

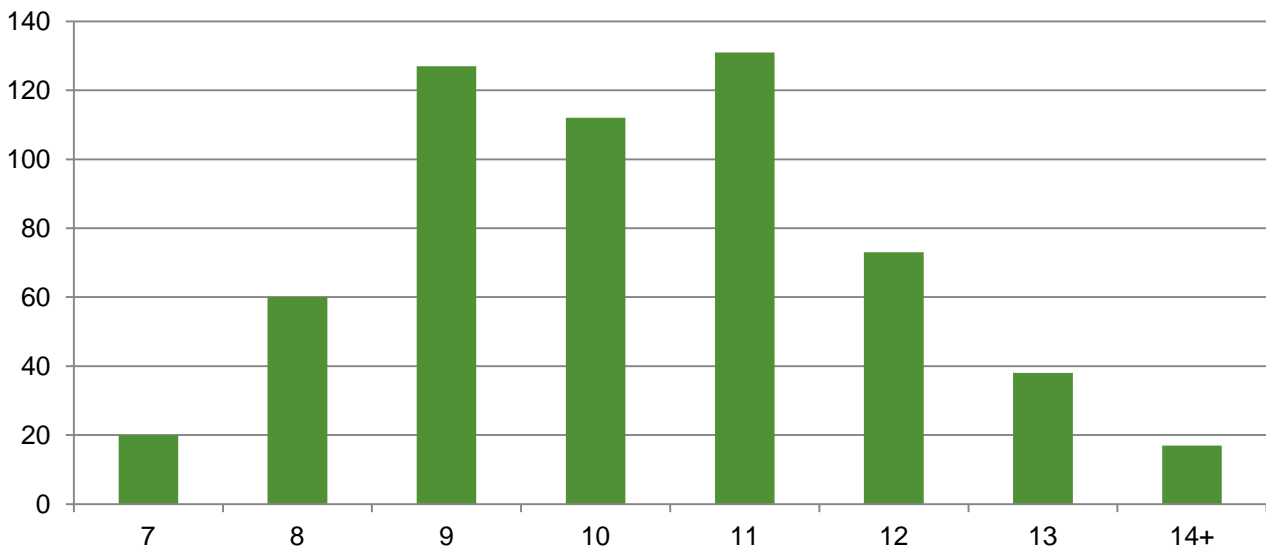
Drug Education Survey 2011

Survey Background

The London Youth Involvement Project is a youth-led project giving young Londoners the chance to help influence drug and alcohol prevention in the city. The young people wished to find out whether their own varied experiences of drug education were reflected across London, so designed a questionnaire for secondary school pupils. This was distributed through schools and youth groups, and online.

In total, there were 590 responses, 253 female and 337 male. Responses were received from pupils of at least 185 schools across at least 27 London boroughs. Figure 1 shows the age profile of respondents.

Figure 1: School year of respondents



Quantity and timing of drug education

Just over a fifth (22%) of young people surveyed said they had not received any drug education at secondary school.

This varied by age: 34% of KS3 students, 12% of KS4 students and 21% of older respondents said they had not received any drug education. The higher proportion among the older young people could be because coverage of drug education has improved in recent years but may also be attributed to young people not remembering drug education they received.

For half (50%) of those who said they had had drug education at school, this first took place in Year 7, and for

23% in Year 8, but just over a quarter (27%) waited until Year 9 or later.

Of those who said they had some drug education, a third (34%) said it took place once a year or less, as shown in Figure 2. This is a smaller proportion than would be suggested by the recent PSHE mapping survey (Formby et al., 2011) which found that over 60% of schools taught about drugs, alcohol and tobacco once a year or less. However, if you include young people in our survey who reported having had no drug education, that brings the proportion up to 48%.

Figure 2: How often do you receive drug education at school?

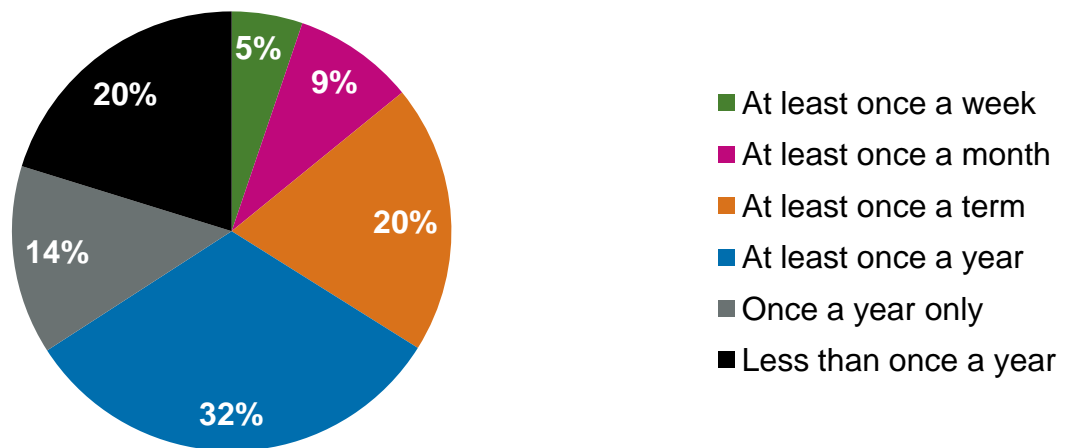
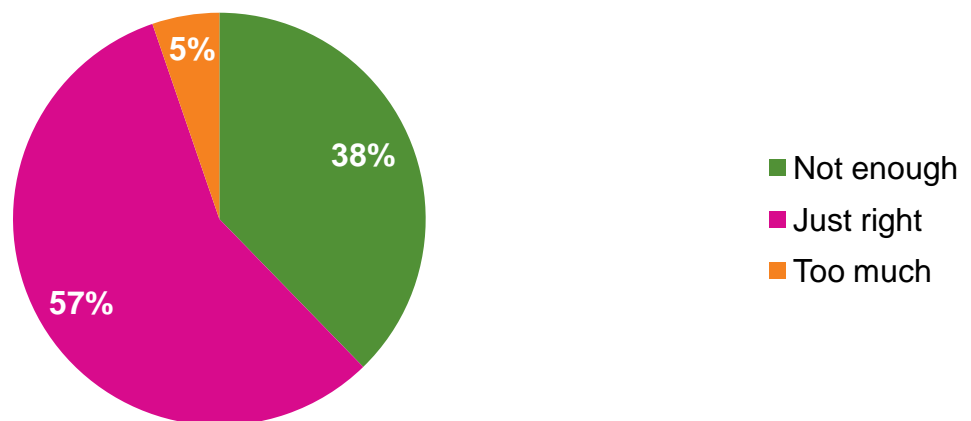


Figure 3 shows that 38% of young people thought they were not getting enough drug education, compared to just 5% who thought they were getting too much. Unsurprisingly, those receiving drug education less often were the most likely to be dissatisfied with the amount they were getting: 63% of those who had drug education less than once a year thought it was not enough, compared to 46% of those who had it once a year, and 32% who received it 'at least once a year'.

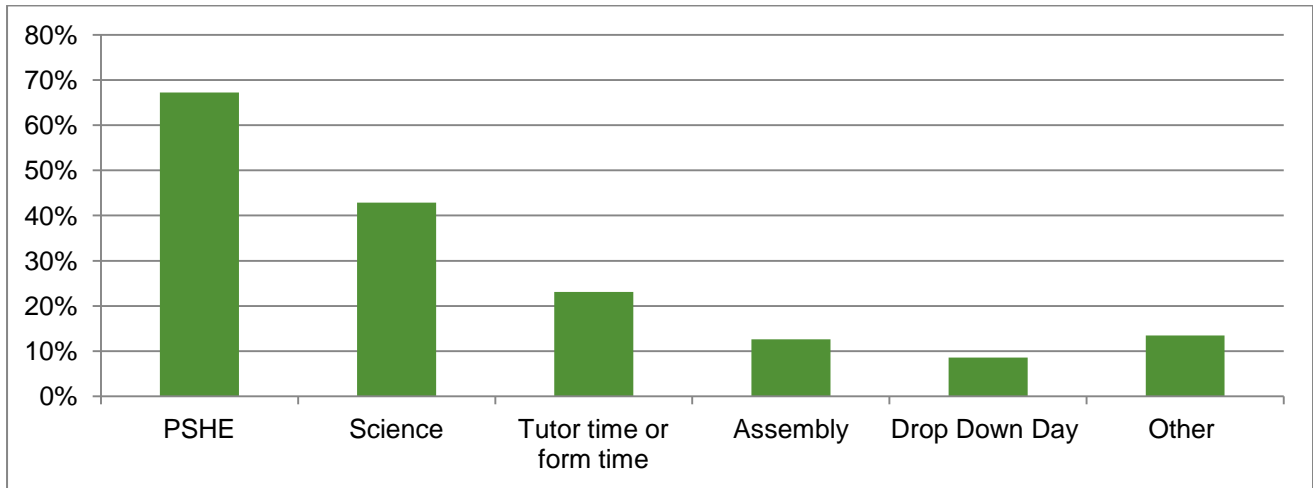
Figure 3: Young people's views on the amount of drug education they received



Timetabling of drug education

As shown in Figure 4, drug education was most often taught in PSHE (67%) or science lessons (43%).

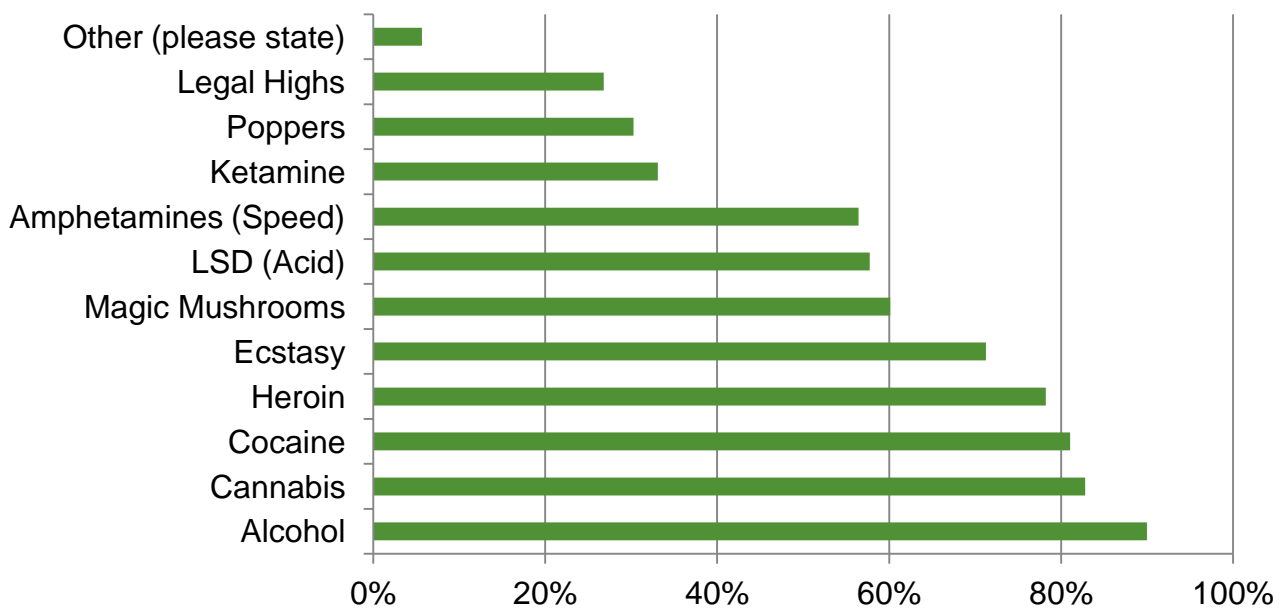
Figure 4: What lesson(s) did you receive drug education in?



Topics covered in drug education

Figure 5 shows the coverage of different drugs within drug education. Among young people, use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis is far more widespread than any other drug. Looking at drugs used by the 16-24 year old age group,¹ some of the more significant of the other drugs used, such as ketamine, amyl nitrate (poppers) and so-called 'legal highs' appear to be less often covered in schools.

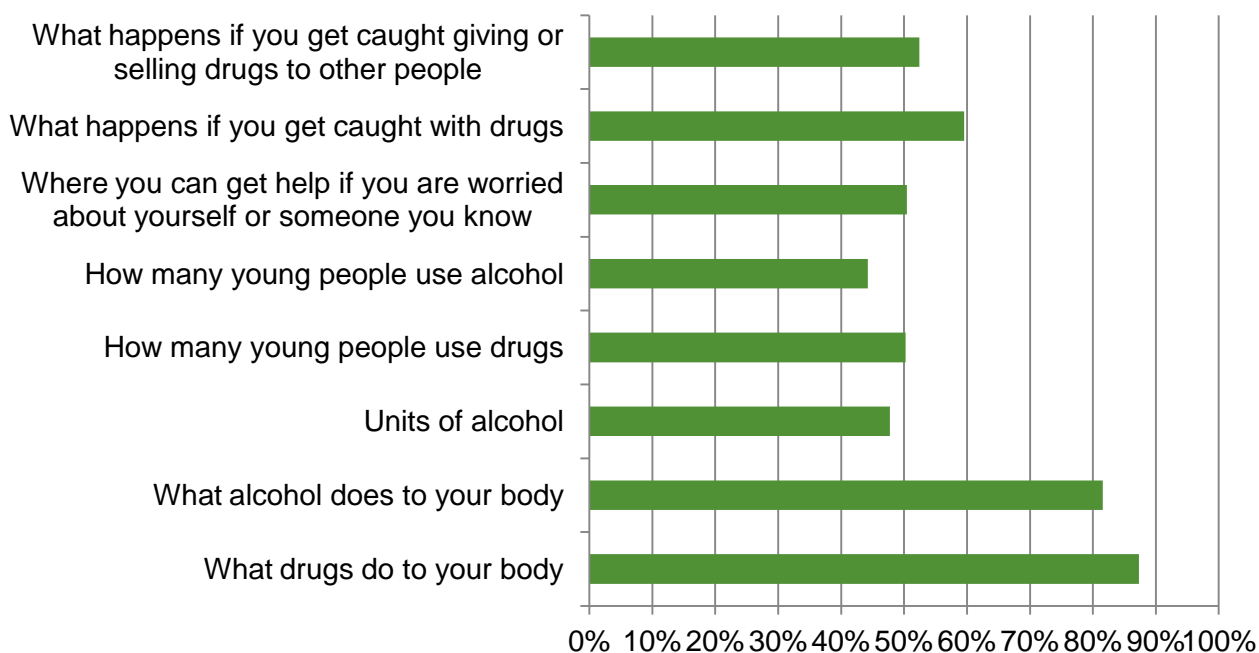
Figure 5: Which drugs did you learn about?²



¹ British Crime Survey 2010/11

² Tobacco was omitted from the survey

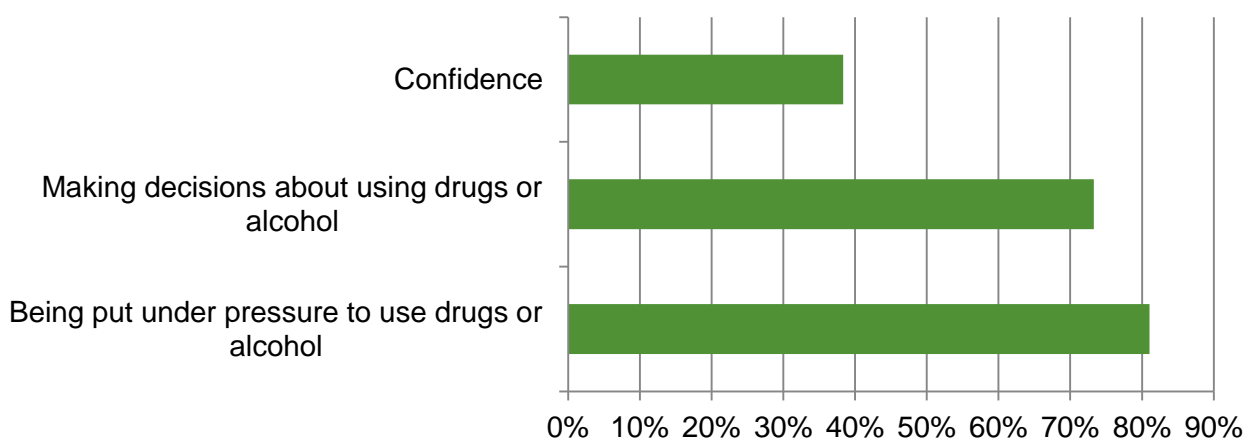
Figure 6: Did you learn about any of the following during your drug education?



Most young people recalled learning about what alcohol and drugs do to your body. However, each of the other subjects was only remembered by around half of young people. This strongly suggests that important topics are not sufficiently covered in many schools.

Research has found that an important factor influencing young people's decisions about drugs is their perception of social norms: whether they consider a substance is widely used and considered acceptable among their peer group. Misperceptions around this can be changed by a 'normative education' approach, but the results from this survey suggest that this approach has not as yet been widely adopted by schools.

Figure 7: Did you talk about any of the following during your drug education?



As shown in Figure 7, most young people seem to be learning about 'extrinsic' skills of decision-making and resistance. What may be lacking is an accompanying focus on internal values, linked to the normative education approach mentioned above.

Young people's views on what they felt was missing from their drug education

The young people were asked what one thing they would like to learn more about in their drug education. There were 371 responses to this question, covering a wide range of topics, but some themes stood out, as shown below (figures in brackets show number of responses considered to fall into this category).

Everything (17)

Everything! - Barely anything is taught
A bit more of everything
More detail of all the things we already do

Effects/consequences (108)

Side effects
Effects of drugs
What drugs do to your body
Consequences

Specific drugs (25)

Alcohol was mentioned most often
Alcohol units
Legal drugs
Smoking
Poppers

Different types (15)

Different types of drugs
Class A, B, C drugs

Personal experiences (21)

Experiences of young people who get addicted in real life

People that have been affected by drugs and alcohol. How it can affect family and friends too.

Legal information (20)

Legal stuff

What happens if you get caught with drugs

Practical advice (17)

How to avoid people who will get you using them
Who but the police I can talk to if I know someone taking or selling drugs
How to help someone who has taken drugs, who is in a serious condition and an ambulance is far away
How to drink and not get drunk?

Origin (21)

Where they come from
How are drugs made

Statistics (12)

How many people use drugs
How common is it in our school

Why? (8)

Reasons why people take drugs
Why people get addicted to drugs