

# Children as young as SEVEN are experimenting with ecstasy and cannabis, shocking study shows

- Home office survey also reveals nine-year-olds are taking cocaine
- One in three who have ever smoked cannabis first tried it when they were under 16, Home Office reveals

By [Martin Robinson](#)

British children as young as seven are taking ecstasy and cannabis, it was revealed today.

Nine-year-olds are also trying cocaine and often it is because their parents are failing to control them, experts say.

The Government's annual crime survey has shown for the first time the youngest users of the most popular drugs in Britain - cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine.



Fears: Children as young as seven are trying cannabis (posed by models) and other drugs like ecstasy

They found almost one in three who have ever smoked cannabis first tried it when they were under 16.

Around six per cent of those who had ever taken Class A cocaine took it first at school and 8.2 per cent had taken ecstasy before they turned 16.

Jeremy Todd, chief executive of the charity Family Lives, said: 'We speak to thousands of families every

year and evidence shows that parents are the main influence on how children approach drugs and alcohol.

'Equipping parents with the tools to ensure they can talk effectively with their children is the best way of preventing children experimenting at an early age and can prevent later problems in teenage and adult life.'



Common: Children across the UK are taking ecstasy, pictured, a Home Office survey has shown

The results give a shocking picture of drug use by children in Britain.

'The most commonly reported age for first taking cannabis was 16 years. But, as expected, there was a lot of variation among adults in the age cannabis was reported to be first taken, ranging from eight to 56 years old,' the report says.

'Age of onset was most commonly 18 for cocaine powder, but again this was within a wide range of reported ages, from nine to 57 years old.

'The most commonly reported age of onset for ecstasy was 18 years. Again, the first age of use reported by adults varied considerably, between seven and 51 years old.'

But it appears that drugs are getting less attractive to young people, because abuse is 'around the lowest level since measurement began in 1996.

The report says adults between 16 and 59, 8.9 per cent had taken drugs in the last 12 months, which is a drop.

Cannabis use has dropped the most, while there have been reductions in ecstasy and cocaine compared with the 1990s.

High school children taking drugs is down 12 per cent and the number of under-16s trying cigarettes is at its lowest for 30 years