

The effects of transition to secondary school, alcohol consumption and peer pressure on youth smoking

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Summary

- This study provides further evidence for the debate on a possible smoking ban in restaurants and investigates the influence of peer pressure on smoking habits and alcohol consumption among young people.
- Teenagers often start smoking on a daily basis after moving from primary to secondary school. The results of the pan-European survey ESPAD¹ indicate that more than 40% of young people in the Czech Republic smoke, which is one of the highest rates in the EU.
- This study looks at pupils' transition from primary to secondary school in order to identify the role peers play in young peoples' decisions to start smoking.
- The results of this study show that new classmates play a key role in influencing male secondary school students, but not their female counterparts. If half the students in a class smoke, a student entering that class is 10% more likely to become addicted to smoking.
- Classmates' influence is greatest among secondary school students who regularly visit bars and restaurants and drink alcohol. This means that youth smoking is to a certain extent encouraged by drinking alcohol in bars and restaurants. In other words, a ban on smoking in bars and restaurants, such as currently discussed, or stricter controls on the sale of alcohol to minors, could effectively reduce smoking among teenagers.
- The results also demonstrate that pupils' choice of secondary school has a significant knock-on effect not only on the skills and knowledge they gain, but also on smoking habits and their consumption of alcohol, which in turn affect their life expectancy and other health indicators.

¹ ESPAD – European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs)