

# Unhappiness with hometown causes one in five youths to take up smoking and drinking

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Unhappiness with the place they live in is causing young people to turn to smoking and drinking, according to a new study just published, according to research carried out at Heriot-Watt University.

## Neighbourhood satisfaction study

The study, published in *Environmental Research* looked at 4,427 people aged between 10 and 15 years and asked about their health-related behaviours and levels of happiness.

It found that one in five (20 per cent) said they were unhappy in their hometown or city leading them to take up smoking or drinking, against an overall downward trend on these behaviours among adolescents across the UK.

The study revealed that almost seven per cent of those interviewed were classified as having an 'abnormal psychiatric state' and one in five felt unhappy with the place they live in as well as other aspects of their life, including their relationships with family, friends, school and their personal appearance.

Those who reported being unhappy said they were more likely to suffer from headaches or sicknesses, tended to not be nice to people, lost their tempers easily, spent more time alone and found themselves easily distracted or being bullied by people the same age as them.

## One in five adolescents dissatisfied

Dr Ivy Shiue from the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society (EGIS) at Heriot-Watt University said the research indicated that children and young people who are unhappy continue to turn to behaviours that damage their health to cope with their unhappiness, against a national [downward trend](#) among the general population.

She said, "Our study showed that one in five adolescents was unhappy living in their home towns and as a result turned to potentially destructive behaviours that damage their health.

"They also tended to have a negative vision of their future and found it difficult to address challenges and stresses in their lives such as going to school, applying for jobs and making new friends."

Dr Shiue says wellbeing courses that support physical health, positive relationships, education and work are essential for young people and should be included in school curriculums and teacher training.

"There is very strong evidence that investment in promoting mental and [emotional health](#), wellbeing and resilience of [young people](#) in early years, can avoid health and social problems later in life. This can play a major role in how people behave in response to different and often challenging situations.

"People with a weak sense of self-belief avoid challenging tasks as they believe it's beyond their capabilities, focus on personal failings and have low self-esteem. Classes in wellbeing and resilience should be introduced into the school curriculum to allow these problems to be tackled early on in a child's life."

A report by the all-party parliamentary group on wellbeing economics,

launched last month, called for political parties to set out their approach to improving wellbeing in their manifestos. It recommends doctors, nurses and teachers should be trained in mindfulness techniques to improve the mental wellbeing of patients and pupils.

**More information:** The report is available online:  
[parliamentarywellbeinggroup.org.uk/](http://parliamentarywellbeinggroup.org.uk/)

Provided by Heriot-Watt University

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