# Cocaine use among UK parents and professionals surges as deaths hit record highs



Across the United Kingdom, homes are increasingly receiving a different kind of delivery alongside their typical household goods. The nation faces a burgeoning issue with cocaine use, particularly among adults who might otherwise fit the mould of responsible citizens—parents, professionals, and home-owners.

Recent insight from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reveals that approximately one in 40 British adults are reportedly using cocaine regularly, placing the UK as the country with the second-highest usage rates globally, exceeding that of any other European nation. The demographic driving this demand is notably diverse, extending beyond the traditional image of affluent young party-goers to include many parents and professionals.

Cocaine-related fatalities have escalated sharply, with the Office for National Statistics reporting that 2023 witnessed over 1,100 deaths—ten times the number from a decade prior. The vast majority of these deaths involve individuals from Millennial and Generation X cohorts, particularly males aged 40 to 49. The trend signifies a disturbing shift with a growing number of adults, often parents, grappling with addiction.

Rachel Cooper, a 36-year-old from Cardiff, recounted her first experience with cocaine at the age of 17, a moment she later recognised as a precursor to her addiction. Cooper’s struggles intensified during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 when she found herself furloughed and isolated at home. "All I was doing was sitting in the garden and drinking, and my cocaine use just got really bad," she explained. The addiction, once manageable, spiralled out of control, leading her to spend exorbitant amounts—over £800 during a particularly destructive weekend.

Data from the National Crime Agency (NCA) indicates that the UK consumes around 117 tonnes of cocaine annually, with the market value estimated at £11 billion. The price of a gram remains approximately £50, but its purity has increased, further incentivising use. Law enforcement has reported seizing over 28 tonnes of cocaine in the year ending March 2024, marking the largest haul since records began in 1973.

Cocaine's popularity extends across various social strata, with users employing it as a coping mechanism for the pressures of modern life. Notably, several professionals have turned to cocaine for its effects throughout their demanding schedules. Charles Yates, the NCA's deputy director of threat leadership, highlights the insatiable demand for cocaine despite the increase in law enforcement measures.

Many parents have openly acknowledged their drug use as a means to manage daily stresses. A mother from west London shared, "Where I live, everyone – and I mean everyone – is doing it," indicating a widespread acceptance among her peers. This trend often occurs in seemingly normal environments, where parents may use cocaine following a week’s worth of responsibilities.

However, the combination of cocaine with alcohol poses additional risks. The interaction produces cocaine’s metabolite, cocaethylene, which can enhance the drug's effects while simultaneously increasing health risks. The phenomena of drug-related crime continue to be compounded by these patterns of use, as issues such as violence and trafficking persist.

Scott Ardley from the addiction treatment charity Rehabs UK noted that many middle-aged users of cocaine manage to maintain their daily routines while concealing their addiction from those around them. He described the gradual shift where initial recreational use transforms into dependence as individuals seek relief or energy to cope with their responsibilities.

Public incidents reflecting the darker side of this phenomenon have surfaced in alarming news stories. These include cases of parents driving while under the influence, creating hazardous circumstances for their children and the community. A mother from Kent faced legal action for being incapable of driving her children to school due to her delinquency induced by cocaine.

For Rachel Cooper, her addiction led her to live in fear of losing her children. Despite maintaining her responsibilities, she felt she was functioning only at a surface level. She has since transitioned to advocating for sobriety, sharing her experiences through social media platforms to assist others grappling with addiction.

Current statistics reveal a troubling trend; individuals aged 60 to 69 were hospitalised multiple times this year for overdose-related incidents involving cocaine. As the user demographic ages, the compound risks of addiction manifest more prominently, pressing upon healthcare systems and families alike. The narrative surrounding cocaine in the UK illustrates a complex societal challenge, uniquely characterised by its impact on everyday lives, pushing the idea that the conversation around drug use must evolve as the landscape does.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2023registrations> - This Office for National Statistics report details that in 2023, there were 1,118 deaths involving cocaine in England and Wales, marking a 30.5% increase from the previous year and nearly ten times higher than in 2011. Males accounted for 79.2% of these deaths, and cocaine has consistently been the second most-used drug after cannabis over the past decade.
2. <https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/latest/news-and-views/withyou-responds-to-the-ons-statistics-on-drug-related-deaths-in-2023> - WithYou's response to the ONS statistics highlights that in 2023, there were 5,448 drug misuse deaths registered in England and Wales, an 11% increase from 2022. Of these, 1,118 deaths involved cocaine, representing the 12th consecutive annual rise. The North East region had the highest rates of drug-related deaths, while London had the lowest.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy5l4nknew0o> - This BBC News article reports that in 2023, there were 5,448 deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales, marking an 11% rise from the previous year and the highest level since records began in 1993. Just under half of these deaths involved an opiate such as heroin, while the number of cocaine deaths rose for the 12th year in a row.
4. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/drugmisuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2024> - The Office for National Statistics' report indicates that in the year ending March 2024, 8.8% of people aged 16 to 59 years (approximately 2.9 million people) and 16.5% of people aged 16 to 24 years (around 971,000 people) used 'any drug' in the past 12 months. The prevalence of powder cocaine use in the last year was 2.1% for people aged 16 to 59 years and 3.8% for those aged 16 to 24 years.
5. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/470811/drug-poisoning-deaths-cocaine-in-england-and-wales/> - Statista's data shows that in 2022, there were 857 deaths involving cocaine in England and Wales, more than seven times higher than in 2011. The UK had the highest prevalence of cocaine users in Europe in 2019, with 2.7% of individuals using cocaine during that period.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/dec/19/drug-poisoning-deaths-in-england-and-wales-at-highest-level-in-past-30-years> - The Guardian reports that in 2022, the death rate from drug poisoning in England and Wales was 81.5% higher than in 2012, marking the highest level in 30 years. Just under half of all drug poisoning deaths involved an opiate, and there was a rise in the number of drugs typically recorded on the death certificate, now averaging two drugs per death.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14684717/Truth-middle-class-cocaine-use-mothers-LILY-AMORY.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data