

Study challenges 'ned culture' stereotypes

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A new study is challenging stereotypes around the youth subculture whose members are often labelled as 'neds' or 'chavs'.

Researchers from the MRC Social and [Public Health](#) Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow interviewed more than 3,000 15-year-olds in and around Glasgow for the study, published today in the British Sociological Association's journal *Sociology*.

Their findings dispute a number of common perceptions about 'neds' and young people's feelings about the label. They found evidence that the labels, often thought to be derogatory, are being reclaimed as a sort of badge of pride by some young people, with 15% of [interviewees](#) willingly self-identifying as a 'ned' or 'chav'. More female interviewees claimed identification with the terms than male, with 17.4% of girls and 12.7% of boys reporting they considered themselves part of that group.

Contrary to the stereotype of 'neds' or 'chavs' being exclusively from deprived backgrounds, the researchers found that around 13% of the young people they interviewed from more affluent or middle-class families unambiguously identified with the label 'ned', compared with 22% from less affluent or working class backgrounds.

Robert Young of the MRC Social and Public [Health Sciences](#) Unit, who led the project, said: "When we began the study, we were keen to find out if any young people would positively identify themselves with the term 'ned' or 'chav', which have been overwhelmingly used as terms of abuse for a particular section of society. We also wanted to pinpoint

which aspects of the culture might appeal to them.

"It appears that, regardless of [social background](#) or gender, a significant proportion of young people self-identify as 'neds', participate in the stereotypical [behaviours](#) associated with the label such as [antisocial behaviour](#) and alcohol and drug abuse, and share a lack of interest in education."

"There is a surprisingly low association between adopting a 'ned' identity and experience of deprivation among the young people we spoke to, certainly far less than popular assumptions would suggest. Those who identify as 'neds' are not exclusively from disadvantaged areas; instead, it seems that part of the appeal of joining such groups may be to attain a better social standing within their own peer-group and greater peer respect, even for young people from more middle-class backgrounds."

"'Neds' or 'chavs' are often respected by the young people we spoke to for being risk-takers, thrill-seekers or rule-breakers and this sort of 'cool' transgressive behaviour may contribute to the appeal of joining these groups and could explain [young people's](#) desire to identify themselves with an otherwise stigmatised social group."

A total of 3,194 15-year-olds from 22 schools in and around Glasgow were interviewed for the study. Pupils were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire and took part in an interview on parental employment and social class.

The questions focused on respondents' levels of identification with a range of youth styles; socioeconomic and family background; levels of educational engagement; cultural and lifestyle factors such as how often they read books, perceived peer status and alcohol intake; and levels of truancy and delinquency.

The MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit is an affiliated member of the University's Institute of Health and Wellbeing.

The paper, titled "Can Neds be non-delinquent, educated or even middle class?", is available from the Sociology website at bit.ly/NVjXFC

Provided by University of Glasgow

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