Background
Smoking is one of the major public health problems worldwide. The prevalence of adult smoking in Russia is very high: more than two thirds of Russian men and about 25 % of women are daily smokers (McKee et al, 1998). Less is known about adolescent smoking.

Aim
To estimate the prevalence of adolescent smoking in a disadvantaged area in Northwest Russia.

Methods
Of the 229 pupils who were eligible to participate in the study, 188 schoolchildren from all three schools in two most disadvantaged districts in Arkhangelsk (figure 1) aged 14-17 years filled in an anonymous questionnaire in the classroom about their smoking habits and knowledge on smoking and its effects on health. The rest of pupils were absent at school for the unknown reasons.

Thus, response rate was 82%.

Results

Prevalence of adolescent smoking
Altogether, 57.3 % of boys and 47.4 % of girls ever smoked (figure 2). And 48 % of boys and 38 % of girls smoke daily.

Mainly, both boys and girls initiate smoking at the age of 11-15 (figure 3).

Among smokers, 11.0 % of boys and 4.0 % of girls smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day (figure 4). On average, boys smoke 6-10 cigarettes a day while girls smoke 4-8 cigarettes a day.

Discussion
In the our study the prevalence of adolescent smoking in a disadvantaged area in Arkhangelsk is higher than in a central part of the city (42.0 % vs 28.2 %) (Skvortsova et al, 2007). Boys predominated in being smokers than girls as it has been shown in another Russian research (Skvortsova et al, 2007). Every tenth boy and twenty-fifth girl smoke 20 and more cigarettes a day. So, it is possible to assume that they have the generated nicotinic dependence despite young age. Good self-estimation and perception that tobacco smoking is harmful to health are related with not being a current smoker among adolescents.

The study had several limitations. First, findings are based on self-reports by adolescents without clinical measurements (for example, level of blood or urine cotinine). Moreover, some of pupils who were absent at school during study may have been different from the school attended pupils. Thus, given that self-reported data has been previously shown to underestimate the real prevalence of smoking, the current situation in Arkhangelsk require immediate attention of the public health authorities.

Conclusion
The prevalence of adolescent smoking in the study area is very high in both genders. The observed prevalence of smoking in girls is substantially higher than smoking in adult women in Russia in general indicating a considerable problem for women’s health in the future.

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