

Short Report HBSC Ireland 2014

Alcohol and cannabis use in school-children in Ireland

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Introduction

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and runs on a four-year cycle. In 2014, Ireland participated for the fifth time in the HBSC study (www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc). The overall aims of the HBSC study are to gain new insight into, and increase our understanding of young people's health and well-being, health behaviours and their social context. HBSC collects data on key indicators of health, health attitudes, and health behaviours, as well as the context of health for young people. The study is a school-based survey with information collected from students through self-completion questionnaires in classrooms. HBSC Ireland 2014 was funded by the Department of Health. Further information on the HBSC Ireland can be found at www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc or www.hbsc.org, the International HBSC website.

The most recent HBSC Ireland study was conducted in 2014 and included 13,611 school-children from 3rd class in primary school to 5th year in post-primary school. Collectively, 230 primary and post-primary schools across Ireland participated in this study. The methods employed comply with the International HBSC protocol and are detailed in the national report from the 2014 survey see http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/hbsc_2014.html.

Focus of this report

This short report presents a brief analysis of alcohol and cannabis intake among Irish school-children, aged 13-17, across the country broken down by age and gender. Overall, data from 7,320 school-children aged 13-17 were analysed.

The HBSC Ireland questionnaire measures alcohol and cannabis intake including the following questions:

- On how many days (if any) have you drunk alcohol? Responses for in your lifetime and for in the past 30 days were; Never, 1-2 days, 3-5 days, 6-9 days, 10-19 days, 20-29 days, 30 days or more
- Have you ever had so much alcohol that you were really drunk? Responses for in your lifetime and for in the past 30 days were; Never, Yes once, Yes 2-3 times, Yes 4-10 times, Yes more than 10 times
- At what age did you do the following things? Responses for drink alcohol (more than a small amount), get drunk, and take cannabis were; Never, 11 years old, 12 years old, 13 years old, 14 years old, 15 years old, 16 years or older
- Have you ever taken cannabis (hashish, grass, pot)? Responses for in your lifetime, in the last 12 months, and in the last 30 days were; Never, 1-2 days, 3-5 days, 6-9 days, 10-19 days, 20-29 days, 30 days or more.

Findings

Overall, 51% of 13-17 year olds reported that they ever had an alcoholic drink. Table 1 shows the age and gender breakdown. The majority of boys and girls reported having ever had an alcoholic drink at 17 years old. There was a higher proportion of girls than boys reporting ever having had an alcoholic drink at age 17 years, 84.3 compared to 81.9 respectively.

Table 1: Percentage of 13-17 year olds reporting that they have ever had an alcoholic drink, by age and gender

Age	Boys	Girls	All
13 years	27.6	20.3	23.2
14 years	40.7	35.5	37.6
15 years	57.7	54.5	55.7
16 years	72.7	70.0	71.1
17 years	81.9	84.3	83.3

Table 2 shows the age and gender breakdown of those who reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days. Just less than 1 in 5 (19.3%) 13-17 year olds reported that they drank alcohol in

the last 30 days. A higher proportion of boys report drinking in the last 30 days in all age groups (except for 17 year olds) compared to girls (Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage of 13-17 year olds reporting that they have had an alcoholic drink in the past month, by age and gender

Age	Boys	Girls	All
13 years	6.1	4.2	4.9
14 years	13.6	12.4	12.9
15 years	25.5	23.2	24.1
16 years	43.4	42.2	42.7
17 years	57.7	63.7	61.1

Alcohol

Table 3 shows the age and gender breakdown of lifetime drunkenness. Over one-quarter (26.6%) of 13-17 year olds reported having drunk so much alcohol that they were ‘really drunk’. Table 4 shows the age and gender breakdown of age of initiation for alcohol. The highest reported age of initiation of alcohol consumption was at the age of 14 and 15 both accounting for approximately 27% of respondents aged 13-17 years.

Cannabis

The majority (90.1%) of 13-17 year olds reported that they have never used cannabis in their lifetime. Table 6 shows the age and gender breakdown. Just less than 10% report having used cannabis in the last 12 months. Table 7 shows the age and gender breakdown. Overall, 4.1% of 13-17 year olds report they have used cannabis in the past 30 days. Table 8 shows the age and gender breakdown. Table 9 shows the age and gender breakdown of the age of initiation for using cannabis.

Table 3: Percentages of 13-17 year olds reporting that they have been really drunk*, by age and gender

	Boys					Girls					All				
	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years
Never	92.8	84.8	72.6	51.8	37.4	95.4	87.2	74.0	58.3	41.1	94.4	86.2	73.5	55.6	39.5
Yes, once	5.9	7.4	10.3	15.5	17.2	2.9	6.0	10.5	13.9	12.9	4.1	6.6	10.4	14.5	14.8
Yes, 2-3 times	0.6	4.3	7.4	15.0	17.2	0.9	4.9	8.6	11.7	19.2	0.8	4.6	8.1	13.0	18.3
Yes, 4-10 times	0.3	1.9	3.8	8.5	9.7	0.5	1.3	3.1	9.1	14.6	0.4	1.5	3.3	8.9	12.4
Yes, >10 times	0.5	1.7	6.0	9.3	18.6	0.3	0.7	3.9	7.0	12.2	0.4	1.1	4.7	8.0	15.0

*Really drunk in their lifetime

Table 4: Percentages of 13-17 year olds reporting age of alcohol initiation, by age and gender

	Boys					Girls					All				
	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years
Never	74.1	67.4	49.9	32.0	21.0	79.1	72.2	52.7	35.1	18.3	76.5	70.2	51.6	33.8	19.5
11 or younger	4.6	4.6	5.6	3.9	3.0	3.0	3.5	2.9	2.4	2.1	4.1	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.5
12	9.3	7.0	5.2	6.7	4.6	7.5	4.2	4.3	4.0	2.1	8.2	5.3	4.7	5.1	3.2
13	12.0	9.6	8.8	8.6	8.4	10.5	10.0	9.5	7.6	6.6	11.1	9.8	9.2	8.1	7.4
14	-	11.4	15.8	14.2	13.8	-	10.0	16.0	14.9	14.9	-	10.6	15.9	14.5	14.4
15	-	-	14.7	18.8	21.8	-	-	14.7	23.5	21.5	-	-	14.6	21.6	21.7
16 or older	-	-	-	15.8	27.5	-	-	-	12.6	34.3	-	-	-	13.8	31.3

Table 5: Percentages of 13-17 year olds who reported age of drunkenness initiation, by age and gender

Boys	Girls	All
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Age	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years
Never	89.5	84.9	74.6	51.1	33.8	91.8	86.1	74.8	55.5	36.1	90.4	85.5	74.7	53.7	35.1
11 or younger	1.0	0.6	2.0	1.2	1.1	0	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.0
12	2.9	2.6	1.8	2.3	0.8	3.0	0.5	1.2	1.5	0.9	2.9	1.4	1.4	1.8	0.8
13	6.7	3.2	3.9	4.3	3.5	5.2	3.9	4.0	3.5	3.9	5.8	3.6	3.9	3.9	3.7
14	-	8.7	8.5	9.7	8.2	-	8.8	10.0	9.2	6.2	-	8.8	9.4	9.4	7.1
15	-	-	9.2	16.6	16.6	-	-	9.9	15.7	17.9	-	-	9.6	16.1	17.3
16 or older	-	-	-	14.7	36.0	-	-	-	14.1	34.2	-	-	-	14.3	35.0

Table 6: Percentages of 13-17 year olds who reported that they have ever used cannabis, by age and gender

Age	Boys					Girls					All				
	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years
Never	97.1	94.7	87.1	80.5	75.2	98.1	96.2	92.1	84.6	78.7	97.7	95.6	90.2	82.9	77.2
1-2 days	1.8	2.3	5.0	6.7	9.3	1.1	2.1	2.6	7.0	9.3	1.4	2.2	3.5	6.9	9.3
3-5 days	0.2	0.8	1.1	2.2	2.7	0.4	0.4	0.9	2.7	3.4	0.3	0.6	1.0	2.5	3.1
6-9 days	0.2	0.8	0.6	1.5	2.1	0.1	0.3	1.4	0.7	2.1	0.1	0.5	1.1	1.0	2.1
10-19 days	0.2	0.3	0.6	2.2	2.4	0.1	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.3	0.1	0.5	0.6	1.4	1.8
20-29 days	0.2	0	0.2	1.7	0.5	0	0.1	0.4	0.9	1.5	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.2	1.1
30 days or more	0.5	1.1	5.4	5.4	7.7	0.2	0.3	2.1	3.2	3.8	0.3	0.6	3.4	4.1	5.5

Table 7: Percentages of 13-17 year olds who reported that have used cannabis in the past 12 months, by age and gender

Age	Boys					Girls					All				
	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years
Never	96.1	93.9	87.4	82.7	76.6	97.2	96.5	92.8	86.9	82.2	96.7	95.5	90.7	85.1	79.7
1-2 days	1.3	2.5	4.4	5.1	9.6	0.9	1.7	2.0	6.0	8.0	1.1	2.0	3.0	5.6	8.7
3-5 days	1.3	0.5	1.4	2.8	3.1	0	0.4	1.3	2.7	2.7	0.6	0.4	1.3	2.7	2.9
6-9 days	0	1.4	0.9	2.8	1.4	0	0.6	1.2	0.9	1.6	0	0.9	1.1	1.7	1.5
10-19 days	0	0	1.2	1.4	2.8	0	0.2	0.7	1.0	1.8	0	0.1	0.9	1.2	2.3
20-29 days	0	0	0.3	0.7	0.9	0	0.3	0.3	0.5	1.1	0	0.2	0.3	0.6	1.0
30 days or more	1.3	1.8	4.4	4.4	5.6	1.9	0.3	1.7	2.0	2.5	1.6	0.9	2.8	3.0	3.9

Table 8: Percentages of 13-17 year olds who reported that they have used cannabis in the past 30 days, by age and gender

Age	Boys	Girls	All
13 years	1.1	0.7	0.9
14 years	3.0	2.4	2.6
15 years	8.8	5.2	6.7
16 years	11.3	7.3	9.0
17 years	13.8	8.8	11.0

*5.5% 13-17 year olds report taking cannabis in the past 30 days

Table 9: Percentages of 13-17 year olds who reported age of cannabis initiation, by age and gender

Boys	Girls	All
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Age	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years
Never	97.2	94.8	87.5	79.4	74.8	97.8	96.1	92.4	84.8	78.8	97.1	95.4	90.4	82.6	77.0
11 or younger	0.9	0	1.4	1.0	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.2	0	1.2	0.2	0.8	0.6	0.1
12	0.9	0.8	0.3	0.5	0	0	0.3	0.6	0.2	0	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0
13	0.9	2.0	1.9	3.1	2.2	1.5	1.0	1.8	1.2	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.9	2.0	2.2
14	-	2.4	4.5	4.6	3.6	-	2.4	2.1	1.9	1.7	-	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.5
15	-	-	4.3	7.0	4.1	-	-	2.9	7.1	5.2	-	-	3.4	7.1	4.7
16 or older	-	-	-	4.3	15.1	-	-	-	4.5	12.2	-	-	-	4.4	13.5

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