

HBSC Ireland 2014:

Alcohol and cannabis use in school-children in Ireland (updated)

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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 the sampled 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 15, 16 and 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: Percentages 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 than of girls report drinking in the last 30 days in all age groups, except for among 17 year olds, where the pattern is reversed (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Percentages 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 presents the age and gender breakdown for lifetime drunkenness. Overall more than one-quarter (26.6%) of 13-17 year olds reported having drunk so much alcohol that they were 'really drunk'. Table 4 presents the age and gender breakdown for age of initiation for alcohol. Alcohol initiation increases with age from 13 years old on, with a clear step change around age 14.

Cannabis

The majority (88.5%) of sampled 13-17 year olds reported that they have never used cannabis in their lifetime. Table 6 presents the age and gender breakdown for frequency of lifetime cannabis use. Overall, approximately 10% report having used cannabis in the last 12 months. Table 7 presents the age and gender breakdown for frequency of last 12 months cannabis use. Overall, 6.4% of 13-17 year olds reported they have used cannabis in the past 30 days. Table 8 presents the age and gender breakdown of any cannabis use in the last 30 days. Finally, Table 9 presents the age and gender breakdown for age of initiation for using cannabis. Cannabis initiation increases with age between 13 and 17, but more gradually than alcohol initiation over these ages.

Table 3: Percentages of 13-17 year olds reporting that they have ever 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

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	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

Cannabis Tables

Table 6: Frequency of lifetime cannabis use, 13-17 year olds 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	96.7	94.8	86.4	77.2	71.5	97.7	96.0	91.9	84.9	78.4	97.2	95.4	89.2	80.9	74.6
1-2 days	1.8	2.6	5.3	7.8	9.9	1.3	2.1	2.6	6.8	9.4	1.6	2.4	3.9	7.3	9.7
3-5 days	0.1	0.7	1.1	2.8	2.4	0.4	0.4	0.9	2.5	3.3	0.3	0.6	1.0	2.7	2.8
6-9 days	0.5	0.7	0.6	1.6	2.3	0.1	0.5	1.4	0.6	2.1	0.3	0.6	1.0	1.1	2.2
10-19 days	0.1	0.4	0.4	2.4	3.1	0.1	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.5	0.1	0.5	0.6	1.7	2.4
20-29 days	0.2	0.0	0.1	2.1	0.8	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.8	1.6	0.1	0.0	0.2	1.4	1.1
30 days or more	0.5	0.8	6.1	6.1	9.9	0.3	0.3	2.0	3.6	3.8	0.4	0.6	4.0	4.9	7.2

Table 7: Frequency of last twelve months cannabis use, 13-17 year olds 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	97.0	95.0	87.0	80.2	72.8	98.1	96.3	92.6	87.3	82.1	97.6	95.7	89.9	83.6	76.9
1-2 days	1.3	2.1	4.7	6.2	9.9	1.1	1.7	2.2	5.7	7.7	1.2	1.9	3.4	6.0	8.9
3-5 days	0.6	0.4	0.9	3.2	3.5	0.3	0.7	1.3	2.6	2.6	0.5	0.5	1.1	2.9	3.1
6-9 days	0.3	1.2	0.8	3.6	2.2	0.1	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.7	0.2	0.9	0.9	2.2	2.0
10-19 days	0.3	0.1	1.7	1.3	2.8	0.0	0.1	0.8	1.1	1.9	0.1	0.1	1.3	1.2	2.4
20-29 days	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.7	1.1	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.6	1.3	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.6	1.2
30 days or more	0.5	1.2	4.6	4.9	7.7	0.3	0.4	1.6	2.0	2.7	0.4	0.8	3.1	3.5	5.5

Table 8: Frequency of any cannabis use in the last 30 days, 13-17 year olds by age and gender

Age	Boys	Girls	All
13 years	1.2	0.7	0.9
14 years	2.7	2.3	2.5
15 years	9.2	5.2	7.1
16 years	13.0	7.5	10.3
17 years	15.8	9.4	12.9

Table 9: Percentages of 13-17 year olds who reported age of cannabis initiation, 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	97.2	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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