

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams¹ in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (Europe) and co-ordinated by Professor Candace Currie of the University of Edinburgh. In 2006 HBSC Ireland surveyed 10,334 schoolchildren in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

Further information is available at:
<http://www.hbsc.org>
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/>



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HPRC
Health Promotion Research Centre



Office of the Minister for
Children and Youth Affairs
Oifig an Aire Leanaí
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Department of
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AN ROINN SLÁNTE AGUS LEANAÍ

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Summary

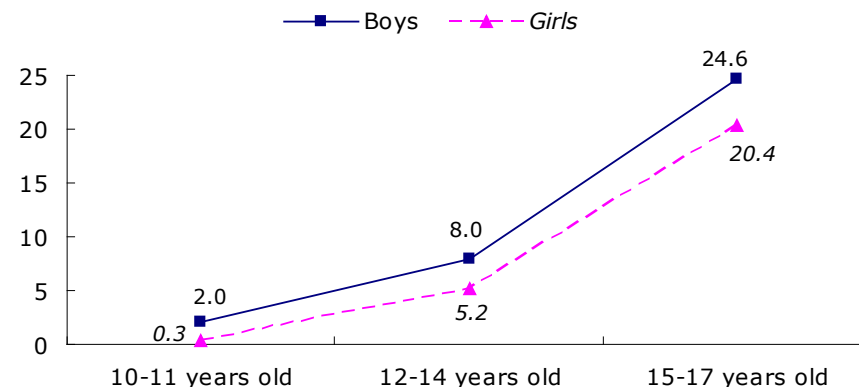
HBSC Ireland 2006 has found that 12.4% of schoolchildren in Ireland report using cannabis in the past 12 months (14.3% of boys and 10.4% of girls). This figure represents a slight increase since 1998 (10.3%). The percentage of children that have used cannabis is higher among older children; 2% of boys and 0.3% of girls aged 10-11 years and 24.6% of boys and 20.4% of girls in the 15-17 year old age group. Children who have used cannabis in the past 12 months are less likely to: find it easy to talk to their parents, like school, live with both parents, report excellent health and be happy about their lives. They are more likely to report feeling pressured by schoolwork and spend four or more evenings per week with friends. Cannabis use in this factsheet refers to children who have used cannabis once or more in the last 12 months.

Why this topic?

Drug use among young people is a major concern because of its associations with antisocial and criminal behaviour and threat to public health². Early cannabis use has been found to increase the risk of problem behaviours in older adolescents and adulthood, including licit and illicit drugs use, risky sexual behaviour, academic failure and delinquency^{3,4}.

Trends 2002-2006

Overall the percentage of children reporting cannabis use in the past 12 months has remained relatively stable between 2002 (11.1%) and 2006 (12.4%). Prevalence of reported use was stable in every age and gender group, with the exception of boys aged 15-17 years whose reported usage decreased from 30.5% to 24.6% over this time frame.

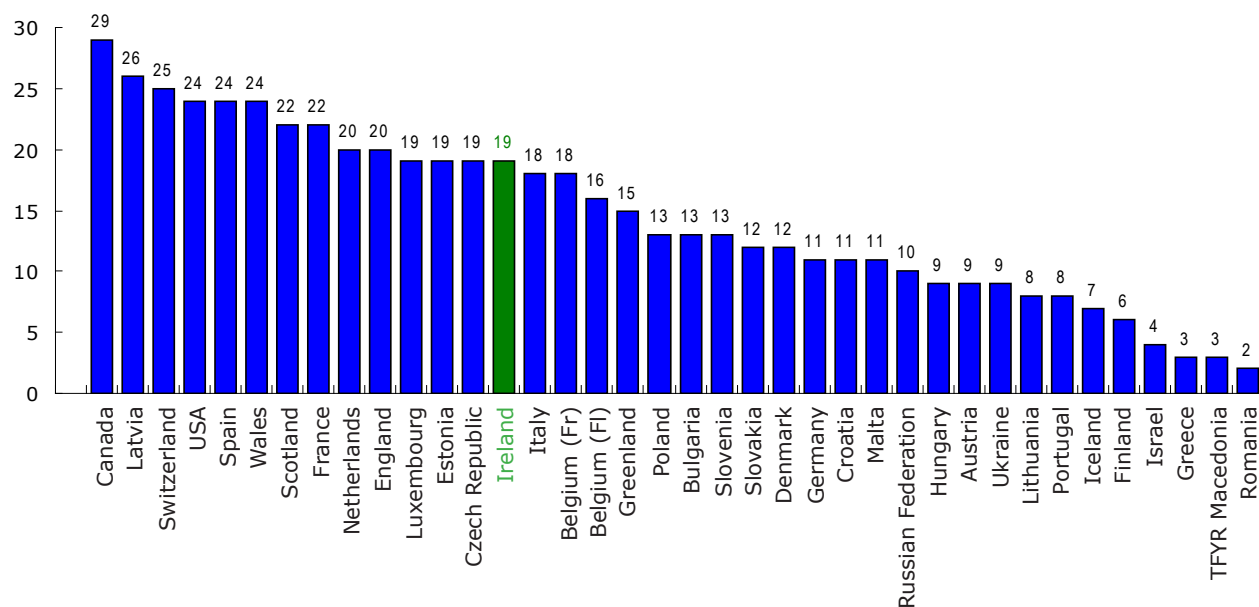


Percentage of children who have used cannabis in the last 12 months, by age and gender

Cannabis use in context

- Children who have used cannabis are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (64.2% vs. 82.9%) and father (46.9% vs. 66.6%) than those who have not.
- Children who have used cannabis are less likely to live with both parents (66.8% vs. 83%) than those who have not.
- Children who have used cannabis are more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork (50.4% vs. 39.5%) and less likely to report that they like school (44.9% vs. 71.6%) than those who have not.
- Children who have used cannabis are more likely to spend more than four evenings a week with friends (58.8% vs. 39.5%) than those who have not.
- Children who have used cannabis are less likely to report excellent health (18.9% vs. 35.8%) and feeling happy about their lives (31.0% vs. 52.1%) than those who have not.
- Cannabis use is not associated with social class.

...Cannabis use among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting cannabis use in the last 12 months, by country

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All factsheets and other HBSC publications and reports can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc>

Contact us at: hbcs@nuigalway.ie

International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 14th among 38 countries in Europe and North America, with 19% reporting cannabis use once or more in the last 12 months. Prevalence of cannabis use in Ireland is considered high in comparison to other HBSC countries. There are no international rankings for 11 and 13 year olds as, internationally, this question was only asked of 15 year old students.

Implications

The overall percentage of young people in Ireland reporting cannabis use in the last 12 months has remained stable since 2002. Ireland compares poorly to other European and North American countries involved in HBSC in terms of

prevalence of cannabis use among young people. These data suggest that good relationships with parents may play a protective role, whereas peer relationships may increase the likelihood of cannabis use. In light of these findings, urgent attention should be directed at both prevention of drug use initiation and support for drug use cessation for young people. School and other community settings have the potential to support this.

References

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3. Brook, J.S., Balka, E.B. & Whiteman, M. (1999). The risks for late adolescence of early adolescent marijuana use. *American Journal Public Health*, 89, 1549 -1554.
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