

EVIDENCE BASED SEXUAL HEALTH POLICIES:

THE ROLE OF THE HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL- AGED CHILDREN STUDY (HBSC).

Wednesday May 29th

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SEXUAL HEALTH: CURRENT SITUATION IN IRELAND

- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
 - 13,259 notifications of STIs in 2011, an increase of 12.2% when compared with 2010
- Crisis Pregnancy
 - 35% of women and 21% of men experienced crisis pregnancy in 2010
 - 13% of all pregnancies (1 in 8 pregnancies)
- Abortion
 - 21% of crisis pregnancies result in abortion
 - Women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics 2006 (n=5042)

(Health Protection Surveillance Centre 2010; 2011, ICCP, 2010)

SEXUAL HEALTH: CURRENT SITUATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN IRELAND

◉ STIs

- 59.3% of STI notifications among 20 to 29 years
- 11.3% of STI notifications from under 20 years
- 1995 (n=147), 2011 (n=1536)

◉ Crisis Pregnancy

- 66% of females and 31% of males reported crisis circumstances of pregnancy (ICCP)

◉ Abortion

- 31% of crisis pregnancies resulted in abortion (ICCP)

(Health Protection Surveillance Centre 2010; 2011, ICCP, 2010)

OUTCOMES

- ◉ Adverse health outcomes
 - illness, infertility, psychological distress, stigma
- ◉ Negative outcomes for young parents
 - Deprivation, academic attainment, poorer health, stigma
- ◉ Negative outcomes for the children of teenage parents
 - Birth complications, academic attainment, emotional/behavioural problems
- ◉ Cost to health and social care systems
 - Health Service and wider public services

SEXUAL HEALTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- ◉ Sexual Health Services
- ◉ Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- ◉ Friends and peers
- ◉ First intercourse
- ◉ Substance use

SEXUAL HEALTH STRATEGIES & POLICIES

**The National
Health
Promotion
Strategy
(2000-2005)**

**Eastern Health
Board: The
Sexual Health
Strategy
(2005)**

**Southern
Health Board:
Strategy to
Promote
Sexual Health
(2001-2011)**

**Western
Health Board:
Towards a
Sexual Health
Policy for the
West (2006)**

SEXUAL HEALTH STRATEGIES & POLICIES

New Sexual Health Strategy for Ireland...

- ◎ June 2012 - Steering group announced
 - Department of Health, HSE, Sexual Health Professionals, NGOs, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Education and Skills, and Institute of Public Health.
- ◎ The improvement of the nation's sexual health and wellbeing.
 - surveillance, testing, treatment, and prevention of HIV and STI's, crisis pregnancy and sexual health education and promotion.

EVIDENCE BASED POLICY

- ◉ Emphasis on evidence based policy and practice
- ◉ Drawing on wide sources of evidence to identify challenges and potential solutions
- ◉ Integrated and co-ordinated provision based on needs of young people
- ◉ Role of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (HBSC)?

HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

- ◉ Improve understanding of young people's health and wellbeing, including sexual behaviours
- ◉ 200,000 school-aged children across 43 countries
- ◉ Mandatory sexual health questions introduced for 15 year olds in 2002.
 - Ireland in 2010

HBSC 2010 MANDATORY QUESTIONS

- ◉ Engaged in sexual intercourse
- ◉ Age of sexual initiation
- ◉ Method of contraception (pregnancy prevention)
- ◉ Condom use (prevention of STIs)

FINDINGS

- ◉ 28.8% of males and 22.8% of females reported engaging in sexual intercourse
- ◉ Most common age of sexual initiation was 15 years old (29% males and 35.1% of females)
- ◉ Condom was the most frequently reported method of contraception (73.6%) followed by the birth control pill (21.9%) and withdrawal (14.5%)
- ◉ Around 8% of the sexually active adolescents reported engaging in unprotected sex.

2014 PILOT STUDY

- Aim: Provide guidance to the international network on the utility and appropriateness of the sexual health items
 - acceptability, understandability, answerability, translatability and relevance
- Participants: 233 Irish students aged 15-19 years
- Methodology: Questionnaire and classroom discussions

2014 PILOT QUESTIONS

◉ Romantic Experiences

- Experience of ever being in love
- Experience of a romantic relationship

◉ First Sexual Intercourse

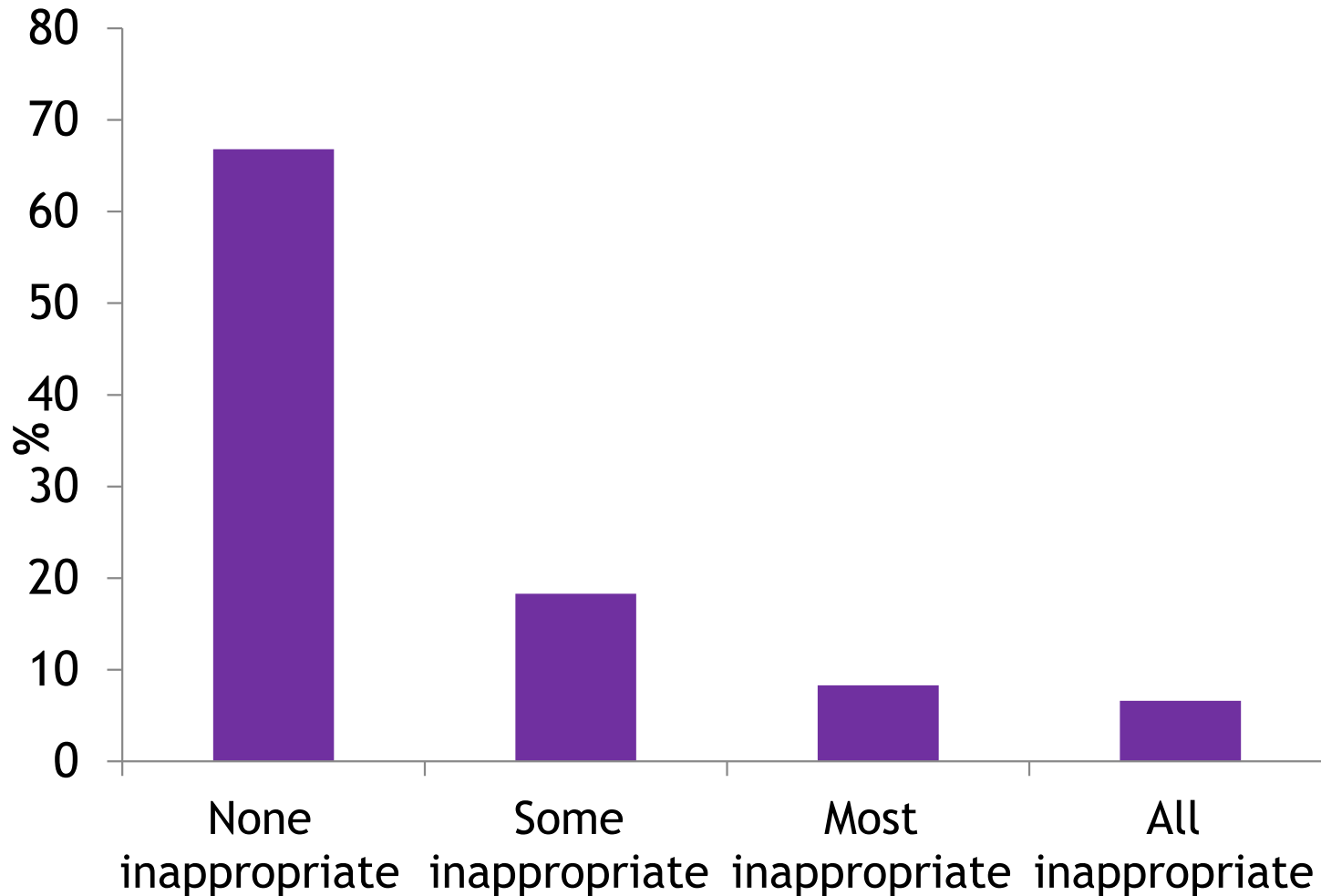
- Age of partner at first sexual intercourse
- Contraception use at first sexual intercourse
- Perception of timing of first sexual intercourse
- Substance use prior to first sexual intercourse
- Perception of age of first sexual intercourse

RESULTS

- ◉ Small number of respondents who commented on the personal content of the questionnaire
- ◉ Small number of respondents suggested minor alterations to the wording e.g. love (n=12), going out (n=5), sexual intercourse (n=1)
- ◉ Phrasing and age-targeting of the questions were considered appropriate
- ◉ Overall, no specific issues with the questions were identified.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Appropriateness of the pilot sexual behaviour questions



IMPLICATIONS FOR HBSC 2014

- ◉ Questions which have conceptual cohesion within the study
- ◉ Questions which are understandable, acceptable and of relevance to adolescents
- ◉ Informed a standardised protocol which will enable the collection of detailed data on adolescents' sexual behaviours

IMPLICATIONS FOR SEXUAL HEALTH POLICY

- ◉ Importance of evidence when planning and implementing effective and efficient responses at a policy and practice level
- ◉ Integrated and coordinated policy, sensitive to the needs and priorities of young people
- ◉ Utilise data on the sexual behaviour of adolescents and has the potential to inform the development of sexual health policy at all levels
- ◉ Evaluate the outcomes

SUMMARY

- ◉ Complex and challenging issues surrounding the design and implementation of public policy
- ◉ Multifaceted nature of young people's sexual health and the range of issues which underlie sexual behaviour
- ◉ Use data to develop integrated and co-ordinated policy surrounding needs of young people
- ◉ Support young people to make informed, healthy, safe and fulfilling choices

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