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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 St Andrews. This factsheet is based on data collected in 2010 from 12,661 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

Further information is available at:
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hbsc
HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN



Summary

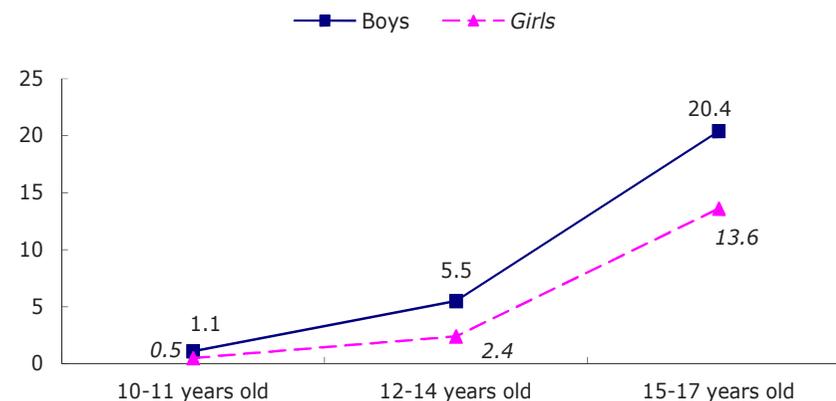
HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that the percentage of children who report having used cannabis has decreased between 2006 (12.4%) and 2010 (8.4%). There are higher rates of cannabis use among older children; 0.9% of 10-11 year olds, 4.0% of 12-14 year olds and 17.2% of 15-17 year olds. The decreases since 2006 are larger in the two older age groups. In all age groups boys are more likely than girls to report cannabis use. Those who have used cannabis are less likely than those who have not to report that they live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their mother and their father and to report liking school. They are more likely to report that they spend four or more evenings out per week and that they feel pressured by their school work than those who have not used cannabis. 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 and is considered a threat to public health². While occasional cannabis use does not appear to pose serious problems³, early, heavy and frequent use have all been associated with a range of health and social problems⁴, including licit and illicit drugs use, risky sexual behaviour, academic failure and delinquency^{4,5}.

Change 2006-2010

Overall there has been a decrease in the percentage of children who report that they have used cannabis in the last 12 months from 12.4% in 2006 to 8.4% in 2010. This decrease is seen for boys aged 12-17 years and most notably among girls aged 15-17 years. The rates of reported cannabis use are higher among boys than girls in all age groups.

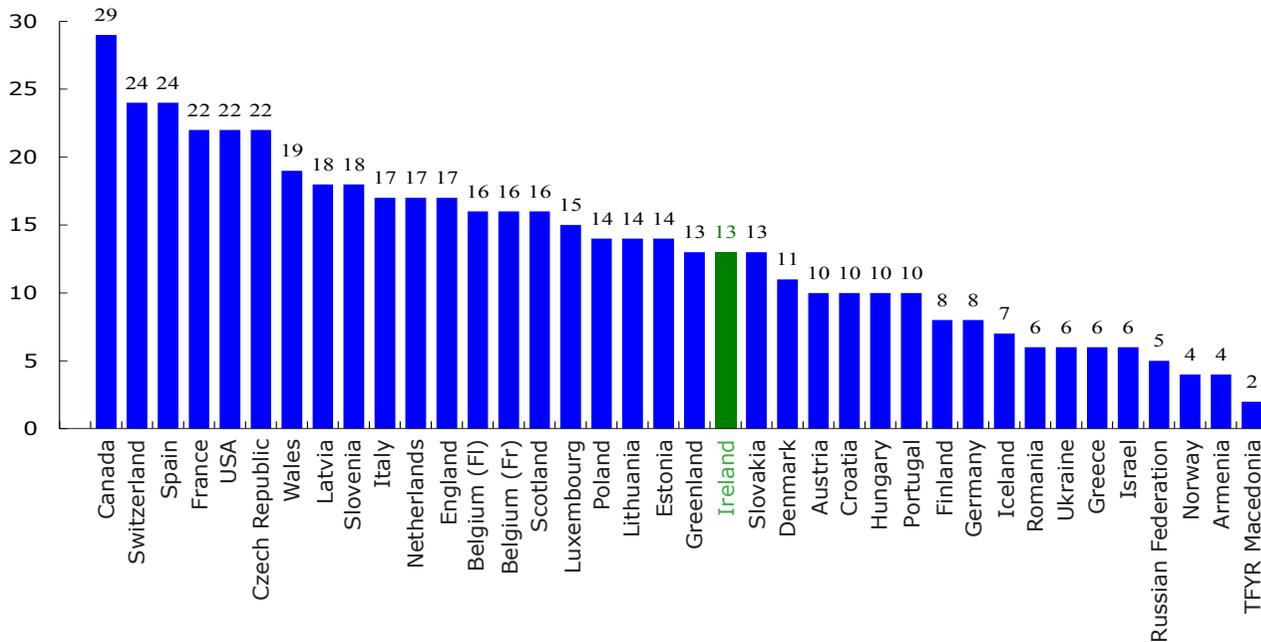


Percentage of children who have used cannabis in the last 12 months, by age and gender

Cannabis use in context

- Children who have used cannabis are less likely to report living with both parents (58.0%) compared with those who have not (76.7%).
- Children who have used cannabis are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (67.4% vs. 83.1%) or father (56.3% vs. 67.5%) than those who have not.
- Children who have used cannabis are more likely to spend four or more evenings per week out with friends than those who have not (54.9% vs. 37.0%).
- Children who have used cannabis are less likely than those who have not to report liking school (45.4% vs. 73.8%).
- Children who have used cannabis are more likely than those who have not to report that they feel pressured by their schoolwork (45.5% vs. 37.9%).
- Cannabis use in the last 12 months is not associated with social class.

...Cannabis among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year olds who have used cannabis in the last 12 months , by country

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We would like to thank all the children, teachers and schools who participated and acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues in the Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway.

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

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International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 21st among 38 countries in Europe and North America with 13.1% reporting they currently use cannabis. The countries with the highest rates are Canada (28.6%) and Switzerland (23.9%) and those with the lowest rates are Macedonia (2.3%) and Armenia (3.6%). Use of cannabis was only asked of 15 year olds internationally and there are no available comparisons for younger children.

Implications

Cannabis use as reported by schoolchildren in Ireland, has decreased over the years. Ireland ranks relatively low among countries involved in HBSC 2010, with cannabis use rates higher in many North American and Western European countries compared to Ireland. These data suggest that good

relationships with parents may play a protective role whereas negative school experiences may increase the likelihood of cannabis use. The rates of cannabis use among children in Ireland have been steadily declining and care should be taken to ensure that this positive trend is reinforced.

References

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3. Engels, R.C.M.E. & Ter Bogt, T. (2001). Influences of risk behaviours on the quality of peer relations in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 30, 675-695.
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This factsheet was prepared by Mary Callaghan, Natasha Clarke, Aoife Gavin, Colette Kelly, Michal Molcho, Christina Murphy, Saoirse Nic Gabhainn and Larri Walker.