NATIONAL SEXUAL HEALTH **AWARENESS** WEEK

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR, INITIATION AND CONTRACEPTIVE USE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN IRELAND

Findings from the 2010 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Ireland study

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The Health Behaviour in School aged-Children (HBSC) study

- World Health Organisation (WHO) cross-national research project
- Improve understanding of young people's health and wellbeing, including sexual behaviours
- 200,000 school children aged 11, 13 and 15 years across 43 countries every 4 years



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HBSC Ireland

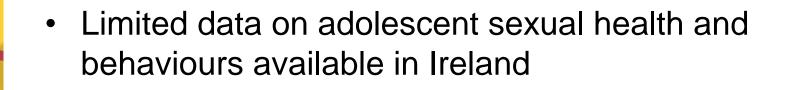
- Carried out in Ireland since 1998
- Data collection in Ireland extended to include young people aged 9 to 18 years
- Sample is representative of geographical population distribution of children in Ireland based on census data
- In HBSC Ireland 2010:
 - 256 schools were recruited response rate of 67%
 - 16,060 school children took part response rate of 85%





Adolescent Sexual Health

- Adolescence is an influential stage of life
- Sexual behaviours such as inconsistent condom use, multiple partners and casual sex are recognised risk factors for unplanned pregnancy and STI transmission
- Early onset of first intercourse associated with poor sexual health outcomes





Aim

 Adolescents' sexual intercourse, age of initiation and contraceptive use at last intercourse in relation to socio-demographic and lifestyle characteristics





Measures: Sexual Health Behaviour

- Mandatory sexual health questions introduced in 2002 (Ireland in 2010)
 - Have you ever had sexual intercourse? (Sometimes this is called "making love", "having sex" or "going all the way")
 - How old were you when you had sexual intercourse for the first time?'
 - The last time you had sexual intercourse, what method(s) did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy?
 - The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?



Measures: Socio-demographic & Lifestyle

Demographic	Lifestyle	
Age Social class Family affluence Traveller status Household composition Disability or Chronic Illness	Socio-cultural Communication with friends Sense of community Neighbourhood environment Bullying others Music & drama Being bullied Club/team activities Poor adult communication Local resources Health check-ups	Negative lifestyle behaviours Alcohol involvement Cannabis involvement Unhealthy food from parents Smoking involvement Unhealthy food consumption
	Health Symptoms Quality of life Medication for physical symptoms Medication for psychological symptoms	Positive lifestyle behaviours Exercise Travel Healthy food Breakfast Teeth/seatbelt



Methods

- 4,494 school children aged **15-18 years**
- Sexual health behaviour
- Socio-demographic and lifestyle characteristics

- Chi-square tests relationships between categorical variables
- Logistic regression examine the predictors of sexual intercourse, age of initiation and contraceptive non-use



Data Management

- Data inconsistencies
 - Rigorous decision-making process
 - Issues associated with self-report data
- What to report?
 - Sample / Relevant Sample (e.g., all participants / all those who reported having sex)
 - Respondents (e.g., all those who responded to a question)





Experience of Sexual Intercourse

- **26.1%** of adolescents aged 15-18 years reported having engaged in sexual intercourse (*n*=1065/4088)
- **28.8%** of boys (*n*=619) and **22.8%** (*n*=439) of girls reported they ever had sexual intercourse



Predictors of Engagement in Sexual Intercourse

Demographics Not living with both parents Traveller status Older age

Health

Taking medication for physical symptoms

Boys

Socio-cultural

Good communication with friends Poor neighbourhood environment Poor participation in music & drama Participation in club/team activities

Negative lifestyle behaviours

Alcohol involvement Cannabis involvement Smoking involvement





Predictors of Engagement in Sexual Intercourse

Demographics Social class (middle) Older age

Positive lifestyle behaviours Inactive modes of travel

Girls

Socio-cultural

Good communication with friends Poor neighbourhood environment Being bullied and bullying others Poor participation in music & drama

Negative lifestyle behaviours

Alcohol involvement Cannabis involvement Smoking involvement Unhealthy food consumption



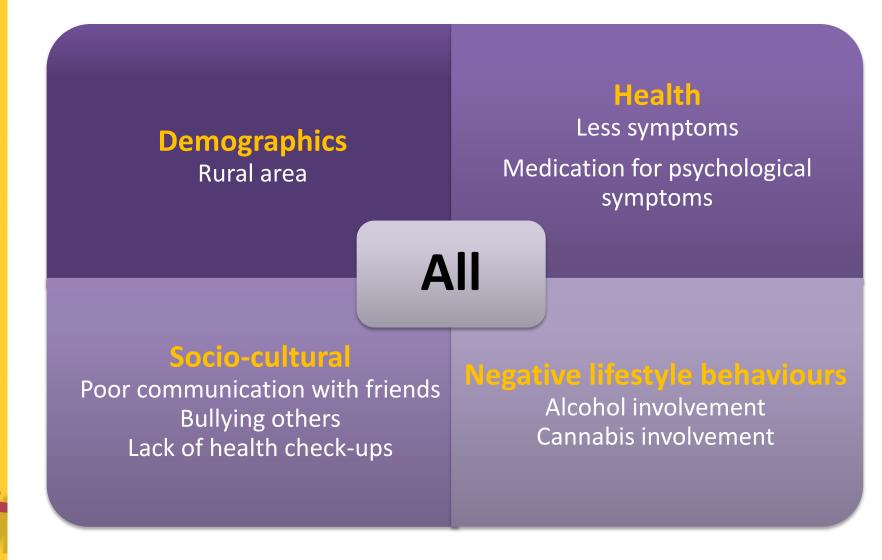
Age of Sexual Initiation Before 14 Years

- **3.2%** boys (*n*=141) and **1.3%** girls (*n*=59) of the whole sample (*n*=4494) were sexually active before age 14 years
- Of those young people who reported being sexually active, 22.8% of boys (n=141/619) and 13.4% of girls (n=59/439) reported being sexually active before age 14 years





Predictors of Sexual Initiation Before 14 Years



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Contraceptive Methods Used At Last Intercourse

 Contraceptive methods of those who reported engaging in sexual intercourse

Contraceptive type	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Condom	79.0	80.0
Contraceptive pill	19.4	26.9
Dual (Condom & contraceptive pill)	17.0	23.3
Withdrawal	14.5	14.6

• **10.5%** of boys and **6.8%** of girls reported using no reliable method of contraception at last intercourse





Predictors of Non-Condom Use At Last Sexual Intercourse

Health Medication for physical symptoms

All

Positive lifestyle factors

High frequency of physical activity Poor tooth brushing/wearing seatbelt





Predictors of Non-Dual Contraceptive Use At Last Sexual Intercourse



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Summary

- Prevalence of sexual intercourse, initiation and contraceptive use among boys and girls aged 15-18 years
- Socio-demographic and lifestyle predictors of sexual intercourse, initiation and contraceptive use
- Profile of young people who are sexually active and also those at risk (of early initiation and non-contraceptive use)



Gender and adolescent specific



Final Thoughts...

- Socio-demographic variables associated with sexual behaviours.
- Adolescents are a distinct group with unique influences on their sexual health and behaviour
- Develop and implement specifically targeted policy and interventions which take a holistic approach in addressing the needs of those most at risk
- More research required to further the understanding of the sexual health and practices of adolescents' across Ireland





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