

Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland

Bulletin 5

2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey: Polydrug Use Results

This bulletin presents key findings on polydrug use (the use of more than one substance within a specific time period). Analysis was carried out on the data collected for last month use which reflects current use. The focus is on the combinations of both legal and illegal drugs based on information obtained from the first drug prevalence survey of households to be carried out in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The survey sampled a representative number of people aged between 15 and 64 during late 2002 and early 2003. The survey was undertaken by MORI MRC according to standards set by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

IRELAND – Key Findings

- Nearly one-fifth of people in Ireland had not used any drugs (legal or illegal) in the last month.
- The most commonly reported form of polydrug use involved alcohol and tobacco.
- 5% of the respondents had used tobacco only in the previous month.
- Polydrug use involving illegal substances is small at 1.93%.
- A higher percentage of women (22%) than men (16%) reported not consuming any drug (legal or illegal) during the last month.
- The combination of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug was much more common among males (2.65%) than females (1.20%).
- More young adults aged 15-34 combined alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug (3.36%) than older adults aged 35-64 which was 0.64%.
- Four-fifths (81.9%) of those who had smoked tobacco, had also used alcohol in the last month.
- Of those who had used cannabis, over 90% had also used alcohol and 84% had smoked tobacco in the last month.
- Users of cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants, and cocaine were very likely to have used legal substances as well as other illegal substances.

NORTHERN IRELAND

– Key Findings

- Over one-fifth of the adult population in Northern Ireland had not used any drugs (legal or illegal) in the last month.
- The most commonly reported form of polydrug use involved alcohol and tobacco.
- Just 6.36% of the respondents had used tobacco only in the previous month.
- Polydrug use involving illegal substances is small at 2.11%.
- A higher percentage of women (25%) than men (19%) reported not consuming any drug (legal or illegal) during the last month.
- The combination of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug was much more common among males (3.70%) than females (0.55%).
- More young adults aged 15-34 combined alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug (4.10%) than older adults aged 35-64 which was 0.55%.
- For the combination of alcohol and tobacco there was an age-group difference; more young adults have tried this combination than is the case for older adults.
- Respondents who reported having used cannabis were more likely to have reported using alcohol (92%) and tobacco (82%).

IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND COMPARISON

– Key Findings

- Slightly more people in Northern Ireland (22%) than in Ireland (19%) did not take any drug (legal or illegal) in the last month.
- The most common form of polydrug use was alcohol and tobacco for both Northern Ireland (23%) and Ireland (24%).
- Whilst more people smoked tobacco only in Northern Ireland (6.36%) than in Ireland (5.27%), more people took alcohol only in Ireland (45%) than Northern Ireland (36%).
- A greater number of men than women combined alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug in Ireland than in Northern Ireland.
- Combinations of illegal drug use was found in a small minority in both jurisdictions.

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Introduction

The survey was commissioned by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD) in Ireland and the Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit (DAIRU) within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) in Northern Ireland.

The main focus of the survey was to obtain prevalence rates for key illegal drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine and heroin on a lifetime (ever used), last year (recent use) and last month (current use). Similar prevalence questions were also asked of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs such as tranquillisers. Attitudinal and demographic information was also sought from respondents.

Following an open tender process, the tender was awarded to MORI MRC to conduct the survey.

Methodology

The questionnaire and methodology for this survey were based on best practice guidelines drawn up by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). The questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interviews with respondents aged between 15 and 64 years and who are normally resident in households in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Thus persons outside these age ranges, or who do not normally live in private households, have not been included in the survey. This approach is commonly used throughout the EU and because of the exclusion of those living in institutions (for example prisons, nursing homes etc.) this type of prevalence survey is usually known as a **general population survey**.

Fieldwork for the survey was carried out between October 2002 and April 2003 and the final achieved sample comprised of 8,434 respondents (4,918 in Ireland and 3,516 in Northern Ireland). The response rate for the survey was 70% in Ireland and 63% in Northern Ireland.

The sample was weighted by gender, age, Health Board¹ in Ireland and Health and Social Services Board area in Northern Ireland, to maximise its representativeness of the general population.

Details of the methodology have been summarised in a paper published on the websites of the NACD (<http://www.nacd.ie/>) and the DHSSPS (<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/>) and a comprehensive technical report containing copies of the questionnaires used in both jurisdictions is published on both websites.

What is Prevalence?

The term **prevalence** refers to the proportion of a population who have used a drug over a particular time period. In general population surveys, prevalence is measured by asking respondents in a representative sample drawn from the population to recall their use of drugs. The three most widely used recall periods are: lifetime (ever used a drug), last year (used a drug in the last twelve months), and last month (used a drug in the last 30 days). Provided that a sample is representative of the total population, prevalence information obtained from a sample can be used to infer prevalence in the population.

Lifetime prevalence refers to the proportion of the sample that reported ever having used the named drug at the time they were surveyed. A person who records lifetime prevalence may or may not be currently using the drug. Lifetime prevalence should not be interpreted as meaning that people have necessarily used a drug over a long period of time or that they will use the drug in future.

Last year prevalence refers to the proportion of the sample that reported using a named drug in the year prior to the survey. For this reason, last year prevalence is often referred to as **recent use**.

Last month prevalence refers to the proportion of the sample that reported using a named drug in the 30-day period prior to the survey. Last month prevalence is often referred to as **current use**. A proportion of those reporting **current use** may be occasional (or first-time) users who happen to have used in the period leading up to the survey – it should therefore be appreciated that current use is not synonymous with regular use.

¹ Since January 2005 the Health Boards in Ireland have undergone restructuring and are merged under one authority – the Health Service Executive. The above reference relates to the Health Board structure detailed in *Bulletin 2 - Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland 2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey: Health Board (Ireland) & Health and Social Services Board (Northern Ireland) Results (Revised)*.

Previous Publications

Initial results from the 2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey were published in **Bulletin 1** (October 2003, revised June 2005), which gave lifetime, last year, and last month prevalence rates for key drugs for the island of Ireland, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Bulletin 2, published in March 2004 (revised June 2005), contained comparable information for Ireland and its constituent Health Boards and Northern Ireland and its constituent Health and Social Services Board areas. Prevalence rates for alcohol and tobacco (and, relating to Northern Ireland only, for anabolic steroids and Nubain®) were also included in the tables.

Bulletin 3 (2002/2003) Drug Prevalence Survey: Cannabis Results) examined age of first use, regular use, type of cannabis used, method by which cannabis is used, how and where cannabis is obtained, reasons for stopping use, attitudes to cannabis use and perceptions of risk, together with the most common characteristics of typical cannabis users.

Bulletin 4 (2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey: Cocaine Results) contained prevalence rates for the use of cocaine and other information relating to cocaine use in Ireland and Northern Ireland including - age of first use; regular use, type of cocaine used (powder or crack), method by which cocaine is consumed, how and where cocaine is obtained, reasons for stopping use, perceptions of risk and a profile of users.

Understanding the Results of this Bulletin

This Bulletin (no. 5) is concerned with polydrug use, that is the use of more than one drug within the last month, in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Results are given for all respondents, aged between 15 and 64, by gender and by age (young adults aged 15-34 and older adults aged 35-64) based on data provided for last month use.

All percentages presented in the text are rounded to the nearest whole number where possible. However, one or two decimal places are occasionally presented in the text to facilitate ease of comparison between small numbers.

Interpreting the Data

- All figures are based on weighted data
- All figures are rounded to the nearest decimal place
- All figures are based on valid responses
- Data is based on last month use.

- For the purpose of this study:
 - “legal drugs” refers to alcohol, tobacco, sedatives, tranquillisers and anti-depressants
 - “illegal drugs” refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents
 - “nothing” refers to respondents reporting that they had not used any drugs (legal or illegal) in the last month.

Definition of Polydrug use

There are a number of forms of polydrug use. The most general definition (and the form reported here) is concurrent drug use, which involves a person using at least two substances during the same time period (for example, having used both cocaine and ecstasy in the last month).

Polydrug use is associated with a number of negative consequences including mental and physical ill-health, violence, aggression and a range of social problems. Polydrug use is more likely to result in accidents and death (including death from overdose) than when a single substance is consumed.

There is evidence that polydrug use is common among people seeking drug treatment and that this pattern of usage may well be on the increase. A Health Research Board (HRB) report shows, that of all cases treated for problem drug use, the proportion of cases having problems with more than one drug increased from 71% in 1998 to 76% in 2002 (HRB, 2005).² The report also shows that the pattern of ‘additional’ drugs was linked to the main problem drug. For example, when an opiate was the main problem drug, the most common additional problem drugs were cannabis followed by benzodiazepines, other opiates and then cocaine.

In considering the results presented here, note that the figures for prevalence are for that specific combination of drugs ONLY. Thus, the figures for alcohol, refers to that group of people who consumed alcohol only, i.e., that group did not use any other substance, during that specified interval. A greater percentage than this will actually have consumed alcohol, but will also have used another substance (for example, smoked tobacco). The important point is that the tables presented in this report are not aimed at presenting information on the prevalence of *individual* substances but rather at the combination of drugs.

Future Publication

Bulletin 6 (the final publication from the survey) will present the results for use of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (ST/ADs) use in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The report will contain prevalence data, age of first use, frequency of use, method of taking sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants and how they were obtained.

2 Long, J., Lynn, E., Kelly, F. (2005) *Trends in treated problem drug use in Ireland, 1998-2002*. Occasional Paper No. 17. Dublin. Health Research Board

Results – Ireland

Polydrug use – All adults

Last month prevalence (Table 1)

Results from Table 1 show that nearly one-fifth (19%) of the adult population aged between 15 and 64 in Ireland had used no drugs (either legal or illegal) in the last month. In other words, a large proportion of adults are not current users of any substance.

While the largest proportion of respondents (45%) who consumed alcohol-only, the most frequent combination of polydrug use (24% of all adults) involved the two most familiar legal substances, i.e. alcohol and tobacco.

Looking at the overall figures, the percentage involving other forms of polydrug use, (apart from the combination of alcohol and tobacco) was low. The most frequently reported combination for alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug was 1.93%. Again, it should be remembered that these drug use combinations do not indicate the level of consumption of any individual drug on its own.

**Table 1: Ireland
Drug use combinations – All adults (15-64)**

Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 4918	Percent
1 Alcohol	2202	44.78
2 Alcohol, Tobacco	1185	24.10
3 Nothing	941	19.14
4 Tobacco	259	5.27
5 Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	95	1.93
6 Alcohol, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	67	1.37
7 Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD	51	1.04
8 ST/AD	42	0.85
9 Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	30	0.61
10 Tobacco, ST/AD	24	0.49
11 Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	10	0.20
12 Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	8	0.16
13 Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	3	0.06

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

Gender (Tables 2 & 3)

A higher percentage of women (6.29%) than men (4.25%) had used tobacco-only, while a higher proportion of men (48%) than women (42%) had used alcohol-only.

The combination of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug is more common among males (2.65%) than females (1.20%). However, the gender differences for low-frequency combinations were small.

**Table 2: Ireland
Drug use combinations – Males**

Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 2470	Percent
1 Alcohol	1184	47.93
2 Alcohol, Tobacco	616	24.94
3 Nothing	394	15.97
4 Tobacco	105	4.25
5 Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	65	2.65
6 Alcohol, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	26	1.03
7 Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	22	0.89
8 Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD	18	0.74
9 ST/AD	18	0.72
10 Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	8	0.33
11 Tobacco, ST/AD	7	0.27
12 Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	5	0.22
13 Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	1	0.06

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

**Table 3: Ireland
Drug use combinations – Females**

	Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 2448	Percent
1	Alcohol	1018	41.61
2	Alcohol, Tobacco	569	23.26
3	Nothing	547	22.34
4	Tobacco	154	6.29
5	Alcohol, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	42	1.71
6	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD	33	1.35
7	Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	29	1.20
8	ST/AD	24	0.97
9	Tobacco, ST/AD	18	0.72
10	Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	8	0.33
11	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	3	0.10
12	Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	1	0.06
13	Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	1	0.06

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

**Table 4: Ireland
Drug use combinations – Young adults (15-34)**

	Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 2333	Percent
1	Alcohol	950	40.71
2	Alcohol, Tobacco	647	27.73
3	Nothing	470	20.15
4	Tobacco	104	4.46
5	Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	78	3.36
6	Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	28	1.18
7	Alcohol, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	17	0.72
8	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD	16	0.70
9	Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	7	0.29
10	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	6	0.24
11	ST/AD	5	0.20
12	Tobacco, ST/AD	4	0.16
13	Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	3	0.12

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

Prevalence of polydrug use by age-group in the last month (Tables 4 & 5)

Looking at the figures for young versus older adults, a number of points of comparison emerge. Firstly, the percentage of respondents who had not used any substance is very similar (although, more young adults fall into this category). Secondly, the proportion of older adults who had used alcohol-only in the previous month (49%) was higher than the proportion of younger adults who reported using alcohol-only (41%).

Conversely, the percentage who had used alcohol and tobacco was greater among young adults (28%) than among older adults (21%).

There were no major differences in low-frequency combinations of substances apart from the combination of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug. Prevalence rates were higher (3.36%) for young adults than for older adults (0.64%).

**Table 5: Ireland
Drug use combinations – Older adults (35-64)**

	Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 2585	Percent
1	Alcohol	1253	48.46
2	Alcohol, Tobacco	538	20.83
3	Nothing	471	18.24
4	Tobacco	155	6.00
5	Alcohol, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	51	1.96
6	ST/AD	37	1.43
7	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD	35	1.35
8	Tobacco, ST/AD	21	0.80
9	Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	16	0.64
10	Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	3	0.11
11	Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	2	0.09
12	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	2	0.09

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

Relationship between use of particular substances with use of other substances – All adults (Table 6)

Patterns of polydrug use change when the data for specific drugs used was analysed. This table presents the pattern of association between the use of one substance and the use of another. For example, of the respondents who used alcohol (3,639), 37% also used tobacco and 3.1% also used cannabis.

In general, the commonly-used legal substances (alcohol and tobacco) are associated with less use of other substances than vice-versa. Thus, it can be seen that of those who had smoked tobacco, over four-fifths (81.9%) had drunk alcohol. However, for both of these substances, the number trying illegal and other substances was quite small. In contrast, users of cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants, and cocaine were very likely to have used legal substances as well as other illegal substances. For example, of those who had used cannabis within the last month, over 90% had used alcohol and 84% had smoked tobacco. Of those who had used amphetamine-type stimulants, all had used alcohol, 87% had used tobacco, 59% cannabis, 19% cocaine and 7% had used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants.

Table 6: Ireland							
Use of one substance by users of another substance – All adults (15-64)							
	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	4918	3639	1635	126	20	17	195
Alcohol	74.0		81.9	90.1	100.0	91.6	64.8
Tobacco	33.3	36.8		83.9	87.4	57.8	44.1
Cannabis	2.6	3.1	6.4		59.3	62.6	4.7
ATS ²	0.4	0.5	1.1	9.4		22.5	0.7
Cocaine	0.3	0.4	0.6	8.4	19.1		0.7
ST/AD ³	4.0	3.5	5.3	7.3	7.1	8.4	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Use of one substance by users of another substance – Gender (Tables 7 & 8)

When comparing alcohol consumption amongst males and females, there was no consistent pattern. There was no difference in the percentage of respondents who had used tobacco. Gender differences were more evident when looking at the association of tobacco with other substances. Male users of tobacco were more likely to have drunk alcohol, used cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants and cocaine. Female tobacco users were more likely to have used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants.

Gender differences among those who have used cannabis are more complex. Female users of cannabis were more likely to have drunk alcohol (93%), than males (87%). Male users of cannabis were more likely to have used amphetamine-type stimulants (11%) and cocaine (12.5%) than females (5.6% and 0.0%, respectively). On the other hand, female users of cannabis were more likely to have tried sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (9.7%) than male cannabis users (6.1%). Male users of amphetamine-type stimulants were more likely than females to have used other substances, the small number of respondents in this category should be borne in mind. Finally, male users of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants were likely to have also used cannabis (7%), amphetamine-type stimulants (1.9%) and cocaine (1.9%) while female users only reported cannabis use (3.3%).

Table 7: Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Males

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	2470	1937	826	85	16	17	75
Alcohol	78.4		85.3	88.6	100.0	91.6	65.4
Tobacco	33.5	36.4		83.3	91.9	57.8	42.2
Cannabis	3.4	3.9	8.6		58.0	62.6	7.0
ATS ²	0.7	0.9	1.8	11.2		22.5	1.9
Cocaine	0.7	0.8	1.2	12.5	23.1		1.9
ST/AD ³	3.0	2.5	3.8	6.1	8.6	8.4	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Table 8: Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Females

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	2448	1703	808	41	3	0	120
Alcohol	69.6		78.4	93.1	100.0	-	64.4
Tobacco	33.1	37.2		85.3	65.9	-	45.4
Cannabis	1.7	2.2	4.3		65.9	-	3.3
ATS ²	0.1	0.2	0.3	5.6		-	-
Cocaine	-	-	-	-	-		-
ST/AD ³	4.9	4.5	6.8	9.7	-	-	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Use of one substance by users of another substance – Age (Tables 9 & 10)

A comparison of Tables 9 and 10 shows that the pattern of alcohol use was different for young and older adults. Young adults who had drunk alcohol were more likely to have smoked tobacco (43%) and used cannabis (5.3%) but less likely to have used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (2.2%). A fairly similar pattern is evident in the case of users of tobacco, i.e. young adults were more likely to have used alcohol and cannabis but less likely to have used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants. In the case of cannabis, there was a tendency for young adults more so than older adults, to have used other substances apart from sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants.

A comparison between young and older adults with regard to amphetamine-type stimulants and cocaine was especially difficult given that there was only one respondent in the case of older adults.

With regard to sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants users, young adults were more likely to have used other substances (legal and illegal) than older adults.

Table 9: Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Young adults (15-34)

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	2333	1741	864	101	19	16	50
Alcohol	74.6		86.4	90.6	100.0	91.1	77.5
Tobacco	37.1	42.9		82.5	86.7	55.2	56.6
Cannabis	4.3	5.3	9.7		57.2	60.3	13.6
ATS ²	0.8	1.1	1.9	10.7		17.7	2.9
Cocaine	0.7	0.8	1.0	9.5	14.9		2.9
ST/AD ³	2.1	2.2	3.3	6.7	7.5	8.9	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Table 10: Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Older adults (35-64)

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	2585	1898	771	24	1	1	146
Alcohol	73.4		76.8	87.8	100.0	100.0	60.4
Tobacco	29.9	31.2		89.9	100.0	100.0	39.8
Cannabis	0.9	1.1	2.8		100.0	100.0	1.6
ATS ²	*	0.1	0.1	4.1		100.0	-
Cocaine	*	0.1	0.1	4.1	100.0		-
ST/AD ³	5.6	4.6	7.5	9.8	-	-	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Results – Northern Ireland

Polydrug use – All adults

Last month prevalence (Table 11)

Over one-fifth (22%) of the adult population in Northern Ireland had not used any drugs (legal or illegal) in the last month. While the largest proportion of respondents (36%) had consumed alcohol-only, the most frequent combination of polydrug use involved alcohol and tobacco; this was the case for nearly one-quarter of respondents (23%). Just 6% of respondents had used tobacco-only.

The percentage of respondents reporting polydrug use, (excluding the combination of alcohol and tobacco) was low. The most frequently reported combination of polydrug use was alcohol, either in combination with tobacco and sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (2.90%), or combined with sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (2.50%) or the combination of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug (2.11%). Other combinations of drug use occur only infrequently in the findings from this survey.

**Table 11: Northern Ireland
Drug use combinations – All adults (15-64)**

Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 3516	Percent
1 Alcohol	1261	35.85
2 Alcohol, Tobacco	818	23.27
3 Nothing	767	21.83
4 Tobacco	224	6.36
5 Alcohol, Tobacco, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	102	2.90
6 Alcohol, ST/AD	88	2.50
7 Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	74	2.11
8 ST/AD	73	2.07
9 Tobacco, ST/AD	66	1.86
10 Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	23	0.64
11 Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	9	0.25
12 Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	5	0.13
13 Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	4	0.11
14 ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	2	0.05
15 Any Illegal Drug	1	*
16 Alcohol, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	1	*

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Gender (Tables 12 & 13)

A higher percentage of women than men reported not consuming any substance during the previous month. However, a larger proportion of women (7.6%) than men (5.1%) had used tobacco-only, while a larger proportion of men (40%) than women (32%) had used alcohol-only.

The combination of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug was more common among males (3.7%) than females (0.55%). However, the combinations of alcohol and sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants, and alcohol, tobacco and sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants were more frequently reported by women (3.11%, 4.03%, respectively) than men (1.87%, 1.75%, respectively). Gender differences with regard to low-frequency combinations were not substantial.

**Table 12: Northern Ireland
Drug use combinations – Males**

Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 1739	Percent
1 Alcohol	692	39.79
2 Alcohol, Tobacco	421	24.18
3 Nothing	331	19.03
4 Tobacco	89	5.10
5 Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	64	3.70
6 Alcohol, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	33	1.87
7 Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD	30	1.75
8 Tobacco, ST/AD	24	1.39
9 ST/AD	21	1.22
10 Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	17	0.99
11 Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	7	0.41
12 Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	4	0.23
13 Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	3	0.17
14 ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	2	0.11
15 Any Illegal Drug	1	0.07

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

**Table 13: Northern Ireland
Drug use combinations – Females**

	Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 1777	Percent
1	Alcohol	569	32.00
2	Nothing	437	24.57
3	Alcohol, Tobacco	398	22.38
4	Tobacco	135	7.60
5	Alcohol, Tobacco, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	72	4.03
6	Alcohol, ST/AD	55	3.11
7	ST/AD	52	2.90
8	Tobacco, ST/AD	41	2.32
9	Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	10	0.55
10	Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	5	0.30
11	Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	2	0.09
12	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	2	0.08
13	Alcohol, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	1	0.05

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Prevalence of polydrug use by age-group in the last month (Tables 14 & 15)

A comparison of young and older adults in Northern Ireland shows a number of similarities and differences. Firstly, the percentage who had tried no substance is very similar, the difference between young adults (22.16%) and older adults (21.56%) is less than one percentage point. Secondly, the number of young adults who had used alcohol-only (35%), is quite similar to the figure for older adults (37%). Thirdly, the figure for tobacco-only is quite similar for young (6%) and older adults (7%).

However, for the combination of alcohol and tobacco there was a difference; a larger proportion of young adults (26%) had tried this combination than older adults (21%). On the other hand, 3.56% of older adults reported having used alcohol, tobacco and sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants compared with 2.07% for young adults. For users of alcohol and sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants only, the percentage of older adults was 3.36% while for young adults the percentage was 1.41%. Prevalence rates were higher in the reported use of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants only for older adults (3.09%) compared with young adults (0.77%).

**Table 14: Northern Ireland
Drug use combinations – Young adults (15-34)**

	Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 1550	Percent
1	Alcohol	542	34.97
2	Alcohol, Tobacco,	403	26.00
3	Nothing	343	22.16
4	Tobacco	90	5.79
5	Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	64	4.10
6	Alcohol, Tobacco, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	32	2.07
7	Alcohol, ST/AD	22	1.41
8	Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	21	1.38
9	ST/AD	12	0.77
10	Tobacco, ST/AD	11	0.69
11	Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	4	0.25
12	Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	4	0.23
13	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	3	0.16

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

**Table 15: Northern Ireland
Drug use combinations – Older adults (35-64)**

	Last month prevalence	Frequency n = 1966	Percent
1	Alcohol	719	36.55
2	Nothing	424	21.56
3	Alcohol, Tobacco	415	21.12
4	Tobacco	134	6.81
5	Alcohol, Tobacco, Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants (ST/AD)	70	3.56
6	Alcohol, ST/AD	66	3.36
7	ST/AD	61	3.09
8	Tobacco, ST/AD	55	2.79
9	Alcohol, Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug ¹	11	0.55
10	Alcohol, Tobacco, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	6	0.31
11	ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	2	0.09
12	Alcohol, Any Illegal Drug	1	0.06
13	Tobacco, Any Illegal Drug	1	0.05
14	Alcohol, ST/AD, Any Illegal Drug	1	0.05

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

¹ For the purpose of this study, "illegal drugs" refers to amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine powder, crack, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, poppers and solvents

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Relationship between use of particular substances with use of other substances – All adults (Table 16)

Patterns of polydrug use change when the data for specific drugs used was analysed. This table presents the pattern of association between the use of one substance and the use of another. For example, of the respondents who used alcohol (2,375), 44% also used tobacco and 4% also used cannabis.

Overall, it was evident that the use of alcohol and tobacco was associated to a lesser extent with the use of other substances than vice-versa. Thus, it can be seen that of those who had smoked tobacco, nearly four-fifths (77%) had drunk alcohol. However, for both of these substances, the number trying illegal and other substances was quite small.

The respondents who reported having used cannabis were more likely to have reported using alcohol (92%) and tobacco (82%). A minority of cannabis users were also likely to report the use of amphetamine-type stimulants (18%) and sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (12%).

In the case of current amphetamine-type stimulant users, while the majority used alcohol (88%) and tobacco (64%), none had used cocaine and nearly one-quarter had used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (24%). The very small number of current cocaine users (3 users) makes any cross-comparisons very difficult. Over half of current users of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants had also used alcohol (58%) and tobacco (53%). Only a small percentage of users of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants had used cannabis (3.5%) or amphetamine-type stimulants (1.7%).

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	3516	2375	1301	103	24	3	343
Alcohol	67.6		77.1	91.5	87.9	100.0	58.1
Tobacco	37.0	44.2		81.7	64.4	64.6	52.5
Cannabis	2.9	4.0	6.5		77.9	64.6	3.5
ATS ²	0.7	0.9	1.2	17.9		-	1.7
Cocaine	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.8	-		-
ST/AD ³	9.8	8.4	13.8	11.6	24.2	-	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

² Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

³ Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Use of one substance by users of another substance – Gender (Tables 17 & 18)

When comparing alcohol use among males and females, the picture is quite similar, except with use of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants. Double the proportion of females (12%) who used alcohol have used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants, compared to males (5.5%). There are some gender differences with respondents who have used tobacco; a higher percentage of males than females who have used tobacco have also used alcohol (81%, 73%, respectively), while a higher percentage of females who used tobacco have also used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (17%) when compared to males (10%).

A larger proportion of male cannabis users had also used other substances in comparison with female users, except in the case of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants where the percentage is similar. However, the relatively small number of female cannabis users should be taken into account. There are also difficulties in making gender comparisons with regard to amphetamine-type stimulants and cocaine, because of the small number of reported female amphetamine-type stimulant users (3) and cocaine users (zero).

With regard to users of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants, the association with alcohol and tobacco use results are similar. However, a larger proportion of males than females who have used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants have also used cannabis (9%, 0.7%, respectively) and amphetamine-type stimulants (4.7%, 0.0%, respectively).

**Table 17: Northern Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Males**

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	1739	1264	642	89	21	3	121
Alcohol	72.7		81.3	92.0	86.4	100.0	57.8
Tobacco	37.0	41.3		84.4	66.5	64.6	54.2
Cannabis	5.1	6.5	11.7		81.0	64.6	8.5
ATS ²	1.2	1.4	2.2	19.1		-	4.7
Cocaine	0.2	0.2	0.3	2.1	-		-
ST/AD ³	7.0	5.5	10.2	11.6	27.2	-	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

**Table 18: Northern Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Females**

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	1777	1111	659	14	3	0	222
Alcohol	62.5		73.0	88.7	100.0	-	58.2
Tobacco	37.1	43.3		63.9	47.6	-	51.5
Cannabis	0.8	1.1	1.4		52.4	-	0.7
ATS ²	0.1	0.2	0.2	9.9		-	-
Cocaine	-	-	-	-	-		-
ST/AD ³	12.5	11.6	17.4	11.9	-	-	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Use of one substance by user of another substance – Age (Tables 19 & 20)

Differences between young and older adults (Tables 19 & 20) in the use of many of the substances were observed. In the case of alcohol, there was a greater tendency for young adults to have used tobacco (46%) and cannabis (7%) than older adults (39% and 1.4% respectively). However, older alcohol users were more likely to have used sedatives, tranquilisers or anti-depressants (11%) than younger adults (5.2%).

The same pattern of difference was evident with regard to tobacco use. A larger proportion of young tobacco users (82%) had also used alcohol than older tobacco users (73%). Similarly, young tobacco users were more likely to have used cannabis (11%) than older users (2.3%). However, older tobacco users were more likely to report using sedatives, tranquilisers or anti-depressants (19%) than younger adults (8.1%).

There were no major differences between young and older adults with regard to cannabis users and the use of alcohol (91%, 94%, respectively) and tobacco (81%, 84%, respectively). The majority of all cannabis users had used alcohol and tobacco. However, there were differences with regard to other substances. A larger proportion of young adults (21%) who had used cannabis had also used amphetamine-type stimulants than older adults (5.7%). There were also differences with regard to sedatives, tranquilisers or anti-depressants; 6.8% of young adults who had used cannabis had also used sedatives, tranquilisers or anti-depressants compared with 33% of older adults.

Obviously, there is a need for caution in comparing young and older users of amphetamine-type stimulants given the small number of amphetamine-type stimulants users (4). The trend was for higher prevalence rates of other substances by young adults except with respect to sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants. A comparison in the case of cocaine was not possible.

Finally, with respect to users of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants, a larger proportion young adults reported having used other substances than older adults. While 68% of young users of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants had also used alcohol, the corresponding percentage for older adults was 55%. Similarly with tobacco, the relevant percentages were 60% (young adults) and 50% (older adults). The same pattern was evident for cannabis and amphetamine-type stimulants.

**Table 19: Northern Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Young adults (15-34)**

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	1550	1068	609	94	20	3	83
Alcohol	70.1		82.3	91.0	94.9	100.0	68.0
Tobacco	39.3	46.1		81.2	67.0	64.6	59.4
Cannabis	5.4	7.0	11.2		86.6	64.6	6.9
ATS ²	1.3	1.7	2.2	20.6		-	2.5
Cocaine	0.2	0.3	0.3	2.3	-		-
ST/AD ³	5.4	5.2	8.1	6.8	10.3	-	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

**Table 20: Northern Ireland
Use of one substance by users of another substance – Older adults (35-64)**

	Last Month Prevalence	Users of Alcohol	Users of Tobacco	Users of Cannabis	Users of ATS ²	Users of Cocaine	Users of ST/AD ³
<i>N (weighted)</i>	1966	1298	692	19	4	0	260
Alcohol	65.5		72.6	94.0	50.1	-	54.9
Tobacco	35.2	39.0		83.6	50.1	-	50.2
Cannabis	1.0	1.4	2.3		30.1	-	2.4
ATS ²	0.2	0.1	0.3	5.7		-	1.4
Cocaine	-	-	-	-	-		-
ST/AD ³	13.2	11.1	18.9	32.5	100.0	-	

All figures are based on weighted data, valid responses, and are rounded to the nearest decimal place or two decimal places where appropriate.

2 Amphetamine-type stimulants (Ecstasy and Amphetamines)

3 Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-depressants

- No person surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

* Less than half of 0.1 per cent (<0.05%) of those surveyed reported the use of this drug combination

Comparison – Ireland and Northern Ireland

A number of important similarities in polydrug use emerged from Northern Ireland and Ireland. The first was the large percentage (around one-fifth) in both jurisdictions of respondents who had used no substance (either legal or illegal) in the last month. It is also important to note that this pattern of non-use is not confined to any single age-group or gender; among young and older adults and among males and females, a minority fall into this category.

Another finding was that the most common polydrug combination was alcohol and tobacco, 24% of respondents in Ireland and 23% of respondents in Northern Ireland reported this combination of polydrug use. Again this pattern of use was consistent across gender and age-groups in both jurisdictions.

In both Northern Ireland and Ireland, the largest proportion of respondents was those who used alcohol-only during the previous month, 45% of the respondents in Ireland compared to 36% in Northern Ireland. The difference was most pronounced in the case of older adults; 37% of older adults in Northern Ireland were current users, while in Ireland the results were much higher at 49%.

The combination of polydrug use for alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug is found in a small minority, in Ireland (1.93%) and Northern Ireland (2.11%). The proportion of polydrug use of illegal drugs is lower in both jurisdictions.



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