

Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland

2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey: Polydrug Results

Bulletin 5

(2007)

Research conducted by:

The NACD and the Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit (DAIRU) within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland commissioned MORI MRC to carry out this study.

Aim:

To establish the prevalence of drug use in Ireland. This summary is concerned with polydrug use (use of more than one drug in the last month). It provides analysis by all adults (15-64), gender and young (15-34) versus older adults (35-64) for various drug use combinations and use of one substance by users of another.

Method:

A representative sample (8,434) of people between 15-64 years of age in Northern Ireland (3,516) and Ireland (4,918) were surveyed following the guidelines from the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). Questionnaires were administered using face to face interviewing of people in private households between October 2002 and April 2003. Figures are rounded generally and to the nearest decimal place where comparisons are made.

Key Findings:

- Nearly one in five of all adults (19%) in Ireland had not used any drugs, including tobacco and alcohol, in the last month
- More women (22%) than men (16%) reported not using any drug, legal or illegal, in the last month
- 5% of respondents had used tobacco only in the last month
- Polydrug use involving illegal substances was small at 2%
- The combined use of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug among men (2.65%) was more than double that among women (1.20%)
- 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
- 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)
- Female users of cannabis were more likely to have tried sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (9.7%) than male cannabis users (6.1%)
- More young adults (aged 15-34) combined the use of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal drug (3.36%) than did older adults (aged 35-64) at 0.64%
- 82% of those respondents who had used tobacco had also used alcohol in the last month

- Of those who had used cannabis in the last month (2.6%), over 90% had also used alcohol in the last month and 84% had smoked tobacco
- Everyone who reported use of amphetamines and ecstasy in the last month also used alcohol in the last month
- 92% of those who had used cocaine in the last month (0.3%) reported use of alcohol also
- When compared to Northern Ireland, fewer people in Ireland (19%) had not taken any drug (legal or illegal) than in Northern Ireland (22%) in the last month.

Conclusions:

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.