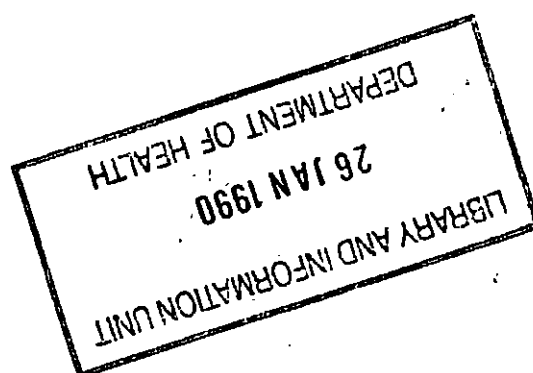


North Western Health Board
Board Sláinte an Iar-Thuaiscirt

Students' Drinking Behaviour



A survey of alcohol use among students
in second level schools in the North
West Region

Brian McAuley
May 1989

Library & Information Unit

Department of Health

Hawkins House, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Tel: + 353 -1 - 6714711 ext 2749/2750/2751

Fax: + 353 -1 - 6711947

006955

BNU 5

This book is due for return on

This

30/02/90

Don Gresswell Ltd., London, N.21 Cat No. 1208



North Western Health Board
Bord Sláinte an Iar-Thuaiscirt

Schools' Programmes

Health Education Office, Tirconail St., Donegal

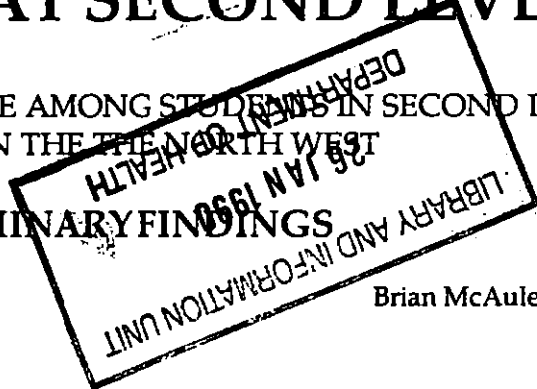
(073) 21506 / 22130

"DRINKING AT SECOND LEVEL"

A SURVEY OF ALCOHOL USE AMONG STUDENTS IN SECOND LEVEL
SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH WEST

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Brian McAuley, May 1989



1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 1987 the Chairman of the Health Board Mr. Patrick Harte T.D., requested that a survey be carried out to ascertain the level of alcohol consumption among young people in the north west. In 1988, the Chief Executive Officer of the Board requested the Acting Programme Manager Community Care to use the expertise of the Board's Schools Programme personnel to carry out such a survey.
- 1.2 In April 1988, Mr. Brian McAuley drew up a plan to carry out an alcohol survey of second-level school students which was agreed by the A/Programme Manager Community Care. A survey instrument was developed by the Schools Programme staff which was discussed with Dr. Michael Murray of the Applied Health Unit of the University of Ulster who provided consultancy to the project.

2. THE SAMPLE

- 2.1 There are 53 second level schools in the counties of Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim which had a total enrolment of 19,441 students in September 1988 as follows:

County	No. of Schools	Total on rolls
Donegal	24	11,918
Sligo	16	5,212
Leitrim	11	2,311
Totals	51	19,441

Table 2.1 Total Enrolment in schools in the north west

000796

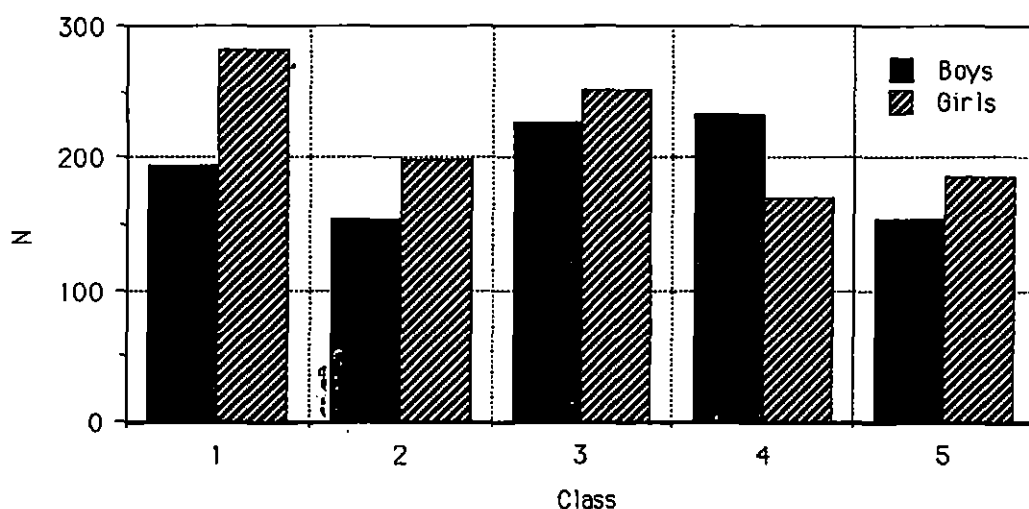
2.2 It was decided to sample 10% of the total group taking into account the variables of county and sex. A decision was also taken to include all class groups in the survey, not just students in senior cycle, so that a comprehensive picture of drinking patterns of second level students would be available. The sample was randomly selected by class group from all the schools in the region and a total of 100 class groups in 41 schools were surveyed. The total number of pupils involved in the survey was 2,054 of which there were 1089 (53%) girls and 965 (47%) boys. There is a slightly larger proportion in the first year age group which reflects, to some extent, the position existing in schools. The sample from senior classes is slightly larger than 20% of those classes. Table 2.2 shows the survey sample broken down into class groups:

Class	1		2		3		4		5		Totals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Boys	195	9.5	154	7.5	228	11	234	11.4	154	7.5	965	47
Girls	282	13.7	199	9.7	251	12	171	8.3	186	9	1089	53
Total	477	23.2	353	17.2	479	23	405	19.7	340	16.5	2054	100

Table 2.2 The survey sample by class groups

2.3 Figure 2.1 shows the survey sample in graph form by class group which emphasises the larger number of students in the first year and third year class groups. Students in the Leaving Certificate group (No. 5) are the smallest group in the sample.

Figure 2.1 Survey sample by class groups



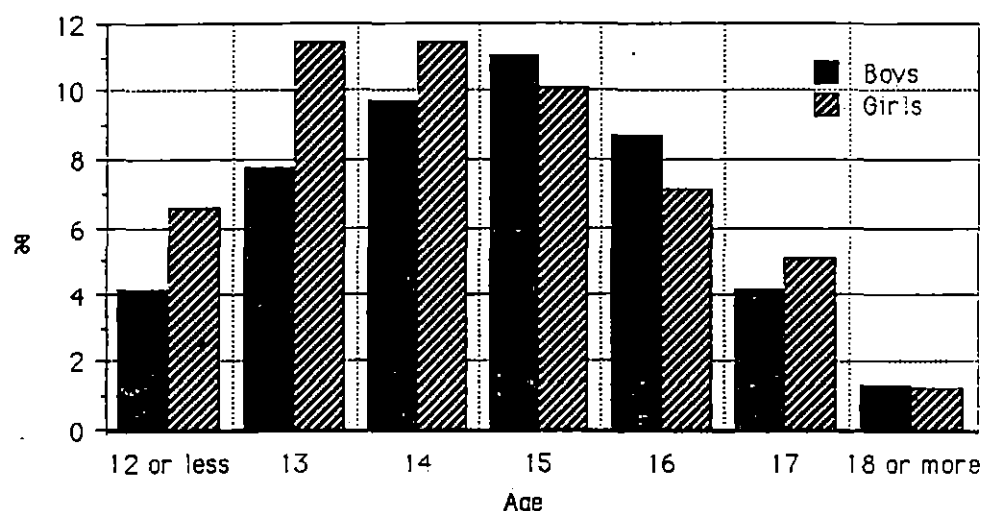
2.4 The age of those sampled ranged from 11 years, (8 students) to 20 years (2 students). The age groups 13 years, 14 years and 15 years accounted for over 60% of the sample, each age group comprising about one fifth of the sample. More than a quarter of the sample (27.8%) were 16 years or over. It is important to remember, however that the sample was not randomly selected by age but by class group. Table 2.3 shows the age range of the sample:

Age in years	12 or less	13	14	15	16	17	18 or more	Total
Boys (%)	4.18	7.79	9.74	11.05	8.71	4.19	1.32	47%
Girls (%)	6.58	11.44	11.49	10.08	7.16	5.06	1.22	53%
n	221	395	436	433	327	190	52	2054

Table 2.3 Survey sample by age and sex

2.5 There were more girls in the younger age groups and more boys in the 15-16 year groups. The sample by age and sex is shown in Figure 2.2

Figure 2.2 Survey sample by age and sex



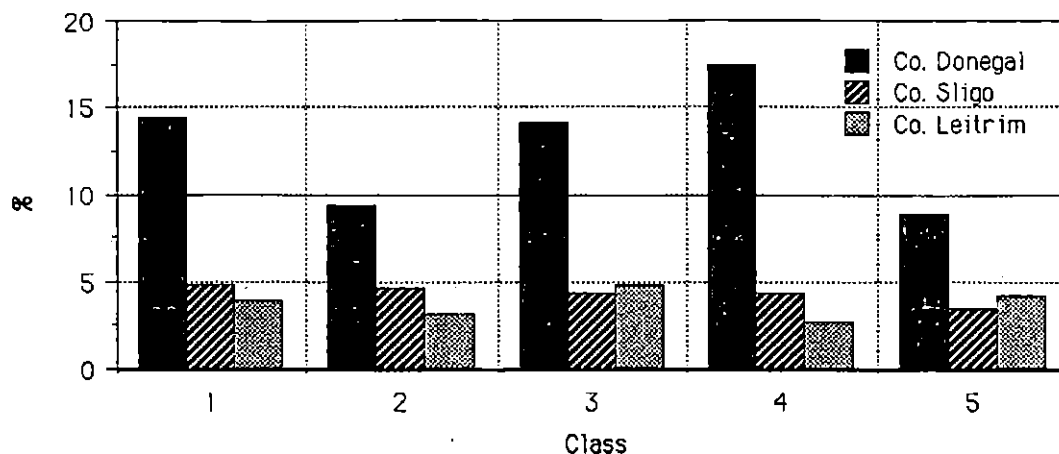
2.6 The sample was selected proportionately by county with class groups from Co. Donegal representing a greater proportion than either Sligo or Leitrim. The county distribution is shown in table 2.4:

Class	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Donegal	14.51	9.35	14.17	17.51	8.86	59.40
Sligo	4.77	4.67	4.38	4.43	3.41	21.67
Leitrim	3.94	3.16	4.77	2.78	4.28	18.93
Total %	23.22	17.19	23.22	19.72	16.55	100%
n	477	353	479	405	340	2054

Table 2.4 Survey sample by county and class group

2.7 About 60% of the sample were from schools in Donegal, 22% from Co. Sligo schools and 19% from schools in Leitrim. This reflects the relative number of students in each county and was upheld throughout class groups with the exception of the third year class. Figure 2.3 shows the breakdown of the sample by county :

Figure 2.3 Survey sample by county and class group



3. ADMINISTRATION

- 3.1 Principals of all schools were contacted and asked to participate in the survey. All agreed. Parents of students who were to be surveyed were also contacted by letter asking permission for their children to fill in the survey form.
- 3.2 During the last two weeks of November and the first two weeks of December, 1988, all of the classes in the sample were surveyed in a standardised format by officers of the schools' programme, Maura McNally and Janet Gaynor.
- 3.3 The survey results were coded in the Health Education Office, Donegal and are being analysed on computer there.

4. DRINKING BEHAVIOUR

- 4.1 There were two questions in the survey questionnaire to ascertain the level of drinking among students in second level schools in the north west:

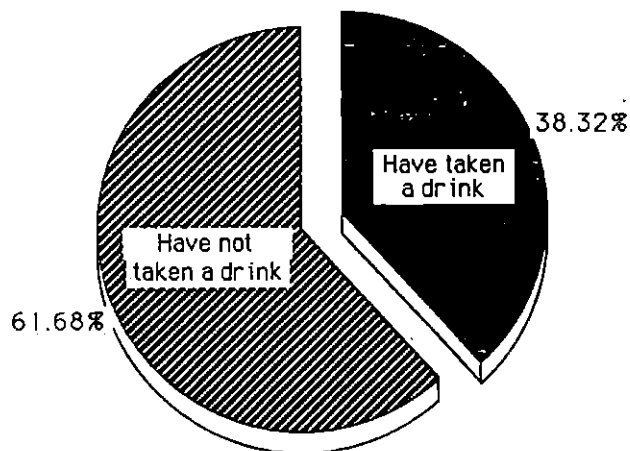
Q.10 *Have you ever had a proper alcoholic drink, not just a sip?*

Q.18 *How often do you have an alcoholic drink?*

- (a) *Almost every day*
- (b) *About twice a week*
- (c) *About one a week*
- (d) *About one every two weeks*
- (e) *About once a month*
- (f) *Only a few times a year*
- (g) *I never drink alcohol now*

- 4.2 When asked the question: "have you ever taken a proper alcoholic drink, not just a sip?" 38% (787) students replied "yes" and 62% (1267) students replied "no".

Figure 4.1 Students who had/had not taken a drink



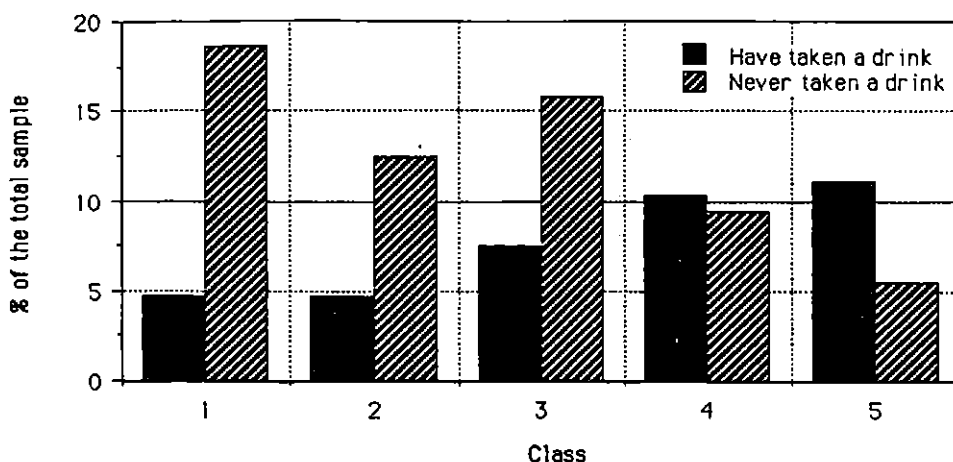
4.3 While the majority of students had not taken an alcoholic drink the following table indicated that more than two thirds of boys in the leaving cert and pre-leaving cert class had taken a drink and that 69% of girls in the Leaving cert class had taken a drink. The overall picture seems to indicate that a minority of students in the junior cycle and a majority of those in senior classes had taken a drink. This does not indicate that they would drink in any regular fashion, neither is it meant to represent that they had just taken a sip from someone else's glass. The breakdown by class and sex for those who had/had not taken a drink was as follows:

Class	1		2		3		4		5		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Have Taken a Drink												
No.	52	44	53	43	89	66	148	64	107	121	449	338
%	27	16	34	22	39	26	63	37	69	69	47	31
Have Never Taken a Drink												
No.	143	238	101	156	139	185	86	107	47	65	516	751
%	73	84	66	78	61	74	37	63	31	31	53	69
Totals	195	282	154	199	228	251	234	171	154	176	965	1089
%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 4.1 Those who had/had not taken a drink (not just a sip) by class group and sex

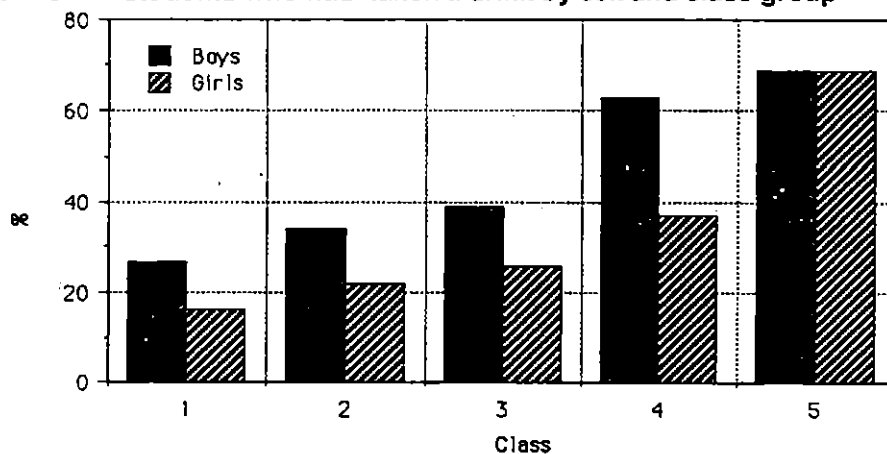
4.4 Figure 4.2 shows more clearly the number of students who had/had not taken a drink in each class group ranging from 20% of first year students who had taken a drink to 67% of Leaving Cert students who had taken a drink.

Figure 4.2 Students who had/had not taken a drink by class group



4.5 Figure 4.3 represents those students who had taken a drink in each class group. More boys than girls had taken a drink in each class group up to Leaving Certificate when the number of boys and girls who had taken a drink was the same.

Figure 4.3 Students who had taken a drink by sex and class group



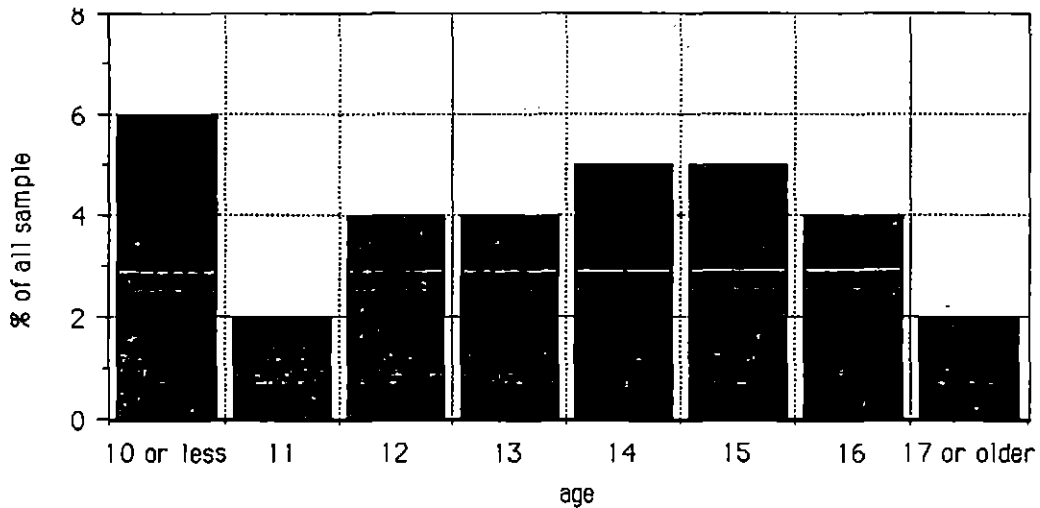
4.6 Students were asked "How old were you when you first started to drink" and the results were as follows:

Age	%	n
10 or less	6	115
11	2	39
12	4	83
13	4	90
14	5	104
15	5	105
16	4	81
17 or more	2	43
Can't remember	68	1394

Table 4.2 Age when students took their first drink

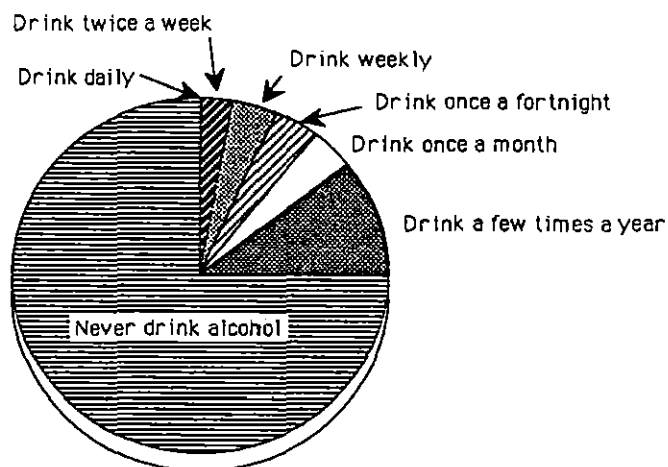
- 4.7 Most students said that they could not remember when they had taken their first drink. Of the 32% of students who did reply to the question most had taken their first drink between the ages of 12 and 15 years as illustrated in figure 4.4:

Figure 4.4 Age when students took their first drink



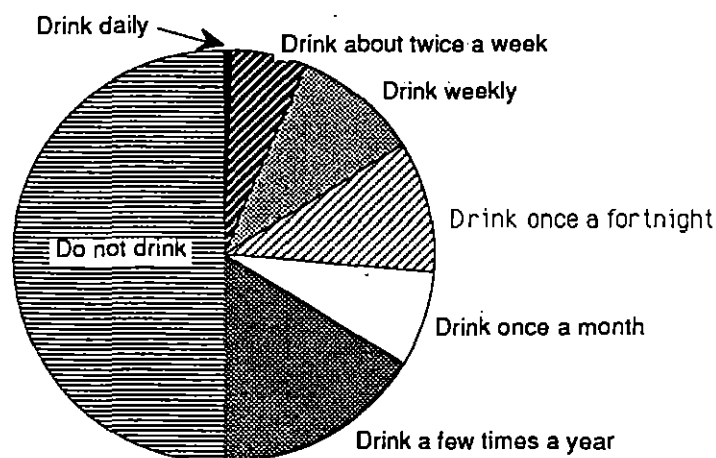
- 4.8 Question 18 was chosen as a discriminatory question to identify those who drink on a regular basis as opposed to those who do not drink. When students were asked how often they take an alcoholic drink the results were as follows:

Figure 4.5 How often students take a drink



- 4.9 Overall, this is an encouraging picture, indicating that 7 out of 10 students in second level schools in the north west do not drink at all. However, when we examine the group in the sample who were at senior level, i.e. those in 4th and 5th year classes, the picture is somewhat different:

Figure 4.6 How often students in senior cycles take a drink



4.10 The numbers of students taking a drink on a regular basis and those who did not drink at all according to class group and sex was as follows:

Class Group	1		2		3		4		5		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Almost every day	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	3	0	8	1
About twice a week	0	0	0	1	8	2	11	4	16	13	35	20
About once a week	1	0	2	3	6	3	24	6	19	23	52	35
About once a fortnight	2	0	2	2	7	2	18	9	19	30	48	43
About once a month	3	2	8	2	12	6	23	3	14	15	60	28
A few times a year	21	14	22	13	24	32	45	24	24	28	136	111
Never drink alcohol	167	266	118	178	170	206	112	124	59	77	626	851
Total	195	282	154	199	228	251	234	171	154	186	965	1089

Table 4.3 Numbers of students according to frequency of drinking, class group and sex.

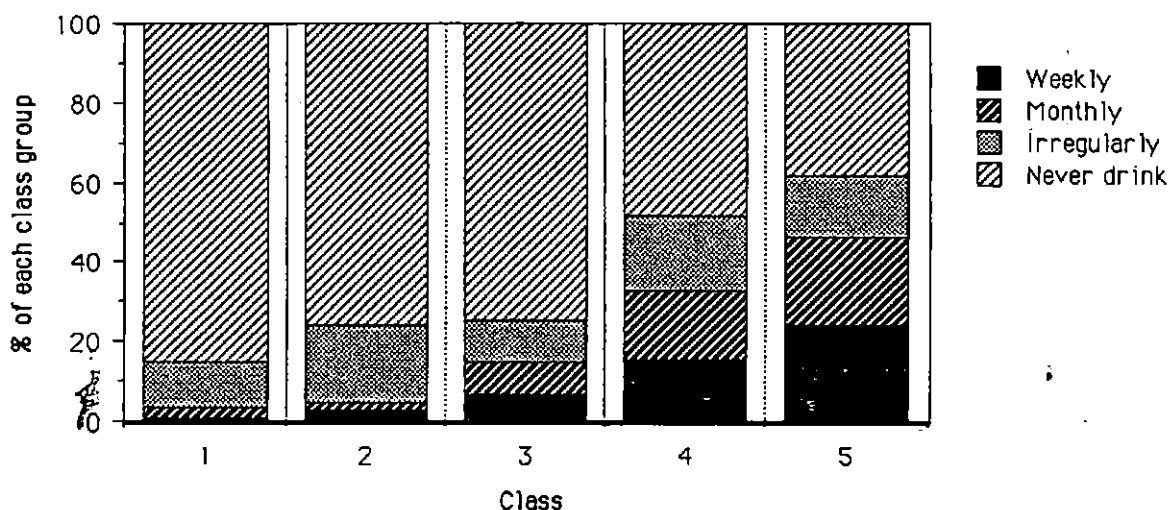
4.11 The percentage of boys who do not drink at all was 85% in first year and 38% in the Leaving cert class. The percentage of girls who did not drink at all was 94% in first year and 42% in the Leaving cert group. If we assume that "those who drink a few times a year" are not regular drinkers then we can say that 1% of first years, 7% of 2nd years, 10% of third years, 23% of 4th years and about 44% of Leaving certs drink regularly.

Class Groups	1		2		3		4		5		Total	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Take a drink...	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Almost every day	0.5	1	1.3	0	0.5	0	0.4	0.6	2	0	.83	.09
About twice a week	0	0	0	0.5	3.5	1	5	2	10	7	3.63	1.84
About once a week	0.5	0	1.3	1.5	3	1	7.6	5	12	16	5.39	3.21
About once a fortnight	1	0	1.3	1	3	1	7.6	5	12	16	4.97	3.95
About once a month	1.5	0.7	5	1	5	2	10	2	9	8	6.22	2.57
A few times a year	11	5	14.3	6.5	10.5	13	19	14	16	15	14.09	10.19
Never drink alcohol	85.5	94.3	76.6	89.5	74.5	82	48	72.4	38	41.5	64.87	78.15
n (100%) =	195	282	154	199	288	251	234	171	154	186	965	1089

Table 4.4 Percentage totals according to frequency of drinking, class group and sex.

4.12 Figure 4.7 shows in graph form the drinking frequency of all students. Students who take a drink 'almost every day', 'about twice a week' and 'about once a week' are rated as "weekly drinkers". Those who take a drink 'about one a fortnight' and 'about once a month' are rated as "monthly drinkers". Those who drink 'a few times a year' are described as "irregular drinkers".

Figure 4.7 Drinking frequency for all students by class group



5. MONEY AND DRINKING

- 5.1 Students were asked two questions in relation to money: "About how much money do you have to spend on yourself each week" and "About how much of this money do you spend on alcohol?"

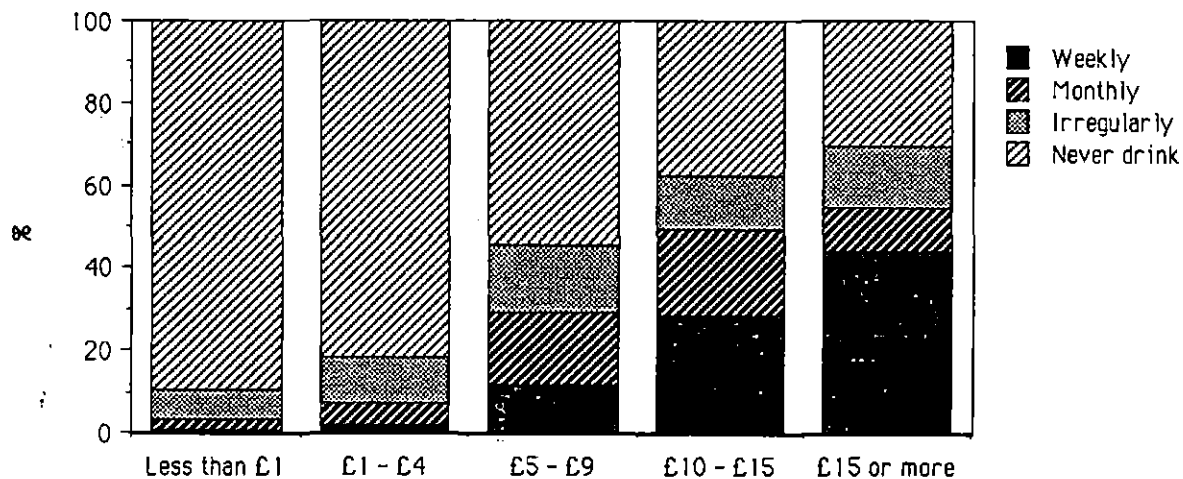
5.2 Table 5.1 shows the amount of disposable money that students had according to how frequently they had taken a drink:

Take a drink...	Less than £1		£1 - £4		£5 - £9		£10 - £15		£15 or more	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Weekly	0.58	2	1.85	19	11.6	50	28.39	44	44	33
Monthly	2.61	9	5.06	52	17.4	75	20.65	32	10.67	8
Irregularly	6.96	24	11.28	116	16.71	72	13.55	21	14.67	11
Never Drink	89.86	310	81.81	841	54.29	234	37.43	58	30.67	23
Totals	100	345	100	1028	100	431	100	155	100	15

Table 5.1 Spending money and frequency of drinking

5.3 The table shows that some 50% or more of those who had £10 and more to spend on themselves each week took a drink either weekly or monthly. This is illustrated graphically in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Weekly money that students spend on themselves and frequency of drinking.



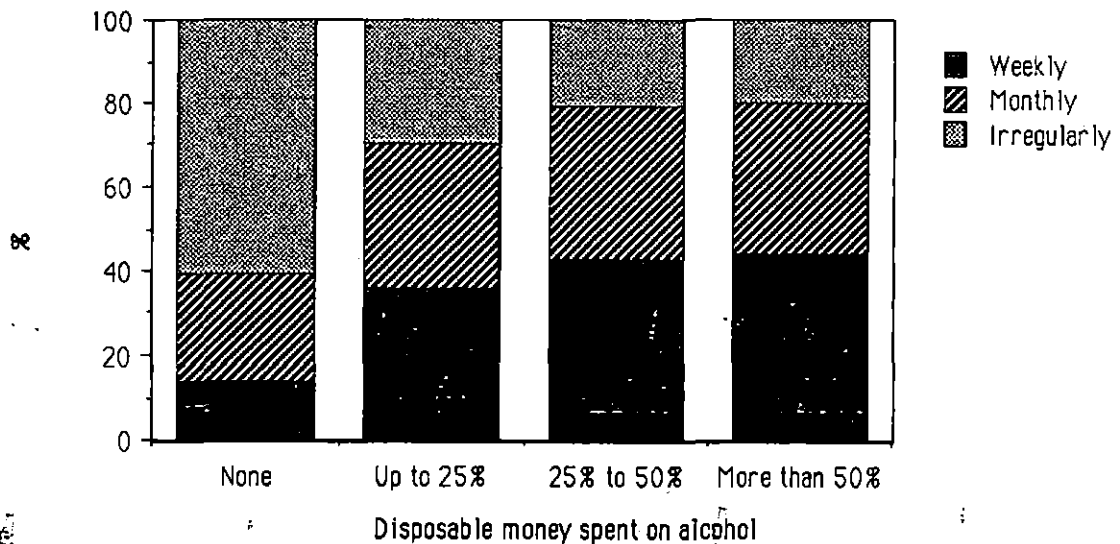
5.4 Students were asked: "About how much of this money do you spend on Alcohol?" For the students who took a drink, the results were as follows:

	None		25%		25% - 50%		50%		Total	
Those who drink...	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Almost Every Day	44%	4	11%	1	0%	0	44%	4	100%	9
About Twice a Week	25%	14	27%	15	33%	18	15%	8	100%	55
About Once a Week	23%	20	43%	37	25%	22	9%	8	100%	87
About Once a fortnight	26%	24	26%	36	22%	20	12%	11	100%	91
About Once a Month	53%	46	26%	23	15%	13	6%	5	100%	87
A Few Times a Year	67%	167	21%	51	8%	20	4%	9	100%	247
Total	48%	275	28%	163	16%	93	8%	45	100%	576

Table 5.2 Amount of their money that students who take a drink spend on alcohol.

5.5 As would be expected those who drink on a more regular basis spend more of their disposable money on alcohol. This is shown graphically in figure 3.2. Some 44% of those who spend over 50% of their money on drink are weekly drinkers and some 35% of those who spend between 25% - 50% of their money on alcohol drink monthly.

Figure 5.2 Amount of money spent on alcohol



6. ATTITUDES OF PARENTS AND FRIENDS TO DRINKING

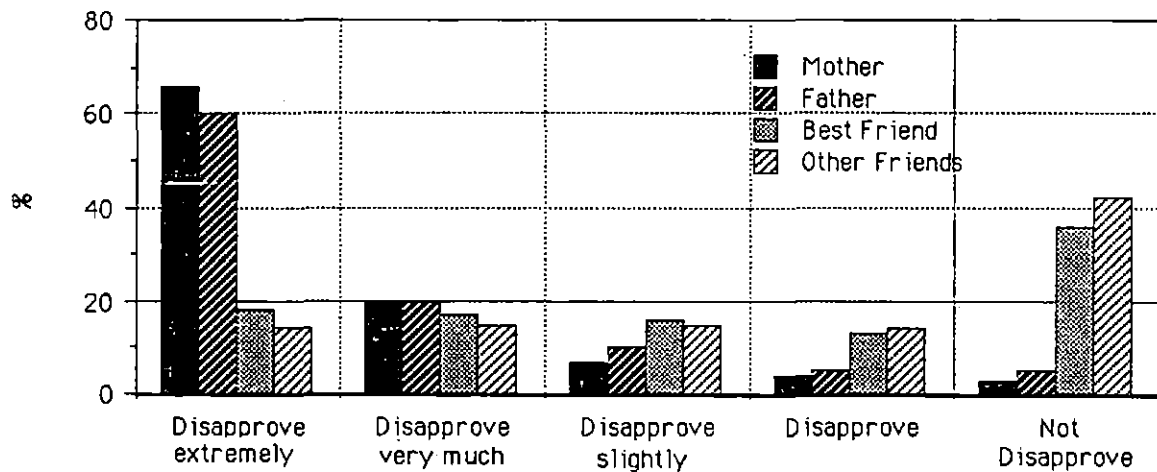
6.1 When students were asked how parents and friends would approve/disapprove of their drinking the results in percentage terms were:

	Disapprove Extremely	Disapprove Very Much	Disapprove Slightly	Disapprove	Not Disapprove
Mother	66%	20%	7%	4%	4%
Father	60%	20%	10%	5%	5%
Best Friend	18%	17%	16%	13%	36%
Other Friends	14%	15%	15%	14%	42%

Table 6.1 Parents and friends opinions of students' drinking behaviour.

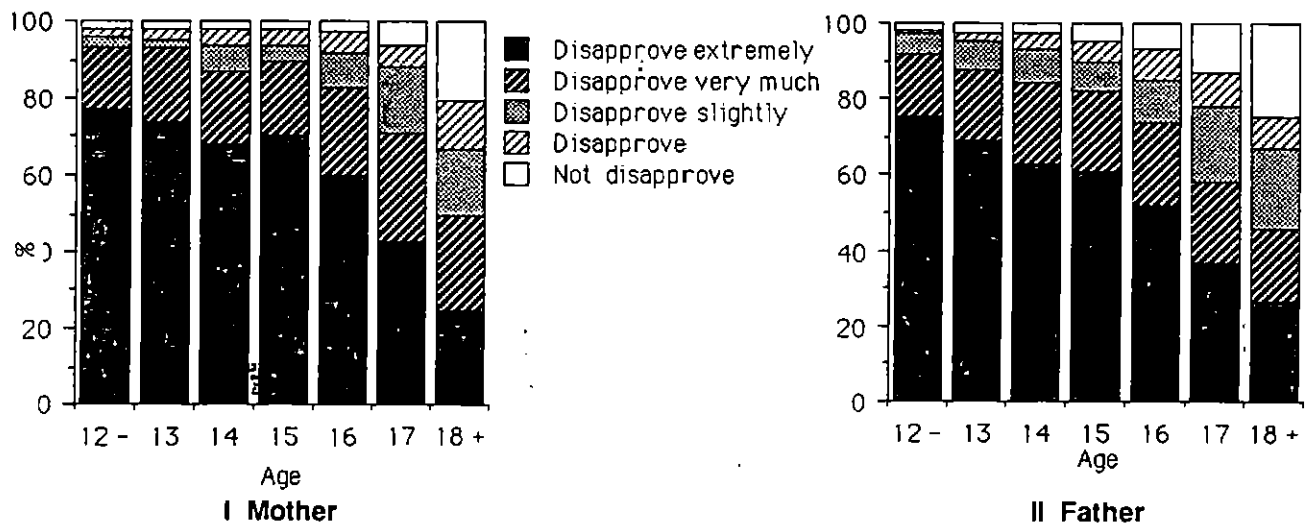
6.2 This means that about two thirds of all students reported that their parents disapproved "extremely" while less than one fifth said that their friends disapproved extremely of their taking a drink. Figure 6.1 shows the proportions in the form of a stacked graph.

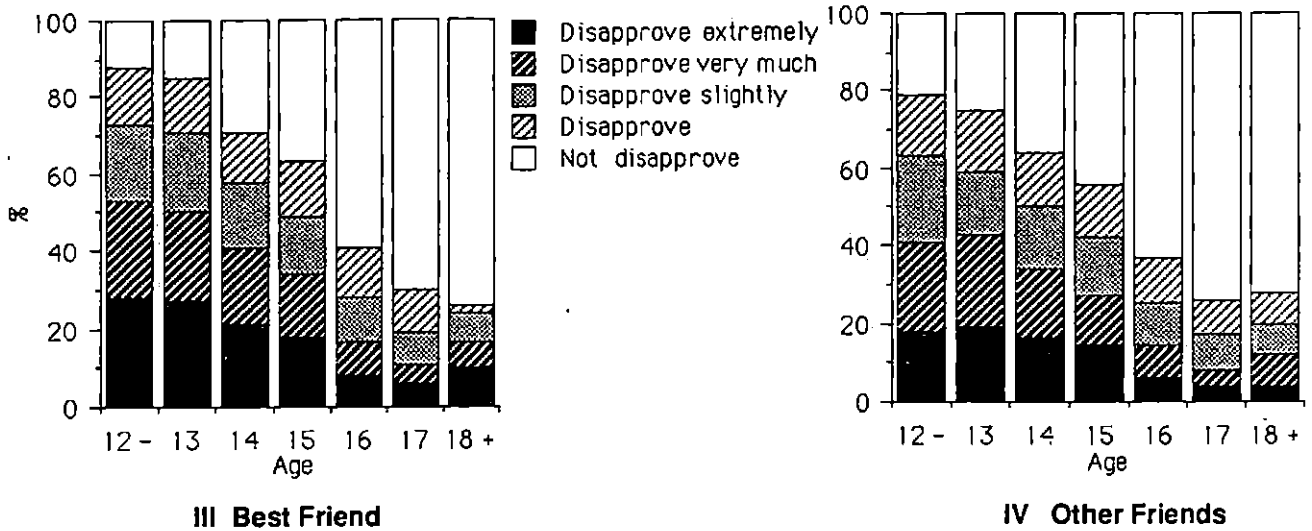
Figure 6.1 Students' rating of their parents' and friends' views of their drinking



6.3 As would be expected, age was an important factor in students' opinions regarding their parents' and friends approval/disapproval of their drinking. The following graphs indicate that a greater number of older students considered that their parents did not disapprove highly of their drinking:

Figure 6.2 Students' rating of parents and friends opinions by age.





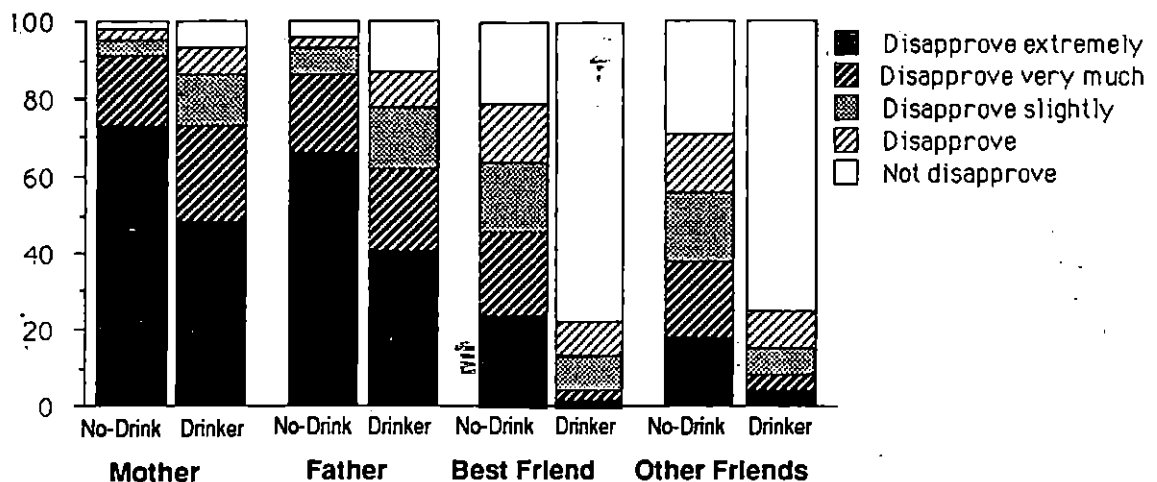
6.4 When we compare the approval/disapproval rating of parents and friends as perceived by students it is noteworthy that some 70% of non-drinkers consider their parents disapprove of drinking, while the figure for drinkers is nearer 40%.

	Disapprove Extremely		Disapprove Very Much		Disapprove Slightly		Disapprove		Not Disapprove	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Take drink:										
Mother	48%	73%	25%	19%	13%	3%	7%	3%	7%	2%
Father	41%	66%	21%	20%	16%	7%	9%	3%	12%	4%
Best Friend	2%	24%	3%	22%	9%	18%	9%	15%	77%	21%
Other Friends	4%	18%	4%	20%	7%	18%	10%	15%	75%	29%

Table 6.2 Parents and friends opinions of students' drinking behaviour.

6.5 Figure 6.3 shows a comparison between the ratings of those who do not drink and those who do take drink:

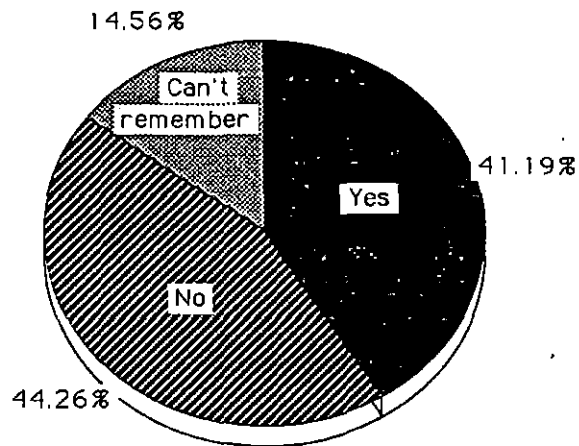
Figure 6.3 Comparison of approval ratings between non-drinkers and drinkers.



7. ALCOHOL EDUCATION

- 7.1 When students were asked "have you got any information, or had any lessons or discussions about alcohol/drinking in this school?" the replies were as follows:

Figure 7.1 "Had you any lessons on alcohol at school?"



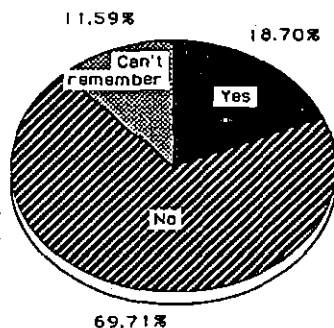
- 7.2 It is interesting that 52% of those who drink said that they had lessons on alcohol while only 39% of those who did not drink had such lessons. This may be explained by the fact that there was a much smaller number who take drink and those who did not take drink were mostly younger students.

	Do not drink		Take drink		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	583	39	263	52	846	41
No	733	48	166	32	909	44
Can't remember	208	13	91	16	299	15
Totals	1524	100	520	100	2054	100

Table 7.1 Students who had/hadnot lessons on alcohol by drinking behaviour

- 7.3 When students were asked whether they had seen a film about alcohol at school the answers were as follows:

Figure 7.2 "Have you seen a film about alcohol at school?"



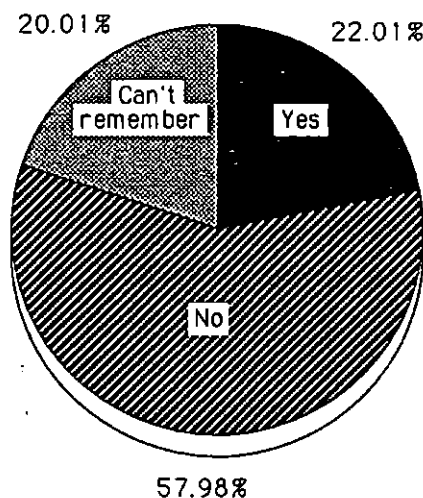
7.4 Students were asked in what subjects alcohol was discussed in school. The replies indicated that more than 50% learned about taking alcohol in health education classes and when combined with civics the figure was nearly 70%. Religious education classes was second highest with 39% of all students learning about alcohol in these classes. The six top classes mentioned by students are tabulated in Table 7.2:

	Do not drink		Take drink		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Health Education	763	50	333	58	1096	53
Religion	488	32	308	53	796	39
Civics	184	12	140	24	324	16
English	200	13	101	18	301	15
Home Economics	147	10	76	13	222	11
Irish	62	3	39	7	101	5

Table 7.2 Subjects in which students learned about alcohol

7.5 When students were asked whether they had any guest speakers in school who talked about alcohol the replies were as follows:

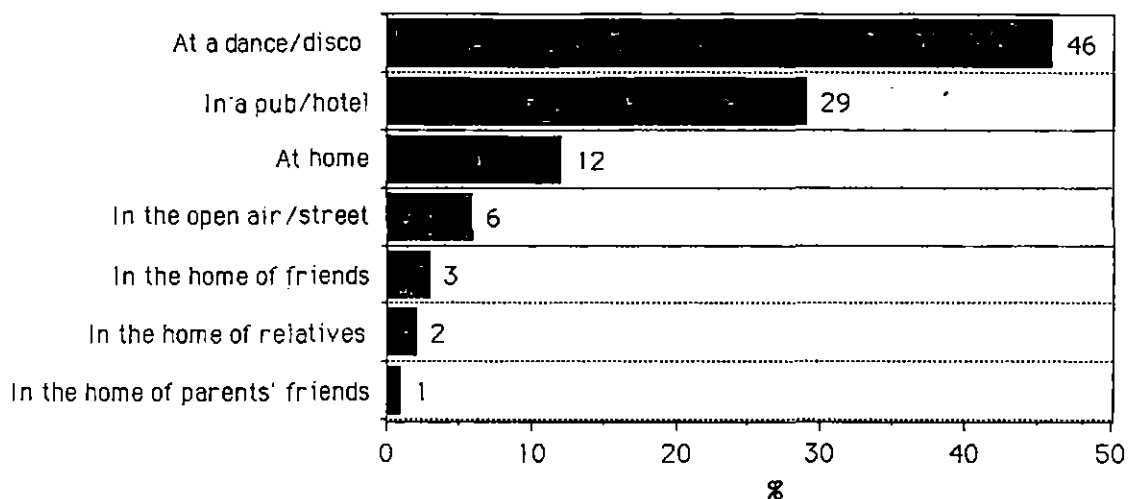
Figure 7.3 "Have you ever had guest speakers into school to talk about alcohol?"



8. STUDENTS' DRINKING BEHAVIOURS

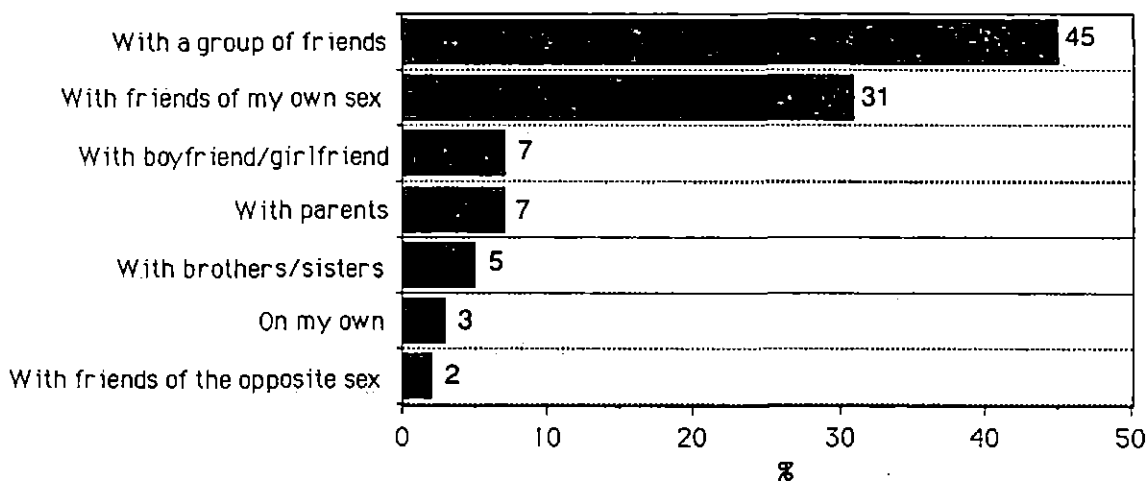
8.1 The majority of students take drink at dances and discos (46%) and also in hotels and pubs (29%).

Figure 8.1 Places where students take drink



8.2 Nearly 50% of students drink in groups with their friends of both sexes. 31% drink with their friends of the same sex.

Figure 8.2 Those with whom students take a drink



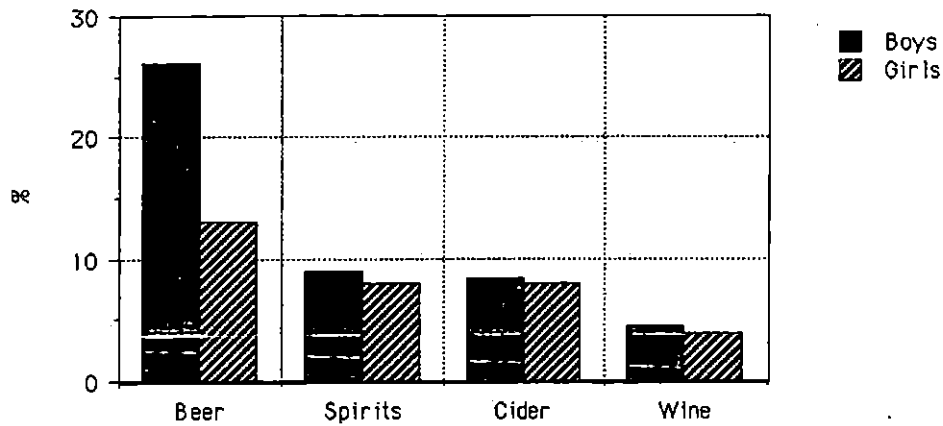
8.3 Beer is the most popular drink among students, with 39% of those who drink taking it "most times". Spirits and cider are taken most times by 17% and 16% of students respectively. Nearly 7 out of 10 students "hardly ever" drink wine. The drinks that students take were ranked as follows:

	Hardly Ever		Sometimes		Most times	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Cider	347	61	132	23	95	16
Beer	154	27	195	34	225	39
Wine	395	69	131	23	48	8
Spirits	280	49	196	34	98	17

Table 8.1 Types of drink taken by students

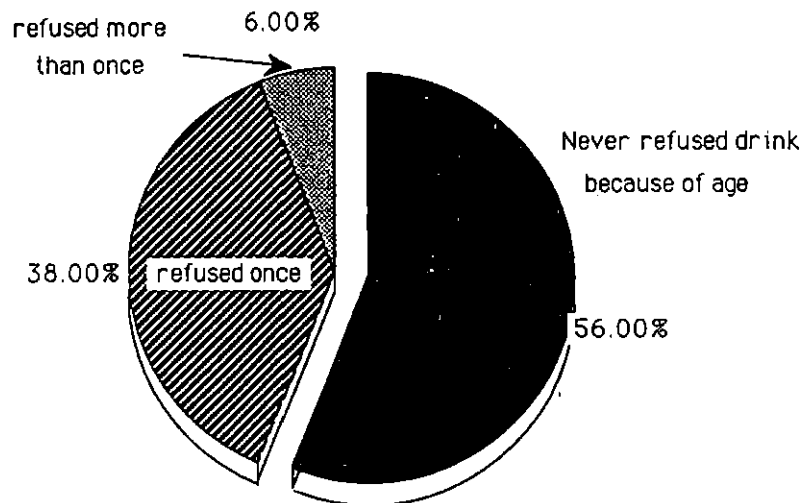
8.4 Figure 4.5 shows the drinks that students take according to sex:

Figure 8.3 Types of drink that students take "most of the time"



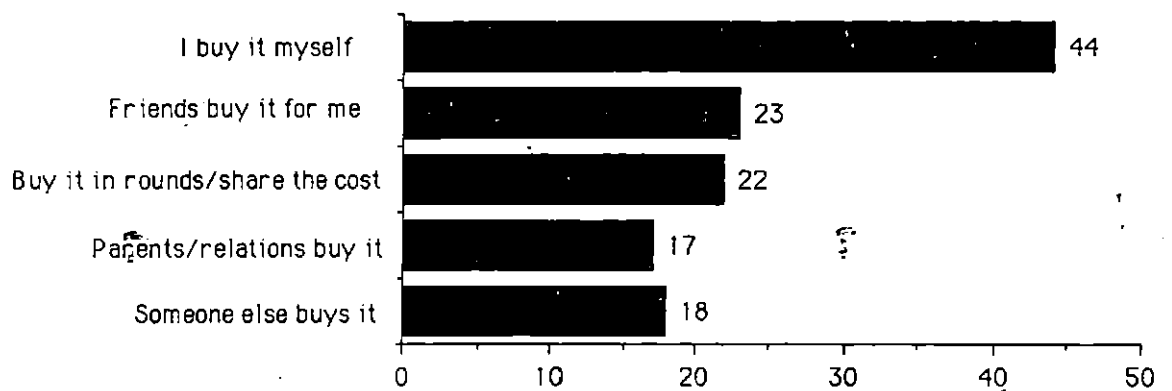
8.5 When students who drink were asked: "Have you ever tried to buy alcohol and been refused because of your age?", they replied as follows:

Figure 8.4 Purchasing drink under 18 years



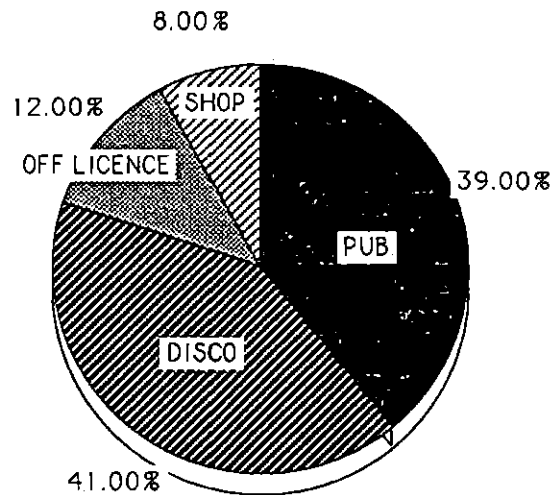
8.6 44% of students buy the drink for themselves directly. 22% join with others to purchase alcohol. In response to the question about who usually buys the drink they take, students replied:

Figure 8.5 Who usually buys drink for students



8.7 Four out of ten students who take drink buy the drink in a disco and another four would purchase the drink in pubs. Only a minority of about 20% purchase alcohol in shops, supermarkets and off-licences. In response to the question "Where do you usually buy your alcoholic drink?" the replies were:

Figure 8.6 Where students purchase alcoholic drink



8.8 Exactly half of the students who took drink said that they had been drunk.

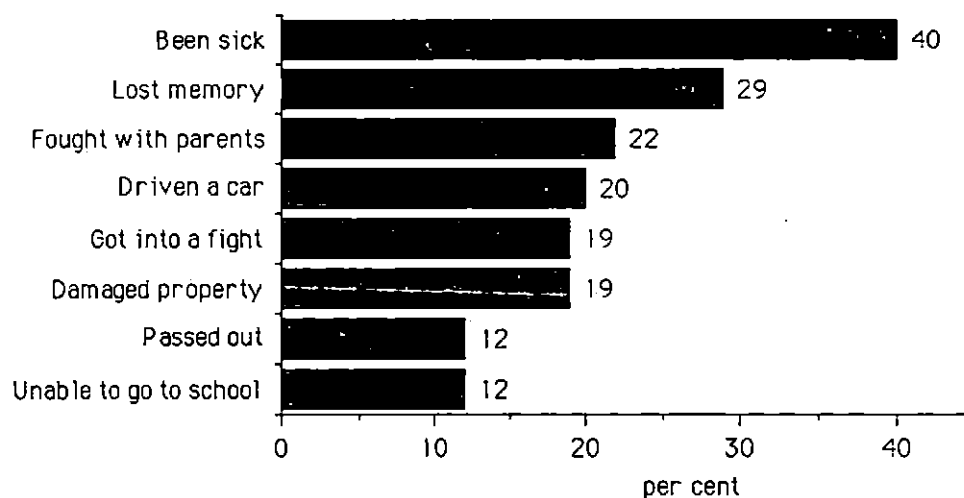
8.9 Students were asked what the effects of drink had been on them over the past year and the replies were as follows:

	Never	Once	More than Once
Been sick	60%	30%	10%
Passed out	88%	6%	6%
Lost memory	71%	17%	12%
Unable to go to school	88%	8%	4%
Got into a fight	81%	15%	4%
Damaged property	81%	16%	3%
Driven a car	82%	16%	4%
Fought with parents	78%	17%	5%

Table 8.2 The effects of alcoholic drink on students.

- 8.10 The highest reported adverse effect of drink on students was that they got sick. Some 29% of students reported suffering memory loss. Some 20% of students also fought with their parents, drove a car, damaged property and got into a fight.

Figure 8.7 Where students purchase alcoholic drink



- 8.11 When asked how many drinks they took the last time they had a drink the results were:

No. of drinks	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pints	23%	24%	7%	6%	4%	12%
Single measures	13%	21%	8%	4%	3%	5%
Single glasses	12%	15%	2%	1%	1%	35%

Table 8.3 Number of drinks students took the last time they had a drink

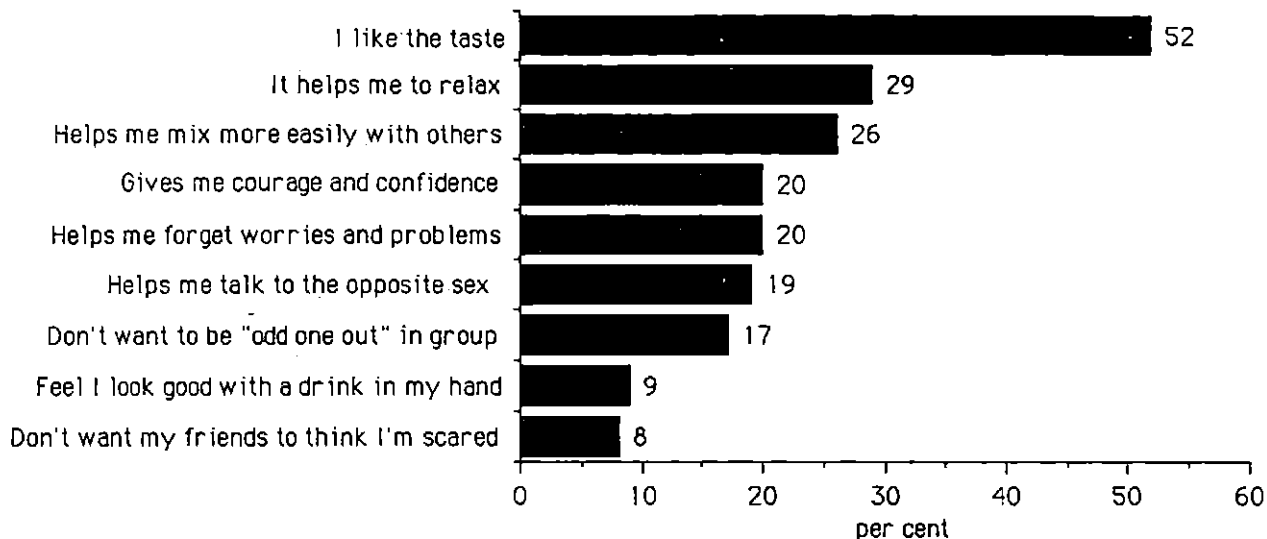
- 8.12 When asked why they drink students replied as follows:

They like the taste	301	(52%)
They don't want to be "left out"	96	(17%)
It helps relax	169	(29%)
It gives them courage and confidence	117	(20%)
Helps them talk to opposite sex	109	(19%)
Don't want friends to think they're scared	43	(8%)
Helps them mix with others	152	(26%)
Feel they look good with drink	53	(9%)
Helps to get over worries and problems	116	(20%)

Table 8.4 Reasons students give for taking alcohol

- 8.13 More than 50% of students said that they drink because they like the taste. Other reasons are ranked in order in figure 8.7:

Figure 8.7 Reasons why students take drink



9. REASONS WHY STUDENTS DO NOT TAKE A DRINK

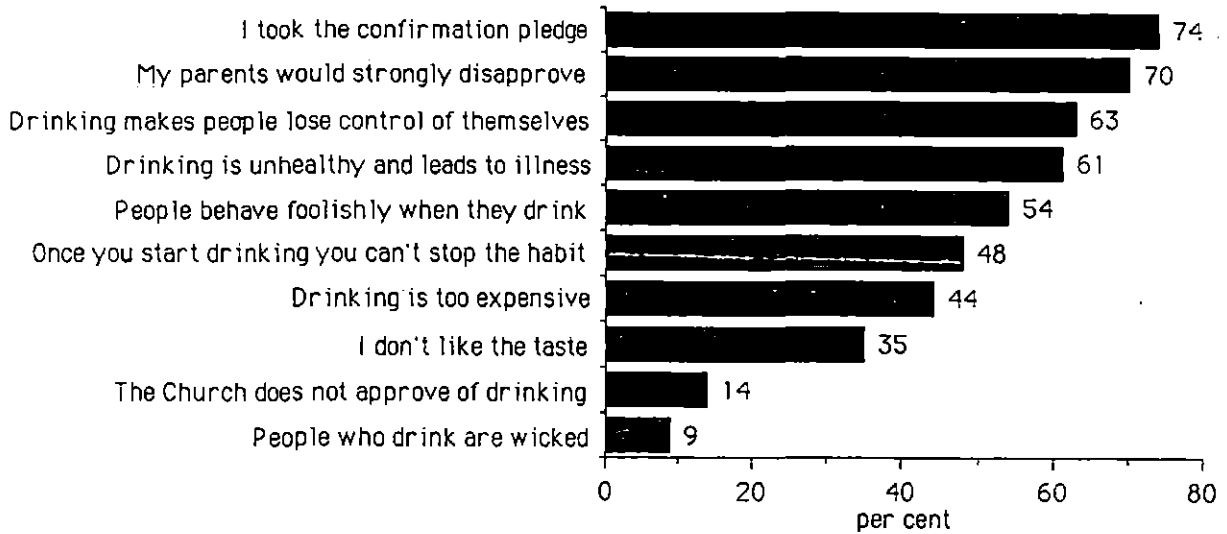
- 9.1 Students who do not take drink were given a list of reasons why people do not drink and asked to mark those that were true for them. The results were as follows:

Reason	n	%
I don't like the taste	513	35
It is unhealthy	889	61
It is too expensive	643	44
People who drink are wicked	130	9
The Church disapproves	200	14
Drinkers lose control of themselves	917	63
Drunks behave foolishly	783	54
It leads to a habit	696	48
My parents disapprove	1010	70
The Confirmation pledge	1077	74

Figure 9.1 Reasons why students do not drink

9.2 Nearly three quarters of those who do not drink said that they do not do so because they had taken their confirmation pledge. The second in rank was parental disapproval (70%) and nearly two-thirds put "loss of self-control" and "drinking is unhealthy" as important reasons for them. The reasons that students listed are ranked in figure 9.1.

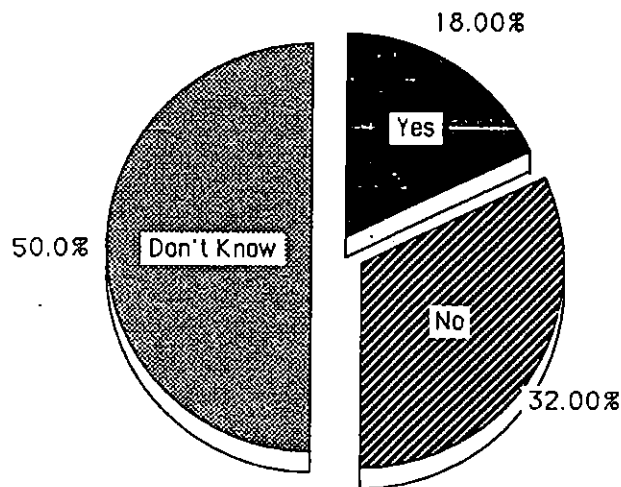
Figure 9.1 Reasons why students listed why they do not drink



10. SOME ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS OF NON-DRINKERS

10.1 When asked "Do you think you may start drinking when you get older?" students who do not drink replied:

Figure 10.1 "Will you start drinking when you get older?"



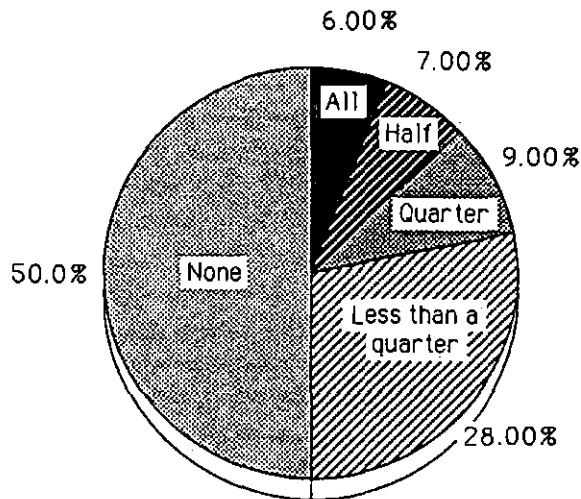
10.2 When asked "How many of your friends drink alcohol?" the non-drinkers replied:

	n	%
All of them	83	6
About half	107	7
About a quarter	124	9
Less than 25%	402	28
None	740	50

Table 10.1 Number of friends of non-drinkers who take alcohol

10.3 Just half of those who do not drink have friends who also do not drink.

Figure 10.2 "How many of your friends do not drink?"



10.4 The number of non-drinkers who were "Pioneers" or members of a temperance group was as follows:

Figure 10.3 "Are you a pioneer / member of a temperance group?"

