



**SMOKING, ALCOHOL
AND
OTHER DRUG USE**

*Among Post-Primary School Pupils
In County Roscommon and
The Elphin Diocese Area of County Galway*

**PRELIMINARY
FINDINGS**

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ABSTRACT

This report presents the preliminary findings of a survey into Smoking, Alcohol and Other Drug use among Post-Primary School Pupils in County Roscommon and the Elphin Diocese Area of County Galway. The overall aims of the research were to:

- ascertain the number of smokers
- quantify the level of smoking
- ascertain the level of knowledge and beliefs of the respondents regarding the impact of smoking on health
- ascertain the number drinking alcohol
- quantify the level of alcohol consumption
- ascertain the number of drug takers
- quantify the level of drug use
- ascertain the level of knowledge and beliefs of drug users regarding the impact of drug use on health

A survey, involving 3,088 students was carried out in 13 post-primary schools in County Roscommon and the Elphin Diocese Area of County Galway. A review of literature and previous studies, guided by the objectives of this study, informed the design and content of the questionnaire used.

The overall findings of the survey were:

- 58% indicated they were smoking or had smoked cigarettes
- 82.4% of respondents indicated their awareness that smoking can damage their health
- 53.4% indicated they were drinking or had drunk alcohol
- 19.8% indicated they were using or had used drugs
- 82.3% of those who were using or had used drugs indicated their awareness of the impact of drug use on health

INTRODUCTION

Roscommon Regional Youth Service is a voluntary, professional Youth Service organisation, working with and for young people, assisting with their personal and social development. This study was carried out on behalf of the Youth Service because of its Concern at the apparent high levels of substance use and abuse among young people within its area. This concern however was based solely on anecdotal evidence, as no previous research of this kind had been carried out in the region.

The purpose of this study therefore was to quantify the levels of substance use and misuse among post-primary school students in the area. This would give a precise picture of the extent of the problem and could provide a basis for formulating appropriate responses. Funding for the study was provided by the Western Health Board and the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health, who, for similar reasons, were also interested in the outcome of the research.

Three specific substance categories were targeted. These were Cigarette Smoking, Alcohol Consumption and Other Drug use. All second-level schools in the area were contacted and asked for their voluntary participation in the study. All agreed to participate (*full list on page 29*).

This document outlines the preliminary findings of the study. The precise breakdown of responses to many of the questions asked are set out in tabulated form throughout the document. A full and more comprehensive report may be published at a future date dependent on funding and resources.

METHODOLOGY

A survey instrument was used to:

- ascertain the number of smokers
- quantify the level of smoking
- ascertain the level of knowledge and beliefs of the respondents regarding the impact of smoking on health
- ascertain the number drinking alcohol
- quantify the level of alcohol consumption
- ascertain the number of drug takers quantify the level of drug use
- ascertain the level of knowledge and beliefs of drug users regarding the impact of drug use on health

A review of literature and previous studies, including O’Fathaigh & Mortell 1990, guided by the objectives of this study, informed the design of the questionnaire used. The format was relatively simple and contained 99 multiple choice questions, across four sections - Cigarette Smoking, Alcohol Consumption, Other Drug use and Other Personal Information. The questionnaires and answer sheets were separate documents. The survey instrument was self-administered.

Permission to carry out the survey was sought from the 13 post-primary schools in County Roscommon and the Elphin Diocese area of County Galway (*a list of the schools, including student numbers surveyed is outlined on page 29*), which is the area of remit of Roscommon Regional Youth Service. Consent was given and arrangements were put in place to carry out the survey which allowed full classes to be administered at the one time and in immediate succession, ensuring that a full school was completed in the one day.

While the survey was administered to full classes at a time, each student however was seated on their own and at a distance from fellow classmates. Before each testing session, students were reminded that participation was voluntary and were given the option of leaving if they did not wish to participate. Teachers were not allowed to be present during the testing session. Before each session began, the administrator explained the purpose of the study in general terms and reassured the students as to their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses to the survey. A copy of the specific statement read by the administrator to the participants before each testing session is contained in the back of this report.

To assist with the collation and analysis of the survey data, a special designated computer programme was designed by Mr Eamonn Donoghue. The responses from each individual questionnaire were keyed into this programme and statistical results generated, many of which are outlined in the tables contained in this preliminary report.

OVERALL RESULTS

A total of 3,088 pupils, across the 13 schools, took part in the study. 456 answer sheets were discounted however, because they were invalidated, either by multiple responses to the same question or several questions unanswered. This left a total valid survey of 2,632 consisting of 1,344 (51%) males and 1,288 (49%) females with an age/sex breakdown as follows:

Age	Male	Female	Total
13	12.1%	9.6%	21.7%
14	9.5%	8.7%	18.2%
15	10.9%	10.6%	21.5%
16	8.7%	9.3%	18.0%
17+	9.8%	10.8%	20.6%

A school by school breakdown of responses are not being given. Assurances to this extent were given to each school when permission was sought to conduct the study.

SMOKING RESULTS TABLES

This section outlines the findings relating to cigarette smoking. It gives details of the circumstances under which cigarettes were first tried and refers to the perceived smoking habits of parents. The section also deals with attitudes relating to cigarette smoking.

The majority of pupils (58%) indicated that they had smoked a full cigarette. 30.7% admitted to smoking before the age of 16 years. Full details are outlined in Table 2 as follows:

Q. Have you ever smoked a Cigarette?

Yes 58%

No 42%

Age/Sex of 'Yes' Respondents

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
13	5.1%	3.1%	8.2%
14	5.0%	4.6%	9.6%
15	6.9%	6.0%	12.9%
16	6.2%	5.9%	12.1%
17+	7.4%	7.8%	15.2%
TOTALS	30.6%	27.4%	58.0%

Table 2

Peer influence appears to figure highly with 38.3% indicating that they were with friends the first time they smoked a cigarette.

Q. Were you alone or with others the first time you smoked a Cigarette?

	With Friends	With Brothers	With Sisters	With Parents
12.2%	38.3%	3.8%	2.6%	1.1%

Table 3

Q. Overall, about how many Cigarettes did you smoke each day during the past month?

Age	None/ Doesn't Smoke	A Few Not Every Day	1 - 4 A Day	5 - 9 A Day	More Than 10 A Day
Male					
13	96.9%	2.2%	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%
14	94.9%	3.3%	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%
15	92.9%	3.9%	1.3%	1.1%	0.8%
16	93.3%	2.6%	1.4%	1.8%	0.9%
17+	91.3%	2.4%	1.4%	2.1%	2.8%
TOTALS	69.4%	14.4%	5.4%	5.8%	5.0%

Table 4A

Q. Overall, about how many Cigarettes did you smoke each day during the past month?

Age	None/ Doesn't Smoke	A Few Not Every Day	1 - 4 A Day	5 - 9 A Day	More Than 10 A Day
FEMALE					
13	98.3%	1.6%	0%	0%	0.1%
14	96.0%	3.2%	0.4%	0%	0.4%
15	93.4%	4.4%	0.9%	0.9%	0.4%
16	94.4%	3.3%	1.1%	0.8%	0.4%
17+	93.2%	3.7%	1.1%	1.2%	0.8%
TOTALS	75.3%	16.2%	3.5%	2.9%	2.1%

Table 4B

The survey showed that the majority of young people were aware of the dangers to health of cigarette smoking. 82.4% indicated their awareness that smoking can damage their health. 69.2% expressed the belief that cigarette smoking could shorten their life span, while 87.4% said they thought cigarette smoking would increase their chances of getting lung cancer. Interestingly, despite popular belief, only 13.9% of the young people surveyed said they thought smoking helped them to look more grown up. 86% of those surveyed believed smoking to be a waste of money. Full details outlined in Table 5 as follows:

Q. If I smoked Cigarettes next month, they would

	I am certain It would	I think it would	Unsure	I think it would not	I am certain It would not
Harm my health	58.3%	24.1%	11.6%	4.3%	1.7%
Shorten my life	41.0%	28.2%	21.3%	6.8%	2.7%
Increase m chances of getting lung cancer	66.5%	20.9%	6.6%	2.3%	3.7%
Help me feel more relaxed	10.9%	15.3%	24.7%	19.1%	30.0%
Give me bad breath	60.8%	23.1%	8.1%	3.0%	5.0%
Help me look more grown up	4.9%	9.0%	10.5%	25.8%	49.8%
Make me more popular among my friends	6.7%	9.0%	19.1%	26.1%	39.1%
Be immature	23.2%	18.9%	24.5%	21.5%	11.9%
Give me a bad name	14.3%	15.4%	26.5%	28.4%	15.4%
Cost me too much money	69.7%	17.6%	3.0%	4.2%	5.5%
Be a waste of money	71.8%	14.2%	6.2%	5.1%	2.7%
Give my clothes a bad smell	57.3%	26.3%	7.5%	4.7%	4.2%

Table 5

Table 6 shows the level of perceived smoking habits of parents and friends. 30.9% indicated that their mothers smoked. 32.2% indicated that their fathers smoked.

Q. Described the Smoking Habits of your Relations and Friends

	Does not Smoke	Fewer than 5 a Day	5 - 10 A Day	11 - 20 A Day	More than 20 A Day
My Mother	69.1%	8.5%	8.2%	9.4%	4.8%
My Father	67.8%	8.2%	7.3%	9.4%	7.3%
My best Friend	70.8%	15.1%	8.9%	3.3%	1.9%
Most of my other Good Friends	61.0%	24.3%	11.4%	2.4%	0.9%

Table 6

Q. Of all young people your age in this country, about what Percentage do you think smoke at least one Cigarette each day?

Less than 10%	Between 11% -25%	Between 26% - 40%	Between 41% - 55%	More than 55%
5.7%	16.1%	28.8%	30.3%	19.1%

Table 7

It is interesting to note that while there is a very high percentage of parental disapproval to their children smoking - Mothers 93%, Fathers 92.1% - heir friends are more tolerant as outlined in Table 8.

Q. To what extent would your parents and friends disapprove if you were to smoke cigarettes?

	Disapprove Strongly	Disapprove	Would not Mind	Approve	Approve Strongly
My Mother	67.0%	26.0%	6.0%	0.4%	0.6%
My Father	68.1%	24.0%	7.0%	0.4%	0.5%
My Best Friend	16.5%	22.0%	56.3%	3.3%	1.9%
Most of my Other Good Friends	8.3%	21.2%	65.0%	4.0%	1.5%

Table 8

ALCOHOL RESULTS TABLES

This section deals with Alcohol Use. Again it is interesting to note the likely peer influence with 32.3% of respondents indicating that they were with friends the first time they had a whole alcoholic drink. Overall 53.4% indicated that they drank. Breakdown outlined in Table 9.

Q. Were you alone or with others the first time you had a whole drink of an alcoholic drink?

Alone	With Friends	With Brothers	With Sisters	With Parents	Total
7.4%	32.3%	2.8%	1.8%	9.1%	53.4%

Table 9

Table 10 highlights the incidence of drunkenness with 28.8% indicating that they had enough alcoholic drink to feel drunk, 10.1% under the age of sixteen years. 7.9% indicated that they were drunk more than nine times.

Q. How often have you ever had enough of any alcoholic drink to feel drunk?

MALE					
Age	Never	1 - 3 Times	4 - 6 Times	7 - 9 Times	More than 9 Times
13	2.8%	0.5%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
14	3.0%	0.8%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%
15	2.9%	1.9%	0.55	0.2%	0.8%
16	2-3%	1.6%	1.0%	0.4%	1.4%
17+	2.2%	1.7%	0.8%	0.9%	2.9%
TOTALS	13.2%	6.5%	2.7%	1.7%	5.6%

Table 10A

FEMALE					
Age	Never	1 - 3 Times	4 - 6 Times	7 - 9 Times	More than 9 Times
13	1.7%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
14	1.7%	0.8%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%
15	2.9%	1.2%	0.5%	0.1%	0.5%
16	2.5%	1.4%	0.6%	0.2%	0.5%
17+	2.7%	2.4%	1.1%	0.8%	1.0%
TOTALS	11.5%	6.1%	2.6%	1.3%	2.3%

Table 10B

Respondents were asked to indicate the effects alcoholic drink had on them during the past year 17% indicated that they had been sick. 7.2% indicated loss of memory. 6.8% got into fights. 4.8% fought with parents. 4.7% damaged property. Detailed breakdown outlined in Table 11. Reasons given for drinking alcohol outlined in Table 12.

Q. During the past year how often has drink caused the following effects on you?

	Never	Once	More than Once
Been Sick	20.9%	10.6%	6.4%
Passed Out	34.9%	1.6%	1.2%
Lost Memory	30.6%	4.0%	3.2%
Unable to go to School	34.8%	1.6%	1.3%
Got into a Fight	31.0%	3.8%	3.0%
Damaged Property	33.1%	2.4%	2.3%
Fought with Parents	33.1%	2.7%	2.1%

Table 11

Q. Indicate from the following list your reasons for drinking Alcohol?

I like the taste	41.1%
I don't want to be left out	12.5%
It helps me to relax	22.4%
It gives me courage	17.9%
It helps me mix with opposite sex	19.9%
I don't want friends to think I am afraid to drink	11.4%
It helps me mix with my friends	16.9%
It makes me feel more adult	15.1%
It helps me get over worries and problems	13.4%

Table 12

Indications of the level of drinking are outlined in tables 13 and 14. Table 14 shows that 13.7% of respondents indicated that they had more than three pints the last occasion on which they drank. 3% indicated that they had more than nine pints, while 1.6% indicated they had more than nine measures of spirits. Both tables would indicate that Beer, Lager, Ale & Stout are the most popular drinks.

Q. On how many occasions during the past month did you drink a whole drink of each of the following?

	None	1-3 Times	4-6 Times	7-9 Times	More than 9 Times
Cider	33.6%	12.7%	2.9%	1.4%	2.8%
Beer, Lager, Ale or Stout	24.1%	15.5%	5.4%	2.4%	6.3%
Wine	38.0%	12.3%	1.8%	0.2%	1.1%
Spirits (Vodka, Whiskey etc)	30.9%	13.6%	3.9%	1.9%	3.2%

Table 13

Q. The last time you drank alcohol, how many drinks did you take?

	None	1-3	4-6	7-9	More than 9
Pints	18.8%	21.2%	8.1%	2.6%	3.0%
Spirit Measures	32.1%	14.4%	3.8%	1.3%	1.6%

Table 14

When asked as to their source of alcohol, respondents indicated public houses as their main source, with 10.8% indicating their homes as their usual source. Table 16 also shows public houses as being the main source of supply even for drinking off the premises with 17% indicating that they had bought drink from pubs within the last month to drink elsewhere.

Q. What is your usual source of alcohol?

Your Home	Public House	Off Licence	Supermarket	Other
10.8%	24.8%	2.1%	1.3%	12.9%

Table 15

Q. In the last month how often have you bought alcoholic drink from the following outlets to drink elsewhere?

	Never	Once	2-3 Times	4-5 Times	More than 5 times
Public House	36.9%	7.0%	4.4%	1.3%	4.3%
Supermarket/ Shop	45.3%	4.5%	2.3%	0.5%	1.2%
Off Licence	58.2%	4.3%	1.9%	0.8%	1.4%

Table 16

DRUG RESULTS TABLES

This information deals with drug use. In order to ascertain specific information on various substances, the general question - "Do you use drugs?" was not asked. Analysis of the data however would indicated that just under 20% of respondents used drugs at some stage. Table 17 shows a breakdown of age, sex and substance used.

Q. Have you ever used any of the following to get 'high' or to try to get 'high'?

Male					
Aged	13	14	15	16	17+
Glue, Solvents, Gas	0.6%	0.8%	1.2%	1.3%	1.3%
Marijuana (Pot, Hash)	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	1.3%	1.6%
Heroin (Smack)	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%
Cocaine (Crack)	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%
LSD	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.6%
Magic Mushrooms	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%
Prescribed tablets for self	1.2%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.8%
Prescribed tables for someone else	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%
Other	0.5%	0.7%	0.8%	1.2%	0.8%

Table 17A

Q. Have you ever used any of the following to get 'high' or to try to get 'high'?

Female					
Aged	13	14	15	16	17+
Glue, Solvents, Gas	0.4%	1.0%	1.2%	0.8%	0.5%
Marijuana (Pot, Hash)	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	1.3%	1.6%
Heroin (Smack)	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Cocaine (Crack)	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
LSD	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Magic Mushrooms	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
Prescribed tablets for self	0.4%	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%
Prescribed tables for someone else	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%
Other	0.3%	0.8%	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%

Table 17B

The following were answered only by those who admitted to taking substances to get 'High' - other respondents were requested to pass on this section.

**Q. Please indicate whether or not you think each actually would happen to you
If you took drugs. It would**

	I am certain it would	I think It would	Unsure	I think it Would not	I am certain It would not
Harm my health	14.0%	2.3%	1.9%	0.7%	0.9%
Help me look more grown up	3.2%	1.4%	1.5%	3.4%	10.1%
Cost me too much money	13.4%	2.2%	1.1%	0.9%	2.0%
Help me feel more relaxed	5.5%	3.0%	3.8%	1.5%	5.7%
Make me more popular among my friends	2.7%	1.2%	3.0%	4.1%	8.4%
Give me bad breath	4.6%	1.9%	6.7%	2.7%	3.3%
Be a waste of money	10.8%	2.2%	2.4%	1.4%	2.4%
Shorten my life	10.3%	2.5%	3.5%	1.0%	1.9%
Give me a bad name	10.4%	3.0%	2.9%	1.0%	1.8%
Be immature	7.3%	3.0%	4.1%	2.1%	2.8%
Get me into trouble with the law	11.5%	3.5%	1.9%	1.1%	1.1%
Lower my School performance	9.7%	3.5%	3.5%	0.8%	1.6%

Table 18

Table 19 shows a breakdown of substances used during the past month. Apart from other drugs, it is interesting to note both from Tables 17 and 19 the high incidence of abuse of prescribed drugs. Table 20 shows the home indicated as the first source of drugs.

Q. On how many occasions during the past month did you use each Of the following to get 'High' or to try and get 'High'?

	None	1-3 Times	4-6 Times	7-9 Times	More than 9 Times
Glue, Solvents, Gas	14.4%	3.8%	0.9%	0.2%	0.7%
Marijuana	15.1%	2.5%	0.6%	0.3%	1.1%
Heroin	17.6%	0.8%	0.1%	0.2%	0.7%
Cocaine	17.4%	0.9%	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%
LSD	17.2%	1.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%
Magic Mushrooms	16.6%	1.2%	0.6%	0.1%	0.5%
Prescribed Tablets for self	15.7%	2.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5
Prescribed Tablets for someone else	17.0%	1.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.5%

Table 19

Q. Where did you get drugs the first time?

At School	Party/Disco	In the Street	Home	Pubs
2.2%	3.6%	2.0%	3.9%	0.4%

Table 20

Q. Do you have a regular source of drugs?

Yes 2.8% No 15.1%

OTHER INFORMATION RESULTS TABLES

This section outlines additional information about the respondents. Respondents were asked to indicate if they had part-time jobs and how much money they had to spend each week. 36.5% indicated that they had part-time work with 16.3% indicating that they had £10 or more to spend on themselves each week. Breakdown given in tables 22 and 23.

Q. How much money do you have to spend on yourself each week?

Male					
Age	Less than £1	£1 - £4	£5 - £9	£10 - £15	More than £15
13	2.8%	6.6%	1.9%	0.5%	0.3%
14	1.1%	5.5%	1.7%	0.6%	0.4%
15	1.2%	5.7%	2.8%	0.8%	0.3%
16	0.3%	3.3%	2.5%	1.3%	1.4%
17+	0.3%	2.6%	2.4%	2.5%	2.1%

Table 22A

Q. How much money do you have to spend on yourself each week?

Female					
Age	Less than £1	£1 - £4	£5 - £9	£10 - £15	More than £15
13	2.1%	6.1%	0.9%	0.2%	0.2%
14	1.3%	4.9%	2.0%	0.2%	0.2%
15	1.1%	5.6%	2.7%	0.8%	0.3%
16	0.6%	5.2%	2.5%	0.5%	0.3%
17+	0.8%	4.2%	2.8%	2.0%	1.4%

Table 22B

**Q. Do you work part-time?
(The following responded Yes)**

Age	Male	Female	Overall Total
13	2.8%	1.2%	4.0%
14	3.4%	2.6%	6.0%
15	3.9%	3.6%	7.5%
16	4.5%	3.7%	8.2%
17+	5.6%	5.2%	10.8%
Totals	20.2%	16.3%	36.5%

Table 23

When asked questions regarding school, 92.7% of respondents indicated that they thought it was important to do well in school, 3.8% felt they were either below average or among the worst.

Q. How important is it to you do well in school?

Very Important	Important	Unsure	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
55.0%	37.7%	4.7%	1.8%	0.8%

Table 24

Q. In general, how well do you do at school in comparison with other students in your class?

Among the Best	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Among the Worst
18.9%	29.3%	48.0%	2.1%	1.7%

Table 25

When asked about relationship with parents, 90.7% indicated that they got on well or very well with their mothers while 86.5% indicated that they got on well or very well with their fathers.

Q. How do you usually get along with your parents and friends?

	Very well	Well	Unsure	Badly	Very badly
My Mother	57.6%	33.1%	5.5%	2.4%	1.4%
My Father	52.6%	33.9%	8.4%	2.9%	2.2%
My best friend	74.8%	22.1%	2.6%	0.3%	0.2%
Most of my other good friends	50.6%	44.7%	4.2%	0.3%	0.2%

Table 26

**Q. Are you an active member of any of the following?
(The following responded Yes)**

	Male	Female
Sports Club	33.2%	15.7%
Youth Club/Group	23.7%	20.6%
School Team	29.7%	20.4%
Pioneers	14.9%	14.7%
Other Groups	24.5%	22.9%

Table 27

LIST OF SCHOOL SURVEYED

<i>School</i>	<i>Number of Students Surveyed</i>
St. Cuan's College, Castleblakeney	170
St. Mary's College, Ballygar	243
Convent of Mercy, Roscommon	499
Roscommon C.B.S.	373
Roscommon Vocational School	178
Castlerea Vocational School	80
Convent of Mercy, Castlerea	383
St. Mary's College, Boyle	183
Convent of Mercy, Boyle	202
Ballaghaderreen Vocational School	65
St. Nathy's College, Ballaghaderreen	358
Strokestown	284
Elphin	70
TOTAL: 13 SCHOOLS	3088

STATEMENT READ BY ADMINISTRATOR

“Your class is one of a number who are participating in a study of Smoking, Alcohol and Other Drug Use among post-primary school pupils in County Roscommon and the Elphin Diocese area of County Galway. Today I am asking you to complete a questionnaire. You will not be asked your name and nobody will ever be able to find out how you answer the questions. No one in the school will be allowed to see the answer sheets either. If for any reason you do not wish to participate in this study, you are free to leave the room now, without any question.

The answer sheets are separate to the questionnaires. Please write your answers on the answer sheets only. Do not write anything on the question sheets. It is important that you answer all of the questions in the survey truthfully. Do not put your name anywhere on the question or answer sheets. Your answers are completely confidential. I am only interested in the overall picture and not in any one person.

Please work carefully, reading all the instructions before answering. I would appreciate it if you would work by yourselves and do not share any of your answers with people sitting around you.

Please open your questionnaire and begin. If you have any questions, raise your hand and I will come to you. When you finish, just wait quietly.”