

Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland 2002/2003

Drug Prevalence Survey: Health Board (Ireland) & Health and Social Services Board (Northern Ireland) Results (Revised) Bulletin 2



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 survey.

Aim:

To obtain prevalence rates for key illegal drugs and other drugs including alcohol for each Health Board (HB) in Ireland and Health and Social Services Board (HSSB) in Northern Ireland. Bulletin 2 presents a regional breakdown relating to drug prevalence on a lifetime (ever used a drug), last year (recent) and last month (current) basis.

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 residing in private households between October 2002 and April 2003.

Key Findings:

- Across HB and HSSB areas lifetime prevalence of illegal drugs ranged between 11% and 30%.
- There was almost a threefold difference, ranging from 3% to 8%, across HB and HSSB areas in the rates for recent illegal drug use.
- Current illegal drug use rates ranged between 0.2% and 5% across areas.
- Prevalence rates (lifetime, recent and current) tended to be higher in the East of both Ireland and Northern Ireland than elsewhere.
- Cannabis was the main illegal drug used in all HB and HSSB areas; lifetime prevalence rates varied across areas from 9% to 27%; recent use from 2% to 8%; and current use from 0.2% to 5%.
- Prevalence rates for other illegal drugs were considerably lower than for cannabis across all areas and for all periods (lifetime, recent, and current use).
- In HB areas, cocaine and ecstasy were the most commonly reported illegal drugs used in the last year after cannabis.
- In almost all areas prevalence rates of lifetime, recent and current use were higher amongst men than women, and higher amongst young people than older people.
- Prevalence rates for use of sedatives, tranquilisers or anti-depressants were higher amongst older people and women in most areas.