

## **Short Report**

### **HBSC Ireland: cannabis and volatile substance use between 1998-2006.**

**Michal Molcho, Aoife Gavin and Saoirse Nic Gabhainn  
HBSC Ireland, Health Promotion Research Centre  
National University of Ireland, Galway**

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#### **Introduction:**

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (European Office). The study runs on a four-year cycle and in 2006 there were 41 participating countries across Europe and North America. HBSC collects data on key indicators of health, health attitudes and health behaviours, as well as the contexts of health for young people. The study is a school-based survey with information collected from students through self-completion questionnaires in classrooms (see note 1 below). Further information on the International HBSC study can be found at [www.hbsc.org](http://www.hbsc.org).

There have been three HBSC Ireland surveys, in the Springs of 1998, 2002 and 2006. In each survey the same sampling and data collection methods were employed; with self-completion questionnaires completed by students from a nationally representative stratified sample of primary and post-primary schools (5<sup>th</sup> class to 5<sup>th</sup> year). The methods employed in all surveys complied with the relevant International HBSC protocols and are detailed in national reports from the surveys, which can be found at [www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc](http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc).

#### **Focus:**

This short report presents a brief analysis of self-reported cannabis and volatile inhalators among Irish schoolchildren aged 10-17 years. In all three surveys the following questions were used:

- “Have you ever taken cannabis in your life?” with response options ‘never’, ‘once or twice’, ‘3 to 5 times’, ‘6 to 9 times’, ‘10 to 19 times’, ‘20 to 39 times’, ‘40 times or more’.
- “Have you ever taken cannabis in the last 12 months?” with response options ‘never’, ‘once or twice’, ‘3 to 5 times’, ‘6 to 9 times’, ‘10 to 19 times’, ‘20 to 39 times’, ‘40 times or more’.

- “Have you ever taken glue or solvents in your life?” with response options ‘never’, ‘once’, ‘twice’, ‘3 to 5 times’, ‘6 to 9 times’, ‘10 to 19 times’, ‘20 to 39 times’, ‘40 times or more’. This question was not included in the HBSC Ireland questionnaire of 2006.

For the purposes of this report all responses were collapsed into ‘never’ or ‘once or more’. Data are presented below by survey year, age-group and gender.

### Findings:

Table 1 presents the percentage of adolescents who reported lifetime use of cannabis by age-group and gender in 1998, 2002 and 2006. In 2006, 15.7% of all participating students reported using cannabis at least once in their life, a slight increase from 12.4% and 12.1% in 1998 and 2002 respectively. Lifetime cannabis use was relatively more frequent among boys and older students.

**Table 1: Percentages of adolescents who have ever used cannabis by age, gender and survey year.**

Age (years)	1998 HBSC Ireland survey			2002 HBSC Ireland survey			2006 HBSC Ireland survey		
	Boys %	Girls %	Total %	Boys %	Girls %	Total %	Boys %	Girls %	Total %
10-11	4.5 (n= 729)	1.2 (n=884)	2.7 (n=1615)	1.4 (n=578)	0.3 (n=697)	0.8 (n=1275)	1.5 (n= 551)	0.1 (n=766)	0.7 (n=1318)
12-14	12.3 (n=2040)	4.9 (n= 2082)	8.5 (n= 4142)	6.7 (n= 1644)	4.0 (n=2115)	5.2 (n= 3760)	10.1 (n=2499)	6.4 (n=2257)	8.3 (n=4757)
15-17	30.0 (n= 1208)	20.4 (n= 1223)	25.1 (n=2432)	32.3 (n= 1159)	21.7 (n= 1745)	25.9 (n= 2907)	31.3 (n=2068)	26.4 (n=1825)	29.0 (n=3896)
All ages	16.2 (n=3977)	8.6 (n= 4244)	12.4 (n= 8310)	14.6 (n=3455)	10.2 (n= 4666)	12.1 (n= 8113)	18.1 (n= 5118)	13.2 (n=4848)	15.7 (n=9971)

Table 2 presents the percentage of students who reported use of cannabis in the last 12 months by age-group and gender in 1998, 2002 and 2006. Cannabis use in the last 12 months was more frequently reported by boys and older students. Overall in 2006, 12.1% of participating students reported using cannabis in the last 12 months compared to 11.1% in 2002 and 10.2% in 1998. The difference was evident mainly among 15-17 year olds.

**Table 2: Percentages of adolescents who used cannabis in the last 12 months by age, gender and survey year.**

Age (years)	1998 HBSC Ireland survey			2002 HBSC Ireland survey			2006 HBSC Ireland survey		
	Boys %	Girls %	Total %	Boys %	Girls %	Total %	Boys %	Girls %	Total %
10-11	3.1 (n= 706)	0.8 (n=872)	1.8 (n=1580)	1.0 (n= 576)	0.0 (n= 693)	0.5 (n= 1269)	2.0 (n= 502)	0.3 (n= 701)	1.0 (n= 1204)
12-14	10.6 (n= 1993)	3.7 (n= 2049)	7.1 (n= 4044)	6.2 (n= 1646)	3.6 (n=2109)	4.8 (n= 3756)	8.0 (n=2323)	5.2 (n= 2105)	6.7 (n= 4429)
15-17	26.5 (n=1177)	16.1 (n= 1202)	21.2 (n=2380)	30.5 (n= 1150)	19.3 (n= 1737)	23.8 (n=2890)	24.6 (n= 1909)	20.4 (n=1675)	22.6 (n=3586)
All ages	14.1 (n=3876)	6.7 (n= 4123)	10.2 (n=8004)	13.7 (n= 3372)	9.1 (n= 4539)	11.1 (n=8105)	14.0 (n= 4734)	10.1 (n=4481)	12.1 (n=9219)

Table 3 presents lifetime glue or solvent use in 1998 and 2002. Overall, fewer adolescents reported glue/solvent use in 2002 (6.0 %) compared to 1998 (9.9%). Glue/solvent use was more frequently reported by boys and older students.

**Table 3: Percentages of adolescents who have ever used glue or solvents by age, gender and survey year.**

Age (years)	1998 HBSC survey			2002 HBSC survey		
	Boys %	Girls %	Total %	Boys %	Girls %	Total %
10-11	6.1 (n= 729)	2.7 (n=890)	4.2 (n= 1621)	4.9 (n=568)	1.2 (n=688)	2.9 (n=1256)
12-14	11.6 (n= 2048)	8.7 (n= 2092)	10.1 (n= 4143)	6.3 (n= 1605)	3.7 (n=2083)	4.9 (n=3689)
15-17	14.7 (n= 1219)	11.6 (n= 1223)	13.2 (n=2443)	11.0 (n= 1070)	7.6 (n=1647)	8.9 (n=2720)
All ages	11.5 (n=3996)	8.3 (n= 4205)	9.9 (n= 8207)	7.6 (n=3243)	4.8 (n= 4418)	6.0 (n= 7665)

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For further information on HBSC Ireland contact:

Dr. Saoirse Nic Gabhainn, HBSC Ireland, Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway, 12 Distillery Road, Galway Ireland.

[hbsc@nuigalway.ie](mailto:hbsc@nuigalway.ie) or see [www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc](http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc)

### Note 1

In August 2008 the results of the third national Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey carried out in Ireland were published (Nic Gabhainn *et al.*, 2007). The HBSC survey is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe. Its aim is to increase our understanding of young people's health and well-being, health behaviour and their social context. HBSC surveys have been conducted across Europe since the early 1980s. The first HBSC survey conducted in Ireland was carried out in 1998 (Friel *et al.* 1999) and repeated again in 2002 and 2006. In the three surveys a small number of questions on drug use were asked.

The sampling procedures followed those used in 1998. Initially, Individual schools within former Health Board regions were randomly selected and subsequently classes within schools were randomly selected for participation. The objective was to achieve a nationally representative sample of school-going children. The survey was carried out between April 2006 and June 2006 and included children aged 9-17 years present in school on the day of the survey. A total of 215 number schools out of a valid sample of 341 number participated in the survey, giving a school response rate of 63 per cent. 10, 334 questionnaires from 215 schools received by the end of the summer term were included in the third HBSC report to maintain seasonal comparability with the two other HBSC surveys.

Friel, S., Nic Gabhainn, S. & Kelleher, C. (1999). *The National Lifestyle Surveys: Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition (SLÁN) and the Irish Health Behaviour in School-Aged children survey (HBSC)*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children

Nic Gabhainn, S., Kelly, C. & Molcho, M. (2007). *HBSC Ireland 2006: National Report of the 2006 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children in Ireland*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children.