

Northern Ireland Health and Social Wellbeing Survey 2001

Bulletin number 6

July 2002

Contents

- Current cigarette smokers
- Non/ ex-cigarette smokers
- Health and cigarette smoking
- Drinkers, ex-drinkers and lifetime abstainers
- Average weekly alcohol consumption
- Type of alcoholic drink consumed
- Health and drinking
- Cigarette smoking and drinking

Commissioned by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety



Cigarette smoking and drinking

This is the sixth bulletin produced from the Northern Ireland Health and Social Wellbeing Survey 2001. The topics covered in the previous reports include; Top-line results, Mental health and wellbeing, Physical activity, Health and ill-health and Sexual health.

This bulletin presents some of the key findings from the cigarette smoking and drinking sections of the survey. The bulletin focuses on: Current cigarette smokers and drinkers, non/ex-smokers and drinkers, health and smoking/drinking, level of cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption, type of alcoholic

drink consumed and a look at cigarette smoking and drinking combined.

Respondents aged 16 or 17 were asked the questions on smoking and alcohol consumption by self-completion.

No causal inference is implied by the figures quoted in this bulletin as other explanatory factors such as age, social class, etc. need to be considered.

In addition to this bulletin, tables of all the key areas are available on-line. Details of how to access these are provided at the end of this bulletin.

Current cigarette smokers

Smoking trends in Northern Ireland are usually monitored using the Continuous Household Survey (CHS).

Overall, the proportion of people smoking cigarettes has fallen from 33% in 1983 to 27% in 2000/01. During this period the proportion of male cigarette smokers has decreased from 39% to 26%, while the proportion of female cigarette smokers has changed little and is currently at a similar level to that in 1983 (29% and 28% respectively). Only a small proportion (1%) smoked just a pipe or cigar in 2000/01, and these were mainly men (3%).

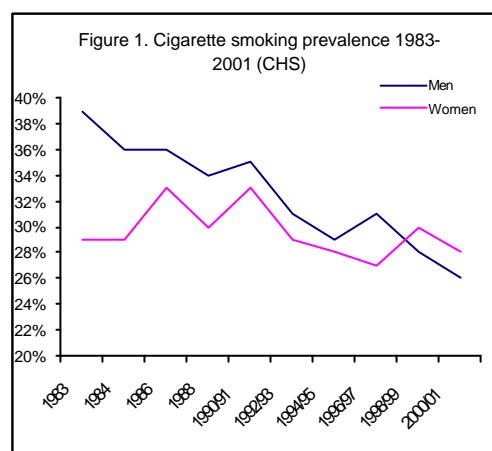
Smoking prevalence in the 2000/01 CHS is similar to the 2001 Health and Social Wellbeing survey, in which 29% of people reported that they currently smoke cigarettes.

Age and sex

30% of men and 29% of women smoke cigarettes and this decreases with age in both sexes. Women aged 16-24 were about 4 times as likely to smoke cigarettes (35%) as those aged 75 or above (9%). Men aged 16-24, however, were less than twice as likely to smoke cigarettes (32%) as men aged 75 or above (19%).

Socio-Economic Group (SEG)

Smoking prevalence was highest amongst the unskilled SEG and lowest amongst the



professional/ managerial SEG (45% and 20% respectively). 41% of cigarette smokers from an unskilled SEG background were heavy smokers smoking 20 or more cigarettes per day.

Average daily cigarette consumption

More than one third (39%) of cigarette smokers were heavy smokers, smoking twenty or more cigarettes per day. Men were more likely than women to be heavy smokers (48% and 33% respectively).

The highest prevalence of heavy cigarette smoking occurred in the 45-54 age group (55%) and the lowest was in the 16-24 age group (22%).

Non/ ex-cigarette smokers

39% of respondents aged 16 and over had never smoked cigarettes and 31% were ex-cigarette smokers.

Never smoked cigarettes

Age and sex

Women were almost one and a half times more likely than men to have never smoked cigarettes (45% and 31% respectively).

Men aged 16-24 were just as likely as women of this age to have never smoked cigarettes (44% and 42% respectively). Women aged 65 and over however, were much more likely than men in this age group to have never smoked cigarettes (61% and 24%).

Overall, respondents in the 16-24 age group and 75+ age group were most likely to have reported never smoking cigarettes (43% and 53% respectively), compared with those respondents aged 45-54 (33%).

Socio-economic group (SEG)

44% of respondents from a skilled non-manual SEG

background had never smoked cigarettes compared with approximately one third (31%) of those from a skilled manual SEG background.

Ex-cigarette smokers

Age and sex

Men were more likely than women to have given up smoking cigarettes (39% and 26% respectively).

Almost one quarter of men and women aged 16-24 had given up smoking cigarettes (24% and 23% respectively).

Men aged 65 and over were twice as likely as women of the same age to have given up smoking cigarettes (56% and 28%).

Socio-economic group (SEG)

Respondents from a professional/ managerial SEG were most likely to have given up smoking cigarettes (39%), compared with respondents from an unskilled SEG who were least likely to have stopped smoking (22%).

Health and cigarette smoking

Angina

Respondents who had experienced angina at some point in their lives were less likely to smoke cigarettes than those who had never experienced angina (23% compared with 30%).

9% of angina sufferers were heavy smokers, smoking twenty or more cigarettes a day.

Asthma

36% of adults aged 16 and above who had suffered from asthma at some point in their lives smoked cigarettes compared with 29% of adults who have never suffered from asthma.

Respondents who had experienced asthma were more likely to be heavy smokers than respondents who had not experienced asthma (14% and 11% respectively).

Diabetes

Respondents who have never suffered from diabetes were one and a half times more likely to smoke cigarettes than those people who had suffered diabetes (30% and 19% respectively).

Possible mental health problem

Respondents showing signs of a possible mental health problem were more likely to smoke cigarettes than respondents not showing signs of a possible mental health problem (38% and 27% respectively).

General health

Respondents whose health had not been good over the previous twelve months were more likely to smoke

Table 1. Health problem by cigarette smoking prevalence

		Cigs a day		Base	
		Cigarette Smokers	1-19		20+
Angina	Yes	23%	13%	9%	309
	No	30%	18%	12%	4362
Asthma	Yes	36%	21%	14%	508
	No	29%	17%	11%	4163
Diabetes	Yes	19%	10%	9%	143
	No	30%	18%	12%	4528
Limiting long standing illness	Yes	30%	17%	14%	1285
	No	29%	18%	11%	3386
A lot/great deal of stress	Yes	33%	19%	14%	1832
	No	27%	17%	10%	2836
High blood pressure	Yes	26%	16%	10%	1127
	No	31%	18%	12%	3542
Possible mental health problem	Yes	38%	22%	16%	966
	No	27%	17%	10%	3659
Good health	Yes	26%	17%	9%	2437
	No	35%	19%	16%	784

cigarettes than those who said their health had been good during this time (35% compared with 26%).

Stress

Respondents experiencing quite a lot or a great deal of worry or stress in the previous twelve months were more likely to smoke cigarettes than those experiencing a little or no worry during this time (33% and 27%).

Drinkers, ex-drinkers and lifetime abstainers

76% of respondents aged 16 and above were current drinkers, 17% had never drunk and 7% used to drink.

Current drinkers

Age and sex

Men were more likely than women to drink alcohol (82% and 72% respectively).

There was no significant difference in the prevalence of current drinkers between the ages of 16-44. The prevalence of current drinkers decreases with age from there after. 79% of respondents aged 45-54 were current drinkers compared with 48% of those aged 75 and above.

Socio-economic group (SEG)

The highest prevalence of current drinkers occurred in the professional/ managerial SEG (82%) and lowest in the unskilled manual SEG (66%).

Type of alcoholic drink consumed

The most common choice of drink was beer, lager, cider or stout, with 51% of adults having had a drink of this sort in the previous twelve months.

Alcopops were most common amongst the young. 51% of 16-24 year old drinkers having had a drink of this sort.

Lifetime abstainers

Age and sex

Women were almost twice as likely as men to be lifetime

abstainers (21% and 11% respectively).

Older women were over three times as likely as younger women to have never drunk alcohol. 32% of women aged 45 and over had never drunk alcohol compared with 10% of women aged 16-44.

There was no significant difference in the prevalence of men who had never drunk alcohol between the age of 16-64. Men aged 65 and above were more likely to report being lifetime abstainers than those younger than 65 (20% and 8% respectively).

Socio-economic group (SEG)

15% of respondents from a non-manual socio-economic background and 16% from a manual SEG background had never drunk alcohol.

Ex-drinkers

Age and sex

There was no significant difference in the prevalence of men and women who had given up drinking alcohol.

Overall, older respondents were more likely to have given up drinking alcohol than younger respondents. 9% of respondents aged 45 and above were ex-drinkers compared with 4% of those aged 16-44.

Socio-economic group (SEG)

The highest prevalence of ex-drinkers occurred in the unskilled manual SEG (11%) and the lowest occurred in the professional/ managerial SEG (4%).

Average weekly alcohol consumption

For the purposes of this survey sensible weekly drinking levels are 21 units for men and 14 units for women.

Age and sex

Men were almost twice as likely as women to drink above the sensible weekly limit. 25% of male drinkers exceeded the sensible weekly limit while 14% of female drinkers drank over the sensible limit in a typical week.

For both men and women, the proportion drinking over the sensible limits decreased with age. Men aged 16-24 were almost 3 times as likely to drink above the sensible limits (37%) as those aged 65-74 (14%).

Women aged 16-24 were 5 times as likely to drink above sensible limits (30%) as those aged 65-74 (6%).

Socio-economic group (SEG)

There was no significant difference in the prevalence of respondents drinking above sensible weekly limits between manual and non-manual SEGs.

Dangerous drinking levels

5% of male drinkers and 3% of female drinkers drank above dangerous levels of alcohol in a typical week (50 units for men and 35 for women).

Overall, approximately one in ten current drinkers aged 16-24 drank above dangerous levels in a typical week (11%), compared with 3% of drinkers aged 25 or above.

Socio-economic group (SEG)

There was no significant difference in the prevalence of respondents drinking above dangerous drinking levels in a typical week across the different SEGs.

Self-perception of weight

Respondents who weigh less than they should were more likely to drink above dangerous levels in a typical week (7%) than those who weigh more than they should (4%) or just about the right amount (4%).

Frequency of drinking

Approximately one in three drinkers who drink almost every day drank above dangerous levels in a typical week (28%).

Type of drink consumed

The highest prevalence of drinking above dangerous levels occurred amongst respondents who had drunk alcopops in the past year (12%).

Health and drinking

Angina

Respondents who suffered angina at some point in their lives were less likely to drink alcohol than those who had not experienced angina (59% and 78% respectively). 5% of respondents who had experienced angina drank above recommended levels of alcohol in a typical week.

Diabetes

Just over one half of adults who had suffered from diabetes at some point in their lives drank alcohol compared with over three quarters of those who had not experienced diabetes (54% compared with 77%).

High blood pressure

Respondents diagnosed with high blood pressure at some point in their lives were less likely to drink than respondents who had never been diagnosed with high blood pressure (69% and 79% respectively). One in ten adults diagnosed with high blood pressure drank above recommended levels of alcohol during a typical week.

Table 2. Health problem by drinking level

		Drinkers	Below rec levels	Above rec levels	Base
Angina	Yes	59%	54%	5%	309
	No	78%	62%	15%	4369
Asthma	Yes	76%	59%	17%	508
	No	76%	62%	14%	4170
Diabetes	Yes	54%	50%	3%	143
	No	77%	62%	15%	4535
Limit long standing illness	Yes	64%	54%	10%	1289
	No	81%	65%	16%	3389
A lot/great deal of stress	Yes	76%	61%	15%	1832
	No	77%	62%	15%	2842
High blood pressure	Yes	69%	59%	10%	1128
	No	79%	63%	16%	3548
Possible mental health prob	Yes	74%	59%	15%	967
	No	77%	63%	15%	3664
Good health	Yes	82%	65%	17%	2440
	No	63%	52%	11%	786

Cigarette smoking and drinking

Age and sex

Table 3 illustrates that 10% of men and 6% of women who were heavy smokers also drank above dangerous alcohol levels during a typical week.

The highest prevalence of smokers who drank over dangerous levels of alcohol in a typical week occurs in the 16-24 age group (15%) compared with the next highest, 6% of the 55-64 age group.

Socio-economic group (SEG)

Respondents who were non-smokers and non-drinkers were more than twice as likely to be from an unskilled manual SEG background (46%) than a professional/managerial SEG background (19%).

Asthma sufferers

Cigarette smokers who had experienced asthma at some point in their lives were more likely to drink above dangerous levels of alcohol in a typical week than cigarette smokers who had not experienced asthma (11% and 5% respectively).

High blood pressure

Respondents who smoked cigarettes and had been diagnosed with high blood pressure at some point in their lives were less likely to drink above the recommended level of alcohol compared with those smokers who had not been diagnosed with high blood pressure (16% and 26%).

Table 3. Drinking status by cigarette smoking status

		Ex/non smokers	1-19 a day	20+ a day
Men	Ex/non drinkers	21%	10%	14%
	Low (0-10 units)	44%	37%	28%
	Moderate (>10-21 units)	19%	25%	24%
	Fairly high (>21-50 units)	13%	23%	24%
	High (over 50 units)	3%	6%	10%
Base	Men	1375	304	279
Women	Ex/non drinkers	32%	15%	17%
	Low (0-7 units)	49%	50%	39%
	Moderate (>7-14 units)	11%	18%	23%
	Fairly high (>14-35 units)	6%	14%	15%
	High (over 35 units)	1%	3%	6%
Base	Women	1926	528	259

For additional copies of this bulletin or for the detailed tables and technical report, or previous bulletins in this series please contact:

Central Survey Unit
McAuley House
2-14 Castle Street
Belfast BT1 1SA

Tel: (028) 9034 8244

Fax: (028) 9034 8205

E-mail: stuart.bennet.csu@nics.gov.uk

Visit the NISRA website

www.nisra.gov.uk

or the DHSSPS website

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk