

Northern Ireland Health and Social Wellbeing Survey 2001

Bulletin number 1

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

This bulletin presents some of the key findings from the second Health and Social Wellbeing Survey 2001.

Central Survey Unit was commissioned by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to conduct a survey on the health and wellbeing of the Northern Ireland population.

The survey covered a broad range of issues relating to health and wellbeing. It is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 16 and over living in Northern Ireland.

The survey was carried out by Central

General Health

Overall, 52% of people said their health had been 'good' in the previous 12 months, 31% said it was 'fairly good' and 17% said it was 'not good'.

38% of both men and women indicated that they have a long-standing illness.

The proportion of men and women with a long-standing illness increased with age. 13% of men and 14% of women aged 16-24 had a long-standing illness in comparison to 65% of men and 67% of women aged 75 and over.

26% of men and 29% of women indicated that they have a health problem or disability that substantially limits their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

19% of men and 27% of women reported having been informed by a health professional that they had high blood pressure. The incidence of diagnosed high blood pressure increased with age for both men and women.

39% of men and 42% of women said they had consulted a doctor regarding back pain.

Survey Unit between February and July 2001 on a random sample of 5000 private addresses in Northern Ireland. The results presented are based on information from 5205 individuals.

In addition to this bulletin, tables of all top line results, survey questions and a technical notes supplement are available on-line. Information on how to access these tables is provided at the end of this bulletin.

Additional bulletins will be produced over the next 6 months to look at specific topic areas in more detail.

18% of men and 22% of women reported that they had experienced severe back pain in the 12 months prior to the interview.

People were asked about circulatory illness, diabetes and asthma. 11% had been told by a doctor that they were suffering from asthma, followed by 7% with angina. 76% stated that they had not experienced any of the conditions mentioned (Table 1).

Table 1. Circulatory illness, diabetes and asthma reported by respondents aged 16 and over.

Common Conditions	All	Men	Women
Angina	7%	7%	6%
Heart attack	3%	4%	2%
Heart murmur	3%	2%	4%
Other kind of heart trouble	3%	3%	3%
Stroke	1%	2%	1%
Diabetes (During pregnancy)	0%	0%	1%
Diabetes (Not during pregnancy)	3%	4%	2%
Asthma	11%	10%	11%
None of these	76%	76%	76%
Bases	4690	1968	2722

Cigarette Smoking

29% of people aged 16 and over reported that they currently smoke cigarettes, 31% had given up smoking cigarettes and 39% had never smoked cigarettes.

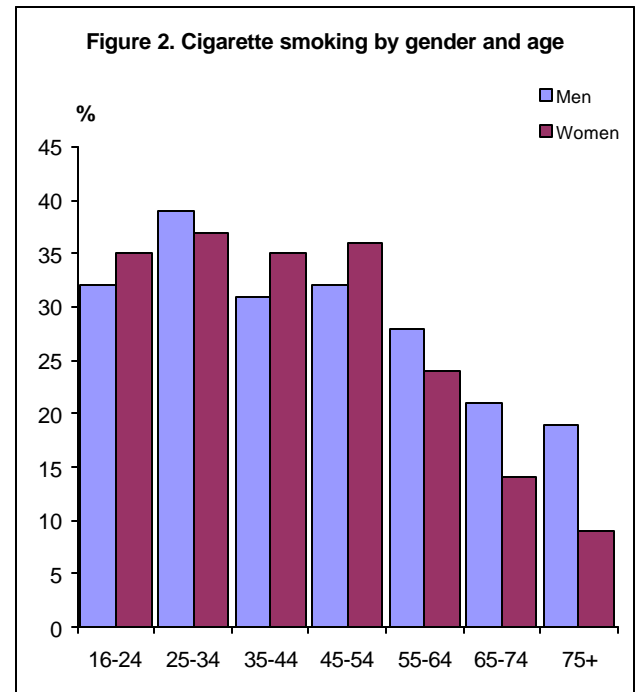
The prevalence of cigarette smoking tends to decrease with age in both sexes. Women aged 16-24 were about 4 times as likely to smoke cigarettes (35%) as those aged 75 or more (9%). Men aged 16-24, however, were less than twice as likely to smoke cigarettes (32%) as men aged 75 or more (19%).

Most smokers smoked on average between 15–24 cigarettes a day (40%).

14% of cigarette smokers smoked on average 25 or more cigarettes per day.

The heaviest smokers were in the middle age groups. 21% of cigarette smokers aged 45-54 smoked on average 25+ per day, compared with 7% of cigarette smokers aged 16-24.

Men were the heaviest smokers and were almost twice as likely (19%) as women (10%) to smoke more than 25 cigarettes a day.



Drinking

Overall, 76% of people were current drinkers, 7% used to drink and 17% were lifetime abstainers.

82% of men and 72% of women were current drinkers.

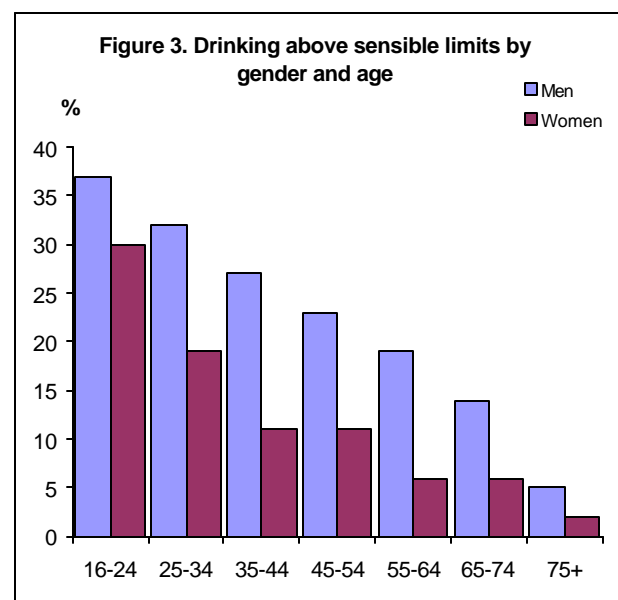
A higher percentage of people in the younger age groups drank alcohol than in the older age groups. 88% in the 16-24 age group drank alcohol in comparison to 48% in the 75 and over group.

The most popular choice of alcoholic drink was 'beer, lager, cider or stout', with 51% of people having had a drink of this sort in the last 12 months. Men were much more likely to drink beer, lager, cider or stout than women, (79% and 28% respectively). Women were more likely to drink 'wine, champagne or babycham', 58% having drank these in the last 12 months.

Men were almost twice as likely as women to drink above the sensible weekly limit. 25% of male drinkers exceeded the sensible weekly limit of 21 units while 14% of female drinkers drank over the 14 unit sensible limit.

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 the sensible limits (30%) as those aged 65-74 (6%).



Mental Health

Respondents were asked about the level of stress they had experienced over the previous 12 months. Overall, 12% of persons aged 16 and over had experienced a great deal of worry or stress and 61% had experienced little or no worry or stress.

Women were more likely to have experienced a great deal of worry or stress than men, 14% compared with 10%.

Respondents in the middle age groups were about twice as likely to have experienced a great deal of worry or stress (16%) as those in the youngest (8%) or oldest age groups (8%).

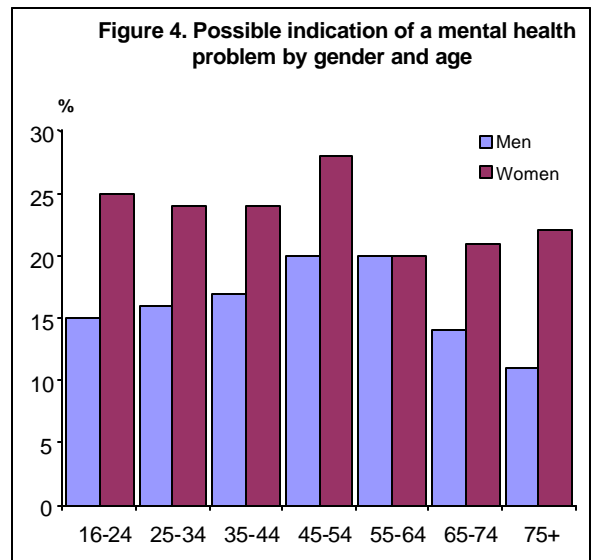
21% of all people aged 16 and over showed signs of a possible mental health problem such as depression, by scoring highly on the GHQ12.

17% of men and 24% of women showed possible signs of a mental health problem. Women in most age groups, with the exception of those aged 55-64, were more likely than men to show signs of mental health problems.

Respondents were asked about the amount of social support they received from family and friends. Overall, 40% of people aged 16 and over experienced a lack of social support, with 14% experiencing a 'severe lack' of

social support. Men were more likely to have experienced a severe lack of social support (17%) than women (12%).

The proportion of men and women reporting a severe lack of social support changed little with age. Men aged 35-74, however, were almost twice as likely as women in the same age group to report a severe lack of social support.



Sexual Health

This section was only asked of respondents aged 16-44, using a self completion form.

The 3 most common ways that respondents learned about sex were: 'Friends of about my own age' (53%), 'Lessons at school' (47%), and 'From my mother' (35%).

Half of the respondents reported having had sexual intercourse for the first time by age 17 for men and age 18 for women.

63% of men and 68% of women who have had sexual intercourse used a form of contraception on their first occasion.

The majority of 16-24 year old men (78%) and women (79%) said they used a contraceptive the first time they had sexual intercourse. In comparison, just over a half of 35-44 year old men (52%) and women (58%) said they had used contraceptives the first time they had sexual intercourse.

Of those respondents who had sexual intercourse, 88% of men and 84% of women had sex in the 3 months

prior to the day of the interview.

7% of men and 5% of women who have had sexual intercourse have attended a Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic.

19% of people have changed their sexual lifestyle or made decisions about sex because of concern about contracting the HIV virus.

Young people were more likely to have changed their sexual lifestyle than older people, 26% aged 16-24 compared with 12% aged 35-44. There was no significant difference between men and women.

9% of people said that they, or their partner, had sought medical or professional help about infertility.

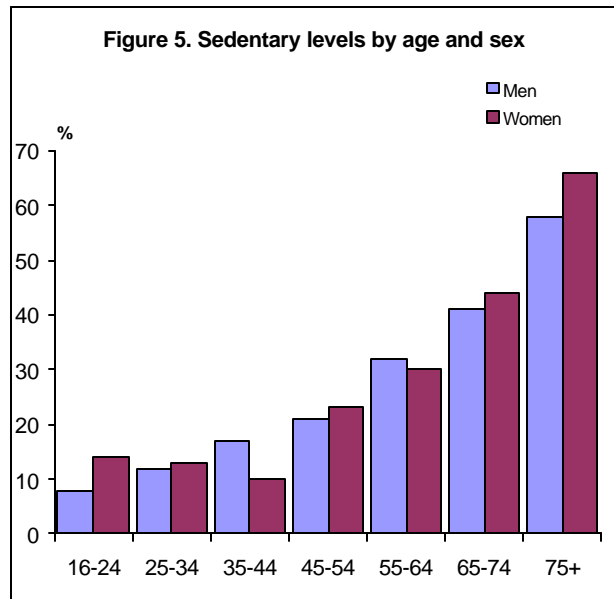
13% of people aged 35-44 have sought medical or professional help about infertility compared with 2% of people aged 16-24. There was no significant difference between men and women.

Physical Activity

Within the definitions used in the survey, 25% of all people aged 16 and over can be classed as sedentary. That is, they have not performed any activity of at least a moderate level, lasting 20 minutes, on at least one occasion in the last 7 days.

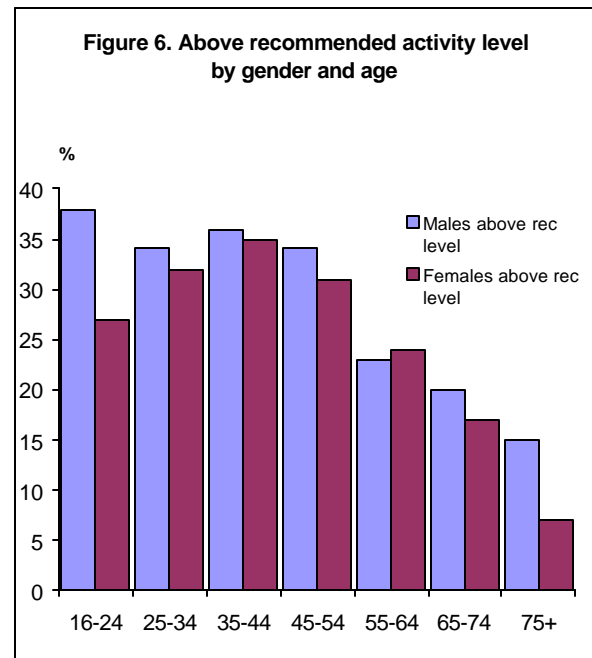
The elderly are considerably more likely to be sedentary than the young. 63% of people aged 75 and over were sedentary in comparison to only 11% of 16-24 year olds.

Approximately a quarter of both men (24%) and women (25%) were sedentary. Young women aged 16-24, however, were almost twice as likely to be sedentary (14%) as young men (8%), whereas men aged 35-44 were more likely to be sedentary (17%) than women (10%). There was no difference between men and women in other age groups.



28% of all people take above the recommended level of physical activity of at least 30 minutes per day on 5 days a week.

The proportion of men taking above the recommended level of physical activity fell from 38% aged 16-24 to 15% aged 75+.



The proportion of women taking above the recommended level fell from 27% aged 16-24 to 7% aged 75+.

Respondents were asked how often they had gone on a long walk in the previous 4 weeks. This included country walks and any walks in the course of their work or to and from work. 32% had walked 1 - 2 miles at least once a week and 21% had walked 2 or more miles at least once a week. 52% had not walked 1 - 2 miles in the previous 4 weeks. There were no significant differences between men and women.

Overall, 24% of people said that they were not regularly active in the previous six months and did not intend to be so in the next six months. Women were more likely to be of this opinion than men, 25% and 22% respectively.

33% of men and 35% of women said they had an injury/disability/medical condition which limits their physical activity.

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

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