High-risk cannabis use in Irish teenagers

Joan Hanafin, Salome Sunday, Luke Clancy

TobaccoFree Research Institute Ireland (TFRI), TU Dublin, Ireland

BACKGROUND

Cannabis use during adolescence is associated with cognitive, psychological, and social harms, particularly when use is frequent or high-risk.
While prevalence of cannabis use among Irish adolescents is well-documented and decreasing, less is known about their high-risk cannabis use.

METHODS

SAMPLE
Data were from a nationally representative, stratified random sample of 5,186 Irish adolescents aged 15-16 years.

MEASURES
Cannabis use was assessed over lifetime, past-year and past-30-day periods.

HIGH-RISK ASSESSMENT
Six indicators of high-risk cannabis use were examined, alongside a composite high-risk score (0-2).

CONTACT

Prof Joan Hanafin
jhanafin@tri.ie
www.tri.ie

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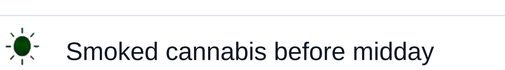
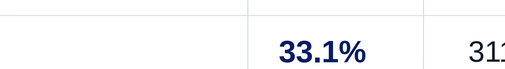
RESULTS

1) PREVALENCE OF CANNABIS USE

LIFETIME USE
19.7% (n=953)



PAST-YEAR USE
16.0% (n=796)



PAST-30-DAY USE
7.6% (n=382)

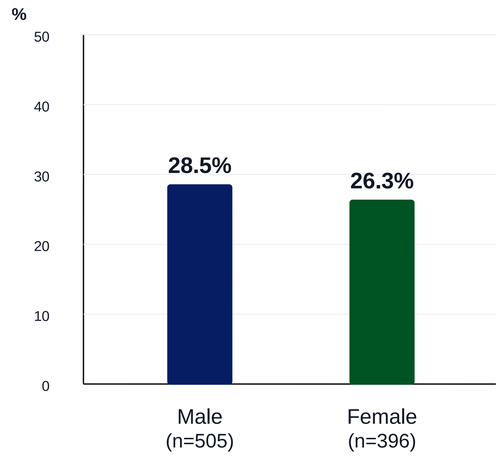
2) INDICATORS OF HIGH-RISK (PROBLEM) CANNABIS USE AMONG EVER-USERS (n=933*)

	%	n
Had memory problems after smoking cannabis	**33.5%**	314
Smoked cannabis before midday	**33.1%**	311
Smoked cannabis alone	**28.0%**	262
Friends or family had told them to stop/reduce use	**18.3%**	172
Had problems due to cannabis consumption	**17.3%**	162
Tried unsuccessfully to reduce or stop cannabis use	**16.1%**	151
High-risk use (score ≥2)	**28.6%**	**267**

**Total n may vary slightly due to missing data on individual items.*

3) HIGH-RISK CANNABIS USE (SCORE ≥2) AMONG EVER-USERS (n=933*)

Males had significantly higher overall high-risk scores as well as higher scores on every individual item measured.



KEY FINDINGS

28.6%
of ever-users met the high-risk threshold (n=267).

33.5% / 33.1%
memory problems and use before midday were the most common indicators.

Male risk:
Males consistently reported higher risk across all indicators.

CONCLUSION

Prevention strategies should extend beyond reducing prevalence to addressing harmful patterns of use and identifying and supporting high-risk adolescents.