



# Young Adult Smoking in Ireland – Initiation, Prevalence, Cessation, and Intervention Points

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**Data deposition:** The data that support the findings were used under license for the current study. They are available from Central Statistics Office Ireland but restrictions apply.

<https://www.cso.ie/en/aboutus/lgdp/csodatapolicies/dataforresearchers/rmfregister/>

**Ethical approval** for GUI Wave 4 was granted by the GUI Research Ethics Committee, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Ireland.



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# BACKGROUND

Focus in the literature is mainly on earlier teens, especially regarding initiation

In general, 20-34 year-olds have the highest smoking prevalence of any age group



# OBJECTIVES

To establish, for 20-year-olds in Ireland:

1

prevalence of ever-smoking, former, current and daily smoking

2

most common ages of initiation into smoking

3

motivations for smoking

4

reported difficulty with cessation



# METHODS GUI LONGITUDINAL STUDY



***Growing Up in Ireland:*** the national longitudinal study of children and young people in Ireland. Since 2006, the study has provided Government with an evidence base for informed policy decisions .



***Growing Up in Ireland*** has 2 cohorts ('98 and '08). We use data from 5,190, 20 year-olds from Wave 4 of Cohort '98 (formerly Child Cohort) collected in 2018/19.



All our analyses were performed using STATA version 16.1.



# METHODS GUI VARIABLES

## Questions about cigarettes (incl. roll-ups)

*Have you ever smoked a cigarette?* Yes/No

*Which of the following best describes you?* Only ever tried smoking once or twice/ Used to smoke but not now/ Smoke occasionally/ Smoke daily

*How old were you when you first smoked a cigarette?* \_\_\_\_ years  
(11 years or younger, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 years)

*Have you ever tried to give up cigarettes but found that you couldn't?* Yes/No

*What would you say is your most important reason for smoking?* I enjoy it/ It helps cope with stress/ To help lose or maintain weight/ Because my friends smoke/ Because my family smoke/ I can't give it up/ Something else



# RESULTS

# Ever-Smoking Prevalence

	Have you ever smoked a cigarette N (%)
Yes	3807 (73.9)
No	1344 (26.1)
Total	5151 (100.0)

Table 1: Prevalence of ever-smoking in 20-year-olds



# RESULTS

# Current Smoking Prevalence

	Current Smoking N (%)
Yes	1946 (37.5)
No	3244 (62.5)
Total	5190 (100.0)

Table 2: Prevalence of current smoking in 20-year-olds





# RESULTS

## Age of initiation

	How old were you when you first smoked a cigarette N (%)
11 years or younger	45 (1.2)
12	105 (2.7)
13	149 (3.9)
14	278 (7.3)
15	381 (9.9)
16	628 (9.9)
17	669 (16.4)
18	<b>885 (23.1)</b>
19	520 (13.6)
20	<b>165 (4.3)</b>
Total	3825 (100.0)

Table 3: Age of initiation into cigarette smoking reported by 20-year-olds



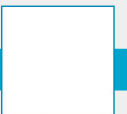
# RESULTS

## Reasons for Smoking

	Most important reason for smoking? N (%)
Enjoy it	762 (20.9)
Helps cope with stress	547 (15.0)
Helps to lose or maintain weight	31 (0.9)
Because friends smoke	<b>1082 (29.7)</b>
Can't give it up	74 (2.0)
Something else	1147 (31.5)
Total	3643 (100.0)



Table 4: Most important reasons for smoking cited by 20-year-olds



# RESULTS

## Cessation - Former Smokers


	Which of the following best describes you? N (%)
Only ever tried smoking once or twice	1528 (39.9)
Used to smoke but not now	<b>358 (9.4)</b> 
Smoke occasionally	1347 (35.2)
Smoke daily	592 (15.5)
Total	3825 (100.0)

Table 5: Percentage of 20-year-old ever-smokers who quit



# RESULTS

## Cessation – Failed to Quit

	Have you ever tried to give up cigarettes but found that you couldn't? N (%)
Yes	488 (12.8)
No	3323 (87.2)
Total	3811 (100.0)



Table 6: Percentage of 20-year-old ever-smokers who wanted to quit but were unable



# Conclusion

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- Smoking rates are high among 20-year-olds, with three-quarters of respondents reporting that they had ever-smoked.
- More than 1 in 8 (13%) had tried to stop smoking but were unable to.
- The ages between 17 and 19 were vulnerable ones for smoking initiation, perhaps indicative of young adults leaving school, starting higher education and jobs, and moving away from home.
- Of all initiation ages analysed (11-20 years), age 18 was the most frequently reported age suggesting a need for targeted prevention and cessation for older teens and young adults.



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