

Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland 2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey: Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-Depressants Use Results Bulletin 6 (2007)

Research conducted by:

The NACD and the Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit (DAIRU) within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland commissioned MORI MRC to carry out this study.

Aim:

To establish the prevalence of drug use in Ireland. This summary presents the prevalence rates of the use of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants. The results are given for all respondents (aged 15-64), by gender and by age group – young adults (15-34) and older adults (35-64) for lifetime, last year and last month use.

Method:

A representative sample (8,434) of people between 15-64 years of age in Northern Ireland (3,516) and Ireland (4,918) were surveyed following the guidelines from the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). Questionnaires were administered using face to face interviewing of people in private households between October 2002 and April 2003. Respondents were asked about these drugs as a collective, i.e., did you ever use sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants? A list of examples was provided to the interviewees and they were invited to reply yes or no. They were not asked to isolate which drug, therefore we can only report this information as a group of drugs and not by single drug.

Key Findings:

- Older adults were twice as likely to report lifetime use of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants (16%) than young adults (8%) and three times more likely to report last month use
- Female respondents reported higher prevalence rates than males across all time periods
- The average (median) age of first use for all adults was 30 years, however when examined by gender, males were likely to report first use at 28 years and females at 30 years
- The majority of current users (last month use) – 81% - took these drugs daily or almost daily
- Most people who used sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants in the last month got them on prescription (95%)
- 84% of young adults reported getting these drugs on prescription and 8% reported getting them from someone they knew
- 98% of current users took these drugs in tablet form
- 2% reported injecting sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants
- Respondents who were separated, divorced or widowed reported higher prevalence rates than those who were single (never married), co-habiting or married

- Higher prevalence rates were linked with various indicators of deprivation such as being dependent on the State long term, not being in paid work, lower levels of educational attainment, leaving education before 15 years of age and living in local authority housing
- In all instances, use of sedatives, tranquillisers or anti-depressants was higher in Northern Ireland than in Ireland.

Glossary

Sedatives and tranquillisers

Sedatives and tranquillisers are commonly used terms for the same group of medicines which depress, slow down or calm the brain and central nervous system. These drugs are prescribed under medical supervision and can only be obtained by prescription from a pharmacist.

Anti-depressants

These are medicines used to treat conditions such as low or sad mood, loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities, fatigue and energy loss usually known as Depression. These drugs are prescribed under medical supervision and can only be obtained by prescription from a pharmacist.