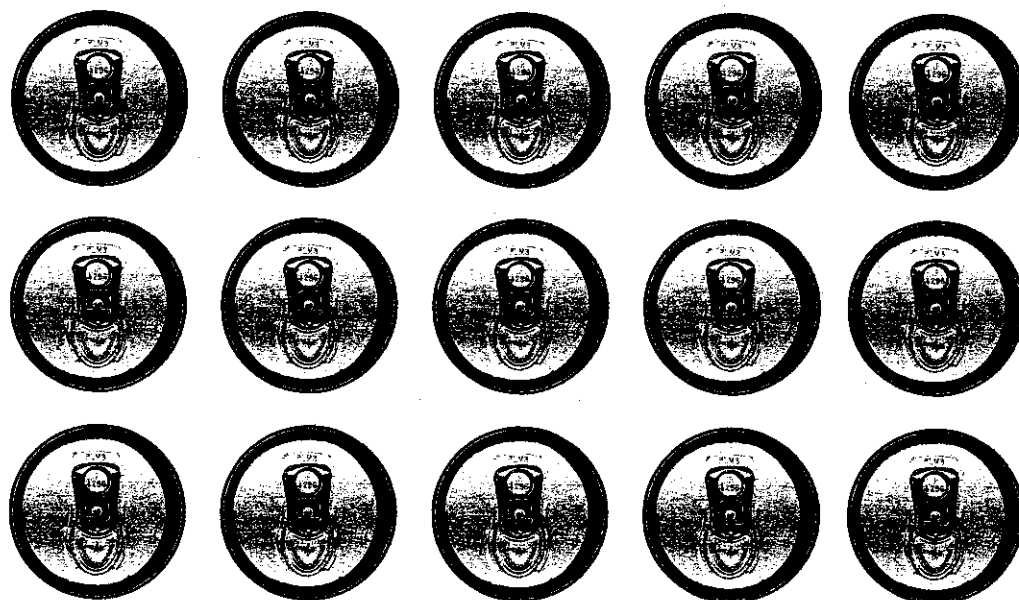
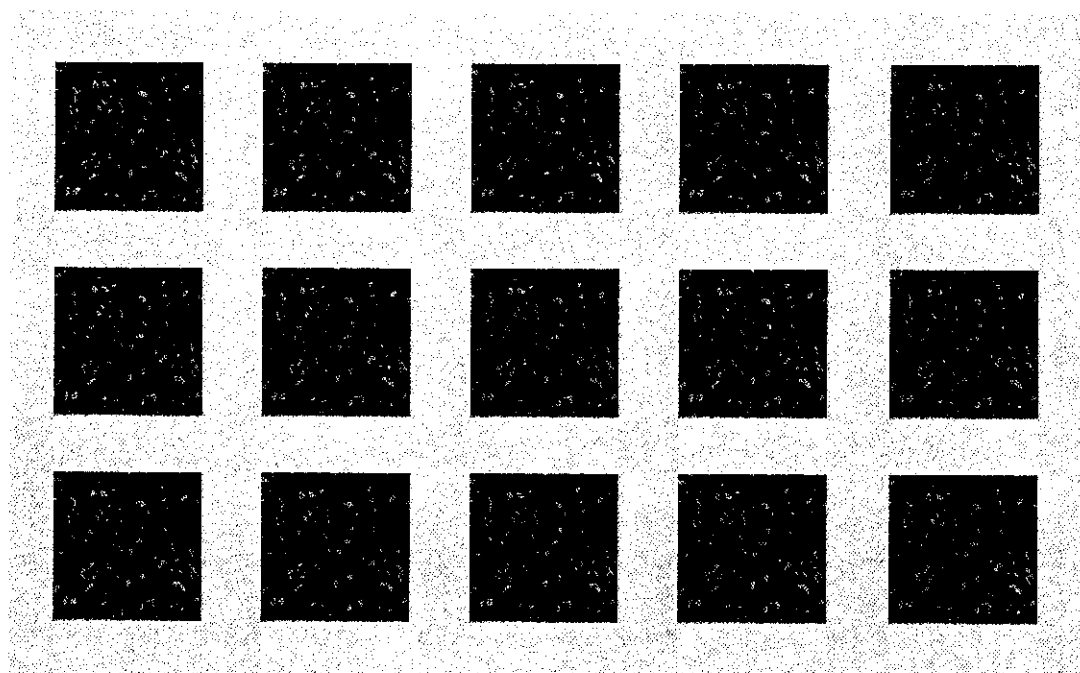


SMOKING AND DRINKING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN IRELAND





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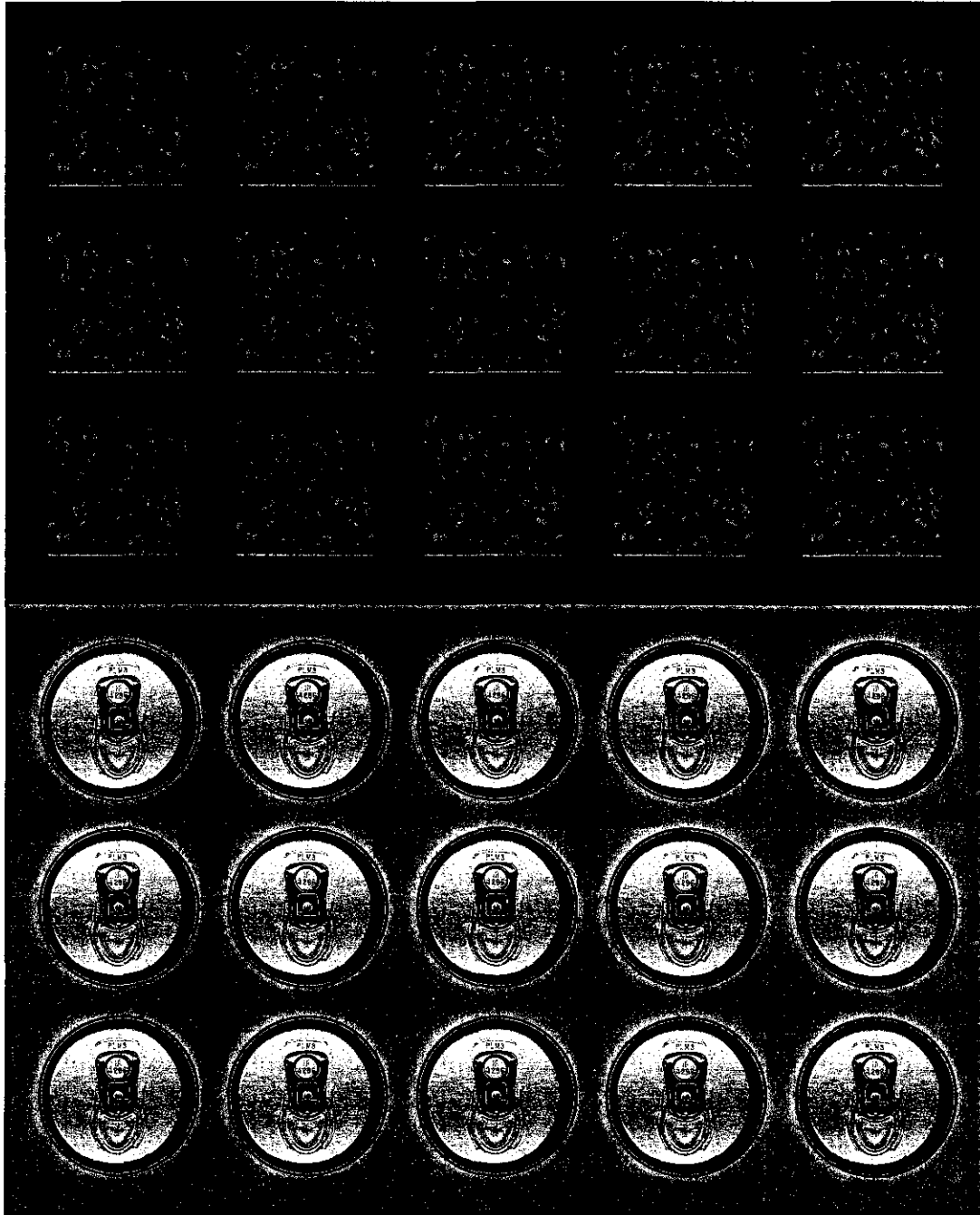


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Chapter 1

Introduction

In early 1993, the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute to conduct a survey on smoking and drinking among a nationally representative sample of about 4000 young people aged 12 - 18, including some 15 - 18 year olds who had left school. Data were obtained using anonymous questionnaires. A total of 3935 questionnaires were completed in a representative sample of 80 second level schools (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). One hundred and fifty seven (157) young people who had permanently left school were also interviewed giving an 80% response rate from the 197 who were contacted in this group. Because of the great difference in size between the pupil sample and the sample of out-of-school young people the results are presented separately for the two groups. (Details of the sampling method for both groups are given in Appendix A).

Figure 1.1 School Sample Characteristics - Sex and Age Group

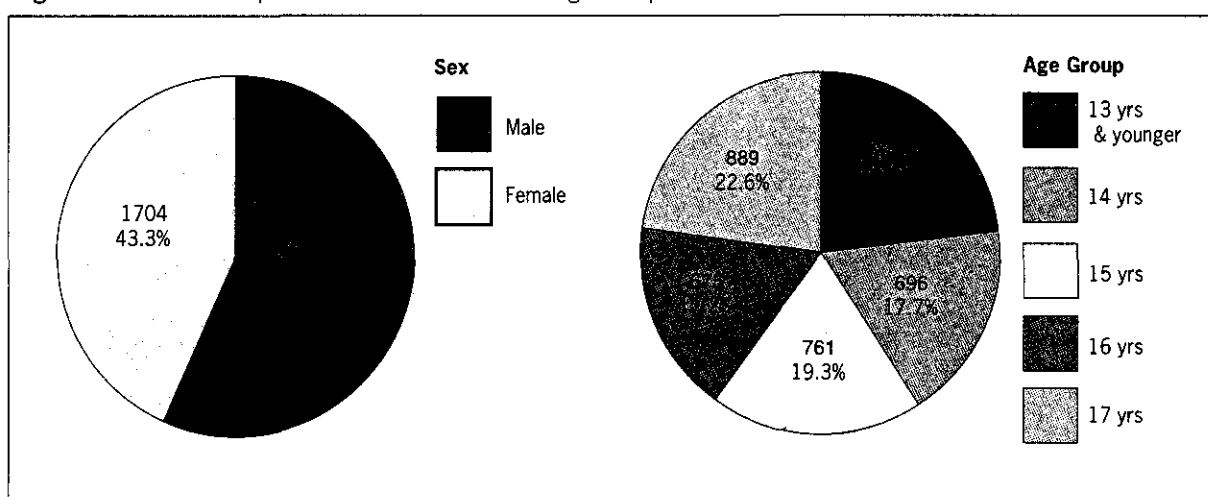
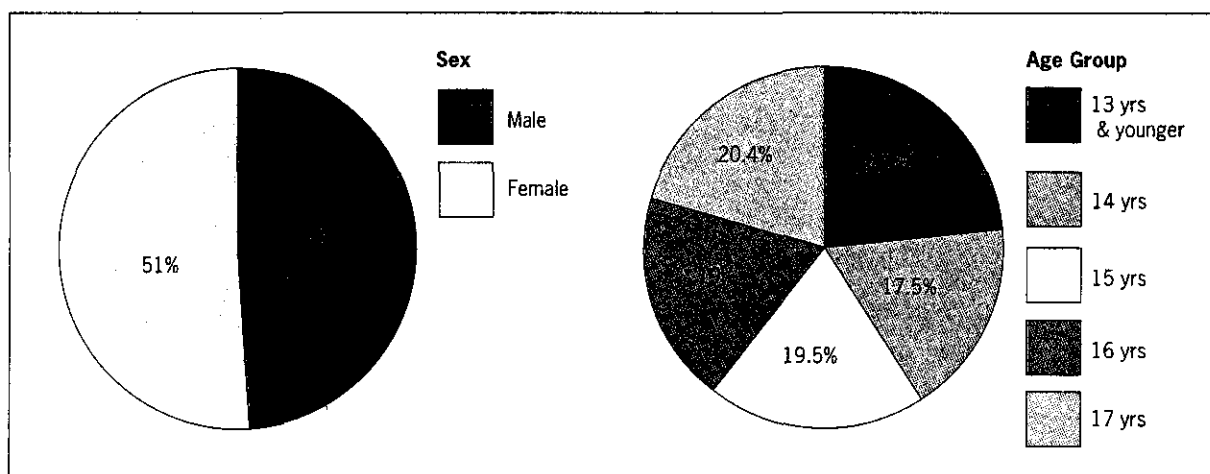


Figure 1.2 Reweighted School Sample Characteristics - Sex and Age Group



This was the first survey done on a nationally representative sample of young people in schools, previous surveys having concentrated on large urban areas (e.g. Grube and Morgan studies 1984 and 1990 were both based in Dublin). In the absence of previous national surveys, some comparisons are made in this report between the findings in the current survey and those in the earlier Grube and Morgan Dublin studies. Caution however is required in drawing any conclusions from these comparisons due to the different geographic base of the samples.

Chapter 2

Cigarette smoking - the pupil sample

2.1 Smoking Prevalence

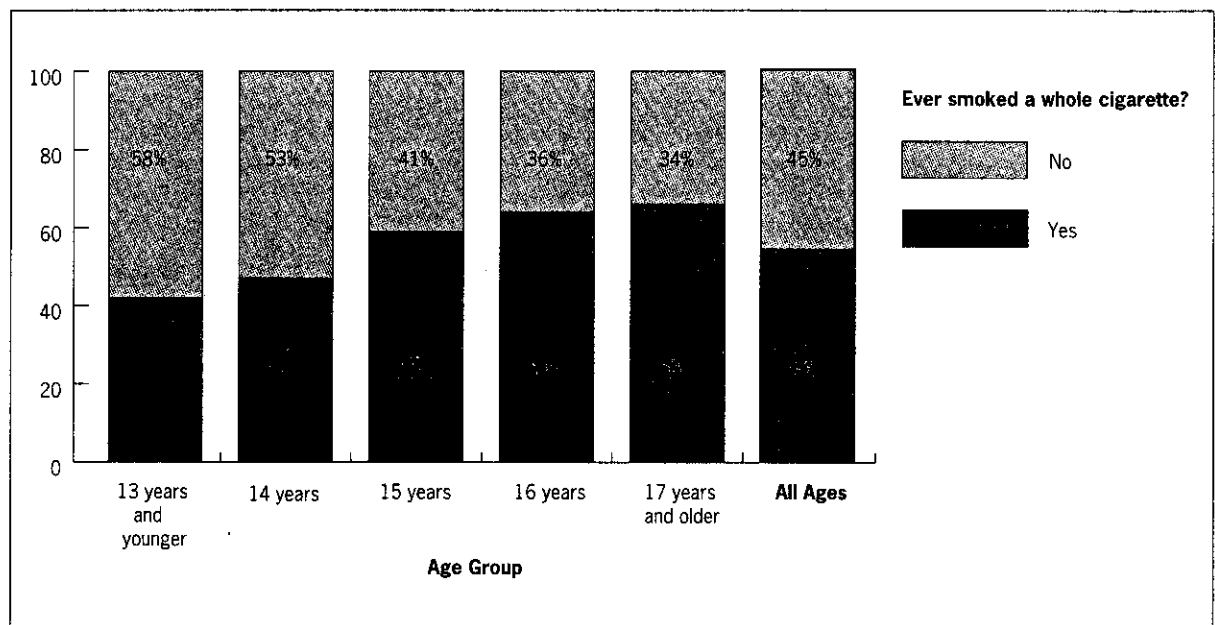
The study used three measures of smoking prevalence:

- lifetime use: based on the question "have you ever smoked a whole cigarette?"
- current use: having smoked at least 1-2 cigarettes in the last month (30 days)
- regular use: smoked daily (at least 1-2 cigarettes) during the previous month (30 days).

Lifetime Smokers

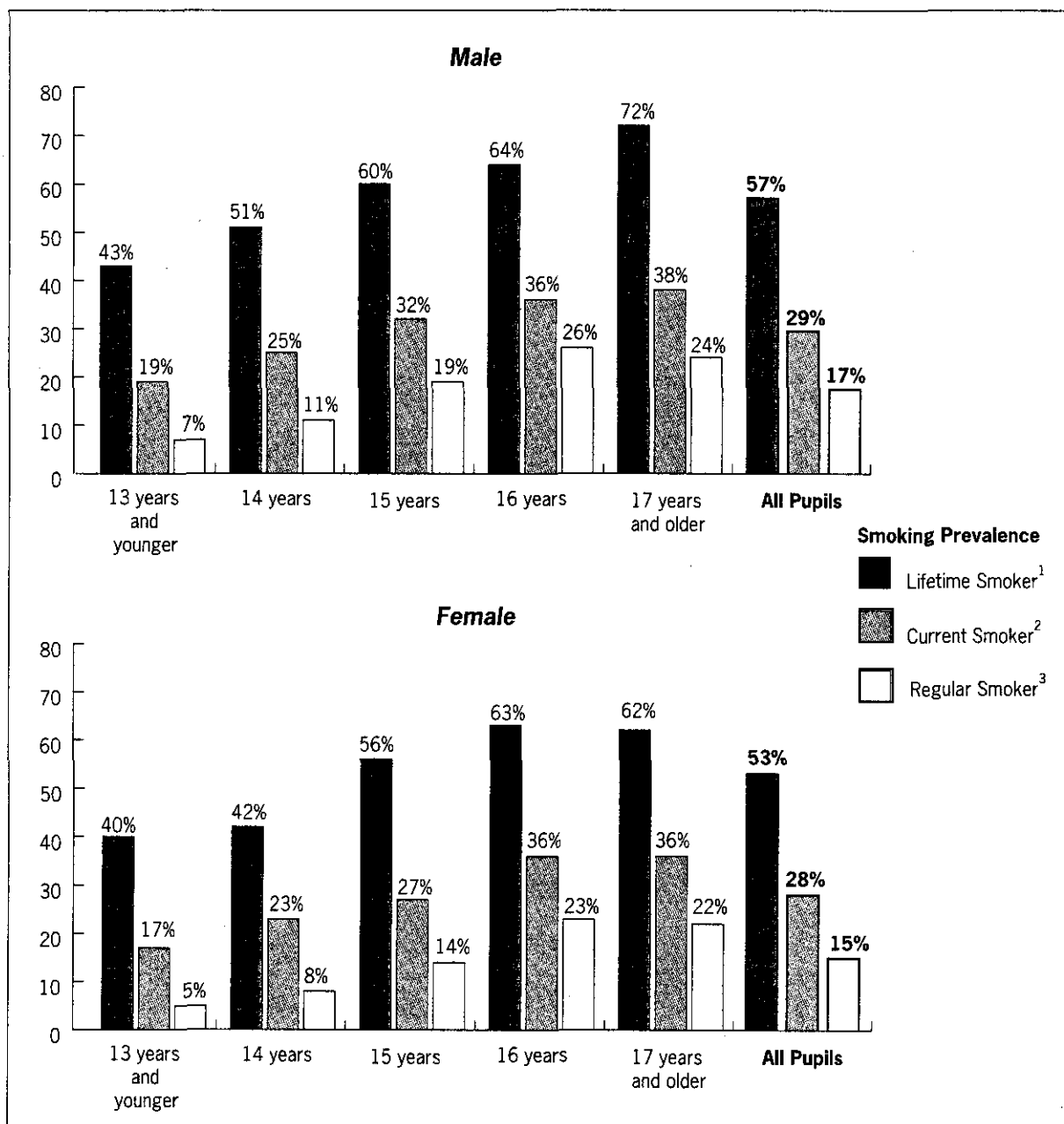
Fifty five per cent (55%) of second level pupils nationally aged 12 - 18 years have ever smoked (lifetime prevalence) (Figure 2.1). This compares with 67% in 1984 and 61% in 1991 found by Grube and Morgan in Dublin surveys of the same age group.

Figure 2.1 Lifetime smoking prevalence by age group among 12 - 18 year old pupils



Lifetime smoking prevalence rates for males are higher than those for females at all ages with an overall difference of 4% for the group as a whole (57% for males compared to 53% for females). At age 16 years the gap between the sexes is only 1% but increases to 10% at age 17 years and older (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Smoking prevalence (%) among 12 - 18 year old second level pupils by age & sex



¹ Lifetime - ever smoked a whole cigarette

² Current Use - smoked at least 1-2 cigarettes during the previous 30 days

³ Regular use - smoked daily (at least 1-2 cigarettes) during the previous 30 days

Current Smokers

Twenty nine per cent (29%) of second level pupils aged 12 - 18 are current smokers (i.e. smoked at least 1 - 2 cigarettes in the last month). This compares with 37% in 1984 and 34% in 1991 in Grube and Morgan's Dublin studies. Eighteen per cent (18%) of 13 year olds are current smokers and this increases by 6% for each year up to 16 years after which it rises by 1% to 37% of those aged 17 years and older. The largest rises in rates occur between 14 and 15 years for boys and between 15 and 16 years for girls. At age 17 years and older 38% of boys and 36% of girls are current smokers. Prevalence of current smoking is approximately the same in the three types of school - primary, vocational, community/comprehensive.

Regular Smokers

Sixteen per cent (16%) of 12 - 18 year old second level pupils are regular smokers (i.e. smoked at least 1 - 2 cigarettes a day during the previous month). This compares with 24% in 1984 and 19% in 1991 in Grube and Morgan's Dublin studies. At 13 years and younger 7% of boys and 5% of girls are regular smokers. This percentage increases by an average of 6% for each year of age up to age 16 after which it shows a 1% fall. At age 17 years and older 23% of pupils (24% of boys and 22% of girls) are regular smokers. Again prevalence of regular smoking is the same in the three types of school.

2.2 Smoking and Social Class

In relation to social class, no clear trend was apparent except that those males for whom social class was unknown* had the highest percentage of lifetime smokers, current smokers and regular smokers, while among females the same situation prevailed except that here the unskilled manual group had roughly similar percentages of current and regular smokers to the group for whom social class was unknown. Among males, the unskilled manual group had the second highest proportion of regular smokers. * Social class was unknown for about 10% of the total sample.

Figure 2.3 Percentage of male pupils who are lifetime, current and regular smokers by social class (using Irish Social Class scale)

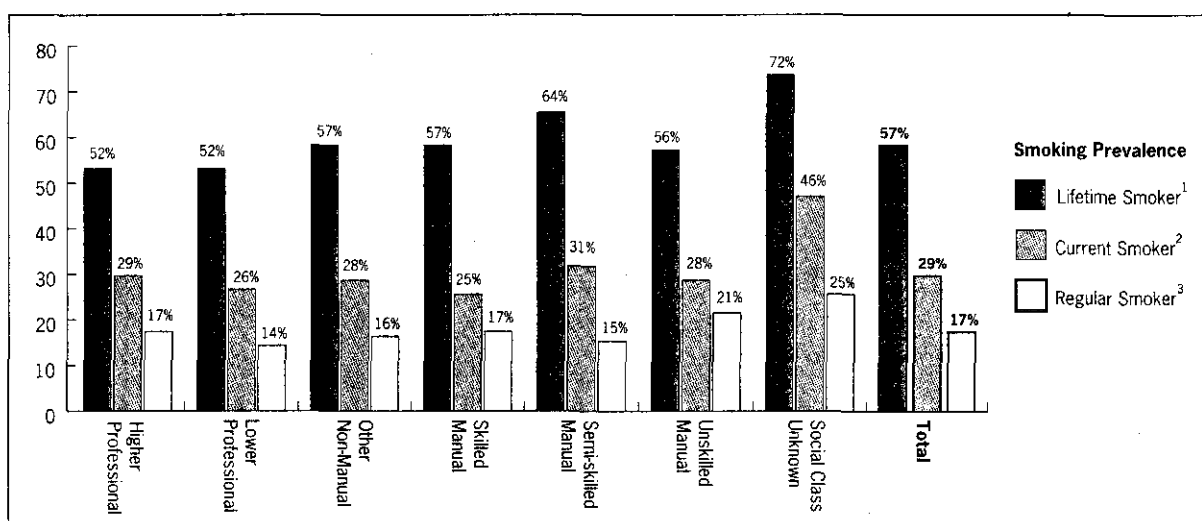
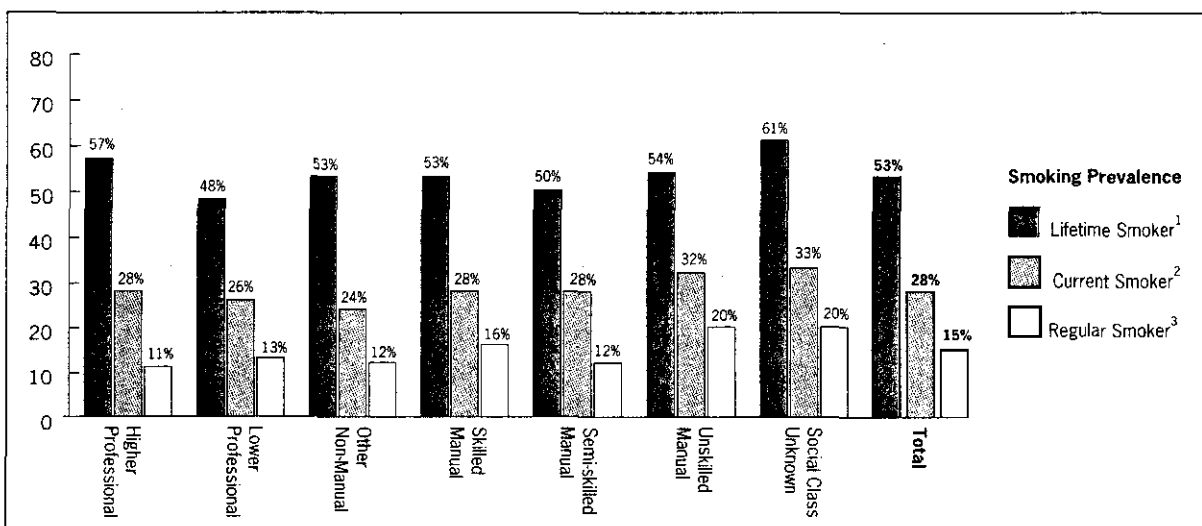


Figure 2.4 Percentage of female pupils who are lifetime, current and regular smokers by social class (using Irish Social Class scale)



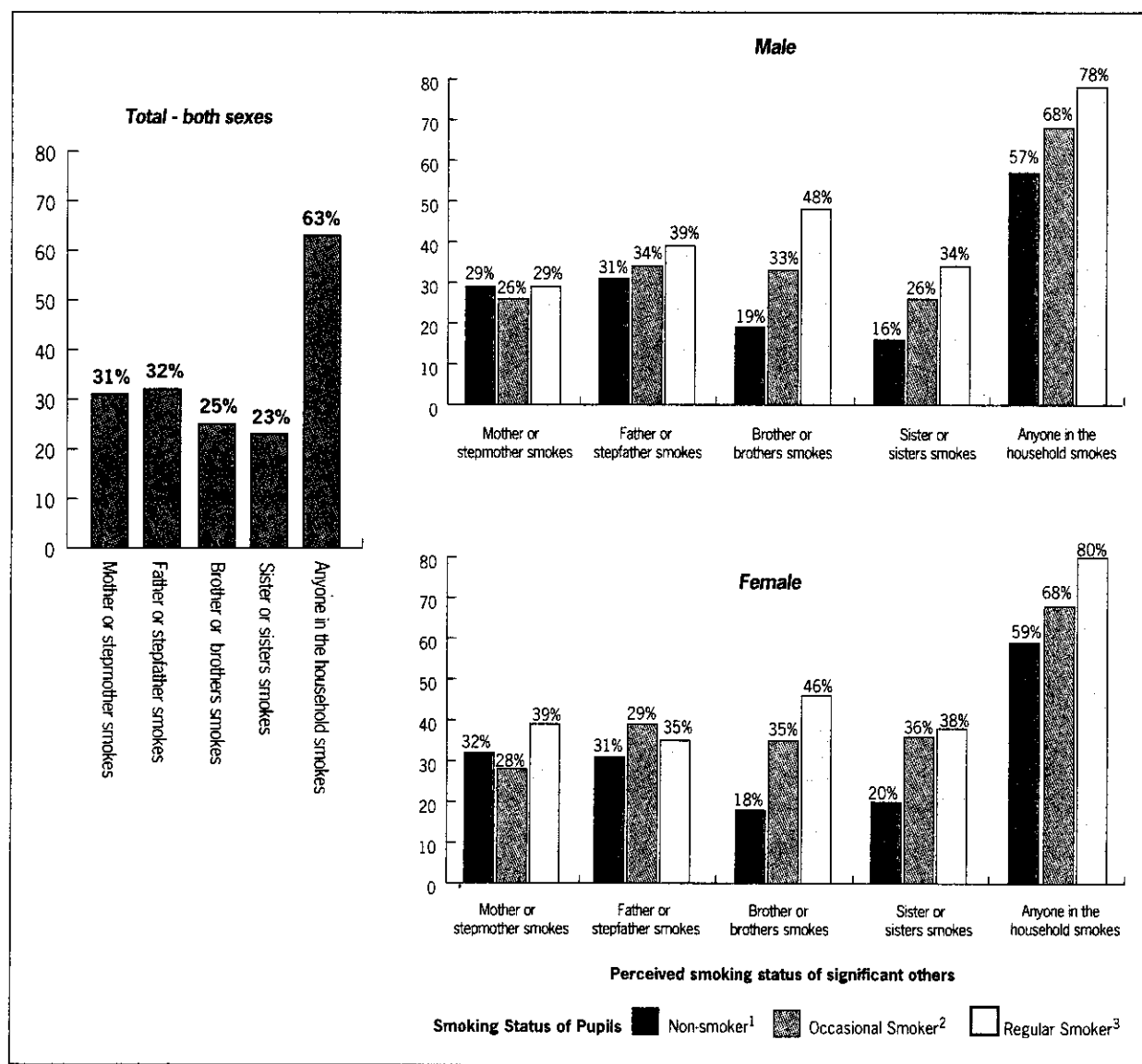
¹ Lifetime - ever smoked a whole cigarette ² Current Use - smoked at least 1-2 cigarettes during the previous 30 days

³ Regular use - smoked daily (at least 1-2 cigarettes) during the previous 30 days

2.3 Smoking status of significant others

The research shows that almost two thirds of pupils are members of a household in which some other member (parent or sibling) smokes (Figure 2.5). The links between smoking status of another family member and that of the pupil are clear. Pupils who live in households where some other family member smokes are more likely to smoke themselves than those pupils who live in households where no other member smokes. This difference seems to be mainly associated with a brother or sister smoking rather than with a parent smoking.

Figure 2.5 Smoking status of other family members living in the same household by Pupils' Smoking Status and Sex



¹ Non - smoker: have never smoked a whole cigarette

² Occasional smoker: having smoked at least 1-2 cigarettes during the previous month but less than 1-2 cigarettes daily

³ Regular smoker: having smoked at least 1-2 cigarettes daily during the previous month

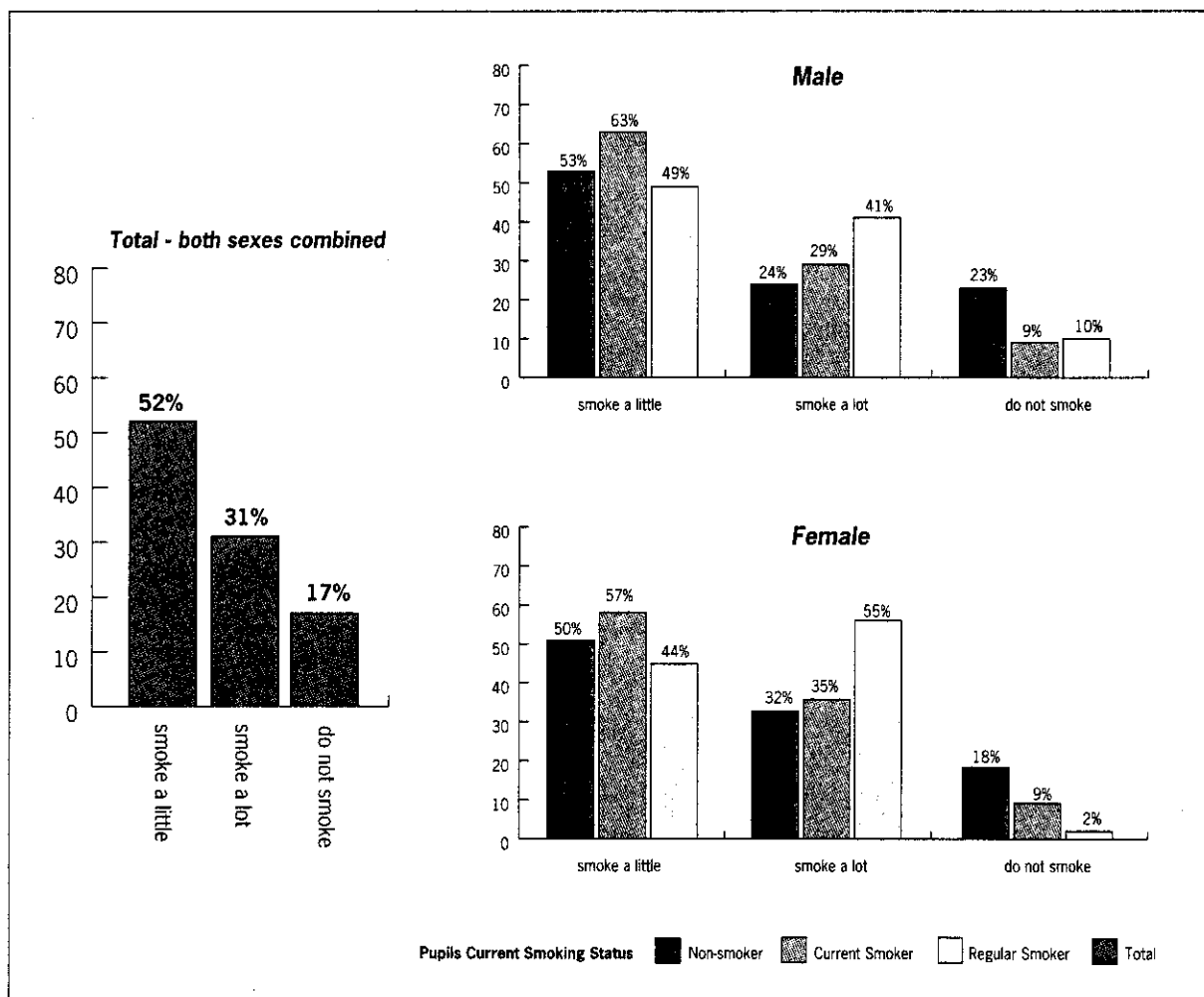
Three quarters of non-smokers have a best friend who is a non-smoker, compared with around 30% of occasional smokers and around 20% of regular smokers (Table 2.1). Half of the occasional smokers have a best friend who “smokes a little”: half of the regular smokers have a best friend who “smokes a lot”. In the case of other good friends, the pattern for occasional and regular smokers is fairly similar but a much higher proportion of the other good friends of non-smokers are young people who “smoke a little”. Just over half of pupils characterise “most young people of my age that I know” as “smoking a little”, around 30 per cent (30%) as “smoking a lot” and only 17% as “not smoking at all” (Figure 2.6). The extent to which smoking is regarded as a peer group norm by smokers and non-smokers alike is striking.

Table 2.1 Perceived amount smoked by best friend and other good friends by pupils' sex and smoking status

<i>Perceived amount smoked by best friend</i>	Non-smoker		Occasional Smoker		Regular Smoker		All Pupils
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
smokes a little	18	15	49	53	27	37	23
smokes a lot	9	6	21	19	52	45	16
does not smoke	73	79	30	29	21	18	61

<i>Perceived amount smoked by other good friends</i>	Non-smoker		Occasional Smoker		Regular Smoker		All Pupils
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
smoke a little	41	36	51	53	39	40	40
smoke a lot	18	14	27	32	53	50	23
do not smoke	41	50	22	15	8	11	37

Figure 2.6 Pupils' estimate of "the amount smoked by most young people of my age that I know" by current smoking status and sex

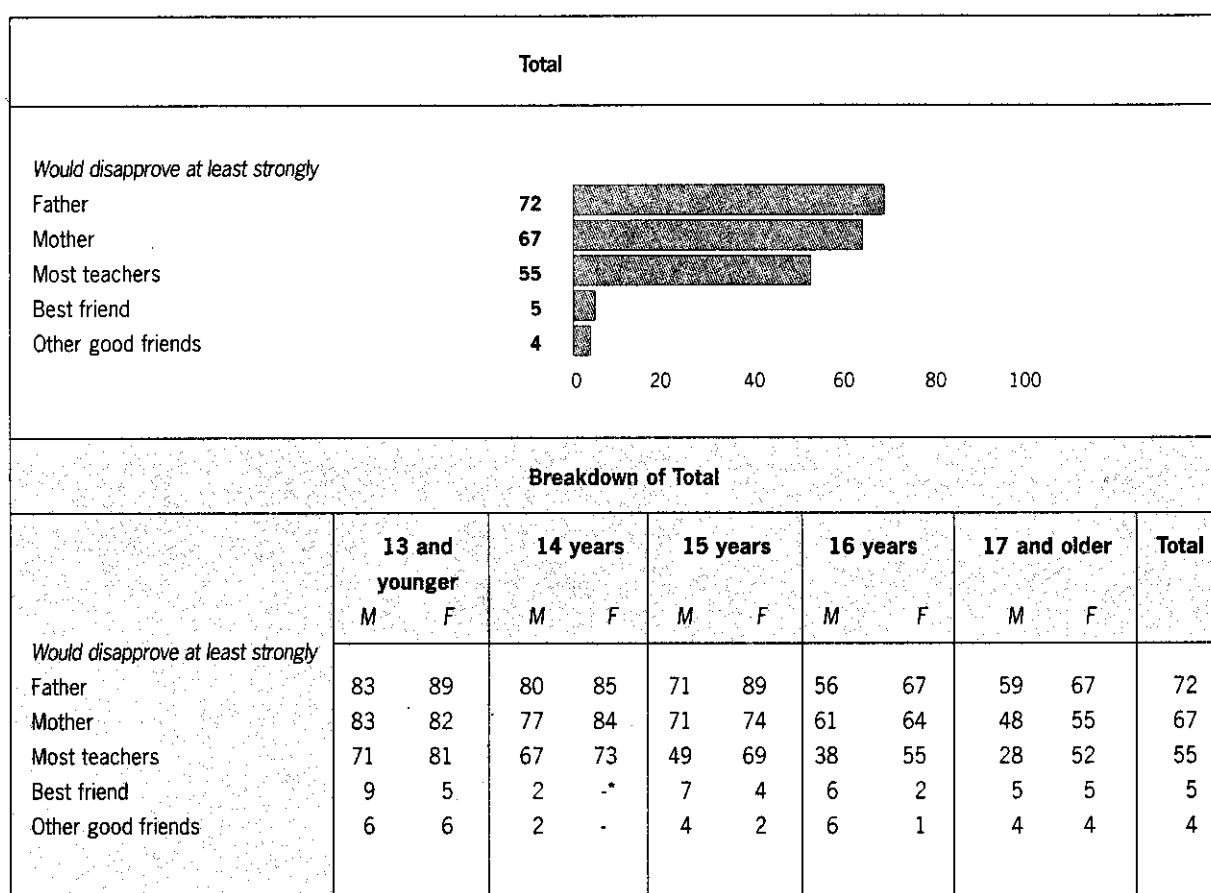


2.4 Perceived disapproval of smoking by significant others

Parents

More current non-smokers than current smokers perceive their parents as disapproving at least strongly (very strongly or strongly) of their possible smoking (Tables 2.2 and 2.3). Older pupils, both smokers and non-smokers, are less likely than younger pupils to perceive their parents as disapproving.

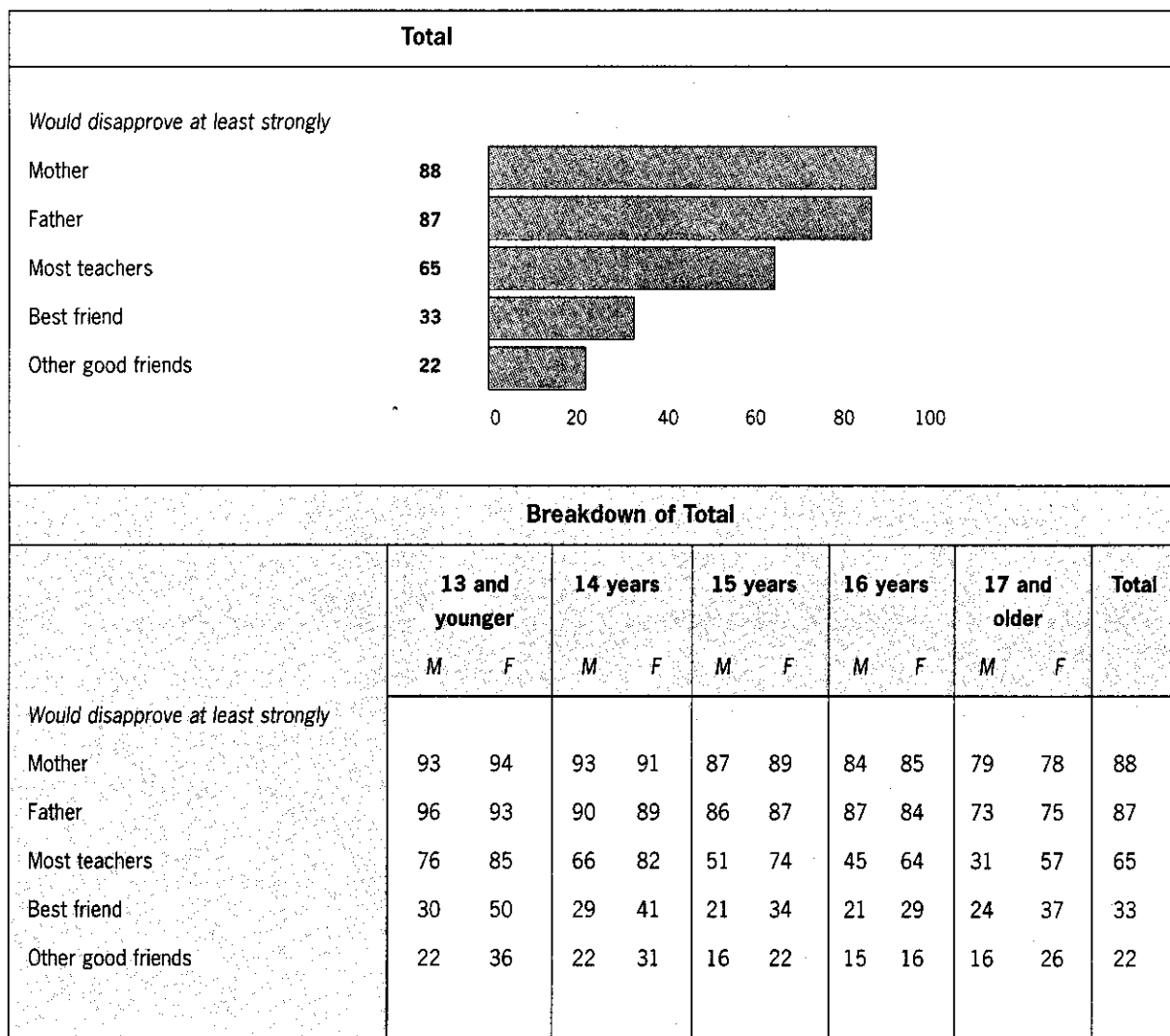
Table 2.2 Percentage of pupils who are current smokers (by age and sex) who perceive that significant others would disapprove at least strongly of their smoking



Note: Pupils would choose from the following responses: *disapprove very strongly*, *disapprove strongly*, *disapprove*, *disapprove slightly*, *would not disapprove*. The percentages in the above graph refer to the combined categories *disapprove very strongly* and *disapprove strongly*.

* Where there is no entry under a particular heading, illustrated by "-*", this indicates that there were no responses under the heading. Where "0" appears, there are a small, but statistically insignificant, number of cases which have been rounded down to the nearest whole number, in this case 0.

Table 2.3 Percentage of non-smoker pupils (by age and sex) who perceive that significant others would disapprove at least strongly if they were to smoke



Thus at age 16, 61% of boys and 64% of girls who are current smokers perceive their mother as disapproving at least strongly of their smoking while 56% and 67% respectively perceive their father as doing so. However, among non-smokers of the same age, 84% of boys and 85% of girls perceive their mother as disapproving at least strongly, while 87% and 84% respectively perceive their father as doing so.

Pupils were asked how important it was to them, in their decision to smoke or not, to have the approval of their parents. Forty-five per cent (45%) of all the pupils rated it at least very important to have the approval of their parents in regard to their smoking behaviour. More non-smokers than smokers attached importance to their mother's and father's approval.

Friends

A third of pupils who are current non-smokers consider that their best friend would disapprove at least strongly of their smoking while only 5% of current smokers think this. Almost a quarter of all pupils (24%) considered the approval of their best friend as at least very important. Non-smokers were more likely than smokers to rate their best friend's approval as at least very important, and female non-smokers were most likely to attach importance to it.

Teachers

Among pupils aged 16 years who were current smokers, 38% of boys and 55% of girls thought that most teachers would disapprove at least strongly of their smoking, while among non-smokers 45% of boys and 64% of girls thought so.

More non-smokers than smokers considered the approval of teachers on this issue as important to them.

2.5 Agreement or Disagreement with statements about smoking

A number of statements in relation to smoking were presented to respondents who were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement with them (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Percentage of second level pupils aged 12-18 agreeing with statements about smoking

Total						
Statements						
Smoking is dangerous to you health	91					
People are silly to smoke	74					
Non-smokers are stronger and more independent	60					
People who do not smoke are in more control of their lives	53					
Smoking helps you feel relaxed	34					
Smokers are weak and have no will power	31					
Smoking helps to relieve boredom	30					
Difficult to say no if offered cigarette by a friend	28					
Smoking helps keep you slim	17					
Smoking makes you feel more self-confident	15					
Need to smoke to be accepted as one of the gang	13					
Smoking is fun	13					
Smoking makes you look grown up	12					
It is cool to smoke	9					
		0	20	40	60	80 100
Breakdown of Total						
Statements	Non-smoker		Occasional smoker		Regular smoker	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Smoking is dangerous to you health	92	91	91	91	89	91
People are silly to smoke	85	82	56	50	53	52
Non-smokers are stronger and more independent	73	67	44	38	32	29
People who do not smoke are in more control of their lives	66	57	41	32	31	23
Smoking helps you feel relaxed	22	19	57	62	80	75
Smokers are weak and have no will power	42	33	20	20	16	13
Smoking helps to relieve boredom	19	16	56	48	73	65
Difficult to say no if offered cigarette by a friend	25	25	43	28	44	32
Smoking helps keep you slim	13	17	18	18	23	26
Smoking makes you feel more self-confident	10	10	26	26	31	28
Need to smoke to be accepted as one of the gang	15	13	13	12	9	5
Smoking is fun	7	5	26	28	31	28
Smoking makes you look grown up	11	10	15	18	13	7
It is cool to smoke	8	8	14	11	10	6

Note: Pupils could choose from the following responses: agree strongly, agree, unsure, disagree, disagree strongly. The figures in the table refer to the combined percentage who agreed strongly and agreed.

Three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "people are silly to smoke". Fifty three per cent (53%) of boys and 52% of girls who were regular smokers agreed or agreed strongly with this. Overall there was a low level (12%) of agreement with the statement "smoking makes you look grown-up". Likewise only 9% agreed that "it is cool to smoke". This was true even among regular smokers. Overall about 30% agreed that "smokers are weak and have no willpower". Non-smokers were more likely than smokers to agree with this, with 42% of male non-smokers and 33% of females agreeing or agreeing strongly with this compared to 16% of male regular smokers and 13% of females. About one third of non-smokers were unsure about this statement. Only 13% agreed or agreed strongly that "you need to smoke if you are to be accepted as one of the gang". Twenty eight per cent (28%) agreed or agreed strongly that "it is difficult to say no if you are offered a cigarette by a friend". Male regular and occasional smokers were the groups most likely to agree with this. Fifteen per cent (15%) agreed that "smoking makes you feel more self-confident", with both occasional and regular smokers more likely than non-smokers to agree. Over half (53%) agreed that "people who do not smoke are more in control of their lives" with non-smokers much more likely to agree with this than smokers.

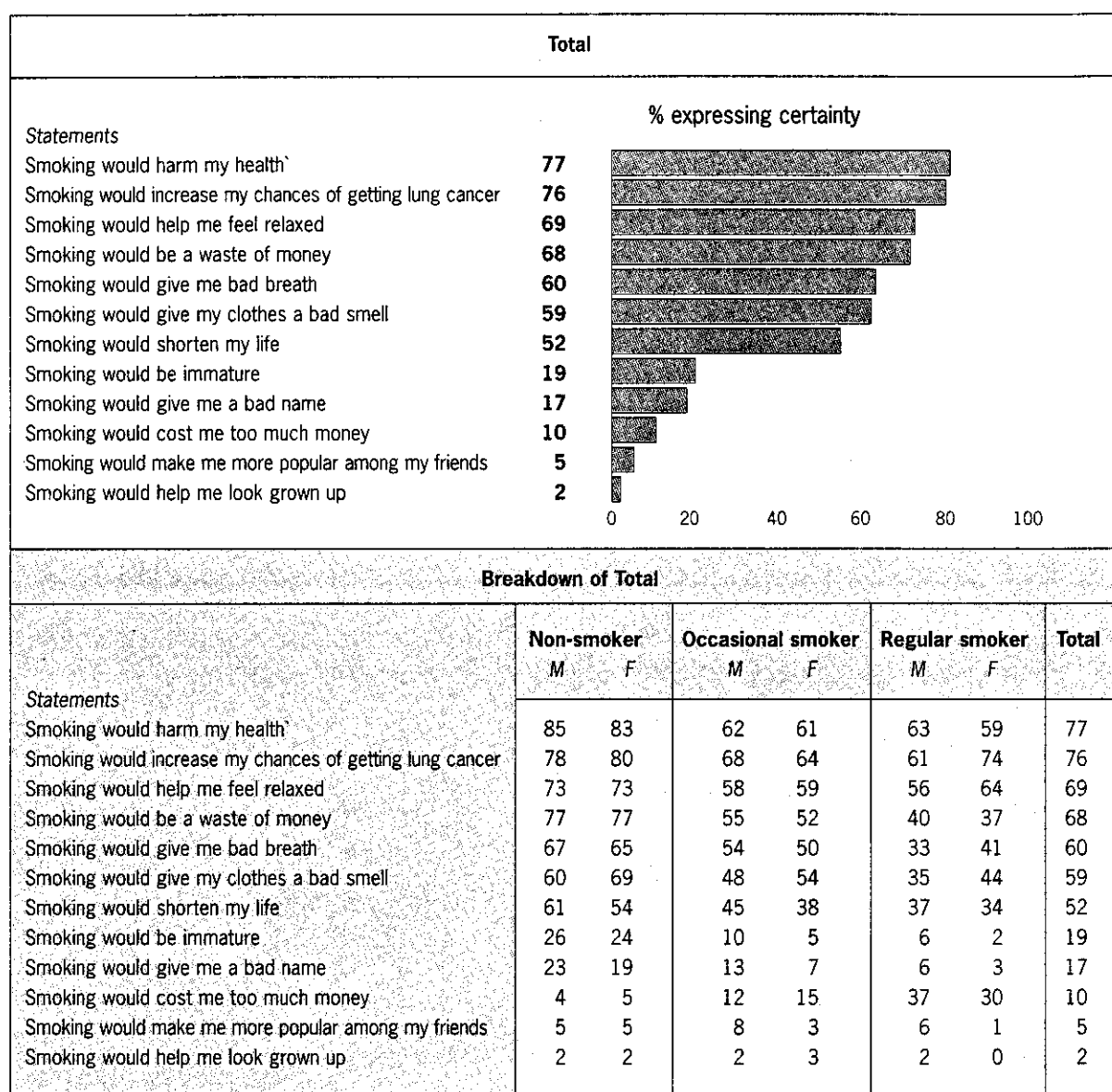
Thirty per cent (30%) agreed that smoking relieves boredom with both occasional and regular smokers being much more likely to agree with this than non-smokers. Ninety per cent (90%) agreed that "smoking is dangerous to your health" with smokers and non-smokers equally agreed on this. Thirteen per cent (13%) agreed that "smoking is fun" with smokers more likely than non-smokers to agree with this. Sixty per cent (60%) agreed that "non-smokers are stronger and more independent" with agreement much higher among non-smokers than among smokers.

Seventeen per cent (17%) agreed that "smoking helps keep you slim". About a quarter of female regular smokers agreed. One third overall agreed that "smoking helps you feel relaxed" but 75% - 80% of regular smokers agreed with this.

2.6 Beliefs about the consequences of smoking to themselves personally

Over 90% of all pupils believed that smoking would harm their health and would increase their chance of getting lung cancer, though certainty about harm to their health was higher among non-smokers than among smokers. Seventy eight per cent (78%) thought that smoking would shorten their life with again certainty on this being highest among non-smokers (Table 2.5). In the region of a quarter of both occasional and regular smokers were unsure as to whether smoking would shorten their lives and among regular smokers an additional 14% thought that it wouldn't shorten their lives.

Table 2.5 Percentage of pupils expressing certainty that particular consequences of smoking would happen to them personally, by smoking status



Eighty eight per cent (88%) thought that smoking would give them bad breath with regular smokers least likely to believe this.* Eighty six per cent (86%) thought smoking would be a waste of money with again regular smokers being least likely to believe this. However only 29% thought that smoking would cost them too much money and smokers were by far more likely than non-smokers to agree with this. Only 18% of male non-smokers and 15% of female non-smokers thought it would cost them too much and over one third were unsure about this. Eighty eight per cent (88%) believed that smoking would give their clothes a bad smell.

Thirty seven per cent (37%) believed that smoking would be immature, with smokers much less likely to agree than non-smokers. About one third (32%) believed smoking would give them a bad name with smokers, particularly regular smokers, less likely to think this.

* The percentages quoted here are higher than those in the Table 2.5 which relates only to those expressing certainty that the consequences would happen to them.

Only 13% believed smoking would make them popular among their friends and only 11% believed it would make them look more grown up.

Ninety one per cent (91%) believed that smoking makes, or would make, them more relaxed, with smokers and non-smokers equally likely to believe this, but more non-smokers expressed certainty about it.

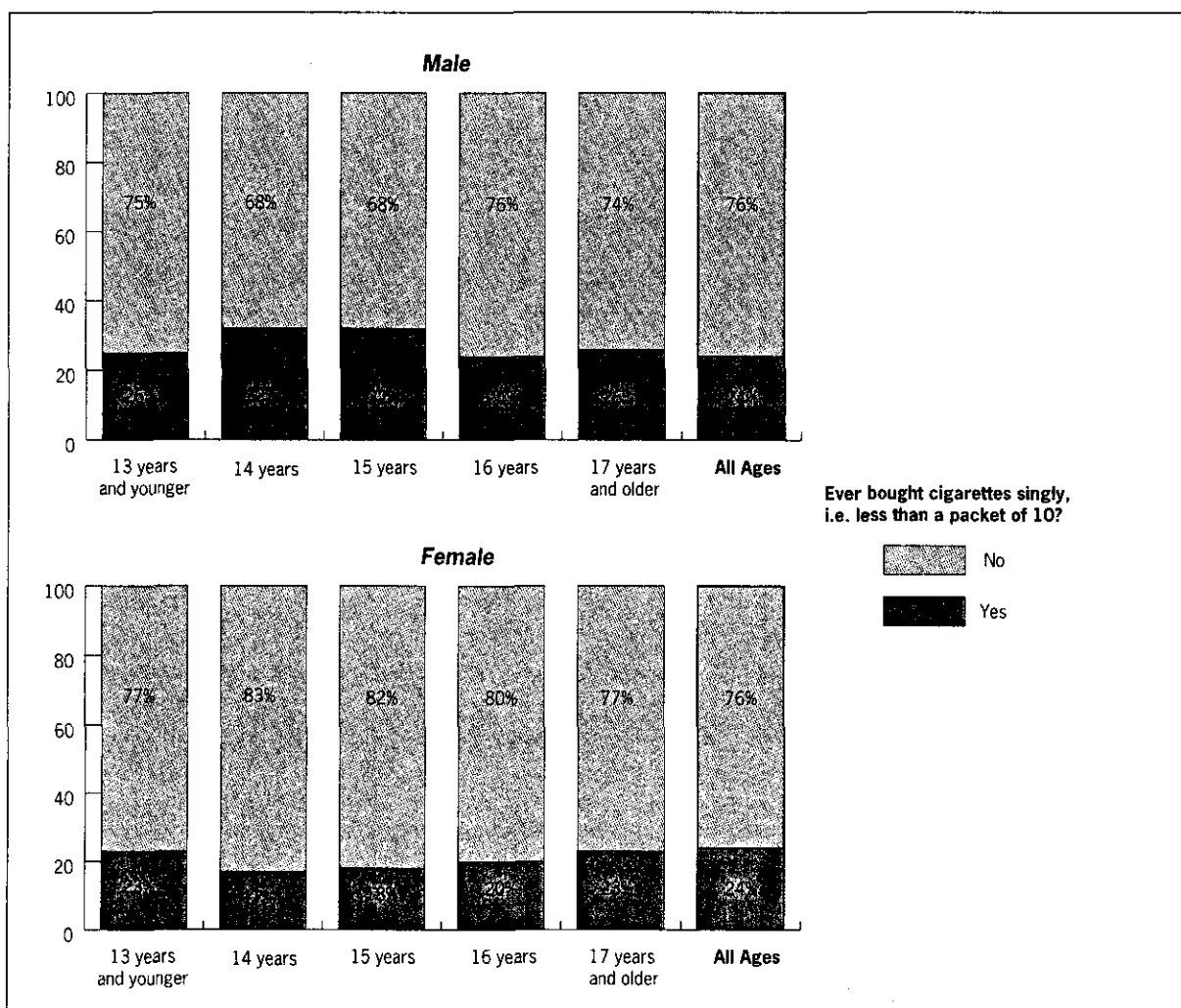
Pupils were then presented with the previous twelve sentences and asked how good or bad they would feel if each of these things did actually happen to them. For nine of these twelve items ninety per cent (90%) or more said that they would feel bad or very bad. These were causing harm to their health, costing too much money, increasing their chances of getting lung cancer, having bad breath, wasting money, having a shortened life, getting a bad name, acting immaturity and their clothes having a bad smell. For each of the other three items - looking more grown up, feeling more relaxed, being more popular among friends - a majority said they would feel good or very good, with about 15% saying they would feel bad or very bad. In between these there was a considerable percentage ranging from one fifth to over a third who were unsure how they would feel in these circumstances.

2.7 Access to cigarettes

Buying cigarettes singly

Almost a quarter (24%) of those who have ever smoked report that they have bought cigarettes singly i.e. less than a packet of ten (Figure 2.7). A higher percentage of boys than girls report having done so.

Figure 2.7 Percentage of pupil lifetime smokers who have ever bought cigarettes singly by age group and sex



Usual source of cigarettes

Newsagent shops and friends are the two most common sources of cigarette supply reported, accounting between them for half of all the source indications (Table 2.6). Twenty seven per cent (27%) said that they usually buy cigarettes in newsagents while 23% said that they usually get them from friends. Ten per cent (10%), 9% and 8% usually buy from pubs, supermarkets and machines respectively.

Table 2.6 Usual source of cigarettes for those pupils who have ever smoked a cigarette, by age and sex (%)

Totals											
Statements											
I buy in newsagent	27										
Friends give them to me	23										
I buy in pub	10										
I buy in supermarket	9										
I buy from machine	8										
I buy in garage shop	5										
Sibling gives them to me	4										
I buy from other type of shop	3										
I buy from other people	3										
I take them	3										
I get them in some other way	2										
I buy from mobile van or street seller	1										
Parent gives them to me	1										
Breakdown of Total											
Statements	13 years and younger		14 years		15 years		16 years		17 years and older		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
I buy in newsagent	30	27	29	32	28	28	27	25	25	25	27
Friends give them to me	32	36	26	29	18	27	20	24	17	20	23
I buy in pub	2	5	6	6	10	6	13	10	16	14	10
I buy in supermarket	6	8	9	7	9	7	12	9	9	11	9
I buy from machine	6	2	6	4	8	6	8	7	10	11	8
I buy in garage shop	3	5	4	3	8	6	6	7	5	5	5
Sibling gives them to me	3	5	3	4	4	6	4	7	4	5	4
I buy from other type of shop	2	2	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	4	3
I buy from other people	5	3	6	4	5	4	3	3	3	1	3
I take them	4	5	3	5	3	4	3	2	2	2	3
I get them in some other way	4	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2
I buy from mobile van or street seller	2	1	1	-*	1	-	1	1	1	1	1
Parent gives them to me	1	-	1	-	0	1	1	1	2	1	1

* Where there is no entry under a particular heading, illustrated by "-", this indicates that there were no responses under the heading. Where "0" appears, there are a small, but statistically insignificant, number of cases which have been rounded down to the nearest whole number, in this case 0.

Experience of refusal when trying to buy cigarettes

Three quarters (77%) of those who have ever smoked report that they have ever bought cigarettes in a newsagents and one in fifteen report that they have been refused at some time (Table 2.7). Even among those under 16 at the time of the survey (i.e. under the legal age for purchase of cigarettes) only in the region of 1 in 10 report that they have experienced a refusal at this source. Forty four per cent (44%) of pupils have bought in pubs where one in eleven report that they have been refused. In the region of one third each have ever bought in supermarkets (36%), garages (30%) and other types of shops (38%). One in twelve report that they have been refused in supermarkets, one in fifteen in garage shops and one in nineteen in other types of shops. Ten per cent (10%) have ever bought from mobile vans/street sellers and one in ten report that they have been refused at some time.

Table 2.7 Percentage of pupil lifetime smokers¹ who report that they have ever been refused cigarettes when trying to buy them. Bases = those who have ever tried to purchase cigarettes in each particular location²

Age Group											
	13 and younger		14		15		16		17 and older		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Refused by:											
Newsagents, tobacconists or sweetshop	13	10	11	11	7	4	6	4	4	2	7
Garage shop	42	5	24	14	13	2	8	0	1	0	7
Supermarket	40	18	20	14	13	3	2	1	2	0	8
Other shop	15	4	21	8	7	-*	3	3	0	-	5
Mobile van/street seller	27	0	20	40	17	0	5	0	0	0	10
Pub	30	20	16	16	12	11	8	6	6	2	9

¹ Lifetime smokers=those who have ever smoked a whole cigarette

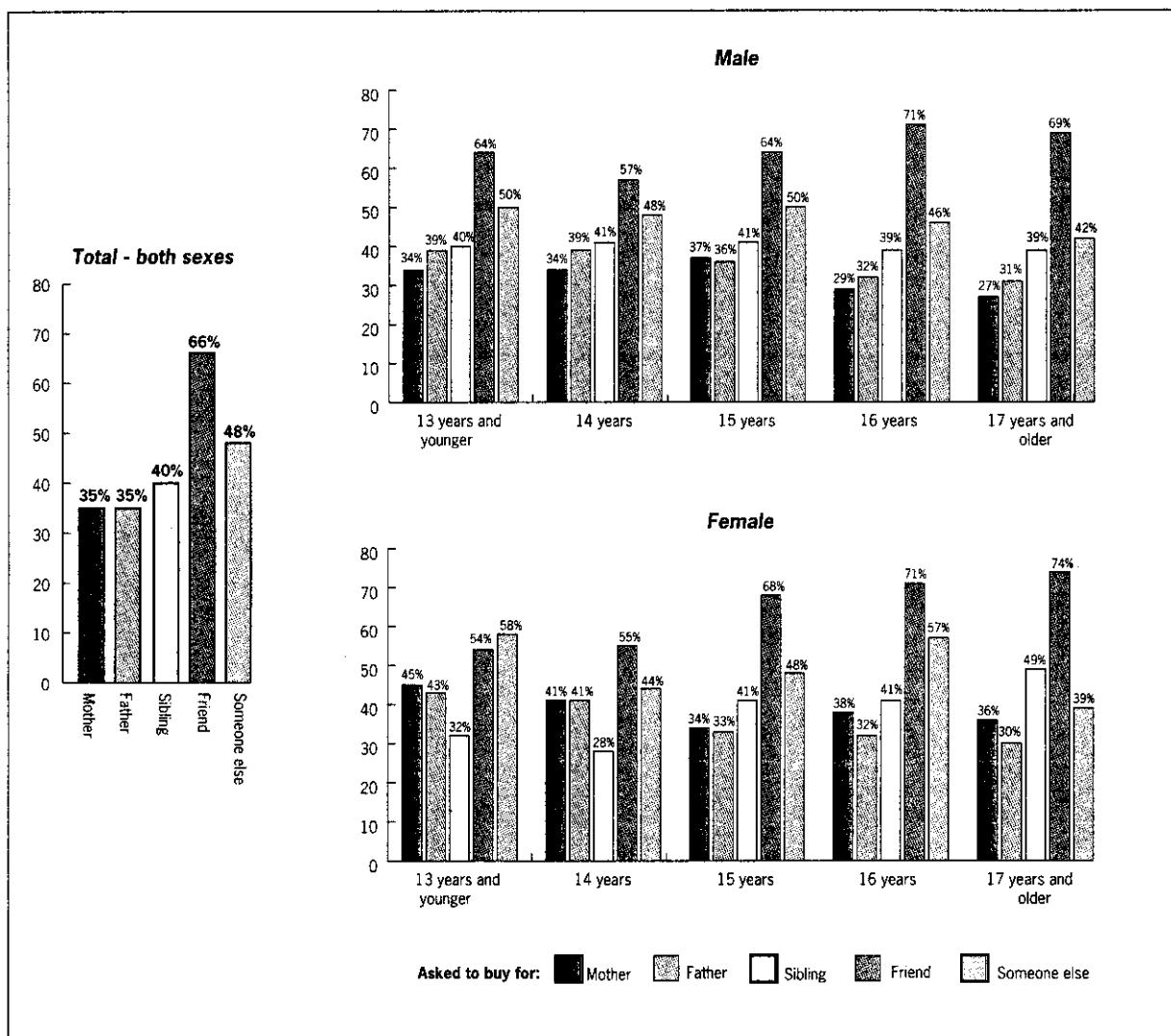
² The following are the percentages who have ever tried to buy cigarettes in different locations: newsagents/tobacconists/sweetshops: 77%; pub: 44%; supermarkets: 36%; garage shops: 30%; other shops: 38%; mobile van/street seller: 10%

* Where there is no entry under a particular heading, illustrated by "-", this indicates that there were no responses under the heading. Where "0" appears, there are a small, but statistically insignificant, number of cases which have been rounded down to the nearest whole number, in this case 0.

Asked to buy cigarettes for others

A high proportion of those who have ever smoked report that they have been asked to buy cigarettes for someone else (Figure 2.8). Over a third (35%) have been asked by their mother and the same percentage have been asked by their father. Forty per cent (40%) have been asked by their siblings and 66% have been asked by a friend. Almost half have been asked to buy for someone other than those mentioned above. Younger teenagers were as likely, if not more likely, than older teenagers to report that they have been asked to buy by a parent.

Figure 2.8 Percentage of pupils who are lifetime smokers who have been asked to buy cigarettes for others by age and sex

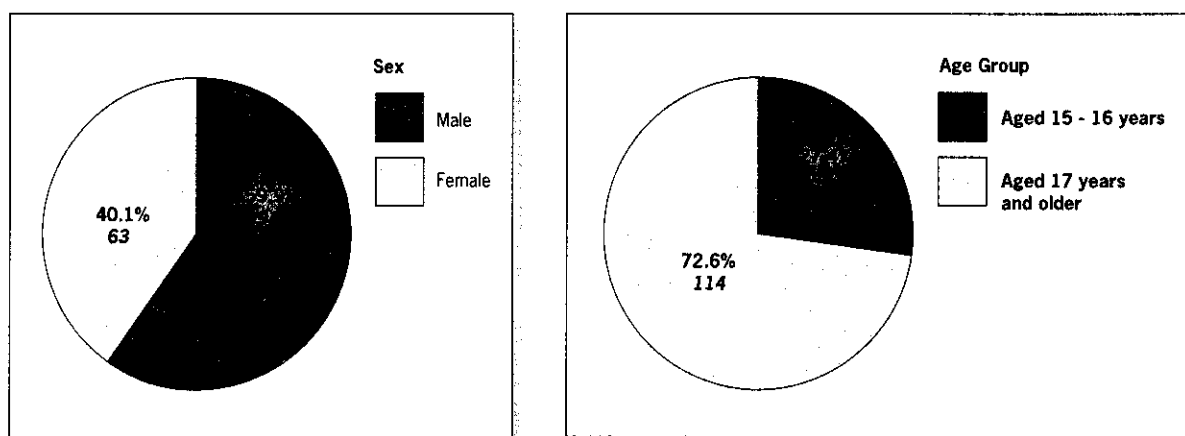


Cigarette smoking - the out-of-school sample of young people

3.1 Introduction

One hundred and fifty seven (157) young people aged 15 - 18 who had permanently left school were contacted and given the same questionnaire as the school pupils. The sampling of this group was not of a purely random type as it involved the use of a "snowballing" technique (details of this are given in Appendix A). It proved quite difficult to contact out-of-school young people and the sample eventually obtained is less than half the number it had originally been planned to interview. In the sample achieved, the male/female ratio is 3:2 and almost three quarters of the sample members are aged 17 years or older (Figure 3.1). With a total sample of only 157, breakdowns by age and sex quickly become based on very small numbers of cases - there are for instance only 16 out-of-school females in the 15 or 16 age group. For all these reasons any generalisation of the findings to the national population of out-of-school young people should be done with great caution.

Figure 3.1

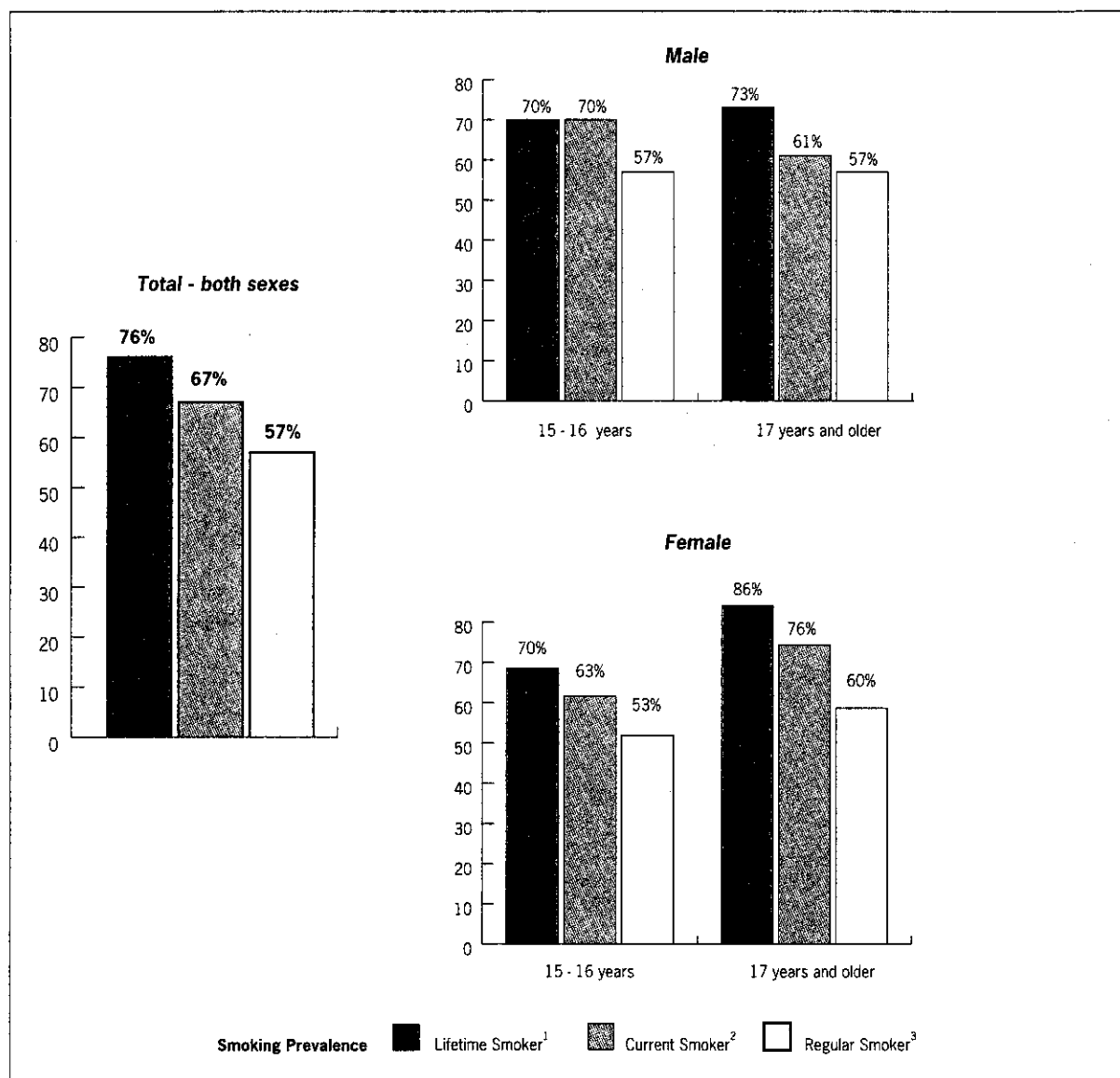


3.2 Prevalence of smoking in the out-of-school sample

Lifetime smokers

Three quarters (76%) of the out-of-school sample have ever smoked a whole cigarette (Figure 3.2). Eighty six per cent (86%) of girls aged 17 years and over have ever done so compared to 62% of those of the same age who are still in school while for boys the corresponding percentages are 73% and 72%.

Figure 3.2 Prevalence of lifetime, current and regular smoking in the out-of-school sample of 15-18 year olds



¹Lifetime = ever smoked a whole cigarette

²Current use = smoked at least 1 - 2 cigarette during the previous 30 days

³Regular use = smoked daily (at least 1 - 2 cigarettes) during the previous 30 days

Current Smokers

Two thirds of those out-of-school are current smokers (i.e. smoked at least 1 - 2 cigarettes in the last month) compared to about one third of those the same age in school. Three quarters (76%) of out-of-school girls aged 17 years and older are current smokers compared to 36% of those in school, while for boys the corresponding percentages are 61% of those out-of-school and 38% of those in school.

Regular Smokers

Fifty seven per cent (57%) of those out-of-school are regular smokers (i.e. smoking at least 1 - 2 cigarettes daily during the previous month) compared to a percentage in the early 20s of those the same age in school. Sixty per cent (60%) of out-of-school girls aged 17 years and over are regular smokers compared to 22% of those in school while the corresponding percentages for boys are 57% and 24%.

3.3 Smoking status of significant others

Eighty five per cent (85%) of out-of-school young people live in a household where someone else smokes. Forty three per cent (43%) have a best friend who smokes a lot and a further 31% have a best friend who smokes a little. Forty eight per cent (48%) have other good friends who smoke a lot and 42% have other good friends who smoke a little. Forty eight per cent (48%) of the out-of-school sample think that most young people of their age that they know smoke a lot and a further 46% consider that most young people of their age smoke a little. In other words only 6% think that most young people of their age that they know don't smoke.

3.4 Agreement with statements about smoking

A number of statements were presented to the young people who were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with them. They could also choose the option "unsure". Three quarters agreed that "people are silly to smoke". Only 13% agreed that "smoking makes you look grown up", while 9% were unsure. Only 14% agreed that "you need to smoke to be accepted as one of the gang" and a further 7% were unsure. Just under a quarter (22%) agreed that "smoking makes you feel self-confident" and a further 16% were unsure. Almost half (48%) agreed that "non-smokers are more in control of their lives" and a further 18% were unsure. Half agreed that "non-smokers are stronger and more independent than smokers" with 12% unsure about this.

Almost one third (31%) agreed that "smokers are weak and have no willpower" while 15% were unsure about this. Only 10% agreed that "it is cool to smoke".

Half (49%) agreed that "smoking relieves boredom" and a further 16% were unsure. About a fifth (19%) agreed that "smoking is fun". Fifty eight per cent (58%) agreed that "smoking makes you feel relaxed" with 23% unsure. Over a quarter (28%) agreed that "smoking helps keep you slim" and a third were unsure about this.

Over 90% agreed that "smoking is dangerous to your health". However over a third (35%) agreed that "it is difficult to say no if offered a cigarette by a friend".

3.5 Access to cigarettes in the out-of-school sample

Given the age composition of the out-of-school sample (15 - 18 years), most of its members are legally entitled to purchase cigarettes. Thirty seven per cent (37%) report that they have ever bought cigarettes singly. Newsagents, pubs and supermarkets are the places where this sample of out-of-school young people most commonly buy their cigarettes, with 28%, 15% and 12% respectively saying that they usually buy in these outlets. Ten per cent (10%) each mentioned garage shops, machines and friends as their source.

Alcohol consumption - the pupil sample

4.1 Prevalence of Drinking

As in the case of cigarette smoking, the study used several measures of drinking prevalence as follows:

- 1) lifetime prevalence rate: based on the question "have you ever had a whole alcoholic drink (more than just a sip or a taste)?"
- 2) current prevalence rate: the percentage who have had an alcoholic drink within the previous 30 days
- 3) the prevalence of having felt drunk in the last year (12 months).

In relation to the current prevalence rate, non-drinkers are defined as those who reported that they had not consumed any alcoholic beverages during the previous month; occasional drinkers were those who reported consuming only one type of beverage (beer, cider, wine or spirits) and on not more than three occasions. Regular drinkers are those who drank more than one type of alcoholic drink in the previous month or drank on more than three occasions.

Lifetime Drinkers

Overall 63% of second level pupils aged 12 - 18 have ever drunk a whole alcoholic drink (Figure 4.1). This compares with estimates of 65% in 1984 and 78% in 1991 in Grube and Morgan's Dublin studies. For both sexes the prevalence of lifetime drinking increases with age (Figure 4.2). At age 13 years and younger 47% of boys and 35% of girls have had a whole alcoholic drink (lifetime prevalence). This shows that lifetime prevalence is 12% higher among males than among females at age 13 or younger. However the gap closes and the difference reduces to 3% at 15 years and 1% among those 17 years and older.

Figure 4.1 Lifetime drinking prevalence i.e. percentage of 12-18 year olds second level pupils who have ever had a whole alcoholic drink, by age group

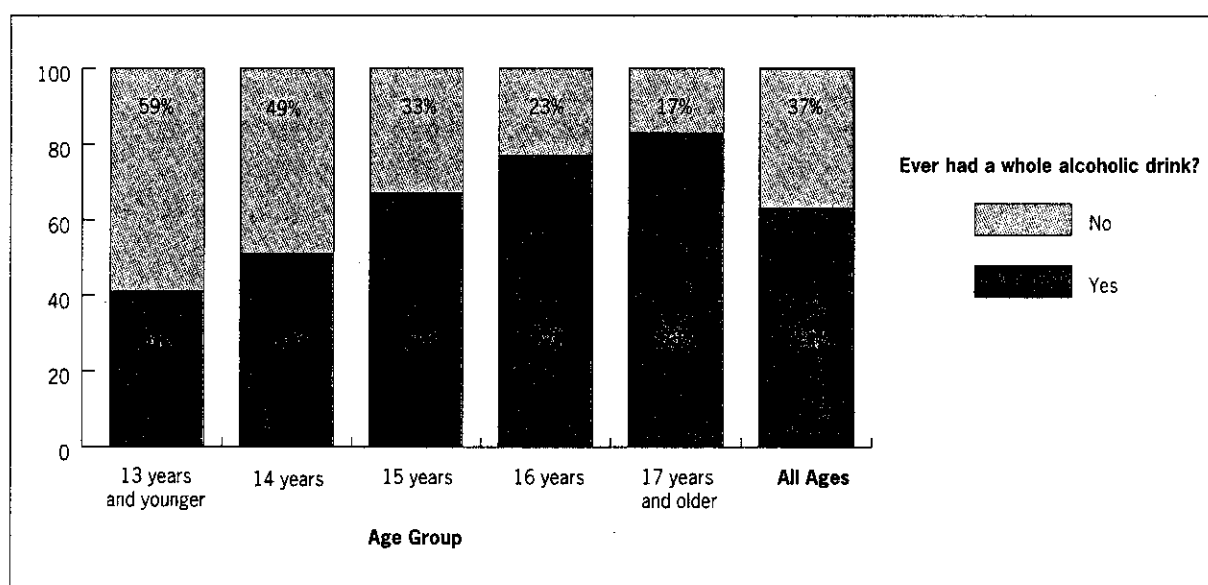
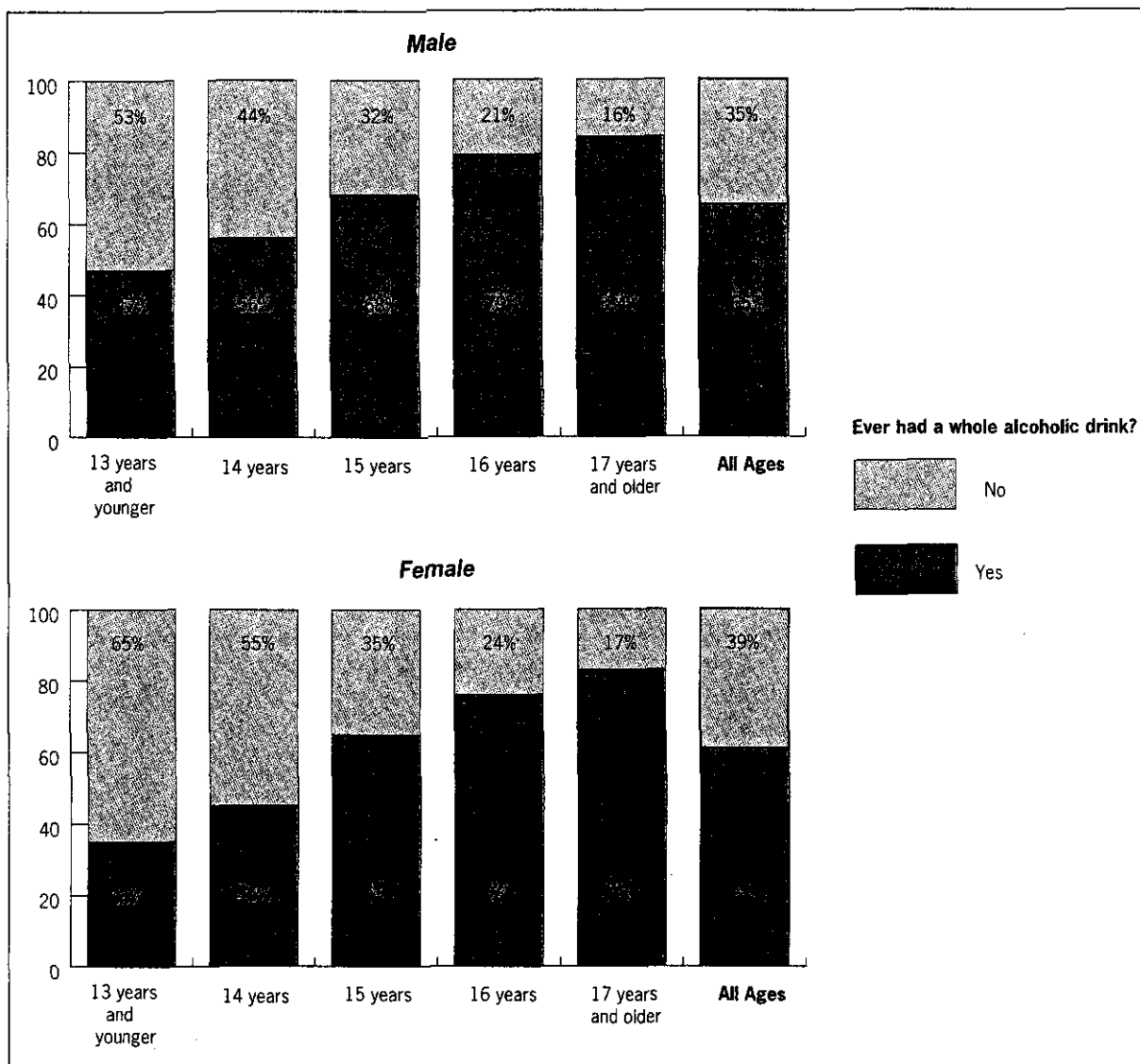


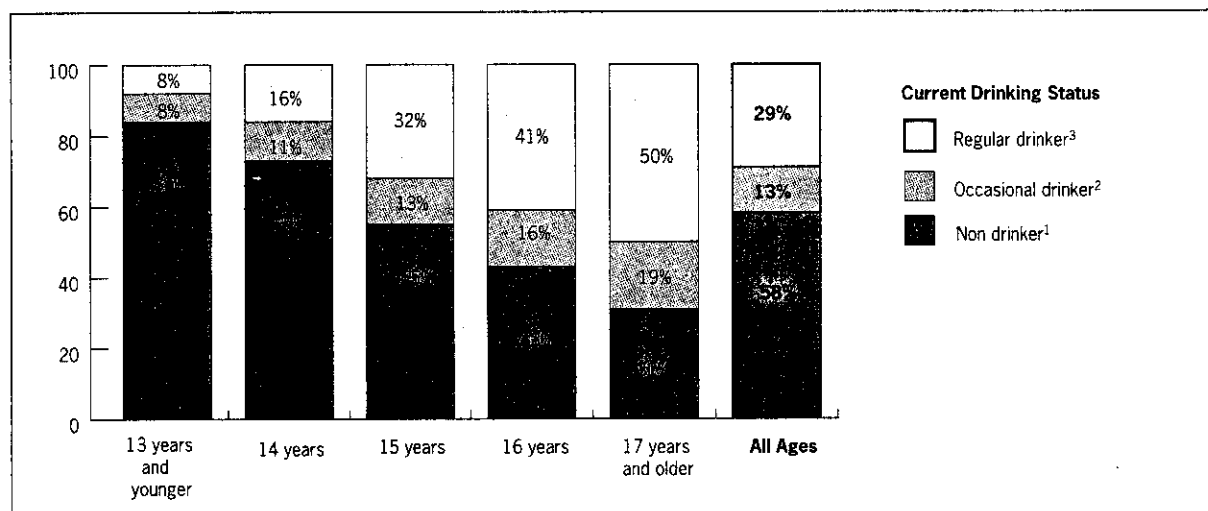
Figure 4.2 Percentage of 12-18 year old pupils who have had a whole alcoholic drink by age and sex



Current drinkers

Forty two per cent (42%) of second level pupils aged 12 - 18 are current drinkers (Figure 4.3). This compares with 51% in 1991 in Grube and Morgan's Dublin study. Prevalence increases from 16% at age 13 and younger to 45% at age 15 and 69% at age 17 years and older. Overall the current drinking rate rises with increasing age. The rate is higher among boys than girls at all ages except 15 when a slightly higher percentage of girls are current drinkers (Figure 4.4). At age 13 years and younger 18% of boys and 14% of girls are current drinkers while by age 17 years and older prevalence has risen to 72% among boys and 66% among girls. At national level there is scarcely any difference between different types of schools in the proportion of 12 - 18 year olds who are current drinkers.

Figure 4.3 Current drinking status by age group of 12-18 year old second level pupils (%)

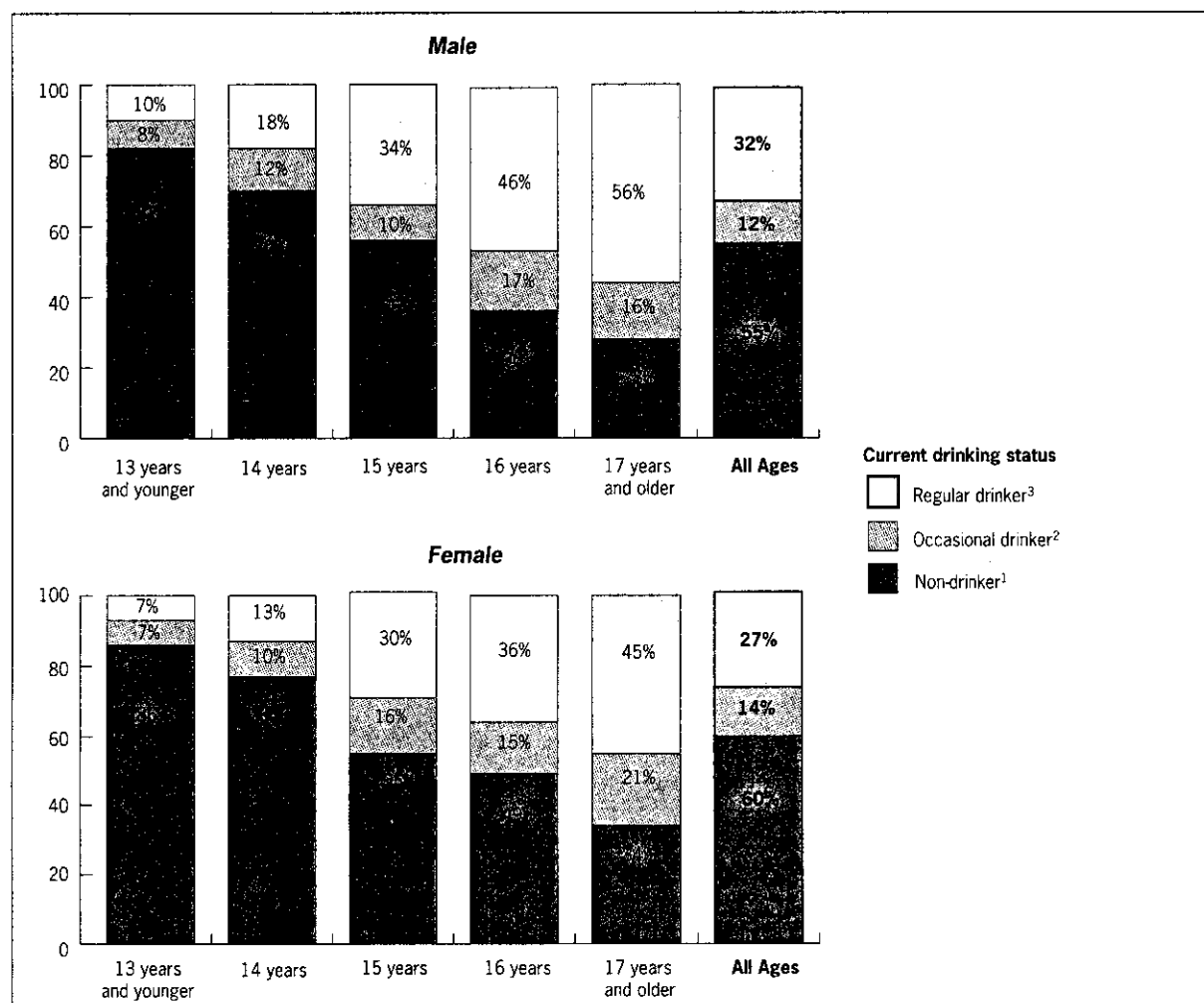


¹ Non-drinkers=those who had not had an alcoholic drink in the previous month

² Occasional drinkers=those who had an alcoholic drink in the previous month, but only one type of beverage (beer, cider, wine or spirits) and on not more than three occasions

³ Regular drinkers=those who drank more than one type of beverage in the previous month or who drank on more than three occasions

Figure 4.4 Current drinking status of 12-18 years old second level pupils (%) by age group and sex



Regular drinkers

As already mentioned the category of current drinking includes those who are classified as occasional drinkers (i.e. those who reported drinking only one type of beverage - beer, wine or spirits - and on not more than three occasions in the last 30 days) and regular drinkers (those who drank more than one type of beverage or drank on more than three occasions in the last 30 days). The research shows that 29% of second level pupils aged 12 - 18 years are regular drinkers (32% of boys and 27% of girls). Prevalence of regular drinking rises from 10% among boys aged 13 years and younger and 7% among girls to 34% and 30% respectively at age 15 and 56% and 45% respectively among those aged 17 years and older. There is little difference between types of schools in the proportion of 12 - 18 year olds who are regular drinkers, the prevalence rates being 28% for secondary schools and 31% each for community/comprehensive schools and vocational schools.

Drunkenness

Forty per cent (40%) of 12 - 18 year old second level pupils reported having been drunk at some time during the previous 12 months (Figure 4.5). This compares with a figure of 50% found by Grube and Morgan in their 1991 Dublin study. Overall 44 per cent (44%) of males and 37% of females report having been drunk in the last 12 months and the percentage reporting this increases with age (Figure 4.6). At age 13 years or younger 18% of males and 14% of females report having been drunk at least once in the last 12 months. This increases to 49% and 42% respectively at age 15 and to 71% and 57% respectively at age 17 years and older.

Figure 4.5 Number of times second level pupils aged 12-18 years felt drunk in the last 12 months by age group

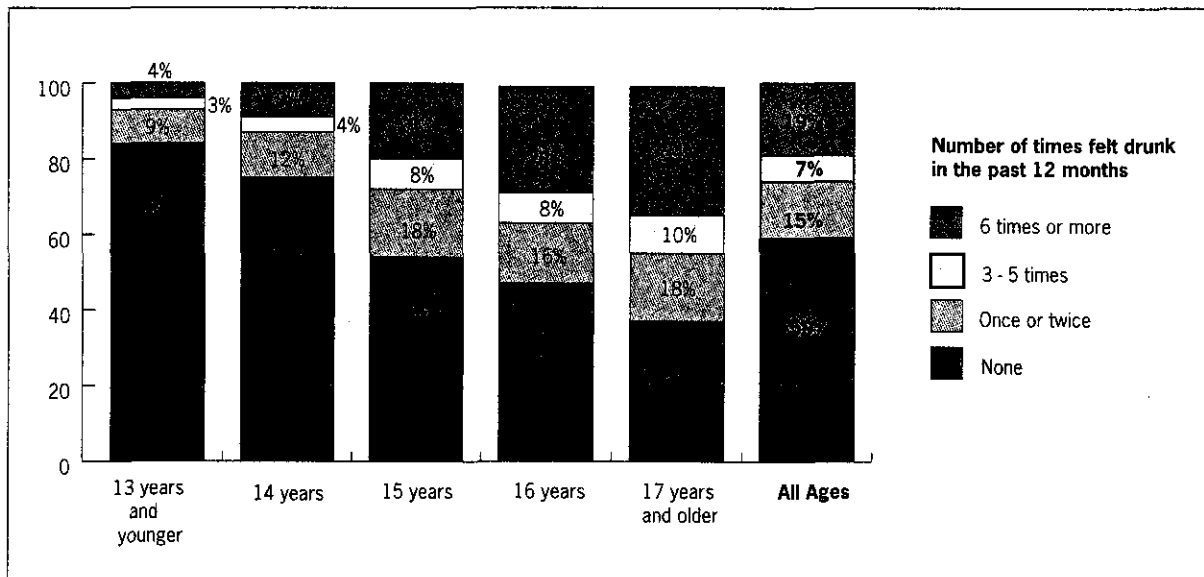
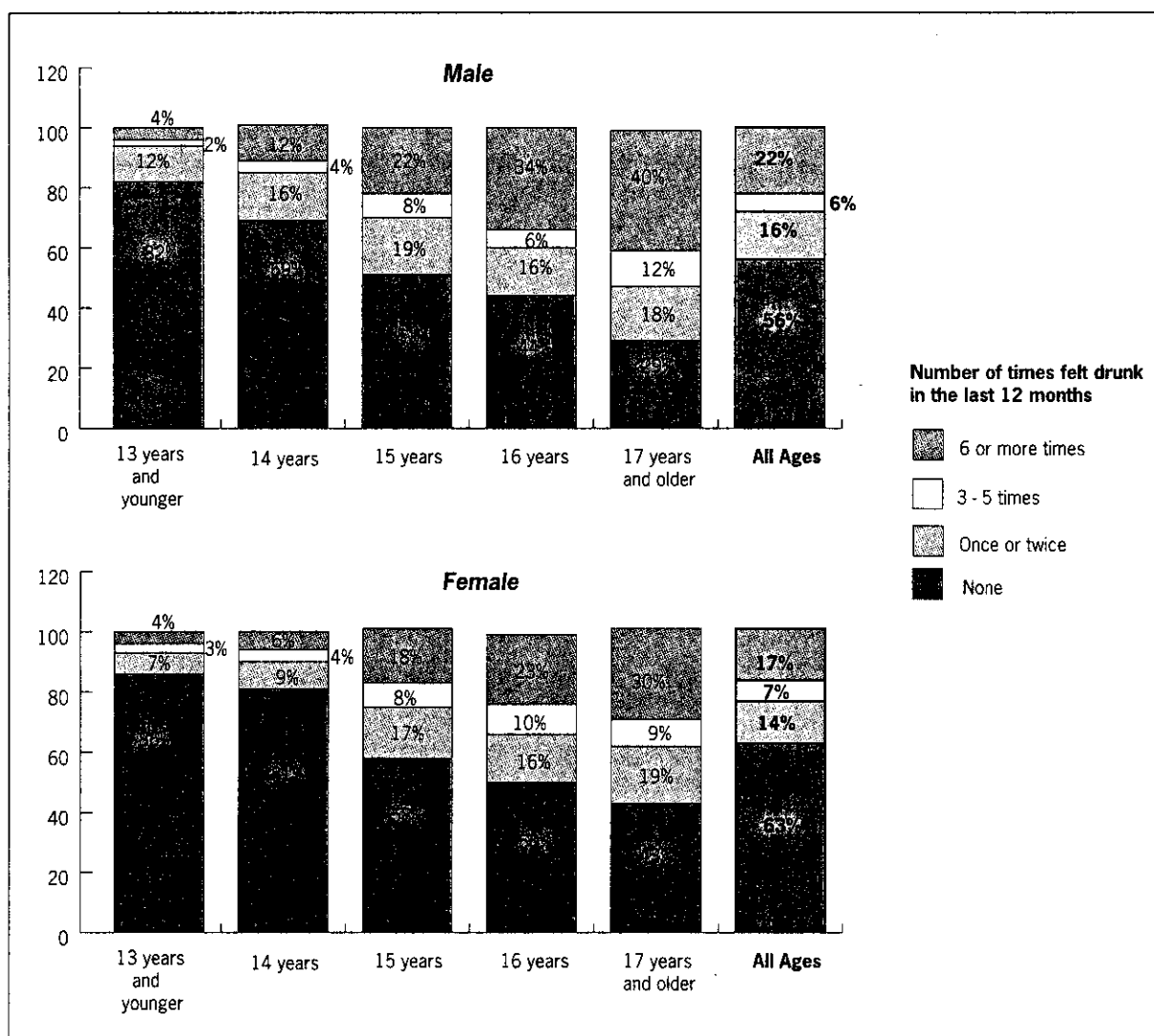


Figure 4.6 Number of times second level pupils felt drunk in the last 12 months by age group and sex (%)



At age 15, 22% of males and 18% of females report having been drunk six or more times in the previous 12 months while at age 17 years and older 40% of males and 30% of females report this.

4.2 Drinking Status and Social Class

No clear association between current drinking status and social class was evident among those pupils for whom social class was known (about 90% of the sample). Among boys the highest percentage of non-drinkers was found in social class six - children of unskilled manual workers but the next highest percentage was found in the two highest social classes - higher professionals and lower professionals (Figure 4.7). Among girls the highest percentage of non-drinkers was found in social class five - semi-skilled manual workers and the lowest percentage of non-drinkers was in the adjacent social class six - unskilled manual workers (Figure 4.8). This latter class also had the highest proportion of girls who were regular drinkers.

Figure 4.7 Male pupils' current drinking status by social class (using Irish Social Class Scale)

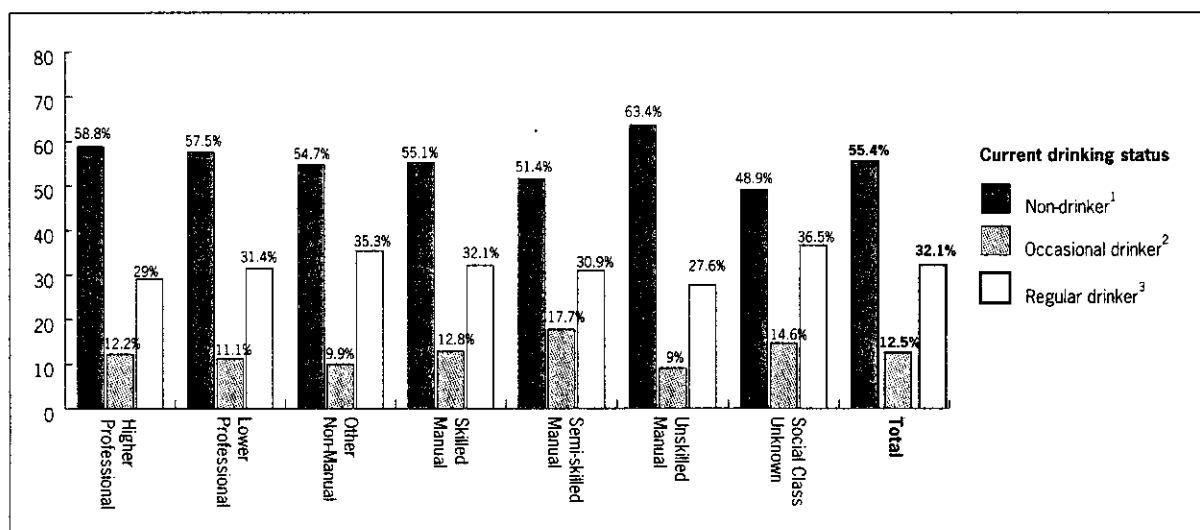
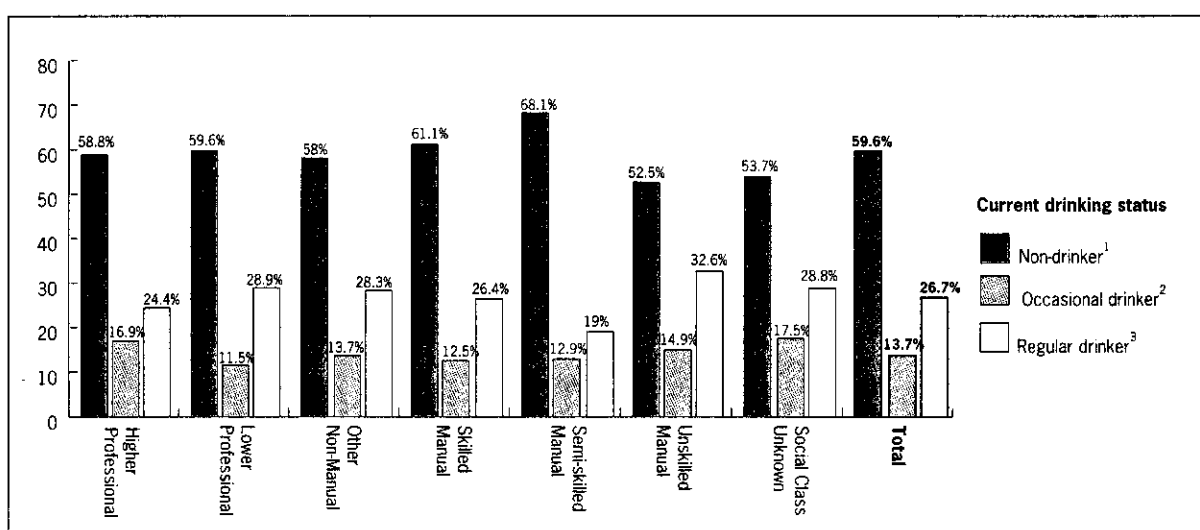


Figure 4.8 Female pupils' current drinking status by social class (using Irish Social Class Scale)



¹ Non-drinkers=those who had not had an alcoholic drink in the previous month

² Occasional drinkers=those who had an alcoholic drink in the previous month, but only one type of beverage (beer, cider, wine or spirits) and on not more than three occasions

³ Regular drinkers=those who drank more than one type of beverage in the previous month or who drank on more than three occasions

4.3 Experience of the consequences of drinking

Pupils were presented with a variety of possible consequences of drinking and asked if they had ever experienced them (Table 4.1). These consequences were most likely to have been experienced by older pupils and also particularly by males. Overall 16% of 12 - 18 year olds had got into trouble with their parents because of drinking. Nine per cent (9%) of 14 year old males and 8% of females had done so, while by age 17 and older 39% of males and 21% of females had had this experience. Fifteen per cent (15%) of males aged 17 years and over and 5% of females had got into trouble with the Gardai because of drinking. In the same age group 12% of males and 8% of females had missed school because of drinking while over a quarter (26%) of that age group of males and almost one fifth (19%) of females had gone to school with a hangover.

Over half (53%) of males aged 17 years and over had "got sick to their stomach" because of drinking and over 40% of females had done so. Thirty per cent (30%) of 15 year old males and over a quarter of females had had this experience. Fourteen per cent (14%) of male pupils aged 17 years and older had passed out while drinking and 10% of females had done so while 44% of males and 36% of females of this age had been unable to remember some of the things they did while drinking.

Table 4.1 Percentage of second level pupils experiencing various consequences of drinking by age group and sex

Totals											
<div><div>Statements</div><div><div>Got sick to your stomach</div><div>26</div><div></div></div><div><div>Unable to remember things done while drinking</div><div>25</div><div></div></div><div><div>Trouble with parents</div><div>16</div><div></div></div><div><div>Gone to school with hangover</div><div>12</div><div></div></div><div><div>Rode a bicycle under the influence of alcohol</div><div>11</div><div></div></div><div><div>Passed out</div><div>6</div><div></div></div><div><div>Trouble with Gardai</div><div>5</div><div></div></div><div><div>Missed school because of drinking</div><div>4</div><div></div></div><div><div>Drove a car under the influence of alcohol</div><div>3</div><div></div></div></div> <div><div>0</div><div>20</div><div>40</div><div>60</div><div>80</div><div>100</div></div>											
Breakdown of Total											
Statements	13 years & younger		14 years		15 years		16 years		17 years & older		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Got sick to your stomach	9	11	16	12	30	26	34	33	53	41	26
Unable to remember things done while drinking	13	10	14	13	28	29	28	32	44	36	25
Trouble with parents	7	5	9	8	18	14	25	15	39	21	16
Gone to school with hangover	5	5	8	6	13	8	21	14	26	19	12
Rode a bicycle under the influence of alcohol	11	4	15	2	20	5	24	4	27	6	11
Passed out	2	1	4	1	6	6	10	10	14	10	6
Trouble with Gardai	1	1	3	-	8	5	7	3	15	5	5
Missed school because of drinking	1	1	2	1	4	2	5	2	12	8	4
Drove a car under the influence of alcohol	2	1	2	-	6	0	3	0	8	3	3

Three per cent (3%) of 12 - 18 year old second level pupils had driven a car or motor bike while, or just after, drinking. Eight per cent (8%) of males aged 17 years and over had done this. Eleven per cent (11%) of the group as a whole had ridden a bicycle just after drinking while 20% of males aged 15 years and 27% of males aged 17 years and over had done so.

4.4 Prevalence of drinking among significant others

Over a third (35%) of pupils have mothers and about quarter (24%) have fathers who do not drink alcohol (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). In 16% of cases neither parent drinks. Twelve per cent (12%) have mothers and 26% have fathers who drink several times a week, while 1% have mothers and 4% have fathers who drink alcohol every day. Some association is found between non-drinking children and non-drinking parents as well as between children who drink and more regularly drinking parents.

Table 4.2 How often mother drinks by pupils' current drinking status and sex

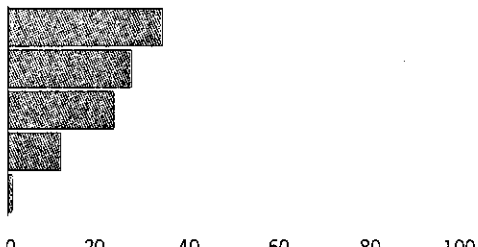
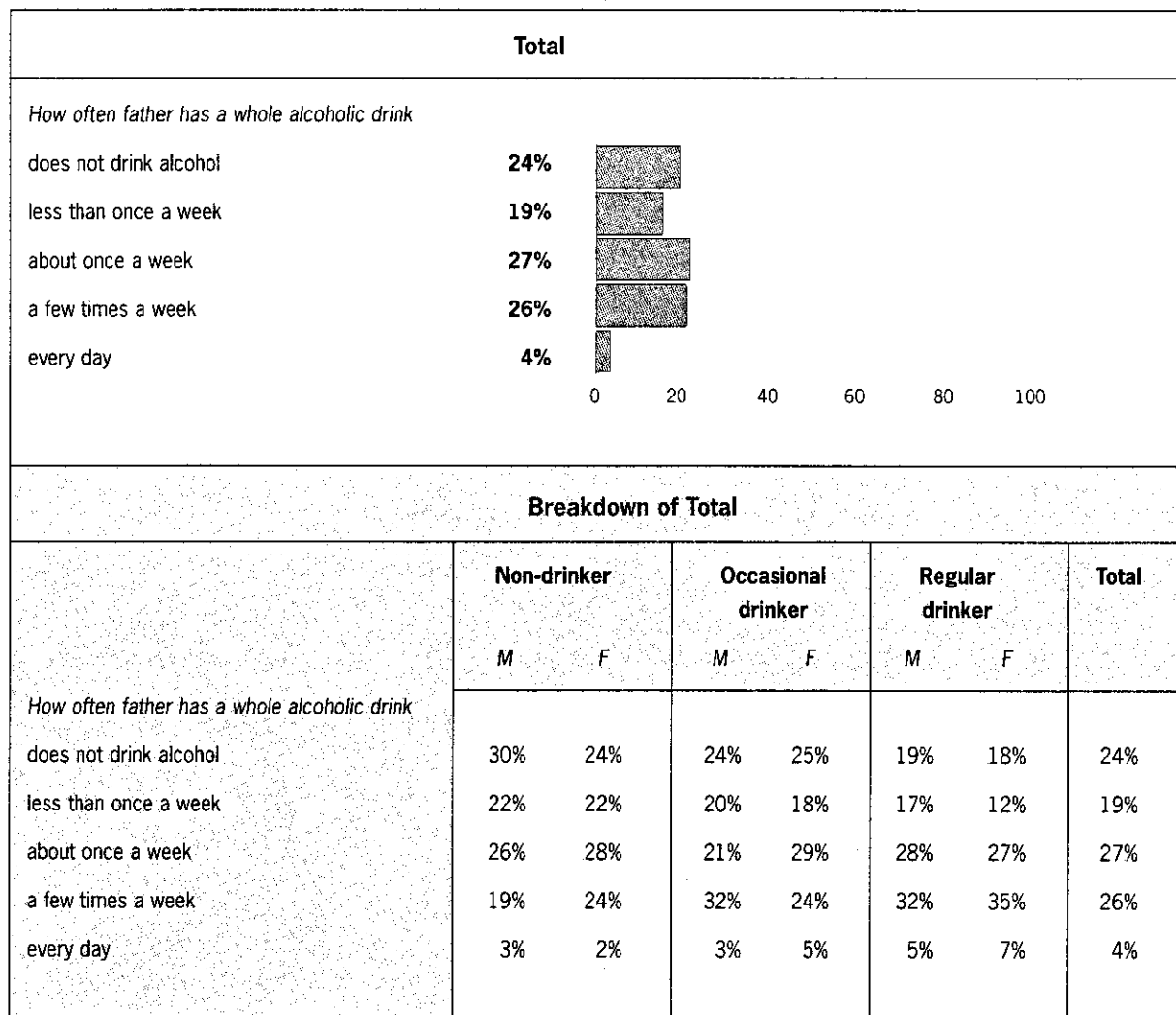
Total								
<i>How often mother has a whole alcoholic drink</i>								
does not drink alcohol	35%							
less than once a week	28%							
about once a week	24%							
a few times a week	12%							
every day	1%							
0 20 40 60 80 100								
Breakdown of Total								
<i>How often mother has a whole alcoholic drink</i>	Non-drinker		Occasional drinker		Regular drinker		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F		
	does not drink alcohol	41%	39%	32%	32%	29%	25%	35%
	less than once a week	26%	28%	30%	32%	28%	30%	28%
about once a week	24%	23%	22%	26%	25%	26%	24%	
a few times a week	9%	9%	15%	10%	16%	17%	12%	
every day	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	

Table 4.3 How often father drinks by pupil's current drinking status and sex



Pupils who do not drink themselves are much more likely than pupils who drink, to have a best friend who is a non-drinker and to have other good friends who are non-drinkers (Figure 4.9 and Table 4.4). When asked how often most young people their own age drank, "about once a week" was the most common response among non-drinkers, occasional drinkers and regular drinkers alike, with 42% overall giving this response (Figure 4.10). However drinkers, particularly regular drinkers, were more likely than non-drinkers to perceive young people of their own age drinking with at least this frequency. Seventeen per cent (17%) of 12 - 18 year olds perceived most young people of their age to drink a few times a week. Only 1% perceived them to drink everyday.

Figure 4.9 How often best friend drinks by pupils' current drinking status and sex

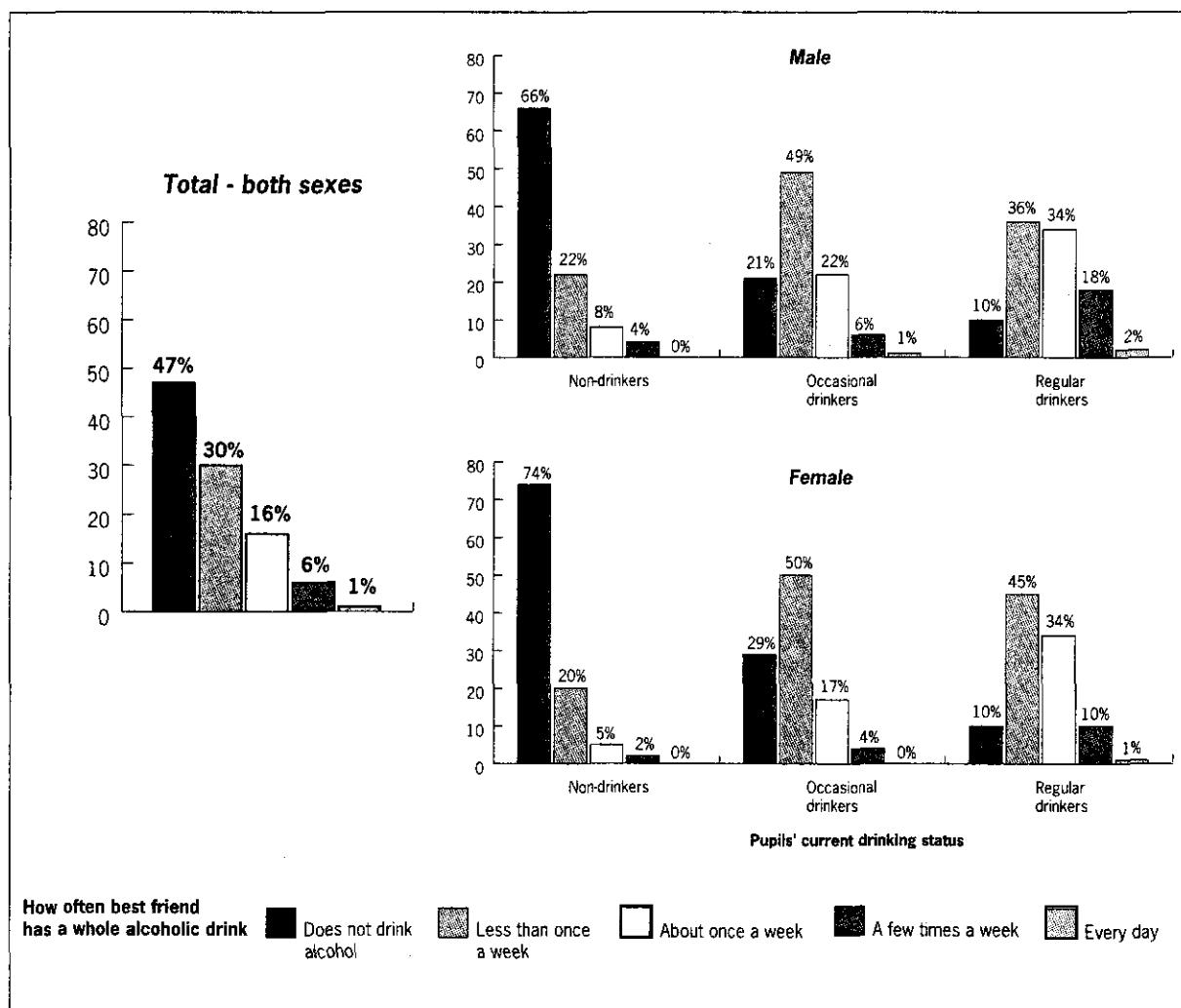


Table 4.4 How often other good friends drink by pupils' current drinking status and sex

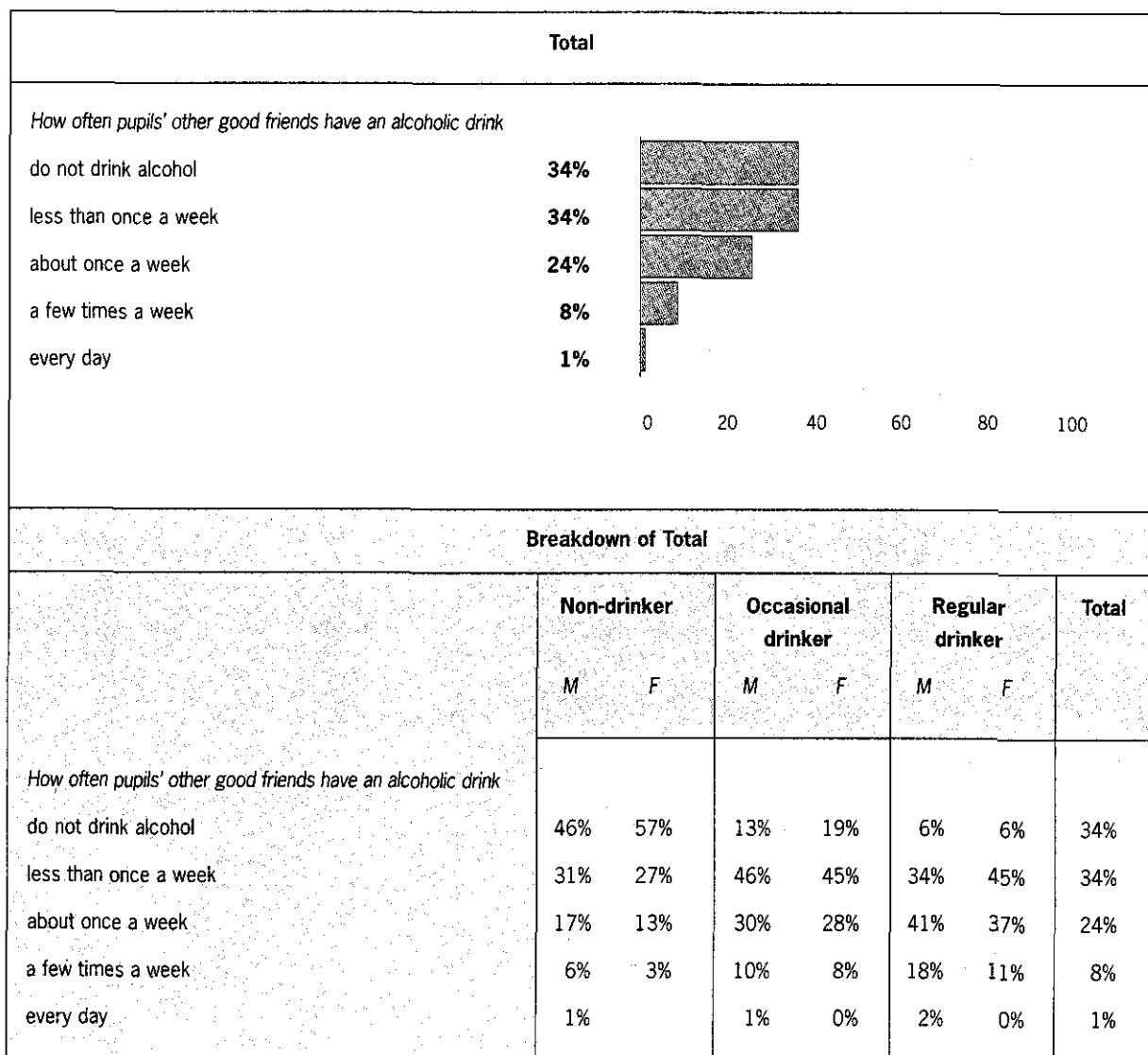
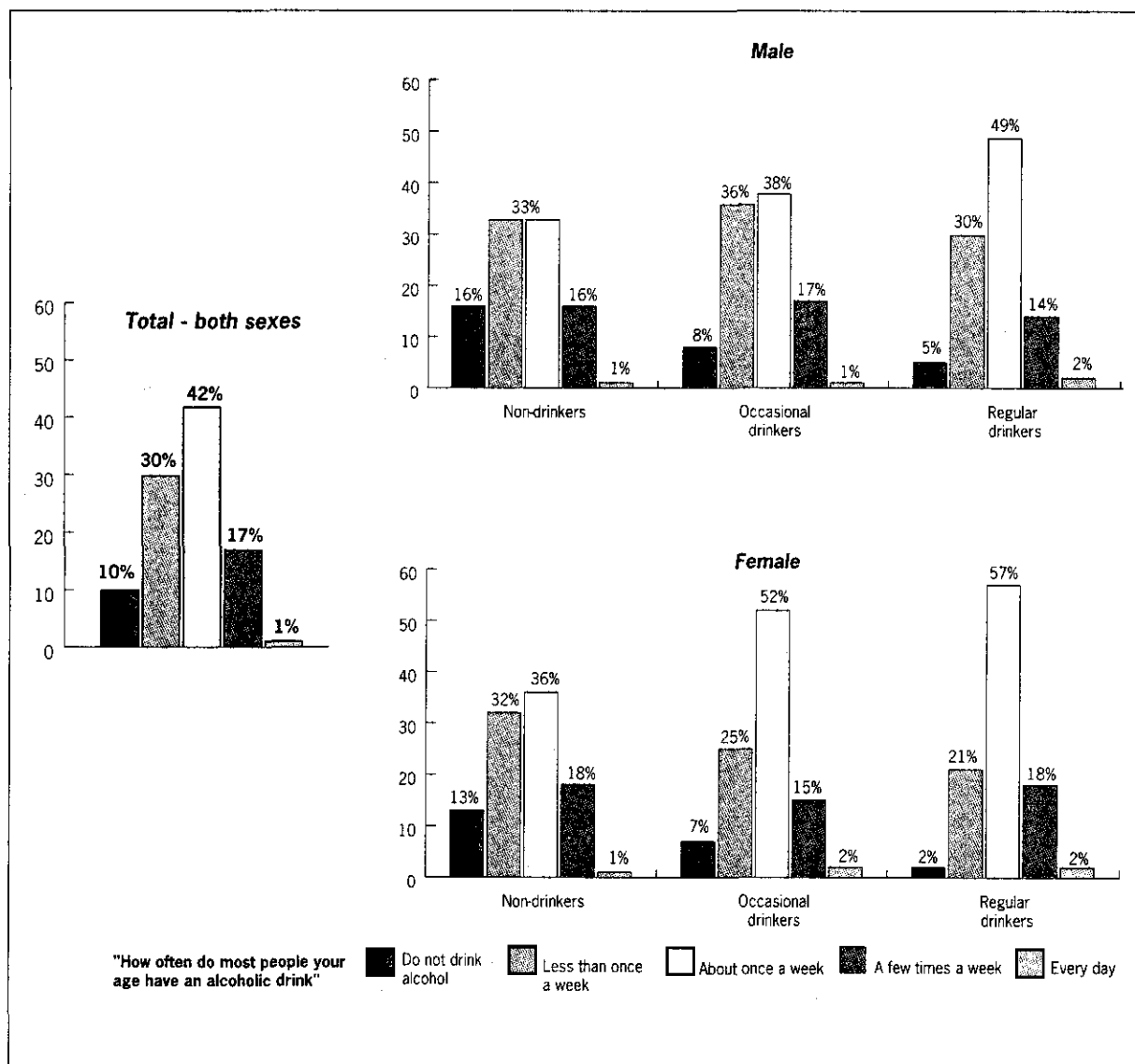


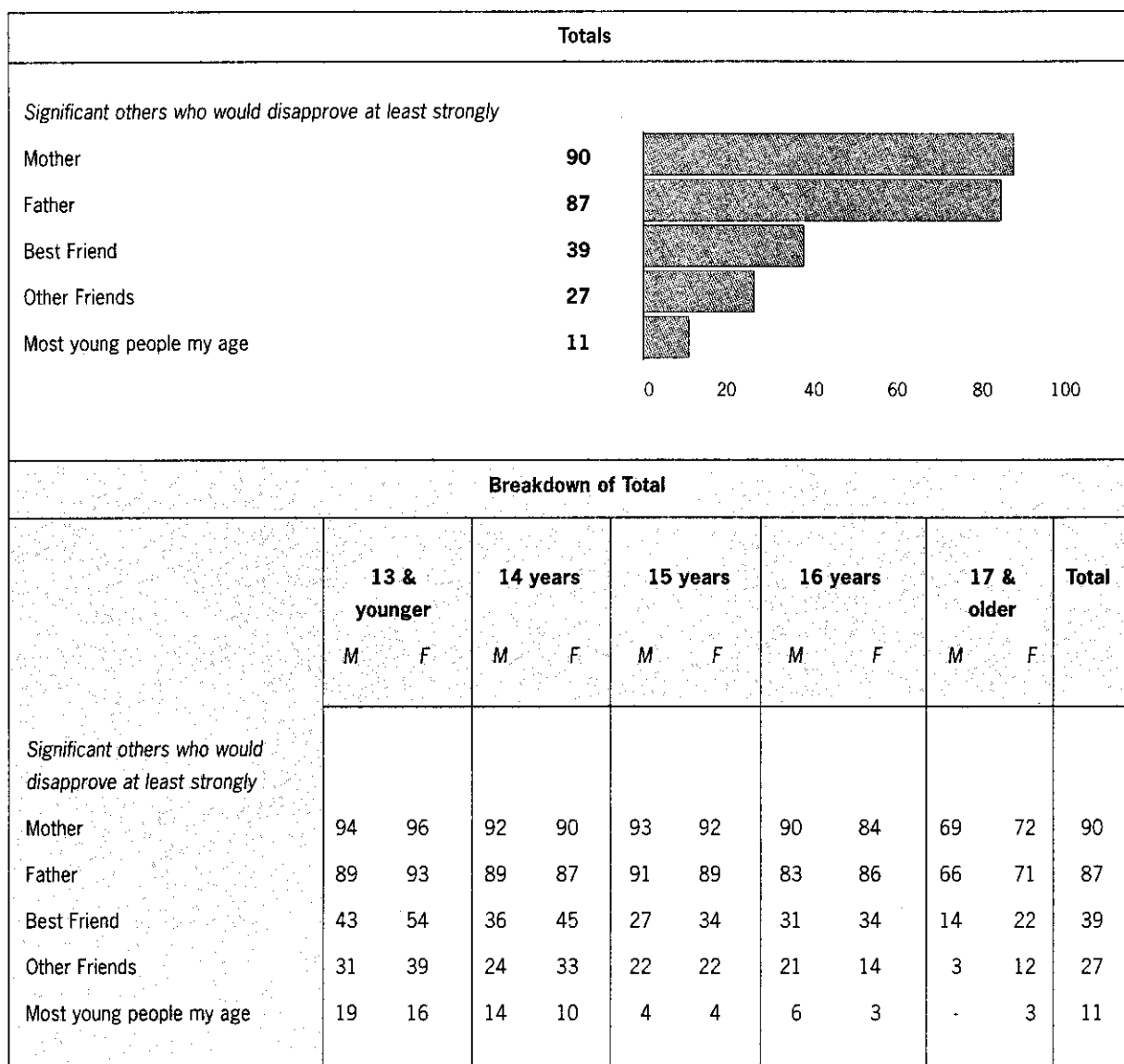
Figure 4.10 Pupils perception of "How often most young people my age drink" by pupils current drinking status and sex



4.5 Perceived approval/disapproval of significant others for drinking

Pupils who did not drink were asked for their perceptions of how their parents, best friend and other good friends would approve or disapprove if they were to drink alcohol (Table 4.5). The older pupils are, the less they perceive these people as disapproving. About 90% of non-drinkers overall anticipated at least strong disapproval from their father and mother. Even among those aged 17 years and older, 69% of males and 72% of females perceived their mother as disapproving at least strongly, while 66% of males and 71% of females perceived their father as doing so. Thirty nine per cent (39%) of best friends were expected to strongly disapprove compared with 27% of other good friends and 11% of "most young people my age". Fifty seven per cent (57%) of non-drinkers perceived that "most young people my age" would not disapprove of their taking up drinking while 21% perceived their best friend and 29% other good friends as not disapproving.

Table 4.5 Percentage of non-drinkers pupils (by age and sex) who perceive that significant others would disapprove at least strongly if they were to drink alcohol



Note: Pupils could choose from the following responses: *disapprove very strongly*, *disapprove strongly*, *disapprove*, *disapprove slightly*, *would not disapprove*. The percentages in the above table refer to the combined categories *disapprove very strongly* and *disapprove strongly*.

4.6 Agreement with statements about drinking

All pupils were presented with statements about drinking and asked the extent which they agreed or disagreed with them (Table 4.6). Twenty one per cent (21%) agreed that “drinking alcohol makes you look grown up” compared with 12% who agreed with the same statement about smoking. Current drinkers were more likely to agree with this statement than were non-drinkers. Twelve per cent (12%) agreed that “you need to drink to be accepted as one of the gang” - 1% less than the percentage agreeing with the same statement about smoking. There was no great variation about this by drinking status. A third agreed that “it is difficult to say no if you are offered a drink by one of your friends” compared to 28% when the statement referred to smoking. Twenty six per cent (26%) agreed that “drinking makes you feel more self-confident” compared to 15% for the same statement about smoking. Drinkers, and particularly female regular drinkers (54%), were most likely to agree with this.

Table 4.6 Percentage of pupils aged 12-18 years agreeing with statements on alcohol by pupils' sex and drinking status

Totals							
Statements							
Drinking alcohol makes you feel relaxed	37						
Drinking alcohol is fun	34						
Difficult to say no if offered drink by a friend	33						
Those who drink alcohol tend to be more popular	29						
Drinking alcohol helps relieve boredom	27						
Drinking alcohol makes you feel more self-confident	26						
Drinking alcohol makes you look grown up	21						
It is cool to drink alcohol	13						
Need to drink to be accepted as one of the gang	12						
		0	20	40	60	80	100

Breakdown of Total							
Statements	Non-Drinker		Occasional Drinker		Regular Drinker		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Drinking alcohol makes you feel relaxed	19	18	49	46	70	72	37
Drinking alcohol is fun	18	10	50	43	69	67	34
Difficult to say no if offered drink by a friend	31	27	42	27	45	38	33
Those who drink alcohol tend to be more popular	29	24	28	28	35	28	29
Drinking alcohol helps relieve boredom	18	11	38	29	50	50	27
Drinking alcohol makes you feel more self-confident	13	12	31	36	43	54	26
Drinking alcohol makes you look grown up	16	17	27	23	29	24	21
It is cool to drink alcohol	11	8	21	16	17	16	13
Need to drink to be accepted as one of the gang	12	12	14	6	16	9	12

Note: Pupils could choose from the following responses: *agree strongly*, *agree*, *unsure*, *disagree* and *disagree strongly*. The percentages in the above table refer to the combined categories *agree strongly* and *agree*.

Twenty seven per cent (27%) agreed that drinking helps relieve boredom compared to 30% who agreed with this statement in relation to smoking. Drinkers were more likely than non-drinkers to agree, with 50% of regular drinkers of both sexes agreeing compared to 18% of male and 11% of female non-drinkers. Thirteen per cent (13%) overall thought that "it was cool to drink" compared to 9% who agreed with the same statement about smoking. Non-drinkers were less likely than drinkers to agree with this. Over a third (34%) agreed that "drinking alcohol is fun" compared with 13% who agreed with this statement about smoking. Just under 70% of regular drinkers of both sexes agreed with this. Thirty seven per cent (37%) overall agreed that drinking alcohol makes you feel relaxed compared to 34% in the case of smoking. Again about 70% of regular drinkers of both sexes agreed with this statement. Twenty nine per cent (29%) overall agreed that "those who drink alcohol tend to be more popular", with no striking difference by drinking status on this except that male regular drinkers were most likely to agree.

4.7 Self esteem and family esteem

All pupils were presented with eight statements relating to self-esteem and family esteem (Table 4.7). Just over one fifth (21%) agreed that "other people wish they were like us". 50% overall responded that they were unsure and this was the most common response among drinkers and non-drinkers alike. A larger proportion of non-drinkers than drinkers were unsure while a larger proportion of drinkers than non-drinkers disagreed with it. Responses to the statement "I am not as popular as other people my age" indicated that regular drinkers are more likely than non-drinkers to perceive themselves to be popular. Overall eleven per cent (11%) agreed that "no one pays much attention to me at home" and regular drinkers were somewhat more likely than non-drinkers to agree with this. Overall, 14% agreed with the statement "I wish I were a different type of person and had more friends". There was little variation in this between the different drinking status groups. Only 4% agreed that "my parents would trade me for another child if they could". Non-drinkers were most likely to disagree strongly. Seventy per cent (70%) of male non-drinkers and 74% of females disagreed strongly with this statement compared to 58% of male regular drinkers and 53% of females.

Table 4.7 Percentage of pupils agreeing with statements on family esteem and self-esteem by sex and current drinking status

Totals							
Statement							
I know my parents are proud of me	74						
My parents know that they can depend on me	74						
Other people think I am a lot of fun to be with	65						
I am not as popular as other people my age	30						
Other people wish they were like us	21						
I wish I were a different kind of person and had more friends	14						
No one pays much attention to me at home	11						
If they could, my parents would trade me for another	4						
		0	20	40	60	80	100
Breakdown of Total							
Statement	Non-Drinker		Occasional Drinker		Regular Drinker		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
I know my parents are proud of me	76	82	77	71	64	63	74
My parents know that they can depend on me	78	82	70	73	63	61	74
Other people think I am a lot of fun to be with	58	65	58	69	65	70	65
I am not as popular as other people my age	36	35	25	33	18	23	30
Other people wish they were like us	19	20	19	19	24	24	21
I wish I were a different kind of person and had more friends	15	13	11	16	12	14	14
No one pays much attention to me at home	8	8	9	13	14	15	11
If they could, my parents would trade me for another	4	3	5	7	7	8	4

Note: Pupils could choose from the following responses: *agree strongly*, *agree*, *unsure*, *disagree* and *disagree strongly*. The percentages in the above table refer to the combined categories *agree strongly* and *agree*.

Sixty five per cent (65%) agreed that "other people think I am a lot of fun to be with" and there was little variation on this between the drinking status groups. Strong agreement with the statement "I know my parents are proud of me" was clearly associated with drinking status, with non-drinkers being over-represented among those agreeing strongly and regular drinkers being under-represented. Overall 32% agreed strongly and a further 42% agreed with the statement. A similar pattern emerged in relation to the statement "my parents know they can depend on me".

4.8 Access to Alcohol

Sources of alcohol

Among the age group of 12 - 18 year old second level pupils who have ever taken a whole alcoholic drink, pubs, discos and the home are the three most commonly reported sources of supply (Table 4.8). Twenty three per cent (23%) mentioned the pub, 19% a disco, 9% got it from their father or mother and a further 10% get it from the drinks supply at home without their father's or mother's knowledge. Fourteen per cent (14%) indicated that off-licences were their usual source of supply while 4% mentioned supermarkets. Twelve per cent (12%) reported older siblings or friends as their usual source. Thirteen year olds of both sexes and 14 year old females were more likely than other age groups to mention home (either with or without parents' permission) as their usual source.

Table 4.8 Where pupils who have ever taken a whole alcoholic drink (lifetime drinkers) usually obtain alcohol by age group and sex

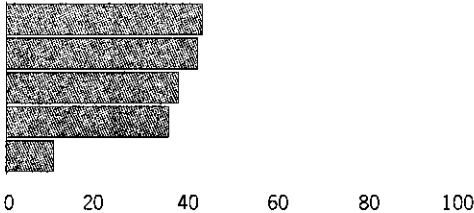
Totals									
Statements									
In a pub	23								
In a disco	19								
In an off-licence	14								
Older siblings or friends buy it for me	12								
I take it from the drinks supply at home unknown to my parents	10								
Mother or Father gives it to me	9								
I get it in some other way	8								
In a supermarket	4								
In a sports club	1								
		0	20	40	60	80	100		

Breakdown of Total											
Statements	13 years & younger		14 years		15 years		16 years		17 years & older		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
In a pub	8	11	13	8	20	16	27	24	31	33	23
In a disco	8	14	9	10	13	11	20	20	27	31	19
In an off-licence	11	14	14	8	17	14	18	14	16	10	14
Older siblings or friends buy it for me	15	8	19	15	14	20	11	14	5	6	12
I take it from the drinks supply at home unknown to my parents	19	17	16	21	12	16	6	9	3	4	10
Mother or Father gives it to me	17	18	8	23	6	8	4	8	6	7	9
I get it in some other way	21	15	15	12	10	12	6	7	2	2	8
In a supermarket	2	2	4	2	7	4	5	4	6	5	4
In a sports club	1	-	2	0	1	0	2	1	4	2	1

Experience of refusal when trying to buy alcohol

Fifty eight per cent (58%) of those who have ever taken a whole alcoholic drink, have tried to buy alcohol in a pub and about a third of these report that they have experienced a refusal (Table 4.9). Half of those who have ever taken a drink have tried to buy alcohol in a disco and about one in ten report that they have ever been refused. Thirty eight per cent (38%) have ever used off-licences and two fifths report that they have experienced a refusal. Supermarkets have been used by 20% and two fifths have experienced refusal. Nine per cent (9%) have tried to buy alcohol in a sports club and about one in three report that they have experienced a refusal.

Table 4.9 Percentage of pupils who ever experienced a refusal when trying to purchase alcohol at various locations (as percentage of those who have ever tried to buy in each location)

Totals												
Refused in:												
Supermarket	41											
Off-licence	40											
Sports Club	36											
Pub	34											
Disco	10											
0 20 40 60 80 100												
Breakdown of Total												
Refused in:	13 years & younger		14 years		15 years		16 years		17 years & older		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
	Supermarket	52	50	68	17	61	48	38	33	36	25	41
	Off-licence	49	28	69	6	56	36	41	50	36	24	40
	Sports Club	47	73	76	0	54	75	29	36	7	15	36
	Pub	66	29	56	17	51	28	34	28	41	18	34
	Disco	41	11	35	5	24	4	8	5	8	3	10

¹ The following are the percentages of pupils who have ever tried to buy alcohol in different locations:
Pubs: 58%; supermarkets: 20%, off-licence: 38%, disco: 51%, sports club: 9%

Alcohol consumption in the out-of-school sample

5.1 Drinking status

The contrast between those in school and those out-of-school is less marked in the case of drinking than in the case of smoking. In three of the four relevant age/sex groupings the proportion of non-drinkers is higher among pupils than among out-of-schoolers but the margin between the two is by no means as large as in the case of smoking (Figure 5.1). At age 17 years and over 59% of male out-of-schoolers and 58% of females are regular drinkers while the corresponding percentages in the case of pupils are 56% of males and 45% of females (Figure 5.2). There is scarcely any difference between the out-of-school sample and pupils of the same age in the proportion who had felt drunk more than six times in the previous 12 months - at age 17 years and over, 40% of males and 30% of females in both samples have experienced this (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.1 Lifetime drinking prevalence i.e. number and percentage of out-of-school sample who have ever had a whole alcoholic drink, by age group and sex

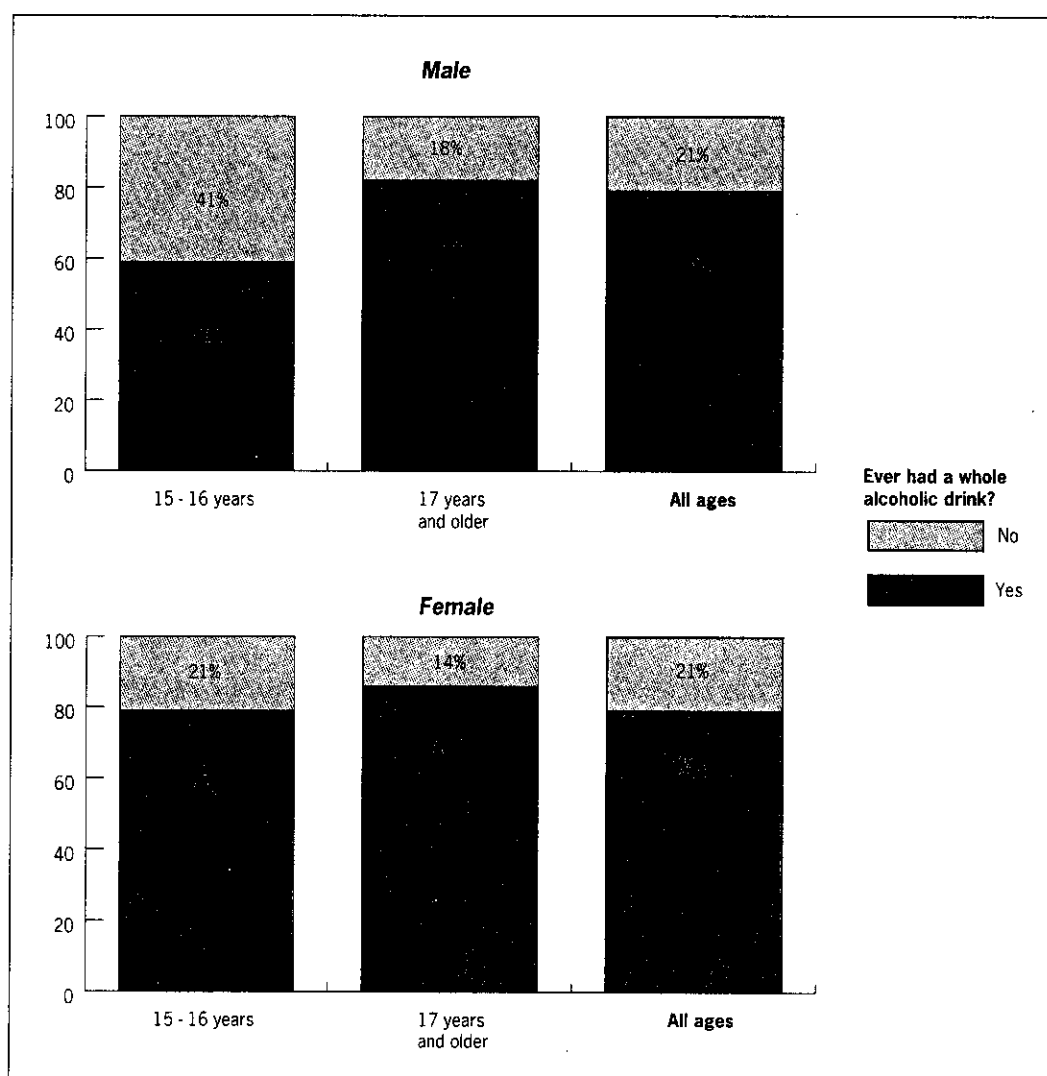
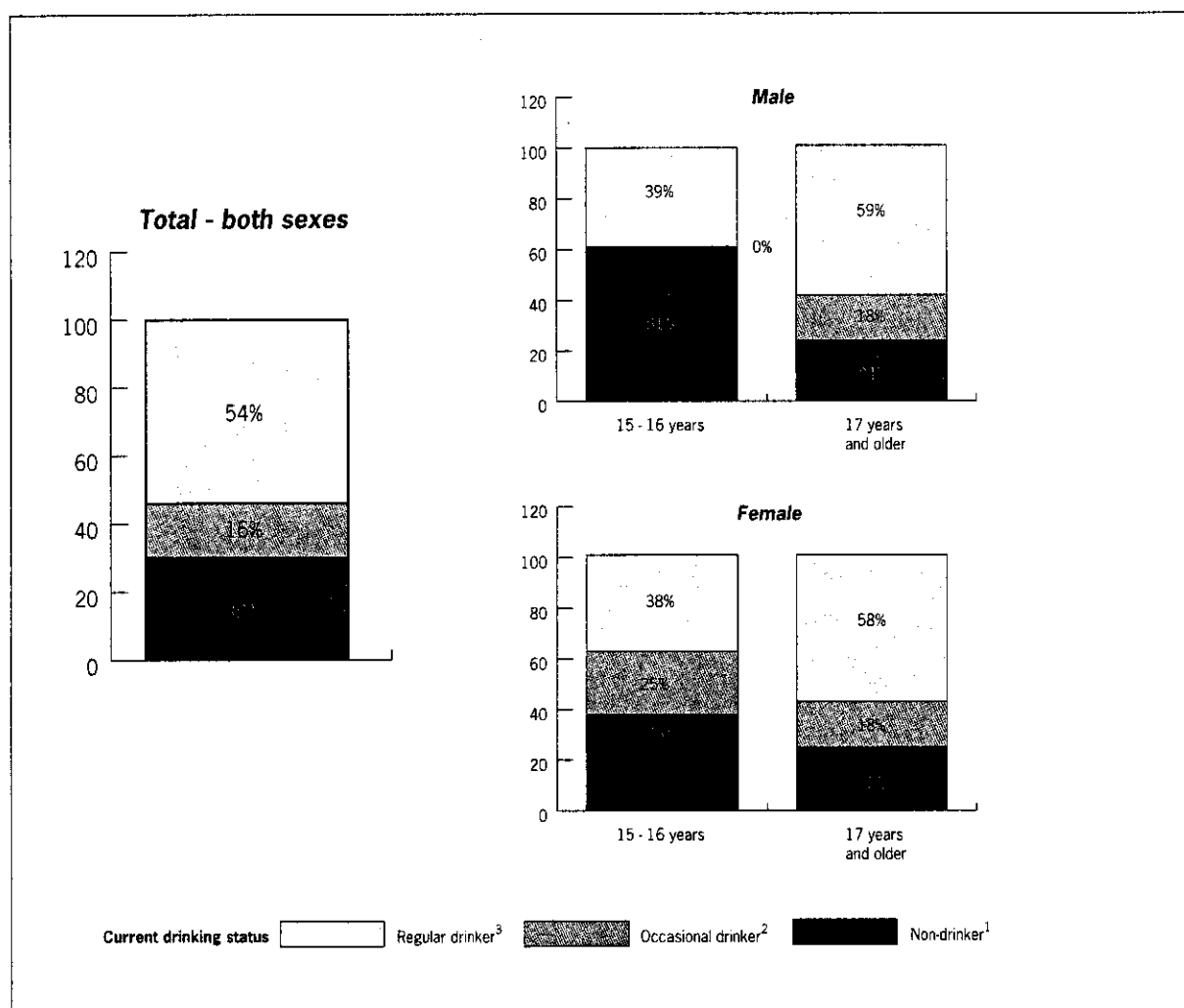


Figure 5.2 Current drinking status of out-of-school sample by age group and sex

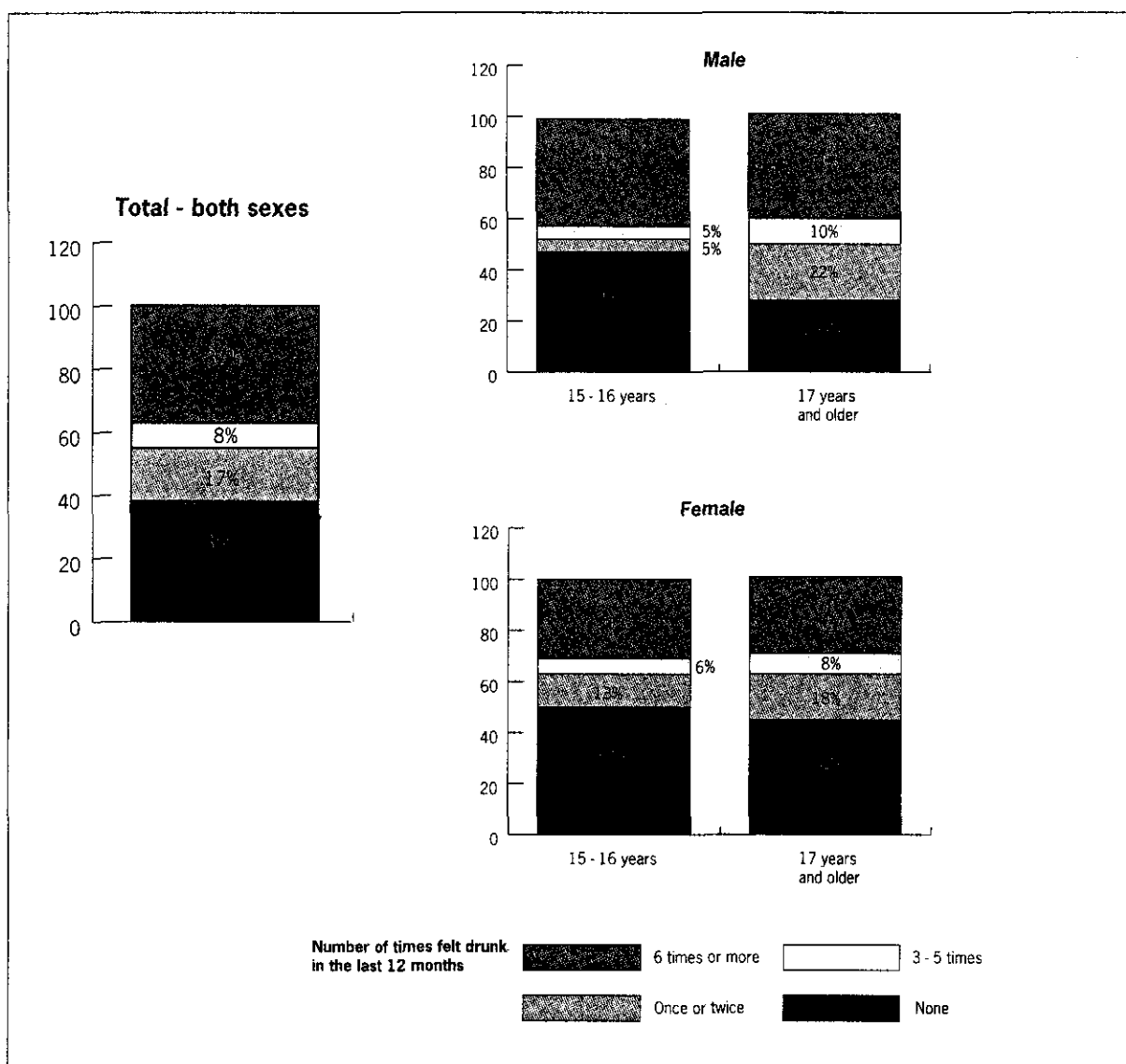


¹ Non-drinker = those who have not had an alcoholic drink in the previous 30 days

² Occasional drinker = those who have had an alcoholic drink the the previous 30 days, but only one type of beverage (beer, cider, wine or spirits) and/or on not more than three occasions

³ Regular drinker = those who drank more than one type of alcoholic beverage or who drank on more than three occasions in the previous 30 days

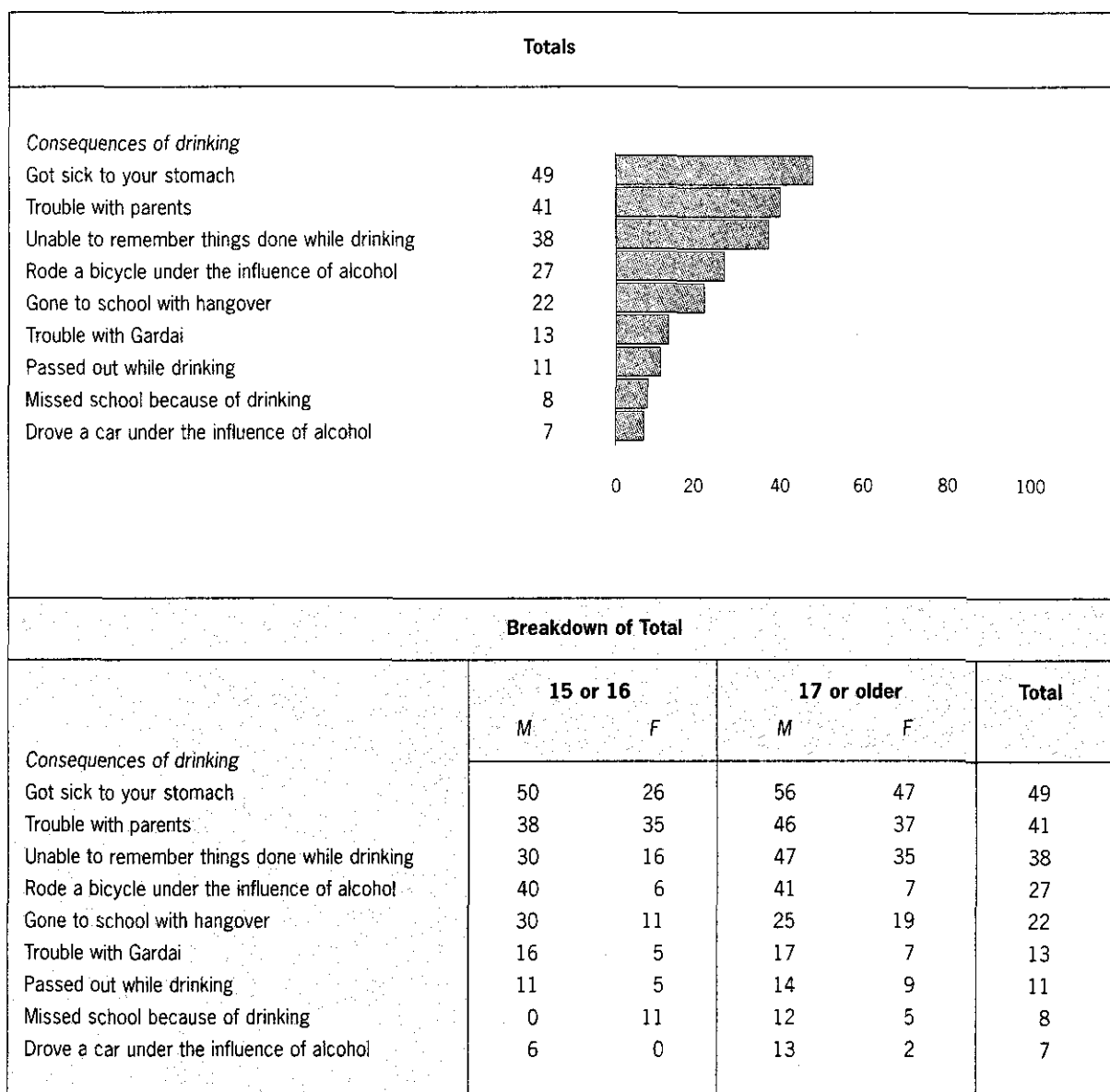
Figure 5.3 Number of times out-of-school sample felt drunk in the last 12 months by age group and sex



5.2 Experience of the consequences of drinking

There is no great difference between the two samples in relation to experience of the consequences of drinking except in the case of two consequences (Table 5.1). More out-of-schoolers of both sexes aged 17 years and over compared to pupils report getting into trouble with their parents and more out-of-school males than male pupils report driving or riding a bike under the influence of drink.

Table 5.1 Percentage of out-of-school sample who experienced various consequences of drinking by age group and sex



5.3 Prevalence of drinking among significant others

Thirty nine per cent (39%) of out-of-schoolers have a mother and 20% have a father who does not drink alcohol. About 15% have a best friend who doesn't drink and about the same percentage have other good friends who don't drink.

5.4 Agreement with statements about drinking

The most common out-of-schoolers estimate of "how often young people my own age drink" is about once a week (41%), followed closely by "a few times" a week (35%). Twenty per cent (20%) of the out-of-school youth agree that "drinking makes you look grown up" and a further 9% are unsure. Nine per cent (9%) agree with the statement that "you need to drink to be accepted as one of the gang". Twenty nine per cent (29%) agree that "it is difficult to say no if you are offered a drink by one of your friends". Thirty per cent (30%) agree that "drinking makes you feel more self-confident" and a further 15% are unsure. Over a third (37%) agree that "drinking relieves boredom" and a further 12% are unsure. Only 7% agree that "it is cool to drink" and a further 12% are unsure. Forty four per cent (44%) agree that "drinking is fun". Over half (51%) agree that "drinking makes you feel more relaxed" and a further 14% are unsure. Fifteen per cent (15%) agree that "those who drink alcohol tend to be more popular" and a further 15% are unsure about this.

5.5 Self esteem and family esteem

The out-of-school sample in common with the pupil sample were presented with a set of statements related to self-esteem and family esteem. Only eighteen per cent (18%) agreed that "other people wish they were like us" while 41% were unsure about this. One fifth (21%) agreed that "I am not as popular as other people my age" and a further 18% were unsure. Ten per cent (10%) agreed that "no one pays much attention to me at home" and a further 5% were unsure. Only 5% each agreed that "I wish I were a different kind of person and had more friends" and that "if they could my parents would trade me in for another child". Almost three quarters (74%) agreed that "other people think I am a lot of fun to be with" and a further 18% were unsure about this. Sixty five per cent (65%) agreed that "I know my parents are proud of me" and a further 29% were unsure about this.

5.6 Access to Alcohol

Sources of supply

Pubs, discos and off-licences were most frequently mentioned by the out-of-school sample who had ever drunk alcohol, as their usual source of supply, with 34%, 25% and 21% respectively mentioning these.

Experience of refusal when buying alcohol

About 90% had ever tried to buy alcohol in a pub and less than half reported that they had experienced a refusal. About 80% had tried to buy alcohol in a disco and only one in nine reported that they had experienced a refusal. Two thirds had tried to buy in an off-licence and somewhat over a third reported that they had been refused. The extent of refusal in these three sources of alcohol appears to have been about the same in the pupil sample and the out-of-school sample.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Smoking, drinking and drug use among Irish school pupils have been the subjects of a number of surveys over the past twenty-five years. The data presented in this report broaden the existing base of knowledge with regard to young peoples' smoking and drinking behaviour in three significant respects. First, the schools where data have previously been collected on smoking and drinking behaviours, and on the factors which influence them, are heavily concentrated in the larger urban centres rather than spread evenly across the country. By contrast the data that have been presented in this report come for the first time from a nationally representative sample of schools.

Second, while the collection of data had previously been restricted to the captive audience of school pupils, data from a sample of out-of-school young people, whose members might be expected to be at particularly high risk in relation to substance abuse, was examined in this report.

Third, the report presented a profile of the sources from which young people across all the regions of the state report obtaining the cigarettes they smoke and the alcoholic beverages they drink. This profile complements the findings of test purchase studies which have indicated that the statutory age limits to which the sale of cigarettes and alcohol are subject are being widely disregarded.

In this concluding chapter attention is drawn to some of the principal findings of the current survey, beginning with prevalence of smoking and drinking.

6.2 Prevalence of cigarette smoking

The most commonly used measures of smoking prevalence among young people are lifetime use, use in previous month and regular use. This current study found a national lifetime prevalence rate of 55% for second level pupils i.e. 55% have ever smoked a whole cigarette. This compares with estimates of 67% in 1984 and 61 per cent in 1991 by Grube and Morgan in their Dublin studies. Twenty nine per cent (29%) of second level pupils nationally in this study are current smokers i.e. have smoked at least 1-2 cigarettes in the last month. This compares with Dublin estimates of 37% in 1984 and 34% in 1991 by Grube and Morgan. Sixteen per cent (16%) of second level pupils nationally are regular smokers (i.e. smoked at least 1-2 cigarettes daily in the previous month). This compares with Dublin estimates of 24% in 1984 and 19% in 1991 by Grube and Morgan. More detailed analysis of the data in the current study shows a prevalence of 30% for current smoking and 17% for regular smoking in the Eastern Health Board area - the area most comparable with the Dublin studies by Grube and Morgan. These rates for the Eastern Health Board are slightly lower than those found by Grube and Morgan in Dublin in 1991 and seven percentage points lower than those found in 1984. Because of the different geographic basis of the current study and those of Grube and Morgan and also because of the few time points involved (1984, 1991 and 1993) caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions about trends. However it might be said that insofar as the data suggest any trend, it is a small but consistent downward one.

It is of obvious interest to compare the findings of this research study with those of other European countries. However variation in the age groups questioned and in definitions of smoking prevalence make it difficult to make valid comparisons. Results for the 1993/94 WHO Cross-National Study on Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) provide data for a number of European countries on the percentage of 11, 13 and 15 year old school pupils who (a) have ever tried smoking and (b) are current smokers i.e. smoke at least once a week. Taking the 15 year age group, the current 1993 study indicates that 59% of Irish pupils (60% of boys and 56% of girls) have ever smoked a whole cigarette. Comparison of this figure with that for 15 year olds in the HBSC study who have ever experimented with smoking suggests that for boys about 12 of the 25 countries have lifetime smoking rates greater than Ireland's while for girls about 16 countries have rates greater than the Irish one. In other words on this measure of smoking prevalence Irish 15 year old pupils fall about mid-way among their counterparts in 25 European countries.*

Prevalence of lifetime smoking among 15 year old girls in the Republic of Ireland is close to that of their counterparts in Northern Ireland but lower than those of 15 year old girls in Scotland and Wales. For boys the rate is similar in the Republic of Ireland to those in Scotland and Wales and marginally higher than that in Northern Ireland. Differing definitions

*Ireland has not participated in the HBSC study

of current smoking in the current Irish study and the HBSC study do not allow valid comparisons on this measure of smoking prevalence.

In the small sample of out-of-school young people in the current Irish study the prevalence of lifetime, current and regular smoking was much higher than in a comparable age group of pupils. Thus at age 17, 60% of out-of-school girls aged 17 years and older are regular smokers compared to 22% of those in school while the corresponding prevalences among boys are 57% and 24%.

6.3 Prevalence of drinking

Sixty three per cent (63%) of second level pupils aged 12-18 years nationally have ever taken a whole alcoholic drink. This compares with estimates of 65% in 1984 and 78% in 1991 in Grube and Morgan's Dublin studies. Forty-two per cent (42%) of second level pupils nationally are current drinkers i.e. have had at least one alcoholic drink in the previous month. This compares with 51% in Grube and Morgan's 1991 Dublin study. Twenty nine per cent (29%) of second level pupils nationally are regular drinkers i.e. they drank more than one alcoholic beverage or drank on more than three occasions in the previous 30 days. Forty per cent (40%) of all pupils (44% of males and 37% of females) in the present study indicated that they had been drunk at least once in the previous 12 months and this increased to 71% of males and 57% of females at age 17 years and older. At age 17 years and older 40% of males and 30% of females report being drunk more than six times in the previous 12 months. As in the case of smoking, for all measures of drinking status - lifetime, current and regular drinking as well as the proportion who reported being drunk at least once in the previous 12 months - prevalence in this current 1993 study, both nationally and in the Eastern Health Board area, is slightly lower than in Grube and Morgan's 1991 Dublin study. Again the different geographic bases of the studies call for caution in interpreting any trend. Only for lifetime drinking can a comparison be attempted between this current study and Grube and Morgan's 1984 Dublin study. The 1984 Dublin study found that 65% of pupils had ever had a whole alcoholic drink, a figure which rose to 78% in Grube and Morgan's 1991 Dublin study. As already mentioned, the current 1993 national study found a lifetime prevalence of 63%.

As in the case of smoking, variations in the way drinking behaviour is measured, make it difficult to make valid comparisons with studies in other countries. The 1993/94 phase of the WHO Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) survey found that by the age of 15, the proportion who had tasted an alcoholic drink reached nearly 100% in Wales and exceeded 80% in all 25 countries studied except Israel. This current 1993 survey in Ireland found that 67% of 15 year olds had "ever had a whole alcoholic drink (more than just a sip or a taste)". It is to be noted that the question asked in the current Irish survey is more restrictive than that in the HBSC survey and therefore unless drinking levels in Ireland were higher one would expect the percentage in the Irish survey to be lower than those found in the HBSC study. The definition of current drinking also differs between the HBSC study and the current Irish study. The HBSC study measures the percentage who drink alcoholic beverages at least once a week while the current Irish study uses a measure of those who have drunk at least one alcoholic drink in the past 30 days making any valid comparison difficult.

The contrast between pupils in the out-of-school sample is less in the case of drinking than smoking. At age 17 years and older 59% of males out-of-school and 58% of females are regular drinkers compared to 56% of males and 45% of females in the pupil group. The proportion of those aged 17 years and older who have been drunk six or more times in the previous 12 months is the same among out-of-school males and females as among their pupil counterparts.

6.4 Normative influences on smoking and drinking

In common with previous research in Ireland (Grube and Morgan 1986, 1990) and indeed elsewhere, there was a clear link between the smoking status of a young person and whether or not his or her best friend smoked. The same was true in the case of drinking behaviour. There was also a link between young peoples' smoking and drinking status and that of their other good friends. Young people who smoke are more likely than non-smokers to live in a household where some other person (either parent or sibling) smokes. Some association was found between childrens' drinking and that of their parents, with the children of non-drinking parents being more likely to be non-drinkers themselves.

The extent to which smoking is perceived as a peer group norm by smokers and non-smokers alike is striking. Overall

only 17% of pupils (including only 23% of non-smoking males and 18% of females) estimated that "most young people of my age that I know don't smoke". In fact of the sample itself, 45% reported that they had never smoked a whole cigarette and about 70% reported that they had not smoked even 1-2 cigarettes in the previous month. One interpretation of this is that young people over-estimate the prevalence of smoking among their peers.

Over a third (35%) of those who have ever smoked have been asked to buy cigarettes for their mother and a similar percentage have been asked to buy for their father. The percentages being asked to do this are as high (if not higher) in the age group 13-14 years, as in the group as a whole.

6.5 Knowledge of and beliefs about consequences of smoking

Level of agreement with the statement that "smoking is dangerous to your health" was high, with 90% of both smokers and non-smokers agreeing with this. However when asked to indicate their degree of certainty that smoking would harm their own health, while over 90% believed that it would, certainty about this happening was greater among non-smokers than among smokers. About a quarter of both occasional and regular smokers were unsure as to whether smoking would shorten their lives or not and among regular smokers, an additional 14% thought that it wouldn't shorten their lives.

6.6 Access to cigarettes and alcohol

Newsagent shops/tobacconists/sweetshops and friends are the two most common sources of cigarette supply reported, accounting between them for 50% of all source indications. The fact that only one in fifteen who have tried to buy cigarettes in newsagents/tobacconists/sweetshops or in garage shops report that they have ever been refused gives cause for concern. Even among those under 16 years at the time of the survey (i.e. under the legal age for purchase of cigarettes) only about one in ten have reported that they have experienced a refusal in a newsagents/tobacconists/sweetshops. These findings complement the findings of test purchase studies and suggest that the statutory age limits relating to the sale of cigarettes are being widely disregarded. Similarly a quarter of pupils who have ever smoked report that they have bought cigarettes singly (i.e. less than a packet of ten) despite the fact that this is illegal under the Tobacco (Health Promotion and Protection) Act.

A similar situation emerges in relation to alcohol supply. Pubs, discos and the home are the three most commonly reported sources of supply for pupils, accounting between them for two thirds of all the source indications. Discos stand out from other commercial sources as the places where pupils report being least likely to experience refusal with only one in ten of those who have ever tried to buy alcohol there reporting that they have been refused, despite the fact that the sale of alcohol to those under 18 is illegal.

6.7 Conclusion

Since this research was conducted a number of developments have taken place at policy level of relevance to the subject matter of the study. These include three publications by the Department of Health - the Health Strategy, "Shaping a Healthier Future", the Health Promotion Strategy and the National Alcohol Policy - which address, inter alia, the issues of smoking and drinking in young people. The findings of the national survey reported here will play a useful role in the implementation of policy and in monitoring progress in the years ahead.

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Appendix A

Sampling Methods

The objective of the sample was to obtain interviews with a representative cross-section of young people aged 12 to 18. Since the great bulk of these are still in school, it was decided to carry out the main set of interviews in classrooms and to attempt to sample young people outside education through a combination of sifting and snowballing sampling techniques. These two sampling exercises are described separately.

Sample of Schools

The ESRI keeps a computerised register of second level schools which is based on the official Department of Education list. The sample for the first school survey was selected from this register in the following stages. In 1992, 793 second level schools appeared on the register. The desired sample size for the present inquiry was about 4,000 respondents of 160 classes (assuming 25 pupils per class). The actual sample was constructed in three stages. First, a random sample of 80 schools was selected, proportionally stratified by type of school (secondary, vocational and community/comprehensive), number of pupils and health board region. The stratification procedure ensured that the schools were fully representative of the population across the specified variables. Second, within each selected school, a target number of classes to be surveyed was derived. For schools of under 300 pupils, the target was one class; for schools of 300-499 pupils, it was two classes; for schools of 500 or more pupils, it was three classes. This step was inserted to avoid a bias in the sample towards pupils from smaller schools. Third, with regard to the question of how to select classes within the schools, it was clearly desirable to ensure that the respondents would be evenly spread across all the age groups in the schools. To achieve this, all the selected schools were simultaneously classified by the basic stratification variables (type, size and health board). Within each cell of this classification, target years (i.e. first year, second year, etc.) were specified for each school in a systematic, cyclical manner. The selection of the particular class within the year was left to the school's discretion.

Sample of Young People who have left school

This was a particularly difficult group to sample since they are not very numerous and are widely spread throughout the general population. Because of these difficulties, it was decided to attempt to access its members by using a "snowball sampling" technique. Each month, the ESRI, in conjunction with TEAGASC, conducts a survey of consumer attitudes with a national random sample of households. Employing a "sifting" strategy which has previously been used in the construction of samples of population sub-groups which are defined by a combination of age and situational characteristics - such as, for example, elderly people receiving informal care in the community (O'Connor, Smyth and Whelan, 1988; Blackwell, O'Shea, Moane and Murray, 1992) - interviewers were asked to identify in the sample households during the rounds of this survey from July 1992 to February 1993, any young people who had (a) passed their 15th but not reached their 18th birthdays on 1 September, 1992 and (b) had left full-time second level education permanently (i.e. excluding young people on holiday from second level schools).

During March and April, these young people were contacted again. Interviewers rechecked whether they fulfilled the situational criteria and, if they did so, asked them to complete the same questionnaire as was administered in the schools. At this point the sifting strategy was supplemented by the snowballing technique. The respondents were also asked to supply the names of three other young people aged 15 to 17 who had left school permanently. The interviewers then called on those named in response to this question and asked them to co-operate in the survey. These procedures generated 98 names from the initial Consumer Survey interviews and an additional 99 names were supplied by these original respondents. The fact that the total sample assembled was just under half the size it had initially been hoped to achieve illustrates the degree of difficulty involved in gaining access to people in this age range.