



Experience of Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2001 Northern Ireland Crime Survey

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KEY POINTS

- ◆ More than one quarter (26%) of all Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) respondents admitted taking at least one type of illicit drug at some time in their lives; 11% admitted to having taken in the last year and 7% within the last month. This compares with 34% of British Crime Survey (BCS) respondents who have ever used any illicit drug; 12% who used at some time in the last year and 8% who used in the last month (Table 2).
- ◆ The proportion of NICS respondents admitting to having ever taken illicit drugs increased from 24% in 1998 to 26% in 2001. The percentage of male respondents admitting to having ever taken any illicit drug increased from 30% to 31% over the same period while the percentage of females increased from 19% to 22% (Table 6).
- ◆ Cannabis remains the most commonly used illicit drug in Northern Ireland with 18% of 2001 NICS respondents admitting to having ever used it. Ecstasy (6%) is the second most commonly used illicit drug (Figure 5).
- ◆ More than two in five (43%) NICS respondents aged 16 to 24 years have used illicit drugs at some time in the past, 28% within the last year and 19% within the last month (Table 2). A similar pattern is observed in the BCS findings.
- ◆ 28% of males aged 16 to 24 years claim to have used an illicit drug in the last month while 37% claim to have used in the last year. This compares with 12% of female respondents in this age group who claim to have used in the last month and 21% in the last year (Table 2).
- ◆ Almost two thirds (63%) of NICS respondents aged 16-24 years claimed that, in general, it was very or fairly easy to obtain illegal drugs. In terms of accessibility to specific illicit drugs, 62% of this age group said that cannabis was very or fairly easy to obtain, while only 10 % claimed methadone to be very or fairly easy to obtain (Table 5).
- ◆ The average age of first use of any illicit drug among NICS respondents who reported using illicit drugs at some time was 19.1 years. Respondents aged 16 to 24 years reported having first used at an average age of 16.2 years. Among 25 to 34 year old respondents, the average age of first use was 19.4 years while among 35 to 59 year olds the average age of first use was 23 years (Table 4).

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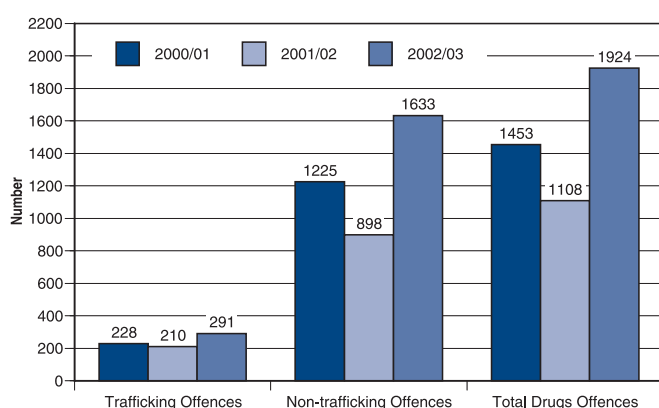
INTRODUCTION

1. The Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) is a personal interview survey of adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. The NICS was carried out between mid-August 2001 and the end of January 2002. Previously conducted in 1994/95 and 1998, the NICS closely mirrors the format and questions of the British Crime Survey (BCS), the equivalent survey for England and Wales. The NICS includes a specific self-reporting drugs component which was completed only by persons surveyed aged 16 to 59 years. This bulletin examines the prevalence and trends of illicit drug use among these respondents.

DRUG MISUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: THE STATISTICS

2. To put the NICS findings into context, statistics on recorded drug offences and drug seizures in Northern Ireland should first be considered.

Figure 1: Number of drug offences recorded by the PSNI between 2000/01 and 2002/03



(Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland – Report of the Chief Constable 2001/02, 2002/03)

Note: Figures for 2002/03 are recorded according to the National Crime Recording Standard, which was introduced on 1 April 2002

3. The number of drug offences recorded by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has fluctuated over the past 3 years. There were 1,924 drug offences recorded in 2002/03, a 74% increase from 2001/02 (1,108) and a 32% increase from 2000/01 (1,453). A total of 291 trafficking offences were recorded in 2002/03, an increase of 39% on the 2001/02 figure (210) and a 28% increase on the 2000/01 figure (228). Non-trafficking drug offences (mainly possession offences) in 2002/03 (1,633) had increased by 82% on the previous year, 2001/02 (898) and by 33% on 2000/01 (1,225) (Figure 1).

4. A total of 1,781 drug seizure incidents (i.e. the number of occasions on which one or more types of drugs were seized) were recorded in 2002/03 (Table 1). This represents a 16% increase on the 1,533 incidents in 2001/02 and a 2% increase on the 2000/01 figure (1,750 incidents).

Table 1: Illicit drugs seized by the PSNI by type and quantity 2000/01 to 2002/03

		2000/01		2001/02		2002/03	
		No. of seizures	Amount seized	No. of seizures	Amount seized	No. of seizures	Amount seized
CLASS A							
Cocaine	Powder(gms)	27	1,701.4	28	3,399.9	44	3,023.87
	Wraps	0	0	4	4	3	12
	'Crack'	2	43.1	4	66.5	1	50
Ecstasy	Tablets	346	410,671	262	127,368	258	605,188
	Powder(gms)	6	498	8	232.81	2	1
	Capsules	4	11	1	2	5	25
LSD	Doses	9	117	3	122	1	4
	Microdots	2	201	0	0	2	1
Opiates	Powder(gms)	61	3,131.6	46	102.11	21	346.01
	Tablets	7	1,670	4	51	1	41
	Ampoules	4	203	1	4	1	1
	M1s	6	121	8	366	14	428.52
	Wraps	10	16	42	69	1	1
Seizures of Class A drugs		455	-	385	-	335	-
CLASS B							
Cannabis	Resin(kgs)	1,320	384.4	1,126	417.2	1,366	709.5
	Herbal(kgs)	45	21.6	65	49	78	27.7
	Plants	11	210	14	141	29	202
	Oil	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Joints	131	253	119	273	104	169
Amphetamines	Powder(kgs)	51	3.9	70	8.8	83	27.6
	Wraps	8	16	8	26	9	24
	Tablets	8	458	3	118	4	11
Barbiturates	Tablets	0	-	0	-	0	-
Seizures of Class B drugs		1,458	-	1,259	-	1,534	-
Total seizure incidents		1,750	-	1,533	-	1,781	-

Class A includes: LSD, cocaine, crack, ecstasy, heroin, magic mushrooms and methadone.

Class B includes: cannabis, amphetamines and barbiturates.

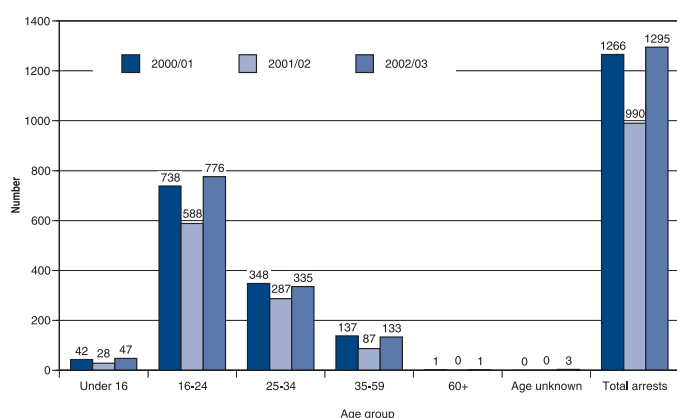
(Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland – Report of the Chief Constable 2002/03)

5. Between 2000/01 and 2002/03 the number of seizures involving Class A drugs fell from 455 to 335. The amount of cocaine seized increased by 78% from 1,701.4 gms to 3,023.87 gms while the number of ecstasy tablets seized increased by 47%, from 410,671 to 605,188. However, Table 1 also shows that between 2000/01 and 2002/03 the amount of LSD seized fell from 117 Doses to 4 Doses, and 201 Microdots to 1 Microdot. The amount of Opiates seized also fell substantially from 3,131.6 gms to 346.01 gms.

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6. In each of the years 2000/01 to 2002/03, more than four in every five seizure incidents involved a Class B drug. The number of seizures of Class B drugs fluctuated over this three year period reaching a peak of 1,534 incidents in 2002/03. This was an increase of 22% on 2001/02 (1,259) and an increase of 5% on 2000/01 (1,458). A total of 709.5kgs of cannabis resin was seized in 2002/03, compared with 417.2kgs in 2001/02 and 384.4kgs in 2000/01. There were 27.6kgs of amphetamines seized in 2002/03, an increase from 8.8kgs in 2001/02 and 3.9kgs in 2000/01 (Table 1).

Figure 2: Drug related arrests in Northern Ireland by age group, 2000/01 to 2002/03



(Source: Central Statistics Unit, Police Service of Northern Ireland)

7. There were 1,295 drug related arrests in Northern Ireland in 2002/03. This is a 31% increase on the 2001/02 figure (990) and a 2% increase on the 2000/01 figure (1,266). The proportion of persons arrested in 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03 who were aged 16 to 24 years was similar at 58%, 59% and 60% respectively (Figure 2).

8. Statistics of the annual average Northern Ireland prison population and annual number of receptions into prison show that in 2002, 9% (58) of the average annual population under sentence of immediate custody were convicted of 'drug offences' (Figure 3). Six percent (71) of the total number of prisoners received into prison under sentence of immediate custody were convicted of 'drug offences' (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Average Northern Ireland prison population under sentence of immediate custody by offence 2002

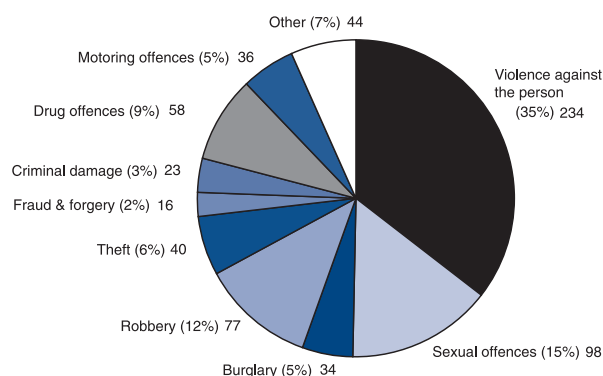
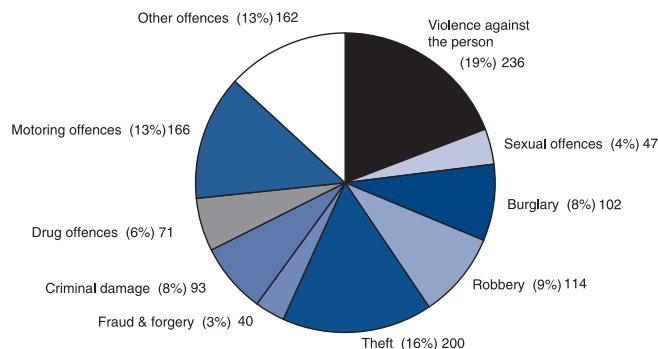


Figure 4: Immediate custody prison receptions in Northern Ireland by offence 2002



(Source: 'The Northern Ireland Prison Population in 2002', NIO Research and Statistical Bulletin 3/2003)

THE 2001 NORTHERN IRELAND CRIME SURVEY

9. As was noted earlier, the NICS was carried out between mid-August 2001 and the end of January 2002. The Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) conducted the NICS on behalf of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

10. The NICS includes a specific self-reporting drugs component which was completed only by persons in the sample aged 16 to 59 years. Emphasis was placed on the confidentiality of responses to promote accurate reporting. Respondents were encouraged to take personal control of the laptop computer used in interviewing and, by following simple on-screen advice, input their answers directly and without the oversight of the interviewer. There were a total of 2,120 possible respondents to the drugs module, 2,037 (96.1%) of whom formed the final sample (81 refused to answer the questions on drugs and a further two were

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discounted for methodological reasons). 12% of the respondents asked for their information to be keyed directly by the interviewer.

11. The drugs component included questions about amphetamines (speed, whizz, uppers, billy), cannabis (marijuana, grass, hash, ganja, blow, draw, skunk, weed, spliff), cocaine (coke), crack (rock, stones), ecstasy ('E'), heroin (smack, 'H', brown), LSD (acid), magic mushrooms, methadone or physeptone, tranquillisers (temazepam, valium), amyl nitrite (poppers) and anabolic steroids (steroids).

12. Respondents were asked about their experience of drugs. Questions were framed in terms of three different recall periods - ever/lifetime, the last year and the last month. Use within the last year or last month better reflects regular or recent use. Two new sets of questions were introduced in the 2001 NICS, asking respondents about age of first use of illicit drugs and ease of access to illicit drugs.

13. A fictitious drug, 'semeron', was included in the questionnaire to help assess the accuracy of responses. Claimed usage might suggest over-reporting in relation to non-fictitious drugs. Only two respondents in the NICS claimed to have used 'semeron'- they were subsequently removed from the analysis.

FINDINGS

EXPERIENCE OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN NORTHERN IRELAND BY TYPE OF DRUG AND SEX OF RESPONDENT

14. The 2001 NICS estimated that more than one quarter (26%) of all 16 to 59 year old respondents had taken at least one type of illicit drug at some time in their lives. Prevalence estimates for use of any illicit drug in the last year and last month were much lower at 11% and 7% respectively. A similar pattern was observed in the 2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey in which 20% of Northern Ireland respondents reported ever using an illegal drug, 6% in the year prior to the survey and 3% in the month prior to the survey. In England and Wales the 2001 British Crime Survey (BCS) estimated that one third (34%) of those aged 16 to 59 had used illicit drugs at some time; 12% within the last year and 8% within the last month.

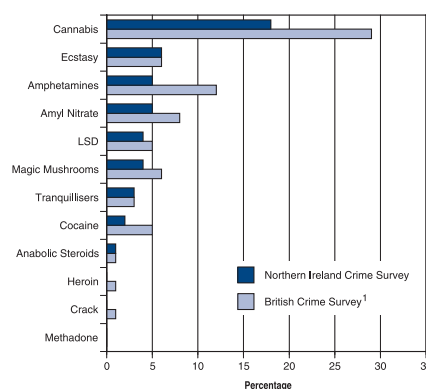
15. Analysis indicated that in the NICS, male respondents were almost one and a half times more likely than female respondents to have tried illicit substances at some time. This is similar to the findings of the BCS (Table 2).

Table 2: Use of illicit drugs by age and sex of respondent in the 2001 Northern Ireland Crime Survey and in the 2001 British Crime Survey

	Ever used	Used last year	Used last month
Northern Ireland Crime Survey			
Males	31%	14%	10%
16-24	50%	37%	28%
25-34	44%	20%	13%
35-59	20%	5%	3%
Females	22%	8%	4%
16-24	38%	21%	12%
25-34	30%	9%	4%
35-59	13%	4%	2%
Total	26%	11%	7%
16-24	43%	28%	19%
25-34	35%	13%	8%
35-59	16%	4%	2%
British Crime Survey¹			
Males	41%	15%	10%
16-24	54%	35%	24%
25-34	56%	20%	13%
35-59	29%	7%	4%
Females	28%	9%	5%
16-24	44%	24%	14%
25-34	37%	11%	6%
35-59	19%	3%	2%
Total	34%	12%	8%
16-24	49%	30%	19%
25-34	47%	15%	10%
35-59	24%	5%	3%

¹ BCS data based on further analysis of Findings 182, Prevalence of drug use: key findings from the 2001/2002 British Crime Survey.

Figure 5: Northern Ireland Crime Survey (2001) and British Crime Survey (2001) respondents who have ever used specific illicit drugs



¹ BCS data based on further analysis of Findings 182, Prevalence of drug use: key findings from the 2001/2002 British Crime Survey.

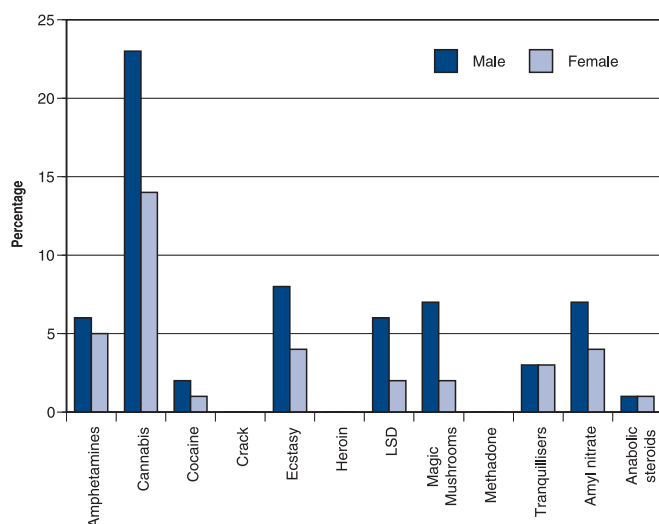
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16. Figure 5 shows that cannabis was reported as the most commonly ever used illicit drug in both crime surveys, with 18% of NICS respondents aged 16 to 59 admitting to ever taking it compared to 29% of respondents in the BCS. Seven percent of NICS respondents admitted to having used cannabis within the last year and 4% within the last month. The corresponding figures for the BCS were 11% and 7% respectively. Ecstasy (6%) is the second most commonly ever used illicit drug among 16 to 59 year old NICS respondents. The BCS reported that amphetamines (12%) were the second most common ever used illicit drug. NICS findings are very similar to results of the 2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey in which cannabis (17%) was the most common ever used drug and ecstasy (6%) the second most common ever used drug.

17. The NICS estimated that males were much more likely than females to use illicit drugs - 31% of males admitted taking illicit drugs at some time. Prevalence rates for males for the last year and month were much lower, at 14% and 10% respectively. This compared with 22% of female respondents who ever used illicit drugs; 8% who used them in the last year and 4% who used them in the last month. The BCS estimated that 41% of males had tried illicit drugs at some time, 15% within the last year and 10% within the last month (Table 2).

18. There was a statistically significant difference between NICS male and female respondents in relation to the use of illicit drugs for each of the three recall periods, with males more likely than females to have used the illicit drugs in each recall period.

Figure 6: Specific illicit drugs ever used by Northern Ireland Crime Survey (2001) respondents by respondents' sex



19. The NICS estimated that almost one quarter (23%) of males had ever used cannabis and that almost one in ten (8%) had ever used ecstasy. In comparison, one in seven (14%) female respondents reported having ever used cannabis and one in twenty (5%) had ever used amphetamines (Figure 6).

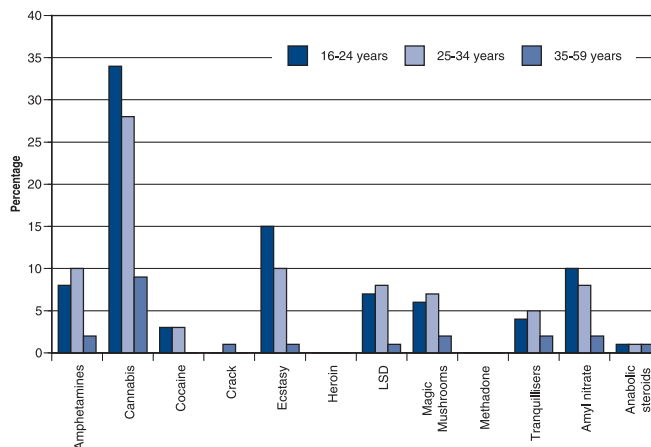
EXPERIENCE OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN NORTHERN IRELAND BY AGE GROUP AND SEX OF RESPONDENT

20. More than two in five (43%) NICS respondents aged 16 to 24 years had used illicit drugs at some time in the past. Analysis of more recent use indicated a rate of 28% within the last year and 19% within the last month. However, the rate of use of illicit drugs at some time in the past declined with age – more than one third (35%) of all 25 to 34 year olds and almost one in six (16%) of all 35 to 59 year olds admitted to having ever used any drug (Table 2). Findings from the 2002/03 Drugs Prevalence Survey also show that illegal drug use declines with age.

21. Results of both the 2001 NICS and BCS indicated that respondents aged 16 to 24 were more likely to be regular users of illicit drugs than those aged 25 to 34 years or 35 to 59 years. Indeed, 16 to 24 year olds were twice as likely as those aged 25 to 34 to have used illicit drugs in the last year or the last month (Table 2).

22. There was a statistically significant difference between NICS respondents aged 16 to 24 and those aged 25 to 34 and 35 to 59 and their use of illicit drugs for each of the three recall periods.

Figure 7: Specific illicit drugs ever used by Northern Ireland Crime Survey (2001) respondents by respondents' age



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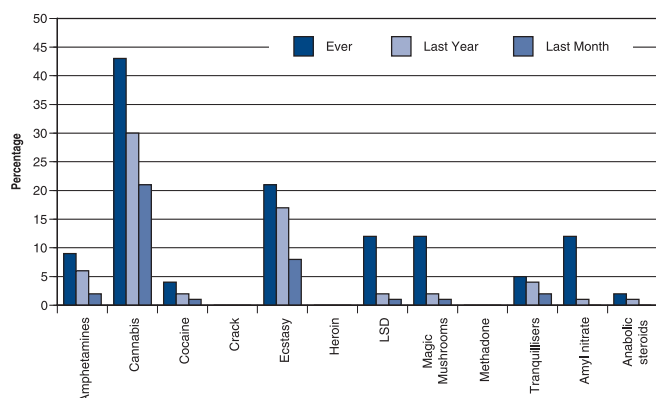
23. The most common types of illicit drugs ever used by 16 to 24 year old NICS respondents were cannabis (34%), ecstasy (15%) and amyl nitrite (10%) (Figure 7). The most common illicit drugs used by 16 to 24 year olds within the last year and last month were cannabis (20% and 14% respectively), ecstasy (10% and 6% respectively) and amphetamines (4% and 2% respectively).

24. In both the NICS and the BCS, male respondents aged 16 to 24 years reported the highest 'last year' use of illicit drugs (37% and 35% respectively) (Table 2).

25. The NICS estimated that male respondents aged 16 to 24 years were approximately twice as likely as female respondents aged 16 to 24 years to have recently used illicit substances. More than one third (37%) of all male respondents in this age group had taken illicit drugs within the last year and more than one quarter (28%) within the last month (Table 2).

26. There was a statistically significant difference between male and female NICS respondents aged 16 to 24 years and the use of illicit drugs across all three recall periods, with males more likely to have used illicit drugs than females.

Figure 8: Use of specific illicit drugs among 16-24 year old male Northern Ireland Crime Survey (2001) respondents



27. Cannabis was the most commonly used illicit drug among male NICS respondents aged 16 to 24 years across all three recall periods. More than two in five (43%) 16 to 24 year old male NICS respondents admitted taking cannabis at some time while one in five (21%) had taken ecstasy. However within the last year, almost one third (30%) of 16 to 24 year old male respondents had taken cannabis and one in six (17%) had taken ecstasy. Within the last month one in five (21%) had taken cannabis and one in twelve (8%) had taken ecstasy (Figure 8).

28. Table 3 shows that in the highly addictive group of illicit drugs - heroin, methadone, cocaine and crack - cocaine is the most commonly ever used with 2% of NICS respondents having used it at some time in their lives. However, 6% of NICS male respondents aged 25 to 34 have used cocaine at some time.

29. There was a statistically significant difference between NICS male and female respondents aged 25 to 34 who ever used cocaine, with males more likely to have used cocaine than females.

30. Figures relating to more severe drug use i.e. heroin, methadone, crack and cocaine should be treated cautiously because of survey limitations. Surveys like the NICS may underestimate because those involved in severe drug use may not be easily reached by random household surveys. Also, respondents may be reluctant to admit to the use of the most heavily stigmatised drugs.

Table 3: Northern Ireland Crime Survey (2001) and British Crime Survey (2001) respondents who have ever used highly addictive illicit drugs

	Heroin	Methadone	Cocaine	Crack
Northern Ireland Crime Survey				
Males	0%	0%	2%	0%
16-24	0%	0%	4%	0%
25-34	0%	0%	6%	1%
35-59	0%	0%	0%	0%
Females	0%	0%	1%	0%
16-24	0%	0%	2%	0%
25-34	0%	0%	2%	0%
35-59	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	0%	0%	2%	0%
16-24	0%	0%	3%	0%
25-34	0%	0%	3%	1%
35-59	0%	0%	0%	0%
British Crime Survey¹				
Males	1%	1%	7%	1%
16-24	1%	1%	12%	2%
25-34	1%	1%	12%	2%
35-59	1%	0%	3%	1%
Females	0%	0%	3%	1%
16-24	1%	1%	5%	1%
25-34	0%	0%	6%	1%
35-59	0%	0%	2%	0%
Total	1%	0%	5%	1%
16-24	1%	1%	8%	1%
25-34	1%	1%	9%	1%
35-59	0%	0%	3%	0%

¹ BCS data based on further analysis of Findings 182, Prevalence of drug use: key findings from the 2001/2002 British Crime Survey.

EXPERIENCE OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN NORTHERN IRELAND: AGE OF FIRST USE

Table 4: Average age of first drug use by age group among Northern Ireland Crime Survey (2001) respondents.

Age Group	Average Age (years)
All (16 to 59 years)	19.1
16 to 24 years	16.2
25 to 34 years	19.4
35 to 59 years	23.0

31. For the first time in the NICS, respondents who reported using drugs at some time were asked how old they were at first use. The average age of first use among respondents aged 16 to 59 years was 19.1 years. Respondents aged 16 to 24 years reported having first used at an average age of 16.2 years. Among 25 to 34 year old respondents, the average age of first use was 19.4 years while among 35 to 59 year olds the average age of first use was 23 years (Table 4).

EXPERIENCE OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN NORTHERN IRELAND: EASE OF ACCESS

Table 5: Ease of access to specific illicit drugs among 16-24 year old Northern Ireland Crime Survey (2001) respondents.

	Very easy	Fairly easy	Fairly difficult	Very difficult	Impossible	Not answered*
Any illegal drug	28%	35%	8%	3%	2%	23%
Amphetamines	14%	29%	11%	5%	3%	38%
Cannabis	35%	27%	7%	2%	3%	27%
Cocaine	9%	14%	17%	10%	6%	44%
Crack	7%	12%	12%	11%	5%	53%
Ecstasy	30%	28%	3%	3%	4%	32%
Heroin	6%	11%	10%	13%	7%	53%
LSD	9%	19%	12%	7%	6%	48%
Magic Mushrooms	14%	17%	9%	5%	5%	49%
Methadone	3%	7%	9%	11%	7%	62%

* Includes 'don't know', 'did not want to answer', those not asked because they had never heard of the drug and other missing responses

32. Also for the first time NICS respondents who reported ever using any illicit drugs were asked how easy it would be to obtain certain illicit drugs. Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents aged 16 to 24 years claimed that, in general, it was very or fairly easy to obtain illegal drugs. Cannabis was declared to be the most accessible illicit drug with 62% of 16 to 24 year old respondents claiming it as very or fairly easy to obtain. Ecstasy (58%) and amphetamines (43%) were also

declared to be among the most accessible drugs (Table 5). This compares with findings from the BCS in which cannabis (68%), ecstasy (43%) and amphetamines (42%) were declared to be most accessible i.e. very or fairly easy to obtain.

EXPERIENCE OF ILLICIT DRUGS: A COMPARISON OF 1998 AND 2001 NORTHERN IRELAND CRIME SURVEYS

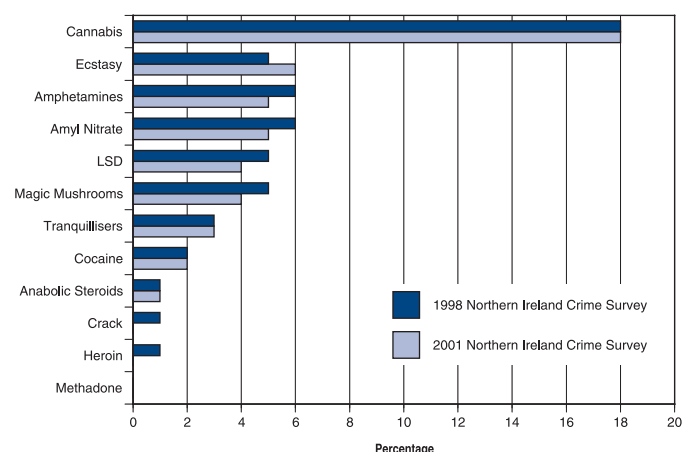
Table 6: Northern Ireland Crime Survey respondents who have ever used illicit drugs: 1998 and 2001

	1998 Northern Ireland Crime Survey			2001 Northern Ireland Crime Survey		
	Ever use	Last year	Last month	Ever use	Last year	Last month
Male	30%	13%	7%	31%	14%	10%
Female	19%	5%	3%	22%	8%	4%
Total	24%	9%	5%	26%	11%	7%

33. The percentage of respondents of the NICS admitting to having ever taken illicit drugs increased from 24% in the 1998 survey to 26% in the 2001 survey. The percentage of male respondents admitting to having ever taken illicit drugs increased from 30% to 31% over the same period while the percentage of females increased from 19% to 22%. In both years males were almost one and a half times more likely than females to have ever tried illicit drugs (Table 6).

34. The proportion of male respondents admitting to using illicit drugs in the last month increased from 7% in the 1998 survey to 10% in the 2001 survey. The proportion of female respondents admitting to using illicit drugs in the last year increased from 5% in the 1998 survey to 8% in the 2001 survey.

Figure 9: Northern Ireland Crime Survey respondents who have ever used specific illicit drugs: 1998 and 2001



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35. Cannabis remains the most commonly used illicit drug in Northern Ireland, however the percentage of respondents admitting to having ever taken cannabis has remained the same over the two surveys at 18%. An increase is observed in the use of ecstasy (up from 5% to 6%).

36. Between 1998 and 2001, there have been decreases, although small, in the use of amphetamines, amyl nitrate, LSD, magic mushrooms, crack and heroin (down one percentage point) (Figure 9).

TECHNICAL NOTES

Sampling and Fieldwork for the NICS

37. The initial sample consisted of 4,834 addresses randomly selected from the Valuation and Lands Agency domestic property database. The full list of addresses was stratified into three regions – Belfast, East Northern Ireland and West Northern Ireland.

38. Visits to each address by an interviewer from the NISRA Central Survey Unit resulted in an eligible sample of 4,318 occupied addresses, from which attempts were made to interview one randomly selected respondent at each address.

39. Selecting only one person at each address means that individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than those living in small households. Accordingly, the data presented have been weighted by household size to prevent a bias towards small household sizes.

40. The initial fieldwork period spanned a three-month period from mid-August to mid-November 2001. This was later extended into January 2002, by which time 3,010 people aged 16 years and over had given complete interviews. Of these, 2,120 respondents were eligible to complete the self-completion drugs module (i.e. aged between 16 to 59 years). 81 respondents refused to take part and a further two were discounted for methodological reasons, giving a final sample size of 2037. This represents an eligible response rate of 96.1%.

41. Respondents were assured in advance that any information they would provide would be treated as confidential and that the level of detail produced in publications or in any subsequent analyses would not allow them to be individually identified.

Table 7: 2001 NICS self-completion drugs module sample profile

		Unweighted number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Sex	Men	880	43	46
	Women	1,157	57	54
Age Group	16-24	311	15	20
	25-34	542	27	23
	35-59	1,184	58	57
Region	Belfast	335	17	15
	East NI	965	47	47
	West NI	736	36	38

Rounding and statistical significance

42. Non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses. Percentages may not always sum to 100 due to the effect of rounding or because respondents could give more than one answer.

43. Statistical significance tests have been carried out on a range of group differences observed within the NICS 2001 findings. These tests are used to establish the degree of confidence with which we can infer the observed findings as an accurate reflection of the views of the population.

44. For the purpose of this bulletin, where group differences have emerged as being statistically significant, this has been reported at the 5% ($p < 0.05$) level of probability (two-tailed). This means that, for any observed result that is found to be significant, we are 95% confident that this has not happened by chance.

45. The use of self-reported surveys to obtain information on illicit drug taking has its limitations. Firstly, sampling private households inevitably excludes the more habitual drug user who may be homeless or living in residential institutions. Secondly, some respondents will be reluctant to disclose information relating to illegal behaviour regardless of the level of confidentiality.

*Experience of Drug Misuse:
Findings from the 2001 Northern Ireland Crime Survey*

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