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# The Planet Youth survey: Cavan

What young people say about  
living in Cavan in 2025

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# Key Findings

## HOME



- Perceived **parent attitudes** toward teen substance use is linked with their teen's actual substance use
- Only half of teens reported eating **fruit** or **vegetables** every day



### SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Parents should be aware of their **words** and **behaviours** at home around substance use, which may influence their child's likelihood of substance use.

Consumption of **fruit & vegetables** should be increased. Access and encouragement could be increased across multiple settings (home, community, school)

**Females** reported poorer **mental health** and higher rates of **self-harm** than males. While the reasons for this are unclear, we noticed females reported **less sleep**, more adverse experiences **online**, and were less likely to achieve recommended daily **exercise** targets



## WELLBEING

### SUGGESTED ACTIONS



Further **research** is needed into what interventions work for improving mental health and for whom. Self-harm appears to have reduced among girls but increased slightly among boys in Cavan between 2023 and 2025.

The **Increase Leisure Time Initiative** was set up across Cavan and Monaghan to expand free, safe and healthy leisure opportunities for young people. These include improving team bonding activities and increasing the diversity of extra-curricular activities available in schools.

## SUBSTANCES



- Compared to other counties, Cavan showed **low substance use rates**, but rates of **alcohol**-use and **drunkenness** in Cavan rose between 2023 and 2025
- While rates of lifetime **vaping** in Cavan were similar to the national average, these are high by international standards [6]. The peak age to start vaping was **13** years old in **Cavan**



### SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Many adolescents reported getting their **vapes from shops**. More could be done to enforce the law around sale of vapes to minors on a national, regional and community level.

Over 1 in 3 teens (**34%**) said it would be **easy to access cannabis** if they wanted to. This presents a clear objective for **Gardaí**, **community** organisations and **parents** to restrict access to cannabis in communities and online.

# LEISURE



On average, teens in Cavan spend more time per week on **social media (14%** of hours in the week) than they do playing **team sports (6%)**, watching **shows or movies** alone (7%) or with their families (4%) or playing **video games (6%)\***

There is **not a simple relationship** between time on social media and mental health



## SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Having **phone-free breaks**, for example during meals, before bed, or while outdoors, may help boost teen wellbeing. Parents can set realistic boundaries for the whole family like tech free hours and using device settings to manage screen time. Visit [webwise.ie](http://webwise.ie) for tips to help navigate social media pressures and maintain online wellbeing.

The Planet Youth study offers an ideal vehicle with which to test whether the Department of Education's introduction of **phone pouches** changes the amount of time students spend on social media and whether this in turn improves wellbeing.

**18%** of secondary school students in Cavan said they had been diagnosed with a neuro-developmental condition such as **ADHD, autism, dyslexia** or **dyscalculia**



# SCHOOL

## SUGGESTED ACTIONS

As awareness of these conditions grows, diagnosis rates rise. National and regional educational authorities need to ensure schools and students have sufficient learning and social **supports** for neurodiverse adolescents. These may include Special Needs Assistant posts, sensory breakout rooms or alternative teaching methods.

# COMMUNITY



- **Drinking outdoors** was quite common in Cavan with over 1 in 4 teens in this sample doing so (**26%**)
- Roughly 1 in 3 teens (**32%**) in Cavan felt there was no after-school **social space** in their area
- Just 1 in 7 teens were getting recommended levels of **physical activity**



## SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Providing **safe spaces** in the community for young people such as free sports facilities and youth cafes may help to reduce boredom, prevent experimentation with substances and increase in-person meaningful engagement with peers.

\* These percentages are approximate and were estimated based on the average number of hours spent on each of these activities *per day* ("None", "1 hour", etc), expressed as a percentage of *the week* (168 hours)

# About the Survey

Planet Youth is the local adaptation and implementation of the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM). The IPM is an evidence-based primary prevention model, developed by researchers, community workers and policy makers in Iceland. Active in many countries globally, it is an adaptable system that aims to reduce substance use and improve wellbeing among adolescents.

In 2025, all **11** secondary schools in county Cavan were invited to partake in the final Planet Youth surveys, as were the **3** Youthreach centres. A total of 100% of secondary schools and 100% of Youthreach centres in Cavan agreed to take part. Of the eligible students in those institutions, **83%** students completed the survey between 8<sup>th</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025. The survey was anonymous and was completed during school time.

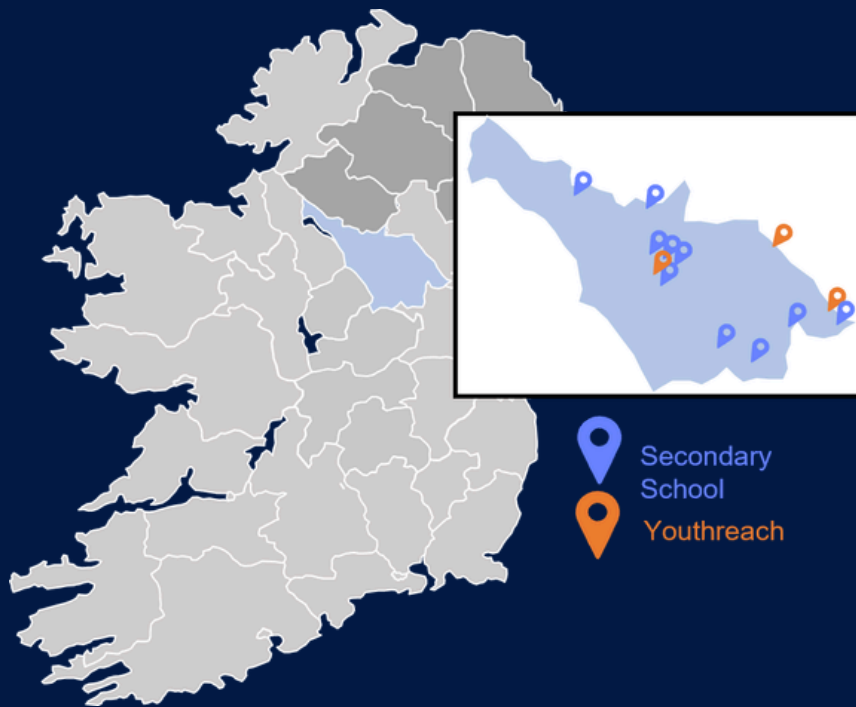
To ensure comparability with previous reports, respondents were removed if they indicated they used a fictitious drug “releevin” (13 respondents) or if they were not in education, employment, or training (2 respondents).

This report is a summary of the 2025 data, the last collection of a five year cycle. It provides local communities and county-wide organisations with data that can be used to develop community actions in relation to after school activities, transport, mental health and more.





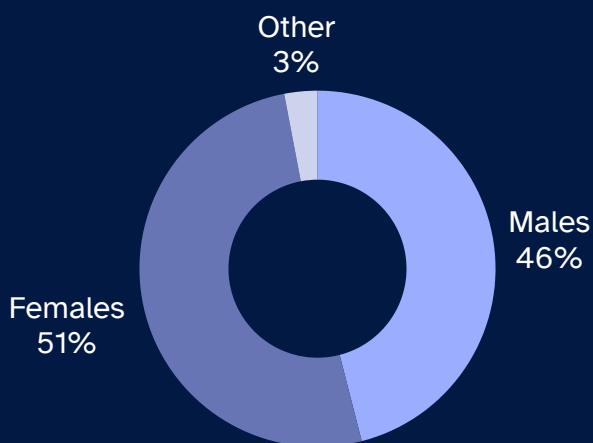
# Who took the survey?



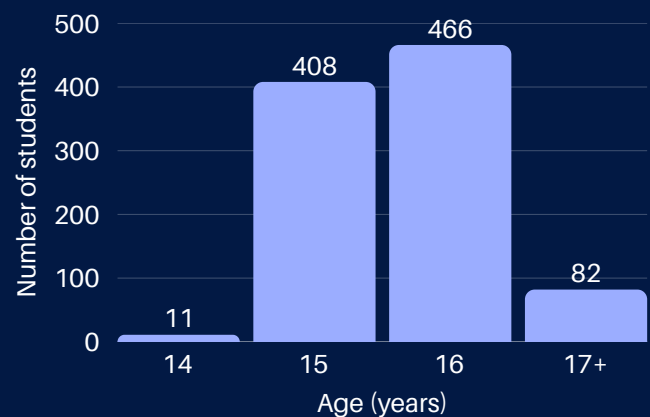
**967 adolescents** from **11 secondary schools** across County Cavan completed the survey in 2025, as well as **55** students from **3** Youthreach centres.

Before reading the results of the survey, it is important to understand who is represented in this sample of **967** young people. The vast majority were in Transition Year (**71%**) and had sat the Junior Certificate several months before (**83%**). The genders and ages of the sample are shown below.

## Gender



## Ages



**3%** of participants selected transgender, non-binary, other, or prefer not to say for their gender



**90%** of participants were aged between 15 & 16

Adolescents from a range of **family** and **social** backgrounds took part in this survey. Below, we describe some of the important sources of diversity in our young participants.



## Financial Difficulties

A small % of adolescents said their parents didn't always have enough money to pay for **food (8%)** or **bills (12%)**. However, a higher proportion said their parents didn't always have enough to pay for **clothes and school uniforms (18%)** or **sports and registration fees (23%)**.

## Ethnic Diversity



**67%** described their ethnic/cultural backgrounds as White Irish, **13%** as another White background and **19%** identified as an ethnic minority (Asian, African, Middle Eastern, Traveller, Roma, or Other).

## Access

Most people (**96%**) said they had access to **reliable transport** to get to school, after-school activities, medical appointments and shopping.

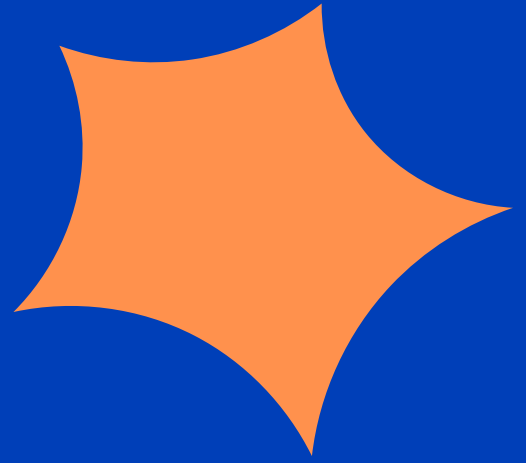


# 24%



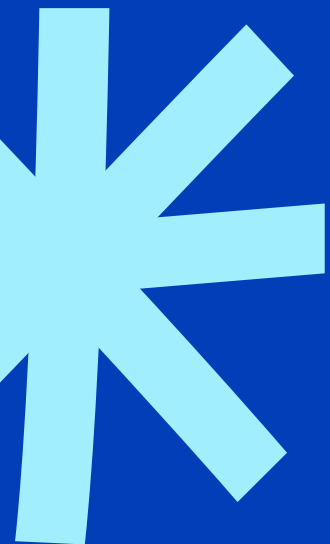
## Young caregivers

reported providing **care or support** to a family member or loved one due to their physical or mental health condition, disability, addiction, or other challenge



# Results

in more detail



# Home life

Many habits are formed at home. Here we focus on the relationship between adolescents and their parents/carers, including time spent together and rule-setting.

## Family Time

**70%** of teens “often” or “very often” spend time with their parents at the **weekends**. **64%** do so on **weekdays**. **4-5%** said they never spend time with their parents.



**90%** said it was easy to receive **caring and warmth** from their parents and **80%** said it was easy to get **advice** about personal matters



Roughly half said they eat a **meal with parents/carers** every day (**44%**), while **72%** do so 4+ days in the week.



Roughly half of teens said their parents set **rules** about what they can do **in the home** (**54%**) and **outside** the home (**63%**), with **52%** having a definite **time** they need to be home in the evenings.



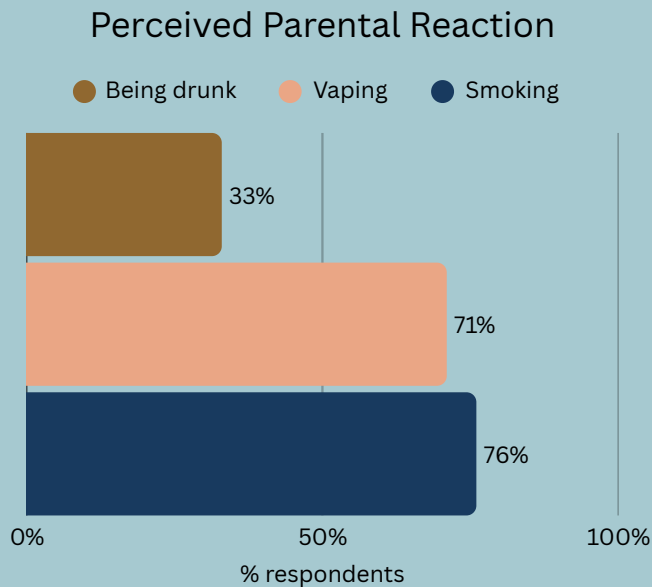
**94%** of respondents said that they often or very often felt safe in their homes, leaving **6%** who only felt safe sometimes or less often.



**84%** of teens say their parents/carers know where they are in the evenings.

# Parental attitudes matter

We asked young people how they would think their parent/carer would react if they used various substances from being totally against it, to they would not care. Most parents are totally against their teen vaping (**71%**) or smoking (**76%**), but only **1 in 3** were totally against them being drunk (**30%**).



The more “against” using a substance teens perceived their parents to be, the less likely teens were to use that substance.

For instance lifetime rates of **vaping** ranged from **84%** in those who felt their parents would not care if they vaped, to **33%** who felt their parents were totally against it.

This emphasises the link between **parent attitudes** toward substances and teenage substance use.

## Parent health

**13%** of adolescents in Cavan said that their parent had a **drinking or drug problem** at some point in the young person’s life, and **11%** said their parent had experienced a **mental illness**.

Young people whose parents had experienced mental illness were almost **3 times more likely** to say their own mental health was bad (**32%**).

Young people whose parents had a drinking problem at some point in their life were **2 times** more likely to report being drunk in the last 30 days.

## Violence at home

**13%** said they had witnessed **physical violence** in their home, where an adult was involved, and **16%** said they had witnessed **psychological violence** in their home where an adult was involved.

Young people who witnessed physical or psychological violence in the home were over **3 times more likely** to say their mental health was bad (**26%**), compared to those who said they did not witness physical or psychological violence (**9%**).

The information above illustrates the relevance of **parent wellbeing and behaviour** to the mental health of the child.

Parent well-being and behaviour can influence teen mental health. Services supporting the whole family and the community are vital to improve and sustain the teens well-being. See [HSE](#) website for parental supports.

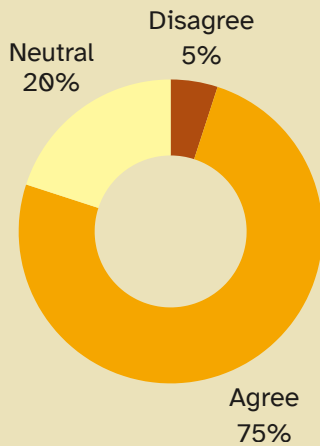


# School life

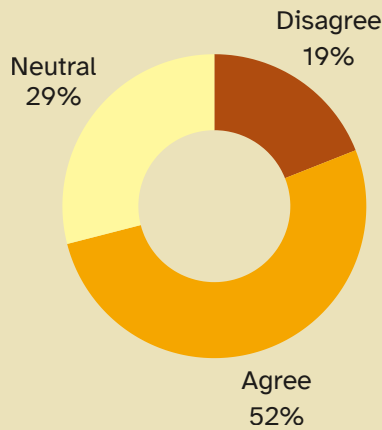


Adolescents spent a large portion of their waking hours at school, and enjoying school is a key predictor of general wellbeing at this age. Secondary school students in Cavan generally reported positive experiences in school...

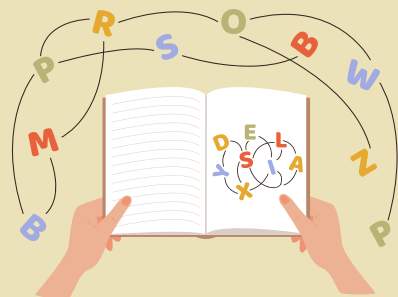
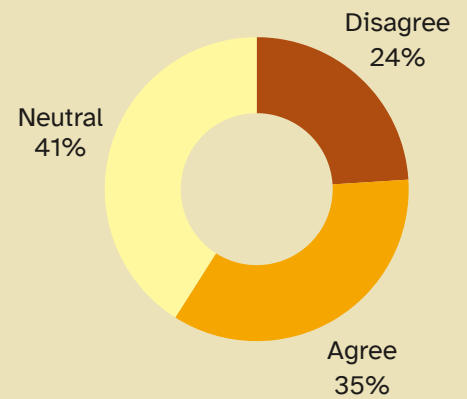
## I get along with the teachers



## I feel good at school

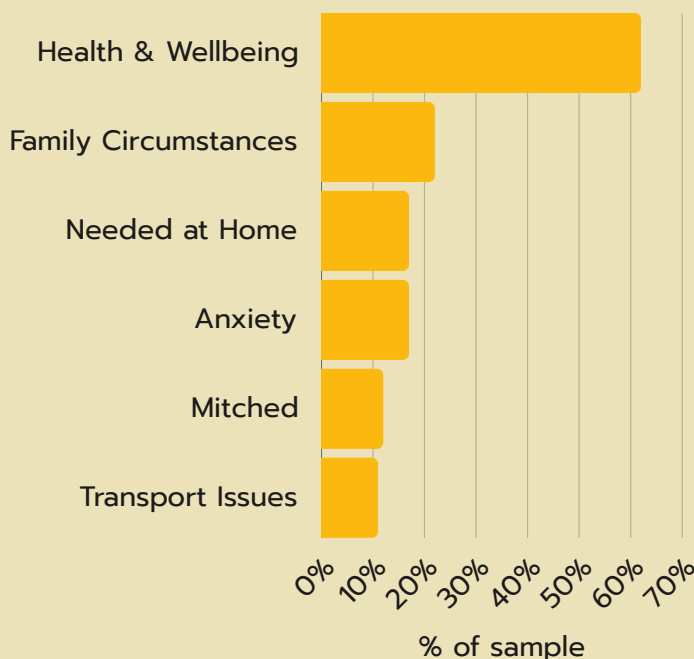


## Schoolwork is interesting



**29%** of respondents said they found schoolwork **hard**. **Learning difficulties** or **neurodivergence** may account for some of these responses. **18%** of respondents in Cavan said they had been diagnosed with at least one of the following: **dyslexia**, **dyscalculia** or **dyspraxia** (**12%**), **ADHD** (**6%**), or **autism** (**6%**).

### Reasons for school absence



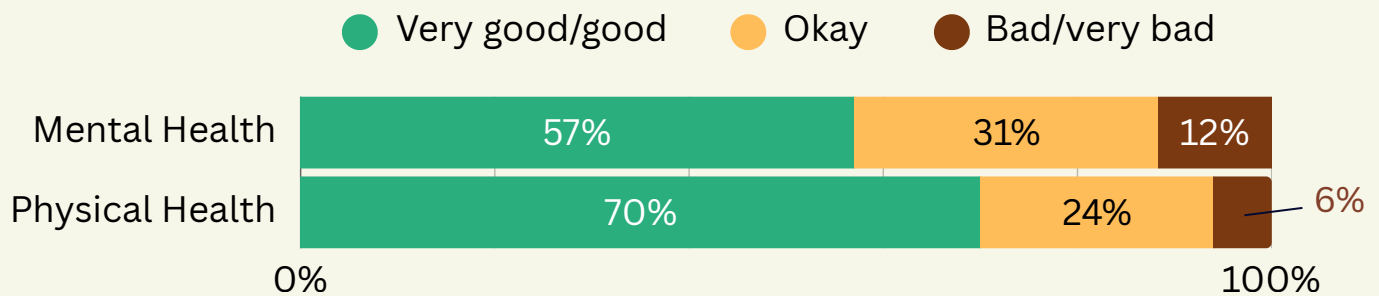
## School Absence

The **average** amount of school missed in the past month was **3 days**. Almost half of the sample had missed **3 or more days** in the past month (**45%**).

The graph to the left shows **62%** of respondents missed at least one day of school in the past month due to health and wellbeing, **22%** due to family circumstances and **17%** due to anxiety.

# Health & Wellbeing

Most adolescents in Cavan rated both their mental and physical health as good (or very good). However, over twice as many young people reported bad **mental** health (12%) than reported bad **physical** health (6%).



## Mental health support

When asked “Have you ever thought you **could do with help** with mental health issues?” **39%** of adolescents said yes. However, when asked if they ever **looked for help or support** for a mental health issue, only **20%** said yes.

Among teens in Cavan that looked for help, **61%** said the help was available in a **timely manner** when they needed it.



## Self-harm & suicide

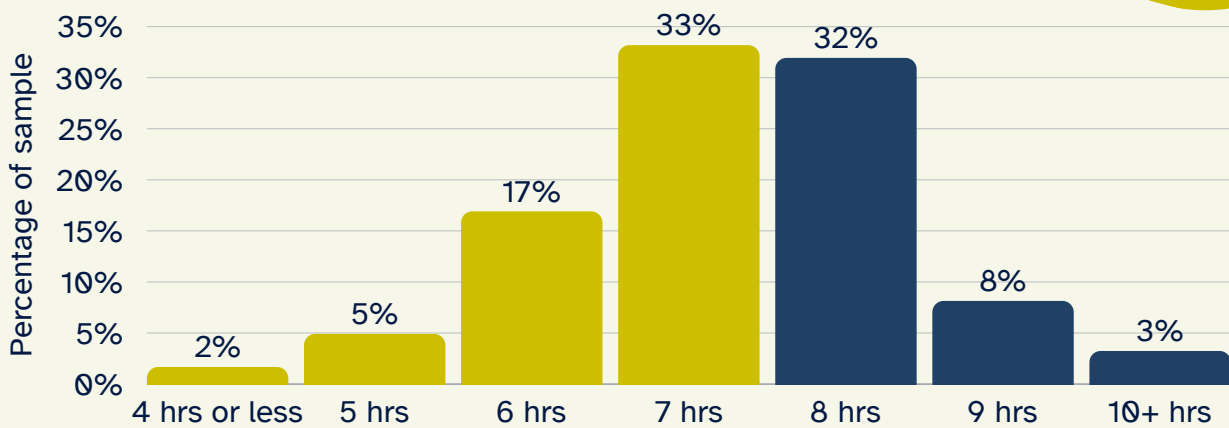
Over **1 in 3** adolescents in this sample said they had harmed themselves on purpose (**33%**). Over **1 in 4** said that a **friend or someone close** to them had attempted suicide (**29%**), and **8%** said they had **attempted suicide** at some point in their lifetime.

There were strong **gender differences** in **mental health**, but not in physical health. Over twice as many females as males said their mental health was bad (**70%** vs **25%**). Reports of ever **self-harming** were significantly **higher in females (60%)** compared to **males (33%)**. This gender gap in adolescent mental health and self-harm is supported by other research from Ireland, UK and the US [see references [1-3](#)].



**Sleep** affects emotional wellbeing and cognitive functioning, and is particularly important during development. It is recommended that adolescents get **8-10 hours** sleep [4].

The graph below shows that roughly half of the sample (**43%**) said they get **8+ hrs sleep** a night on average (blue). This leaves **57%** who get 7 hours sleep or less (yellow). The % who got 7 hours or less sleep was slightly higher in **females (52%)** compared to **males (45%)**.



Sleep is often **displaced** by other activities like screen use or socialising. Below shows some of the activities that may be in competition with sleep:

**84%**

have a phone in their bedroom at night



**13%**

often use their phones between midnight and 6am



**42%**

Outside past midnight at least 1 night in the past week

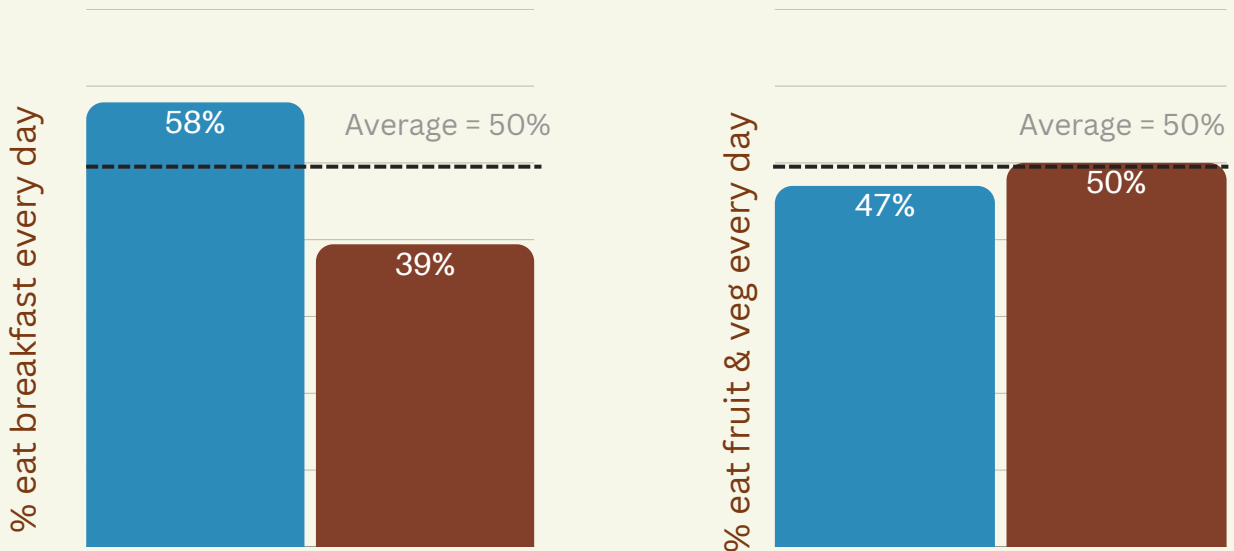


## Diet

Roughly half of respondents said they eat breakfast everyday (**43%**), and a similar percentage said they ate fruit and vegetables every day (**47%**). Males were more likely to eat breakfast everyday, but both males and females were equally likely to eat fruit and veg everyday.



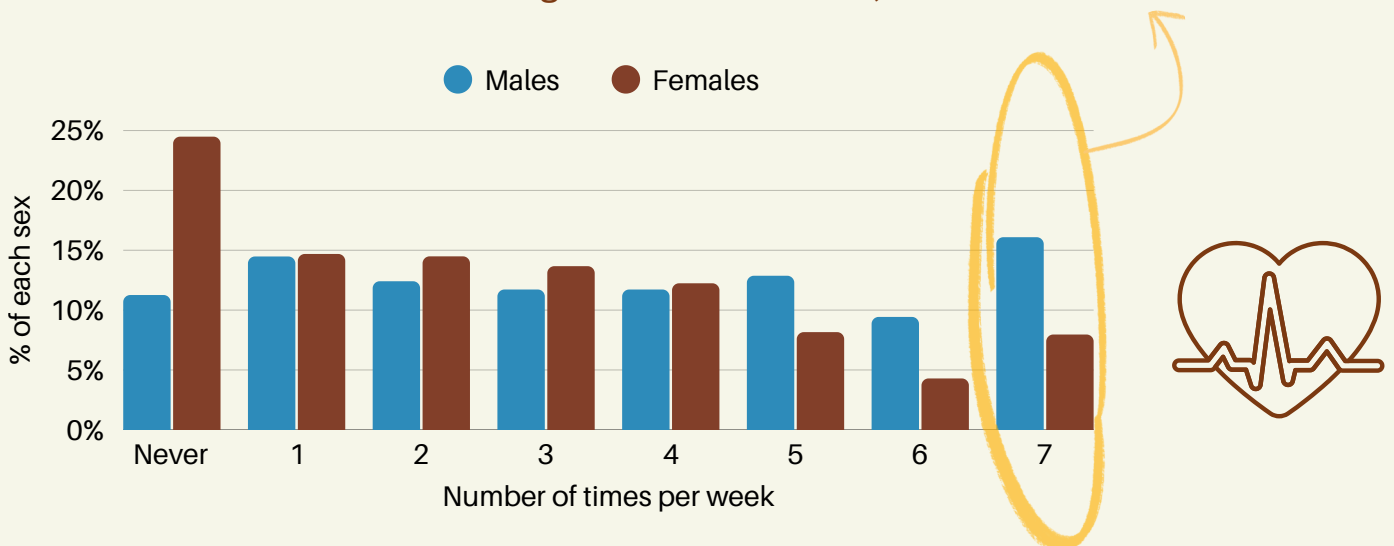
● Males ● Females



## Physical activity

According to the Health Service Executive and World Health Organisation, adolescents should be doing at least **1 hour per day** of moderate intensity activity (e.g. where breathing rate is raised).

Just **12%** of adolescents said they engaged in an hour of physical activity **7 times a week** that raised their breathing rate (**16%** of males; **8%** of females).



# Hobbies & Leisure



Half of respondents (**51%**) said they play a team sport outside of school at least once a week, with most of those playing two or three times a week.

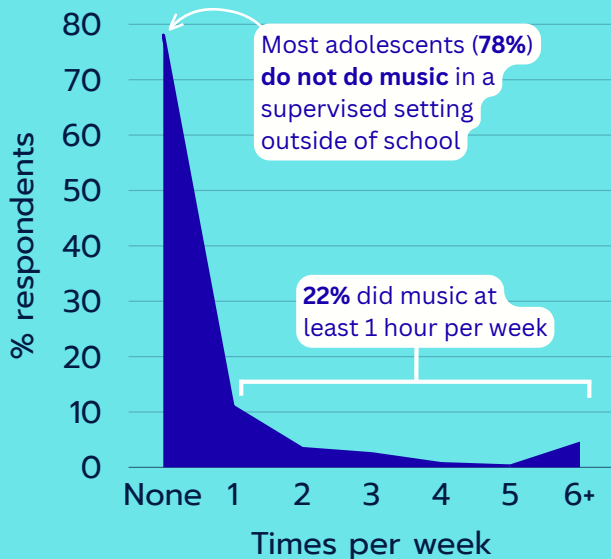


Over **1 in 5** adolescents (**22%**) play music at least once an hour after school. **11%** play music 1 hour a day.

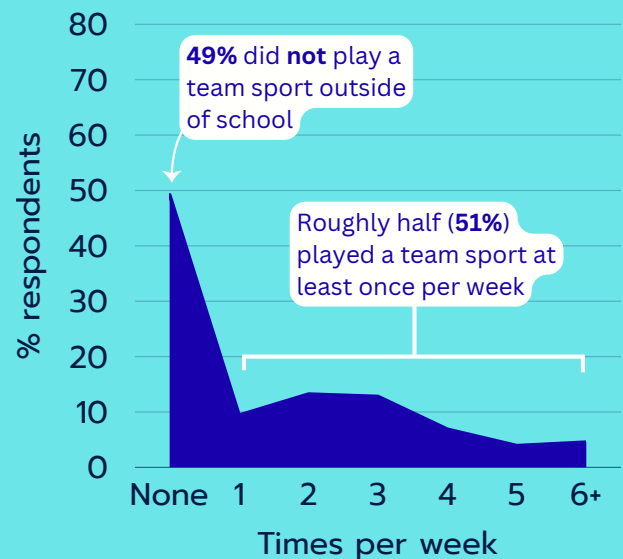


Significantly more males reported playing **video games** at least once per week (**81%**) compared to females (**37%**).

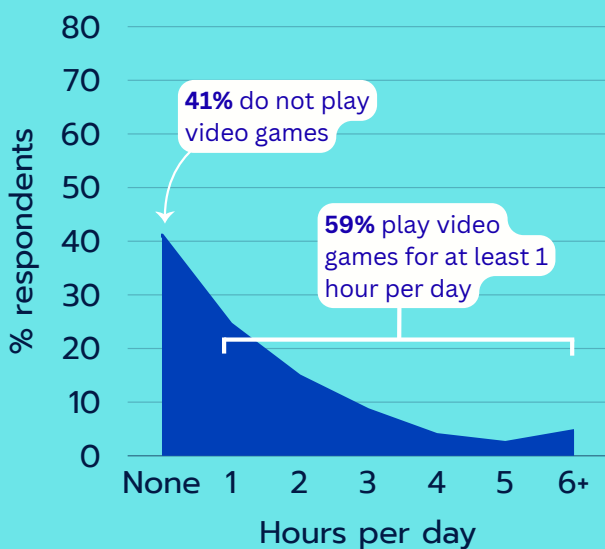
## Music



## Team sport



## Video Games



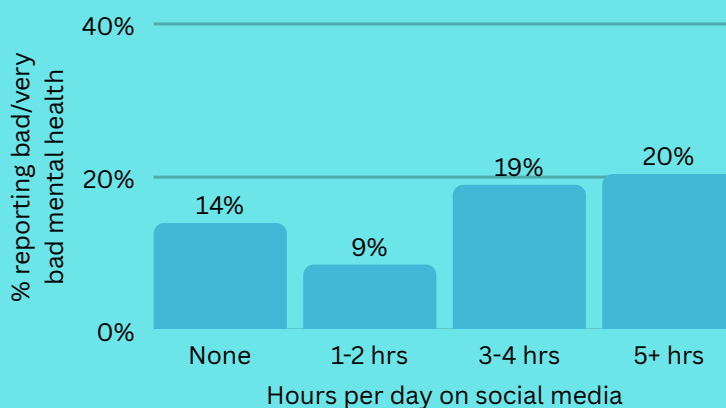
# Social media & mental health

The graphs below show that the relationship between time spent on **social media** and **mental health** is not simple.

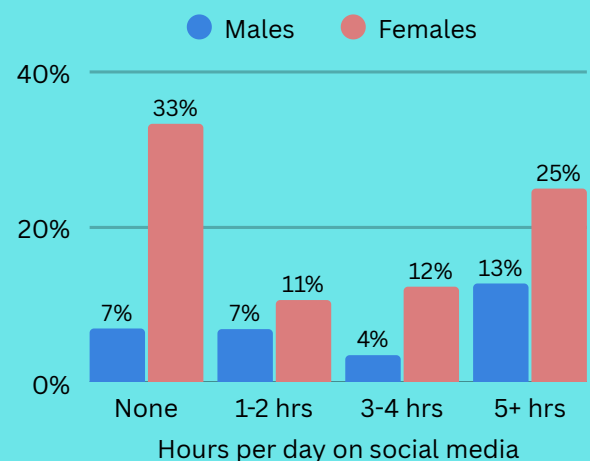
The more time spent on social media the more likely young people were to rate their mental health as bad, however those who spent **no time** on social media also reported relatively high rates of bad mental health (**14%**). This supports the “**Goldilocks Hypothesis**” which suggests that *some* social media use (e.g., 1-2 hrs) may be beneficial but very low or high levels may be harmful [5]. When we split by gender, we see that spending no time on social media is particularly linked with poor mental health in females.

## Time on social media & poor mental health

All respondents



Split by gender



45%

said social media made them feel less **happy about how they look** (66% of females, 32% of males)



14%

said they were **bullied online** in the past year (18% of females, 9% of males)



23%

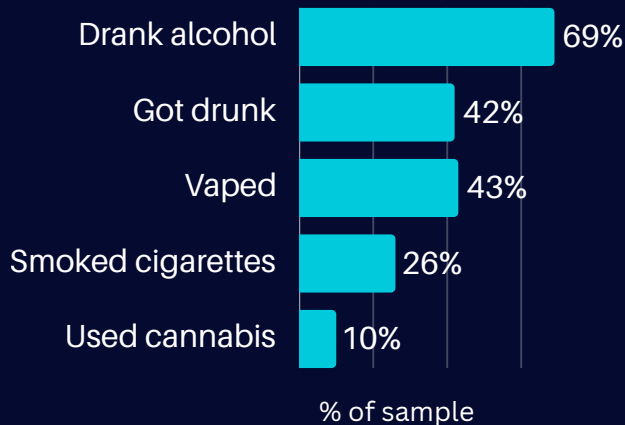
said they were asked to send a **sexually explicit image** of themselves via social media in the past year (30% of females, 14% of males)

# Substance use

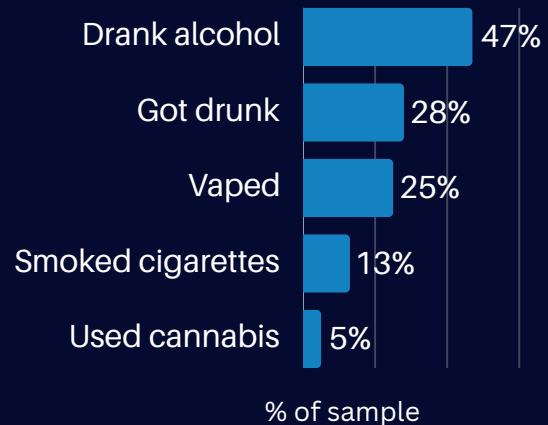


Adolescents were asked if they had **ever** used various substances (alcohol, cigarettes, etc.). If they said yes, they were asked if they had used them in the **past month**. The graphs below show the proportion who used these substances at least once in these timeframes:

## IN LIFETIME

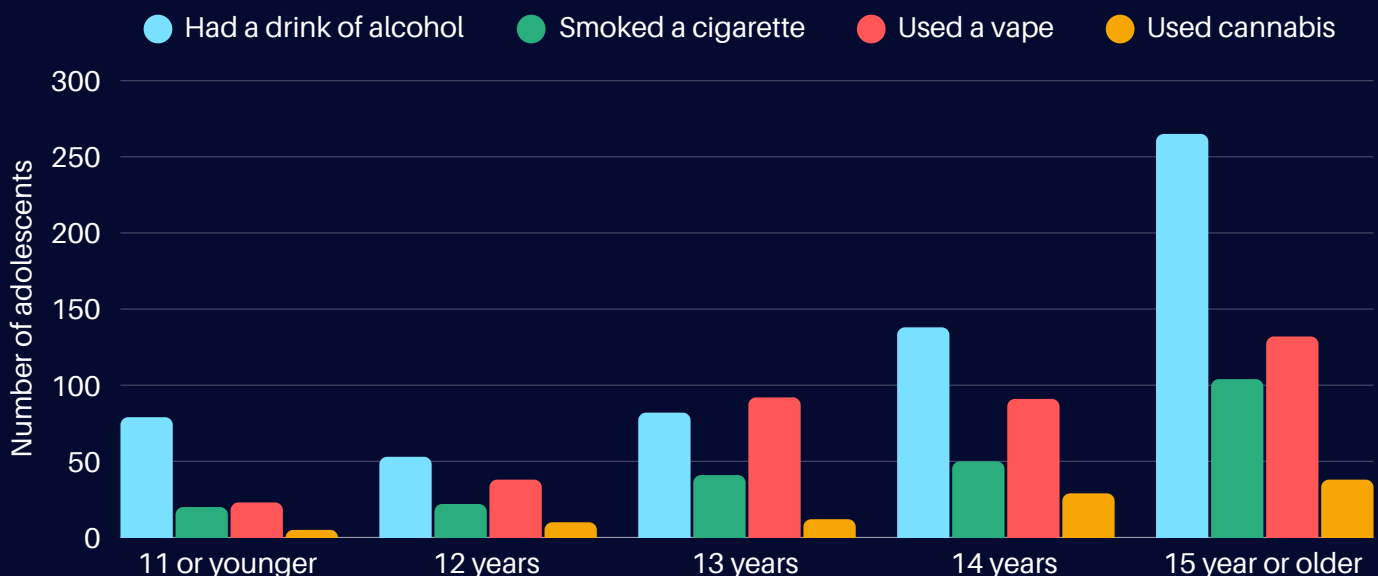


## IN PAST 30 DAYS



## When does it start?

We asked adolescents when they used each substance for the first time. We might expect the likelihood of having used a substance increases linearly the older a child gets, but two substances do not conform to this trend: (1) A portion of the sample (**9%**) had **alcohol** at 11 or younger. The peak age for onset of vaping was 13 years old. Almost 1 in 10 adolescents (**11%**) said they started vaping at 13 years old specifically, while **18%** reported vaping at 13 years old or younger.



## National Comparison

How does Cavan compare with other regions in Ireland in terms of teenage substance use? The Planet Youth survey has been carried out across many other counties. We have restricted the data from each county to secondary school students aged 15-16 since 2023 to maximise comparability. We've used a traffic light system to show counties with the **lowest** to the **highest** rates of use for each substance, with the **national average** in yellow.



Region & year of survey	Lifetime alcohol	Lifetime vaping	Lifetime smoking	Lifetime cannabis
Cavan 2025	68%	40%	24%	8%
Monaghan 2025	67%	36%	21%	7%
North Dublin 2025	60%	31%	18%	12%
Tipperary 2024	77%	44%	23%	7%
Wicklow 2024	70%	38%	21%	13%
Galway City 2024	69%	43%	25%	14%
Galway County 2024	74%	46%	27%	11%
Mayo 2024	71%	44%	28%	11%
Roscommon 2024	78%	44%	26%	10%
North Dublin 2023	66%	39%	19%	17%
Cavan 2023	76%	47%	28%	9%
Monaghan 2023	76%	40%	23%	9%
<b>National Average</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>11%</b>

# Community



**84%** of respondents in Cavan said that they often **felt safe** in their neighbourhood, leaving **16%** who only felt safe “sometimes” or less often.

**46%** said that there were **activities** available to them, and **38%** said there was a suitable outdoor youth space in the area they live. For **17%** of the sample, there were activities available but they could not access them due to **lack of transport**.

## Community safeguarding

The community plays a vital role in keeping young people safe. They can do so by making sure public health policies are followed, limiting access to spaces where risky behaviours take place, and providing alternative activities.



Among teens who had vaped in Cavan, **45%** said they had bought their vapes directly **from shops** and **23%** (81 individuals) said they did so often.

This is despite it being **illegal** to sell vapes to minors since December 2023.



**26%** of teens in the sample said they **drank outdoors**, such as on a street, or in a park/field (**11%** rarely, **10%** sometimes, **5%** often).

**42%** of the full sample said their **parents** had provided them with alcohol (**8%** often; **15%** sometimes; **19%** rarely).



**41%** indicated that there was a suitable after-school **social space** where they could meet friends or do activities, while **32%** said that there wasn't.

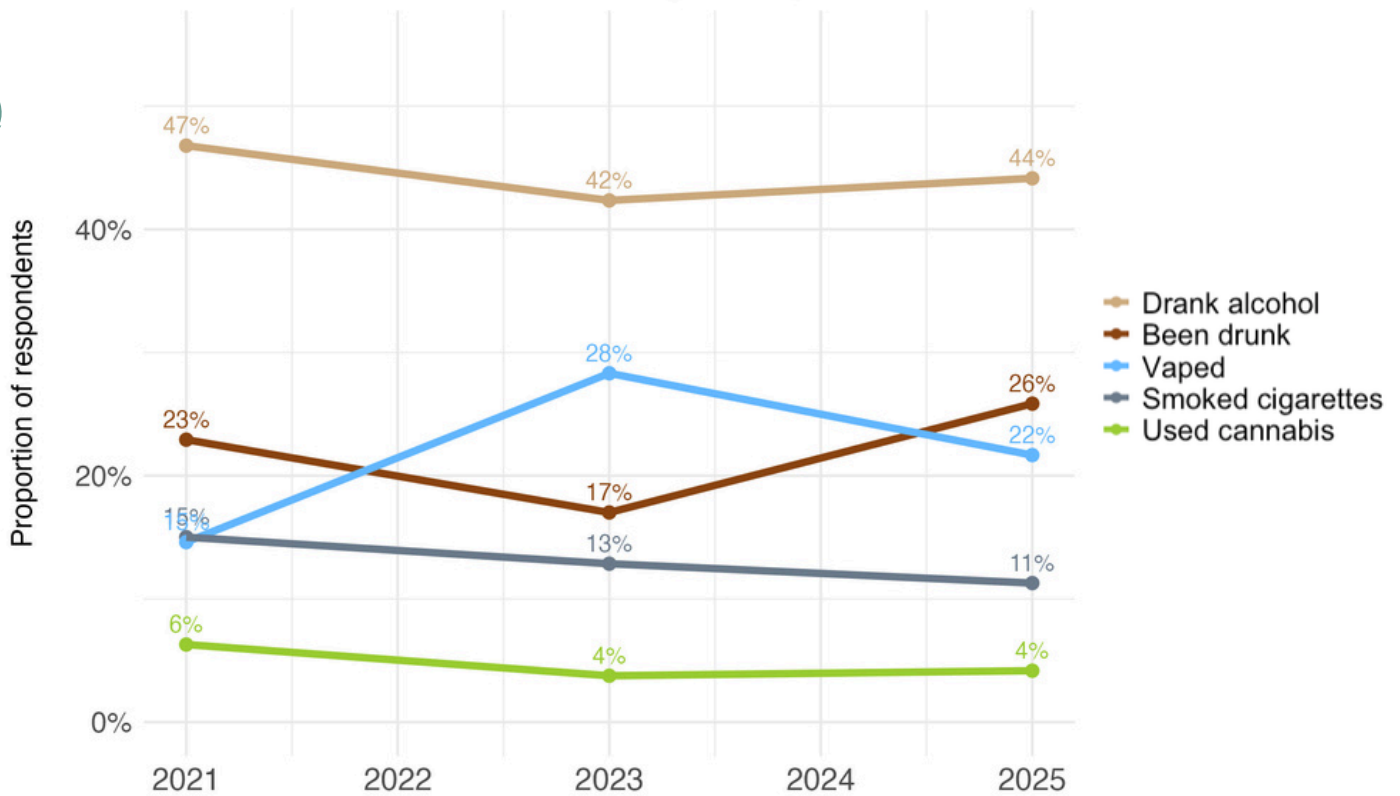
The proportion agreeing that there was a suitable space **ranged across municipal districts** from **33% to 59%**.



# Changes over time



The Planet Youth survey has been conducted three times now in Cavan, in 2021, 2023 and 2025. This allows us to look at how key indices of adolescent health and behaviour have changed over time. These results are limited to respondents aged 15-16 to avoid any discrepancies across years in the age of the sample.

**Past month substance use among 15-16-year-olds**



The plot above shows that past month alcohol use and drunkenness dropped between 2021 and 2023, but grew between 2023 and 2025. Rates of vaping and smoking were similar (at ~15%) in 2021 but diverged thereafter, with vaping becoming more popular. Rates of cannabis-use have remained relatively stable.

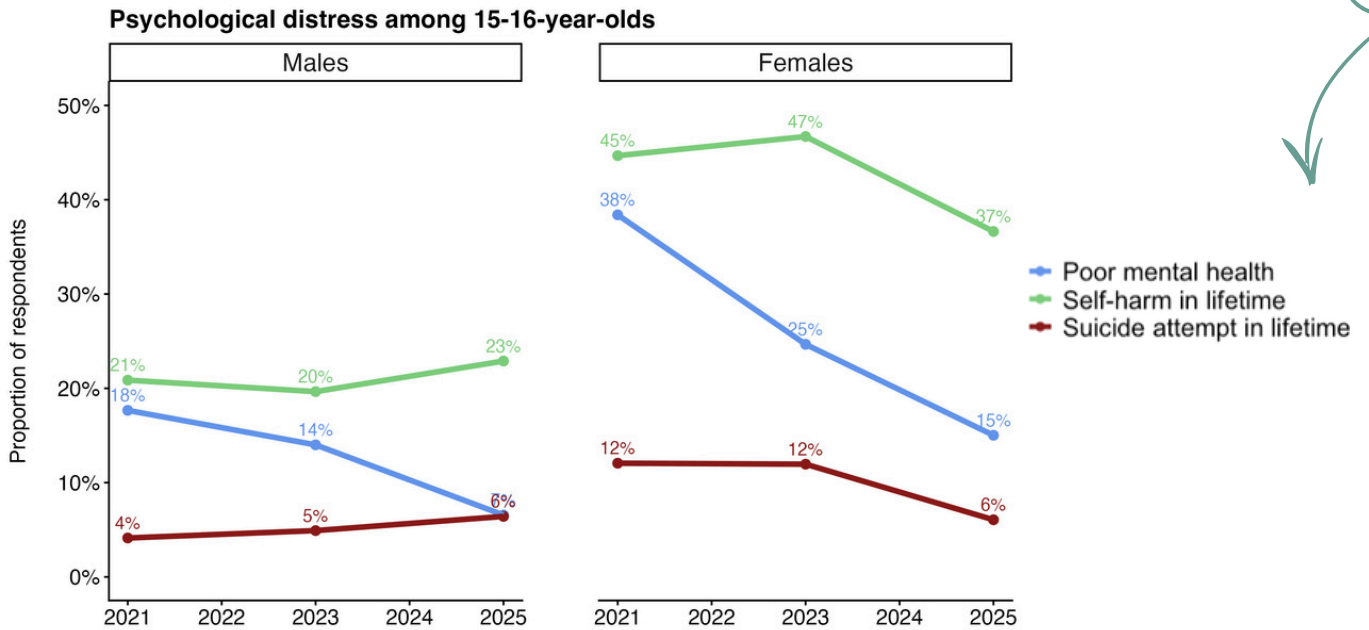
## Proportion of 15-16 year olds spending 4+ hours per day on social media

29%  34%  43%

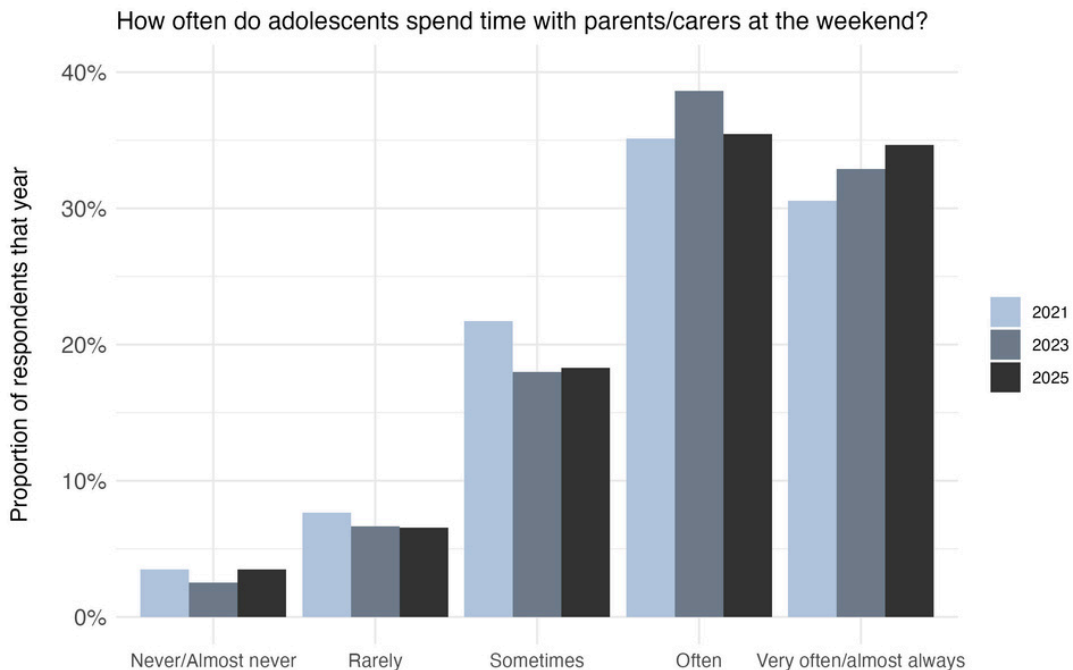
2021                      2023                      2025



The plots below show change over time in indices of **psychological distress** among 15-16-year-olds in Cavan. We show this separately for males and females, given higher rates of most of these distress measures among females. We can see rates of poor mental health have decreased since 2021 in both males and females (blue line) suggesting **improvement over time**. However, mental health may have been particularly poor in 2021, immediately after the COVID-19 lockdown [1]. For **teenage girls in Cavan, all measures of psychological distress decreased between 2023 and 2025**, but there was less consistency among males.



The plot below shows that most 15-16 year olds in Cavan often spend time with **their parents/carers at the weekend**. The proportion “very often” or “almost always” spending time with their parents/carers has increased since 2021.



# Resources

## Wellbeing Supports for Young People in Cavan

### CAVAN

**Foróige:** Supports young people aged 8-25 yearsold and families through volunteer-led groups and staff-led targeted Youth Projects and services.  
Tullacmongan Resource Centre  
Contact: 086 7791685

**Youth Work Ireland Cavan and Monaghan:** Provides youth programmes and supports for young people in the 10-24 age range, information, after schools groups and drop-ins.  
Contact: 087 7684757

**ISPCC Childline Therapeutic Support Service:** Provides children, young people, and families with therapeutic support in response to difficulties or challenges across **Cavan and Monaghan**. YWCA Building, North Road, Monaghan.  
Contact [monaghan@ispcc.ie](mailto:monaghan@ispcc.ie) / 087 7121996

**Teach Oscail family resource centre:** Offers support and parenting programmes to families struggling with a variety of challenges at home. Young people between 16 and 24 can access a Level Up programme which assists those currently out-of-education or unemployed to access tailored programmes. 31 Church Street, Cavan Town. Contact: 049 4372730 / [info@teachoscaillrc.ie](mailto:info@teachoscaillrc.ie)

**Focus Family resource centre:** Actively working with individuals, families and the community to make a difference by creating a warm, caring non-judgemental service that meets ever-changing needs through listening, support, education and advocacy. Portaliffe Centre, Killeshandra. Contact: 049 4364065 / [focusfrc@gmail.com](mailto:focusfrc@gmail.com)

**Parent Line:** 1890 929 277

**Women's Aid:** 1800 341 900

**National Rape Crisis:** 1800 778 888 / [counselling@rcc.ie](mailto:counselling@rcc.ie)

**National LGBT+ helpline:** 1890 929 539

**Money Advice & Budgeting Service:** 0818 07 2000

**Monaghan & Cavan Youth Substance Support (MACYSS).** Support service for young people who are presenting with alcohol and other drug concerns.  
Contact 085 744 2857

**YouThrive:** An early intervention youth mental health service based in Cavan and Monaghan for ages 12-24 with mild and emerging mental health difficulties. YouThrive is a partnership between **HSE** and **Foróige**. Peace Campus Monaghan & outreach services across Cavan & Monaghan.  
Contact [youthrive@hse.ie](mailto:youthrive@hse.ie) / 047 74655

**Pieta Suicide and Self Harm Crisis Service:** Counselling services now available across Cavan and Monaghan  
Contact 0818 111 126

**Cavan Traveller Movement:** Works in solidarity with the settled community to promote Traveller rights, and to create a safe space for Travellers to come together, share ideas and discuss issues impacting the community.  
Contact: 049 4356156 / 0871753007

### NATIONAL

**Spunout:** Online mental health information and support for young people

**Togetherall:** A 24/7 free, anonymous and online community where people aged 16-30 in Ireland can connect with others who understand what they're going through

**ISPCC Digital Wellbeing Programmes,** for young people 15-18 yrs & parents.  
Contact: [spaceformanxiety@ispcc.ie](mailto:spaceformanxiety@ispcc.ie)

**Drugs Helpline:** 1800 459 459 or **Ask about alcohol**

**Family Addiction Support Network:**  
Contact 087 904 6405 / [info.fasn@gmail.com](mailto:info.fasn@gmail.com)

**Childline:**  
Free Text : Talk to 50101 Chat Online 24/7  
childline.ie Freephone 24/7: 1800 666 666

**Outcomers:**  
LGBTI+ Support Service Contact: 042 9329816  
[info@outcomers.org](mailto:info@outcomers.org)

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Visit the **Planet Youth Ireland website** (<https://planetyouth.ie/>) for more information on the work ongoing around the country



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## Funding partners



## Academic partner



