Health Survey (NI)
First Results 2017/18
Health Survey (NI): First Results
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This publication is a summary of the main topics included in the 2017/18 Health Survey. Following on from this summary report, the Department of Health intends to produce more detailed topic specific bulletins and tables throughout 2018/19 and 2019/20. These will be made available on the Health Survey page on the Departmental website.


Any material used must be acknowledged and sourced to the Health Survey Northern Ireland, Department of Health.
General Health

Over two-thirds of respondents (70%) rated their general health as very good or good

The majority of respondents (86%) described the life they lead as very or fairly healthy

Long-term conditions

43% have a physical or mental health condition or illness expected to last 12 months or more

Females (44%) were more likely than males (40%) to have a long-term condition. Prevalence also increased with age with 22% of those aged 16-24 reporting a long-term condition compared with 70% of those aged 75 and over

Three-fifths of those with a long-term condition (59%) felt they received enough support from Health and Social Care Services to help manage their condition, while 11% said that they didn’t need any help

Mental Health

Around a fifth (18%) had a high GHQ12 score which could indicate a mental health problem (17% males; 18% females)

A quarter of respondents (26%) had concerns about their own mental health

Three-fifths of these (58%) sought help, with 82% of these seeking help from their GP and 44% a family member

Of those who did not seek help, three-quarters (74%) felt that they could handle things on their own

Most respondents (88%) were either very satisfied or satisfied with life

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing mean score was 51.4 (similar to 2016/17)
Compliments and Complaints during the last year

Four-fifths of respondents (81%) had contact with the Health and Social Care System in Northern Ireland. Of these, 84% were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience.

Almost three-fifths (57%) had given a compliment - Most of these were verbal, with 6% giving a written compliment and/or gift. 4% had made a complaint during the last year.

Wellbeing

Around two-fifths reported very high levels of...

- Satisfaction with life
- Feeling worthwhile
- Happiness

A fifth (21%) reported high levels of anxiety, while 45% reported very low levels.

Use of computers for health

Over half of respondents (56%) used the internet to look up health information:

- Females (60%) were more likely to do so than males (49%)
- Older respondents were less likely to do so than younger respondents (10% aged 75+; 77% aged 25-34)

10% ordered or requested a prescription online

- 6% scheduled an appointment with a healthcare provider online
- 5% used online health chat groups
- 2% bought medicines online
- 3% communicated with a health care provider by email
In 2017/18, **18%** of adults smoked cigarettes

- Although there was **no significant change** from 2016/17, smoking prevalence has fallen from **24%** in 2010/11
- The median number of cigarettes smoked per week fell from **90** in 2010/11 to **80** in 2017/18

### By sex

- **20%** of males smoke (down from **25%** in 2010/11)
- **18%** of females smoke (down from **23%** in 2010/11)

### By deprivation

- **30%** of those living in the most deprived areas smoke, down from **39%** in 2010/11
- **11%** of those living in the least deprived areas smoke, no change from **14%** in 2010/11

### In the home

- The proportion of homes in which smoking is not allowed rose to **86%**

### In the family car

- Similarly **88%** of respondents who own a family car do not allow smoking in their cars

### e-cigarettes

- Around **three-fifths** of respondents (57%) have **never smoked or used e-cigarettes**
- **2%** of adults have **never regularly smoked** but have used e-cigarettes

#### Population smoking status

(Outer - 2017/18  Inner - 2014/15)

- Current smokers currently using e-cigarettes
- Current smokers who ever used e-cigarettes
- Current smokers who never used e-cigarettes
- Ex-smokers who currently use e-cigarettes
- Ex-smokers who ever used e-cigarettes
- Ex-smokers who never used e-cigarettes
- Non-smokers who ever/currently use e-cigarettes
- Non-smokers and never used e-cigarettes

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8% of adults currently use e-cigarettes.

No difference in current use by males and females.

One in six smokers (16%) & one in five ex-smokers (19%) currently use e-cigarettes, an increase from the 2014/15 findings (12% and 10% respectively).
Alcohol

Over three-quarters (77%) of adults aged 18 and over drink alcohol

Male and female drinking patterns differ significantly

A fifth of males (19%) were non-drinkers, half (50%) drank below weekly limits and a third (31%) drank above weekly limits.

A fifth of male drinkers (20%) drank on 3 or more days per week.

A quarter of females (25%) were non-drinkers, two-thirds (66%) drank below weekly limits and 9% drank above weekly limits.

A tenth of female drinkers (10%) drank on 3 or more days per week.

Tattoos & Piercings (other than earlobes) in the last ten years

Females were more likely than males to get piercings (Females 11%; Males 3%) and tattoos (Females 20%; Males 17%)

- A tenth experienced problems such as infection or pain following their tattoo or piercing.

Of those who had tattoos, 27% got their first tattoo before the age of 18.

- Half of males (50%) got their first tattoo aged 18-24, while a fifth (20%) got theirs aged 25 and over.
- Almost two-fifths of females (38%) got a first tattoo aged 18-24, while more than a third (36%) got theirs aged 25 and over.

Loneliness

A fifth of respondents (20%) showed signs of loneliness

- Females (21%) showed more signs of loneliness than males (18%)
- Similarly those living in urban areas (22%) were lonelier than those living in rural areas (17%)
- More than a quarter of those living in the most deprived areas (28%) showed signs of loneliness, compared with 16% of those in the least deprived areas.
- Younger people (aged 16-34) showed more signs of loneliness (21%) than people aged 65 and over (14%).
64% of adults were either overweight (37%) or obese (27%)

Females - Have a greater tendency to be normal including underweight than males
Normal including underweight 43%; Overweight 30%; Obese 27%

Males - Have a greater tendency to be overweight than females
Normal including underweight 27%; Overweight 46%; Obese 26%

40% of males and 47% of females had changed their eating habits in the past 3 years to lose weight

For those who tried to control their weight or eat more healthily, lack of willpower was the main obstacle encountered

Around a quarter (26%) of children aged 2-15 were either overweight (18%) or obese (9%)

Food choices

Fruit & Vegetables

Three-quarters of respondents (74%) ate fruit on most days

Four-fifths of respondents (81%) ate vegetables on most days

The proportion of those eating 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day fell from a high of 43% in 2016/17 to 38% in 2017/18

Snacks & fizzy drinks

Consumed on most days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>snacks &amp; drinks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biscuits</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cakes/desserts</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savoury snacks</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confectionary</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost a fifth (18%) drank sugary fizzy drinks on most days with males (21%) more likely than females (15%) to choose these drinks

Breakfast

Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) ate breakfast on all five weekdays and 80% ate breakfast on both Saturday and Sunday
**Attitudes to Breastfeeding**

36% of respondents were aware of the **Breastfeeding Welcome Here** scheme, with females (40%) more likely to be aware of it than males (29%). Those in the 25-44 age group were most likely to have heard of the scheme.

**Proportion who agree strongly / agree that Breastfeeding is...**

- **Normal (92%)**
- **Good for baby (86%)**
- **Offensive (2%)**
- **Distasteful (4%)**
- **Embarrassing (12%)**

**Proportion who agree strongly / agree with the following statements...**

- Breast milk is healthier than formula for babies (62%)
- Formula is as healthy for an infant as breast milk (24%)
- Breastfeeding is more convenient than formula feeding (41%)
- Formula feeding is more convenient than breastfeeding (36%)

The majority agreed strongly or agreed that “Mums should feel free to breastfeed their babies in public” (84%) and that “People should support mums who breastfeed in public” (82%).

**Caring responsibility**

13% have caring responsibilities (10% male & 14% female)

Around three-fifths of carers indicated their own health had been affected by their caring role. The most commonly reported symptoms were feelings of tiredness, stress, and disturbed sleep.

Almost three-quarters of carers (73%) receive no money for their help. Over half of carers (55%) receive help from other family members, while almost a third (32%) receive no help from others.