

14.0: PREVALENCE OF DRINKING AND ILLEGAL BEHAVIOUR:

Figure 13 diagrammatically consolidates useful information on the extent to which both drugs and alcohol are used, either experimentally, or habitually. Low content alcohol appears to be the substance used by more than half of the students surveyed. It is also interesting to note that occurrence of experimentation or use decreases as the substance becomes “harder” and moreover the “popularity” of the top two substances, Alcohol and Marijuana. In this instance it is noticeable that girls have higher use levels than boys in relation to alcohol, while boys are more inclined towards illegal substances, such as marijuana. In all instances, however, there is a close relationship between the usage levels for boys and girls.

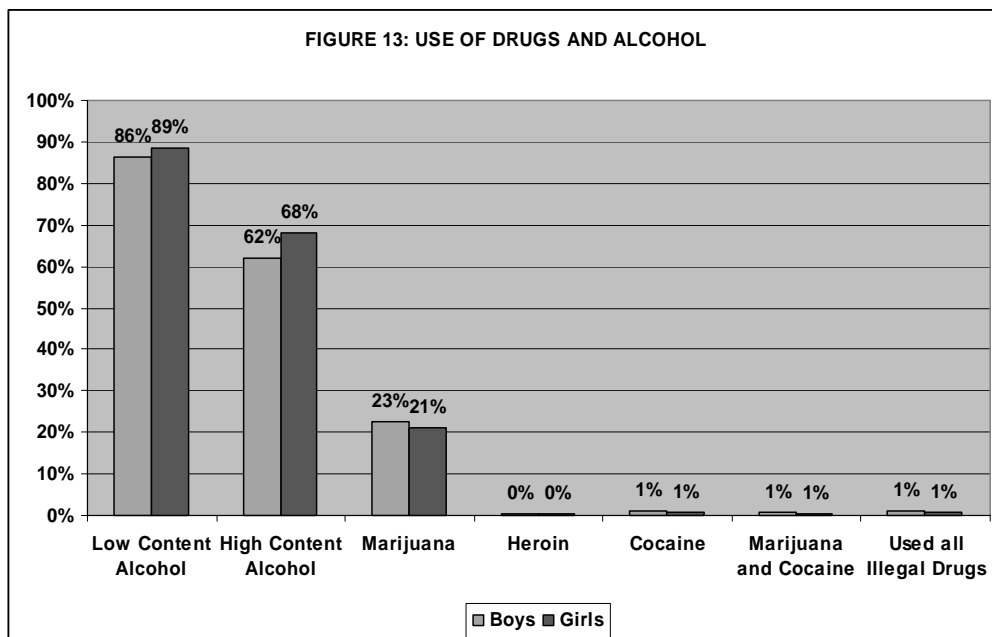
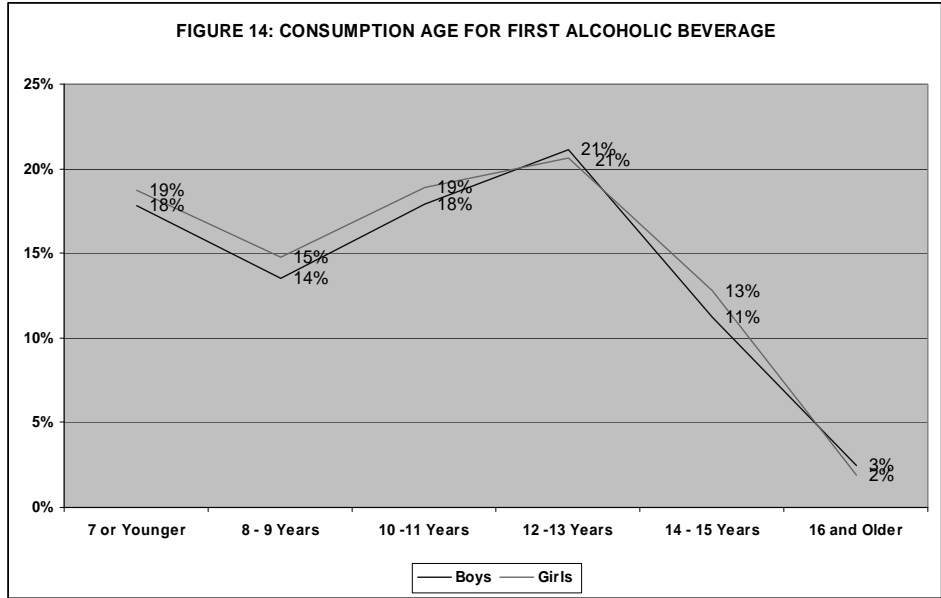


Figure 14 shows the ages at which boys and girls experimented or started using alcohol and it can be seen that there is no statistically significant difference between the ages at which boys and girls had their first drink. This pattern is very different to the findings of the 1999 study which concluded that “boys generally started out earlier and seemed to try “harder” alcoholthan their female counterparts”. This shift in the influence that gender has on the age that drinking commenced can be partially explained by increase in the quantity of boys in the study and the fact that on this occasion the data is not disaggregated into stronger and lighter beverages.



This study also sought to probe the environmental factors that contribute to drug use, and asked students if they had ever been offered illegal drugs, and if so, if this has ever happened in the school. This data is presented in figure 15. It is interesting to note that the highest level of illegal drug use (marijuana) is substantially lower than any of these environmental factors and this suggests that students are exercising restraint when offered drugs, or have refused the approach of suppliers in the school, or the family. Related questions asked students if they have ever received drug education at their primary, or secondary schools and 85% of students recalled having such exposure either one or both institutions.

