

# Professor Mary Cannon

The mental health  
of irish  
schoolchildren:  
Results of the 2021  
surveys from  
North Dublin,  
Cavan &  
Monaghan



Planet Youth in Ireland  
**Conference**



A large, textured orange circle with a brushstroke-like edge, positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the main title text.

# THE MENTAL HEALTH OF IRISH SCHOOLCHILDREN

RESULTS OF 2021 SURVEYS FROM  
NORTH DUBLIN, CAVAN & MONAGHAN

PROF MARY CANNON

DR NIAMH DOOLEY

DR EMMET POWER



RCSI

UNIVERSITY  
OF MEDICINE  
AND HEALTH  
SCIENCES

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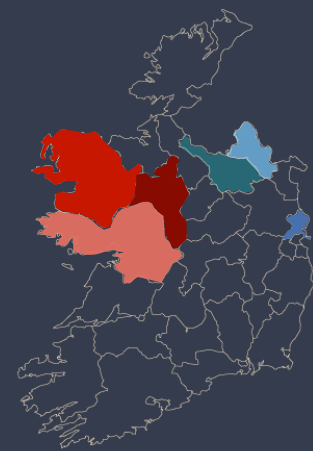
Planet Youth in Cavan, Monaghan & North Dublin



Mental health problems in the 2021 sample



Cannabis-use in the 2021 sample



East-West comparisons

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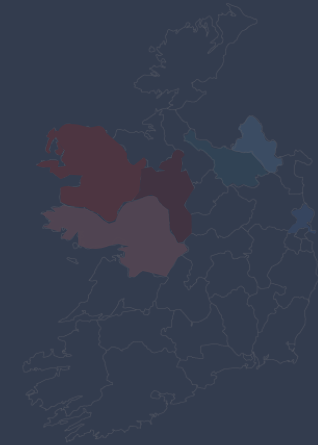
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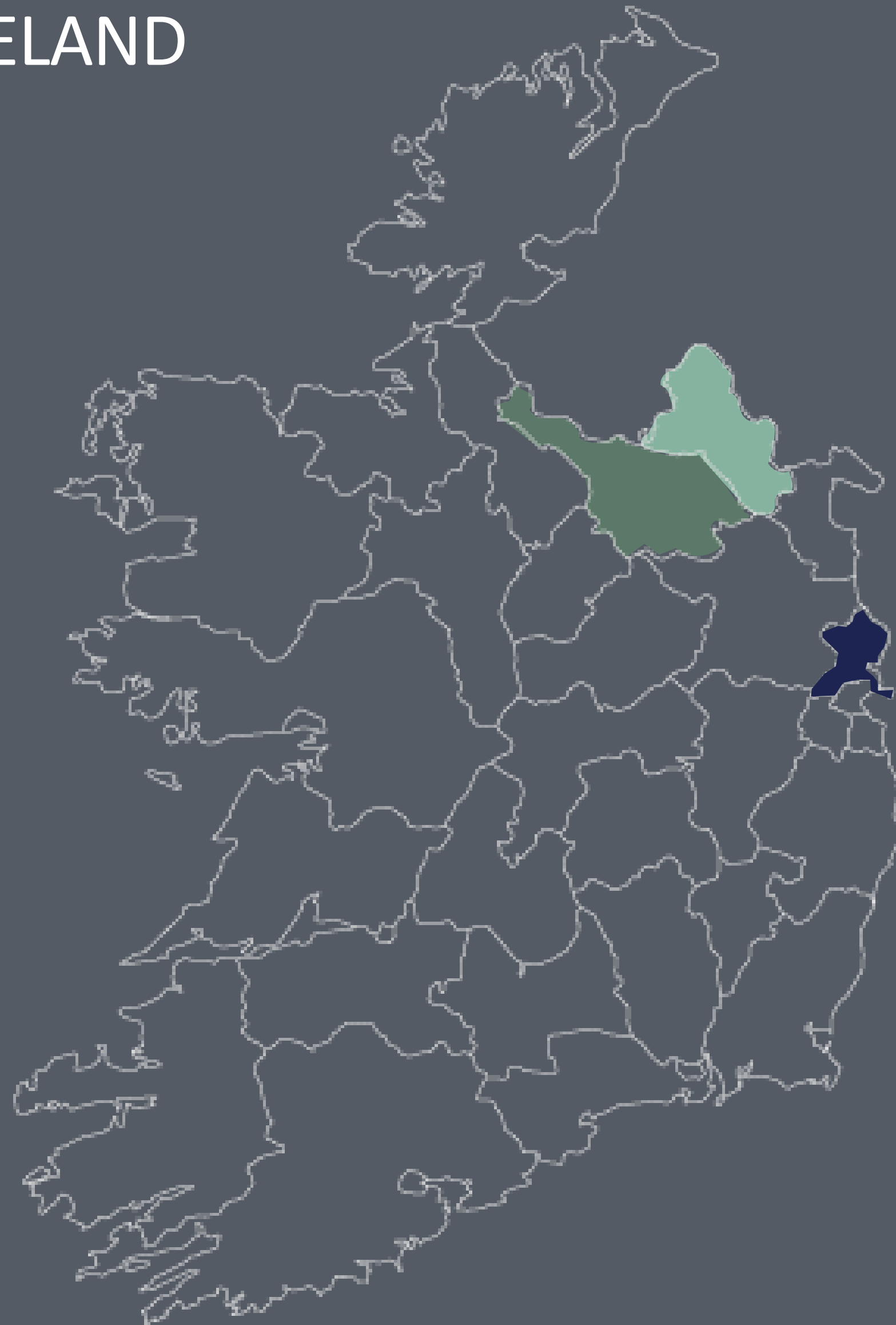
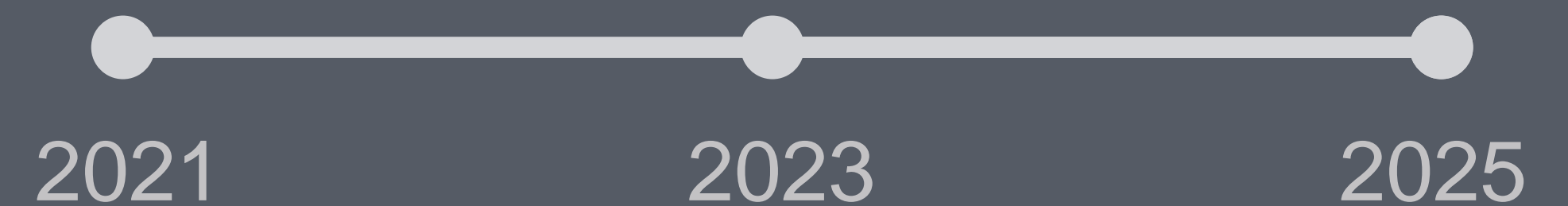
## POPULATION

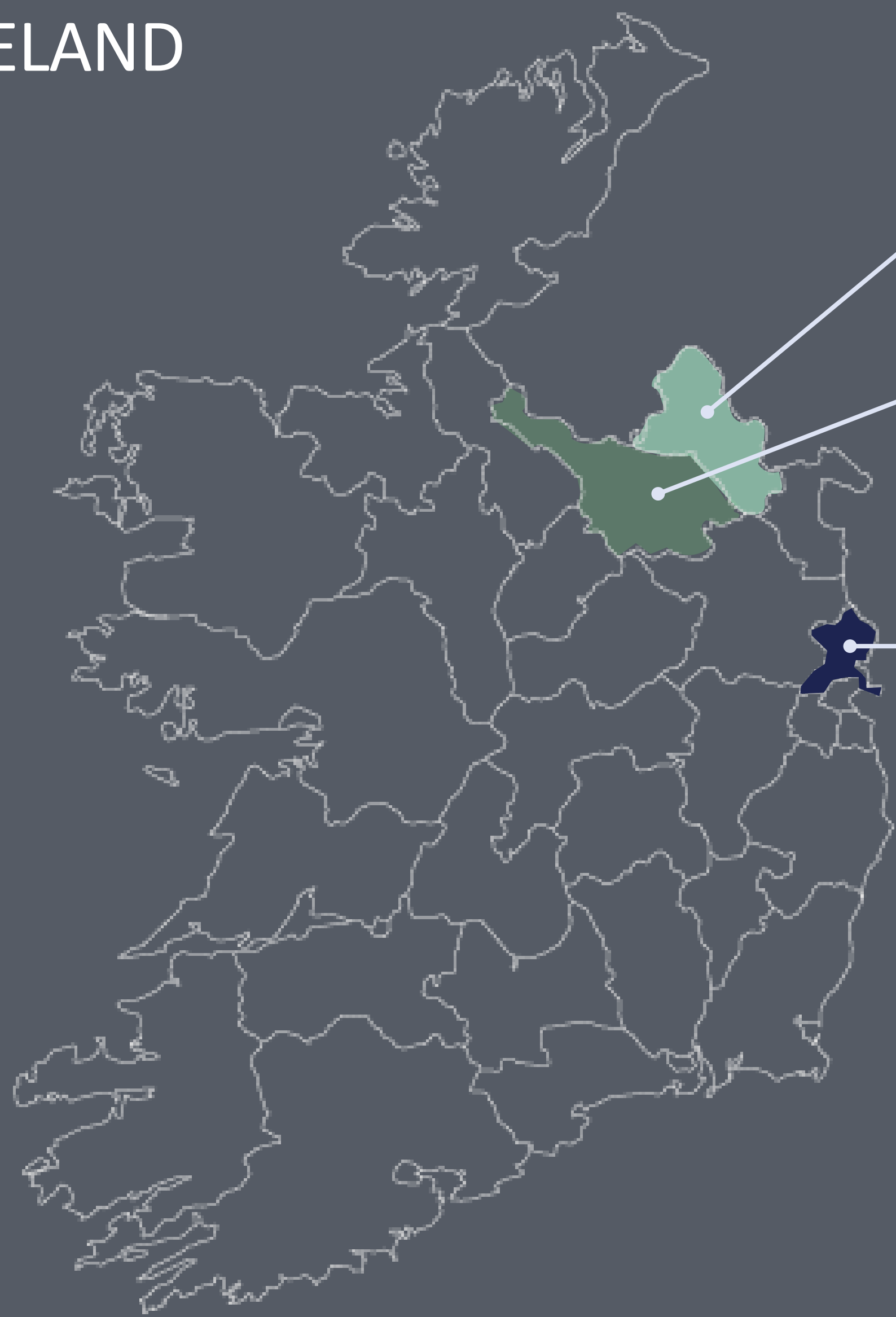
Adolescents from secondary schools & YouthReach centres in North Dublin, Cavan & Monaghan

## GOVERNANCE

- Drug & Alcohol Task Forces  
North-East Regional  
North Dublin Regional
- Cavan-Monaghan Education & Training Board
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- Planet Youth ehf

## SURVEYS





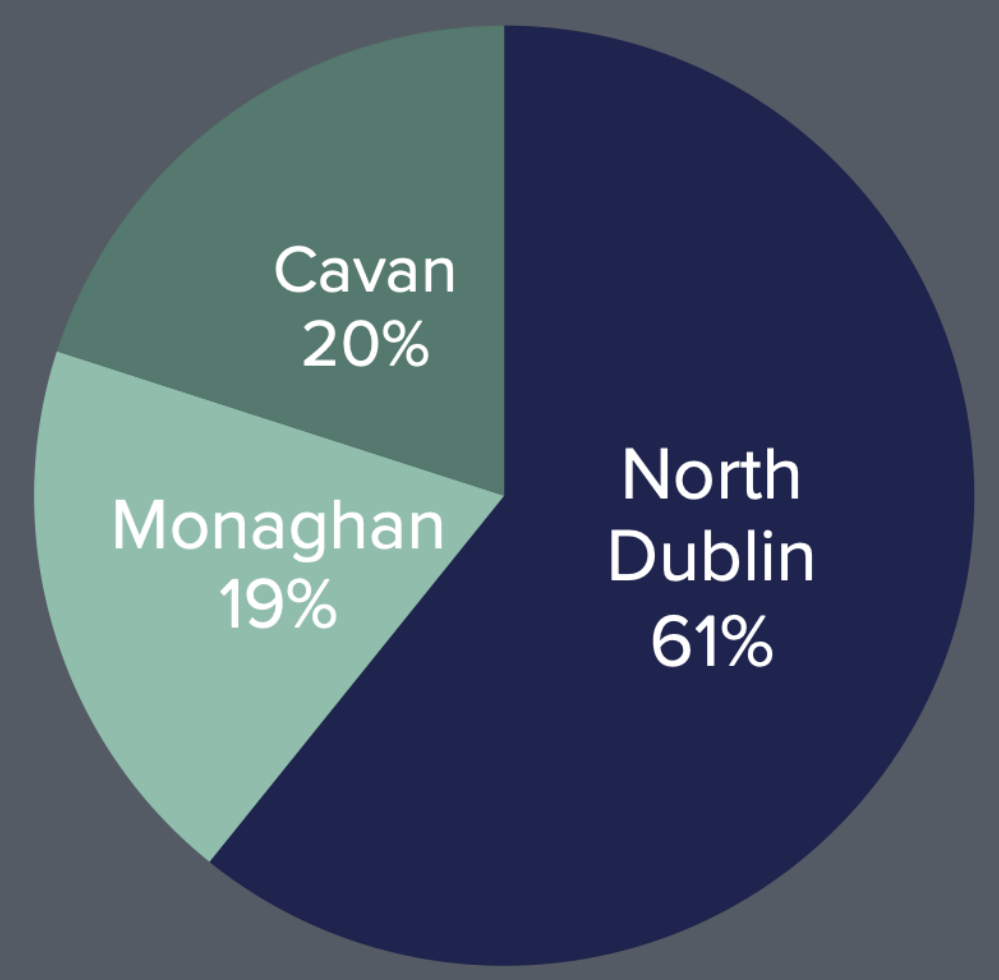
845 STUDENTS FROM 13 SCHOOLS  
MONAGHAN TOWN, CARRICKMACROSS, CASTLEBLAYNEY,  
CLONES, & BALLYBAY

882 STUDENTS FROM 12 SCHOOLS  
CAVAN TOWN, VIRGINIA, BAILIEBOROUGH, BALLYJAMESDUFF,  
BAWNBOY, BELTURBET, COOTEHILL & KINGSCOURT

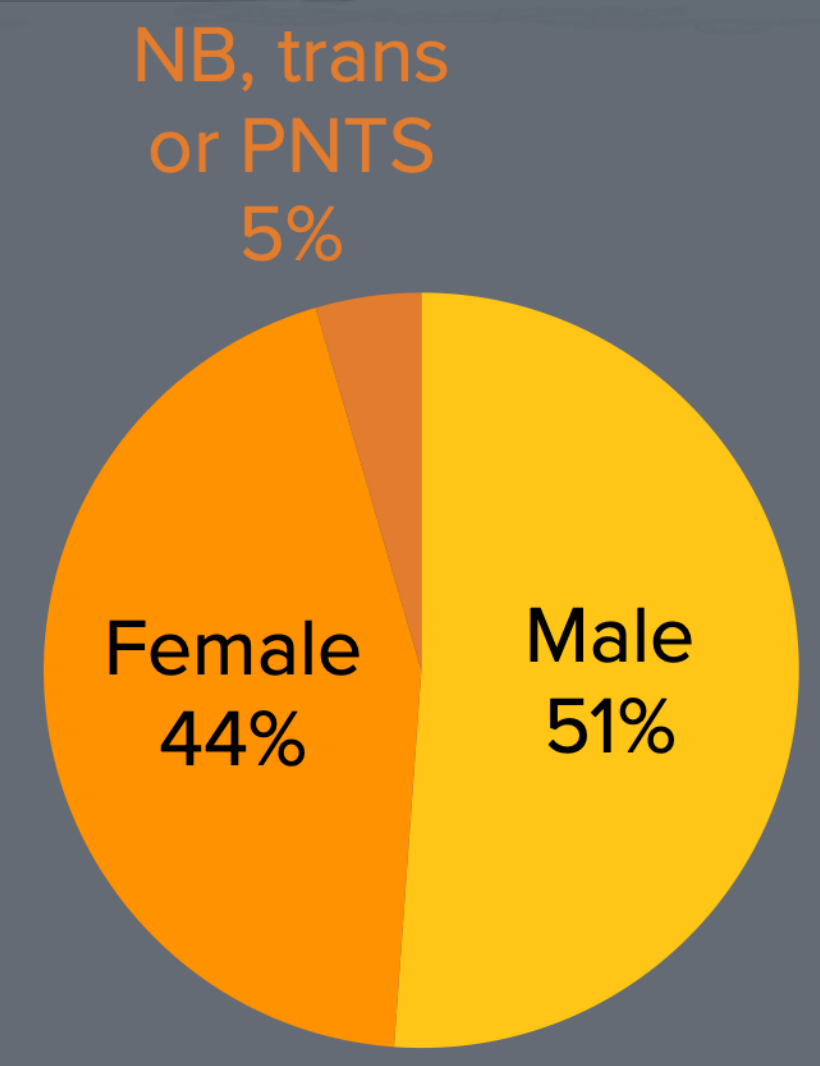
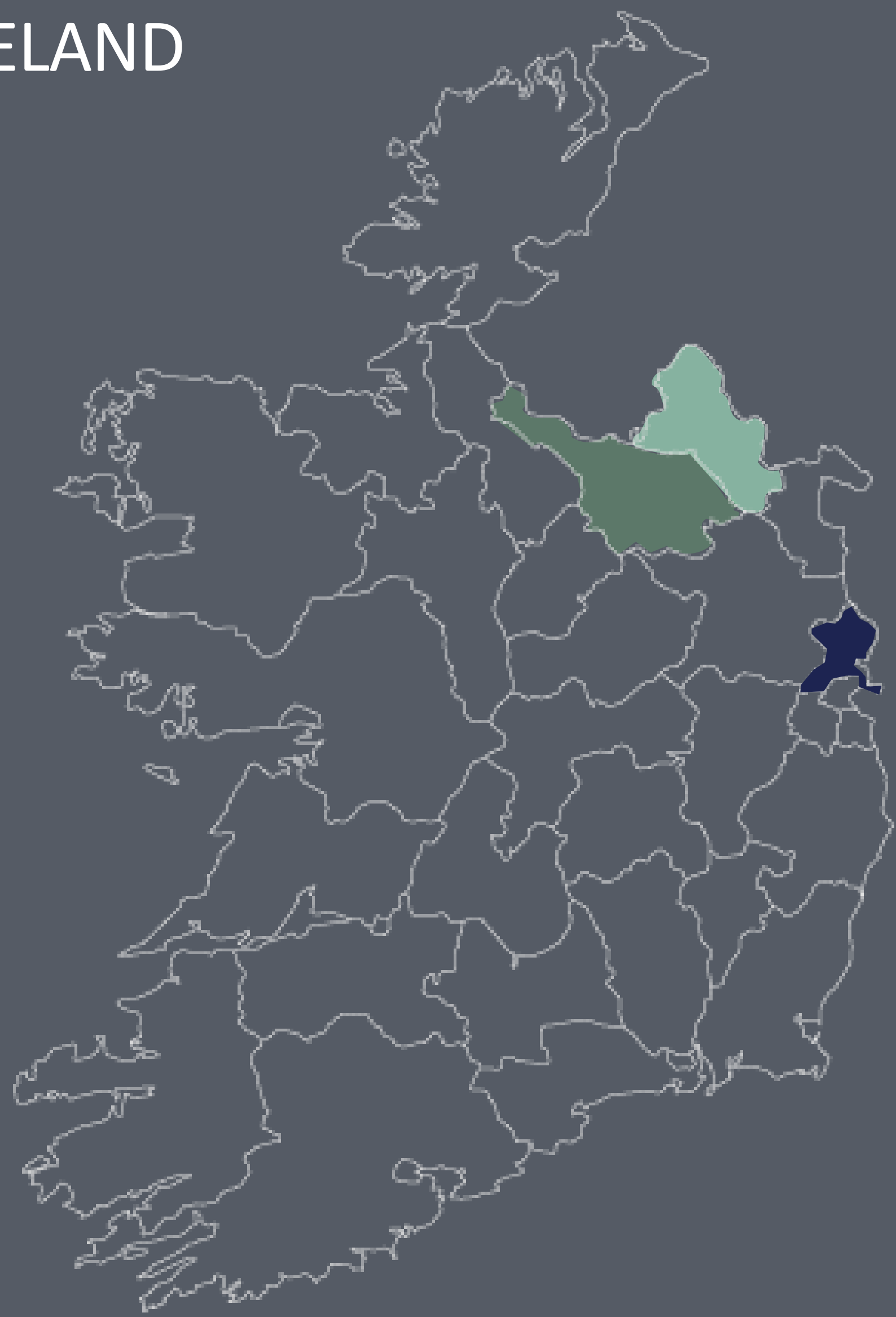
2677 STUDENTS FROM 15 SCHOOLS  
BALBRIGGAN, SWORDS, MALAHIDE, PORTMARNOCK,  
DONABATE, PORTRANE, RUSH, LUSK, KINSEALY,  
SUTTON & DUBLIN 15

SCHOOL RESPONSE RATE: 100%  
PARTICIPANT RESPONSE RATE: 88%

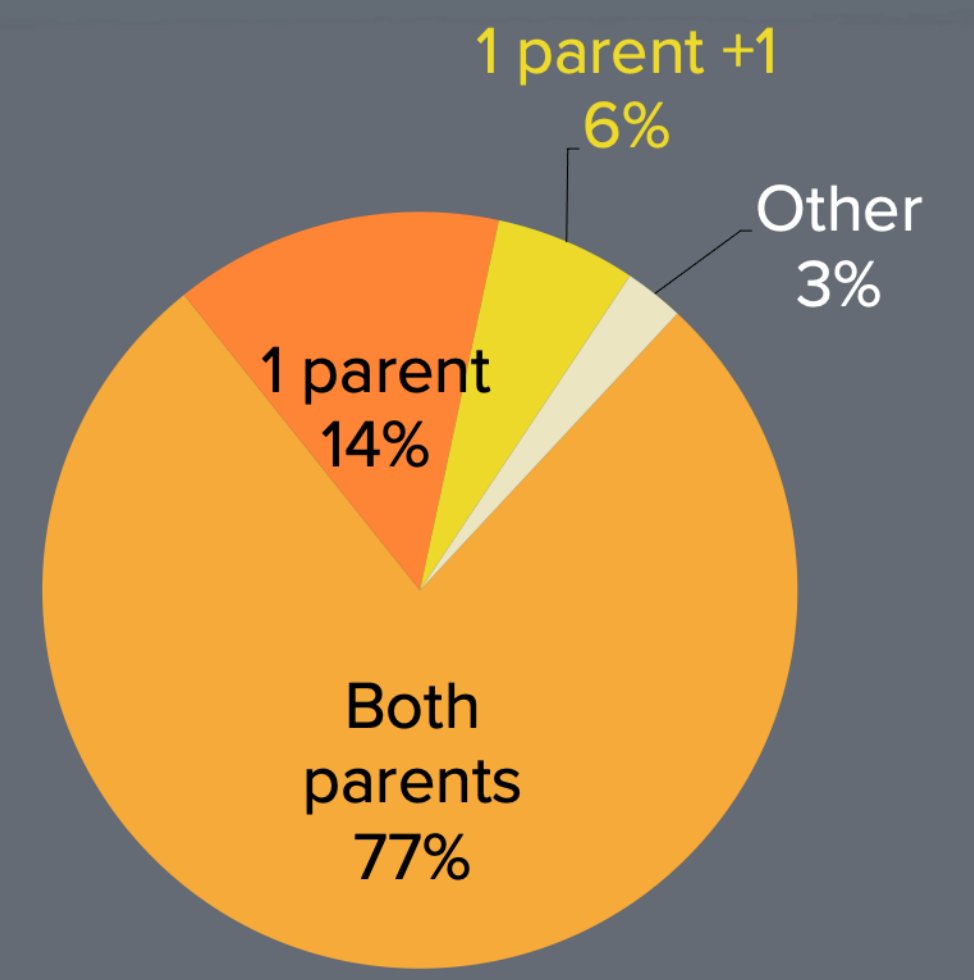
SCHOOL RESPONSE RATE: 75%  
PARTICIPANT RESPONSE RATE: 76%



N = 4,404



GENDER IDENTITY



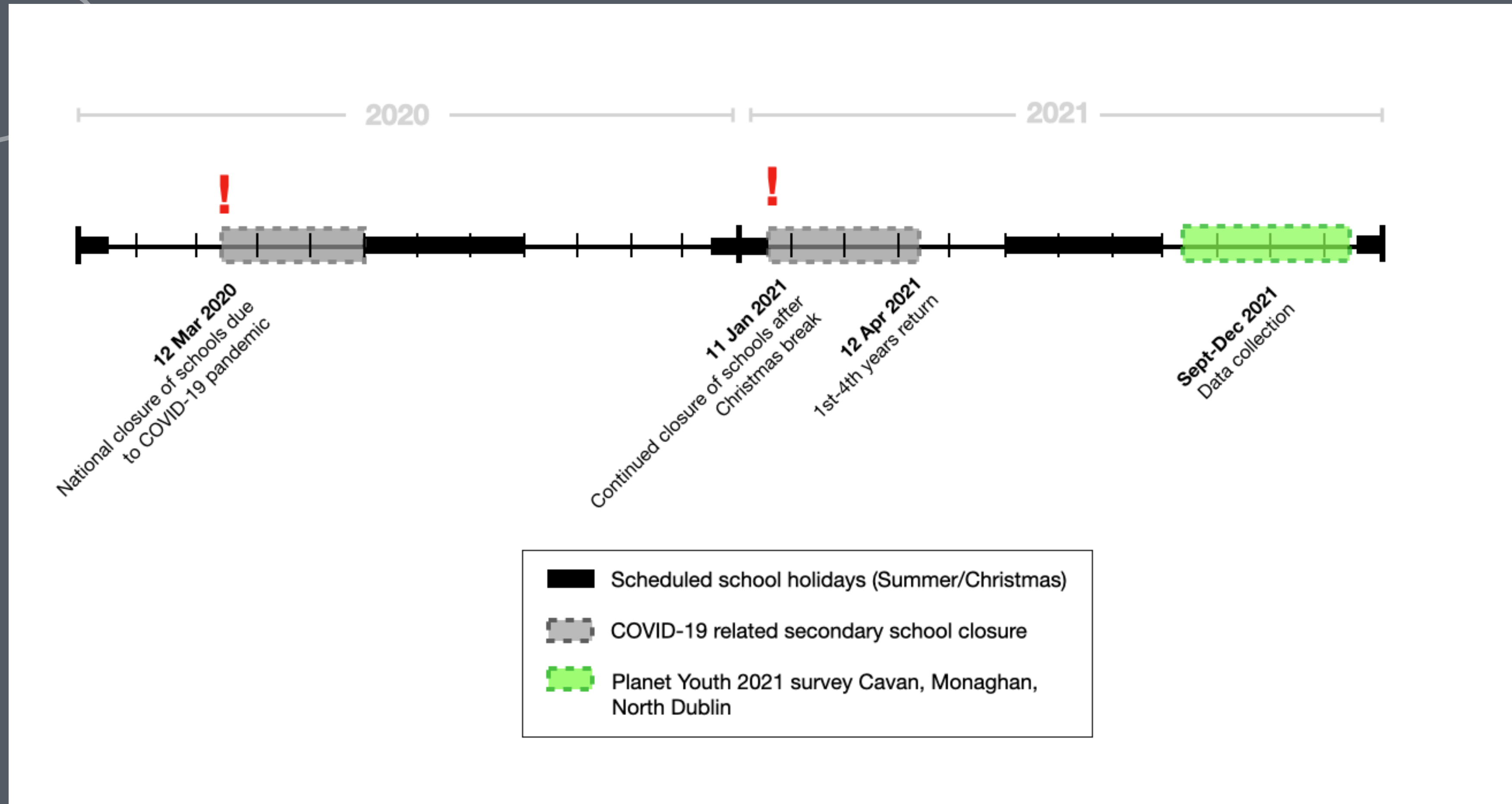
FAMILY MAKE-UP



NB = Non-Binary  
PNTS = Prefer not to say

Data collection: Sep- Dec 2021

This group missed 5.5 months of in-person schooling over 2 years







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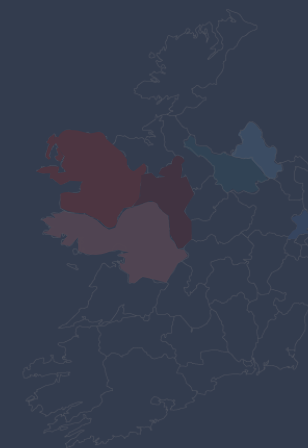
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# MENTAL HEALTH MEASURES



# "BAD" MENTAL HEALTH

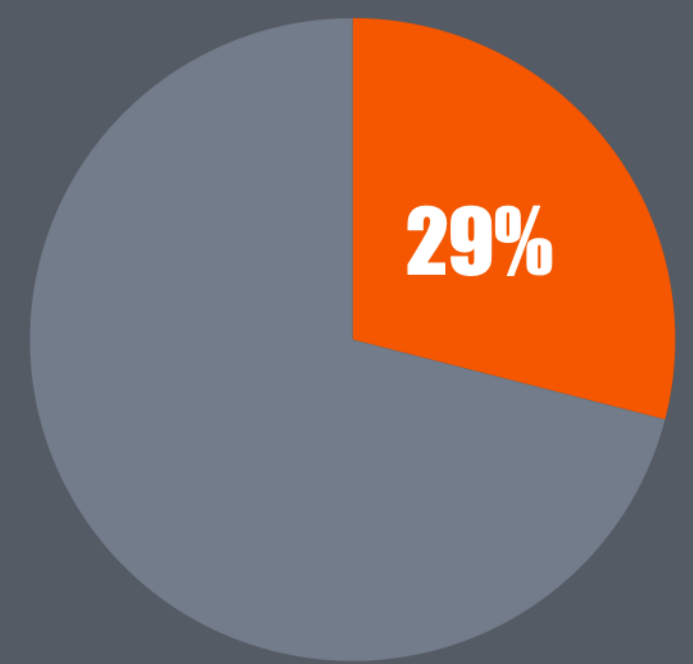
HOW WOULD YOU  
RATE YOUR  
MENTAL HEALTH?

VERY GOOD / GOOD / OKAY / **BAD** /  
VERY BAD

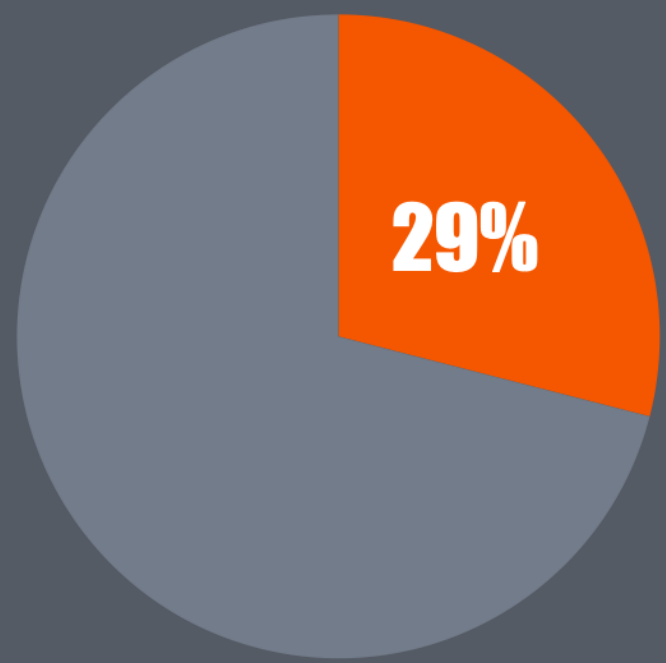
**29%**



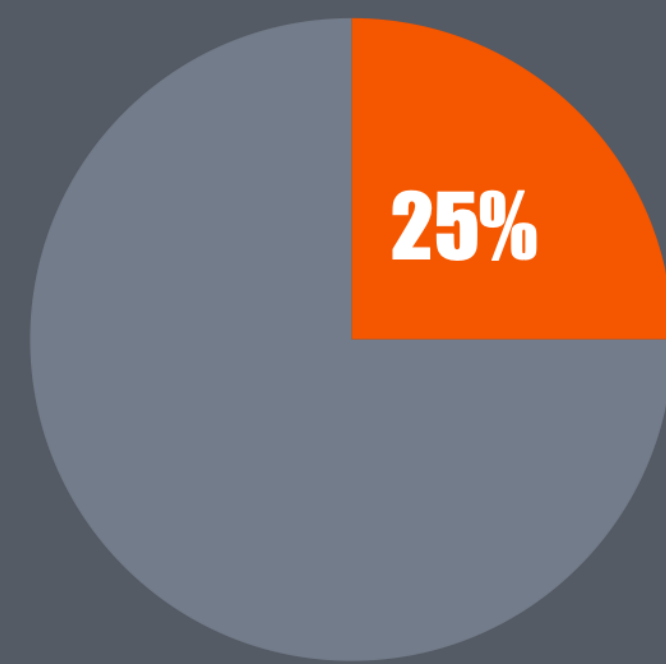
DUBLIN



CAVAN

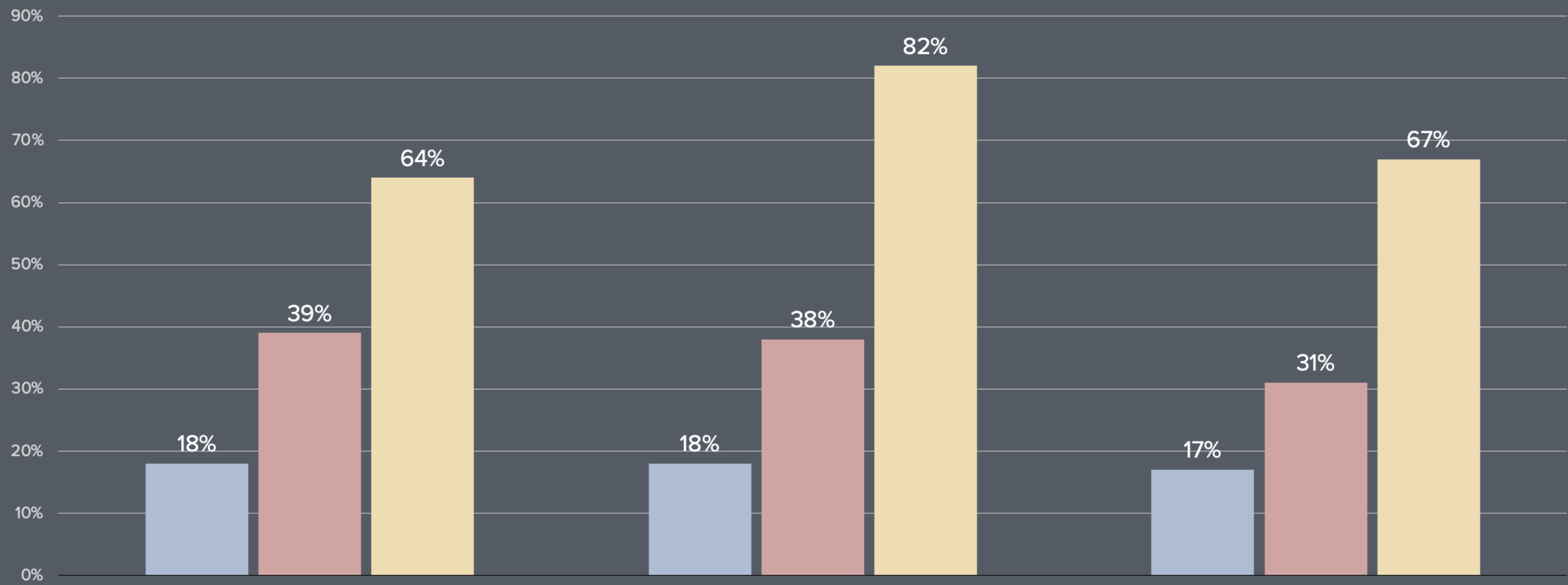


MONAGHAN



NON-SIGNIFICANT  
GROUP DIFFERENCE  
(URBAN V RURAL)

RATES OF BAD MENTAL HEALTH



■ Male (n=2220)  
■ Female (n=1933)  
■ Other (n=194)  
• Non-binary  
• Trans  
• Prefer not to say

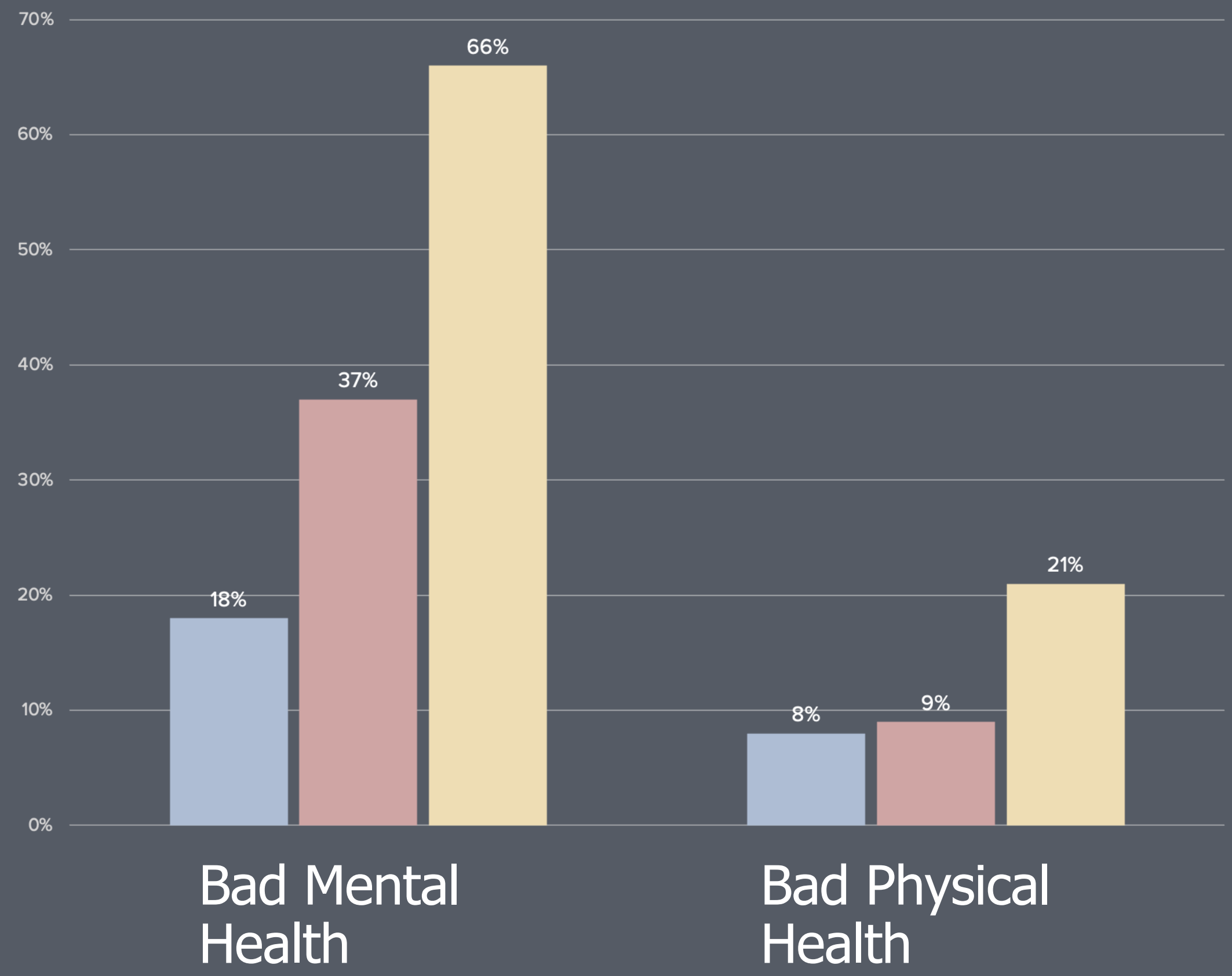
SIGNIFICANT GENDER  
DIFFERENCE (P < .001)

# HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

VERY GOOD / GOOD / OKAY / **BAD** / **VERY BAD**

## Full PY Sample

- Male (n=2220)
- Female (n=1933)
- Other (n=194)



# HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH?

VERY GOOD / GOOD / OKAY / **BAD** / **VERY BAD**

# GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH (SDQ)

SDQ SCORE > 20  
AS AN INDICATOR OF  
PROBABLE MENTAL DISORDER

SDQ SCORES  
0 (NO PROBLEMS) — 40 (MAX PROBLEMS)

I do not have at least 1 good friend  
I'm often worried  
I'm restless, overactive & cannot stay still  
I'm bullied by others  
I steal things  
I have many fears, I'm easily scared  
etc.



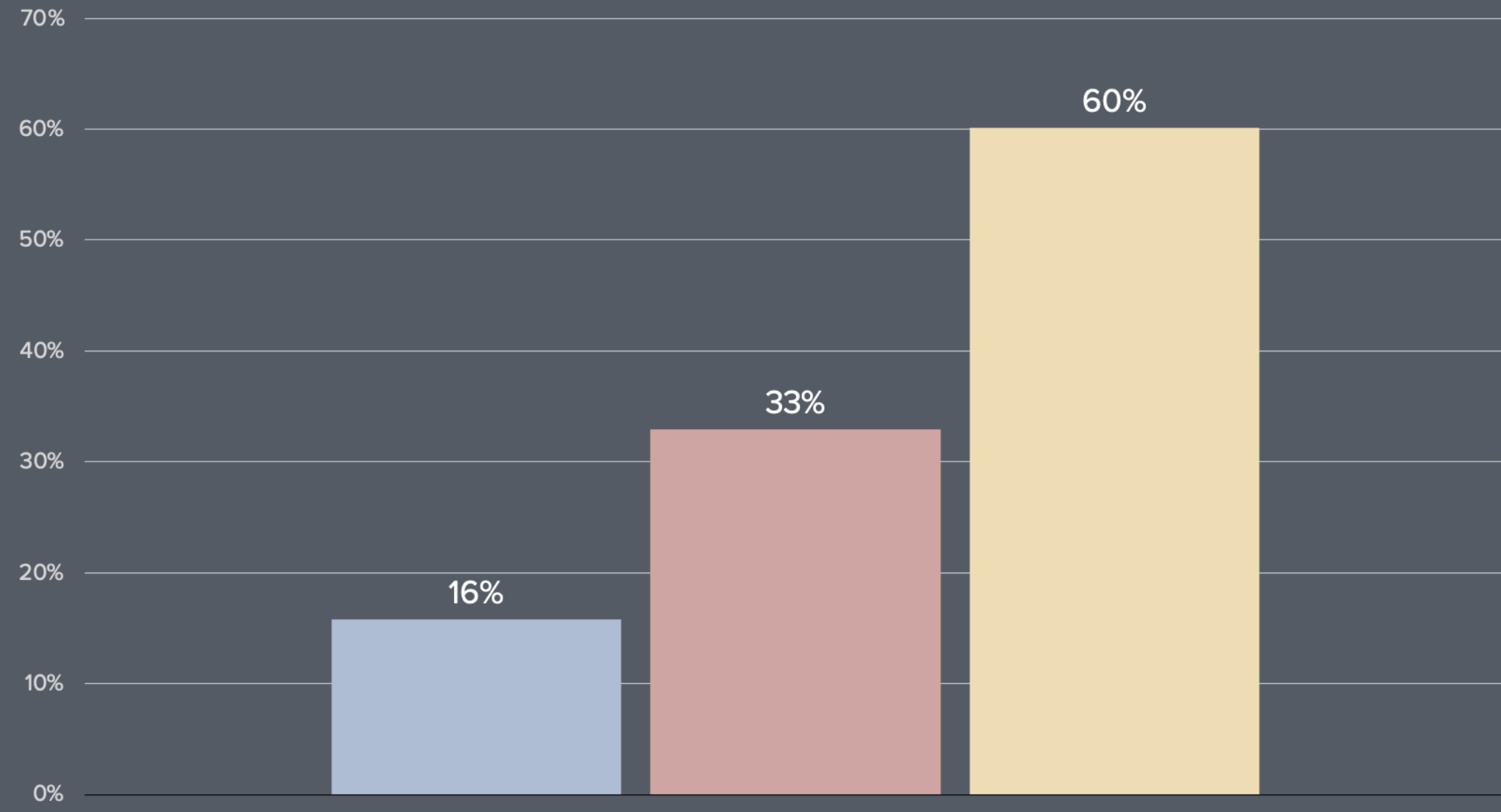
DUBLIN CAVAN MONAGHAN

28%

24%

20%

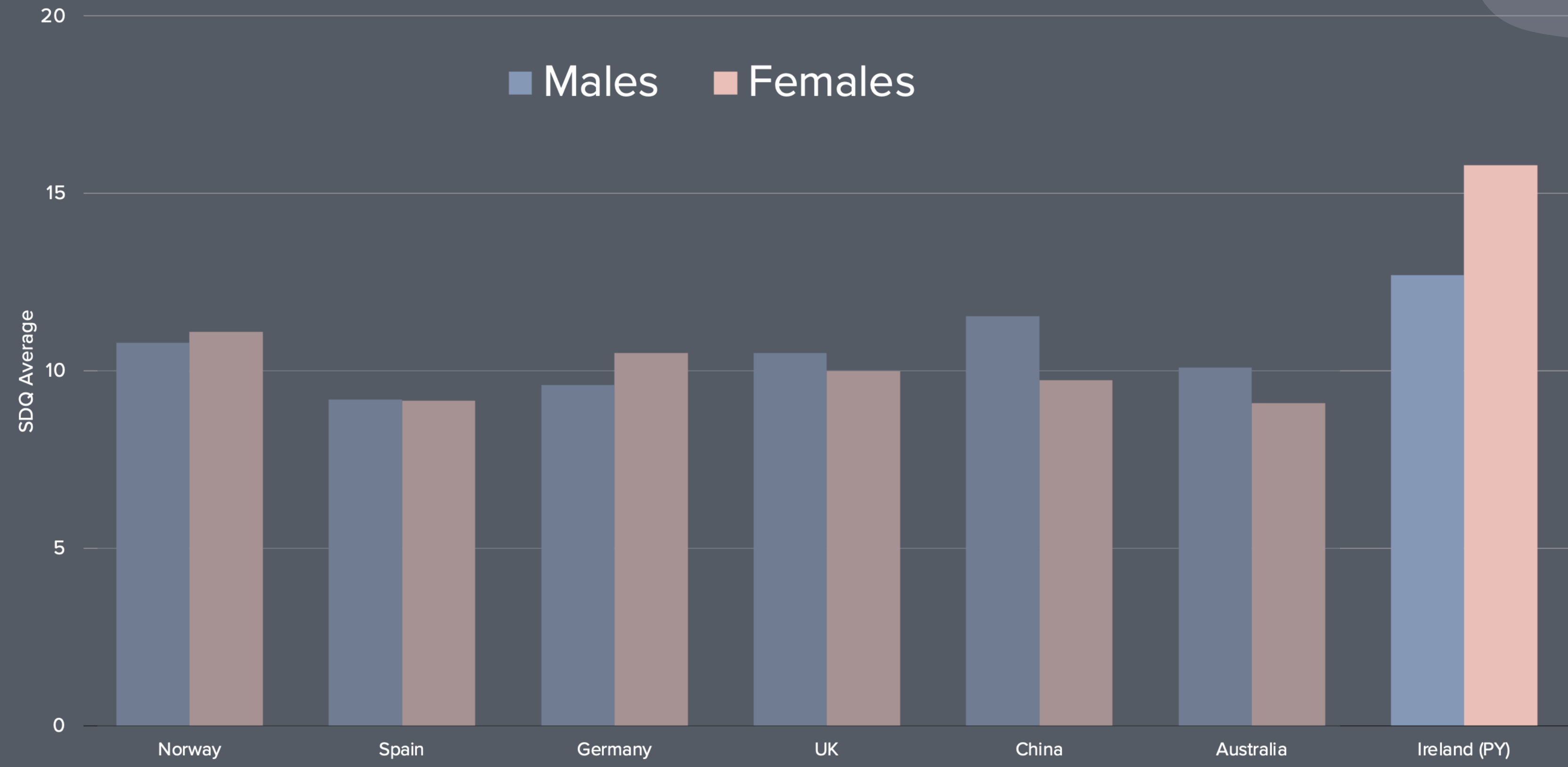
SIGNIFICANT GROUP  
DIFFERENCE (P < .001)  
URBAN V RURAL



Male (n=2220)  
Female (n=1933)  
Other (n=194)

SIGNIFICANT GENDER  
DIFFERENCE (P < .001)

# SDQ SCORES



**NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL  
COMPARISON**

<b>Ages</b>	13-16	11-17	11-17	11-15	11-17	14-17	14-18
<b>Year of pub</b>	2006	2021	2018	2003	2008	2005	2021
<b>Approx N</b>	9,000	2,000	6,500	4,500	800	150	4,000

# INTERIM SUMMARY

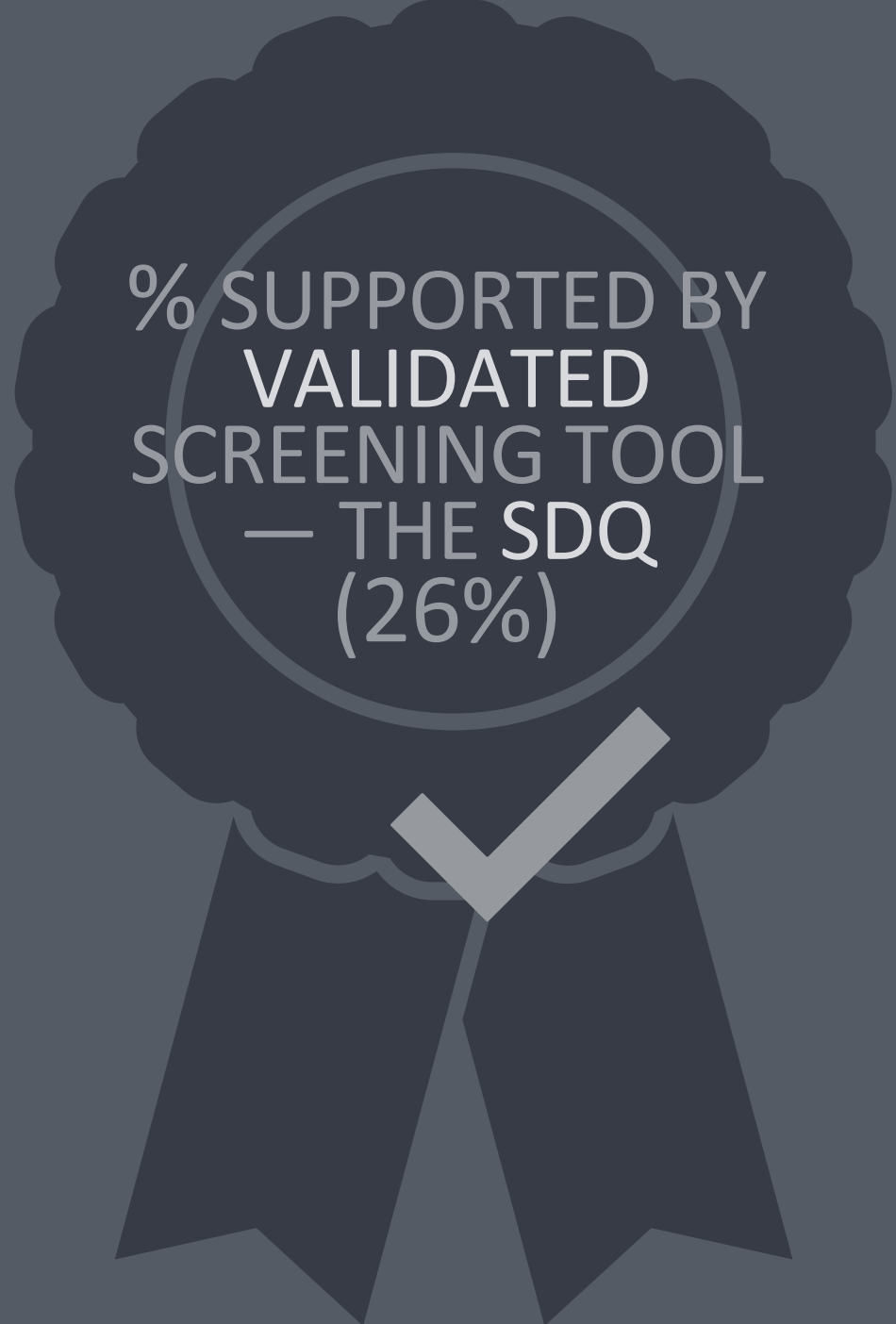
**29%** OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THIS SAMPLE SAID THEIR **MENTAL HEALTH WAS BAD**



COMPARED TO 9% WHO REPORTED BAD PHYSICAL HEALTH



% SUPPORTED BY VALIDATED SCREENING TOOL — THE SDQ (26%)



WHO?



SMALL VARIATION ACROSS COUNTIES (~5%)



LARGE VARIATION ACROSS GENDERS (~50%)





Have you ever **heard voices** or sounds that no one else can hear?

Have you **seen things** that other people could not see?

Do you believe your **thoughts can be read** by another person?

Have you ever had messages sent just to you **through the TV/radio**?

Have you ever thought that people are **following or spying** on you?

Have you ever felt you were **under the control** of some special power?

Have you ever felt like you had **extra-special powers**?

No, never (0)    Maybe (0.5)    Yes, definitely (1)

2 OR MORE /

29%



DUBLIN

33%

CAVAN

26%

MONAGHAN

21%

SIGNIFICANT GROUP DIFFERENCE (P < .001)

[World Psychiatry](#). 2013 Oct; 12(3): 187–197.  
Published online 2013 Oct 4. doi: [10.1002/wps.20056](https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20056)

PMCID: PMC3799240  
PMID: [24096775](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24096775/)

Urbanicity, social adversity and psychosis

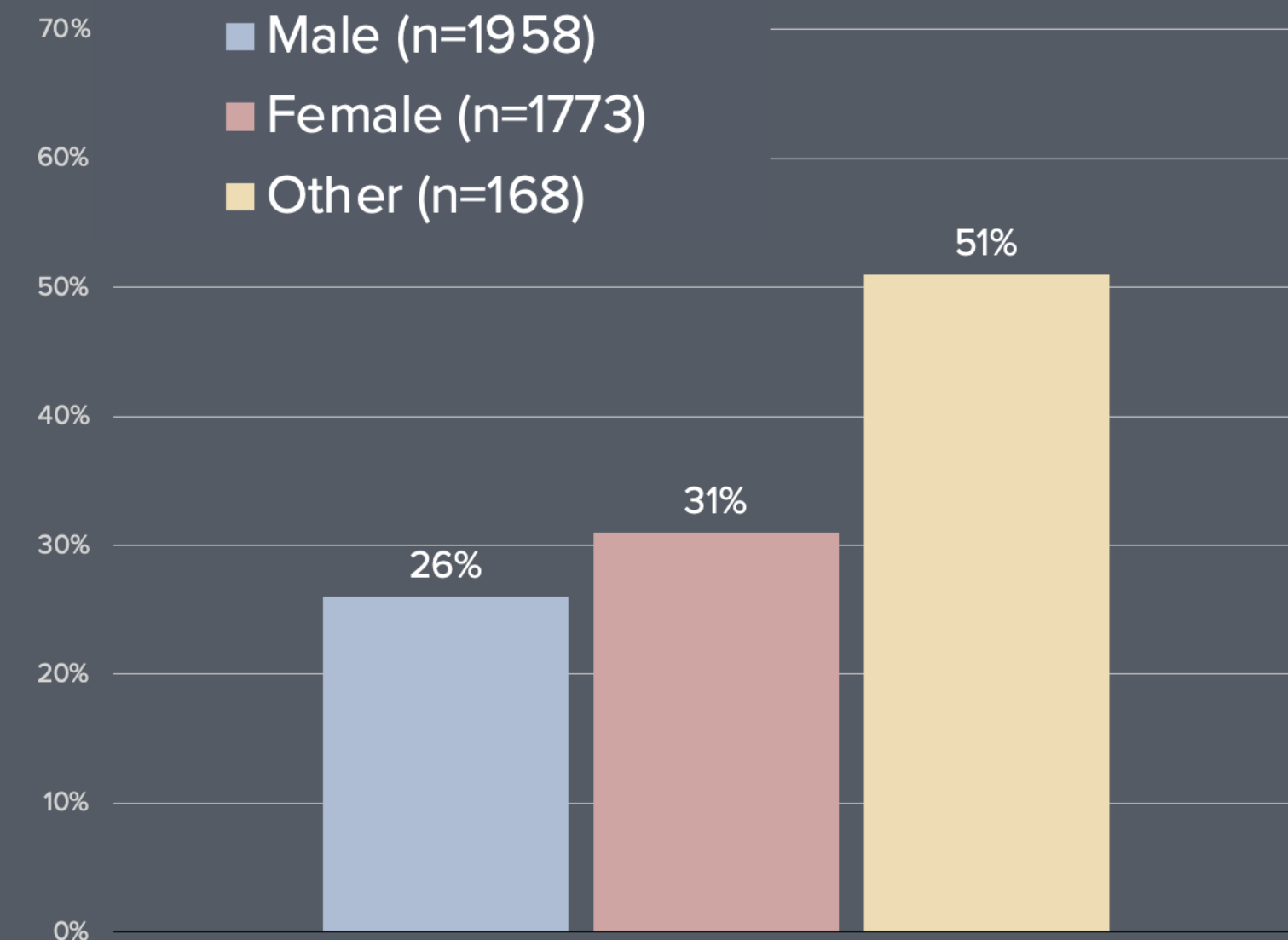
[Andreas Heinz](#),<sup>1</sup> [Lorenz Deserno](#),<sup>1,2</sup> and [Ulrich Reininghaus](#)<sup>3</sup>

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ABSTRACT

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In recent years, there has been increasing interest in research on geographical variation in the incidence of schizophrenia and other psychoses. In this paper, we review the evidence on variation in incidence of schizophrenia and other psychoses in terms of place, as well as the individual- and area-level factors that account for this variation. We further review findings on potential mechanisms that link adverse urban environment and psychosis. There is evidence from earlier and more recent studies that urbanicity is associated with an increased incidence of schizophrenia and non-affective psychosis. In addition, considerable variation in incidence across neighbourhoods has been observed for these disorders. Findings suggest it is unlikely that social drift alone can fully account for geographical variation in incidence. Evidence further suggests that the impact of adverse social contexts – indexed by area-level exposures such as population density, social fragmentation and deprivation – on risk of psychosis is explained (confounding) or modified (interaction) by environmental exposures at the individual



SIGNIFICANT GROUP DIFFERENCE (P < .001)

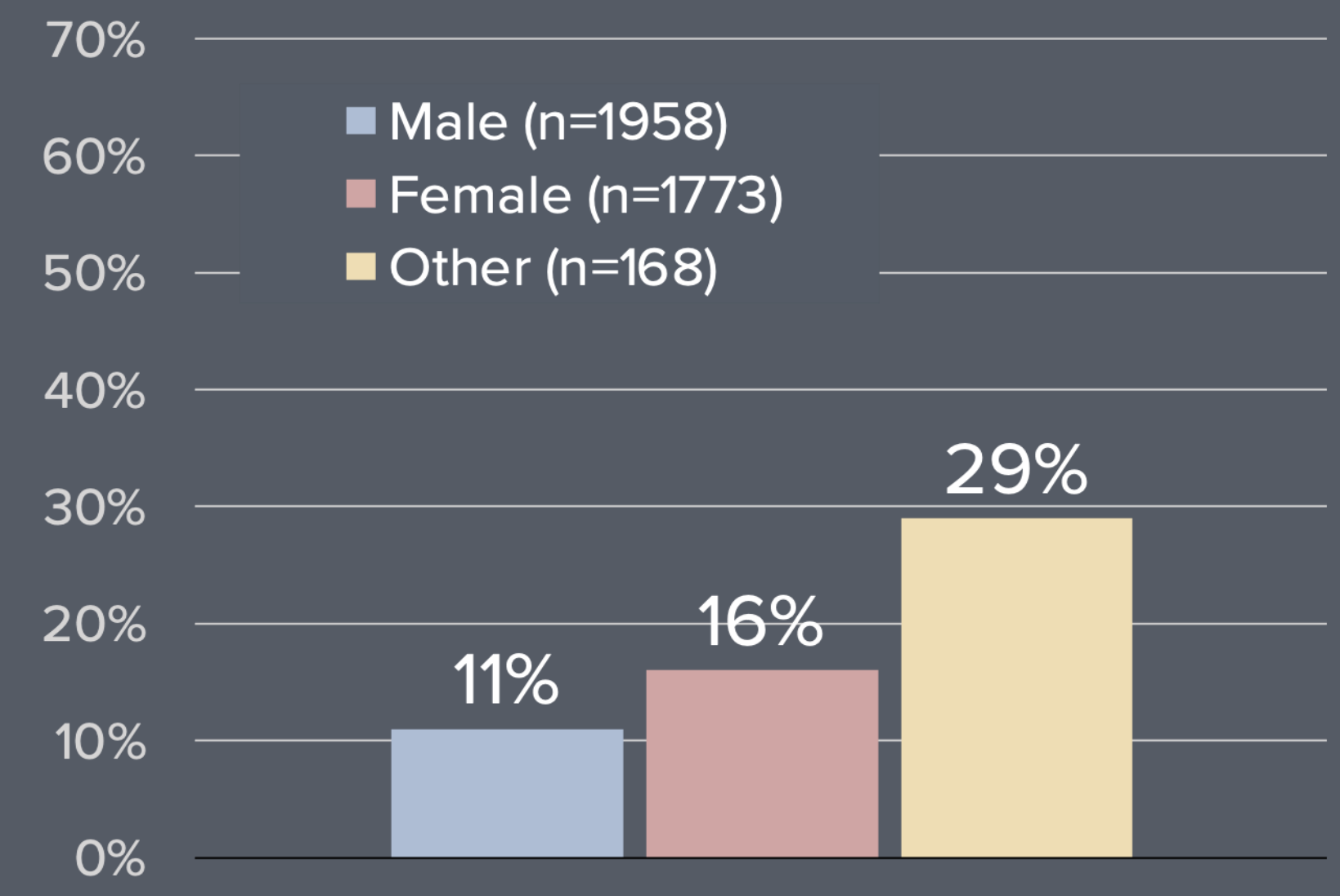


- Have you ever heard voices or sounds that no one else can hear?
- Have you **seen things** that other people could not see?
- Do you believe your **thoughts can be read** by another person?
- Have you ever had messages sent just to you **through the TV/radio**?
- Have you ever thought that people are **following or spying** on you?
- Have you ever felt you were **under the control** of some special power?
- Have you ever felt like you had **extra-special powers**?

14% 

Compared to:  
**7-8%** estimated prevalence of PEs in adolescents  
Kelleher et al., 2012 Meta-Analysis

No, never (0)    Maybe (0.5)    Yes, definitely (1)



# SUICIDAL THOUGHTS & ATTEMPTS

HAVE YOU EVER  
HAD SUICIDAL  
THOUGHTS?

NO / YES



42%

DUBLIN

44%

CAVAN

39%

MONAGHAN

37%

SIGNIFICANT GROUP  
DIFFERENCE (P < .001)

HAVE YOU EVER  
ATTEMPTED  
SUICIDE?

NO / YES



11%

13%

10%

8%

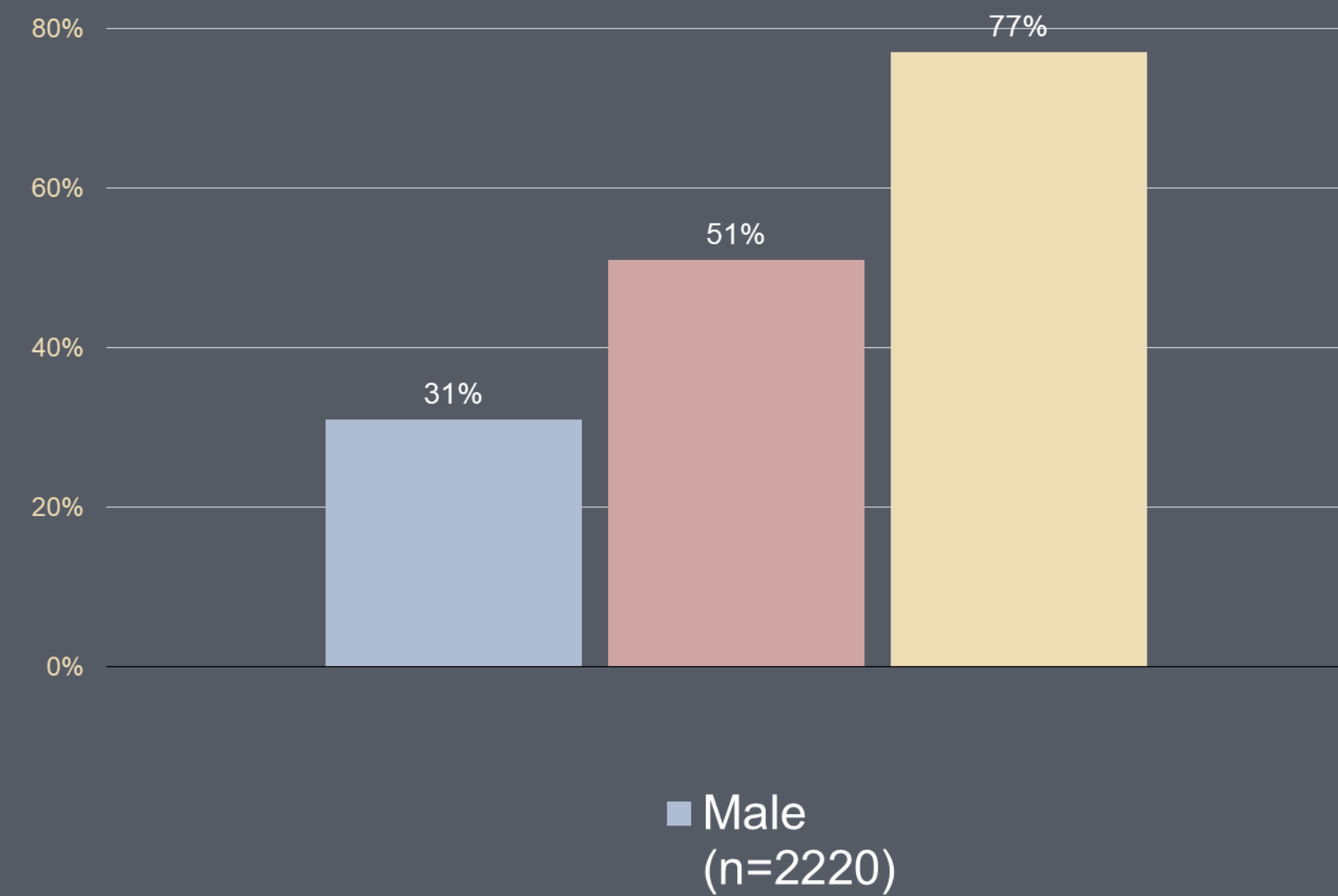
SIGNIFICANT GROUP  
DIFFERENCE (P < .001)

# SUICIDAL THOUGHTS & ATTEMPTS

## ... BY GENDER IDENTITY

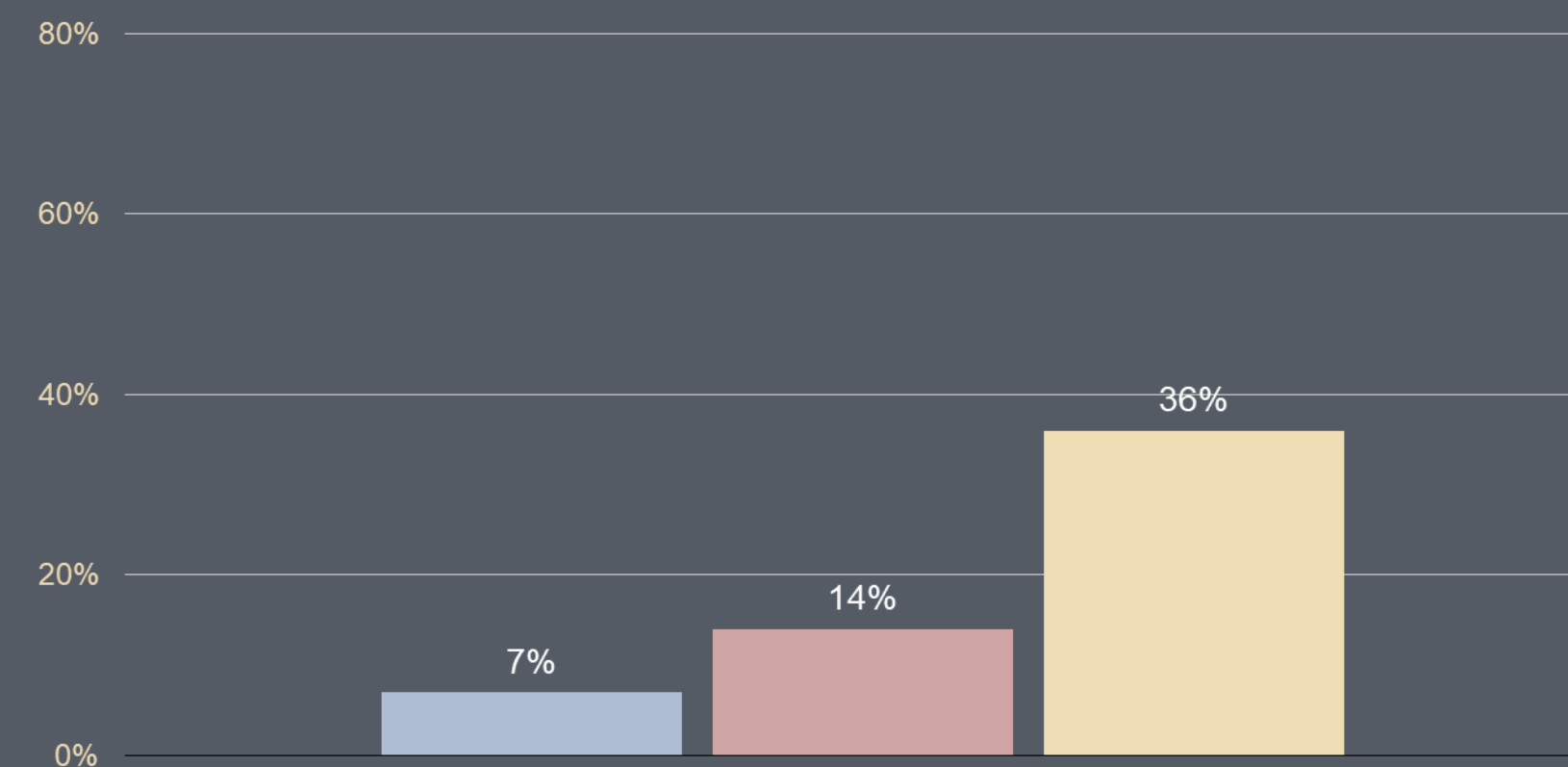
HAVE YOU EVER  
HAD SUICIDAL  
THOUGHTS?

NO / YES



HAVE YOU EVER  
ATTEMPTED  
SUICIDE?

NO / YES



# INTERIM SUMMARY

THE **GENDER GRADIENT** EXISTS FOR ALL SPECIFIC MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES



NON-BINARY / TRANS / PREFERRED NOT TO SAY

2 IN 3 REPORTED BAD / VERY BAD MENTAL HEALTH

HALF REPORTED PSYCHOTIC-LIKE EXPERIENCES

1 IN 3 HAD ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

## FEMALES

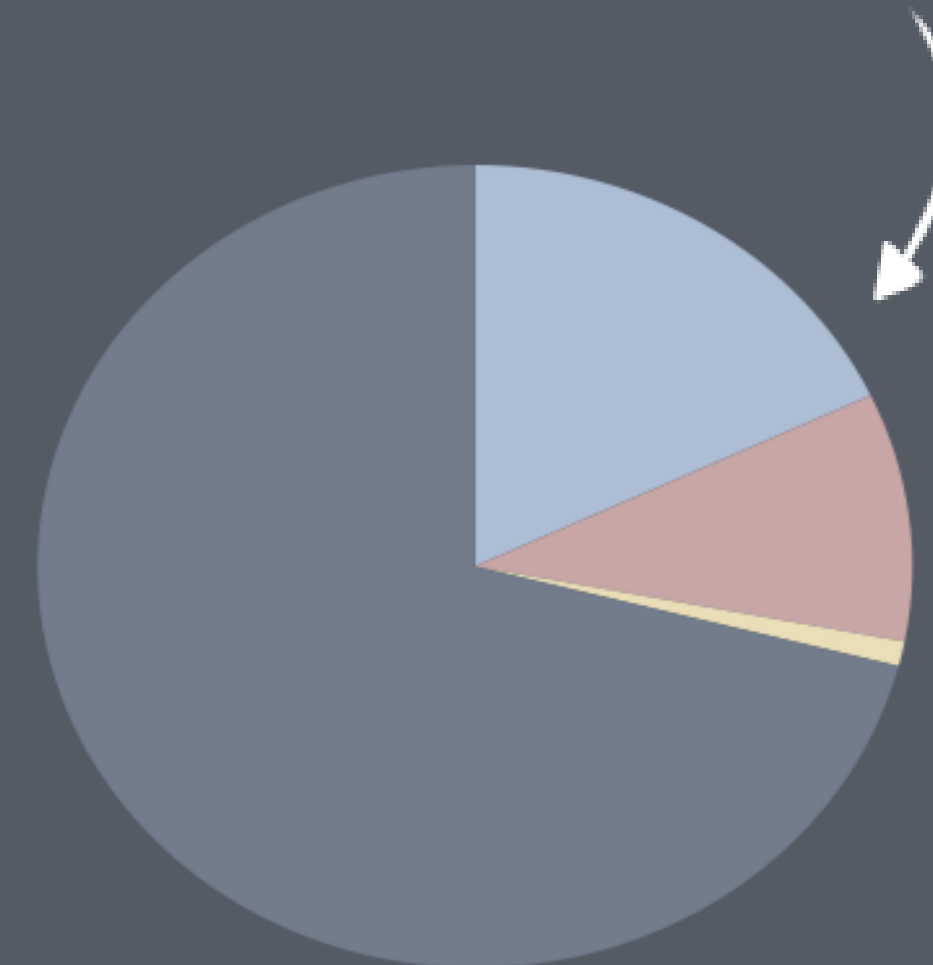
2X MORE LIKELY THAN MALES TO:

- REPORT BAD/VERY BAD MENTAL HEALTH
- HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

SIGNIFICANTLY MORE ANXIETY & DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS THAN MALES

**BUT**

Majority of those with poor mental health are males



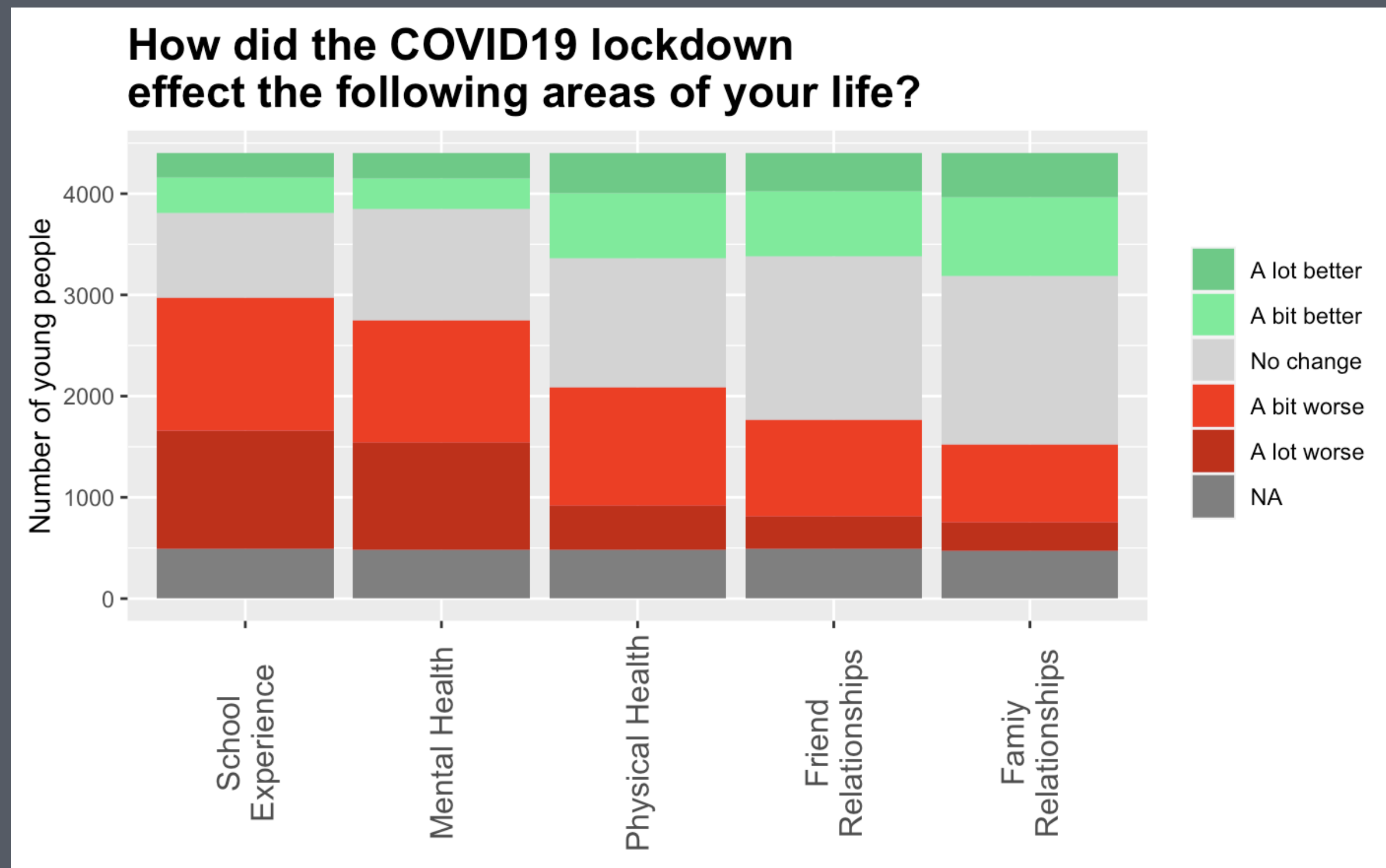
**ODDS RATIOS**

**DEMOGRAPHIC PREDICTORS OF MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES**

	<b>BAD SUBJECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH</b>	<b>PROBABLE MENTAL DISORDER (SDQ &gt;20)</b>	<b>PSYCHOTIC-LIKE EXPERIENCES (APSS ≥2)</b>	<b>LIFETIME SUICIDAL THOUGHTS</b>	<b>LIFETIME SUICIDE ATTEMPT</b>
Female (vs male)	2.75	2.65	1.27	0.44	0.45
Trans, NB + (vs male)	9.19	7.16	2.54	0.14	0.15
North Dublin (vs rural)	1.05	1.36	1.52	0.76	0.72
Younger age (vs 15-16)	1.06	0.94	1.10	1.18	0.94
Older age (vs 15-16)	1.01	0.87	0.78	0.92	0.65
Relative financial poverty*	2.70	2.49	1.83	0.44	0.35
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> (variance explained)	13.5%	12.0%	4.3%	10.6%	10.1%



# WHAT ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF COVID?

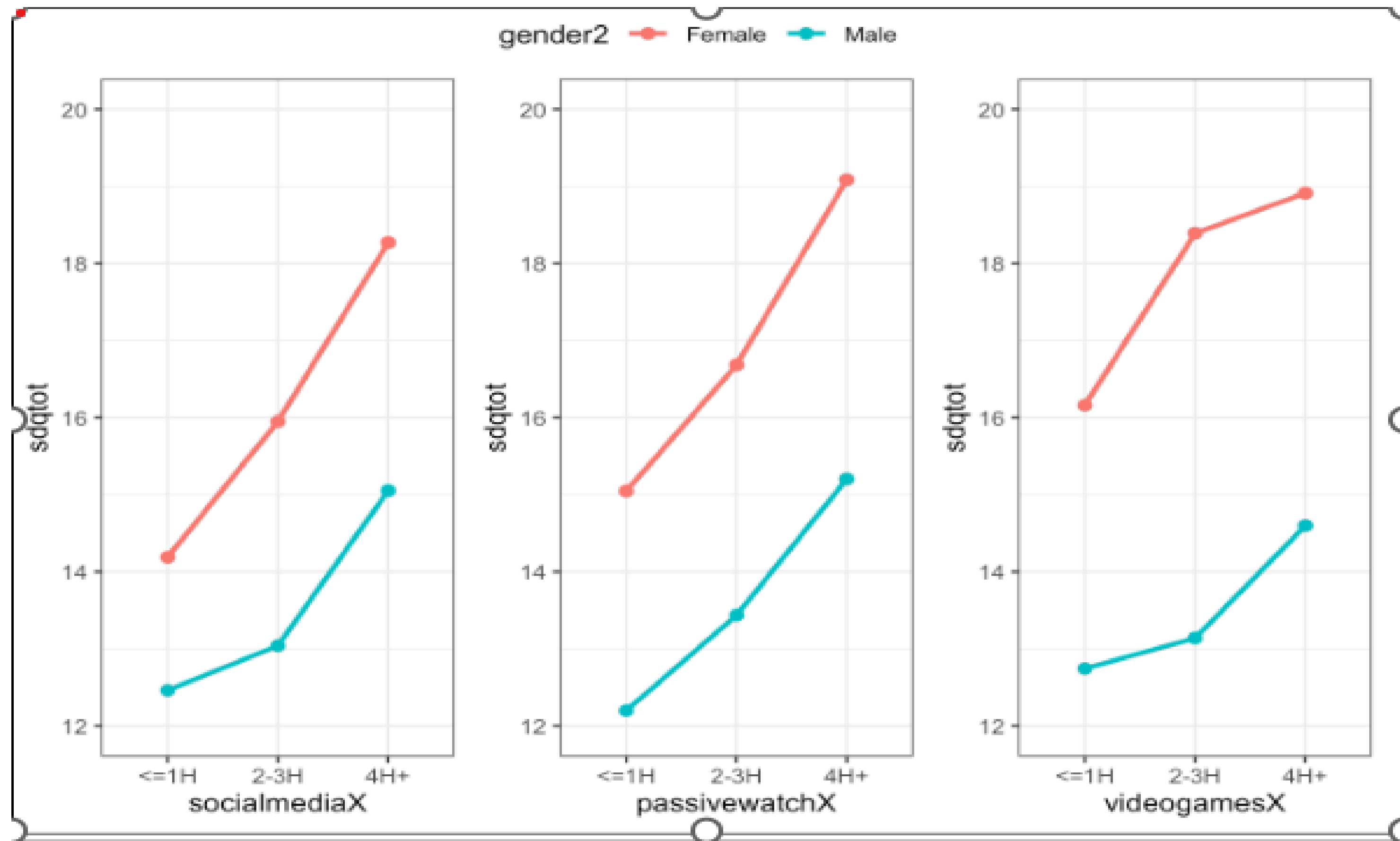


**Logistic Regression:** Effects of COVID on various areas of life as predictors of bad mental health

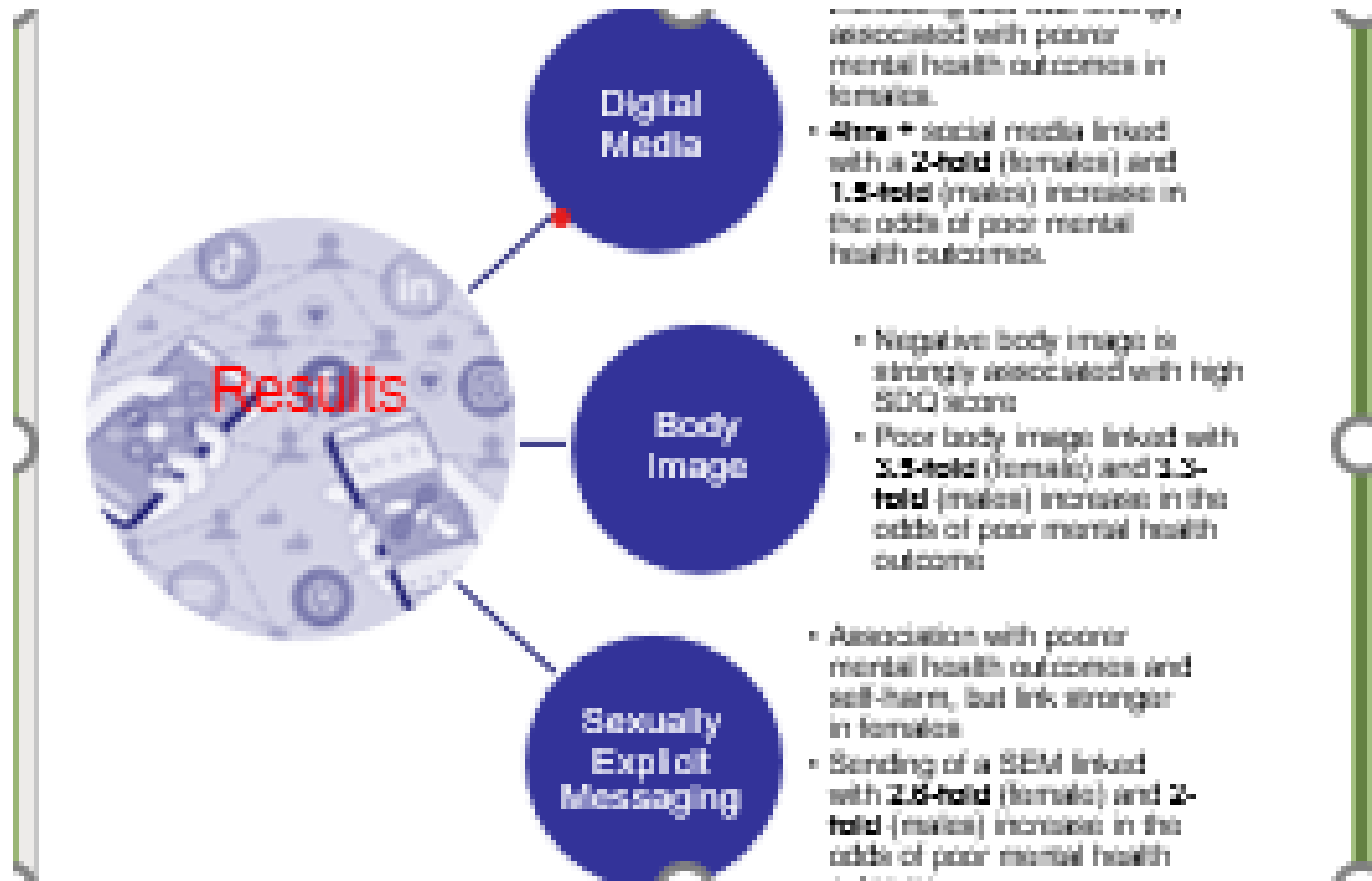
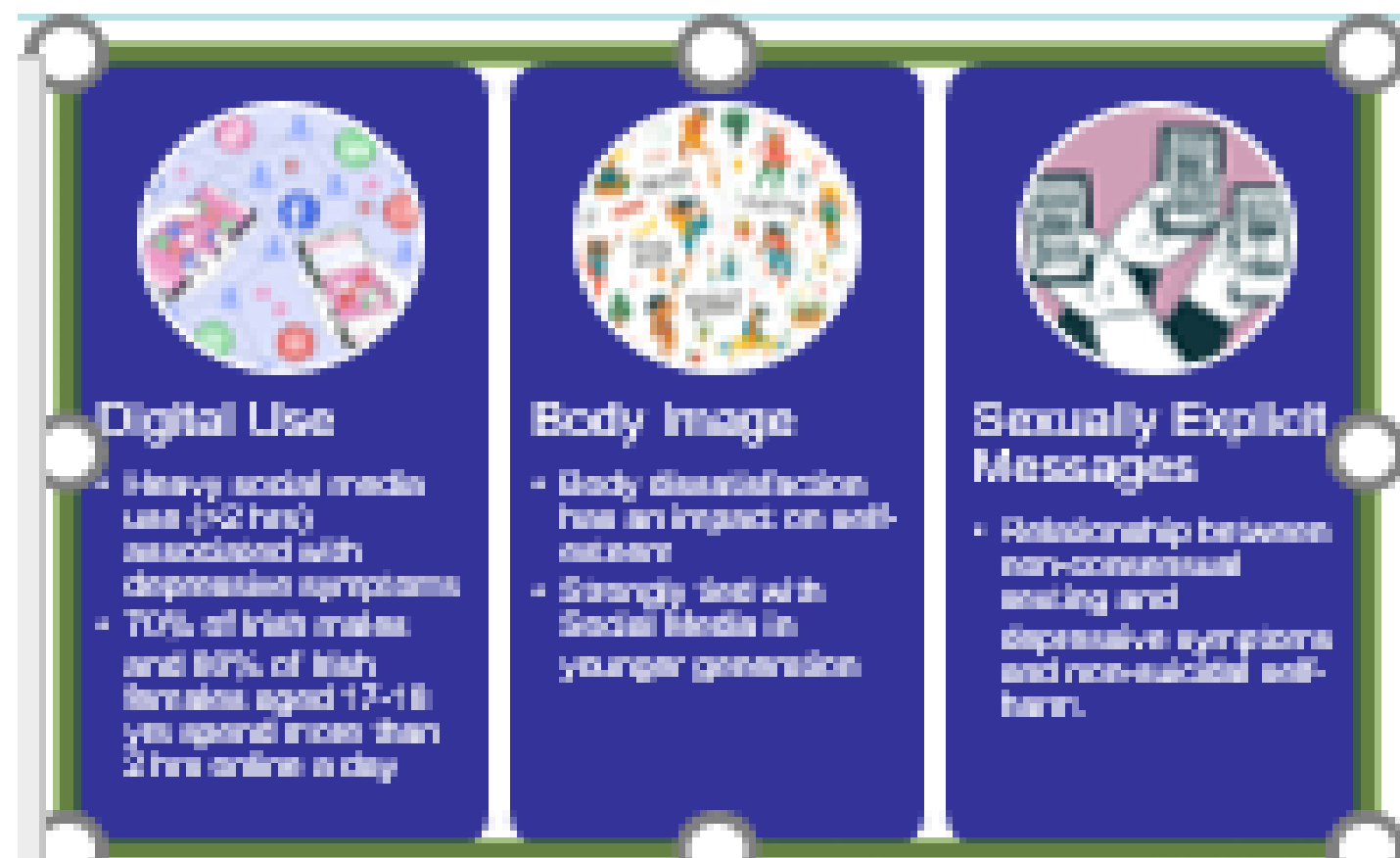
	<b>BAD SUBJECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH</b>	
Worse physical health	OR = 1.32	p < .001
Worse family relationship	OR = 1.26	p < 0.001
Worse school experience	OR = 1.24	p < .001
Worse friend relationships	OR = 1.07	p = 0.10

Controlling for: gender identity, age, geographic region, & financial poverty.

# Social Media and Mental Health – gender differences



# Social Media Use, Body Image and Sexually explicit messaging and mental health







# CONTENTS



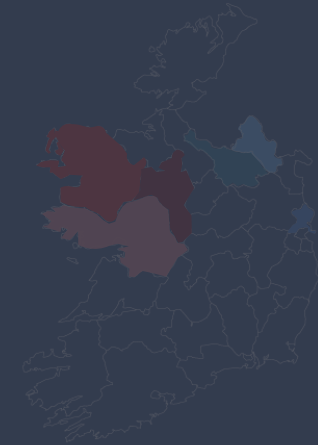
Planet Youth in Cavan, Monaghan & North Dublin



Mental health problems in the 2021 sample



Cannabis-use in the 2021 sample

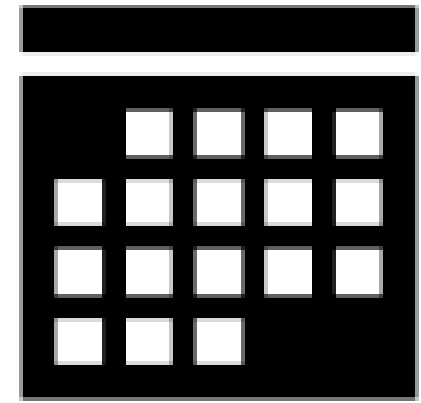


East-West comparisons

# Cannabis-use in the sample (N = 4,072)

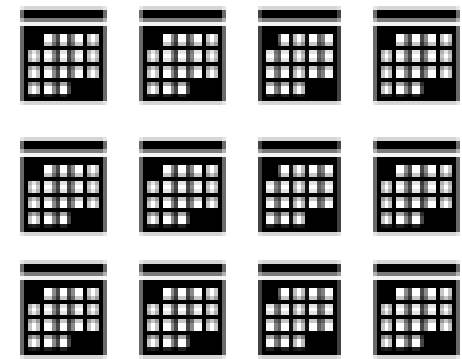
How often have you used **cannabis products** in...

The past 30 days?



**7% (302)**

The past 12 months?



**13% (548)**

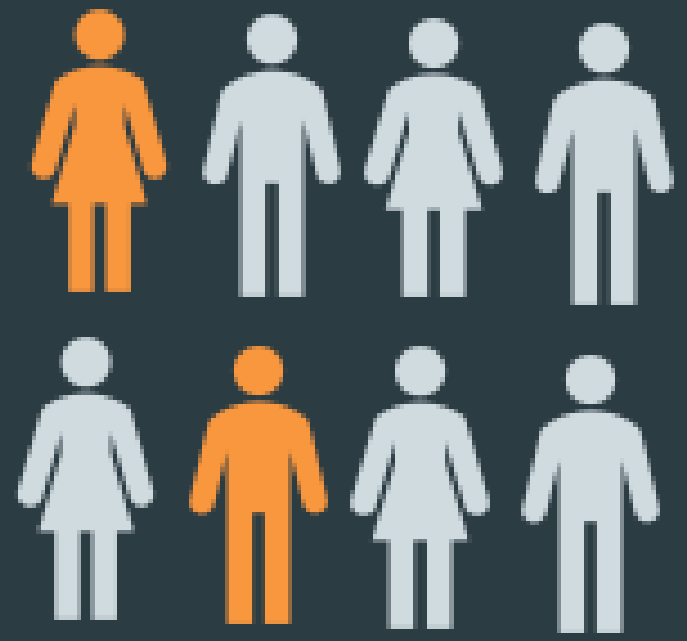
Your lifetime?

**EVER**

**17% (683)**

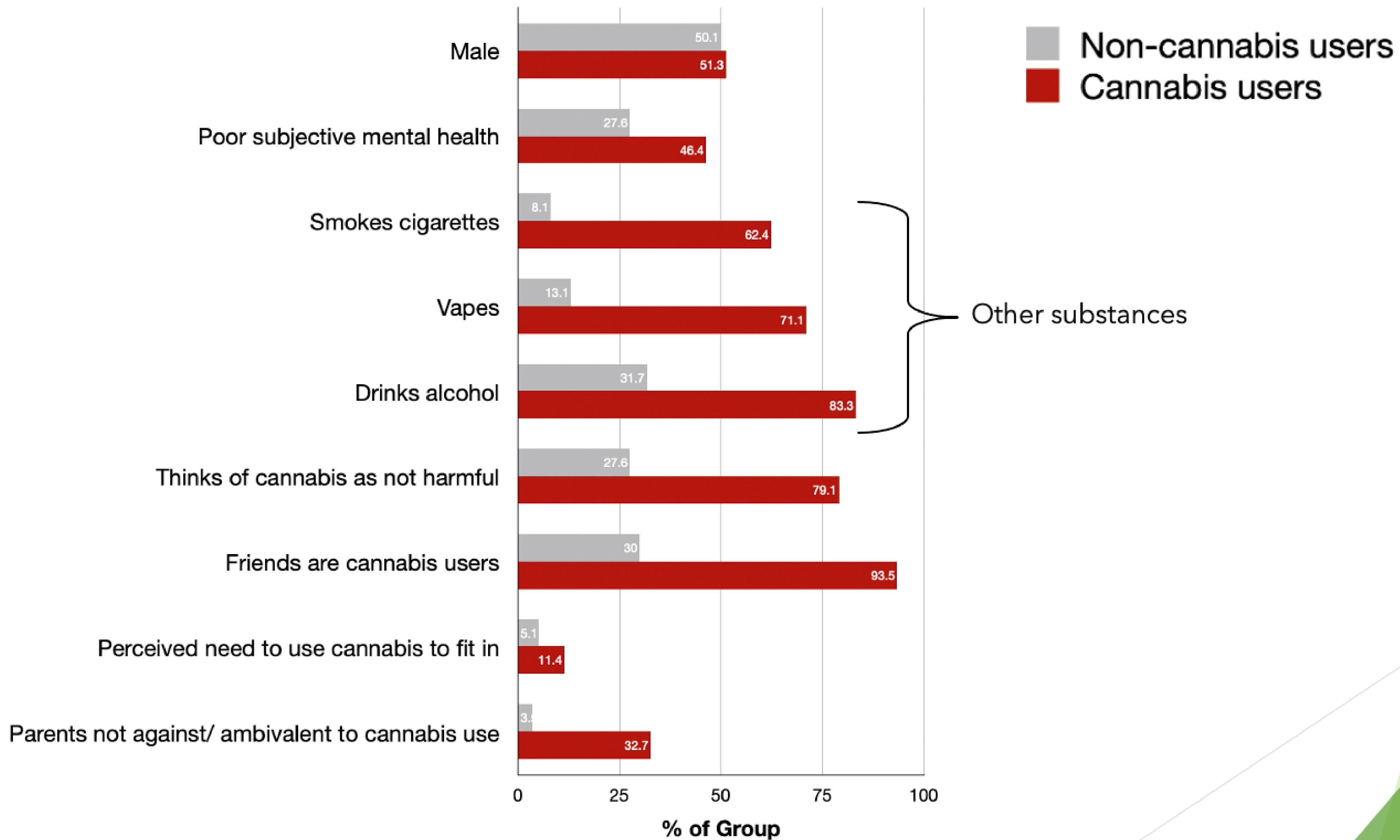
# Cannabis-use in the sample (N = 4,072)

	By Age-group		
	<b>&lt;15 years</b> (N = 503)	<b>15-16 years</b> (N = 3288)	<b>&gt;16 years</b> (N = 592)
<b>% cannabis in past month</b>	3.57%	6.43%	16.30%
<b>% cannabis in past year</b>	7.13%	12.05%	26.74%
<b>% cannabis in lifetime</b>	8.35%	14.87%	32.85%



# Who are the cannabis users?

# Characteristics of cannabis-users



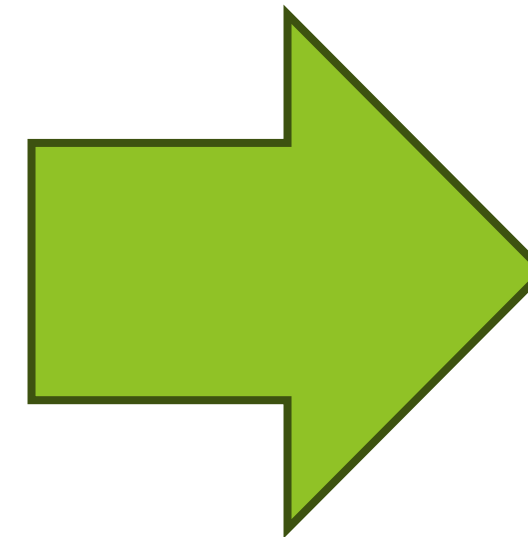


▶ **Risk & protective factors for cannabis use**

# Analysis

## Factors

- Mental health (good / okay / bad)
- Perceptions of cannabis (harmful/ not harmful/ unsure)
- Parental perception of cannabis (against it / not)
- Parental supervision level
- Friends use cannabis (Y/N)
- Feels peer pressure to use cannabis (Y/N)
- School engagement level
- Team sport participation level
- Parents knowledge of friend group
- Drinks alcohol? (Y/N)
- Smokes cigarettes? (Y/N)
- Vapes? (Y/N)
- Gender (M/F/other)
- Maternal education (3<sup>rd</sup> level/ secondary/ primary)

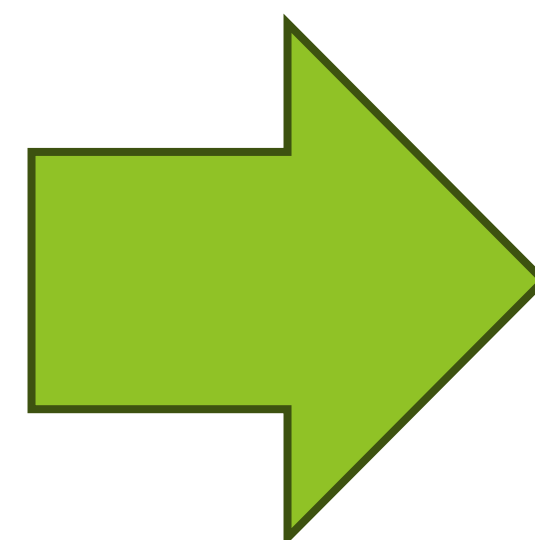


**Odds of using  
cannabis in past month**

# Analysis

## Factors

- Mental health (good / okay / bad)
- **Perceptions of cannabis**  
(harmful/ **not harmful**/ unsure)
- **Parental perception of cannabis**  
(against it / not)
- **Parental supervision level**
- Friends use cannabis (Y/N)
- **Feels peer pressure to use cannabis (Y/N)**
- School engagement level
- Team sport participation level
- Parents knowledge of friend group
- **Drinks alcohol? (Y/N)**
- **Smokes cigarettes? (Y/N)**
- **Vapes? (Y/N)**
- Gender (M/F/other)
- Maternal education (3<sup>rd</sup> level/ secondary/  
primary)



**Significantly increased**  
odds of using  
cannabis in past month



# Peer factors

The odds of cannabis use were higher among adolescents who:

- had peers that use cannabis compared to those who did not (aOR **9.81**, CI: 5.76-16.71,  $p < 0.001$ )
- felt peer pressure to use cannabis compared to those who did not (aOR **1.91**, CI: 1.09-3.33,  $p = 0.024$ )



# Cannabis-use highly related to use of other substances

- current alcohol users (aOR **2.68**, CI: 1.79-4.02,  $p < 0.001$ )
- current smokers (aOR **3.17**, CI: 2.18-4.60,  $p < 0.001$ )
- current e-cigarette users (aOR **2.72**, CI: 1.87-3.96,  $p < 0.001$ ).



# Parental factors

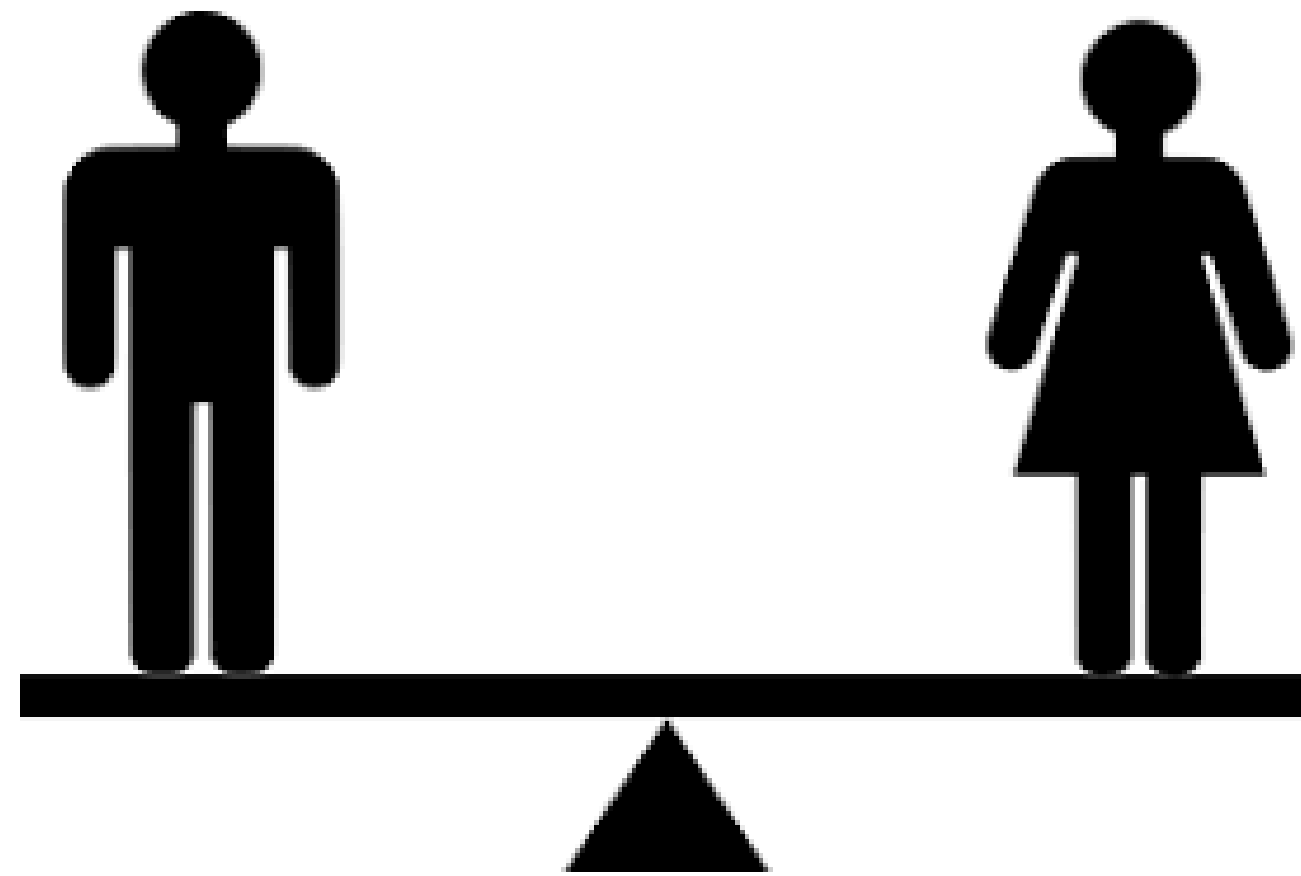
The odds of cannabis use were higher among adolescents who:

- felt their parents were not against cannabis compared to those who felt their parents were against it (aOR **3.71**, CI: 2.43-5.66,  $p < 0.001$ )
- Were less supervised by their parents (the odds of cannabis use increased by **11%** for each unit decrease on a supervision scale)



# Gender and cannabis use

- An interesting finding in this study is that there was **no association between gender and cannabis use**.
- Historically, male gender has been noted as a risk factor for cannabis use, with more recent evidence suggesting this gap is narrowing.
- This is the first study in the Irish setting to find no difference in cannabis use between males and females (to our knowledge)



# Interim Summary

- Past month cannabis use was reported by 7.3% of study participants
- Importantly for policymakers, many of the risk and protective factors are modifiable :



- Youth perception of cannabis as harmful
- Higher parental supervision level
- Parents “against” cannabis-use



- Smoking
- Alcohol use
- Vaping
- Peer cannabis use
- Peer pressure

# CONTENTS



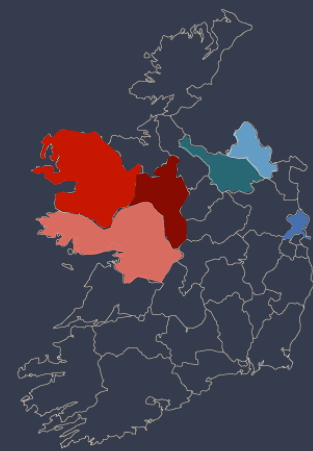
Planet Youth in Cavan, Monaghan & North Dublin



Mental health problems in the 2021 sample

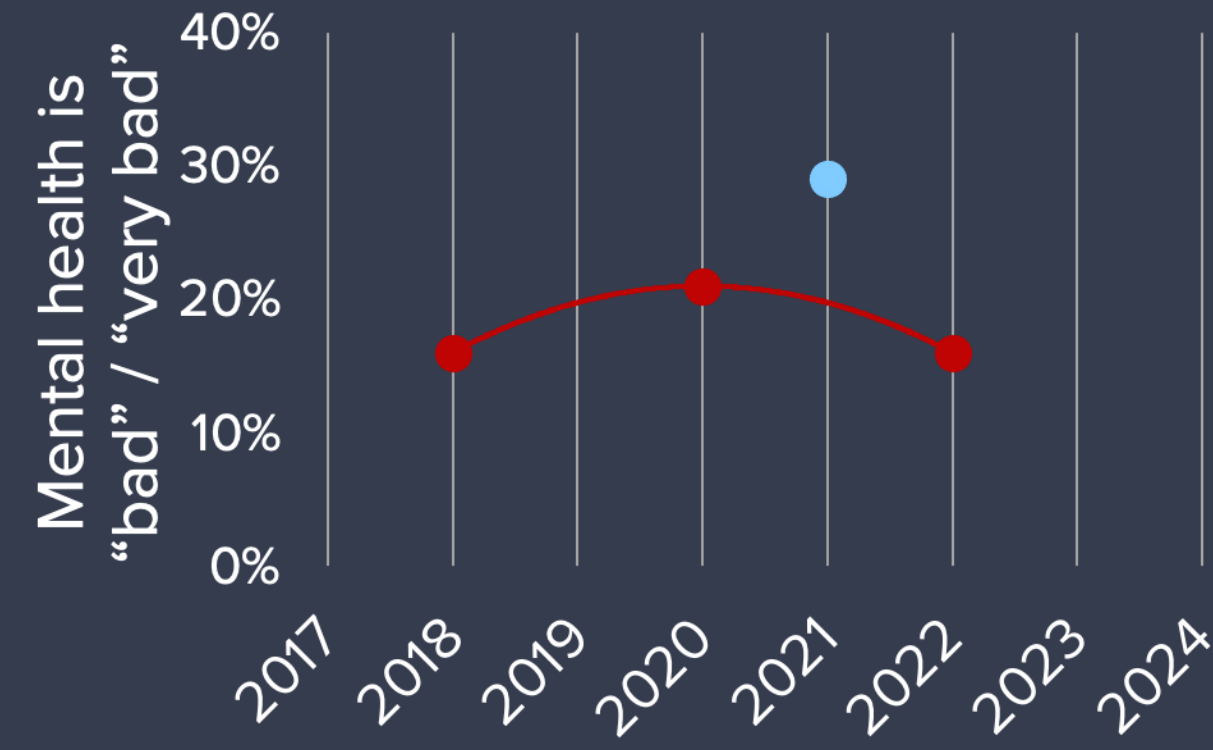
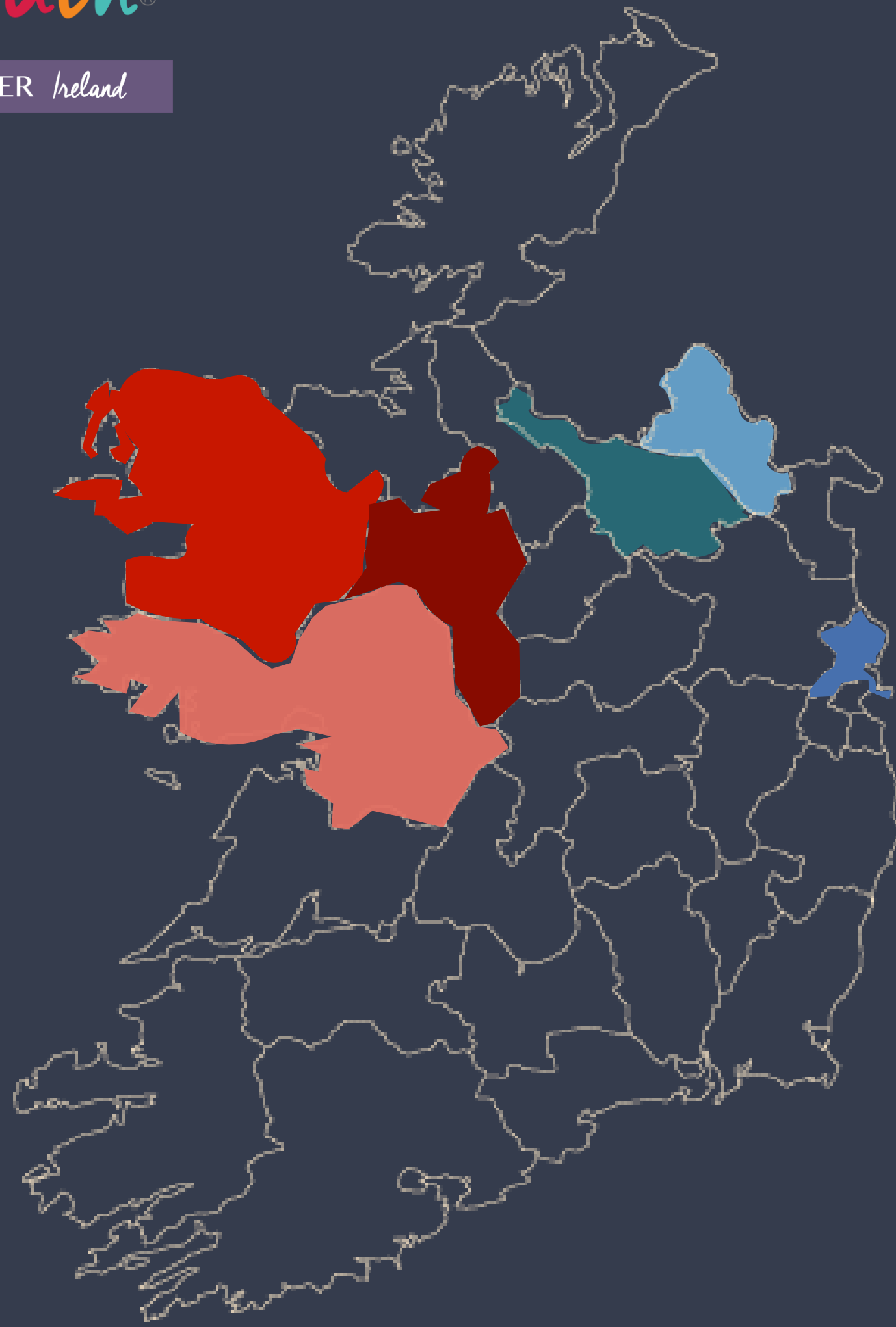


Cannabis-use in the 2021 sample



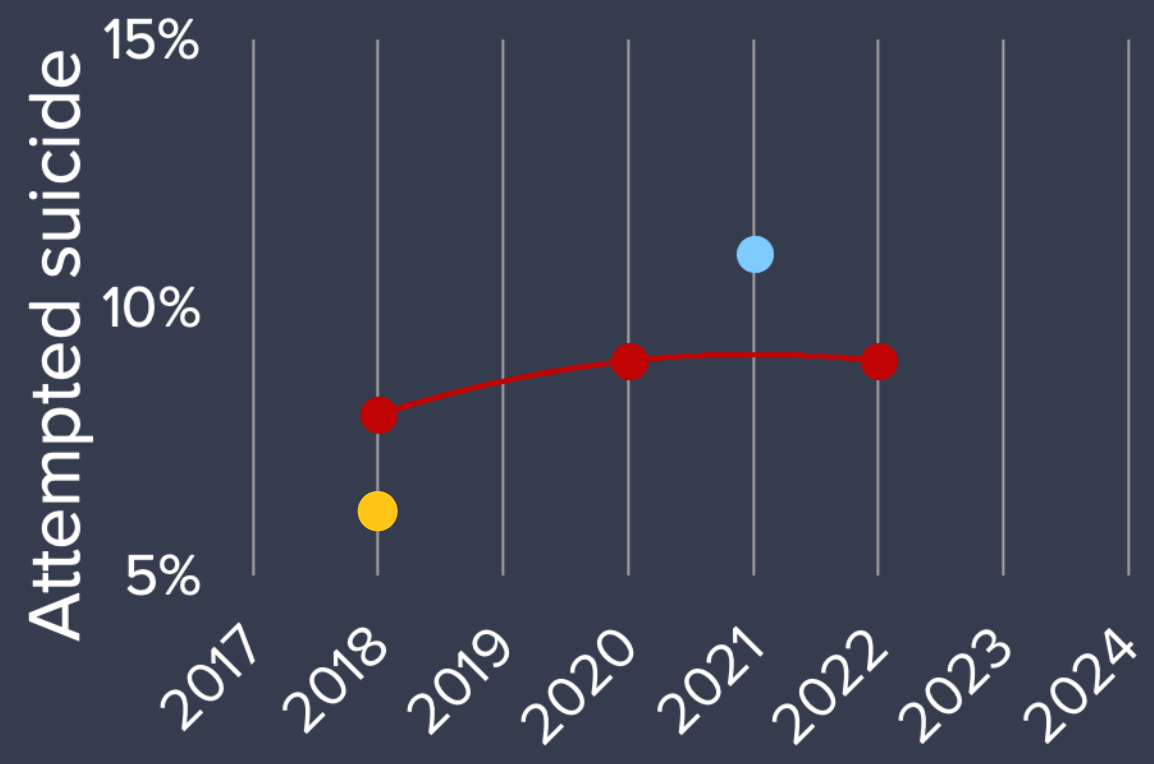
East-West comparisons

# GAUGING NATIONAL TRENDS

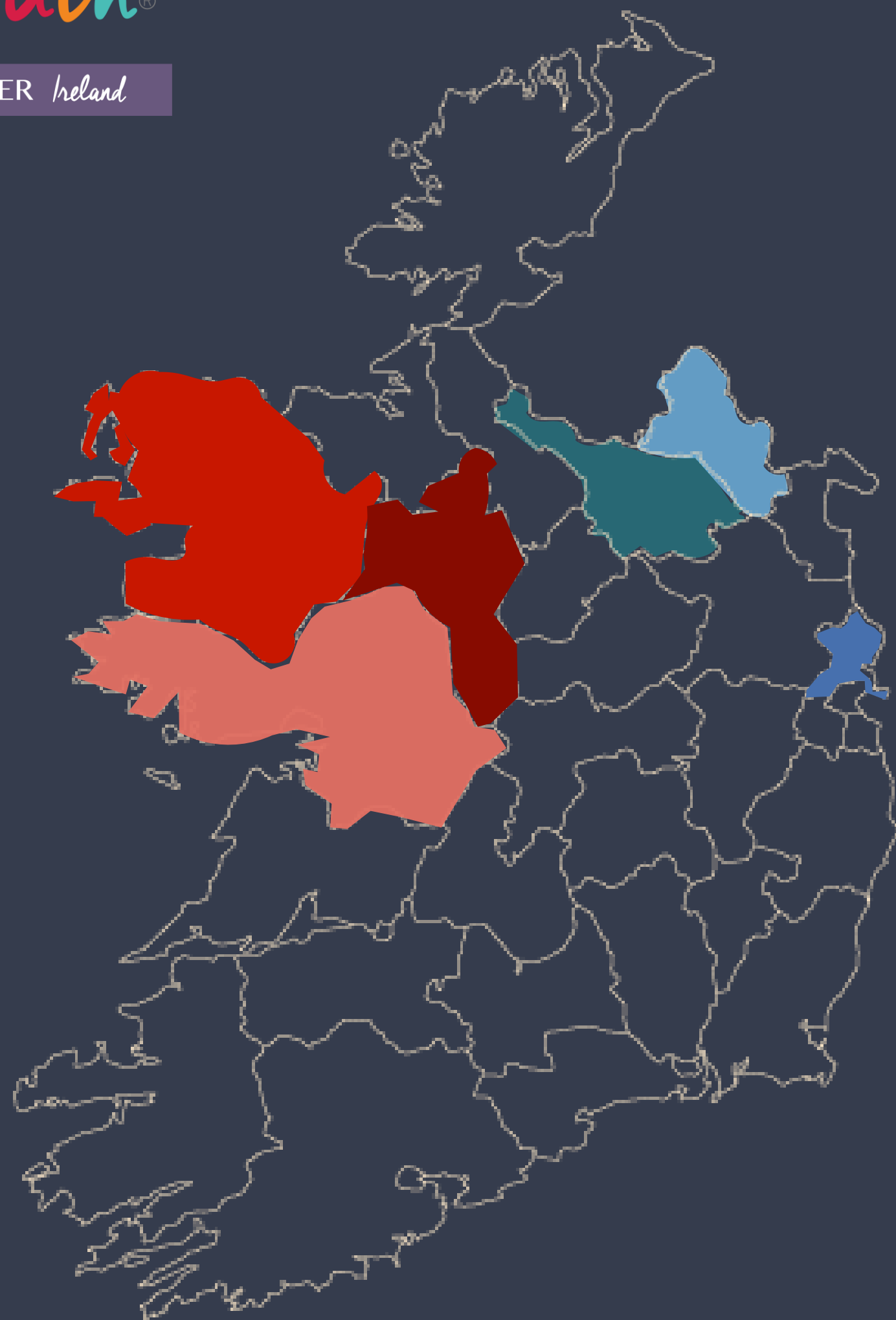


● PY West  
● PY North East

● My World 2, Ireland  
2018-9 N~10,000  
Ages 12-19



**!**  
**HIGHER PREVALENCE OF SUICIDAL ATTEMPTS COMPARED TO PREVIOUS ESTIMATES**



# FUTURE COLLABORATION

The cover of the Planet Youth Ireland guide for researchers. It features a dark blue background with an orange circular graphic on the left containing the text 'PLANET YOUTH IRELAND'. Below this, on an orange background, is the text 'Guide for researchers on the North Dublin, Cavan & Monaghan datasets Wave 1'. The ISSDA logo is in the top right corner.



PLANET YOUTH  
IRELAND

Guide for researchers on the **North  
Dublin, Cavan & Monaghan** datasets  
Wave 1



# THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

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