

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE IS ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS DIFFERENTLY ACCORDING TO THE GENDER

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INTRODUCTION

- Starting to drink alcohol at a very young age carries a variety of specific health risks. Indeed, studies have shown that early alcohol consumption can cause irreversible damages on the adolescent brain^[1].
- Moreover, early alcohol use, when compared with an initiation in mid-adolescence, is associated with an increase in the frequency and quantity of alcohol consumed and an increase in

the alcohol-related problems during later adolescence and early adulthood^[2].

- However, few studies exist among the under 15-year-olds and even less focusing on gender differences in the associated determinants, while several studies have shown that early alcohol use may be influenced by different determinants depending to the gender^[3-5].

OBJECTIVE

To identify potential gender differences in the association between alcohol use and some selected sociodemographic and psychosocial factors, among adolescents aged 10 to 14.

METHODS

SAMPLE

- "Health Behaviour in School-aged Children" (HBSC) cross-sectional survey conducted in 2014 in the French-speaking schools of Belgium (Walloon Region and Brussels-Capital Region)^[6].
- Two-stage random sample, stratified proportionally on the distribution of the school population by province and education network.
- Sample analyzed here: 4,714 10-14-year-old adolescents attending schools in the Walloon Region (WR).

DATA COLLECTION

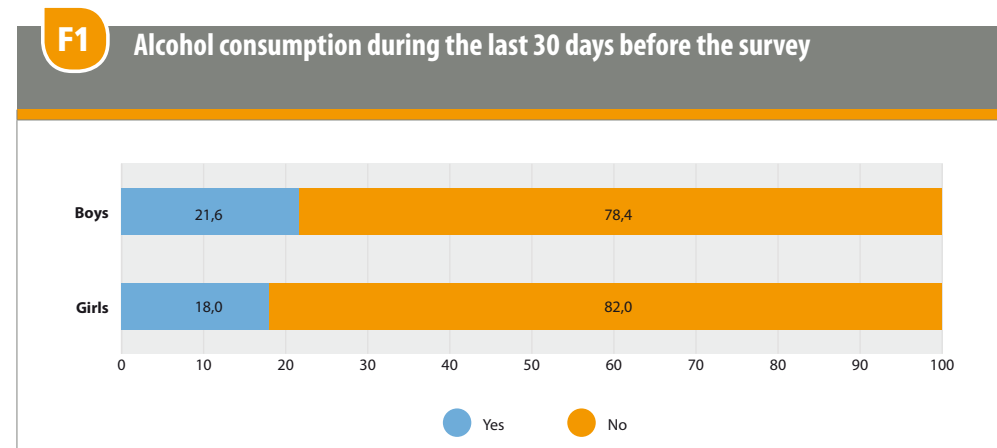
- Self-administered questionnaires.
- Alcohol consumption: having drunk at least one day during the last 30 days before the survey.
- Sociodemographic characteristics: gender, age, socioeconomic status measured through the "Family Affluence Scale" (FAS)^[7], family structure, and migratory status.
- Psychosocial factors: family support, peer support, contacts via social networks, outings with friends outside school time, school satisfaction and life satisfaction^[8].
- Gender stratified multivariable logistic regression modelling.

LIMITATIONS

Rates of alcohol use might be misreported due to memorization and social desirability biases.

RESULTS

In 2014, a fifth of the 10-14-year-olds in the Walloon Region had consumed alcohol during the last month before the survey (boys: 21.6%, girls: 18.0%) (Fig. 1).



IN BOTH GENDERS (Fig. 2 and 3): An association was found with age, migratory status, FAS, frequency of contacts via social networks and frequency of outing with friends outside school time. No association was found with family and peer support.

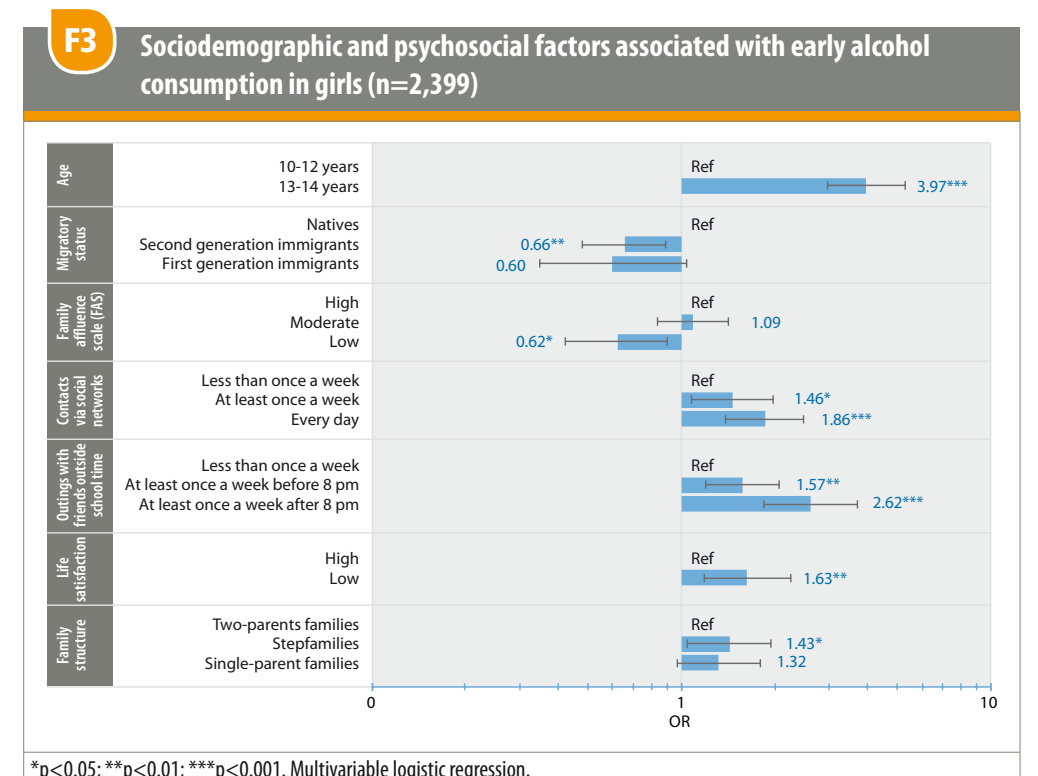
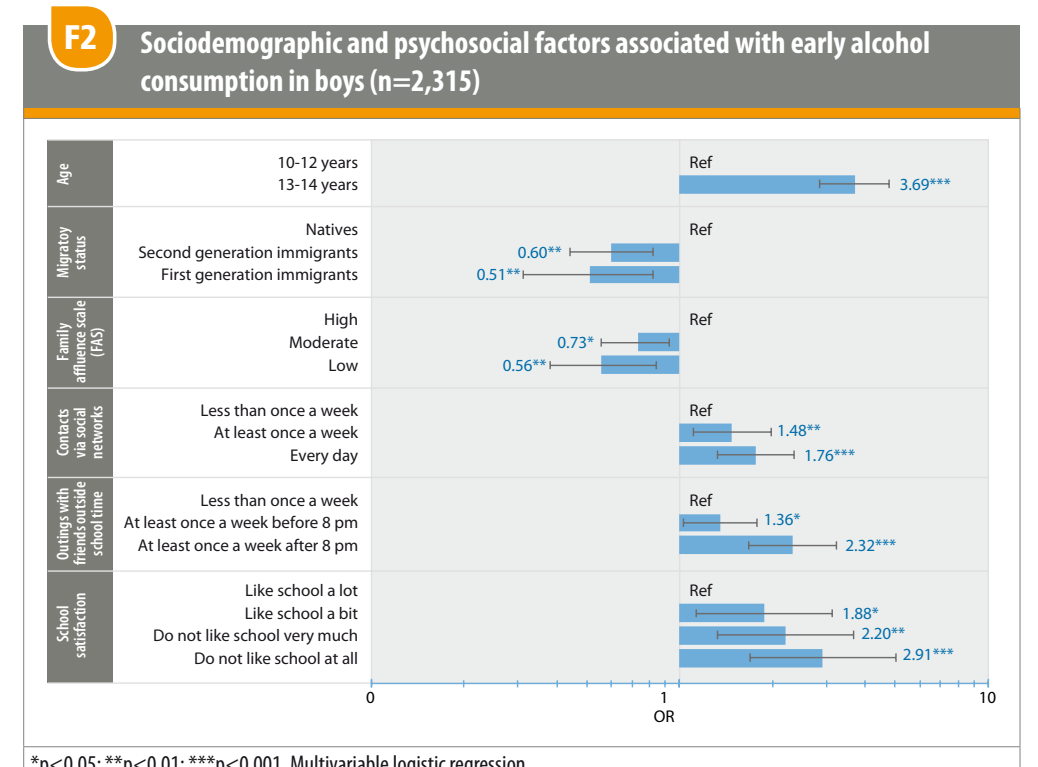
- Adolescents aged 13-14 years (vs. 10-12 years), those who communicated at least once a week (vs. less than once a week) and, those who met their friends at least once a week (vs. less than once a week) were more likely to have consumed alcohol in the last 30 days before the survey.
- Associations with the FAS and the migratory status were little different between boys and girls. Boys and girls from "low" FAS and boys from "medium" FAS (vs. "high" FAS) were less likely to have consumed alcohol during the past month. Regarding the migratory status, boys' first- and second-generation immigrants and girls' second-generation immigrants (vs. natives) were less likely to have consumed alcohol.

MAIN GENDER DIFFERENCES

- School satisfaction was associated with early alcohol consumption in boys only (Fig. 2). The proportion of boys who drank alcohol in the 30 days preceding the survey was highest amongst those who least liked school.
- In girls, unlike boys, an association was found for life satisfaction and family structure (Fig. 3). Girls who lived in stepfamilies (vs. two-parent families) and those with "low" life satisfaction (vs. "high") were more likely to have consumed alcohol in the 30 days before the survey.

CONCLUSION

- Although both genders shared common risk factors (age, migratory status, FAS, frequency of contacts via social networks and frequency of outing with friends outside school time), our findings highlighted gender differences in some risk factors associated with early alcohol consumption (family structure, life satisfaction and school satisfaction).
- In the literature, very few studies explored gender differences and findings were inconsistent for some of them (such as peer support and school satisfaction)^[9-11].
- It appears therefore necessary to pursue investigations to better understand determinants of early alcohol consumption. Even if some of them, like age or family structure, are not modifiable, such an identification can help to target the most vulnerable adolescents and to adapt prevention messages.



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