

## Tobacco and alcohol consumption

Tobacco and alcohol are major risk factors for at least two of the leading causes of premature mortality – cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

**On average, in 2014 about 19% of the adult population smoked daily, but this proportion varies greatly across the OECD** (Figure 6.11). Rates were lowest in Mexico and Sweden (less than 12%). On the other hand, smoking rates remain high in Latvia at 36%. Smoking prevalence is also generally higher among men than among women in all OECD countries except in Sweden and Iceland. Smoking rates across most OECD countries have shown a marked decline. On average, smoking rates have decreased by about one fourth since 2000, from 26% in 2000 to 19% in 2014. Large reductions occurred in Denmark, Luxembourg and Norway. Smoking rates only increased in Latvia and the Slovak Republic. Smoking rates were also low at 12% or less in Brazil and Colombia, and they were high at above one third in Indonesia.

Alcohol consumption, as measured by recorded data on annual sales, stands at 8.9 litres per adult, on average, across OECD countries, based on the most recent data available (Figure 6.12). Austria, Estonia, France and the Czech Republic reported the highest consumption of alcohol with 11.5 litres or more per adult per year. Low alcohol consumption was recorded in Turkey and Israel, as well as in emerging economies Indonesia and India, where religious and cultural traditions restrict the use of alcohol in some population groups. Although average alcohol consumption has gradually fallen in many OECD countries since 2000 – by about two-thirds of liters per adult –, it has risen by one liter or more in Chile, Latvia, Poland and Sweden, as well as in key partner countries China, Lithuania and the Russian Federation. OECD analysis based on individual-level data show that men of low socioeconomic status are more likely to drink heavily than those of a higher socioeconomic status, while the opposite is observed in women (OECD, 2015).

**Adolescent smoking and drinking often have adverse consequences for physical and mental health.** Adolescents establish addictions more quickly than adults and regular drinking is associated with poorer psychological, social and physical health outcomes, as well as poorer educational outcomes, violence, injuries, smoking, drug use and risky sexual behaviour (OECD, 2015a). On average, one in eight 15-years-old reported smoking at least once a week. Adolescent smoking rates ranged from less than 5% in Canada, Iceland and Norway to around 20% in France, Hungary and Italy (Figure 6.13). Boys reported significant higher prevalence in Finland, Israel, Lithuania and Russian Federation, while the opposite pattern prevailed in the Czech Republic and Luxembourg.

As for drunkenness at 15-years-old, on average one in five adolescent old reported have been drunk at least twice in their life. Rates ranged from 10% in Israel to above 35% in Denmark, Hungary and Lithuania (Figure 6.14). Boys are more likely to report higher prevalence than girls particularly in Austria, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation and Switzerland. The United Kingdom is

the only country where girls (from England and Wales, not Scotland) report significant higher prevalence than boys.

### Definition and measurement

The proportion of daily smokers is defined as the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who report smoking every day. International comparability is limited due to the lack of standardisation in the measurement of smoking habits in health interview surveys across OECD countries. Variations remain in the age groups surveyed, the wording of questions, response categories and survey methodologies (e.g. in a number of countries, respondents are asked if they smoke regularly, rather than daily). Self-reports of behaviours may also suffer from social desirability bias that may potentially limit cross-country comparisons.

Alcohol consumption is defined as annual sales of pure alcohol in liters per person aged 15 years and over. The methodology to convert alcoholic drinks to pure alcohol may differ across countries. Official statistics do not include unrecorded alcohol consumption, such as home production.

Tobacco and alcohol consumption rates for 15 years old by gender are from the 2013/14 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, which collects information on many socio-economic factors that affect health behaviour among children for 26 OECD countries. Indicators shown here by gender are the percentage of 15-year-olds who smoke at least once a week and those who have been drunk on two or more occasions.

### Further reading

- HBSC (2016), *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Study: International Report from the 2013/2014 Survey*, [www.hbsc.org/publications/international](http://www.hbsc.org/publications/international).
- OECD (2015a), *Tackling Harmful Alcohol Use – Economics and Public Health Policy*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264181069-en>.
- OECD (2015b), *Health at a Glance 2015 – OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health\\_glance-2015-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2015-en).

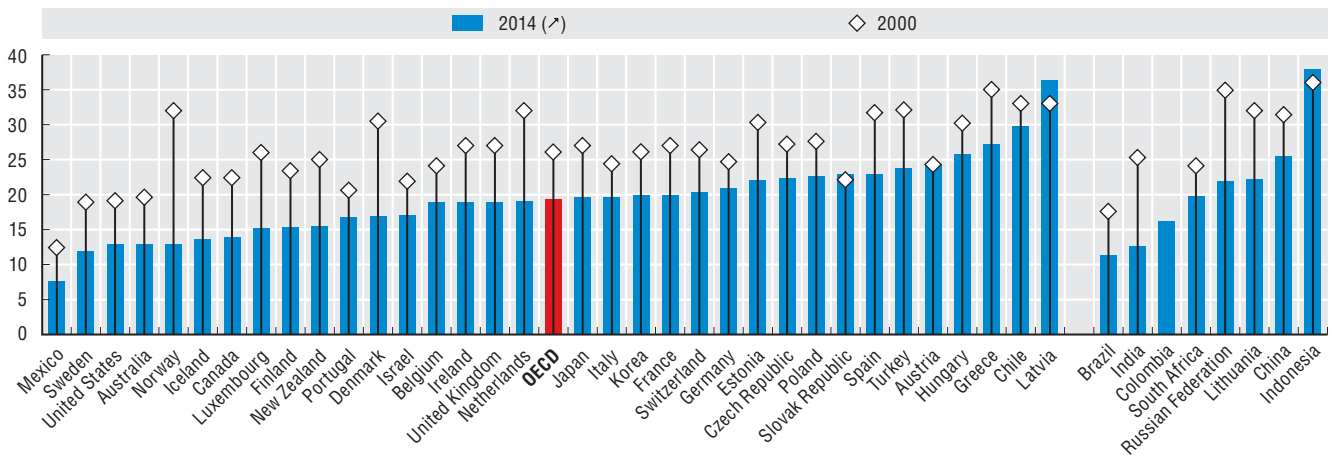
### Figure notes

Figures 6.11 and 6.12: See Statlink for precise years.

Figures 6.13 and 6.14: Data for Belgium were computed using population shares for Flemish (60%) and French (40%); data for the United Kingdom were computed using population shares for England (85%), Scotland (9%) and Wales (5%).

6.11. Marked decline in smoking rates among adults in most OECD countries

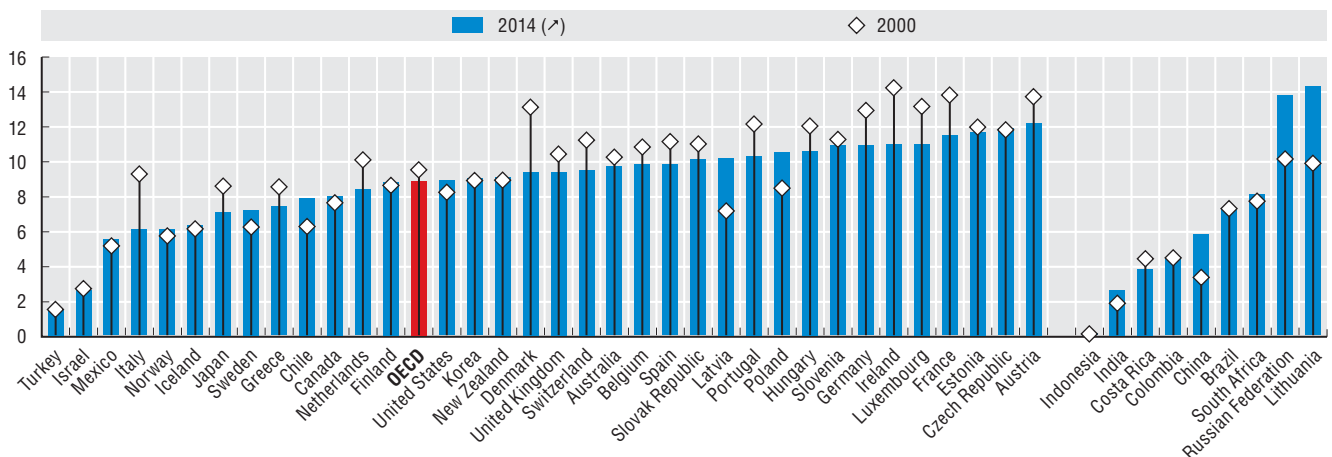
Percentage of population 15 years and over smoking daily, in 2000 and 2014 (or nearest year)



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933405648>

6.12. Gradual decline in alcohol consumption among adults in most OECD countries

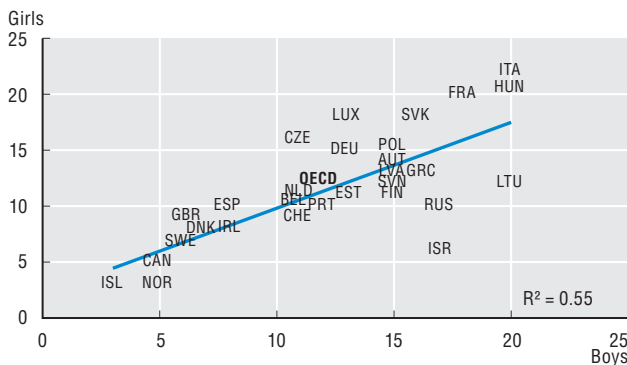
Liters of pure alcohol per person aged 15 years and over, 2000 and 2014 (or nearest year)



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933405654>

6.13. On average one in eight 15 years old reported smoking at least once a week

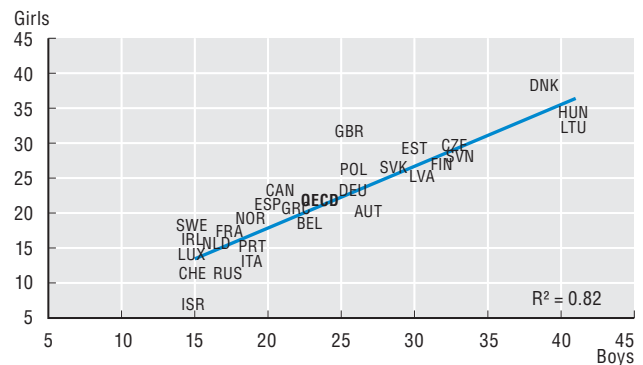
Percentage of 15-year-olds who smoke at least once a week, by gender; in 2013/14



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933405662>

6.14. On average one in five 15 years-old reported have been drunk at least twice in their life

Percentage of 15-year-olds who have been drunk on two or more occasions, by gender, 2013/14



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933405675>

Source: HBSC (2016), Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study: International Report from the 2013/2014 Survey, [www.hbsc.org/publications/international](http://www.hbsc.org/publications/international).



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