

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI

AZERBAIJAN CHAPTER VII: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

The health of the young generation is one of the priorities of the government. According to the data of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the number of young people in the total population aged from 14 to 29 amounts to 2 305 300, or 22.8% of the overall population of Azerbaijan (at the beginning of 2021).

Over the past few years, little research has been done about young people and their health. The State Statistical Committee annually develops the publication Youth in Azerbaijan, which provides statistical data on various aspects of youth, including health.

According to the data of the State Statistical Committee, in 2020, morbidity of youth aged 14-29 years old on different diseases made 464 100 people, or 1 982.3 per 10 000; the number of patients in clinics was 1 229.5 per 10 000.

In 2020, per 100 000 youths, there was 1 person with alcoholism and 37 persons with drug addiction or toxicomania. The number of people newly appeared as disabled in 2020 was 13 600; 12.8% of them were aged 14-29 years old.

The number of sports facilities at the beginning of 2021 in the country was 11 800 and the number of people engaged in sport clubs was 399 100. Various sports, such as football, volleyball, chess, track and field athletics, basketball, draughts and freestyle wrestling are most popular among youth population.

Several studies have been conducted by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan on non-communicable diseases (NCDs): the Stepwise approach to surveillance (STEPS) survey (2017), the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-2016); “Research of NCD Risk Factors in Azerbaijan” (2016) and a comparative analysis to evaluate the relevance of Azerbaijani legislation on tobacco control to requirements of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (conducted in 2015, updated in 2016). According to the information collected, as in most countries, NCDs are a major cause of death and morbidity in Azerbaijan. Moreover, there is a high prevalence of risk factors, such as smoking, being overweight and unhealthy diets, responsible for the vast majority of NCD cases.

The Stepwise approach to surveillance (STEPS) survey conducted in 2017 found the following.

- The prevalence of tobacco use, smoked and smokeless combined, was 24.0%. Overall, 48.8% of men were estimated to be current smokers, with 47.2% being daily smokers and 1.6% non-daily smokers. Only 0.2% of women reported smoking at the time of the interview. The percentage of current smokers among men was higher in the younger age group (49.3%) as compared to the older age group (47.8%). The survey revealed a slight difference in the

percentage of current male smokers in urban (49.2%) and rural (48.3%) areas by place of residence. The survey showed that men started smoking from 18.7 years of age, with almost no difference between male age groups 18-34 and 45-69 (18.3 vs. 19.4 years old, respectively). The mean duration of smoking among daily smokers of men was 20.4 years. The mean duration of smoking for older respondents was higher than younger group (33.9 vs. 13.1 years, respectively). Some 95.1% of daily smokers reported using manufactured cigarettes. The mean number of manufactured cigarettes smoked per day by daily smokers was 18.9 for all age groups. Among currently smoking male respondents, about 49.5% had tried to stop smoking during the last year. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24.9%) at home and about one in five respondents (18.3%) at the workplace were exposed to second-hand smoke during the 30 days preceding the survey.

- Approximately 29.7% of all respondents reported having ever consumed an alcoholic drink in their lives, with the remaining 70.3% being lifetime abstainers. Current drinking ("past 30 days drinkers") basically happened among males (27.6%) as opposed to females (0.8%). Some 11.0% of men reported consumption of six or more drinks ("heavy episodic drinking") at least once during the last 30 days.
- Almost one in 5 individuals (19%) did not meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations on physical activity for health. There was no noticeable difference between the age groups and genders, but there was a visible difference between the place of residence: the urban population met WHO recommendations less than rural citizens did. The median duration of all physical activity carried out daily recorded by all respondents was 129 minutes; 146 minutes for men and 120 minutes for women. About 91% of women did not engage in vigorous physical activity (men – almost 72%).
- The survey showed that about every third person (32.5%) had three or more risk factors for non-communicable diseases, and this increased proportionally with age. Men were more affected (40.0%) than women (24.9%). A total of 61.7% of respondents had 1-2 risk factors, and only 5.8% of the population studied had none of the five risk factors for non-communicable diseases.

Data from GYTS – 2016 (13-15-year-olds) indicated that over 10% of students had ever smoked cigarettes, with significantly higher rates among boys. Current tobacco use rates were lower - 7.3%. Close to three in 10 students live in homes where others smoke and 40.8% of students are exposed to smoke in enclosed public places (27.3% in 2011).

Main concepts

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On protection of population health" ("Ehəlinin saqlamliqinin qorunmasi haqqinda" Azerbaijan Respublikasinin Ganunu) was adopted on 26 June 1997. Although amended many times, it does not contain a chapter nor article regarding the main concepts of health.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On physical education and sport" ("Beden terbiyesi ve idman haqqinda" Azerbaijan Respublikasinin Ganunu) adopted on 30 June 2009 contains 30 definitions regarding physical education and sport. The most important among them are:

- physical education – an integral part of the general culture of society, a field of social activity that reflects a set of norms, knowledge and values aimed at the formation of a healthy lifestyle and physical and mental development through physical activity;
- sport – an integral part of physical education aimed at constantly improving a person's physical fitness, participation in competitions of all levels and showing high results through a complex of various physical movements;
- mass sports – field of sports aimed at organised physical activity and physical development of the population, as well as participation in physical culture and health events and mass sports competitions;
- physical training – a process aimed at the development of physical qualities and abilities, taking into account the sociodemographic characteristics of the person and the types of activities;
- physical maturity – the process of harmonious combination of physical and spiritual qualities in each person engaged in physical education and sports.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On psychological assistance” (*“Psixholoji yardim haqqinda” Azerbaijan Respublikasinin Ganunu*) adopted on 21 January 2019 contains 16 main concepts used in this Law. The most important among them are:

- psychological assistance – measures based on psychological principles and methods for the purpose of solving psychological problems, overcoming the consequences of stressful situations, improving interpersonal relationships and mental health, personal development, social adaptation;
- psychologist – a person who meets the requirements established by this Law, having received higher education in the field of psychology or the specialty of psychologist in the form of additional education in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On education” and who has the right to provide psychological assistance;
- person receiving psychological assistance – a person (people) applying to a person providing psychological assistance in connection with a complex psychological situation.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the central executive body implementing state policy and regulation in the field of health. The health sector includes the areas of public health, healthcare and pharmacy.

In 2006, the Public Health and Reforms Centre (PHRC) was established under the Ministry of Health. The PHRC determines the main directions in the organization of the public health service, the development and application of health programs, the regulation of reforms in medical institutions, and the methodological justification for reforms in the field of health care financing. By order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 15 February 2016, the State Agency for Compulsory Medical Insurance under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan

was established. The agency is an executive body that ensures the application of compulsory health insurance, raises funds for the financing of medical services within the basic (services) package, is a recipient of health services and ensures the payment of necessary expenses in this regard.

In accordance with the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 20 December 2018, the Medical Territorial Units Management Association (TABIB), a public legal entity, was established by the State Agency for Compulsory Medical Insurance. To implement the Decree, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted a decision to approve the list of medical institutions under the auspices of TABIB.

TABIB's main purposes are to ensure the organisation of medical services to protect the health of the population in subordinate medical institutions and to take measures to improve the quality of medical services. TABIB creates favourable conditions for the population in the field of public health, adapts the activities of medical institutions to the requirements of the compulsory health insurance system and controls the compliance of the quality of medical services in medical institutions with modern requirements.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the central executive body implementing state policy and regulation in the field of youth, physical education and sports in the country. One of the activities of the Ministry is participation in the formation of a unified state policy in the field of physical education and sports and ensuring the implementation of this policy.

Within the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan, there are two committees dealing with health and sport issues:

- the Committee on Healthcare is the leading committee concerned with draft laws and decisions about the formation and fulfilment of the state healthcare policy;
- the Youth and Sports Committee is the leading committee concerned with draft laws and decisions about the formation and fulfilment of the state policy on youth and sports.

Cross-sectoral co-operation

Among the responsibilities of the Ministry of Health is co-ordination of activities of other executive authorities in the field of public health. Thus, the ministry co-ordinates several activities in the field of health.

The Country Co-ordinating Mechanism to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the CCM) in Azerbaijan was established in compliance with the requirements of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and on the basis of Agreement No. 17/5540-11 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 13 November 2004. The CCM has the status of a national advisory body and represents a multisectoral partnership of legal entities and individuals, created on a voluntary basis. The goal of the CCM is to contribute to the

strengthening of measures to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Azerbaijan.

Three working groups function under the CCM: on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. They gather about once a month and discuss the work done and future activities.

By order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 27 January 1997, the State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Combating Drug Abuse and Illicit drug Trafficking was created. According to the Charter of the Commission, its main task is to ensure the implementation of the state policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the field of combating drug addiction and drug trafficking and to co-ordinate the activities of state bodies and public associations in this field. The chair of the Commission is the Vice-Prime Minister, the members are deputy ministers of relevant state bodies. The structure of the state commission comprises:

1. the State Commission on Combating Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking;
2. the working group of the State Commission on Combating Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking;
3. commissions on Combating Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in City and District Executive Powers.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Azerbaijan co-ordinates implementation of the activities provided by the state programme Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021 ("Azerbaijan gənliyi 2017–2021-ci illerde" Dövlət Programı) and reports to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the implementation of the activities envisaged in the state programme once a year. In order to monitor the implementation of each of the five-year state programs, there is a practice of creating of Inter-Ministerial Council. This Council gathers once or twice a year. The head of the Council is the minister for youth and sport; members of the Council are represented by deputy ministers/heads of agencies, specified as executors in the state programme.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

There is no specific strategy nor state programme in the field of sport and physical activity. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On physical culture and sports" defines the organisational-legal and socio-economic bases of activity in the field of physical culture and sports in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the main principles of state policy, regulates relations in this field and guarantees the right of everyone to engage in physical culture and sports.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

According to the Statute of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, one of the main objectives of the ministry is to ensure the promotion of physical education and sports in the country, including the

media coverage of the social significance of physical education and sports, its role in strengthening public health, physical development and the forming of a healthy lifestyle; and to determine the forms and methods of this promotion.

According to data from the State Statistical Committee for 2021, there are 11 770 sport establishments (including palaces of sport, Olympic sport complexes, stadiums, etc.) in the country. The number of people involved in physical culture and sport is 1 861 600 (out of 10 119 100 total population).

The Ministry of Youth and Sports holds many events to promote sport and physical activity among young people, including contests on various types of sports, health and physical activity festivals, marathons and awareness-raising campaigns.

On October 28-31, 2021, the European Sports Week was held in Azerbaijan for the first time, in Mingachevir under the motto “Be Active”. The annual event in European countries plays an important role in attracting people to physical education and healthy lifestyle, regardless of age, education, ethnicity or profession and promotes physical culture and sports for all segments of the population. During the week, young men and women took part in competitions in several sports.

Various projects and initiatives realised by youth non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people are financially supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Youth Foundation.

Physical education in schools

Chapter IV of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On physical education and sport” (*“Beden terbiyesi ve idman haqqında” Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu*) defines the organisation of physical education and sports in the areas of citizen education, health, work, living and recreation. According to Article 17 of the Law, “one of the main tasks of educational institutions is to protect and strengthen the health of preschool children, pupils and students, to form in them the need for physical maturity and a healthy lifestyle.”

Educational institutions determine the forms of physical education, means of physical education, sports and physical activity on the basis of state educational standards and physical fitness standards, taking into account local conditions and the interests of students.

The organisation of physical education and training in educational institutions includes:

- conducting compulsory physical education classes within the framework of basic education programmes in the amount determined by the state educational standards and additional (optional) physical education and sports classes within the framework of additional education programmes. In all secondary schools, pupils attend two compulsory physical education classes per week;
- creation of appropriate conditions for conducting complex physical education, health and sports events with students in addition to providing them with sports equipment and tools;

- implementation of measures for the formation of physical education habits in students, their involvement in physical education and sports, taking into account their individual characteristics and health;
- physical education of students with disabilities;
- conducting extracurricular physical education and sports activities with children and involving children and youth in active physical education and sports activities in their free time and during vacations.

Since 2014, TOPs – Creation of Modern Educational Technology in Physical Education, a joint project of the British Council, the Ministry of Education and the Sport for Development public union has been implemented in Azerbaijan. The aim of the project is to equip physical education teachers with new skills on modern educational technologies in physical education and to create an advantageous environment for the development of learners' physical skills by creating opportunities for the protection of their physical and psychological health conditions at secondary schools.

A practical study guide for teaching the TOPs methodology was prepared based on the state study programme on physical education to be used during physical education lessons.

As a result of the project's implementation, active teaching methodology has been developed for the application of the subject programme on physical education at the respective schools. The project played an important role in increasing awareness on healthy food, active lifestyles and sport's role in the development of social skills among almost 100 000 students, teachers and parents.

Collaboration and partnerships

There are no specific policy initiatives or programmes aiming to encourage partnerships between formal education providers, youth workers, health professionals and sporting organisations at the national level. However, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports work in close co-operation on the issues regarding sport activity in educational institutions.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

There is no specific strategy nor state programme in the field of healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition.

The development concept "Azerbaijan 2020: A look into the future" (*"Azerbaijan 2020: qelejeve bakhish" Inkishaf Konsepsiyasi*) approved by order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 29 December 2012 envisaged the adoption of a number of documents in the health sector. In the period 2013-2020, the following documents were adopted:

- Strategy for the fight against non-communicable diseases in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2015-2020

- State programme of obligatory medical examination of children
- State programme on improving the health of mothers and children for 2014-2020
- State programme for the fight thalassemia for 2015-2020
- Action plan on HIV/AIDS for 2016-2020
- Action plan on Haemophilia for 2016-2020
- Action plan on Diabetes for 2016-2020
- Action plan for the fight against Tuberculosis in 2016-2020
- Action plan for immunoprophylaxis of infectious diseases for 2016-2020.

Based on the above-mentioned development concept, the Ministry of Health adopted “The Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2014-2020” (“Azerbaijan Respublikasi Səhiyyə Nazirliyinin 2014-2020-ci illər üzrə Strateji Plan”). The main target of this plan was to achieve the highest possible level of health of the population in the country by increasing the efficiency of the health system and providing quality health services.

One of the recently adopted programmes is the State programme on combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors and drug addiction for 2019-2024, approved by a decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 22 July 2019.

According to Article 4 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On youth policy” (“Genilər siyaseti haqqında” Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu) adopted in 2002, there are two obligations of the state in the field of youth policy implementation regarding health issues:

- to implement measures in the field of education, upbringing, physical, mental and spiritual development and health protection of youth;
- to provide young people with knowledge in the field of family planning and reproductive health and to improve the work of institutions providing services in this field.

The main operational document in the sphere of youth is the state programme Youth of Azerbaijan in 2017-2021 (“Azerbaijan gəniliyi 2017–2021-ci illərdə” Dövlət Programı). One of the activities of the programme is protecting the health of young people and supporting young people in need of special care.

Activities under this direction include:

- carrying out awareness-raising activities for young people on healthy lifestyles (drug, tobacco, alcohol and other psycho-active substances, prevention of infectious and non-infectious diseases, healthy eating), increasing knowledge and improving their behaviour;
- increasing the level of physical activity among young people, educating them and parents, teachers and other people working with young people in the field of healthy lifestyles and physical activity and conducting awareness-raising activities in this regard;
- increasing the knowledge and improving the behaviour of young people towards reproductive health and family planning;
- improving the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of young people related to mental health.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

There are no top-level policies, programmes, projects nor initiatives encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people.

In 2017, Azerbaijan started to implement the HBSC (Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children) survey with the aim of studying schoolchildren's (11-, 13- and 15-year-old boys and girls) health, well-being, social environment and health behaviours. The purpose of the research was to gain new insight into and increase understanding of health the behaviours, health, well-being, lifestyles and social contexts of young people and to obtain necessary evidence on those aspects. The majority of respondents (88.4%) considered themselves healthy, but 11.6% visited doctors because of long-term diseases, disabilities or other health-related problems. Only a third of the students (31.5%) refused to accept foods containing sweet ingredients, but most of them (68.5%) took food items containing carbohydrates (sweets). The collected information indicates that most students (62.3%) had plenty of oily dishes. The vast majority of children were satisfied with their weight, but 13.5% were those who want to lose their weight without keeping diet; those who wanted to increase their weight represented 8.8% and only 5.8% of respondents indicated that they were keeping diet. Two tenths (22.9%) of the respondents missed lunch or dinner, and one tenth (9.9%) did not take meals the whole day (fasting the whole day).

HEALTH BEHAVIOURS

- Out of all respondents, 13.8% drank Coca-Cola every day or more than once a day, 30.2% eat sweets (chocolate, candy) every day or more than once a day.
- 19.8% of schoolchildren use computers on weekdays and 30.3% on weekends to improve their knowledge.
- Children, in very few cases, used gadgets for measuring the level of physical activities. However, 79.5% of them had a smartphone without the necessary applications, 11.3% of teenagers had a smartphone with applications but did not actively use them, and finally, only 9.1% of the teenagers had a smartphone with software applications that they actively used.
- The majority of students (77.1%) thought that, among all disturbing factors, roads for pedestrians and cyclists are important or very important and 79.6% of those would prefer having larger sidewalks or pedestrian paths; almost 76.9% of the respondents want roads with less traffic.
- According to the collected data, 79.6% of respondents considered it important or very important to have larger and safer sidewalks or pedestrian paths for reaching schools; 84.1% of respondents were worried about the safety of road crossings; out of all respondents, 82.9% wished to have cabinets for personal belongings in their schools.

EATING HABITS

Healthy eating is important for the healthy development of children and youth and to reduce the risk of obesity later in life. Poor eating behaviours that begin during teenage years may continue into adulthood, creating negative conditions for a wide variety of eating-related concerns. Weekly breakfast habits of students surveyed: 59% - eat breakfast 5 days a week, 8.0% - eat

breakfast 1 day a week, 5% - eat breakfast 2 days a week, 3.6% eat breakfast 3 days a week and 3.1% - eat breakfast 4 days a week.

At the same time, 74.7% of pupils had breakfast during weekends (Saturday and Sunday); 10.4% only on one weekend day (Saturday or Sunday) and 14.9% did not eat breakfast on weekends at all.

Among the boys surveyed, eating habits of fruits and vegetables were distributed (during one week) as follows:

- ✓ 11-year-old boys who used vegetables - 38.0%, fruits 36.0%,
- ✓ 13-year-olds - 41.7% fruits, 35.3% vegetables,
- ✓ 15 years olds - 26.4% fruits and 26.4% vegetables.

Among the girls surveyed, eating habits of fruits and vegetables during a week were distributed as follows:

- ✓ 11-year-old girls who used vegetables 42.3%, fruits 44.9%,
- ✓ 13-year-olds - 47.6% fruits, 42.1% vegetables,
- ✓ 15-year-olds - 36.1% fruits and 28.5% vegetables.

During the week the students participated in the survey: 56.4% never drank dietary Coca-Cola and low-sugar refreshments, marked as zero sugar, 66.5% never drank energy drinks (e.g. Red Bull), 26% never drank Coca-Cola and 10.9% never eat sweets (chocolate, candy).

At the same time 4.9% took dietary Coca-Cola and low-sugary soft drinks marked as zero sugar, 3.2% took energy drinks (e.g. Red Bull) once a day, 13.8% drank Coca-Cola every day or more than once a day, 30.2% ate sweets (chocolate, candy) every day or more than once a day.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

Healthy behaviour is defined as activity undertaken by people for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing their health, preventing health problems, or achieving a positive body image. According to the survey data, not many children engaged in vigorous physical activities outside school hours. Only one third of children did physical exercises daily or 4-6 times per week, while almost one third or 26.9% never do the activities and another 8.2% do so only very rarely.

Among young people, routine participation in moderate to vigorous physical activity is associated with a variety of physical and mental health benefits. The physical health benefits include the regulation of body weight and chronic disease risk factors (e.g. blood pressure, blood cholesterol), improved fitness, and the development of healthy and strong bones. The mental health benefits include a better mood, decreased risk of depression, and improved academic performance. Current recommendations are that children and youth participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily for health benefits.

Physical activities are any activities that accelerate heartbeat and respiration rates; these include sports, various physical activities in school, playing with friends, walking, running, jogging, roller-skating, biking or skateboarding, dancing, swimming, playing football and surfing. According to the collected data, the majority of children were engaged in physical activities in the previous week for at least 60 minutes: 91.2% of 11-year-old boys, 91.1% of 13-year-old boys and 84.9% of 15-year-old boys responded to the question positively. However, the rates among girls are slightly lower than among boys: correspondingly, 89.3% of girls aged 11, 88.7% of girls aged 13 and 82.3% of 15-year-old girls were engaged in physical activities for at least 60 minutes. According to the survey data, 27.7% of 11-year-old boys and 22.8% of girls were engaged in physical activity daily and, correspondingly, 23.9% boys and 10.9% girls aged 13 and 18.9% of girls and 9.9% of boys aged 15 did so.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

During their lifetime, 7.2% of the boys and 3.8% of girls reported having smoked at some point. But in the previous 30 days the rate of smoking was lower (3.6% of boys and 2.5% of girls).

The proportion of non-smokers was 80.2%, but still around one fifth of children (19.8%) had tried or was smoking; around 14% of children had tried alcohol at least once; less than 5% of children got drunk at least once a week; less than 3% of children were cannabis users.

Among the young, 1.8% of 11-year-old, 3.2% of 13-year-old and 6.2% of 15-year-old boys were truly drunk at least once during their lifetime. In boys and girls, this indicator increases proportionally with age. Some 3.0% of the youngest (11-year-old) students had had alcoholic beverages during their lifetime. At the age of 13, 6.1% of boys had taken alcohol, however only 3.2% of girls had drunk it at least once in their lifetime; 8.2% of 15-year-old boys had tried alcoholic beverages, 4.5% of girls had tried them at least once by that age.

According to the information collected, no alcoholic beverage is preferred. But the most commonly used alcohol is beer at 4.8%.

According to the responses of the 15-year-old students, 69.7% of them had not consumed any alcoholic beverages in the last 12 months, and 30.3% had never had any alcoholic beverages in their lives. Among the respondents, 98.1% had never used marijuana in their lifetime and in the last 30 days, 1.9% had used marijuana occasionally, and 1.1% had used it in the last 30 days.

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS), a component of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS), is a global standard for systematically monitoring youth tobacco use (smoked and smokeless) and tracking key tobacco control indicators. GYTS is a nationally representative school-based survey of students from 13 to 15 years and is designed to produce cross-sectional estimates for each country. GYTS uses a standard core questionnaire, sample design, and data collection protocol. It assists countries in fulfilling their obligations under the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

In Azerbaijan, GYTS was conducted in 2016 by the Public Health and Reforms Centre, under the co-ordination of Ministry of Health of Azerbaijan. The overall response rate was 97.9%. A total of 2 220 eligible students in grades 8-10 completed the survey, of which 2 122 were aged 13-15.

TOBACCO USE

- 8.4% of students, 12.9% of boys, and 3.1% of girls currently used any tobacco products.
- 7.3% of students, 11.6% of boys, and 2.3% of girls currently smoked tobacco.
- 2.9% of students, 4.6% of boys, and 1.0% of girls currently smoked cigarettes.
- 1.8% of students, 2.4% of boys, and 1.1% of girls currently used smokeless tobacco.

CESSATION

- More than 6 in 10 current smokers had tried to stop smoking in the previous 12 months.

SECOND-HAND SMOKE

- 28.8% of students were exposed to tobacco smoke at home.
- 40.8% of students were exposed to tobacco smoke inside enclosed public places.

ACCESS & AVAILABILITY

- 91.1% of current cigarette smokers obtained cigarettes by buying them from a store, street vendor or kiosk.
- Among current cigarette smokers who bought cigarettes, 64.8% were not prevented from buying them because of their age.

MEDIA

- More than 6 in 10 students noticed anti-tobacco messages in the media.
- More than 3 in 10 students noticed tobacco advertisements or promotions when visiting points of sale.
- Almost 1 in 10 students owned something with a tobacco brand logo on it.

KNOWLEDGE & ATTITUDES

- 81.8% of students definitely thought other people's tobacco smoking is harmful to them.
- 82.8% of students favoured banning smoking inside enclosed public places.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Topics linked to health education are incorporated in formal education through such subjects as biology and "life knowledge".

From the 1st to the 9th grades, pupils in school have the compulsory subject "life knowledge". Within the framework of this subject, pupils get acquainted with such topics as hygiene, daily routine, healthy life, ways to maintain health, protection from infectious diseases, first aid, healthy lifestyles, bad habits, emotions, healthcare, preservation of reproductive health, ecological balance and other topics.

From the 6th to the 11th grades, pupils in school have the compulsory subject biology. Within the framework of this subject, pupils get acquainted with such topics as the human body, human systems and organs, life without bad habits, the structure and development of a living organism, nervous activity, metabolism, physical activity, the fight against infectious diseases,

genetics, medicine, a healthy family, mental development, depression, psychosis, the environment, environmental impact on human health, global environmental problems, environmental restoration, etc.

Peer-to-peer education approaches

There are no top-level guidelines facilitating peer-to-peer education as a form of non-formal or informal learning about factors related to health and well-being.

UN Population Fund in Azerbaijan ([UNFPA-Azerbaijan](#)) has promoted this approach in the past, particularly in the field of reproductive health. They supported the creation of the local Y-Peer (Young Peer Education) network. The local network aims to raise awareness on sexual and reproductive health, gender and sexuality among young people. The local team consists of volunteer peer trainers, focal points and local co-ordinators.

Many NGO projects dealing with healthy lifestyles and improving the health of young people supported by state organisations include peer-to-peer education approaches.

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

There is no specific strategy nor state programme in the field of mental health of young people.

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On psychological assistance” (*“Psixholoji yardım haqqında” Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu*) adopted on 29 January 2019 defines the legal basis for the provision of psychological assistance in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the rights and responsibilities of persons receiving psychological assistance and psychologists and regulates relations in this area.

According to the law, the types of psychological assistance are as follows:

- psychological prevention and education – information about the factors and conditions that cause psychological problems;
- psychological counseling – the process of helping a person to understand and solve psychological problems;
- psychological support – detection and prevention of psychological problems that may affect a person's ability to adapt;
- psychological examination (diagnostics) – study of psychological problems that disrupt the normal life of a person, affect their system of behaviour and relationships, and assess the individual psychological characteristics of the person receiving psychological assistance in order to correctly determine the type, form and amount of psychological assistance;
- psychotherapy – treatment of mental disorders using psychological methods;
- psychological rehabilitation and psychological correction – restoration or development of psychosocial adaptation and effective social behaviour of a person with mental health problems;

- psychological training – a method of active learning aimed at the development of new knowledge, habits and attitudes related to the field of psychology.

Improving the mental health of young people

There are no top-level policies, programmes nor projects addressing the mental health of young people.

The decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the approval of the rules and conditions of rendering of free psychological assistance” of 16 October 2020 (*“Odenishsiz psixoloji yardimin qosterilmesi Gaydasi ve Shertleri”nin tesdiq edilmesi haqqinda Azerbaijan Respublikasi Nazirler Kabinetinin Gerari*) defines persons entitled to get free psychological assistance. According to paragraph 3.3. of these rules, “The person providing psychological assistance determines the type and form of psychological assistance to be provided, taking into account the sex, age and individual characteristics of the person receiving psychological assistance”.

On 12 June 2018, amendments were made to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On education” (*“Tehsil haqqinda” Azerbaijan Respublikasinin Ganunu*) of 19 June 2009. A new paragraph was added to the law concerning the organisation of psychological services in educational institutions.

The rules for the organisation of psychological services in educational institutions, approved by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan of 30 April 2020 (*“Tehsil muassiselerinde psixoloji xidmetin teshkili Gaydalari”nin tesdiq edilmesi haqqinda Azerbaijan Respublikasi Nazirler Kabinetinin Gerari*) regulate the relations related to the organisation of psychological services in all educational institutions.

Paragraph 1.2 of the rules stipulates that

psychological services in educational institutions are organised in accordance with international agreements, educational legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, other normative legal acts and these Rules in the field of ensuring the mental and physical development of students, as well as their social protection. based on the results and achievements of research and in coordination with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, using and applying modern theories in the field of child development.

Paragraph 2 describes the main objectives of psychological services in educational institutions.

2.1. Psychological services, in cooperation with parents or other legal representatives, the management and pedagogical staff of the educational institution, study the psychological condition of students, educational activities, socio-moral problems and provide them with psychological support, their progressive mental development, realisation of tendencies, interests and potential, provides prevention of mental disorders.

2.2. The main purpose of the organisation of psychological services is:

- increasing the academic achievements of students;
- formation of a positive behaviour model in students;
- creating a safe and healthy environment in the educational institution;
- supporting the mental and psychological health of students;
- regulation of family-educational institution relations.

The Azerbaijan Children's Hotline service has been running in the country since 2010. It provides free psychological and social assistance to children in need of professional help. Employees of the hotline service support the applicants on issues related to children's rights, health protection, effective organisation of leisure time and other issues. The hotline operates under joint co-operation of state, international and non-governmental organisations and a private telecom company.

In 2017, a mobile application version of the Children's Hotline service was launched for iOS and Android operating systems. People can call the Azerbaijan Children's Hotline, which operates 24 hours a day via the short number 116111 and +994 50 680 22 80, +994 51 580 22 80, +994 51 880 11 80, +994 51 880 22 80 mobile numbers, e-mail, Facebook and Instagram social networks, live chat on the centre's website and the mobile application *uşaqqaynarxetti*.

7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

According to Article 7 of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On youth policy" (*"Genjler siyaseti haqqında" Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu*), the Ministry of Health takes measures to provide medical care to young people. Young people studying in public educational institutions are provided with free medical services. The Ministries of Education and Health ensure that young people studying full-time in educational institutions undergo a comprehensive medical examination every year at the expense of the educational institutions.

Awareness raising on prevention of harmful habits among young people and awareness of a healthy lifestyle is carried out. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the State Committee for Family, Women's and Children's Affairs take measures to increase knowledge of family planning among young people and for prevention, reduction and elimination of drug addiction, toxic substances abuse, alcoholism and other serious diseases.

Amendments made to the Family Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijan Respublikasının Aile Mejllesi) on 17 October 2014 applied medical examination of persons wishing to enter into marriage. According to Article 13 of the code

Persons wishing to enter into marriage undergoes a medical examination, as well as counselling on medical-genetic, medical-psychological and family planning issues at their request at the state and (or) municipal medical institutions at the expense of the state or local budget. A certificate confirming that the persons wishing to enter into a marriage have passed a medical examination shall be attached to their application for marriage to the relevant executive authority.

To implement this article, normative legal acts were approved by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers dated 28 April 2015. Among them are:

1. the list of the diseases for which persons wishing to enter into marriage must undergo a medical examination;
2. rules of the medical examination of the persons wishing to enter into marriage;
3. the form of the certificate confirming passing of the medical examination of the persons wishing to enter into marriage.

The list of diseases includes:

1.1. hemoglobinopathies:

1.1.1. major beta-thalassemia;

1.1.2. intermediate beta-thalassemia;

1.1.3. drepanothalassemia;

1.1.4. sickle-cell anaemia;

1.2. HIV/AIDS;

1.3. syphilis.

The rules were developed in accordance with Article 13 of the Family Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan in order to create conditions for the formation of a healthy family, to prevent the birth of children with inherited diseases and congenital malformations and it determines the procedure for medical examination of persons wishing to marry.

The Public Health and Reforms Centre developed a system for assessing the risk factors of individual patients. Anyone entering the portal www.saglamliq.isim.az can, by answering some questions, get their average health score. This score will allow a person to understand whether they are healthy or not and what risk factors they have. They will also receive recommendations for improving their health. A person can print out the information received, and after a certain time, answer the questions again and compare the old and new results. This allows a person to monitor their health on their own and, in case of alarm signals, seek medical help in a timely manner. This information portal also has articles on obesity, work stress, physical activity, diabetes, etc.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth-friendly

There are no specific top-level policies, programmes, projects nor initiatives to make health facilities more youth-friendly.

In early 2000s, the international organisations UNICEF and UNFPA carried out projects and programmes, such as Clinics Friendly to Young People and Reproductive Centres for Youth. These centres provided mainly advisory and informational support to young people. But as soon as the financing of the project was completed, these projects were closed.

Currently, there are about 30 youth houses in the capital and regions of the country. Youth houses are social-service institutions created with the aim of strengthening patriotic work among young people, organising their leisure time and harmonious development, providing legal and informational assistance and providing psychological support and rehabilitation. They are subordinate to the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Education create conditions to engage the population, especially young people, in sports and physical activity. Under the Ministry of Youth

and Sports, there are 43 Olympic sports complexes, where training in Olympic sports is held free of charge. There about 70 children/youth sports schools in the country. Part of them is subordinate to the Ministry of Youth and Sports and part of them to the Ministry of Education, where training is also free of charge.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

The order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the approval of [Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development](#) dated 2 February 2021 defined five national priorities for the country's socio-economic development. One of them is "areas of modern innovations and competitive human capital". This priority concerns the health sector. It states:

longevity and healthy lifestyle of citizens must be ensured. This is important for increasing the productive activity and social welfare of citizens. Health and longevity will directly depend on the quality of the health care system in the country. The share of quality health services in the formation of national income should be increased by achieving high results in the application of modern innovations in health. The increase in life expectancy should be achieved through quality health and a healthy lifestyle.

According to the above-mentioned order, relevant state bodies (institutions) shall take necessary measures in order to fulfil the tasks arising from the national priorities. Currently, the Ministry of Health is in charge of developing new strategies and programmes to address this priority.

The issue of adopting a national strategy and state programme for the development of physical education and sports is very topical. The Ministry of Youth and Sports works on the elaboration of these documents, which are planned to be adopted in 2022. Particular attention will be paid to the development of mass sports among the population, especially among young people.

Currently, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, together with relevant state bodies, is developing a draft of a new state programme, Youth of Azerbaijan in 2022-2026. The new programme should be drafted on the basis of the national priorities.

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