

HBSC IRELAND

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams¹ in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (Europe) and co-ordinated by Professor Candace Currie of the University of St Andrews. This factsheet is based on data collected in 2010 from 12,661 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

Further information is available at:
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HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN



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Summary

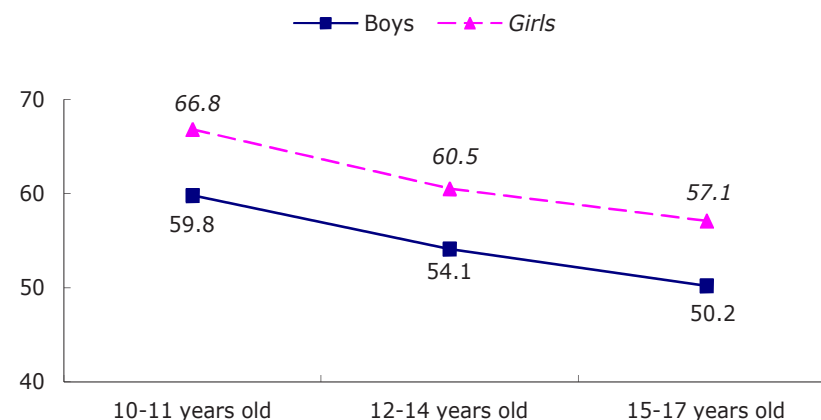
HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 56.6% of schoolchildren aged 10-18 years report positive relationships with their classmates (53.4% of boys and 60.2% of girls). This figure has slightly decreased since 2006 (59.7%). The percentage of children reporting positive relationships with classmates is higher among girls across all age groups. The largest gender difference in reporting positive relationships is in the 10-11 (girls 66.8%, boys 59.8%) and 15-17 year age groups (girls 57.1%, boys 50.2%). Children who have positive relationships with their classmates are less likely to report episodes of drunkenness, being current smokers and experiencing emotional and physical symptoms. They are more likely to report excellent health and happiness and being involved in physical activity. For this factsheet students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements 'students in my class(es) enjoy being together', 'most of the students in my class(es) are kind and helpful' and 'other students accept me as I am' were classified as having positive classmate relationships.

Why this topic?

The school setting is an important arena for children for at least 10 years of their lives 5-7 hours a day. Consequently it plays an important role in the health of young people. Developing positive peer relationships and friendships is crucial in helping adolescents deal with developmental tasks such as forming identity, developing social skills and self-esteem and establishing autonomy. Positive relationships with peers and good friendships are important for the development of social and psychological health². Peer social skills and early classroom adjustment have been identified as protective against adolescent depression³.

Change 2006-2010

Overall the percentage of children reporting positive relationships has slightly decreased since 2006 (59.7% in 2006, 56.6% in 2010). There remains a trend for a decrease in positive classmate relationships with age.

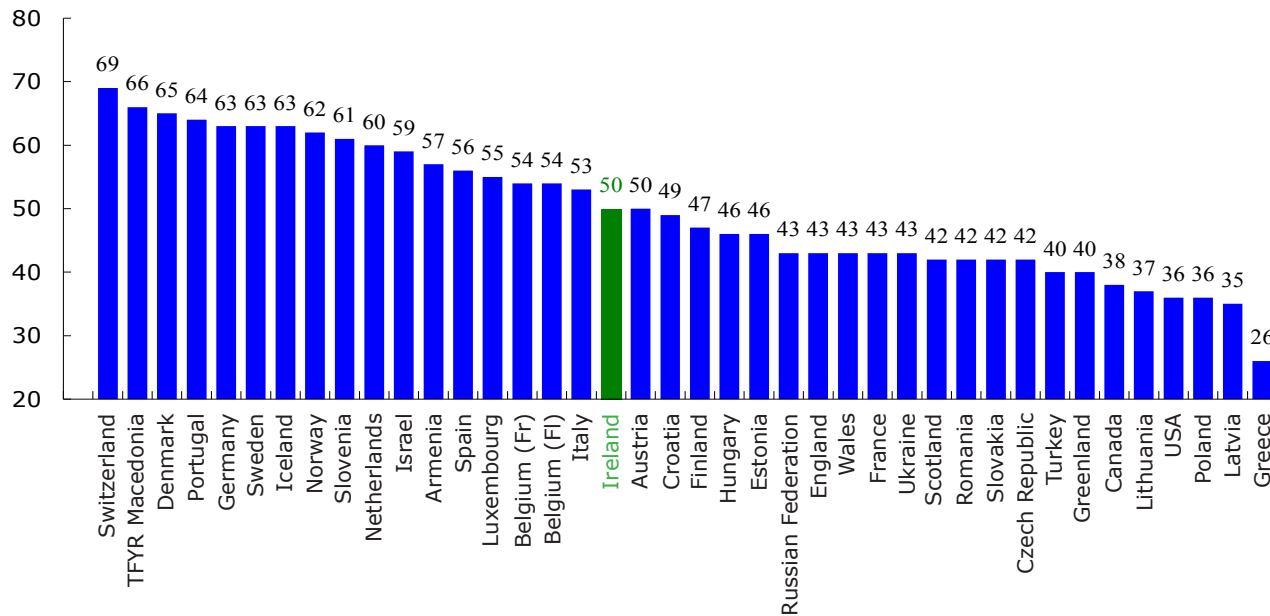


Percentage of children who report positive classmate relationships, by age and gender

School peer support in context

- Students reporting positive relationships with classmates are less likely to be current smokers than students not reporting such relationships (9.4% vs. 14.4%).
- Students reporting positive relationships with classmates are less likely to have been drunk than students not reporting such relationships (24.7% vs. 32.5%).
- Students reporting positive relationships with classmates are more likely to report being physically active than students not reporting such relationships (53.0% vs. 47.2%).
- Students reporting positive relationships with classmates are more likely to report excellent health than students not reporting such relationships (37.9% vs. 26.0%) and are also more likely to report that they feel very happy about their lives (60.2% vs. 37.5%).

...Classmate relationships among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting positive classmate relationships, by country

- Students reporting positive relationships with classmates are less likely to report frequent emotional symptoms than students not reporting such relationships (44.6% vs. 62.0%) and they also report less frequent physical symptoms (46.4% vs. 60.9%).
- The quality of reported relationships with classmates is not associated with social class.

International

Fifteen year old school children in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 18th among 40 countries in Europe and North America with 50.5% reporting positive relationships with classmates. Overall, 61.4% of 11 year olds in Ireland (rank 10th) and 56.4% of 13 year olds in Ireland (rank 14th) report positive relationships with classmates.

Implications

More than half of schoolchildren in Ireland (56.6%) experience positive relationships with classmates but this figure has slightly decreased since 2006. Given the associations between positive classmate relationships and several risk and resilience factors, it is necessary to identify and address the issues surrounding the children who are less socially integrated. Policy and support should be targeted towards encouraging the development of the social skills and self-esteem of school children who do not experience positive relationships with classmates.

References

1. Currie, C., Zanotti, C., Morgan, A., Currie, D., de Looze, M., Roberts, C., Samdal, O., Smith, R., & Barnekow, V. (eds). (2012). *Social determinants of health and well-being among young people. Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study: international report from the 2009/2010 survey*. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2012 (Health Policy for Children and Adolescents, No. 6).
2. Currie, C., Nic Gabhainn, S., Godeau, E., Roberts, C., Smith, R., Currie, D., Pickett, W., Richter, M., Morgan, A., & Barnekow, V. (eds.). (2008). *Inequalities in young people's health: HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 Survey*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe. (Health Policy for Children and Adolescents, No. 5).
3. Smokowski, P. R., Mann, E. A., Reynolds, A. J., & Fraser, M. W. (2004). Childhood risk and protective factors and late adolescent adjustment in inner city minority youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26(1), 63-91.

This factsheet was prepared by Mary Callaghan, Natasha Clarke, Aoife Gavin, Yetunde John-Akinola, Colette Kelly, Michal Molcho, Saoirse Nic Gabhainn and Larri Walker.

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