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Summary

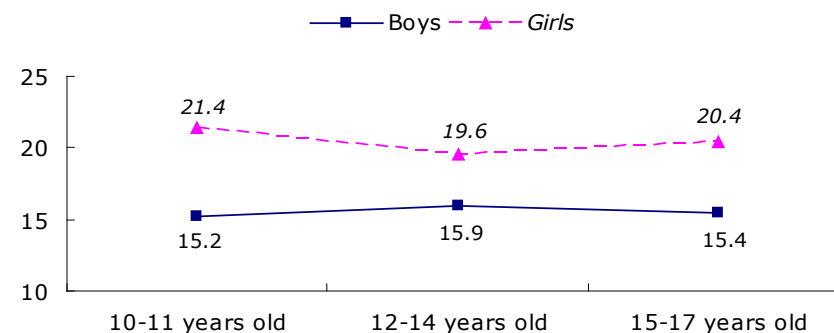
HBSC Ireland has found that 17.9% of schoolchildren in Ireland report eating vegetables twice or more daily (15.6% of boys and 20.2% of girls). This figure has remained relatively stable since 2002 (16.9%). The percentage of boys consuming vegetables is lowest among 10-11 year olds (15.2%) and highest among 12-14 year olds (15.9%). The opposite pattern is seen among girls with the highest vegetable consumption among 10-11 year olds (21.4%) and lowest among 12-14 year olds (19.6%). Children who consume vegetables twice or more daily are less likely to spend four or more evenings with friends. They are more likely to: find it easy to talk to their parents or best friend, live with both parents, like school, report excellent health and feel happy about their lives. Vegetable consumption in this factsheet refers to children who report consuming vegetables everyday, more than once.

Why this topic?

Increasing vegetable intake is a major public health challenge². Vegetables are an important component of a healthy diet; are rich in vitamins, minerals, fibre and plant chemicals, many of which are thought to protect against a range of chronic diseases^{2,4}. However vegetable intakes among Irish schoolchildren are often insufficient³.

Trends 2002-2006

The overall percentage of children who report consuming vegetables twice or more daily has remained relatively stable between 2002 (16.9%) and 2006 (17.9%). Prevalence of reported vegetable consumption is higher among girls (20.2%) than boys (15.6%). The percentage of boys consuming vegetables everyday more than once has remained relatively stable across all age groups since 2002, while for girls it increased slightly, with the exception of 12-14 year old girls which have remained stable.



Percentage of children who report consuming vegetables everyday, more than once, by age and gender

Vegetable consumption in context

- Children from lower social classes are less likely to consume vegetables twice or more daily (social class 5-6: 16.1%; social class 3-4: 17.1% and social class 1-2: 21.2%) than other social classes.
- Children who eat vegetables are more likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (83.6% vs. 80.0%), father (68.0% vs. 63.1%) and best friend (90.2% vs. 87.2%) than those who do not.
- Children who eat vegetables are more likely to live with both parents (84.1% vs. 80.0%) and to like school (75.8% vs. 66.3%) than those who do not.
- Children who eat vegetables are less likely to spend four or more evenings with friends (36.5% vs. 43.2%) than those who do not.
- Children who eat vegetables are more likely to report having excellent health (43.8% vs. 31.0%) and feeling happy about their lives (55.6% vs. 48.2%) than those who do not.

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 Edinburgh. In 2006 HBSC Ireland surveyed 10,334 schoolchildren in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

Further information is available at:
<http://www.hbsc.org>
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/>



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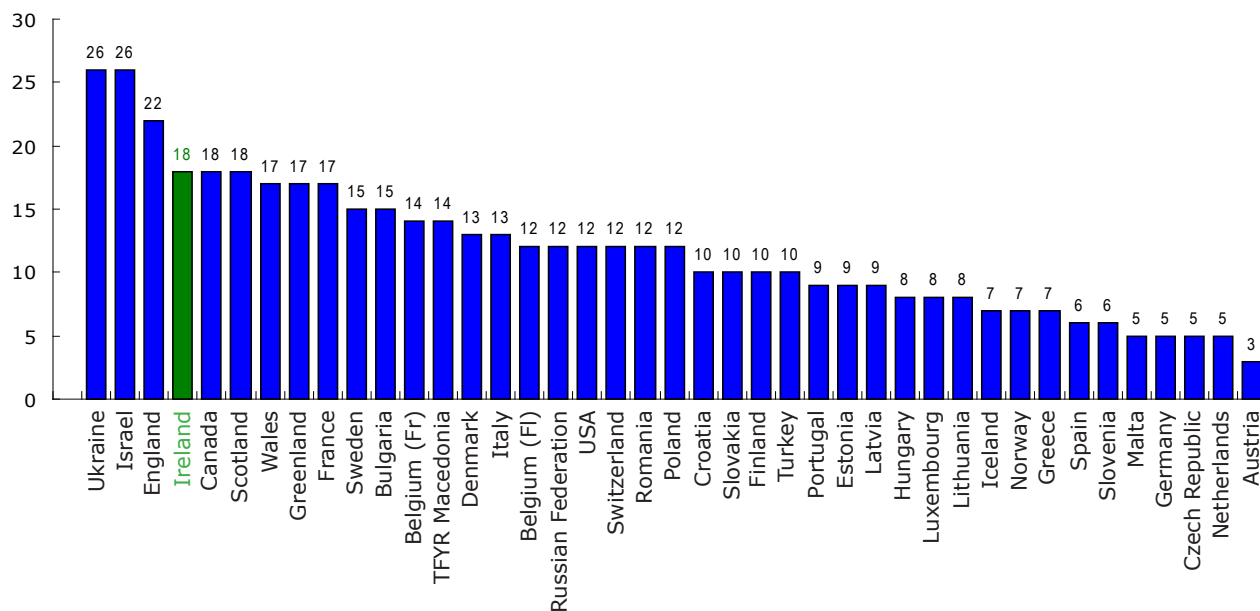


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Department of
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AN ROINN SLÁNTE AGUS LEANAÍ

...Vegetable consumption among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting consuming vegetables everyday, more than once, by country

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All factsheets and other HBSC publications and reports can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc>

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International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 4th among 41 countries in Europe and North America, with 18% reporting vegetable consumption twice or more daily. Overall 19% of 11 year olds in Ireland (rank 10th) and 19% of 13 year olds in Ireland (rank 8th) report consuming vegetables everyday more than once.

Implications

The overall percentage of children in Ireland that report consuming vegetables twice or more daily has remained relatively stable since 2002. Ireland ranks high in comparison to other European and North American countries. While ranked high internationally, these figures indicate that the majority of schoolchildren in Ireland are probably failing to meet recommendations for daily

vegetable consumption. These data indicate a need for more research to understand why vegetable consumption is low across both genders and all age-groups and to develop more effective interventions for increasing vegetable consumption during this key developmental stage¹. Schools may provide an ideal setting for this.

References

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3. Trew, K., Barnett, J., Steverson C, Muldoon, O., Breakwell, G., Brown, K., Doherty, G. & Clarke, C. (2008). *Young people and food: Adolescent dietary beliefs and understandings*. Safefood. <http://www.safefood.eu/en/Publication/Research-reports/> (accessed 24th February 2009).
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This factsheet was prepared by Priscilla Doyle, Katie Cunningham, Aoife Gavin, Siobhan O'Higgins, Graham Brennan, Pauline Clerkin, Aingeal de Róiste, Colette Kelly, Michal Molcho, Brenda Murphy, Larri Walker and Saoirse Nic Gabhainn.