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### Summary

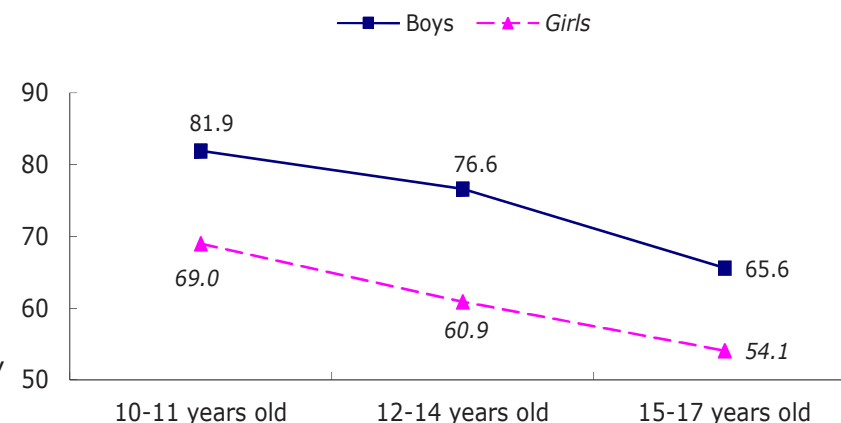
HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 66.6% of schoolchildren in Ireland report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their father (73.1% of boys and 59.5% of girls), a slight increase since 2006 (64.1%). The percentage of children who find it easy to talk to their father is higher among boys of all ages, compared to girls and is higher among younger children; 81.9% of boys and 69.0% of girls aged 10-11 years, and 65.6% of boys and 54.1% of girls aged 15-17 years. Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report emotional and physical symptoms, drunkenness, that they currently smoke and have bullied others. They are more likely to report excellent health, feeling very happy and exercising four or more times a week. Relationship with father in this factsheet refers to children who report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their father about things that really bother them.

### Why this topic?

Ease of communication with parents is a protective factor for adolescents<sup>1</sup>. When a positive relationship exists between father and child it has the potential to promote the child's social and emotional development<sup>2</sup>. Children with involved, caring fathers have better educational outcomes, are more likely to be emotionally secure and have better social connections with peers when they are older<sup>3</sup>. A positive relationship between a father and daughter can promote a positive sense of body image<sup>4</sup> and an open communication style is associated with less aggression and violence among boys<sup>5</sup>.

### Change 2006-2010

The percentage of school children that report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their father has increased slightly since 2006 (64.1% to 66.6%). This is evident both for boys (71.1% to 73.1%) and girls (56.6% to 59.5%) and across all age groups. The largest increase is among girls aged 15-17 years (46.6% to 54.1%).



Percentage of children who report finding it easy to talk to their fathers, by age and gender

### Relationship with fathers in context

- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are more likely to report excellent health (37.8% vs. 23.6%) and feeling very happy (59.2% vs. 34.1%) than children who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report frequent emotional symptoms (43.6% vs. 66.6%) and physical symptoms (46.0% vs. 63.3%) than children who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report having been drunk (23.7% vs. 34.5%) and current smoking (9.3% vs. 14.2%) than children who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report they bullied others (14.5% vs. 19.2%) than children that do not.

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams<sup>1</sup> 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.

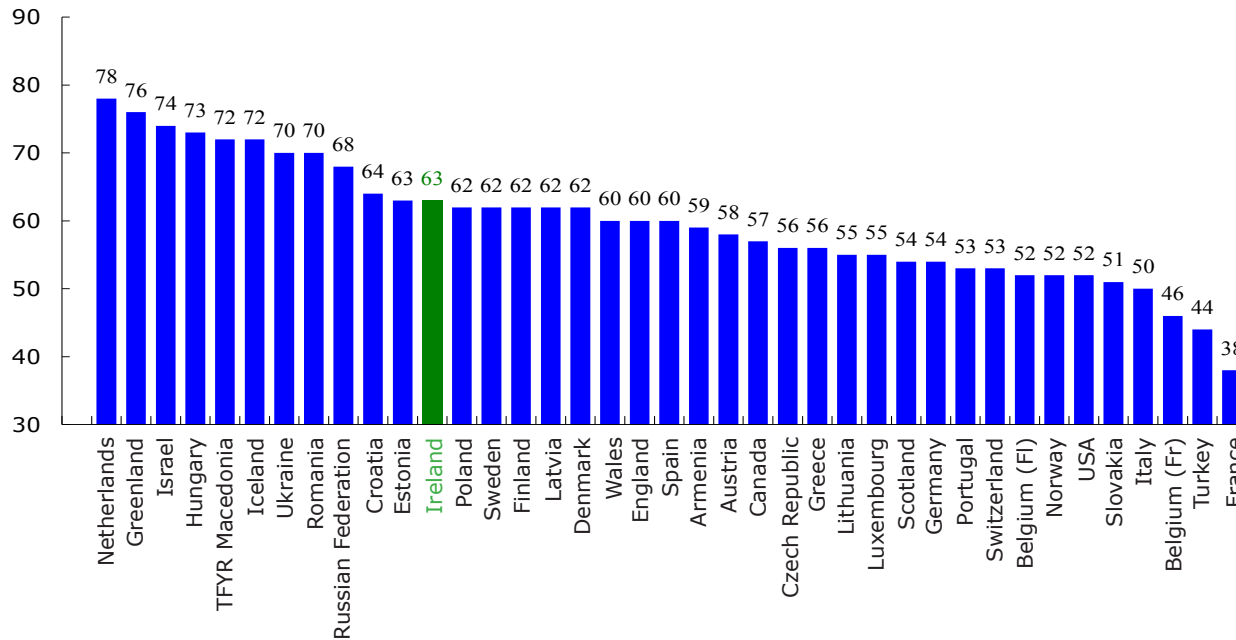
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## ...Relationship with fathers among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting they find it easy to talk to their fathers, by country

- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are more likely to report engaging in physical activity more than four times a week (54.5% vs. 44.0%) than children who do not.
- Ease of talking to father is not associated with social class.

### International

With 62.6% reporting that they find it easy to talk to their father, 15 year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 12th among 39 countries in Europe and North America. Ireland is ranked 13th (70.6%) among 13 year old children and 28th (72.1%) among 11 year old children.

### Implications

The overall percentage of children reporting they find it easy to talk to their father has increased slightly since 2006; Ireland ranks high internationally for 15 and 13 year olds and midrange for 11 year olds, similar to the pattern in 2006. These findings suggest that a strong relationship with a father is a predictor of a child feeling happy and reporting excellent health. The children who do not report ease of communication with their father are more likely to be currently smoking, have bullied others and have been drunk, confirming the importance of this relationship for a child's overall well-being. Older children are less likely to report they find it easy to talk to their father. This highlights the need for assisting parents to maintain communication with their child as they get older. It would be useful to explore this further with a view to improving communication or support structures for all age groups.

### References

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

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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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