

Natasha Clarke and the HBSC Ireland Team, Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway

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.

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HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN



Summary

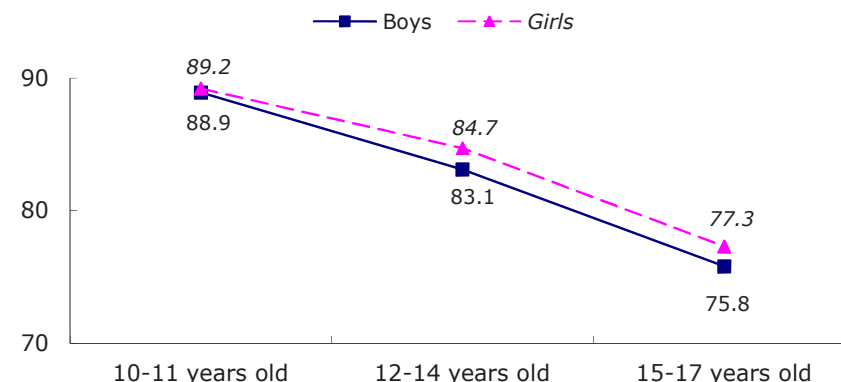
HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 81.8% of schoolchildren in Ireland report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their mother, remaining stable since 2006 (80.7%). Overall girls report slightly higher rates of ease of talking to mother (81.0% of boys and 82.6% of girls). The percentage of children who find it easy to talk to their mother is higher among younger children; 88.9% of boys and 89.2% of girls aged 10-11 years vs. 75.8% of boys and 77.3% of girls aged 15-17 years. Children who find it easy to talk to their mothers are less likely to report frequent emotional and physical symptoms, drunkenness, that they currently smoke, have been injured and have bullied others. They are more likely to report excellent health, feeling very happy and that they engage in physical activity four or more times a week. Relationship with mother in this factsheet refers to children who report finding it easy to very easy to talk to their mother about things that really bother them.

Why this topic?

Parental communication and support is associated with improved health and behavioural outcomes in adolescence². More girls than boys in Ireland report that their parents spend time talking with them³. Previous research has found that girls and boys feel equally comfortable talking to their mother about their problems, and this is not the case for fathers⁴. Good communication with mother can be a protective factor for early sexual activity, drinking alcohol and current smoking in adolescence¹.

Change 2006-2010

The percentage of schoolchildren that report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their mother has remained stable since 2006 (80.7% vs. 81.8%). This is seen across all age groups and genders, with the exception of girls aged 15-17 years, where an increase is observed (72.3% to 77.3%).

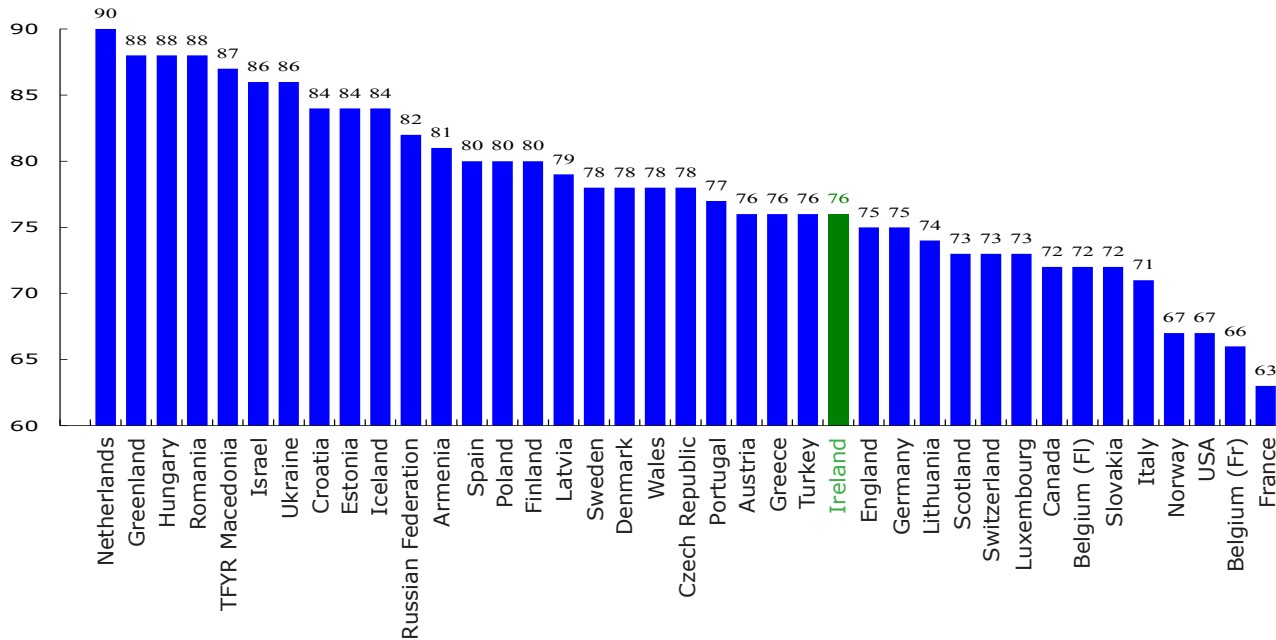


Percentage of children who report finding it easy to talk to their mother, by age and gender

Relationship with mothers in context

- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are more likely to report excellent health (34.8% vs. 22.8%) and feeling very happy (55.4% vs. 27.5%) than children who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report frequent emotional symptoms (47.9% vs. 71.3%) and physical symptoms (49.3% vs. 67.5%) than children who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report drunkenness (25.0% vs. 40.5%) and current smoking (9.6% vs. 18.6%) than children who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report that they bullied others (14.5% vs. 23.8%) and that they have been injured (38.3% vs. 42.6%) than children who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are more likely to report engaging in physical activity four or more times a week (51.1% vs. 45.9%) than children who do not.

...Relationship with mothers among schoolchildren in Ireland



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

- Ease of talking to mother is not associated with social class.

International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 25th among 39 countries in Europe and North America with 75.6% reporting that they find it easy to talk to their mother. Ireland is ranked 17th (84.4%) among 13 year old children and 26th (88.6%) among 11 year old children internationally.

Implications

The overall percentage of children who report they find it easy to talk to their mother has remained stable since 2006. In comparison to other countries in Europe and North America Ireland ranks midrange for 15, 13 and 11 year olds. Children that communicate easily with their mother are more likely to feel very happy, report excellent health and

engage in physical activity four or more times a week. The decrease in reporting ease of communication with mother as children get older highlights the need for assisting parents to maintain communication with their child as they get older. These 2010 data highlight an increase in the percentage of girls aged 15-17 years who report ease of communication with mother. It would be useful to explore this pattern with the aim of improving relationships within all age groups. Particular attention should be paid to supporting children who do not have a good relationship with their mother.

References

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3. Brooks, A-M., Hanafin, S., Cahill, H., Nic Gabhainn, S., & Molcho, M. (2010). *State of the Nations Children 2010*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children.
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All factsheets and other HBSC publications and reports can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc>

Contact us at: hbsc@nuigalway.ie

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