

**The HBSC Ireland Team, Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway***Overall percentages for HBSC 2014 and HBSC 2010 in this factsheet have been weighted<sup>2</sup>***Summary**

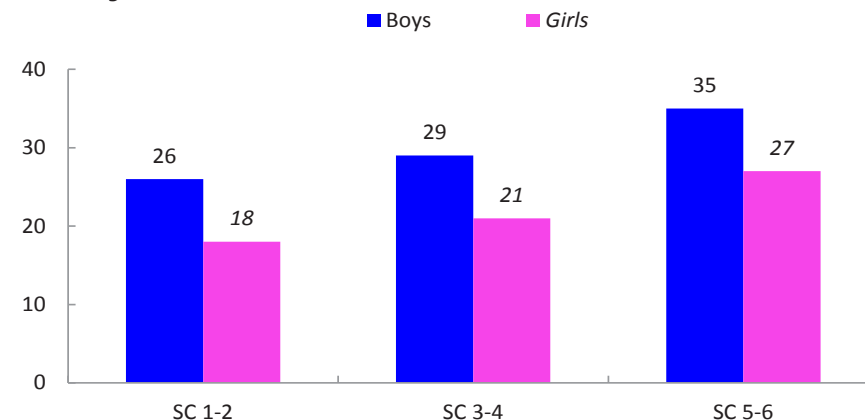
In this factsheet having had sex refers to young people aged 15-17 years who report that they have had sexual intercourse at least once in their life. Overall, 26.9% of 15-17 year olds report they have ever had sex, remaining stable from 2010 (27.2%). A higher proportion of boys (31.4%) than girls (21.4%) report having had sex, similar to 2010 (30.8% boys; 23.1% girls). Those who report living with both parents and those who report being able to talk to their mother and father about things that really bother them are less likely to report having had sex. Young people who report spending four or more evenings out with their friends per week are more likely to report having had sex. Young people from lower social class groups are more likely to report having had sex than those from higher social class groups.

**Why this topic?**

Many young people initiate sexual activity during their teenage years<sup>3</sup>. Sexual initiation is generally described as a normal part of the transition into adulthood<sup>3</sup>. However, sexual activity can have negative consequences including sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, many young people report not using contraception at last intercourse<sup>4</sup>.

**Change 2010-2014**

The proportion of young people who report that they have ever had sex remains stable since 2010 (27.2% in 2010; 26.9% in 2014). The proportion of boys (30.8% in 2010; 31.4% in 2014) and girls (23.1% in 2010; 21.4% in 2014) who report that they have ever had sex remains stable since 2010.



Percentage of 15-17 year olds who report having ever had sex, by social class and gender

**Having had sex in context**

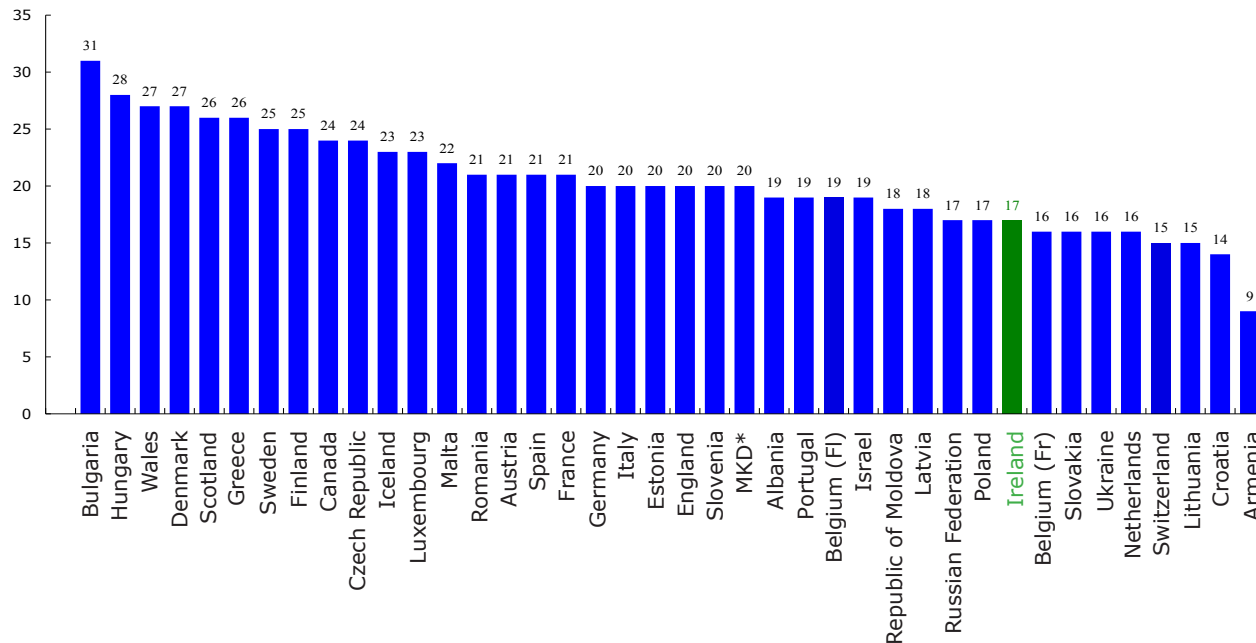
- Young people from higher social classes are less likely to report having had sex than those from lower social class groups (21.6% in social classes 1-2; 24.3% in social classes 3-4; 30.2% in social classes 5-6).
- Young people who live with both parents are less likely than those who do not to report having had sex (61.3% vs 79.4%); while those who report finding it easy to talk to their mother (73.5% vs 78.2%) and their father (57.8% vs 62.4%) are also less likely to report having had sex.
- Young people who report spending four or more evenings out with their friends per week (43.6% vs 22.3%) are more likely to have had sex.
- Young people who report liking school are less likely to report having had sex compared to those who do not (53.2% vs 69.0%) while those who report feeling pressured by their schoolwork are more likely to report having had sex compared to those who do not feel so pressured (57.2% vs 52.2%).

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 Dr Joanna Inchley of the University of St Andrews. This factsheet is based on data collected in 2014 from 10,368 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

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



## ...Sexual behaviour among young people in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year olds who have ever had sex, by country

\*MKD - The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

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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](mailto:hbsc@nuigalway.ie)

### International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 32nd among 40 countries in Europe and North America with 16.7% reporting that they have had sex. The countries with the highest rates reporting having ever had sex are Bulgaria (31.1%) and Hungary (28.1%). Countries with the lowest rates are Armenia (9.0%) and Croatia (13.6%). As questions on sexual behaviour were only asked of 15 year olds internationally, there are no available comparisons for younger children<sup>1</sup>.

### Implications

Having had sex, as reported by young people in Ireland, remains stable since 2010. For 15 year olds, Ireland ranks 32nd among countries that took part in the study, with 16.7% reporting that they have ever had sex. The findings presented in this factsheet suggest that having a good

relationship with parents has a protective role against having had sex. Spending time with friends in the evening may increase the likelihood of young people reporting having had sex. Having had sex is not necessarily a health risk as long as those involved are engaging freely and have had adequate emotional and physical preparation for this developmental milestone.

### References

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2. Gavin, A., Keane, E., Callaghan, M., Molcho, M., Kelly, C. & Nic Gabhainn, S. (2015). *The Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study 2014*. Dublin: Department of Health & Galway: Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway.
3. Avery, L. & Lazdane, G. (2008). What do we know about sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in Europe? *The European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care*, 13(1), 58-70.
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