

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Ireland

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Background

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The HBSC study runs on an academic four-year cycle (www.hbsc.org). HBSC collects information on the key indicators of health, health attitudes and health behaviours, as well as the context of health for young people. The study was established in 1982. There has been a constant growth in the number of participating countries in the HBSC network: internationally, HBSC currently includes 50 countries from North America and the WHO European Region. Researchers from University of Galway, with the leadership of Professor Saoirse Nic Gabhainn, joined the network in 1994, with the first data collection taking place in 1998. The 2022 survey was the seventh time that Ireland has been involved in this international collaborative study.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the HBSC study is to gain new insight into young people's health and well-being; understand the social determinants of health; and inform policy and practice to improve young people's lives.

Design/Methods

The HBSC study is conducted in schools with data collected through self-completion questionnaires administered by teachers in the classroom. In 2022 the HBSC team introduced an online version of the questionnaire and schools self-selected their method of delivery (online or traditional pen and paper method). The survey instrument is a standardised questionnaire developed by the international research network, which is supplemented by questions on issues of national importance for practice and policy development. The survey is administered to a representative sample of 11-, 13- and 15-year-old students in each participating country. In Ireland, primary (3rd-6th class) and post-primary (years 1st-5th) school pupils take part in the survey, thus children aged 9-17 years are represented in the sample. The most recent national data collection took place in 2022,

with over 10,000 young people participating and the HBSC team are currently finalising the data file.

In 2022 the priority for the HBSC Ireland Team was finalising the survey instrument, preparing the final sample of schools to be recruited and the recruitment process itself. The HBSC Ireland data were submitted at the end of December 2022 to the HBSC International Databank, meeting the deadline for HBSC Ireland data to be included in all upcoming international outputs.

Public Patient Involvement

Young people actively participate in various stages of the HBSC research cycle, from formulating research and survey questions to prioritising topics for dissemination. An overview of the central role children play in the study and the impact this has had on policy can be viewed [here](#).

Dissemination

HBSC Ireland data appeared in 7 national reports, 2 international reports and in 29 peer reviewed papers in 2022.

Knowledge Translation

The HBSC Ireland Team is involved in several forms of knowledge translation, addressing various topics on adolescent health for different audiences. HBSC Ireland operates a knowledge translation helpdesk to respond to data requests from health authorities, local governments, and fellow researchers. We continued work on the Short Report series and the provision of specific requested analyses from government, NGO and the community sector. All outputs from HBSC Ireland are available at www.universityofgalway.ie/hbhc. The HBSC Ireland twitter page (@hbhcireland) reports regularly on our outputs and their impact.

The HBSC Ireland study was chosen to be featured in a television programme entitled *Change Makers*. This programme, brought to life by the Irish Universities Association, New Decade TV and RTÉ featured transformative research-led projects and the inspiring people behind them. The episode featuring HBSC focused on the participative role that children play in the HBSC research cycle. It aired on January 7th 2022, and is available to view on our website. A flavour of the episode is available [here](#).

HBSC Ireland was also chosen as a case study, from across the University, to demonstrate our research impact and highlighted the central role children play in the study; view [here](#).