

HBSC IRELAND

The Health Behaviour in School-aged children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams^{1,2} in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (Europe) and co-ordinated by Dr Candace Currie of the University of Edinburgh. In 2002 HBSC Ireland surveyed 8,424 Irish children from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

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



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Summary

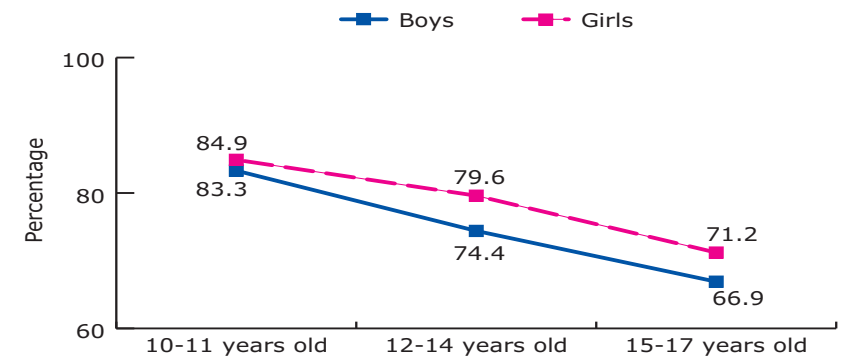
HBSC Ireland has found that 75.6% of children report finding it easy to talk to their mothers (73.4% of boys and 77.1% of girls), which represents a slight increase since 1998. The percentage of children that find it easy to talk to their mothers decreases with age, from 83.3% of 10-11 year old boys and 84.9% of 10-11 year old girls, to 66.9% of 15-17 year old boys and 71.2% of 15-17 year old girls. Children who find it easy to talk to their mothers are less likely to: report frequent emotional and physical symptoms, have been really drunk, have been injured, have bullied others and smoke cigarettes, while they are more likely to: report excellent health and feeling happy about their life. Ease in talking to mothers in this factsheet refers to children who report finding it easy or very easy to talk their mothers about things that really bother them.

Why this topic?

Within the family, the well-being of children is influenced by the family's relational well-being, which among other things includes both parent-parent relationships and parent-child relationships. Both fathers and mothers have a crucial influence on both these aspects of family relations³.

Trends 1998 – 2002

The percentage of children who report that they find it easy to talk to their mother has increased slightly between 1998 (72.9%) and 2002 (75.6%). This increase is more pronounced among boys (69.6% to 73.4%) while the percentage of girls remains relatively stable (76% to 77.1%). This increase is seen across all age groups although it is most



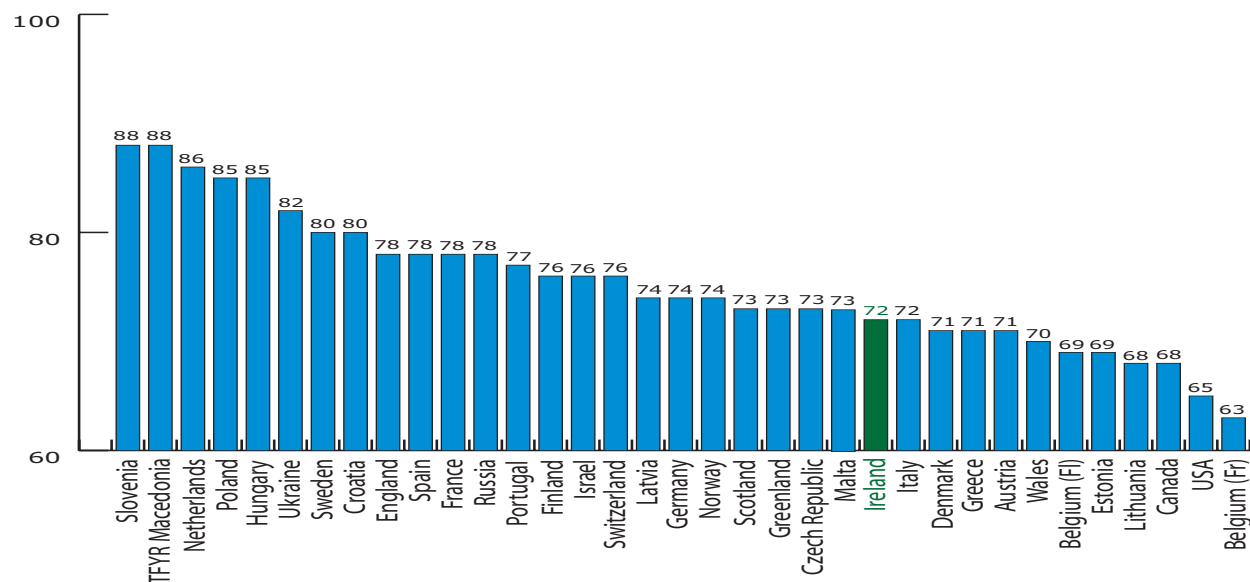
Percentage of children who report finding it easy to talk to their mothers by age and gender, HBSC 2002

prominent among boys aged 15- 17 (63.9%- 69.5%).

Relationship with mothers in context

- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are more likely to report excellent health (30% vs. 22%) and feeling happy about their lives (49% vs. 29%), than those who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report frequent physical symptoms (22% vs. 32%) and emotional symptoms (12% vs. 22%), than those who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report having been really drunk, than children who do not (27% vs. 43%).
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report having been injured, than those who do not (45% vs. 48%).
- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report having bullied others, than those who do not (19% vs. 25%).

...Relationship with mothers among Irish schoolchildren



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

- Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to be current smokers than those who do not (16% vs. 26%).
- Ease of talking to mother is not associated with social class or exercising more than 4 times a week.

International

Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 24th among 35 countries in Europe and North America with 72% reporting that they find easy to talk to their mother. Overall 81% of Irish 11 year olds (rank 32nd) and 78% of Irish 13 year olds (rank 23rd) report finding it easy to talk to their mother.

Implications

The overall percentage of young people in Ireland who report finding it easy to talk to their mothers has shown

a slight increase since 1998. This percentage is relatively low among other countries in Europe and North America. The findings presented in this factsheet show that strong relationships are associated with high levels of health and happiness. However, the findings also show that older children find it harder to talk to their mothers. This pattern needs further investigation to find out whether it is a progressive decline that continues into adulthood or if it is purely associated with adolescence. Emphasis needs to be placed on assisting parents to help develop and maintain their relationships with their children. Attention also needs to be focused on children who have poor relationships with their mother and alternative support structures developed to help prevent engagement in risk and anti-social behaviours, e.g. drinking alcohol and bullying others.

References

1. Currie, C., Samdal, O., Boyce, W. & Smith, R. (eds.) (2001). Health behaviour in school-aged children: a WHO cross-national study (HBSC): research protocol for 2001/2002 survey. Edinburgh: CAHRU, University of Edinburgh.
2. Currie, C., Roberts, C., Morgan, A., Smith, R., Settertobulte, W., Samdal, O. & Barnakov-Rasmussen, V. (eds.) (2004). Young people's health in context. Health Policy for Children and Adolescent No. 4. Copenhagen: WHO-Europe.
3. McKeown, K. (2000). *Fathers and Families: Research and Reflection on Key Questions*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children.

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