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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 Edinburgh. In 2006 HBSC Ireland surveyed 10,334 schoolchildren in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

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

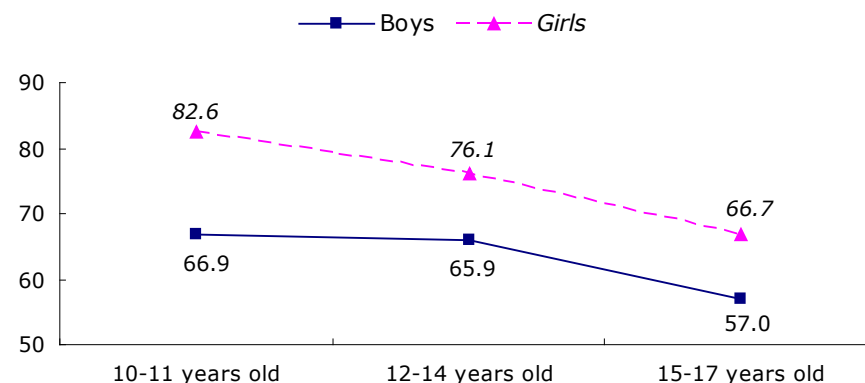
HBSC Ireland has found that 67.8% of schoolchildren in Ireland report liking school (boys 62.4% and girls 73.5%). This percentage represents a slight decrease since 1998 (72.4%). The percentage of children that like school is higher among younger children; 66.9% of boys and 82.6% of girls aged 10-11 years, 57% of boys and 66.7% of girls aged 15-17 years. Children who like school are less likely to: feel pressured by schoolwork and spend four or more evenings with friends; while they are more likely to: find it easy to talk to their parents and best friend, live with both parents, report excellent health and feel happy about their lives. Liking school in this factsheet refers to children who report liking school a bit or a lot at present.

Why this topic?

Schools are important settings for both education and health: health and education are seen as inseparable², with good health being closely related to successful learning and successful learning being a support for good health³. Liking school contributes not only to academic achievement, but to overall life satisfaction and quality of life among young people⁴, and thus is important for healthy development⁵.

Trends 2002-2006

Overall the percentage of children who report liking school a bit or a lot has remained relatively stable from 2002 (68.8%) to 2006 (67.8%). School perception remains stable over time across all age groups and genders with the exception of 10-11 year old boys which increased slightly (63.7% to 66.9%) and 15-17 year old girls which decreased slightly (69.8% to 66.7%).

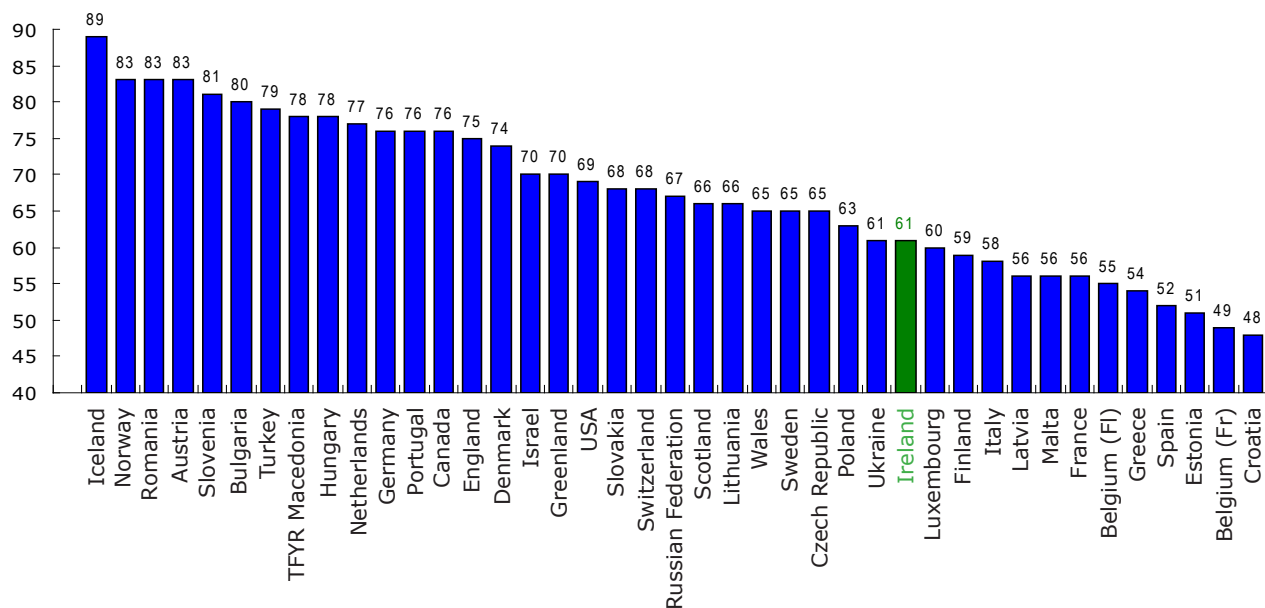


Percentage of children who reported liking school, by age and gender

School perceptions in context

- Children from higher social classes are more likely to report liking school (social classes 1-2: 72.0%, social classes 3-4: 66.6%; and social classes 5-6: 68.5%) than those from lower social classes.
- Children who report liking school are more likely to live with both parents (82.5% vs. 76.3%) than those who do not.
- Children who report liking school are more likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (84.3% vs. 73.1%), father (67.2% vs. 57.2%) and best friend (89.2% vs. 84.7%) than those who do not.
- Children who report liking school are less likely to spend more than four evenings a week with friends (38.4% vs. 50.3%) than those who do not.
- Children who report liking school are less likely to feel pressured by schoolwork (35.4% vs. 52.8%) than those who do not.

...School perceptions among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting liking school, by country

- Children who report liking school are more likely to report excellent health (37.0% vs. 25.3%) and feeling happy about their lives (56.0% vs. 36.3%) than those who do not.

International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 29th among 41 countries in Europe and North America with 61% reporting that they like school. Overall 76% of 11 year olds (ranked 27th) and 72% of 13 year olds (ranked 20th) report liking school.

Implications

The percentage of young people in Ireland that report liking school has remained relatively stable since 2002. This can be considered mid-range for 11 and 13 year olds,

but low for 15 year olds, when compared to other European and North American countries. These findings indicate that strong family relationships are related to more positive perceptions of school. In addition, liking school is related to positive health and wellbeing, while not liking school may place children at risk from dropping out and becoming further marginalised. The importance of positive school perceptions and Ireland's low international ranking among certain age groups highlights the need for inclusive strategies to be developed to prevent alienation from school. Further research should also be conducted to explore the underlying reasons for children disliking school.

References

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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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