

# SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: Findings from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study.

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**A designated WHO Collaborating Centre  
for Health Promotion Research.**

# Sexual health: current situation in Ireland

- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
  - 13,259 notifications of STIs in 2011, an increase of 12.2% when compared with 2010
- Crisis Pregnancy
  - 35% of women and 21% of men experienced crisis pregnancy in 2010
  - 13% of all pregnancies (1 in 8 pregnancies)
- Abortion
  - 21% of crisis pregnancies result in abortion
  - Women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics 2006 (n=5042)

(Health Protection Surveillance Centre 2010; 2011, ICCP, 2010)

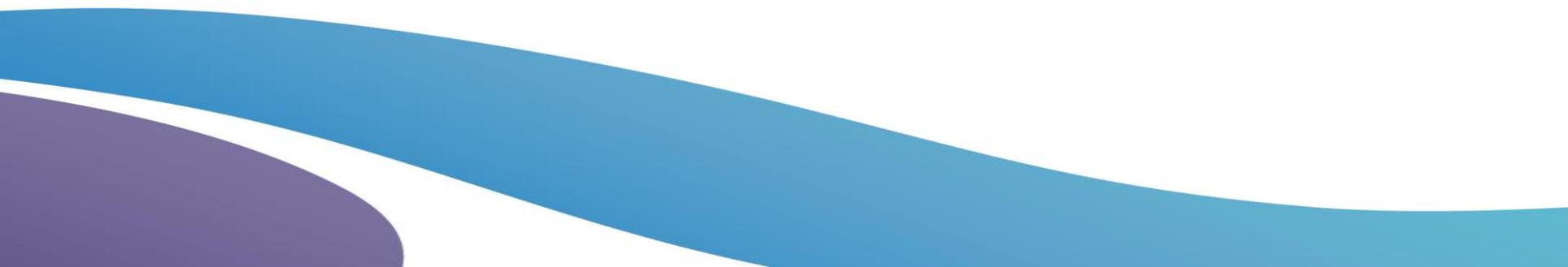


# Sexual health: current situation for young people in Ireland

- STIs
  - Increasing trend in STI notifications
  - 60.1% of STI notifications among 20 to 29 years in 2013
  - 11.1% of STI notifications from under 20 years in 2013
- Crisis Pregnancy
  - 66% of females and 31% of males aged 18-25 years reported crisis circumstances of pregnancy (ICCP)
  - 1,639 births to mothers who were under the age of 20 years in 2012 (Central Statistics Office, 2013)
- Abortion
  - 31% of crisis pregnancies resulted in abortion (ICCP)
  - 3,982 women gave Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics in 2012 (HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme)

(Health Protection Surveillance Centre 2014, ICCP 2010)

# Outcomes

- Adverse health outcomes
    - illness, infertility, psychological distress, stigma
  - Negative outcomes for young parents
    - Deprivation, academic attainment, poorer health, stigma
  - Negative outcomes for the children of teenage parents
    - Birth complications, academic attainment, emotional/behavioural problems
  - Cost to health and social care systems
    - Health Service and wider public services
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# Sexual health strategies & policies

**National  
AIDS  
Strategy  
(2000)**

**National Health  
Promotion  
Strategy  
(2000-2005)**

**Crisis  
Pregnancy  
Programme  
(2012-2016)**

**Crisis  
Pregnancy  
Agency  
(2007-2011)**

**Eastern Health  
Board: The  
Sexual Health  
Strategy  
(2005)**

**Southern  
Health Board:  
Strategy to  
Promote  
Sexual Health  
(2001-2011)**

**Western  
Health Board:  
Towards a  
Sexual Health  
Policy for the  
West (2006)**

# Sexual health strategies & policies

## New Sexual Health Strategy for Ireland...

- Currently in progress
  - Department of Health, HSE, Sexual Health Professionals, NGOs, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Education and Skills, and Institute of Public Health.
- The improvement of the nation's sexual health and wellbeing.
  - surveillance, testing, treatment, and prevention of HIV and STI's, crisis pregnancy and sexual health education and promotion.

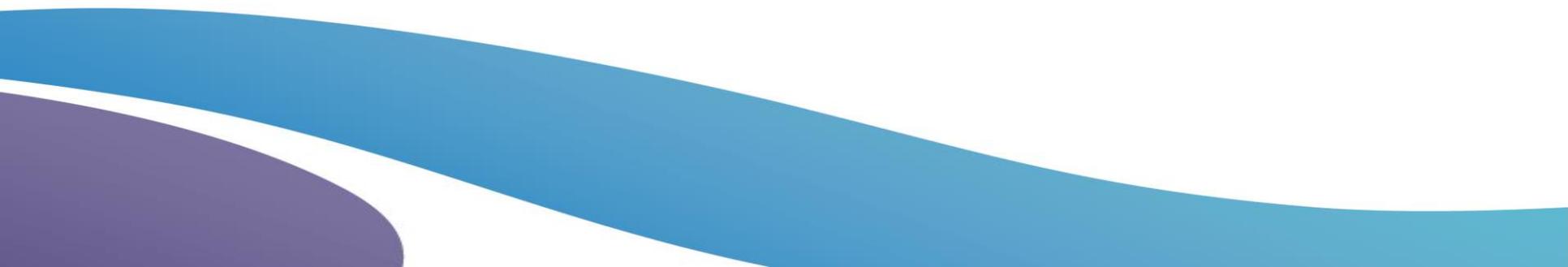
# The Health Behaviour in School aged-Children (HBSC) study

- World Health Organisation (WHO) cross-national research project
  - Improve understanding of young people's health and wellbeing, including sexual behaviours
  - 200,000 school children aged 11, 13 and 15 years across 43 countries every 4 years
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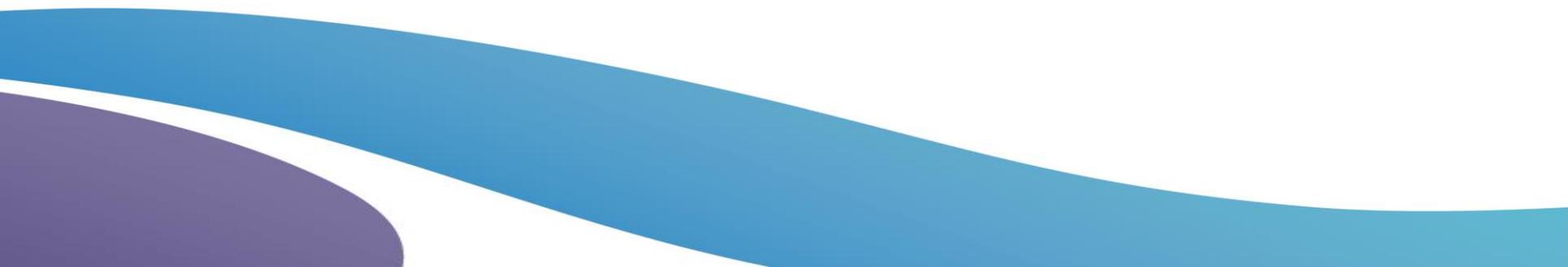
# HBSC Ireland

- Carried out in Ireland since 1998
  - Data collection in Ireland extended to include young people aged 9 to 18 years
  - Sample is representative of geographical population distribution of children in Ireland based on census data
  - In HBSC Ireland 2010:
    - 256 schools were recruited - response rate of 67%
    - 16,060 school children took part - response rate of 85%
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# Measures: Sexual Health Behaviour

- Mandatory sexual health questions introduced in 2002 (Ireland in 2010)
    - Have you ever had sexual intercourse? (Sometimes this is called “making love”, “having sex” or “going all the way”)
    - How old were you when you had sexual intercourse for the first time?’
    - The last time you had sexual intercourse, what method(s) did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy?
    - The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?
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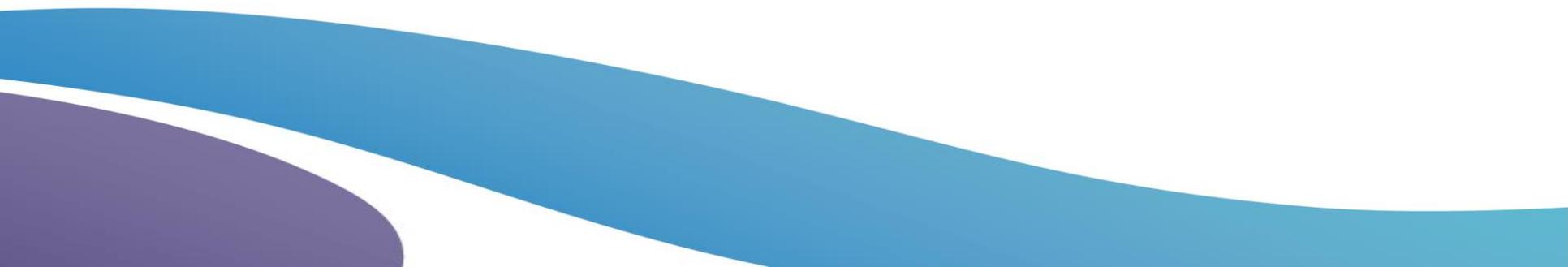
# Aim

- Adolescents' sexual intercourse, age of initiation and contraceptive use at last intercourse in relation to socio-demographic and lifestyle characteristics
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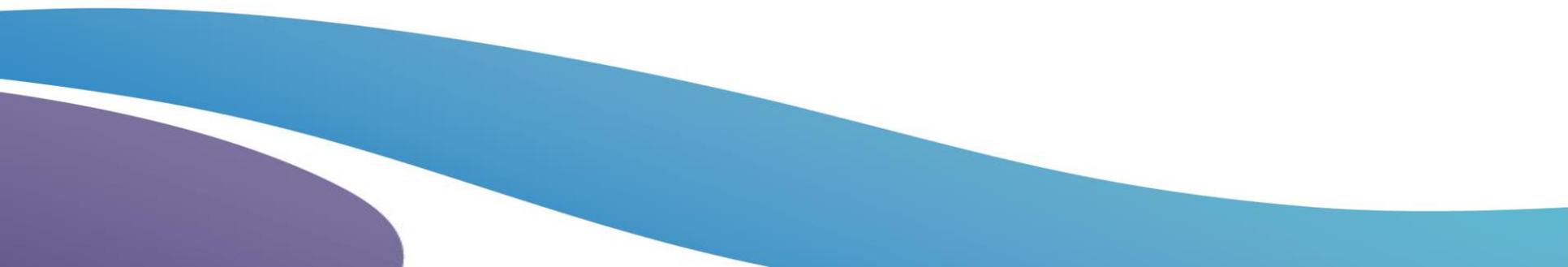
# Measures: Socio-demographic & Lifestyle

Demographic	Lifestyle	
<p>Age Social class Family affluence Traveller status Household composition Disability or Chronic Illness</p>	<p><b>Socio-cultural</b> Communication with friends Sense of community Neighbourhood environment Bullying others Music &amp; drama Being bullied Club/team activities Good adult communication Health check-ups</p>	<p><b>Negative lifestyle behaviours</b> Alcohol involvement Cannabis involvement Unhealthy food from parents Smoking involvement Unhealthy food consumption</p>
	<p><b>Health</b> Symptoms Quality of life Medication for physical symptoms Medication for psychological symptoms</p>	<p><b>Positive lifestyle behaviours</b> Exercise Active travel Healthy food Breakfast Teeth/seatbelt</p>

# Methods

- 4,494 school children aged **15-18 years**
  - Sexual health behaviour
  - Socio-demographic and lifestyle characteristics
  - **Chi-square tests** - relationships between categorical variables
  - **Logistic regression** - examine the predictors of sexual intercourse, age of initiation and contraceptive non-use
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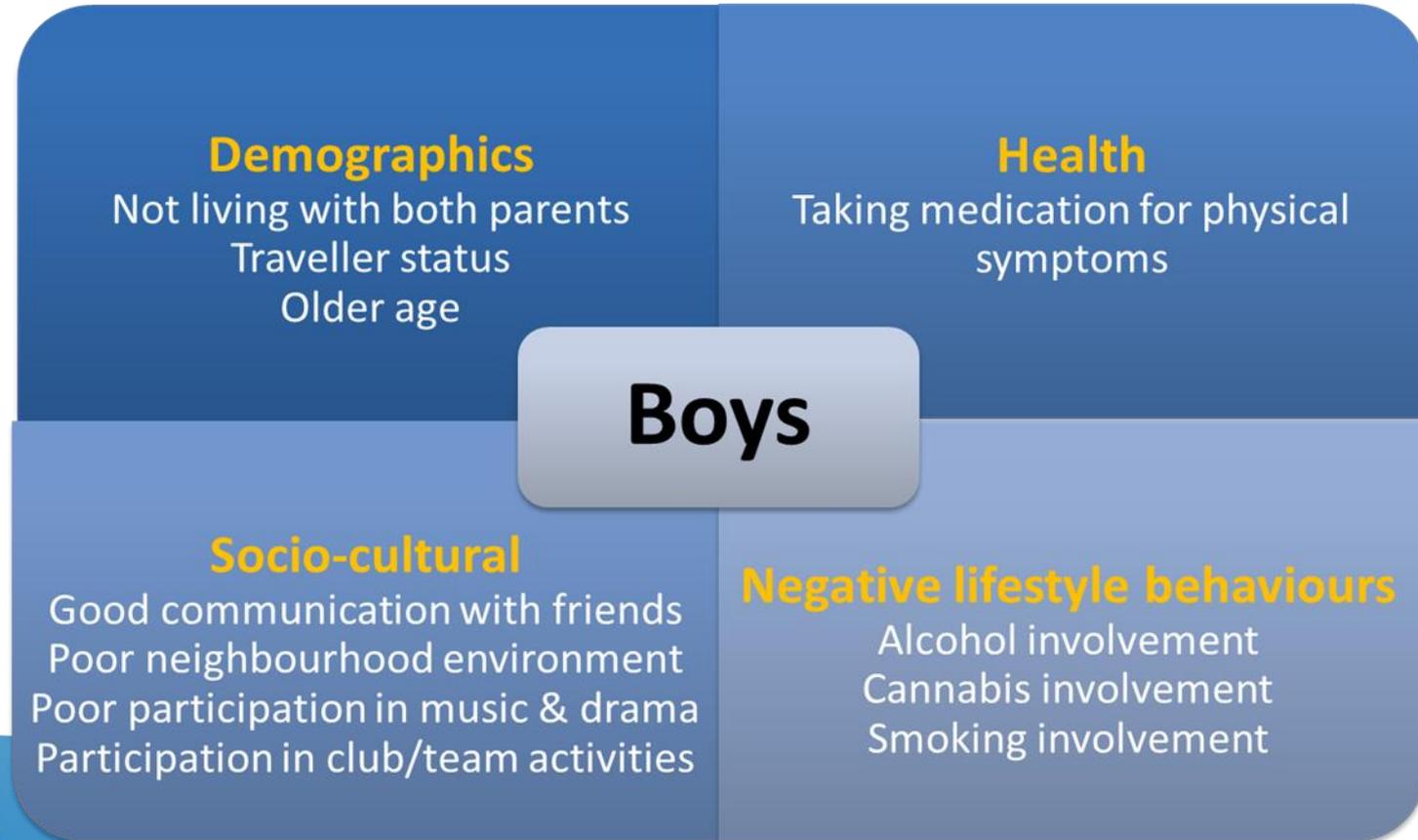
# Data Management

- Data inconsistencies
    - Rigorous decision-making process
    - Issues associated with self-report data
  - **What to report?**
    - **Sample / Relevant Sample** (e.g., all participants / all those who reported having sex)
    - **Respondents** (e.g., all those who responded to a question)
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# Experience of Sexual Intercourse

- **26.1%** of adolescents aged 15-18 years reported having engaged in sexual intercourse (n=1065/4088)
  - **28.8%** of boys (n=619) and **22.8%** (n=439) of girls reported they ever had sexual intercourse
  - **21.2%** of respondents reported initiating sexual intercourse before the age of 17 years (n=951) (**22.6%** of boys; **19.4%** of girls).
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# Predictors of Engagement in Sexual Intercourse



# Predictors of Engagement in Sexual Intercourse

## Demographics

Social class (middle)  
Older age

## Positive lifestyle behaviours

Inactive modes of travel

## Girls

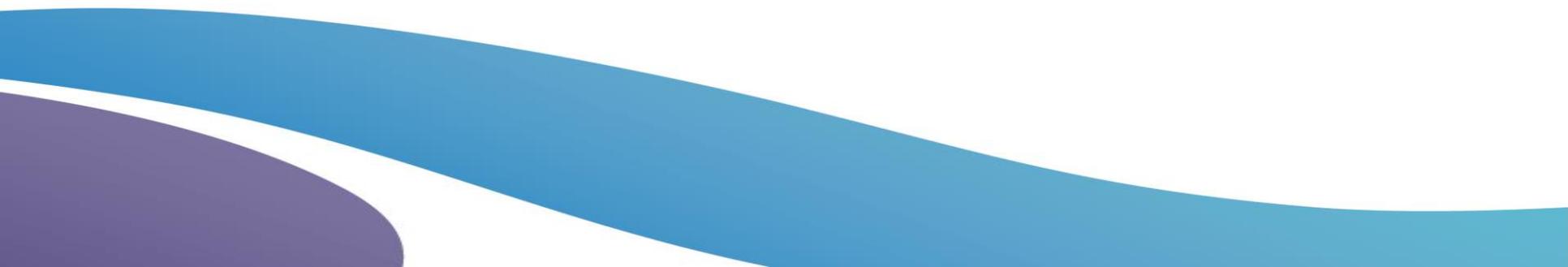
## Socio-cultural

Good communication with friends  
Poor neighbourhood environment  
Being bullied and bullying others  
Poor participation in music & drama

## Negative lifestyle behaviours

Alcohol involvement  
Cannabis involvement  
Smoking involvement  
Unhealthy food consumption

# Age of Sexual Initiation Before 14 Years

- **3.2%** boys (n=141) and **1.3%** girls (n=59) of the whole sample (n=4494) were sexually active before age 14 years
  - Of those young people who reported being sexually active, **22.8%** of boys (n=141/619) and **13.4%** of girls (n=59/439) reported being sexually active before age 14 years
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# Predictors of Sexual Initiation Before 14 Years

## Demographics

Rural area

## Health

Less symptoms

Medication for psychological symptoms

All

## Socio-cultural

Poor communication with friends  
Bullying others  
Lack of health check-ups

## Negative lifestyle behaviours

Alcohol involvement  
Cannabis involvement

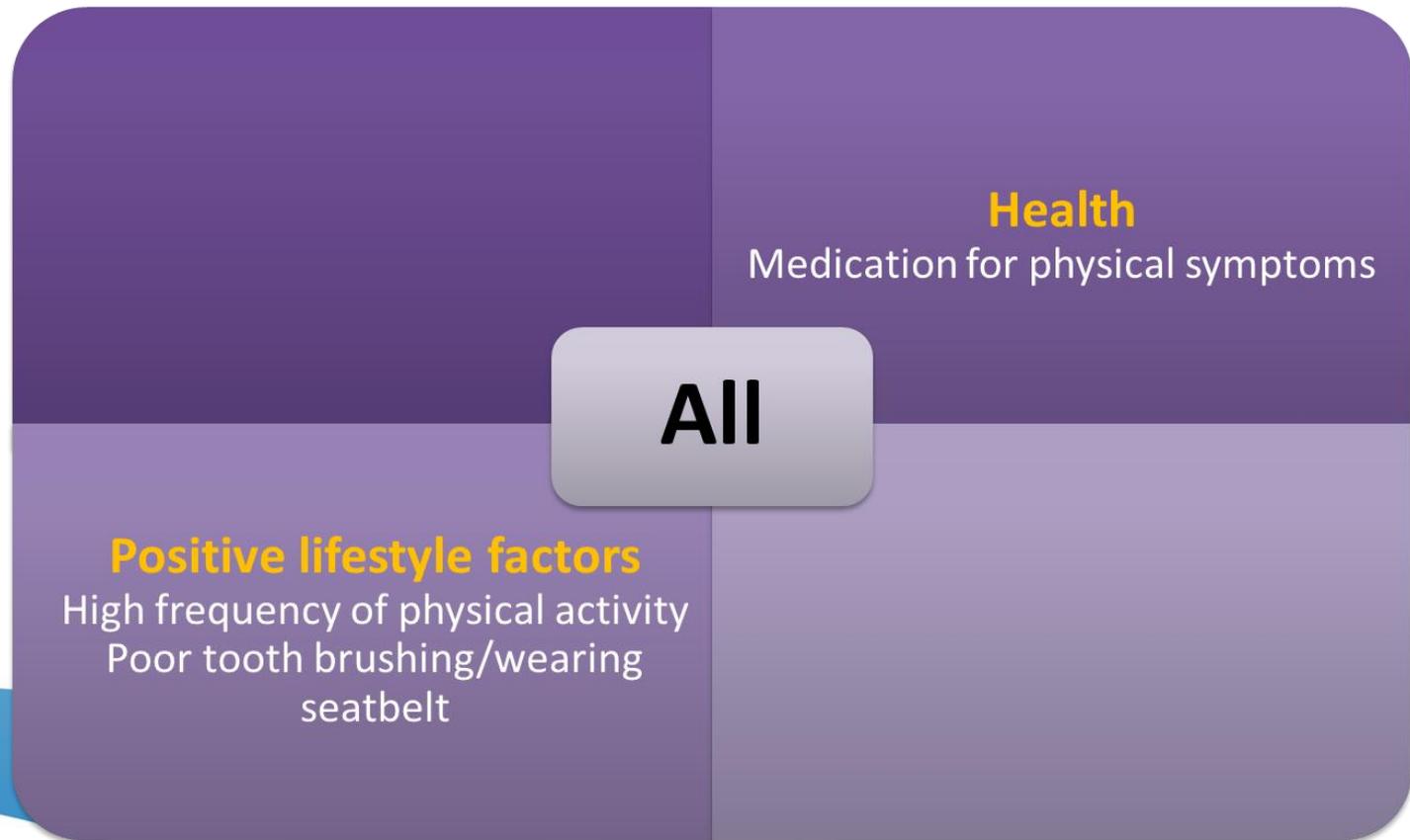
# Contraceptive Methods Used at Last Intercourse

- Contraceptive methods of those who reported engaging in sexual intercourse

Contraceptive type	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Condom	79.0	80.0
Contraceptive pill	19.4	26.9
Dual (Condom & contraceptive pill)	17.0	23.3
Withdrawal	14.5	14.6

- 10.5%** of boys and **6.8%** of girls reported using no reliable method of contraception at last intercourse

# Predictors of Non-Condom Use at Last Sexual Intercourse



# Predictors of Non-Dual Contraceptive Use at Last Sexual Intercourse

## Demographics

Younger age  
Boys

## Negative lifestyle behaviours

Alcohol involvement

All

# Summary

- Socio-demographic variables associated with sexual behaviours.
  - Adolescents are a distinct group with unique influences on their sexual health and behaviour (clusters of risk/protective factors)
  - Develop and implement specifically targeted policy and interventions which take a holistic approach in addressing the needs of those most at risk
  - More research required to further the understanding of the sexual health and practices of adolescents' across Ireland
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# Acknowledgements

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