

Short Report

HBSC Ireland 2014: Traveller children's health and lifestyle compared to all other children in Ireland

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Introduction

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and runs on a four-year cycle. In 2014, Ireland participated for the fifth time in the HBSC study (www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc). The overall aims of the HBSC study are to gain new insight into, and increase our understanding of young people's health and well-being, health behaviours and their social context. HBSC collects data on key indicators of health, health attitudes, and health behaviours, as well as the context of health for young people. The study is a school-based survey with information collected from students through self-completion questionnaires in classrooms. HBSC Ireland 2014 was funded by the Department of Health. Further information on the HBSC Ireland can be found at www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc or www.hbsc.org, the International HBSC website.

The most recent HBSC Ireland study was conducted in 2014 and included 13,611 school-children from 3rd class in primary school to 5th year in post-primary school. Overall, 42.2% boys and 57.8% girls participated. Collectively, 230 primary and post-primary schools across Ireland participated in this study. The methods employed comply with the International HBSC protocol and are detailed in the national report from the 2014 survey see http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/hbsc_2014.html. The sample is nationally representative of 10-17 year olds however some 9, 18 and 19 year olds are also included in analyses, though not nationally representative for these ages.

Focus of this report

This report was requested the Primary Health Care Project, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. This short report presents a brief analysis of children who identify as being a

member of the travelling community compared to those who report they are not a member. Comparisons are made on a number of socio-demographic and lifestyle indicators. Overall, 290 (2.2%) of the sample reported being members of the travelling community, 411 (3.0%) were missing and 12,910 (94.8%) were not members of the travelling community. According to the 2011 census children from the traveller population accounted for 1.2% of the total child population.

The HBSC Ireland questionnaire asks about traveller status using the following question;

- Are you a member of the Travelling community? Response options; Yes or No

Children were asked the following other questions used in this report:

Socio-economic

- Does your mother or father have a job, if yes what place and exactly what job he/she does there; this was recoded to social class (SC) 1-2 (highest), 3-4 (middle) and 5-6 (lowest). The categories used for SC are standard and were determined by the highest reported parental occupation. SC 1-2 represents professional occupations such as solicitor and doctors or managerial such as nurses, teacher. SC 3-4 represents non-manual occupations such as sales, office clerk or skilled manual occupations such as hairdresser or carpenter. SC 5-6 represents semi-skilled occupations such as postman or driver as well as unskilled occupations such as cleaner or labourer.

Dietary habits

- How many days a week do you usually eat or drink...1) fruit, 2) vegetables or 3) soft drinks with added sugar. Responses were i) Never, ii) less than once a week, iii) once a week, iv) 2-4 days a week, v) 5-6 days a week, vi) once a day, every day, vii) every days more than once. These were recoded into daily versus less than daily consumption
- How often do you usually have breakfast (more than a glass of milk or fruit juice) responses ranged from never to 7 days? Recoded as less than 5 days versus 5 or more days.

Physical & leisure time activity

- Outside of school hours: How often do you usually exercise in your free time so much that you get out of breath or sweat? Responses were recoded as at least 4-6 times per week/everyday vs. 2-3 times a week to never
- How many hours a day, in your free time do you usually spend watching TV, videos (including YouTube or similar services), DVDs and other entertainment on screen? Responses ranged from none at all to 7 or more hours a day. Recoded as less than 2 hours vs. greater or equal to 2 hours a day

Family & peer support

- How easy is it for you to talk to 1) mother or 2) father about things that really bother you? Responses were recoded as i) very easy or easy, ii) difficult or very difficult, iii) don't have or see this person.
- At present how many close male and female friends do you have? Responses ranged from 0 to 3 or more. Recoded as 3 or more vs. less. This question was also recoded using child gender to get friends of opposite sex

Bullying

- The following questions refer to being bullied at school or via cyber methods
 - 1) How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?
 - 2) How often have you been bullied in the following ways; someone sent mean instant messages, wall postings, emails and text messages, or created a website that made fun of me.
 - 3) Someone took unflattering or inappropriate picture of me without permission and posted them online

Responses were i) I have not been bullied at school or in this way in the past couple of months, ii) it only happened once or twice, iii) 2 or three times a month, iv) about once a week, v) several times a week. All bullying variables were recoded as bullied at least once vs. never bullied. Mean messages and inappropriate pictures were coded together into cyber-bullied.

Physical fights and injuries

- During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight? Responses were recoded as ever in a fight (i) 1 time, ii) 2 times iii) 3 times iv) 4 times or more) vs. never in a fight in the past 12 months
- During the past 12 months, how many times were you injured and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse? responses were recoded as at least once (1 time up to 4 times or more) and never injured in the past 12 months

School participation

- In our school the students take part in making the rules. Responses were on a 5 point scale; i) strongly agree to v) strongly disagree. Recoded as i) agree/strongly agree, ii) neutral, iii) disagree/strongly disagree

Area that they live

- Generally speaking, I feel safe in the area where I live; responses i) always, ii) most of the time, iii) sometimes, iv) rarely or never, recoded as always/most of the time vs. sometimes/never
- There are good places to spend your free time (e.g. leisure centre, parks, shops) response 5 point scale from i)strongly agree to v) strongly disagree, recoded as 1) strongly agree/agree, 2) neutral and 3) disagree/strongly disagree

Happiness

- In general how do you feel about your life at present? Responses recoded as happy (I feel very happy or quite happy) and not happy (I don't feel very happy or I'm not happy at all)
- Thinking about the last week...have you been happy with the way you are, responses recoded as happy (very often or always) and not happy (never, seldom or quite often)

Sexuality

- Are you comfortable talking about your sexuality, responses were yes, no, and don't know. (This was only asked for adolescents 15 years and older)

Smoking

- How often do you smoke at present? Responses were i) everyday ii) at least once a week, but not every day iii) less than once a week iv) I do not smoke. Recoded as weekly vs. less than weekly or never
- Have you ever smoked tobacco (at least one cigarette, cigar or pipe) response was yes or no
- How many days (if any) have you smoked cigarettes in your lifetime, responses ranged from never to 30 days or more. Recoded into yes or no

Alcohol

- On how many days (if any) have you drunk alcohol in your lifetime? Responses ranged from never to 30 days or more and was categorised into never vs. at least one days (this question was not asked to younger children)
- Have you ever drunk so much alcohol that you were really drunk in the last 30 days? Responses ranged from never to yes, more than 10 times. Recoded as yes, no (this question was not asked to younger children)

Cannabis use

- Have you ever taken cannabis (hashish, grass, pot) in your life? Responses ranged from never to 30 days or more. This was categorised as yes, no (this question was not asked to younger children)

Sexual activity

- Have you ever had sexual intercourse? (Sometimes this is called ‘making love’, ‘having sex’, or ‘going all the way’), responses were yes no (this question was only asked to those 15 years and older)

Socio-demographic characteristics of traveller children compared to all other children

Table 1: Percentage of traveller children and all other children, by gender and age

Age	Traveller children		All other children	
	Boys (39.0)	Girls (58.6)	Boys (42.3)	Girls (57.5)
9 years or younger	14.2	17.7	10.7	9.7
10-11	24.8	23.5	23.3	22.9
12-14	31.0	33.5	35.6	35.2
15-17	27.4	20.6	28.9	31.3
18+	2.7	3.5	1.1	0.8
Missing age	-	1.2	0.5	0.3

Gender: n=7 (2.4%) missing for traveller versus n=28 (0.2%) missing for all other children
 Age: n=4 (1.4%) missing for traveller children and n=49 (0.4) missing for all other children missing
 Column percentages; all percentages in each column add to 100%

Table 2: Percentage of traveller children and all other children, by highest parental social-class and age-group

Age	Traveller children				All other children			
	SC 1-2 (21.0)	SC 3-4 (27.2)	SC 5-6 (9.3)	Missing SC (42.4)	SC 1-2 (41.4)	SC 3-4 (33.2)	SC 5-6 (9.7)	Missing SC (15.7)
9 years or younger	14.9	38.3	8.5	38.3	37.9	35.2	9.4	17.6
10-11	23.2	20.3	10.1	46.4	40.0	36.4	10.3	13.3
12-14	21.3	29.8	5.3	43.6	39.7	33.4	10.1	16.8
15-17	25.8	25.8	15.2	33.3	46.0	29.9	9.0	15.2
18+	10.0	10.0	10.0	70.0	30.8	36.8	8.6	23.9

Row percentages; all percentages across the row for traveller children and all other children separately add to 100%

Dietary habits and leisure time activity of traveller children compared to all other children

Table 3: Percentage of traveller children and all other children consuming, fruit, vegetables or soft drinks at least once per day and consuming breakfast on at least 5 days

	Traveller children	All other children
Daily fruit	42.1	43.4
<i>Missing fruit</i>	4.1	2.5
Daily vegetables	38.3	45.4
<i>Missing veg</i>	6.6	3.8
Daily soft drinks	20.3	11.0
<i>Missing soft drink</i>	7.2	3.7
Eat breakfast >=5 days*	59.0	71.7
<i>Missing breakfast q</i>	17.6	14.5

* Question about breakfast was asked slightly different for older age-group (12-18 year olds) compared to younger age-groups (9-11 year olds)

Table 4: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who exercise at least 4 times a week and who watch TV greater than 2 hours per day

	Traveller children	All other children
Physical Activity over the last 7 days	57.2	51.4
<i>Missing</i>	11.0	7.1
TV viewing greater than 2 hours/day*	4.7	2.4
<i>Missing</i>	17.5	7.2

* TV question was not asked to younger children n=79 traveller children and n=2859 all other children. This age-group was excluded from analysis, missing calculated of those who were asked question.

Family and peer support for traveller children compared to all other children

Table 5: Percentage traveller children and all other children who find it easy to talk to their mother or father about things that really bother them

	Traveller children	All other children
Easy to talk to mother	70.0	77.0
<i>Missing</i>	11.0	5.2
Easy to talk to father	57.6	62.4
<i>Missing</i>	11.4	4.7

Table 6: Percentage of traveller children and all other children with 3 or more friends of the same gender and of the opposite gender

	Traveller children	All other children
3 or more friends of same gender	76.9	83.3
<i>Missing</i>	10.3	4.7
3 friends of opposite gender	54.8	52.0
<i>Missing</i>	14.5	7.0

Being bullied in traveller children compared to all other children

Table 7: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who report having been bullied at least once in the past couple of months

	Traveller children	All other children
Bullied at school at least once	32.1	26.5
<i>Missing</i>	5.9	3.2
Cyber-bullied at least once *	25.9	22.0
<i>Missing</i>	13.2	5.1

* Cyber-bullying was not asked to younger children n=79 traveller children and n=2859 all other children, these children were excluded from analyses, missing calculated of those who were asked question.

Table 8: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who report having been in a physical fight at least once in the past 12 months

	Traveller children	All other children
In a physical fight during past 12 months	39.8	25.3
<i>Missing</i>	5.7	2.5

* Physical fighting was not asked to younger children n=79 traveller children and n=2859 all other children and were excluded from analyses, missing calculated of those who were asked question.

Table 9: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who report having been injured and needing medical treatment in the past 12 months

	Traveller children	All other children
Injured requiring medical attention	47.4	38.3
<i>Missing</i>	7.6	2.4

* Injuries requiring medical attention was not asked to younger children n=79 traveller children and n=2859 all other children and were excluded from analyses, missing calculated of those who were asked question.

Participation in making school rules

Table 10: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who report participating in school rules

	Traveller children Agree	All other children Agree
Making school rules	47.6	36.3
<i>Missing</i>	4.8	1.3

Characteristics of the area where traveller children live compared to all other children

Table 11: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who report on aspects of their neighbourhood

	Traveller children	All other children
Feel safe in area they live	76.6	87.0
<i>Missing</i>	7.2	3.6
Report good places in their area to spend free time	67.2	58.6
<i>Missing</i>	7.2	4.5

Table 12: Percentage of traveller children and all other children happy with their lives at present and happy the way they are

	Traveller children	All other children
Happy with life at present	87.2	89.1
<i>Missing</i>	3.1	1.0
Happy with the way they are	59.0	57.3
<i>Missing</i>	4.1	2.6

*question only asked to those 15 years and older n=76 traveller children and n=4028 all other children

Table 13: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who are comfortable talking about their sexuality

	Traveller children	All other children
Comfortable talking about sexuality-yes*	63.2	69.3
<i>Missing</i>	15.8	12.5

* Question only asked to those 15 years and older n=76 traveller children and n=4028 all other children, missing calculated from these age-groups only.

Table 14: Percentage of traveller children and all other children who report risk behaviours

	Traveller children	All other children
Never smoked	77.9	86.9
<i>Missing</i>	3.5	1.2
Smoke every week	10.3	4.3
<i>Missing</i>	3.8	1.1
Been drunk at least once in past 30 days*	12.8	8.5
<i>Missing</i>	22.8	9.0
Never had alcoholic drink*	55.5	58.9
<i>Missing</i>	3.3	0.9
Ever used cannabis*	21.3	8.8
<i>Missing</i>	13.7	5.9

* Not asked to younger children n=79 traveller children and n=2,859 all other children, missing calculated of those who were asked question.

** Only asked for children aged 15 years and older n=76 traveller children and n=4,028 all other children

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