

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

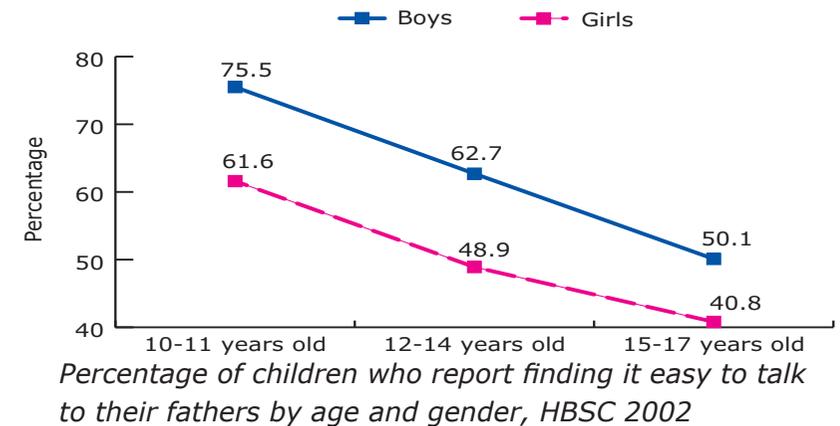
HBSC Ireland has found that 53.1% of children report finding it easy to talk to their fathers (60.5% of boys and 47.7% of girls), which represents an increase since 1998. The percentage of children that find it easy to talk to their fathers decreases with age, from 75.5% of 10-11 year old boys and 61.6% of 10-11 year old girls, to 50.1% of 15-17 year old boys and 40.8% of 15-17 year old girls. Children who find it easy to talk to their fathers are less likely to: report frequent emotional and physical symptoms, have been really drunk, have bullied others and smoke cigarettes, while they are more likely to: report excellent health, feeling happy about their life and exercise more than 4 times per week. Ease in talking to father in this factsheet refers to children who report finding it easy or very easy to talk their fathers 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 covers both parent-parent relationships and parent-child relationships. Both fathers and mothers have a crucial influence on both these aspects of family relations³.

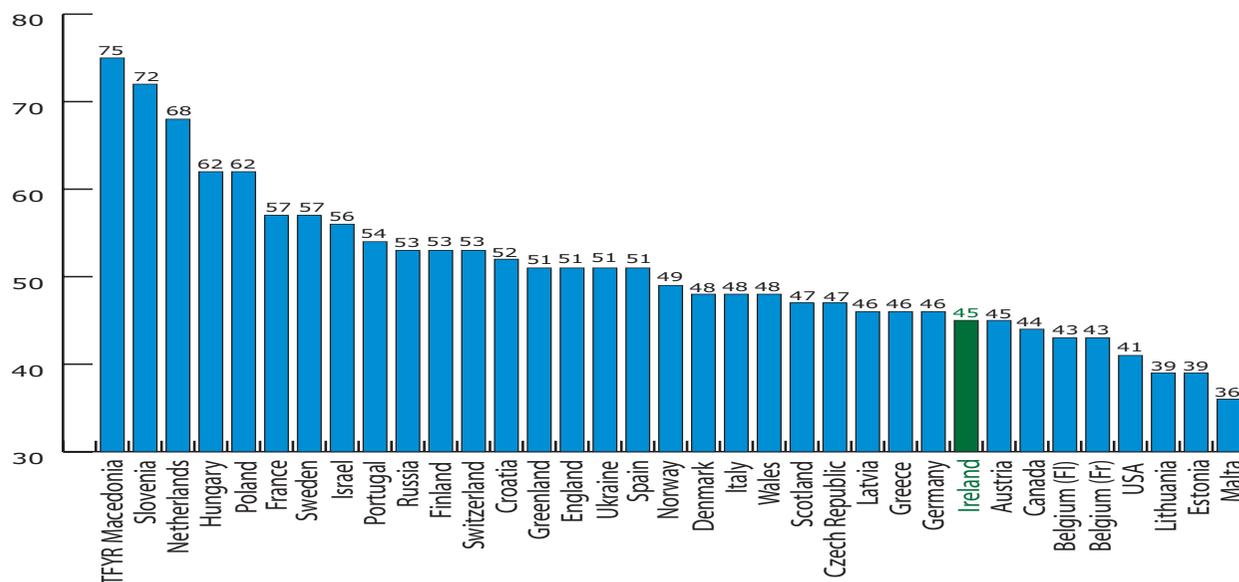
Trends 1998 – 2002

Overall the percentage of children who report that they find it easy to talk to their father has increased between 1998 (45.8%) and 2002 (53.1%). This increase is seen among boys (51.8% to 60.5%) and girls (40.0% to 47.7%) and across all age groups.

**Relationship with fathers in context**

- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are more likely to report excellent health (34% vs. 21%) and feeling happy about their life (55% vs. 32%), than those who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report frequent physical symptoms (20% vs. 30%) and emotional symptoms (10% vs. 19%), than those who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report having been really drunk, than those who do not (25% vs. 39%).
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report having bullied others, than those who do not (17% vs. 24%).
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are more likely to report exercising more than 4 times per week, than those who do not (52% vs. 42%).
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to smoke, than those who do not (13% vs. 24%).

...Relationship with fathers among Irish schoolchildren



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

- Ease of talking to father is not associated with social class or having been injured.

International

Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 27th among 35 countries in Europe and North America, with 45% reporting that they find it easy to talk to their father. Overall 66% of Irish 11 year olds (rank 21st) and 55% of Irish 13 year olds (rank 18th) report finding it easy to talk to their father.

Implications

The overall percentage of young people in Ireland who report finding it easy to talk to their fathers has increased since 1998. However, among other countries in Europe and North America, this figure is relatively low. The findings presented in this factsheet indicate that strong relationships

with fathers are associated with higher levels of health, happiness and happiness. Attention needs to be focused on children without such relationships and why older children appear to find it more difficult to talk to their fathers. Emphasis needs to be placed on assisting fathers to help develop and maintain their relationships with their children. Alternative support structures should also be developed to help prevent engagement in risk and anti-social behaviours (e.g. drinking alcohol and bullying others) for those children who have poor relationships with their fathers.

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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