

## HBSC IRELAND

The Health Behaviour in School-aged children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams<sup>1,2</sup> 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>



*Ms Pauline Clerkin, Dr Kieran Walsh and Dr Saoirse Nic Gabhainn, Centre for Health Promotion Studies, NUI Galway*

**Summary**

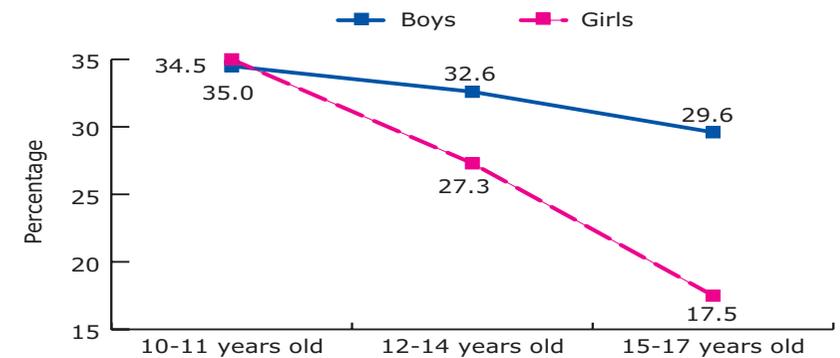
HBSC Ireland has found that 27.8% of Irish children report excellent health (boys 31.7%, girls 24.8%). This figure has remained stable since 1998. The percentage of children reporting excellent health decreases with age, from 34.5% of 10-11 year old boys and 35.0% of 10-11 year old girls, to 29.6% of 15-17 year old boys and 17.5% of 15-17 year old girls. Children with excellent health are less likely to: feel pressured by schoolwork, report frequent emotional and physical symptoms, have been really drunk and to have bullied others, while they are more likely to: be from higher social classes, live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents and feel happy. Excellent health in this factsheet refers to children who report their health is excellent.

**Why this topic?**

Self-reported measures of health capture an affective aspect of adolescent well-being. This assists in understanding the cultural and time trends that may influence children's perception of their health. Previous studies have confirmed that self-reported health is a reliable indicator of health status<sup>3</sup>.

**Trends 1998 – 2002**

Overall, the percentage of children who report excellent health has remained stable between 1998 (27.4%) and 2002 (27.8%). However, the overall number of girls who report their health as excellent has increased slightly, particularly among girls aged 15-17 (10.4% to 17.5%). There has been a slight decrease in the number of

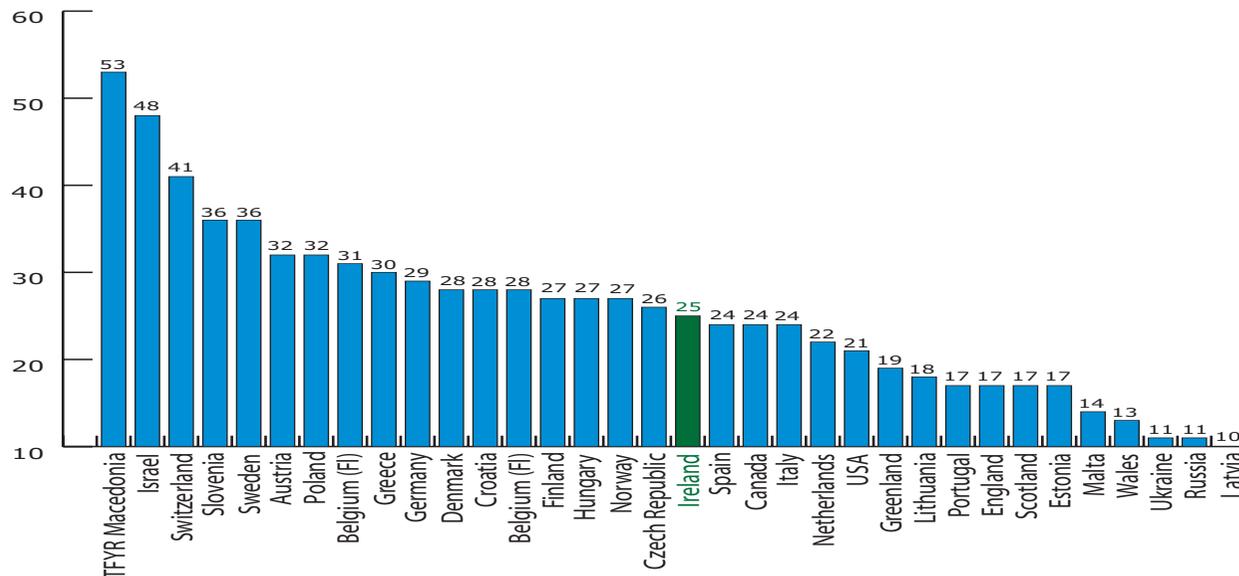


*Percentage of children who reported excellent health by age and gender, HBSC 2002*

boys reporting excellent health. This decrease is most pronounced among boys aged 10-11 (41.9% to 34.5%).

**Health perceptions in context**

- Children from higher social classes are more likely to report their health as excellent (social classes 1-2, 30%, social classes 3-4, 27%. social classes 5-6, 27%).
- Children who report excellent health are more likely to live with both parents, than those who do not (29% vs. 22%).
- Children who report excellent health are more likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (81% vs. 74%) and father (65% vs. 49%), than those who do not.
- Children who report excellent health are less likely to feel pressured by schoolwork, than those who do not (30% vs. 37%).
- Children who report excellent health are more likely to say they are happy, than those who do not (68% vs. 35%).



Percentage of 15 years old children reporting excellent health, by country

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- Children who report excellent health are less likely to report frequent physical (17% vs. 28%) and emotional symptoms (7% vs. 16%), than those who do not.
- Children who report excellent health are less likely to have been really drunk, than those who do not (23% vs. 35%).
- Children who report excellent health are less likely to have bullied others, than those who do not (17% vs. 21%).
- Self-reported excellent health is not associated with ease of talking to best friend or spending 4 evenings or more with friends.

### International

Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 18<sup>th</sup> among 34 countries in Europe and North America with 25% reporting excellent health. Overall 33% of Irish 11 year olds (ranked 22<sup>nd</sup>) and 28% of Irish 13 year olds (ranked 20<sup>th</sup>)

report their health as excellent.

### Implications

The percentage of young people in Ireland that report excellent health has remained stable since 1998, and can be considered to be midrange among the rankings of the other countries in Europe and North America. The findings presented in this factsheet indicate that positive family relationships are in turn associated with positive self-reported health. There are, however, important differences in self-reported health by social class, age and gender and these require further consideration. The substantial drop in excellent perceived health for girls is of particular concern and requires the attention of policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

### References

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3. Idler, E. L. & Benyamini, Y. (1997). Self-rated health and mortality: A review of twenty-seven community studies. *Journal of Health And Social Behavior*, 38, 21-37.