

## 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**

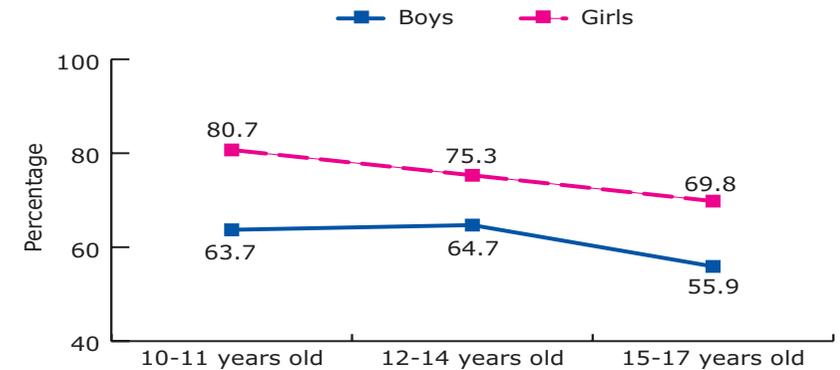
HBSC Ireland has found that 68.8% of Irish children report that they like school a bit or a lot, (boys 61.9%, girls 73.9%), representing a slight decrease since 1998. The percentage of children that like school decreases with age, from 63.7% of 10-11 year old boys and 80.7% of 10-11 year old girls, to 55.9% of 15-17 year old boys and 69.8% of 15-17 year old girls. Children who like school are less likely to: spend more than 4 evenings a week with friends and feel pressured by schoolwork, while they are more likely to: be from the higher social classes, live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents and best friend, report excellent health and feel happy. Liking school in this factsheet refers to children who report liking school a bit or a lot at present.

**Why this topic?**

School experiences influence the social and health behaviours of young people as well as their educational development<sup>3</sup>. Liking school contributes to overall life satisfaction and quality of life among young people<sup>4</sup>, and thus is important for healthy development<sup>5</sup>.

**Trends 1998 – 2002**

Overall, the percentage of children who report that they like school has decreased slightly between 1998 (72.4%) and 2002 (68.8%). This decrease is more pronounced among girls (79.5% to 73.9%) than boys (64.6% to 61.9%) and is seen across all age groups. The most marked decrease is seen in girls aged 12-14 (82.6%-75.3%).

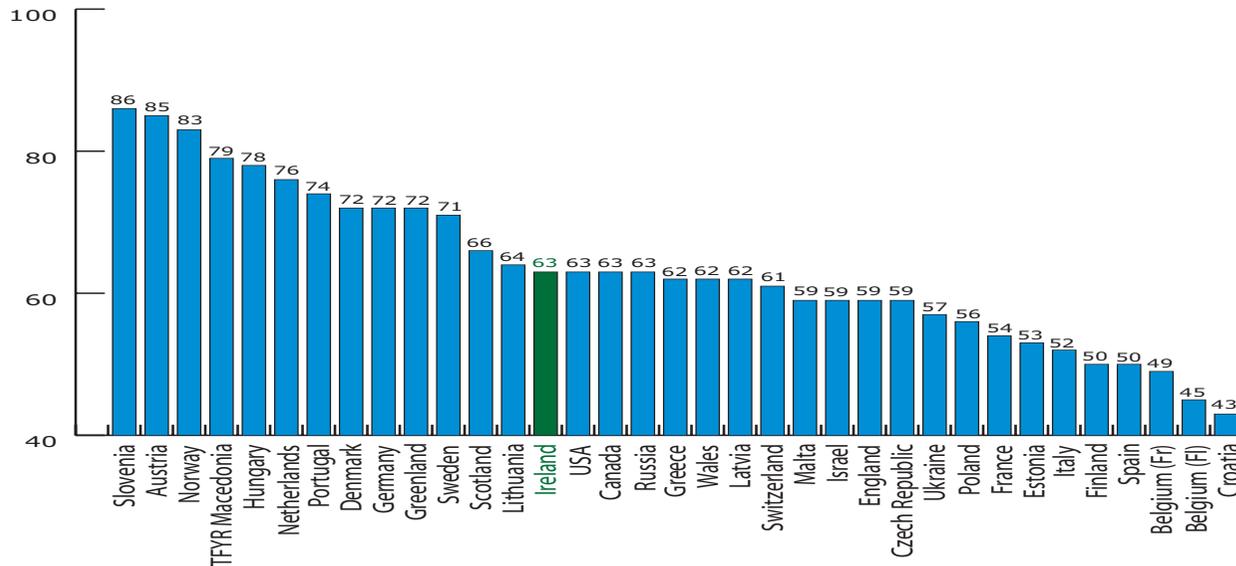


Percentage of children who reported liking school by age and gender, HBSC 2002

**School perceptions in context**

- Children from higher social classes are more likely to report that they like school (social classes 1-2, 40%, social classes 3-4, 43%. social classes 5-6, 17%).
- Children who like school are more likely to live with both parents, than those who do not (87% vs. 83%).
- Children who like school are more likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (80% vs. 66%) and father (57% vs. 44%), than those who do not.
- Children who like school are more likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend, than those who do not (86% vs. 81%).
- Children who like school are less likely to spend more than 4 evenings a week with friends, than those who do not (37% vs. 45%).
- Children who like school are less likely to feel pressured by schoolwork (31% vs. 46%), than those who do not.
- Children who like school are more likely to report excellent health (30% vs. 22%) and feeling happy about their life (50% vs. 32%), than those who do not.

## ...School perceptions among Irish schoolchildren



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

### International

Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 14<sup>th</sup> among 35 countries in Europe and North America with 63% reporting that they like school a bit or a lot. Overall 70% of Irish 11 year olds (ranked 28<sup>th</sup>) and 73% of Irish 13 year olds (ranked 12<sup>th</sup>) report liking school.

### Implications

The percentage of young people in Ireland that report liking school a bit or a lot has shown a slight decrease since 1998, and can be considered midrange between the rankings of other countries in Europe and North America. The data presented here indicate that such behaviour is relatively high compared with other countries in Europe and North America. The findings presented in this factsheet indicate that strong family relations help to encourage positive perceptions of school. In addition, the findings indicate that

liking school is related to positive health and well-being. Not liking school may place children at risk from dropping out and becoming further marginalised. Inclusive strategies need to be developed to prevent alienation from school and further research should be conducted to explore the underlying reasons for children disliking school.

### 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. Argyle, M., & Martin, M. (1991). The psychological causes of happiness. In F. Strack & M. Argyle (eds.) *Subjective well-being: An interdisciplinary perspective*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
4. Hurrelmann, K., Leppin, A. & Nordlohne, E. (1995). Promoting health in schools: the German example. *Health Promotion International*, 10, 121-131.
5. Millstein, S.G., Nightingale, E.O. & Petersen, A.C. (1993). Promoting the healthy development of adolescents. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 269, 1413-1415.

HBSC Ireland is funded by the Health Promotion Unit of the Department of Health and Children. The production of these factsheets is grant aided by the Health Research Board. HBSC Ireland was part of the National Health and Lifestyle Surveys directed by Professor Cecily Kelleher. We would like to thank all the children, teachers and schools who participated and acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues in the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, NUI Galway.