

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>



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

Summary

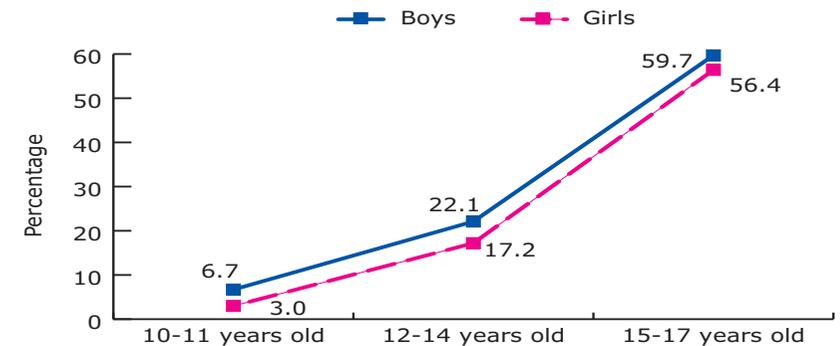
HBSC Ireland has found that 31.2% of children have had so much alcohol that they were really drunk (32.7% of boys and 30.1% of girls). This percentage has remained stable since 1998. The percentage of children that have been drunk increases with age, from 6.7% of 10-11 year old boys and 3.0% of 10-11 year old girls, to 59.7% of 15-17 year old boys and 56.4% of 15-17 year old girls. Children who have been drunk are less likely to: live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents, like school, have excellent health and be happy with their lives, while they are more likely to: spend 4 evenings or more a week with their friends and feel pressured by schoolwork. Been drunk in this factsheet refers to children who report having had so much alcohol that they were really drunk once or more in their life.

Why this topic?

A greater number of young people are starting to drink at a younger age, a higher percentage are regular drinkers by 18 years and many abuse alcohol^{3, 4, 5}. Alcohol-related misuse can result in harm to health, in economic loss, in violence and disruption of family life and serious accidents⁶.

Trends 1998 – 2002

The overall percentage of children reporting having been drunk has remained stable (29.3% in 1998 to 31.2% in 2002). There is an increase among girls (24.0% to 30.1%), while boys show a slight decrease (34.8% to 32.7%). However, the percentage of 10-11 year olds who have been drunk has more than halved (9.9% to 4.7%).

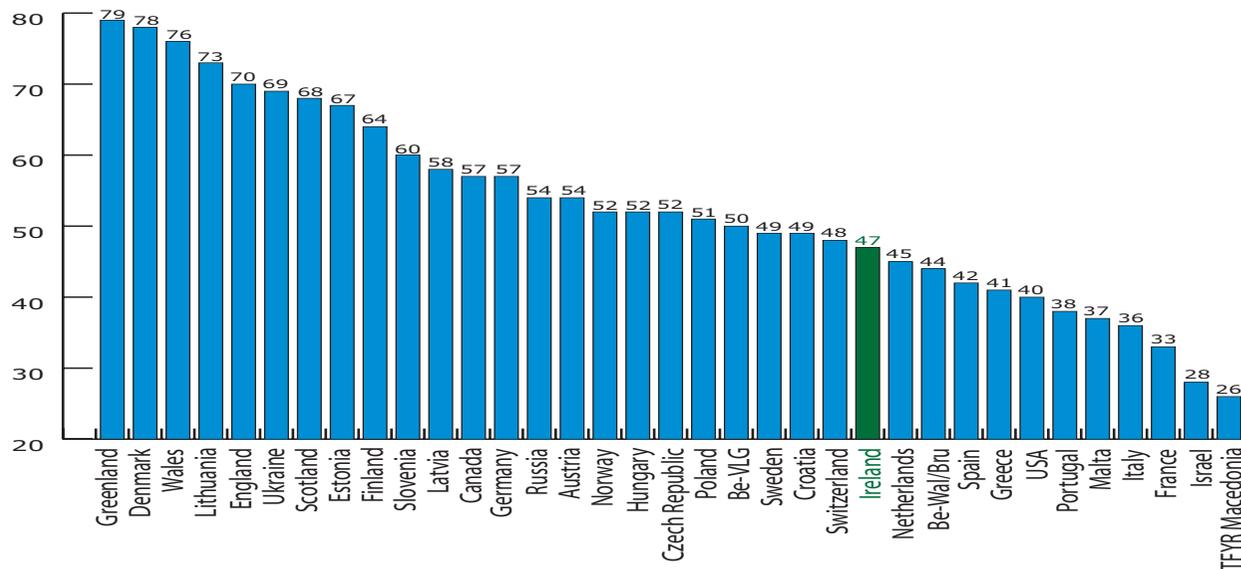


Percentage of children who have been really drunk by age and gender, HBSC 2002

Drunkenness in context

- Children who have been drunk are less likely to live with both parents, than those who have not (81% vs. 88%).
- Children who have been drunk are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mothers (66% vs. 80%) and fathers (42% vs. 58%), than those who have not.
- Children who have been drunk are more likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend, than those who have not (88% vs. 83%).
- Children who have been drunk are more likely to spend 4 evenings or more a week with their friends, than those who have not (50% vs. 35%).
- Children who have been drunk are less likely to report that they like school (57% vs. 74%) and more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork (41% vs. 32%), than those that have not.
- Children who have been drunk are less likely to report excellent health (20% vs. 31%) and feeling happy about their life (34% vs. 49%), than those who have not.
- Having been drunk is not associated with social class.

...Drunkenness among Irish schoolchildren



Percentage of 15 years old children reporting they have been drunk, by country

International

Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 24th among 35 countries in Europe and North America, with 47% reporting that they had consumed so much alcohol that they were really drunk. Overall, 5% of Irish 11 years olds (ranked 27th) and 16% of Irish 13 years olds (ranked 30th), report that they had consumed so much alcohol that they were really drunk.

Implications

The overall percentage of young people in Ireland that reported having been really drunk has remained stable since 1998, and is relatively low in comparison to some other countries in Europe and North America. Nevertheless, more than half of Irish 15-17 year olds have taken so much alcohol that they have been really drunk. The findings outlined in this factsheet suggest that strong family

relations may help to reduce drunkenness, whereas good peer relations may increase the likelihood of getting really drunk. Given the number of adolescents (including the increasing percentage of girls) that are involved in this risk behaviour effective environmental, policy and education strategies require further resources.

References

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6. Health Promotion Unit-Department of Health (1996). *The National Alcohol Policy*. Stationary Office.

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