

## 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>



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**Summary**

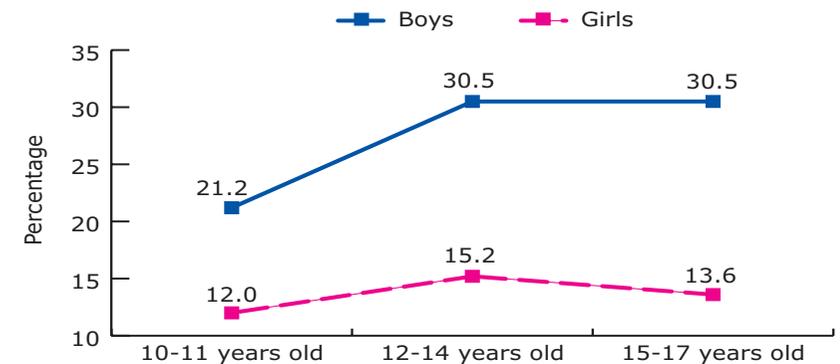
HBSC Ireland has found that 20.2% of children report having bullied others, (28.7% of boys and 14.0% of girls), representing a slight decrease since 1998. The percentage of boys bullying others increases with age up to 12-14 years (30.5%) and then remains stable, (21.2% of 10-11 year olds and 30.5% of 15-17 year olds). The percentage of girls engaged in bullying others peaks at 12-14 years old (15.2%), (12.0% of 10-11 year olds and 13.6% of 15-17 year olds). Children who have bullied others are less likely to: live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents, like school, have excellent health and feel happy, while they are more likely to: spend more than 4 evenings a week with their friends and feel pressured by schoolwork. Bullying others in this factsheet refers to children who report taking part in bullying another student(s) at school once or more in the past couple of months.

**Why this topic?**

Bullying is viewed as a problem in Irish schools and is seen as including such behaviour as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, exclusion and extortion<sup>3,4</sup>. Those students who engage in bullying may be less interested in school and more likely to engage in health-risk behaviours such as smoking and excessive drinking. In addition, it is not uncommon to find that these students are also bullied<sup>5</sup>.

**Trends 1998 – 2002**

The percentage of children who report having bullied others has decreased slightly between 1998 (24%) and 2002 (20.2%). There has been a substantial decrease among boys



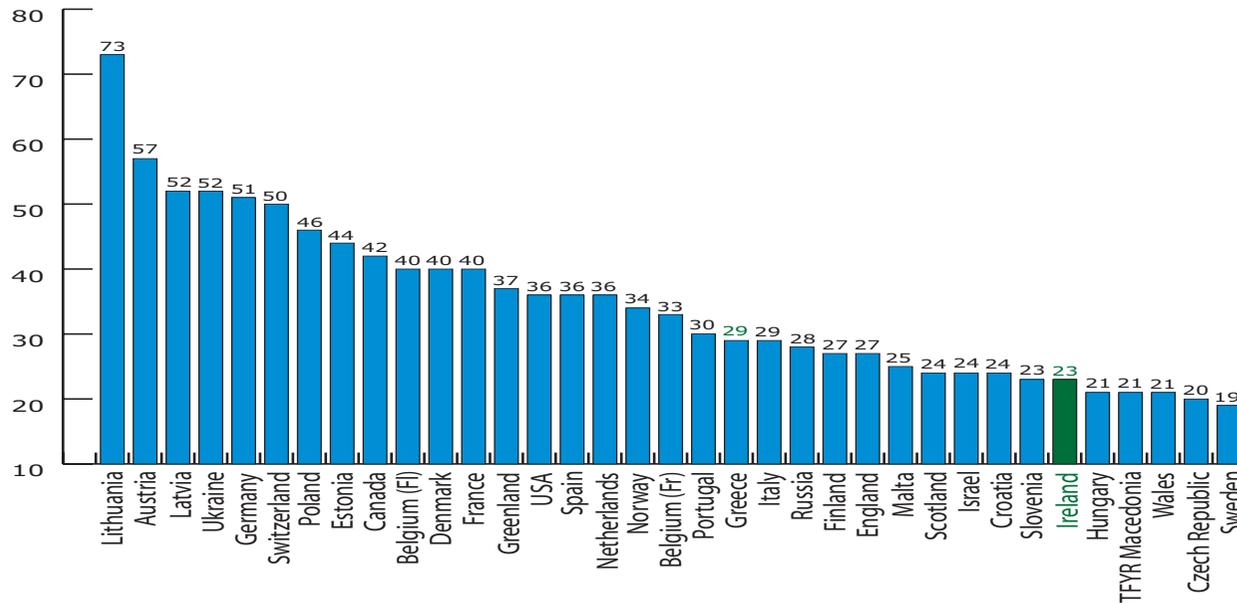
Percentage of children who have bullied others by age and gender, HBSC 2002

(34.4% to 28.7) while the percentage of girls who report having bullied others has remained stable at 14.0%. The most pronounced decrease is seen among boys aged 10-11 (32.1% to 21.1%) and boys aged 15-17 (37.1% to 30.5%).

**Bullying others in context**

- Children who are living with both parents are less likely to report having bullied others, than those who do not live with both parents (20% vs. 22%).
- Children who bullied others are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (70% vs. 77%) and father (45.6% vs. 54.4%), than those who have not.
- Children who bullied others are more likely to spend more than 4 evenings a week with their friends, than those who have not (48% vs. 37%).
- Children who bullied others are less likely to report liking school, than those who have not (60% vs. 71%).
- Children who bullied others are more likely to report feeling pressured by schoolwork, than those who have not (39% vs. 34%).

## ...Bullying others among Irish schoolchildren



Percentage of 15 years old children reporting they have bullied others, by country

- Children who bullied others are less likely to report excellent health (24% vs. 29%) and feeling happy about their life (36% vs. 46%), than those who have not.
- Bullying others is not associated with social class or ease in talking to a best friend.

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### International

Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 30<sup>th</sup> among 35 countries in Europe and North America with 23% reporting that they have bullied others. Overall 19% of Irish 11 year olds (ranked 31<sup>st</sup>) and 24% of Irish 13 year olds (ranked 32<sup>nd</sup>) report having bullied others.

### Implications

The percentage of young people in Ireland that reported having bullied others has decreased since 1998, and is low in comparison to most other countries in Europe and

North America. These findings suggest that strong family relationships may help to prevent children bullying others, while strong peer relationships may be related to such behaviour. Furthermore, those who bully others appear to be more susceptible to feeling pressured by schoolwork, poor self-rated health and not feeling happy with life. On the basis of the associations presented in this factsheet, more resources need to be invested in researching the motivations of a bully and the initiation patterns of bullying.

### References

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