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The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams¹ in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (Europe) and co-ordinated by Professor Candace Currie of the University of St Andrews. This factsheet is based on data collected in 2010 from 12,661 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

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HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN



Summary

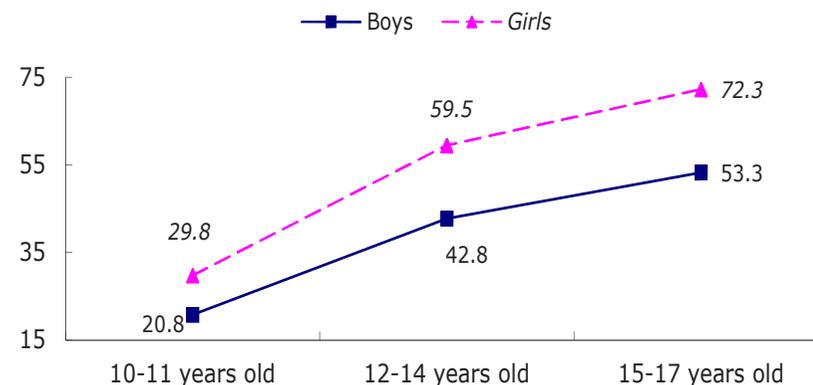
HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 51.7% of schoolchildren in Ireland report using electronic communication (phone, text messages and internet) with friends everyday (43.9% of boys and 60.0% of girls). This figure has been continually increasing since 2002; 30.9% to 42.3% in 2006 and 51.7% in 2010. Use of e-communication is more common among older children; 20.8% of boys and 29.8% of girls aged 10-11 years, 42.8% of boys and 59.5% of girls aged 12-14 years and 53.3% of boys and 72.3% of girls aged 15-17 years. Children who report using e-communication with friends everyday are more likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend and spend four or more evenings with friends. However those who do not report using e-communication with friends everyday are less likely to report they find it easy to talk to their parents, that they live with both parents and that they like school. E-communication in this factsheet refers to children who report talking on the phone, sending text messages or contacting friends through the internet everyday.

Why this topic?

The use of e-communication has increased faster among young people than the rest of the population in recent years¹. Adolescents tend to communicate privately online (via instant messaging and e-mail) online mainly with people they are friends with offline². Although previous research on e-communication and internet usage have yielded mixed results regarding health effects^{3,4}, it is important to continue to monitor this for possible health effects.

Change 2006-2010

The percentage of schoolchildren that report using e-communication with friends everyday has increased since 2006 (42.3% to 51.7%). This increase is seen overall for boys (33.1% to 43.9%) and girls (51.7% to 60.0%) and for both genders aged 12-14 and 15-17 years. The largest increase is among boys aged 15-17 years (39.2% to 53.3%), with girls of this age also reporting a considerable increase in e-communication (60.7% to 72.3%).

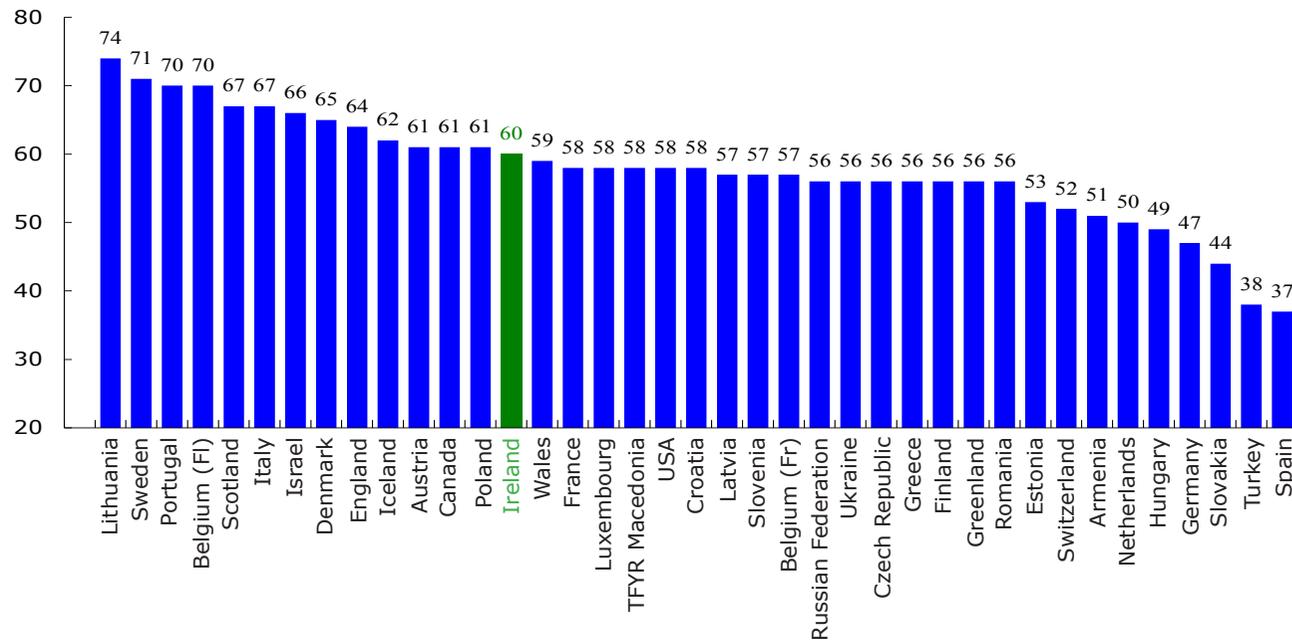


Percentage of children reporting communicating with friend by phone, text or email daily, by age and gender

Electronic communication in context

- Children from higher social classes (SC) are less likely to report using e-communication with friends everyday than children from other social classes (SC1-2: 50.7%; SC3-4: 53.2%; SC5-6: 53.1%).
- Children who report using e-communication with friends everyday are more likely to report ease of communication with best friend (92.4% vs. 83.7%) and spending four or more evenings with friends (46.0% vs. 30.9%) than children who do not.
- Children who report using e-communication with friends everyday are less likely to report living with both parents (75.4% vs. 76.8%) and liking school (67.5% vs. 75.2%) than children who do not.
- Children who report using e-communication with friends everyday are less likely to report ease of communication with mother (80.2% vs. 83.5%) and ease of communication with father (63.4% vs. 70.1%) than children who do not.

...Electronic communication among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting communicating with friend by phone, text or email, by country

- Children who report using e-communication with friends everyday are less likely to report feeling pressured by school work (42.4% vs. 34.4%) than children who do not.

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We would like to thank all the children, teachers and schools who participated and acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues in the Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway.

All factsheets and other HBSC publications and reports can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc>

Contact us at: hbsc@nuigalway.ie

International

With 60.4% reporting that they use e-communication with friends everyday, 15 year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 14th among 39 countries in Europe and North America. Ireland is ranked 7th (55.2%) among 13 year old children, and 18th (29.2%) among 11 year old children.

Implications

The overall percentage of children reporting that they use e-communication with friends everyday has increased since 2006. Ireland ranks high for 13 and 15 year olds; and midrange for 11 year olds. This highlights the increasing

access young people have to e-communication methods in Ireland. Children who use e-communication with friends everyday are more likely to have strong social network with friends, to spend four or more evenings with friends and to find it easy to communicate with their best friend. However these children are also more likely to report poorer communication with their parents and not living with both parents. The positive and negative associations of using electronic communication deserve further examination.

References

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