

HBSC IRELAND

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 Edinburgh. In 2006 HBSC Ireland surveyed 10,334 schoolchildren in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

Further information is available at:
<http://www.hbsc.org>
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc>



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HPRC
Health Promotion Research Centre



Office of the Minister for
Children and Youth Affairs
Oifig an Aire Leanaí
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Department of
Health & Children
AN ROINN SLÁNTE AGUS LEANAÍ

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Summary

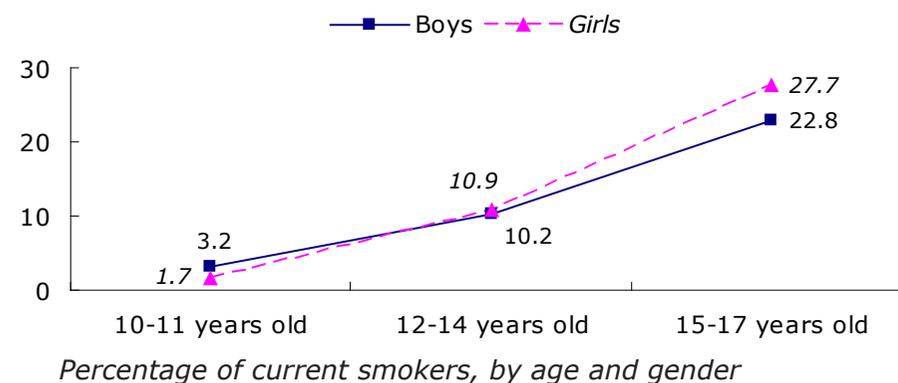
HBSC Ireland 2006 has found that 15.3% of schoolchildren in Ireland report that they currently smoke; this represents a continuing decline from 1998 (21.2%). The percentage of smokers is higher among older children; 3.2% of boys and 1.7% of girls aged 10-11 years; and 22.8% of boys and 27.7% of girls aged 15-17 years. Those who smoke are less likely to report finding it easy to talk to their parents and living with both parents while they are more likely to report finding it easy to talk to their best friend, negative school perceptions, feeling pressured by schoolwork, having been bullied and spending more evenings out with their friends. Current smoking in this factsheet refers to children who report that they smoke at least monthly.

Why this topic?

Smoking is a leading cause of death globally and the largest cause of health inequalities in low income countries². Studies report that some Irish children perceive smoking as a right of passage and a societal norm³. Children and adolescents who smoke cigarettes are more susceptible to respiratory problems, premature atherosclerosis and reduced physical fitness⁴.

Trends 2002-2006

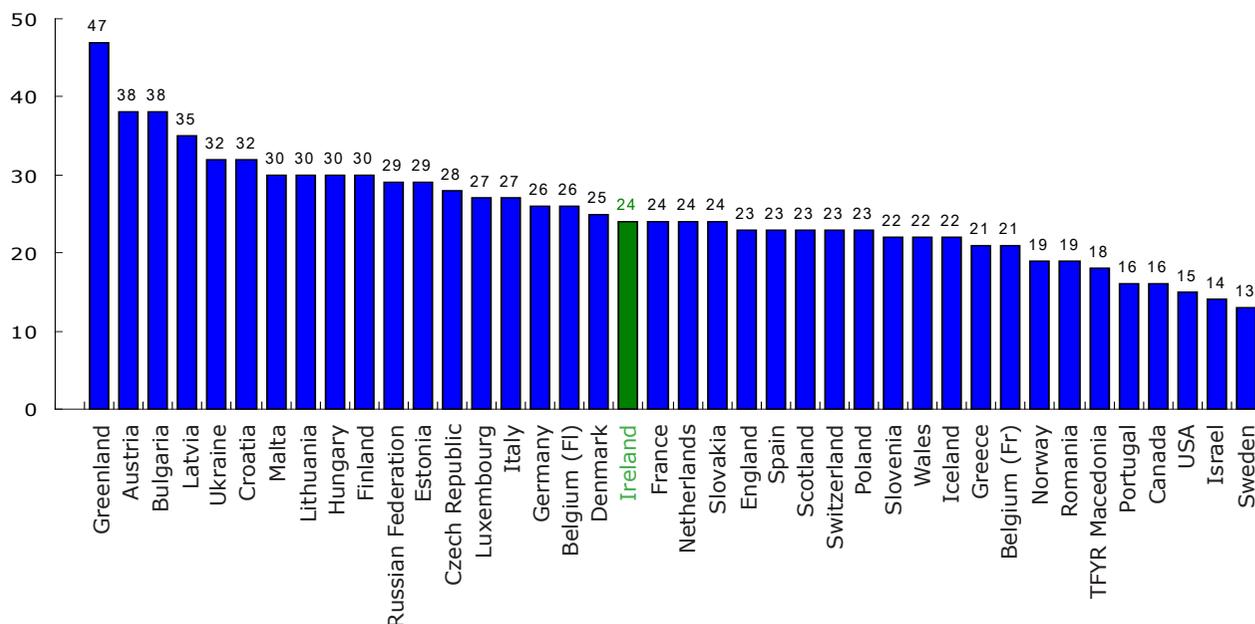
There has been a continuing reduction in the percentage of children who report that they are smokers from 18.6% in 2002 to 15.3% in 2006. This slight decrease is seen in both girls and boys and across all ages. The reduction is most marked among children aged 15-17 years (from 31.8% in 2002 to 25.1% in 2006).



Smoking behaviour in context

- Children who smoke are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (67.8% vs. 82.9%) and father (47.9% vs. 66.8%) than those who do not.
- Children who smoke are less likely to report living with both parents than those who do not (68.3% vs. 82.8%).
- Children who smoke are more likely to report feeling pressured by schoolwork (49.9% vs. 39.3%) and less likely to report liking school (45.0% vs. 72.0%) than those who do not.
- Children who smoke are more likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend (90.8% vs. 87.3%) than those who do not.
- Children who smoke are more likely to spend more than four evenings a week out with friends than those who do not (57.8% vs. 39.4%).
- Smoking is not associated with social class.

...Smoking behaviour among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year olds currently smoking, by country

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

Contact us at: hbcs@nuigalway.ie

International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 19th among 40 countries in Europe and North America, with 24% reporting that they currently smoke. Overall 2% of 11 year olds in Ireland (rank 26th) and 9% of 13 year olds in Ireland (rank 19th) report that they are current smokers.

Implications

Current smoking, as reported by schoolchildren in Ireland, has decreased over the years and in particular there has been a drop in the percentage of current smokers aged 15-17 years. Ireland ranks approximately mid-way among countries involved in HBSC 2006, with smoking rates higher in many eastern European countries compared to Ireland. These data suggest that good relationships with parents may play a protective role

whereas peer relationships may increase the likelihood of smoking. Older girls in Ireland are more likely to smoke than boys which may warrant gender appropriate programmes to be developed both in terms of prevention of smoking initiation as well as smoking cessation.

References

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