

## HBSC IRELAND

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams<sup>1</sup> 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



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## Summary

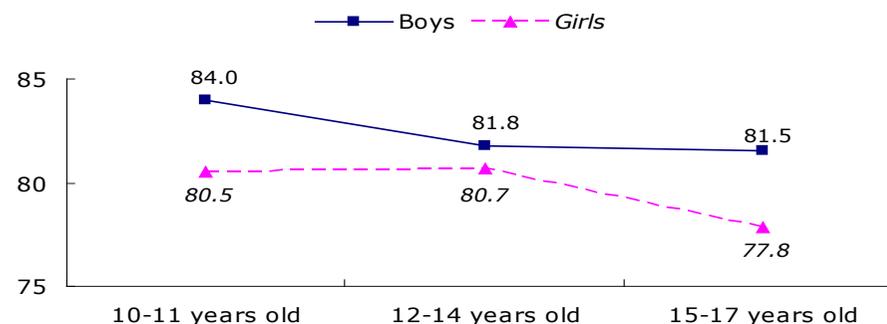
HBSC Ireland 2006 has found that 80.5% of schoolchildren in Ireland are living with both parents; a percentage that has been gradually decreasing since 1998 (88%). Overall no significant differences were found between boys and girls or age groups in terms of living with both parents. Schoolchildren in Ireland who report living with both parents are more likely to report excellent health, feeling very happy about their lives and engaging in physical activity. They are less likely to report frequent emotional or physical symptoms and less likely to report episodes of drunkenness or being a current smoker.

## Why this topic?

Traditional family structures have been changing and there are various alternatives for household composition with increasing numbers of children not living with both parents<sup>2</sup>. Both family structure and relationships within families influence young people's development, well-being and behaviour<sup>3</sup>.

## Trends 2002-2006

The percentage of children living with both parents has decreased from 85.6% in 2002 to 80.5% in 2006. This decrease is apparent among both genders and across all age groups although it is more pronounced in girls (86.3% to 79.4%) than in boys (84.7% to 81.6%). The most marked decrease is seen among girls aged 15-17 years (85.7% to 77.8%).

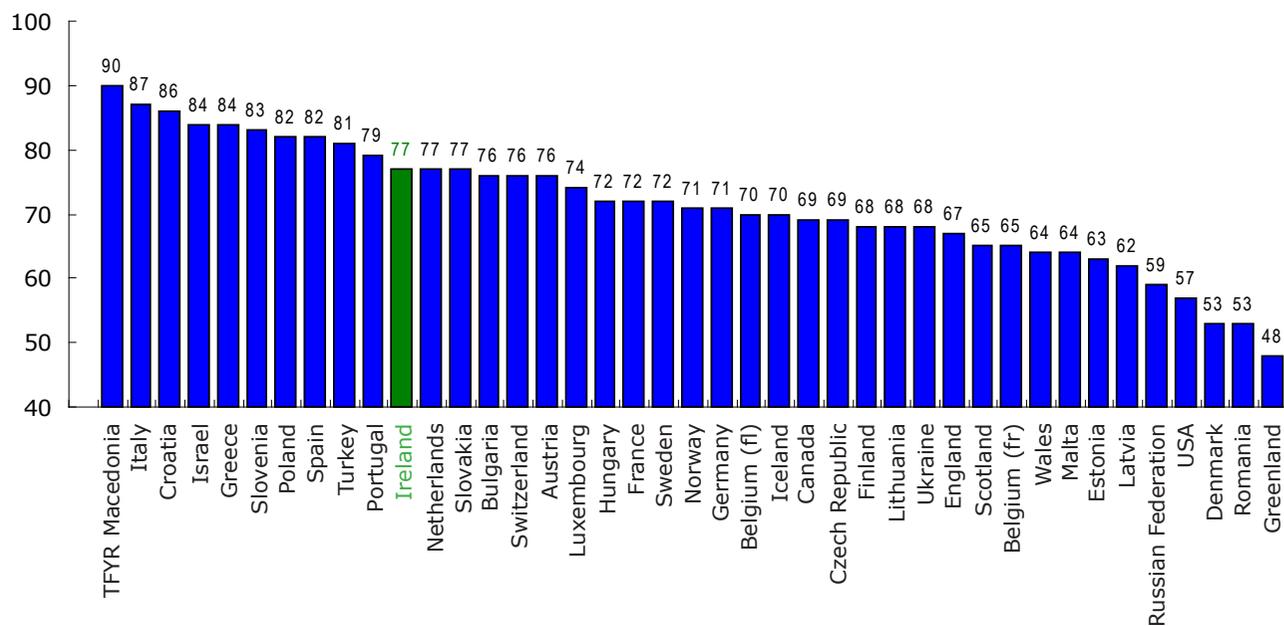


Percentage of children living with both parents, by age and gender

## Family Structure in context

- Children living with both parents are more likely to report excellent health (34.8% vs. 26.7%) and feeling happy (51.9% vs. 39.4%) than children who do not.
- Children living with both parents are less likely to report frequent emotional symptoms (30.2% vs. 40.4%) and physical symptoms (31.5% vs. 41.5%) than children who do not.
- Children living with both parents are less likely to report having been drunk (29.7% vs. 43.7%) and current smoking (12.8% vs. 24.8%) than children who do not.
- Children living with both parents are less likely to bully others (20.9% vs. 25.8%) than children who do not.
- Children living with both parents are more likely to report exercising more than four times a week (53.9% vs. 48.3%) than children who do not.
- Children from higher social classes (SC) are more likely to report living with both parents (SC 1-2: 86.5%; SC 3-4: 81.2%; SC 5-6: 79.9%).

## ...Family structure among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting living with both parents, by country

### International

With 77% reporting that they live with both of their parents, 15 year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 11<sup>th</sup> among 41 countries in Europe and North America. Ireland is ranked 16<sup>th</sup> (76%) among 13 year old children, and 17<sup>th</sup> (77%) among 11 year old children.

### Implications

These data illustrate that family structure is changing in Ireland, with a decrease in the percentage of children living with both parents. Although the quality of family relationships is not presented here, the positive relationship between health, well-being and living with both parents highlights the need for family support in the context of changing family dynamics. The findings of a higher frequency of physical and

emotional symptoms and increased likelihood of engaging in risk behaviours among those not living with both parents should be widely disseminated so that those working with, or on behalf of, children can respond appropriately.

### References

1. Currie, C., Nic Gabhainn, S., Godeau, E., Roberts, C., Smith, R., Currie, D., Pickett, W., Richter, M., Morgan, A. & Barnekow, V. (eds.) (2008). *Inequalities in young people's health: HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 Survey*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe. (Health Policy for Children and Adolescents, No. 5).
2. Barnekow, V., Buijss, G., Clift, S., Bruun Jensen, B., Paulus, P., Rivett, D. & Young, I. (2007). *Health Promoting Schools: A resource for developing indicators*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.
3. Wight, D., Williamson, L. & Henderson, M. (2006). Parental influences on young people's sexual behaviour: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29(4), 473-494.

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

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