

## 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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AN ROINN SLÁNTE AGUS LEANAÍ

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### Summary

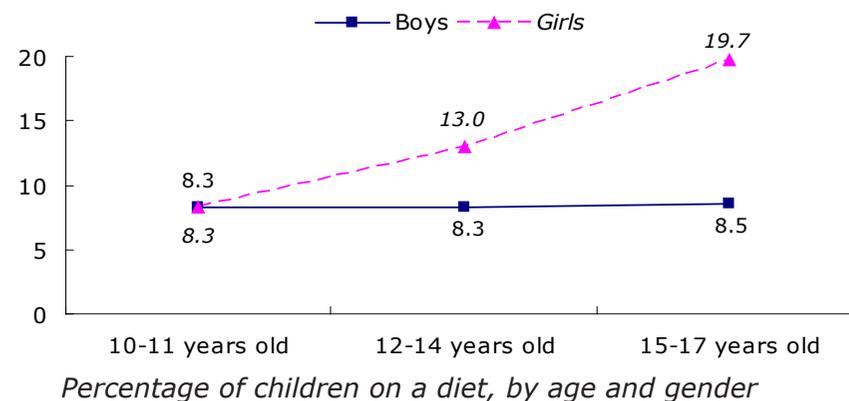
HBSC Ireland 2006 has found that 11.5% of children report dieting (8.3% of boys and 14.9% of girls), this figure has remained stable since 2002. The percentage of girls dieting is higher among older girls (8.3% of 10-11 year olds and 19.7% of 15-17 year olds), whereas the percentages of boys dieting remains stable across age groups. Children who report dieting are less likely to live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents, like school, have excellent health or be happy with their lives, and are more likely to report feeling pressured by schoolwork, and spending four or more evenings per week with friends. Dieting in this factsheet refers to children who report that they are on a diet or doing something to lose weight at present.

### Why this topic?

Dieting is a prevalent behaviour among adolescents<sup>1</sup> and weight control practices can comprise a mixture of acceptable and less acceptable methods<sup>2</sup>. Body image or self-perception of overweight are significant factors associated with adolescents' attempts to lose weight<sup>3</sup>. Inadequate dietary intake during adolescence can have serious short and long term health implications<sup>4</sup>. Dieting is also associated with low self-esteem and other negative psychological states<sup>5</sup>.

### Trends 2002-2006

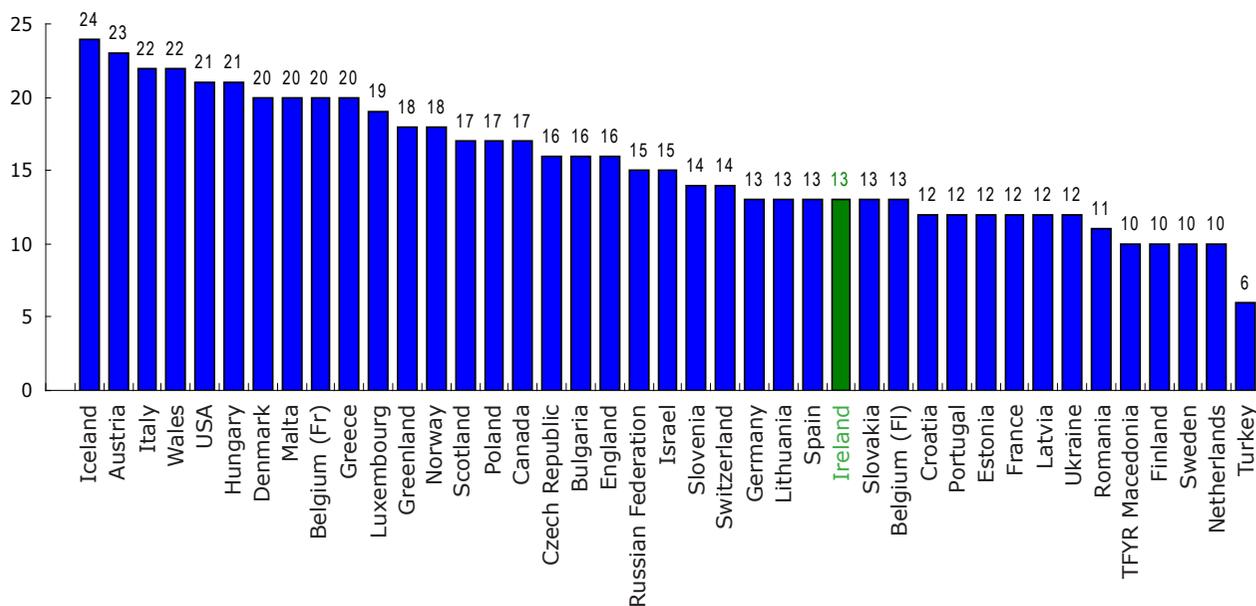
The overall percentage of children who report dieting has remained stable from 2002 (13.1%) to 2006 (11.5%). There has been a slight decrease among girls (17.9% to 14.9%), with figures for boys remaining stable (6.6% to 8.3%).



### Dieting in context

- Children who report dieting are less likely to live with both parents (77.9% vs. 80.9%) than those who do not.
- Children who report dieting are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (75.9% vs. 81.3%) and father (54.7% vs. 65.2%) than those who do not.
- Children who report dieting are more likely to spend more than four evenings a week with friends (46.2% vs. 41.7%) than those who do not.
- Children who report dieting are more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork (51.1% vs. 39.6%) and are less likely to like school (62.8% vs. 68.5%) than those who do not.
- Children who report dieting are less likely to report excellent health (19.4% vs. 35.2%) and being happy with their lives (38.0% vs. 51.1%) than those who do not.
- Dieting is not associated with social class.

## ...DiETING behaviour among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting they are on a diet, by country

### International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 27<sup>th</sup> among 41 countries in Europe and North America with 13% reporting that they are dieting. Overall 11 year old children are ranked 38<sup>th</sup> (8% report being on a diet) and 13 year olds are ranked 31<sup>st</sup>

### Implications

The number of children in Ireland reporting that they are on a diet has remained stable since 2002 and Ireland is relatively low in comparison to other European and North American countries. Communication with parents and positive school environments appear to be protective factors against dieting. Dieting is an issue among both genders but particularly among girls as dieting increases substantially with age among girls. Dieting is associated

with lower levels of feeling happy with life and subjective health. School and other community settings have the potential to support healthy eating habits.

### References

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5. Siegel J.M. (2002). Body image change and adolescent depressive symptoms. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 17, 27-41.

HBSC Ireland is funded by the Health Promotion Policy Unit of the Department of Health and Children and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. 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>

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