

## 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



Office of the Minister for  
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Department of  
Health & Children  
AN ROINN SLÁNTE AGUS LEANAI

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## Summary

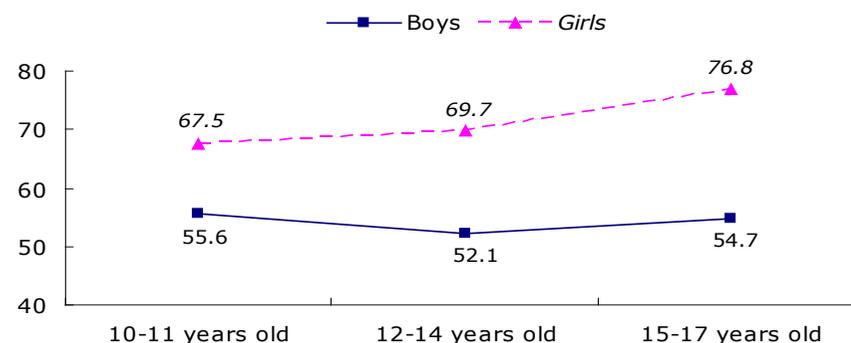
HBSC Ireland 2006 has found that 62.5% of schoolchildren in Ireland report brushing their teeth more than once a day (53.5% of boys and 71.9% of girls) which has remained stable since 2002 (61.6%). Tooth brushing more than once a day is higher among younger boys (55.6% of 10-11 year olds and 54.7% of 15-17 year olds) and older girls (67.5% of 10-11 year olds and 76.8% of 15-17 year olds). Children who report brushing their teeth more than once a day are more likely to live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents and best friend, like school, have excellent health and be happy with their lives.

## Why this topic?

Tooth brushing is vital for maintaining gum health and plaque control which also aids in preventing the two main dental diseases; caries and periodontal disease. It is recommended that the frequency of tooth brushing be at least twice a day<sup>2</sup>. Poor oral health is associated with lower life satisfaction and self-esteem<sup>3</sup>.

## Trends 2002-2006

The overall percentage of children who report brushing their teeth more than once a day has remained stable since 2002 (61.6% to 62.5%). There has been a slight increase among boys (50.2% to 53.5%) whereas figures for girls remain stable (70.1% to 71.9%).

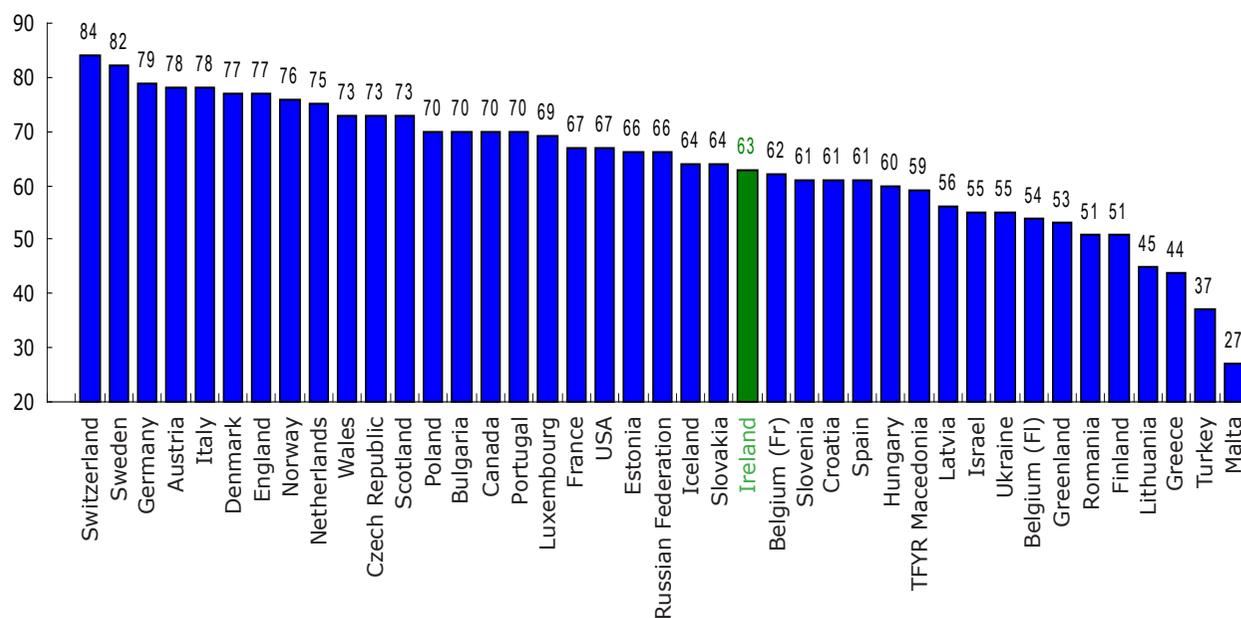


Percentage of children who brush their teeth more than once a day, by age and gender

## Toothbrushing in context

- Children from higher social classes (SC) are more likely to report brushing their teeth more than once a day (SC 1-2: 65.7%; SC 3-4: 61.9% and SC 5-6: 62.6%).
- Children who brush their teeth more than once a day are more likely to report living with both parents (81.4% vs. 79.1%) than those who do not.
- Children who brush their teeth more than once a day are more likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (81.6% vs. 79.2%), father (65.1% vs. 62.4%) and best friend (89.4% vs. 85.1%) than those who do not.
- Children who report brushing their teeth more than once a day are more likely to report liking school (70.9% vs. 62.8%) than those who do not.
- Children who report brushing their teeth more than once a day are more likely to report excellent health (36.5% vs. 27.9%) and being happy with their lives (52.8% vs. 44.4%) than those who do not.

## ...Oral Hygiene among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting that they brush their teeth more than once a day, by country

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Contact us at: [hbcs@nuigalway.ie](mailto:hbcs@nuigalway.ie)

### International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 24<sup>th</sup> among 41 countries in Europe and North America with 63% reporting that they brush their teeth more than once a day. Overall, 62% of 11 year olds (ranked 23<sup>rd</sup>) and 58% of 13 year olds (ranked 30<sup>th</sup>) report that they brush their teeth more than once a day.

### Implications

Overall, among children in Ireland, the number who report brushing their teeth more than once a day remains stable since 2002. Ireland is mid-range in comparison to other European and North American countries. Communication with parents and peers as well as liking school are positively associated with tooth

brushing. A substantial minority of schoolchildren in Ireland do not meet the toothbrushing recommendations. Further resources should be allocated to promoting good oral health among all children.

### 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. Dental Health Foundation Ireland (2006). *Healthy Teeth for Life*. Dublin: Dental Health Foundation
3. McGrath, C. & Bedi, R. (2000). Gender variation in the social impact of oral health. *Journal of the Irish Dental Association*, 46, 87-91.

*This factsheet was prepared by Aoife Gavin, Siobhán O'Higgins, Graham Brennan, Pauline Clerkin, Aingeal de Róiste, Cliona Fitzpatrick, Colette Kelly, Michal Molcho, Larri Walker and Saoirse Nic Gabhainn.*