

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 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



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Summary

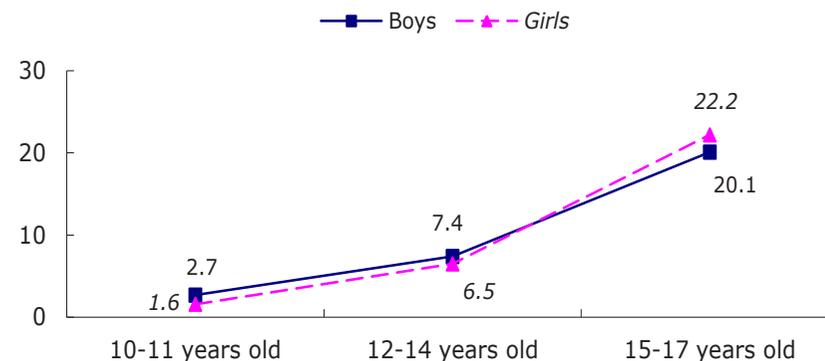
Overall the percentage of children who report current smoking has slightly decreased between 2006 (15.3%) and 2010 (11.8%). There are higher rates of smoking among the older children; 2.2% of 10-11 year olds, 7.0% of 12-14 year olds and 21.1% of 15-17 year olds. The declines since 2006 are larger in the two older age groups. There are only marginal differences in current smoking between girls and boys. Those who smoke are less likely than their non-smoking peers to report that they live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their mother and their father and to report liking school. Current smokers are more likely to report that they find it easy to talk to their best friend, spend four or more evenings out with friends per week and that they feel pressured by their school work than non-smokers. 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 ill-health, disability and death globally and significantly impacts on health throughout the lifecourse². Children and adolescents who smoke cigarettes are more susceptible to respiratory problems, premature atherosclerosis and reduced physical fitness³. National smoking rates have been decreasing over recent years⁴. However, it has been reported that some Irish children perceive smoking as a right of passage and a societal norm⁵.

Change 2006-2010

There has been a reduction in the percentage of children who report that they are current smokers from 15.3% in 2006 to 11.8% in 2010. This decrease is seen in both boys and girls from 12 to 17 years old.

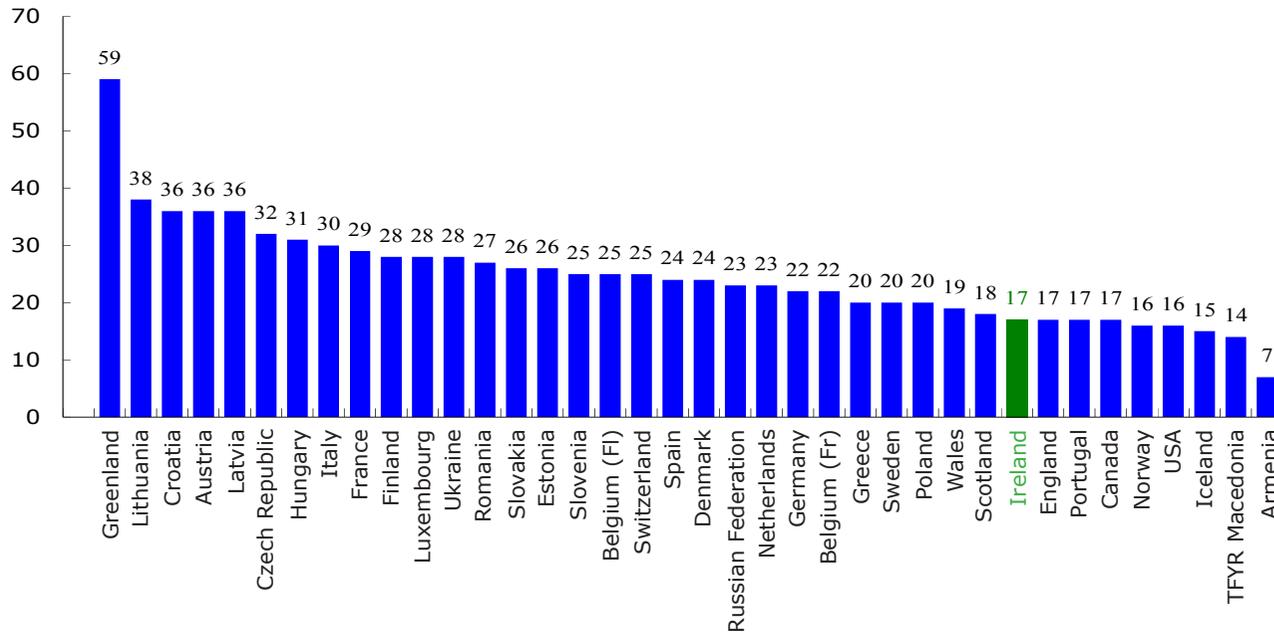


Percentage of current smokers, by age and gender

Smoking behaviour in context

- Children who smoke are less likely to report living with both parents (64.1%) compared with those who do not smoke (76.0%).
- Children who smoke are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (69.8% vs. 83.3%) or father (56.6% vs. 67.9%) than those who do not smoke.
- Children who smoke are more likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend than those who do not smoke (90.3% vs. 88.0%).
- Children who smoke are more likely to spend four or more evenings per week out with friends than those who do not smoke (55.6% vs. 36.7%).
- Children who smoke are less likely than those who do not to report liking school (46.6% vs. 74.1%).
- Children who smoke are more likely than those who do not to report that they feel pressured by their schoolwork (46.7% vs. 37.7%).

...Smoking behaviour among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year olds currently smoking, by country

- Current smoking is more likely among children from social classes 5-6 (11.9%) and 3-4 (11.5%) than children from social classes 1-2 (9.6%)

International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 30th among 38 countries in Europe and North America with 17.2% reporting they currently smoke. The countries with the highest rates are Greenland (59.1%) and Lithuania (38.0%) and those with the lowest rates are Armenia (7.1%) and Macedonia (14.4%). Overall 2.0% of 11 year olds in Ireland (rank 15th) and 6.5% of 13 year olds in Ireland (rank 28th) report being current smokers.

Implications

Current smoking, as reported by schoolchildren in Ireland, has decreased over the years and most recently among mid-late adolescents. Ireland ranks relatively low among countries involved in HBSC 2010, with smoking rates higher in many eastern and central 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. Although the trend is positive, there is clearly a need to refocus smoking prevention and smoking cessation activities for children in Ireland.

References

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2. World Health Organisation. (2012). *WHO Global Report: Mortality attributable to tobacco*. Geneva: WHO.
3. Elliott, B.M. & Grunberg, N.E. (2005). Adolescent tobacco use. In J.H. Owing (Ed.) *Trends in Smoking and Health Research*. New York: Nova Science.
4. Brugha, R., Tully, N., Dicker, P., Shelley, E., Ward, M., & McGee, H. (2009) *SLÁN 2007: Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition in Ireland. Smoking Patterns in Ireland: Implications for policy and services*, Department of Health and Children. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
5. Treacy, M., Hyde, A., Boland, J., Whitaker, T., Abaunza, P.S., & Stewart-Knox, B.J. (2007). Children talking: Emerging perspectives and experience of cigarette smoking. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(2), 238-49.

This factsheet was prepared by Mary Callaghan, Natasha Clarke, Aoife Gavin, Colette Kelly, Michal Molcho, Christina Murphy, Saoirse Nic Gabhainn and Larri Walker.

HBSC Ireland is funded by the Health Promotion Policy Unit of the Department of Health.

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.

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