Relationship with mothers among schoolchildren in Ireland

HBSC IRELAND

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Summary

HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 81.8% of schoolchildren in Ireland report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their mother, remaining stable since 2006 (80.7%). Overall girls report slightly higher rates of ease of talking to mother (81.0% of boys and 82.6% of girls). The percentage of children who find it easy to talk to their mother is higher among younger children; 88.9% of boys and 89.2% of girls aged 10-11 years vs. 75.8% of boys and 77.3% of girls aged 15-17 years. Children who find it easy to talk to their mothers are less likely to report frequent emotional and physical symptoms, drunkenness, that they currently smoke, have been injured and have bullied others. They are more likely to report excellent health, feeling very happy and that they engage in physical activity four or more times a week. Relationship with mother in this factsheet refers to children who report finding it easy to very easy to talk to their mother about things that really bother them.

Why this topic?

Parental communication and support is associated with improved health and behavioural outcomes in adolescence. More girls than boys in Ireland report that their parents spend time talking with them. Previous research has found that girls and boys feel equally comfortable talking to their mother about their problems, and this is not the case for fathers. Good communication with mother can be a protective factor for early sexual activity, drinking alcohol and current smoking in adolescence.

Change 2006-2010

The percentage of schoolchildren that report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their mother has remained stable since 2006 (80.7% vs. 81.8%). This is seen across all age groups and genders, with the exception of girls aged 15-17 years, where an increase is observed (72.3% to 77.3%).

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

• Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are more likely to report excellent health (34.8% vs. 22.8%) and feeling very happy (55.4% vs. 27.5%) than children who do not.
• Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report frequent emotional and physical symptoms, drunkenness, that they currently smoke, have been injured and have bullied others (25.0% vs. 40.5%) and current smoking (9.6% vs. 18.6%) than children who do not.
• Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report that they bullied others (14.5% vs. 23.8%) and that they have been injured (38.3% vs. 42.6%) than children who do not.
• Children who find it easy to talk to their mother are more likely to report engaging in physical activity four or more times a week (51.1% vs. 45.9%) than children who do not.
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Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 25th among 39 countries in Europe and North America with 75.6% reporting that they find it easy to talk to their mother. Ireland is ranked 17th (84.4%) among 13 year old children and 26th (88.6%) among 11 year old children internationally.

**Implications**

The overall percentage of children who report they find it easy to talk to their mother has remained stable since 2006. In comparison to other countries in Europe and North America Ireland ranks midrange for 15, 13 and 11 year olds. Children that communicate easily with their mother are more likely to feel very happy, report excellent health and engage in physical activity four or more times a week. The decrease in reporting ease of communication with mother as children get older highlights the need for assisting parents to maintain communication with their child as they get older. These 2010 data highlight an increase in the percentage of girls aged 15-17 years who report ease of communication with mother. It would be useful to explore this pattern with the aim of improving relationships within all age groups. Particular attention should be paid to supporting children who do not have a good relationship with their mother.

**References**


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