

# Bullying among Irish schoolchildren

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## Summary

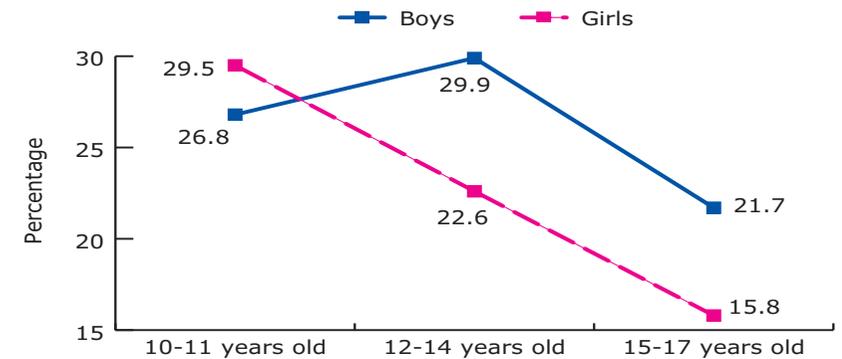
HBSC Ireland has found that 23.3% of children report being bullied (26.4% of boys and 21.0% of girls). The overall figure has remained relatively stable since 1998. The percentage of boys being bullied peaks at the ages of 12 to 14 years (29.9%), with 26.8% of 10-11 year olds and 21.7% of 15-17 year olds being bullied. The percentage of girls being bullied decreases with age, from 29.5% of 10-11 year olds, to 15.8% of 15-17 year olds. Children who have been bullied are less 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, while they are more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork. Bullying in this factsheet refers to children who report being bullied at school once or more in the past couple of months.

## Why this topic?

Bullying is viewed as a problem in Irish schools and includes behaviours like teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, exclusion and extortion<sup>3,4</sup>. Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may also be damaged with consequent lowering of self-esteem<sup>5</sup>.

## Trends 1998 – 2002

The percentage of children who report having been bullied has remained relatively stable between 1998 (24.6%) and 2002 (23.3%). There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of boys who report having been bullied (29.5% to 26.4%), which is most prominent among 10-11 year olds (36.2% to 26.8%). The percentage of girls reporting having



Percentage of children who have been bullied by age and gender, HBSC 2002

been bullied has increased very slightly from 19.9% in 1998 to 21.0% in 2002. This increase is across all age groups.

## Bullying in context

- Children who live with both parents are less likely to have been bullied, than those who do not (23% vs. 26%).
- Children who have been bullied are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (70% vs. 77%) and father (47% vs. 55%), than those who have not.
- Children who have been bullied are less likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend, than those who have not (79% vs. 86%).
- Children who have been bullied are less likely to report liking school, than those who have not (65% vs. 70%).
- Children who have been bullied are more likely to report feeling pressured by schoolwork, than those who have not (42% vs. 33%).
- Children who have been bullied are less likely than those who have not, to report excellent health (24% vs. 29%) and feeling happy about their life (32% vs. 48%).

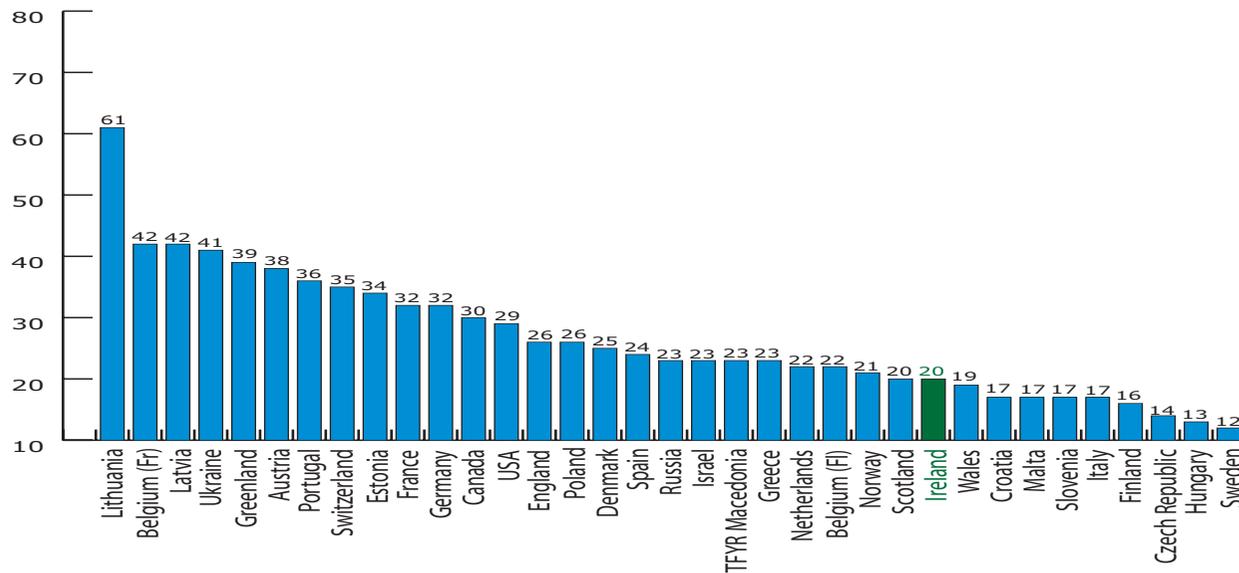
## HBSC IRELAND

The Health Behaviour in School-aged children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams<sup>1,2</sup> in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (Europe) and co-ordinated by Dr Candace Currie of the University of Edinburgh. In 2002 HBSC Ireland surveyed 8,424 Irish children from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

Further information is available at:  
<http://www.hbsc.org>  
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/>  
<http://www.hbsc.org/countries/ireland.html>



## ...Bullying among Irish schoolchildren



Percentage of 15 years old children reporting they have been bullied, by country

- Having been bullied is not associated with social class or spending 4 evenings or more with friends.

### International

Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 26<sup>th</sup> among 35 countries in Europe and North America with 20% reporting that they have been bullied. Overall 30% of Irish 11 year olds (ranked 26<sup>th</sup>) and 27% of Irish 13 year olds (ranked 25<sup>th</sup>) report having been bullied.

### Implications

The percentage of young people in Ireland that reported having been bullied has remained reasonably stable since 1998. Although this figure is relatively low in comparison to some other countries in Europe and North America, it still indicates that almost a quarter of Irish children have been bullied. Children who have been bullied appear to be more

susceptible to feeling pressured by schoolwork, poor self-rated health and not feeling happy with life. Given these and other implications of bullying for Irish children, more resources need to be invested in addressing this behaviour. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to investigate the motivations of those who bully and the initiation patterns of bullying.

### References

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