

## **Short Report**

### **HBSC Ireland: urban and rural patterns in alcohol consumption among Irish children**

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#### **Introduction:**

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (European Office). The study runs on a four-year cycle and in 2006 there were 41 participating countries across Europe and North America. HBSC collects data on key indicators of health, health attitudes and health behaviours, as well as the contexts of health for young people. The study is a school-based survey with information collected from students through self-completion questionnaires in classrooms. Further information on the International HBSC study can be found at [www.hbsc.org](http://www.hbsc.org).

The most recent HBSC Ireland dataset comprises 10,344 children from 5th class in primary school to 5th year in post-primary schools. The methods employed comply with the International HBSC protocol and are detailed in the first national report from the 2006 survey, which can be found at [www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc](http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc).

#### **Focus:**

This short report presents a brief analysis of the alcohol use among Irish schoolchildren aged 15-17 years across urban and rural settings. The HBSC Ireland questionnaire measures alcohol use with the following questions;

- ‘At what age did you first drink alcohol?’ with response options - never; 11 years old or less; 12 years old; 13 years old; 14 years old; 15 years old; 16 years of older.
- ‘At what age did you first get drunk?’ with response options - never; 11 years old or less; 12 years old; 13 years old; 14 years old; 15 years old; 16 years of older.
- ‘On how many occasions have you done the following things in the last 30 days:
  - ‘Drank alcohol?’ - with response options - never, once or twice, 3 to 5 times; 6 to 9 times; 10 to 19 times; 20 to 39 times; 40 times or more.
  - ‘Been drunk?’ - with response options - never, once or twice, 3 to 5 times; 6 to 9 times; 10 to 19 times; 20 to 39 times; 40 times or more.

**Findings:**

Overall, 75% of Irish children aged 15-17 years report having drunk alcohol. Among those who report having drunk alcohol, 56% report having been really drunk. Table 1 presents an overview of the size of the sample for 15-17 year olds when broken down by gender and locality. Table 2 presents the percentages of children reporting age at which they had their first alcohol drink, by gender and location. Table 3 presents the reported age when first got drunk among 15-17 year olds, by gender and location. Table 4 presents on how many occasions the 15-17 year olds report having drunk alcohol in the last 30 days. Table 5 presents on how many occasions 15-17 year olds report having being drunk in the last 30 days, by gender and location.

Table 1: Sample size of 15-17 year olds by gender and locality (N=3833)

	City			Town			Village			Country		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
<i>n</i>	308	313	<b>622</b>	521	425	<b>947</b>	415	398	<b>813</b>	767	684	<b>1451</b>

Table 2: Percentage of 15-17 year olds reporting age when first had an alcohol drink (more than a small amount) by gender and locality.

	City			Town			Village			Country		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
11 years or less	11	7	8	10	7	8	9	7	8	11	6	9
12 years	10	9	10	13	9	11	12	9	11	10	9	9
13 years	13	18	14	14	19	16	16	19	17	13	15	14
14 years	18	23	20	22	24	22	20	24	22	16	17	17
15 years +	23	21	22	22	22	22	27	22	24	23	28	25
Never	24	24	24	20	19	20	17	19	18	26	25	25

Table 3: Percentage of 15 to 17 year olds reporting when first got drunk by gender and locality.

	City			Town			Village			Country		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
11 years or less	4	1	3	3	2	3	4	1	2	3	1	2
12 years	6	5	5	6	3	4	5	4	4	4	3	3
13 years	8	11	9	8	12	10	10	9	9	8	8	8
14 years	19	16	17	16	15	16	20	23	22	12	12	12
15 years +	27	26	26	27	32	29	29	26	27	27	31	29
Never	37	41	39	38	37	38	32	39	35	47	46	47

Table 4: Percentage of 15-17 year olds reporting on how many occasions has drunk alcohol in the last 30 days by gender and location.

	City			Town			Village			Country		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Never	38	42	40	40	38	40	34	35	34	45	44	44
Once or twice	25	24	24	30	28	29	28	26	27	25	29	27
3 - 9 times	28	26	27	22	25	23	29	20	29	21	21	21
10 + times	9	9	9	8	8	7	10	8	9	8	7	7

Table 5: Percentage of 15-17 year olds reporting on how many occasions have got drunk in the last 30 days by gender and location.

	City			Town			Village			Country		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Never	53	59	56	62	60	61	58	57	58	69	68	68
Once or twice	25	22	23	22	22	22	24	25	24	17	22	19
3 - 9 times	17	14	15	12	13	13	14	14	14	11	10	10

10 + times	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	1	2
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### Key Findings

- Adolescents who report living in the country report being older when they have their first alcohol drink compared to those living in the city, town or village.
- Adolescents who report living in the country are more likely to report never having had an alcoholic drink and report first getting drunk at a later age (15 years or older) compared to the other three localities.
- The percentage of children who report having drunk alcohol in the last 30 days is lowest among those who live in the country
- The percentage of children who report having never gotten drunk in the last 30 days is highest among those who live in the country
- The frequency of having gotten drunk in the last 30 days is highest among children in the city.

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