

Family factors and eating behaviour of schoolchildren

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IUHPE July 2010



Family environment

- Family is a key setting for health promotion
- Family environment can influence dietary behaviours of young people
 - Parental intake, home food availability/accessibility
 - Parental modelling, family rules
 - Parental control, family structure and communication

Families in Ireland

- Traditional family structures are changing in Ireland
 - 17.8% are lone parent families (CSO, 2007)
 - 55% of mothers are in employment (OECD, 2003)
 - Families are smaller in size & no. of large families has decreased (CSO, 2007)

Aims

- To explore associations between family environment and eating behaviour of schoolchildren in Ireland
 - **Family characteristics** - maternal employment, 2 parent families, family size
 - **Family communication** - ease of talking to mother/father about things that really bother you
 - **Family meal habits** – eating together, eating in front of TV

HBSC - background

- A cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe
- HBSC was initiated in 1982 and is conducted every 4 years. Ireland has been involved since 1998
- HBSC 2006 involved more than 180,000 children from 41 countries



HBSC Ireland - methodology

- Nationally representative sample of school-aged children in the ROI
- Consent from schools, parents & children
- In-school, self-completion questionnaire
- Ethical approval from the NUI Galway REC



Methodology – HBSC Ireland

- 215 primary and post-primary schools took part
- Children in 5th class to 5th year were invited to partake n = 10,334 students (10-18 years)
- Study was carried out in May-June and Sept.-Oct. 2006



Results

■ Family characteristics

- 36% of families have ≥ 4 children
- 77% of children live with both parents
- 70% of mothers are employed

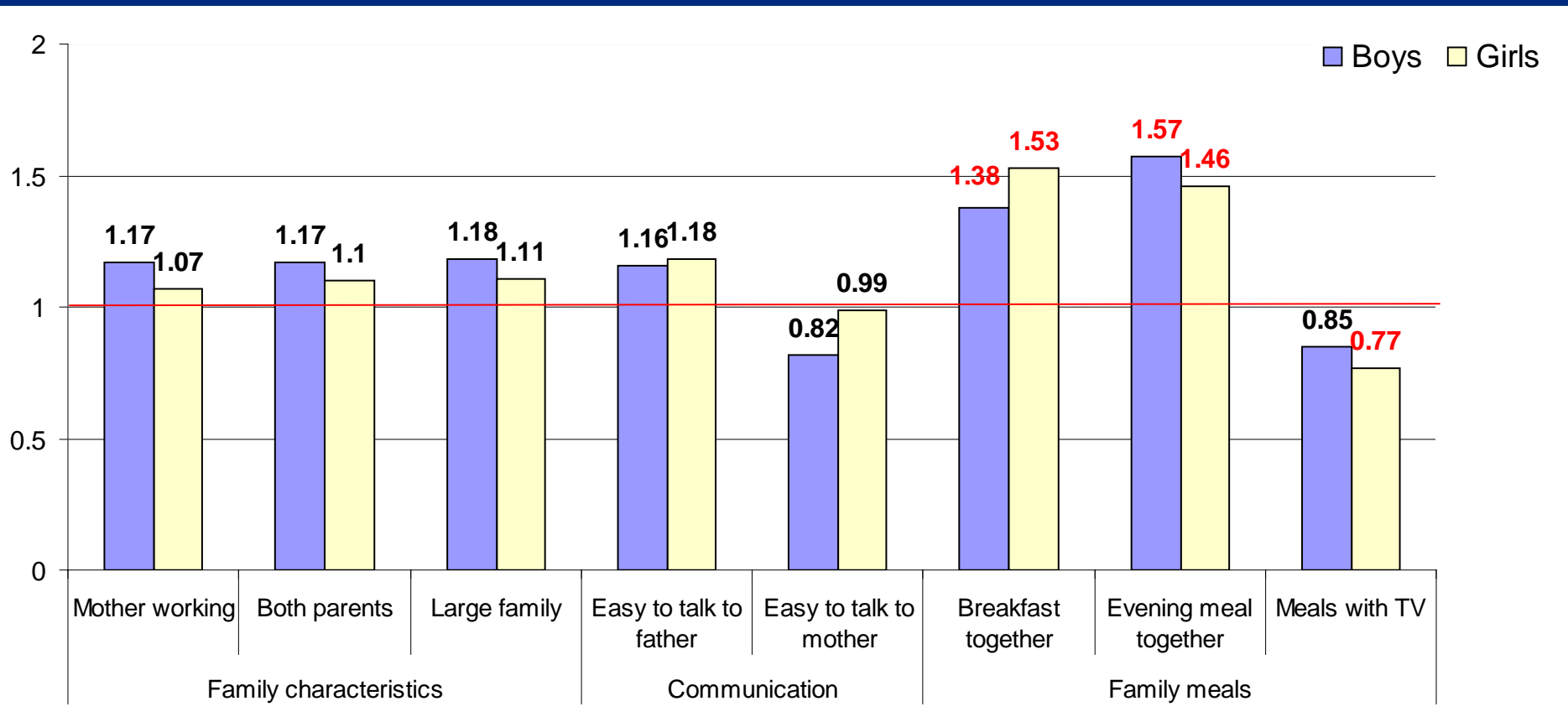
■ Family communication

- Easy to talk to mother = 80.7%
- Easy to talk to father = 64.1%

■ Family meal habits

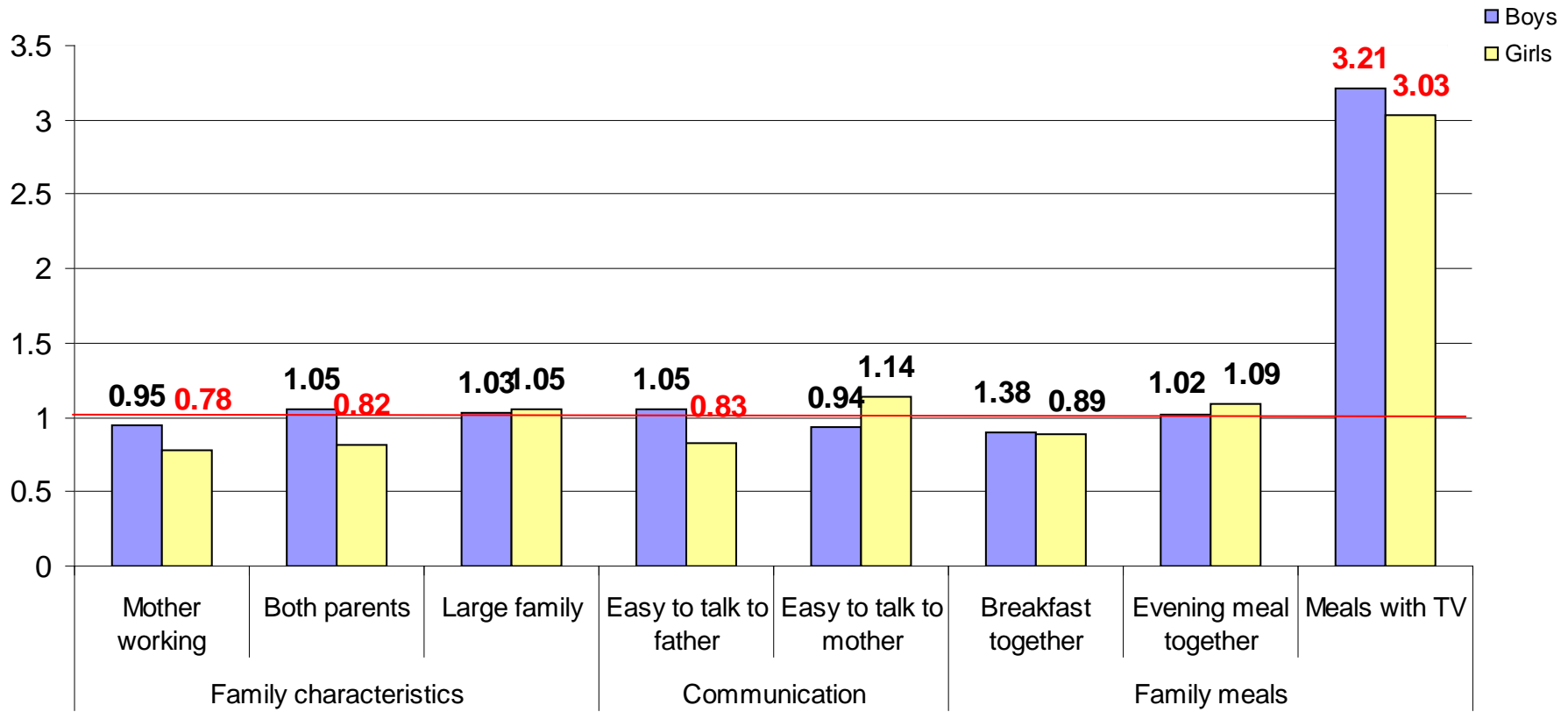
- Breakfast together on 5 or more days = 28.5%
- Evening meal together on 5 or more days = 61.6%
- Watch TV while having a meal on 5 or more days = 24.9%

Fruit intake ≥ 2 /day



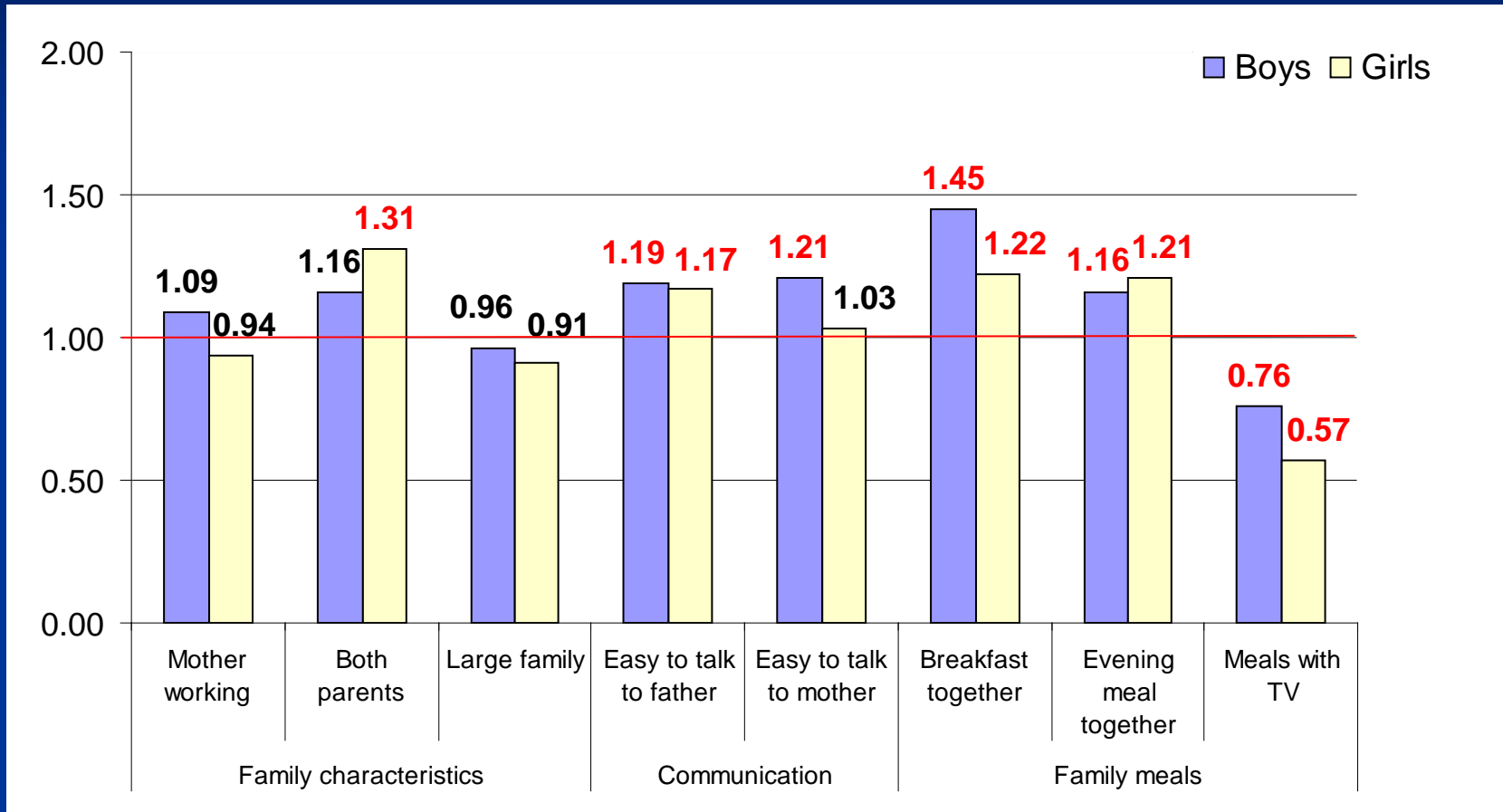
Adjusted for age and family affluence

Soft drinks daily



Adjusted for age and family affluence

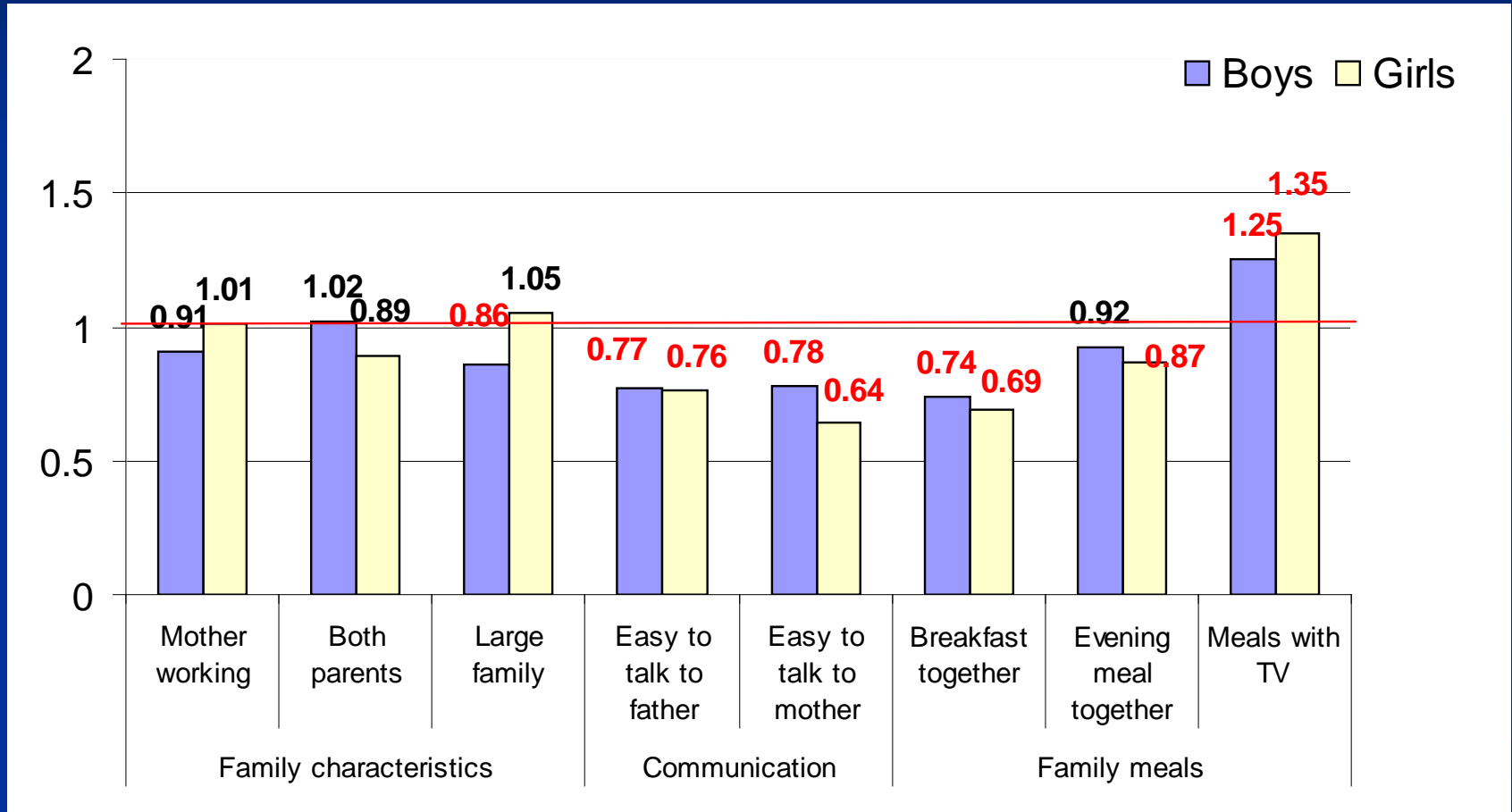
Fish weekly



Adjusted for age and family affluence



Body dissatisfaction



Adjusted for age and family affluence

Discussion

- Family factors play a role in the eating behaviours of schoolchildren in Ireland
- Family meals and child-parent communication is particularly important
- More emphasis on the family as a setting for health promotion in Ireland is warranted.

Acknowledgements

- Schools, parents & children
- Department of Health and Children, Ireland
- Office of the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, Ireland

Team members

- Dr Saoirse Nic Gabhainn, PI
- Dr Michal Molcho, Deputy PI
- Dr Colette Kelly, Survey Manager
- Amanda Fitzgerald
- Natasha Clarke
- Larri Walker
- Siobhan O'Higgins
- Aoife Gavin
- Priscilla Doyle
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- Prof Candace Currie & team, International Co-ordinating Centre, Scotland

- HBSC network of researchers



Further details available....

- www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc
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- www.hbsc.org

