

# Perceptions of local area as predictors of injury and physical activity among schoolchildren in Ireland <sup>1485</sup>



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## Background

It is well known that the social, physical and economic environments where young people grow up have significant impact on their ability to achieve and sustain health. Creating supportive environments has the potential to protect young people from adverse risks and promote healthy lifestyles that maximise the possibilities for health. Given the burden of death, disability and chronic illness associated with unintentional injury and physical inactivity, it is important to understand the socio-environmental determinants associated with both.

## Objectives

To investigate perceptions of local area as predictors of physical activity and of unintentional injury.

## Underlying values and principles

Active lifestyle is a key component for healthy living, while injury is a leading cause for disability among young people. In order to allow individuals to fulfill their potential, they should be provided with environments that promote physical activity in a safe manner.

## Knowledge base and evidence base

Physical inactivity and injury together are the leading causes of disability and chronic illness in young adults.

Yet, there is evidence linking physical activity with injury, evidence that may suggest that the risk for injury imposed by

physical activity is too large and may act as a barrier to an active lifestyle.

This study tries to address this contradiction through identifying characteristics of the local area that could provide a safe environment associated with both a decreased risk for injury and an increased level of physical activity.

## Methods

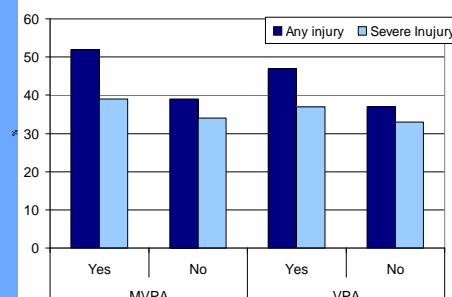
A nationally representative sample of 10, 146 schoolchildren aged 10-17 years old schoolchildren completed a questionnaire during class time. The questionnaire included questions on injury, participation in physical activity, and perceptions of local area.

Associations between local area perceptions and physical activity (moderate to vigorous (MVPA) and vigorous (VPA)) and injury (any and severe) are expressed in odds ratios from logistic regression models.

## Context

This study is based on data collected as part of the 2006 Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study.

Injuries by level of activity



## Injury and physical activity in context (Odds Ratios)

Perception of local area	MVPA - daily	VPA - frequent	injury	Severe injury
well off	.99	1.14**	0.98	1.09
feels safe	1.24***	0.98	0.91*	0.92
good place to live in	0.93	1.08	0.84**	0.83**
safe to play	1.05	1.06	0.89	0.95
I can trust people	0.97	1.08	1.05	1.06
good places to go	1.40***	1.07	1.17***	1.15**
I can ask for help	1.09	1.23***	1.00	0.91
N	9,074	9,113	9,153	9,211

\* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

## Conclusion

Nearly one in two (43%) of Irish children reported a medically activity in the previous 12 months and 28% reported that they were physically active for 60 minutes or more every day (Moderate-to-Vigorous Physical Activity), among the highest rate in Europe.

Medically attended injuries were prevalent among active children but the prevalence of injuries resulting in days of activity lost were similar between active and non-active children, suggesting that while active children are more likely to be injured, their injuries are not more severe. Most local area perceptions were not significantly associated with either physical activity or injury, but perceptions of safeness of the local area were associated with lower level of injury and higher level of participation in physical activity.

These findings highlight the need for safe environments for children to play and live, environments that promote physical activity, and at the same time are associated with lower injury rates.

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