

## **Short Report**

### **HBSC Ireland: frequency of smoking behaviour in middle childhood and adolescence**

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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 HBSC Ireland Middle Childhood Survey (2006) uses identical methods to the main survey, but includes only children from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes in randomly selected primary schools. The methods employed in both surveys 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 self-reported smoking behaviour among Irish schoolchildren aged 9-17 years, for the HBSC Ireland Middle Childhood Survey and the HBSC Ireland Main Survey. In both surveys the following question on smoking frequency was used:

- 'How often do you smoke tobacco at present?', with the response options 'every day', 'at least once a week, but not every day', 'less than once a week' and 'I do not smoke'.

Answers to this question are presented below separately for the two surveys, and by age group and gender.

## Findings:

Tables 1-3 present data from the Middle Childhood, first broken down by gender (Table 1), then by age (Table 2) and finally by both age and gender (Table 3). Tables 4-6 provide the same information from the Main Survey. Very few children of either gender report regular smoking earlier than 12 years of age. The most striking patterns in these data are the substantial differences by age group in the main study, and the pattern that shows that during adolescence, girls are at least if not more likely than boys to report regular smoking behaviour.

Table 1: HBSC Ireland Middle Childhood Survey: Smoking Frequency by Gender

Gender	Boys	Girls
Every day	0.3	0.1
At least once a week, but not every day	0.4	0.3
Less than once a week	0.6	0.4
I do not smoke	96.9	98.4
Missing	1.8	.9
N	1753	1637

Table 2: HBSC Ireland Middle Childhood Survey: Smoking Frequency by Age Group

Age Group	9 yrs old	10 yrs old
Every day	0.2	-
At least once a week, but not every day	0.2	0.3
Less than once a week	0.4	0.7
I do not smoke	98.2	98.0
Missing	1.0	1.0
N	1344	1463

Table 3: HBSC Ireland Middle Childhood Survey: Smoking Frequency by Gender and Age Group

Age Group	9 yrs old		10 yrs old	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Every day	0.3	.1	-	-
At least once a week, but not every day	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.3
Less than once a week	0.8	-	0.7	0.7
I do not smoke	97.1	99.3	97.8	98.3
Missing	1.5	.4	1.3	.7
N	660	683	760	701

Table 4: HBSC Ireland Main Survey: Smoking Frequency by Gender

Gender	Boys	Girls
Every day	8.2	8.6
At least once a week, but not every day	3.0	3.3
Less than once a week	3.3	3.7
I do not smoke	84.3	82.3
Missing	1.3	2.1
N	5287	5035

Table 5: HBSC Ireland Main Survey: Smoking Frequency by Age Group

Age Group	10-11	12-14	15-17
Every day	0.6	4.5	15.5
At least once a week, but not every day	0.6	2.8	4.5
Less than once a week	1.1	3.0	4.9
I do not smoke	94.8	88.0	74.1
Missing	2.9	1.7	1.0
N	1371	4846	3934

Table 6: HBSC Ireland Main Survey: Smoking Frequency by Gender and Age Group

Age Group	10-11		12-14		15-17	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Every day	1.1	0.2	4.5	4.6	14.3	16.8
At least once a week, but not every day	0.9	0.4	2.6	3.0	4.0	5.0
Less than once a week	1.2	1.0	3.0	3.1	4.3	5.6
I do not smoke	96.3	93.8	88.6	87.3	76.4	71.6
Missing	.5	4.6	1.3	2.0	1.1	.9
N	563	807	2534	2311	2089	1842

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