

## **Short Report**

### **HBSC Ireland: smoking behaviour between 1998-2006.**

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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).

There have been three HBSC Ireland surveys, in the Springs of 1998, 2002 and 2006. In each survey the same sampling and data collection methods were employed; with self-completion questionnaires completed by students from a nationally representative stratified sample of primary and post-primary schools (5<sup>th</sup> class to 5<sup>th</sup> year). The methods employed in both surveys complied with the relevant International HBSC protocols and are detailed in national reports from the surveys, 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 10-17 years, for the HBSC Ireland surveys undertaken in 1998, 2002 and 2006. In all three surveys the following questions on smoking frequency were included:

- “Have you ever smoked tobacco?”, with the response options ‘yes’ and ‘no’.
- “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’.

In 2006, participating students were also asked to indicate how frequently they smoked cigarettes with the question:

- “How frequently have you smoked cigarettes during the last 30 days?”, with the response options ‘not at all’, ‘less than 1 cigarette per week’, ‘less than 1 cigarette per day’, ‘1-5 cigarettes per day’, ‘6-10 cigarettes per day’, ‘11-20 cigarettes per day’ and ‘more than 20 cigarettes per day’.

### Findings:

Table 1 presents the percentages who reported that they ever smoked tobacco, by age-group, gender and survey year. Among younger children, boys were more likely to report ever smoking than girls, but the opposite was the case among the older children. The percentage of children who reported that they ever smoked has decreased for each age-group and both genders across the survey years.

Table 1: Percentages who reported ever smoking, by age, gender and survey year

Age Group	10-11 years		12-14 years		15-17 years	
Gender	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1998	25.5	17.3	50.0	47.9	67.4	69.3
2002	12.7	8.1	34.0	33.0	61.4	62.6
2006	10.4	7.3	29.6	27.0	51.8	56.7

Tables 2-4 present the percentages who reported any current smoking behaviour, by age group, gender and survey year. In table 2 the percentages reflect all reported current smoking behaviour, irrespective of frequency. Table 3 presents data for those who reported smoking at least weekly, and table 4 for those who reported smoking at least daily. In each case, there appears to be an interaction between age-group and gender, and a reported decrease in current smoking behaviour, both between 1998-2002 and 2002-2006.

Table 2: Percentages who reported any current smoking behaviour, by age-group, gender and survey year

Age Group	10-11 years		12-14 years		15-17 years	
Gender	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1998	8.6	4.6	19.5	18.9	31.6	36.9
2002	4.6	2.6	13.6	13.3	29.9	33.1
2006	3.2	1.7	10.2	10.9	22.8	27.7

Table 3: Percentages who reported weekly smoking, by age-group, gender and survey year

Age Group	10-11 years		12-14 years		15-17 years	
Gender	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1998	2.5	1.6	13.1	11.4	24.5	28.2
2002	2.1	1.2	8.3	9.1	23.6	25.2
2006	2.0	0.6	7.2	7.7	18.5	22.0

Table 4: Percentages who reported daily smoking, by age-group, gender and survey year

Age Group	10-11 years		12-14 years		15-17 years	
Gender	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1998	1.0	0.1	8.4	6.3	19.2	20.1
2002	0.5	0.3	5.1	6.1	19.0	20.2
2006	1.1	0.3	4.6	4.7	14.4	17.0

Table 5 presents the self-reported frequency of smoking behaviour by age-group and gender from 2006. These data indicate that while consumption is higher amongst older children, relatively few children of any age-group are smoking in excess of 20 cigarettes, the equivalent of one packet, per day.

Table 5: Percentages reporting frequency of smoking behaviour, by age-group and gender

Age Group	10-11 years		12-14 years		15-17 years	
Gender	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Not at all	97.3	98.0	89.4	88.9	76.2	70.6
Less than 1 cigarette per week	1.6	1.7	3.4	4.0	5.3	6.4
Less than 1 cigarette per day	0.2	0.1	1.4	1.3	2.2	3.1
1-5 cigarettes per day	0.4	0.1	2.4	2.3	5.4	7.9
6-10 cigarettes per day	0.0	0.0	1.7	2.2	5.9	7.3
11-20 cigarettes per day	0.2	0.0	0.9	0.8	3.3	3.7
More than 20 cigarettes per day	0.4	0.0	0.9	0.4	1.6	1.0

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