Exercise among schoolchildren in Ireland

Aisling Beckwith & the HBSC Ireland Team, Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway

Overall percentages for HBSC 2014 and HBSC 2010 in this factsheet have been weighted

Summary
Exercising in this factsheet refers to children who report exercising four or more times a week outside school hours, to the point where they get out of breath or sweat. Overall, 51.6% of children report that they exercise four or more times a week. This figure remains stable from 2010 (49.7%). More boys (60.5%) than girls (43.6%) report exercising. The proportion of children exercising is higher among younger than older children (63.8% boys and 55.8% girls 10-11 years; 55.4% boys and 34.3% girls 15-17 years). Children who report living with both parents and those who find it easy to talk to their mother and father about things that really bother them are more likely to report exercising, as are those who report liking school and those who spend four or more evenings out with their friends per week. Children from higher social class groups are more likely to report exercising than those from lower social class groups.

Why this topic?
Physical activity can contribute to the physical and mental health of schoolchildren, and can have positive impacts on academic performance. Conversely, physical inactivity is associated with adverse health outcomes such as obesity and low self-esteem. However, many young people do not meet physical activity guidelines and participation in physical activity generally declines throughout childhood, especially among girls.

Change 2010-2014
The proportion of children who report exercising four times or more a week has remained stable from 49.7% in 2010 to 51.6% in 2014. The proportion of boys (60.1% 2010; 60.5% 2014) who report exercising remains stable since 2010, while there has been a slight increase in the proportion of girls who exercise since 2010 (40.4% 2010; 43.6% 2014).

Exercise in context
- Children from higher social class groups are more likely to report exercising than those from lower social class groups (53.1% in social classes 1-2; 50.2% in social classes 3-4; 44.2% in social classes 5-6).
- Children who report living with both parents are more likely to report exercising than those who do not (78.2% vs 74.6%), as are those who report finding it easy to talk to their mother and father about things that really bother them, compared to those who do not find it easy.
- Children who report spending four or more evenings with their friends are more likely to report exercising than those who do not (39.2% vs 25.7%).
- Children who report that they like school are more likely to report exercising (76.5% vs 70.9%) while those who report feeling pressured by their schoolwork are less likely to report exercising than those who do not feel so pressured (38.7% vs 46.7%).
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All factsheets and other HBSC publications and reports can be downloaded from our website: http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc

Contact us at: hbsc@nuigalway.ie

References


This factsheet was prepared by Aisling Beckwith, Mary Callaghan, Aoiife Gavin, Eimear Keane, Catherine Perry, Larri Walker and Saoirse Nic Gabhann.