

HBSC IRELAND

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams¹ in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (Europe) and co-ordinated by Dr Joanna Inchley of the University of Glasgow. This factsheet is based on data collected in 2018 from 12,002 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country².

Further information is available at:
<http://www.hbsc.org>
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hbsc
HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN
ÉIREANN/IRELAND



Summary

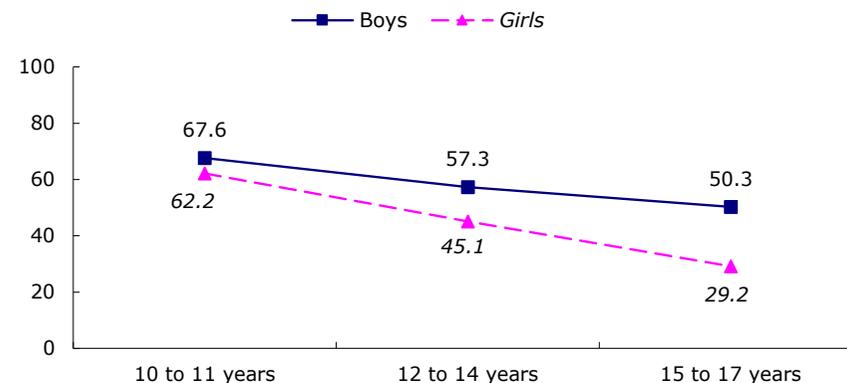
Exercising in this factsheet refers to physical activity undertaken to the point where children get out of breath or sweat. Overall, 49.3% of children report that they exercise regularly (four or more times a week) outside school hours. There has been little change since 2014 (51.6%). More boys (57.1%) than girls (42.3%) report exercising four or more times a week. The proportion of children exercising regularly is higher among younger than older children (67.6% of boys and 62.2% of girls aged 10-11 years; 50.3% of boys and 29.2% of girls aged 15-17 years). Children in higher social class groups are more likely to report regular exercise than those in lower social class groups. Children who like school, and those who do not feel pressurised by their schoolwork, are more likely to report regular exercise. Children who live with both parents, and those who spend four or more evenings with friends, are more likely to report regular exercise.

Why this topic?

Physical activity contributes positively to the health of schoolchildren. It reduces the risk of overweight and obesity³ and can improve both the mental health of children⁴ and their academic achievement⁵. However, many young people do not meet physical activity guidelines, with girls particularly at risk of not exercising regularly⁶.

Change 2014-2018

The proportion of children who report exercising four or more times a week has remained stable from 51.6% in 2014 to 49.3% in 2018. The proportion of children who report exercising regularly has decreased slightly for both boys (60.5% in 2014, 57.1% in 2018), and remained stable for girls (43.6% in 2014, 42.3% in 2018).



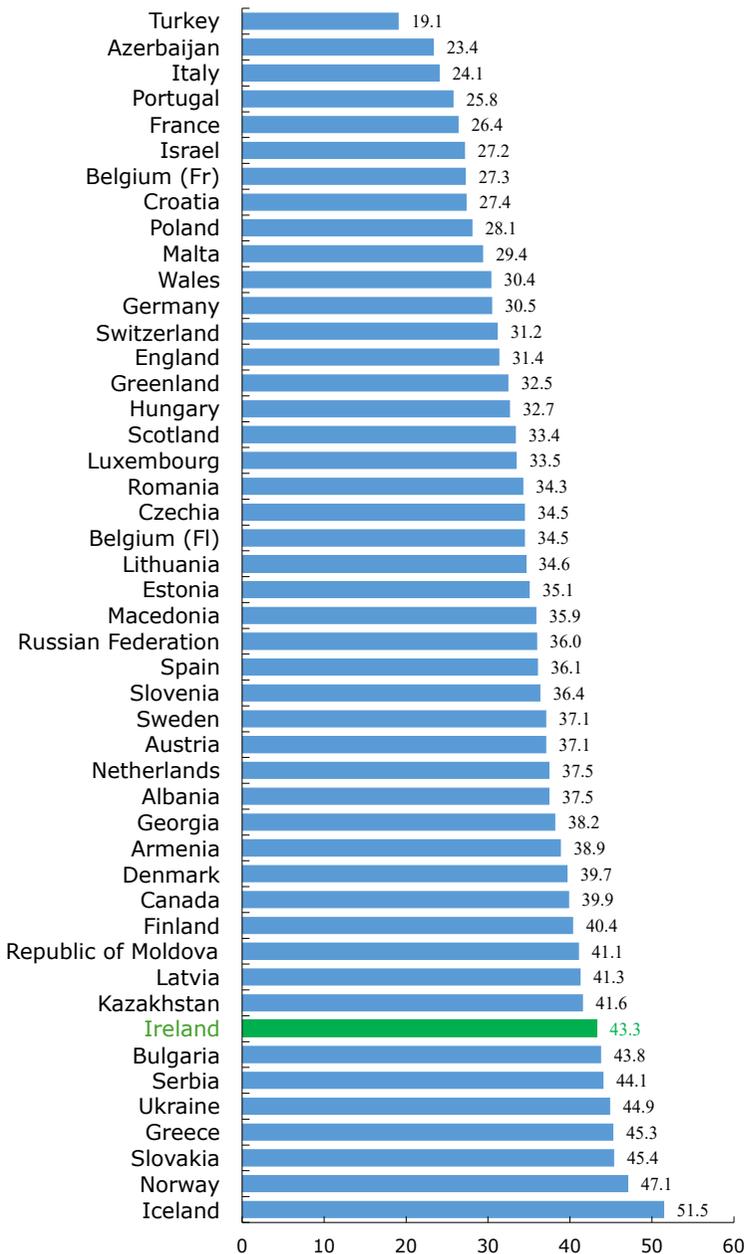
Percentage of children who exercise four or more times a week outside school hours, by age and gender

Exercise in context

- Children in higher social class groups are more likely to report exercising regularly than those from lower social class groups (51.0% in social classes 1-2; 48.9% in social classes 3-4; 45.2% in social classes 5-6)
- Children who live with both parents are more likely to report exercising regularly compared to children who live in other types of households (51.0% vs. 44.1%)
- Children who report that they find it easy to talk to their mother are more likely to report exercising regularly (51.0% vs. 39.1%) compared to those who do not find it easy. The same pattern holds for ease of talking to their father (54.7% vs. 38.7%)
- Children who report spending four or more evenings out with friends per week are more likely to report exercising regularly than those who do not spend as many evenings out with friends (62.1% vs. 43.9%)
- Children who report liking school are more likely to report exercising regularly compared to those who do not (50.6% vs. 46.2%), while those who report feeling pressured by school work are less likely to report exercising regularly compared to those who do not feel pressured (43.4% vs. 49.3%).

...Exercise among schoolchildren in Ireland

Percentage of 15 year children reporting exercise four or more times a week outside school hours, by country



International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 8th among 47 countries in Europe with 43.3% reporting that they exercise four or more times a week (HBSC average: 35.1%)¹.

Implications

The proportion of schoolchildren who report exercising regularly has decreased slightly since 2014. Given the positive health impacts of regular exercise for schoolchildren, it is important to promote and facilitate regular exercise, particularly among those who are less likely to be active. This factsheet suggests action is required on multiple fronts, as the factors associated with physical inactivity are diverse and include socio-economic status, family relationships, and the school environment.

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This factsheet was prepared by: Eoin Dennehy, Aoife Gavin and Saoirse Nic Gabhainn of the HBSC Ireland research team, NUI Galway.

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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

