

## HBSC IRELAND

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams<sup>1</sup> 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 country<sup>2</sup>.

Further information is available at:  
<http://www.hbsc.org>  
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/>



hbsc  
HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN  
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN  
ÉIREANN/IRELAND



## Summary

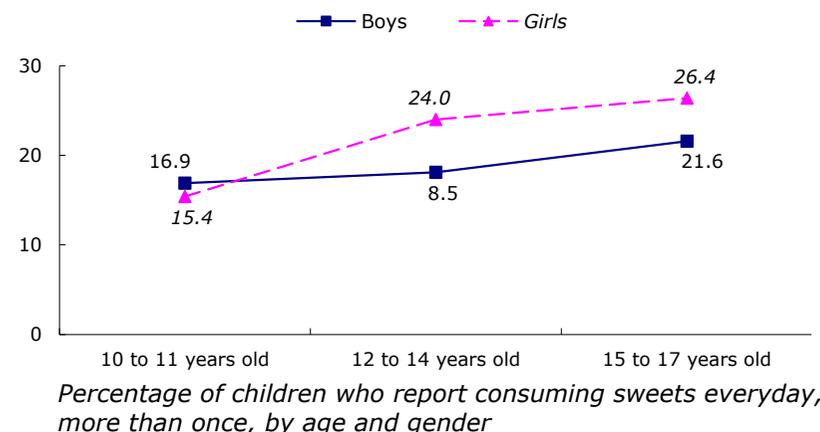
Sweet consumption in this factsheet refers to children who report consuming sweets every day more than once daily. Overall 21.4% of school children in Ireland report consuming sweets more than once daily (19% of boys and 23.5% of girls). This figure has declined since 2014, when it was 27%. The percentage of children who consume sweets more than once daily is higher among older children; 21.6% of boys and 26.4% of girls aged 15-17 in comparison with 19.0% of boys and 23.5% of girls aged 10-11. Children who consume sweets more than once daily are less likely to live with both parents, find it harder to talk to their parents and are less likely to enjoy school. They are also more likely to spend four or more evenings with friends and to report feeling pressured by school.

## Why this topic?

Sweets are predominantly comprised of sugar and therefore provide little nutrition value to a child's diet<sup>3</sup>. Eating sweets on a regular basis can lead to dental caries<sup>4</sup> and weight gain which in turn can lead to obesity, type 2 diabetes<sup>5</sup> and cardiovascular disease<sup>6</sup>. It is recommended that sweets should not be consumed more than twice a week<sup>4</sup>.

## Change 2014-2018

The overall percentage of children who report consuming sweets more than once daily has declined between 2014 (27%) and 2018 (21.4%)<sup>2</sup>. There has been a decrease in each age group and among both boys and girls.

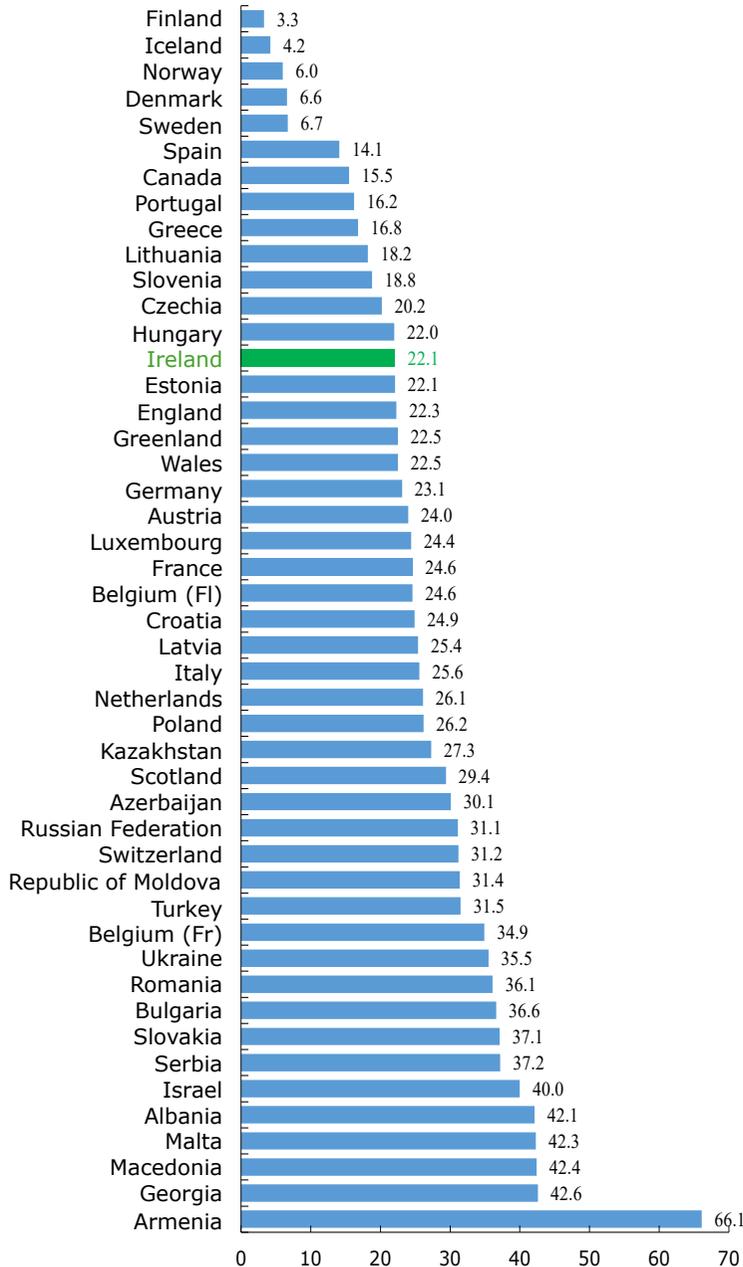


## Sweet consumption in context

- Children in lower and middle social class groups are more likely to report eating sweets more than once daily than those in higher social class groups (22.2% in social class 5-6; 22.3% in social class 3-4; 20.2% in social class 1-2)
- Children who report living with both parents are less likely to report eating sweets more than once daily compared to children in other types of households (20.2% vs. 24.7%)
- Children who report that they find it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report eating sweets more than once daily compared to those who do not find it easy (20.7% vs. 24.1%). The same pattern holds for ease of talking to father (19.4% vs. 23.8%)
- Children who report spending four or more evenings out with friends per week are more likely to report eating sweets more than once daily than those who do not spend as many evenings out with friends (23.8% vs. 20.3%)
- Children who report liking school are less likely to report eating sweets more than once a day compared to those who do not (19.9% vs. 25.1%), while those who report feeling pressured by school work are more likely to report eating sweets more than once a day compared to those who do not feel pressured (24.1% vs. 19.2%).

## ...Sweets consumption among schoolchildren in Ireland

Percentage of 15 year children reporting consuming sweets everyday, more than once, by country



### International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 15th among 47 countries in Europe with 22.1% reporting that they eat sweets more than once a day<sup>1</sup>.

### Implications

The number of young people that report consuming sweets once or more daily has decreased since 2014. Ireland ranks 15th in comparison to 47 other European and North American countries. Nevertheless, the majority of schoolchildren in Ireland exceed the recommended intake of sweets. It is important to identify factors which influence sweet consumption during childhood and adolescence and support interventions for decreasing sweet consumption at school and at home, such as the START campaign<sup>7</sup>.

### References

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- See <https://www.safefood.net/start/about>. Accessed September 20, 2021.

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All factsheets and other HBSC publications and reports can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbcs>

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