

## 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

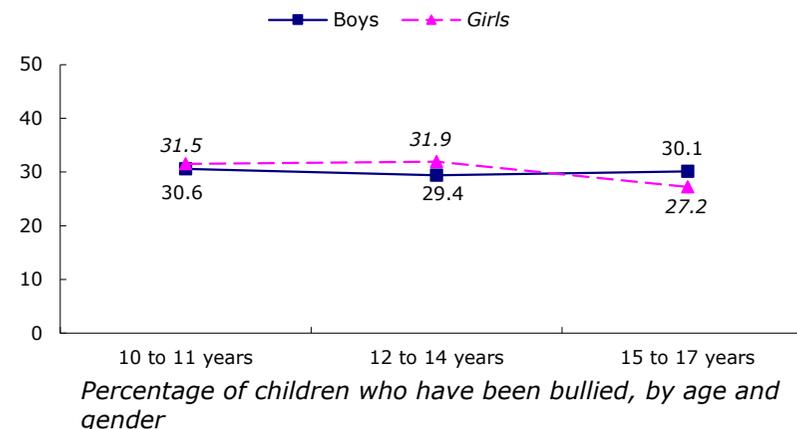
HBSC Ireland has found that 29.2% of school children in Ireland report having been bullied (29.8% of boys and 30.2% of girls). This figure has increased since 2010 (24.3%). The percentage of girls who have been bullied is higher among girls in the 12-14 year old category (31.9%, 31.5% of 10-11 year olds and 27.2% of 15-17 year olds). Children who report having been bullied are less likely to live with both parents, to find it easy to talk to their mother and father, or to like school and are more likely to feel pressured by school work. Bullying in this factsheet refers to children who report being bullied at school once or more in the past couple of months.

## Why this topic?

Bullying may be defined as intentional, unwanted behaviour, such as verbal, physical or psychological aggression directed by an individual or group against another person or persons. In addition, cyberbullying, placing one-off offensive or deliberately hurtful statements, messages or images on a public form or social network site where it can be viewed and/ or repeated by other people is regarded as bullying behaviour<sup>3</sup>. School bullying can affect mental and physical health and result in poorer academic performance. Exposure to bullying may lead to anxiety, self-harm, depression and in some cases suicide<sup>4</sup>. Prevention and intervention programmes must be updated and fully implemented and monitored to tackle all forms of bullying.

## Change 2014-2018

Overall the percentage of children who report having been bullied has increased since 2010 (24.3%). There has been a slight increase in the number of boys who have been bullied (25.5% to 29.8%) while there is a notable increase in the number of girls (23% to 30.2%). This increase remains consistent over both gender and all age categories.

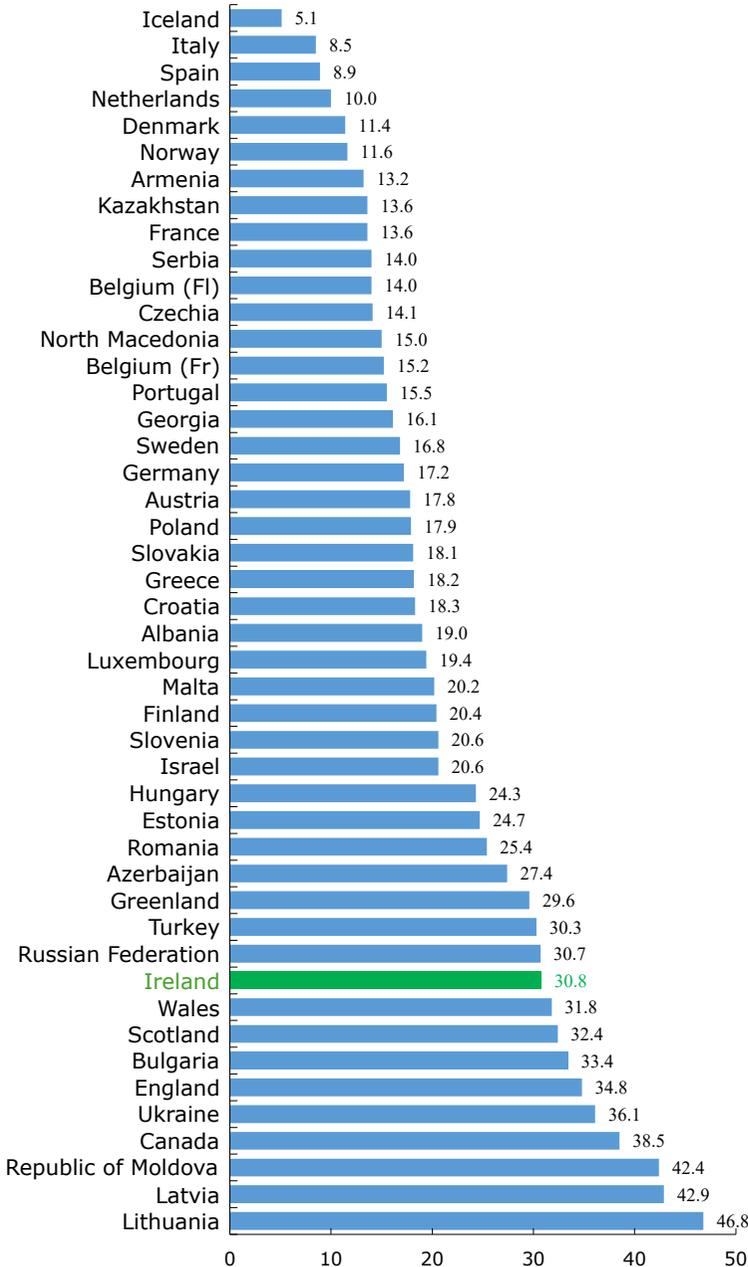


## Bullying behaviour in context

- Children from lower social class groups are significantly more likely to report being bullied compared to other social class groups (33.4% in social classes 5-6; 31.0% in social classes 3-4; 27.7% in social classes 1-2)
- Children who live with both parents are less likely to report being bullied compared to children who live in other types of households (28.0% vs 35.9%)
- Children who report finding it easy to talk to their mother are less likely to report being bullied compared to those who do not find it easy (27.8% vs 40.7%). The same pattern holds for ease of talking to father (25.8% vs 37.5%)
- Children who report liking school are less likely to report being bullied compared to those who do not (28.% vs. 38.1%), while those who report feeling pressured by school work are more likely to report being bullied compared to those who do not feel pressured (34.7% vs. 26.4%)
- Spending four or more evenings out with friends per week is not associated with being bullied.

## ...Bullying behaviour among schoolchildren in Ireland

Percentage of 15 year children reporting they have been bullied, by country



### International

15 year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 10th among 44 countries in Europe and North America<sup>1</sup>.

### Implications

The percentage of children in Ireland reporting having been bullied at least once in the past couple of months has increased since 2010, with Ireland placed at the top end of mid-range in comparison to other European and North American countries. The percentage of children who report having been bullied remains stable across all age groups and in both genders. The findings presented indicate that children who report being bullied feel pressured by school work and not liking school. Good communications with parents and positive experiences in the school environment may act as a protective factor against being bullied.

### References

- Inchley, J., Currie, D., Budisavljevic, S., Torsheim, T., Jåstad, A., Cosma, A., Kelly, C., & Arnarsson, A.M. (2020). *Spotlight on Adolescent Health and Well-being. Findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada. International report. Volume 1. Key findings*. Copenhagen: WHO. DOI: [10.665/332091](https://doi.org/10.665/332091)
- Költő, A., Gavin, A., Molcho, M., Kelly, C., Walker, L., & Nic Gabhainn, S. (2020). *The Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study 2018*. Dublin: Department of Health & Galway: Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway. DOI: [10.13025/zvwm-rp65](https://doi.org/10.13025/zvwm-rp65)
- Department of Education and Skills. (2013). *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools September 2013*. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills. [Link](#)
- Downes, P. & Cefai, C. (2016). *How to Prevent and Tackle Bullying and School Violence: Evidence and Practices for Strategies for Inclusive and Safe Schools, NESET II report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. DOI: [10.2766/0799](https://doi.org/10.2766/0799)
- Waasdrop, T.E. & Bradshaw, C.P. (2015). The overlap between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. *Journal Of Adolescent Health, 56*(2015), 483-488. DOI: [10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.12.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.12.002)
- Elgar, F., Garipey, G., Dirks, M., Walsh, S.D., Molcho, M., Cosma, A., Malinowska-Cieslik, M., Donnelly, P.D., & Craig, W. (2019). Association to early-life exposure to income inequality with bullying in adolescence in 40 countries. *JAMA Pediatrics, 173*(7), e191181. DOI: [10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.3971](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.3971)

This factsheet was prepared by: Caroline Grogan, Aoife Gavin and Michal Molcho of the HBSC Ireland research team, NUI Galway.

HBSC Ireland is funded by the Department of Health.

We would like to thank all the children, teachers and schools who participated and acknowledge the contribution of our colleagues in the Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway.

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

Contact us at: [hbcs@nuigalway.ie](mailto:hbcs@nuigalway.ie)

