

# SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: Future research plans of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study.

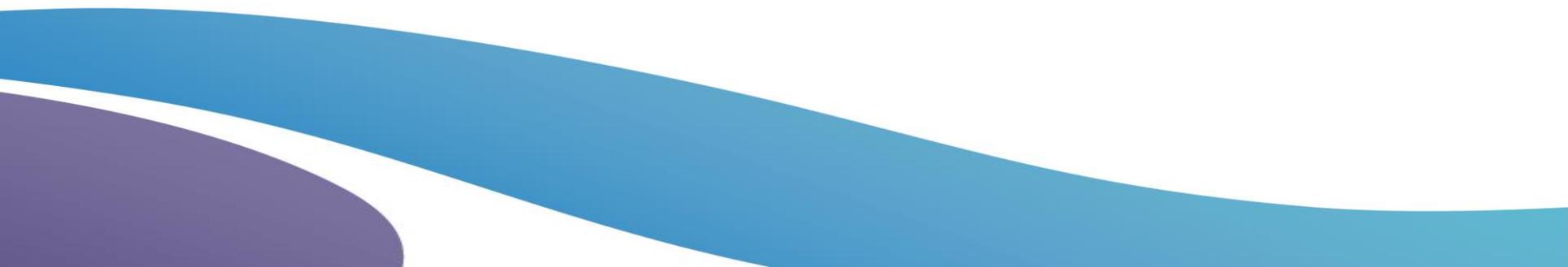
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**A designated WHO Collaborating Centre  
for Health Promotion Research.**

# Sexual behaviour questions: background

- Few cross national studies have been conducted on sexual behaviour and contraceptive use among adolescents
  - Lack of data for policy development
  - 2001/2002 four standardised questions related to sexual behaviour have been included as mandatory HBSC questions
  - Derived from the US Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) asked by all countries of 15 year-old students
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# Issues with HBSC 2002-2010 questions

- Introduction of 'skip patterns' in some countries
  - Poor, inexact or inconsistent translations
  - Changes to the format of the questions
  - Addition of multiple national contraception items (e.g., emergency contraception)
  - Inconsistencies in participant data
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# 2013/2014 mandatory questions

- Skip pattern

	Have you ever had sexual intercourse (sometimes this is called "making love" "having sex" or "going all the way" or <i>other appropriate colloquial terms</i> )?
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
2 <input type="checkbox"/>	No (please go to question *)

- Layout change

	The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
2 <input type="checkbox"/>	No
3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know

# Optional packages

- Romantic Experiences
    - Significant impact on mental health, development and future romantic relationships
  - First sexual intercourse
    - Relate to other risk behaviours and both psychosocial and physical health outcomes
  - Not previously included as mandatory or optional package in HBSC
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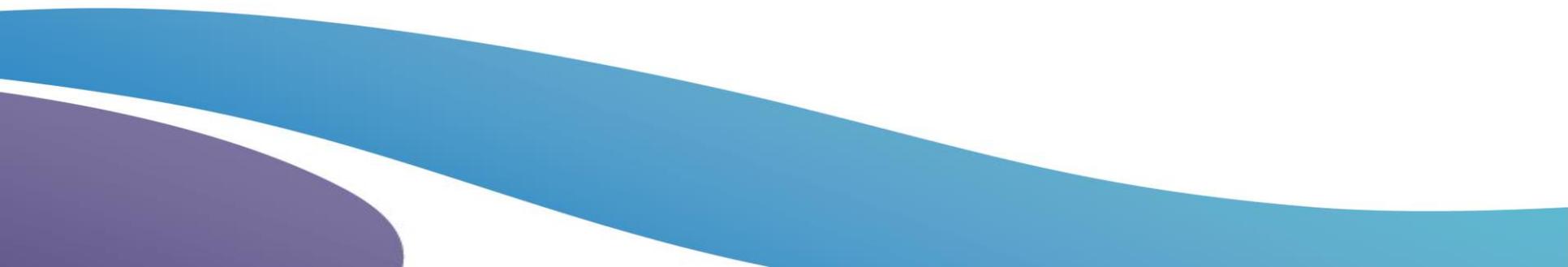
# 2014 optional package questions

- Romantic Experiences
    - Experience of being in love
    - Experience of a romantic relationship
  - First Sexual Intercourse
    - Age of partner at first sexual intercourse
    - Contraception use at first sexual intercourse
    - Perception of timing of first sexual intercourse
    - Substance use prior to first sexual intercourse
    - Perception of age of first sexual intercourse
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# HBSC 2014 pilot study

- **Aim:** Provide guidance to the international network on the sexual health items
  - acceptability, understandability, answerability, translatability and relevance

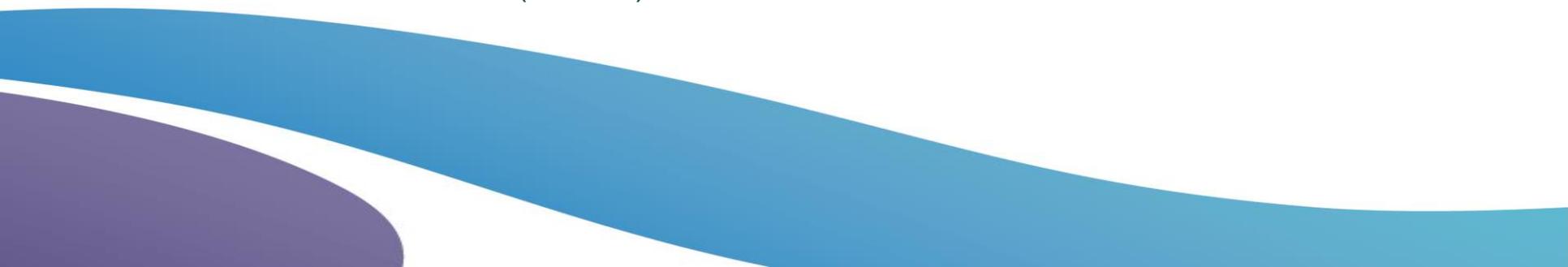
# HBSC 2014 pilot study

- **Participants:** 657 school students aged 13-19 from deliberately contrasting socio-economic backgrounds and educational contexts
    - France n=98 (3 schools, 6 classes)
    - Hungary=192 (1 school, 6 classes)
    - Ireland n=233 (5 schools, 12 classes)
    - Portugal n=30\* focus groups (1 school, 1 class)
    - Romania n=105 (1 school, 4 classes)
  - **Methodology:** Questionnaire administration and/or qualitative exploration
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# 2014 Mandatory questions: pilot findings

- Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
    - Response rate of 96.7% (607/628 participants)
    - Small number of students commented that the questions were too personal or too private (n=3/628)
    - Small number of Portuguese and Irish students queried the contents of the brackets (crucial n=3/30) (unnecessary n=2/30, n=1/233)
    - Overall, high response rate, no issues with appropriateness of the questions or difficulty in understanding
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# 2014 Mandatory questions: pilot findings

- The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom/birth control pill/other?
    - Highest number of missing values for any of the contraceptive methods was n=6
    - Very few comments about any of the contraception questions
    - No issues reported regarding the appropriateness of the question
    - Other methods included; vaginal ring, withdrawal (Hungary) and contraceptive injection (Ireland), female condom, contraceptive patch, contraceptive ring and intrauterine device (France)
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# 2014 optional packages: pilot findings

- Romantic Experiences
    - Small number of respondents suggested minor alterations to the wording e.g. love (n=14), going out (n=5)
    - Phrasing and age-targeting of the questions were considered appropriate
    - Overall, no specific issues with the questions were identified
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# 2014 optional packages: pilot findings

- First Sexual Experience

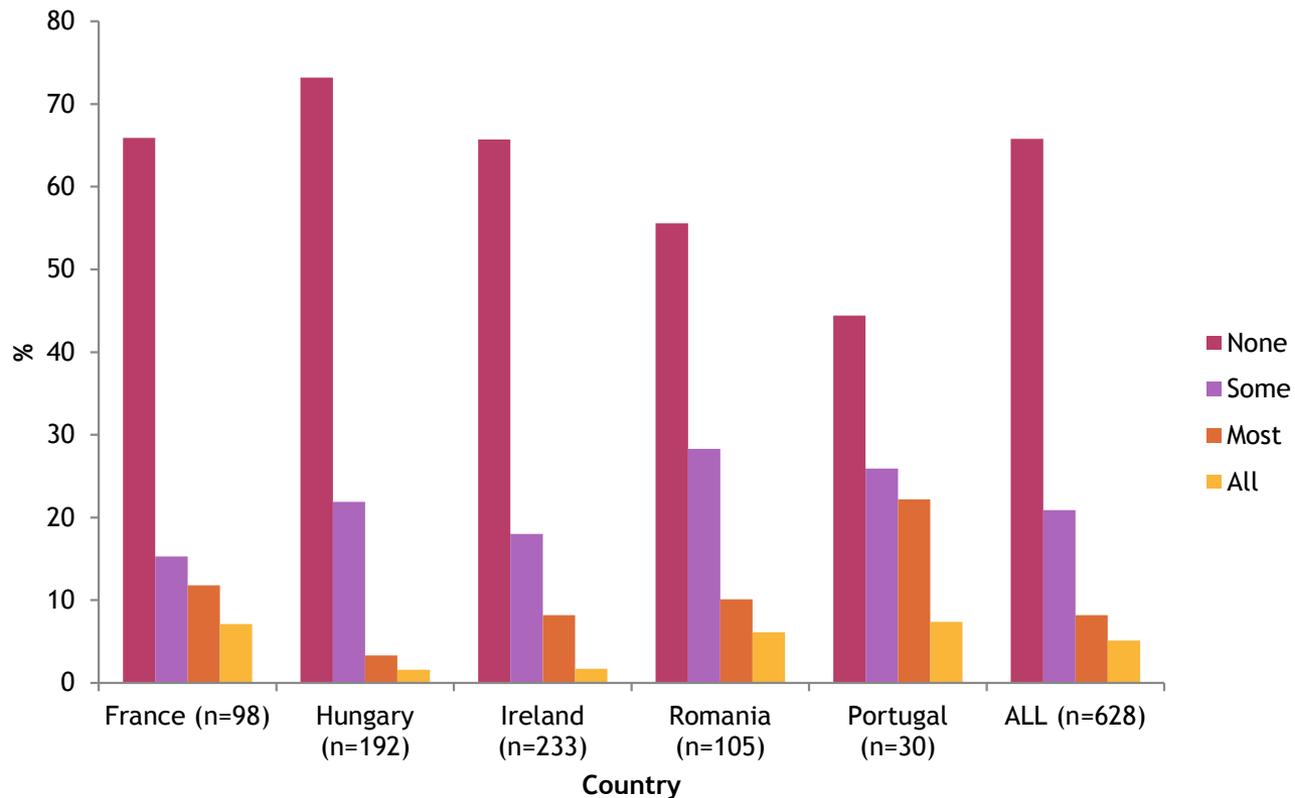
- Preference for more response options on Perception of timing of first sexual intercourse

	When you first had sexual intercourse, would you personally say:
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	you wanted it to happen earlier
2 <input type="checkbox"/>	you wanted it to happen at that time
3 <input type="checkbox"/>	you would rather have had it later
4 <input type="checkbox"/>	you did not really want to have intercourse
5 <input type="checkbox"/>	you did not ask yourself that

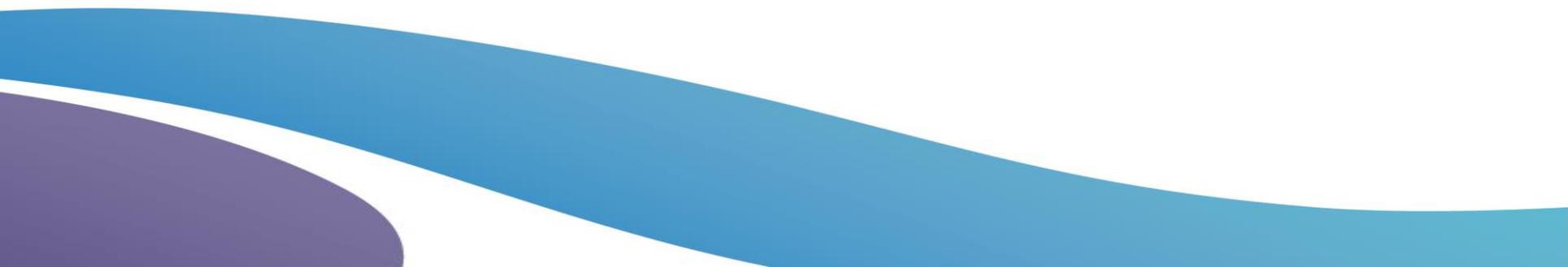
- Comments surrounding uncertainty on perception initiation (n=25)
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# Overall results

- *Figure 1: Inappropriateness of the pilot sexual behaviour questions*



# Test re-test

- As part of the HBSC Ireland piloting process a test re-test study was also carried out
  - The purpose of this re-test was:
    - to highlight any differences or difficulties that may arise from questions and compare answers over time
    - to test the validity of the question items
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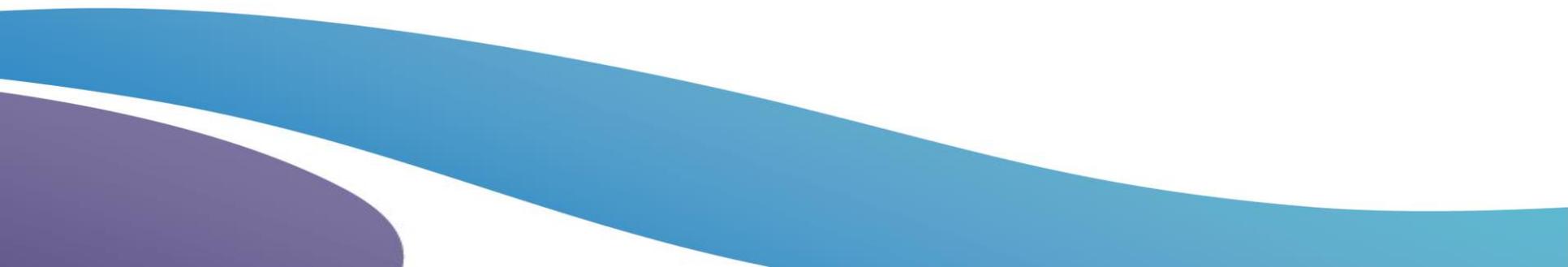
# Test re-test

- Pilot questionnaire administered to the same students at two different time points
    - Two weeks between Time 1 and Time 2
  - Carried out in three mixed post-primary schools across Ireland
    - Galway, Offaly and Dublin
  - 63 matched cases from Time 1 and Time 2
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# Test re-test results

- Kappa statistics were calculated for each of the sexual health items. Kappa is most commonly used to measure inter-rater reliability.
  - The kappa statistics indicate that 12 out of the 17 items contained a sufficient level of inter-rater reliability (i.e. kappa above 0.6).
    - Items in which participants score varied from Time 1 to Time 2 related to the use of 'other contraception' at first and last intercourse, the number of times engaged in sexual intercourse, perception of timing of first sexual intercourse and perception of age of first intercourse.
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# Implications for HBSC 2014

- Provided guidance for the mandatory and optional sexual behaviour questions
  - Questions which have conceptual cohesion within the study
  - Questions which are understandable, acceptable and of relevance to adolescents
  - Informed a standardised protocol which will enable the collection of internationally comparable data on adolescents' sexual behaviours
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# Overall summary

- Few cross national studies have been conducted on sexual behaviour and contraceptive use among adolescents
  - Adolescent sexual behaviour is a salient public health issue
  - HBSC study provides a unique opportunity to examine sexual behaviours across a wide variety of contexts in a systematic and comparable fashion
  - Inform and influence population health, health services and health education policy (focus groups)
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# Acknowledgements

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  - *This work was funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences collaborative grant with the Crisis Pregnancy Programme of the HSE. With special thanks to: Maeve O'Brien  
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  - *HBSC Ireland Team*
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