

## Short report

### HBSC Ireland 2014: health and risk behaviour among school children in Donegal

Eimear Keane, Catherine Perry, Michal Molcho

HBSC Ireland, Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway

#### Introduction

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and runs on a four-year cycle. In 2014, Ireland participated for the fifth time in the HBSC study ([www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc](http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc)). The overall aims of the HBSC study are to gain new insight into, and increase our understanding of young people's health and well-being, health behaviours and their social context. HBSC collects data on key indicators of health, health attitudes, and health behaviours, as well as the context of health for young people. The study is a school-based survey with information collected from students through self-completion questionnaires in classrooms. HBSC Ireland 2014 was funded by the Department of Health. Further information on the HBSC Ireland can be found at [www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc](http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc) or at [www.hbsc.org](http://www.hbsc.org), the International HBSC website.

The most recent HBSC Ireland study was conducted in 2014 and included 13,611 school children from 3rd class in primary school to 5th year in post-primary school. Overall, 42.2% boys and 57.8% girls participated. Collectively, 230 primary and post-primary schools across Ireland participated in this study. The methods employed comply with the International HBSC protocol and are detailed in the national report from the 2014 survey see [http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/hbsc\\_2014.html](http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/hbsc_2014.html).

#### Focus of this report

This short report provides a descriptive analysis of the 2014 HBSC survey data comparing secondary school children (second year to fifth year) from Donegal to the rest of the sample regarding alcohol consumption, smoking, and cannabis use, eating and dieting, physical activity and sexual activity.

### The questions analysed for Irish secondary school children aged 12-17 years were:

- On how many occasions (if any) have you (a) smoked cigarettes?...in the last 30 days and (b) drunk alcohol?...in the last 30 days. The response options for each question was (1) never, (2) 1-2 days, (3) 3-5 days, (4) 6-9 days, (5) 10-19 days, (6) 20-29 days, (7) 30 days (or more).
- Have you ever taken cannabis?...in the last 30 days. The response options were (1) never, (2) 1-2 days, (3) 3-5 days, (4) 6-9 days, (5) 10-19 days, (6) 20-29 days, (7) 30 days (or more).
- How often do you usually have breakfast (more than a glass of milk or fruit juice)? For (a) weekdays the response options were (1) I never have breakfast during the week, (2) one day, (3) two days, (4) three days, (5) four days, and (6) five days and for (b) weekend days the response options were (1) I never have breakfast during the weekend, (2) I usually have breakfast on only one day of the weekend, (3) I usually have breakfast on both weekend days.
- How many days a week do you usually eat or drink...? (a) fruits, (b) vegetables, (c) sweets (candy or chocolate), (d) coke or other soft drinks that contain sugar. The response options for each item were (1) never, (2) less than once a week, (3) once a week, (4) 2-4 days a week, (5) 5-6 days a week, (6) once a day, every day, (7) every day more than once.
- At present are you on a diet or doing something else to lose weight? Response options (1) no my weight is fine, (2) no but I should lose some weight, (3) no because I need to put on some weight, (4) yes.
- Over the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day? Response options were 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 days.

### Further questions analysed for Irish secondary school children aged 15-17 years were:

- Have you ever had sexual intercourse? The response options were (1) yes, (2) no.
- Those who responded yes to the question above were asked - How old were you when you had sexual intercourse for the first time? The response options were (1) 11 years old or younger, (2) 12 years old, (3) 13 years old, (4) 14 years old, (5) 15 years old, (6) 16 years old, (7) 17 years old or older.

The findings are presented below in tables. Findings are unweighted and are broken down by age group. Findings are presented by theme: substance use, eating and dieting, physical activity and sexual behaviour.

## Findings: Substance use

Table 1 presents the percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting on how many occasions they smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days, by age group and region. Table 2 presents the percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting on how many occasions they drank alcohol in the last 30 days, by age group and region. Table 3 presents the percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting on how many occasions they had taken cannabis in the last 30 days, by age group and region.

**Table 1: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many occasions they smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Never	95.8	89.4	96.0	85.7
1-2 days	1.8	0.9	1.5	3.8
3-5 days	0.6	1.4	0.4	1.8
6-9 days	0	0.9	0.5	1.2
10-19 days	0	1.4	0.5	1.8
20-29 days	0.6	0.5	0.3	1.0
30 days (or more)	1.2	5.5	0.7	4.7

**Table 2: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many occasions they drank alcohol in the last 30 days, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Never	92.3	71.0	91.4	60.3
1-2 days	4.2	15.4	5.9	23.2
3-5 days	2.4	6.8	1.3	9.4
6-9 days	0.6	4.1	0.4	4.4
10-19 days	0	1.8	0.4	1.6
20-29 days	0	0	0.2	0.2
30 days (or more)	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.9

**Table 3: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many occasions they had taken cannabis in the last 30 days, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
<b>Never</b>	98.2	94.2	98.3	91.4
<b>1-2 days</b>	0	2.7	0.7	3.8
<b>3-5 days</b>	0	0.9	0.3	1.5
<b>6-9 days</b>	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.8
<b>10-19 days</b>	0.6	0.9	0.1	0.9
<b>20-29 days</b>	0	0	0.1	0.3
<b>30 days (or more)</b>	0.6	0.4	0.2	1.4

### Findings: Eating and dieting

Tables 4 and 5 present the percentage of 12-17 years olds reporting on how many weekdays (Table 4) and weekend days (Table 5) they eat breakfast (more than a glass of milk or fruit juice), by age group and region. Table 6 to 8 presents the percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting on how many days per week they eat fruits (Table 6), vegetables (Table 7), and sweets (Table 8), by age group and region. Table 9 presents the percentage of 12-17 years olds reporting on how many days per week they drink coke or other soft drinks, by age group and region. Table 10 presents the percentage of 12-17 years olds reporting that they are on a diet or doing something to lose weight, by age group and region.

**Table 4: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many weekdays they eat breakfast (more than a glass of milk or fruit juice), by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
<b>I never have breakfast during weekdays</b>	24.1	15.9	13.8	15.9
<b>One day</b>	1.7	3.9	3.1	2.8
<b>Two days</b>	2.3	6.9	4.0	4.4
<b>Three days</b>	6.9	4.7	5.9	6.2
<b>Four days</b>	3.4	3.9	5.3	5.4
<b>Five days</b>	61.5	64.8	68.0	65.4

**Table 5: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many weekend days they eat breakfast (more than a glass of milk or fruit juice), by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
I never have breakfast during the weekend	9.1	11.2	7.9	8.6
I usually have breakfast on only one day of the weekend	19.3	14.2	13.6	17.2
I usually have breakfast on both weekend days	71.6	74.7	78.5	74.2

**Table 6: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many days a week they usually eat fruits, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Never	3.9	6.0	4.1	4.2
Less than once a week	2.8	8.9	7.0	7.1
Once a week	6.6	8.5	8.7	9.8
2-4 days a week	37.6	28.9	26.5	26.3
5-6 days a week	11.6	13.2	15.5	14.3
Once a day every day	16.0	14.0	16.7	15.0
Every day more than once	21.6	20.4	21.5	23.4

**Table 7: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many days a week they usually eat vegetables, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Never	5.1	8.2	5.0	4.8
Less than once a week	6.7	4.3	4.4	3.5
Once a week	9.0	6.0	5.2	4.5
2-4 days a week	26.4	27.2	20.4	21.4
5-6 days a week	12.9	22.0	20.7	21.1
Once a day every day	18.5	16.4	22.9	22.6
Every day more than once	21.4	16.0	21.5	22.1

**Table 8: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many days a week they usually eat sweets, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Never	1.7	0.9	0.8	1.3
Less than once a week	4.6	8.4	5.5	6.5
Once a week	12.6	16.7	13.5	10.8
2-4 days a week	36.2	33.0	35.1	32.8
5-6 days a week	18.4	17.6	17.7	18.7
Once a day every day	14.9	11.0	15.3	15.6
Every day more than once	11.5	12.3	12.2	14.4

**Table 9: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting how many days a week they usually drink coke or other soft drinks that contain sugar, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
Never	11.4	7.7	9.5	12.7
Less than once a week	19.9	25.5	27.2	27.7
Once a week	27.8	20.4	19.5	16.9
2-4 days a week	19.9	24.7	22.6	21.6
5-6 days a week	8.5	6.0	8.1	7.6
Once a day every day	5.1	5.5	5.1	5.3
Every day more than once	7.4	10.2	8.1	8.2

**Table 10: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting they are on a diet or doing something else to lose weight**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
No, my weight is fine	53.1	46.6	57.0	51.4
No, but I should lose some weight	25.1	23.1	20.3	22.3
No, because I need to put on weight	4.5	3.8	5.5	5.7
Yes	17.3	26.5	17.3	20.6

## Findings: Physical Activity

Table 11 presents the percentage of 12-17 years olds reporting on how many days in the past 7 they were physically active for at least 60 minutes, by age group and region.

**Table 11: Percentage of 12-17 year olds reporting on physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day over the past 7 days, by age group and region**

	Donegal school children		Rest of the sample	
	12-14 years	15-17 years	12-14 years	15-17 years
<b>0 days</b>	3.5	9.0	3.5	6.1
<b>1 day</b>	2.9	10.3	4.9	8.8
<b>2 days</b>	14.6	15.0	9.1	12.0
<b>3 days</b>	20.5	19.7	14.7	16.6
<b>4 days</b>	19.9	12.9	17.4	17.4
<b>5 days</b>	18.1	12.9	18.3	15.2
<b>6 days</b>	7.0	8.2	12.2	9.7
<b>7 days</b>	13.4	12.0	20.0	14.2

## Findings: Sexual behaviour amongst 15-17 year olds

Table 12 presents the percentage of 15-17 year old that reported that they have ever had sexual intercourse, by region. Table 13 presents data on the age of first sexual intercourse of those who reported having ever had sexual intercourse, by region.

**Table 12: Percentages reporting that they ever had sexual intercourse, by region**

	Donegal school children	Rest of the sample
	15-17 years	15-17 years
<b>Yes</b>	23.1	25.5
<b>No</b>	76.9	74.5

**Table 13: Percentages reporting how old they were at first sexual intercourse of those who have ever had sex, by region**

	Donegal school children	Rest of the sample
	15-17 years	15-17 years
<b>11 years old or younger</b>	4.9	8.3
<b>12 years old</b>	2.4	3.1
<b>13 years old</b>	12.2	6.3
<b>14 years old</b>	7.3	14.6
<b>15 years old</b>	46.3	31.7
<b>16 years old</b>	22.0	27.5
<b>17 years old or older</b>	4.9	8.5

**Acknowledgements:** HBSC Ireland 2014 was funded by the Department of Health. This short report was requested by Anne Timony Meehan, Donegal Children and Young People’s Services Committee and was completed in July 2016. We would like to acknowledge the children and parents who consented and participated, the management authorities, principals and teachers who helped us to collect the data, the staff at the Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland Galway, the HBSC Ireland Advisory Board and the International coordinator of HBSC, Dr Jo Inchley of the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Further information on HBSC Ireland is available at [www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc](http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc).