

## 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 Professor Candace Currie of the University of Edinburgh. In 2006 HBSC Ireland surveyed 10,334 schoolchildren in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

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



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## Summary

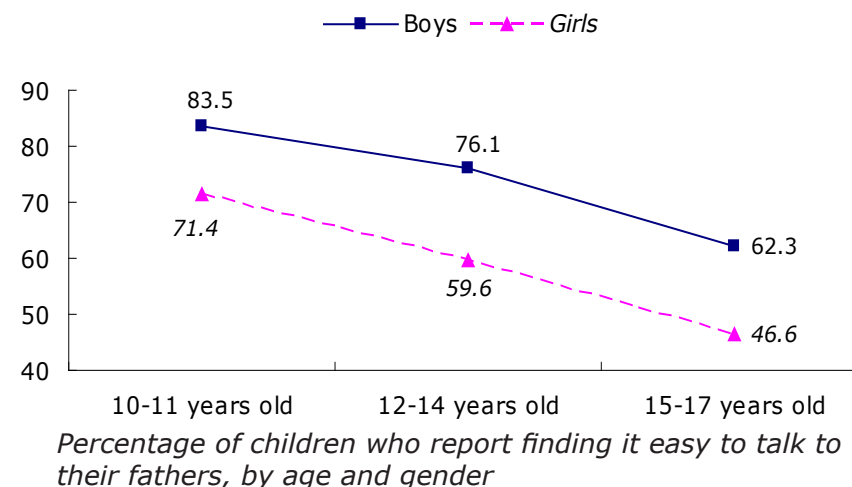
HBSC Ireland 2006 has found that 64.1% of school children in Ireland report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their father (71.1% of boys and 56.6% of girls), which represents a substantial increase since 1998 (45.8%). The percentage of children who find it easy to talk to their father is lower among older children; 83.5% of boys and 71.4% of girls aged 10-11 years and 62.3% of boys and 46.6% of girls aged 15-17 years. Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to: have been drunk, have bullied others, smoke and to report emotional and physical symptoms. They are more likely to: report excellent health, feel happy about their lives and exercise four or more times weekly. Relationship with fathers in this factsheet refers to children who report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their father about things that really bother them.

## Why this topic?

The vital role of parenting in the development of young people's health and well-being is well established<sup>2</sup>. Both mothers and fathers have a crucial influence on family's well-being; this covers both parent-parent relationships and parent-child relationships<sup>3</sup>. Children who have adults in their lives who are sources of support, and who perceive that they get on well with them has been found to be more important than parental accessibility in relation to overall wellbeing<sup>4,5</sup>.

## Trends 2002-2006

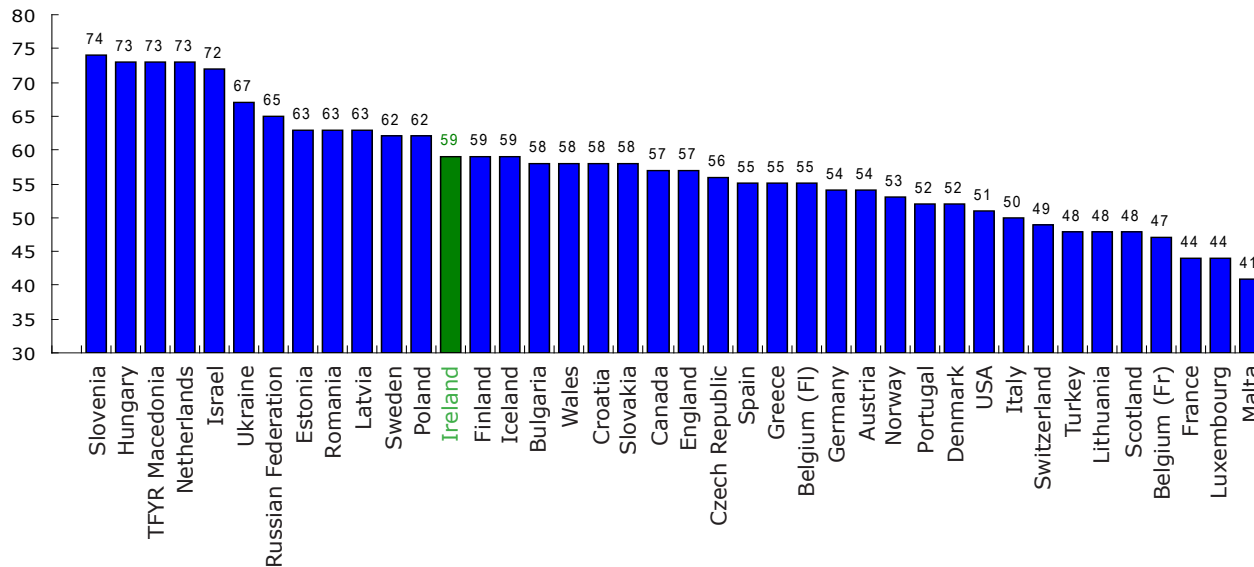
Overall the percentage of children who report that they find it easy or very easy to talk to their father has increased substantially between 2002 (53.1%) and 2006 (64.1%). This increase is seen among boys (60.5% to 71.1%) and girls (47.7% to 56.6%) and across all age groups. The largest increase is among boys aged 12-14 years (62.7% to 76.1%).



## Relationships with fathers in context

- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report frequent emotional symptoms (24.8% vs. 42.8%) and physical symptoms (26.4% vs. 43.3%) than those who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are more likely to report excellent health (39.6% vs. 23.8%), feel happy about their lives (60.1% vs. 33.1%) and exercise more than four times a week (57.5% vs. 45.1%) than those who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report having been drunk (25.3% vs. 42.3%) or to smoke (10.7% vs. 20.7%) than those who do not.
- Children who find it easy to talk to their father are less likely to report having bullied others (19.0% vs. 25.5%) than those who do not.
- Ease of talking to father is not associated with social class.

## ...Relationship with fathers among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting they find it easy to talk to their fathers, by country

### International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 13th among 40 countries in Europe and North America with 59% reporting that they find it easy to talk to their father. Overall 76% of 11 year olds (ranked 22nd) and 69% of 13 year olds (ranked 12th) report finding it easy or very easy to talk to their father about things that really bother them.

### Implications

The overall percentage of young people in Ireland who report finding it easy to talk to their father has increased substantially since 2002: Ireland ranks high internationally for 15 and 13 year olds and mid-range for eleven year olds. These findings indicate that strong relationships with fathers are associated with higher levels of happiness and excellent

health. Emphasis still needs to be placed on assisting fathers to help maintain their relationships with their children. Attention needs to focus on children without such relationships and on why older children appear to find it more difficult to talk to their fathers. Parallel to this, alternative support structures should be developed to help prevent engagement in risky and anti-social behaviours for those children who have poor relationships with their fathers.

### References

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3. McKeown, K. (2000). *Fathers and Families: Research and Reflection on Key Questions*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children.
4. Shucksmith, J., Hendry, L. B. & Glendinning, A. (1995). Models of parenting: implications for adolescent well-being within different types of family contexts. *Journal of Adolescence*, 18(3), 253-270.
5. Brolin Laftman, S. & Ostberg, V. (2006). The pros and cons of social relations: an analysis of adolescents' health complaints. *Social Science & Medicine*, 63(3), 611-23.

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

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