

Short Report

HBSC Ireland 2010: School Characteristics, Policy and Context in Ireland: HBSC Ireland Post-Primary Schools.

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August 2013

Introduction:

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study is a cross-national research study conducted in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe and runs on a four year cycle. In 2010 Ireland participated for the fourth time in the HBSC study (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 is funded by the Department of Health. Further information on the International HBSC study can be found at www.hbsc.org. The most recent HBSC Ireland dataset comprises of 16,060 schoolchildren from 3rd class in primary school to 5th year in post-primary school. In total 256 schools across Ireland participated in the HBSC 2010 study. The methods employed in Ireland comply with the International HBSC protocol and have been detailed in the national report from the 2010 survey (see http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc/documents/nat_rep_hbsc_2010.pdf).

Data at the school level have not previously been collected in Ireland as part of the HBSC survey but have the potential to help us further understand and impact on school children's health behaviour. Using an adapted version of the international HBSC school level questionnaire, data were collected on five key domains of interest to HBSC Ireland and are described below.

Methods:

A 25-item school level questionnaire was designed based on the HBSC International school level questionnaire, to be completed by school principals, teachers or other school staff. Questions were divided into five domains: School Characteristics, Nutrition, Physical Activity, Violence/Bullying and School Neighbourhood. Questions asked about school policies and facilities, food availability, time allocated to physical activity and neighbourhood characteristics. All post-primary schools that took part in the 2010 HBSC survey ($n=119$) were contacted by email

and/or phone and invited to participate in the survey. Data were collected online using SurveyMonkey or by post from 64 post-primary schools throughout Ireland (response rate 55%). Analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.

Results:

The survey was primarily completed by the school principal (80.3%). Other participants included vice-principals (6.6%), teachers (4.9%) and school secretaries (4.9%).

1. School Characteristics

a. Students permitted to leave school at lunch time

Grade	Yes		No		Grade not in school	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
First year	12	19.0	51	81.0	-	-
Second year	19	30.6	43	69.4	-	-
Third year	19	31.1	41	67.2	1	1.6
Transition year	24	38.7	32	51.6	6	9.7
Pre leaving cert year	32	51.6	30	48.4	-	-
Leaving cert year	43	67.2	20	31.3	1	1.6

b. School has a Green Flag

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	27	43.5
No	35	56.5

2. Nutrition

- a. School has a policy to (a) increase the consumption of healthy foods (e.g., fruit and vegetables) during the school day and (b) limit consumption of sweets, crisps, and soft drinks among students

	Increase healthy foods		Limit sweets, crisps and soft drinks	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes (written policy)	9	14.5	10	15.9
Yes (informal policy)	33	53.2	32	50.8
No policy	20	32.3	21	33.3

- c. Students allowed to bring their own chocolate / sweets / biscuits / cake / crisps to school

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	56	88.9
No	7	11.1

- d. School has procedures to inform students, teachers and parents about policies concerning nutrition and healthy eating

	Students		Teachers		Parents	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	38	64.4	24	42.9	21	37.5
No	21	35.6	32	57.1	35	62.5

- e. School has one or more vending machine, tuck shop or canteen

	Vending Machine		Tuck shop		Canteen	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	23	37.1	31	52.5	41	68.3
No	39	62.9	28	47.5	19	31.7

f. Food items reported to be available from different sources, all schools

Food Items	Vending Machine		Tuck shop		Canteen	
	Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%
Bottled water	19	40.4 ¹	27	51.9	28	53.8
100% fruit/vegetable juice	12	25.5	13	25.0	26	50.0
Regular soft drinks*	4	8.5	20	38.5	9	17.3
Diet soft drinks	4	8.5	11	21.2	2	3.8
Whole milk	2	4.3	7	13.5	21	40.4
Skim (non-fat) or low fat milk	0	0	0	0	7	13.5
Chocolate (or other flavoured) milk	2	4.3	4	7.7	11	21.2
Warm drinks**	4	8.5	3	5.8	22	42.3
Chocolate/sweets/biscuits/cake/crisps	10	21.3	23	44.2	8	15.4
Chips (French fries)	-	-	0	0	17	32.7
Fruits	0	0	7	13.5	25	48.1
Vegetables/salads	1	2.1	1	1.9	18	34.6
Yoghurt	0	0	7	13.5	20	38.5
Ice-cream	-	-	1	1.9	1	1.9
Pizza	-	-	1	1.9	14	26.9
Sandwiches	2	4.3	13	25.0	29	55.8
Whole-grain bread/rolls/wraps	1	2.1	9	17.3	29	55.8
White bread/rolls/wraps	1	2.1	11	21.2	27	51.9

***Regular soft drinks, sports drinks, or fruit drinks that are not 100% juice**

**** Warm drinks (coffee, tea, hot cocoa)**

¹ This indicates that of all participating schools 40.4% had bottled water available for students to purchase from vending machines.

g. Food items reported to be available from different sources, for those reporting those sources are present in their schools

Food Items	Vending Machine		Tuck shop		Canteen	
	Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%
Bottled water	18	85.7 ²	26	86.7	27	77.1
100% fruit/vegetable juice	12	57.1	13	43.3	26	74.3
Regular soft drinks*	4	19.0	19	63.3	8	22.9
Diet soft drinks	4	19.0	10	33.3	2	5.7
Whole milk	2	9.5	7	23.3	21	60.0
Skim (non-fat) or low fat milk	0	0	0	0	7	20.0
Chocolate (or other flavoured) milk	2	9.5	4	13.3	11	31.4
Warm drinks**	4	19.0	3	10.0	21	60.0
Chocolate/sweets/biscuits/cake/crisps	10	47.6	23	76.7	8	22.9
Chips (French fries)	-	-	0	0	16	45.7
Fruits	0	0	6	20.0	25	71.4
Vegetables/salads	1	4.8	1	3.3	18	51.4
Yoghurt	0	0	7	23.3	20	57.1
Ice-cream	-	-	1	3.3	1	2.9
Pizza	-	-	1	3.3	13	37.1
Sandwiches	2	9.5	12	40.0	28	80.0
Whole-grain bread/rolls/wraps	1	4.8	8	26.7	28	80.0
White bread/rolls/wraps	1	4.8	10	33.3	26	74.3

*Regular soft drinks, sports drinks, or fruit drinks that are not 100% juice

** Warm drinks (coffee, tea, hot cocoa)

² This indicates that bottled water is available for purchase in vending machines by students in 85.7% of those schools that had vending machines.

h. Types of food outlets in close proximity to school

	Fast Food restaurant		Coffee shop		Other restaurant		Supermarket		Street vendor		Mobile chip van	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	42	67.7	35	60.3	32	56.1	53	85.5	15	27.3	2	3.8
No	20	32.3	23	39.7	25	43.9	9	14.5	39	70.9	50	96.2
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.8	-	-

i. Perceive that students buy food or drinks in following outlets

	Fast Food restaurant		Coffee shop		Other restaurant		Supermarket		Street vendor		Mobile chip van	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	24	45.3	5	12.2	7	17.5	39	66.1	4	9.5	2	4.9
No	28	52.8	32	78.0	32	80.0	20	33.9	35	83.3	38	92.7
Don't know	1	1.9	4	9.8	1	2.5	-	-	3	7.1	1	2.4

3. Physical Activity

a. School promotes student's walking and biking to and from school

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	36	60.0
No	24	40.0

b. Students permitted to run in the school yard

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	38	65.5
No	20	34.5

c. School promotes active travel to and from school in the following ways

	Yes	%	No	%	Don't know	%
Identify safe routes	5	8.9	49	87.5	2	3.6
Designate a 'car free zone'	14	24.1	43	74.1	1	1.7
Allow bicycles on school property	55	90.2	6	9.8	0	0
Encourage helmets and safety gear for cyclists	43	70.5	16	26.2	2	3.3
Organise walking events	14	23.7	45	76.3	0	0

d. Facilities in the school area or neighbourhood (up to 2kms/ 1.2 miles) used by the school for physical education (PE)

	Yes	%	No	%
Gymnasium	51	86.4	8	13.6
Swimming Facility	26	49.1	27	50.9
Football / Soccer / Hurling / Rugby field	59	98.3	1	1.7
Hockey pitch	10	20.4	39	79.6
Basketball court	55	94.8	3	5.2
Playground	31	59.6	21	40.4
Areas for boarding or skating	5	10.4	43	89.6
Running track	22	42.3	30	57.7
Tennis court	30	56.6	23	43.4
Green fields / Parks / Nature Reserves	38	69.1	17	30.9
Wooded Areas	18	36.7	31	63.3

e. Minutes per week allocated to physical education (PE) classes by grade

Grade	0 minutes		1 - 40 minutes		41 - 80 minutes		81 + Minutes	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
First year	0	0	2	3.3	52	85.2	7	11.5
Second year	0	0	3	4.9	52	85.2	6	9.8
Third year	1	1.6	5	8.2	50	82.0	5	8.2
Transition year	1	1.8	0	0	31	56.4	23	41.8
Pre leaving cert year	3	5.3	8	14.0	42	73.7	4	7.0
Leaving cert year	3	5.5	9	16.1	41	73.2	3	5.4

4. Violence/bullying

a. School has a policy or rules to prevent violence/bullying/discrimination/harassment (n=61)

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes (written policy)	61	100.0
Yes informal policy (verbal agreement)	0	0
No	0	0

b. School has policy or rules for responding to violence at school (n=60)

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes (written policy)	54	90.0
Yes informal policy (verbal agreement)	4	6.7
No	2	3.3

c. School has procedures to inform students, teachers and parents about violence-related policies/rules and about practices when breaking the rules

	Students		Teachers		Parents	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	60	100.0	57	96.6	59	98.3
No	0	0	2	3.4	1	1.7

5. School Neighbourhood

a. Problems in the neighbourhood where the school is located

	Yes	%	No	%
Tensions based on racial, ethnic, or religious differences	7	12.1	51	87.9
Rubbish or broken glass in the street, on roads, or paths	14	23.7	45	76.3
Graffiti	20	34.5	38	65.5
Selling or using drugs or excessive drinking in public	21	36.2	37	63.8
Gangs	11	18.6	48	81.4
Heavy traffic	34	57.6	25	42.4
Vacant or run down houses or buildings	18	31.0	40	69.0
Crime in the neighbourhood	19	32.8	39	67.2
Broken footpaths	10	17.5	47	82.5
Insufficient street lighting	10	17.2	48	82.8
Lack of cycle lanes	50	84.7	9	15.3
Road safety/driver awareness	25	43.9	32	56.1

Acknowledgements:

HBSC Ireland is funded by the Department of Health. We would like to acknowledge all schools 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, Professor Candace Currie of the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Further information on HBSC Ireland is available at www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc.