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Summary

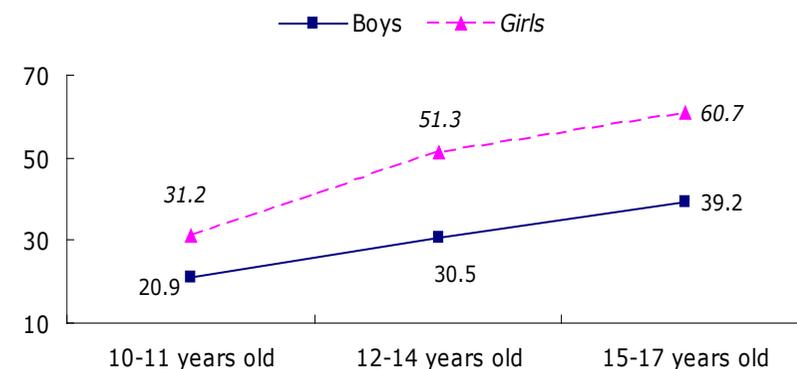
HBSC Ireland has found that 42.3% of schoolchildren in Ireland report using e-communication (phone, text messages and the internet) with friends everyday; 33.1% of boys and 51.7% of girls. This figure has increased substantially since 2002 (30.9%). Use of e-communication is more common among older children; 20.9% of boys and 31.2% of girls aged 10-11 years, 39.2% of boys and 60.7% of girls aged 15-17 years. Children who report using e-communication with friends everyday are less likely to: find it easy to talk to their parents, live with both parents and like school. They are more likely to: find it easy to talk to their best friend, spend more evenings out with friends, feel pressured by schoolwork, report being really drunk, currently smoke and report frequent emotional and physical symptoms. E-communication in this factsheet refers to children who report talking on the phone, sending text messages or contacting friends through the internet everyday.

Why this topic?

Technology and electronic communication have become increasingly important in today's society and for many people form an integral part of everyday life, particularly for younger people². Forms of electronic communication generally used include instant messaging, e-mail, text messaging and social networking. Research shows that these communication tools are used by young people primarily to reinforce existing relationships with peers². Research studies on electronic communication usage have reported conflicting^{3,4} health implications.

Trends 2002-2006

Overall the percentage of children who report using e-communication everyday to talk with friends has substantially increased between 2002 (30.9%) and 2006 (42.3%). This increase is seen among both genders and across all age-groups. Overall girls report using e-communication more than boys and this is evident across all age-groups.



Percentage of children reporting communicating with friend by phone, text or email daily, by age and gender

Electronic communication in context

- Children who use e-communication are less likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (78.2% vs. 82.5%) and father (60.9% vs. 66.2%), while they are more likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend (92.6% vs. 84%) than those who do not.
- Children who use e-communication are less likely to live with both parents (79.2% vs. 82%) than those who do not.
- Children who use e-communication are more likely to report frequent emotional symptoms (37.8% vs. 27.7%), physical symptoms (39.4% vs. 28.8%) and to spend four or more evenings with friends (51.4 vs. 35.3%) than those who do not.
- Children who use e-communication are more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork (44.6% vs. 37.6%) and are less likely to like school (64.1% vs. 71.2%) than those who do not.

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research teams¹ 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.hbhc.org>
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/hbhc/>



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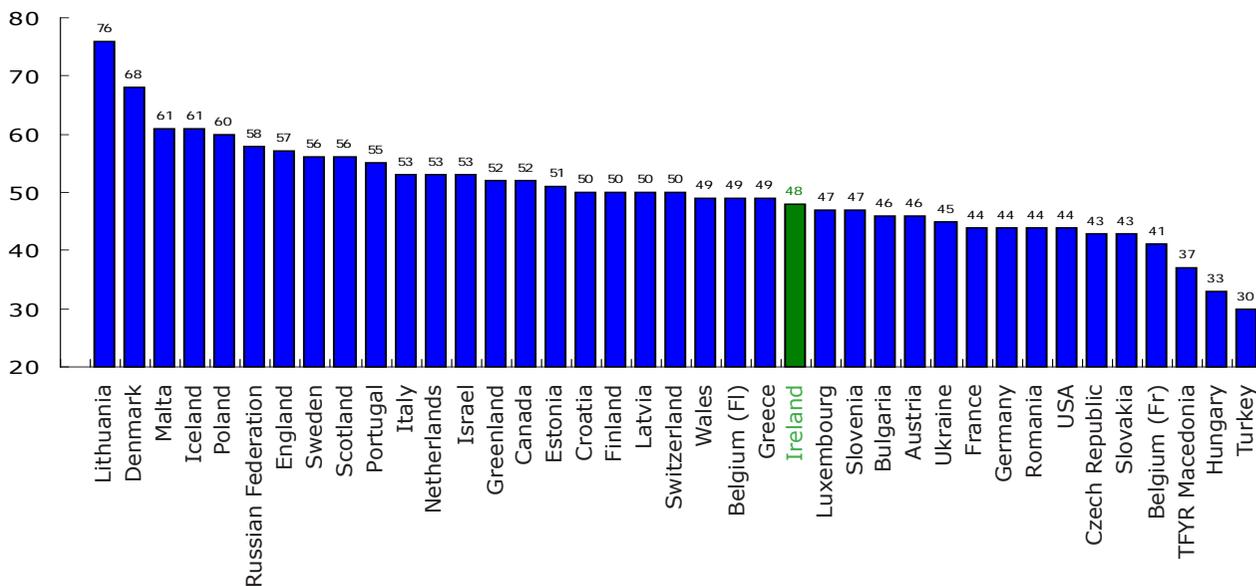


Office of the Minister for
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Department of
Health & Children
AN ROINN SLÁNTE AGUS LEANAÍ

...Electronic communication among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting communicating with friend by phone, text or email daily, by country

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

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- Children who use e-communication are more likely to report having been really drunk (42.8% vs. 24.2%) and to currently smoke (21.2% vs. 10.4%) than those who do not.
- Use of e-communication is not associated with social class.

International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 24th among 39 countries in Europe and North America, with 48% reporting use of e-communication to talk to friends. Overall 28% of 11 year olds in Ireland (rank 19th) and 39% of 13 year olds in Ireland (rank 23rd) report talking to their friends via e-communication everyday.

Implications

The percentage of young people in Ireland that report using e-communication to communicate with friends has increased substantially since 2002, with Ireland ranking mid-range in comparison to other European and North American countries. Strong relationships with peers may increase the likelihood of daily usage of electronic communication. These findings also suggest that there is a positive association between daily use of communication and engaging in risky behaviours. Due to the rapid development of many modes of electronic communication and their increased usage among schoolchildren in Ireland, policymakers and practitioners should examine the potential positive and negative impacts these trends can have for young people.

References

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