

Highlights from the study on Health Behaviour in School Children (HBSC) 2010

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate



Introduction

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study is a cross-national research survey conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. The HBSC aims to gain new insight into, and increase the understanding of young people's health and well-being, health behaviours, and their social context.

The study is a school-based survey with data collected through self-completion questionnaires administered in the classroom. The study was carried out according to an International protocol which lays out the methodology of the study. A full list of Forms 1, 3 and 5 classes at secondary level was drawn from all state, church and independent schools and a cluster sampling exercise was carried out.

The questionnaires were completed within the school setting at individual desks and without discussion with other pupils in order to maintain young people's confidentiality and ensure that pupils were comfortable with answering personal questions in a reliable way. On completion, each pupil individually placed the questionnaire in a sealed envelope. The data collection was carried out over a two-week period in May 2010. Data was entered in SPSS and analysed.

The information from the study can be used by policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, and professionals in sectors such as health, education, social services, justice and recreation, to protect and promote young people's health.

Nutrition

Gender does not seem to have an effect on the consumption of breakfast on every school day. However, the consumption of breakfast varies between the different ages. An average of 50 % of school children consume breakfast on every school day. At the age of 11, school children have the highest percentage of consumption of breakfast on every school day, with the percentage of girls being slightly higher than that of boys. At the age of 13, the consumption of breakfast on every school day decreases with a higher percentage in boys than girls. However, at the age of 15 the consumption of breakfast on every school day increases, with a higher percentage in boys than in girls.

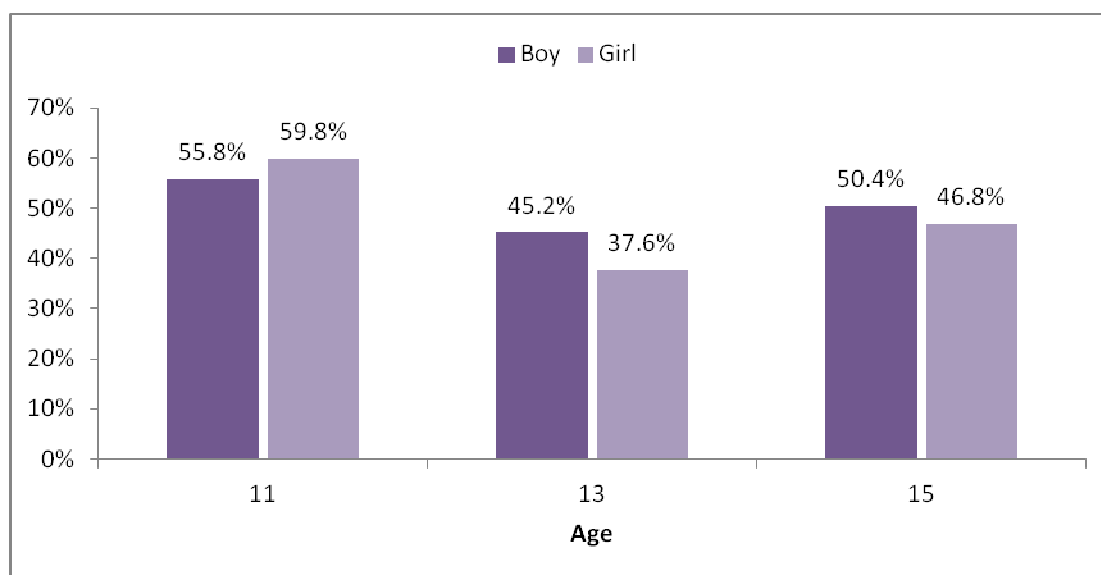


Figure 1: Percentage having breakfast every school day

Across all ages the percentage of girls consuming fruit daily is higher than that of boys. The percentage of girls consuming fruit on a daily basis remains consistent between the ages of 11 and 15, at an average of 42 %. However, even though the percentage of school boys consuming fruit on a daily basis remains consistent between the ages of 11 and 13, with an average of 41 %, at the age of 15 a drop of around 15 % is observed. In fact, at the age of 15, there is a difference of around 16 % between girls and boys in the consumption of fruit on a daily basis.

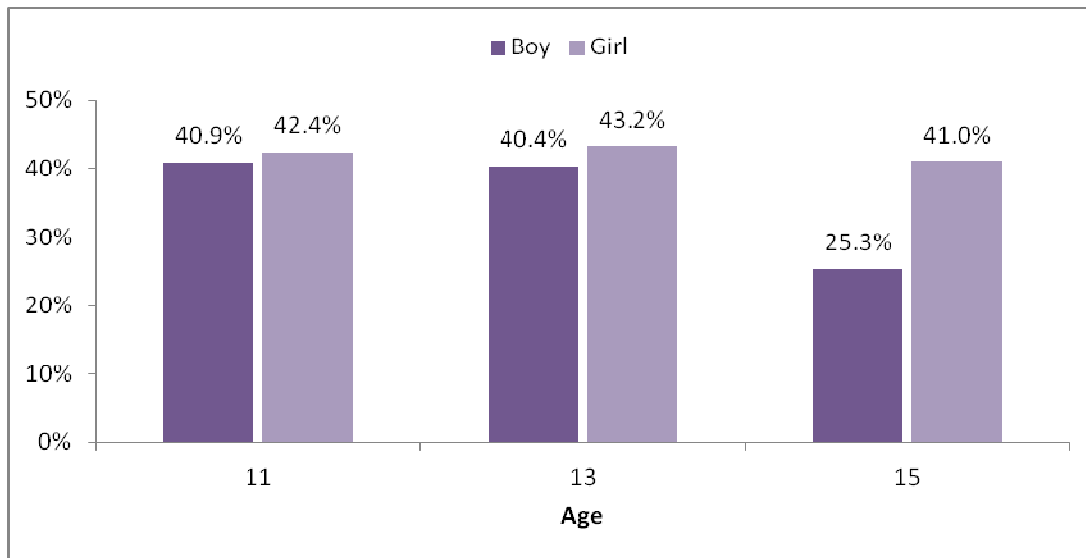


Figure 2: Percentage eating fruit daily

The percentage of boys consuming soft drinks on a daily basis increases slightly between the ages of 11 and 15, with an average of 47 %. On the contrary, the percentage of girls consuming soft drinks on a daily basis decreases between the ages of 11 and 15. Even though the percentage of girls consuming soft drinks between the ages of 11 and 13 decreases slightly, a drop of 10 % is observed between the ages of 13 and 15. Therefore, there is a difference of 15 % at the age of 15 between boys and girls in the consumption of soft drinks on a daily basis.

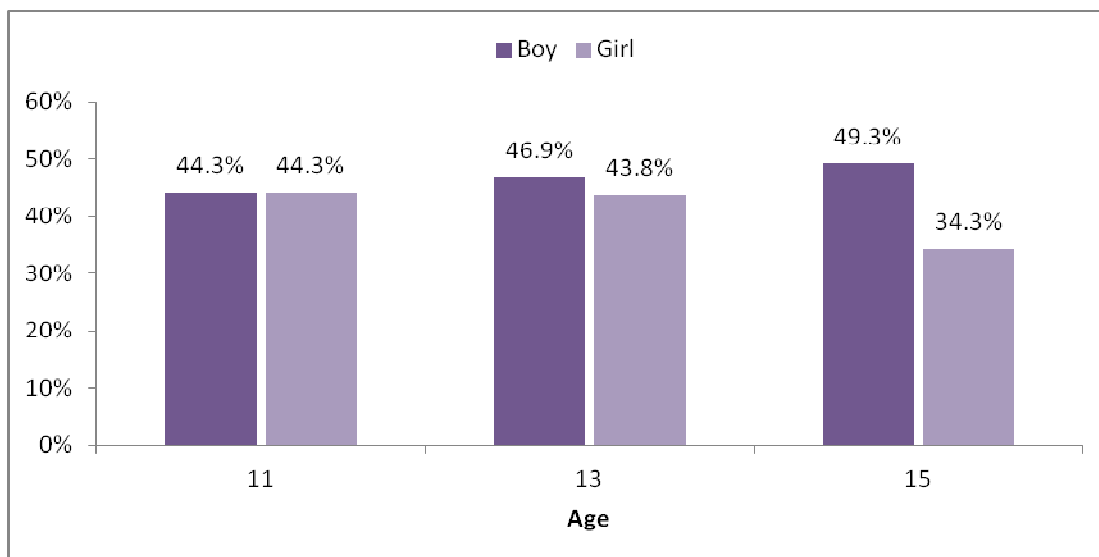


Figure 3: Percentage consuming soft drinks daily

Body Mass Index (BMI) and Physical Activity

A considerable percentage of school aged children are overweight or obese. The percentage is largest amongst 11 year old boys. In fact, 41.3 % of 11 year boys are overweight or obese, compared to 26.3 % of girls of the same age. The percentage of overweight or obese girls remains quite constant with age while for boys it drops as age increases to 28.2 % amongst 15 year olds.

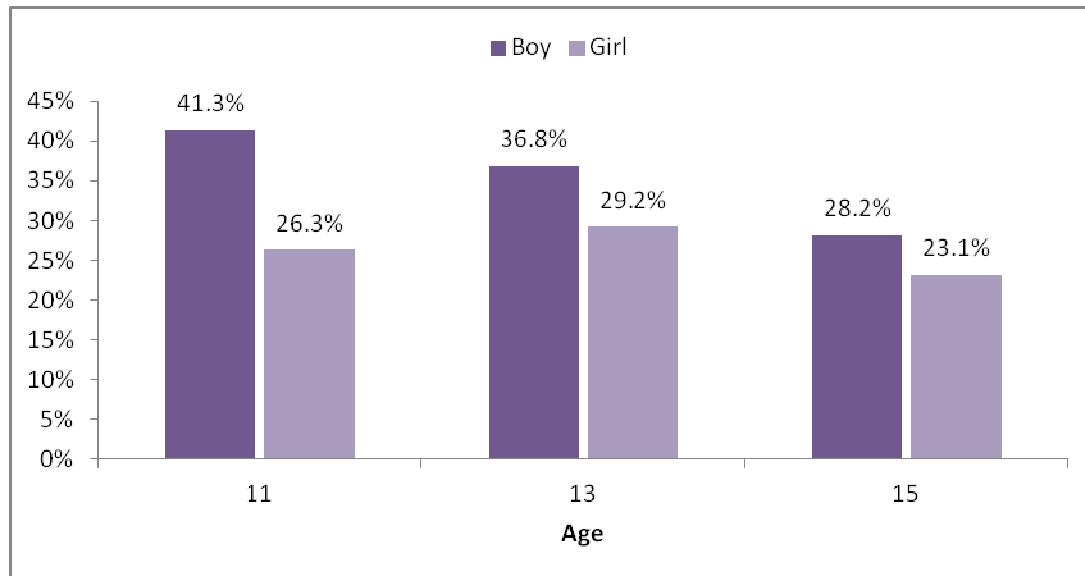


Figure 4: Percentage being overweight or obese

The percentage of school children participating in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity on a daily basis for at least 1 hour varies considerably by gender, with a higher percentage amongst boys than girls. The average difference between boys and girls in all ages is about 17 %. However, the percentage of school children participating in daily physical activity decreases between the ages of 11 and 15. The percentage of boys between the ages of 11 and 15 engaging in physical activity on a daily basis for at least 1 hour, decreases by around 16 %, whilst the percentage of girls decreases by around 11 %.

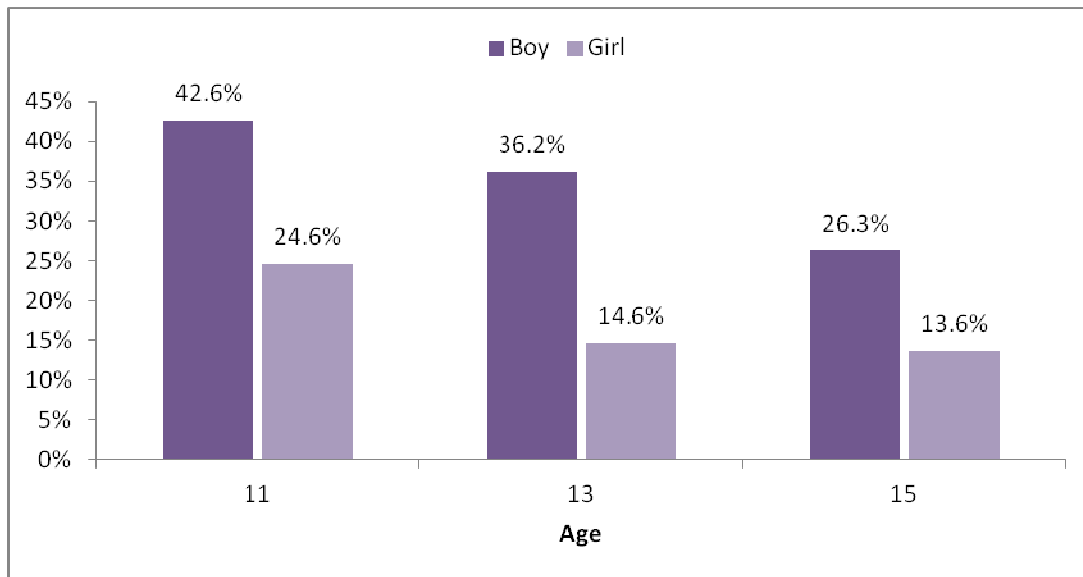


Figure 5: Percentage participating in 60mins of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily

Gender does not considerably affect the percentage of school children watching TV for more than 2 hours per weekday, with the percentage of boys being slightly higher than that of girls throughout the different ages. The percentage of school children who watch TV for more than 2 hours per weekday remains consistent throughout the different ages, with around 60 % of the school children watching TV for more than 2 hours on every weekday.



Figure 6: Percentage watching TV for more than 2 hours per weekday

Risky Behaviours

Between the ages of 11 and 13 the percentage of boys who smoke at least once a week decreases slightly, however increases between the ages of 13 and 15. There is an increase of about 8 % between the ages of 11 and 15 in girls admitting to smoking at least once a week. At the age of 11 and 13 the percentage of boys who smoke at least once a week was higher than that of girls, with a difference of around 5 % observed at the age of 11. However, at the age of 15, the percentage of girls smoking at least once a week is slightly higher than that of boys.

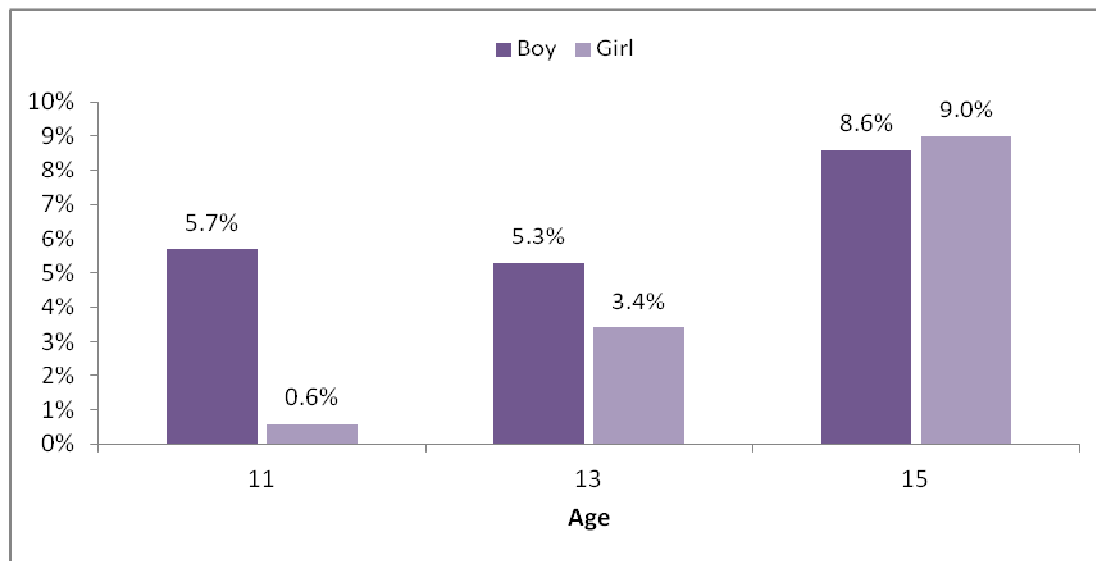


Figure 7: Percentage smoking at least once a week

There is an increase in the percentage of school children consuming alcohol between the ages of 11 and 15, with the percentage of boys being higher than that of girls in all ages. An increase of around 26 % is observed for boys and around 24 % for girls between the ages of 11 and 15. There is a large difference between boys and girls in the consumption of alcohol at the age of 11 and 15, with a difference of 9 % and 11 %, respectively.

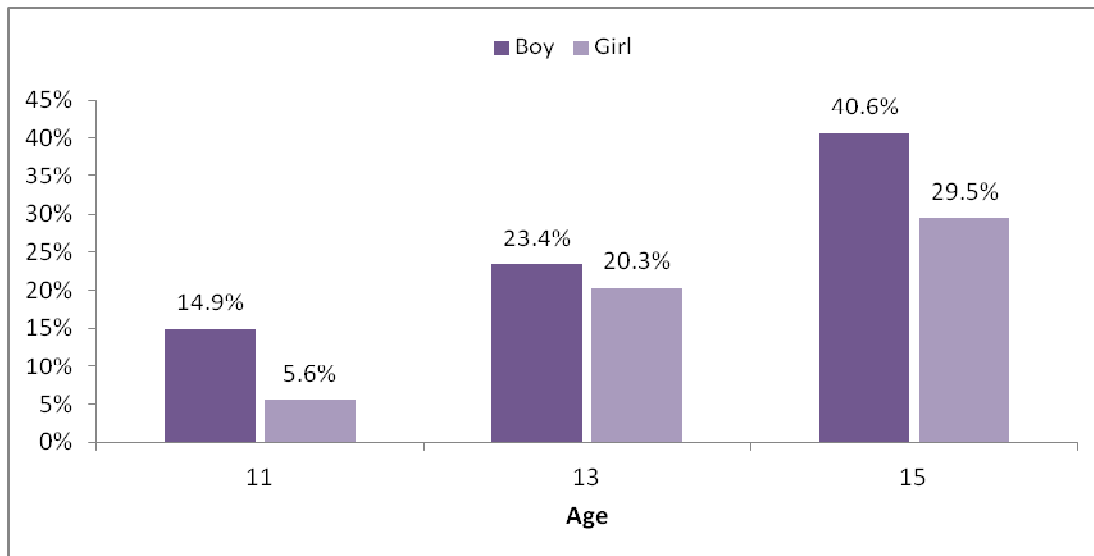


Figure 8: Percentage drinking alcohol at least once a week

Approximately 17 % of boys aged 15 reported having had sexual intercourse at least once. The percentage amongst girls is slightly lower at 13.4 %.

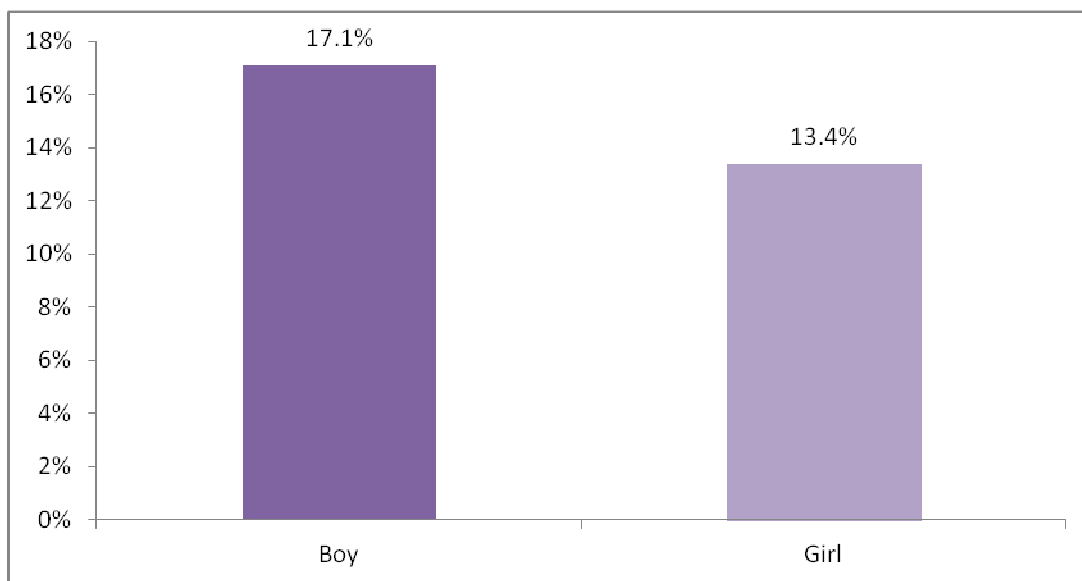


Figure 9: Percentage of 15 year olds having had sexual intercourse

The full report on the HBSC 2010 Malta study will include further indicators emerging from the study with a focus on health inequalities. Trends from past editions of the study will also be analysed.