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### Summary

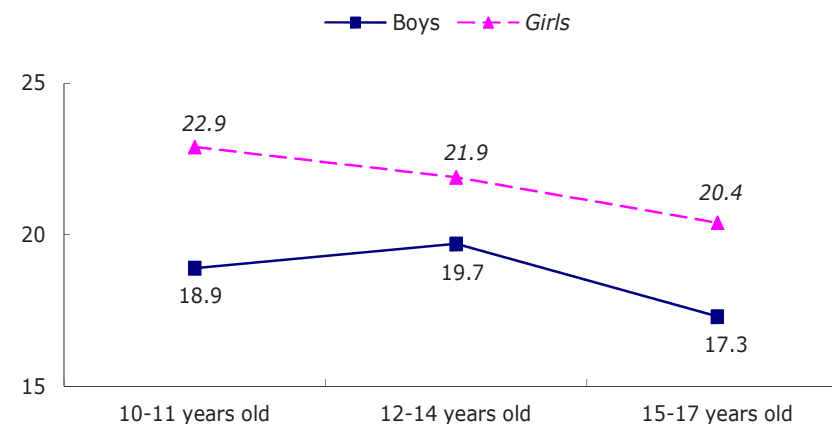
HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 20.0% of schoolchildren in Ireland report eating vegetables everyday, more than once (18.7% of boys and 21.5% of girls). This figure represents a slight increase since 2006 (17.9%). There has been a slight increase in the number of children who report consuming vegetables in the younger age groups since 2006; from 18.9% to 20.9% among 10-11 year olds and from 17.7% to 20.7% among 12-14 year olds. Children who consume vegetables everyday, more than once are more likely to live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents or best friend and are more likely to like school compared to children who consume vegetables less frequently. They are also less likely to spend four or more evenings with friends. Vegetable consumption in this factsheet refers to children who report consuming vegetables everyday, more than once.

### Why this topic?

Eating vegetables can help promote health and reduce the risk of a number of chronic diseases<sup>2</sup>. Increasing children's consumption of vegetables can be challenging as they often have erratic eating behaviour influenced by their social environment<sup>3</sup> and they tend to prefer unnutritious energy-dense food<sup>4</sup>. Studies continue to show that children and adults in most regions of the world are still not eating the recommended daily quantity of vegetables<sup>5</sup>.

### Change 2006-2010

The overall percentage of children who report consuming vegetables everyday, more than once has increased slightly from 2006 (17.9%) to 2010 (20.0%). Reported vegetable consumption is higher among girls (21.5%) than boys (18.7%). The percentage of boys consuming vegetables everyday more than once has increased slightly in the younger age groups to 18.9% in the 10-11 year olds and to 19.7% in the 12-14 year olds, with the exception of 15-17 year old boys which remained stable at 17.3%. The percentage of girls consuming vegetables everyday, more than once has increased slightly to 21.9% for the 12-14 year olds but has remained stable for the other age groups.



Percentage of children who report consuming vegetables everyday, more than once, by age and gender

### Vegetable consumption in context

- Children from higher social classes are more likely to consume vegetables (social class 1-2: 23.3%; social class 3-4: 19.0% and social class 5-6: 17.7%) than other social classes.
- Children who eat vegetables are more likely to live with both parents (77.5% vs. 74.1%) and to like school (77.6% vs. 69.5%) than those who do not.
- Children who eat vegetables are more likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (83.9% vs. 81.4%), father (69.6% vs. 65.9%) and best friend (89.7% vs. 87.9%) than those who do not.
- Children who eat vegetables are more likely to like school (77.6% vs. 69.5%) than those who do not.
- Children who eat vegetables are less likely to spend four or more evenings with friends (34.0% vs. 39.6%) than those who do not.

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 St Andrews. This factsheet is based on data collected in 2010 from 12,661 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country.

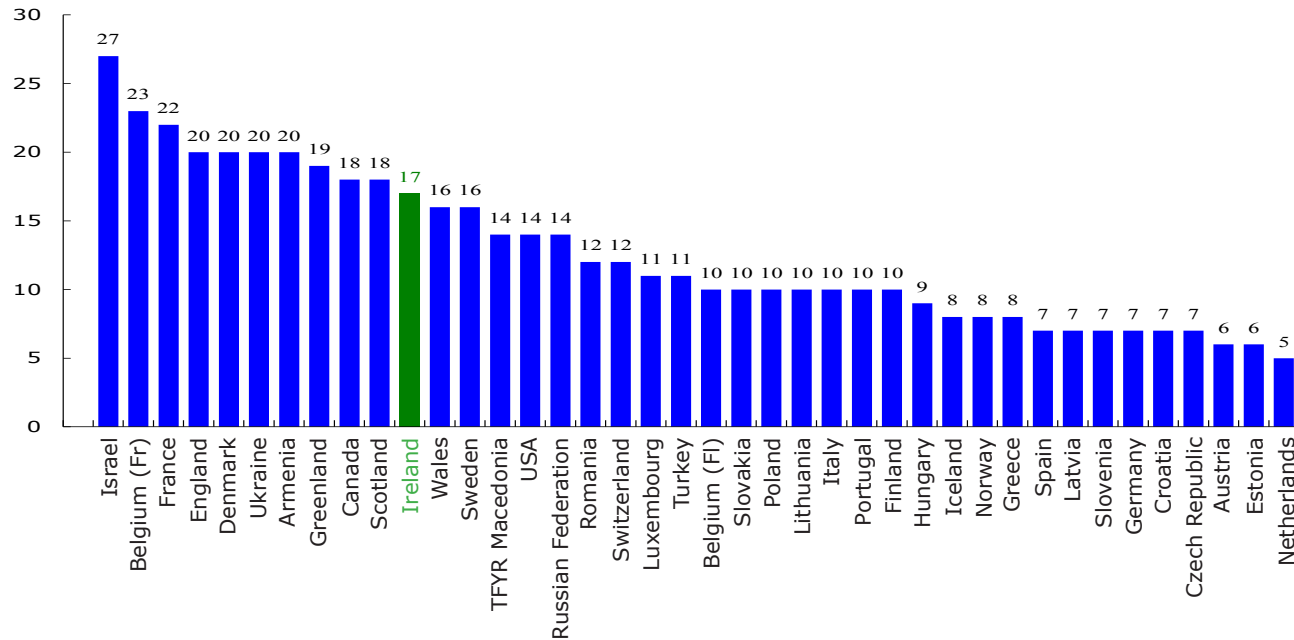
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## ...Vegetable consumption among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting consuming vegetables everyday, more than once, by country

### International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 11th among 40 countries in Europe and North America, with 16.8% reporting vegetable consumption everyday, more than once. Overall 21.5% of 11 year olds in Ireland (rank 8th) and 20.6% of 13 year olds in Ireland (rank 6th) report consuming vegetables more than once everyday.

### Implications

The overall percentage of children in Ireland that report consuming vegetables everyday more than once has increased slightly since 2006, with Ireland continuing to rank highly in comparison to other European and North American countries<sup>1</sup>. However, these figures indicate that the majority of schoolchildren in Ireland are not eating the

recommended daily quantity of vegetables. There is a need to explore what the wider determinants of vegetable consumption are in order to increase vegetable consumption both inside and outside of the school and particularly at home.

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*This factsheet was prepared by Mary Callaghan, Natasha Clarke, Aoife Gavin, Colette Kelly, Michal Molcho, and Saoirse Nic Gabhainn and Larri Walker.*

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