



## **Food poverty among schoolchildren in Ireland. HBSC Ireland Research Factsheet No. 13.**

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### Summary

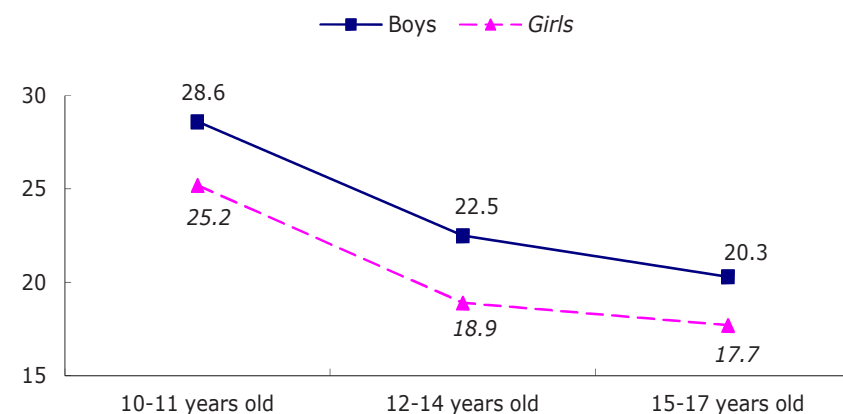
HBSC Ireland 2010 has found that 20.9% of schoolchildren in Ireland report going to school or bed hungry because there is not enough food at home. This figure represents a slight increase from 16.6% in 2006. More boys (22.4%) report that they go to school or bed hungry than girls (19.3%). More children in the 10-11 year old age group report going to school or bed hungry at 26.8%, which is an increase from 18.3% in 2006. Children who report going to school or bed hungry are less likely to report excellent health and feeling very happy about their lives. They are more likely to report having been drunk, current smoking, being injured, frequent emotional and physical symptoms and to have bullied others. Food poverty in this factsheet refers to children who report going to school or bed hungry because there is not enough food at home.

### Why this topic?

Food insecurity and an inadequate diet have a negative impact on health and well-being<sup>2,3</sup>. Food poverty is a complex issue and may be affected by material circumstances such as parent work-life balance and household (dis)organisation<sup>2</sup>. Families with children have been found to be three times as likely as those without children to be affected by food poverty in Ireland<sup>4</sup>. Low income households are particularly at risk of food poverty<sup>4</sup> with many not reaching daily dietary guidelines<sup>5</sup>.

### Change 2006-2010

The overall percentage of children who report going to school or bed hungry has increased slightly from 16.6% in 2006 to 20.9% in 2010. There has been an increase in the percentage of younger children who report going to school or bed hungry from 18.3% to 26.9% in 10-11 year olds and from 15.6% to 20.7% in 12-14 year olds. There has been a slight increase in boys aged 15-17 years (17.0% to 20.3%) who report going to school or bed hungry, while the figure for girls aged 15-17 years has remained stable (16.8% to 17.7%).



Percentage of children reporting they went to school or bed hungry, by age and gender

### Food Poverty in context

- Children from the lower social classes (SC) are more likely to report going to school or bed hungry (SC 1-2: 19.3%; SC 3-4: 20.2% and SC 5-6: 22.7%).
- Children who report going to school or bed hungry are less likely to report excellent health (23.6% vs. 35.2%) and feeling very happy about their lives (40.0% vs. 52.9%) than those who do not.
- Children who report going to school or bed hungry are more likely to report emotional (62.1% vs. 49.4%) and physical (63.2% vs. 49.8%) symptoms than those who do not.
- Children who report going to school or bed hungry are more likely to report having been drunk (31.6% vs. 27.3%), current smoking (15.2% vs. 10.6%) and having been injured (44.6% vs. 38.1%) than those who do not.
- Children who report going to school or bed hungry are more likely to report having bullied others (21.6% vs. 15.2%) than those who do not.

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) is a research study conducted by an international network of research 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.

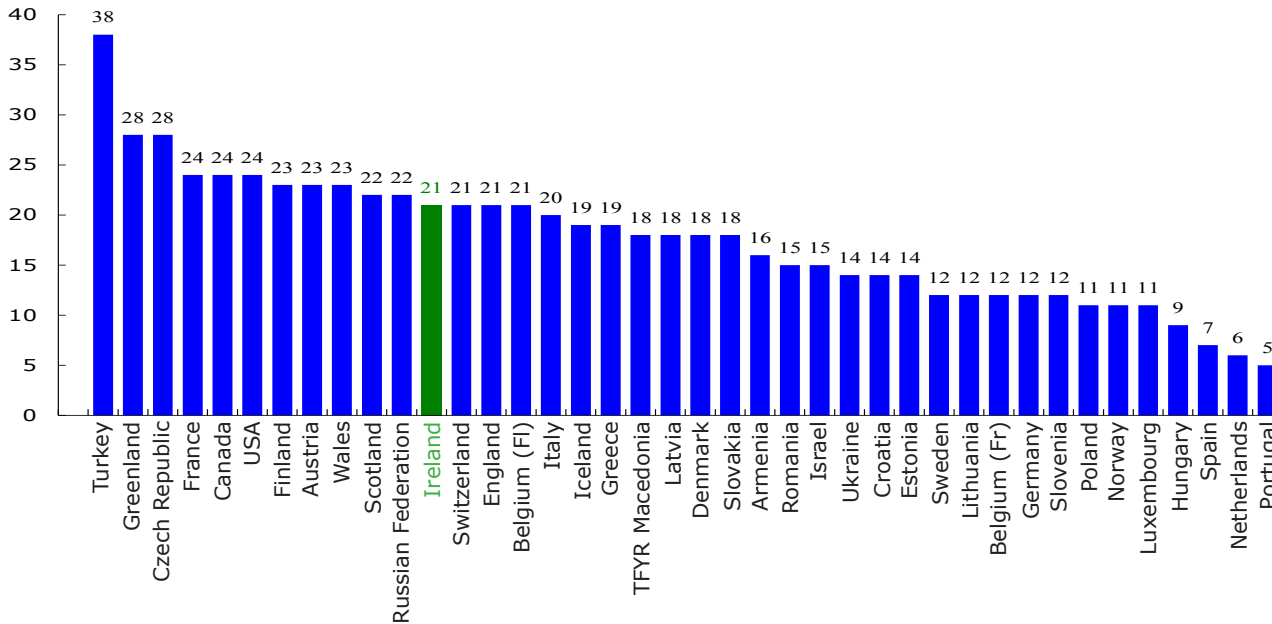
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## ...Food poverty among schoolchildren in Ireland



Percentage of 15 year old children reporting they went to school or bed hungry, by country

### International

Fifteen year old schoolchildren in Ireland (boys and girls together) are ranked 12th among 40 countries in Europe and North America with 21.0% reporting that they go to bed or school hungry. Overall 24.6% of 11 year olds in Ireland (ranked 12th) and 19.2% of 13 year olds in Ireland (rank 18th) reported going to bed or school hungry because there was not enough food at home.

### Implications

Overall, the percentage of young people in Ireland that report going to school or bed hungry has increased slightly since 2006. Ireland ranks high for 11 and 15 year olds, with up to a quarter of children reporting that they go to school or bed hungry and remains midrange for 13 year olds in comparison to other European and North American countries. As is illustrated in this factsheet, food poverty

can be associated with poorer health outcomes and increased participation in risk behaviour. Food poverty has been found to be a problem across all social classes with more children in the lower social classes experiencing food poverty. A comprehensive strategy for assisting those families affected by food poverty should be developed.

### References

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