



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS FROM THE HBSC 2018 SURVEY IN SCOTLAND

HEALTH BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION COLLABORATIVE CROSS-NATIONAL STUDY (HBSC)

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This report presents data on adolescent health and wellbeing from the World Health Organisation (WHO) collaborative cross-national Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in Scotland. Findings from the 2018 HBSC survey are presented and these are compared to equivalent data, where available, from seven previous survey rounds (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014). A nationally representative sample of 5,286 pupils participated in the 2018 Scottish HBSC survey. Key findings are summarised below.

LIFE AT HOME

Most young people in Scotland (65%) lived with both their parents whilst 24% lived in a single parent family and 7% in a step-family. The proportion of young people living with both parents has gradually declined since 1990. More young people found it easy or very easy to talk about things that bothered them with their mothers (83%) compared to their fathers (71%). There has been a persistent gender difference since 1990, with boys finding it easier than girls to talk to their father; however, the proportion of girls who find it easy to talk to their fathers has increased from 48% in 1990 to 67% in 2018. Three-fifths (61%) of young people reported high levels of family support but this reduced with age. Just over a third (36%) of young people reported eating a meal with their family every day. Young people from more affluent families were more likely to report high family support, more easy communication with their parents and more frequent family meals.

LIFE IN THE LOCAL AREA

Less than half of 13- and 15-year olds in Scotland said their local areas was a 'really good' place to live, but the majority 'always' feel safe in their local area and agreed that there were good places in their local area to spend their free-time. Overall positive perceptions of the local area, based on a composite measure, decreased with age. Around two-thirds (67%) of adolescents used local greenspace at least once a week during the summertime. Young people from lower affluence families were less likely to report positive perceptions of their local area.

LIFE AT SCHOOL AND WITH FRIENDS

One quarter (25%) of adolescents in Scotland said they liked school 'a lot'; girls were more likely to report this than boys. Forty-one percent of adolescents experienced 'some' or 'a lot' of pressure from schoolwork. Fifteen-year-olds reported higher levels of schoolwork pressure than the 11- and 13-year olds, with highest levels reported by 15-year old girls (75%). Perceived schoolwork pressure is at its highest since 1994, and the gender gap has increased since 2010. Over half of young people (53%) said they expect to go to university when they leave school and this was more common among girls. Just over one in five adolescents reported high support from classmates, but this decreased with age from 34% of 11-year olds to 13% of 15-year olds. Just over half (53%) of 11- to 15-year olds reported high levels of peer support; this was higher among girls than boys at all ages. Young people from low affluence families were less likely to say they liked school and reported lower levels of support from classmates and peers.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

Less than one in five (17%) of adolescents in Scotland meet the current physical activity recommendations for 60 minutes a day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA). Participation in leisure time vigorous physical activity was higher among boys than girls (47% versus 41%), with the greatest gender difference at age 15. Less than half of adolescents in Scotland usually walk to school and very few pupils cycle. Active school travel was more common in primary school. In terms of sedentary behaviour, around two-thirds (68%) of adolescents watch television for two or more hours a day on weekdays. TV viewing was higher among boys than girls at age 11 only. Since 2006, playing computer games on weekdays has increased substantially, from 22% to 42% among girls and from 53% to 71% among boys. Use of computers for non-gaming purposes has also increased from 44% in 2006 to 65% in 2018, with the highest levels of use among 15-year olds. Physical activity was higher among young people from higher affluence families with the exception of active travel to school. Conversely, screen time was higher among those from lower affluence families.

EATING BEHAVIOURS

Three-fifths (62%) of adolescents reported eating breakfast every day on school days, but prevalence decreased with age from 75% of 11-year olds to 51% of 15-year olds. Just over a third of adolescents reported eating fruit (35%) or vegetables (36%) every day. Fruit and vegetable consumption were higher among girls at all ages. Since 2002, daily consumption of cakes or biscuits has declined from 32% to 12% among boys and from 24% to 11% among girls. Almost one in five (17%) young people eat crisps and more than one in four (27%) eat sweets or chocolate every day. Daily consumption of sugary fizzy drinks has declined from 47% in 2002 to 17% in 2018. Around one in four (24%) young people drink fruit juice or smoothies and about one in twenty (6%) drink energy drinks every day. In general, healthier eating behaviours were more common among those from higher affluence families.

ORAL HEALTH

Three quarters (75%) of young people in Scotland brush their teeth at least twice daily. At every age, girls were more likely than boys to do so. Since 1990, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of both boys and girls who brush their teeth more than once a day. More frequent tooth brushing was significantly associated with family affluence, with higher prevalence among young people from higher affluence families. Young people reported a range of dental issues, the most common being crooked teeth or spaces between their teeth although this decreased with age. Girls were more likely than boys to report problems with their teeth at age 13 and 15. Young people from lower affluence groups were more likely to report having crooked or discoloured teeth, whereas having a dental brace or retainer was more common among young people from higher affluence families.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The majority (85%) of young people reported high life satisfaction. Around one in five (22%) adolescents rated their health as 'excellent' but 15-year old girls were the least likely to report 'excellent' health (12%). Over a third (36%) of adolescents said they feel very happy with their life at present. Feeling very happy decreased with age from 51% of 11-year olds to 23% of 15-year olds. Over half (51%) of young people in Scotland reported 'often' or 'always' feeling confident in themselves (60% boys versus 42% girls). However, in 2018, levels of confidence were amongst the lowest seen in 24 years.

Around a third (35%) of young people experienced multiple health complaints every week and prevalence was higher among girls than boys at age 13 and 15. Prevalence of multiple health complaints is at its highest for both boys and girls since 1994. The most common health complaints were sleep difficulties, feeling nervous and feeling irritable. Girls were more likely than boys to perceive their body to be too fat (40% versus 26%) and this gender difference was seen at every age group. Conversely, boys were more likely to think they were too thin (16% boys, 9% girls).

The mean WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) score for 13- and 15-year olds was 47.1. Based on the WHO-5 Wellbeing index, 37% adolescents were classified as having low mood (33% boys, 41% girls) and 14% were at risk of depression (11% boys, 17% girls). Both low mood and risk of depression increased with age. All the mental health and wellbeing indicators were significantly associated with family affluence, with poorer outcomes for those from families with lower affluence.

SLEEP

The average sleep duration on weekdays was 8.3 hours for 13-year olds and 7.8 hours for 15-year olds. Adolescents slept for longer at weekends; on average 9.6 hours for 13-year olds and 9.3 hours for 15-year olds. The proportion of young people reporting sleep difficulties more than once a week has increased from 23% in 2014 to 30% in 2018. Among 13- and 15-year olds, sleep difficulties were more common among girls than boys and young people from lower affluence families were more likely to report difficulties in getting to sleep than those from higher affluence families (25% versus 35%).

SPENDING TIME ONLINE (ELECTRONIC MEDIA COMMUNICATION)

Nearly all (95%) young people said they owned a smartphone with connection to the internet. The vast majority (92%) of 15-year olds kept their smartphones in their bedroom at night. Over half (57%) of adolescents reported having a computer connected to the internet in their bedroom; boys were more likely to have this than girls. A third (33%) of adolescents reported that they had intense online contact (almost all the time throughout the day) with close friends and this was more common amongst girls than boys. Preference for online communication was higher amongst 15-year olds than 11- and 13-year olds. Nearly one in ten (9%) adolescents were categorised as having problematic social media use.

SEXUAL HEALTH

One in five 15-year olds in Scotland reported having had sexual intercourse (21% boys and 19% girls). The proportion of girls who reported having had sexual intercourse has fallen from 27% in 2014 to 19% in 2018 but there was no significant change amongst boys. Amongst those young people who said they had had sexual intercourse, 17% reported having first had sex at the age of 13 or younger, 31% at the age of 14 and 53% at age 15 or older. One in five reported using alcohol or drugs at first sexual intercourse. More boys than girls said they wanted their first sexual intercourse to have happened earlier whereas girls were more likely to say that they wished it had happened later. Three-fifths (60%) of adolescents reported using condoms at first sexual intercourse and a further one fifth (19%) reported using birth control pills. Less than one in ten (8%) reported using another contraceptive method. Adolescents from lower affluence families were less likely to use a condom only or in combination with the pill.

SUBSTANCE USE

One in ten adolescents said they had ever smoked tobacco and prevalence increased with age; 1% of 11-year olds, 7% of 13-year olds and 21% of 15-year olds. Lifetime use of tobacco is at its lowest level in 28 years. Young people were also asked about e-cigarette use for the first time in HBSC: 7% of 15-year olds and 3% of 13-year olds had used an e-cigarette in the last 30 days. Less than one in ten (8%) young people reported drinking alcohol weekly but this increased with age, from 3% of 11-year olds to 16% of 15-year olds. Weekly drinking has been declining since 1998. Eight percent of 15-year olds reported having used cannabis in the last 30 days, and boys were more likely to have done so than girls (12% versus 5%). Substance use did not tend to vary by family affluence; only cannabis use in last 30 days was more prevalent amongst young people from lower affluence families (13% versus 4%).

BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATION

Traditional bullying was more common than cyberbullying: 14% of young people reported that they had been bullied at school at least two or three times in the past couple of months whereas 5% reported being cyberbullied. There has been no change in prevalence of traditional bullying since 2014. The most common types of bullying reported by young people were name calling and being made fun of in a hurtful way, or others spreading lies or false rumours about them.

Young people were asked about their experiences of discrimination. Around one in four said they had been discriminated against based on their gender. At age 13, boys were most likely to report gender discrimination from teachers whereas girls were more likely to experience it from other pupils at school. Around one fifth of girls but over a quarter of boys said they had been discriminated against because of where they, their parents or grandparents were born. This type of discrimination was most likely to come from other pupils at school. Being discriminated against because of the amount of money their family had was less frequent than other forms of discrimination but had still been experienced by more than one in ten adolescents.