**School Perceptions among Irish schoolchildren**

**Summary**

HBSC Ireland has found that 68.8% of Irish children report that they like school a bit or a lot, (boys 61.9%, girls 73.9%), representing a slight decrease since 1998. The percentage of children that like school decreases with age, from 63.7% of 10-11 year old boys and 80.7% of 10-11 year old girls, to 55.9% of 15-17 year old boys and 69.8% of 15-17 year old girls. Children who like school are less likely to: spend more than 4 evenings a week with friends and feel pressured by schoolwork, while they are more likely to: be from the higher social classes, live with both parents, find it easy to talk to their parents and best friend, report excellent health and feel happy. Liking school in this factsheet refers to children who report liking school a bit or a lot at present.

**Why this topic?**

School experiences influence the social and health behaviours of young people as well as their educational development\(^3\). Liking school contributes to overall life satisfaction and quality of life among young people\(^4\), and thus is important for healthy development\(^5\).

**Trends 1998 – 2002**

Overall, the percentage of children who report that they like school has decreased slightly between 1998 (72.4%) and 2002 (68.8%). This decrease is more pronounced among girls (79.5% to 73.9%) than boys (64.6% to 61.9%) and is seen across all age groups. The most marked decrease is seen in girls aged 12-14 (82.6%-75.3%).

**School perceptions in context**

- Children from higher social classes are more likely to report that they like school (social classes 1-2, 40%, social classes 3-4, 43%. social classes 5-6, 17%).
- Children who like school are more likely to live with both parents, than those who do not (87% vs. 83%).
- Children who like school are more likely to find it easy to talk to their mother (80% vs. 66%) and father (57% vs. 44%), than those who do not.
- Children who like school are more likely to find it easy to talk to their best friend, than those who do not (86% vs. 81%).
- Children who like school are less likely to spend more than 4 evenings a week with friends, than those who do not (37% vs. 45%).
- Children who like school are less likely to feel pressured by schoolwork (31% vs. 46%), than those who do not.
- Children who like school are more likely to report excellent health (30% vs. 22%) and feeling happy about their life (50% vs. 32%), than those who do not.
International
Irish 15 year olds (boys and girls together) are ranked 14th among 35 countries in Europe and North America with 63% reporting that they like school a bit or a lot. Overall 70% of Irish 11 year olds (ranked 28th) and 73% of Irish 13 year olds (ranked 12th) report liking school.

Implications
The percentage of young people in Ireland that report liking school a bit or a lot has shown a slight decrease since 1998, and can be considered midrange between the rankings of other countries in Europe and North America. The data presented here indicate that such behaviour is relatively high compared with other countries in Europe and North America. The findings presented in this factsheet indicate that strong family relations help to encourage positive perceptions of school. In addition, the findings indicate that liking school is related to positive health and well-being. Not liking school may place children at risk from dropping out and becoming further marginalised. Inclusive strategies need to be developed to prevent alienation from school and further research should be conducted to explore the underlying reasons for children disliking school.

References