State of the Nation’s Children: Key Findings

Ireland 2016
KEY FINDINGS 2016

- The child population of Ireland increased by an estimated 17.8% between 2006 and 2016 (Population and Migration Estimates, Central Statistics Office, 2016).
- 61.6% of all child deaths in 2015 occurred in the period of infancy (Vital Statistics, Central Statistics Office, 2015).
- Approximately one in six children in Ireland live in a lone-parent household (Census of the Population, 2011).
- One in three children live in families where the mother has a third-level degree or higher (Census of the Population, 2011).
- The number of Traveller children increased by 30.3% between 2006 and 2011 (Census of the Population, 2011).
- The number of foreign national children increased by 49.5% between 2006 and 2011 (Census of the Population, 2011).
- Almost 6% of the child population in Ireland have a disability (Census of the Population, 2011).
- 5.6 per 1,000 children provide regular unpaid personal help for a friend or family member with a long-term illness, health problem or disability (Census of the Population, 2011).
- Older children find it more difficult to talk to their mother when something is really bothering them (HBSC Survey, 2014).
- The percentage of children who report that they find it easy to talk to their father when something is really bothering them increased from 56.2% in 2002 to 70.2% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).
- Significantly more girls than boys report that their parents spend time just talking with them several times a week (PISA Survey, 2015).
- More than half of 15-year-old children report that their parents discuss with them how well they are doing at school several times a week (PISA Survey, 2015).
- 76% of 15-year-old children report that their parents eat a main meal with them around a table several times a week (PISA Survey, 2015).
- Almost nine out of ten children have three or more friends of the same gender (HBSC Survey, 2014).
Three out of four children have a pet of their own or a pet in their family (HBSC Survey, 2014).

Immigrant children, Traveller children and children with a disability and/or chronic illness were more likely to report being bullied at school (HBSC Survey, 2014).

Approximately 38% of the 4,178 pre-school services contracted to deliver the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme in June 2016 met the higher capitation requirements (ECCE Database).

Approximately one in every ten primary school children misses 20 days or more in the school year (Tusla, the Child and Family Agency Annual School Attendance Data, 2013/2014).

Approximately one in every six post-primary school children misses 20 days or more in the school year (Tusla, the Child and Family Agency Annual School Attendance Data, 2013/2014).

Retention rates to the completion of the Leaving Certificate have increased by 6.4 percentage points - from 83.8% of children in the 1999 school entry cohort to 90.2% of children in the 2009 school entry cohort (Education Statistics Database, 2016).

Children in Ireland have maintained their strong performance in reading literacy since 2012, and the gender gap in favour of girls has narrowed (PISA Survey, 2015).

In 2015, overall performance in mathematics in Ireland was approximately the same as in 2012 (PISA Survey, 2015).

Science literacy scores of 15-year-olds in Ireland are above the OECD average (PISA Survey, 2015).

The percentage of low birth weight babies increased slightly between 2011 and 2015, from 5.4% in 2011 to 5.9% in 2015. (National Perinatal Reporting System, 2015).

Breastfeeding initiation rates have continued to increase (National Perinatal Reporting System, 2015).

Almost half of the total hospital discharges of children in 2015 were children aged under five years (Hospital In-Patient Enquiry, 2015).

The total number of hospital discharges of children with a principal diagnosis of ‘injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes’ was relatively stable between 2011 and 2015.

The percentage of children aged seven years classified as being in the ‘normal’ weight category increased by three percentage points over the period 2010-2012 (WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative, 2012).
Two-thirds of children registered as having an intellectual disability in 2015 were boys (National Intellectual Disability Database, 2015).

In 2015, approximately one in three children on the National Physical and Sensory Disability Database were registered as having multiple disabilities. (National Physical and Sensory Disability Database, 2015).

The number of child welfare and protection referrals increased by 8.5% between 2012 and 2015 (Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, 2015).

The percentage of children aged 10-17 who reported that students at their school participate in making the school rules increased by about three percentage points between 2010 and 2014 - from 32.6% in 2010 to 35.5% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).

In 2012, more than one-third of 15-year-old children reported that reading is one of their favourite hobbies (PISA Survey, 2012).

The percentage of children who reported smoking cigarettes every week decreased from 11.6% in 2006 to 5.3% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).

The percentage of children aged 10-17 who reported never smoking cigarettes increased from 59.8% in 2002 to 84.2% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).

The percentage of children aged 10-17 who reported having been drunk at least once in the past 30 days decreased from 18.3% in 2010 to 10% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).

The percentage of children aged 10-17 who reported never having had an alcoholic drink increased from 47.2% in 2006 to 58.3% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).

The percentage of children who reported taking cannabis at least once in their lifetime decreased from 15.7% in 2006 to 8.8% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).

The number of babies born to girls aged 17 and under decreased by 23% between 2011 and 2015 (Vital Statistics, Central Statistics Office, 2015).

In 2014, approximately one in four children aged 15-17 reported that they have had sex (HBSC Survey, 2014).

Approximately three out of ten girls aged 15-17 reported feeling happy with the way they are (HBSC Survey, 2014).

Approximately nine out of ten children aged 10-17 reported being happy with their lives at present (HBSC Survey, 2014).

In 2015, there were 14 suicides of children aged 10-17 (Vital Statistics, Central Statistics Office, 2015).
In 2015, 2.5 times as many girls as boys presented at hospital emergency departments following self-harm (National Self-Harm Registry Ireland, 2015).

Children in Ireland have one of the highest levels of physical activity among 42 WHO countries and regions (HBSC Survey, 2014).

Children in higher social class categories are more likely to eat breakfast on five or more days per week (HBSC Survey, 2014).

The percentage of children aged 10-17 who report drinking soft drinks that contain sugar at least once a day has fallen from 26% in 2006 to 12.6% in 2014 (HBSC, 2014).

In 2013, Ireland’s public expenditure on educational institutions between primary and tertiary level was 5.2% of gross domestic product (GDP) and was above the EU-28 average (Department of Education and Skills; OECD report Education at a Glance, 2016).

In 2014, 18.6% of children were considered to be at risk of poverty (European Union Survey on Income and Living Conditions, 2014).


In 2016, there were 46,294 households with children identified as being in need of social housing (Summary of Social Housing Assessments, 2016).

In 2014, nine out of ten children reported feeling safe in the area where they live (HBSC Survey, 2014).

The percentage of children who reported that there are good places in their area to spend their free time increased from 51.2% in 2010 to 61.5% in 2014 (HBSC Survey, 2014).

Over the five-year period 2010-2014, the number of children referred to the Garda Diversion Programme decreased by 44.5% (An Garda Síochána, 2014).

Early antenatal care is lowest among younger pregnant women (National Perinatal Reporting System, 2016).

In 2015, 97.5% of newborn babies were visited by a public health nurse within 72 hours of discharge from hospital for the first time. (Outturn of Quarterly Performance Indicator Returns, 2015).

In 2015, 93.7% of children had their 7-9 Month Developmental Check on time (Outturn of Monthly Activity Data Returns, 2015).
In 2014, the national uptake rates of D₃, P₃, T₃, Hib₃, Polio₃ and HepB₃ for children at 24 months of age reached the target of 95% (Health Protection Surveillance Centre, *Annual Epidemiological Report 2014*).

The number of children on an inpatient/day case waiting list awaiting treatment increased by 44.4% between 2011 and 2015 (Patient Treatment Register, 2015).

The number of children in the care of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency increased by approximately 3.6% between 2011 and 2015 (Tusla, 2014).

In 2015, among children, ‘depressive disorders’ were the most common reason for admission to psychiatric hospitals/units and child and adolescent units (National Psychiatric In-Patient Reporting System, 2015).