

Health and health behaviour in adolescents: Switzerland in an international comparison



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A WHO collaborative cross-national study of adolescent health and well-being

The health, health behaviour and well-being of adolescents are key factors for their psychosocial development as well as for their future health and path of life. Adolescence is therefore a time that brings both risks and opportunities. On one hand, it is generally characterised by an increase in risk behaviours (e.g. substance use) and a decrease in health-promoting behaviours (e.g. healthy eating habits and sufficient physical activity). On the other hand, it is a prime time for prevention and health promotion interventions.

The international study *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) is conducted every four years under the aegis of the World Health Organisation (WHO-Europe), with the aim of observing the health and health-related behaviours of 11-, 13- and 15-year-old schoolchildren at regular intervals. More than 40 countries are currently participating, including Switzerland since 1986.

This factsheet presents the results of the Swiss HBSC survey 2022 through a selection of 27 health-relevant indicators and their evolution over time in an international comparison.

Switzerland in an international comparison

Table I provides an overview of the results for the 27 analysed indicators. For more detailed information, a list of national and international research reports and national factsheets discussing the results of the HBSC 2022 study is presented on page 3.

In **2022**, Switzerland's results for **11-, 13- and 15-year-olds** are often fairly close to those of the participating neighbouring countries (Germany, Austria, France and Italy). In other words, their prevalences are often of a similar order of magnitude.

In the international ranking of all participating countries for **15-year-olds**, Switzerland is in the **best third** or the **middle third** of the ranking for most indicators (see box 'How to read Table I?') and is therefore relatively well placed.

Among **15-year-olds**, Switzerland ranks particularly well for **bullying** (at school and online), **stress related to schoolwork**, **perceived social support** (from family and friends), **overweight** (slight to severe), **problematic social media use** and **condom use** at last sexual intercourse (among sexually initiated 15-year-olds). However, Switzerland has some of the highest rates of 15-year-olds who have used **cannabis** or **e-cigarettes** in the last 30 days, or who perceive themselves as **'a little or much too fat'**.

Between 2018 and 2022, the position of **15-year-olds** in Switzerland in the international ranking worsened in terms of recurrent or chronic **physical and psychoaffective symptoms** (partially already between 2014 and 2018), while it improved in terms of **overweight** (slight to severe), **daily consumption of sugary soft drinks** and **physical activity** (at least 60 minutes every day). Regarding the remaining indicators, the ranking has hardly changed.

The method in brief

The international study of *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) is conducted every four years under the aegis of the World Health Organisation (WHO-Europe). It is based on a standardised questionnaire completed by 11- to 15-year-old schoolchildren in the classroom.

The schoolchildren's participation is voluntary (with parental consent) and their answers strictly confidential. The last data collection took place from autumn 2021 to spring 2023, although the exact timing and duration varied from country to country (from March to June 2022 in Switzerland).

The results presented in this factsheet are based on analyses conducted by Addiction Switzerland using the international HBSC database. With a few exceptions, these results are identical to those published in the international HBSC research reports.

Switzerland's position in the international rankings was determined based on the country rankings published in the international reports. For the few indicators for which the ranking had not been published, Addiction Switzerland determined the position based on further analysis with the international database.

How to read Table I ?

To determine Switzerland's position in the international ranking, the international HBSC research reports which present the countries in descending order based on their prevalence were consulted. Switzerland's position was then counted from top to bottom (see column 'Ranking 2022 CH').

A **green** background means that Switzerland is in the **best third** of the ranking (e.g. in the top third for protective behaviours or in the bottom third for risk behaviours). A **yellow** background means that Switzerland is in the **middle third** of the ranking. An **orange** background means that Switzerland is in the **worst third** of the ranking (e.g. in the last third of the ranking for protective behaviours or in the first third of the ranking for risk behaviours).

Table I – Overview of the selected HBSC indicators - Situation in 2022 and change compared to 2018 – 15-year-olds

Indicator		2022 (%)					Comparison of prevalence 2018 – 2022 ^e	Ranking 2022 CH ^f	Comparison third of the ranking 2018 - 2022 CH ^g
		CH	AUT	ITA	GER	FRA			
Health and well-being	Self-rated health (excellent)	32	31	24	30	33	stable, signs of decrease in ITA	15/43	rather stable
	Headache ^a (several times a week or daily)	25	23	31	24	21	increase	18/44	deterioration
	Stomach-ache ^a (several times a week or daily)	18	13	20	13	15	increase	11/44	deterioration
	Backache ^a (several times a week or daily)	24	23	28	21	28	increase	17/44	rather stable
	Sadness ^a (several times a week or daily)	29	27	54	32	25	increase	27/44	deterioration
	Irritability ^a (several times a week or daily)	35	39	52	43	39	increase	29/44	deterioration
	Nervousness ^a (several times a week or daily)	31	30	59	30	41	increase	34/44	rather stable
	Difficulties getting to sleep ^a (several times a week or daily)	32	28	29	31	40	increase	17/44	deterioration
	Dizziness ^a (several times a week or daily)	19	17	23	20	19	increase	26/44	deterioration
	Feeling lonely (most of the time or always, last 12 months)	19	21	18	23	24	- ^h	27/44	- ^h
Body	Negative body image (feeling 'too fat')	36	38	30	40	31	signs of increase, stable in ITA and AUT	13/42	rather stable
	Overweight (slight to severe; based on an estimated body mass index)	17	23	18	21	16	signs of increase, (rather) stable in CH, GER, ITA	31/39	improvement
Diet and physical activity	Sugary soft drinks (every day)	17	18	11	15	21	rather stable, decrease in CH and FRA	18/43	improvement
	Fruits and vegetables (several times a day)	11	9	8	8	9	rather stable, increase in CH and AUT	17/44	rather stable
	Physical activity (at least 60 minutes every day; estimation)	14	14	5	12	11	rather stable, signs of increase in CH, GER, FRA	30/45	improvement
Risk and protective behaviours	Alcohol use (in the last 30 days)	40	53	56	55	40	trends vary by country	21/44	rather stable
	Conventional cigarette use (in the last 30 days)	15	19	26	17	13	trends vary by country	19/44	rather stable
	E-cigarette use (in the last 30 days)	23	21	23	23	19	- ^h	11/32	- ^h
	Cannabis use (in the last 30 days)	10	7	12	9	6	trends vary by country	7/42	rather stable
	Condom use at last intercourse (among sexually initiated 15-year-olds)	75	68	69	58	70	decrease	2/42	rather stable
	Problematic social media use ^b (yes)	7	10	13	9	7	increase, decrease in FRA	35/43	rather stable
Violence	Victim of cyberbullying (at least 1 incident in the last few months)	11	12	8	12	9	signs of increase	32/43	rather stable
	Victim of bullying at school (at least 2 incidents per month)	6	6	3	7	3	rather stable	35/45	rather stable
School and social environment	Stress related to schoolwork (somewhat or very stressed)	41	40	72	46	45	increase	34/44	rather stable
	Perceived social support from friends ^c (high)	74	68	56	64	63	decrease, stable in CH	1/43	rather stable
	Perceived social support from family ^d (high)	75	70	54	58	61	decrease, signs of increase in CH and AUT	5/44	rather stable
Life satisfaction (scale from 0 to 10)		M ⁱ =7.0	M ⁱ =7.2	M ⁱ =6.6	M ⁱ =7.2	M ⁱ =6.9	signs of a slight decrease	25/44	rather stable

Notes : CH = Switzerland; ITA = Italy; GER = Germany; FRA = France; AUT = Austria;

^a In the last 6 months

^b Problematic social media use was measured using the 'Social Media Disorder Scale' (Van Der Eijnden et al., 2016).

^c Measured using the 'family' subscale of the MSPSS (*Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*, Zimet et al., 1988).

^d Measured using the 'peers' subscale of the MSPSS (*Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*, Zimet et al., 1988).

^e Unless otherwise stated, refers to Switzerland, neighbouring countries and the international average of all participating countries.

^f See box 'How to read Table I ?'

^g If Switzerland is in the same third in 2018 and 2022, its position is considered rather stable, while a rise or fall between two thirds is considered an improvement or a deterioration.

^h Question asked for the first time in 2022

ⁱ M = mean value

Health and well-being		International report	National report Factsheet
Diet		International report	National report Factsheet
Physical activity		International report	National report Factsheet
Body image and weight status		International report	National report Factsheet
Substance use		International report	National report Factsheet
Online behaviours		International report	National report Factsheet
(Cyber-)bullying		International report	National report
Social environment		International report	National standard tables
Sexuality		International report	National standard tables
Other topics		HBSC Data Browser	National standard tables

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Balsiger, N. & Delgrande Jordan, M. (2025). *Gesundheit und Gesundheitsverhalten von 11-, 13- und 15-jährigen Jugendlichen im Jahr 2022 und Entwicklung über die Zeit: Die Schweiz im internationalen Vergleich – Ergebnisse der Studie Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)* (Forschungsbericht Nr. 176). Lausanne: Sucht Schweiz. With English summary.