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Department of
Children and Youth Affairs



LIFE AS A CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON IN IRELAND

Report of a National Consultation









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CONTENTS

Minister's Foreword	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Category definitions	ix
Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	7
Background	8
Consultation process and implementation	8
Strategic context of the consultation – Promoting children's right to be heard	9
Economic and social context of consultation in 1999	10
Economic and social context of consultation in 2011	10
Structure of report	10
2. Methodology and Sample Design for Consultation Process	11
Objectives	12
Study design and setting	12
Population and sampling framework	12
Structure of the education system	12
Sample design	13
Sample school selection	13
Data sources	13
Development of the consultation instrument	13
Launch of the consultation	17
Distribution of packs	17
Follow-up and response rate	18
Follow-up	18
Response rate	18
Data analysis	18
Statistical methods	19
Limitations and strengths	19
Validity and generalisability	20
3. Demographics of participants	21
Response rates	22
Who took part in the consultation?	22

4. Life as a Child in Ireland	25
<i>What's the best thing about being a child in Ireland?</i>	26
Education	27
Sport	28
Friends	28
Irish identity	28
Additional things that were the best thing about being a child in Ireland	29
<i>What's the worst thing about being a child in Ireland?</i>	30
Economy and finances	31
Weather	32
Education	33
Anti-social behaviour and crime	34
Additional things that were the worst thing about being a child in Ireland	35
<i>What one thing would you change for children to be happy in Ireland?</i>	36
Education	37
Economy and finances	38
Social problems	39
Play	39
Additional things children would change for children to be happy in Ireland	40
5. Life as a Young Person in Ireland	41
<i>What do you think is good about being a young person living in Ireland?</i>	42
Education	43
Sport	43
Activities	44
Not having responsibility	44
Additional things that were good about being a young person in Ireland	45
<i>What do you dislike about being a young person in Ireland?</i>	46
Economy and finances	47
Education	48
Anti-social behaviour and crime	49
Weather	50
Additional things young people disliked about living in Ireland	50
<i>If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you change for young people?</i>	51
Education	52
Economy and finances	53
Driving and transport	54
Places to go	55
Additional things young people would change about living in Ireland	55

6. Summary of Main Findings	57
Key findings	58
Overview of key issues identified by children and young people	59
Comparison with other studies in Ireland	60
Family and friends	60
Education	60
Economy and finances	61
Social problems	62
Social outlets	62

References	63
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Members of the Oversight Committee for National Children's Consultation 2011	68
Appendix 2: Structure of the Irish Education System	69
Appendix 3: Sample size	70
Appendix 4: Sample school selection	72
Appendix 5: Publicity and Promotional Strategy for National Children's Consultation 2011	73
Appendix 6: Materials included in Consultation Pack	75
Appendix 7: Response rates for target sample schools	80
Appendix 8: Age profile of participants in National Children's Consultation 2011	81
Appendix 9: School class and year profile of participants in National Children's Consultation 2011	82
Appendix 10: County profile of participants in National Children's Consultation 2011	83
Appendix 11: Subcategories for <i>The best thing about being a child and Good things about being a young person in Ireland</i>	84
Appendix 12: Subcategories for <i>The worst thing about being a child and Things young people dislike about living in Ireland</i>	85
Appendix 13: Subcategories that <i>Children and young people would like to change about living in Ireland</i>	87
Appendix 14: Subcategories for <i>The best thing about being a child in Ireland</i>	89
Appendix 15: Subcategories for <i>The worst thing about being a child in Ireland</i>	90
Appendix 16: Subcategories for <i>Things children would change in Ireland</i>	92
Appendix 17: Subcategories for <i>Things that are good about being a young person in Ireland</i>	94
Appendix 18: Subcategories for <i>Things young people dislike about living in Ireland</i>	95
Appendix 19: Subcategories for <i>Things young people would change in Ireland</i>	97



MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland: Report of a National Consultation documents the views of 66,705 children and young people. This consultation was conducted to inform development of the Children and Young People's Policy Framework by my Department, which will set out the key policy objectives for the next five years. I believe that having the views of children and young people is critical to the development of this Policy Framework.

In April 2011, children and young people from the age of 7 to 18 in every school and Youthreach centre in the country were invited to complete short questionnaires containing three open questions. The questions asked about what's good, what's not good and what should be changed to improve the lives of children and young people in Ireland.

The results show overall satisfaction with our education system and a keen awareness of the recession and its impact. Perhaps not surprisingly, children are in favour of less homework, shorter school days and longer holidays. More significant are the recommendations when it comes to reforming our education system. The children and young people who participated in this survey favour continuous assessment and the reform of the points and exam systems.

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I encourage children and young people to play an active role in civic society and to take an interest in our democratic system. This report is an example of such engagement. I was particularly interested to read the views and recommendations of the children and young people who participated in this research and will be using their views to inform the Children and Young People's Policy Framework, which my Department is currently drafting.

The success of this consultation is the result of a number of factors, including the involvement of a highly committed Oversight Committee of key stakeholders; the work of the consultation team from the School of Nursing and Midwifery in Trinity College Dublin, contracted to manage and run the consultation with my Department; and the implementation of a targeted communications strategy by my Department.

The views expressed by children and young people in this consultation challenge the adult world in a variety of ways and make it evident that we must work in partnership with children and young people in developing effective public policies and services. Indeed, it is the policy of my Department to listen to and respect the voices of children and young people, and to involve them in decisions that affect their lives.

Frances Fitzgerald, TD

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The consultation team from Trinity College Dublin, commissioned by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) for this national consultation with children and young people, has benefited greatly from the assistance of many groups and individuals.

We would like to thank Minister Frances Fitzgerald, TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and her Office, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (formerly known as the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs) for their support and guidance during the consultation. In particular, we would like to thank Anne O'Donnell, Head of Citizen Participation, and her colleagues, Dr. Sinéad Hanafin, Anne-Marie Brooks and Olive McGovern, for assistance with the production of the final report.

We would like to thank all the children and young people (66,705 of them) who kindly participated in the consultation, providing us with valuable data on their likes, dislikes and preferences for change in Ireland. We hope that their views will be heard and taken account of, and that their participation will contribute towards the development of the new Children and Young People's Policy Framework.

We would like to thank the members of the Oversight Committee for their guidance and advice in the planning and conduct of the consultation. A full list of their names is provided in Appendix 1. We are particularly grateful to the Irish Primary Principals Network, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals, National Parents' Council – Primary, National Parents' Council – Post-Primary, Comhairle na nÓg and all the other organisations that helped in the successful running of the consultation.

We would also like to say a very special thank you to all of the children and young people who were involved in planning and running the consultation, who participated in the Oversight Committee, who decided on the wording of the questions for the consultation and who played a significant role in writing and designing the children and young people's versions of the reports of this consultation. All of the children and young people made an outstanding contribution to the project and brought the voice of children and young people to every step of the process.

We are very grateful to the school Principals and class teachers for their kind support and assistance in the administration of the questionnaires to children and young people. We would also like to thank Liz Harper, Clive Byrne, Kathryn Moore, James Malseed, Orla Murray and Joanne Byrne for their help and support in the development of the guidelines for teachers in primary and secondary school settings.

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CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

Category	Description
Activities	Included responses that describe anything to do, such as hobbies or pastimes. Responses in relation to activities were mainly about activities in general.
Anti-social behaviour and social problems	Included responses in relation to crime, illicit drug use, smoking, fighting and violence, homelessness, kidnapping and poverty, which could be perceived as social problems.
Driving and transport	Included responses in relation to the legal driving age, road safety, drink-driving and infrastructure.
Economy and finances	Included responses in relation to the recession and economy, finances (from the lack of money in Ireland to family finances, such as social welfare cuts and bills), employment (from the growing rate of unemployment to future job prospects) and the cost of living (which included the price of everything from food to sweets to fuel to activities).
Education	Included responses that made a reference to any aspect of education, including homework, facilities and resources, exam stress and pressure, school days and holidays, school bags, books, quality, access and availability.
Friends	Included responses in relation to the importance of friends and friendships.
Irish identity	Included responses that participants perceived as 'Irish', such as the friendly and helpful nature of Irish people, sports that are particularly Irish (such as hurling, camogie and the GAA) and Irish culture and traditions (such as myths, legends, Celtic art and St. Patrick's Day celebrations).
Not having responsibility	Included responses that participants highlighted as not having any financial worries, any worries or responsibilities in general and not having the responsibilities that their parents or other adults have.
Places to go	Included responses that most commonly referred to places to go in general, with occasional references to specific places to go.
Play	Included responses that referred to play in general, places to play (such as playgrounds) and availability and condition of play facilities (such as swings, slides and monkey bars).
Sport	Included responses that made any reference to sport, a type of sport or facilities associated with sport (such as football pitches and places to play or practise sport in general).
Weather	Included any reference to the weather.

Stop the recession



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, *Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland: Report of a National Consultation*, documents the views of 66,705 children and young people. This national consultation was conducted to inform development of the Children and Young People's Policy Framework by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which will set out the key policy objectives for the next five years.

During 2010, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (formerly the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, OMCYA) developed the concept and methodology for a children and young people's consultation. It was agreed that children and young people in every school and Youthreach centre in the country would be invited to complete short questionnaires containing three open questions.

The questions for the primary school children were devised at a consultation with 7-12 year-olds conducted by the OMCYA in November 2010. The three questions devised by children for the primary school children were:

1. What's the best thing about being a child in Ireland?
2. What's the worst thing about being a child in Ireland?
3. What one thing would you change in Ireland for children to be happy?

Questions for young people were formulated by the OMCYA's Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) in 2010. The CYPF consists of 35 young people, aged 12-18, from all parts of the country. They are nominated to the CYPF through Comhairle na nÓg and organisations representing seldom-heard children/young people. The three questions for second-level young people were:

1. What do you think is good about being a young person living in Ireland?
2. What do you dislike about being a young person in Ireland?
3. If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you change for young people?

An Oversight Committee was established in November 2010 to work in partnership with the DCYA on developing and implementing the consultation process. This committee was comprised of representatives from the DCYA, the Department of Education and Skills, the two national associations of school principals, second-level teachers, primary school teachers, national parent associations, the student council co-ordinator (second-level), children and young people from the DCYA Children and Young People's Forum, and other key stakeholders. These stakeholders played a critical role in advising on the most effective way to conduct the consultation process.

It was decided that the consultation process would be managed by experts in seeking the views of children and young people, and conducting analysis of such findings. Accordingly, in January 2011, a consultation team, led by Professor Imelda Coyne and Professor Catherine Comiskey from the School of Nursing and Midwifery in Trinity College Dublin, was contracted to manage and run the national consultation in cooperation with the DCYA.

The consultation was underpinned by Article 12 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989), which entails respecting children's views and using child-centred research methods. In keeping with the spirit of the UNCRC, the DCYA decided that the consultation should provide an opportunity for the maximum number of children and young people in the country to express their views. This was achieved by targeting all children and young people enrolled in the Irish education system.

This is the second time that a consultation has been conducted to inform a National Children's Strategy or Policy Framework in Ireland. The first public consultation was carried out in 1999 to inform *Our Children – Their Lives: National Children's Strategy 2000-2010*, during the 'Celtic Tiger' era in Ireland – an age of economic boom, prosperity, high employment and infinite opportunity. In contrast, the present consultation took place in 2011 and was conducted in an age of austerity, rising unemployment and emigration, and increased uncertainty as to what the future holds for many families.

RESPONSE RATE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

A standard postal response rate of approximately 10% was initially expected, amounting to approximately 409 schools. However, as a result of a comprehensive communications strategy, implemented by the DCYA with the support of the Oversight Committee and the team of consultants at Trinity College, a response rate of over 38% was achieved. Key to this communications strategy was a press launch of the consultation by Frances Fitzgerald, TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, a week before the nominated consultation week of 4-8 April 2011.

The questionnaires were completed by 66,705 children and young people during the week of the 4-8 April 2011. 38% of all primary and second-level schools (n=1,594) participated in the consultation. 81% of participants (n=54,163) were from primary schools and 19% (n=12,542) were from second-level education. 52% of the participants (n=34,714) were female and 48% (n=31,614) were male. Participants ranged in age from 4 to 23 years; the mean age of participants was 11 years, with a standard deviation of 2.3 years. Half of the participants were in the age group 10-12 years and so this group accounted for approximately half of males (50%) and half of females (50%).

KEY MESSAGES FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- It is interesting to note that, despite the very high number of responses to the consultation (66,705), there was agreement among the children (aged 7-12) and the young people (aged 13-18) about their top like, their top dislike and their top change.
- Children and young people said that **education** is the best thing about living in Ireland. Children noted that there were good schools, schooling is free and everybody can go to school. Young people noted that education is a right, it is free and the standard is really good.
- Children and young people said that the worst thing about living in Ireland is the **recession and current financial situation**. Children noted that there is no money in the country, people are not happy, children will have to pay back banks when they grow up, parents are worried about losing jobs and having less money, everything is more expensive, and they themselves may not be able to get a job and earn money when they leave school. Young people noted that the country is in a recession, the economy is going downwards, there are no jobs and the high cost of living. Many were worried about the effect of the recession on their families' financial situation and their future job prospects.
- Children and young people said that the top thing they would change are **aspects of the education system**. Children suggested changes such as: have less homework; make days at school shorter and holidays longer; have less pupils in classroom; have more equipment for sports and art; put more money into teaching science and have science labs; and have more computers in school. Young people suggested changes such as: have better school facilities and resources; have bigger classrooms; change the points and exam system; use more continuous assessment; reduce high costs of books and uniforms; and spend less time in school.
- It is evident from the range of responses that children and young people have opinions and views on living in Ireland and that they value the opportunity to convey their views. Answers to the questions were provided by 66,705 children and young people from every part of Ireland. They provided detailed information on changes they would like, which indicated that they were keen to contribute and influence future policies that will affect their lives.

OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The key findings from the national consultation are presented in two chapters within the report: Chapter 4 outlines the likes, dislikes and areas for change identified by primary school children, while Chapter 5 covers the same areas for young people in second-level schools and Youthreach centres. Chapter 6 provides a summary of the main findings emerging from the consultation. A number of appendices give additional details and statistics.

Views of primary school children (see Chapter 4)

What's the best thing about being a child in Ireland?

1. **Education** is viewed as the best thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - 20% of children (n=10,652) said that the education they receive is the best thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - Children noted the access to education and availability of good schools.
2. **Sport** is viewed as the 2nd best thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - 16% of children (n=8,411) said they liked sports.
 - Children liked the range of both individual and team sports available and being able to watch sports.
3. **Friends** are viewed as the 3rd best thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - 14% of children (n=7,490) said that friendship was an important aspect of life for them.
 - Children liked having lots of friends, making new friends and having friends who were good and treated them well.
4. **Irish identity** is viewed as the 4th best thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - Irish identity was named by 11% of children (n=6,215).
 - Children liked sports that were specifically Irish, such as camogie, hurling and the GAA.

What's the worst thing about being a child in Ireland?

1. **The Irish economy and finances** are the worst thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - 24% of children (n=13,150) said that the economy and finances were the worst things about being a child in Ireland.
 - Children listed the recession, debts to be repaid and not having enough money or having no money. They mentioned the excessive media coverage of topics relating to the recession.
2. **Weather** is the 2nd worst thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - The weather was a significant issue for 18% of children (n=9,794).
 - Children mentioned the inclement weather, the lack of snow and heavy snow, and the effect the weather has on other areas of their lives.
3. **Education** is the 3rd worst thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - 14% of children (n=7,327) said certain aspects of education were the worst thing.
 - Some of the areas that children listed were homework, facilities and resources, subjects, school days and school uniforms.
4. **Anti-social behaviour and crime** are the 4th worst thing about being a child in Ireland.
 - Anti-social behaviour and crime were identified by 11% of children (n=5,777).
 - Children noted the level of crime, the risk of kidnapping and anti-social activities, such as smoking and illicit drug use.

What one thing would you change in Ireland for children to be happy?

The 1st thing children want to change is **education**.

- 22% of children (n=11,918) would change some aspect of the Irish education system.
- Children would make changes to the level of homework received and the time required to do it, and would also make changes to ensure appropriate educational facilities and resources were available.

The 2nd thing children want to change is **economy and finances**.

- 18% of children (n=9,884) would change some aspect of the economy and finances in Ireland.
- Children would make changes to end the recession, improve the economy and finances, and reduce the cost of living.

The 3rd thing children want to change relate to **social problems**.

- 10% of children (n=5,437) would make changes in order to improve social problems.
- Children would make changes to reduce the level of crime (including murders and robberies), reduce the availability of illicit drugs and ban the sale and supply of cigarettes.

The 4th thing children want to change is **play**.

- 8% of children (n=4,202) would change play.
- Children would improve play by including more places to play, increase security in existing play facilities in order to reduce damage resulting from vandalism and increase the free time available to play.

Views of young people (see Chapter 5)

What do you think is good about being a young person living in Ireland?

1. Education is viewed as the top good thing by young people.

- 27% of young people (n=3,340) said they liked the education they receive.
- Young people appreciated the quality of education and felt privileged to have the opportunity and right to get an education in Ireland.

2. Sport is viewed as the 2nd good thing by young people.

- 16% of young people (n=1,966) said they liked sports in Ireland.
- Young people listed the availability of a range of different sports, the positive emphasis on sport and having sport as an outlet from school and work.

3. Activities are viewed as the 3rd good thing by young people.

- 10% of young people (n=1,236) said that activities were important for them.
- Young people liked having lots to do and are able to participate in a range of different activities.

4. Not having responsibility is viewed as the 4th good thing by young people.

- Not having responsibility was listed by 9% of young people (n=1,173).
- Young people identified as good the limited sense of financial responsibility, not having the worries or responsibilities of their parents and not having to worry in general.

What do you dislike about being a young person in Ireland?

1. The Irish economy and finances are most disliked by young people.

- 19% of young people (n=2,346) said that the economy and finances were the thing they disliked most.
- Young people disliked the economic downturn, the level of unemployment and the lack of job opportunities, with the consequences of salary cuts, changes in social welfare entitlements and increased taxes on their parents.

2. **Education** is the 2nd thing most disliked by young people.
 - 16% of young people (n=2,011) disliked certain aspects of education.
 - Young people disliked the lack of adequate facilities and resources, school- and exam-related pressure and stress, and the level of homework.
3. **Anti-social behaviour and crime** are the 3rd thing most disliked by young people.
 - 9% of young people (n=1,115) disliked anti-social behaviour and crime.
 - Young people disliked the availability and level of use of cigarettes, illicit drugs and alcohol among young people.
4. **Weather** is the 4th thing disliked most by young people.
 - 8% of young people (n=972) disliked the weather.
 - Young people disliked the cold, wet weather and the weather in general.

If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you change for young people?

The 1st thing young people would change is **education**.

- 27% of young people (n=3,405) would change some aspect of the education system.
- Young people in second-level education would like to change issues such as school-related pressure and stress, subjects, uniforms and the high cost associated with education, such as books and uniforms.

The 2nd thing young people would change is **economy and finances**.

- 12% of young people (n=1,561) would change the current economy and financial situation in Ireland.
- Young people would make changes to ensure there were sufficient job opportunities for them when they complete their second- or third-level education.

The 3rd thing young people would change is **driving and transport**.

- 9% of young people (n=1,115) would change aspects of driving and transport.
- Young people were particularly interested in reducing the legal driving age and decreasing the cost of insurance to make it more accessible for young people.

The 4th thing young people would change are **places to go**.

- 9% of young people (n=1,082) were interested in changing places to go.
- Young people would like more places in which to hang out in a safe environment.

OVERVIEW OF KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Both children and young people said that **education** is the best thing about living in Ireland. Children noted that there were good schools, schooling is free and everybody can go to school. Young people noted that education is a right, it is free and the standard is really good. However, there were aspects of the education system that they disliked and would like to change. Children suggested changes such as: have less homework; make days at school shorter and holidays longer; have less pupils in classroom; have more equipment for sports and art; put more money into teaching science and have science labs; and have more computers in school. Young people suggested changes such as: have better school facilities and resources; have bigger classrooms; change the points and exam system; use more continuous assessment; reduce high costs of books and uniforms; and spend less time in school.
- Both children and young people chose **sport** as the 2nd best thing about living in Ireland. Children noted that there were different sports available; a variety of sports played; gives you a break from school and work; and good sports facilities in Ireland. Young people noted that there were different sports available; lots of places to play sports; and lots of sports to watch.

However, at the same time, there were aspects to sports that they would like to change. Children suggested changes such as: have more playgrounds; have playgrounds suited for older children; have monkey bars, swings and slides in schools; increased security in existing playgrounds to prevent vandalism; and have more time for play. Young people suggested changes such as: have more places in which to hang out in a safe environment; more youth clubs and cafés; more adventure and skateboard parks; air-soft ranges and paintball facilities; and more fun places to go.

- For children, the other two best things about being a child in Ireland are friendships and Irish identity (such as being Irish, Irish sports, culture and traditions). The other things children liked were play, places to go, activities, not having to worry about things, food, family and fun. For young people, the other two top good things are activities (hobbies, pastimes) and not having the worries or responsibilities that their parents have to deal with, such as managing money and paying bills. The other things that were good for young people were being Irish, friendships, places to go, play, food and relationship with family.
- For both children and young people, the worst thing is the **recession and current financial situation** in Ireland. Clearly, many were worried about the effect of the recession on their families' financial situation and their future job prospects. Children noted that there is no money in the country, people are not happy, children will have to pay back banks when they grow up, parents are worried about losing jobs and having less money, everything is more expensive, and they themselves may not be able to get a job and earn money when they leave school. Young people noted that the country is in a recession, the economy is going downwards, there are no jobs and the high cost of living. Children suggested changes such as: end the recession, have more jobs available so people do not have to leave the country, have better wages and reduce the price of food and services. Young people suggested similar changes, including: end the recession, have more jobs available to stop emigration, guarantee people a job after college and reduce the cost of living.
- For children, the other worst things about being a child in Ireland are the weather and bad behaviour and crime. With regard to the first, children disliked the cold, wet weather, lack of sunshine, heavy snow and the fact that they cannot go outside to play when the weather is bad. They also disliked bullying, rules, littering, people drink-driving and having to wait until the age of 18 to vote, drink and see certain films. Young people said they disliked anti-social behaviour and the weather. They also disliked rules and discipline, bullying and peer pressure, littering, rules about driving and having to wait until the age of 18 to vote, drink and see certain films. Young people suggested changes such as: lower the legal driving age to 16, reduce the price of insurance, end drink-driving, have more bicycle lanes and lower the speed limit for young drivers.
- In relation to **anti-social behaviour and crime**, children noted that there was a high level of crime, criminals are mean, risk of kidnapping, vandalism and graffiti in parks, level of violence, young people smoking and illicit drug use. Young people disliked anti-social behaviour, illegal drugs, availability of cigarettes, peer pressure to smoke, binge-drinking and the high levels of crime. Children suggested changes to anti-social behaviour and crime as their 3rd top change. They suggested: stop all crime, have more guards, have no drugs, ban smoking completely, stop teenagers drinking and smoking, and give large fines to people who sell drink to underage children. Young people wanted to see a reduction in the level of crime and the availability of cigarettes and drugs, with more penalties for possession of drugs.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that the children and young people participating in this consultation could write what they liked since the questions were open-ended and there were no predefined categories. Hence, children and young people were given the opportunity to highlight their likes, dislikes and suggested areas for change with no restriction on topics. These findings will make an important contribution towards the development of the forthcoming Children and Young People's Policy Framework for the next five years.

1. INTRODUCTION



BACKGROUND

During 2010, the Children's Participation and Research Units of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) developed the concept and methodology for a children and young people's consultation. It was agreed that children and young people would be invited to complete very short questionnaires in all schools and Youthreach centres throughout the country, identifying what's good, what's not good and what they would change about being a child or young person in Ireland.

Critical to the process was the decision that the wording of questions for the consultation would be developed by children and young people themselves and that the design of the questionnaires would be informed by children and young people.

In 2011, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) commissioned a consultation team from Trinity College Dublin to conduct a nationwide consultation with children and young people, with the objective of involving them and listening to their views in order to inform and guide the development of the new Children and Young People's Policy Framework. (This is the successor to the National Children's Strategy, *Our Children – Their Lives*, which was published in 2000.) The extensive consultation targeted every primary and post-primary school student in Ireland. This approach was critically important to ensure that the views of children and young people were central to the new Policy Framework, which will set out the key objectives to guide children's policy over the next five years. The Policy Framework aims to improve the lives of children and promote the enhancement and protection of their rights. The consultation was in keeping with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The pertinent part of Article 12 requires that:

State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Thus, respecting children's rights to be heard in matters that directly affect their everyday lives has become an established principle in Ireland and internationally. To provide background to this consultation, this chapter gives an overview of the development of the first National Children's Strategy, its origins in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the consultation process that took place in 1999 as part of its development. The rationale for the current extensive consultation process is also presented. There is a brief discussion of the economic and social context in which both consultations took place and an overview of the growing body of literature that advocates the inclusion of children's voices in matters that concern their lives. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the report.

CONSULTATION PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The overwhelming uniqueness and success of the present consultation in terms of numbers of children and young people responding (66,705 in total) was a result of the adherence of the consultation process to internationally recognised key drivers on implementation (Burke *et al*, 2012).

The key drivers of success include:

- stakeholder consultation and buy-in;
- leadership;
- resources;
- implementation team and plan;
- staff capacity;
- organisational support and supportive organisational culture;
- communication;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- learning from experience.

Each of these aspects of successful implementation was addressed. An Oversight Committee was established through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), which included senior representatives and leaders from primary schools, secondary schools, the National Children's Council, the National Parents' Council – Primary, the National Parents' Council – Post-primary, the TCD consultancy team and children and young people (*see Appendix 1*). The Oversight Committee

was consulted on every aspect of the consultation design, thus ensuring ongoing and effective communication and buy-in from all stakeholders. The questions for the consultation with primary school children were devised through a consultation with 7-12 year-old children conducted by the DCYA. A detailed communication and dissemination of information strategy was drawn up for the consultation process by senior staff within the DCYA, who had considerable experience of national consultations and drew upon previous learning from experience. Each stage of the consultation process was monitored and evaluated in order to improve the ongoing process. Sufficient resources for the scale of the consultation were planned and allocated by the DCYA. Finally, capacity within the membership of the Oversight Committee was substantial: members had expertise in education, children, communication, project planning, study design, data analysis and Government policy and planning.

Many additional factors contributed to the success of the consultation, not least the fact that it was conducted in the school setting and supported by key stakeholders within the education system, thereby ensuring that every child and young person throughout Ireland was afforded the opportunity to participate. A further strength of the consultation was the questionnaire design: input from children and young people in the design stage of the instrument ensured that the questionnaires were appropriate and appealing for the children and young people who would complete them. The use of open-ended questions afforded children and young people the opportunity to express their views on any issues which they felt were significant to their lives. Copies of the questionnaires for children and young people are provided in Chapter 2 (see Figures 1 and 3).

STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF THE CONSULTATION - PROMOTING CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO BE HEARD

The first National Children's Strategy, *Our Children - Their Lives*, published by the Department of Health and Children in 2000, was a 10-year plan, with a vision of:

An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.

The strategy represented a major step by the Irish Government to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in Ireland. One of the four main principles guiding the UNCRC states that 'The views of children must be taken into account in matters affecting them' (UN, 1989). Article 12 of the UNCRC deals specifically with this concept and, in turn, Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy stated Ireland's commitment to ensuring that 'children will have a voice on all matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity' (UN, 2002, p. 7).

The work of the DCYA Citizen Participation Unit is guided by Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy and Article 12 of the UNCRC, in ensuring that children and young people under the age of 18 have a voice in the design, delivery and monitoring of services and policies that affect their lives, at national and local level. In its report, the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) also promotes the need for all citizens, including children and young people, to become involved in social and community life.

Over the past number of years, this objective has been realised through the development of effective **structures** for children's participation in decision-making, conducting **consultations and dialogues** with children and young people, development of **evidence-based policy** in keeping with national and international best practice, and **partnering** with statutory and non-governmental organisations.

There is a growing body of evidence on the benefits of participation for children. These include the opportunity to express their feelings, views and preferences; better provision of information; developing confidence, competence and self-esteem; increasing skills in decision making; developing civic skills; and encouraging participation in wider society. The growing interest in understanding children's childhood, documenting their perspectives and recognising their agency has led to the

increasing inclusion of children in research and consultations, and significant efforts have been made to document children's voices about matters that affect them. The Irish Government is committed to listening to children, with the explicit aim of putting children at the centre of policy and practice.

In developing the National Children's Strategy in 1999, children and young people were successfully consulted with and this had a significant impact on the priorities identified in the strategy that followed. This second consultation process, conducted in 2011, is evidence of the ongoing commitment of Government to the participation of children and young people in policy development.

Economic and social context of consultation in 1999

During the first consultation process, Ireland was experiencing unprecedented economic prosperity, increased immigration and expectations, and increased levels of social expenditure by the Government (Department of Health and Children, 2000a). Ireland had comparable living standards to the rest of Europe and children were enjoying opportunities that had never previously existed. The Irish Government also had the capacity to increase resources available for social investment, primarily for children. In tandem with increased economic prosperity, there was a growing public debate about children in Ireland, focusing on their care, their needs and their aspirations. There was also an acknowledgment of failures towards children in the past and the fact that some children still faced barriers in being accorded their rights (Department of Health and Children, 2000b). There was also concern about a high rate of child poverty and youth homelessness, despite increased economic prosperity. Increased suicide rates among young people and persistent problems with alcohol consumption and illicit drug-taking highlighted the need for a coherent and comprehensive approach to support children and young people (Department of Health and Children, 2000a). Finally, a change in the cultural make-up of Ireland meant that issues of racism and discrimination were being examined and considered. Thus the economic and social setting of the consultation in 1999 influenced the issues that children and young people living in Ireland highlighted as significant for them.

Economic and social context of consultation in 2011

Similar to the first consultation, this second consultation has occurred at a period of significant social and economic change in Ireland. This consultation has occurred during a severe economic recession, resulting in emigration, increased unemployment and reduction in social welfare expenditure. The economic recession has affected many families directly, with loss of jobs, loss of homes and continued financial uncertainty. Therefore, the current economic and social context will influence the responses of the children and young people consulted.

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

Following this introduction and background to the consultation process, the report continues with:

Chapter 2 describes the methodology and organisation of the consultation process with children and young people.

Chapter 3 presents the demographic profile of the sample.

Chapter 4, *Life as a child in Ireland*, presents the children's responses to the questions *What's the best thing about being a child in Ireland?*, *What's the worst thing about being a child in Ireland?* and *What one thing would you change in Ireland for children to be happy?* The main findings are described and illustrated with direct quotations from the children.

Chapter 5, *Life as a young person in Ireland*, presents the young people's responses to the questions *What do you think is good about being a young person living in Ireland?*, *What do you dislike about being a young person in Ireland?* and *If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you change for young people?* The main findings are described and illustrated with direct quotations from the young people.

Chapter 6 critically discusses the key findings from the consultation and compares them with evidence from other research studies conducted with children and young people in Ireland.

The main text is followed by **References** used to inform the report and **19 Appendices** expanding on various aspects of the consultation.

2. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DESIGN FOR CONSULTATION PROCESS



OBJECTIVES

The objective of the consultation, as outlined in Chapter 1, was to give children and young people in Ireland the opportunity to express their views on issues that affect their lives directly. The sampling objective of the study was to select a representative sample of children and young people in Ireland who were attending primary school from 2nd Class upwards and all second-level year groups. The Irish education system was considered the most accessible means to obtain such a representative sample of children and young people required for the study.

STUDY DESIGN AND SETTING

An Oversight Committee was established in November 2010 to work in partnership with the DCYA on developing and implementing the consultation process. This committee was chaired and managed by the Children's Participation Unit of the DCYA and comprised members of the DCYA Research Unit, the Department of Education and Skills, the two national associations of school principals, second-level teachers, primary school teachers, national parents' associations, the student council co-ordinator (second-level), children and young people from the DCYA Children and Young People's Forum, and other key stakeholders (*see full list of members in Appendix 1*). These stakeholders played a critical role in advising on the most effective way to conduct the consultation process. In February 2011, members of the TCD consultation team joined the Oversight Committee after being awarded the contract for the consultation process.

The Oversight Committee was consulted on every aspect of the consultation design. The consultation was a cross-sectional study of children and young people enrolled in primary and second-level education in Ireland. Schools throughout Ireland were invited to participate in the consultation during the week of 4-8 April 2011. Follow-up was conducted until the end of May 2011, when second-level schools closed for the summer holidays. The final date for receipt of completed questionnaires was 26 August 2011.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING FRAMEWORK

The education sector in Ireland, supported by the Department of Education and Skills, consists of over 4,000 schools, with 856,685 students enrolled for the school year 2009/2010. This sector can be further classified into primary-level and second-level schools (*see further details in Appendix 2*). In addition to the numbers of children and young people enrolled in the education sector, a comprehensive list of all schools in Ireland, with their postal addresses, was compiled based on correspondence with and information available from the Department of Education and Skills' website (www.education.ie).

Structure of the education system

The primary education system is comprised of 3,289 schools, with a student population of 505,998 for the school year 2009/2010 (*see Appendix 2*). These schools can be further categorised into mainstream and Special Education schools.

The second-level education system is made up of 843 education facilities, with a student population of 350,687 for the school year 2009/2010 (*see Appendix 2*). Mainstream second-level schools account for 729 of these facilities and Youthreach programmes account for 108 second-level education facilities in Ireland. The final subgroup of second-level schools is comprised of 6 detention schools.

To guarantee the success of the consultation, the full participation of children and young people was essential. Therefore, all children and young people enrolled in the Irish education system from 2nd Class upwards were eligible to participate in the consultation process.

SAMPLE DESIGN

All 4,132 schools throughout the country were invited to take part in the consultation process and in addition a stratified random sample was selected. The number of schools to be included in the random sample was chosen based on literature which suggests the response rate to postal surveys can be as low as 10% and is generally lower than 20% (Moser and Kalton, 1993). If 10%-20% of all schools returned a completed pack, the number of returned packs could be in the region of between 400 to 800 schools.

In order to ensure that primary, second-level, special schools, designated Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) band schools and Youthreach centres were appropriately represented, it was deemed feasible that a stratified random sample of between 1%-2% of schools would be specifically targeted for inclusion and follow-up in the consultation. The midpoint of this interval was selected and based on a random sample of 1.5%: 60 schools were selected for inclusion in the representative random sample – 35 at primary level and 25 at second-level. Details of the method for allocating the proportion of primary and second-level schools to the random sample are outlined in Appendix 3.

Sample school selection

A list of each of the subgroups of schools was drawn up as follows:

- mainstream primary schools;
- primary Gaelscoileanna;
- Designated Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) band primary schools;
- Special Education schools;
- mainstream second-level schools;
- second-level Gaelscoileanna;
- Designated Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) band secondary schools;
- Youthreach centres;
- detention schools.

Microsoft Excel (MS Excel) was used to randomly select the specified number of schools from the list for each subgroup. Details of the methodology used to select the random sample are given in Appendix 4.

DATA SOURCES

During the study design process, it was envisaged that the age of the sample would range from 7-18 years. When contemplating the questionnaire design, careful consideration was given to the different level of understanding of the target audience, given the wide age range. Therefore, two questionnaires were developed, one with the wording tailored for young children (*see Figure 1*) and the other tailored for young people (*see Figure 3*). Questionnaires consisting of four demographic questions and three open-ended qualitative questions were then distributed to all schools.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSULTATION INSTRUMENT

The questionnaires were designed to provide a means by which children and young people could express their views on what they liked, disliked and would change in Ireland, in an anonymous and confidential manner. The questions for the primary school children were devised through a consultation with 7-12 year-old children conducted by the DCYA in November 2010.

The **questionnaire for primary school children** contained three questions (see Figure 1):

1. What's the best thing about being a child in Ireland?
2. What's the worst thing about being a child in Ireland?
3. What one thing would you change in Ireland for children to be happy?

Figure 1: Questionnaire for children



Consultation on
National Children's Strategy
2012-2017

Age:

Boy/Girl:

Class:

County where you live:

What's the best thing about being a child in Ireland?

What's the worst thing about being a child in Ireland?

What one thing would you change in Ireland for children to be happy?

Primary school children participating in the consultation were invited to draw a picture on the back of the questionnaire if they wished (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Back of children's questionnaire



Questions for teenagers were formulated by young people, aged 13-18, from the DCYA Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) in 2010. The CYPF was established in 2004 as a reference panel to advise the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Office on issues of concern to children and young people and to undertake projects or activities at the behest of the Minister or the Office in pursuing issues or initiatives that require an input from young people. There are 35 young people in the CYPF, aged 12-18, from all parts of the country. They are nominated to the CYPF through Comhairle na nÓg and organisations representing seldom-heard children/young people.

The **questionnaire for second-level young people** contained three questions (see Figure 3):

1. What do you think is good about being a young person living in Ireland?
2. What do you dislike about being a young person in Ireland?
3. If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you change for young people?

Figure 3: Questionnaire for young people

The questionnaire is titled "Consultation on National Children's Strategy 2012-2017" and includes a logo of a person with arms raised inside a star. It contains four input fields for demographic information: Age, Male/Female, Class Year, and County where you live. The main body of the questionnaire consists of three question boxes, each with four horizontal lines for writing. The first box is blue and asks "What do you think is good about being a young person living in Ireland?". The second box is orange and asks "What do you dislike about being a young person in Ireland?". The third box is blue and asks "If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you change for young people?". A small logo for the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is located in the bottom right corner of the questionnaire area.

Sample questionnaires were drawn up and initially presented to primary and second-level members of the Oversight Committee for feedback on the design, particularly the layout. After some minor changes, the TCD consultancy team presented two sample primary school questionnaires and three sample secondary school questionnaires at a meeting of Comhairle na nÓg in Dublin in February 2011. The consultancy team consulted with small groups of primary-level children and second-level young people at the meeting. Members were asked to vote for the questionnaire that they felt was most appropriate and that would most appeal to children and young people. The chosen questionnaires were then piloted in 4 different schools (2 primary and 2 secondary) in Dublin, Kildare and Westmeath. Subsequent to the pilot study, some minor changes were made to the wording of the demographic questions on each questionnaire and their position was altered on the page. The guidelines for teachers were also revised to include a checklist for completing the questionnaires.

Launch of the consultation

The consultation was officially launched by the Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, TD, on 28 March 2011. However, prior to the launch and distribution of packs, the DCYA, in consultation with the Oversight Committee and the TCD consultation team, developed a strategy to publicise and promote the consultation to ensure the highest possible response rate (see Appendix 5).

Key elements of the publicity and promotional strategy included:

- Promotion of the consultation on the websites of all key education partners, including school Principals' associations, teachers' unions, parents' associations, school management bodies, teacher training colleges and other prominent education websites.
- Establishment of Facebook and Twitter pages to promote the consultation process.
- Posters were sent to all schools, teacher education centres, public libraries, teacher training colleges, Comhairle na nÓg and other venues.
- Promotion of consultation by young people from the 34 Comhairle na nÓg, who acted as 'Ambassadors' for the consultation.
- Press and photo launch by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in Scoil Chaitríona National School, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin.
- Extensive print, photo and broadcast coverage.
- A text message was sent to every school Principal in the country from the Directors of the National Principals' associations seeking support for the consultation process.

Distribution of packs

Packs were posted to all schools throughout Ireland in the week prior to the consultation week of 4-8 April 2011. Materials in each pack included a letter from the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs explaining the consultation process and inviting schools to participate; teachers' guidelines on how to administer the questionnaires and conduct the consultation without bias; and posters publicising the consultation (see Appendix 6).

The sample schools received a pack of 90 questionnaires, to be distributed to students from 2nd Class upwards at primary level. All sample schools were also issued with a business response envelope, which required no payment from the schools for postage. Non-sample schools were sent a pack of 30 questionnaires and were issued with a return addressed envelope. All schools were invited to photocopy the questionnaire if extra copies were required for distribution.

The rationale behind including a business response envelope for sample schools was to encourage schools to return completed questionnaires by reducing the amount of administration work involved for the school. Since there was no limit on the numbers of completed questionnaires that a school could return, it was not possible to budget for and provide a Freepost service for non-sample schools; however, return addressed envelopes were included in their packs in an effort to minimise the amount of administration work required of them.

FOLLOW-UP AND RESPONSE RATE

In order to ensure the highest possible response rate, a publicity and promotional strategy for the consultation was developed by the DCYA (see Appendix 5) and all sample schools were followed up and encouraged to participate in the consultation by the team at Trinity College Dublin.

Follow-up

Sample schools were initially followed up during the week of the consultation (4-8 April 2011). School Principals were telephoned to ascertain if packs with sufficient questionnaires had been received and if they had any questions regarding the consultation. Any sample schools that had not received packs were re-issued a full pack by post. During the consultation week, a group text message was issued to all school Principals by the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) to encourage participation in the consultation. The week following the consultation, sample schools were contacted by telephone to make sure those that had not received packs initially were in receipt of the re-issued packs and to enquire if there were any difficulties or issues with completing the packs. Sample schools were telephoned prior to the Easter break as a reminder to return completed packs. Finally, sample schools were contacted in the week before the summer holidays to remind those yet to return completed packs to invite their students to participate in the consultation and to return the completed packs as soon as possible.

Response rate

The response rate can be divided into the follow-up rate and the completion rate. The *follow-up rate* is the percentage of sample schools that agreed to participate or stated their intention not to participate in the consultation. The *completion rate* is the percentage of schools that returned completed questionnaires. A total of 1,594 completed consultation packs were returned, which accounted for 38% of all school and educational facilities in Ireland and equated to 66,705 completed by children and young people. Primary and second-level schools returned 1,336 and 258 packs respectively, which equated to 41% of all primary schools and 31% of all second-level schools in Ireland participating in the consultation. From the random sample of 60 schools, the follow-up rate was 82% and fully completed packs were returned by 68% of sample schools. However, 5% of schools were not interested in participating in the consultation process, 3% of schools stated no material for the consultation was received and 5% of the returned sample were deemed lost in the post. The response rates for the sample schools are shown in Appendix 7.

DATA ANALYSIS

Due to the volume of qualitative data received, the PASW Text Analytics for Surveys 3 package was used to assist with analysis of participants' responses. Therefore, all data were subject to content analysis, which is a method to summarise the content by counting various responses to specific categories. As a result, all responses were entered into a PASW Statistics 18 database verbatim. Spelling and grammatical errors were corrected to facilitate the use of a text analysis package to categorise the data. The PASW Text Analytics for Surveys 3 package was chosen to categorise participants' responses because it uses natural language processing (NLP) technologies designed specifically for questionnaire text. The most beneficial features of this package for analysis of the data were its ability to identify major themes quickly, to distinguish between positive and negative responses, and to consistently place text responses in the categories whilst allowing manual intervention to refine categories.

The data from the pilot study were analysed by two independent researchers and categories derived using content analysis. The principal investigator, an expert in the field of qualitative data analysis, reviewed the data and refined the categories derived. The TCD consultancy team then met to discuss the emerging categories, clarify issues around categories and linking subcategories. This

process and team consultation led to the refinement and agreement on core categories, resulting in a final list of categories (*see p. ix, at beginning of this report*). The core categories that emerged in the pilot study were later used as a foundation for building the codebook for the consultation itself.

Initially, PASW Statistics 18 databases were created for each of the random sample schools. The databases were then analysed one at a time in PASW Text Analytics for Surveys 3, using the coding framework developed in the pilot study. The coding framework was built on to ensure that a comprehensive codebook which could be applied to all responses from consultation participants was formed. A codebook with categories for each of the three variables reported by participants – likes, dislikes and changes – was developed. This was achieved by continually extracting and building upon core categories that emerged in the first instance from the random sample school databases and latterly from all non-sample school databases.

Once a comprehensive codebook was derived, all responses were analysed in PASW Text Analytics for Surveys 3 using the final customised codebook. Participants were not limited to providing one response for each question and in the case of multiple responses from participants each of their responses was categorised. The overall frequencies of responses for each of the categories were used to determine the top likes, dislikes and changes for participants. The findings were then summarised in Tables, with each category and the corresponding number of responses the category received for each of the three qualitative questions in the consultation (*see Appendices 11-19*). The criteria for inclusion of a core category were determined for each of the three questions. The cut-off point for inclusion was based on the natural cut-off in responses for each of the questions. A minimum criterion of at least 5% of all participants liking a theme was set as the cut-off point for inclusion as a core category for 'likes'. A cut-off point of at least 3% of all participants disliking or opting to change a theme was selected for inclusion as a core 'dislike' or core 'change' category; any category which 3% or more of participants selected as dislike or change was a core category.

All data entered were subject to rigorous cleaning and screening to ensure validity and reliability. The coded responses to the demographic questions were checked to identify any outliers by examining the range; if any outliers were identified, these were checked against the original questionnaire. The database was spell-checked to ensure that the text analytics package would recognise the content. During the content analysis, the automatic extraction of data was continually monitored to identify any miscategorised data, which were then manually transferred to the correct category.

STATISTICAL METHODS

Demographic data were analysed to produce frequencies of age, county of residence and school classes. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean and range, were produced for participants' ages. Frequencies were produced for the core categories and the subcategories underpinning those categories. Results are presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS

The questionnaires were completed by children and young people during the week of 4-8 April 2011. The week in which the consultation was conducted coincided with many topical news items about the weather, natural disasters and road safety issues. As a result of the specific timeframe in which the consultation was conducted, the issues that emerged are a snapshot of what children and young people liked, disliked and would change *at that point in time*. It is worth noting generally that people's responses to questions can be influenced by the news. Thus, the likes, dislikes and issues for change highlighted by the children and young people may have been informed and influenced by the news during the week of the consultation – items such as the earthquake in Japan (*The Irish Times*, 2011), the Irish economy and the banking crisis (Brennan, 2011) and road safety and drink-driving issues (Byrne, 2011).

Many factors contributed to the success of this consultation, not least the fact that the consultation was conducted in the school setting and supported by key stakeholders within the education system, ensuring that every child and young person throughout Ireland was afforded the opportunity to participate.

A further strength of the consultation was the questionnaire design: input from children and young people in the design stage of the instrument ensured that the questionnaires were appropriate and appealing for the children and young people who would complete them. The use of open-ended questions afforded children and young people the opportunity to express their views on any issues which they felt were significant to their lives.

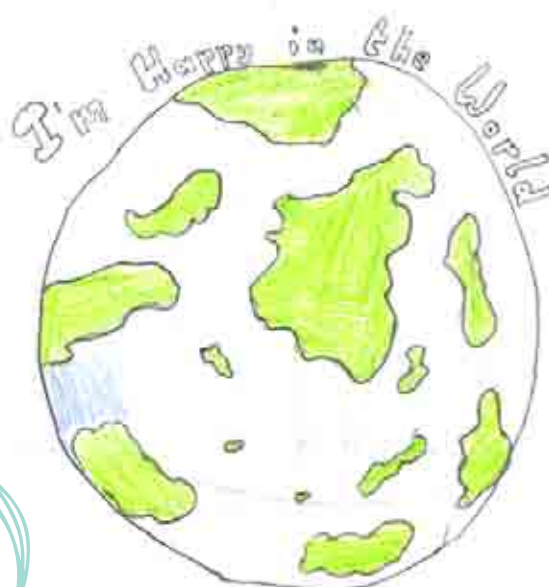
A limitation of conducting a consultation of this magnitude is the financial viability of sending a copy of the questionnaire for every child and young person in the country. However, some school Principals noted that it was not practical with budget constraints in the current economic climate for some schools to cover the cost of photocopying and return postage.

Completing the consultation questionnaires was proposed as a class exercise for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Since this is only part of the Junior Cycle curriculum at post-primary level (*see reference to website of National Council for Curriculum and Assessment*), it could result in a decreasing pattern for participation from 1st year to 6th year at second-level. The different school settings may have resulted in a higher response rate from primary school children compared with second-level young people. In addition, the structure of the primary school day may have been more conducive to allocating time for completion of the questionnaires.

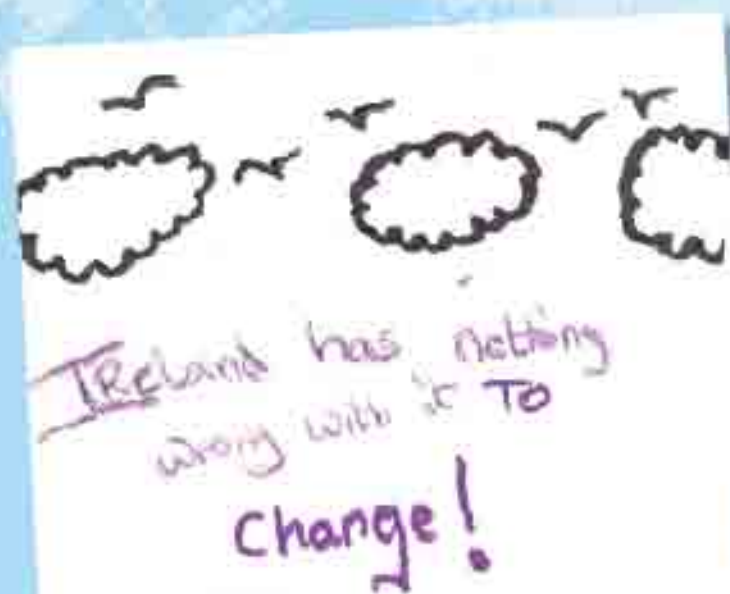
Consultation packs distributed to schools also contained a lesson plan, which suggested teachers in primary schools could conduct a 'brainstorming' session with students prior to administering the questionnaire. This could result in issues which are particularly relevant for some schools (e.g. school closures) being highlighted in the consultation.

VALIDITY AND GENERALISABILITY

The findings that have emerged in this consultation are consistent with the findings of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study and the *State of the Nation's Children* report. However, the statistics from this consultation are not comparable with these reports and must be viewed with caution in light of the fact that in the GUI study and the *State of the Nation's Children* report, children were asked direct questions about specific aspects of their lives. It is important to note that for this consultation, children and young people were not prompted to discuss any particular aspects of their lives in Ireland and were therefore free to choose any issues which they felt were significant.



3. DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS



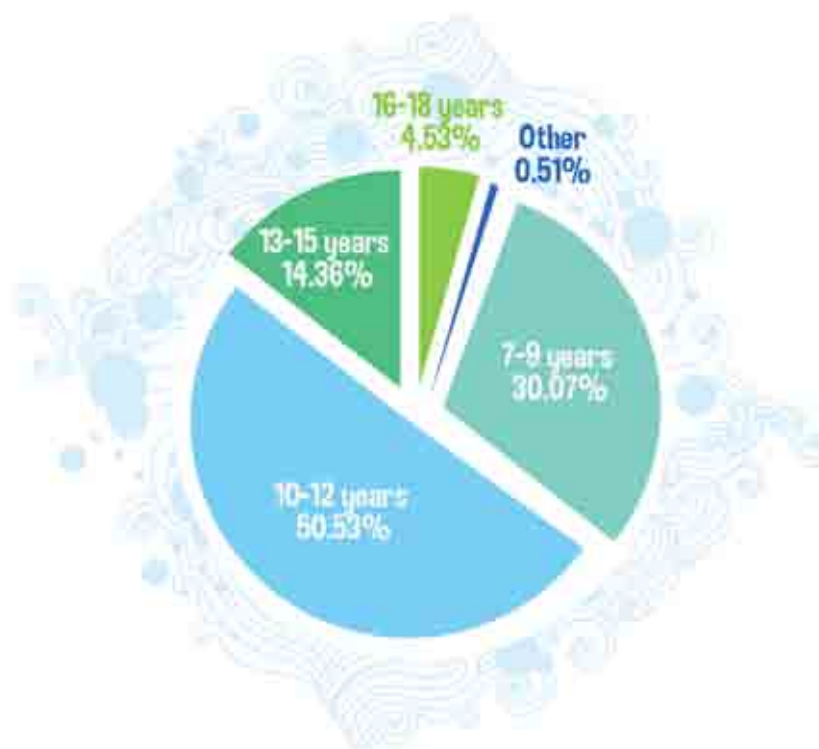
RESPONSE RATES

The consultation packs were distributed to 4,144 schools and educational institutions catering for primary and second-level children. A total of 1,594 completed consultation packs were returned, comprising of 1,336 (41%) primary schools and 258 (31%) second-level schools. The follow-up rate for the stratified random sample was 82%, with 68% of sample schools returning fully completed packs.

WHO TOOK PART IN THE CONSULTATION?

The questionnaires were completed by 66,705 children and young people, of which 54,163 children attended primary school and 12,542 young people were enrolled in second-level education in Ireland. Females accounted for 52% of consultation participants. The age range was 4-23 years, with a mean age of 11 years and a standard deviation of 2.3 years. Half of the participants were aged 10-12 and this age group accounted for approximately 50% of males and 50% of females involved in the consultation (see *Figure 4 and Appendix 8 for further details*).

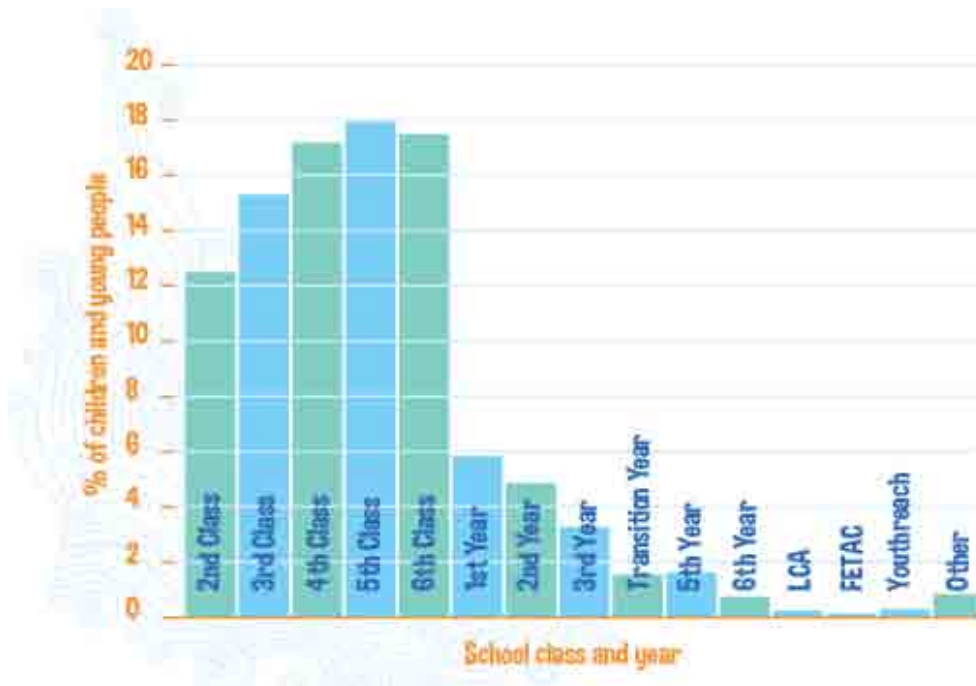
Figure 4: Age profile of participants



'Other' is comprised of those aged 4-6 and 19+ years.

Details of class or year group were given by 65,837 (99%) children and young people. Children from every class and year group in primary and second-level education in Ireland were represented in the consultation (see *Appendix 9*). The majority of participants came from 4th, 5th and 6th Class at primary level (see *Figure 5*). The guidelines issued to teachers as part of the consultation pack (see *Appendix 6*) suggested that the questionnaire could be administered to students as part of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lesson; this, however, is only a curricular subject up to Junior Certificate level and is not a formal Senior Cycle subject.

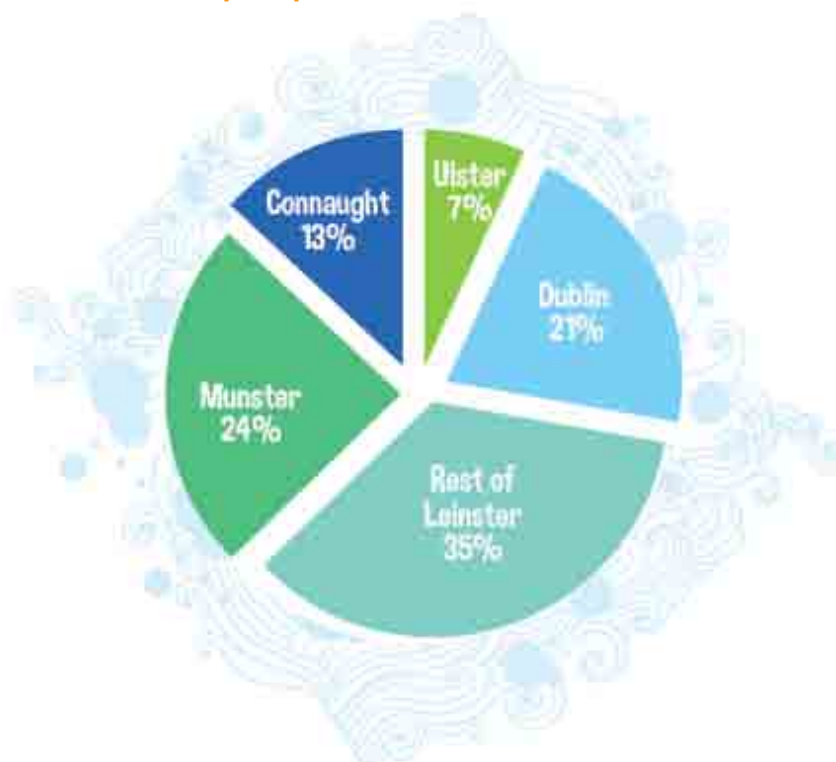
Figure 5: School classes and years of participants



‘Other’ is comprised of Junior infants, Senior infants and Special Education classes that did not follow the mainstream class categories.

Children and young people were asked for the name of their county of residence on the questionnaire. Data on county of residence were collected from 63,798 (96%) children and young people – 52,464 (97%) from primary school children and 11,334 (90%) from young people attending second-level education (see Appendix 10). The views of children and young people living in all 26 counties were represented in the consultation (see Figure 6, by province). Dublin was the most represented county, with Leitrim being the least represented. This finding is to be expected since Dublin has the largest population in Ireland, with 28% of the total population of the country, while Leitrim has the smallest population, accounting for less than 1% of the total population (CSO, 2006).

Figure 6: Province of residence of participants



Happiness for the world.



4. LIFE AS A CHILD IN IRELAND



This chapter presents the findings from the responses given by primary school children (aged 7-12) participating in the national consultation to the following three questions:

1. What's the best thing about being a child in Ireland?
2. What's the worst thing about being a child in Ireland?
3. What one thing would you change in Ireland for children to be happy?

Details of the core categories that emerged from the collation of responses to the questions asked of children are presented and discussed below. Further details of the data analysis are available in Appendices 11-16.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A CHILD IN IRELAND?

Children's responses to this question are presented in Figure 7 and Table 1. There is some overlap since some children had lots of ideas about what were the best things about being a child in Ireland. As can be seen, education, sport, friends and Irish identify were the top 4 best things reported by the children.

Figure 7: Best thing about being a child in Ireland

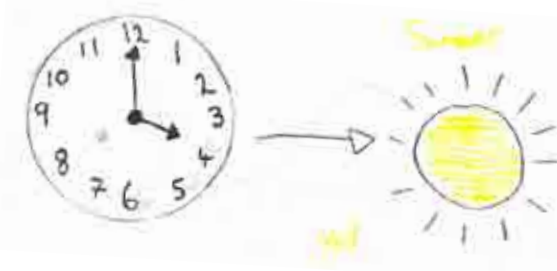
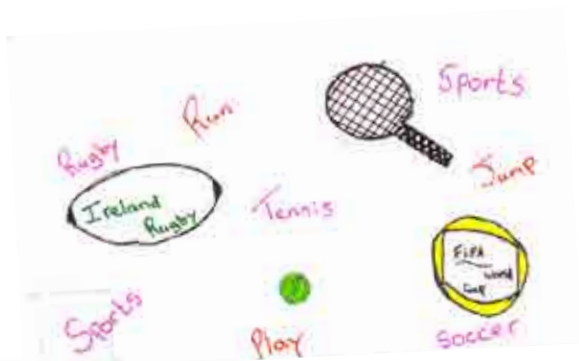
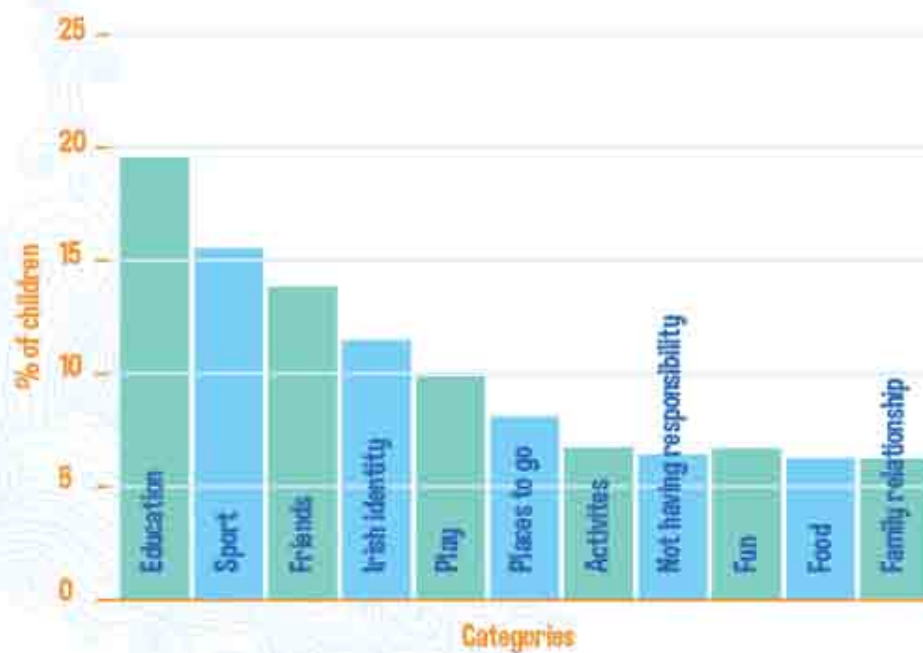


Table 1: Categories children like in Ireland

Category	Primary	
	n	%
Education	10,652	19.67
Sport	8,411	15.53
Friends	7,490	13.83
Irish identity	6,215	11.47
Play	5,311	9.81
Places to go	4,366	8.06
Fun	3,637	6.71
Activities	3,627	6.7
Not having responsibility	3,442	6.35
Food	3,387	6.25
Family relationship	3,351	6.19

Education

Education is the 1st best thing or 'top like' for children living in Ireland. Almost 20% of children indicated that they are satisfied with some aspect of education. Within the education category, the **education system** is a significant like for 19% of children. Children are particularly happy with their access to education, the availability of good schools and the quality of the education they receive in schools throughout Ireland.

Making Holy Communion. We get a good education. [8 year-old boy, 2nd class, Louth]

The best thing is there are many good schools where you can get a good education. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Donegal]

The best thing about living in Ireland is being able to have a good education because places in Africa have no education. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Dublin]

All the places for kids are brilliant and the education is fantastic. Lots of kids will now grow up with a successful job and money. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Galway]

The **cost of education** is an aspect of education that 1% of children are happy with. Some children were pleased with the access to and availability of free education in Ireland.

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is that we get free education and good schools. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Meath]

Education is free and available to all. [12 year-old girl, 6th class Carlow]

There is some overlap within the education category because some children are happy with both the education system and the cost of education.

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is the good schools and free education. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Kerry]

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is that there is free education and a very good education system. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Louth]

Sport

Over 14% of children said that sport is the 2nd best thing about being a child in Ireland. This was because they are happy to be able to watch sports and to have a range of sports available to them. They enjoy playing individual and team sports – anything from swimming and horse-riding to football and rugby.

There are lots of sports like rugby, football, tennis and hockey. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Dublin]

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is that I get to go swimming. [8 year-old girl, 2nd class, Westmeath]

We get to play sport. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Wexford]

There are no earthquakes or wars. There are a number of different sports to play and watch. [8 year-old girl, 3rd class, Wexford]

Over 1% of children said that having **sports facilities** available in their locality is good and that they like the quality of the sports facilities available in Ireland.

There are lots of sports facilities and the people are very friendly. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Offaly]

I think the best things about being a child in Ireland are there are many sports facilities and opportunities in local areas. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Carlow]

There is not a lot of extreme poverty and we are very lucky with all the sports facilities we have in our schools and villages. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Tipperary]

The towns have lots of great swimming activities, the towns have great soccer pitches. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Monaghan]

Friends

Children said that having friends is the 3rd best thing about being a child in Ireland. Almost 14% of children mentioned the importance of friends and friendships for them. Children are happy that they have lots of friends, can make new friends and spend time with their friends. It is also important for some of the children that they have good friends who treat them well.

The best thing is my family and my friends. I'm safe with my family. My friends are nice to me. [9 year-old boy, 4th class, Mayo]

You get to play every day and meet new friends to play with and learn new stuff. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Tipperary]

I have a loving family and great friends. [12 year-old girl, 6th class Cork]

Irish identity

Children said the 4th best thing about being a child in Ireland is 'being Irish'. Over 11% of children like being Irish and expressed pride about their Irish identity and aspects of life which they perceive to be particularly 'Irish'. Within the Irish identity category, the top best thing liked by children were **Irish sports**, such as camogie, hurling and the GAA.

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is we have our own sport (GAA). [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Carlow]

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is that we are the only country in the world that plays GAA. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Cork]

It's good being a child and living in Ireland because we have our own sports ... most other countries have sports that everyone uses, but here in Ireland we have our own and our own culture. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Wicklow]

The next most cited aspect of Irish identity considered best by children are **Irish people**. Children said that Irish people are very friendly, kind and helpful.

Because there are nice people in Ireland and if you are in trouble, they will help you. [7 year-old girl, 2nd class, Offaly]

We get longer holidays. We have a very good education system. The Irish people are very friendly (I am not Irish). [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Waterford]

The people in Ireland are very friendly. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Wexford]

St. Patrick's Day is only in Ireland and only Irish people. [8 year-old boy, 2nd class, Wicklow]

Children also said that **Irish culture and traditions** are the best things about being a child in Ireland. Aspects that children enjoy are Irish dancing, music, myths, legends, history and St. Patrick's Day and the celebrations and festivals associated with it.

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is we are a peaceful country and have an interesting history. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Louth]

The best thing is the Irish and the dance and music. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Carlow]

The best thing about being a child in Ireland are all the cultural things and music. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Donegal]

We have lots of cool ancient castles and legends and myths. [9 year-old boy, 4th class, Dublin]

We have clean water. We have our own language and myths, stories and games. Most people are friendly. We have good land and good roads for rallying and we have good facilities and good food and we're a neutral country. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Sligo]

When St. Paddy's Day comes along and you're watching the parade. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Dublin]

Additional things that were the best thing about being a child in Ireland

Play, places to go, fun and activities are additional things that children mentioned as the best things about being a child in Ireland. Children's responses in relation to **play** indicated they are happy with being able to play, having people such as family and friends to play with, and having games to play and places to play.

Get to play with my brother. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Cork]

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is there's lots of other children to play with. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Louth].

Children mentioned **having places to go** as one of the best things about being a child in Ireland. They identified the availability of places to go like parks and beaches, and having nice places to go with their family and friends.

We have such good education and it has some nice places that a child can visit. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Offaly]

The best thing about being a child in Ireland is that there are lots of places to go with your family. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Galway]

Children mentioned **having fun** as one of the best things about being a child in Ireland.

We get lots of food, we have lots of friends, we can have a lot of fun. [13 year-old boy, 6th class, Cork]

It is very fun being a child in Ireland. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Galway]

Children indicated that **activities in general** were among the best things about being a child in Ireland. They are particularly happy with having hobbies, pastimes and things to do.

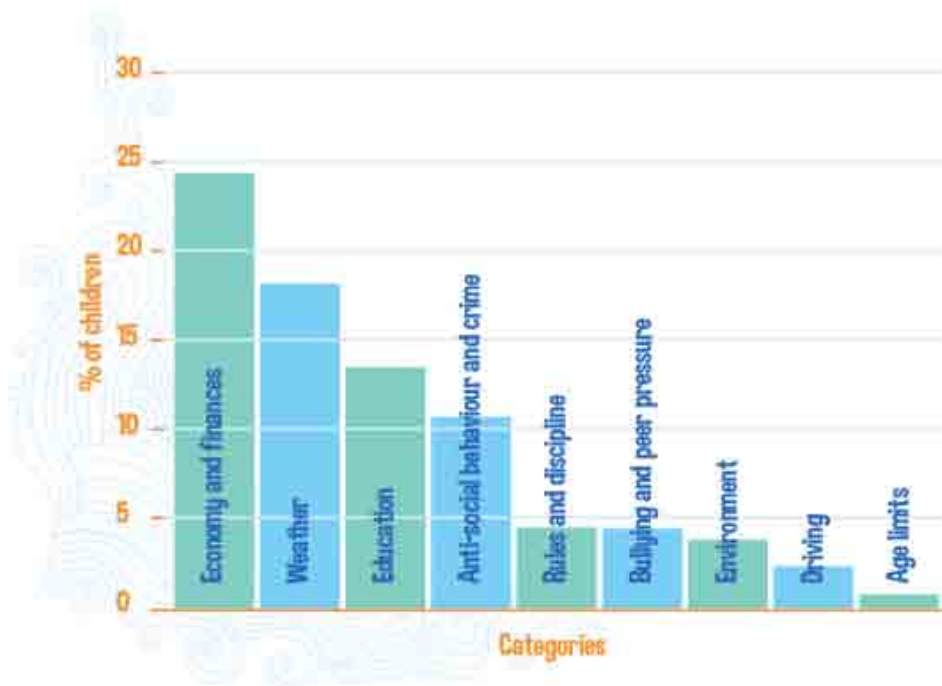
The best thing about being a child in Ireland is having a lot of things to do. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Roscommon]

The best thing about being a child in Ireland in that there are so many activities and clubs that we can join. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Galway]

WHAT'S THE WORST THING ABOUT BEING A CHILD IN IRELAND?

The children identified a wide range of things they considered to be the worst things about being a child in Ireland (see Figure 8 and Table 2). As can be seen, economy and finances, the weather, education (aspects of) and anti-social behaviour/crime were the top 4 worst things reported by the children.

Figure 8: Worst thing about being a child in Ireland



'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.

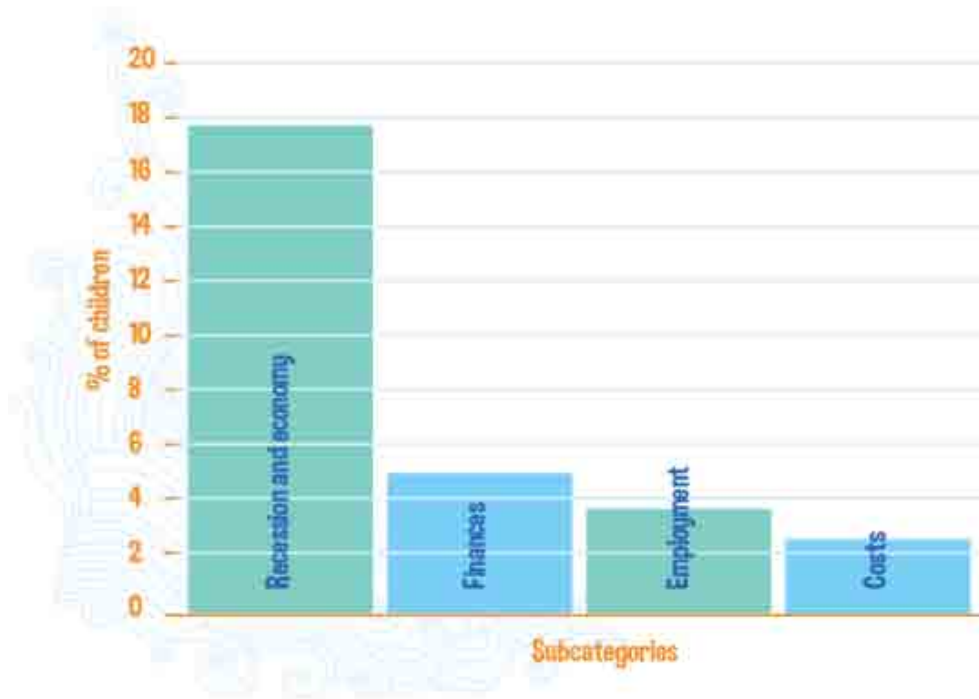
Table 2: Categories children dislike in Ireland

Category	Primary	
	n	%
Economy and finances	13,150	24.28
Weather	9,794	18.08
Education	7,327	13.53
Anti-social behaviour and crime	5,777	10.67
Rules and discipline	2,497	4.61
Bullying and peer pressure	2,393	4.42
Environment	2,085	3.85
Driving	1,344	2.48
Age limits	547	1.01

Economy and finances

The worst thing about being a child in Ireland is the recession and not having enough money. Over 24% of children referred to some aspect of the economy and financial situation as the worst thing about living in Ireland. The subcategories that underpin the economic and financial category are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Subcategories children dislike about economy and finances in Ireland



'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.

Within economy and finances, the majority of children's responses were in relation to the **recession and the current Irish economy**. Almost 18% of children said that the worst things are the financial crisis, the recession and the effect it was having on them, having to pay back the bank loans when they grow up and the general sense of 'doom and gloom' associated with the recession.

There is a recession on and the losses are harsh. There is no money in the country and school is very difficult for me. There is no help for work because it would take too much time. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Cork]

We grew up in a Celtic Tiger and now we have to get used to a recession. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Wicklow]

The worst thing is the country in bad times and there's no money in the country. [11 year-old, boy, 5th class, Kildare]

When we grow up, we will have to pay of what the banks loaned out. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Mayo]

The recession, because everyone is always down in the dumps. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Cork]

You are not heard or your opinions don't count as much as an adult's would, and also we will be affected with the recession because when we get out of secondary school, there won't be too many jobs. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Meath]

In relation to the economy, children said that they were unhappy with the **financial situation** – they expressed concern about no money in the country, the cuts to social welfare and worry about the financial impact on their parents.

My mum and dad are paying too much money and they don't have much money. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Wicklow]

That we are the second worst country on money in the European Union. Shortage of money will affect our future. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Carlow]

We haven't had money in over 2 and a half years and the social services don't work good enough. [13 year-old boy, Special Education, Wicklow]

The worst thing is Fianna Fáil getting us into this mess and not allowing school to do anything and child benefit has been cut, which means we can't do anything nice or fun because nobody has money. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Dublin]

Children's statements indicated some concern about the growing level of **unemployment** and future job prospects, as well as the high costs associated with living in Ireland, with many children commenting on how expensive clothes, fuel, sweets and toys are.

Children's mummies and daddies are out of work and we don't have as much money. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Dublin]

The worst thing is the recession and parents being stressed over losing their jobs and getting their wages cut. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Offaly]

I'm worried about my future, in case there's no work to earn money. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Donegal]

My mom has to pay lots of bills and it wastes all our money. [8 year-old boy, 3rd class, Cork]

The weather, how expensive lots of things are. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Westmeath]

The recession, parents losing jobs, being worried about jobs for when we grow up because of the Government. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Tipperary]

Weather

The weather is the 2nd worst thing for children living in Ireland. Over 18% of children's comments indicated they dislike the Irish weather. They stated that they dislike the cold, wet, inclement Irish weather, the lack of sunshine and also the effect weather had on other areas of their lives, such as play. Some children mentioned the fact that there has been heavy snow in Ireland as a worst thing, while others disliked that there is not enough snow in Ireland.

Sometimes the weather is bad and I can't go outside and play with my friends. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Dublin]

You have bad weather nearly every day. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Kerry]

Not being able to go to an outdoor sports training session because of inclement weather. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Limerick]

That it's not much snow and that the sun isn't as hot as another country in the summer. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Dublin]

The rain, floods, ice and snow. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Galway]

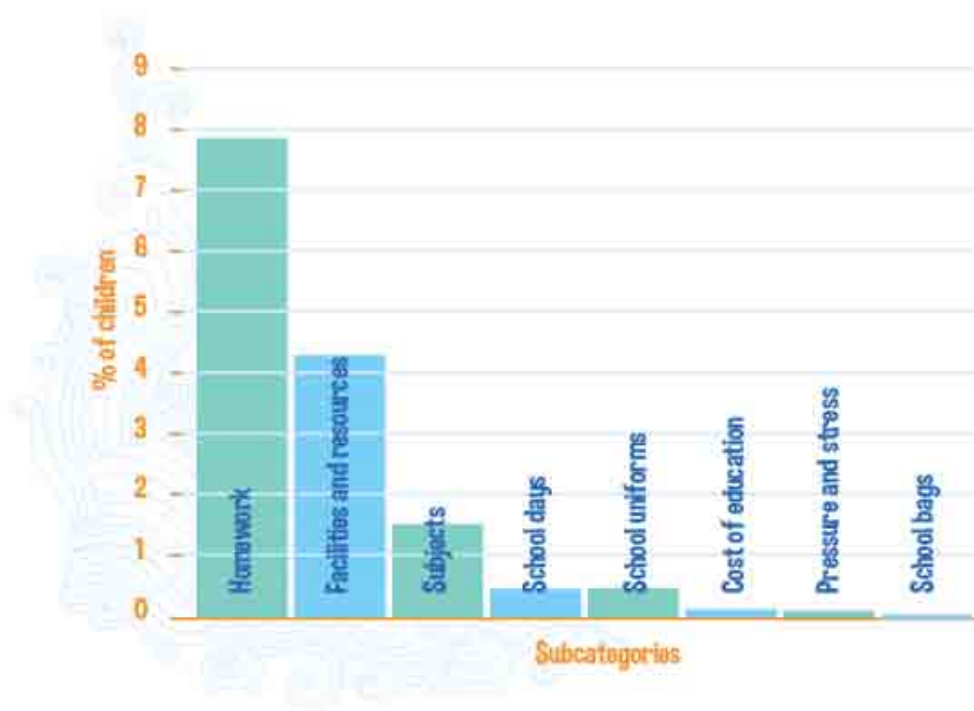
I do not like being a child in Ireland because the weather is wet, in winter there is not too much snow and in summer it is not too hot. [11 year-old boy, 6th class, Kerry]

The worst thing about being a child in Ireland is that there is lots of heavy snow and it's hard to go anywhere because you can't get around. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Cavan]

Education

Education is the 3rd worst thing for children living in Ireland. Over 13% of children said that they are dissatisfied with one or more aspects of education in Ireland (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: What children dislike about education in Ireland



Homework is the most common area of education that children said that they dislike. Almost 8% of primary school children said that the worst thing is the amount of homework given to them, the length of time required to complete it and having to do it after a 'long day' at school.

The worst thing about being a child in Ireland is that we are at school all day and when we come home we have to do homework and we could pick if we want to do Irish or not. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Donegal]

The worst thing is homework. I am in school for 5 hours and 40 minutes and then when I come home I have homework to do. [12 year-old boy 6th class, Offaly]

We get too much homework, I think we should do extra work in school instead of at home. We should enjoy our evening. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Dublin]

We have to spend about 6 hours in school a day, then go home and spend 1 or 2 hours on homework. [12 year-old girls, 6th class, Kildare]

We have homework and it takes a long time to do it. After school you come home and have to do homework and when you're done it's nearly time for bed! [10 year-old boy, 5th class, Kilkenny]

Another aspect of education that children are unhappy with are school **facilities and resources**. The children's responses indicated that primary schools do not have appropriate science and technology facilities, lack classroom supplies and classroom sizes are inadequate.

The Government lent the banks too much money and now schools don't have a lot of classroom supplies. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Dublin]

The low recognition of the fact that maths and science are the keys to the future and we don't get a good enough education in these subjects. [12 year-old boy, 5th class, Louth]

In national school there is no woodwork room, science room, art room, etc. It's all in the one class and prefabs in some schools. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Sligo]

Bomb scares, not enough shopping centres, no computer rooms in schools, no equipment for science experiments in primary school. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Donegal]

Our classrooms are too crowded and the school car park is too small. We could also do with a new school. [13 year-old boy 6th class, Laois]

Children listed other aspects of education in Ireland as being problematic, such as subjects, school days and school uniforms. Some children dislike the length of the school day, the length of school holidays, the early start to the school day and having to go to school 5 days a week. Some children also dislike having to wear a school uniform.

The worst thing is that school is very long. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Dublin]

Everything is dear. School starts too early. School ends too late. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Kildare]

Break time should be longer and summer holidays should be longer and there should be more breaks in the middle of the year. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Tipperary]

Not being part of Britain. School uniforms. People driving too fast. Hard, boring subjects. People being mean on the school bus. Unfair games at PE, also boring games. School starts too early. Church being ages away. Ruthless, mean kids. [10 year-old girl, 5th class, Wicklow]

Anti-social behaviour and crime

The 4th worst thing about being a child in Ireland, mentioned by almost 11% of participants, are anti-social behaviour and crime. The most common responses were about **crime**. Children dislike the level of crime in Ireland and expressed concern about the number of murders, shootings and robberies.

There is a lot of crime in Ireland. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Cork]

The worst thing about being a child in Ireland is that there is too much murder. [8 year-old boy, 2nd class, Donegal]

The crimes that are committed, like innocent people being killed. When I hear things like that I think it is very unfair and cruel. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Donegal]

So many murders and crimes committed. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Kildare]

I think the worst about being a child in Ireland is that people are mean and they rob houses and shoot people. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Monaghan]

I hate the way the prisons are really good and the criminals are so mean. [11 year-old girl, 4th class, Roscommon]

Children also expressed concern about other aspects, such as the **taking of illicit drugs, smoking and kidnapping**.

Drugs, because when you're addicted it's very hard to give up and you could lose all your money. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Tipperary]

Too much teenage drinkers and teenage smokers. Not much money left because of the bank mess. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Cork]

Adults drinking and smoking is a bad influence for kids and too much vandalism in the parks, way too much graffiti. [9 year-old girl, 4th class, Dublin]

The worst thing about being a child in Ireland is that some children get kidnapped. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Galway]

The worst thing about being a child in Ireland is that us children are getting kidnapped. [11 year-old girl, 4th class, Meath]

The worst thing is that some kidnappers could kidnap you. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Carlow]

Additional things that were the worst thing about being a child in Ireland

Rules and discipline, bullying and peer pressure, the environment and driving are additional things that children indicated are the worst thing about being a child in Ireland. Aspects of **rules and discipline** that children dislike include having to get permission to do things, not being able to do what they want and getting into trouble.

You don't have independence yet. You have to get permission to do something. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Donegal]

The worst thing about being a child is you're always told what to do and you can't do things for yourself. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Dublin]

Being in trouble. [6 year-old girl, Unknown, Dublin]

Children indicated one of the worst things for them is getting bullied and the fact that **bullying** happens.

If someone is bullying you, you are afraid. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class Wexford]

Some children get bullied in school and don't get help. [9 year-old boy, 4th class, Roscommon]

A good few children are being bullied. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Westmeath]

Children also thought that **the environment** is one of the worst things about being a child in Ireland. They are unhappy with pollution, litter and trees being chopped down.

I think the worst thing about being a child in Ireland is that people are cutting down trees because without trees we wouldn't have oxygen. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Wexford]

There is a lot of pollution in the place. People aren't talking in Irish. People want to put small schools together. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Donegal]

I think pollution is the worst because if you see the rivers all you can see is wrappers and bottles. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Kilkenny]

The worst thing is that people litter every day. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Laois]

Children also thought that not being able to **drive** and the legal driving age are some of the worst things about being a child in Ireland.

That children can't drive a car. [8 year-old girl, 2nd class, Laois]

Kids can't drive until they are 18. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Meath]

You can't have a driving licence. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Limerick]



WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE FOR CHILDREN TO BE HAPPY IN IRELAND?

The categories that children wanted to change are presented in Figure 11 and Table 3. As can be seen, education (aspects of), economy and finances, social problems and play were the top 4 things children would change.

Figure 11: Things children would change in Ireland

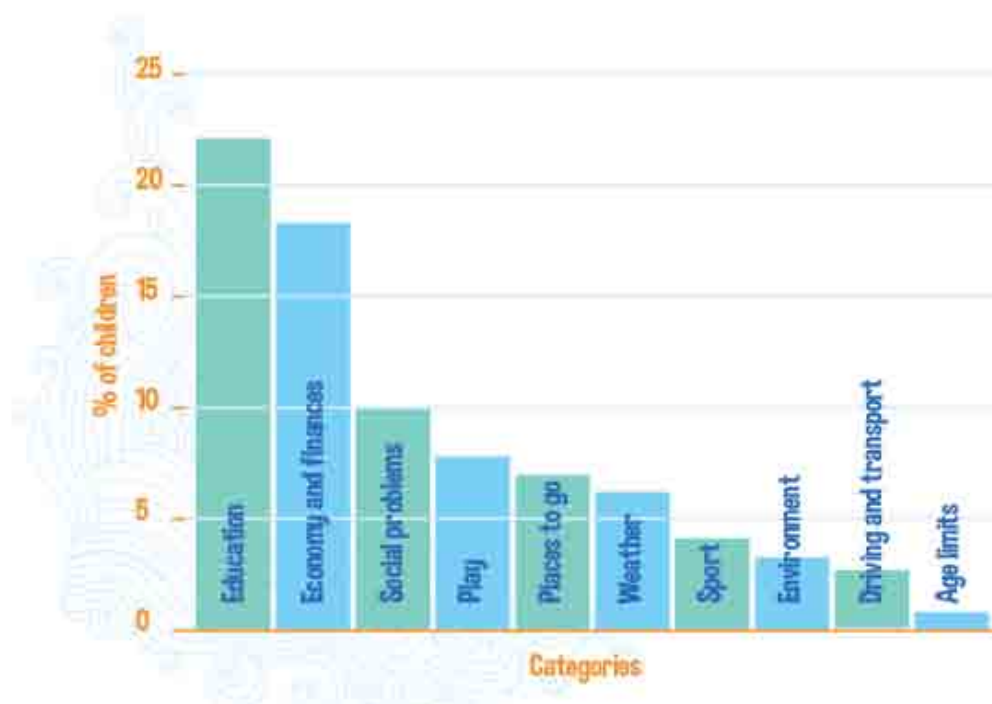


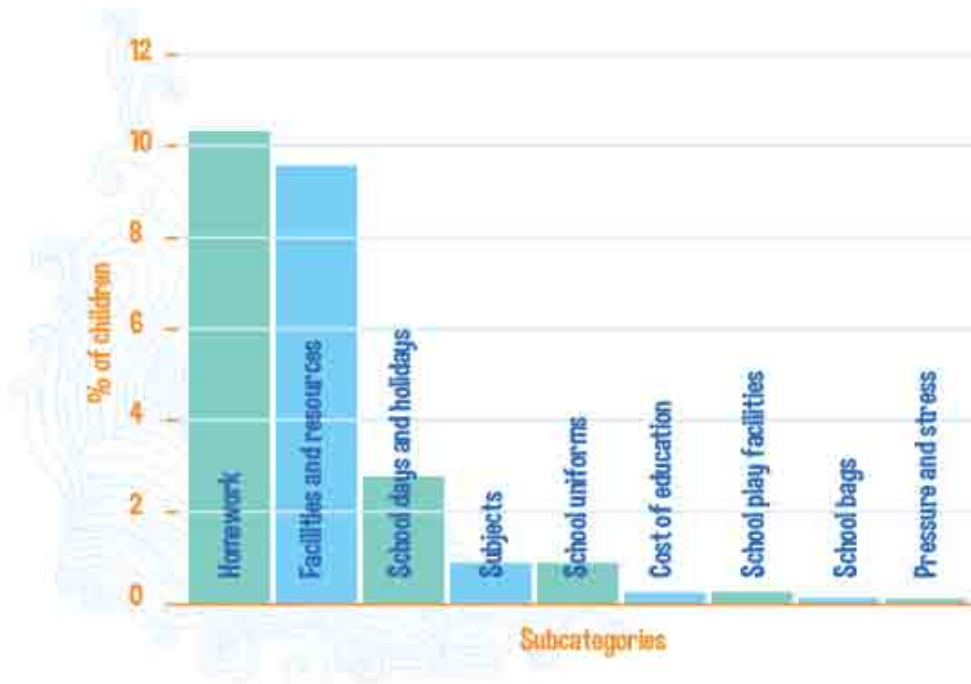
Table 3: Categories children would change in Ireland

Category	Primary	
	n	%
Education	11,918	22.0
Economy and finances	9,884	18.25
Social problems	5,437	10.04
Play	4,202	7.76
Places to go	3,751	6.93
Weather	3,344	6.17
Sport	2,214	4.09
Environment	1,752	3.23
Driving and transport	1,443	2.66
Age limits	424	0.78

Education

Education is the most significant area for change identified by children. 22% of participants said that they would make changes to at least one aspect of education in Ireland. As education is a broad area, the subcategories that underpin the education category are presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Subcategories children would change within education in Ireland



Within the education category, over 10% of children highlighted **homework** as an area requiring change, with children suggesting the amount of homework be reduced and some children indicating they would cut out homework altogether if they were in a position to do so.

Less homework. I think we get too much homework and I don't get time to exercise. Every child has a family and a home. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Kerry]

There wouldn't be any homework and more days off of school. [11 year-old boy, 4th class, Cork]

I would change having homework and we would have two seconds of homework every day. [9 year-old, girl, 3rd class, Galway]

No homework for primary schools. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Kildare]

Children also said they would change the **facilities and resources** available in their schools, with almost 10% of children saying they would change the availability of science and technology resources and would make changes to ensure that class numbers would be appropriate for the capacity the classroom could hold.

I would change that every classroom in Ireland should have an iPad for every child and the children's allowance should be raised. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Kilkenny]

I would change the classroom numbers and I would get new schools. [13 year-old boy, 6th class, Laois]

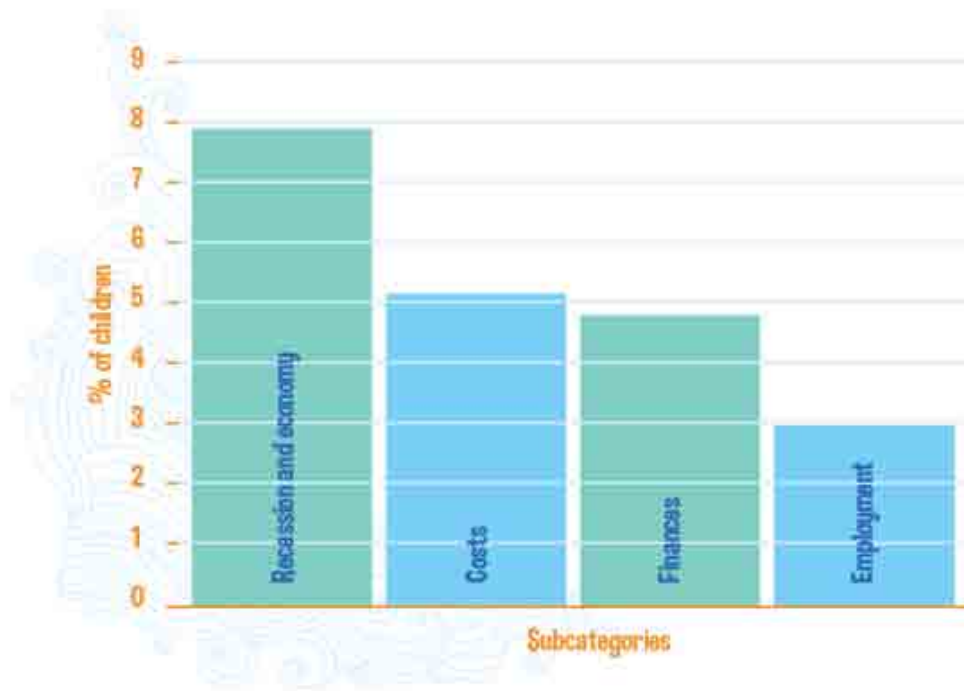
More school space and equipment because my school is built for 3 or 4 teachers and we have 15. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Laois]

The people in the school could get more stuff for the school, like stuff for sports or art or science. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Dublin]

Economy and finances

The economic and financial situation in Ireland is the 2nd most common thing that children would like to change. The subcategories underpinning the economy and finances category are presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Subcategories children would change within economy and finances in Ireland



The majority of children's responses in relation to the economy and finances category were about the **recession and the economy**. Children would choose to make changes to end the recession and improve the economy.

That the bankers would stop wasting the country's money on themselves. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Cork]

People to reduce, reuse and recycle, to fix the recession. [13 year-old girl, 6th class, Kildare]

I would improve the recession so that people would not have to emigrate. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Offaly]

I would change back the recession and make Ireland's economy better. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Kildare]

I would change the economy. It's so sad hearing about people who have lost their jobs. I would take action straightaway. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Louth]

Recessional lending, economy fixing, homework banned and homeless people put in the ghost estates. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Mayo]

I think they should pay off the debts and all the parties – Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, etc – should unite and make Ireland change for the best. Also more resources for the school. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Tipperary]

Children also felt that costs and finances could be improved to make life better for children in Ireland. They suggested reducing the cost of living, along with improving the financial situation of not only their parents, but also the Irish country.

That electricity would be free and big wages. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Kerry]

The one thing I would change is to stop the Government from wasting the money when famous people come. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Cork]

I would decrease the salary of the politicians and increase the amount given to the public and decrease taxes. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Dublin]

The prices would be payable so your parents can buy what you need to survive. [8 year-old girl, 2nd class, Dublin]

Half price for every product. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Mayo]

Lower the prices of food and other things. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Tipperary]

The thing I would change in Ireland is put all the prices down. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Dublin].

Social problems

The 3rd area for change chosen by children are social problems, with over 10% of children wanting to bring about change in relation to crime, smoking, illicit drugs and poverty. Children would opt to reduce the number of murders and robberies, and would introduce measures to reduce crime in general.

No more murders anymore or bullying – it's terrible and it's sad. [8 year-old girl, 3rd class, Wicklow]

I would change the way that all crime will stop and more fun activities in Ireland. [11 year-old boy, 5th year, Clare]

I would change that there would be no robbers because I worry about it sometimes. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Cork]

More Garda so that there would be less crime. [11 year-old girl, 6th class, Dublin]

Children would also make changes to the social problems of **illicit drugs and smoking**. They would opt to reduce the availability of illicit drugs in Ireland in order to prevent people from taking drugs and some children indicated they would make changes to ban or stop the sale of cigarettes.

One thing I would change in Ireland for children to be happy is to get rid of cigarettes. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Cavan]

I would like people to care about the world and get rid of drugs and cigarettes. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Dublin]

Ban drugs, alcohol and cigarettes. [8 year-old boy, 2nd class, Kerry]

I would change the amount of drugs being brought into Ireland so kids would be healthier and there would be less crime. [12 year-old boy, 6th class, Waterford]

I would make sure there were no drugs in Ireland so children won't take any drugs. [8 year-old boy, 3rd class, Monaghan]

Play

The social outlet of play is the 4th top aspect of living in Ireland that children would choose to change. Almost 8% of participants felt that play could be improved by the inclusion of more playgrounds and play facilities in their areas.

If I could, I would make at least about 10 playgrounds in each county. [9-year-old boy, 4th class, Longford]

To make children happy, I would change things in playgrounds. Some things are too babyish for 9 and 10 year-olds. [9 year-old girl, 3rd class, Monaghan]

Build more playgrounds. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Westmeath]

I would like to make children happy in Ireland by giving monkey bars and swings and slides in every school. [10 year-old girl, 4th class, Galway]

Children would also increase **security in playgrounds** to ensure equipment is not damaged or vandalised, and would choose to repair damaged playground equipment, such as slides and swings.

No homework on Fridays. More activities in schools. Stop teenagers ruining our parks and playgrounds. [9 year-old girl, 4th class, Tipperary]

Teenagers spray paint on the swings and slides in the playground. They just break all our stuff and that makes things boring. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Dublin]

Children also indicated they would change the amount of time they have to play, reporting that they would like **more play time**.

Play all day. [8 year-old boy, 2nd class, Wicklow]

More play time. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Unknown].

Additional things children would change for children to be happy in Ireland

Additional things children mentioned they would change in order for children to be happy were places to go, the weather, sports and the environment. Children would like to change the cost of **places to go**, have a greater selection of places to go and in particular they indicated that a theme park should be opened in Ireland.

I would like if there were more places for children to go and places to see. [10 year-old, 4th class, Monaghan]

Theme park should be opened in country. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Dublin]

I would like to change the price of places to go, because you can go to more places. [11 year-old girl, 5th class, Galway]

If they could change **the weather**, children mentioned they would like more sunshine and generally nicer weather.

That we would get more sun. [8 year-old boy, 2nd class, Galway]

The weather. I wished the weather could be changed. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Kildare]

Children would also change **sport** so that there would be a greater selection of sports, no restriction on the amount of sports they can play and more sports facilities, such as stadiums and swimming pools.

More sport activities in every parish in Ireland. Sports like badminton or squash. [11 year-old boy, 6th class, Kilkenny]

More sports in Ireland. [10 year-old boy, 4th class, Limerick]

More football stadiums. [9 year-old boy, 3rd class, Kildare]

The thing I would change is that children should be able to play as many sports as they want. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Kilkenny]

Finally, children said they would like to make changes to aspects of **the environment**, such as reducing pollution and litter, being more eco-friendly and preventing global warming.

Plant more trees, less litter and be kinder to animals. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Galway]

The one thing I would change in Ireland is have less pollution. [8 year-old boy, 2nd class, Kilkenny]

I would try to prevent global warming. [11 year-old boy, 5th class, Dublin]

I would make Ireland greener and make everyone stop littering – it's bad for wildlife and the world. I would also change the Government. [12 year-old girl, 6th class, Dublin]

5. LIFE AS A YOUNG PERSON IN IRELAND



This chapter presents the findings from the responses given by second-level young people (aged 12-18) participating in the national consultation to the following three questions:

1. What do you think is good about being a young person living in Ireland?
2. What do you dislike about being a young person in Ireland?
3. If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you change for young people?

Details of the categories that emerged from the collation of responses to the questions asked of young people are presented and discussed in detail below. Further details of the data analysis are available in Appendices 11-13 and 17-19.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS GOOD ABOUT BEING A YOUNG PERSON LIVING IN IRELAND?

The categories that young people thought are good about being a young person living in Ireland are presented in Figure 14 and Table 4. As can be seen, education, sport, activities and not having responsibility are the top 4 things that young people consider good.

Figure 14: Good things about being a young person living in Ireland

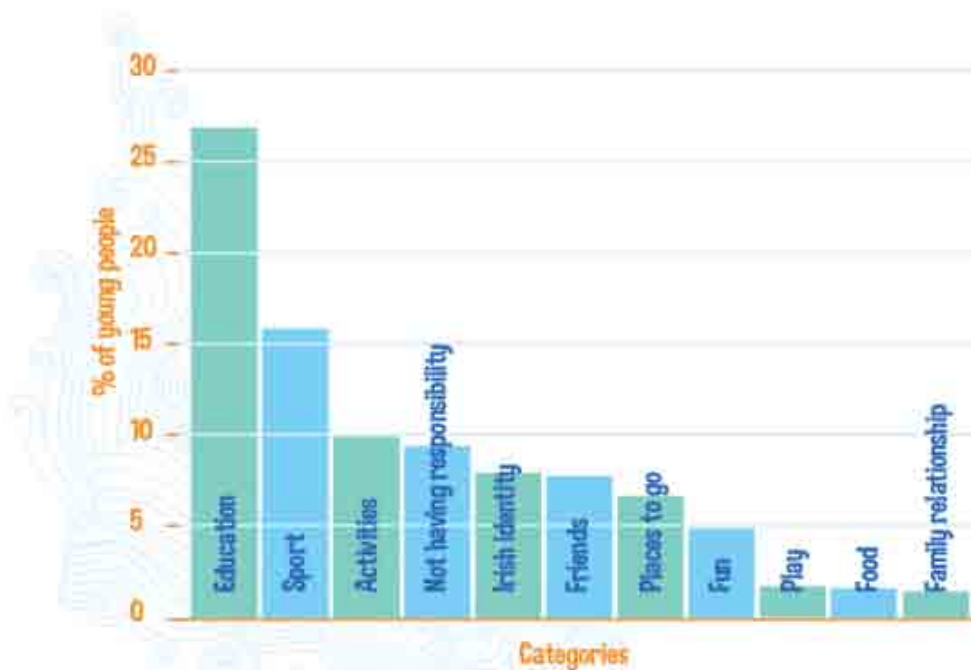


Table 4: Categories for things young people in Ireland think are good

Category	Secondary	
	n	%
Education	3,340	26.63
Sport	1,966	15.68
Activities	1,236	9.85
Not having responsibility	1,173	9.35
Irish identity	985	7.85
Friends	979	7.81
Places to go	820	6.54
Fun	616	4.91
Play	235	1.87
Food	231	1.84
Family relationship	187	1.49

Education

The top item young people identified as good is education. 27% of young people thought education in Ireland is good and within this category over 26% of young people mentioned the Irish education system. Young people reported that they are happy with the quality of the education they receive and feel privileged to get an education, considering that not everyone is afforded the same opportunities as young people in Ireland. They also indicated being happy with their right to an education and how the school system in Ireland finishes a year earlier than that of other countries.

Being able to get an education. Some people don't have that in different countries. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Clare]

We have a good education system in place that sets us up for life. This education is important, especially if we have no choice but to emigrate when we finish. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Westmeath]

I like that the school system finishes a year earlier than other schools in other countries. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Clare]

You have access to a lot of facilities and we are privileged to go to school. [13 year-old boy, 2nd year, Dublin]

I think the educational system is exceptional and sporting facilities are very good. [14 year-old boy, 2nd year, Meath]

As a young person living in Ireland, you are very lucky to have the ability to get a good education. [16 year-old boy, 4th year, Donegal]

Sport

Sport is the 2nd good thing for young people living in Ireland. Almost 16% of young people liked some aspect of sport in Ireland – 13% like the variety and availability (from team sports like football to individual sports like swimming) and 3% liked sports facilities specifically. They also considered sport as an outlet from school and work, and liked the positive emphasis on sports in Ireland.

There are a lot of sports to play in Ireland. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Kildare]

There are a lot of activities you can do, like GAA athletics, swimming and horse riding, and it takes you away from school and work! [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Tipperary]

Big emphasis on sport. [17 year-old boy, 5th class, Galway]

Young people have many different types of schools/sports and different activities to do in Ireland. [17 year-old girl, 6th year, Wexford]

Within the category of sport, over 3% of young people reported that sports facilities in Ireland are good and indicated that they are pleased with the availability and quality of sports facilities.

I like the local sports facilities. [12 year-old girl, 1st year, Galway]

There's a youth group in every town and a lot of sports facilities. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Louth]

The education system in Ireland is a very good standard. Therefore giving you a better chance in life. Sporting facilities in the country are very good. [16 year-old girl, 4th year, Donegal]

Plenty of opportunities, good schooling facilities and sporting facilities. [17 year-old boy, 5th year, Kildare]

Activities

The 3rd thing young people in Ireland identified as good are activities. Almost 10% of young people indicated that they thought the activities in Ireland are good. They are pleased with the range of activities available – from after-school activities to hobbies like fishing. They also highlighted that there is a lot for young people to do and they are pleased to be able to participate in activities.

There is a lot of space in the country. A lot of good facilities. There is a lot of things to do, like fishing. The people are nice. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Mayo]

There is a wide range of activities that are available to young people. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Laois]

We have a lot more facilities and activities available to us compared to people in other countries. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Meath]

There are a lot of opportunities and activities available to young people. [16 year-old boy, 4th year, Offaly]

Participating in a lot of activities. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Offaly]

A good education system, good selection of food, good GAA complex, good after-school activities and sports. [18 year-old girl, 6th year, Wexford]

Not having responsibility

The 4th item young people identified as good is not having responsibility. Over 9% of young people like the sense of limited responsibility. They indicated that it is good not to have a lot of financial responsibilities.

No worry about paying bills. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Donegal]

Being young. Not having to worry about bills, etc. [17 year-old girl, LCA year 1, Unknown]

Having never worry about taxes or the recession. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Dublin]

We don't have to worry about money yet and we're not affected by the recession very much. [16 year-old girl, 3rd year, Kildare]



Young people are pleased not only to have no financial responsibilities, but also to have no responsibilities in general. They reported that they thought it is good not to have too many responsibilities, important responsibilities or the worries their parents or other adults have.

We don't have to work or pay bills. We don't have a lot of very important responsibilities.
[13 year-old girl, 1st year, Kerry]

Have not many responsibilities in your teenage years compared to your adult years.
[16 year-old boy, 4th year, Dublin]

Less responsibility. [17 year-old girl, 6th year, Meath]

Because you have no responsibility, your parents look after you and you don't have to pay for anything. [14 year-old boy, 3rd year, Leitrim]

Additional things that were good about being a young person in Ireland

Additional things that young people said are good about being a young person in Ireland are Irish identity, friends, places to go and fun. Young people's responses in relation to **Irish identity** indicate that they are happy with things they feel are specifically 'Irish', including people, sports, culture and traditions.

Friendly people. Mixed secondary schools. [13 year-old girl, 2nd year, Wexford]

I like the traditional sports. [17 year-old boy, 5th year, Westmeath]

You have your own culture what you can participate in (e.g. go to GAA matches) and feel part of it. The sense of community is good too. Your community is like family to you. [16 year-old girl, 4th year, Kilkenny]

Young people also thought **friends** are a good thing about living in Ireland. Having friends and spending time with friends are positive aspects for young people.

Hanging around with your friends and going to school. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Carlow]

Friends! [16 year-old girl, 4th year Monaghan]

Having **places to go** is another aspect of living in Ireland that is a good thing for young people. They are generally pleased with the availability of the places to go and mentioned specific places, such as shopping centres, parks, cinemas and discos.

That there are a lot of things to do, like shopping centres, parks, cinemas. [14 year-old boy, 2nd year, Unknown]

Ireland has a lot of things to do and nice places to go. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Westmeath]

Young people also indicated that **fun** is a good thing about being a young person in Ireland.

You get to have fun. You don't have to go to work. You don't have to get stressed about anything.
[13 year-old girl, 1st year, Unknown]

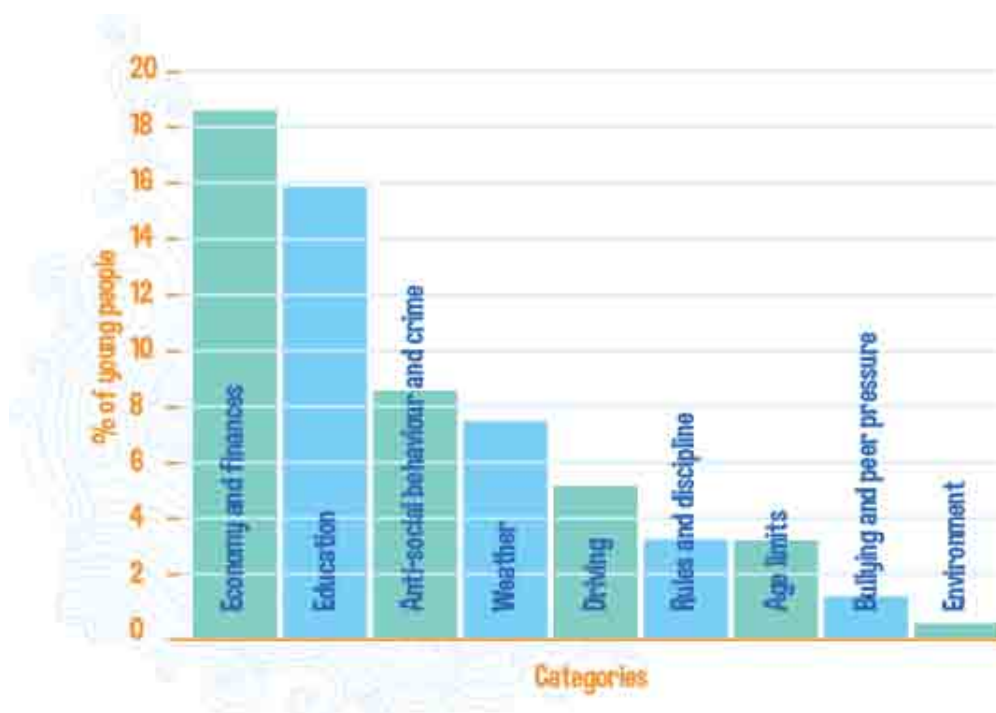
You have fun with your friends and family. I like doing sport. [14 year-old boy, 1st year, Carlow].



WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT BEING A YOUNG PERSON IN IRELAND?

The categories that emerged from young people’s responses to what they dislike about being a young person in Ireland are presented in Figure 15 and Table 5. As can be seen, economy and finances, education (aspects of), anti-social behaviour and crime, and the weather are the top 4 things that young people dislike most.

Figure 15: Dislikes about being a young person in Ireland



‘Costs’ include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.

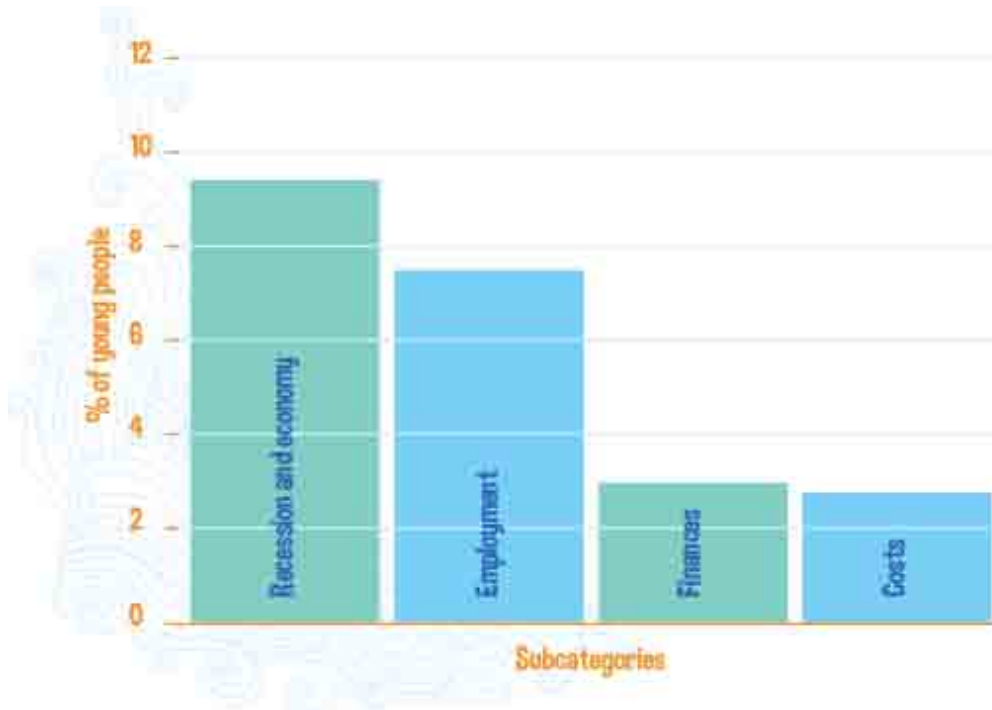
Table 5: Categories young people dislike in Ireland

Category	Secondary	
	n	%
Economy and finances	2,346	18.71
Education	2,011	16.03
Anti-social behaviour and crime	1,115	8.89
Weather	972	7.75
Driving	691	5.51
Rules and discipline	456	3.64
Age limits	451	3.60
Bullying and peer pressure	210	1.67
Environment	78	0.62

Economy and finances

The top dislike for young people in Ireland is the economy and finances. Almost 19% of young people indicated that they are dissatisfied with some aspect of the current economic and financial situation. The subcategories that underpin this category are presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Subcategories young people dislike about economy and finances in Ireland



Within the category of economy and finances, the majority of young people's responses were in relation to the **recession and the economy**. Young people reported that they do not like having to pay off the national debt, the economic downturn and the fact that Ireland is currently in a recession.

That we don't have a vote until we are 18. We will be paying off the majority of the national debt so we should get a say in how the country is run with the money our generation will be paying the banks. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Clare]

What the banks and other people in high authority did to this country to help to destroy our future prospects in Ireland. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Cork]

The economy is going downwards. We should do more Irish and do more Irish customs. [14 year-old boy, 1st year, Limerick]

The fact that our country is in debt and to think of possibly having to leave Ireland in search of work. [14 year-old boy, 2nd year, Mayo]

That our future is in the balance because of all the Government/banks mistakes. That we will have to solve their problems. [17 year-old girl, 5th class, Roscommon]

The 2nd most mentioned aspect of the economy and finances was **employment**. Over 7% of young people do not like the employment situation in Ireland, with responses ranging from the level of unemployment to the poor future job prospects.

The country is in a recession and there are no jobs. And also the Leaving Cert is too much pressure at once because our life depends on the exam. [17 year-old boy, 6th year Cork]

Lack of jobs, college costs too much, Brian Cowen. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Galway]

I don't like the way there are no jobs available in the country because of the recession. [17 year-old boy, 6th year, Unknown]

Knowing we won't be able to get a job when we leave school. [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Tipperary]

Young people also expressed dislikes about **finances and the cost** of everything in Ireland. They commented that everything is very expensive – from the cost of sweets and treats to fuel and car insurance.

Very expensive to buy things in the country. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Galway]

Everything is very expensive to buy in shops. I don't get a lot of money. A chocolate bar is 90 cent – it is too much. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Clare]

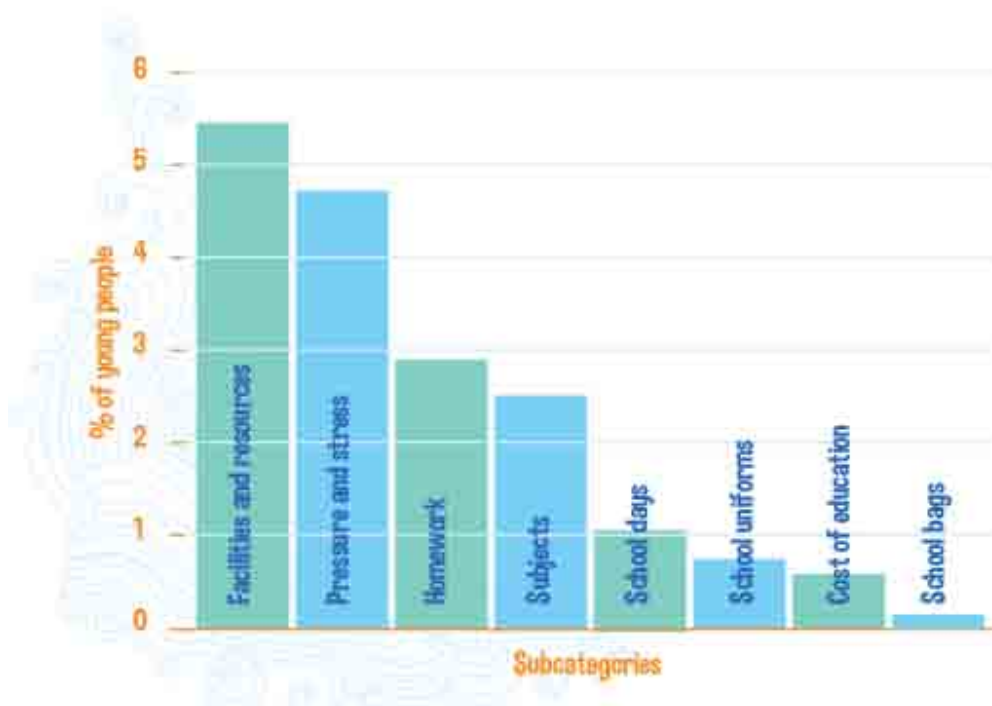
Too expensive in general. [17 year-old boy, 5th year, Dublin]

No jobs when you finish school. High petrol tax, insurance and petrol for cars. Everything is expensive. [16 year-old girl, 5th year, Kildare].

Education

Education is the 2nd most frequent dislike for young people, with 16% not liking some aspect of education in Ireland. There was a range of different responses in relation to education and the subcategories that underpin this category are shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Subcategories young people dislike about education in Ireland



The area of **facilities and resources** was highlighted by over 5% of young people as the top aspect of education that they dislike. Comments included that science and technology facilities were not available or were inadequate, and that generally they do not like facilities in their schools and the lack of classroom facilities.

I dislike the justice system. Change the Leaving Certificate system, it's too difficult. I hate our school facilities, they are terrible, our school is so old and it badly needs funding. Our locker room is an aluminium shed, we have dogs and birds that go in there. It's really bad and freezing in the winter. [16 year-old girl, 5th year, Galway]

If you are not involved in sport, there is little to do. Local libraries are poorly equipped and technology is not in schools. There is no movement for employment for young people. 95% of my year plan to emigrate. [16 year-old girl, 5th year, Kilkenny]

What I don't like is the schools don't have a lot of modern features. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Galway]

Pressure and stress is a dislike for young people. Almost 5% of all second-level participants reported stress and pressure in relation to State exams and the points system for third-level education as things they dislike. They also indicated their dislike for Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations determining their futures.

The Junior and Leaving Cert. Your life should not be based on a few tests. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Dublin]

The education system and the pressure of picking subjects when you haven't tried them, especially before starting 1st year. [16 year-old girl, 4th year, Dublin]

Stigma attached to teenagers. You have to pay to hang out somewhere. Stress of the Leaving Cert (continuous assessment – shouldn't all ride on one exam). [16 year-old girl, 5th year, Cork]

Don't like the fact our Leaving Cert depends on two weeks of exams. Also the fact we've to pay college fees. [15 year-old girl, 4th year, Meath]

Studying for exams because there is too much pressure. Not enough activities to do. [14 year-old boy, 2nd year Wicklow]

Young people indicated dislikes with **homework**. 3% of second-level participants are unhappy with some aspect of homework – from getting homework at all to getting excessive amounts of it, which is time-consuming to complete.

Your life revolves around school and homework. It's all you do. We are sometimes looked down on by adults and aren't allowed to do some things. [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Kerry]

We have to obey our elders and we get homework and it lasts a long time and wastes our time. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Clare]

Nothing to do at all. Very bored. Homework, we get enough work in school and the weather. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Wicklow].

Anti-social behaviour and crime

The 3rd most frequent dislike for young people in Ireland are anti-social behaviour and crime. Almost 9% of young people mentioned that they are unhappy with some aspect of anti-social behaviour, such as illicit drugs, misuse of alcohol, smoking and crime. They feel that **illicit drugs** are too readily available and there is a high level of use among young people.

We are exposed to a lot of crime, drugs and alcohol from a very young age. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Cork]

The easily accessible drink and drugs. I dislike the weather. [17 year-old girl, 2nd year, Mayo]

There are a lot of drugs and gangland criminals in the country. And we get a lot of homework in school. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Kilkenny]

I dislike being a young person in Ireland because of the criminal activities going on around us. Drinking, taking drugs and these are young people. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Cork]

Smoking, including the availability of cigarettes and peer pressure to smoke, and the misuse of **alcohol** are also significant dislikes reported by young people in Ireland.

Some young people smoke and drink and that's one of the things I don't like because the people that smoke and drink tell other people to smoke and drink too. [12 year-old girl, 1st year, Donegal]

The number of young people who smoke is disgraceful. And they should be ashamed of themselves. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Unknown]

Young people smoking. You can get cigarettes easily. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Sligo]

It's a mess. Too many alcoholics hanging around our clubs and they are giving the area a bad name. [13 year-old boy, 2nd year, Dublin]

Many children get drunk often. [14 year-old girl, 3rd year, Louth]

The amount of binge-drinking being done by young people in Ireland. [17 year-old girl, 5th year, Tipperary]

Young people reported disliking the high level of **crime**, theft and murders in their areas and in Ireland generally.

Too much crime in my area. Tragedy has struck in area. [15 year-old boy, 2nd year, Limerick]

Bad to live in Ireland – too much crimes, a lot of violence, too dear to live, animals unsafe and treated badly. [14 year-old boy, 1st year, Dublin]

I hate the crime around my area and there are a lot of shootings in Finglas. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Dublin]

I hate being a young person in Ireland because in some places in Ireland there are fights, murders and drugs. [12 year-old girl, 1st year, Longford]

The worst thing about living in Ireland is the high rate of crime exploding through the years, e.g. drugs, robbery. [17 year-old girl, Youthreach, Wexford]

Weather

The 4th top dislike for young people in Ireland is the weather, with almost 8% of young people not liking it. They reported disliking the weather in general, with some remarking that it is too cold, too wet and not enough sunshine.

The weather would put you in a bad mood. [16 year-old girl, 5th year, Tipperary]

Too much rain. School is like prison. Get too much homework. [16 year-old boy, 3rd year, Westmeath]

The education system is different to other countries and the weather is dreadful. I would love summery summers and snowy winters. [16 year-old girl, 5th year, Unknown]

The weather is a bit depressing. [16 year-old boy, 4th year, Donegal]

The weather is a bit brutal sometimes. [12 year-old boy, 1st year, Unknown].

Additional things young people disliked about living in Ireland

Young people also indicated that driving, rules and discipline, age limits and bullying and peer pressure are things they dislike about living in Ireland. In relation to **driving**, young people mentioned not being able to drive, the legal age for driving and the theory test as some of the things they dislike.

I dislike the way you can't drive until you're 18. [13 year-old boy, 1st year, Offaly]

I dislike being a young person in Ireland as you cannot drive until you are 17 and the price of insurance is very expensive, even though you are probably more likely to be very careful when you are starting to drive. [13 year-old girl, 2nd year, Clare]

We can't drive. [15 year-old boy, 2nd year, Unknown]

Areas of **rules and discipline** that young people mentioned they dislike include being told what to do, not being allowed to do certain things and being bossed around by adults.

Your parents tell you what to do and you have to do it. You're not allowed to leave the house. [12 year-old girl, 1st year, Kildare]

All the rules and regulations about what young people can and can't do. Nobody listens to young people. Minimum wage is less for children. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Cork]

There are lots of rules that we have to follow that we don't like. [13-year-old boy, 2nd year, Dublin]

Young people mentioned a number of different aspects of **age limits** that they disliked, including age restrictions in general, age restrictions on movies, the legal age for voting and for drinking alcohol.

We can't vote. We can't buy 18 and over DVDs and games without parental permission. We can't drive. We can't buy CDs with bad language. [12 year-old boy, 1st year, Clare]

Sometimes you have to be a certain age to do things. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year Galway]

The age limit to go out drinking. [17 year-old boy, 6th year, Dublin]

Young people also dislike **bullying and peer pressure**. In particular, they dislike that bullying occurs, bullying for the person who is being bullied, that people make fun of others and that there is peer pressure on them to smoke, drink alcohol and dress in a certain way.

I dislike all the bullying and peer pressure. I know they're trying to stop bullying, but they're not trying hard enough. It's still leading to a high percentage of people committing suicide and this needs to be worked on in primary school. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Kilkenny]

Peer pressure relating to drinking, smoking, crime, etc. [14 year-old boy, 2nd year, Roscommon]

Some people can bully or make fun of you just by the way you look. Parents can be quite controlling too. [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Dublin]

IF YOU WERE LEADER OF THE COUNTRY, WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU CHANGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

The categories that young people would change in Ireland if given the opportunity are presented in Figure 18 and Table 6. As can be seen, education (aspects of), economy and finances, driving and transport, and places to go are the top 4 things that young people would want to change.

Figure 18: Things that young people would change in Ireland

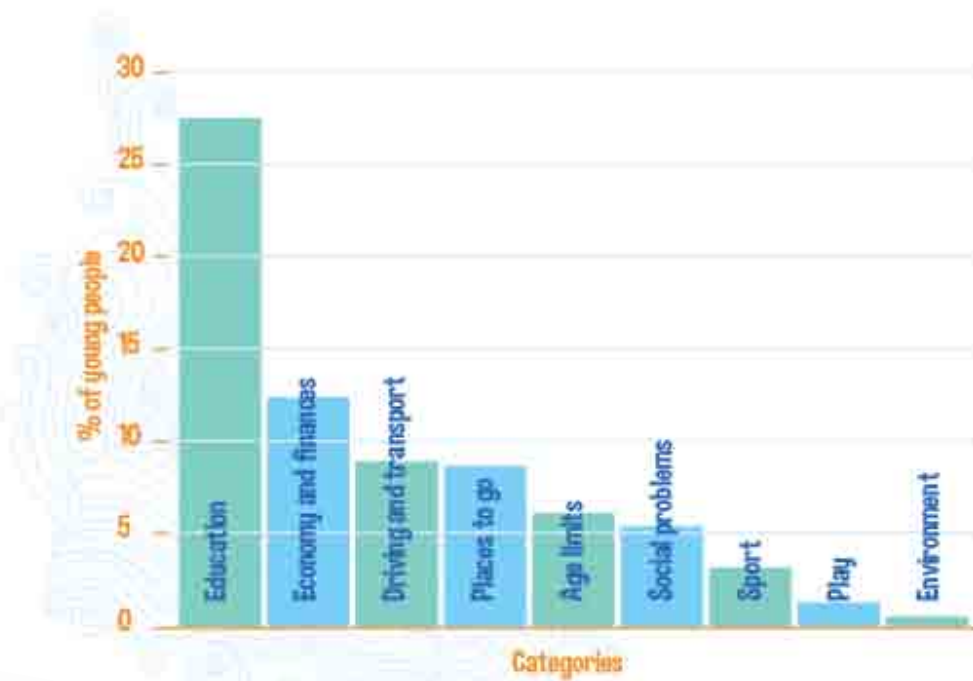


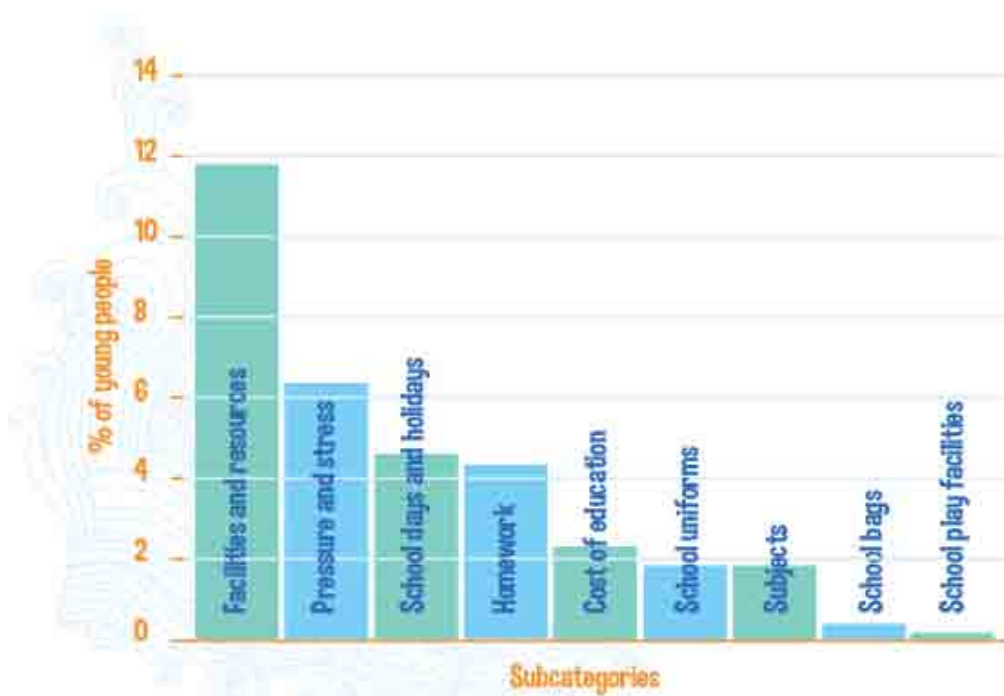
Table 6: Categories that young people would change in Ireland

Category	Secondary	
	n	%
Education	3,405	27.15
Economy and finances	1,561	12.4
Driving and transport	1,115	8.89
Places to go	1,082	8.63
Age limits	773	6.16
Social problems	676	5.39
Sport	404	3.22
Play	158	1.26
Environment	70	0.56
Weather	57	0.45

Education

Education is the top item for change, selected by 27% of young people. A range of different areas that young people would opt to change were mentioned. The subcategories that underpin education are presented in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Subcategories within education that young people would change



The top aspect of education that almost 12% of young people would change are **facilities and resources**. Young people would like to improve the technology in schools, to emphasize the importance of and investing in science facilities and equipment for classrooms, and to increase resources for special education.

More emphasis on science facilities in schools. Less emphasis on religion. More extra-curricular activities for less sporty students. [16 year-old girl, 5th year, Galway]

Better and more technology in schools. [17 year-old boy, 5th year, Wicklow]

I would make resources available in schools. Give children less homework. [13 yr old boy, 1st year, Westmeath]

Give more money to schools to get high-tech technology for students to experience. [17 year-old boy, 5th year, unknown]

Get homeless off the streets. Gay rights – civil marriage ... [with full] rights for children. Fuel costs should come down. Legalise and tax cannabis. Garda violence and respect. More resources for special education. If I was leader, I would legalise civil marriages ... [with full] rights to children. [19 year-old girl, Youthreach, Dublin]

The 2nd most significant area for change within education for second-level participants is school- and exam-related **pressure and stress**. They would like to change the points system for entry into third-level education and the model of State examinations, with continuous assessment suggested as a preferred alternative to reduce pressure and ease stress.

I would change the Leaving Cert so that there is less pressure on students at the end of 6th year. I would do this by introducing continuous assessment. [17 year-old girl, 6th year, Unknown]

I would change the CAO system and the Leaving Cert system. There is too much pressure on students for points. [18 year-old boy, 6th year, Westmeath]

Recession, chance of no jobs after college. Pressure and stress from points system. No jobs, no money. [17 year-old girl, 6th year, Dublin]

Less tests so not under so much pressure. [14 year-old girl, 1st year, Donegal]

I think the school year should be shorter and with continual assessment rather than the pressure of big exams. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Cork]

Young people would also opt to change the structure of the **school day**, week and term, with some participants expressing the need to change school start and end times, shorten the school week and increase school holidays, therefore reducing term time.

I would change the school hours. The school should start at 8 and finish at 1pm or 2pm. [17 year-old girl, 3rd year, Unknown]

School would be earlier so we finish early. Or school hours shorter. [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Leitrim]

School times, as I go to school 9 hours out of the 16 hours I'm awake. I get 3 hours free. [14 year-old boy, 3rd year, Wicklow]

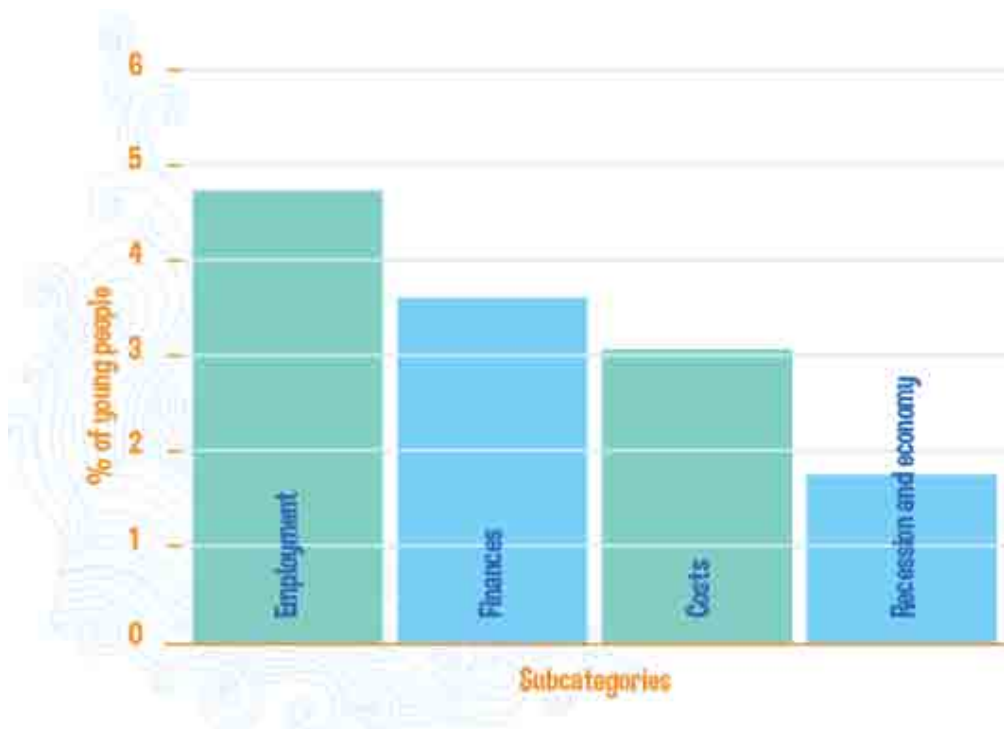
Have less school days, e.g. 3 days of the week. Reduce costs of things. [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Unknown]

Longer school holidays. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Meath]

Economy and finances

The 2nd most significant area for change mentioned by young people is the current economic and financial situation, with over 12% of young people wanting to make changes to improve it. The subcategories that underpin this category are presented in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Subcategories young people would change within economy and finances in Ireland



Employment was the most significant aspect for change mentioned by second-level students with regard to the economy and finances. Almost 5% of young people would make changes to employment to ensure that there are employment opportunities for them when they complete their education.

Let them have more say. Ensure there are enough well-paid jobs available to stop emigration numbers. Make Irish optional. [17 year-old girl, 5th year, Tipperary]

That everyone could go to college and everyone could be guaranteed a job that they want. [17 year-old girl, 5th year, Sligo]

Increase spending on education. Increase child support. Less emphasis on examinations. More employment opportunities for young people. [17 year-old girl, 6th year, Meath]

Make more jobs available for younger people in Ireland, to keep them here as they are the future of Ireland. [17 year-old girl, 6th year, Kildare]

I'd try my best to get the country back on its feet, creating jobs so that they don't have to leave their family and friends to find employment. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Kildare]

Create jobs for people leaving college. [17 year-old boy, 6th year, Westmeath]

Driving and transport

Driving and transport is the 3rd most significant area that young people would change. The topic of driving rules was particularly relevant for young people since the majority of their responses in relation to driving and transport were about the legal driving age. Young people felt the legal driving age needs to be changed and expressed an interest in changing the accessibility and cost of insurance for young people.

That we can drive when 14, go wherever we wanted to, with no questions asked, and go to school whenever they wanted. [14 year-old boy, 2nd year, Wicklow]

I would change the driving age to 16. [16 year-old girl, 4th year, Carlow]

So people can drive at any age they like. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Unknown]

The driving age should be lowered to 16 and insurance should be low for starting drivers. I would also take speed cameras off the road because they are a distraction. [17 year-old boy, 5th year, Cork]

I would take down the price of insurance for young drivers. [16 year-old boy, 5th year, Unknown]

Reduce the cost of third-level education. Reduce the amount of driving lessons needed in order to get a license. Reduce the cost of insurance. Bring drivers, etc. into secondary schools. [16 year-old girl, 4th year, Dublin]

A small number of young people would make changes to aspects of **road safety**, including recommendations to end drink-driving, the provision of more bicycle lanes, speeding and traffic lights.

I would set up more facilities for young people and add more cycling paths. [14 year-old boy, 2nd year, Kilkenny]

I would change the age for drinking as many accidents are caused by drinking and driving. Or else change the driving age. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Cork]

That the driving speed for 18-25 years old is limited to 50mph so there wasn't many accidents. [13 year-old boy, 2nd year, Cork]

Places to go

The 4th area that young people would choose to change are places to go. They report that they would like more places in which to 'hang out' in a safe environment, particularly when the weather is bad.

If I were leader of the country, I would try to create more places where young people can hang out when the weather is bad. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Cork]

Provide more recreational centres and places to hang out for young people. I would also like to be able to vote younger, at 16 maybe. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Meath]

If I were leader, I would put a youth club in every town for something to do, where young people can hang out in a safe environment. [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Meath]

Having places for teenagers to meet up, like clubs, etc. For there to be places where we are given the opportunity to study drama and art and music in a really good way, where we can really learn and get out there and do it. [15 year-old boy, 3rd year, Laois].

Additional things young people would change about living in Ireland

Additional areas young people mentioned they would change in Ireland include age limits, social problems, sports and play. Young people would change **age limits** for voting, the legal age for drinking alcohol and for films and games. In relation to age limits for voting and consuming alcohol, some young people indicated they would reduce the legal age, suggesting 16 as an appropriate age for both voting and drinking alcohol.

Voting age put down to 16. Driving age lowered also. [14 year-old girl, 3rd year, Limerick]

More activities for children, license age goes down, drink age goes down. [14 year-old girl, 2nd year, Unknown]

Young people also indicated they would like to change **social problems** such as illicit drugs, smoking and crime. They mentioned having stricter policies in relation to smoking and drug use, raising awareness of the dangers of both habits, reducing illicit drug use and banning illicit drugs and smoking.

I would change things for the better. I would ban drugs unless they're prescribed. [16 year-old girl, 3rd year, Kildare]

I would make it a lot harder for young people to get their hands on cigarettes. [15 year-old girl, 3rd year, Laois]

Young people would make changes to sports in Ireland, with suggestions for more **sports facilities** and having more sports available for young people all over the country.

Make more sports greens available or activity areas for young people. [14 year-old boy, 1st year, Meath]

More sports. [14 year-old boy, 1st year, Cavan]

Finally, young people indicated changes they would make to **play**, including more time to play and an increase in the availability of play facilities.

Less school, more play. Less exams and more fun and no stress. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Wicklow]

I would make school start earlier (e.g. 8:30am) and make it finish earlier (e.g. 3:30pm). So then you would have more time to go outside and play while it is still light. [13 year-old girl, 1st year, Galway]



SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS



KEY FINDINGS

All children and young people from 2nd Class upwards in primary and second-level education were invited to participate in this consultation. This resulted in one of the largest consultations to date with children and young people, with 66,705 participants completing the questionnaires. The key findings are summarised below.

What is the best thing for *all* participants?

The top 4 likes for all participants are:

- Education – 21% of children and young people (n=13,992)
- Sport – 16% of children and young people (n=10,377)
- Friendships – 14% of children and young people (n=8,469)
- Irish identity – 11% of children and young people (n=7,200)

What is the best thing about being a *child* in Ireland?

The top 4 best things for children are:

- Education – 20% of children (n=10,652)
- Sport – 16% of children (n=8,411)
- Friendships – 14% of children (n=7,490)
- Irish identity – 11% of children (n=6,215)

What do you think is good about being a *young person* in Ireland?

The top 4 things that are good for young people were similar but not identical to children. They are:

- Education – 27% of young people (n=3,340)
- Sport – 16% of young people (n=1,966)
- Activities – 10% of young people (n=1,236)
- Not having responsibilities – 9% of young people (n=1,173)

What is the worst thing for *all* participants?

The top 4 dislikes or worst for all participants are:

- Economy and finances – 23% of children and young people (n=15,496)
- The weather – 16% of children and young people (n=10,766)
- Education – 14% of children and young people (n=9,338)
- Anti-social behaviour and crime – 10% of children and young people (n=6,892)

What is the worst thing for *children*?

The top 4 worst things for children are:

- Economy and finances – 24% of children (n=13,150)
- The weather – 18% of children (n=9,794)
- Education – 14% of primary school children (n=7,327)
- Anti-social behaviour and crime – 11% of children (n=5,777)

What do *young people* dislike the most?

The top 4 dislikes for young people are:

- Economy and finances – 19% of young people (n=2,346) feel that the economy and finances are one of the worst things about living in Ireland
- Education – 16% of second-level young people (n=2,011) are dissatisfied with system
- Anti-social behaviour and crime – 9% of young people (n=1,115)
- The weather – 8% of young people (n=972)



What would *children and young people* change in Ireland?

The top 4 changes for all participants are:

- Education – 23% of children and young people (n=15,323)
- Economy and finances – 17% of children and young people (n=11,445)
- Social problems – 9% of children and young people (n=6,113)
- Places to go – 7% of children and young people (n=4,833)

What one thing would *children* change in Ireland for children to be happy?

The top 4 changes for children are:

- Education – 22% of children (n= 11,918)
- Economy and finances – 18% of children (n=9,884)
- Social problems – 10% of children (n=5,437)
- Play – 8% of children (n=4,202)

If you were leader of the country, what one thing would *young people* change for young people in Ireland?

The top 4 changes for young people are:

- Education – 27% of young people (n=3,405)
- Economy and finances – 12% of young people (n=1,561)
- Driving and transport – 9% of young people (n=1,115)
- Places to go – 9% of young people (n=1,082)

OVERVIEW OF KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Both children and young people said that **education** is the best thing about living in Ireland. Children noted that there were good schools, schooling is free and everybody can go to school. Young people noted that education is a right, it is free and the standard is really good. However, there were aspects to the education system that they disliked and would like to change. Children suggested changes such as: have less homework; make days at school shorter and holidays longer; have less pupils in classroom; have more equipment for sports and art; put more money into teaching science and have science labs; and have more computers in school. Young people suggested changes such as: have better school facilities and resources; have bigger classrooms; change the points and exam system; use more continuous assessment; reduce high costs of books and uniforms; and spend less time in school.
- Both children and young people chose **sport** as the 2nd best thing about living in Ireland. Children noted that there were different sports available; variety of sports played; gives you a break from school and work; and good sports facilities in Ireland. Young people noted that there were different sports available; lots of places to play sports; and lots of sports to watch. However, at the same time, there were aspects to sports that they would like to change. Children suggested changes such as: have more playgrounds; have playgrounds suited for older children; have monkey bars, swings and slides in schools; increased security in existing playgrounds to prevent vandalism; and have more time for play. Young people suggested changes such as: have more places to hang out in a safe environment; more youth clubs and cafés; more adventure and skateboard parks; air-soft ranges and paintball facilities; and more fun places to go.
- For children, the other two best things about being a child in Ireland are friendships and Irish identity (such as being Irish, Irish sports, culture and traditions). The other things children liked were play, places to go, activities, not having to worry about things, food, family and fun. For young people, the other two top good things are activities (hobbies, pastimes) and not having the worries or responsibilities which their parents have to deal with (such as managing money and paying bills). The other things that were good for young people were being Irish, friendships, places to go, play, food and relationship with family.

- For both children and young people, the worst thing is the **recession and current financial situation** in Ireland. Clearly, many were worried about the effect of the recession on their families' financial situation and their future job prospects. Children noted that there is no money in the country, people are not happy, children will have to pay back banks when they grow up, parents are worried about losing jobs and having less money, everything is more expensive, and they themselves may not be able to get a job and earn money when they leave school. Young people noted that the country is in a recession, economy is going downwards, there are no jobs and the high cost of living. Children suggested changes such as: end the recession; have more jobs available so people do not have to leave the country; have better wages; and reduce price of food and services. Young people suggested similar changes, such as: end the recession; have more jobs available to stop emigration; guarantee people a job after college; and reduce the cost of living.
- For children, the other worst things about being a child in Ireland are the **weather and bad behaviour and crime**. Children disliked the cold wet weather, lack of sunshine, heavy snow and that they cannot go outside to play when the weather is bad. They also disliked bullying, rules, littering, people drink-driving, and having to wait until 18 to vote, drink and see certain films. Young people said they disliked anti-social behaviour and the weather. They also disliked rules and discipline, bullying and peer pressure, littering, rules about driving, and having to wait until 18 to vote, drink and see certain films. Young people suggested changes such as: lower the legal driving age to 16; reduce price of insurance; end drink-driving; have more bicycle lanes; and lower the speed limit for young drivers.
- In relation to **anti-social behaviour and crime**, children noted that there was a high level of crime, criminals are mean, risk of kidnapping, vandalism and graffiti in parks, level of violence, young people smoking and illicit drug use. Young people disliked anti-social behaviour, illegal drugs, availability of cigarettes, peer pressure to smoke, binge-drinking and high levels of crime. Children suggested changes to bad behaviour and crime as their third top change, with suggestions such as: stop all crime; have more guards; have no drugs; ban smoking completely; stop teenagers drinking and smoking; and give large fines to people who sell drink to underage children. Young people wanted to see a reduction in the level of crime and the availability of cigarettes and drugs, with more penalties for possession of drugs.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER STUDIES IN IRELAND

It is important to note that the questionnaires were qualitative, with open-ended questions and no predefined categories. Hence children and young people were given the opportunity to highlight their likes, dislikes and suggested areas for change with no restriction on topics. Despite the fact that participants could choose any aspect of life in Ireland, the core categories that emerged were similar to the findings which resulted from direct questions put to children on topics such as education and social issues in the *Growing Up in Ireland* national longitudinal study (Williams *et al*, 2009) and the *State of the Nation's Children* report (OMCYA, 2010).

Family and friends

Family relationships and friendships were common likes for children and young people in the present consultation. Similar aspects of life were reported as significant for children and young people when asked about relationships with their parents and their peers in 2006 (OMCYA, 2010). But it was also evident in the present consultation, indirectly from other responses, that participants were concerned about their parents struggling financially, family members emigrating and the adverse impact on the health and well-being of family members, particularly parents.

Education

The education system in Ireland is a broad and complex system comprised of many different elements. Therefore, it is understandable that education featured in the likes, dislikes and areas for change raised by children and young people in the present consultation. Similar to findings from

the earlier consultation on the National Children's Strategy conducted with 2,488 children in 1999 (Department of Health and Children, 2000a), education was one of the best things for children and young people in Ireland. Similar results were also reported by Comiskey *et al* (2011) in a study of over 600 children attending designated urban disadvantaged primary schools. In this study, both parents and children rated the school environment above international normal levels as measured by the Kidscreen 27 questionnaire (KIDSCREEN Group Europe, 2006). In the 2011 consultation with young people on reform of the Junior Cycle, good teachers, positive feedback and encouragement from family and friends were central to education (Roe, 2011). Participants in the present consultation were satisfied with the education system and felt that they were receiving a good education, while also stating that having the right to free education was important for them.

While children thought that these aspects of the education system were good, the scope of the education topic is so wide and varied that there were also aspects which participants were not happy with. As a result of this, education was also a popular area for change suggested by children and young people. Within education, children and young people suggested changes to the provision of facilities and resources. School Principals also report that certain facilities, such as number of classrooms, sports facilities and play facilities, are sometimes inadequate (Williams *et al*, 2009).

In the 10 years since the first public consultation for the National Children's Strategy 2000-2010 (Department of Health and Children, 2000a), school exam pressure and stress remains an area which young people are unhappy with and feel change is necessary. Young people involved in the 2011 consultation on reform of the Junior Cycle identified the Junior Certificate exam as a negative form of assessment, which caused undue pressure and stress for students (Roe, 2011). Young people continue to report concerns about State examinations and the points system for entry into third-level education, suggesting continuous assessment may be a more appropriate and fair method of assessment. Similarly, the majority of participants in the consultation on Junior Cycle reform agreed that continuous assessment was a preferable form of assessment. However, some young people believed that this method of assessment was not favourable since it would put young people under pressure and cause stress, and would also detract from the importance of exams (Roe, 2011).

Homework was an area within education that children and young people were also unhappy with and felt change was needed. Participants felt the amount of homework and the length of time required to do it was excessive after a 'long day' in school. It is possible that the level of homework assigned to children and young people requires review given young people highlighted that doing homework dominated their evenings and affected the amount of free time they had for socialising and participating in other extra-curricular activities (McEvoy, 2008). More recently, parents from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study raised homework as an issue, reporting that the time their children spent doing homework was more than teachers expected (Williams *et al*, 2009).

Economy and finances

From the present consultation, it is evident that children and young people have concerns regarding the recession and economy. The level of awareness among young people and particularly children in relation to the recession and financial problems faced by parents is of note. Children and young people were anxious about their families struggling to pay bills and their parents' employment situation. Although children were not happy with the level of discussion around the recession at home, they were also unhappy with the excessive media coverage of topics relating to the recession. Article 17 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

The state has an obligation to ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of media sources and to take measures to protect children from harmful materials.

Given the level of responses about anxiety and stress from children in relation to the recession, it is possible that the information and material they have access to through the media could be influencing their emotional health and well-being. This highlights the need to strike a balance between protection and participation. While it is important to inform and listen to children and young people, there is also a moral obligation to protect their emotional health and well-being.

The economic climate in which the consultations in 1999 and 2011 were conducted are arguably worlds apart and while some of the issues are similar, overall there is a significant change in children and young people's views on living in Ireland. The initial public consultation in 1999 was carried out in the 'Celtic Tiger' era, when Ireland was a prosperous country with unlimited opportunities and future prospects for children and young people. As a result of the current economic situation, Ireland is no longer flourishing. Children and young people feel there is a lack of opportunities, which will result in difficulty gaining employment when they have completed their education. Their comments indicated concern about the cost of education – everything from the re-introduction of third-level fees to the financial burden on parents in relation to school books and uniforms. The fact that many children and young people are aware of and worried about the recession and the financial burden on their families may explain why they reported being happy that they do not have to bear financial responsibility. There were many comments regarding emigration, future job prospects, family working abroad and financial strain on families. The comments suggest that the sense of optimism exuded by children and young people in the first public consultation (1999) has been replaced with a sense of pessimism about what the future holds for them and their families. Travel and working abroad were once exciting opportunities for the children and young people of Ireland; now emigration is viewed as a necessity in order to fulfil their ambitions.

Social problems

Children and young people raised concerns regarding a range of social problems in Ireland. Participants were unhappy with social problems and wanted to make changes to improve issues such as crime, homelessness, illicit drugs, graffiti, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Some of these social problems were similar to the issues of concern raised by children and young people in the first public consultation (1999). That report by the Department of Health and Children (2000a) highlighted early drinking as a social issue that children and young people expressed concerns about. However, during the present consultation, some children and young people were interested in lowering the legal age for alcohol consumption, which contradicts the health promotion strategies to reduce underage alcohol use in Europe (Council of the European Union, 2001, cited by Department of Health and Children, 2002). This interest in lowering the legal age limit for alcohol is supported by the findings of the 2008 consultation with 252 teenagers on their views on solutions to alcohol misuse. McEvoy (2008) found that the majority of young people would opt to lower the legal drinking age for alcohol to the age of 16+ years and would support the introduction of a safe limit drinking policy.

The major social concern among children and young people regarding drug use is consistent with the findings of the Department of Health and Children (2000a), where participants revealed their fears about the availability of illicit drugs for children and young people.

Again, similar to the findings of the Department of Health and Children (2000a), personal safety is topical for children and young people in the present consultation, with the main concerns centring around safety while out on the street and while in parks.

Social outlets

Participants drew attention to the vast array of social outlets available to them in the form of activities, places to go, sports, play and play facilities. In contrast to the public consultation in 1999, when a small number of young people spoke positively about social outlets in their area (Department of Health and Children, 2000a), 7% of participants in the present consultation were positive about the social outlets available to them. It is important to note that social outlets appeared in the likes, dislikes and changes categories by participants. During the public consultation in 1999, children drew attention to a major deficit in the number of playgrounds in Ireland. The need for more playgrounds continues to be an issue for children and they also express concern about damaged playground equipment and security issues in playgrounds. Many participants noted the abundance of activities, some sports such as soccer and basketball, and sports facilities in some areas; however, they also reported a deficit in facilities for new sports and activities, such as air-soft ranges and skateboard parks.

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The Best things about
being a child in Ireland...

Wild life

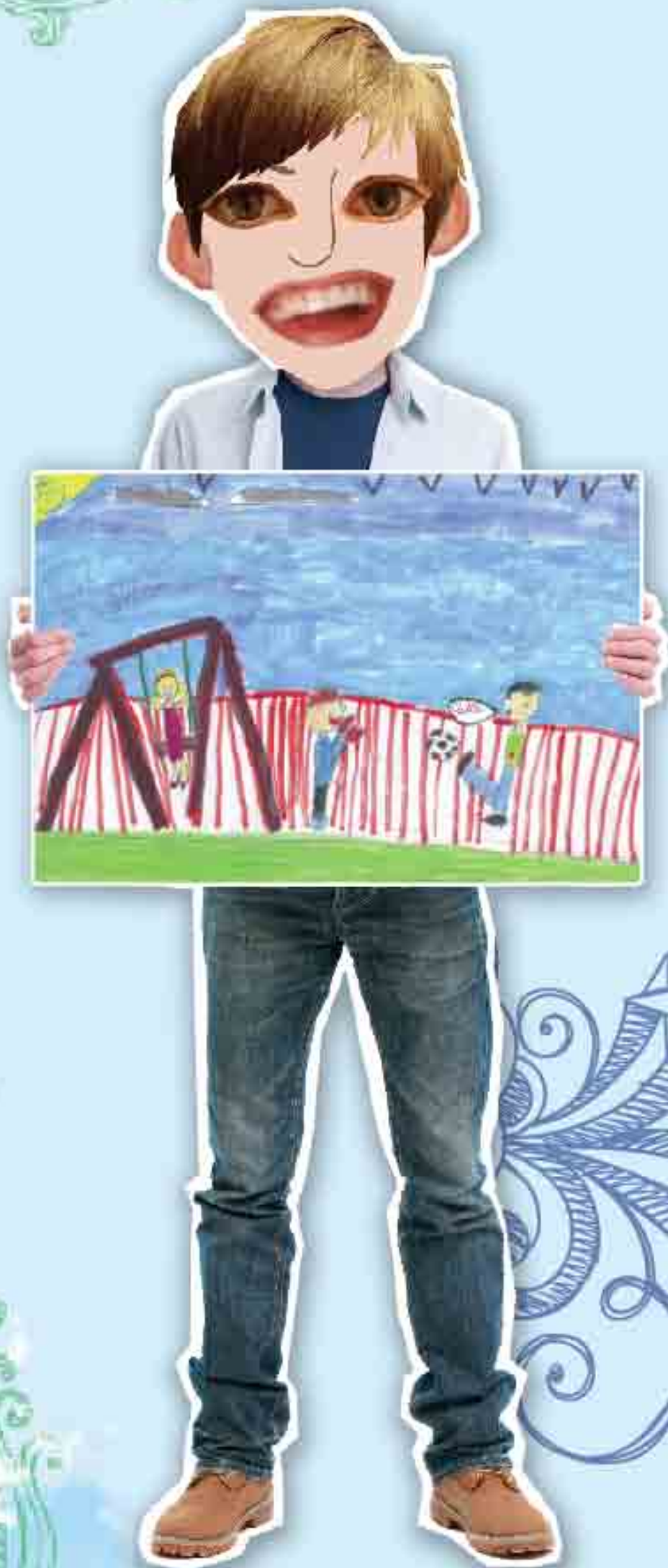


Books



Fresh air





APPENDICES



NO
WHERE
TO GO

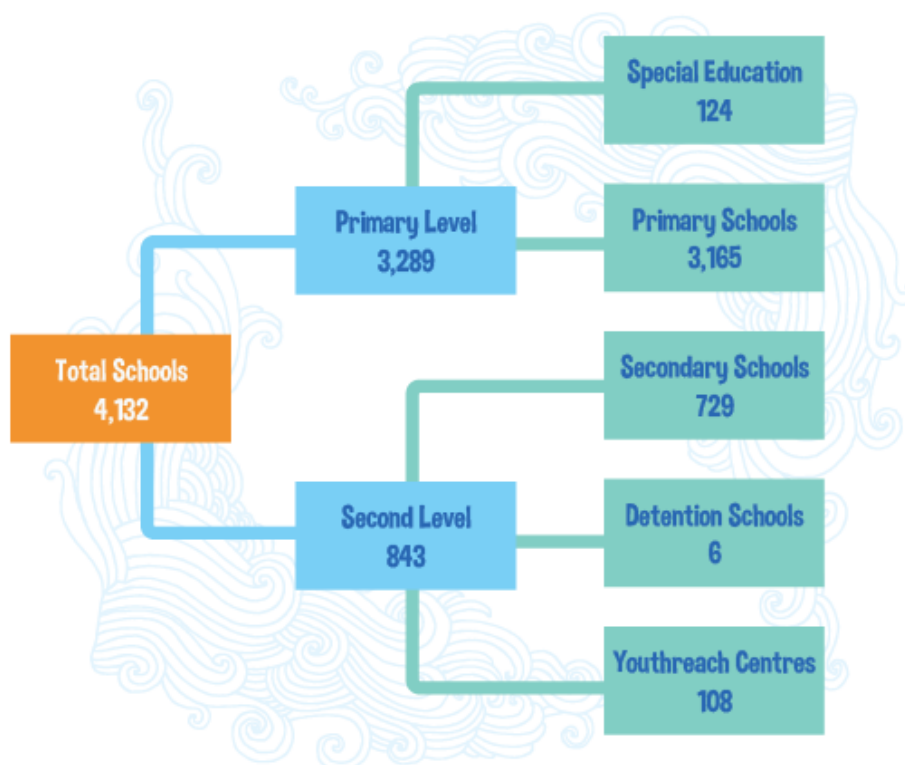


WALKIES

APPENDIX 1: MEMBERS OF THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION 2011

Anne O'Donnell	Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
Olive McGovern	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Anne-Marie Brooks	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Emma Bradley	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Liz Harper	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Deirdre Phelan	Student Council Co-ordinator
Orla Murray	Primary Teacher, Loreto Junior Primary School, Dublin 12
James Malseed	Deputy Principal, Kill O' the Grange Primary School
Kathryn Moore	Post-Primary Teacher, St. Dominic's College, Cabra, Dublin 7
Joanne Byrne	Primary Teacher, Kilmeade Primary School, Athy
Frank Hayes	Primary Teacher, Scoil Íosagain, Crumlin, Dublin 12
Maire Igoe	Children Services Unit, Dublin City Council
Theresa Ryan	Department of Education and Skills
Clive Byrne	Director, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
Sean Cottrell	Director, Irish Primary Principals Network
John Williams	Irish Primary Principals Network
Imelda Coyne	Trinity College Dublin (TCD) consultation team
Catherine Comiskey	Trinity College Dublin (TCD) consultation team
Orla Dempsey	Trinity College Dublin (TCD) consultation team
Mary Killeen	National Parents' Council – Primary
Tommy Walsh	President, National Parents' Council – Post-Primary
Nadine McCabe	DCYA Children and Young People's Forum
Craig Byrne	DCYA Children and Young People's Forum
Ali Jack	DCYA Children and Young People's Forum
Roisin Giblin	DCYA Children and Young People's Forum
Eimhin Boland	DCYA Children and Young People's Forum
Judith Sleator	Student, Loreto Junior Primary School, Dublin 12

APPENDIX 2: STRUCTURE OF THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM



Primary education system

The primary education system can be further categorised into mainstream education, Special Needs education and private schools. All Special Needs education schools are under primary administration; however, these schools also cater for second-level students. The largest group is made up of mainstream schools, which consists of 3,165 schools. Mainstream primary schools also cater for pupils with some learning difficulties, such as mild speech and language difficulties, mild social or emotional difficulties, and mild attention control difficulties related to attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Citizens Information, 2011a).

The Special Needs education system consists of 124 schools providing education services for children with conditions such as autism, dyslexia and hearing impairment. This group also includes hospital schools, which provide education and support with homework for children staying in hospital.

Second-level education system

Mainstream second-level schools can be further classified as secondary, vocational and community, and comprehensive schools. The largest group is made up of 383 secondary schools, followed by 254 vocational schools and 92 community and comprehensive schools. Youthreach programmes provide basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience for 15-20 year-olds who have left school with no formal education (Citizens Information, 2011b). The 6 detention schools in Ireland cater for children and young people aged 12-21 years (Citizens Information, 2010).

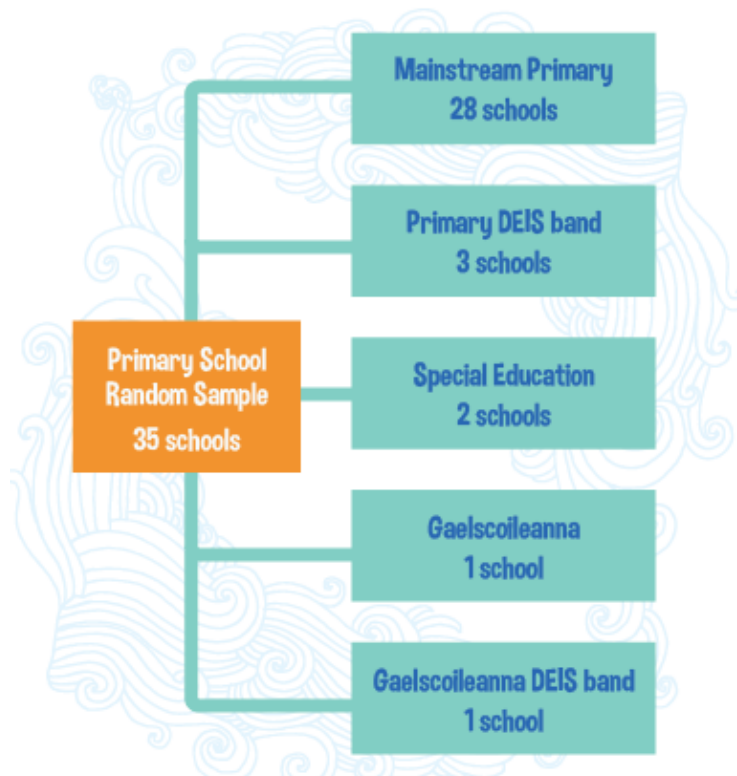
APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE SIZE

The proportions of primary and second-level schools for the consultation were decided based on the numbers of the ratio of the total population of students enrolled in primary and second-level education. The initial numbers were not based on the number of schools at each level since the number of primary institutions is significantly higher than those at second-level; however, some second-level schools would have a large student population and could have several primary schools in an area feeding into them. A minimum criterion of at least one school from each school subgroup to be included was set and adhered to. This ensured that subgroups, such as detention schools which account for a small proportion of schools, were included in the random sample.

Primary school random sample size

The primary school random sample was stratified to include mainstream primary schools, designated Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) band primary schools, special education and hospital schools, primary Gaelscoileanna and primary DEIS band Gaelscoileanna. The proportion of sample schools allocated to each school group was based on the percentage of the total number of schools that each school type accounted for. The number of each primary school type included in the primary school random sample can be seen in Figure A3-1.

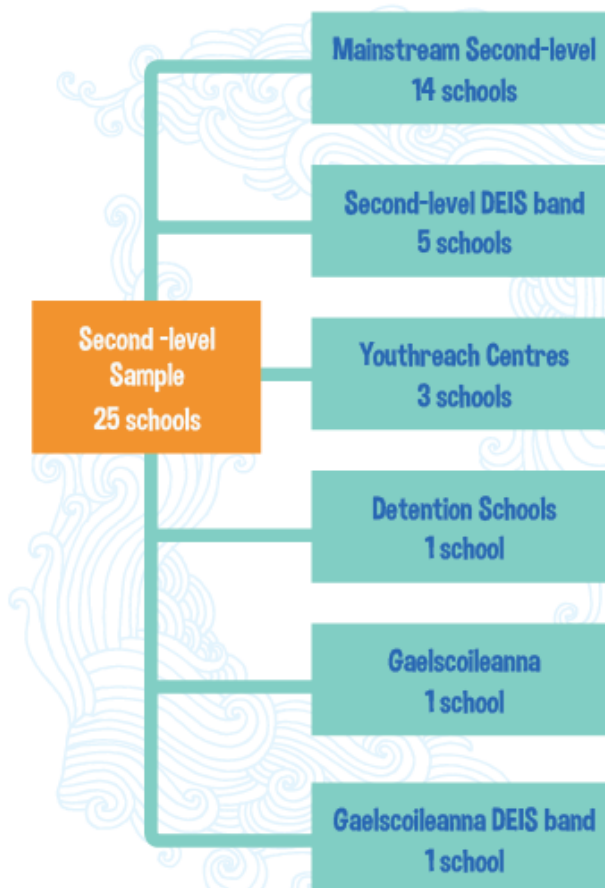
Figure A3-1: Structure of the Irish primary school system and sample school numbers



Second-level random sample size

The second-level random sample was stratified to include mainstream second-level schools, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) band second-level schools, detention schools, Youthreach centres, second-level Gaelscoileanna and second-level DEIS band Gaelscoileanna. The proportion of second-level sample schools allocated to each school type was based on the percentage of the overall number of schools that each school accounted for. The number of schools from each second-level school subgroup included in the second-level random sample can be seen in Figure A3-2.

Figure A3-2: Structure of the Irish second-level school system and sample school numbers



APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE SCHOOL SELECTION

The list of school names in the first subgroup (i.e. mainstream primary schools) was pasted into the first column of a MS Excel spreadsheet. In the second column, MS Excel's randomise function was used to assign every school in the subgroup a random number. The two columns were then sorted in ascending order of the random number, using the 'Sort' command. Every school from the MS Excel row number of the subgroup sample size up to the top row was part of the sample. This process was repeated for each subgroup list to form the primary and second-level random samples.



APPENDIX 5: PUBLICITY AND PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY FOR NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION 2011

Launch management

Action	Responsibility	Date (2011)
Venue	DCYA	15 March
Photographer	DCYA	21 March
Refreshments	DCYA	21 March
Children for launch: Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg, schools involved in pilot, DCYA Children and Young People's Forum	DCYA	15 March
Media	DCYA	
Event management	DCYA	

Publicity

Action	Responsibility	Date (2011)
RTÉ News2day and other children's programmes	DCYA	15 March
Advance press notice of event to national and regional news desks	DCYA	15 March
Seek key radio interview slots	DCYA	Week of 21 March
Seek key newspaper feature and supplements slots	DCYA	Week of 21 March
All 34 Comhairle na nÓg asked to generate local publicity	DCYA	15 March
Press release to all 34 Comhairle na nÓg	DCYA	25 March
Press release to all organisations on Consultation Oversight Committee for issue to members and on websites	DCYA	25 March
Press release to national and regional news desks	DCYA	28 March

Promotion

Action	Responsibility	Date (2011)
Distribution of posters to all 34 Comhairle na nÓg	DCYA	24 March
Distribution of posters to all 4,300 schools	DCYA/TCD	24 March
Distribution of posters to Teacher Education Centres	TCD	24 March
Distribution of posters to Youthreach centres, via national co-ordinator	TCD	24 March
Translation and distribution of Irish versions of letter, forms, guidelines and poster to Gaelscoileanna	TCD/DCYA	24 March
Distribution of Ambassador stickers to 34 Comhairle na nÓg	DCYA	24 March
IPPEN website (Irish Primary Principals Network)	IPPEN	16 March
NAPD website (National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals)	NAPD	16 March
ASTI website	TCD	16 March
TUI website	TCD	16 March
INTO website	TCD	16 March
Primary Times	TCD	16 March

Scoilnet	TCD	16 March
Skool.ie	TCD	16 March
Schooldays.ie	TCD	16 March
Gaelscoileanna.ie	TCD	16 March
USS.ie	TCD	16 March
Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)	TCD	16 March
Reminder text to Principals on Wednesday, 6th April	IPPN/NAPD	6 April
Contact Department of Environment about asking all public libraries via City and County Managers to download poster from website for public display	DCYA	16 March
Contact student unions in St. Patrick's College and Church of Ireland College of Education re. students using consultation as lesson plan during teaching practice	TCD	16 March
Facebook page	TCD	Week of 21 March
Twitter page	TCD	Week of 21 March



APPENDIX 6: MATERIALS INCLUDED IN CONSULTATION PACK

National
Children's
Strategy
2012-2017



Consultation with children and young people on the new National Children's Strategy (2012-2017)

National Children's Strategy Consultation Week: Monday, 4th – Friday, 8th April 2011

April 2011

Dear Principal,

Work has commenced in the Department of Children on the development of a new National Children's Strategy. As Minister for Children, I want to know the issues of real importance to children and young people all over the country to feed into the new strategy.

Children and young people are invited to complete questionnaires in all schools and Youthreach Centres throughout the country from Monday, 4th April – Friday, 8th April 2011.

The questionnaires contain questions about what's good, what's not good and what they would change about being a child or a young person in Ireland today. These questions were developed by children and young people themselves at consultations conducted by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs during 2010.

A research team from Trinity College, Dublin (TCD) has been contracted to manage and run the national consultation in cooperation with my Department. All consultation data will be analysed by the TCD research team and fed into the development of the new National Children's Strategy. A report of the children's consultation process will be published online later this year.

I would be delighted if your school would participate in this very important consultation process. Please find enclosed copies of the questionnaires and a set of guidelines to assist teachers in explaining to students the purpose of the exercise. In order to take part in the consultation:

- Please distribute the questionnaires to any or all classes (from 2nd class upwards at primary level) in your school.
- Please feel free to photocopy the questionnaires for all students in your school.
- Please return completed questionnaires in the enclosed return addressed envelope by Friday, 8th April.

Information provided during the course of the consultation process will be treated in the strictest confidence and every questionnaire will be coded to ensure the anonymity of the school and the student.





If you have any queries about the questionnaires, please feel free to contact Dr. Drla Dempsey, Trinity College, Dublin, Tel: (01) 896 4155.

I look forward to discovering the views of children and young people on the issues of importance to them in Ireland in 2011 and thus to informing our new National Children's Strategy for the next 5 years.

Yours sincerely,

Frances Fitzgerald, TD
Minister for Children





Guidelines for Primary School Teachers on introducing consultation questions for children and young people on new National Children's Strategy

Background

The first National Children's Strategy (2000-2010) states that 'children will have a voice in matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'. The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (DMCYA) is developing a new National Children's Strategy (2012-2017) and children and young people are being asked to give their views on the enclosed templates.

How this consultation is being carried out

Two sets of questions have been developed – one set for younger children (aged 8-12) and one for teenagers (aged 13-17). The questions have been developed in consultation with young people. **Every school in the country will be sent copies of the template pads so that all children and young people have the opportunity to participate.** All the templates will be filled in during the same week and sent back to a team of consultants, who will analyse and report on the data.

Children are free to opt out of this consultation

Children and young people are invited to participate. They can, however, opt out of the activity without giving a reason. This is not a test and participation is voluntary.

Links with curriculum

This exercise can be used as a lesson plan for a SPHE class. The strand is 'Myself and the Wider World' and the strand unit is 'Developing Citizenship'.

Confidentiality

It is important that children have the opportunity to give their own views and that they know how the information will be used. The templates ask for such information as their age, gender and county of residence, but not their names. This information is needed to ensure that the consultation reaches a good spread of ages, achieves a gender balance and accesses the views of children living in both urban and rural areas. Please stress to participants that **there are no 'right' answers and that each person should fill in the template with their own opinions.**


Brainstorming may be useful

You might encourage children to 'brainstorm' each question, using one key word for each brainstorm and writing their responses on the board. Children could then copy down the words that they feel are relevant to them.

Feedback to children and young people

All of the information will be analysed and fed into the development of the new National Children's Strategy. The views of the children and young people will form the basis of a special report, which will be published separately and will be available online. Please encourage participants to draw a picture on the back of their templates; some of these may be used in the report.

Thank you for your help



Checklist for filling in templates

Please

- ★ Ensure that the **demographic section** (*box at top right of template*) is completed. In the pilot test, the way this worked best was when the whole class did it together and did it first.
- ★ Encourage children and young people to **think for a moment before** they start writing to make sure that the most important things to them are what they write about.
- ★ Mention that we do not need perfect spelling or grammar. This is **not a test**: children and young people are being invited to participate, not told that they have to, and their participation is voluntary. What we need is to be able to read the material and understand their input.
- ★ Stress that **there are no right or wrong answers**. We are only interested in the views of children and young people on the questions.
- ★ Underline the fact that this consultation is going to **every school** in the country.
- ★ Explain that the information coming back will be analysed and form the basis of a **special report**, which will be published separately and will be available online.
- ★ Make it clear that **all of the ideas and answers will be read and analysed**. If the same idea comes up from different people, it will be included in the report. We cannot promise that these ideas will be implemented. However, it is really important that the policy-makers *know* about the opinions of children and young people.
- ★ Point out that they do **not need to give their names** – the information is confidential and therefore nobody will know who said what.



Consultation on the

National
Children's
Strategy

2012-2017



Guidelines for Second-level Teachers on introducing consultation questions for young people on new National Children's Strategy

Background

The first National Children's Strategy (2000-2010) states that '*children will have a voice in matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity*'. The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) is developing a new National Children's Strategy (2012-2017) and children and young people are being asked to give their views on the enclosed templates.

How this consultation is being carried out

Two sets of questions have been developed – one set for teenagers (aged 13-17) and one for younger children (aged 8-12). The questions have been developed in consultation with young people. **Every school in the country will be sent copies of the template pads so that all children and young people have the opportunity to participate.** All the templates will be filled in during the same week and sent back to a team of consultants, who will analyse and report on the data.

Young people are free to opt out of this consultation

Young people are invited to participate. They can, however, opt out of the activity without giving a reason. This is *not* a test and participation is voluntary.


Confidentiality

It is important that young people have the opportunity to give their own views and that they know how the information will be used. The templates ask for such information as their age, gender and county of residence, but not their names. This information is needed to ensure that the consultation reaches a good spread of ages, achieves a gender balance and accesses the views of young people living in both urban and rural areas. Please stress to participants that **there are no 'right' answers and that each person should fill in the template with their own opinions**.

Feedback to children and young people

All of the information will be analysed and fed into the development of the new National Children's Strategy. The views of the children and young people will form the basis of a special report, which will be published separately and will be available online.

Please
Turn over
for more



The Wider World

The State - Ireland

The Community

The Individual & Citizenship
Rights / Responsibilities

Local Community Development

Democratic Systems, Structures & Institutions

Interdependence of International Groupings World Development Issues

Suggestion for links to CSPE curriculum
As illustrated left:

- ★ Young people are being asked for their opinions at the level of the individual and as citizens.
- ★ The consultation is taking place at the level of their communities (schools).
- ★ The Government (State) is developing the new National Children's Strategy through the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA).
- ★ The wider world context is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The right to participation states, 'Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. Participation rights include the right to express opinions and be heard, the right to information and freedom of association'.

Thank You for your help.

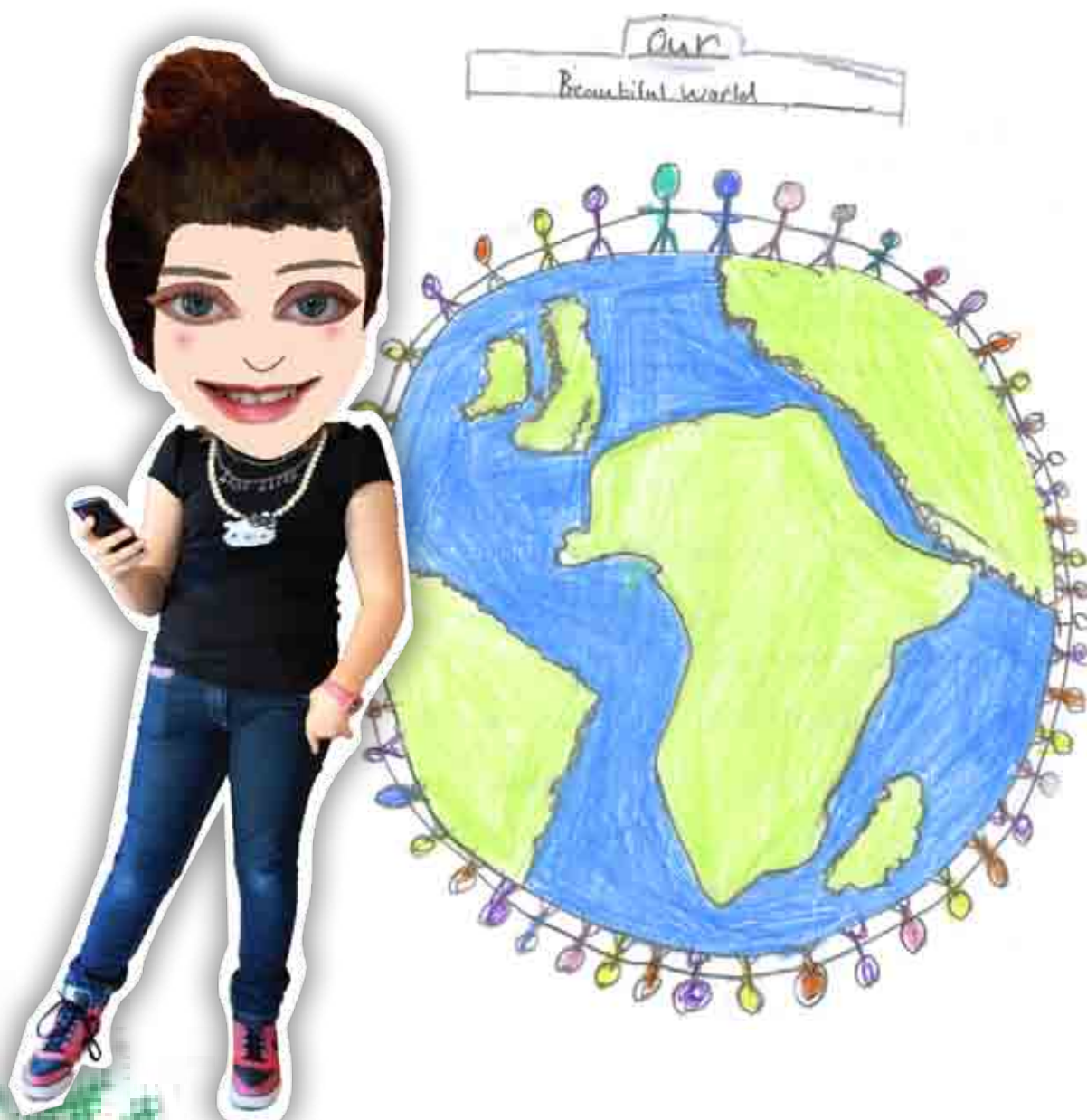
Please Checklist for filling in templates

- ★ Ensure that the **demographic section** (box at top right of template) is completed. In the pilot test, the way this worked best was when the whole class did it together and did it first.
- ★ Encourage young people to **think for a moment before** they start writing to make sure that the most important things to them are what they write about.
- ★ Mention that we do not need perfect spelling or grammar. This is **not a test**: young people are being invited to participate, not told that they have to, and their participation is voluntary. What we need is to be able to read the material and understand their input.
- ★ Stress that **there are no right or wrong answers**. We are only interested in young people's views on the questions.
- ★ Underline the fact that this consultation is going to **every school** in the country.
- ★ Explain that the information coming back will be analysed and form the basis of a **special report**, which will be published separately and will be available online.
- ★ Make it clear that **all of the ideas and answers will be read and analysed**. If the same idea comes up from different people, it will be included in the report. We cannot promise that these ideas will be implemented. However, it is really important that the policy-makers *know* about the opinions of children and young people.
- ★ Point out that they do **not need to give their names** – the information is confidential and therefore nobody will know who said what.

Many Thanks

APPENDIX 7: RESPONSE RATES FOR TARGET SAMPLE SCHOOLS

		Completed		Incomplete				Total	
				Response		No response			
Group	Subgroup	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Primary schools	Mainstream	18	30.0	3	5	7	11.6	28	46.6
	DEIS Band	3	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	5.0
	Gaelscoileanna	1	1.7	1	1.7	0	0.0	2	3.4
	Special Education	2	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.3
Secondary schools	Mainstream	9	15.0	2	3.3	3	5.0	14	23.3
	DEIS Band	3	5.0	1	1.7	1	1.7	5	8.4
	Youthreach centres	2	3.3	1	1.7	0	0.0	3	5.0
	Detention	1	1.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.7
	Gaelscoileanna	2	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.3
Total	All sample schools	41	68.3	8	13.3	11	18.3	60	100



APPENDIX 8: AGE PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION 2011

Age group	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
4-6 years*	83	0.26	96	0.28	179	0.27
7-9 years	9,108	29.01	10,719	31.09	19,827	30.07
10-12 years	15,978	50.89	17,360	50.36	33,338	50.52
13-15 years	4,700	14.97	4,742	13.76	9,442	14.36
16-18 years	1,434	4.57	1,492	4.33	2,926	4.53
19-21 years*	89	0.28	62	0.18	151	0.23
22-23 years*	3	0.01	3	0.01	6	0.01

* The age groups listed in Column 1 were the inclusion criteria given in the letters and guidelines distributed to schools. However, since some schools thought the questionnaires were attractive, they decided to distribute them to all students and it was agreed at a DCYA meeting that all completed forms should be included. However, it is not technically correct to say we accessed all children and young people aged 4-23 since most of the schools did follow the brief given and there is only a very small number included outside of this specific criterion.



APPENDIX 9: SCHOOL CLASS AND YEAR PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION 2011

Class	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
2nd Class	3,962	12.65	4,259	12.34	8,221	12.49
3rd Class	4,649	14.84	5,424	15.71	10,073	15.3
4th Class	5,258	16.79	6,051	17.53	11,309	17.18
5th Class	5,572	17.79	6,251	18.11	11,823	17.96
6th Class	5,620	17.94	5,895	17.08	11,515	17.49
1st Year	1,828	5.84	2,024	5.86	3,852	5.85
2nd Year	1,603	5.12	1,618	4.69	3,221	4.89
3rd Year	1,097	3.50	1,096	3.18	2,193	3.33
Transition Year	457	1.46	579	1.68	1,036	1.57
5th Year	533	1.70	576	1.67	1,109	1.68
6th Year	268	0.86	268	0.78	536	0.81
LCA	66	0.21	54	0.16	120	0.18
FETAC	12	0.04	13	0.04	25	0.04
Youthreach	106	0.34	97	0.28	203	0.31
Other*	291	0.93	310	0.90	601	0.91

* 'Other' is comprised of Junior infants, Senior infants and Special Education classes that did not follow the mainstream class categories.



APPENDIX 10: COUNTY PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION 2011

County	Primary		Secondary		Total	
	N	%	N	%	n	%
Dublin	11,085	21.13	2,093	18.47	13,178	20.66
Cork	4,367	8.32	925	8.16	5,292	8.29
Kildare	3,064	5.84	1,109	9.78	4,173	6.54
Galway	3,220	6.14	692	6.11	3,912	6.13
Kerry	2,343	4.47	453	4.00	2,796	4.38
Donegal	2,228	4.25	504	4.45	2,732	4.28
Wicklow	2,155	4.11	532	4.69	2,687	4.21
Limerick	2,287	4.36	354	3.12	2,641	4.14
Meath	2,076	3.96	484	4.27	2,560	4.01
Tipperary	2,074	3.95	449	3.96	2,523	3.95
Clare	1,453	2.77	588	5.19	2,041	3.2
Mayo	1,548	2.95	361	3.19	1,909	2.99
Wexford	1,514	2.89	375	3.31	1,889	2.96
Louth	1,744	3.32	114	1.01	1,858	2.91
Offaly	1,430	2.73	307	2.71	1,737	2.72
Waterford	1,634	3.11	34	0.3	1,668	2.61
Carlow	1,077	2.05	146	1.29	1,223	1.92
Westmeath	735	1.4	484	4.27	1,219	1.91
Kilkenny	799	1.52	386	3.41	1,185	1.86
Laois	1,006	1.92	166	1.46	1,172	1.84
Cavan	869	1.66	139	1.23	1,008	1.58
Roscommon	920	1.75	88	0.78	1,008	1.58
Sligo	822	1.57	139	1.23	961	1.51
Longford	848	1.62	105	0.93	953	1.49
Monaghan	794	1.51	146	1.29	940	1.47
Leitrim	372	0.71	161	1.42	533	0.84

APPENDIX 11: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A CHILD AND GOOD THINGS ABOUT BEING A YOUNG PERSON IN IRELAND

Education

Table A11-1: Subcategories children and young people liked in Education in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Education	13,992	20.98
Subcategory	Education system	13,689	20.52
	Cost of education	822	1.23

Sport

Table A11-2: Subcategories children and young people liked in Sport in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Sport	10,416	15.6
Subcategory	Sports	9,394	14.08
	Sports facilities	1,120	1.68

Irish identity

Table A11-3: Subcategories children and young people liked in Irish identity in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Irish identity	7,200	10.79
Subcategory	People	2,485	3.73
	Sports	2,427	3.64
	Culture and traditions	1,979	2.97
	Language	570	0.85
	Pride	344	0.52

Not having responsibility

Table A11-4: Subcategories children and young people liked in Not having responsibility in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Not having responsibility	4,615	6.92
Subcategory	Other responsibility	3,115	4.67
	Financial responsibility	2,042	3.06

APPENDIX 12: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THE WORST THING ABOUT BEING A CHILD AND THINGS YOUNG PEOPLE DISLIKE ABOUT LIVING IN IRELAND

Economy and finances

Table A12-1: Subcategories within Economy and finances that children and young people disliked in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Economy and finances	15,496	23.23
Subcategory	Recession and economy	10,795	16.18
	Finances	3,153	4.73
	Employment	3,011	4.51
	Costs*	1,857	2.78

* 'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.

Education

Table A12-2: Subcategories within Education that children and young people disliked in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Education	9,338	14.00
Subcategory	Homework	4,632	6.94
	Facilities and resources	3,056	4.58
	Subjects	1,174	1.76
	Pressure and stress	679	1.02
	School days	416	0.62
	School uniforms	372	0.56
	Cost of education	167	0.25
	School bags	56	0.08

I'M Proud
to be... Irish!



Anti-social behaviour and crime

Table A12-3: Subcategories within Social problems that children and young people disliked in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Social problems	6,892	10.33
Subcategory	Crime	1,698	2.55
	Illicit drugs	1,599	2.4
	Smoking	1,099	1.65
	Fighting and violence	793	1.19
	Kidnapping	779	1.17
	Alcohol	757	1.13
	Anti-social behaviour	406	0.61
	Homelessness	337	0.51
	Personal safety	335	0.50
	Poverty	323	0.48
	Racism and discrimination	221	0.33
	Child abuse and cruelty	211	0.32
	Social issues general	5	0.01

Driving

Table A12-4: Subcategories within Driving that children and young people disliked in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Driving	2,035	3.05
Subcategory	Driving laws	1,690	2.53
	Road safety	354	0.53

Age limits

Table A12-5: Subcategories within Age limits that children and young people disliked in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Age limits	998	1.5
Subcategory	Voting	720	1.08
	General*	146	0.22
	Drinking	81	0.12
	Films and games	64	0.10

* Any general responses in relation to age limits in Ireland that does not include specific responses about lowering the age limit for alcohol.

APPENDIX 13: SUBCATEGORIES THAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE ABOUT LIVING IN IRELAND

Education

Table A13-1: Subcategories within Education that children and young people would like to change in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Education	15,323	22.97
Subcategory	Facilities and resources	6,639	9.95
	Homework	6,131	9.19
	School days and holidays	2,132	3.2
	Pressure and stress	862	1.29
	Subjects	752	1.13
	School uniforms	740	1.11
	Cost of education	464	0.7
	School play facilities	167	0.25
	School bags	120	0.18

Economy and finances

Table A13-2: Subcategories within Economy and finances that children and young people would like to change in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Economy and finances	11,445	17.16
Subcategory	Recession and economy	4,502	6.75
	Costs*	3,115	4.67
	Finances	3,089	4.63
	Employment	2,187	3.28

* 'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.



Anti-social behaviour and crime

Table A13-3: Subcategories within Social problems that children and young people would like to change in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Social problems	6,113	9.16
Subcategory	Crime and crime deterrent	1,413	2.12
	Illicit drugs	1,212	1.82
	Smoking	1,197	1.79
	Poverty	985	1.48
	Homelessness	820	1.23
	Fighting and violence	546	0.82
	Kidnapping	334	0.5
	Graffiti and vandalism	168	0.25
	Racism and discrimination	82	0.12

Driving and transport

Table A13-4: Subcategories within driving and transport that children and young people would like to change in Ireland

		Total	
		n	%
Category	Driving and transport	2,558	3.83
Subcategory	Driving rules	1,747	2.62
	Transport and infrastructure	434	0.65
	Road safety	425	0.64

Age limits

Table A13-5: Subcategories within Age limits that children and young people would like to change in Ireland

		Primary		Secondary		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Category	Age limits	424	0.78	773	6.16	1,197	1.79
Subcategory	Voting	350	0.65	436	3.48	786	1.18
	Alcohol	12	0.02	248	1.98	260	0.39
	General*	58	0.11	109	0.87	167	0.25
	Films, games and DVDs	7	0.01	2	0.02	9	0.01

* Any general responses in relation to age limits in Ireland that does not include specific responses about lowering the age limit for alcohol.

APPENDIX 14: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A CHILD IN IRELAND

Education

Table A14-1: Subcategories within Education that were the best thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Education	10,652	19.67
Subcategory	Education system	10,483	19.35
	Cost of education	425	0.78

Sport

Table A14-2: Subcategories within Sport that were the best thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Sport	8,411	15.53
Subcategory	Sports	7,766	14.34
	Sports facilities	743	1.37

Irish identity

Table A14-3: Subcategories within Irish identity that were the best thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Irish identity	6,215	11.47
Subcategory	Sports	2,118	3.91
	People	2,095	3.87
	Culture and traditions	1,751	3.23
	Pride	277	0.51
	Language	506	0.23

Not having responsibility

Table A14-4: Subcategories within Not having responsibility that were the best thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Not having responsibility	3,442	6.35
Subcategory	Other responsibility	2,269	4.19
	Financial responsibility	1,557	2.87

APPENDIX 15: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THE WORST THING ABOUT BEING A CHILD IN IRELAND

Economy and finances

Table A15-1: Subcategories within Economy and finances of the worst thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Economy and finance	13,150	24.28
Subcategory	Recession and economy	9,599	17.72
	Finances	2,778	5.13
	Employment	2,059	3.8
	Costs*	1,502	2.77

* 'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.

Education

Table A15-2: Subcategories within Education of the worst thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Education	7,327	13.53
Subcategory	Homework	4,256	7.86
	Facilities and resources	2,357	4.35
	Subjects	851	1.57
	School days	278	0.51
	School uniforms	276	0.51
	Cost of education	89	0.16
	Pressure and stress	72	0.13
	School bags	34	0.06



Anti-social behaviour and crime

Table A15-3: Subcategories within Social problems of the worst thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Social problems	5,777	10.67
Subcategory	Crime	1,549	2.86
	Illicit drugs	1,199	2.21
	Smoking	892	1.65
	Kidnapping	763	1.41
	Fighting and violence	692	1.28
	Alcohol	507	0.94
	Homelessness	320	0.59
	Poverty	310	0.57
	Anti-social behaviour	301	0.56
	Personal safety	286	0.53
	Child abuse and cruelty	200	0.37
	Racism and discrimination	133	0.25
	Social issues general	5	0.01

Driving

Table A15-4: Subcategories within Driving of the worst thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Driving	1,344	2.48
Subcategory	Driving laws	1,015	1.87
	Road safety	336	0.62

Age limits

Table A15-5: Subcategories within Age limits of the worst thing about being a child in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Age limits	547	1.01
Subcategory	Voting	431	0.80
	General*	67	0.12
	Films and games	38	0.07
	Drinking	14	0.03

* Any general responses in relation to age limits in Ireland that does not include specific responses about lowering the age limit for alcohol.

APPENDIX 16: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THINGS CHILDREN WOULD CHANGE IN IRELAND

Education

Table A16-1: Subcategories within Education that children would change in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Education	11,918	22
Subcategory	Homework	5,594	10.33
	Facilities and resources	5,173	9.55
	School days and holidays	1,557	2.87
	Subjects	532	0.98
	School uniforms	519	0.96
	Cost of education	186	0.34
	School play facilities	166	0.31
	School bags	91	0.17
	Pressure and stress	72	0.13

Economy and finances

Table A16-2: Subcategories within Economy and finances that children would change in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Economy and finances	9,884	18.25
Subcategory	Recession and economy	4,274	7.89
	Costs*	2,713	5.01
	Finances	2,621	4.84
	Employment	1,572	2.90

* 'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.



Anti-social behaviour and crime

Table A16-3: Subcategories within Social problems that children would change in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Social problems	5,437	10.04
Subcategory	Crime and crime deterrent	1,343	2.48
	Smoking	965	1.78
	Illicit drugs	953	1.76
	Poverty	952	1.76
	Homelessness	772	1.43
	Fighting and violence	518	0.96
	Kidnapping	332	0.61
	Graffiti and vandalism	161	0.3
	Racism and discrimination	55	0.1

Driving and transport

Table A16-4: Subcategories within Driving and transport that children would change in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Driving and transport	1,443	2.66
Subcategory	Driving rules	795	1.47
	Road safety	388	0.72
	Transport and infrastructure	293	0.54

Age limits

Table A16-5: Subcategories within Age limits that children would change in Ireland

		Primary	
		n	%
Category	Age limits	424	0.78
Subcategory	Voting	350	0.65
	General*	58	0.11
	Alcohol	12	0.02
	Films, games and DVDs	7	0.01

* Any general responses in relation to age limits in Ireland that does not include specific responses about lowering the age limit for alcohol.

APPENDIX 17: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THINGS THAT ARE GOOD ABOUT BEING A YOUNG PERSON IN IRELAND

Education

Table A17-1: Subcategories within Education that were good things about being a young person in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Education	3,340	26.63
Subcategory	Education system	3,206	25.56
	Cost of education	397	3.17

Sport

Table A17-2: Subcategories within Sport that were good things about being a young person in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Sport	2,005	15.99
Subcategory	Sports	1,628	12.98
	Sports facilities	377	3.01

Irish identity

Table A17-3: Subcategories within Irish identity that were good things about being a young person in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Irish identity	985	7.85
Subcategory	People	390	3.11
	Sports	309	2.46
	Culture and traditions	228	1.82
	Pride	67	0.53
	Language	64	0.51

Not having responsibility

Table A17-4: Subcategories within Not having responsibility that were good things about being a young person in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Not having responsibility	1,173	9.35
Subcategory	Other responsibility	846	6.75
	Financial responsibility	485	3.87

APPENDIX 18: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THINGS YOUNG PEOPLE DISLIKE ABOUT LIVING IN IRELAND

Economy and finances

Table A18-1: Subcategories within Economy and finances that young people disliked about living in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Economy and finance	2,346	18.71
Subcategory	Recession and economy	1,196	9.54
	Employment	952	7.59
	Finances	375	2.99
	Costs*	355	2.83

* 'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.

Education

Table A18-2: Subcategories within Education that young people disliked about living in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Education	2,011	16.03
Subcategory	Facilities and resources	699	5.57
	Pressure and stress	607	4.84
	Homework	376	3
	Subjects	323	2.58
	School days	138	1.1
	School uniforms	96	0.77
	Cost of education	78	0.62
	School bags	22	0.18

Free education:



where to spend free time



Anti-social behaviour and crime

Table A18-3: Subcategories within Social problems that young people disliked about living in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Social problems	1,115	8.89
Subcategory	Illicit drugs	400	3.19
	Alcohol	250	1.99
	Smoking	207	1.63
	Crime	149	1.19
	Anti-social behaviour	105	0.84
	Fighting and violence	101	0.81
	Racism and discrimination	88	0.7
	Personal safety	49	0.39
	Homelessness	17	0.14
	Kidnapping	16	0.13
	Poverty	13	0.1
	Child abuse and cruelty	11	0.09
	Social issues general	0	0

Driving

Table A18-4: Subcategories within Driving that young people disliked about living in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Driving	691	5.51
Subcategory	Driving laws	675	5.38
	Road safety	18	0.14

Age limits

Table A18-5: Subcategories within Age limits of dislikes of young people in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Age limits	451	3.6
Subcategory	Voting	289	2.30
	General*	79	0.63
	Drinking	67	0.53
	Films and games	26	0.21

* Any general responses in relation to age limits in Ireland that does not include specific responses about lowering the age limit for alcohol.

APPENDIX 19: SUBCATEGORIES FOR THINGS YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD CHANGE IN IRELAND

Education

Table A19-1: Subcategories within Education that young people would change in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Education	3,405	27.15
Subcategory	Facilities and resources	1,466	11.69
	Pressure and stress	790	6.3
	School days and holidays	575	4.58
	Homework	537	4.28
	Cost of education	278	2.22
	School uniforms	221	1.76
	Subjects	220	1.75
	School bags	29	0.23
	School play facilities	1	0.01

Economy and finances

Table A19-2: Subcategories within Economy and finances that young people would change in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Economy and finances	1,561	12.4
Subcategory	Employment	615	4.90
	Finances	468	3.73
	Costs*	402	3.21
	Recession and economy	228	1.82

* 'Costs' include the cost of living, fuel, toys, sweets, etc.



Anti-social behaviour and crime

Table A19-3: Subcategories within Social problems that young people would change in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Social problems	676	5.39
Subcategory	Illicit drugs	259	2.07
	Smoking	232	1.85
	Crime and crime deterrent	70	0.56
	Homelessness	48	0.38
	Poverty	33	0.26
	Fighting and violence	28	0.22
	Racism and discrimination	27	0.22
	Graffiti and vandalism	7	0.06
	Kidnapping	2	0.02

Driving and transport

Table A19-4: Subcategories within Driving and transport that young people would change in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Driving and transport	1,115	8.89
Subcategory	Driving rules	952	7.59
	Transport and infrastructure	141	1.12
	Road safety	37	0.3

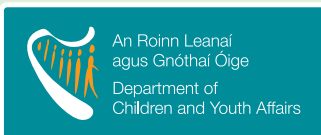
Age limits

Table A19-5: Subcategories within Age limits that young people would change in Ireland

		Secondary	
		n	%
Category	Age limits	773	6.16
Subcategory	Voting	436	3.48
	Alcohol	248	1.98
	General*	109	0.87
	Films, games and DVDs	2	0.02

* Any general responses in relation to age limits in Ireland that does not include specific responses about lowering the age limit for alcohol.





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