



An Roinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of  
Children and Youth Affairs



# LIFE AS A YOUNG PERSON IN IRELAND

National Consultation



## WHAT WAS THE CONSULTATION ABOUT?

In April 2011, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs asked every single school in Ireland – including primary schools, secondary schools, special education schools, Youthreach centres and detention schools – to take part in a consultation.

Young people were asked these 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?
- If you were leader of the country, what one thing would you CHANGE for young people?

You might remember filling it out?!



## WHO TOOK PART?

# 66,705

children and young people from every part of Ireland took part

This was **four times more than expected!**

"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."

**38%** of schools took part

**52%** were girls

**48%** were boys

The main things that **YOUNG PEOPLE** said are in this leaflet. The main things that **CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOL** said are in a different leaflet.

Children as young as 4 and young people as old as 23 filled out the survey.

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

The young people had lots of ideas about what was GOOD about being a young person living in Ireland. The top **FOUR THINGS** that young people think are best about being a young person living in Ireland are:

"There's a lot of emphasis on sports and the sports facilities are good."



"There are good education opportunities. Schools are very well run."

## 1. EDUCATION

Education was the top thing that young people said is good because:

- Young people in Ireland have a right to an education "as some people don't have that in different countries"
- Education is free in Ireland
- The standard or level of education in Ireland was "exceptional" or really good
- School finishes a year earlier than school in other countries

## 3. ACTIVITIES

The third best thing is the wide range of activities available to young people because:

- There is a lot for young people to do, from after-school activities to hobbies like fishing
- Young people are given the chance to take part in activities in Ireland

## 2. SPORTS

Sports are the second best thing because:

- A lot of sport is played in Ireland
- There are lots of different types of sport, from team sports like football to individual sports like swimming
- It "takes you away from school and work"
- There are good sports facilities in Ireland

## 4. NOT HAVING RESPONSIBILITY

"Not having many responsibilities in your teenage years compared to your adult years" is the fourth best thing because young people:

- Do not have to worry about money yet
- Do not have to worry about paying bills
- Do not have the same worries or responsibilities that their parents or other adults have

Other things that young people said are GOOD about being a young person living in Ireland are:

- Being Irish
- Friendship
- Places to go
- Fun
- Play
- Food
- Relationship with your family

"There are a lot of opportunities and activities available to young people."

No Worries

"Having no responsibility; your parents look after you and you don't have to pay for anything."



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

The FOUR THINGS that young people DISLIKE the most about being a young person in Ireland are:

"People smoke and drink alcohol at a very young age."

## 1. ECONOMY & FINANCES

The thing that young people dislike most is Ireland's economy and finances because:

- The country is in recession
- The economy is going downwards
- There are no jobs
- The cost of everything is too high

"Your life should not be based on a few tests."

## 2. EDUCATION

Even though education was at the top of the list of what was good about being a young person in Ireland, it is also second on the list of things that young people DISLIKE for reasons such as:

- Facilities in schools are not good
- There are not enough classrooms
- Science and technology facilities are either not available or not good enough
- Feeling under pressure and stressed by the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and the points system for third-level education
- Getting too much homework which takes too long to do
- The number of days spent at school
- Having to wear a school uniform
- The cost of education
- Carrying heavy school bags

"Life revolves around school and homework."

Other things that young people DISLIKE about being a young person in Ireland are:

- Driving
- Rules and discipline
- Age limits - having to wait until you are 18 to vote, drink and see certain films
- Bullying and peer pressure
- The environment

"Knowing we won't be able to get a job when we leave school."

## 3. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The third thing that young people dislike is anti-social (bad) behaviour and crime in their own areas because:

- Illegal drugs are too easy to get
- A lot of young people take illegal drugs
- A lot of young people smoke
- There is a lot of peer pressure to smoke
- There is so much 'binge drinking' by young people in Ireland
- There is so much crime and violence, such as theft, fights and shootings

## 4. WEATHER

Fourth on the list of what young people dislike about living in Ireland is the weather. Most people just dislike the weather because:

- It is too cold and too wet
- There is not enough sunshine in Ireland
- It would put you in a bad mood
- It is a bit depressing

"We grew up in a Celtic Tiger and now we have to get used to a recession."



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

The FOUR THINGS that young people would most like to CHANGE are:

"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."

## 1. EDUCATION

Education is the thing young people would most like to change. The parts of education that young people would like to change are to:

- Have better facilities and resources, such as better:
  - Science and technology facilities
  - Equipment for classrooms
  - Computer facilities
- Have more money for special education
- Have bigger classrooms to fit the number of students in each class
- Have less stress and pressure caused by:
  - The points system for entry into third-level education
  - The Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate exams
- Use 'continuous assessment' to examine students, i.e. have little exams and coursework all the way through school rather than one big exam at the end
- Spend less time at school. Young people suggested starting school earlier and finishing earlier, having a shorter school week and having more holidays

"I would change the CAO system and the Leaving Cert system. There is too much pressure on students for points."

## 2. ECONOMY & FINANCES

The second thing that young people would change is Ireland's economy and finances:

- Make more jobs available for young people
- Make sure there are enough jobs to stop emigration
- Guarantee people a job after they finish college
- End the recession as quickly as possible
- Cut the cost of living, e.g. food, clothes, school books and the price of activities

"I would take down the price of insurance for young drivers."

## 3. DRIVING

The third thing that young people would like to change are aspects of driving and suggest the following changes:

- Lower the legal driving age (to 16)
- Take down the price of insurance for young drivers
- End drink-driving
- Have more bicycle lanes
- Lower the speed limit for young drivers

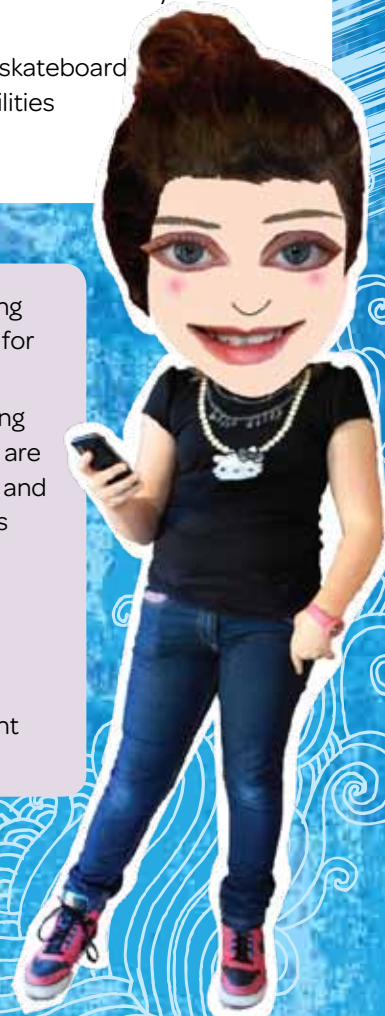
## 4. PLACES TO GO

Even though the third best thing is the wide range of activities available to young people, it is also the fourth thing that young people would like to change for the following reasons:

- More places to 'hang out' in a safe environment and particularly when the weather is bad
- More youth clubs/cafés in the countryside as well as in the cities
- More adventure parks/skateboard parks and paintball facilities
- More fun places to go

Other things that young people would change for young people are:

- Age limits - having to wait until you are 18 to vote, drink and see certain films
- Bad behaviour and crime
- Sport
- Play
- The environment



## SUMMARY

This table shows you the TOP FOUR things that young people said are GOOD, that they DISLIKE and that they would CHANGE about being a young person in Ireland:

TOP FOUR THINGS	THAT ARE GOOD	THAT ARE DISLIKED	THAT YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD CHANGE
1	EDUCATION	ECONOMY AND FINANCES	EDUCATION
2	SPORTS	EDUCATION	ECONOMY AND FINANCES
3	ACTIVITIES	ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	DRIVING
4	NOT HAVING RESPONSIBILITY	WEATHER	PLACES TO GO

### WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE INFORMATION FROM THE CONSULTATION?

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will use the information from the consultation to help them develop policies and plans for children and young people over the next five years.

Special thanks to all of the young people who helped us with the design and content of this leaflet: Ailish, Aine, Alex, Brendan, Claire, Eimhin, James, Judith, Katherine, Katie, Martin, Patricia, Rhiannon and Thomas.

"The weather can interfere with things I want to do in my everyday life such as hanging out or exercise."



An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of  
Children and Youth Affairs

Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs  
43 Mespil Road  
Dublin 4

Tel: +353 (0)1 647 3000  
Fax: +353 (0)1 667 0826  
E-mail: [citizenparticipation@dcya.gov.ie](mailto:citizenparticipation@dcya.gov.ie)  
Web: [www.dcya.ie](http://www.dcya.ie)