

**CHILD
COHORT**
NOVEMBER
2012



**Growing Up
in Ireland**
National Longitudinal
Study of Children

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

KEY FINDINGS: 13-YEAR-OLDS

NO. 1 SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AMONG 13-YEAR-OLDS

INTRODUCTION

This Key Finding reports on data from the second wave of interviews with *Growing Up in Ireland's* Child Cohort. The 8,568 children and their families were first interviewed when the children were 9 years old, and then at age 13 years, when 7,400 were re-interviewed between August 2011 and February 2012. This Key Finding presents summary information on the school experiences of 13-year-olds in the early years of junior cycle (lower secondary) education.

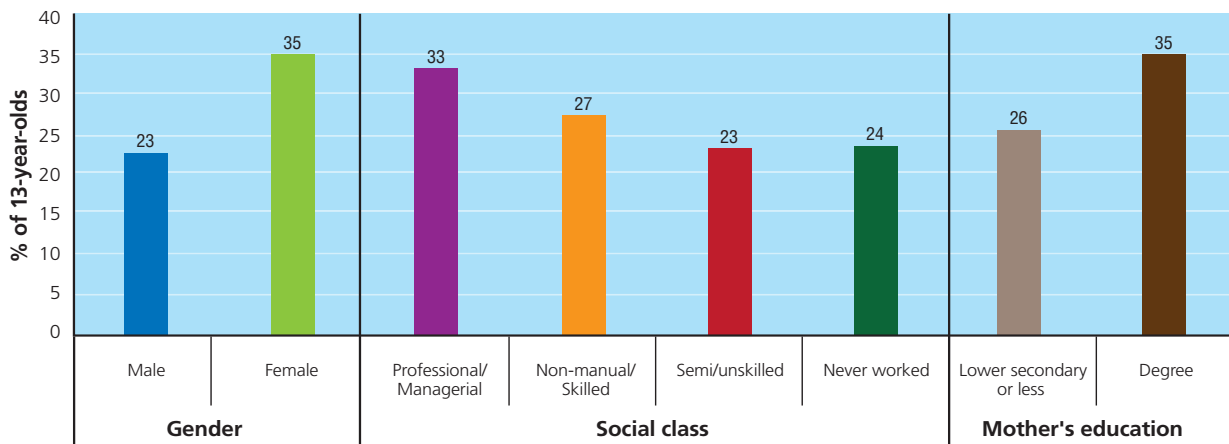
Almost all 13-year-olds had made the transition to second-level education. This involved exposure to new subjects, new classmates, new teachers and new school structures. Their attitudes to school, the quality of their interaction with their teachers and peers, and their expectations for the future at this stage all have implications for their longer-term educational success.



MOST 13-YEAR-OLDS WERE POSITIVE ABOUT SCHOOL BUT ATTITUDES DIFFERED BY GENDER AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

- 46% of 13-year-olds were in first year and 51% were in second year of second-level education. Most had positive attitudes to school: 29% liked it *very much* and 32% liked it *quite a bit*. Girls were more positive about school than boys: 35% of girls liked school *very much* compared with 23% of boys (Figure 1).
- Attitudes to school varied by social background; 13-year-olds with highly educated mothers and with parents from professional/managerial backgrounds were more positive about school than others. For example, 35% of those whose mother had a degree (or higher qualification) liked school *very much* but this was the case for only 26% of those whose mother had a lower secondary qualification.
- Young people in their second year of second-level education were less positive about school than those in first year or those still in primary school; 25% of second-year students liked school *very much* compared with 36% of first-year students and 34% of primary school students.

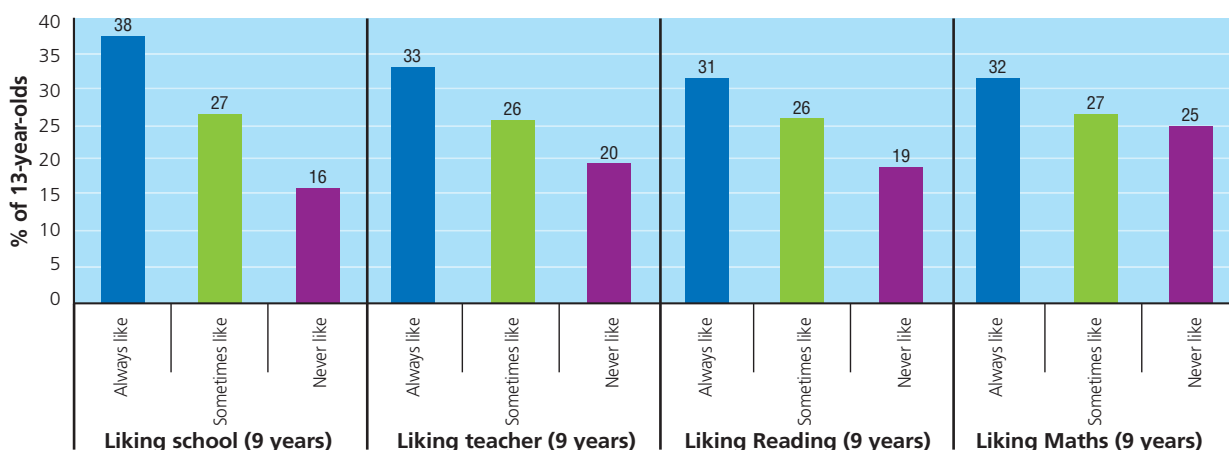
Figure 1: Percentage of 13-year-olds who liked school *very much* by gender, household social class and mother's education



POSITIVE ATTITUDES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL WERE LINKED TO LATER ENGAGEMENT IN SECOND-LEVEL EDUCATION

- 13-year-olds who were positive about school at age 9 had more positive attitudes to school when they were 13 years old. For example, 38% of those who *always* liked school when they were 9 liked it *very much* when they were 13, compared with 16% of those who *never* liked school at the age of 9 (Figure 2).
- Those who liked Reading and Maths at primary school were more positive about school four years later than those who disliked these subjects. However, there was considerable movement in attitudes; some children became more negative about school over time, while others became more positive.

Figure 2: Percentage of 13-year-olds who liked school *very much* by attitudes to school, their teacher, Reading and Maths at age 9



GIRLS AND MIDDLE-CLASS STUDENTS HAD MORE POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH THEIR TEACHERS

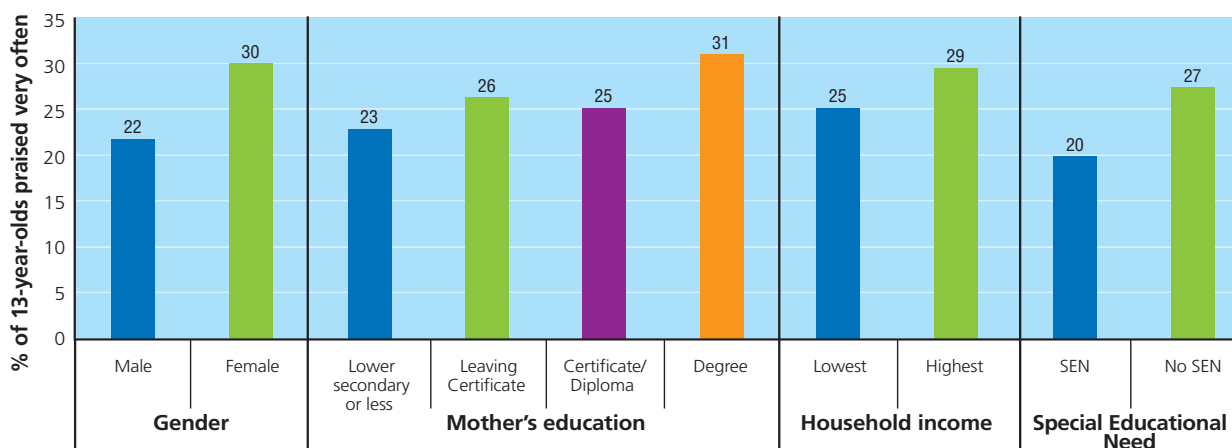
Young people were asked about the frequency of positive interactions with their teachers (being praised for schoolwork or for answering questions in class) and negative interactions (being reprimanded by teachers).

- Girls reported more positive interactions, and fewer negative interactions, with their teachers than boys. For example, 30% of females

reported being praised by teachers for their schoolwork *very often* compared with 22% of males (Figure 3).

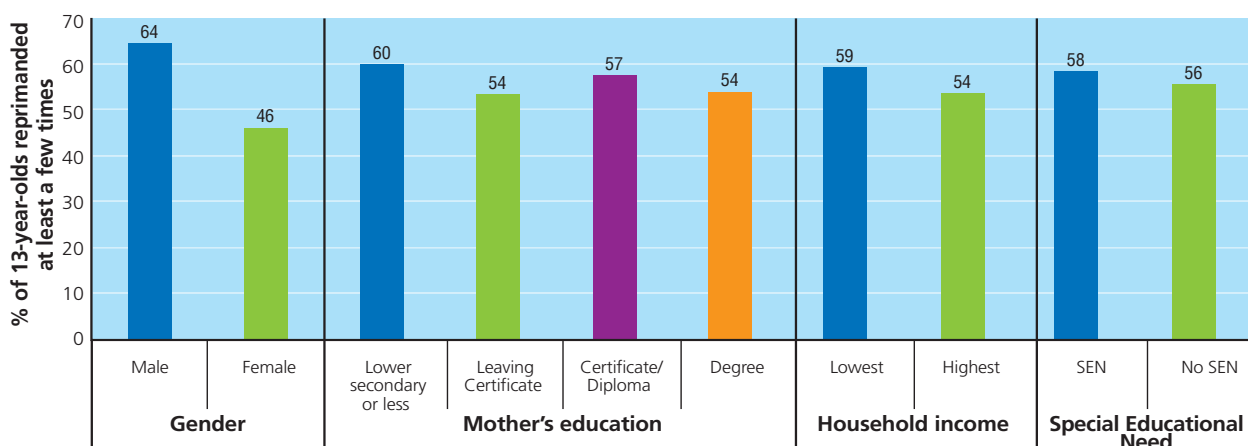
- The gender gap was bigger for negative interactions: almost two-thirds of boys (64%) had been reprimanded by their teachers for misbehaviour compared with less than half of the girls (46%) (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Percentage of 13-year-olds who reported being praised *very often* by their teachers for their schoolwork, by gender, maternal education, household income and special educational needs



- 13-year-olds whose mothers had degree-level qualifications and those from higher-income families had more positive interactions with their teachers (Figure 3).
- Those from low-income families reported more negative interactions with their teachers than those from higher-income families (Figure 4). Furthermore, 13-year-olds whose mother had lower educational levels (lower secondary or less) experienced more negative interactions than other groups.
- Young people with special educational needs (SEN) reported fewer positive interactions with their teachers than their peers: 20% reported being praised for their schoolwork *very often* compared with 27% of non-SEN students (Figure 3). Differences between the two groups in relation to negative interactions were much smaller (Figure 4).
- Students in first year recorded fewer negative interactions with their teachers than those in second year; 46% had been reprimanded because of their schoolwork compared to 56% of second-year students.

Figure 4: Percentage of 13-year-olds who reported being reprimanded by their teachers for misbehaviour a *few times* or more frequently



THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT GENDER GAP IN LEVELS OF MISBEHAVIOUR AT SCHOOL

The 13-year-olds were asked about various forms of misbehaviour and related punishment in school over the previous year.

- ‘Messing’ in class was the most common form of misbehaviour, while more serious issues (such as truancy and being suspended) had been experienced by only a small number of 13-year-olds (Figure 5).
- There were significant gender differences in misbehaviour. All forms were more common among boys than girls. For example, over half (52%) of males reported getting into trouble for not following school rules compared with less than a third (31%) of females.
- Young people’s misbehaviour varied by social background. For example, 34% of those from non-employed households had received detention compared with 16% of 13-year-olds from professional/managerial backgrounds (Figure 6).
- Similarly, young people whose mothers had lower levels of education (lower secondary or less) were more likely to have received detention (28% compared with 16% of those with graduate mothers), as were those living in low-income households.
- Second-year students had higher rates of misbehaviour than those in first year; for example, 26% of second-year students had received detention compared with 16% of students in first year.

Figure 5: Frequency of misbehaviour among 13-year-olds at school, by gender

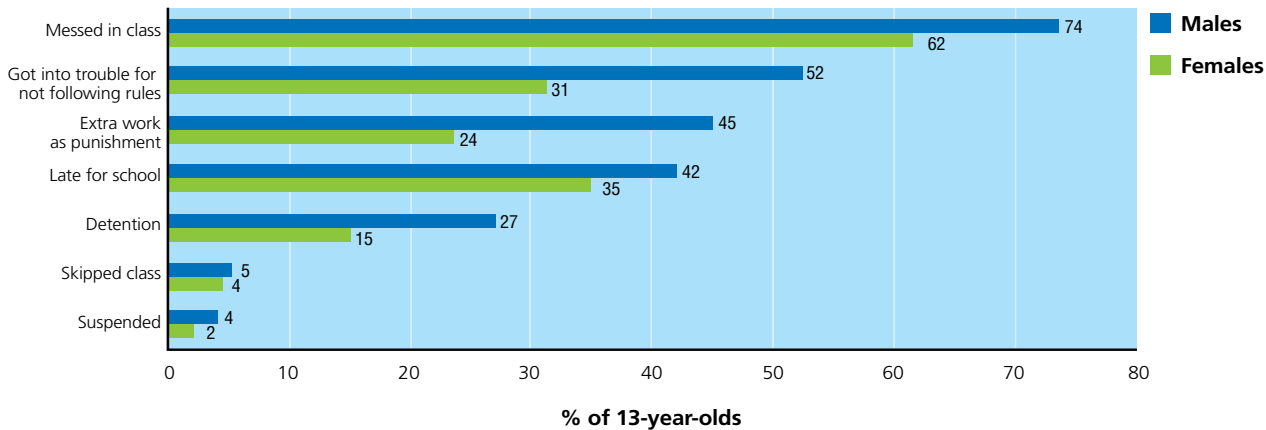
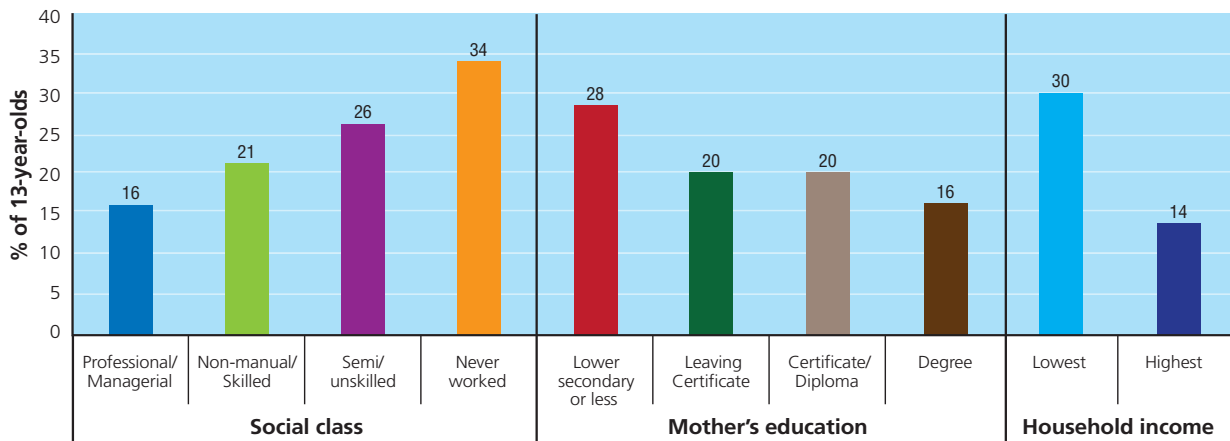


Figure 6: Percentage of 13-year-olds who had been given detention, by social class, mother’s education and household income quintile



MOST PARENTS SUPPORTED THEIR CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THEIR SCHOOL

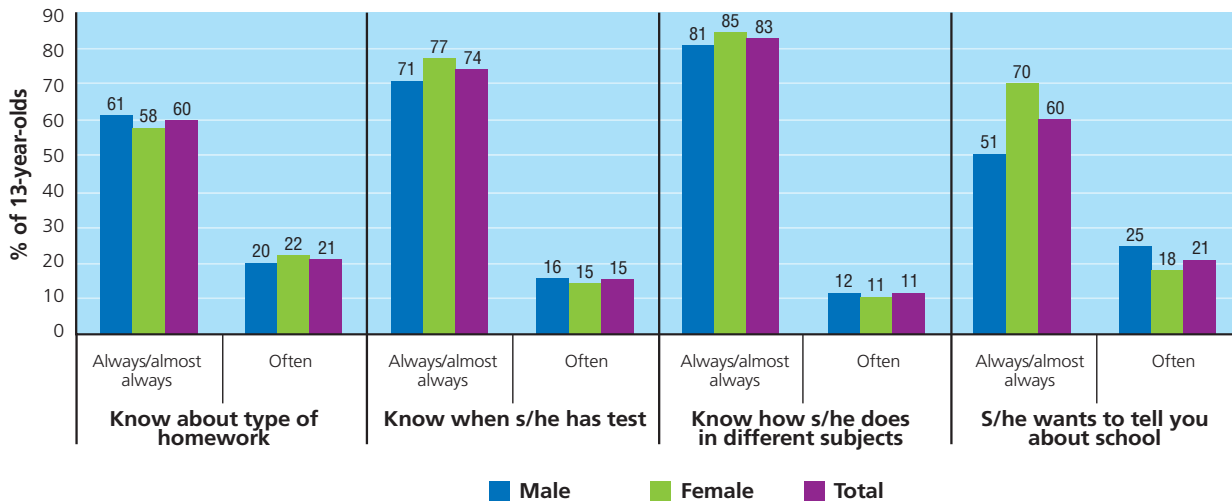
Parental involvement in their children's education encompasses a range of activities, including discussing what is going on at school, providing help with homework/study and attending meetings and events in the school. It is known to enhance children's school motivation and progress.

- Almost all mothers reported that they knew how their 13-year-old was getting on in their different subjects and when their child was having a test at school (Figure 7). Four-fifths knew what type of homework their child had and a similar proportion reported that their

child wanted to tell them about school.

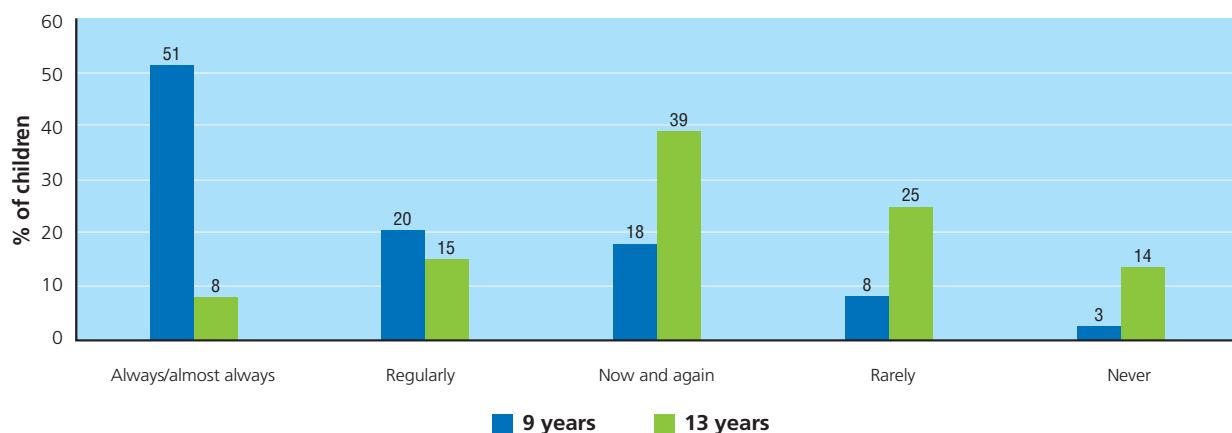
- The majority of mothers across all social groups (by social class, mother's education and household structure) knew how their child was getting on at school. However, mothers of daughters were much more likely to report that their child *always* or *almost always* wanted to tell them about school than the mothers of sons (70% compared with 51%). As a result, mothers of daughters had slightly more knowledge about their child's schooling than mothers of sons.

Figure 7: Percentage of mothers who *always/almost always* or *often* knew what was going on in relation to their child's education



- The majority of parents helped with their 13-year-old's homework: 8% *always/almost always* helped, 15% *regularly* helped, while a further 39% helped their child *now and again*. However, Figure 8 shows that parental involvement in helping with homework decreased markedly from 9 to 13 years.

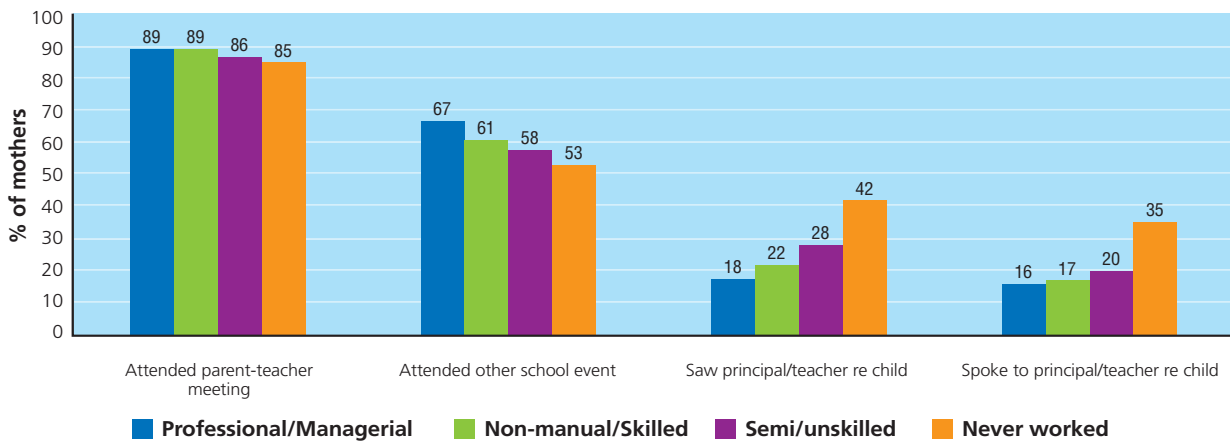
Figure 8: Frequency of parents helping child with homework at 9 years and at 13 years



MOST PARENTS ENGAGED WITH THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL

- The vast majority of mothers (88%) had attended a parent-teacher meeting in the last year but fewer (62%) had attended a school concert, play or other event. A minority (23%) had been to see the principal or teacher about their child's behaviour or performance, while 19% had spoken to the principal/teacher about these issues over the phone.
- Formal contact with the school was more related to social background than informal contact. Attending a parent-teacher meeting was very common across all social groups (Figure 9). However, two-thirds of mothers in the professional/managerial group (67%) attended other school events compared with just over half (53%) of those who had never worked.
- Contact with the school principal or teacher (either in person or over the phone) was much more common for mothers who had never worked. For example, 42% of mothers in this group had seen the principal or teacher in relation to their child's behaviour/performance compared to only 18% of mothers in the professional/managerial group.
- As might be expected, mothers had more contact with the school when their child had higher levels of misbehaviour. For example, 28% of those whose child had been in trouble at school had been to see the principal or teacher, compared with 19% for those whose child had not been in trouble. Furthermore, 26% of those whose child had been in trouble at school had spoken to the principal/teacher over the phone compared with 14% of those whose child had not been in trouble.

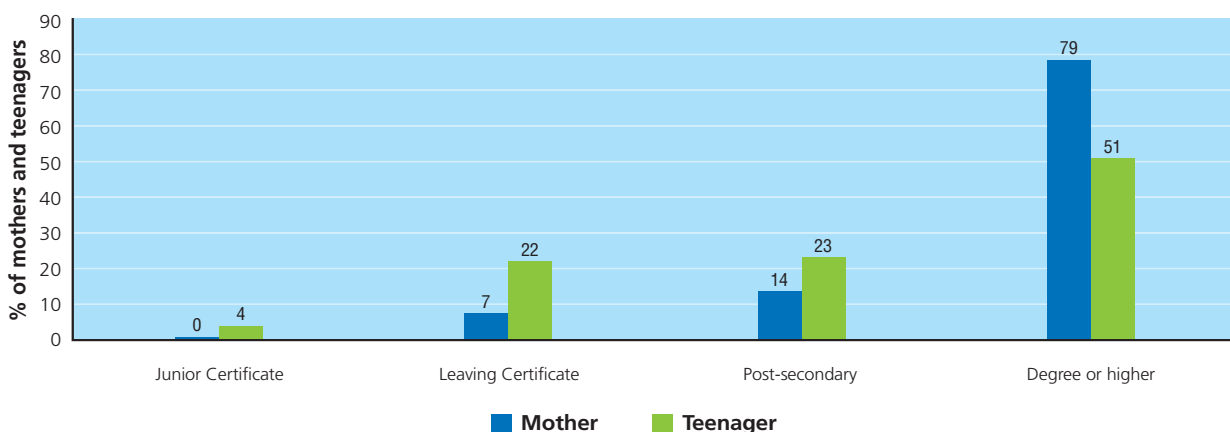
Figure 9: Parental contact with their child's school in the last 12 months, by occupational status



PARENTS HAD HIGHER EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS THAN THEIR CHILDREN

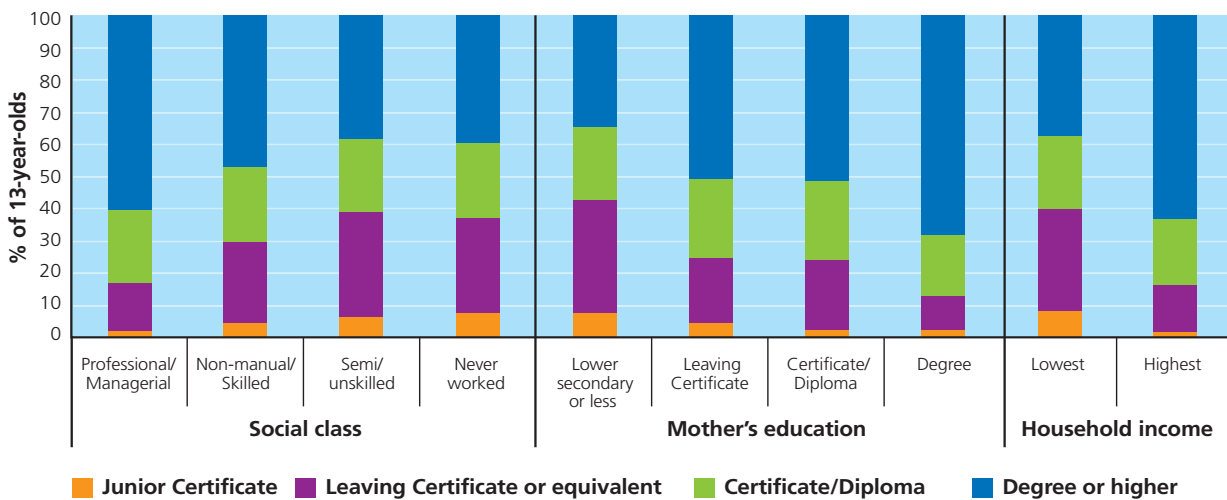
- Mothers had much higher expectations than their children about the child's expected highest qualification at the end of their education: over three-quarters of mothers (79%) expected their son or daughter to obtain a degree or post-graduate degree, while this was the case for only half of the 13-year-olds themselves (51%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Expectations regarding highest educational qualifications as reported by mothers and 13-year-olds



- Gender made very little difference to the educational expectations of 13-year-olds.
- There were, however, significant differences by family background. Figure 11 shows, for example, that 69% of 13-year-olds whose mother had a degree expected to get a degree themselves, while this was the case for only 35% of those whose mother had lower secondary education (or less). Similarly, 60% of young people from professional/managerial backgrounds expected to get a degree while about 40% of those from semi/unskilled backgrounds or those where household members had never worked had this expectation.
- Educational expectations also reflected household income levels; 38% of those in the lowest income quintile expected to reach the Leaving Certificate at most, compared with only 16% of young people in the highest income quintile.
- 13-year-olds with a special educational need (SEN) had lower educational expectations than their peers; 38% expected to get a degree compared with 54% of those without a SEN.

Figure 11: Educational expectations (as reported by 13-year-olds) by social class, mother's education and household income



SUMMARY

Almost all 13-year-olds had made the transition to second-level education and were broadly positive about their school. However, important gender and social background differences had emerged in relation to school engagement. Boys had more negative attitudes to school, and were more likely to misbehave at school and to experience negative interactions with their teachers than girls.

Those 13-year-olds from professional/managerial, high-income and highly educated households had more positive interaction with teachers, lower levels of misbehaviour and more positive attitudes to school.

These gender and social background differences are of policy concern, given the importance of school engagement for longer-term achievement and retention.





Growing Up in Ireland is the National Longitudinal Study of Children. It tracks the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children: a Child Cohort (interviewed initially at 9 years and subsequently at 13 years) and an Infant Cohort (interviewed initially at 9 months and subsequently at 3 years).

The Study is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office. It is being carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

The first wave of fieldwork with the families of the older Child Cohort included 8,568 9-year-olds, their parents and carers, teachers and school principals. Interviews began in September 2007 and were completed in March 2008. The second round of interviews with this cohort took place between August 2011 and February 2012. Ninety per cent of the original sample of 9-year-olds were successfully re-interviewed.

Access to *Growing Up in Ireland* data

An anonymised version of all quantitative and qualitative data collected in *Growing Up in Ireland* is being made available through the Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA) at:

<http://www.ucd.ie/issda/data/growingupinireland/>

and the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) at:

<http://www.iqda.ie/content/growing-ireland>

Thank-you to all participants

The success of *Growing Up in Ireland* is the result of contributions from a large range of individuals, organisations and groups, many of whom helped to recruit the sample and collect the data. We are particularly grateful to the thousands of families from every part of the country who gave so generously of their time on two occasions to make this Study possible. A very big 'thank-you' to the children and their families.

(Figures based on preliminary analysis and may be subject to change)



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