



KEY FINDINGS



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**STATE OF
THE NATION'S
CHILDREN**





Part 1: Sociodemographics

- In 2023, it is estimated that there were 1,255,738 children living in Ireland. This accounted for 23.2% of the total population (see Table 1).
- In 2021, 291 children died in Ireland. This equated to an overall mortality rate of 2.41 per 10,000 (see Table 4).
- In 2022, 15.5% of children lived in a single parent family unit (see Table 9).
- In 2016, 8.1% of children had a mother with either no formal education or primary education only, and 50.6% of children had a mother whose highest level of education was either a lower secondary or upper-secondary education (see Table 12)
- In 2022, there were 14,142 Traveller children in Ireland. This accounted for 1.2% of the total child population and 42.9% of the total Traveller population (see Table 15).
- In 2022, there were 88,630 foreign national children in Ireland. This accounted for 7.3% of the child population (see Table 17).
- In 2022, there were 131,764 children with a disability in Ireland. This accounted for 10.8% of the child population (see Table 20).
- In 2022, there were 8,165 children providing regular unpaid personal help for a friend or family member with a long-term illness, health problem or disability in Ireland. This accounted for 0.7% of the child population (see Table 22).



Part 2: Children's relationships

- In 2018, **83.3%** of children aged 10–17 reported finding it easy to talk to their mother when something is really bothering them. This changed only marginally between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 24).
- In 2018, **67.9%** of children aged 10–17 reported finding it easy to talk to their father when something is really bothering them. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 27).
- In 2018, **69.6%** of children aged 15 reported that their parents spend time just talking with them several times a week (see Table 30).
- In 2018, **51.9%** of children aged 15 reported that their parents discuss with them how well they are doing at school several times a week (see Table 32).
- In 2018, **69.1%** of children aged 15 reported that their parents eat a main meal with them several times a week (see Table 34).
- In 2018, **89.3%** of children aged 10–17 reported having three or more friends of the same gender. This increased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 36).
- In 2018, **71.7%** of children aged 10–17 reported having a pet of their own or a pet in the family. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 39).
- In 2018, **31.1%** of children aged 10–17 reported having been bullied at school in the past couple of months. This increased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 42).



Part 3: Children's outcomes

- For the 2022/23 pre-school year there were 108,616 children registered for the latest finalised ECCE programme call under Core Funding. There were 3,970 services contracted to offer ECCE in 2022/23 (see Table 45).
- Over the period 2017 to 2021, the percentage of primary school children who were absent from school for 20 days or more increased from 12.1% to 40.3% (see Table 47).
- Over the period 2017 to 2021, the percentage of post-primary school children who were absent from school for 20 days or more increased from 14.6% to 26.8% (see Table 50).
- The Leaving Certificate retention rate for children entering secondary school in 2016 was 91.7%, i.e. out of the 63,910 enrolled on 30 September 2016 in year one of the Junior Cycle, 58,605 sat the Leaving Certificate or received a calculated grade by 2021 or 2022 (see Figure 9).
- In 2022, 15 year-old children in Ireland achieved a mean score of 516.0 on the reading literacy scale (see Table 55).
- In 2022, 15 year-old children in Ireland achieved a mean score of 491.6 on the mathematics literacy scale (see Table 57).
- In 2022, 15 year-old children in Ireland achieved a mean score of 503.8 on the science literacy scale (see Table 59).
- In 2021, 5.9% of all babies born were in the low birth weight category (weighing less than 2,500 grams) (see Table 61).
- In 2021, 61.7% of infants were breastfed on being discharged from hospital. This includes 46.0% who were breastfed exclusively and a further 15.7% who were fed using a combination of bottle and breastfeeding (see Table 63).
- In 2022, there were 135,033 hospital discharges of children (see Table 65).



- In 2022, there were 11,758 hospital discharges of children with a principal diagnosis of “injury, poisoning, and certain other consequences of external causes” (see Table 67).
- In 2018, 76.9% of first class children were classified as being in the “normal” weight category according to the International Obesity Taskforce Standards. 15.5% were classified as either “overweight” or “obese” (see Table 69).
- In 2022, there were 8,826 children registered as having an intellectual disability (see Table 70).
- In 2022, there were 6,340 children registered as having a physical and/or sensory disability (see Table 72).
- In 2022 Q4, there were 21,473 child welfare and protection referrals to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency (see Table 74).
- In 2018, 32.6% of children aged 10–17 reported students at their school participate in making the school rules. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 76).
- In 2018, 30.8% of children aged 15 reported that reading is one of their favourite hobbies (see Table 79).
- In 2018, 2.4% of children aged 10–17 reported smoking cigarettes every week. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 81).
- In 2018, 89.4% of children aged 10–17 reported never having smoked cigarettes. This increased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 84).
- In 2018, 6.9% of children aged 10–17 reported having been drunk at least once in the past 30 days. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 87).
- In 2018, 69.4% of children aged 10–17 reported never having had an alcoholic drink. This increased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 90).



- In 2018, 7.8% of children aged 10–17 reported having taken cannabis at least once in their lifetime. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 93).
- In 2021, there were 141 births to mothers aged 15–17, down from 209 in 2018 (see Table 96).
- In 2018, 24.8% of children aged 15–17 reported having ever had sex. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 98).
- In 2018, 57.6% of children aged 10–17 reported feeling happy with the way they are. This changed only marginally between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 101).
- In 2018, 88.2% of children aged 10–17 reported being happy with their lives at present. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 104).
- In 2021, there were 9 suicides by children aged 10–17, down from 16 in 2014 (see Table 107).
- In 2020, the rate (per 100,000) of children and young people aged 10–24 presenting at a hospital emergency department following self-harm was 375 (see Table 109).
- In 2018, 51.1% of children aged 10–17 reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day on more than four days per week. This changed only marginally between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 111).
- In 2018, 78.2% of children aged 10–17 reported eating breakfast on five or more days per week. This increased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 114).
- In 2018, 6.5% of children aged 10–17 reported drinking soft drinks that contain sugar at least once a day. This decreased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 117).



Part 4: Formal and informal supports

- Public expenditure on educational institutions between primary and tertiary level decreased from 5.21% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013 to 3.13% in 2019 (see Figure 26), although real public expenditure increased from €8,286,000,000 in 2013 to €9,192,000,000 in 2018 (see Table 121).
- In 2022, 15.2% of children were considered to be at risk of poverty, down from 15.9% in 2018 (see Table 122).
- In 2022, 7.5% of children experienced consistent poverty, down from 7.7% in 2018 (see Table 123).
- In 2022, there were 21,086 households with children identified as being in need of social housing (see Table 124).
- In 2018, 90.2% of children aged 10–17 reported feeling safe in the area where they live. This increased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 126).
- In 2018, 67.2% of children aged 10–17 reported that there are good places in their area to spend their free time. This increased between 2014 and 2018 (see Table 129).
- In 2022, 8,404 children aged 10–17 were referred to the Garda Diversion Programme. Some children were referred more than once and so the total number of referrals was 15,719 (see Table 132).
- In 2021, 89.4% of pregnant women attended antenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy (see Table 135).
- In 2022, 98.4% of newborns were visited by a public health nurse within 72 hours of discharge from hospital for the first time (see Table 136).



- In 2022, 85.4% of newborn children had their developmental health screening before reaching 12 months of age (see Table 137).
- In 2022, for children at 12 months of age, uptake rates among Local Health Offices (LHOs) for D₃, P₃, T₃, and Polio₃ ranged from 77% to 93% (see Table 139).
- In 2022, for children at 24 months of age, uptake rates among Local Health Offices (LHOs) for D₃, P₃, T₃, Polio₃, HepB₃, and Hib₃ ranged from 88% to 97% (see Table 140).
- As of December 2022, there were 8,959 children on an inpatient/day case (IPDC) waiting list and 83,239 children on an outpatient (OP) waiting list (see Table 142 and Table 143).
- In 2022, there were 5,626 children in the care of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency (see Table 144).
- In 2022, there were 366 admissions of children to psychiatric hospitals/units and child and adolescent units (see Table 146).

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