



**CHILD  
COHORT**  
NOVEMBER  
2012



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

# GROWING UP IN IRELAND

## KEY FINDINGS: 13-YEAR-OLDS

### NO. 4

### THE LIVES OF 13-YEAR-OLDS: THEIR RELATIONSHIPS, FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOURS

#### 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.

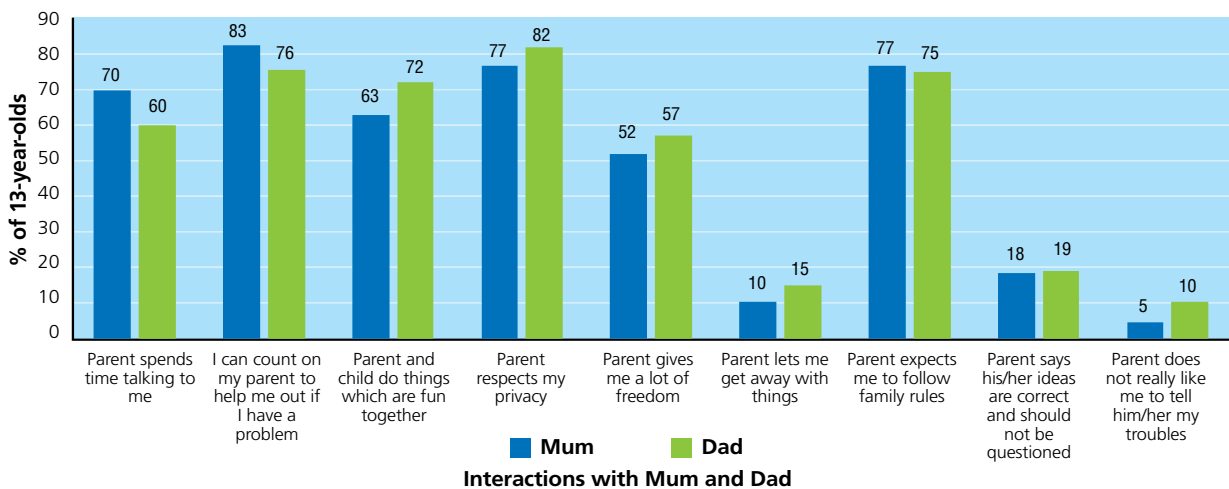
Thirteen is the start of adolescence, a period involving a range of physical, emotional and psychological changes and experiences. This Key Finding focuses on the relationship between the young people and their parents and family; their self-concept; and their involvement in risky behaviours such as smoking, drinking and substance use.



## NEARLY ALL 13-YEAR-OLDS GET ON WELL WITH PARENTS

- Almost all 13-year-olds indicated that they got on well with both their parents: 99% got on *very well* or *well* with their mother and 98% with their father.
- The majority of 13-year-olds felt that parents *spent time talking to them*, that parents *could be counted on to help if they had a problem*, that *they did fun things together*, and that parents *respected their privacy*.
- Over three-quarters believed that parents *expected them to follow family rules*. Only a small minority saw their parents as *letting them get away with things*, as *insisting that their ideas were correct and should not be questioned*, or as *not liking them sharing their troubles* (Figure 1).
- There were, however, differences in interactions with mothers and fathers. More young people said they spent time *talking* to their mum (70%) than to their dad (60%). In contrast, more young people said they did *fun things* with their dad (72%) than with their mum (63%).

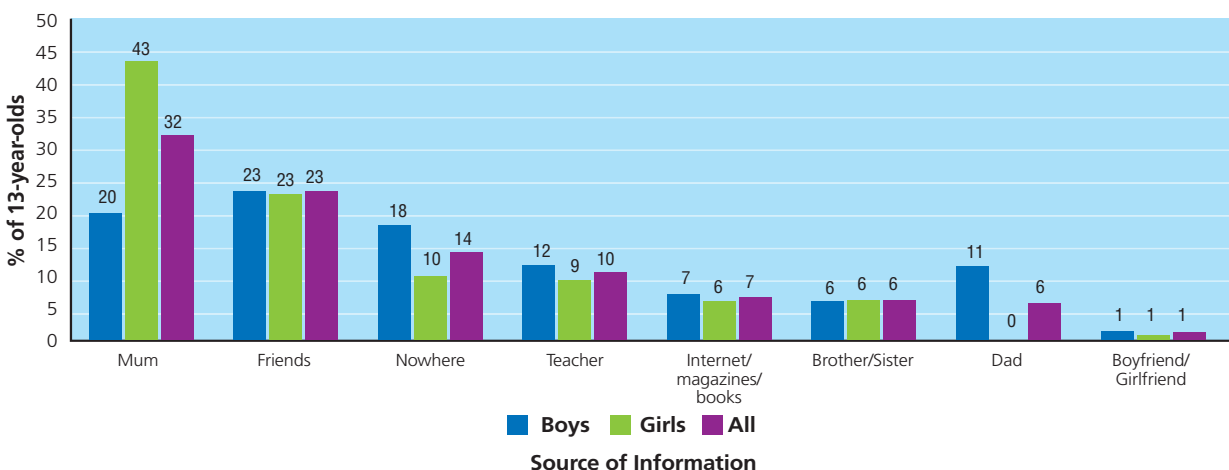
Figure 1: 13-year-olds' interactions with their parents



## MOTHERS AND FRIENDS MOST LIKELY SOURCE FOR ADVICE ON SEX/RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

- 46% of 13-year-olds had discussed sex/relationship issues with their parents (42% of boys and 51% of girls).
- When the 13-year-olds were asked where they would be most likely to go for information or advice on sex or relationship issues, Mothers were mentioned as the most likely source (32%). Only 6% cited their father as the most likely source of information. Virtually no girls said they would seek advice from their fathers and boys were more likely to say they would approach their mother (20%) than father (11%) (Figure 2).
- Friends (but not boyfriends/girlfriends) were mentioned as the second most likely source for information and advice (23%).
- Only 10% of 13-year-olds said teachers would be their most likely source of information or advice.
- It is a matter of concern that 14% of 13-year-olds said they would go *nowhere* for information or advice on sex or relationship issues. This was stated by almost twice as many boys (18%) as girls (10%).

Figure 2: Most likely source of information for boys and girls on sex and relationship issues

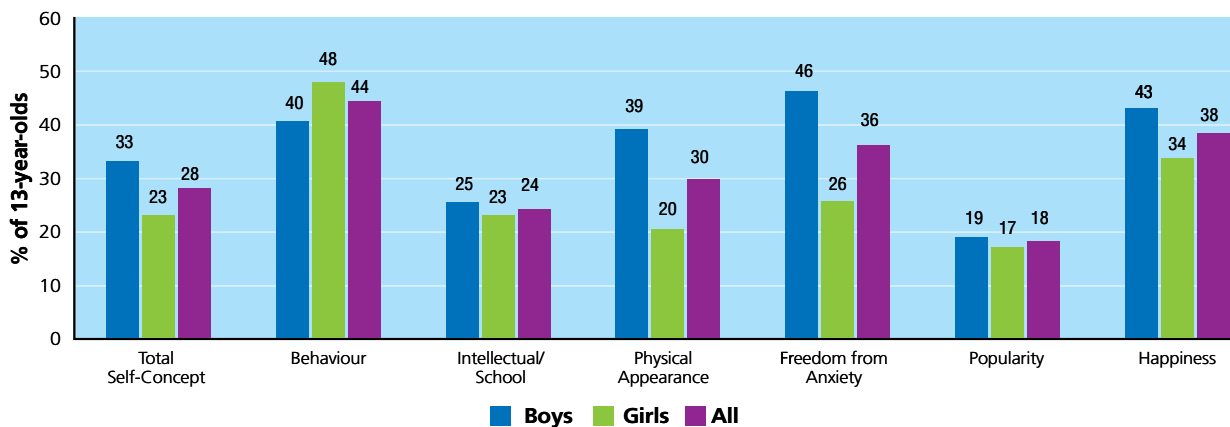


## BOYS GENERALLY HAD A MORE POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT THAN GIRLS

The 13-year-olds answered questions on how they felt about themselves (self-concept), including:

- Overall **self-concept**
- **General behaviour** – relating to problematic behaviours
- **Intellectual and school status** – relating to intellectual and academic tasks
- **Physical appearance** – perception of appearance
- **Freedom from anxiety** – sense of fear, unhappiness, shyness and feelings of being left out
- **Popularity** – with peers, evaluation of their own social functioning
- **Happiness** – satisfaction with life

**Figure 3: Percentage of 13-year-olds classified as above average (in the top third) in aspects of self-concept**



- In general, boys were more likely than girls to have above average scores on self-concept; 33% of boys compared with 23% of girls were above average (Figure 3).
- Similarly, boys were more likely to have above average scores on physical appearance (39% compared to 20%), freedom from anxiety (46% compared to 26%), and happiness (43% compared to 34%).
- Girls, in contrast, were more likely than boys to have above average scores on the behaviour subscale (48% and 40% respectively), indicating that fewer girls had problematic behaviours.
- Boys and girls did not differ significantly in terms of intellectual and school status (25% compared to 23%) or popularity (19% compared to 17%).
- Although there were substantial differences in the way in which boys and girls saw themselves, these differences were, almost without exception, not related to social advantage or disadvantage.

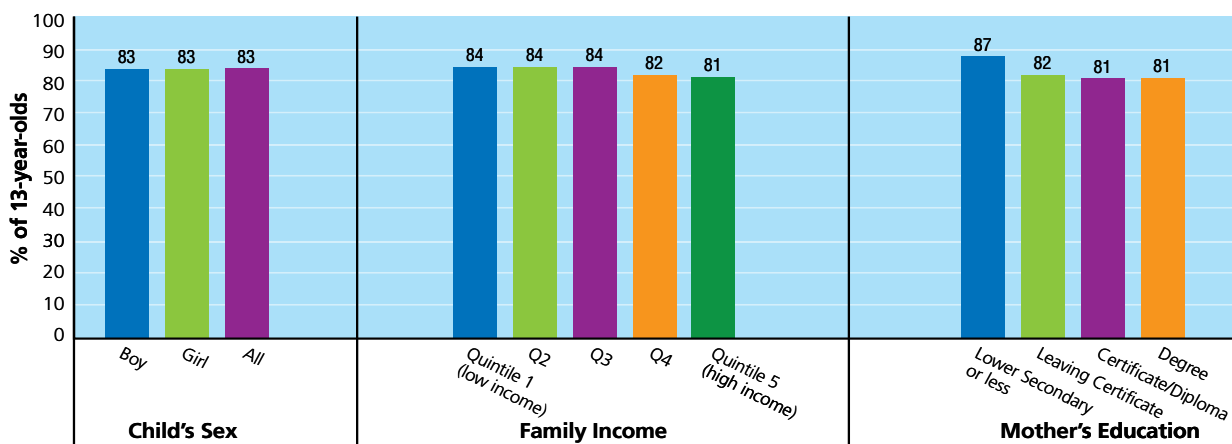


## 83% OF 13-YEAR-OLDS HAVE REGULAR SPENDING MONEY

The 13-year-olds were asked whether or not they had money to spend on a regular basis each week, from any source; 83% said they had.

- There was no difference in the percentage of boys and girls who had regular weekly spending money.
- Similarly, there was no significant difference in the percentage of children from different income groups who had money to spend each week (Figure 4).
- There was, however, a difference in terms of the education of the child's mother. A significantly higher percentage of children whose mother had the lowest level of education had money to spend on a regular weekly basis – 87%, compared to 81-82% among other children (Figure 4).

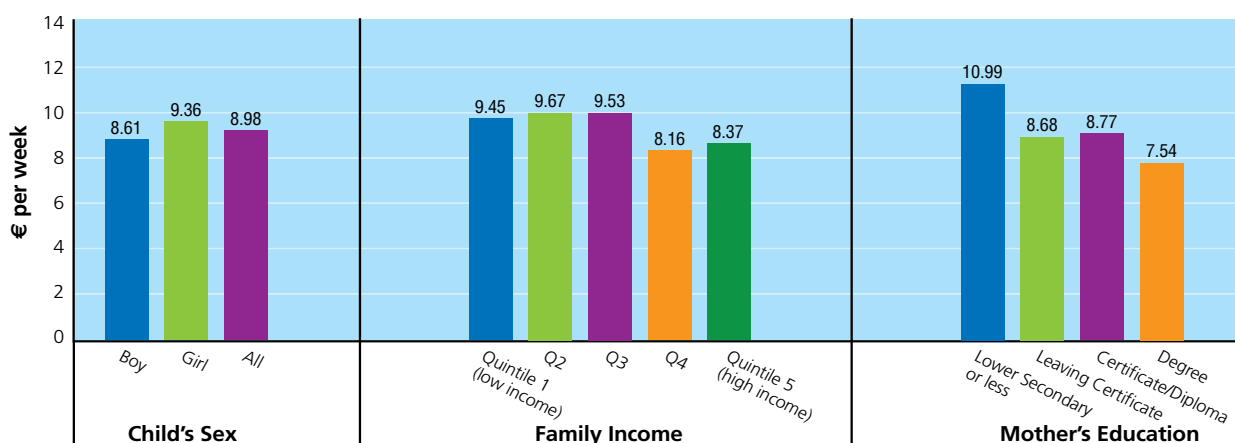
**Figure 4: Percentage of 13-year-olds who have money to spend on a regular weekly basis, in relation to child's sex, family income (equivalised) and mother's education**



The children who said they had money to spend each week were asked to record the amount. The average was €8.98 (based only on the children who said they had money to spend each week) (Figure 5).

- Girls had significantly more to spend than boys (€9.36 compared to €8.61).
- Children in families in the highest two income groups (quintiles) had significantly less to spend than others: €8.16 - 8.37 compared to €9.45 - 9.53 per week.
- Children whose mothers had the lowest levels of education had significantly more to spend (€10.99). Those whose mothers had the highest level of education had significantly less (€7.54).

**Figure 5: Average amount of money 13-year-olds have to spend each week (based on those who have money to spend) in relation to child's sex, family income (equivalised) and mother's education**

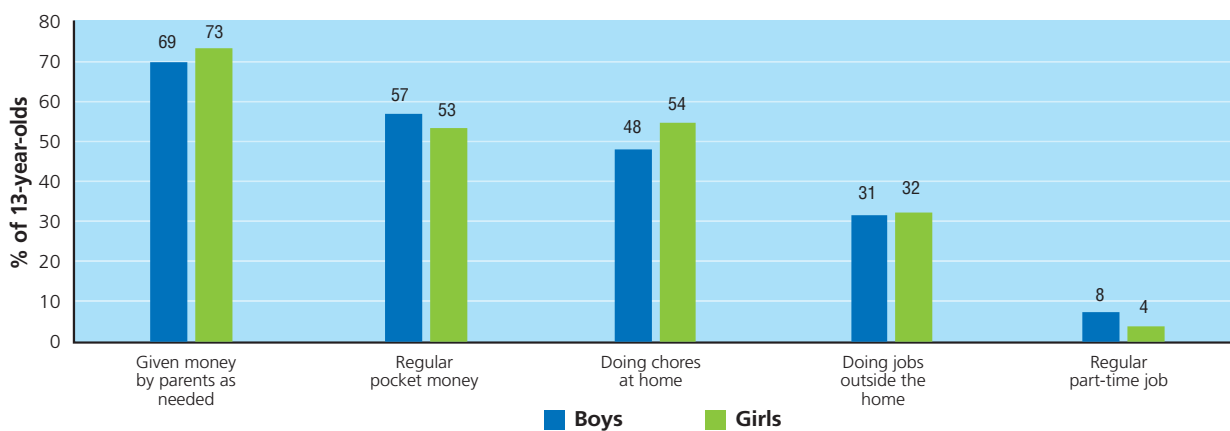




The 13-year-olds were also asked to record, from a list of five sources, where they got the money they had to spend. They selected all sources that applied to them (Figure 6).

- The most common source of money was from parents – 71% of 13-year-olds who had money to spend each week said they got it from parents as they needed it.
- 55% said they got regular pocket money – a slightly higher percentage among boys (57%) than girls (53%).
- Girls (54%) were more likely than boys (48%) to report that their spending money came from doing chores (including babysitting) at home.
- A small minority (5%) of 13-year-olds who usually had money to spend said they had a regular part-time job. This was more common among boys (8%) than girls (4%).

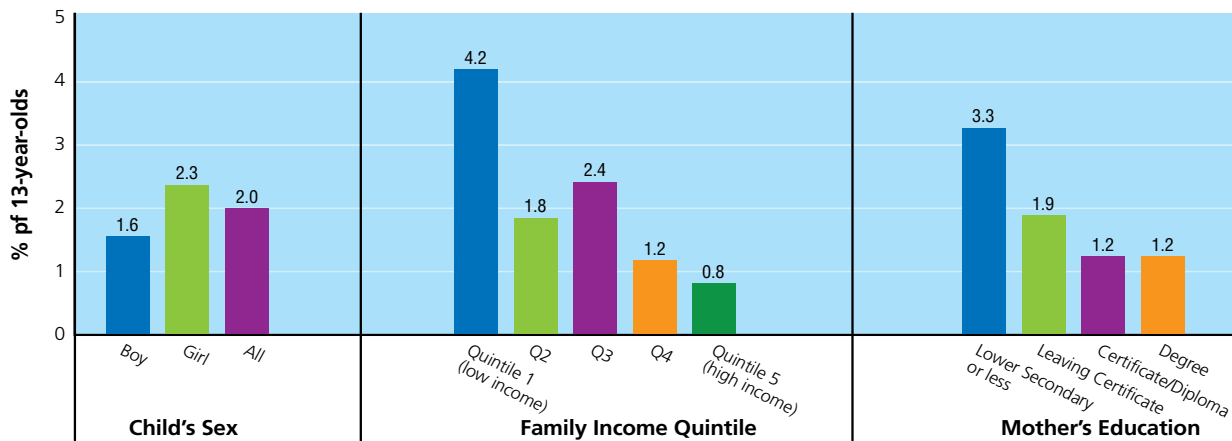
**Figure 6: Sources of money which 13-year-olds have (based on those who have money to spend) in relation to child's sex**



## ONLY 2% OF 13-YEAR-OLDS SMOKED AT THE TIME OF INTERVIEW, BUT 7% HAD TRIED IT

- 91% of 13-year-olds said they had never smoked a cigarette, 7% had smoked but not in the last year, and 2% currently smoked (Figure 7).
- Slightly more girls (2.3%) than boys (1.6%) currently smoked, but this difference was not statistically significant.
- More 13-year-olds whose mothers were in the lowest educational category or in the lowest income group smoked.

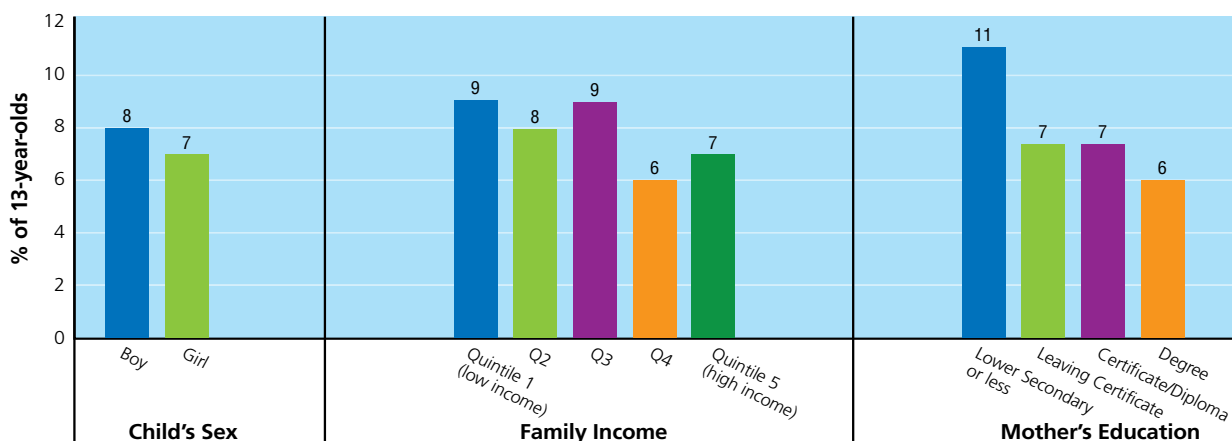
**Figure 7: Percentage of 13-year-olds who currently smoked, in relation to child's sex, mother's education and family income (equivalised)**



## 15% OF 13-YEAR-OLDS HAD TRIED ALCOHOL

- 85% of 13-year-olds said they had never taken alcohol, 8% had drunk alcohol in the last year, and 7% had done so at some point in the past (Figure 8).
- Slightly more boys (8%) than girls (7%) had taken alcohol in the last year, but the difference was not statistically significant.
- More 13-year-olds whose mothers were in the lowest education group had drunk alcohol in the last year, but there were no significant differences by family income.
- Only a very small proportion (0.6%) of all 13-year-olds said they currently drank *once a month or more*. Most of those who had consumed alcohol in the last year said it was only *rarely* or on *special occasions*.
- 1.0% of 13-year-olds said that they had tried cannabis; 3% said they had tried solvents or inhalants to *get high*, while 0.4% said they had used *other drugs* (such as ecstasy, speed, heroin, methadone, crack or cocaine).

**Figure 8: Percentage of 13-year-olds who had drunk alcohol in the last year, classified by child's sex, mother's education and family income (equivalised)**





## SUMMARY

The findings show that the children are generally getting on very well with their parent(s). There appear to be some differences, however, in their interactions with their mothers and fathers. More children said they spent time *talking* to their mother (70%) than to their father (60%). In contrast, a higher percentage spent time doing *fun things* with their father (72%) than with their mother (63%).

Substantial proportions of both boys and girls had discussed sex and relationships with their parents – 42% of boys and 51% of girls.

In general, 13-year-olds had a positive self-image. Boys had a more positive self-image than girls. An exception to this was the higher self-image that girls had in terms of their behaviour, indicating less problematic behaviours among girls than boys.

A very large majority (91%) of 13-year-olds had never smoked a cigarette, 7% had smoked at some point but not in the last year and 2% said they currently smoked. Similarly, a large majority (85%) had never taken alcohol. A small percentage (0.6%) of 13-year-olds recorded that they drank alcohol *once a month or more*.





***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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If you would like further information about  
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