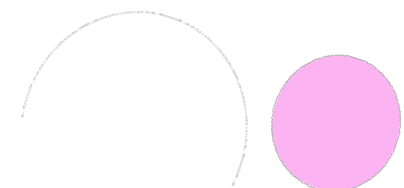




Off to a Good Start? Primary School Experiences and the Transition to Second-Level Education

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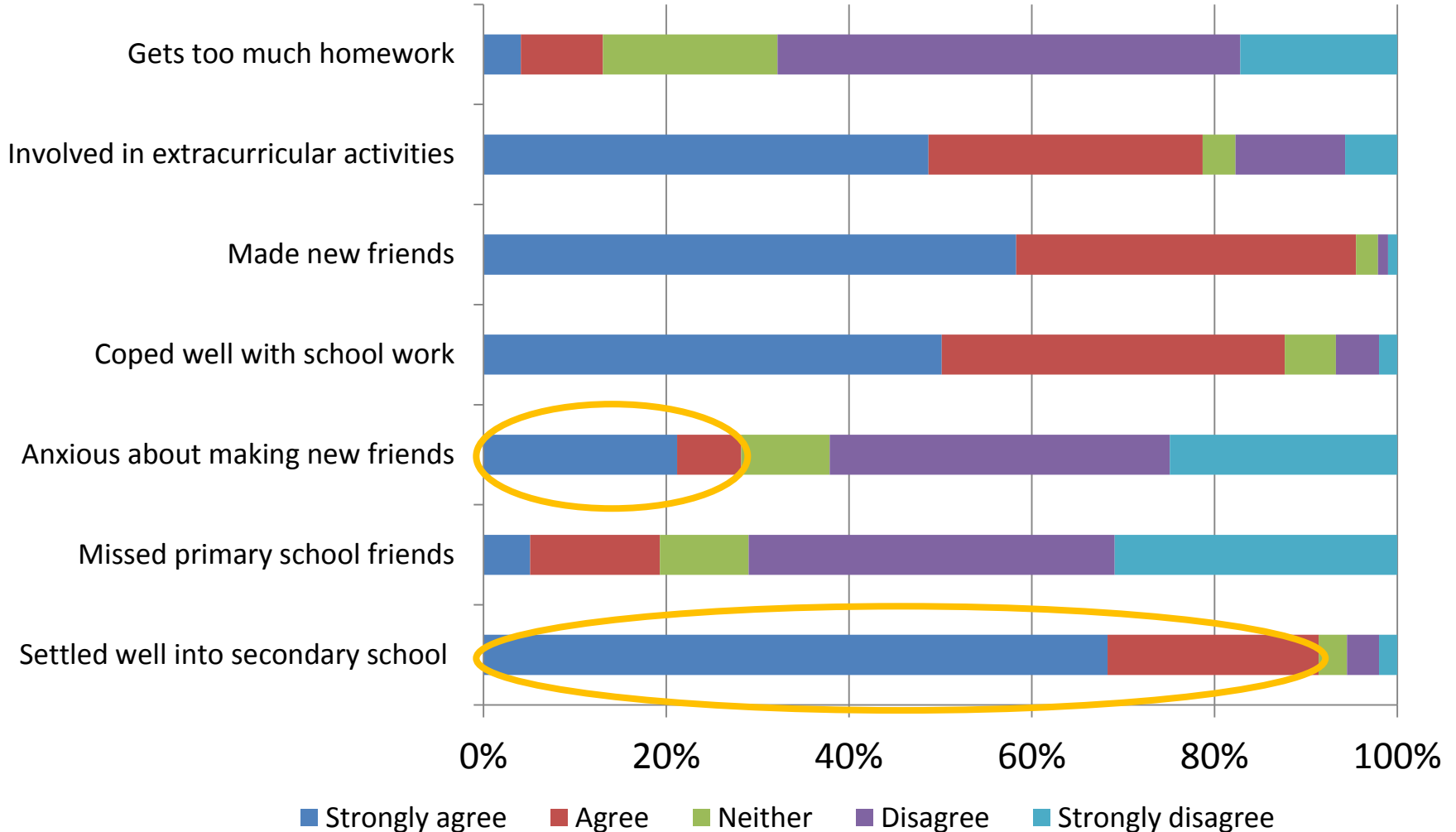
Introduction

- Transition from primary to second-level education involves new subjects, different relationships with teachers and a new peer group
- Focus of the report:
 - To what extent are young people’s social relationships with significant others (parents, peers, teachers) associated with their adjustment to second-level education?
 - Is young people’s engagement with school at age 13 related to their earlier experiences at primary level?
 - To what extent are the ease of transition and school engagement associated with initial experiences of second-level education?

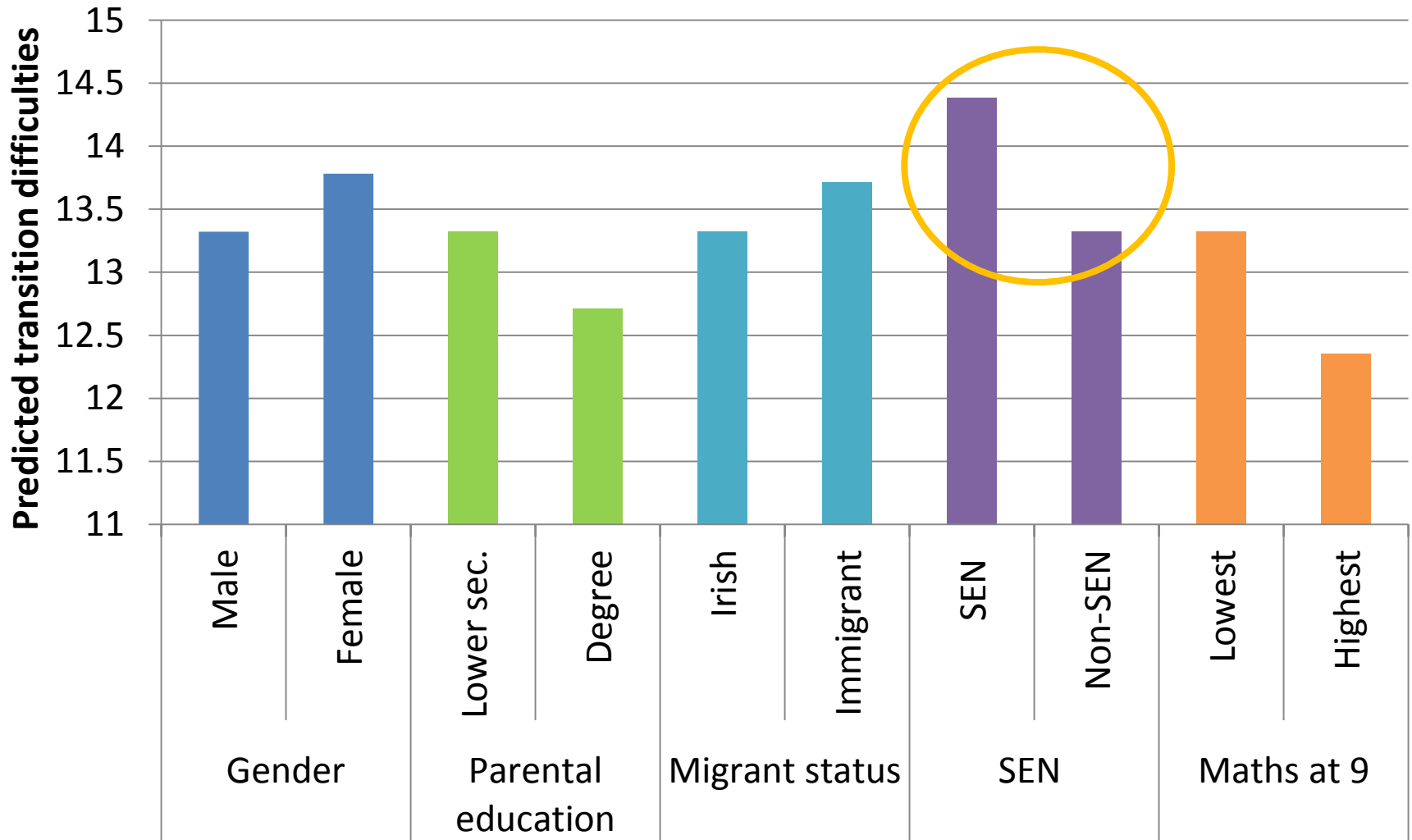
Outcomes

- Adjustment to second-level education:
 - Transition difficulties, as reported by the primary care-giver
 - Academic self-image (Piers Harris scale)
- School engagement:
 - Attitudes to school
 - Attitudes to school subjects (English, Irish, Maths, Science)
 - Attendance
- Analytical approach: multilevel modelling, using a range of background factors and taking account of longitudinal measures

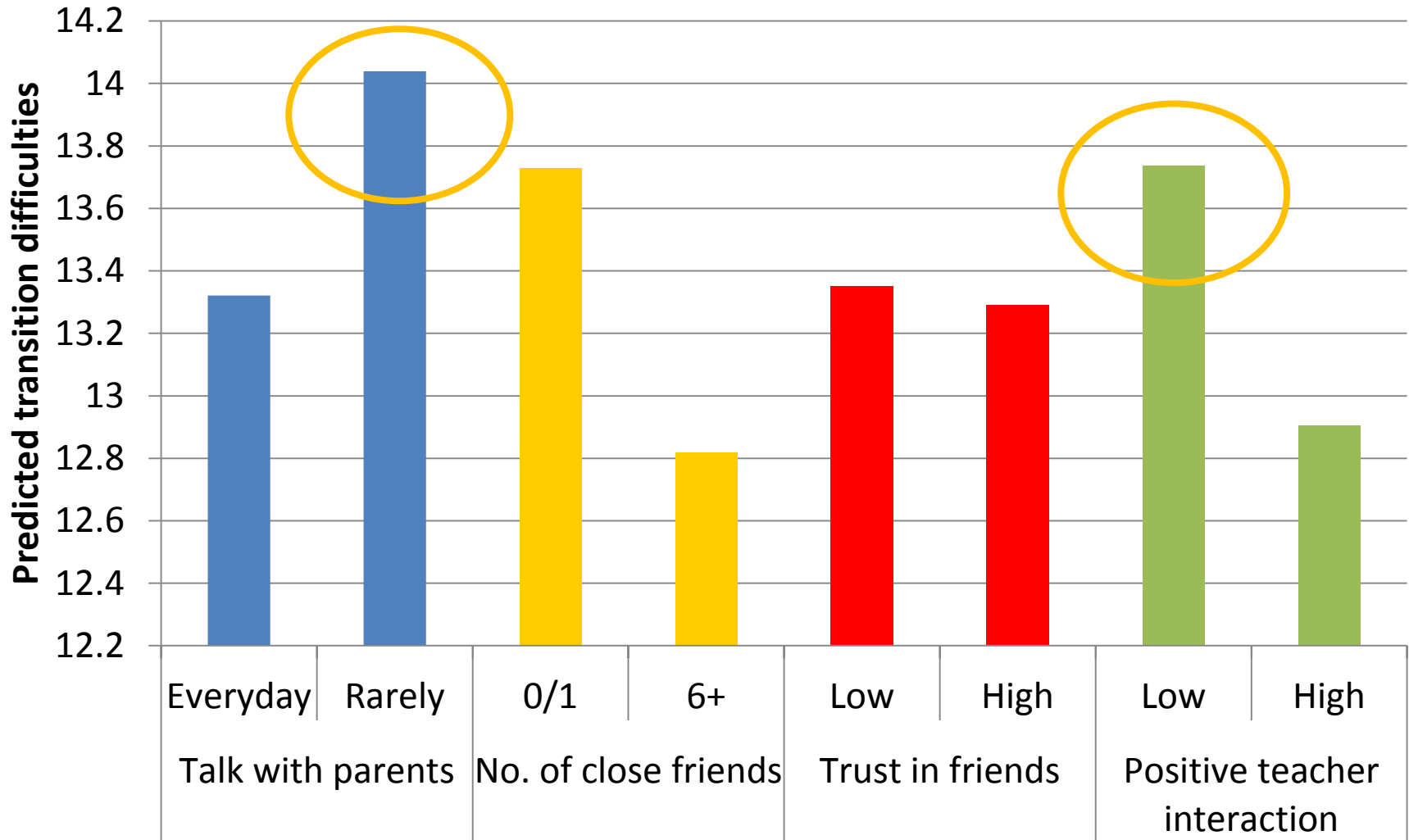
Transition difficulties



Transition difficulties and background



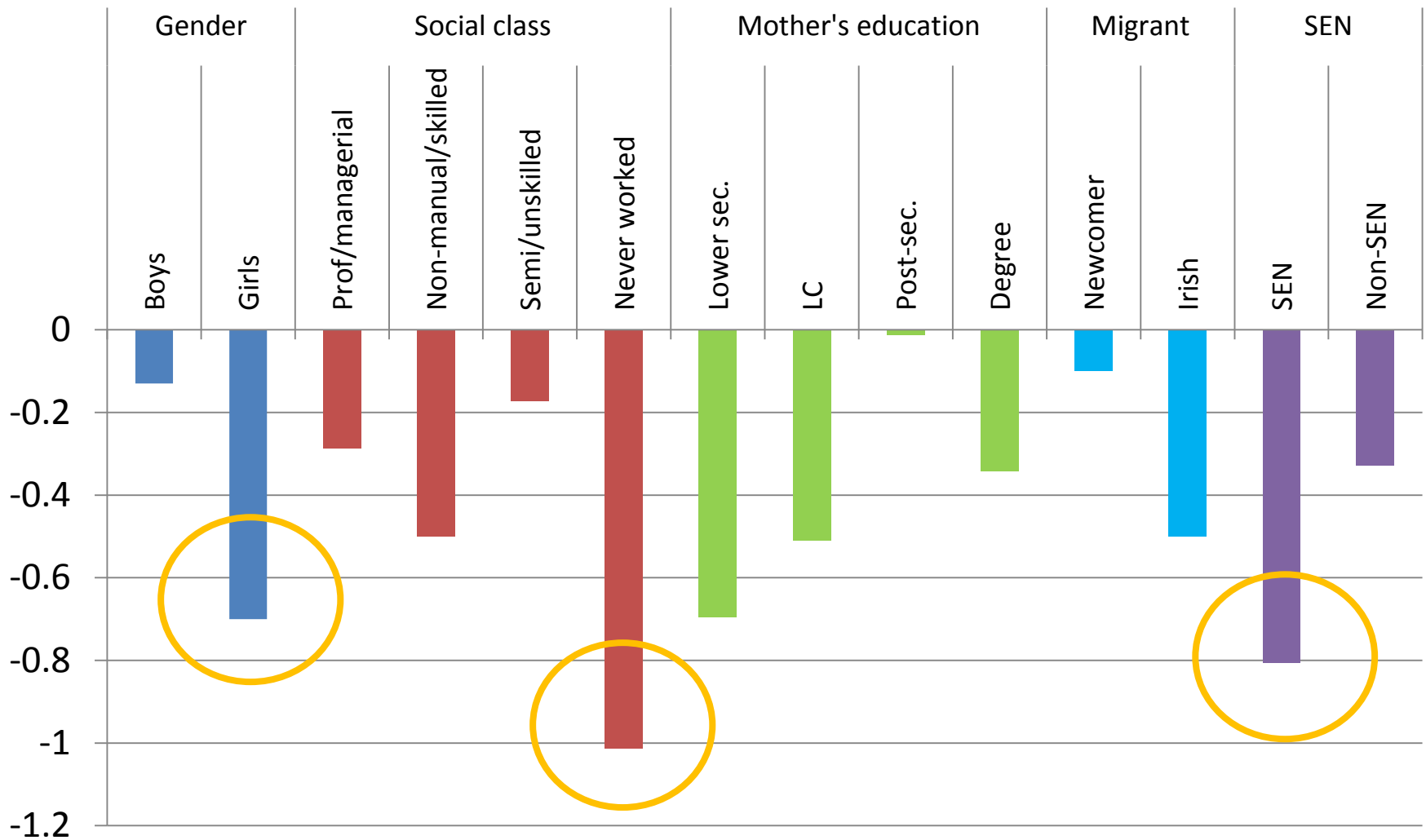
Transition difficulties and social relationships



Formal parental involvement

- Help with homework: fewer transition difficulties among those who rarely/never received help – academic preparedness
- Attendance at parent-teacher meetings (age 9) and school-based events (13) are associated with fewer difficulties

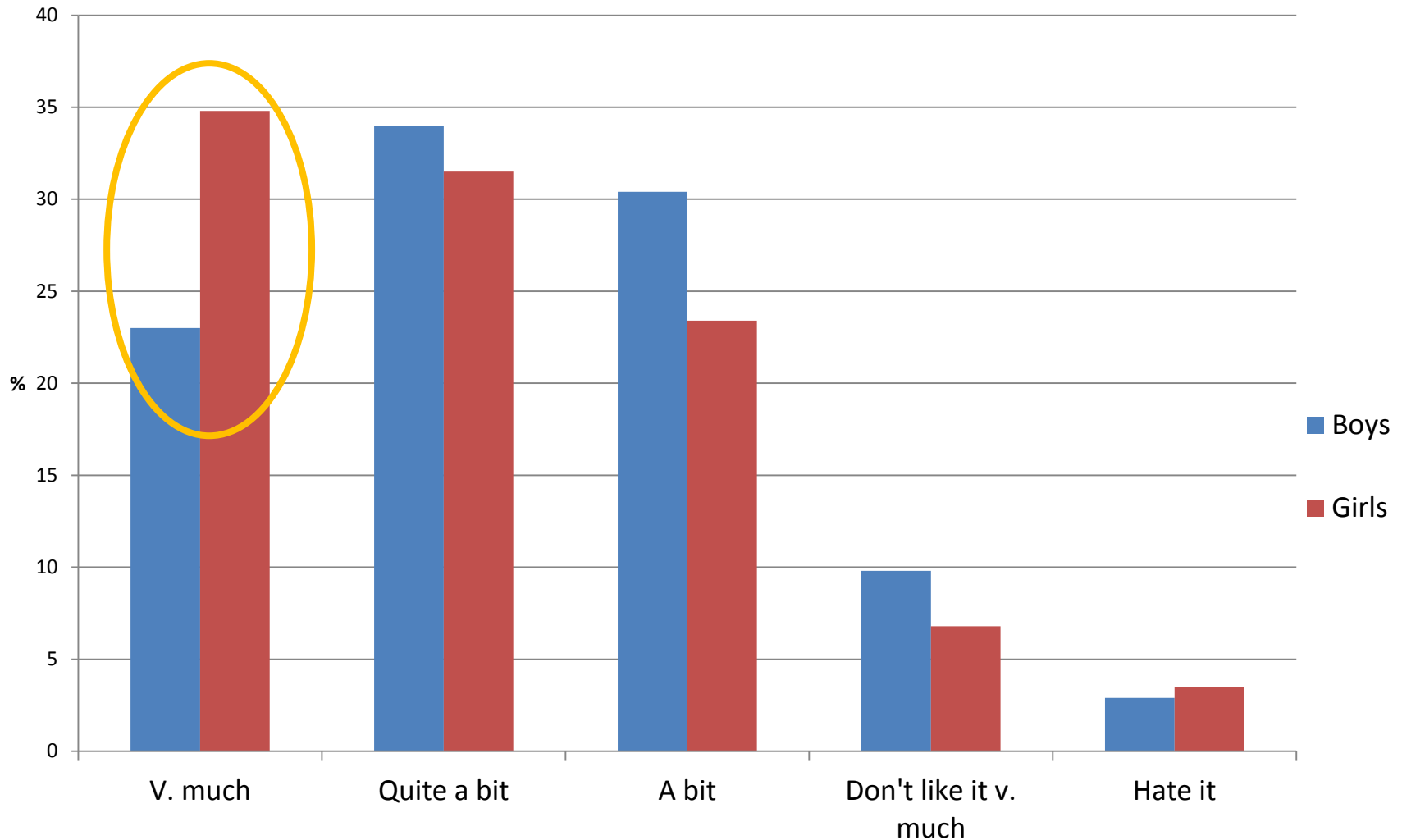
Change in academic self-image between 9 and 13 years of age



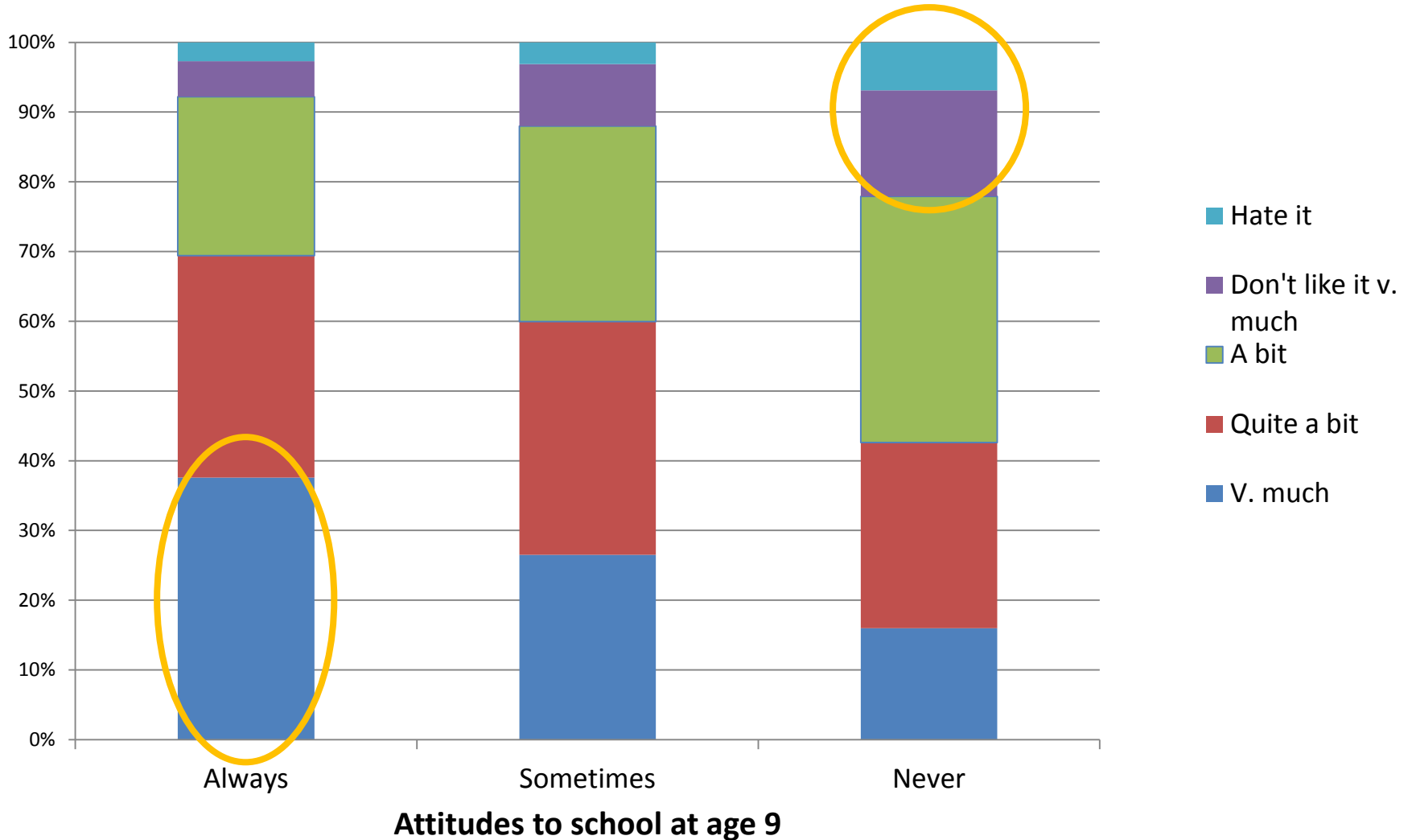
Influence of school factors on academic self-image

- Primary school:
 - Not liking their teacher and not liking reading or Maths are associated with poorer self academic-self image 4 years later
- Experiencing transition difficulties leads to young people feeling less confident as learners
- Second-level school:
 - The quality of interaction with teachers is a strong influence on self-image: role of praise v. reprimand
 - Being in second year is associated with a decline in self-image
 - Subject difficulty and interest

Attitudes to school at age 13



Stability in attitudes between 9 and 13



Negative attitudes to school at 13

- Background factors:
 - Boys
 - Families with lower levels of education
 - Lone parent families
 - Young people with SEN
- Primary school experiences:
 - Negative attitudes to school, teachers and subjects at age 9
 - Lowest reading scores at 9
- Second-level experiences:
 - Transition difficulties
 - Being in second year
 - Nature of interaction with second-level teachers
 - Finding second-level subjects not interesting
 - Finding second-level subjects difficult

Does the school attended matter?

- Significant differences in transition difficulties, academic self-image and attitudes to school by both primary and second-level school, controlling for background factors and prior reading achievement
- Type of school makes less difference
- But greater transition difficulties and more negative attitudes to school in DEIS schools (Urban Band 1)

Conclusions

- Social and gender differentiation in experience of transition process
- Greater difficulties for young people with SEN
- Relationships play a protective role in easing the transition to second-level education: parents, peers, teachers
- Primary school experiences are highly influential: positive experience of school and subjects, acquisition of foundational skills (especially Maths)
- Second-level experiences: interaction with teachers; subject interest and difficulty

Implications for policy

- Engaging primary school experience for all; early experience of Maths is particularly important (NCCA review of primary curriculum)
- Role of foundational skills highlights importance of literacy and numeracy strategy
- Evidence of social inequality in experiences and outcomes at individual and school level; implications for DEIS programme
- Inclusion of young people with SEN
- Dip in student engagement in second year reinforces case for junior cycle reform; importance of a broader repertoire of teaching and assessment methods
- Positive school climate; implications for school discipline policy