



Children of Migrants in Ireland: How are they faring?

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Introduction

- Rapid migration to Ireland in the early 2000s led to increase in the number of adults born outside Ireland - and children born in Ireland whose parents were born abroad
- Some claim the outcomes of these children - the 'second-generation' - is the 'litmus test' of integration (OECD, 2018)
- This report considers how 'migrant-origin' children differ from children with Irish parent(s) in terms of (English) language skills and self-concept
- These children were all born in Ireland: some have one parent born abroad; some have both parents born abroad; diverse in parents origin, ethnicity, language background

Why Language & Self-Concept?

- Host-country language proficiency major factor in migrant integration and outcomes of migrant children (Kristen et al., 2016; Isphording, et al. 2016).
- This is true for learning in school and academic outcomes - but also for forming friendships, sports participation etc (Darmody et al. 2016)
- Delay in language acquisition may undermine equality of opportunities – both in childhood and later life (Cavallo and Russo, 2020).
- Language only one, if very important part of children's lives: How do children see themselves- perceptions of their own behaviour, appearance, popularity, life satisfaction also important- their '**self-concept**'

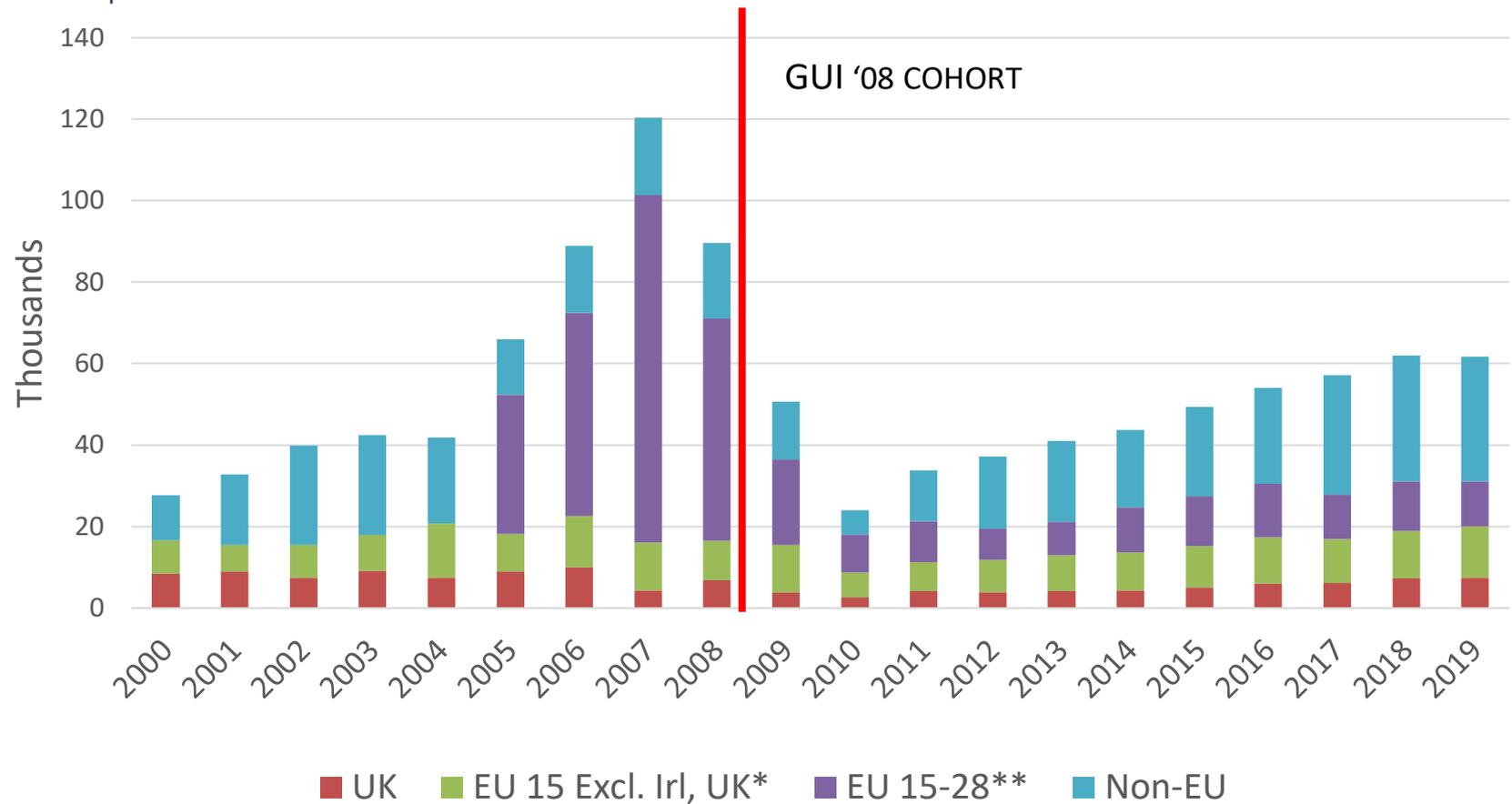
Previous research

- **Family factors** influencing outcomes of migrant-origin children
 - Parents' country of origin (Flisi, et al., 2016);
 - Parents' ethnicity (Crosnoe and Turley, 2011);
 - Family structure (1 or 2 parents?); if 2, one Irish parent? (Sprong and Skopek, 2021);
 - Parents' linguistic background (Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2015; Turney & Kao, 2009),
 - parents' socio-economic background and educational attainment (Crosnoe, 2007 ; Bradley et al., 2001).
- **Pre-school participation /School-level factors**- school size, socio-economic and ethnic segregation (Levels and Dronkers, 2008); student-teacher relationships (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009).

Research questions

1. How is young children's English language ability related to their parents' country of origin, native language & their ethnicity?
2. Do family resources – income and education - account for any 'migrant-origin penalty'?
3. Does migrant-origin children's experience of preschool and school in Ireland contribute to differences in language skills observed?
4. How do English-language skills develop over time – do migrant-origin children catch up between 3 and 9 years?
5. Do migrant-origin children differ in their self-concept from Irish origin peers at age 9?

Immigration to Ireland 2000-2019



Source: CSO, 'Population and migration estimates', up to end April of reference year.

The Growing Up in Ireland '08 Cohort

WAVE 1 Age
9m



2008 (11,134)

- Parents interview (face-to-face)
- child physical measures

WAVE 2
Age 3



2011 (9,793)

- Parents interview
- Cognitive tests, including vocab (in English)**

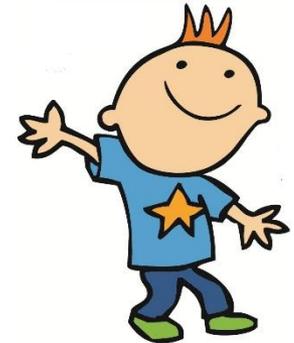
WAVE 3
Age 5



2013 (9,001)

- Parent interview inc age of school start
- COGNITIVE TEST (in English)**
- Teacher questionnaires

WAVE 5
Age 9



2017 (7,563)

- Parent interview
- Child questionnaire, including **self concept**
- School info
- Child English reading test**

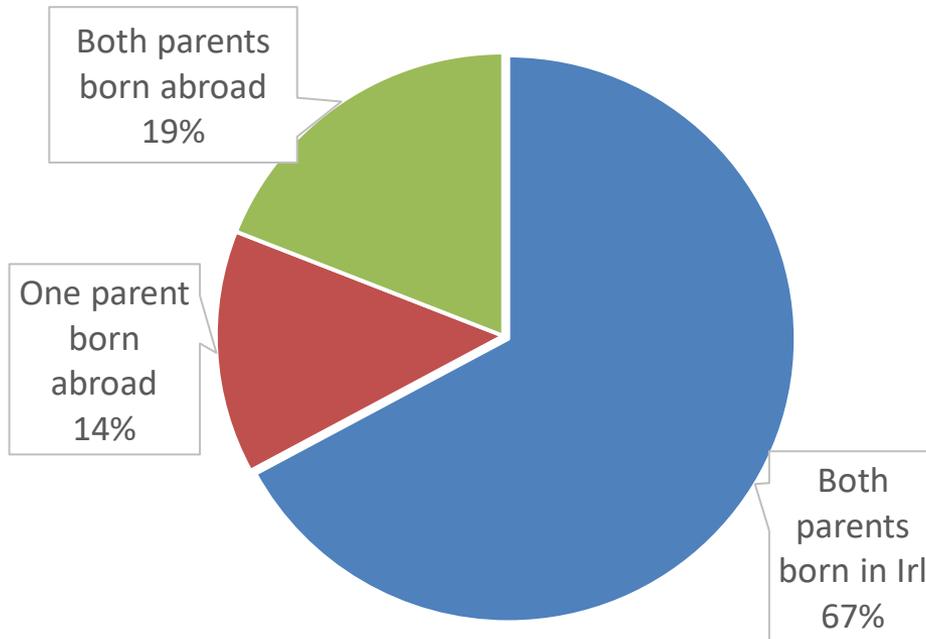
Extensive Info on child, family background, school/creche info

Data and Methods

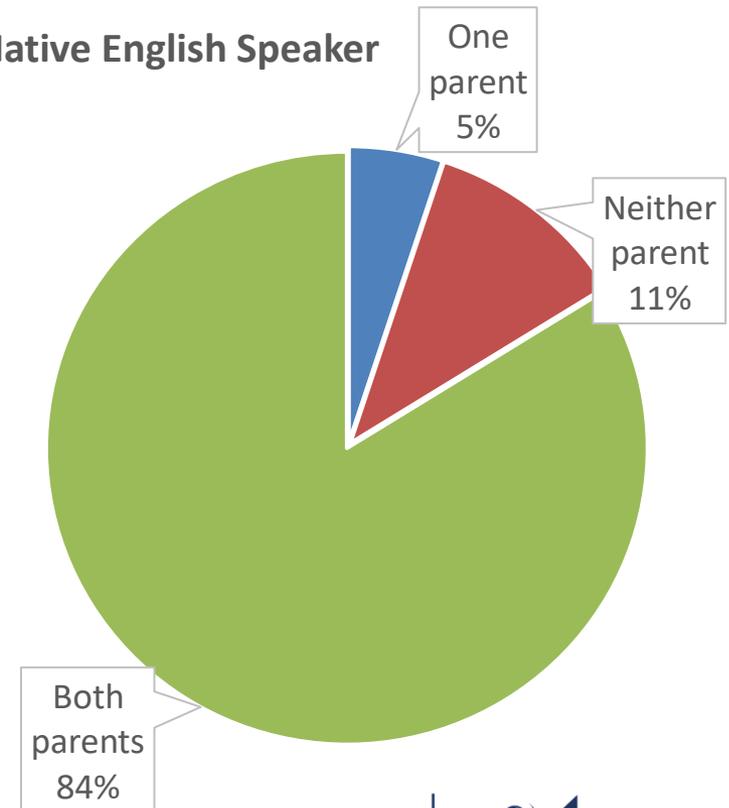
- Migrant-origin = one or both parents born abroad
- Distinguish **parental CoB, linguistic background and ethnicity**
- **Outcomes:**
 - Naming (English) Vocabulary scale from British Ability Scales (Elliott, et al, 1996)
 - Drumcondra (English) Reading Test at Age 9 (close to curriculum)
- **Models** of mean English vocabulary/reading and self-concept scores (OLS)
- We also consider low English vocab/reading achievement (lowest quintile or fifth)
- Models to explore progression over time in language (LDV)

Children of migrants - background

Parents Country of Birth

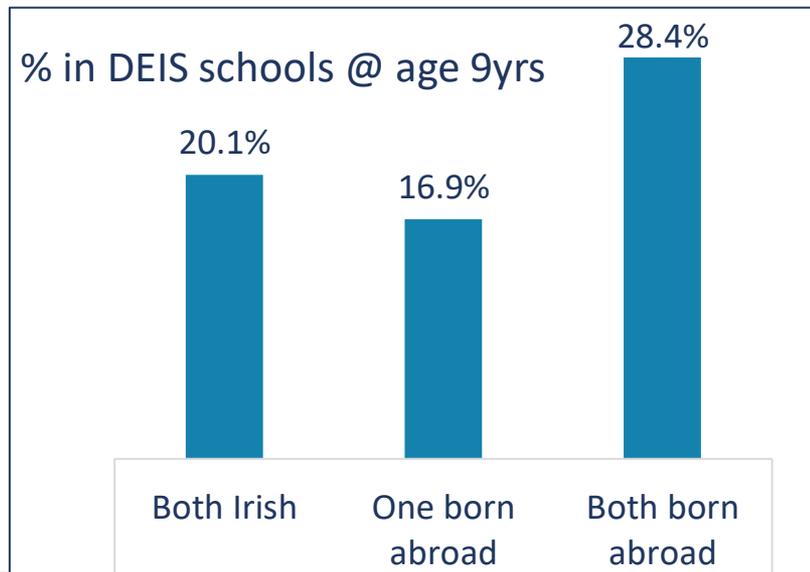
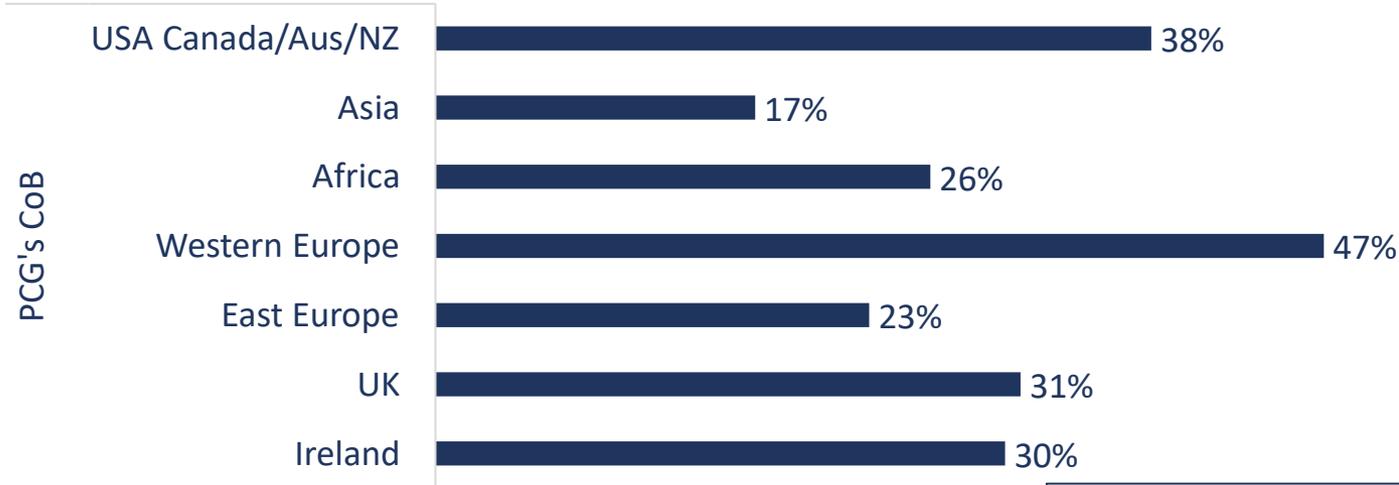


Native English Speaker

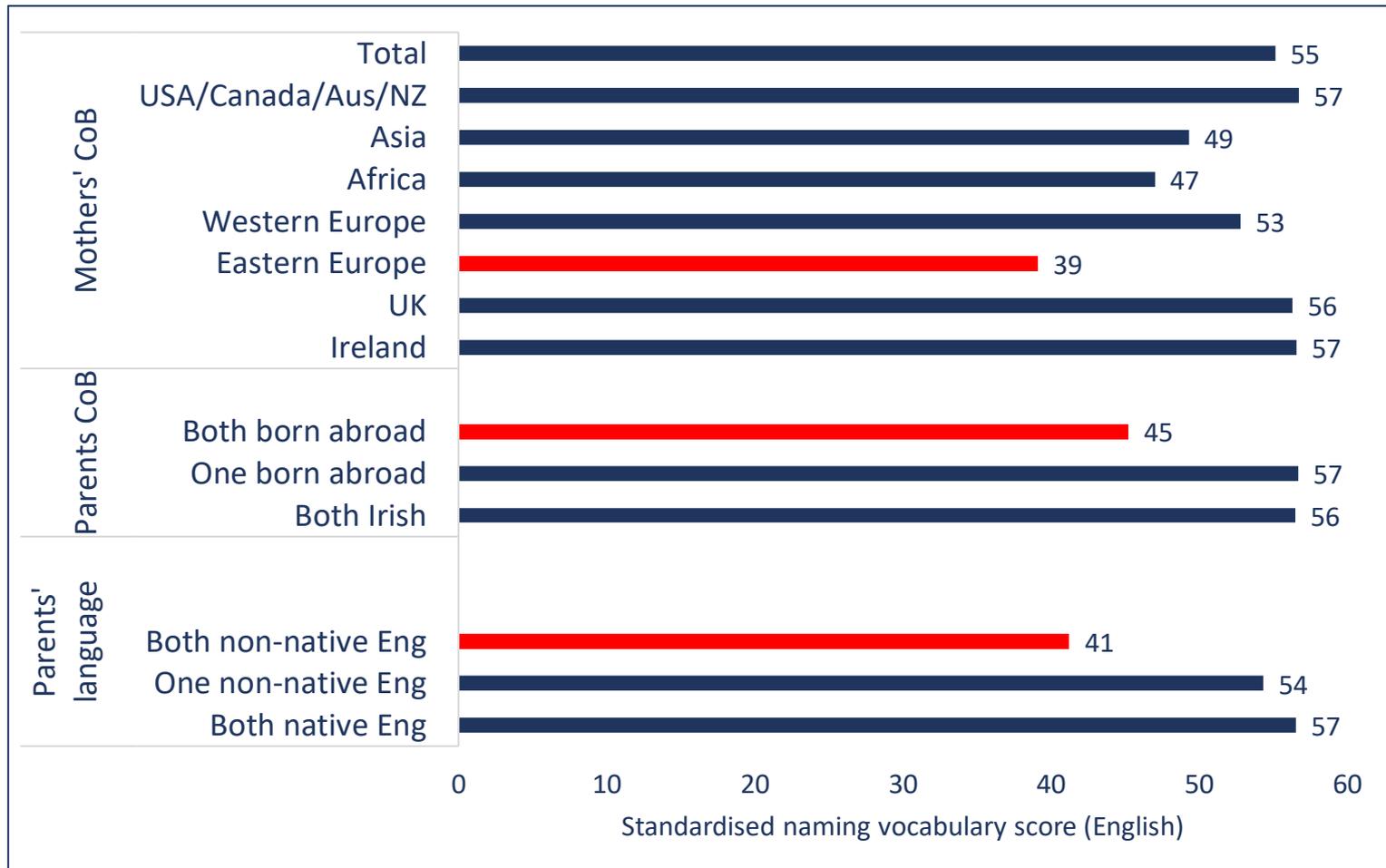


Differences in access to preschool or school type?

% Children in Centre-based Care 3yrs



1 Outcome: English vocabulary score (age 5)



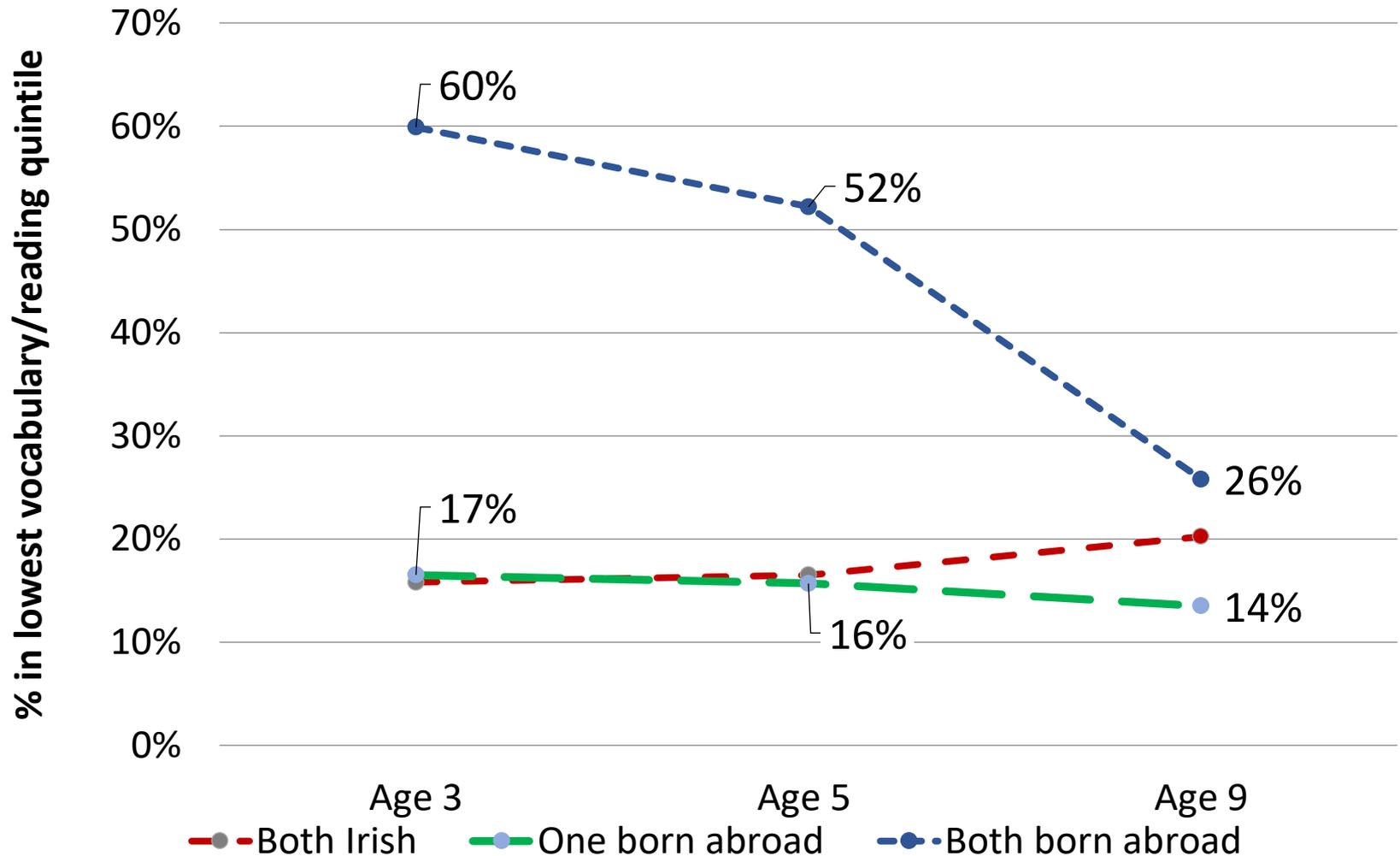
Source: GUI '08 cohort W3, weighted by longitudinal weight.

Note: 'Both' includes single parent families. CoB stands for country of birth.

Factors linked to English vocabulary

- Parents country of origin & linguistic background
- No additional effect of parents (minority) ethnicity after parents' origin country and language controlled
- Children from 'mixed' backgrounds (eg 1 Irish parent, 1 immigrant) do not differ in vocabulary from children with 2 Irish parents
- Schools: Children in disadvantaged schools have lower vocabulary score, even after family bckgrnd controls
- High proportion of migrants in school – not associated with reading scores (after family background controls)

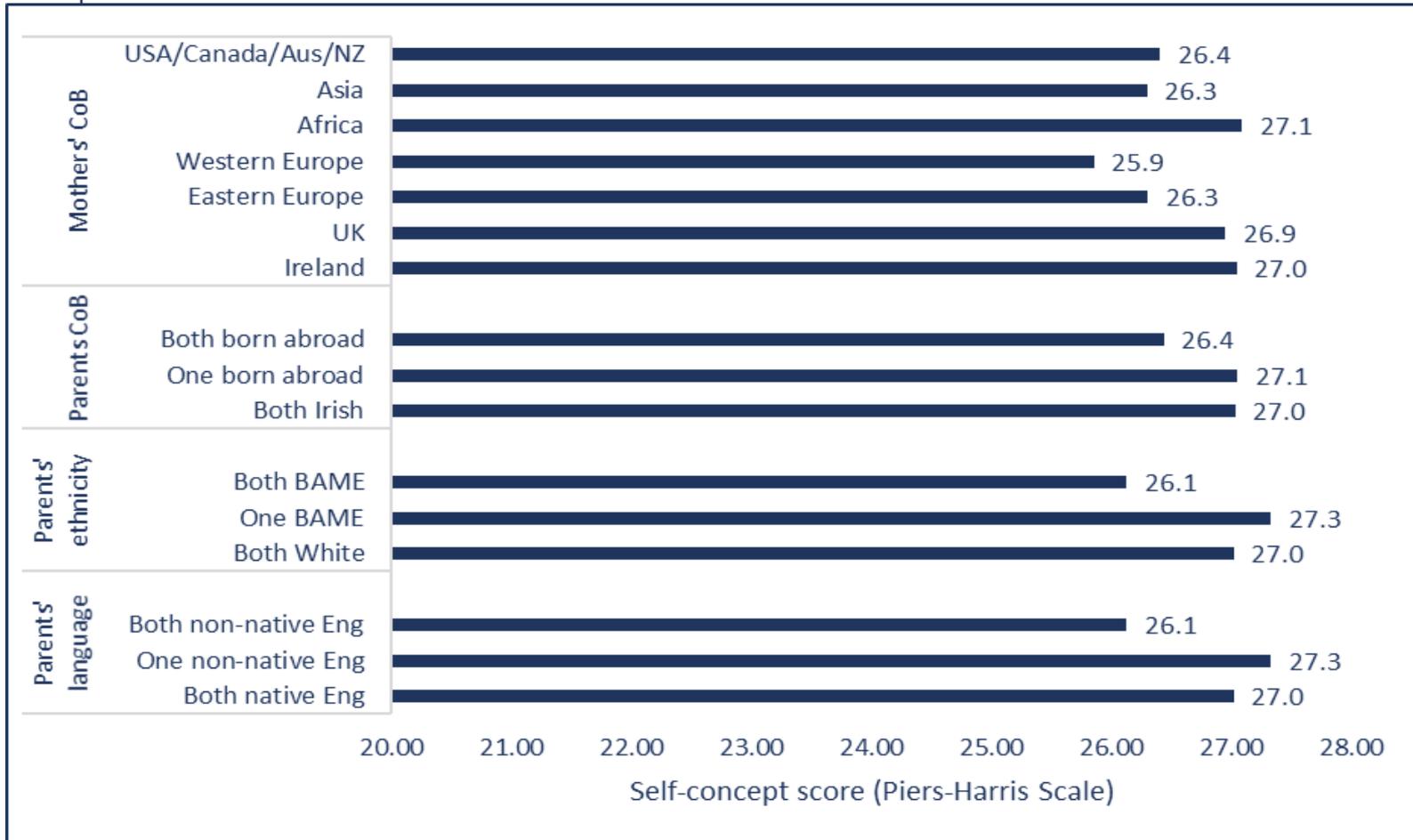
2. Over time: Narrowing gap in vocab/reading scores from 3yrs to 9yrs



Children's language development between age 3 and 9

- Migrant-origin children progress faster in English language development than Irish peers
- Esp between age 5 and age 9 (at school)
- Migrant origin children move out of the lowest quintile (fifth) – and almost ‘catch up’
- By age 9 much smaller differences, if any, between migrant-origin and Irish children

3. Self-concept at age 9 (mean scores)



Factors linked to self-concept at 9

- Mostly **migrant-origin children do not differ** from Irish-origin children in self concept.
- Having two parents, parents with more resources (money/education), being a girl, no SEN and playing a team sport associated with higher self-concept
- Having no native English-speaking parent in the house was associated with lower self concept, largely explained by socio-economic resources
- After all controls, **West European-origin kids lowest** self-concept; **African-origin kids highest**

Some Policy Implications

- Migrant-origin children, in general, are progressing well in English-language skills in primary school, tho **useful to monitor policy effort** for those struggling
- The findings do highlight the importance of **accessing quality learning at pre-school for migrant-origin kids**
- Migrant-origin children more likely to be in DEIS Urban Band schools, so enhanced supports here will benefit them
- Supporting parents' language useful to promote liaison with schools

Key Messages

- Linguistic background greater role than parental region of origin or ethnicity for language skills
- Strong progress in performance in English expressive vocabulary/ reading for migrant-origin kids in Ireland between age 5 and 9.
- Despite catch-up, children who have both parents non-native English-speakers are at a disadvantage at nine
- Children with one Irish parent or one English-speaking parent do not differ from children with 2 Irish/English speaking parents
- Little or no difference between migrant-origin and Irish-origin children in their self-concept at age 9

Thanks for listening! Comments welcome

Want to read more:

<https://www.esri.ie/publications/children-of-migrants-in-ireland-how-are-they-faring>

Coming soon:

Origin and Integration: Housing and Family of Migrants in Ireland

Disrupted Transitions? Impact of COVID on GUI '98 Cohort

Vocabulary scores at age 9

