

**CHILD  
COHORT**  
NOVEMBER  
2016



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

# GROWING UP IN IRELAND

## KEY FINDINGS: CHILD COHORT AT 17/18 YEARS

### NO. 1: EDUCATION AND EARLY WORK EXPERIENCES

#### INTRODUCTION

This Key Finding presents summary information on the educational and early work experiences of young people from the third wave of interviews with *Growing Up in Ireland's (GUI)* older Child Cohort, when the young people were 17/18 years of age.

17/18-year-olds are on the cusp of a new stage of life, the transition from secondary school to further education or the workforce. To assist in the planning of appropriate structures and supports for young people it is important to understand their experiences of the education system: whether or not they liked school, how they fared academically and the skills they developed, as well as their intentions regarding further education, training or entry to the workforce following school. Educational experiences and outcomes will have a major impact on subsequent life chances, especially given the role of Leaving Certificate performance in accessing post-school education/training and employment.

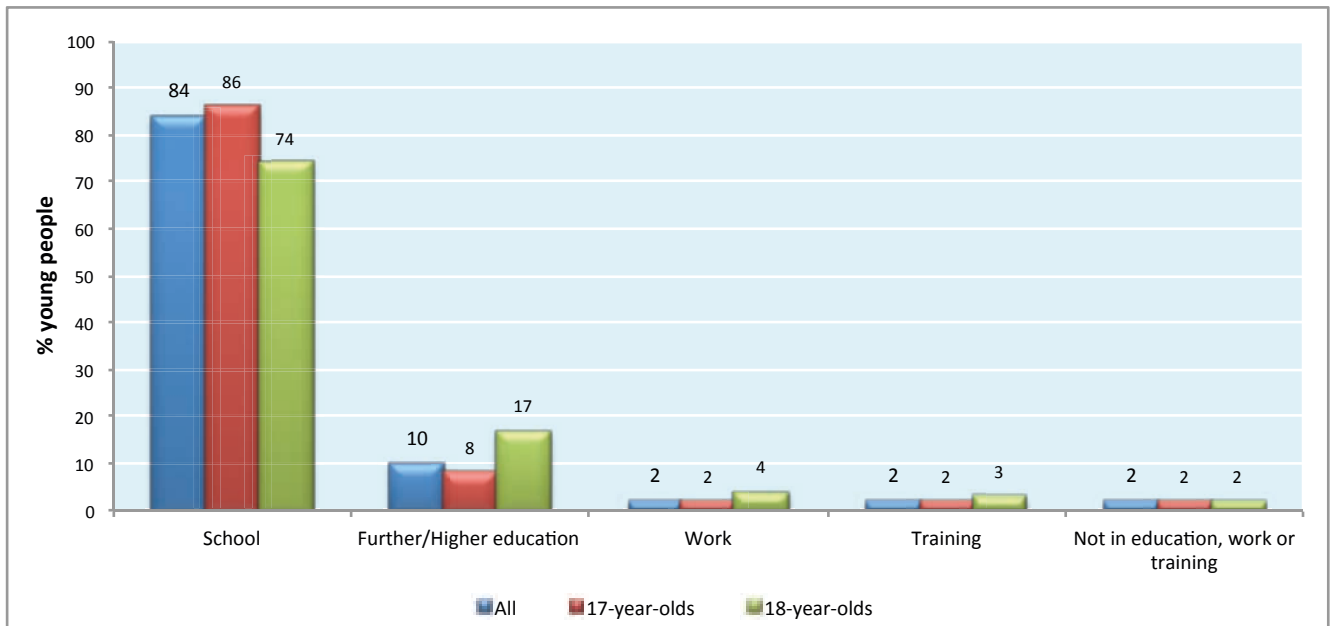
A total of 80% of the cohort was 17 years of age, with the remaining 20% being 18 years old. Almost all (over 99%) of the young people's main address was their parental home. Most of the young people (80%) lived in two-parent households, the remainder in one-parent households. The main caregiver for 95% of 17/18-year-olds was their mother. For ease of discussion in this series of Key Findings at 17/18 years of age we will use the term 'Mother's education' throughout to refer to main caregiver educational attainment.

## EDUCATION AND WORK STATUS

### The majority of 17/18-year-olds were still studying in school

- 84% were still in school with 10% in further/higher education, 2% were working, another 2% were training, and 2% reported not being engaged in any of these activities.
- As would be expected, young people who had already turned 18 years were more likely to have moved on from secondary school into further/higher education<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Education and work status for 17- and 18-year-olds**



- Just over half (53%) were in 6th year (their Leaving Certificate year) with a further 8% repeating the Leaving Certificate. 38% of the 17/18-year-olds who were still in school were in 5th year (their pre-Leaving Certificate year). The remainder were mostly in younger year groups.
- Of the 10% of 17/18-year-olds who were in further/higher education, 56% were studying in a university or Institute of Technology. The remainder were doing a Post Leaving Certificate course (PLC).
- Just under two-thirds of the 6% of the 17/18-year-olds who were no longer in education (secondary school or further/higher education) had completed the Leaving Certificate examinations. Just under half (43%) of them said they intended to go back to full-time education in the next year.



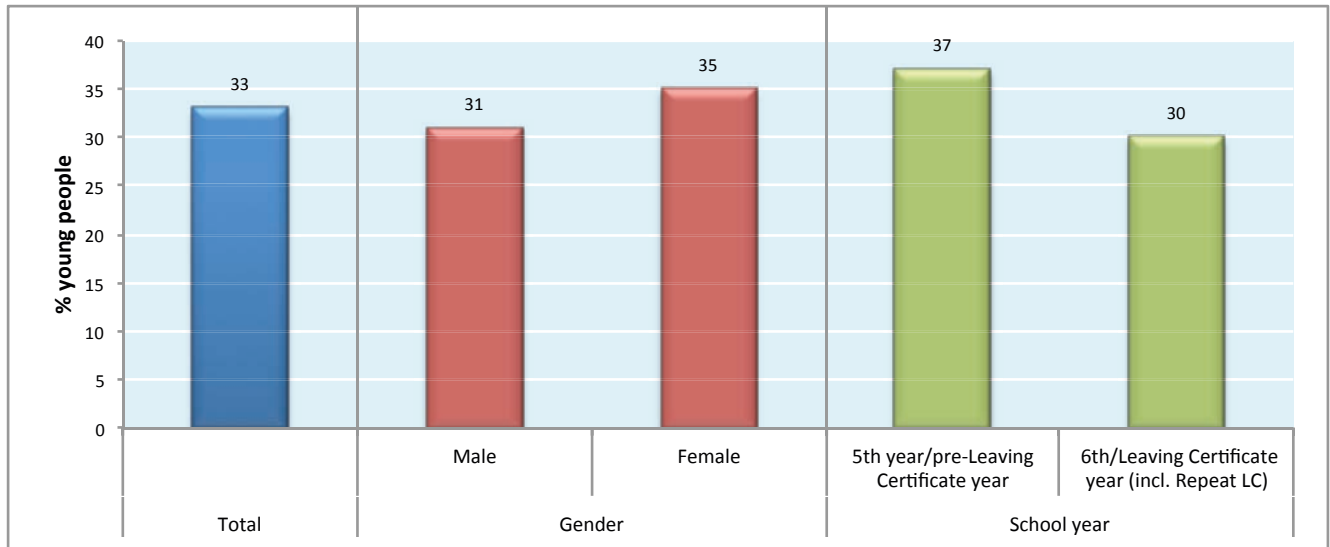
<sup>1</sup> 'Further education' includes studying a Post-Leaving Certificate Course. 'Higher education' includes studying at a university or an Institute of Technology.

## PART-TIME JOBS WHILE AT SCHOOL

A third of all 17/18-year-olds who were still in school had part-time jobs

- Slightly more females (35%) who were still in school had a part-time job compared to males (31%) (Figure 2).
- Having a part-time job while at school was less likely among students who were in their Leaving Certificate year (30%) compared to those who were in 5th year (37%) (Figure 2).
- The average time spent working during term in a part-time job was 9 hours per week, with an average weekly income of €72.

Figure 2: Young people with part-time jobs in school by gender and school year



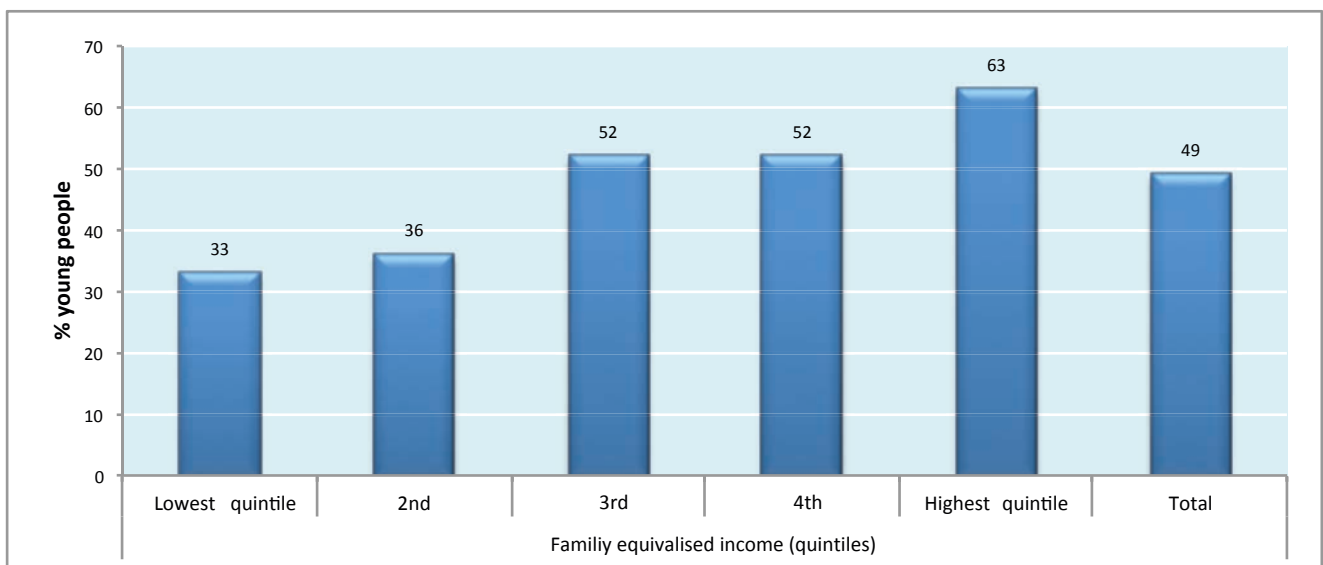


## GRINDS AND PRIVATE TUITION AMONG 17/18-YEAR-OLDS IN FINAL YEAR OF SCHOOL

### Leaving Certificate students from more advantaged families were more likely to take grinds<sup>2</sup>

- Nearly half (49%) of the young people who were in their Leaving Certificate year were taking grinds or private tuition, and a further 20% said they were planning to take grinds before they sat their exams.
- Significantly more females (53%) than males (45%) were taking grinds in their Leaving Certificate year.
- Figure 3 shows that 63% of 17/18-year-olds in the highest income quintile<sup>3</sup> were taking grinds in their Leaving Certificate year compared to 33% of young people from families in the lowest income quintile.

**Figure 3: Percentage of 17/18-year-olds in final year in school taking grinds/private tuition classified by family income**



<sup>2</sup>'Grinds' are private tuition paid for by the student or his/her family outside the school setting. These may be on a one-to-one or group basis.

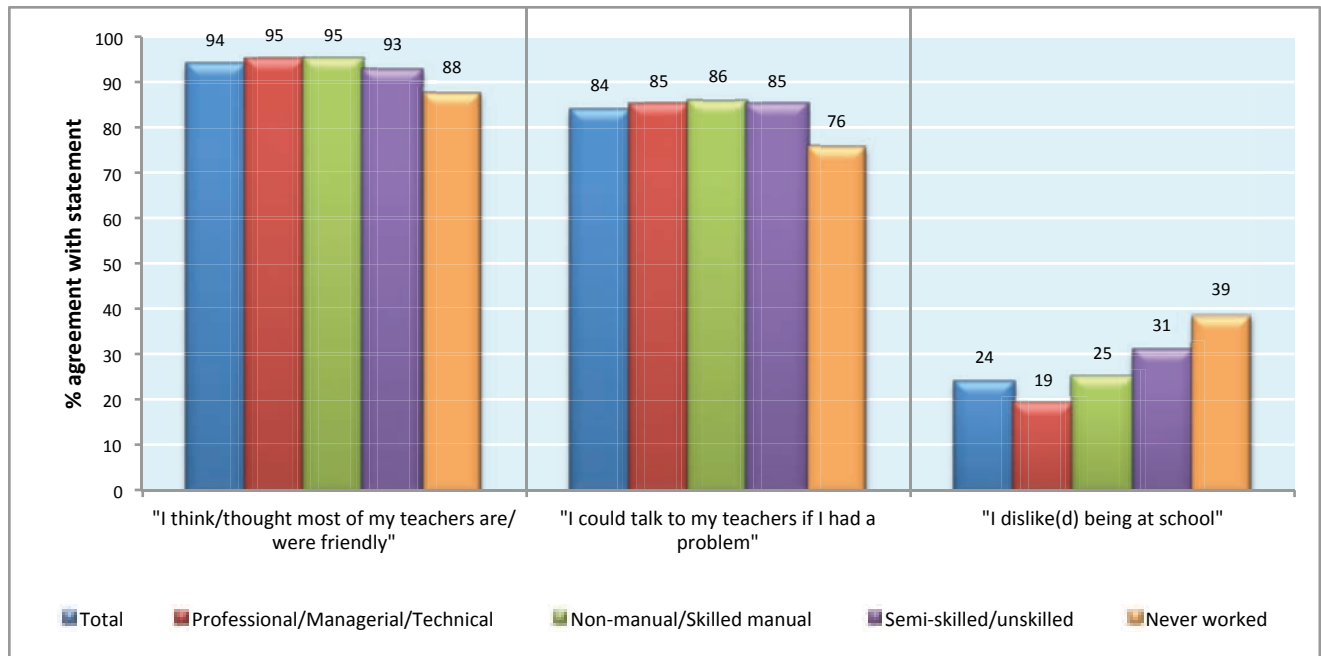
<sup>3</sup>Based on 'equivalised income' which accounts for family size and composition.

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS SCHOOL AND TEACHERS

Overall, young people had generally positive attitudes towards teachers and school in their current or final year in school

- A very high percentage of 17/18-year-olds agreed that “most of [their] teachers were friendly” (94%) and that they could “talk to [their] teachers if they had a problem” (84%).
- Notwithstanding the very high proportions who had a positive attitude towards their teachers, a sizeable minority (24%) of 17/18-year-olds said they “dislike(d) being at school”.
- Both males and females were similar in their perceptions of teachers and attitudes towards school.
- Attitudes towards school and teachers varied significantly by social class.<sup>4</sup> Young people from the most socially disadvantaged homes had more negative views of teachers and, especially, school – 39% of the most socially disadvantaged 17/18-year-olds disliked school compared with 19% of those in the most socially advantaged group (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Percentage of 17/18-year-olds agreeing with statements regarding school and teachers, classified by social class**



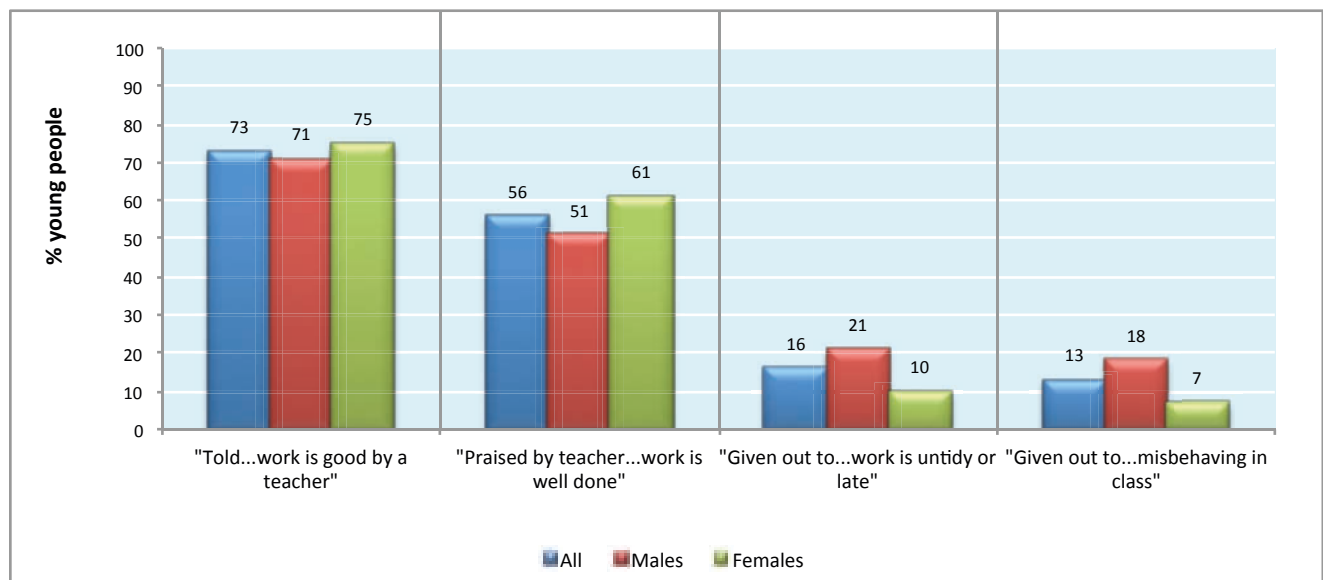
<sup>4</sup> Measured here by family's social class at the 13-year interview. This measure is largely based on occupational group.

## Young people's perception of treatment by teachers was generally positive

17/18-year-olds' perception of their treatment by teachers was examined by asking the young people how frequently they received praise or criticism from their teachers in their current or final year in school.

- Overall, young people's perception of treatment by their teachers was fairly positive, with 73% being told that their work was good and 56% being praised by their teacher because their work was well done (Figure 5).
- Figure 5 also shows that females were more likely to be frequently told by teachers that their "work is good" or be praised for their "work [being] well done", while males experienced more frequent negative feedback.
- 16%, however, said they had been "given out"<sup>5</sup> to by the teacher because their "...work was untidy or late" and 13% due to "...misbehaving in class".

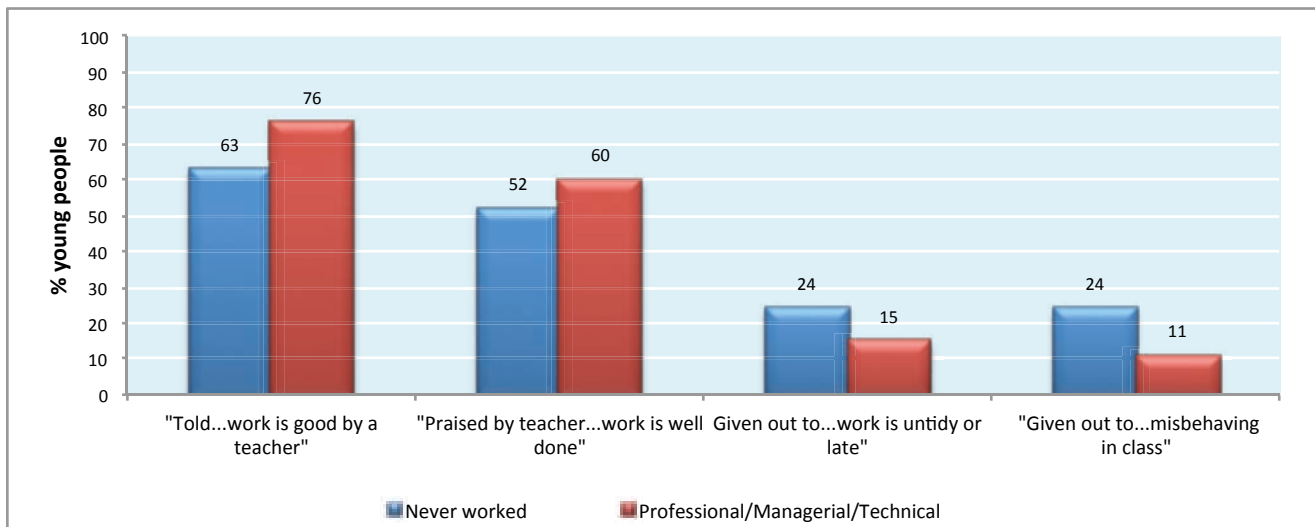
**Figure 5: Percentage of males and females reporting *very often/often* for statements relating to treatment by teachers**



- Young people from the most socially disadvantaged families (those in the 'Never worked' social group) reported more negative experiences with teachers than those from families in the Professional/Managerial/Technical group (the most socially advantaged families). Young people from more disadvantaged families were significantly more likely to say they were given out to for "...misbehaving in class" (24% compared to 11% of those from the most socially advantaged families) or because their work was "...untidy or late" (24% compared to 15%). Similarly, they were less likely to report having been "praised by a teacher...work is well done" (60% compared to 52%) or told by a teacher that their "work is good" (76% compared to 63%) (Figure 6).



<sup>5</sup> "Given out" is a term used in Ireland to signify reprimand.

**Figure 6: Perception of treatment by teachers, classified by social class**

**67% of young people consistently liked school from 9 to 17/18 years. The proportion disliking school, however, increased with age**

- A total of 6% of 9-year-olds disliked school. This increased to 11% of 13-year-olds and 24% of 17/18-year-olds.
- Table 1 shows that 67% of 17/18-year-olds consistently said they liked school at 9, 13 and 17/18 years of age.
- Notably, however, 18% of 17/18-year-olds said they liked school at 9 and 13 years of age but disliked it at 17/18 years. A further 4% liked school at 9 years but disliked it at 13 and 17/18 years of age.
- Only a very small proportion (considerably less than 1%) of all young people consistently disliked school at 9, 13 and 17/18 years of age.
- About 3% did not like school at 9 but grew to like it at 13 and 17/18 years.

**Table 1: 17/18-year-olds classified according to their pattern of liking/disliking school at 9, 13 and 17/18 years of age**

Liked school at...			Percentage young people
9 years	13 years	17/18 years	
Yes	Yes	Yes	67%
Yes	Yes	No	18%
Yes	No	No	4%
No	Yes	Yes	3%
No	No	No	0.5%
Other patterns of like/dislike			8%

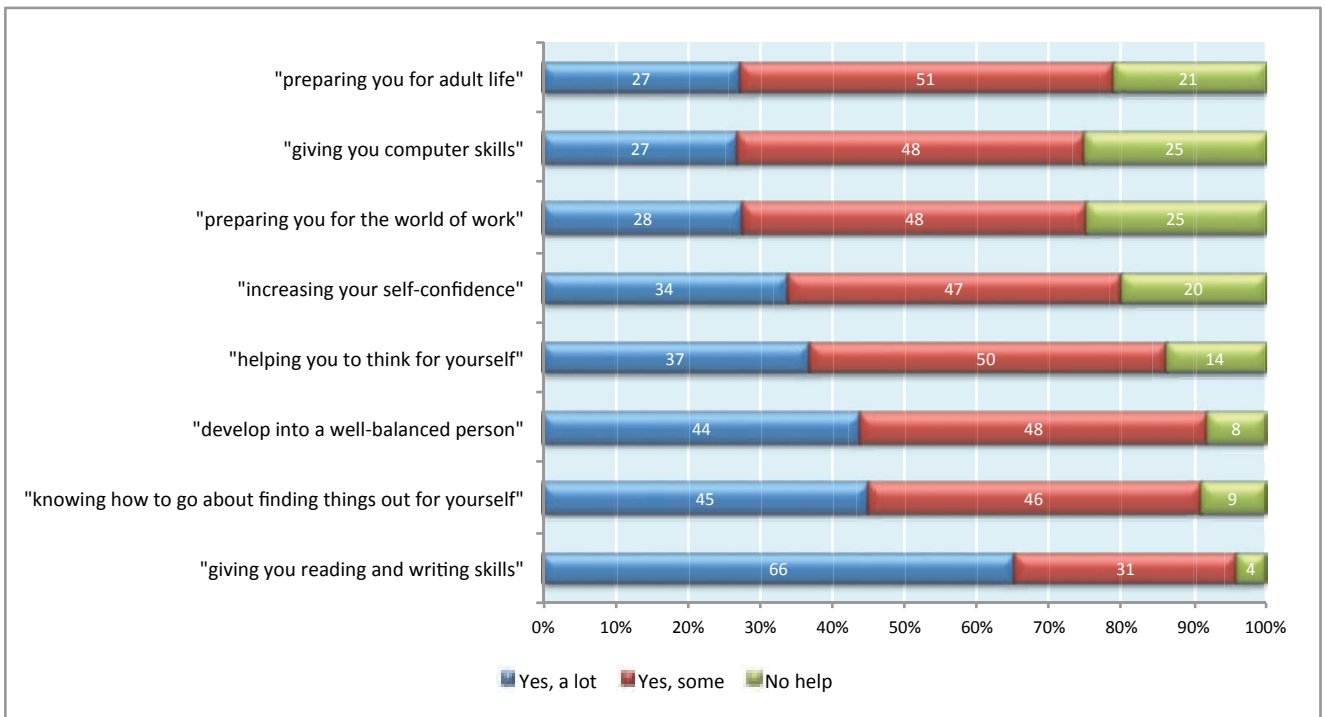


## YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL AS PREPARATION FOR LIFE

Overall, a large majority of young people reported that secondary school was beneficial in preparing them for life after school

- Substantial minorities (approximately 8-20%), however, felt that secondary school did not help them to develop into well-balanced, self-confident adults who could think for themselves (Figure 7).
- It is a particular concern that over 20% of 17/18-year-olds thought that school did not benefit them in "preparing [them] for adult life" or "the world of work". It is particularly notable that a quarter of young people said they did not think secondary school gave them "...computer skills" (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Young people's views of secondary school as beneficial in preparing them for life



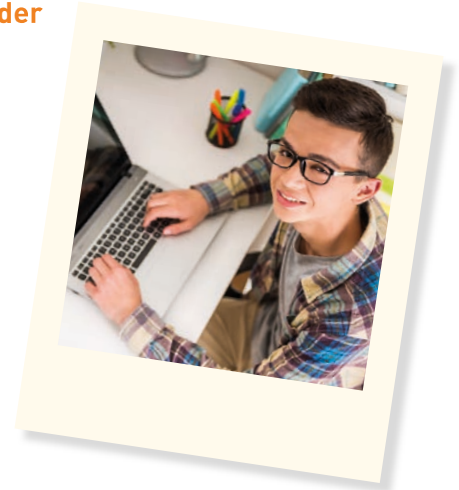
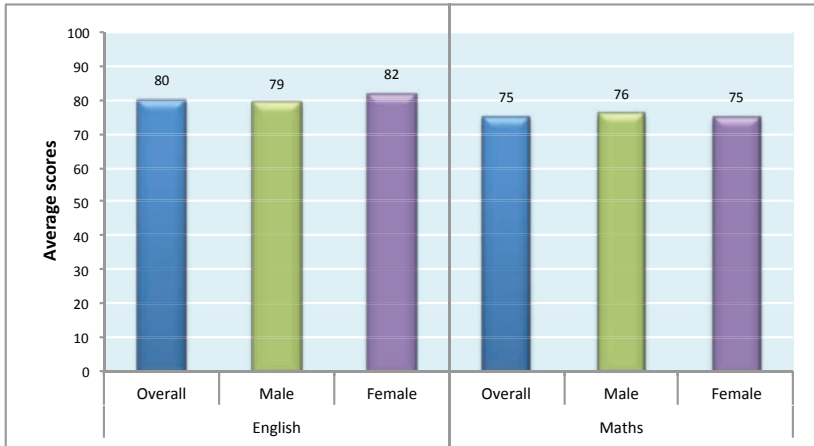


## PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL

Educational performance from 9 years onwards is consistently related to mother’s level of education

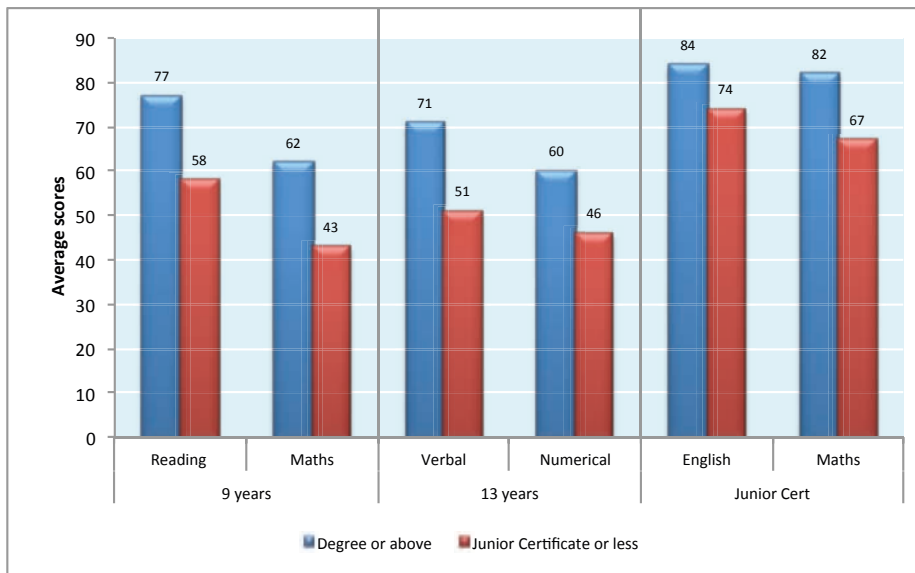
- There was no significant difference between males and females in Maths performance at Junior Certificate<sup>6</sup> level, but females performed better than males in English.

Figure 8: Junior Certificate English and Maths scores, classified by gender



- Young people from more educationally advantaged homes (in terms of mother’s education) performed somewhat better in Junior Certificate English and, especially, Junior Certificate Maths exams (Figure 9).
- Figure 9 also shows that, on average, young people from more educationally advantaged homes had consistently higher scores in English and Maths from 9 years, based on Drumcondra tests at 9 and 13 years and the Junior Certificate exam results (usually 14 – 15 years of age).

Figure 9: Maths and English scores at 9 years, 13 years and Junior Certificate by mother’s level of education



<sup>6</sup> For this analysis Junior Certificate scores were calculated on the basis of a points system similar to that used in the Leaving Certificate, as below:

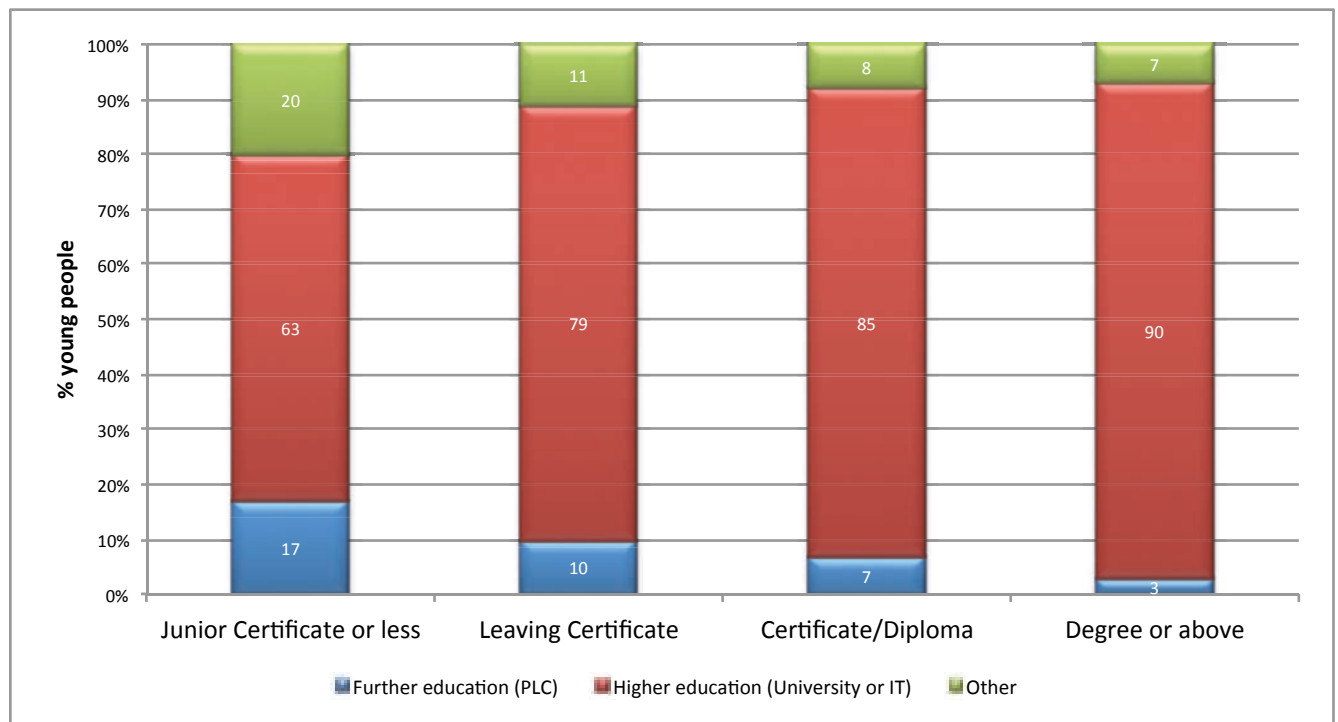
Grade							
Level	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
Higher	100	90	80	70	60	50	0
Ordinary	80	70	60	50	40	30	0
Foundation	60	50	40	30	20	10	0

## INTENTIONS REGARDING FURTHER/HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG THOSE STILL AT SCHOOL

**A substantial majority of 17/18-year-olds who were still at school intended to continue to further/higher education**

- When asked to record from a list of pre-coded categories what they were “...most likely to do...” when they left school, the overwhelming majority (89%) said they were most likely to continue to further/higher education. 80% said this would be to a higher education course in a university or Institute of Technology and 9% said to a further education course (PLC). Approximately 2% planned to go straight into work and 3% into training.
- A slightly higher proportion of females (92%) than males (86%) said they would most likely go on to further/higher education.
- Continuing to further/higher education overall was related to mother’s level of education - 80% of those whose mother’s had the lowest level of education compared to 93% among those whose mothers had a degree (Figure 10).
- The type of post-secondary education (i.e. whether ‘further’ or ‘higher’) was also related to mother’s level of education. A significantly larger proportion of 17/18-year-olds whose mother was in the highest education group said they were most likely to progress to higher education (90% compared to 63%), while a larger percentage of young people whose mother had a Junior Certificate or less intended to continue to further education (PLC) – 17% compared to 3% (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Percentage of 17/18-year-olds who said they were most likely to continue in further or higher education, classified by mother’s level of education**



Note: ‘Other’ includes training, apprenticeships, work and “taking a year out”

## SUMMARY

The majority of 17/18-year-olds were still in school at the time of interview, with a further 10% in further/higher education. Of the 84% of the cohort who were still in school, most (89%) reported that they intended continuing on to further/higher education.

Perhaps one of the most concerning issues to emerge from the figures presented in this Key Finding is the extent to which attitudes towards and performance in the education system are related to various measures of social advantage. While overall there was a fairly positive attitude towards school and teachers, young people from the most socially disadvantaged families appeared to have the most negative attitude to teachers and school. Likewise, young people whose mother had lower levels of education performed worse at Junior Certificate level in English and Maths and were somewhat less likely to aspire to higher education. Socially disadvantaged young people were also less likely to be availing of grinds/private tuition to support their second-level education.

Looking at the stability of attitudes and performance across the three interviews, the proportion of young people disliking school increased substantially from 9 to 17/18 years of age. 18% of the young people said they liked school at 9 and 13 years of age but disliked it at 17/18 years, suggesting this dislike develops during secondary school. Regarding educational performance, the social gradient seen in Junior Certificate English and Maths results is consistent with assessments at 9 and 13 years of age, where educational performance from 9 years onwards is consistently related to level of mothers education.

Additional interventions may be needed to reduce the apparent dependency of educational outcomes on family characteristics such as social class and income if a generational improvement in highest level of education at this transition point is to be achieved. The *Growing Up in Ireland* study is ideally placed to examine the mechanisms by which social and economic factors impact on educational experiences and attainment and the longitudinal impact which these have in later life.





*Growing Up in Ireland* is the National Longitudinal Study of Children. It tracks the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children: an 'Infant Cohort', interviewed initially at 9 months and with subsequent data collection waves at 3, 5 and 7/8 years of age; and a 'Child Cohort', interviewed initially at 9 years of age, subsequently at 13 and, most recently, at 17/18 years. It is the 17/18-year-olds in the Child Cohort who are the subject of this Key Findings series.

The *Growing Up in Ireland* study is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), with a contribution from The Atlantic Philanthropies for Phase 2. The project is overseen and managed by the DCYA in association with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and an inter-departmental Project Team and Steering Group. The project is being implemented by a consortium of independent researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

The Child Cohort was recruited in 2007, when 8,568 9-year-olds, their families, teachers and school principals were interviewed. Just over 7,400 young people, their families (and school principals) were re-interviewed at 13 years of age (between August 2011 and February 2012) and just over 6,200 families from this cohort participated again at 17/18 years of age (between November 2015 and September 2016).

### **Methodology**

The data were recorded using a range of administered and self-completed questionnaires. The figures discussed in this Key Finding were statistically adjusted (or 're-weighted') to account for design and inter-wave attrition using a number of standard socio-demographic controls such as family type, young person's gender, family income and social class. The data presented in this key finding were collected in home-based, face-to-face interviews with young people and their parents.

### **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) (<http://www.ucd.ie/issda/data/growingupinirelandgui/>) and the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/iqda/collections>).

**Thank you to all participants.** The success of *Growing Up in Ireland* is the result of contributions of time and effort from a large range of individuals, organisations and school staff. This landmark longitudinal research will benefit future generations of children. We are particularly grateful to the thousands of families from every part of the country who gave so generously of their time on three occasions to make this study possible. A very big 'thank you' to all these children, young people and their families.

(The figures presented in this Key Finding are purely descriptive. They do not control for potential interactions or confounding effects. All figures are preliminary and may be subject to change).



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