



Social Inequalities in Adolescent Risky Behaviours: Trends from Two Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts

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Fás Aníos in Éirinn
Growing Up in Ireland

RISKY BEHAVIOURS IN ADOLESCENCE

What are risky behaviours?

- Drinking
- Vaping
- Smoking
- Drug use

Relevance of early adolescence

- New social/peer networks, new experiences/experimentation, self-discovery
- Less parental monitoring
- First engagement in risky behaviour

Associated dangers

- Physical and mental health risks
- Engagement in anti-social and criminal activities
- Early risky behaviour often predicts subsequent behaviour

RECENT LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

SMOKING:

Tobacco Free Ireland Programme (2016):

- *Prioritise the protection of children*
- *Target 'disadvantaged' communities*
- Packaging / price
- Ban on smoking in a car with a child

DRINKING:

Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018

- *“delay initiation of alcohol consumption by young people”*
- Limits on advertising near schools, playgrounds, cinemas

VAPING:

Popularity exploded amongst young people recently:

- Ban on sale to U-18s (2023)
- Ban on single-use vapes (2024)
- Ban on certain flavours (2024)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What impact (if any) have recent legislative changes had on risky behaviours among 13-year-olds in Ireland?

2. To what extent have socially-driven disparities been impacted?

3. What other factors are driving risky behaviour?

METHODS

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

- National longitudinal study of children and young people
- Est. 2007 *“to provide evidence to inform policy and services for young people”*
- **Wide range of development outcomes:**
 - Physical health
 - Education / civic engagement
 - Socio-emotional well-being
 - Family / socio-demographic characteristics
- **Dual cohort design**
 - Cohort '98 (n ≈ 8,500) recruited at 9yrs / Cohort '08 (n ≈ 11,000) recruited at 9mths
- **Both cohorts interviewed at age 13:**
 - Cohort '98 in 2011 (**pre-legislation**)
 - Cohort '08 in 2021 (**post-legislation**)

METHODS

13-YEAR-OLD:

Smoking

- Ever smoked? / Currently smoke?

Vaping

- Ever vaped?

Drinking

- Ever had an alcoholic drink? How often?

Drugs

- Tried cannabis, or other drugs?
-

PARENTS:

Smoking

- Do you currently smoke?
- If so, how much?

Drinking

- AUDIT screening tool
 - Binge drinking (monthly)
-

SOCIAL CLASS:

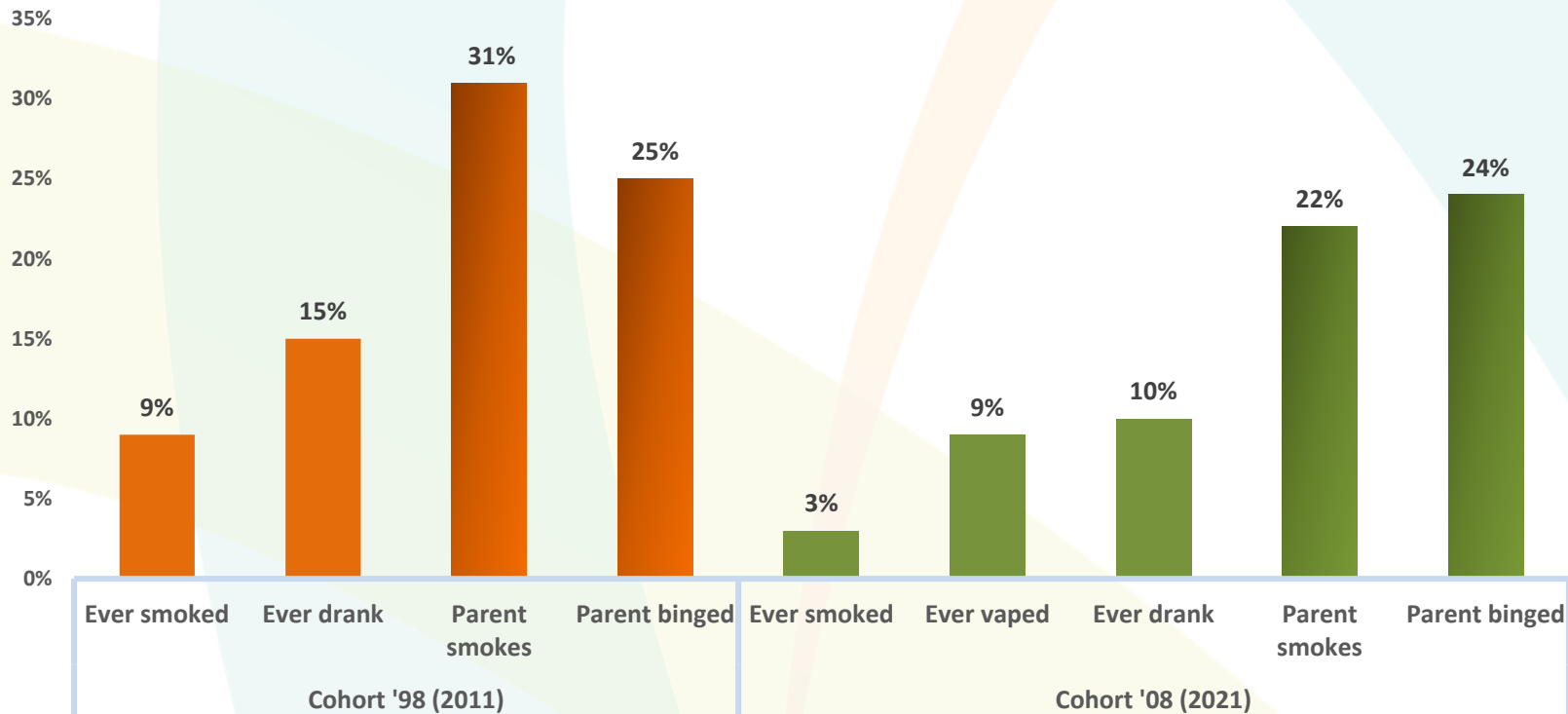
- Family type
- Parental education
- Family income



FINDINGS...

FINDINGS:

Fig: Risky Behaviours, Overall Prevalence



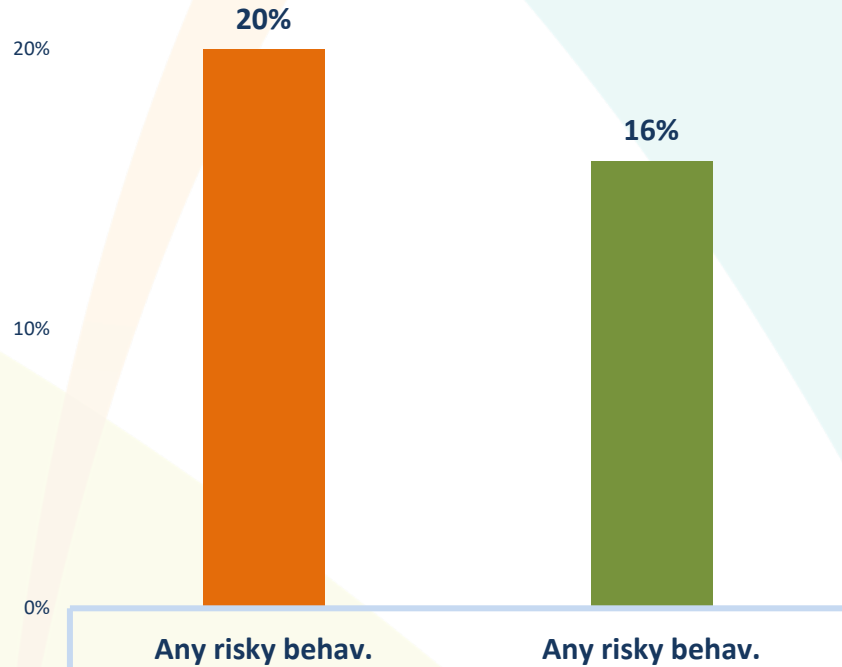
FINDINGS:

Any Risky Behaviour?

If 13YO answered yes to at least one of....

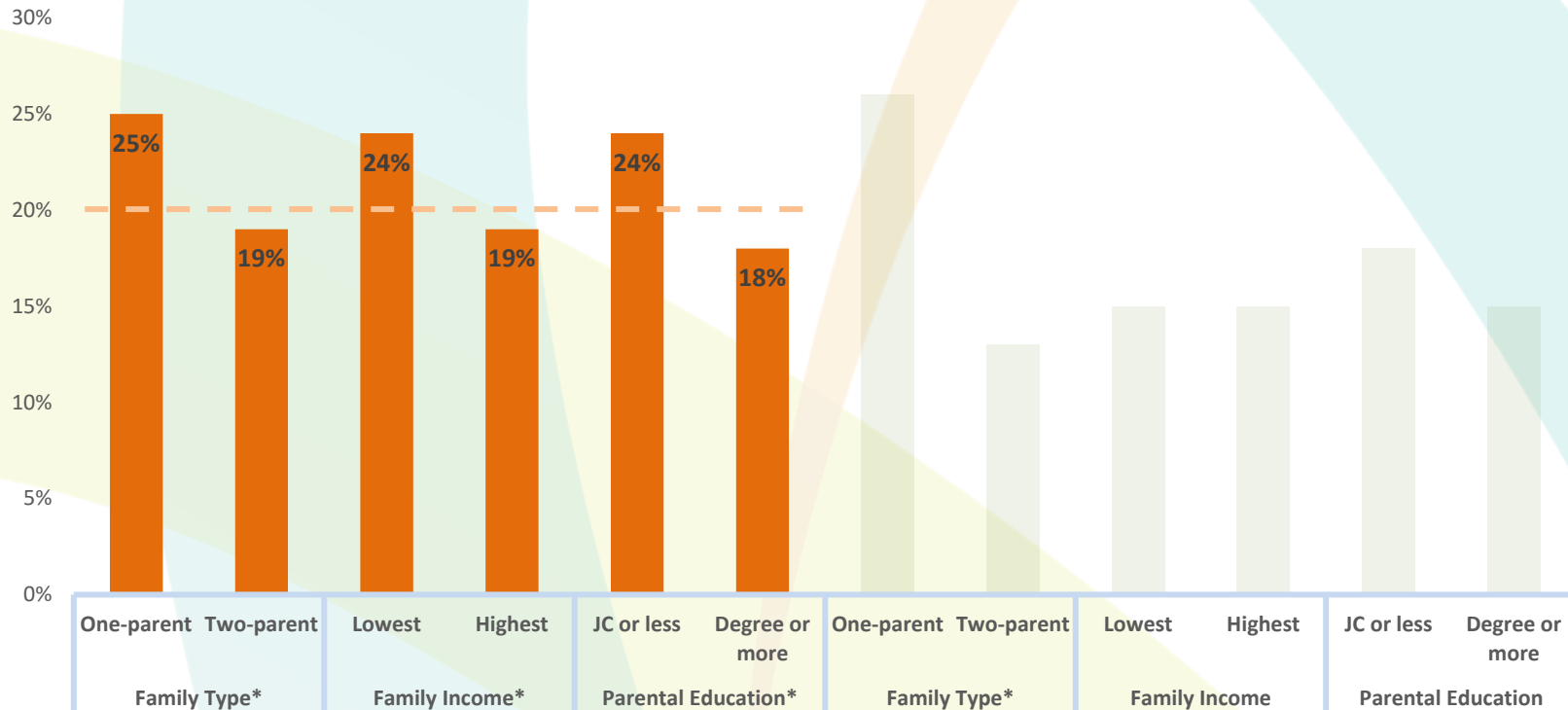
- + Ever drank?
- + Ever smoked?
- + Ever vaped?*
- + Ever taken drugs?

Fig: Any Risky Behaviour, overall



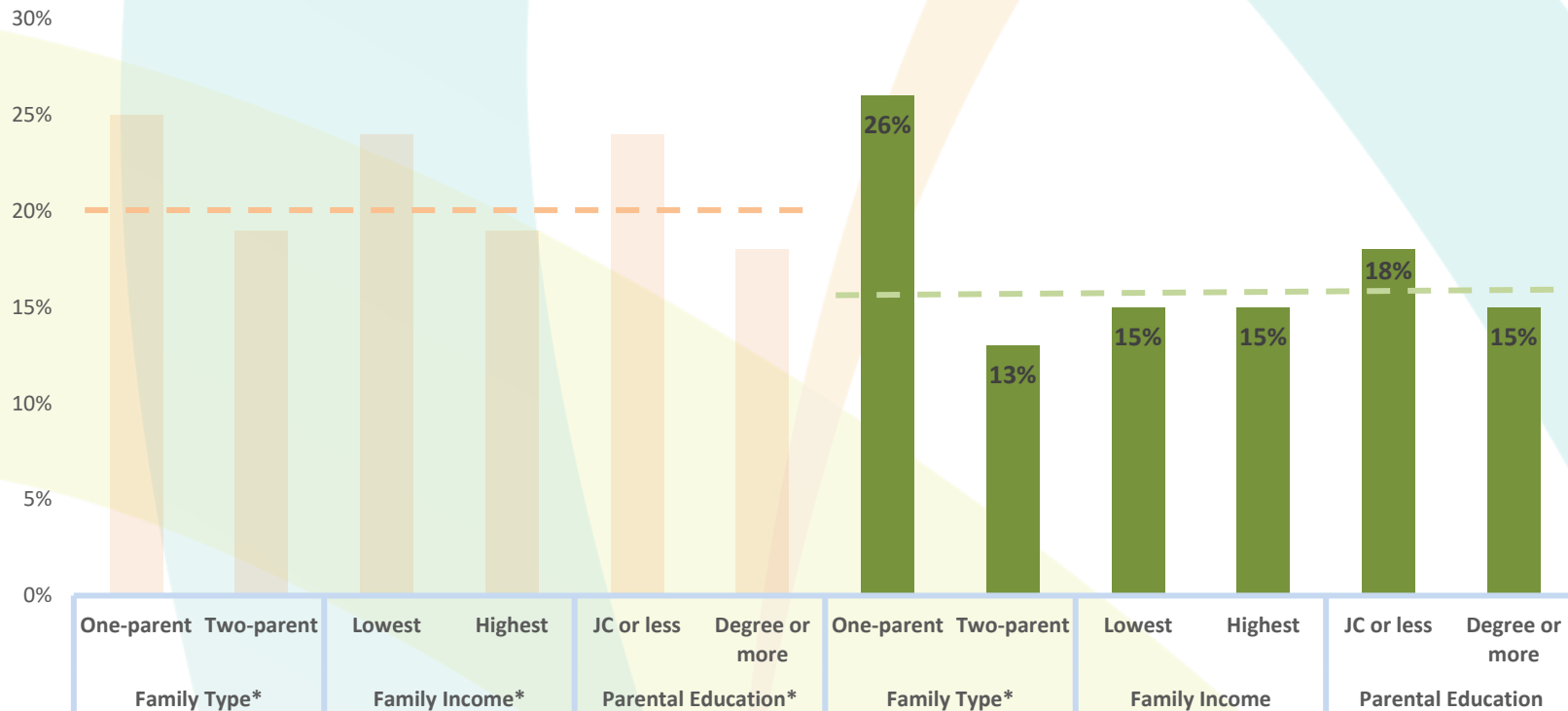
FINDINGS:

Fig: Any Risky Behaviour, by social class



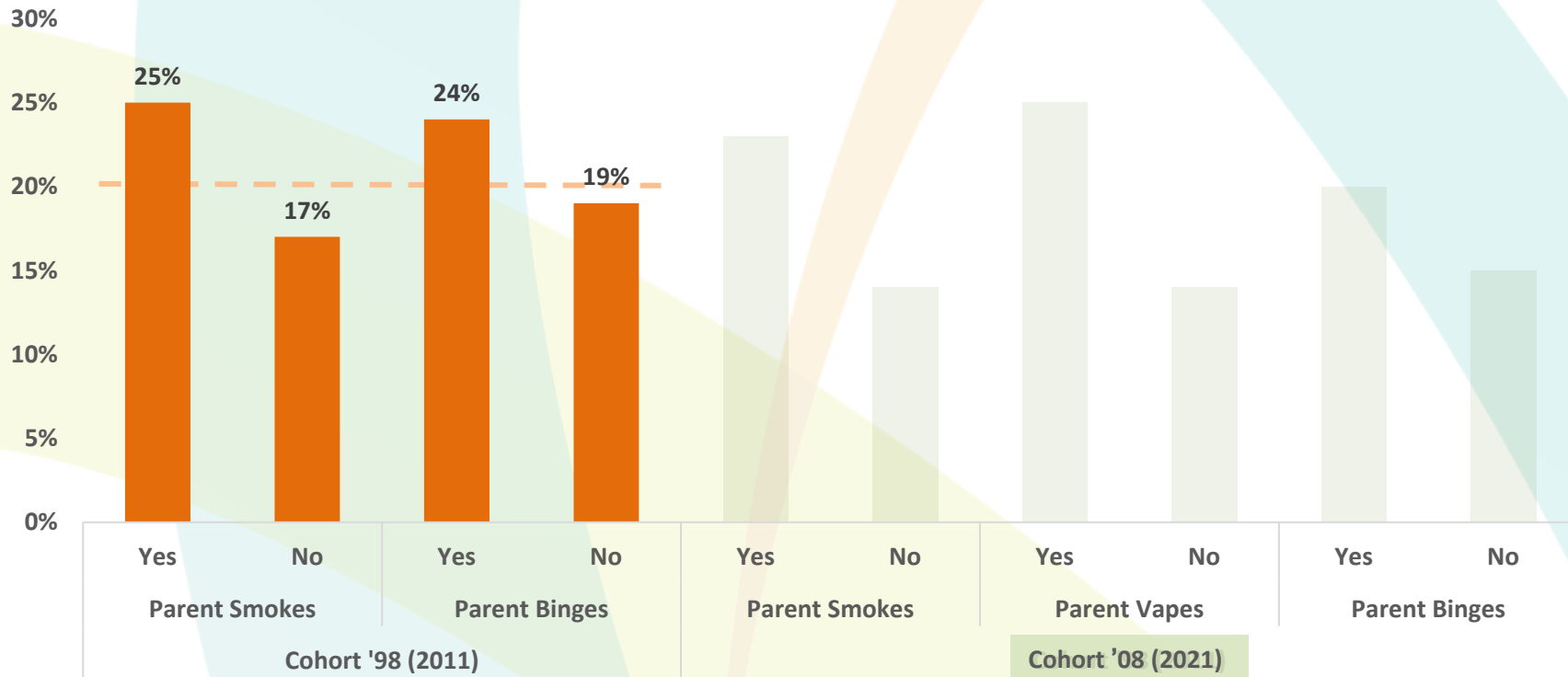
FINDINGS:

Fig: Any Risky Behaviour, by social class



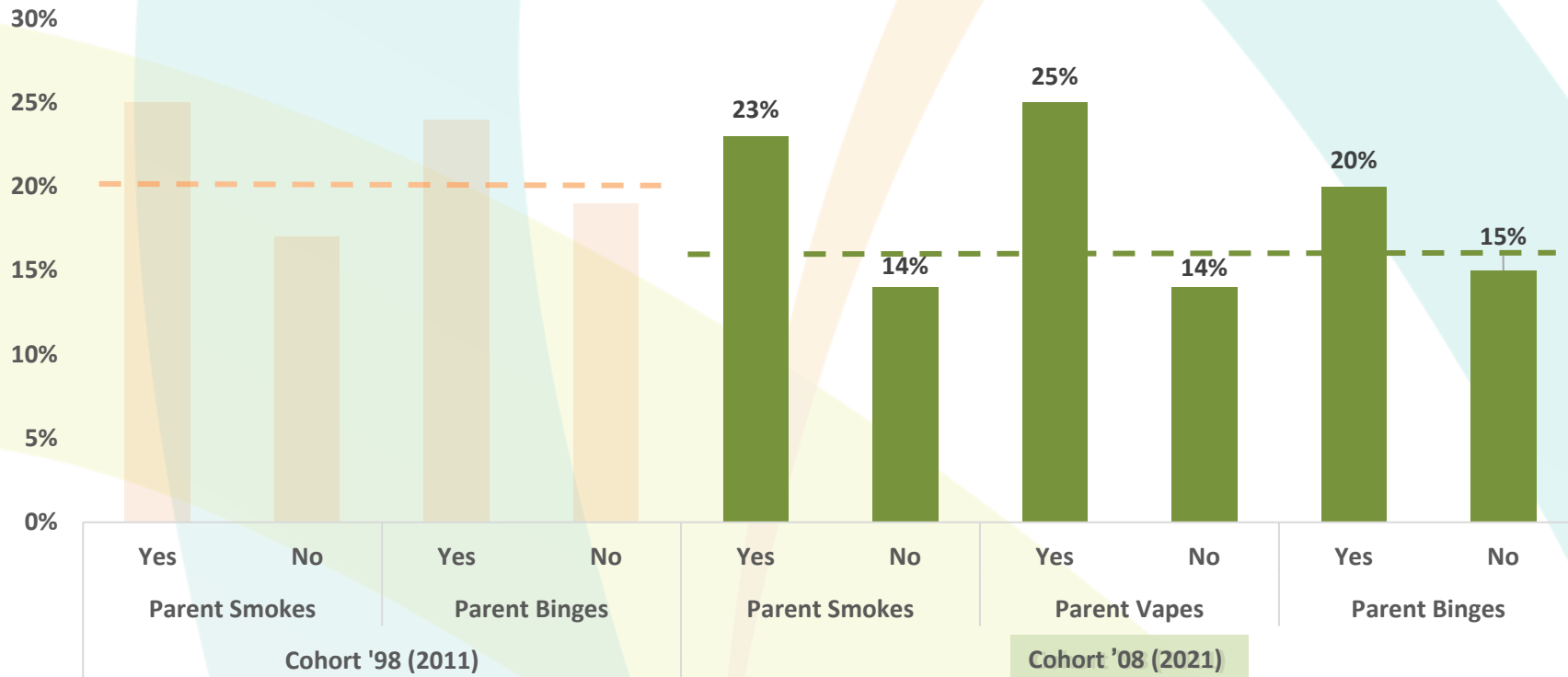
FINDINGS:

Fig: Any Risky Behaviour, by parental behaviour



FINDINGS:

Fig: Any Risky Behaviour, by parental behaviour



REGRESSION MODELLING:

Odds Ratios: Engagement in Risky Behaviour at Age 13

	Cohort '98			
	Unadjusted OR	Adjusted OR		
One-parent family	1.55**	1.36*		
Low income family	1.52**	1.24		
Low parental education	1.63**	1.25		
Parent smokes	1.53**	1.39**		
Parent binges	1.32**	1.22*		

*p<0.05, **p<0.001

REGRESSION MODELLING:

Odds Ratios: Engagement in Risky Behaviour at Age 13

	Cohort '98		Cohort '08	
	Unadjusted OR	Adjusted OR	Unadjusted OR	Adjusted OR
One-parent family	1.55**	1.36*	1.90**	2.16**
Low income family	1.52**	1.24	0.97	0.94
Low parental education	1.63**	1.25	1.33	0.82
Parent smokes	1.53**	1.39**	1.97**	1.95**
Parent binges	1.32**	1.22*	1.43*	1.46*

*p<0.05, **p<0.001

FINDINGS: SMOKING

Cohort '98:

- Child twice as likely to smoke if...
 - ...in one-parent family
 - ...parent smokes

Cohort '08:

- Child smoking rates much lower but...
 - ...one-parent status risk as before
 - **...almost 4-fold increased risk if parent smoked**

DRINKING

Cohort '98:

- Parental drinking patterns comparable across cohorts
- Similar child risk (OR=1.4-15) for...
 - One-parent status, parental education and parental binge drinking

Cohort '08:

- 13-year-old at increased risk if...
 - **...they lived in a one-parent home (OR=2.9)**
 - ...parent binge drank regularly (OR=1.6)

SUMMARY

- **Rates of risky behaviour broadly improving**
 - Due to legislation?
- **Social gradient tempered somewhat, one-parent status still predictive**
 - Consider effect of the COVID pandemic?
- **Interventions should target parents' risky behaviour**
 - Strongly linked with child risk, smoking more impactful

Future Research:

- **Consider other predictors**
 - Parenting
 - Parental stress
- **Explore risky behaviours independently**
 - Related but distinct: single parents more likely to smoke, less likely to binge drink
- **Vaping**
- **Trends at 17yrs, 20yrs...**

Thank You

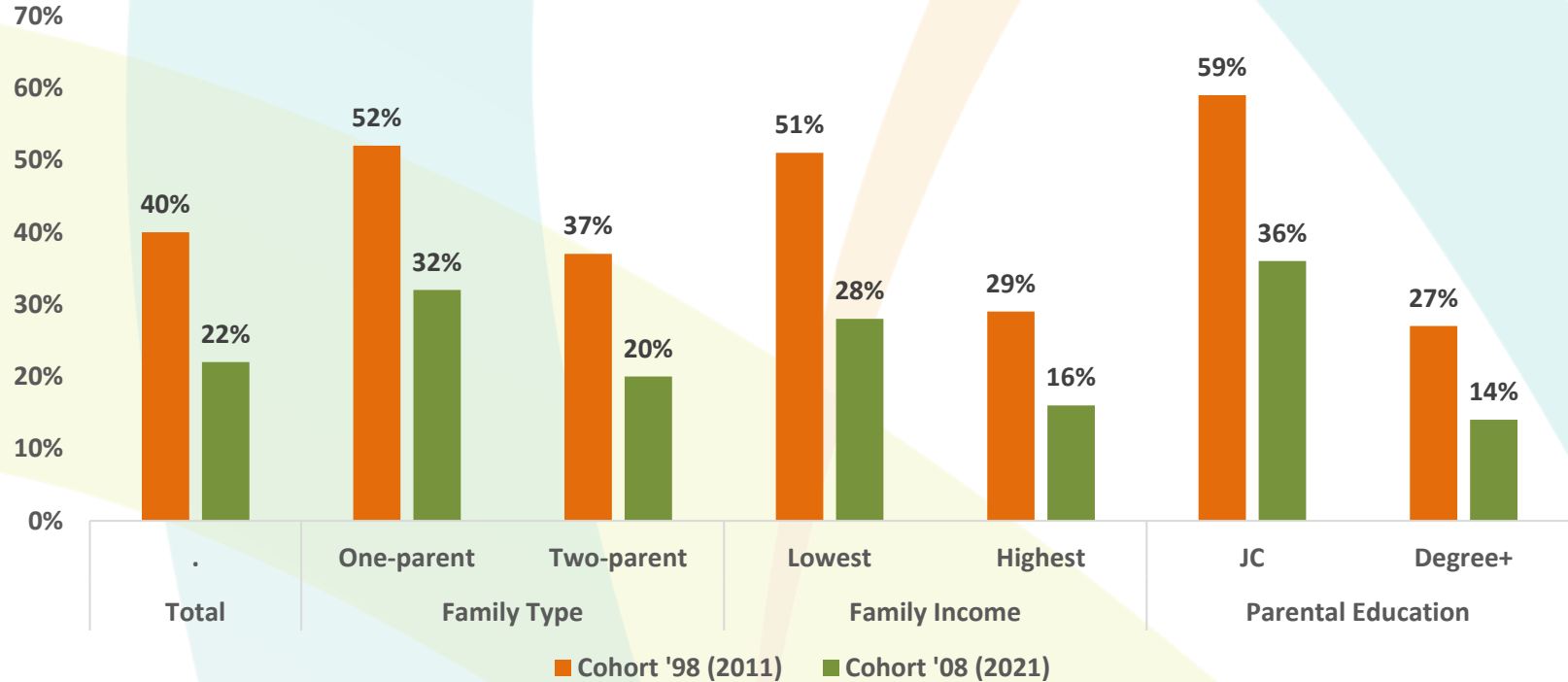
- Colleagues at DCEDIY & CSO
- Participant children and families

Happy to take questions, or for more info...

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- www.growingup.gov.ie

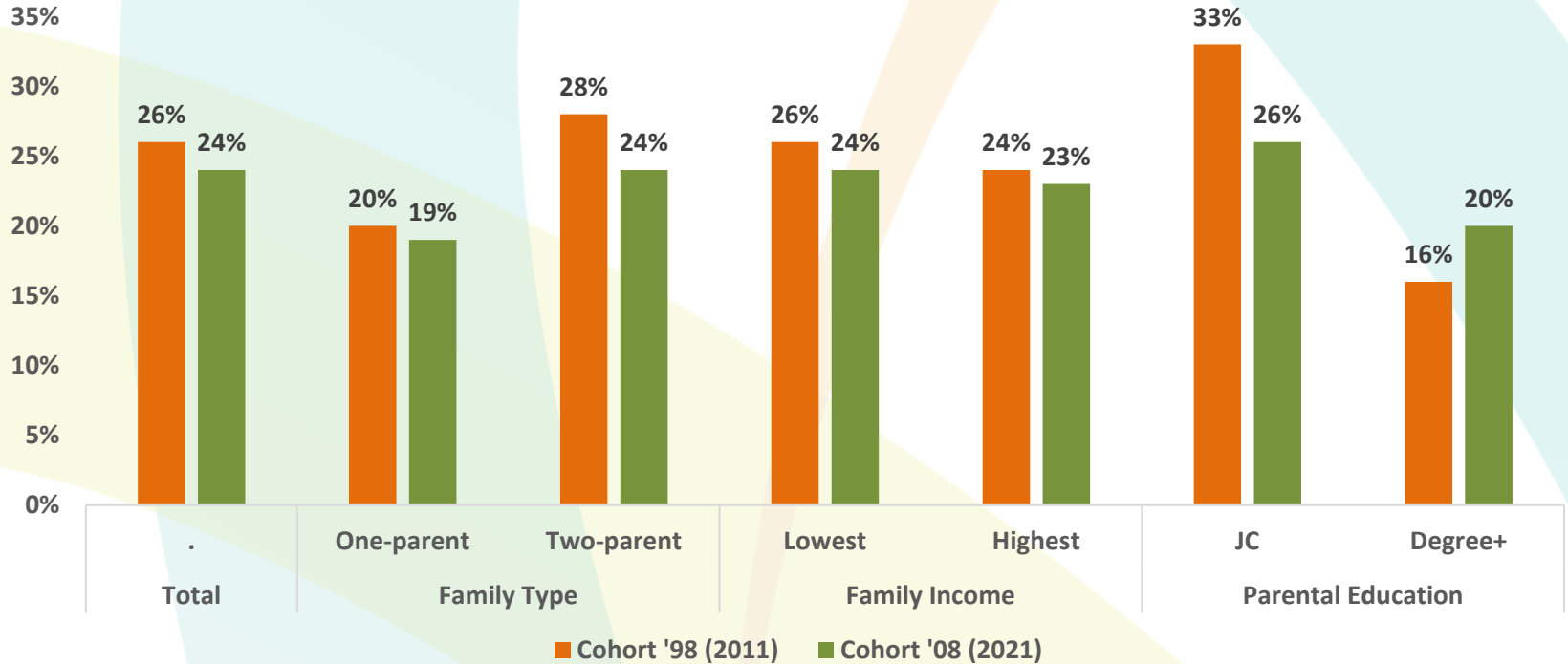
FINDINGS:

*Fig: PARENTAL SMOKING * B/G FACTORS*



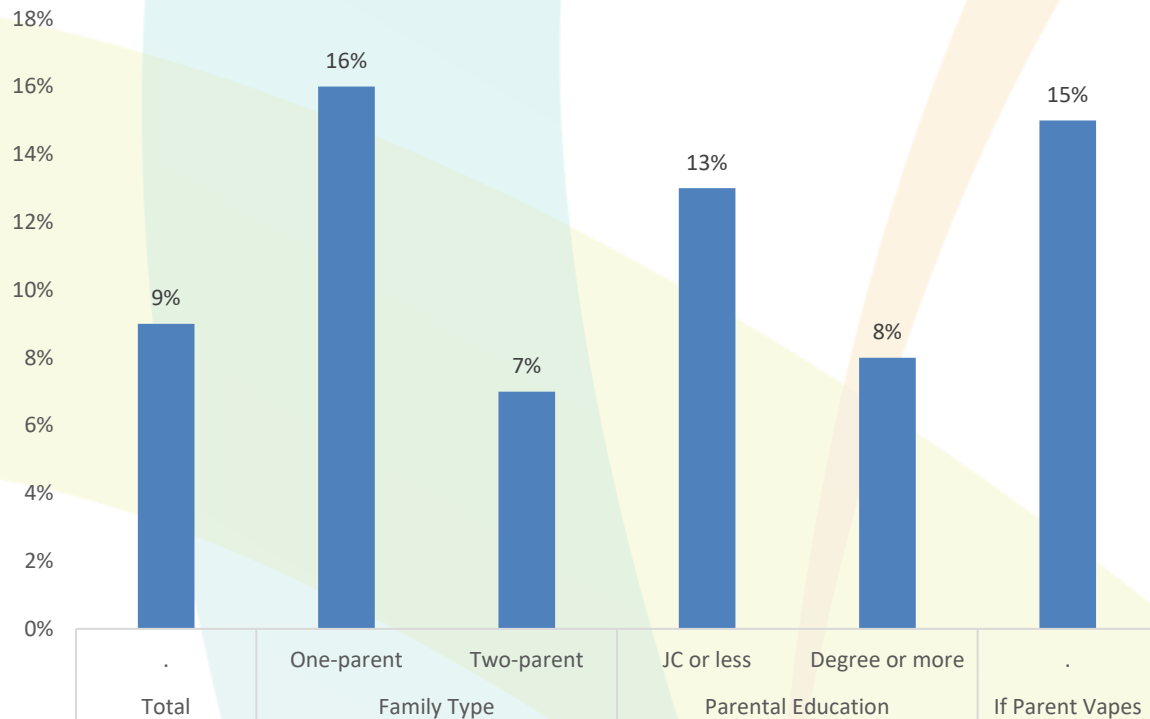
FINDINGS:

Fig: PARENTAL BINGE DRINKING * B/G FACTORS



FINDINGS: VAPING

Fig: Prevalence overall, Cohort '08



- Vaping three times as prevalent as smoking
- No comparable data for C'98 given newness of this phenomenon
- Social gradient present
- Parental behaviour also important