GROWING UP IN IRELAND · RESEARCH FINDINGS

Factors that Foster Resilience in Outcomes for Vulnerable Children

An Analysis Using Data from the Growing Up in Ireland Survey

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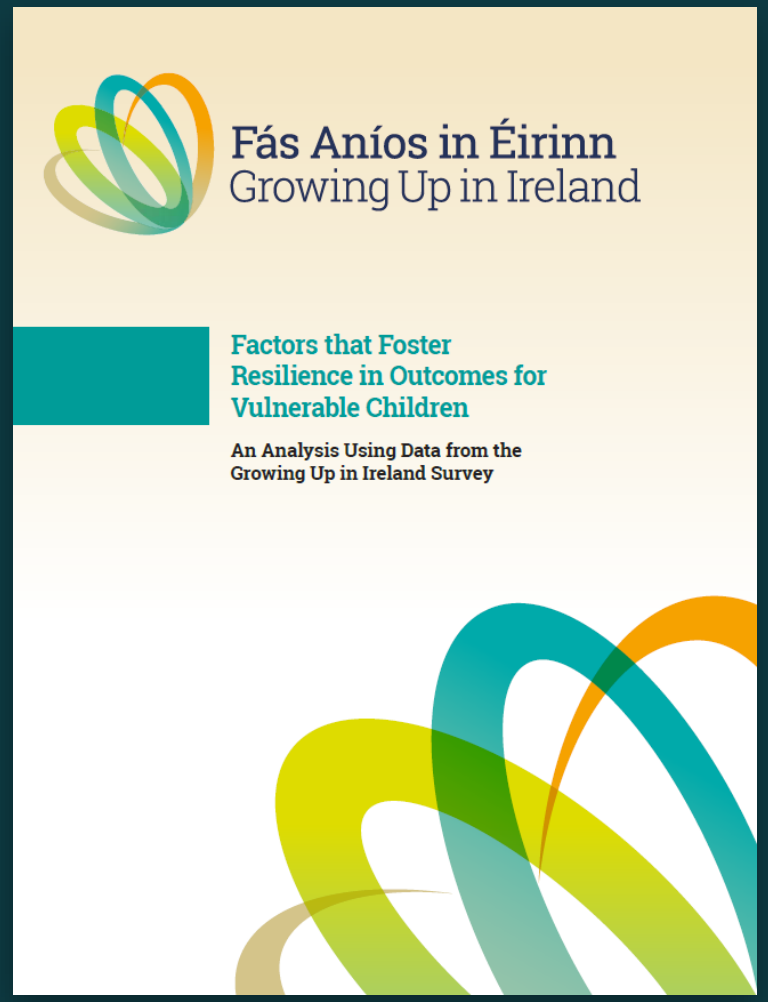
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Growing Up in Ireland



BACKGROUND

Context for the study



THE RISK

Childhood adversity is a key risk factor for poor adult wellbeing

Han et al., 2023; Linares et al., 2022



BUT …

Trajectories are not fixed

Some individuals have a relatively good outcome despite serious stresses or adversities

Rutter, 2013



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Can offset or reduce the negative impact of risk and support positive development

e.g. Relationships · Activities · Education

Hirschauer & Scheerer, 2014; Marquez et al., 2023



KNOWLEDGE GAP

- How is childhood risk associated with adult wellbeing in an Irish context?
- What factors improve the chances of better outcomes despite early disadvantage?

THIS STUDY

Four questions addressed in this study

1

RISK · AGE 9

What patterns of childhood risk are visible at age 9?

2

WELLBEING · AGE 25

What wellbeing profiles are evident at age 25?

3

RISK → WELLBEING

How is childhood risk associated with adult wellbeing?

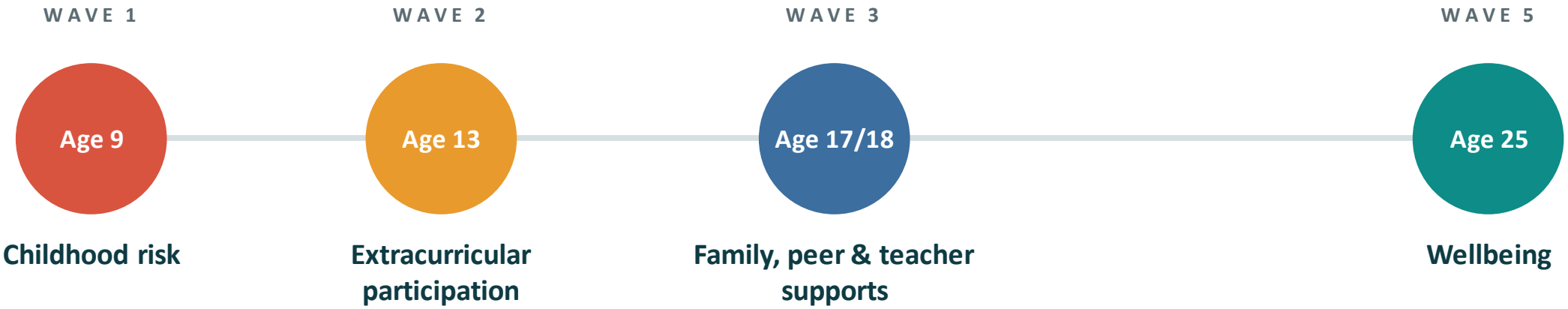
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PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Which supports help adolescents to ‘do well’ later in life?

STUDY DESIGN

A longitudinal view from childhood to adulthood



n = 8,568

Growing Up in Ireland • Cohort '98 • baseline analytic sample

THEORY

- Socio-ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)
- Wellbeing and Flourishing (Linares et al., 2022)

ANALYSES

- Latent Class Analysis
- Latent Profile Analysis
- Moderated logistic regression analyses

QUESTION 1 · RISK AT AGE 9

What patterns of childhood risk are visible at age 9?

CHILD

- 1 Learning or Health Problems
- 11 Peer, Conduct, Emotional or Hyperactivity Problems

FAMILY

- 2 Family Financial Difficulties
- 3 Single Parent Household
- 4 Parent Conflict
- 5 Parent Health Issues
- 6 Extended Family Issues
- 7 Parent or Friend Death

SCHOOL & PEERS

- 8 School Performance Difficulties
- 9 Victim of Bullying

NEIGHBOURHOOD

- 10 Unsafe Neighbourhood

QUESTION 1 · FINDINGS

Age 9: childhood risk clustered into three profiles

Latent Class Analysis (LCA) grouped children with similar patterns across 11 risk indicators.



80%

LOW RISK

Low probability of the measured adversities / challenges

10.5%

SOCIAL–HEALTH RISK

Health, learning, school, emotional or peer difficulties

9.5%

FAMILY SES RISK

Family financial strain and/or lone-parent household

These are probabilistic profiles—not labels that describe every child in a group.

What wellbeing profiles are evident at age 25?

‘Doing well’ conceptualised as relatively positive functioning across several domains

10

variables selected from the GUI Wave 5 dataset to measure these six domains

SIX DOMAINS FROM THE FLOURISHING LITERATURE *VanderWeele et al., 2017; 2025*

SOCIAL
Relationships and trust

EMOTIONAL
Life satisfaction and optimism

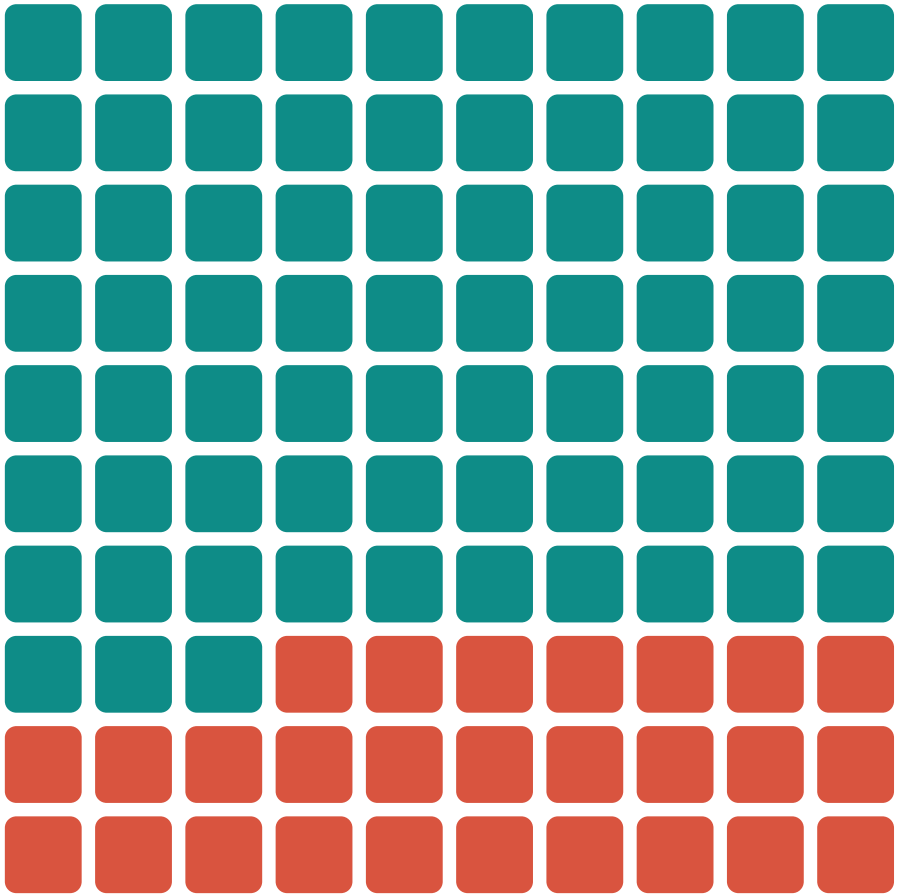
PHYSICAL
Physical health

COGNITIVE
Self-esteem and functioning

COMMUNITY
Belonging / social wellbeing

ECONOMIC
Financial security

Wellbeing profiles at age 25



Each square = 1% of young adults

73%

Almost 3 in 4 young adults likely 'Doing Well'

Young people evidenced better than average functioning across most wellbeing domains.

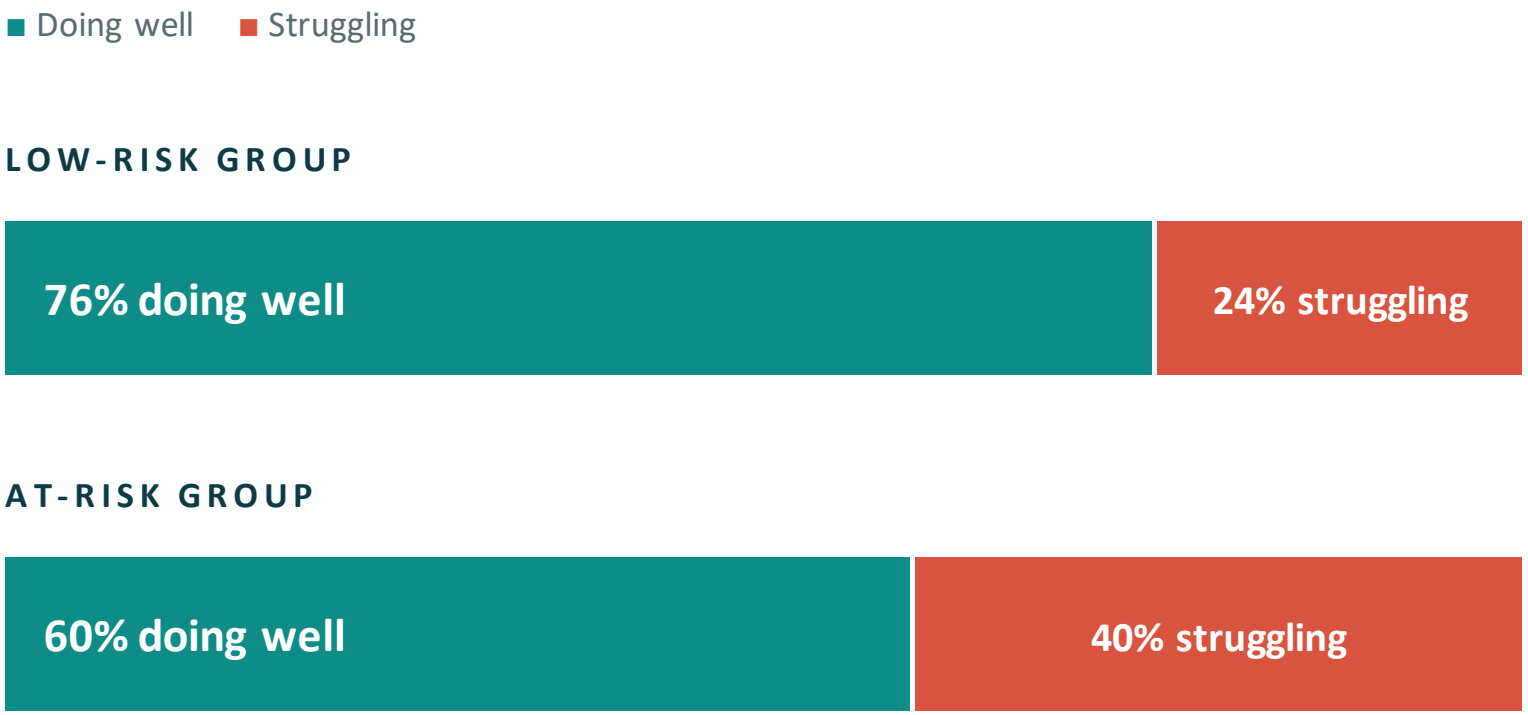
27%

More than 1 in 4 young adults likely 'Struggling'

Young people evidenced poorer than average functioning across most wellbeing domains.

QUESTION 3 · RISK → WELLBEING

What is the link between childhood risk & adult wellbeing?



Risk groups were merged for this analysis.

60%

of the at-risk group were doing well at age 25

Most were not struggling.

QUESTION 4 · PROTECTIVE FACTORS

What increased the odds of doing well at age 25?

Five protective factors were analysed across home, peer and educational contexts, drawn from Waves 2, 3 and 5 of the GUI ’98 Cohort

WAVE 2 Age 13

HOME AND LEISURE

Extracurricular participation

WAVE 3 Age 17/18

PEER

Peer attachment

EDUCATION

Teacher support

HOME

Parent-child relationship

WAVE 5 Age 25

EDUCATION

Educational attainment

Measures combine study child self-report and primary caregiver report · Socio-ecological framework

All five protective factors were linked to higher odds of doing well



Regular leisure participation

+126% odds



Higher levels of education

+31% odds per level



Low conflict with parents



Supportive teachers



Strong peer friendships

These supports were linked to doing well in both low-risk and at-risk groups

…but were not enough to close the gap between the groups

CONCLUSIONS

Three key findings

01

Early adversity raises the risk of struggling as an adult

Children at risk at age 9 were more likely to be struggling at 25 (40% vs 24%).

02

Early risk is not destiny

6 in 10 at-risk children were doing well at 25, while 1 in 4 from the low-risk group were struggling. Wellbeing changes over time.

03

Everyday supports matter for every young person

Education, good relationships at home, in school and with friends, and extracurricular activities all raised the odds of doing well.

IMPLICATIONS

Messages for policy

TARGETED

Prioritise children facing early adversity

Early intervention and prevention, tailored to social–health and family SES risk.

TARGETED

Keep support going beyond childhood

Some young people need additional or continued support through adolescence and into emerging adulthood.

UNIVERSAL

Invest in supportive settings for all

Schools, families, peers and communities: support education, quality relationships and access to extracurricular activities, working across sectors.

Aligned with Irish policy frameworks: Young Ireland · Pathways to Wellbeing

REFLECTIONS

Interpreting the findings: cautions

Associations, not causes

Observational data cannot establish causality

Adversity measured once

At age 9 only, as present or absent; later or ongoing adversity not captured

A limited set of protective factors

Contextual factors only; individual factors (e.g. coping) not examined

Selected measures

Indicators of risk and flourishing were not exhaustive; some single-item measures

Thank you

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