

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

Cohort '08
Nov. 2018

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

KEY FINDINGS: COHORT '08 AT 9 YEARS OLD

NO. 1

9-YEAR-OLDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

INTRODUCTION

Growing Up in Ireland is the national longitudinal study of children designed to inform policy affecting children and their families. The study follows two cohorts of children, born roughly a decade apart. The families of **Cohort '08** (the **Infant Cohort**) were first interviewed in 2008/2009, when the child was 9 months old. They were re-interviewed when the child was 3 years, 5 years, and 7/8 years (the latter by postal survey) and between July 2017 and March 2018 when the child was 9 years old. The other cohort is **Cohort '98** (the **Child Cohort**) that includes children born in 1998 and recruited into the study when they were 9 years old in 2007/8.

This series of *Key Findings* draws on information provided by the **Cohort '08** 9-year-old and his or her Primary Caregiver (usually the mother, and henceforth in this report referred to as the mother). The series is based on the 7,563 9-year-olds whose families participated in the study at ages 9 months, 3 years, 5 years and 9 years old.

This *Key Findings* report is the first in a series on the lives of these children at 9 years of age. It focuses on the lives and circumstances of these 9-year-olds in post-recession Ireland, the financial situation of their families and changes in family structure over time. It also looks at the relationship with grandparents, out-of-school care for the children and the contribution the children make to family chores.

For some outcomes, findings on the 9-year-olds of **Cohort '08** are contrasted with those of the earlier **Cohort '98**. There are important differences between the two cohorts at 9 years old, apart from being born a decade apart. The main difference is that the children in the '08 cohort at 9 years old have been living in Ireland since they were 9 months old. The cohort does not include children who had moved to Ireland when they were older than 9 months; or children whose families had dropped out of the study since they were 9 months old. Cohort '98, on the other hand, was recruited at 9 years old and represents all 9-year-olds living in Ireland at the time they were recruited in 2007/08.

Many useful comparisons can be made between the cohorts, but, for the reasons noted here, comparisons between them cannot be used to draw firm conclusions about differences between *all* 9-year-olds in 2017 and *all* 9-year-olds in 2007.

Growing Up in Ireland is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), with a contribution from The Atlantic Philanthropies in Phase 2; and managed and overseen by the DCYA in association with the Central Statistics Office.



THE FAMILIES OF COHORT '08 AT 9 YEARS OLD

The average age for mothers of 9-year-olds was 41 years and two-thirds were in employment

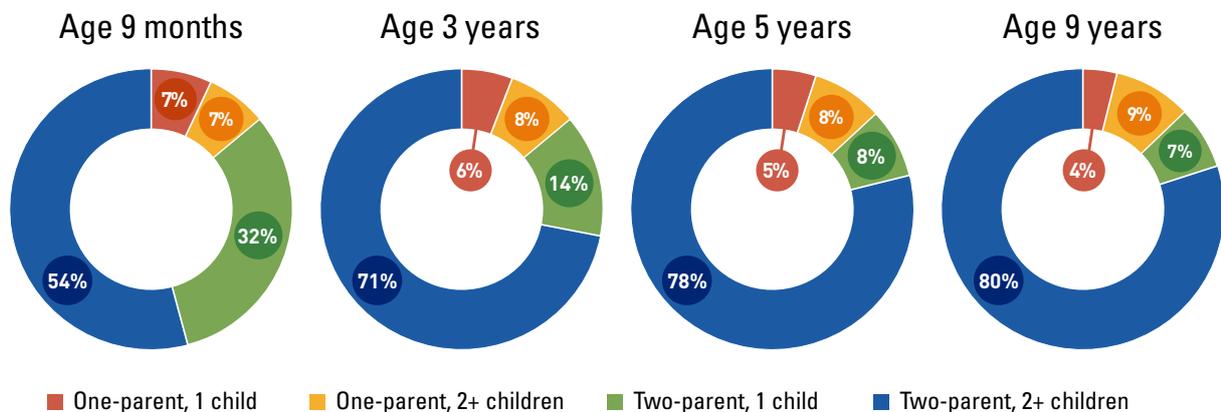
On average, the mothers of Cohort '08 9-year-olds were 41 years old; 15% were under 35; 60% were between 35 and 44; and 25% were age 45 or over. Most (65%) of the mothers were in employment, 28% were working full-time in the home and the remaining 7% were in some other economic status (such as unemployed or ill). Of the mothers in employment, 27% usually worked up to 20 hours per week; 27% worked 21-30 hours; 36% worked 31-40 hours and 10% worked over 40 hours.

Nearly two-thirds of mothers were in employment (65%) and almost half of these worked over 30 hours per week.

Almost nine out of ten 9-year-olds lived in two-parent families

Overall, 87% of 9-year-olds lived in two-parent families and the remaining 13% lived in one-parent families (Figure 1). The percentage of one-parent and two-parent families for this cohort was relatively constant at each interview between 9 months and 9 years of age (Figure 1), but there was an increase in the number of children who had brothers or sisters, particularly in two-parent families.

Figure 1: Cohort '08 children by family structure at 9 months old, and at ages 3, 5 and 9 years old.



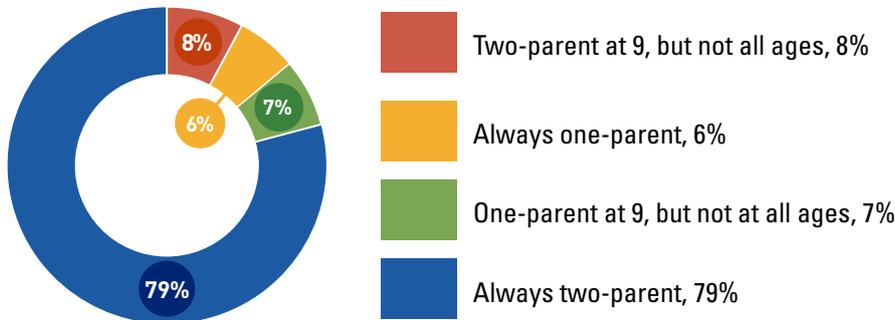
A substantial majority (89%) of 9-year-olds had brothers or sisters living in the household. Mothers reported that three-quarters (74%) of these get on well with their siblings.

Even though the proportion of children who lived in one-parent families was similar as the child grew from 9 months to 9 years old, there was quite a bit of change for individual families, reflecting relationships between the parents forming or dissolving. This can be seen in Figure 2: 79% of 9-year-olds were in two-parent families consistently at 9 months, 3 years, 5 years and 9 years of age. A further 8% of Study Children were in two-parent families at 9 years of age but for some of their lives had been in a one-parent family.

A relatively small proportion (6%) of children were consistently in one-parent families between 9 months and 9 years, with no change in family structure recorded at interviews. A slightly higher proportion (7%) were living in one-parent families at 9 years old but had been living in two-parent families in at least one of the earlier interviews.



Figure 2: Continuity and change in family structure from 9 months to 9 years for Cohort '08



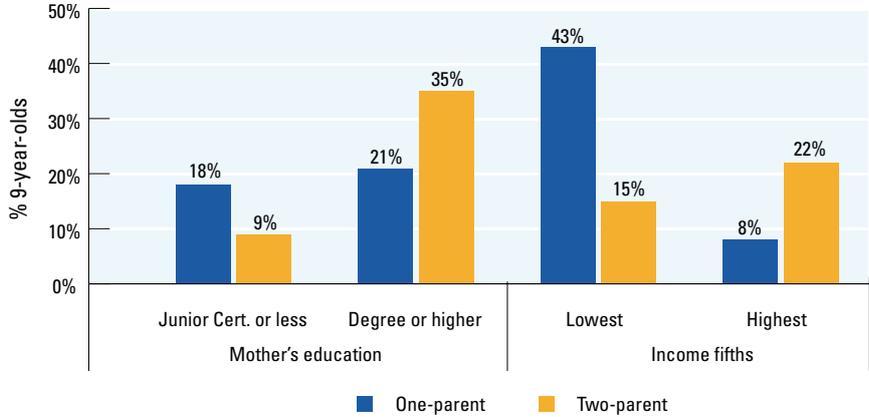
13% of 9-year-olds lived in one-parent families but only about half of these had lived in one-parent families at all four ages (9 months, 3 years, 5 years and 9 years old).



One-parent families had lower incomes and lower levels of education

Children in one-parent families were the most likely to live in households with low levels of income and maternal education (Figure 3). The 9-year-olds in one-parent families were twice as likely as those in two-parent families (18% vs. 9%) to have mothers in the lowest education category and were nearly three times as likely to be in the lowest family income group (43% vs. 15%).

Figure 3: Cohort '08 at 9 years old in one-parent and two-parent families according to highest and lowest levels of mother's education and household income



One-parent families were more likely than two-parent families to be in the lowest income group and have lower levels of maternal education.

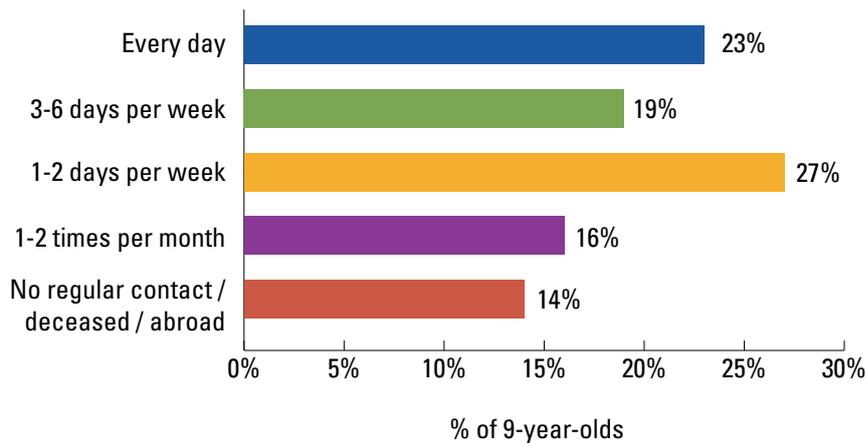
Note: The income fifths divide the 9-year-olds into five equally-sized groups based on family income (adjusted for household size and composition, i.e. 'equivalised').

Over one-third of mothers of two-parent families had degrees compared to just over one-fifth of those in one-parent families (35% vs. 21%). One-parent families were much less likely than two-parent families to be in the top income fifth (8% vs. 22%).

9-YEAR-OLDS' CONTACT WITH GRANDPARENTS

Just under a quarter (23%) of Cohort '08 9-year-olds saw their grandparents *every day* with a further 46% seeing them at least once or twice a week (Figure 4). Only 14% of 9-year-olds did not regularly see their grandparents: the grandparents of 4% both lived abroad, and 2% were all deceased, while 5% *rarely or never* saw their grandparents and 3% had no regular contact for other reasons.

Figure 4: Frequency of contact with grandparents for Cohort '08 at 9 years old in 2017



70%
of 9-year-olds
saw their
grandparents
at least once a
week.

88%
had a close
relationship
with at
least one
grandparent.

The majority (88%) of 9-year-olds had a *close* or *very close* relationship with at least one grandparent, including 14% who had a *close* or *very close* relationship with all four grandparents. Just 12% did not have a close relationship with *any* grandparent (including those whose grandparents were deceased or abroad).

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CARE DURING TERM TIME

Nearly all the children were in school and, of these, 9% were in Second Class, 66% were in Third Class and 24% were in Fourth Class. Mothers were asked to indicate the main type of out-of-school care used for the child during term-time, that is, on a regular basis outside of holiday periods and weekends. Where the mother was not in employment, the main type of out-of-school care was provided by the parents for 96% of the 9-year-olds. Non-parental care was used much more extensively when the mother was in employment.

Table 1 shows that parental care was still the most common form (53%) when the mother was in employment (possibly reflecting part-time or flexible working hours by one or both parents or the non-employment of the father).



Table 1: Main type of out-of-school care during term-time for Cohort '08 at 9 years old where mothers were in employment

Main type of out-of-school care	% of 9-year-olds
By parent at home	53%
Unpaid relative	15%
Paid relative	5%
Paid childminder	14%
Homework club/after-school care group setting	8%
Other	5%
Total	100%

In families where the mother was employed, out-of-school care during term-time was mainly provided by parents themselves (53%), followed by relatives (20%) and paid childminders (14%).

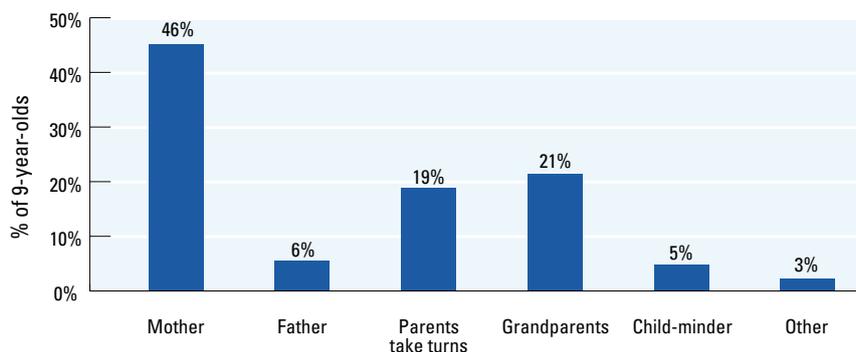
Care provided by a relative was the next most important source of childcare for mothers in employment (15% unpaid and 5% paid), followed by paid childminders (14%). Overall, 9-year-olds whose mother worked outside the home and for whom the main form of care was non-parental care, spent an average of 10.7 hours per week in non-parental care during term time.

MOTHER MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MINDING SICK CHILDREN

Just over half of 9-year-olds (54%) lived in a two-parent family where both parents were employed. In these families, if the child was too sick to attend school, the mother was mainly responsible for minding the child (Figure 5). The mother was usually either solely responsible (46%) or shared responsibility with the father (19%). In just 6% of cases, the father was solely responsible for minding a sick child. In 21% of families a grandparent was the care provider in these circumstances.



Figure 5: "Who usually minds the 9-year-old when he/she is too sick to attend school" in families of Cohort '08 (two-parent families where both parents are in employment – 54% of cases)



In families where both parents were employed, the mother was more likely than the father to be responsible for caring for a sick child (46%, vs. 6% of fathers and 19% shared responsibility).

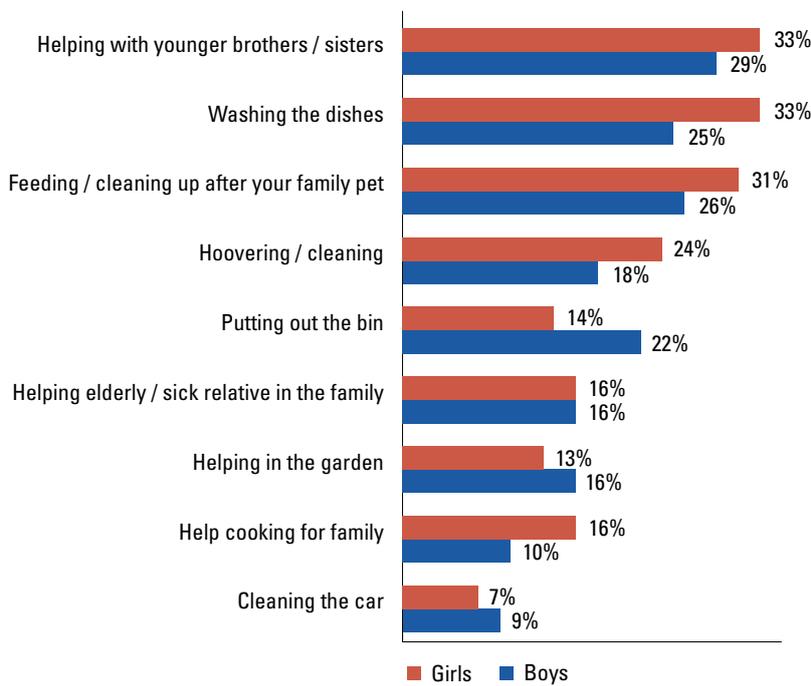
For children living in employed one-parent households (7% of all 9-year-olds), over half (57%) were usually minded by their mother when they were too sick to attend school. A large minority were looked after by their grandparents (28%) with other relatives (including the father) and childminders making up the remainder.

HELPING OUT WITH CHORES AT HOME

The 9-year-olds themselves were asked how often they helped with different family chores. For the majority of chores, girls were more likely than boys to report helping *very often*, including helping with younger brothers or sisters (33% vs. 29%), washing the dishes (33% vs. 25%), feeding or cleaning up after a family pet (31% vs. 26%) and hoovering/cleaning (24% vs. 18%) (see Figure 6).

A smaller number of tasks were more often performed by boys, such as putting out the bins (22% of boys and 14% of girls report helping *very often*), helping in the garden (16% of boys and 13% of girls) and cleaning the car (9% of boys and 7% of girls). Overall, 77% of girls and 72% of boys helped with at least one of these chores *very often*.

Figure 6: Percentage of boys and girls of Cohort '08 who reported helping with different chores very often



Both boys and girls helped with household chores, but girls were more likely than boys to help with chores very often.



THE FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FAMILIES OF COHORT '08 AT 9 YEARS OLD

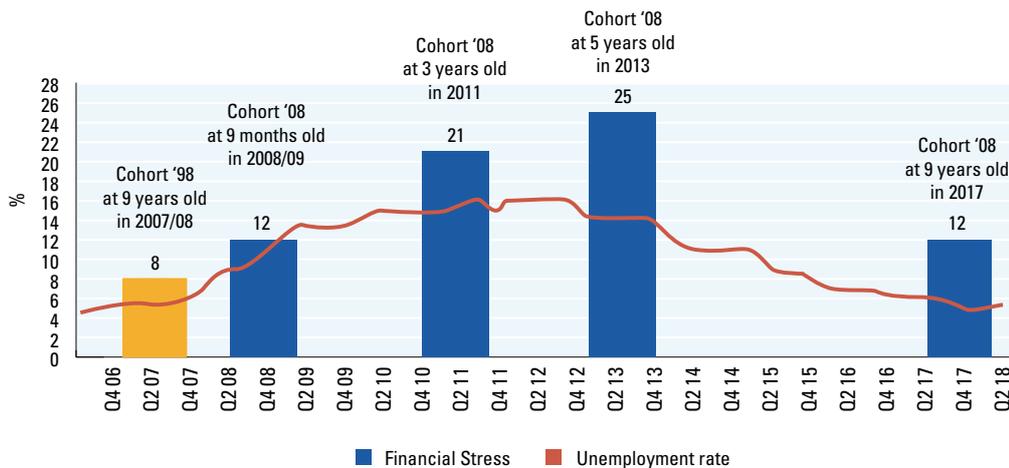
The number of families who had difficulties making ends meet went down since the children were aged 5 years

In each interview the mother was asked how easily the family was able to make ends meet. Those who said *with great difficulty* or *with difficulty* were classified as 'financially stressed'.

Figure 7 shows the percentage of families in Cohort '08 who were financially stressed when the Study Child was 9 months, 3 years, 5 years and 9 years of age (the blue columns). It also shows the level of stress for the families of the earlier cohort (Cohort '98, the orange column) when that Study Child was 9 years old. The red line shows the trend in unemployment for the Irish population over the period in question and reflects the severity of the recession over that time. The horizontal axis shows the year and quarter.

The first orange column shows the timing of the fieldwork with the earlier Cohort '98, towards the end of the Celtic Tiger era. These children were 9 years old at that time, when unemployment rates were about 5%. Just 8% of these families experienced financial stress in 2007/08.

Figure 7: Financial stress experienced by families when Cohort '08 Study Child was 9 months, 3 years, 5 years and 9 years, and Cohort '98 children at 9, in the context of the national unemployment rate by year and quarter

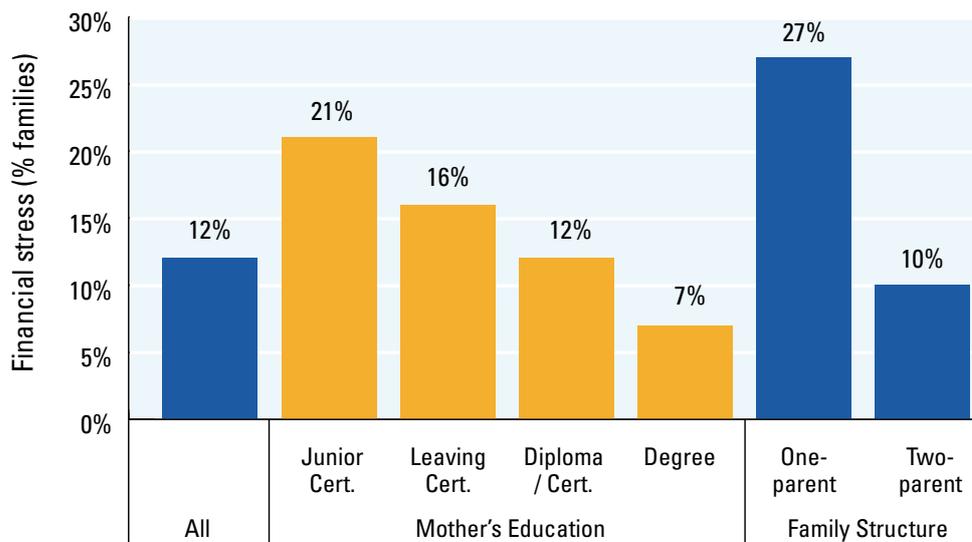


Fewer families in 2017/18 experienced financial stress than had done so mid-recession (12% vs. 25%)

The level of unemployment had already started to rise (and the recession had already begun) when the Cohort '08 families were first interviewed in 2008/09 and 12% of the families experienced financial stress. Nevertheless, there was a steep rise in financial stress among these families as unemployment increased further during the recession, with a peak in 2013 when the Study Children of Cohort '08 were 5 years old. This closely followed the trend in the recession (as measured by the unemployment rate). The proportion of families in Cohort '08 who experienced financial stress more than doubled between the time the child was 9 months old in 2008/09 and the time the child was 5 years old in 2013 (from 12% to 25%). The level of financial stress fell after 2013, approaching pre-recession levels in 2017-18 when the Cohort '08 Study Child was 9 years old (12%).

Levels of financial stress in Cohort '08 families in 2017 were higher in families with lower levels of maternal education and in one-parent families (Figure 8). Among mothers who had left school at or before the Junior Certificate, 21% experienced financial stress compared to 7% of those who had a degree. The difference by family structure was even larger: 27% of one-parent families were experiencing financial stress when the children were 9 years old compared with 10% of two-parent families.

Figure 8: Financial stress experienced by families of Cohort '08, classified by family structure and mother's education when Study Child was 9 years of age



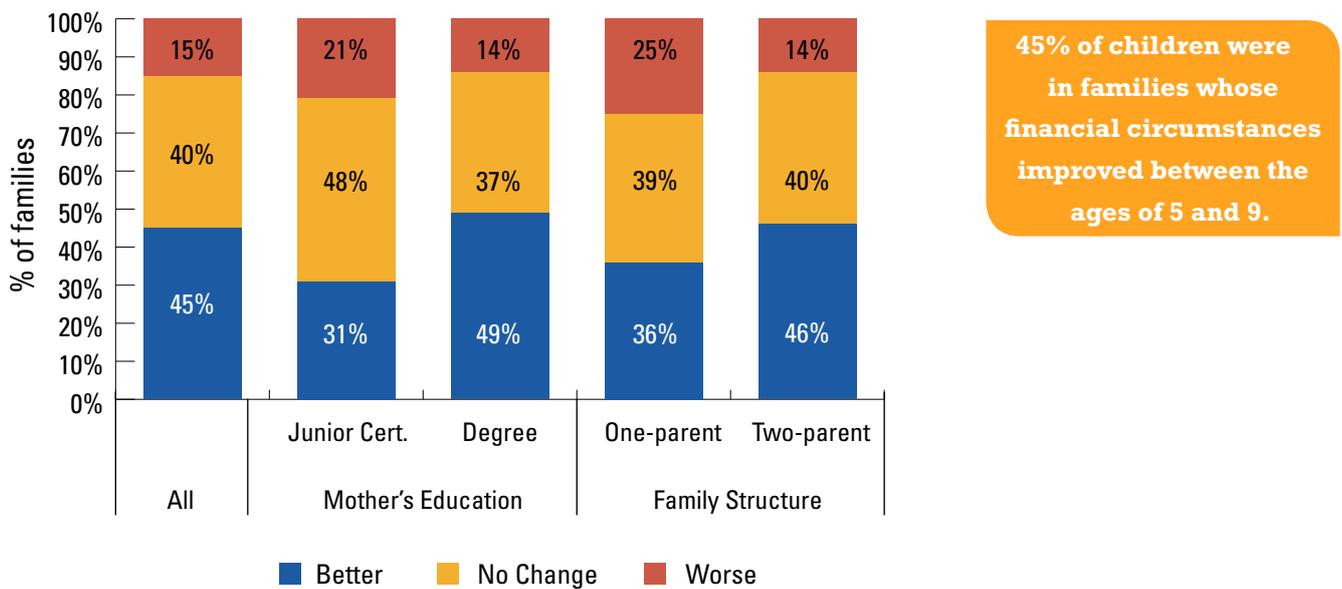
One-parent families and families with lower levels of maternal education tended to experience most financial stress.



CHANGE IN FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES SINCE THE AGE OF 5 (BETWEEN 2013 AND 2017)

In 2017, families were asked to indicate whether their overall financial situation had improved or deteriorated since their last face-to-face interview, when the Study Child was 5 years of age. Just under half of families (45%) recorded that their financial circumstances had improved since the Study Child was 5 years of age while 15% said they had deteriorated (Figure 9), with the remainder (40%) reporting no change.

Figure 9: Mother's report of improvement or deterioration in financial circumstances between the 5- and 9-year interviews (2013-2017), classified by family structure and mother's education (Cohort '08 in 2017)



Note: Family structure and mother's education are as measured at age 9.

Generally, families with higher levels of maternal education reported higher levels of improvement and lower levels of deterioration – 31% of families in which the 9-year-olds' mothers had left school by Junior Certificate recorded an improvement compared with 49% of those whose mothers were educated to degree level. Mothers in one-parent families were less likely than those in two-parent families to record an improvement (36% compared to 46%) and more likely to record a worsening of circumstances (25% compared to 14%). However, a similar percentage of mothers in both groups (39-40%) reported no change.



FAMILY AND FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF 9-YEAR-OLDS IN 2017 AND 2007

There are some differences in the overall family and financial profile of the 9-year-olds in Cohort '98 and Cohort '08. The Cohort '08 9-year-olds in 2017 were more likely to have a mother who is in employment, a mother born outside Ireland (though almost all of the Cohort '08 children themselves had been born in Ireland) and to live in two-parent families (Table 2). Their families were also more likely to be experiencing financial stress than the Cohort '98 9-year-olds in the pre-recession year of 2007.

Table 2: 9-year-olds in Cohort '08 compared to 9-year-olds in Cohort '98

	Cohort '08 (9 in 2017)	Cohort '98 (9 in 2007)
One-parent families	13%	18%
At least one brother/sister	89%	88%
Mothers in employment	65%	54%
Families experiencing financial stress	12%	8%
Mothers born outside Ireland	19%	16%



DISCUSSION POINTS

The percentage of one- and two-parent families had remained fairly stable since the children were 9 months of age (13% and 87%, respectively) but there was change at the individual level. Only 6% of 9-year-olds had lived in one-parent families at all four ages (9 months, 3 years, 5 years and 9 years old).



As in previous waves, one-parent families tended to be in more difficult socio-economic circumstances. They were three times as likely as two-parent families to be in the lowest income fifth, twice as likely to be in the lowest category of maternal education (Junior Certificate or less), and tended to experience more financial stress during the recession.

Grandparents were an important resource for families of 9-year-olds: 70% of 9-year-olds saw their grandparents at least once a week; 88% had a close relationship with at least one grandparent; in 21% of families where both parents worked (and 28% of working one-parent families), grandparents were mainly responsible for minding the children when they were sick.



BACKGROUND

Growing Up in Ireland is the national longitudinal study of children and young people. The study is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), with a contribution from The Atlantic Philanthropies, and is managed by the DCYA in association with the Central Statistics Office. It is being carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD).



The study tracks the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children over time. **Cohort '08 (Infant Cohort)** families were first interviewed on a face-to-face basis when the Study Child was 9 months and subsequently at 3 years, 5 years, and most recently at age 9. The families were surveyed by post at 7/8 years. **Cohort '98 (Child Cohort)** families were interviewed at 9 years (in 2007/08), at 13 and at 17/18 years and at age 20 in 2018/19.

There were just over 11,100 9-month-olds in the first round of interviews with the families of Cohort '08 between September 2008 and March 2009. The response rate was 65%. The second round of interviews (at 3 years of age) took place between January and August 2011; the third round of interviews (at 5 years of age) was completed between March and September 2013. The response rate (as a percentage of those who had participated in the previous wave) was 90% at both the second and third rounds. The fourth round of data collection (at 7/8 years old) was conducted on a postal basis (from March to October 2016), with a 55% response rate. The fifth round at age 9 was conducted on a face-to-face basis (from June

2017 to April 2018), with a response rate of 88.1% of those who had participated at age 5. These *Key Findings* reports analyse the 7,563 children whose families participated in the rounds at 9 months, 3 years, 5 years and 9 years (i.e. excluding children who missed the 3 year or 5 year interview).

The questionnaires can be found at: <https://www.growingup.ie>.

In any study that follows people over time, some will drop out. To account for non-response, information collected in the surveys was statistically adjusted on the basis of mother's education, family income and family social class. This ensures that the data are representative of the population as a whole - all 9-year-olds who had lived in Ireland since they were 9 months old. All figures presented in this *Key Findings* report are based on the statistically adjusted data. While the researchers have made every effort to adjust for any differences between those who left the study and those who continued to participate, it is possible that this adjustment is imperfect.

The figures presented here are purely descriptive and do not control for potential interactions or confounding effects.

All figures are preliminary and may be subject to change.

Access to Growing Up in Ireland data: Anonymised versions of all data collected in *Growing Up in Ireland* are available for research through the Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA, <https://www.ucd.ie/issda/>) for quantitative data; and the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA, <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/iqda>) for qualitative data.

THANK YOU TO ALL PARTICIPANTS

The success of *Growing Up in Ireland* is the result of contributions from a large number of individuals, schools, organisations and groups, many of whom helped to recruit the sample and collect the data. The Study Team is particularly grateful to the thousands of families from every part of the country who gave so generously of their time on numerous occasions to make this study possible. A very big 'thank you' to all the children and their families.

For further information about *Growing Up in Ireland* visit www.growingup.ie or email growingup@esri.ie or Freephone 1800 200 434.