Growing Up in Ireland: The Lives of 9-year-olds of Cohort '08

The Growing Up in Ireland Study Team

16th June 2021   #GUIat9

Dr Eoin McNamara (Research Analyst, ESRI)

Dr Desmond O'Mahony (Research Analyst, ESRI)

ESRI ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Trinity College Dublin — The University of Dublin

An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Outline

Section	Topic
1	Introduction
2	Family
3	Physical Health
4	Play and Activities
5	Education and Cognitive Development
6	Socio-emotional Well-being
7	Relationships
8	Policy Implications and Conclusions

Introduction

- *Growing Up in Ireland* is the national longitudinal study of young people – two cohorts (Cohort '98/'08)

- Report follows the 9yr wave of interviews for Cohort '08 (2018)
  - Data collected from parents, the 9-yr-old and school (postal)
  - Fifth wave of data collection

- **8,032 cases** included in the analysis (51% boys, 49% girls)
  - 72% of all cases included at 9 months (11,134)
  - 89% of all cases included at age 5 (9,001)
 - Data reweighted

Family

Family: Structure

- 85% of 9-year-olds lived in **two-parent families**
  - Less likely for: - lowest income families (66%)
                     - lowest social class families (58%)
- 88% of 9-year-olds had **at least one other child** at home
  - Less likely for one-parent families (67%)
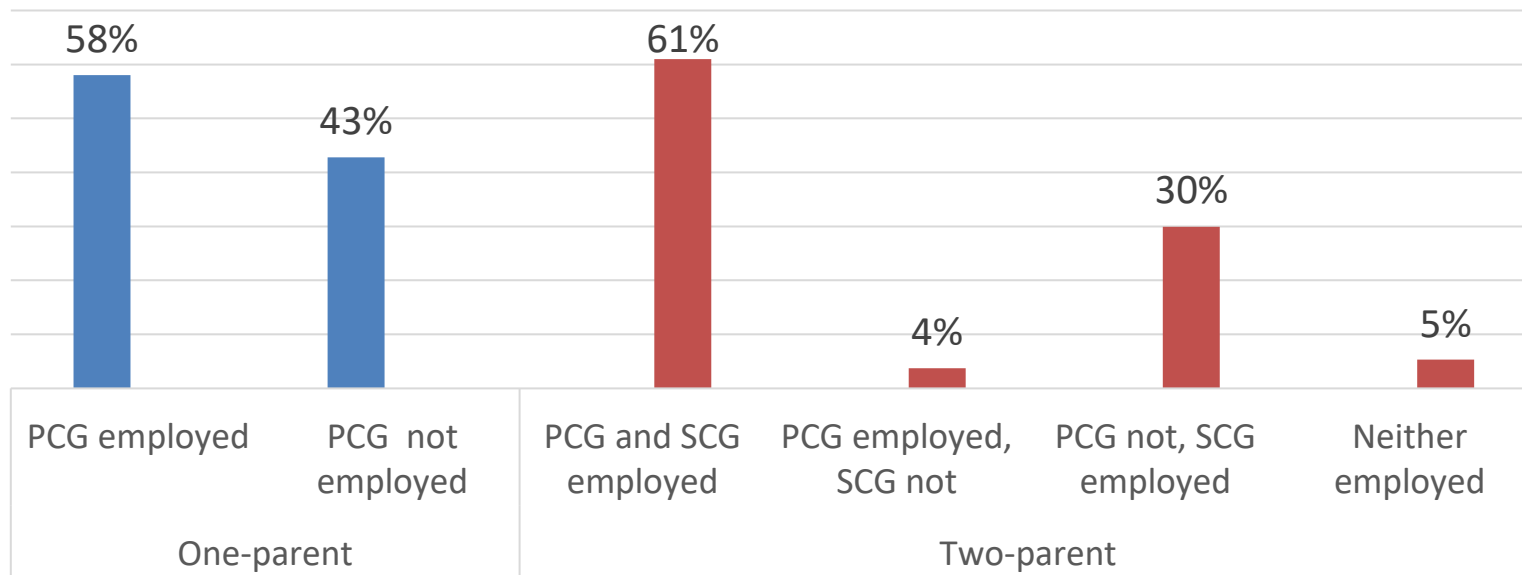- Most children lived in a **stable family structure**….

Fig: Changes in family structure between 9 months and 9 years

- ■ Always two-parent
- ■ Always one-parent
- ■ One-parent at 9, was two parent
- ■ Two-parent at 9, was one-parent

9%

7%

8%

76%
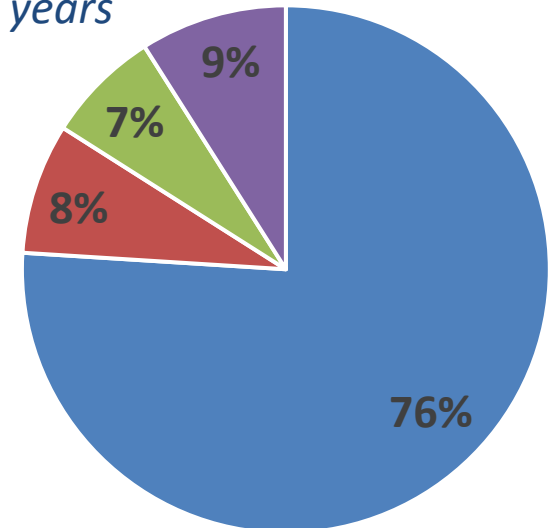
Family: Employment

Fig: Parental employment pattern by family structure

Missed out on family time because of work commitments?
- 55% of fathers   - 42% of mothers

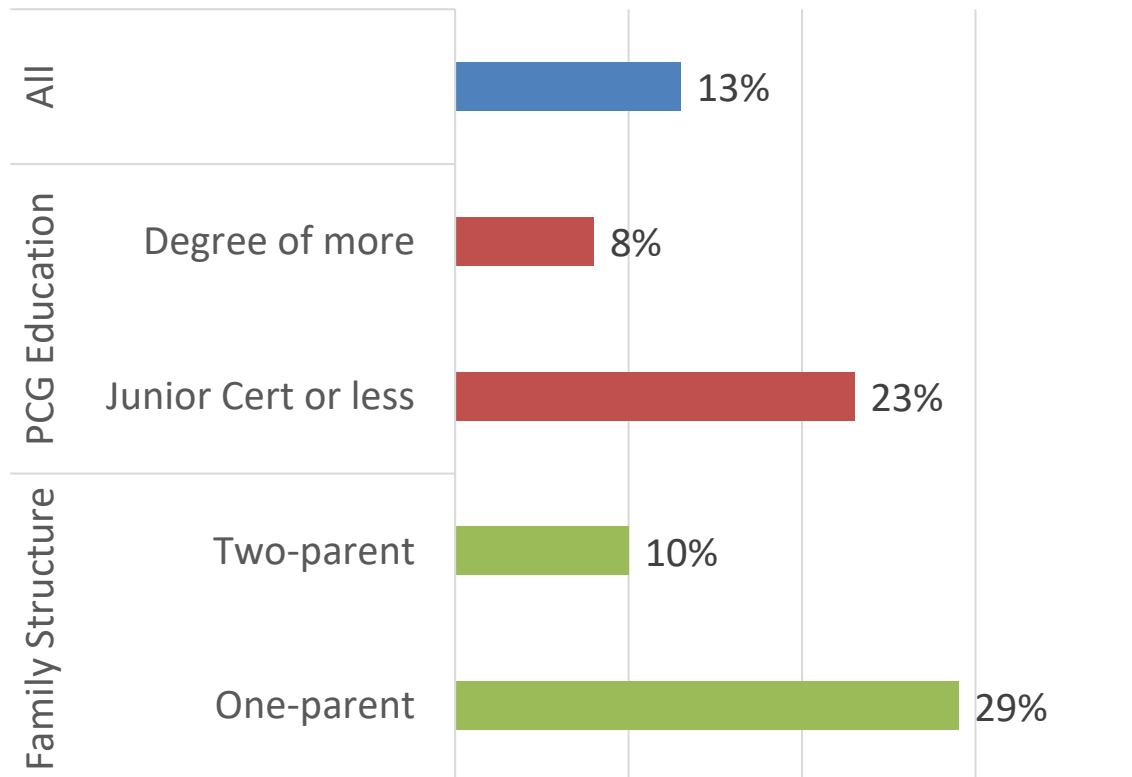**Turned down work opportunities because of family commitments?**
- 20% of fathers   - 28% of mothers

Family: Financial Stress

Parents were asked about the degree of ease or difficulty their household had making ends meet…

Fig: 'Difficulty' or 'great difficulty' making ends meet

Trends in financial stress reflect wider economic circumstance:

- 5 years old in 2013 = 26%
- 9 months in 2008/9 = 13%

Physical Health

Health

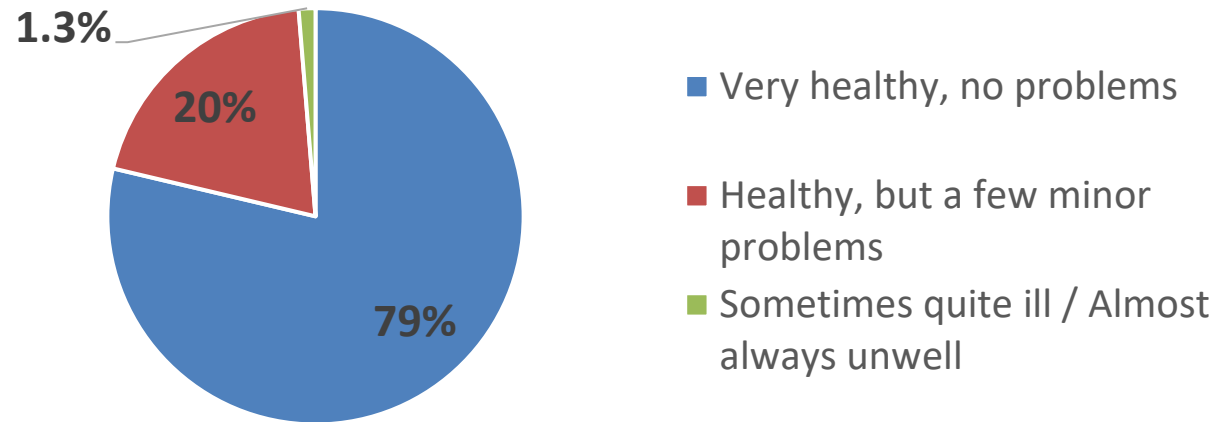- Parents were asked to describe their child's current health….

- Very healthy, no problems
- Healthy, but a few minor problems
- Sometimes quite ill / Almost always unwell

1.3%
20%
79%

Fig: Social gradient in percentage of children who were 'very healthy' at every wave

One-parent	Two-parent	Lower-skilled & never worked	Professional
47%	57%	47%	62%

Family structure — Social class
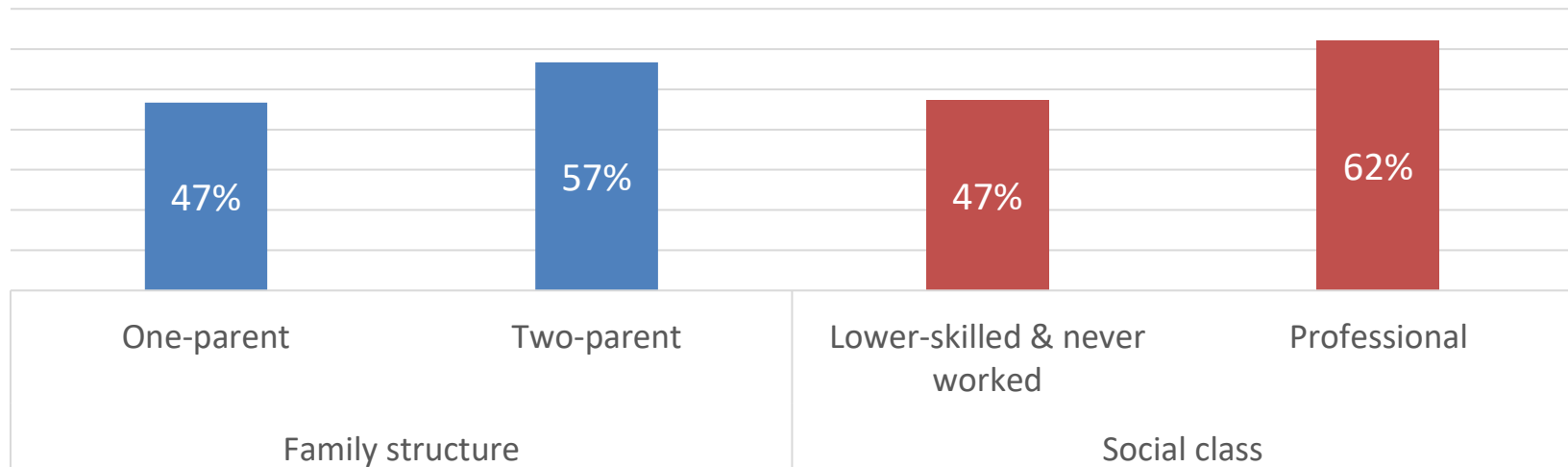
Health: Chronic Illness

- Almost one-in-four (24%) parents said their child had a longstanding illness, condition or disease
  - Differences observed according to gender and family circumstance….

| Gender		Family structure		Income quintile	
Boys	Girls	One-parent	Two-parent	Lowest	Highest
28%	19%	27%	23%	28%	22%
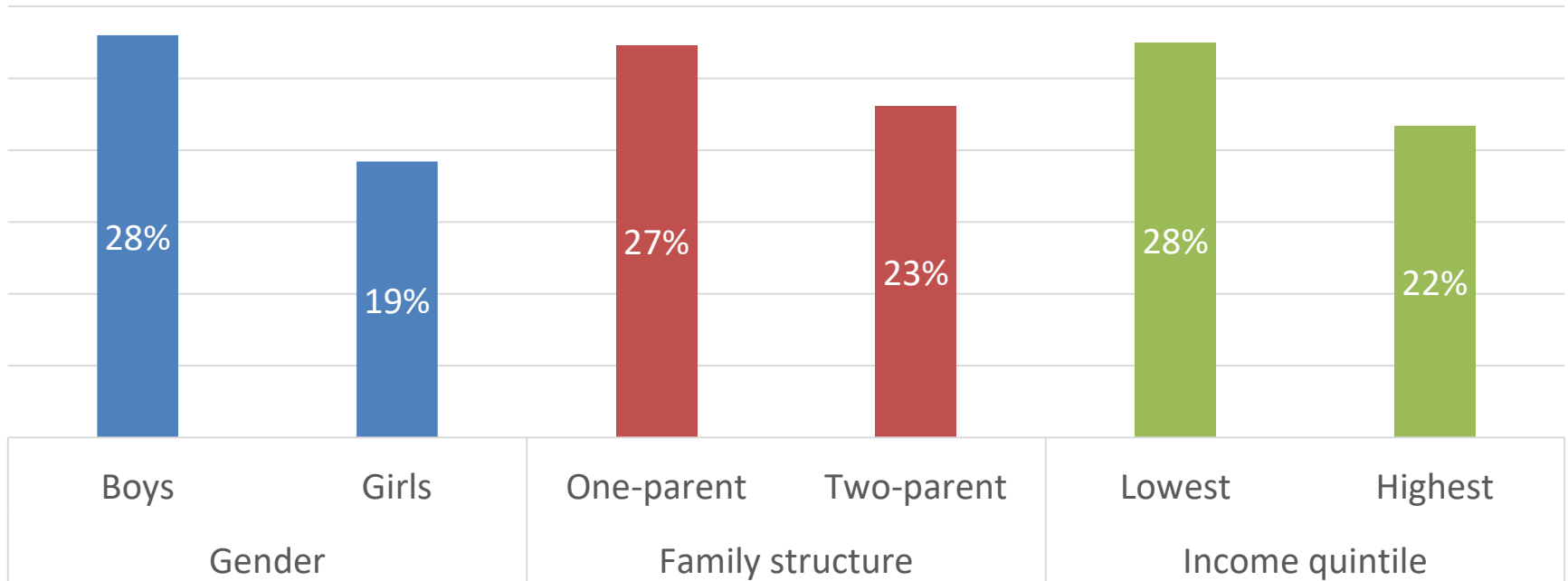
Most commonly reported conditions:
Asthma (9%), eczema (3%), autistic spectrum disorders (3%), respiratory allergies (3%)

Health: Overweight & Obesity

- 18% of 9-year-olds were overweight and 5% were obese; higher for….
  - **Girls** (24% vs 21%)
  - Those from **lowest income** families (31% vs 15% highest income)
  - Those who were overweight/obese at **3yrs** (73% of obese 3YOs still overweight/obese)
  - Those whose **parents** were also overweight or obese….
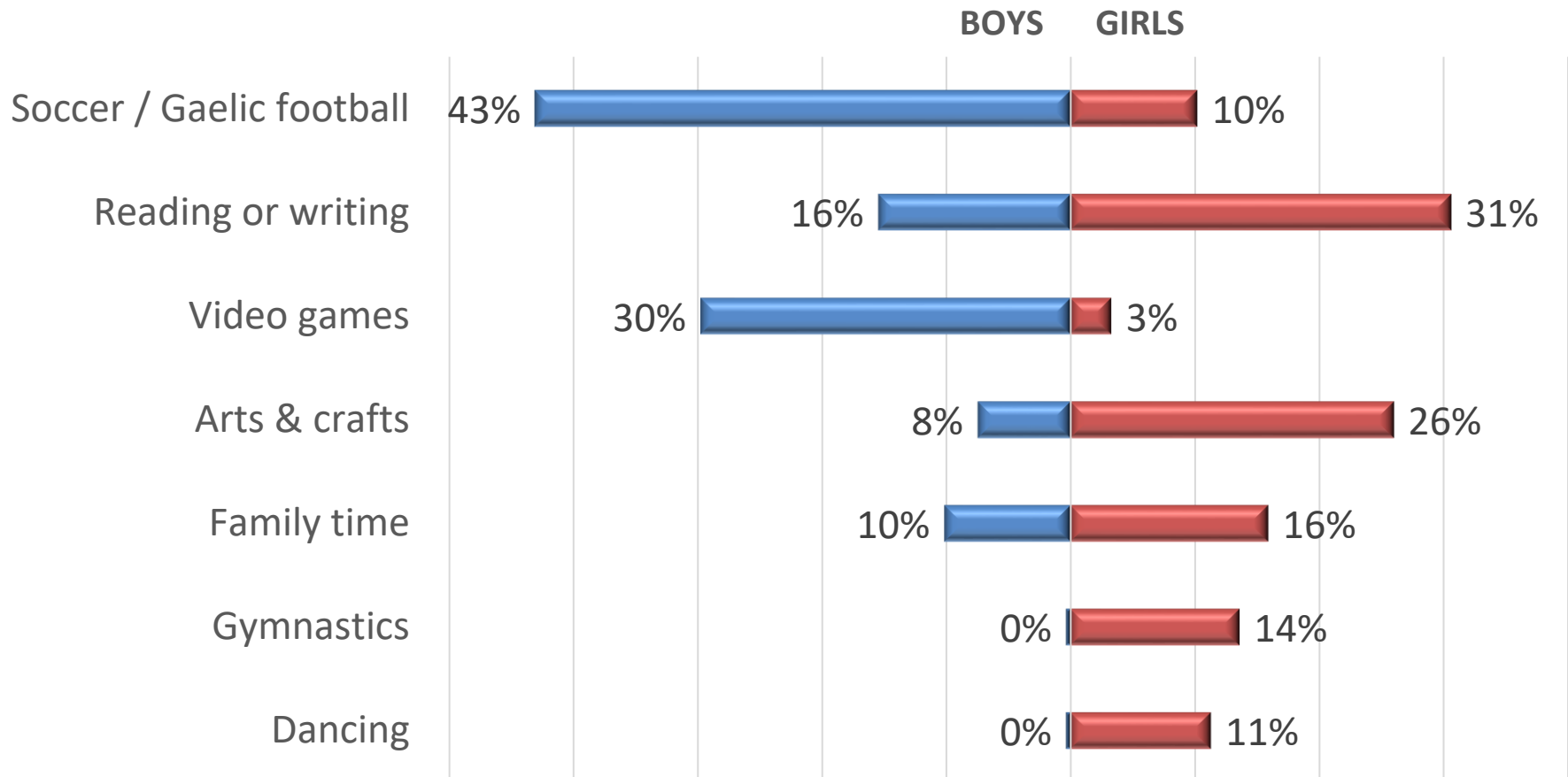
Fig: Child Overweight or Obesity by Parental BMI Status

None	One	Two
14%	22%	29%

Number of overweight or obese parents
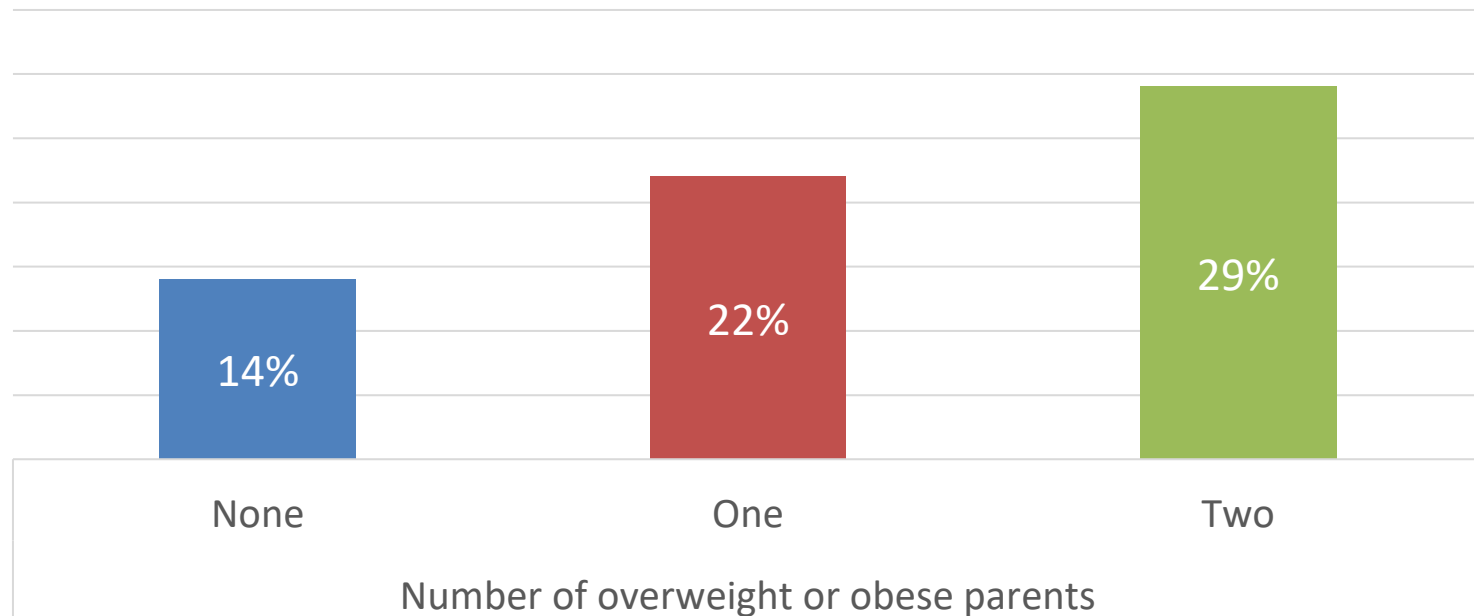
Play and Activities

Play and Activities

Children were asked to list their favourite things to do in their free time…

Fig: Gender differences in favourite activities for 9-year-olds

	BOYS	GIRLS
Soccer / Gaelic football	43%	10%
Reading or writing	16%	31%
Video games	30%	3%
Arts & crafts	8%	26%
Family time	10%	16%
Gymnastics	0%	14%
Dancing	0%	11%

Play and Activities

Parents were asked about organised activities the 9-year-old participated in…

Fig: Most common organised activities, by gender and income

Legend: ■ Team sport ■ Individual sport ■ Music/Dance

Mostly paid-for activities

Male: Team sport 75%, Individual sport 60%, Music/Dance 19%
Female: Team sport 57%, Individual sport 64%, Music/Dance 52%
Highest: Team sport 77%, Individual sport 76%, Music/Dance 45%
Lowest: Team sport 53%, Individual sport 48%, Music/Dance 24%

Gender — Income
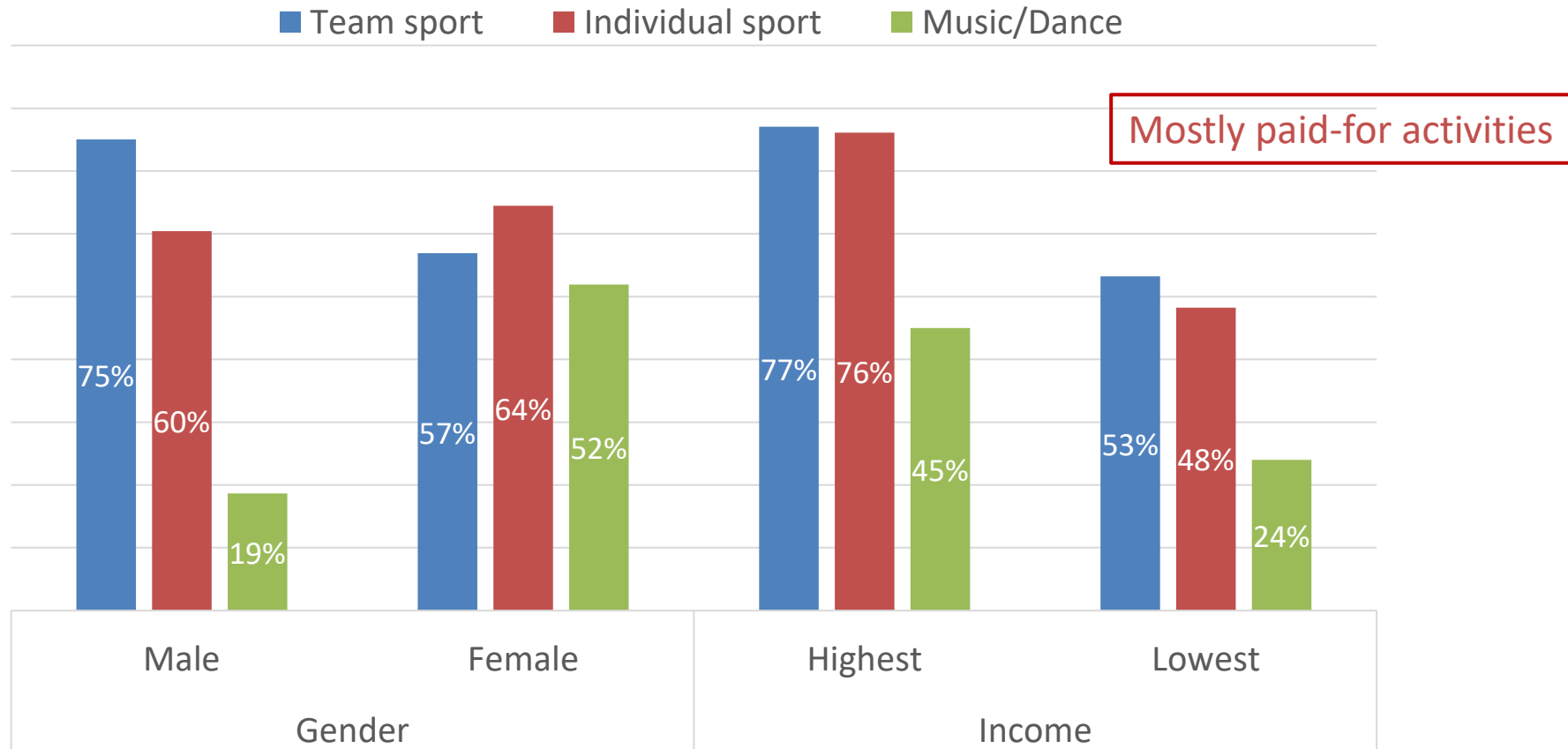
INTERNET / COMPUTER SCREEN TIME:

• Second most popular 'favourite activity' (29% of boys, 24% of girls)

• Almost all children had access to the internet

  • 69% owned the device

• 53% said they were allowed to use the internet unsupervised

• Most common activities:

  • playing games alone (81%), YouTube (78%), searching for info (55%)

SCREEN TIME USAGE WAS HIGHER…

• At the weekend

• For those with lower-educated parents

• For high screen-time users at age 5

Education and Cognitive Development

Education: Attitude

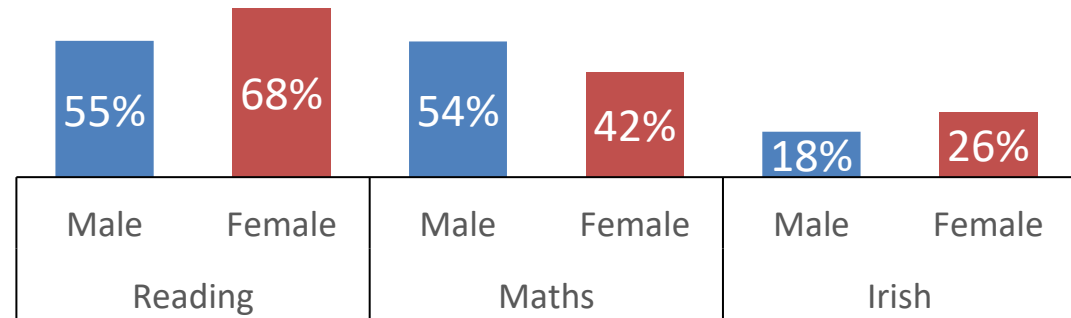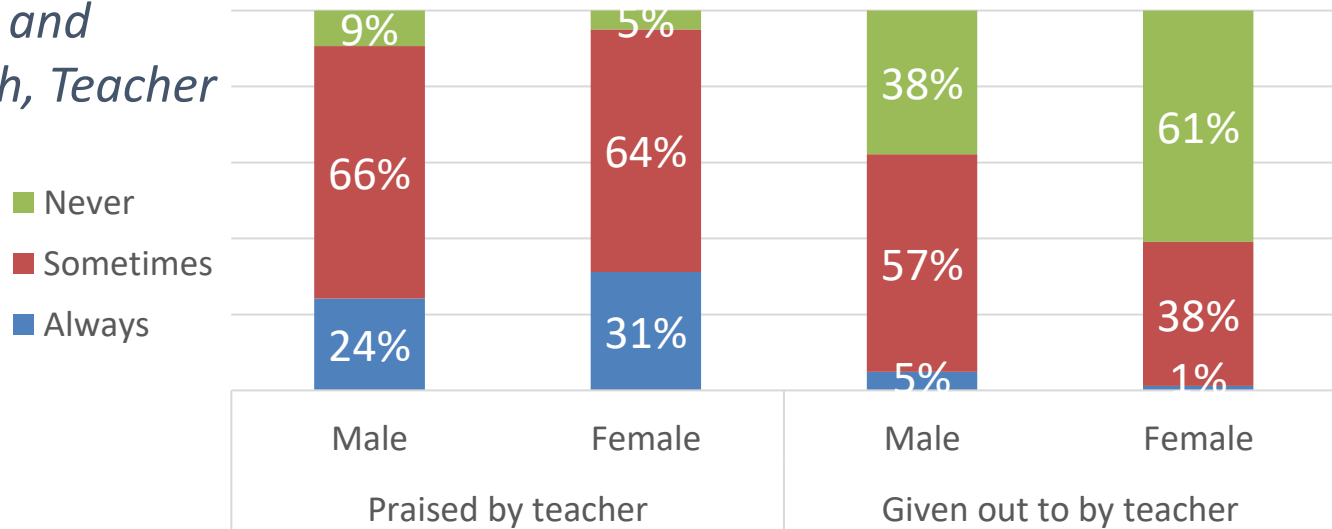*Fig: Gender Differences in Attitudes to School Subjects: "Always like it"*

	Reading		Maths		Irish	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	55%	68%	54%	42%	18%	26%

Fig: Gender Differences in Attitudes to, and Interaction with, Teacher

Legend:
- Never
- Sometimes
- Always

	Praised by teacher		Given out to by teacher	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Never	9%	5%	38%	61%
Sometimes	66%	64%	57%	38%
Always	24%	31%	5%	1%

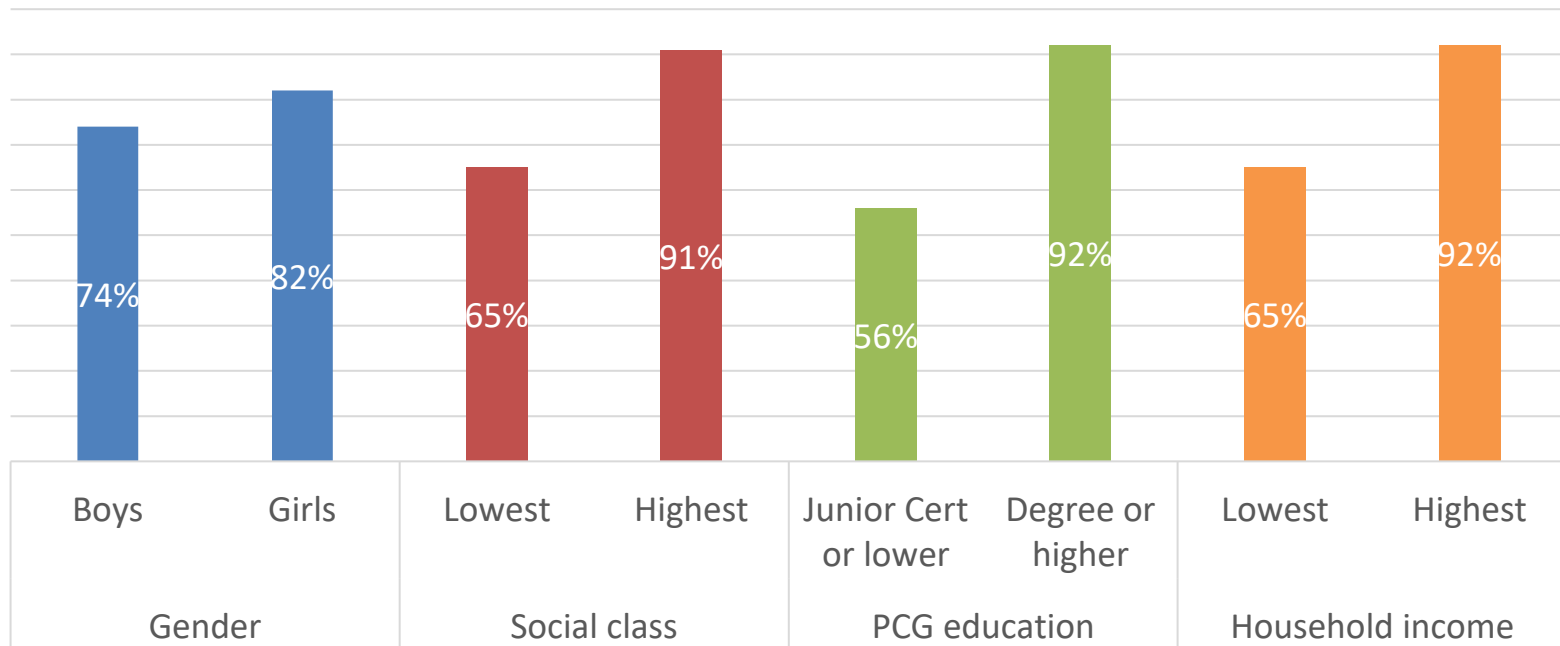- Drumcondra reading (vocabulary) test scores were linked to parental behaviours

- Reading daily to the child and frequently listening to the child read were found to have a strong association with standardised test performance

Fig: Changes in score on BAS vocabulary tests at 3 5, and 9, by parental education and bottom vocabulary quartile
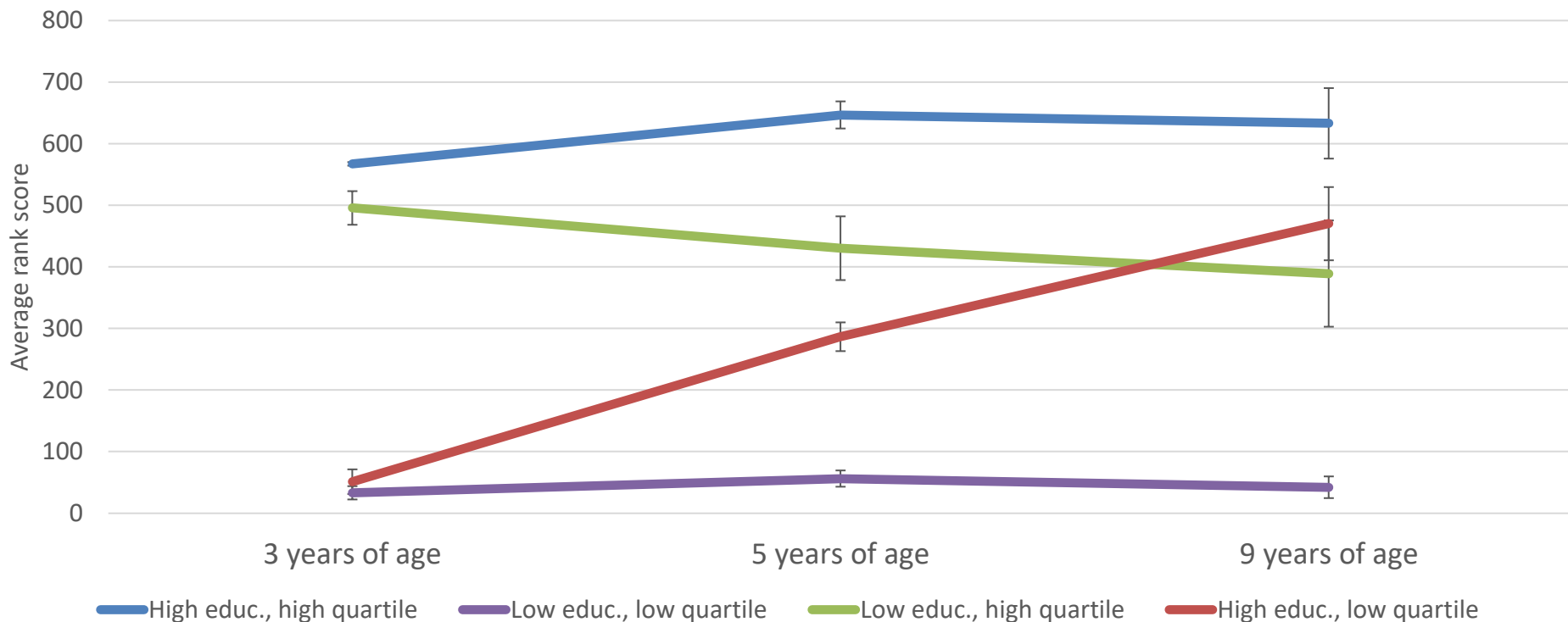
Education: Expectations

- Almost four-fifths (78%) of parents expected their child to get a degree or postgraduate/higher degree

| Boys	Girls	Lowest	Highest	Junior Cert or lower	Degree or higher	Lowest	Highest
74%	82%	65%	91%	56%	92%	65%	92%
Gender		Social class		PCG education		Household income	

- Expectations were lower for children who had….
  - lower Drumcondra reading scores at 9yrs   - lower vocabulary scores at 5yrs
  - more negative (teacher-reported) dispositions towards school at age 5
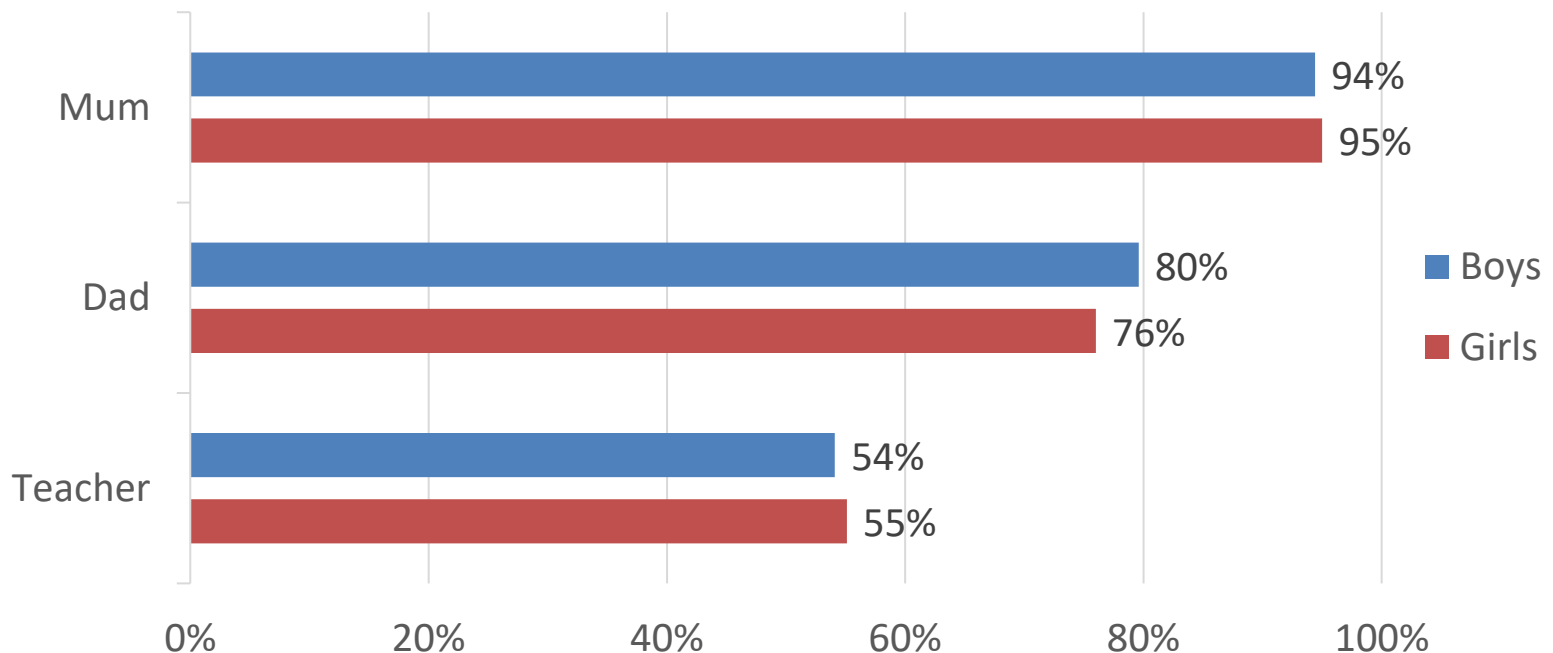
Socio-emotional Well-being and Relationships

Socio-emotional Well-being

Fig: Primary Caregiver (mother) report of mean SDQ scores by gender
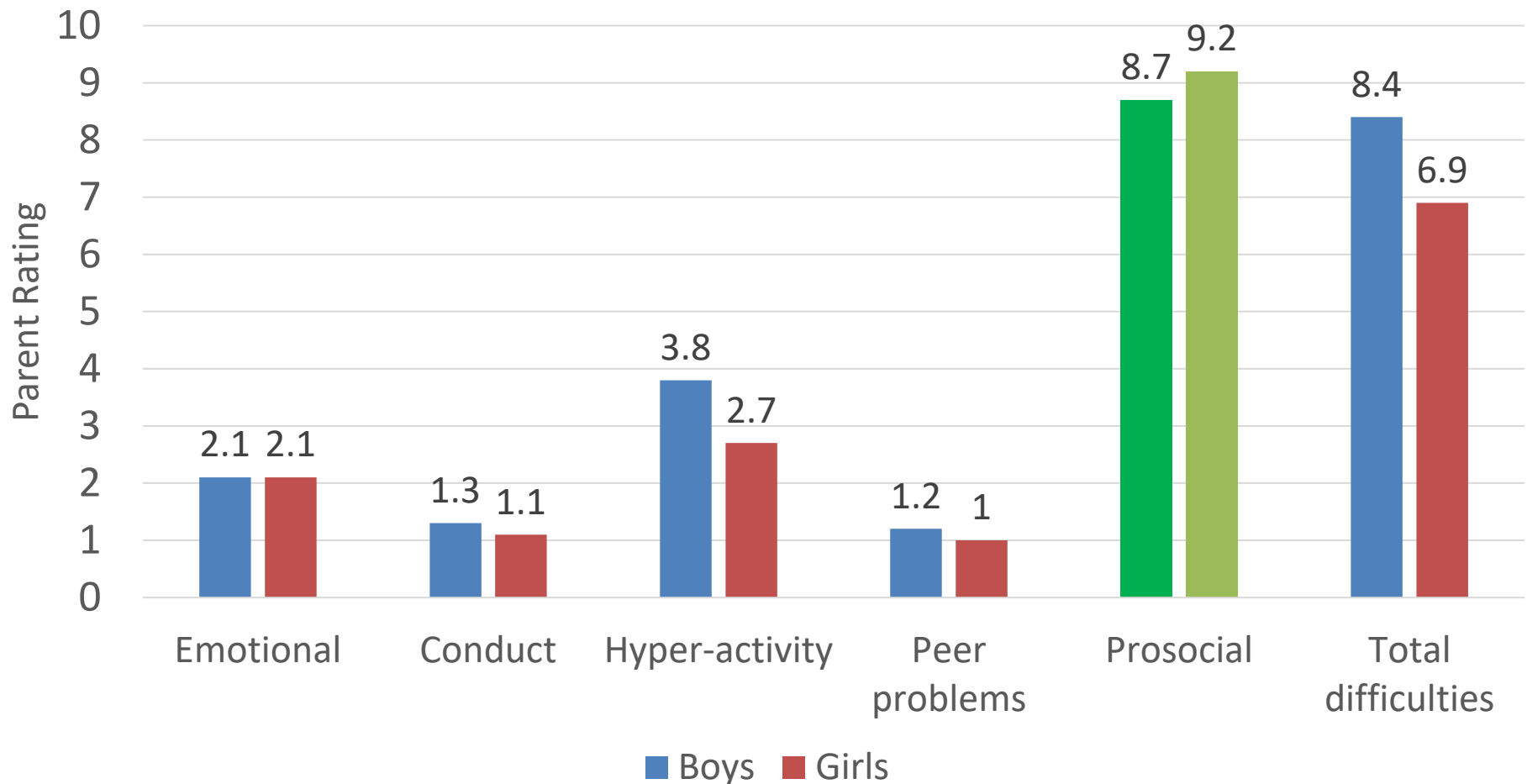
Relationships: Parents

- Parents reported having close relationships with their children
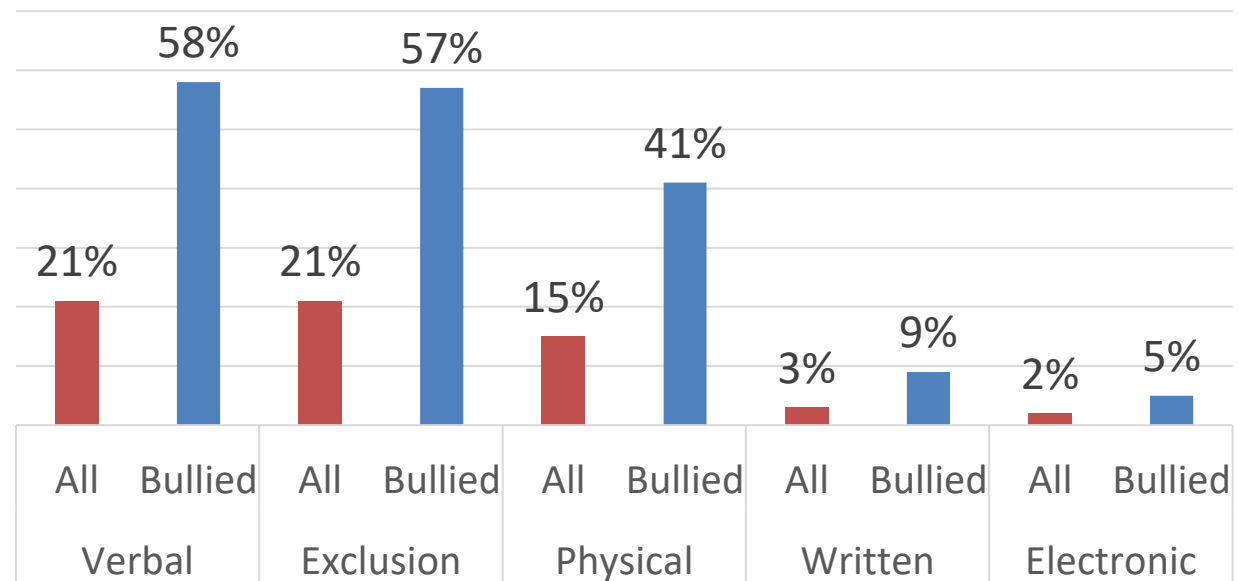 - Longitudinally, low closeness / high conflict were transitory
- Around 80% of children said they got on *very well* with their parents
  - Girls more likely to say they got on *very well*
- 9-year-olds were asked who they'd talk to about a problem….

Bar chart:

	Boys	Girls
Mum	94%	95%
Dad	80%	76%
Teacher	54%	55%

Growing Up in Ireland
National Longitudinal Study of Children

- Child-report: 60% said they *more than 10 friends*

- Parent-report: Almost all 9-year-olds had at least one close friend, about 50% had 4+

- No friends?   - 4% (child-report)   - 1% (parent-report)

- Almost two-fifths of children said they had been picked on in the last year

Fig: Types of bullying reported by 9-year-old

	Verbal		Exclusion		Physical		Written		Electronic	
	All	Bullied	All	Bullied	All	Bullied	All	Bullied	All	Bullied
	21%	58%	21%	57%	15%	41%	3%	9%	2%	5%

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Conclusion and Policy Implications

RISKS / THREATS:

- Gender differences and social gradient evident in key outcomes of health and education

- Policy needs to be responsive to gender and age appropriate behaviours and should aim to close the gaps presented by differences in family circumstances

COVID-19 context:

- This report references the experiences of the children before the current pandemic but highlights disparities that could potentially be magnified as a result of the pandemic

- Understanding developmental trajectories from infancy to middle childhood can help to understand learning loss and set targets for improvement/recovery

Conclusion and Policy Implications

RESOURCES:

- Evidence of economic recovery

- Positive findings with regard to health, education and relationships

- Opportunities to strengthen support networks for 'at risk' children

WHAT NEXT?:

- Special COVID-19 survey conducted in Dec 2020 (data forthcoming from CSO)

- Data collection with Cohort '98 at age 13 wave beginning this month

- Opportunities to explore impact of the pandemic vs recession in cross cohort comparisons

Thanks   #GUIat9

- Our co-authors and the wider GUI team

- Our colleagues at Trinity College and the CSO

- The DCEDIY and Assistant Secretary General Bernie McNally

- Especially the 9-year-olds, their families and their teachers

Self-concept

- *9-year-olds completed the Piers-Harris Scale to measure their own self-concept*
  - *The risk of being in lowest two 'total score' categories was higher for boys, those in lower income families, those in one-parent families and those whose parents had lower education*

Income quintile		Family type		Education		Gender	
Lowest (±3%)	Highest (±2%)	Two parent (±1%)	One parent (±3%)	Junior Cert or less (±4%)	Degree or more (±1%)	Male (±1%)	Female (±1%)
27%	14%	16%	26%	26%	13%	19%	16%