

# GROWING UP IN IRELAND



## KEY FINDINGS: 9-YEAR-OLDS

### NO. 1 BEING 9 YEARS OLD

#### INTRODUCTION

This is the first in a series of *Key Findings* from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. It summarises some results on the characteristics of 9-year-olds and their families.

#### HOW MANY 9-YEAR-OLDS?

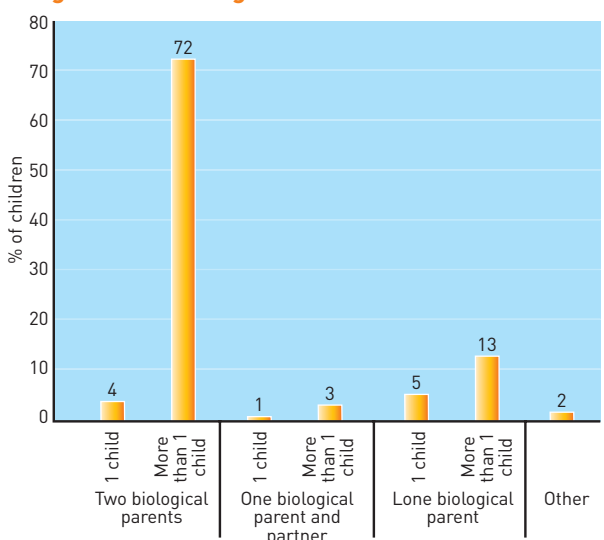
According to the most recent Census figures (2006), there were 56,497 9-year-old children resident in Ireland. Just over half of these (51%) were boys. All the figures in this document are based on a representative sample of these children and their families.

#### MOST 9-YEAR-OLDS LIVED WITH TWO PARENTS

Figure 1 shows the percentage of children in different family types.

- Most 9-year-olds (72%) lived with both of their biological parents and siblings. A further 4% lived with both biological parents with no siblings.
- 22% lived with one biological parent; 18% lived in lone-parent families with one biological parent; a further 4% lived with one biological parent and his/her spouse or partner.
- 10% of 9-year-olds lived in a family with no siblings.
- 2% lived in other types of families, for example with adoptive parents, foster parents, grandparents and so on.

Figure 1: Percentage of children who lived in each family type



#### Message from the Minister

I welcome the publication of *'Being 9 Years Old'*. This is one of a series of *Key Findings* documents drawn from *Growing Up in Ireland - the National Longitudinal Study of Children*. These documents are designed to provide data and information on children in Ireland in an easily understood manner and should be useful to members of the public as well as policy makers.

The publication of this document would not be possible without the commitment and contribution from parents, teachers, principals and children themselves, all of whom have generously given their time to participate in *Growing Up in Ireland*. I would like to thank them all for their involvement in this very important study.



**Barry Andrews TD**  
Minister for Children

## OVER 80% OF 9-YEAR-OLDS GOT ON 'VERY WELL' WITH THEIR PARENTS

In general, children got on very well with their parents and siblings.

- Nearly 87% of 9-year-olds reported that they got on 'very well' with their mother and over 83% got on 'very well' with their father.
- One-third (35%) said they 'always' got on well with their siblings, while very few (2%) said that they 'never' got on well with them.
- Most children recorded that they would talk to their mother about a problem (90%). A smaller number (61%) said they would talk to their father about a problem.

## MOST 9-YEAR-OLDS HAD FREQUENT CONTACT WITH THEIR EXTENDED FAMILY

- Just over two-thirds (66%) of those who had living grandparents were reported to visit them 'quite a lot'. Around half saw their aunts/uncles (52%) and cousins (49%) 'quite a lot'.
- 68% of 9-year-old children said they had visited relatives with their parents in the week preceding their interview.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

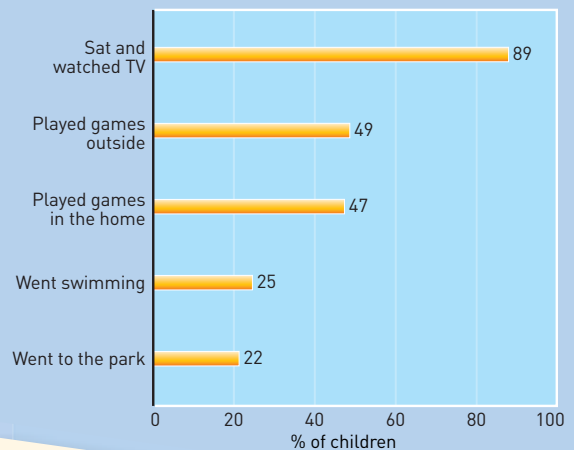
Both parents and children discussed activities undertaken as a family. These are central to the nature of relationships in the home and the way families structure their lives.

- Around three-quarters of parents (72%) reported that they sat down to eat a meal with their 9-year-old every day and 77% said they talked about things together every day.

Children were asked about the activities they had participated in with their parents in the past week.

- **Figure 2** shows that the most frequently mentioned activity was watching TV together (89%).
- Almost half of the children had played games outside with their parents; a slightly smaller percentage (47%) had played indoor games.
- One-quarter of children said they had gone swimming with their parents in the previous week, while just over 20% reported having gone to the park with them.

**Figure 2: Percentage of children who had undertaken specified activities with their parents in the past week**



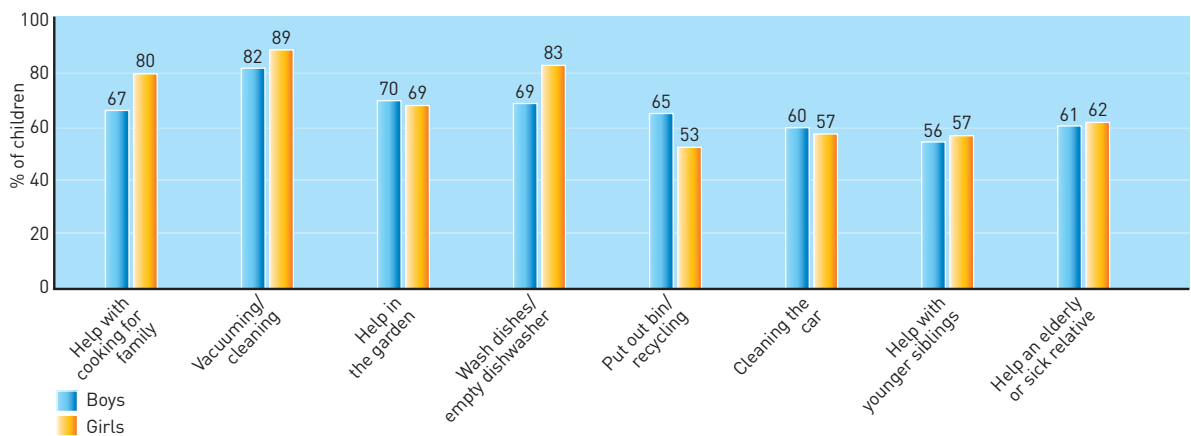
## HELPING OUT AT HOME

Children were asked about the chores they performed in the home.

- The household chore most widely performed by children was vacuuming/cleaning; 85% of 9-year-olds said they did this 'often' or 'occasionally'.
- Over a quarter (26%) of children 'often' helped out with an elderly or sick relative, while 35% did so 'occasionally'. A third (33%) of 9-year-olds 'often' and a further 23% 'occasionally' helped with younger brothers or sisters.

- **Figure 3** shows the percentage of boys and girls who said they did each task – either 'often' or 'occasionally'. It is clear that a higher proportion of girls than boys reported helping out at home in most activities. The biggest difference is in activities such as 'washing dishes/emptying the dishwasher' (83% of girls and 69% of boys). There are also big differences in 'helping with cooking' (80% and 67% respectively).
- The only task that was performed notably less frequently by girls than boys was 'putting out the bin/recycling' (53% and 65% respectively).

**Figure 3: Percentage of boys and girls who performed each household task either 'often' or 'occasionally'**



## LOOKING AFTER THEMSELVES

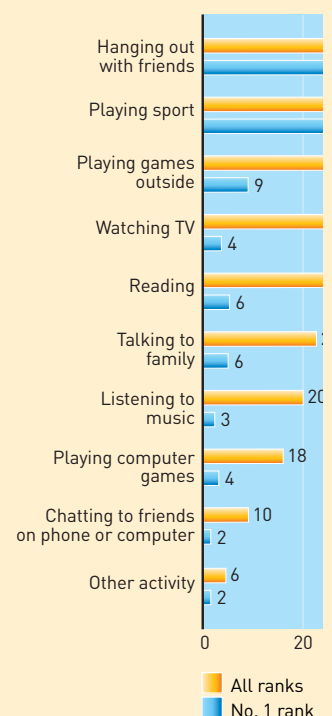
- Nine out of 10 children were expected to shower or bathe themselves.
- Just over 70% were expected to make their own breakfast and 4% to make their own dinner.
- Most children were expected to tidy their own bedroom (85%) and make their bed (75%).

## HANGING OUT WITH FRIENDS WAS 9-YEAR-OLDS' NUMBER ONE PASTIME

Children were asked to rank their top three pastimes from a set of nine categories presented to them (**Figure 4**).

- The most popular of the set of activities was 'hanging out with friends'; 35% of children ranked this as their top pastime.
- Only 4% of children said that watching TV was their number one pastime, although 29% ranked it among their top three activities.

**Figure 4: Percentage of children giving a No. 1 rank and any rank to each activity**



## SPORT WAS FAVOURITE HOBBY OR ACTIVITY

- Children were asked in an open-ended question to specify their 'favourite hobby or activity' (as distinct from their No.1 pastime). The most frequently mentioned was sport, some aspect being mentioned by 65% of 9-year-olds. The next most frequently mentioned hobby or activity was some form of cultural pursuit, which includes dancing, acting, playing an instrument, etc. This was mentioned by 9% of children.
- There were big differences in the types of hobbies mentioned by boys and girls. Almost 74% of boys mentioned sports compared with 55% of girls. In contrast, cultural activities were mentioned much more frequently by girls (17%) than boys (2%).

## STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES: THREE-QUARTERS OF 9-YEAR-OLDS WERE INVOLVED IN ORGANISED SPORTS/FITNESS CLUBS

- Parents were asked about the types of structured or organised activities that their child was engaged in (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Participation in structured activities – parent report**

Activity	Percentage participating		
	Boys	Girls	Total
	Per cent		
Sports/Fitness Club	84	66	75
Cultural activities	31	65	48
Youth club	7	8	7
Scouts/Guides/Boys Brigade/Girls Brigade	12	15	13
Homework club	7	8	8

- Three-quarters of 9-year-olds were involved in organised sports/fitness clubs outside school. Participation among boys (84%) was considerably higher than among girls (66%).
- Just under half (48%) of 9-year-olds were involved in cultural activities (dance, ballet, music, arts, drama). Much higher proportions of girls (65%) than boys (31%) were involved in this type of activity.
- Relatively small percentages of 9-year-olds were involved in youth clubs (7%), Scouts/Guides (13%) and homework clubs (8%).



## SEDENTARY ACTIVITIES: TWO-THIRDS OF 9-YEAR-OLDS WATCHED 1-3 HOURS OF TV A DAY

- According to parents, 65% of 9-year-olds typically spent between one and three hours watching TV on an average day. A further 9% spent between three and five hours each day.
- 9-year-olds typically spent some time (usually less than an hour per day) playing video games (44%) or using the computer (51%).
- Nearly half of 9-year-old children (45%) had a TV in their bedroom.
- Just under 45% of 9-year-olds had a mobile phone.

## 86% OF 9-YEAR-OLDS HAD A COMPUTER AT HOME

- Most children (86%) said there was a computer at home and 91% of these said they used it to some degree.
- Just under 7% of 9-year-olds had a computer in their bedroom.
- The most popular use for computers, according to the children themselves, was playing games (86%). This was followed by:
  - surfing the internet for fun (49%)
  - surfing the internet for school (47%)
  - watching movies (29%)
  - doing homework (25%)

## MOST 9-YEAR-OLDS HAD A PET

- About two-thirds of children (68%) said they had at least one pet in the family.
- Nearly half (47%) said they had a family dog.
- The most popular reason given by children for liking their pet was that they were fun to be with (81%).

## ASPIRATIONS FOR FUTURE OCCUPATIONS

Children were asked what they wanted to do when they grew up. There were clear gender differences in the types of occupations that they aspired to (some of the most popular ones are shown in Table 2).

**Table 2: Top 10 occupations aspired to by 9-year-olds**

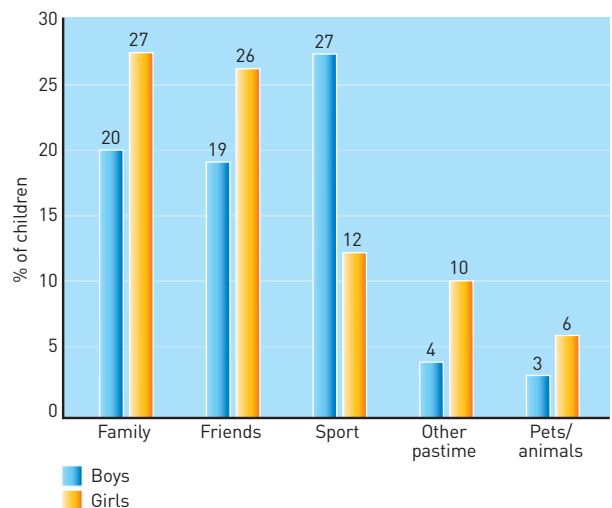
Occupation	Boys	Girls	Total
	Per cent		
Sports person	43	7	25
Primary school teacher	2	22	12
Hairdresser/barber/beautician	0	14	7
Vet	2	11	6
Singer / Musician	2	9	5
Garda / Police Officer	6	2	4
Artist / Painter / Sculptor	2	4	3
Actor/Director/Producer	2	4	3
Doctor	2	4	3
Nurse	0	3	1

## WHAT MAKES CHILDREN MOST HAPPY

Children were asked to complete the sentence, 'The thing that makes me most happy is...'

- The most popular overall answer was 'family' (24%). This was closely followed by 'friends' (22%) and 'sport' (20%).
- 'Family' was more important for girls (27%) than boys (20%). Similarly, girls were more likely to mention 'friends' (26% compared with 19% of boys). In contrast, boys were more likely to mention 'sport' (27% compared with 12% for girls). (Figure 5)

**Figure 5: Five most important things mentioned by children which make them happy (percentage)**



CHILDREN WERE ASKED TO COMPLETE THE SENTENCE, 'THE THING THAT MAKES ME MOST HAPPY IS...'



***Growing Up in Ireland*** is the National Longitudinal Study of Children. This Study aims to track, from infancy through to adolescence, the lives of two representative cohorts of children in Ireland – an infant cohort (recruited at 9 months of age) and a child cohort (recruited when they were 9 years old).

The Study is funded by the Department of Health and Children through the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, in association with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and 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).

Focusing initially on the child cohort, the first wave of fieldwork, which included approximately 8,500 nine-year-old children, their parents and their teachers, began in September 2007 and was completed in May 2008. This document is one of a series that summarises key findings from that wave of fieldwork.

The success of ***Growing Up in Ireland*** is the result of contributions from many individuals, organisations and groups, including principals, teachers and other staff in over 1,000 National Schools who helped with recruitment and data collection. We are particularly grateful to the 8,500 9-year-olds and their families, each of whom gave so generously of their time to make this Study possible.



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

If you would like further information about ***Growing Up in Ireland***, please visit

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e-mail [growingup@esri.ie](mailto:growingup@esri.ie)

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*The figures reported above are preliminary and may be subject to change.*

