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THE CHANGING SOCIAL WORLDS OF 13-YEAR-OLDS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Central Statistics Office
GUI	Growing Up in Ireland
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study draws on data on Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) Cohorts '98 and '08 to document changes in the lives of adolescents over the period 2011/12 to 2021/22, building on an earlier study (Smyth, 2022) which compared their experiences at nine years of age. This decade was a period of considerable social and policy change, including reform of the junior cycle, growing digitalisation and the disruption of the pandemic to all aspects of young people's lives. Changes were also evident in the profile of young people and their families, with increasing cultural diversity, higher education levels among parents, lower levels of financial strain and increasing numbers with a disability among members of Cohort '08 than among their older cohort counterparts.

The study looks at changes in 13-year-olds' relationships with their parents and peers, in their day-to-day activities and in their experiences of school. The main research questions addressed by the study are:

1. How have the quality of relationships, experience of learning and activities engaged in by adolescents changed over the course of a decade?

2. To what extent do any such changes reflect differences in the family characteristics of the young people?

3. Are any such changes more evident for boys or girls or for young people from different social backgrounds? Is differentiation by gender and social background in adolescents' social worlds less evident for the younger cohort than previously?

The remainder of this executive summary outlines the main findings of the study and discusses the implications for policy development.

MAIN FINDINGS

The study findings point to very significant changes in the lives of 13-year-olds, even taking account of the shift in their profile. Both mothers and fathers report much lower levels of conflict than previously while young people see their mothers as more responsive to their needs. Parents are also less likely to use more punitive approaches (such as grounding) to deal with behaviour and more likely to explain what the young person has done wrong. In contrast, the quality of peer engagement, at least as reported by mothers, has worsened over time, with greater peer problems evident among Cohort '08 members. Furthermore, young people report having smaller friendship groups than previously. It is not clear whether

these patterns reflect longer-term trends or the short-term impact of the pandemic.

Significant changes are evident in adolescent lives. There has been an increase in weekly involvement in organised sports and very low levels of engagement in hard and light exercise are less evident than a decade previously. Levels of weekly involvement in cultural activities (such as drama and dance) have been stable, if not increasing, though involvement in organised groups (like youth clubs and Scouts/Guides) has declined somewhat, at least partly because of ongoing pandemic restrictions at the time of the 2021/22 survey. Overall, the proportion of 13-year-olds who are not regularly involved in any of these structured activities has declined somewhat from 25 to 21 per cent. Unfortunately, no fully comparable information is available on changes in reading for pleasure but there is tentative evidence of a growth in the number of boys in particular who rarely read. Not surprisingly, there has been a shift away from traditional media (such as TV watching but also playing video/computer games) towards other (non-school-related) screen time. High levels of screen time are generally associated with less involvement in sport and cultural activities.

Cohort '08 had experienced the full implementation of junior cycle reform as well as a change in approaches to teaching and learning at both primary and second-level. This has apparently led to improved interest in English, Maths and, especially, Science. However, this has not translated in the same way into improved attitudes to school in general. Indeed, there is a decline in the proportion of girls who say they like school very much. Preliminary analysis suggests this is at least partly related to increased emotional difficulties among girls. Further research is merited on whether this reflects the impact of the pandemic or other societal changes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

There are many positive findings emerging from this study, particularly more democratic family relations, improved engagement in sport and physical exercise, and greater interest in some core subjects in the wake of junior cycle reform. The study findings do, however, highlight persistent social background and gender differences in the lives adolescents lead. Financial strain continues to be a source of friction between parents and teenagers, reinforcing the need to target adequate levels of income support towards families with children. Young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take part in the kinds of out-of-school activities (like hard exercise and cultural engagement) that boost their development, highlighting the need for subsidised activities in communities and supports for schools to provide access to a range of extracurricular options.

There are marked gender differences in young people's lives, with girls more likely to be involved in cultural activities and reading and boys more likely to be involved in sport and hard physical exercise. Previous research suggests that these gendered patterns emerge early and in- and out-of-school settings should seek to provide all

young people with access to a range of activities from their early years onwards. The findings point to a significant shift in screen time, with boys in Cohort '98 spending longer on other (non-TV, non-gaming) screen time than girls but this pattern reversing among Cohort '08, a pattern that merits further investigation. Gendered attitudes to subjects are also evident, with girls more positive about language-based subjects and boys more positive about Maths and Science. The widening gender gap in interest in STEM is concerning, given the policy effort in encouraging girls into STEM, and highlights the importance of inclusive curriculum and pedagogy from an early age.

At the age of nine (Smyth, 2022), 13-year-olds with a disability have much poorer outcomes across the main domains studied here. Further research is planned on the increase over the decade in the proportion with a disability and the implications for their experiences and outcomes.

The study was not designed to look at the effects of the pandemic on adolescent outcomes and, given the timing of data collection, it is not possible to discern whether any impact is long-lasting or not. Nonetheless, the findings point to poorer peer relations and more emotional difficulties among this cohort, especially among girls. There is tentative evidence that this gendered pattern of emotional difficulties is related to greater relative conflict with parents and less positive views of school among girls. Further research is merited to identify the risk and protective factors to inform policy development in a context where school principals report much poorer wellbeing and school attendance among students (Smyth, 2023) in the post-pandemic period.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The past decade has seen rapid social change in the lives of young people and their families, with increasing diversity in Irish society, growing digitalisation of daily lives, policy reform from early years to further and higher education, and the disruption to learning and wellbeing caused by the global pandemic. Having two cohorts in the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study enables detailed analyses of the extent of change in the lives of adolescents over a decade. This research builds upon a similar analysis of changes over time in the lives of nine-year-old children (Smyth, 2022), which showed improved parent-child relations but concerning declines in engagement in sports and growing socio-economic inequality in sports participation and reading. Information from the 13-year wave of Cohort '08 offers the potential to look at whether these changes persist into adolescence and whether new trends are observed in the wake of the pandemic. The domains analysed comprise relationships with parents and friends; the kinds of activities in which adolescents engage (including sports, cultural activities and screen time); and engagement in school.

The main research questions addressed by the study are:

1. How have the quality of relationships, experience of learning and activities engaged in by adolescents changed over the course of a decade (2011/12–2021/22)?

2. To what extent do any such changes reflect differences in the family characteristics of the young people?

3. Are any such changes more evident for boys or girls or for young people from different social backgrounds? Is differentiation by gender and social background in adolescents' social worlds less evident for the younger cohort than previously?

The remainder of this chapter places the study in the context of policy and broader social change, outlines the main changes in the profile of the 13-year-olds and discusses the data, measures and methodology used.

1.2 THE CHANGING CONTEXT FOR ADOLESCENTS

1.2.1 The developmental context

Adolescence is a time of important biological and social changes in young people's lives, with pubertal development and a growing importance of peer relationships (Brown and Larson, 2009). Adolescents have increasing independence from their parents, spending less time with them and engaging in fewer shared activities (Larson et al., 2013; Dubas and Gerris, 2002; Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins, 2006). Adolescence coincides with changes in educational experiences too. The transition to second-level education can lead to a disruption in existing peer networks, especially in Ireland where there is active school choice, and difficulties adjusting to the new school context with more subjects, several teachers and often larger schools (Smyth et al., 2004; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020, 2021). While there are common aspects to adolescent development, research has highlighted the way in which these developmental processes are shaped by broader social change (Crockett and Silbereisen, 2000; Schoon, 2006) and influenced by economic shocks (Conger et al., 2000).

Researchers internationally have pointed to the absence of systematic data on trends in the time use of adolescents (Hagell et al., 2012; Gracia, 2023). A notable exception is a body of work by Mullan (2019) who documented changes in the lives of 8–16-year-olds in the UK between 1974/75 and 2014/15. He found an increase between 1975 and 2000 in the time spent on sport by 11–13-year-olds but levels remained stable between 2000 and 2015. There was a decline in time spent on hobbies and outdoor play but the time spent on socialising outside the home was stable. Two main themes have emerged from other research. Firstly, studies have documented the increasing time spent on digital media and a decrease in time spent on traditional media such as television and books (see Twenge et al., 2019 on trends in the US 2010–2016; Patalay and Gage, 2019 on trends in England 2005–2015). Secondly, available research suggests an increase in emotional difficulties and mental health problems among teenagers over time (Hagell et al., 2012). In Ireland, the My World survey documented an increase in adolescent levels of depression and anxiety between 2010/11 and 2018/19, with a widening gender gap (Dooley et al., 2019). Several researchers have pointed to the interconnectedness of these two trends, with high levels of digital engagement seen to be associated with poorer wellbeing and greater mental health problems, especially for females (Twenge and Martin, 2020). However, other studies have contested this argument (see, for example, Orben and Przybylski, 2019) and instead have pointed to the role of increasing school-related stress over time in driving poorer wellbeing (Högberg et al., 2020; De Looze et al., 2020).

1.2.2 Policy and societal changes

Perhaps the most significant recent policy change affecting young people's lives in Ireland has been the reform of the junior cycle. The *Framework for Junior Cycle* (Department of Education and Skills, 2015) set out the plans for the phased implementation of reform, with changes in the content and methodology of subjects, a reduction in the number of subjects, the introduction of short courses, new programmes for students with special educational needs (SEN) and a new system of assessment and reporting. The framework had also specified a new curriculum area of wellbeing, with revised guidelines issued to schools in 2021 to emphasise the importance of a whole-school programme and underpinning climate to support wellbeing (NCCA, 2021). Cohort '08 members entered second-level education at a stage when the phasing of junior cycle implementation had been completed. An evaluation of the reform (McGarr et al., 2023) has indicated that students now experience a range of active approaches to teaching and learning but more teacher-directed approaches and an emphasis on individual work are still common. Despite the reduction in the number of subjects and greater emphasis on class-based assessments, students continue to report stress in balancing their workload and see exams as putting significant strain on their wellbeing (McGarr et al., 2023).

Members of Cohort '98 and of Cohort '08 were both exposed to massive societal shocks which differed in their timing and impact. Cohort '98 experienced the Great Recession in their middle childhood, with Ireland in economic recovery at the time they were surveyed at 13 years of age. Cohort '08 members were in infancy at the start of the recession. Research has shown that the recession resulted in increased levels of financial strain among families and poorer physical and socio-emotional wellbeing among children (Gibbons et al., 2023; Reinhard et al., 2018; Sprong et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic and related public health restrictions led to massive disruption in the lives of young people from Cohort '08[1] and their families in terms of their learning, social relationships and day-to-day activities. The majority of 15-year-olds in Ireland reported a lack of motivation to learn and missing school-organised sports during the period of school closures, with higher levels doing so in Ireland than in the OECD as a whole (Donohue et al., 2023). Young people differed in their access to the resources to support home learning (GUI Study Team, 2021), with consequences for their wellbeing (Smyth and Murray, 2022). Two-thirds of Cohort '08 made the transition to second-level education between the two periods of school closures (GUI Study Team, 2021), with less preparation for the adjustment process than would have been the case previously. Less information has been available on how young people have fared since schools have reopened. In 2022, second-level school principals reported that a significant proportion of students were behind in their learning and, in most cases, wellbeing and attendance were worse than before the pandemic (Smyth, 2023). There has been a good deal of

[1] Cohort '98 experienced the pandemic at the time of key life transitions such as leaving school and entering further/higher education or the labour market. However, analyses in this report do not look at this phase.

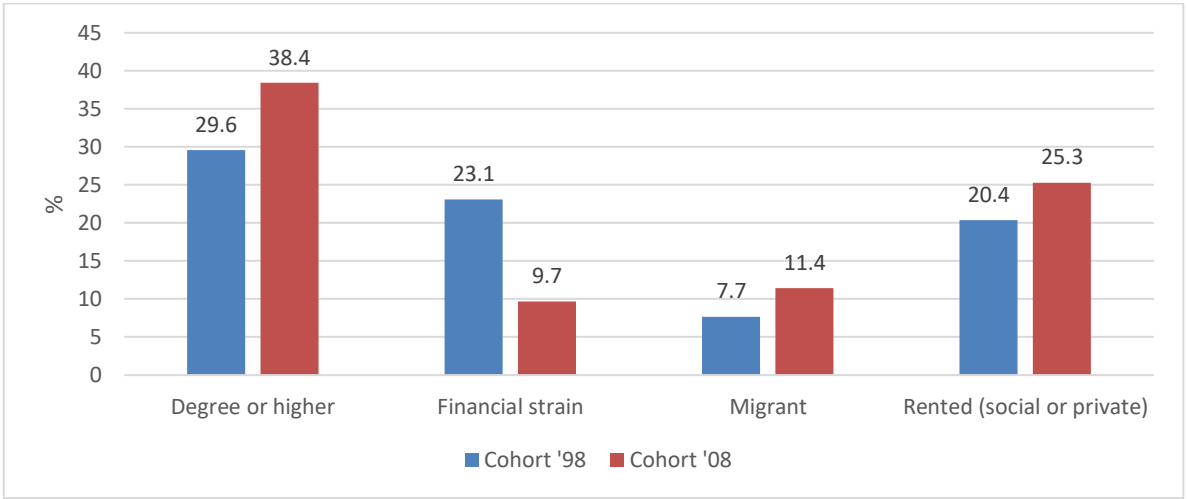
research internationally looking at the effects of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing during the period of disruption (see, for example, Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021; Hu and Qian, 2021). However, research is only emerging on whether these effects have persisted into the post-pandemic period.

In addition, there have been a number of other policy changes that would have impacted on the two cohorts differently, including the expansion of early years provision, changes in income support for families and the extension of entitlement to leave for parents (see Smyth and Russell, 2021).

1.2.3 The changing profile of 13-year-olds and their families

This section uses GUI data to outline the main changes in the profile of teenagers and their families over time. Reflecting large-scale educational expansion in Ireland, there is a marked increase in the proportion of 13-year-olds who have one or more parents with a degree, from 30 to 38 per cent (Figure 1.1). When Cohort '98 was 13 years of age, in 2011/12, Ireland was still in recovery from the Great Recession, with almost a quarter of families reporting difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet. By 2021/22, despite the temporary disruption to parental employment caused by the pandemic, the proportion was much lower at 10 per cent of families. In keeping with broader trends in housing tenure in Ireland, the proportion of 13-year-olds living in rented accommodation (either social housing or private rented) increased from 20 to 25 per cent. There has been significant growth in the level and nature of inward migration to Ireland in recent years (McGinnity et al., 2020), a pattern reflected in the increase in migrant-origin[2] young people from 8 per cent among Cohort '98 to 11 per cent among Cohort '08.

FIGURE 1.1 CHANGES IN FAMILY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN COHORTS '98 AND '08



Source: GUI Cohorts '98 and '08.

[2] Migrant-origin young people comprise those for whom both of their parents were born outside Ireland. In the case of lone-parent families, classification is based on the birthplace of the resident parent.

There were fewer changes between cohorts in the composition of the family. The proportion of lone-parent families when the young person was 13 was broadly stable, declining only slightly from 19 to 18 per cent. Family size declined between cohorts, in keeping with national trends of a decline in the number of children per family (CSO, 2023);[3] among Cohort '98, 22 per cent had three or more siblings but this declined to 15 per cent for Cohort '08. There was no shift in the distribution between urban and rural areas between cohorts.

The most significant difference between cohorts relates to the reported prevalence of having a long-term illness or disability. Mothers of Cohort '98 were asked two sets of questions about illness/disability: one was an open-ended question about whether the young person had a long-standing condition or disability while the other set of questions presented respondents with a list of conditions (such as physical disability or visual or hearing impairment, or specific learning disability) and asked whether the young person had any of those named (or another not specified). The incidence was higher using the list of conditions rather than the open-ended conditions. Mothers of Cohort '08 were not asked the open-ended question but were instead presented with a list of conditions (with a different classification to that used in Cohort '98). Comparing the 'list' reports, the prevalence increased from 19 per cent in Cohort '98 to 36 per cent in Cohort '08. Furthermore, there was an increase from 6 to 23 per cent in the proportion who indicated that the young person was 'severely' or 'to some extent' hampered in their daily activities by this condition. Future research will seek to unpack the comparability of measures of illness/disability over time and the factors underlying this marked increase in reported prevalence.

The significant changes in the socio-economic background of families, in family size and the prevalence of disability are taken into account in exploring the extent to which 13-year-olds have experienced changes in key domains of their lives (Section 1.3.2).

1.3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Data collection

Survey waves for Cohort '98 at 9, 13, 17/18 and 20 years of age and survey waves for Cohort '08 at 9 months, 3, 5 and 9 years of age involved face-to-face interviews with families, with interviews conducted with children and young people themselves from the age of nine onwards. More sensitive questions were administered by interviewers on a self-completion basis during the interview visit to the home. Fieldwork took place over the period August 2011 to February 2012. The period of fieldwork initiation for Cohort '08 at 13 years of age (July 2021 to June

[3] https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/householdsizeandmaritalstatus/#:~:text=Census%202022%20recorded%201%2C841%2C152%20private,average%2C%20which%20stood%20at%202.75.

2022) was one of continuing public health restrictions, a situation which necessitated a change in the mode used. The decision was taken to shift to a telephone survey with the self-complete element administered via an online platform hosted by the Central Statistics Office (Murray et al., 2023).

The change in mode had a number of implications for the survey content. Respondent burden would be greater over the phone so a number of questions initially planned for inclusion had to be dropped. More complex questions which required prompt cards were not feasible over the phone so could not be included. For several questions, simpler answer categories were required. The consequences of these changes for comparability between the two cohorts are discussed in Section 1.3.2. In addition, a time-use diary was not included for the young person. This meant that information could not be triangulated across research instruments where there was a change in question wording or answer categories (as was the case for reading for pleasure, for example).

For Cohort ’08, a total of 10,052 13-year-olds and their families were targeted, made up of those who had taken part when the young person was nine years of age and a small proportion of those who had taken part in earlier rounds but not at nine. The response rate was 78 per cent of the valid sample (Murray et al., 2023). The response rate for Cohort ’98 was higher at 90 per cent of the valid sample (Thornton et al., 2016). This change over time is likely to reflect the broader decline in response rates found in population surveys internationally (see, for example, Luiten et al., 2020) as well as the specific circumstances of the pandemic. In both survey waves, attrition was greater among more socio-economically disadvantaged groups so weighting is used to make the samples representative of the population as a whole.

1.3.2 Measures and methodology

The measures used in this study were selected to capture the key domains of young people’s lives, including their relationships with parents and peers, their day-to-day activities and their engagement with school. Selection was also based on the comparability of question wording and the potential to recode answer categories to be consistent across the two cohorts.

TABLE 1.1 MEASURES OF PARENTAL AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS

	Cohort '98	Cohort '08
Family relationships		
Mother-child conflict (parent report)	Conflict subscale of the short form of the Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (8 items)	Conflict subscale of the short form of the Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (8 items)
Father-child conflict (parent report)	Conflict subscale of the short form of the Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (8 items)	Conflict subscale of the short form of the Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (8 items)
Quality of mother-child relationship (young person report)	How well do you get on with your Mum? *Very well/fairly well/ you and your Mum do not get on*	We would now like to ask you some questions about the parent or guardian whom you live with and usually looks after you. Even if you live with two parents/guardians, please just keep one of them in mind when answering the next set of questions. How well do you get on with this parent or guardian who usually looks after you? *Very well/fairly well/we do not get on*
Maternal responsiveness (young person report)	Subscale of Parenting Style Inventory II	Subscale of Parenting Style Inventory II
Dining together daily (parent report)	How many days per week do you sit down to eat together?	How many days per week do you sit down to eat together?
Peer relationships		
Number of friends (young person report)	How many friends do you normally hang around with? *None; 1 or 2; 3–5; 6–10; more than 10*	How many friends do you normally hang around with? *None; 1 or 2; 3–5; 6–10; more than 10*
Number of close friends (young person report)	How many of these would you describe as close friends?	How many of these would you describe as close friends?
Peer problems (parent report)	Peer problems subscale of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	Peer problems subscale of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Source: GUI Cohorts '98 and '08.

Table 1.1 shows the measures used to capture relationships with parents and peers among 13-year-olds that are used in Chapter 2. Parents of Cohort '08 were asked about the level of conflict with the young person, using the Pianta Child-Parent Relationship scale, but not about levels of closeness. This reflected space constraints in the 13-year questionnaire for Cohort '08 and the lack of variability in the high levels of closeness found in earlier waves. For similar reasons, the measurement of the young person's perspective was limited to one subscale of the Parenting Style Inventory, responsiveness, and in relation to the primary caregiver only.[4] Cohort '98 had also been administered the demandingness and autonomy-granting subscales. Cohort '98 were asked how well they got on with their mothers and fathers. Cohort '08 were asked about how well they got on with the parent or

[4] These were administered through the online, self-complete module so the total numbers responding were lower than for the phone interviews (see Murray et al., 2023).

guardian they live with and usually looks after them. Given the vast majority of primary caregivers in the study were female, these responses are taken to refer to the relationship with their mother.[5] Questions on size of the peer network, overall and in terms of close friends, were comparable over time. Unfortunately, the questions on frequency of socialising with friends were not fully comparable and Cohort '08 members were not asked about their closeness with, and alienation from, their peers because these scales required a large number of items. Instead, the mother-reported peer problems subscale of the SDQ is used as a proxy for the quality of the young person's engagement with their peers. The wording of the subscale items means that they are likely to capture both how isolated the young person is from their peers (size of friendship network) and the quality of their engagement with them.

Table 1.2 shows the measures of day-to-day activities that are used in Chapter 3. Three measures of engagement in sports and physical activity are used. The question wording on involvement in organised sports (that is, those that involve a coach or instructor) is similar across cohorts but the response categories change. As a result, the analyses can distinguish only between those who take part weekly and all others. This lacks the fine-grained differentiation possible with the nine-year-old data where Smyth (2022) showed a decline over time in those involved in organised sports on an almost daily basis. In order to supplement this information, questions on involvement in hard and light exercise were used. The timeframe specified changed between cohorts, with a reference period of 14 days for Cohort '98 and 7 days for Cohort '08. Similarly, the intensity of engagement changed referring to 60 minutes of activity for Cohort '08 and 20 minutes of activity for Cohort '98. In addition, the answer categories are top-coded for Cohort '98 (referring to 9 or more days out of 14). For this reason, analyses focus on identifying those with very low levels of involvement (the equivalent of two days or fewer per fortnight) who are likely to be more comparable.

[5] In addition, this measure is more strongly related to the quality of the relationship with mothers at the age of nine than the quality of the relationship with fathers.

TABLE 1.2 MEASURES OF DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

	Cohort '98	Cohort '08
Physical activity		
Organised sport (young person report)	How often do you: play sports with a coach or instructor, or as part of an organised team, other than in PE class (swimming, soccer, hockey, etc.)? *Never/less than once a week/1–3 times a week/4 or more times a week*	How often do you: play sports with a coach or instructor, or as part of an organised team, other than in PE class (swimming, soccer, GAA games, hockey, etc.)? *At least once a week/at least once a month/ less often or never*
Levels of engagement in hard exercise	How many times in the past 14 days have you done at least 20 minutes of exercise hard enough to make you breathe fast and make your heart beat faster? *None; 1–2; 3–5; 6–8; 9 or more days*	Over the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least an hour (60 minutes) per day? (Increases your heart rate and makes you get out of breath some of the time.) *None/zero days; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 days/ every day*
Levels of engagement in light exercise	How many times in the past 14 days have you done at least 20 minutes of light exercise that was not hard enough to make you breathe fast and make your heart beat faster? *None; 1–2; 3–5; 6–8; 9 or more days*	Over the past 7 days, on how many days did you take part in light exercise for a total of at least an hour (60 minutes) per day? (Not hard enough to make you breathe heavily or make your heart beat faster.) *None/zero days; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 days/ every day*
Organised activities		
Structured cultural activities	How often do you: take part in dance, drama or music lessons? *Never/less than once a week/1–3 times a week/4 or more times a week*	How often do you: Take part in art, crafts, drama or music lessons/clubs/rehearsals? Take part in dance lessons? *At least once a week/at least once a month/ less often or never*
Involvement in organised groups	How often do you: take part in clubs or groups such as Guides or Scouts, youth club, community or church groups? *Never/less than once a week/1–3 times a week/4 or more times a week*	How often do you: take part in clubs or groups such as Guides or Scouts, youth club, community or church groups? *At least once a week/at least once a month/ less often or never*
Screen time		
Television watching	On a normal weekday during termtime, about how many hours do you spend watching television, videos or DVDs? *Hours/minutes*	On a weekday during termtime, how much time do you spend: watching television/ films/videos (on TV set, tablet or other device) *None; <1; 1–2; 2–3; 3–4; 5 hours or more*
Video/computer gaming	On a normal weekday during termtime, about how many hours do you spend playing video games such as PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo, etc.? *Hours/minutes*	On a weekday during termtime, how much time do you spend: playing video/computer games *None; <1; 1–2; 2–3; 3–4; 5 hours or more*
Other screen time	On a normal weekday during termtime, about how many hours do you spend using the computer? *Hours/minutes*	On a weekday during termtime, how much time do you spend on: other online or screen-based activities? *None; <1; 1–2; 2–3; 3–4; 5 hours or more*

Source: GUI Cohorts '98 and '08.

In terms of other structured activities, the question on involvement in organised groups remained the same, though the answer categories changed so, as with sport, the analyses can distinguish only between weekly involvement and all others. There was some change to the recording of structured cultural activities in Cohort '08, with the addition of arts/crafts and of clubs/rehearsals to the question wording. In addition, involvement in dance lessons was asked about separately. As with sports, the analyses can only distinguish between those who take part weekly and all others. The change in wording for cultural activities may result in a somewhat higher number for Cohort '08 but will give insights into the patterning by gender and social background, an important issue given inequalities evident at the age of nine.

A limitation in the information on cultural engagement is the lack of comparability of the questions on reading. Cohort '98 members were asked about how much time they read for pleasure per day, with the option of recording no time, while Cohort '08 members were asked about the frequency per week. Nonetheless, side-by-side comparisons and the patterning by gender and social background provide useful insights into reading behaviour among the two cohorts (see Chapter 3).

Previous research on the two cohorts at the age of nine had shown increasing levels of mobile phone ownership and a shift in the type of screen time (Smyth, 2022). For the two cohorts at age 13, we can distinguish between time spent watching TV/films/videos (on a TV set, tablet or other device), time spent playing video/computer games and other online or screen-based activities. Cohort '98 were asked to record the exact number of hours/minutes so these have been regrouped to be comparable with the responses among Cohort '08. Given the changes over time, it might be the case that there is some blurring of the boundaries between the categories; for example, some types of gaming might be counted by the young person as 'other' screen time rather than computer/video gaming. Nonetheless, the analyses can point to important differences between groups of young people in their digital engagement.

TABLE 1.3 MEASURES OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

	Cohort '98	Cohort '08
School engagement (young person report)	How do you feel about school in general? *Like it very much/like it quite a bit/like it a bit/don't like it very much/hate it*	How do you feel about school in general? *Like it very much/ like it quite a bit/ like it a bit/ don't like it very much/ hate it*
Interest in Maths (young person report)	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*
Interest in English (young person report)	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*
Interest in Irish (young person report)	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*
Interest in Science (young person report)	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*	For each of these subjects, please indicate if you find the subject: *interesting, OK, not interesting or you, don't take the subject.*

Source: GUI Cohorts '98 and '08.

The measures of educational experiences discussed in Chapter 4 are outlined in Table 1.3. The measures were selected to capture overall school engagement and interest in key subject areas in the wake of junior cycle reform as well as the effect of the pandemic. The measures are fully comparable across cohorts.

The analyses explore differences between cohorts in their behaviours and experiences and also examine whether these differences between cohorts are apparent when we take account of changes over time in their composition. These analyses include a range of individual and family background factors that are measured in a fully comparable way between cohorts, namely, gender, parental education, household social class, whether the family is a lone-parent family, whether they have a migrant background (with both parents born abroad), whether the young person has three or more siblings, whether the 13-year-old has a long-term illness or disability (as reported by their mother), and whether they live in a rural or urban area. Although there are a number of measures of family background in the analyses, an additional measure is included on whether the family lives in rented accommodation (that is, in the private rented sector or renting from a local authority or approved housing body). This sector was previously found to have poorer quality housing on average and a negative impact on a range of child outcomes (see Laurence et al., 2023). In the appendix tables in Chapters 2 to 4, further analyses are included which examine the relationship with household income, measured in quintiles (fifths).

The analyses are based on the 13,581 cases that took part in all waves of the respective cohorts: 6,056 from Cohort ’98 and 7,525 from Cohort ’08. To retain as many cases as possible, those who do not report household income are assigned to a separate category and included in the analyses. The number of cases varies slightly across analyses due to differential missing information on the outcome variables. The number of cases for father-reported outcomes is smaller as non-resident fathers were not surveyed and not all resident fathers completed the secondary caregiver questionnaire (for further detail, see Smyth and Russell, 2021). Weights are used to account for non-response and attrition. The two datasets were pooled in order to directly test between-cohort differences.

The methodology used is similar to that employed to analyse change among nine-year-olds (Smyth, 2022). In the analyses presented in Chapters 2 to 4, a series of nested regression models are conducted. Model 1 compares the outcome for Cohort ’98 and Cohort ’08 to provide a measure of the raw difference between the two cohorts. Model 2 adds in the young person and family characteristics measured in both cohorts (outlined in the previous paragraph) to take account of potential changes in composition over time. In other words, these analyses allow us to determine, for example, whether improved sports participation over time is due to the higher educational levels found among parents of Cohort ’08 young people. Model 3 includes interaction terms for gender and parental education; this allows us to assess whether gender and educational differences change between cohorts. Model 4 includes interaction terms for social class and financial strain to examine whether the social class gap and gap by economic insecurity have changed over time. Appendix tables in Chapters 2 to 4 present sensitivity analyses to explore whether there are changes in the impact of household income over time.

Because interaction terms can be difficult to interpret in an intuitive way, for selected outcomes, graphs are used to depict the interaction between cohort and, say, parental education. Thus, the graph shows the relationship between parental education and the outcome in question, showing how this relationship changes over time, holding the other factors constant.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 looks at the factors associated with (changes in) family and peer relationships while Chapter 3 examines the extent to which day-to-day activities, including sports, cultural activities and screen time, have changed between cohorts. Chapter 4 looks at school engagement and level of interest in key school subjects. Chapter 5 outlines the main findings and discusses the implications for policy development.

CHAPTER 2

Relationships with family and peers

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at changes over time in the nature of relationships that adolescents have with their parents and peers. Multivariate models are used to examine whether between-cohort differences in relationships are evident when we take account of the changing profile of 13-year-olds over time. In addition, the models assess whether gender and social background differences have increased or decreased over time. Section 2.2 looks at the extent of parent-child conflict, reported by mothers and fathers respectively, and the responsiveness of mothers, as reported by the young person. The quality of the family relationship is also examined by looking at whether families eat dinner together on a daily basis. Section 2.3 looks at the size of the peer group, distinguishing between all friends and close friends; the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) subscale on peer problems, as reported by the mother, is used as a proxy for friendship quality.

2.2 RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show the model coefficients for mother-child and father-child conflict respectively, using the Pianta measure of the degree of conflict, with higher scores indicating more conflict. The values for the scale vary from 8 to 40, with a (pooled) mean of 14.8 and a standard deviation of 6.7 for mother-child conflict (and 14.3 and 6 respectively for father-child conflict). There is a significant reduction in the level of mother-child conflict over time, with a raw difference of over one point (around a sixth of a standard deviation) between Cohort ’98 and Cohort ’08 (Model 1, Table 2.1). The between-cohort difference becomes larger when individual and family background factors are included in the analyses (Model 2); in other words, the decline in mother-child conflict is greater than might have been expected given the changes in young people’s profile. There is no systematic variation in conflict by migrant status or household income (Table A2.1). Levels of conflict are found to be higher in lone-parent families, among those living in rented accommodation and those living in urban areas while they are lower in the case of larger families (where young people have three or more siblings). Experiencing financial strain (difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet) is associated with much higher levels of conflict. The strongest relationship is with having a disability, where levels of mother-child conflict are much higher than for other groups. To contextualise the scale of the change over time, it is worth noting that the between-cohort difference is on par with the size of the impact of financial strain and only exceeded in size by disability status.

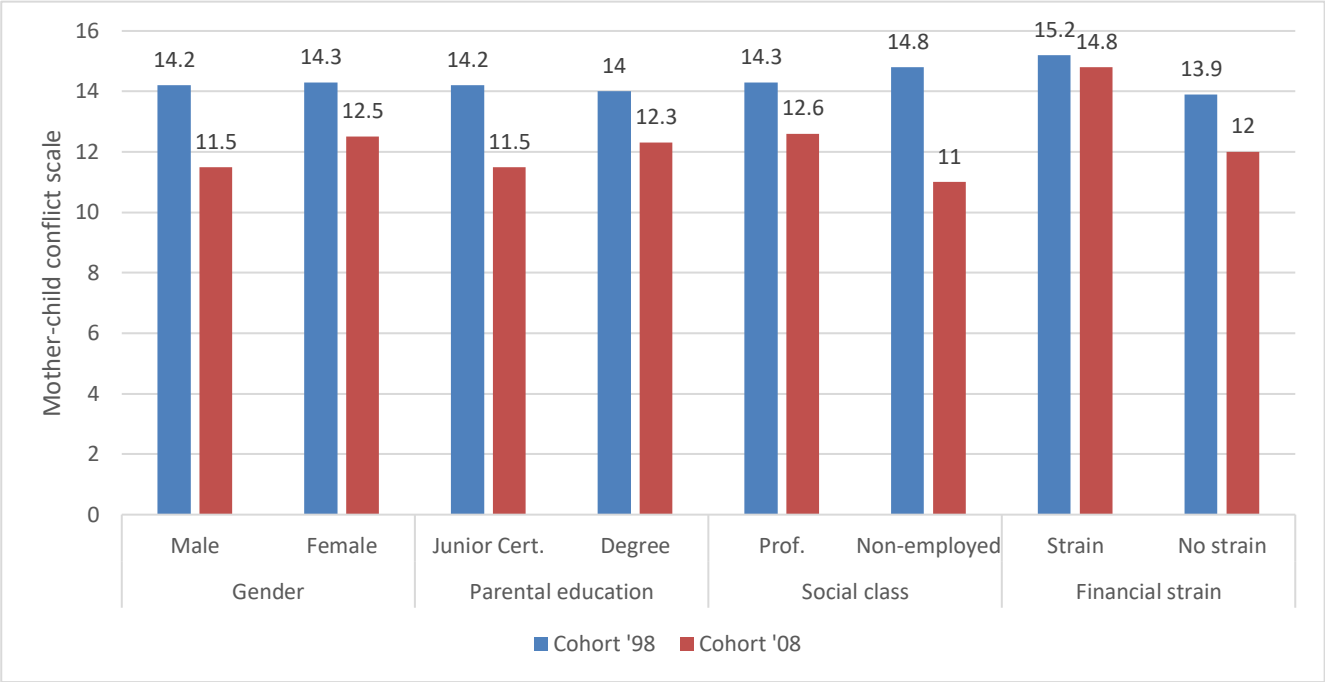
TABLE 2.1 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF MATERNAL CONFLICT WITH THE 13-YEAR-OLD (PIANTA SCALE)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	15.293	13.740	14.214	13.920
Cohort '08	-1.121***	-1.574***	-2.693***	-1.920***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.505***	0.108	0.104
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		-0.251	-0.466±	-0.228
Post-secondary		0.057	-0.193	0.053
Degree		0.162	-0.244	0.124
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Household social class:				
Professional		0.464±	0.439	0.331
Managerial		-0.001	-0.026	-0.041
Other non-manual		0.203	0.161	0.086
Skilled manual		-0.130	-0.166	-0.029
Non-employed		0.121	0.113	0.927**
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		1.468***	1.463***	1.292***
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.272	0.272	0.292
Lone-parent family		0.546***	0.535***	0.502**
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		-0.394**	-0.388**	-0.374**
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness of young person		3.063***	3.054***	3.051***
Urban location		0.504***	0.497***	0.490**
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.395*	0.417*	0.431**
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.859***	0.886***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.570	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.695±	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.004*	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.270
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.112
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.222
Skilled* Cohort '08				-0.299
Non-employed* Cohort '08				-1.923***
Strain* Cohort '08				1.543*
Adjusted R^2	0.007	0.064	0.065	0.067
N (unweighted)	14,158			

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

As well as looking at overall changes in levels of conflict, we are interested in the extent to which the relationship between individual and background factors and conflict shifts over time. Whether the gender or social gradient has changed can be assessed by looking at the significance level of the interaction term. For ease of interpretation, the predicted values are presented in Figure 2.1.

FIGURE 2.1 PREDICTED LEVELS OF MOTHER-CHILD CONFLICT BY GENDER, PARENTAL EDUCATION, SOCIAL CLASS AND FINANCIAL STRAIN



Source: Derived from Models 3 and 4 in Table 2.1.

It is clear from Figure 2.1 that levels of maternal conflict declined over time for all of the specified groups. However, the extent of decline varied across gender and social groups (Figure 2.1). The decline in mother-son conflict was greater than for mothers and daughters, with the gender gap thus increasing over time. For Cohort '98, girls have only very slightly higher levels of conflict than boys but by Cohort '08, there is a much clearer gender difference (around a sixth of a standard deviation). Additional analyses explored what might account for this shift in the pattern by gender. The prevalence of emotional difficulties (measured by mother reports on the SDQ subscale)[6] increased between Cohorts '98 and '08, with a greater increase for girls; this may reflect the impact of the pandemic and/or longer-term shifts in wellbeing.[7] Table A2.2 presents a very simple model looking at the relationship with gender and cohort taking account of SDQ emotional difficulties. Not surprisingly, mother-child conflict is higher where young people have greater emotional difficulties, though it is not possible with these analyses to determine the direction

6 The range for the SDQ emotional subscale is 0 to 10; the pooled mean is 2.1 with a standard deviation of 2.2.

7 Further research is needed to disentangle the potential drivers of this increase.

of causality. Nonetheless, the level of emotional difficulties is found to account for about two-thirds of the relative increase in mother-daughter conflict over time (compare Models 1 and 2). In other words, the fact that girls from Cohort ’08 have more conflict with their mothers than boys do is at least partly related to their higher levels of emotional difficulties.

Conflict declined less for more advantaged families (professional or graduate parents) than for more disadvantaged groups (with parents with lower secondary (Junior Certificate) education or not in employment). However, the pattern for experience of financial strain is quite different. There was only a slight decline in conflict for those whose families had difficulties making ends meet while there was a much larger decline for other groups. Thus, financial strain has a stronger relationship with maternal conflict among Cohort ’08.

TABLE 2.2 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF PATERNAL CONFLICT WITH THE 13-YEAR-OLD (PIANTA SCALE)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	15.062	13.893	14.180	13.548
Cohort '08	-1.767***	-2.131***	-2.944***	-1.387**
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.531***	0.286±	0.287±
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		-0.301	-0.499	-0.255
Post-secondary		-0.315	-0.315	-0.254
Degree		0.293	0.017	0.306
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.602*	0.586*	0.861*
Managerial		0.150	0.133	0.472
Other non-manual		0.236	0.228	0.743*
Skilled manual		-0.162	-0.176	0.439
Non-employed		0.435	0.428	2.038***
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.779***	0.778***	0.707***
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		-0.301	-0.306	-0.216
Large family		-0.108	-0.095	-0.081
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		1.961***	1.961***	1.931***
Urban location		0.718***	0.712***	0.725***
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.000***	1.009***	1.022***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.548*	0.554*
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.812	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.264	
Degree* Cohort '08			0.781	
Professional* Cohort '08				-0.679
Managerial* Cohort '08				-0.770±
Non-manual* Cohort '08				-1.243*
Skilled* Cohort '08				-1.520**
Non-employed* Cohort '08				-3.851***
Strain* Cohort '08				0.286
Adjusted R^2	0.022	0.055	0.056	0.059
N		10,447		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

Table 2.2 shows the equivalent patterns for conflict between 13-year-olds and their fathers. This information is only available for resident fathers (see Chapter 1). There is a somewhat larger decline in father-child conflict than was the case for mothers, with levels dropping by over a quarter of a standard deviation over time (Model 1). Again, we see that the decline is greater than might be expected given the changes in profile of young people and their families (Model 2). Paternal conflict does not vary significantly by parental education, migrant status, family size (Table 2.2) or income (Table A2.1). As with maternal conflict, levels are higher for young people with a disability, those living in rented accommodation and those living in urban areas (Model 2). Young people whose families experience financial strain have higher levels of conflict with their fathers but this pattern does not change over time. As with maternal conflict, conflict declines more for boys than for girls, widening the gender gap (Model 3). Among the later cohort, fathers have higher levels of conflict with their daughters than with their sons, a pattern that appears to be accounted for by rising levels of emotional difficulties among girls (Appendix Table A2.1). Conflict declines over time across all social class groups, with the greatest decline among non-employed households (Model 4).

Although parent-child conflict had decreased over time, descriptive analyses show a slight decline in the proportion of young people who reported getting on very well with their mother, from 79 to 77 per cent. The factors associated with this outcome are presented in Table 2.3. Unlike mother-child conflict, the outcome is binary, distinguishing between those who report getting on very well with their mother and all others. A logistic regression model is therefore used. The coefficients are presented in terms of odds ratios; values above one indicate that a factor is associated with increased chances of getting on very well with their mother while values below one indicate reduced chances. Analyses indicate that the small decline found descriptively is accounted for by a shift in the profile of adolescents and their families, with no change over time when cohort composition is taken into account (compare the cohort coefficient in Models 1 and 2, Table 2.3). Girls are less likely to report very good relationships with their mothers and this gender gap widens significantly between cohorts. Young people whose parents have post-secondary or tertiary qualifications are less likely to report a very good relationship than those whose parents have lower levels of education; relationship quality is also somewhat lower among those from the highest-income families (Table A2.1). Variation by social background does not vary markedly over time, though relationships improve more for the non-employed group than for others. Relationships are somewhat less positive among those from lone-parent families, larger families and those with a disability.

TABLE 2.3 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH WHETHER THE YOUNG PERSON GETS ON VERY WELL WITH THEIR MOTHER (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	3.745	1.907	1.880	6.501
Cohort '08	0.878*	0.923	0.837	1.007
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.692***	0.796***	0.801***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		0.877	0.841±	0.871
Post-secondary		0.791*	0.710**	0.802*
Degree		0.661***	0.628***	0.671***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		1.047	1.060	0.985
Managerial		1.014	1.023	0.970
Other non-manual		0.960	0.969	0.970
Skilled manual		1.063	1.073	1.000
Non-employed		1.003	1.018	0.797±
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.929	0.928	0.943
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.925	0.944	0.937
Lone-parent family		0.735***	0.745***	0.748***
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.840**	0.837**	0.834**
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.832***	0.837**	0.838**
Urban location		0.956	0.951	0.957
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.995	0.980	0.992
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.617***	0.611***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			1.293	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			1.633*	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.422±	
Professional* Cohort '08				1.219
Managerial* Cohort '08				1.143
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.989
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.263
Non-employed* Cohort '08				2.461***
Strain* Cohort '08				0.919
Nagelkerke R^2	0.001	0.020	0.024	0.026
N	10,109			

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

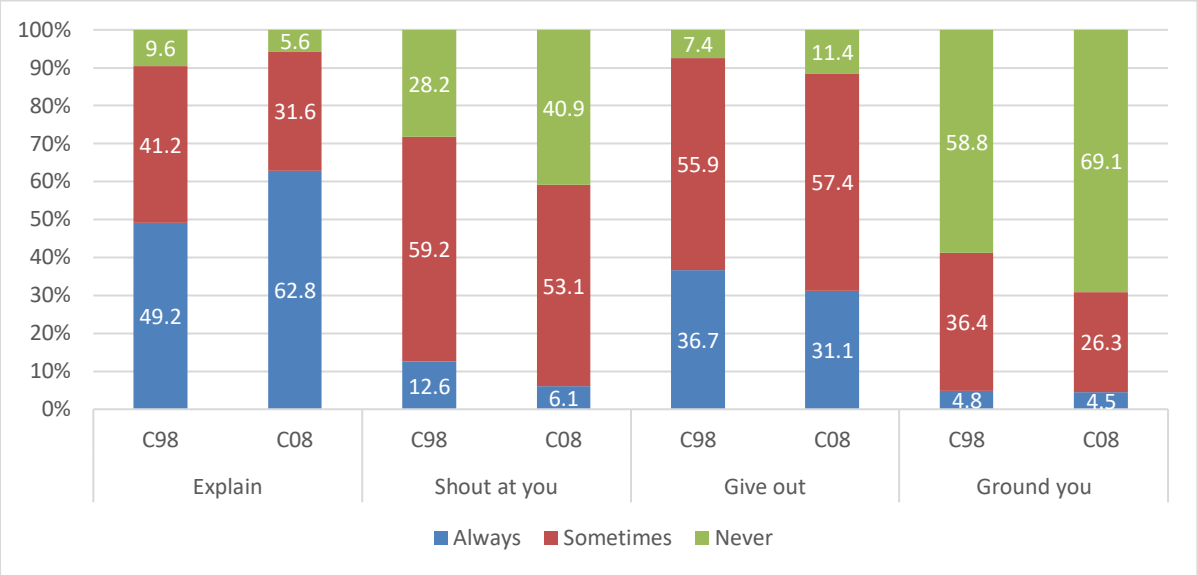
Table 2.4 looks at the young person's views on the responsiveness of their mother. The responsiveness scale varies from 5 to 25, with higher scores indicating a better relationship, with a (pooled) mean of 20.7 and a standard deviation of 3.4. Consistent with the decline in parent-child conflict, responsiveness levels improved significantly over time. This difference is over a fifth of a standard deviation and is larger than the effect of any individual or background factors. Young people from a migrant-origin family, those in larger families and those with a disability were significantly less likely to see their mother as responsive. In contrast to the parent-reported patterns, there was no significant variation by urban/rural location, housing tenure or family structure. Perceived responsiveness increased over time for both girls and boys but there was a larger increase for boys. Among Cohort '98, girls were more likely than boys to perceive their mothers as responsive but this pattern had reversed by Cohort '08. Responsiveness increased for all social groups but the increases were somewhat larger among those whose parents had Junior Certificate education only or whose parents were not in employment. Among Cohort '08 members, there is little systematic variation by parental education or social class, except for lower levels of responsiveness among the semi/unskilled manual group than other social classes. Similarly, responsiveness improved somewhat more for those in the lowest income groups (Table A2.1).

TABLE 2.4 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE YOUNG PERSON'S PERCEPTION OF MATERNAL RESPONSIVENESS

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	20.484	20.589	20.261	20.523
Cohort '08	0.754***	0.766***	1.919***	0.751***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.344***	0.658***	0.655***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		-0.086	0.104	-0.050
Post-secondary		0.025	0.054	0.053
Degree		-0.214	-0.022	-0.166
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.246	0.272	0.096
Managerial		0.234±	0.243±	0.109
Other non-manual		0.089	0.108	-0.067
Skilled manual		0.049	0.060	-0.192
Non-employed		0.230	0.245	-0.028
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		-0.130	-0.117	-0.119
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		-0.469***	-0.452***	-0.442***
Lone-parent family		0.017	0.048	0.059
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		-0.423***	-0.416***	-0.427***
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		-0.421***	-0.418***	-0.397***
Urban location		-0.085	-0.075	-0.084
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		-0.184±	-0.198±	-0.209*
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			-1.147***	-1.185***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			-1.168***	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			-0.335	
Degree* Cohort '08			-0.772*	
Professional*Cohort '08				0.592±
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.464±
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.645*
Skilled* Cohort '08				0.991*
Non-employed* Cohort '08				1.026**
Strain* Cohort '08				-0.071
Adjusted R^2	0.009	0.020	0.027	0.026
N		9,881		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

FIGURE 2.2 HOW PARENTS DEAL WITH YOUNG PERSON'S MISBEHAVIOUR BY COHORT, AS REPORTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE



Source: GUI Cohort '98 and Cohort '08 at 13 years of age.
Note: C98: Cohort '98; C08: Cohort '08.

Consistent with this reduction in parent-child conflict and improvement in maternal responsiveness, the ways in which parents deal with misbehaviour have also changed. The analyses presented here are descriptive to indicate the types of parent-child interaction which may underlie the findings on conflict and responsiveness discussed above. Figure 2.2 shows a marked increase in the regular use of explaining to the young person what they have done wrong (from 49% to 63%). There is also a marked reduction in parents shouting at the young person and in the use of grounding as a response to misbehaviour.[8] There is also somewhat of a reduction in parents giving out to the young person, though this occurs at least occasionally in the vast majority of families.

An alternative measure of family relationships and contact is whether they eat dinner together on a daily basis. Table 2.5 shows the factors associated with eating together. Model 1 shows that there is a raw difference, with Cohort '08 being slightly less likely to eat with their family daily; the percentages eating together daily are 64 per cent for Cohort '98 and 62 per cent for Cohort '08. However, Model 2 indicates that this difference is related to changes in the profile of the population. Daily dining does not vary markedly by parental education but there are clear differences by social class, with those whose parents have professional, managerial or other non-manual occupations being less likely to do so, a pattern that may be related to differences in working patterns. In keeping with these social class patterns, eating together is more common among the lowest income groups (Table A2.1). Daily dining levels are also lower among lone-parent and migrant-origin

[8] Additional analyses (not shown here) indicate that this shift occurred across all levels of parental education.

families as well as for those living in urban areas. Rates are also lower where young people have a disability. Variation by social class does not change over time but there is an interesting shift in the gender pattern. Estimated probabilities indicate that for girls, rates decline from 65 per cent for Cohort ’98 to 61 per cent for Cohort ’08, while for boys, rates are broadly stable at 63 per cent. It is difficult to explain these gender differences without further exploring eating patterns and day-to-day activities among girls and boys.

TABLE 2.5 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE FAMILY EATING DINNER TOGETHER EVERY DAY (ODDS RATIOS)

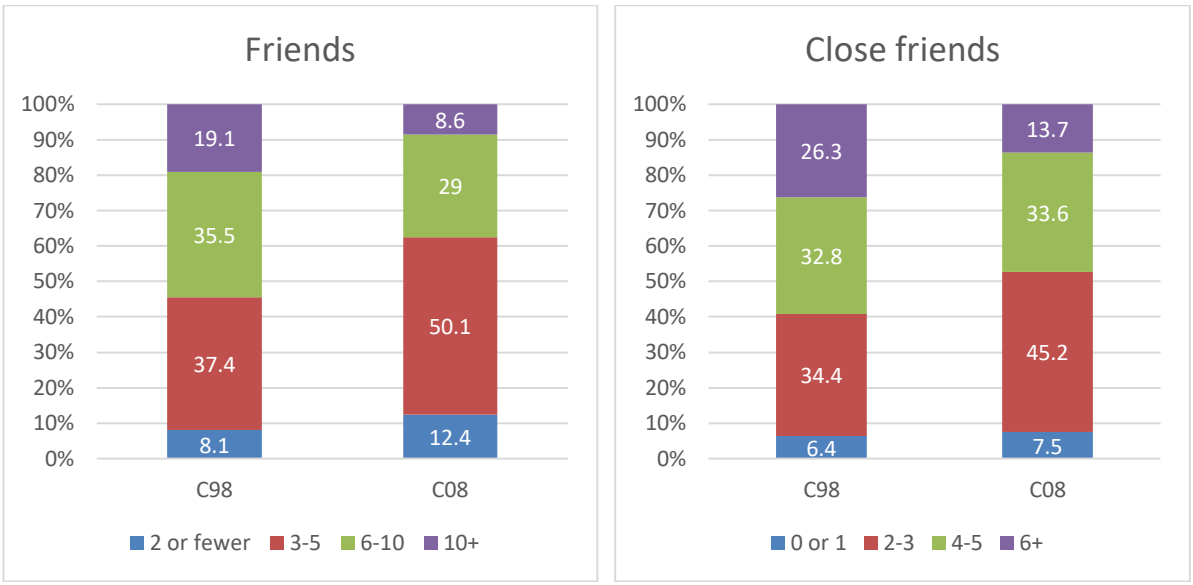
	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	1.788	2.824	2.679	2.627
Cohort '08	0.914*	0.954	1.054	1.109
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		1.016	1.102*	1.104*
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		0.940	0.926	0.942
Post-secondary		0.830**	0.844*	0.826**
Degree		0.901	0.927	0.901
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.825*	0.829*	0.967
Managerial		0.780***	0.785***	0.804*
Other non-manual		0.780***	0.786***	0.793*
Skilled manual		0.870±	0.877±	0.888
Non-employed		0.997	1.000	0.969
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.961	0.962	0.983
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.835**	0.836**	0.834**
Lone-parent family		0.756***	0.756***	0.759***
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.999	0.998	0.942
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.897*	0.900*	0.899*
Urban location		0.781***	0.782***	0.782***
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.059	1.052	1.052
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.836*	0.832*
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			1.089	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.974	
Degree* Cohort '08			0.950	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.745±
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.944
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.979
Skilled* Cohort '08				0.973
Non-employed* Cohort '08				1.083
Strain* Cohort '08				0.933
Nagelkerke R^2	0.001	0.014	0.015	0.015
N	13,562			

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

2.3 PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Figure 2.3 shows the number of friends and of close friends reported by young people from the two cohorts. In both cases, there is a significant decline in those having large friendship groups (of six or more). For friends overall, large peer groups declined from 55 per cent to 38 per cent and from 26 per cent to 14 per cent in the case of close friends.

FIGURE 2.3 NUMBER OF FRIENDS AND OF CLOSE FRIENDS BY COHORT (ACTUAL PERCENTAGE)



Source: GUI Cohort '98 and '08.
Note: C98: Cohort '98; C08: Cohort '08.

Tables 2.6 and 2.7 look at whether these changes are due to shifts in the composition of 13-year-olds and their families. Table 2.6 shows a significant decline in the size of peer groups is evident, even when individual and family background factors are taken into account. Peer groups are smaller among those with a disability, those from migrant backgrounds and among those whose parents have post-secondary or tertiary qualifications. Peer groups are larger among young people from larger families. There is little systematic variation by social class, location, income or experience of financial strain. However, those living in rented accommodation have smaller peer groups. This may relate to more frequent house moves among this group that disrupt friendship patterns (see Laurence et al., 2023). Alternatively, poorer housing quality (including accommodation being too small) in this sector may mean that young people are less likely to be able to bring friends home. Overall, girls have smaller peer groups than boys. On closer investigation, there is little difference for Cohort '98 but a much larger gender gap for Cohort '08. There is little systematic change over time in the pattern by social class, parental education or income. However, there is a tendency for the decline in peer group size to be greatest for those from non-employed households and less marked for those from higher income groups (Table A2.3).

TABLE 2.6 GENERALISED LINEAR MODELS (CUMULATIVE LOGIT FUNCTION) OF NUMBER OF FRIENDS (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Cohort '08	0.497***	0.560***	0.806*	0.750***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.891***	1.070	1.069
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		1.010	1.107	1.026
Post-secondary		0.845**	0.923	0.864*
Degree		0.864*	0.906	0.881*
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		1.002	0.996	1.035
Managerial		1.130*	1.121±	1.159±
Other non-manual		0.992	0.995	1.077
Skilled manual		0.907	0.910	0.924
Non-employed		0.966	0.970	1.162
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		1.018	1.016	0.971
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.713***	0.714***	0.714***
Lone-parent family		1.042	1.047	1.038
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		1.127**	1.128**	1.131**
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.731***	0.733***	0.734***
Urban location		1.051	1.058	1.057
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.859**	0.860**	0.851***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.656***	0.658***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.730*	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.829	
Degree* Cohort '08			0.898	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.928
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.946
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.842
Skilled* Cohort '08				0.983
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.642**
Strain* Cohort '08				1.174
Log likelihood	-11038.830	-10951.534	-10927.926	-10923.693
N		13,169		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

The picture is fairly similar when we consider close friends rather than friends in general, with a significant decline in the size of the group over time (Table 2.7). However, there are clearer differences by some background characteristics, with smaller numbers of close friends found among migrant-origin young people and those with a disability. Those from the higher social classes (professional, managerial and other non-manual) and from the highest income group are more likely to report having more close friends (Table A2.3). As with friends in general, those from larger families tend to have more close friends while those in rented accommodation tend to have fewer close friends. There is a wider gender gap in the number of close friends among Cohort '08, with girls having fewer friends (Model 3). As with friends in general, the proportion with large networks declines more for those from jobless households than for other class groups. It would appear that the decline in the size of friendship groups resulted in less diversity by age within the group. Among Cohort '98, a fifth reported that some, most or all of their friends were two years older than them, while this had declined to just 7 per cent among Cohort '08.

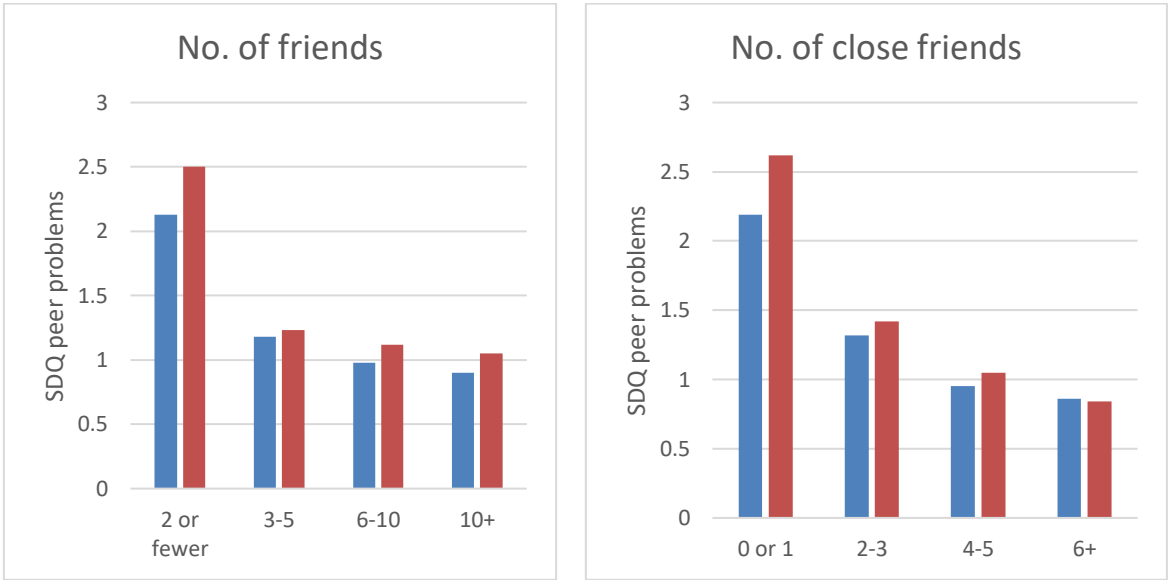
TABLE 2.7 GENERALISED LINEAR MODEL (CUMULATIVE LOGIT FUNCTION) OF NUMBER OF CLOSE FRIENDS (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Cohort '08	0.585***	0.628***	0.720**	0.890
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.840***	0.939	0.941
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		1.156*	1.173*	1.175**
Post-secondary		1.107±	1.153±	1.125±
Degree		1.032	1.033	1.045
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		1.233*	1.231*	1.418**
Managerial		1.264**	1.262***	1.359***
Other non-manual		1.159*	1.165*	1.327***
Skilled manual		0.947	0.953	1.063
Non-employed		1.095	1.101	1.379***
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.943	0.942	0.945
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.671***	0.672**	0.672***
Lone-parent family		1.046	1.046	1.042
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		1.115**	1.115**	1.117***
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.689***	0.692***	0.690***
Urban location		0.939±	0.941±	0.944±
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.845***	0.843***	0.839***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.776***	0.777***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.971	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.946	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.020	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.750
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.861
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.753*
Skilled* Cohort '08				0.787±
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.584***
Strain* Cohort '08				0.983
Log likelihood	-11052.313	-10910.521	-10902.760	-10894.535
N		13,091		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

Because of the absence of other measures of friendship quality (see Chapter 1), the SDQ peer problems subscale is used as a proxy. This scale varies from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating greater problems, with a mean of 1.3 and a standard deviation of 1.6. As noted in Chapter 1, this measure will capture having few friends as well as the quality of interaction with them. Table 2.8 shows a significant increase over time in the level of peer problems (Model 1). Model 2 indicates that most (almost two-thirds) of this increase is accounted for by a change in the profile of young people, namely, an increase in the proportion with a disability, from migrant-origin families and those living in rented accommodation, all of which are associated with greater peer difficulties. The differences by disability and rental tenure are large, at more than half a standard deviation. Gender differences are very modest, with only slightly fewer problems found among girls. Peer difficulties do not vary markedly by education but are less evident in professional/managerial and higher-income families (Tables 2.8 and A2.2). Such difficulties are also more prevalent in families experiencing financial strain and those living in urban areas while they are somewhat less evident in larger families. There is little change over time in the patterning of peer relations by gender or social background, though those living in non-employed households are more likely than other groups to have had an increase in peer difficulties.

FIGURE 2.4 MEAN SDQ PEER PROBLEMS BY NUMBER OF FRIENDS AND OF CLOSE FRIENDS BY COHORT



Source: GUI Cohort '98 and '08.
Note: For Cohort '98, levels of peer problems do not differ between the largest two groups but all other pair-wise comparisons are significant. For Cohort '08, the main difference for number of friends is between the lowest group and all others. For close friends, levels of peer problems differ significantly between all groups.

Figure 2.4 shows that there is a marked relationship between the number of friends a young person has and the extent of mother-reported difficulties interacting with their peers. Peer difficulties are particularly evident for those with very small friendship groups and decline with size of the peer group.

TABLE 2.8 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF SDQ PEER PROBLEMS SUBSCALE

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	1.081	0.990	0.961	1.019
Cohort '08	0.167***	0.058*	0.197	0.016
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		-0.047±	-0.073*	-0.074*
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		-0.072	-0.051	-0.079
Post-secondary		-0.031	0.015	-0.045
Degree		-0.040	0.016	-0.050
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		-0.164**	-0.162**	-0.163*
Managerial		-0.151**	-0.149**	-0.141*
Other non-manual		-0.081	-0.079	-0.093
Skilled manual		-0.048	-0.075	-0.115
Non-employed		0.191**	0.185*	0.064
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.194***	0.197***	0.210***
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.184***	0.183***	0.180***
Lone-parent family		0.075±	0.074±	0.079±
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		-0.094**	-0.094**	-0.095**
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.839***	0.837***	0.837***
Urban location		0.107***	0.108***	0.107***
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.961***	0.200***	0.203***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.060	0.059
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			-0.045	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			-0.178	
Degree* Cohort '08			-0.201	
Professional* Cohort '08				-0.002
Managerial* Cohort '08				-0.022
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.026
Skilled* Cohort '08				0.091
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.271±
Strain* Cohort '08				-0.048
Adjusted R^2	0.003	0.081	0.081	0.081
N		13,872		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

2.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the nature of relationships with parents and peers among 13-year-olds and whether these relationships have changed over time. The findings point to an improvement in the quality of parent-child relationships, with a reduction in conflict and improved responsiveness. How parents deal with misbehaviour has become more democratic, with greater emphasis on explaining what the young person did wrong and less reliance on shouting at them or more punitive measures such as grounding them. The regularity of families having dinner together is broadly stable when we take account of the shift in profile of 13-year-olds and their families over time.

The findings show a change over time in the size of peer groups, with a marked reduction in the number of friends overall and of close friends reported by young people. A greater reduction was evident for girls than boys. The shift was accompanied by less age diversity in the peer group, with Cohort '08 participants less likely to report socialising with much older peers. A potential explanation lies in the effects of the pandemic. While the vast majority of 13-year-olds reported always being able to keep in touch with their friends during the most recent period of school closures, those who were not had smaller friendship groups subsequently and were less likely to 'hang out' with their friends frequently. Unfortunately, changes over time in the questions used means that there is no comparable measure of the quality of friendships. The mother-reported SDQ peer difficulties subscale is used as a proxy. This measure indicates an increase in problems interacting with peers over time, an increase that is largely (but not wholly) driven by the increase in young people of migrant origin, with a disability or living in rented accommodation, all factors associated with poorer peer relations. Quantity and quality are intertwined, with those with very small friendship groups having greater difficulties interacting with others.

TABLE A2.1 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS (PARENT-REPORTED) TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE

	Maternal conflict	Paternal conflict	Gets on very well with mother (Odds ratio)	Maternal responsiveness	Eating together daily (Odds ratios)
		13.840	1.719	20.134	2.446
Cohort '08	-2.472***	-2.681***	1.482**	2.101***	1.065
(Ref. Cohort '98)					
Household income quintile:					
Quintile 2	0.013	0.773**	-0.207*	0.233±	0.973
Quintile 3	-0.023	0.194	-0.046	0.253±	0.658***
Quintile 4	0.017	0.122	-0.031	0.605***	0.842*
Quintile 5	-0.128	0.476±	-0.268**	0.412**	0.744***
Income missing	0.141	0.275	0.840	0.227	0.929
(Ref. Lowest quintile)					
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	0.214	-0.801±	1.052	-0.445±	0.899
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	0.885*	0.695	0.536**	-0.813**	1.218
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	0.358	0.653	0.591**	-1.435***	0.812±
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	1.055**	0.668	0.919	-0.781**	0.936
Income missing* Cohort '08	-0.514	0.043	0.846	-0.926**	0.857
Adjusted/Nagelkerke R^2	0.059	0.053	0.025	0.028	0.017
N	14,158	10,447	10,109	9,881	13,562

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

TABLE A2.2 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND PARENT-CHILD CONFLICT

	Maternal conflict		Paternal conflict	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	15.231	13.186	14.915	13.810
Cohort '08	-1.579***	-2.049***	-2.128***	-2.331***
Female	0.015	-0.435**	0.256	-0.062
Female* Cohort '08	0.916***	0.598***	0.554*	0.302
SDQ emotional problems		1.191***		0.720***
Adjusted R^2	0.009	0.163	0.027	0.092
N	13,562		10,447	

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE A2.3 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF PEER GROUP TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE

Text	Number of friends (Odds ratios)	Number of close friends (Odds ratios)	SDQ peer problems
Constant			0.976
Cohort '08	0.564***	0.611***	-0.010
(Ref. Cohort '98)			
Household income quintile:			
Quintile 2	0.969	0.972	-0.069
Quintile 3	0.935	1.031	-0.083
Quintile 4	0.930	1.039	-0.130*
Quintile 5	1.013	1.185*	-0.127*
Income missing	1.123	1.168	-0.219**
(Ref. Lowest quintile)			
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	1.208±	1.303*	0.044
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	1.224±	1.140	-0.022
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	1.251*	1.277*	0.012
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	1.259*	1.200	-0.032
Income missing* Cohort '08	1.049	1.029	0.197±
Adjusted R^2	-	-	0.077
Log likelihood	-10939.702	-10913.232	-
N	13,169	13,091	13,872

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

CHAPTER 3

Day-to-day activities

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter turns attention to the day-to-day activities engaged in by 13-year-olds. Section 3.2 looks at involvement in organised sport and in levels of physical exercise. It also looks at involvement in cultural activities (such as music or drama classes) and in organised clubs (such as youth clubs or Scouts/Guides). Section 3.3 examines three types of screen time: watching television, playing video/computer games and other screen use. As in Chapter 2, multivariate models are used to look at changes over time overall and by gender and social background.

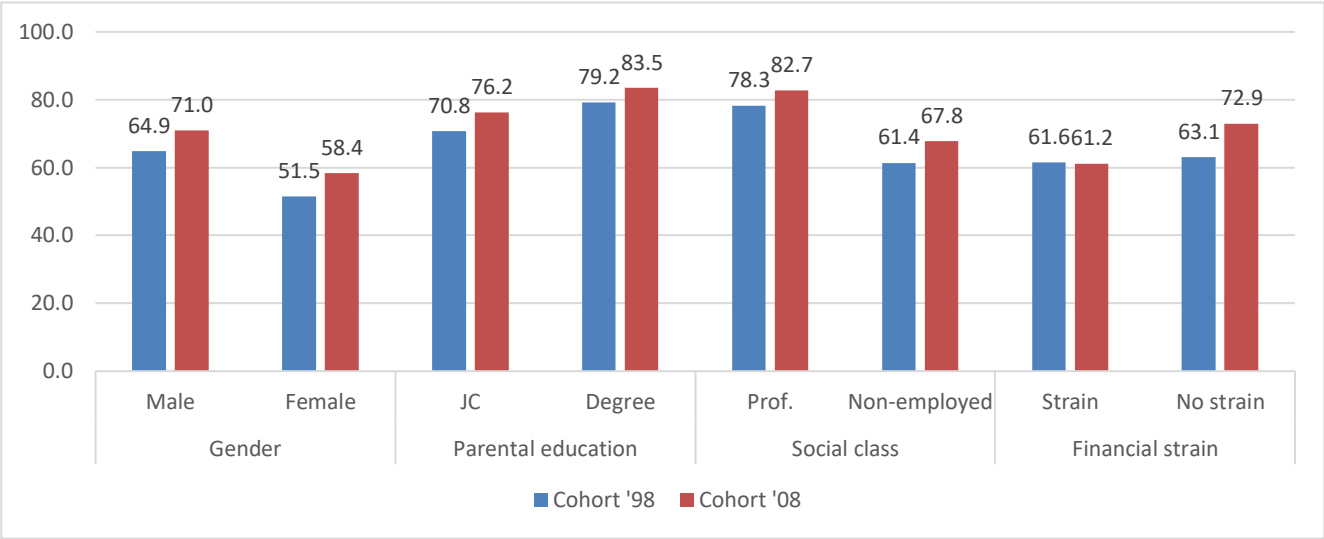
3.2 STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Because of changes in the response categories used (see Chapter 1), involvement in organised sport distinguishes between those who were involved at least once a week and others. Using this measure, levels of involvement are found to have increased over time, from 65 per cent for Cohort '98 to 70 per cent for Cohort '08. As discussed in Chapter 1, fieldwork for Cohort '08 took place over a period when there had been easing of pandemic-related restrictions but not all restrictions were removed. To capture this, young people who did not take part in structured activities at the time of the survey were asked whether this was related to lack of interest, pandemic restrictions or another reason. For sport, 1.7 per cent of the total cohort were not taking part in sport and attributed this to pandemic restrictions. Thus, the increase over time in participation may be slightly underestimated because of the survey timing.

Table 3.1 (Model 2) indicates that the increase in weekly involvement in organised sport is not explained by changes in the composition of the adolescent group. Girls are much less likely to be involved in organised sport than boys. Involvement increased for both girls and boys but the size of the gender gap did not change over time. A clear social gradient is evident, with the highest levels of involvement among those from professional or graduate families. Even taking account of parental education and social class, lower levels of involvement are found among those in rented accommodation. This may relate to involvement in organised activities being disrupted by house moves (see Laurence et al., 2023) and/or the lack of green space or local facilities in certain areas. The scale of the gender and social gaps is evident from Figure 3.1. There are also clear gradients by household income (not illustrated, see Table A3.1). The interaction terms (Models 3 and 4) indicate that the effects of gender, social class, parental education or income did not change over time. In contrast, the effects of financial strain did change. Levels of involvement are lower among those whose families report difficulty making ends

meet. However, unlike other groups, there was no increase in involvement over time for this group (see Figure 3.1), meaning that the gap by financial strain is greater among Cohort '08 members. Other measures of individual and family circumstances are strongly associated with sports involvement. Levels of involvement are much lower among those with a disability and among those from migrant-origin families.

FIGURE 3.1 PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WEEKLY INVOLVEMENT IN ORGANISED SPORT BY GENDER, PARENTAL EDUCATION, SOCIAL CLASS AND FINANCIAL STRAIN



Source: Derived from Models 2 and 4 in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE 13-YEAR-OLD TAKING PART IN ORGANISED SPORTS AT LEAST WEEKLY (ODDS RATIOS)

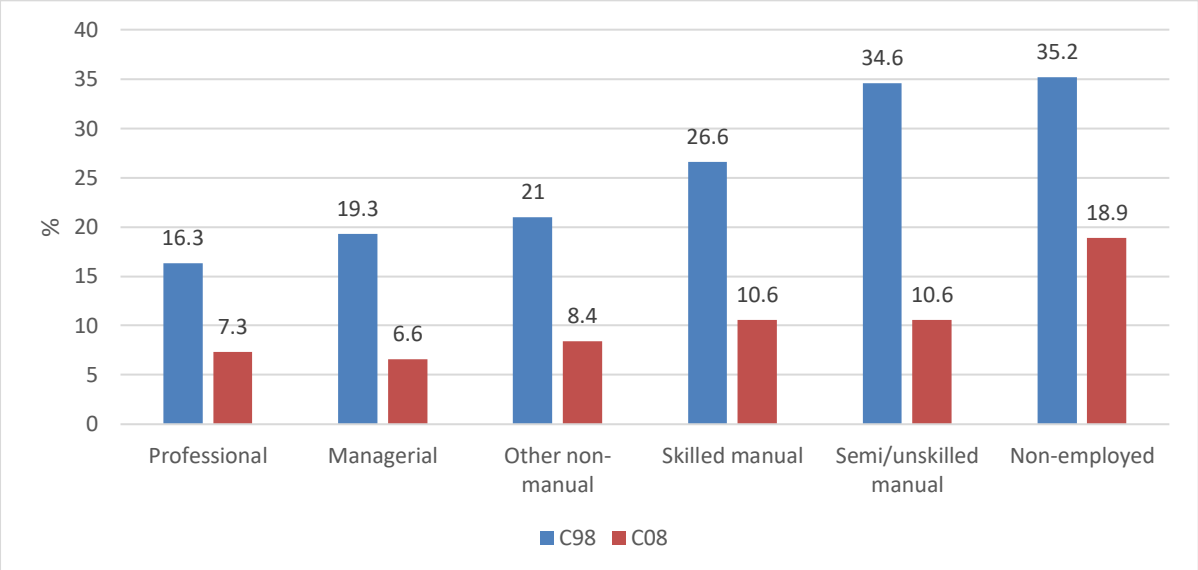
	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	1.831	1.847	1.791	1.709
Cohort '08	1.270***	1.325***	1.443**	1.575***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.574***	0.585***	0.582***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		1.310***	1.271**	1.319***
Post-secondary		1.456***	1.556***	1.457***
Degree		2.061***	2.177***	2.078***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		1.954***	1.965***	2.015***
Managerial		1.466***	1.473***	1.569***
Other non-manual		1.302***	1.313***	1.426***
Skilled manual		1.076	1.083	1.043
Non-employed		0.861±	0.860±	0.937
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.862**	0.864**	0.937
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.599***	0.598***	0.592***
Lone-parent family		0.909±	0.908±	0.912
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		1.039	1.039	1.045
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.540***	0.540***	0.539***
Urban location		0.930±	0.931±	0.930±
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.707***	0.702***	0.705***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.966	0.962
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			1.184	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.861	
Degree* Cohort '08			0.865	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.913
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.846
Non-manual*Cohort '08				0.812
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.099
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.822
Strain* Cohort '08				0.743*
Nagelkerke R^2	0.004	0.133	0.134	0.135
N	13,236			

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

Because of changes in the categories used, analyses of levels of exercise (hard and light) focus on the factors associated with having low levels of involvement (the equivalent of two days or less per fortnight, see Chapter 1). While these are more comparable, it is worth noting some caveats. First, the change in timeframe from 14 to 7 days may have altered respondent recall and/or reporting. Second, more examples were given for hard exercise for Cohort '08 and some of the examples were potentially more inclusive of a broader range of interests (such as dancing and swimming). Furthermore, some public health restrictions were still in place at the time of the survey so exercise may have been a more viable activity than other activities.

Having low levels of hard exercise is much less common for Cohort '08, a difference that is not explained by changes in their profile (Models 1 and 2, Table 3.2). Girls have much lower levels of hard exercise than boys, though the interaction term in Model 3 indicates that the gender gap closes somewhat over time but remains substantial. There is a clear gradient by parental education with those whose parents have only secondary education being more likely to have low levels, a pattern that does not change over time. In contrast, there is a slight reduction in the level of social class inequality, though those from manual or non-employed households continue to have lower levels of hard exercise than other social class groups. Involvement also varies by income, with the highest levels found in the highest income quintiles (Table A3.1). Over and above parental education and social class, being from a migrant background is associated with lower levels of hard exercise as is living in rented accommodation. The latter pattern may relate to access to green space and the presence of local facilities and merits further investigation. Those with a disability have much lower levels of hard exercise than their peers.

FIGURE 3.2 ACTUAL PERCENTAGES WITH LOW LEVELS OF HARD EXERCISE BY SOCIAL CLASS



Source: Derived from Model 3 in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE 13-YEAR-OLD HAVING LOW LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT IN HARD EXERCISE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	0.316	0.267	0.259	0.280
Cohort '08	0.320***	0.274***	0.292***	0.228***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		2.200***	2.358***	2.366***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		0.854*	0.906	0.856*
Post-secondary		0.761***	0.704***	0.770**
Degree		0.668***	0.636***	0.674***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.658***	0.653***	0.550***
Managerial		0.643***	0.639***	0.586***
Other non-manual		0.642***	0.634***	0.563***
Skilled manual		0.851±	0.846±	0.778*
Non-employed		1.005	1.010	0.816±
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.995	0.990	1.048
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		1.534***	1.548***	1.553***
Lone-parent family		1.018	1.023	1.021
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.906	0.905	0.898±
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		1.993***	2.001***	2.009***
Urban location		1.036	1.035	1.033
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.319***	1.331***	1.325***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.759*	0.750*
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.581*	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			1.308	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.276	
Professional* Cohort '08				1.788*
Managerial* Cohort '08				1.378±
Non-manual* Cohort '08				1.630*
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.389
Non-employed* Cohort '08				2.089***
Strain* Cohort '08				0.705±
Nagelkerke R^2	0.064	0.148	0.151	0.151
N	13,221			

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

Patterns of involvement in light exercise are broadly similar to those for hard exercise, with a significant improvement in levels over time (Table 3.3). Unlike hard exercise, however, there is no evidence of a gender gap. Light exercise levels are lower among those whose parents have secondary education, a gap that narrows somewhat over time. Those in the highest income group have higher levels of light exercise but there is some narrowing of the income gap over time. Levels of light exercise are much lower among those with a disability.

TABLE 3.3 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE 13-YEAR-OLD HAVING LOW LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT IN LIGHT EXERCISE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	0.658	0.792	0.829	0.878
Cohort '08	0.186***	0.195***	0.156***	0.125***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.984	0.979	0.982
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		0.968	0.949	0.965
Post-secondary		0.808**	0.857±	0.827*
Degree		0.704***	0.621***	0.705***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.882	0.857	0.769*
Managerial		0.812**	0.790**	0.689***
Other non-manual		0.878	0.863±	0.837±
Skilled manual		0.938	0.927	0.865
Non-employed		0.956	0.948	0.802*
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		1.095±	1.090	1.089
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.971	0.972	0.980
Lone-parent family		1.113±	1.109±	1.115±
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		1.106±	1.108*	1.102±
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		1.195***	1.199***	1.202***
Urban location		0.973	0.971	0.973
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.086	1.098	1.096
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			1.003	1.007
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			1.122	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.971	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.757**	
Professional* Cohort '08				1.706*
Managerial* Cohort '08				1.945***
Non-manual* Cohort '08				1.155
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.349
Non-employed* Cohort '08				1.963***
Strain* Cohort '08				1.043
Nagelkerke R^2	0.152	0.166	0.169	0.168
N	13,220			

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

Weekly involvement in structured cultural activities increased significantly over time, from 29 per cent in Cohort '98 to 36 per cent in Cohort '08.[9] It should be noted that the explicit mention of arts and crafts in the Cohort '08 survey may have increased the figure slightly. Nonetheless, there is no evidence of the slight decline in participation found among these young people at the age of nine. This overall picture conceals considerable complexity by gender and social background. As at nine years of age, gender makes the largest difference to cultural participation, with much higher levels found among girls (Table 3.4). The interaction term indicates that the gender gap narrowed slightly over time but remained nonetheless substantial. There is a clear social gradient in cultural participation, with the greatest involvement found among those whose parents are graduates or in professional occupations and those whose families have higher levels of income. There is no shift over time in the education or class gap. However, there is some evidence of a slight narrowing of the gap between the top income group and others, though again the difference remains large. Young people living in urban areas are much more likely to be involved in structured cultural activities but few other background factors influence participation.

In contrast, weekly participation in organised groups (such as youth clubs or Scouts/Guides) declined from 21 per cent for Cohort '98 to 16 per cent for Cohort '08. This decline is not accounted for by changes in the profile of the group (Table 3.5, Model 2) but may be, at least partly, due to pandemic restrictions as 3.7 per cent of the total said they were not involved for this reason. There are no gender differences in participation and very little systematic variation by social background, except for lower involvement among those from jobless households. There is some shift by social class over time (Model 4), with a decline among all social class groups except those from semi/unskilled backgrounds. Levels of involvement are much higher among those living in rented accommodation and, to some extent, among those from larger families. Participation is found to be much lower in urban than in rural areas.

9 As with sports, some cultural activities may have been curtailed due to pandemic restrictions. The proportion of the total cohort who indicated they were not involved in cultural activities because of restrictions was 2.4 per cent so the figure for involvement may be an underestimate.

TABLE 3.4 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE 13-YEAR-OLD HAVING AT LEAST WEEKLY INVOLVEMENT IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	0.317	0.196	0.099	0.100
Cohort '08	1.409***	1.263***	2.037***	1.688***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		4.063***	4.859***	4.885***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		1.008	1.039	0.991
Post-secondary		1.353**	1.449**	1.298*
Degree		2.034***	2.284***	1.984***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		1.240*	1.246*	1.420**
Managerial		1.108	1.111	1.203
Other non-manual		1.102	1.113	1.053
Skilled manual		0.968	0.974	0.925
Non-employed		0.896	0.895	0.634*
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.883±	0.883±	0.893
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.926	0.928	0.914
Lone-parent family		0.908	0.904	1.090±
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.918±	0.917±	1.142**
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		1.087±	1.090±	1.090
Urban location		1.140**	1.143**	1.142**
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.933	0.924	0.922
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.707***	0.698***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.954	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.787	
Degree* Cohort '08			0.721	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.784
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.844
Non-manual* Cohort '08				1.123
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.126
Non-employed* Cohort '08				1.939**
Strain* Cohort '08				0.977
Nagelkerke R^2	0.009	0.159	0.161	0.163
N	13,509			

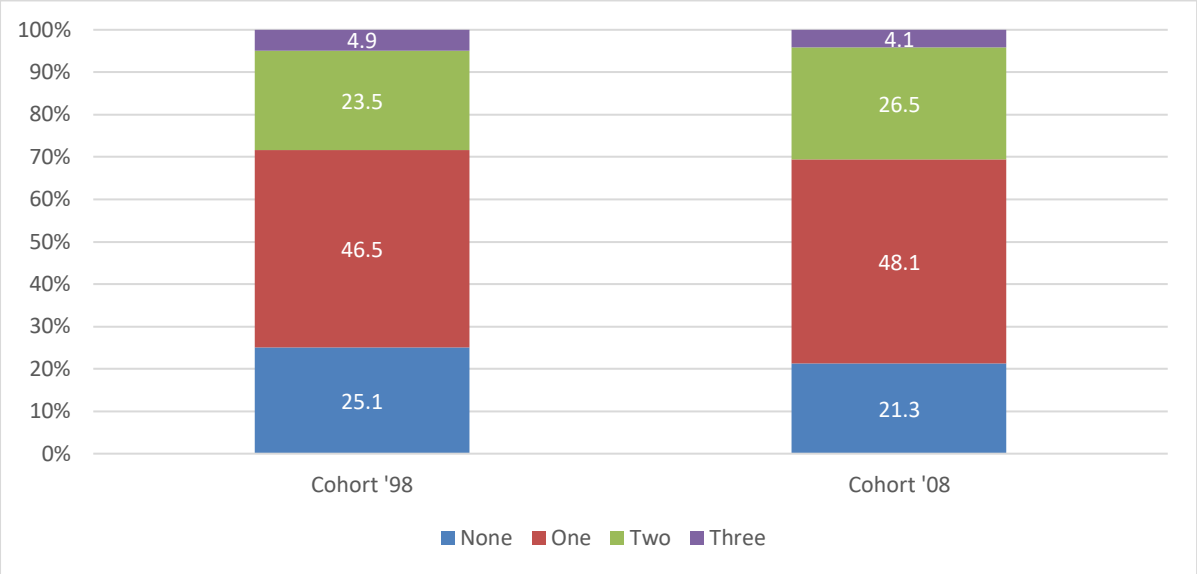
Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE 3.5 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE 13-YEAR-OLD HAVING AT LEAST WEEKLY INVOLVEMENT IN ORGANISED CLUBS OR GROUPS (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Constant	0.270	0.328	0.315	0.272
Cohort '08	0.690***	0.682***	0.774±	1.024
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.976	1.002	1.007
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		0.833*	0.884	0.828*
Post-secondary		0.870±	0.947	0.984
Degree		0.944	0.928	0.954
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		1.042	1.030	1.113
Managerial		0.950	0.939	1.099
Other non-manual		0.988	0.982	1.289*
Skilled manual		0.984	0.880	1.137
Non-employed		0.807*	0.804*	0.975
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		1.083	1.080	1.057
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		0.993	0.991	0.995
Lone-parent family		0.916	0.916	0.919
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		1.126*	1.127*	1.130*
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.983	0.984	0.975
Urban location		0.795***	0.797***	0.802***
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.312***	1.323***	1.308***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.934	0.939
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.767	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.824	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.025	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.829
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.713*
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.513***
Skilled* Cohort '08				0.528***
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.634*
Strain* Cohort '08				1.128
Nagelkerke R^2	0.008	0.016	0.017	0.019
N	13,235			

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

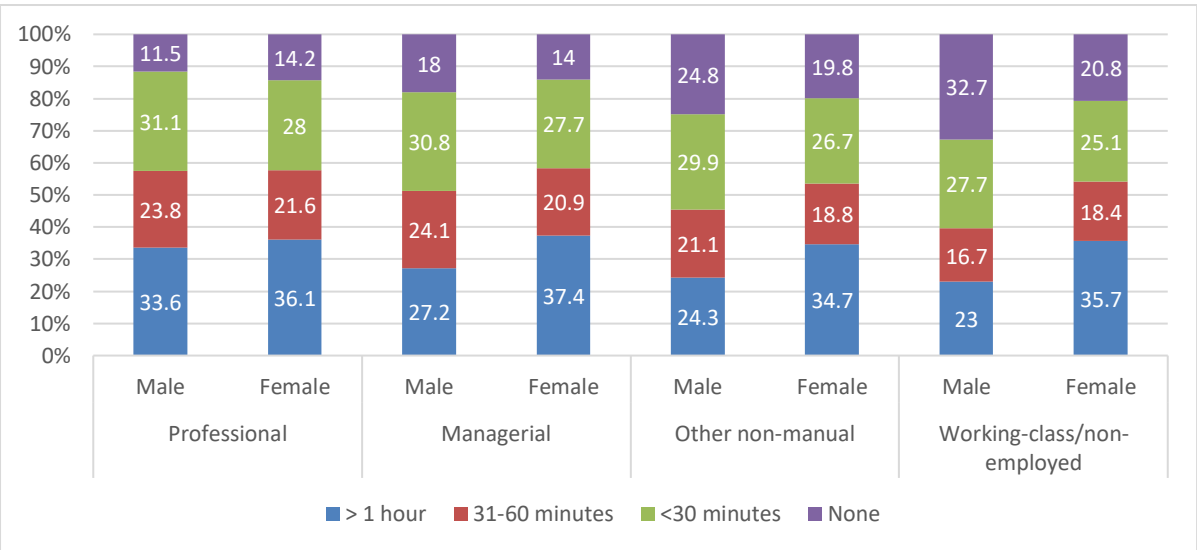
FIGURE 3.3 LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN ORGANISED ACTIVITIES (SPORTS, CULTURAL AND CLUBS) BY COHORT



Source: GUI Cohorts '98 and '08.

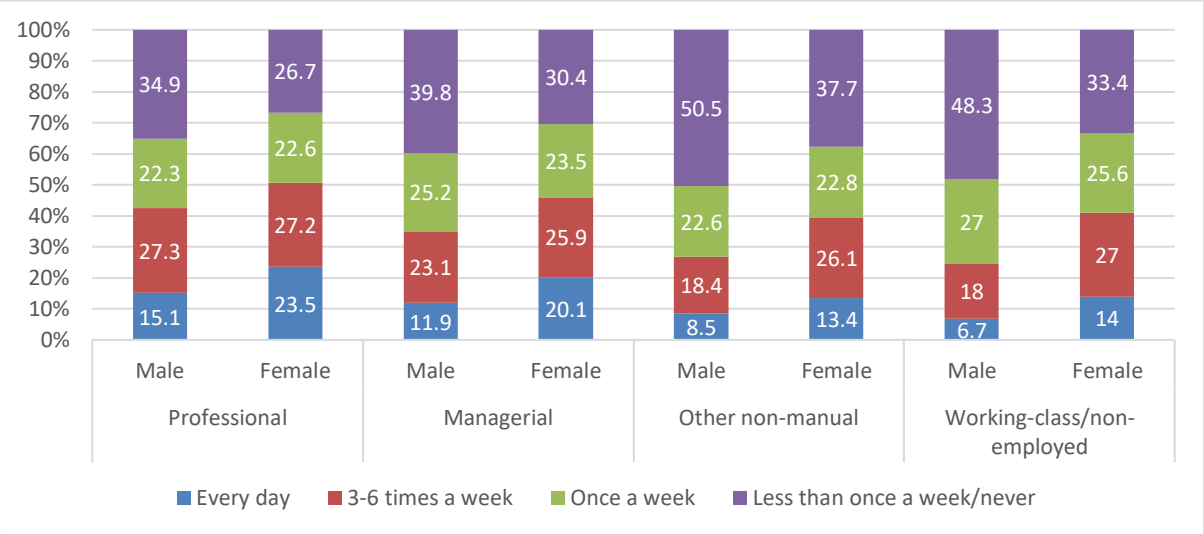
Looking at involvement across the three types of structured activities (organised sport, cultural activities and clubs such as youth clubs) shows that the majority of 13-year-olds across both cohorts are involved in at least one such activity (Figure 3.3). Between a fifth and a quarter have no such involvement, with the most common form of involvement being one activity. Between cohorts, there is an increase in the proportion involved in at least one structured activity.

FIGURE 3.4 TIME SPENT READING FOR PLEASURE BY SOCIAL CLASS AND GENDER, COHORT '98 (ACTUAL PERCENTAGES)



Source: GUI Cohort '98.

FIGURE 3.5 FREQUENCY OF READING FOR PLEASURE BY SOCIAL CLASS AND GENDER, COHORT '08 (ACTUAL PERCENTAGES)



Source: GUI Cohort '08.

Analyses of the two cohorts at age nine had indicated a decline in the frequency of reading for pleasure over time (Smyth, 2022). Unfortunately, it is not possible to make a similar comparison at 13 years of age because of differences in the question wording – focusing on time per day for Cohort '98 and number of days per week for Cohort '08. Nonetheless, a descriptive analysis of patterns by gender and social background reveals interesting insights. For Cohort '98, girls were much more likely than boys to spend more than an hour a day reading, with this gender difference significant in all social classes except the professional group (Figure 3.4). Among boys, there was a clear social gradient in reading patterns, with a sizeable proportion – a third – of boys from working-class or non-employed households spending no time reading. There is much less variation by social class among girls, though the proportion not spending any time reading is higher among the other non-manual and working-class groups than among the professional/managerial classes.

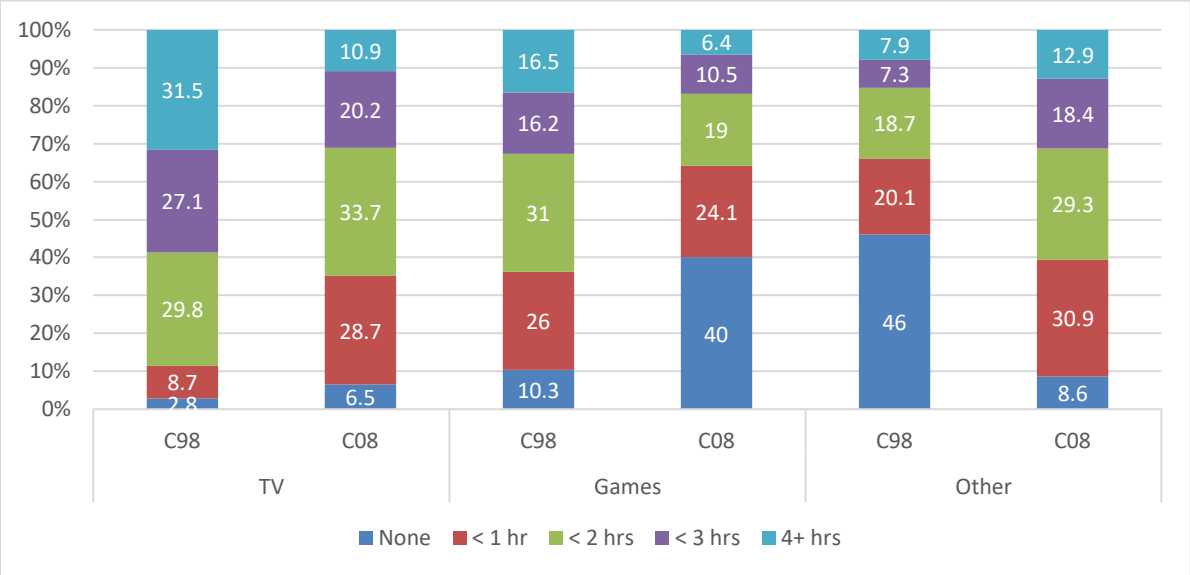
Among Cohort '08, significant gender differences in reading frequency are found within all social classes (Figure 3.5). As for Cohort '98, social class differences are stronger among boys than girls. While the answer categories cannot be compared across cohorts, taken in conjunction with comparable findings for the two cohorts at age nine, there does seem to be tentative evidence of an increase in those who hardly ever read for pleasure. Around half of boys in the other non-manual and working-class groups report reading for pleasure less than once a week or never and this figure is almost four in ten even for those from the professional/managerial classes.

3.3 SCREEN TIME

In both cohorts, young people were asked about the time they spent watching television (including on another device), playing video/computer games and other online or screen-based activities on a regular term time day. As discussed in Chapter 1, there may be increased blurring between these categories of activities over time. Respondents were explicitly told not to count in-school screen time. Further research is needed to explore the type of screen use (though the categories vary over time), including for educational purposes.[10]

Figure 3.6 shows the time spent on these different activities between cohorts. Very significant changes are evident, with a sizeable reduction in the time spent watching television and in playing video/computer games, and a large shift to other screen-based activities.

FIGURE 3.6 TIME SPENT ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCREEN-BASED ACTIVITIES BY COHORT



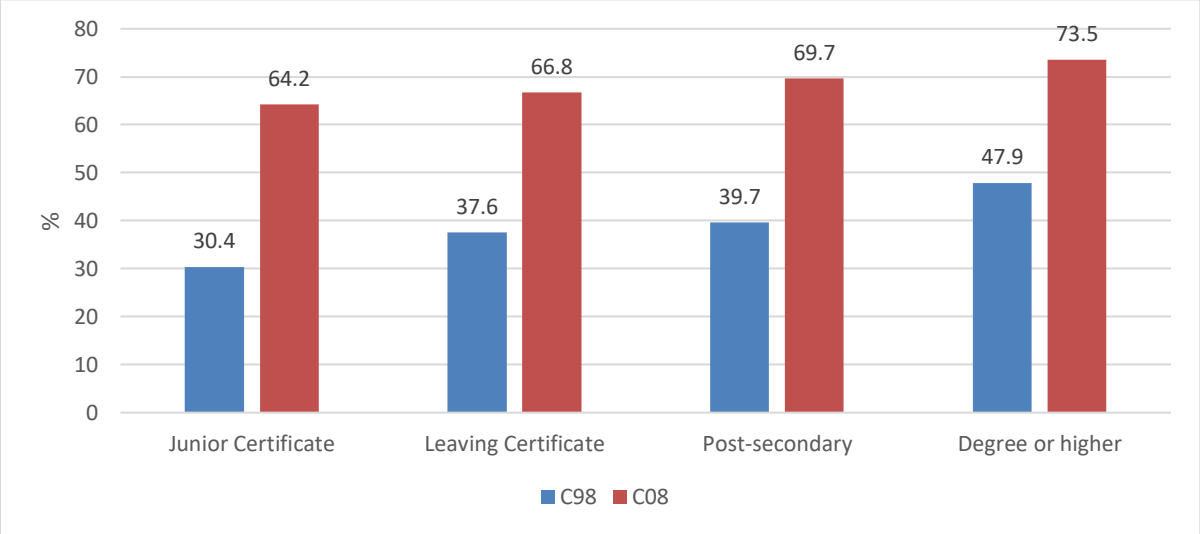
Source: GUI Cohorts '98 and '08.

Looking at TV watching, there was a marked reduction in longer periods (four or more hours) from almost a third of those in Cohort '98 to just over a tenth for Cohort '08. The majority of Cohort '08 watch TV for two or fewer hours while this was the case for only less than half of Cohort '98. The analyses presented in Table 3.5 indicate this reduction was not accounted for by changes in the profile of 13-year-olds. Girls watch slightly less TV than boys, with this difference remaining constant over time. TV watching varies markedly by family background, being lowest for those with graduate or professional parents and higher for those living

[10] Preliminary analysis would appear to suggest that schoolwork plays a modest role in these trends over time. Half of Cohort '08 reported never or hardly ever using their smartphone or tablet to do homework while two-thirds of Cohort '98 reported having used the internet for homework.

in lone-parent families. Experience of financial strain is significantly associated with more TV time as is living in rented accommodation and living in an urban area.

FIGURE 3.7 PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WATCHING TWO OR FEWER HOURS TV PER DAY BY PARENTAL EDUCATION AND COHORT



Source: Derived from Model 3 in Table 3.6.

Some differences over time were evident in the social patterning of TV watching. Figure 3.7 shows a clear gradient by parental education in watching TV for two or fewer hours per day among both cohorts. However, the difference is somewhat less among Cohort '08 families, meaning that TV time among graduate families has not declined to the same extent as for other families. The interaction term for social class reveals a similar pattern, with (already low) levels of TV watching among professional families declining less than for other groups. In contrast, the greater tendency of those experiencing financial strain to watch more TV is greater among Cohort '08 members.

TABLE 3.6 GENERALISED LINEAR MODELS (CUMULATIVE LOGIT FUNCTION) OF TIME SPENT WATCHING TELEVISION (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Cohort '08	0.280***	0.296***	0.236***	0.252***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.902**	0.883***	0.885**
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		0.844**	0.799**	0.838**
Post-secondary		0.770***	0.743***	0.781***
Degree		0.640***	0.564***	0.643***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.711***	0.703***	0.561***
Managerial		0.891±	0.882*	0.833*
Other non-manual		0.908	0.899±	0.932
Skilled manual		0.879*	0.874*	0.853±
Non-employed		0.917	0.918	0.881
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		1.215***	1.210***	1.130*
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		1.055	1.058	1.060
Lone-parent family		1.096±	1.092±	1.092±
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.931±	0.932±	0.934±
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		1.043	1.046	1.045
Urban location		1.101**	1.097**	1.101**
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.119*	1.124*	1.123*
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			1.038	1.048
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			1.179	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			1.171	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.396**	
Professional* Cohort '08				1.587**
Managerial* Cohort '08				1.161
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.930
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.052
Non-employed* Cohort '08				1.089
Strain* Cohort '08				1.334**
Log likelihood		-15103.947	-10945.581	-10938.426
N		12,700		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

There was a very large decline in the proportion of 13-year-olds spending time playing video/computer games, with the proportion spending no time increasing from 10 per cent to 40 per cent over the decade (Figure 3.6). At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion spending four or more hours on computer games declined from 17 to 6 per cent. Very large gender differences are evident, with much lower levels of involvement among girls than boys (Table 3.7, Model 2). However, over time the decline was somewhat less in relative terms for girls than boys (see interaction term in Model 3). Computer gaming levels were much lower among those from graduate or professional families and this pattern did not change over time. Levels were also lower among those from higher-income families, though the relative decline over time was somewhat less for those group. Levels of involvement were greater among those in urban areas and those living in rented accommodation; they were also higher among those with a disability and those from migrant-origin and lone-parent families. Gaming levels were lower among those from larger families.

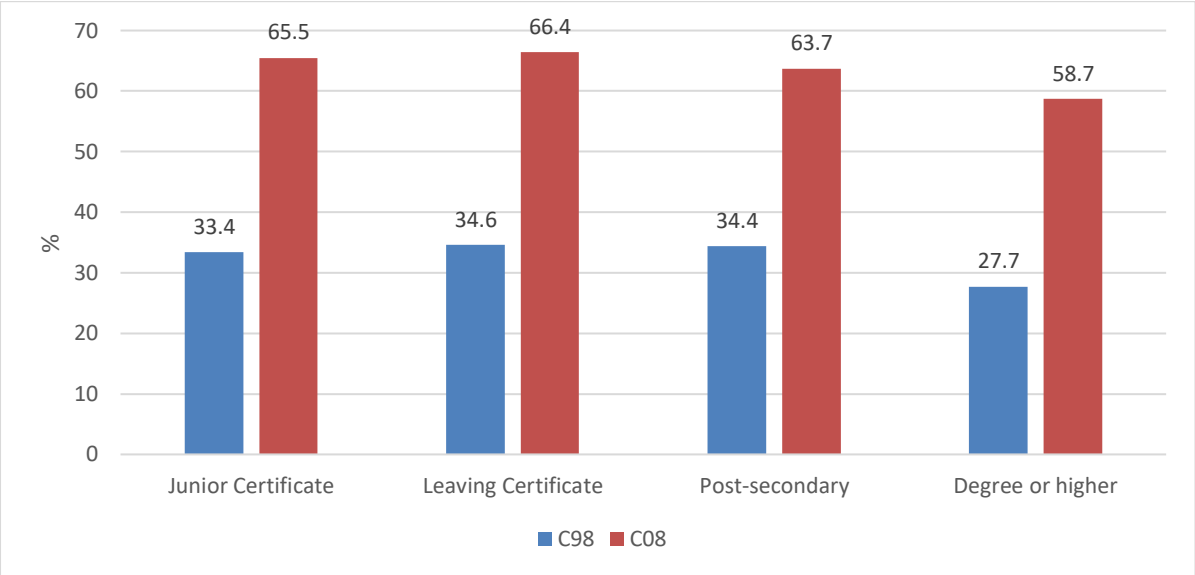
TABLE 3.7 GENERALISED LINEAR MODELS (CUMULATIVE LOGIT FUNCTION) OF TIME SPENT PLAYING VIDEO/COMPUTER GAMES (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Cohort '08	0.279***	0.276***	0.587***	0.757**
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.601***	1.354***	1.358***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		0.827***	0.817**	0.863*
Post-secondary		0.734***	0.742***	0.812***
Degree		0.582***	0.615***	0.623***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.673***	0.672***	0.742**
Managerial		0.808***	0.821***	0.838*
Other non-manual		0.811***	0.846**	0.884
Skilled manual		0.808***	0.847**	0.963
Non-employed		0.847*	0.860*	0.908
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		1.012	1.000	0.997
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		1.150*	1.210**	1.217***
Lone-parent family		1.095±	1.125*	1.127*
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.858***	0.848***	0.848***
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		1.131***	1.171***	1.166***
Urban location		1.160***	1.189***	1.195***
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.181***	1.154**	1.162**
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.128***	0.128****
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			1.218	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			1.228±	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.069	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.800
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.942
Non-manual* Cohort '08				0.897
Skilled* Cohort '08				0.712**
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.869
Strain* Cohort '08				1.019
Log likelihood		-15049.154	-10562.862	-10560.215
N		12,726		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

There was a very significant shift over time in other screen time (Figure 3.6). Among Cohort '98, almost half (46%) of 13-year-olds did not engage in screen time (other than TV or video/computer games) while this was the case for less than a tenth of Cohort '08 members. At the other end of the spectrum, spending three or more hours on screens increased from 15 per cent to 31 per cent. Table 3.8 indicates that this shift was not explained by changes in the profile of adolescents and their families. The results show a very significant shift in the gender patterning of screen time, with girls spending less time online than boys among Cohort '98 but a reversal of this pattern by Cohort '08. Descriptive analyses for Cohort '08 indicate that 38 per cent of girls spend two or more hours online compared with a quarter of boys.

FIGURE 3.8 PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF SPENDING ONE OR MORE HOURS ONLINE (EXCLUDING TV AND VIDEO/COMPUTER GAMES) PER DAY BY PARENTAL EDUCATION AND COHORT



Source: Derived from Model 3 in Table 3.8.

A shift over time by social background is also evident. Young people with graduate parents spend less time online than other groups but the relative gap narrows somewhat over time (Figure 3.8). Similarly, the gap by social class and income also appears to narrow over time (Model 4, Table 3.8 and Table A3.2). These patterns are consistent with those found for mobile phone ownership at the age of nine; early adopters in Cohort '98 were more likely to be from less advantaged groups but this social gap diminished over time. Screen time is somewhat higher in urban areas and lower for those from larger families but there is systematic variation by family type, migrant origin or having a disability.

Table 3.9 looks at the relationship between screen time and involvement in other activities. More time spent watching TV is associated with less involvement in organised sports, cultural activities and clubs, and greater likelihood of low levels of engagement in hard and light exercise. However, the thresholds vary across

outcomes. For example, only those who spend a lot of time – four or more hours – watching TV are less involved in clubs. In contrast, anything more than an hour's viewing is linked to lower levels of exercise and less cultural engagement. High levels of gaming are similarly associated with lower sports and cultural engagement and involvement in clubs. However, gaming time is linked to levels of hard exercise but not significantly related to light exercise.

TABLE 3.8 GENERALISED LINEAR MODELS (CUMULATIVE LOGIT FUNCTION) OF OTHER SCREEN TIME (ODDS RATIOS)

	Raw differences	Differences controlling for family and child factors	Changes in the effect of gender and education	Changes in the effect of class and strain
Cohort '08	3.679***	3.871***	0.540***	0.360***
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		0.432***	0.108***	0.107***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		1.078	0.984	1.014
Post-secondary		1.028	0.876	0.899±
Degree		0.793***	0.593***	0.671***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		0.966	0.942	0.810±
Managerial		0.977	0.945	0.758***
Other non-manual		1.086	1.028	0.870
Skilled manual		0.992	0.919	0.896
Non-employed		1.024	0.991	1.030
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		1.048	1.028	0.977
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		1.029	0.919	1.015
Lone-parent family		1.084±	1.060	1.050
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.920*	0.922±	0.920*
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		1.059	1.035	1.038
Urban location		1.088*	1.072*	1.073*
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		1.042	1.109	1.114*
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			15.201***	15.407***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			1.032	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			1.068	
Degree* Cohort '08			1.331*	
Professional* Cohort '08				1.404*
Managerial* Cohort '08				1.612***
Non-manual* Cohort '08				1.415**
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.040
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.892
Strain* Cohort '08				1.261*
Log likelihood		-14473.623	-10043.819	-10028.009
N		12,717		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE 3.9 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCREEN TIME (TV AND OTHER) AND OTHER DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

	Organised sports (Odds ratio)	Low levels of hard exercise (Odds ratio)	Low levels of light exercise (Odds ratio)	Cultural activities (Odds ratio)	Organised clubs (Odds ratio)
Cohort '08	1.287***	0.190***	0.181***	1.318***	0.708***
(Ref. Cohort '98)					
Time watching TV:					
1–2 hours	1.056	1.260***	1.132*	0.892*	1.028
2–3 hours	0.864*	1.395***	1.170**	0.780***	1.084
3–4 hours	0.888±	1.591***	1.145±	0.757***	0.995
4+ hours	0.675***	1.682***	1.555***	0.702***	0.825*
(Ref. <1 hour)					
Other screen time:					
<1 hour	0.998	0.960	0.921	0.920	1.013
1–2 hours	0.944	1.278***	1.051	0.757***	0.786***
3+ hours	0.843**	1.357***	1.060	0.727***	0.819**
(Ref. None)					
Nagelkerke R^2	0.140	0.258	0.234	0.166	0.020

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at changes in day-to-day activities among 13-year-olds. There is an increase over time in the proportion who attend organised sports at least weekly as well as a reduction in the numbers with low levels (two or fewer days a fortnight) of hard and light exercise. There is some narrowing of the gender gap in sports and hard exercise, though differences remain substantial. Differences by social background and migrant origin in organised sports and hard exercise levels are substantial, but the differences by social background decline somewhat over time.

There is evidence of a stable, if not increasing, level of participation in cultural activities (such as drama and dance), though gender and social background differences remain large. There is a slight decline in the numbers taking part in organised groups such as youth clubs and Scouts/Guides, which may be, at least partly, explained by the persistence of pandemic restrictions at the time of the survey. Not surprisingly, there is a significant shift away from traditional media such as television towards other screen-based activities, with a swing in the gender pattern towards longer screen time among girls. Further research is needed to unpack changes in the types of screen use across different groups of young people. There is some evidence of less involvement in sports, exercise and cultural activities among those with greater screen time.

TABLE A3.1 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF SPORTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Organised sports (weekly)	Low levels of hard exercise	Low levels of light exercise	Cultural activities (weekly)	Organised groups (weekly)
Cohort '08	1.383***	0.303***	0.147***	2.324**	0.731***
(Ref. Cohort '98)					
Household income quintile:					
Quintile 2	1.174*	1.126	0.958	1.008	1.010
Quintile 3	1.392***	0.975	0.885	1.271*	1.091
Quintile 4	1.668***	0.778**	0.839*	1.452***	1.013
Quintile 5	2.343***	0.541***	0.714***	2.116***	0.861
Income missing	1.198±	0.727*	0.754***	1.568***	0.950
(Ref. Lowest quintile)					
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	1.103	1.025	1.102	0.912	0.972
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	1.389*	0.722±	1.045	0.844	1.008
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	1.075	1.105	1.472*	0.761±	0.796
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	0.990	1.056	1.708***	0.587***	1.185
Income missing* Cohort '08	1.053	1.509±	1.399±	0.723±	0.924
Nagelkerke R^2	0.116	0.146	0.162	0.147	0.015
N	13,276	13,221	13,220	13,509	13,235

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

TABLE A3.2 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF SCREEN TIME TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Television	Games	Other screen time
Cohort '08	0.294***	0.562***	0.930
(Ref. Cohort '98)			
Household income quintile:			
Quintile 2	0.931	0.850*	1.141±
Quintile 3	0.853*	0.967	0.872±
Quintile 4	0.753***	0.795***	0.753***
Quintile 5	0.581***	0.582***	0.601***
Income missing	0.818*	0.827*	0.888
(Ref. Lowest quintile)			
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	0.833±	1.253*	0.898
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	0.822±	0.982	1.296*
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	0.958	1.177	1.416**
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	1.135	1.257*	1.695***
Income missing* Cohort '08	0.805	1.175	1.261±
Log likelihood	-15087.632	-14559.617	-13635.387
N	12,700	12,726	12,717

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

CHAPTER 4

Educational experiences

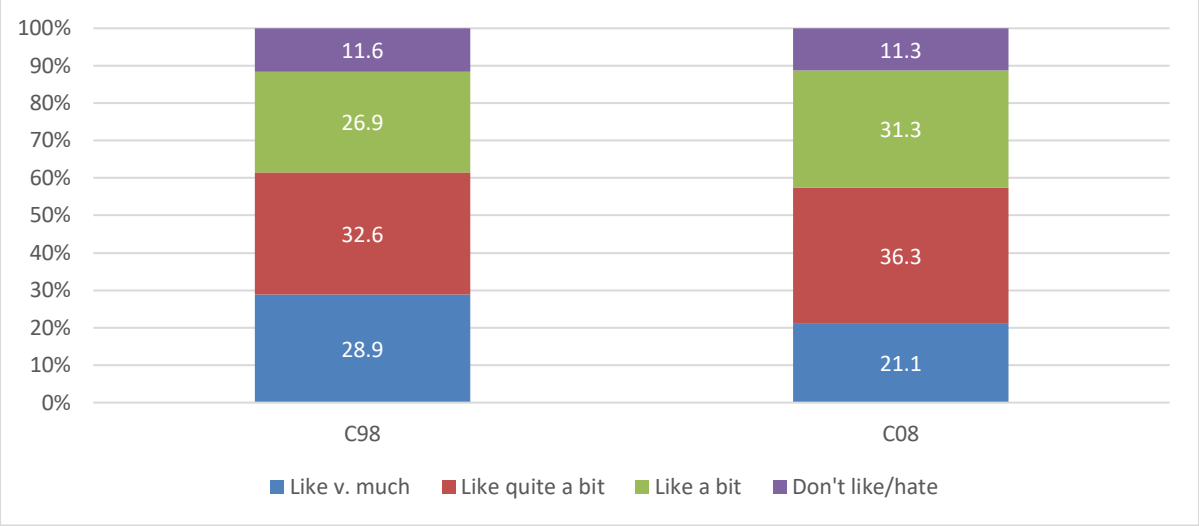
4.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter 1, the educational experiences of 13-year-olds from Cohort '08 have been impacted by two sets of factors: junior cycle reform which has affected the number and content of subjects studied as well as the assessment approaches experienced; and the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic, a time when most of this cohort were making the transition to second-level education. Changes in teaching and learning at primary level will also have influenced student experiences of a subject area. The vast majority of both cohorts were in first or second year of second-level education; no further detail is available on the 'other' category but this is likely to include those in special schools (which are counted as primary level for official purposes) and those who were being homeschooled. This chapter looks at changes over time in school engagement, that is, whether young people like school, and subject engagement, the extent to which young people find English, Irish, Maths and Science interesting. Young people were asked about these subjects as the vast majority take them at junior cycle level. As in Chapters 2 and 3, multivariate models are used to assess the extent of changes over time and whether patterns by gender and social background have altered.

4.2 SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Figure 4.1 shows some change over time in adolescent attitudes to school, with a reduction in those saying they like school very much (from 29% to 21%) and an accompanying increase in liking school 'quite a bit' or a 'bit'. The numbers who dislike or even hate school remain stable over time.

FIGURE 4.1 SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT BY COHORT (ACTUAL PERCENTAGES)



Source: GUI Cohort '98 and '08.
Note: C98: Cohort '98; C08: Cohort '08.

Table 4.1 shows that this shift in attitudes over time is not related to the changing composition of young people and their families (Model 2). Girls have more positive attitudes to school than boys. However, this pattern changes over time (Model 3), with a significant narrowing of the gender gap in school attitudes among Cohort '08.[11] To explore whether this trend reflects changes in wellbeing, a simple analysis of the relationship between emotional difficulties (the SDQ subscale) and attitudes to school was carried out (Table A4.2).[12] The gender gap in emotional difficulties widened over the decade concerned, from 0.38 points to 0.64 points. For Cohort '98, the raw gender gap in school engagement was 0.241, with this gap widening slightly to 0.281 when emotional difficulties and year group are taken into account. For Cohort '08, however, the raw gender gap is much smaller at 0.075, with this gap increasing to 0.150 when emotional difficulties and year group are included in the model. Thus, emotional difficulties negatively impact on girls' school engagement in both cohorts but appear to do so to a much greater extent among the younger cohort.

School engagement is highly structured by all aspects of family background, with more positive attitudes among those with graduate parents as well as those from professional/managerial and higher-income households. The social gradient in school engagement is broadly stable over time, except for a slight narrowing of the gap between the top income quintile and the remainder (Table A4.1). Being under financial strain is associated with more negative attitudes to school, even taking

11 Descriptive analyses show that 24 per cent of girls like school 'very much' compared with 22 per cent of boys. For Cohort '98, the figures were 35 per cent and 23 per cent respectively.

12 For ease of comparison across models, an OLS regression model was used.

account of parental education and social class. Attitudes are also less positive among those from lone-parent families, those living in rented accommodation and urban dwellers. Migrant-origin adolescents do not differ from their peers in their attitudes to school. The strongest relationship is found between disability and school attitudes, with particularly negative attitudes to school among those with a disability.

TABLE 4.1 GENERALISED LINEAR MODELS (CUMULATIVE LOGIT FUNCTION) OF POSITIVE ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL (ODDS RATIOS)

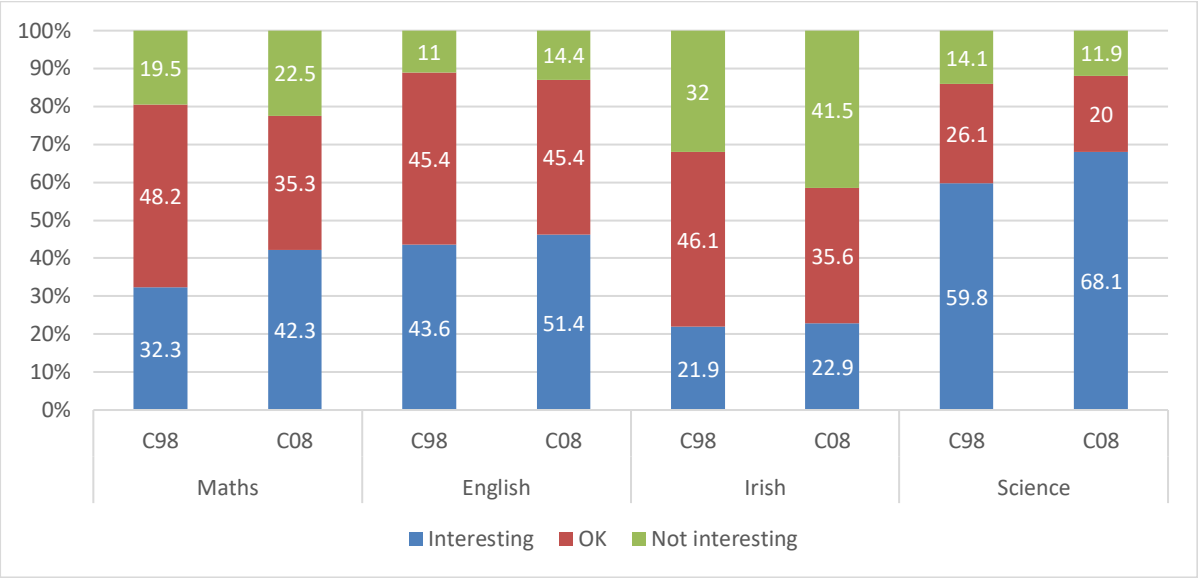
	Raw differences (1)	Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)	Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)	Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)
Cohort '08	0.807***	0.795***	1.098	1.002
(Ref. Cohort '98)				
Female		1.452***	1.750***	1.745***
(Ref. Male)				
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate		1.195**	1.237**	1.211**
Post-secondary		1.254***	1.323***	1.263***
Degree		1.377***	1.531***	1.405***
(Ref. Lower secondary)				
Social class:				
Professional		1.504***	1.515***	1.609***
Managerial		1.336***	1.346***	1.413***
Other non-manual		1.072	1.088	1.065
Skilled manual		1.088	1.104	1.069
Non-employed		1.111	1.115	1.124
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)				
Experiencing financial strain		0.913*	0.912*	0.902±
Parent(s) born outside Ireland		1.100	1.106±	1.100
Lone-parent family		0.818***	0.821***	0.822***
(Ref. Two-parent family)				
Large family		0.942	0.940	0.940
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)				
Disability/illness		0.661***	0.662***	0.663***
Urban location		0.802***	0.806***	0.804***
(Ref. Rural)				
Social/private rented tenure		0.898*	0.891*	0.890*
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)				
Female* Cohort '08			0.664***	0.662***
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08			0.955	
Post-secondary* Cohort '08			0.889	
Degree* Cohort '08			0.802±	
Professional* Cohort '08				0.873
Managerial* Cohort '08				0.883
Non-manual* Cohort '08				1.033
Skilled* Cohort '08				1.078
Non-employed* Cohort '08				0.985
Strain* Cohort '08				1.038
Log likelihood		-12090.570	-8640.801	-8640.226
N		12,563		

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

4.3 SUBJECT ENGAGEMENT

At both timepoints, 13-year-olds express higher levels of interest in Science and English with lower levels of interest shown in Irish (Figure 4.2). Members of Cohort '08, who had experienced junior cycle reform, reported higher levels of interest in Maths, English and Science than those from Cohort '98. At the same time, there was also a small increase for Maths and English in those finding the subjects 'not interesting' as opposed to 'OK'. Attitudes to Irish differed in showing a sizeable increase in the percentage finding the subject 'not interesting' (from 32% to 42%).

FIGURE 4.2 PERCEIVED INTEREST IN MATHS, ENGLISH, IRISH AND SCIENCE BY COHORT (ACTUAL PERCENTAGES)



Source: GUI Cohort '98 and '08.

4.3.1 Maths engagement

Table 4.2 shows that even taking account of the shift in adolescent profile, there was an increase in interest in Maths and a slight increase in those finding the subject not interesting compared to those who find it 'OK'. Girls are less likely than boys to find Maths interesting and more likely to describe it as not interesting. Furthermore, the gender gap in lack of interest increases between Cohort '98 and Cohort '08 (Model 3), with the predicted probability increasing from 21 to 26 per cent among girls and remaining stable at 19 per cent for boys. Maths engagement increases with levels of parental education with this pattern remaining fairly stable over time. There is no clear gradient by social class when parental education is taken into account and only those from the highest-income group differ from their peers in attitudes to Maths. Migrant-origin young people are equally likely to find Maths interesting but less likely to describe it as not interesting rather than OK. Levels of interest in Maths are lower among those from lone-parent families and, especially, among those with a disability. Urban adolescents tend to be more polarised in their attitudes to Maths than their rural peers.

TABLE 4.2 MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODELS OF ATTITUDE TO MATHS (ODDS RATIOS) (BASE CATEGORY: OK)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	1.807***	1.576***	1.800***	1.571***	1.903***	1.746***	2.059***	1.134
(Ref. Cohort '98)								
Female (Ref. Male)			0.809***	1.162**	0.838***	1.064	0.837***	1.056
Parental education:								
Leaving Certificate			1.178*	1.075	1.134	1.129	1.173*	1.062
Post-secondary			1.241**	1.044	1.147	1.059	1.233*	1.034
Degree			1.452***	1.089	1.589***	1.242	1.460***	1.085
(Ref. Lower secondary)								
Social class:								
Professional			0.894	0.693**	0.912	0.703**	0.965	0.564***
Managerial			0.905	0.886	0.923	0.896	0.979	0.829±
Other non-manual			0.903	0.810*	0.915	0.814*	0.999	0.742*
Skilled manual			0.819*	0.954	0.826*	0.953	0.810±	0.830
Non-employed			0.925	0.773*	0.929	0.772*	0.885	0.631***
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)								
Experiencing financial strain			0.947	1.008	0.951	1.015	0.992	1.000
Parent(s) born outside Ireland			0.998	0.718***	1.000	0.714***	0.986	0.711***
Lone-parent family			1.111±	1.506***	1.114±	1.507***	1.121±	1.507***
(Ref. Two-parent family)								
Large family			1.089±	0.950	1.087±	0.950	1.089±	0.948
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)								
Disability/illness			0.824***	1.220***	0.823***	1.216***	0.823***	1.221***

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE 4.2 (CONTINUED)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Urban location			1.172***	1.267***	1.173***	1.268***	1.175***	1.263
(Ref. Rural)								
Social/private rented tenure			0.826	0.942	0.975	0.942	0.980	0.946
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)								
Female* Cohort '08					0.943	1.226*	0.941	1.227*
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08					1.158	0.866		
Post-secondary* Cohort '08					1.108	0.872		
Degree* Cohort '08					0.796	0.682*		
Professional* Cohort '08							0.862	1.476±
Managerial* Cohort '08							0.842	1.134
Non-manual* Cohort '08							0.813	1.186
Skilled* Cohort '08							1.064	1.374±
Non-employed* Cohort '08							1.174	1.635±
Strain* Cohort '08							0.872	0.777
Nagelkerke R^2	0.020		0.044		0.046		0.046	
N	13,098							

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

4.3.2 Engagement in English

In keeping with the descriptive findings, attitudes to English become a little more polarised over time and this is not accounted for by changes in the profile of young people (Table 4.3). Girls are much more positive about English as a subject than boys and the gender gap remains stable over time. Attitudes are more polarised among those whose parents have higher levels of education and there is some evidence that the gap between those whose parents have post-secondary or tertiary qualifications and others becomes smaller over time. Those who have a disability or are from a large family are less interested in English while those in rental accommodation are slightly more interested than might be expected given their other characteristics. Migrant-origin youth are more likely to characterise English as OK rather than interesting or not interesting.

TABLE 4.3 MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODELS OF ATTITUDE TO ENGLISH (ODDS RATIOS) (BASE CATEGORY: OK)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	1.564***	1.737***	1.543***	1.701***	2.195***	1.705*	1.858***	1.532*
(Ref. Cohort '98)								
Female (Ref. Male)			1.350***	0.857**	1.357***	0.915	1.350***	0.915
Parental education:								
Leaving Certificate			1.183*	1.488***	1.262**	1.504**	1.179*	1.497***
Post-secondary			1.188*	1.398**	1.285**	1.254	1.161*	1.412**
Degree			1.361***	1.472**	1.670***	1.426*	1.343***	1.473**
(Ref. Lower secondary)								
Social class:								
Professional			0.874	0.833	0.891	0.836	1.086	0.787
Managerial			0.895	0.910	0.910	0.913	0.999	0.807
Other non-manual			0.883±	0.836	0.897	0.838	0.843±	0.724*
Skilled manual			0.866±	0.912	0.874±	0.914	1.008	0.868
Non-employed			0.885	0.681**	0.887	0.684**	0.919	0.623**
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)								
Experiencing financial strain			0.949	0.955	0.958	0.953	0.979	0.988
Parent(s) born outside Ireland			0.887±	0.773*	0.882±	0.775*	0.892±	0.783*
Lone-parent family			1.072	1.148	1.075	1.151	1.077	1.148
(Ref. Two-parent family)								
Large family			0.868**	0.889	0.867**	0.888	0.864**	0.886±
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)								
Disability/illness			0.868**	1.043	0.865**	1.044	0.864**	1.048

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE 4.3 (CONTINUED)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Urban location			1.021	1.005	1.025	1.006	1.020	1.003
(Ref. Rural)								
Social/private rented tenure			1.144*	0.980	0.838	0.983	1.143*	0.986
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)								
Female* Cohort '08					1.002	0.870	0.999	0.867
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08					0.838	0.895		
Post-secondary* Cohort '08					0.732*	1.199		
Degree* Cohort '08					0.562***	1.031		
Professional* Cohort '08							0.645**	1.102
Managerial* Cohort '08							0.786±	1.258
Non-manual* Cohort '08							1.145	1.404
Skilled* Cohort '08							0.700±	1.074
Non-employed* Cohort '08							0.931	1.199
Strain* Cohort '08							0.883	0.859
Nagelkerke R^2	0.015		0.032		0.035		0.034	
N	13,087							

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

4.3.3 Engagement in Irish

The patterns of increased numbers finding Irish not interesting holds even when the changing profile of adolescents and their families is taken into account (Model 2, Table 4.4). Girls have higher levels of interest in the subject than boys, though the gender gap in finding Irish interesting narrows over time. As with English, attitudes to Irish are more polarised among those from more highly educated families. Attitudes do not vary markedly by income but are less positive among the lowest-income group and most positive among the highest-income quintile. There is some evidence of a stronger social class gradient in attitudes among Cohort ’08 than Cohort ’98 (Model 4). Migrant-origin young people are less likely than their peers to consider Irish interesting. Lack of interest in Irish is more prevalent among those with a disability, those from lone-parent families and those in rented accommodation.

TABLE 4.4 MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODELS OF ATTITUDE TO IRISH (ODDS RATIOS) (BASE CATEGORY: OK)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	1.350***	1.675***	1.321***	1.582***	1.292	1.781***	1.069	1.599***
(Ref. Cohort '98)								
Female (Ref. Male)			1.251***	0.836***	1.401***	0.830***	1.385***	0.827***
Parental education:								
Leaving Certificate			1.268*	1.256**	1.139	1.270**	1.290**	1.258**
Post-secondary			1.272**	1.202*	1.242±	1.162	1.290**	1.182*
Degree			1.396***	1.371***	1.402**	1.548***	1.424***	1.355***
(Ref. Lower secondary)								
Social class:								
Professional			0.841	0.826±	0.847	0.839±	0.641**	0.935
Managerial			0.910	0.833*	0.917	0.847*	0.830±	0.865
Other non-manual			0.932	0.843*	0.944	0.851±	0.732**	0.740**
Skilled manual			0.771**	0.850±	0.782*	0.855±	0.647***	0.925
Non-employed			0.868	1.000	0.865	1.007	0.767±	1.025
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)								
Experiencing financial strain			0.998	0.965	1.000	1.002	1.042	0.996
Parent(s) born outside Ireland			0.570***	1.045	0.575***	1.043	0.577***	1.053
Lone-parent family			0.987	1.312***	0.984	1.314***	0.982	1.311***
(Ref. Two-parent family)								
Large family			1.007	0.987	1.002	0.986	1.001	0.982
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)								
Disability/illness			1.053	1.363***	1.059	1.359***	1.064	1.363***

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE 4.4 (CONTINUED)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Urban location			0.941	1.083±	0.940	1.084±	0.936	1.080±
(Ref. Rural)								
Social/private rented tenure			1.150±	1.348***	1.132±	1.336***	1.163*	1.354***
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)								
Female* Cohort '08					0.765***	1.004	0.775**	1.004
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08					1.677*	1.042		
Post-secondary* Cohort '08					1.154	0.995		
Degree* Cohort '08					1.069	0.739±		
Professional* Cohort '08							1.805**	0.825
Managerial* Cohort '08							1.279	0.947
Non-manual* Cohort '08							1.930***	1.417*
Skilled* Cohort '08							1.587*	0.846
Non-employed* Cohort '08							1.382	0.962
Strain* Cohort '08							0.783	0.964
Nagelkerke R^2	0.014		0.044		0.047		0.048	
N	12,131							

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

4.3.4 Science engagement

Figure 4.2 had shown a significant increase in the level of interest expressed in Science over time, a pattern that is not explained by the changing composition of adolescents (Model 2, Table 4.5). Girls express lower levels of interest in Science than boys and this gender gap widens somewhat over time. Expressing this in terms of predicted probabilities, 61 per cent of boys and 58 per cent of girls in Cohort ’98 found Science interesting; by Cohort ’08, the figures were 71 per cent and 65 per cent respectively. Science engagement is structured by social background, being higher for more educated and higher-income families, and these differences are stable over time. Migrant-origin young people express more interest in Science while those experiencing financial strain, from a larger family or having a disability have lower levels of interest. Levels of interest are slightly higher among those in rented accommodation than might be expected given their profile in terms of other measures of family background.

TABLE 4.5 MULTINOMIAL LOGIT MODELS OF ATTITUDE TO SCIENCE (ODDS RATIOS) (BASE CATEGORY: OK)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	1.497***	1.105	1.353***	1.104	1.503**	1.264	1.364*	1.157
(Ref. Cohort '98)								
Female (Ref. Male)			0.875***	1.093	0.981	1.148±	0.979	1.141
Parental education:								
Leaving Certificate			1.100	0.823±	1.050	0.776*	1.103	0.826±
Post-secondary			1.433***	0.837	1.451***	0.965	1.447***	0.833±
Degree			1.572***	0.802±	1.615***	0.840	1.583***	0.798±
(Ref. Lower secondary)								
Social class:								
Professional			1.043	0.747±	1.053	0.748±	1.015	0.846
Managerial			1.127	0.952	1.138	0.953	1.064	0.937
Other non-manual			1.108	1.042	1.125	1.056	1.023	0.967
Skilled manual			0.890	0.961	0.903	0.971	0.889	0.981
Non-employed			1.075	0.889	1.080	0.885	0.961	0.856
(Ref. Semi/unskilled manual)								
Experiencing financial strain			0.861*	0.872	0.860*	0.873	0.863*	0.909
Parent(s) born outside Ireland			1.224*	1.145	1.231*	1.144	1.237*	1.158
Lone-parent family			0.987	0.910	0.988	0.908	0.991	0.912
(Ref. Two-parent family)								
Large family			0.759***	0.920	0.758***	0.919	0.755***	0.916
(Ref. 2 or fewer siblings)								
Disability/illness			0.803***	0.940	0.806***	0.943	0.806***	0.943

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE 4.5 (CONTINUED)

	Raw differences (1)		Differences controlling for family and child factors (2)		Changes in the effect of gender and education (3)		Changes in the effect of class and strain (4)	
	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting	Interesting	Not interesting
Urban location			1.060	1.286***	1.061	1.287***	1.061	1.285***
(Ref. Rural)								
Social/private rented tenure			1.196**	1.065	1.179*	1.051	1.193**	1.065
(Ref. Own with/without mortgage)								
Female* Cohort '08					0.755***	0.881	0.757**	0.883
Leaving Certificate* Cohort '08					1.300	1.146		
Post-secondary* Cohort '08					0.997	0.743		
Degree* Cohort '08					0.963	0.885		
Professional* Cohort '08							1.084	0.780
Managerial* Cohort '08							1.160	1.055
Non-manual* Cohort '08							1.248	1.236
Skilled* Cohort '08							1.014	0.951
Non-employed* Cohort '08							1.349	1.130
Strain* Cohort '08							0.973	0.831
Nagelkerke R^2	0.009		0.035		0.037		0.037	
N	12,395							

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored changes over time in young people's engagement with school in general and with particular subjects. Such changes must be seen against the backdrop of junior cycle reform as well as the disruption to education caused by the pandemic. While attitudes to school are broadly stable among boys, girls become somewhat less positive about school in general, apparently because of the impact of greater emotional difficulties. Further research is needed to explore whether such difficulties reflect the impact of the pandemic and/or other aspects of social change. The findings highlight persistent differences in school engagement by socio-economic background, with parental education, social class, income, experience of financial strain and family structure all significantly related to attitudes to school. Levels of school engagement are found to be much lower among young people with a disability.

Junior cycle reform has meant a change in the content of subjects and how they are assessed. The findings point to increased interest in Science, English and Maths (but not Irish). At the same time, there has been a slight increase in the numbers finding English and Maths not interesting as opposed to OK. There are significant gender differences in subject engagement, with girls more positive about English and Irish and boys more positive about Maths and Science. Furthermore, there is concerning evidence of a slight widening of the gender gap in STEM interest over time, echoing the widening of the gender gap in Maths attitudes among this cohort at the age of nine (Smyth, 2022). Engagement across all four subjects analysed tends to be significantly higher among those with more highly educated parents, though other aspects of family background are not as clearly related to subject attitudes. In keeping with their attitudes to school overall, young people with a disability tend to be significantly more negative about English, Irish, Science and Maths.

TABLE A4.1 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF ATTITUDE TO SCHOOL TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Attitude to school
Cohort '08	1.183*
(Ref. Cohort '98)	
Household income quintile:	
Quintile 2	1.242**
Quintile 3	1.198*
Quintile 4	1.349***
Quintile 5	1.739***
Income missing	1.661***
(Ref. Lowest quintile)	
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	0.862
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	0.897
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	0.873
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	0.732**
Income missing* Cohort '08	0.701**
Log likelihood	-12057.005
N	12,563

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

TABLE A4.2 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL

	Cohort '98		Cohort '08	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	3.635	3.872	3.607	3.927
Female	0.241***	0.281***	0.072**	0.150***
In second year of second-level education		-0.277***		-0.178***
SDQ emotional problems		-0.058***		-0.101***
Adjusted R^2	0.013	0.042	0.001	0.062
N	7.374		6,265	

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10.

TABLE A4.3 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF ATTITUDE TO MATHS TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	2.186***	1.668***
(Ref. Cohort '98)		
Household income quintile:		
Quintile 2	1.005	1.252*
Quintile 3	0.880	0.986
Quintile 4	1.101	1.114
Quintile 5	1.205*	0.830
Income missing	1.090	0.895
(Ref. Lowest quintile)		
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	0.745*	0.598***
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	0.927	0.948
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	0.988	0.861
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	0.847	0.817
Income missing* Cohort '08	0.756±	0.932
Nagelkerke R^2	0.043	
N	13,098	

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

TABLE A4.4 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF ATTITUDE TO ENGLISH TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	1.787***	1.450*
(Ref. Cohort '98)		
Household income quintile:		
Quintile 2	1.246**	0.935
Quintile 3	1.132	0.883
Quintile 4	1.365***	1.376*
Quintile 5	1.289**	1.029
Income missing	1.290*	1.033
(Ref. Lowest quintile)		
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	0.836	1.337
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	0.952	1.720**
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	0.792±	0.959
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	0.865	1.507*
Income missing* Cohort '08	0.843	1.204
Nagelkerke R^2	0.031	
N	13,087	

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

TABLE A4.5 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF ATTITUDE TO IRISH TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	1.709***	1.697***
(Ref. Cohort '98)		
Household income quintile:		
Quintile 2	1.495***	1.271**
Quintile 3	1.398**	1.234**
Quintile 4	1.462***	1.109
Quintile 5	1.650***	1.302***
Income missing	1.198	1.385**
(Ref. Lowest quintile)		
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	0.764	0.791±
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	1.116	1.013
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	0.943	0.982
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	0.758	0.940
Income missing* Cohort '08	0.960	0.806
Nagelkerke R^2	0.046	
N	12,131	

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

TABLE A4.6 SENSITIVITY ANALYSES OF ATTITUDE TO SCIENCE TO INCLUDE HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE (ODDS RATIOS)

	Interesting	Not interesting
Cohort '08	2.100***	1.390*
(Ref. Cohort '98)		
Household income quintile:		
Quintile 2	1.241*	1.119
Quintile 3	1.421***	0.865
Quintile 4	1.530***	1.352*
Quintile 5	1.687***	1.043
Income missing	1.555***	1.087
(Ref. Lowest quintile)		
Quintile 2* Cohort '08	0.795	0.742
Quintile 3* Cohort '08	0.815	1.309
Quintile 4* Cohort '08	0.793	0.719
Quintile 5* Cohort '08	0.829	0.927
Income missing* Cohort '08	0.577**	0.423**
Nagelkerke R^2	0.030	
N	12,395	

Source: Growing Up in Ireland Cohorts '98 and '08.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; + p<.10. The models also control for gender, family structure, family size, migrant status, urban/rural location and housing tenure.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

5.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study takes advantage of the two-cohort nature of the GUI study to explore changes in the lives of adolescents over the period 2011/12–2021/22, building on an earlier study on changes in the lives of nine-year-olds (Smyth, 2022). The report focuses on the key domains of social relationships, day-to-day activities and educational experiences. The families of young people from Cohort '08 are better educated, more culturally diverse, smaller and less likely to be under financial strain than their counterparts from Cohort '98. All of these factors would be expected to influence adolescent outcomes so the analyses look at whether changes in outcomes are evident over and above these compositional shifts. As well as changes in the profile of families, significant social and policy changes took place over this decade, including reform at junior cycle, increasing digitalisation of daily lives and the disruption caused by the pandemic to all aspects of the lives of adolescents and their families.

The main research questions addressed by the study are:

1. How have the quality of relationships, experience of learning and activities engaged in by adolescents changed over the course of a decade (2011/12–2021/22)?

2. To what extent do any such changes reflect differences in the family characteristics of the young people?

3. Are any such changes more evident for boys or girls or for young people from different social backgrounds? Is differentiation by gender and social background in adolescents' social worlds less evident for the younger cohort than previously?

This chapter outlines the main findings emerging from the study (summarised in Table 5.1) and discusses the implications of these findings for policy development.

5.2 CHANGES IN SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

International research has highlighted a shift over time in the ideology of parenting, with a more child-centred approach, less emphasis on obedience and more quality time spent by parents with children (Sayer et al., 2004; Altintas and Sullivan, 2017; Ryan et al., 2020; Chambers and Gracia, 2021). A comparison of the two GUI cohorts suggests improved parent-child relations in Ireland, with a growing democratisation of family life. Over a decade, mothers and fathers reported improved levels of

closeness with their nine-year-old children (Smyth, 2022). Although levels of conflict were broadly stable over time in middle childhood, analyses at the age of 13 indicate sizeable reductions in the extent of parent-child conflict among both mothers and fathers and an improvement in how responsive young people felt their mother was to their needs. During the pandemic restrictions, the majority of parents and young people in the cohort reported enjoying the additional time they spent with their family members (GUI Study Team, 2021). Further research could usefully explore whether this closeness played any role in reduced parent-child conflict. Conflict levels reduced across all social groups, with the greatest improvement among more disadvantaged groups. The exception was those families experiencing financial strain where conflict levels were stable over time. Conflict reduced more for boys than for girls; preliminary analysis suggests this may be, at least partly, related to a gendered increase in emotional difficulties but further research is needed to examine whether this reflects the impact of the pandemic or other factors. The parental approach to dealing with behaviour has also changed over time, with less emphasis on shouting at or grounding young people and more focus on explaining what they did wrong.

Peers adopt a more important role as young people move into adolescence (Brown and Larson, 2009), though the transition to second-level education can disrupt existing friendship networks (Smyth et al., 2004). The pandemic-related restrictions resulted in a very severe disruption to face-to-face contact with peers, with almost half of this cohort meeting their friends less than previously even when schools had re-opened (GUI Study Team, 2021). At the age of nine, members of Cohort ’08 reported having somewhat larger friendship groups than those of Cohort ’98. However, by the age of 13, this pattern had reversed, with a marked reduction in the number of friends overall and of close friends. This pattern was largely driven by a reduction in peer group size among more disadvantaged groups, though the reduction was also greater for girls than boys. The shift was accompanied by less age diversity in friendship groups, with the younger cohort less likely to socialise with much older peers. The change over time may reflect the impact of the pandemic, as those who curtailed contact with friends to a greater extent had fewer friends later on. However, further research is needed to explore this issue.

Unfortunately, comparable information is not available on friendship quality or the frequency of contact with friends. Instead, the mother-reported peer difficulties SDQ subscale is used as a proxy, with a significant increase found in the level of difficulties over time, though this pattern is largely driven by the increase in the groups of young people with poorer peer relations, namely, those with a disability, from migrant backgrounds or living in rented accommodation. Quantity and quality are interrelated, with more difficulties interacting with others found among those with very few friends.

TABLE 5.1 SUMMARY OF PATTERNS OF CHANGE IN ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES BETWEEN COHORTS

	Change between cohorts	Changes by gender	Changes by social background
Mother-child conflict	Decreased	No gender gap initially but higher for girls in Cohort '08	Little systematic variation by education or class but conflict declined more for disadvantaged families; higher with financial strain, a difference that increases over time
	Decreased	Small gender gap initially but higher for girls in Cohort '08	Little systematic variation by education or class but higher with financial strain; declines over time for all social groups, especially non-employed households
Young person gets on very well with mother	Apparent decrease due to compositional change	Less positive for girls, with gap widening over time	Lower for higher educated initially, with the gap narrowing over time; improvement over time for non-employed households
Maternal responsiveness	Increased	Initially higher for girls but gender gap reverses over time	Increased over time for all social groups, with greatest increases for disadvantaged households
Eat dinner together every day	Apparent decrease due to compositional change	Slight fall for girls over time	Higher for working-class and lower income families; stable over time
Peer relationships			
Number of friends overall	Decreased	Smaller among girls in Cohort '08	Greater decline over time among those from non-employed households
Number of close friends	Decreased	Smaller among girls in Cohort '08	Greater decline over time for those from non-employed households
Peer problems (SDQ subscale)	Increased; related to compositional change	Slightly lower among girls; stable over time	Lower among professional/managerial and higher income groups; stable over time
Activities			
Weekly engagement in organised sports	Increased	Lower among girls; no change over time	Differentiation by family background; stable over time, though widening gap for those experiencing financial strain
Low levels of hard exercise	Decreased	Higher for girls; slight narrowing of gender gap over time	Higher among least advantaged groups; some narrowing of gap over time
Low levels of light exercise	Decreased	No gender difference	Higher for lower education groups; some narrowing of gap over time
Weekly involvement in structured cultural activities	Increased/stable	Much higher for girls; slight narrowing of gender gap over time	Strong social gradient; stable over time except for slight relative increase for non-employed group
Weekly involvement in organised groups	Decreased	No gender difference	Little variation by social background; decrease over time is less for working-class group
TV watching	Declined	Lower for girls; stable over time	Strong social gradient; lower relative decline for more advantaged groups
Video/computer gaming	Declined	Much lower for girls; slight narrowing of gap over time	Lower for professional and graduate families; stable over time
Other screen-based activities	Increased	Lower for girls in Cohort '98 but gender gap reversed by Cohort '08	Lower for more advantaged groups; slight narrowing of gap over time

TABLE 5.1 CONTINUED

	Change between cohorts	Changes by gender	Changes by social background
Educational experiences			
Attitudes to school	Decline in % liking school very much	Girls more positive in Cohort '98; gender gap narrows because of decline for girls	Strong social gradient; stable over time
Interest in Maths	Increased (but some polarisation)	Lower for girls; widening gap over time	Gradient by parental education; stable over time
Interest in English	Increased (but some polarisation)	Higher for girls; stable over time	More polarised by parental education; some narrowing of gap over time
Interest in Irish	Increased % 'not interesting'	Higher for girls; narrowing of gender gap over time	More polarised by parental education; some narrowing of education gap but widening of social class gap over time
Interest in Science	Increased	Lower for girls; slight widening of gap over time	Social gradient; stable over time

5.3 DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

The study focuses on a number of different activities among adolescents, including involvement in sport and physical exercise, cultural engagement and screen time. At the age of nine, the cohort was asked about the number of days in which they engaged in sport (but were not asked to separate out organised from unstructured sport). Analyses showed a decline in near-daily sports activity over time and an increase in the social gradient in involvement (Smyth, 2022). At the same time, almost all of the nine-year-old children in both cohorts had at least weekly involvement. At age 13, young people were asked separately about organised sports, with the change in answer categories meaning the analyses distinguish weekly involvement and lower levels. Weekly engagement in organised sports increased over time, with the gender and social background differences in involvement remaining stable (Table 5.1). In addition, low levels of engagement in hard and light exercise (the equivalent of two days or fewer per fortnight) are found to decrease over time. While the scale of this change should be interpreted with caution due to changes in the framing of the questions, the results are consistent with those of Woods et al. (2022) who found an increase in the proportion of children and young people meeting the physical activity guidelines and engaging in weekly sport between 2018 and 2022. Further research could usefully examine whether this positive trend is related to more outdoor activities among some groups during the period of pandemic-related restrictions and/or the effect of broader policy development in relation to sports and exercise.

Weekly involvement in organised groups, such as youth clubs or Scouts/Guides, declined over time but analyses suggest this decline may have been, at least partly, related to the ongoing impact of pandemic restrictions at the time of the survey. There was no significant variation by gender for either cohort or little systematic variation by social background. However, the decline in involvement has been less for those from semi/unskilled manual households than for other groups.

Engagement in structured cultural activities (such as music or dance lessons) had declined over time among nine-year-old children. However, there is evidence of stability, if not increase,[13] in weekly engagement at the age of 13. The very large gender gap in favour of girls narrowed slightly over time but remained sizeable. Engagement was strongly structured by social background (parental education, social class and income), with little change over time, except for an improvement among the non-employed groups. Among nine-year-olds, there was evidence of a decline in the frequency of reading for pleasure over time. Unfortunately, the question wording on reading at age 13 changed between cohorts so is not directly comparable. Nonetheless, it is interesting to look at the patterning of reading behaviour for both groups. In both cohorts, girls read much more frequently than boys and social class differences are greater among boys than girls. While the categories are not comparable, there is tentative evidence of an increase in the numbers who hardly ever read for pleasure.

Recent years have seen an increased digitalisation of day-to-day lives among adolescents and their families (see, for example, Hartas, 2020). At the age of nine, mobile phone ownership increased significantly between Cohort '98 and Cohort '08. However, mobile phone ownership at the age of 13 was already near-universal for Cohort '98.[14] Analyses looked at three types of screen time: watching television (even on another device); video/computer gaming; and other screen time. At the age of nine, time-use diary information showed little overall change in total screen time but a shift away from TV towards other types of screen time (Smyth, 2022). The absence of a time-use diary for Cohort '08 at 13 means that analyses cannot examine changes in total screen time. However, there was a substantial shift over time in type of screen time, with a sizeable reduction in TV watching and gaming and an increase in other screen-based activities.

TV watching declined across all social groups, but with less of a decline for professional and graduate families, though from initially lower levels. A similar pattern was found when the cohort members were nine years old, a pattern that may suggest the retention of some communal TV viewing among more advantaged groups. Gaming was much more common among boys than girls, although there was a very slight narrowing of this gap over time. There was a strong social gradient in time on gaming and this remained stable over time. Other screen-based activities show a reversal of the earlier gender gap, towards higher levels among girls in Cohort '08 while the social gradient in time spent narrowed only slightly over time. As at nine years of age, there was a trade-off between screen time and involvement in other activities. Both TV and other screen time were associated with lower levels of engagement in organised sports and hard exercise. However, only TV watching was significantly related to levels of light exercise. Both TV and other screen time

[13] Some caution is needed because of the explicit inclusion of art and crafts in the wording for Cohort '08.

[14] However, the data do not distinguish between smartphones and other phones.

were associated with lower levels of cultural engagement and involvement in organised groups.

5.4 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Cohort '08 members had experienced the full implementation of reform at junior cycle level but had also had massive disruption to their learning during the period of pandemic-related school closures. Furthermore, most of the group made the transition to second-level education over the first period of school closures, with less preparation for the transition than their older counterparts would have had. The study findings show that changes in the content of subjects and approaches to teaching and learning have been largely positive for subject engagement among young people, despite pandemic disruption. In particular, the new Science curriculum's emphasis on active enquiry-based learning and fostering enjoyment of the subject appears to have contributed to increasing interest in the subject.[15] Levels of interest have increased too in English and Maths, though not to the same extent as for Science, though there appears to be some polarisation, with lack of interest increasing slightly for some groups. Only in Irish is there evidence of declining interest, with the proportion finding the subject 'not interesting' increasing over time.

In spite of increased interest in three of the subjects considered, marked gender differences remain, with girls more positive about the language-based subjects of English and Irish and boys more positive about Maths and Science. There is evidence of a widening gender gap over time in the latter pattern, which is consistent with the widening of the gender gap in Maths found among these young people at the age of nine. There are also social gradients in attitudes to Maths and Science that are stable over time.

Increased subject engagement does not, however, appear to translate into better school engagement among adolescents. There is, in fact, a decline in the proportion reporting that they like school very much, a pattern that is accounted for by female trends. Preliminary analyses suggest that some of this change is related to increasing emotional difficulties, particularly among girls, post-pandemic. Whether this is due to the disruption of the pandemic and/or to other social changes such as increased screen time and social media engagement merits further research.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The study findings point to an improvement over time in many aspects of young people's lives, particularly more democratic family relations, improved engagement in sport and physical exercise, and greater interest in some core subjects in the wake of junior cycle reform. On the other hand, young people are

[15] Changes in the approach to teaching Science at primary level may also have played a part.

reported to have poorer relations with peers and smaller friendship groups and there is tentative evidence of a growing number who rarely, if ever, read for pleasure.

While there has been a general improvement in many domains, the study findings highlight persistent differences in the lives led by different groups of adolescents, with further research needed to unpack the risk and protective factors underlying these patterns. There has been a good deal of policy development around the new model of Supporting Parents (DCEDIY, 2022). The study findings suggest the need to target supports towards families of children and teenagers with a disability, given the higher levels of parent-child conflict evident in these contexts. Financial strain continues to be a source of friction between parents and teenagers, reinforcing the need to target adequate levels of income support towards families with children to reduce conflict and improve wellbeing.

As at the age of nine (and even earlier, see Smyth, 2016), young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take part in some kinds of out-of-school activities, including sport and other forms of hard exercise, cultural engagement and, especially among boys, reading for pleasure. This pattern is likely to contribute to an ongoing social gap in cognitive and physical outcomes among adolescents. The findings therefore point to the need for subsidised activities in communities and supports for schools to provide access to a range of extracurricular options. The low levels of involvement in sport and physical exercise among young people with a disability suggest the importance of inclusive practice in out-of-school provision. There is need too to address gender differences in young people's out-of-school activities; there has been increasing policy emphasis on the encouragement of sports involvement among women and girls (Woods et al., 2022) but this could be usefully placed in the context of an emphasis on tackling gender stereotyping across the full range of out-of-school activities. Given that these gendered patterns emerge early (Smyth, 2016), in- and out-of-school settings should seek to provide all young people with access to a range of activities from their early years onwards. As at the age of nine, young people with a disability have much poorer outcomes across the main domains studied here. Further research is planned on the increase over the decade in the proportion with a disability and the implications for their experiences and outcomes.

The findings point to increased interest in English, Maths and, especially, Science (but not Irish) in the wake of junior cycle reform. However, greater interest in these subjects has not translated into improved attitudes to school overall. Indeed, there is a decline in the proportion of girls who like school very much, which preliminary analysis suggests is related to increased emotional difficulties. The social and gender gradient in interest in Maths and Science, and the widening gender gap in STEM interest, is concerning and suggests the need for more inclusive teaching and learning approaches, and, at senior cycle, more inclusive provision, in these subjects.

The study was not designed to look at the effects of the pandemic on adolescent outcomes and it is not possible to determine whether any such effects were temporary or longer lasting. Nonetheless, the findings point to poorer peer relations and more emotional difficulties among this cohort, especially among girls. There is tentative evidence that this gendered pattern of emotional difficulties is linked to greater relative conflict with parents and less positive views of school among girls. Second-level school principals report much poorer wellbeing and school attendance, and, especially in schools serving more disadvantaged communities, poorer school engagement among their students in the post-pandemic period (Smyth, 2023). Further research is merited to identify the school- and family-level factors that have contributed to post-pandemic recovery in order to inform policy development.

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