

The Changing Social Worlds of 13-Year-Olds

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VENUE

ESRI Webinar

AUTHOR

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- Members of programme steering group
- Discussants
- Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) Study Team
- GUI families



Background to the study

Introduction

- Two cohorts of GUI enable us to look at the experiences of 13-year-olds a decade apart – 2011/12 (Cohort '98) and 2021/22 (Cohort '08)
- Period of rapid social, economic and policy change
- Reform of junior cycle
- Growing digitalisation
- Disruption of the pandemic to all aspects of young people's lives

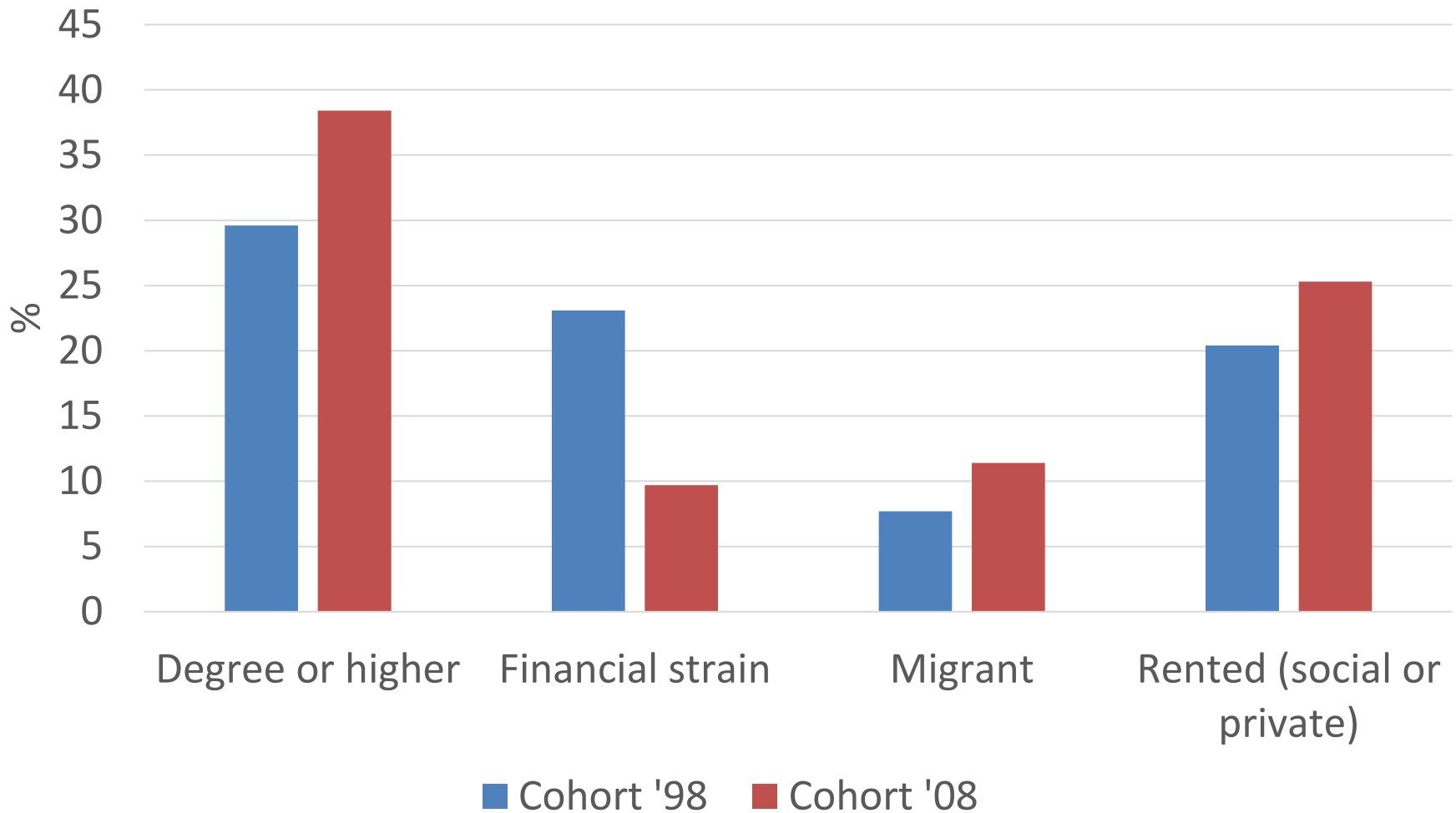
Research questions

1. How have the quality of relationships with parents and peers, 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 characteristics of the young people?
3. Are any such changes more evident for boys or girls or for young people from different social backgrounds?



Changes in the profile of families and young people

Changes in family background



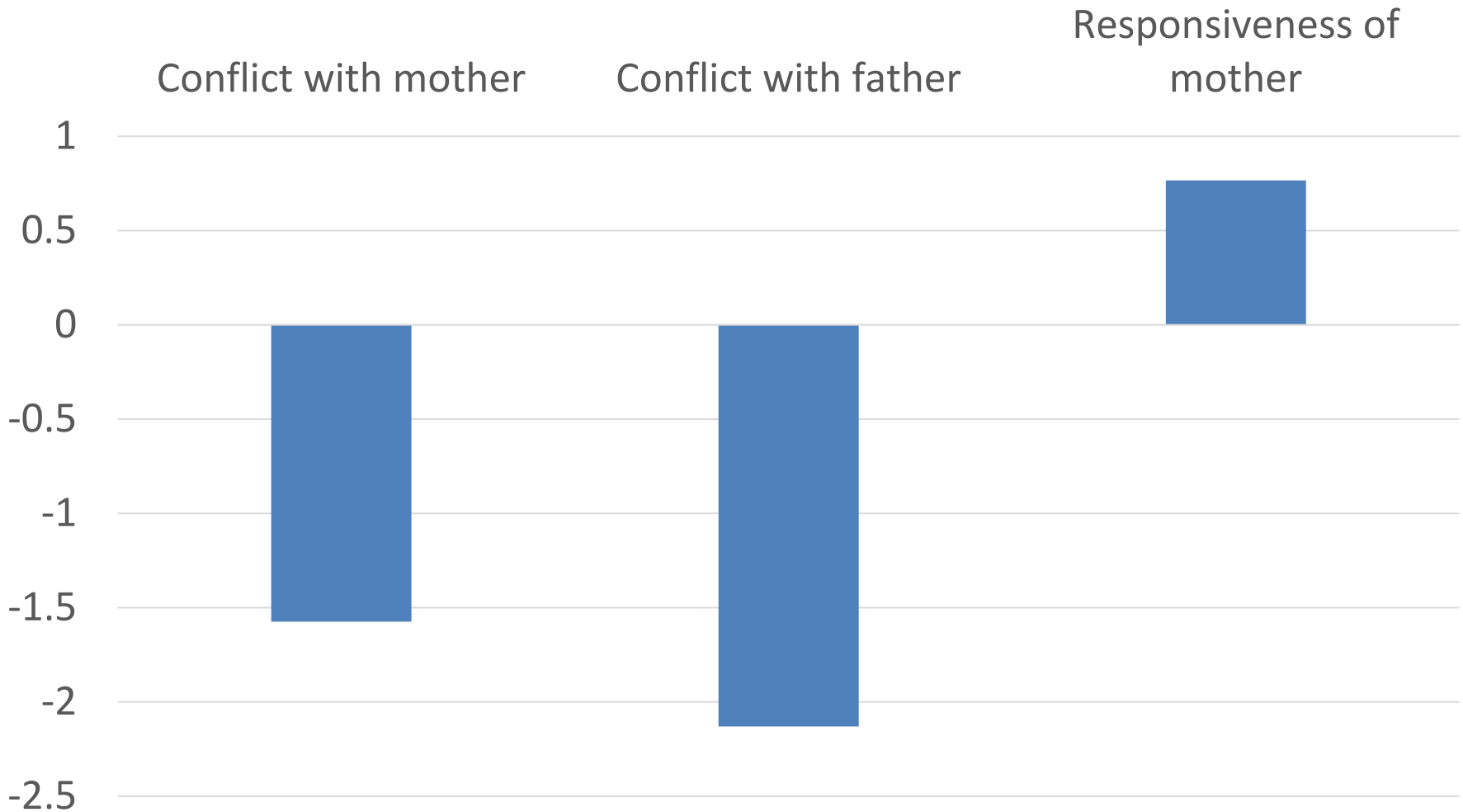
Other patterns

- Stable % of lone-parent families (18%)
- Decline in large families (to 15%)
- Significant increase in % with long-lasting condition/illness or disability
- Analyses look at changes in young people's lives, taking account of these changes in their characteristics



Child-parent relationships

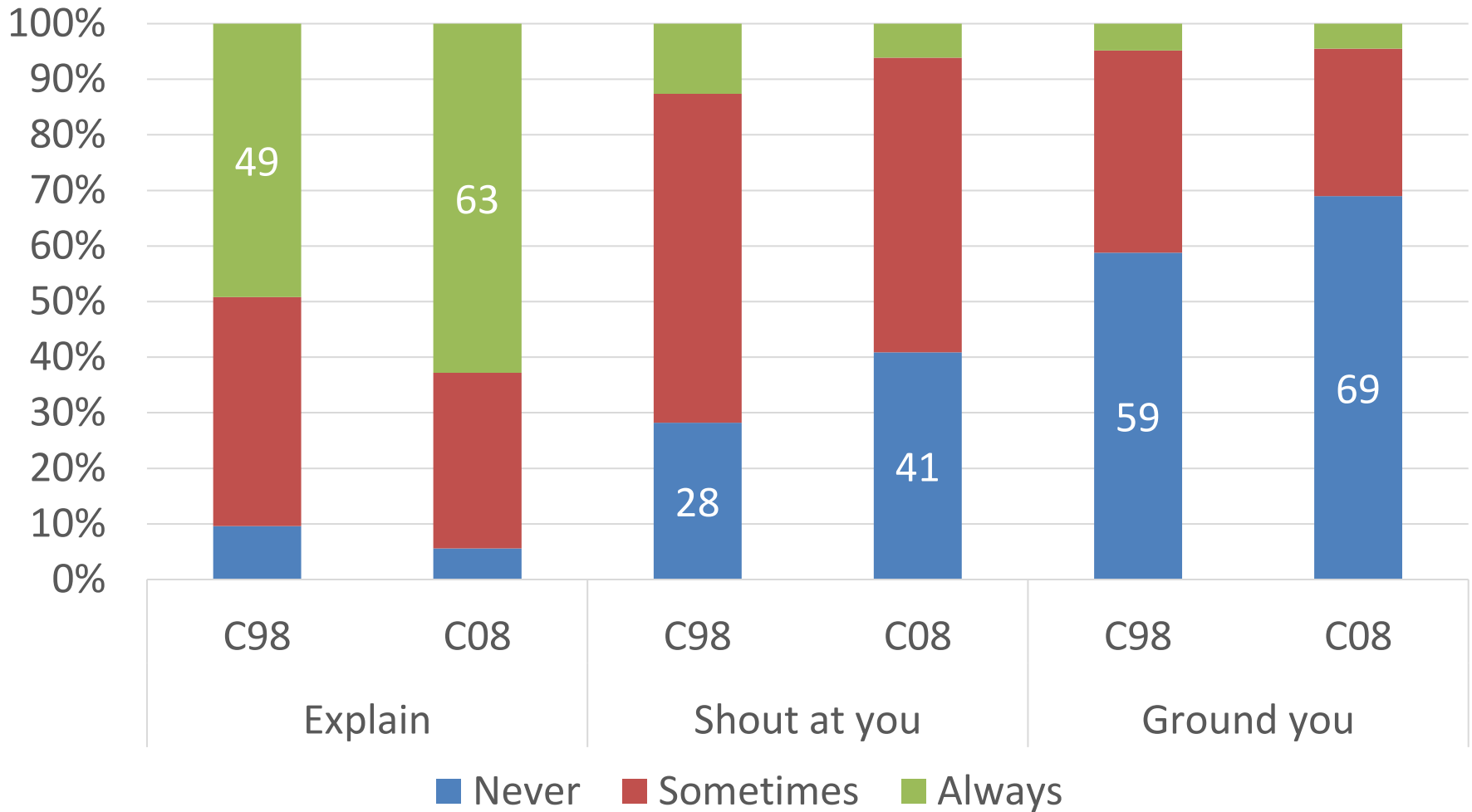
Changes in relationship quality, controlling for characteristics



Factors in parent-child conflict

- Higher among lone-parent families, those living in rented housing and in urban areas
- Higher where young person has a long-standing condition or disability
- Conflict declined less for girls than boys (related to increase in emotional difficulties)
- Conflict did not decline over time for families living under financial strain

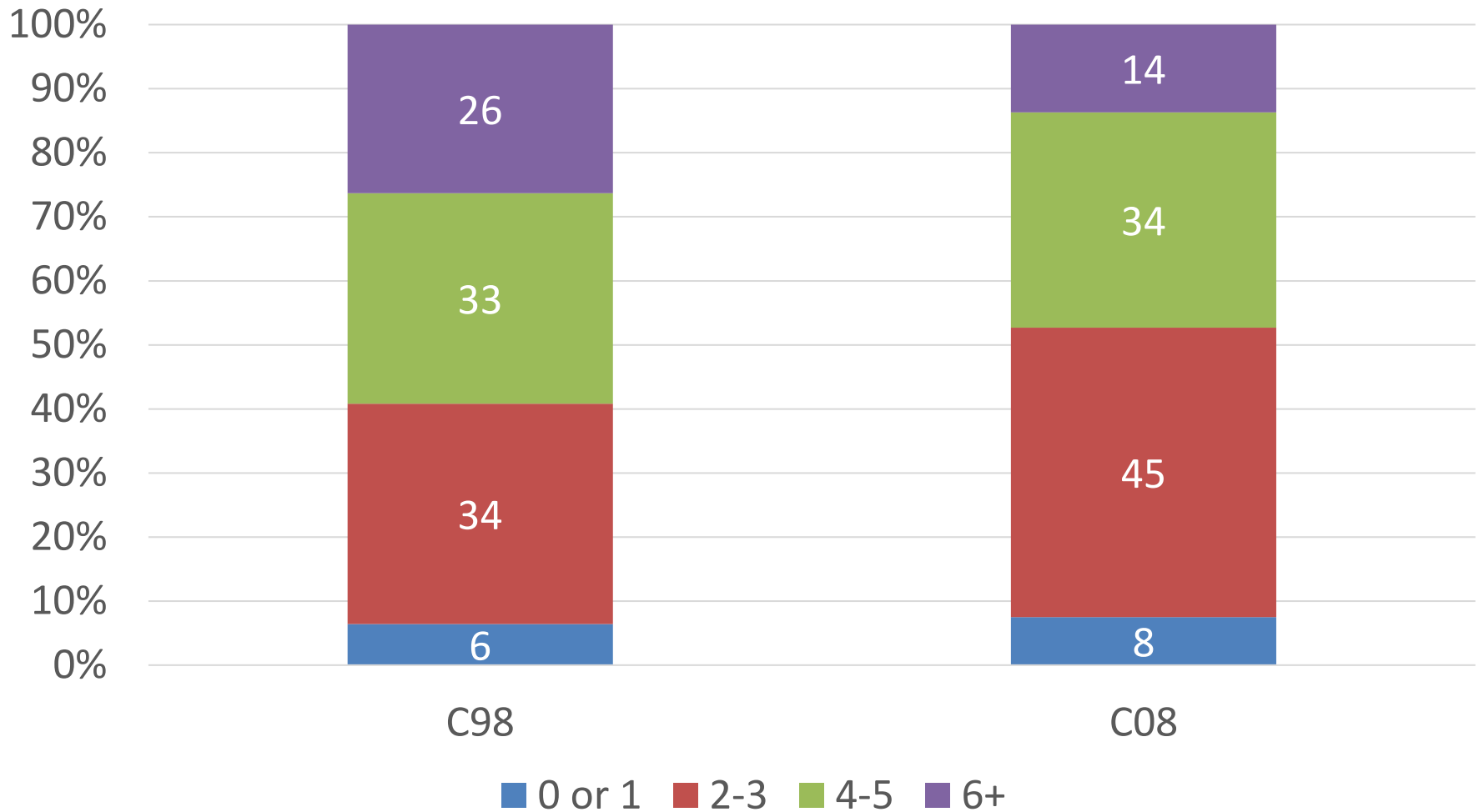
How parents deal with misbehaviour





Peer relationships

Number of close friends



Friendship patterns

- Smaller numbers of close friends among migrant-origin young people, those with a disability and those in rented accommodation
- Girls have fewer friends than boys, with the gender gap widening over time
- Cohort '08 are less likely to socialise with older peers
- Some increase in peer problems over time (reported by mothers), largely driven by increasing numbers of migrant origin, with a disability or living in rented housing



Day-to-day activities

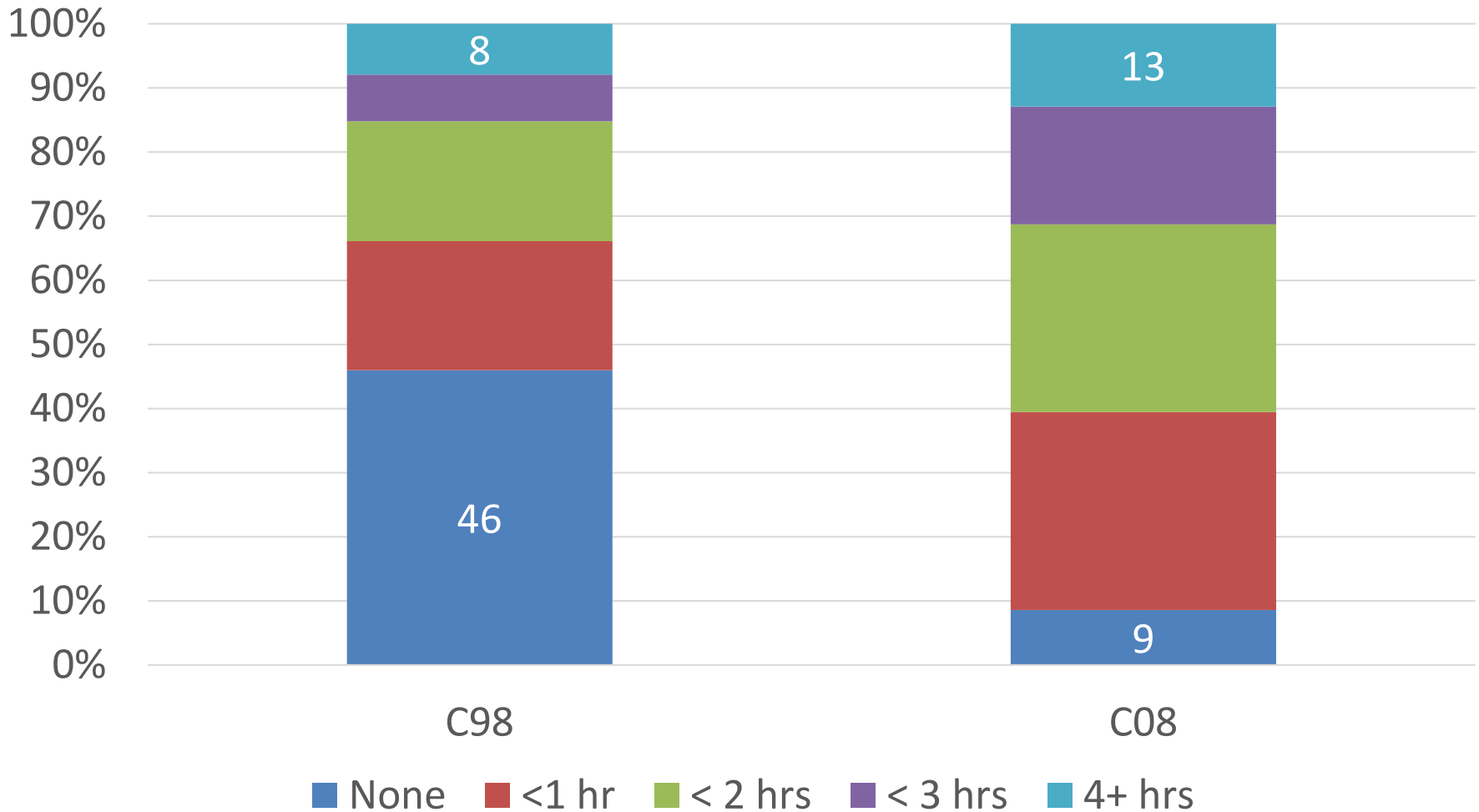
Involvement in organised sport

- Increase in weekly involvement in organised sport: 65% → 70%
- Higher among boys than girls
- Higher among those from professional or graduate families
- Lower among those with a disability or of migrant origin
- Involvement improved among all social groups, except those whose families are under financial strain

Other activities

- Improvement in cultural engagement (music/ drama): 29% → 36%
- Higher for girls and for those from more advantaged families
- Fall in involvement in organised groups (e.g. youth clubs), at least partly related to pandemic restrictions
- Measures of reading for pleasure are not fully comparable but a sizeable % of boys from disadvantaged backgrounds spend little or no time reading
- Screentime: shift from watching TV and playing video games towards other screen-based activities

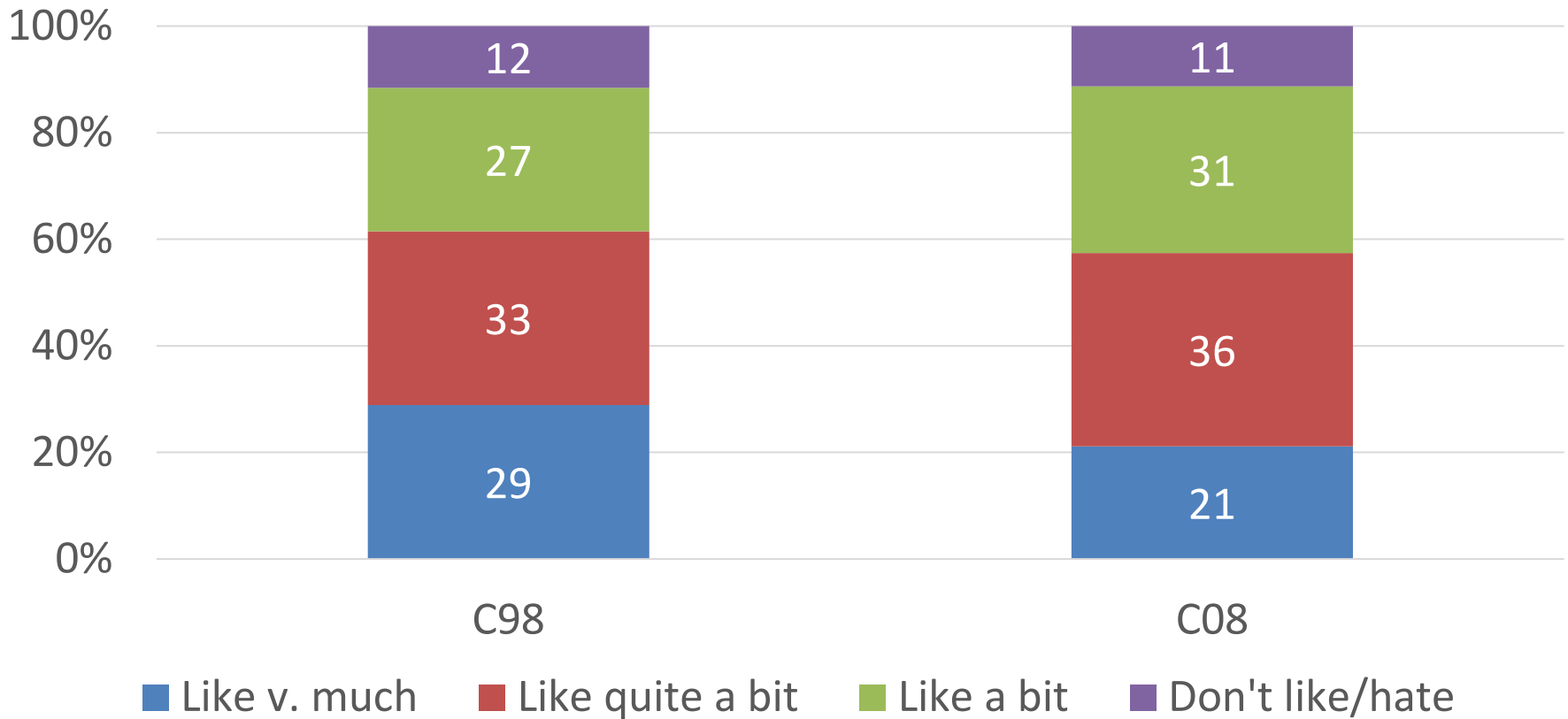
Other screentime (weekday)





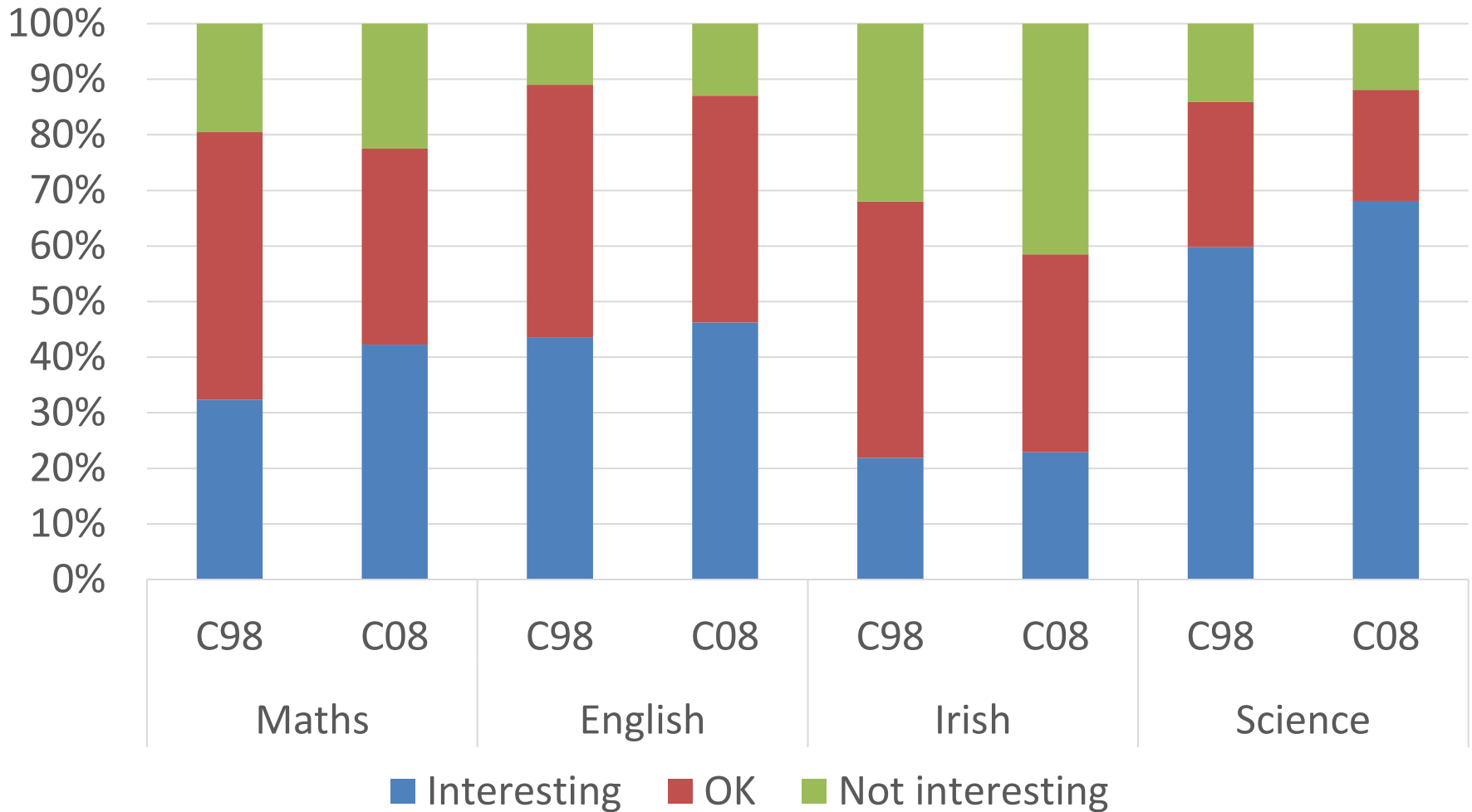
Engagement in learning

Attitudes to school



Girls: 35% → 23% like school very much

Attitudes to Maths, English, Irish and Science





Policy implications

Conclusions and implications

- Improvement in many aspects of young people's lives – more democratic family relations, improved sport and physical exercise, and greater interest in some core school subjects
- But smaller friendship groups and poorer peer relations; relatively low levels of reading for pleasure
- Persistence of gender differences: girls more involved in cultural activities and reading and boys more involved in sport and hard physical exercise; important that 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
- Girls are 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 policy focus on promoting STEM among girls
- Emerging evidence that greater emotional difficulties among girls are impacting on their family relationships and school engagement

Implications (2)

- Persistent social inequalities in young people's lives: young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to take part in various out-of-school activities, including sport and other forms of hard exercise, cultural engagement and reading – implications for social gap in cognitive and physical outcomes
- Need for subsidised activities in communities and supports for schools to provide access to a range of extracurricular options
- Financial strain as a source of parent-child friction – need for targeted income supports for families with children