



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



GROWING UP IN IRELAND

KEY FINDINGS: COHORT '98 AT 20 YEARS OLD IN 2018/19

NO. 1

BEING 20 YEARS OLD

INTRODUCTION

This *Key Findings* report presents summary information on the lives and circumstances of the 20-year-olds from the fourth wave of interviews with *Growing Up in Ireland's* older **Cohort '98** between August 2018 and June 2019.

It focuses on where they live; their main activity as regards work, education or training; their financial situation; their engagement with the wider world (including voluntary activity and political activity); their aspirations for the future; and whether they have had any contact with the Gardaí or the courts.

The *Key Findings* reports draw mainly on information provided by the 5,191 young people themselves. The background characteristics of the young people and their families (such as family type, mother's education, social class, income category) were measured at the most recent prior wave (typically at age 17/18) and these are examined in relation to their experiences at age 20.

This is the first time that data from *Growing Up in Ireland* have been available on young people as they make the transition from their teen years into early adulthood. It allows an examination of the connections between their diverse experiences in childhood and adolescence and the important transition to adulthood. It is relevant to policy in a broad range of new areas, including further and higher education and training, labour market entry, new household formation and the physical and mental health status of young adults.

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



Where the 20-year-olds lived in 2018/19

Most 20-year-olds still lived with their parents; just under one-third had another address (Figure 1). Even among those with another address, most (84%) still reported their parents' address as their main one. Young people whose mother¹ had a degree or higher level of education were most likely to have another address (40%), as were those 20-year-olds who were themselves in further or higher education (40%). Young women were slightly more likely than young men to have another address, as were 20-year-olds from two-parent families compared to those from one-parent families.

Figure 1: Percentage of 20-year-olds with a non-parental address, by background characteristics

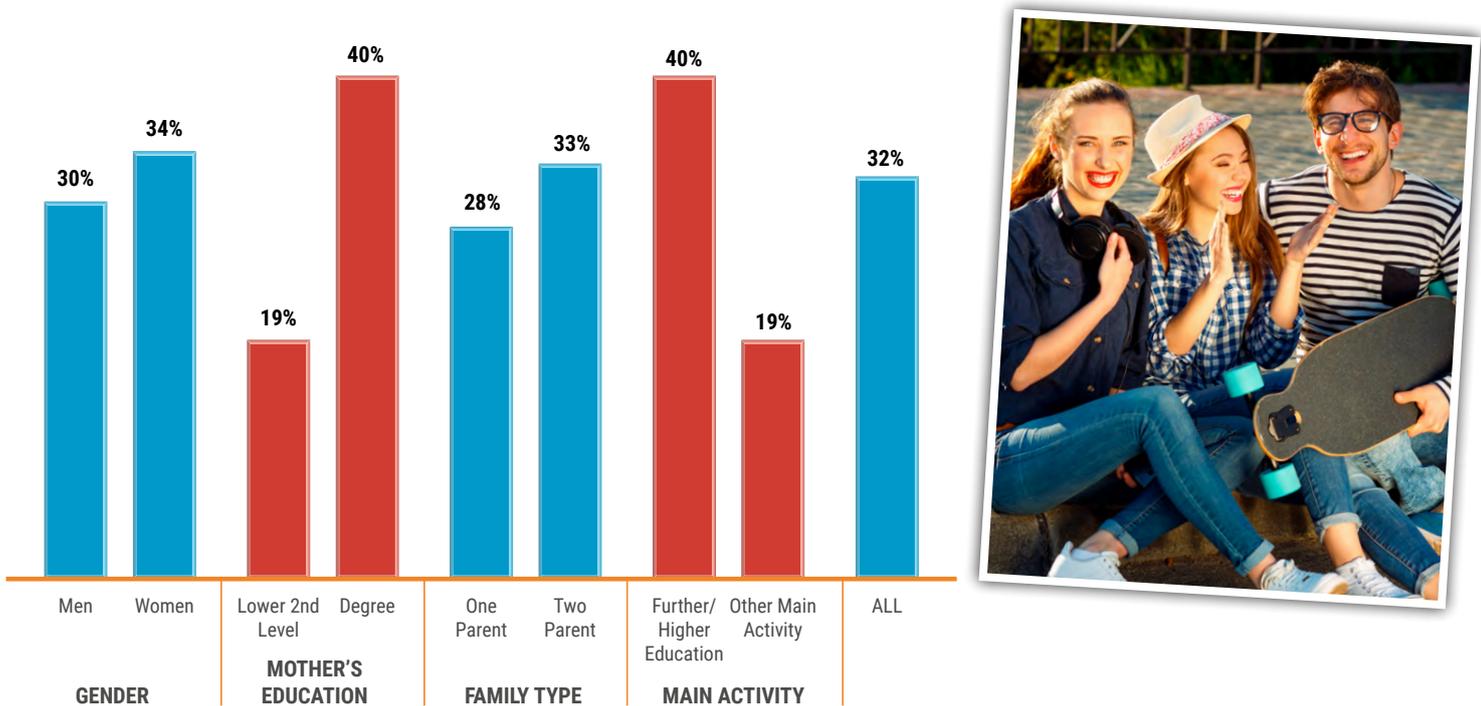
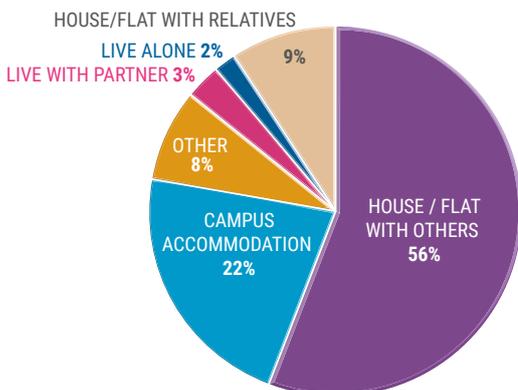


Figure 2 shows the type of non-parental accommodation among those with another address. Over half were sharing a house or flat with non-relatives, while just over one-fifth were in campus accommodation. Other analyses showed that over 80% of the accommodation was rented.

Figure 2: Type of accommodation (for 20-year-olds who have a non-parental address)



Over two-thirds of 20-year-olds gave their parents' address as their sole address. Of those who gave another address, the biggest group were sharing a privately rented house or flat.

¹ 'Mother' refers to the parent/guardian who completed the 'Parent One' (at ages 17/18 and 20) or 'Primary Caregiver' (earlier waves) questionnaire – usually the mother. Mother's education is the highest level of education completed by Parent One when the young person was aged 17/18. 'Lower 2nd level' refers to the equivalent of Junior Certificate or less; 'Degree' refers to a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. Family type (one- or two-parent) is based on the situation when the young person was aged 17/18.

Main activity, financial situation and making ends meet

Figure 3 shows the main activity of 20-year-olds at the time of the interview.² The biggest group (62%) were in *further or higher education*; 6% were in *training*; over one-quarter were in *employment* (21% full-time and 6% part-time); 3% were *unemployed* (or 11% of those in the labour market) and 2% in some *other activity*.

Figure 3: Main activity of 20-year-olds at time of interview, overall and by gender and mother's education

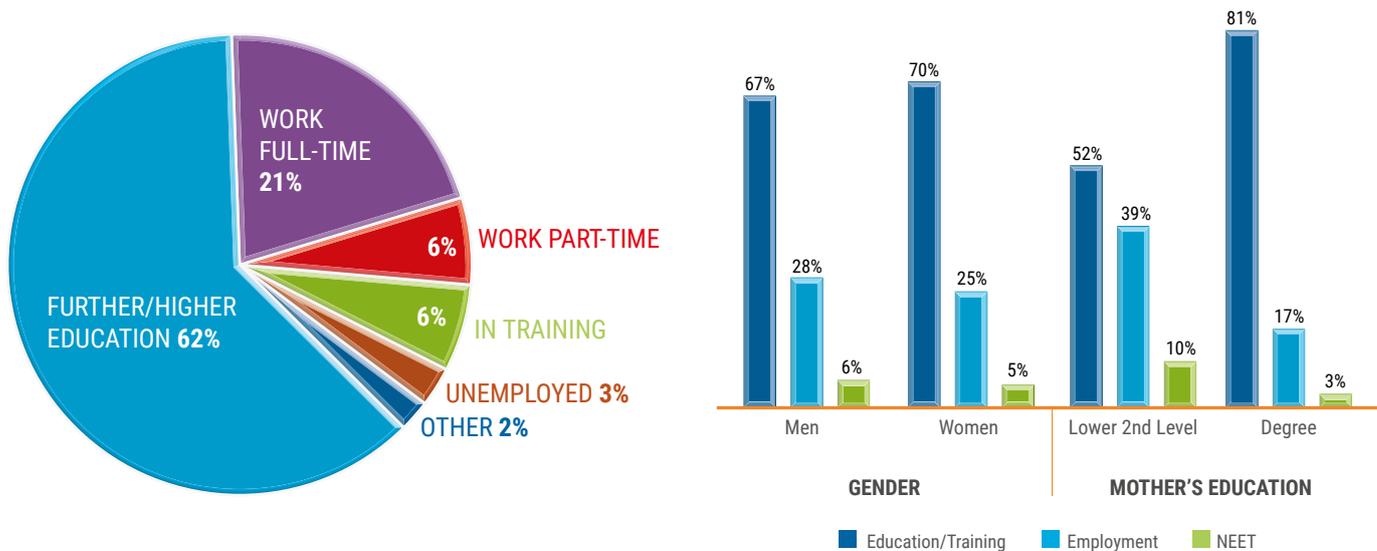
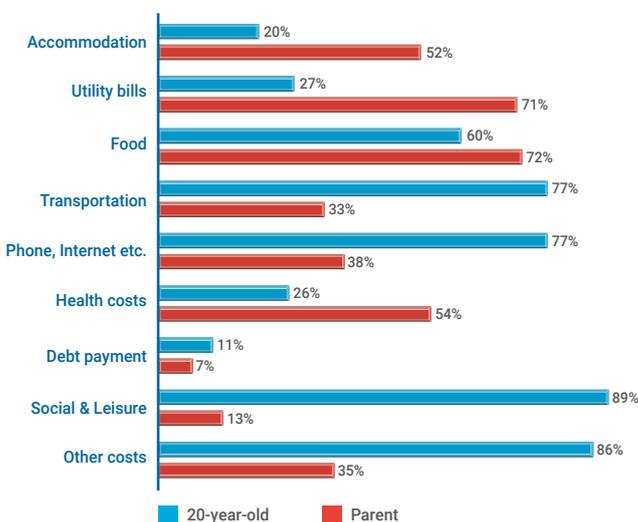


Figure 3 also shows main activity by gender and mother's education. Young women were slightly more likely than young men to be in *education or training* (70% vs 67%) and slightly less likely to be *at work* (25% vs 28%). Being in *education or training* was more common among those from higher-education backgrounds (81% vs 52% of those whose mother had lower second-level education or less) and being *at work* was less common (17% vs 39%). The 20-year-olds whose mothers had lower levels of education were much more likely to be *not in education, employment or training* (NEET, 10% vs 3%). There was no gender difference in this respect.

Over two-thirds of 20-year-olds were in further or higher education or training and just over one-quarter were working, either full-time (21%) or part-time (6%).

Figure 4: 20-year-olds' reports of whether they or their parents contribute to different living costs



The 20-year-olds were asked whether they or their parents contributed to certain living costs. Since both may have contributed, the percentages may sum to more than 100. As most 20-year-olds still lived at home, parents usually contributed to their basic living expenses such as 'accommodation', 'utility bills' and 'food' (52%, 71%, and 72%, respectively – Figure 4).

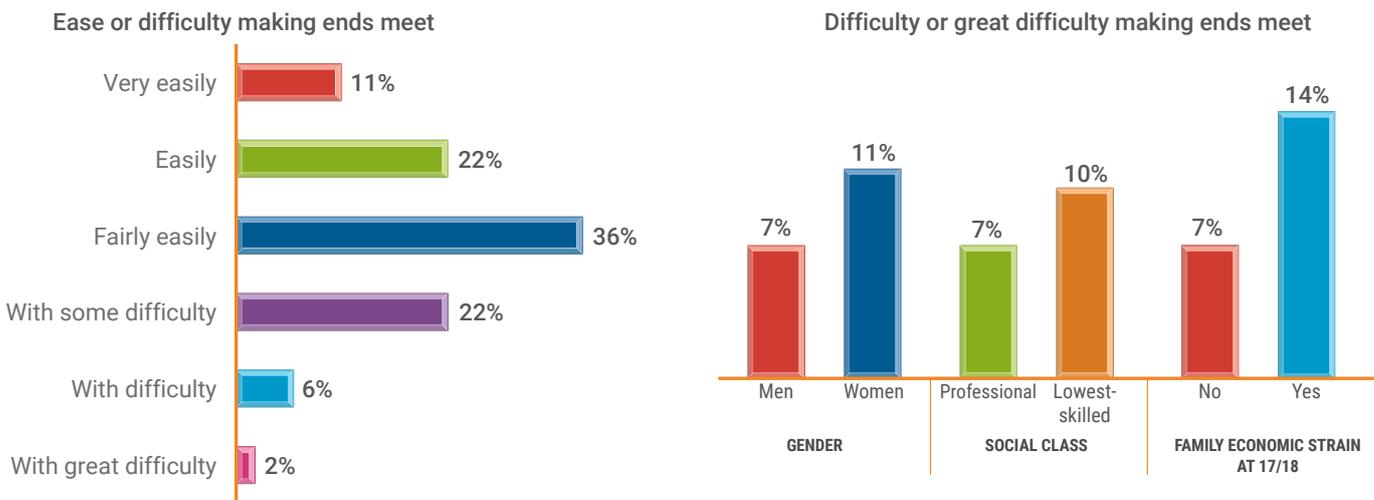
Young people themselves were most likely to pay for their 'social and leisure' expenses (89%), 'other costs' (86%), communication ('phone and internet', 77%) and 'transportation' costs (77%).

Most 20-year-olds rely on the help of their parents for basic living expenses such as food, housing and utility bills.

² Based on 20-year-olds' reports of their 'main activity with regard to work or other activities'.

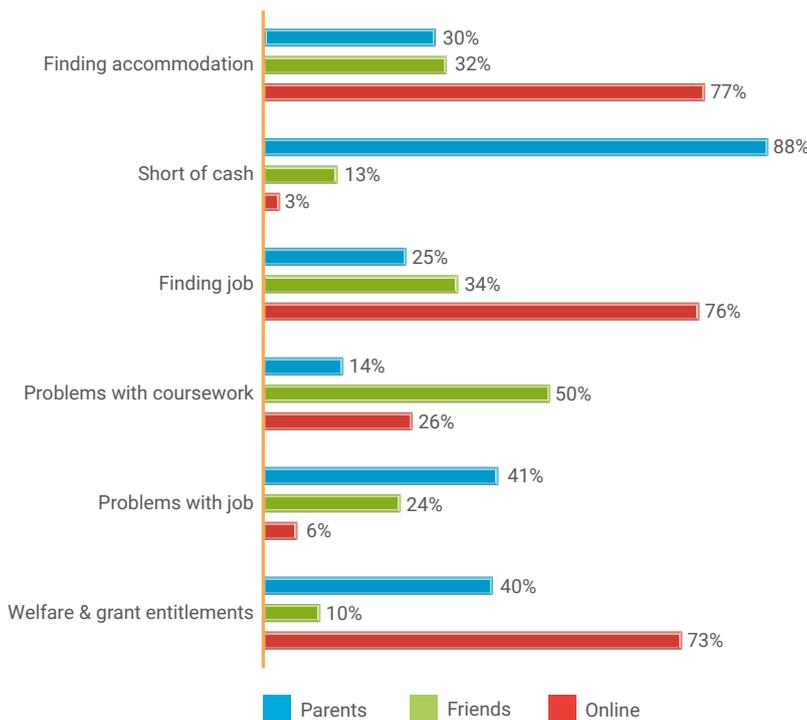
Over one-third of 20-year-olds reported being able to ‘make ends meet’ *fairly easily* (36%), with a further one-third doing so either *easily* or *very easily* (Figure 5). Just over one-fifth reported *some difficulty*, while 8% reported *great difficulty* or *difficulty*. Young women were somewhat more likely than young men (11% vs 7%) to have *difficulty* or *great difficulty* in making ends meet, and the rates were also somewhat higher for those from the lowest-skilled social classes.³ There was also evidence of continuity over time: rates of economic strain were considerably higher among 20-year-olds whose parents had reported *difficulty* or *great difficulty* making ends meet three years earlier when the young adult was 17/18 years old (14% vs 7% for others).

Figure 5: The 20-year-olds’ overall degree of ease or difficulty making ends meet and having difficulty or great difficulty, by gender, social class and family economic strain when the young person was 17/18 years old



Sources of information or help

Figure 6: Sources of information or help on a variety of issues relevant to 20-year-olds



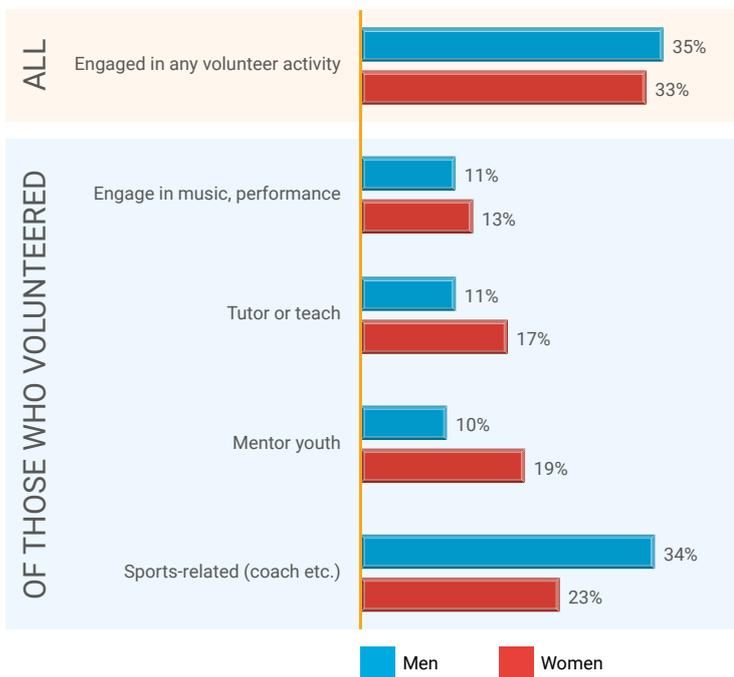
The 20-year-olds were asked where they would ‘go for information or help’ in a variety of situations (Figure 6). Response options were *parents*, *other family*, *friends*, *online* and *other*. Figure 6 shows the pattern for the most commonly identified sources: *parents*, *friends* and *online*. Almost 9 in 10 of young people said they would go to their parents for information or help if they were ‘short of cash’. For information or help on other issues, such as ‘finding accommodation’, ‘finding a job’ or checking their ‘social welfare and grant entitlements’, they were much more likely to search online for information (about three-quarters).

³ Social class is based on the occupation of the parents when the young person was 17/18 years old. Here, figures are shown for professionals (including doctors, architects, teachers and nurses) and the lowest-skilled (including semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers and those who never worked) social classes.

Volunteering

Apart from work, training and education, activities such as volunteering and political activism are important aspects of young people’s engagement with the wider world as adults. Figure 7 shows that over one-third of 20-year-olds had engaged in ‘volunteer activities’ in the past six months. There were similar rates for young women and young men, but there was a gender difference in the type of engagement. While *sports-related* volunteering was the most common type for both genders, the rate was higher for young men than young women (34% vs 23%), while young women were slightly more likely to volunteer in areas such as *music/performance*, *tutoring* and *mentoring*.

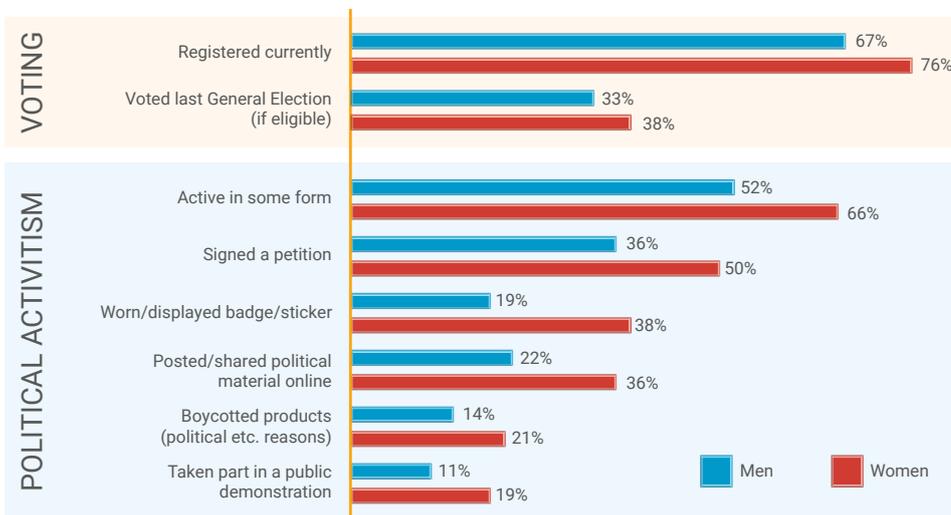
Figure 7: Types of voluntary activity of 20-year-olds, by gender



Over one-third of 20-year-olds had engaged in volunteer activities in the previous six months. Sports-related volunteering was the most common type for both young men and young women (but with a higher figure for young men, 34% vs 23%). Young women were more likely than young men to engage in tutoring or mentoring.

Political engagement and activism

Figure 8: Whether the young adult was registered to vote, voted in the last election or was politically active, by gender



Young people were asked about their engagement in different types of political activity (Figure 8).

About two-thirds of young men and over three-quarters of young women reported that they were currently ‘registered to vote’, and 33% of young men and 38% of young women who had been eligible in 2016 had ‘voted in the 2016 general election’.

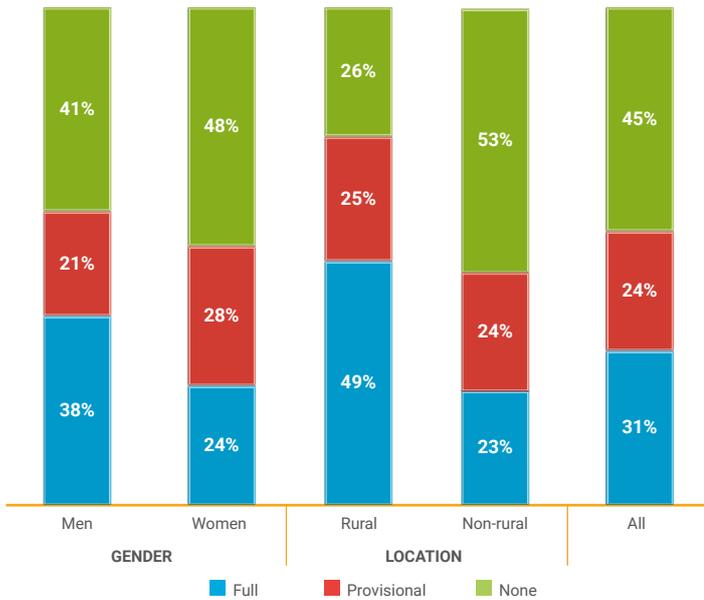
Over half of young people were involved in at least one other type of political activity, with a higher rate among young women than young men (66% vs 52%). The most common types of activity were 'signing a petition' (50% young women and 36% young men), 'wearing a badge/sticker' (38% and 19%) and 'sharing political material online' (36% and 22%; see Figure 8, previous page).

Driving licence

Having a driving licence can be an important marker of independence for young people in Ireland, particularly in rural areas where public transport links are less comprehensive. About 55% of 20-year olds had a driving licence (31% full licence and 24% provisional). There were higher rates in rural (i.e. open countryside) areas (74%, based on parental address); young men were slightly more likely than young women to have a licence (59% vs 52%).



Figure 9: Whether 20-year-olds had a driving licence, by gender and location



About 55% of 20-year-olds had a driving licence (either full or provisional), with higher rates in rural areas (74%).

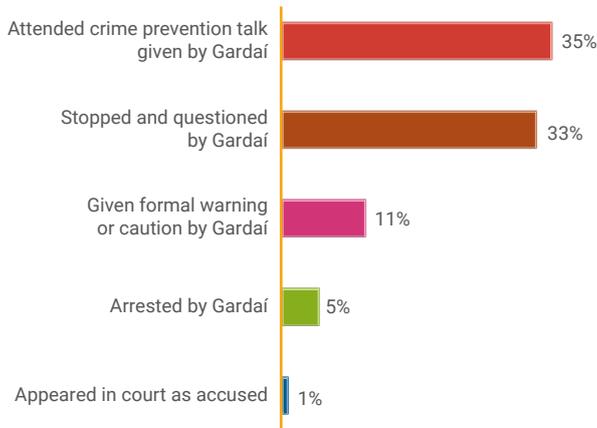
Contact with Gardaí (Irish police) and courts

Contact with the Gardaí/courts can arise through engagement with crime prevention, being a victim of crime (though not all crime is reported), being a witness to a crime, or being suspected of wrongdoing. The 20-year-olds were asked about their contact with the Gardaí/courts since the last interview at age 17/18. Since that time, over one-third of young adults had 'attended a crime prevention talk given by the Gardaí'; one-third were 'stopped and questioned'; just over one in ten were 'given a formal warning or caution', one in twenty were 'arrested' and 1% 'appeared in court as accused' (Figure 10).



One-third of 20-year-olds reported that they had been stopped and questioned by the Gardaí at some point since they were 17/18 years old.

Figure 10: Young people's contact with the Gardaí/courts



Young men were much more likely than young women to have been 'stopped and questioned by the Gardaí' (47% vs 19%) and to have been given a 'formal warning or caution' (16% vs 6%).

Differences by social class and family type were smaller than the gender differences, but there were higher rates of contact with the Gardaí/courts among 20-year-olds from one-parent families and from the lowest-skilled social classes.

There was also evidence of links between earlier anti-social behaviour (ASB) and contact with the Gardaí/courts: 20-year-olds who had reported engaging in anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the 13-year interview were more likely than those who had not engaged in ASB to report at age 20 that they had been 'stopped and questioned by Gardaí' (50%), been 'given a formal warning or caution by the Gardaí' (22%) or been 'arrested' (12%).

Victims of crime

One-tenth of 20-year-olds said they had been a 'victim of crime' in the previous two years (Figure 12). Of those who had been a victim of crime, the most common types were being 'assaulted or threatened with assault by a stranger'; 'assaulted or threatened with assault by someone they knew' or having 'something stolen from their person'. 'Fraud or cybercrime', having a 'car/motorbike/bicycle stolen' or having their 'home broken into' were less frequent.

Young men were more likely than young women to say they had been a 'victim of crime' in the previous two years (12% vs 8%; Figure 13). They were about twice as likely to say they had been 'assaulted by a stranger' (6% vs 3%) or by someone they knew (4% vs 2%).

Figure 11: Contact of 20-year-olds with the Gardaí/courts by background characteristics and anti-social behaviour at age 13

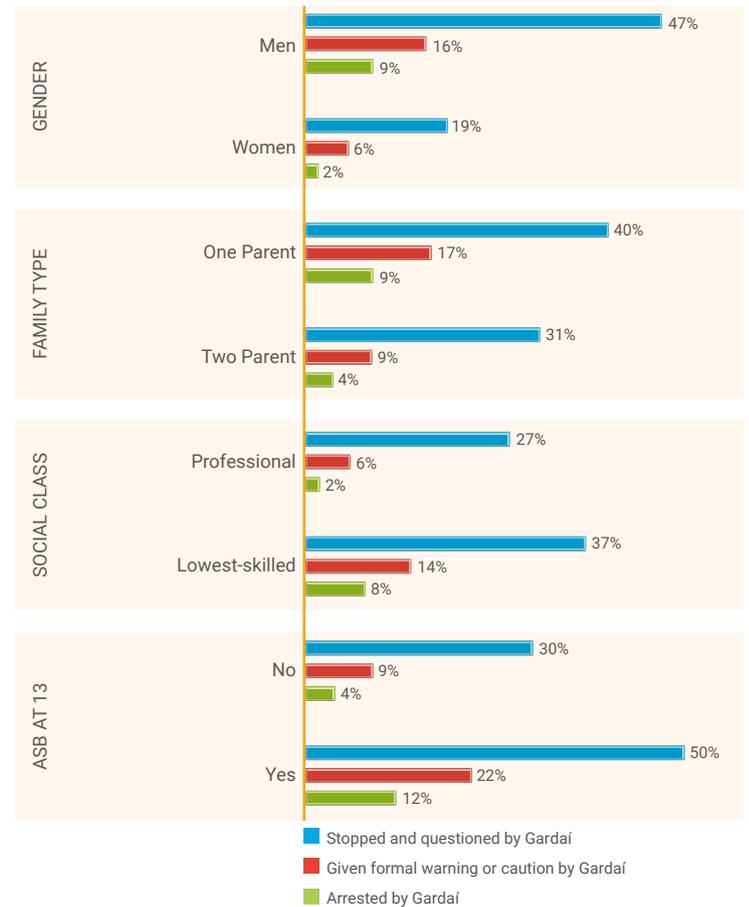
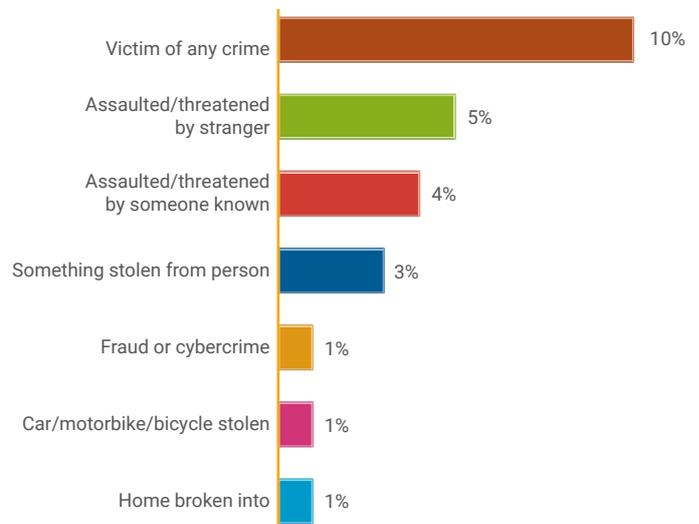
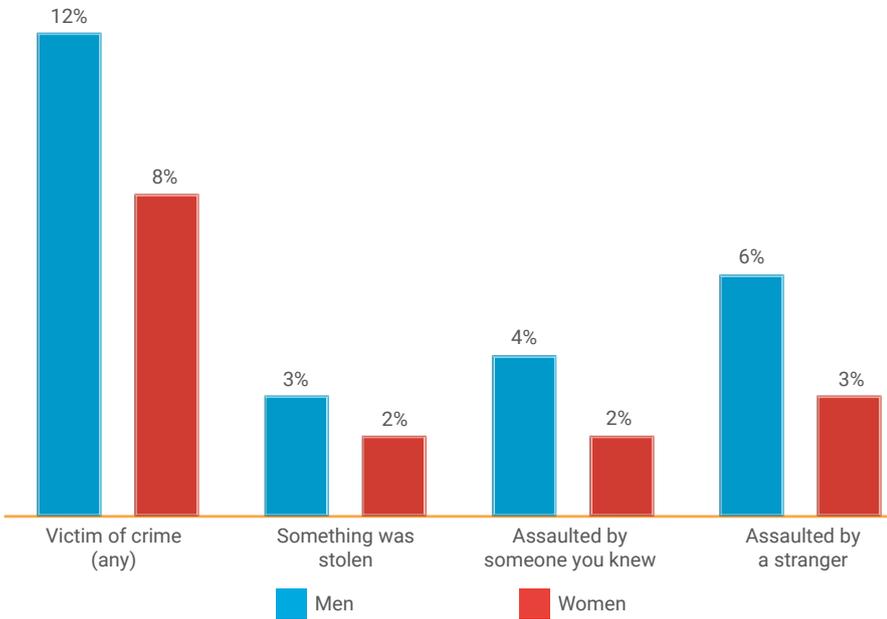


Figure 12: Whether the young adult has been a victim of crime (last 2 years), by type of crime



One in ten 20-year-olds had been a victim of crime in the previous two years and, of these, nearly half had been assaulted or threatened with assault.

Figure 13: Whether the young adult has been a victim of crime and type of crime, by gender

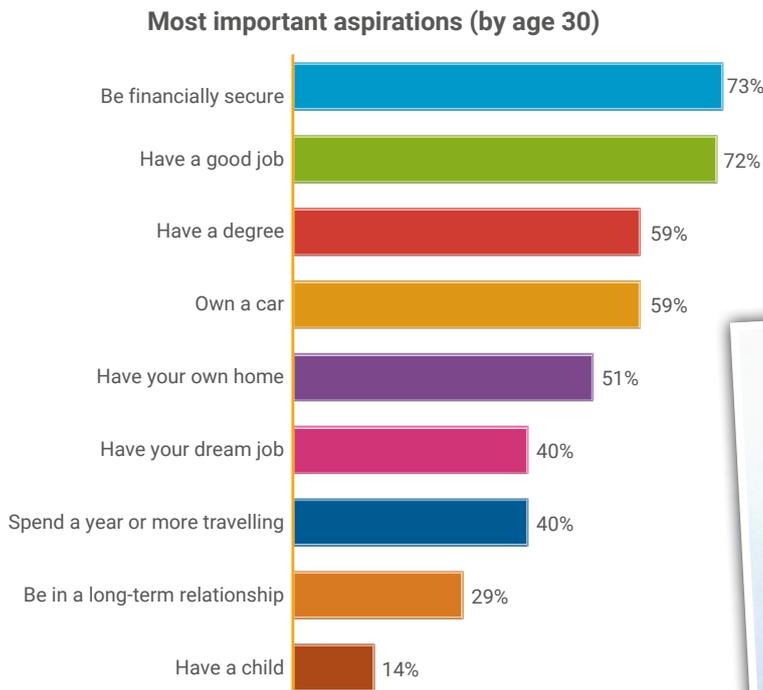


Young men were about 50 per cent more likely than young women to state that they had been a victim of crime in the previous two years. They were about twice as likely to say that they had been assaulted.

Aspirations and concerns

Young people were presented with a list of possible aspirations they might achieve by the time they were 30 and asked to rate the importance of each one on a scale from 0 to 10. Figure 14 shows the percentage rating each one as *highly important* (either 9 or 10 on the 10-point scale). The most common aspirations rated *highly important* were to 'be financially secure' (73%), to 'have a good job' (72%), to 'have a degree' (59%), to 'own a car' (59%), or to 'have their own home' (51%). Less common were aspirations to 'have their dream job', 'spend a year or more travelling', be in a 'long-term relationship', or 'have a child' by the age of 30.

Figure 14: Aspirations the 20-year-olds regard as highly important to achieve by the time they are 30



Financial and employment security were among the main aspirations of young people. Over 70% regarded being financially secure and having a good job by age 30 as highly important.



There were social class differences in the aspirations considered highly important (Figure 15). The 20-year-olds from the lowest-skilled social classes gave higher ratings than those from the professional social class to being 'financially secure' (75% vs 68%), having 'a good job' (73% vs 67%), owning 'a car' (63% vs 47%) and having their 'own home' (55% vs 40%). On the other hand, those from the professional social class gave a higher rating to having 'a degree' (73% vs 46%).

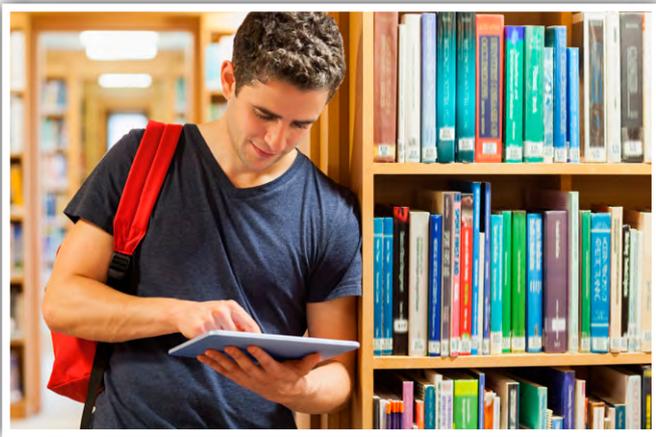
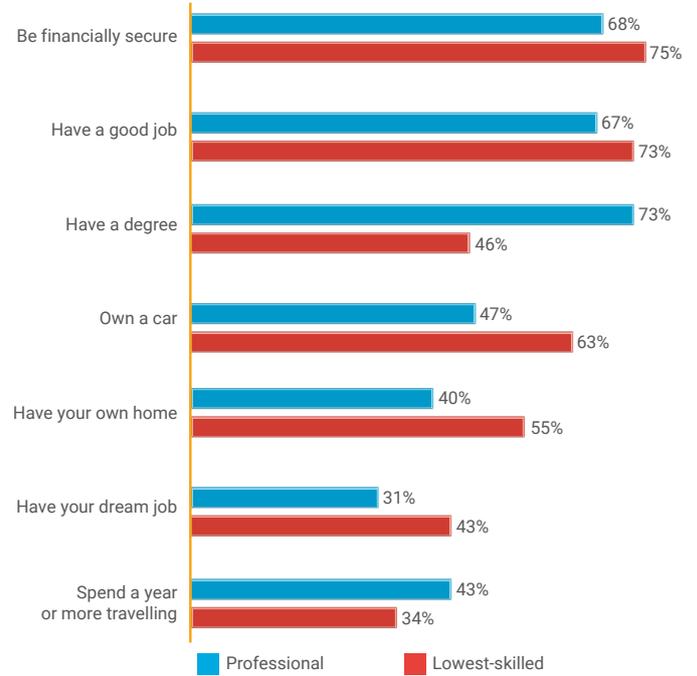
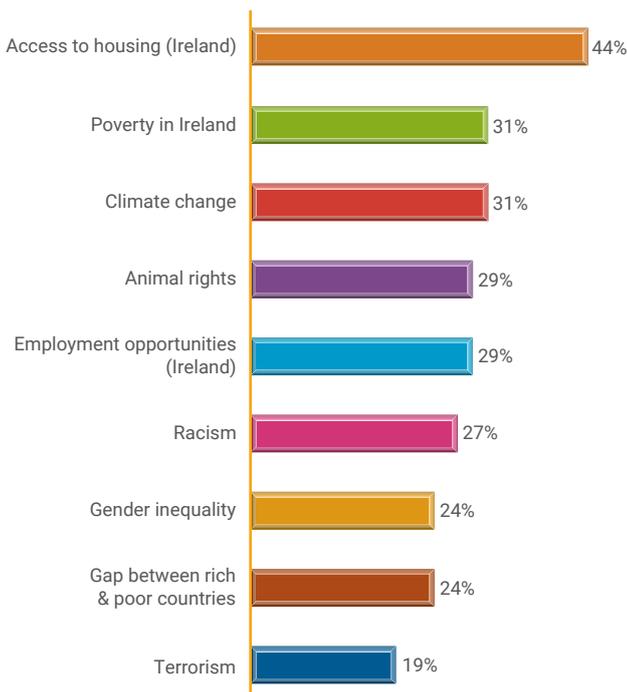


Figure 15: Aspirations the 20-year-olds regard as highly important to achieve by the time they are 30, by social class



The 20-year-olds were also shown a list of topical issues and asked how concerned they were about each of them, on a scale ranging from 0 to 10. Figure 16 shows the percentages of young people indicating *very high levels* of concern (9 or 10 on the scale). 'Access to housing in Ireland' had the highest percentage of young people expressing *very high levels* of concern (44%). About 31% expressed *very high* concern about 'poverty in Ireland' and 'climate change', and 29% about 'animal rights', and 'access to employment opportunities.' Slightly lower percentages expressed *very high* concern about 'racism', 'gender inequality', the 'global gap between rich and poor' and 'terrorism'.

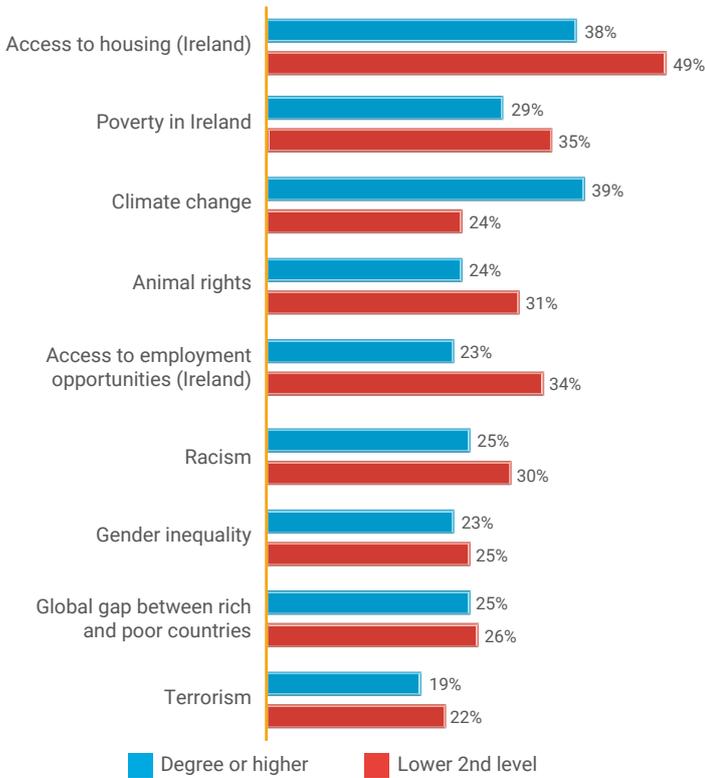
Figure 16: Issues the 20-year-olds rated as of very high concern (9 or 10 on a scale from 0 to 10)



Two out of five 20-year-olds indicated very high levels of concern about access to housing in Ireland while nearly one in three indicated very high levels of concern about poverty in Ireland and climate change.



Figure 17: Issues the 20-year-olds rated as of very high concern, by highest and lowest levels of mother's education



There were differences in the level of concern expressed according to the backgrounds of the young people. Figure 17 shows the differences by the highest (degree or higher) and lowest (lower second-level) levels of mother's education.

Those whose mothers had lower levels of education were more likely to express very high levels of concern in general, but particularly so about 'access to housing in Ireland' (49% vs 38%), 'poverty in Ireland' (35% vs 29%) and 'access to employment opportunities in Ireland' (34% vs 23%).

On the other hand, 20-year-olds whose mothers had a degree were more likely to express very high levels of concern about 'climate change' (39% vs 24%).



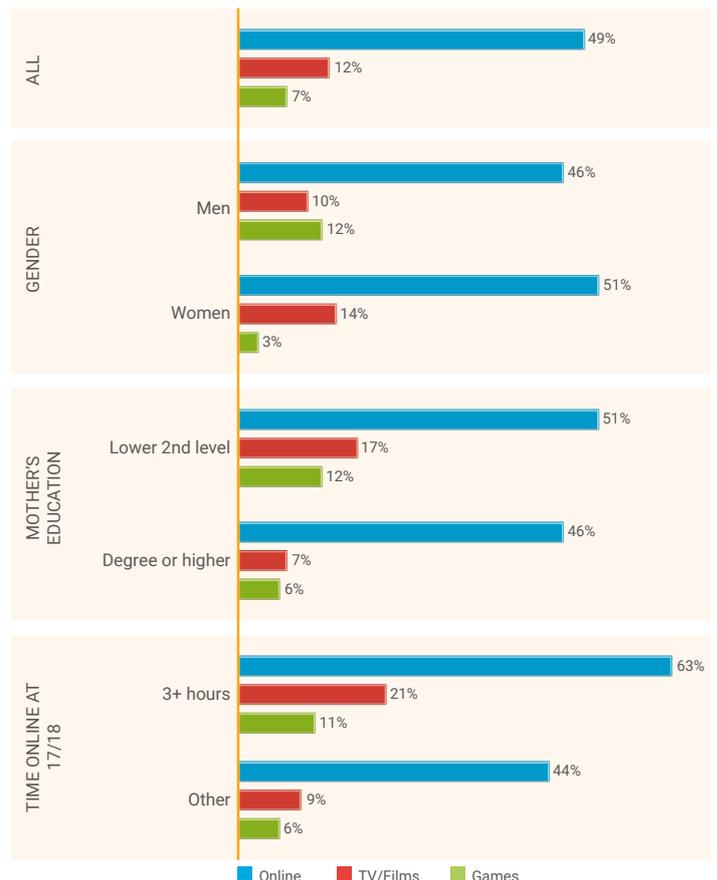
Figure 18: Rate of 20-year-olds spending more than 3 hours on a typical weekday on screen-based activities

Screen time

The 20-year-olds were asked about the amount of time they spent on a typical day on screen-based activities (including such activities for study but not including any such activities for their work). Almost half of young people spent *over three hours* 'online' on a typical weekday (Figure 18); about 12% spent this amount of time 'watching TV or films' and 7% spent *over three hours* on 'games'.

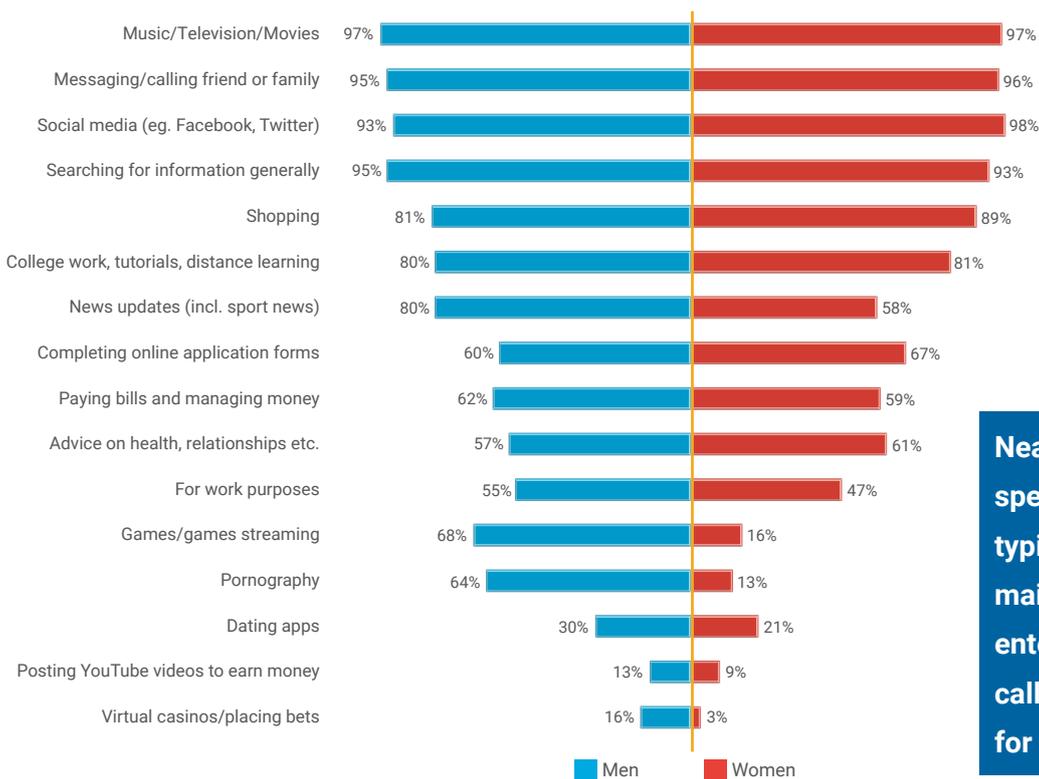
The gender differences in time spent 'online' or 'watching TV/films' were rather small, but young men were more likely than young women to spend *over three hours* on 'games' (12% vs 3%). Spending *over three hours* on all three types of screen-based activity was more common among 20-year-olds whose mothers had lower levels of education.

Looking at the longitudinal pattern, those who had spent more time 'online' at age 17/18 were considerably more likely to spend *over three hours* on all three types of screen-based activity at age 20. This longitudinal pattern was stronger than the differences by gender and mother's education for time spent 'online' or 'watching TV/films'.



The 20-year-olds who spent some time 'online' were asked to indicate whether they used the internet for each of 16 different purposes (Figure 19). More than eight out of ten young men and young women used the internet for 'music/TV/movies', 'social media', 'messaging/calling', 'searching for information generally', 'shopping' and 'college work'. More than half used the internet for 'news/sports updates' (with a rate of 80% for young men), 'completing online application forms', 'paying bills and managing money', 'getting advice on health, relationships or other issues' and 'for work purposes'. Over 60% of young men used the internet for 'games' or to access 'pornography', but fewer than one-fifth of young women did so.

Figure 19: Reasons 20-year-olds use the internet, by gender



Nearly half of 20-year-olds spent over 3 hours online on a typical weekday. Among the main uses of the internet were entertainment, social media, calling or messaging, searching for information and shopping.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Most 20-year-olds still lived with their parents; most were still in education or training and still depended on their parents financially, especially for basic living expenses.
- At the time of the survey, over two-thirds had registered to vote, over one-third had volunteered in the past six months, and over one-half had engaged in some type of political activism in the last year. The 20-year-olds also indicated high levels of concern about general issues such as climate change and poverty.
- Access to housing was the issue causing most concern to 20-year-olds, particularly among those from less advantaged backgrounds.
- A desire for financial and employment security featured strongly in their aspirations for themselves in the next ten years. Only a minority aspired to be in a long-term relationship or have a child by the age of 30.

BACKGROUND

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

The study tracks the development of two nationally representative cohorts of children and young people over time. **Cohort '98 (Child Cohort)** members were selected through primary schools and interviewed at 9 years, at 13 years, at 17/18 years and at 20 years old. These *Key Findings* are based on the 5,191 interviews with **Cohort '98** at age 20.

The second cohort is around ten years younger: **Cohort '08 (Infant Cohort)** members were first interviewed when the Study Child was 9 months old. The cohort members were re-interviewed at ages 3, 5 and 9 years, and a postal survey was completed by the parents at age 7/8. The experience of this cohort is described in a separate series of reports.

Methodology

The table below shows the details of each round of data collection with Cohort '98.

Age	When	Completed	Response rate*
9 years	2007/08	8,568	89%
13 years	2011/12	7,525	89%
17/18 years	2015/16	6,216	76%
20 years	2018/19	5,191	66%

* The response rate is the number of completions as a % of the total issued to interviewers in each wave (eligible cohort members where the address was known, apart from definitive refusals).

In any study that follows people over time, some will not respond in the first wave (non-response) or drop out between waves (attrition). Every effort has been made to adjust for any differences between those who respond and those who do not, though it is never possible to guarantee that this has been completely successful. Adjustments for non-response in Wave 1



were based on characteristics of the schools the 9-year-olds attended and data from the 2006 Census (see www.growingup.ie/pubs/Sample-Design-and-Response_9YearCohort.pdf). Adjustments for attrition between waves were based on characteristics measured at the last interview (or the first wave), including the young person's gender, family type, mother's education, family income, family social class; and the young person's score on a reading test at age 9. All figures presented in this *Key Findings* report are based on the statistically adjusted data.

The figures presented here are purely descriptive and do not control for potential interactions or confounding effects. All figures are preliminary and may be subject to change.

Access to Growing Up in Ireland data: Anonymised versions of all data collected in **Growing Up in Ireland** are available for research. Information on how to apply for access to the data, and copies of the questionnaires, are available at www.growingup.ie/information-for-researchers.

Thank you to all participants

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

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