



Cohort '98
Report No. 9
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THE LIVES OF 20-YEAR-OLDS: MAKING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

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The lives of 20-year olds

Overview

- Context of data collection
- The transition to adulthood
- Educational and labour market experiences
- Leisure and relationships
- Physical and socio-emotional well-being
- Summary and policy implications



Background to the report

- **Growing Up in Ireland** is the national longitudinal study of children in Ireland
- The study is funded by the Government of Ireland, overseen by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Central Statistics Office, and carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin
- There are two cohorts of children in the study:
 - Cohort '08 (Born in 2008, now 13 years old)
 - Cohort '98 (Born in 1998, now 23 years old)

Background to the report

- Cohort '98 - Fourth wave of interviews conducted at age 20 in 2018/19
- 5,190 Young Adult participants
 - 61% of the 8,568 participants from Wave 1
- 4,887 Primary Caregivers provided household contextual information
- Main interview: Completed on a computer with an experienced interviewer
- Sensitive topics: Completed on a computer by the Young Adult in private

What's special about age 20?

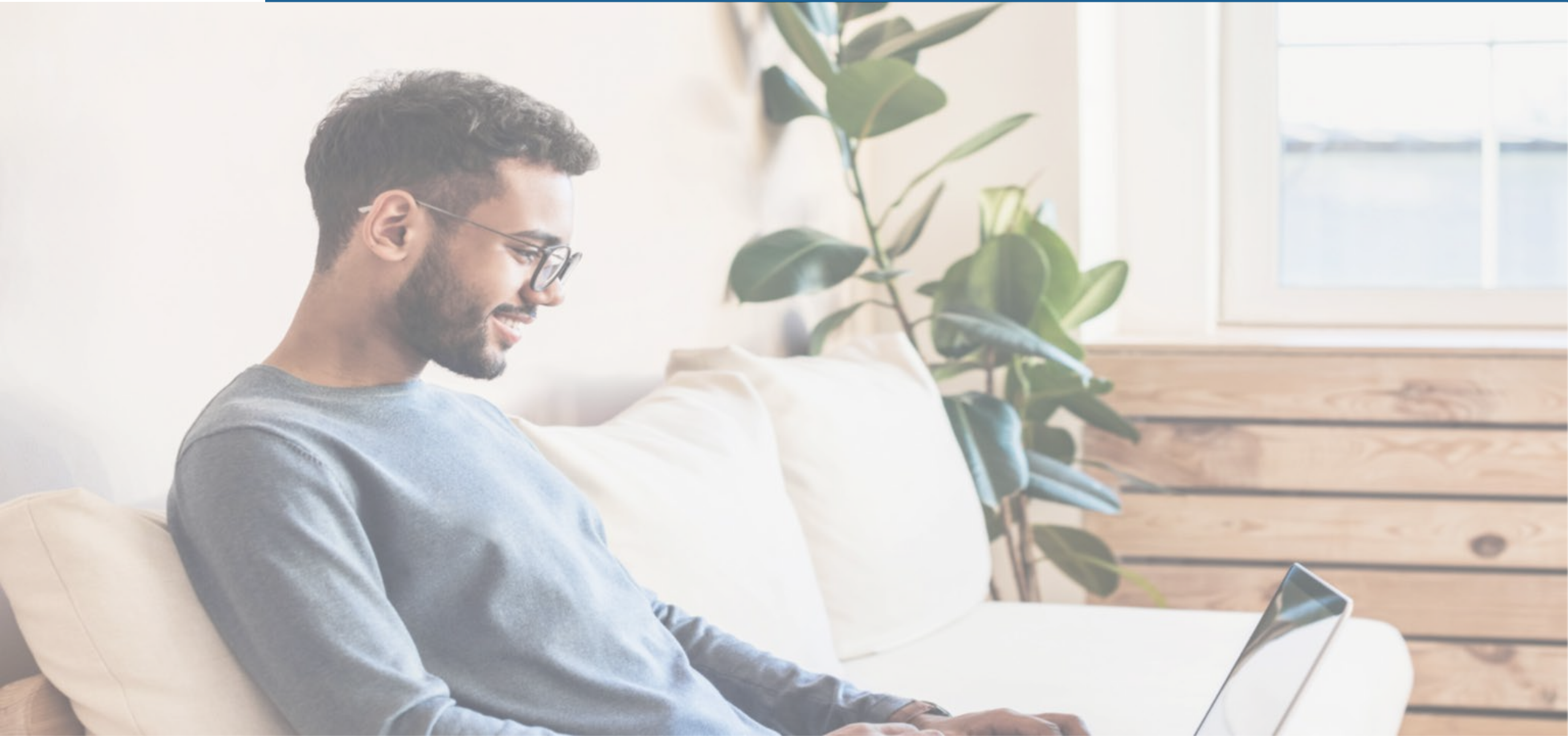
- Historical context for this cohort:

– Wave 1 - Age 9	(2007)	- Celtic Tiger
– Wave 2 - Age 13	(2011)	- Great Recession
– Wave 3 - Age 17/18	(2015)	- Economic Recovery
– Wave 4 - Age 20	(2018/19)	- Early Adulthood
– Special - Age 22	(2021)	- Special Covid Survey
- First wave where all of the 'study children' were 'Young Adults'
- Shift to Young Adult as being the main informant across time (9, 13, 17/18)

What's special about age 20?

- Greater diversity of circumstances
 - 17/18 most in secondary education and living with parent(s)
 - 20 years: Mixture of living situations
 - Parental home, Independent, hybrid
 - Combinations of Unemployment, Work, Education
- Exploring outcomes based on various pathways
- Exploring differences in experiences and attitudes based on gender and socio economic status variables (SES)*
 - *Family social class, income and education from previous wave at 17

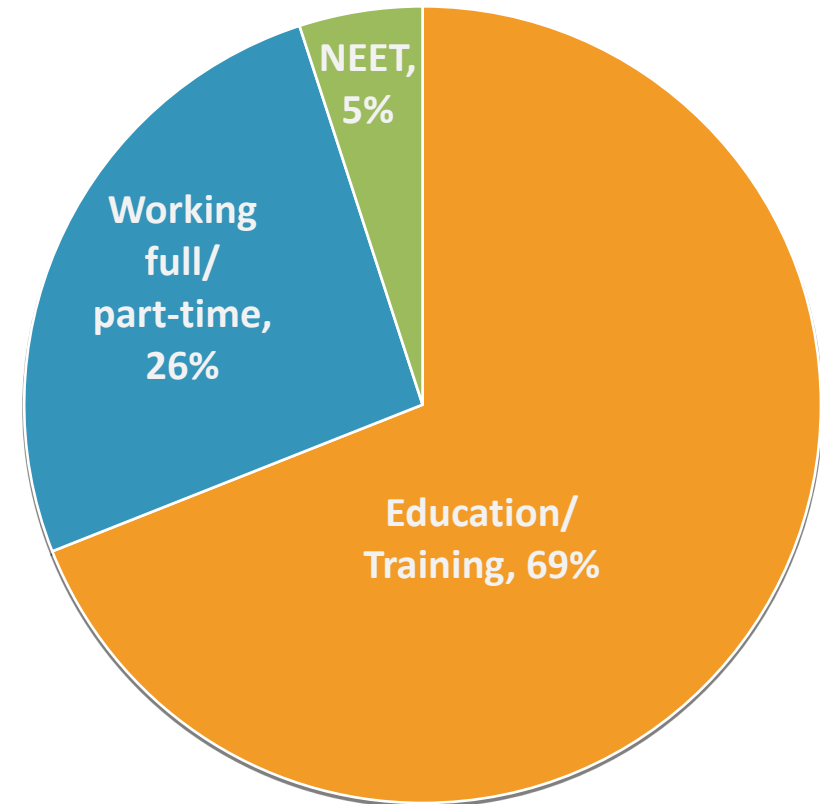
Transition to adulthood



The transition to adulthood – Principal economic status

- Emerging adulthood, many still in a period of transition
- Most had not yet reached financial or residential independence
- Broad pathways associated with family background

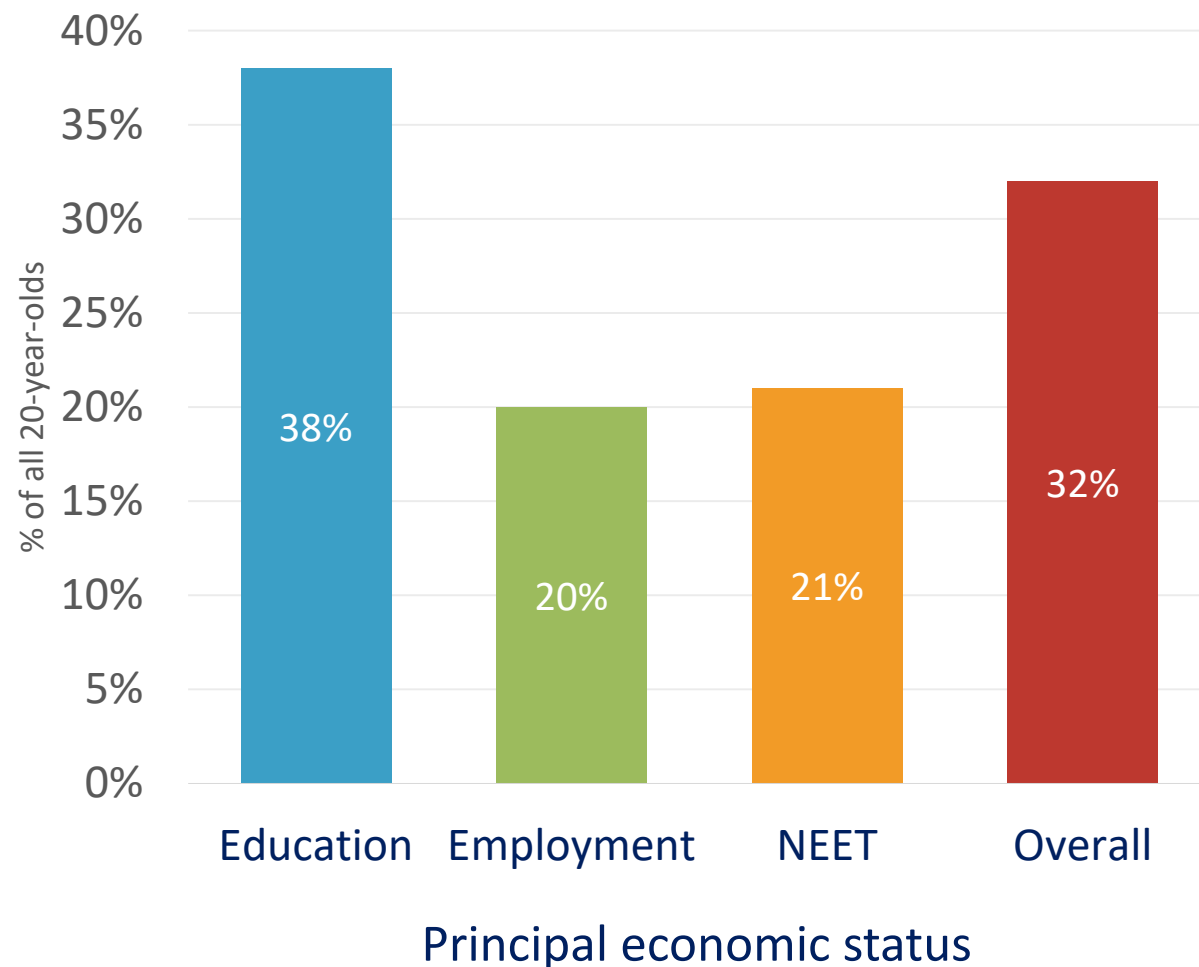
Principal economic status of 20-year-old



The transition to adulthood – Living situation

- 68% of all YAs resided with parents
- YAs in education more likely to live at another address 38%
- 82% of YAs with another address still considered parental address as their main address
- YAs living at home less likely to contribute to their own health costs, accommodation, food and utility bills

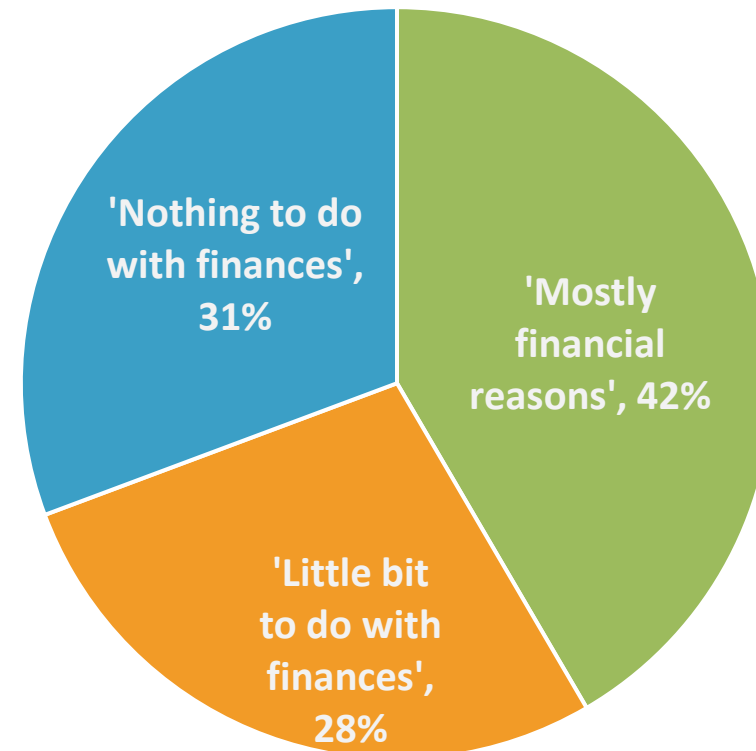
Percentage of 20-year-olds Living at another address



The transition to adulthood – Living situation

- YAs living in family home split between wanting to remaining in place 56% and wanting to live independently 44%
- Financial considerations dominate living situation for most
- Complex picture of shared income and a shift towards adult responsibilities
 - 15% living at home contribute to utility bills compared to 53% living at another address

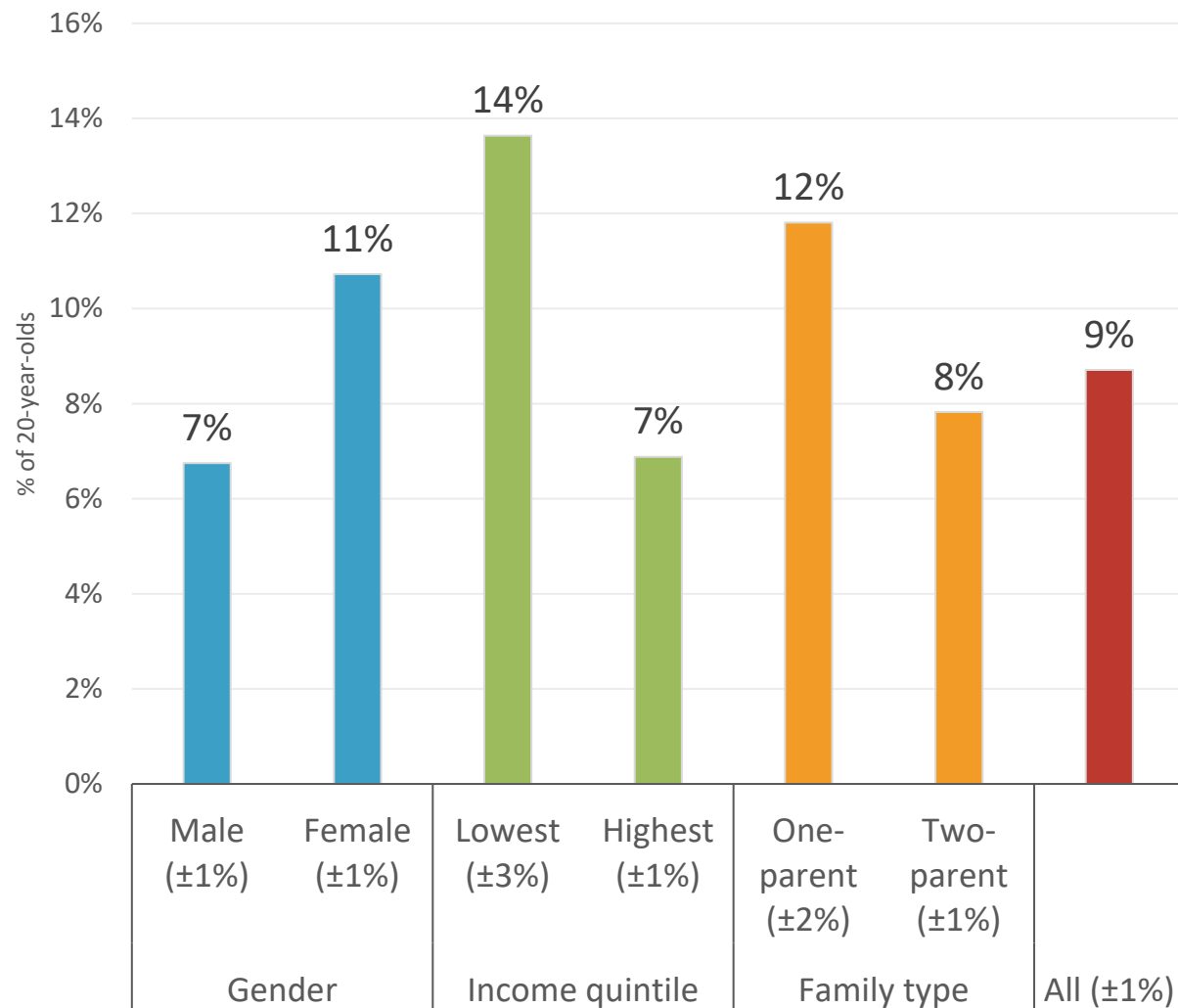
Finances as reason for living at home



The transition to adulthood – Financial stress

- 9% of YAs self-reported current financial stress overall
(difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet)
- YAs in lowest fifth of incomes at 17/18 were more likely to report financial stress at 20
- 15% of YAs had experienced financial stress at two or more waves of data collection

% of 20-year-olds reporting financial stress by gender and background



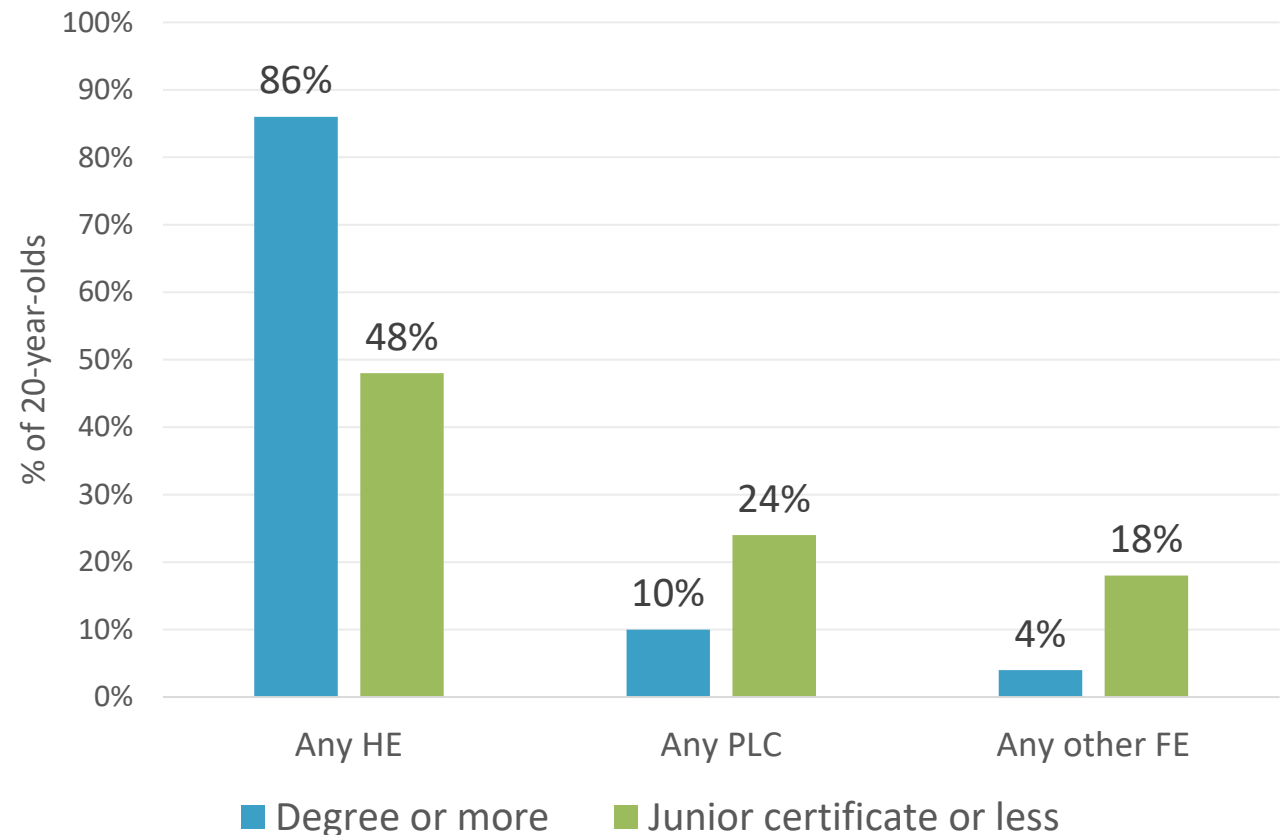
Education, Training and Labour Market Experiences



Post-school education and training

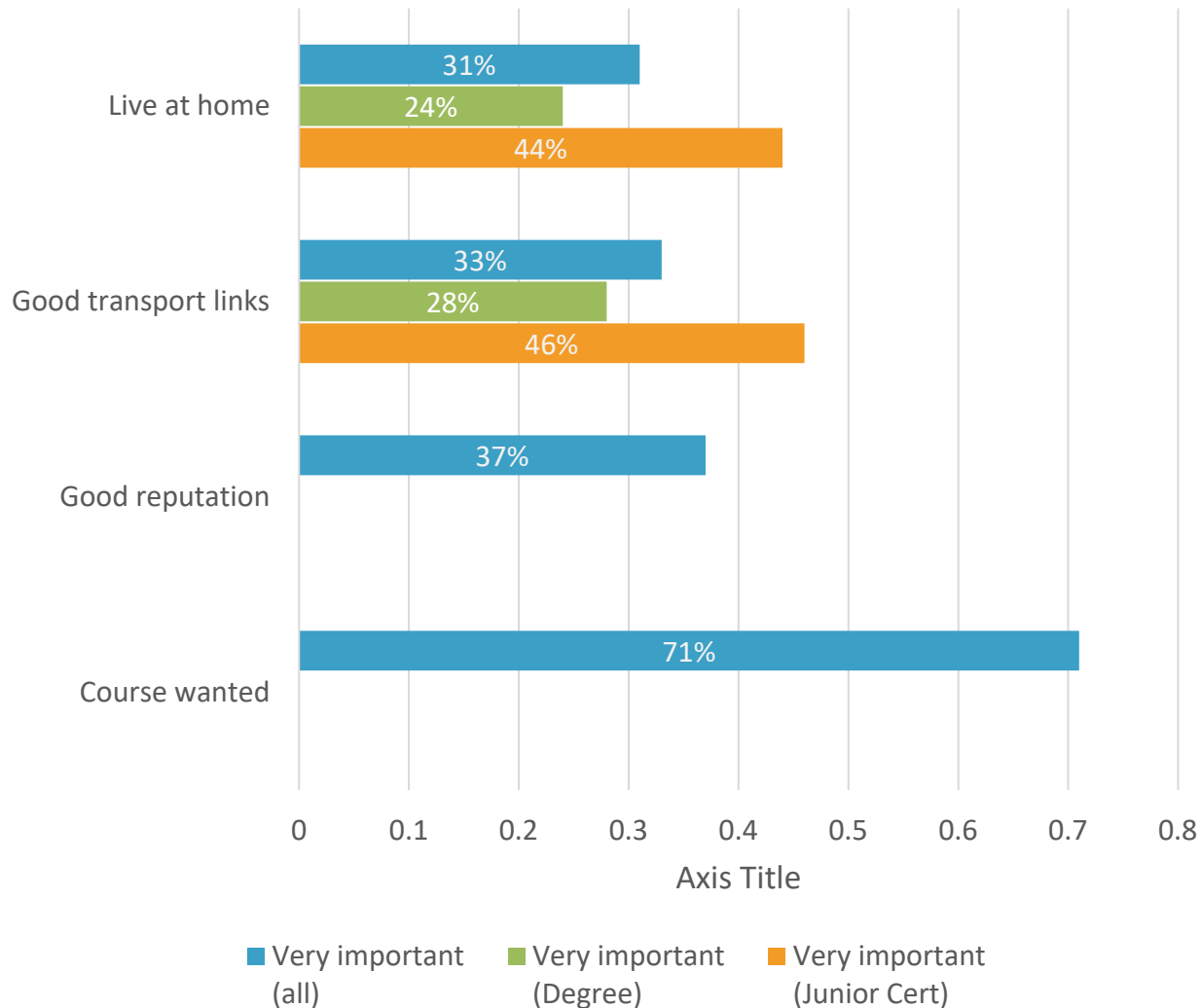
- Post-school education/training pathway:
 - Higher Education (HE),
 - Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC)
 - Other further education (FE) courses (including apprenticeship, Youthreach and training schemes)
- 87% of YAs had taken part in at least one education/training course since they left school
- The level of course taken was strongly associated with parental education

% of 20-year-olds in education or training by parent education



Entry and dropout to Higher/Further education

Influences on institution choice

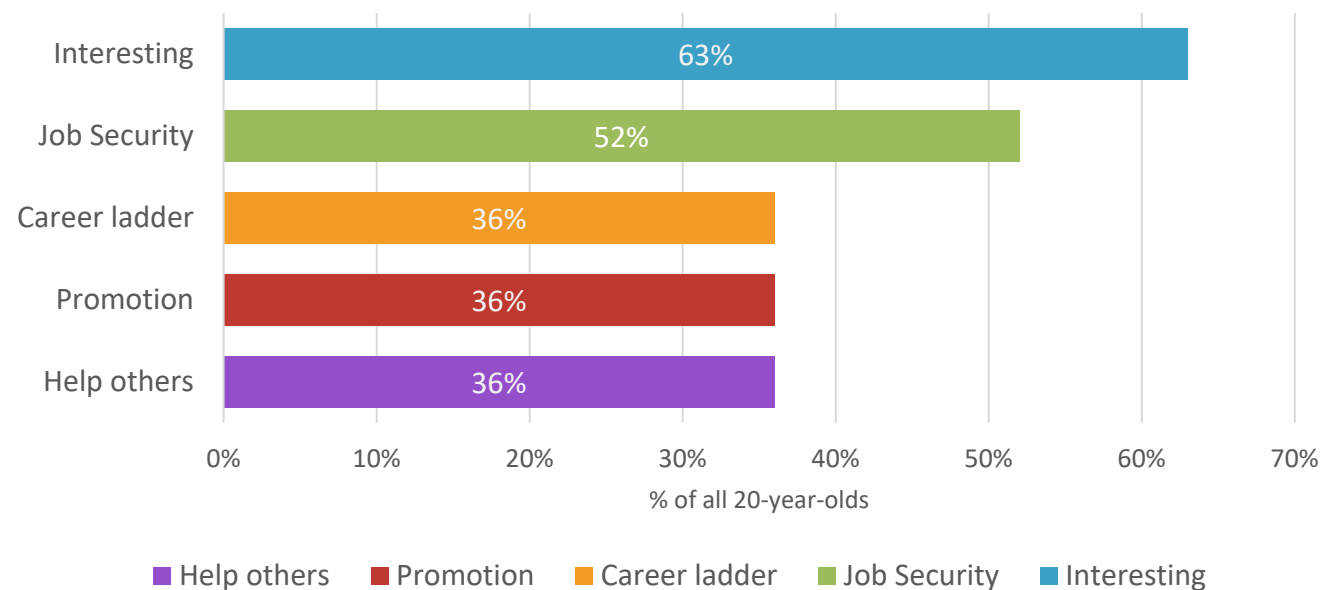


- Overall, 11% of YAs who entered HE courses and 18% of YAs who entered FE* courses dropped out of them
 - *PLC, FE, Apprenticeships combined due to smaller numbers
- HE dropout was moderately associated with parental education
 - 9% HE dropout at Degree level education or higher
 - 16% HE dropout at Junior Cert level education or lower
- FE dropout was not strongly associated with education/income/class
 - 24% FE dropout if YA was from a single parent family
 - 15% FE dropout if YA was from a two parent family

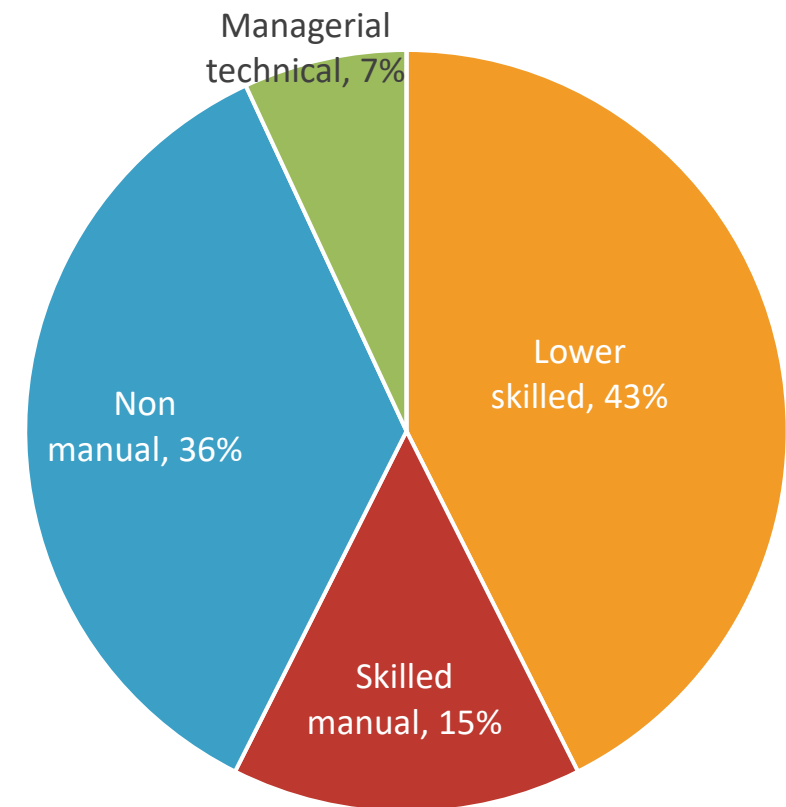
Labour market experiences - Employment and Education

- Of the 26% of those whose main activity was employment
- 71% full-time permanent, 14% regular part time, 12% temporary, 3% other

Job qualities rated as 'very important' by all YAs



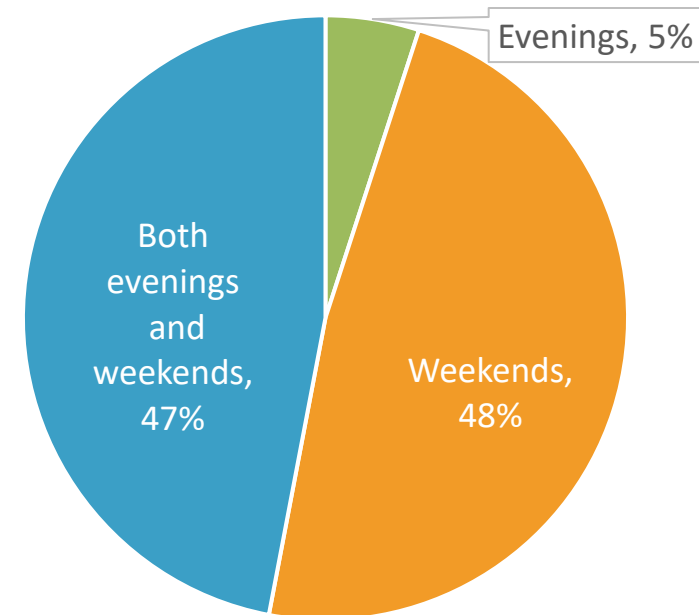
Job class for those whose main activity was employment



Labour market experiences - Education

- Of the 69% whose main activity was education/training
 - 65% had a term-time job
 - 85% of those worked 20 hours or less
 - 82% earned €200 or less a week
- 27% YAs in education hoped to be in a professional role by 30 compared to 14% of their peers in employment

Working during term time

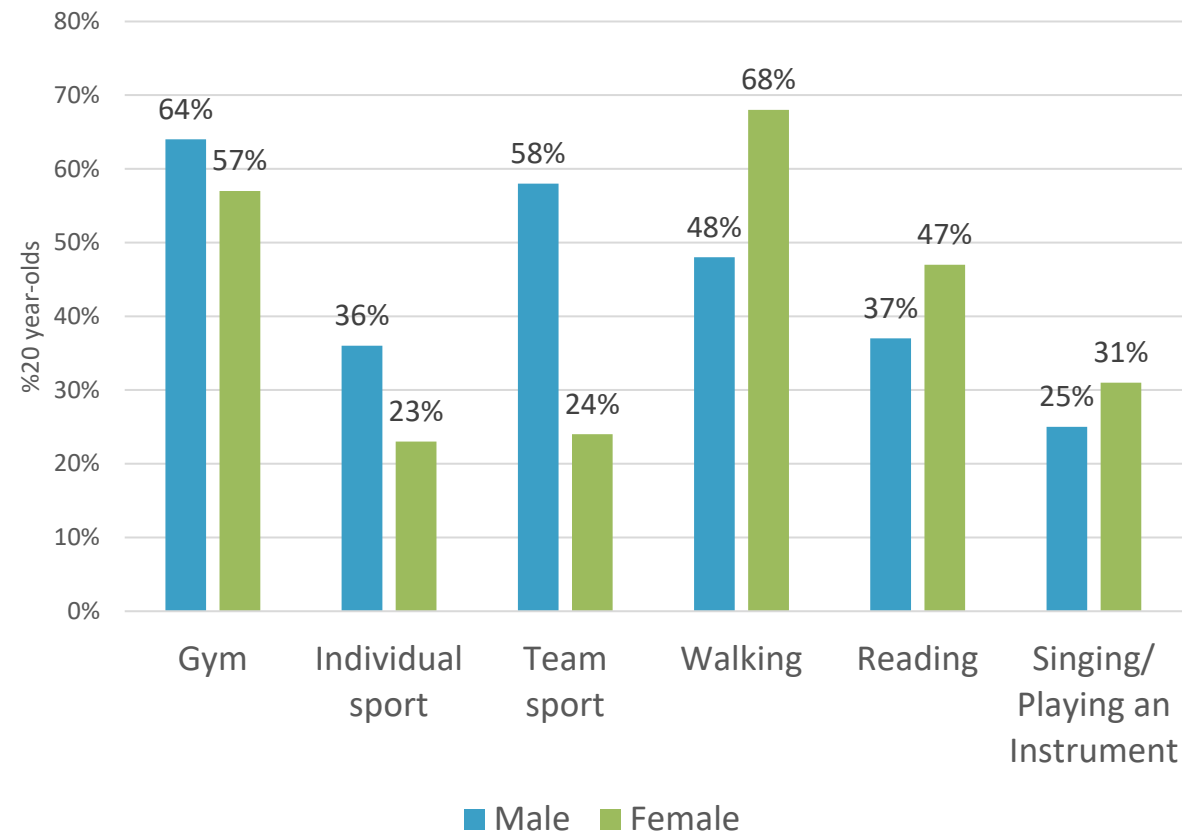


Leisure and technology use



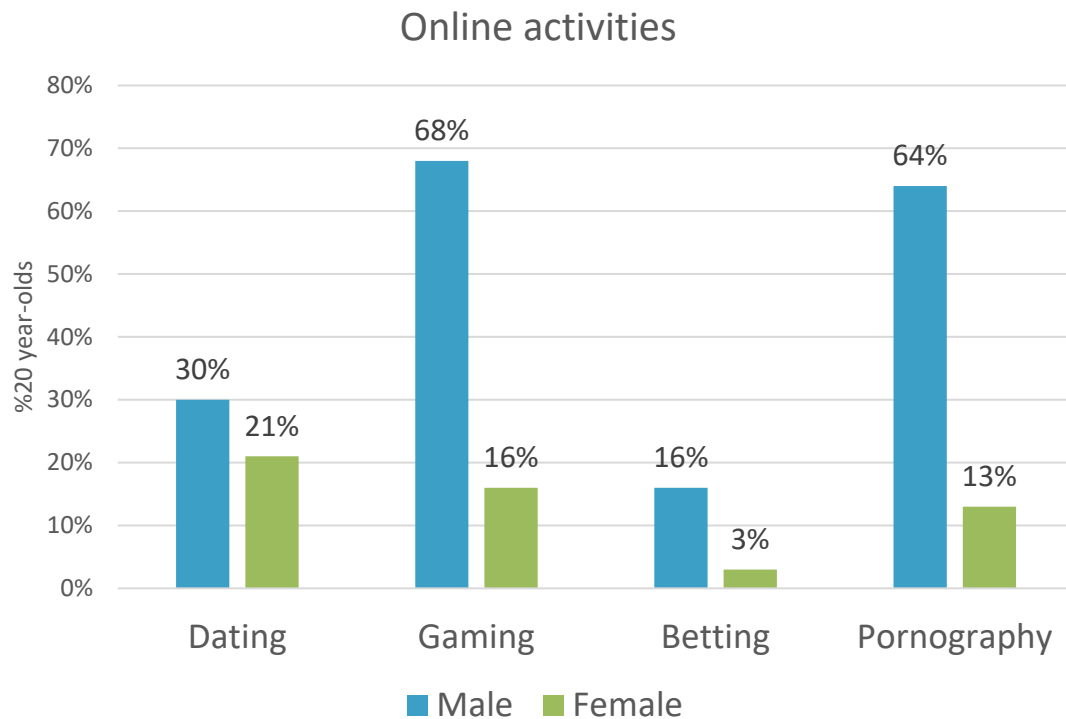
- Using the internet, listening to music, hanging out with friends almost universally endorsed >95%
- Attending pubs/clubs and watching TV >85%
- Gender differences
 - Males slightly more likely to attend a gym, and more likely to play Team or individual sports
 - Females more likely to report walking, reading, or playing instruments

Common leisure activities among 20-year-olds



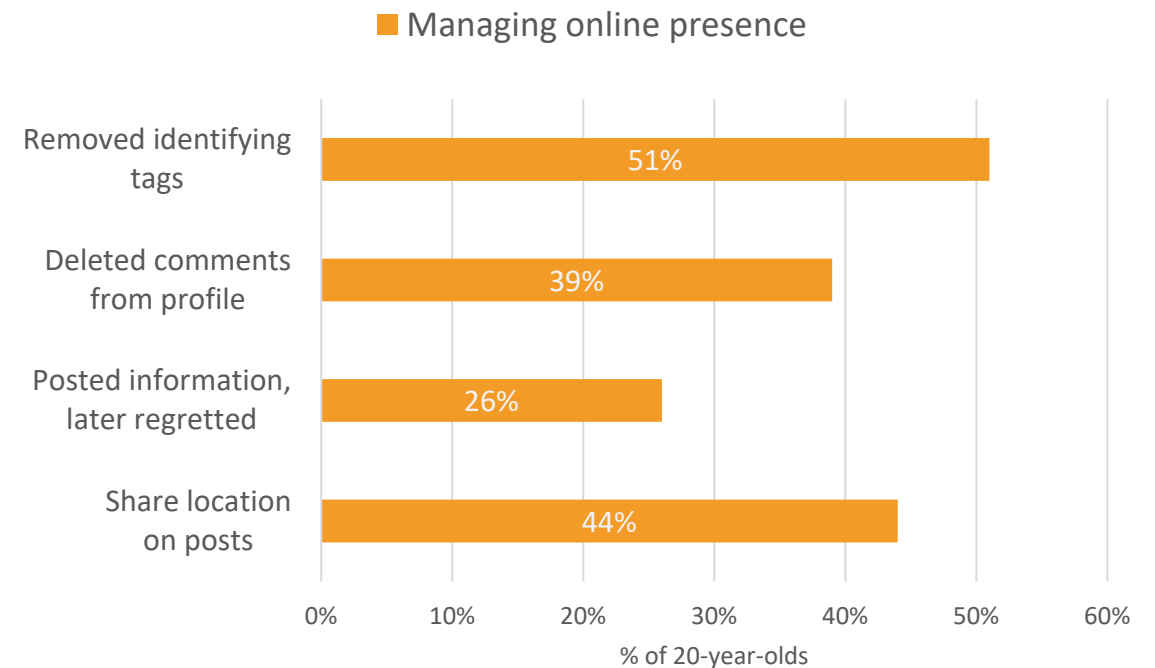
- Common Internet activities

>95% use social media, watch video content, search for information, and message and call people



- Privacy

>90% knew how to make use of privacy options on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter



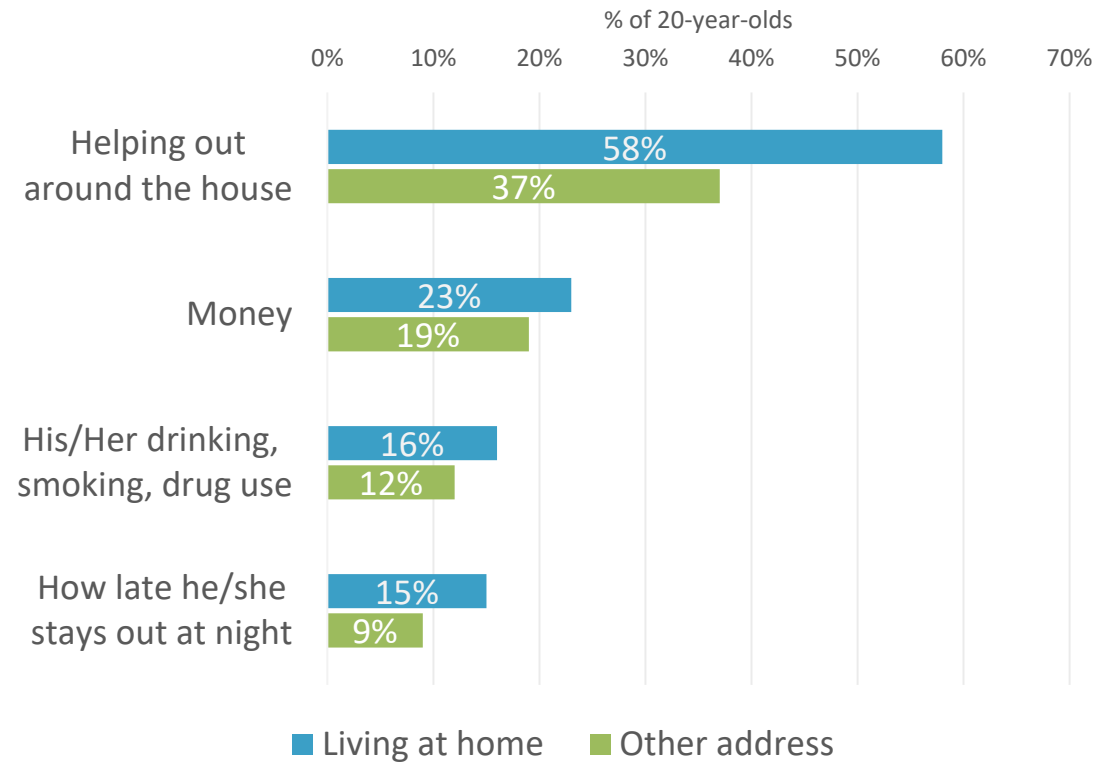
Relationships



Parents

- Broadly positive reciprocal relationships reported between YA and parents
- Relationship with parent (YA reported)
 - Higher levels of intimacy, admiration and conflict reported for relationship with mothers
 - Unreliability reported in low ranges but higher for fathers

Disagreements reported by parents in last 3 months

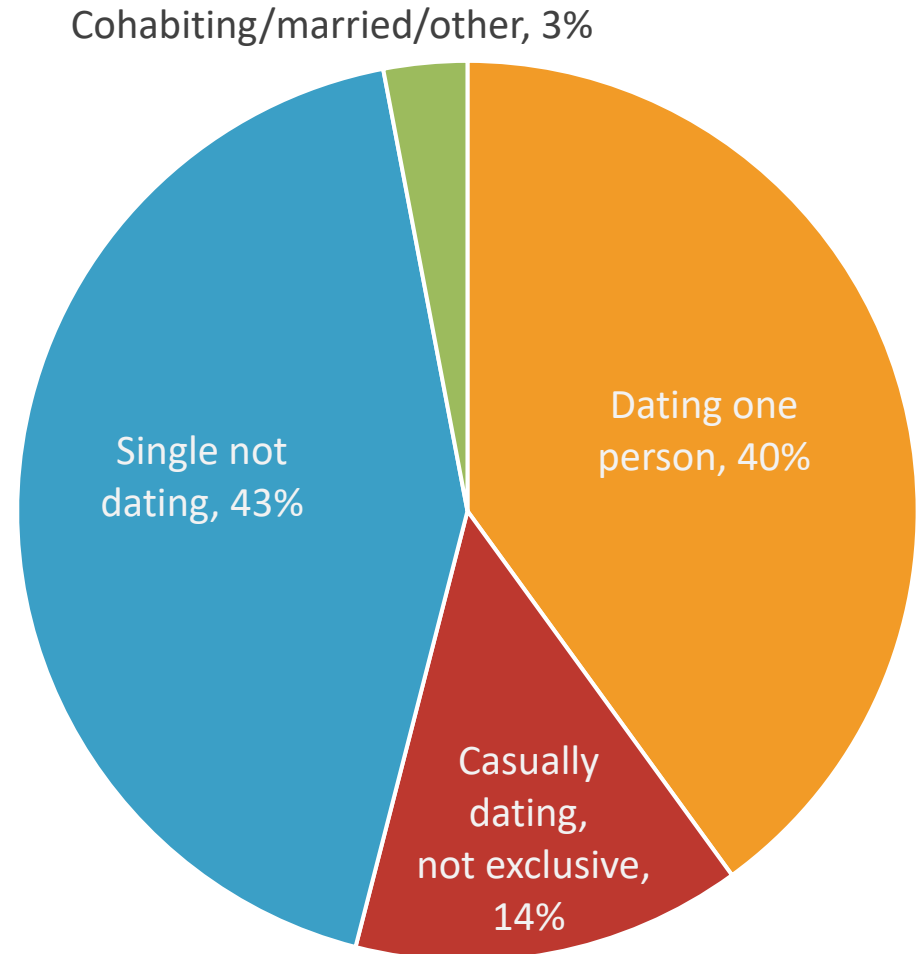


Friendships and romantic relationships

Friendships

- 69% of all YAs increased number of friends between 17 and 20yrs
- 26% experience a decline in the size of their friendship group post secondary education
- 58% of all YAs reported 11 or more friends
 - 98% of all YAs reported at least some close friends
- 86% of all YAs said they could talk to friends about their thoughts and feelings

Romantic relationships at 20

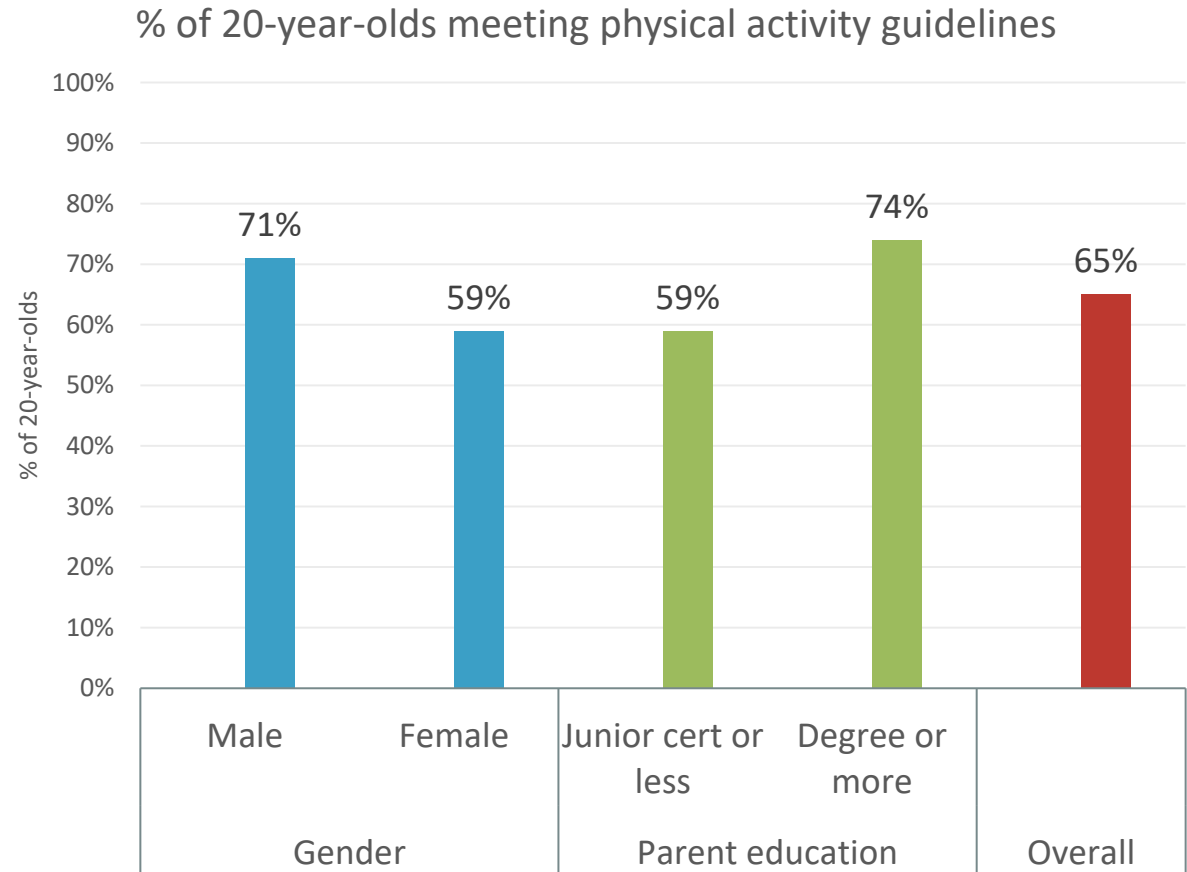


Wellbeing



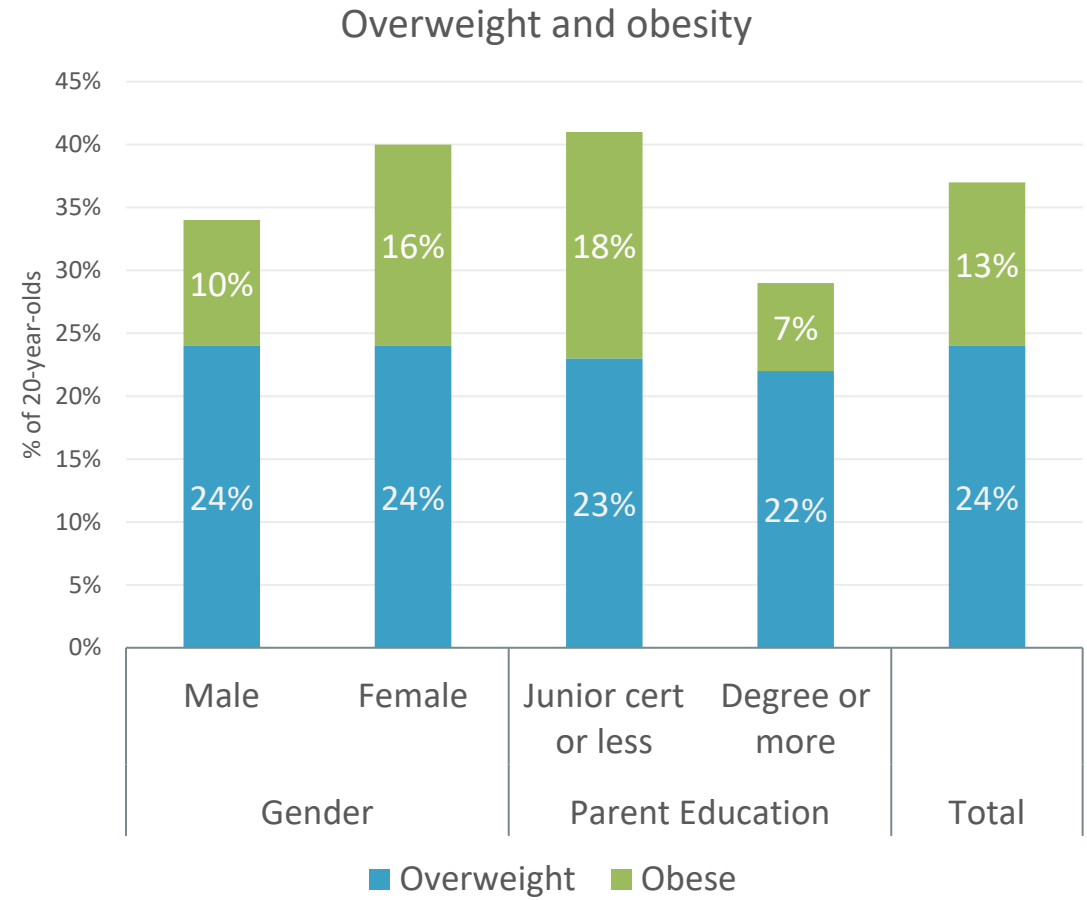
Physical wellbeing - Physical activity

- Overall 65% of YAs meeting physical activity guidelines
- Longitudinal analysis shows a reduction in physical activity from adolescence into early adulthood
- Gender, and SES components in physical activity evident
 - (68% in education/training, 65% in work, 39% NEET)



Physical wellbeing - Overweight and obesity

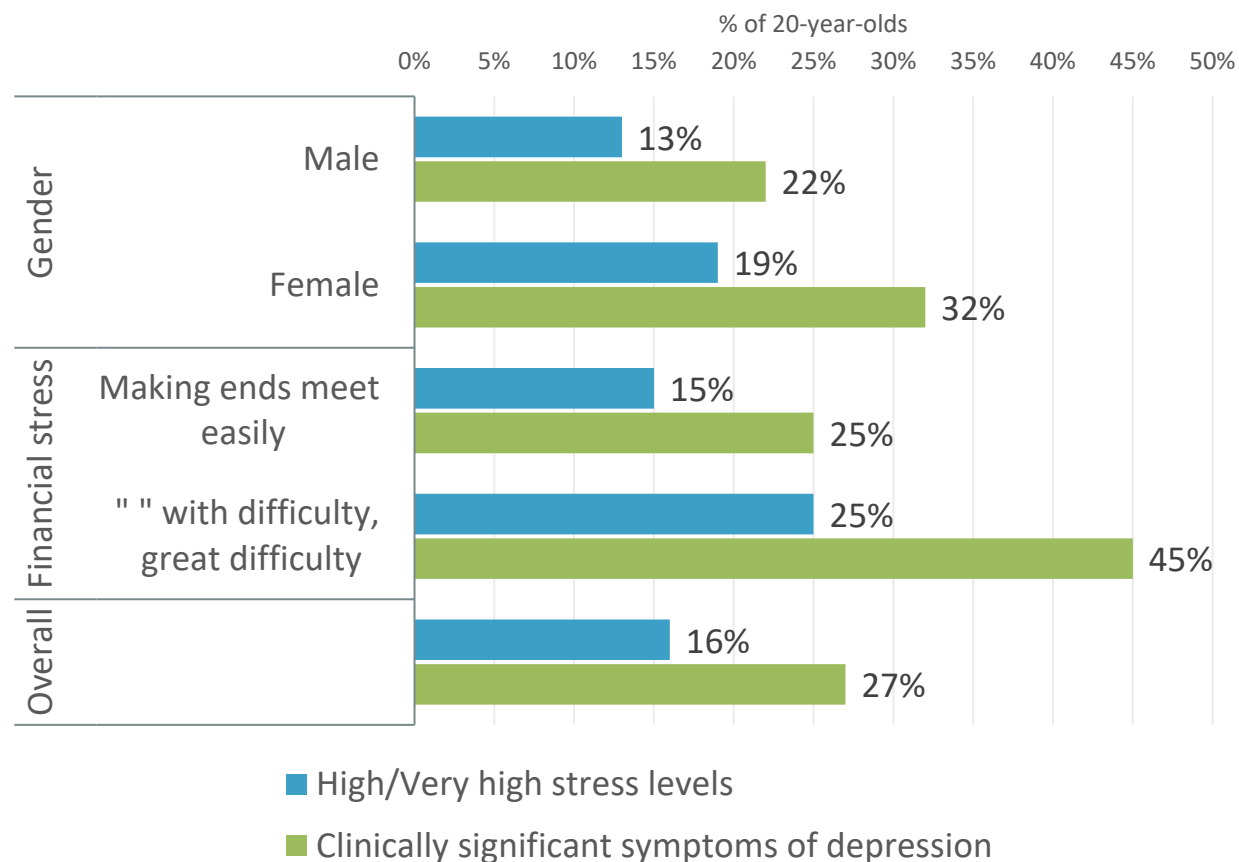
- Overweight increased from 20% at 17 to 24% at 20yrs overall
- Obesity increased from 8% to 13% overall
 - 16% young women vs 10% young men
 - 18% at lowest education vs 7% in highest education
- Parental and YA overweight/obesity
 - 7% if parent normal weight
 - 12% if parent overweight
 - 20% if parent obese



Socio-emotional well-being

- Stress - DASS
- 19% of young women versus 13% of young men reported above high/very high stress scores
- Strongly related to financial stress and principal economic activity
 - 14% education training, 17% work, 28% NEET*
- Depression – CES-D8
- 22% young men, 32% young women reporting clinically significant depressive symptoms
- Previous high depression scores linked to current depression status
 - 46% of YAs reporting high depression scores at one previous wave also report high levels of depression at 20

% of 20-year-olds reporting high stress and depression levels



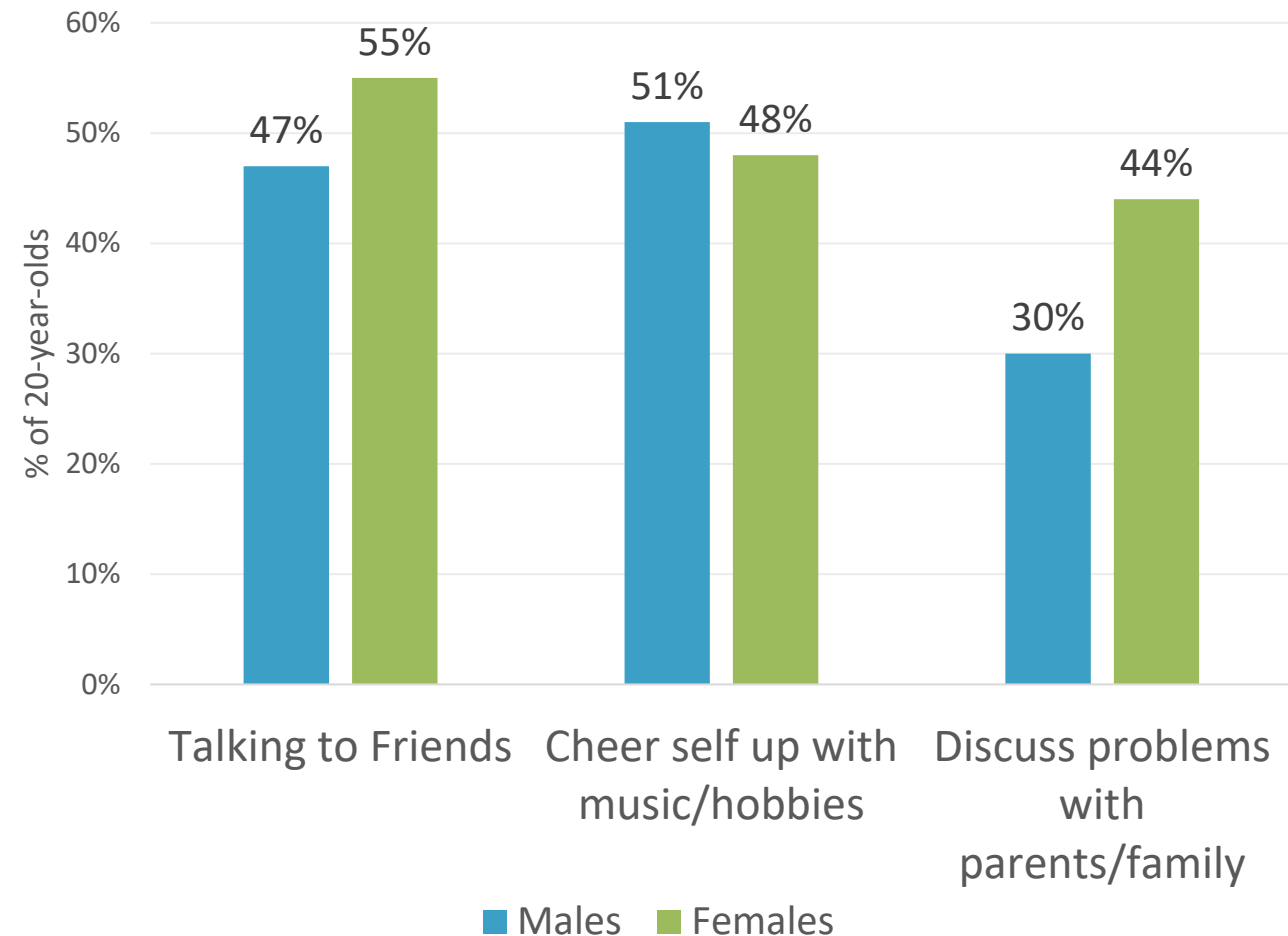
Coping and support

- 82% reporting high stress and 84% reporting high depression had attended health professional* in previous 12 months

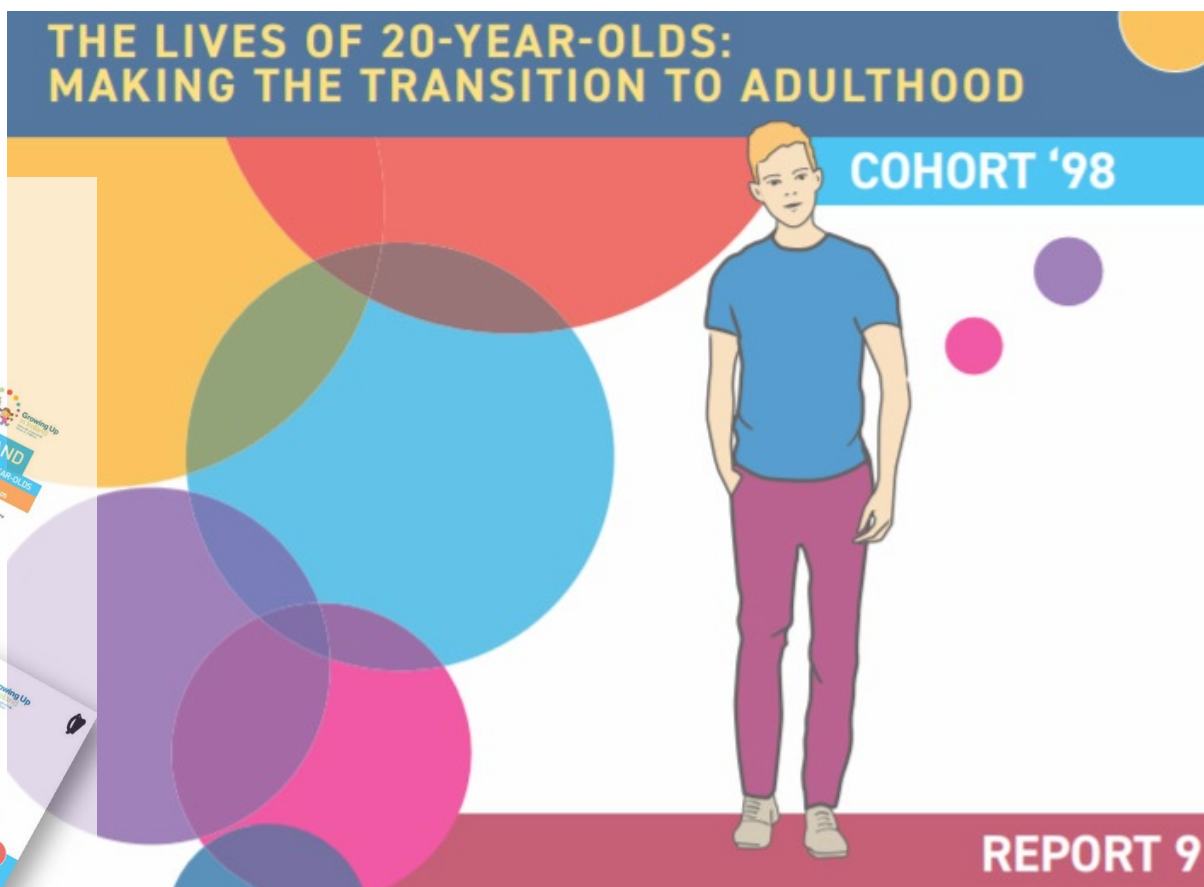
*GP/Psychiatrist/Psychologist/Counsellor

- This gap translates to about 3-4% of full GUI sample who report elevated symptoms of stress/depression without attending a health professional in previous 12 months
- Coping strategies most used by the YAs adaptive and healthy, ~10% report often drinking/smoking as coping style

Coping strategies most often used by 20-year-olds



Summary and Implications



Being 20 years old

- Experiences during adolescence (or even earlier) can shape outcomes in early adulthood
- Continued reliance of 20-year-olds on their parents for accommodation, financial and emotional support
- Deterioration in 'healthy' lifestyle choices since the cohort left school, increases in overweight/obesity, and a decline in physical activity
- Overall YAs show adaptive and connected coping styles, despite reporting high stress and depression levels - particularly for those under financial strain
- Gaps in support for young adults where parental resources are unavailable

20 year survey and pandemic

- GUI - Special COVID-19 survey
 - December 2020 at 22 years
- Longitudinal insight into ‘pre-pandemic’ situation
- Disruption to career paths
 - Education
 - Work experience
 - Experiences of unemployment
- Changes in wellbeing during the pandemic based on conditions at 20 years
- Changes to
 - Formal supports
 - Social support networks
 - Coping mechanisms
- Impacts on
 - Mental health
 - Physical activity
 - Romantic relationships/friendship networks

Thank you

- Thanks to co-authors, reviewers and DCEDIY Project office, especially for the continued support for GUI from Dr. Fergal Lynch
 - Special thanks to the GUI Research Team, Data Team and Interviewers
- Most of all, thanks to the Young Adults and their families. None of this would be possible without your contributions