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# CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS IN IRELAND: HOW ARE THEY FARING?

MERIKE DARMODY, FRANCES MCGINNITY AND HELEN  
RUSSELL



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
BAS	British Ability Scales
CoB	Country of birth
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
EAL	English as an additional language
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme
FPSY	Free pre-school year
GUI	<i>Growing Up in Ireland</i>
GAM	General Allocation Model
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLS	Ordinary least squares
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
SEN	Special educational need
SES	Socio-economic status
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
RMF	Randomised microfile



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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There has been an increasing focus in policy development internationally and in Ireland on the importance of migrant integration. Consequently, a growing body of research has focused on the experiences of adult migrants and their children. Earlier studies on the experiences and outcomes of migrant-origin children in Ireland have examined children at age nine and older, many of whom moved to Ireland as children but were not born here. Much of this research has documented the social and academic challenges these children encounter. However, there has been relatively little research on the factors influencing child cognitive and socio-emotional development drawing on the experiences of second-generation children – children born in Ireland who have at least one migrant parent. This study looks at a variety of factors that shape these outcomes in early childhood, a crucial period for skill development, using rich data on children from Cohort '08 of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study, who were born in 2008 and were nine years old in 2017.

The study investigates whether migrant-origin children differ from children with two Irish-born parents in terms of their English language development at three, five and nine years of age, and their self-concept at nine years. Language development is measured using tests of English vocabulary carried out at ages three and five, and of reading ability at nine years. Child self-concept is captured at nine years using a shortened version of the Piers-Harris Self-concept Scale, which the children completed themselves. English-language ability is important for children's school achievement and later integration into the labour market; it is also important for peer relationships. Self-concept is a key indicator of child socio-emotional wellbeing.

English vocabulary outcomes and self-concept are analysed through a series of statistical models that firstly explore differences by parental country of birth, linguistic background and ethnic background. Previous research on child development highlights the importance of family, social and economic resources and child characteristics (such as gender and special educational needs (SEN), as well as institutional factors (for example, childcare and school characteristics). The models therefore also explore the role of these factors in understanding differences between migrant-origin children and children whose parents are born in Ireland.

The study draws out implications for policy at early childhood and primary school level for migrant-origin children, in order to inform future policy development, including actions in the successor to the *Migrant Integration Strategy 2017–2021* and the *National Action Plan Against Racism* currently being developed (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017; Anti-Racism Committee, 2021).

## MAIN FINDINGS

- One-third of children in the '08 Cohort of GUI have at least one parent born abroad, though these children are diverse in terms of parental country of birth, linguistic background and ethnicity.
- In total, 14 per cent of children had one parent born abroad and one Irish-born parent. A further 19 per cent had both parents, or a lone parent, born outside the Republic of Ireland.
- Eleven per cent of children were in families where neither parent (or a lone parent) was a native English speaker.
- Six per cent of children had a mother from a Black, Asian or Other ethnic minority background. Ethnicity was self-reported using the Census categories.
- Children with a migrant background were somewhat less likely than those with Irish-born parents to have attended centre-based childcare at age three, prior to enrolment in the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) scheme, but this varied widely by maternal country of birth.
- Children with both parents born abroad started school at an earlier age than those with one or both Irish parents and were much more likely to attend a Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) school: 28 per cent compared to 20 per cent of children when both parents are Irish-born and 17 per cent for those with one Irish-born parent and one parent born abroad. Note this cohort started school prior to the recent introduction of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act, which is intended to provide greater equality in school access.
- Regarding English language achievement, children whose mothers come from the UK or other English-speaking countries (the US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) do not differ from the children of Irish mothers in English vocabulary scores at age five. However, children with mothers from eastern Europe have significantly lower English vocabulary scores, on average, than students of Irish origin. Further analysis shows that having two parents that are non-native English speakers is the main distinction for vocabulary scores, regardless of parents' country of origin.
- At age three, 60 per cent of migrant-origin children were in the bottom quintile on the English vocabulary test (including those who had insufficient language skills to take part in the test). By age five, this had declined to 52 per cent and by age nine, 26 per cent were in the bottom quintile for reading. This suggests considerable progress in English-language development between ages three and nine for migrant-origin children living in Ireland.
- While the differential in English language achievement for second-generation migrant-origin children is much reduced at age nine, children of parents who are both non-native English speakers still have lower mean reading scores at age nine. Children who have one parent who is a native English speaker do not differ from children where both parents are native English speakers. A similar pattern is found for those who have one Irish-born parent and one foreign-born parent.
- This study has shown that, for the most part, second-generation migrant-origin children do not differ from Irish-origin children in terms of wellbeing at age

nine, as measured by their total self-concept score. This measure incorporates children's sense of their intellectual, educational, physical, emotional and social characteristics. Some migrant groups (for example, eastern Europeans) were found to have lower mean self-concept scores, which was mediated through child characteristics (including lower participation in sports and social/cultural activities). Lower mean self-concept scores are observed among children with parents from western Europe and the United States (US)/Canada/Australia compared to children with Irish parents, despite accounting for a range of other factors linked to child wellbeing.

- Having no native English-speaking parent in the household was associated with a lower self-concept score and this was mediated through fewer socio-economic resources.
- Participation in team sports is associated with higher self-concept among children, regardless of their national, ethnic or cultural background.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

The study's findings indicate that parental region of origin and linguistic background can make a difference to migrant-origin children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. The findings highlight the importance of facilitating access to quality early learning and care for migrant-origin children, as participation in early learning and care at age three is lower for them than for Irish-origin children, despite earlier research showing that children from non-English-speaking backgrounds benefit more from participation in centre-based care than their Irish-origin peers (McGinnity et al, 2015a). The findings also point to the need for support for migrant-origin students at primary level, including: enhanced support for DEIS Urban Band 1 schools; and provision of continuous English-language support, with ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of this language support in meeting children's needs. In addition, enhancing the English language skills of migrant parents would facilitate both their children's language development and learning, as well as migrant parents' liaison with schools. Previous research has highlighted the lack of a coordinated approach to English language provision for adult learners in Ireland, and the lack of awareness around provision that does exist (McGinnity et al., 2020b). Opportunities for migrant-origin children to engage in social activities, particularly engagement in team sports, would also be beneficial as our findings show this fosters a positive self-image among children.

How children view themselves and their linguistic proficiency in the language of instruction is likely to influence their experiences in the Irish education system and beyond, and to ultimately shape their integration into Irish society. Given recent changes to school admissions policy, as well as to access and affordability of early learning and care in Ireland, further research is needed to establish whether these patterns observed for this cohort born in 2008 persist for later cohorts of children.



## CHAPTER 1

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### Introduction

The past 30 years have seen an increase in migration to Ireland, and this has led to a corresponding increase in research on migrant integration (McGinnity et al., 2012, 2020a; Gilmartin and Dagg, 2020; Kelly et al., 2016), as well as in policy (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017; 2019). The number of second-generation children in Ireland – those born here to at least one migrant parent – has also grown in recent years. The integration of the second migrant generation provides the real ‘litmus test’ for integration, as many of the skills and experience of the first generation will have been acquired abroad (OECD, 2018). Indeed, some have argued that ‘the outcomes of the native-born offspring of immigrants are (thus) a better measurement for integration than the outcomes of the foreign-born’ (OECD, 2018, p. 18).

The aim of this study is to consider the integration of the second generation by using a high-quality representative cohort study, *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI), which allows us to compare migrant-origin children with Irish-origin children and to follow all children (and their families) to track their development from infancy to nine years of age.

The first wave of the GUI study was carried out in 2008, when the children were nine months old, following a rapid increase in immigration to Ireland. The second wave was undertaken in 2011, when the children were aged three and the third wave in 2013 when they were aged five. The children were also surveyed in 2017, at age nine. The report considers: the region of origin of parents; the parents’ linguistic background and their ethnicity; and how the latter are associated with child English language development and self-concept.

This report seeks to answer the following key questions:

- Are differences in English language development evident in early childhood?
- Can differences between second-generation migrant-origin and native Irish children can be explained by differences in socio-economic background?
- Are differences between second-generation migrant-origin groups and children with Irish-born parents stable over time or do they increase or decrease as the child develops?

The study takes a longitudinal approach, exploring English language outcomes of second-generation migrant-origin children at three, five and nine years of age. Experiences of social integration (participation in sport and cultural activities) and self-concept are examined at age nine, based on the children’s own reports. Under



this approach, the report combines a focus on English language outcomes as well as the wellbeing and self-concept of migrant children.

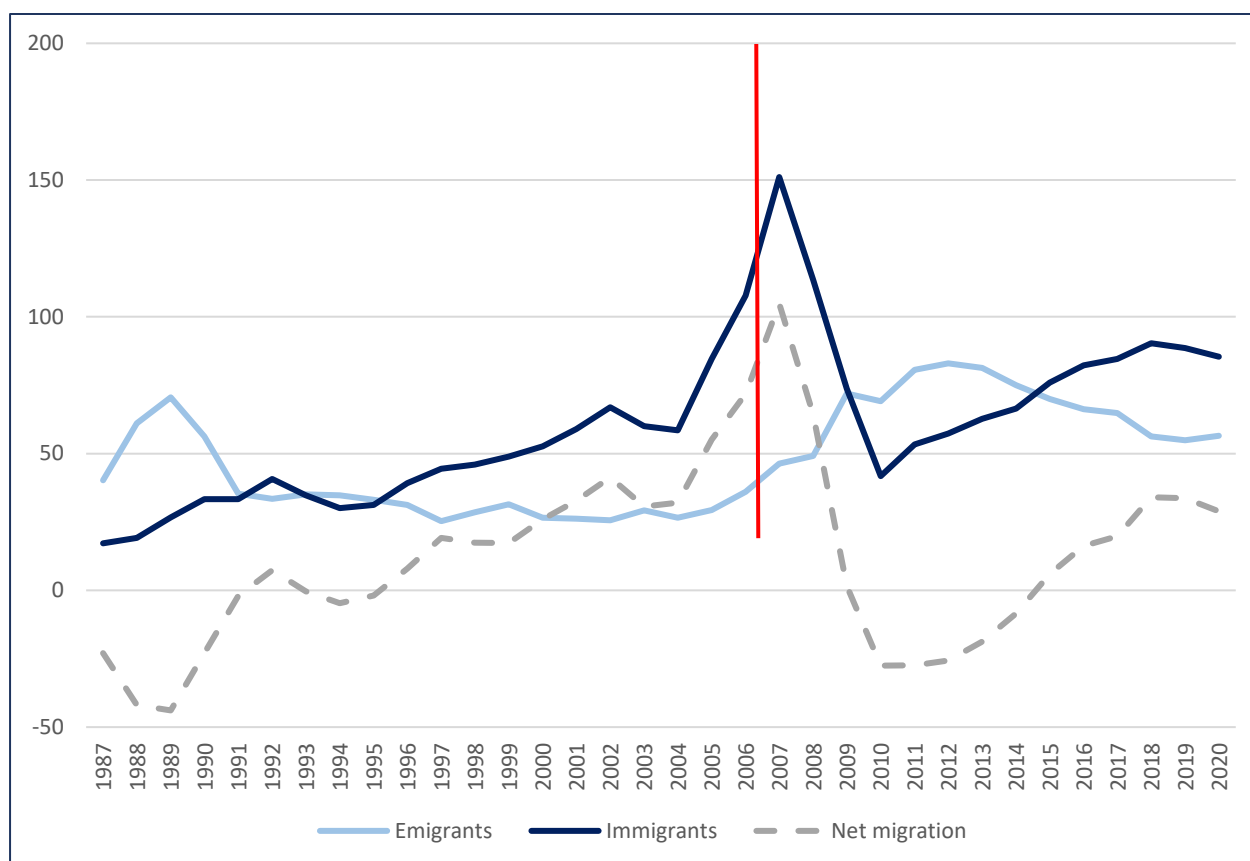
This chapter provides context for the report in terms of: migration flows to Ireland and how we define second-generation migrant-origin children; and policy concerning the care and education of children at preschool and primary school level, both in general and with specific regard to the needs of migrant-origin children.

## **1.1 MIGRATION POLICY AND MIGRATION FLOWS TO IRELAND**

The landscape of migration in Ireland has changed significantly over the last 30 years, with large shifts in the migratory patterns linked to changing economic conditions, as well as the expansion of the EU. Up until the 1990s, Ireland had a longstanding history of net emigration (see Figure 1.1, dotted line). This changed due to a period of economic growth, which led immigrants from other countries, as well as returning Irish emigrants, to move to Ireland in search of employment. In the period 2004–2007, the years preceding the first wave of the GUI study, the country saw a large increase in net migration (the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants) due to the expansion of the EU and the continuing economic boom (see Figure 1.1). The sharp recession in 2008, together with the rapid increase in unemployment, led to a large fall in immigration and increased emigration, and in 2010 Ireland entered a period of net emigration. As immigration recovered and emigration fell, by 2015 net migration was positive once again and has remained so.<sup>1</sup>

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1 By 2020, net migration was just under 30,000, meaning that around 30,000 more people moved to Ireland to live than emigrated.

**FIGURE 1.1 IMMIGRATION, EMIGRATION AND NET MIGRATION, 1987–2020**

Source: CSO 'Population and migration estimates', various releases.

Note: The red vertical line is the year of the first wave of the GUI study.

According to figures from Eurostat,<sup>2</sup> 16 per cent of the population in Ireland in 2008 were born abroad, of which 74 per cent were born in the EU and 26 per cent were born in non-EU countries.<sup>3</sup> While EU nationals are free to work and live in Ireland, non-EU nationals are required to obtain residence permits in order to live in Ireland.<sup>4</sup> Residence permits in Ireland are issued for a number of reasons, including education, work, family reasons and protection factors, such as asylum seeker status. Since 2007, work permits are typically issued for highly skilled jobs with an annual salary over €30,000 (see McGinnity et al., 2020a).<sup>5</sup> Most non-EU migrants come to either study or work, with a smaller number seeking international protection or coming for other reasons, such as family reunification.

The immigrant population in Ireland is diverse in terms of country of origin, nationality, ethnic background and language proficiency. Figure 1.2 shows the

2 Eurostat data explorer table [migr\_pop3ctb].

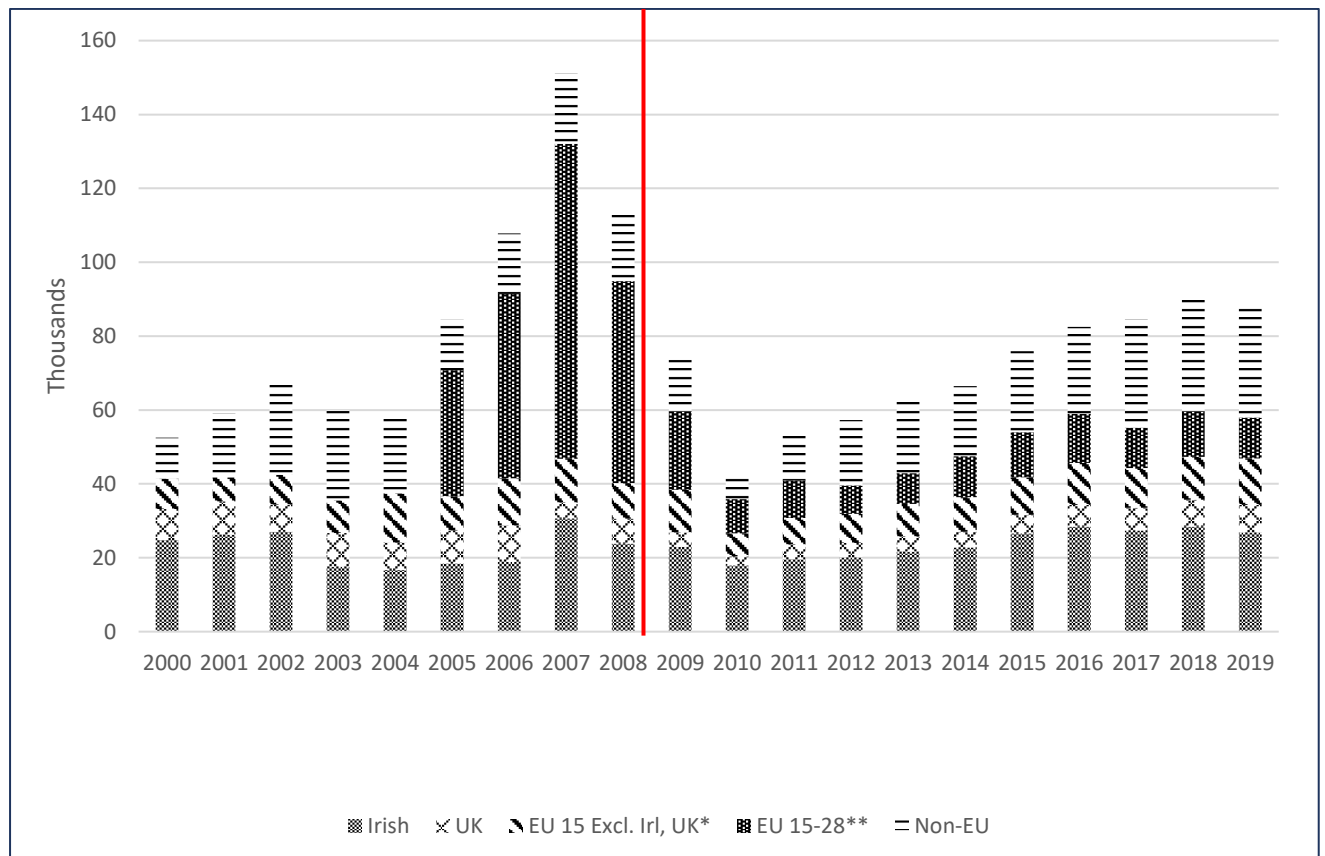
3 Prior to Brexit in January 2020, migrants from the UK were counted as EU migrants. Post-Brexit, British nationals enjoy similar work and residence rights to EU nationals.

4 A small number of European Economic Area (EEA) migrants who are not EU citizens have equivalent rights to EU citizens in Ireland. The term EU is used here as it is more widely understood. See McGinnity et al. (2020a) for a discussion.

5 In January 2007, a new employment permit system was adopted with the aim of attracting highly skilled non-EEA migrants and restricting low-skilled migration from outside the EEA. Since 2007, there are a very restricted number of occupations with salaries less than €30,000 for which work permits can be issued (see McGinnity et al., 2012).

nationality of immigration flows between 2000 and 2008. Immigration increased gradually between 2000 and 2002. After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, immigration to Ireland from EU countries rapidly increased. Immigration from EU15 and EU28 countries made up most of the immigration flows from 2005 to 2008, accounting for 48 per cent of immigration in 2008.

**FIGURE 1.2 NATIONALITY OF IMMIGRATION FLOWS, 2000–2019**



*Source:* CSO, 'Population and migration estimates', up to end April of reference year.

*Notes:* \*Rest of EU15 excluding Ireland and the UK: countries before enlargement on 1 May 2004 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Portugal). \*\*EU15 to EU28: Ten countries that joined the EU on 1 May 2004 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), along with Bulgaria and Romania, which joined on 1 January 2007, and Croatia, which joined on 1 July 2013. Prior to 2005, EU15 and EU28 migrants were included in the non-EU group.

Immigration peaked around the time of the GUI Cohort '08 infant interviews in 2007–2008 and then fell dramatically as a result of the economic recession (see also discussion of Figure 1.1). Immigration started to slowly increase from 2011, though by 2019 was still far from the 2006–2008 peak, particularly from EU28.

A distinctive feature of migrants in Ireland is that they are, in general, highly educated: this is particularly true for those of west European or Asian origin (McGinnity et al., 2020a). Eastern Europeans are the only group with somewhat lower levels of educational attainment (based on the highest qualifications of 25–34 year olds in 2019, see McGinnity et al., 2020a). Another distinctive feature of migrants in Ireland is that a significant proportion of non-EU nationals have

acquired Irish citizenship through naturalisation, which usually signals an intention to stay in the country on a permanent basis.

Immigration has also brought increased ethnic diversity to Ireland, though as most immigrants are of European origin, Black, Asian or Other ethnic groups represent a small proportion of the population.<sup>6</sup> McGinnity et al. (2018), using Census data, show how the number and proportion of people who indicated an ethnicity other than 'White Irish' increased significantly between 2006 and 2016 in Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Of the population who indicated an ethnicity other than White Irish, 'other White' remains the largest group, at 9.5 per cent of the population in 2016.<sup>8</sup> That same census year, Asian or Asian Irish accounted for just over two per cent of the population, while Black or Black Irish made up 1.4 per cent of the total population. While ethnicity, nationality and place of birth overlap, they are not the same: 38 per cent of the Black ethnic group were born in Ireland and 62 per cent were born abroad, mostly in Africa. Fifty per cent of the Black ethnic group hold Irish citizenship (McGinnity et al., 2020a). The 'mixed' or 'Other' ethnicity category accounted for 1.5 per cent of the population, including those from a mixed-ethnicity background, and others who did not feel they fitted into any of the other categories.<sup>9</sup>

Migrants residing in Ireland are also diverse in terms of languages spoken at home.<sup>10</sup> Non-Irish nationals who spoke a language other than English or Irish at home amounted to 363,715 persons in 2016 (CSO, 2016).<sup>11</sup> Eighty per cent of the non-Irish nationals who arrived in Ireland in 1996 or before indicated that they spoke English very well, while among the later arrivals (2015), only 44.4 per cent spoke English very well, with nearly one in five (19.1 per cent) stating they could not speak English well or at all (*ibid.*).<sup>12</sup> McGinnity et al. (2020b) analyse the self-reported English language skills of adult migrants from particular countries of birth using Census microdata. Not surprisingly, a high proportion of migrants from countries where English is widely spoken, such as the UK, the US, and many former British colonies, report that they speak English very well, as do many from western

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6 See Chapter 3 for the definition of ethnic groups used in this report.

7 Information on ethnicity was collected for the first time in the Irish Census in 2006. Census respondents were asked: 'What is your ethnic or cultural background?' See

[https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2016/2016censusforms/65995\\_English\\_Household\\_2016\\_New\\_Version\\_Do\\_Not\\_Complete.pdf](https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2016/2016censusforms/65995_English_Household_2016_New_Version_Do_Not_Complete.pdf), question 11 for detailed answer categories. A number of commentators have highlighted the limitations of this measure (see, for example, King O'Riain, 2007), but it is the only measure currently available in Ireland.

8 This group comprises a mixture of regions of origin, with east European nationals dominating, followed by UK nationals, west European nationals, and some White non-EU (McGinnity et al., 2018).

9 McGinnity et al. (2018) note this category is very diverse and includes people from Poland, Romania, Brazil, and the UK, among other countries. We cannot rule out the possibility of some respondents having difficulties answering the question. Note this is separate to 'not stated', which refers to those who did not respond to this question.

10 Figure derived from PxStat tables E7047 and EY025.

11 See: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp7md/p7md/p7dgs/>.

12 Speaking English capacity varied by national background, with Brazilian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Romanian respondents reporting low English language proficiency (CSO, 2016).

Europe. Origin countries where only one-third of migrants report they speak English well are scattered around the globe, but include Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland and Romania (*ibid.*). English language proficiency of parents is likely to impact on employment chances and household resources, but also the English language proficiency and academic achievement of migrant children. Chapter 3 considers in more detail the region of origin, language background and ethnicity of the parents of migrant-origin children in the GUI cohort study.

## 1.2 DEFINING SECOND-GENERATION MIGRANTS

The individual circumstances and experiences of both first- and second-generation migrant children and young people are likely to vary. For this reason, it is important to use clear, precise definitions in this area of research. Over the years, several definitions have been put forward as to how to distinguish between different migrant groups. Anderson and Blinder (2019) point towards a broad differentiation in migration literature and public discourses between ‘immigrants’ (individuals aiming to settle in the host country) and ‘migrants’ (individuals more likely to be temporary residents). However, the two terms are often used interchangeably by various interest groups. Moreover, available large-scale datasets have utilised different factors in defining foreign-born individuals, such as country of birth, nationality and/or length of stay. This ambiguity in definitions used is likely to result in inconsistency regarding studies seeking to quantify immigrant/migrant populations and those that explore the impact of migration on host countries, which in turn is likely to confuse policy debates on the topic (Anderson and Blinder, 2019).

Research to date has also differentiated between different migrant generations. First-generation generally refers to individuals born abroad who have migrated to host countries for a variety of reasons. These individuals are, arguably, the most affected by migration-related challenges and socio-cultural adaptation.

Much of the earlier research and theoretical work regarding second-generation migrants originates from the US and Canada, though European research on this topic has also gathered pace. In immigration research, the term ‘second generation’ generally refers to children born in the host country to at least one foreign-born parent (Eurostat, 2014).<sup>13</sup> Some authors also include in this category children born abroad but brought to a host country before primary school (King et al., 2006). Molcho et al. (2006) note that these children are, at least to some extent, affected by the migration experience of their parents. In this report, we use the

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13 There has been some criticism of using the term ‘second-generation migrant’ as it is seen to perpetuate immigrant status across generations (OECD, 2018, p. 18).

term ‘second-generation migrant-origin children to refer to Irish children born to at least one migrant parent.

Several authors have put forward additional categories of generation. ‘Generation 1.5’ refers to children of those individuals who were born abroad and brought into the host country at a very young age (Röder and Ward, 2014; Rumbaut, 2004). Their identity encompasses a combination of ‘new’ and ‘old’ culture and tradition (Asher, 2011). While children belonging to ‘1.5G’ spend their formative years in a new country, they may still be influenced by the traditions of their country of origin (Rumbaut, 2004). Further differentiation has been made between ‘1.75G’ – children arriving to a host country under the age of five – and ‘1.25G’ – young people between the ages of 13 and 17 years – to reflect the extent of children’s experiences and socialisation in the host country (Rumbaut, 2004).

To date, few studies of second-generation migrant-origin children in Ireland have been conducted. This reflects migration trends and the age of the population concerned. The number of such studies is growing, however, and it seems reasonable to imagine that future research will explore the outcomes of other generations.

Much of the existing migration research in the US and Europe has conceptualised ‘second generation’ as one group. However, some authors have cautioned against the use of such a ‘pan-ethnic’ term, as it refers to a very heterogeneous group (Vathi, 2015; Portes and Zhou, 1993). Thus, the category of second-generation migrants should not be considered a homogeneous one; rather, one in which subgroups experience outcomes that are better or worse than, or equal to, those of the comparable native population (Schurer, 2008). Eckstein (2002) argues that migrant generations are influenced by the different social conditions they experience in their pre- and post-migration times. To address the heterogeneity in the second-generation migrant group in Ireland, Röder et al. (2014) developed and utilised the following broad country groupings: IRL (indigenous families); UK; EU accession states; EU13; Africa; Asia; and other (Oceania, North America, Americas, non-EU European and unspecified nationalities). Disaggregating migrant data further is important, as several studies conducted in different European countries have found that second-generation young people from some countries fare less well in host countries compared to others (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003). Ethnic background may also play a role in understanding the outcomes of second-generation migrant children (Jonsson et al., 2018).<sup>14</sup> Linguistic background is important too, given the key role of the host country language in the integration of children (*ibid.*). This is especially true in a country like Ireland, as English is widely spoken in many parts of the world. In researching second-generation migrant outcomes there are

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14 Disaggregating by ethnicity is also consistent with plans, under the National Action Plan against Racism, to introduce an ethnic identifier more broadly in data in Ireland (Anti-Racism Committee, 2021).

additional factors to consider. For example, Röder et al. (2014) note that infants with two migrant parents may have different outcomes from those with one migrant and one native-born parent.

To date, research on second-generation migrants in Ireland has been limited. This is due to the relatively low levels of inward migration to Ireland up to the 2000s, and partly due to lack of data regarding parents' country of birth in available datasets. An important exception to this in terms of quantitative, representative data is the *Growing up in Ireland* (GUI) longitudinal study. The data available in GUI enable the exploration of outcomes for subgroups of children in greater detail, and the representative nature of the data makes it possible to generalise the findings to the wider population of this age cohort. This dataset enables a detailed exploration of different dimensions of child outcomes, including English language, wellbeing and self-concept. To date, little is known about how young migrants perform in the language of instruction relative to their native peers and whether gaps exist between groups. Furthermore, areas such as wellbeing and self-concept among migrant children have not received much attention in Irish research, despite the fact that wellbeing can tap into processes of adaptation and acculturation that are not captured by indicators of 'structural integration', such as employment or income (Jonsson and Mood, 2018). Measures of wellbeing have been widely used as an indicator of migrant integration in the host country, both for adults and young children (for example, Safi, 2010; Johnsson and Mood, 2018). Self-concept as part of a sense of belonging has also been considered important in migrant integration (Wu et al., 2012). Understanding how different groups of migrant-origin children fare in Ireland helps to pinpoint areas that need greater policy intervention. In this report, we define second-generation migrant-origin children as those born in Ireland where at least one parent was born abroad. Based on the information available on the survey, the basic grouping includes the following categories:

- both parents (or lone parent) born abroad;
- one (of the two parents) born abroad;
- both parents (or lone parent) born in Ireland.<sup>15</sup>

A more detailed classification is based on parental country or region of birth: Ireland; UK; eastern Europe; western Europe; Africa; Asia; the US/Canada/New Zealand/Australia; and other (mainly South and Central America). An additional grouping is based on the study child's linguistic background, distinguishing whether one or both parents is a native English speaker. Finally, we distinguish the second generation according to whether: both parents are from an ethnic minority group (Black, Asian or Other); both parents are of White ethnicity; or the study child is

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In the GUI survey, in almost all cases, the primary caregiver was the child's mother (99.7%) and the secondary caregiver (where present) was the child's father. Throughout this report, we refer to primary caregivers as mothers and secondary caregivers as fathers.

from a mixed-ethnic background (one parent White, one parent ethnic minority). Chapter 3 outlines these classifications in more detail. Descriptive statistics present outcomes for these groupings separately, but as they are clearly related and overlap, the statistical modelling allows us to identify the association of each of these characteristics with child outcomes. Throughout the report we use the terms migrant-origin children, children from a migrant background or second-generation migrant-origin children interchangeably.

### **1.3 EDUCATION POLICY CONTEXT**

#### **1.3.1 Early childhood education**

This section considers the educational policy context in Ireland for the integration of migrants, both second-generation Irish children and those who arrived in the country as children. Educational policy in Ireland is constantly evolving but this section only considers policy relevant to the GUI '08 cohort (from 2008 to 2018), discussing first pre-school and then primary school.

According to OECD (2021), participation in early care and education plays a key role in enabling migrant children to reach their full potential. Barriers include low availability of such services in general, as well as limited access specific to immigrant children. While issues of affordability are relevant to all, awareness of services can be lower among migrant-origin families.

In Ireland, non-parental childcare for children aged three years and younger is largely market-based and very expensive – one of the most expensive in the EU when the GUI children were of pre-school age (2008–2013) (Russell et al., 2018). In that period, there was limited availability of lower-cost childcare in community crèches, but considerable reliance on informal childcare such as grandparents, particularly for infants (McGinnity et al., 2013). This lack of investment and state support can be particularly challenging for migrant parents, many of whom do not have relatives living nearby and who may not be able to afford centre-based care.

Indeed, McGinnity et al. (2014) found that, with the exception of three year olds with west European mothers, all children of migrant origin were much less likely to be in non-parental childcare at age three, when compared with Irish three year olds. Linked to this, migrant mothers had considerably lower maternal employment rates than Irish mothers. Roeder et al. (2017) highlight, in particular, the situation of mothers from EU accession states, who, as labour migrants, had very high pre-birth employment rates, but low earnings and very low rates of non-parental childcare post-birth. Low participation of migrant children in non-parental childcare has also been found internationally (OECD, 2021). This is potentially of concern; in 2015, McGinnity et al. found a positive effect of attending centre-based childcare on vocabulary outcomes for children from non-English-speaking



backgrounds in Ireland, which was not found for children from English-speaking backgrounds.

The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE), introduced in 2010, was an important policy initiative for children from the '08 cohort of GUI. This universal scheme provides part-time education and care to pre-school aged children. Between 2010 and 2015, the scheme was available to children between the ages of three years, two months and four years, seven months and covered one school year (38 weeks) for 15 hours a week.<sup>16</sup> While the scheme is free, parents and guardians could also pay for additional hours in the childcare facility if this option was available and they could afford it as, for many parents, 15 hours state-provided childcare would not be enough to cover working hours, especially when you factor in commuting time. This scheme had extremely high take-up from its introduction: McGinnity et al. (2015) found almost all (96 per cent) of the GUI '08 cohort had participated in the ECCE scheme by age five. Participation in this scheme was high across all social class groups, but given very low participation in (very expensive) centre-based care at age three, the jump in participation rates was highest for more disadvantaged groups (see Figure 6.2 in Murray et al., 2016).<sup>17</sup> In Chapter 4 we consider the participation of migrant-origin children in this scheme. Lack of participation among this group would tend to indicate lack of awareness on the part of migrant families, as the scheme is free to all parents.

The Department of Education also provides an early childhood programme known as Early Start in a small number of schools to meet the educational needs of children between the ages of three years, two months and four years, seven months from disadvantaged areas. The programme is a one-year fully funded scheme offered in certain designated disadvantaged areas. The aim of the scheme is to enhance the overall development of young children and prevent school failure and to 'counteract the effects of social disadvantage'.<sup>18</sup> Early Start preschools are located in vacant primary school classrooms and are staffed by both trained teachers and childcare workers.<sup>19</sup> Similar to ECCE, classes are not full-time, with children attending class for two and a half hours each day (Monday to Friday). Children cannot be enrolled in both ECCE and Early Start at the same time.

A second policy approach to supporting migrant children at pre-school age is the provision of language screening and, where necessary, language support through pre-school (OECD, 2021). Language screening involves assessing the language development of young children to assess those falling behind. Early language screening and early (pre-school) language stimulation is a feature of several OECD

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16 In 2016, this scheme was extended to two years.

17 In most cases, children who did not attend the ECCE scheme did not do so because of their participation in other schemes, such as Early Start (see below), or because the child had SEN (*ibid.*).

18 See <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/78ff8-early-start-programme/#what-the-early-start-programme-is>.

19 Parental involvement is highly encouraged under the Early Start Programme and parents are encouraged to volunteer to attend class activities.

countries. For example, Denmark and the UK screen at age two; a number of other countries, such as Austria and Germany, screen between three and six years (OECD, 2021). In most of these countries, early language stimulation is provided via pre-school settings. One such course, in the Netherlands, which provides ten hours per week of language development as part of pre-school education, was evaluated using a large representative national sample (Leseman et al., 2017). Findings indicate that this approach reaps large benefits in terms of language proficiency (*ibid.*). However, there is currently no early language assessment or support provided to non-English language learners at pre-school in Ireland.

### 1.3.2 Primary school

Ireland provides state-funded education to both Irish and non-Irish nationals at both primary and secondary school levels. Children usually attend their local school. However, parents can apply for their child to attend any primary or secondary school in the country. Some commentators have argued that active school choice on the part of families is a key feature of Irish education policy that contributes to the social stratification of schools (Smyth, 2016), and results in some ‘desirable’ schools being oversubscribed. Previous research has found that finding places in schools has been difficult for some migrant families; this is due to some schools being oversubscribed, as well as admissions policies that favour settled communities, such as waiting lists and prioritisation of children of previous students (Smyth et al., 2009).<sup>20</sup> In Ireland, Byrne et al. (2010) found an absence of school segregation, at least at the level found in many other European countries, mainly due to the geographical dispersal of the migrant population (see also Fahey et al., 2019), and the wide variety of national groups represented. However, Smyth et al. (2009) found that immigrant-origin students are over-represented in larger schools, schools located in urban areas and those with a socio-economically disadvantaged intake. The authors attribute this to the interaction between geographical location, parental choice of schools and school admissions criteria that tend to favour settled communities (*ibid.*).

While every child in Ireland has equal access to primary school education, targeted supports, such as language supports, are needed in schools for migrant-origin children to ensure that they have the same or similar opportunities and outcomes to children who are not from migrant backgrounds. The Intercultural Education Strategy 2010–2015, which aimed to ‘ensure that all education providers are assisted with ensuring that inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment become the norm’ (Department of Education and Skills,

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20 This situation has changed somewhat with the introduction of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018. While this represented a major reform of admissions policy, with its stated aim of making ‘rules around admissions to schools more structured, fair, and transparent’ (Department of Education, 2021), it was implemented after the GUI cohort of children were interviewed at nine years. This policy change may influence the transition to second level schools of this cohort. For details of changes, see <https://www.education.ie/en/parents/information/school-enrolment>.

2010, p. x), was a key policy initiative. Under this strategy, resources were allocated for English as a second language (EAL) in both primary and secondary schools. Budget cuts in 2007 and 2008 saw the number of EAL supports reduced to a maximum of two teachers per school. In the 2012/2013 academic year, EAL supports funding was merged with special needs funding. This change enabled schools to change teaching hours between EAL and special needs supports. As EAL now falls under the General Allocation Model (GAM) and schools are not required to report how GAM funds are spent and allocated, it is not possible to assess whether supports are meeting language learning needs.<sup>21</sup>

As Smyth (2016) notes, the Irish education system is characterised by a considerable degree of school-level discretion as to how resources and processes are organised. Policies regarding migrant children are no exception. For example, English language proficiency assessment kits are disseminated to primary schools, but for the most part no standardised system of language assessment is in place in primary schools. There is also likely to be considerable variation in terms of how schools assign resources to English language tuition and special educational needs (SEN).

There was no successor to the Intercultural Education Strategy, but the Migrant Integration Strategy (2017–2020) includes 12 education-related actions (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017). The mid-term progress report on the Migrant Integration Strategy Review (2019) reported on the implementation of these actions (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019). Action 26, to pass the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act, noted above, was fulfilled when the Act was enacted in 2018. Action 29, to monitor the number of non-English-speaking migrant children in schools has also been addressed; since 2016/2017 the Department of Education and Skills has collected additional data on migrant children in the annual primary school census (*ibid.*).<sup>22</sup> Action 31, monitoring the effectiveness of training for teachers in managing diversity and tackling racism, delivered via the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PTSD), was reported in the interim review (*ibid.*) as having minor problems or delays. In terms of fostering and developing positive attitudes towards diversity and celebrating difference (Action 36), the anti-bullying procedures published in 2013–2014 include several specific measures that specifically deal with identity-based bullying.<sup>23</sup>

An important policy initiative to combat educational disadvantage in Ireland is the DEIS programme (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), introduced in

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21 Schools that can demonstrate that they have high concentrations of pupils requiring EAL can apply for additional funds (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019).

22 Preliminary findings from this school census database, the primary online database, are in Department of Education and Skills (2017). See also: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Primary-Online-Database-POD-/Primary-Online-Database-POD-.html>.

23 For further details on the actions and their implementation, see MIS interim review (2019).

2006 and designed to target additional resources to schools serving disadvantaged populations. To address the needs of pupils from disadvantaged communities, the DEIS scheme allows for smaller class sizes and provides additional funding, access to literacy and numeracy programmes and assistance with school planning (Smyth et al., 2015). An evaluation of the scheme in 2015 found some improvements in attendance, retention and exam performance, though the authors point to the continuing concentration of disadvantage in DEIS schools, especially Urban Band 1 schools.<sup>24</sup> In line with Weir and Kavanagh (2018), they also point to the fact that a significant proportion of disadvantaged students attend non-DEIS schools (up to one-half), meaning that they are unable to avail of the additional supports that DEIS schools provide (*ibid*).

A number of resources are also available to all primary school children who are in need of extra supports. These include resource teachers, pastoral care and learning supports, and are available to migrant children, where appropriate.

#### 1.4 REPORT STRUCTURE

This chapter has set out the aims and scope of this research study, as well as relevant contextual factors such as migration and education policy in Ireland. Chapter 2 considers the theoretical frameworks that have been developed to understand the experience of second-generation migrant children in their receiving or host countries. It reviews previous international literature and, where available, Irish literature, on the cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes of migrant-origin children, alongside the factors at individual and family level that influence these outcomes. It also reviews literature on how these children's pre-school and school experience serves to facilitate or impede their development.

Chapter 3 describes the evidence base for this report: the GUI Cohort '08 at ages nine months, three years, five years and nine years. It details the measures used for vocabulary, reading and socio-emotional wellbeing, how second-generation migrant children are identified and how their family background and school situation are measured. Using these data, Chapter 4 presents a profile of the second-generation migrant population in Ireland, including parental country of origin, linguistic and ethnic background, and participation in pre-school and primary school in Ireland.

Chapter 5 considers a key measure of cognitive achievement – English language ability – measured from age three through to age nine.<sup>25</sup> In doing so it explores how migrant-origin children compare to Irish-origin children, and how this pattern changes over time. Chapter 6 compares child self-concept at age nine among

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24 Smyth et al. (2015) also note improvement in overall literacy and numeracy in DEIS schools over the period 2007–2014, though they find no narrowing of the gap with non-DEIS schools.

25 It is beyond the scope of this research to consider ability in mathematics.

migrant-origin and Irish-origin children, and also looks at how this relates to parental country of origin and a range of other factors, including participation in sport and cultural activities. Chapter 7 summarises the key findings of the report and reflects on their implications for policy and future research.

## CHAPTER 2

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### Theoretical framework and literature review

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Various theoretical and conceptual frameworks have been developed for understanding the experiences of migrants in their receiving countries. Theoretical work regarding the integration and experiences of second-generation migrants has, until recently, mainly been carried out by US scholars (Vathi, 2015). These theories can broadly be divided into culturalist (Portes and Zhou, 1993) and structuralist (Ogbu, 1983) perspectives, depending on whether the emphasis is placed on acculturation or socioeconomic mobility in the host society (Portes et al., 2016).

Research exploring the development and outcomes of migrant children in receiving countries has a long history, mostly with a focus on western, especially 'old' migrant-receiving countries. Much of this research targets migrant children's academic development and focuses on older children and adolescents (Cheah and Leung, 2011). Studies on socio-emotional outcomes among immigrant children are limited and have tended to focus on bullying and racial discrimination (Priest et al., 2019). In Ireland, a growing body of research focuses on the experiences of migrant-origin young people, mainly drawing on the first generation. Much of this research has focused on the intersection of education and migration, exploring the experiences of migrant children in Irish primary and secondary schools (Smyth et al., 2009; Darmody and Smyth, 2018; Devine, 2011; McGinnity and Darmody, 2019; Faas et al., 2019). Existing research in Ireland has highlighted challenges confronted by migrant children in both academic and social spheres, which are often underscored by ethnicity and proficiency in the English language (McGinnity et al., 2015; Darmody and Smyth, 2015; Smyth et al., 2009). To date, little is known about the educational and social outcomes of second-generation migrant-origin children (with notable exceptions of research by Röder et al., 2014; Frese et al., 2015; Sprong and Skopek, 2021). This chapter provides a brief overview of theories and research on the integration and experiences of migrants, providing important contextualisation for the analysis and findings of this study.

#### 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A wealth of theoretical concepts and analytical tools have been utilised to study migrant integration in Europe and elsewhere. This body of knowledge demonstrates the complex nature of migrant integration, which is shaped by origin-country influences (such as migrant selection, cultural distance, ethnic profile and language spoken), the experiences of migrants (such as attitudinal response and discrimination), as well as structural characteristics of the receiving

country (such as policies for children, education systems, childcare and social welfare systems).

Initial frameworks that focus on the integration of migrants include 'assimilation theory', which suggests that the longer migrants stay in a host country the greater the likelihood of the second-generation identifying with the dominant group (Waters, 1990). However, in the US, Portes and Zhou (1993) differentiated between three alternative pathways for the second-generation: assimilation into the poor underclass; acculturation and integration into the native middle class; and rapid upward social advancement, relying on a strong ethnic community. The theory of 'segmented assimilation' attempts to explain the factors that determine into which segment of American society an immigrant group can assimilate (Zhou, 1997). Extrafamilial influences such as neighbourhood, school and peer effects are important in educational outcomes for migrants and natives alike (Luthra and Soehl, 2015). Crucially, however, important 'gaps' in this theory concern its lack of recognition of the differences that exist within ethnic groups in terms of education, cultural background, social class (Thomson and Crul, 2007), and of gendered patterns of integration (Waldinger and Perlmann, 1998). Furthermore, educational outcomes of migrants are also affected by additional factors, such as (parental) legal status, perceptions of the host country, discrimination and characteristics of the co-ethnic community (Luthra and Soehl, 2015). Some migrant groups may fail to attain middle class status, despite parental skill levels and are, thus, incorporated into the 'working-class' stratum (Luthra and Waldinger, 2013).

In Europe, migration scholars have found the theory of segmented assimilation to be not easily generalisable to the European context, due to notable differences between national contexts (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003). However, the theory is helpful in explaining differences in migrant experiences and in identifying the factors at the individual/background and contextual level associated with differential outcomes. Context matters because it influences how structure, culture, personal agency and outcomes influence migrants and their children (Thomson and Crul, 2007). Thus, according to comparative integration context theory, migrant integration is strongly influenced by differences in the contexts in which integration takes place – the receiving country's institutional arrangements regarding education, its labour market, its housing market and its legislation (Crul and Schneider, 2010).

The impact of culture – the set of values, symbols, beliefs, languages and norms that guide human behaviour (see Menipaz and Menipaz, 2011) – has been widely considered in sociological and education research. According to cultural reproduction theory, one needs to consider a broader range of factors than financial resources alone when exploring individual outcomes. Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory originated as a framework for understanding social class differences in the transmission of advantage from one generation to the next.

Cultural capital of the dominant group acquired at home, in school, or both, can be converted into social and economic advantage in later life. For Bourdieu, cultural capital is a competence in society's high-status culture – its behaviour, habitus and attitudes. Thus, cultural capital plays an important part in reproducing educational and social hierarchies; the amount of cultural capital that students 'inherit' from their family of origin is a function of their socioeconomic status (Bourdieu, 1979). Equally important is social capital – aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to a durable network of somewhat institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition. The inheritance of cultural capital, along with economic and social capital, enables members of the dominant classes to reproduce their socioeconomic position (Bourdieu, 1998).

While initially formulated in terms of social class, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital has been expanded by subsequent theorists (see, for example, Lareau and Horvat, 1999) to take account of cultural diversity in terms of nationality and/or ethnicity. These authors suggest that policies and practices within the schools of a receiving country are likely to be more familiar to students from the dominant group – the 'insiders' who possess this information as part of their cultural capital. By contrast, members of migrant groups, possessing different cultural capital, norms and values, often find themselves in the position of 'outsiders' (Bourdieu, 1998). Perception of difference in values and dispositions by individuals or groups in relation to others may result in cultural distance and may have a direct influence on student attitudes and outcomes (see Triandis, 1998).

This 'mismatch' between home and school cultures may vary across nationalities or linguistic groups, as well as social class, depending on various types of capitals at their disposal. Converting one form of capital into another is not straightforward, but is achieved by complex processes (Devine, 2009). Some individuals have more capital and so are dominant over those with less capital; others may have equal but different compositions of capital at their disposal, which puts them in a different relationship to other individuals or institutions. For migrant children, the school is their primary source of contact with the majority culture, and thus an important site for acquiring knowledge of the *lingua franca* of the receiving country, as well as culturally relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes (Park-Taylor, et al., 2007). Bourdieu (1998) argues that the 'outsider' status of migrants may differ across groups since some migrant families are more likely than others to be in a position to access information on the education system of the receiving country and to internalise its cultural preferences (Weine et al., 2004).

With respect to the educational outcomes of migrant children, the level of cultural integration – the sense of belonging their parents feel towards the host country – can affect their investment in educational activities (Schüller, 2015). According to the family investment model (Conger et al., 2010) parents can 'invest' in the



development of their children and do so by providing a stimulating learning environment at home and through family activities.

The literature on international migration suggests that migrants are not drawn at random from their country of origin and that nor is the receiving country randomly chosen. Rather, migrants are negatively or positively selected depending on a series of factors. Examples include: unobservable characteristics, such as migrant abilities, ambition and resiliency; observable skills, such as migrant education or occupation; and returns from educational attainment in the country of origin as well as in the receiving country (Rooth, 2007; Feliciano, 2020).

Status attainment theory refers to the transmission of socio-economic advantage from one generation to the next (also called intergenerational social mobility); it seeks to shed light on how the characteristics of an individual's family/socio-economic background relate to their educational attainment and occupational status in society (Campbell, 1983). In migration research, parental occupational status and educational level influence the status attainment of their children (Bauer and Riphahn, 2007). Status attainment theory can also illuminate opportunities for migrants to 'catch up' with their native counterparts. A number of studies have referred to 'migrant optimism' when discussing the outcomes of migrants and their children, underscored by the drive to succeed in their host country (Fernandez-Reino, 2016; Feliciano and Lanuza, 2015). According to literature in this area, the educational attainment levels of migrant children is influenced by a positive disposition towards education and future orientation among parents, as well as proficiency in the language of the host country (Doepke and Zilibotti, 2015).

Despite the disadvantaged background of some migrant parents, authors have found that parents often have high expectations and aspirations for their children's education and greater school engagement (Minello and Barban, 2012). While expectations and aspirations have sometimes been used interchangeably in previous studies on migrant outcomes, the terms differ, with the former referring to more realistic beliefs, while the latter describes desired outcomes – individuals' aspirations are generally higher than their expectations (Fernandez-Reino, 2016). A study in the UK has identified a gap in student expectations among those aged 14 years between ethnic minority and White British groups, even controlling for student achievement and socio-economic background. Higher educational expectations are experienced among the former, mostly driven by parental expectations (Fernandez-Reino, 2016). Various studies refer to the immigrant paradox whereby the children of immigrants in some cases perform well or even outperform children with native parents, despite facing various challenges (Crosnoe, 2013). This is evident even when both groups come from similar socio-economic backgrounds (*ibid.*). Feliciano and Lanuza (2017) argue that higher educational achievement of the 1.5 and second generations in the US could be

explained by their higher socio-economic background, which may not be adequately captured by standard measures of socio-economic status (SES).

When considering child outcomes, social stratification literature has often drawn on the conceptual framework of primary and secondary effects. This framework is now increasingly used in exploring ethnic inequalities in education. The former considers the differentials in academic performance between migrants and the majority group, controlling for the family socioeconomic background of students. The latter refers to the differences in choices between the two groups at relevant transition points during the educational career of the young people (Fernandez-Reino, 2016). While primary effects in the case of migrant children tend to be negative, with many lagging behind their native peers, secondary effects have been found to be positive considering higher continuation rates among migrants in education (*ibid.*).

### 2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The successful integration of migrant children and young people has been among the foremost policy challenges for many western countries. Evidence from different jurisdictions indicates that, compared to their native peers, these children and young people tend to experience more limited outcomes in terms of educational attainment, school performance, opportunities and life chances (Heath and Brinbaum, 2007; Becker et al., 2013). This can partly be explained by various background and structural factors. Background factors that influence the outcomes of migrant children include: migrant status or country of origin (Flisi, et al., 2016); ethnicity (Crosnoe and Turley, 2011); generation (OECD, 2018); family structure and characteristics – children from lone parent families and mixed (native-migrant) families (Sprong and Skopek, 2021); minority linguistic background (Sierens and van Avermaet, 2015; Turney and Kao, 2009); and parental socio-economic position and educational attainment (Borjas, 1992; Crosnoe, 2007; Bradley et al., 2001). Structural and school-level factors include: access to schools (Smyth, et al., 2009); school size; socio-economic and ethnic school segregation (Levels and Dronkers, 2008);<sup>26</sup> student–teacher relationships (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009); and attitude to school (Ismail, 2019).

Taken together, the opportunities and life chances of migrant children are shaped both by resources within migrant families, as well as by the opportunities provided by educational and social institutions in the destination countries (Crul, 2007). Migration is associated with a set of contextual risk factors, interaction of which may result in a high likelihood of more long-term negative consequences for the cognitive, socio-emotional and educational development of many migrant children

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26 Segregation at the neighbourhood level has been found to influence progress in (host) language acquisition of adult migrants, though the strength and direction of the effect varies across migrant groups (Liebig and Spielvogel, 2021).

and young people, despite the resilience of some migrants/migrant groups (Dimitrova et al., 2016).

The sections that follow consider these factors in greater detail. It is important, however, to note that migrant children comprise a very diverse group and differences exist between jurisdictions as well as between and within migrant groups. Furthermore, Baysu et al. (2018) demonstrate that school performance of migrant young people within one ethnic group can vary across different national school systems.

### **2.3.1 Background factors and child outcomes**

Much of the research on the outcomes of migrant children and young people have compared migrants (either as one group or a disaggregated group) and natives. Some authors argue that in order to fully understand the experiences and outcomes of migrant children, one needs to compare their outcomes to those young people who did not migrate (migrant selection effect) (Hoffmann, 2021; Zuccotti, et al., 2017). Positive migrant selectivity – whereby individuals who have migrated tend to have higher educational attainment, skills and resilience compared to their counterparts who remained – may help to explain patterns of success among migrants and their children across different domains (Feliciano, 2020). Not considering the migrant selection effect may lead to misinterpretation of unequal outcomes among migrants and their children, especially when assuming that intrinsic cultural differences explain such outcomes (*ibid.*). However, research in this area is limited, due to the unavailability of detailed data on migrant selection.

Children of migrants now make up a considerable proportion of the population across the developed world. International research suggests that even at preschool age, children differ in a number of important ways according to family migration history, generation, ethnicity and national origins (De Feyter et al., 2009). The reasons for migration are many and varied, but often include work, study, family and humanitarian protection. First-generation migrant families face many acculturation demands in the host country that impact on their integration and socio-emotional wellbeing (Oppedal, 2020).

### **Language proficiency**

Proficiency in the language of the receiving country has been considered one of the main factors affecting the integration of migrants, as well as the academic and socio-emotional outcomes of migrant children (Kristen et al., 2016; Isphording, et al., 2016). Results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) across OECD countries show that, on average, first-generation migrant students are less likely to attain academic proficiency at the same level as their native peers

(OECD, 2018).<sup>27</sup> The average gap in test scores of migrant children and their native peers tends to vary across countries and is strongly associated with achievement differences in the parent generation and language spoken in the home (Dustmann et al., 2012).

In Germany, a different mother tongue to that of the language of instruction has been shown to have an additional significant negative association with child achievement in mathematics, even when controlling for socio-economic characteristics of the family (Becker, 2013). In the United States (US), Magnuson et al. (2006) reported that migrant children whose mother uses a non-English language in communication with them tend to have lower mathematics test results than children of native-born parents. This was not the case for migrant children whose mother spoke English with them (Magnuson et al., 2006, p. 1255). In Ireland, Kavanagh and Weir (2018) showed that children in fifth and second class (primary school) whose families spoke a language other than English/Irish at home had lower average reading achievement than pupils who spoke only English/Irish at home. Little difference was found among second class children in the mean mathematics score, based on the language spoken in the home, whereas at all other grade levels, children who spoke a foreign language at home outperformed their peers who spoke English/Irish (*ibid.*).

There is a growing interest in developing language proficiency outside the classroom, with authors highlighting the role of sport in the development of cognitive and language skills (Garcia-Hermoso et al., 2019). Language proficiency is also crucial in the socio-emotional adjustment of migrant children, as difficulties in the host language and ensuing difficulties in forming friendships with native peers have both been associated with depressive symptoms among the immigrant youth (Oppedal et al., 2020). Having high English proficiency has been found to be associated with higher self-esteem and fewer depressive symptoms among Latino migrants (Rumbaut, 1994).

Delay in language acquisition may undermine equality of opportunities from childhood for migrant children (Cavallo and Russo, 2020). Acquiring academic language proficiency has also been found to be instrumental in terms of the educational pathways of migrant young people considering high-stakes testing in many high-income countries (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Passing or failing high-stakes standardised tests that evaluate academic proficiency has direct

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27 PISA distinguishes between four types of immigration background: first-generation immigrant students are foreign-born students whose parents were also foreign-born; second-generation immigrant students are students who were born in the country of assessment, but whose parents are foreign-born; students with an immigrant background include both first- and second-generation immigrant students (also referred to as 'immigrant students'); and students without an immigrant background refers to those born in the country of assessment or who have at least one parent who was born in that country. See: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/Definitions.pdf#:~:text=PISA%20distinguishes%20among%20four%20types%20of%20immigration%20background%3A,country%20of%20assessment%2C%20but%20whose%20parents%20are%20foreign-born.>

consequences for students regarding the options available to them. Students with low levels of the language of instruction have been found to be at a disadvantage in high-stakes testing (Anjeh, et al., 2006).

### **Ethnicity and cultural context**

Educational outcome patterns also vary by ethnicity (Bottia, 2019), though these tend to differ across migrant-receiving countries and are linked to parental education levels (*ibid.*). As with cognitive outcomes, there are mixed findings from international research on the link between ethnicity and socio-emotional factors among migrant children and young people, possibly reflecting the heterogeneity of migrant groups. For example, while some studies have found greater socio-emotional difficulties among Asian and Hispanic young people in the US than their European counterparts (Zhou, et al., 2003), other studies on Asians in the US have found no such differences (Cheah and Leung, 2011), possibly reflecting heterogeneity among the broad ethnic groups. These inconsistent findings highlight the need for more research regarding the social development of migrant children. Cultural context and parenting practices also seem to matter in terms of the socio-emotional outcomes of migrants. For example, warmth, reasoning and autonomy-granting among Chinese mothers regarding their pre-school children predicted greater behavioural and attention regulation abilities in these children, which in turn predicted decreased teacher-rated child socio-emotional and behavioural difficulties (Cheah et al., 2009). In another study by Izzo et al. (2000), use of parental warmth and control was found to be positively associated with child socio-emotional adjustment. Authors have also found an association between highly integrated migrant mothers and child pro-social behaviours (Shin et al., 2010). Cultural conflict among migrant parents and their children, in cases where the latter has adopted the cultural norms of the receiving country, has been found to be a strong negative predictor of migrant children's psychological, social and emotional adjustment (Sam, 2006). In some migrant families, children often acquire language proficiency more quickly than their parents. The resulting 'language brokering' has been found to be associated with greater internalising behaviour (such as feeling withdrawn) among Chinese American and Korean American adolescents (Chao, 2006).

### **Socio-economic background and family structure**

Background characteristics and family resources matter to child outcomes (White, 2018). Several studies document a strong relationship between socio-economic background, parental education, childcare, family structure and cognitive development in early childhood (Anger and Heineck, 2010; Evans, 2004; Stevens et al., 2009). Overall, children from higher socio-economic backgrounds and with better educated parents tend to achieve better results at school (Cruel, 2007).

One-parent families have among the highest risks of both material deprivation and income poverty (Watson, et al., 2018). Literature on family structure and child

educational and cognitive outcomes shows that single-parent family status has a negative impact on children's academic outcomes in a number of countries (Pong, et al., 2003). Single-parent families are more likely to have a lower standard of living, and family income tends to be a good predictor of a child's academic achievement. However, the debate on the causality of family structure and child outcomes is ongoing (Amato, et al., 2015). Research on lone parenthood and immigration has shown that migrant pupils from single-mother families score four points lower on a maths test than migrant pupils who live with both parents (Dronkers and Kalmjin, 2013), even when controlling for maternal SES and migration history. In Iceland, Chen and Ragnarsdóttir (2014) found that in addition to the challenges common among many lone parents, in terms of less time and fewer sources of income compared to two-parent families, additional challenges centre around integration and social interactions.

Research to date presents a complex picture for children with one migrant and one native parent (Sørensen et al., 2016; Dennis, et al., 2016; Sprong and Skopek, 2021). Overall, cognitive outcomes tend to be similar for children in mixed families with one native-born parent to those of their native peers. In Ireland, using data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study, Sprong and Skopek (2021) found migration-related disparities in verbal skills, already at the age of five. Furthermore, these disparities vary across the migrant groups, with children of Polish parents exhibiting lower scores, and tend to be more marked for children with two non-native parents. The language spoken at home was found to be a powerful predictor for migrant disadvantage (*ibid.*).

### 2.3.2 Structural and school-level factors

#### Early childhood education settings

Researchers analysing early childhood education and care programmes cite evidence that high-quality centre-based childcare has positive impacts on child development, particularly for disadvantaged children (Kulic et al., 2019). In France, a recent study by Berger et al. (2021) found that crèche attendance has a positive impact on language skills, no impact on motor skills and a negative impact on behaviour. The positive impact on language skills is particularly concentrated among disadvantaged children, which implies that facilitating increased crèche access among disadvantaged families may hold potential for decreasing early socioeconomic disparities in this area. Nursery school or crèche enrolment is generally lower among disadvantaged families (Gambaro et al, 2014). In Ireland, analysis using data from the GUI study did not find clear positive effects of centre-based care on vocabulary at age five, for all children or those from a disadvantaged background, though there was no measure of quality of childcare in the study (McGinnity et al., 2015). The one group for whom there was a small positive effect of centre-based childcare on vocabulary in Ireland was children from non-English-speaking backgrounds (*ibid.*). Yet crèche participation among immigrant families is

generally lower than that for native-born families (Fortuny, 2010); this has also been found in Ireland (McGinnity et al., 2014).

Access to quality pre-school childcare is important for the socio-emotional development of children and in terms of preparing them for school, both academically and socially. According to parents' reports, children availing of centre-based care in Ireland had fewer emotional and peer problems, although somewhat higher conduct issues (Russell, et al., 2016). The authors of this study also found that centre-based care was associated with small but significant improvements in pro-social behaviour for children in lone-parent families (*ibid.*). In many receiving countries, migrant families tend to be more socio-economically disadvantaged and less likely to access centre-based care, compared to their native counterparts, despite the benefits accruing to these families and their children, especially regarding language development (Karoly and Gonzalez, 2011).

### **School settings**

School systems have an important role to play in the outcomes of migrant-origin young people (Baysu et al., 2018). Educational researchers have identified school composition as one of the key areas responsible for school differences in overall academic success (NCES, 2015). Schools catering for students from different socio-economic background may differ in many ways, including teacher quality, staffing ratios, school climate and teacher expectations. Academic outcomes can be influenced by the fact that many migrant-origin children tend to be concentrated in schools serving disadvantaged areas (Byrne, et al., 2010).

Aspects of destination countries impact the cognitive outcomes of migrant-origin children, over and above differences among migrant groups, something that becomes evident when comparing the experiences and outcomes of the same migrant group across different countries. This suggests that practices adopted by individual destination countries either support or hinder the educational progress of migrant children (Crul, 2007). Access to schools, integration policies and resources available all play a part in the settling-in process of migrant children (Smyth, et al., 2009). School admission policies and the tendency for migrant populations to be more concentrated within particular neighbourhoods have resulted in higher concentrations of migrant-origin children in some schools, and an extensive literature on how this may impact educational outcomes. Much of the research on migrant concentration in schools comes from the US, and generally shows that academic results are poorer in schools where migrants are more highly represented (Bottia, 2019). In other jurisdictions, results from studies on the impact of migrant concentration on educational outcomes tend to be more mixed. For example, while small negative spill-over effects from migrants to natives was found in a cross-country study by Brunello and Rocco (2011), no such effects of non-native English speakers on native students in English schools was detected by Geay et al. (2012). In the Netherlands, a study by Ohinata and VanOurs (2012)

found no adverse effects for native students and some negative effects on migrant students' test scores in reading. In Denmark, however, negative effects of a higher migrant concentration were found for both native and migrant secondary school students (Jensen and Wurtz-Rasmussen, 2011). In Austria, Schneeweis (2015) found that migrant students have lower grades in schools that have a higher share of migrant students, with very little spill-over effect for native students. The author also found that a higher share of migrants within a particular grade reduced the likelihood of migrant students attending 'high track' schools after primary school, with no significant effects for native students.<sup>28</sup> The research also showed that the impact for migrant students was stronger when the share of the students from the same migrant group was considered.

Once social and individual characteristics were controlled for, Cebolla-Boado and Medina (2011) found that the concentration of migrants had no effect on achievement in Spanish schools. The effect of concentration was only significant if migrants represented at least one-fifth of the student body. The population attending schools where migrant-origin students were more highly represented tended to be more disadvantaged than the rest of the student population.

### **Social integration**

International and Irish research has highlighted the important role teachers play in the experiences of children (especially at a younger age) and the development of their socio-emotional skills. Some Irish research studies refer to a lack of understanding among teachers regarding the backgrounds of and challenges experienced by migrant-origin children and young people (Darmody et al., 2011), as well as a misrecognition of minority social and cultural capital (Kitching, 2011), which may result in transmitting negative social stereotypes. Different cultural norms of teachers and migrant parents has also been found to have an adverse impact on teacher rating, both in academic competence and behavioural problems even after controlling for student gender and ethnicity, parental education and school involvement, as seen in the US study by Sirin et al. (2009). Data from the GUI study show that children whose mother was born abroad have fewer socio-emotional difficulties and higher pro-social scores (based on the mother's report) than the children of Irish mothers, although the teacher-rated scale showed that this group of children had lower pro-social scores (Russell et al., 2016). However, other research, also drawing on GUI data, has pointed towards comparable teacher ratings on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for migrant and native students upon entry into formal schooling and more favourable teacher ratings for minority language children with poor English vocabulary skills compared to native children with poor English vocabulary skills (McNally et al., 2019).

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28 Low track schools provide basic general education and prepare students for further vocational education, while high track schools offer an academically-oriented curriculum.



Irish research has found that social integration is very important for young people, defined as feeling a sense of belonging to a group, being able to engage in similar activities and generally spending time together inside and outside school – in other words, feeling like an ‘insider’ rather than an ‘outsider’ (see Darmody and McGinnity, 2019; Darmody and Smyth, 2017; Darmody and Smyth, 2015; Smyth, et al., 2009). However, the research evidence shows that some migrant children experience difficulties in social integration in schools (Smyth, et al., 2009), have fewer close friends, especially some ethnic groups (Darmody et al., 2016; Liu, 2013), experience greater social distance from native peers (Tormey and Gleeson, 2012), and are confronted by stereotypical views on migrants in general, especially in terms of their reasons for moving to Ireland (Meade and O’Connell, 2009; Darmody and Smyth, 2015). Social connectedness to their native-born peers may serve to enhance the opportunities migrant students have at school and beyond (Darmody, 2011). Social interaction through meaningful shared activities (for example, sport and cultural participation) may also mitigate against social prejudices and racism (Darmody and Smyth, 2015; Darmody, 2011).

Cumulative exposure to racial discrimination and bullying victimisation has been found to result in socio-emotional difficulties among ethnic minority young people (Priest et al., 2019). Earlier studies have shown that awareness of racial stereotypes and outgroup biases – dislike for people outside their own identity group – emerge in middle childhood, which is usually defined as between six and 12 years (Aboud and Amato, 2001). Children recognise discriminatory acts by age 10 (McKown and Weinstein, 2003), suggesting that at this stage children are able to differentiate between bullying and racial discrimination (Priest et al., 2019). Bullying victimisation is associated with a range of negative impacts, including childhood mental health issues, anxiety and depression (Wolke and Lereya, 2015; Ford et al., 2017). The extent and nature of racial bullying may vary between ethnic groups. For example, bullying based on the stereotypical view of Asian young people in the US as a ‘model minority’, characterised as being comprised of highly motivated high achievers was found to be positively associated with more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009).

### **Participation in leisure activities and peer group dynamics**

Participation in sport has been found to have a positive impact on children’s education and behaviour (Felfe et al., 2016). Sport has consistently been cited as having a positive impact on the social integration of migrant children and young people. Participation in sport has been found to raise self-esteem and confidence among migrant-origin children as well as enhancing their popularity with peers (Erkut and Tracy, 2002).

Analysis of two waves of the GUI Cohort ’98 study looked at the levels of participation in out-of-school social activities among migrant children living in Ireland, and found generally lower levels of leisure participation compared to their

Irish peers at both ages nine and 13, although the gap between Irish and migrant children narrows over time (Darmody and Smyth, 2017). On cultural participation, affordability is a factor as well as English language proficiency. There were lower levels of sports involvement among African, eastern European and, in particular, Asian families; while the reasons for lower levels of participation are not clear, it is possible that the types of activities on offer may be unfamiliar to some immigrant-origin children as they are heavily focused on team sports, such as GAA games (*ibid.*).

As a result of peer group dynamics and exclusionary practices, as well as linguistic challenges, some migrants may revert to the 'comfort zone' of friendships with other young people from their country of origin (Darmody, 2011; Jonsson et al., 2018). This approach can negatively impact a child's number of friends and the composition of their friendship groups, as well as their sense of belonging and wellbeing. Making and keeping friendships is important for individual wellbeing and for emotional and social support over the life trajectory. Having at least one close friend is associated with better social skills and fewer adjustment problems (Dunn, 2004).

### **Outcomes of second-generation children and young people**

There is now a considerable body of literature on the educational attainment of second-generation migrant children, most of which is US-based, though the volume of European research in this area is increasing. Much of this literature argues that the initial disadvantage faced by migrants leads to persistent gaps in the outcomes of second-generation children and young people (Krause et al., 2011). However, outcomes of second-generation are generally better than those of first-generation migrant children (OECD, 2018). In Ireland, PISA results for 2015 show that second-generation students on the whole do not differ from native students in their test scores in reading and mathematics, compared to first-generation students, who tend to perform at a considerably lower level in these disciplines (Darmody and Smyth, 2018). However, in Germany, Lüdemann and Schwerdt (2010) found that second-generation boys are more likely than their native counterparts to attend the lowest secondary school track (Hauptschule) and that both second-generation migrant boys and girls receive worse than average school grades in reading and mathematics.

Irish research which compared the academic outcomes of migrant children to that of natives found that many migrant students underperform academically (McGinnity et al., 2015; Darmody et al., 2016). It has also been found that language proficiency has a significant impact on the academic achievement of migrant students here (Darmody and Smyth, 2018; Darmody et al., 2016). In addition, differences can be observed between national or ethnic groups, with the lowest level of reading achievement among nine-year-olds found among children of eastern European origin (McGinnity et al., 2015).

Emerging Irish research on a younger cohort of migrant children has shown that some migration-related disparities in verbal skills exist at the start of primary school (at the age of five), and that they differ across regional groups (Sprong and Skopek, 2021). The authors have also found that verbal skills differ between children with two migrant parents and those with one migrant and one native Irish parent.

The following chapters of this report explore differences in outcomes in early childhood and whether the differences between native and migrant children change over time.

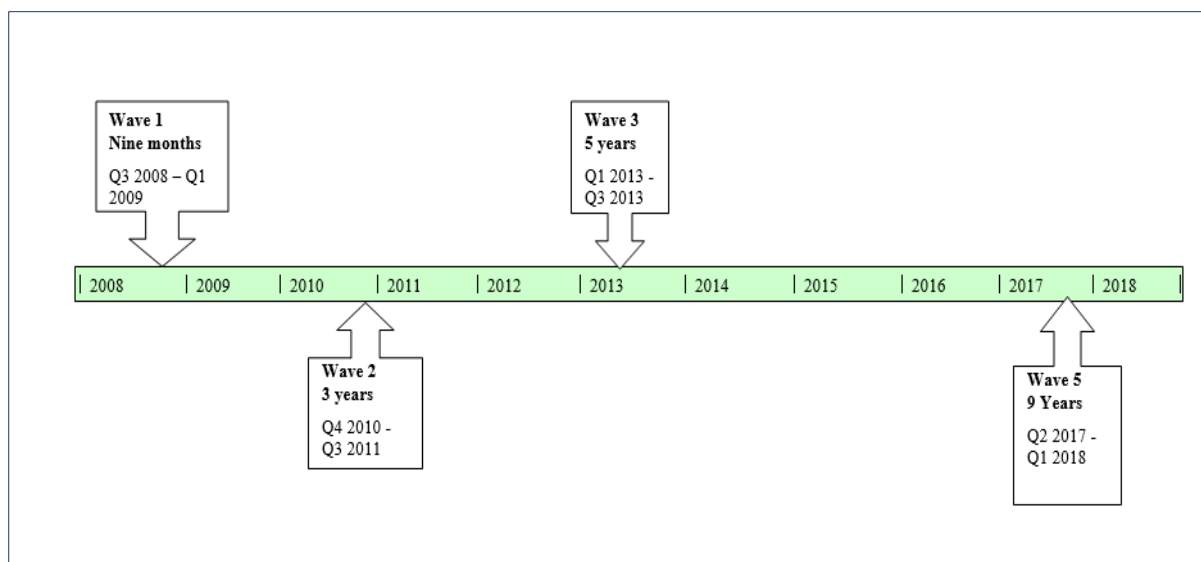
## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 ABOUT *GROWING UP IN IRELAND* (COHORT '08)

Participants were members of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) Cohort '08 (formerly known as the Infant Cohort).<sup>29</sup> The cohort members were recruited, with their primary caregivers (usually the biological mother), when they were infants.<sup>30</sup> The sample was nationally representative and based on a stratified random sample (for further details see McNamara et al., 2019). Data were collected during household interviews, with the first one conducted when the members were nine months old (in 2008–2009). Subsequent interviews took place at ages three, five and nine years (with a short postal survey following at seven/eight years, not utilised here). In the first wave, at nine months, there were 11,134 child participants, of whom 8,032 subsequently took part at age nine. A detailed description of the design, instrumentation and procedures for each wave are available from the GUI website ([www.growingup.ie](http://www.growingup.ie)). A reduced sample of just under 7,000 respondents (unweighted) took part in all four waves and provided data for all the variables used in this analysis.

FIGURE 3.1 TIMELINE OF DATA COLLECTION FOR COHORT '08



29 A second older cohort of children were included in the GUI study from age nine; this is known as the '98 Cohort.

30 The GUI survey instruments use the terms primary caregiver and secondary caregiver. In almost all cases, the primary caregiver was the child's mother (99.7%) and the secondary caregiver (where present) was the child's father. Therefore, throughout the report we refer to them as mothers and fathers.

## 3.2 OUTCOME MEASURES

### 3.2.1 Vocabulary test at three and five years

The Naming Vocabulary Scale was used as the cognitive test in GUI at ages three (Wave 2) and five (Wave 3). Taken from the British Ability Scales (BAS; Elliott et al., 1996), this scale measures expressive vocabulary (saying the word) as opposed to receptive vocabulary (understanding the word).<sup>31</sup> The tests were administered in the child's home by the interviewer. In the Naming Vocabulary Scale, the interviewer showed the child pictures (drawings rather than photographs) of everyday objects, like a chair, and the child was asked to name the object (in English). If the primary caregiver judged the child to have insufficient (English) language skills to undertake this test, it was not administered. This applied to children with a disability or special educational need (SEN), as well as those who did not have English as their main language. In total, five per cent of children did not participate in the test at age three. Children from migrant backgrounds were over-represented among the non-completers, comprising 75 per cent of this group. (In Chapter 5, we take a variety of approaches to include the non-completers in the analysis to avoid bias.) The same tests were completed at both ages three and five years, with scores adjusted for the child's age (Williams, et al., 2019). At five years of age, only one per cent of children did not undertake the vocabulary test; this figure was three per cent for children with a migrant mother. For more detailed discussion of these tests and their psychometrics, see McGinnity et al. (2015).

### 3.2.2 Drumcondra reading test (vocabulary) at nine years

The Drumcondra English Reading Test was developed for Irish schoolchildren and is linked to the national curriculum. The vocabulary element of the test was administered at age nine. For each nine year old, interviewers were instructed to administer the Drumcondra test level that corresponded to the child's last year of school. Prior to analysis, scores were adjusted according to class level and the child's age at administration, so that they are comparable across the different levels. Only the vocabulary part of the test was administered (for further details see McNamara et al., 2020).

### 3.2.3 Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale

Child self-concept was captured at nine years of age using a shortened version of the Piers-Harris Self-concept Scale (Piers and Herzberg, 2002; McNamara et al., 2020). The child participants completed these questions in their home as part of a self-complete questionnaire used for more sensitive or personal questions.

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31 One of the particularly beneficial features of the British Ability Scales is that the core sub-tests are individually interpretable: to assess the level of performance it is not necessary to complete all tests in the battery (Elliott et al., 1997). This makes it particularly suitable for collection in a time-restricted survey setting such as the GUI study.

The scale consists of 31 items, which can be also subdivided into the following six subscales. (Some of the individual items load onto more than one sub-scale.)

- **Behavioural adjustment** – A sub-scale of nine items on problematic behaviours, which includes perception of getting into trouble, or behaving badly at home or at school.
- **Intellectual and school status** – A sub-scale of eight items reflecting the nine year olds’ assessment of their abilities with respect to intellectual and academic tasks. It also includes items relating to general satisfaction with school and perceptions of future achievements.
- **Physical appearance and attributes** – A sub-scale of seven items about perceptions of physical appearance and other attributes such as leadership and ability to express ideas.
- **Freedom from anxiety** – A sub-scale of eight items exploring a variety of feelings including fear, unhappiness, nervousness, shyness and feeling left out of things.
- **Popularity** – A sub-scale of six items exploring nine year olds’ evaluation of their social functioning. This includes items such as difficulty making friends, being picked on and feeling left out.
- **Happiness and satisfaction** – A sub-scale of six items reflecting feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life; for example, feeling unhappy and liking or disliking the way they are.

In the analysis, we focus primarily on the total score across the 31 items. The score ranges from three to 31. The mean score was 27 with a standard deviation of 4.21 (McNamara et al., 2020). A slightly higher proportion of children with two non-native English-speaking parents do not complete the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale (11.3 per cent) than those with two native English-speaking parents (8.9 per cent). This difference could be related to language difficulties in completing the questions.

### 3.3 MEASUREMENT OF MIGRANT BACKGROUND

We use a variety of measures to differentiate those with a migrant background, country of birth of primary and secondary caregivers (mothers and fathers), linguistic background of parents and ethnicity of parents. This information is taken from Wave 1 of the study from both primary caregiver (usually the mother) and secondary caregiver (usually the father) questionnaires. All of the children were living in Ireland by nine months of age, and a very small number had been born outside Ireland.<sup>32</sup>

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32 Of the 11,134 children, 114 were born abroad but came to Ireland before they were nine months old. We include these with the second-generation migrants.

### 3.3.1 Parental country of birth

The parents of the GUI children come from over 120 different countries; these have been grouped into eight categories in order to provide sufficient cases for analysis:

- Ireland;
- UK;
- eastern Europe, including EU countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and non-EU countries (Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kosovo, Moldova, Russia, Serbia and the Ukraine);
- western Europe, including EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden) and Norway and Switzerland;
- Africa;
- Asia;
- US/Canada/New Zealand/Australia; and
- ‘other’ – South and Central America and other countries not classified elsewhere.

We created a simplified second-generation identifier with three categories:

- both parents (or lone parent) born in Ireland;
- one parent born abroad and one born in Ireland; and
- both parents (or lone parent) born abroad.<sup>33</sup>

In this study, children in the first and second categories are classified as second-generation migrants.

**Linguistic background** is captured from questions to both the mother and father on whether English is their native language. The information on both parents is combined into the following categorisation:

- both parents (or lone parent) native English speaker;
- one parent (mother or father) native English speaker and one not; and
- both parents not native English speakers.

**Ethnic background** of parents is classified as:

- both parents (or lone parent) White Irish or other White background;
- one parent Black, Asian or Other ethnic minority; and

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<sup>33</sup> There is no case whereby the country of birth of a child’s mother is missing, though for fathers, 24 per cent of cases have no information on the secondary caregiver’s country of birth (see Table 4.2 below). In some cases, this parent may be born abroad. For consistency, we also use a consistent definition of migrant-origin children throughout the study: a child with two parents born abroad at nine months remains in this category throughout. A disadvantage is that some children may change ‘status’ through parental separation and/or re-partnering.

- both parents Black, Asian or Other ethnic minority.

Traveller status is included as a separate ethnicity in the questionnaire; however, in the research microdata file (RMF) data, Travellers are included in the White Irish group, and so cannot be separately identified here.

### 3.4 MEASUREMENT OF EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

A range of explanatory variables are included in the analysis to capture family social and economic status, child characteristics, participation in early education and care, school start and school characteristics. These variables are selected to measure the family, environmental and institutional influence on children's outcomes, some of which may mediate or moderate the influence of migrant background and are primarily based either on the literature review in Chapter 2 or previous work on developmental outcomes of this cohort in the GUI study (see for example Williams et al., 2016; McGinnity et al., 2015; Smyth, 2018).

#### 3.4.1 Maternal education

Educational attainment was based on the highest qualification obtained. These were grouped into lower secondary or less, upper secondary (e.g. Leaving Certificate), non-degree (e.g. certificate or diploma level) and degree-level or above.

#### 3.4.2 Low household income

Mothers provided an exact figure or best-guess estimate of household income (net of tax, PRSI, etc). This figure was then equivalised depending on the number of adults and children in the household, and divided into quintiles, with the highest (fifth) quintile comprising the wealthiest families. A dummy variable was created to measure families in the bottom two quintiles of the equivalised income distribution. An additional dummy was created to cover cases where income information was not available.

#### 3.4.3 Special educational need (SEN)

Teacher reports were used to measure SEN at five years.<sup>34</sup> Children were recorded as having a SEN if a teacher reported them as having any of the following conditions to the extent that it limited their activity in school: physical disability or visual or hearing impairment; speech impairment; autism spectrum disorders; mild general learning disability; moderate/severe/profound general learning disability; specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia); emotional or behavioural problem, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); or other limitations including

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34 The pattern of results is the same if we use SEN measured in Wave 5 at nine years of age, so we opted to use the same measure in the models of outcomes at age nine.



dyspraxia/motor problems; or other medical or health problem. Additional education needs due to language background or family difficulties were excluded from the measure.

#### 3.4.4 Centre-based care

To analyse the influence of participation in formal childcare, we draw on a variable that records whether or not the child was in regular centre-based care at the age of three (and hence likely to have started early education before the rest of the cohort). In Chapter 4, we also examine whether take-up of the free pre-school place under the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) differed between children of a migrant background and those whose parents were Irish born. Mothers were provided with information about the scheme and asked, 'Did you avail of the free preschool year for the Study Child?'<sup>35</sup>

#### 3.4.5 School start

This variable captures whether or not children had started school at the time of the Wave 3 interview, at age five, which was the case for almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of children. This variable also captures length of exposure to school at age nine.

#### 3.4.6 School characteristics

At Wave 3 and Wave 5, information about the characteristics of schools were collected from school principals. Unlike Cohort '98, the sample for Cohort '08 was not clustered at school level. In Wave 5, the 8,032 children in the study were attending 2,365 schools.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, in most cases only a small number of the study children were attending the same school. Of the schools included, 83 per cent (1,863) have five or fewer students in the sample, and only 3.3 per cent (78) have over ten students in the sample. For this reason, we do not conduct multilevel analysis; instead, we include school characteristics as a separate step within nested ordinary least squares (OLS) or logistic regression models (see Section 3.4 below).

The social composition of schools is measured by Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) status. There are three designated DEIS statuses: DEIS Urban Band 1, DEIS Urban Band 2 and DEIS Rural. DEIS schools are identified as having a socially disadvantaged intake and are entitled to additional resources and supports. Urban Band 1 schools are the most disadvantaged.

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35 The preamble to the question stated, 'Children aged between 3 years 3 months and 4 years 6 months on the 1st of September each year are entitled to free part-time preschool places funded by the Government. For these questions, I would like you to think about only those preschool places funded by the free preschool year'.

36 At the time (2017), there was a total of 3,246 primary schools in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2019).

The proportion of children with a migrant background in a school is used as a second school-level characteristic. This measure is based on school principal reported figures of the total school population and, within that, the number of students with a migrant background. This has been recoded into a categorical variable in order to include those with missing values in the models. It is measured at Wave 5. Where there is missing information at Wave 5, we use the information collected at Wave 3 to reduce the number of missing cases.

### 3.5 ANALYTIC STRATEGY

In the chapters that follow, we analyse the GUI data using statistical models. Our strategy is to construct a set of nested models. First, country of birth information for mothers and fathers is entered. We then examine how these coefficients are altered by the inclusion of linguistic background of parents (the combined measure noted above) and the ethnic background of parents. The nested model approach allows us to exploit the rich data on family background in the GUI to investigate which aspects of child background – such as language and ethnicity – lie behind the parental country-of-birth effect. Following this, we examine how all three indicators change when controls for family socio-economic status (SES), child characteristics and school characteristics are added in three additional steps. In addition to the nested models, we conduct a Gelbach decomposition analysis (Gelbach, 2016) to assess how much of the country-of-birth effects are accounted for by the different groups of explanatory variables, which ensures that interpretation of the results is not determined by the sequence in which they are added. In the case of vocabulary and reading outcomes, we estimate a model in which we add the children's scores from an earlier wave. These are known as lagged dependent variable models and show how child progression over time relates to the explanatory variables.

The main models are OLS regression models. The outcomes (dependent variables) are continuous – vocabulary scores, reading scores and self-concept scores – and the results can be interpreted as a one-unit change in the outcome variable; for example, reading scores being associated with a one-unit change in the predictor variable. Many of the predictor variables are categorical, and in this case the coefficient can be interpreted as the unit change in the outcome measure associated with being in a given category compared to the reference category. For example, taking mother's education, a coefficient of +5.5 for 'degree' means that in cases where a mother has a degree, the study child has a 5.5 point higher score than children in the reference group, where the mother has lower secondary education. The effect of each variable is net of all the other explanatory variables in the model.

We also include two logistic regression models, where the outcome is a binary variable: being in the lowest quintile of the vocabulary/reading score or not.<sup>37</sup> In these models, coefficients are presented in the form of odds ratios; values above one indicate that the explanatory variable is associated with a greater likelihood of being in the bottom quintile for vocabulary/reading achievement compared to the reference group, while values below one indicate that the factor is related to a lower likelihood of being in the bottom quintile.

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37 We are primarily interested in the factors that influence low reading ability rather than variation across the whole distribution. For this reason, we do not use a quintile regression.

## CHAPTER 4

### Profile of the second generation

In this chapter, we outline the profile of the second generation in Cohort '08 of the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) study. Section 4.1 considers the country of origin of the mother and the father (where he is co-resident), as well as the child's linguistic background and ethnicity, as important background information for understanding their school achievement and wellbeing. In addition to family background, an important theme in the literature on the integration of migrant children is exposure to the host or receiving country (Jonsson et al., 2018). For children, key sources of 'exposure' in Ireland are their participation in and experience of preschool and school. Section 4.2 examines participation in early education and childcare and school start among children with a migrant background. Relating to debates articulated in Chapter 2, Section 4.3 considers some salient characteristics of the schools attended by second-generation migrant children at age nine.

#### 4.1 BIRTHPLACE AND LINGUISTIC AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF PARENTS

Looking at parental country of birth across all families in the GUI Cohort '08 (Table 4.1), we find that, for over two-thirds (67 per cent) of children, their parents were both born in Ireland (or one parent, in the case of lone parent families). Almost one-fifth of children had parents who were both born abroad, and 14 per cent had one parent who was born abroad and one Irish-born parent. At the Wave 1 interview, at nine months, a somewhat lower proportion of migrant mothers were lone parents (12.4 per cent) than was the case for Irish-born mothers (15.4 per cent). By the Wave 5 interview, when the children were nine years, migrant mothers were more likely to be lone parents (16.8 per cent) than Irish-born mothers (14.4 per cent). Previous research suggests that the experience of migration may contribute to relationship breakdown (Kamijin, 2018). Analysis of the Census 2016 shows that lone parenthood rates also differ across migrant groups in Ireland (McGinnity et al, forthcoming).

**TABLE 4.1 PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WITH IRISH AND NON-IRISH PARENTS**

	Weighted %	Unweighted N
<b>Both parents Irish</b>	67.1	7,971
<b>One parent born abroad</b>	13.9	1,464
<b>Both parents born abroad</b>	19.0	1,699
<b>Total</b>	100.0	11,134

Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 1.

Notes: Lone parents are assigned to either the 'Both parents Irish' or 'Both parents born abroad' categories, depending on their country of birth.

Table 4.2 examines the country of birth of mothers and fathers. It shows that, following Irish-born, the two largest groups are those born in the UK and those born in eastern Europe, with each group accounting for around seven per cent of mothers and fathers). African and Asian migrants (roughly three per cent) comprise the next largest group, followed by those from western Europe.

**TABLE 4.2 PARENTAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH (%)**

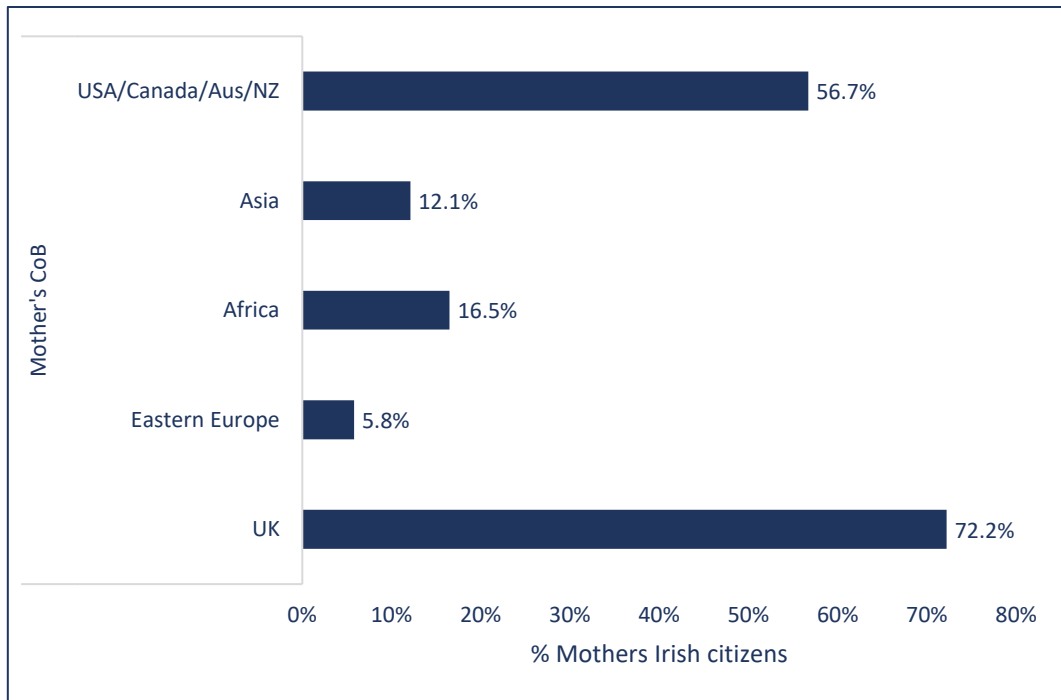
	Mother	Father
<b>Ireland</b>	77.8	78.3
<b>UK</b>	6.5	7.3
<b>Eastern Europe</b>	7.0	6.3
<b>Western Europe</b>	1.3	1.2
<b>Africa</b>	3.2	2.9
<b>Asia</b>	2.6	2.8
<b>US/Canada/Aus/NZ</b>	1.1	0.9
<b>Other</b>	0.4	0.4
<b>N</b>	11,134	8,424

Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 1

Notes: Couple and lone parent households. A total of 2,707 cases were excluded from the analysis of fathers as country of birth information was missing (24 per cent).

Obtaining Irish citizenship is associated with additional rights for those born outside of the EU and is also a signal of a long-term attachment to Ireland. Some migrants may have Irish citizenship before they move to Ireland by virtue of Irish ancestry or because they were born in Northern Ireland (see McGinnity et al., 2020a, for a discussion of citizenship attainment among migrants). The proportion of parents born abroad who are Irish citizens varies by country of birth, and is highest among those born in the UK or in the category comprising those in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Almost three-quarters of mothers from the UK (72 per cent) and 57 per cent of mothers from the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were Irish citizens. In contrast, 17 per cent of African mothers and 12 per cent of Asian mothers were Irish citizens. Mothers from eastern Europe (six per cent) were the least likely to be Irish citizens. These patterns of citizenship are broadly consistent with overall patterns of citizenship in the foreign-born adult population (McGinnity et al., 2020a).

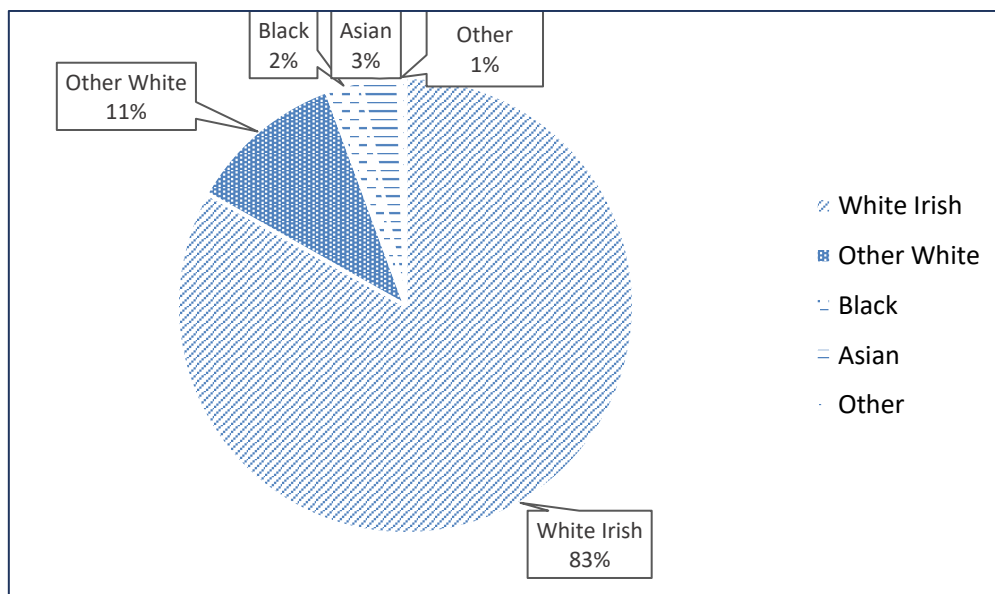
**FIGURE 4.1 PROPORTION OF MOTHERS BORN ABROAD WHO ARE IRISH CITIZENS**



Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 1.  
 Note: Wave 1 results for western Europe are not included due to small cell sizes.

Figure 4.2 shows the ethnicity of mothers within the GUI. The results are very similar for fathers (not shown). Overall, 'White Irish' made up the majority of (83 per cent), followed by 'other White' (11 per cent). 'Asian' (three per cent), 'Black/African' (two per cent) and 'other' (one per cent) made up a significantly smaller proportion of ethnicity. The ethnic makeup of the GUI mothers reflects that of the population in the 2011 Census (see McGinnity et al., 2018).

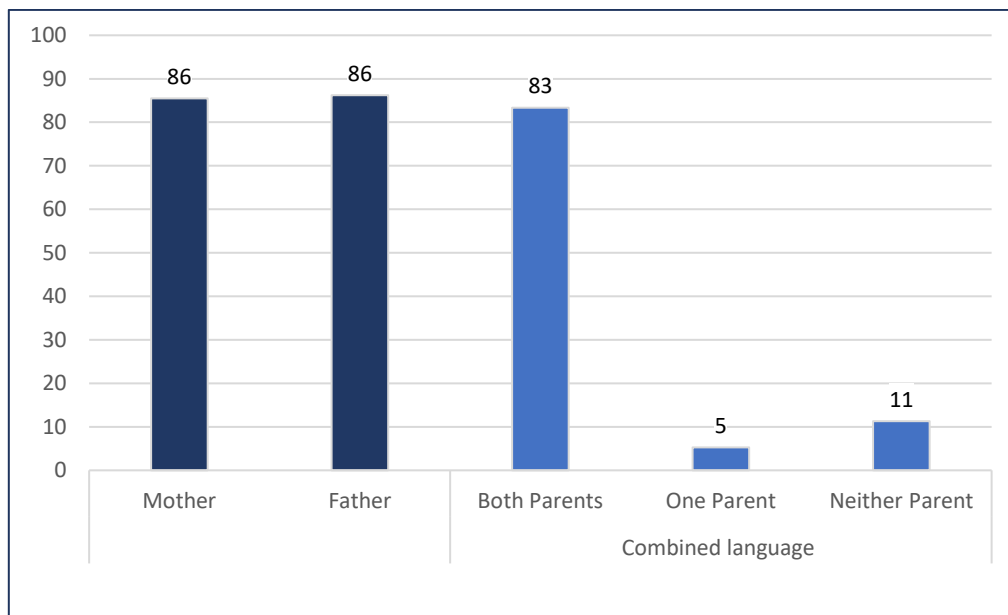
**FIGURE 4.2 ETHNICITY OF MOTHERS**



Notes: Measured at Wave 1 of GUI. Cross-sectional sample N=11,134.

Figure 4.3 presents the proportion of parents with English as a native language. A high proportion (86 per cent) of both the mother and the father (where present) were English native speakers. In terms of family context, 83 per cent of children had two native English-speaking parents and 11 per cent of children were living in families where neither parent was a native English speaker. A minority of children (five per cent) lived in households where one parent had English as a native language and the other parent was not a native English speaker.

**FIGURE 4.3 PROPORTION OF PARENTS WITH ENGLISH AS NATIVE LANGUAGE**



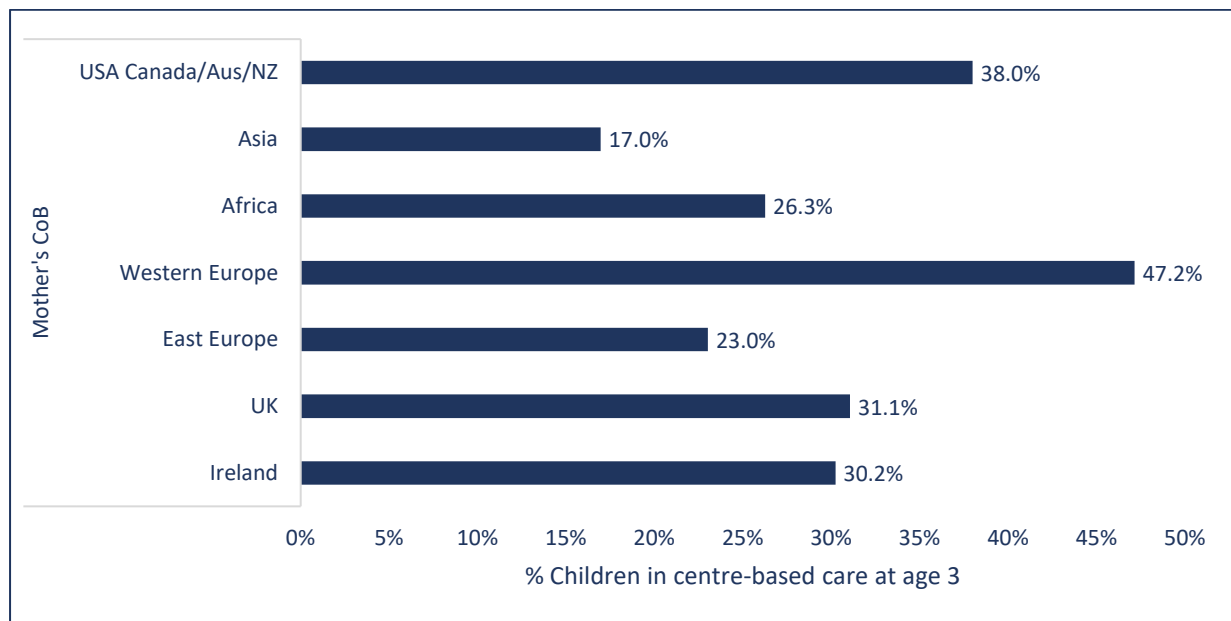
*Notes:* Measured at Wave 1. Cross-sectional sample. N=11,134. Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding. Lone parents are assigned to the 'Both parents' category.

## 4.2 EARLY CHILDCARE/EDUCATION AND STARTING SCHOOL

As noted in Chapter 1, access to formal care early in Ireland is restricted by high costs, especially for young infants. Lower income may therefore act as a barrier for some migrant groups. Lack of knowledge about childcare services and entitlements may also reduce access to parents who are not familiar with the Irish system. In particular, market-based provision for children aged three and under may be difficult to navigate for newcomers. Limited provision of services results in extensive waiting lists, which can put newcomers at a disadvantage. At the same time, demand for formal care may be higher among migrant parents because they do not have ready access to family networks to provide informal childcare. Participation in formal childcare is also potentially influential for the acquisition of English language skills. McGinnity et al. (2015) find a small positive effect of participation in centre-based care compared to full-time parental care, at age three, on cognitive skills at five years for children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, but not for those from English-speaking backgrounds.

Previous GUI-based research showed that families with a non-Irish mother were less likely to use non-parental childcare for their child at age three (Murray et al., 2016). At the three-year interview, the study children were not yet eligible to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme.<sup>38</sup> When they did use non-parental care, migrant families were more likely to use centre-based care than home-based care – care by relatives or by childminders (*ibid.*). Figure 4.4 indicates that the use of centre-based care varies widely by the regional background of the mother. The highest level of use is observed among mothers of western European origin, followed by mothers from the US/Canada/Australia/NZ. In contrast, mothers from Asia and eastern Europe were significantly less likely to use formal centre-based care than Irish mothers. These differences are likely to partly reflect variation in the employment rates of mothers (see also McGinnity et al., 2014). As Roeder et al. (2017) note, using data from this cohort, eastern European mothers in Ireland have very high employment rates prior to having children, but this is then followed by low rates of employment.

**FIGURE 4.4 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN CENTRE-BASED CARE AT AGE 3 BY MATERNAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH**



Source: GUI Cohort '08 Wave 2, cross-sectional weight. N = 9,793.  
 Note: CoB stands for country of birth.

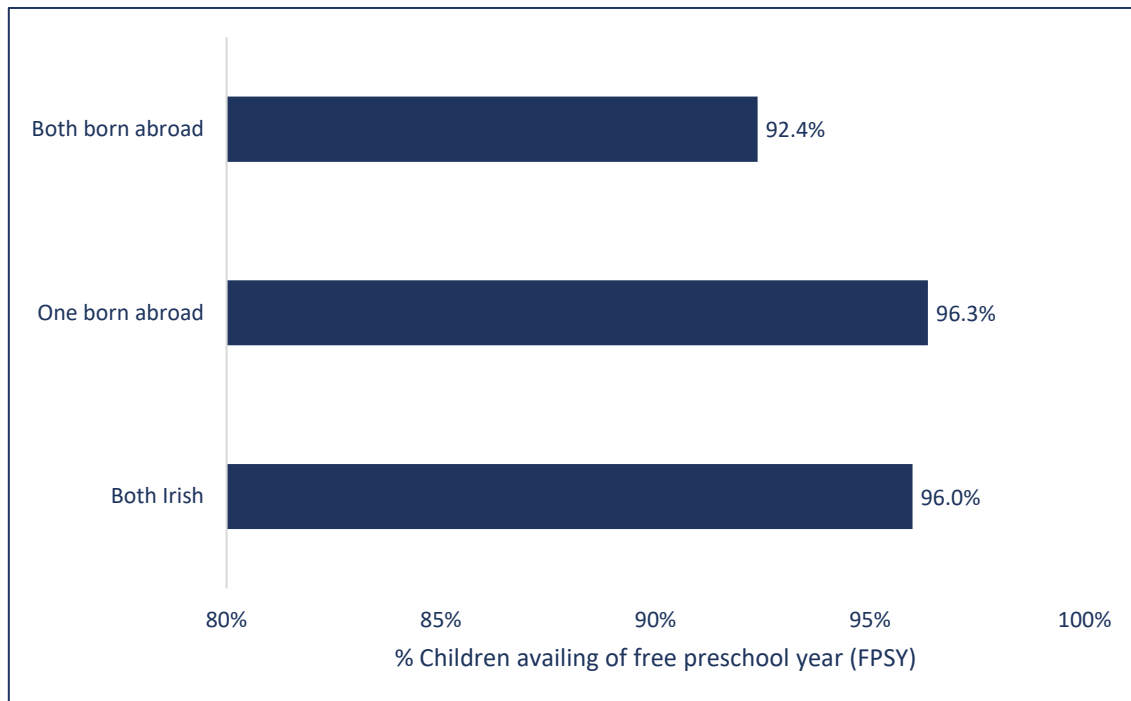
The study children were one of the first cohorts to be entitled to a free pre-school year (FPSY) with the introduction of the ECCE scheme in 2010. While that year saw very high take up overall, there is a noticeable difference in the proportion of families in which both parents were born abroad who availed of the service when compared to the rest of the population (see Figure 4.5). This is likely to reflect a lack of knowledge about the scheme: as it is free for parents, cost is unlikely to be a barrier (see also OECD, 2021). As by now, the scheme is much more established, this gap in awareness levels may no longer exist. We cannot differentiate further

38 At the time of interviews, eligibility began at three years and three months. See pages 9-10 above.



by country of origin due to the small number who did not participate, though we do know that 90 per cent of children with both parents born abroad participated in the ECCE scheme.

**FIGURE 4.5 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WHO AVAILED OF ECCE FPSY BY PARENTAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH**



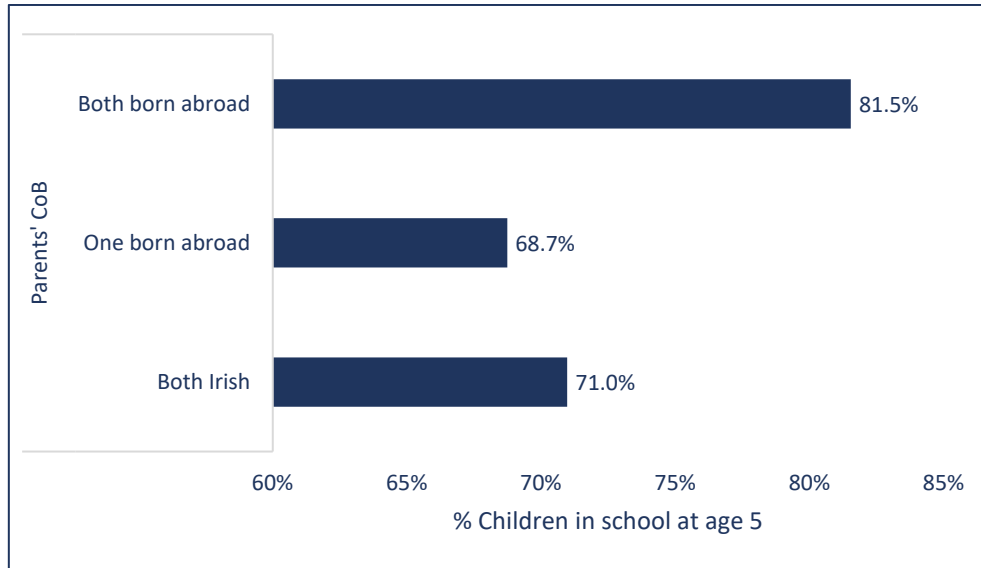
*Source:* GUI Cohort '08 Wave 3 weighted by cross-sectional weight. N = 8,993.

*Notes:* 'Both' includes lone-parent families. CoB stands for country of birth.

While they are not legally obliged to start school until they are six years old, the majority of children in Ireland start school by or at five years of age (Murray et al., 2016). In many other European countries, children aged under six years are in pre-school settings and, in fact, OECD statistics on 'early years' spending typically include spending for four- and five-year-olds in infant classes in primary school (*ibid.*). Compulsory school starting age also differs in sending countries. For example, in Britain it is five years, in Poland and Lithuania it is seven years, while in most of the EU it is six years (Sharp, 2002). Figure 4.6 shows that there is a significant difference in the age of school start by migrant background. Children with two migrant parents were significantly more likely to have started school by age five than those with at least one or both parents born in Ireland. If primary school in Ireland is considered a form of early care and education (albeit very different from that in preschool settings), this runs counter to patterns in many European countries, where participation of migrant-origin children in early care and education at the ages of five or six is typically lower than that of native-born children (Kulic et al., 2019). It is also in contrast to the participation rates of migrant-origin children in preschool at age three (Figure 4.4.) These two processes are likely to be related; if migrant parents are not accessing the ECCE they are more likely to start school early. School start is again potentially important for (English)

vocabulary development as it will influence the exposure of the child to formal learning through English.

**FIGURE 4.6 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AT AGE 5 BY PARENTAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH**



Source: GUI Cohort '08 Wave 3, weighted by cross-sectional weight. N = 8,993.

Notes: 'Both' includes lone parent families. CoB stands for country of birth.

### 4.3 SCHOOL DEIS STATUS AND MIGRANT CONCENTRATION AT AGE 9

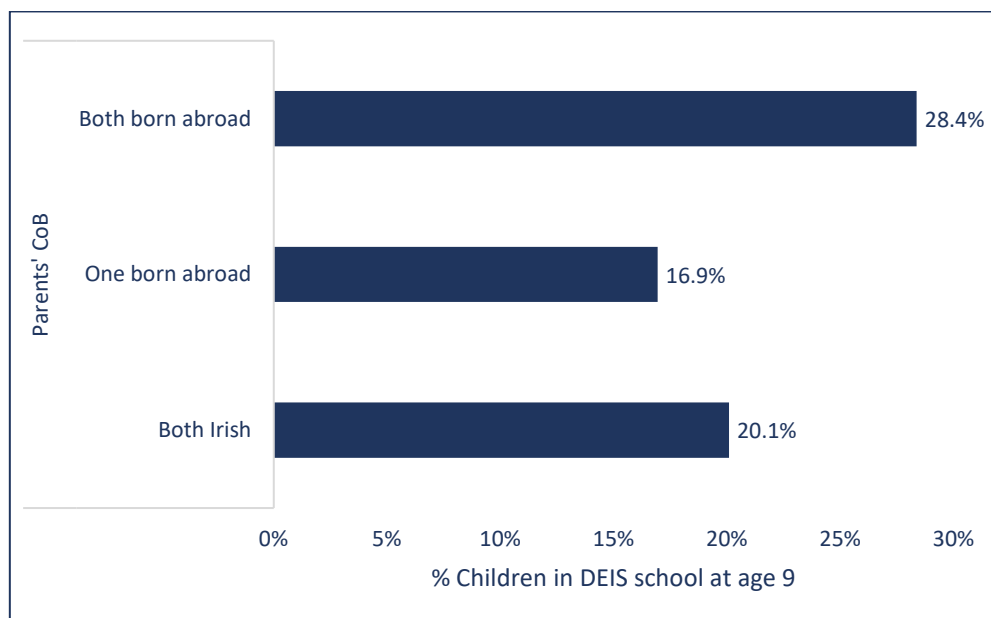
This section considers evidence on two important features of the schools that migrant-origin children attend in Ireland, both of which are relevant to their development and integration. These features are: whether migrant-origin children are more likely to attend a disadvantaged school; and whether they are concentrated in particular primary schools and thus likely to be in schools with many other migrant children.

Previous research in Ireland showed that schools with a disadvantaged intake differ in many ways from non-disadvantaged schools, including teacher quality, school climate and teachers' expectations (McCoy et al., 2014; Smyth et al., 2015). Based on responses to a representative survey of principals in 2007, Byrne et al. (2010) found that, at both primary and secondary level, migrant-origin children were more likely to be concentrated in schools serving disadvantaged areas. The authors interpreted this as an interaction between residential segregation, parental choice and school admission criteria (*ibid.*). Was this still the case when this cohort of children were interviewed at age nine in 2017? Figure 4.7 presents the proportion of children by parental country of origin according to whether they were in any category of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) school (see Section 3.3 for details of DEIS categorisation). Whereas around one-fifth (20 per cent) of children whose parents were both Irish were attending DEIS primary schools, this was the case for 28 per cent of children whose parents were both born abroad. The proportion of children in DEIS schools is highest for those who have a mother

from Asia (37 per cent) or Africa (30 per cent), compared to 20 per cent for those with an Irish mother. The figure falls to 23–24 per cent for those with a mother from the UK or eastern Europe, and to 19 per cent for migrant-origin children whose mother is from any other county.

This pattern of over-representation is consistent with the findings of Byrne et al. (2010), and also reflects international trends. Interestingly though, children who have one parent born abroad are somewhat less likely to attend DEIS schools (17 per cent), suggesting that this group is distinct from children with both parents born abroad.

**FIGURE 4.7 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN A DISADVANTAGED (DEIS) SCHOOL BY PARENTAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH**



Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 5, weighted by cross-sectional weight. N = 7,250.

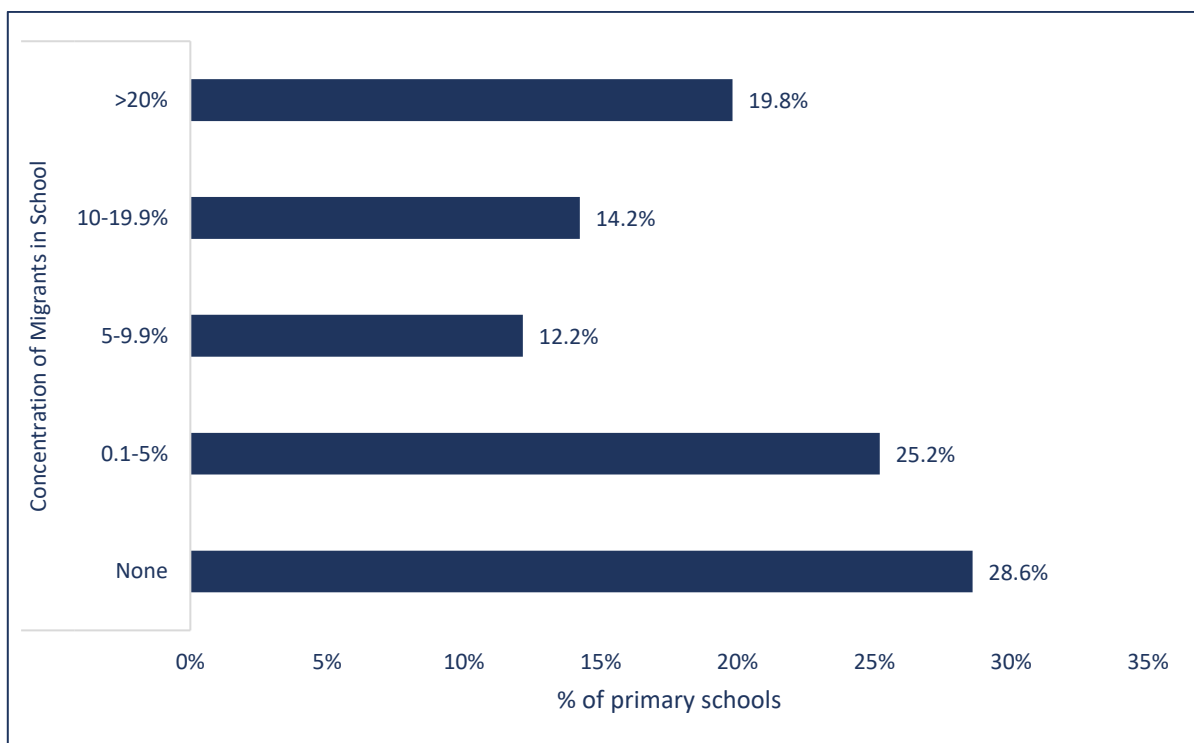
Notes: 'Both' includes single parent families. CoB stands for country of birth.

To what extent are migrant-origin children clustered in schools? Figure 4.8 presents the overall proportion of children in primary schools at age nine (in 2017) by the concentration of migrants in school, as reported by the school principal. (See Chapter 3 for details of measurement; this does not distinguish between first and second-generation migrants.) Almost 30 per cent of children in Cohort '08 of the GUI were found to attend schools with no migrant-origin children. A significant proportion (one-quarter) attended schools with a small proportion of migrants (less than five per cent). Around 27 per cent attended schools with between five and 19 per cent of migrants, while 20 per cent of children were found to attend schools in which over one-fifth of the school body is of migrant origin. Further analysis shows that children with both parents born outside Ireland were much more likely to be in schools with a higher concentration of migrant students: 43 per cent of this group were in schools where one-fifth or more of students were from a migrant background, compared to 19 per cent of those with one parent

born abroad and one born in Ireland and 16 per cent of children with only Irish-born parents (see appendix figure A.1).

Previous research (Fahey et al., 2019) found that the first-generation migrant population is widely distributed across the country measured at local electoral district level with some concentration within city centres. The pattern for school attendance suggests somewhat greater clustering at the school level. In Chapters 5 and 6, we consider whether the proportion of migrants in a school is associated with either cognitive achievement or socio-emotional wellbeing, both for all pupils attending the school, and for migrant-origin children specifically.

**FIGURE 4.8 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY CONCENTRATION OF MIGRANTS**



Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 5, weighted by cross-sectional weight. N = 7,059. Excludes missing values (12 per cent of the sample).

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter presented a profile of migrant-origin children from Cohort '08 of the GUI study, in terms of their backgrounds and their exposure to preschool and school in Ireland. Analysis of Wave 1 shows that for one-third of children in these data, either both parents (19 per cent) or one parent (14 per cent) was born abroad. This is using the 'broadest' definition of migrant-origin children, including parents born in the UK as born abroad, and recording those where one parent is born in Ireland, and one born abroad.

Reflecting the patterns of immigration to Ireland, half of the migrant-origin children had parents of either UK or eastern European origin, though a significant

minority had parents born in Africa or Asia. Fewer migrant-origin children had parents born in western Europe or the US. Overall, in this cohort, where mothers were not White Irish, they were mainly of 'other White' ethnicity (11 per cent of the sample). Children of Black mothers made up two per cent of the overall sample, and Asian mothers three per cent. In terms of linguistic background, 11 per cent of children lived in families where neither parent was a native-English speaker, with a further five per cent living in families where one parent was a native English speaker. This highlights that while one-third of children are of migrant origin, most of these have one native English-speaking parent. It will be interesting to investigate how the five per cent of children with one native English-speaking parent fare in terms of their English-language development.

Participation in preschool education is potentially beneficial for cognitive development, in particular for migrant children or children from a different language background. In 2011, around 30 per cent of children in this cohort were attending the (typically expensive) centre-based care at age three. A much higher proportion of children of west European and North American/Australasian mothers were found to attend centre-based care than those of eastern European, Asian and African mothers. Attendance of the part-time free preschool year, between ages three and five, at 96 per cent of children, was found to be much higher than participation in centre-based care at three years. Children with two parents born abroad have slightly lower participation rates than other children, though over 90 per cent of them still participate in this scheme. Most children in this cohort were in school by age five and, in contrast to preschool, children with both parents born abroad are more likely to be in school at age five (81 per cent) than children with two Irish parents (71 per cent). Being in school at age five may affect achievement scores at age five, but also will affect the duration of 'exposure' to school at age nine.

All the children in the cohort were attending primary school at age nine, but children with both parents born abroad were more likely to attend disadvantaged primary schools (28 per cent) than children with two Irish parents (20 per cent).

In terms of how migrants are concentrated in schools, in many schools in Ireland a small proportion of the student body is of migrant origin, as reported by principals. However, around one-fifth of all children in the '08 cohort were attending schools where over 20 per cent of students were of migrant background. Second-generation migrants were more likely to attend schools with a high share of migrant students. Chapters 5 and 6 will consider the effect, if any, of both family background and exposure to preschool and school on the cognitive achievement and socio-emotional adjustment of children in Cohort '08 of the GUI study. The next chapter considers child achievement in English and how this evolves over time

## CHAPTER 5

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# English language and reading levels among second-generation migrant children

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we investigate the cognitive outcomes of second-generation migrant children in early to middle childhood. We focus on English vocabulary and reading outcomes;<sup>39</sup> this is because these outcomes are more likely to be related to migrant status and because competency in English is crucial for educational achievement in Ireland (Darmody and Smyth, 2018). Children whose first language is English tend to have better vocabulary and reading levels, compared to those for whom English is a second language (ibid, 2018). More generally, research has shown that competency in the language of the destination country is an important measure of migrant integration, something that remains relevant for the second generation (Jonsson et al., 2018). OECD (2018b) notes that language barriers and socio-economic disadvantage are two of the largest obstacles to the successful integration of young people with an immigrant background and that they play a significant role in gaps in educational attainment.

Children's expressive English language vocabulary was tested directly at age three and at age five using age-appropriate tests (see Chapter 3 for details of measures). At nine years of age, the children completed the Drumcondra Primary Reading Test, which is a set of curriculum-based standardised assessments of reading achievement for primary school pupils in Ireland. At age three, a minority of the child respondents did not undertake the English vocabulary test as their primary caregiver believed they would be unable to do so. Non-completion was higher among children of migrants (over 26 per cent of the children with both parents born abroad did not complete the test, compared to five per cent of the overall sample); therefore, we provide details on the scores at age five years because this is a more inclusive sample. In an analysis of children in the lowest quintile of reading scores at age three, those who did not complete the test because of insufficient English language skills are included.<sup>40</sup>

It is important to note that the measure used in the *Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)* study is a measure of proficiency in English, rather than language ability *per se*. Children from a non-English-speaking background are likely to speak another language, and language proficiency is influenced by bilingualism. Studies have indicated that compared with monolinguals, young bilinguals have a smaller

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39 English is the language of instruction in most Irish primary schools (with the exception of 290 Gaelscoileanna). The Department of Education allows students to apply to be excused from studying Irish in English-medium primary and secondary schools. If a student has lived abroad or does not speak English, they may be exempted.

40 Children with both parents born abroad made up just over 70 per cent of the non-completers at age three.

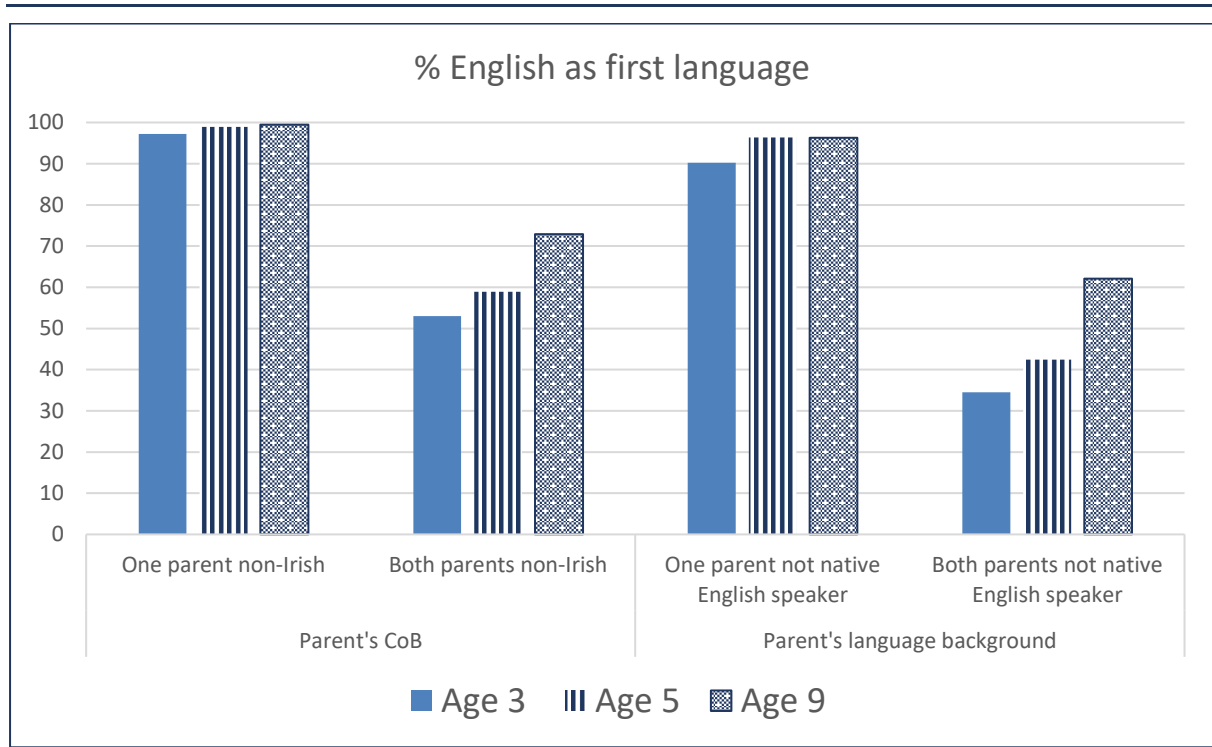
vocabulary if only one language is taken into account (Bialystok, 2006). However, when bilinguals' two languages were taken into account, their vocabulary was found to be similar to that of monolinguals (Poulin-Dubois et al., 2012). A more detailed study focusing on the linguistic ability of bilingual children would be required, and this was not explored in GUI. Of course, the first language of children may also change over time as they develop: this is the subject of the next section.

## 5.2 CHILD'S FIRST LANGUAGE

Given the importance of language for cognitive outcomes, we begin with parental reports of children's first language, data that were collected at each wave of the survey. What is interesting to note is that these reports change according to the child's age.<sup>41</sup> At age three, almost all children with at least one Irish-born parent spoke English or Irish as their first language (97 per cent). Among children with two migrant parents, just over half spoke English as their first language at age three, a figure that rose to 60 per cent at age five and 73 per cent at age nine. A similar pattern emerges regarding parental linguistic background. A large majority (90 per cent) of children with at least one English-speaking parent had English as their first language at age three, rising to 96 per cent at both age five and age nine. Just over one-third of children with two parents (or a lone parent) with a non-English linguistic background spoke English as their first language at age three. But this rose to 62 per cent at nine years of age, suggesting a high level of English language adoption for those children with parents who both have a different linguistic background. This may be partly due to encouragement from parents, considering the importance parents attach to English language fluency in terms of educational attainment and options for the future.

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41 The term 'first language' is used in the questionnaires. It is understood as the main language the child uses rather than the language that the child first learned. As the reported first language changes over time, it is clear that parents also interpret it in this way, rather than in a chronological sense.

**FIGURE 5.1 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS ENGLISH BY AGE AND PARENTAL ORIGIN AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND**

*Source:* GUI Cohort '08 Wave 2, Wave 3 and Wave 5, weighted by longitudinal weight. Parental response to the question, 'What is the study child's first language?'

*Notes:* Children with two parents born in Ireland or where both parents are native English speakers are not presented. 'Both' includes single parent families. CoB stands for country of birth.

This 'linguistic integration' or adoption of the host-country language by children from a different language background is likely to have implications for both academic and social integration in Ireland.

### 5.3 ENGLISH VOCABULARY AND READING ACHIEVEMENT AT AGES 5 AND 9

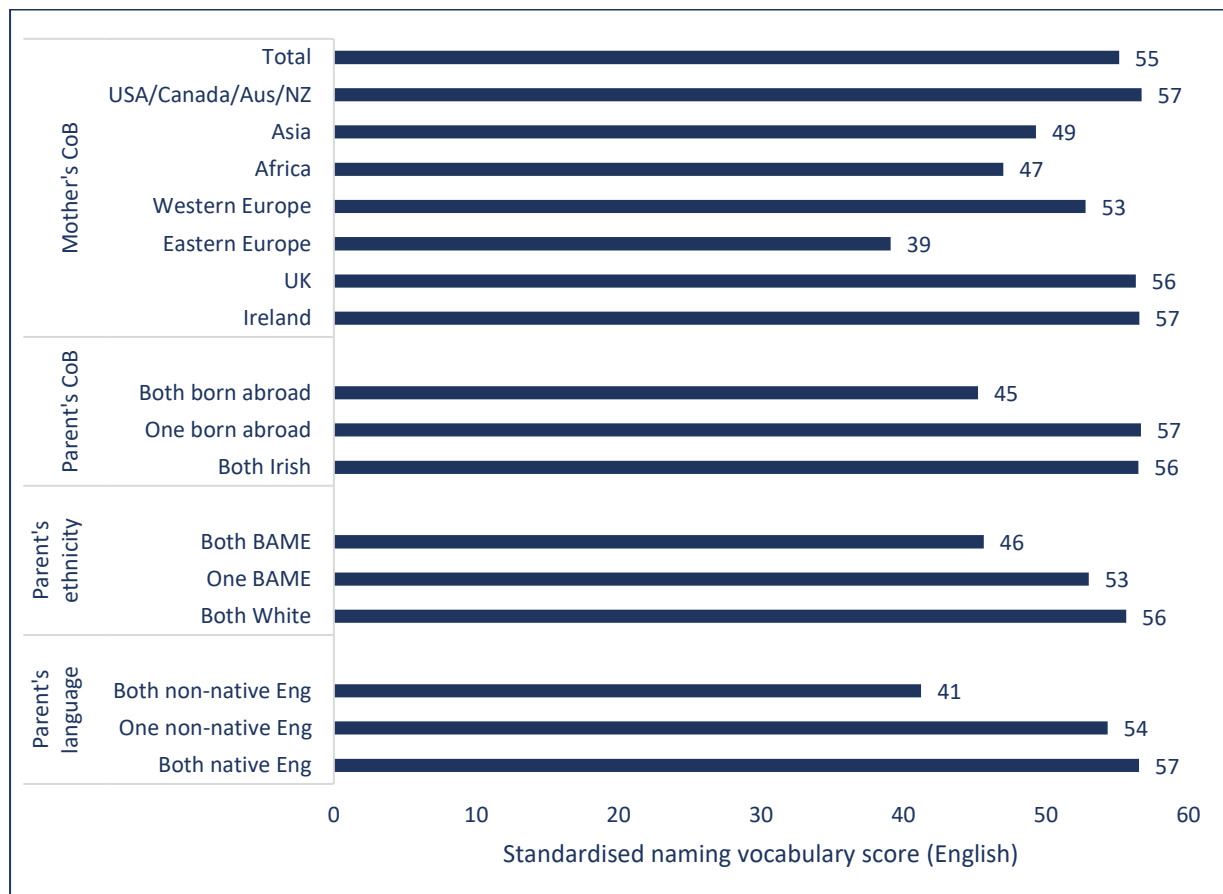
#### 5.3.1 Vocabulary achievement at age 5

How did the English vocabulary of migrant-origin children differ from that of Irish-origin children at age five? The vocabulary test at age five years has an average score of 55 and, as shown in Figure 5.2, the vocabulary scores of the second generation with one Irish and one non-Irish parent are no different from those with two Irish-born parents. Where both parents are born abroad, the children have a mean score of 45 compared to 55 for children of parents born in Ireland. There are significant differences by parental region of origin. In families where the mother was born in eastern Europe, the children had a mean score of 39; this rose to 47 for those born in Africa. Unsurprisingly, scores for children with a mother from the Anglophone countries in the 'US/Canada/Australia/New Zealand' category did not differ from those with Irish parents. Self-rated English-language competence of parents is not measured directly in the GUI study, but these patterns are consistent with self-reported English language proficiency by adults from these regions using



2016 Census data. Self-rated English-language skills vary considerably across country-of-origin group, but tend to be lower among eastern Europeans and higher for migrants who come from a country where English is widely spoken (McGinnity et al., 2020b, Chapter 3).

**FIGURE 5.2 MEAN NAMING VOCABULARY SCORES OF 5 YEAR OLDS BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH, ETHNICITY AND LANGUAGE BACKGROUND OF PARENTS**



Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 3, weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: 'Both' includes single parent families. CoB stands for country of birth; BAME stands for Black, Asian and minority ethnic. For parental CoB, the UK is measured as abroad. 'Other' is not available for mothers' CoB as the sample (N) is too small.

Figure 5.2 also shows that children with both parents (or lone parent) from an ethnic minority background (Black, Asian or Other/mixed ethnicity) have lower mean English vocabulary scores at age five years than those where one or both parents are White.

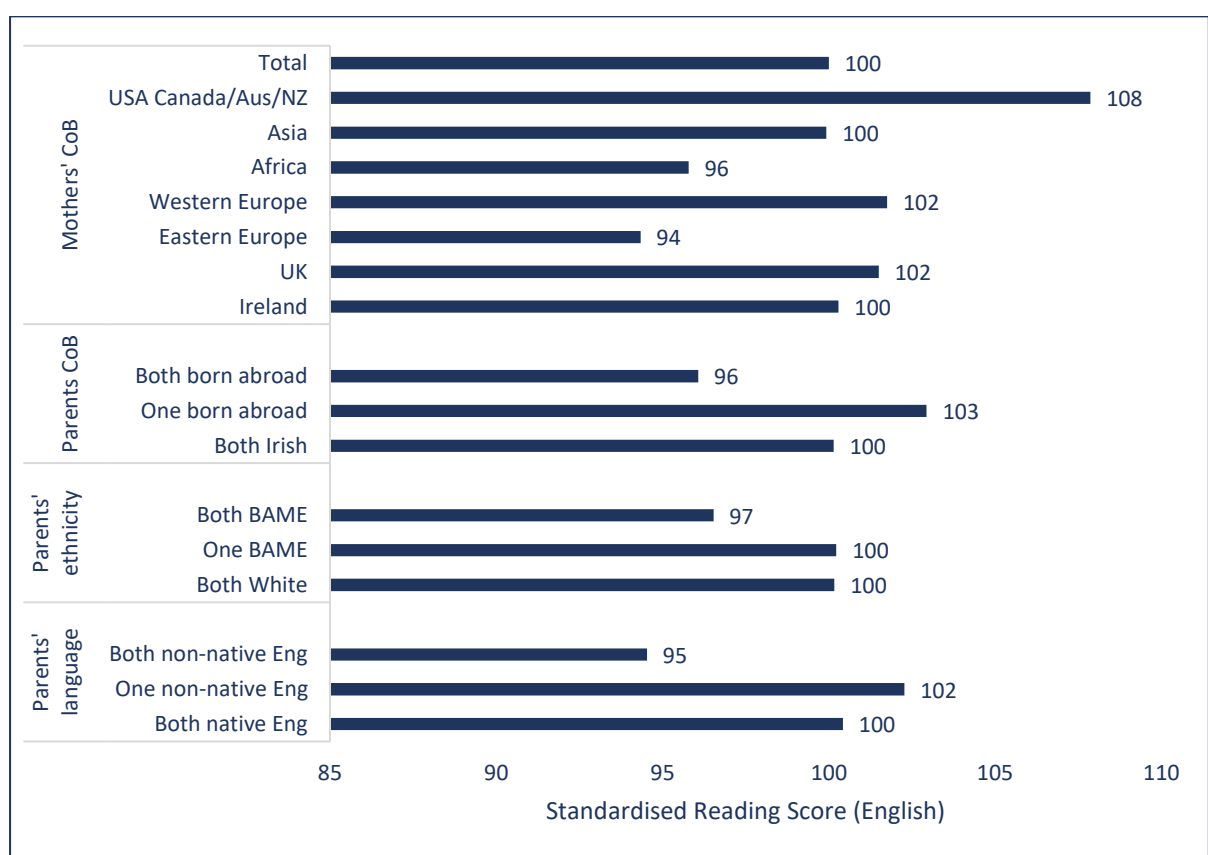
The models below test whether there is any independent influence of ethnic background when linguistic background and socio-economic status (SES) are controlled. They find a significant gap in the mean vocabulary scores at five years between children where both parents are non-native English speakers (41) and

children with two English-speaking parents (57). Where one of two parents is not a native English speaker, the mean score is 54.<sup>42</sup>

### 5.3.2 Overall English reading achievement at age 9

At age nine, the study children completed the Drumcondra Reading Test, which is adjusted for the school stage (for more details see Chapter 3). The measure has been rescaled to have a mean score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. Figure 5.3 replicates the groups presented in Figure 5.2 to present children from different origin-country, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds.

**FIGURE 5.3 MEAN ENGLISH READING SCORES OF 9 YEAR OLDS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, ETHNICITY AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND OF PARENTS**



Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 5, weighted by longitudinal weight.  
 Notes: 'Other' is not available for mother's CoB as the sample (N) is too small. CoB stands for country of birth; BAME for 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'. For parental CoB, the UK is measured as abroad. 'Both' also includes single parent families.

The patterns for maternal country of birth are similar to those observed at age five, albeit with a different scale. Reading scores of children whose mother was born in the US/Canada, western Europe and the UK now have slightly higher mean scores than those born in Ireland, while children of African and eastern European origin have slightly lower mean scores, though the difference is not as great as at age five. Mean reading scores of Asian-origin children do not differ from those of children

42 Significance tests are available in the model so are not calculated here.

with Irish parents at age nine. Some of these factors may be related to socio-economic background and other family and school characteristics. We investigate this using regression modelling in Section 5.5.

Figure 5.3 shows that children with parents who were both born abroad, as well as children with both parents of minority ethnicity and where both parents are non-native English speakers, all have somewhat lower scores than the mean score (100). However, once again, the difference is not as marked as it is at age five (see Figure 5.2). The mean score for children without a native English-speaking parent is five points lower than the mean for those with two native English-speaking parents, which is only one-third of a standard deviation on the scale ( $SD = 15$ ). It is also interesting to note that children who have one parent born abroad and one Irish parent, as well as those with one native English-speaking parent and one non-native English-speaking parent, actually perform slightly higher on English reading tests at age nine than those with two Irish parents or two native English-speaking parents.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that having one Irish parent or one native English-speaking parent significantly facilitates children's English language development. In the next section, using models of reading levels at age nine, we investigate whether any other characteristics of these children and their families play a role.

#### 5.4 TRAJECTORIES OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AMONG MIGRANT CHILDREN (AGE 3 TO 9)

Another way of considering achievement and how it varies by groups is to focus not on the mean scores, but rather on those with low scores relative to their peers. For this, we divide children into five groups or quintiles based on their scores at each wave. This section focuses on the composition of the lowest quintile of achievement. These children are performing poorly in naming vocabulary in English/English reading, which may adversely affect their peer relationships, as well as their learning.

Are second-generation migrant children over-represented in this lowest quintile? Table 5.4 presents the proportion of children in the lowest quintile of English vocabulary/reading by parental country of birth. At age three, there are very clear differences between children with either both or one parent born in Ireland and children with both parents born abroad. At age three, three-fifths of those in the latter group are in the bottom quintile of English reading. This falls to just over half (52 per cent) at age five. What is remarkable is that four years later, at age nine, only one-quarter of these same children, where both parents were born abroad, are in the lowest quintile of achievement. Given the children would have been at school for all (or at least most) of these four years, it does suggest considerable

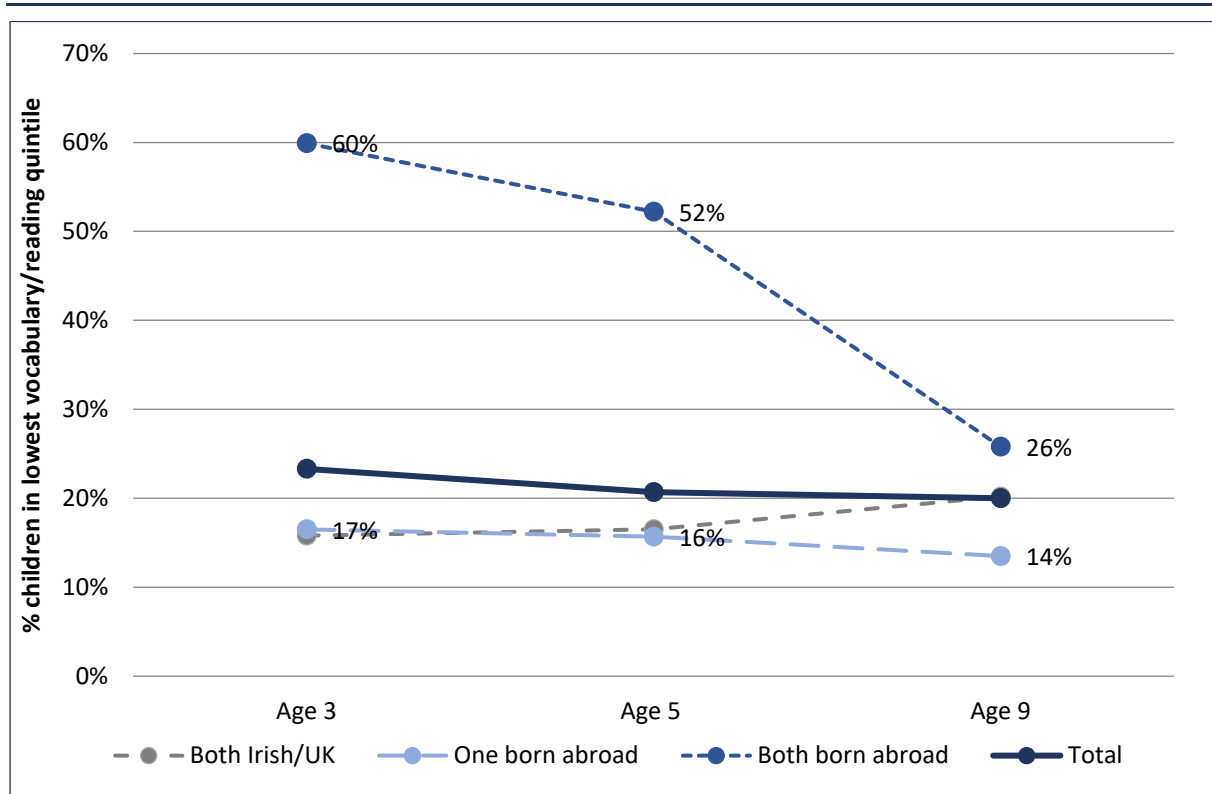
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43 These groups overlap, but not completely. For example, a child with a parent from the US and another from Turkey might count as having one non-native English-speaking parent, but with both parents born abroad.

progress is made in terms of achievement in English reading by second-generation migrants in Irish schools.

It is also of note that by age nine, while one-fifth of the children of Irish parents are in the lowest quintile in English reading, a lower proportion (14 per cent) of those with one Irish parent are in the lowest quintile. This suggests that this group of children are performing better than children with two Irish parents. This is shown in Figure 5.3, which presents mean reading scores. That said, these families may be advantaged in terms of having higher parental education and higher incomes, which is the focus of Section 5.6.

**FIGURE 5.4 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN THE LOWEST QUINTILE OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY/READING BY PARENTAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH\***



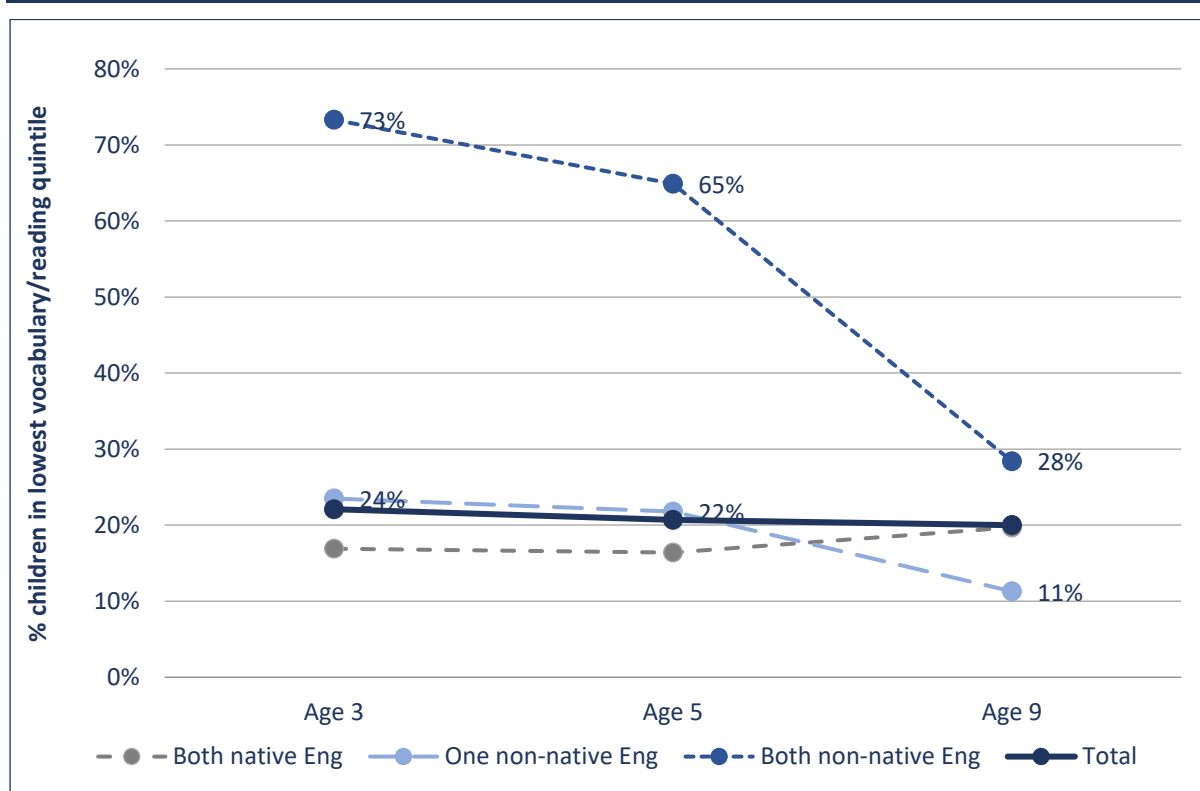
Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 2, Wave 3 and Wave 5, weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: \*Age 3 scores include those who were not able to complete the test at age 3 in the bottom quintile, which is why 23 per cent of the total sample is in the bottom quintile at age 3, rather than 20 per cent. 'Both' includes single parent families.

Figure 5.5 presents children's linguistic background, rather than parental country of birth. The figure presents the proportion of those in the lowest quintile of English vocabulary/reading among children with two native English-speaking parents, one native English-speaking parent and two non-native English-speaking parents. For children with two non-native English-speaking parents, the change over time is even more dramatic than in Figure 5.4: almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of this group were in the lowest quintile of vocabulary at age three, two-thirds (65 per cent) at age five but only 28 per cent by age nine. That said, even at age nine, this group were more likely to be in a lower achievement quintile than children with at least one native English-speaking parent.

Figure 5.5 also shows how, by age nine, children with one native English-speaking parent are less likely to be in the lowest quintile in English reading than children with two native English-speaking parents (11 per cent versus 20 per cent). As with children with one parent born abroad, with whom there is likely to be significant overlap, this may be an advantaged group in other ways, something we investigate using regression modelling.

**FIGURE 5.5 PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN THE LOWEST QUINTILE OF VOCABULARY/READING BY PARENTAL LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND**



Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 2, Wave 3 and Wave 5, weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: Age 3 scores include those who were not able to complete the test at age 3 in the bottom quintile, as in the model above (Table 5.2). 'Both' includes lone parent families.

## 5.5 MODELS OF VOCABULARY AT AGE 5

### 5.5.1 Mean vocabulary scores at age 5

To what extent are these differences in achievement by parental region of origin related to linguistic and ethnic background, other parental resources or characteristics of schools attended? Some international research argues that much of the gap between immigrant-origin and native-origin children is related to socio-economic background (see Chapter 1). Many immigrant parents are engaged in lower paid jobs, hence the disadvantage is related to lack of resources (Heath and Brinbaum, 2007; Crosnoe, 2007). Multivariate models presented below investigate the relationship between parental region of origin, ethnicity, language and naming vocabulary in English at age five. These are presented as nested models, which successively add parental resources (their level of education and financial resources); child characteristics, including gender, special educational needs (SEN)

and exposure to centre-based childcare and primary school; and key relevant school characteristics (whether the school is a designated disadvantaged (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, DEIS) school and the proportion of migrants in the school). A final model adds the child's score on naming vocabulary at age three as a way of measuring the association between these factors and change over time in vocabulary score. A decomposition analysis investigating which explanatory variables account for most of the change in the country of birth coefficients between Model 1 and Model 5 is also undertaken.<sup>44</sup>

In the absence of other controls (Model 1, Table 5.1) both maternal and paternal country of birth are significantly related to English vocabulary scores at age five. All groups score significantly lower than those with an Irish-born mother, with the exception of those whose mother comes from the UK and the US/Canada/Australia. The lowest scoring group comprises children with mothers from eastern Europe: they score almost 15 points lower on average than children with Irish mothers. When the child's father is born outside Ireland/UK, there is an additional negative association with vocabulary scores.<sup>45</sup> As we want to retain those in lone-parent families, children with no father present are included as a separate category. Children from lone parent families also have lower scores on English vocabulary at age five, consistent with previous research (Nixon and Swords, 2016). The same is found for those whose father was present in the home but did not complete the survey. Further analysis (available from the authors) shows a more negative effect of lone parenthood on children's vocabulary at five years for children with migrant mothers. Due to the relatively small size of the migrant lone parent group, we did not estimate separate effects for each country of birth.

Model 2 introduces language and ethnicity. Here we see that children with two non-native English speaking parents have lower English vocabulary scores than those children with two native English-speaking parents. Linguistic background is closely associated with parental origin country: once we account for linguistic background, the influence of parental country of birth is much reduced. For example, Asian-origin children no longer differ from children whose parents are Irish, while the effect of being of eastern European or African origin is also reduced. Being from an ethnic minority background is not associated with vocabulary at age five, at least when parental origin country and linguistic background are accounted for. The decomposition analysis shows that linguistic and ethnicity factors controlled for in the models play the biggest role in reducing the country-of-birth effect for all maternal country-of-birth categories except regarding those from the UK and US/Australia: the impact is largest for mothers born in eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and 'other' country of birth. Similarly, linguistic and ethnic background

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44 This is available on request from the authors.

45 To reduce the number of categories in the model, paternal country of birth is combined.

factors play the largest role in reducing the effect of fathers born outside Ireland and the UK, but play no role in accounting for the 'father born in UK' coefficient.

Model 3 shows that while parental education and income are clearly associated with vocabulary at age five (whereby children disadvantaged on either income or parental education have lower vocabulary scores), this does very little to explain differences by maternal country of origin or linguistic background. The decomposition analysis shows that socio-economic position plays a small role in the negative effect seen among those whose mother was born in Africa and those whose father was born outside Ireland or the UK. Socio-economic status also accounts for a significant increase in the coefficient among those whose mother was born in western Europe and the US/Australia.<sup>46</sup> The decomposition shows the socio-economic position of the family plays the largest role in accounting for the effect of the father being non-resident. Therefore, the lower vocabulary scores experienced by second-generation migrant children in Ireland are not primarily accounted for by their socio-economic background, as is the case in some other European countries (OECD, 2018).

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46 In the case of the US/Australia, socio-economic status variables have the greatest influence on the maternal country-of-birth effect.

**TABLE 5.1 OLS REGRESSION OF VOCABULARY AT AGE 5 AND CHANGE OVER TIME (3-5 YEARS)**

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Parental CoB</b>	Mother – UK	0.29	0.3	0.51	0.53	0.41	0.34
<b>(Ref. Ireland)</b>	Mother – eastern Europe	-14.75 ***	-10.61 ***	-10.9 ***	-10.98 ***	-10.56 ***	-5.89 ***
	Mother – western Europe	-3.8 ***	-3.09 *	-3.75 **	-3.8 **	-3.58 **	-0.4
	Mother – Africa	-5.85 ***	-2.11 ^	-2.1 ^	-2.14 ^	-1.81	-1.25
	Mother – Asia	-4.45 ***	-0.07	-0.41	-0.53	-0.18	0.34
	Mother – US	0.21	0.13	-0.68	-0.39	-0.56	-0.62
	Mother – ‘other’	-5.06 *	-1.97	-2.04	-1.81	-1.48	2.04
<b>(Ref. Ireland)</b>	Father – UK	0.92 ^	0.93 ^	0.93 ^	0.8	0.73	0.55
	Father – born outside IRL/UK	-4.62 ***	-2.93 ***	-2.74 ***	-2.76 ***	-2.57 ***	-1.71 **
	No father/LP	-1.31 **	-0.84 ^	-0.35	-0.28	-0.23	0.22
	Father info missing	-3.34 ***	-2.98 ***	-1.19 **	-1.3 ***	-1.08 **	-0.53
<b>Parental language</b>	One native Eng		0.44	0.35	0.24	0.08	0
<b>(Ref. Both native Eng)</b>	Both non-native Eng		-6.43 ***	-6 ***	-6.3 ***	-6.51 ***	-2.88 **
<b>Parental ethnicity</b>	One BAME		1.87	1.95 ^	1.58	1.58	0.87
<b>(Ref. Both White)</b>	Both BAME		-1.15	-1.04	-1.52	-1.33	-0.37
<b>Mat. educ.</b>	Upper secondary			1.82 ***	1.5 ***	1.37 ***	0.34
<b>Ref. Lower</b>	Non-degree			3.02 ***	2.72 ***	2.53 ***	0.96 *
<b>secondary)</b>	Degree or higher			3.88 ***	3.62 ***	3.43 ***	1.43 ***
<b>Family income</b>	Low income* (Wave 1)			-1.58 ***	-1.42 ***	-1.41 ***	-0.55 *
	Income missing			-0.38	-0.3	-0.31	0.03
<b>Child characteristics</b>	Female				0.82 ***	0.83 ***	-0.32
<b>(Ref. No SEN)</b>	Has SEN				-4.39 ***	-4.31 ***	-2.09 ***
	SEN missing				-1.07 *	-1.74 **	-0.91 ^
<b>(Ref. not in school by age 5)</b>	In school by age 5				2.05 ***	2.18 ***	1.58 ***
	Centre-based care age 3				-0.16	-0.05	-0.03
<b>DEIS status</b>	DEIS Urban 1					-1.74 ***	-1.23 **
<b>(Ref: non-disadvantaged)</b>	DEIS Urban 2					0.22	0.06



**TABLE 5.1 (CONTD.) OLS REGRESSION OF VOCABULARY AT AGE 5 AND CHANGE OVER TIME (3-5 YEARS)**

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	DEIS Rural					1.16 *	1.1 *
	DEIS missing					0.77	0.97 ^
<b>Migrant prop. In school</b>	< 5%					-0.67 ^	-0.87 **
<b>(Ref: no</b>	5-9%					-0.35	-0.17
<b>migrant students)</b>	10-19%					-0.78 ^	-1.01 **
	> 20%					-1.18 **	-0.73 ^
	Prop. Missing					0.3	-0.41
	<b>T score for naming vocabulary (age 3)</b>						0.39 ***
<b>Constant</b>		57.27 ***	57.14 ***	54.93 ***	54.04 ***	54.49 ***	35.81
	Number	8,514	8,514	8,514	8,514	8,514	8,193
	Adjusted R square	0.135	0.143	0.161	0.185	0.189	0.282

Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 1, Wave 2 and Wave 3. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: \*\*\* P < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05; ^ p < 0.1. Family low income if in bottom two income quintiles. CoB is 'country of birth'; LP is 'lone parent'; BAME is 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'; SEN is 'special educational needs'.

In Model 4, we see how a child's own characteristics (gender and SEN status) are clearly associated with vocabulary scores, with girls performing slightly better and children with SEN having lower vocabulary scores. Having started school at age five is also associated with higher vocabulary scores, while having attended centre-based care at age three is not associated with vocabulary scores (see also McGinnity et al., 2015).

Model 5 shows that children in DEIS Urban Band 1 schools have lower achievement scores than children attending non-DEIS schools, even after accounting for family income and the range of other individual and family factors. We further test for differences in attendance at DEIS Urban Band 1 schools between second-generation migrant children and those with Irish-born parents. We find that there is an additional negative effect for children with two migrant parents (-2.5) on top of the negative effect of DEIS Urban Band 1 for children with two Irish-born parents (-1.5) compared to all children in non-DEIS schools. The effect for children with one migrant and one Irish parent is the same as for those with two Irish-born parents.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, children in schools with a higher proportion of migrants (20 per cent or more) have slightly lower scores on vocabulary at age five. The direction of the relationship is the same for schools with a lower proportion of migrant students but is not significant at the five per cent level. This is consistent with some international studies that find that children in schools with higher proportions of migrants tend to have somewhat lower achievement levels (Bottia, 2019). This finding is for the whole sample, meaning that the effect is present for children with Irish-born parents as well as those with migrant parents.<sup>48</sup> These effects, combined with the fact that migrant children are more likely to be both in DEIS Urban Band 1 schools and in schools with a higher proportion of migrants, serves to slightly reduce country-of-origin and linguistic differences, though the effect is very small.

It is the introduction of the child's own vocabulary score at age three (Model 6) that really reduces the country-of-origin and linguistic background differences. There are still differences between children with eastern European or African mothers and those with two non-native English-speaking parents. This suggests that these children make less progress between ages three and five than others. For other regional groups, there is no statistically significant difference in English vocabulary development over time.

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47 The interaction models are available on request from the authors. In the model, we do not distinguish between parental country of birth as the groups would become very small. The interaction between parental native language and DEIS Urban Band 1 is not significant; this may be due to the smaller numbers in the 'two non-native English-speaking parents' category.

48 The interaction between the proportion of migrant students (measured on a continuous scale) and the migrant background of the children themselves was tested and found to be non-significant (not shown). This indicates that the effect of the proportion of migrant students within a school is the same for both migrant and Irish-origin children.

### 5.5.2 Low vocabulary at age 5

As noted in Section 5.4, an alternative way of considering English vocabulary achievement and how it varies across different groups is to focus on children with lower levels of achievement, rather than mean scores. As before, we consider the scores of all children at age five, and then identify those in the lowest quintile of achievement. These children are struggling in naming vocabulary in English, which may adversely affect their peer relationships as well as their learning and motivation to learn.

Table 5.2 presents a model investigating factors associated with being in the lowest quintile of vocabulary at age five. Groups with an odds ratio greater than one are more likely to be in the bottom quintile of achievement than the reference category, while those with an odds ratio less than one are less likely to be in the bottom quintile of achievement. Not all controls are presented, but factors that have been accounted for are outlined in notes beneath the table.

Children whose mother was born in the UK, Asia, the US or another foreign country do not differ significantly from the children of Irish mothers, at least when other factors are accounted for. But the children of eastern European, western European and African mothers are more likely to be in the lowest quintile of vocabulary scores than the children of Irish mothers. The children of eastern European mothers are six times more likely to be in the low English vocabulary quintile at age five. Having a father born abroad is also associated with a greater likelihood of being in the lowest quintile, as is having two non-native English-speaking parents. Parental ethnicity is not associated with achievement, once origin and linguistic background are controlled. Adding information on whether the child was in the lowest quintile of vocabulary at age three considerably reduces these differences, though the effect of maternal region of origin and linguistic background remain.

**TABLE 5.2 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF LOWEST QUINTILE OF VOCABULARY AT 5 YEARS (BOTTOM QUINTILE) AND CHANGE OVER TIME (AGE 3–5) (ODDS RATIOS)**

		Model 1		Model 2	
<b>Parental CoB</b>	Mother – UK	0.96		0.97	
<b>(Ref. Ireland)</b>	Mother – eastern Europe	6.20	***	4.34	***
	Mother – western Europe	2.77	***	2.20	**
	Mother – Africa	1.74	*	1.83	*
	Mother – Asia	1.36		1.41	
	Mother – US	0.95		0.88	
	Mother – ‘other’	1.72		1.54	
<b>Father’s CoB</b>	Father – UK	0.76	^	0.77	
<b>(Ref. Ireland)</b>	Father – born outside IRL/UK	1.47	**	1.35	*
	Father – not resident	1.06		1.06	
	Father – info missing	1.19	^	1.14	
<b>Parental language</b>	One native Eng	0.83		0.84	
<b>(Ref. Both native Eng)</b>	Both non-native Eng	2.42	***	1.78	**
<b>Parental ethnicity</b>	One BAME	0.61	^	0.58	^
<b>(Ref. Both White)</b>	Both BAME	1.28		1.02	
<b>Maternal education</b>	Upper secondary	0.77	**	0.86	^
<b>(Ref. Lower secondary)</b>	Non-degree	0.65	***	0.76	*
	Degree	0.58	***	0.72	**
<b>Income Wave 1 (top 60%)</b>	Bottom 40%	1.34	***	1.25	**
	Child female	0.88	*	1.00	
	Child SEN Wave 3	2.48	***	1.97	***
	Inschool at Wave 3	0.61	***	0.64	***
	Centre care Wave 2	0.83	**	0.90	
<b>DEIS school Wave 3</b>	Urban Band 1	1.19		1.22	^
<b>(ref no)</b>	Urban Band 2	1.01		0.93	
	Rural DEIS	0.82		0.85	
<b>% migrant students in</b>	Less than 5%	1.22	*	1.20	^
<b>Wave 3</b>	5%–9%	1.19		1.15	
	10%–19%	1.30	*	1.26	*
	20% or more	1.30	*	1.20	
<b>Bottom 20% vocabulary at age 3</b>				4.42	***
<b>Constant</b>		0.25	***	0.16	***
	N	8,437		8,437	
	Chi-square	1231.340		1689.060	
	Nagelkerke R-square	0.212		0.284	

Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 3. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05, ^ p < 0.1. Models 1 and 2 include controls for mother’s education, family income, attributes of children (sex; SEN; whether in school by age 5; whether in centre-based care by age 3), and school characteristics (DEIS status; migrant prop). CoB is ‘country of birth’; LP is ‘lone parent’; BAME is ‘Black, Asian and minority ethnic’.

## 5.6 MODELS OF ENGLISH READING AT AGE 9

### 5.6.1 Mean scores on English reading at age 9

Table 5.3 presents multiple regression models that investigate factors associated with English reading at age nine. As in Table 5.1, the model allows us to both estimate the effect of maternal region of birth, while also accounting for the child's linguistic and ethnic background, as well as other child, family and school characteristics that may be relevant for English reading scores and which may partly explain the differences observed in reading scores by maternal region of birth.

Model 1, which accounts for no other factors, shows that children whose mothers are from the UK, the US or other Anglophone countries have higher reading scores than the children of Irish mothers. But children whose mothers are from eastern Europe or Africa have slightly lower scores. Having a father from outside the UK or Ireland is also associated with lower reading scores. Having no secondary caregiver – that is, having just one parent – is associated with much lower scores. Further analysis of interactions (not shown) found that the effect of lone parenthood remained the same whether the mother was born in Ireland or abroad.<sup>49</sup>

When we account for linguistic background in Model 2, we find that when all parents present are not native English speakers, children at nine years score five points lower on average than children where all parents are native English speakers. Once we account for language, the disadvantage for the children of eastern European and African mothers is much reduced and becomes not significant. This implies that linguistic background explains much of the difference in scores.<sup>50</sup> It is in sharp contrast to the results at age five, where even controlling for linguistic background, the children of eastern European mothers in particular still had much lower vocabulary scores.

Similar to the pattern at age five, Model 2 in Table 5.3 shows that children who have one native English-speaking parent do not differ from those with two native English-speaking parents. Model 2 also shows that children's ethnic background has no association with English reading at nine years when language and region of origin are accounted for.

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49 However, the effect of having a father present who did not complete the secondary caregiver survey (in Wave 1) was more negative for migrant mothers, suggesting non-completion may be tapping into poorer English-language skills of fathers.

50 The decomposition analysis confirms that linguistic background and ethnicity accounts for the majority of the difference in scores of birth for mothers from eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and 'other' countries. These two variables also account for most of the negative effect of the father being born outside Ireland or the UK.

**TABLE 5.3 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF READING SCORES AT AGE 9 AND CHANGE OVER TIME BETWEEN AGES 5 AND 9**

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Mother's CoB</b>	Mother – UK	1.2 ^	1.23 ^	1.54 *	1.62 *	1.58 *	1.44 *
<b>(Ref. Ireland)</b>	Mother – eastern Europe	-3.68 ***	-0.42	-1.38	-1.65	-1.35	2.7 *
	Mother – western Europe	0.37	1.12	-0.24	-0.81	-0.78	0.54
	Mother – Africa	-2.11 ^	0.28	0.06	-0.23	0.15	0.87
	Mother – Asia	0.06	3.34 ^	2.47	2.16	2.47	1.74
	Mother – US	6.24 **	6.25 **	4.10 *	4.01 *	3.88 *	3.92 *
	Mother – 'other'	2.73	5.33	5.58 ^	5.02	5.23 ^	4.99 ^
<b>Father's CoB (Ref. Ireland)</b>	Father – UK	-0.19	-0.16	-0.48	-0.71	-0.7	-0.89
	Father – born outside IRL/UK	-2.27 **	-0.83	-0.65	-0.69	-0.61	0.49
	No father/Lone parent	-7.19 ***	-6.95 ***	-2.79 ***	-3.48 ***	-3.26 ***	-2.84 ***
	Father – info missing	-3.4 ***	-3.02 ***	-1.61 **	-1.49 *	-1.45 *	-1.22 *
<b>Parental language</b>	One native English		0.23	-0.19	-0.09	-0.09	0.04
<b>(Ref. Both native Eng)</b>	Both non-native English		-5.12 ***	-4.08 **	-4.13 **	-4.28 **	-0.95
<b>Parental ethnicity</b>	One BAME		-0.94	-0.65	-1.06	-1.09	-1.44
<b>(Ref. Both White)</b>	Both BAME		-0.06	0.03	-0.68	-0.62	0.32
<b>Mat. educ.</b>	Upper secondary			4.14 ***	3.58 ***	3.48 ***	2.98 ***
<b>(Ref. Lower secondary of less)</b>	Non-degree			6.46 ***	5.81 ***	5.81 ***	4.69 ***
	Degree			9.37 ***	8.69 ***	8.64 ***	7.24 ***
<b>Family income</b>	Low income* (Wave 1)			-3.14 ***	-2.88***	-2.62 ***	-1.99 ***
	Income missing			-2.03 **	-2.00 **	-1.66 **	-1.54 *
<b>Child characteristics</b>	Female				0.59	0.31	-0.04

**TABLE 5.3 (CONTD.) OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF READING SCORES AT AGE 9 AND CHANGE OVER TIME BETWEEN AGE 5 AND AGE 9**

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>(Ref. No SEN)</b>	Has SEN				-7.10 ***	-6.89 ***	-5.17 ***
<b>(Ref. not in school by age 5)</b>	In school by age 5					4.77 ***	4.14 ***
	Centre-based care age 3					0.84 *	0.84 *
<b>DEIS status Wave 5</b>	DEIS Urban 1					-2.06 **	-1.33 *
<b>(Ref: non-disadvantaged)</b>	DEIS Urban 2					0.96	1.03
	DEIS Rural					-0.25	-0.62
	DEIS status missing					0.26	0.47
<b>Migrant prop. In school Wave 5</b>	0.1 < 5%					0.12	0.23
<b>(Ref: no migrants in school*)</b>	5-9%					0.8	0.6
	10-19%					-0.05	0.22
	> 20%					-0.87	-0.79
	Prop. Missing					-0.58	-0.26
<b>T score for naming vocabulary (age 5)</b>							0.43 ***
<b>Constant</b>		101.76 ***	101.67 ***	96.71 ***	94.38 ***	94.52 ***	70.73 ***
	N	7,104	7,104	7,104	7,104	7,104	7,104
	Adjusted R square	0.040	0.042	0.104	0.150	0.153	0.248

Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 5. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: \*\*\* P < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05, ^ p < 0.1. Family low income if in bottom two income quintiles. CoB is 'country of birth'; LP is 'lone parent'; BAME is 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'; SEN is 'special educational needs'.

Model 3 shows how the children of mothers with a third-level degree have English reading scores over nine points higher than the children of mothers who left school early. Children from low-income backgrounds also have lower scores. Both of the findings are as expected, though do little to affect the differences between migrant groups, except that the reading score advantage for the children of US/Australian/Canadian mothers is somewhat reduced.

Model 4 shows that children with SEN have lower scores, as expected, and also that those who had started school at age five have higher scores in English reading, presumably as they have been exposed to school for a longer period. There is a small positive effect associated with having been in centre-based care on English reading at age nine. The fact that children with both parents born abroad are more likely to have started school by age five may be an advantage for them (see Figure 4.6). However, the fact that they are less likely to be in centre-based care at age three (Figure 4.4) is likely to be a disadvantage, particularly as previous research has found that children from a non-English-speaking background benefit more from centre-based care than children from an English-speaking background, at least in terms of vocabulary (McGinnity et al., 2015).

Model 5 shows that being in a disadvantaged school (Urban DEIS Band 1) is associated with lower English reading scores, even accounting for a range of other background characteristics. However, other school characteristics included in the model are not associated with English reading levels at age nine. In particular, the number of migrants in primary school does not affect English reading at nine years, though higher concentrations of migrant pupils in a school were found to be associated with vocabulary scores at age five (see Table 5.1). This may be because, as this model shows, differences in reading scores between migrant-origin and Irish-origin children are much reduced by age nine.

Finally, Model 6 adds scores at age five, to permit analysis of change over time. In general, adding the previous score reduces the effect of other characteristics or makes them statistically insignificant. An important exception here is the children of eastern European mothers. Here we find these children make more progress in English achievement than the children of Irish mothers. This is interesting and consistent with the overall finding that differences in English language achievement at age nine are much smaller than at age five.

### **5.6.2 Low reading scores at age 9**

Table 5.4 presents the findings of a model estimating the chances of being in the lowest quintile for English reading at age nine. The groups of children and the estimation and interpretation of this model are the same as those in Table 5.2, but the findings are quite different. At age nine, none of the children whose mothers were born abroad are more likely to be in the lowest quintile of achievement in English reading than children with Irish mothers. In fact, the children of Asian



mothers are now less likely to be in the lowest quintile (less than half as likely). Having a father born outside Ireland or the UK is also not associated with being in this low vocabulary quintile; neither is having two non-native English-speaking parents. After adding the score at age five, we find that children with eastern European mothers are actually less likely to be in the lowest quintile than children with Irish mothers, suggesting they progress more over time.

**TABLE 5.4 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF BEING IN THE LOWEST QUINTILE IN READING SCORES AT 9 YEARS (BOTTOM QUINTILE) AND CHANGE OVER TIME (5–9) (ODDS RATIOS)**

		Model 1 at 9 years	Model 2: add score at 5
<b>Maternal CoB</b>	Mother – UK	0.87	0.88
<b>(Ref. Ireland)</b>	Mother – eastern Europe	0.88	0.56 *
	Mother – western Europe	1.16	0.92
	Mother – Africa	0.66	0.54
	Mother – Asia	0.43 *	0.42 ^
	Mother – US	0.61	0.69
	Mother – ‘other’	0.68	0.61
<b>Paternal CoB (Ref. Ireland)</b>	Father – UK	1.28 ^	1.36 *
	Father – born outside IRL/UK	1.1	1
	No father/LP	1.34 **	1.31 *
	Father – info missing	1.67 ***	1.65 ***
<b>Parental language</b>	One native Eng	0.83	0.87
<b>(Ref. Both native Eng)</b>	Both non-native Eng	1.87	1.43
<b>Parental ethnicity</b>	One BAME	0.76	0.8
<b>(Ref. Both White)</b>	Both BAME	1.12	1.01
<b>Bottom quintile vocabulary at age 5</b>			3.66 ***
<b>Constant</b>		0.43 ***	0.32 ***
	N	7,104	7,104
	Chi-square	740.566	1023.141
	Nagelkerke R-square	0.157	0.212

Source: GUI Cohort '08, Wave 5. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: \*\*\* P < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05, ^ p < 0.1. Models 1 and 2 include controls for mother's education, family income, attributes of children (sex; SEN; whether in school by age 5; whether in centre-based care by age 3), and school characteristics (DEIS status; migrant prop). CoB is 'country of birth'; LP is 'lone parent'; BAME is 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'.

## 5.7 SUMMARY

Language proficiency is a key driver of immigrant integration, as discussed in Chapter 2. Cultural and linguistic distance plays a role in the acquisition of the language of the host country, one that may impact on the outcomes of migrant-origin children (Melkonian, et al., 2019; Isphording, 2014). Furthermore, language

development is shaped by a range of background and school-level factors (De Feyter et al., 2009; Dustmann et al., 2012; Baysu et al., 2018).

The primary focus of this chapter was on English language achievement at ages five and nine. It examined how this factor differed depending on maternal country of birth, and linguistic and ethnic background, and how it changed over time. As noted at the outset, these are not measures of overall linguistic ability, but of performance in English expressive vocabulary and in English reading.

At age five, there are some clear disadvantages for some second-generation migrant children, with lower scores found particularly among children whose mothers are from eastern Europe, but also western Europe, Africa and Asia. These differences are considerably reduced when we account for children's linguistic background in statistical models, though the lower scores for children from eastern and western Europe remain even after controlling for many background characteristics, and these children are more likely to be in the lowest vocabulary quintile at age five than Irish children. Children whose mothers come from the UK or other Anglophone countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US) do not differ from the children of Irish mothers in expressive vocabulary scores in English at age five, as expected.

A key finding of this chapter is that by age nine, the penalty in English language achievement for these same migrant-origin children is much reduced. We observe dramatic falls in the proportion of children with both parents born abroad or non-native English-speaking who are in the lowest quintile of English language achievement (Figures 5.4 and 5.5). In the models (Tables 5.3 and 5.4), we find children with two non-native English-speaking parents have somewhat lower reading scores at age nine, but once we control for this there is no evidence of differences by country of birth (except an advantage for the children of mothers from Anglophone countries). The children of eastern European mothers actually make somewhat more progress between ages five and nine than the children of Irish mothers. As these are the same children in all three waves of the survey, we know this is not due to compositional differences between the samples. The tests of English language administered at age five and age nine are age appropriate if somewhat different from each other, but as English vocabulary is a prerequisite for reading comprehension, it seems appropriate to compare them. Note that all through this chapter, the children of Irish mothers are used as a 'benchmark' as the key question in this report is whether the development of second-generation migrant children differs from that of the children of Irish parents.

Children without a native English-speaking parent are clearly at a disadvantage in terms of English reading, as shown in both descriptive charts and models presented in this chapter, though the gap is lower at age nine than at age five. However, another important finding is that children who have one native English-speaking

parent and one non-native English-speaking parent do not differ from children where both parents are native English speakers. A similar pattern is found for those who have one Irish parent and one foreign-born parent. It seems that having one English-speaking parent is enough to facilitate English language development, at ages five and nine.

Children who have two parents from an ethnic minority background have lower scores at age five and somewhat lower scores at age nine to children from a White background. However, when we account for maternal region of origin and language background, there is no additional penalty.

One point to note is that the focus of this chapter is on expressive vocabulary and English reading, because this is very important for subsequent educational achievement and peer relationships. It is also where we might expect the greatest differences between the second generation and the children of Irish parents. However, it is only one element of cognitive skills and achievement. Indeed, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores at age 15 consistently show that the mathematics and science achievement of children from non-English-speaking backgrounds do not tend to differ from those for children from English-speaking backgrounds. (A difference is found between the two groups regarding English reading scores at 15 years.) Similarly, McGinnity et al. (2015) find a large disadvantage in vocabulary for five-year-old children from non-English-speaking backgrounds but a much smaller difference in non-verbal reasoning scores between children from an English-speaking and a non-English-speaking background (*ibid.*).<sup>51</sup>

Cognitive development and achievement in school are important aspects of childhood development and integration, but they are not the only ones. The chapter that follows considers the socio-emotional development of second-generation migrant children in order to give a more comprehensive picture of their development and how they are integrating into Irish society.

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51 The non-verbal reasoning test used pictures and only required English to understand the instructions. It is a measure of reasoning ability (see McGinnity et al., 2015, Chapter 1 for further details of this test). This study does not account for maternal country of birth or ethnic background.



## CHAPTER 6

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### Child self-concept

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we broaden the examination of second-generation migrant children's outcomes to encompass their social and psychological wellbeing. We draw on a measure of child self-concept (also termed self-image) as reported by the study children themselves when they were nine years of age. This covers aspects such as their concept of their intellectual and physical selves, as well as their happiness and popularity. As noted in Chapter 1, previous studies have used wellbeing as an indicator of migrant integration in the host country (see, for example, Safi, 2010; Johnsson and Mood, 2018). Self-concept as part of a sense of belonging has also been considered important in migrant integration (Wu et al., 2012).

While the challenges of adaptation and acculturation for migrant families may lead us to expect wellbeing in general, including self-concept, to be lower for migrant-origin children, findings to date on the topic are mixed (Belhadj-Kouider et al., 2014, 2015). Indeed, some studies even show migrant children have a higher sense of mental wellbeing than the majority population (Jonsson and Mood, 2018).

Social interaction is an important correlate of migrant integration and wellbeing, fostering a sense of belonging in the wider society (Gsir, 2014). Participation in sports and social activities (Darmody and Smyth, 2017) is an important means of forming friendships for first-generation migrants. Therefore, we are interested in the role of participation in sports and social/cultural activity as predictors of positive self-concept among second-generation migrant children.

Previous research in Ireland and elsewhere has shown that migrant-origin children engage with sports and cultural activities in different ways (Hertting and Karlefors, 2013), with somewhat lower participation levels in organised sports or structured cultural activities than those found for their native counterparts (Darmody and Smyth, 2017). Participation can also vary by national groups: research in Ireland, based on the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) Cohort '98, found children from eastern Europe, Asia and Africa are less likely to participate in structured sporting activities and that this was only partly explained by economic resources (Darmody et al., 2016).

The characteristics of schools have previously been found to be important for the wellbeing and self-concept of children in middle childhood (Smyth, 2015). It has also been shown that this factor can influence the sense of belonging and inclusion among first-generation migrant children (Devine, 2013; Harte, et al., 2016).

Wellbeing of migrant-origin students is found to be influenced not only by their region of origin, but also by how well schools in the receiving country support them in overcoming various difficulties associated with integrating and succeeding at school (OECD, 2015). In line with earlier research in Ireland (see Smyth et al., 2009), we saw in Chapter 4 that there is a greater concentration of students with a migrant background in disadvantaged schools, which may have a negative effect on their social outcomes. Previous research has also found that principals of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) schools, at both primary and post-primary level, report a higher prevalence of emotional and behavioural difficulties among students (Smyth et al., 2015).

It may have a positive effect on the wellbeing of individual migrant students to attend a school with a higher proportion of migrant students, if this enhances their sense of belonging in the school community. For example, in schools with high levels of migrant concentration, migrant-origin children may experience an enhanced sense of belonging due to greater opportunities to form positive relationships that may mitigate against the risk of bullying (Vitoroulis and Georgiades, 2017). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2018) shows that in some OECD countries, namely Australia, Norway and the UK, both migrant and non-migrant students' sense of belonging was stronger in schools with a higher concentration of migrant students. Previous research findings regarding school principals in Ireland (Smyth et al., 2009) suggest that the presence of migrant children in a school has a positive spill-over effect for non-migrant children in terms of motivation and behaviour.

## 6.2 SELF-CONCEPT SCORES

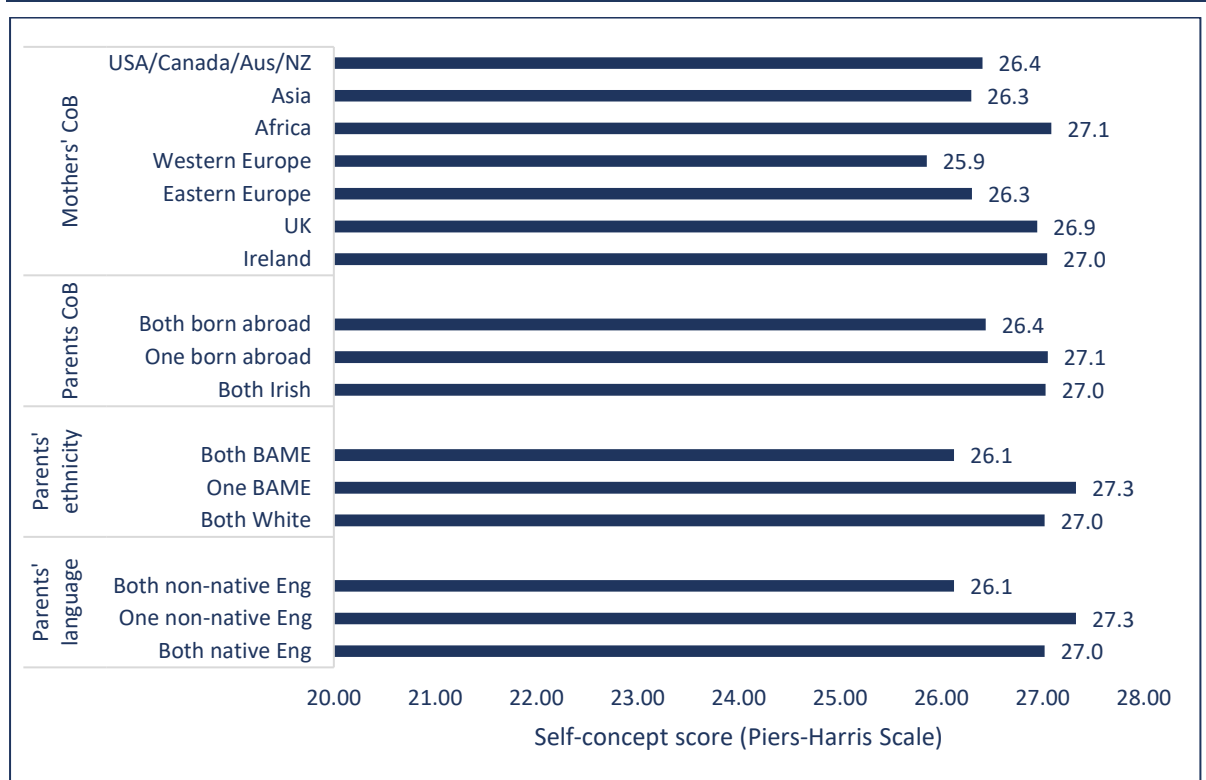
We examine the total self-concept scores among children with migrant backgrounds and those with Irish-born parents. The scale ranges from three to 31. Taking the maternal country of birth, we see that children of mothers from eastern Europe, western Europe, the US/Canada/Australia and Asia have marginally lower total self-concept scores than those with mothers from Ireland. Children of mothers from the UK and Africa have the same scores as children with Irish-born mothers.

Taking the background of both parents into account, we see that where both parents are born abroad children have a somewhat lower self-concept score than when one or both parents are born in Ireland ( $p < .001$ ).

The raw difference in self-concept between children where both parents are from an ethnic minority background and those where both are White is just over one point on the scale, which is one-quarter of a standard deviation (see Figure 6.1). By contrast, those with a mixed ethnic background (one White and one Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) parent) have a somewhat higher score than families

where both parents are White.<sup>52</sup> The same pattern is observed based on the linguistic background of parents.

**FIGURE 6.1 MEAN TOTAL SELF-CONCEPT SCORES OF 9 YEAR OLDS BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH, ETHNICITY AND LANGUAGE BACKGROUND OF PARENTS**



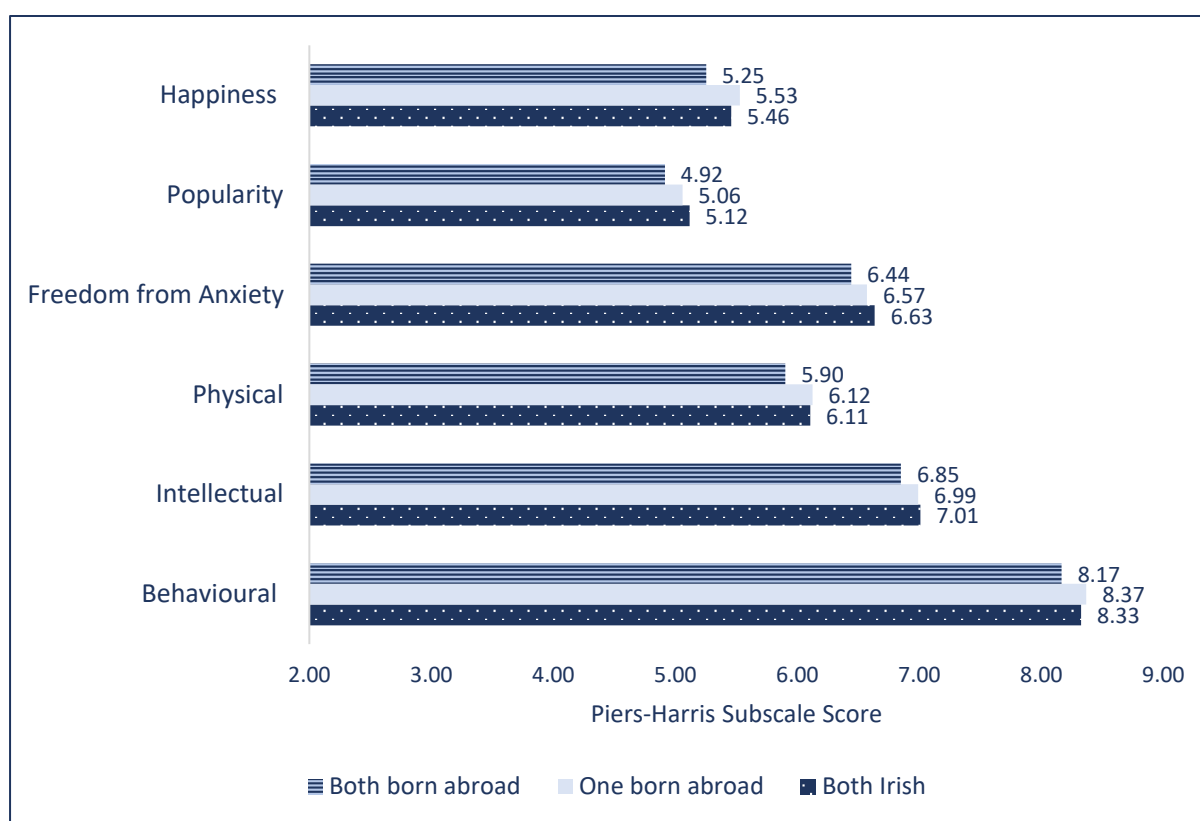
Source: GUI Cohort '08 Wave 5. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: Self-concept measured by Piers-Harris Scale. Scale ranges from three to 31. 'Both' includes lone parent families. CoB stands for 'country of birth'; BAME stands for 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'.

As noted in Chapter 3, the self-concept score is made up of six subscales: happiness, popularity, freedom from anxiety, physical self-image, intellectual/educational self-image and behavioural self-image (see Chapter 3 for further details). All subscales are scored in a way that means higher scores indicate a more positive self-concept. The subscales have a different number of items, so the focus here is on the relativities within each subscale rather than differences between scales. Figure 6.2 shows that the differences in subscale scores between migrant-background children and those from an Irish background are relatively minor. This illustrates that the total score is not disguising wider differences in particular subscales between second-generation migrant and Irish-origin children.

52  $P < .05$  (t-test). Some of the advantage in raw scores of the mixed group may arise because every child in this group is in a two-parent family, whereas the other two groups include lone parent families.



**FIGURE 6.2 SELF-CONCEPT SUBSCALE SCORES OF 9 YEAR OLDS BY PARENTAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH**

Source: GUI Cohort '08 Wave 5. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

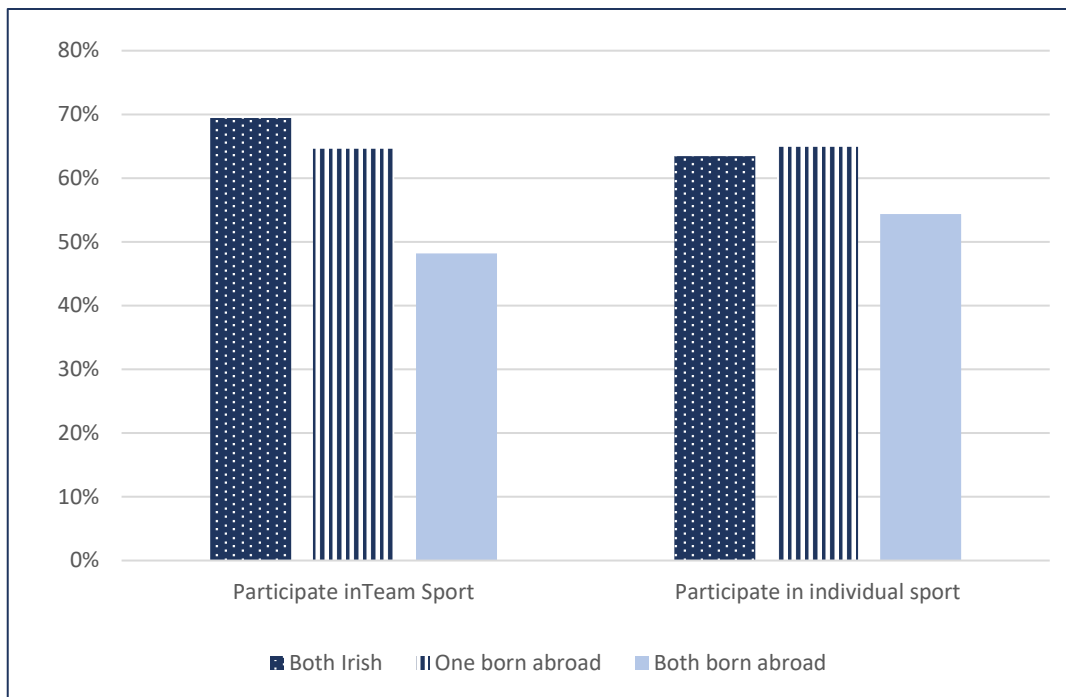
Notes: Self-concept measured by Piers-Harris Scale. 'Both' includes lone parent families. 'Born abroad' includes UK-born.

### 6.3 PARTICIPATION IN SPORT, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Participation in team sports is significantly lower among children with a migrant background (48 per cent) compared to children with Irish parents (69 per cent), a finding that is in line with earlier studies (Darmody and Smyth, 2017; Coughlan et al., 2014).<sup>53</sup> Participation among children with mixed-migrant and Irish parentage (65 per cent) is more similar to those with only Irish parents.<sup>54</sup> Where both parents are migrants, children are also more unlikely to participate in individual-level sports.

53 The question refers to activities outside of school hours, though it does not specify if the activity takes place at the school. Respondents are also asked if the activity has to be paid for but we did not use this information. Those at DEIS schools were less likely to participate in individual and team sport than those in non-DEIS schools. Further analysis would be necessary to distinguish the influence of school-level and family-level influences.

54 This group includes those with a lone Irish parent or two Irish parents in couple households.

**FIGURE 6.3 PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS AT AGE 9 BY MIGRANT BACKGROUND (PARENTS BORN ABROAD)**

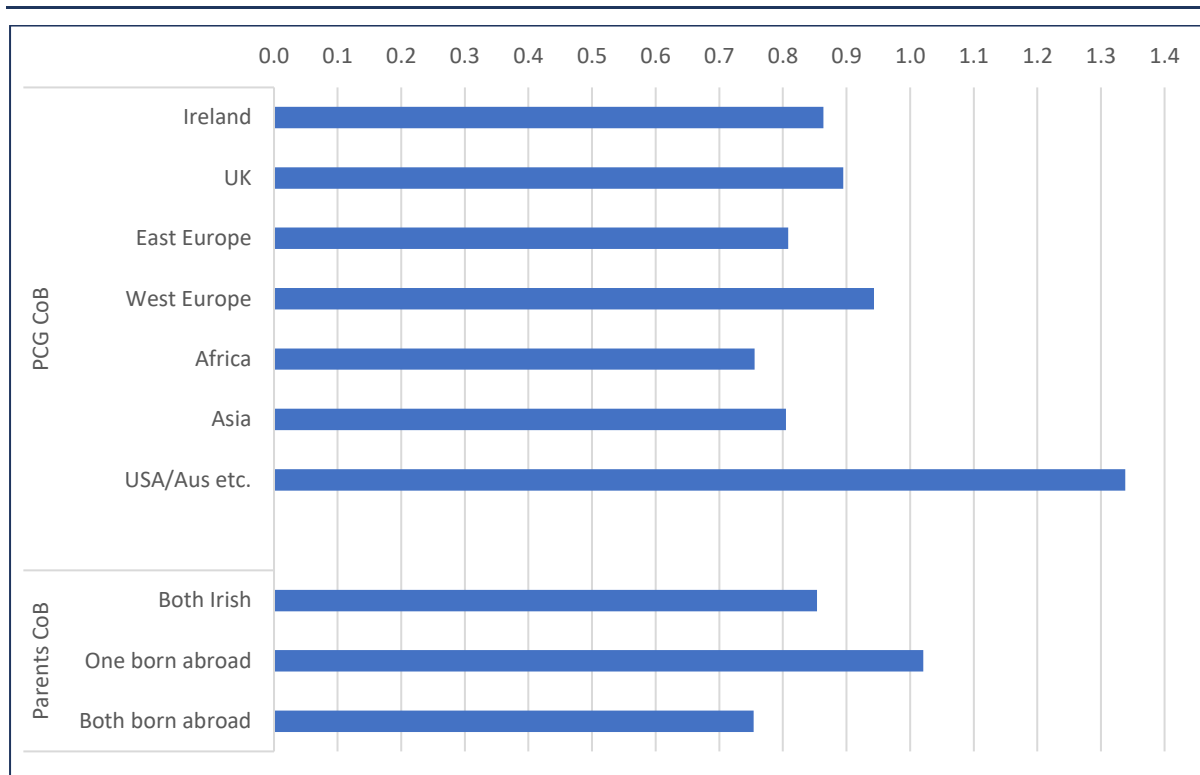
*Source:* GUI Cohort '08 Wave 5. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

*Note:* Self-concept measured by Piers-Harris Scale. 'Both' includes lone parent families. 'Born abroad' includes UK-born.

Children's participation in eight social and cultural activities is also assessed: drama classes; arts/crafts, computer/technology, youth clubs, religious clubs or groups, music or dance, scouts, and language classes.<sup>55</sup> We count the number of activities but we do not have information on frequency of attendance. Children with a migrant background (both parents) have a somewhat lower level of participation than those with Irish-born parents; however, those with one parent born in Ireland and one born abroad have the highest level of participation.<sup>56</sup>

55 We exclude homework classes as these are judged to be an educational activity rather than social or cultural, though the results are not affected if we include this activity.

56 T-tests show that both groups are significantly different to those with two Irish-born parents.

**FIGURE 6.4 MEAN NUMBER OF SOCIAL/CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AT AGE 9 BY MATERNAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH AND PARENTS BORN ABROAD**

Source: GUI Cohort '08 Wave 5. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: Self-concept measured by Piers-Harris Scale. 'Both' includes lone parent families. 'Born abroad' includes UK-born.

## 6.4 MODELS

As with cognitive outcomes, self-concept is analysed through a series of nested models. Model 1 presents differences across second-generation groups based on parental country of origin. Model 2 and Model 3 examine whether these initial differences are related to language background or ethnicity. We then investigate whether any remaining differences are explained by socio-economic conditions, individual-level characteristics, such as gender, special educational need (SEN) and participation in sport and social/cultural activities. Finally, Model 5 assesses the influence of school characteristics, namely DEIS status, which indicates whether or not a school is socially disadvantaged, and the proportion of migrants in the student population.

In Model 1, children with a mother from eastern Europe, western Europe or Asia have significantly lower self-concept scores. Paternal country of birth does not have an additional effect. However, where the father is not co-resident, children have a significantly lower score. We checked whether the effect of lone parenthood differed by whether the mother was born abroad (not shown), and found that, without controls, the effect of a non-resident father is slightly lower for migrant mothers, but that when the full set of controls were included there is no significant interaction. This shows that the effect is the same for each group.

Model 2 indicates that where one parent is a native English speaker, there is no effect on self-concept, but where both parents are not native English speakers, child self-concept is reduced. Once parental language is controlled for, those with a mother from Asia or eastern Europe are no longer significantly different from those with an Irish-born mother. However, the decomposition analysis (available on request from authors) shows that the contribution of the linguistic factor, in terms of explaining mother and father country-of-birth coefficients, is not significant.

Ethnic minority background does not have a significant influence on child self-concept (Model 3), but when it is added to the model, children with an African mother have a more positive self-concept compared to the Irish reference group. The decomposition analysis confirms that the ethnic background controls are not significant in accounting for country-of-birth differences. The lower self-concept of children with a western European background persists despite language and ethnicity controls.

Socio-economic conditions are significantly related to self-concept (Model 4) but do not alter the parental country-of-birth effects. However, the 'both non-native speakers' effect is now insignificant, suggesting that this effect partially works through lower socio-economic resources among these families. This is consistent with findings from McGinnity et al. (2020b) that show among adult migrants, lower self-rated English language skills are associated with higher unemployment rates and lower occupational attainment when in work in Ireland. The decomposition analysis further shows that socio-economic status (SES) factors contribute positively to the self-concept scores of children whose mother is from western Europe but that this is not enough to counteract other (mostly unobserved) influences that reduce self-concept.

Model 5 shows that girls have a more positive self-concept than boys at age nine, but that children with SEN have a significantly more negative self-concept. In this study, participation in team sport has a significant positive association with child self-concept, while involvement in individual sports or social and cultural activities has no such effect.<sup>57</sup> The decomposition analysis shows that child characteristics – gender, SEN and participation in sports and social/cultural activities – contribute most to explaining the lower scores of the eastern European mother group and the Asian mother group. Indeed, these characteristics are also associated with a significant lowering of the score for children with a mother from Africa, the UK and western Europe.

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57 An earlier study by Smyth (2015) based on the GUI Cohort '98 indicates that participation in sport appears to enhance a sense of belonging and fulfilment.

Model 6 adds a set of institutional variables to the picture. It finds that age when starting school and participation in formal childcare at age three do not influence child self-concept, and that neither do they influence the country-of-birth effect. Similarly, attending a disadvantaged school does not influence self-concept; neither does the proportion of migrants in a school's student population.<sup>58</sup> Given that the sample is not clustered within school, the analysis cannot rule out the possibility that such school-level processes would be discernible with an alternative research design. Overall, the model explains a relatively low proportion of variance (6 per cent), suggesting that there are other unobserved factors at play; for example, personality type.

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58 There is some indicative evidence that a higher proportion of migrants in a school population has a positive effect on the self-concept of second-generation students; however, because of the relatively small number of respondents in schools with a high proportion of migrant students, the results are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 6.3 OLS REGRESSION OF SELF-CONCEPT SCORES AT AGE 9**

		Model 1 – CoB	Model 2 – +language	Model 3 – +BAME	Model 4 – +SES	Model 5 – +child	Model 6 – +school
Mother's	UK	-0.10	-0.09	-0.09	-0.07	-0.05	-0.05
CoB Ref. Ireland)	Eastern Europe	-0.69 *	-0.13	-0.27	-0.41	-0.22	-0.22
	Western Europe	-1.48 **	-1.45 **	-1.49 **	-1.62 **	-1.47 **	-1.48 **
	Africa	0.40	0.79 *	1.23 *	1.15 *	1.26 *	1.25 *
	Asia	-0.92 *	-0.41	0	-0.18	0.06	0.05
	US, Aus etc.	-0.85	-0.84	-0.84	-1.00 ^	-1.03 ^	-1.05 ^
	'Other'	-1.19	-0.79	-0.71	-0.78	-0.47	-0.42
Fathers CoB	UK	-0.06	-0.05	-0.06	-0.04	-0.01	-0.01
(Ref. Ireland)	Born outside IRL/UK	-0.11	0.15	0.18	0.23	0.23	0.22
	Not-resident/Lone parent	-1.58 ***	-1.53 ***	-1.52 ***	-1.03 ***	-0.83 ***	-0.86 ***
	Info. missing	-0.01	0.08	0.08	0.21	0.18	0.17
Parental language	One native English		0.28	0.28	0.3	0.26	0.26
(Ref. Both Eng)	Both non-native English		-0.94 *	-0.79 ^	-0.63	-0.64	-0.64
Parental ethnicity	One BAME			-0.08	-0.06	-0.01	-0.03
(Ref. Both White)	Both BAME			-0.72	-0.61	-0.72	-0.71
Mother's educ.	Upper secondary				0.85 ***	0.67 ***	0.69 ***
(Ref. lower second)	Non-degree				0.81 ***	0.57 **	0.61 ***
	Degree				1.04 ***	0.78 ***	0.82 ***
Family income	Low income* (9 months)				-0.13	-0.07	-0.07
	Low income* (9 years)				-0.45 ***	-0.37 **	-0.39 **
<b>Child characteristics</b>							
Male (ref)	Female					0.50 ***	0.51 ***

**TABLE 6.3 (CONTD.) OLS REGRESSION OF SELF-CONCEPT SCORES AT AGE 9**

		Model 1 – CoB	Model 2 – +language	Model 3 – +BAME	Model 4 – +SES	Model 5 – +child	Model 6 – +school
Ref. No SEN	Has SEN					-1.53 ***	-1.54 ***
Ref. =No	Team sport (9 years)					0.90 ***	0.89 ***
Ref. =No	Individual sport (9 years)					-0.06	-0.09
Scale	N social and cultural activities (9 years)					0.06	0.04
<b>Institutional</b>							
Ref. =No	In school by 5 years						-0.16
Ref. =No	Centre-based care at 3 years						-0.10
School DEIS status	DEIS Urban 1						0.30
(Ref: Non-	DEIS Urban 2						0.04
disadvantaged)	DEIS Rural						0.23
% Migrant students	0.1< 5%						0.03
(Ref: No migrants in	5%–9%						-0.25
school*)	10%–19%						0.15
	> 20%						-0.03
Constant		27.3 ***	27.27 ***	27.27 ***	26.61 ***	26.06***	26.16 ***
	N	6680	6680	6680	6680	6680	6680
	Adjusted R-square	0.019	0.021	0.021	0.032	0.061	0.060

Source: GUI Cohort '08 Wave 5. Weighted by longitudinal weight.

Notes: \*\*\* P < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05; ^ p < 0.1. Self-concept measured by Piers-Harris Scale. Family low income if in bottom two income quintiles. CoB is 'country of birth'; LP is 'lone parent'; BAME is 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'; SEN is 'special educational needs'.

## 6.5 SUMMARY

As discussed in Chapter 2, migrant integration is influenced by a range of factors, including country of origin, individual characteristics, experiences in the host country and structural characteristics. The level of integration of migrant-origin children varies across OECD countries, ranging from low integration (for example, France and Belgium) to high integration (for example, Australia) (OECD, 2012). This study has shown that in Ireland the children of migrants have self-concept scores, which incorporates a child's sense of their intellectual, educational, physical, emotional and social selves, that are generally on a par with those of children whose parents were born in Ireland. The differences in self-concept between those with mothers and/or fathers born outside Ireland are relatively small, and children with an African mother fare better than those with Irish-born parents.

Lower self-concept is observed for some groups. We find that, of the explanatory factors investigated, the child characteristics of gender, SEN and participation in sports and social/cultural activities play the biggest role in accounting for parental country-of-birth characteristics. However, the lower self-concept levels found among children whose mothers are from western Europe and the US/Canada/Australia are not explained by the models and are puzzling because these are socially and economically advantaged groups. This indicates that unobservable characteristics, such as abilities, ambition and resiliency (Rooth, 2007; Feliciano, 2020) may also play a role. A meta-analysis of cross-cultural differences in self-concept among children (Wastlund et al., 2001), albeit using a different measure, found that children from Africa had the highest self-concept, those from Asia had the lowest self-concept on non-academic dimensions and those from America/Australia had the lowest academic self-concept. Our results suggest that cultural differences persist for the second generation who are living in the same country but with parents from different backgrounds. In addition, we find that both parents being non-native English speakers has a negative influence on self-concept, and that this in turn is related to the lower economic resources of these households.

According to integration context theory, migrant integration is strongly influenced by contextual differences in terms of where integration takes place, such as institutional arrangements in schools (Crul and Schneider, 2010). No significant school effects were found for self-concept; however, further research focusing on different outcomes or on samples clustered within schools might identify such differences. International research suggests that there are positive ways of promoting the value of diversity through the curriculum and learning materials, by promoting cultural competence among teachers and other students as well as by creating opportunities for common activities that encourage links between students (Darmody and Smyth, 2015). Participation in team sports in particular is associated with higher self-concept among children, regardless of their national,



ethnic or cultural background; however, children in families where both parents were born abroad are less likely to participate. Therefore, greater supports for participation both inside and outside the school setting are likely to be beneficial. However, it should be noted that the direction of causality in the relationship between sports participation and self-concept cannot be established in the current analysis and it is possible that those with higher self-concept scores select into these activities. Disentangling these processes is possible with the GUI Cohort '98 as self-concept is measured in multiple waves.

While self-concept is a well-validated and multi-dimensional measure of how children are faring, it is nevertheless just one measure of child wellbeing and there may be group-level differences in terms of other aspects of social integration, such as peer relationship and bullying, which could be explored in future research, using data from the GUI.

## CHAPTER 7

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### Conclusion

#### 7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In Ireland, it is unclear whether differences in outcomes between native and migrant-origin children exist at a very young age, growing more stable thereafter, or whether they increase or decrease over time. It is also unclear whether such patterns are the same across different types of outcomes (such as cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes) and different national groups. Recent years have seen a growing interest in these topics, however; for a recent contribution to the evidence, see Sprong and Skopek (2021). This is the context for the present study, which seeks to address this gap in Irish research by exploring a range of cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes of migrant-origin children at ages three, five and nine years, which span an important period for both skill development and laying the foundations of future learning.

Language development is measured using English expressive vocabulary tests, which were carried out at ages three and five, and reading ability tests at nine years. Child self-concept is measured at nine years using a shortened version of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, which the children completed themselves. English language ability is important for school achievement and integration into the labour market: it is also important for peer relationships. Self-concept is a useful indicator of child socio-emotional wellbeing. Previous research has indicated that both domains are essential to the learning processes of a child (Suárez-Orozco, 2018), and thus should be considered together.

We consider second-generation migrant-origin children to be children of parents born outside Ireland, including parents born in the UK. Using this definition, we find that 14 per cent of children have one parent born abroad and one born in Ireland while a further 19 per cent have both parents (or lone parent) born abroad.

On the basis of previous research and theories concerning migrant integration, cultural distance and linguistic difference, we present children's English-language and self-concept scores, distinguished by the country of origin, linguistic background and ethnic background of parents. We then use statistical modelling to explore the role of these three factors in understanding child outcomes. First-generation migrants may often be economically disadvantaged (Jonsson et al., 2018); therefore, the economic and social resources of parents are also considered as a possible mediating factor (Suárez-Orozco, 2018; OECD, 2017). Participation in early care and education and certain characteristics of schools attended by migrant-origin children have also been shown to influence the development of this

group; for this reason, these factors are also considered in the statistical models of English language ability and self-concept at age nine.

A consistent finding across both the cognitive (language/reading) and self-concept outcomes is that children with one parent born in Ireland and one born abroad do not differ from children whose parents were both born in Ireland. Indeed, on some intermediary measures the latter group fares slightly better than the Irish-origin children; for example, these children are less likely to be in the low-income group and more likely to participate in social and cultural activities.

There is a strong upward trajectory in the English-language attainment of migrant-origin children over time. The proportion of children with both parents born abroad who are reported to have English as their first language increases from 53 per cent at age three to 72 per cent at age nine. At age three, 60 per cent of children with both parents born abroad are in the bottom quintile of English language/reading achievement, compared to 20 per cent of the whole sample. Yet by age nine, only 28 per cent of children with both parents born abroad are in this lowest quintile, compared to 20 per cent of the full sample. This indicates a positive integration in early to middle childhood for second-generation migrant-origin children in terms of English language achievement. It is likely due to a combination of factors – from learning in school, including additional language learning, to interactions with peers and others outside school, to encouragement from their parents. This may be allied with migrant ‘language adoption’, whereby migrant parents may encourage the learning of the dominant language. Previous research has identified a tendency among migrants to focus on the acquisition of the (official/high status) languages spoken in the receiving country, at the expense of heritage languages (Chaudhry and Zeeshan, 2019). Whatever factors underlie this finding, the acquisition of English language skills by this cohort is likely to facilitate both current and future learning in the Irish education system by second-generation migrant children, as well as social interaction with their peers.

Chapter 2 has outlined the challenges encountered by migrants in receiving countries as well as the background and structural factors that impact the social and academic integration of children of migrants. Notwithstanding the progress made, this report shows that there are some clear and persisting disadvantages for some second-generation migrant children in Ireland. Children of a mother from eastern Europe, western Europe, Africa and Asia were found to have lower vocabulary scores at five years and somewhat lower reading scores at nine years, compared to children of Irish-born mothers. These differences are considerably reduced when we account for child linguistic background in statistical models, though the lower scores remain, particularly for children from eastern but also western Europe, even after controlling for many background characteristics. These children are more likely to be in the lowest vocabulary quintile at age five compared to their native counterparts. Children in families without a native

English-speaking parents continue to be disadvantaged in their reading scores at age nine. The effect size is not large (-4.3 points on a 100 point scale, just one-third of a standard deviation), comparing to an effect size of +8.6 for those whose mother has a degree. The finding indicates the importance of language background for academic outcomes, in line with earlier work by Darmody and Smyth (2018). The model of reading at age nine that included the chances of being in the lowest quintile of vocabulary at age five suggests that migrant-origin children, particularly those from eastern Europe, are much less likely to be in this lowest quintile of reading at age nine, suggesting greater progression over time for these groups.

Turning to child self-concept, we find that linguistic and economic resources play a role in explaining some differences in the self-concept of migrant-origin and Irish-origin children, consistent with previous research in the US and Europe (Rumbault 1994; Crul, 2007). Overall, the self-concept scores of second-generation migrant children were somewhat lower than Irish-origin children. However, the self-concept scores of children with mothers from eastern Europe and Asia were no longer different to those with Irish mothers when parental linguistic background and socio-economic status (SES) were taken into account. Children whose mothers were from western Europe and the US, however, continued to have lower scores even when a wide range of individual, family and school characteristics were taken into account. This may be due to unobservable characteristics of these groups. Children with African mothers had somewhat higher self-concept scores than those with Irish-born mothers. This may be due to a number of factors. One of these is the migrant selection effect as discussed in Chapter 2, whereby highly motivated migrants are more likely to migrate, compared to others from the same country of origin. Religiosity, the nature of family ties and social networks may also play a role: some authors have suggested that migrant children and young people might also compare their situation with peers or family in the country of origin, who did not migrate, rather than peers in their host country (Jonsson and Mood, 2018).

Ethnic background did not play a significant role in self-concept when parental country of birth and language were held constant. Other research has found that the experience of racism has a significantly negative impact on self-concept among other age groups, as well as wellbeing and mental health among adults, including young adults (Paradies et al., 2015; Fibbi et al., 2021). It is therefore important that ethnic differences in self-concept continue to be monitored over time, and that the future trajectories for these groups are observed as they reach adolescence. Previous research suggests that children's recognition of discriminatory acts is evident by age ten (McKown and Weinstein, 2003). However, child awareness of prejudices and in-group biases may increase as they further develop their social skills and increase independent contact with a wider group of people outside of family, neighbours and classmates. Cohort '98 of the *Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)* study are asked about their experience of bullying related to their race, nationality

or ethnicity, as well as their experience of discrimination. It is important that such issues are captured in future waves of Cohort '08.

## 7.2 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There is evidence of good progression in English language proficiency among young children who were born in Ireland to migrant, non-native English-speaking parents; however, gaps remain at nine years of age. What steps might be taken to narrow gaps in the English language/reading achievement of children? Several studies have suggested targeted measures should be implemented to assist this group of young people, ranging from early education programmes and cognitive and language training to parent and teacher training. A review undertaken by Beelmann et al. (2020) has revealed strong effects of child cognitive and language training programmes on child academic and language outcomes and relatively low effects of all programmes on child socio-emotional outcomes. The authors argue that individualised and culturally tailored programmes seem to be more effective. They also question the potential of individual psycho-social and educational programmes to counterbalance the multifaceted risks of immigration.

Cavallo and Russo (2020) highlight the need to promote language integration at a young age and to invest in the language acquisition of first-generation migrants. Rodriguez and Darmody (2017) note how migrant parents who lack English proficiency may experience considerable difficulties negotiating their way through the education system and establishing themselves as partners in the home–school interface. The lack of a coordinated approach to English language provision for adult learners in Ireland has been raised as a policy issue for a number of years, with need for language learning far outstripping supply (McGinnity et al., 2020a). Parental English language proficiency is likely to have positive spill-over effects for children (Driessen, 2017).

The results of this study have implications for early education and care policy. We find that while there was a high level of take up of the free preschool year (the ECCE scheme) for children with two parents who were born abroad, these children were somewhat less likely to have participated in the programme than Irish-origin children. We also found that, while participation in centre-based childcare at age three (before ECCE) was not associated with vocabulary levels at age five for all children, it was associated with higher English reading skills at age nine, even when vocabulary scores at age five are included. Previous research identified a 'compensatory effect', in that the language benefit of centre-based care was greater for children from a non-English-speaking background (McGinnity et al., 2015). Taken together, this evidence suggests that early education investments benefit children of both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds, and are likely to benefit migrant-origin children even more. Since this cohort of children were of pre-school age (in the period 2008–2013), there has been a major reform of pre-school childcare policy with the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme

(Russell et al., 2018). Recent estimates using the ESRI's tax-benefit model (SWITCH) indicate that families in the bottom third of the income distribution will benefit most from the childcare subsidy introduced, with this group experiencing the greatest fall in childcare costs (Callan et al., 2021). This may facilitate more low-income migrant families to access formal pre-school childcare than has been the case for this cohort, and thereby enable more migrant mothers to return to work after childbirth, if they wish, even if their earnings are low. This is important given that maternal employment can act as a protective factor against poverty and economic vulnerability, particularly among low-income families (Maître et al., 2021). The streamlined nature of the National Childcare Scheme, designed to make the system clearer and more straightforward, may also be an advantage for migrant parents in navigating the complex system of childcare provision in Ireland.

As noted in Chapter 1, some countries provide language screening as well as, where necessary, language support through pre-school (OECD, 2021), and some evaluations have indicated that this approach reaps large benefits in terms of language proficiency (Leseman et al., 2017). Consideration could be given to additional targeted language supports at pre-school drawing on lessons from other jurisdictions.

According to context theory, migrant integration is strongly influenced by differences in the contexts in which integration takes place, such as schools. School effects in the current study are relatively modest, though it should be noted that there was typically only a small number of pupils from our sample in each school.

We find that a higher concentration of migrant students in the school is associated with a lower score on the English vocabulary test at age five, independent of the child's own and family characteristics. This effect was the same for children with a migrant background and those without. The size of the effect is small and disappears by age nine. Nevertheless, it suggests there may be a need for additional supports for schools with a high number of students with migrant backgrounds, especially for the younger classes.

We find a small negative effect on English language achievement, at ages five and nine, for those attending the most disadvantaged schools (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Urban Band 1) over and above the children's own economic or social disadvantage – a reduction of minus two on a 100-point scale at age nine. Moreover, progression is lower between five and nine years for pupils in these schools. At age five, we find that this negative effect is greater for students with migrant parents than those with Irish-born parents. By age nine, however, no difference is found in the 'DEIS Urban Band 1 effect' between migrant-origin and Irish-origin children. Greater investment in schools with the most disadvantaged student populations would be of benefit for all children attending. However, given that there is also a higher concentration of migrant-origin children in DEIS schools

(in line with the earlier study by Smyth et al., 2009), further support for the most disadvantaged schools would assist with the narrowing of the achievement gap. Regarding self-concept, we found that children in DEIS schools fare as well as those in non-DEIS schools.

School admissions policies may not intentionally disadvantage migrant families, but a number of factors lead to migrant children in this cohort being concentrated in disadvantaged schools. The impact, if any, of the introduction of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 on migrant children's allocation to schools will be interesting in this regard. Cultural diversity of a school population will of course also be determined by the diversity of the local population/school catchment area, which cannot be manipulated by school policy.

While significant progress is made between ages three and nine in terms of the English language skills of children with two parents born abroad, these children still have lower language skills at age nine, on average, than Irish-origin children. As discussed in Chapter 1, there is no standardised system of English language assessment in place in Irish primary schools and there is likely to be considerable variation in how schools assign resources to English language tuition and special educational needs (SEN), though the funding model means it is not possible to assess this. Are learning supports for English as an additional language (EAL) being effectively directed towards children who need it? Monitoring supports offered at school level and their effectiveness via English-language assessments of participating children could usefully inform policy in the area. For children in Cohort '08, further research could investigate reported participation in language support classes and whether this is linked to English language development between ages five and nine.<sup>59</sup>

A recurring theme in educational policy is the importance of parental engagement. Yet if parents lack the requisite language skills, home-school liaison may be negatively affected. In addition, parents with poor English language skills may not be able to support their children with their learning or homework. Facilitating adult acquisition of English language skills is recognised as an action in the Migrant Integration Strategy (2017–2021). However, there have been some implementation issues (Department of Justice and Equality, 2019), and it is important that this is prioritised in the successor strategy. Supporting English language skills through effective policy provision will reap benefits, not just for the integration of adult migrants (see McGinnity et al., 2020a), but also the integration of their children into Irish society.

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59 In the teacher surveys at Wave 3 and Wave 5, respondents are asked whether the study child has received support for English as an additional language (if the teacher has answered yes to the child having any difficulty that limits their learning).

### 7.3 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As noted above, the integration of children from a migrant background not only occurs in family, childcare centres and schools, but also in local neighbourhoods and communities. Embeddedness in a local neighbourhood that is welcoming and accepting of migrant families (see Fahey et al., 2019) can further support the socio-emotional development of migrant-origin children and young people. Matching information on local areas to the GUI would allow much greater insights into how the composition of a local community influences the experiences of children and young people from migrant backgrounds.

Children of parents that came to Ireland as refugees, and who may have spent time in direct provision, are likely to require additional supports (Ombudsman for Children's Office, 2020). It is not possible to identify children from a refugee background in the GUI study, but future research could focus on the wellbeing and educational needs of this group.

An interesting finding from this report is that, in terms of both English language proficiency and self-concept, children with one migrant parent or one English-speaking parent do not typically differ from those with two Irish-origin or native-English-speaking parents, even after accounting for background characteristics. We know relatively little in Ireland about recent patterns of intermarriage by migrant status or linguistic background.<sup>60</sup> Future research could consider the nature and patterns of these 'mixed' partnerships in Ireland.

In the current study, we focus on self-concept as reported by the children themselves, as this provides an important insight into their self-esteem, happiness and sense of belonging in school and among peers. However, while this is a multi-dimensional measure, it cannot capture all the dimensions of young people's experience. There is scope for extending the current research to consider other outcomes, such as socio-emotional development as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Previous research on socio-emotional outcomes of children in Ireland at five years of age has found that migrant children experience fewer socio-emotional difficulties and have higher pro-social scores, although teacher ratings identify lower pro-social scores among this group (see Russell et al., 2016), conflicting findings that highlight the need for further research in this area. Further, the measure of self-concept is collected for the first time at nine years of age, so the analysis could not incorporate change over time, which means that causal conclusions cannot be drawn. Future waves of the GUI will allow this initial study to be further developed.

The role of religious affiliation and religiosity has not been considered in this report, though it is potentially important, both in terms of children's experience of

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60 See Lunn and Fahey (2011) for an analysis of marital homogamy using the Census.



school in Ireland and their wellbeing more generally (Smyth, et al., 2013). Particularly in the context of the dominant role of the Catholic Church in Irish schools, and the fact that many of those from minority religions come from a migrant background, investigating this topic in greater depth using data from the GUI Cohort '08 could provide useful insights, as could exploring the role of minority religious affiliation in the lives of 17 and 20 year olds using later waves of the GUI. The current study focuses on English language and reading as core elements of the school curriculum and strong predictors of achievement within the Irish school system, as well as a key measure of migrant integration. However, this is only one indicator of cognitive development; as noted in Chapter 5, other non-verbal skills are less likely to differ between migrant and non-migrant groups. Moreover, there is evidence that bilingualism is an advantage in other cognitive outcomes. The GUI provides the opportunity to examine other cognitive outcomes such as the selective attention 'map' test at age nine and the influence of bilingualism and other cognitive/learning outcomes as the children age. Mathematics skills are an important indicator of cognitive skills, as well as being important for many occupational trajectories. Investigating how these skills differ in Cohort '08 could usefully add to what we know from other sources, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study or the national assessments of mathematics administered at primary school (Kavanagh et al., 2016; Kavanagh and Weir, 2018).

The GUI data provide the opportunity to explore many of the issues raised here in greater detail, by following the same group of children over time, allowing researchers to analyse not only the 'direction of travel' in terms of development and integration, but also the impact of past experiences (positive or negative) on children's lives. For example, analysis of racially motivated bullying and experience of discrimination is possible using Cohort '98, which collected data on both children who were born in Ireland and those who migrated as children. A further wave of data will be collected from Cohort '08 when they reach 13 years. This continued collection of data on the progression of those from a migrant background – both people who came to Ireland as children (who make up 11 per cent of Cohort '98), and those born in Ireland to migrant parents – makes for an invaluable resource in terms of examining the experiences of these groups in Irish society and informing the development of policies that promote integration and minimise the risks of segregation and exclusion that have emerged in other countries.

Of course, migration is a dynamic phenomenon: Chapter 1 shows how the scale and composition of immigration flows to Ireland have varied considerably over the past 30 years. The children in the GUI Cohort '08 were born just after a rapid rise in immigration, particularly from eastern Europe, and this study does show parental region of origin and language background play an important role in child outcomes. The GUI study, both the '08 and the earlier '98 cohorts, offers tremendous potential as a resource for investigating the integration of migrant-origin children into Irish society, as children and into young adulthood. Any new

child cohort study could also reveal valuable insights into subsequent cohorts of migrant-origin children. In any new cohort study, consideration could usefully be given to surveying children who were born in Ireland to migrant parents, and those who came to Ireland as children.



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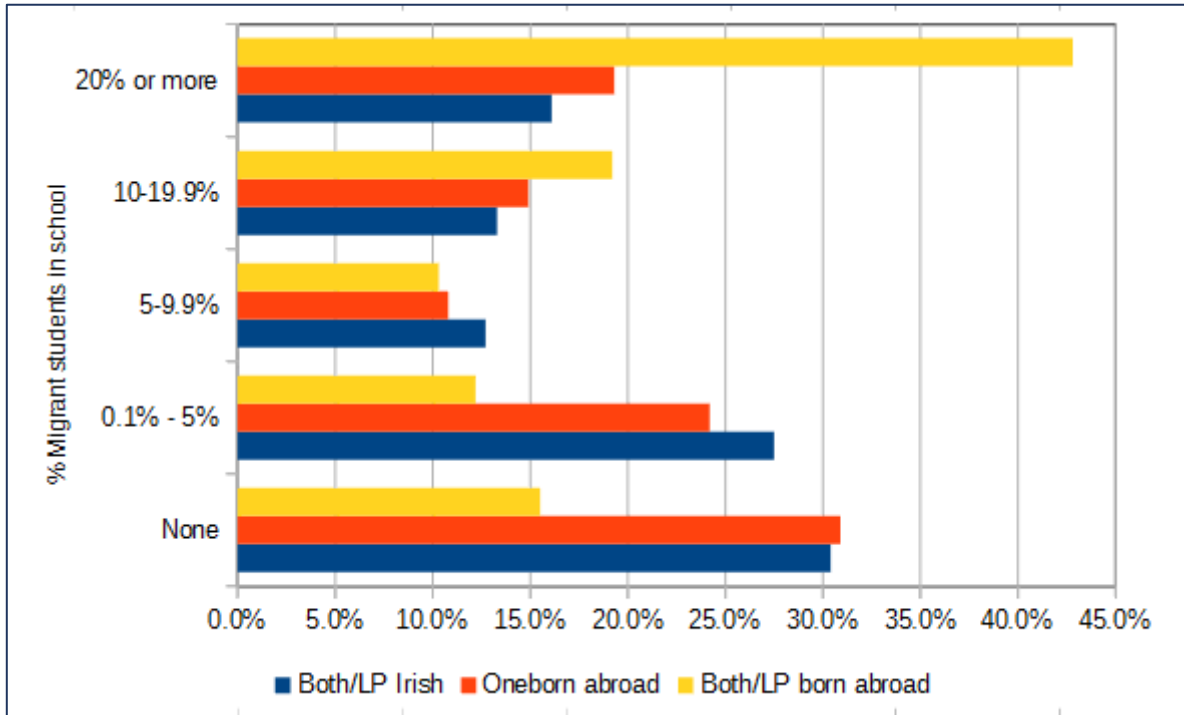
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## APPENDIX 1

FIGURE A1 PROPORTION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AT 9 YEARS BY PARENTAL COUNTRY OF BIRTH



Note: GUI Wave 5, weighted by cross sectional weight.

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