

# **Ready to Engage? – First Results of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)**

*Irish National Summary of IEA's Initial Findings Report*

**Jude Cosgrove  
Lorraine Gilleece  
Gerry Shiel**

**Educational Research Centre  
St Patrick's College, Dublin  
[www.erc.ie](http://www.erc.ie)**

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Lorraine Gilleece (Educational Research Centre)  
Gerry Shiel (Educational Research Centre)

### Information on Further Reporting

The IEA *Initial Findings* report represents just the first step in a sequence of international and national reporting. Further reporting will include:

- The full-length international report in late September, 2010
- The report on an EU test and questionnaire in late September, 2010
- An international encyclopaedia of the civic and citizenship education systems of participating countries in late December, 2010
- A full-length national report in early November, 2010. The national report will include detailed and comprehensive analyses of all ICCS instruments, a comparison of the ICCS test and the CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education) curriculum, the results arising from a number of questions that were added to the international questionnaires and are unique to Ireland, and analyses that examine a wide range of school and student characteristics simultaneously.

The reports will be available on [www.erc.ie](http://www.erc.ie) and [www.iea.nl](http://www.iea.nl).

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# Ready to Engage? – First results of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)

*Irish National Summary of IEA's Initial Findings Report*

## 1. Overview

ICCS stands for the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study. It is a project of the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement). The main points arising from the IEA's *Initial Findings* report on ICCS, published on June 29, 2010, are outlined in this summary report.

This summary:

- lists participating countries
- describes the design and structure of the study
- establishes a context for ICCS
- discusses the content of the study
- describes the content of the ICCS test of civic knowledge
- describes aspects of the performance of 14-year-olds in Ireland compared with students in other participating countries
- considers key characteristics associated with test performance
- describes students' beliefs and attitudes relating to aspects of citizenship
- provides some information on the views of teachers surveyed.

## 2. Participating Countries

Thirty-eight countries/systems (henceforth 'countries', listed in Table 1) participated in ICCS. Southern Hemisphere countries conducted the survey in autumn 2008 and Northern Hemisphere countries conducted it in the spring of 2009.

**Table 1: Countries participating in ICCS**

#Austria	Greece	*Netherlands
#Belgium (Flemish region)	Guatemala	#New Zealand
Bulgaria	*, #Hong Kong (SAR)	Norway
Chile	Indonesia	Paraguay
Chinese Taipei	Ireland	Poland
Colombia	Italy	Russian Federation
Cyprus	Korea (Republic of)	Slovak Republic
Czech Republic	Latvia	Slovenia
#Denmark	Liechtenstein	Spain
Dominican Republic	Lithuania	Sweden
#England	#Luxembourg	#Switzerland
Estonia	Malta	Thailand
Finland	Mexico	

\*Country did not meet the international student sampling standards.

#Country did not meet the international teacher sampling standards.

## 3. Design and Structure of ICCS

To ensure the quality and comparability of the ICCS results across countries, all countries participating in ICCS (including Ireland) implemented a field trial in a small sample of schools in spring of 2008. Results were used to refine procedures and select test items and questionnaire content for the main study. The structure of the

ICCS assessment is shown below. For each survey instrument (shown in bold), a summary of the content covered is listed.

<b>Student Instruments</b>
<p><b>Assessment of civic knowledge</b> (45 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four content areas: civic society and systems; civic principles; civic participation; and civic identities.</li> <li>• Two processes: knowing; and reasoning and analysing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Student questionnaire</b> (40 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics (e.g. gender, family structure, migrant status)</li> <li>• Home background (e.g. parental education, books in the home)</li> <li>• Parental interest in social and political issues</li> <li>• Views on participation in class</li> <li>• Participation in civic and citizenship education (CCE) related activities inside and outside of school time</li> <li>• Interest in politics</li> <li>• Views on gender, ethnic, and immigrant rights</li> <li>• Voting intent and intent to join a political party</li> <li>• Trust in civic institutions</li> </ul> <p><b>EU Regional Module</b> (25 minutes) – taken by 24 participating countries including Ireland</p> <p><u>Part 1:</u> knowledge about the EU</p> <p><u>Part 2:</u> attitudes towards the EU, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of belonging in the EU</li> <li>• Attitudes towards the euro</li> <li>• Attitudes towards learning European languages</li> <li>• Beliefs about EU governance and enlargement of the EU</li> </ul>

<b>Teacher questionnaire</b>
<p>30 minutes (Second year teachers of all subjects)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics (e.g. gender, age, years' teaching experience)</li> <li>• Qualifications and experience</li> <li>• School and class climate</li> <li>• Views on the content of the civic and citizenship education (CCE) curriculum</li> </ul> <p><i>Optional teacher questionnaire section – 10 minutes (CCE teachers only)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence in teaching CCE-related topics</li> <li>• CCE activities in and outside of class time</li> <li>• Perceived improvements needed to the teaching and learning of CCE</li> </ul>

<b>School questionnaire</b>
<p>30 minutes (<i>principals of participating schools</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management, resources and demographics</li> <li>• Characteristics of and resources in the local community</li> <li>• Teaching and learning of CCE</li> </ul>

<b>National context questionnaire</b>
<p>(<i>Completed by the Department of Education and Skills</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure of education system</li> <li>• Civic and citizenship education in the curriculum</li> <li>• Recent developments in civic and citizenship education</li> </ul>

Very few results from the school and teacher questionnaires are included in the *Initial Findings* report and none of the results of the EU regional module are available yet; the data from these survey instruments have yet to be analysed.

#### **4. Context for ICCS in Ireland**

In March 2007 the *Taskforce on Active Citizenship* gave national prominence to civic and citizenship issues in Ireland. One recommendation of the report was that Ireland participate in ICCS. Ireland is one among 18 of the participating countries that offers all students the opportunity to learn about civic and citizenship education (CCE) issues as a compulsory subject at lower secondary education. In Ireland, the subject is called CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education). There is a strong emphasis in CSPE on active participation. The CSPE syllabus covers four major content areas (the individual and citizenship, the community, the State – Ireland, and Ireland and the world) with seven concepts cross-cutting these content areas (democracy, rights and responsibilities, human dignity, interdependence, development, law, and stewardship).

However, CSPE is only timetabled for one class period a week and is the only Junior Certificate subject assessed with a common-level paper (40% of marks) and an action research project (60% of marks). Other subjects, such as history, home economics, religious education (RE) and social, personal and health education (SPHE) cover content relevant to the ICCS assessment. Students might also learn about ICCS concepts outside of school (e.g. in the news or in discussion with parents). It should be noted that students in Ireland participated in ICCS in the spring of second year and would not have covered all of the CSPE curriculum.

In the broader context of CCE, other issues are noteworthy, for example:

- the current review of the junior cycle by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- opportunities for civic- and citizenship-relevant experiences in Transition Year including specific programmes such as Young Social Innovators (YSI)
- the current development of a new senior cycle subject, politics and society, by the NCCA

- patterns of social and political change that are occurring in Ireland and internationally, such as the increase in migration, the development of democracy, the increase in NGOs, globalisation, and security threats.

## 5. Content of the ICCS Test of Civic Knowledge

Students were allocated 45 minutes to complete the test of civic knowledge. The majority of questions were multiple choice. The ICCS test distinguished between four content areas (civic society and systems; civic principles; civic participation; and civic identities), and two processes (knowing; and reasoning/analysing).

Three examples of questions from the test are described in this section in order to illustrate the types of tasks that students were asked to do.

Example 1 aims to assess understanding of civic society and systems and the process of reasoning/analysing. It asks about regulation of the media by the government. On average both in Ireland and internationally, 41% of students answered the question correctly (option d); option b was an attractive distractor, picked by more than 35% of students nationally and internationally.

<b>ICCS Test (Example 1)</b>		
In many countries, media such as newspapers, radio stations and television stations are privately owned by media companies. In some countries, there are laws which limit the number of media companies that any one person or business group can own.		
<i>IRL</i> %	<i>INT</i> %	Why do countries have these laws?
16	11	a) To increase the profits of media companies
37	39	b) To enable the government to control information presented by the media
6	9	c) To make sure there are enough journalists to report about the government
<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>d) To make it likely that a range of views is presented by the media</b>

Correct answer is shown in bold.

Source: ICCS draft international database.

Example 2 (next page) aims to assess knowledge about civic principles and the process of reasoning/analysing. The question requires a written response, in which students are asked to provide two different ways in which public debate can benefit society.

<b>ICCS Test (Example 2)</b>			
Public debate is when people openly exchange their opinions. Public debate happens in letters to newspapers, TV shows, radio talkback, Internet forums and public meetings. Public debate can be about local, state, national or international issues.			
Score	IRL %	INT %	How can public debate benefit society? Give <b>two different</b> ways. (Examples of responses in Ireland)
0	26	38	<i>There is too much graffiti around the place so we need to stop it!</i>
1	43	44	<i>It can help people see that there are always two sides to a story/argument</i>
2	31	18	a) <i>They might want to inform people about problems which can be looked into.</i> b) <i>It can make other people see different views which others have</i>

Source: ICCS draft international database.

Students can achieve a score of 0, 1 or 2 points depending on the quality of their answers. To get full points, a student needs to give reasons that cover two of the five categories given below.

1. better knowledge or understanding of the substance of an issue or situation
2. provides solutions to problems *or* a forum from which solutions can come
3. increase in social harmony, acceptance of difference, or reduction of frustration
4. increases people's confidence or motivation to participate in their society
5. represents/enacts the principle of freedom of expression for people.

A score of 1 up to a maximum score of 2 for each reason that covers one category only, and 0 points is given for responses that do not cover any of the five categories.

Looking at sample responses to Example 2 (above), the first response is not directly relevant to the question, so 0 points are awarded (26% in Ireland). In the second example, the student's reason covers only one of the five specified categories, so 1 point is given. The third response is an example of a full-score (2-point) response since two different reasons are given. Irish students did better on this item in international comparison, with 31% obtaining a score of 2 compared to 18% internationally.

Example 3 (next page) concerns the content area of civic participation and again covers the process of reasoning/analysing. It is on the topic of the boycotting of products due to exploitation of cheap labour. This was a relatively easy item, with 86% of students in Ireland responding correctly to it. Again, the Irish percent correct is higher than the international one (72%).

<b>ICCS Test (Example 3)</b>		
Marek buys new school shoes. Marek then learns that his new shoes were made by a company that employs young children to make the shoes in a factory and pays them very little money for their work. Marek says he will not wear his new shoes again.		
<i>IRL</i> %	<i>INT</i> %	Why would Marek refuse to wear his new shoes?
3	8	a) He thinks that shoes made by children will not last very long.
<b>86</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>b) He does not want to show support for the company that made them.</b>
3	9	c) He does not want to support the children that made them.
8	11	d) He is angry that he paid more for the shoes than they are actually worth.

Correct answer is shown in bold.

Source: ICCS draft international database.

## 6. Student Achievement on the ICCS Test of Civic Knowledge

Students' responses to individual questions were combined to give an overall civic knowledge score. The achievement scale has an international mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. Table 3 (next page) shows, for all countries:

- average performance (column 2)
- standard errors of country estimates (SE)<sup>1</sup> (column 3)
- an indication as to whether the country average is significantly above or below the international average (column 4)
- gender differences in average achievement (column 5)
- grade level (column 6), and
- average age of participating students (column 7).

The average age of participants is 14.4 years and the mean age of Irish students (14.3) is close to the international average. Average age across countries ranges from 13.7 to 15.0 years. In the majority of countries (34), students were sampled from grade 8 (second year in Ireland). Variations in average age and grade level should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

The highest-performing countries are Finland, Korea, Denmark and Chinese Taipei. These four countries have an average score that is well ahead of the other countries. Ireland scores a substantial 34 points or one-third of a standard deviation above the international average, with a rank of seventh out of 36 countries with acceptable student samples. Ireland has a similar average performance to Poland, Sweden and Switzerland. Lower scores are associated with emerging economies (e.g. the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Indonesia, and Paraguay).

<sup>1</sup> The standard error is a measure of uncertainty surrounding the mean score which is due to the fact that a sample of second year students participated, rather than the entire population of second years.

**Table 2: Mean ICCS score, gender differences, grade level, and mean age, all countries**

Country/System	Mean ICCS Score	SE	International Comparison	Female Advantage	Grade Level	Mean Age
Finland	576	(2.4)	▲	<b>28</b>	8	14.7
Denmark	576	(3.6)	▲	<b>8</b>	8	14.9
Korea, Republic of	565	(1.9)	▲	<b>22</b>	8	14.7
Chinese Taipei	559	(2.4)	▲	<b>26</b>	8	14.2
Sweden	537	(3.1)	▲	<b>21</b>	8	14.8
Poland	536	(4.7)	▲	<b>33</b>	8	14.9
Ireland	534	(4.6)	▲	<b>22</b>	8	14.3
Switzerland	531	(3.8)	▲	7	8	14.7
Liechtenstein	531	(3.3)	▲	12	8	14.8
Italy	531	(3.3)	▲	<b>18</b>	8	13.8
Slovak Republic	529	(4.5)	▲	<b>18</b>	8	14.4
Estonia	525	(4.5)	▲	<b>33</b>	8	15.0
England	519	(4.4)	▲	<b>20</b>	9	14.0
New Zealand	517	(5.0)	▲	<b>31</b>	9	14.0
Slovenia	516	(2.7)	▲	<b>30</b>	8	13.7
Norway	515	(3.4)	▲	<b>24</b>	8	13.7
Belgium (Flemish)	514	(4.7)	▲	6	8	13.9
Czech Republic	510	(2.4)	▲	<b>18</b>	8	14.4
Russian Federation	506	(3.8)		<b>21</b>	8	14.7
Lithuania	505	(2.8)		<b>35</b>	8	14.7
Spain	505	(4.1)		<b>19</b>	8	14.1
Austria	503	(4.0)		<b>16</b>	8	14.4
Malta	490	(4.5)	▼	<b>34</b>	9	13.9
Chile	483	(3.5)	▼	<b>14</b>	8	14.2
Latvia	482	(4.0)	▼	<b>30</b>	8	14.8
Greece	476	(4.4)	▼	<b>32</b>	8	13.7
Luxembourg	473	(2.2)	▼	<b>10</b>	8	14.6
Bulgaria	466	(5.0)	▼	<b>26</b>	8	14.7
Colombia	462	(2.9)	▼	3	8	14.4
Cyprus	453	(2.4)	▼	<b>40</b>	8	13.9
Mexico	452	(2.8)	▼	<b>24</b>	8	14.1
Thailand	452	(3.7)	▼	<b>48</b>	8	14.4
Guatemala	435	(3.8)	▼	2	8	15.5
Indonesia	433	(3.4)	▼	<b>19</b>	8	14.3
Paraguay	424	(3.4)	▼	<b>29</b>	9	14.9
Dominican Republic	380	(2.4)	▼	<b>26</b>	8	14.8
<i>Countries not meeting sampling requirements</i>						
Hong Kong (SAR)	554	(5.7)	-	21	8	14.3
Netherlands	494	(7.6)	-	7	8	14.3
International Average	500	-	-	22	-	14.4

▲/▼ Significantly above/below international average; significant gender differences in **bold**.

Source: *Initial Findings* report, Table 8.

The gender difference in achievement in Ireland is 22 points in favour of girls, which is the same as the international average. Gender differences are statistically significant in all but four countries, ranging from 2 to 48 points. These differences may be partly due to differences in reading literacy favouring girls. It can also be seen from Table 2 that the size of the gender difference is not related to overall average achievement.

Results are also reported in terms of international benchmarks or proficiency levels, ranging from Level 1 (concrete understanding of basic principles) to Level 3 (advanced levels of civic knowledge and reasoning). Table 3 shows brief statements of the kinds of knowledge and skills that students are likely to be able to demonstrate at each proficiency level of the ICCS test.

**Table 3: Brief description of proficiency levels**

Proficiency Level	Brief description: Students at this level are likely to...
Level 3 (> 563 points)	Make connections between processes of social/political organisation and influence; generate accurate hypotheses about benefits, motivations and likely outcomes of policies and actions; integrate, justify and evaluate positions, policies or laws based on their underlying principles; demonstrate familiarity with economic forces and the strategic nature of active participation
Level 2 (479-563 points)	Demonstrate familiarity with representative democracy; recognise ways that institutions and laws protect and promote principles and values; understand the potential of voting within a representative democracy; generalise principles and values from specific policies and laws; generalise the role of the individual citizen to broader civic activities
Level 1 (395-479 points)	Demonstrate familiarity with equality, social cohesion and freedom as principles of democracy and are able to relate these principles to everyday examples; demonstrate understanding of concepts relating to the individual as an active citizen; recognise the necessity for individuals to obey the law; relate individual courses of action to likely outcomes; relate personal characteristics to an individual's ability to affect change
Below Level 1 (<395 points)	Knowledge and skills of students at this level are not assessed by ICCS

Source: *Initial Findings* report, Table 5.

The levels represent an increasing hierarchy of knowledge and reasoning about civic issues, ranging from Level 1 (where students can demonstrate a concrete understanding of basic civic principles), to Level 3 (where they can demonstrate a more interconnected and abstract understanding of civic principles and processes). Students scoring below Level 1 have a level of knowledge and skill that is below the easiest questions on the test so their proficiencies cannot be described by ICCS.

Table 4 shows, for Ireland and nine comparison countries<sup>2</sup>, the percentages of students scoring at each proficiency level as described in Table 3. In Ireland, 10% of students scored below Level 1, 20% at Level 1, 29% at Level 2, and 41% at Level 3. The percentage of students scoring at Level 3 compares favourably with the international average of 28% and is about the same as the average for Ireland and the nine comparison countries (40%), but is well behind Finland (58%) and Denmark (56%). Ten percent of students in Ireland scored at the lowest proficiency level ('below Level 1') compared to the ten-country average of 8%, and just 2% and 4% in Finland and Denmark, respectively. These students have a level of knowledge and skills below that measured by the ICCS test.

**Table 4: Percentages of students at each proficiency level on the ICCS test – Ireland and nine comparison countries, the 10-country average, and the overall international average**

Country/System	Below			
	Level 1 (<395)	Level 1 (395-479)	Level 2 (479-563)	Level 3 (>563)
Finland	2.1	10.2	30.0	57.7
Denmark	3.7	12.7	27.5	56.1
Sweden	7.8	20.5	31.7	40.1
Poland	8.6	19.4	30.9	41.0
Ireland	9.9	19.9	29.1	41.1
Switzerland	5.6	20.5	37.3	36.6
England	12.7	22.2	30.8	34.3
New Zealand	14.4	22.0	28.1	35.4
Slovenia	8.6	25.0	36.3	30.0
Belgium (Flemish)	8.4	23.8	38.8	29.1
10-country average	8.2	19.6	32.1	40.1
International average	15.7	26.0	30.5	27.8

Countries are ordered by overall average achievement.

Source: *Initial Findings* report, Table 9.

## 7. Characteristics Associated with Civic Knowledge

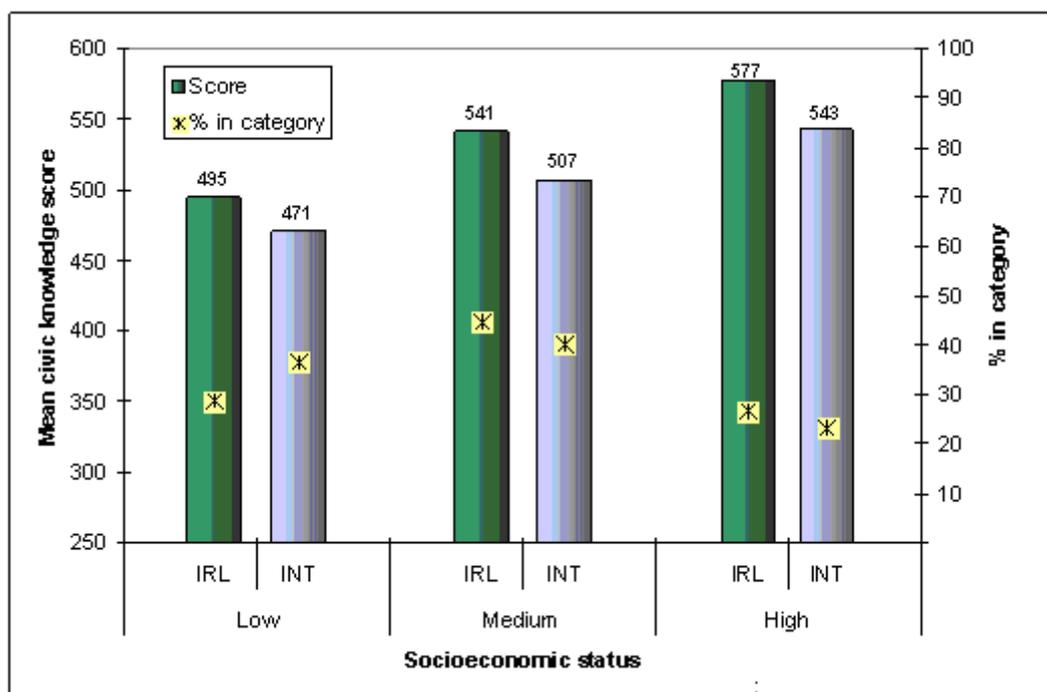
The *Initial Findings* report highlights a number of background characteristics that are associated with student achievement on the civic knowledge test. Many more variables (including those relating to teachers and schools) that may be relevant to interpreting student performance were not examined in this initial report, so these results should be interpreted with caution. The characteristics considered here are socioeconomic status, parental interest in political and social issues, and migrant status.

<sup>2</sup> These countries were selected for a variety of reasons – for example high average performance (Finland, Denmark, Sweden), similar performance compared with Ireland (Poland, Sweden, Switzerland), similar cultural and linguistic characteristics (England, New Zealand), similar population sizes (New Zealand, Slovenia, Belgium-Flemish), and/or recent educational reform (Poland).

First, student socioeconomic status (SES), as indicated by parental occupation, is associated with achievement. In Ireland the score difference on the ICCS test between students in the international upper and lower thirds of the SES distribution – 82 points – is a little higher than the international average of 72 points (Figure 1). Countries differ in the extent to which SES is related to achievement. The relationship is much weaker in countries such as Finland (where the score difference between students in the upper and lower thirds of the SES distribution is 53 points), Korea (48 points) and Latvia (42 points). In Finland and Korea, high average achievement is combined with a relatively weak relationship between civic knowledge and SES.

In all figures presented in this summary, each bar represents the mean ICCS knowledge score of a sub-group and each cross ('X') represents the percentage of students in that sub-group.

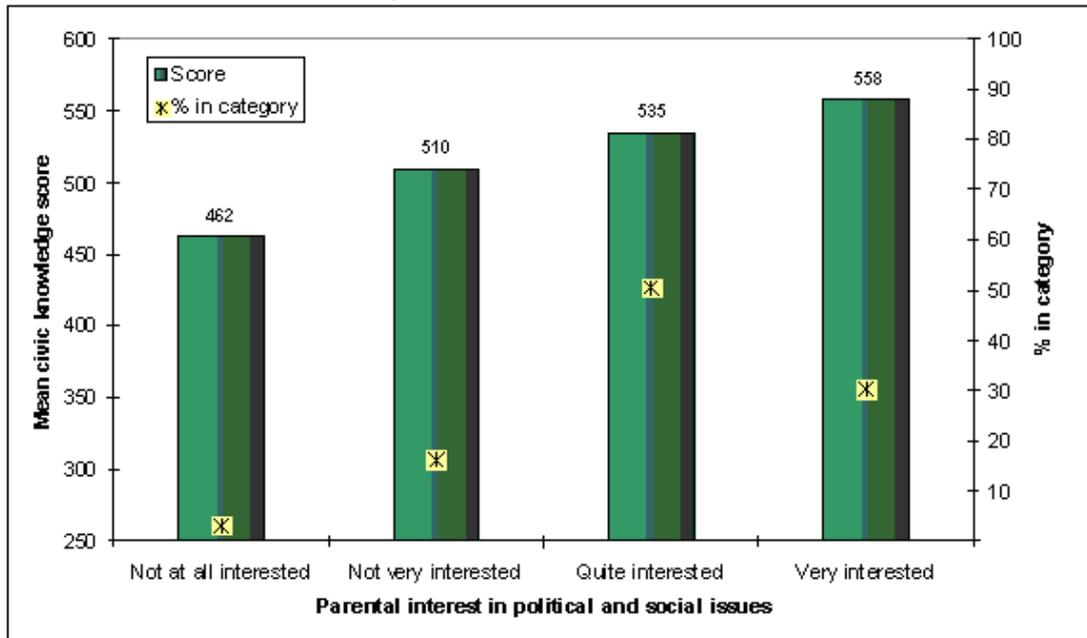
**Figure 1: Mean civic knowledge scores (Ireland and international average) for students in low, medium and high categories of socioeconomic status**



Source: *Initial Findings* report, Table 25.

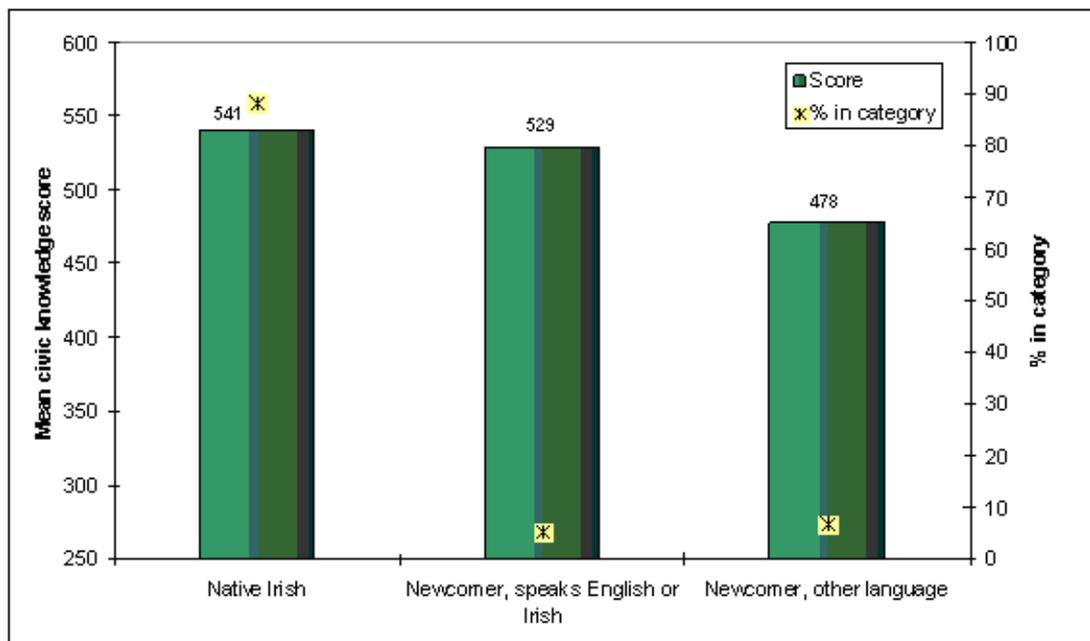
Second, a relationship is found between parents’ interest in social and political issues and their children’s levels of achievement. In Ireland, parental interest is comparatively high (with 30% of students reporting that their parents are ‘very interested’ in political and social issues compared with 23% internationally). In Ireland, there is a 96-point score difference between students who report that their parents are ‘very interested’ compared with those reporting that their parents are ‘not at all interested’ (Figure 2). This is greater than the corresponding international score-point difference of 68.

**Figure 2: Mean civic knowledge scores in Ireland by categories of parental interest in political and social issues**



Source: *Initial Findings* report, Table 26.

**Figure 3: Mean civic knowledge scores of students in Ireland by migrant and language status**



Source: ICCS draft international database.

Third, students' migrant status is related to achievement in almost all countries (where there are sufficient numbers of students in migrant groups to report results), although countries vary in terms of the compositions of migrant populations, their share of first-generation newcomers, and the language spoken by students at home. In Ireland, a 43-point difference is found in the achievements of newcomer and non-newcomer or native students, in favour of the latter. Of the 12% of newcomer students in Ireland, about half (7% of all students) speak a first language other than English or Irish. *National* analyses indicate that there is no significant achievement difference between newcomer and non-newcomer students who speak English or Irish, while these two groups outperform newcomers speaking other languages by more than half a standard deviation (Figure 3). Some of the high-achieving countries in ICCS have relatively low numbers of migrant students (e.g. Chinese Taipei, Finland, Korea and Poland – all less than 5%).

## 8. Students' Beliefs and Attitudes

The student questionnaire used in the ICCS study yielded information on a wide range of students' beliefs and attitudes and, in some cases, the *Initial Findings* report examines their associations with achievement. Some of the observed associations may interact with other characteristics such as SES, so results should be interpreted with caution.

Key beliefs and attitudes considered here include students' interest in social and political issues, views on political parties, intention to vote in national elections, trust in civic institutions and people, attitudes to equal gender rights, participation in civic-related activities inside and outside of school, and views on classroom climate.

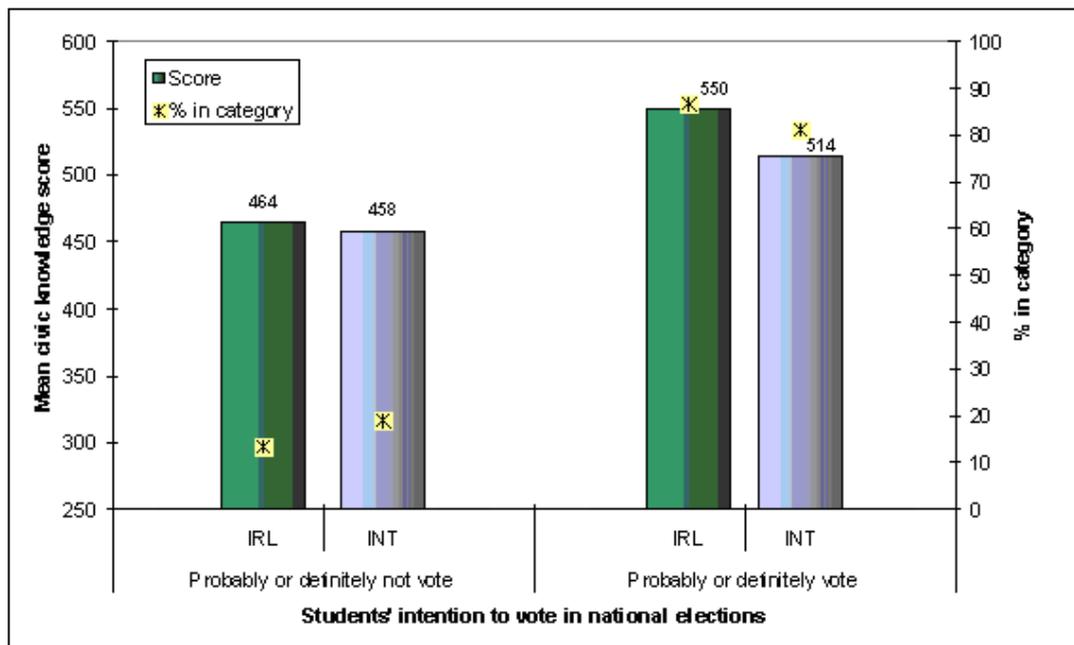
Students were asked a series of questions on their interest in political and social issues (e.g., How interested are you in ...politics in your country? ...politics in other countries?). Responses were combined to form a scale with an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. The Irish average is the same as the international average (50), and the gender difference in Ireland is marginal (about one scale point in favour of girls).

In Ireland, 44% of students express a preference for a particular political party, compared with 48% internationally. However, a higher percentage of students in Ireland (87%) report an intention to vote in future national elections than internationally (81%). In Ireland, the score-point difference on the ICCS test between students intending and not intending to vote (85 points) is higher than the international average (56), indicating that intention to vote is associated with higher levels of civic knowledge (Figure 4a). Similarly, there is an 8-point difference on the interest in political and social issues scale in favour of students intending to vote compared to an international average difference of 6 points (Figure 4b).

Students were asked about the extent to which they trust civic institutions and people in general. The percentages of students in Ireland indicating 'complete' or 'quite a lot of' trust in the national government is lower (52%) than the international

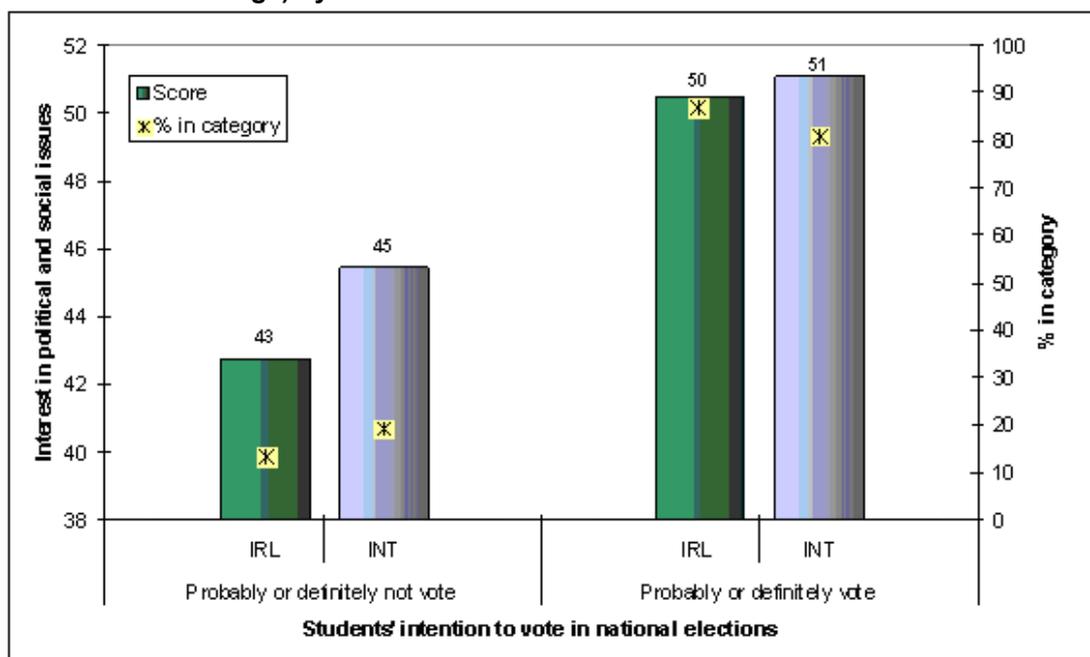
average (62%). Similarly, lower levels of trust in the media are evident in Ireland (48%) when compared with the international average (61%). In Ireland, students' levels of trust in political parties (40%) and in schools (75%) are similar to the corresponding international averages (41% and 75%, respectively), while trust in people in general in Ireland (64%) is a little higher than the international average (58%).

**Figure 4a: Mean civic knowledge scores (Ireland and international average) by students' intention to vote in national elections**



Source: Initial Findings report, Table 18.

**Figure 4b: Students' interest in political and social issues (Ireland and international average) by students' intention to vote in national elections**



Source: Initial Findings report, Table 18.

Students were also asked a series of questions about their attitudes towards gender rights (e.g., level of agreement with questions such as ‘Women should stay out of politics’, ‘Men and women should get equal pay when they are doing the same jobs’). These questions were used to construct an index with an international mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. In Ireland, students score significantly above the international mean (by 4 points or two-fifths of a standard deviation), indicating relatively more positive attitudes towards gender equality. However, as in all countries, girls in Ireland have a significantly higher score (59) than boys (50), though the mean score of boys in Ireland is 3 points higher than the corresponding international average of 47 points.

Since the IEA’s Six Subject Study was conducted in 1971<sup>3</sup>, there has been some shift in Irish students’ attitudes to gender rights. For example, in 1971, 22% of students strongly agreed or agreed that ‘Women should stay out of politics’ compared to 7% in 2009. Also, while 62% of students in Ireland in 1971 agreed or strongly agreed that ‘Men and women should have the same rights in every way’, 96% did so in 2009.

Students were asked about the number of civic-related activities they participated in outside school in the past school year (e.g., in activities arranged by a voluntary groups to help the community, or a human rights organisation). Rates of participation in Ireland are generally similar to the corresponding international averages. For example, 50% of students in Ireland indicate that they were involved with a voluntary group and 9% with a human rights organisation.

Students were also asked about the number of civic-related activities that they had participated in while at school (e.g. voting for Student Council representatives). Again, Irish rates of participation are similar to the corresponding international averages. For example, 66% of students in Ireland reported having taken part in a debate at school, while 38% indicated that they had participated in decision-making within the school.

Students’ views on the extent to which there was openness in classroom discussion were examined using agree/disagree statements such as ‘Teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class’ and ‘Students express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students’. These were again summarised on a scale with an international mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. Irish students’ scores were a little higher (by 2 points) compared to the international average. However, although in most countries, girls reported a more open climate, the difference was 5 points in Ireland compared to 2 points internationally.

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<sup>3</sup> Torney, J.V., Oppenheim, A.N., & Farnen, R.F. (1976). *Civic education in ten countries: An empirical study*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiskell; New York: Wiley.

Litton, F., (1977). *Aspects of civic education in Ireland: National Report on the IEA Cross National Survey of Civic Education*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

## 9. Key Findings from the Teacher Survey

When asked what they thought were the three most important aims of CCE, teachers in Ireland tended to select ‘promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions’, ‘promoting participation in the local community’, ‘promoting critical and independent thinking’, and ‘promoting knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities’. Irish teachers are unusual by international comparison as they attributed a higher level of importance to the first two of these four aspects (Table 5) In contrast, teachers in Ireland placed a comparatively low emphasis on ‘developing skills and competencies in conflict resolution’ and ‘promoting capacity to defend one’s own point of view’.

**Table 5: Percentages of teachers endorsing 10 areas of CCE education (top three ratings), Ireland and international averages (teachers of all subject areas)\***

Area	Percent endorsing (Ireland)	Percent endorsing (International)
Promoting knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities	56	60
Promoting critical and independent thinking	49	52
Promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions	42	33
Promoting participation in the local community	40	16
Promoting care and respect for the environment	39	41
Developing skills and competencies in conflict resolution	22	41
Promoting participation in school life	19	19
Promoting capacity to defend one’s own point of view	13	20
Promoting strategies against racism/xenophobia	12	10
Preparing students for future political participation	7	7

\*Only the top three areas rated by each teacher were included in this analysis.

Source: *Initial Findings* report, Table 21.

In the context of school life more generally, teachers were asked how often they participated in community activities with their second years (e.g. human rights projects, cultural activities, sports). Rates of participation in Ireland were lower than the corresponding international averages. For example, 24% of teachers in Ireland had not participated in any of the listed activities with their students in the past school year, compared to 10% internationally. This finding contrasts with the comparatively high emphasis placed on promoting participation in the local community shown in Table 5 (above).