Fás Aníos in Éirinn
Growing Up in Ireland

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Book of Abstracts
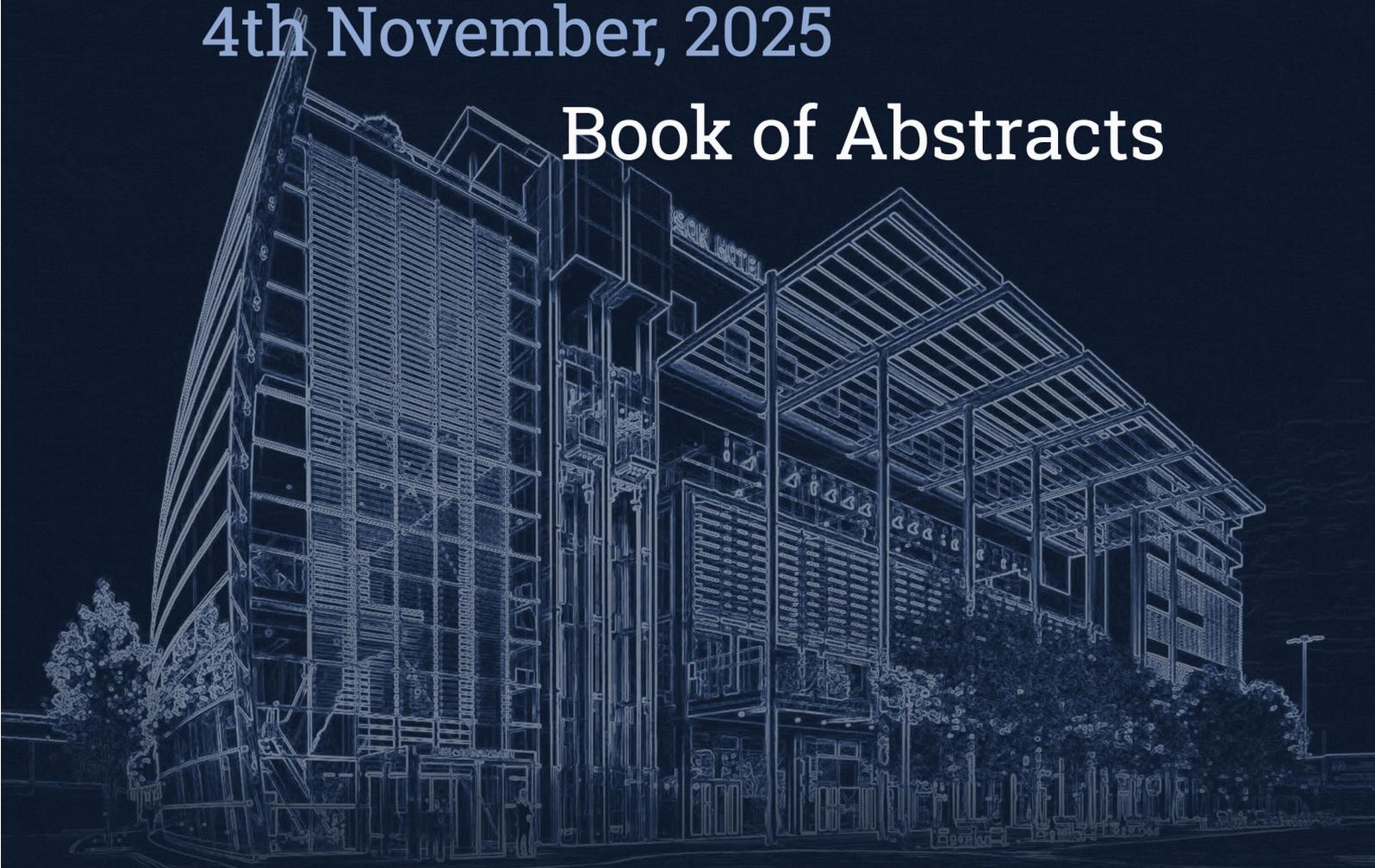
Keynote Presentation: Room 1, Stratocaster A&B, 14:00

Mind the gap: Towards a better understanding of how structural inequalities are related to Early Childhood Education and implications for longitudinal research

Professor James Hall (University of Southampton)

Biography: Dr James Hall is Associate Professor of Education at the University of Southampton and Deputy Director of the UK's National Centre for Research Methods. He also leads the Quantitative Methods in Education group at the Southampton Education School.

His research focuses on early child development and Early Childhood Education (ECE), with particular interest in how parents and preschools jointly shape children's development and educational outcomes. His work aims to inform the design of high-quality early interventions and evidence-based policy.

Dr Hall adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on education, psychology, and health, and has contributed to major UK studies including the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) and the national evaluation of Children's Centres in England (ECCE). He served as an advisor on ECE for Ofsted, the education standards body in England, between 2018 and 2023, contributing to national guidance on quality and pedagogy.

He also continues to advance methodological innovation in the study of child development. His recent work includes *airbag moderation*, a conceptual framework for understanding situations in which structurally shaped factors, such as ECE quality, are both influenced by social disadvantage and modify its effects on children's outcomes. The framework addresses limitations in traditional moderation frameworks by recognising that many protective factors are themselves unequally distributed, offering a more realistic basis for studying how early interventions interact with patterns of social inequality.

Abstract: High-quality early childhood education (ECE), characterised by warm, responsive adult–child interactions and rich learning experiences, has the potential to reduce social inequalities by reducing inequalities in child development by the start of school. Yet families experiencing structural disadvantage are often also the least likely to access such provision, even though they stand to benefit the most. This risks widening gaps in children's development at the start of school, compounding structural inequalities in schools, and ultimately causing harm to our societies.

This keynote explores how unequal access to high-quality ECE combines with broader social and economic conditions to shape early developmental outcomes. Drawing on international evidence, I argue that while ECE is widely positioned as a means of addressing deeply rooted structural inequalities, it often falls short of that promise in practice. One reason for this is that the empirical evidence base (often derived from large-scale longitudinal studies) has tended to overlook how social and economic inequalities shape families' access to, and use of, high-quality ECE.

The keynote begins by summarising the international evidence base on the potential for high-quality ECE to reduce early developmental inequalities. It then highlights a gap in this literature: who is it who is more likely to receive this high-quality provision? I argue that this omission stems in part from conceptual frameworks that treat structural inequality as relevant to child outcomes but not to ECE access and use. I propose an alternative framework that accounts for both, and illustrate its value through analysis of data from the UK's longitudinal Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study.

As the Growing Up in Ireland study launches a new cohort, this keynote invites researchers, policymakers, and ECE stakeholders to consider how longitudinal research design, conceptual frameworks, and policy ambition can better align to reflect the social stratification of opportunity in children's early lives.

Session A: Mental health
Room 1, Stratocaster A&B

The mental health of young people before, during, and after COVID-19: Evidence from Growing Up in Ireland

Anne Nolan (Economic and Social Research Institute)
Emer Smyth (Economic and Social Research Institute)
Michael Vallely (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Session A, Room 1, Stratocaster A&B. 10:15

Background/Context: The COVID-19 pandemic and public health measures resulted in widespread and lengthy closures of schools, colleges and workplaces, and reduced social interaction. Data from Ireland and other countries shows that young people experienced large increases in mental health difficulties, including depressive symptoms, during the pandemic. However, there is a lack of evidence on how young people have fared in the post-pandemic period.

Methods: Data from the '98 Cohort of Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) at ages 20 (2018), 22 (2020) and 25 (2023) are used to examine change in depressive symptoms prior, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Mixed effects models are employed to assess the change in depressive symptoms over time, and the factors associated with these changes. In GUI, depressive symptoms are measured using the 8-item Center for Epidemiological Studies depression scale (CES-D).

Results: During the COVID-19 survey (carried out in December 2020 when Cohort '98 were aged 22), 48 per cent of young people reported clinically-significant depressive symptoms. This proportion was a substantial increase on the 27 per cent who reported depressive symptoms in 2018 (when the young people were aged 20). The proposed research will examine how depressive symptoms evolved into the post-pandemic period, and the factors (e.g., sex, living arrangements, socioeconomic position, etc.) associated with these changes.

Conclusion: This research, on the change in depressive symptoms prior, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, will have important implications for the development of policy and practice in relation to mental health and wellbeing among young people.

What counts as bullying? The perspectives of 13-year-olds

Emer Smyth (Economic and Social Research Institute)
Merike Darmody (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Session A, Room 1, Stratocaster A&B. 10:35

Context: Previous research has highlighted a discrepancy between the views of young people and 'official' labelling of bullying, with young people less likely to include intentionality and repetition in their definition of bullying. This paper uses data from Cohort '08 of the Growing Up in Ireland study to explore the circumstances under which young people label behaviour as bullying.

Methods: The 13-year wave had two measures of bullying behaviour, a direct question and a question for all on experience of bullying-type behaviours. Eight per cent of the 13-year-olds indicated they had been 'bullied' in the three months prior to the survey but almost a third of other young people reported experiencing bullying-type behaviour on at least two occasions. Logistic regression models are used to explore the relationship between the two measures.

Results: The 13-year-olds are more likely to count behaviour as bullying if it is more frequent, if the same person or people are involved and if they see the behaviour as causing greater harm. Being made angry by the behaviour has the strongest effect on the likelihood of labelling it as bullying. Someone circulating an upsetting photo, name-calling and having something hurtful posted online are more likely to be labelled as bullying than other types of behaviour.

Conclusion: A significant group of young people who experience repetitive behaviour that causes them harm do not see their experience as fitting within the existing parameters of anti-bullying policy and so are less likely to report their experiences.

Parental relationships' influence on emerging adults' subjective well-being: The mediating role of self-esteem

Sharon Scanlon (University of Limerick)
Emmanuel Affum-Osei (University of Limerick)

Session A, Room 1, Stratocaster A&B. 10:55

Background: Social relationships are critical in shaping subjective well-being, particularly within the family. While self-esteem is widely recognised as a core component of well-being and is known to influence relationship quality, the specific role of parent-child relationship quality during emerging adulthood remains underexplored, especially given the current trend of emerging adults in Ireland living at home for longer due to housing pressures.

Methods: This study investigated whether self-esteem mediates the relationship between parental relationship quality and subjective well-being among emerging adults. Data were drawn from Wave 4 (age 20) of the Growing up in Ireland cohort '98. A series of regression analyses tested the proposed mediation model.

Results: Our study investigated self-esteem as a potential mechanism for explaining the association between quality parental relationships and subjective well-being. In line with our assumptions, higher-quality parental relationships were positively associated with subjective well-being. Specifically, our results indicate that individuals with higher self-evaluations of worthiness (self-esteem) had positive associations with subjective well-being. Indeed, our study highlighted that self-esteem is one potential mechanism by which the positive effects of their parental relationships impact their subjective well-being.

Conclusion: These findings underscore the continued psychological importance of parental relationships during emerging adulthood. As economic factors prolong co-residence with parents, understanding how these relationships affect young adults' well-being becomes increasingly relevant. This study highlights the need for family-centred approaches in mental health interventions. It contributes to a growing body of literature emphasising self-esteem as a crucial mechanism linking family dynamics to psychological outcomes.

Session B: Transitions to adolescence and adulthood
Room 2, Alhambra

Expectations to progress to third-level education: A comparative analysis of GUI Cohorts '98 and '08, DEIS schools, and ELI insights

Kate Darmody (Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland)
Nikki Ryan (Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland)

Session B, Room 2, Alhambra. 10:15

Background/Context: This presentation will look at expectations of progressing to third-level education among Irish youth and their parents, drawing on longitudinal data from the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study, with a focus on Cohorts '98 (now 25) and '08 (now 17) and evaluation findings from three Early Learning Initiative (ELI) programmes. ELI programmes target educational underachievement and aspirations in socio-economically challenged areas where progression to third level is historically low.

Methods: Data was collected via post evaluation surveys from Junior coding club (ages 10-12), Educational Guidance (Ages 12-14 - first year) and Discover University (ages 14-17) and compared with GUI findings.

Results: When set in the wider context of Irish educational attainment and GUI results, our findings provide evidence that our mission to level the educational playing field and nurture expectations and desire for third level education in students from disadvantaged backgrounds is having a positive impact, but discrepancies still exist. This is backed up by findings from other initiatives with similar goals such as Preparing for Life. Similarities in the relationship between parental expectations for their children and children's own expectations are present in both the GUI and ELI data where collected.

Conclusion: ELI's community-based programmes in Dublin's inner city have demonstrated measurable improvements in educational engagement and desire and expectations to continue to third level among children from disadvantaged areas, suggesting that targeted supports can mitigate long-term disparities, but further work is needed to find out if this translates to action.

Socioeconomic inequality and academic tracking in Irish secondary education: The role of parental expectations

Ilyar Heydari Barardehi (Trinity College Dublin)

Yekaterina Chzhen (Trinity College Dublin)

Session B, Room 2, Alhambra. 10:35

Background/Context: Despite Ireland's formally comprehensive secondary school system, students are informally tracked into academic or vocational pathways through curricular subject levels and programme selection. This study examines how socioeconomic status (SES) and parental educational expectations (PEE) influence students' academic track placement and the difficulty levels of Leaving Certificate English and Mathematics, focusing on the mediating role of PEE.

Methods: Using data from the "Growing Up in Ireland" (GUI) longitudinal study, Cohort '98, we examined three outcome measures: (1) academic track placement (Leaving Certificate vs. vocational programmes), and subject difficulty levels in (2) English and (3) Mathematics. We employed binary logistic regression to model binary outcomes and ordered logistic regression for predicting Mathematics' difficulty level choices (Foundation, Ordinary, Higher). SES was measured through equivalised household income deciles and parental education. PEE was dichotomized as high (expecting a college degree or higher) vs. low. We applied the Karlson–Holm–Breen (KHB) method to test for mediation effects of PEE.

Results: Both components of SES are associated with higher levels of curricular difficulty and academic track placement. PEE also strongly and independently predict these outcomes. However, mediation analysis shows that PEE hardly mediates the relationship between SES and educational outcomes. That is, SES and PEE function as separate predictors rather than forming a mediating pathway.

Conclusion: SES and PEE both play strong, independent roles in shaping educational trajectories in Ireland. The lack of mediation suggests that effective policy responses should address both family background and expectation-related mechanisms to reduce stratification in education system

Work, economic status and cost of living: transitions from childhood to adulthood

Caragh Stapleton (Central Statistics Office)

Session B, Room 2, Alhambra. 10:55

Background/Context: The shape of the modern workforce in Ireland is more dynamic than ever. Changes are driven by the ever-increasing role of AI, increased globalization, and post-pandemic changes in working patterns. Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) Cohort '98 are at a point in their lives where many are transitioning out of higher education and into working life. This study looks at the dynamics of the GUI '98 workforce at age 25 and explores economic factors such as cost of living.

Methods: GUI Cohort 98 at age 25 was the first instance of extensively combining GUI survey data collection with administrative data, to reduce respondent burden and increase the analytical value of the data. Weighted frequency analysis was carried out using R on both administrative data and survey response variables on employment, income and factors relating to cost of living.

Results/Conclusion: This paper will explore the economic status of, and cost of living for, Cohort '98 as they move into adulthood. We found that there has been little difficulty in transitioning into the workforce for this group of adults with more than four-fifths reporting they were in employment at the time of interview. There were differences between respondents in employment and those not in employment in relation to having difficulty making ends meet. Less than one third of those in employment compared with over half of those not in employment had at least some difficulty making ends meet.

Session C: Physical health and development
Room 3, Stratocaster C

Should height be added to the well-being indicators? Evidence using GUI

Nicole Bolger (National Economic and Social Council/University College Dublin)

Session C, Room 3, Stratocaster C. 10:15

Background/Context: Child height is widely recognised in international literature as a robust, objective indicator of child well-being, capturing cumulative influences of nutrition, health, and socioeconomic status. This paper explores whether height should be formally included among Ireland's national well-being indicators, drawing on empirical evidence and international comparisons.

Methods: The analysis begins by situating Irish children's height in an international context, followed by a comparative assessment of child height data across multiple Irish sources, including the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study. A detailed investigation was then conducted using GUI data to examine the determinants of height in five-year-olds. Descriptive statistics and regression analyses (AMF) were employed to assess key factors, including parental characteristics, nutritional intake, genetic inheritance, and socioeconomic variables.

Results: The analysis confirms several statistically significant predictors of child height. Primary influences include parental height and weight, and child weight. Additional contributing factors include household income, parental social class, parental education, and clustered dietary patterns (e.g., carbohydrate- and fried food-dominant diets).

Conclusion: Child height emerges as a meaningful indicator of child welfare, reflecting critical dimensions of early life circumstances and long-term development. The GUI study provides high-quality, nationally representative data that enriches our understanding of height as a developmental metric in the Irish context. However, limitations remain. Height is a slowly changing variable and, in GUI, is measured at multiple occasions in children's formative years, including at age five (cohort 08) - the internationally accepted benchmark. Earlier inconsistencies in measurement have also affected reliability, though recent standardisation (e.g., Leicester stadiometer protocol) has improved data quality. Despite these challenges, the inclusion of child height as a well-being indicator warrants serious consideration. Policymakers should consider implementing systematic, standardised height measurement at age five in annual national surveys.

BMI trajectories from adolescence to adulthood – Predictors and subsequent health risks

Eoin McNamara (Department of Children, Disability and Equality)

Session C, Room 3, Stratocaster C. 10:35

Background/Context: Establishing and maintaining a healthy weight from an early age can help prevent or delay a variety of health issues in adulthood. However, evidence suggests that obesity risk increases as people age.

Individual health trajectories can be explored to better understand how risk factors for negative health outcomes develop over time. This study aims to identify distinct trajectories in body mass index (BMI) from childhood to adulthood in a large cohort of young Irish people, identifying associated risk factors, and the extent to which specific BMI trajectories predict chronic illness in early adulthood.

Methods: Data from Waves 1 to 5 (9 to 25yrs) of GUI's Cohort '98 were used. Height and weight were measured, from which BMI was calculated, while extensive information on other health outcomes and wider socio-demographic factors was gathered via interview. Distinct BMI trajectories were explored using growth mixture modelling.

Results: Three distinct BMI trajectories were identified; a persistently non-overweight group (45%), a persistently overweight group (35%) and a worsening BMI group (20%). Membership of the worsening BMI group was not predictive of subsequent chronic illness, but membership of the persistently overweight group was. The latter group was characterised as having a higher representation of females and those from less advantaged families, particularly in terms of parental education.

Conclusion: Whilst an overall trend of BMI levels disimproving over time was observed, it was the persistently overweight group at most risk of chronic illness. These findings further emphasise the need to address the issue of overweight/obesity as early in life as possible.

Neighbourhood characteristics and alcohol use in adolescents and young adults in Ireland

Anne Doyle (Health Research Board)
Seán Millar (Health Research Board)
Abigail Stevely (University of Sheffield)
John Holmes (University of Sheffield)

Session C, Room 3, Stratocaster C. 10:55

Background/Context: In 2018, Ireland introduced legislation to reduce alcohol-related harm, with a key focus on delaying alcohol initiation among young people. While adolescent drinking is shaped by multiple social contexts, research has largely emphasised family and peer influences, with limited attention to neighbourhood characteristics. Existing studies often focus on alcohol availability or marketing and are typically cross-sectional or region-specific.

Methods: This study uses data from the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) Cohort '98, examining whether neighbourhood features (disorder, safety, built environment, and urban–rural location) are associated with alcohol initiation and subsequent drinking patterns. Neighbourhood measures were based on caregiver reports at Wave 1, and alcohol outcomes (lifetime use, age of initiation, drinking frequency, binge drinking, and hazardous drinking measured by the AUDIT) were assessed at Wave 3.

Results: Descriptive findings show that 33.9% of caregivers reported neighbourhood disorder, 82.8% had access to five or more services locally, and 91.6% perceived their neighbourhood as safe for children. By age 17, 88.7% of participants had consumed alcohol, 41.5% initiated drinking by age 15, and 75.4% of drinkers had engaged in binge drinking at least once.

Regression analyses revealed small but significant associations:

Adolescents in neighbourhoods perceived as safer initiate alcohol use later than those in less safe areas and binge drink less frequently. Adolescents living in areas with more accessible services and facilities reported more frequent alcohol use.

Conclusion: Overall, neighbourhood context plays a modest but significant role in shaping adolescent drinking behaviours.

Session D: One-parent families and non-resident fathers
Room 1, Stratocaster A&B

A longitudinal study of mental health in lone-parent transitions

Gretta Mohan (Economic and Social Research Institute)
Bertrand Maître (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Session D, Room 1, Stratocaster A&B. 11:45

Context: Lone-parent transitions, often due to separation, divorce, or bereavement, are significant life changes profoundly impacting mental well-being. Individuals face unique stressors like financial strain, social isolation, and sole childcare responsibility. Despite the increasing prevalence of lone-parent families, there's a gap in understanding parents' long-term mental health trajectories through and beyond these transitions. This longitudinal study addresses this deficit, offering crucial insights into the evolving mental health landscape for lone parents.

Methods: This study uses data from the first four waves (2008-2017) of the Growing Up in Ireland '08 cohort, focusing on 7,505 families. Longitudinal weights account for attrition. Using logit models, the research investigates the link between becoming a lone parent (predominantly lone mothers) and subsequent depression, controlling for prior mental health and other factors.

Results: Between children's ages of 9 months and 9 years, nearly 3% of two-parent households transition to lone-parent status between survey waves. While only 9% of primary caregivers (PCGs) in stable two-parent households report depression symptoms in Wave 2, this rises sharply to 28% among PCGs transitioning to lone parenthood. Preliminary modelling indicates that PCGs moving from two-parent to lone-parent households are three times more likely to report depression than those remaining in two-parent households, even after accounting for prior depression levels.

Conclusion: Understanding mental health challenges and trajectories during lone-parent transitions enables policymakers to design precisely tailored interventions. This includes targeted psychological support, accessible counselling, or programmes addressing stressors like financial precarity or social isolation. Supporting lone parents' mental health can indirectly protect and improve mental health outcomes for the next generation, breaking cycles of disadvantage.

Challenges in involving non-resident fathers in research on children

Emer Smyth (Economic and Social Research Institute)
Merike Darmody (Economic and Social Research Institute)
Helen Russell (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Session D, Room 1, Stratocaster A&B. 12:05

Background: Fathers who are not living full-time with their children have been included in almost all waves of the GUI study. However, like other international cohort studies, there have been challenges in involving non-resident fathers in large numbers.

Methods: The study draws on interviews with staff from cohort studies internationally, interviews with separated parents and NGOs working with parents, and new analysis of GUI data on households with non-resident fathers.

Results: International cohort studies have varied in the extent to which they have included non-resident fathers. Mothers are almost always the gatekeepers to access non-resident fathers, creating challenges where relationships are poor. Best practice internationally indicates better response rates where fathers are included from the beginning, there is strong messaging about their importance in their children's lives, and there is proactive interviewer contact and follow-up.

In Ireland, only around a third of mothers were willing to give permission for the father to be contacted when the child was 9 months and 3 years. They were more willing to do so where father-child contact was frequent and their own relationship with the father was good. Among fathers contacted, those who were in more frequent contact with the child were more likely to respond.

Conclusion: Despite the challenges, the findings highlight the importance of including non-resident fathers to provide a more complete picture of the factors influencing children's development and access to resources.

Session E: Educational attainment
Room 2, Alhambra

The impact of low birthweight on educational attainment: Evidence from Growing Up in Ireland surveys

Joanne Twomey O'Connor (University College Cork)

Brendan McElroy (University College Cork)

Lee-Ann Burke (University College Cork)

Ann Kirby (University College Cork)

Yuping Yin (University College Cork)

Session E, Room 2, Alhambra. 11:45

Background/Context: Low birthweight (LBW), defined as less than 2,500 grams, is a significant public health concern linked to long-term outcomes such as height, IQ at age 18, earnings and education, even after controlling for parental variables. This research examines the relationship between low birthweight and academic performance.

Methods: Data from Waves 1-4 were used to estimate the effect of birthweight on English and Maths test scores, across key educational stages: Drumcondra Waves 1 and 2, Junior Certificate, and Leaving Certificate. Initial analysis used correlation coefficients to examine the strength and direction of the relationship.

Results: Preliminary results show a consistent, statistically significant positive relationship between birthweight and academic performance in all but one test score. In Drumcondra Wave 1, birthweight was positively correlated with reading ($r = 0.0772$, $p < 0.001$) and maths scores ($r = 0.0780$, $p < 0.001$). Similar associations were found in Wave 2 for numerical ability ($r = 0.0879$) and verbal reasoning ($r = 0.0710$), both $p < 0.001$. Junior Certificate results showed weaker but significant correlations. At Leaving Certificate level, birthweight was significantly correlated with maths scores ($r = 0.0828$, $p < 0.001$), but not with English scores ($r = 0.0231$, $p = 0.1194$). These results indicate a relationship is there that warrants more advanced analysis to be undertaken.

Conclusion: Birthweight shows a modest but persistent association with academic outcomes. Further analysis using panel regression is needed, and will be undertaken, to isolate causal pathways and account for confounding variables.

Teaching mathematics in multi-grade settings: Implications for policy and practice

Breed Murphy (Mary Immaculate College)

Session E, Room 2, Alhambra. 12:05

Background: Almost one quarter of mainstream classrooms in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland have a multi-grade configuration, where children in two or more grade levels are taught by one mainstream teacher. Mathematics outcomes in primary school have been shown to predict later mathematics outcomes, educational attainment and socioeconomic outcomes. Despite the importance of mathematics and the significant numbers of children that participate in multi-grade education in Ireland, references to multi-grade education in policy documents are rare. This paper presents implications for policy and practice arising from a study of mathematics outcomes among children in multi-grade classes.

Methods: Data from Waves 1 and 2 of the '98 Cohort of the Growing Up in Ireland study were analysed using multi-level models. The study examined Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test scores of 9-year-old children, their Drumcondra Numerical Ability Test scores at age 13, and associated predictive factors. The predictive factors of the children in the multi-grade cohort (n=1342) and single-grade cohort (n= 4176) were compared.

Results: Within multi-grade settings, children's individual characteristics were among the strongest predictors of their mathematics attainment. Frequent use of pair work was a statistically significant positive predictor of mathematics attainment. However, frequent use of individual work and frequent use of computers in class were non-significant negative predictors of mathematics attainment.

Conclusion: In order to promote equity, facilitate the effective use of pedagogical approaches and support increased mathematics attainment, specific adjustments to pedagogical practices, teacher education policy and curriculum resources are recommended for multi-grade education.

Session F: Oral health and diet
Room 3, Stratocaster C

Oral health behaviours from middle childhood to adulthood: Findings from a nationally representative longitudinal study in Ireland

Vinay Sharma (Dublin Dental University Hospital, Trinity College Dublin)
Michael Crowe (Dublin Dental University Hospital, Trinity College Dublin)
Lewis Winning (Dublin Dental University Hospital, Trinity College Dublin)
Oscar Cassetti (Dublin Dental University Hospital, Trinity College Dublin)
Aifric O'Sullivan (University College Dublin)
Michael O'Sullivan (Dublin Dental University Hospital, Trinity College Dublin)

Session F, Room 3, Stratocaster C. 11:45

Background: The primary objective was to investigate the relationship between age and oral health behaviours (daily toothbrushing frequency, dentist visit behaviour, and consumption of sugary foods and drinks) in Irish children.

Methods: Data on 4,729 individuals who participated in all four waves of the GUI Child Cohort Survey were used. The relationship between age and oral health behaviours was assessed using random-effects logistic regression models. Covariates were study participants' gender, educational level, family income, occupational class and medical status at 9 years of age.

Results: At age 9 years, 63% of participants visited the dentist at least once a year, 73% had sugary foods daily, and 51% had sugary drinks daily. At age 13 years, 72% brushed their teeth at least twice daily. The odds of visiting a dentist at least once a year decreased with age (Odds Ratio (OR) 0.89, 95% CI: 0.82 - 0.89). Consumption of sugary drinks and foods at least once a day increased with age (OR$_{Foods}$ 1.13 95% CI: 1.04 - 1.13; OR$_{Drinks}$ 1.26 95% CI: 1.16 - 1.26). No age effect on daily toothbrushing frequency was observed (OR 1.00, 95% CI: 0.77 - 1.00). Females had higher odds of toothbrushing at least twice daily (OR 3.55, 95% CI: 2.96 - 3.55) and consuming sugary foods (OR 1.09, 95% CI: 1.01 - 1.09) and drinks at least once a day (OR 1.59, 95% CI: 1.46 - 1.59).

Conclusion: Oral health behaviours deteriorate with increasing age. For oral health promotion, interventions should be gender specific and planned at an early age.

"How do you like them apples?". Examining gender differences in educational and labour market influences on adolescent dietary scores.

Lee-Ann Burke (University College Cork)

Session F, Room 3, Stratocaster C. 12:05

Background/Context: Adolescent dietary behaviours are key foundations for long-term health and economic productivity. Yet, little is known about how family education and labour market factors shape these outcomes. Using a human capital framework, we investigate how intergenerational education and parental labour supply influence adolescent dietary scores in Ireland, with particular focus on gender differences.

Methods: Dietary data from Wave 1 and Wave 3 of the Growing Up in Ireland child cohort is analysed. The dependent variable is a dietary score reflecting healthier eating. Key explanatory variables include parental education, parental working hours, cognitive ability at age 9, and Leaving Certificate points at 18. Controls include exercise, mental health, income, homeownership, health insurance, and household composition. Random effects panel regressions are estimated separately for boys and girls.

Results: Parental education strongly predicts dietary scores, with larger effects for boys. Lower maternal and paternal education are associated with lower scores for both genders. Among boys, higher maternal education (primary degree: $\beta=0.508$, $p<0.05$; postgraduate: $\beta=0.585$, $p<0.05$) has significant positive effects. For girls, only maternal postgraduate education shows positive associations ($\beta=0.392$, $p<0.1$). Higher Leaving Certificate points predict better dietary scores for both genders, independent of early cognitive ability. Maternal part-time work (<20 hrs) benefits boys' scores ($\beta=0.501$, $p<0.05$); for girls, maternal non-employment is most favourable ($\beta=0.356$, $p<0.05$). Exercise and income proxies are also positively associated.

Conclusion: Dietary scores reflect both intergenerational and individual human capital pathways, shaped by gendered family dynamics. Tailored policies addressing parental education, maternal employment, and gender differences may enhance dietary outcomes.

Session G: Child well-being
Room 1, Stratocaster A&B

Key factors impeding or supporting child and adolescent well-being in Ireland: A systematic review examining evidence from the Growing Up in Ireland cohorts

Kaat Philippe (University College Dublin)
Ross Neville (University College Dublin)
Seaneen Sloan (University College Dublin)

Session G, Room 1, Stratocaster A&B. 15:05

Background/Context: There is evidence that indicators of subjective well-being have declined among young people in Ireland in recent years (Költő et al., 2020). It is therefore timely to consider what is currently known about the key risk and protective factors that may influence child and adolescent well-being in Ireland.

Methods: A systematic review was undertaken to source, summarise, and interpret the body of evidence on child well-being in Ireland, based on Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) data. Research across all GUI cohorts ('98 and '08) and ages (Infants to Young Adults) was eligible for inclusion. A total of 886 documents were retrieved from 26 databases and screened, with 353 eligible GUI studies identified, and 223 peer-reviewed journal articles and 23 thematic reports selected for detailed analysis. Child outcomes and related factors were categorised into four well-being domains: (1) Physical Health and Development; (2) Education and Cognitive Development; (3) Socioemotional Development and Well-being; and (4) Civic and Economic Engagement, and corresponding subdomains.

Results: The majority of studies evaluated socioemotional outcomes, followed by health and education/cognitive outcomes. Civic outcomes were underrepresented. A wide range of individual, family, peer, school, neighbourhood, and socio-political factors were associated with child and youth well-being outcomes in Ireland. Socio-economic and neighbourhood factors play a significant role in shaping outcomes across multiple domains. Different trends between Cohort '98 and '08 were also observed.

Conclusion: This review offers insight into the risks and protective factors influencing child well-being in Ireland. It includes suggestion for policy interventions to address inequalities.

Beyond the household: Child-centred multidimensional deprivation and household income in Ireland

Chloe O'Hanlon (Trinity College Dublin)
Yekaterina Chzhen (Trinity College Dublin)

Session G, Room 1, Stratocaster A&B. 15:25

Background/Context: Studies of child poverty in Ireland have largely employed household-level measures of deprivation, in line with the official national measure, or included household finances as an indicator of deprivation. This study instead develops a child-centred and child rights-informed deprivation index, to investigate the relationship between household income and multidimensional child deprivation in Ireland.

Methods: The index is operationalised over two waves of data from the Growing Up in Ireland survey's '08 Cohort (at ages 9 and 13). The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child is used to identify six dimensions of deprivation in the data; nutrition, access to healthcare, protection from violence, access to information, leisure and adequate accommodation.

Results: Findings indicate that household income poverty alone cannot identify deprived children, with deprived children not being a direct subset of children in low-income homes. However, lower income remains a statistically significant predictor of multidimensional deprivation. Notably, transitions into multidimensional deprivation were more prevalent than transitions into the lowest income bracket over time. Children whose primary caregivers were single, or had lower educational attainment, were more likely to be multidimensionally deprived at ages 9 and 13. At 13, girls faced a higher risk of deprivation than their male counterparts.

Conclusion: Overall, this study highlights that the development of rights-informed multidimensional deprivation indices may identify areas of deprivation which are less dependent on household income. It indicates advantages of using child-centred indices over household-level measures, and points toward a need for nonmonetary policy interventions in Ireland to combat child deprivation.

Session H: Pastimes and screen-time
Room 2, Alhambra

How parents shape adolescent screen time: Findings from Denmark and Ireland

Celine Fox (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Seraphim Dempsey (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Lasse Hyldig Hansen (Danish Competition and Consumer Authority)

Mackenzie Owens (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Sofie Ane Vebæk Gelskov (Danish Competition and Consumer Authority)

Gretta Mohan (Economic and Social Research Institute)

Session H, Room 2, Alhambra. 15:05

Background/Context: Parents influence children's digital habits through both their own screen behaviour and the rules they set. However, the relative importance of these strategies remains unclear. While parental influence on adolescent screen time is well recognised, cross-country evidence comparing parent-child dynamics is limited. This study examines how parental behaviour and rule-setting shape adolescent screen use in Denmark and Ireland, using nationally representative data.

Methods: For Denmark, we use data from the 2025 *Young Consumers and Social Media* survey, including self-reported and screenshot-verified social media screen time for 1,025 parent-child pairs (352 with objective data). For Ireland, we analyse Wave 6 of *Growing Up in Ireland* (n=4,424), where both parents report their own and their 13-year-old child's general screen use and digital rule-setting practices. In both countries, screen time is captured using harmonised ordinal categories. We estimate associations between adolescent screen time and parental screen habits, rule-setting behaviours, and demographic covariates.

Results: In Denmark, objective measures confirmed that parental and child self-reports closely aligned with actual screen time. In both countries, maternal and paternal screen habits were associated with adolescent screen time, though maternal behaviours had a stronger predictive value in Ireland. Across contexts, parental rules were modestly linked to lower screen use, but screen modelling appeared more influential.

Conclusion: Parental screen habits are consistently associated with adolescent use, often more so than explicit screen time restrictions. While policy debates often focus on school-based interventions or device bans, our findings highlight parents as key mediators of adolescents' digital engagement.

Comparing what nine-year-olds prefer to do, and what they actually do, outside school

Ann Swift (Trinity College Dublin)

Session H, Room 2, Alhambra. 15:25

Background/Context: The idea that disability arises from an interaction between impairments and environmental barriers that prevent 'equal participation' is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). There is a considerable body of literature examining how participation might be defined and measured for disabled children, with extra-curricular activities often in focus. However it is not always clear how this literature, and the multiple tools which it has informed, relates to children's first-hand accounts of what participation means to them. Generally, interviews with the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) Cohort '98 at age nine found that some children neither choose nor enjoy their structured activities, but in their free time can exercise choice and control.

As part of a wider study to explore how children's activity profiles relate to disability, this research asked whether what children *actually* do reflects what they *prefer* doing.

Methods: At age nine, the Cohort '98 children were asked to nominate their three favourite activities from a list. They were clustered on this basis, and the resulting groups examined for their relationship with impairment, gender, and their 'actual activity' profiles.

Results: The analysis yielded eight distinct clusters. The largest (21%) had a distinct preference for 'hanging with friends', and the smallest (9%) all omitted sport from their top three. Cluster membership was associated with impairment and gender, and with distinct 'actual activity' profiles.

Conclusion: Generally, this cohort participated in activities it enjoyed. Impairment was associated with distinct activity preferences, and also with particular 'actual activity' profiles.

Session I: Special surveys
Room 3, Stratocaster C

Together – Cohort '08 twins in the Growing Up in Ireland study

Bernadette Ryan (Central Statistics Office)

Session I, Room 3, Stratocaster C. 15:05

Background/Context: Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) collected data on twins at each wave. Twins face a unique family dynamic and childhood experience compared to singletons. Twins can often be treated as more similar to each other than to other siblings which can blur the line between what is genetic and what is environmental. This paper will utilise GUI Cohort unpublished data from GUI Cohort '08 families with twins, from Waves 1 to 6. This data was collected from when the twins were aged 9 months old, concluding at 13 years old. The longitudinal data offers unique and valuable insights into how social environments, cultural contexts, and life experiences influence young people over time, while controlling for genetic similarity.

Methods: We will carry out descriptive analysis looking at the development and lived experiences of GUI Cohort '08 twins when compared to singletons. Weighted frequency analysis will be carried out on a number of variables including health, exercise, friendships, sibling relationships, mental health and parental conflict in both twins and singletons.

Results: This paper will explore whether being a twin has any discernible impact on developmental growth and the lived experiences of children in Ireland. By tracking twins over various stages of their childhood we can better understand the impact of social structures – family dynamics, education, and socioeconomic status – on behaviour and identity formation.

Improving questionnaire design using Audit Trails: Evidence from the GUI08 pilot

Gabriel Coelho (Central Statistics Office)
Aidan McCarthy (Central Statistics Office)
Fiona O'Riordan (Central Statistics Office)

Session I, Room 3, Stratocaster C. 15:25

Background/Context: One of the greatest goals in questionnaire design is ensuring we deliver the best possible instrument to participants and, ultimately, collect high-quality data. Several barriers, such as survey length and complex wording, can compromise this goal. One valuable tool for Blaise-developed surveys like Growing Up in Ireland is the Audit Trail, a log file capturing key paradata about the interview and survey process. It records, for example, the time taken to answer each question, the number of "Don't Know"/"Refusal" responses, and the number of clicks per question.

Methods: We analysed the Audit Trails from the GUI08 Pilot to refine the survey for its main phase. We already suspected the survey was too long, something confirmed by interviewer feedback. Using Audit Trail data, we assessed both participant- and question-level aspects.

Results: Young people took an average of 1 hour and 29 minutes to complete the survey, encountering about 665 distinct questions and providing 58 additional clicks. Among many other things, the Audit Trails helped us identify questions that (1) caused interviewer difficulties, (2) participant uncertainty, (3) took too long to be answered, (4) and with high number of "Don't Know".

Conclusion: Combined with interviewer and participant feedback, the Audit Trails helped us to tailor a better GUI08 survey before its main launch. Specifically, they allowed us to refine interviewer training, shorten or clarify problematic questions, and improve routing to reduce "Don't Knows". While the Audit Trails shouldn't be used alone, they offer valuable insights that can significantly assist Questionnaire Designers.

Data acknowledgments

Papers using RMF data:

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Data acknowledgments

Papers using RMF data: