



# The Impact and Value of GUI

Fás Aníos in Éirinn  
Growing Up in Ireland

# Background

- Long history - idea first raised in 1980 Task Force on Child Care Services
- National longitudinal study announced in National Children's Strategy (2000) – established in 2006 in context of dearth of data on children
- Overarching aims to examine what contributes to or undermines the well-being of children over time ... and contribute to the setting of effective and responsive policies
- Represents significant state investment in research and data
- GUI data used extensively by researchers, Government Departments and public bodies

# Benefits of Longitudinal Data

- Surveys the same individuals over time - each wave provides point in time evidence for policy
- Builds a bank of data over time - identifying risk / protective factors, pathways
- Longer term, tells us how early life experiences shape later life outcomes
- Helps assess impact of policy changes or unexpected societal events – recession, Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE), COVID
- Strengthens research infrastructure - important national research and data resource
- International reputation and comparability – family of studies, common standardised measures

# Data Gathered by GUI since 2007

- Information from core respondents parents/guardians, child/young person  
*(supplemented by info from childcare providers, teachers, school principals)*
- Household characteristics / demographics  
*(social class, income, migrant status, family structure, housing tenure...)*
- Four key domains
  - ✓ Health – health status, use of services, physical activity, weight, health behaviours...
  - ✓ Education – school engagement, achievement, transitions, cognitive development, aspirations...
  - ✓ Socio-emotional development – relationships with parents/peers, self-esteem, anxiety/depression...
  - ✓ Economic and civic participation – volunteering, work, societal concerns, political engagement, experience of discrimination...
- Key outputs to date: circa 100 reports, infographics, annual research conference, data workshops, data files from 10 waves of data collection have been archived.

# Growing Up in Ireland, impact to date on Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

## Policy impact

**The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth** has used Growing Up in Ireland data extensively to inform public policy on a wide range of issues such as:

- GP use among children
- childcare and cognitive outcomes
- obesity and weight
- transitions to post-primary school
- take up of the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme,
- parenting and infant development,
- mothers' return to work and childcare choices,
- the effects of the recession and family stress on three year olds,
- socio-emotional and behavioural outcomes in early adolescence,
- economic vulnerability and socioemotional development.

The department has also used GUI findings to guide the development of First 5: a whole-of-government strategy for babies, young children, and their families.

# Examples of how Growing Up in Ireland data informs policy decisions

## **Arts Council**

strategic planning for children's cultural participation

## **Department of Rural and Community Development**

Civic engagement in rural areas

## **Department of Health**

Medical card usage.  
Population health planning.  
Screen time.

## **Health Service Executive**

Young people's health behaviours.  
Sex and sexual behaviour among young people.

## **National Disability Authority**

Parental educational expectations of children with disabilities

## **Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications/Commission for Communications Regulation**

Children's use of mobile phones and learning.

## **Health Research Board**

drug use and pathways to drug use

## **Department of Education**

Review of career guidance

## **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment**

Transitions to primary school

## **Institute of Public Health**

Advising on upcoming legislation on Vaping and Gambling.

## **National Council for Special Education**

Estimating special needs prevalence.  
Educational outcomes for students with Special Educational Needs.

# High Level of Use Growing Up in Ireland's AMFs\* and RMFs+

Year	AMF Applications	RMF Applications	Total
2010-2019	967	328	1295
2020	134	40	174
2021	134	43	177
2022	154	15	169

\*Anonymised Microdata Files    +Researcher Microdata Files

# Examples of Research Impact

## **Trinity College, Dublin**

Digital media, screen time & mental health.  
Ethnicity & breastfeeding rates.  
Chronic illness and educational failure.  
Folic acid & cleft palate in infants.

## **University College Cork**

Individual, family and environmental effects on physical activity.  
Childhood obesity and the local food environment.

## **National College of Ireland**

home learning environments and disadvantage

## **Maynooth University**

Children & grandparents.  
Effects of school age childcare on outcomes.

## **Treoir**

Unmarried and solo parent experiences

## **National University of Ireland, Galway**

Overweight, obesity and health.  
Socioeconomic profile of childhood disability.

## **Dental Hospital, Trinity College Dublin**

Dental problems across GUI waves

## **Higher Education Authority/Trinity College, Dublin**

gambling and participation in sport over time

## **Economic and Social Research Institute**

Attitudes to the Irish language.  
Ante natal care pathways.  
Access to GP services and GP fees.  
Energy poverty and child health.  
Primary to post primary transitions.

## **Mary Immaculate College, Limerick**

Home learning environment and cognitive development.  
Gender and attitudes to maths.  
Determinants of active commuting to school.

## **Dublin City University**

Parent book reading at 9 months and vocabulary development at 3

# Spotlight on Research Questions used by External Researchers

What is the role of social inequality in explaining child obesity?

Is there a link between obesity and child behavioural problems?

What is the effect of a parent's perception of their child's weight status?

Themes of external publications using GUI data to research:

## Weight and Well-being



Does increased screen time affect risk of obesity in children?

Is there a relationship between obesity and chronic disease in children?

Is there an association between maternal employment and child weight status?

Is there a link between screen time and psychosocial development?

How do children's physical activity levels change over time?

Is there a relationship between screen time and physical activity?

Themes of external publications using GUI data to research:

## Physical activity and screen time



What is the parent's role in their child's exercise?



Can screen time affect children's cognitive development?

What is the impact of migration background on educational outcomes?

What do children and teenagers think about school?

How do children with special educational needs fare in the school system?

Themes of external publications using GUI data to research:

## School and education



How do individual and socio-economic factors shape educational inequality?

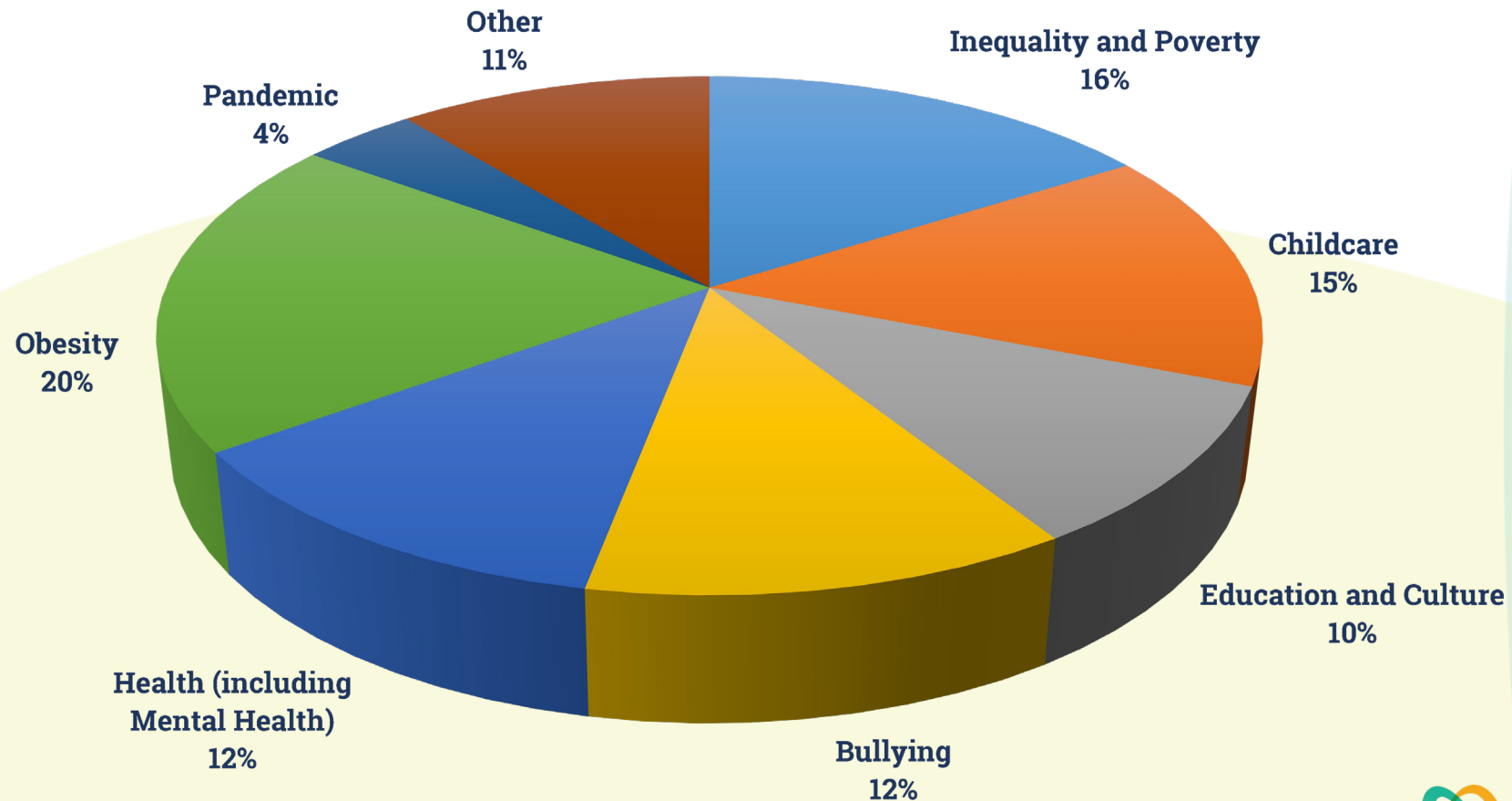


Do school characteristics influence educational outcomes?



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# GUI in Oireachtas/Parliament debates from 2010 – 2023 (251 references)



# Case study: Social World of 9 year olds report : 21 November 2022

- Report is the 8<sup>th</sup> publication from a research partnership between DCEDIY and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) that uses Growing Up in Ireland data.
- The report was published by the ESRI on the 21 November 2022. The author is Emer Smyth.
- Report compared the two age Growing Up in Ireland cohorts at age 9 to examine their social lives and pastimes.
- **Policy Relevance:** Department of Education, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Arts Council, National Council of Curriculum and Assessment, Tusla, Ombudsman for Children's Office
- **Radio interviews:**
  - RTÉ Radio 1's Morning Ireland Drive Time, Breakfast Briefing and The Hard Shoulder, Newstalk's Moncrieff with Sean Moncrieff, East Coast Radio, Kildare Radio, Highland Radio interviews and discussion.
- **Press coverage:** extensive coverage in all the dailies and online web coverage
- **Event launch with Introduction by Minister and input from Department of Education**, 63 attendees from HSE (Health Service Executive), The Arts Council, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Department of Education, Central Statistics Office, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, University of Limerick, National Treasury Management Agency, The Housing Agency, University College Cork, GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association), Ombudsman for Children's Office, South East Technological University.

# Case study: Social World of 9 year olds

## report : 21 November 2022

- **Taoiseach worries children get smartphones too early and turn away from sport**  
*"I think that research should inform the primary school curriculum"* – Irish Mirror
- **Just over half of nine-year-olds own a phone, up 10% on ten years ago** – Journal.ie
- **Nine Year Olds Are Now Less Likely To Play Sports** – Newstalk fm
- **More than half of nine-year-olds now own a phone – and they play and read less** – Irish Independent
- **The life of a nine-year-old Irish child: fewer hobbies, reads less, owns a mobile phone** – Irish Times online
- **Nine-year-olds live 'very gendered' lives as girls read more but play less sport**  
*'Slight widening' in gender differences on maths a cause for concern, ESRI report author says'* – Irish Times
- **More children with illnesses, fewer family meals** – study RTE.ie

# Growing Up in Ireland, its impact to date

'As Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, I have been impressed by the significant contribution which the Growing Up in Ireland data has made to policy development and to decision making across the entire remit of my Department. Growing Up in Ireland also provides Government with a way to measure the impact that policies and services are having on children and young people and assess where we need to make changes to improve outcomes.'

**Roderic O'Gorman**

*Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth*

'In addition to the research we have directly engaged with and published that draw on Growing up in Ireland, other studies that have been carried out have shone a light on areas of relevance to our work. The Covid-19 special survey showed how young people's participation in structured cultural activities was particularly impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. While we had no role in commissioning or publishing that particular report, as policy makers, it is helpful to be able to access this information. From the Covid-19 special survey, we see that children in the lowest income groups in particular participated less than usual in organised cultural activities.'

**Arts Council**

'As the state's first Minister for Children and Youth Affairs I was a strong supporter of the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study having launched the first results of the programme in 2013. This data driven study assisted me as Minister in shaping better and more informed socio-economic policy decisions for the benefit of all our society. GUI studies and research were signposts for important emerging issues such as childhood obesity that needed to be addressed by government and society.'

**Frances Fitzgerald**

*Member of the European Parliament*

'The Growing Up in Ireland study is unique in its kind in Ireland, and, as such, it has been a hugely important resource for my PhD on the educational achievement of Irish children with a migration background and the potentially equalising role of preschool.'

**Stefanie Sprong**

*Researcher, Department of Sociology, Trinity College Dublin and winner of the 2021 GUI Conference Award for Best Presentation with a Public Policy Focus*

'Growing Up in Ireland plays a really important part in ensuring that, as policy makers, we make the right choices for children. It gives us access to reliable data and insights based on the life experiences of children and young people over a long period of time. GUI data therefore deepens our understanding of what influences educational outcomes, and it has produced a rich source of information that has informed, and will continue to inform policy making in the education sector. A review of career guidance provision in Ireland was recently informed by data from Growing Up in Ireland. This is just one example of its usage.'

**Bernie McNally,**

*Secretary General,  
Department of Education*

'We are looking forward to using GUI data to provide evidence to both policy makers and practitioners that will enable them to identify patterns in substance use among children and young adults and design evidence-based and targeted interventions in the most appropriate settings.'

**Brian Galvin**

*Health Research Board*

'The civil service is committed to producing policy that is based on evidence; and the recently published national research and innovation strategy prioritises maximising the impact of research and innovation on the economy, society and the environment. Growing Up in Ireland is an exemplary project which has met these objectives and will continue to contribute to a data rich policy framework in the future.'

**Kevin McCarthy,**

*Secretary General,  
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth*

'Families matter for child wellbeing and by comparing the GUI study to international child cohort studies, we see the resilient nature of the Irish family.'

**Dr Carmel Hannan**

*Department of Sociology at the University of Limerick*

# Press coverage in 2 year period 2021-2022 on GUI

## PERIOD

### From

2021-01-01 09:00:00

### To

2022-12-31 12:59:00

VOLUME OF  
ARTICLES

**164**

# Trend by media – spikes when we launch reports

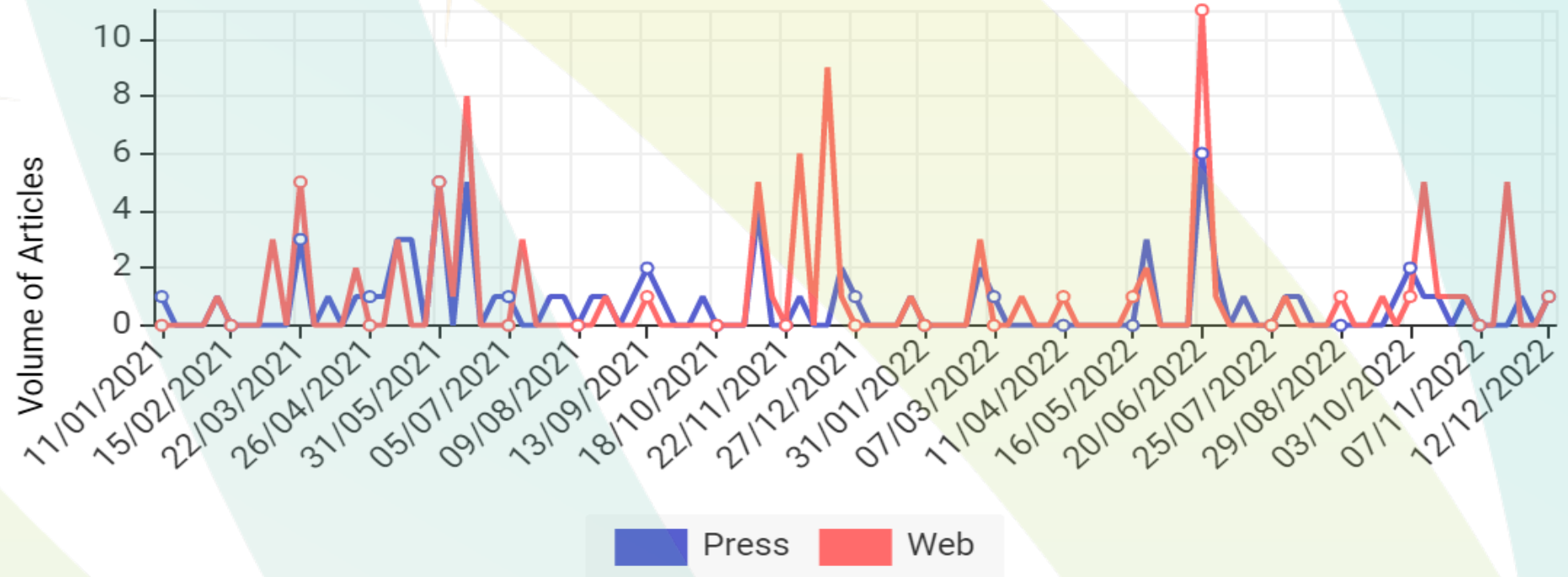
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# Thank You

For more information please visit our website or  
contact us at [growingup@equality.gov.ie](mailto:growingup@equality.gov.ie)



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