Growing Up in Ireland

National Longitudinal Study of Children

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Book of Abstracts

Paper presentations

Keynote Address

Professor Alissa Goodman CBE (University College London)

Inequalities in the early years, and opportunities and challenges setting up two new national birth cohort studies in the UK

In this talk I will present evidence on early years inequalities in the UK, which has formed one chapter of the Deaton review on inequalities. I'll show the wide reaching nature of inequality in early childhood environments, as well as new evidence on how genes and environments in the early years are correlated, and how inequalities in early development are changing over time. I'll also give an overview of two new major national birth cohort projects in the UK, the Early Life Cohort Feasibility Study funded by ESRC and the Children of the 2020s, commissioned by the Department for Education.

Biographical note:

Alissa Goodman is Professor of Economics, Director of the Centre for Longitudinal Studies, and Co-Director of the Early Life Cohort Feasibility Study, a project funded by ESRC to test the feasibility of a new birth cohort for the UK. She is a Co-Investigator on two further new national cohort projects, Children of the 2020s and the Covid Social Mobility and Opportunities Study. Alissa joined CLS in 2013 as PI of the 1958 National Child Development Study , having previously worked at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, where she served as its Deputy Director (2006-2012), and Director of its Education and Skills research sector. Alissa's main research interests relate to inequality, poverty, education policy, and the intergenerational transmission of health and well-being. Alissa was awarded a CBE for services to social science in 2021.

REPORT LAUNCH

Report Launch: Research Needs for Cohort '98 at Age 25

Growing Up in Ireland Study Team (ESRI)
Research and Evaluation Unit (DCEDIY)

This research needs report is intended to inform the nature and content of the fifth wave of data collection at 25 years of age for Cohort '98. It is a joint collaboration by the Growing Up in Ireland Study Team based at the ESRI and the GUI Project Team in the DCEDIY. The report draws on a range of sources in developing proposals for the wave. These include:

- A focused review of the international literature and short review papers prepared by three labour-market experts at the ESRI
- A review of the content of comparable international cohort studies
- An overview of the relevant policy landscape
- A survey of the Growing Up in Ireland Scientific Advisory Group and relevant policy stakeholders to capture their perspectives on the priorities for the next wave of data collection
- Focus groups with adults in their mid-20s to explore what they saw as important in the next wave
- A consultation session with policymakers and academics to outline the findings emerging from the survey and focus groups and discuss the priorities regarding questions/measures

The report is structured according to core areas of research interest: education/training; labour-market experiences and income; physical health; mental and socio-emotional well-being; relationships; civic engagement; concerns and aspirations. These are supplemented by additional chapters describing the background to the study, summarising work by other similar studies, data collection options, and describing the extensive consultation period undertaken in advance of this report.

SESSION A

Post-school expectations and outcomes among migrant-origin young people in Ireland

Frances McGinnity (ESRI)
Merike Darmody (ESRI)
Emer Smyth (ESRI)

Session A

Context: International evidence suggests that children of migrant parents tend to have lower grades and test scores, and yet are highly motivated regarding their aspirations, expectations and educational choices, which they may not achieve (Salikutluk, 2016; Jonsson and Rudolphi, 2011; Van De Werfhorst and Van Tubergen, 2007) - resulting in the 'aspirations-achievement' paradox. Ireland represents an interesting case-study given the recency of immigration and the heterogeneity of migrants in terms of countries of origin and languages spoken and relatively high levels of education.

Methods: To test the 'aspirations-achievement paradox' in Ireland, this paper examines immigrant students' post-school expectations at 17 and their actual participation in third-level education at age 20 using GUI Cohort '98. The two outcome variables analysed are progression to higher education and type of field of study in post-school education. Control variables include mother's education, household income, family structure, urban/rural location, school social and migrant mix, expectations and exam grades. The analyses are based on a series of nested logistic regression models.

Results: Distinguishing migrant-origin young people by English language background, we find that post-school expectations and rates of progression to higher education are high for both English-speaking and non-English speaking migrant-origin groups and their Irish peers, and expectations and progression rates do not differ between the three groups.

Conclusions: This challenges previous research on the 'aspirations-achievement' paradox for migrant-origin students and also the expectation that migrant-origin students may be disadvantaged in terms of post-school transitions.

Session A

Educationally maintained inequality? The role of risk factors and resilience at 9, 13 and 17 in disabled young people's post-school pathways at 20.

Keyu Ye (ESRI)
Eamonn Carroll (ESRI)
Selina McCoy (ESRI)

Session A

Context: Reflecting the neglect of childhood disability in social stratification research, there is a dearth of research on the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and disability in shaping early adulthood outcomes. While some research points to disproportionality in the identification of disability by social class and the impact of school context in the types of special educational needs (SEN) identified (McCoy, Banks and Shevlin 2012), few studies have considered how these intersections shape later educational outcomes.

Methods: Multivariate analyses are used to examine the relationship between early childhood disadvantage and educational outcomes in young adulthood. Using data at 9 years, we explore the long-term impact of socio-economic disadvantage, SEN, as well as the role of school context. We then assess how children with varying experiences of intersectional inequality experience the transition educational outcomes at 20 years.

Results and conclusions: Descriptive analyses suggest that young people experiencing multiple disadvantages at 9, especially those who are more likely to experience economic vulnerability, dislike school and attend a DEIS school, fare less well in terms of accessing HE. Disability type matters - having a socio-emotional and psychological difficulty remains negatively associated with HE attendance, although the lower likelihood of attending HE for those with an intellectual disability or a specific learning difficulty is mediated by other factors. Socioeconomic factors, parental expectations, as well as the child's school attendance and their academic performance are all significant predictors of HE attendance. The results raise important implications for educational policy to support inclusion and equity in education.

Session B

Early digital exposure and later digital skills: evidence from home and school environments in Ireland

Míde Griffin (ESRI)
Seán Lyons (ESRI, TCD)
Selina McCoy (ESRI, TCD)
Gretta Mohan (ESRI, TCD)

Session B

Context: Digital skills are crucial for navigating an increasingly online world and fostering digital inclusion. Digital exposure occurs early on, however questions remain about the effects of this phenomenon on later (ICT) outcomes. This research asks if exposure to a technology-rich environment at home or school, aged 9 and 13, impacts perceived computer skills at age 17, and how individual and school characteristics mediate these relationships.

Methods: Data from Waves 1, 2 and 3 of the GUI Cohort '98 are used. A sociocultural approach is employed, using activity theory to understand ICT learning in the school context and broader social context. Logit models are used to explore the associations between a student's belief that secondary school has equipped them with computer skills (aged 17) and exposure to technology-rich environments, controlling for other child, household, and school characteristics.

Results: We find a positive association between a student's belief that secondary school has given them computer skills (aged 17) and the use of computers in class aged 9, as well as using the internet for school projects at home and mobile phone ownership age 13. Female students, students in girls' schools and in vocational schools are more likely to feel that school has equipped them with computer skills.

Conclusions: School and social contexts such as gender, school gender mix and school type may be just as important as exposure to technology-rich environments in the development of ICT skills. These findings can help policymakers foster digital inclusion among young people.

Who chooses science? Subject take-up in the *Growing up in Ireland* study

Carmel Hannan (UL)
Emer Smyth (ESRI)

Session B

Context: This paper builds on earlier research by Smyth and Hannan (2003, 2006 and 2008) which examined the influence of school and student factors on scientific subject take-up in secondary schools in Ireland. Here we extend this work by taking a life-course approach with an emphasis on the science pipeline using data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. The focus is on the provision and uptake of Physics, Chemistry and Biology in the Leaving Certificate taking account of previous student experiences from age 9.

Methods: Using data from the first 3 waves of GUI '98 Cohort, we estimate models of Physics and Chemistry provision at the school level and take-up of Physics, Chemistry and Biology in the Leaving Certificate. Our key research questions focus on (a) what schools are unlikely to provide scientific subjects in the senior cycle and (b) what factors explain differential up-take in science subjects both at the school and student levels.

Results: The vast majority of schools in the study provide Biology at Leaving Certificate level but a significant minority do not provide Physics and Chemistry. These are mainly smaller schools and those serving more disadvantaged populations. We find that attitudes towards math, test scores in math and science career aspirations at age 9 are predictive of taking Chemistry, Physics and to a lesser extent, Biology at senior cycle. Taking account of a range of student and school differences, we find significant school-level variation in take-up rates.

Conclusion: The overall conclusion is that "science" does not just suffer from a "gender problem". In particularly, the uptake of Physic and Chemistry is an elite choice with students from the professional classes most likely to take these subjects.

Do children in multi-grade classes in small schools do well in mathematics?

Breed Murphy (Marino Institute of Education)

Session B

Context: Multi-grade classes are a common structure in the primary education sector. This research analyses the mathematics outcomes of children in multi-grade classes compared to children in single grade classes. Children's outcomes, particularly attainment in multi-grade classes, is a key concern among parents, educators and policy-makers.

Methodology: The data analysed in this study pertains to the '98 cohort from the 'Growing Up in Ireland' study and relates to children's outcomes at age 9 and age 13. It examines children's scores in norm referenced assessments and their attitudinal outcomes. Descriptive statistics and multilevel modelling are used in the analysis.

Findings: While there is no evidence of a statistically significant difference between the mean mathematics scores of children in multi-grade classes in small schools and their single-grade counterparts at age 9, differences emerge when scores are disaggregated according to gender, school size and whether or not the study child has a learning disability. While dispositions towards mathematics appear to be broadly similar at age 9, differences emerge between children who had studied maths in multi-grade and single grade classes at age 13 in terms of their perceived level of difficulty in relation to mathematics and their ranking of mathematics when asked about their subject preferences.

Conclusion: Although no statistically significant differences appear between the mean mathematics scores of 9 year olds in multi-grade and single grade classes overall, variations occurred when analysed according to children's characteristics. While attitudes towards maths for children in multi-grade settings were similar to their single-grade counterparts at age 9, differences were evident at age 13.

A longitudinal investigation of personality and internet behaviours of young people who meet online contacts face-to-face

Gretta Mohan (ESRI, TCD)

Session C

Context: The blurring of virtual and real-life interaction in modern, digital societies has seen an increase in online socialising which can lead to real life encounters, particularly prevalent among younger 'digitally native' groups.

Methods: This study uses three waves of the Growing Up in Ireland '98 Cohort to examine the characteristics and behaviours of 4,360 20-year-olds who report they had met someone face-to-face in the previous year that they had first got to know on the internet. Multiple logistic regression models are employed to investigate factors recorded when the young person was 9 and 17 years which may predict having met a person from an online setting at 20 years.

Results: A third of 20-year-olds had met someone from online, lower for females (25%) than males (37%). Regression reveals that females are less likely to report meeting online acquaintances in an offline setting, while those characterised by the trait of openness, and those who spent more time on the internet and used dating apps at the age of 17 are more likely to meet people from the internet. Greater emotional stability at 17 is associated with a lower likelihood of meeting people from online. Early exposure to information and communication technologies, as indicated by mobile phone ownership at 9 years, is positively associated with meeting online contacts at 20 years.

Conclusions: Understanding the factors associated with meeting people from a virtual setting is important as online safety, privacy, and risks are considered by the public, policymakers, and researchers.

Consequences of victimization among Irish adolescents: a longitudinal cohort study

Giulio D'Urso (School of Education, University College Dublin)
Jennifer Symonds (School of Education, University College Dublin)

Session C

Context: This study investigates the long-term consequences of victimisation across early adolescence, late adolescence and early adulthood in terms of emotional and conduct problems, peer relationships, as well as smoking and sleeping difficulties. The study also examines how these outcomes can become chronic in the early adulthood, considering the early victimisation experience, controlling by gender, cognitive ability, and family social class.

Method: The total sample comprised 7,525 participants studied across 13, 17 and 20 years of age, from the Child Cohort of the Growing Up in Ireland study (48.9 % male).

Results: Using path analysis modelling, we discovered that victimisation was related to emotional problems and sleeping difficulties at 17 years old. Peer problems at 13 years old were negatively related to close friends at 17 years old. Emotional problems at 13 years old were related to emotional problems at 17 years old. Conduct problems at 13 years old were related to conduct problems at 17 years old. Gender was related to close friends, emotional problems, sleeping difficulties, and smoking at 17 years old. Moreover, smoking problems at 20 years old was predicted by smoking problems at 17 years old. Sleeping difficulties at 20 years old was predicted by victimization and sleeping difficulties at 17 years old. Emotional well-being at 20 years old was predicted only by victimisation, and emotional problems at 17 years old. Reactive aggression at 20 years old was predicted by conduct problems at 17 years old, and cognitive ability. Gender was also related to close friends, reactive aggression, emotional well-being, and sleeping difficulties at 20 years old.

Conclusions: Preventative and targeted intervention programs in schools have a chance to prevent a continual sense of vulnerability in collective contexts.