

Growing Up in Ireland, its impact to date

Growing up in Ireland, the national longitudinal study of children and young people will mark its 16th birthday this year. Since 2006, the GUI has followed the lives of over 19,000 families. As GUI tracks children from birth to young adulthood, it allows Government, policy makers and researchers to track changes over time and monitor the impact of policy and service initiatives on children and young people.

What does GUI do?

- Tracks individual development from childhood through to adulthood
- Helps identify what factors help or hinder development over time
- Helps identify problems which need to be addressed
- Helps identify the points in time when interventions are required
- Used to assess the impact of policies or unexpected events (e.g. recession and COVID-19)

Inputs

- Over 19,000 families have taken part in GUI across two cohorts, Cohort 98 started in 2008 with 9,500 children aged 9 years and their families. Cohort 08 started in 2008 with 11,000 9 month olds and their families.
- Over 70,000 interviews with families have been conducted since 2007
- Special COVID-19 web survey in December 2020 with both cohorts, including the young people and their parents in the younger cohort and the young adults in the older cohort

Policy impact

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

- GP use among children
- childcare and cognitive outcomes
- obesity and overweight
- 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.

• At least 25 Government Departments and State Agencies have also used GUI data to inform their policy and services for children and young people.

Some examples of when GUI data has been used are:

- **The Arts Council** to understand children and young

people's cultural participation and the direction of its work

- **The Department of Health's** Healthy Ireland policy framework, and in its 2018 Capacity Review
- **The Department of Education** in a review of career guidance
- **The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment** in funding research with the Commission on Communications Regulation (ComReg) on mobile phone ownership and academic performance
- **The Central Statistics Office** to report on the indicators for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- **The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment** to generate evidence on supporting transitions to primary school
- Findings from the GUI special COVID-19 Survey provided timely evidence to Government on the impact of the pandemic on well-being, education and employment and directed the importance of the return to school
- **The Health Research Board** for an upcoming in-depth longitudinal project on drug use among young people
- **The National Council for Special Education** to estimate the prevalence of special educational needs (SEN) and examine outcomes for children with SEN
- **The Health Service Executive** used GUI data to examine health behaviours among young adults and to examine risk and protective factors for mental health and wellbeing during childhood

Outputs

- 91 official Growing Up in Ireland reports have been published on a wide range of subjects relevant to children and young people
- GUI report launches typically inspire national and local media conversations on these issues
- GUI anonymised datasets, are available to researchers, from the Central Statistics Office and Irish Social Science Data Archive;
- Over 200 reports, books and journal articles published externally by researchers using GUI data

