



Findings from the first 5 years

Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) is the longitudinal research study following the lives of thousands of children from birth through to the teenage years and beyond. Launched in 2005, families from all parts of Scotland are taking part in GUS which collects information on a wide range of topics including family circumstances and change, child health and development, use of services and support, experiences of school and pre-school, diet and physical activity, parenting styles and responsibilities. This year, a further 6,000 babies are being recruited to take part in GUS. Information from these families will tell us whether the experiences of children growing up in Scotland are changing. GUS is providing important new evidence to help inform the development of policies and services for children and their families. Findings from GUS support the case for increased investment in early years, early intervention and prevention.

All research findings from the study are available through the study website:
www.growingupinscotland.org.uk

New findings from the first 5 years of the study were published in June 2011:

Parental service use and informal networks in the early years

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/05/25092504/0>

Changes in child cognitive ability in the pre-school years

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/05/31085122/0>

Parenting and children's health

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/05/25092122/0>

Change in early childhood and the impact of significant events

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/05/25092325/0>

Please turn over to read some of the key findings from these reports.

If you would like to sign up to receive regular updates and about new developments and findings from GUS, please visit our website www.growingupinscotland.org.uk

You can also follow us on Twitter: @growingupinscot



Scottish Centre for
Social Research



GUS is funded by the Scottish Government and is carried out by the Scottish Centre for Social Research in collaboration with the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at the University of Edinburgh and the MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit in Glasgow.

Parental service use and informal networks in the early years

- Around 2 in 5 families with children under 5 were classified as 'low service users'. Families with lower incomes and fewer educational qualifications were less likely than others to use services such as antenatal classes, parent and baby/toddler groups and childcare services.
- For first-time mothers, the main reasons for not using antenatal classes included not liking the group format and not knowing where classes were held. These reasons for non-attendance were more common than reasons such as time, cost and travel barriers.
- Younger mothers and those experiencing disadvantage were more likely to be reluctant to engage with formal support services. They were more likely to be wary of contact with professionals like Health Visitors and Social Workers. It is unclear whether lower service use results from reluctance or whether reluctance stems from prior poor experience of services.
- One third of low service users also had low levels of informal support from family friends.

Changes in child cognitive ability in the pre-school years

- On average, children from more advantaged backgrounds have higher vocabulary and problem solving abilities at age 3 and age 5 than children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The largest differences in ability are between children whose parents have higher and lower educational qualifications. At age 5, compared with children whose parents have no qualifications, those with a degree-educated parent are around 18 months ahead on vocabulary and 13 months ahead on problem-solving ability.
- Changes in vocabulary ability in the pre-school period are more strongly related to aspects of the child's home environment and the choices and behaviours of parents than external factors like pre-school education.
- Amongst children whose parents had lower levels of education, those who had strong early attachment with their mother, had better early language development and more regularly experienced parent-child activities like reading, singing and playing games were more likely to show a greater improvement in their cognitive ability in the pre-school period than those who did not have these experiences.

Parenting and children's health

- Low parenting skills, as measured by a parenting index, were associated with a greater risk of poorer health outcomes and health behaviours amongst children under 5.
- Child health and health behaviours were also less favourable in families experiencing adversity. However, good parenting was found to have a positive impact on child health, suggesting that parenting support could go some way in reducing health inequalities.

Change in early childhood and the impact of significant events

- During the first five years of their lives, around one in ten children in Scotland experience their parents separating, with the incidence being highest in the first two years after the child's birth. Separation increased the likelihood of mothers experiencing poor mental health and low income, both known drivers of poor child outcomes.
- Children living in families with low incomes are more likely to experience changes such as parental separation, frequent house moves, parental job loss and the onset of a long-term maternal health problem.
- The findings suggest that services should take a 'whole-family' approach to prevent negative outcomes for children.

For more information please visit www.growingupinScotland.org.uk or contact Lesley Kelly, GUS Dissemination Officer on 0131 651 5004 or lesley.kelly@ed.ac.uk