

Initial findings from Birth Cohort 2

Growing Up in Scotland is a large-scale longitudinal research project which is tracking the lives of several groups of Scottish children from the early years, through childhood and beyond. GUS is concerned with all aspects children's lives including health, development, family circumstances, parenting, neighbourhood, education, friends and leisure activities.

GUS helps to find out how the circumstances and experiences of children growing up in Scotland are changing. It also shows how early experiences influence later outcomes as the children grow older.

The principal aim of the study is to provide information to support policy-making and service planning in Scotland, but it is also intended to be a broader resource that can be drawn on by academics, voluntary sector organisations and others. Findings from the study are being used as a resource for the training and development of practitioners working with young children and their families, including nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, teachers and social workers.

New findings from the study provide a detailed insight into the lives of babies born in Scotland during 2010 and 2011. Information was collected from over 6,000 families when their babies were around 10 months old. A new report looks at the topics of pregnancy and birth, infant feeding, parenting and support, non-resident parents, childcare, child health and development and parental health. Where possible, comparisons are made with the experiences of 'Birth Cohort 1', children born 6 years earlier in 2004 and 2005.



Some key findings

- 79% of babies live with 2 parents and 21% live with a single parent (no change since Birth Cohort 1)
- After taking account of inflation, there has been little change in family incomes between 2005/06 and 2011/12.
- The proportion of families living in private rented accommodation has increased from 6% to 16%.
- 80% of mothers said they had drunk no alcohol at all during their pregnancy, compared with 74% of mothers 6 years ago.
- The proportion of parents using the internet as a source of information during pregnancy has doubled (from 27% to 55%). But health professionals are still the most commonly cited source of information, mentioned by 90% of parents.
- 63% of mothers breastfed their baby at least once. 36% of mothers breastfed their baby exclusively for 6 weeks or more while one quarter breastfed their baby for at least 6 months.

- 14% of babies were at least 6 months of age when introduced to solid food, while 42% were at least 5 months of age when weaning began.
- Most parents were satisfied with the service provided by their health visitor during the first few months following the birth of their child. 83% of parents said that their health visitor was good or very good at providing helpful advice and 91% said the same in relation to listening to them.
- 70% of parents had not attended any parenting classes or programmes over the past 12 months. Just over half of parents said that they were unlikely to attend a parenting programme or class in the future.
- There are some differences in attitudes towards formal support services between different groups. Younger parents, parents of lower educational level and those with lower incomes are more likely to say that they find it hard to ask for help from services.
- Parenting stress was greater for parents without informal support from family and friends, and for parents in both the most disadvantaged and the most advantaged groups.
- Family disadvantage and a lack of social support for parenting were both independently associated with less frequent activities important for child development, including reading stories, singing nursery rhymes and visiting other families with young children.
- At 10 months of age, 21% of children had a non-resident biological parent. One quarter of these children did not have any contact with their non-resident parent. In over half of families (57%) the parents had not previously lived together.
- Around half of parents (52%) were using childcare when their baby was 10 months old. This has decreased from 60% six years ago, perhaps reflecting improvements in maternity leave entitlements between the two cohorts.
- Grandparents are the most common type of childcare – used by 69% of families using childcare. 28% of families use nurseries and 10% use childminders. 35% of families using childcare have more than one childcare provider or arrangement in place.
- Families used childcare for an average of 22 hours per week. One quarter of parents said that they found childcare costs difficult to pay.
- Almost all (95%) of children were described as having ‘very good’ or ‘good’ health. However, 12% of children have a long-term illness or condition.
- One in twenty parents reported some or a lot of concerns about their child’s development, learning or behaviour. These concerns were more likely within families in the lowest income group (9%).
- Parents living in disadvantaged circumstances were more likely than others to report lower levels of physical and mental health.

For more information and to download a copy of the full report please see
www.growingupinScotland.org.uk

Previous reports from GUS include:

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>

Health inequalities in the early years

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/04/26103009/0>

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