



**Report on  
Public Consultation Processes for  
National Strategy for Research  
and Data on Children's Lives  
2011 – 2016**

NOVEMBER 2011

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

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# Contents

<b>1. Introduction and Overview .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Consultation with children and young people.....	1
Online public consultation.....	1
Structure of report.....	2
Data content issues .....	2
Themes arising from consultation with children and young people.....	2
Themes arising from online consultation .....	2
Research and Data Process Issues .....	4
Need for coordination and leadership .....	4
Data quality.....	4
Availability and access .....	5
Improved reporting and use of research and data findings .....	5
<b>2. Methodology.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Consultation with children and young people.....	6
DCYA Children and Young People's Forum .....	6
Consultation process .....	6
Online consultation questionnaire .....	7
Questionnaire development .....	7
Data collection .....	8
Analysis .....	8
Profile of respondents.....	10
Summary.....	12
<b>3. Data Content Issues .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Data content issues for children and young people .....	14
Health .....	14
Transition to adulthood.....	15
Where to get advice, help and support .....	16
Data content issues from online survey .....	16
Data producers and users .....	16
Priority areas .....	17
Health .....	18
Education.....	20
Social, Emotional and Behavioural issues.....	22
Financial and Economic issues.....	24
Participation.....	25
Safety.....	27
Relationships .....	28
Demographics .....	30
Environment .....	31
Justice.....	32
<b>4. Data Process Issues .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Data process issues for children and young people .....	33
Relevance of data .....	33
Access to and sources of information .....	33
Data quality.....	34
Dissemination .....	35
Data process issues from online consultation.....	36
Data culture .....	36
Data sharing .....	36
Research design and processes.....	39
Dissemination .....	42
Ethical issues.....	43
Resources .....	44
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1: Online Consultation Questionnaire .....	45
Appendix 2: Respondents to Online Consultation .....	48

# 1. Introduction and Overview

The *National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives, 2011-2016* has been published in fulfilment of a commitment given in the social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*. The strategy has been developed in the context of substantial investment in the creation and transfer of knowledge for the purpose of improving citizens' lives and brings together key issues of relevance to both research and data around children's lives in particular. The aim of the strategy is to set out the vision, goals, principles and actions required to guide and support the collection, compilation and dissemination of data, statistics and research on children and to facilitate the utilisation of good-quality, easily accessible, internationally comparable information about the lives of children in Ireland.

This report presents the findings from the formal consultations conducted in the course of the generation of an evidence base for the strategy. These consultations contained two principal strands: direct consultation with children and young people (2008) and a public consultation via an online questionnaire (2009).

## Consultation with children and young people

In order to ensure the voice of children was heard in the development of this research and data strategy, a consultation workshop was conducted in 2008 with the Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). This consultation, led by the Research Division of the OMCYA in collaboration with the Participation Unit of the Office, took place at an early stage in the process of developing the strategy since it was felt that the views of children and young people might not be well represented in the other components of the evidence base, which included:

- a background review of the literature on key issues relating to data systems;
- description and analysis of current data available on children's lives in Ireland;
- examination of information needs expressed in or required for measurement of policy goals;
- in-depth examination of data usage in practice through a number of cross-national case studies.

The views of the CYPF and the key issues identified during the consultation were given the same weight as the views of other individuals, groups and organisations in the subsequent analysis of these inputs to the strategy's development (*see Chapter 3*).

## Online public consultation

A structured consultation on research and data needs and availability was conducted over the period March – April 2009 through the medium of an online questionnaire, which was made publicly available and also notified to a targeted mailing list of about 1,000 organisations. The questionnaire used in the consultation (*see Appendix 1*) was designed to capture the views of both producers and users of research and data on children's lives and addressed the following issues:

- priority topics for the next 10 years;
- current production and use of data on children's lives;
- issues of data quality, availability and access;
- dissemination policies and strategies;
- planned developments in data on children's lives.

Overall, 196 responses were received from a broad spectrum of interests and sectors, including service providers, academics/researchers, Government departments and agencies, and non-governmental organisations. The detailed findings from these responses are presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

## Structure of report

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the main points arising from the two formal consultations used in the development of the strategy. *Chapter 2* outlines the methodology used in collecting and analysing the responses to the consultations. The detailed findings from the children's and young people's consultation workshop and from the online consultation questionnaire are presented in Chapters 3 and 4, with *Chapter 3* relating mainly to issues regarding the content of research and data on children's lives and Chapter 4 focusing on issues relating to the process of producing and disseminating research and data on children that arose during the consultation.

## Data content issues

### Themes arising from consultation with children and young people

A core part of the consultation was to explore in what specific areas did children and young people want information. Three main areas emerged during discussions, summarised below and examined in detail in Chapter 3:

- **Health:** Emotional health emerged as a strong theme for the young participants in the consultation, in particular the need for openness and dialogue in relation to issues affecting them. Issues of physical health, including knowledge of health status and what is considered 'normal' health for their age group, were also topics of interest, as were dental health and lifestyle issues, such as exercise, sexual health and related behaviours.
- **Transition to adulthood:** Issues relating to the end of schooling and the transition to higher education or employment emerged as areas where children and young people required information.
- **Where to get help and other practical information:** Topics mentioned here included support services, linking in some cases to issues of emotional and mental health. However, there was also a strong need expressed for factual everyday information relating to recreation, transport, and facilities.

### Themes arising from online consultation

This section provides a thematic overview and examples of data content issues raised by respondents to the online consultation. Many of the themes are cross-cutting in nature, highlighting the interlinked and complex character of the various dimensions of children and young people's lives. These themes varied in their focus and are presented here under the three main headings of child, family and society.

#### Child

Four major themes focusing on the child or young person as an individual emerged from the consultation. All targeted the overall goal of enabling children to realise their own capacities, ensuring they can prosper.

- **Development and transition:** A major theme throughout the consultation was respondents' involvement with and prioritisation of data on children and young people's development throughout various life stages and processes. There was a focus on identifying and ensuring healthy and appropriate transitions in several domains, particularly health, education and social/emotional/behavioural issues. Examples of data relating to this theme that respondents were interested in included data concerning children's physical, cognitive, sexual and moral development, and data following their educational progression. It can be deduced from many of the responses that this focus on the healthy development of young people was necessary to support their transition from a healthy childhood to a future healthy adulthood.
- **Interventions and their impact:** There was also a strong emphasis on data around effective early interventions. Respondents were concerned with identifying early interventions that might prevent or remedy undesirable transitions or developments in children's lives. A primary example drawn from the consultation was on the importance of data on the impact of early intervention in cases of child protection and welfare. Another area of substantial importance for research and data on early intervention related to education and whether early

intervention can help improve a student's educational progress. Some domains in which early intervention was a main topic included health, education, social/emotional/behavioural issues, and safety. These interventions were often described as an important and essential means of ensuring that children and young people follow a healthy and appropriate path of development.

- **Outcomes:** Throughout discussions on data at the level of the child and young person, outcomes were a recurring theme throughout almost all of the domains. Respondents focused on the crucial importance of data that measured how successfully children and young people are actually doing. Many respondents, for example, articulated the necessity of measuring health outcomes for children and young people, describing a variety of areas in which assessing health outcomes is vital – from the neonatal stage to the adolescent stage, including sexual and mental health. Such research and data are seen as essential in order to form an evidence base for future planning and operations, as well as to ensure that the outcomes of various strategies aimed at improving children's lives are able to be measured.
- **Children with additional needs:** One theme that emerged strongly from many respondents throughout the consultation was the importance of research and data on children and young people with additional needs. This was considered particularly important since these children are among the most vulnerable in society and include marginalised and at-risk children and young people, such as disabled children, children with a long-term illness, children with special educational needs, children living in poverty, homeless children, children in care, abused children, ethnic minorities and young people of differing sexual orientation. This theme permeated many domains, including health, education, social/emotional/behavioural issues, financial/economic issues, participation and safety.

## Family

In terms of family, an emerging theme was the essential importance of data on the role of the family unit in the lives of children and young people. This theme recurred throughout several domains, particularly health, education, financial/economic issues, safety and relationships.

Many respondents described the functions served by families in various aspects of children's lives. A trend in responses focused on the diverse and changing structure of the family unit in Ireland today. Respondents considered the importance of data on children and young people in a diversity of living situations, including children living with lone parents, children living in poverty, children in care, abused and neglected children, homeless children and ethnic minorities. They also articulated a number of ways in which a child's family situation could impact on his or her chances of success. Examples of topics in this area that respondents were particularly interested in included demographic data on family contexts, the effects of a family's financial situation on children's lives, the nature of support systems for children and young people, and the impact of the familial situation on young people's ability to access services.

## Society

At the more macro level, the importance of data on wider society and children and young people's engagement with the wider culture permeated many of the responses to the consultation. The domains in which respondents were involved with and prioritised data on children's experiences with wider society included health, education, social/emotional/behavioural issues, financial/economic issues, participation, relationships, environment and justice. These themes focused on the following two main areas:

- **Social integration and participation:** A prevalent theme throughout the consultation was the vital importance of children's social integration and participation. The descriptions of this data tended to focus on areas in a child or young person's life that would help them to not just get by, but to flourish in society. Respondents were interested in how well children managed to integrate socially and the aspects of their lives that affected their integration. Some respondents were particularly interested in the integration of children with additional needs, especially those in minority or marginalised groups. Topics of research and data that respondents were involved with and prioritised included children and young people's lifestyles and their ability to access and engage with a range of events and activities. The topic of participation extended to interest in young people's involvement in society as active citizens. While many respondents were interested in what fostered integration, others were primarily

interested in issues related to anti-social behaviour, such as barriers to participation and involvement with crime.

- **Services:** Respondents to the consultation focused on the importance of data on the role of services in the lives of children and young people. The issues around services for children and young people included their ability to access services, their experiences with them and the impact, if any, of such services. This theme highlighted the contribution owed by wider society in providing appropriate and useful services to support and enhance the lives of children and young people. Examples of types of services highlighted included mental health services, addiction treatment services, childcare services, child protection services and youth services. Services were an underlying topic in many domains, including health, education, social/emotional/behavioural issues, participation, safety and justice.

## Research and Data Process Issues

Chapter 4 presents the range of issues identified in relation to data processes from the responses to the online consultation under six headings, namely:

- data culture;
- data sharing;
- research design and processes;
- dissemination;
- ethics;
- resources.

Common concerns arising across these items related to coordination and leadership, improvements in data quality and harmonisation, availability of and access to appropriate data holdings, and improved reporting on and use of research and data. A summary of these issues is presented below.

### Need for coordination and leadership

A strong theme running through all of the material raised in relation to research and data processes was the need for greater coordination, infrastructure and national guidance on issues of concern. Leadership, at both organisational and national level, was seen as central to the development of a culture not only of increased use of data, but also of sharing and linking data to provide a more broad-based knowledge of children's lives. The need for strict controls (including data sharing protocols, ethical guidance, adherence to data protection and other best practice guidance) was recognised as being an essential adjunct to such initiatives and it was felt that these required leadership at national level.

Some practical suggestions on the initiation of an infrastructure to support more coordinated data use included the development of centralised data sources, support for networks to promote data and information sharing, and the advancement of data sharing protocols at national level across organisations.

### Data quality

Issues of comparability, standardisation and quality were highlighted across a number of themes during the consultation. The need for benchmarks, both nationally and internationally, and for standardised data collection to allow for comparisons to such benchmarks was articulated. The role of meta-data in informing data use and in contributing towards greater harmonisation of concepts, definitions and processes was raised, both in terms of improving quality in individual data sources and also in facilitating increased use of data across themes and disciplines by allowing for meaningful comparisons.

The ubiquity of references to the need for comparability across datasets among respondents would suggest the need for development and use of standard classifications as far as possible across national data holdings. The need for common markers of key characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity and geography was also frequently cited by many respondents, which further supports the need for use of standard measures and coding systems. This applies not only to

survey data, but also to administrative datasets which are more likely to have the capacity to generate measures on smaller population groups than is possible from survey data due to quality and confidentiality considerations.

A point specifically in relation to data on children's lives emerging from the consultation was the need for 'child-centred' measures, referring not only to the positioning of children as a focus of data collection and analysis, but, equally importantly, designing data collection so that the voice of children and young people could be heard at all stages of the process, including the final outputs.

## **Availability and access**

Concerns about availability of data were another central theme in the consultation. These concerns could be broadly categorised into two categories: those concerned with the creation of new data and those relating to access to existing data. For the first, the generation of new knowledge around children's lives was a central point and included matters such as the collection of data on more sensitive areas of children's lives, where access to respondents, ethical concerns and availability of suitable methodologies and instruments were of relevance. In some cases, while data were available that met some of the needs expressed, there was an acknowledgement of the limitations of the data available and the need to increase its coverage – either in terms of the population of interest or of the concepts and measures of interest.

In relation to access to existing data, a lack of knowledge of the full extent of data currently collected and held by public bodies was seen as a major barrier to full access and use. In addition, the diversity of sources and types of data collected by and available from public bodies were seen as difficulties, as were the varying forms of dissemination in use. Proposals to address this issue included suggestions about centralised data holdings, with the OMCYA and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) seen as possible guardians of such databases, and the wider e-Government initiative was also raised as a possible vehicle for such developments. The publication of good-quality meta-data was also seen as relevant in this regard, as a vehicle for improved knowledge and understanding of existing data collection.

## **Improved reporting and use of research and data findings**

New mechanisms and additional resources were seen as necessary for the optimal use of research and data findings in service and policy contexts. Networks among both producers and users of research and data were regarded as an effective mechanism to increase collaboration, leading not only to increased coordination in data production (*see Chapter 4*), but also leading to improved utilisation through awareness raising and knowledge transfer.

New approaches to dissemination were also identified as a key mechanism in this regard, with suggestions for increased generation of thematic reports, research and data outputs being more closely linked to service and policy outcomes, and greater use of narrative to explain and interpret statistical measures. Increased use of more sophisticated reporting of statistical outputs, including use and explanation of quality measures such confidence intervals for estimates, was seen as likely to lead to improved understandings of such outputs. More regularity in dissemination schedules was regarded as desirable, as was increased frequency of outputs.

A lack of quantitative analytical capacity among both researchers and users was identified as a barrier to improvements in this area. Resources, too, were seen as requiring further investment in order to conduct analysis and to provide training and building capacity and skills in this area. This also linked back to the earlier issue of a culture of data use, the absence of which tends to lead to restricted resource allocation in this area.

## 2. Methodology

This chapter sets out the process of consultation undertaken and the type of analysis conducted on responses to the consultations in the preparation of the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives.

### Consultation with children and young people

#### DCYA Children and Young People's Forum

The DCYA Children and Young People's Forum (CYPF) was established to act as a reference panel and advise the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on issues of concern to children and young people. There are currently 30 young people on the Forum, aged 12-18 years, from all over the country. They are nominated to the CYPF through Comhairlí na nÓg and organisations representing seldom-heard children and young people. Four representatives from the CYPF are members of the National Children's Advisory Council.

The CYPF has been an invaluable resource to the DCYA and its members have been consulted on or been involved in many initiatives, including:

- the design and content of the National Recreation Policy;
- the DCYA website ([www.dcy.a.ie](http://www.dcy.a.ie));
- the development of resources for student councils;
- tender evaluation committees for relevant projects;
- health service provision for teenagers;
- the mid-term review of the National Children's Strategy.

Several members of the CYPF are now over 18 and have formed a management committee, which works in partnership with DCYA staff in running the Forum.

#### Consultation process

The aim of the process used for the consultation with children and young people was to reflect their views in the content of the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives. The following objectives were set out:

- to identify children's and young people's views on the information they would most like to see available for and about young people;
- to obtain their views on how they make decisions about the quality and reliability of the information they access;
- to get their views on how best information can be made available.

The consultation took the form of a one-day workshop, held on 19 April 2008, with 29 young people. The following areas were covered in the introductory session by the DCYA Head of Research:

- Overview of the National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives and its development.
- Purpose of the consultation.
- Definition and examples of what the term 'data' on children's lives means (mainly statistics and information).
- Examples given included:
  - number of children and teenagers living in your city, town or village, or number of children and teenagers attending your school or for whom English is a second language;
  - other data, such as percentage of under-16s who binge drink or who help out in their local community;

- 'data' also refers to information generally about your health, such as where local health services are available, the symptoms of meningitis or different courses available for school-leavers.

Members of the CYPF were randomly divided into three groups. Each group was facilitated by an experienced facilitator and had a young person from the CYPF management team as a note-taker. A list of possible prompts was agreed between the facilitators prior to the workshops. The overall structure of the discussions was centred on the following three areas:

- information content;
- information dissemination;
- assessing quality of information.

Results of discussions and feedback were recorded on flipcharts and each group then gave a short summary of the main points to the whole group. Following the consultation, all information from the flipcharts was transcribed. A thematic analysis was undertaken and the main findings are set out in Chapter 3 of this report.

## Online consultation questionnaire

The second consultation element in the development of the strategy was conducted through the medium of an online questionnaire (*see Appendix 1*). This was designed to allow those producing or using data, statistics or research on children (or those with an interest in this area) to express their views, comments and suggestions for the strategy. Respondents were asked to comment on:

- their priorities for research and data on children's lives over the next 10 years;
- their current production and/or use of research and data on children's lives;
- dissemination of outputs from their work;
- quality issues with data currently being produced/used;
- any developments in terms of such research and data that they were aware of in their field.

The focus of the consultation was to obtain a broad overview of current and emerging issues around data on all aspects of children's lives, including but not confined to:

- the child as an individual;
- family situation;
- children with additional needs;
- supports and services;
- participation in community and society;
- the effect of the wider context in which the child lives, such as local community, living situation (e.g. urban/rural), Government policies, economic situation;
- children's outcomes (in childhood and throughout life).

## Questionnaire development

The consultation questionnaire was designed for online dissemination and completion. The final questionnaire was preceded by both pilot and pre-pilot versions. The pre-pilot questionnaire was circulated for comment in February 2009 among key policy-makers and statistical staff in the OMCYA and Department of Health and Children, the CSO's Data Strategy Steering Group representative and statisticians from other Government departments. Following receipt of comments, a pilot questionnaire was formulated and circulated for completion in the period February – March 2009 to a wider group, including the CSO, statistical units in other Government departments, policy-makers and researchers. The results of the pilot brought about further changes to the questionnaire, principally the inclusion of a reference to international data and a reduction of detail in some questions which had led to unnecessary repetition in the pilot responses. The consultation questionnaire was finalised in March 2009 and a copy is provided in Appendix 1 of this report. It was designed in KeyPoint software for web dissemination and made available on [www.surveysurver.net](http://www.surveysurver.net) from 23 March – 29 April 2009.

## Data collection

The consultation was publicised in two ways: through a press release and a targeted mailing list. A press release was issued on 23 March 2009, resulting in reports in the *Irish Examiner* and *Irish Independent* newspapers and radio interviews by Independent Network News (INN). The press release, with a link to the consultation questionnaire, was made available on the websites of the Department of Health and Children ([www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)), the OMCYA ([www.omcya.ie](http://www.omcya.ie)) and on Children's Database ([www.childrensdatabase.ie](http://www.childrensdatabase.ie)). The press release was also picked up by a number of special interest bulletins, such as *Youth Work Ireland: Local Member Youth Services Current Awareness Update* and the newsletter *Public Affairs Ireland*.

In the week of 23 March 2009, over 1,000 organisations and networks were notified of the consultation by e-mail. The organisations were classified into the following categories:

- Government departments;
- State agencies;
- the social partners;
- professional associations;
- non-governmental organisations;
- health sector organisations, including hospitals, hospices, HSE childcare information officers, national community care general managers and social workers;
- academic institutions and researchers;
- local and regional authorities, county development boards, county childcare committees, county libraries and vocational education committees.

Two reminders were sent during April 2009 and the consultation closed on 29 April 2009, with 196 responses.

## Analysis

The analytical approach taken in examining the responses to the consultation, in common with other elements of the strategy, takes as its starting point the Whole Child Perspective (WCP) on which the National Children's Strategy is based. This perspective seeks to provide a more complete understanding of children's lives and encompasses three aspects:

- the extent of children's own capacities;
- the multiple interlinked dimensions of children's development;
- the complex mix of informal and formal supports that children rely on.

Responses to the consultation were categorised using a 4-part coding frame. The specific categories for each part of the frame are detailed in Table 1.

- **Content:** The first part of the coding frame dealt with the content areas of responses, broken down into 10 domains (health, education, safety, justice, etc).
- **Focus:** The second part of the coding frame assigned a code to the subject or focus of the response. For example, responses might have described issues dealing directly with a young person and their personal experience, or they might have talked about young people's issues through the lens of the wider family or Government. This part of the frame had 5 codes.
- **Life course:** The third part of the coding frame assigned a code to the life course stage of children and young people to which the response referred. It consisted of 6 codes spanning the life course that referred to particular periods of childhood (e.g. infancy or adolescence).
- **Child group:** The final part of the coding frame assessed whether responses dealt with all children or children with additional needs. Children with additional needs included children with additional health, educational, economic or behavioural needs, as well as children who were particularly marginalised, vulnerable or at risk.

**Table 1: Coding frame for consultation**

Element of framework	Categories
Whole Child Perspective – Content	Health Education Social, Emotional, Behavioural Financial/Economic Participation Safety Relationships Demographic Environment Justice
Whole Child Perspective – Focus	Child/young person Immediate Family Wider family/friends Community/voluntary/statutory sector National Government
Life course	Prenatal period Infancy Early childhood Middle and late childhood Adolescence All children
Child group	All children Children with additional needs

A second coding scheme was developed in order to address the data process issues reported in the consultation. This coding scheme arose from an examination of the issues arising from responses. It also took account of the various aspects of the data cycle, including:

- data collection/compilation;
- data processing;
- analysis;
- dissemination;
- implementation;
- review and evaluation.

Six major categories were formulated, each with a number of sub-categories.

- **Data culture:** The first categorisation refers to a culture of data use and permeates the entire research and data cycle since it describes the conditions in which data is being processed. These responses often referred to a culture of data production and use that de-emphasized data as unnecessary and lacking priority. They suggested the need for a change in the environment – to one that emphasizes data as a vital facet of decision-making, planning and operations.
- **Data sharing:** The second category dealt with responses that referred to issues of data sharing, such as coordination, infrastructure, accessibility and standardisation. Data sharing issues particularly affect the compilation, implementation, and review and evaluation phases of the data cycle, mainly due to issues with access to data held by other agencies. Furthermore, a lack of standardisation plays a major role in all aspects of the data cycle since it means certain data may have no standard definition or comparable measure. Several respondents discussed the ethical issues surrounding data sharing, such as privacy and confidentiality (*see Chapter 4 for further discussion*).
- **Research design and processes:** The third category addressed issues arising in the research design of data. These issues particularly affect the first half of the data cycle, including data collection, processing and analysis. This theme included sub-categorisations, such as gaps, coverage, disaggregation, methods, timeliness, analysis and data systems.
- **Dissemination:** The fourth category dealt with dissemination issues, including reporting techniques and policy and service delivery. These issues specifically affect the latter half of the data cycle, including dissemination, implementation and review and evaluation.

- **Ethics:** A further category addressed ethical issues in data processes, particularly related to confidentiality and privacy. These respondents suggested the importance of ensuring that children’s privacy remains a priority, while enabling data sharing. These ethical issues involve most aspects of the data cycle, particularly the data collection and dissemination/sharing phases.
- **Resources:** The final category included responses that dealt with resource issues, including a lack of funding and trained support. Resource issues affect the entire data cycle since they may have serious implications for both data production and use.

After responses were assigned the appropriate codes, an overall assessment of the data was done in order to assess themes and develop results.

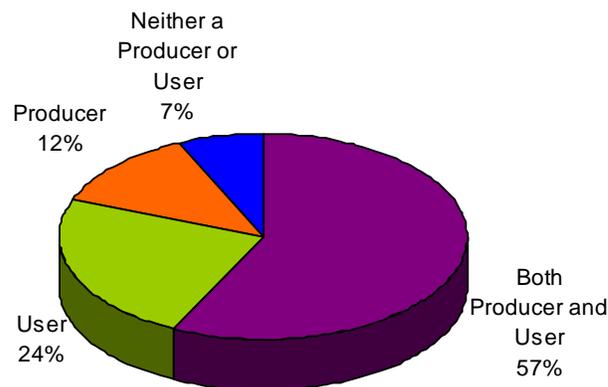
## Profile of respondents

In total, 196 responses were received by the close of the online consultation. (Two of these contained no information on the characteristics of the respondent and are excluded from the respondent profiles presented below.) Responses were categorised by the 10 Whole Child Perspective (WCP) content focus areas and by 9 organisation types based on an examination of responding organisations.

Respondents were also asked to state whether they were responding on an individual basis or on behalf of an organisation. Overall, approximately 71% of responses were made on behalf of an organisation and 28% were from individuals. Only 3 respondents (1.5%) did not state on whose behalf they were replying. A full list of the organisations that responded to the consultation can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

In terms of the production and use of data, more than half of the respondents (57%) reported both producing and using data in some form (*see Figure 1*). Nearly a quarter of respondents (25%) described themselves as being solely users of data, while about 12% reported being mainly producers of data. Approximately 7% of respondents described themselves as not producing or using data relating to children; of these respondents, many described how they hoped data processes relating to children would be progressed in the future so that they would be in a position to develop their own production and use of data on children.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of respondents, by data producer or user**



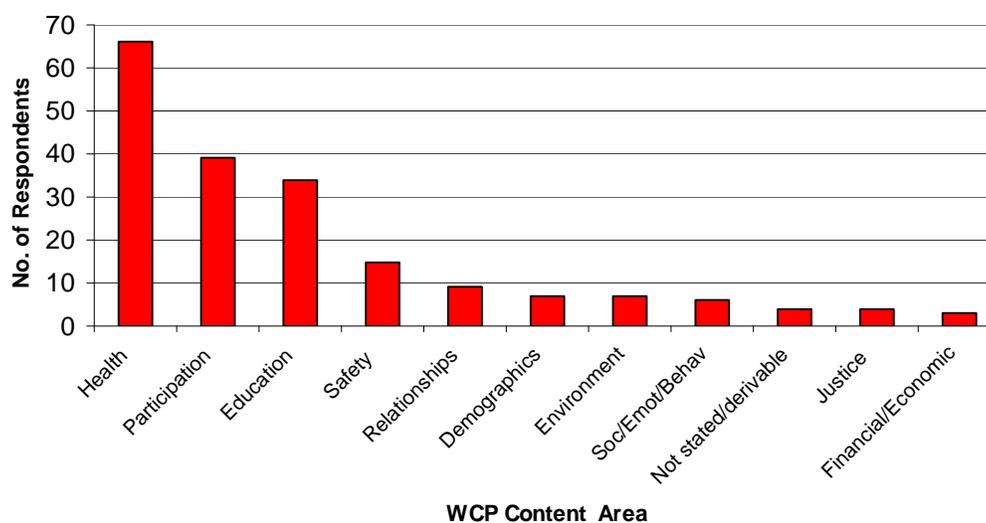
In terms of WCP content areas, a majority of respondents (34%) dealt with health (see Table 2 and Figure 2). The next most frequently represented focus areas were participation (20% of responses) and education (17%). The least number of responses came from justice and financial, with 2% or less of responses. All other response categories had between 3% and 8% of respondents. Only 2% of respondents did not indicate which WCP focus area they were associated with.

**Table 2: Responses to consultation questionnaire, by WCP domain and by individual/organisation type represented**

WCP domain: Content focus	Individual*		RESPONDING AS Organisation type represented		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Health	32	54	34	25	66	34
Education	7	12	27	20	34	18
Social, Emotional, Behavioural	2	3	4	3	6	3
Financial/Economic	0	0	3	2	3	2
Participation	1	2	38	28	39	20
Safety	6	10	9	7	15	8
Relationships	1	2	8	6	9	5
Demographics	3	5	4	3	7	4
Environment	3	5	4	3	7	4
Justice	0	0	4	3	4	2
Not stated/derivable	4	7	0	0	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Includes a small number where no personal/organisational information was provided.

**Figure 2: No. of responses to consultation questionnaire, by WCP domain**



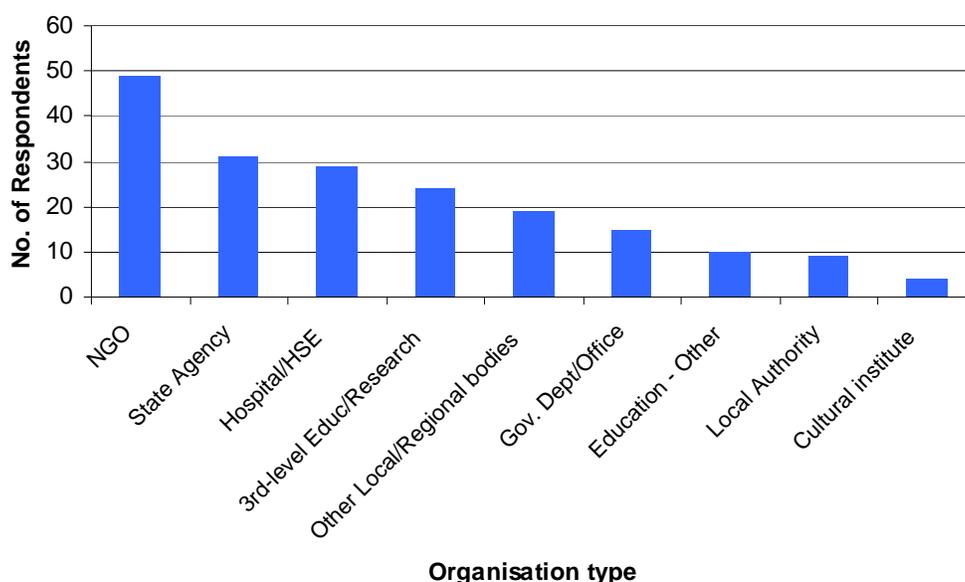
In terms of organisation types, a majority of respondents (25%) were NGOs (see Table 3 and Figure 3). The next most frequently represented types of organisation were as follows: State agencies (16%), Hospital/HSE (15%) and 3rd-level education/research (12%). Government Departments/Offices, other local/regional bodies and 'education – other' all had between 5% and 10% of respondents. A small proportion of responses were also received from cultural institutes and local authorities. Only 2% of respondents did not state their organisation type.

**Table 3: Responses to consultation questionnaire, by organisation type and individual/organisation represented**

Organisation type	RESPONDING AS				Total	
	Individual*		Organisation represented			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Government Department/Office	6	10	9	7	15	8
State agency	6	10	25	19	31	16
Hospital/HSE	20	34	9	7	29	15
3rd-level Education/Research	16	27	8	6	24	12
Education – Other	3	5	7	5	10	5
Local Authority	2	3	7	5	9	5
Other local/regional bodies	0	0	19	14	19	10
NGO	2	3	47	35	49	25
Cultural institute	0	0	4	3	4	2
Not stated/derivable	4	7	0	0	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Includes a small number where no personal/organisational information was provided.

**Figure 3: No. of responses to consultation questionnaire, by organisation type**



## Summary

The respondents to the online consultation represented a broad range of organisations and individuals. Their interests varied from international, national, regional and local, and included representatives from all of the 10 WCP domains. Responses to the consultation informed two main areas: content issues and data process issues. *Content issues* were analysed in order to learn more about the types of data being produced and used by respondents. Priority areas in each WCP focus area were assessed in order to gain an understanding of what those working with data viewed as important areas for research and data into children’s lives. *Data process issues* were examined in order to gain a better understanding of the research and data issues occurring for those who deal with data on children and young people.

The young people participating in the consultation workshop also identified a range of issues relating to data content and processes. Some of these, such as reliability and relevance of information, reflected issues arising in the online consultation (although in a slightly different context perhaps than that of the adult respondents to the questionnaire), while others, such as

information on services and methods of accessing information, had more direct relevance to their daily lives and thus were unique to their own perspectives.

The content and data process issues raised in the online consultation provided an important component of the evidence-base for the discussion on data needs and data gaps in Chapters 3 and 4 of the main report, *National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives, 2011-2016*.

### 3. Data Content Issues

In this chapter, issues of data content arising in both consultation processes are outlined. Those from the consultation with children and young people are presented under the main topics identified as priorities, while the findings of the online questionnaire are structured under each of the 10 WCP content areas, namely: health, education, social/emotional/behavioural issues, financial/economic issues, participation, safety, relationships, demography, environment and justice. For each WCP content area, the issues for both producers and users of data are discussed. For data producers, the data they generate as well as the principal methods of dissemination they reported utilising are discussed. Each section on data users contains information on the data they reported working with and their purposes and outputs. Each WCP content area also has an overview of the priority areas for research and data as identified by the respondents.

#### Data content issues for children and young people

The specific areas around which young people would like information to be available to them formed a core part of the consultation. In general, the content of the information identified by the participants can be summarised as follows:

##### Health, especially emotional health

- The emotional difficulties young people have and the way they deal with them (e.g. depression; suicide; self-harm support services such as the Samaritans; bullying; pressures young people are under; anorexia; bulimia; how young people deal with problems; and how to deal with pressure from, for example, peers, parents, drink and drugs).
- Health information (e.g. physical health, practical health issues, lifestyle, exercise, normal health).
- Sexual health, including sex/sexuality (e.g. sexually transmitted infections, crisis pregnancy, contraception, safe sex).

##### Transitions to adulthood

- Types of services for early school-leavers.
- Where courses are held and how to avail of them.
- How to develop a good CV and do well in job interviews.

##### Where to get advice, help and support

- Practical information for young people (e.g. movie times, flights, bus/rail times, facilities in local area).
- Information for parents, schools and wider community (e.g. how to build trust with young people; what is normal for young people (especially normal development, the stresses they are under and specifically exam pressures); and the importance of talking to other parents).

The points made about these issues are expanded on below.

#### Health

*'Health is a big issue for young people, so a lot of young people try to find information on it'*  
(Quote from participant)

Participants in the consultation identified a number of areas of health and well-being they considered important. These included issues relating to their physical health, dental care and lifestyle. It was noted that going to the doctor was expensive and it would be very helpful to '*know what was normal health*' for their age without having to pay for the information.

Other more lifestyle-oriented information was also identified as important and the example of exercise was used to illustrate the complexity of their need. It was noted that as well as knowing how much exercise a young person should take, they also needed to know where they could go in their own locality '*given that at 16 years they are generally too young to join a gym*' but '*are afraid to be out running in case people laugh*'. Another example related to sexual health, where one young person said, '*A lot of young people don't get the information they need; like in school you get sex talks, but the area of sexuality is left out*'.

It was also noted that information was required in areas related to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy and safe sex.

While general health issues were considered important, a very strong theme emerging from the consultation related to young people's desire to have more information about their emotional health and also for their parents/school and general community to be more familiar with these issues in respect of young people.

There was a very strong view that young people find it hard to talk about their feelings and there was some agreement that '*Young people hide their true feelings and pretend everything is grand*' and '*they bottle everything up*'.

Knowing '*about*' as well as '*how to access services*' to support their emotional health and well-being was considered critical. It was suggested, for example, that while the Samaritans provided a very broad service, there was a '*lack of awareness about their target groups and the actual workings of it*'. A number of specific areas were mentioned, including depression, anorexia, suicide, bullying and self-harm. It was strongly suggested that young people should know all about '*sensitive/taboo subjects, like suicide*' and that these issues should '*not be hidden*' or '*brushed under the carpet*'. Issues relating to bullying were also identified and, in a very enlightened discussion, it was noted that the process of '*naming bullying*' can be very difficult for young people and that sometimes bullying that takes place at the more '*minor end*' could be even harder because of the '*difficulty in pinning it down*'.

At a more general level, participants noted that young people were subjected to a lot of pressure, particularly around exams. They made a plea for people to '*know about the difficulty of sitting State exams and the pressures of school and teenage life*'. Participants also noted that they themselves need to know how to deal with pressure from peers, parents and teachers in school.

Following on from this discussion, it was considered of critical importance that parents and schools had information about the pressure young people were under. Other areas identified by young people as being important for their parents and wider society to know about them related to:

- what is normal for young people of their age;
- the importance of young people going out at weekends;
- how to build trust with young people in their care;
- the need for boundaries that are within the current norms 'rather than what was normal thirty years ago'. As one participant commented: 'Parents don't realise that times have changed and that life for a teenager is completely different.'

The young people strongly suggested that parents use each other as sources of information rather than relying on books.

## Transition to adulthood

In addition to health information, some participants spoke about the need to have information that could help them move into adulthood, including:

- types of services for early school-leavers;
- knowing where to get courses and how to avail of them;
- how to become rich;
- how to develop a good CV and do well in job interviews.

## Where to get advice, help and support

Finally, the young people noted the need for very practical information, such as:

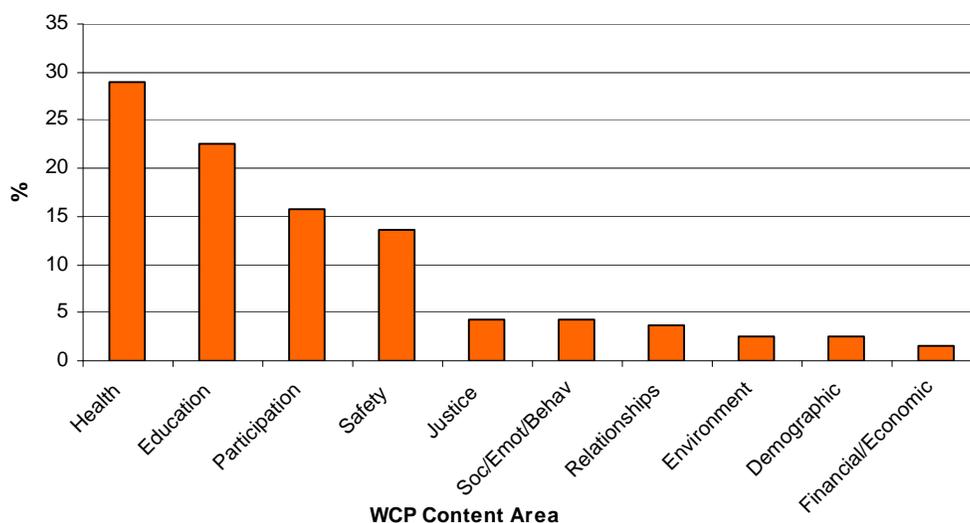
- movie times;
- flights;
- bus and rail times;
- people to talk to about issues – bottle things up;
- facilities in local area (e.g. cinema timetable, trains, buses).

## Data content issues from online survey

### Data producers and users

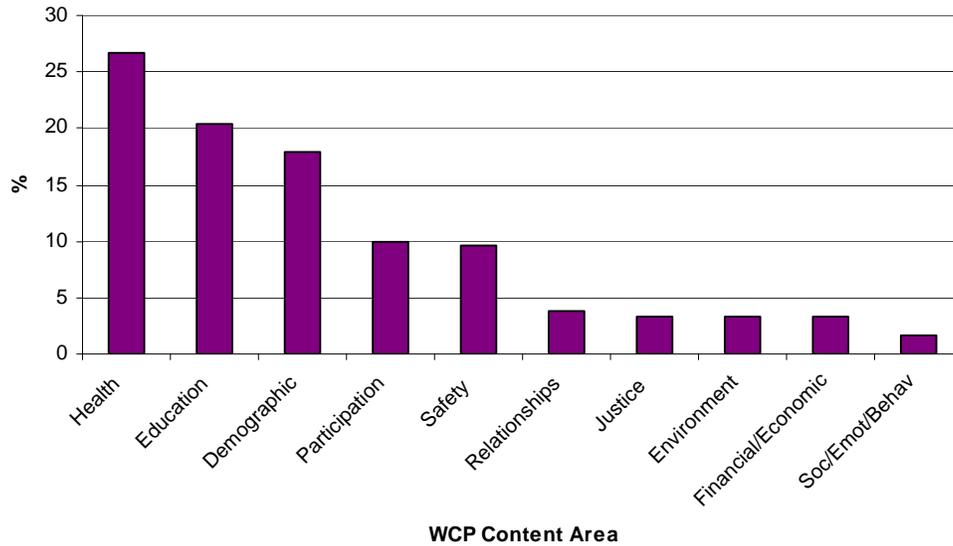
Respondents to the consultation were asked to identify whether they were primarily a producer or a user of data, or both a producer *and* a user of data. (The terms are not mutually exclusive since more than half of respondents were involved in aspects of both data production and data use – see *Figure 1, Chapter 2.*) They were then asked to complete the appropriate section of the questionnaire. As described in Chapter 2, 57% of respondents both produced and used data, 25% were data users only and 12% were data producers only. Of the data producers, almost 30% developed data relating to children and young people’s health. The next largest category of respondents (approximately 23%) developed data relating to child and youth education. Smaller proportions reported they generated data on children and young people in the areas of environment (3%), demographics (3%) and financial and economic issues (2%). The distribution of data producers by WCP domain or content area is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Data produced by respondents, by WCP domain**



The distribution of the WCP content areas for users of data was roughly similar to that of the producers of data, with health and education again constituting the largest categories of responses, almost 50% combined (see *Figure 5*).

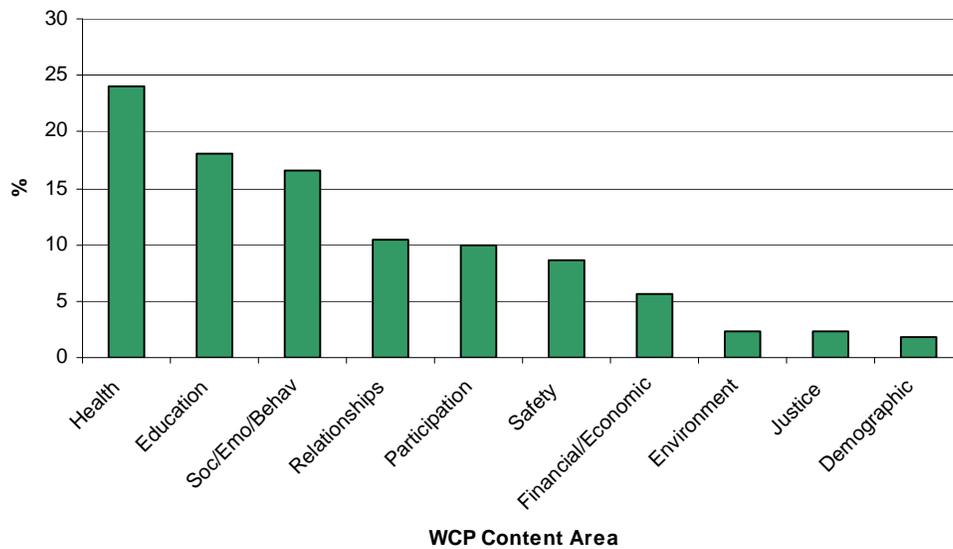
**Figure 5: Data used by respondents, by WCP domain**



### Priority areas

Respondents were asked to identify priority areas for research and data on children’s lives over the next 10 years (see Figure 6). Of the approximately 650 priority areas identified, nearly a quarter (24%) related to children and young people’s health. The next largest categories dealt with children’s education (18%) and their social, emotional and behavioural issues (17%). Lower proportions (approximately 2% each) prioritised topics relating to children’s environment, justice issues and demographics.

**Figure 6: Priority areas for research and data on children’s lives, by WCP domain**



## Health

### Data production

Nearly 30% of respondents reported producing data for use at national level related to children and young people's health. Roughly equal numbers of respondents reported producing administrative and survey/research data. Many respondents reported preparing general administrative data related to health services and patient admissions. Several respondents described using Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE) forms to collect information on patients. The HSE reported developing data on monthly activity and performance indicators. Three respondents described generating health data on the prenatal and neonatal stage, including data on neonatal health and outcomes; these included maintaining the National Perinatal Recording System (NPRS) and reporting data to the Vermont Oxford Network database for low birth weight infants.

Several respondents reported producing survey data on children's growth and development. Such data fell into two main categories.

- The first category dealt with data that measured children's physical, cognitive and general health development. Here, the National Nutrition Surveillance Centre (NNSC) described conducting the Lifeways and World Health Organization (WHO) Surveillance surveys, which measure the physical growth of 5- and 7-year olds, respectively. Other respondents who reported supplying data in this category included the Early Development Inventory (EDI), the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), KIDSCREEN, and the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) dataset.
- The second category focused more specifically on nutrition, activity levels and obesity. Here, University Hospital Galway reported conducting the Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance (IUNA) food surveys and the WHO Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI). The Irish Sports Council reported generating a variety of data and statistics on children's physical activity.

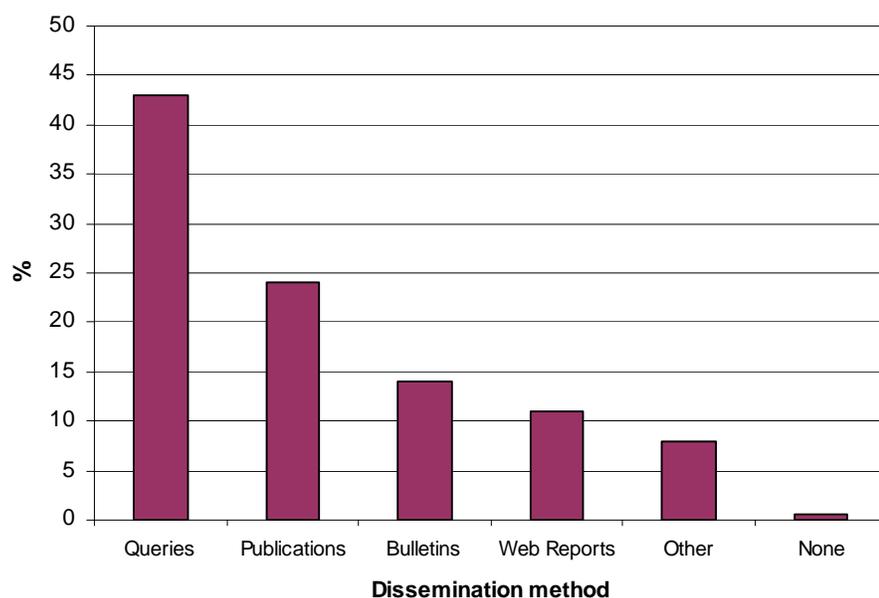
A few respondents reported preparing administrative data on children with disabilities. These included the National Intellectual Disability Database (NIDD) and the National Physical and Sensory Disability Database (NPSDD). Several respondents reported producing administrative data and research on specific conditions including asthma, autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cystic fibrosis, coeliac disease, cancer and heart disease.

Some respondents reported developing data on young people's sexual and mental health. One described producing quantitative and qualitative research and data on aspects of young people's sexual health, covering topics such as sexual health and knowledge, pregnancy and abortion. A few respondents reported producing data on young people's mental health. This administrative data included the prevalence and patterns of mental health disorders, numbers of clients using mental health services and evaluations of mental health treatment interventions. One respondent reported conducting research on the prescribing of anti-depressants to children.

Several respondents also reported formulating data on young people's substance use and addiction. Some reported preparing administrative data on the characteristics of young people accessing addiction treatment services. The National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD) described conducting the All-Ireland Drug Prevalence Survey and the Alcohol and Drug Research Unit (ADRU) of the Health Research Board reported maintaining two national drug surveillance systems.

Most producers of health-related research and data reported that they disseminate their findings beyond their own organisation. Fewer numbers of respondents reported using dissemination within their organisation also. Only one respondent indicated their organisation was not involved in any forms of data dissemination, despite being a producer of data. As can be seen in Figure 7, producers of health data reported availing of a wide range of dissemination methods, including publications, responses to queries, web reports and bulletins.

**Figure 7: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in health domain**



#### Data use

Approximately 27% of data respondents reported utilising related to children's health. Some respondents reported that they use general health data, statistics and research. A few described availing of health service admissions information, including HIPE data. Respondents also reported drawing on a variety of national and international data sources relating to children's health. In terms of general health and development for all children, several respondents reported using HSBC data, CSO data and other data on population health. Some examples of data sources mentioned included HSE data, the Lifeways survey, *State of the Nation's Children* data, National Child Development Study (UK) and data from Northern Ireland.

Many respondents described using data related to specific health issues. The main topics in this regard included neonatal health, nutrition/physical activity/obesity, oral health, disability, mental health, sexual health and substance use and addiction. In terms of neonatal health, respondents reported utilising both national and international data sources, including the NPRS and the Vermont Oxford Network report. On the topic of children's nutrition/physical activity/obesity, respondents drew on data from the IUNA, COSI and other sources. Several respondents reported using data on disability, with their primary data sources including the National Disability Survey (NDS), NPSDD and NIDD databases, and Census data on disability. A few respondents reported drawing from data on children and young people's mental health, using both national and international data on prevalence rates, risk and protective factors, and service delivery. One respondent reported using both national and international data on young people's sexual health and sexuality. In terms of young people's substance use and addiction, respondents reported using both national and international data on prevalence, morbidity, treatment and policy, their data sources including the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD), European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), HBSC and HIPE.

Respondents in the health sector reported using data primarily to inform service delivery and policy, and to measure performance. One respondent from a Government department explained the role of data in her organisation: '*Data is essential for all aspects of the Department's role in monitoring, evaluation, policy development and population health*'. Other uses for data that respondents reported included producing funding applications; meeting international, legal and other reporting requirements; generating knowledge; and informing research. A majority of respondents reported producing publications, internal reports and web-based reports for dissemination. Other disseminated outputs reported from respondents in the health sector included:

- annual reports;
- databases;
- funding applications;
- information documents;
- media;
- press releases;
- performance reports;
- policy reports;
- responses to Parliamentary questions;
- presentations;
- service plans;
- submissions.

### Priority areas

Almost a quarter (25%) of the priority areas for future research and data identified by respondents related to children's health. Several respondents reported an interest in general health issues, including children and young people's experiences with and access to health services. One typical comment described an interest in data that related to '*children and service use and access to medical support and services*'. Many respondents also prioritised data on children's physical development. Respondents expressed particular interest in longitudinal data that tracked children's development, with a focus on identifying developmental delays and its factors. One respondent suggested that '*quality indicators need to be developed that will provide data on whether children are reaching key developmental milestones in a number of different areas*'. Several respondents prioritised research and data on disability, including prevalence rates, the needs of disabled young people and the delivery of services to them. Several respondents were also interested in data concerning children's diseases and conditions, such as asthma, Tourette's Syndrome and cancer.

Other respondents expressed interest in data in various areas of children and young people's health, including neonatal/infant health, physical health, mental health, substance use and addiction, sexual health and oral health. In the area of neonatal health, respondents suggested the need for data on infants in intensive care, premature births and babies born with congenital anomalies. Respondents also articulated a need for data on young people's physical health, including development, nutrition, obesity and physical activity. Many respondents were interested in research in the area of child and adolescent mental health, and suggested research areas on general mental health and illness, suicide, and services and service evaluations. Several respondents also proposed the need for research and data on substance use and addiction, particularly its impact on young people. Another area for data collection suggested related to issues of sexual health, such as sexual identity and access to reproductive health services. Finally, respondents proposed the need for research into oral health, particularly its links to child poverty and the development of oral health actions and policies.

## Education

### Data production

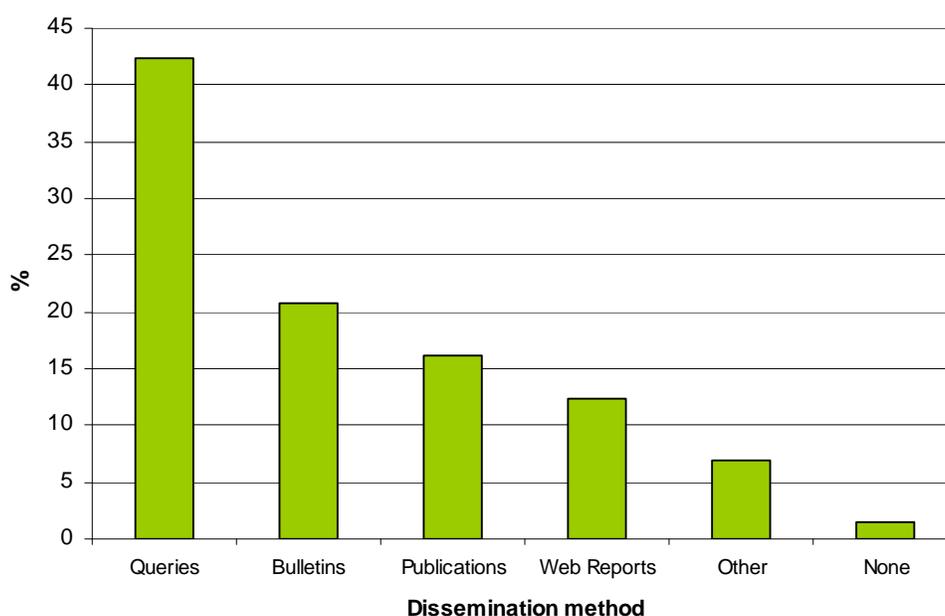
Approximately 23% of the data that respondents reported producing for use at national level dealt with children and young people's education. Respondents generated data both for administrative purposes and for survey or research purposes. The most common area respondents reported developing data in concerned early childhood care and education (ECCE). Generally, respondents reported preparing data relating to the numbers and characteristics of children and their parents involved with childcare services. The OMCYA reported formulating '*detailed data on levels of childcare provision and economic profile of parents in 900 childcare services*'. In addition, some respondents reported producing data related to childcare needs in their communities and on parent and toddler groups.

In addition to data on ECCE, several respondents reported generating data on children and young people's education generally. One respondent developed data on participation in the educational system. A few respondents described producing data related to educational advancement and school retention. Three described specifically producing data on early school-leavers, including the

ESRI's School Leavers' Survey. Two respondents reported developing data related to education and race/ethnicity: one produced data on the *'childcare needs of Traveller children'*, while the ESRI described producing the Newcomer Survey for the Department of Education and Skills (this survey deals with issues of inclusion for children of various ethnicities and races). Other data generated on education included the Longitudinal Study of Children through Second Level, data on family literacy learning and data on sexual education.

Respondents in the education sector reported engaging in a variety of data dissemination strategies, particularly regular internal bulletins, responses to regular and ad hoc external queries, and web reports (see Figure 8). Two respondents reported that, despite being producers of data, they engaged in no data dissemination.

**Figure 8: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in education domain**



### Data use

Just over 20% of data respondents reported using related to the education of children and young people. This mostly related to two main areas: general education and ECCE. Respondents reported using local, national and international data in both areas. In terms of general education, respondents described utilising a variety of data sources, including statistics and research from the Department of Education and Skills, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and Vocational Education Committees (VECs). Some topics respondents mentioned using data on included educational attainment, early school-leaving, and school participation and attendance. Several respondents reported drawing on data on children's literacy. While most respondents discussed topics in terms of all children, two respondents reported employing data on specific groups: one described using data on the education of children with disabilities and another described using the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy. On the topic of ECCE, many respondents reported working with local and internal data, such as numbers in childcare services, types of services and the characteristics of staff working with children. One respondent reported availing of international data on ECCE and outcomes.

Respondents in the education sector reported using data for a variety of purposes, particularly service delivery. One respondent described how data *'helps greatly to plan the supports we can offer to assist childcare services to provide quality childcare, adhere to their requirements under the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) and to have better outcomes for children, i.e. a more quality childcare service delivered to them'*. Other uses for data included informing

policy and research, meeting reporting requirements, measuring performance and producing funding applications. Most respondents in the education sector reported devising publications for dissemination. Other disseminated outputs included:

- annual reports;
- audits;
- databases;
- funding applications;
- information documents;
- internal reports;
- newsletters;
- policy reports;
- presentations;
- service plans;
- submissions;
- web-based reports.

### **Priority areas**

Approximately 18% of the priority areas for future research and data suggested by respondents related to children and young people's education, the majority of which dealt with factors influencing educational development and young people's educational outcomes. Several respondents prioritised data on education generally, particularly children's literacy. Two respondents suggested the need for research into educational access. Several more prioritised the need for research into early interventions in education and their outcomes. Many respondents suggested priority areas relating to ECCE services, including access, quality and impact. Another area for research proposed by respondents dealt with children and young people's development throughout their educational careers. A few respondents suggested the need for research into the development of improved systems that would follow children's educational progression. Many respondents proposed the need for research into children and young people's social, emotional or behavioural functioning and needs in educational settings. One described wanting data on '*the needs of today's children of all ages and how that can be met educationally*'.

A further area for research recommended by several respondents dealt with retention in educational settings. One respondent proposed specifically the need for research on '*strategies to keep children in the education system*'. Many respondents were also interested in data on young people's school attainment and the impacts of education on their adult lives. One described his interest in data on outcomes, an underlying theme for many comments: '*... how well the early years, primary and secondary curricula prepare children and young people for personal, working lives and as active citizens*'.

While many respondents suggested these data topics in terms of all children, several groups of children with additional needs were proposed as requiring further research. These groups included children with disabilities, children with illness, children whose first language is not English, children in care and children from disadvantaged areas. Generally, respondents prioritised data on these children's needs, available educational programmes, school performance, integration and outcomes.

## **Social, Emotional and Behavioural issues**

### **Data production**

Data in this category relates to children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural development and well-being, including their needs at various stages. Approximately 4% of respondents reported producing data for use at national level related to social, emotional or behavioural issues. Virtually all of the data respondents reported generating in this category was based on surveys and research. Almost one-third related to young people's sexuality, including data on teenage sexuality, sexual media content and the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youth with support services. Both the ESRI and the Children's Research Centre of Trinity College, Dublin reported their joint role in producing the National Longitudinal Study of Children, *Growing Up in Ireland*, which is a nationwide longitudinal study monitoring the development of approximately 8,500 9-year-olds and 11,100 9-month-olds over a 7-year period.

In addition, one respondent reported supplying data on young people's positive alternatives to alcohol and drugs. Only one organisation reported preparing administrative data on needs assessment prior to starting programmes. Approximately equal numbers of respondents reported using internal and external, or both, methods of research and data dissemination (see Table 4). While respondents reported availing of a number of data dissemination methods, the most commonly cited were internal regular bulletins, external ad hoc publications, external web reports and external responses to ad hoc queries.

**Table 4: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in social, emotional, behavioural domain**

Dissemination method	Count	%	Cumulative %
Queries	8	36.4	36.4
Publications	5	22.7	59.1
Bulletins	4	18.2	77.3
Internet	4	18.2	95.5
Other	1	4.5	100
None	0	0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Data use

Very few respondents reported utilising data relating to children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural issues. Most of the data respondents reported drawing on concerned assessing children and young people's well-being. One respondent reported using data from the *Growing up in Ireland* study. Another respondent described employing Strength Difficulty Questionnaires as tools for screening children and young people's behaviour. Another discussed working with data on '*the experiences of childhood given the impacts of changing environments, pressures and conditions*'. One respondent from the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources reported using data on broadcasting and children. Of the respondents who dealt with children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural issues, most reported using data to inform policy and research. One employed data to plan service delivery. Respondents typically reported producing publications and web-based reports from data. They also developed funding applications, internal reports and policy reports from data.

### Priority areas

Approximately 17% of the priority areas for future research and data suggested by respondents related to children's social, emotional and behavioural issues and well-being. Generally, respondents suggested the importance of research that examined all children's well-being and quality of life through areas such as children's happiness, worries, confidence and hopes. One respondent suggested the importance of quality of life indicators, while another proposed research on the role of Government in providing children's services and promoting children's well-being. Respondents also prioritised a range of developmental issues as requiring research and data, suggesting the need for research on children and young people's emotional, social, psychological and moral development, as well as their needs. Several respondents prioritised data on the development of young people's sexuality, particularly the experiences of LGB youth. Topics raised as priorities relating to sexuality included the sexualisation of children, the impact of gender stereotyping, the development of sexual identity, sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, and sexual harassment.

In addition, respondents described the need for research that explores the influences that shape how children and young people develop values and make choices. A further area prioritised as requiring research dealt with the issue of outcomes for children, as well as the interventions and impacts that may affect outcomes. Respondents suggested the need for research investigating and identifying the areas of life that might potentially affect or impact on children's development; such areas included heredity, early life influences, outdoor play, cultural and creative pursuits, and the communities in which children live. Many respondents also prioritised the need for research that examined the impact of information technologies and media on children's lives. In addition, respondents proposed the need for research and data on intervention programmes and services on child development and outcomes. Several respondents described the need for data

on resilience in children, particularly '*resilience factors in supporting positive outcomes for children*'.

Besides being a general theme, outcomes were also an underlying issue in many respondents' suggestions for priority areas. One respondent summarised the questions of many others by asking, '*What determines outcomes for children living in Ireland?*' While many respondents discussed these issues in terms of development and outcomes for all children, various respondents discussed developmental issues for marginalised, socially excluded or otherwise vulnerable children. They suggested the need for research on the development and outcomes of children in care, children in disadvantaged areas, children with disabilities, children with mental illness, minority children and LGB youth. Specific priority issues relating to these children included development and experiences, quality of life, interventions and supports, social inclusion and outcomes.

## Financial and Economic issues

### Data production

Very few respondents reported that they produced data on the financial and economic situation of children for use nationally. However, those reporting such production included significant national surveys, such as the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), both conducted by the CSO. One agency was involved in the development of qualitative data on child poverty (in the form of case studies and stories) that was used in its work to address the issue. The respondents who reported generating financial and economic data engaged roughly equally in both internal and external methods of dissemination (see Table 5). Internally, bulletins and responses to queries were disseminated on an ad hoc basis only. External dissemination included ad hoc publications, Internet publications, and ad hoc and regular responses to queries.

**Table 5: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in financial and economic domain**

Dissemination method	Count	%	Cumulative %
Queries	5	55.6	55.6
Publications	2	22.2	77.8
Bulletins	1	11.1	88.9
Internet	1	11.1	100.0
Other	0	0	100.0
None	0	0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Data use

Few respondents reported utilising economic and financial data. Several respondents described generally working with poverty, deprivation and income data. Two noted specifically drawing on the EU-SILC study. One respondent described their use of economic data succinctly: '*Any available qualitative and quantitative data and research is used to give an overall picture of child poverty in Ireland. International research and data is used to contextualise the Irish experience*'. In addition to using data in order to contextualise Ireland's child poverty, other respondents reported employing financial data in order to inform policy and plan service delivery. One organisation focused on '*tackling poverty and disadvantage*' and described how they utilise data in order to inform '*service planning, policy development and strategic planning*'. The outputs of such data use by financial and economic organisations included:

- annual reports;
- funding applications;
- internal reports;
- media;
- press releases;
- newsletters;
- policy reports;
- presentations;

- publications;
- service plans;
- submissions;
- web-based reports.

### Priority areas

Approximately 6% of the priority areas for future research and data identified by respondents dealt with the financial and economic situations of children. A majority of responses focused on the experience of the individual child. Many of these respondents suggested the importance of socio-economic data on children, particularly disadvantaged, vulnerable or marginalised children. Some particular groups identified by respondents as requiring financial research and data included migrants, Travellers, lone parents, working poor and households with disabled members. Several respondents prioritised the importance of investigating the effects of a child's economic situation on his or her development. One respondent summarised the issue by prioritising data relating to '*economic diversity and its impact on the lives of children*'. Two respondents suggested the need for data investigating the relationships between poverty and educational outcomes.

A few respondents discussed economic issues in terms of the family unit, noting how such data could help in '*assisting families in disadvantaged communities to better and more equitable futures*'. In addition, three respondents suggested priority areas relating to the wider community or national government: two prioritised data that examined Government spending and its association with outcomes for children. Generally, these respondents recommended research and data that would give a more complete picture of child poverty in Ireland so that organisations could make positive impacts on the lives of financially disadvantaged children and young people.

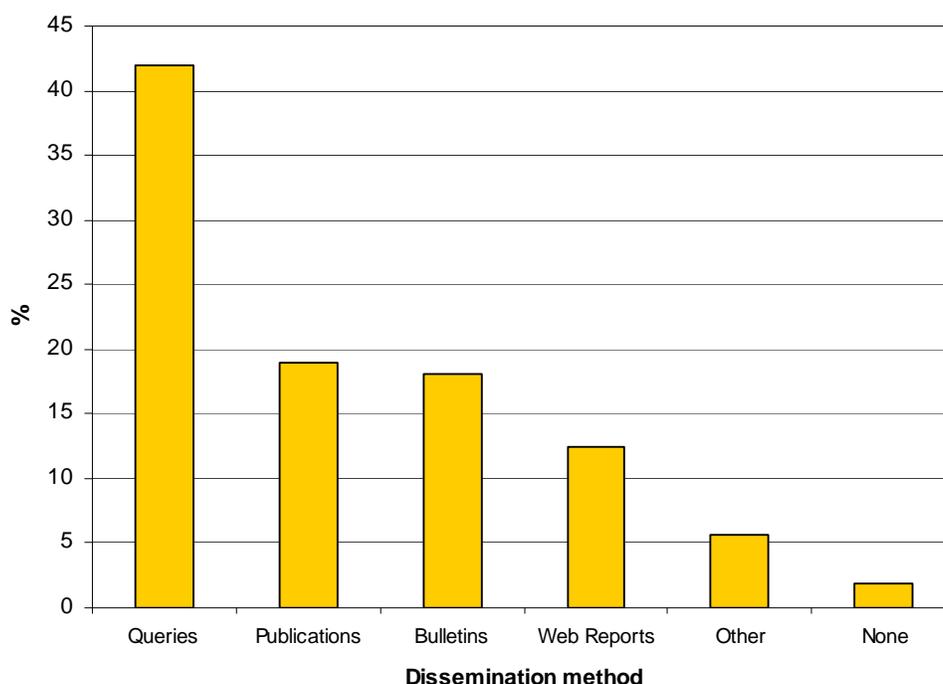
## Participation

### Data production

Nearly 16% of data that respondents reported producing for use at national level dealt with issues relating to children's participation. Such data dealt mainly with children and young people's integration, particularly their engagement with a variety of programmes, services and events. Most respondents reported preparing administrative data, such as numbers of children involved with an organisation's programmes. Some areas in which respondents reported supplying data included books and libraries, museums, the arts, youth services, youth work and youth groups. A few respondents specifically described generating data on cultural diversity, integration and equality. One generally reported producing data on the situation of separated, asylum-seeking and refugee children in Ireland, and another described conducting research studies on equality. In addition, one respondent from a Government department described preparing data on the number of young people involved with a social inclusion programme. A further State agency was responsible for preparing reports for the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies. Other research included studies on youth theatre, the arts and sport.

Roughly equal numbers of respondents in the participation sector reported using external and internal, or both, methods of data dissemination (see *Figure 9*). Two respondents reported that, despite being engaged in data production, they did not use any form of dissemination. While respondents reported availing of a variety of data dissemination methods, the most commonly cited were external ad hoc publications, external Internet reports, external and internal ad hoc query responses, and internal regular bulletins.

**Figure 9: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in participation domain**



#### **Data use**

Approximately 10% of data respondents reported using related to children's participation and integration. In terms of integration, several respondents reported working with data on minority children, particularly Travellers, as well as data on migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children. A few respondents described drawing from studies on equality and policies on social inclusion. Several respondents indicated that they used data on children's participation in various activities and programmes; areas mentioned included library services, youth work, youth groups and youth services. Several respondents reported working with national and international data on the arts. Others described using data on children's involvement with recreational activities in Ireland, including both sport and play.

The majority of respondents dealing with participation employed data to plan service delivery. One respondent described how data *'provides a basis for development of programmes, but also a means of evaluating the programmes which are currently in place'*. Many respondents also reported utilising data in order to inform policy and advocacy. One respondent explained how data is used *'primarily for advocacy purposes, in terms of working to influence policy at national and local levels within Ireland'*. In addition, respondents also reported using data for funding applications, to meet reporting requirements and to inform research. A variety of disseminated outputs were reported by data users in the participation sector, the most frequent being publications and web-based reports. Other methods included:

- annual reports;
- information documents;
- internal reports;
- newsletters;
- policy reports;
- presentations;
- service plans;
- submissions.

#### **Priority areas**

Almost 10% of the priority areas for future research and data identified by respondents were related to children's participation and integration. Generally, respondents suggested topics regarding all children's participation, such as their lifestyles, their levels of involvement in and the

impact of social, cultural and sporting activities, and children as citizens and participants in civil society. More specifically, respondents also suggested the importance of data on children's integration, particularly relating to minority or marginalised groups such as immigrant children, disabled children, Travellers, young homeless, young drug users, early school-leavers and young parents. Many respondents detailed specific areas in which they sought data on young people's participation. Generally, respondents suggested the need for data on the available activities and services for children and young people, as well as the barriers to accessing such programmes and their impacts. Some areas prioritised by respondents as needing research included participation in the arts, music, museums, library services, support services, youth groups and youth work. A few respondents also prioritised research on children's use of information and communication technologies (e.g. mobile phones, the Internet and social networking sites) and their impact.

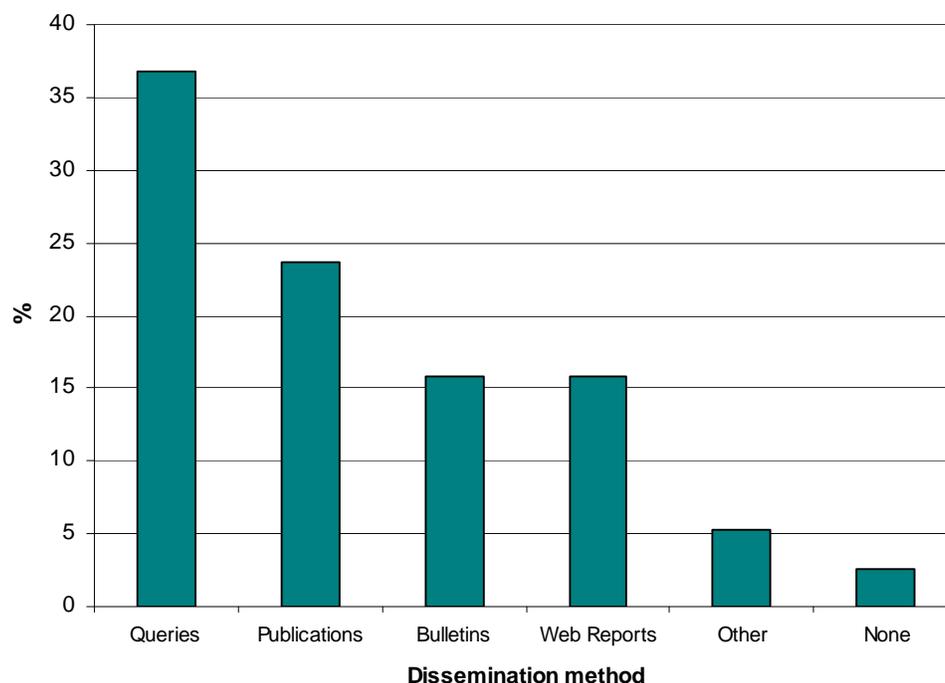
## Safety

### Data production

Approximately 14% of data that respondents reported producing for use at national level related to children's safety. A majority of the data on safety was administrative. Several respondents reported preparing data for both administrative and research purposes on the protection and welfare of children, including homeless children, neglected children, children in care and children in foster care. A few of the respondents also reported developing administrative and research data on child abuse, including sexual abuse. Respondents from the HSE reported developing and maintaining the Child Care Interim Dataset, which collects information on children's safety and covers topics such as children in care, children facing neglect and abuse, and homeless children.

Two respondents described preparing administrative data on children involved in road traffic collisions. Another respondent reported developing data on injuries in the workplace among young people. Equal numbers of respondents reported employing external and internal, or both, methods of data dissemination, the most frequently cited being external ad hoc publications and external web reporting (see Figure 10). While most respondents engaged in at least one form of dissemination, one respondent indicated their organisation was not involved in any forms of data dissemination, despite being a producer of data.

**Figure 10: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in safety domain**



## Data use

Nearly 10% of data respondents reported using related to children's safety. The data respondents reported utilising aligned closely with much of the data that was reported as being produced on children's safety. A majority of respondents reported availing of data on child protection and children in care. Specific examples included the HSE's Child Care Interim Dataset and child protection policy data. A few respondents also reported working with data on homeless families and children. One respondent described the range of data they used on children's safety: '*Child protection policy, social welfare directives, international research best practice guidelines, publications, media reports, data collected by related agencies, testimonials from parents, direct contact*'. Respondents also reported drawing from data on the abuse of children, including sexual abuse and data relating to domestic violence. In addition, respondents described using data on road traffic collisions and injuries in the workplace.

The majority of respondents engaged with issues relating to children's safety reported using data in order to plan service delivery. In addition, several respondents reported the role of data in informing policy and advocacy. In a typical comment, one respondent described how '*this data guides the work of the organisation in assessing gaps in services and advocating and lobbying for improvements in service delivery, policy and practice*'. Respondents also indicated that data was used to increase knowledge and inform research.

The outputs of this data use by children's safety organisations included:

- funding application;
- information documents;
- internal reports;
- media messages;
- policy reports;
- presentations;
- publications;
- service plans;
- submissions;
- web-based reports.

## Priority areas

Approximately 9% of the priority areas for future research and data identified by respondents dealt with children's safety. A significant theme to emerge from these suggestions related to risk factors and outcomes for children. In a typical comment, one respondent prioritised the need for '*research on the possible outcomes of risk – such as early school-leaving, homelessness, sexual exploitation, childhood and adult poverty – that impact on the ability of some children and youth to successfully negotiate key transitional phases in their lives*'. Similarly, several respondents suggested the importance of research and data that explore the lives of neglected and abused children and children in care, with particular emphasis on their outcomes. Other respondents generally prioritised child protection, with a focus on the impact of early preventive interventions. Bullying and its effects were proposed as general priority areas for research. More specifically, two respondents suggested cyber-bullying as a priority topic for research in the next decade. Road safety and preventing accidents in the workplace were also suggested as important areas for research and data. While these suggestions generally prioritised research on children's safety at the level of the individual child, one respondent in particular described her belief in the importance of investigating children's safety on a broader level; she noted the need for '*research to identify how to remedy deficiencies in service integration that allow children to fall through cracks in the system*'.

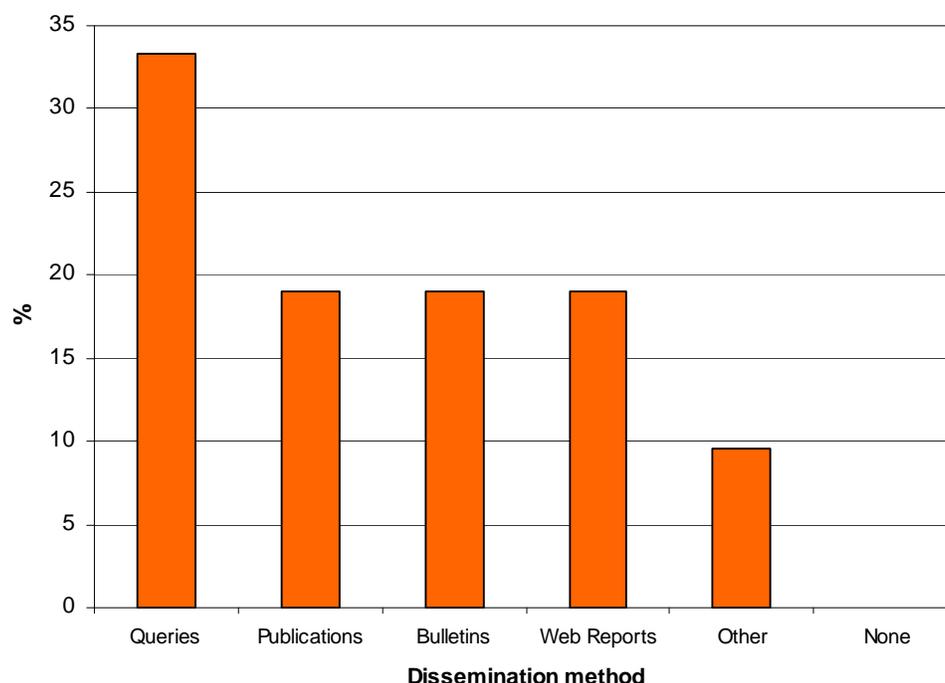
## Relationships

### Data production

Several respondents reported that they generated data on children's relationships for use nationally, focusing on the relationships between children and their families or carers (rather than friendships) and on relationships within communities or with professionals, such as teachers. Roughly equal numbers reported producing administrative and survey or research data in this content area. While one respondent indicated that they prepared administrative data relating to

families generally, other respondents described preparing administrative data relating to specific family types. These included lone-parent families, foster families and families with a member in prison. While it was generally stated that this data was generated in order to inform knowledge about children's relationships, one respondent described specifically developing data to evaluate service provision. One respondent conducted research studies on family life and work-life balance, while another produced survey data relating to values and viewpoints of relations on children. Respondents reported relatively equal levels of external and internal dissemination, with the most frequently cited methods being regular internal bulletins, external ad hoc publications and external publications on the Internet (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in relationships domain**



### Data use

Roughly 4% of data respondents reported using concerned children's relationships. Two respondents reported drawing from general data on family life and family types or units. Other respondents focused more specifically on the needs of certain children or family types, including children as carers, children in care, lone parents, adopted children and foster families. Two respondents reported working with data on work-life balance, with one noting interest in *'the way work affects children as a result of the employment status of their parents'*. A majority of those engaged with children's relationships described employing data to inform service delivery. Others described using data to increase knowledge and inform policy. In a typical comment, one user reported that data is utilised *'to inform our policies and service. Such data is highly important to our work and to how our policy messages are received'*. The most frequently reported outputs of relationship data were internal reports, newsletters, publications and web-based reports.

### Priority areas

Approximately 11% of the priority areas for future research and data suggested by respondents related to children's relationships. The responses could be categorised into 6 major themes:

- In the first category, respondents reported priority areas for data generally relating to family structures. One respondent prioritised data on *'the details of the familial context of children's lives that takes account of the complexity, diversity and, in some instances, fluidity of family life in which children are nurtured and cared for'*.
- In the second category, respondents indicated children's support systems as a priority for research. The support systems described dealt with children's relationships both within and

outside the family. Respondents also proposed that services available to children and families should be a priority area for research and data.

- The third category of responses prioritised research and data that would examine the outcomes of various family structures on children’s well-being. Several respondents generally recommended research that investigated the *‘impact of different forms of family life on the well-being of children’* as a priority for research. Different types of relationships respondents were interested in included separated-parent families, lone-parent families, foster families, same-sex parent families, families with a disabled member, adopted children and children of prisoners.
- A fourth category identified child carers as a priority area for research and data. These respondents prioritised research that investigated the role of children and young people in caring for dependent family members.
- The fifth category of responses suggested the importance of research on the role of relationships to children in care. For example, one respondent suggested priority in the research area of *‘making the link from parental loss and a young person accessing out-of-home services’*.
- The final category referred to data on families and childcare as a priority. Two respondents noted interest in economics and parental preferences as factors in selection of childcare, while another prioritised data on the effects of childcare on children and their families.

## Demographics

### Data production

Demographic data relate to characteristics of a population, such as age, race or household composition. While very few respondents reported that they produced demographic data for use nationally, the data generated included the Census of Population, conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on a quinquennial or 5-yearly basis. Other examples of demographic data produced included age ranges and specific localities of youths in a population and births registration. Roughly equal numbers of survey and administrative data were supplied. Of the respondents who produced demographic data, most used external methods of dissemination (see *Table 6*). Only one used solely internal dissemination methods in the form of responses to ad hoc queries, while another used both internal and external dissemination methods. The most frequently reported forms of external dissemination for demographic data included regular publications, Internet publications, ad hoc publications and ad hoc queries. Only one respondent reported not engaging in any form of data dissemination.

**Table 6: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in demographics domain**

Dissemination method	Count	%
Queries	4	36.4
Publications	4	36.4
Bulletins	2	18.2
Internet	1	9.1
Other	0	0
None	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Data use

About one-fifth of the data respondents reported utilising was demographic. Of these responses, the data source most frequently cited was the CSO, particularly its Census of Population. Other data sources included births registration data, as well as spatially mapped Census information. Often demographic information was employed as an underlying basis to inform data use, rather than being the focus of use. These demographic data sources were employed to inform academic research, resulting in publications and policy documents. In addition, they were used to plan service delivery. One respondent described working with *‘broad trends and demography to inform teaching, clinical service planning, and to generate ideas for research’*. One State agency had a legal requirement to report the number of births. A few of the respondents noted drawing from demographic data to assess trends and population information across specific variables, such as gender, locality and age.

## Priority areas

Few of the priority areas suggested for future research and data on children's lives dealt with demographics. While a few respondents generally suggested the importance of demographic profiles for all children across all life courses, some suggested the priority of having more information relating to specific sub-groups of children. Several respondents recommended the need for demographic information that captured more fully the diversity of children in Ireland, particularly groups such as immigrant and migrant children, young Travellers and children in care. Similarly, one respondent believed a profile of the languages children use should be captured by research.

## Environment

### Data production

Very little of the data that respondents reported producing at national level related to children and their environment. All of the data generated was for administrative use and included children's travel patterns, school involvement in environmental programmes, and open and recreation space available for children. The Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) reported generating data relating to travel patterns and behaviours of children going to school in the Dublin area. One County Council supplied data on school involvement in environmental programmes. Other respondents formulated data on open spaces and recreation available for children, including the number of playgrounds available. One respondent was interested in developing data on the number of green spaces available in Dublin and the use and benefit of the spaces for the public. Of those who produced environmental data, both external and internal forms of dissemination were used equally (see Table 7). Respondents reported disseminating data using responses to queries, both ad hoc and regular bulletins, and publications; several also used the Internet as tool for dissemination.

**Table 7: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in environment domain**

Dissemination method	Count	%
Queries	13	56.5
Publications	4	17.4
Bulletins	3	13.0
Internet	2	8.7
Other	1	4.4
None	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Data use

Very few respondents reported utilising data related to children's environments. Equal numbers of respondents described using City/County Development Board data or data relating to children's housing. One respondent described drawing from data on children's travel patterns, while another described using mapping information. Several local authorities involved with work on the environment and children described employing environmental data to measure organisational performance, while other respondents reported utilising it in funding applications and to inform policy and service delivery. Respondents in the environmental sector reported the production of publications, producing both internal reports and web-based reports.

## Priority areas

Few of the priority areas for future research and data identified by respondents related to children and their environment. The areas identified fell into 4 general categories:

- The first category dealt with levels of knowledge and awareness surrounding the environment. One respondent sought knowledge at the level of the individual child, prioritising the individual's '*awareness*' of environmental issues, while another prioritised an '*assessment of environmental education*'.
- The second area recommended by two respondents as a priority for research and data related to the modes of transport used by children.

- The third category of responses prioritised research and data on children’s living spaces, including information on the impact of housing on outcomes for children’s lives.
- The final main priority area described by respondents suggested the need for research and data on the availability of open spaces for children and the impact of such spaces on their lives.

## Justice

### Data production

This domain refers to data relating to issues such as crime, the judicial system and detention centres. Approximately 4% of the data that respondents reported generating for use at national level related to justice. The majority of justice data was administrative, with only one respondent reporting producing general research on youth justice. The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) described formulating statistics on offending, the Garda Diversion Project and detention schools. The Probation Service of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform reported preparing case data on young people and families in contact with its service. Of the respondents supplying justice data, roughly equal numbers reported using internal and external, or both, methods of dissemination (see Table 8). The most frequently reported forms of data dissemination were made on a regular, rather than an ad hoc, basis; these included the dissemination of data through bulletins, publications and queries.

**Table 8: Dissemination methods utilised by data producers in justice domain**

Dissemination method	Count	%
Queries	9	42.9
Publications	5	23.8
Bulletins	4	19.0
Internet	2	9.5
Other	1	4.8
None	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Data use

Very little of the data respondents reported using was related to justice issues. Most respondents reported generally working with data on youth, crime and the justice systems, including data from the IYJS Garda Juvenile Diversion Programmes. Respondents described employing justice data for various purposes, such as meeting international and legal reporting requirements, measuring performance, and informing policy and service delivery. Approximately half of those working in justice organisations reported utilising data for service delivery. One such respondent explained how data was an *‘important tool to help plan for the future, to identify trends and monitor changes’*. The outputs of data use by justice organisations included annual reports, internal reports, information documents and service plans.

### Priority areas

Few of the priority areas for future research and data suggested by respondents were related to justice issues. Respondents recommended general priority areas relating to justice that focused on both the child and the wider statutory sector. Examples of priority topics for research and data included cycles of juvenile offending, the justice system, Court appearances and recidivism rates. Several respondents expressed interest in the origins of criminal behaviour. A few proposed the need for research and data on anti-social behaviour in young people and its link to offending. One prioritised data that would explore *‘children’s interface with the criminal justice system, particularly in regard to anti-social attitudes and behaviour, their antecedents and strategies to further develop social inclusion’*. Similarly, another respondent recommended the importance of data relating to the *‘optimum remedies for offending’*. Specifically, one respondent proposed the need for research and data investigating the relationship between alcohol and drug use and youth offending.

## 4. Data Process Issues

In this chapter, issues relating to data processes arising in the consultations are presented. The issues identified by children and young people are categorised under the four headings of relevance of data, access to and sources of information, data quality and dissemination. Issues that emerged during the online consultation were categorised into six groups based on an analysis of responses relating to data processes, while taking into account various stages of the data cycle, including data collection/compilation, data processing, analysis, dissemination, implementation, and review and evaluation. The following discussion is structured under the headings of data culture, data sharing, research design and processes, dissemination, ethical issues and resources.

### Data process issues for children and young people

*'Statistics are there to back up the facts'*  
(Quote from participant)

#### Relevance of data

The question of whether young people consider access to 'data' and 'information' to be important is central because, inevitably, attitudes to information are directly correlated with its usage. It became clear throughout the consultation workshops held with children and young people that not all information is important to them. It was noted, for example, that *'information like how many people live in your area or how many drink, smoke or do drugs is only useful for projects like geography'*. It was also noted that if young people need statistical information, it would generally tend to be for school-based work or for *'personal reasons'*.

On the other hand, participants did indicate that *'factual information is very important'*, that *'statistics (e.g. road accidents) are important to young people to prevent [them] happening'* and *'if statistics are health- or life-related, they are important to young people'*. Consequently, it may be that utilisation of information by young people is more a question of relevance of the data to their individual personal needs at that time rather than the availability of such material.

#### Access to and sources of information

One of the key areas identified for discussion in each of the three workshops related to how information can be made available.

##### Internet

Not surprisingly, the Internet, both at home and at school, was identified as being a very important source of information, although it is important to note that the validity of the information provided through this mechanism was questioned. One young person said: *'The Internet is one of the main ways of finding information, but there needs to be a way to trust it'*.

The search engines Google and Yahoo were identified as being the initial point of contact for many participants. Some young people reported that Google was their automatic home page.

Some drew attention to being able to get very good and specific information from company websites. This included, for example, information about transport (e.g. bus/train/Luas), including timetables and cost of fares. Other websites were also identified as providing good information. The website 'Talk to Frank' ([www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)), which provides information on drugs, was identified in 2 of the 3 workshops as being very good and trusted by a lot of young people.

Social networking sites, such as Bebo and Facebook, also featured as sources of information. It was noted that the DCYA Children and Young People's Forum has its own webpage on Bebo, which allows the group to provide information about their work and also to coordinate meetings and make other practical arrangements. The YouTube site was also identified as being a

potential source of information, for example, for '*looking at major events that might have been on the news*' or '*learning how to play a specific tune on guitar*'. Others noted, however, that not all the information on YouTube was useful. While other websites, such as Wikipedia, were also identified as sources of information, there was a general scepticism about the information contained in them (see discussion on '*Data quality*' below).

### **Family, peers and school**

While the Internet is clearly a significant source of information for young people, other sources were also identified. Indeed, the young people were anxious to point out that a website was not the same as being able to talk to someone and ask specific questions. As one young person noted, '*The Internet is a great source of information, but not the same as one-to-one questions*'. It was also noted that on the occasions when one did not have access to the Internet, it was important to be able to ask adults for the information required.

People within the family (e.g. parents, older family members, siblings) and in the school environment (e.g. teachers, especially career guidance teachers, and people who came in to give 'talks', including past pupils of the school) were commonly identified as important sources of information for young people. Books and handouts were also highlighted, suggesting that written information may also have a role to play. One young person said that '*Career Guidance should be well equipped with handouts available on topics related to young people*'.

Some young people identified their peers as a source of information and noted the usefulness of 'word of mouth' for finding out about things.

### **Other sources**

The media was also considered an important source of information and a specific example given related to the advertisements on drink-driving. Others mentioned TV ads, magazines, bumper stickers on cars and even information on cartons in fast-food stores. Sources that were less commonly mentioned, but nevertheless considered important, were in youth-specific environments, such as youth cafés or youth forums, and from organisations such as Childline and the Samaritans. A small number of young people identified professionals, such as doctors and youth workers. Interestingly, libraries were only identified by one person as a potential source of information.

### **Challenges in getting information**

There was general agreement among the young participants that it is hard to get reliable and factual information about a range of areas, but particularly about where they can access support. They identified a number of specific challenges, including the difficulties of knowing what information is relevant. As one young person commented, '*I might spend ages and still not find the information – Google gives thousands of results*'.

Other issues identified were:

- knowing what information is reliable;
- the limitations of parental, school and other adults' knowledge;
- difficulties of bias, in the way information is presented;
- the possibility of having to pay for the information;
- restricted access to the Internet, particularly in the school environment;
- the importance of care being taken when dealing with sensitive issues.

### **Data quality**

The young people in this consultation were remarkably knowledgeable about the need to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' information, especially on the Internet. They noted that it was difficult for them to be sure that information was reliable and that it was important to check something really important out from a few different sources.

A number of participants noted that the Internet had some limitations and that accessing the right site was not always easy, although it was suggested that '*commonsense let's you know what you need or don't need*'.

Some discussion took place about the process of searching for information on the Internet and people noted that they usually click on the first link and work their way down until they find what they want. An alternative approach was to go to a site and use the links from that site to get to others.

Judgements about whether a site was reliable appeared to be influenced by:

- the general appearance of the site (if it is more professional looking, they are more likely to believe it relevant);
- the source of the site (e.g. a university site would be considered more reliable than other sites);
- whether they had used the site before and found it useful (*'People always go back to what they know'*);
- commonsense.

Participants were sceptical about such sites as Wikipedia (where information can be changed by anyone) and YouTube (where they suggested there was inadequate protection against unsuitable material for minors).

In respect of the Internet generally, there was an overall consensus that while it did contain some misinformation, it was also very useful as a source of information. As one young person noted, *'Some rubbish and unreliable information is on the Internet, but a lot is useful and valid'*.

Tips suggested by participants to check the quality of an Internet site included:

- does it look professional (layout, colour scheme, language accessible);
- do you know where the information is coming from;
- find out if information is reliable from friends;
- go to sites where the information cannot be changed by other people;
- check if the information on the site has been examined by a professional in the area;
- cross-reference information to see if it comes up more than once;
- ask past pupils or teachers.

Recommendations for improvement of information included:

- make supportive, reliable information available about young people and their lives;
- do not underestimate the importance of having information provided through one-to-one contact;
- increase awareness about the limitations of the Internet;
- establish of a national body that would award a 'quality' mark to help differentiate reliable and unreliable information for young people;
- provide information in a way that is accessible to young people.

## Dissemination

Suggestions were made on the types of dissemination that would improve access to information for young people, including:

- an extension of the system operated by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency would be helpful across a number of areas (using mobile phone technology, specifically texting);
- have teachers well informed so that young people can ask questions after class on topics related to their lives;
- availability of handouts on reliable websites covering a range of topics, such as STIs, bullying, self-harm and anorexia;
- ensure there is no discrimination;
- successful past pupils to give tips on 'life' and relate their experiences.

## Data process issues from online consultation

The responses to data process issues emerging from the online consultation questionnaire could be grouped into six categories, each discussed in detail below. In the first category, respondents emphasized the need for a change in the *data culture*, one which would emphasize data as a vital facet of decision-making, planning and operations. The second category highlights responses related to issues of *data sharing*, including aspects of coordination, infrastructure, accessibility and standardisation. The third category deals with a variety of issues related to all aspects of *research design and processes*, including data collection, data quality, data analysis and data systems. The fourth category encompasses *dissemination* issues, including reporting techniques and policy and service delivery. The fifth category addresses *ethical issues* in data processes, particularly those related to confidentiality and privacy. The final category focuses on responses relating to *resources*, including a lack of funding and trained support.

### Data culture

A few of the respondents perceived a need for the prioritisation of the production and use of data in various sectors. One described a data culture as characterised by '*a commitment and awareness of the necessity of appropriate data collection and data quality*'. These respondents explained their belief that 'data' is often perceived as lacking value, as something unnecessary and lacking priority. This attitude to data was perhaps summarised best by a respondent in library services, who commented: '*Most people see information and libraries as a luxury and suggest they aren't sufficiently developed to need/avail of those types of resources yet*'. One respondent noted how it could be '*hard to persuade staff that data gathering is important*'. Another respondent described feeling that data and statistics are seen as a management requirement, rather than a business driver. They suggested that a 'culture of data' use and evidence-based planning should be put in place at an operational level in the health service. Overall, these respondents emphasized the importance of a data culture, in which data production and use was an essential facet of operations.

### Data sharing

Many of the respondents suggested the need for increased data sharing within and between producers and users of data, including Government departments, State agencies, NGOs, the health sector, professional organisations and research institutions. In particular, respondents perceived the need for two specific changes. The first was an *increase in coordination* at all levels of the research and data process between various producers of data. This coordination entails the development of central data sources, improving infrastructure, increasing accessibility of data and creating benchmarks. This necessarily led to the second, more specific aim of placing greater emphasis on the *importance of the standardisation of data*, specifically concepts and definitions, between producers of data.

#### Increase in coordination

Generally, respondents focused on the importance of improving coordination among all parties dealing with data for children in order to allow for more effective data use. Many respondents discussed the importance of increasing coordination between and among data producers and users. Some proposed developing central data sources that would integrate data generated and store it in one central and easily available location. Others stressed the importance of generally improving the infrastructure to improve data sharing. They outlined the importance of improving data sharing at national level and indicated their belief that the national Government has a central role to play in coordinating data sharing. In addition, one respondent suggested the implementation of benchmarks to assess quality standards nationally. Similarly, other respondents described the importance of making data more internationally relevant to allow for comparisons. A further response was that accessibility to data should be improved in order to allow producers and users an improved means of availing of data. Finally, one respondent described his belief that national benchmarks should be set to assess nationally recognised standards of quality.

### **Develop central data sources**

Overall, respondents recommended the development of central data sources that would increase integration and efficiency throughout the data process. Some respondents proposed the integration of available data sources, while others suggested the creation of new central data sources. One respondent described succinctly her belief that *'Data from all cultural organisations involved in creative programmes for children need to be collated and made accessible via a central resource'*. Respondents from many sectors, including educational, cultural and health, all echoed this suggestion as they described the lack of connections between datasets. It was suggested that these central sources of data would improve data processes by generally making data more available. In addition, it was proposed that central data sources would allow for a more streamlined, integrated and coordinated approach throughout data processes. Generally, these respondents proposed that *'All data on children in Ireland should be available in one place and easily accessible to organisations and individuals'*. Several respondents described the Internet as the most suitable means for coordinating these central data sources. One described how data use could be improved *'if all the data was held and collated through one fixed Internet-based site'*. Furthermore, it was proposed that linking data sources would allow for more meaningful comparisons across similar measures. As one respondent responsible for supplying data noted, *'It would be useful if we could cross-reference our data against data produced by other agencies'*.

### **Improve infrastructure: Extend collaboration and communication**

Overall, many respondents believed that improving the infrastructure of data sharing is essential. The notion of *'more coordination of data between agencies and organisations'* repeatedly emerged in discussions. For some, this meant an improvement and increase in the networks between organisations working with children's data, with an emphasis on improved communication, summed up by one respondent by *'Better networks for communicating research findings and knowledge exchange are required'*. Another respondent suggested how the poor infrastructure between different bodies, particularly in different sectors or localities, made monitoring cases *'extremely difficult'*. These respondents stressed the need for enhanced links between various organisations at all levels – locally, nationally and internationally.

### **Increase national-level involvement**

Generally, respondents emphasized the value of having not just local data, but also national-level data. Several described measures needed to improve data sharing at national level and for *'data sharing protocols [to be put] in place among all organisations at a national level.'* For some, this meant the implementation of a national database that would assist in coordinating various local-level data. It was suggested that this increased coordination among agencies would allow for improved service provision. One respondent believed the establishment of a national research centre on the arts would improve data use and described the implications of lacking a such a centre: *'Currently, in Ireland there is no such body which can contribute to the generation of credible, accessible, quality-assured and peer-reviewed research'*.

Overall, some respondents stressed their beliefs about the importance of the role of the national government in both making its own data more readily available and accessible, as well as providing a means of disseminating data from other organisations. Some respondents described the specific role they believed national government should play in data sharing: one proposed that data should be collected and disseminated through Government agencies, while another described how the OMCYA *'should have more comprehensive data sources available, drawing on each Government department's information, rather than the user having to go between all the different departments'*. This would provide greater ease and access for those working with data. Another respondent suggested that Government data should be integrated into the CSO database as part of 'e-government'.

### **Increase accessibility of data**

Overall, many respondents suggested the importance of increased accessibility to data in order to make their own data more robust. They recommended the need for an improved means for accessing others' data. Several users of data described difficulties with accessing data and locating sources, echoing one respondent's comment that access to certain sector data is *'lacking and requires considerable improvements'*. They suggested how increased access to data in all sectors would improve their use of data. Two respondents specifically noted their desire for improved access to Government data: *'It would be helpful if Government departments were open with the data they gather'*. It was hoped that by using others' data, a producer's own work and

data processes would be better informed and contextualised. One respondent proposed how access to data would better inform her work: *'Multidisciplinary data from health and social services combined would be useful to give indication and insight into prevalence and statistical indications in relation to child protection'*.

### **Create benchmarks for comparability**

Some respondents emphasized their desire for data that would be more useful, relevant and comparable at both national and international level. Proposals included the implementation of benchmarks and international standards in order to make data more comparable. One respondent involved in childcare described his desire for a national benchmark for childcare services. He described how such benchmarks would enable standards to be set for the assessment of these services and that these 'quality marks' would indicate to parents which childcare services had reached the national standards set. He proposed how such a nationally recognised standard would be of great value to this sector. Another respondent recommended that benchmarks be established by national institutions in order to create standards of reference for children's hospitals. Similarly, other respondents described the importance of having Irish data that was comparable at an international level. One stated simply that *'increased ease of access to international data would be welcome'*. Another thought it would be useful for Irish level data to be linked to international data.

### **Improve consistency through standardisation of data processes**

Overall, a crucial suggestion highlighted by many respondents was the need to improve consistency by standardising data collection processes between different organisations and across the country. Many respondents described inconsistencies throughout various sectors in many facets of the research and data cycle, including definitions, data collection, sampling, analysis and output. Several cited the issue of non-standardised data as having major implications for their ability to employ data effectively. One described how due to varying levels of disaggregation across sectors, data had to be *'specially compiled or re-configured'*. Another described how it was difficult to measure certain indicators because not all data sources collected the same information. In addition, one respondent stated: *'It is very difficult to produce all-Ireland data as the data collection systems differ'*. Respondents encouraged *'congruence across all agencies'* and noted the need for *'consistent information systems'* to be put in place. One respondent described the need for all agencies in a similar area to *'adopt similar data collection structures, therefore raising standards and facilitating a broader and more comparative view'*.

### **The need for standard measures**

Respondents particularly highlighted the need for standardised measurements and described the perceived difficulties of lacking such measures, ranging from coordination to difficulty with interpretation. They described *'discrepancy in measurements'* and *'problems with identification'*. One respondent noted an issue with non-standardised definitions: *'Each area has a different definition of the data required and therefore the final dataset is very difficult to trust'*. Another respondent, working in the childcare sector, described a *'lack of agreed terms'*, while respondents in both the education and health sectors stressed the need for *'common identifiers'* for individuals. It was hoped that these unique identifiers would enable the link of data both within the healthcare and education sectors and across various other sectors.

### **Comparability**

Overall, the users of data emphasized their belief in the importance of standardised data, which would allow comparisons across varying sectors and levels. They believed that such standardised data would improve the comparability of data within datasets longitudinally, as well as to other datasets. One respondent working in the area of sexual abuse described a *'lack of consistency in standards and comparability of data'*. Another dealing with children's literacy noted how the *'wide variety of data collection tools'* rendered comparisons difficult. In a further example, the importance of using uniform data processes was stressed in order to allow national or international comparability.

## Research design and processes

There was general consensus among data producers and users that improvements should be made in a broad range of areas concerning research design and processes. These improvements included the following areas, each discussed in detail below:

- address data gaps;
- extend data coverage to ensure populations are being represented;
- improve data collection techniques to ensure sensitive issues are fully researched;
- data to be more child-centred, with a focus on listening to children and young people's voices;
- additional methods of data collection;
- improve timeliness of data collection;
- levels of disaggregation;
- improve collection of quality data, to be accurate, precise and relevant to the population being studied;
- improve analytic techniques;
- align research design more closely with outcomes;
- improve data systems development.

### Address data gaps

Overall, many respondents suggested the importance of addressing gaps in data in a variety of sectors. They explained how a lack or perceived lack of data affected their ability to develop and avail of data to its fullest potential, particularly as relates to monitoring outcomes and service provision. Some areas relating to children were described as lacking any data (*'It is of more concern that certain information is entirely absent'*), while in others there was a lack, or perceived lack, of *'essential data'*. Several respondents described how a lack of data made it difficult to use data to its full potential. One respondent described her difficulties with having little or no data: *'There is no data available on specific target groups of young, which makes it difficult to argue for increased provisions for certain disadvantaged groups.'* In similar vein, another respondent stated: *'Without this basic statistical information, we may well not be in a position to provide these children with adequate support and protection.'* Many respondents illustrated similar issues of how a lack of data made the monitoring of outcomes and service provision particularly difficult. Some producers of data hoped that addressing data gaps would provide a more complete statistical or experiential picture of a phenomenon.

### Extend data coverage and improve population representation

Overall, respondents highlighted their need for in-depth and comprehensive data coverage that would fully address the target populations. It was perceived by some that increased coverage would improve organisations' use of data, particularly in relation to monitoring outcomes and improving service provision.

Several respondents suggested that data coverage needed to be extended to cover target areas more completely. Some described data relating to children's issues as being *'too broad'* and *'not specific enough'*, and that data needed to be more comprehensive, specific and detailed. One respondent described succinctly an issue for her organisation as relating to the coverage of children and young people in data: *'Children and young people are not being consistently identified as a cohort of the population in general.'*

Other respondents described a need for the extension of already existing data to include other groups, such as age groups, ethnic groups and geographic regions. Specifically, one proposed the need for more data on *'specific vulnerable groups'*. Two of the data producers specifically mentioned the difficulty in accessing adolescents regarding sexual health and on lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) issues (*see below*). Overall, these respondents suggested that improvements be made in the ability to access target populations in order to ensure representation. Another respondent mentioned the perceived need for more geographically diverse data. Others described their desire for more data on under 18- and under 16-year olds. In one specific case, two respondents, both working in the area of disability, described how the voluntary nature of registration in a database meant that it was unlikely all of the eligible target population was being represented.

It was suggested by two respondents involved with supplying data that more extensive data coverage would allow for a greater understanding of the issues of a target group. Some proposed how this, in turn, would enhance service provision. One respondent described how extending data coverage would allow for *'profiles of the children and the families [to] be created, the impacting issues recorded and the supports available identified'*. Similarly, many respondents felt that data needed to be extended to include measures relating to the progress of children and the monitoring of outcomes and service provision in a variety of areas. For example, one respondent believed that data needed to be extended in order to provide information *'critical for the work'* of the organisation in the implementation of schemes. It was also perceived that increased data coverage would allow for comparisons between certain subgroups and the greater population, enhancing the understanding of issues for particular groups.

### **Addressing sensitive issues**

Two respondents stressed the importance of ensuring that data on sensitive topics can be produced and suggested improvements in addressing sensitive issues. They specifically mentioned difficulties in addressing adolescents on issues relating to sexual health and LGB status. Both mentioned how the nature of their subject area made research difficult, with the former noting the *'sensitivity'* surrounding sexual health issues and the latter describing the *'residual stigma and prejudice'* relating to LGB issues. In terms of researching sexual health, the respondent noted that difficulty of access meant that *'the voice of today's adolescent is not being heard'*; they stressed the need for the *'ability to more easily research young people in second-level schools (and out-of-school adolescents also)'*. The other respondent described how young people needed to be *'supported, encouraged and provided with opportunities to contribute to data collection initiatives'* in relation to LGB issues.

### **Focus on child-centred data**

Several respondents suggested that data should be more child-centred in order to provide *'a clearer picture of what it feels like to be a child in Ireland'*, a picture based on the perspectives of the children themselves. It was proposed that this child-centred nature of data should influence all parts of the data process, including research design, data collection, analysis and dissemination. Respondents suggested more *'direct research with children'*, including an increase in consultations with children and young people. One respondent commented, *'We also feel that it is important that this data is recorded directly from children and young people and is not second-hand information'*, and this sentiment was echoed by many others. It was hoped that such data would reflect children's views, giving them a 'voice' in research. In addition, some respondents suggested the importance of collecting data at the unit of the child, with a focus on *'the whole child and not just parts'*. This would allow for a perspective that takes into account the multi-faceted, intertwined and complex nature of many areas in the lives of children and young people. Furthermore, one respondent described how young people should have the opportunity to give feedback on data related to them in order to *'give them a chance to respond or make recommendations based on the evidence presented'*.

### **Additional methods of data collection**

Several respondents believed that additional methods of data collection should be employed in research and data design, particularly longitudinal studies, to improve data processes and to provide more relevant and comprehensive data. One described data in his area as being based almost solely on descriptive or summary evaluations. Another described a dearth of survey data available. Yet another suggested increasing generally the use of mixed methods and triangulation of methods. A few respondents pointed specifically to a lack of longitudinal studies: *'Longitudinal information for Ireland is generally not available'*.

### **Improve timeliness of data collection**

Several respondents suggested the need for increasing timeliness of data generation throughout the data production process in order for data to be most fully effective. They emphasized the importance of keeping data up to date. Specifically, one respondent proposed how there should be a *'commitment to regular update of prevalence to gauge if there any changes'*. Another described the importance of being able to access their target population in order to increase the timeliness of data reporting and policy development.

## Disaggregation

Many respondents described issues with the levels of disaggregation of data. Generally, there is a lack, or perceived lack, of disaggregation, which, if improved, would increase the value of data. Some specific variables along which they suggested disaggregation should be increased included age, locality, ethnicities and specific sectoral issues. For example, one respondent noted his belief that general area information was available, but no breakdown of information as regards *'where highest poverty levels are, highest rates of unemployment, highest rate of early school-leaving'*. Another illustrated a similar issue: *'Many statistics are not disaggregated by age (very important when talking about different children's needs), location and socio-economic background'*. Some respondents described how not having adequately disaggregated data affected their use of data: in one case, a respondent described how due to inconsistent levels of disaggregation across sectors, *'there is some requirement to have data specially compiled or re-configured'*.

## Improve quality of data – accurate, precise and relevant

Several respondents suggested the need for an improvement in the quality of data produced. Specifically, they mentioned the importance of accuracy and precision in data collection. In a typical comment, one respondent noted his belief that *'simple data is often not collected well'*. Generally, respondents characterised the accuracy of data available as *'questionable'*. One respondent noted issues with accuracy: *'The data available ... are less than reliable and frequently show inconsistencies from year to year'*. In a similar comment, another respondent described always facing questions over the accuracy of data received. A few respondents explained in greater detail perceived statistical inaccuracies in the available data. One noted how *'neither surveys report confidence intervals around their prevalence estimates, which would be accepted best practice'*. Another described observing *'systematic data coding errors'* in the data they used. Yet another noted *'methodological issues'* in sampling.

In addition, respondents described how issues with data accuracy affected their ability to employ data fully. One noted how being *'constantly unsure if data is accurate and reliable'* affected service development. Another described her issue with accuracy: *'Issues of accuracy, validity, ambiguity in the posing of questions in the data collection and issues of missing data – all have seriously compromised the ability to accurately quantify the questions of interest.'* In another instance, a respondent recounted how if data was even provided to them, it required *'validation and correction'*. One respondent proposed a means for improving the quality of data in her research area by including a chapter in the annual report on *'year-on-year reporting on the quality and completeness of the data'*.

Furthermore, two respondents involved with supplying data suggested the particular need for relevant and up-to-date measurements that accurately reflect the areas being investigated. One perceived that *'the statistics do not reflect'* the phenomena. Similarly, another noted that *'performance indicators in use are outdated'*. These respondents described how the current measurements used did not actually correspond to the issue being studied. Overall, they recommended the production of higher quality data, with a focus on precision and relevance.

## Improve analytic techniques

Several respondents suggested how improved data analysis techniques by those preparing data and presenting data outputs would enhance a user's ability to effectively interpret data. One respondent simply urged *'greater use of statistical techniques of description and interpretation'*. Similarly, another suggested that suppliers of data should conduct more analysis centrally, rather than each user of data having to perform their own individual analysis. Others suggested an improvement in more specific analytic techniques: two respondents described their belief in a need for an increased analysis of the relationships between variables, while another felt that measures, such as confidence intervals, should be reported in order to improve the reliability of data.

## Align research design more closely with outcomes

Many respondents were concerned that research and data being produced did not align as closely as it could with the aims of their organisations. These aims related specifically to the issue of outcomes for children, particularly concerning service provision and its impact. Overall, they suggested the need for outcome data that would measure and monitor the impact of services. One respondent described a lack, or perceived lack, of such research relating to children: *'The*

*children's sector currently has very little clear development of output and result and impact indicators and very little target setting in relation to these indicators. This greatly limits the ability to monitor progress and to evaluate services effectively.*' A more specific example was given by one respondent who wanted research on the *'results of intervention studies among children'* in order to prevent substance abuse. Some respondents suggested that *'performance indicators'* would be an ideal means of measuring such outcomes. One succinctly stated his belief in the need for *'good performance indicators that would assist in planning and specified funding'*. One respondent criticised their research design, noting that the measurements in use had *'little relevance in respect of outcomes for children'*.

Some respondents suggested specifically how such outcome data would allow for organisations to use data to inform policy implementation. As one suggested, there was a need to *'design research data/variable analysis in order to inform specific policy gaps to maximise the potential of the research'*. Similarly, another respondent emphasized the belief that data *'needs to be more targeted and link to or inform Government policy objectives and future strategies'*.

### **Improve data systems development**

There was consensus among some respondents that a transition to improved data systems would streamline data processes, improving their accuracy, efficiency and reliability. They proposed the need for an overall improvement in data systems development. For some, an absence of any data systems meant information was not being used most effectively. One respondent described a lack of any *'information technology [IT] system to accurately capture all information that is requested'*. Another noted how they would benefit from *'some form of IT'* that would allow more comprehensive data to be used. Generally, these respondents suggested the need for a general implementation of data systems in order to improve data use.

A majority of these respondents suggested the importance of transitioning from manual data systems to electronic systems. Respondents described a range of problems arising from manual data systems, such as inconsistencies in data entered manually, the time element (*'It can take people days to pull information'*) and *'inefficiencies in the processing and transmission of data'*. One respondent suggested how a transition to electronic data systems would improve data quality, allowing for an ease in the manipulation of data for users. Pertaining specifically to data producers, another theme emphasized was the importance of developing data systems that were meeting the needs of data production. One respondent articulated the need for a system that can capture data/information needs of stakeholders. Similarly, another suggested how *'a module for the costing of services, performance indicators and monitoring of service provision should be incorporated into any system going forward'*.

### **Dissemination**

Many respondents suggested a need for an improvement in dissemination techniques and practices. Respondents recommended changes in two general areas:

- **Improving the more practical techniques of dissemination.** These suggestions focused on data being made more available overall; the need to increase the amount and frequency of reporting; the need for more timely dissemination of data; and the need to improve the relevance and quality of outputs.
- **Data findings must inform policy and services more directly.** Interestingly, one respondent described a paradox in terms of funding, data production and dissemination: *'Researchers are currently only funded to produce research creating perverse incentives to produce but not to communicate'*.

### **Improve reporting techniques**

In terms of dissemination strategies, many respondents recommended improving reporting techniques. Their suggestions covered a wide range of areas relating to the dissemination process. Overall, many respondents noted the importance of improving reporting techniques in order to increase the accessibility for all people, agencies and organisations to data that is regularised, meaningful and of a high quality.

### **Increase levels of reporting**

Several respondents recommended more generally an increase in the levels of reporting. One respondent declared: '*All organisations involved in provision of services to children should be required to put information on specific aspects of patient outcome into the public domain*'. Several respondents described issues with the frequency of data produced and the importance of regularly updated data. In a typical comment, one respondent noted how '*frequency of [data] collection can be an issue where you are dependent on a particular data source*', while another described how the data she uses should be '*updated on an ongoing basis*'. Generally, these respondents suggested how data processes could be improved with an increase in the frequency of dissemination from producers of data to users of data.

### **Implement regularised dissemination**

Many respondents described issues with the timeliness and frequency of data dissemination. In a typical comment, one respondent said: '*Data is irrelevant and out of date by the time it is available*'. Respondents described how they often received data at a much later date than the collection of data, rendering it inaccurate and irrelevant. One respondent simply stated: '*Delays in publication mean figures are often out of date*'. More specifically, respondents explained how outdated data affected their ability to perform effectively. In one example, a respondent noted how outdated data was '*not a good measure of performance*'. Another emphasized the need for data in '*real time*', which would allow appropriate planning. Furthermore, it was suggested that reporting should be done more frequently and on a regular basis. Generally, it was hoped by respondents that having more regularised dissemination would provide more accurate and relevant information.

### **Improve quality of data reporting**

Some respondents described their belief in the importance of presenting data in a meaningful, relevant and appropriate way, and suggested the need to improve the quality of data reporting, calling for the '*production of high quality reports*'. Several specifically suggested that the relevance of data reporting needed to be improved, while others proposed how an improvement in the presentation of data would make interpretation and understanding less ambiguous. One respondent proposed how '*a narrative to explain the data would ensure researchers and others do not misinterpret the data*'. Similarly, another respondent echoed that '*an occasional thematic report across surveys would bring the data together in a more accessible method for users*'. Others suggested how varying data outputs would increase the efficiency of data use. One respondent described wanting '*visual presentation, like graphs and pie-charts, for quick reference*'. Along the same lines, another respondent described how a '*chart summarising key findings ... could be used as a quick reference*'.

### **Link data findings to policy and service delivery**

Several respondents recommended linking data findings more closely to policy and service delivery. One respondent described the need to develop '*policy briefings drawing on research findings*'. Another suggested the importance of addressing the implications of data findings as regards policy and service delivery. Others pointed specifically to the need to align data findings with policy and service outcomes, '*encouraging the use of research in policy and practice*'.

## **Ethical issues**

Several respondents suggested the importance of ensuring and maintaining appropriate ethical standards throughout research and data processes, and perceived the need for ethical issues to be addressed more fully throughout the research and data cycle, particularly in the data collection and dissemination phases. These respondents proposed confidentiality as a central issue for data processes. One described how privacy and child protection should '*remain a priority*'. Respondents described the issue with confidentiality as linked closely to data sharing, noting that the sharing of data should be '*appropriately done*' and that data processes should '*ensure privacy of child while enabling linkage of data*'. One respondent suggested protocols should be developed for handling data, including the use of anonymous data. Another proposed that data protection should meet international standards.

## Resources

Many respondents suggested the need for an increase in the amount of available resources for research and data processes. They described a lack of essential resources at many stages of the data process. For some, this meant specifically a lack of financial resources or funding. Others described the need for more and better trained staff to deal with data.

### Increase available resources

Overall, respondents described needing additional resources and support to engage in effective data production and use. Several described a lack of available resources for effectively producing and using data. An *'insufficient capacity'* was cited by a few as having implications for data processes, including the inability to undertake projects, to keep data up to date and to use data effectively. These respondents suggested the importance of sufficient resources for all aspects of data processes. A respondent working in foster care summarised the importance of resources for data production: *'With adequate resources, more proficient data collection could be undertaken by the organisation'*. Another respondent echoed this comment, stating that there exists *'a poor research capacity in the user community'*.

### Increase funding

Specifically, several respondents noted a lack of finances and funding for data production. In one case, a respondent working in child and family services noted how they had spent years developing a complete specification for a file management system, which was now at risk due to a lack of funding. Some respondents described how a lack of funding affected service delivery and policy development. One respondent explained specifically the importance of having funding for policy and service development, saying that *'funding for research on the role and use of research evidence in policy development, decision-making, service development and practice'* is needed. Another respondent dealing in psychological services for young people noted how a lack of funding risked cutting into significant doctoral research in the area. In one particularly topical comment, one producer of data proposed that *'information gathering is often sacrificed to crisis management, especially in the current cut-backs climate'*.

### Improve training and availability of trained researchers

Several respondents emphasized their belief in the importance of having appropriately trained support to deal with research and data. They perceived a lack of trained support available to engage in data processes. One respondent in the data user community noted *'no clerical support to interrogate the data'*, while another described *'staff shortages'*. Another respondent highlighted the need for a *'person responsible to collect appropriate data on children'* in the hospital setting. Not surprisingly, this lack of people available often related to the specialist training a person requires to be qualified to handle data. One respondent described specifically the need for greater training in statistical techniques, while another explained how access to trained experts would make the data they produce *'as robust as possible'*. A final issue involved the gathering of data on children: *'The lack of researchers within the youth sector also makes data collection difficult'*.

## Appendix 1: Online Consultation Questionnaire



### National Data Strategy on Children's Lives: Consultation Questionnaire

The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is currently developing a National Data Strategy on Children's Lives. This strategy will set out the vision, goals, principles and actions to guide and support the collection, compilation and dissemination of data, statistics and research on children and will facilitate the utilisation of good quality, easily accessible, internationally comparable information about children in Ireland.

As part of the process of developing a National Data Strategy we are conducting this consultation which seeks to add to the evidence base which will underpin the strategy. This questionnaire has been designed to allow those using or providing data, statistics or research on children to express their views, comments and suggestions for the Data Strategy. The instructions for completing the questionnaire are given below. The focus of this consultation is to obtain a broad overview of current and emerging issues around data on children. We are not asking for an inventory of all of the data you use/produce but rather for an overview of the role of data, research and statistics on children in your work. By completing this questionnaire you are contributing to a strategic plan for better information on the lives of children in Ireland. Please answer the questions below as fully as possible. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Please provide the following details:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a:  Government Department  Academic  
 State Agency  NGO  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of function of organisation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you responding:  On behalf of your organisation  
 On an individual basis

How to complete this questionnaire:

All respondents please answer the section 'Looking to the Future' below.

Then if you consider your organisation is:

Mainly a **producer** of data, statistics or research, please complete the '**Producers of Data, Statistics or Research**' section.

Mainly a **user** of data, statistics or research, please complete the '**Users of Data, Statistics or Research**' section.

**Both** a user and producer of data, statistics or research, please complete **both of these sections**.

Looking to the Future

LF 1: Can you give a brief description of how you would like to see data on children's lives in Ireland develop over the next 10 years?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LF 2: Can you identify 3 priority areas for research on children's lives in the next decade?

- i) \_\_\_\_\_  
ii) \_\_\_\_\_  
iii) \_\_\_\_\_

Click 'next' below to move to the next page

Producers of data, statistics or research

**P 1: What data on children does your organisation currently produce?**  
(please just give an overview, not detailed descriptions of individual data sources)

a) for use at national level \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b) for use at international level \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**P 2: Do you use any of the following methods to disseminate your data? Tick all that apply.**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internally within your organisation, through regular bulletins           | <input type="checkbox"/> Externally through ad hoc publications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internally through ad hoc bulletins                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Externally on the web                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internally via regular queries   | <input type="checkbox"/> Externally via regular queries         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internally via ad hoc queries  | <input type="checkbox"/> Externally via ad hoc queries          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Externally to other organisations through a regular publication schedule | <input type="checkbox"/> No dissemination                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |   |

**P 3: Are there changes you feel could be made to the data you produce to add value or maximise the potential of this data or to improve quality/ level of data provision for your users?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**P 4: Is your organisation currently developing new data sources on children, making changes to existing sources or planning such developments? If so please give a brief description of these changes or developments (planned or current) over the following time periods:**

Currently in progress: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Planned to take place within the next year \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Planned to take place within the next 1-4 years \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Planned to take place within the next 5-10 years \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**P 5: Do you currently have the capacity to fully exploit the potential of the data you collect?**  Yes  
 No

If no, what would be required for this to be achieved?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Click 'next' below to move to the next page or 'back' below to return to the previous page

Users of data, statistics or research

**U 1: What data on children does your organisation currently use? Please just give an overview, not detailed descriptions of individual data sources.**

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**U 2: What purpose(s) is this data used for and how important is it to the work of your organisation e.g. does it enable you to meet a policy requirement, a KPI, legal reporting requirements, an international reporting requirement, to plan service delivery etc.?**

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**U 3: Does this work result in outputs, (e.g. publications, internal reports, web-based reports) which are disseminated? If so please indicate the form these outputs take.**

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**U4: In your opinion, does this data fully meet your requirements?**  Yes  
 No

**Specifically:**

Are there any issues with quality in the data that you use - accuracy, timeliness, frequency, level of disaggregation available, ease/speed of access? 

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Do you have any unmet data needs - what are the gaps in the data being provided to you? 

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Are there any other changes that could be made to this data which would increase its value to you? 

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**U 5: Are you aware of any changes or developments being implemented in the data sources you use? If so please give a brief description of these changes or developments (planned or current).**

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Thank you for your time and assistance

Please click on 'submit' below to submit the questionnaire and click OK in the box that appears.

Once your questionnaire is successfully submitted, you will see a 'thank you' message on screen, if you do not see this your questionnaire has not been submitted.

## Appendix 2: Respondents to Online Consultation

There were 196 responses received to the public consultation to inform this strategy. Of these, 6 were from private individuals or unidentifiable, 135 were on behalf of organisations and the remaining 55 were from individuals working in a range of organisations.

### Organisational responses were received from:

Alcohol Action Ireland  
AMEN  
Arts Council  
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)  
Asthma Society of Ireland  
Barnardos  
Bunclody Vocational College  
Callan Community Network Ltd.  
Carers Association  
Caring for Carers Ireland  
Carlow VEC  
Central Statistics Office (CSO)  
Chester Beatty Library  
Childminding Ireland  
Children Acts Advisory Board  
Children at Risk in Ireland (CARI) Foundation  
Children's Books Ireland (CBI)  
Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin  
Children's Rights Alliance  
City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB)  
Clare County Childcare Committee  
Coeliac Society of Ireland  
Coláiste Abbain  
Combat Poverty Agency  
COPE Galway  
County Cork VEC  
County Dublin VEC  
Courts Service of Ireland  
Crafts Council of Ireland  
Create  
Crisis Pregnancy Agency  
Crosscare Young Adult Support Service  
Cúram  
Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland  
Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service  
Dental Health Foundation  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism  
Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources  
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs  
Department of Education and Science  
Department of Health and Children, Social Inclusion Unit  
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform  
Dodder Valley Partnership  
Drug Treatment Centre Board (DTCB)  
Dublin City Council  
Dublin City Council, Culture, Recreation and Amenity Department  
Dublin Transportation Office (DTO)  
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)  
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Childcare Committee  
Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)  
Equality Authority (An Túdarás Comhionannais)

Family Support Agency  
 Fingal County Childcare Committee  
 Fingal County Council  
 Focus Ireland  
 Forensic Science Laboratory  
 Galway City and County Childcare Committee  
 Galway City Partnership  
 Galway County Council  
 Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)  
 General Register Office  
 Headway  
 Health and Safety Authority (HSA)  
 Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)  
 Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway  
 Health Research Board (HRB)  
 Health Service Executive  
 Health Service Executive, Children and Family Services, Social Work Service  
 Health Service Executive, Disability Services  
 Health Service Executive, Youth Drugs and Alcohol Service  
 Health Service Executive, Local Health Office, Psychology Service  
 Health Service Executive, Childcare Directorate, Limerick  
 Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)  
 Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI)  
 Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH)  
 International Adoption Association (IAA)  
 Irish Association of Young People in Care (IAYPIC)  
 Irish Childcare Policy Network (ICPN)  
 Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health  
 Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)  
 Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA)  
 Irish Mental Patients' Educational and Representative Organisation (IMPERO)  
 Irish Osteoporosis Society (IOS)  
 Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA)  
 Irish Sports Council  
 Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association (ISKA)  
 Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS)  
 Katharine Howard Foundation  
 Library Association of Ireland (Cumann Leabharlann na hÉireann)  
 Library Council  
 Limerick City Children's Services Committee  
 Longford County Childcare Committee  
 Lucca Leadership  
 Mayo County Childcare Committee  
 Mental Health Commission  
 Monaghan County Childcare Committee  
 Music Network Ltd.  
 My Time After School Childcare, Hospital Family Resource Centre  
 National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) (An Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh)  
 National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD)  
 National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD)  
 National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA)  
 National Disability Authority (NDA) (Údarás Náisiúnta Michumais)  
 National Federation of Arch Clubs  
 National Gallery of Ireland (Gailearaí Náisiúnta na hÉireann)  
 National Nutrition Surveillance Centre (NNSC)  
 New Communities Partnership (NCP)  
 No Name Club Ltd.  
 North Tipperary County Childcare Committee  
 One Family  
 Order of Malta Ireland  
 PACE  
 Probation Service

Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)  
Road Safety Authority (RSA)  
Roscommon County Council  
Rotunda Hospital  
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)  
Sligo County Childcare Committee  
South Dublin Children's Services Committee  
South Tipperary County Childcare Committee  
South Tipperary County Council  
Teach Oscail FRC Project  
Tourette Syndrome Association of Ireland (TSAI)  
University College Cork (UCC)  
Waterford County Childcare Committee Ltd.  
Waterford County Council Library Service  
Waterford Museum of Treasures  
Wexford County Childcare Committee  
Wexford County Council Public Library Service  
Young Men's Catholic Association (YMCA)

**Responses were received from 55 individuals working in the following organisations:**

Broadford Montessori Pre-School  
Central Statistics Office (CSO)  
Comhairle Naíonraí na Gaeltachta Teo  
Cork Institute of Technology  
Cork University Hospital  
Department of Health and Children (An Roinn Sláinte agus Leanaí)  
Dublin Institute of Technology  
Geary Institute, UCD  
Health Research Board (HRB)  
Health Service Executive (HSE)  
Higher Education and Training Awards Council  
Homeless Agency  
Irish Refugee Council  
Laois County Council  
Liberty Steiner/Waldorf Initiative  
Mercy University Hospital, Cork  
National Disability Authority (NDA) (Údarás Náisiúnta Michumais)  
National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street  
National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway)  
Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA)  
Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Dublin  
Road Safety Authority (RSA)  
Trinity College, Dublin (TCD), Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics  
Trinity College, Dublin (TCD), Children's Research Centre  
University College, Dublin (UCD), School of Applied Social Science  
University College, Dublin (UCD), School of Medicine and Medical Science  
University College, Dublin (UCD), School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems  
University College, Dublin (UCD), Social Science Research Centre  
University Hospital, Galway  
Westmeath VEC