

**A report of consultations with children and young people about
human rights in Ireland in advance of the United Nations Universal
Periodic Review (UPR) process**

January 2016



Index

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	6
About this report.....	6
United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.....	6
Background.....	6
The role of the Citizen Participation Unit of the DCYA.....	6
Report structure.....	7
Section 1: Consultation methodology	8
1.1 Overview.....	8
1.2 Development of consultation methodologies.....	8
1.3 Key stages in the consultation process.....	8
1.4 Recruitment of the children and young people.....	9
1.5 Data analysis.....	10
Section 2: Rationale for consulting with children and young people	11
2.1 Overview.....	11
2.2 Rationale.....	11
2.3 International policies.....	11
2.4 National policies.....	12
2.5 Benefits of participation.....	12
2.6 Models of participation.....	13
Section 3: Questionnaire Results	14
3.1 Overview.....	14
3.2 Respondent profile.....	14
3.3 Key findings.....	14

Section 4: Analysis of key themes.....	17
4.1 Overview.....	17
4.2 Education/school.....	17
4.3 Shelter/A home.....	17
4.4 Food and water.....	18
4.5 Equality/no discrimination/racism.....	18
4.6 Freedom of speech, opinions, thoughts.....	19
4.7 Safety/security/protection.....	20
4.8 Family/marriage/have children.....	20
4.9 Freedom/to be born free and equal.....	21
4.10 Healthcare/good health.....	21
4.11 Life.....	22
4.12 Play, rest, recreation, exercise, sport.....	22
4.13 Freedom of religion and beliefs.....	22
4.14 Democracy /to vote/participate in society.....	23
4.15 Be treated fairly and equally by the law.....	23
4.16 No slavery.....	24
4.17 Not to be neglected, abused, hurt, tortured.....	24
4.18 Privacy.....	25
4.19 Job/money.....	25
4.20 Love, understanding, acceptance, care.....	25
4.21 Freedom of movement/travel.....	26
4.22 Same sex marriage/gay rights/choose sexuality.....	26
4.23 Listened to/heard/ treated with respect/dignity.....	27
4.24 Clothes.....	27
4.25 Have and change nationality.....	27

4.26 Own property/possessions.....	28
4.27 Friends/be part of a group or community.....	28
4.28 Happiness.....	28
4.29 Not to be bullied.....	28
4.30 Asylum.....	29
4.31 A name/identity.....	29
4.32 Worker’s rights.....	29
4.33 Social security.....	30
4.34 Be yourself/individuality.....	30
4.35 Protest/peaceful assembly.....	30
4.36 Children's rights.....	30
4.37 Women’s rights.....	31
4.38 Not to be kidnapped.....	31
4.39 Information.....	31
4.40 Culture.....	32
4.41 Disability rights.....	32
4.42 To speak your own language.....	32
4.43 Abortion.....	32
Section 5: Summary of key findings.....	34
References.....	36

Figures

Figure 1: Respondent profile.....	14
-----------------------------------	----

Tables

Table 1: The most important human rights in Ireland.....	16
--	----

Executive Summary

This report documents and analyses the process and findings of a consultation process with children and young people about human rights in Ireland in advance of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

The Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs collaborated to ensure that the voice of children and young people was included in the UPR process in line with national and international best practice in relation to children and young people's participation in decision-making that affects their lives.

An age appropriate methodology was developed by the DCYA Citizen Participation Support Team which included the development of a single page questionnaire with the question, '*Which human rights are most important in Ireland,*' and a short briefing document with a definition of human rights and an outline of the UPR process.

There were two key stages in the process, consultation with children and young people through the hard copy questionnaire and a consultation meeting with children and young people to discuss the findings in more detail and to participate in the design and development of child and youth friendly materials based on the report.

The questionnaire was completed by 3,930 children and young people in total. This included 1,613 children from primary schools, 2,158 young people from Comhairle na nÓg and 159 seldom-heard children and young people. Data from the questionnaires was recorded and analysed according to the emerging human rights themes.

Education/school was identified as the most important human right in Ireland by 51.3% of children and young people, followed by shelter (45.9%), food and water (40.3%), equality or not to be discriminated against (33.5%), freedom of speech (23.7%), safety, security and protection (17.2%), family, marriage and to have children (14.2%), to be born free and equal (14.1%), healthcare or good health (12.2%) and life (11.1%).

Introduction

About this report

This report documents and analyses the process and findings of a consultation process with children and young people about human rights in Ireland in advance of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. The UPR is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council which is based on equal treatment for all countries. It provides an opportunity for all States to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. The UPR also includes a sharing of best human rights practices around the globe. (www.ohchr.org).

Background

This consultation process was part of the Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality preparations for Ireland's review under Cycle 2 the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. Under the UPR process, the domestic human rights situation of each UN member state is reviewed every four and a half years. The state under review submits a written report to the UN and undergoes an interactive dialogue in Geneva. Consultation is a key requirement of the UPR process, and helps to inform the preparation of the state's National Report. Ireland's last review was in 2011, and the second National Report is due for submission to the UN in February 2016.

The role of the Citizen Participation Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The Citizen Participation Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) agreed to undertake consultations with children and young people about their perceptions of human rights issues in Ireland, in co-operation with Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality. The Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs collaborated to ensure that the voice of children and young people was included in the UPR process.

The work of the DCYA Citizen Participation Unit is guided by Article 12 of the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and is directed by the belief that children and young people are the citizens of today and not just the adults of tomorrow. Its work is undertaken through the development of effective structures for children's participation in decision-making, conducting consultations and dialogues with children and young people, development of evidence-based policy in keeping with national and international best practice. The DCYA is committed to ensuring the inclusion of seldom-heard children and young people in participation structures and initiatives.

Report structure

This report is divided into the following sections:

- Section 1 outlines the development of consultation methodologies, key stages in the consultation process, recruitment of children and young people and data analysis
- Section 2 examines the rationale for consulting with children and young people and fits the process within national and international policies and literature
- Section 2 outlines the results from the consultation questionnaire
- Section 3 analyses the key human rights identified by children and young people in depth
- Section 4 summarises the key findings from the consultation process

Section 1: Consultation methodology

1.1 Overview

This section includes information on the development of consultation methodologies, key stages in the consultation process, recruitment of children and young people and data analysis.

1.2 Development of consultation methodologies

The DCYA Citizen Participation Support Team developed age-appropriate and strengths-based methodologies for the consultation process. This included the development of a one-page questionnaire and question using age-appropriate language. The questionnaire was accompanied by a short briefing document with a definition of human rights and an outline of the UPR process, to be used by children or young people themselves or by teachers or adult workers.

An age-appropriate methodology was also developed for the consultation meeting with children and young people to discuss the report findings in more depth and to participate in the design and development of child and youth friendly materials based on the report.

1.3 Key stages in the consultation process

The consultation process was conducted in two stages:

- **Stage One: (September – November 2015)**

As part of stage one of the consultation process, up to 6,000 children and young people were given the opportunity to complete a hard copy questionnaire with the following question '*Which human rights are most important in Ireland?*'

This form was distributed at the majority of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meetings during September and October 2015. The age cohort in attendance at AGMs was 12 – 17 years. In total, 2,158 young people from Comhairle na nÓg completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was also distributed to 8 – 12 year old children from approximately 30 Primary schools. Overall, 1,613 children from primary schools completed the questionnaire.

In addition, the questionnaire was sent to seldom-heard children and young people through a number of groups, organisations and schools who work with this cohort. Altogether, 159 seldom-heard children and young people aged 8 – 17 years completed the questionnaire.

- **Stage Two: (January 2016)**

Stage two of the consultation process involved a meeting with children and young people in Woodquay in Dublin to discuss the findings of the questionnaire and the design and development of children and young people’s materials based on the report. A presentation on the main findings of the questionnaire was given by the Researcher and children and young people were encouraged to ask questions afterwards. Children and young people were then divided in smaller groups to discuss the presentation further and come up with comments and questions. They also addressed issues such as the report audience, content and format and design options such as photos, illustration, abstract, etc.

1.4 Recruitment of the children and young people

Children aged 8 – 12 years were recruited through 30 primary schools around Ireland. Young people aged 13- 17 years were recruited through the 31 Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meetings in Autumn 2015. Seldom-heard children and young people were invited to participate through sending the questionnaire to organisations and institutions working with this cohort. Responses were received from the following organisations:

- Barnardos (Amplifying Voices Programme)
- EPIC (Empowering People in Care)
- Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Service
- Foróige Youth Services (Blanchardstown Youth Service and Tallaght Youth Service)
- Head Strong- The National Centre for Youth Mental Health
- Irish Wheelchair Association
- Linn Dara School (for children and adolescents who are experiencing severe emotional disturbance)
- Open Door
- Youth Work Ireland (Carlow Regional Youth Service)

1.5 Data analysis

Questionnaire data was analysed through recording approximately the first 1,000 responses and analysing the key human rights emerging until a saturation point of themes was reached. These human rights were then divided into 42 separate categories or themes and an online survey tool (Survey Gizmo) was used to create a survey template where the questionnaires were inputted manually and then analysed. Comments made in relation to human rights were also recorded and are included in the report as quotes.

Section 2: Rationale for consulting with children and young people

2.1 Overview

This section examines the rationale for consulting with children and young people and provides an analysis of how the project fits within the national and international literature on children and young people's participation in decision-making.

2.2 Rationale

Under Cycle 2 of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, the Department of Justice and Equality sought submissions from civil society and interested stakeholders to help shape Ireland's National Report. To ensure that the voice of children and young people was included in the UPR process, a consultation process was developed in collaboration with the Citizen Participation Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA). Ensuring the voice of children and young people is heard and involving children and young people in decision-making corresponds with international and national policies and best practice in these areas.

2.3 International policies

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was ratified by Ireland in 1992, guarantees a commitment to ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard and their opinions are given due weight in matters that affect them.

Article 12 of the UNCRC states:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which outlines the fundamental rights protected in the EU, on ‘The rights of the child’, states:

“Children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being. They may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity.”

2.4 National policies

The right of children and young people to a voice in decisions that affect their lives was first introduced in Irish policy in 2000 through *Our Children – Their Lives: The National Children’s Strategy*. Goal 1 of the strategy, drawing strongly on Article 12 of the UNCRC, stated that *‘children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity’*

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2022 also commits to children and young people having a voice in decisions that affect their lives across all five outcome areas of the Policy Framework.

The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making (2015-2020), is guided and influenced by the UNCRC and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Its goal is to ensure that children and young people will have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives. The Strategy (DCYA, 2015:20) defines children and young people’s participation in decision-making as *‘the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly.’*

Objective 7 of the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making commits to *“mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research”*.

2.5 Benefits of participation

The benefits of participation by children and young people in decision-making are widely reported. Benefits for services include improved services, policies and research; benefits for

children include increased self-confidence and communication skills and better educational outcomes; and benefits for society include active citizenship and social inclusion (DCYA, 2015: 7).

2.6 Models of participation

There are a number of models of participation, including Hart's Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969), Treseder's (1997) Degrees of Participation; Shier's (2001) Pathways to Participation; Kirby et al's (2003) Model of Participation; and Lundy's (2007) Model of Participation. The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making (DCYA, 2015) is underpinned by Lundy's (2007) Model of Participation, which is grounded in the UNCRC and focused on a rights-based approach to involving children in decision-making. Lundy's Model of Participation calls for the consideration of four key elements: space (children must be given the opportunity to express a view); voice (children must be facilitated to express their view); audience (the view must be listened to) and influence (the view must be acted upon, as appropriate).

Section 3: Questionnaire Results

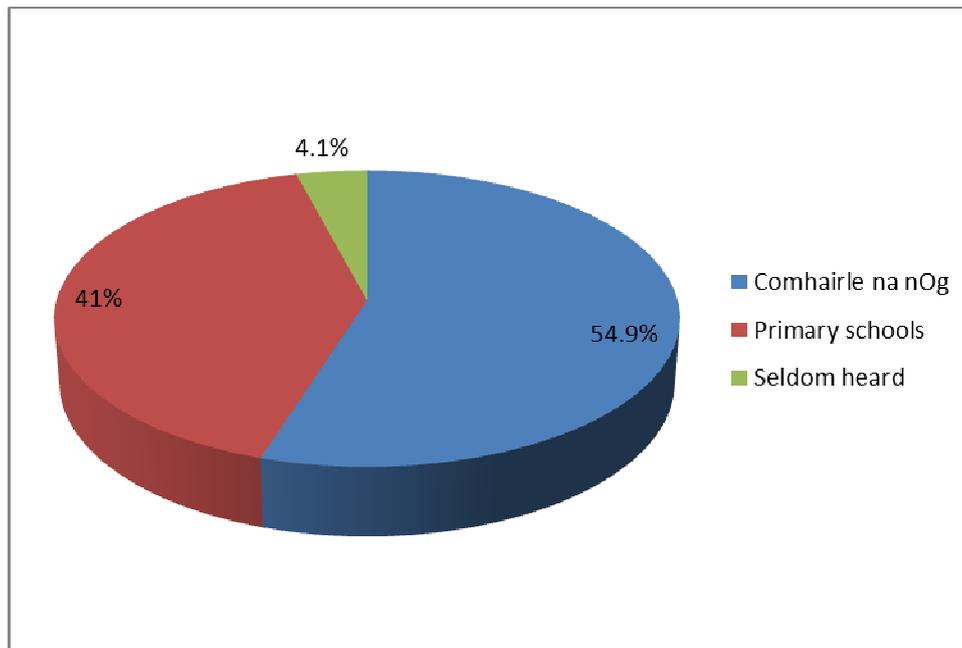
3.1 Overview

This section outlines the results of the questionnaire which was completed by children and young people as part of the consultation process.

3.2 Respondent profile

A total of 3,930 children and young people completed the questionnaire on human rights as part of the consultation process. Of these, 2,158 (54.9%) were young people from Comhairle na nÓg, 1,613 (41%) were children from primary schools around Ireland and 159 (4.1%) were seldom-heard children and young people.

Figure 1: Respondent profile



3.3 Key findings

As Table 1 outlines, education/school was identified as the most important human right in Ireland with over half (51.3%) of all children and young people citing this right. Shelter or having a home was considered to be the next most important human right (45.9%), followed by food and water (40%). One third (33.5%) of all children and young people thought equality or not being discriminated against was the most important human right, followed by freedom of speech (23.7%) and safety, security and protection (17.2%).

Having a family, getting married and having children was highlighted as an important human right by 14.5% of children and young people, followed by freedom or to be 'born free and equal' (14.1%) and healthcare or having good health (12.2%).

Just over one in ten (11.1%) children and young people thought life was the most important human right while 9.4% felt play, rest, recreation, exercise, sport etc. was very important. Freedom of religion and beliefs was mentioned by 9% of children and young people followed by democracy and participation in society (8.5%), to be treated fairly and equally by the law (8.2%), no slavery (6.9%) and not to be neglected, abused, hurt or tortured (6.8%).

Privacy was judged to be an important human right by 6.7% of children and young people, followed by having a job or money (6.1%), love, understanding, acceptance and care (5.6%), freedom of movement/travel (4.3%), same sex marriage/gay rights/choose sexuality (4%), listened to/heard/ treated with respect/dignity (4%).

The next most frequently cited human rights were clothes (3.9%), to have and change nationality (3.6%), to own property/possessions (3.4%), friends or to be part of a group or community (3.1%), happiness (2.7%), not to be bullied (2.4%), asylum (2.3%), to have a name or identity (1.9%), worker's rights (1.9%), social security (1.6%), to be yourself/individuality (1.2%), protest/peaceful assembly (1%), children's rights (0.8%), women's rights (0.5%), not to be kidnapped (0.4%), information (0.4%), culture (0.4%), disability rights (0.3%), to speak your own language (0.3%) and abortion (0.2%).

Table 1: The most important human rights in Ireland

Human rights	Total %	% of all young people from Comhairle na nÓg	% of all children from primary Schools	% of all Seldom-heard children/young people
Education/school	51.3%	55.8%	47.2%	30.8%
Shelter/A home	45.9%	50%	41.2%	35.9%
Food and water	40.3%	43.7%	37.1%	40.3%
Equality/no discrimination/racism	33.5%	29.7%	39.8%	20.8%
Freedom of speech, opinions, thoughts	23.7%	28.4%	18.2%	15.7%
Safety/security/protection	17.2%	13.7%	18.5%	12.6%
Family/marriage/have children	14.5%	6.9%	25.5%	5.7%
Freedom/to be born free and equal	14.1%	8.6%	20.8%	21.4%
Healthcare/good health	12.2%	11.9%	13.4%	2.5%
Life	11.1%	7.9%	15.3%	12%
Play, rest, recreation, exercise, sport etc.	9.4%	5.1%	15.6%	4.4%
Freedom of religion and beliefs	9%	8.1%	10.8%	3.1%
Democracy /to vote/participate in society	8.5%	9.8%	7.2%	4.4%
Be treated fairly and equally by the law	8.2%	3.2%	15.2%	5%
No slavery	6.9%	1%	15.1%	5%
Not to be neglected, abused, hurt, tortured etc.	6.8%	1.1%	14.6%	5.7%
Privacy	6.7%	4.3%	10.3%	3.1%
Job/money	6.1%	3.5%	9.7%	4.4%
Love, understanding, acceptance, care	5.6%	5%	6.6%	5.7%
Freedom of movement/travel	4.3%	1%	8.9%	3.1%
Same sex marriage/gay rights/choose sexuality	4%	3%	5.7%	0.6%
Listened to/heard/ treated with respect/dignity	4%	4.9%	2.6%	5%
Clothes	3.9%	5%	2.7%	2.5%
Have and change nationality	3.6%	1.3%	6.8%	2.5%
Own property/possessions	3.4%	0.5%	7.4%	1.3%
Friends/be part of a group or community	3.1%	1.6%	5.1%	3.8%
Happiness	2.7%	2.3%	3.5%	0.6%
Not to be bullied	2.4%	1.1%	4.4%	0.6%
Asylum	2.3%	1.6%	3.3%	1.3%
A name/ identity	1.9%	1.2%	2.9%	0.6%
Worker's rights, e.g. gender, pay equality	1.9%	0.9%	3.3%	-
Social security	1.6%	0.6%	3.2%	0.6%
Be yourself/individuality	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	2.5%
Protest/peaceful assembly	1%	0.3%	2.1%	-
Children's rights	0.8%	0.7%	0.9%	0.6%
Women's rights	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	-
Not to be kidnapped	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	-
Information	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	0.6%
Culture	0.4%	0.1%	0.6%	0.6%
Disability rights	0.3%	0.5%	0.1%	-
To speak your own language	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	-
Abortion	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	-

Section 4: Analysis of key themes

4.1 Overview

This section analyses the key human rights which emerged from the questionnaire results in greater detail. It also includes quotes from children and young people who completed the questionnaire.

4.2 Education/school

Education or school was identified as the most important human right in Ireland by children and young people with over half (51.3%) of respondents citing this right. Respondents thought all children and young people should have access to free, good quality primary, secondary and third level education. They felt equal access to education was very important, for example for children and young people with physical and learning disabilities, young Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and that everyone should be treated equally within the education system. Education was considered to be important in terms of creating future opportunities and a better educated and tolerant society.

- *“All children are entitled to get a good education no matter who you are.”* [Child]
- *“Right to education. This is because no matter what your background or home situation, education can help bring you to new places and bring new opportunities. Also school can act as a support system.”* [Young person]
- *“The right to proper education until you are at least 18 because even if you're poor growing up you will be able to have more job opportunities. Also lack of education is the cause of many wars and discrimination in the world.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.3 Shelter/A home

The right to shelter, a house or home was considered to be an important human right by 45.9% of respondents. According to children and young people, all members of society in Ireland have a right to a home including homeless people and members of the Traveller community. Many children and young people discussed the current increase in homelessness in Ireland and felt the issue should be addressed. Access to housing and supports for young people when they leaving care was highlighted by one seldom-heard young person.

- *“I think we should have shelter for everyone including the poor.”* [Child]
- *“Every person should be entitled to a home and everyone feels strongly about this issue. The government are not doing enough to help the homeless people.”* [Young person]
- *“Access to housing and support when leaving care beyond the age of 18.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.4 Food and water

The right to nutritious food and clean water was identified as an important human right by 40.3% of children and young people. It was judged to be the most important right by seldom-heard children and young people. The issue of food poverty among some children and adults such as those who are homeless was highlighted. A number of respondents also raised the issue of free water being a human right in the context of the recent introduction of water charges in Ireland.

- *“Some children eat no breakfast.”* [Young person]
- *“I have the right to food. We need to eat food every day to help us to grow and develop our bodies. Food gives us nourishment and also to develop our brain so we can learn.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]
- *“Water is a basic human right and having to pay for it is ridiculous.”* [Young person]

4.5 Equality/no discrimination/racism

To be treated fairly and equally and not be discriminated against because of your race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexuality, age, ability/disability, mental health, social class, background, nationality, language, political opinions, skin colour or appearance was recognised as an important human right by a third of all respondents.

- *“The most important human right in Ireland is equality. Equality means that everyone should be treated fairly and equally regardless of their religion, colour, whether they are a boy or a girl, whether they are disabled or not. We are all the same.”* [Child]

- *“People shouldn't have the right to be racist because I hate it when people make fun of other people's skin colour.” [Child]*
- *“We should all be treated fairly and equally. Just because we may have a different skin tone or a part of the Travelling community no one in Ireland should ever be discriminated! Whoever we are we should never be left out! [Child]*

A small number of children and young people gave examples of personal experiences of racism and discrimination.

- *“I think that girls should be treated more fairly and that brown girls in school should be treated just like white girls and older boys always say that just because we are brown we are called gorilla, black chocolate and much more.” [Child]*
- *“I have a right to live my life free from racism.” [Seldom-heard child/young person]*

4.6 Freedom of speech, opinions, thoughts

Freedom of speech, opinions, expression and thoughts was highlighted as an important human right by 23.7% of respondents. The right of children and young people to have a voice and express their opinions was judged to be particularly important in society. Young people who completed the questionnaire were more likely to consider freedom of speech to be important compared with younger children.

- *“Each child should be able to give their own positive opinion and should not be teased.” [Child]*
- *“Right to freedom of speech because everyone deserves an opinion.” [Young person]*
- *“Every right is important but freedom of speech for children I feel is overlooked. I understand why you can't vote until you are 18 but imagine your future was in the hands of someone else because for kids it is...it's our future and we should be heard and listened to.” [Seldom-heard child/young person]*

4.7 Safety/security/protection

The right to safety, security and protection was identified as an important human right by 17.3% of respondents. Children and young people would like to live in a safe, peaceful, stable, free, fair, clean home, environment and world.

- *“A safe childhood.”* [Child]
- *“The most important right is safety as safety covers a safe home, being safe on the street from predators and being safe in your country.”* [Young person]
- *“Protection is one of the most important rights for children and young people. We all have rights to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.8 Family/marriage/have children

The right to family, marriage and children was mentioned by 14.5% of respondents. This included the right to have a loving family, to live with your parents unless it is unsafe to do so, be able to marry whoever you want and to have children. Respondents stated that child marriages should not be allowed. The right of all people to adopt children including gay people was also discussed. The right to family, marriage and children was significantly more important to younger children (25.5%) than to young people (6.9%).

- *“Right to grow up in a loving, caring family.”* [Young person]
- *“The right to be with your parents unless it is harmful.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]
- *“Everyone has the right to marry who they love.”* [Child]
- *“People are allowed to have whatever amount of children they want with whoever they want.”* [Child]

4.9 Freedom/to be born free and equal

According to 14.1% of respondents, freedom or to be born free and equal is an important human right. This human right was judged to be more important by younger children compared with young people.

- *“We are all born free and equal.”* [Child]
- *“I think everybody has the right to be free because without freedom we wouldn’t be able to do many things.”* [Child]
- *“I have a right to freedom because I can go outside and play all day and walk down town with my friends and family.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.10 Healthcare/good health

The right to healthcare, medication and to have good physical and mental health was deemed to be important by 12.2% of respondents. Children and young people thought access to free, efficient and prompt healthcare was very important as well as information on staying healthy, for example physical and mental health programmes in schools. The need for better mental health care in Ireland was discussed by some respondents in addition to children and young people’s right to be heard in the healthcare system.

- *“The right to be healthy because if you are not healthy you cannot do some things like running, gymnastics, football and GAA.”* [Child]
- *“The right to the best health possible and to medical care and to information that will help you stay well.”* [Young person]
- *“Mental health treatment. I think that medically, physical illnesses are considered much more important and that should not be the case.”* [Young person]
- *“Say a child has mental health problems. If they didn't have the right to be heard or get help they would probably live their entire life with that problem!* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.11 Life

The right to life or to live was mentioned by 11.1% of respondents. This included the right not to be killed or executed by another person or a state.

- *“The right to have your own life...having your own life and future is very special to human beings.”* [Child]
- *“I think the right to life is the most important right in Ireland because no matter who you are no matter what you've done you don't deserve to die.”*[Young person]

4.12 Play, rest, recreation, exercise, sport

Overall, 9.4% of respondents thought the right to play, rest, recreation, exercise and sport was an important human right. Children and young people felt this right was important because it helps them relax, make friends and can improve their mental health. This right was judged to be more important by younger children rather than teenagers. Some young people discussed the need for more recreation facilities and places to hang out with their friends.

- *“The right to play outside, to play on your bike or scooter.”* [Child]
- *“To play and have fun. To have a rest and holidays from school.”* [Child]
- *“You have the right to play and relax by doing things like sports, music and drama. These things are important because they help your mental health and may help you to make friends.”* [Young person]

4.13 Freedom of religion and beliefs

Freedom of religion and beliefs including being able to freely and safely practice your religion and change religion was identified as an important human right by 9% of respondents. The right of children in care to have their religion respected was raised by one seldom-heard respondent.

- *“Not everyone has to believe what you believe.”* [Child]

- *“The right to practice religion providing safe places for religious communities to use.”* [Young person]
- *“Children (in care) should be looked after by people who respect their religion, culture and language.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.14 Democracy /to vote/participate in society

The right to democracy, to vote, to free and fair elections and to participate in society and government was highlighted as an important right by 8.5% of respondents. Lowering the voting age to 16 was raised by some respondents.

- *“Right to participate in Government and free elections.”* [Child]
- *“Democracy, the right to have a say in the running of the country.”* [Young person]

4.15 Be treated fairly and equally by the law

Overall, 8.2% of respondents felt the right to be treated fairly and equally by the law was an important human right in Ireland. This included having your human rights protected by the law as well as being presumed innocent until proven guilty, having access to legal representation, having a fair public trial by jury and not being unfairly imprisoned. Younger children considered this right to be more important compared with young people.

- *“Your human rights are protected by the law and we are all equal before the law.”* [Child]
- *“You have the right to a fair and public trial because everyone should get their chance to tell their side of the story.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]
- *“The right to be treated equally under the law, regardless of gender, race, religion and sexuality.”* [Young person]

Children's rights within the justice system were raised by a small number of respondents. This included the right to talk to a judge in court, for example to give information and opinions about their parents.

- *"Children should have a right to tell the judge what they think about their parents if they go to court."* [Child]
- *"Teenagers should have a say in where they live when parents' divorce."* [Young person]

4.16 No slavery

Not to be a slave was mentioned as an important human right by 6.9% of respondents. Younger children mentioned this right more frequently than young people.

- *"No slavery past or present."* [Child]
- *"I think the most important human right is freedom from slavery because the people suffer very much."* [Child]

4.17 Not to be neglected, abused, hurt, tortured

In total, 6.8% of respondents thought the right not to be neglected, abandoned, physically, sexually or emotionally abused, hurt, tortured or exploited was the most important human right. This included children not being hurt by their parents. Again, younger children (14.6%) were more likely to consider this an important human right than young people (1.1%).

- *Children have a right not to be slapped by your friends or family because that is abuse."* [Child]
- *"Parents should not hit their children."* [Child]
- *"We all have rights to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation."* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.18 Privacy

The right to privacy, e.g. to have a private life, privacy in the family home, online and in correspondences was highlighted by 6.7% of respondents.

- *“The right to privacy. No one should read our letters.”* [Child]
- *“Privacy is important because nobody has to know things you don't want them to know about.”* [Child]
- *“Privacy from parents.”* [Young person]

4.19 Job/money

A total of 6.1% of respondents felt having a job or work and money to live and support your family was an important human right. Children and young people felt all members of society should have the right to work including refugees and asylum seekers, homeless people, people from disadvantaged areas and people with physical and learning disabilities.

- *“I have a right to work when I am older.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]
- *“Everyone should have a job when they are an adult and people with disabilities should work in line with their abilities.”* [Child]

4.20 Love, understanding, acceptance, care

The right to love, understanding, acceptance, nurturing, support and care from your parents and family was put forward as an important human right by 5.6% of respondents. This right was judged to be important for children and young people’s emotional and mental well-being.

- *“The right to emotional security.”* [Young person]
- *“Parents help me to be brave and for me to be strong. They cheer me up when I am sad.”* [Child]

- *“The right to love, if you don't have love suicide happens if you feel lonely.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.21 Freedom of movement/travel

Freedom of movement or free travel between countries was considered to be an important human right by 4.3% of respondents. This included the right of refugees to move freely, for example if they are fleeing a war.

- *“Allowed to move if you are in danger.”* [Child]
- *“To go to other countries if war is on in your own country.”* [Child]
- *“If someone was being mean to you in Africa and you want to move somewhere you could.”* [Young person].

4.22 Same sex marriage/gay rights/choose sexuality

Same sex marriage, gay rights and the right to choose your own sexuality were identified as important human rights by 4% of respondents. Children and young people felt this right was important to ensure gay people feel supported and accepted. A number of respondents mentioned the recent marriage equality referendum result as a positive development for gay rights in Ireland.

- *“I think gay rights are most important in Ireland because if you are gay you would want to be supported.”* [Child]
- *“Everyone should be able to marry someone that is the same gender as them.”* [Child]
- *“No one has the right to say that you can't be transgendered.”* [Child]

4.23 Listened to/heard/ treated with respect/dignity

According to 4% of respondents, the right to be listened to and heard and treated with respect and dignity is an important human right. Respondents felt this right was particularly important to children and young people and vulnerable groups in society in areas such as education, healthcare and the justice system.

- *“Children should have a voice and be heard.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]
- *“Imagine your future was in the hands of someone else because for kids it is...it’s our future and we should be heard and listened to.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]
- *“The right not to be spoken to as if we are inferior to adults by some, not all teachers. We are younger human beings not inferior because we were born later, our generation is being stereotyped.”* [Young person]

4.24 Clothes

The right to warm and appropriate clothes and shoes was mentioned by 3.9% of respondents.

- *“The right to appropriate clothes for the climate.”* [Young person]

4.25 Have and change nationality

The right to have a nationality and the freedom to change it was identified as an important human right by 3.6% of respondents. This included the right to citizenship of a country, a passport and a national identity.

- *“The right to belong to a country.”* [Child]
- *“Nationality and freedom to change it.”* [Child]
- *“The right to become an Irish citizen and obtain an Irish passport.”* [Young person]

4.26 Own property/possessions

The right to own property and possessions was considered to be important by 3.4% of respondents. Younger children (7.4%) were more likely to feel this was an important human right compared with young people (0.5%).

- *“I think that everyone has the right to own a house.”* [Child]

4.27 Friends/be part of a group or community

According to 3.1% respondents, the right to have friends or be part of a group or community is an important human right.

- *“It is a right for us to play with our friends and make friends.”* [Child]

4.28 Happiness

Happiness was deemed to be an important human right by 2.7% of respondents. This included being happy at home, in school and in living in a happy world.

- *“A happy home.”* [Child]
- *“A free and happy world.”* [Child]
- *“To live in a happy safe environment.”* [Young person]

4.29 Not to be bullied

The right not to be bullied was raised by 2.4% of respondents and cited more often by younger children than teenagers. Bullying in schools was the most frequently mentioned type of bullying, however online or cyberbullying was also discussed. The serious impact of bullying on mental health and its link to suicide in some cases was raised by a number of respondents.

- *“No bullying in school or anywhere.”* [Child]

- *“The right for a child to come into school and not be bullied for who they are.”* [Child]
- *“Safety in relation to preventing bullying and cyberbullying.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]
- *“Some people kill themselves over bullying.”* [Child]

4.30 Asylum

The right to seek asylum in another country was identified as an important human right by 2.3% of respondents. Children and young people felt asylum seekers should be afforded the same human rights as Irish citizens, for example, housing, healthcare, education, social security and employment.

- *“To seek asylum if a country treats you badly.”* [Child]
- *“The right to asylum and to give people the basic human rights if they flee from their country.”* [Child]

4.31 A name/identity

Overall, 1.9% of respondents thought your name and identity or having a good name was an important human right.

- *“The right to a name and identity.”* [Young person]
- *“No one should try to harm our good name.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.32 Workers’ rights

Workers’ rights were judged to be an important human right by 1.9% of respondents. For example, gender and pay equality in the workforce, reasonable working hours and conditions and the right of workers to join a trade union.

- *“The right not to be used as a cheap worker.”* [Child]
- *“One thing I don’t like is that, even now, men get paid more than women even if they have the same job. I don't think that's fair at all.”* [Child]
- *“Vets and doctors are sometimes working more than 24 hours at a time. There are plenty of teachers, especially in the early years not getting pay during holidays.”* [Child]

4.33 Social security

The right to social security was considered to be an important human right by 1.6% of respondents.

4.34 Be yourself/individuality

The right to be yourself, individuality and to an identity was cited by 1.2% of respondents.

- *“The most important right is human should be themselves not to be someone else.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.35 Protest/peaceful assembly

The right to protest and peaceful assembly was mentioned by 1% of respondents.

- *“I seen videos on the news of people peacefully protesting (they inflicted no harm) and police hit them and did not let them speak.”* [Child]

4.36 Children's rights

Children’s rights were cited as an important human right by 0.8% of respondents. Respondents felt all children in Ireland should be treated equally and fairly and should be respected by adults.

- *“Treat all the children of the nation equally.”* [Child]
- *“We have the right to have a great childhood.”* [Child]
- *“Kids should be treated the same as adults...adults should treat kids properly.”* [Child]

4.37 Women’s rights

Women’s rights were highlighted as an important human right by 0.5% of respondents. This included the right of women to be treated equally to men, for example in education, the workforce and society in general. The lack of rights for women in other countries was mentioned by some respondents.

- *“Women have the right to do everything that men can do and even do them better!”*
[Young person]
- *“I would love to see men and women getting paid equally.”* [Child]
- *“Women should have the right to be free in Saudi Arabia, to leave the house whenever, to dress how they like, to have a job and to drive.”* [Child]

4.38 Not to be kidnapped

The right not to be kidnapped was cited as an important human right by 0.4% of respondents.

- *“Not to be kidnapped or sold is important because all children should live with their family.”* [Child]

4.39 Information

The right to information was identified as an important human right by 0.4% of respondents. This included information on mental health and other issues affecting children and young people.

- *“Freedom of information about issues that affect young people.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.40 Culture

Culture was mentioned as an important human right by 0.4% of respondents.

4.41 Disability rights

Disability rights were referred to by 0.3% of respondents. This included the right of children and adults with a physical or intellectual disability to be treated equally and not to be discriminated against in society as well as the right to receive special care and support to help lead a full and active life, for example in areas such as education, healthcare and housing. The right of accessibility was highlighted by one seldom-heard respondent with a disability.

- *“If you have a disability you have the right to full care and education to help and develop and lead a full life.”* [Young person]
- *“Every child with special needs should get their own SNA.”* [Child]
- *“The right to accessibility.”* [Seldom-heard child/young person]

4.42 To speak your own language

The right to speak your own language was highlighted by 0.3% of respondents. This included the right to speak Irish and to use sign language. The right for children in care to be looked after by someone who respects their language was raised by one seldom-heard respondent.

- *“Right to speak own language.”* [Young person]

4.43 Abortion

Finally, 0.2% of respondents cited abortion as an important human right. One respondent felt this was an important right which should be allowed if someone is raped and another respondent would like there to be more discussion on the issue of abortion in Ireland.

- *“I think women/girls should be allowed abortions because if it's not their fault like if they got abused.” [Child]*
- *“I think that abortion should be legal and a human right. I think we need to bring back the abortion discussion and bring it to young people because teenage girls are a group that probably need abortion to be legal the most. I think abortion is one of the only topics where adults just won't listen to us because they think we don't understand but we do, and we need to be heard.” [Young person]*

Section 5: Summary of key findings

This report documents and analyses the process and findings of a consultation process with children and young people about human rights in Ireland. According to over half of children and young people, equal access to free, good quality education is the most important human right in Ireland. The right to a home was identified as the next most important human right by over four out of ten respondents. The need to address the issue of homelessness was also highlighted.

Food and water was the next most commonly mentioned human right by four out of ten respondents and was considered to be the most important human right by seldom-heard children and young people. Equality and not to be discriminated against was the next most cited human right and was highlighted by one third of respondents.

Freedom of speech, opinions, expression and thoughts was the next most identified human right and was more frequently mentioned by young people than by younger children. The right to safety, security and protection, a family, marriage and children and to be born free and equal were the next most commonly reported human rights, all of which younger children cited more often than teenagers.

The right to healthcare and good health was the next most important human right followed by the right to life. Play, rest, recreation, exercise and sport was the next most discussed human right and younger children considered this to be more important compared with young people.

Freedom of religion and beliefs followed by democracy, to vote and participate in society were the next most highlighted human rights. The right to be treated fairly and equally by the law was the next human right identified by respondents and was judged to be more important by younger children compared with teenagers. Similarly, the next most mentioned human rights, slavery and not to be neglected, abused, hurt or tortured, were discussed more often by younger children rather than young people.

The right to be listened to, heard and treated with respect and dignity was the next most important human right, according to respondents, and was considered to be more

important to young people rather than younger children. Privacy and having a job and money were the next most mentioned human rights, with younger children stating their importance more than teenagers.

Both younger children and young people thought the right to love, understanding, acceptance and care from parents and family was an important human right. Younger children felt the next most identified human rights, freedom of movement or travel and gay rights were more important than young people.

The next most frequently cited human rights were clothes, followed by to have and change nationality, to own property or possessions, friends or to be part of a group or community, happiness, not to be bullied, asylum, to have a name or identity, worker's rights, social security, to be yourself/individuality, protest/peaceful assembly, children's rights, women's rights, not to be kidnapped, information, culture, disability rights, to speak your own language and abortion.

References

Arnstein, S.R. (1969) 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 216-24.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2014) *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020*. Dublin: Government Publications.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015- 2020*. Dublin: Government Publications.

Department of Health and Children (2000) *Our Children – Their Lives: National Children's Strategy, 2000-2010*. Dublin: Government Publications.

European Union (2000) *Charter of Fundamental Rights* (2000/C 364/01). Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

Kirby, P., Lanyon, C., Cronin, K. and Sinclair, R. (2003) *Building a culture of participation involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills and National Children's Bureau.

Lundy, L. (2007) 'Voice is not enough: Conceptualizing Article 12 of the UNCRC', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 927-42.

Shier, H. (2001) 'Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities and obligations. A new model for enhancing children's participation in decision-making in line with Article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child', *Children and Society*, Vol. 15, pp. 107-17.

Tresder, P. (1997) *Empowering children and young people*. London: Save the Children.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Available at:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>