

April–June 2020

In March 2020, schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, creating uncertainty in education. Many STEM enrichment activities for students were cancelled.

I'm a Scientist, Stay at home was launched to allow school students to stay connected with STEM from April to June. Students could log in and take part whether they were at school or at home, reconnecting with their teachers and each other.

The Green Zone (green.imascientist.ie) was part of the *I'm a Scientist, Stay at home* event for schools across Ireland. It incorporated learning from the pilot UK activity, which ran during March 2020 after schools closed (read the evaluation report: ias.im/96.13507).

The Zone ran over 6 weeks and was funded by Science Foundation Ireland.

- 80 scientists created profiles in the Zone, and 66 engaged with students in live chats and answering questions. 40 of these were new to the *I'm a Scientist* activities.
- Scientists from a broad range of areas and career stages took part. For example, Roisin Jones is a chemistry researcher at ThermoFisher Scientific, Simon Spichak works at University College Cork as a Neuroscientist, and Dimitar Shterionov is an assistant professor in computing at ADAPT Centre in Dublin.
- 191 students from 15 schools all over Ireland logged into the Zone. 12 of these schools had taken part in a previous *I'm a Scientist* activity.
- 82% of participating students came from DEIS or underserved schools.
- 25 live chats took place during the event. 147 posted questions were approved and sent to the researchers who responded with 896 answers.
- On average, 6 researchers attended each live chat session, providing students with a wide variety of roles and people to learn about.
- Each week, students voted for their favourite Scientists of the Week, with four scientists announced as winners during the event.

Key activity figures

THE GREEN ZONE	
Schools	15
Students logged in	191
% of students active	83%
Questions asked	147
Questions approved	135
Answers given	896
Scientist comments	61
Student comments	100
Votes	218
Live chats	25
Lines of live chat	3,485
Average lines per chat	235

The Green Zone was a general Zone for both primary and secondary students, with schools participating from all over Ireland.

In total, 56 teachers signed up for the activity, from 42 different schools. Feedback from teachers at this time showed us that the coronavirus disruptions made it difficult for teachers to plan and commit to the activity.

15 schools took part in live Chats and Ask. Over a third of questions in Ask were about science topics, and a quarter about careers and education. Popular topics in the Green Zone included the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, space, and the environment.

School activity

Moneystown N S, Wicklow [U] (23 12)
Inver College, Monaghan [DEIS/U] (21 13)
St Colmans Clara National School, Kilkenny (19 16)
North Dublin NS Project, Dublin [U] (15 3)
Ardgillan Community College, Dublin [U] (12 10)
Our Lady Queen Of Apostles, Dublin [DEIS/U] (11 35)
Skerries Community College, Dublin [U] (11 15)
S N MHUIRE, Meath [U] (9 21)
Meánscoil Iognáid Ris, Kildare (8 8)
Mastersons NS, Leitrim [U] (8 40)
St Pius X National School, Dublin [U] (7 4)
Clouna National School, Clare [U] (7 19)
Cabra Community College, Dublin [DEIS/U] (6 16)
Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ, Limerick (1)
Community College Dunshaughlin, Meath [U] (1 11)



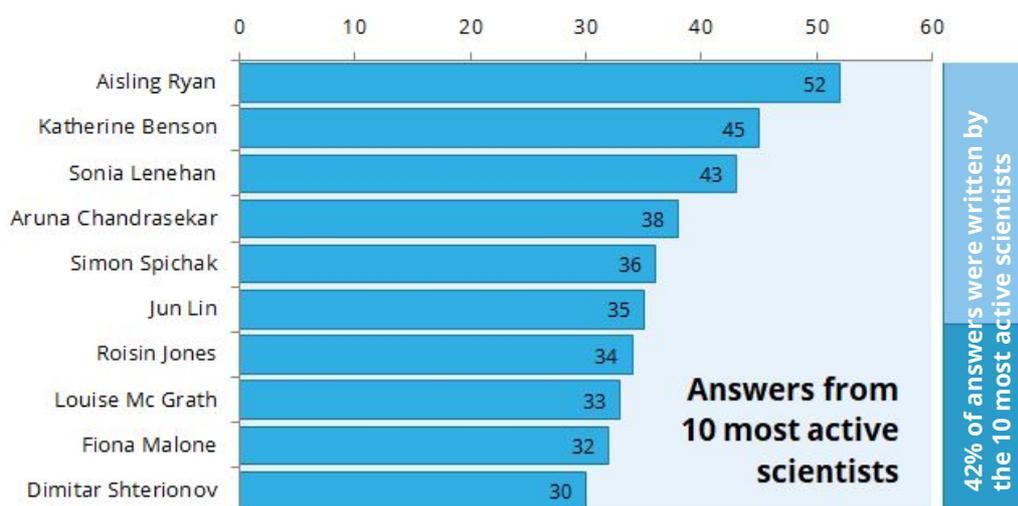
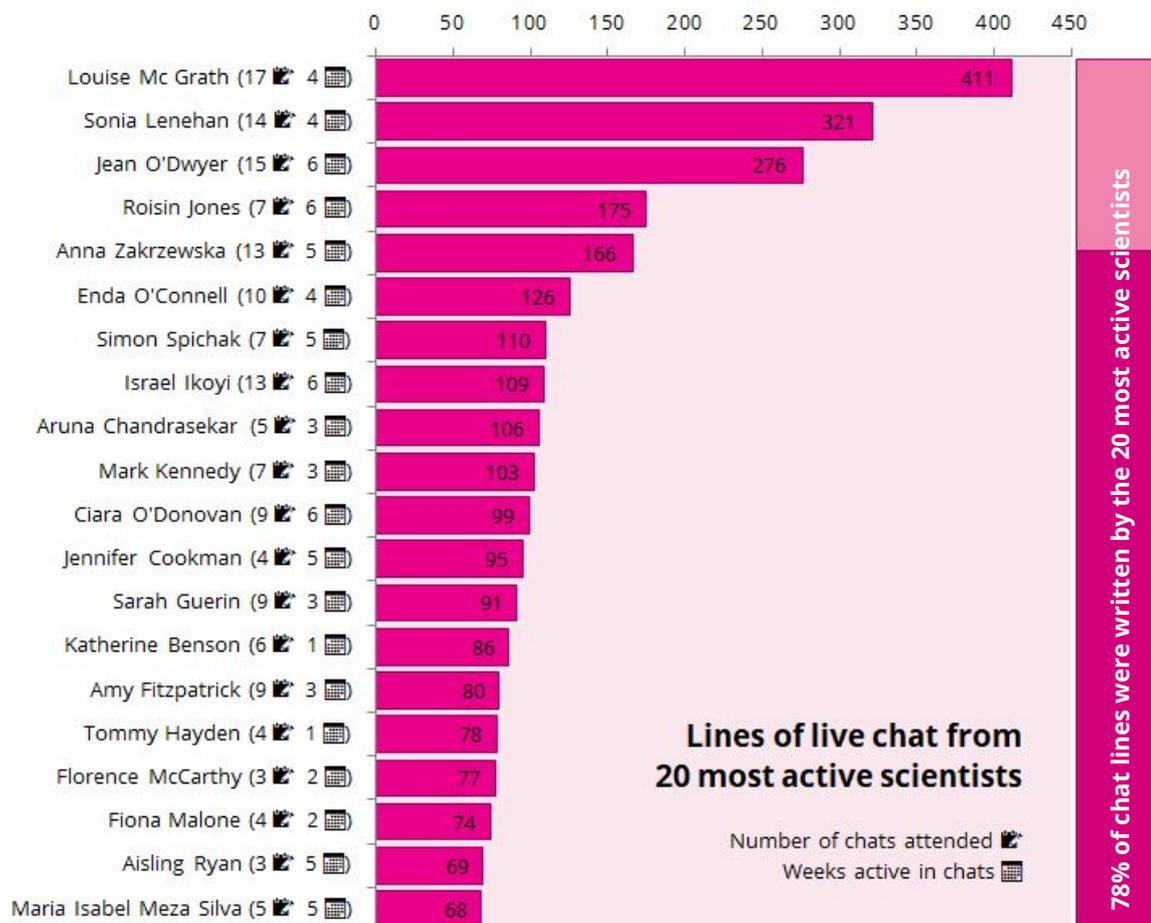
Map (above) and table (left) show schools with students who actively participated in the zone.

Numbers next to schools represent the number of active users [] and if they took part in a live chat, the average lines of live chat per active user [].

We want to increase the participation of under-represented groups going into STEM careers. Find out more, and how you can support us in working with more of these at: about.imascientist.org.uk/under-served-and-wp/

Scientist activity

66 scientists were active in the zone, writing 3,485 lines of live chat and providing 896 answers to posted questions.



See all the participating scientists: green.imascientist.ie/scientists/

Examples of good engagement

Students and scientists often discussed their experiences in school, for example in this conversation about favourite subjects. Scientists showed a genuine interest in the students' opinions and experiences, helping students to see their thoughts as valued and contributing to their science capital:

*"When you were a kid, what was your favourite subject in school?" - **Student***

"I loved Science in primary school and in secondary school I loved biology and english!"-

Sonia, Scientist

*"My favorite subject was chemistry. It was sort of like magic to me. I loved maths a physics too, they were a close second. What's your favourite subject now and why? - **Aruna,***

Scientist

*Art and Maths, strange combination you might think but they compliment each other perfectly!" - **Fiona, Scientist***

"Wow! Not sure if I would be a great scientist, only English and drama appeal to me" -

Student

*"Well, you could be anything you want to be as long as you have a passion for it. English and drama are so very interesting. Shakespeare plays are my absolute favourite. I will look forward to yours in the future" - **Aruna, Scientist***

*"Hmmmmm, I don't mind Shakespeare, but I don't think plays are what I want to do. I have already been in a production of "Bugsy Malone", but i found it incredibly nerve wracking. I want to do film acting, which I have also had experience in "- **Student***

*"That's amazing. Anything we might have already seen?" - **Aruna, Scientist***

*"No, it's not out yet, and the production was stopped because of, well, everything, but it should be in cinemas by January. I only had two lines, but it was a pretty big deal, cuz it was a Hollywood film shooting in Mayo. Plus Jamie Dornan was in it. Didn't get to see him though" - **Student***

Many conversations and Ask questions were about the coronavirus pandemic. Scientists were open about the impact on their work and lives, helping students to see them as normal people:

*"Is coronavirus having an impact on all your work or do most work at home?" - **Student***

*"I can work from home, there are a few minor limitations." - **Anna, Scientist***

*"At least you can get some work in!" - **Student***

*"Yeah, we can't see our students face to face, which is a bummer. Especially our final year students - we normally can celebrate with them but this year we can't except through zoom" - **Jean, Scientist***

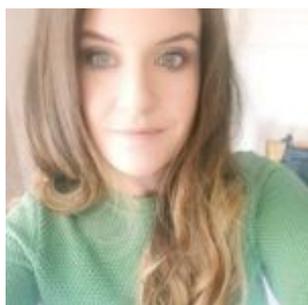
*"Maybe next year you can celebrate!!" - **Student***

*"Oh we will!!" - **Jean, Scientist***

Scientists of the Week

Students voted each week for their favourite scientist to be named *Scientist of the Week*.

The four *Scientists of the Week* were **Jean O'Dwyer, Katherine Benson, Mark Kennedy, and Louise McGrath**.



Student Winner: sarah07

As the student winner, sarah07 will receive a certificate and gift voucher for her great questions and engagement throughout the event.

Feedback

The students loved their involvement and I was amazed at some of the questions they asked.
— Teacher, Community College Dunshaughlin

The scientists are all so engaged with the kids, they are really quick with their responses and are very positive and friendly with the kids too.
— Teacher, Our Lady Queen of Apostles

Thank you sooo much we had lots of questions and you gave great answers!!!!
— Student

Thank you so much for organising this initiative! I had so much fun, it was a very rewarding experience! I learned so much from the kids and hope they learned just as much from me! It's great to see all the inquisitive minds, they all have bright futures ahead!
— Louise McGrath, Scientist

These chats have made isolation so much better, getting to hear all these amazing things
— Student

Feedback from across the Stay at home activity

This feedback is from teachers, scientists and students who took part in the Irish or UK activities.

Everything was amazing! I was astounded by the questions that the children were asking and about how well the scientists answered their questions. My class were really inspired and have realised what a wide variety of careers use Science. They believe that they can do it too. -- Teacher



Ailith Ewing
@Ailith_Ewing

I decided to take part in [@imascientist](#) to remind me why I enjoy being a scientist, to remind me what was important about my work and to learn from the enthusiasm of students and other scientists alike. It worked. I am grateful. Highly recommend to scientists at all career stages

1:20 PM · Jul 27, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

Was just as much a benefit for me as for students. Isolated working from home, the chats were just what I needed to lift my spirits and get excited about science! -- Elena Maters, Scientist

I was just so impressed by what I think is a huge effort by all involved to support and inspire young students (many of whom are struggling to keep motivated during these uncertain times). Much thought and care was clearly given to each answer and my students have all contacted me since to say that they had "the best time!" -- Teacher

I'm a Scientist has been a lifeline for me, I'm isolating on my own and it can be really lonely. I have really enjoyed chatting to students and scientists and learning so much! -- Chloe, Scientist

im so happy this was a homework enrichment! :-) -- Student

Thank you scientists very interesting answers loved this might be a scientist for my job! -- Student



Lucie Evans ▶ I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here
22 mins · 🌐

Just had the most wonderful 40 minutes of live chat with 9 of your scientists and 22 of my year 8 students. The scientists were superb and the students absolutely loved their chat time. They're scrutinising all the answers now and deciding who to vote for! Thank you so much for running this during lockdown, it's really helped to keep them motivated and engaged.



[I'm a Scientist Team](#) Retweeted



_DHSPHysics
@_DHSPHysics

Thank you [@imascientist](#) for providing our pupils with the opportunity to talk to scientists today. They thought it was "so cool" and we were very impressed by their questions! 🐼 🧠 🧐

1:32 PM · May 27, 2020 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)