

Kids' Life and Times Survey 2025

Technical Notes

Full details of all Kids' Life and Times surveys are available at:

www.ark.ac.uk/klt

Contact details:

Martina McKnight

ARK

School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work

Email: martina.mcknight@qub.ac.uk

Jonny Hanson

ARK

School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work

Email: j.hanson@qub.ac.uk

Background

The 2025 Kids' Life and Times (KLT) survey is the seventeenth carried out by ARK. ARK is a joint resource between Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University. Its goal is to make social and political information on Northern Ireland available to the widest possible audience.

Prior to the introduction of KLT, ARK had been running two annual attitudes surveys: the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey for adults aged 18 years and over (1998 to date), and the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey for 16-year-olds (2003 to date). Despite a growing interest in children's rights and needs, the opinions of younger age groups had been mostly ignored when decisions were being made about many issues involving them. Conscious of this, ARK recognised the need for a regular and rigorous children's survey that would provide easily accessible, quality research data for the academic, voluntary and government sectors, and, also, promote the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives.

Given this context, in 2007 ARK investigated the feasibility of running a survey of children in Northern Ireland and consulted with school principals, parents and children. Several survey methodologies were considered. However, in order to maximise coverage and response, an online survey based in schools was seen as the most appropriate, given that all primary schools in Northern Ireland have internet access as part of the Classroom 2000 (C2k) initiative (<http://www.c2kni.org.uk/>). The first KLT survey took place in 2008.

The 2025 survey builds on the success of the previous KLT surveys and uses the same methodology to assess the views of Primary 7 (P7) children in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork for the 2025 survey was carried out between 10 March – 2 May 2025.

Acknowledgements

The KLT team would like to thank the following organisations for funding modules in the 2025 KLT survey:

- The Mental Health Champion NI.
- QUB - recipients of an ESRC grant (PI Dr Siobhan McAlister).

We would also like to say thank you for the help, advice and support given by the following:

- The Department of Education (DE) for providing school contact details.
- C2kni for advising primary schools that the survey was available for completion.

We particularly appreciate the time and effort taken by everyone involved in each school and the P7 pupils who participated in the 2025 survey.

Technical details of the 2025 survey

Ethical permission

Ethical permission was sought, and obtained, from the Ethics Committee based in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast.

Target population

The target population was all P7-age children in Northern Ireland. There were approximately 25170 children in total which included P7-age pupils attending 822 primary schools (this included P7-age children in special and independent schools).

In November 2024 DE provided their most recent database (2023/24) containing the names and addresses of all primary schools in Northern Ireland and the number of P6 pupils in each - as the questionnaire would be completed between March and May 2025 these P6 pupils would, by then, be in P7.

Communication with schools

On 6 March 2025 all principals of primary and special schools in Northern Ireland were sent a letter providing information on the KLT survey and advising that it would be available for completion from 10 March to 11 April 2025 (the latter was subsequently extended to 2 May). The letter contained an instruction document for teachers, parental consent forms, and a summary of the findings from KLT 2024. A contact telephone number and an email address were provided so that principals could contact the survey team for more information. While principals could request translations of the consent forms no requests were received. The letter directed principals and teachers to the KLT website where they could access the results of previous surveys and, importantly, view the content of the 2025 questionnaire. It also provided details on how to request an anonymised, confidential report based on their school's responses. Each letter included a unique three-digit identification code for that school allocated by the KLT team for administrative purposes. A link was provided to a trouble-shooting document available on the KLT website.

During April, follow-up telephone calls were made to schools that had not participated to that point and, as in previous years, this helped to boost the response rate.

Consent

Consent to participate involved three levels:

- Firstly, the school principal agreed that the school could participate.
- Secondly, a parent or guardian of each P7 pupil within the participating schools received a consent form which they were asked to complete and return to the school if they **did not** wish their child to take part.
- Thirdly, at the start of the questionnaire, each child was asked if s/he agreed to take part.

Online questionnaire

The online questionnaire was designed and administered by the ARK team in conjunction with the funders. The questions were presented in different ways to try to maintain interest, for example, clicking on words or writing into a text box. Before the survey went live, testing was done by members of the KLT team to ensure that all links/questions were working correctly.

Completing the questionnaire

Once the child agreed that s/he wanted to take part, s/he was asked to enter the three-digit school identification number. This number was printed on all documentation sent to the school by the KLT team. However, the child could also enter the seven-digit school code used by DE. When either code was entered, the full name and address of the school appeared on the screen, and the child was asked to confirm if this was the school they attended. The class teacher or other staff members could contact the KLT team by phone or email at any stage to confirm their school identification number, or get any clarification required. No further identification codes or names of children were required.

Survey content

The questionnaire took about 20 minutes to complete. Each question had a 'Skip' option which the children could use if they did not want to answer it.

Questions on KLT 2025 included:

- Home and family;
- School and bullying;
- Respect and disrespect;
- Mental Health;
- The Environment.

Response rate

Fairly accurate information on the number of pupils in primary and special schools is available from the database provided by DE, although the figures will not be exact given that some children will leave, or join, schools throughout the year.

There were 822 schools with P7-age pupils on the database provided by DE, and of these 152 participated in the survey, representing 18 percent of schools.

There were approximately 25170 P7-age children. This figure was compiled using the database provided by DE in November 2024 (see details above). In total, 4191 children logged on to the survey, a response rate of approximately 17 percent.

Table 1 shows the response rate, by school (DE and KLT) and by children (KLT), for each Council area.

Table 1: Response by Council Area

	Schools (DE and KLT)		Children (KLT) %
	DE %	KLT %	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	7	10	10
Ards and North Down	6	7	9
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	11	11	13
Belfast	13	11	16
Causeway Coast and Glens	9	8	5
Derry City and Strabane	8	9	7
Fermanagh and Omagh	10	10	6
Lisburn and Castlereagh	5	6	9
Mid and East Antrim	7	9	10
Mid-Ulster	12	7	6
Newry, Mourne and Down	12	12	10

Table 2 shows the response rate, by school (DE and KLT) and by children (KLT), for each school management type. In 2025, slightly more Catholic Maintained (48%) than Controlled (45%) schools took part in the survey. No schools from the Special, Independent or Other Maintained sectors took part in the 2025 survey. Table 3 suggests an over-representation of urban schools (53%) participated in the 2025 KLT survey compared to the figure for DE (47%).

Table 2: Response by type of school management

	Schools (DE and KLT)		Children (KLT) %
	DE %	KLT %	
Controlled	45	45	45
Catholic Maintained	44	49	47
Controlled Integrated	3	4	5
Grant Maintained Integrated	3	2	3
Voluntary	1	1	1
Other Maintained	3	-	-
Special ⁱ	4	-	-
Independent	1	-	-

Table 3: Response by school location

	Schools (DE and KLT)	
	DE %	KLT %
Urban	47	54
Rural	53	46

Table 4 presents the gender of KLT respondentsⁱⁱ. As can be seen, most children identified as boy (48%) or girl (50%) with 1% saying 'neither' and 1% opting for 'I don't want to say'.

Table 4: Response by gender

	KLT %
Boys	48
Girls	50
Neither	1
I don't want to say	1

Accessing the data

Tables of results from the 2025 survey are available on the KLT website at www.ark.ac.uk/klt.

Users can also download the data in SPSS format from the website to carry out their own statistical analyses. However, all identifying information and open-ended variables have been removed from this dataset.

Using the data

This document is intended to provide background information on the survey and the survey methodology; if you require any further technical information please contact us (see details above).

The data have been tested extensively, but if you find anything that looks like an error please let us know as soon as you can.

A helpline service is available for anyone who has a query about the survey or the results (see details below). Alternatively, you can use the help section on the KLT website at www.ark.ac.uk/klt/help/

ⁱ Please note that of the 33 Special schools with P7 pupils in 2023/24, DE figures record 31 as Controlled, 1 as Catholic Maintained and 1 as Other Maintained.

ⁱⁱ DE were unable to provide data on the gender breakdown of all pupils in P7 for this year therefore it was not possible to compare the figures.