

*...making social and
political information
on Northern Ireland
available...*

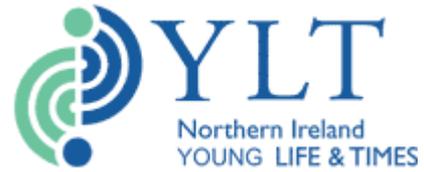


Young Life and Times 2004

**Young People's Attitudes to Politics and
Elections**

Compiled by Dirk Schubotz, Director YLT

www.ark.ac.uk/ylt



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Young People's Attitudes to Politics and Elections.

Report on the results of questions set by the Electoral
Commission

Compiled by

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Belfast, February 2005

Introduction

The Electoral Commission is a UK wide independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament in 2000. The Commission aims to increase public confidence in the democratic process – and encourage people to take part – by modernising the electoral process, promoting public awareness of electoral matters and regulating political parties. A set of questions on voting and elections was commissioned for inclusion in the 2004 Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey by The Electoral Commission. This report summarises the results of these questions. The full set of tables of results, the survey questionnaire and the technical report of the 2004 YLT survey are available online (www.ark.ac.uk/ylt). The data set is also available for downloading in SPSS format from the YLT website. YLT encourages other organisations and researchers to use the dataset for their own analyses.

Methodology

The sampling frame for the survey was the Child Benefit register. All 16-year olds living in Northern Ireland born in February 1988 and receiving Child Benefit were invited to take part in the survey. 1,983 questionnaires were sent out to the young people's home addresses. For data protection reasons, the letters were sent out by the Department of Social Development (DSD), which administers the Child Benefit data in Northern Ireland on behalf of Inland Revenue. Enclosed with the letter were the YLT questionnaire and a letter from the YLT team outlining background information about the survey. After approximately one week, a reminder postcard was sent out to all 16 year olds who had not responded. This postcard was again sent out by DSD.

There were three ways of completing the survey:

- by post, using the pre-stamped envelope provided;
- online;
- by phone.

824 16 year olds responded to the survey. This represents a response rate of 41.6%. Most respondents completed the paper questionnaire. One respondent completed the survey by phone, and 18 respondents filled in the survey online.

The complete technical report of the survey is available online (<http://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/2004/tech04.pdf>).

Results

This section summarises the results of the questions about politics and elections set by the Electoral Commission. The first two questions were concerned with political interest and knowledge demonstrated by 16 year olds.

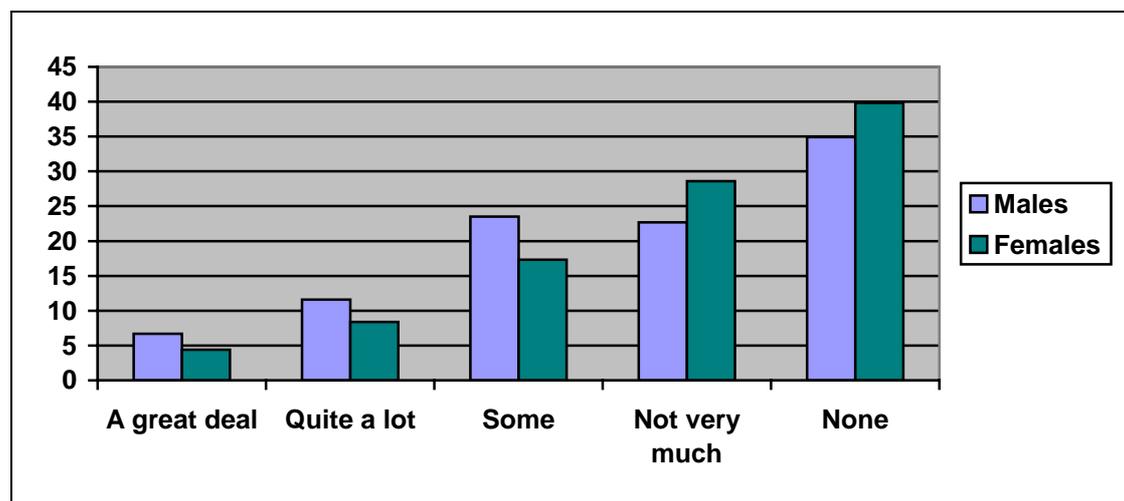
How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics?

Only 16 percent of respondents said that they had ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of interest in what is going on in politics. Over one third (37.6%) of respondents said they had no interest in politics at all and more than a quarter of respondents (26.2%) said they had ‘not very much’ interest (Table 1). Males had a slightly greater interest in politics than females. In terms of socio-religious background, those who did not identify themselves as either Catholics or Protestants were least interested in politics. Almost three quarters (72%) of these respondents said they had no or ‘not very much’ interest in politics.

Interestingly, those living in rural areas were significantly less likely than those living in urban areas to say that they had no interest at all in politics. 28.7% of those who said they lived ‘on a farm or in a country home’ and 35.7% of those living ‘in small country villages’ said they had no interest at all in politics compared to 46.9% of those living in ‘a big city’ who gave the same answer¹.

Grammar school students were slightly more likely to say that they had ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of interest in politics, followed by those attending planned integrated schools. Students from secondary schools were the least likely to be interested in politics. Figures 1 to 3 summarise the findings relating to this question.

Figure 1: Respondents’ interest in politics by gender (%)



¹ Respondents were asked to specify in what type of area they lived. The options were: a) a big city, b) the suburbs or outskirts of a big city, c) a small city or town, d) a country village, e) a farm or home in the country, f) don’t know

Figure 2: Respondents' interest in politics by socio-religious background (%)

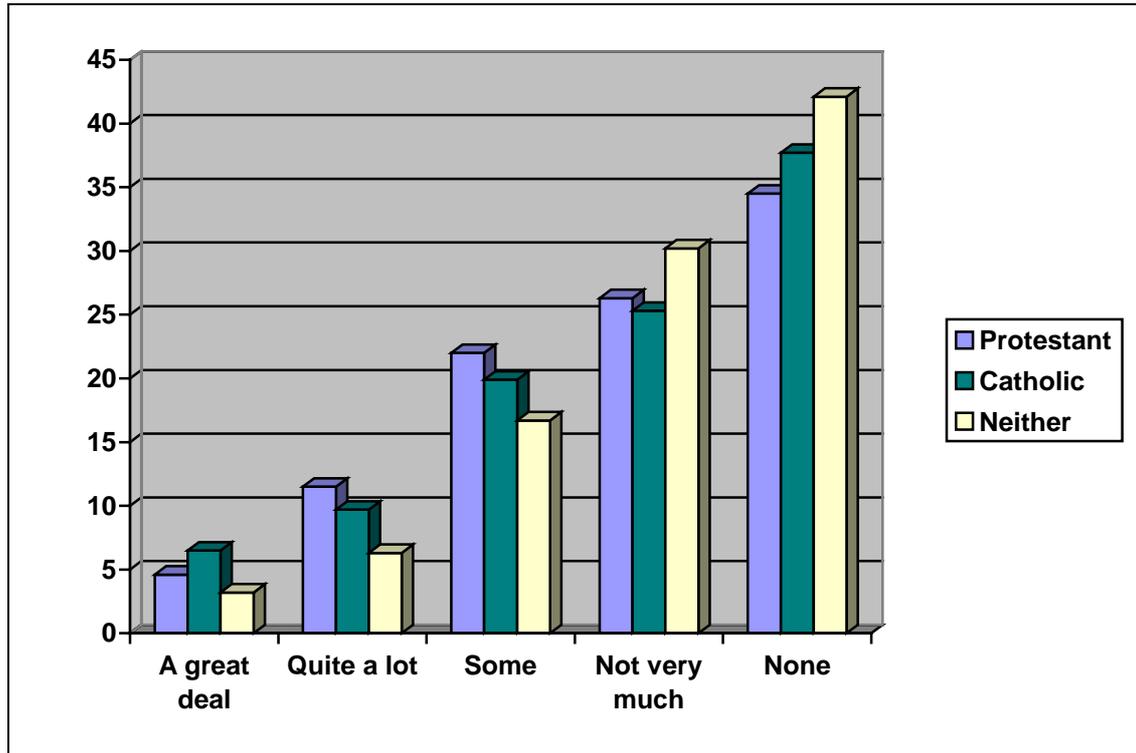
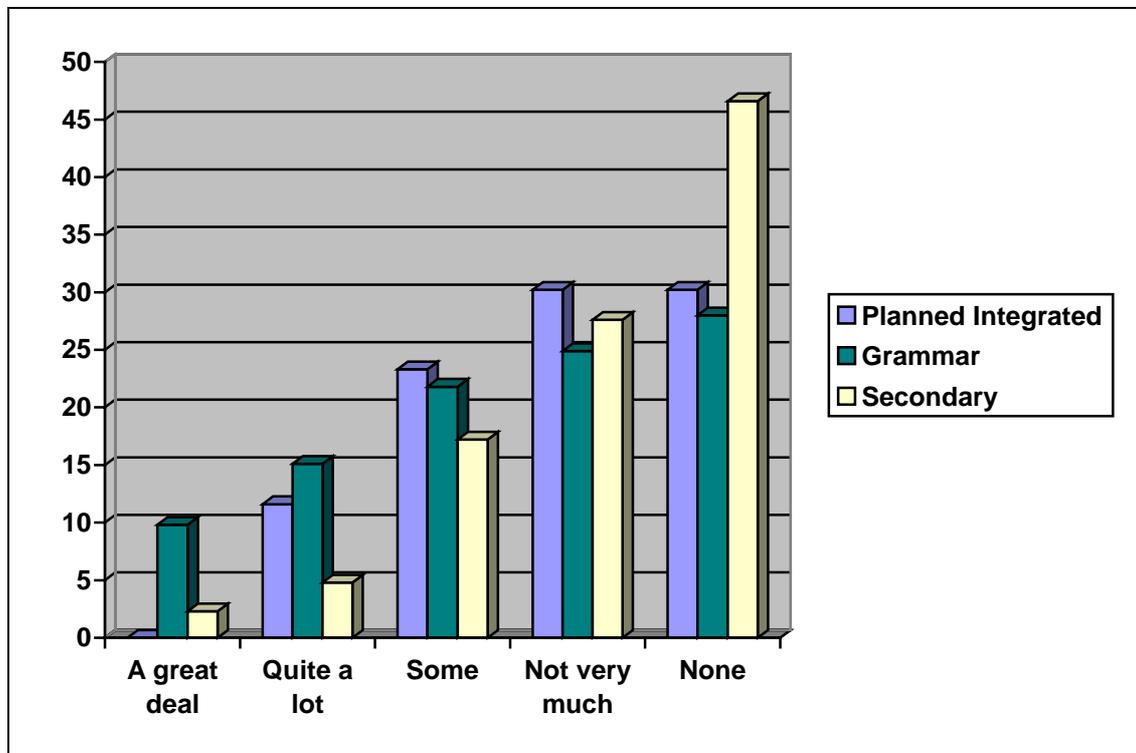


Figure 3: Respondents' interest in politics by school type attended (%)



Respondents were then asked what three current social and political issues they were most interested in. This was an open-ended question. No answer options were predetermined to choose from (except for those who wanted to say that they were not interested politics or did not know what issues they were interested in), so respondents were free to say what ever they wanted. 45% of respondents said they were not interested in political and social issues. This reflects the response to the previous question of how much interest respondents had in politics. A further 21.4% of 16-year olds responded that they did not know what social and political issues they were interested in. Less than one third (30.5%) of respondents listed social and political subject areas they were interested in. Eleven main categories emerged when the open-ended responses were re-coded in order to quantify them (see Table 1). A complete list of all political and social issues mentioned can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Areas of social and political interest of respondents recoded (%)

	1st option	2nd option	3rd option
Issues related to the Peace Process in Northern Ireland	31.9	22.1	29.0
Paramilitaries and sectarianism in Northern Ireland	8.4	13.0	9.1
Other local Northern Ireland news	2.0	3.9	5.1
Education	7.6	4.8	6.3
Environment	3.6	3.0	2.3
Wars, including Iraq war	12.4	8.7	4.5
Health issues including drugs, smoking, alcohol	3.6	8.7	5.1
Other current affairs	11.2	9.1	9.7
Other international affairs	6.8	12.6	14.8
Legal issues, crime, equality issues	3.6	5.2	3.4
Other political and social issues	9.2	9.1	10.8

How much do you feel you know about politics?

Just as with interest in politics, over half (56%) of all respondents also felt they had little or no knowledge about politics. Only three percent of respondents felt they knew a great deal, and a further 13 percent felt they knew a lot about politics. As with their interest, males regarded themselves being slightly more knowledgeable in politics than females (Figure 4).

Those who said they were neither Catholic or Protestant were more likely to say that they knew ‘nothing at all’ or ‘not a lot’ about politics (Figure 5). Responses to other questions in the YLT survey and comments from respondents would suggest that politics in Northern Ireland tends to alienate those who do not identify as either Protestants or Catholics, and they therefore lose interest and become detached from

social and political issues. It is probably this alienation rather than the lack of religious affiliation as such that contributes to the perceived lack knowledge of social and political matters among those who said their were neither Catholic nor Protestant.

Figure 4: How much do you feel you know about politics, by gender (%)

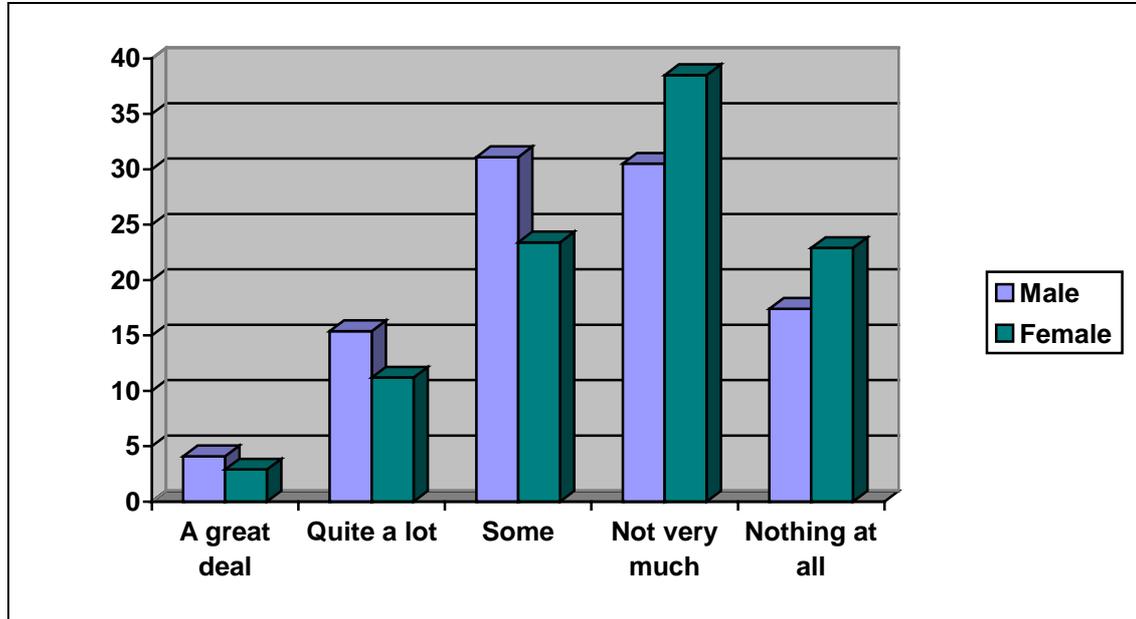
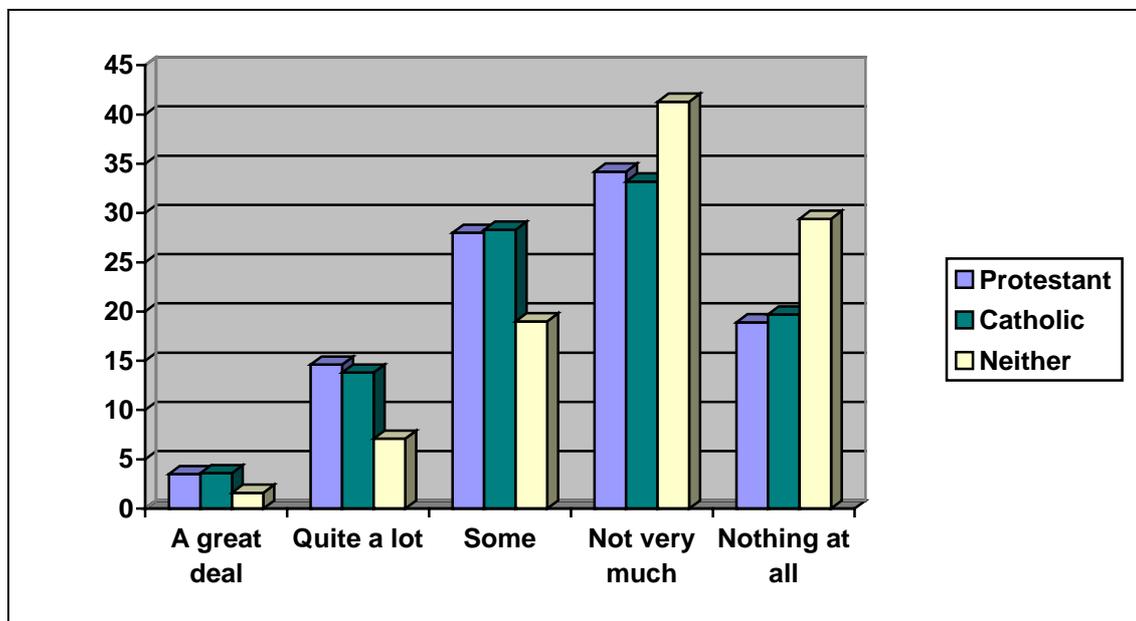


Figure 5: How much do you feel you know about politics, by socio-religious background (%)



Grammar school students were more likely to say they knew ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ about politics than students who attended secondary schools or planned integrated schools (Figure 6). Respondents living on a farm or in a country home were least likely to say they had no or not very much interest in politics (43.9 %).

Figure 6: How much do you feel you know about politics, by school type attended (%)

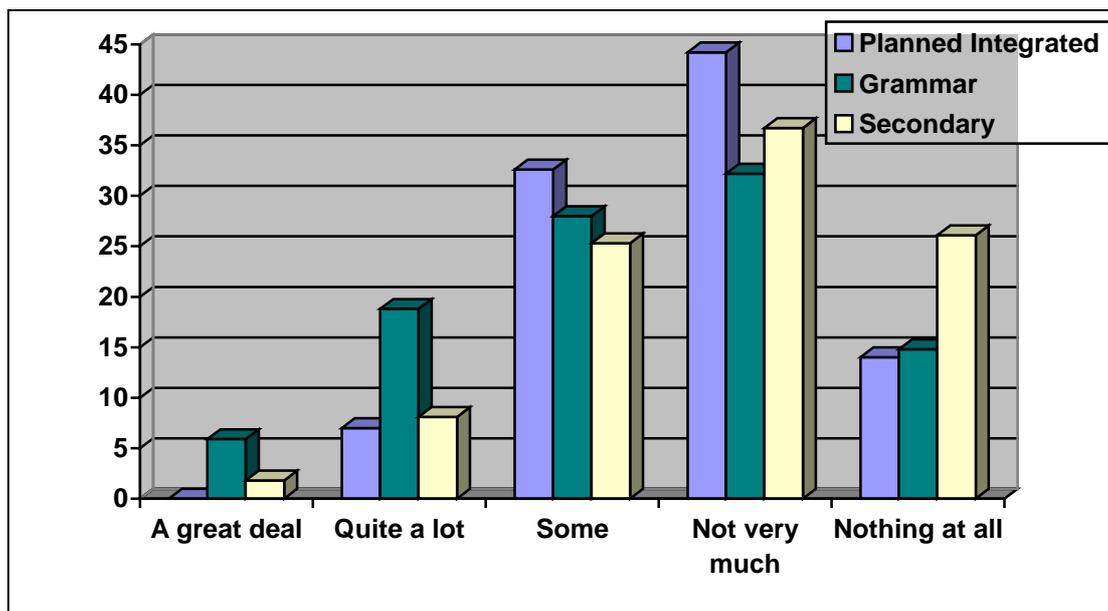


Table 2: Respondents' attitudes towards politics and elections (in %)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Schools should be required to provide lessons and opportunities for all pupils to discuss politics.	15.2	33.9	31.1	10.3	5.5	3.0
I want to have a say in how the country is run.	18.6	36.4	29.6	8.4	2.7	3.5
Being active in politics is a waste of time.	6.6	10.7	38.0	27.1	13.0	4.0
No politicians or parties represent my views.	9.6	15.4	32.8	15.0	5.6	20.1
I find the language that politicians use easy to understand.	1.9	18.3	24.2	31.1	13.3	8.7
When people like me get involved in politics they really can change the way things are run.	6.4	19.2	29.6	19.4	8.9	13.7

Respondents were also asked to choose which of the three statements below best reflected their attitudes to elections:

- a. It's not really worth voting.**
- b. People should only vote if they care who wins.**
- c. It's everyone's duty to vote.**

Despite the apparent lack of interest in and knowledge of politics, almost half (49%) of the respondents agreed that schools should be required to provide lessons and opportunities for all pupils to discuss politics. Over half (55%) of the respondents also felt that they wanted to have some say in how Northern Ireland was run. Only a small minority felt that being active in politics was a waste of time. Interestingly, around one quarter (25.6%) of respondents also believed that they could really change the way things are run if they got involved in politics (Table 2)

The second statement proved to be most popular. Almost half of respondents identified with this statement (45.4%). Over one third (35.4%) of respondents felt that it was everyone's duty to vote, whereas 11.7% of respondents felt that they could most affiliate with the statement that it wasn't really worth voting.

Males and females differed in that more males (15.1%) than females (9.3%) felt it was not worth voting, whilst females were more likely to agree than males that it was everyone's duty to vote (38.1% and 32.3%). Interestingly, nearly half (49.4%) of those saying they lived on a farm or in a house in the country felt that it was everyone's duty to vote compared with under one third (29.7%) of those who said they lived in 'a big city' (see footnote 1). 16 year old in living in rural areas were less than half as likely as those living in big cities to say that it wasn't really worth voting (farm or house in the country: 8.5%, country village: 9.5%, big city: 20.3%)

In terms of socio-religious background, Protestants were slightly more likely than Catholics to feel that it was everyone's duty to vote whereas those who said they were neither Protestant nor Catholic were more likely to say that it wasn't worth voting (15.9%). Over half of these respondents (54.8%) agreed that people should only vote if they care who wins.

Again, it seems plausible to argue here that the apparent apathy to voting among those who did not identify as Catholic or Protestant may derive from the structure of the Northern Ireland political landscape where parties that are not clearly defined as unionist or nationalist have limited electoral support. This becomes clear if one refers to the statements in Table 2 above. Among those who said they were neither Catholic nor Protestant 31.8% agreed with the statement that no politicians or party represented their view, compared to 23.5% of Catholics and 23.4% of Protestants. In terms of the statement 'I want to have a say in how the country is run' there was almost no difference between young people in the three categories. Protestants (55.3%) were only marginally more likely than Catholics (55.2%) and those who belonged to neither group (54.7%) to agree with this statement. Earlier research undertaken by Young Life and Times together with the National Children's Bureau (Ewart, S. and

Schubotz, D. et. al. 2004)² showed clearly that it is disillusionment about politics in Northern Ireland and its representatives rather than a general lack of interest in political issues that often leads to apparent political apathy among young people.

Students attending grammar schools were less than half as likely as their counterparts in secondary and planned integrated schools to say that it wasn't really worth voting, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3: Attitudes to voting by school type attended (%)

	Integrated	Grammar	Secondary
It's not really worth voting	18.6	7.8	14.7
People should only vote if they care who wins	44.2	47.1	44.6
It's everyone's duty to vote	34.9	39.5	31.6

Knowledge about elections

The great majority of respondents (95.9%) knew that only people who are 18 years of age or are entitled to vote at elections. Most respondents (88.3%) also knew that a photographic ID was necessary in order to vote. However, only a small minority (7.3%) was aware that 16-year olds can register to vote (Table 4). There was very little difference between respondents' knowledge of elections in terms of the school type they attended or their socio-religious belonging. The difference between females and males was also very small, but it is interesting to note that although males said they knew more about politics than females (as discussed above), females were slightly more likely to answer the questions on elections correctly.

Table 4: Respondents' knowledge about elections (%) (All statements are true.)

Statement	True	False	Don't know	Not answered
You can register to vote when you are 16.	7.3	86.5	4.4	1.8
You must be aged 18 or over to vote.	95.9	2.1	1.0	1.1
You need photographic ID to vote.	88.3	3.6	6.8	1.2

² Ewart, Shirley & Schubotz, Dirk et.al. (2004): Voices Behind the Statistics. Young People's Views of Sectarianism in Northern Ireland. National Children's Bureau. London (www.ncb.org.uk/resources/voices_behind_statistics.pdf)

Participation in political activities

567 out of the 824 respondents had taken part in at least one political activity over the past 12 months. This represents 81% of the respondents. By far the most popular activities were fundraising for charities (53,9%) or the participation in sponsored events (40.4%), which were the two least ‘political’ activities on the list of possible actions. This is confirmed by the finding that in terms of participation in fundraising activities, there was virtually no difference between those who said they had a great deal of interest in politics and those who said they had not very much interest (56.8% and 56.5% said they raised funds). Just under one quarter of respondents said they had signed a petition in the previous year. Actual campaigning, taking part in demonstrations, pickets or marches or boycotting projects for political, environmental or ethical reasons were significantly less popular activities among respondents. Here, interest in politics had a significant impact on whether or not 16 year olds did boycott products or not. Those who said they had a great deal of interest in politics (31.8%) were almost fourteen times more likely than those who said they had no interest in politics (2.3%) and still almost twice as likely as those who said they had quite a lot of interest in politics (16.3%) to have boycotted products. Just 13 respondents (1.6%) said they had joined a party or campaigning organisation (Table 5).

Table 5: Activities respondents had taken part in past 12 months (%)

Helped with fundraising or collected money for charity	53.9
Taken part in a sponsored event	40.4
Signed a petition	24.5
Campaigned on behalf of a group or charity	13.3
Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march	10.2
Worn a political badge	6.4
Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	6.3
Joined a political party or campaigning organisation	1.6
None of the above	24.3
Other activity	4.9

Generally, it appears that the less directly political an action was the more likely respondents were to have taken part in it. However, there was a marked gender difference in the type of activities respondents had taken part in. For example, 47% of females compared to just 31% of males said they had taken part in a sponsored event. Females were also more likely to have helped with fundraising or collecting money for charities (64% compared to 40%) or to have signed a petition (30% and 18%). Males, on the other hand, were slightly more likely than females to have taken part in demonstrations, pickets or marches (13% and 8%), to have boycotted certain products (8% and 6%) or to have joined a political party or campaigning organisation.

Little difference was found in this respect between Catholics and Protestants. However, those respondents who said they were neither Catholic or Protestant were

significantly more likely to have not taken part in any of the activities listed, as Table 6 shows.

Table 6: Respondents, by religious affiliation, saying they had... (%)

	Catholic	Protestant	Neither
Helped with fundraising or collected money for charity	56	58	40
Taken part in a sponsored event	42	45	25
Signed a petition	26	24	23
Campaigned on behalf of a group or charity	13	15	10
Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march	10	11	9
Worn a political badge	7	8	2
Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	6	7	8
Joined a political party or campaigning organisation	2	1	2
None of the above	24	20	37
Other activity	5	5	6

Table 7: Respondents, by school type, saying they had... (%)

	Integrated	Grammar	Secondary
Helped with fundraising or collected money for charity	55.8	65.3	44.3
Taken part in a sponsored event	39.5	47.1	35.4
Signed a petition	23.3	32.5	17.5
Campaigned on behalf of a group or charity	16.3	16.2	10.9
Taken part in a demonstration, picket or march	11.6*	10.6	9.9
Worn a political badge	4.7*	6.2	7.3
Boycotted certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons	2.3*	9.2	4.3
Joined a political party or campaigning organisation	0*	2.8	0.3*
None of the above	18.6	15.7	31.4
Other activity	4.7*	4.8	5.1

* n ≤ 5

Students attending secondary schools were significantly less likely than students from planned integrated or grammar schools to say that they had not taken part in any of

the listed political activities. In fact they were twice as likely as grammar School students not to have taken part in any political activity. However, the differences in the more political activities (beyond the relatively safe signing of a petition or collecting charity money) were less dramatic, as Table 7 shows. Grammar school students were for example only slightly more likely than respondents who attended secondary schools to have taken part in a demonstration, picket or march. A list of all other political activities respondents took part in is attached in Appendix 2.

Summary and Discussion

When asked generally about their interest in politics, respondents to the 2004 YLT survey appeared relatively disinterested. On this general level, the perceived knowledge about politics was similarly poor. However, when asked more specifically, over three quarters of respondents had actually taken part in some form of social or political activity over the past twelve months, although the activities they were most likely to take part in were social activities that were unlikely to involve any great personal sacrifices or efforts, such as fundraising or taking part in sponsored events. Interest in politics did only partially determine whether or not YLT respondents had taken part in these activities. Participation in more open and risky political activities such as demonstrations or pickets were less common among respondents and depended on a great deal of political interest.

At this level of data analysis it is difficult to hypothesise about the reasons for this pattern. A possible explanation could be that it is regarded as politically accepted and even expected behaviour to raise funds for good causes. Schools often encourage this with initiatives such as uniform-free days for charities or charity car washes, to name just two quite common activities. Young people in Northern Ireland grow up in an environment where collections for perceived good causes or for charities are common and promoted on a regular basis.

Secondly, for 16-year olds, many means of active political participation have only just become available. Not all schools have working school councils through which young people could have practiced and developed a taste for active participation and decision-making. Few are involved in clubs or youth initiatives that operate participatory structures of decision-making. At age 16, many young people may only just have developed an interest and enough confidence and maturity to even consider an active participation in politics.

Furthermore, the participation in elections, which are often portrayed as the main method of decision-making in democratic societies, is not available to 16-year olds. They have to wait for another two years in order to vote and for another five years if they consider standing for elections. There are very few political representatives at a young age. From this point of view it is little surprising that only one in five YLT respondents (20.6%) disagreed with the statement that no politician or party represented their views and only one in five (20.2%) respondents agreed that the language that politicians use is easy to understand. 16 year olds are excluded from the political system in its current structures and the YLT data suggest that most of them feel alienated from this system. The comments from YLT respondents about the role of politicians in Northern Ireland exemplifies this. One respondent said:

‘Politicians do absolutely nothing to help the matter in Northern Ireland. They are overpaid, useless and only aggravate problems.’

Another respondent said:

‘When we get proper politicians I will think about political issues.’

A third respondent even blamed politicians for the conflict around Holy Cross Primary School in North Belfast:

‘When there was the trouble at Holy Cross Girl's Primary School I was on holiday in Majorca. It was the main news on Sky News; it was the first time I realised how sad and pathetic a lot of people in my country are. I was embarrassed to say I was from Northern Ireland. I put a lot of the blame on our politicians. How can they expect to move forward if they won't even talk to one another?’

A closer look at the group of 16-year olds who identified as neither Catholic nor Protestant gave further evidence for this position. Respondents in this group were more likely than Catholics and Protestants to say that it wasn't worth voting and more likely to agree that people should only vote if they care who wins. This could partially be explained with the finding that respondents in this group were also more likely to feel that no politicians or party represented their view. On the other hand, in terms of the statement ‘I want to have a say in how the country is run’ there was almost no difference between young people in this group and their Protestant and Catholic counterparts. Over half (55%) of all respondents felt that they wanted to have some say in how the country they live in is run and only 17% agreed that being active in politics was a waste of time. Over one quarter of respondents also felt that they could make a difference if they got involved in politics. This shows clearly that young people in Northern Ireland are not as disinterested in politics as it seems at first glance.

In terms of their knowledge about voting, the vast majority of 16-year olds were able to answer the questions on the electoral system correctly, which would indicate that young people's knowledge is not as bad as they themselves perceive it to be.

In conclusion, one could argue that the lack of interest in politics that YLT respondents have expressed refers to the existing political system in Northern Ireland from which 16-year olds are not only excluded but also alienated. This political system is dominated by middle-aged male politicians which in the eyes of YLT respondents reinforce the existing segregation in Northern Ireland society. If young people felt their input would make a difference and their voices would be heard, it seems that a greater number of young people could be recruited to play a more active role in politics.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Social and politics issues of interest

Q: Thinking about social and political issues in the news, which three issues interest you most?

(All open-ended responses. Number of identical responses highlighted in brackets. A summary and categorisation of all issues mentioned can be found in Table 1 of the report)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| - 11 plus | - American politics and elections | - Attacks on homes, building (nearby) |
| - 11-Sep | - American presidency | - Attempting to bring peace and a suitable agreement to the country |
| - 12th July Parades especially Drumcree | - And how Pathetic some assembly are with not agree or making an effort to make things work! | - Bad government decision eg. Poor policing |
| - 3rd world problems | - Animal rights | - Bank rates |
| - Abortion (2) | - Anti War | - Banning of fox hunting. |
| - Abortion campaigns | - Any sectarian attacks | - Bans and laws changing |
| - Abortion laws | - Anything in my community. | - Being in the EU |
| - About drug etc. | - Anything that will affect me personally. | - Benefits |
| - Achievements by local people | - Arguments | - Between Catholics and Protestants |
| - Advances in cross community relationships | - Arts and leisure funding. | - Boiling issues |
| - African issues | - Assembly | - Bomb Queries |
| - Agreement between parliamentary groups | - Assembly activities (if any) | - Bombings & Conflict within countries |
| - Agriculture | - Assembly breaking down | - Bombs |
| - Agriculture + CAP reform | - Asylum seekers (3) | - Bringing some how both religions together. |
| - American elections. | - Attacks | - Budget |
| - American politics | | |

- Bush
- Business
- Business Progression
- business/economy
- Catholic + Protestant fevers
- Cease fire
- Chechen / Russia crisis
- Child abuse
- Children's rights
- College debts
- Commissioning
- Community issues
- Community relations
- Conflict (2)
- Conflict in other countries
- Constant talk at Stormont
- Corruption
- Crime (3)
- Crime + Punishment
- Crime against minority's
- Crime and justice
- Cross community projects (3)
- Current Affairs (3)
- Current affairs i.e. war
- Dead locked assembly
- De-arming of IRA
- Decision to offer money to 16 + who continue education
- Decommissioning (4)
- Decommissioning/Policy Board
- Demilitarisation of UFF
- Demilitarisation of UVF
- Designer baby debate
- Development in NI situation
- Different political parties opinions
- Discrimination
- Don't know much about them!
- Drug abuse
- Drug Laws / Abuse
- Drug Problems
- Drugs
- Drugs issues
- Drumcree parade (3)
- DUP & Sinn Fein going to Leeds Castle
- DUP + Sinn Fein Talks
- Ecology
- Economy (2)
- Education (21)
- Education (pass + rates ideas)
- Education matters
- Education system to do away with grammar schools which should not happen, selection happens in all areas of life, get to it. It will lead to a falling in standards.
- Educational issues (3)
- Elderly care in N.I.
- Election results
- elections
- Elections (14)
- Employment (2)
- Endangerment of animals. Stop killing them then we can stop complaining that there's none left
- Entertainment
- Environment problem

- Environmental issues (9)
- Environmental protection
- Ethnic attack
- Euthanasia
- Executive
- Fair policing
- Fair/equality
- Family benefits
- Famine
- Farming (2)
- Fighting (2)
- Finance (2)
- Football (2)
- Football news
- Foreign affairs (3)
- Foreign news
- Foreign Policy (2)
- French ban on head scarves
- Gaining equality for everyone.
- General
- General local news
- George Bush's idiotic decisions and peoples reactions to them
- Getting a developed government.
- Getting side of sectarianism in politics.
- Giving power book to Stormont
- Global Events
- Global Pollution
- Global Warming
- Globalisation
- Good Friday agreement
- Good Friday agreement
- Good Friday agreement (10)
- Good Friday agreement process
- Government bias travels republications
- Government spending
- Government working together
- Growing problem of racism
- Head Lines
- Health (5)
- Health + Education service
- Health care (4)
- Home rule/British rule
- Homelessness (2)
- Homelessness/poverty
- Housing (2)
- How police will deal with attacks on people
- How the politician represents the community where they are
- How the talks going
- Hunger stackers
- I am more interested in world issues.
- I for school
- If attacks happen
- Immigrants
- Immigration (2)
- Improving life for everyone.
- Increase in obesity
- Increasing racism & Sectarianism & Discrimination of homosexuals
- Info. on education.
- Interface areas
- International relations
- Intimation of Minorities
- Intimidation
- IRA
- IRA decommissioning

- IRA not being taken away when they should be
- Iraq - George Bush build up
- Iraq (5)
- Iraq relations with middle east
- Iraq war
- Iraq war - war on terrorism (2)
- Iraq war (6)
- Iraq war blame
- Irish Studies
- Jobs (2)
- July 12th (2)
- lack of hospital in Tyrone
- LEDUS + MEDUS
- Leeds castle meeting
- Leeds Castle Talks
- Leisure
- Local affairs (peace process)
- Local crime
- Local elections
- Local events (2)
- Local issues
- Local news (2)
- Local Politics
- Local sport
- Looking a teenage large drinking
- Loyalists threats
- Main difference between Nationalists and Unionists
- Major crisis around the globe
- Make up of N.I. Assembly.
- Marches
- Media effluence on politics.
- Medical
- Medical research discoveries
- Military Politics
- Minimum wage
- Money
- Money/benefits from government.
- Money/Tax
- More Protestant politics get away with everything and it should not be allowed.
- More sport programmes for young children to help combat obesity
- murders.
- Music news
- My local area
- N Irelands
- N. Ireland issues
- N. Ireland peace process (2)
- N.I affairs
- N.I. & the trouble
- N.I. Government (2)
- Natural disasters
- Need of others
- Neither the Republic of Ireland / Britain really care about N.I's future.
- New legislations by the government
- NGO, ie IMF, World Bank, WTO
- NHS, Taxes
- Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland agreement.
- Northern Ireland assembly (3)
- Northern Ireland leaving the UK
- Northern Ireland politics
- Oil prices
- Olympics and things happening there
- Omagh Bombing

- Only general social or political issues which are relevant to the people
- Open issues
- Orange marches at interfaces
- Orange order Parades
- Our politics (Northern Ireland)
- Our world leaders
- Out of hours cover - G.Ps - Patients.
- Palestine & Israel
- Parades (3)
- Parades being banned
- Parades Commission
- Paramilitaries (4)
- Paramilitary activities (2)
- Paramilitary attacks (4)
- Paramilitary decommissioning
- Paramilitary groups
- Paramilitary related offences
- Paramilitary violence
- Party compensatives
- Party elections
- Party policies
- Party politicals
- Paying taxes
- Peace - Good Friday agreement
- Peace (2)
- Peace agreements
- Peace talks (4)
- Peace talks in N. Ireland.
- People forced to move house/intimidation
- Personal safety issues
- Plans to tackle racism sectarianism
- Police Ombudsman inquiries
- Police work
- Police/Law/Rights
- Policing (2)
- Political actions
- Political parties
- Political parties trying to bring peace to N.I.
- Political stability
- Political talks (elections)
- Politics
- Politics in the whole of Ireland is general-particularly in the north.
- Politics within Northern Ireland
- Pollution (2)
- Poor service provide by NHS
- Poverty (3)
- Power sharing talks.
- Power struggle republicans and paramilitary
- Presidential elections (USA)
- Preventing sectarian violence.
- Probing enemy
- Problems
- Progress of the NI assembly.
- Proposed on fox hunting
- Protestants + Catholics
- Public service investments.
- Queen Mother
- Racial attacks.
- Racism (3)
- Racism going on in Northern Ireland
- Racism/racist attacks in NI

- Rapes
- Receive of Good Friday agreement
- Recent world events
- Reconciliation projects
- Relation between religion
- Relation with other countries (Iraq)
- relationship between nationalists & Unionist
- Religion
- Religious discrimination
- Religious division
- Religious violence
- Republican issues
- republican/unionist
- Republicanism
- Republicans in government
- Resettlement of local Gov.
- Results of the elections
- Return to power sharing
- Rise in rent
- Road services
- Sadam attacks
- Schools (3)
- Sectarian
- Sectarian conflict and resolutions
- Sectarian Violence
- Sectarianism (12)
- (Stopping) Sectarianism
- Sex
- Sexual activity among young people
- Siege in Russia
- Sinn Fein (2)
- Sinn Fein DUP fighting all the time
- Sinn Fein/IRA (2)
- Situation in Iraq
- Six Countries
- Solving conflicts
- Solving the Northern Ireland problem
- Sometimes American issues
- Sporting
- Sports (11)
- Sports news
- Starvation
- Statement in the political process in NI
- Stock market
- Stormont (2)
- Stormont assembly (2)
- Stormont meetings
- Stormont suspension
- Strikes e.g. civil servants
- Substance abuse among young people
- Talks at Leeds castle
- Targeting of vulnerable.
- Taxes (3)
- Teenage
- Teenage violence
- Terrorism (11)
- Terrorism / War
- That both sides have freedom of speech
- The Belfort rows on T. V. between different religions communities
- The change the Euro brought to Ireland
- The comment aftermath of the war in Iraq
- The conflict in Northern Ireland
- The devolved government

- The ethnic minorities being targeted.
- The EU Constitution
- The Euro
- The general elections
- The Government in general
- The health device
- The influence of the media on politicians.
- The intimidation from the IRA
- The IRA ceasefire and the UDA-UVF ceasefire
- The Leeds talks
- The NHS (4)
- The peace issues - makes me happy
- The Peace process (13)
- The people who are meant to run our country
- The pound being changed
- The rising of student fees
- The Russia school things
- The Russian 'war on terror'
- The smoking ban
- The State of N Ireland Government
- The state of the NI assembly generally following NI politics
- The 'Statement' in the assembly
- The troubles
- The unravelling of the PSNI
- The US presidency election
- The way people are being treated in other poorer countries and what if anything is being done to provide help for them.
- Things for young people
- Tilling.
- Tony Blair with fox hunting
- Tornadoes in Florida
- Transport
- Transport system
- Transportation
- Trouble between loyalist + republicans.
- Trouble in Russia
- Troubles in N. Ireland (2)
- Trying to force Catholics out of the North of the Country
- Tuition fees (2)
- U.S. Government
- Underage drinking
- Underage drugs
- Unemployment
- United Ireland (4)
- University fees (2)
- University top-up fees
- Upcoming election
- Violence (2)
- Violence within religious groups
- Voting (2)
- War (10)
- War (Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan etc.)
- War + terrorism
- War anywhere
- War around the world
- War in countries
- War in Iraq (10)
- War of the Middle East
- war on terrorism

- War throughout the world.
- War updates
- War! I think we are trying to force people to live like us when they/we don't understand us/them.
- Wars (2)
- Watching how things unfold in politics everyday
- Water rates
- Water taxes
- We only have the IRA Jerry Kelly and Gerry Adams.
- Weather
- What goes on in other countries
- What is going to happen with regards to terrorism
- What the Government are doing to make area safer and stult.
-
- What they have to offer for at community
- What's going on nearby
- What's happening around the world.
- What's happening round the province
- When Tony Blair is going to be voted out
- When we get proper politicians I will think about political issues.
- When will there be true equality in N. Ireland
- When will these killings stop?
- Where the government are not fitting their money
- Whether or not he Stormont assembly will rescue
- Whether Stormont is or is not holding the NI assembly
- Who is going up for election?
- Who runs Northern Ireland
- Who's side has been elected
- Why do the two groups not see eye to eye (Sinn Fein, DUP)?
- WNA
- Women's rights
- World affairs
- World news (2)
- Young deaths by dangerous driving
- Young people
- Youth drinking (a lot)
- Youth issues (3)
- Youth organisations

Appendix 2: Political activity

Q: What other political activity have you taken part in the past 12 months? (all open-ended responses)

- A cross-community event - 'The Ulster Project' - where 1/2 of participants are Catholic. The other Protestant 1/2 boys, 1/2 girls - and you go to a place in the 'States' & stay with a family:- it is then that you become 'a family' - I still keep in touch with my Protestant friends, and I think that The Ulster Project needs more recognition for what it does.
- Been at school; left only about 2 months back.
- Formed a local youth political action group.
- Had a talk with active politicians + gave my views on posters and activities.
- I am interested in politics but not the petty party politics that is all too often apparent in NI. At times the situation really aggravates me. I also see things from different points of view. Hence I do not involve myself with one political party.
- I stand up for fair trade for farmers by buying as much fair trade goods as I can
- Joined a local Youth Forum to get better equipment in and around my area.
- Joined the Orange Lodge.
- Joining a British political website & researching information for them.
- Never did or would do anything because when you give money to charity my friend steals the boxes out of school.
- Taken part in the Ulster Project.
- Teenagers pollute my area a lot with tins, bottles and rubbish. How do you encourage us to stop. More Bins? Refund on bottles?
- Took part in Demilitarisation Rally.
- Took part in discussions with other people my age in respect to politics. Contributed in the running of a political website.
- Watched the twelfth parade (12th July).
- Went on a cross community program CFPNI (Children Friendship Program Northern Ireland).
- Went on work experience at a political office.
- Work for cancer.
- Written an article on the issue of fox hunting and whether it should be banned, which was published. Written a letter to my MP requesting they state their own personal views.
- Written to MP's and business people about fairness in international trade for 3rd world producers.

ARK Team

Gillian Robinson	Director
Robert Miller	Deputy Director
Lizanne Dowds	Deputy Director
Paula Devine	Research Director
Katrina Lloyd	Research Director
Martin Melaugh	CAIN Director
Brendan Lynn	CAIN Deputy Director
Ann Marie Gray	Policy Director
Patricia McKee	Senior Analyst
Mike McCool	IT Director
Anne Marie Dorrity	Programme Administrator
Dirk Schubotz	YLT Director
Shonagh Higgenbotham	Secretary

Contact Details

ARK
Aberfoyle House
Magee Campus
University of Ulster
Northland Road
Londonderry BT48 7JA

Tel: 028 7137 5513
Fax: 028 7137 5510
E-mail: info@ark.ac.uk

ARK
Institute of Governance
Public Policy and Social Research
Queen's University Belfast
Belfast BT7 1NN

Tel: 028 9097 3034
Fax: 028 9097 2551
E-mail: info@ark.ac.uk

www.ark.ac.uk



In collaboration with Queen's University, Belfast and University of Ulster