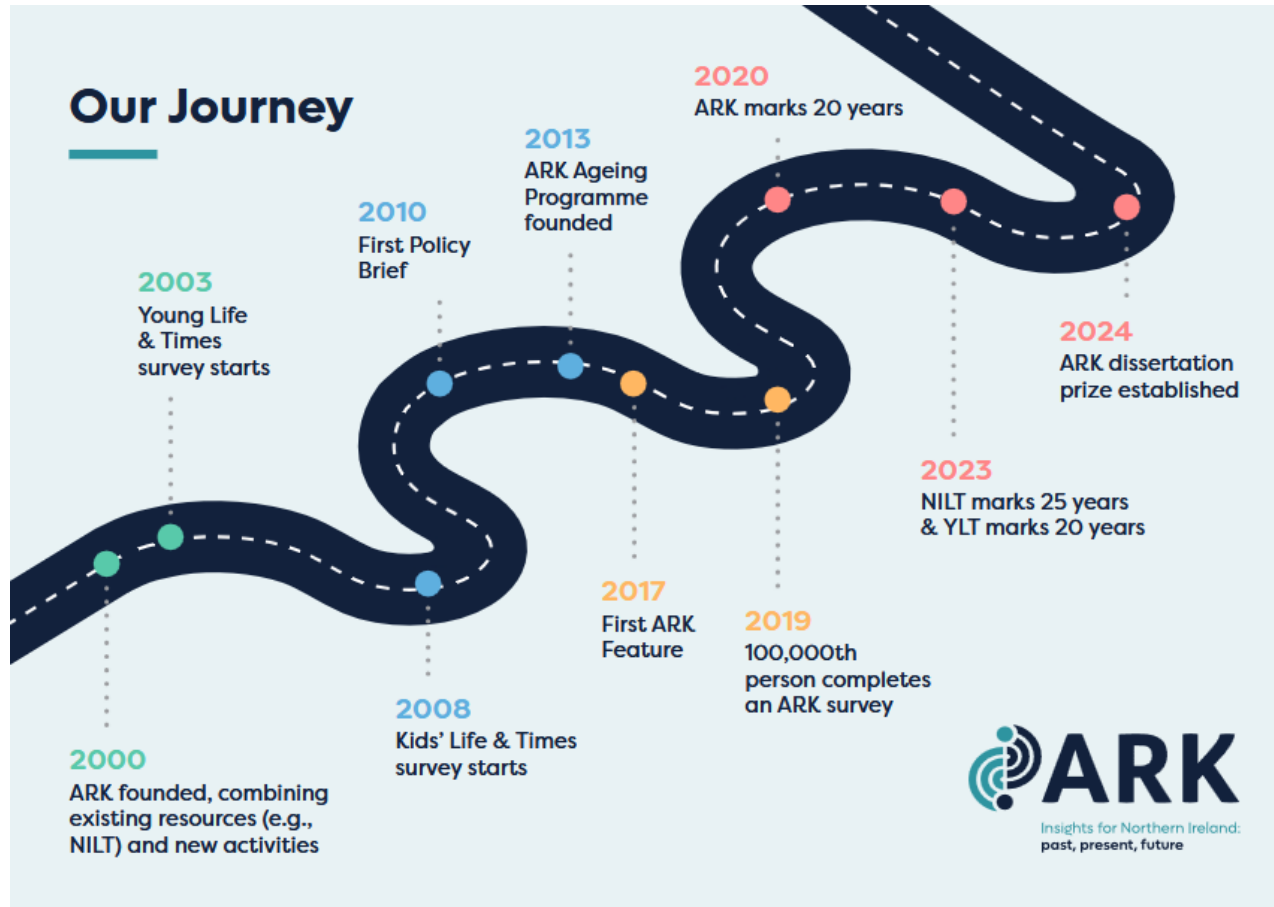


ARK at 25: past, present, future

Prof Ann Marie Gray (UU)

Dr Paula Devine (QUB)



Joint initiative across Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, established in 2000

Rationale was the need for high quality research information for the newly established devolved government

Goal is to increase the accessibility and use of academic data and research

Pioneer in open access and impact

No core funding (except 2006-2011)



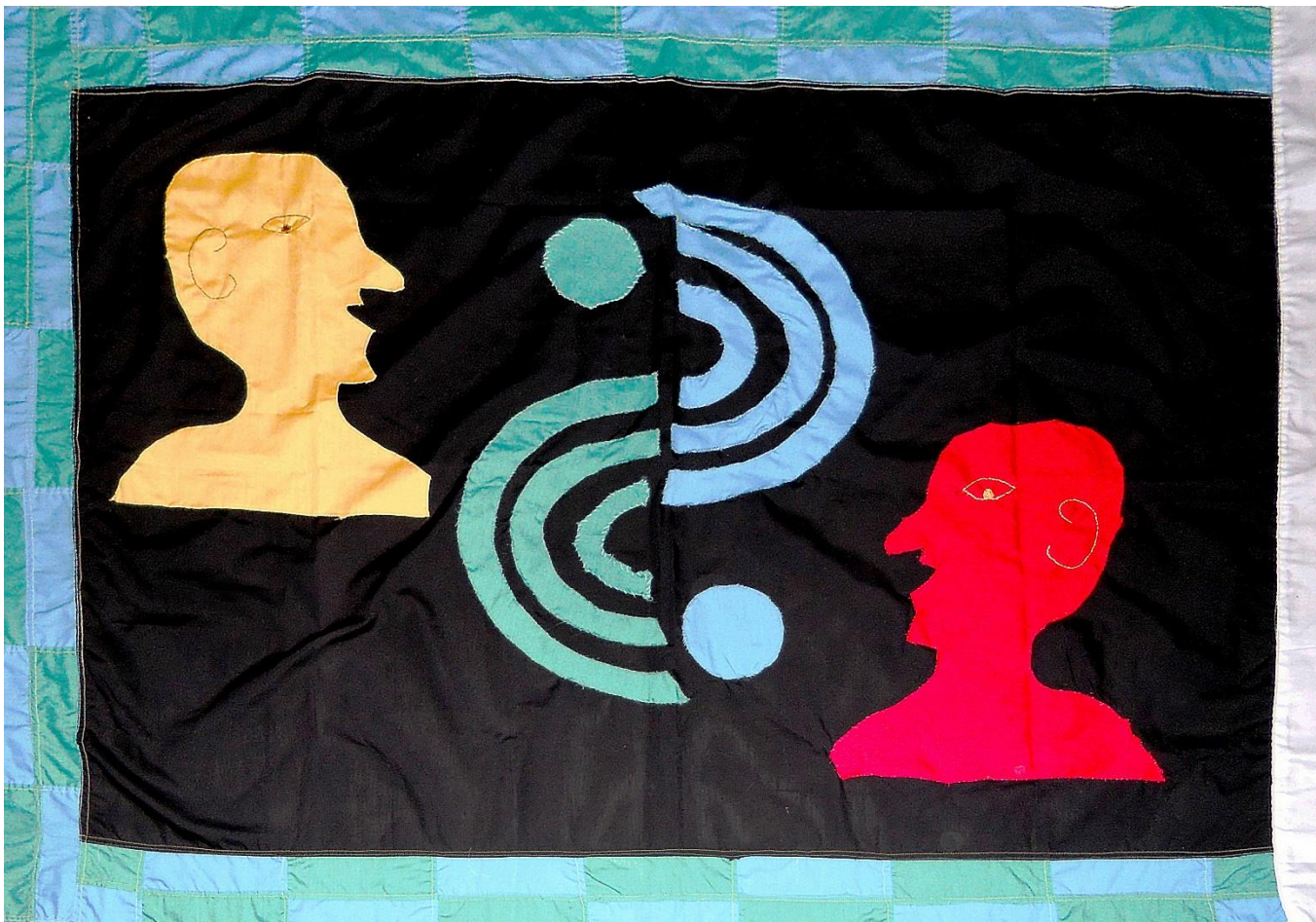
A research, policy and impact centre:

- Carry out research on key policy issues
- Make information accessible
- Support civic society with the research and evidence that it needs to build social renewal and healthy communities
- Inform and monitor policy
- Challenge policy

- Three annual public attitudes surveys
- A critical policy unit looking at some of the most challenging issues facing society and policy
- Programmes of work focused across the lifecourse, eg ageing; children and young people
- A wide range of public engagement activities

- Externally-funded research projects eg
 - Peace Monitoring Report (CRC and JRCT)
 - Hidden homelessness (Simon Community and Nationwide)
 - Men's Health (Men's Health Forum Ireland)
 - Volunteering (Volunteer Now)
 - Gender budgeting (JRCT)
 - Reproductive rights (ESRC)





ARK's users include researchers, teachers, schoolchildren, policymakers, journalists, community/voluntary sector workers ...

... and anyone with an interest in Northern Ireland society and politics.

- 1998 – Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT)
- 2003 – Young Life and Times (YLT), 16 year olds
- 2008 – Kids' Life and Times (KLT), 10-11 year olds



**3,440 P7 children did it. It was OK
- Here are some of the things that
other kids said about doing it.**

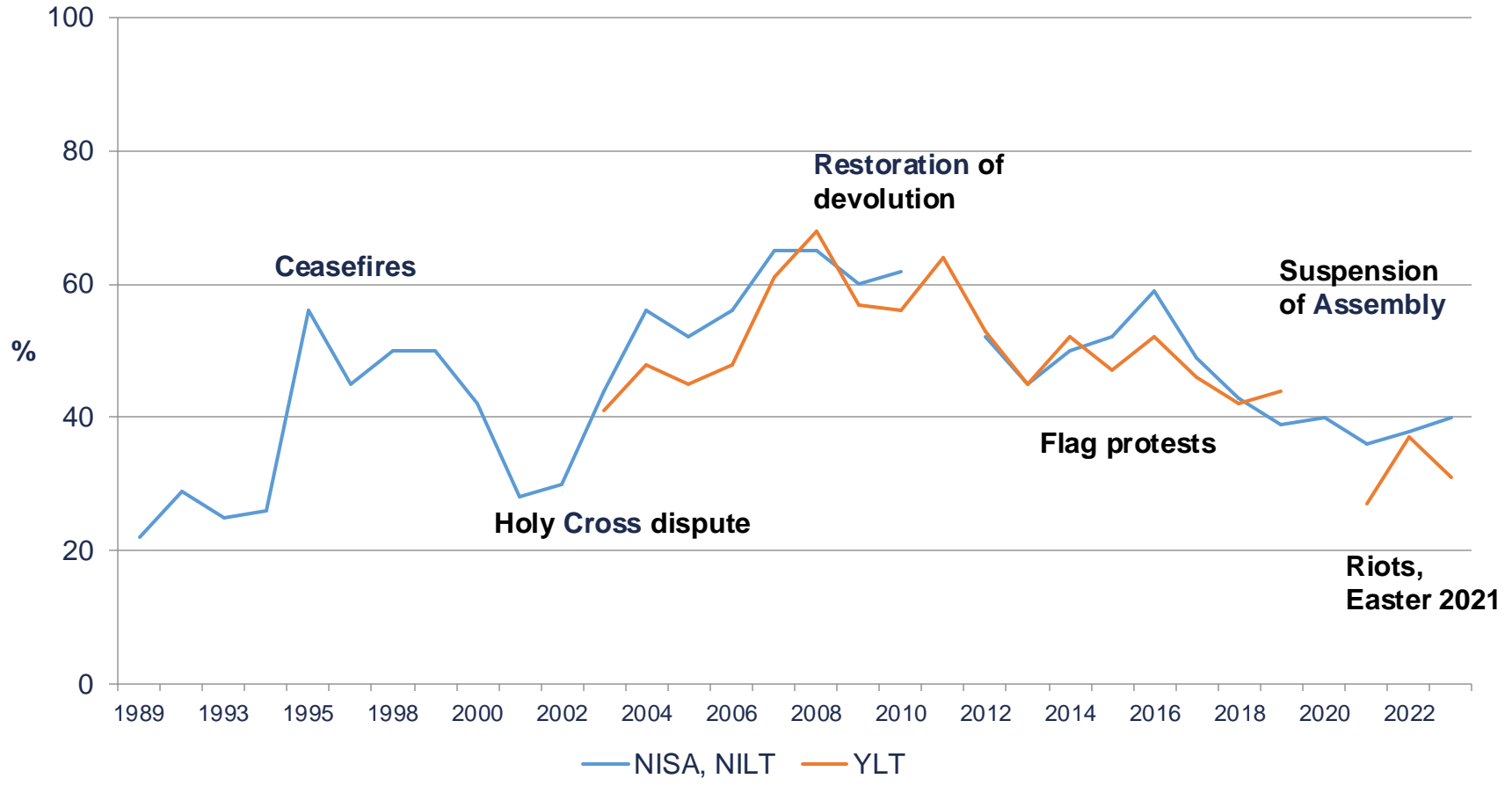
**'I think it is good to ask children their views
on things and make it fun for them.'**

**'I liked it because it gave children a chance
to express their opinions and you didn't have
to answer the questions if you didn't want to.'**

**'It was a good way to help children speak in
a way that it is not out loud but it is to other
people. It is also a good way to improve
schools and how bullying can be solved.'**

'Surveys like this let kids voice their opinion.'

% believing that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now than 5 years ago





Surveys collect data to inform social policy and contribute to public debate

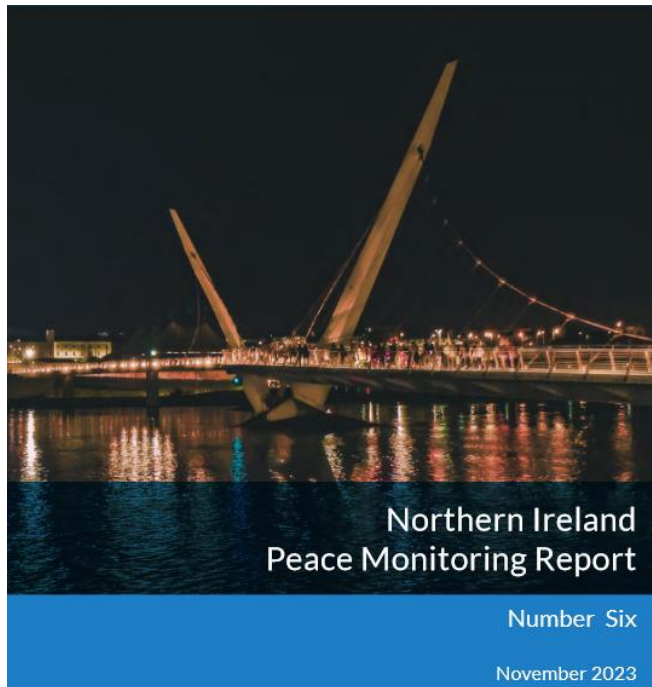
Since 1998, 136,000 adults, young people and children have taken part in the surveys

Range of issues reflects particular circumstances of NI (eg good relations) and timely social policy concerns



ARK Feature

Do social attitudes to abortion suggest political parties in Northern Ireland are out of step with their supporters?



Measure the distance travelled over time towards a peaceful and inclusive society or away from it

- Political progress
- Sense of safety
- Wealth, Poverty and Inequality
- Cohesion and Sharing

<https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2024-01/NIPMR6.pdf>

Our key mission is the same - but we have responded to change – some voluntary and some not.

NILT and YLT surveys are completely online (push from COVID)

Some issues continue to be important – eg, community relations, social care, poverty, housing

But new topics for ARK – eg, the environment, climate change and the challenges of achieving a 'just transition'

ARK team size has increased

Social media use has grown

More emphasis on engagement and communication

Some challenges remain (funding) and some are harder than before

In an era of disinformation and misinformation, AI and fake news, the need for trusted and robust evidence is even more important

ARK has shown that good research and data can contribute to evidence-informed policies - but evidence has to fight for its place

Enhanced public engagement and participation

More international collaboration given global nature of social policy and political challenges



Sign up for our
monthly newsletter



www.ark.ac.uk



ARK at 25 Events Schedule



Exhibition

ARK through the Ages -
January

Workshop

Ageism and the Arts -
March

NILT Launch

Climate Change -
May

YLT/KLT Launch

Environment and Respect -
September

Seminar

Community/Good Relations -
October

Launch

ARK at 25 -
February

Roundtable

Social Care Reform -
April

Seminar

Future Public Services -
June

Lecture

With Danny Dorling -
September

Hackathon

Social Enterprise -
November

More event and publication details at www.ark.ac.uk
or via our monthly newsletter



www.ark.ac.uk

