



Department of

Education

www.education-ni.gov.uk

Demand for Integrated Education: Findings from the 2024 Life and Times survey

By Dr Paula Devine and Dr Erin Early
ARK (QUB)

No 69, 2025



Education & Training

RESEARCH REPORT



Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency



2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

Demand for Integrated Education

**Report for Department of Education
18 June 2025**

**Prepared by:
Dr Paula Devine (Queen's University Belfast)
Dr Erin Early (Ulster University)**

www.ark.ac.uk/nilt

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Section 1: Introduction	6
Aim and format of the report.....	6
Legislation and previous research.....	7
Legislation	7
Previous research	8
Section 2: Methodology	11
About the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey	11
Technical details of the 2024 survey	11
Presentation of results in this report	14
Section 3: Results.....	15
Demographics	15
Preferences for Integrated education	16
Primary school.....	19
Post-primary school.....	29
Section 4: Discussion	36
Section 5: References	39
Section 6: Appendices	43
Appendix 1: Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted)	43
Appendix 2: Questionnaire	45

Tables

Table 1: NILT sampling	13
Table 2: Characteristics of NILT respondents	15
Table 3: Preference for Integrated school	18
Table 4: Did eldest child ever attend an Integrated primary school in NI?	20
Table 5: Five most important factors: child attended/attends an Integrated primary school.	21
Table 6: Most important factor: child attended/attends an Integrated primary school	22
Table 7: Five most important factors: child does <u>not</u> /did <u>not</u> attend an Integrated primary school	23
Table 8: Most important factor: child does <u>not</u> /did <u>not</u> attend an Integrated primary school.	24
Table 9: Most important factors: child does <u>not</u> /did <u>not</u> attend Integrated primary school....	25
Table 10: Would like child to attend an Integrated primary school: child does <u>not</u> /did <u>not</u> attend Integrated primary school	26
Table 11: Why not attend an Integrated primary school?	26
Table 12: Want primary school to transform to Integrated school?	28
Table 13: Child attend Integrated post-primary school.....	30
Table 14: Five most important factors: child attends an Integrated post-primary school.....	31
Table 15: Most important factors: child attends an Integrated post-primary school	32
Table 16: Five most important factors: child does <u>not</u> attend Integrated post-primary school	33
Table 17: Most important factor: child does <u>not</u> attend Integrated post-primary school	34
Table 18: Why not attend an Integrated post-primary school?	34
Table A1: Sampling error and confidence limits, NILT 2024.....	44

Figures

Figure 1: Preference for mixed-religion school (%).....	9
Figure 2: Preference for Integrated school	17
Figure 3: Thinking about your eldest child currently at school in NI. Do they currently, or did they ever, attend an Integrated primary school in NI?.....	19
Figure 4: Thinking about your eldest child currently at school in NI. Do they currently attend an Integrated post-primary school in NI?	29

Executive Summary

- The Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 expanded the definition of Integrated education as educating together “those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; and those of different abilities”.
- The Act outlines the duties of the Department of Education and Education Authority in monitoring and ascertaining the demand for Integrated education in Northern Ireland. However, there is no agreed methodology on how to monitor or ascertain demand.
- There is a lack of recent research investigating the factors that affect school choice in Northern Ireland, and specifically, the factors influencing Integrated school choice.
- The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey annually monitors the attitudes and behaviour of adults in Northern Ireland, thus providing an important record of public opinion to social policy issues. 1,199 adults (aged 18 or over) took part in 2024.
- When asked “*If you were deciding where to send your child/children to school, would you prefer an Integrated school?*”, 55% of respondents said they would prefer an Integrated school.
- The landscape for choosing a primary or post-primary school in Northern Ireland is complex.
- For respondents whose eldest child had ever attended an Integrated primary school in Northern Ireland, 47% reported the Integrated status of the school as an important factor in influencing school choice, and 22% stated this was the most important factor in their choice of primary school.

- At post-primary level, 17 out of the 36 respondents whose eldest child currently attended an Integrated post-primary school in Northern Ireland stated that the Integrated status of the school was an important factor in determining choice of post-primary school. Four respondents stated it was the most important factor.
- The NILT data indicate that school choice for primary and post-primary schools is driven by a range of factors, with the most important being the quality of education, the accessibility of the school and proximity to home, regardless of the Integrated status of a school.
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) provisions of the school were also reported as important factors determining primary and post-primary school choice, regardless of the Integrated status of the school. This is important within the context of the recently launched Programme for Government (Northern Ireland Executive, 2025).
- Geographical variation in Integrated school attendance is evident. Attendance at an Integrated primary or post-primary school was highest among those living in an urban area. 'No Integrated school being nearby' was cited as a reason for not attending an Integrated primary and/or post-primary school, even if respondents' preference would have been for their child to attend such a school type.
- The questions asked in the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey are focused upon *parental choice* of primary and post-primary school for their child, aligning with the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 and Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.
- Only two respondents in the 2024 NILT survey said that the choice of school was made by their child. As such, a wider discussion that elicits the views of young people on the topic could provide a broader and more holistic understanding of the factors at play in school choice in Northern Ireland.

Section 1: Introduction

Since the opening of the first Integrated school (Lagan College) in 1981, Integrated education has steadily increased in Northern Ireland (NI). In the academic year 2024/25, there were 71 primary and post-primary Integrated schools (Department of Education, 2025a), with approximately eight and a half per cent of pupils attending an Integrated primary school or post-primary school in 2024/25 (Department of Education, 2025b).

There are four school management structures in Northern Ireland; Controlled (including Controlled Integrated), Voluntary, Maintained (including Catholic Maintained and Other Maintained schools), and Grant Maintained Integrated (see Robinson, 2023 for further details). To some extent, these structures reflect the religious segregation of society. Integrated schools consist of controlled Integrated (transformation of a controlled school to Integrated status), and grant maintained (newly established) Integrated schools. In 2019, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee stated “The existence of so many types of schools partly stems from Northern Ireland’s divided past, but also reflects the demand that exists for different models of education. Many parents make a choice to send their child to a school with a particular ethos, be that an Integrated school or an Irish medium one...” (p.35). Thus, there is a need to understand the factors influencing parental demand for specific types of schools.

Aim and format of the report

This report presents findings from the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey. The Department of Education (Northern Ireland) funded questions that examined attitudes and preferences for Integrated education, measured attendance at an Integrated primary or post-primary school, and investigated factors influencing school choice. These questions provide a timely insight into attitudes towards Integrated education and parental choice on education settings in Northern Ireland under the context of the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

The report is structured into four main sections: 1) Introduction and Context; 2) Methodology; 3) Results and 4) Discussion. The key findings are outlined in Section 3 (Results), some of which are also considered according to a range of demographic characteristics of respondents (e.g., age, sex, religious background and residency in an urban or rural location).

Legislation and previous research

Legislation

Since The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, a statutory framework has placed responsibility upon the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Integrated education. The Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 extended this framework outlining that the Department of Education and the Education Authority are responsible for encouraging, facilitating, and supporting Integrated education.

Along with the development of policies, the definition of Integrated education has changed over time. The first definition was provided by The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 as educating Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils together at school. However, more recent reports such as the Independent Review of Integrated Education recommended an update to the definition of Integrated education to reflect “Northern Ireland’s changing demographic and increasing diversity” (Topping and Cavanagh, 2017, p.25). The definition has most recently been expanded in the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (‘The Act’). The Act defines Integrated education as educating together “those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, including reasonable numbers of both Protestant and Roman Catholic children or young persons; those who are experiencing socio-economic deprivation and those who are not; and those of different abilities”.

The purpose of Integrated education, according to the Act is to: deliver educational benefits to children and young persons; promote awareness and appreciation of human rights; promote equality of opportunity; promote good relations, and promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.

Section 5 and Section 6 of the Act outline the duties of the Department of Education and Education Authority in monitoring and ascertaining the demand for Integrated education in Northern Ireland, which is defined as “the extent to which parents would prefer their children to be educated at grant-maintained integrated or controlled integrated schools rather than at schools which are not grant-maintained integrated schools or controlled integrated schools” (Section 6). However, there is currently no agreed methodology on how to monitor or ascertain demand (Department of Education, 2023), though such data are required to ensure an accurate assessment of demand for Integrated education over time. A study, funded by the Integrated Education Fund (IEF), was conducted by Early et al. (2023) to review the

methods used to assess demand for Integrated education in Northern Ireland. The study identified a range of methods used, including (but not limited to) first preference applications of pupils to schools, over/undersubscription of Integrated school places, parental ballots and expression of interest forms. Although these methods provide part of the necessary evidence jigsaw to measure demand for Integrated education, these alone are not sufficient to ensure an accurate investigation (Early et al., 2024). As outlined by Early et al. (2024, p.19) “attitude surveys provide a potentially representative insight into support for Integrated education and the extent to which demand for school provisions is evident across social groups in Northern Ireland”. The complexity of the landscape in which Integrated education is situated, and specifically parental choice of an Integrated school for their child, must be acknowledged, which the questions funded by the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) in the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey begin to address.

Previous research

Previous evidence suggests that the choice of school in Northern Ireland is affected by a range of factors other than integration such as school reputation, school quality, school proximity and convenience, pastoral care and the school’s admissions criteria (Gallagher and Smith, 2002). Morgan et al. (1993) categorised factors influencing parental choice of school for their child in Northern Ireland into ideological preference, educational factors and proximity/convenience.

However, there is a lack of recent studies that investigate what factors affect school choice in Northern Ireland, and specifically, a lack of evidence exploring the factors influencing Integrated school choice. This highlights the importance of the questions funded by the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) in the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey to fill an evidence gap, whilst also working to assist the Department of Education in meeting their duties under the Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 to monitor and ascertain demand for Integrated education in Northern Ireland.

In the national and international context, various studies have examined factors influencing school choice. A range of factors have been reported as influential including attendance by another family member (Erickson, 2017), the school location and ease of access/transportation (Burgess, Greaves and Vignoles, 2019; Erickson, 2017; McCarthy, 2016; Rohde et al., 2018), quality of the education setting (Burgess, Greaves and Vignoles,

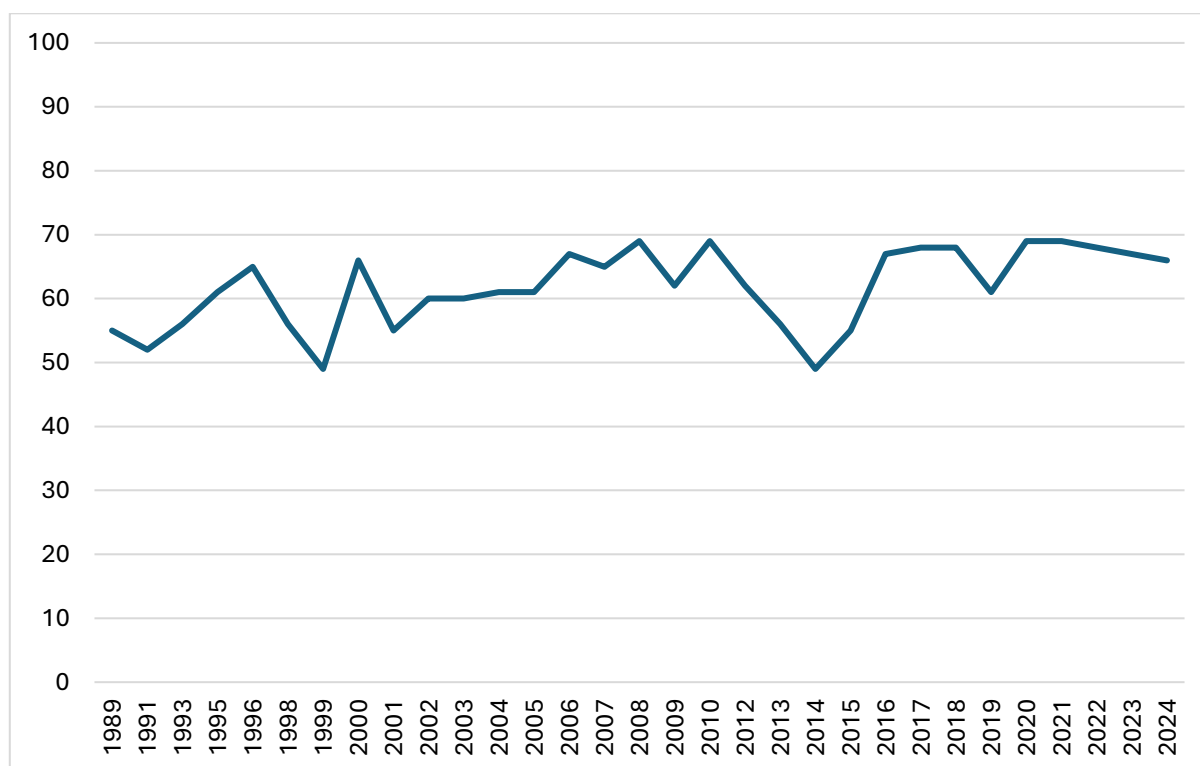
2019; Erickson, 2017; Rohde et al., 2019; Yahya et al., 2012), academic outcomes of the school (Denessen, Driessena and Sleggers, 2005), the school culture (Erickson, 2017; McCarthy, 2016) and its reputation (Denessen, Driessena and Sleggers, 2005; Erickson, 2017; Rohde et al., 2019). The inclusion of questions in the 2024 NILT survey on Integrated education preference and factors influencing school choice will provide an opportunity to examine whether the factors of importance across other regions are similar to those deemed important within the context of Northern Ireland.

Previous survey research has explored general levels of support for mixed-religion education. For example, since its foundation in 1998, NILT has consistently asked the following question on preference for mixed-religion education:

If you were deciding where to send your children to school, would you prefer a school with children of only your own religion or in a mixed-religion school?.

This question was previously asked in the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes (NISA) survey, which ran from 1989 to 1996. This provides an important time-series of how, or if, attitudes have changed on this issue over time (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Preference for mixed-religion school (%)



Source: 1989-1996 NISA; 1998-2024 NILT

In 1989, 55% of respondents said that they would prefer to send their children to a mixed-religion school, rising to 66% by 2024 (Figure 1). Overall, Catholic respondents were least likely to support mixed-religion schools, whilst those with no religion were most supportive.

However, it is important to note that while this data is often perceived as providing evidence of preference for Integrated education, this is not the case. Importantly, it gives data on preference for mixed-religion schools, which is not the same as Integrated schools. For example, mixed schools often refer to those that are attended by Catholic and Protestant pupils but are not of formal Integrated status (Early et al., 2024), whilst Integrated schools are those that “intentionally supports, protects and advances an ethos of diversity, respect and understanding between those of different cultures and religious beliefs and of none, between those of different socio-economic backgrounds and between those of different abilities” (Integrated Education Act [Northern Ireland] 2022, Section 1). Ensuring these distinct concepts are considered separately is important for ensuring the measurement of parental demand for different school provisions in Northern Ireland is not conflated.

Section 2: Methodology

About the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

The aim of the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey is to monitor the attitudes and behaviour of adults in Northern Ireland annually to provide a public record of how, or if, attitudes and behaviour change in relation to a wide range of social policy issues. The survey provides trusted and independent evidence that is robust and representative of the Northern Ireland population, to inform policy making as well as social, public and policy debate.

Each year, the survey explores a range of topics, with some topics repeated every year (for example, Community/Good Relations), whilst others are included less regularly. NILT is a direct successor of the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes survey which ran from 1989 to 1996.

NILT is a constituent resource of ARK (www.ark.ac.uk), which is a research, policy and impact hub, based jointly in Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. ARK runs a suite of three surveys recording the attitudes of people of all ages in Northern Ireland to the key issues affecting their lives:

- Northern Ireland Life and Times survey of adults aged 18 years or over (<https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/>);
- Young Life and Times survey of 16 year olds (www.ark.ac.uk/ylt); and
- Kids' Life and Times survey of 10-11 year olds (www.ark.ac.uk/klt).

Technical details of the 2024 survey

The 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey involved 1,199 respondents aged 18 years or over (see Table 1). The survey was administered using Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI). However, respondents were also given the option of completing the survey by phone, thus allowing the survey to be as inclusive as possible. For example, potential respondents may not have access to broadband, may not wish to undertake the survey online, may have privacy concerns, or literacy issues. However, only 2 per cent of respondents completed the survey by phone.

The 2024 survey received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast, where the survey coordinator (Dr Paula Devine) is based.

Pilot and mainstage fieldwork

Fieldwork was undertaken by Ipsos, and this contract was awarded after a public tender process. Data collection was conducted between 6th September 2024 and 19th November 2024.

The fieldwork comprised two phases. Firstly, a pilot survey was undertaken to assess the reliability and accuracy of the questionnaire and the script, and to allow for any changes to be made ahead of the mainstage fieldwork. Question wording and understanding were tested, along with any routing and filtering.

Secondly, the mainstage fieldwork was launched with minor changes to the questionnaire, including amendments to questions and response options. During fieldwork, data was continuously quality assured to ensure the highest quality of the final outputs.

Advance letter

Ipsos developed four letters to be sent to the selected households. The initial letter was sent to 8,000 sampled addresses and informed the potential participants about the study, its importance and how they could take part. These advance letters included a URL and unique access code to the survey online for each household. Each letter clearly stated that the survey should be completed by one adult (aged 18 or over) in the household, and that if there were two or more adults then the adult with the next birthday should complete the survey. At the beginning of the interview, the participant also had to confirm that they were the person within the household with the next birthday. A Freephone number was also included for those respondents who wished to complete the survey by phone.

The subsequent letters acted as reminders to households to participate in the study. All the letters contained the link to the Ipsos privacy policy, and a copy of the NILT information leaflet was included in the initial letter. Individuals were informed how their personal data would be handled in accordance with GDPR, and their right to withdraw from the research if they did not want to take part. Ultimately, only three of the four planned mailings were utilised, as the target number of participants was reached following the third mailout.

Sampling design

The sample for the 2024 NILT survey consisted of a stratified random sample of addresses selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF) database of addresses. This database is considered the most comprehensive and up-to-date address listing available in the UK. The PAF, maintained by Royal Mail, is the most widely used sample frame for high-quality social surveys in the UK and contains a list of all delivery points in the country. A random sample was drawn for each Local Government District (LGD) to achieve the desired sample size of 8,000 addresses, distributed proportionally across the 11 LGDs.

The Postcode Address File (PAF) provides a good sampling frame of addresses, however, it lacks information on household size, thus requiring further selection processes to be applied to convert the listing of addresses to a listing of individuals, from which, one person (the 'selected respondent') can be chosen to complete the survey. **Table 1** presents the overall breakdown of the sample.

Table 1: NILT sampling

	Count	Percent
Usable cases	1,199	15.0%
Unusable cases	370	4.6%
<i>Unusable cases (survey accessed, but not completed)</i>	341	4.2%
<i>Unusable cases (completion time under 20 min)</i>	29	0.4%
Letters returned	126	1.6%
Refusals by email, telephone	62	0.8%
No response following three letters	6,243	78.0%
Total	8,000	100%

Weighting

In order to ensure representation of the Northern Ireland population, a weight factor was created, based on age, sex and LGD. See Appendix 1 for further details.

Survey content

The survey explores of a number of topics. The topics included in the 2024 survey are:

- Respect
- Minority ethnic people
- Good relations
- Skills and employment
- Integrated education
- Safeguarding
- Criminal justice system
- Gender-based violence
- Political attitudes
- Community safety
- Demographic and socio-economic characteristics

Presentation of results in this report

Survey data is subject to sampling error (see Appendix 1 for further details), which gives the possibility that differences between groups (such as different age groups) and over time (from one survey year to the next) may be due to chance, rather than representing real differences. To test for this, the results of statistical analyses have been reported at the 5% level of probability. In other words, where a difference between groups or across survey years is found to be statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$), we can be 95% confident that this represents a real difference and did not occur by chance.

Throughout this report, statistically significant results have been identified using an asterisk (*) in the tables. However, in surveys with very large sample sizes, even small differences in percentages can be statistically significant. To address this, effect sizes (Cramer's V) have been calculated for those differences which are statistically significant. An effect size is a measure of how important the difference between groups actually is: large effect sizes (0.80 and above) mean the difference is important while small effect sizes (less than 0.20) mean that the difference is not important (Cohen, 1988).

Where possible, we have provided crosstabulations by an extensive range of social, economic and demographic variables. However, the small cell size means that this was not possible for all questions. Due to rounding, column/row totals may not round to 100.

Section 3: Results

Demographics

Table 2: Characteristics of NILT respondents

	%
Age	
18-24	10
25-34	17
35-44	17
45-54	17
55-64	16
65+	22
Sex	
Male	49
Female	50
In another way	<0.5
Religious affiliation	
No religion	25
Catholic	34
Protestant	38
Other	3
Don't know	1
Member of minority ethnic community	
Yes	6
No	91
Don't know	3
Live in city, town or country	
Big city or outskirts	24
Small city or town	43
Country	32
Where respondent lives: rurality	
Urban	64
Rural	36
Education	
Degree or higher	53
A level/diploma/Higher education diploma	19
GCSE A-C	12
Other/no qualification	15
School attended by respondent	
Formally Integrated school	6
Mixed-religion school	9
Other/don't know	83
Children at school in NI	
Children at school in NI	24
No children at school in NI	76

Preferences for Integrated education

At the start of the Integrated education questions, respondents were presented with the following introductory text:

*In Northern Ireland, many schools provide education to children from diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic and ability backgrounds. While all schools promote mutual tolerance and respect between those from different community backgrounds and cultures, there are some schools that are officially recognised as **Integrated Schools**.*

*An **Integrated School** is legally defined as a school that actively promotes an environment of diversity and respect. This includes respect and understanding between individuals of different cultures, religious beliefs (including those with none), socio-economic backgrounds, and abilities.*

This provided the legal definition of an Integrated school (based on the Integrated Education [Northern Ireland] Act 2022), and this definition was repeated several times throughout this section of the questionnaire. This ensured that all respondents were made aware of the specific characteristics and ethos of Integrated schools, and did not conflate this with mixed-religion schools.

The first question in the 2024 NILT module focused explicitly on Integrated education.

If you were deciding where to send your child/children to school, would you prefer an Integrated school?

Overall, a small majority of respondents (55%) said that they would prefer an Integrated school, with 17% saying that they would not prefer this (see Figure 2). However, 23% said that they had no preference and 5% said that they did not know.

Figure 2: Preference for Integrated school

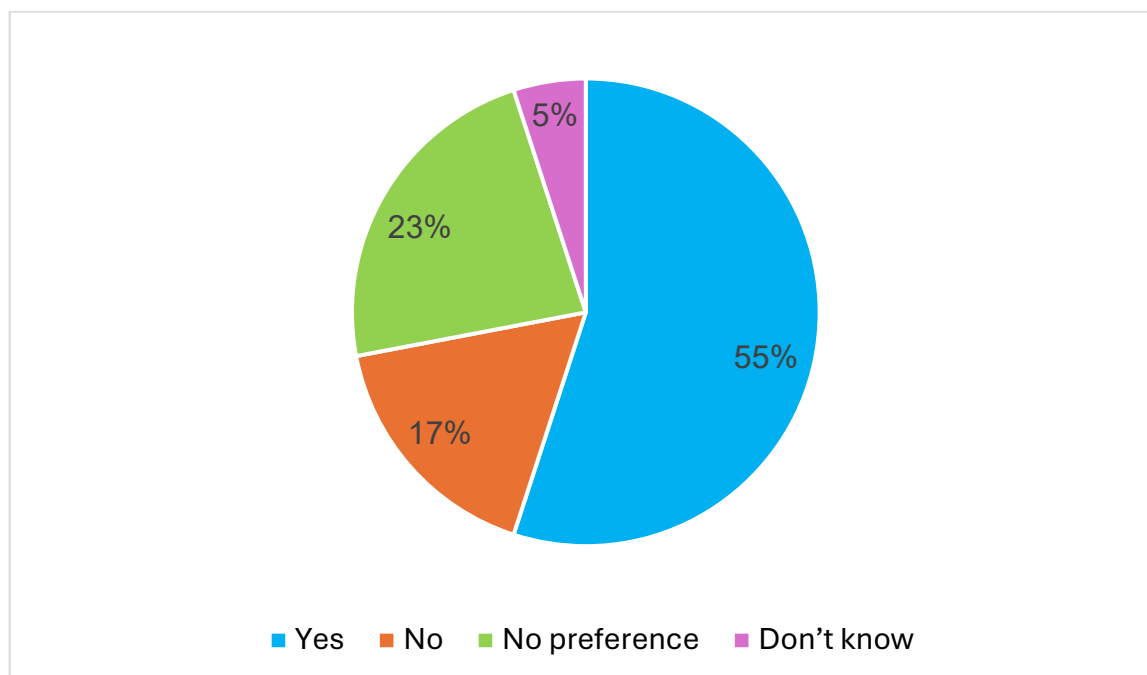


Table 3 breaks down these responses by demographic characteristics. There are statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.001$) in relation to age groups (highest levels of support among the oldest respondents), religious affiliation (highest support among those with no religion), residential location (higher support among those living in cities, towns or urban areas) and type of school attended (highest support among those attending an Integrated school). Respondents with no children at school in Northern Ireland were more likely to say that they would prefer to send a child to an Integrated school. Effect sizes were small.

Figure 1 shows that 66% of respondents said that they would prefer a *mixed-religion* school. Thus, the proportion of respondents preferring an Integrated school (55%) is lower than those supporting a mixed-religion school. Furthermore, one fifth (22%) of respondents who reported that they would prefer to send their child to a mixed-religion school said that they have no preference in relation to sending their child to an Integrated school. This suggests that it is the mixing of children of different religious backgrounds that is important, rather than being Integrated *per se*.

Table 3: Preference for Integrated school

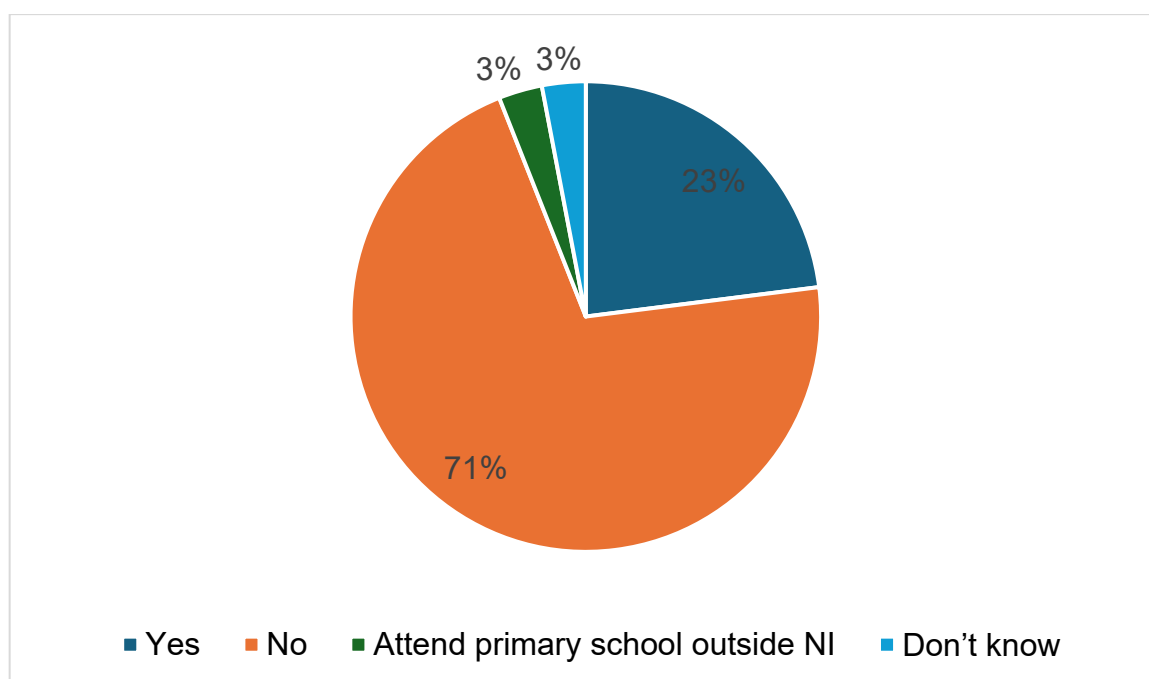
	%			
	Prefer Integrated school	Not prefer Integrated school	No preference	Don't know
All	55	17	23	5
Age***, v=.106				
18-24	49	19	24	8
25-34	47	20	24	9
35-44	56	22	18	5
45-54	50	22	25	2
55-64	59	12	26	2
65+	61	12	24	3
Sex				
Male	57	15	23	4
Female	52	20	24	5
Religious affiliation***, v=.196				
Catholic	44	24	26	5
Protestant	50	21	24	4
No religion	75	5	18	3
Minority ethnic community				
Yes	54	21	19	6
No	55	18	23	4
Live in city, town or country**, v=.090				
Big city or outskirts	59	12	24	5
Small city or town	58	18	20	4
Country	47	21	28	5
Where lives: rurality**, v=.116				
Rural	58	15	22	5
Urban	48	22	26	4
Educational qualifications				
Degree or higher	56	17	23	4
A level/diploma	54	21	20	4
GCSE A-C	54	18	24	3
Other/no qualifications	52	16	29	3
Type of school respondent attended***, v=.102				
Attended Integrated school	79	9	9	3
Attended mixed-religion school	63	12	23	2
Attended other school	52	19	25	4
Children at school in NI*, v=.142				
Children at school in NI	47	27	23	3
No children at school in NI	57	15	24	5
Would prefer mixed-religion school	73	4	22	2

*p≤0.05; **p≤0.01; ***p≤0.001

Primary school

Nearly one quarter (23%) of respondents had children at primary or post-primary school in Northern Ireland (NI) at the time that the fieldwork was conducted (n=288). These respondents were then asked to think about the type of primary school that their eldest child attended. Figure 3 shows that nearly one quarter (23%) of these children were currently or had ever attended an Integrated primary school, with a further 71% attending another type of school in Northern Ireland. 3% said that their children did not attend primary school in Northern Ireland, and a similar proportion said that they didn't know the type of primary school that they attended.

Figure 3: Thinking about your eldest child currently at school in NI. Do they currently, or did they ever, attend an Integrated primary school in NI?



Due to small cell counts, crosstabulation by a wide range of demographic variables (outlined in Table 3) was not possible. Table 4 shows that attendance at an Integrated primary school was higher among respondents living in urban areas, and among those with no religion. Catholic respondents were least likely to send their child to an Integrated primary school. Effect sizes were small to medium.

Table 4: Did eldest child ever attend an Integrated primary school in NI?

	%			
	Yes	No	Attend primary school outside NI	Don't know
All	23	71	3	3
Sex				
Male	22	72	3	3
Female	24	71	3	2
Religious affiliation***, $v=.209$				
Catholic	13	79	5	3
Protestant	24	69	2	5
No religion	39	61	0	0
Live in city, town or country				
Big city or outskirts	31	67	2	0
Small city or town	22	71	3	4
Country	20	73	5	2
Where lives: rurality*, $v=.198$				
Rural	16	77	5	1
Urban	28	67	1	4

* $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

Attend Integrated primary school

The 74 respondents whose eldest child had ever attended an Integrated primary school in Northern Ireland were asked to identify the *five most important factors* to them when making the decision about their child's school. Table 5 shows that nearly all respondents (88%) identified quality of education as important. School facilities (71%), how easy it was to travel there (69%) and proximity to home (65%) were identified by approximately two thirds of respondents. The Integrated status of the school was an important factor for nearly one half of respondents (47%).

Table 5: Five most important factors: child attended/attends an Integrated primary school

	% of respondents identifying factor
Quality of education	88
School facilities	71
How easy it was to travel there	69
Proximity to home	65
It is/was an Integrated school	47
Extra-curricular activities	38
Family or friends are/were at the school	27
Condition of buildings	26
Childcare arrangements	16
Other factor (please write in)	11
I don't know	1

The 'other' responses focused on:

- School policies including Special Educational Needs (SEN) provisions and pupil wellbeing (n=4)
- Breakfast clubs
- School composition of different cultures
- School size
- Religious teachings of the school

When those respondents with an eldest child who attended/attends an Integrated primary school were asked which of these factors was the *most important*, quality of education was stated by one half of respondents (52%). Table 6 shows that being an Integrated school was identified as the most important factor by one fifth of respondents (22%), followed by proximity to home (12%). Due to the small number of cases, crosstabulations were not appropriate for this question.

Table 6: Most important factor: child attended/attends an Integrated primary school

	%
Quality of education	52
It is/was an Integrated school	22
Proximity to home	12
School facilities	4
How easy it was to travel there	3
Condition of buildings	1
Family or friends are/were at the school	3
Other factor	3

Attend non-Integrated primary school

The 199 respondents whose eldest child attended a non-Integrated primary school in Northern Ireland were asked to identify *five factors* which were most important to them when making the decision about their child's school.

As evident in Table 7, nearly all respondents (93%) identified quality of education as important, with school facilities, how easy it was to travel there and proximity to home each identified by 72% of respondents. This is the same pattern of responses as seen in the previous table for those parents with a child attending/attended an Integrated primary school (Table 5). However, in Table 7 (where child attended a non-Integrated primary school), a preference for their child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background was cited by 30%, including 40% of Catholic respondents, 32% of Protestant respondents and 5% of those with no religion.

Table 7: Five most important factors: child does not/did not attend an Integrated primary school

	% of respondents identifying factor
Quality of education	93
School facilities	72
How easy it was to travel there	72
Proximity to home	72
Family or friends are/were at the school	38
Extra-curricular activities	32
Prefer child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background	30
Condition of buildings	22
Childcare arrangements	22
Other factor (please write in)	10

The 'other' responses fell within the following themes:

- Irish language
- School ethos
- School atmosphere
- School reputation
- Parent was employed in the school
- Family tradition (parent attended the school)
- Eligibility criteria of the school
- School size
- Knowledge of the school
- Only option based on residential location
- School policies including SEN provisions and pupil wellbeing
- Religious teachings of the school
- School diversity and inclusivity

When asked which of the listed factors was the *most important*, again, quality of education was the most important factor for parents whose child did not attend an Integrated primary school (see Table 8). However, this was identified by a larger proportion of respondents (72%) compared to those parents whose child attended an Integrated school (52%) – see Table 7.

Table 8: Most important factor: child does not/did not attend an Integrated primary school

	%
Quality of education	72
Proximity to home	10
Prefer child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background	6
How easy it was to travel there	3
Childcare arrangements	2
Family or friends are/were at the school	1
Extra-curricular activities	1
School facilities	<0.5
Other factor	4

Table 9 focuses on the three most frequently identified factors (quality of education, proximity to home, and preference for child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background) and how responses varied according to the characteristics of respondents. The proportion of respondents identifying quality of education as the most important factor when deciding upon primary school was highest among those living in a big city/outskirts (84%) and lowest among those living in the country (64%). Proximity to home was most important for 14% of Protestant respondents, 13% of female respondents and 12% of those living in the country. A preference for their child to learn with children of the same background was highest among Protestant respondents (12%).

Table 9: Most important factors: child does not/did not attend Integrated primary school

	%		
	Quality of education	Proximity to home	Prefer to learn with own background
All	72	10	6
Sex			
Male	79	6	1
Female	68	13	9
Religious affiliation*, $v=.279$			
Catholic	77	6	5
Protestant	63	14	12
No religion	70	11	0
Live in city, town or country			
Big city or outskirts	84	5	0
Small city or town	72	11	7
Country	64	12	8
Where lives: rurality			
Rural	67	9	8
Urban	76	10	4

* $p \leq 0.05$

Of those parents whose eldest child did not/does not attend an Integrated primary school, four in ten said that they would have liked them to attend an Integrated primary school (Table 10). Conversely, 32% said that they would not have liked that. However, over one quarter of respondents (28%) said that they did not know. From Table 10, it is evident that those with no religion were most likely to say that they would have liked their child to attend an Integrated primary school (72%) and least likely to say that they did not know (19%). In addition, six out of ten of those living in a big city or outskirts would have liked their child to attend an Integrated primary school. Effect sizes were medium.

Table 10: Would like child to attend an Integrated primary school: child does not/did not attend Integrated primary school

	%		
	Yes	No	Don't know
All	40	32	28
Sex			
Male	40	30	30
Female	40	34	27
Religious affiliation***, v=.283			
Catholic	36	35	29
Protestant	19	46	35
No religion	72	9	19
Live in city, town or country***, v=.225			
Big city or outskirts	60	12	28
Small city or town	30	47	23
Country	38	27	34
Where lives: rurality			
Rural	34	35	31
Urban	44	30	26

***p≤0.001

The 78 parents would have liked their child to attend an Integrated primary school were asked why this did not happen (Table 11). The most commonly identified reason was that there was no Integrated primary school nearby (66%). While the number of responses is too small for crosstabulations, it is notable that two third of respondents living in a small city or town, or in the country identified this a key factor affecting their decision.

Table 11: Why not attend an Integrated primary school?

	%
There was no Integrated primary school nearby	66
I thought that there was no point in applying for a place at an Integrated primary school as it would be oversubscribed	8
I applied for a place at an Integrated primary school, but it was oversubscribed	5
Other (please write in)	16
Don't know	5

‘Other’ responses were:

- Preference for Irish Medium
- School size
- School eligibility criteria
- SEN provisions
- Siblings attended a different school
- School location/ease of access/transportation
- Education quality
- School reputation
- Family tradition

Those respondents whose child did not attend an Integrated school in Northern Ireland were asked if they would have wanted their child’s primary school to transform to be an Integrated school. While 41% said that they would, a sizeable proportion (26%) said that they did not know. Table 12 shows that a majority of those with no religion (75%) and those living in a big city or outskirts (59%) said that they would have wanted their child’s primary school to transform. The opposite view was strongest amongst those living in a small city or town (46%). Nevertheless, a sizeable proportion of all groups (at least 18%) said that they did not know.

Table 12: Want primary school to transform to Integrated school?

	%		
	Yes	No	Don't know
All	41	33	26
Sex			
Male	41	34	24
Female	41	32	27
Religious affiliation***, v=307			
Catholic	39	40	20
Protestant	20	41	39
No religion	75	7	18
Live in city, town or country**, v=183			
Big city or outskirts	59	16	28
Small city or town	31	46	23
Country	44	28	28
Where lives: rurality			
Rural	38	35	28
Urban	44	32	24

p≤0.01; *p≤0.001

Post-primary school

To provide an understanding of school choice across the compulsory education system in Northern Ireland, respondents were then asked about their post-primary school decision for their eldest child.

165 respondents said that their eldest child was currently attending a post-primary school. Of these, one fifth (21%, n=37) were currently attending an Integrated post-primary school (see Figure 4). Of these, two thirds (n=24) had also attended an Integrated primary school. Table 13 shows that attendance at an Integrated post-primary school was highest among those living in an urban area (30%). The effect size is medium.

Figure 4: Thinking about your eldest child currently at school in NI. Do they currently attend an Integrated post-primary school in NI?

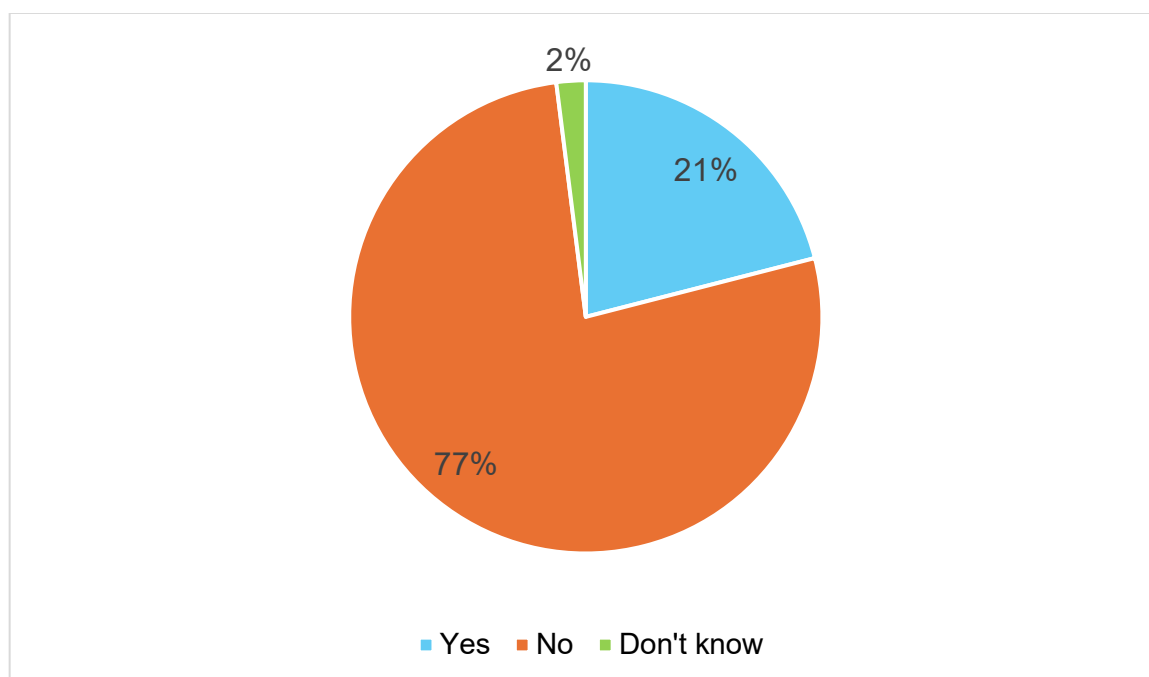


Table 13: Child attend Integrated post-primary school

	%		
	Yes	No	Don't know
All	21	77	2
Sex			
Male	20	78	2
Female	21	77	2
Religious affiliation			
Catholic	16	84	0
Protestant	20	76	4
No religion	26	72	3
Where lives: rurality**, v=.287			
Rural	8	91	2
Urban	30	66	3

**p≤0.01

Attend Integrated post-primary school

The 37 respondents whose eldest child is currently attending an Integrated post-primary school were asked to identify *five factors* which were most important to them when making the decision about their child's post-primary school. Due to the small number of respondents, percentages cannot be calculated, and therefore the number of respondents (n) is presented in Table 14.

Table 14 indicates that nearly all respondents identified quality of education (n=32), with how easy it was to travel there (n=23), and school facilities (n=20) being identified over half of respondents. The Integrated status of the school was a factor for around half of parents (n=17), and a similar number identified the grammar stream as important (n=16).

Table 14: Five most important factors: child attends an Integrated post-primary school

	n of respondents identifying factor
Quality of education	32
How easy it was to travel there	23
School facilities	20
Proximity to home	18
It is/was an Integrated school	17
There is a grammar stream	16
Extra-curricular activities	14
Condition of buildings	9
Family or friends are/were at the school	8
Childcare arrangements	1
I don't know	1
Other factor (please write in)	5

The 'other' responses were centred around:

- SEN provisions
- Openness to religions

When asked which of these factors was the *most important*, quality of education was identified by 23 out of the 36 respondents who responded to this question, with 4 respondents reporting the Integrated status of the school (see Table 15).

Table 15: Most important factors: child attends an Integrated post-primary school

	n of respondents
Quality of education	23
It is/was an Integrated school	4
There is a grammar stream	3
Proximity to home	1
School facilities	1
How easy it was to travel there	1
Condition of buildings	1
Other factor	2

Attend non-Integrated post-primary school

The 124 respondents whose eldest child did not attend an Integrated post-primary school in Northern Ireland were asked to identify *five factors* which were most important to them when making the decision about their child's school.

Table 16 shows that nearly all respondents (98%) identified quality of education, with school facilities, and how easy it was to travel there identified by seven out of ten respondents. This reflects the same pattern of responses as seen in Table 14 for factors relating to attending an Integrated post-primary school. Additionally, one half of parents felt that being a grammar school was an important factor. A preference for their child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background was cited by 22%. Crosstabulations are not presented for this question as the number of respondents is too small.

Table 16: Five most important factors: child does not attend Integrated post-primary school

	% of respondents identifying factor
Quality of education	98
School facilities	70
How easy it was to travel there	69
Proximity to home	53
It is a grammar school	50
Family or friends are/were at the school	45
Extra-curricular activities	33
Prefer child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background	22
Childcare arrangements	7
Condition of buildings	7
Other factor (please write in)	10

The 'other' responses related to:

- AQE score
- Local knowledge of school and teaching staff
- Ethos of school (eg not overly religious; access to Irish language)
- Size of school and pastoral care
- Perceived behaviour at local Integrated school
- SEN provisions
- Child's choice

When asked which of these factors was the *most important*, again, quality of education was most commonly identified (71%). All other factors were reported by less than one in ten respondents (see Table 17).

Table 17: Most important factor: child does not attend Integrated post-primary school

	%
Quality of education	71
It is a grammar school	5
Family or friends are/were at the school	5
Prefer child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background	4
How easy it was to travel there	4
Proximity to home	3
School facilities	2
Other factor	7

One third (34%) of respondents said that they would have liked their child to attend an Integrated post-primary school, 40% said they would not have liked this, and a sizeable minority (26%) said that they did not know. Parents who would have liked their child to have attended an Integrated post-primary school were asked why their child did not do this. Table 18 shows that the most commonly identified reason was the lack of an Integrated post-primary school nearby (n=21). Due to small cell size, percentage figures cannot be presented, nor can crosstabulations.

Table 18: Why not attend an Integrated post-primary school?

	n of respondents
There was no Integrated post-primary school nearby	21
I thought that there was no point in applying for a place at an Integrated post-primary school as it would be oversubscribed	4
I applied for a place at an Integrated post-primary school, but it was oversubscribed	2
Other (please write in)	17
I don't know	1

Other' responses focused on:

- Child's choice
- Preference for a grammar school
- Poorer reputation of Integrated schools (e.g. education, pastoral care, behaviour, facilities)
- Not meeting the needs of child (e.g. mental health)

Those respondents whose child did not attend an Integrated post-primary school in Northern Ireland were asked if they would have wanted their child's post-primary school to transform to be an Integrated school. While 38% said that they would, a similar proportion (35%) said that they did not, and a further 26% said that they did not know.

Section 4: Discussion

The school system in Northern Ireland is complex, as are the factors that parents consider when choosing a school for their child. This is clearly reflected in the data from the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey. The results highlight that although the Integrated status of a school is important to parents when decisions are made about the school their child should attend, it is only one factor, and not necessarily the most important, influencing their choice.

The key trends from the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey highlight that the quality of education provided by the school, how easy it was to travel to the school, its proximity to home, and the facilities of the school were the most important factors in parental choice of primary and post-primary school, even when accounting for the Integrated status (or non-Integrated status) of the school. However, this does not mean the Integrated status of the school is irrelevant. Indeed 47% of respondents whose eldest child had ever attended an Integrated primary school in Northern Ireland, and 17 out of 37 respondents whose eldest child was currently attending an Integrated post-primary school stated that this was an important factor. The findings suggest it is pertinent to understand the importance placed upon the Integrated status of a school within the wider, more complex landscape where educational and logistical factors are central to parental decision making. The analysis clearly shows that one factor does not determine school choice.

Reasons for preferring an Integrated school varied according to where the respondent lived. For example, attendance at an Integrated primary school or an Integrated post-primary school was higher among respondents living in urban areas than those in rural areas. This aligns with findings from Roulston and Cook (2021) who reported that Integrated schools are not convenient for many households in Northern Ireland. That research found that 11% of households are within one mile of an Integrated primary school, while 22% are more than six miles from the nearest Integrated primary school. A similar trend was reported for post-primary schools. Among NILT respondents, two thirds of parents who stated that they would have liked their child to attend an Integrated primary school reported that the key reason the child did not do so was because there was no Integrated primary school nearby. In particular, this was the case for the majority of those living in a rural area.

When considering which factors were important in parents' choice of primary and post-primary school, respondents were able to state 'other' factors, in addition to the standardised list provided on the questionnaire. One frequently identified 'other' factor was Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision within the school. This is particularly pertinent as the recently launched Northern Ireland Programme for Government outlines the importance, and immediate priority, of better support and services for children and young people with SEN in the education system (Northern Ireland Executive, 2025).

The NILT findings also indicate the importance of continuing to analyse preferences for Integrated schools and mixed-religion school as separate concepts in future data collection. The rationale for this is clear. While one fifth of respondents stated that their preference would be to send their child to a mixed religion school, they had no preference in relation to them attending an Integrated school. Understanding the associated complexities between preferences for the mixing of children from different religious backgrounds and the formally Integrated status of schools is important. The NILT findings suggest it is the mixing rather than Integrated status of the school that is important.

The Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) was passed in 2022. The data collected through the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey therefore provides an important insight into parental attitudes soon after the implementation of the Act. The findings emphasise the need to revisit and monitor these attitudes and experiences as the Act beds down (for example, in five years' time). This is particularly apposite given the complexities outlined and potential for the number of Integrated primary and post-primary schools to increase.

The questions included in the 2024 Northern Ireland Life and Times survey are focused upon *parental choice* of primary and post-primary school for their child. This aligns with the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 and the most recent Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 that states "... a reference to ascertaining the demand for Integrated education is a reference to ascertaining the extent to which parents would prefer their children to be educated at grant-maintained Integrated or controlled Integrated schools rather than at schools which are not grant-maintained Integrated schools or controlled integrated schools." (Section 6[3]).

However, a weakness in this is that a focus on parental demand excludes the views of those children and young people who are attending school. As argued by Early et al. (2024) this needs to be addressed by widening the discussion on school choice to capture the views of children and young people. As noted, for two respondents in the 2024 NILT survey, the choice of the school was influenced by their child's opinion. However, the importance of the child's perspective was not mentioned by the rest of the respondents. As outlined by Early et al. (2024, p.20) "although the views of children and young people may be taken into account within individual families, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1990) states that children have the right to be included in all decisions affecting their lives, and school choice is arguably one of the main decisions. Consequently, there is a strong case to reach out to children and young people directly with accessible information about school choices." A recent ARK Policy Brief (Early, Schubotz and Hanson, 2025) acknowledges this recommendation and considers post-primary school choice in Northern Ireland according to the perspective of 16-year-olds using data from the 2024 Young Life and Times survey.

A focus on parental demand and parental preference for different school types also excludes the views of wider community voices. For example, methods such as Community Conversations give the opportunity for everyone within a geographic area to participate (see Early et al. (2023) for further details).

Overall, the findings of this report indicate that the landscape for choosing a primary or post-primary school in Northern Ireland is complex. It is not just one factor such as the Integrated status of a school that influences parental choice. The importance placed by parents on the quality of education and accessibility of a school is consistent at both primary and post-primary level. There is also concern about appropriate SEN provision. Thus, how the school meets the totality of needs of the child is also an important area for consideration, especially under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Section 5: References

Burgess, S., Greaves, E. & Vignoles, A. (2019). 'School choice in England: evidence from national administrative data', *Oxford Review of Education*, 45(5), pp. 690–710.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2019.1604332>

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*. New York, NY: Routledge Academic.

Council for Integrated Education (2023). *Great news for Integrated Education in Bangor*.

Available at: <https://nicie.org/great-news-for-integrated-education-in-bangor/>

Department of Education (2025a). *School enrolments – Northern Ireland summary data. Schools and pupils in Northern Ireland 1991-92 to 2024-25*.

Available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-northern-ireland-summary-data>

Department of Education (2025b). *School enrolments – Northern Ireland summary data. Enrolment by school management type 2000-01 to 2024-25*.

Available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-northern-ireland-summary-data>

Department of Education (2023). *A Strategy for Integrated Education in Northern Ireland*.

Available at: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/A%20Strategy%20for%20Integrated%20Education%20in%20Northern%20Ireland%20-%20April%202023_0.pdf

Denessen, E., Driessena, G. & Slegers, P. (2005) 'Segregation by choice? A study of group-specific reasons for school choice', *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), pp. 347–368.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930500108981>

Early, E., Devine, P., Liu, M. & Schubotz, D. (2023). *Report on Research Methods for Assessing Demand for Integrated Education in Northern Ireland*. ARK.

Available at: <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2023-05/ARKIEFAssessingDemand.pdf>

Early, E., Devine, P., Liu, M. & Schubotz, D. (2024). A review of existing methods used to assess demand for integrated education in Northern Ireland. *Review of Education*, 12(1), e3463.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3463>

Early, E., Schubotz, D. & Hanson, J. (2025). *Understanding Integrated School Choice in a Changing Policy Landscape of Northern Ireland*. ARK Policy Brief.

Available at: <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2025-03/policybrief35.pdf>

Erickson, H.H. (2017) 'How do parents choose schools, and what schools do they choose? A literature review of private school choice programs in the United States', *Journal of School Choice*, 11(4), pp. 491–506.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2017.1395618>

Gallagher, T. & Smith, A. (2002). Attitudes to Academic Selection, Integrated Education and Diversity within the Curriculum, in Gray, A.M., Lloyd, K., Devine, P., Robinson, G. and Heenan, D. (eds), *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland. The Eighth Report*, London: Pluto, pp. 120-137.

Integrated Education Act (Northern Ireland) (2022).

Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/15/contents>

McCarthy, M. (2016). Parental choice of school by rural and remote parents. *Issues in Educational Research*, 26(1), pp.29-44.

Available at: <http://www.iier.org.au/iier26/mccarthy.html>

- Morgan, V., Dunn, S., Cairns, E. & Fraser G. (1993). How do parents choose a school for their child? An example of the exercise of parental choice. *Educational Research*, 35(2), pp.139-148.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013188930350203>
- Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2019). *Education funding in Northern Ireland. Ninth Report of Session 2017-19*. House of Commons.
Available at:
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmniaf/1497/1497.pdf>
- Northern Ireland Executive (2025). *Programme for Government 2024 – 2027*.
Available at: https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-03/programme-for-government-2024-2027-our-plan-doing-what-matters-most_1.pdf
- Robinson, L. (2023). *Annual enrolments at schools and in funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland*. Bangor: Department of Education.
Available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Revised%2022nd%20March%202023%20-%20Annual%20enrolments%20at%20schools%20and%20in%20funded%20pre-school%20education%20in%20Northern%20Ireland%20-%202022-23.pdf>
- Rohde, L. A., Campani, F., Oliveira, J.R.G., Rohde, C. W., et al. (2019). Parental Reasons for School Choice in Elementary School: A Systematic Review. *Journal of School Choice*, 13(3), 287–304.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2019.1643970>
- Roulston, S. & Cook, S. (2021). *Parental choice of primary and post-primary schools: myth or reality*. Belfast: Integrated Education Fund.
Available at:
https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/124035253/Report_08_Parental_Choice_of_Primary_and_Post_Primary_Schools_Myth_or_Reality.pdf
- The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order (1989).
Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1989/2406/contents>

Topping, M. & Cavanagh, C.M. (2017). *The Report of the Independent Review of Integrated Education*. Department of Education.

Available at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/report-independent-review-integrated-education>

United Nations (1990). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

Available at: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/unicef-convention-rights-child-uncrc.pdf>

Yahya, S., Bekerman, Z., Sagy, S. & Boag, S. (2012). When education meets conflict: Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli parental attitudes towards peace promoting education. *Journal of Peace Education*, 9(3), pp.297-320.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2012.698386>

Section 6: Appendices

Appendix 1: Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted)

Sampling Errors and Confidence Limits

When a sample is selected at random from a population, it is not possible to be 100 per cent certain that the findings derived from the sample reflect real differences in that population as a whole – there will always be error. An estimate of the amount of error which is due to sampling can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Where the standard error for a percentage, } p, = \sqrt{\frac{p(100 - p)}{n}}$$

and where n is the size of the sample.

Using this formula, it is possible to create the sampling errors associated with percentages in NILT. To calculate a confidence interval for the population percentage, the following formula is used:

$$95\% \text{ confidence interval} = p \pm (1.96 * se(p))$$

This means that if 100 samples were drawn from the populations of adults aged 18 years or over, then 95 of them would produce an estimate for the percentage, p, within this confidence interval.

Table A1 presents sampling errors and 95% confidence intervals for the systematic random sample design as used in NILT. These intervals are based on unweighted data. Note that the margin of error for all sample estimates is within the parameters of $\pm 2.8\%$.

Table A1: Sampling error and confidence limits, NILT 2024

		%	Sampling error	95% Confidence limits
Age	18 – 24	5.9	1.3	4.6 – 7.2
	25 – 34	14.2	2.0	12.2 – 16.2
	35 – 44	17.1	2.1	15.0 – 19.2
	45 – 54	18.8	2.2	16.6 – 21.0
	55 – 64	19.2	2.2	17.0 – 21.4
	65 and over	24.7	2.4	22.3 – 27.1
Sex	Male	38.7	2.8	35.9 – 41.5
	Female	60.6	2.8	57.8 – 63.4
	In another way/ prefer not to say	0.7	0.5	0.2 – 1.2
Marital status	Single	31.2	2.6	28.6 – 33.8
	Married/Civil partnership	49.2	2.8	46.4 – 52.0
	Separated	3.9	1.1	2.8 – 5.0
	Divorced	8.2	1.6	6.6 – 9.8
	Widowed	7.6	1.5	6.1 – 9.1
Religion	Catholic	32.3	2.6	29.7 – 34.9
	Protestant	35.4	2.7	32.7 – 38.1
	No religion	24.3	2.4	21.9 – 26.7
	Other	5.7	1.3	4.4 – 7.0

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

NEW SCREEN

Now some questions about education and schools.

In Northern Ireland, many schools provide education to children from diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic and ability backgrounds. While all schools promote mutual tolerance and respect between those from different community backgrounds and cultures, there are some schools that are officially recognised as **Integrated Schools**.

An **Integrated School** is legally defined as a school that actively promotes an environment of diversity and respect. This includes respect and understanding between individuals of different cultures, religious beliefs (including those with none), socio-economic backgrounds, and abilities.

[Note: The definition of Integrated school to be displayed at the top of this page and every page/second page]

ASK ALL
SINGLE CODE
PREFINT

- F1 If you were deciding where to send your child/children to school, would you prefer an Integrated school?
We welcome responses from everyone and not just those with school aged children
Please select one answer

Yes	1
No	2
I don't have a preference	3
I don't know	8
Prefer not to say	9

ASK ALL
SINGLE CODE
GOSCHLNI

- F2 Do you have any children at primary or post-primary school in Northern Ireland?
Please select one answer

Yes	1	Ask F3
No	2	Skip to next module
I don't know	8	
Prefer not to say	9	

ASK IF CODE 1 (YES) AT GOSCHLNI
SINGLE CODE
GOIPSCHL

- F3 Thinking about your eldest child currently at school in Northern Ireland.
Do they currently, or did they ever, attend an Integrated primary school in Northern Ireland?

Please select one answer

Yes	1	Ask F4 and F4a, and then go to F9
No – they attended another type of school in Northern Ireland	2	Go to F5
No – they did not attend primary school in Northern Ireland	3	Skip to F9
I don't know	8	
Prefer not to say	9	

ASK IF CODE 1 (YES) AT GOIPSCHL
MULTICODE – ALLOW UP TO 5 ANSWERS

- F4 Here are some factors that parents/guardians take into account when deciding which primary school they would prefer their child to attend.

Please select the 5 factors which were most important to you when making the decision about your child's school.

IPFACT1	Quality of education	1
IPFACT2	How easy it was to travel there	1
IPFACT3	Condition of buildings	1
IPFACT4	School facilities	1
IPFACT5	Extra-curricular activities	1
IPFACT6	Proximity to home	1
IPFACT7	Family or friends are/were at the school	1
IPFACT8	It is/was an Integrated school	1
IPFACT9	Childcare arrangements	1
IPFACTO	Other factor (please write in)	1
IPFACTDK	I don't know	98
IPFACTREF	Prefer not to say	99

ASK IF CODES 1-10 AT F4
 SHOW ONLY THE CODES SELECTED AT F4
 SINGLE CODE

MIPFACT

F4a Of these factors, which do you think was the MOST important?

Please select one answer

Quality of education	1
How easy it was to travel there	2
Condition of buildings	3
School facilities	4
Extra-curricular activities	5
Proximity to home	6
Family or friends are/were at the school	7
It is/was an Integrated school	8
Childcare arrangements	9
Other factor (please write in)	10

NOW GO TO F9

ASK IF CODE 2 (NO) AT GOIPSCHL
 MULTICODE – ALLOW UP TO 5 ANSWERS

F5 Here are some factors that parents/guardians take into account when deciding which primary school they would prefer their child to attend.

Please select the 5 factors which were most important to you when making the decision about your child's school.

<i>NPFACT1</i>	Quality of education	1
<i>NPFACT2</i>	How easy it was to travel there	1
<i>NPFACT3</i>	Condition of buildings	1
<i>NPFACT4</i>	School facilities	1
<i>NPFACT5</i>	Extra-curricular activities	1
<i>NPFACT6</i>	Proximity to home	1
<i>NPFACT7</i>	Family or friends are/were at the school	1
<i>NPFACT8</i>	Prefer child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background	1
<i>NPFACT9</i>	Childcare arrangements	1
<i>NPFACTO</i>	Other factor (please write in)	1
<i>NPFACTDK</i>	I don't know	98
<i>NPFACTREF</i>	Prefer not to say	99

ASK IF CODES 1-10 AT F5
 SHOW ONLY THE CODES SELECTED AT F5
 SINGLE CODE

F5a Of these factors, which do you think was the MOST important?

Please select one answer

NPFACT1 Quality of education	1
NPFACT2 How easy it was to travel there	2
NPFACT3 Condition of buildings	3
NPFACT4 School facilities	4
NPFACT5 Extra-curricular activities	5
NPFACT6 Proximity to home	6
NPFACT7 Family or friends are/were at the school	7
NPFACT8 It is/was an Integrated school	8
NPFACT9 Childcare arrangements	9
NPFACTO Other factor (please write in)	10

ASK IF NO (CODE 2) AT GOIPSCHL

SINGLE CODE

LIKEIP

F6 Would you have liked your child to have attended an Integrated primary school?

Please select one answer

Yes	1	Ask F7
No	2	Go to F8
I don't know	8	
Prefer not to say	9	

ASK IF YES (CODE 1) AT LIKEIP
MULTICODE

F7 Why did your child not attend an Integrated primary school?

Please select all that apply

WHYNOIP1 There was no Integrated primary school nearby	1
WHYNOIP2 I applied for a place at an Integrated primary school, but it was oversubscribed	2
WHYNOIP3 I thought that there was no point in applying for a place at an Integrated primary school as it would be oversubscribed	3
WHYNOIPO Other (please write in)	4
WHYNOIPDK I don't know	8
WHYNOIPREF Prefer not to say	9

ASK IF CODE 2, 8 OR 9 AT GOIPSCHL
SINGLE CODE

LIKEPTRNS

F8 An existing school can transform to integrated status. If initiated by the school, parents have the option to vote on their preference to transform to integrated status through a secret ballot.

Would you want/have wanted your child's primary school to transform to be an Integrated school?

Please select one answer

Yes	1
No	2
I don't know	8
Prefer not to say	9

ASK IF CODE 1 (YES) AT GOSCHLNI
SINGLE CODE
GOSSCHL

F9 Again, thinking about your eldest child currently at school in Northern Ireland. Do they currently attend a post-primary school?

Please select one answer

Yes	1	Ask F10
No	2	Skip to next module
I don't know	8	
Prefer not to say	9	

ASK IF CODE 1 (YES) AT GOSSCHL
SINGLE CODE
GOISSCHL

F10 Do they currently, or did they ever attend an Integrated post-primary school?

Please select one answer

Yes	1	Ask F11 and then go to next module
No	2	Go to F12
I don't know	8	Skip to next module
Prefer not to say	9	

ASK IF CODE 1 (YES) AT GOISSCHL
MULTICODE – ALLOW UP TO 5 ANSWERS

F11 Here are some factors that parents/guardians take into account when deciding which post-primary school they would prefer their child to attend.

Please select the 5 factors which were most important to you when making the decision about your child's school.

ISFACT1	Quality of education	1
ISFACT2	How easy it was to travel there	1
ISFACT3	There is a grammar stream	1
ISFACT4	Condition of buildings	1
ISFACT5	School facilities	1
ISFACT6	Extra-curricular activities	1
ISFACT7	Proximity to home	1
ISFACT8	Family or friends are/were at the school	1
ISFACT9	It is/was an Integrated school	1
ISFACT10	Childcare arrangements	1
ISFACTO	Other factor (please write in)	1
ISFACTDK	I don't know	98
ISFACTREF	Prefer not to say	99

ASK IF CODES 1-10 AT F11
 SHOW ONLY THE CODES SELECTED AT F11
 SINGLE CODE

F11a Of these factors, which do you think was the MOST important?

Please select one answer

<i>ISFACT1</i> Quality of education	1
<i>ISFACT2</i> How easy it was to travel there	2
<i>ISFACT3</i> There is a grammar stream	3
<i>ISFACT4</i> Condition of buildings	4
<i>ISFACT5</i> School facilities	5
<i>ISFACT6</i> Extra-curricular activities	6
<i>ISFACT7</i> Proximity to home	7
<i>ISFACT8</i> Family or friends are/were at the school	8
<i>ISFACT9</i> It is/was an Integrated school	9
<i>ISFACT10</i> Childcare arrangements	10
<i>ISFACTO</i> Other factor (please write in)	11

NOW GO TO NEXT MODULE

ASK IF CODE 2 (NO) AT GOISSCHL
MULTICODE – ALLOW UP TO 5 ANSWERS

F12 Here are some factors that parents/guardians take into account when deciding which post-primary school they would prefer their child to attend.

Please select the 5 factors which were most important to you when making the decision about your child's school.

NSFACT1	Quality of education	1
NSFACT2	How easy it was to travel there	1
NSFACT3	It is a grammar school	1
NSFACT4	Condition of buildings	1
NSFACT5	School facilities	1
NSFACT6	Extra-curricular activities	1
NSFACT7	Proximity to home	1
NSFACT8	Family or friends are/were at the school	1
NSFACT9	Prefer child to learn with children from their own faith, culture or community background	1
NSFACT10	Childcare arrangements	1
NSFACTO	Other factor (please write in)	1
NSFACTDK	I don't know	98
NSFACTRE F	Prefer not to say	99

ASK IF CODES 1-10 AT F12. SHOW ONLY THE CODES SELECTED AT F12
SINGLE CODE

F12a Of these factors, which do you think was the MOST important?

Please select one answer

NSFACT1 Quality of education	1
NSFACT2 How easy it was to travel there	2
NSFACT3 There is a grammar stream	3
NSFACT4 Condition of buildings	4
NSFACT5 School facilities	5
NSFACT6 Extra-curricular activities	6
NSFACT7 Proximity to home	7
NSFACT8 Family or friends are/were at the school	8
NSFACT9 It is/was an Integrated school	9
NSFACT10 Childcare arrangements	10
NSFACTO Other factor (please write in)	11

ASK IF CODE 2 (NO) AT GOISSCHL
SINGLE CODE
LIKEIS

- F13 Would you have liked your child to have attended an Integrated post-primary school?
Please select one answer

Yes	1	Ask F14
No	2	Go to F15
I don't know	8	
Prefer not to say	9	

ASK IF CODE 1 (YES) AT LIKEIS
MULTICODE

- F14 Why did your child not attend an Integrated post-primary school?
Please tick all that apply

WHYNOIS1 There was no Integrated post-primary school nearby	1
WHYNOIS2 I applied for a place at an Integrated post-primary school, but it was oversubscribed	2
WHYNOIS3 I thought that there was no point in applying for a place at an Integrated post-primary school as it would be oversubscribed	3
WHYNOISO Other (please write in)	4
WHYNOISDK I don't know	8
WHYNOISREF Prefer not to say	9

ASK IF CODE 2, 8 OR 9 AT GOISSCHL
SINGLE CODE
LIKESTRNS

- F15 An existing school can transform to integrated status. If initiated by the school, parents have the option to vote on their preference to transform to integrated status through a secret ballot.

Would you want/have wanted your child's post-primary school to transform to be an Integrated school?

Please select one answer

Yes	1
No	2
I don't know	8
Prefer not to say	9



The Department of Education (DE) Research Report Series is designed to provide easy access to research findings for policy makers, researchers, teachers, lecturers, employers and the public. This reflects the high value which DE places on the wide circulation of research results to ensure that research has the maximum impact on policy and practice in education

Research cannot make decisions for policy makers and others concerned with improving the quality of education. Nor can it by itself bring about change. But it can create a better basis for decisions, by providing information and explanation about educational practice and by clarifying and challenging ideas and assumptions.

Any views expressed in the Research Report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of Education.