

Kids' Life and Times Survey 2014

Technical Notes

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Background

ARK is a joint resource between Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster. Its goal is to make social and political information on Northern Ireland available to the widest possible audience. ARK has run two annual attitudes surveys: the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey for adults aged 18 years and over (1998 to date) and the Young Life and Times Survey for 16 year olds (2003 to date). However, despite a growing interest in the area of children's rights and needs, the opinions of younger age groups are often ignored when decisions are made about many issues involving them. Conscious of this, ARK recognised the need for a regular and rigorous children's survey that could provide easily accessible, quality research data to those in the academic, voluntary and government sectors and promote the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives.

Given this context, in 2007, ARK decided to investigate the feasibility of running a survey of children in Northern Ireland by carrying out a pilot survey. Several survey methodologies were discussed. However, in order to maximise coverage and response, an online survey based in schools was seen as the most appropriate; all primary schools in Northern Ireland have internet access as part of the Classroom 2000 (C2k) initiative (<http://www.c2kni.org.uk/>).

The 2014 Kids' Life and Times (KLT) survey is the seventh to be carried out by ARK. It builds on the success of the previous KLT surveys and uses the same methodology to assess the views of P7 children in Northern Ireland. However, some changes in timing and format were made in 2014. In previous years the survey had been completed between April and June. However, in 2014 it was decided that the KLT survey should run at the same time as the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey, namely, September – December. Furthermore, an increase in the number of funders meant that two versions of the survey were required. While a number of questions covering background, school, integrated education, children's rights and health were included in both versions, version one included additional questions on play and nature and version two additional questions on autism and ageing.

Acknowledgements

The KLT team would like to acknowledge the help, advice and support given by the following individuals and organisations:

- The Department of Education for Northern Ireland and the Education and Library Boards for providing contact details and/or sending out information.
- C2kNI for emailing reminders to primary schools.
- Bang on the door for allowing us to use their characters.
- Our funders, which include Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Integrated Education Fund (IEF), Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), Centre for Behaviour Analysis (CBA) Queen's University Belfast, Improving Children's Lives (ICL) at Queen's University Belfast, Playboard and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

We particularly appreciate the time and effort taken by all the schools and P7 pupils who participated in the survey.

Technical details of the 2014 survey

Ethical permission

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

Target population

The target population was all P7-age children in Northern Ireland. This was approximately 22,500 children consisting of pupils attending 876 primary schools that had P7-age, children in hospital and special schools and also children in this age group who were not in school or who were being taught at home.

Within Northern Ireland, the overall administration of the education system is carried out by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI). There are five Education and Library Boards (ELB) which provide the education, library and youth work services. The data required to access the target population was provided by them and, as such, the KLT team were able to target as many P7-age children throughout Northern Ireland as possible.

DENI provided two databases in June 2014. One contained the names and addresses of all primary schools in Northern Ireland and the number of P6 pupils in each; as the questionnaire would not be completed until October – December 2014 these P6 pupils would by then be in P7; the second database contained the names of the principals of each school. The databases were merged by the KLT team.

A small number of children living in Northern Ireland are educated at home, and registration of this group is undertaken by the ELBs. Four ELBs facilitated our access to this group of children (24 children).

Communication with schools

On 8 October 2014 all principals of primary, special and hospital schools in Northern Ireland received a letter providing information on the survey and advising that the fieldwork would be begin on 3 November and run until 23 December 2014; a child-friendly comic with key findings from previous surveys was also included. A dedicated telephone was set up so that principals could contact the survey team for more information. The letter also offered schools an anonymised, confidential summary report based on their school's responses.

On 30th October 2014, principals were sent a second letter from the survey team, along with an instruction document for teachers, a copy of the parental consent form and a KLT bookmark for every P7 pupil in the school. Principals could contact the KLT helpline to request translations of the consent forms and requests were received for Polish, Lithuanian, Czech and Mandarin Chinese versions. This letter also directed principals and teachers to the KLT website where they could access the results of previous surveys and view both versions of the 2014 questionnaires. Each letter included a unique four-digit identification code for that school allocated by the KLT team for administrative purposes. In addition, a specific number was provided so that teachers could enter the survey to see the questions

before the children took part (their data were not recorded on the database). A troubleshooting document was also made available on the KLT website

On 3 November 2014 the relevant documentation relating to the survey and postage paid envelopes were sent to the four participating ELBs. They posted the documentation on our behalf to the parents/guardians of each child who was being home schooled inviting them to take part in the survey.

A reminder email was sent to all schools from C2kNI on November 18th 2014.

On 4th December 2014 all principals from schools that had not participated to date received a final reminder letter. From that date until the end of the fieldwork period as many schools as possible were contacted by telephone to boost the response rate.

Consent

Consent to participate involved three levels:

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

Online questionnaire

The online questionnaires were designed and administered by the ARK team. The questionnaires did not contain animations or audio, but ARK had obtained permission to use characters from 'Bang on the Door' to make the survey fun and interesting to complete. The questions were presented in different ways to try to maintain interest, for example, clicking on words or writing into a text box. Before the survey went live testing was done by members of the KLT team to ensure that all links/questions were working correctly. The children did not choose which version of the survey they would complete as the online system was configured to ensure that as each child logged on equal numbers of each survey would be completed. As such, not all children in each school completed the same version of the survey.

Throughout the design of the questionnaire, the KLT team worked closely with C2kNI which is the organisation responsible for the provision of an ICT-managed service to all schools in Northern Ireland.

Completing the questionnaire

Schools were advised that the fieldwork period would run from 3 November- 23 December 2014 and most completed within this period. However, three schools requested an extension and for them the survey remained open until 16 January 2015.

Once the child agreed that s/he wanted to take part, s/he was asked to enter the four-digit school identification number. This number was printed on all documentation sent to the school by the KLT team. However, the child was also able to enter the seven-digit school

code used by DENI. When the code was entered, the full name and address of the school appeared on the screen, and the child was asked to confirm if this was the correct school. The class teacher or other staff member was able to phone the KLT helpline at any stage to confirm their identification number. However, no further identification codes or the names of children were required.

Survey content

The questionnaire took about 20 minutes to complete. Each question had a 'Skip' option which the children could use if they did not want to answer it. The questionnaire was designed by the KLT team in association with funding organisations and children.

Questions focused on:

- Home and family;
- Bullying in school;
- Happiness with school;
- Children's Rights;
- Integrated Education;
- Play;
- Nature;
- Ageing;
- Autism.

In addition, the 10-item KIDSCREEN instrument, a health-related quality of life questionnaire for children and young people, was included.

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to suggest questions they felt should be included in any future KLT surveys.

Response rate

Fairly accurate information on the number of pupils in primary, special and hospital schools is available from the database provided by DENI. However, in order to maintain anonymity, KLT did not have exact figures on the number of children being taught at home or within special units for those children who were not in school. Therefore, the response rates quoted here can only be approximations.

There were 876 schools with P7-age pupils on the database provided by DENI, and of these 215 participated in the survey, representing 25% of schools.

There were 22,526 pupils. This figure was compiled using the numbers of P6-age pupils from the DENI database (June 2014) who at the time of the survey would be in P7. Of these 4757 logged on to the survey; this represents approximately 21% of children overall.

Table 1 indicates the response rate within Board areas for schools and for children. Thus, 31% of schools within the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) participated compared with 21% within the Western ELB (WELB); while Southern ELB (SELB) had the lowest response rate for children. Table 2 shows the response rate by school and by children, for each type of school management.

Table 1: Response by Board

	Schools %	Children %
Belfast ELB	31	24
Western ELB	21	19
North Eastern ELB	22	20
South Eastern ELB	30	25
Southern ELB	24	17

Table 2: Response by type of school management

	Schools %	Children %
Controlled	24	22
Catholic Maintained	25	21
Controlled Integrated	53	46
Grant Maintained Integrated	26	18
Voluntary	27	22
Other maintained	17	7
Independent	8	13

Tables 3 and 4 compare the data distribution of all schools by size of school or school location with the distribution of schools participating in KLT.

Table 3: Response by size of school

Number of Pupils	DENI school figures %	KLT %
20 or under	52	33
21 - 40	28	33
41 - 60	13	21
60+	6	13

Table 4: Response by school location

	DENI school figures %	KLT %
Urban	47	56
Rural	53	43

Table 5 compares the gender of KLT respondents with the overall figures across P7 pupils in Northern Ireland

Table 5: Response by gender

	DENI figures %	KLT %
Boys	51	49
Girls	49	51

Getting the data

Tables of results from the 2014 survey are available on the KLT website. Users can also download the data in SPSS portable file format from the website to carry out their own statistical analyses. However, all identifying information has been removed from this dataset. The KLT website is available at www.ark.ac.uk/klt

Using the data

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

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

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

In order to maintain anonymity, some variables have been removed from the KLT dataset.

Contact information

For all queries relating to the survey please contact:

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