

Kids' Life and Times Survey 2015

Technical Notes

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Background

The 2015 Kids' Life and Times (KLT) survey is the eighth to be carried out by ARK. ARK is a joint resource between Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. Its goal is to make social and political information on Northern Ireland available to the widest possible audience.

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

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

The 2015 KLT survey builds on the success of the previous KLT surveys and uses the same methodology to assess the views of P7 children in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork for the 2008-2013 KLT surveys was carried out from April to June; however, in 2014 it was agreed that the KLT and YLT surveys would run at the same time, namely, September to December. However, given the demands on schools during this period, KLT 2015 was also available for completion in January 2016.

Acknowledgements

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

- The Department of Education and the Education Authorities for providing contact details and/or sending out information on our behalf.
- C2kNI, CCMS and NICIE for emailing reminders to primary schools.
- Bang on the door for allowing us to use their characters.
- Our Funders for 2015: Department of Education (DE), Sport NI, Improving Children's Lives (ICL) initiative at Queen's University Belfast, ARK Ageing Programme.

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

Technical details of the 2015 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. There were approximately 22,880 P7-age pupils attending 864 primary schools, P7-age children in hospital and special schools and 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 (DE). There are five Education Authorities (EAs) which provide 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.

DE provided two databases in June 2015. 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 be completed between September 2015 and January 2016, 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 EAs. Three EAs facilitated access to this group of children.

Communication with schools

On 6 October 2015 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 begin on 2 November 2015 and run until 15 January 2016; a child-friendly comic with key findings from previous surveys was also included. A contact telephone and an email address were provided 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 19 October 2015, 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, Hungarian, Latvian and Romanian versions. The letter also directed principals and teachers to the KLT website where they could access the results of previous surveys and view the 2015 questionnaire. Each letter included a unique three-digit identification code for that school allocated by the KLT team for administrative purposes. A trouble-shooting document was also made available on the KLT website.

On 3 November 2015 the relevant documentation relating to the survey and postage paid envelopes were sent to the three participating EAs. 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. Also on 3 November 2015, C2kNI emailed all primary schools reminding them that the survey was available for completion. In addition, CCMS and NICIE contacted schools on our behalf. A reminder email was sent by C2kNI on 14 December 2015.

On 27 November all principals from schools that had not participated to date received a reminder postcard. 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 questionnaire was designed and administered by the ARK team. The survey began with an animated, audio introduction voiced by Professor Gillian Robinson, Director of ARK. Since 2008, ARK has had 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.

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 2 November 2015 to 15 January 2016 and most completed within this period. However, some schools requested an extension and therefore the survey remained open until 22 January 2016.

Once the child agreed that s/he wanted to take part, s/he was asked to enter the three-digit school identification number. This number was printed on all documentation sent to the school by the KLT team. However, the child was also able to enter the seven-digit school code used by DE. 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. No further identification codes or names of children were required.

Survey content

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

Questions on KLT 2015 focused on:

- Home and family;
- Bullying in school;
- Happiness with school;
- Shared Education;
- Physical activity and sport;
- Young Carers¹
- Techniques for staying calm in school.

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 DE. 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 864 schools with P7-age pupils on the database provided by DENI, and of these 237 participated in the survey, representing 27% of schools.

There were 22,880 pupils. This figure was compiled using the numbers of P6-age pupils from the DE database (June 2015) who at the time of the survey would be in P7 and also included children that were being home schooled. In total 5194 logged on to the survey, a response rate of approximately 23%.

Table 1 presents the response rate within the EAs for schools and for children. As can be seen, 19% of schools within the Belfast region participated compared with 32% within the Southern region; while the Southern region had the lowest response rate for children. Table 2 shows the response rate by school and by children, for each type of school management.

¹ Due to complications in how the questions on Young Carers were interpreted by some of the children the responses to these questions have not been included in the dataset.

Table 1: Response by Education Authority

	Schools %	Children %
Belfast Region	19	32
Western Region	28	28
North Eastern Region	27	28
South Eastern Region	29	18
Southern Region	32	13

Table 2: Response by type of school management

	Schools %	Children %
Controlled	25	22
Catholic Maintained	31	24
Controlled Integrated	50	39
Grant Maintained Integrated	26	16
Voluntary	18	14
Other Maintained	16	8
Independent	0	0

Tables 3 and 4 compare the data distribution of all schools by size of school and the 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	51	38
21 - 40	28	35
41 - 60	14	16
60+	8	11

Table 4: Response by school location

	DENI school figures %	KLT %
Urban	46	45
Rural	54	55

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	52
Girls	49	48

Accessing the data

Tables of results from the 2015 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, and open-ended variables, have 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 an error, please let us know as soon as you can.

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

Contact information

For all queries relating to the survey please contact:

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