

# Kids' Life and Times Survey 2019

## Technical Notes

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## **Background**

The 2019 Kids' Life and Times (KLT) survey is the twelfth 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.

Prior to the introduction of KLT ARK had been running 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). Despite a growing interest in the area of children's rights and needs, the opinions of younger age groups had been 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 2019 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 2019 survey was carried out from 10 December 2019 to 21 February 2020.

## **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 Authority for providing contact details and/or sending out information on our behalf.
- C2kNI for emailing reminders to primary schools.
- Bang on the door for allowing us to use their characters.

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 2019 survey**

### **Ethical permission**

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

### **Target population**

The target population was all P7-age children in Northern Ireland. There were approximately 25571 in total which included P7-age pupils attending 848 primary schools (this included P7-age children in special and independent schools).

Within Northern Ireland, the overall administration of the education system is carried out by the Department of Education (DE) and the Education Authority (EA) which provides 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.

In June 2019 DE provided a database containing 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 December 2019 and February 2020 these P6 pupils would by then be in P7.

### **Communication with schools**

On 10 December 2019 C2kni, the organisation responsible for the provision of an ICT-managed services to all schools in Northern Ireland, emailed all primary schools advising them that the survey was available for completion. As we were aware that the mailing of the letters to schools would, due to unforeseen circumstances, be delayed the email advised schools that if they wished to begin completing the survey before receiving the letter they should contact the KLT team and the relevant materials would be emailed to them. A small number of schools who complete KLT regularly did so.

In the week beginning 6 January 2020 all principals of primary and special schools in Northern Ireland received a letter providing information on KLT and advising that the survey was available online for completions and would run until 21 February 2020. The letter contained an instruction document for teachers, a copy of the parental consent form, a KLT bookmark for every P7 pupil in the school and a child-friendly comic with key findings from previous surveys. A contact telephone number and an email address were provided so that principals could contact the survey team for more information. Principals could contact the KLT helpline to request translations of the consent forms; none were required. The letter also offered schools an anonymised, confidential summary report based on their school's responses and directed principals and teachers to the KLT website where they could access the results of previous surveys and, importantly, view the content of the 2019 questionnaire. Each letter included a unique three-digit identification code specific to each school allocated by the KLT team for administrative purposes. A troubleshooting document was also made available on the KLT website.

A reminder email was sent by C2kni to all schools on 22 January 2020. Subsequent to this, follow-up telephone calls were made to schools that had not participated in KLT and, as in previous years, this helped 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, previous 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.

## **Completing the questionnaire**

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 school they attended. The class teacher or other staff members could phone the KLT helpline at any stage to confirm their school identification number, or get any clarification required. 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 2019 included:

- Home and family;
- School and bullying;
- School toilets;
- Children's Rights;
- Climate Change.

## **Response rate**

Fairly accurate information on the number of pupils in primary and special schools is available from the database provided by DE although the figures will not be exact given that some children will leave, or join, schools throughout the year.

There were 848 schools with P7-age pupils on the database provided by DE, and of these 181 participated in the survey, representing 21 percent of schools.

There were 25,571 P7-age children. This figure was compiled using the numbers of P6-age pupils from the DE database (June 2019) who at the time of the survey would be in P7. In total 4,632 took part in the survey, a response rate of approximately 18 percent.

Table 1 presents the response rate within the Council areas for schools and for children. The highest response rate for schools came from Newry, Mourne and Down Council area (17%), with the lowest being Antrim and Newtownabbey (4%).

**Table 1: Response by Council**

|                                      | Schools<br>% | Children<br>% |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Antrim and Newtownabbey              | 4            | 5             |
| Ards and North Down                  | 8            | 8             |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 9            | 10            |
| Belfast                              | 15           | 24            |
| Causeway Coast and Glens             | 7            | 5             |
| Derry City and Strabane              | 6            | 6             |
| Fermanagh and Omagh                  | 10           | 4             |
| Lisburn and Castlereagh              | 7            | 10            |
| Mid and East Antrim                  | 8            | 9             |
| Mid-Ulster                           | 9            | 7             |
| Newry, Mourne and Down               | 17           | 14            |

Table 2 shows the response rate, by school and by children, for each school management type.

**Table 2: Response by type of school management**

|                             | Schools<br>% | Children<br>% |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Controlled                  | 49           | 51            |
| Catholic Maintained         | 42           | 44            |
| Controlled Integrated       | 2            | 2             |
| Grant Maintained Integrated | 2            | <1            |
| Voluntary                   | 1            | 1             |
| Other Maintained            | 3            | 1             |
| Special                     | 1            | 1             |

Table 3 compares the data distribution of all schools by the school location with the distribution of schools participating in KLT.

**Table 3: Response by school location**

|       | DE school figures<br>% | KLT<br>% |
|-------|------------------------|----------|
| Urban | 46                     | 55       |
| Rural | 54                     | 45       |

Table 5 compares the gender of KLT respondents with the overall figure from across all P7 pupils in Northern Ireland.

**Table 4: Response by gender**

|       | DE figures<br>% | KLT<br>% |
|-------|-----------------|----------|
| Boys  | 51              | 51       |
| Girls | 49              | 49       |

#### **Accessing the data**

Tables of results from the 2019 survey are available on the KLT website at [www.ark.ac.uk/klt](http://www.ark.ac.uk/klt). 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.

#### **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/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/klt/help/)).

#### **Contact information**

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