



Kids' Life and Times (KLT)

# Summary of Results

2023



# Background

Every year, ARK, a joint initiative between Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, invites all Primary 7 aged children (10/11 years old) from all schools in Northern Ireland to take part in the KLT survey. KLT gives them the opportunity to share their opinions and experiences of school, health and wellbeing, their rights, and other important social issues.

This document provides a summary of some key findings from the 2023 survey. More detailed results on specific modules are freely available on the KLT website at [www.ark.ac.uk/klt](http://www.ark.ac.uk/klt).

The modules on the 2023 KLT survey were funded by the Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland, Sport NI and the NSPCC.



# Who took part in the 2023 KLT survey?

Of the 5577 children from 212 primary schools who responded to KLT:

- **49%** were girls, **48%** were boys and **3%** selected 'neither' or 'do not want to say'.
- **76%** lived with both parents, **13%** with their mum most of the time, **1%** with their dad most of the time and **7%** spent half their time with each parent. **2%** of children said they lived with someone else.
- **14%** of KLT respondents said they had a long-term disability, illness, or medical condition.
- When asked about the current cost-of-living crisis, **57%** said their families had enough money for both ordinary things and special things. **23%** said their families had enough money for ordinary things but not for some special things, **3%** said they had not enough money for ordinary or special things and **17%** did not know. Most often there was not enough money for holidays and expensive games/presents.

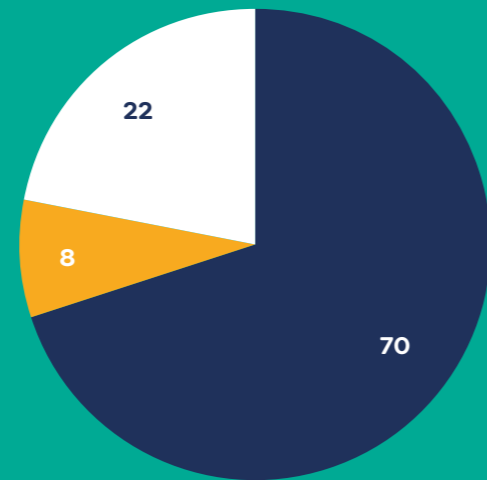


# Experiences of school

The majority of children (70%) said they had been mostly happy at primary school, 8% were mostly unhappy and 22% could not decide. Slightly more girls (72%) than boys (69%) said they had been mostly happy at school.

**Figure 1:**  
Would you say you were mostly happy or unhappy at school? (%)

Mostly happy Mostly unhappy I can't decide

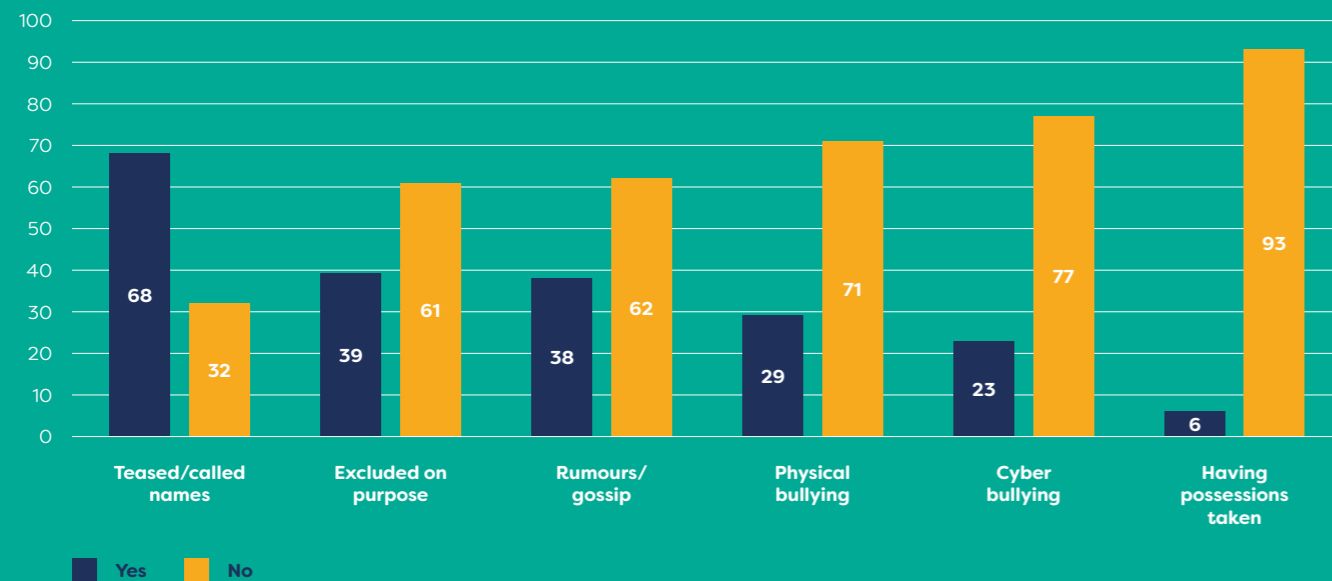


# Bullying

Around one-third (32%) of P7 children said they had been bullied in school, 50% had not been bullied and 18% said they did not know. Of those who had been bullied, the most common type of bullying experienced was being teased or called hurtful names (68%) followed by being left out of things on purpose (39%) (Figure 2). Nearly one-

quarter of children (23%) said they had experienced cyber bullying, for example, through mobile phones, social media, or online games. Children who said they had been bullied at school had poorer wellbeing than their peers who had not been bullied and they were more likely to say they had been unhappy at their primary school.

**Figure 2:**  
Type of bullying experienced (%)

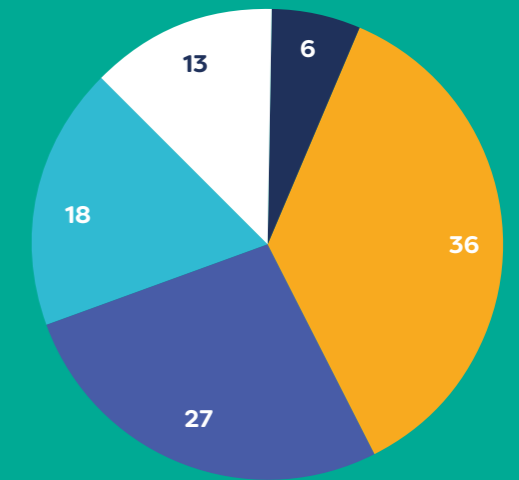


# Sport and physical activity

In a normal week, playing sport or doing some physical activity for at least 60 minutes during a day is the recommended target for children and young people. As Figure 3 shows, only 6% of KLT respondents said they never met the target activity level. Nearly one third (31%) took part in physical activity 7 times a week or more with boys (37%) more likely to do this than girls (26%).

**Figure 3:**  
How many times during a normal week would you spend at least 60 minutes during a day playing sport or doing some physical activity? (%)

Never Up to 4 times a week 4 - 6 times a week 7 times a week More often



Respondents were asked what kind of sports or physical activities they undertook in a normal week. Table 1 shows that the vast majority (96%) of children did PE in school, 40% walked or cycled to school and 77% took part in sports outside school. Overall, there were few differences between boys and girls.

**Table 1:**  
In a normal week would you do any of the following things? (%)

	Boys	Girls	All
Walk or cycle to school	42	38	40
Do PE in school	96	97	96
Take part in sports in a sports club, organised activity, or a gym outside school	80	76	77



Table 2 shows that just over half of KLT respondents feel that being fit and healthy (54%), gaining new skills (53%) and having fun and meeting new friends (53%) are 'very important' reasons for taking part in sport

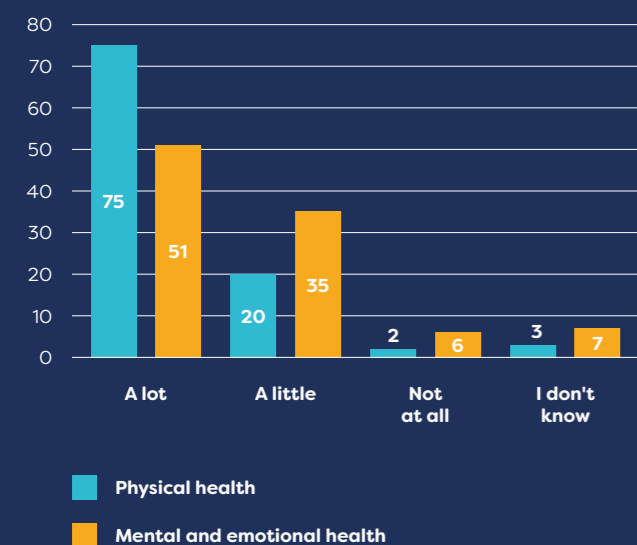
and physical activity. However, only 30% thought that competing with others was a 'very important' reason for taking part in sport and physical activity, with boys (36%) more likely to say this than girls (24%).

**Table 2:** Children who feel the following are 'very important' reasons for taking part in sport or physical activity (%)

	Boys	Girls	All
To be fit and healthy	58	50	54
To gain new skills	57	48	53
To have fun and meet friends	56	50	53
To compete with others	36	24	30

As Figure 4 shows, most KLT respondents thought that taking part in sport or physical activity can help improve physical and mental health 'a lot' or 'a little' with three-quarters (75%) saying it can improve physical health 'a lot'.

**Figure 4:** How much do you think sport or physical activity can improve your health? (%)



Just over half of all KLT respondents (54%) said they had a sports idol although this differed markedly between boys (71%) and girls (38%). Children who said they had a

sports idol were asked who this was and, as the word cloud in Figure 5 shows, the most popular sports idol was Messi, followed by Ronaldo.

**Figure 5:** Who is your sports idol?



## Mental health and wellbeing

Figure 6 shows that just over one quarter (25%) of all KLT respondents assessed their mental health and wellbeing as 'excellent' and only 5% thought it was 'poor'. Slightly more boys (29%) than girls (21%) assessed their mental health and wellbeing as 'excellent'.

**Figure 6:** Children's assessment of their mental health and wellbeing (%)

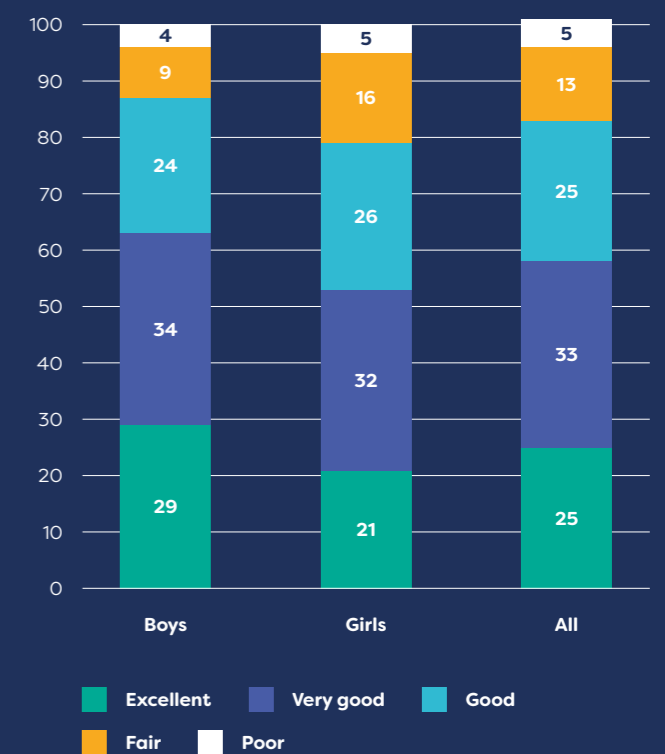


Table 3 shows that the largest stressor for girls was 'problems or arguments with friends' (53%) and for boys it was 'being under pressure to do well at school' (36%). More boys (24%) than girls (13%) said they

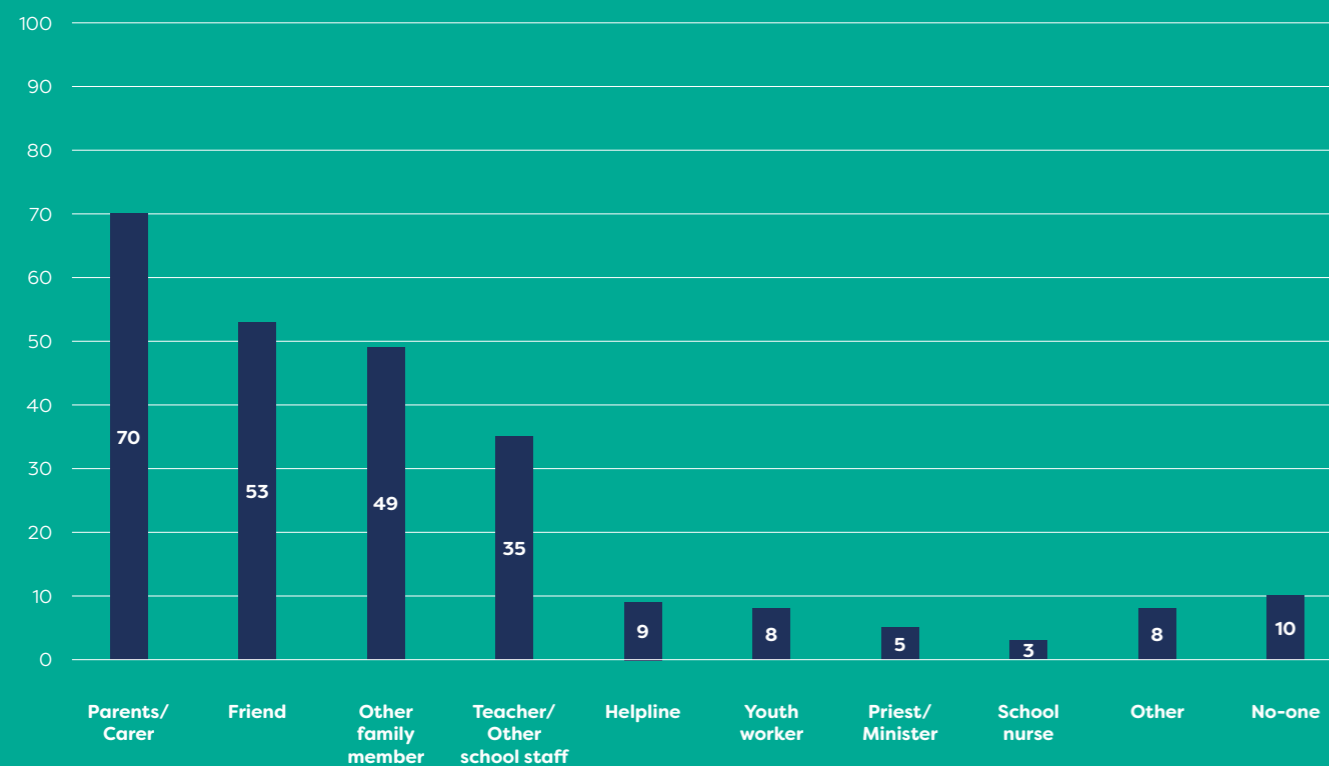
never felt worried or stressed. In general, girls were more likely than boys to say they felt stressed or worried about almost all items assessed in the KLT survey.

**Table 3:** Which, if any, of the following make you feel worried or stressed? (%)

	Boys	Girls	All
Problems or arguments with friends	32	53	42
Being under pressure to do well at school	36	42	39
Problems or arguments at home/with my family	34	38	36
My parent(s)/carer(s) being worried about not having enough money	20	23	22
Not having safe places to play/hang out with friends	12	14	14
Pressure to wear the latest trends in clothing/makeup/sports gear	7	19	13
Having to provide care for a family member	12	12	12
Being sent unsuitable pictures/messages online	11	12	11
Pressure to get likes/positive comments on social media	5	9	8
Not getting help with my disability/learning needs	6	5	6
Other	10	23	20
I never feel worried or stressed	24	13	18

Respondents were asked who they would talk to about any worries they might have. As shown in Figure 7, 70% would talk to their parents/carers, 53% to their friends, and 49% to another family member.

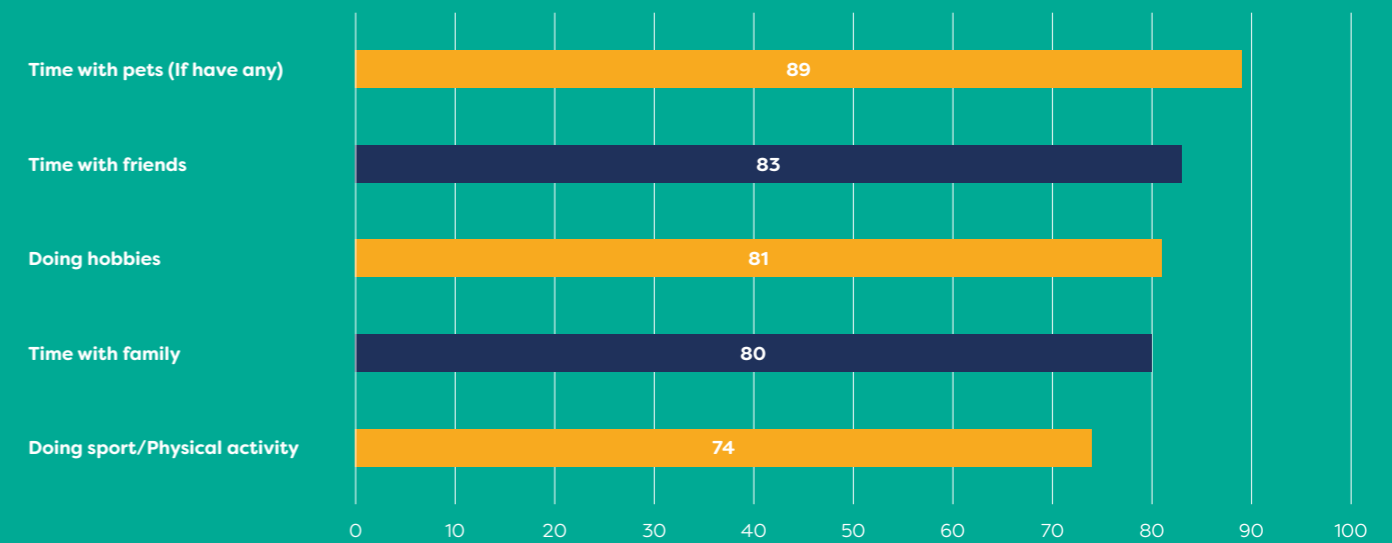
**Figure 7:** Who would you talk to if you were worried or stressed? (%)



As Figure 8 shows, spending time with their pets (if they had any) was the thing that helped children feel better when they were worried or stressed with 89% saying 'strongly agree' or 'agree'. This was followed

by spending time with their friends (83%) and doing hobbies like reading or making things (81%).

**Figure 8:** Things that children strongly agree or agree might make them feel better if they were worried or stressed (%)





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