



# Kids' Life and Times Survey 2023

## Technical Notes

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## **Background**

The 2023 Kids' Life and Times (KLT) survey is the fifteenth 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 2023 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 2023 survey was carried out from 22<sup>nd</sup> February until Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

## **Acknowledgements**

The KLT team would like to thank the following organisations for funding modules in the 2023 KLT survey:

- Northern Ireland Mental Health Champion;
- NSPCC;
- Sport NI.

We would also like to say thank you for the help, advice and support given by the following organisations:

- The Department of Education (DE) for providing contact details;
- C2kNI for emailing reminders to primary schools.

We particularly appreciate the time and effort taken by everyone involved in each school and the P7 pupils who participated in the 2023 survey.

## Technical details of the 2023 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 25989 children in total which included P7-age pupils attending 837 primary schools (this included P7-age children in special and independent schools).

In November 2022 DE provided their most recent database (2021/22) 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 February and March 2023 these P6 pupils would, by then, be in P7.

### Communication with schools

On 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023 all principals of primary and special schools in Northern Ireland were sent a letter providing information on the KLT survey and advising that it would be available from 22<sup>nd</sup> February until Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The letter contained an instruction document for teachers and parental consent forms. 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. In 2023, four requests for translations were received. The questionnaire was translated into Bulgarian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian by Central Translations NI. 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 2023 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.

During March, 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 in conjunction with the funders. 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.

### **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.

Questions on KLT 2023 included:

- Home and family (including financial circumstances);
- School and bullying;
- Mental health and wellbeing;
- Sport.

### **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 837 schools with P7-age pupils on the database provided by DE, and of these 212 participated in the survey, representing 25 percent of schools.

There were approximately 25989 P7-age children. This figure was compiled using the database provided by DE in November 2022 (see details above). In total, 5577 children logged on to the survey, a response rate of approximately 21 percent.

Table 1 shows the response rate, by school (DE and KLT) and by children (KLT), for each Council area. The highest response rate for schools came in the Belfast Council area (15%).

**Table 1: Response by Council Area**

	Schools (DE and KLT)		Children (KLT) %
	DE %	KLT %	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	7	8	8
Ards and North Down	6	9	10
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	11	12	11
Belfast	13	15	20
Causeway Coast and Glens	10	9	6
Derry City and Strabane	8	7	6
Fermanagh and Omagh	10	11	7
Lisburn and Castlereagh	5	6	9
Mid and East Antrim	7	4	4
Mid-Ulster	12	7	7
Newry, Mourne and Down	12	12	11

Table 2 shows the response rate, by school (DE and KLT) and by children (KLT), for each school management type. A fairly equal spread of Controlled and Catholic Maintained schools participated in the 2023 KLT survey (45% and 44% respectively). No schools from the Independent sector took part in the 2023 survey. Table 3 suggests a slight over-representation of urban schools (53%) participated in the 2023 KLT survey compared to the figure for DE (47%).

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

	Schools (DE and KLT)		Children (KLT) %
	DE %	KLT %	
Controlled	42	45	46
Catholic Maintained	42	44	44
Controlled Integrated	3	3	4
Grant Maintained Integrated	3	4	5
Voluntary	1	1	1
Other Maintained	3	1	1
Special	4 <sup>1</sup>	1	<1
Independent	2	-	-

**Table 3: Response by school location**

	Schools (DE and KLT)	
	DE %	KLT %
Urban	47	53
Rural	53	47

<sup>1</sup> Please note that of the 33 Special schools with P7 pupils in 2023, DE figures record 31 as Controlled, 1 as Catholic Maintained and 1 as Other Maintained.

Table 4 compares the gender of KLT respondents with the overall figure from across all P7 pupils in Northern Ireland; as can be seen, there is little difference between the DE and KLT figures for children identifying as boy and girl. However, respondents to KLT were given two additional options, 'Neither' and 'I don't want to say'. Taking this into account, the percentages for KLT responses are as follows: Boys 48%, Girls 48%, Neither 1%, I don't want to say 2%.

**Table 4: Response by gender**

	P7 children (DE and KLT)	
	DE %	KLT %
Boys	50	50
Girls	50	50

### **Accessing the data**

Tables of results from the 2023 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 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 details below). Alternatively, you can use the help section on the KLT website at [www.ark.ac.uk/klt/help/](http://www.ark.ac.uk/klt/help/)

### **Contact information**

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