



Kids' Life and Times (KLT)

Summary of Results

2026



Background

Every year, ARK, a joint initiative between Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, invites all Primary 7 (P7)-aged children (10-11 years old) in Northern Ireland to take part in the Kids' Life and Times (KLT) survey. KLT gives children the opportunity to share their opinions on, and experiences of, a range of issues that affect their lives, for example, school, health and wellbeing, and rights.

This document provides a summary of some key findings from the 2026 survey. More detailed results are freely available on the KLT website at www.ark.ac.uk/klt.

The 2026 KLT survey had three funders. The Department of Education funded questions on Shared Education, the Integrated Education Fund funded questions on integration in society and post-primary school transition, and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland funded questions on social media.



Who took part in the 2026 KLT survey?

Of the 4,250 children from 153 primary schools who responded to KLT:

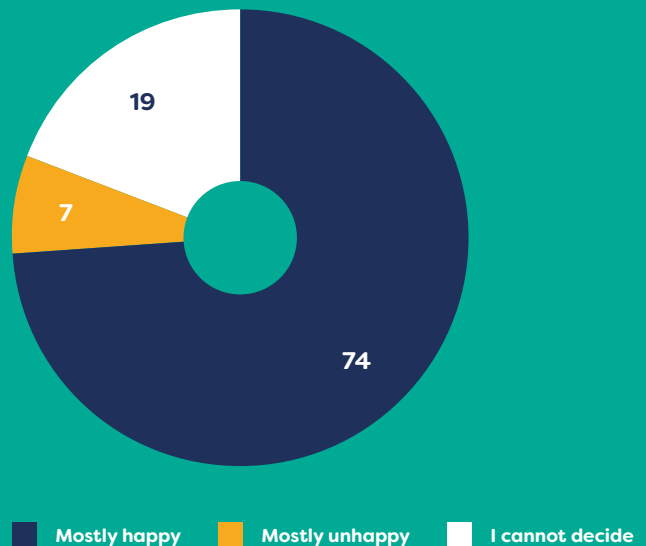
- **49 per cent** were girls, **49 per cent** were boys and **2 per cent** selected 'neither' or 'I do not want to say'.
- Using the Family Affluence Scale, **11 per cent** of respondents were categorised as low affluence, **53 per cent** as medium affluence and **37 per cent** as high affluence.
- When asked to describe the place where they lived, **48 per cent** said in a city or town, while **39 per cent** said in a village or in the country and **13 per cent** were not sure.
- **11 per cent** of KLT respondents said they had a long-term disability, illness, or medical condition.
- When asked about their mental health and wellbeing, **29 per cent** of KLT respondents described it as excellent, **61 per cent** as very good or good, and **10 per cent** described it as fair or poor.



Experiences of School

The majority of children (74%) said they had been mostly happy at primary school, 7 per cent were mostly unhappy and 19 per cent could not decide (Figure 1). More girls (77%) than boys (72%) said they had been mostly happy at school.

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

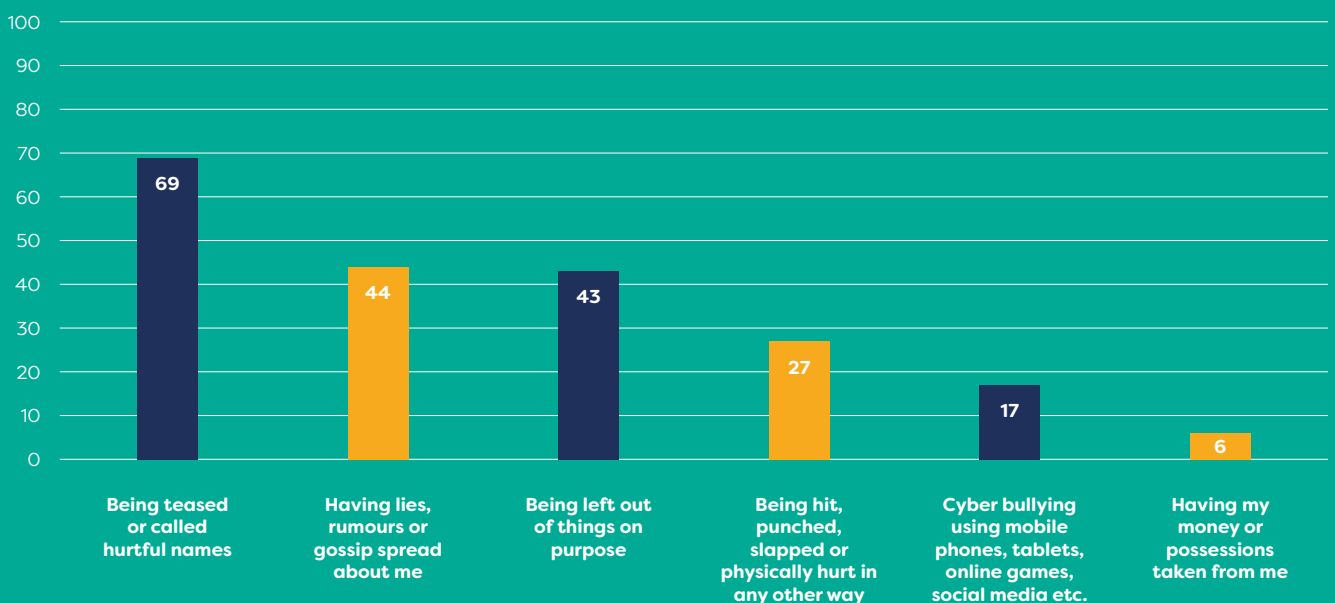


Bullying

Just over one quarter (27%) of P7 respondents said they had been bullied in school, 52 per cent had not been bullied and 21 per cent said they did not know. Slightly more girls (30%) than boys (24%) had experienced bullying. Of those who said they had been bullied, the most common type of bullying experienced was being teased

or called hurtful names (69%), followed by having lies, rumours or gossip spread about them (44%) (Figure 2). 17 per cent of children said they had experienced cyber bullying, through, for example, mobile phones, tablets, social media, or online games.

Figure 2: Type of bullying experienced (multiple responses permitted) (%)

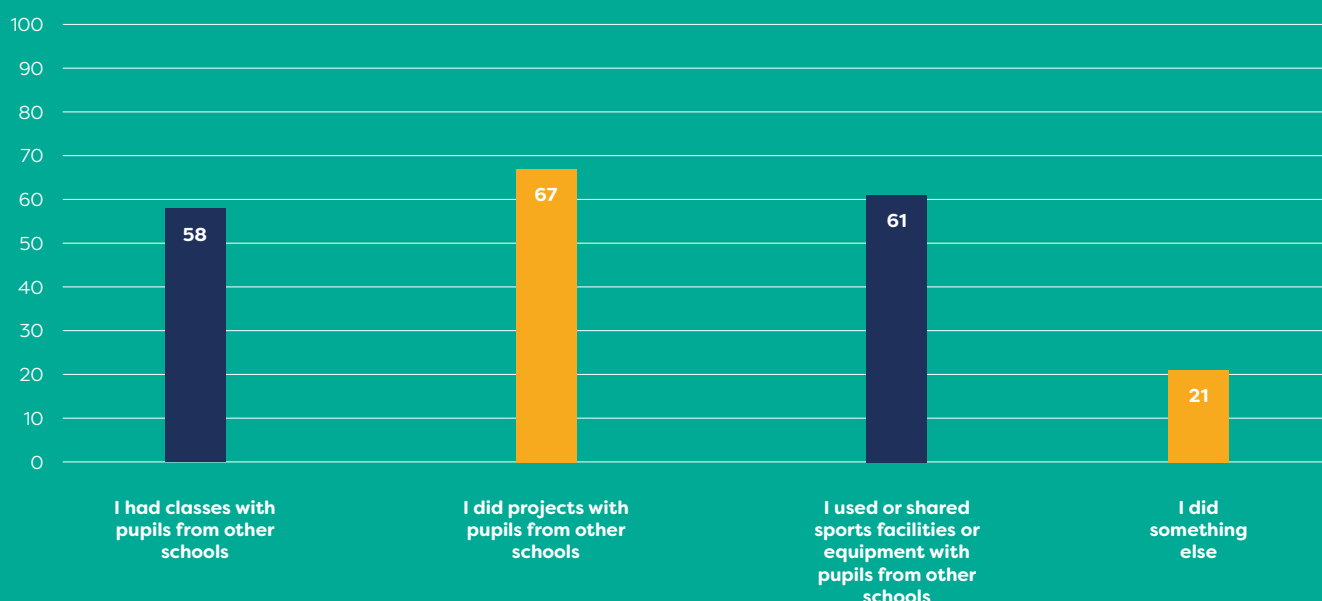


Shared Education

Shared Education involves schools getting together with other schools where pupils are from a different religion or background. When asked if they had ever taken part in Shared Education, 67 per cent of KLT respondents said they had. As Figure 3 shows, the most common activity was doing projects with pupils from other

schools (67%), followed by sharing sports facilities or equipment with pupils from other schools (61%). Over half of KLT respondents who had taken part in Shared Education had classes with pupils from other schools (58%) and 21 per cent had done something else.

Figure 3: What Shared Education activities have you taken part in? (multiple responses permitted) (%)



Children who said they had done projects, had classes, or shared equipment with other schools were asked how much they liked or disliked these activities.

Table 1 shows that sharing sports facilities and computers or equipment was the most popular activity among these P7s with 88 per cent saying they liked it a lot or a little.

Table 1: How much did you like or dislike the following Shared Education activities? (%) ^{1,2}

	Liked	Disliked
Sharing sports facilities and computers or equipment	88	12
Doing projects together	86	15
Sharing classes	80	20

All respondents who had done Shared Education were presented with a list of other things they might have been involved in and were asked how much they liked or disliked each one. As Table 2 shows, the aspect of

Shared Education that KLT respondents liked best was being with children who have a different skin colour or who speak a different language (86%), while the least popular was being taught by different teachers (25%).

Table 2: How much did you like or dislike any of the following Shared Education activities? (%) ^{1,2}

	Liked	Disliked	Did not do this
Being with children who have a different skin colour or who speak a different language than you	86	6	8
Doing classes we don't normally get to do at our school	81	9	11
Making new friends	81	12	8
Being with children who are a different religion to you	80	13	7
Being with children who are richer or poorer than you	80	10	10
Learning new things with pupils from another school	74	17	9
Shared digital and online activities	71	13	16
Travelling to a different school	69	17	14
Being taught by different teachers	66	25	9

When asked if they were better able to respect the views of others since taking part in Shared Education, 66 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed and only 2 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed (Table 3). Very similar

proportions of boys and girls agreed/strongly agreed or disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement. A higher proportion of boys than girls neither agreed nor disagreed, while a higher proportion of girls than boys did not know.

Table 3: Since taking part in Shared Education, I am better able to respect the views of others (%) ³

	Boys	Girls	All
Strongly agree or agree	66	67	66
Neither agree nor disagree	20	17	18
I don't know	11	15	13
Strongly disagree or disagree	3	2	2



Shared Education Campus

A Shared Education Campus is where two (or more) schools share one building or where there are facilities in each school building which both schools use. KLT respondents were asked if they would like their school to be part of a Shared

Education Campus. 30 per cent said they would like their school to be part of a Shared Education Campus, 24 per cent would not like it and 46 per cent did not know.

Post-primary School Transition

KLT respondents are in their final year of primary school and transition to post-primary school at the beginning of the next academic year. The majority of them had been asked by their parents or guardians what schools they would like to go to after primary school (89%). Respondents were then asked how important a

range of factors would be **to them** if they could choose what school to go to when they left primary school (Table 4). Good pastoral care was the most important issue (92%), followed by the subjects taught (86%) and the school's reputation (82%).

Table 4: The importance of factors when choosing a school to go to after primary school (%) ^{1, 4}

	Important	Not important	I don't know
The school has good pastoral care	92	5	2
The subjects taught in the school	86	12	2
The school has a good reputation	82	15	3
The school can provide extra help to pupils who need it	83	14	4
The extra activities the school have including the sports they play	78	19	3
The school has good facilities and is modern	72	23	5
Some of your friends go to the school	66	31	3
The school is easy to get to	66	29	4
The school is a grammar school	44	48	9
Something else	43	14	43
The school is attended by children from different countries and/or who speak different languages	39	50	11
The school is attended by a mix of pupils from Catholic, Protestant and other religious backgrounds	39	48	14
You have a brother or sister who goes to the school	37	57	7

Presented with the same list of options, KLT respondents were also asked what three things they thought would be most important **to their parents or guardians** when choosing a post-

primary school. The top three were: the school has a good reputation (54%); the school is easy to get to (40%); and the school can provide extra help to pupils who need it (30%).

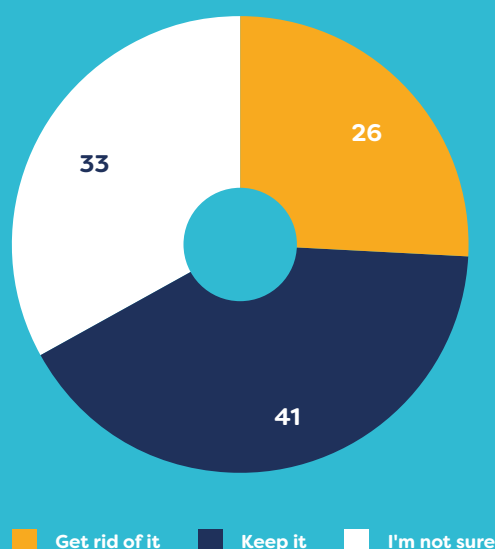
SEAG Test

The SEAG test is used to inform admissions to some post-primary schools in Northern Ireland (for example, grammar schools). It is not compulsory for P7 pupils to take the test. 60 per cent of KLT respondents had taken the SEAG test. Of these one quarter (25%) felt under a lot of pressure because of it, a similar proportion felt no pressure (24%), while just under half (47%) cited a level of pressure somewhere between lots and none.

All KLT respondents were subsequently asked about what should happen to the SEAG test (Figure 4); around two fifths (41%) thought that it should be retained, while approximately one quarter (26%) felt it should be removed, with the remaining third (33%) unsure.

Respondents who sat the SEAG test were more likely to want to retain it than those who had not taken it (51% compared to 26%). A slightly higher percentage of KLT participants who had not taken the test would like to get rid of it (27%) compared to those who had taken the test (25%). A higher proportion of those who had not taken the test were unsure whether it should be retained or not (47%) compared to those who had taken the test (25%).

Figure 4: What should happen to the SEAG test? (%)



Integration in Society

The KLT 2026 survey asked P7-aged children how divided they felt Northern Ireland was in relation to various characteristics. As detailed in

Table 5, KLT respondents felt that division was most evident in terms of religion (33%) and least evident regarding wealth (21%).

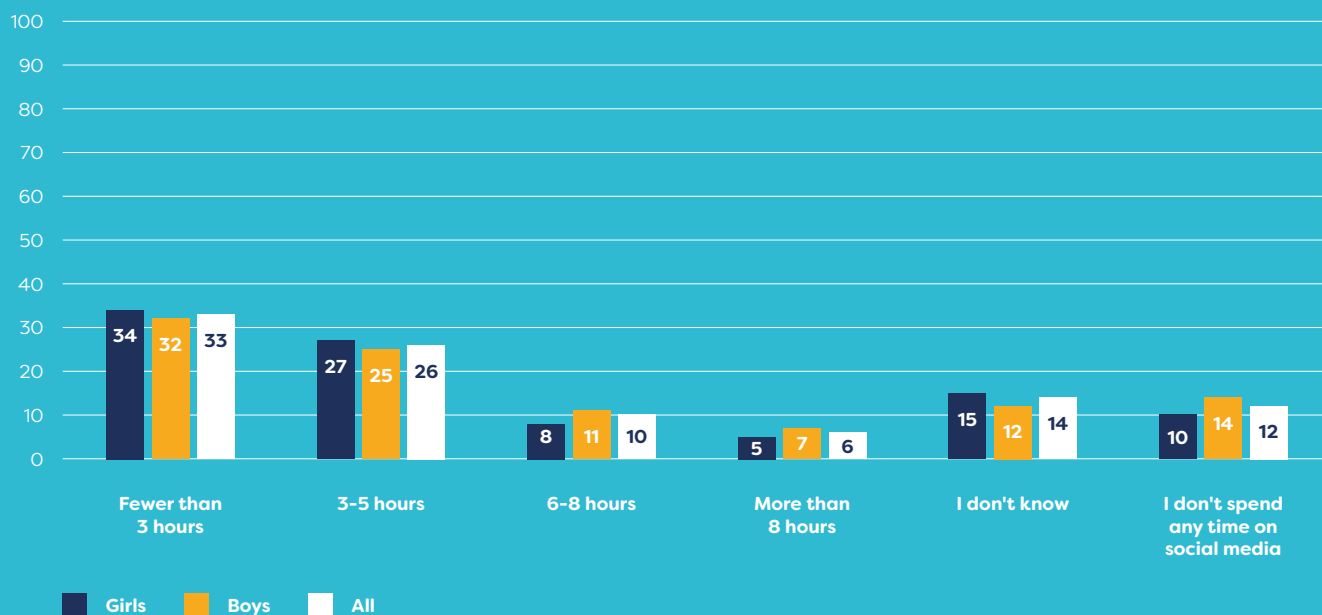
Table 5: Attitudes to the extent of division in Northern Ireland by various characteristics (%) ¹

	Very/quite divided	Not really/ not at all divided	I don't know
Religion	33	50	17
The schools they attend	31	54	15
Their cultural traditions and festivals	29	54	17
The sports they play	28	60	13
Their skin colour and/or the languages they speak	26	60	14
How rich or how poor they are	21	60	19

Social media

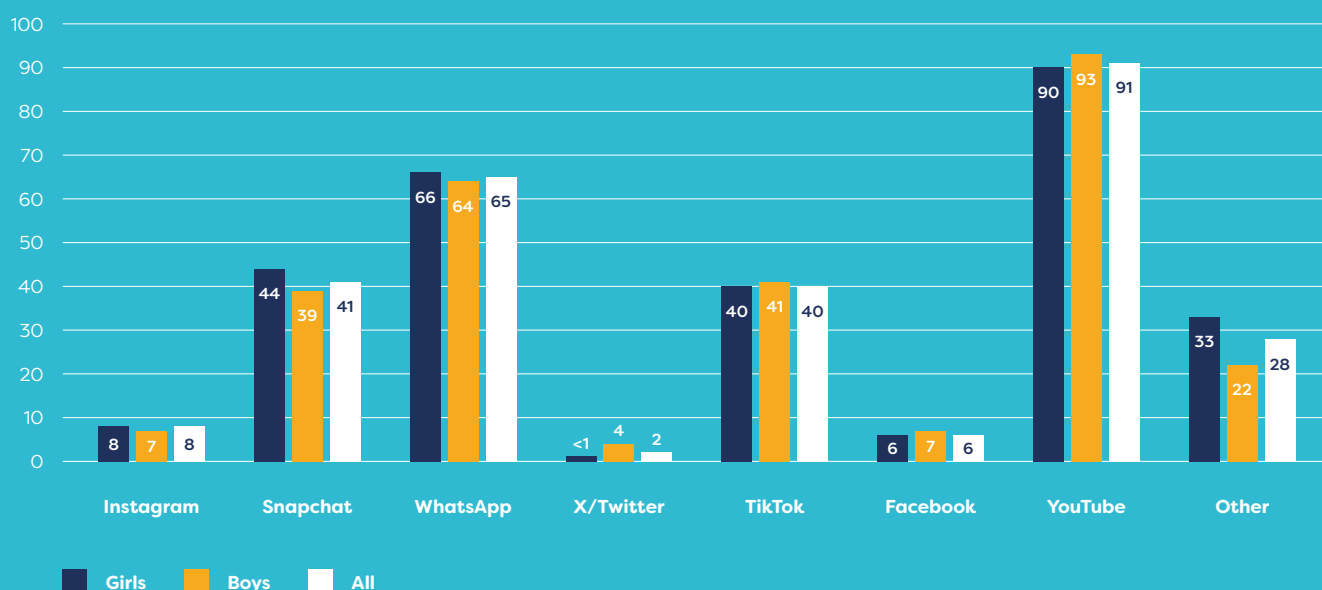
KLT respondents were asked about the amount of time they spent on social media on an average day (Figure 5). One third (33%) spent less than three hours on social media, while around a quarter (26%) spent 3-5 hours.

Figure 5: Time spent on social media (%) ³



When asked about the apps they used on social media (Figure 6), KLT respondents listed YouTube as the most common (91%), followed by WhatsApp (65%) and Snapchat (41%).

Figure 6: Use of social media apps (multiple responses permitted) (%)



The most common way children accessed social media was using their own smart phone (76%) (Table 6). This was followed by their own iPad or other tablet computer (56%) and their

own games console (36%). As shown in Table 6, gender differences in how respondents accessed social media were apparent.

Table 6: Ways of accessing of social media (multiple responses permitted) (%)

	All	Boys	Girls
Own smart phone	76	76	76
Own iPad or other tablet computer	56	47	65
Own games console	36	59	13
Own laptop or computer at home	25	30	20
A parent's/guardian's phone, laptop or computer	18	19	18
Another device	6	6	6
A friend's phone, laptop or computer	5	6	4

Approximately one fifth (19%) of KLT respondents had seen or been sent something upsetting on social media. Most respondents (72%) had received information on how to behave when on social media. When asked whether it is a

good idea to restrict access to social media for children and young people, 23 per cent of respondents said yes, while 46 per cent said no and around one third (31%) were unsure.

The Best Things About Northern Ireland

The 2026 KLT survey asked P7 children what they liked most about Northern Ireland. Figure 7 illustrates the results in a word cloud, showing words with at least 100 mentions – the larger the word in the ‘cloud’, the more times this was mentioned by survey respondents. Respondents wrote:

‘I like the scenery, the variety of stuff to do, the people and how friendly they are’

‘One thing I love about “our wee country” is probably the passion for the country and the sporting activities that we take part in’

‘I hate the weather in Northern Ireland, I despise cold weather, rain and windy days and prefer much warmer and sunny days’

‘I wouldn't rather live anywhere else; I guess my favourite thing about Northern Ireland is that it's Northern Ireland’

Figure 7: What do you like most about Northern Ireland?



Notes

- ¹ Due to rounding, row percentages in Tables 1-2 and Tables 4-5 may not add up to 100.
- ² Table 1-2: Liked refers to liked it a lot and liked it a little responses. Disliked refers to did not like it very much and did not like it at all responses.
- ³ Due to rounding, column percentages in Table 3 and Figure 5 may not add up to 100.
- ⁴ Table 4: Important refers to very important and quite important responses. Not important refers to not very important or not at all important responses.

Contact Us

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