

What is the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey?

The Young Life and Times (YLT) survey is a constituent part of ARK, a resource providing access to social and political information on Northern Ireland (www.ark.ac.uk). All too often the opinions of young people are ignored when decisions are made about many of the issues involving them. Thus, the aim of the Young Life and Times survey is to record the views of 16-year olds in Northern Ireland on a range of issues such as community relations, health, politics, sectarianism and education. By inviting respondents to suggest issues for the next year's survey, we make sure that the topics covered are relevant to the lives of 16-year olds in Northern Ireland today.

Links with other surveys

The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey, an annual survey that began in 1998, records the attitudes and values of adults aged 18 years and over in Northern Ireland. The range of topics included in NILT varies each year, although many modules are repeated over time to monitor changing attitudes and trends on specific social policy issues. In particular, questions on community relations and political attitudes are included each year in order to track how/if attitudes change within the rapidly shifting social and political environment of Northern Ireland. Full details can be found on the NILT website at www.ark.ac.uk/nilt.

From 1998 to 2000, a Young Life and Times (YLT) survey ran alongside NILT. All 12-17 year olds living in the household of an adult NILT respondent were asked to partake in YLT. This was a paper questionnaire with questions mostly being a subset of those asked in the adult questionnaire. One of the main aims of this approach was to enable the analysis of the attitudes of young people and compare them with the attitudes of their parents. However, in 2001 the survey team undertook a review of YLT as the level of use of the young person's survey was much less than that of the adult survey.

Consultation with a variety of users from the academic and voluntary sectors found that:

- There was an extremely high level of interest in a young person's survey.
- There was little interest in linking the attitudes of children to those of their parents.
- There were concerns that questions suitable for 17 year olds were not always suitable for 12 year olds (and vice-versa) and that this was restrictive.
- There was strong policy interest in the views of young people in the areas of community relations, political attitudes, education and employment.
- There was a concern that young people were not interviewed by young people and that the optimal survey design required this.
- There was a concern that the survey did not involve young people in the design of the questions.
- Interviewing young people in their own homes – often in front of their parents – was problematic.
- However, interviewing young people in schools, often with peer effects, was equally problematic, and had the additional coverage problems of children excluded from schools and low numbers of 16 and 17 year olds.

Based on the findings of the consultation exercise, the current methodology was designed to address as many of these issues as possible and the first YLT survey using this methodology was undertaken in 2003.

More recently, the YLT survey has had more links with the Kids Life and Times (KLT) survey which is an annual school-based online survey conducted by ARK among P7 age children, namely children in their final year in primary school in Northern Ireland. The first KLT survey was undertaken in 2008. KLT and YLT have regularly asked similar or identical questions on certain subject areas. This was the case in 2022 when both surveys asked questions of Shared Education, Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Education (CRED). More information on the KLT survey can be found at www.ark.ac.uk/klt.

With the exception of 2020, YLT has been conducted annually since its inception.

Technical details of 2022 survey

Sample

The survey sample was taken from the Child Benefit Register. Since 2004, a statutory instrument and explanatory memorandum (Tax Credits (Provision of Information) (Evaluation and Statistical Studies) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2004) has been in place which allows ARK to access the Child Benefit Register for the YLT survey. The 2022 YLT survey was also approved by the Ethics Committee of the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast.

Child Benefit is a benefit for people bringing up children and is paid for each child. Therefore, the Child Benefit Register contains information on all children for whom Child Benefit is claimed. Until March 2013 this was a universal benefit, but in April 2013 legislation came into place which introduced means testing with regard to Child Benefit payments. Higher earners are now no longer entitled to receive Child Benefit. This meant a potential significant change to the YLT sampling strategy. The use of alternative universal or random sample frames for YLT (such as the GP register) have been considered. However, unlike in other parts of the UK, there is currently still no legislation in place in Northern Ireland that would permit the use of such sample frames. Consultations with HMRC, who administer Child Benefit payments across the UK, also revealed that the names and addresses of those 16-year olds affected by the Child Benefit Payment changes and those whose parents opted out of receiving Child Benefit are still held at HMRC, for example, in order to issue National Insurance Cards. Thus, the Child Benefit Register remains the only suitable sample frame of 16-year olds for the YLT survey.

As in previous years, the sample for the 2022 survey was provided to ARK directly by HMRC. The sample for the 2022 survey included the names and addresses of 5,000 randomly selected young people in Northern Ireland who celebrated their 16th birthday in January, February and March 2022.

In February 2022 a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between ARK and HMRC about the sample provision. Within this agreement ARK laid out the arrangements for the safety and security of the personal data of respondents and included arrangements for a safe transport and storage of the files as well as destruction of

the address file after completion of the data collection. The sample was received in the first week of March 2022.

Until 2018 YLT had been primarily a postal survey, but in 2019 the viability of conducting the survey online with an incentive (£10 shopping voucher) was tested; the cost of the latter was covered through reductions in the postage and processing costs associated with a mail survey. In 2019, the decision was taken that the YLT survey, which had previously been, primarily, a postal survey, would move to online completion with incentive (£10 shopping voucher), although participants would have the option to request paper or phone completion. For the 2020/21 survey a new customised online survey tool, which complied with university and HMRC confidentiality and data security regulations, was developed with the Centre for Data Digitisation and Analysis (CDDA) at QUB. While no issues were encountered with this new format, in 2022 YLT reverted to the ARK online survey tool which participants could/had used prior to the 2020/21 survey. The rationale for this change was to provide greater dedicated support from within the ARK survey team. The raw survey data continue is held on a university server or network computer and details of survey respondents are not accessible to anyone outside the ARK survey team. All files are password protected.

Data Collection

All administration of the mailout for the survey was undertaken by an independent mailing company. Fieldwork was conducted from 11 April to 6 May 2022. In the week beginning 11th April each potential participant received a letter providing information about the survey, including the aims of the project; details on how to opt-out; GDPR clarification and contact details for the survey team, and the web link for the survey. The letter provided participants with a unique identifier code which was required for accessing the survey. The financial incentive was also detailed, namely that those who completed the survey online would receive a £10 gift voucher. In the third week of April 2022, a reminder letter was sent to all those who had not as yet completed or opted out of the survey. Postal completion was offered as an alternative mode of taking part in the survey.

Survey Content

The high level of interest in the YLT survey in 2022 and the respective number of questions included, meant that a split survey was required. Table 1 details the module content, the funder and the survey version in which the questions were included.

Missing values and coding errors

Since its inception YLT has included the following questions:

Do you regard yourself as belonging to any religion Yes/No

If yes, which

This meant that results were provided online for each question analysed by religion – Catholic; Protestant; No religion. Unfortunately, in 2022 these questions were only included in Version 1. This means that results for Version 1 are provided by gender/religion, and results for Version 2 by gender only.

Due to a coding error, ie a wrong question skip, in version 1 of the survey, respondents who attended a Grammar School were not asked if they attended a single-sex or co-educational school.

Table 1: YLT 2022 survey content by funder

	Funder	Version	Version
		1	2
Background	Split among all funders	✓	✓
Community Relations	The Executive Office	✓	
Attitudes to Minority Ethnic Groups	The Executive Office	✓	
Shared Education and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Education (CRED)	Department of Education (DE) - also included in KLT 2022		✓
Support and confidence in career choices; British Sign Language GCSE	Deaf Children’s Society	✓	✓
Coronavirus	ARK	✓	✓
Safety and Attitudes to Paramilitaries	Department of Justice (DoJ) – also included in NILT 2021		✓
Politics	ESRC grant held at QUB (PI Dr K. Hayward)		✓
Gender based violence, particularly violence against women and girls	The Executive Office	✓	

Audio-response experiment

For the first time, we experimented with a voice record plug-in software which allowed respondents to voice-record their responses to selected open questions rather than typing these. These voice responses were stored and automatically transcribed. The main aim of this experiment was to see if young people, especially those who completed the survey on hand-held devices with inbuilt microphones – would opt to complete open questions via voice feedback. In fact, only a very small number of respondents chose that option.

The questions concerned were one question on prejudice and one general question on good relations in survey version 1 and two questions on shared education, ie general attitudes to shared education and attitudes to a shared campus in survey version 2.

Completing the questionnaire

Potential participants were invited to complete the survey online. While postal or phone completion was offered as an alternative mode of taking part in YLT there were no requests for either.

Young people did not need to complete the survey in one session. If they were interrupted when taking part in the study, they could log back on using their unique identifier and could return to their survey where they had left off and complete any remaining questions. However, once a respondent had answered all survey questions, his or her unique identifier was disabled, ensuring only one completion per eligible respondent could be submitted.

Response rate

After cleaning the dataset received from HMRC, i.e. removal of respondents with incomplete or incorrect addresses, 4,947 eligible names remained. Thirty-seven initial mailings were returned as 'addressee unknown/gone away'. One parent got in touch to let us know that their child had deceased. Ten young people or their parents/carers opted out of completing the survey. This left an overall sample of 4,899 16-year olds.

2,136 young people logged onto the survey platform with their ID. After removal of the most incomplete responses (i.e. responses where only very few or no questions were completed), 2,073 responses remained. This represents an overall response rate of 42.3%.

Table 2: Response rate calculation

	n	%
Delivered sample	5,000	
Ineligible/incomplete addresses removed	53	
Addressee unknown/Return to sender	37	
Deceased	1	
Opted out/unable to complete	10	
Base	4,899	100
Logged on	2,136	43.6
Removed incompletes	44	0.9
Remaining responses in dataset	2,073	42.3

Getting the data

Tables of results from the 2022 YLT survey can be accessed from the YLT website. Users can also download the data in SPSS portable file format from the website to carry out their own statistical analyses. The YLT website is available at www.ark.ac.uk/ylt.

Using the data

This documentation is intended to provide background information to the survey and to the survey and sampling methodologies. However, 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 a mistake, please let us know as soon as you can.

A helpline service is also available should you have a query about the survey or the results (see contact details below). Alternatively you can use the help section on the YLT website (www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/help/).

In order to maintain anonymity, the open ethnicity variable has been recoded into the categorical ETHNCAT variable. Open responses to the question on respondents' religious background have been recoded. The derived religion variable RELIGCAT consists of the following categories: 'Catholic', 'Protestant', 'Other religion' and 'No religion'. Open responses to other questions that may compromise the anonymity of respondents are not available as part of the downloadable dataset, but will appear as a list of all responses in the results section on the YLT website.

This dataset should not be weighted.

Contact information

For all queries relating to the survey, please contact:

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