

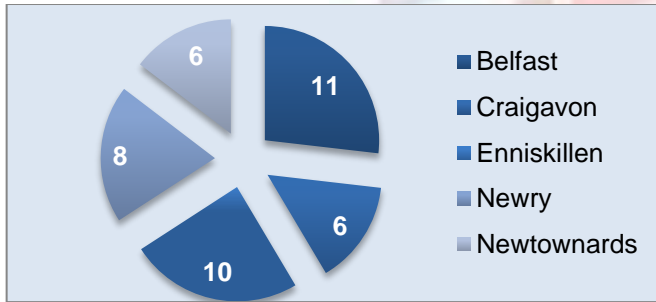
Who took part in the study?

All young people living in Northern Ireland who celebrated their 16th birthday in February or March 2015 were invited to take part in the YLT survey and to attend a focus group near where they lived.

1,157 16 year olds responded to the YLT survey.

41 young people participated in the focus groups, with each group varying in participant numbers (Figure 1). Girls comprised 78% of participants. The majority of participants attended Grammar Schools. A majority lived in small towns, villages or in the country side.

Figure 1: Focus group participants by venue where discussions were held



Previous experiences

The participants in the focus groups were asked about the countries they had visited previously. They marked these on a world map with stickers (see below for an example).



The Table below shows the countries that young people said they had visited. Most had visited these as part of a family holiday or a school trip. School trips were under the guise of either a History curriculum trip, sports tour or an exchange trip to promote language learning.

Continent	Destination
Africa	Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia
Asia	Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore
Australia	Australia
Europe	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey
North America	Canada, US

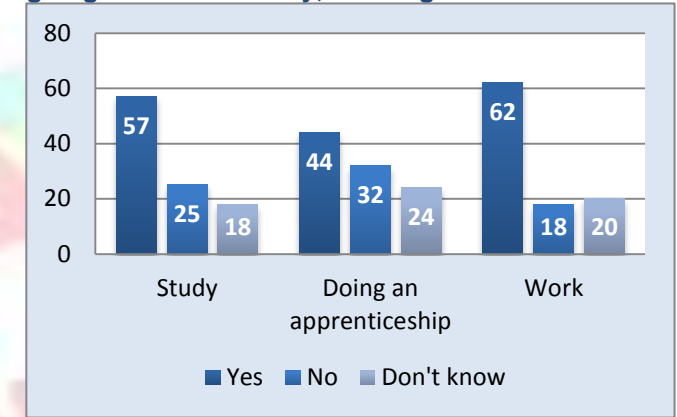
When on holiday with family, young people felt the opportunities to speak another language with native speakers were very limited.

Going abroad in future

Young people were asked about the likelihood of going abroad for either study, work, apprenticeships or travel. Figure 2 shows that quite a high proportion of young people said in the survey they wanted to go abroad.

Those attending grammar schools and with the ambition to go to university were most likely to say that they would like to go abroad to work or study. Females were more likely than males to say that they would consider studying or doing an apprenticeship abroad, however, there was no gender difference in relation to working abroad.

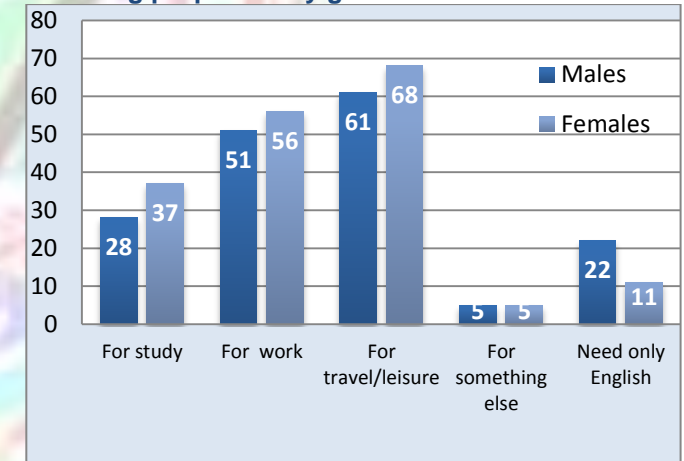
Figure 2: Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, learning and work



Additional language skills

YLT respondents were asked whether they thought they needed to learn another language to live abroad. Figure 3 shows that females were much more likely than males to say that learning another language would be useful.

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents saying learning an additional language is useful for the following purposes. By gender



Barriers to going abroad and language learning

Young people in focus groups were asked about barriers they may experience when planning to go abroad or learning a new language. Below are some of the issues mentioned:

- ➔ When going abroad, you may not be aware of the cultures in that specific country.
- ➔ The time it takes to learn a language can be off-putting and restricting.
- ➔ Many countries have more than one main language, therefore you may need to learn multiple new languages.
- ➔ If your school does not provide the facilities to learn a language it can be expensive to have to go elsewhere as well as it being very difficult to teach yourself.
- ➔ If a language teacher is not a native speaker, they can pronounce words wrong and give incorrect pronunciation and spelling.
- ➔ In schools, the language assistants are only available at a level therefore it may postpone the learning of languages.

Skills and support needed to go abroad

We asked what the skills were young people needed to go and live abroad and what could be done to make this easier:

- ➔ Willingness to learn about new cultures
- ➔ Enthusiasm
- ➔ Communication and language skills
- ➔ Practical skills (Navigation, money management)
- ➔ Independence and confidence
- ➔ More financial support for schools for exchange trips as opportunities to use another language
- ➔ Languages and culture could be cooperated into more subjects. More of a variety of languages taught in schools.
- ➔ More access to information about available opportunities for careers teachers.

Background to the Study

This leaflet provides a summary of key findings of a study undertaken in 2015/16 in conjunction with ARK's Young Life and Times (YLT) project on language learning and Internalisation. The study was funded by the British Council.

Two questions – one on language learning and one on young people's ambitions to live abroad for work, learning/study or travel - were asked in the 2015 YLT survey. In addition five focus follow-up groups took place with 16-year olds to explore this topic in more depth.

What is the British Council?

The British Council aims to connect people worldwide with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK. Their education work helps transform national education systems, builds more inclusive and open societies and increases young people's opportunities.

The British Council commissioned this research because they wanted to find out more about what young people think about language skills and how they feel about living and working abroad .

ARK (www.ark.ac.uk)

ARK is a joint resource between Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster.

The full research report can be found at www.ark.ac.uk/publications/researchreports/

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This summary flier was produced jointly with Courtney Rodgers and Nikki Ireland who both took part in this study.



Attitudes to Language Learning and Internationalisation

Summary of Research Findings

