

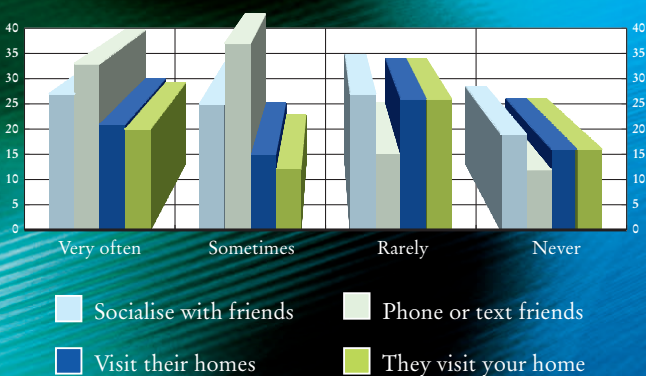
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Family, friends and school played an important role in the development of identity and community relations for YLT respondents. 47% felt that their family had been the most important influence on their attitude towards others. One respondent said:

'People only learn to be prejudiced and bigoted through their parents. People need to be better educated about each other's differences and only then will they learn to tolerate one another's views.'

- 79% of respondents who said they either belonged to the Catholic or Protestant community had had contact with pupils from other communities.
- 54% of those said this contact happened through school, the majority through inter-school links.
- 64% had attended a cross-community scheme.
- 74% of those who participated in cross-community schemes felt that the contact with other people had been positive.
- 62% of respondents said they had at least one close friend from another community background than themselves and 16% said they had more than ten.

The graph below shows the extent to which people socialise with people from other communities (in%).



BACKGROUND OF THE YLT SURVEY

All too often the opinions of young people are ignored when decisions are made about many of the issues involving them.

In June 2003 the Young Life and Times Survey (YLT) invited around 2,000 16 year olds from all parts in Northern Ireland to tell us about their experiences of school, and their views on politics, sectarianism and other social issues. 902 young people responded.

This leaflet provides a summary of key findings of the 2003 YLT survey.

More detailed results on specific issues as well as research updates are freely available on the YLT website at www.ark.ac.uk/ylt.

Many participants commented on how they felt taking part in the survey and what their feelings about community relations are. They suggested a range of subjects that could be asked in future surveys and which would be particularly relevant to young people. Some of these questions will be included in the 2004 YLT survey.

We invite you to comment on the results or ask any questions that you may have. You can do this via the YLT website or by post or phone.

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

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2003 YOUNG LIFE AND TIMES SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

'I THINK YOUNG LIFE AND TIMES IS A VERY GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET THEIR VIEWS TAKEN INTO PERSPECTIVE.'

'I THINK 16 YEAR OLDS SHOULD BE ASKED MORE ABOUT THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS AND WHAT LIFE IS LIKE AT HOME FOR THEM. YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A LOT OF PROBLEMS AND SOME OF THEM HAVE NOBODY TO TALK TO AND FIND IT HARD TO GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE OR TRUST PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN LET DOWN IN THE PAST BY FRIENDS OR FAMILY.'

'IF YOU ARE TRYING TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND DO NOT FOCUS ON RELIGION BUT ALSO MORE ON EDUCATION. HOW THIS GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A DIFFERENT SET OF BELIEFS, ALSO HOW SOCIETY HAS CHANGED. THIS IS THE SOLUTION.'



Project supported by the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

WHO TOOK PART IN THE 2003 YLT SURVEY?

All young people from Northern Ireland who celebrated their 16th birthday in February 2003 were invited to take part in the survey. Among the 902 16 year olds that responded:

- 40% were male and 60% female.
- 23% said they lived in a big city or its outskirts, 38% lived in a small town and 37% lived in a village or in the countryside.
- 45% attended a grammar school, 47% attended a secondary school, 6% attended planned integrated schools and 2% attended other schools.
- 88% regarded themselves as belonging to a particular religion, 12% said they did not.
- The majority of respondents who belonged to a religion were Catholics (53%), 22% were Presbyterians, 12% belonged to the Church of Ireland, 3% were Methodist and 2% Baptist.
- Among those who belonged to a religion around two thirds (65%) said they attended church at least once a month.
- 39% described their national identity as being Irish, 28% as British, 25% as Northern Irish, and 4% as Ulster.
- 45% said they belonged to the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, 43% regarded themselves as part of the Protestant community and 12% said they were neither.

EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL

Experiences of school varied between males and females, but also according to what type of school young people attended.

74% of respondents reported overall positive school experiences and said they did enjoy learning in school.

Young women reported slightly more positive school experiences than young men. There were also differences in relation to what school young people attended as the table below shows.

Respondents saying 'yes' to statements (in %)

	Planned Integrated	Grammar	Secondary
I was bored at school	29	26	29
Some teachers at school really inspired me	60	64	65
School is all 'listening' and very little 'doing'	16	29	22
School taught me the skills and knowledge I will really need later in life	76	75	76
School didn't teach me how to think for myself	20	27	21
School opened my mind and made me want to learn	62	62	55
I did not enjoy learning at school	22	17	23

- 78% of respondents wanted to continue with full-time education after their GCSE exams, but for 22% of participants, 2003 was to be their final year in school.
- 70% of YLT respondents felt that the 11+ tests put too much pressure on 10 and 11 year olds.
- 74% of females, compared to 62% of males agreed that 11+ tests meant too much pressure at a young age. 57% of all grammar school students agreed with this statement
- Only 8% of all respondents disagreed with the statement that selection had to happen at some stage in a young person's education.

IDENTITY

As everywhere else, young people in Northern Ireland have a number of overlapping identities, but religious and national identity often receive the greatest interest.

- 60% of YLT respondents felt that their national identity was important to them.
- 60% also thought that their religious identity was important to them.
- Catholics felt stronger about their religious and national identity than Protestants, and identity was also slightly more important for young males than for young females.
- Most Catholics (78%) saw themselves as Irish, and most Protestants regarded themselves as British (53%). However...

YLT shows that equating British with Protestant and Irish with Catholic is too simple. For example:

- 15% of Catholics and 32% of Protestants said their national identity was Northern Irish.
- Some Catholics (4%) said they were British or had an Ulster identity and some Protestants (2%) said they were Irish.

Among the 12% of YLT respondents who said they did not belong to either the Catholic or Protestant community:

- 36% said they felt they were Northern Irish, 30% felt Irish and 23% felt British.

Many YLT respondents commented that religious and national identity should not be a hindrance in building close friendships. One young person said:

'Community relations will be better in Northern Ireland when we find that the labelling doesn't matter and that we are comfortable with each other no matter whether the person is Protestant or Catholic.'