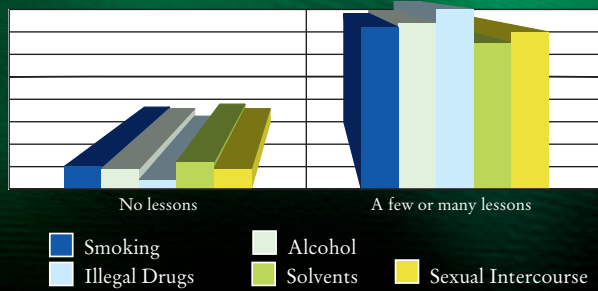


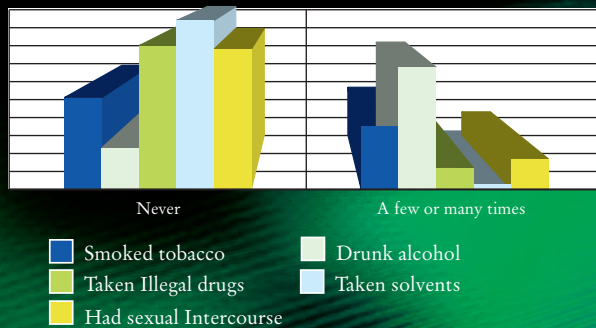
SMOKING ALCOHOL DRUGS & SEX

Respondents to the 2003 survey suggested that YLT should ask about smoking, alcohol, drugs and sex because they played an important role in the lives of 16-year olds.

The figure below shows that very few respondents had received no lessons on smoking, alcohol, drugs and sexual intercourse.



The next figure shows how many respondents said had taken drugs or alcohol or had had sexual intercourse.



Females were more likely to have smoked and to have taken alcohol whereas males were more likely to have had sexual intercourse or to have experimented with drugs.

Friends had the most influence on respondents' views on sexual intercourse and alcohol use. School was most influential on their views on illegal drugs, whereas attitudes on smoking were mostly shaped by family views and behaviour.

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.

Every year Young Life and Times Survey (YLT) invites 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. In 2004, 824 young people responded.

This leaflet provides a summary of key findings of the 2004 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.

As in the previous year, many participants commented that taking part in the survey gave them a good opportunity to express their views on issues that affected them. They suggested a range of subjects that could be asked in future surveys. Some of these questions will be included in the 2005 YLT survey.

Comments on the YLT survey are welcome any time and can be submitted via the YLT website.

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

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2004 YOUNG LIFE AND TIMES SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

'I BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE ARE LETTING RELIGIOUS BIASES BE PASSED DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION AND IT IS ABOUT TIME THAT THIS STOPS. YOUNGER GENERATIONS HAVE A CHANCE TO CHANGE THINGS AND THEY SHOULD USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND.'

'EVERYTHING ABOUT BEING A TEENAGER ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT POLITICS, SCHOOL OR DRUGS - TEENAGERS ARE PEOPLE TOO! THERE ARE OTHER PROBLEMS THAT CAN AFFECT THEM. FOR INSTANCE, ABUSE AT HOME, THE LOSS OF SOMEONE THEY CARE ABOUT, AN ILLNESS ETC. EVERYONE IS THEIR OWN PERSON, WITH THEIR OWN PROBLEMS - BEING A TEENAGER DOES NOT DEFINE WHO WE ARE!'

'I FEEL THAT PEER PRESSURE IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS MANY YOUNG PEOPLE GET INTO SMOKING AND DRINKING. MANY SEE DRUGS AS AN EASY WAY OUT OF AN AWFUL SITUATION. I PRESUME, MANY YOUNG PEOPLE UNEDUCATED ABOUT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, MAY SEE IT AS SOMETHING EVERYONE IS INVOLVED IN. THE MEDIA OFTEN PORTRAYS THIS.'



Project supported by the
EU Programme
for Peace and Reconciliation

WHO TOOK PART IN THE 2004 YLT SURVEY?

All young people from Northern Ireland who celebrated their 16th birthday in February 2004 were invited to take part in the survey. Among the 824 16 year olds that responded:

- 42% were male and 58% female.
- 24% said they lived in a big city or its outskirts, 39% lived in a small town and 35% lived in a village or in the countryside.
- 43% attended a grammar school, 45% attended a secondary school, 5% attended planned integrated schools and 2% attended other schools.
- 84% regarded themselves as belonging to a particular religion, 15% said they did not.
- The majority of respondents who belonged to a religion were Catholics (54%), 22% were Presbyterians, 13% belonged to the Church of Ireland, 3% were Methodist and 2% Baptist. 8% belonged to other churches.
- Six out of ten (62%) of those who belonged to a religion said they attended church at least once a month.
- 40% described their national identity as being Irish, 22% as British, 24% as Northern Irish, and 7% as Ulster.
- 44% said they belonged to the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, 39% regarded themselves as part of the Protestant community and 17% said they were neither.

EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL

Seven out of ten respondents said that schoolwork and exams made them stressed. This was by far the most common reason mentioned for stress. One respondent said for example:

'School made me stressed all the time which is one of the main reasons I left. I get stressed if I have deadlines.'

However, only 15% agreed with the statement that they did not enjoy learning in school. School experiences by school type are summarised in the table below.

Respondents 'agreeing' with statements (in %)

	Planned Integrated	Grammar	Secondary
Some teachers at school really inspired me	77	65	68
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	81	79	72
School didn't teach me how to think for myself	19	16	23
School opened my mind and made me want to learn	63	54	50
I did not enjoy learning at school	14	9	20

Overall, young women reported more positive school experiences than young men, although females felt more pressurised by schoolwork than males:

- Only 28% of males and 22% of females rarely or never felt under pressure by schoolwork.
- 27% of males, compared to 15% of females said they were always or often bored in school.
- 61% of males and 64% of females said they were never bullied in school. This means that over one third of respondents were bullied in school at least once.
- 85% of respondents said they were going back to school or college after their GCSE exams. 73% of YLT respondents hoped to attend third level education in two years time.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

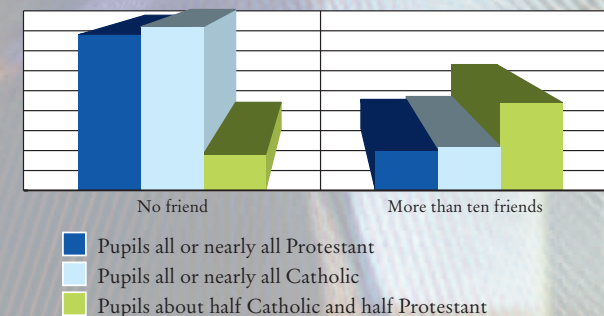
64% of YLT respondents felt that their national identity was important to them and 54% felt that their religious identity was important. Religious and national identity was more important for Catholics than for Protestants and more important for males than for females.

- 46% of respondents said that their family had been the most important influence on their views about the other main religious community. One respondent said:

'Some of my family and friends wonder why I socialise with Protestants because they were actually the cause of my granddad's death as they murdered him. I just don't understand the difference in us. I would love to see peace in the community.'

- 44% felt they were part of the Catholic community, 39% said they were Protestant and 17% felt they were neither.

Around three quarters (76%) of respondents had had contact with young people from other religious communities and 61% had taken part in cross-community projects. However, the graph below shows that respondents who attended schools with a mixed intake were four times less likely to have no friend from the other main religious community, but twice as likely to have more than ten friends that did not have the same religious background as themselves.



One respondent commented:

'I think that community relations are starting to develop more because of integrated schools. Without a doubt they are the way forward.'