

Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey

Summary of Results



Background

All too often the opinions of young people are ignored when decisions are made about many of the issues involving them. Every year, therefore, ARK - a joint initiative by Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University - invites 16 year olds from all parts of Northern Ireland to take part in the YLT survey to share their experiences of school, their views on politics, community relations and other social issues.

2,069 young people responded to the 2020-21 YLT survey. This results flier provides a summary of some key findings from the 2020-21 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.

The 2020-21 YLT survey was part-funded by the Executive Office, the Departments of Education and Justice, the Office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and Public Health Agency, Ohio University (HCOM) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Who took part in the 2020-21 YLT survey?

All young people living in Northern Ireland (N.I.) who celebrated their 16th birthday in April, May and June 2021 were invited to take part in the survey.

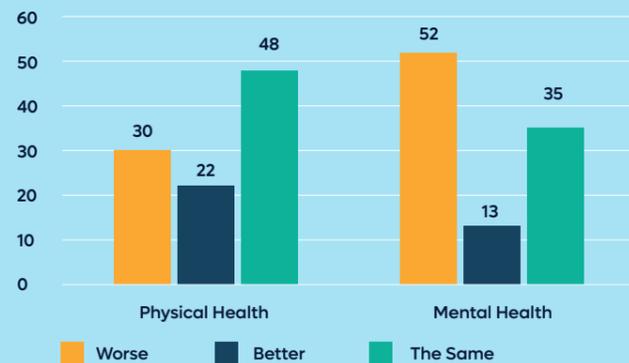
Of the 2,069 respondents:

- **56%** were female, **43%** were male and **1%** had another gender identity.
- **11%** of males and **28%** of females had been sexually attracted to a person of the same sex at least once.
- **22%** said they lived in a big city or its outskirts, **42%** a small city or town and **34%** in a village or in the countryside.
- **43%** attended a grammar school, **47%** a secondary school, **7%** a formally integrated school, and **3%** another type of school.
- **15%** attended an all-girl schools/college, **9%** an all-boys school/college and **76%** attended a mixed boys and girls school/college.
- **72%** lived with both parents, **18%** lived only with their mother, **2%** lived only with their father and **6%** lived with their mother some time and father some time.
- **16%** of respondents said they had a long-standing physical, mental or developmental/sensory health condition.
- **59%** regarded themselves as belonging to a particular religion - **34%** were Catholic, **21%** Protestant, while **2%** belonged to another religion. **40%** of respondents indicated that they belonged to no religion.
- **34%** said their families were financially either very well-off or well-off, **11%** said their families were not at all well-off or not well-off, **48%** of respondents described their family's financial situation as average.



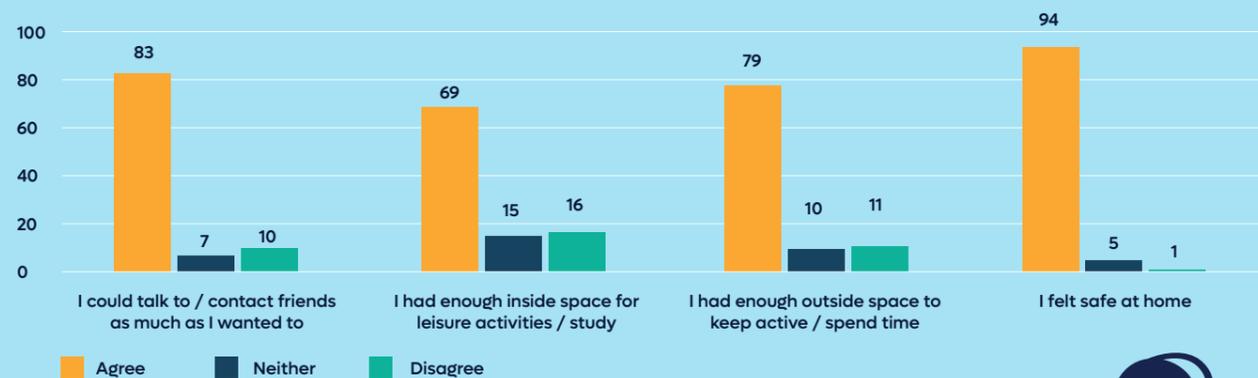
Young People's Experience of Coronavirus Lockdown

Figure 1: Young people saying their physical and mental health during lockdown was... (%)



56% of respondents did not go to school throughout lockdown, 36% went to school some of the time, only 9% attended school all the time. 29% of respondents said that their parents/carers were worried about them when they returned to school after the first lockdown, whilst 44% said they were not worried. 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their education had been negatively affected by the COVID19 pandemic.

Figure 2: During the recent COVID19 lockdown... (%)



75% said they had returned full-time to school after the first lockdown. However, only 5% of respondents said they could attend all the after-school activities they normally attended, whilst 19% said they were able to attend some of these. 90% of respondents said they were able to meet up with friends since lockdown ended, whilst 67% said they were able to spend time in parks. 38% said they were able to return to their leisure time group activities. 35% said they had been able to spend short breaks overnight with their families away from home.

Only one quarter (26%) agreed or strongly agreed that Government had provided young people friendly information about COVID19, whilst just 6% agreed or strongly agreed Government listened to young people when making decisions about COVID19.

Good Relations and Attitudes to Minority Ethnic Groups

Just 13% of 16 year olds agreed that Northern Ireland is a place where people respect each other, 52% disagreed, and 32% neither agreed nor disagreed.

74% of respondents felt that religion would always make a difference to how people in Northern Ireland feel about each other.

44% of respondents felt their national identity was important to them. National identity was more important to Catholic (64%) than Protestant 16 year olds (51%); 48% of those with other religious identities and 23% of those with no religious background felt that national identity was important.

52% of Protestant respondents felt 'very favourable' or 'quite favourable' about people from the Catholic community, whilst 47% of Catholic respondents felt similarly about people from the Protestant community. 55% of respondents felt favourable towards people from minority communities, 2% felt unfavourable and 37% were neither favourable nor unfavourable.

Figure 3: Perceptions of community relations over time (%)



Table 1: Respondents who 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the culture and traditions of the Catholic, Protestant and minority ethnic communities add to the richness and diversity of NI society. By religion.

	%		
	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
Catholic community	62	41	50
Protestant community	45	55	46
Minority ethnic community	58	45	51

In a world without COVID19, 60% of respondents said they 'very often' or 'sometimes' socialised or played sports with people from a different religious background. The same proportion said they 'very often' or 'sometimes' socialised or played sports with people from a different religious background.

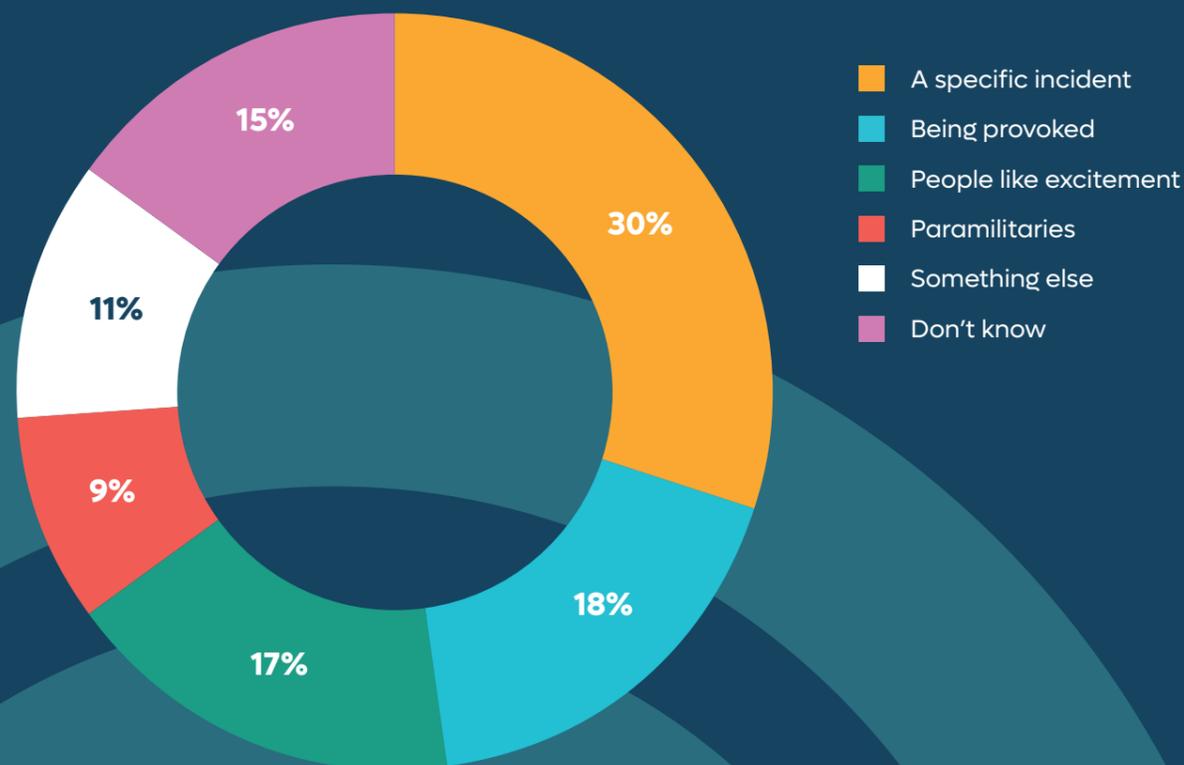


Community Safety and Attitudes to Paramilitaries

87% of YLT respondents said they felt safe or very safe in the area where they lived. Males were more likely than females to state that they felt 'very safe' (52% compared to 41%). Males (58%) were also slightly more likely to agree than females (52%) that there was strong sense of community in the neighbourhood where they lived. Respondents who lived in rural areas were more likely to say that they felt safe than respondents from urban areas, and those who lived in country villages expressed the strongest sense of community. 21% of those living in big cities felt that paramilitaries had a controlling influence on their neighbourhood compared to just 3% of those living in villages or in the countryside.

Whilst 12% of those living in big cities agreed that paramilitaries helped to keep their areas safe, fewer than 2% of those living in rural neighbourhoods felt the same. However, 22% of those living in a big city agreed that paramilitary groups contributed to crime, drug dealing and anti-social behaviour in their area, compared to just 10% of respondents from rural neighbourhoods. Around 1 in 3 respondents from urban areas agreed that paramilitaries compared to 1 in 4 in rural areas agreed that paramilitaries should look out for their own communities. 65% of respondents felt that the Brexit debates had contributed to recent riots in Northern Ireland. Figure 4 shows why young thought some people got involved in rioting.

Figure 4: In your opinion, what is the main reason that some people in Northern Ireland get involved in rioting or sectarian trouble



Shared Education

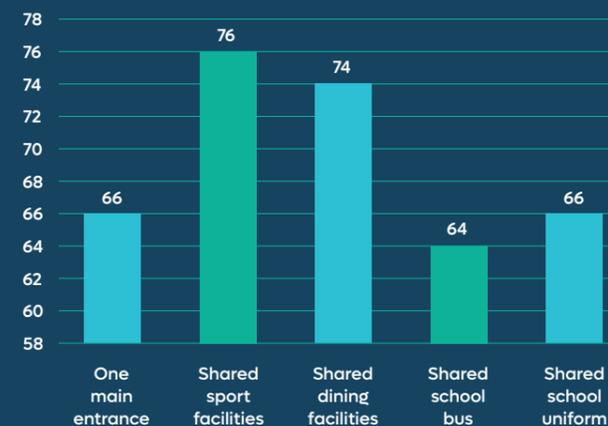
52% of respondents said they were involved in Shared Education. Of those who were not, 37% said they would like to be involved, 22% said they would not like to be involved and 41% said they did not know if they would like to be involved or not.

The most likely Shared Education activity respondents were involved in were joint projects (81%), followed by equipment sharing (52%) and joint classes (48%). Joint projects were also the most popular activity with 65% of those who had done these saying that they like these. 41% of respondents said they liked joint classes.

Half of all respondents said they generally felt favourable about Shared Education. Only 6% felt unfavourable, whilst the remaining respondents felt either neutral towards Shared Education (28%) or said they did not know how they felt (15%).

38% wanted their own school to be part of a Shared Education Campus. Around One quarter (24%) of respondents did not want this, whilst 38% were not sure.

Figure 5: Respondents saying they would like the following to be shared if their school was part of a Shared Education Campus



The following quotes from respondents show the benefits young people felt Shared Education had.

"I think it's very important that we mix different school groups together as it allows the students to understand different cultures and religions and shows them that we are all equals."

"I think it's important to move forward in our country and put our differences aside."

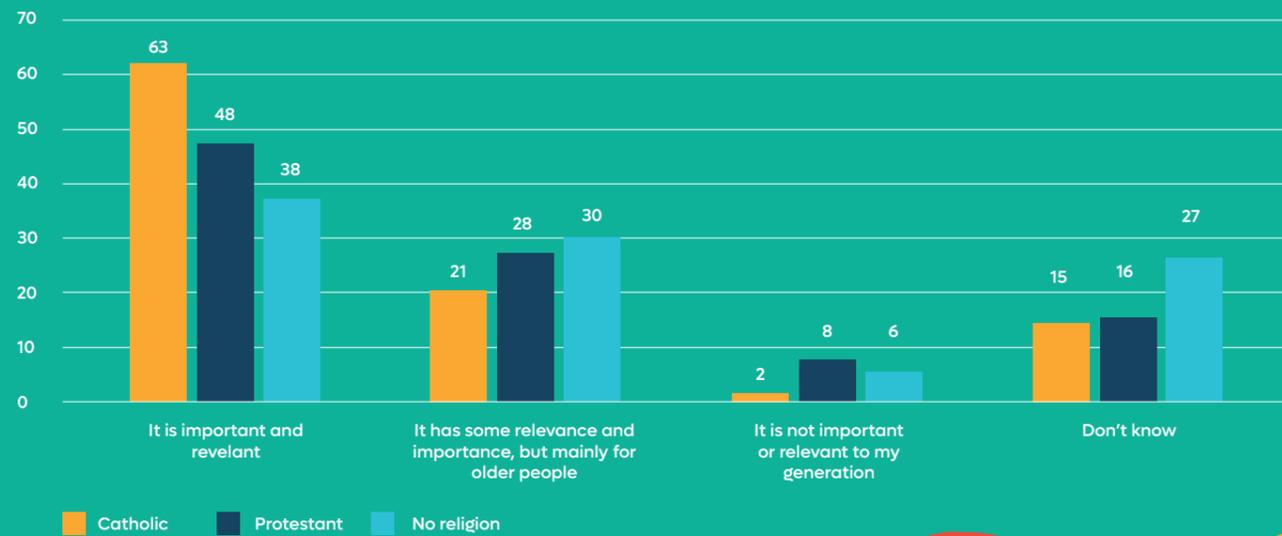
"I think it's good for people to meet others with different views to open their minds."

"A lot of people my age are overly sectarian, so maybe shared education will make them realise it's a waste of energy to hate people like that."

Attitudes to Politics

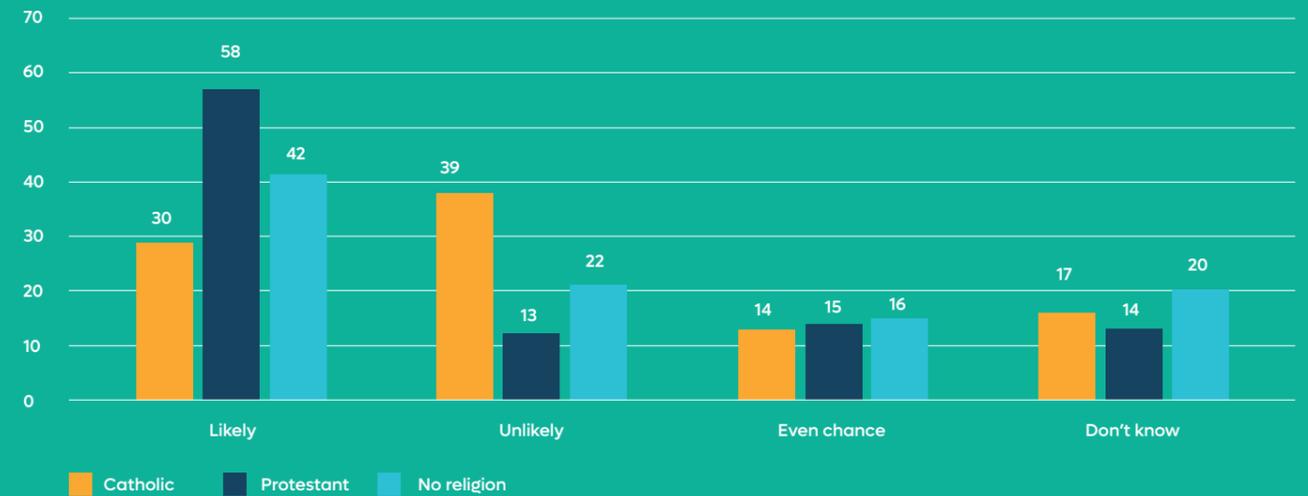
95% of respondents said they had heard of the Good Friday Agreement. 75% had discussed the Agreement in their school. The majority of respondents felt the Agreement was still important.

Figure 6: Do you think the Good Friday Agreement is still important and relevant for your generation? By religious background of respondents (%)



Overall 42% of respondents felt it was likely that Northern Ireland still exists in 20 years' time, compared to 26% who felt that this was unlikely.

Figure 7: Do you think it is likely that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will still exist in 20 years' time? By religious background of respondents (%)



If 16 year olds could vote in a referendum, 35% would vote that Northern Ireland should unify with the Republic of Ireland, whilst 36% would vote against this, 11% said they would not vote and 18% said they did not know how they would vote. 67% of Catholic respondents would vote for Northern Ireland to unify with the Republic of Ireland, whilst 79% of Protestant respondents would vote against this. 30% of respondents said they were more in favour of a united Ireland as a result of Brexit, and 11% said they were less in favour now. For 42% of respondents Brexit made no difference to how they felt about a united Ireland.



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