

Kids' Life and Times Survey 2020

Technical Notes

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Background

The 2020 Kids' Life and Times (KLT) survey is the thirteenth to be carried out by ARK. ARK is a joint resource between Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. Its goal is to make social and political information on Northern Ireland available to the widest possible audience.

Prior to the introduction of KLT ARK had been running two annual attitudes surveys for a number of years: the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey for adults aged 18 years and over (1998 to date), and the Young Life and Times (YLT) survey for 16 year olds (2003 to date). Despite a growing interest in the area of children's rights and needs, the opinions of younger age groups had been mostly ignored when decisions were being made about many issues involving them. Conscious of this, ARK recognised the need for a regular and rigorous children's survey that would provide easily accessible, quality research data for the academic, voluntary and government sectors, and promote the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives.

Given this context, in 2007 ARK investigated the feasibility of running a survey of children in Northern Ireland and consulted with school principals, parents and children. Several survey methodologies were considered. However, in order to maximise coverage and response, an online survey based in schools was seen as the most appropriate; all primary schools in Northern Ireland have internet access as part of the Classroom 2000 (C2k) initiative (<http://www.c2kni.org.uk/>). The first KLT survey took place in 2008.

The 2020 survey builds on the success of the previous KLT surveys and uses the same methodology to assess the views of P7 children in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork for the 2020 survey was carried out from 12 October 2020 to 26 February 2021.

Acknowledgements

The KLT team would like to acknowledge the help, advice and support given by the following individuals and organisations:

- The Department of Education for providing contact details.
- C2kNI for emailing reminders to primary schools.
- Our Funders for 2020: Department of Education (DE); Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).

We particularly appreciate the time and effort taken by everyone involved in each school and the P7 pupils who participated in the survey. We are especially grateful for participation in the 2020 survey given the exceptional circumstances that schools were experiencing as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Technical details of the 2020 survey

Ethical permission

Ethical permission was sought, and obtained, from the Ethics Committee based in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast.

Target population

The target population was all P7-age children in Northern Ireland. There were approximately 25450 in total which included P7-age pupils attending 842 primary schools (this included P7-age children in special and independent schools).

In June 2020 DE provided a database containing the names and addresses of all primary schools in Northern Ireland and the number of P6 pupils in each - as the questionnaire would be completed between October 2020 and February 2021 these P6 pupils would by then be in P7.

Communication with schools

On 13 October 2020 all principals of primary and special schools in Northern Ireland were sent a letter providing information on the KLT survey and advising that it would be available from 12 October 2020 until 29 January 2021. The letter contained an instruction document for teachers and parental consent forms. In previous years, the schools were also sent a KLT bookmark for every P7 pupil in the school; however, this was not done in 2020. Due to Covid-19 and the potential for contamination, the number of items sent to schools was kept to a minimum. A contact telephone number and an email address were provided so that principals could contact the survey team for more information. Principals could contact the KLT helpline to request translations of the consent forms and requests were received for Lithuanian and Polish versions. The letter also offered schools an anonymised, confidential summary report based on their school's responses and directed principals and teachers to the KLT website where they could access the results of previous surveys and, importantly, view the content of the 2020 questionnaire. Each letter included a unique three-digit identification code for that school allocated by the KLT team for administrative purposes. A trouble-shooting document was also made available on the KLT website.

During late November, follow-up telephone calls were made to schools that had not participated in KLT and, as in previous years, this helped to boost the response rate. In addition, a reminder about the survey was sent by C2kni to all schools on 6 December 2020.

Due to the need for social distancing in schools as a result of Covid-19, and the restrictions this placed on accommodating completion of the survey by the children, a number of schools requested an extension to the survey fieldwork. Therefore, the survey remained open until 26 February 2021.

Consent

Consent to participate involved three levels:

- Firstly, the school principal agreed that the school could participate.
- Secondly, a parent or guardian of each P7 pupil within the participating schools received a consent form which they were asked to complete and return to the school if they **did not** wish their child to take part.
- Thirdly, at the start of the questionnaire, each child was asked if s/he agreed to take part.

Online questionnaire

The online questionnaire was designed and administered by the ARK team in conjunction with the funders. The questions were presented in different ways to try to maintain interest, for example, clicking on words or writing into a text box. Before the survey went live, testing was done by members of the KLT team to ensure that all links/questions were working correctly.

Throughout the design of the questionnaire, the KLT team worked closely with C2kni.

Completing the questionnaire

Once the child agreed that s/he wanted to take part, s/he was asked to enter the three-digit school identification number. This number was printed on all documentation sent to the school by the KLT team. However, the child was also able to enter the seven-digit school code used by DE. When the code was entered, the full name and address of the school appeared on the screen, and the child was asked to confirm if this was the school they attended. The class teacher or other staff members could phone the KLT helpline at any stage to confirm their school identification number, or get any clarification required. No further identification codes or names of children were required.

Survey content

The questionnaire took about 20 minutes to complete. Each question had a 'Skip' option which the children could use if they did not want to answer it.

Questions on KLT 2020 included:

- Home and family;
- School and bullying;
- Shared Education;
- Impact of Covid-19 on children's rights.

Response rate

Fairly accurate information on the number of pupils in primary and special schools is available from the database provided by DE although the figures will not be exact given that some children will leave, or join, schools throughout the year.

There were 842 schools with P7-age pupils on the database provided by DE, and of these 94 participated in the survey, representing 11 percent of schools. This was a much lower response rate than in previous survey years (usually over 20%) but was not unexpected given the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of lock-downs and school closures throughout the fieldwork period.

There were approximately 25450 P7-age children. This figure was compiled using the numbers of P6-age pupils from the DE database (June 2020) who at the time of the survey would be in P7. In total 2242 children logged on to the survey, a response rate of approximately 9 percent. Reflecting the response rate for schools, fewer children participated in the 2020 KLT survey than in previous years (usually around 18%).

Table 1 shows the response rate, by school (DE and KLT) and by children (KLT), for each Council area. The highest response rate for schools came from the Newry, Mourne and Down Council area (19%), with the lowest from Causeway Coast and Glens (4%).

Table 1: Response by Council Area

	Schools (DE and KLT)		Children (KLT) %
	DE %	KLT %	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	7	6	7
Ards and North Down	6	6	6
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	11	13	18
Belfast	13	8	9
Causeway Coast and Glens	10	4	2
Derry City and Strabane	8	5	4
Fermanagh and Omagh	10	13	6
Lisburn and Castlereagh	5	5	8
Mid and East Antrim	7	7	7
Mid-Ulster	12	12	15
Newry, Mourne and Down	12	19	18

Table 2 shows the response rate, by school (DE and KLT) and by children (KLT), for each school management type. The 2020 KLT survey had an over-representation of Catholic Maintained schools when compared to the DE figures (55% and 43% respectively). Conversely, there were fewer schools from the Controlled sector in the KLT sample (39%) than in the figures reported by DE (43%). The figures suggest that there is slightly more bias in the KLT school sample in terms of school management type than has been the case in previous years.

Table 2: Response by type of school management

	Schools (DE and KLT)		Children (KLT) %
	DE %	KLT %	
Controlled	43	39	35
Catholic Maintained	43	55	61
Controlled Integrated	3	1	1
Grant Maintained Integrated	3	2	2
Voluntary	1	1	1
Other Maintained	3	1	<1
Special	4 ¹	0	0

Table 3 compares the distribution of all schools by location (urban/rural²) with the distribution of schools participating in KLT. As in previous years, slightly more schools located in urban areas (51%) than rural areas (49%) took part in the survey compared with the figures from DE (46% and 54% respectively).

¹ Please note that of the 38 Special schools with P7 pupils, DE figures record 36 as Controlled, 1 as Catholic Maintained and 1 as Other Maintained.

² DE website <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolment-school-level-data-201920>

Table 3: Response by school location

	Schools (DE and KLT)	
	DE %	KLT %
Urban	46	51
Rural	54	49

Table 4 compares the gender of KLT respondents with the overall figure from across all P7 pupils in Northern Ireland; as can be seen, there is little difference between the DE and KLT figures.

Table 4: Response by gender

	P7 children (DE and KLT)	
	DE %	KLT %
Boys	51	49
Girls	49	51

Accessing the data

Tables of results from the 2020 survey are available on the KLT website at www.ark.ac.uk/klt.

Users can also download the data in SPSS format from the website to carry out their own statistical analyses. However, all identifying information and open-ended variables have been removed from this dataset.

Using the data

This document is intended to provide background information on the survey and the survey methodology; 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 an error please let us know as soon as you can.

A helpline service is available for anyone who has a query about the survey or the results (see details below). Alternatively, you can use the help section on the KLT website at www.ark.ac.uk/klt/help/

Contact information

For all queries relating to the KLT survey please contact:

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