



Kids' Life and Times (KLT)

Summary of Results

2022



Background

All too often the opinions of children are ignored when decisions are made about many of the issues involving them. Every year, therefore, ARK - which is a joint initiative between Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University - invites all Primary 7 (P7) - aged children (10/11 years old) from all schools in Northern Ireland to take part in the KLT survey.

KLT gives them the opportunity to share their opinions and experiences of school, health and wellbeing, their rights and other important social issues.

This flier provides a summary of some key findings from the 2022 survey. More detailed results on specific modules are freely available on the KLT website at www.ark.ac.uk/klt. The Shared Education module on the 2022 KLT survey was funded by the Department of Education.

In 2022, 4,639 children from 187 primary schools responded to KLT and, of these:

- **49%** were female, **47%** were male and **3%** were neither or did not want to say.
- **78%** lived with both parents, **12%** with their mum most of the time, **1%** with their dad most of the time and **7%** spent half their time with each parent. **2%** of children said they lived with someone else.
- **12%** of KLT respondents said they had a long-standing physical, mental or developmental/sensory health condition.
- **49%** said they lived in a city or a town, **38%** in a village or in the countryside and **13%** were unsure.



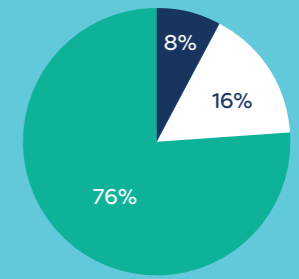
Experiences of school

The majority of children (76%) said they had been mostly happy at primary school, 8% were mostly unhappy and 16% could not decide. More girls (80%) than boys (74%) said they had been mostly happy at school.

Figure 1:

Would you say you were mostly happy or mostly unhappy at school

- Mostly happy
- Mostly unhappy
- I can't decide



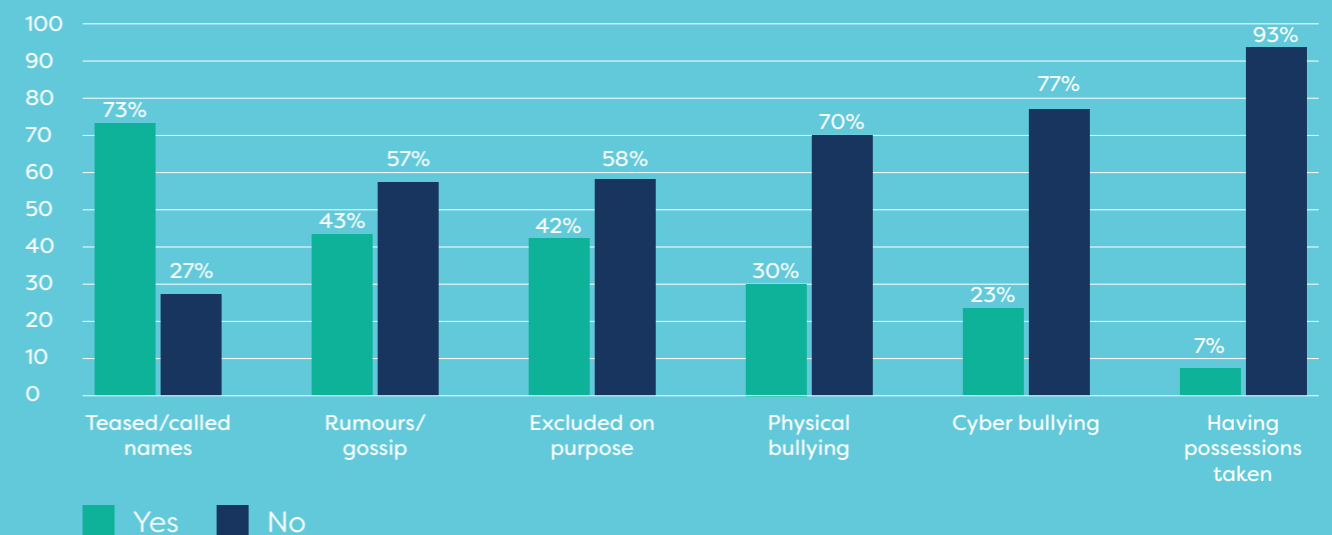
Bullying

Around one-third (32%) of P7 children said they had been bullied in school, 50% had not and 18% said they did not know. Of those who had been bullied, the most common type of bullying experienced was being teased or called hurtful names (73%) followed by having lies or rumours spread about them (43%).

Nearly one-quarter of children (23%) said they had experienced cyber bullying, for example, through mobile phones, social media or online games. Children who said they had been bullied at school had poorer wellbeing than their peers who had not been bullied and they were more likely to say they had been unhappy at their primary school.

Figure 2:

Type of bullying experienced



School starting age

In 2022, the Government in Northern Ireland changed the rules on the school starting age. This means that parents with children born between April and July can now wait until after their child's fifth birthday before sending them to primary school.

To assess children's views on this important issue, KLT included some questions on school starting age; 44% of respondents thought that children should start primary school at age four while 38% chose age five. Only 7% thought the school starting age should be six and 11% couldn't decide. The children provided some interesting insights in to why they chose particular ages as demonstrated in these quotes.



Should start school at age 4

“When children start to develop more at the age of 3 and 4, education would be ideal to start structuring their work abilities and their future. Reading is a very good way to begin learning as you can have your parents read for you but I believe young children should begin education at age 3 to 4.”

“If children join school at 4 it will be fair for people in June so they can go to school the same time as people born in August and September.”

Should start school at age 5

“When you are 4 you haven't matured enough because they are too young but if you are 5 you have a decent understanding of the way to act.”

“They would have developed social skills by the time they are 5 and it would be easier for kids to fit in if they knew how to make friends and socialise.”

“I think that because the child would be a bit more developed and they would be able to learn things but maybe the children from different countries could join at age 6 because if they don't know how to speak these languages they would not be able to understand teachers.”

Should start school at age 6

“I think children should start at the age of 6 (maximum), as it is important for them to build good and stable relationships outside of school. Giving them more time to do so is vital for them to be happy during school. Also, starting education at a later age has benefits. Such as more understanding of the educational environment they are being thrust into, maturity in school, knowing how to handle situations a bit better, etc.”

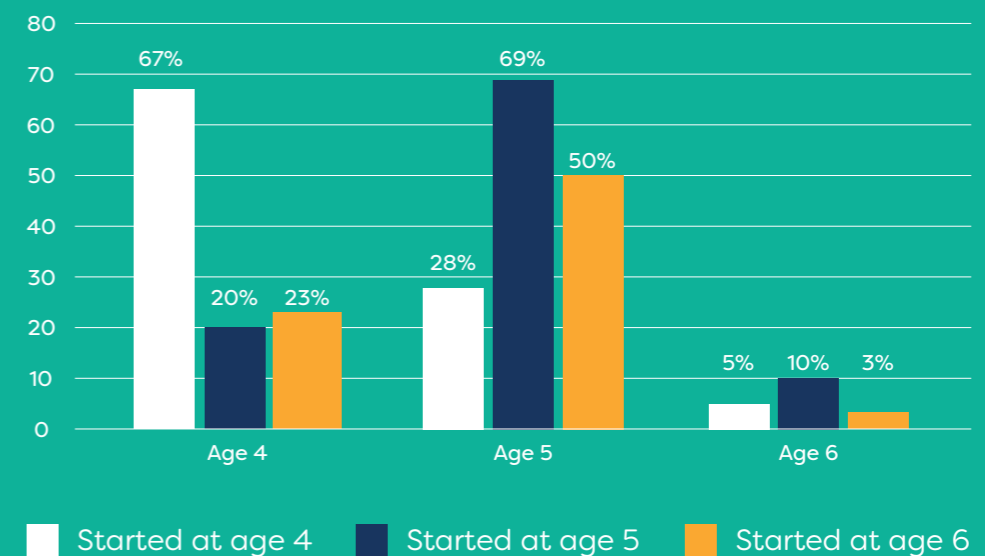
“Because at other country people start at the age of 8 (I think that is the right age) and they learn as good as us by the end on high school.”

As might be expected, there was a link between the age the children themselves started school and their views on the school starting age.

Of those who selected an age, the majority (67%) of those who were aged four also thought the school starting age should be four and, similarly, 69% of those who started school at age five thought the school starting age should be five.

Figure 3:

Age children should start school by age child started school



Shared Education

Shared Education is when primary schools get together with other schools with pupils from a different religion. Pupils might go to another school to use the computers or swimming pool, or to do classes or projects with the pupils from the other school.

In KLT 2022, 60% of respondents said they had been involved in Shared Education. Of those who had not been involved in Shared Education, 40% said they would like to be involved, 20% said they would not like to be involved and 40% said they did not know if they would like to be involved or not.

Two-thirds (66%) of children who had taken part in Shared Education agreed that they were better able to respect the views of other people and 38% said they had made at least one close friend from a different religion as a result of taking part in Shared Education.

Overall, just under half (48%) of KLT respondents said they were very favourable or favourable about Shared Education. Only a minority were unfavourable (8%) and 19% said they did not know.

Among the respondents who said they were in favour, the main reasons they gave were meeting new people who were different to them, making new friends and that sharing was fun as demonstrated in the word cloud in Figure 4.

Of the small number of children who were unfavourable towards Shared Education, the main reasons were that they did not know the other children and that they preferred their own school environment. Some of their comments included the following:

'I just like my normal class and didn't like mixing with too many people.'

'Because I didn't know anyone and I find it hard to make friends.'

'I like to personally know the people I'm with and to use equipment that I'm familiar with.'

Figure 4:
Why respondents are in favour of Shared Education

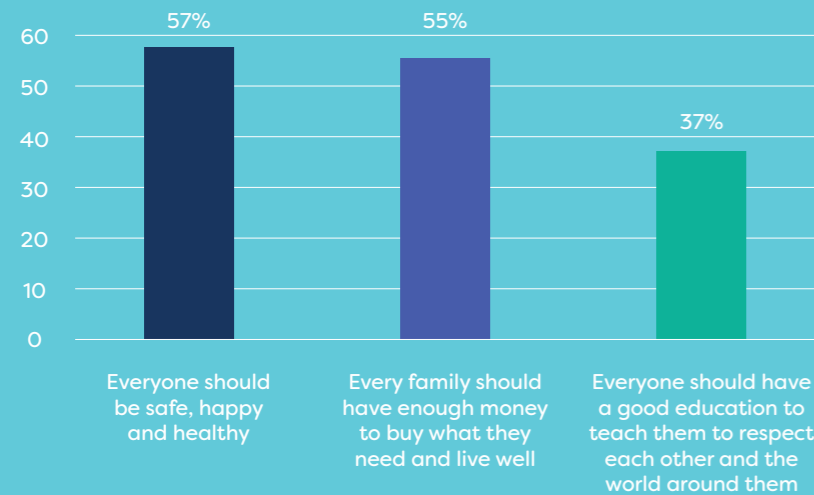


Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs for short) were developed by the United Nations and suggest ways to improve the world and protect the planet.

To get children's views on these goals, KLT respondents were given nine SDGs and asked to choose the three they thought were most important. The three most common goals selected by the children can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5:
Top 3 SDGs selected



The KLT respondents were asked what they thought they could do to help make Northern Ireland a better place for everyone to live in, particularly when thinking about their top three SDGs. As can be seen in the word cloud in Figure 6, one issue that dominated the responses was the need for everyone to stop littering and to pick up litter when they could.

The children were also concerned about the environment more generally and they expressed a need to ensure everyone has a home and enough money to live on. Many also felt that Northern Ireland would be a better place to live if everyone, regardless of gender, race or religion was treated fairly and with respect.

'You could stop pollution so the planet would be a better place.'

'You could make everyone more aware about climate change as lots of people are not taking it very seriously.'

'We could all try to care for the world by picking up litter, reusing, recycling, not wasting water, growing more trees and trying not to drive cars to stop global warming and pollution. We could donate things and food to people in need and donate money to charity.'

'You could do fundraising for people that don't have much money.'

'We could try build more homeless shelters and help single parents that may be struggling.'

'Treat everyone with respect, look after our environment. Control the price of energy bill.'

'Raise awareness about Racism, Sexism and Climate change so we can make a difference.'

'We should be a country with equality and no matter what religion/country/race you are!'

Figure 6:
What respondents can do to make Northern Ireland a better place to live



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