



Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey

# Summary of Results

2024



# Background

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Every year, ARK, a joint initiative between Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, invites 16-year-olds from across Northern Ireland to take part in the YLT survey to share their views on school, politics, community relations and other social issues. Due to the large number of questions YLT 2024 was a 'split survey'. This meant that there were two versions of the survey - some questions were asked in both and some in one or the other.

This document provides a summary of some key findings from the 2024 survey. Detailed results for all YLT surveys (2003-2024), as well as topical Research Updates, are freely available on the YLT website at [www.ark.ac.uk/ylt](http://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt).

The 2024 YLT survey was part-funded by the Executive Office, the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, the Integrated Education Fund, Ohio University, Marie Curie and the Office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.



# Who Took Part in the 2024 YLT Survey?

Everybody living in Northern Ireland who celebrated their 16th birthday between December 2023 and February 2024 was invited to take part in the survey.

Of the 2,210 16-year-olds who took part in YLT:

- **55%** were female, **42%** were male and **3%** had another gender identity.
- **21%** said they lived in a big city or its outskirts, **43%** in a small city or town and **35%** in a village or in the countryside.
- **47%** attended a grammar school, **42%** a secondary school, **8%** a formally integrated school, and **3%** another type of school.
- **74%** lived with both parents, **16%** lived only with their mother, **2%** lived only with their father and **6%** lived with their mother some time and father some time. **2%** had other living arrangements.
- **18%** of respondents said they had a long-standing physical, mental, or developmental/sensory health condition. For **21%** of these respondents this health condition limited their ability to carry out day-to-day activities 'a lot'.
- **63%** regarded themselves as belonging to a particular religion - **37%** Catholic, **23%** Protestant, while **3%** belonged to another religion. **37%** of respondents indicated that they belonged to no religion.
- **31%** of respondents said their families were financially either well-off or very well-off, **52%** described them as average, and **14%** said their families were not well-off or not at all well-off.
- When asked what they thought they would be doing in two years' time, in October 2025, **80%** of respondents reckoned they would be going to college or university full - or part-time. A further **9%** felt that they would be working full - or part-time, while the remainder chose 'unemployed', 'on a training scheme' or 'other'.

# Good Relations and Attitudes to Minority Ethnic Groups

Three quarters of respondents (75%) thought that religion would always make a difference to how people in Northern Ireland feel about each other. Just over one third of respondents (37%) thought community relations were better than 5 years ago whilst 4% thought they were worse. However, the largest proportion (43%) thought relations were about the same. When asked what they thought relations would be like in 5 years' time the proportions were similar: 36% thought they would be better, 9% thought they would be worse and 40% thought they would be about the same.

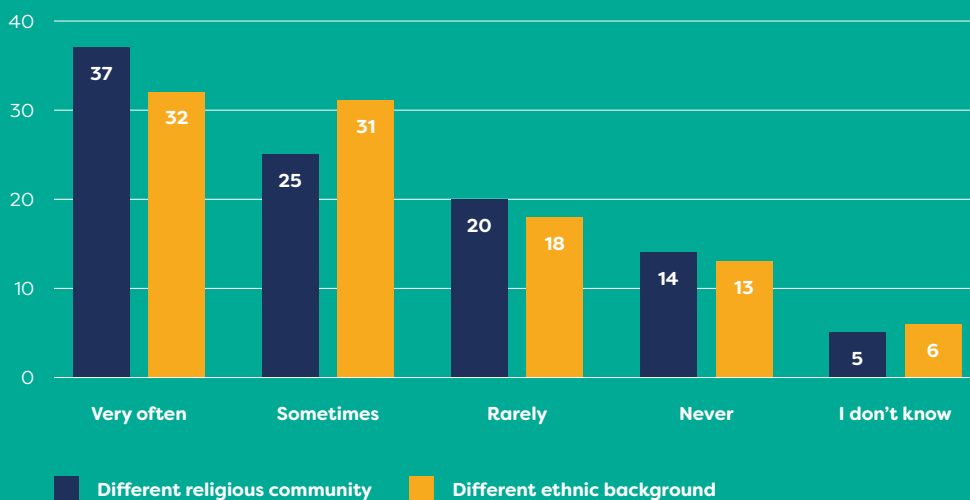
Only 22% of 16-year-olds agreed or strongly agreed that Northern Ireland is a place where

people respect each other, 36% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 39% neither agreed nor disagreed. Nevertheless, 68% of respondents said that they definitely or probably had a sense of belonging to Northern Ireland; approximately one fifth (21%) said they definitely or probably had no such sense of belonging.

Figure 1 shows how often respondents socialised or played sport with people of different religious or ethnic backgrounds. 62% very often or sometimes socialised or played sport with people from a different religious community. When it came to doing the same with those from a different ethnic background, the proportion was almost the same (63%).

**Figure 1:**

*How often do you socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community or from a different ethnic background to yourself? (%)*



43% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that Northern Ireland is a society that welcomes refugees escaping persecution. 55% strongly agreed or agreed that it is our duty to provide protection to refugees escaping persecution. 36% agreed or strongly agreed that they would like more opportunities to get to know asylum seekers or refugees.

Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents felt they were 'not at all prejudiced' towards people from minority ethnic communities. However,

63% agreed or strongly agreed that people's perceptions of refugees and asylum seekers are negatively affected by the media.

Overall, Table 1 indicates that 52% of respondents felt favourable about people from minority ethnic communities. This was slightly higher than the proportion that was favourable towards Protestants and somewhat lower than the proportion that was favourable towards Catholics.

**Table 1:**

*Respondents who feel very or quite favourable about people from the Catholic, Protestant and minority ethnic communities (By religion)*

	%			
	Catholic	Protestant	No religion	All
<b>Catholic community</b>	87	43	49	61
<b>Protestant community</b>	43	71	43	49
<b>Minor ethnic communities</b>	60	45	47	52

## Community Safety and Attitudes to Paramilitaries

84% 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' (51% compared to 40%). However, less than one fifth (18%) of respondents who identified as non-binary said they felt 'very safe' in the area where they lived.

Respondents who lived in rural areas were much more likely (57%) to say that they felt 'very safe' in their area than respondents from urban areas (46%). Those who lived in rural areas were slightly less likely to agree or strongly agree that the PSNI kept their area safe (41% compared to 44% of those living in urban areas).

28% of respondents who lived in urban areas agreed or strongly agreed that there was a lot of crime, drugs, and anti-social behaviour among young people in their areas, compared to just 22% living in rural communities.

14% of respondents living in urban areas, compared to just 6% of respondents in rural neighbourhoods, agreed or strongly agreed that paramilitaries had a controlling influence in their area. 60% of respondents living in rural settings disagreed or strongly disagreed that young people were being influenced too much by paramilitary groups, compared to 57% who lived in urban areas

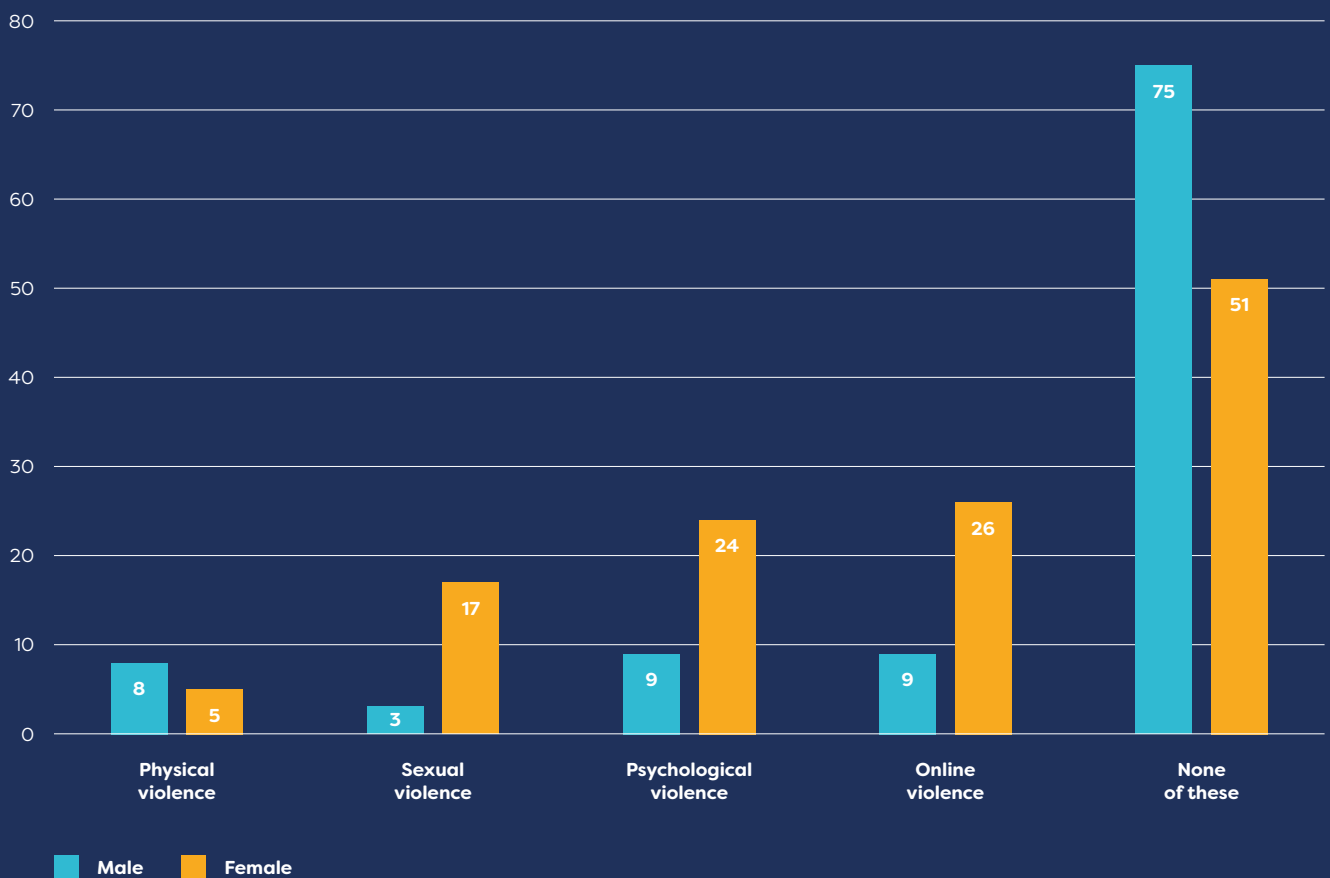
# Gender-based Violence

Based on a definition provided, Figure 2 shows the proportion of males and females who reported that they had experienced different types of gender-based violence in the last year. Males were more likely to report having experienced physical violence, but all the

other forms of violence were more likely to be reported by female respondents. 75% of males said they had never experienced any type of violence, compared to 51% of females and 10% of non-binary respondents.

**Figure 2:**

*Respondents who had personally experienced in the last year (By gender) (%)*



31% of respondents said that women and girls in Northern Ireland were ‘more likely’ to become victims of gender-based violence, compared to two years ago. 15% said they were ‘less likely’ and 36% said ‘about the same’. When asked the same question in relation to online gender-based violence compared to two years ago, 51% said women and girls were ‘more likely’ to become victims, 9% said ‘less likely’ and 24% said ‘about the same’.

YLT asked 16-year-olds who they would report gender-based violence experiences to if they were personally a victim. Respondents were most likely to say they would report this to a family member (63%), a close friend (48%),

the police (28%) or a teacher or other staff member in school (25%). Approximately one in ten 16-year-olds said they would either not be comfortable reporting this (12%) or that they did not know who they would report it to (10%).

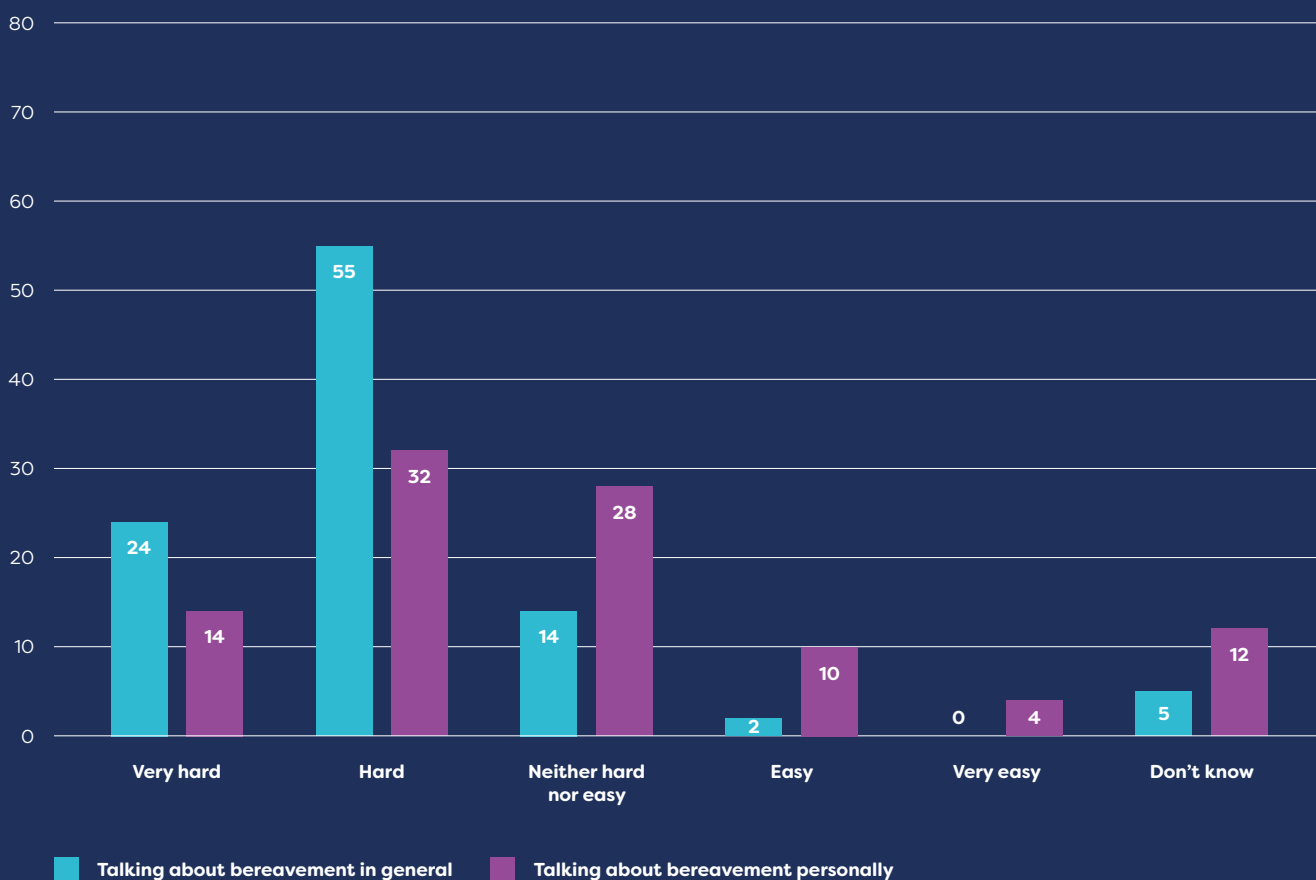
# Grief Education

54% of 16-year olds had experienced the death of someone close to them, while 34% had not and 12% preferred not to say. Figure 3 shows that respondents thought discussing bereavement issues was challenging. While 79% thought that most people find it 'hard' or 'very hard' to talk about the subject, less than half (46%) felt

that they found it 'hard' or 'very hard' to discuss bereavement themselves. A noticeably higher proportion of respondents personally thought that discussing the topic was 'easy' or 'neither easy nor hard', compared to people in general. Personal bereavement experience did not significantly influence any of these attitudes.

**Figure 3:**

How easy or hard is talking about bereavement, generally and personally? (%)



A large majority of respondents (89%) thought that it was important or very important for schools to support pupils who have been bereaved. When asked what practical support schools could offer, the responses included:

a quiet place to when feeling overwhelmed (71%); specific person(s) they can go to in school if they need to talk (55%); flexibility and sensitivity, especially at important times (56%); extra time to finish schoolwork (52%); teachers talk to young person before sharing information about their bereavement (27%); help to access school-based counselling (37%); information/support to access help outside school (28%). Only 4% felt that it did not help to get schools involved in bereavement support.

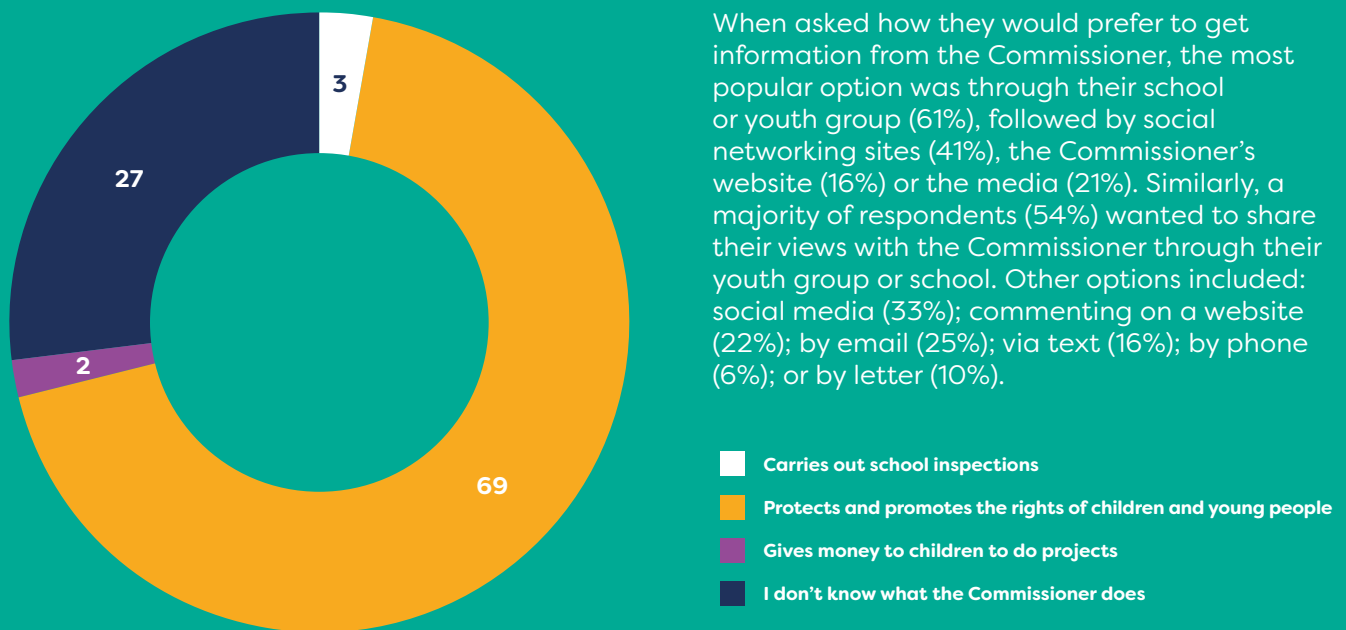
# Young People's Rights

One third (33%) of respondents had heard of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, also known as UNCRC, while less than one in five (18%) had heard of the Children's Commissioner for Northern Ireland (NICCY).

When asked what they thought NICCY does, a large majority (69%) of 16-year-olds thought that it protects and promotes the rights of children and young people (Figure 4).

**Figure 4:**

*What do you think the Children's Commissioner for Northern Ireland does? (%)*



When asked how they would prefer to get information from the Commissioner, the most popular option was through their school or youth group (61%), followed by social networking sites (41%), the Commissioner's website (16%) or the media (21%). Similarly, a majority of respondents (54%) wanted to share their views with the Commissioner through their youth group or school. Other options included: social media (33%); commenting on a website (22%); by email (25%); via text (16%); by phone (6%); or by letter (10%).

## Education

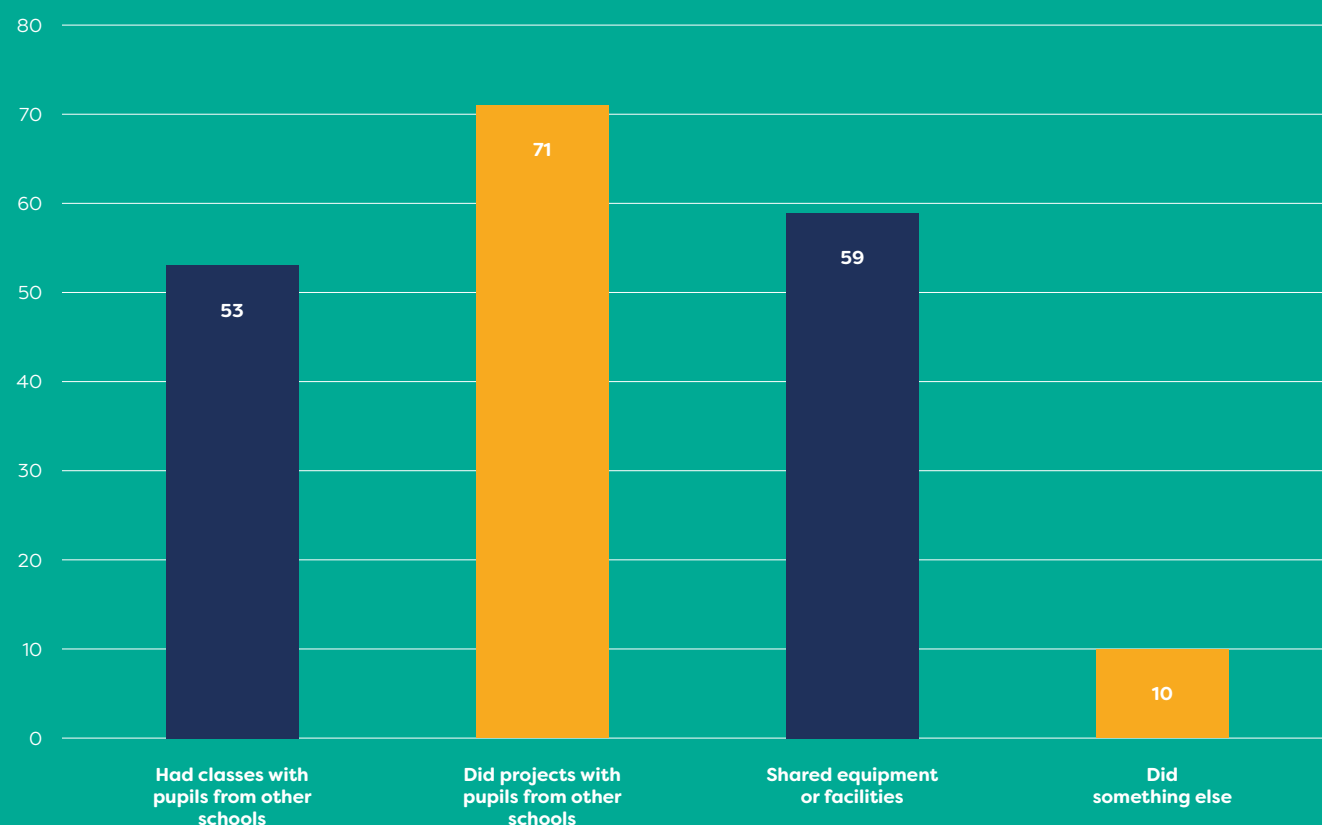
56% of respondents stated that they had been involved in Shared Education. Of those, 71% had done projects with pupils from other schools, 53% had classes with pupils from other schools, 59% had shared facilities or equipment with other schools, and 10% had done something else (Figure 5). 58% of those who had taken part in Shared Education agreed or strongly agreed that, since taking part in Shared Education, they were better able to respect the views of others whilst 36% said they had made close friends with young people from other schools who had a different religious background from their own. Of those who had not had an opportunity to be involved in Shared Education, 37% said they would like to be involved, 24% said they would not like to be involved and 39% answered 'Don't know'.





**Figure 5:**

What are the things you did as part of Shared Education? (%)



Respondents were asked about the factors that had influenced the choice when they had moved from their primary to their post-primary school. Logistical issues and the reputation of the school were the two most significant factors, with 70% and 80% of respondents respectively citing these as 'important' or 'very important'. The subjects offered by the school came third, with 66% saying this was important or very important. 76% of respondents stated that they had a say in selecting their post-primary school.

Three attitude questions were asked in relation to personal and religious identity and the exploration or diversity in school. Overall, 53% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their personal identity and views were respected in their school. However only 16% of students agreed or strongly agreed that church representatives should be involved in the running of schools, with 46% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this. About half of respondents (49%) agreed or strongly agreed that their school allowed controversial issues to be explored in groups or classes. (Table 2).

**Table 2:**

Attitudes towards identity and diversity in current school.

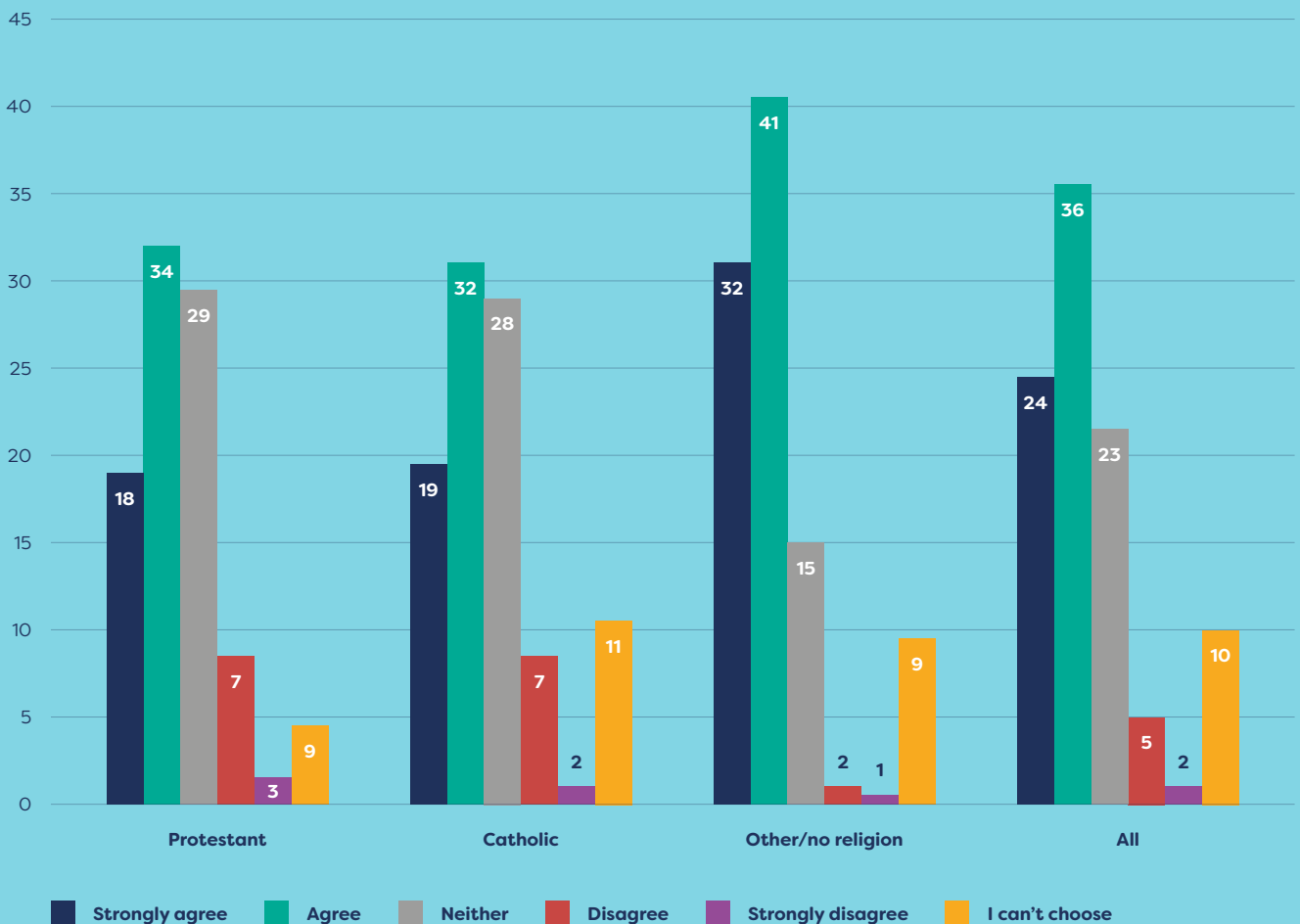
	%			
	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Can't choose
I feel my personal identity and views are respected in my school	53	25	19	4
Church representatives should be involved in the running of schools	16	30	46	8
My school allows young people to explore controversial issues	49	23	19	9

Figure 6 shows that 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that government should encourage and support integrated education in Northern Ireland. Only 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Catholic and Protestant respondents reported very similar levels of support towards government encouragement and support of integrated education in Northern Ireland, with

51% and 52% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement respectively. However, support for government encouragement and support for integrated education in Northern Ireland was much stronger among those with another religion or no religious background (73% agreeing or strongly agreeing), as Figure 6 shows.

**Figure 6:**

*Government should encourage and support integrated education in Northern Ireland. (By religious background) (%)*



Grammar school students (63%) displayed higher levels of support for encouragement and support of integrated education in Northern Ireland than secondary school students (54%). Females (64%) were more supportive of government support for integrated schools than males (53%). With regard to respondents'

family-financial background, we found very little difference in attitudes with over six in ten respondents from not well-off, average well-off and well-off families all agreeing or strongly agreeing with government support and encouragement for integrated education.



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