

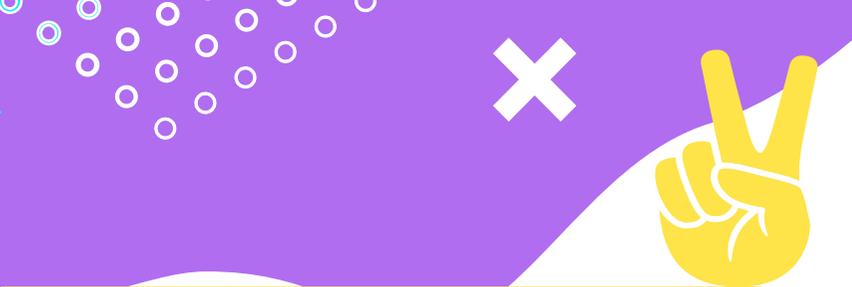
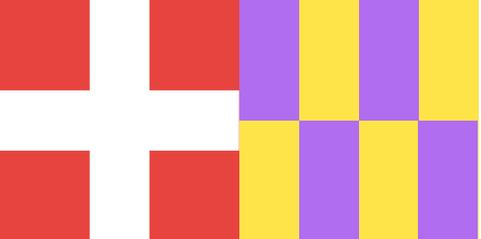


Young People of the Peace Process:

exploring the social, political and cultural issues that matter

Summary Report





Introduction

The Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIYF)

is a youth led regional organisation working with young people aged between 11 and 25. The organisation was established in 1979 by the Department of Education to promote the voice of young people.



This programme emerged from young people expressing their wishes to be included in conversations about 'legacy issues' as well as continuing to provide space and support to continue to look at issues around identity, the Troubles, young people and peace.

This work was designed and delivered by a youth steering group of young people aged 16-18.



Through this piece of work the group involved hoped to achieve the following:

- *To create an opportunity to discuss with young people their views on these topics.*
- *To reach young people across different communities within Northern and ensure a diversity of views are represented.*
- *To promote this survey to young people across the region.*
- *To better understand young people's views and opinions on issues about the past and future.*
- *To promote the voice of young people in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC.*

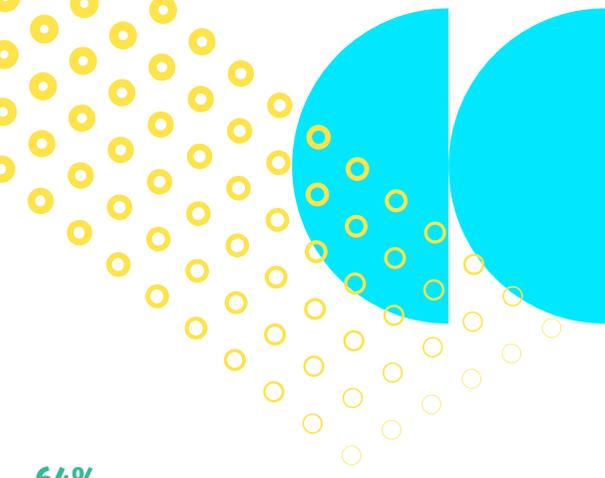
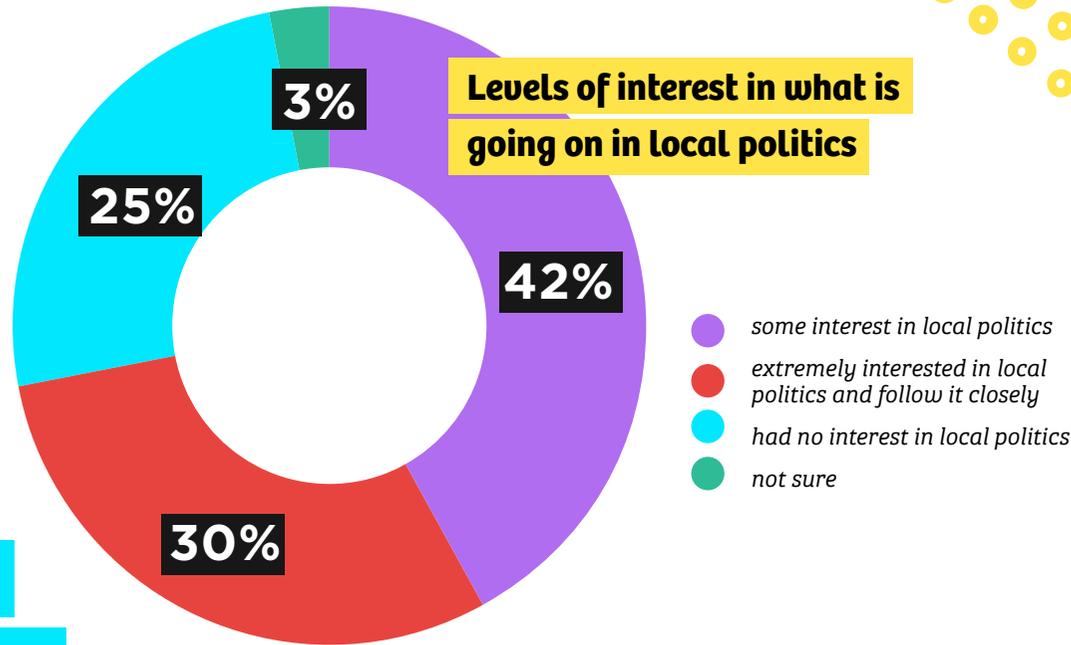
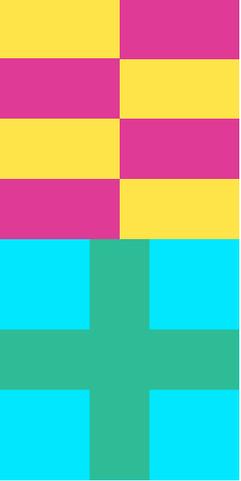
"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child" – Article 12, UNCRC

- *To promote the views of young people and present these to decision makers and people in power.*

Who answered our survey?

The survey gathered **388 individual responses** from young people aged between **16-22 years of age**, with **16-year-olds** providing the most responses (**40%**). This age bracket was selected intentionally by the group to gather the views specifically of **young people born after the Good Friday Agreement**. The respondents to the survey also represented a wide range of gender, sexual orientations and religious backgrounds. When asked to indicate their religious background, **42%** noted that they were **Catholic** and **30% Protestant**. A further **9%** indicated that they would **prefer not to say**, **18%** selected other and **1%** identified with **Islam/Muslim** beliefs.



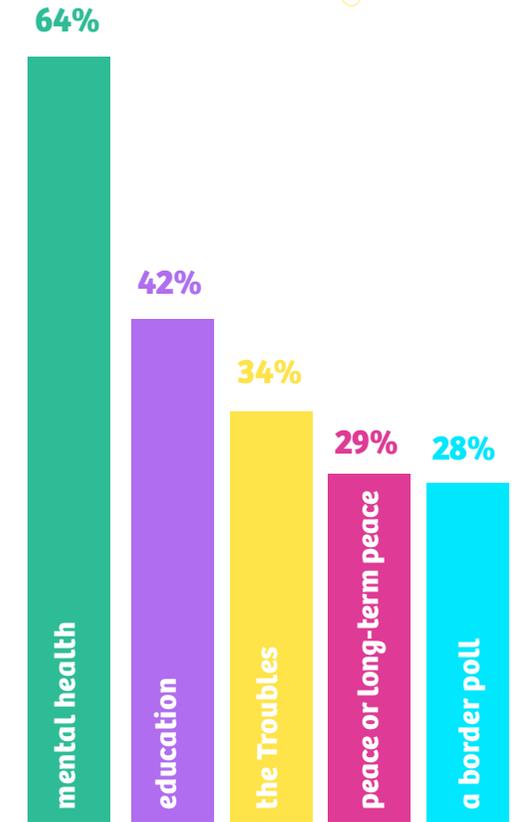


Political & Social Issues

The survey revealed that **62%** of young people 'agreed and strongly agreed' with the view that politicians **did not value their views** and/or opinions. Furthermore, **47%** of young people 'agreed and strongly agreed' with the statement that **politics in Northern Ireland has not changed in twenty years**. The majority of young people (**76%**) also 'agreed and strongly agreed' that politics in Northern Ireland is **defined by the Troubles**. A large number (**47%**) also 'agreed and strongly agreed' that **politicians talk about the past more than the present and the future**.

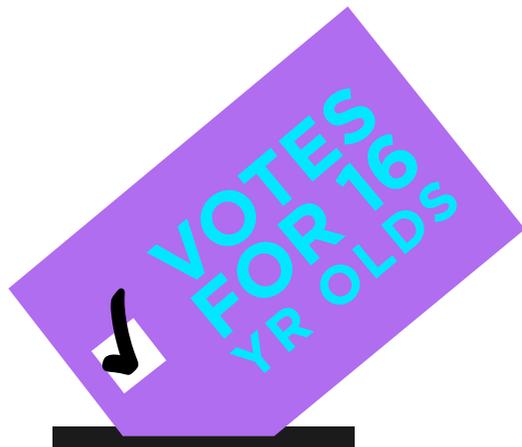
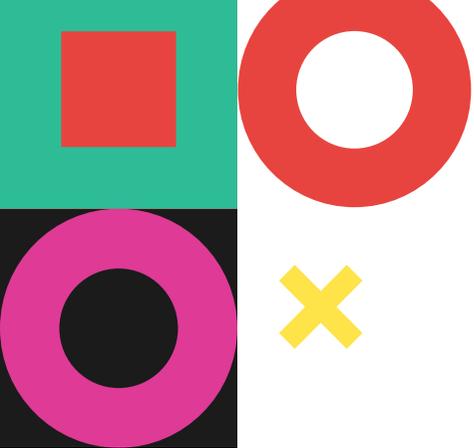
In relation to the statement that **'there are parties that represent my views'** the results were more mixed with **46% 'agreeing and strongly agreeing'** with the statement, compared with **24%** that 'disagreed and strongly disagreed' with it. There was a similar finding with the statement around **'knowing how to contact my local politician for help and assistance'** with **47%** 'agreeing and strongly agreeing' and **43%** 'disagreeing and strongly disagreeing'.

The majority (**51%**) of young people 'disagreed and strongly disagreed' with the statement that they would **'contact their local politician for help and assistance if needed'**, with a further **54%** also 'disagreeing and strongly disagreeing' with the statement that they would contact a politician **'even if they did not agree with them'**. **18%** stated that they neither agreed or disagreed.



What social and political issues interest you most?

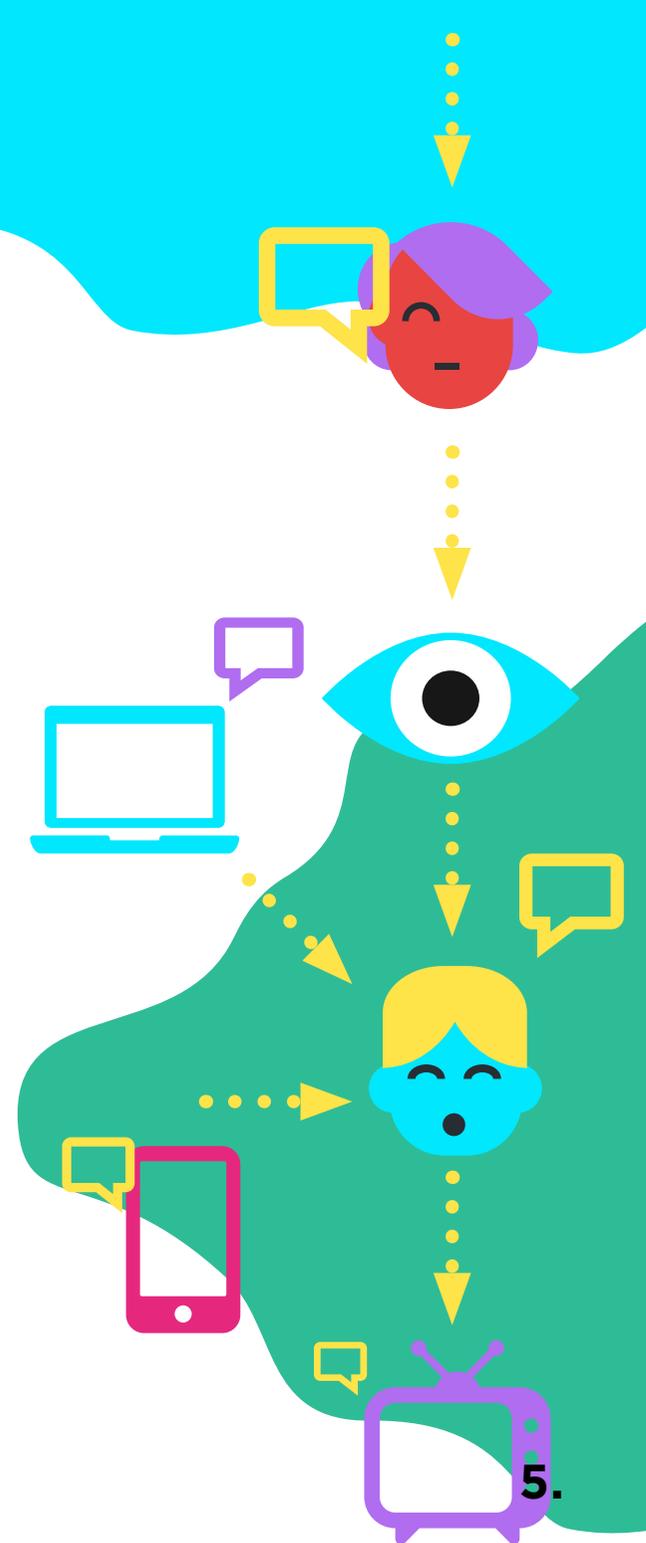
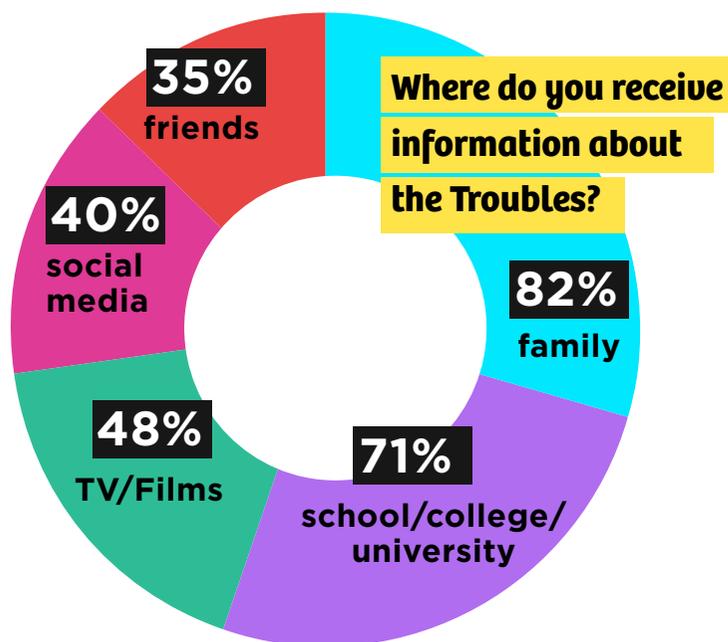
respondents could pick up to 3 issues.



The overwhelming majority of respondents (**71%**) 'agreed and strongly agreed' with the position that **young people should be allowed to vote at sixteen** and a further **87%** 'agreed and strongly agreed' with the statement that **young people can affect change by getting involved in campaigns and activism.**

The survey explored young people's knowledge, understanding and experience of the Troubles. The results revealed that only **1%** of young people had '**no**' knowledge of the **history of the Troubles**, with a further **53%** stating that they had '**some**' and **43%** indicating '**a lot**' of knowledge about the period in Northern Ireland's history that is often called the Troubles.

The respondents were asked **where** they receive their information about the Troubles. The results found that the most common place for gathering information was the **family (82%)** followed by in **school/college/university (71%), TV/Films (48%), social media (40%)** and **friends 35%**.





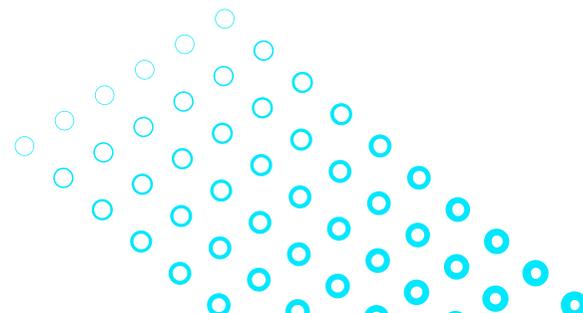
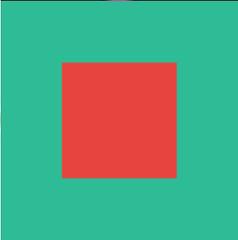
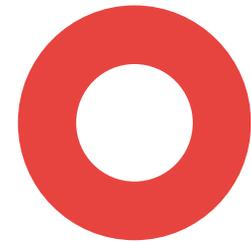
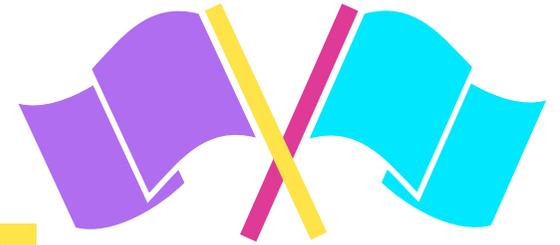
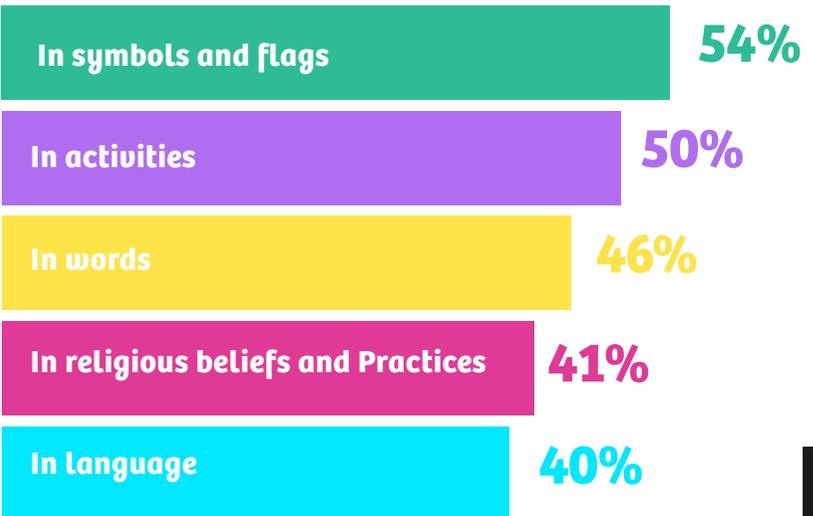
Identity & Culture

In terms of issues surrounding **religion, culture and identity** an overwhelming number of young people indicating that an individual's religious background had no impact (**82%**) on how they would feel about them.

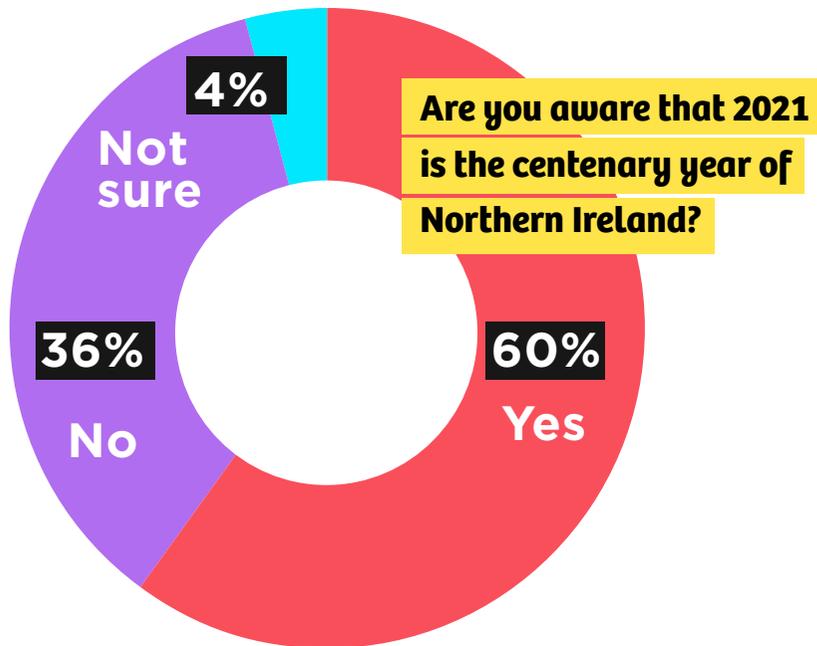
	% of participants	Number of participants
Irish	52%	198
Northern Irish	45%	172
British	26%	99
European	14%	53
Ulster	11%	43
All of the above at different times	4%	15
Other	2%	7
Don't know	2%	6



What ways do you express your culture?



The centenary



The respondents were then asked to consider whether society should celebrate **the Establishment of NI, acknowledge it**, or **protest against it** while also being mindful of public health advice given the Covid restrictions (figure 17). The results showed that the largest number of participants (**44%**) felt that society should acknowledge it, followed by celebrating it (**33%**) and ignore it (**16%**). Only **11%** of young people felt that people in society should protest against it.



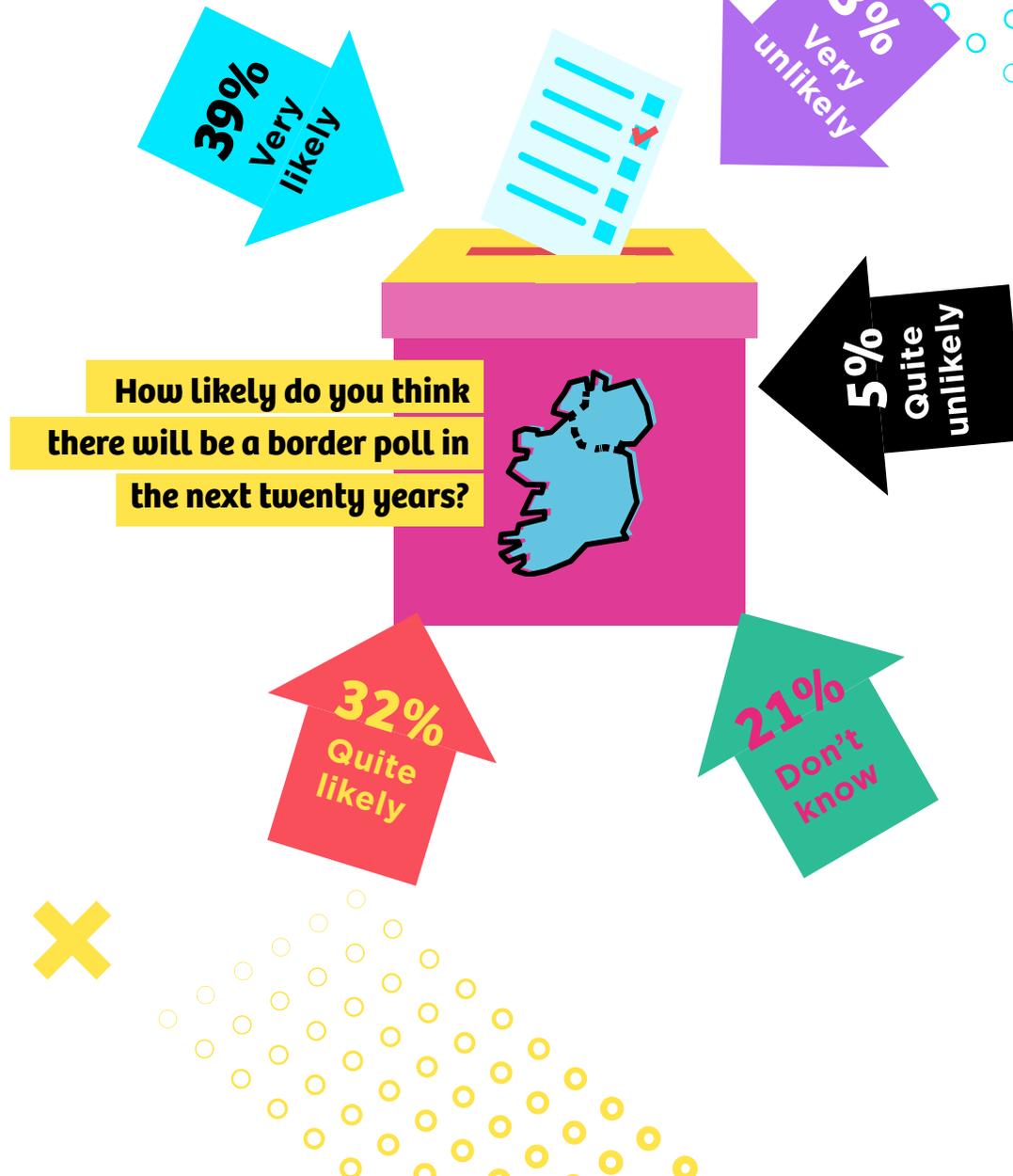
When the results were analysed further there were differences with **18%** of those from a **Catholic background** suggesting society should celebrate it compared with **68%** from a **Protestant background**. Furthermore, **1%** of those from a **Protestant background** felt society should protest against it compared with **18%** of those from a **Catholic background**.



Border poll

The respondents were next asked to think about the potential for a **border poll** to take place in the next twenty years. The results indicated that the majority of respondents (**71%**) held the view that a poll was either '**very or quite likely**' by 2041. In contrast a very small number (**8%**) thought that it was either '**quite or very unlikely**'.

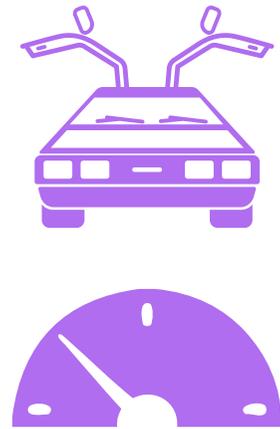
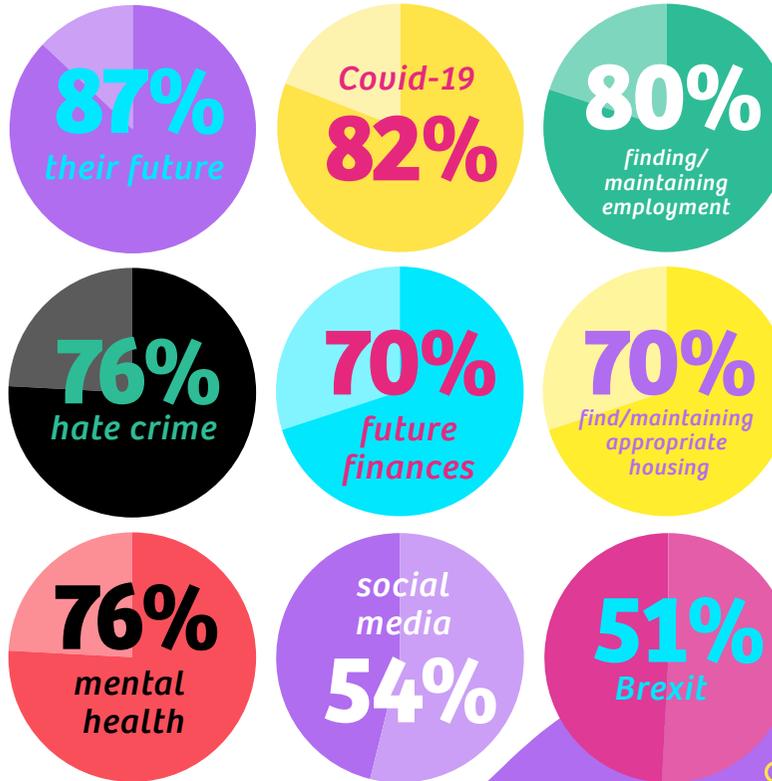
Building on this question the respondents were asked to think about **how they would vote** in the event of a border poll. Of those that completed the question the results found that **41%** of young people would vote to '**join with Ireland**', **32%** would vote to '**stay within the United Kingdom**', **21%** indicated that they '**did not know**' how they would vote, **5%** '**would not vote**', and **1%** '**preferred not to say**'.

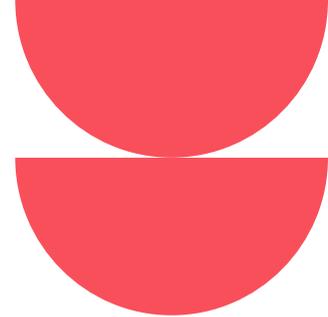
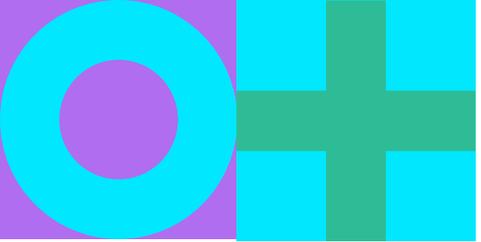


The future

The final part of the survey focused on the future. Young people said that if given the opportunity, a majority (**42%**) said that they question would **'relocate to live in another country'**. This was followed by a further **31%** who would **'maybe relocate'**, with another **20%** suggesting that they would **'not move to another country'**

Finally, young people were asked to think about the future. The findings revealed that young people were **'concerned or really concerned'** with:





Hopes

The survey concluded with an open-ended question which asked the respondents to identify one hope they might have for the future. The largest number of responses related to topics such as:

- *Ending sectarianism*
- *Eradicating tribal politics*
- *Promoting cultural differences and inclusivity*
- *Better support service for mental health issues*

Covid 19 has had a big impact on the young people's education and mental health that will be felt for many years to come. Most of the people making decisions that will impact us live in a completely different world

The findings provided an insight into how young people think about a range of sensitive social and political issues in Northern Ireland. There is no doubt that:

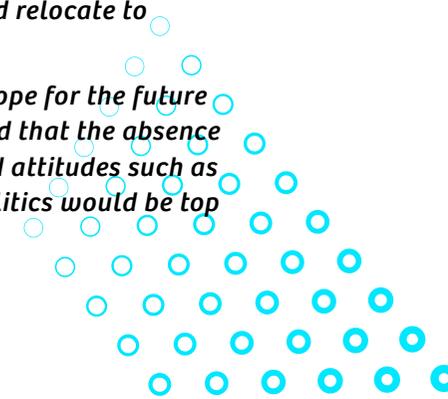
- *A large number of young people are really interested in politics even though many of them feel that the elected representatives focus on the past more than the future, and that young people should be allowed to vote at 16.*
- *The three most important issues identified by young people were mental health, education and the Troubles.*
- *There is an appetite among young people to explore the topic of the Centenary of Northern Ireland.*
- *Young people recognise the high probability of a border poll within the next two decades and that voting habits are consistent with religious and community background.*
- *A large number of young people if presented with the opportunity would relocate to another country.*
- *When asked to identify a hope for the future the young people suggested that the absence of negative behaviours and attitudes such as sectarianism and tribal politics would be top of their list*

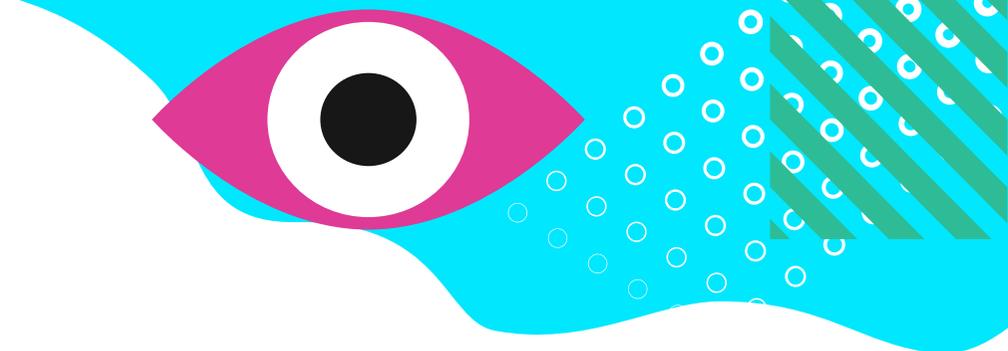
More acceptance within society as a whole

I hope that our generation is the generation to change how people within Northern Ireland treat one another

Peace - For everyone to get along

That religious biases and sectarian acts can become a thing of the past





Recommendations

Drawing this report to a conclusion there are a number of recommendations that can be made based on the findings from the survey:

 **Create safe spaces for young people to discuss legacy matters including a border poll and the centenary of NI.**



 **Opportunities for young people to engage politicians on creating positive, post pandemic narrative and opportunities for young people**

 **Lower the voting age to 16**

 **Support young people to work in partnership with decision makers to create real and meaningful educational and employment opportunities**

 **Opportunities to provide safe but challenging spaces for young people to explore the 'identity' questions in more detail. Furthermore, in light of brexit and the growing debate around a border poll, it is crucial that young people have a vehicle to consider these challenging issues within the context of their identity.**



