



‘Big Youth Survey’ Summary Report

January 2024

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Background

This report summarises the views of the young people who completed the Youth Assembly’s ‘Big Youth Survey’ in January 2024. The survey was designed to help new Youth Assembly Members identify and decide which issues to focus on during their mandate.

The online survey was aimed at all young people aged 12-21 in Northern Ireland. The survey was sent to Youth Assembly Members, the Youth Assembly Consultation Forum, MLAs, the Speaker’s Advisory Group and every post-primary school and college in Northern Ireland. In addition, it was promoted widely through youth networks and the Youth Assembly’s social media channels. It was live for the period 8 January to 26 January 2024.

Young people chose their top three issues from a list of 18 which were suggested by Youth Assembly Members at their first meeting in December 2023. In addition, young people were able to add an issue if it wasn’t on the list. They were also given the chance to explain why they chose the issues they did.

The 18 issues (in alphabetical order) were:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Agriculture | 10. Justice |
| 2. Culture and Identity | 11. Poverty |
| 3. Dealing with the past/
legacy issues | 12. Rights and equality |
| 4. Economy | 13. Rural issues |
| 5. Education | 14. Sport and leisure |
| 6. Environment | 15. The Arts |
| 7. Health (mental and
physical) | 16. Transport and
infrastructure |
| 8. Housing and
homelessness | 17. Youth services |
| 9. Jobs | 18. Youth voice and
participation |

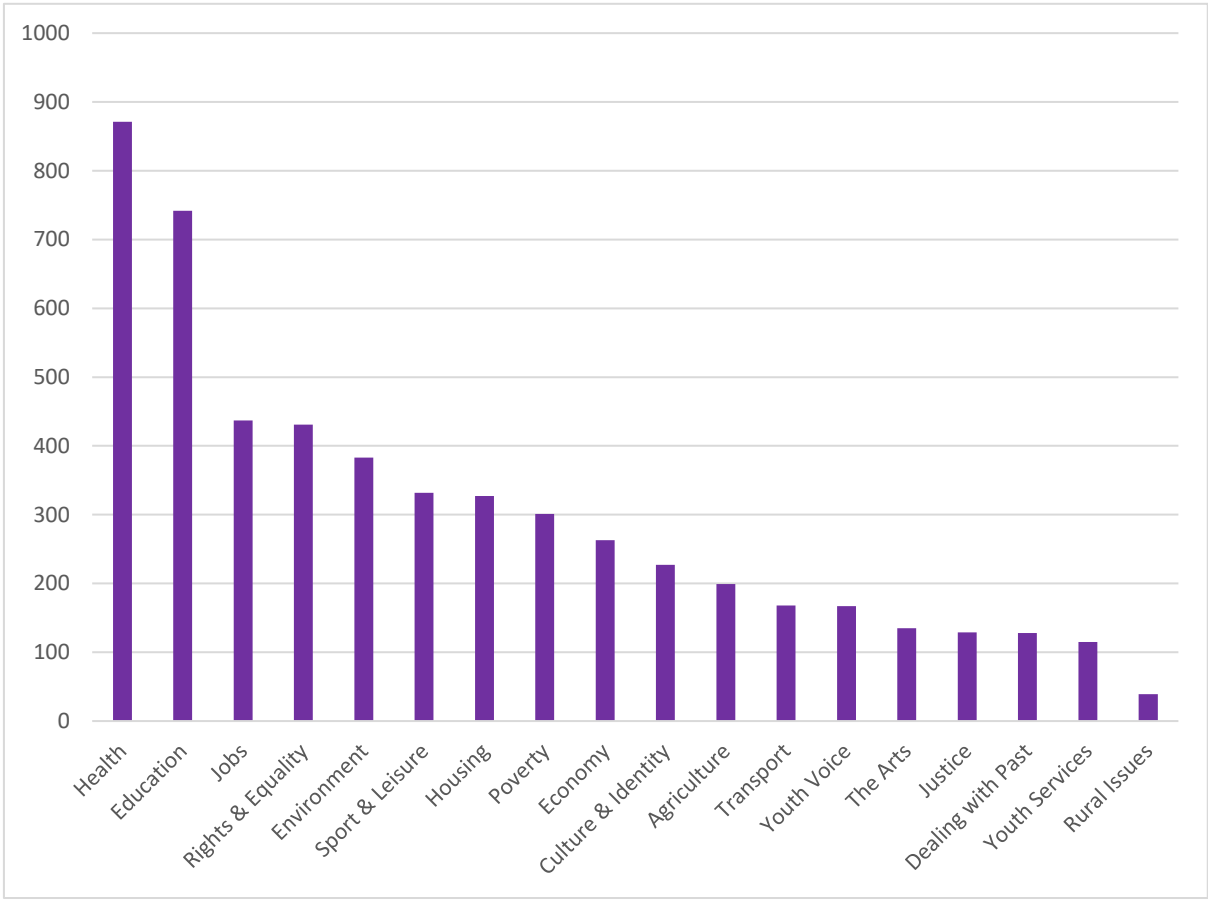
Key points

In total, 1,798 survey responses were received from young people across Northern Ireland. This is an 89% increase on the 2021 survey carried out for the last Youth Assembly mandate which was completed by 951 young people.

Based on the responses, the rank order of the issues is as follows:

	Topics	No. of respondents who selected this as one of their top three preferences	% share of votes (rounded to nearest whole number)
1	Health	871	16
2	Education	742	14
3	Jobs	437	8
4	Rights & Equality	431	8
5	Environment	383	7
6	Sport & Leisure	332	6
7	Housing and Homelessness	327	6
8	Poverty	301	6
9	Economy	263	5
10	Culture & Identity	227	4
11	Agriculture	199	4
12	Transport	168	3
13	Youth Voice	167	3
14	The Arts	135	3
15	Justice	129	2
16	Dealing with the Past	128	2
17	Youth Services	115	2
18	Rural Issues	39	1

Figure 1: Rank order of issues



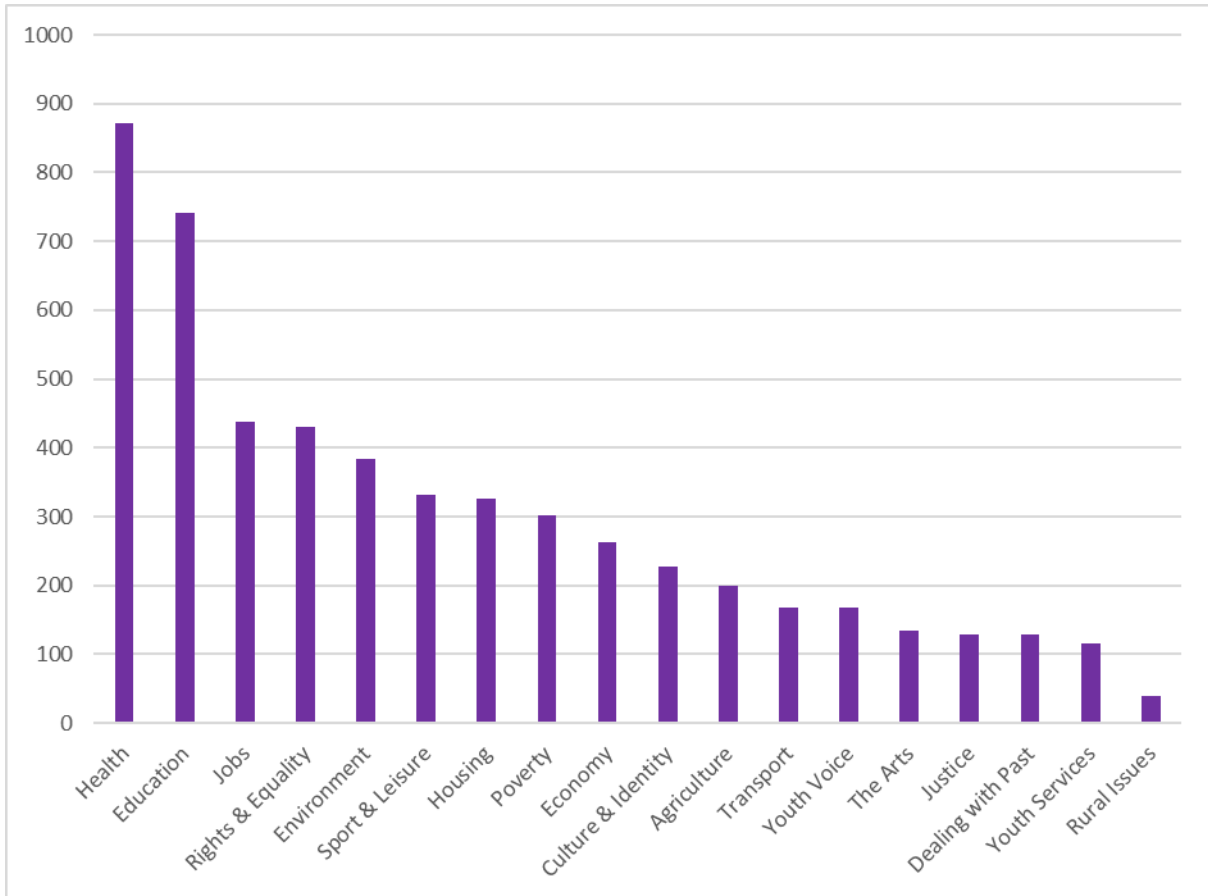


Figure 2: Rank order of issues bar chart

Breakdown of respondents by age

Age	Percent
12	25.08%
13	20.30%
14	17.91%
15	11.35%
16	9.07%
17	7.79%
18	4.34%
19	1.00%
20	0.83%
21	1.00%
I am responding on behalf of a young person	1.33%

Figure 3: Age – Percentage

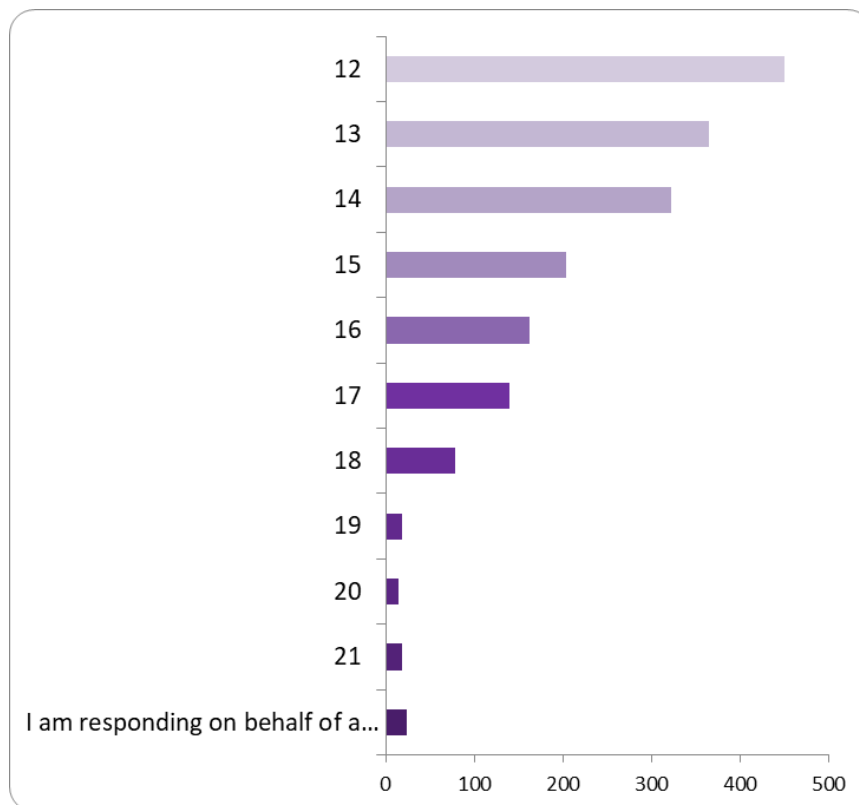


Figure 4: Age bar chart

Why were these issues chosen?

Those who completed the survey were given the opportunity to explain why they had chosen particular issues and why it is important for the Youth Assembly to focus on them. Responses were anonymous. All comments were read, considered and are reflected in the summary below.

Please note that the comments and themes identified are those of the respondents and may represent the view of only one individual. In addition, they do not represent the views of the Youth Assembly.

In the following summary, comments on each of the issues are grouped thematically. Issues are presented in alphabetical order.

1. Agriculture

Lack of funding and recognition for farmers

Concerns for the future of farming

Health of farmers

2. The Arts

Lack of funding and recognition

Benefits of involvement in the arts

Lack of opportunities to get involved (too costly)

3. Culture and Identity

Language and culture e.g. Ulster Scots and Irish

Greater role for education

Religion - lack of curriculum

Racism and hate crime on the rise

LGBTQ+ identity - greater support

4. Dealing with the past/ legacy issues

Understanding the past

Victims need to be heard

Education needed around the troubles

5. Economy

Cost of living crisis

Effect of economy on other issues

Worries for the future

Education around economy for young people

6. Education

Curriculum reform needed

Homework stress

Impact of strikes

Support for young carers, those children with additional needs and for the mental health of all students

Funding for schools

Need to feel prepared for adult life

Mental health

Transfer test

Cost of education (school uniform, free school meals, university fees)

Pupils need to have a say

7. Environment

Awareness and education in environmental citizenship

Climate anxiety

Natural world - animals in danger, local environment at risk e.g. Lough Neagh

Pollution - litter, smoke, recycling

Governments and large companies do not take this seriously

8. Health (mental and physical)

Mental health - not taken seriously, impact of social media, pressure at school, lack of services, impact on young carers

NHS - funding, access to services, waiting lists

Physical health - vaping, obesity, access to period products, fast food

9. Housing and homelessness

Rising cost of housing

Cost of living

Homelessness – rising numbers, impact on children, stigma

10. Jobs

Careers advice - need it younger, need to be better quality

Challenges - no part time jobs, low rates of pay, discrimination

Low salaries - cost of living, public sector pay, poor salaries compared to rest of UK

11. Justice

Fairness - reform of justice system needed, takes too long

Restorative justice programmes need to be expanded

Tougher sentences for more serious crimes

12. Poverty

Impact - hidden issue with lots of associated problems e.g. lack of educational attainment, criminality, poor housing

Action needed by government e.g. cost of school meals, uniform, lack of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), homeless shelters and more food banks.

13. Rights and equality

Age - Children need to be involved in the decisions that are made for them.

Race - hate crimes, discrimination and racial slurs are common

Gender - pay disparity

Disability - everyone deserves to be equal and feel valued in society

Sexuality - rights of LGBTQ+ youth

Need for education around other cultures and identities and children's rights

14. Rural issues

Poor access to services e.g. hospitals, banks, leisure activities

Rural areas underfunded

Farming underfunded

Education – schools closed or amalgamated

Transport - road network and quality of roads are poor

15. Sport and leisure

Not enough facilities overall for young people

School - better variety of sports and access for all

16. Transport and infrastructure

Accessibility - public transport expensive, unreliable and not accessible by all

Cost e.g. travel to school should be free for all

Safety - too many on some buses, lack of night buses

Climate impact - better public transport = less reliance on cars = less carbon emissions/more sustainable overall

Trains - need to improve railway infrastructure

Rural areas - lack of transport and infrastructure in rural areas which limits opportunities

17. Youth services

We need accessible and well-funded youth services for all young people

More services for young carers

Support for young people with disabilities.

More activities for those aged 18-25.

Well-resourced youth services bring many benefits - sense of belonging, lower rates of crime, boosts confidence and skills, better mental health, job opportunities and life skills

18. Youth voice and participation

Local Government and Northern Ireland Assembly – young people need to have a say on decisions made for them

No-one seems to listen to teenagers

Young people are ignored in government issues and when we are, it is a token placement and has no meaning.

Schools - Pupils' voices should be heard.

Voting - Many young people feel that their vote doesn't matter

Other issues raised

(in alphabetical order)

- Abortion rights
- Anti-bullying awareness
- Autism
- Bereavement education in schools
- Bill of Rights
- Constitutional issues
- Decline in morality
- Disability awareness and services
- Fears about international relations/war
- Gambling advertisements in media
- Gender equality
- Government not sitting
- Immigration
- Lack of representation of diverse communities in local councils in Northern Ireland
- Learning disability awareness
- Neurodiversity - how it is seen, understood and optimised within our society
- Parenting programmes and support for struggling families
- Policing
- Providing a safe space for vulnerable people e.g. disabled people
- Respite care unavailable for young carers
- RSE being pushed to young children at school
- School bathroom privileges
- Support for care leavers
- Women's rights
- Young carers are at a disadvantage through missing school, the opportunity to lead a normal life, socialising with their own peer group
- Young carers go unrecognised for their role

Thanks

The Youth Assembly would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey and share their lived experience, perspectives and opinions. Thanks also to those young people and adults in schools, colleges and throughout the youth sector who helped to share the survey with their networks. A further thanks to the individuals, organisations and representatives who helped to amplify the survey by sharing our posts on social media.

Next Steps

The survey results will be published on CitizenSpace once the survey closes.

This summary report will help Youth Assembly Members plan for their next plenary, on Saturday 24 February 2024 during which Members will debate and vote on their priorities for the mandate.

The Youth Assembly Committees will be established after the plenary and will be based on the issues voted on by the Youth Assembly Members in plenary.