

Education and Training

Being Young in Scotland 2007: Scottish Government findings

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This paper presents the key findings arising mainly out of the questions that the Scottish Government asked in the third sweep of the Being Young in Scotland survey (BYIS) undertaken in 2007¹. BYIS is run by YouthLink and its third sweep was carried out by mruk research. It aims to paint a picture of young people aged 11 to 25 in Scotland: their lifestyle and interests, their attitudes and aspirations, and some of the challenges they face. In 2007, the Scottish Government asked questions on engagement with the youth work sector, knowledge of the Scottish Youth Parliament, and citizenship.

Main Findings

- In terms of spare time activities, the survey showed a steady decline in engagement and participation in structured activities amongst school pupils as they become older and move on from secondary school. Going to a friend's house and watching TV/videos/DVDs were the most commonly identified spare time activities for both 11-16 and 17-25 year-olds.
- Regarding participation in youth organisations, activities or services, respondents identified the need to be made more aware of the opportunities available, wanting friends to participate with them, and having more available locally.
- Around half of all respondents said youth work organisations were good at taking young people's views into account. However, this was less positive amongst young people from the most deprived areas: 28% said that youth work organisations listened only 'a little' or 'not at all'.
- On attitudes to immigration, around 44% of all respondents (but 60% of those aged 17-25) held the belief there were too many immigrants living in Scotland and approximately 32% agreed that we need to do more to help other nationalities settle here.
- When asked about the most important characteristics that make someone a good citizen, a large number of respondents identified respecting others (75% of school pupils and 74% of young people), obeying the law (57% of school pupils and 63% of young people) and looking after the environment (31% of school pupils and 25% of young people). Perceptions of volunteering as a mark of good citizenship seemed to have fallen gradually since 2003 and was quite low down the list in 2007.
- When asked what issues they would like to be consulted on, their town/area and leisure facilities were identified as particularly important for both school pupils and young people.
- Respondents said they would find it easier to express their views to the government if they simply knew more about opportunities to do so; they also said they would prefer expressing their views to the government through face-to-face contact.

¹ A summary of the core questions has been published by YouthLink and is available online: <http://www.youthlink.co.uk/news/newsarticles/beingyounginscotland>

- Over 80% of all respondents said they never participated in pupil/youth forums/councils.
- Although knowledge of the Scottish Youth Parliament remains generally low with under a quarter of all respondents saying they had heard about it, the proportion of respondents who said they had *never* heard of it has fallen since 2005, particularly amongst 17 to 25 year olds (from 60% in 2005 to 24% in 2007).
- An increasing, although still small, minority of children and young people agreed that the Scottish Parliament had made 'a real difference to life in Scotland' (a majority could not express an opinion on the matter).
- Around 70% of all respondents said they were proud to be Scottish (an increase of 14 percentage points since 2005 for 17-25 year-olds), but more disagreed than agreed with the statement 'I consider myself as European'.
- In terms of expected school-leaving qualifications, nearly 6 in 10 school pupils expected to leave school with Highers at least. A smaller but slowly increasing proportion (44%) said they would achieve Advanced Highers.
- A majority of respondents felt they had good job prospects and a relatively small, but nonetheless increasing, proportion agreed with the statement 'there is little chance for people like me to make it in life' (18% of 17-25 agreed with this in 2007, up from 10% in 2003).

About the study

For the third sweep of BYIS, **mrnk** research surveyed a total of 2,685 children and young people aged 11 to 25 years old throughout Scotland: 1,685 school pupils in S1 to S4 (11-16 year-olds) and 1,000 young people aged 17-25. The fieldwork took place between March and late June 2007.

There were two separate parts to the survey both using the same supervised self-completion survey method:

- Self-completion in schools under interviewer supervision for the 11-16 year olds²
- Self-completion in respondents' home under interviewer supervision for the 17-25 year olds

The questionnaires used for the two 'sub-surveys' were broadly the same. The core questions from the previous survey sweeps were repeated; these covered lifestyle and spare time activities (inc. volunteering); media consumption; attitudinal questions on a number of issues such as trust and respect, political institutions, Scottish identity, environment, and poverty; and qualifications and expectations for future work/study. In addition, questions on participation in youth work activities, awareness of and involvement in the Scottish Youth Parliament, and citizenship were asked on behalf of the Scottish Government (further questions were asked on behalf of other organisations, but these are not reported here).

The findings reported here are given at the "95% confidence interval". Given that this survey is based on a sample, interpretation of the findings should take into consideration sampling tolerances and the resulting variations in statistical reliability. Findings therefore need to be treated with caution, especially when relating to the sub-samples for the key variables used in the analysis (age, gender, household composition, rural/urban, deprivation³, and ethnicity: white and non-white). Full details of the methodology employed are given in the full report, available on request from the Scottish Government.

Throughout this summary, the term 'young people' refers to respondents aged 17-25 and 'school pupils' refers to those aged 11-16.

² While the intention was to interview all 11-16 year olds within the sample in school, S4 pupils had to be interviewed in their home due to recruitment difficulties in schools. However, to minimise the effects of this changed approach, these respondents were found within the catchment area of the schools which had already been identified to be part of the sample. Statistical tests carried out on the data have shown that this changed approach did not have a significant impact on the validity of the data and comparability with previous sweeps.

³ this was done for the 20% least and most deprived areas using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

Key findings

Spare time activities

Respondents were asked about how they used their **spare time**. A wide range of activities were covered including taking part in sport, attending cultural facilities, participating in uniformed clubs, volunteering and fundraising, and also caring for families and relatives. Overall, the results showed a steady decline in engagement and participation in structured activities as school pupils became older and moved on from secondary school.

Amongst 11-16 year-olds, a large majority identified 'going to a friend's house' (78%), and 'watching TV/videos/DVDs' (76%) as being amongst the things they were most likely to do in their spare time. Taking part in sports (53%) was slightly ahead of hanging around on the streets (48%); visiting relatives (43%) and attending a youth club (34%) were also relatively common. Going to the cinema rated much more highly (55%) than going to the theatre, an art gallery or a museum (8%, 3% and 6% respectively).

Some similarities were found amongst the 17-25 age group: a large majority of these respondents also ticked 'watching TV' (88%) and 'going to a friend's house' (79%); going to the cinema again rated much higher (45%) than going to the theatre, an art gallery or a museum (6%, 7% and 6% respectively). In contrast though, where 48% of those aged 11-16 had ticked 'hanging around on the streets' as one of the things they were most likely to do in their spare time, only 9% of 17-25 year-olds ticked that response.

Social attitudes

When asked to select which groups of people/institutions they have the most **trust and respect** for, parents were top of the list among both age groups (69% for the 11-16 and 74% for the 17-25). This was followed by friends (46% for the 11-16 and 53% for the 17-25). In third position were teachers (for school pupils) and doctors (for young people). The Press and politicians were regarded by both age groups as the least trusted or respected categories of people.

The survey tried to elicit respondents' **attitudes to violence**. A majority of school pupils (53%) reported that children should have legal protection from being smacked (and 31% of young people also agreed with this). However, the findings also showed that 13% of school pupils agreed with the statement "it's acceptable to use physical force to get something you really want" (it was lower, at 8%, for young people). A similar proportion (12%) stated that they were really frightened to go out due to their perceived levels of public violence. Amongst young people, this fear of going out was significantly more prevalent among non-white

respondents – whilst still only a minority: 27% of the non-white people surveyed agreed with the statement versus 13% for white people.

A few questions touched on attitudes to **immigration and international aid**. Overall, around 44% of all respondents held the belief there were too many immigrants living in Scotland and approximately 32% agreed that we need to do more to help other nationalities settle here. On whether there were too many immigrants living here, a much greater proportion of young people (60% i.e. twice as much as in 2003) than school pupils (34%) said they agreed. However, a similar proportion of 11-16 and 17-25 agreed that more should be done to help other nationalities settle in Scotland (35% and 28% respectively). Sub-group analysis showed that boys/young men in both age groups and those 17-25 year olds living in urban areas were more likely to say that there were too many immigrants in Scotland. On the topic of aid, the survey showed that a majority of school pupils believed we should do more to help people living in poorer countries. Forty three percent of young people also held that view although this represents a significant drop of 23 percentage points since 2005 (while the survey data cannot explain such a fall, it could be argued that the much higher 2005 figure was partly due to the high profile given to Third World poverty through the Gleneagles Summit and Make Poverty History campaign).

Engaging with the youth work sector

The survey tried to find out about how well connected children and young people were with the youth work sector in Scotland. Twenty two percent of school pupils and 7% of young people in the survey said they **attended a youth club** at least once a fortnight. Attendance was highest amongst boys aged 12 and 13. Regarding participation in youth organisations, activities or services, respondents identified the need to be made more aware of the opportunities available, wanting friends to participate with them, and having more available locally. For 15% of 11-16 (but only 3% of 17-25), youth clubs are used as a **source of information** about activities and services. Around half of all respondents said youth work organisations were good at **taking young people's views into account**. However, this was less positive amongst young people from the most deprived areas: 28% said that youth work organisations listened only "a little" or "not at all".

Citizenship and civic participation

Respondents were asked a few questions that relate to citizenship and civic participation.

The study shed some light on children and young people's views of **what makes a good citizen**. When asked to identify the most important characteristics that made

someone a good citizen, respondents said "respecting others" (75% of school pupils and 74% of young people), "obeying the law" (57% of school pupils and 63% of young people) and "looking after the environment" (31% of school pupils and 25% of young people).

Volunteering as a mark of good citizenship seemed to have fallen gradually since 2003 and was quite low down the list in 2007. Overall, a high majority of young people (82%) and school pupils (61%) said they never volunteer or do fund raising. Amongst those who do, school pupils were more likely than young people to have participated in voluntary work in the last six months (35% and 17% respectively). However, about a third of all respondents who did not currently take part in volunteering, would consider it in the future (39% young people and 30% school pupils). School pupils from the most deprived areas were far less likely to have done any volunteering when compared to respondents from the least deprived areas (26% versus 42%). This was also found to be the case, but to a lesser extent, in the 17-25 age group.

On a **civic participation** theme, respondents were asked if they had ever been asked for their views or comments. Over half of school pupils had been asked for their views by their school/college/university (57%), friends (55%) and parents and family (53%), while 18% said they had not been asked for their views or comments at all. Young people were generally less likely than school pupils to say they have been asked for their views: lower proportions had been asked for their views by friends (48%), their parents/family (38%), or their school/college/university (33%). Around a third of young people had not been asked at all for their views (32%).

When asked what issues they would like to be consulted on, school pupils most frequently mentioned their school (41%), town/area (39%), leisure facilities (38%) and racism (31%). While young people most frequently mentioned their town/area (42%), leisure facilities (33%) and what the government and local Council are doing (both 29%).

School pupils would prefer to express their views to the government through face-to-face contact (43%), e-mail/msn messenger (34%), through school (32%) or by signing a petition (29%). For young people, face-to-face contact was also the most frequently chosen method for expressing their views (32%), followed by e-mail/msn messenger (26%) and signing a petition (31%).

When asked what might make it easier for them to express their views to the government, the most frequently mentioned responses for school pupils were knowing more about opportunities to express views (47%), the school organising it (33%) and knowing more about issues (31%). Young people were most likely to mention knowing more

about opportunities to express views (40%), having an actual interest in issues (31%) and knowing more about issues (28%).

The survey also asked about participation in **pupil/youth forums/councils**. Over 80% of all respondents said they never participated in these and levels of participation were similar for school pupils and young people (between 6% and 9% depending on the exact measure). Those most likely to attend at least every couple of months seemed to be young men aged 19 or 20.

In terms of children and young people's knowledge of the **Scottish Youth Parliament** (SYP), the proportion of 17 to 25 year olds saying *they have never heard of it* has decreased dramatically since the last sweep (from 60% in 2005 to 24% in 2007); while the number of young people *who have heard about the SYP* has remained constant at 22%. A similar, if less pronounced, pattern emerged amongst school pupils: a drop from 48% in 2005 to 30% in 2007 amongst those *who have never heard of the SYP* and a slight rise in those *who have heard of it*: from 20% to 24%. The survey also tried to elicit perceptions of how well the Scottish Youth Parliament represents the views of 14-25 year-olds. Amongst both age groups, the majority did not know (53% for school pupils and 66% for young people). However, among those who did express a view, school pupils were more positive (a total of 30% responded 'very good' and 'fairly good'; compared with 15% of those aged 17-25).

Re-visiting what makes someone a good citizen, **voting** at elections has also decreased in importance over the years and was the characteristic with the lowest rating in 2007. However, just under half of all respondents said that they thought it was **important to vote**. Young women were more inclined to agree with this statement, while respondents from the most deprived areas were less inclined to agree with it.

Respondents were also asked whether or not they agreed that the **Scottish Parliament** had made a real difference to life in Scotland. Although a majority said they neither agreed nor disagreed or simply did not know (27% of school pupils and 45% of young people neither agreed nor disagreed; 28% of school pupils and 11% of young people did not know), the proportion of respondents who agreed has increased over the years: amongst those aged 11-16, the proportion of those who agreed has risen from 11% in 2003 to 21% in 2007; for those aged 17-25, it's gone up from 7% in 2003 to 13% in 2007.

Identity and attitudes to the future

The study attempted to get an understanding of children and young people's identity and their attitudes to the future.

Around 70% of all respondents said they were **proud to be Scottish**. For 17-25 year-olds, this represented an increase of 14 percentage points since 2005. When asked whether or not they agreed with the statement '**I consider myself as European**', overall, more disagreed than agreed. Among school pupils, roughly the same amount agreed and disagreed (27% versus 30%) and slightly more agreed in 2007 than they had done in 2005 (27% versus 23%). Amongst young people on the other hand, a much greater proportion disagreed than agreed with the statement. Moreover, there was a big drop in the proportion of 17-25 who agreed (from 32% in 2005 to 18% in 2007).

In terms of expectations regarding **school qualifications**, levels remained pretty consistent with the previous sweep: nearly 6 in 10 school pupils expected to leave school with Highers at least; a smaller, but slowly increasing proportion (44%) said they would achieve Advanced Highers. Expected attainment level and deprivation were strongly correlated; not only were there lower attainment expectations in the most deprived areas, but the gap between the most and the least deprived areas widened with higher qualification levels (from a difference of 9 percentage points at Standard Grade up to 23 percentage points at Advanced Higher). Overall, respondents from rural areas seemed to have higher expectations, while those from single parent families had lower expectations. Two thirds of school pupils thought it was very or fairly likely they would go on to **university/college**, but only 40% of respondents aged 17-25 were in higher/further education.

Linked to the above, a majority of respondents felt they had good **job prospects** and a relatively small, but nonetheless increasing, proportion agreed with the statement 'there is little chance for people like me to make it in life' (18% of 17-25 agreed with this in 2007, up from 10% in 2003). Amongst 17-25 year-olds, the proportion who felt they had good job prospects (52%) was consistent with 2003, but represented a drop of 9 percentage points since 2005. Moreover, respondents from the most deprived areas were less likely to agree with this than those in the least deprived areas (44% compared to 62% for school pupils, and 39% versus 58% for young people). On whether or not they agreed with the statement 'if I had the chance, I would leave Scotland', a minority agreed and an increasing proportion disagreed (from 36% in 2003 to 46% in 2007 for 11-16 – less marked amongst 17-25: from 32% to 36%).

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