

ARK Research Report



**Attitudes to Language Learning and
Internationalisation.**

Results from 2016 Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey

Dirk Schubotz



March 2017

List of Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| List of Tables and Figures..... | 3 |
| Acknowledgment | 4 |
| 1. Background to the Study..... | 5 |
| <i>Introduction</i> | 5 |
| 2. Methodology..... | 5 |
| <i>2016 Young Life and Times (YLT) survey</i> | 5 |
| Survey questions..... | 6 |
| 3. Results..... | 9 |
| <i>Expectations after Brexit</i> | 9 |
| <i>YLT respondents' preferences in relation to Brexit</i> | 9 |
| <i>Ambition to go abroad for learning or work</i> | 12 |
| <i>Internationalisation ambitions and Brexit</i> | 16 |
| <i>Future language learning</i> | 15 |
| 4. Conclusions | 19 |
| References..... | 21 |

List of Tables and Figures

List of Tables

| | | Page |
|----------------|---|------|
| Table 1 | Proportion of 16-year olds (in %) considering going abroad for study, learning and work after finishing school. By survey year | 13 |
| Table 2 | Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By school type attended and survey year. | 15 |
| Table 3 | Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By place of living and survey year. | 16 |
| Table 4 | 2016 YLT respondents' ambition to study, learn or work abroad, by their attitudes to Brexit | 16 |
| Table 5 | 2016 YLT respondents' ambition to study, learn or work abroad, by their expectations of Brexit and family financial wellbeing | 17 |
| Table 6 | YLT respondents' ambition to learn another language. By rurality/urbanicity and survey year | 18 |

List of Figures

| | | Page |
|-----------------|--|------|
| Figure 1 | Do you think you will personally be better-off outside the EU? (%) | 8 |
| Figure 2 | Do you think you will personally be better-off outside the EU? By national identity (%) | 9 |
| Figure 3 | Do you think you will personally be better-off outside the EU? By family financial background (%) | 9 |
| Figure 4 | If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16-year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By religious background (%) | 10 |
| Figure 5 | If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16-year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By financial background (%) | 11 |
| Figure 6 | If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16-year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By rurality/urbanicity (%) | 12 |
| Figure 7 | If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16-year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By national identity (%) | 13 |
| Figure 8 | Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By gender (%) | 14 |

| | | |
|------------------|---|----|
| Figure 9 | Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By religious background and study year (%) | 15 |
| Figure 10 | Proportion of respondents saying learning an additional language is useful for the following purposes... By survey year (%) | 18 |
| Figure 11 | YLT respondents' ambition to learn another language. By how respondents would vote in a Brexit referendum (%) | 19 |

Acknowledgement

This report was compiled by Dr Dirk Schubotz, YLT Director. The 2016 YLT team also included:

- Dr Martina McKnight (Research Fellow)
- Dr Grace Kelly (Research Fellow)
- Dr Katrina Lloyd (YLT Management Team)
- Mr Mike McCool (ARK IT Director)
- Mrs Eileen Gray (Administrative support)

Without the contribution of the named ARK staff members this project could not have been completed. We are grateful to the 16-year olds who completed the survey and to the British Council Office (NI) for providing the funding for this study.

1. Background to the Study

Introduction

In 2015, on behalf of and funded by the British Council, ARK undertook a mixed methods study among 16-year olds in Northern Ireland to elicit their attitudes to language learning and internationalisation (Schubotz and McCartan, 2016).

In 2016 a referendum was held on whether or not the UK should leave the European Union. A majority of people who voted in the referendum were in favour of 'Brexit', and preparations are now under way to trigger Article 50 of the EU's 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which then initiates a two-year exit process for the UK from the EU.

The British Council expressed an interest in finding out how the EU referendum vote may impact on young people's intentions to leave Northern Ireland in order to work or study abroad, and what implications this may have for their ambitions to learn another language. The YLT survey provided a unique opportunity to compare 16-year olds' internationalisation ambitions in the months before and after the Brexit referendum. Thus, funding was provided by the British Council to repeat the questions asked in the 2015 YLT survey (ARK 2016) on language learning and internationalisation. In addition, two questions were asked in relation to young people's attitudes to Brexit and their anticipations of the impact that Brexit would have on their personal lives.

2. Methodology

2016 Young Life and Times (YLT) Survey

YLT is a postal survey conducted annually by ARK among 16-year olds in Northern Ireland (with optional online and phone completion where respondents prefer this). YLT has collected social attitudes data among young people in Northern Ireland since 2003. The survey sample for the YLT survey is taken from the Child Benefit Register (CBR). ARK receives the names and addresses of eligible YLT respondents directly from HMRC. The CBR provides an almost perfect random sample of 16-year olds for the YLT survey. Permission to access the addresses of recipients of the Child Benefit for the YLT survey was granted to ARK after a statutory instrument and explanatory memorandum was approved by Parliament in Westminster in 2004. Data security and confidentiality are subject to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between HMRC and ARK. HMRC demands highest standards of data security which form part of a service level agreement signed between ARK and HMRC.

Fieldwork for the 2016 YLT survey was undertaken from November to December 2016. All young people who celebrated their 16th birthday during February and March of 2016 were invited to take part in the survey. They were sent an information sheet on the study to their home addresses and were given an opportunity to opt out at this stage. Those not opting out, received further information and a paper questionnaire about two weeks later. A link to an online version of the survey was also forwarded, in case young people preferred to complete the survey online. Each respondent was

allocated a unique identifier, which prevented duplicate completions. Incentives were given to the first 100 online respondents (£10 shopping voucher each) and a prize draw to the total value of £500 was also offered to everyone who participated in YLT either online or by completing the paper version of the survey. Data input was contracted out to an independent company. In total, in 2016 there were 3,513 eligible respondents.

Survey Questions

The following questions were asked in relation to language learning and 16-year olds' ambitions to learn, study or work abroad. These two questions had also been asked in the 2015 YLT survey.

When you finish school/college in Northern Ireland would you consider:

(Please tick ONE box in each row)

| | Yes | No | I don't know |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ...Studying outside the UK | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| ...Doing an apprenticeship/internship outside the UK | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| ...Working outside the UK | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |

Thinking of the future, do you think that learning an additional language will be valuable for you?

(Please tick ALL that apply)

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Yes, for study | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Yes, for work | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Yes, for travel/leisure | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Yes, for something else | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |

(Please write in)

No, I don't think I will need any language other than English 1

The two questions asked on Brexit were the following:

Finally, in May 2016, a referendum was held on whether or not the UK should leave the European Union ('Brexit').

Thinking of your own situation, do you think that you personally will be better-off or worse-off outside the EU?

(Please tick ONE box only)

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Definitely better-off | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Probably better-off | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Probably worse-off | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| Definitely worse-off | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

And if the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16-year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? (Please tick ONE box only)

- ✓
- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| I would vote to leave | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| I would vote to remain | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| I wouldn't vote | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| I would not be eligible to vote | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| I don't want to say | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| I don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |
-

Each annual YLT survey includes background variables, including information on:

- Respondents' religious, ethnic and community background, including the religious composition of their neighbourhood;
- Their current economic and educational status, including the type of school most recently attended and the religious composition of this school;
- Their gender and their sexual orientation;
- Whether or not respondents have a limiting long-term illness or disability;
- Whether or not respondents have caring responsibilities, and whether or not they live with both of their parents, one parent or none;
- Whether they live in urban or rural areas.

In addition, YLT also collects information on respondents' family financial background, which is a proxy variable for their family's socio-economic status. This information is self-reported by respondents in line with what is regarded as best practice for survey research of this nature with children and young people. We also calculate a District Council variable.

The questions asked on behalf of the British Council were first analysed by background variables. Comparisons were then made between the 2015 and 2016 survey years. For the questions on language learning and internationalisation. Finally, we tried to establish whether or not any differences were attributable to 16-year olds' attitudes to Brexit.

Other questions in the 2016 YLT survey focused on community relations, respect and a sense of belonging (funded by the Executive Office), culture (funded by the Improving Children's Lives Initiative at Queen's University Belfast), Sport (funded by Sport NI) and education (funded by the Department of Education).

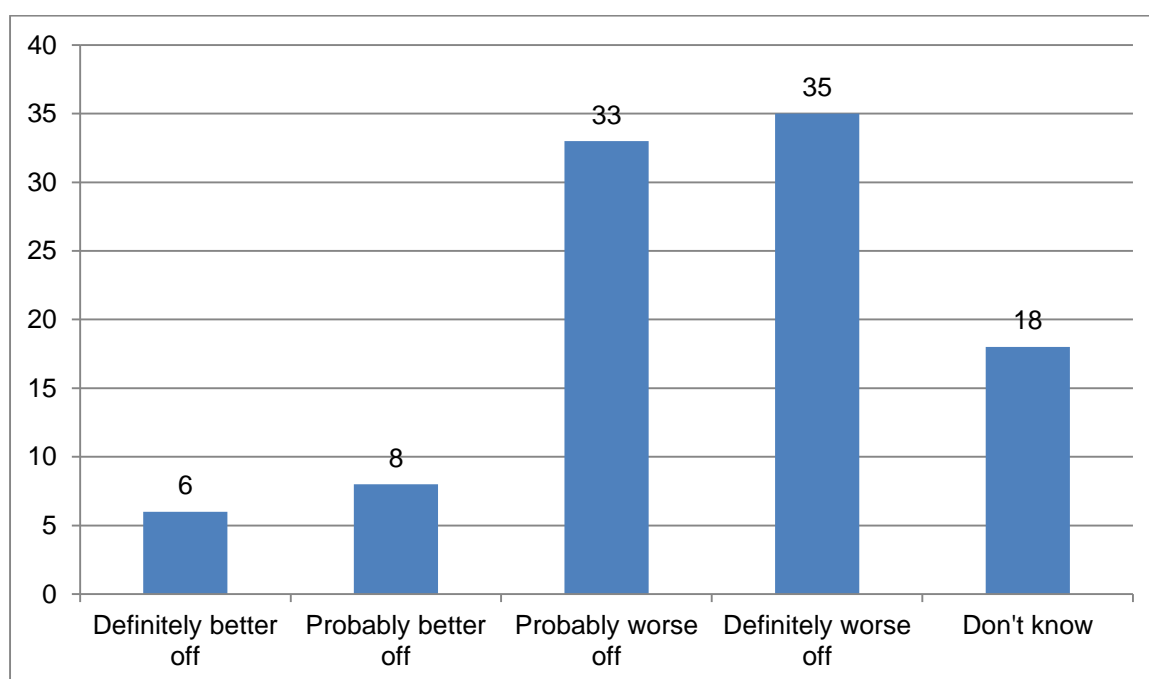
3. Results

YLT survey data was collected from November to December 2016. 1,009 16-year olds completed the survey which represents a response rate of 29%.

Expectations after Brexit

Respondents in the 2016 survey were asked whether they thought that they were personally better-off outside the EU. Figure 1 shows that over two thirds of YLT respondents felt that they would personally be worse-off outside the EU. Only 14 percent felt that they would be better-off.

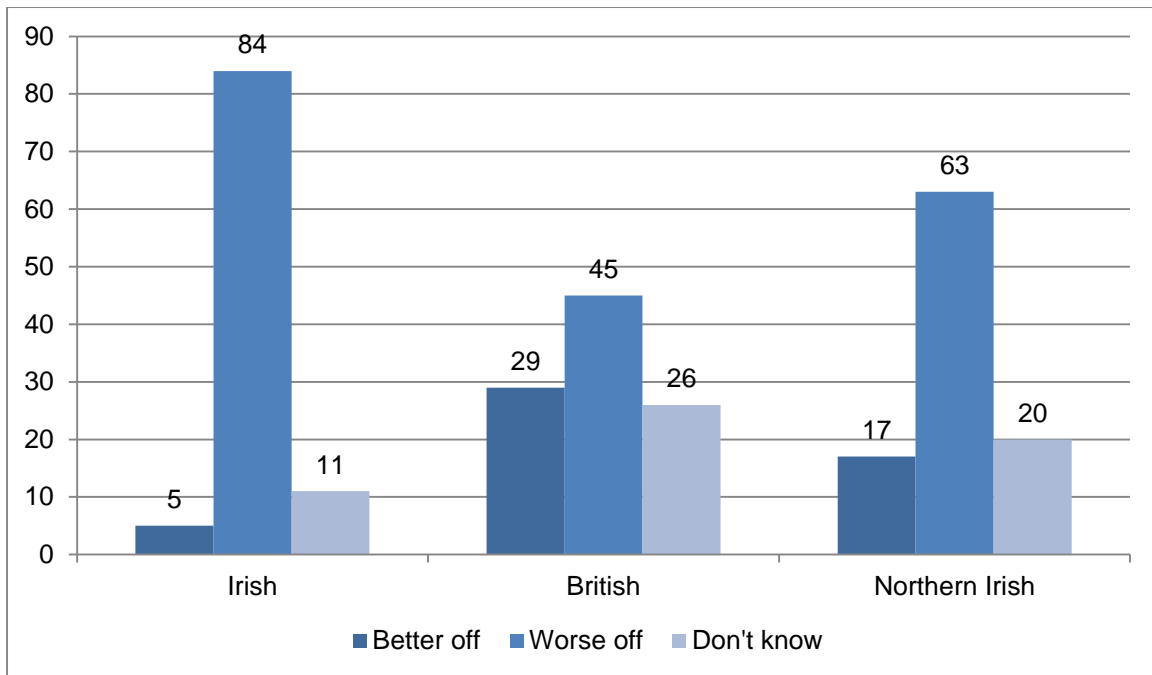
Figure 1: Do you think you will personally be better-off outside the EU? (%)



We found statistically highly significant differences in relation respondents' religious background, their national identity and their family-financial wellbeing. One quarter of Protestants thought they would be financially 'definitely' or 'probably' better-off outside the EU. Only six percent of Catholics and 14 percent of respondents with no religious background felt the same.

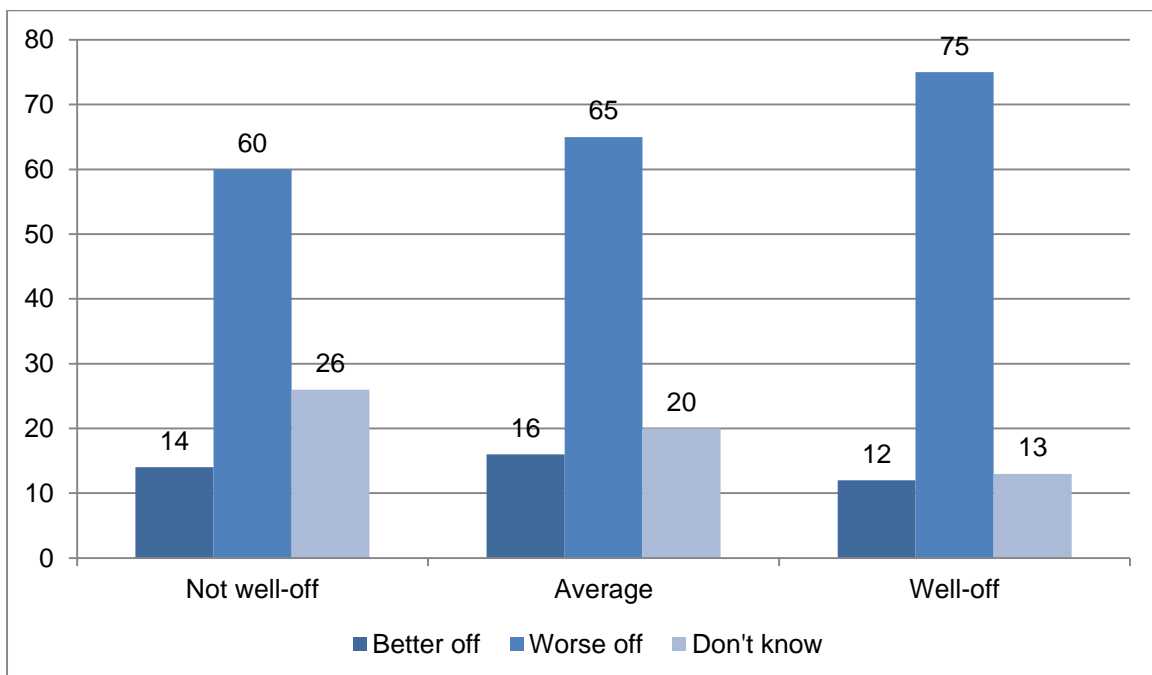
Irish national identity was most strongly related to the anticipation of being personally worse-off outside the EU. However, although YLT respondents who identified as British were much more likely to say that they would probably or definitely be better-off outside the EU, still fewer than one in three of these 16-year olds (29%) thought so (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Do you think you will personally be better-off outside the EU? By national identity (%)



Respondents from financially not well-off backgrounds were significantly less likely to say that they would be worse-off outside the EU than respondents from average and well-off backgrounds ($p=0.003$). Not well-off respondents also expressed the highest level of personal uncertainty about a future outside the EU (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Do you think you will personally be better-off outside the EU? By family financial background (%)



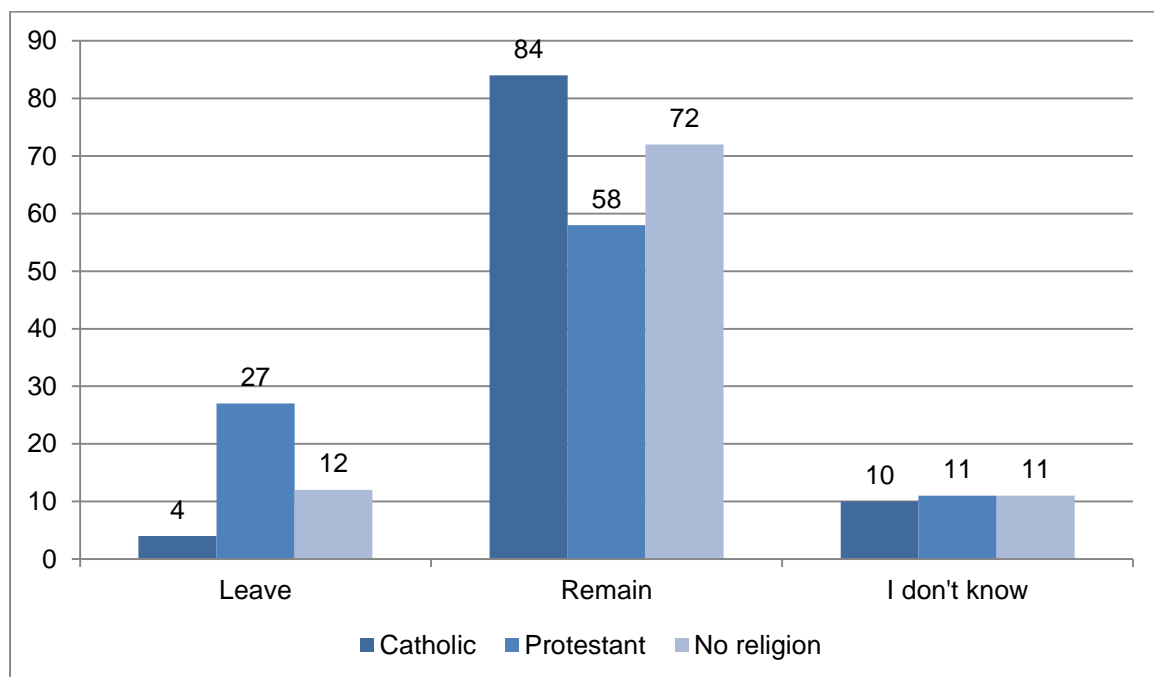
One of the concerns often expressed by pro-EU campaigners was that one of the effects of Brexit could be a loss of international and European laws that protect minority groups. There is limited scope to test this in YLT, but the data show that same-sex attracted respondents (80%) were significantly more likely to say than opposite-sex attracted respondents (67%) that they thought they would be personally worse-off outside the EU. Disabled and non-disabled respondents and males and females did not differ in their assessment of this.

YLT respondents' preferences in relation to Brexit

Responding to the question of how they would vote if they were permitted to do so, 72 percent of respondents said they would vote for the UK to remain within the EU; 13 percent said they would vote for the UK to leave the EU, whilst 11 percent said they did not know how they would vote. Only two percent said they would not vote, whilst the remaining respondents either said they would not be eligible to vote or they said that they did not want to say how they would vote.

Again, religious and national identity as well as family-financial background were the strongest predictors for how 16-year olds would have voted, if they had been given an opportunity. However, Figure 4 shows that whilst Protestants were significantly more likely than their Catholic counterparts to say that they would vote for the UK to leave the EU, there was still a majority among 16-year old Protestants who would prefer the UK to remain in the EU; in fact, Protestant 16-year olds were still more than twice as likely to say that they wanted the UK to remain in the EU than to say that they wanted the UK to leave.

Figure 4: If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16 year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By religious background (%)

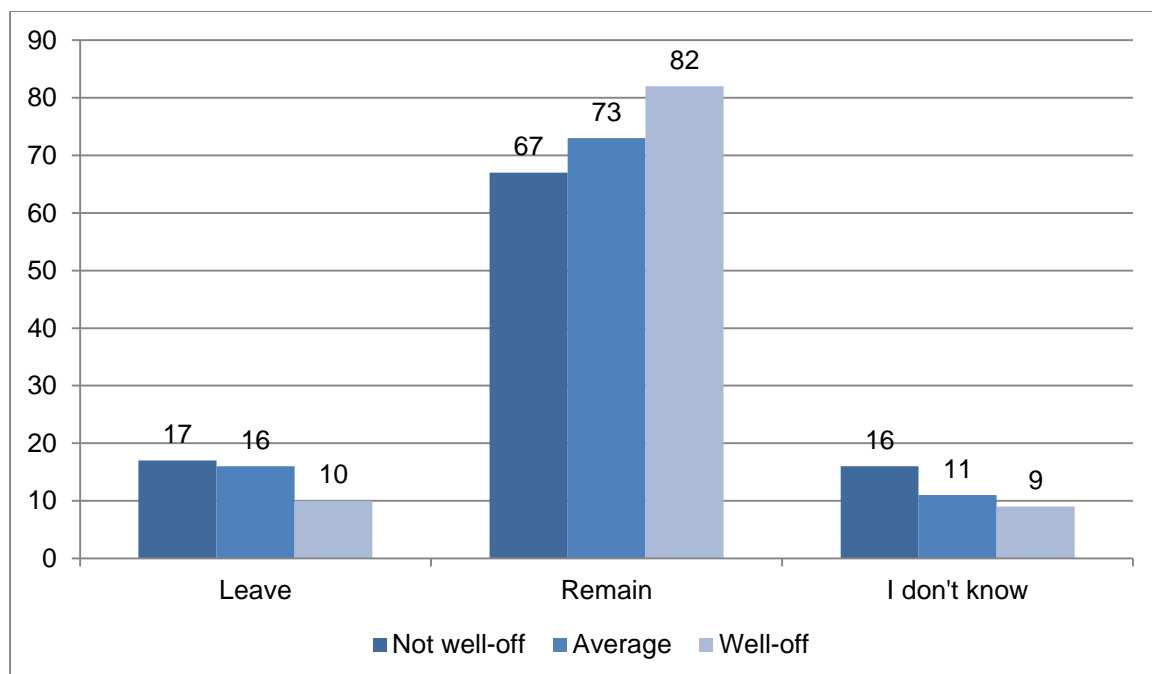


A further breakdown by school type attended shows that 41 percent of Protestants attending secondary schools said that they would vote for the UK to leave the EU, twice the proportion of Protestants who attended grammar schools (21%) who expressed this view. But even among Protestants in secondary schools, a higher proportion said that they would vote to remain in the EU (45%).

In total, three quarters (76%) of YLT respondents who attended grammar schools thought they would personally be 'definitely worse off' outside the EU, but just over half (51%) of respondents who attended formally integrated schools or Colleges for Further and Higher Education (52%) and six in ten (60%) respondents from secondary schools thought this. This difference between grammar school students and students in other types of school was statistically highly significant ($p=0.000$). Eighty-one percent of those attending schools with exclusively or predominantly Catholic pupils felt they would probably or definitely be worse-off personally outside the EU compared to just 56 percent of those attending schools with predominantly or exclusively Protestant pupils.

Living in predominantly Protestant areas did not have any effect on 16-year old Catholics' views on how they would vote, however, Protestants who lived in predominantly Catholic areas were more likely to say they would vote to remain in the EU (79%) than Protestants who lived in predominantly Protestant areas (56%).

Figure 5: If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16 year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By financial background (%)

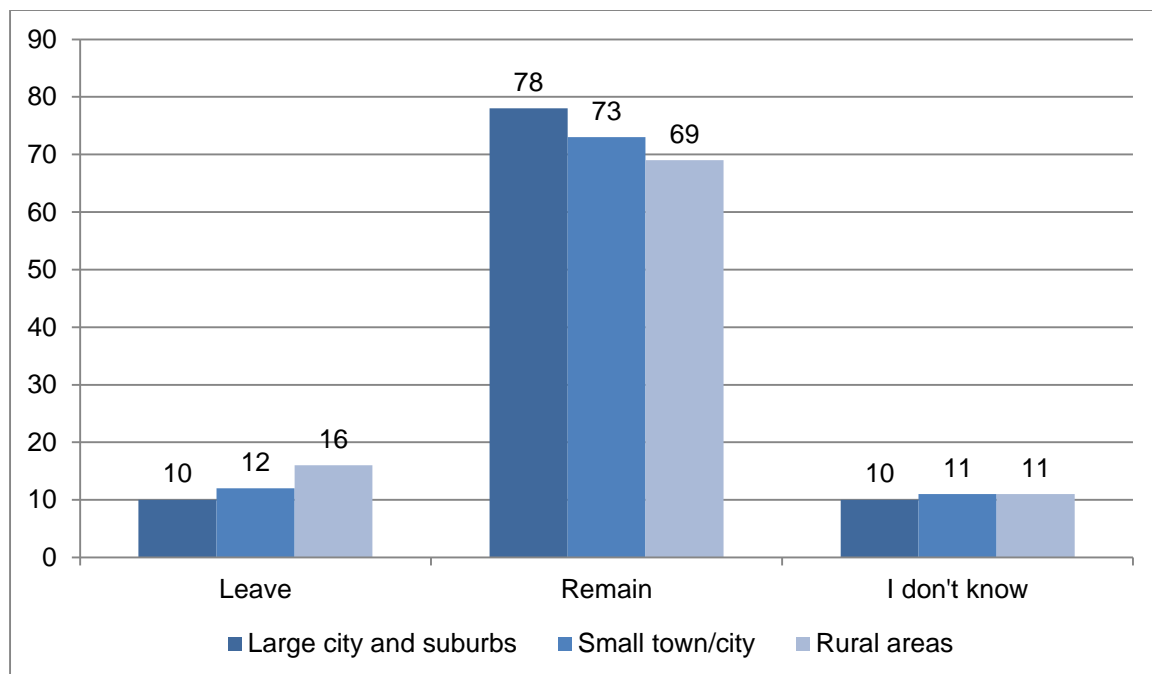


Being from financially well-off backgrounds was also associated with the strongest preference for a 'remain' vote, as Figure 5 shows. However, even among 16-year olds who said that their families were financially 'not at all well-off' a majority of 58 percent said they would vote for the UK to remain in the EU. YLT only found a

majority for a leave vote among Protestants who said they came from not-well-off families, with 59 percent of these YLT respondents saying that they would vote for the UK to leave the EU. However, only 42 percent of these YLT respondents said that they felt they would personally ‘definitely’ be better-off outside the EU, the same proportion who felt that they would probably be worse-off.

Respondents from urban and rural areas varied slightly in their opinions on Brexit, as Figure 6 shows, with respondents from urban areas being a little more likely to say that they would vote to remain in the EU, although statistically this difference was insignificant. Forty-three percent of respondents from urban areas (city and suburbs) thought they would ‘definitely be worse-off’ personally outside the EU compared with just 30 percent of respondents from rural areas.

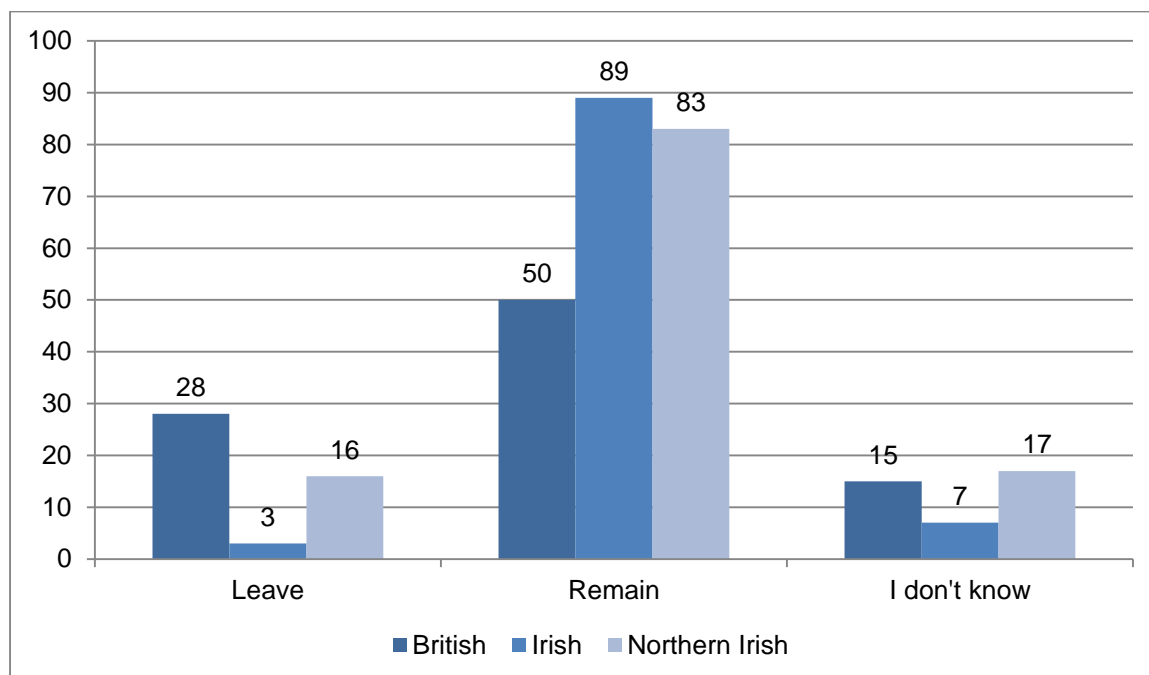
Figure 6: If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16 year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By rurality/urbanicity (%)



National identity was strongly ($p=0.000$) related to a difference in attitudes towards Brexit as Figure 7 shows. Those identifying as British were almost ten times as likely as those identifying as Irish to say they would vote to leave the EU. Still half of those 16-year olds identifying as British would vote for the UK to stay in the EU. Over eight in ten respondents who identified as Northern Irish also preferred the UK to stay in the EU.

Overall the results on the questions around the Brexit vote show clearly that Protestants and those identifying as British, especially those from not well-off backgrounds were most likely to be in favour of Brexit and anticipated an improvement of their personal circumstances as a result of Brexit.

Figure 7: If the Brexit referendum was held again tomorrow and 16 year olds were entitled to vote, how would you vote? By national identity (%)



Ambition to go abroad for learning or work

As in the 2015 YLT survey, the first question asked focused on 16-year olds' desires to live abroad for work, study or apprenticeship. Of particular interest in the 2016 survey was to explore how the new macro-political climate after the Brexit referendum might affect young people's plans.

Table 1: Proportion of 16-year olds (in %) considering going abroad for study, learning and work after finishing school. By survey year

| | % | | | | | |
|------------|-------|------|------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| | Study | | Doing an apprenticeship/internship | | Work | |
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Yes | 57 | 49 | 44 | 31 | 62 | 52 |
| No | 25 | 32 | 32 | 44 | 18 | 25 |
| Don't know | 18 | 19 | 24 | 25 | 20 | 24 |

Table 1 compares the plans of 2015 and 2016 YLT respondents. The Table shows that the proportion of respondents who said they considered going abroad to study, do an apprenticeship or work was significantly smaller in 2016 than in 2015. This drop in interest to go abroad was highest in relation to apprenticeships/internships (12%) and lowest, but still statistically significant, in relation to studying (8%).

Figure 8 suggests that the decrease in 16-year olds' ambitions to go abroad is predominantly due to a significantly decreased willingness among females to do so. As in 2015, female respondents in 2016 were more likely to say they considered going abroad for studying than male respondents, however, the difference between males and females was much smaller in 2016 than in 2015, as Figure 8 shows. Significantly, there was an 18 percentage point drop from 2015 to 2016 among females saying they were considering to go abroad to do an apprenticeship. In fact, male YLT respondents in 2016 were now just as likely as their female counterparts (31% each) to say that they were considering to go abroad for an apprenticeship. In 2016, males were now also slightly more likely than females to say that that they considered going abroad to work.

Figure 8: Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By gender (%)

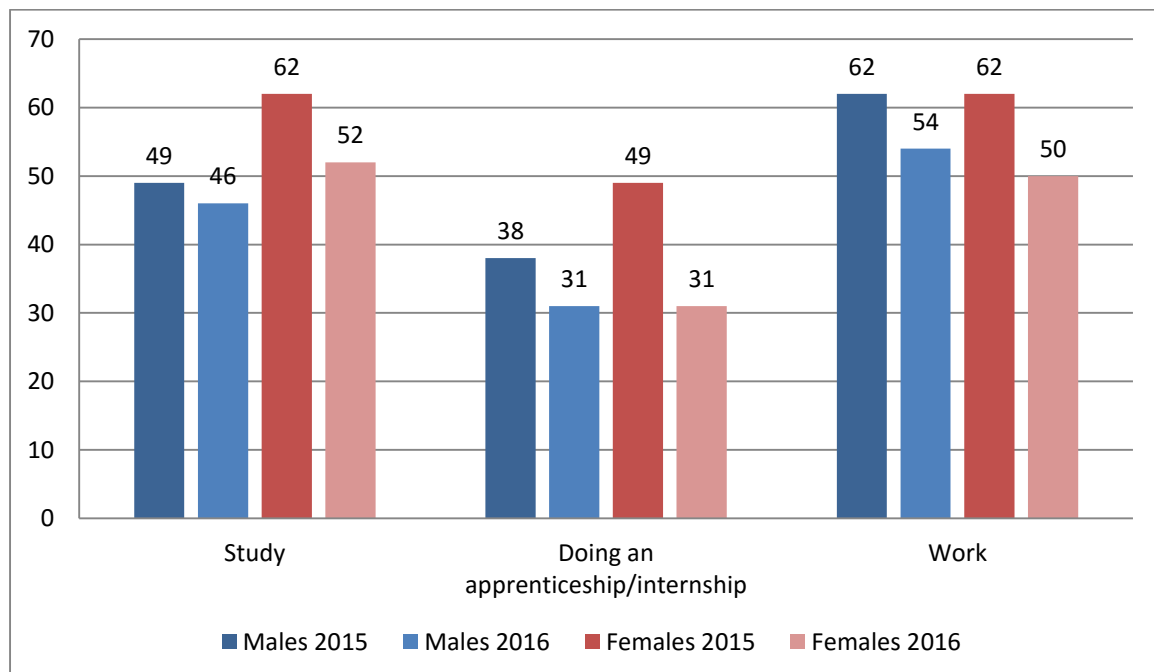


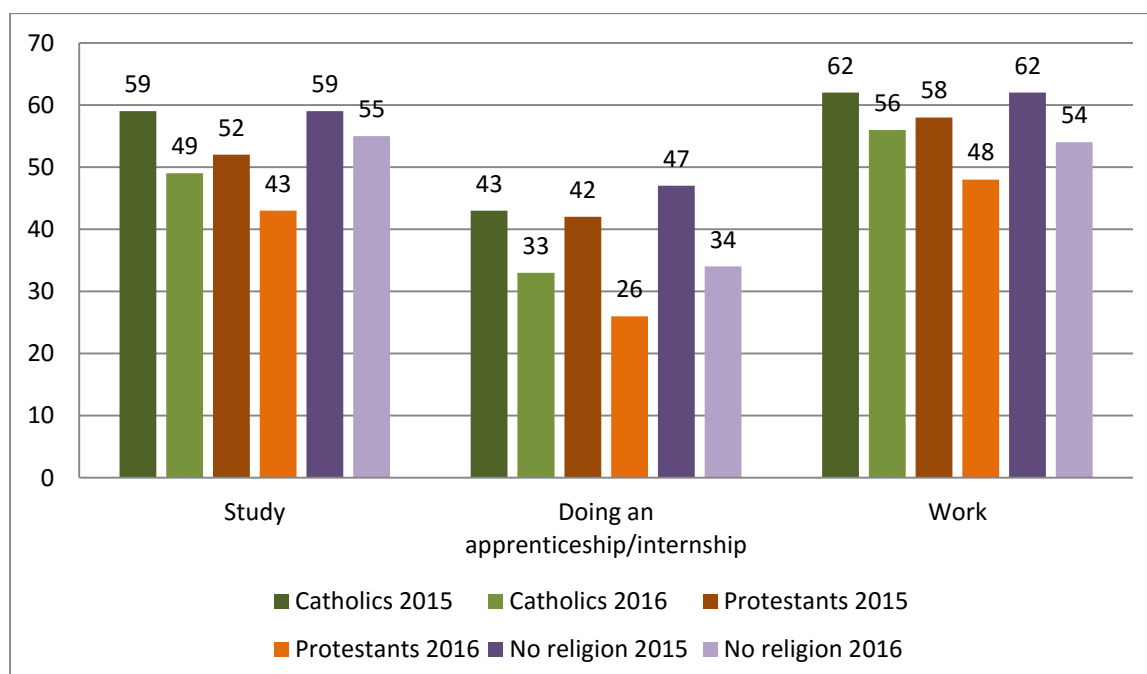
Table 2 provides a similar breakdown of the survey results by the type of school respondents attended. The Table shows that across all main school types attended, fewer 16-year olds in 2016 than in 2015 expressed the intention to go abroad for study apprenticeship or work. The only exception is an insignificant increase among FE College students in 2016 who said they considered studying abroad. Whilst in 2015 still almost half (47%) of all grammar school students said they considered going abroad to do an apprenticeship or internship, only one third (33%) did say this in 2016. The decrease was even larger among those attending formally integrated schools.

Table 2: Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By school type attended and survey year.

| | % | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|------|------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| | Study | | Doing an apprenticeship/internship | | Work | |
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Grammar | 63 | 55 | 47 | 33 | 68 | 56 |
| Secondary | 48 | 44 | 39 | 30 | 53 | 46 |
| Formally Integrated | 57 | 43 | 43 | 27 | 61 | 54 |
| FE Colleges | 40 | 42 | 41 | 28 | 62 | 52 |

Figure 9 shows that both Catholic and Protestant respondents as well as those with no religious backgrounds were less likely in 2016 than in 2015 to say they considered going abroad to study, work or learn and apprenticeship. Overall, the decrease in ambitions to go abroad was largest among Protestants. The ambition to study abroad was least reduced among those with no religious background (4%) whilst the ambition to do an apprenticeship abroad was most reduced among Protestants (16%).

Figure 9: Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By religious background and study year (%)



On the basis of the 2015 YLT survey findings in our previous report (Schubotz and McCartan 2016) we had reported that respondents from 'rural' backgrounds were less likely to say that they considered leaving the UK for study, apprenticeship, or

work than respondents from ‘urban’ backgrounds. This trend was confirmed in 2016, although the decrease in the ambition to go abroad was particularly noticeable among those who live in urban areas, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3: Proportion of 16-year olds considering going abroad for study, apprenticeship or work. By place of living and survey year.

| | % | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------|------|------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| | Study | | Doing an apprenticeship/internship | | Work | |
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 |
| Large City and suburbs | 69 | 51 | 47 | 33 | 68 | 56 |
| Small town | 56 | 51 | 44 | 33 | 62 | 55 |
| Countryside | 53 | 46 | 43 | 28 | 60 | 47 |

Internationalisation ambitions and Brexit

Table 4 shows that in the first instance, there appears to be a significant relationship between attitudes to Brexit and YLT respondents’ ambition to go abroad. Over half of those who said they would vote for the UK to remain in the EU if given the chance, and who feel they will be worse-off personally after Brexit, say that they intend to study or work abroad. This compares with around four in ten of those who say they would vote for the UK to leave the EU and who feel that they will be personally better-off after Brexit. All of these relationships were statistically significant.

Table 4: 2016 YLT respondents’ ambition to study, learn or work abroad, by their attitudes to Brexit

| | % | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--------|------------|---|-----------|------------|
| | How would you vote in the Brexit referendum? | | | Think after Brexit they will be personally... | | |
| | Leave | Remain | Don’t know | Better-off | Worse-off | Don’t know |
| Study | 38 | 53 | 46 | 40 | 54 | 40 |
| Apprenticeship | 24 | 33 | 29 | 25 | 34 | 25 |
| Work | 45 | 56 | 42 | 47 | 56 | 42 |

When family financial wellbeing is taken into consideration, the results become somewhat clearer (Table 5). Well-off respondents who thought they would be worse-off after Brexit were a little more likely to say that they would consider studying, learning and working abroad than average well-off and not-well off respondents.

However, these differences were statistically insignificant. Interesting is the finding that six in ten (60%) of those who came from financially well-off families and who thought Brexit would leave them personally better-off, would consider working abroad, whereas only 32 percent of those from not-well off family contexts who thought they would gain from Brexit also wanted to work outside the UK. Statistically significant was the difference in intentions to work or study abroad among average well-off respondents between those who thought they would be better-off outside the EU and those who thought they would be worse-off ($p=0.001$).

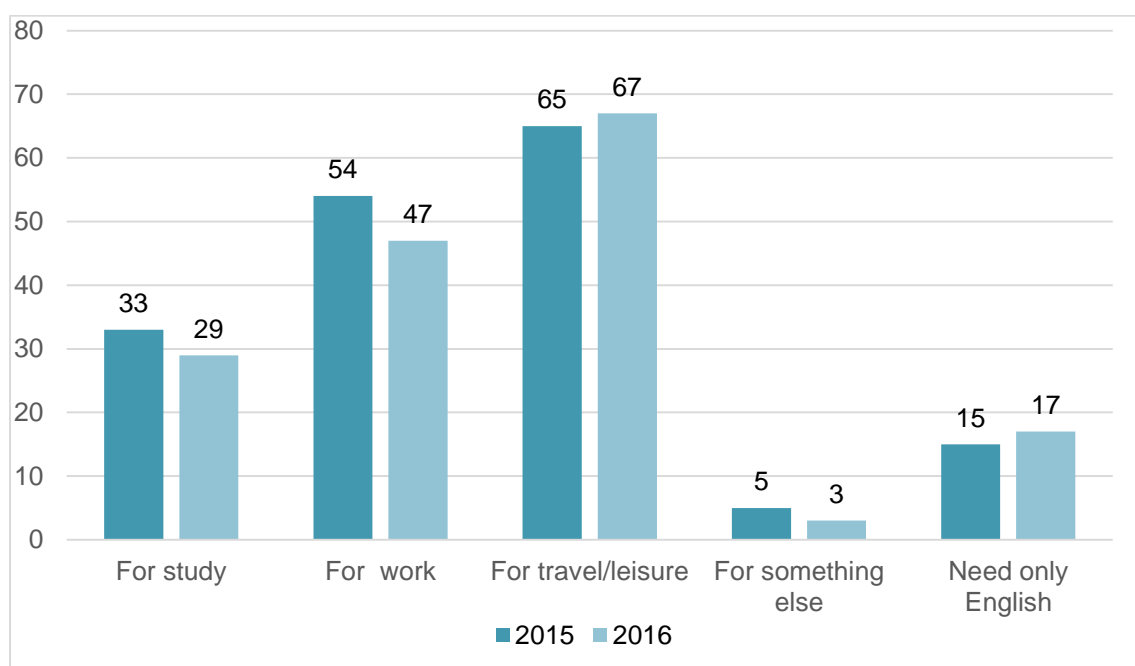
Table 5: 2016 YLT respondents' ambition to study, learn or work abroad, by their expectations of Brexit and family financial wellbeing

| | | % | | |
|--|--------------|--|-----------|------------|
| | | Thinks after Brexit they will be personally... | | |
| | | Better-off | Worse-off | Don't know |
| Consider studying outside the UK | | | | |
| | Not well-off | 47 | 54 | 42 |
| | Average | 42 | 53 | 40 |
| | Well-off | 38 | 58 | 51 |
| Consider doing an apprenticeship or internship outside the UK | | | | |
| | Not well-off | 16 | 35 | 25 |
| | Average | 31 | 32 | 22 |
| | Well-off | 22 | 37 | 37 |
| Consider working outside the UK | | | | |
| | Not well-off | 32 | 54 | 34 |
| | Average | 47 | 55 | 40 |
| | Well-off | 60 | 57 | 56 |

Future language learning

As in 2015, YLT Respondents were asked whether they felt that learning an additional language in future would be beneficial for them. Figure 10 shows that there has been very little change in attitudes to language learning in 2016 compared to the previous year. The proportion of those respondents who said that they would need another language to study or work abroad was slightly smaller in 2016 than in 2015, but that decrease was statistically not significant.

Figure 10: Proportion of respondents saying learning an additional language is useful for the following purposes... By survey year (%).



In 2015, 35 percent of those intending to go to university said they thought learning another language would be useful for studying. In 2016 this figure was 33 percent.

In 2016, females remain slightly more likely than males to say that an additional language would be useful, but unlike in 2015, the gender difference between males and females was not significant. The exception is that in 2016 males (20%) remain significantly more likely to say than females (15%) that they did not need another language apart from English ($p=0.000$).

With regard to respondents' background, if anything, in 2016 respondents differed less than in 2015. Family financial wellbeing was statistically not at all related to language learning ambitions in 2016.

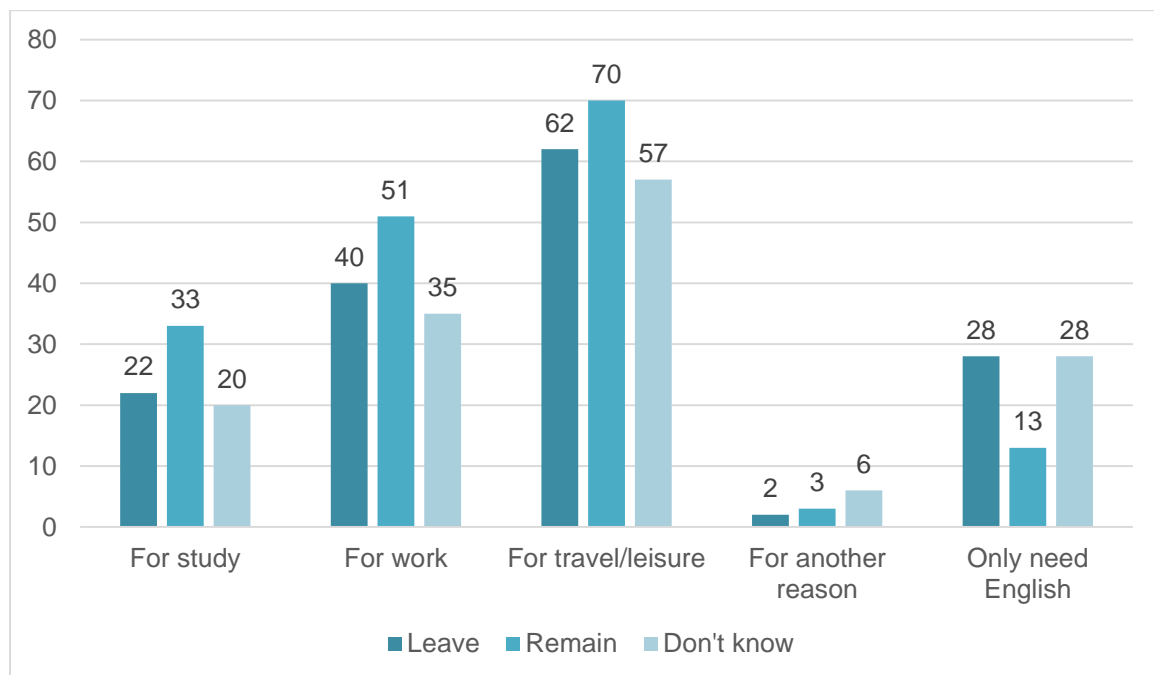
Table 6: YLT respondents' ambition to learn another language. By rurality/urbanicity and survey year

| | % | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------|------------|------|-------|------|
| | Urban | | Small town | | Rural | |
| | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 | 2015 | 2016 |
| For study | 36 | 36 | 34 | 31 | 30 | 24 |
| For work | 59 | 50 | 56 | 46 | 51 | 47 |
| For leisure/travel | 69 | 73 | 67 | 68 | 62 | 63 |
| For something else | 5 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Need only English | 11 | 12 | 13 | 17 | 19 | 20 |

A rural background remains significantly related to a lesser ambition to learn languages (Table 6). As already discussed in the previous report (Schubotz and McCartan 2016), the likely reason is that young people who grow up in rural areas may be more closely tied to their location, for example if they are expected to help on a family farm.

Apart from gender and rurality, the only other significant difference was that 23 percent of Protestants but only 13 percent of Catholics said that they only needed English as a language ($p=0.002$). This difference is perhaps related to attitudes to the Irish language rather than any other language as Catholics and Protestants did not differ in their attitudes to learning languages for study, work and travel.

Figure 11: YLT respondents' ambition to learn another language. By how respondents would vote in a Brexit referendum (%)



Whilst background variables made little difference to 16-year olds' ambitions to learn other languages, attitudes to Brexit did (Figure 11). Respondents who said they were in favour of the UK to remain in the EU were significantly more likely to say that they would want to learn another language and significantly less likely to say that they would only need English in future. These results were identical when the preference to remain in the EU was replaced with the anticipation of being worse-off personally after Brexit and the preference for a leave vote was replaced with the anticipation of being better-off personally as a result of Brexit.

A further breakdown by school type attended shows that across all school types attended only respondents who thought they will be personally better-off after the Brexit vote felt they did not need to learn another language apart from English. On the other hand, respondents attending formally integrated schools and secondary schools who said they will be worse-off personally after the Brexit vote were more likely to say that they intend to learn another language for work, study and travel. This difference was statistically highly significant.

4. Conclusions

Fieldwork for the 2015 YLT survey was undertaken around six months before the Brexit referendum, whilst fieldwork for the 2016 survey started six months after the referendum. Thus the 2016 YLT survey provided a unique opportunity to ask 16-year olds who could not vote in the referendum about their attitudes to Brexit before article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty is triggered and details of the exit negotiations between the EU and the UK become clearer. The survey also provided a first opportunity to assess whether the Brexit vote is likely to impact on young people's internationalisation ambitions which are assumed to be reduced by the UK exiting the EU and the likely reduced freedom to avail of opportunities to work and study in the EU.

The 2016 YLT survey showed that the vast majority of 16-year olds in Northern Ireland oppose Brexit and assume that the UK leaving the EU will be personally damaging to them. Catholics and those identifying as Irish were significantly more in favour of remaining in the EU and are also much more likely than Protestants and those identifying as British to think that the EU exit will leave them worse-off. The opinions of those identifying as Northern Irish are much more aligned to those saying they are Irish than those saying they are British.

Not well-off respondents are more in favour of Brexit than well-off respondents. A majority for Brexit only exists among 16-year old Protestants from not-well-off backgrounds. However, even among these respondents only just four in ten thought that they will be personally better-off in a UK outside the EU. So, the claim that the Brexit referendum has created a political structure outside the EU that young people have to live with, but were not consulted on and do not actually approve of is confirmed by YLT.

Ambitions to study, learn and work abroad were weaker among 2016 YLT respondents than they were among YLT respondents one year earlier. In particular females in 2016 were much less likely to say that they wanted to go abroad than their counterparts one year earlier. In saying that, the main patterns in relation to internationalisation ambitions and language learning remained the same. It is respondents from well-off backgrounds who are most likely to say that they intend to go abroad, probably because they have the resources to do so. The outcomes of the Brexit referendum did not have as much of an impact on young people's intentions to study, learn or work outside the EU as might have been expected. Especially the well-off and not well-off respondents appear to be much more influenced by the opportunities or lack of opportunities respectively that their families' financial position provides.

The ambition to learn further languages was much stronger among those who would have voted to remain in the EU and who felt that they will be personally worse-off after the Brexit vote. This finding was statistically significant, even when school types attended were taken into account. Especially pupils at non-Grammar schools who felt that they would be worse-off after Brexit showed more interest in learning another language than their counterparts who felt they will be better-off after Brexit. This perhaps is the strongest detectable relationship between attitudes to Brexit and internationalisation ambitions.

Of course, as already stated above, the actual implications of Brexit are not yet clear at this early stage of negotiations where many details still need to be agreed. So far the Brexit outcomes may only marginally make a difference to the plans of 16-year olds, but 2016 YLT gives us a good idea that young people from more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and with lower educational achievements were most likely to favour Brexit, and this mirrors of course the results of the actual referendum result. It appears therefore that the pro-EU politicians have failed to convince the most marginalised people in the UK that the European project is of benefit to them. However, whether the UK outside the EU will be a fairer society which creates more opportunities for the most disadvantaged people, including young people, and whether the level of inequality and disadvantage for these groups will be reduced, remains to be seen.

References

ARK. *Young Life and Times Survey, 2015* [computer file]. ARK www.ark.ac.uk/ylt [distributor], May 2016.

ARK. *Young Life and Times Survey, 2016* [computer file]. ARK www.ark.ac.uk/ylt [distributor], May 2017.

Schubotz, D. and McCartan, C. (2016). *Attitudes to language learning and internationalisation. Evidence from 2015 Young Life and Times (YLT)* ARK Research Report for the British Council. Belfast: ARK. Available online at: http://www.ark.ac.uk/pdfs/Researchreports/BC_Internationalisation2015.pdf