



N E X T G E N E R A T I O N

Ireland–Northern Ireland

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In addition, we wish to pass on our gratitude to the project's advisory group, who offered important observations regarding the overall direction the study should take, and Perceptive Insight, which successfully conducted the survey fieldwork and assisted with recruitment for some of the focus groups.

This report offers an insight into the hopes and concerns of the 'Next Generation' across Ireland and Northern Ireland in this period of social and political change.

Advisory group

Tara Grace Connolly

Professor Maurice Devlin

Professor Pat Dolan

Professor Joanne Hughes

Laura Kelleher

Marie-Claire McAleer

Harry McCann

Ruth Taillon

Roger Warnock

British Council team

Christine Wilson, Director,
Next Generation Research

Mags Walsh, Director,
British Council, Ireland

Alf Desire, Director (until February
2018), British Council, Ireland

Liz McBain, Senior Programme
Manager, British Council, Ireland

Jonathan Stewart, Director,
British Council Northern Ireland

Michael Arlow, Head of Education
and Society, British Council
Northern Ireland

Naomi McAteer, Education and
Society Manager, British Council
Northern Ireland

> FOREWORDS

It is a pleasure for me to introduce the newest of our Next Generation reports. The voices of young people from across the island of Ireland are now added to those of their peers in South Africa, Kenya, Turkey and Colombia, to name just a few.

All of these are nations undergoing change – change that offers threat and opportunity in equal measure, particularly for the young.

The British Council's Next Generation series focuses on countries undergoing change, whether it's social, economic or political. It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voices and, in turn, make a contribution towards improved youth policy. That way, we can contribute to ensuring young people's voices are heard when changes are being made that will affect their lives.

The island of Ireland has seen more change than many parts of the world over the last two decades. The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement was intended to lead to a huge dividend in terms of economic opportunity and social aspiration, and it did for some, but not for all. North and south, many were and continue to be affected by the financial shock of 2008, and the political and economic decisions that followed. The changes that will result from the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU are likely to have equally profound consequences for people on both sides of the border.

Some of the participants in this research – who are all aged between 18 and 30 – were not born when the Agreement was passed. Even for those who were, the societies that they grew up in were already changing rapidly. They continue to do so, and now, the UK's departure will affect people from Northern Ireland, which will retain the UK's only land border with the EU, and Ireland, the UK's closest neighbour.

Our series, *Lives Entwined*, began in 2004 to explore the shifting relationships between Britain and Ireland. Bertie Ahern, then Taoiseach, noted how the islands' histories 'have been intricately linked through geography, trade and migration'; the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, stated: 'The blurring and re-drawing of boundaries – physical, political and cultural – between our countries has taken place many times over the centuries. Frequently, these shifts have produced tension, division and hardship'. In 2018, we again face the centuries-old question of those boundaries, and those tensions. The research in *Next Generation Ireland–Northern Ireland* – carried out by the Institute for Conflict Research – reveals in their own words some of the challenges faced by young people at this pivotal moment.

In many ways, the report's findings are worrying. Young people express dissatisfaction with their education – a thread we have also seen in Next Generation research in the UK, in Colombia and in Turkey. They fear that it is not preparing them for the

challenges they are likely to face in future. The fragility of the employment market is also a cause for concern, as is the cost of housing. This, and the pressures wrought by social media and a sense of comparison with their peers, is impacting on their mental health, and a key recommendation of this report is to address that.

While they have lost some faith in political institutions – again, mirroring results elsewhere – they are socially aware, and raise concerns over discriminatory treatment of others, especially vulnerable groups, and are keen to find ways to effect positive change in their societies.

And yet, despite these challenges, the vast majority of young people surveyed – 86 per cent – said they felt optimistic and that they feel in many ways better off than their parents' generation.

At the British Council we remain committed to supporting young people in their aspirations, and to seeking new ways to ensuring that this next generation can continue to widen their horizons, take advantage of new opportunities and make a positive contribution to this rapidly changing world.

Combined with their resilience and optimism, I believe that young people across the island of Ireland can forge a future not characterised by division, but by peaceful co-operation.

Sir Ciarán Devane,
Chief Executive, British Council

We joined the Next Generation Advisory Board because we believe it's important for older generations to understand that the issues and problems of today's youth are not the same as the issues of those that came before us.

This research was undertaken in light of the monumental changes that have taken place on our island, many of which occurred before we were born, or at least were able to comprehend what was at stake.

This includes the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, which has tangibly affected the lives of so many. Without it, our society, particularly in Northern Ireland, would continue to have suffered sustained violence, and young people would not have had the opportunities that have been enabled since.

But we are concerned about the impact of Brexit upon the Agreement and the hard-won peace, and that border communities in particular will suffer economic losses. Unlike our parents, we have never experienced a hard border on the island. But the concerns about Brexit go beyond that. As young Europeans, we have benefited immensely from our open borders, single market, and opportunities to travel and study as a member of the EU.

Anything that makes this harder does a disservice to the years spent and the work done by those who came before us with the foresight to create a better future for our generation and those that follow us. We fear that Brexit will limit our futures, our prospects and our ability to have global influence. And this may result in further 'brain drain', as increasing numbers of young people feel they must relocate in order to find job security and a bright future.

And that is a waste, because we believe – we know – that young people across the island of Ireland have a huge amount to contribute to our communities and societies, as we continue the commitment that was made to peaceful coexistence and co-operation 20 years ago, and as we face the challenges that Brexit is likely to bring.

Our generation is brimming with leaders, changemakers, creatives and entrepreneurs who are shaped and inspired by the opportunities we have been provided with, and the history that has defined our island. Yet this research highlights the myriad challenges we face, from insecure employment to lack of access to affordable housing. Importantly, it also raises awareness of the impact this is having on the mental health of our generation.

We would like policymakers and those reading this *Next Generation Ireland–Northern Ireland* research to understand the needs and concerns of the young people who call this island home. We ask that they make the effort to understand what is behind this distrust in our institutions, our feelings of disillusionment and our lack of motivation to engage with establishments that continually fail us.

We would like them to take stock of the recommendations that emanate from this research, from the provision of adequate services such as education, mental healthcare and housing, to ensuring our generation is not cut out of dialogue around the Brexit negotiations, which will have significant impact on our futures.

Importantly, we ask them to listen to us and to realise that young people know themselves and the future they want – the future they can help create – better than anyone else. The way to create strong and positively impactful policy is to engage with young people directly, and allow them to inform their work in order to create policy that is truly reflective of the needs of the next generation.

**Tara Grace Connolly (Belfast)
and Harry McCann (Dublin),**
*Next Generation Ireland–Northern
Ireland Advisory Group*

> EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young people living in Ireland and Northern Ireland currently encounter a range of diverse and significant challenges. Northern Ireland's youth have not been faced with the same degree of political violence that previous generations witnessed, yet they live in a 'post-conflict' environment that features a number of leftover problems from the region's main period of conflict. Those living in Ireland face the challenges left from the 2008 financial crash, particularly around employment and housing. In addition to these particular tests, young people right across the island of Ireland are also attempting to navigate the UK's decision to leave the EU, and its implications for their future economic prosperity, opportunities to work, study and travel across Europe, as well as the issues of the border and the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement.

Yet despite these considerable challenges and potential reasons for anxiety about their futures, young people throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland have greater access to certain opportunities than any generation that went before them. Never before has it been so easy to travel and work globally, nor

has there ever been such access to information about the rest of the world, via social media platforms and other content online.

Given this complicated range of challenges and opportunities, young people living in Ireland and Northern Ireland are at a pivotal moment, 20 years after the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, and ten years after the financial crash. It is in this context that the British Council appointed the Institute for Conflict Research to initiate *Next Generation Ireland–Northern Ireland*. The research forms part of the Next Generation series, which explores young people's attitudes and aspirations in countries undergoing change, with the objective of ensuring their voices are heard in relation to these developments.

This report is organised in accordance with the five main themes within which the questions in the survey and focus groups were formulated: education, employment, social issues, politics and looking ahead.

Points raised relate to general findings throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland, unless otherwise stated.





Education

Young people who participated in the study generally indicated dissatisfaction with their educational experiences. The majority of young people wanted to see an enhanced range of vocational opportunities made available and more appropriate support provided in the education system to help young people make strategic decisions about seeking employment or continuing education.

Employment

Given the widespread dissatisfaction with their educational experiences, it is perhaps not surprising that many participants in the study raised concerns about their current and prospective employment opportunities. Over three-quarters of the total number of respondents to the survey were concerned about a 'lack of jobs' to 'a great extent' or to 'some extent'. Participants were also significantly concerned about job security and low pay. The majority of focus group participants in both regions worried about the mental health impact of this situation on individual young people, describing feelings of depression, anger and embarrassment at not being able to secure regular employment. As a result of these different issues, many young people from both Ireland and Northern Ireland were therefore contemplating a move away in search of better job opportunities, despite having no real desire to leave.

Social issues

Participants explained that they felt that members of their generation regularly feel under enormous pressure, which it was suggested could lead to significant mental health problems. In Northern Ireland, participants were also concerned about the transgenerational impact of the region's conflict, with a number feeling that many adults who had lived through this period were damaged by the experience and without appropriate support were in

danger of passing on their experiences and feelings to their children. Lack of affordable housing was seen as a particular issue for young people in Ireland, where 88 per cent of respondents were concerned to 'a great extent' or to 'some extent'.

Regarding issues of a more global nature, concerns about Brexit were largely evenly distributed – 52 per cent of respondents in Ireland and 55 per cent of respondents in Northern Ireland were concerned to a 'great extent' or to 'some extent' about the matter. While a number of participants in the focus groups conceded that they knew little about the matter or had lost interest over time, others described concerns including a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, reduced access to services for those living close to the border, and creation of political instability in Northern Ireland.

Politics

Participants in both strands of the study demonstrated a considerable lack of faith in their relevant political institutions. This may be attributable to views expressed in the focus groups that stated the political system is overly complicated, cumbersome and bureaucratised, focused on policies that are not priorities for young people and run by people that they could not relate to.

The study further looked at how young people obtained information about politics and other matters, outside of their formal education experiences. Around three-fifths used Facebook, while the same number used TV news. Over half of the total number of participants also got their information from friends and family. While focus group participants described a significant dependence on social media as a source of information, they were conscious of needing to interrogate the validity and value of information encountered online and to be aware that it may be designed to manipulate their views.

Looking ahead

Despite the number of challenges that have been identified by young people in this report, the vast majority of survey respondents were quite optimistic about their 'life in general'. When asked to explain the reasons for this significant sense of optimism, participants generally attributed this to their own positivity, a broader sense of purpose within their generation and a general sense that 'everything will work out'.

In relation to how participants specifically felt about the current development of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the world more generally, respondents to the survey indicated levels of pessimism. Respondents in Northern Ireland were significantly less likely to feel optimistic about the way their country was going, with focus group participants citing the current lack of political leadership (in the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive), uneven development between urban and rural environments, and the potential transgenerational impact of the region's conflict.

Participants were also asked to consider whether their generation was better off than their parents' regarding a range of social issues. The responses were mixed. While the majority of participants indicated that their parents had a more clearly defined pathway than their generation – leaving school, getting a job, marrying young, buying a house and having a family – and many envied the stability and security that this brought, they also valued characteristics of modern life, particularly the greater global access to information and opportunities brought about by developments in technology.

Recommendations

Mental health

- Given the considerable pressure young people involved in this report consider themselves to be under, greater focus should be placed on supporting the mental healthcare of young people across Ireland and Northern Ireland. In the first instance, this will involve policymakers acknowledging that youth mental ill health in Ireland and Northern Ireland is perceived as reaching crisis levels.
- Acknowledging the risk of distress and anxiety in relation to exam results highlighted by the young people in this research, as well as the pressures of finding a suitably positive pathway after they leave school, schools should do more to ensure young people are supported during this period of transition, including improved mental healthcare interventions and support within the school system.
- Moving forward, universities and training colleges should also invest sufficient energy in ensuring the young people they are interacting with are being adequately supported. This could include:
 - support for young people in their early stages of moving to a new university (particularly in a new city)
 - adequate provision of mental health support structures, including ensuring they are signposted and promoted in the right form.

Preparedness

- Policymakers should reflect on the principles underpinning school systems in Ireland and Northern Ireland, to ensure education provision is appropriate to the needs of all learners.
- Innovative, creative and sympathetic careers guidance to be provided.
- Provision should aim to increase employability, while responding to the individual strengths and interests of pupils and the demands of modern society, such as the increasing necessity of international study, work and travel.

Voice and participation

- Given the low levels of trust placed in political institutions reported by young people, more readily accessible, clear and concise descriptions of how decisions are made at local, regional, national and European level should be made readily available to young people. These would help them to become more familiar with political institutions and processes.
- In Ireland, continue the introduction of the National Strategy on Young People's Participation in Decision-Making as a way to involve young people (up to 24 years of age) in decision making.
- Given the clear levels of disengagement in the formal political system by young people involved in this study, local government should consider ways to encourage youth engagement in issues that impact them.
- Elected officials should also show greater flexibility in regards how they are prepared to interact with young voters, with a sense that they need to go where young people are, such as using social media platforms.

Social inclusion and cohesion

- Leaders in the UK and Ireland should take decisive steps to counteract the growing sense of inequality that young people appear to be encountering.
- Particularly in Ireland, the rights of young renters need to be protected, and greater incentives provided for first-time buyers.
- In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education should continue to show leadership and ambition in delivering on its shared education obligations and actively work to encourage, facilitate and promote integrated education.
- Leaders and policymakers in Ireland and Northern Ireland should stay fully committed to creating an environment where the rights of minority groups and identities are properly considered and respected.
- Education providers at all stages should reinforce this, by promoting awareness and understanding.

> INTRODUCTION

Residents of Ireland and Northern Ireland have witnessed a period of considerable social and economic change in the last 20 years. Ireland experienced a period of rapid economic growth between the mid-1990s and late 2000s, when unemployment rates fell sharply and the net emigration patterns of the 1980s were reversed. During this time, known as the Celtic Tiger years, Ireland went from being one of Western Europe's poorest countries to one of its wealthiest. A combination of factors made the country an attractive prospect for foreign direct investment, including a low corporate tax rate, generous government subsidies for incoming businesses and a young and well-educated workforce, which had benefited from the EU's Structural and Cohesion funds. This period altered the demographic make-up of the country and brought about a more multicultural society.

At the same time, stability in Northern Ireland was growing following the 1998 political settlement, which brought to an end the region's conflict, ongoing since the late 1960s. The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement was adopted following separate referenda on either side of the border in May 1998. In Northern Ireland, 71.12 per cent voted in favour, while in Ireland, 94.39 per cent voted 'yes'. The Agreement established a blueprint for a power-sharing government at Stormont and the creation of additional institutions to oversee north–south and east–west relations (including the North South Ministerial Council, the British–Irish Council, the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference and the British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly). A number of human rights and equality guarantees were also laid out. A key element of the Agreement was the 'principal of consent', which recognised the legitimacy of the aspiration to a

united Ireland while also acknowledging the present wish of the majority to maintain the union, but retained the right of self-determination for the people of both Ireland and Northern Ireland, were a majority consensus to be achieved in both polities in the future.

Ireland was then hit by a serious economic downturn in 2008, in the aftermath of the global recession. The situation in Ireland was made particularly acute by a housing market bubble in the preceding years, during which banks had provided credit generously to those wishing to buy or build houses. When house prices fell sharply in the wake of the economic crash and many could not afford to repay their loans, financial institutions were imperilled and the government was forced to borrow at high interest rates to avoid their collapse. In 2018, the economy in Ireland is showing signs of recovery – again built largely on the arrival of multinationals attracted by a favourable corporate tax environment, particularly in the technology sector – Facebook, Google and PayPal, among others, have their European headquarters in Dublin. With this backdrop of economic upheaval, Ireland has also experienced significant social change. While Ireland is traditionally a firmly Catholic country, a series of scandals emerging since the late 1980s – most notably in relation to child sexual abuse by priests, abuses in mother and baby homes and forced adoptions – have shaken the church's authority. Ireland's increasing secularisation is perhaps most clearly evidenced by recent referenda results – the first in May 2015, which extended marriage equality to same-sex couples, and more recently in May 2018, which removed the eighth amendment of Ireland's constitution that had made abortion illegal under almost all conditions.

Over the same period in Northern Ireland, voting patterns became more polarised. The more moderate parties, the Ulster Unionist Party and Social Democratic Labour Party, which had played an instrumental role in securing the 1998 Agreement, became increasingly side-lined, while the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin are now routinely returned as the region's two largest parties in Assembly elections, and hold the positions of First Minister and Deputy First Minister respectively. A number of unresolved and contentious issues, left over from the 1998 Agreement, have, however, led to repeated suspensions of the Assembly in that time. The most recent attempt to resolve these matters, *A Fresh Start: the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan 2015*, looked again at aspects of dealing with the past, parading and cultural expression. Political progress in Northern Ireland has now stalled, with the Assembly suspended since January 2017 following the resignation of then leader of Sinn Féin and Deputy First Minister, the late Martin McGuinness, in response to a breakdown of trust between the two main parties. Talks to restore the Assembly continue to falter over disagreement on the creation of a standalone Irish Language Act, among other issues. Northern Ireland remains socially conservative, with the 'petition of concern,' a mechanism designed to ensure that contentious legislation can only be introduced with cross-community support, used by the DUP to block extension of equal marriage rights to the region in 2015. Unlike in the rest of the UK, access to abortion in Northern Ireland is also still heavily restricted.

These complicated matters have been accompanied by uncertainty regarding how the island of Ireland will be affected by the UK's decision to leave the EU, via the Brexit referendum. Over two years since the UK's population voted to leave, the practical impact on Ireland and Northern Ireland is still hard to comprehend – with continuing doubts regarding how a border between the UK and the EU should best be implemented.

While everyone living in Ireland and Northern Ireland is affected by these issues, it is particularly important to try to understand how young people feel about these matters, as they are the group who will inherit the full impact of the decisions taken at this time. They also form a significant segment of Ireland and Northern Ireland's population. According to the 2016 Census in Ireland, the population of 18- to 30-year-olds totalled 758,284, or 15.92 per cent of the overall population (Central Statistics Office, 2016). Population estimates in Northern Ireland for 2017 show 313,120 young people between 18 and 30 in residence, or 16.74 per cent of the total population (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2017).

This is the context in which the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) was commissioned by the British Council to carry out the *Next Generation Ireland–Northern Ireland* study at the start of 2018. There are two main strands to the project's methodology. This includes: a survey across Ireland and Northern Ireland of 1,024 18- to 30-year-olds, and 16 accompanying focus groups, which were geographically distributed across Ireland and Northern Ireland in an effort to ensure that appropriate attention was given to matters of specific pertinence in both the north and south respectively,

rural and urban differences and the interests of minority groups. The report is the latest in the Next Generation series, all of which engage young people in countries undergoing periods of significant social or political change, and seek to understand how those changes affect their views of their lives and their futures. The series has already included young voices from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Tanzania, Ukraine, the UK, Colombia, Turkey and South Africa. The aim is to ensure that young people's voices are heard at a time of change.

The areas of change that provided the framework for this study were the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, the 2008 economic downturn in Ireland, and Brexit. It was determined that these key issues, among others, would best be considered within five general themes, which would be explored in both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) approaches and that inform the structure of this report.

Chapter 1: Education

- How young people felt their education had prepared them for their futures, specifically relating to securing employment, having a family and living independently.

Chapter 2: Employment

- How young people view their current and future work opportunities.

Chapter 3: Social issues

- How young people felt about challenges facing them, both locally, such as affordable housing and access to education, and globally, such as climate change and the refugee crisis.

Chapter 4: Politics

- How young people engage with political institutions, including their propensity to vote and their trust in politicians.

Chapter 5: Looking ahead

- Finally, how young people view their futures, including their levels of optimism.

In addition to ensuring an appropriate framework within which questions in the survey and focus groups would be grouped, it was also important to ensure that the study properly reflected the regional and social diversity that exists across Ireland and Northern Ireland – see Appendix 1 for details of the study's methodology (including the ethical considerations taken during the design and development of the study). As with all Next Generation studies, this report concludes with recommendations for policymakers, based on the views of young people expressed throughout the document.

> CHAPTER 1: EDUCATION

In the first chapter of this report, our research looks at how participants felt that their education had prepared them for their futures, specifically in relation to developing their capacity for living independently, gaining employment and working/studying abroad.

Education (understood in this study as schooling, through to further and higher education) is an issue that regularly occupies media coverage and political debate across the island of Ireland. In Northern Ireland, primary and post-primary education remains largely segregated along religious lines. Addressing segregated education remained a key priority of the Northern Ireland Executive before its collapse in January 2017; with the *Programme for Government 2011–2015* and, the most recent good relations strategy, *Together: Building a United Community* 2013, both containing specific policy commitments in this area. There have been two main responses: the creation of formally integrated schools as legislated for by the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989, and shared education provision as described in *Sharing Works: A Policy for Shared Education* (2015). According to an independent review of integrated education published in November 2016, there is now a total of 65 formally integrated schools, attended in 2015–16 by 20,000 children or 6.9 per cent of all pupils (Topping and Cavanagh, 2016). At the same time significant strides are being made in the shared education sphere with the latest government policy on shared education leading to the Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, which places a duty on the Department of Education and Education Authority to encourage, facilitate and promote shared education. In Ireland, there is ongoing debate about the role of religion within the

education system, while similar challenges related to creating dynamic and contemporary education provision also exist. For instance, the absence of LGBTQ+ issues from the school curriculum has been identified as an issue in both Ireland (Fullerton et al., 2017) and Northern Ireland (Department of Education, 2016). During the fieldwork for this study, the young people involved in the research identified that these matters, among other issues, had a significant impact in regard to how they reflected on their educational experiences.

When asked in both the survey and accompanying focus groups how they felt their education had prepared them for their futures, regarding living independently, gaining employment and working/studying abroad, many young people involved in the study felt that their schools had too often been overly focused on exam results to consider the future development of their pupils. In this regard, participants generally stated the sole focus of their schooling had been on academic attainment, rather than on the development of different skills that would be transferable to their adult lives. Focus group participants who felt that their schools had been too centred on exam results and getting pupils to university (regardless of the quality of the degrees they may be likely to obtain) explained that little attention or support was then given to students interested in exploring

alternative means of training, or for those seeking a year out for travel or other work opportunities. One person involved in the focus groups described their school as ‘a bubble’, and suggested that those in charge likely had little idea of some of the innovative training opportunities that existed as an alternative to applying for university.

Participants often felt that the emphasis on exam results let down young people in a number of ways – it was suggested that students who were struggling academically became increasingly side-lined by teachers who often preferred to focus on pupils who showed a more natural affinity for the related subject matter and who had demonstrated their ability to thrive in an exam format (a format that many young people identified as old fashioned and regressive). Many participants felt that even students who were able to perform well in the current education system were often being let down by the overemphasis on test outcomes, which had created classroom dynamics where there was frequently more focus on exam technique and methods of remembering information, than encouraging students to think creatively and critically about the related course content.



‘We were taught to pass exams and recite information, rather than being encouraged to actually think creatively about a subject.’

Male, 28, Belfast

These perceptions were largely reinforced by the findings in the survey, with respondents indicating that their education had prepared them for work (70 per cent felt that it had done so to a ‘great extent’ or to ‘some extent’), but less so for living independently (56 per cent) or working/studying abroad (47 per cent) – see Figure 1. Exploring this in more detail in the focus groups, participants stated that they had been prepared for work in some basic ways, such as the need for being respectful and developing basic discipline (e.g. punctuality), but that they had been given little insight into other challenges that they would be likely to encounter elsewhere in their working life (e.g. thinking creatively about different problems and applying critical thinking to different issues). The majority of participants felt that they had learned no real life skills that would be easily transferable into their adult lives, which would enable them to live independently. Many indicated that they would have liked to obtain information on issues like tax and mortgages, along with some advice for balancing their future finances. In terms of working/studying abroad, participants regularly felt they learned more from actually doing these things, than from any part of their education.

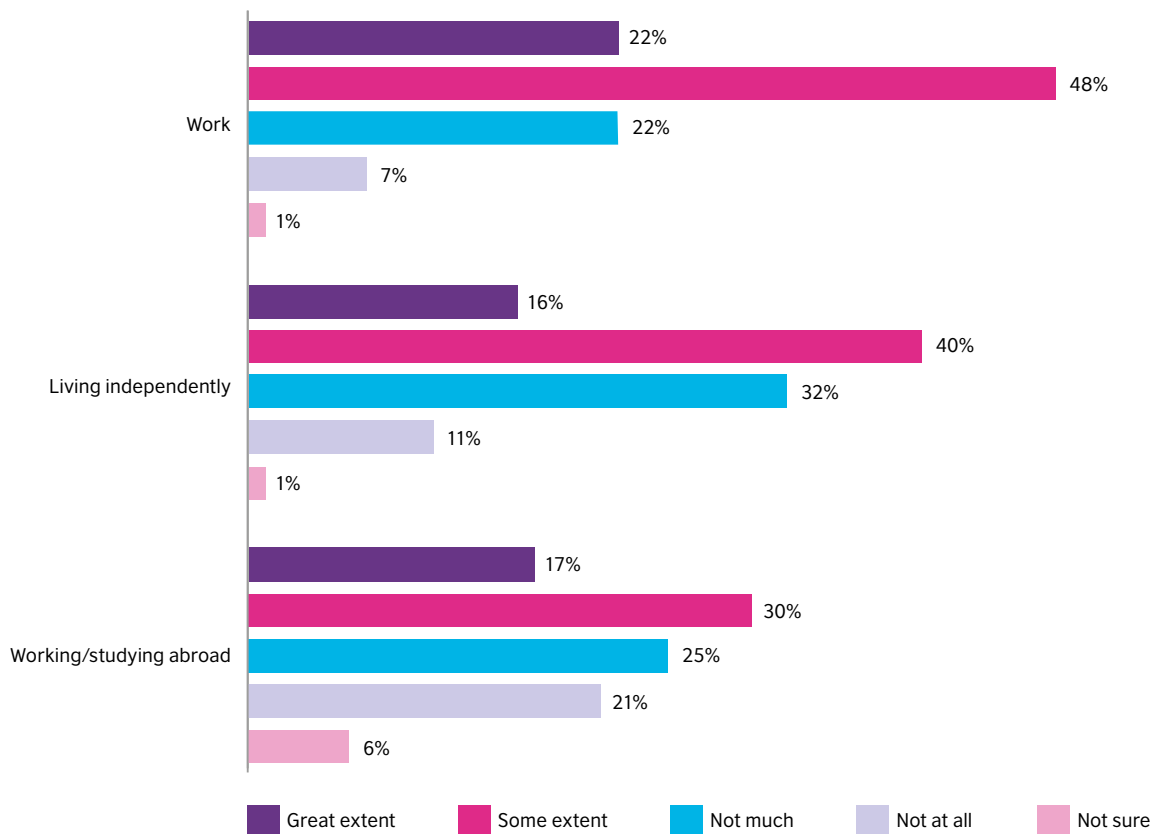
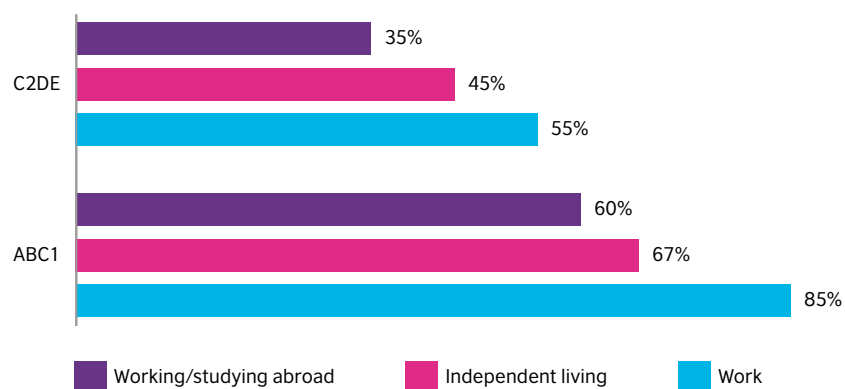
Other studies have found similar results – for instance, respondents to the *Young Voices Structured Dialogue Process Cycle VI* in Ireland (Roe, 2018) indicated that life skills (such as financial

management, cooking and time management) and alternative learning methods (such as creative learning, critical thinking and co-operative learning) were among the most important competencies that young people require for their lives in the future. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Koulla Yiasouma, identified ‘systematic failures’ in current education provision in her inaugural ‘Statement on Children’s Rights in Northern Ireland’ (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2018).

Responses to this section of the survey varied considerably according to socioeconomic status. Those in the middle-income grouping demonstrated significantly higher levels of satisfaction towards their education than those in the low-income group. Of respondents in middle-income households, 85 per cent felt that their education had prepared them to a ‘great’ or to ‘some’ extent for work, compared to 55 per cent from low-income households, 67 per cent for living independently compared to 45 per cent, and 60 per cent for working/studying abroad compared to 35 per cent – see Figure 2.

There were some differences between the way in which participants in Ireland and Northern Ireland reacted to the survey questions on how their education had prepared them for different aspects of their lives. For instance, in relation to developing their capacity to live independently, survey respondents in Ireland were more likely to suggest that their education had prepared them to a ‘great extent’ or to ‘some extent’ (62 per cent in Ireland, against 50 per cent in Northern Ireland). Respondents in Ireland were also

slightly more likely to indicate that their educational experiences had prepared them for studying/working abroad (51 per cent of Ireland participants felt that it had done so to a ‘great extent’ or ‘some extent’, compared to 44 per cent in Northern Ireland – see Figure 3). When this matter was further explored in the accompanying focus groups, participants in Northern Ireland were more likely to indicate that they felt that their education had failed to prepare them for the ‘real world’. Many young people from Northern Ireland were also critical of the segregated nature of the region’s education system. It was often noted that the binary format reduced people’s opportunity to engage with the ‘other’ community and several participants noted that they did not meaningfully interact with anyone from a different community background to their own until they reached university or started working. Participants in studies elsewhere have demonstrated a similar interest in participating in shared education experiences, the Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey (2017) asked 16-year-olds, ‘If pupils from different schools got together, how much would you like or dislike being with young people who are a different religion from you?’ A large number (80 per cent) responded that they would like it ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’. When asked, how they felt about shared education, 53 per cent said that they felt either ‘favourable’ or ‘very favourable’ towards it.

Figure 1: How well do you feel your education has prepared you for...**Figure 2:** My education prepared me to a 'great extent' or to 'some extent' on the following issues... (socioeconomic status*)

* The NRS social grades (A, B, C1, C2, D and E) are a demographic classification system used in the UK. They are often grouped into ABC1 (representing middle class) and C2DE (working class). See <https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/Definitions%20used%20in%20Social%20Grading%20based%20on%20G7.pdf>

Participants who were currently at university or had previously attended a university generally stated that they had learned more 'life skills' there than in school, but many were still dubious about the overall value of their experience – specifically where their degree did not lead to a clear employment pathway. Many participants in the focus groups often stated that they 'regretted' choosing their university course, while they also frequently explained that the content of their degree had little bearing on what they did after university. Young people who had regretted their decisions regarding university often felt that they might have been better 'learning a trade' or 'taking time to travel'.

'I went off to university without a clue for how to do anything. I've probably learned more outside of school.'

Male, 22, Galway

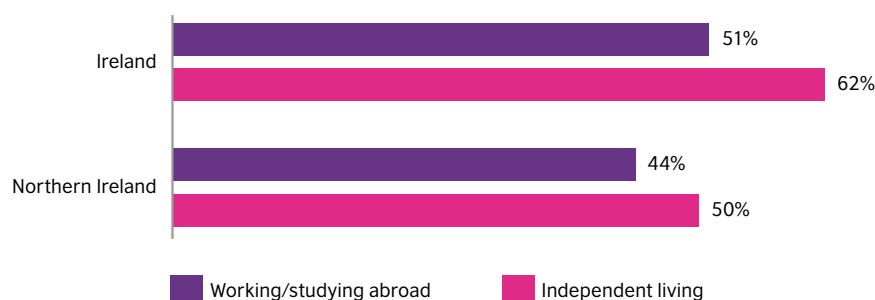
Within the focus groups, participants often stated that they would have liked their school to have encouraged them to think more openly about the condition of society and to consider in more detail their role and social responsibilities within it. Research elsewhere in Ireland has suggested

that an empathetic design within the education system can help resolve some of the challenges that were identified by young people involved in the study and assist them in obtaining some of the life skills they associated with learning at university, but at an earlier age. The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at National University of Ireland Galway is working to mainstream social empathy education programmes in schools and in teacher education. The first phase of the project will see the development of the Activating Social Empathy programme for use in transition year and as part of the new Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme. This programme is based on a view of empathy as a capacity that is only fully realised once it is activated in the social domain, and is designed as an intervention that aims to increase empathy levels, enhance social competence and promote civic engagement in young people.

The overall results from this section of the study generally highlight that the young people involved were dissatisfied with their educational experiences, specifically in relation to the perceived over-emphasis placed on exam results that they had encountered in their

schooling and the lack of focus placed on alternatives to university when it came to leaving this environment. As a result, participants in the focus groups regularly stated their interest in seeing the development of an enhanced range of vocational opportunities and better signposting of the existing options. Participants also suggested that schools need to consider if they are offering students the appropriate support to make strategic decisions about their future – for instance, it was suggested that careers classes should be about more than merely discussing with students what university they would ideally like to attend. Instead, young people felt that these classes should be an opportunity for vibrant conversations about the value of specific degrees and the higher education environment more generally. In Northern Ireland, the segregated nature of primary and post-primary education continues to be a barrier to meaningful interaction between the region's two largest communities and a source of dissatisfaction for young people. In conclusion, there was a strong sense that young people across the island of Ireland desired a more holistic educational experience than they currently feel is on offer.

Figure 3: My education prepared me to a 'great extent' or to 'some extent' on the following issues... (Ireland versus Northern Ireland)





> CHAPTER 2: EMPLOYMENT

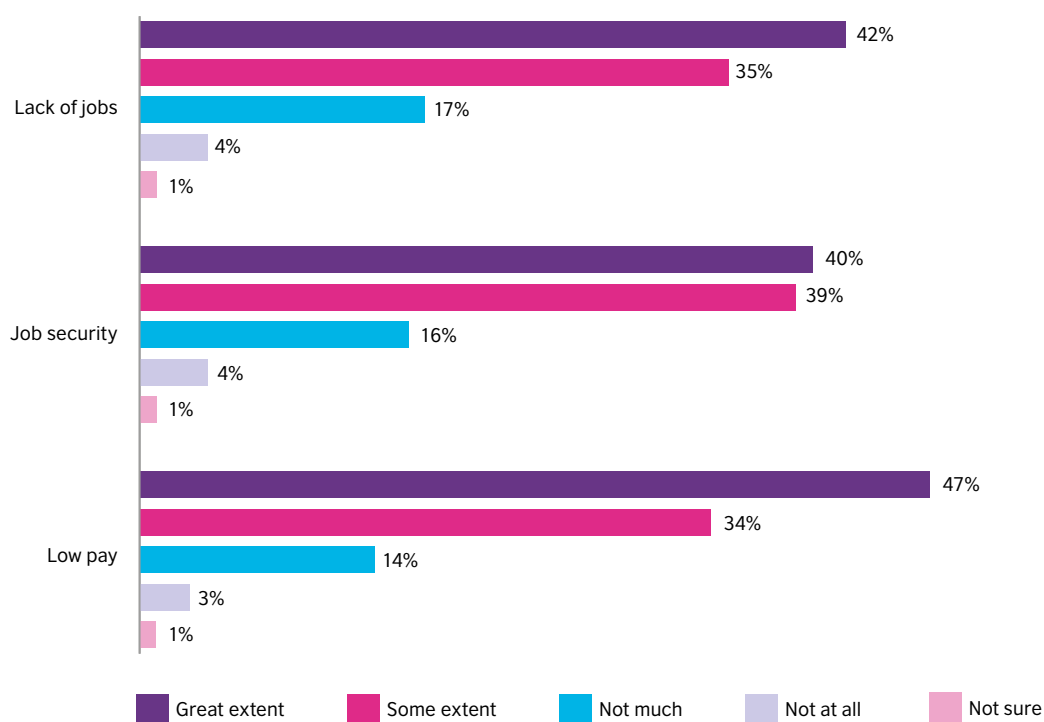
The second chapter of this study looks at how young people from across the island of Ireland feel about different aspects of their work experiences – a traditional problem in both Northern Ireland and Ireland, further complicated by a backdrop of economic crisis in Ireland from 2008 and developing uncertainty regarding how Brexit might affect Northern Ireland directly and future connections between the two regions more generally.

Young people participating in this study are developing their current and future employment aspirations in a complicated era of short-term and zero-hour contracts, unpaid internships and high levels of competition for a small number of high-quality opportunities (Roe, 2018). In 2018, the unemployment rate for 15- to 24-year-olds in Ireland is 12.5 per cent (Central Statistics Office, 2018), while in Northern Ireland the unemployment rate for 18- to 25-year-olds is

recovering from a high point of 19.7 per cent in 2015, but it still remains at close to nine per cent in 2018 (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2018). Studies elsewhere have demonstrated the significant detrimental impact unemployment can have on young people – Vancea and Utzet (2017) indicate that, among other issues, it can lead to high rates of mental health problems, health-risk behaviours and a generally poor quality of life.

Given this challenging employment context, it is somewhat unsurprising that many participants in the study raised concerns about their current and prospective employment opportunities. Over three-quarters (77 per cent) of the total number of respondents to the survey were concerned about a 'lack of jobs' to a 'great extent' or to 'some extent'. Participants in the survey were also significantly concerned about job security (79 per cent) and low pay (81 per cent) – see Figure 4.

Figure 4: To what extent, if at all, do you think the following present a challenge for young people today...





There were considerable differences in the level of concern reported depending on the socioeconomic status of respondents. More respondents from low-income households were concerned to a 'great' extent about all three issues. Of the low-income group, 52 per cent were concerned to a 'great' extent about a lack of jobs (compared to 33 per cent in the middle-income group); 47 per cent about job security (compared to 33 per cent), and 55 per cent about low pay (compared to 39 per cent) – see Figure 5.

'I've never properly worked and I'm not sure that I ever will. That sounds a bit mad, but I didn't really leave school with any qualifications and I can't really see who would take me.'

Female, 19, Derry~Londonderry

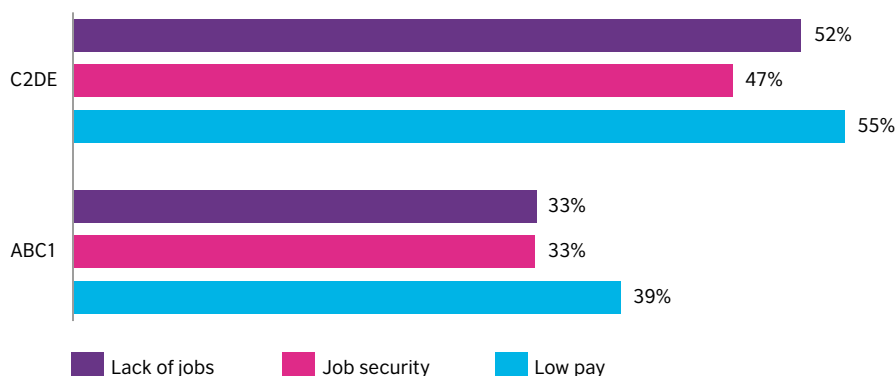
Concerns about current and future employment opportunities were also significant matters of discussion in the accompanying focus groups. A large number of participants felt that there was a basic lack of jobs across Ireland and Northern Ireland, while those jobs that did exist were perceived to be of a low quality and generally quite poorly paid. Also, it was noted that where good job opportunities are available, there was intense competition for these posts. Moreover, participants in the focus groups explained significant levels of frustration with the sense that every job of a reasonable quality required experience, with many noting the difficulty of acquiring experience in such a complicated job market. Some young people noted the potential value of interning as a means of obtaining experience, but others

felt that examples of 'interning' and 'volunteering' were not taken seriously by prospective employers. A large number of participants in the focus groups regularly explained that they were contemplating moving away (generally to England) in the search for better job opportunities.

'I won't get work here. I'll have to leave, without question. I'm qualified... I've a degree, but I can't get near an interview. There are basically no jobs at all, but where decent jobs come up, there's so many applicants. I'll definitely need to go away... maybe I'll come back in the future, but once you leave, you never know – I mean, I might find a relationship elsewhere, or just prefer the place I end up.'

Female, 22, Dublin

Figure 5: The following issues are a challenge for young people today to a 'great' extent... (socioeconomic status*)



* The NRS social grades (A, B, C1, C2, D and E) are a demographic classification system used in the UK. They are often grouped into ABC1 (representing middle class) and C2DE (working class). See <https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/Definitions%20used%20in%20Social%20Grading%20based%20on%20G7.pdf>

'I don't really want to go or anything, like, it's just I can't see here where I would get work. My teaching degree is well respected outside of Northern Ireland, but here, at the moment, there's too many teachers – so yeah, I'll almost definitely go away.'

Female, 22, Belfast

'My brother and sister have both moved to England and I'll probably do the same... I think I might come back, but really it's hard to know until I get there.'

Female, 23, Galway

Concerns about employment were a significant issue to at least some extent for almost every young person involved in the study, but this was a particularly

profound issue in Northern Ireland, where 90 per cent of respondents were worried by a 'lack of jobs' to a 'great extent' or to 'some extent' (compared to 65 per cent in Ireland) – see Figure 6. Northern Ireland respondents were also more likely to have concerns about 'job security' (85 per cent, against 73 per cent in Ireland) and 'low pay' (89 per cent, against 74 per cent in Ireland).

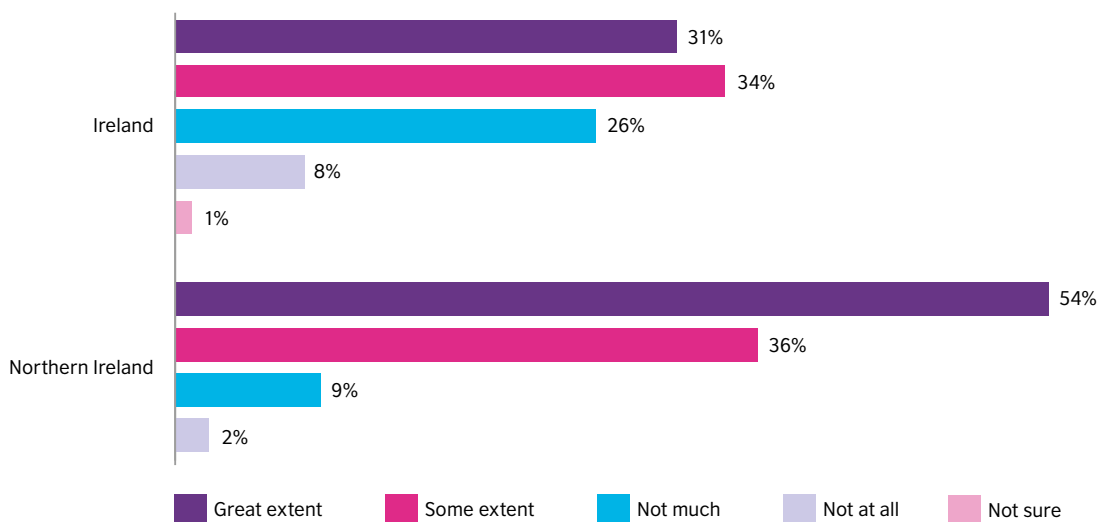
In the focus groups, a large number of participants who could see themselves leaving Northern Ireland generally had no real motivation for leaving, other than work. Most young people who felt they probably would leave considered it their 'last option' or 'only prospect' and many discussed in detail that they would prefer to stay in the region, where they could be close to their

family and friends. Despite their apparent reluctance to leave, few guaranteed they would return if they did go, and suggested that it depended on how good a job they found and if they got into a relationship in their new country. A number of participants indicated that they were not surprised that so many people in their age group might leave Northern Ireland and raised concerns around where this may eventually leave the country in the future.

'It could lead to a brain drain – where people with real talent leave for opportunities elsewhere, but never come back.'

Male, 23, Belfast

Figure 6: To what extent, if at all, do you think a lack of jobs presents a challenge for young people today? (Ireland versus Northern Ireland)



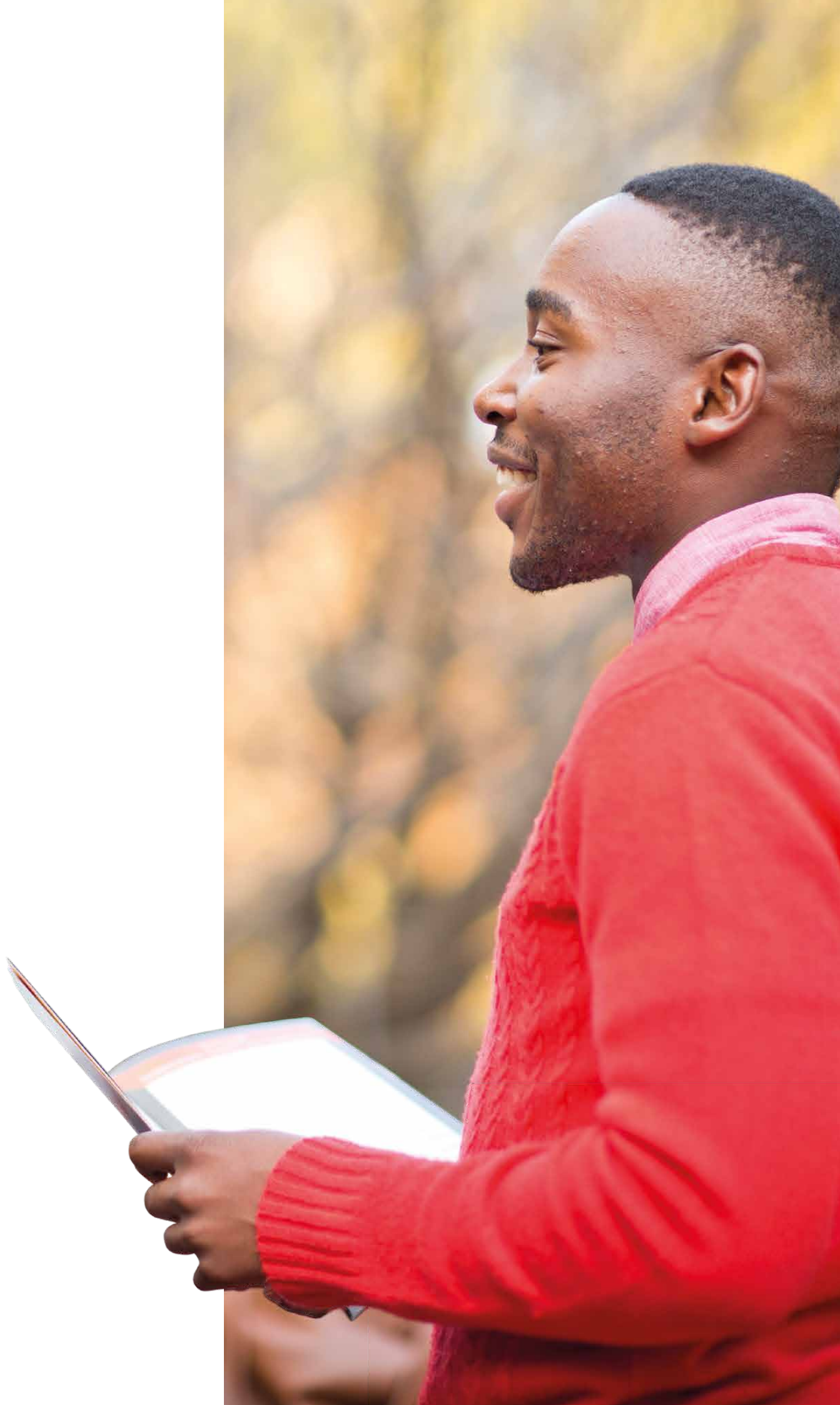
Other studies have also indicated that young people from Ireland and Northern Ireland are increasingly considering moving abroad for new opportunities. In 2015, the Migration Policy Institute stated that the number of people leaving Ireland in the aftermath of the global financial crisis more than tripled between 2008 and 2012. The report acknowledged that emigration has long been a feature of Ireland's history and suggested that no country in Europe has been more affected by the issue, but drew particular attention to an increasing trend of well-educated young people leaving the region – with university graduates being overrepresented among those leaving. The study indicated that the motivation for leaving was largely connected to a lack of jobs and low rates of job satisfaction. The UK was considered the most popular destination, but a large number of those leaving were going to non-European destinations (such as Australia, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and, increasingly, the Gulf states) (Glynn et al., 2015). Similarly, a 2014 research report by a locally based market-research organisation indicated that 67 per cent of young people (categorised as being between the ages of 16 and 24 in the report) see their futures outside of Northern Ireland. The intention to leave the region was generally associated with a lack of confidence in the country's future, with 70 per cent of those surveyed stating that they did not feel that the area's local politicians were capable of agreeing a joint vision for the future of the country (LucidTalk, 2014).

In addition to concerns about the potential societal impact of many young people choosing to leave Ireland and Northern Ireland in the search of better employment options elsewhere, participants in the focus groups were regularly concerned by the personal impact a perceived lack of opportunities had for individual young people in their generation. Many participants who were struggling to find work (or had done so in the past) explained that they frequently felt demoralised, depressed, apprehensive, angry and embarrassed by not being able to secure regular employment. These emotions were particularly frequent and sharp for young people who had seen friends begin to establish 'careers'. During the focus group discussion there was not a substantial sense that graduates were better off than non-graduates and many noted that even where degrees might have previously been a clear advantage, such postings now generally require additional postgraduate qualifications or some level of past experience. This somewhat contradicts empirical evidence on the issue, which consistently shows that graduates have better employment rates and higher earnings than non-graduates. Given that the focus groups consist of a representative sample of this age group, then it suggests a deeper unease and frustration among young people than may be currently recognised and considered by relevant policymakers.

'I think the biggest problem facing any young person at the moment would be jobs. I mean it's just impossible to go straight from university to a job. Most people I know have done some type of internship or volunteering, but I'm not even sure companies really take that seriously. You know, every job description requests experience and if they don't take internship or volunteering seriously well then I have no clue at all how we'll all get a good job.'

Male, 19, Derry~Londonderry

Overall, young people felt that their concerns about getting into regular, well-paid work was often passed over by statutory bodies – which it was suggested were more focused on unemployment in other age categories and had a complacent perspective that young people will 'be all right' and that 'things will work out for that generation'. In a similar context to Chapter 1, young people wanted to see more focus on creative training opportunities and better signposting of available options for young people who had not qualified for university enrolment and for those who wanted to explore vocational training opportunities. Many participants suggested that university courses needed to have clearer employment pathways, and a number of young people spoke positively about how placements in different organisations during their degrees had drastically improved their employability at the end of their course. It was overwhelmingly agreed by the majority of participants that the failure to deliver young people better access to the job market and different innovative training opportunities would ultimately lead to more and more young people leaving the island of Ireland in search of fresh opportunities elsewhere.



> CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL ISSUES

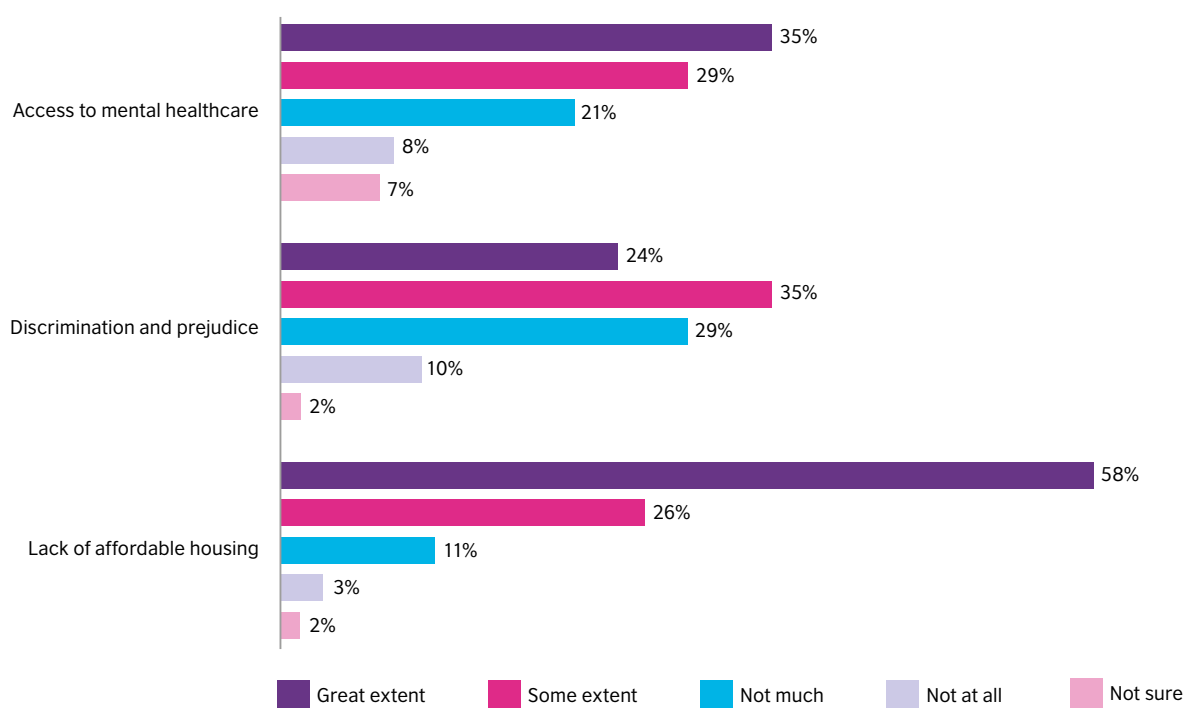
The third chapter in this report begins by exploring how young people feel about a range of different local issues, moves on to ask participants about a collection of global matters and concludes by reflecting on how young people consider the potential impact of the UK leaving the EU.

Throughout the fieldwork, young people indicated that they remained concerned about what they described as traditional problems, such as access to housing, but felt that their generation was increasingly just as focused on what they regarded as an emerging range of challenges, such as discrimination against minority groups and the recognition of high levels of poor mental health among young people. While these may have existed for previous generations, they are now more marked and receiving greater attention – see Figure 7. Barriers to mental healthcare, concerns about

discrimination and anxieties about a lack of affordable housing were all discussed in considerable detail in the focus groups. In relation to mental health, participants regularly stated that they were concerned that young people of their generation were increasingly under pressure to look and feel a certain way, with many suggesting that they feel a specific pressure from social media to conform to a particular image or specific opinion. It was suggested that this sense of pressure could lead to people feeling apprehensive about being different. Anxieties about the issues discussed in

the first two chapters of this publication (education and employment) could also apply significant pressure to young people in relation to achieving a particular status in life through having a career via a successful education experience. A number of young people indicated that it was natural to compare themselves to their peers and where they felt that friends from school were ‘doing better’ (in relation to job security and having disposable income), this could lead to feelings of embarrassment, frustration and hopelessness.

Figure 7: To what extent, if at all, do you think the following present a challenge for young people today?





Other studies have identified high levels of poor mental health in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Research carried out by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland indicated that around one in five (19.5 per cent) of young people aged 19–24 in Ireland were experiencing some type of mental health problem (Cannon et al., 2013). The same study found that one in two young people aged 19–24 had experienced some type of mental health problem in their lives. Studies in Northern Ireland have found similar results: the Department of Health (2017) found that 21 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds have suffered some type of mental health issue. In Northern Ireland, there has been an increasing recognition of the potential transgenerational effect of the region's conflict. O'Neill et al. (2015) identified that where parents exhibit related mental health problems then this can lead to 'toxic stress' for their children and to associated poor mental health outcomes.

A number of participants in the Northern Ireland focus groups also discussed the potential damage of the transgenerational impact of the region's conflict. It was felt that the high levels of housing segregation throughout Northern Ireland and accompanying visual markers of 'territory' continued to shape how people lived their lives, specifically in relation to how they considered travelling through spaces that might be perceived to belong to the 'other' community or interacted with people from a different community background to their own. Many young people involved in the research indicated that they did not feel bound by barriers or constrained by space in the same way as their parents may have done and indicated that they often had friends in the 'other' community, but recognised that this was not the case for all young people. A number of participants noted that exhibiting an open mentality to the 'other' community may be more complicated in interface areas, where the two communities meet. In a focus group with young

people specifically from interface areas in Belfast, participants explained that they had been brought up having little contact with the 'other' community. They explained that they were encouraged to stay in their 'own' area growing up and now, as young adults, felt there was some degree of pressure on them to stay in the local area (this was associated with a communal pressure to keep the area 'strong' and a sense that they might be abandoning their community by moving elsewhere). Further research has also demonstrated that transgenerational trauma is not only passed on through the interaction of parents and children, but can also be consciously or unconsciously transmitted through exposure to their societal environment (McNally, 2014). This reflects findings by the Childhood in Transition research programme carried out by Queen's University Belfast, which included qualitative research in six communities throughout Northern Ireland that had endured relatively high levels of poverty combined with conflict-related violence (McAlister et al., 2014). Further studies have linked the high suicide rates of today's youth in Northern Ireland to the earlier conflict through a number of pathways; in particular, economic deprivation combined with continuing segregation on religious grounds in certain interface areas are thought to increase levels of a range of risk factors that may result in suicide (Kelso, 2017).

Aside from an awareness of cross-community tension in spaces where the two main communities meet, most young people in Northern Ireland were more worried about the way in which minority groups were treated in the region (as opposed to any continuing concerns about the area's post-conflict condition and any related 'leftover' problems). Some participants in the focus groups felt that the area's religious institutions had created a 'narrow-minded atmosphere' that was 'resistant to change'. Young people were concerned that this conservative mentality, and general post-conflict

atmosphere, left little social space for minority groups and a general suspicion of anything that was different. Participants from Ireland also felt a clear sense of concern about how minority groups were treated and also explained that they were worried by the conservative nature of the country's older generations. Research elsewhere has confirmed the suggestion from participants in this study that racism is a problem across the island of Ireland. In 2017, the National Youth Council of Ireland (2017) found that black, Asian and minority ethnic young people experience racism as a 'normal' feature of life. In Northern Ireland, it has been established that racially motivated crimes now exceed sectarian ones (Police Service of Northern Ireland, 2018).

Respondents to the survey in Northern Ireland were most likely to indicate that they had concerns about discrimination: 66 per cent of young people in the region stated that they were concerned to a 'great extent' or to 'some extent' by the matter (51 per cent in Ireland) – see Figure 8.

'I'd be really concerned about discrimination here. Not so much between the communities, I don't think many young people care about that, but more the level of racism and homophobia that exists here. You know, I think both are really bad. I think that this has been a very conservative country and change would be really good, it would take away a lot of the tension, but it's a very conservative country that doesn't want change.'

Male, 22, Belfast

In the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2017), 47 per cent of the total number of respondents indicated that they would not accept a Muslim as a close friend. The age range for young people in the survey is 18–24 years old and they were the least accepting age group, apart from the over-65s.

Figure 8: To what extent, if at all, do you think discrimination and prejudice present a challenge for young people? (Ireland versus Northern Ireland)

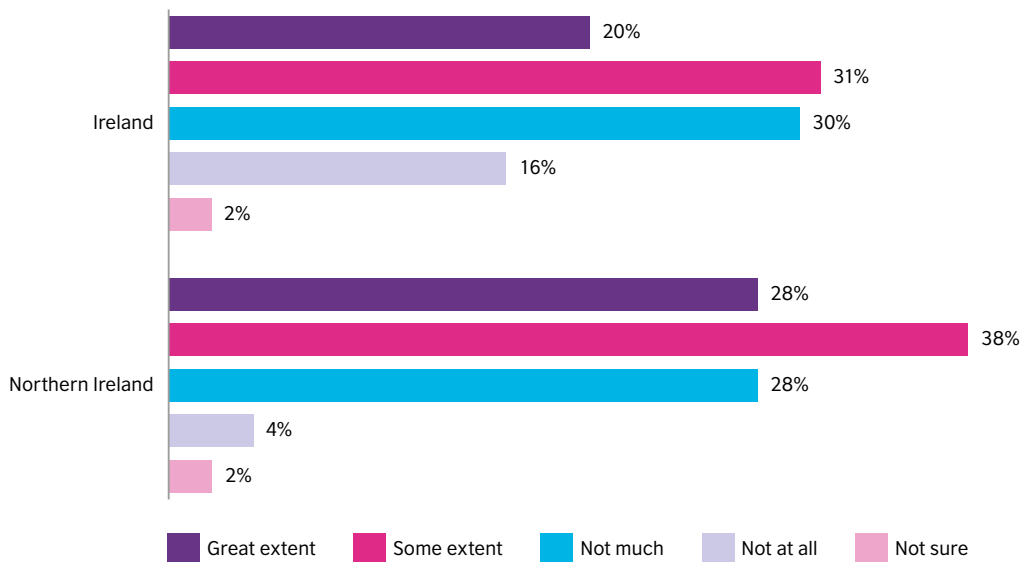
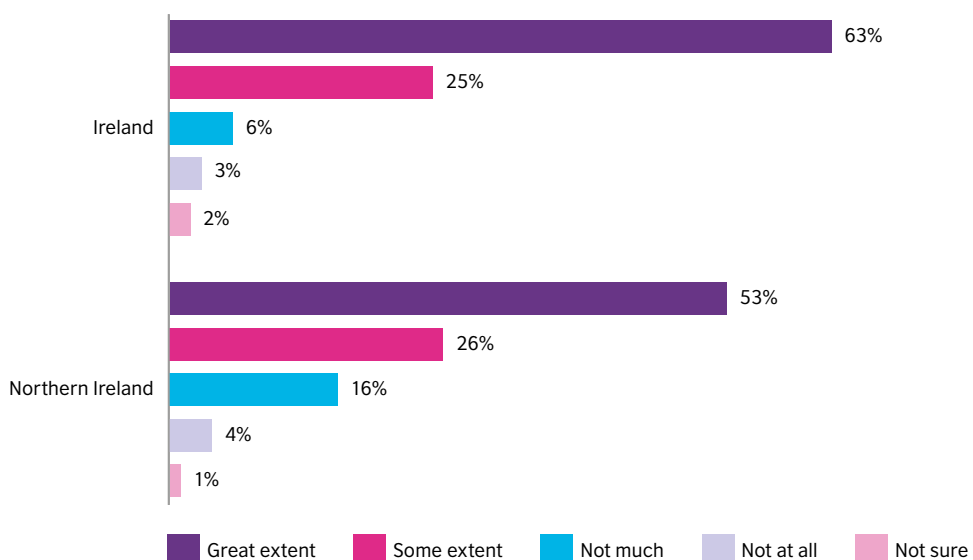


Figure 9: To what extent, if at all, do you think a lack of affordable housing presents a challenge for young people today? (Ireland versus Northern Ireland)



Additionally, 52 per cent of all respondents noted they would not accept a Traveller as a close friend either, with 49 per cent of young people responding in this way – indicating that it is not always the case that youth is a guarantee of tolerance. In a Traveller-specific focus group in Dublin, participants explained that they felt that discrimination against minority groups across the island of Ireland was generally a severe problem. The group also reflected on aspects of particular anti-Traveller prejudice, observing that they felt completely failed by the state system – from their education as a child through to provision for elderly members of the Traveller community. Participants suggested that it was not uncommon for schools to group all Traveller children, regardless of age, into one class (where there was little focus on any particular subject or syllabus). Young people from a Traveller background also stated that they felt their background greatly reduced their ability to get work, while a number also discussed the poor condition of their sites.

‘We’re continuously being failed by the state. They don’t understand the issues that matter to our community, but they are regularly making decisions for us and about us.’

(Female, 27, Dublin)

In addition to feeling discriminated against by society in general, young people involved in the Traveller focus group were also concerned by the level of prejudice that exists within their community, specifically in relation to people who also designated themselves as being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Almost every participant in the focus groups noted concern about the way in which members of the LGBTQ+ community were treated across the island of Ireland. Despite being the first country in the world to produce a national LGBTI+ youth strategy (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2018),

young people from Ireland generally felt that there was still much to do with regard to the promotion of the community’s rights. A number of young people stated that they felt that there was greater acceptance of LGBTQ+ issues in the region’s main cities, than there was in rural Ireland – where it was suggested that there was an ‘old-fashioned mentality that was afraid of change.’ Findings elsewhere have stated that 50 per cent of all young people in Ireland feel that discrimination is a problem for LGBTQ+ youth in Ireland, with specific concerns about bullying and harassment being identified (Fullerton et al., 2017).

In Northern Ireland, findings from a scoping exercise by the Rainbow Project indicated that 65.8 per cent of the area’s LGBTQ+ community had been verbally abused at least once and 43.3 per cent had been threatened with physical violence (O’Hara, 2013). Several participants in the focus groups, again, stated their belief that the ‘conservative’ atmosphere in the region created a lack of tolerance of the LGBTQ+ community and its respective issues. Young people felt that some politicians and specific Unionist parties were failing to properly recognise the rights of the community, though many were encouraged by how a number of other political parties engaged with the annual Pride parade in Belfast.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, while young people involved in the study felt that their generation was increasingly more aware of the challenges provided by discrimination and poor mental health than other generations, they also suggested that they regularly encountered what they described as ‘traditional’ problems, such as difficulties with finding affordable housing. This was a problem for a large number of the total number of respondents to the survey, but was seen as a particular issue for young people in Ireland, where 88 per cent of respondents were concerned to a ‘great extent’ or to ‘some extent’

(79 per cent in Northern Ireland) – see Figure 9. More respondents in the 25–30 age category tended to be concerned to a ‘great’ extent about a lack of affordable housing than those in the 18–24 age bracket (62 per cent against 54 per cent).

‘Rent in Dublin is more expensive than mortgages in nearly every other part of the country.’

Male, 21, Dublin

‘I don’t expect to ever own my own home, nor do any of my friends. It’ll only happen for any of us if our parents bankroll it. It’s dreadful, like, ‘cause I’m single – so without their help there’s no real way I’d be able to do it.’

Female, 28, Galway

‘The cost of rent here (Galway) is absolutely crazy. We were told last week that our rent was going up at the end of this year by €100 – with no real explanation as to why. It’s not even a nice place!’

Female, 23, Galway

Participants in the focus groups based in Ireland explained that they had experienced significant problems with buying and renting property, with a large number suggesting that the objective of buying a home was simply a long-term aspiration. Young people in both Ireland and Northern Ireland stated that they were unsure if they would ever be able to afford their own home. A significant portion of all focus group participants noted that they were still very reliant on their parents or other family members regarding where they lived – a number chose to live at home to avoid the cost of renting, while others who were moving away were planning to initially stay with a family member. A number of participants felt that the challenge of finding affordable housing could have a significant impact on the development of their generation – it was regularly stated that milestones

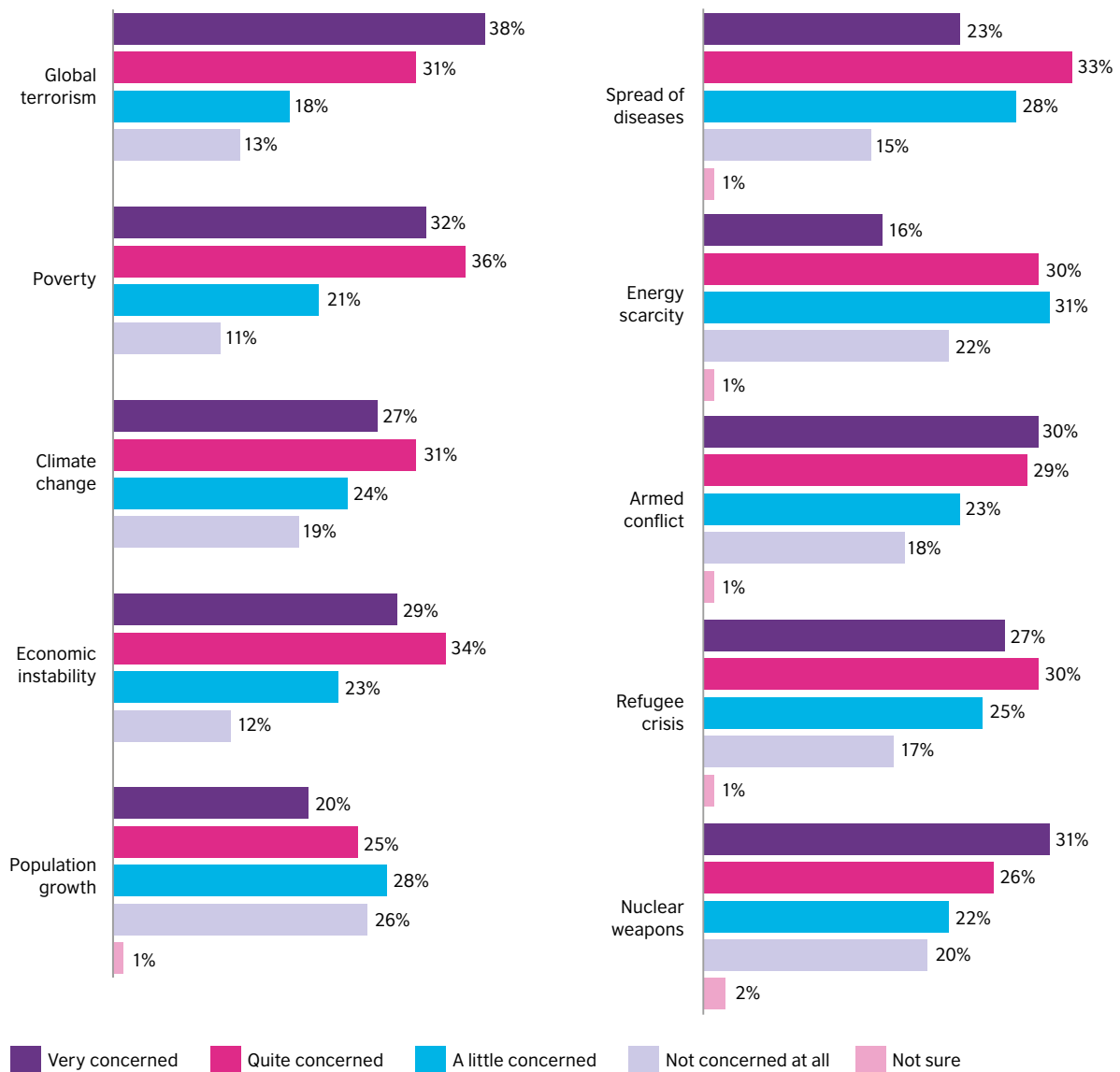
such as buying a home were likely happening at an older age for their generation than would have been the case for their parents (see Chapter 5 for more details). Participants who had seen friends of a similar age buy a home and begin to have a family often stated that they felt like they were being 'left behind' and discussed

a general pressure on people of their generation to buy a home, despite the established challenges of doing so.

As well as being questioned about a range of local issues, participants were also asked about their feelings on a number of global matters. Of greatest concern was global terrorism, with

69 per cent of the total number of participants stating they were 'quite concerned' or 'very concerned' about the issue. This was followed by 68 per cent of young people indicating they were 'quite concerned' or 'very concerned' about poverty and 59 per cent registering concern about armed conflict – see Figure 10 for full details.

Figure 10: To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following global issues...



Females tended to be more concerned than males about the global issues included in the survey. This difference was especially marked in relation to global poverty (74 per cent of females were ‘very’ or ‘quite’ concerned in comparison to 62 per cent of males), spread of diseases (62 per cent compared to 50 per cent), armed conflict (63 per cent compared to 53 per cent), global terrorism (74 per cent compared to 62 per cent) and, most strikingly, the refugee crisis (64 per cent compared to 48 per cent).

Despite respondents to the survey demonstrating significant levels of concern about a number of different global matters, participants in the focus groups often stated they had little interest in these issues. When asked why this was the case, there tended to be two common reasons: 1) a number of young people often stated that they preferred to focus on matters close to home; and 2) participants felt that they had little capacity to influence the outcome of these issues and stated that their feelings would not be taken seriously by relevant decision makers.

Participants in both strands of the study were also asked to consider their feelings on Brexit. Although the exact way in which Brexit will be implemented on the island of Ireland remains unclear, this is a matter that is likely to have considerable local and international consequences. On a local level, the impact on the relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland could be momentous, especially given that the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement created strategic cross-border institutions within the confines of the UK constitution. The intention of these arrangements was to facilitate shared approaches to common problems across the island of Ireland – in relation to north–south matters and east–west issues. Emerging research on the issue of Brexit has found that young people across the island of Ireland have

concerns about its potential impact on the economy, possible increases in tuition fees and the implications it could have for future governance in Northern Ireland (Kramer, 2017).

In the focus groups there was a mixed response to how young people reacted to Brexit. A number of participants conceded that they knew little about how it may actually be implemented, particularly with regard to how a potential hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland would be re-introduced. Others stated that they had lost interest in the matter, given the length of time the associated negotiations between the UK government and the EU had lasted. Those who could display awareness of its related issues generally had strong views on the type of impact it could create. Several participants suggested that the re-introduction of a physical border between Ireland and Northern Ireland could be detrimental to both regions. Many young people were concerned that practical issues like trade could be complicated by increased bureaucracy and additional costs, while it was also suggested that there could be damage to the relationship between the associated political institutions. In Northern Ireland, participants were particularly worried about any political instability that the matter could create. In this regard, young people were concerned that Brexit posed the opportunity for constitutional debate in relation to Northern Ireland’s future. Many participants felt the complicated post-conflict dynamic in the region did not lend itself to positive and open discussions about the possible advantages of a united Ireland or a ‘special’ relationship with the EU in the future, as these issues would likely be ‘sectarianised’. In addition, young people in Strabane and Derry~Londonderry were concerned that institutional separation from the

EU could jeopardise valuable funding streams, specifically associated with agriculture and peace funding. In Ireland, participants were generally most commonly worried about what impact any possible changes could have on political stability in Northern Ireland. Young people in Dundalk were more likely than other participants in Ireland to raise concerns about the potential impact of a re-established border, specifically in relation to how they would be able to access services they currently use in Northern Ireland. A large number of participants in Ireland and Northern Ireland were concerned by the impact Brexit could have on people living on one side of the border, but working on the other.

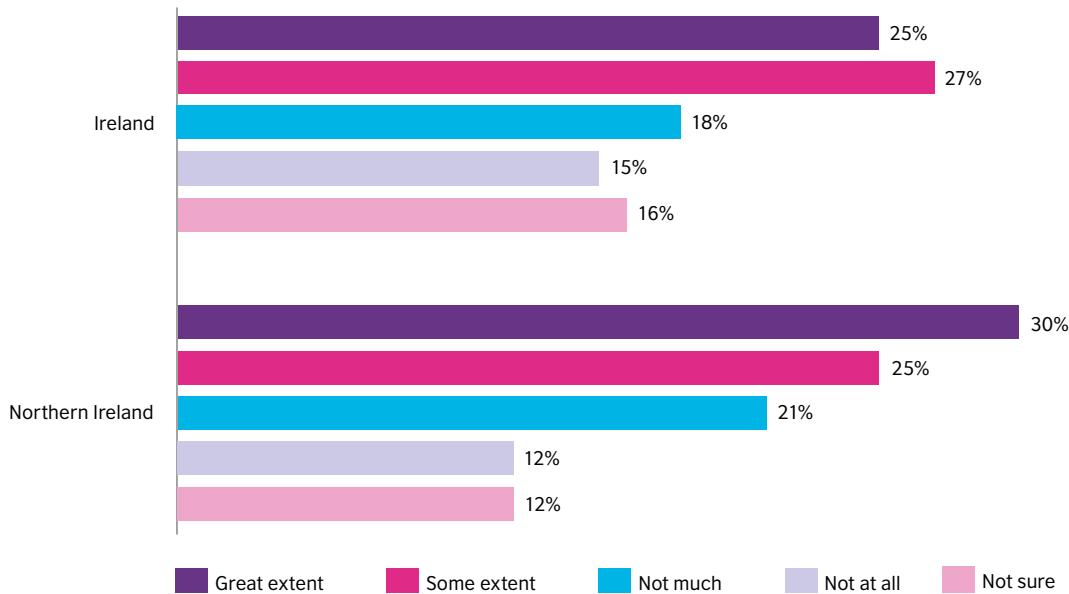
A small number of participants from Northern Ireland felt that Brexit could be beneficial to the region – they felt that it could produce fresh opportunities for the area, specifically referencing that Northern Ireland could be in a unique position as it may be interpreted as ‘having a foot in both camps’ (i.e. it would remain part of the UK, but retain a border with the EU). In the survey, over half (53 per cent) of the total number of all respondents were concerned about Brexit to a ‘great extent’ or to ‘some extent’ (55 per cent in Northern Ireland, against 52 per cent in Ireland) – see Figure 11.

Those from middle-income households were considerably more concerned about Brexit than those in the low-income category. In the former, 61 per cent were concerned to a ‘great’ or to ‘some’ extent, in comparison to 44 per cent in the latter.

‘I’m really worried about where it would leave us. I don’t think anyone thought about it when the referendum happened and I think that sums up how much the UK will care about how we end up after we do officially leave.’

Male, 27, Belfast

Figure 11: To what extent, if at all, do you think Brexit poses a challenge for young people today? (Ireland versus Northern Ireland)



'I'm just worried that it could cause major problems, especially if we ended up with a border poll. I suppose that would be my main issue. I think people could even use it as an excuse to start up again (engage in political violence).'

Female, 23, Cork

'I voted for it. I believe Northern Ireland will benefit greatly from it, if we embrace the opportunity. You know, we're in a unique position (in relation to having a possible land border with Europe) – so we might find it creates new chances for people here.'

Male, 24, Belfast

Overall, young people involved in the study felt concerned that their generation encountered a complicated range of different local and global challenges – some of which they described as 'traditional problems' (that tended to face every generation), but also additional issues that may have received less attention in previous

years (such as discrimination) and emerging matters specific to this generation (such as Brexit).

Participants regularly stated that the mental health of people from their generation needed greater consideration. This request was often associated with the belief that young people currently feel under enormous pressure to be successful (in their personal and professional lives). A number of participants stated that social media often emphasised this sense of pressure and could lead to people feeling inadequate, where they were unable to project a certain image. Young people described how anxieties about image or success in employment and education were exacerbated by constant comparison with peers on various social media platforms. In Northern Ireland, it was felt that the transgenerational impact of the region's conflict was having an additional corrosive impact on the mental health of 18- to 30-year-olds, especially those in interface areas where persistent housing segregation continues to

complicate interactions with the 'other' community. Issues relating to discrimination and prejudice were of particular concern to respondents in Northern Ireland, with focus group respondents tying this to a conservative post-conflict atmosphere in the region, which was unwelcoming to minority groups and identities. In Ireland, a lack of affordable housing was a more pressing concern for respondents, with a large number of focus group participants suggesting that they did not see owning their own home as an achievable goal. Survey respondents demonstrated significant levels of concern across a number of different global issues, but when this was further explored in the focus groups, participants described a greater focus on matters closer to home. Responses to Brexit were less clear, with some participants conceding that they knew little about the possible practical implications, while others expressed worry about a range of specific issues from trade to political instability in Northern Ireland.

> CHAPTER 4: POLITICS

This theme outlines how young people from across the island of Ireland describe their political and social engagement.

Participants in both strands of the study demonstrated a considerable lack of faith in their relevant political institutions. Only two per cent of survey respondents from Northern Ireland had complete trust in the Northern Ireland Assembly and over a third (36 per cent) indicated that they had absolutely no trust at all in the institution. The score for complete trust from respondents in Ireland for Dáil Éireann was zero per cent, and 17 per cent had absolutely no trust at all. Only one per cent of the total number of all respondents had complete trust in the European Parliament and around a fifth (19 per cent) had no trust at all (this figure was higher in Northern Ireland – 22 per cent, against 17 per cent in Ireland). A quarter (25 per cent) of the total number of respondents had no trust at all in the UK government at Westminster and no participant indicated that they had complete trust in the institution – there was little difference in the reaction between how respondents in Ireland and Northern Ireland reacted to the UK government.

In the focus groups, participants were also generally critical of their respective political institutions. A large number indicated that they had no interest whatsoever in politics, despite often recognising the degree to which local and global politics shaped their lives. Many young people stated that they felt no connection to, or interest in, domestic and international politics. Most attributed this lack of interest to the belief that the system was overly complicated, cumbersome and bureaucratised, overly focused on policies that were not priorities for their generation and consisted of people who they generally did not feel they could relate to (often with regard to the perceived age of their elected representative and the suggestion that ‘all’ politicians came from ‘wealthy’ backgrounds).

Figure 12: On a scale from 1 to 10 how much, if at all, do you trust each of the following institutions? (1 = no trust, 10 = trust)

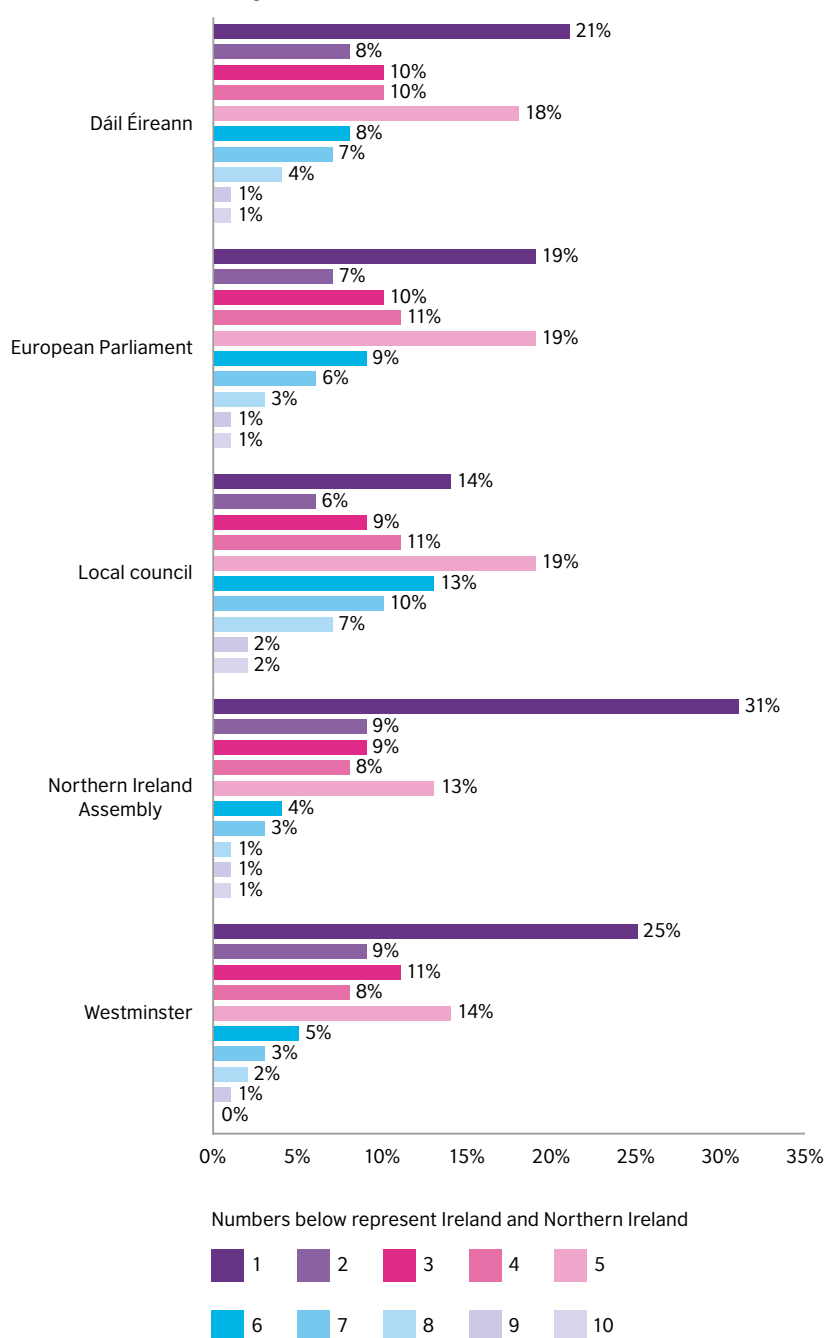
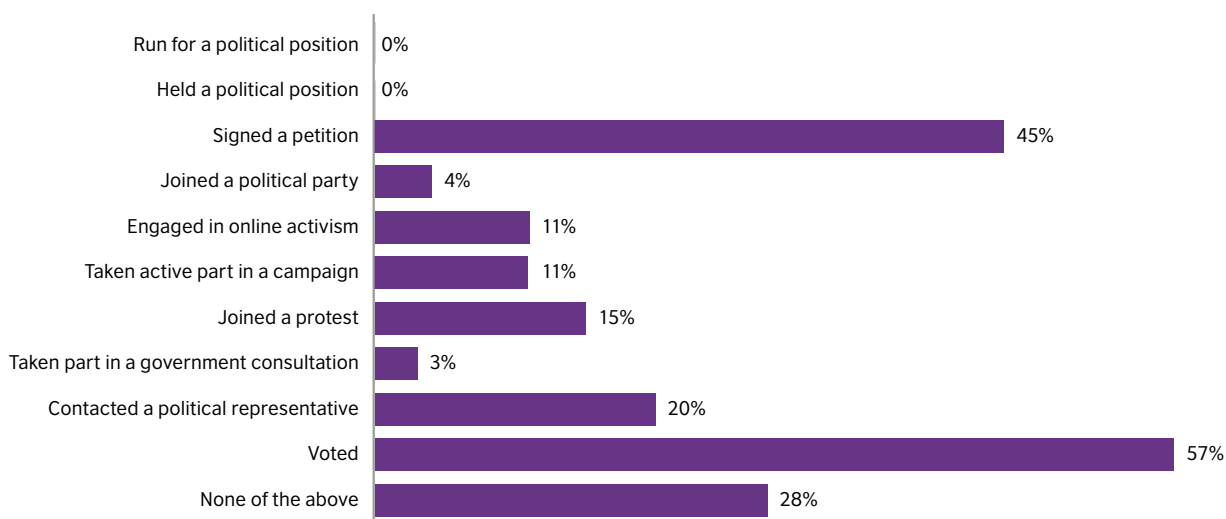




Figure 13: Have you ever done any of the following?

'All I see is a small number of people who look and sound alike, who don't seem to do anything at all and are paid more than I'll ever make.'

Male, 21, Belfast

'I just have no interest at all in politics. I just find it so tedious and I think that the issues I care about wouldn't be the issues that they think are really relevant.'

Female, 24, Galway

'It's so bad. People talk about reform, but I don't even know where you would start.'

Female, 23, Derry~Londonderry

Respondents to the survey indicated that where they had participated in some form of politics this had generally taken the form of voting (57 per cent of participants) or signing a petition (45 per cent), while nearly a third (28

per cent) of participants had not been involved in any political engagement at all – see Figure 13. These findings were largely in line with the comments young people gave about their political participation in the focus groups. However, those in the older age bracket (25–30 years old) were much more likely to have participated in some form of politics than those in the 18–24 bracket. Only 20 per cent of respondents in the older category had never participated in comparison to 34 per cent of the younger cohort.

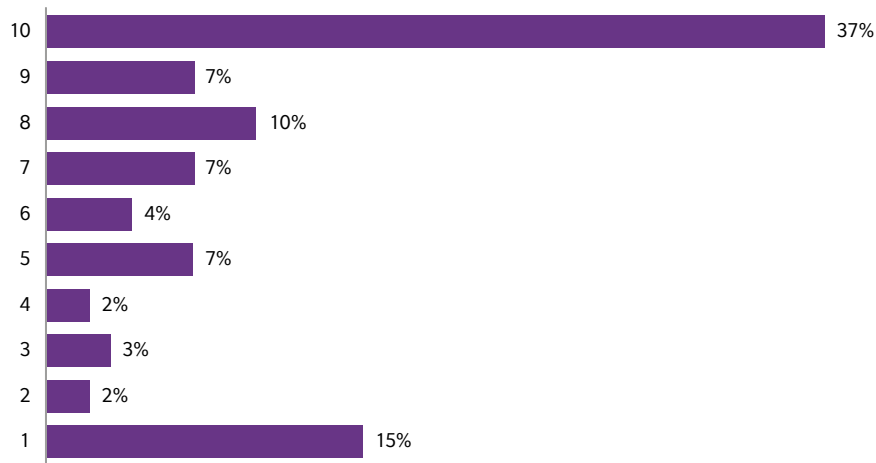
Over one-third (37 per cent) of the total number of respondents to the survey suggested that they would likely vote in an immediate general election (see Figure 14), but a large number of young people involved in the focus groups exhibited less interest in participating in politics in this way. When asked why they would be unlikely to vote in such an event, a large number stated that 'it wouldn't make a difference', while

others offered more specific criticisms of their respective political institutions and associated political parties, including claims that 'all politicians are corrupt', 'the system is broken' and 'I just can't relate to any of the parties or any of the people involved in them'. A number of young people also stated that they would not vote as they 'didn't know how to' and that they would be 'intimidated' by the process or be 'afraid of making a mistake'. Others suggested that they were more interested in supporting the issues they care about in other ways (that were also discussed in the survey), such as joining a protest or signing a petition.

'No, I wouldn't vote at all. I can't see what difference it makes to the issues that I care about. Even if there was a politician who did take an interest in LGBT issues, it would probably be for publicity coming up to an election and then we would never see them again.'

Female, 26, Derry~Londonderry

Figure 14: How likely would you be to vote in an immediate general election, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means that you would absolutely vote, and 1 means you would be absolutely certain not to vote?



'I don't vote. I don't think the current system gets anything done. I'd be more likely to discuss the issues I care about with my friends or go on social media to talk about it with people who would feel the same way.'

Male, 23, Dublin

'I don't even know how to vote. I wouldn't have a clue who to pick.'

Female, 19, Strabane

When participants in the survey were provided with a range of potential suggestions for what may increase their interest in participating in politics, just over a quarter (28 per cent) stated that they would be interested in having more of a vote on decisions taken that relate to their local area and a similar proportion (26 per cent) felt they would like more opportunity to vote on decisions taken about their country. Over a third (37 per cent) indicated that they would not be interested in any of the options offered – see Figure 15.

In a similar outcome to the survey, participants in the focus groups also generally indicated that they did not wish to know more about politics, but indicated that if more effort was made at post-primary-level education to inform students about basic political structures then that may help create a greater culture of interest. Some felt that school visits from local politicians may also help engage young people in specific issues and generate more knowledge of the key issues promoted by different parties. It was indicated that these visits would work best if they were delivered as a series, where politicians from different backgrounds would be invited to discuss why and how they got into politics and move on to describe the issues that matter to them and their relevant party (this was seen as being particularly important in Northern Ireland, where politicians from the 'other' community could be provided with a platform to speak in a cross-community format).

'Maybe if someone had explained it (politics) to me in school I'd be more interested now. I know it impacts my life, but I just can't get into it.'

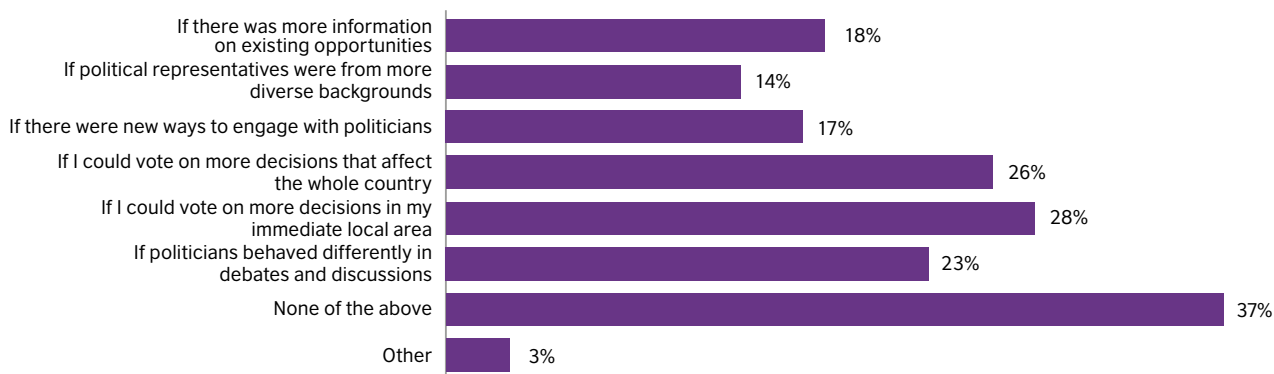
Male, 26, Belfast

'If they spoke to kids about how they vote and why they should vote, then maybe that's something that might stick with them. I don't know how to vote and would be a bit intimidated now, you know, I'd be embarrassed in case I made a mistake or something.'

Female, 21, Strabane

'I would have liked it if they [politicians/ political parties] had come into my school to discuss why I should care about politics or, you know, their party or whatever. I think if they'd done that, then maybe we [fellow students] could have went off to discuss what we'd heard with a teacher or on our own.'

Female, 27, Galway

Figure 15: Which of the following, if any, would make the biggest difference in increasing your participation in politics...?

Despite acknowledging apathy towards conventional political arrangements and the associated institutions, participants in the focus groups were clear that young people were still greatly engaged in key social issues – they often cited examples such as social media campaigns for recent issues, specifically around the abortion referendum in Ireland and the online protest against Donald Trump visiting the UK.

'I think we just care about different issues and want to try and resolve them in different ways.'

Male, 27, Galway

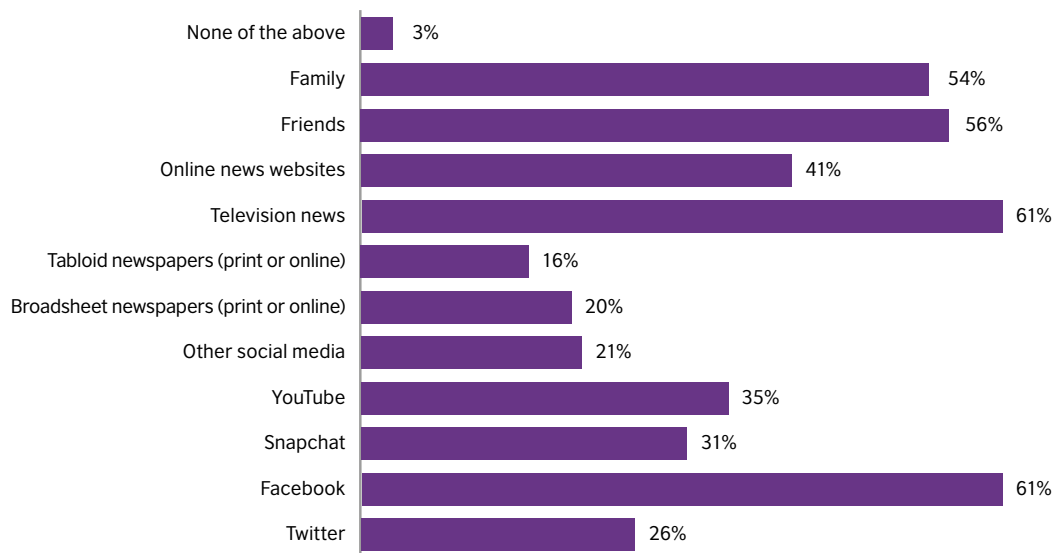
'The idea that young people aren't engaged in politics is a misnomer. Young people aren't involved in mainstream politics because it doesn't work, but they're involved in social issues'

Male, 25, Derry~Londonderry

This section of the research also looked at how young people obtained information about politics and other matters, outside of their formal education experiences. Around three-fifths (61 per cent) used Facebook, while the same number used TV news. Over half of the total

number of participants also got their information from friends (56 per cent) and family (54 per cent) – see Figure 16.

In the focus groups, participants noted that while social media (Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat) was commonly their primary source of information, they were aware of the concept of 'fake news' and consequently stated it was important for them to know the source of the news they consumed. Many young people also stated that they reviewed the opinions they read on social media elsewhere, to check them for bias and accuracy.

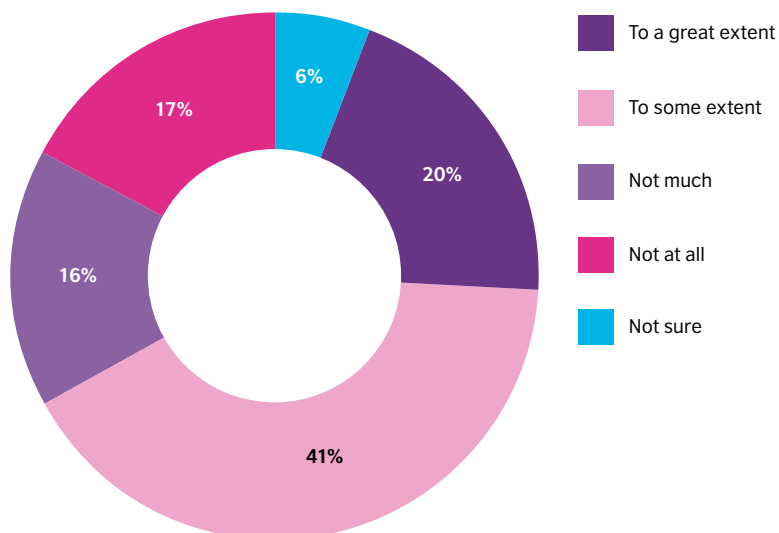
Figure 16: Which of the following do you use to keep you reliably informed with accurate information on current events?

Participants observed that this was important for them to do, due to the huge volume of opinions and information they engaged with, via social media and other online content. Some young people felt that it was necessary for people of their generation to interrogate the validity and value of the information they encountered online, as they felt that some content was there to manipulate how young people felt about certain issues. For instance, while most young

people in the focus groups supported the outcome of the 2018 abortion referendum in Ireland, some were concerned that people who opposed the result were aggressively attacked online for offering a different perspective. It was suggested by some participants that this reduced the possibility of people having a detailed discussion about the matter, and ultimately could lead to people often supporting causes, such as this, as they were 'popular' or had different

celebrities endorsing a particular view – this could also result in people feeling 'guilty' or 'uncomfortable' about having an alternative viewpoint. Despite these risks, respondents to the survey (see Figure 17) and participants in the focus groups still felt that social media was a good way to learn about social and political issues, so long as people were careful about the information they believed and scrutinised the opinions that influenced their thinking.

Figure 17: To what extent, if at all, do you think social media is a good way of learning about social and political issues?



'I wouldn't believe everything I read. No, but I do worry that some do. I think that's why we've seen such a rise in right-wing views.'

Male, 22, Belfast

'Yeah, once I read something on Twitter, I'll go off and check if it's accurate. I might ask a friend or my dad about it. I'd be confident that my friends would do the same, but there is a risk that some people might just believe what they read.'

Female, 24, Cork

'I think social media is obviously great in a number of ways, like getting information and staying in contact with people, but it does need to be treated with care.'

Female, 21, Strabane

Overall, young people involved in the study felt little connection to, or interest in, what they described as 'conventional' politics. This sentiment could generally be attributed to a lack of confidence in their respective political institutions and individual political parties and politicians. Despite this apparent lack of interest, over one-third (37 per cent) of the total number of respondents would vote in an immediate general election, while a large number of young people in the focus groups stressed that their generation remain aware of, and committed to, a range of different social issues (demonstrated by the range of public demonstrations that have been held across the island of Ireland in reaction to different political and social issues). Participants noted the value of social media as a means of expressing their political and social opinions, but also recognised associated risks with this approach.



> CHAPTER 5: LOOKING AHEAD

The fifth chapter explores young people's views about the future, on an individual level, as well as in relation to Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the world in general. Also, given the various issues discussed elsewhere in this report, young people are asked how the circumstances facing their generation compare to their parents' generation – with particular attention given to education, housing, employment, health and overall quality of life.

Despite the number of challenges that have been identified by young people throughout this report, the vast majority of survey respondents were quite optimistic about their 'life in general': 86 per cent felt 'very optimistic' or 'optimistic' – see Figure 18. The vast majority of focus group participants also noted that they felt optimistic about their future. Oddly, few could establish why they felt this way – most attributed it to their personality and a general sense 'that everything will work out'.

'Yeah, I'm very optimistic. I know I won't get any work in Derry, but I can go to Belfast or England and I should be fine.'

Male, 19, Derry~Londonderry

'I just think that it will work out. I'm lucky that my mummy will help me and that I've a brother and his partner here. So, although I don't really know what I want to do, I know I've time to make a decision.'

Female, 25, Galway

'I'm just optimistic it'll all work out.'

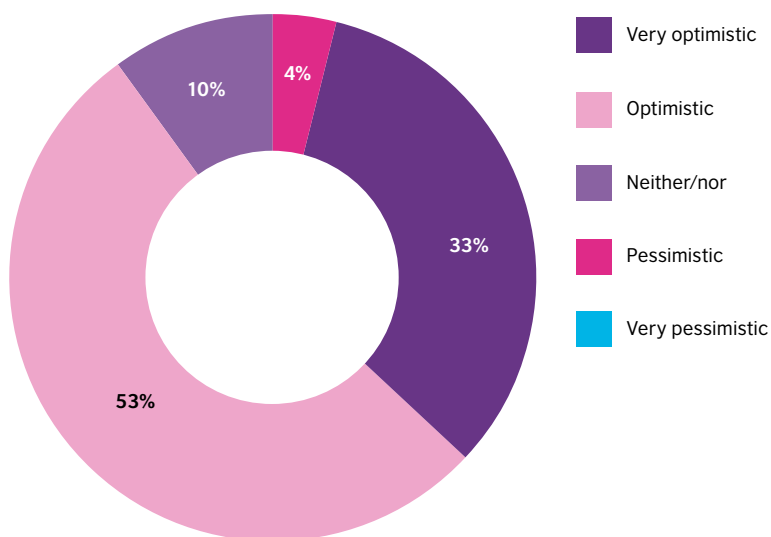
Male, 23, Cork

Having established that most participants were generally optimistic about their life in general, the survey results were generally more mixed when young people were asked to consider if they remained as optimistic about the future of their country and the world more generally. Most respondents to the survey were unconvinced by the direction their country was taking (only 37 per cent were 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic') and the way the world was going (only 25 per cent were 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic') – see Figure 19. There was a substantial difference in how individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds responded to this question. Of those from middle-income households, 46 per cent were 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic' about the way Ireland and Northern Ireland are going in comparison to 27 per cent from low-income households.

Respondents in Northern Ireland were significantly less likely to feel optimistic about the way their country was going: only 20 per cent were 'optimistic' or 'very optimistic' as opposed to 53 per cent in Ireland. In the focus groups, the level of pessimism felt towards the country's future was generally attributed to a lack of political

leadership (in the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive) and to a broad collection of different social issues, covered elsewhere in this study (such as the segregated nature of Northern Ireland's education system, the perceived lack of job opportunities in the region, the extent of discrimination directed at minority groups, concerns about finding affordable housing and the level of poor mental health throughout the area). In addition to these matters, young people involved in the focus groups identified concerns about the uneven development of the region – this included a perception that the significant past and ongoing investment in the region's city centres, often aimed at attracting tourism, was not being extended to inner-city communities, where high levels of deprivation persist. Young people from Strabane and Derry~Londonderry also stated the majority of the region's investment is focused on Belfast and its surrounding area – it was felt that this focus has led to an inadequate transport infrastructure that was not fit to support a fair balance in terms of how the country will likely develop (e.g. future external investors are likely to prefer locations with good transport links).



Figure 18: How optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about your life in general?

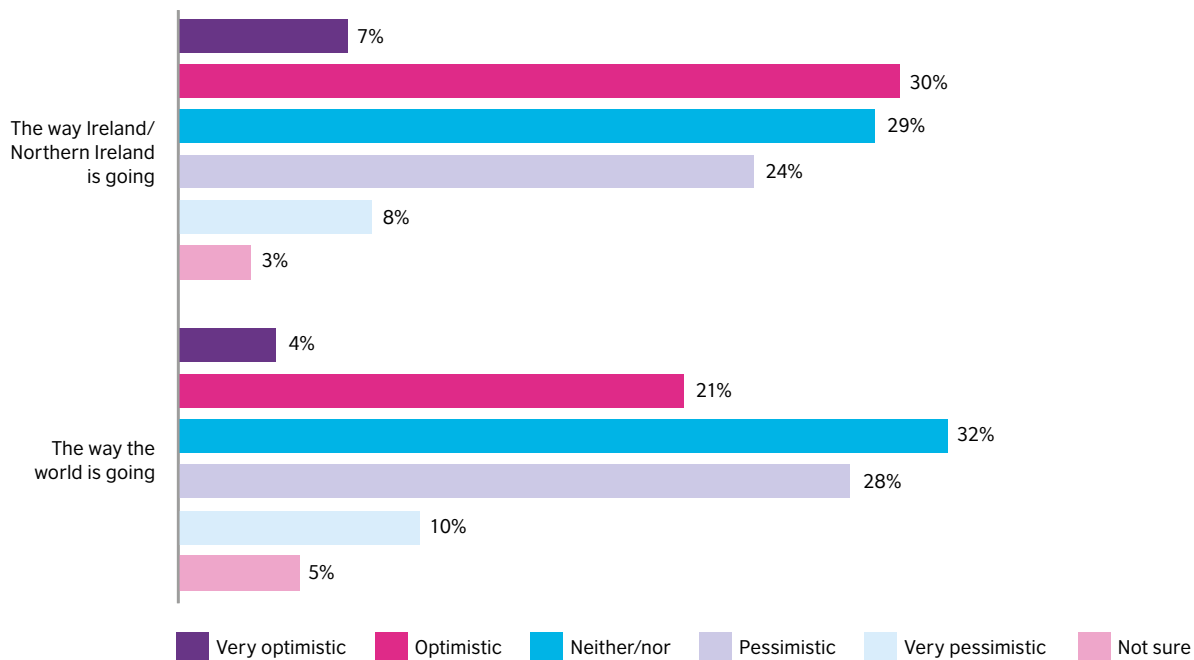
As the survey and focus groups came to an end, young people were asked to consider the range of issues discussed and determine if their generation was better off than their parents'. This question drew a largely mixed response, with most participants generally indicating that they felt that their generation was both better and worse off than their parents' generation.

The majority (78 per cent) of the total number of respondents to the survey felt that they had much better access to educational opportunities and 62 per cent felt they also had a better health outlook – see Figure 20. These findings were corroborated by the responses of focus group participants who indicated that they benefited from more advanced and better-run education and health systems. Despite criticisms

of the education system in Ireland and Northern Ireland elsewhere in this study (see Chapter 1), participants felt they had much greater access to further and higher education than their parents had. A number of young people felt people from their parents' generation only attended university in 'exceptional' circumstances, whereas it was 'commonplace' for people of their generation. This led to a perception that the opportunity to attend university is often 'taken for granted' by people of their generation, whereas it would have been a privilege for their parents. In addition, participants felt that better education of the role of diet and the need for regular exercise had likely provided their generation with a better health outlook than what their parents would have had at the same age.

When it came to housing opportunities, however, a considerable portion of young people suggested they were worse off (55 per cent) than their parents' generation. Similarly, most focus group participants felt that their generation's access to housing was poor and some attributed this to their parents' generation, for often owning multiple properties and complicating the market for first-time buyers.

Half of all respondents (50 per cent) felt they had better access to employment opportunities. This finding appears to contradict findings in Chapter 2 in which young people expressed considerable concern over a 'lack of jobs,' 'job security' and 'low pay'. However, focus group discussions suggest that young people were considering very different aspects of

Figure 19: How optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about...?

the employment market in this section. Participants noted, for example, the variety of employment sectors open to them, particularly jobs created by the growth of new technologies that did not exist when their parents were younger. Others noted that it is now normal to hold several different jobs in a lifetime or even retrain for a new career later in life, while their parents' generation often would have spent their entire working life in the same company. While this situation may have offered their parents' generation stability, it was noted by many young people that this would not meet the demands of their generation, in terms of variety and the need for new experiences. Changed expectations around gender roles were also allowing women to participate and progress in the job market on an equal footing with male peers.

'My mum and dad definitely got work and a home easier than I will. I can't imagine just leaving university and getting straight into a job I'd never leave. I mean, in some ways I'm not sure that's what I would want, but I'd love to know it's a possibility.'

Male, 19, Derry~Londonderry

'The type of jobs our mums and dads walked into just don't exist now. My dad just walked into an entry-level position and from there just worked his way through his company. Again, I just don't think that'd be an option now – if you go in at an entry-level position now, you'd stay there.'

Male, 27, Belfast

Despite these work-related advantages, participants felt that this did not mitigate the highly competitive and often low-quality employment situation in Ireland and Northern Ireland. As a consequence, young people felt increasing, and often unwelcome, pressure to leave home and seek opportunities abroad. Some attributed their current circumstances to their parents' generation for retiring later and for not more aggressively challenging inadequate government policies related to employment (this included the allowance of zero-hour contracts and derisory national minimum wage).

'I think there's an opportunity for me to make more than my mum and dad long-term, but getting there will be very hard.'

Male, 18, Derry~Londonderry

The majority of participants in the focus groups indicated that their parents had a more clearly defined pathway than they do – a number of young people explained that they felt their parents went to school, got some form of job when they left (which was generally permanent and facilitated them moving forward in that particular field), then got married young, bought a house (close to where they were initially raised) and had a family. Participants in the focus groups observed that these milestones were achieved early in their parents' lives and after this they had significant security moving forward. In contrast, many young people discussed staying in education late into their 20s and beyond (partly due to a specific interest in a particular topic, but more likely because many felt that a degree in isolation would not be sufficient to compete in an aggressive job market), having little confidence they would be able to obtain long-term employment (without moving away to first obtain experience) and significant concern that they would never own a home.

'I definitely think that we have much greater opportunities than our parents, but we have much more pressure. I think the rewards are also bigger, but so is the competition.'

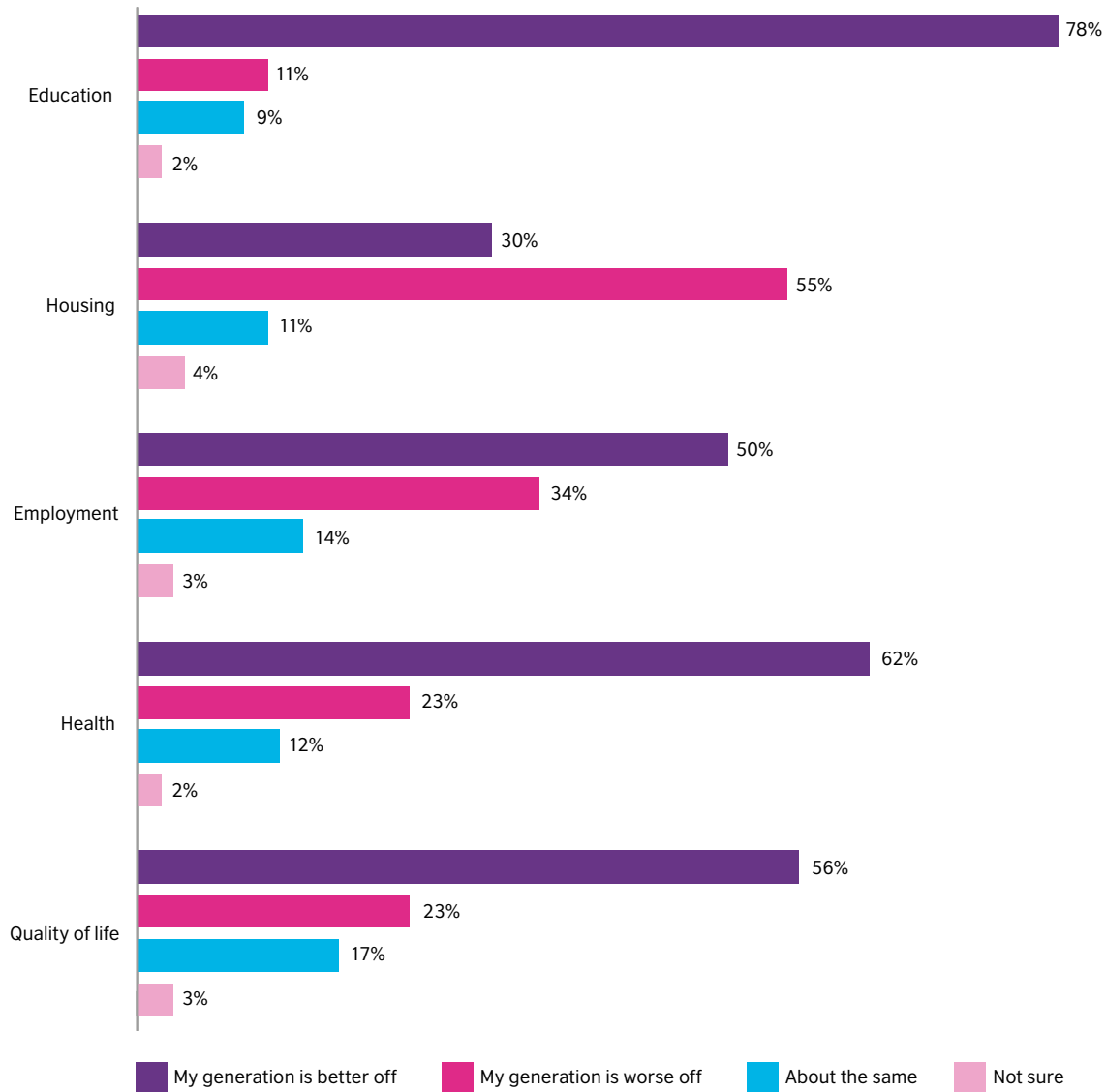
Male, 22, Galway

The sense that young people involved in the study anticipated achieving different personal milestones later in life than their parents did is also an issue that has been identified elsewhere – and is often referred to as 'waithood'. The concept of waithood was first coined by Alcinda Honwana, discussing the issue in an African context (Honwana, 2013). The term is used to describe a situation of stunted transition between childhood and adulthood brought about by a lack of education and employment opportunities. Honwana argues that 'without jobs young people cannot support themselves and their families and therefore cannot successfully transition and instead remain in this "twilight zone"'. The concept was heavily drawn upon by the *Next Generation South Africa* report (Marock and Harrison-Train, 2017), but appears to be equally relevant to the Ireland and Northern Ireland context, with many focus group participants describing frustration and other negative emotions in response to being unable to buy a home and start

a family at the anticipated age. In South Africa's report, it was emphasised that, despite this, young people are 'using their agency and creativity to fashion new "youthscapes" or subcultures with alternative forms of livelihood and social relationships,' regularly using phrases such as 'eke out a living,' 'making do' and 'just getting by' to describe this new reality. The high levels of optimism exhibited by focus group participants and survey respondents to their 'life in general,' noted earlier in this chapter, may be indicative of a similar response from young people in Ireland and Northern Ireland who are showing resilience in the face of a range of setbacks.

In conclusion, despite the array of issues discussed elsewhere in this report and a general perception that aspects of their lives are more complicated than their parents' generation would have been at the same age, young people from across the island of Ireland felt considerable optimism about their future. Most young people attributed this mentality to a general sense that people of their generation were resilient in the face of the different domestic and global challenges they encountered, and determined to take advantage of every opportunity available to them, on a local and global level.

Figure 20: Compared to your parents' generation, do you think your generation is better off or worse off or about the same in relation to the following...?









CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The British Council has sought, through this report, to give voice to and explore the views and concerns of young people from across Ireland and Northern Ireland at a time of uncertainty and re-evaluation for politicians and policymakers. The results have given a comprehensive insight into the lived experiences of young people today, their aspirations for the future and how they articulate their place in the world. Through this process a number of issues have emerged that should be of particular concern and priority to politicians, policymakers, and youth and statutory service providers alike. The recommendations that follow were drafted by the research team and further developed by the advisory group. They reflect the views gathered directly from the young people who were surveyed and who took part in focus groups, and are presented within four key themes.

Mental health

Throughout the study, young people clearly identified concerns about the mental healthcare provision available for their generation (see Chapter 3 for more details). While recognising that there have always been specific stressors on young people, the study suggests that the diversity and complexity of pressures on today's youth poses a major risk to their mental health. The issues of availability and high costs of housing – particularly acute in Ireland, but recognised also as a problem for young people in Northern Ireland – have combined with a fragile employment market and constant pressure from social media. It was often expressed that young people are under considerable pressure to be 'successful', in terms of having a 'career' and obtaining a particular image (in relation to living in a specific area, driving a certain car and wearing brand-appropriate clothing). Participants felt that the failure to fit within this desired profile

(particularly in relation to being unable to find work of a certain level and pay scale) could lead to young people feeling depressed, angry, hopeless, inadequate or ashamed (see Chapter 2 for more details). It was further suggested that young people are overly aware of their current 'status', given the presence of social media and indirect competition with their peers.

The severity of the situation, however, has not been recognised by policymakers, with labels such as the 'snowflake generation' used to dismiss concerns. At the same time, statistics indicate that a crisis in youth mental health is under way in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Ireland has the fourth highest rate of teenage suicide in the developed world (UNICEF, 2017) while Northern Ireland's suicide rate outstrips the rest of the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2017). In this context, participants in the present study were especially disturbed by the perceived insufficiency of the mental healthcare system and the poor signposting of support where it is available.

- Given the considerable pressure young people involved in this report consider themselves to be under, greater focus should be placed on supporting the mental healthcare of young people across Ireland and Northern Ireland. In the first instance, this will involve policymakers acknowledging that youth mental ill health in Ireland and Northern Ireland is perceived as reaching crisis levels.
- Acknowledging the risk of distress and anxiety in relation to exam results highlighted by the young people in this research, as well as the pressures of finding a suitably positive pathway after they leave school, schools should do more to ensure young people are supported during this period of transition, including improved mental healthcare interventions and support within the school system.

- Moving forward, universities and training colleges should also invest sufficient energy in ensuring the young people they are interacting with are being adequately supported. This could include:
 - support for young people in their early stages of moving to a new university (particularly in a new city)
 - adequate provision of mental health support structures, including ensuring they are signposted and promoted in the right form.

Preparedness

Linked to the issue of youth mental health is the notion of young people's preparedness for the lives ahead of them. A large number of young people involved in the study clearly identified that they do not feel they have been adequately prepared for the challenges they are encountering in their early adult lives, including international study, work and travel. Most participants who suggested this associated their self-doubt with the perceived failings of their educational experiences. In Chapter 1, young people from both Ireland and Northern Ireland indicated they believed that they had participated in a system that was overly focused on exam outcomes and one that failed to recognise the value of vocational training and further learning outside of a university environment. Young people felt that this narrow, academic-focused outlook should be replaced by a more holistic approach that ensured the personal development of individual students would be considered at least as equally important as a school's rate of university leavers.

- Policymakers should reflect on the principles underpinning school systems in Ireland and Northern Ireland, to ensure education provision is appropriate to the needs of all learners.

- Innovative, creative and sympathetic careers guidance to be provided.
- Provision should aim to increase employability, while responding to the individual strengths and interests of pupils and the demands of modern society, such as the increasing necessity of international study, work and travel.
- Elected officials should also show greater flexibility with regard to how they are prepared to interact with young voters, with a sense that they need to go where young people are, such as using social media platforms.

In light of the concerns around the Brexit negotiations, it is especially necessary for the government to consider in more detail the impact that political decisions can have on young people living across the island of Ireland. In this case, the result of the UK leaving the EU could mean significant complications for young people in Northern Ireland who want to study, work and travel abroad. The continued financial viability of being able to make use of these opportunities and the future rights and protections to do so have been undermined. Young people in Ireland, particularly those living close to the border, are concerned about the possible impact on business, trade and access to services in Northern Ireland. Both the Irish and UK governments should provide clear assurances that they are working to safeguard the needs, interests and opportunities of young people in these particular negotiations and other future policy initiatives.

Social inclusion and cohesion

The study drew attention to a number of areas of concern around social inclusion and cohesion. In Northern Ireland, segregated education and housing is a persistent barrier to leaving behind the divisions of the past and embracing a prosperous shared future. The research highlighted that young people living in interface areas in particular regret lost opportunities to engage beyond their own community. The research also demonstrated clear disparities in the experiences and outlook of young people from different socioeconomic groups, particularly in relation to levels of satisfaction with their educational experiences and

optimism towards the way Ireland or Northern Ireland are moving into the future. This points to a growing equality gap within society between those from middle- and low-income households, amplified by high housing cost and a volatile job market in which those without parental financial backing are hugely disadvantaged. Young people in Northern Ireland appeared particularly concerned about prejudice and discrimination against minority groups in a social environment which they felt was largely characterised by a post-conflict conservatism. Young people throughout the island of Ireland, however, continue to worry about the continuing challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community in particular.

- Leaders in the UK and Ireland should take decisive steps to counteract the growing sense of inequality that young people appear to be encountering.
- Particularly in Ireland, the rights of young renters need to be protected, and greater incentives provided for first-time buyers.
- In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education should continue to show leadership and ambition in delivering on its shared education obligations and actively work to encourage, facilitate and promote integrated education.
- Leaders and policymakers in Ireland and Northern Ireland should stay fully committed to creating an environment where the rights of minority groups and identities are properly considered and respected.
 - Education providers at all stages should reinforce this, by promote awareness and understanding.

Voice and participation

Throughout the research a large number of young people indicated their frustration with the current political environment in Ireland and Northern Ireland (in relation to feeling that key issues they care about are often being ignored by their political representatives), but still showed considerable interest in different social matters (see Chapter 4 for more details). It was clear from the research that the lack of interest displayed by young people in conventional politics could not be attributed to a lack of knowledge about the system, but a clear sense that the framework in its current condition fails to deal with the issues they care about and in a manner they consider to be effective. This was particularly felt in relation to the issue of Brexit, where participants felt little consideration was being given to what the outcome of the negotiations meant for young people – in relation to their future ability to study, work and travel abroad, the possible impact on trade and reduced access to services in border areas.

- A readily accessible, clear and concise description of the regulations and rules for different decision-making processes would further provide useful clarity and allow young people to feel more empowered in the process.
- Given the clear levels of disengagement in the formal political system by young people involved in this study, local government should consider ways to encourage youth engagement in issues that impact them.

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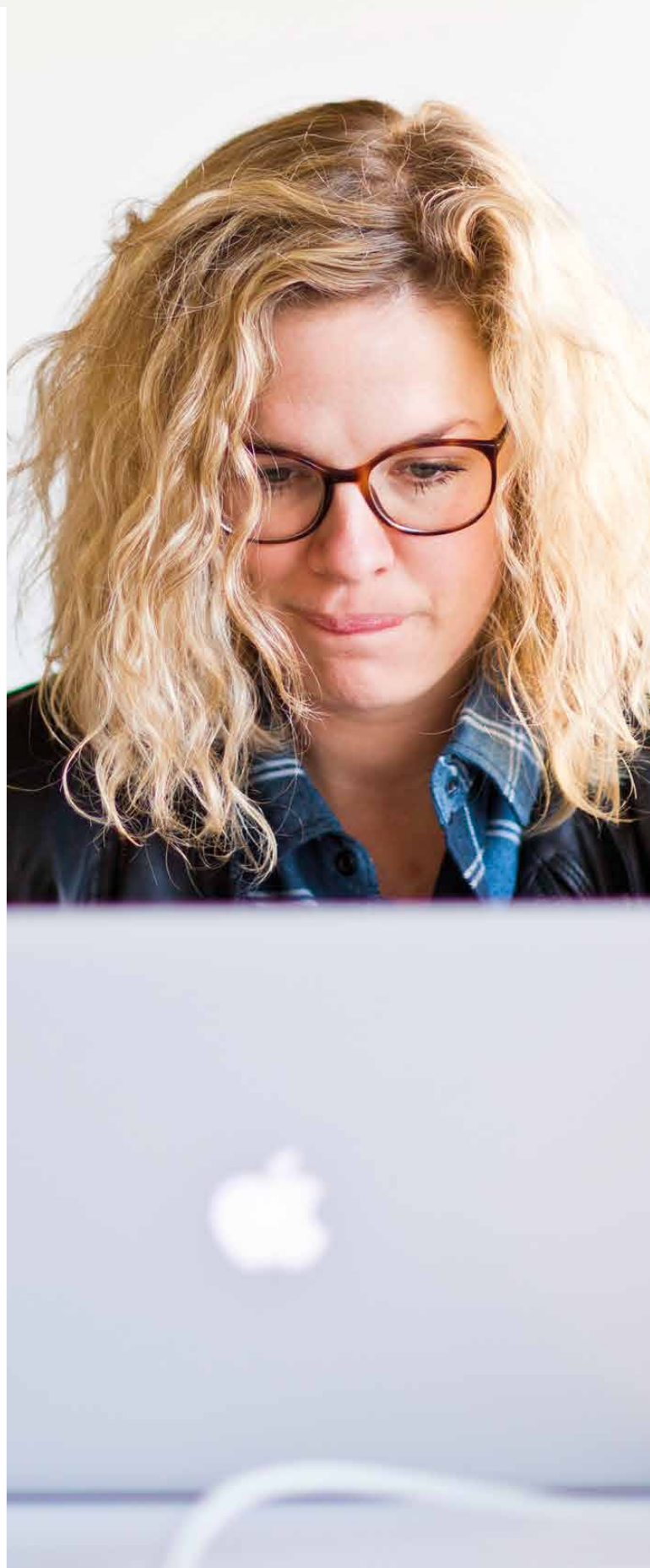
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> APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

Great care was taken in developing a balanced and detailed methodology:

Literature review (February 2018)

- A comprehensive review of existing domestic and global literature (including academic and policy material) relating to the attitudes and aspirations of young people throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland was established.

Northern Ireland/Ireland – survey (March – May 2018)

- ICR developed a survey with 1,024 18- to 30-year-olds across Northern Ireland and Ireland in association with Perceptive Insight (an independent market research association). The number of surveys was split evenly across Ireland and Northern Ireland (500 in each area, creating a robust sample for sub-analysis). The resultant data was weighted proportionately to the population distributions in Ireland and Northern Ireland, meaning the final weighted data tables comprised 290 young adults in Northern Ireland and 710 young adults in Ireland.
- Fifty sampling points in Northern Ireland and Ireland were selected, with ten surveys completed at each point. The sampling points were selected proportionately to the population distribution by county or council area. For instance, County Dublin has a population size of 1,345,402 – 28.3 per cent of Ireland's total population, so the target number here was 140 surveys. Elsewhere, County Offaly's population size of 78,003 is 1.6 per cent of Ireland's total population, so ten surveys were completed here.

- The urban-to-rural split of surveys was also reflective of the distribution of the population. Quotas were applied at each sample point (age, gender and socioeconomic group) to ensure that it was representative of the population based on census data and mid-year population estimates. In Northern Ireland, a quota was applied on community background, to ensure this was also reflective of the demographic profile.
- Taking into account the subject matter, it was established that the surveys should be implemented face-to-face. The benefit of the face-to-face approach was that it could be ensured that respondents were provided with a verbal explanation of the study, while it also encouraged participation in the study, thus helping to reduce non-response bias.
- The following tables highlight the demographic profile of the participants who took part in the survey fieldwork:

Figure 1: Location

Total	Northern Ireland	Ireland
1,024	512 (50%)	512 (50%)

Figure 2: Gender

Total	Male	Female
1,024	493 (48%)	531 (52%)

Figure 3: Age

Total	Aged 18–24	Aged 25–30
1,024	544 (53%)	480 (47%)

Sixteen focus groups across Northern Ireland and Ireland (June – July 2018)

- With five to six participants in each, the total sample size was 84. Groups were organised to ensure appropriate attention was given to Northern Ireland/Ireland and urban/rural issues.
- There were four sessions in Belfast, three in both Dublin and Derry~Londonderry, two each in Cork and Galway and one session each in Strabane and Dundalk.
- The focus groups were representative of the stipulated age bracket (18–30) and were further balanced for gender, educational attainment, economic status and community background.
- An incentive was used to aid with recruitment of the groups – €50 per participant in Ireland and £40 per participant in Northern Ireland.
- The focus groups were recorded both digitally and by way of hand-written notes.
- Focus group participants were asked a series of questions in line with the main survey topics. The focus group data was then manually coded and grouped by theme allowing for further analysis to contextualise the survey findings.
- Throughout the report, direct quotes have been used to indicate the views of particular individuals. Elsewhere, discussion regarding the focus groups reflects the general tenor of the sessions.
- The following tables highlight the demographic profile of the participants who took part in the focus groups:

Figure 4: Location

Total	Northern Ireland	Ireland
84	41	43

Figure 5: Age

Total	Aged 18–24	Aged 25–30
84	58	26

Figure 6: Gender

Total	Male	Female
84	45	39

Ethical considerations

- In addition to ensuring suitable diversity within both strands of the study (regarding the categories of age range, gender, socioeconomic status and community background), significant care was taken in developing the study within an appropriate ethical framework. The ethical principle to ‘do no harm’ was intensified by age of the participants and the delicate nature of the content of the issues discussed in the study. All participants were provided with an information sheet at the inception of the project, which identified that researchers would guarantee their anonymity in the final report. Young people who completed the survey did so in the

presence of a fieldworker and were encouraged to ask any questions they may have had at any point of its completion. Participants involved in the focus groups were asked to fill in a consent form to indicate that they understood the remit of the study and to confirm they agreed that their views could be anonymously used within the confines of this report. All participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Researchers will also ensure that where participants have requested feedback on the study, they will be provided with an overview of the study’s findings and be directed to an online version of the final report.

> APPENDIX 2: SURVEY RESULTS

Education

1. How well do you feel your education has prepared you for the world of work?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	22%	19%	25%	21%	23%	21%	23%
Some extent	48%	48%	49%	48%	49%	46%	51%
Not much	22%	23%	20%	22%	21%	26%	18%
Not at all	7%	9%	5%	7%	6%	7%	6%
Not sure	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%

2. How well do you feel your education has prepared you for life outside of work (e.g. living independently/having a family)?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	16%	13%	18%	15%	17%	13%	18%
Some extent	40%	39%	41%	40%	41%	37%	44%
Not much	32%	33%	30%	32%	31%	36%	27%
Not at all	11%	14%	8%	11%	10%	13%	9%
Not sure	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%

3. How well do you feel your education has prepared you for studying/working abroad?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	17%	15%	19%	19%	16%	16%	18%
Some extent	30%	33%	28%	34%	26%	28%	33%
Not much	25%	24%	27%	23%	28%	25%	26%
Not at all	21%	23%	20%	19%	23%	29%	13%
Not sure	6%	5%	7%	5%	8%	2%	10%

Employment

4. To what extent, if at all, do you think a lack of jobs presents a challenge for young people?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	42%	40%	44%	41%	44%	54%	31%
Some extent	35%	34%	35%	38%	32%	36%	34%
Not much	17%	20%	15%	16%	19%	9%	26%
Not at all	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%	2%	8%
Not sure	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%

5. To what extent, if at all, do you think job security presents a challenge for young people?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	40%	37%	42%	36%	44%	46%	34%
Some extent	39%	39%	39%	42%	36%	39%	39%
Not much	16%	18%	14%	17%	14%	12%	20%
Not at all	4%	5%	4%	4%	5%	2%	7%
Not sure	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

6. To what extent, if at all, do you think low pay presents a challenge for young people?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	47%	47%	48%	45%	49%	58%	36%
Some extent	34%	33%	36%	35%	33%	31%	38%
Not much	14%	16%	13%	15%	14%	8%	20%
Not at all	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Not sure	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Social issues

7. To what extent, if at all, do you think barriers to accessing higher education present a challenge for young people?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	20%	20%	21%	23%	18%	21%	20%
Some extent	36%	32%	40%	35%	37%	39%	33%
Not much	30%	34%	26%	28%	33%	30%	30%
Not at all	12%	13%	11%	13%	11%	7%	16%
Not sure	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%

8. To what extent, if at all, do you think access to mental healthcare presents a challenge for young people?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	35%	32%	39%	34%	36%	37%	34%
Some extent	29%	28%	30%	28%	30%	26%	32%
Not much	21%	23%	18%	22%	19%	22%	19%
Not at all	8%	9%	8%	9%	8%	8%	9%
Not sure	7%	8%	6%	7%	7%	7%	6%

9. To what extent, if at all, do you think discrimination and prejudice present a challenge for young people?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	24%	23%	24%	25%	22%	28%	20%
Some extent	35%	32%	37%	34%	35%	38%	31%
Not much	29%	31%	27%	27%	31%	28%	30%
Not at all	10%	11%	9%	11%	10%	4%	16%
Not sure	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

10. To what extent, if at all, do you think affordable housing presents a challenge for young people?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	58%	55%	61%	54%	62%	53%	63%
Some extent	26%	27%	24%	28%	23%	26%	25%
Not much	11%	12%	11%	13%	10%	16%	6%
Not at all	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%
Not sure	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%

11. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about global poverty?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	32%	25%	38%	32%	31%	39%	24%
Quite concerned	36%	37%	36%	35%	38%	31%	42%
A little concerned	21%	24%	19%	23%	20%	21%	22%
Not concerned at all	11%	14%	8%	11%	11%	10%	12%
Not sure	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

12. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about climate change?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	27%	24%	30%	26%	28%	24%	30%
Quite concerned	31%	31%	30%	31%	30%	26%	35%
A little concerned	24%	23%	25%	24%	24%	24%	23%
Not concerned at all	19%	23%	15%	19%	18%	25%	12%
Not sure	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about economic instability?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	29%	29%	30%	28%	32%	30%	29%
Quite concerned	34%	33%	32%	36%	32%	33%	35%
A little concerned	23%	24%	23%	24%	23%	21%	25%
Not concerned at all	12%	13%	11%	15%	9%	16%	8%
Not sure	1%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%

14. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about population growth?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	20%	19%	21%	19%	21%	21%	19%
Quite concerned	25%	25%	24%	22%	27%	22%	27%
A little concerned	28%	26%	31%	31%	26%	24%	33%
Not concerned at all	26%	30%	23%	27%	25%	32%	21%
Not sure	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

15. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about spread of diseases?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	23%	19%	27%	24%	22%	25%	21%
Quite concerned	33%	31%	35%	33%	33%	30%	36%
A little concerned	28%	30%	25%	26%	29%	27%	28%
Not concerned at all	15%	18%	12%	15%	15%	17%	13%
Not sure	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

16. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about energy scarcity?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	16%	14%	17%	16%	16%	14%	18%
Quite concerned	30%	29%	31%	30%	30%	28%	33%
A little concerned	31%	32%	29%	30%	32%	31%	30%
Not concerned at all	22%	24%	21%	23%	22%	26%	19%
Not sure	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

17. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about armed conflict?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	30%	23%	36%	32%	27%	29%	30%
Quite concerned	29%	30%	27%	28%	29%	27%	30%
A little concerned	23%	23%	23%	21%	25%	22%	23%
Not concerned at all	18%	23%	13%	18%	18%	21%	14%
Not sure	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

18. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the refugee crisis?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	27%	19%	33%	28%	25%	28%	26%
Quite concerned	30%	29%	31%	29%	31%	28%	32%
A little concerned	25%	29%	21%	24%	25%	24%	26%
Not concerned at all	17%	22%	13%	18%	17%	20%	15%
Not sure	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%

19. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about global terrorism?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	38%	31%	44%	37%	38%	37%	38%
Quite concerned	31%	31%	30%	31%	31%	29%	32%
A little concerned	18%	21%	16%	18%	19%	17%	20%
Not concerned at all	13%	17%	9%	13%	12%	16%	9%
Not sure	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%

20. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about nuclear weapons?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very concerned	31%	26%	35%	33%	28%	29%	32%
Quite concerned	26%	25%	26%	24%	27%	24%	27%
A little concerned	22%	24%	21%	22%	22%	21%	23%
Not concerned at all	20%	25%	15%	19%	20%	24%	15%
Not sure	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%

21. To what extent, if at all, do you think Brexit presents a challenge for young people today?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	27%	29%	26%	24%	30%	30%	25%
Some extent	26%	23%	28%	27%	24%	25%	27%
Not much	19%	20%	19%	19%	19%	21%	18%
Not at all	14%	14%	13%	15%	13%	12%	15%
Not sure	14%	14%	14%	14%	13%	12%	16%

Politics

22. On a scale from 1 to 10, how much, if at all, do you trust the Irish Government at Dáil Éireann?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
1 (no trust)	21%	24%	19%	18%	25%	26%	17%
2	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	9%	8%
3	10%	9%	11%	9%	11%	10%	10%
4	10%	11%	9%	9%	11%	11%	9%
5	18%	17%	19%	18%	18%	16%	20%
6	8%	8%	8%	9%	7%	4%	11%
7	7%	7%	8%	8%	7%	5%	10%
8	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	2%	5%
9	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
10 (strongly trust)	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	2%	0%
Not sure	12%	11%	12%	14%	8%	15%	8%

23. On a scale from 1 to 10, how much, if at all, do you trust the European Parliament?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
1 (no trust)	19%	23%	16%	15%	24%	22%	17%
2	7%	7%	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%
3	10%	10%	9%	8%	11%	10%	9%
4	11%	11%	11%	8%	14%	11%	12%
5	19%	16%	21%	19%	19%	18%	20%
6	9%	8%	9%	9%	8%	7%	10%
7	6%	6%	7%	8%	5%	7%	6%
8	3%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%	3%
9	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
10 (strongly trust)	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Not sure	14%	14%	14%	17%	10%	14%	14%

24. On a scale from 1 to 10 how much, if at all, do you trust your local council?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
1 (no trust)	14%	14%	13%	11%	16%	14%	13%
2	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
3	9%	11%	7%	10%	8%	8%	10%
4	11%	11%	12%	11%	12%	11%	12%
5	19%	18%	20%	17%	21%	17%	21%
6	13%	14%	11%	13%	13%	14%	11%
7	10%	10%	10%	13%	7%	11%	9%
8	7%	5%	8%	6%	7%	8%	5%
9	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%
10 (strongly trust)	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%
Not sure	7%	6%	8%	9%	5%	6%	9%

25. On a scale from 1 to 10 how much, if at all, do you trust the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
1 (no trust)	31%	33%	29%	29%	33%	36%	29%
2	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%
3	9%	8%	10%	8%	10%	11%	8%
4	8%	9%	7%	8%	7%	8%	7%
5	13%	12%	14%	14%	12%	12%	14%
6	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	3%
7	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%
8	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%
9	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
10 (strongly trust)	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Not sure	21%	20%	21%	22%	20%	11%	31%

26. On a scale from 1 to 10 how much, if at all, do you trust the UK government at Westminster?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
1 (no trust)	25%	27%	24%	23%	28%	26%	25%
2	9%	8%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%
3	11%	11%	11%	10%	13%	11%	11%
4	8%	10%	7%	8%	8%	11%	5%
5	14%	13%	16%	14%	15%	14%	15%
6	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%	3%
7	3%	4%	3%	3%	4%	5%	2%
8	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	0%
9	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
10 (strongly trust)	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Not sure	21%	20%	21%	24%	18%	13%	29%

27. Have you ever done any of the following?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Signed a petition	45%	41%	49%	44%	46%	50%	40%
Voted in local, national or European elections	57%	52%	62%	45%	70%	52%	62%
Contacted a political representative	20%	19%	20%	15%	25%	18%	21%
Taken part in a government consultation	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%
Joined a protest	15%	15%	15%	14%	16%	15%	15%
Active part in a campaign	11%	11%	11%	12%	11%	12%	11%
Engaged in online activism	11%	11%	10%	12%	10%	12%	9%
Joined a political party	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	3%	5%
Run for a political party	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Held a political position	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
None of the above	28%	31%	25%	34%	20%	30%	26%

28. Which of the following, if any, would make the biggest difference in increasing your participation in politics?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
If there was more info on existing opportunities	18%	16%	20%	20%	15%	16%	20%
If political representatives were from more diverse backgrounds	14%	13%	15%	13%	15%	15%	13%
If I had a better knowledge about how politics works	27%	21%	32%	30%	23%	29%	25%
If there were new ways to engage with politicians	17%	17%	17%	17%	18%	19%	15%
If I could vote on more decisions that affect the whole country	26%	24%	29%	27%	26%	33%	20%
If I could vote on more decisions in my immediate local area	28%	26%	30%	28%	29%	31%	25%
If politicians behaved differently in debates and discussions	23%	22%	24%	22%	24%	26%	20%
None of the above	37%	41%	33%	36%	39%	38%	37%
Other	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	5%	1%

29. How likely would you be to vote in an immediate general election, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means absolutely to vote, and 1 means you would be absolutely certain not to vote?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
1 (certain not to vote)	15%	19%	11%	17%	13%	20%	10%
2	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%
3	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%
4	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
5	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%	10%	4%
6	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%
7	7%	5%	8%	7%	7%	6%	7%
8	10%	12%	9%	9%	11%	10%	10%
9	7%	8%	6%	7%	8%	6%	9%
10 (certain to vote)	37%	31%	42%	35%	39%	30%	44%
Not sure	6%	6%	6%	7%	5%	6%	6%

30. Which of the following do you use to keep you reliably informed with accurate information on current events?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Twitter	26%	24%	28%	28%	23%	28%	24%
Facebook	61%	55%	66%	64%	57%	61%	60%
Snapchat	31%	28%	34%	37%	24%	31%	30%
YouTube	35%	38%	32%	39%	30%	38%	31%
Other social media	21%	21%	21%	22%	20%	24%	18%
Broadsheet newspapers in print or online	20%	21%	19%	17%	24%	18%	22%
Tabloid newspapers in print or online	16%	15%	16%	13%	19%	14%	17%
TV news	61%	58%	63%	56%	66%	63%	58%
Online news websites	41%	40%	41%	39%	43%	40%	42%
Friends	56%	53%	58%	54%	58%	61%	51%
Family	54%	49%	59%	53%	55%	63%	46%
None of the above	3%	4%	1%	4%	1%	3%	2%

31. To what extent, if at all, do you think social media is a good way of learning about social and political issues, or current affairs?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Great extent	20%	16%	23%	23%	16%	19%	20%
Some extent	41%	39%	43%	42%	40%	40%	42%
Not much	16%	17%	15%	11%	21%	13%	19%
Not at all	17%	21%	14%	17%	18%	20%	15%
Not sure	6%	8%	5%	8%	4%	8%	4%

Looking ahead

32. Thinking ahead over the coming years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about your life in general?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very optimistic	33%	32%	33%	31%	35%	30%	35%
Optimistic	53%	52%	55%	54%	52%	52%	54%
Neither/nor	10%	11%	9%	11%	9%	11%	8%
Pessimistic	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%	2%
Very pessimistic	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Not sure	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

33. Thinking ahead over the coming years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the way Ireland/Northern Ireland is going?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very optimistic	7%	7%	7%	7%	6%	2%	12%
Optimistic	30%	31%	28%	28%	31%	18%	41%
Neither/nor	29%	25%	32%	32%	25%	34%	23%
Pessimistic	24%	25%	24%	21%	27%	31%	17%
Very pessimistic	8%	8%	7%	7%	8%	11%	4%
Not sure	3%	4%	2%	4%	2%	4%	3%

34. Thinking ahead over the coming years, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the way the world is going?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
Very optimistic	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	2%	6%
Optimistic	21%	20%	22%	21%	21%	16%	26%
Neither/nor	32%	33%	32%	34%	30%	35%	30%
Pessimistic	28%	29%	28%	26%	31%	30%	27%
Very pessimistic	10%	9%	10%	9%	10%	13%	7%
Not sure	5%	5%	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%

35. Compared to your parents' generation, do you think your generation is better off or worse off or about the same in relation to educational opportunities?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
My generation is better off	78%	75%	79%	75%	80%	67%	88%
My generation is worse off	11%	13%	10%	12%	11%	16%	6%
About the same	9%	10%	9%	10%	8%	13%	5%
Not sure	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	4%	1%

36. Compared to your parents' generation, do you think your generation is better off or worse off or about the same in relation to housing opportunities?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
My generation is better off	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	33%	27%
My generation is worse off	55%	56%	54%	54%	56%	48%	61%
About the same	11%	10%	12%	11%	11%	14%	7%
Not sure	4%	5%	3%	5%	3%	4%	4%

37. Compared to your parents' generation, do you think your generation is better off or worse off or about the same in relation to your health outlook?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
My generation is better off	62%	64%	61%	65%	59%	53%	71%
My generation is worse off	23%	21%	24%	19%	27%	29%	17%
About the same	12%	12%	13%	12%	13%	14%	11%
Not sure	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%	4%	1%

38. Compared to your parents' generation, do you think your generation is better off or worse off or about the same in relation to your quality of life?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
My generation is better off	56%	57%	55%	58%	54%	54%	58%
My generation is worse off	23%	22%	24%	20%	26%	19%	27%
About the same	17%	17%	18%	17%	18%	23%	12%
Not sure	3%	4%	3%	5%	2%	4%	3%

39. Compared to your parents' generation, do you think your generation is better off or worse off or about the same in relation to your employment opportunities?

	Total	Male	Female	18–24	25–30	Northern Ireland	Ireland
My generation is better off	50%	51%	49%	49%	51%	37%	63%
My generation is worse off	34%	34%	34%	34%	34%	41%	26%
About the same	14%	13%	14%	13%	14%	17%	10%
Not sure	3%	2%	3%	4%	1%	4%	1%



> APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

25 June/Belfast

- School leavers/aged 19 to 27 (14.00, ICR)

27 June/Belfast

- Graduates/aged 21 to 25 (14.00, ICR)

3 July/Derry~Londonderry

- Graduates/aged 21 to 24 (11.00, St Columb's Park House)
- Cross-community school leavers/aged 18 to 21 (14.00, Reach Across)

4 July/Strabane

- School leavers/aged 18 to 21 (12.00, Access Youth Engagement)

18 July/Belfast

- Graduates/aged 25 to 30 (19.00, ICR)

19 July/Derry~Londonderry

- LGBTQ+ group/aged 18 to 30 (13.00, Rainbow)

24 July/Dublin

- Traveller group/aged 18 to 30 (11.00, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre)
- Male group/aged 20 to 24 (18.00, Marine Hotel)
- Female group/aged 25 to 30 (19.45, Marine Hotel)

25 July/Mallow (Cork)

- Mixed gender/aged 20 to 24 (18.00, Hibernian Hotel)
- Male group/aged 25 to 30 (19.45, Hibernian Hotel)

26 July/Galway

- Female group/aged 20 to 24 (18.00, Nox Hotel)
- Mixed gender/aged 25 to 30 (19.45, Nox Hotel)

30 July/Belfast

- Interface residents (14.00, ICR)

31 July/Dundalk

- Mixed gender/aged 20 to 30 (18.30, Imperial Hotel)





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Next Generation

The Next Generation series is part of the British Council's commitment to exploring youth voice and choice. It aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voice and support better youth policymaking.

The reports focus on young people in countries experiencing a period of significant change, to ensure that young people's voices are heard and their interests represented in decisions that will have lasting implications for their lives.

www.britishcouncil.org/research/next-generation

<https://nireland.britishcouncil.org>

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