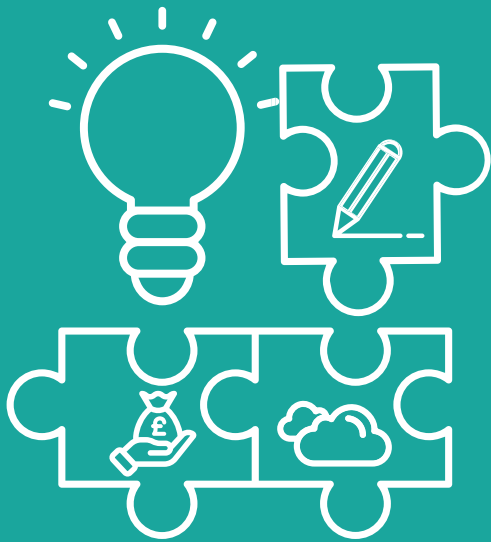


Imagine Change:

Youth perspectives on government in Northern Ireland and priorities for the future



TED^x
DerryLondonderry
x = independently organized TED event

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Overview

Pivotal and Tedx Derry Londonderry have teamed up to gain a better understanding of issues that matter most to young people in the North West.

This report contains findings from a snapshot survey of young people in the North West of Northern Ireland. The project was established as a collaboration between TEDx Derry Londonderry and Pivotal.

TEDx brings the spirit of TED to local communities across the world to provide an environment for thought provoking discussions to take place. Whilst there have been some TEDx events across Northern Ireland, the event has never been to Derry Londonderry. The event is based on the theme 'imagine change' to explore the possibilities that could occur when change is embraced.

TEDx Derry Londonderry wishes to better understand youth perspectives on change to inspire their speakers to better understand challenges and strengths within the North West. This project is the part of a Northern Ireland wide youth research-and-engagement project led by Pivotal.

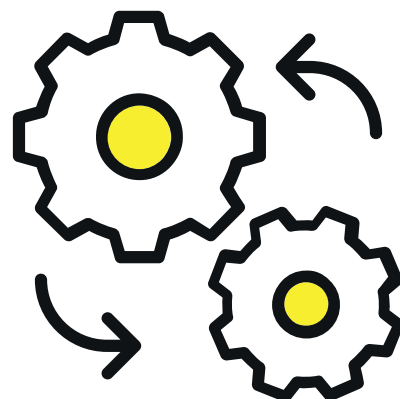
Pivotal is the only wide reaching, independent think tank in Northern Ireland. Pivotal wishes to improve public policy and the discussions about public policy. Pivotal and Tedx Derry Londonderry developed a brief online survey to obtain a snapshot of young people's priorities for the future and their views of government functioning.

217 participants responded to the survey, with young people aged 11-14 making up the largest group of respondents. The findings indicate that young people are concerned about their education, the climate crisis and mental health provision in Northern Ireland. Respondents want to see policy change that creates better jobs, improved mental health services and a greener future in

Northern Ireland. Young people in the small sample valued equality and respect as essential factors for future change.

The survey highlighted the value of drawing on young people's opinions to develop solutions to policy challenges. Young people wanted to see increased unity within government, urging the government to work together to address important issues such as climate change and mental health.

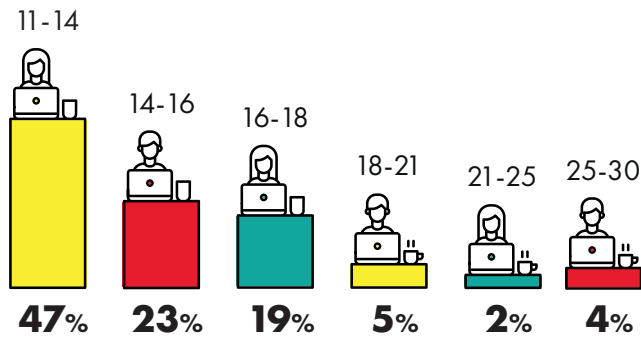
Pivotal will continue to work with young people on policy development as part of a wider youth research plan that commences in the spring of 2021.



Survey findings

Who took part in the survey?

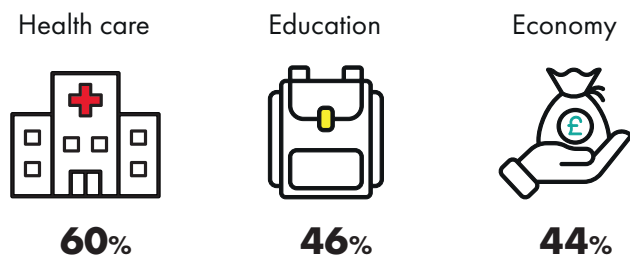
The online survey was designed for young people aged 11-21 years old. However, it was notable that 10 individuals aged 23-30 completed the survey. Graphic 1 represents a breakdown of age ranges of respondents which indicates that young people aged 11-14 years old were the largest age range completing the survey.



Graphic 1

Participants were invited to rate the Executive’s decision making on a Likert scale from 0-poor to 10- excellent across a range of issues. Graphics 2 and 3 provide a summary of appraisals from young people. The figures in these graphics reflect participant's appraisals of government performance in six areas.

The Executive are making good decisions in this area



Graphic 2

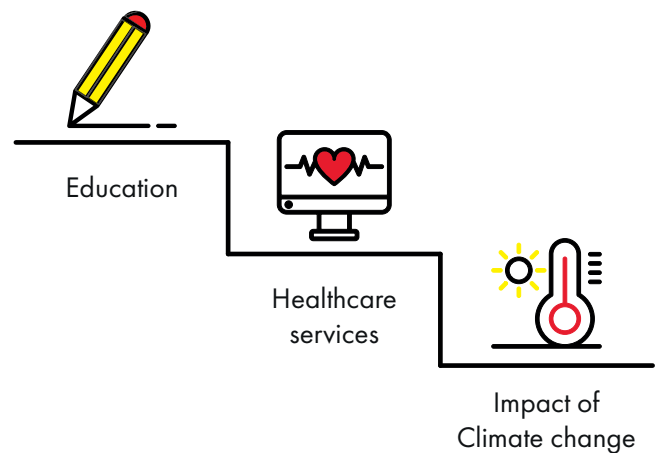
The Executive are making poor decisions in this area



Graphic 3

What were participants’ biggest areas of concern?

The survey invited respondents to rank their biggest concerns in priority order. Graphic 4 illustrates that the majority of respondents were most concerned about education, healthcare and climate change. These issues are further explored in young people’s responses to their ideas for change.



Graphic 4

One big idea for change

Respondents were asked to share their 'one big idea' for change in Northern Ireland. The responses to this question were analysed and grouped into five broad areas for change:

- 1. Better cooperation across government to address 'the bigger picture'**
- 2. Strategies to address the climate emergency**
- 3. Educational reform**
- 4. Better provision of mental health services**
- 5. Investment in local communities and job opportunities**

Better cooperation across government to address 'the bigger picture'

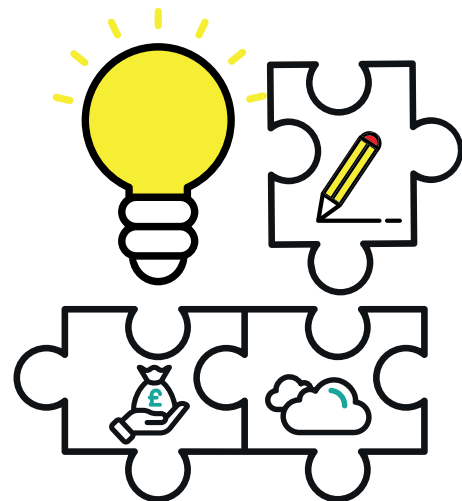
This theme received the highest number of responses from participants. Respondents described concerns about sectarianism within their local area and expressed a desire for "peace within all communities". It was interesting to note that some young people linked community sectarianism with difficulties in government functioning. One participant summed this issue up with the following statement,

"Aye if they would stop talking about orange and the green it's always about protestants and catholics and never the bigger picture"

Young people viewed change being contingent on joint working between politicians to work together on issues of joint concern such as homelessness and crime.

Strategies to address the climate emergency

Environment concerns were raised by a high proportion of young people who described a range of strategies to address the climate crisis in Northern Ireland. Young people raised two clear solutions; a reduction in use of single-use plastic and an increase in reusable energy.



Educational reform

Young people described a range of ideas to reform education which were grouped under two main solutions; increased choice and diversity within the curriculum and a desire from some young people for an increase in integrated education.

Better provision of mental health services

Young people consistently raised concerns about poor access to mental health services and a lack of early intervention within the North West. There was a perception amongst some that inadequate service provision could lead to increases in suicide.

Investment in local communities and job opportunities

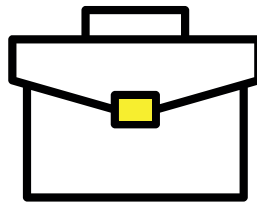
Young people requested better infrastructure in their local communities to improve their quality of life and to create job opportunities. Many participants described a need for "better roads" and "more houses and hospitals" in their local area.

Respondent also highlighted a lack of job opportunities in their local area and a need for "better opportunities", with one person noting that there needed to be "less factories" and "...better opportunities", stopping the 'brain drain'. The last comment appears to refer to the high levels of educational migration experienced in Northern Ireland.

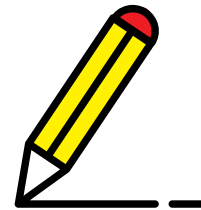
Summary of recommendations



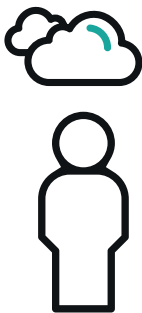
Unity within government and communities



Increase job opportunities



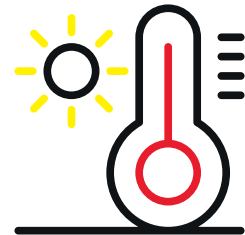
Educational reform



Increase mental health provision



Better infrastructure



Address the environment crisis

This survey provides a snapshot of young people’s opinions about government functioning and solutions for change. Young people showed great insight into challenges within their local communities and broader government functioning. The solutions and areas for change demonstrate the importance of youth participation as an integral part of government’s policy development.

Young people in the survey imagine change through a cohesive government that have future-focused policies to address community relations, the climate emergency, mental health waiting lists and better quality jobs. Young people consistently valued equality and respect as essential factors for future change in Northern Ireland.

Youth participation is a key component of Pivotal’s research agenda in 2021. We have been pleased to work with TEDx on this survey for their Derry Londonderry event and we would like to thank all the young people who took part.

Our future work will extend on the issues raised in this report with young people across Northern Ireland in order to develop evidence-based policy recommendations. Please visit our website for details of upcoming projects.

3rd February 2021

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