# Our Voices Coming Out of Lockdown

## Voices in Lockdown

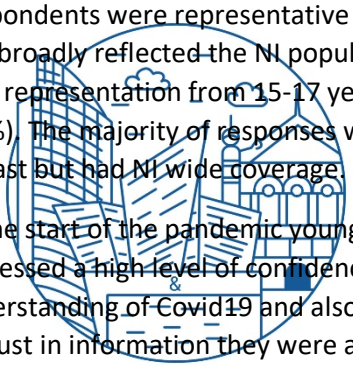
At the start of the Covid19 pandemic and the government enforced lockdown on the 23rd March 2020 the NIYF committed to ensure that the voices of young people would not be lost.

Just four days later the NIYF launched the first of two surveys to reach out to young people across NI to gather their feelings, views and hopes as they entered lockdown.

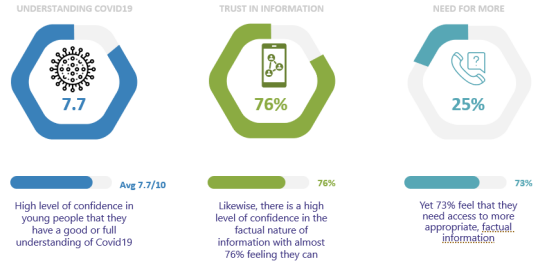
With a subsequent survey at the end of May focusing on coming out of lockdown a total of 1,065 responses were received.

## Findings

Respondents were representative of all ages and broadly reflected the NI population with a high representation from 15-17 year olds (36%). The majority of responses were from Belfast but had NI wide coverage.



At the start of the pandemic young people expressed a high level of confidence in their understanding of Covid19 and also in the level of trust in information they were accessing. However, with much of the information being sourced from social media it is important to reflect on the trustworthiness of posts. This is reflected in the fact that a further 25% expressed a clear desire for more appropriate and factual information. Moreover, many questions were raised in the second survey around the lack of clear information & guidance from government.




## Changing nature of concerns

From the first to the second survey the nature of questions asked reflected the concerns of young people. At the start of the pandemic 74% believe that there is not enough testing going but the issue of testing was not prevalent at all with a focus on the nature of the lockdown and education as the key themes.

## Representation

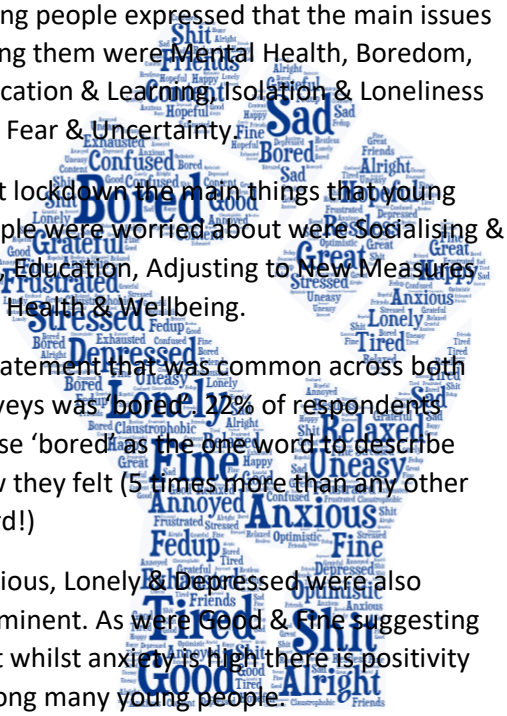
A critical issue for respondents to the surveys was the perceived lack of engagement with young people. 72.5% of respondents feel that their voice has not been considered as important

Likewise, some 80% feel that decision makers aren't listening and 88% felt that it is important that young people are part of the decision-making process.

## Key Concerns

Young people expressed that the main issues facing them were Mental Health, Boredom, Education & Learning, Isolation & Loneliness and Fear & Uncertainty.

Post lockdown the main things that young people were worried about were Socialising & Fun, Education, Adjusting to New Measures and Health & Wellbeing.




A statement that was common across both surveys was 'bored'. 12% of respondents chose 'bored' as the one word to describe how they felt (5 times more than any other word!)

Anxious, Lonely & Depressed were also prominent. As were Good & Fine suggesting that whilst anxiety is high there is positivity among many young people.

## Hopes

This positivity was reflected in the hopes that young people expressed for the future, post lockdown.

From looking forward to holidays and seeing family again to getting back to education and having good job opportunities almost 300 hopes were articulated.

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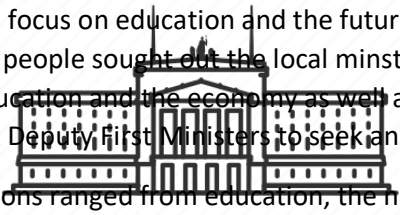
*That we won't return to normal - that we will be kinder and more generous people. Especially to those who really NEED it.*

*I would hope that this situation has put life into perspective for some people and that it's important not just in time like this but all the time to rally together as a whole community to support one another and to celebrate amazing/positive things rather than focus on the negatives*

Many young people also expressed a desire to help during the lockdown recognising that whilst they were healthy that they could help others in their community.

## Speaking Truth to Power

Young People have many questions (891 to be exact) to ask of key influencers from the Prime Minister and local leaders to Donald Trump.



With a focus on education and the future, young people sought out the local minsters for education and the economy as well as the First & Deputy First Ministers to seek answers.

Questions ranged from education, the nature of the COVID19 response and the lockdown but also on testing and PPE queries and considered questions around healthcare provision with a focus on mental health.

*After the Covid-19 Crisis comes to an end, will you take the views of young people more seriously after the sacrifices and contributions we have made throughout it?*

## NI Youth Forum

We believe that all young people have ideas and opinions worth listening to and we want to help you get involved in changing things in your school, community, and in society.

The NIYF survey formed the only NI representation within the UK wide RCPCH (Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health) research on children's and young people's views.