

Ombudsman for Children’s Office: Tomorrow Starts with Us - Survey Results (<https://www.activelink.ie/node/110126>)



Survey says almost half of children are bullied and they don’t feel listened to by adults – Tomorrow Starts with Us children’s survey published by the Ombudsman for Children’s Office

The Ombudsman for Children’s Office (OCO) commissioned *Tomorrow Starts with Us*, a survey carried out with Amárach Research to mark the OCO’s 20th Anniversary. The cost of living, mental health services and future housing needs are the top three concerns for over 1,000 secondary school students who took part in the survey. *Tomorrow Starts with Us* focused on children’s experiences on a wide range of topics including education, bullying, racism and discrimination, mental health in schools, online safety, accessibility, public transport, the student voice and how Ireland rates as a country for young people. The survey also invited children to give their view on solutions and changes they want to see.

Speaking ahead of the publication of *Tomorrow Starts with Us*, Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon said:

“A very worrying outcome from the survey which was carried out among over 1,000 secondary school children in April 2024 is that nearly half (47%) of children say they’ve experienced bullying; this statistic goes across boys and girls and at all age groups. Bullying regularly features in complaints that come to the OCO so it is not surprising that bullying has come up in the survey. However, its prominence and the widespread nature of bullying is really concerning and emphasises the need for the Department of Education to continue to focus on the Action Plan on Bullying, Cinealtás.

“Racism and discrimination is another issue affecting children in our schools with 36% having experienced discrimination and 15% experienced racism. Children told us they want more education on these issues and they want more consequences when it does happen.

“Children also us that they rarely feel listened to by adults both inside and outside the classroom. This despite the fact that including children’s views on decisions that affect them being a fundamental right in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as making for more effective policies. Something is going wrong if children do not feel listened to by policy makers, educators and other adults. I know efforts are being made to include children’s voices in many areas, including within the Department of Education, but more needs to be done to communicate to children what we are doing with their opinions? If the current population of school children do not feel listened to by those in power then it could explain why they are so concerned about their future, as shown by the top 3 concerns.

“On a very positive note 71% of children told us they believe Ireland is a good country to reach their full potential in. They describe Ireland as ‘class’, ‘welcoming’ and ‘wonderful’. It is also very encouraging that 62% rate the education system as being good or very good. However, when it comes to the future of education, it is clear that children have lots of ideas on how to improve the system and the curriculum.

The majority of children would like less emphasis on exam results, less homework, more emphasis on wellbeing and more choices for subjects. With children the key stakeholders in our education system, it is incumbent on us to pay attention to what they are saying and take these recommendations on board in a meaningful way.

“There is a lot for us to take from this survey and learnings to be had that will inform the work of our Office in the coming years. With a General Election coming down the track I am committed to ensuring the powerful messages of the 1,000+ children surveyed for our 20th Anniversary are elevated to policy makers in this and future Governments.”

Access the full [Tomorrow Starts With Us](https://www.oco.ie/library/tomorrow-starts-with-us-a-childrens-survey-on-the-future-of-ireland-to-mark-the-20th-anniversary-of-the-oco/) (<https://www.oco.ie/library/tomorrow-starts-with-us-a-childrens-survey-on-the-future-of-ireland-to-mark-the-20th-anniversary-of-the-oco/>) survey.

Region

Nationwide

[More information \(https://www.oco.ie/news/survey-says-almost-half-of-children-are-bullied-and-they-dont-feel-listened-to-by-adults-tomorrow-starts-with-us-childrens-survey-published-by-the-ombudsman-for-children/\)](https://www.oco.ie/news/survey-says-almost-half-of-children-are-bullied-and-they-dont-feel-listened-to-by-adults-tomorrow-starts-with-us-childrens-survey-published-by-the-ombudsman-for-children/)

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