

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2005

Technical Notes

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What is the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey?

The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey was launched in the autumn of 1998. Its mission is to monitor the attitudes and behaviour of people in Northern Ireland annually to provide a time-series and a public record of how our attitudes and behaviour develop on a wide range of social policy issues. The survey is run on a modular format and while two modules are repeated every year (*Political Attitudes* and *Community Relations*) the rest of the survey varies annually, with all the modules designed to be repeated in years to come.

The survey aims to provide:

- A local resource for use by the general public
- A data source for a more theoretical academic debate

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the funders for the 2005 survey who have been most supportive of the overall aims of the project. They include Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Electoral Commission and Department for Employment and Learning.

The NILT team works with subject specialists to obtain funding for a specific module and to develop the relevant questions. In 2005, we were very pleased to work with:

- Dr Chris Gilligan (School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies, University of Ulster): Attitudes to minority ethnic people
- Professor Suzanne McDonough (School of Health Sciences, University of Ulster) and Professor Dave Baxter (School of Physiotherapy, University of Otago): Health issues and complementary medicine

Links with other surveys

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey is a direct descendent of the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey (NISA) which ran from 1989 to 1996. NISA was a sister survey to the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA), and, by running the same modules as BSA, it provided a time-series of social attitudes allowing comparisons with Britain. Against the background of the new political arrangements in Northern Ireland it was agreed that the new Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey would be better served by cutting its links with its British counterpart. NILT now carries on the tradition of a time-series of attitudes but has shifted the focus away from comparisons with Britain. It is largely Northern Ireland focused, it is social policy focused, and it is designed to be used by the wider public in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, every year includes a substantial component which either continues an old NISA time-series, or replicates a BSA module.

Technical details of the 2005 survey

The overall design

The 2005 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey involved 1200 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 years or over. The number of respondents has been reduced from 1800 in previous years due to problems in securing funding for the survey. The main interview was carried out using computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) and the respondent was then asked to complete a self completion questionnaire.

In 1998, 1999 and 2000, the Young Life and Times Survey ran alongside the adult survey and interviewed young people aged 12 to 17. However, this methodology was reviewed in 2001. Leading on from this, the Young Life and Times restarted in 2003, but with a different methodology from before, and not linked to the adult survey. (Full details on the Young Life and Times Survey can be found at www.ark.ac.uk/ylt)

Survey content

The survey consists of a number of different modules, each based on a specific topic. The modules included in the 2005 survey are:

Background information on the respondents

Health issues and complementary medicine

Democratic participation

Political attitudes

Community relations

Attitudes to minority ethnic people

Gender and family roles

Fieldwork

All interviews were conducted during the period October 2005 to January 2006. Interviewing was carried out by social survey interviewers employed by Research and Evaluation Services (RES). All fieldworkers attended one of three briefing sessions conducted jointly by RES and members of the NILT project team. All interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes. Interviewers made up to a maximum of five calls before the person identified in the sample was deemed to be 'non-obtainable'. The self completion questionnaire was either completed and handed back to the interviewer at the time of the main interview, or the interviewer called back at a later stage to collect it.

Advance mailshot

Households identified in the sample were sent an advance letter which explained the background to the survey, outlined the method by which an individual respondent would be selected from the household, and requested co-operation with the project. The letter provided households with contact details for the project team as well as for RES.

Sampling design

The survey was designed to yield a representative sample of men and women aged 18 and over living in Northern Ireland. The Postal Address File (PAF) was used as the sampling frame for the survey and a simple random sample of addresses was obtained after stratification into three geographic regions (Belfast, East of the Bann and West of the Bann). This was done to ensure the adequate representation of areas of lower population density and is standard practice in Northern Ireland social surveys. At selected addresses, the person whose birthday came next was selected to be the subject of the survey.

The sample selected was slightly larger than necessary in order to provide reserve addresses. Interviewers were instructed to make a total of five calls, or to have received a refusal or other information confirming that an interview would not be obtained, before being issued with reserve addresses. This was to ensure optimal response from the main sample.

Response rate

Table 1.1 shows the status of addresses, and the number of addresses in scope. **Table 1.2** shows the reason for non achievement of interviews with individuals drawn in the sample. **Table 1.3** shows the response rate for the self completion questionnaires.

Table 1.1 Status of addresses		
Total Addresses Issued	Vacant /Derelict/ Commercial	Total in scope
2061	83	1978

Table 1.2 Breakdown of response		
	No.	%
Achieved	1200	61
Refused	507	26
Non-contact	247	12
Other	24	1
Total	1978	

Table 1.3 Completion of self completion questionnaires	
Number of main stage interviews	1200
Number of self completion achieved	1039
% of self completion achieved	87

Sampling errors and confidence intervals

Table 1.4 sets out sampling errors and confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level relating to a Simple Random Sample design as used in the survey. Note that the margin of error for all sample estimates is within the parameters of $\pm 2.8\%$.

Table 1.4 Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables				
		% p	Standard Error of p (%)	95% Confidence limits
Age	18 - 24	11.7	0.93	9.88 – 13.52
	25 - 44	32.6	1.36	29.94 – 35.26
	45 - 64	31.5	1.34	28.87 – 34.13
	65 - 74	13.6	0.99	11.66 – 15.54
	75+	10.3	0.88	8.58 – 12.02
Sex	Male	46.3	1.44	43.48 – 49.12
	Female	53.8	1.44	50.98 – 56.62
Marital status	Married/Cohabiting	51.8	1.44	48.97 – 54.63
	Single	25.7	1.26	23.23 – 28.17
	Widow/Div/Sep	22.6	1.21	20.23 – 24.97
Religion	Catholic	35.2	1.38	32.50 – 37.9
	Protestant	52.6	1.44	49.77 – 55.43
	None	9.7	0.85	8.03 – 11.37
	Other	1.8	0.38	1.05 – 2.55

Data preparation

Main survey data was collected via the NIPO computer aided interviewing package. This was converted to SPSS format prior to analysis. All paper based data (self completion modules) were entered via the SPSS data entry system. All data were merged and subject to an extensive range of inter and intra variable logic checks.

Deriving social class variables

Occupational variables from the data set were derived using the 'Computer Assisted Standard Occupational Coding' (CASOC) software. This programme enables a match to be made between the text describing the respondent's occupation and the most similar occupational description taken from the Registrar General's Standard Classification of Occupations. When a match is made, the system automatically assigns the official three digit code from the 'Standard Classification of Occupations' to this case. This three digit code is the direct basis for the derivation of related information on a social class grouping. The data set contains the National Statistics Socio-Economic Status (NS SEC) variable, which was introduced in 2001, as well as the Registrar General's Standard Classification (which is the predecessor of the NS SEC classification).

Getting the data

Survey results are put on the Internet six months after the end of fieldwork (<http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt>), with frequencies for every question and a breakdown by age, gender and religion on offer.

A 'query' service or helpline is run for those who need additional tables or have any query about the survey. Users can contact one of the Life and Times team directly (see Contact Information on page ix). A leaflet advertising the existence of the data and how to get hold of it is also sent to schools, voluntary groups, civil servants, journalists and assembly members. The funders of the survey receive the dataset somewhat earlier than the public (three months after the end of fieldwork). Nonetheless, one of the guiding principles of the survey is that the information is made available to all and that no one person or organisation has ownership of the results. The web site also allows users to download the data in order to carry out their own particular statistical analyses.

Using the data

The documentation provided here is not a traditional 'technical report' and is designed to be easy to use rather than technically exhaustive. Users who intend to carry out sophisticated statistical analyses or to manipulate the data to investigate particular features may well want to come back to us for more precise details on the survey set-up.

The data have been tested extensively, but if you do find anything that looks like a mistake, please let us know as soon as you can.

Please note that all analyses of the adult data should be weighted in order to allow for disproportionate household size. The weighting variable is called *WTFCTOR*. The only exceptions are the few household variables (for example, tenure and household income), which do not need to be weighted.

Notes and Errata

Categorisation of Religion

At the back of this documentation is a list of other variables on the dataset. This includes the variable RELIGCAT, which categorises the variable RELIGION into 3 groups: Catholic, Protestant and No religion.

The Protestant category was created by grouping together the following denominations:

- Church of Ireland/Anglican/Episcopal
- Baptist
- Methodist
- Presbyterian
- Free Presbyterian
- Brethren
- United Reform Church (URC)/Congregational
- Pentecostal
- Church of Scotland
- Elim Pentecostal
- Reformed Presbyterian
- Non-subscribing Presbyterian
- Salvation Army
- Church of Nazarene
- Jehovah's Witness
- Mormon
- Evangelical
- Metropolitan
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Quaker
- Protestant – no denomination
- Christian – no denomination

We have omitted other religious groups from the RELIGCAT variable, as the numbers were too small to use for meaningful analysis.

Section 2: Health Issues and Complementary Medicine

Due to a programming error within the CAPI software, most respondents who said that they have used massage therapy (Q20a) were not asked 'Did you tell your GP that you were having this treatment?' (Q20d). Only the 6 respondents who said 'Yes' to CGO13Z (that is, they did not consult a practitioner, but did it themselves) were asked Q20d, instead of the 116 respondents who should have been asked this question.

Due to programming errors within the CAPI software, 'other' answers were not recorded for the HBEN2 variable (q41).

Section 6: Background

Due to programming errors within the CAPI software, 'other' answers were not recorded for the following variables:
RELIGION (Q23) and FAMRELIG (Q23a)

In addition, 49 respondents were not asked about their highest educational qualifications (q6).

Comparison with other surveys

Comparison of household characteristics

		NILT 2005*	CHS 2004/05	Northern Ireland Census 2001
<i>Characteristics of sampled households</i>				
<i>Tenure</i>	Owner occupied	73	78	70
	Rented, NIHE	17	12	19
	Rented, Other**	8	9	9
	Other (eg rent free)	1	2	3
Base=100%		1200	5234	626718

* Household characteristics are based on unweighted data from the NILT survey

** 'Rented, Other' includes rented from a housing association and rented privately

Comparison of individual characteristics

		NILT 2005	CHS 2004/05	Northern Ireland Census 2001
%				
<i>Individual characteristics</i>				
<i>Sex</i>	Male	47	47	48
	Female	53	53	52
<i>Age</i>	18-24	17	12	13
	25-34	14	18	20
	35-44	18	19	20
	45-54	17	18	16
	55-59	11	8	7
	60-64	6	7	6
	65 and over	18	18	18
Base=100%	n	1200	5234	1233753
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	28	30	30*
	Married/Cohabiting	59	56	56
	Widowed	7	7	7
	Divorced/Separated	7	7	7
Base=100%	n	1200	5234	1261257
%				
<i>Economic activity</i>	Working	53	44	58**
	Unemployed	4	3	4
	Economically inactive	44	32	38
	Refused/missing	-	21	-
Base=100%		1200	5234	1133621

* Based on total population aged 16 years and over

** Based on total population aged 18 – 74 years

Individual characteristics – NILT 2005

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	95	33	16	8	10	28
Married/cohabiting	5	61	74	77	58	59
Divorced/separated/ widowed	1	6	10	15	33	14
Base=100%	140	172	219	378	286	1195

Individual characteristics – CHS 2004/05

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	97	54	17	10	12	30
Married/cohabiting	3	41	70	76	56	56
Divorced/separated/ widowed	0	5	13	15	31	14
Base=100%	634	951	1013	1677	959	5234

Stated religious denomination

	NILT 2005	CHS 2004/05	Northern Ireland Census 2001
	%		
Protestant	51	42	48
Catholic	37	29	38
Other religion	2	<1	<1
No religion	9	2	13*
Unwilling to say/Don't know	1	26	-
Base=100%	1200	5234	1233751

* Include 'no religion' and religion not stated

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Finding a module in the questionnaires

	Main Questionnaire	Self completion questionnaire
<i>Background</i>	1 – 2, 87 – 96	N/A
<i>Health issues and complementary medicine</i>	3 – 60	N/A
<i>Democratic participation</i>	61 – 66	N/A
<i>Political attitudes</i>	66 – 69	5 - 6
<i>Community relations</i>	70 – 78	6
<i>Attitudes to minority ethnic people</i>	79 – 86	2 - 5
<i>Gender and family roles</i>	N/A	1

Other variables on the dataset

<i>WTFACTOR</i>	Weighting variable
<i>RAGECAT</i>	Age of respondent (categorised) 1 18-24 2 25-34 3 35-44 4 45-54 5 55-64 6 65+
<i>RAGEGRP</i> <i>P2AGEGP –</i> <i>P8AGEGP</i>	Age (categorised) 1 0-17 2 18-24 3 25-44 4 45-64 5 65-74 6 75+
<i>NIPARTY</i>	NI Party identification (Derived from NIPTYID1 and NIPTYID3) 4 Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) 5 Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) 6 Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) 7 Alliance Party 8 Sinn Fein 9 Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) 10 Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) 11 Women's Coalition 15 Other Party 16 None 17 Other answer (please specify) 98 Don't know 99 Refused/not answered
<i>RELIGCAT</i>	Religion of respondent (categorised) 1 Catholic 2 Protestant 3 No religion
<i>SOCLASS1</i> <i>(Respondent)</i> <i>SOCLASS2</i> <i>(Partner)</i> <i>SOCLASS</i>	Overall social class 0 Professional 1 Managerial/technical 2 Skilled non-manual 3 Skilled manual 4 Partly skilled 5 Unskilled 9 Unknown SOCLASS is based on the respondent's social class. If this is missing, then it is based on the partner's social class (if applicable).

<p><i>ANSSECA</i> (Respondent) <i>ANSSECB</i> (Partner)</p>	<p>National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (NS SEC)</p> <p>1.1 Large employers and higher managerial occupations 1.2 Higher professional occupations 2 Lower managerial and professional occupations 3 Intermediate occupations 4 Small employers and own account workers 5 Lower supervisory and technical occupations 6 Semi-routine occupations 7 Routine occupations 8 Never worked and long-term unemployed 9 Not classified</p>
<p><i>CHILDREN</i></p>	<p>Has respondent got children aged 16 or under, either living with them or not living with them? (Derived from CHILDU16 and other household information)</p> <p>1 Yes 2 No</p>