

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2008

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 2008 survey who have been supportive of the overall aims of the project, in particular Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and The Atlantic Philanthropies.

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 2008 survey

The overall design

The 2008 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey involved 1216 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 years or over. The number of respondents has been reduced from 1800 as 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.

The self-completion questionnaire was completed using the following three methods:

- CASI method – the respondent completed the self completion on the computer.
- CAPI method – the interviewer completed the self completion on the computer.
- Traditional pen and paper method – the respondent completed the self completion on paper booklet.

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 2008 survey are:

Background information on the respondents

Community relations

Attitudes to minority ethnic people and migrant workers

Ageism and ageing

Political attitudes

Religion and religious observance

Fieldwork

All interviews were conducted during the period 1st October 2008 to 28th February 2009 by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) interviewers. All interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes. 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 Letter

An advance letter was issued by NISRA to all sampled addresses prior to the interviewer calling at each address. The letter explained the purpose and rationale for the survey as well as contact details for the NISRA staff managing the project.

Sampling design

The sample for the 2008 survey consisted of a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Land and Property Services Agency list of private addresses. This is the most up-to-date listing of private households and is made available to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for research purposes. People living in institutions (though not in private households in such institutions) are excluded. A total of 2,350 addresses were selected for interview.

The Land and Property Services Agency provides a good sampling frame of addresses, but contains no information about the number of people living at an address. Further selection stages were therefore required to convert the listing of addresses to a listing of individuals from which one person (the 'selected respondent') is chosen to complete the questionnaire.

The interviewers listed all members of the household eligible for inclusion in the sample: that is, all persons aged 18 or over living at the address. From this listing of eligible adults, the interviewer's computer randomly selected one adult. This person, the selected respondent, was then asked to complete the interview.

Response rate

Table 1.1 shows the status of addresses, and the number of addresses in scope.

Table 1.2 shows the response rate for the self completion questionnaires.

	Number	Percent
Set sample of addresses	2350	
- Ineligible known	303	
- Ineligible unknown (pre-adjustment)	33	
- Eligible known (pre-adjustment)	2014	
- Ineligible (after adjustment)	307	
Eligible (after adjustment) ¹	2043	100
Fully co-operating	1201	59
Partially co-operating	14	1
Total co-operating	1215	60
Refusal to co-operate	649	32
Non-contact	150	7

¹ The adjusted eligible households include all pre-adjustment eligible households and a proportion of the pre-adjustment "eligibility unknown" households. The proportion of the pre-adjustment 'eligibility unknown' households reclassified as eligible is set at the proportion of pre-adjustment eligible households in the set sample of households: 87%.

Table 1.2 Completed self completion questionnaires	
Number of main stage interviews	1215
Number of self-completion achieved	1088
% of self completion achieved	90

Sampling errors and confidence intervals

Table 1.3 sets out sampling errors and confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level relating to a Systematic 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 1.3 Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted data)				
		%	Standard Error of p (%)	95% Confidence Limits
Age	18 – 24	6	0.70	5.02 - 7.78
	25 – 34	16	1.04	13.56 – 17.64
	35 – 44	20	1.15	17.75 – 22.25
	45 – 54	18	1.10	15.94 – 20.26
	55 – 64	18	1.10	15.65 – 19.95
	65 and over	22	1.19	19.77 – 24.43
Sex	Male	46	1.43	43.50 – 49.10
	Female	54	1.43	50.90 – 56.50
Marital Status	Single	28	1.29	25.48 – 30.52
	Married/Civil Partnership	49	1.43	46.49 – 52.11
	Separated	6	0.67	4.49 – 7.11
	Divorced	7	0.73	5.57 – 8.43
	Widowed	10	0.86	8.31 – 11.69
Religion	Catholic	36	1.37	32.91 – 38.29
	Protestant	49	1.43	45.99 – 51.61
	None	13	0.97	11.30 – 15.10
	Other	2	0.43	1.46 – 3.14

Data preparation

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

Deriving social class variables

Occupational information was derived using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2000. The SOC2000 information was also used to derive the National Statistics Socio-Economic (NS SEC), which is included in this data set.

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 original RELIGION variable has been removed from the dataset in order to protect anonymity of respondents.

In order to maintain consistency, we have followed the coding convention for the religion variable that has been in previous years. Thus, the Protestant category within the RELIGCAT variable 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.

The demographic and socio-economic questions asked in the 2008 NILT survey have been harmonised to match those used in large-scale government surveys. Thus, some of these will be different to those asked in previous years of NILT. However, this harmonisation will increase comparability between NILT and other surveys.

Confidentiality

In order to maintain confidentiality, demographic variables relating to other people in the household are excluded from the dataset, as is the RACE2 variable. Variables relating to religion are also excluded, and are replaced by the following recoded versions of these variables:

Variable	Recoded version
<i>Background module</i>	
RELIGION	RELIGCAT
FAMRELIG	FAMRCODE
<i>Religious Observance module</i>	
FAMREL2	FRCODE2
PRTNRRLG	PRTRCODE
MUMRELIG	MUMRCODE
DADRELIG	DADRCODE

However, tables of results for these variables can be found on the NILT website (www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2008)

Comparison with other surveys

Comparison of household characteristics

		NILT 2008*	CHS 2007/08
<i>Characteristics of sampled households</i>			All households
<i>Tenure</i>	Owned outright	37	35
	Owned with mortgage/co-ownership	35	37
	Rented Local Authority/housing association	15	13
	Rented (other)	11	14
	Rent free	3	1
Base=100%		1216	2,558

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

Comparison of individual characteristics (weighted data)

		NILT 2008	CHS 2007/08
<i>Individual characteristics</i>			
<i>Sex</i>	Male	48	47
	Female	52	53
<i>Age</i>	18-24	9	12
	25-34	16	17
	35-44	19	19
	45-54	19	17
	55-64	18	15
	65 and over	19	20
Base=100%	n	1216	4,830
			18+
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	27	29
	Married/Civil partner	59	56
	Widowed	6	7
	Divorced/Separated	8	7
Base=100%	n		4,829*

* 1 refusal

Individual characteristics – NILT 2008 (weighted data)

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	96	51	17	12	11	27
Married/civil partner	4	45	72	73	57	59
Divorced/separated/widowed	0	4	11	15	32	14
Base=100%	78	190	243	436	269	1216

Individual characteristics – CHS 2007/8

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	96	55	20	9	8	29
Married/civil partner	4	41	70	75	58	56
Divorced/separated/widowed	0	3	11	16	34	14
Base=100%	562	832	936	1,538	961	4,829*

* 1 refusal

Stated religious denomination

	NILT 2008 (weighted)	CHS 2007/08*
Protestant	48	53
Catholic	36	41
Other religion or no religion	14	5
Missing/refused	1	1
Base=100%	1216	3,360

* Supplemented from household membership

Finding a module in the questionnaires

	Main Questionnaire	Self completion questionnaire
Background	2 – 4, 32 - 46	N/A
Attitudes to older people	5 - 12	N/A
Community relations	13 - 21	2 - 4
Attitudes to minority ethnic people and migrant workers	22 - 28	4 - 6
Political attitudes	29 - 31	
Religious observance	N/A	6 - 23

Contact information

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Other variables on the dataset

<i>WTFACOR</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>RELIGCAT</i>	Religion of respondent (categorised) 1 Catholic 2 Protestant 3 No religion
<i>ANSSECA</i> <i>(Respondent)</i> <i>ANSSECB</i> <i>(Partner)</i>	National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (NS SEC) 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