

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2001

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 2001 survey who have been most supportive of the overall aims of the project. They include Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Nuffield Foundation, BUPA Foundation, and Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

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.

Each year over 30 countries participate in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in which the same module of questions is asked cross-nationally. Northern Ireland has taken part in this exercise (via NISA) since 1989. The 2001 module covered **Social Networks**. Full ISSP datasets can be obtained from the *ZentralArchiv* in Köln, Germany where the datasets from the member countries are assembled. Information on the ISSP can be found at their web site: <http://www.issp.org>, while the English version of the ZentralArchiv web site is at <http://www.gesis.org/en/za/index.htm>.

Technical details of the 2001 survey

The overall design

The 2001 *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* involved 1800 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 or over. 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, during 2001 the survey team undertook a review of Young Life and Times, and so no young persons' survey was undertaken.

Not all modules are asked of the full 1800 adult sample. Where a smaller sample size is sufficient for a module, the sample is 'split', such that half the respondents are asked those questions. For example, the structure of the 2001 survey allowed half the sample to be asked the Health Issues module, while the other half were asked the Culture, Arts and Leisure module.

Survey content

Version A	Version B
Background	Background
Education	Education
Political Attitudes	Political Attitudes
Health Issues	Culture, Arts and Leisure
Community Relations	Community Relations
Social Networks	Social Networks

Fieldwork

All interviews were conducted during the period October to December 2001. Interviewing was carried out by social survey interviewers employed by Research and Evaluation Services (RES). All fieldworkers attended one of four 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 and RES, and also confirmed that a donation of £1 would be made to Action Cancer on behalf of each respondent.

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, a Kish grid procedure was utilised to randomly select one individual 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
2820	145	2675

Table 1.2 Breakdown of response		
	No.	%
Achieved	1800	67
Refused	482	18
Non-contact	363	14
Other	30	1
Total	2675	100

Number of main stage interviews	1800
Number of self completion achieved	1407
% of self completion achieved	78%

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 $\pm 3\%$.

		% p	Standard Error of p (%)	95% Confidence limits
Age	18 - 24	8.4	0.65	7.12 – 9.68
	25 - 44	38.2	1.15	35.96 – 40.44
	45 - 64	30.4	1.08	28.27 – 32.53
	65 - 74	13.0	0.79	11.45 – 14.55
	75+	10.1	0.71	8.71 – 11.49
Sex	Male	39.1	1.15	36.85 – 41.35
	Female	60.9	1.15	58.65 – 63.15
Marital status	Married/Cohabiting	52.8	1.18	50.49 – 55.11
	Single	24.8	1.02	22.80 – 26.80
	Widow/Div/Sep	22.2	0.98	20.28 – 24.12
Religion	Catholic	37.7	1.14	35.46 – 39.94
	Protestant	46.1	1.17	43.80 – 48.40
	None	9.9	0.70	8.52 – 11.28
	Other	4.4	0.48	3.45 – 5.35
	Refused	1.9	0.32	1.27 – 2.53

Data preparation

Main survey data was collected via the 'Surveycraft' 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.

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 either contact one of the Life and Times team directly (see Contact Information on page ix), or via the feedback form on the web site (<http://www.ark.ac.uk/havesay.html>). 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

However, users of the data may wish to create their own categories by recoding the RELIGION variable.

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

Comparison with other surveys

Comparison of household characteristics

		NILT 2001*	CHS 2000/01	Northern Ireland Census 1991
<i>Characteristics of sampled households</i>				
<i>Tenure</i>	Owner occupied	64	75	62
	Rented, NIHE	27	18	29
	Rented, Other**	7	7	8
	Other (eg rent free)	1	1	1
Base=100%		1800	5354	530 369

* 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 2001	CHS 2000/01	Northern Ireland Census 1991
%				
<i>Individual characteristics</i>				
<i>Sex</i>	Male	41	47	48
	Female	59	53	52
<i>Age</i>	18-24	10	12	16
	25-34	17	18	21
	35-44	20	21	18
	45-54	19	18	15
	55-59	9	7	6
	60-64	8	6	6
	65 and over	18	18	18
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	24	28	28
	Married/Cohabiting	63	56	59
	Widowed	7	8	9
	Divorced/Separated	7	7	6
Base=100%	n	1800	5354	1 117 221
%				
<i>Economic activity</i>	Working	44	52	49*
	Unemployed	5	4	9
	Economically inactive	51	39	42
	Refused/missing	0	5	0
Base=100%			5354	1 167 938

* Based on total population aged 16 and over

** Includes schemes and employment training etc

Individual characteristics - NILT 2001

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	89	37	13	9	16	24
Married/cohabiting	9	56	76	79	53	63
Divorced/separated/ widowed	2	7	11	12	32	14
Base=100%	151	313	367	541	411	1800

Individual characteristics - CHS 2000/01

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	95	48	15	9	12	28
Married/cohabiting	4	46	73	76	50	56
Divorced/separated/ widowed	1	6	12	15	39	15
Base=100%	645	990	1109	1647	963	5354

Stated religious denomination

	NILT 2001	CHS 2000/01	Northern Ireland Census 1991
	%		
Protestant	47	45	50
Catholic	41	31	38
Other religion	<1	<1	-
No religion	10	3	4
Unwilling to say/Don't know	2	21	7
Base=100%	1800	5354	1 577 836

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Finding a module in the questionnaires

	Main Questionnaire	Self Completion
	Cream	Green
<i>Education</i>	5 – 9	N/A
<i>Political Attitudes</i>	10 – 22	14 - 16
<i>Health Issues</i>	23 – 33	N/A
<i>Culture, Arts and Leisure</i>	34 – 41	N/A
<i>Community Relations</i>	42 – 49	N/A
<i>ISSP: Social Networks</i>	N/A	2 - 14
<i>Background information</i>	2 – 4, 50 - 60	N/A

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>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 13 UK Unionist Party 15 Other Party 16 Other answer 17 Northern Ireland Unionist Party 18 None 98 Don't know 99 Refused/not answered
<i>RELIGCAT</i>	Religion of respondent (categorised) 1 Catholic 2 Protestant 3 No religion
<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
<i>CHILDREN</i>	Has respondent got children aged 16 or under, either living with them or not living with them? (Derived from CHILDU16 and other household information) 1 Yes 2 No