

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2006

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 2006 survey who have been most supportive of the overall aims of the project, in particular Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM).

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 2006 survey

The overall design

The 2006 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey involved 1230 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.

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 2006 survey are:

Background information on the respondents

Informal carers

Community relations

Healthcare

Attitudes to minority ethnic people and migrant workers

Political attitudes

Fieldwork

All interviews were conducted during the period October 2006 to March 2007. Interviewing was carried out by social survey interviewers employed by Millward Brown Ulster (MBU). All fieldworkers attended a briefing session conducted by MBU. All interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes. Interviewers made up to a maximum of ten to twelve 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 Millward Brown Ulster.

Sampling design

The survey was designed to yield a representative sample of men and women aged 18 years 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
2162	175	1987

Table 1.2 Breakdown of response		
	No.	%
Achieved	1230	62
Refused	479	24
Non-contact	227	11
Other	49	2
Total	1987	

Table 1.3 Completion of self completion questionnaires	
Number of main stage interviews	1230
Number of self completion achieved	1203
% of self completion achieved	98

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 $\pm 2.79\%$.

Table 1.4 Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted data)				
		% p	Standard Error of p (%)	95% Confidence limits
Age	18 - 24	10.2	0.86	8.51 – 11.89
	25 - 44	33.7	1.35	31.05 – 36.35
	45 - 64	33.7	1.35	31.05 – 36.35
	65 - 74	13.2	0.97	11.30 – 15.10
	75+	9.3	0.83	7.67 – 10.93
Sex	Male	40.6	1.40	37.86 – 43.34
	Female	59.4	1.40	56.66 – 62.14
Marital status	Married/Cohabiting	48.4	1.42	45.62 – 51.18
	Single	28.9	1.29	26.37 – 31.43
	Widow/Div/Sep	22.8	1.20	20.45 – 24.15
Religion	Catholic	38.6	1.39	35.88 – 41.32
	Protestant	47.2	1.42	44.42 – 49.98
	None	14.0	0.99	12.06 – 15.94
	Other	0.2	0.13	0.00 – 0.45

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 a Keyplan data entry system and again converted to SPSS using Merlin (a data processing package). 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 four digit code from the 'Standard Classification of Occupations' to this case. This four digit code is the direct basis for the derivation of the related information on a social class grouping. This data set contains the National Statistics Socio-Economic (NS SEC) variable, which was introduced in 2001. The SOC code was also matched to provide the four digit ISCO 1988 code.

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 *WTFACOR*. 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

In order to protect anonymity of respondents, some key variables have been omitted or recategorised from the dataset. In particular, the RACE2 variable has been omitted.

The variable RELIGION, PRTRNRLG, MUMRELIG and DADRELIG variables have been categorised into 4 groups: Catholic, Protestant, Non Christian and No religion.

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

Question 35 of the self-completion questionnaire (WAYPLMEC) was designed so that respondents gave only one response. However, 40 respondents gave more than one response. These respondents have been excluded from the dataset.

In previous years, the economic activity of the respondent (Section 7, Question 6) and of the respondent's partner (Section 7, Question 15) has been recorded within single-response variables. However, this may not adequately reflect the lives of individuals, these respondents may now give more than one response to these questions. For example, someone may be working part-time and also be looking after the home.

General Health Questionnaire

The 2006 survey includes the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) within the self-completion questionnaire. The GHQ was designed to identify short-term changes in mental health. The 12 items consist of the following questions:

Question number	Variable name	Question text
3	CONCENT	Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing?
4	WORRY	Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?
5	USEFPART	Have you recently felt you are playing a useful part in things?
6	MAKEDEC	Have you recently felt capable of making decisions about things?
7	STRAIN	Have you recently felt under constant strain?
8	OVERCOME	Have you recently felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?
9	ENJOYACT	Have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?
10	FACEPROB	Have you recently been able to face up to your problems?
11	UHAPPY	Have you recently been feeling unhappy and depressed?
12	LOSECONF	Have you recently been losing confidence in yourself?
13	WORTHPER	Have you recently been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?
14	HAPPY	Have you recently been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?

The GHQ-12 can be scored and analysed in various ways, including

- 'caseness': Recode the values for each of the 12 items (1=0, 2=0, 3=1, 4=1) and calculate the sum of all items. A 'case' is defined as respondents scoring 4 or more.
- Likert: Recode the values for each of the 12 items (1=0, 2=1, 3=2, 4=3) and calculate the sum of all items. The means of these scores can be compared across particular groups (for example, men and women).

The Life and Times website provides statistics based on two of these scoring methods. The scores for each of the 12 variables are available in the dataset to download, although the scores based on the caseness and Likert systems are not.

Comparison with other surveys

Comparison of household characteristics

		NILT 2006*	CHS 2005/06	Northern Ireland Census 2001
<i>Characteristics of sampled households</i>				
<i>Tenure</i>	Owner occupied	68	78	70
	Rented, NIHE	16	10	19
	Rented, Other**	15	10	9
	Other (eg rent free)	1	2	3
Base=100%		1230	4868	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 (weighted data)

		NILT 2006	CHS 2005/06	Northern Ireland Census 2001
%				
<i>Individual characteristics</i>				
<i>Sex</i>	Male	43	47	48
	Female	56	53	52
<i>Age</i>	18-24	14	12	13
	25-34	14	17	20
	35-44	19	20	20
	45-54	20	17	16
	55-59	8	8	7
	60-64	7	8	6
	65 and over	18	19	18
Base=100%	n	1230	4868	1233753
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	28	30	30*
	Married/Cohabiting	57	55	56
	Widowed	7	8	7
	Divorced/Separated	8	7	7
Base=100%	n	1230	4868	1261257

Individual characteristics – NILT 2006 (weighted data)

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	91	39	19	12	11	28
Married/cohabiting	8	60	70	68	60	57
Divorced/separated/ widowed	1	1	12	21	29	15
Base=100%	126	180	234	414	276	1230

Individual characteristics – CHS 2005/6

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	97	51	21	11	9	30
Married/cohabiting	2	44	67	72	56	55
Divorced/separated/ widowed	1	5	11	17	36	15
Base=100%	601	818	957	1574	918	4868

Stated religious denomination

	NILT 2006 (weighted)	CHS 2005/06	Northern Ireland Census 2001
	%		
Protestant	47	43	48
Catholic	40	29	38
Other religion	1	1	<1
No religion	13	1	13*
Unwilling to say/Don't know	1	26	-
Base=100%	1230	4868	1233751

* Include 'no religion' and religion not stated

Finding a module in the questionnaires

	Main Questionnaire	Self completion questionnaire
Background	1, 31 – 40	N/A
Informal carers	2 – 7	N/A
Community relations	8 – 17	3 - 4
Healthcare	18 – 19	1 – 3
Attitudes to minority ethnic people and migrant workers	20 - 27	5 – 8
Political attitudes	28 - 30	8 - 9

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>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>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
<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