



Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2019

(updated 30 October 2023)

Technical Notes

www.ark.ac.uk/nilt

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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 some modules are repeated every year (for example, Community/Good 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;
- Trusted and independent evidence to inform policy making; and
- A data source for a more theoretical academic debate.

We would like to thank the funders for the 2019 survey who have been supportive of the overall aims of the project: The Executive Office, Department of Justice, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Police Ombudsman's Office, Public Health Agency, Public Prosecution Service and Road Safety Partnership. We would especially like to thank all the respondents to the survey.

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 accessible to 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.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times survey is a constituent resource of ARK (www.ark.ac.uk), which is a research, policy and impact hub, based jointly in Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. ARK runs a suite of three surveys in order to record the attitudes of people of all ages in Northern Ireland to the key issues affecting their lives:

- Northern Ireland Life and Times survey of adults aged 18 years or over
- Young Life and Times survey of 16 year olds (www.ark.ac.uk/ylt)
- Kids' Life and Times survey of 10-11 year olds (www.ark.ac.uk/klt)

Where possible and appropriate, we include questions across these surveys, in order to compare attitudes among different ages.

Technical details of the 2019 survey

The documentation provided here 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 can get in touch with the survey team if they require more precise details on the survey set-up. Contact details are provided on page xii of this document.

The overall design

The 2019 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey involved 1,203 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 years 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.

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

- CASI method – the respondent completed the self-completion on the laptop
- CAPI method – the interviewer completed the self-completion on the laptop with the assistance of an interviewer.
- Traditional pen and paper method – the respondent completed the self-completion on paper booklet.

Ethical approval

The 2019 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast, where the survey coordinator is based.

Survey content

The survey consists of a number of different modules, each based on a specific topic. The modules included in the 2019 survey are:

- Introductory questions
- Respect
- Minority ethnic people
- Good relations
- Breastfeeding
- Criminal justice system
- Political attitudes
- Road safety
- Community safety and perceptions of paramilitary influence
- Background

Some of these questions were also included in the Young Life and Times survey of 16 year olds – see <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt>

Pilot and mainstage fieldwork

All interviews were conducted by Ipsos MORI interviewers in the participants' homes. Pilot interviews with 45 participants were carried out during 17th August and 6th September 2019. The main stage of the fieldwork was undertaken during the period 10th September 2019 to 6th February 2020. Participants were asked to complete a CASI (Computer Assisted Self-Interviewing) questionnaire. On agreeing to complete the CASI questionnaire, the respondent was asked to complete a self-completion questionnaire. The respondent was shown how to use the interviewer's laptop to enter answers by completing some example questions. If a respondent did not wish to complete the self-completion questionnaire on the laptop they were given the option to complete a paper version. The paper self-completion questionnaire was completed and handed back to the interviewer at the time of the main interview. If a respondent could not complete the self-completion questionnaire on the laptop or by paper, due to literacy or health issues, the interviewer completed the self-completion questionnaire on the laptop where consent was granted by the participant.

Advance letter

An advance letter was issued by Ipsos MORI 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 staff managing the project. Individuals were informed how their personal data would be handled in line with GDPR, and their right to withdraw from the research if they did not want to take part. The advance letter also included a NILT information leaflet and a link to the Ipsos MORI privacy policy.

Sampling design

The sample for the 2019 survey consisted of a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF) database of addresses. This is the most up-to-date and complete listing of addresses. Private business addresses were removed from the database prior to sample selection. A total of 2,262 addresses were selected for interview. Throughout the survey period, an additional 500 addresses were pulled. However, the figure in Table 1.1 only refers to addresses which were issued and where attempts were made to obtain an interview.

The Postcode Address File (PAF) 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 person to be interviewed was randomly selected using the 'next birthday' rule. The interviewer asked the householder to list the birthdays of all members of the household eligible for inclusion in the sample: that is, all persons aged 18 or over living at the address. The person with the next birthday, at the time of the call, was the person with whom the interview was to be conducted. Where the selected respondent was not available, an appointment was made to call back to interview them at a more suitable time.

Response rate

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

Table 1.2 shows the breakdown of response

Table 1.3 shows the response rate for the self-completion questionnaires.

Table 1.1 Status of addresses		
Total addresses issued	Ineligible (e.g. vacant/derelict/commercial)	Total in scope
2,311	144	2,167

Table 1.2 Breakdown of response		
	Number	Percent
Total co-operating	1,203	56
Fully co-operating	1,203	56
Partially co-operating	0	0
Refusal to co-operate	728	34
Non-contact	218	10
Other	18	1
Total	2,167	100

Table 1.3 Completed self-completion questionnaires	
Number of main stage interviews	1,203
Number of self-completion achieved	1,202
% of self-completion achieved	99.9

Sampling errors and confidence intervals

Table 1.4 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 $\pm 2.81\%$.

Table 1.4 Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted data)				
		%	Margin of Error	95% Confidence Limits
Age	18 – 24	8.1	1.54	6.6-9.6
	25 – 34	16.7	2.10	14.6-18.8
	35 – 44	14.7	2.00	12.7-16.7
	45 – 54	12.6	1.88	10.7-14.5
	55 – 64	15.4	2.04	13.4-17.4
	65 and over	32.5	2.65	29.9-35.1
Sex	Male	45.3	2.81	42.5-48.1
	Female	54.7	2.81	51.9-57.5
Marital status	Single	32.8	2.65	30.1-35.5
	Married/Civil Partnership	40.4	2.77	37.6-43.2
	Separated	4.7	1.2	3.5-5.9
	Divorced	8.5	1.58	6.9-10.1
	Widowed	13.3	1.92	11.4-15.2
Religion	Catholic	32.7	2.65	30.05-35.35
	Protestant	39.4	2.76	36.6-42.2
	None	20.4	2.28	18.1-22.7
	Other	3.9	1.09	2.8-5.0
	Refused/Don't know	3.6	1.05	2.5-4.7

Data preparation

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

Weighting

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 WFACTOR. The only exceptions are the few household variables (for example, tenure and household income), which do not need to be weighted.

Deriving social class variables

Occupational information was derived using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2010. The SOC2010 information was also used to derive the National Statistics Socio-Economic (NS SEC) variable, which is contained in this data set for the respondent and their partner.

Personal and household income

Please note that the number of response codes for the personal and household income questions has been reduced, in order to make it easier for respondents, and to aid analysis.

Changes in question wording during fieldwork

The law in Northern Ireland changed on 21 October 2019 to allow abortion and same sex marriage, hitherto banned, under the provisions of the UK Parliament's Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019. As a result of this change, questions were made to two questions in Section G (Political Attitudes) of the main questionnaire to ensure that the questions reflected the most up to date laws. Details of these question changes have been provided below:

UIABORTNa

Question asked up to and including 22nd October 2019:

- G8a The Republic of Ireland allows termination of pregnancy up to 12 weeks and in cases of fatal foetal abnormality. Abortion is illegal in Northern Ireland except when the mother's life is in danger. In what way might this difference influence how you would vote in a referendum on a united Ireland?

UIABORTNb

Question asked as of 23rd October 2019 (changed to reflect updated law):

- G8b In the Republic of Ireland, termination of pregnancy is legal under certain conditions. In Northern Ireland, it has been decriminalised, but we do not know the final details. If abortion in the Republic of Ireland is more liberal than in Northern Ireland, in what way might this difference influence how you would vote in a referendum on a united Ireland?

UISSMARRa

Question asked up to and including 22nd October 2019:

- G9a Same sex marriage is legal in the Republic of Ireland, but it is illegal in Northern Ireland. In what way might this difference influence how you would vote in a referendum on a united Ireland?

UISSMARRb

Question asked as of 23rd October 2019 (changed to reflect updated law):

- G9b Same sex marriage is legal in the Republic of Ireland. The ban on same sex marriage has been lifted in Northern Ireland but it is not yet available. In what way might this difference influence how you would vote in a referendum on a united Ireland?

Comparison with other data sources

For comparative purposes, the following tables provide NILT data alongside two data sources:

- Continuous household survey – this survey is undertaken by the central survey unit within the Northern Ireland statistics and research agency. Using a representative sample of households across Northern Ireland, the survey is designed to provide an ongoing snapshot of social and economic conditions in Northern Ireland. For more information, see <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/central-survey-unit/continuous-household-survey>
- 2011 Northern Ireland Census – this was designed to collect information on the usually resident population of Northern Ireland on 27 March 2011. Whilst this data is old, it provides the most recent data population-level available

Comparison of household characteristics

		NILT 2019* (unweighted)	CHS 2018/19	Northern Ireland Census 2011
<i>Characteristics of sampled households</i>			All households	
<i>Tenure</i>	Owned outright	39.3	42	32
	Owned with mortgage/co-ownership	22.8	28	35
	Rented Local Authority	12.7	12	12
	Rented other***	20.5	18	18
	Rent free	0.9	1	3
	Other	3.7	-	-
	Refused		-	-
<i>Base=100%</i>		<i>1,203</i>	<i>4,460</i>	<i>703,275</i>

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

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

Comparison of individual characteristics

		NILT 2019 (weighted)	CHS 2017/18	Northern Ireland Census 2011
		%		
<i>Individual characteristics</i>			18+	
Sex	Male	46.8	43	49
	Female	53.2	57	51
<i>Age</i>				
	18-24	11.8	5	13
	25-34	17.0	14	18
	35-44	13.9	16	18
	45-54	14.5	20	18
	55-64	15.9	17	14
	65 and over	27.0	27	19
<i>Base=100%</i>	<i>n</i>	1,203	3,262	1,380,100*
<i>Marital Status</i>			18+	
	Single	33.2	26	36
	Married/Civil Partner	49.4	54	48
	Widowed	8.2	9	7
	Divorced/Separated	9.1	11	9
	Refused/ Don't know	0.2	-	-
<i>Base=100%</i>	<i>n</i>	1,203	3,262	1,431,540*

*The bases for Census data are different due to age including those aged 18 and over, whereas, marital status includes those aged 16 and over.

Individual characteristics – NILT 2019 (weighted data)

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	99	65	31	13	8	33
Married/Civil Partner	0	31	57	71	54	50
Divorced/separated/ widowed	1	4	11	16	37	17
<i>Base=100%</i>	141	204	167	364	323	1,199

Individual characteristics – CHS 2017/18

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	93	56	30	15	8	26
Married/Civil Partner	5	42	58	63	56	54
Divorced/separated/ widowed	2	2	13	21	36	20
<i>Base=100%</i>	164	460	525	1,201	865	3,262

Stated religious denomination

	NILT 2019 (weighted)	CHS 2018/19**	Northern Ireland Census 2011
	%		
Protestant	38	45	48
	%		
Catholic	35	43	45
Other or no religion*	24	11	6
Missing/refused	3	1	1
<i>Base=100%</i>	<i>1,203</i>	<i>10,902</i>	<i>1,108,630</i>

* Include 'no religion' and religion not stated

** Supplemented from household membership

The NILT dataset

The dataset for the 2019 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey is made freely and publicly available within six months of the end of the fieldwork period. The data have been tested extensively, but if you find anything that looks like a mistake, please let us know as soon as you can. Contact details are available on page xii of this document.

Variables on the dataset

The variable name relating to each question can be seen above each question in the questionnaire. The dataset includes the variables relating to the majority of questions. However, in order to maintain confidentiality, some variables are omitted or recoded. For example, demographic variables relating to other people in the household are excluded from the dataset, as is the ETHGROUP variable.

Variables (RELIGION, FAMRELIG, PRTNRRLG) relating to religion are also excluded to protect anonymity of respondents, and are replaced by the recoded versions of these variables:

Variable	Recoded version
RELIGION	RELIGCAT
FAMRELIG	FAMRCODE
PRTNRRLG	PRTRCODE

These variables are classified 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
- Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon)
- Other Protestant
- Other Christian
- Protestant – no denomination
- Christian – no denomination

However, tables of results for the RELIGION, FAMRELIG AND PRTNRRLG variables can be found on the NILT website (www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2019) from mid-June 2020.

The dataset also contains a set of variables that have been specifically created to assist analysis.

<i>WTFACTOR</i>	Weighting variable for number of adults aged 18 years or over in the household
<i>ADULT</i>	Number of adults aged 18 years or over in the household
<i>HOUSEHLD</i>	Number of people in each household
<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>NSSECRESP08</i> <i>(Respondent)</i> <i>NSSECPART08</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>URBRUR</i>	Urban/rural status, based on NINIS data 1 Rural 2 Urban

Finding a module in the questionnaires

Respondents were asked to complete a main questionnaire (face-to-face) and a self-completion questionnaire. The table below provides a list of modules within the 2019 survey, and their page number within the questionnaire.

	Main Questionnaire	Self-completion questionnaire
Introduction	M3 – M5	
Respect	M6	
Minority ethnic people	M7 – M12	SC2 – SC3
Good relations	M13 – M22	SC3 – SC4
Breastfeeding	M23 – M28	
Criminal justice system	M29 – M31	
Political attitudes	M32 – M40	SC7
Road safety	M41 – M43	
Background	M44 – M55	SC7
Community safety and perceptions of paramilitary influence		SC4-SC6

NILT website

The NILT website (<https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt>) is the key source of information relating to the survey. This includes background information, datasets, questionnaires, technical notes and publications relating to all survey years. In addition, frequencies for every question and a breakdown by age, gender and religion are also available online.

A 'query' service or helpline is run for those who need additional tables or have any query about the survey. Users can contact the Life and Times team directly using the contact information below. The funders of the survey receive the dataset 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.

Contact information

If you have any further queries, please contact the NILT director using the details below:

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URL: <https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt>