



Attitudes towards minority ethnic people and migrant workers 2014

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Introduction

The issue of race relations has again been a prominent feature of social discussion in Northern Ireland in the past year with hate crime against ethnic minorities and migrant workers appearing to be on the increase. Figures from the PSNI show a startling increase in the past two years alone with recorded racist incidents increasing by over 40% since 2011/12 and racist crimes doubling in the same period. Despite some claims that racism is primarily a problem in the Belfast area, the data show that this is a simplistic assertion. While it is indicated that East and South Belfast witnessed the biggest upsurge in racist incidents most other policing districts in Northern Ireland also experienced an upsurge in such events (PSNI, 2014).

These trends reflect the results from the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT) which showed that between 2009 and 2013 a particular fracturing of relations between the established population and minority ethnic and migrant communities has occurred. The data from the most recent Survey in 2014 are detailed here and indicate a further breakdown in tolerance towards ethnic minorities in some areas yet also suggest a more stagnant picture in others. This report specifically details the responses with regard to the level and nature of social contact that respondents have with ethnic minorities and migrant workers, the respondents' perceptions of prejudice against these communities, self-reported prejudice, and finally views on the

contributions that new communities make to public life in Northern Ireland.

Levels of Contact

Investigating the actual level of contact respondents had with someone from a minority ethnic background is one of the ways in which we can measure the *potential* for positive intercultural dialogue to occur. Of course, interaction does not always lead to positive outcomes but actual meaningful contact is an important stage in engendering wider cultural understanding at societal level. In this area the data show a relatively positive and progressive picture because in the past number of years the level of contact that respondents have had with those from different ethnic or national groups

as either a friend or a neighbour has been on the increase.

It is especially welcome to see that in the period between 2006 and 2014 the percentage of respondents with a friend from an ethnic minority background has increased across all categories where data were available. The identification of a member of an ethnic minority as a friend suggests the potential for more meaningful engagements to occur and continue. The biggest increase in this category has been in contact with Polish and Black (African/Caribbean) people. The level of contact with members of the Irish Traveller community appears to have increased only slightly. The results also show that a higher percentage of participants now have neighbours from

Table 1: Percentage of respondents who have friends or immediate neighbours from different ethnic or nationality backgrounds 2006 and 2014

	Friends		Neighbours	
	2006 %	2014 %	2006 %	2014 %
Black (African, Caribbean)	11	18	3	5
Chinese	12	16	4	6
South Asian (Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi)	9	11	3	3
Irish Traveller	3	4	2	2
Portuguese	4	6	1	2
Polish	11	22	7	14
Bulgarian	*	4	*	1
Romanian	*	6	*	3
Other Eastern European	*	9	*	5
Filipino	4	7	1	3

* Not asked in 2006

ethnic minorities when compared with 2006. Of course, a participant's definition of someone as their neighbour does not necessarily predicate the basis for positive relationships to flourish. This data, nonetheless, contextualises the extent to which some neighbourhoods have diversified in this five year period.

Perceptions of prejudice

The 2014 NILT also gathered opinions on perceived levels of prejudice against people from minority ethnic communities. One of the questions that respondents were asked was whether or not they felt that there was currently 'a lot', 'a little' or 'hardly any' prejudice against newcomers. The 2014 data show a clear increase from 2013 with 37% indicating that there is a lot of prejudice now compared with only 26% last year. These perceptions have no doubt been compounded by the visibility of racist incidents which have occurred in community neighbourhoods and which have been widely reported in the local media. Also, 53% of those questioned in 2014 felt there to be more prejudice now than there was 5 years ago. By comparison, in 2013 only 35% of participants had expressed this viewpoint. Figure one shows the sharp change in the last year on these perceptions, although the overall outlook appears to be less pessimistic than in 2009.

Levels of self-reported prejudice and social distance

Respondents were also asked if they themselves held prejudiced views towards newcomers. Twenty-four per cent of all participants stated that they were 'very' or 'a little' prejudiced against people from minority ethnic communities. Of these, 80% stated that they would avoid displaying this prejudice, while 18% noted that their behaviour towards minorities was 'consistent' with their prejudice. These figures have remained fairly constant for the past three years having

Figure 1: Perceived prejudice against people from minority ethnic communities

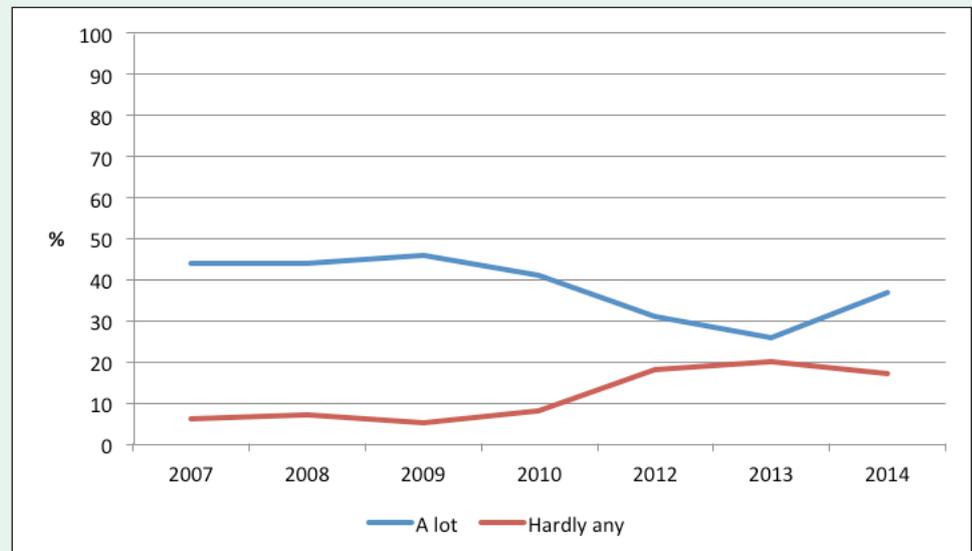


Table 2: Prejudice against people of minority ethnic communities over time

	%						
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	2014
Very or a little prejudiced	35	32	32	32	27	27	24
Avoids displaying prejudice	87	84	91	91	84	81	80
Behaviour consistent with prejudice	12	15	8	9	15	15	18

Table 3: Acceptance of minority groups: *I would willingly accept them as ...*

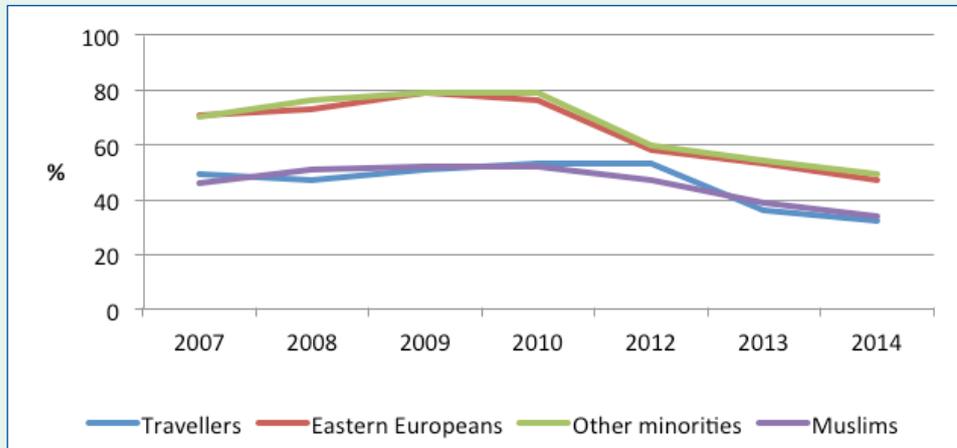
	% willing to accept minority groups as ...			
	Travellers*	Eastern Europeans**	Other Minority Ethnic Groups	Muslims***
A tourist visiting Northern Ireland	-	83	85	71
A resident of Northern Ireland living and working here	-	77	83	64
A resident in my local area	-	-	-	-
Living in a house as a resident in my local area	49	72	77	57
A colleague at my work	53	64	67	52
A close friend of mine	36	51	54	41
A relative by way of marrying a close member of my family	32	47	49	34

* excludes respondents who are Irish Travellers

** excludes respondents who are Eastern European

*** excludes respondents who are Muslim

Figure 2: Acceptance of various minority groups as relative by marriage



fallen from a previous high of 35% in 2007. Nonetheless there has been a slight increase in the numbers of those acting on their prejudice in the past year.

Questions relating to social distance have also in previous years thrown more light on attitudes towards minority ethnic people and migrant workers. Respondents were asked if they would willingly accept ethnic minorities to Northern Ireland as tourists, as residents, as colleagues, friends, or family in-laws. While the acceptance of ethnic minorities in the wider social space has been high, approval drops as the scenarios become more personal. For instance while there were generally higher levels of acceptance for ethnic minorities as a tourist, as a worker, or as a resident in the respondents' neighbourhoods there was much less approval towards newcomers within respondents' closer social circles – such as within their family.

The scenario of accepting ethnic minorities or migrant workers as a family member through marriage has been in steady decline since 2010¹ (see McDermott, 2013; McDermott, 2014). For Eastern Europeans and other minorities approval was around 80% in 2009 and 2010 but has dropped to only around 50% by 2014. The least accepted groups, Irish Travellers and Muslims, had seen a peak of acceptance at around 50% in 2009 and 2010 but levels of acceptance for these communities as a family 'in-law' have also fallen to between 30%-35% by 2014.

Age and Religion

In line with the patterns of past NILT Survey results, responses varied depending on variables such as age and religion. With regard to age, those in the oldest age bracket displayed the least acceptance of other groups compared

Table 4: Acceptance of Eastern Europeans as relative by marriage (by age)

	% willing to accept Eastern Europeans as...					
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
A relative by way of marrying a close member of my family	46	56	47	48	50	38

with those in the younger age categories. It is, however, not the youngest 18 to 24 age group that is the most accepting but those between the ages of 25 and 34 that show most acceptance. When respondents, for instance, were asked if they would accept an Eastern European as a relative by way of marrying a close member of their family the 25-34 age group showed a 56% acceptance rate. Only 46% of the 18-24 age group were willing to accept this while those over the age of sixty-five showed a further decline.

Indeed, since the previous NILT survey was taken in 2013 there has been a drop in acceptance by the 18-24 year old group. The well-documented difficulties this age group faces in finding employment and the simplistic assertions that this is the fault of migrant workers may well have compounded this scenario somewhat.

When it came to religious breakdown, Protestants who responded to the survey

tended to be generally the least accepting of minority ethnic groups across the scenarios presented to them. Another continuing trend from this year's data showed that those from the Protestant community (around 34%) are, by some margin, more likely than their Catholic counterparts (19%) to acknowledge openly that they are 'very prejudiced' or 'a little prejudiced'. By comparison Catholic respondents and those with no religion showed attitudes which can be interpreted as more accepting. It is important to note though that Protestant respondents have also tended to be older, which as stated earlier has been a category which has generally been less favourable. For example, in 2014 31% of the Protestant respondents were over 65 years of age which compared to 21% of Catholics and 10% of those with no religion in the same age group. Nonetheless only 13% of Catholic

respondents aged 65 or more said that they were prejudiced compared with 35% of Protestant respondents aged 65 or more. Overall, there is clear evidence of a general decline in acceptance among all respondents since the last NILT survey in 2013.

Perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the participation of people from minority ethnic groups in public life

In 2014, attitudes relating to ethnic minority participation in public life were also recorded. The majority of respondents acknowledged an increase in the contributions of migrants to life in Northern Ireland. Since 2005 the survey has indicated that the visibility of ethnic

¹ Figures are not available for 2011

minorities in the public space has become more prominent across a range of areas. These included in the education sector (in roles such as school governors), politics and the media.

community groups and political leaders should be more proactive and encourage contributions from ethnic minority and migrant groups more widely. However, on a cautionary note, this was down somewhat from 74% in 2013.

visibility of ethnic minorities in wider life, there continues to be an encroachment of negative attitudes in some areas.

Table 5: Thinking of people from minority ethnic communities and the role that they play in public life, how much do you think that people from minority ethnic communities participate as...

	% saying 'a lot'							
	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	2014
School governors	2	3	3	4	3	5	7	11
Politicians	3	3	3	3	4	7	7	13
Prominent business people	19	15	11	13	13	15	11	17
Leaders within their church or faith communities	27	18	16	18	15	14	13	21
Commentators in the media on issues concerning minority ethnic communities	9	6	8	10	9	12	9	14

Wider encouragement of participation by new communities in public life has been identified as an important theme for the social and political agenda of Northern Ireland. When asked, 67% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that organisations, such as churches,

Conclusion

Again, it is clear from the data presented in this report that a radically improving picture in inter-ethnic relations has not materialised in the past year. Whilst there appears to be a widening role and

References

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The **Northern Ireland Life and Times survey** (NILT) is carried out annually and documents public opinion on a wide range of social issues. NILT is a joint project of the two Northern Ireland universities and aims to provide an independent source of information on what the public thinks about the social issues of the day.

Key points

- The actual levels of contact between respondents and members of minority ethnic communities as 'friends' or as neighbours appear to have increased significantly since 2006. Ethnic minorities have also become more visible to respondents in aspects of public life.
- The number of people saying that ethnic minorities face a lot of prejudice has increased from 26% in 2013 to 37% of all respondents. This is not as high though as the figure of over 45% recorded in 2009.
- The downward trend in acceptance of minority ethnic groups has continued for the third year running.
- The figures on age show us that the oldest and youngest age categories appear to be those with the least welcoming attitudes while the 25-34 year old group showed the highest levels of acceptance of ethnic minorities.
- Protestant respondents are more likely to openly acknowledge that they are 'prejudiced' or 'a little prejudiced' towards someone from an ethnic minority background.

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