

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 1998

Technical Notes

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What is the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey?

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey was launched in the autumn of 1998. Its mission is to monitor the attitudes and behaviour of people in Northern Ireland during the late 1990s and into the next century in order 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 1998 survey

who have been most supportive of the overall aims of the project. They include: Save the Children Fund, Central Community Relations Unit; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; DHSS; and University of Ulster.

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 also taken part in this exercise (via NISA) since 1989. The 1998 module covered **Religion** and the 1999 ISSP will cover **Social Inequality**. Full ISSP datasets can be obtained from the *ZentralArchiv* in Köln, Germany where the datasets from the member countries are assembled.

Technical details of the 1998 survey

The overall design

The *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* involves 1800 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 or over. The main interview is carried out using computer assisted interviewing and the respondent is then asked to complete a self-completion form. The *Young Life and Times Survey*, which runs alongside the adult version, includes interviews with 450 to 500 young people aged 12 to 17. This uses a paper questionnaire containing a sub-set of questions from the adult survey, and one complete module which is of particular relevance to young people (in 1998 this was *Rights of the Child*).

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 900 respondents are asked those questions. For example the structure of the 1998 survey allowed half the sample to be asked the *Public Understanding of Science* module, while the other half were asked *Rights of the Child* module.

Survey content

Version A	Version B
<i>Rights of the Child</i> <i>Political Attitudes</i> <i>Crime and Fear of Crime</i> <i>Community Relations</i> <i>Housing</i> <i>Religion (ISSP)</i>	<i>Public Understanding of Science</i> <i>Political Attitudes</i> <i>Gender and Family Roles</i> <i>Community Relations</i> <i>Housing</i>

Fieldwork

All interviews were conducted during the period October 5 1998 and December 31 1998. Interviewing was carried out by social survey interviewers employed by Research and Evaluation Services (RES). All fieldworkers attended a briefing session conducted jointly by RES' project management team, together with members of the NILT project team. All interviews were conducted in the respondent's home. Interviewers made up to a maximum of five calls before the person identified in the sample was deemed non-obtainable. The average length of time taken to complete interviews was 40 minutes. The self completion form 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

Households identified in the sample were sent an advance letter explaining the background to the survey, the method by which an individual respondent would be selected from the household and requesting co-operation with the project. The advance letter also confirmed that a donation of one pound would be made to Action Cancer on behalf of each respondent. A letter from Action Cancer was also enclosed, confirming the arrangement between them and the research team, and referring to the positive uses to which such valuable donations would be put.

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. The first stage in the sampling process was to stratify Northern Ireland into three geographic strata based on an amalgamation of Local Government Districts, namely 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. Within each of the three strata, the sample size was set to reflect the proportion of the adult population resident there as at the 1991 census. Within each stratum addresses were selected on a simple random sample basis. At selected addresses, a KISH grid procedure was utilised to randomly select one individual to be the subject of the survey.

Each stratum was over sampled to provide reserve addresses. Interviewers were instructed to make a total of five calls, or 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 response rate for the survey. **Table 1.2** shows the reason for non achievement of interviews with individuals drawn in the sample.

Table 1.1 Response rate		
Total Interviews Issued	Vacant /Derelict /Commercial	Total in scope
2806	158	2648

	No.	%
Achieved	1800	68
Refused	497	19
Non-contact	325	12
Other	26	1
Total	2648	100

	Version A	Version B
Number of main stage interviews	910	890
Number of self completion achieved	812	813
% of self completion achieved	89%	91%

Sampling error 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	10.3	0.72	8.9-11.7
	25 - 44	40.8	1.16	38.5-43.1
	45 - 64	30.0	1.08	27.9-32.1
	65 - 74	11.4	0.75	9.9-12.9
	75+	7.4	0.62	6.2-8.6
Sex	Male	43.3	1.17	41.0-45.6
	Female	56.7	1.17	54.4-59.0
Marital status	Married/Cohabiting	53.4	1.18	51.1-55.7
	Single	25.2	1.02	23.2-27.2
	Widow/Div/Sep	21.4	0.97	19.5-23.3
Religion	Catholic	35.1	1.12	32.9-37.3
	Protestant	52.6	1.18	50.3-54.9
	None	9.9	0.71	8.5-11.3
	Other	1.3	0.27	0.8-1.8
	Refused	2.1	0.34	1.4-2.8

Identifying the young people's sample

The CAPI programmes for the main adult interview collected information on the ages of young people normally resident in the adult participant's household. Where any young people in the 12-17 year age band were identified, their parent or guardian was asked for permission to interview him/her/them and could be shown a copy of the young person's questionnaire to demonstrate its content. The parent/guardian was asked to sign a formal consent form for the young person's interview to proceed. Where parental permission was obtained, all young people within the household were interviewed unless they were unavailable or unwilling to take part. Questionnaires were interviewer administered and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Outcomes from this procedure are shown in **Table 1.5** and **Table 1.6** below.

1 Young person	213
2 Young people	100
3 Young people	23
4 Young people	-
5 Young people	-
Total number of young people identified	482

	No.
Total number of young people identified	482
Total number of young people interviewed	356
Response rate for Young Life & Times Survey (%)	74
Reasons for non interview:	
Parent refused	73
Young person refused	38
Young person not available	13
Other	3

Booster sample of young people

At the mid-point of the fieldwork it became apparent that the survey was on target to achieve fewer than anticipated interviews with young people. Projections were based on response rates achieved with similar surveys in Britain. But while response rates to the adult survey were higher in Northern Ireland than in Britain, the reverse was true for young people. It was decided to initiate a booster sample at the mid-point of the fieldwork to make up the shortfall. For this purpose a random sample of addresses was taken from the

Postal Address File. Interviewers called at these addresses and established whether any young people aged 12-17 were normally resident there. Where eligible young people were identified, permission was sought in the normal way to interview all such young people and interviews proceeded as in the main stage described above.

	No.
Total households	500
Total households with young people 12-17 years	90
Total number of households interviewed	50
Total number of young people interviewed	69

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 and the young person's survey) 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 and socio-economic grouping¹. When amalgamated with other collected information it forms the basis for deriving the Goldthorpe Schema and Standard Industrial Classification.

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. This service is part of the role of the Survey Co-ordinator based at the Centre for Social Research, Queen's University, Belfast (see contact information on page 8). A leaflet advertising

¹ Because of an error in the main questionnaire computer program, 'retired' respondents were not asked for their occupational details. When this error was discovered (during data preparation) RES interviewers were instructed to re-contact those people in order to obtain the missing information. About two thirds of the information was then forthcoming, but the proportion of people for whom social class is unknown is still rather high among this group.

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 (for example, to compare the answers of adults with young people in their households) may well want to come back to us for more precise details on the survey set-up. This will be welcomed as we are keen to encourage interaction between the project team and all survey users. Please contact the survey co-ordinator in the first instance, but any member of the project team will be glad to help.

Note that the data has been tested extensively, but if you do find anything that looks like a mistake, please let us know as soon as you can.

A certain amount of methodological work is still ongoing. As explained, the social class variables on the dataset at present have been derived using the CASOC computerised system. However, we are also deriving social class (and the Goldthorpe Schema) using another method. Results from the two will be compared and we will make a decision for future surveys on the most appropriate way of deriving social class.

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 young person's sample does not need to be weighted.

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Finding a module in the questionnaires

	Main Questionnaire	Self Completion Version A	Self Completion Version B	Young Life and Times
	Cream	Green	Blue	Yellow
<i>Rights of the Child</i>	Pages 4-6	N/A	N/A	Pages 6-15
<i>Public Understanding of Science</i>	Pages 7-13	N/A	Page 4	Page 5
<i>Political Attitudes</i>	Pages 14-22	Pages 13-15	Page 5-6	Pages 2-3
<i>Crime and Fear of Crime</i>	Pages 23-27	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Gender and Family Roles</i>	N/A	N/A	Pages 2-4	Page 4
<i>Community Relations</i>	Pages 28-38	Pages 15-16	Pages 6-7	Pages 3-4
<i>Housing</i>	Pages 39-49	Page 16	Page 7	Page 6
<i>Background</i>	Pages 2, 50-61			Pages 16-20
<i>ISSP: Religious Observance</i>	N/A	Pages 2-13	N/A	N/A

Comparison with other surveys

Comparison of household characteristics

		NILT 1998*	CHS 1997/8**	Northern Ireland Census 1991
<i>Characteristics of sampled households</i>				
<i>Tenure</i>	Owner occupied	66	68	62
	Rented, NIHE	25	23	29
	Rented, Other***	8	7	8
	Other (eg rent free)	1	1	1
Base=100%		1800	3021	530 369

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

** CHS: Continuous Household Survey

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

Comparison of individual characteristics

		NILT 1998	CHS 1997/8	Northern Ireland Census 1991
<i>Individual characteristics</i>				
<i>Sex</i>	Male	47	47	48
	Female	53	53	52
<i>Age</i>	18-24	13	13	16
	25-34	19	20	21
	35-44	20	20	18
	45-54	20	16	15
	55-59	7	6	6
	60-64	6	6	6
	65 and over	15	18	18
	Refused/Don't know	<1		
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	26	24	28
	Married/Cohabiting	61	61	59
	Widowed	7	9	9
	Divorced/Separated	6	6	6
Base=100%		1800	5789	1 117 221
<i>Economic activity</i>	Working	51	53	49*
	Unemployed	5	5	9
	Economically inactive	43	42	42
	Refused/missing	1	0	0
Base=100%		1800	5538	1 167 938

* Based on total population aged 16 and over

Individual characteristics - NILT 1998

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	91	35	12	8	12	26
Married/cohabiting	8	59	79	78	51	61
Divorced/separated/ widowed	1	6	10	14	37	13
Base=100%	184	365	366	538	338	1791

Individual characteristics - CHS 1997/8

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65 and over	All
	%					
Single	87	31	9	8	13	24
Married/cohabiting	13	63	80	78	47	61
Divorced/separated/ widowed	0	5	11	15	40	15
Base=100%	747	1172	1137	1686	1047	5789

Stated religious denomination

	NILT 1998	CHS 1997/8	Northern Ireland Census 1991
Protestant	51	58	50
Catholic	38	37	38
Non-Christian	-	1	-
No religion	9	3	4
Unwilling to say	2	2	7
Base=100%	1800	4886	1 577 836
(Undefined CHS*)		12%	

* Religion remains undefined in the CHS for individuals who did not fully co-operate in the survey and were, therefore not asked their denomination. The base for this percentage (5538) is the total number of adults aged 18 and over in the sampled households.

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 55-65 6 65+
<i>NIPARTY</i>	NI Party identification 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 12 Worker's Party 13 UK Unionist Party 14 Green Party 15 Other Party 16 Other answer 17 None
<i>RELIGCAT</i>	Religion of respondent (categorised) 1 Catholic 2 Protestant 3 No religion
<i>NIHEAREA</i>	N Ireland Housing Executive Areas North East Belfast South East South West
<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