

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 1999

Technical Notes

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Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| What is the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey? | 1 |
| Links with other surveys | 1 |
| Technical details of the 1999 survey | 2 |
| The overall design | 2 |
| Survey content | 2 |
| Fieldwork | 2 |
| Advance mailshot | 3 |
| Sampling design | 3 |
| Response rate | 3 |
| Sampling error and confidence intervals | 4 |
| Identifying the young people's sample | 5 |
| Data preparation | 5 |
| Deriving social class variables | 5 |
| Getting the data | 6 |
| Using the data | 6 |
| | |
| Contacting the project team | 7 |
| Notes and errata | 8 |
| Finding a module in the questionnaire | 9 |
| Comparison with other surveys | 10 |
| Other variables on the dataset | 12 |

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 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 1999 survey who have been most supportive of the overall aims of the project. They include: The Nuffield Foundation, The Wellcome Trust, Department for Social Development, Social Security Agency, Training and Employment Agency, Community Relations Unit and the Social Science Research Council of the Royal Irish Academy.

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 1999 module covered **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 1999 survey

The overall design

The 1999 *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* involved 2200 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 or over. The main interview was carried out using computer assisted interviewing and the respondent was then asked to complete a self-completion form. The *Young Life and Times Survey*, which runs alongside the adult version, included interviews with 449 young people aged 12 to 17. This used 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 1999 this was *Education*).

Not all modules are asked of the full 2200 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 1999 survey allowed half the sample to be asked the *Attitudes to Genetics Research* module, while the other half were asked the *Transport* module.

Survey content

| Version A | Version B |
|---|---|
| <i>Background</i> <i>Attitudes to Genetics Research</i> <i>Political Attitudes</i> <i>Education</i> <i>Community Relations</i> <i>Pensions and Pensioners</i> <i>Social Inequality</i> | <i>Background</i> <i>Transport</i> <i>Political Attitudes</i> <i>Education</i> <i>Community Relations</i> <i>Pensions and Pensioners</i> |

Note: The Pensions and Pensioners module has is not included in this dataset or in the accompanying questionnaire due to the complicated nature of the module. If you would like a copy of the data or relevant questions, please contact one of the survey team (see contact details on page vii)

Fieldwork

All interviews were conducted during the period October 7 1999 and January 14 2000. 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 respondent's home. Interviewers made up to a maximum of five calls before the person identified in the sample was deemed non-obtainable. 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 mailshot

Households identified in the sample were sent an advance leaflet 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 leaflet also provided households with contact details for the project team and the interviewer's own name. This mailshot also confirmed that a donation of one pound 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). Each address was checked against the Valuation List held by the Valuation and Lands Agency, in order to identify non domestic properties which were then omitted from the sample. At selected addresses, a KISH grid procedure was utilised to randomly select one individual to be the subject of the survey.

A slightly larger than necessary sample was taken in order 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 1.3** shows the response rate for versions A and B of the main stage interviews, and the self completion questionnaires.

| Total Interviews Issued | Vacant /Derelict /Commercial | Total in scope |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 3337 | 189 | 3148 |

| | No. | % |
|-------------|------|-----|
| Achieved | 2200 | 70 |
| Refused | 551 | 17 |
| Non-contact | 337 | 11 |
| Other | 60 | 2 |
| Total | 3148 | 100 |

| | Version A | Version B |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of main stage interviews | 1076 | 1124 |
| Number of self completion achieved | 830 | 902 |
| % of self completion achieved | 77 | 80 |

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 | 11.0 | 0.67 | 9.7-12.3 |
| | 25 - 44 | 40.2 | 1.05 | 38.2-42.3 |
| | 45 - 64 | 29.2 | 0.97 | 27.3-31.1 |
| | 65 - 74 | 10.4 | 0.65 | 9.1-11.7 |
| | 75+ | 8.6 | 0.60 | 7.4-9.8 |
| Sex | Male | 42.7 | 1.05 | 40.6-44.8 |
| | Female | 57.3 | 1.05 | 55.2-59.4 |
| Marital status | Married/Cohabiting | 50.6 | 1.07 | 48.5-52.7 |
| | Single | 27.6 | 0.95 | 25.7-29.5 |
| | Widow/Div/Sep | 21.7 | 0.88 | 20.0-23.4 |
| Religion | Catholic | 37.7 | 1.03 | 35.7-39.7 |
| | Protestant | 48.6 | 1.07 | 46.5-50.7 |
| | None | 10.1 | 0.64 | 8.8-11.4 |
| | Other | <1 | 0.05 | 0-0.1 |
| | Refused | 3.5 | 0.39 | 2.7-4.3 |

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.

| Table 1.5 Young people identified in participating households (N=2200) | |
|---|------------|
| 1 Young person | 290 |
| 2 Young people | 118 |
| 3 Young people | 22 |
| 4 Young people | 4 |
| Total number of young people identified | 608 |

| Table 1.6 Outcome of young people's main stage survey | |
|--|-----------|
| | No. |
| Total number of young people identified | 608 |
| Total number of young people interviewed | 449 |
| Response rate for Young Life & Times Survey (%) | 74 |

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 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, and is based at the Centre for Social Research, Queen's University Belfast (see Contact Information on page 7). 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.

Note: The Pensions and Pensioners module has is not included in this dataset or in the accompanying questionnaire due to the complicated nature of the module. If you would like a copy of the data or relevant questions, please contact one of the survey team (see contact details on page vii)

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.

The 1999 survey included a module on Pensions and Pensioners for which many of the tables of results are not posted on the web. This is because the analysis calculating benefit take-up and eligibility, as well as pension provision itself, are technically quite complicated. An additional booster sample of pensioners was obtained in order to yield enough pensioners to carry out the analysis. It would be advisable to contact the survey team if any pensions analysis is to be undertaken.

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

Contacting the project team

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Notes and Errata

8 cases look slightly out of place on the variables IDENT1 variable within the Community Relations module. For example, a number of men have described their identity as being 'Woman', 'Mother' or 'Wife'.

Finding a module in the questionnaires

| | Main Questionnaire | Self Completion Version A | Self Completion Version B | Young Life and Times |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| | Page numbers | | | |
| <i>Attitudes to Genetics Research</i> | 5-9 | 8-9 | N/A | 2 |
| <i>Transport</i> | 10-12 | N/A | 2-4 | 2 |
| <i>Political Attitudes</i> | 13-19 | 11-13,14 | 6-8,-9 | 2-3 |
| <i>Education</i> | 20-24 | 10-11 | 5-6 | 3-4 |
| <i>Community Relations</i> | 25-30 | 13 | 8 | 9 |
| <i>ISSP: Social Inequality</i> | N/A | 2-8 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Background information</i> | 3-4, 31-40 | N/A | N/A | 10-13 |

Comparison with other surveys

Sample characteristics

Comparison of household characteristics

| | | NILT 1999* | CHS 1998/9 | Northern Ireland Census 1991 |
|--|----------------------|------------|------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Characteristics of sampled households</i> | | | | |
| <i>Tenure</i> | Owner occupied | 66 | 73 | 62 |
| | Rented, NIHE | 22 | 19 | 29 |
| | Rented, Other** | 9 | 6 | 8 |
| | Other (eg rent free) | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Base=100% | | 2200 | 5390 | 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 1999 | CHS 1998/9 | Northern Ireland Census 1991 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Individual characteristics</i> | | | | |
| <i>Sex</i> | Male | 45 | 47 | 48 |
| | Female | 55 | 53 | 52 |
| <i>Age</i> | 18-24 | 15 | 13 | 16 |
| | 25-34 | 19 | 19 | 21 |
| | 35-44 | 20 | 19 | 18 |
| | 45-54 | 18 | 17 | 15 |
| | 55-59 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| | 60-64 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | 65 and over | 15 | 18 | 18 |
| <i>Marital Status</i> | Single | 27 | 27 | 28 |
| | Married/Cohabiting | 60 | 58 | 59 |
| | Widowed | 7 | 9 | 9 |
| | Divorced/Separated | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Base=100% | | 2200 | 5390 | 1 117 221 |
| <i>Economic activity</i> | Working | 50** | 50** | 49* |
| | Unemployed | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| | Economically inactive | 47 | 40 | 42 |
| | Refused/missing | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Base=100% | | 2200 | 5390 | 1 167 938 |

* Based on total population aged 16 and over

** Includes schemes and employment training etc

Individual characteristics - NILT 1999

| | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-64 | 65 and over | All |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|------|
| | % | | | | | |
| Single | 90 | 38 | 11 | 7 | 12 | 27 |
| Married/cohabiting | 9 | 58 | 76 | 78 | 53 | 60 |
| Divorced/separated/ widowed | 1 | 4 | 13 | 15 | 35 | 13 |
| Base=100% | 243 | 441 | 444 | 643 | 418 | 2200 |

Individual characteristics - CHS 1998/9

| | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-64 | 65 and over | All |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|------|
| | % | | | | | |
| Single | 94 | 42 | 14 | 8 | 11 | 27 |
| Married/cohabiting | 6 | 51 | 74 | 78 | 50 | 58 |
| Divorced/separated/ widowed | 0 | 8 | 12 | 14 | 38 | 15 |
| Base=100% | 675 | 1000 | 1020 | 1678 | 1014 | 5387 |

Stated religious denomination

| | NILT 1999 | CHS 1998/9 | Northern Ireland Census 1991 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|------------------------------|
| Protestant | 48 | 48 | 50 |
| Catholic | 39 | 31 | 38 |
| Other religion | <1 | <1 | - |
| No religion | 10 | 2 | 4 |
| Unwilling to say/Don't know | 3 | 19 | 7 |
| Base=100% | 2200 | 5390 | 1 577 836 |

Other variables on the dataset

| <i>WTFACTOR</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>SOCLASS</i> | Overall social class 0 Professional 1 Managerial/technical 2 Skilled non-manual 3 Skilled manual 4 Partly skilled 5 Unskilled 9 Unknown |