

Separation or sharing?

the people's choice

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THE SURVEY

The survey was carried out on a randomly selected sample from the voters register in Northern Ireland. Questionnaires were distributed by Market Research Northern Ireland Ltd. (MRNI) to each address and collected by trained interviewers during April and May 1996. A total of 715 questionnaires were completed, which gave a satisfactory distribution in terms of sex, age, class, urban/rural location and communal affiliation.

The main communal categories used in this report are those who classed themselves as 'Protestant' (47%) or 'Catholic' (40%); the remainder (13%) have been classed as 'Other' and seem to represent a general cross section of the population rather than a group with distinctive views.

The full details of the sample and a discussion of the statistical validity of the results is set out in the Technical Appendix on pages 22 and 23.

THE RESEARCH TEAM

The research was organised and carried out at the Queen's University of Belfast by Dr. Colin Irwin of the Institute of Irish Studies, Professor Fred Boal of the Department of Geography and Professor Tom Hadden of the Faculty of Law.

THE SPONSORS

The research was planned as a consequence of a series of seminars on social and economic research in Northern Ireland initiated by the Economic and Social Research Council. We are grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for its support for the costs of carrying out the survey, of preparing this interim report and the final report.

INTERIM AND FINAL REPORTS

This interim report has been prepared in order to make some of the results of the survey and their implications for government policy widely available during the current talks process. A more detailed report and analysis of the responses to the survey and of their implications for peace building will be published early in 1997.

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THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Everyone agrees that the division between the two communities in Northern Ireland is getting worse. Over twenty five years of the troubles more and more areas have become effectively segregated. Only a tiny proportion of children attend integrated schools. But is increasing communal separation what people really want? Or have they been driven to it by fear or because there has been no other option.

One purpose of the survey analysed in this interim report has been to find out whether ordinary people in Northern Ireland want to live their lives separately or together. This is not just a question of living in separate housing estates or districts. It covers a wide range of bread and butter issues: employment, education, policing and the system of local and regional government. In all of these there is a choice between structures which, intentionally or otherwise, make separate provision for members of the two communities and structures which facilitate sharing and cooperation.

A NEW TECHNIQUE

There have been surveys on all these matters in the past. But this one is different. Unlike most other opinion polls it has been designed to allow people to express their preferences over the whole range of practical options on each issue rather than simply saying which they like best. And unlike most other opinion polls the people asked were given as much time as they needed to make up their minds. So the survey presents a more considered picture of what a representative sample of people would most like and also what they would be prepared to accept as second or third best on each issue. This should help everyone—including local politicians and the British and Irish governments—to see what compromises are most likely to gain general acceptance.

WHAT NEXT?

The validity of any survey of course can be called into question. People's opinions on some issues vary from day to day, not least in response to events like the standoff at Drumcree or the latest IRA bomb. And all sample surveys are subject to statistical errors. But even if the precise percentages on any issue may be variable, the broad pattern of responses is likely to be an accurate reflection of popular opinion. Many of the responses are in fact similar to those reported over the years in the official Northern Ireland Social Attitude Survey and other opinion polls.

So it is safe to conclude from the responses reported here that most people in Northern Ireland want to live together rather than apart and that even on those matters on which there is most disagreement there are some possible compromises. This suggests that some significant changes in government policy may be called for to increase opportunities for sharing in education, in housing and in policing as well as in employment. The process can be called 'policy appraisal for separation and sharing'—or PASS for short.

The findings also have important implications for the current talks and the peace process as a whole. It suggests that if the politicians and the two governments gave the people a chance to become more directly involved in the process, by asking their views on a range of options in a referendum, the job of finding a generally acceptable solution might be made much easier.

EMPLOYMENT

There has long been and still is a serious inequality in employment and unemployment rates for Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. The initial objective of government policy in the 1970s was to eliminate cases of individual discrimination. It is now focused on achieving balance in the workforce in each place of work. All large employers are required by the Fair Employment Commission to monitor the composition of their workforces and to take 'affirmative action' to remedy any imbalance. So the underlying policy is to achieve fair treatment for members of both communities by promoting sharing rather than separation in the workplace.

The responses to a question on this issue show that there is overwhelming support in both communities for sharing in the workplace: 87% of Catholics and 80% of Protestants said that if they had the choice in a new job they would prefer to work in a 'mixed religion workplace' rather than 'with people of your own religion only'; only 8% of Catholics and 16% of Protestants preferred 'separation'. (see Chart 1)

A similar preference for shared schemes for tackling unemployment over separate ones for one community only emerged on a related question: 56% of Protestants and 70% of Catholics said they would prefer government to give priority to cross-community schemes rather than schemes for disadvantaged communities selected simply on the basis of economic deprivation. (see Chart 2)

There was a similar degree of support in both communities for fair employment legislation generally: 94% of Catholics and 76% of Protestants said they supported it 'strongly' or 'just a bit'. Further analysis of the 24% of Protestants who opposed it 'strongly' or 'just a bit' indicated that the main opposition comes from older DUP supporters who may have lost their jobs in declining industries; younger DUP supporters were more likely to be in favour.

Table 1
Support/ opposition to fair employment law

	Protestant	Catholic	All
Support strongly	49%	85%	64%
Support just a bit	27%	9%	18%
Oppose just a bit	8%	3%	5%
Oppose strongly	15%	1%	9%
Don't know	1%	2%	4%

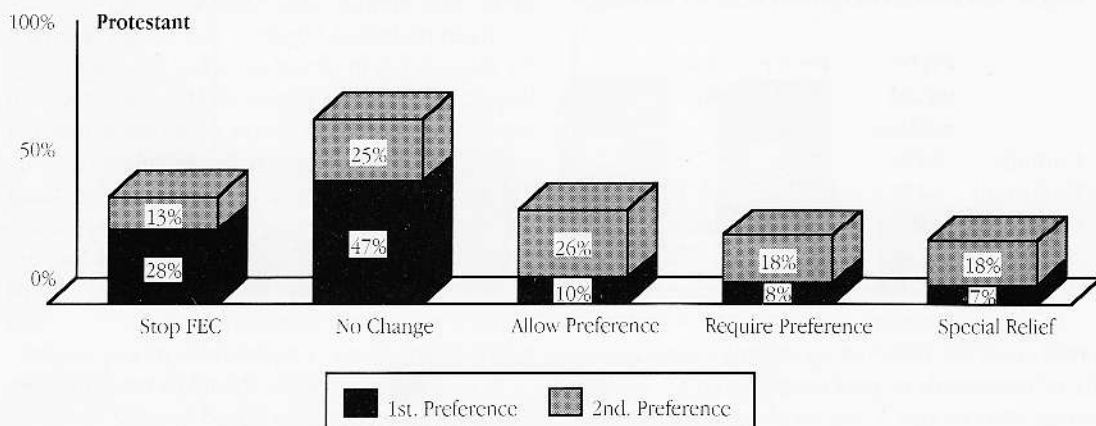
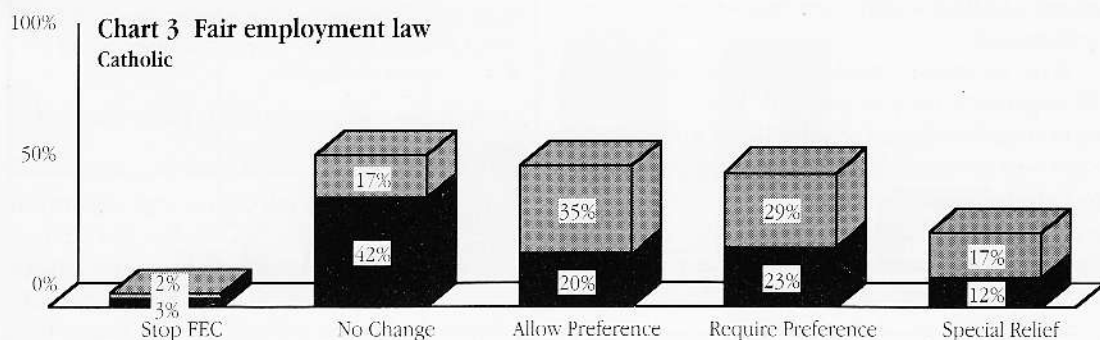
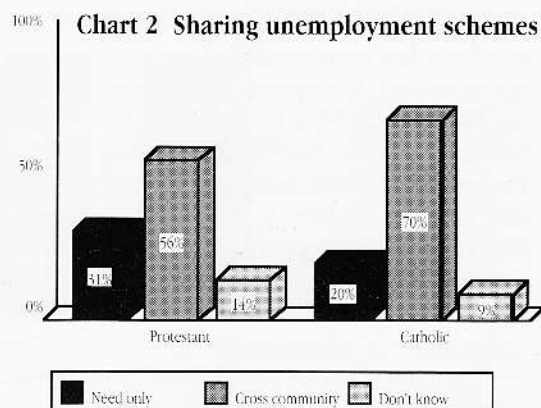
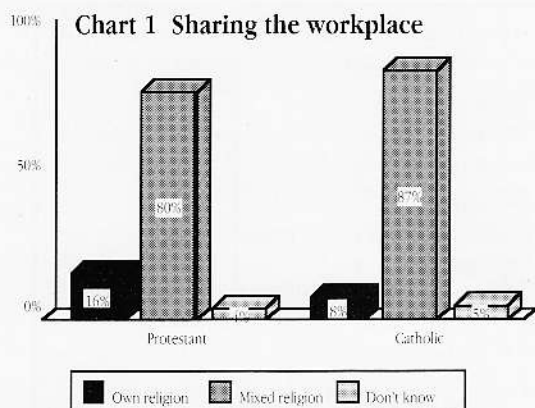
A second set of questions was directed at the more difficult issue of how far should fair employment law go. Five possible options were suggested for respondents to place in order of their preference:

- **Stop fair employment activities** - Repeal fair employment legislation, scrap the Fair Employment Commission and allow employers to give jobs to whom they wish.
- **No change** - Leave current fair employment legislation and policies as they are; don't cut them back but don't extend their powers either.
- **Preference to the under represented community** - Allow employers to give a job to a candidate from the under represented community when two candidates (one a Catholic and one a Protestant) are equally qualified.
- **Active selection from the under represented community** - Require employers to select qualified candidates from the under represented community until a balance is achieved in their workforce that reflects the balance of the two communities in the area.
- **Special relief for areas of high unemployment** - Allow employers in areas of high unemployment to recruit from one community only, leaving it up to government to ensure an overall balance of employment between the two communities in Northern Ireland as a whole.

Allowing or requiring employers to select qualified candidates from an under represented community would clearly increase pressure on employers to promote sharing in their own workforce, while giving special relief to areas of high unemployment would in effect permit increased segregation in many areas.

The responses to this question (see Chart 3) show a clear preference in both communities for keeping the law as it is rather than making it stronger: 72% of Protestants, 59% of Catholics and 66% overall gave that as their first or second choice. Rather more Catholics than Protestants opted for allowing (54% of 1st or 2nd choices) or requiring (52% of 1st or 2nd choices) preference for an under represented community. Very few in either community (only 27% of 1st or 2nd choices overall) opted for allowing greater segregation in areas of high unemployment.

EMPLOYMENT



Policy action

- There is broad cross-communal support for current policies on fair employment which promote communal balance in all places of work.
- There is much less support for any form of relief from fair employment law in areas of high unemployment

HOUSING

Official policy on public housing, like that on employment, has been directed at the elimination of discrimination. In response to allegations of sectarian allocation policies by local authorities a new independent body, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, was established in 1971 with an allocation scheme based exclusively on housing need. The Executive is now generally accepted as wholly impartial. But the combination of its need-based and 'religion-blind' rules for allocation and widespread intimidation by paramilitaries in many areas has resulted in ever increasing segregation in most public authority estates. In practice most applicants for public housing are faced with a choice between estates which are widely regarded as either Catholic or Protestant.

What do people actually want? When we look at the responses to the question 'if you were moving and had a choice would you prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people only of your own religion or in a mixed religion neighbourhood' we find that a considerable majority of all householders (65%), including 68% of Catholics and 64% of Protestants, wish to live in mixed neighbourhoods. (see Table 2 below)

Table 2
Preference for mixed or own religion housing

	Prefer mixed religion	Prefer own religion	Don't know
Catholic	68%	25%	7%
Protestant	64%	31%	5%
Other	61%	23%	16%
All	65%	28%	7%

It is easy, of course, to be in favour of mixing if members of the 'other' group are only a small minority of households in your neighbourhood. But the survey showed that a very large majority (80%) of those who favoured mixing would be prepared to live in an area where there is an equal balance of residents from the Protestant and Catholic communities.

The survey also asked respondents to put five different government housing policies in their order of preference:

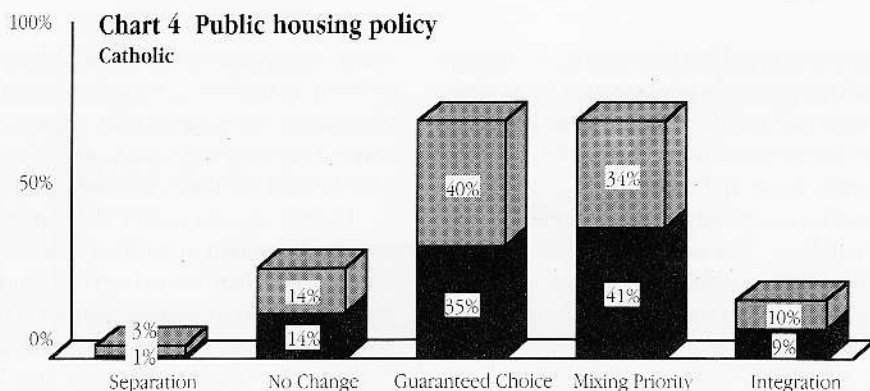
- **Separation** - establish separate housing authorities and estates for Catholics and Protestants in public housing.
- **No change** - Leave housing allocation policy as it is where people are generally required to choose between a predominantly Catholic or Protestant estate.
- **Guaranteed choice** - Ask people if they would prefer to live in a Catholic, Protestant or mixed religion neighbourhood and make sure they are housed according to their wishes by adequately funding mixed housing projects.
- **Choice with incentives for mixed housing** - Ask people if they would prefer to live in a Catholic, Protestant or mixed religion neighbourhood, house them according to their wishes, give funding priority to mixed housing projects and provide other incentives such as shorter waiting lists.
- **Integration** - Require persons in public housing to live in mixed estates.

In response to this question a large majority in both communities (85% of Catholics and 72% of Protestants) chose 'Guaranteed choice' or 'Choice with incentives for mixed housing' or 'Integration to be required in public housing' as their first option; very few gave their first or second preference to any of the other options. (see Chart 4)

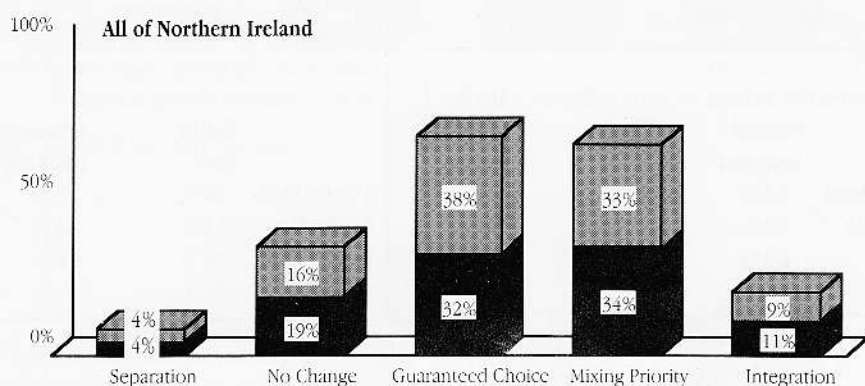
It can be argued, however, that it is all very well for those living in owner-occupied property to say they are in favour of mixing in Housing Executive estates. On this issue it is more important to have the views of those who actually live in public housing. The survey responses showed that there is also strong support for mixing among current Housing Executive tenants, though at a lower level than that expressed by 'outsiders' in owner occupation: 70% of Catholic public sector tenants and 59% of Protestant public sector tenants supported the mixing options.

None of this, of course, should be taken to imply that a majority choice for mixed housing should be achieved at the cost of removing choice from those who favour separation. The preference for separation expressed by a minority of households must also be respected.

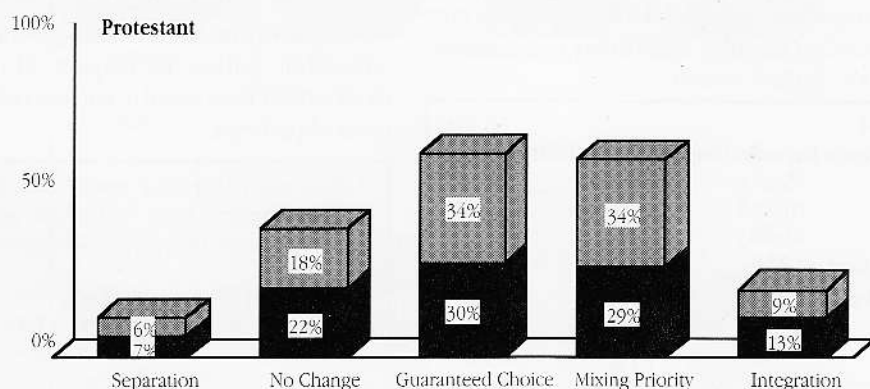
Chart 4 Public housing policy
Catholic



All of Northern Ireland



Protestant



■ 1st. Preference ■ 2nd. Preference

Policy action

- The Housing Executive should give priority to developing and maintaining mixed religion estates in appropriate locations
- The bar on taking religion into account in allocations should be removed where that is necessary to maintain balance in mixed estates.

EDUCATION

It has often been argued that the existence of separate and mutually exclusive school systems for Catholic and Protestant children in Northern Ireland is a major factor in its continuing communal divisions. Repeated opinion polls have indicated that a substantial proportion of people would prefer integrated schooling for their children. But despite some government support for new integrated schools in recent years they still provide places for less than 3% of children.

The results of this survey may help to explain the situation. It confirms the finding of previous polls that a substantial majority (61%) favours mixed religion schools. (see Table 3)

Table 3 Preference for mixed or own religion schools			
	Mixed religion	Own religion	Don't know
Protestant	63%	33%	4%
Catholic	59%	35%	7%
Other	60%	29%	11%
All	61%	33%	6%

It also shows clearly that a similar substantial majority (61%), though higher among Protestants (72%) than Catholics (53%), favours a selective education system in which children sit the 11+ exam and are selected for either a secondary or a grammar school. (see Table 4 below)

Table 4 Preference for selective or mixed ability schools			
	Prefer mixed ability	Prefer selective	Don't know
Protestant	23%	72%	5%
Catholic	42%	53%	5%
Other	31%	45%	24%
All	32%	61%	7%

Government policy has always given more weight to the wishes of those who favour selection (as against mixed ability) rather than integration (as against own religion schools). All new integrated schools have been required to be all-ability and new integrated grammar schools have not been permitted. And though the government now favours the transformation of existing schools to integrated status, the procedures for initiating a transformation make it unlikely that any will occur. School governing bodies include representatives of those opposed to

integration, particularly in Catholic schools, and it is difficult to achieve a majority vote of parents for integration when those who support it are evenly divided between state and Catholic schools and are thus unlikely to form a clear majority in either.

Despite this the survey showed general support for transformation of existing schools to integrated status. More than half in both communities said that they would favour transformations if it was quicker and less expensive, compared with only 30% for building new integrated schools. (see Table 5)

Table 5

Should the government provide more integrated places by building new integrated schools or transforming existing schools?

	Build new	Change existing	Don't know
Protestant	28%	55%	17%
Catholic	33%	54%	13%
Other	28%	44%	27%
All	30%	53%	17%

But if existing segregated schools are to be effectively transformed more incentives and stricter rules for maintaining integrated status will be required.

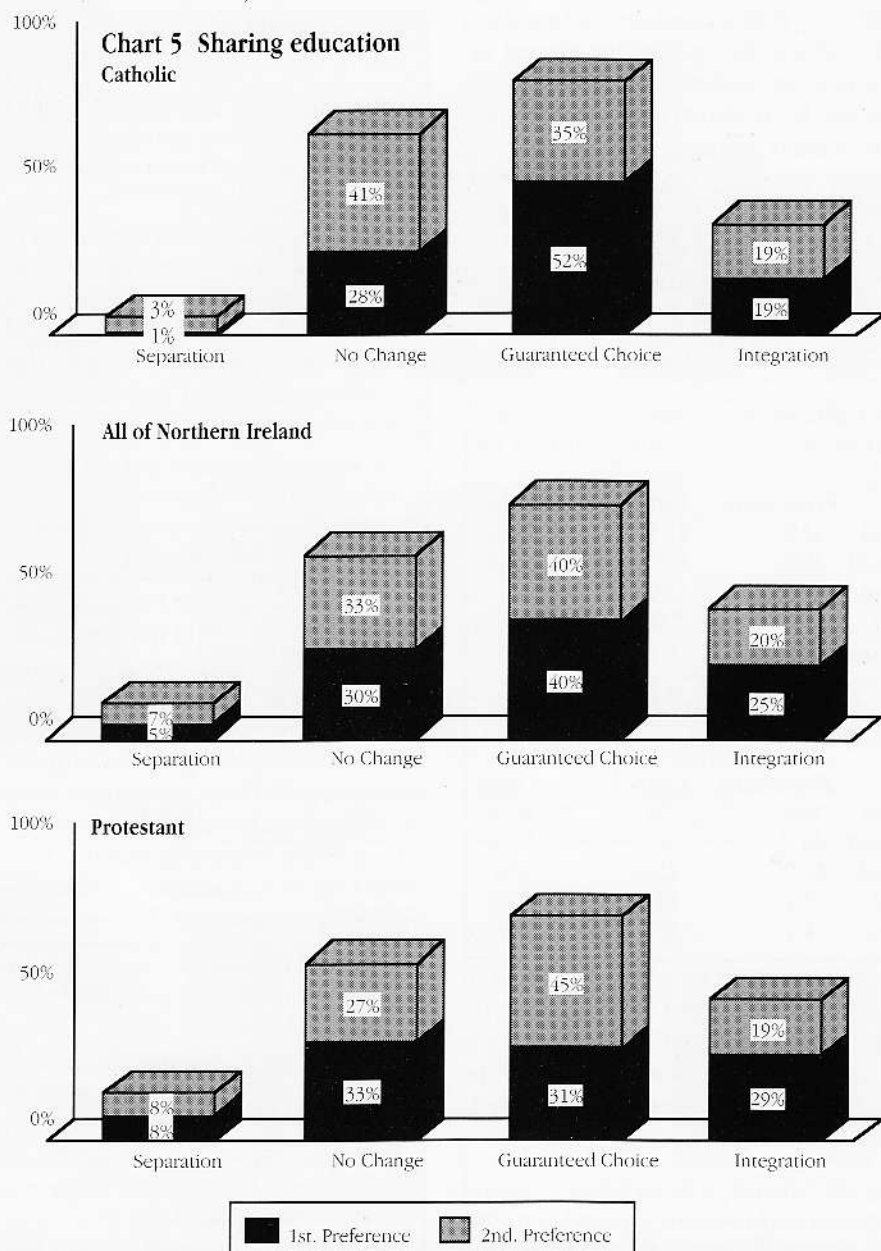
The survey included a more general question on education policy in respect of integration. Respondents were asked to put four policy options in order of preference.

- **Separation** - Establish separate education authorities for separate schools for Catholic and Protestant children with no state funded integrated schools.
- **No change** - Leave education policy as it is where parents generally have to choose between sending their child to a Catholic or Protestant school.
- **Guaranteed choice** - Ask parents if they would prefer to send their child to a single religion school or to an integrated school and make sure their wishes are met by adequately funding integrated schools.
- **Integration** - Establish a single education authority to manage integrated schools for Catholic and Protestant children with no state funded Catholic and Protestant schools.

The survey indicated virtually no support (12% of first and second choices) for the 'Separation' option; some support for forced 'Integration' (45% of first

and second choices); and a clear preference on first and second choices in both communities (76% of Protestants and 87% of Catholics) for 'Guaranteed

choice' rather than 'No change' (60% of Protestants and 69% of Catholics). (See Chart 5)



Policy action

- Parents should be given a guaranteed choice of both integrated grammar and integrated mixed ability schools throughout Northern Ireland
- There should be incentives for transformation to integrated status, greater protection for integration principles and adequate funding for all integrated schools.

POLICING

Attitudes to policing in Northern Ireland have always been highly polarised. The RUC is currently more than 90% Protestant and for Catholics/nationalists its record in politically controversial operations, such as the alleged 'shoot to kill' policy, the alleged ill-treatment of terrorist suspects and the policing of loyalist marches, has tended to overshadow its performance in 'ordinary' policing.

This is clearly apparent in Table 6 below. A large majority of both Catholics (71%) and Protestants (91%) rated RUC performance as 'very good' or 'fairly good' on non-sectarian crimes. But only 43% of Catholics, compared with 84% of Protestants, made the same assessment for sectarian crimes.

Table 6

Do the RUC do a good or a bad job in controlling non-sectarian crime - crime not to do with the troubles?

	Protestant	Catholic	Other
Very good	42%	16%	35%
Fairly good	49%	55%	44%
Fairly bad	5%	15%	6%
Very bad	2%	7%	4%
Don't know	1%	1%	12%

Do the RUC do a good or a bad job in controlling sectarian crime - crime to do with the troubles?

	Protestant	Catholic	Other
Very good	39%	7%	26%
Fairly good	45%	36%	40%
Fairly bad	10%	25%	8%
Very bad	3%	24%	7%
Don't know	4%	8%	18%

These divergent attitudes were even clearer in responses to a question about making efforts to recruit more Catholics: 88% of Catholics said yes to action like changing the name and uniform of the RUC, while 71% of Protestants said no. (see Table 7)

Table 7

Should the police make a greater effort to recruit more Catholics and be more acceptable to the Nationalist community by, for example, changing the name and uniform of the RUC?

	Protestant	Catholic	All
Yes	20%	88%	50%
No	71%	4%	39%
Don't know	9%	8%	11%

When faced with the following five options for future policing structures the difference in the first preferences of Catholics and Protestants was equally striking:

- **No change** - leave current policing structures as they are while attempting to recruit more Catholics.
- **New community policing units within the RUC** - create new policing units to deal with domestic, community and non-violent sectarian problems at a local level as part of the RUC.
- **New community policing units outside the RUC** - Create a number of new local forces to deal with less serious crimes leaving the RUC to deal with more serious crimes in NI as a whole.
- **A new single police force** - Disband the RUC and create a new single police force with fair representation of both communities.
- **A number of regional and city police forces** - Disband the RUC and create a number of new regional and city police forces in, e.g. Belfast, (London) Derry and east and west of the Bann.

Two thirds of Catholics (68%) made disbanding the RUC and creating one or more new forces their first choice, while a similar proportion of Protestants (62%) made 'no change' theirs. (Chart 6) The most acceptable compromise on policing structures related to creating local community policing units within the RUC: 93% of Protestants and 55% of Catholics made this their 1st, 2nd or 3rd choice—a low level of acceptability.

On policing contentious marches, however, a different form of compromise— independent decision making —was indicated. The options were:

- **Allow all parades** - All parades should be allowed to march on public roads and should be provided with police protection.
- **RUC to rule on disputes** - The decision to allow parades to march through different areas should be left to the RUC.
- **Independent body to rule on disputes** - There should be an independent body to rule on all disputes relating to the routing of parades
- **No parades where they are not wanted** - No parades should be allowed to march through areas where a majority of the residents do not want them.

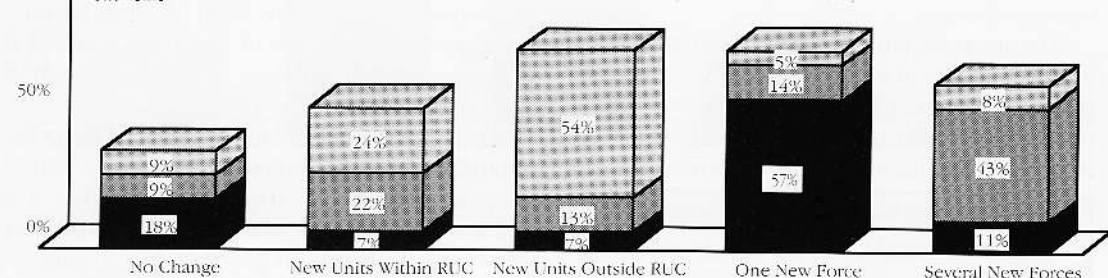
For most Catholics (75%) a decision by residents was first choice and for most Protestants (42%) allow all parades was first choice. When 1st and 2nd preferences were combined there was a clear major-

ity in both communities (86% of Catholics and 59% of Protestants, 70% overall) for giving the decision to an independent body. (see Chart 7)

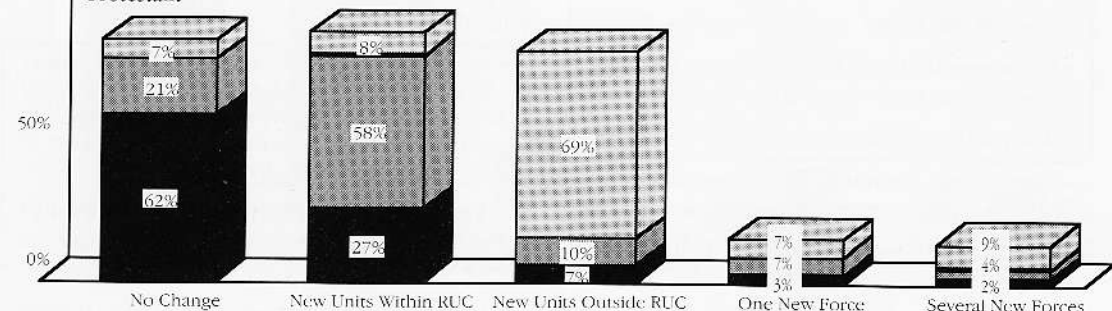
A similar preference for independent decision-

making was apparent on complaints against the police: 53% of Protestants and 91% of Catholics favoured a completely independent agency to investigate complaints against the RUC.

Chart 6 Policing structures
Catholic

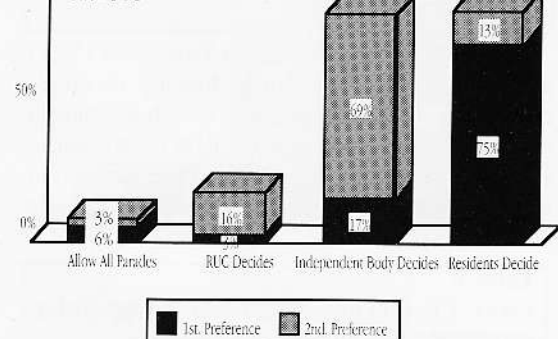


Protestant



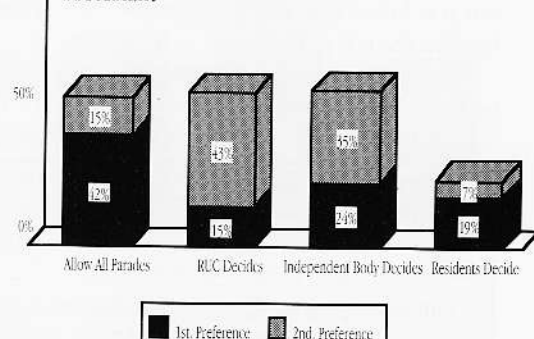
■ 1st. Preference ■ 2nd. Preference ■ 3rd. Preference

Chart 7 Parades
Catholic



■ 1st. Preference ■ 2nd. Preference

Protestant



■ 1st. Preference ■ 2nd. Preference

Policy action

Increasing the acceptability of the police will require:

- truly independent decision making on contentious issues like parades
- substantial organisational changes to the RUC (e.g. new local community policing units)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government in Northern Ireland is often regarded as the cockpit of communal antagonism. There have been frequent complaints of sectarian decisions by district councils controlled by both unionists and nationalists. But there have also been some examples of successful inter-party cooperation and power-sharing, e.g. in the election of mayors and committee chairs.

The questions in the survey were designed to test popular attitudes to separation and sharing on local issues, both on specific matters such as the use of the Irish language and more generally. Five options were offered on the use of Irish street names:

- **English only** - All street names in English only.
- **English and sometimes Irish** - All street names in English with the addition of Irish where a majority of residents are in favour.
- **English and Irish** - for all street names.
- **Sometimes Irish only** - Street names in Irish only, but only where a majority of residents are in favour.
- **Irish only** - All street names in Irish only.

There was a communal division on first preferences on this issue: 75% of Protestants wanted English, while 79% of Catholics wanted Irish to be used as well, either where residents wanted it (41%) or generally (38%). But the combined 1st and 2nd preferences of both Protestants (88%) and Catholics (80%) revealed a clear majority for English in all cases with the addition of Irish where residents wanted it. (See Chart 8) Most respondents probably did not know that this compromise had actually become the law in 1995.

The most significant issue at this level is that of power sharing within local district councils. The survey asked for views on three possible approaches:

- **Majority rule** - Govern on the basis of who has a majority.
- **Partial power sharing** - Where possible rotate the mayor and chairs of various committees.
- **Full power sharing** - Where possible rotate mayor and committees chairs as well as balancing numbers of councillors from each party on committees.

Most Unionists are firmly opposed to institutional power-sharing with nationalists at a regional level. But in some districts the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), but not the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), has made informal arrangements to share council posts

with the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).

This was reflected in responses to the options in the survey. Protestants were almost equally divided between support for majority rule and partial or full power sharing, while almost all Catholics supported full power sharing. (See Chart 9) As on other issues of this kind it was supporters of the DUP (73%) who were most opposed to any form of power sharing, compared with only 3% of Sinn Féin and SDLP supporters. But overall there was greater support in both communities for full power-sharing.

When asked about the use of public funds for the promotion of better community relations almost everyone, as might be expected, was in favour: 91% of Protestants and 98% of Catholics. But there was also majority support for giving priority funding to cross-community programmes rather than for giving equal shares to each community. Three options were offered:

- **Stop supporting single community programmes** - Stop funding all sport, language and other cultural activities associated with Unionism and Nationalism and leave the support of these activities entirely in the hands of their respective communities.
- **Fund single community programmes equally** - Fund the sport, language and cultural activities of each community with equal levels of resources.
- **Priority funding of programmes linked to good community relations** - Give priority funding to sport, language and cultural programmes where cross-community committees are established to maintain good community relations over contentious issues (e.g. Nationalist and Orange marches and Sunday opening).

For a small majority of both Protestants (53%) and Catholics (52%) priority funding of cross-community programmes was their first choice, though more Catholics (42%) than Protestants (27%) wanted equal community funding and more Protestants (20%) than Catholics (6%) wanted to stop all single community programmes. (See Table 8)

Table 8
First Preference for local community programmes

	Protestant	Catholic	Other
No separate funding	20%	6%	15%
Equal funding	27%	42%	32%
Shared schemes	53%	52%	53%

Chart 8 Street names

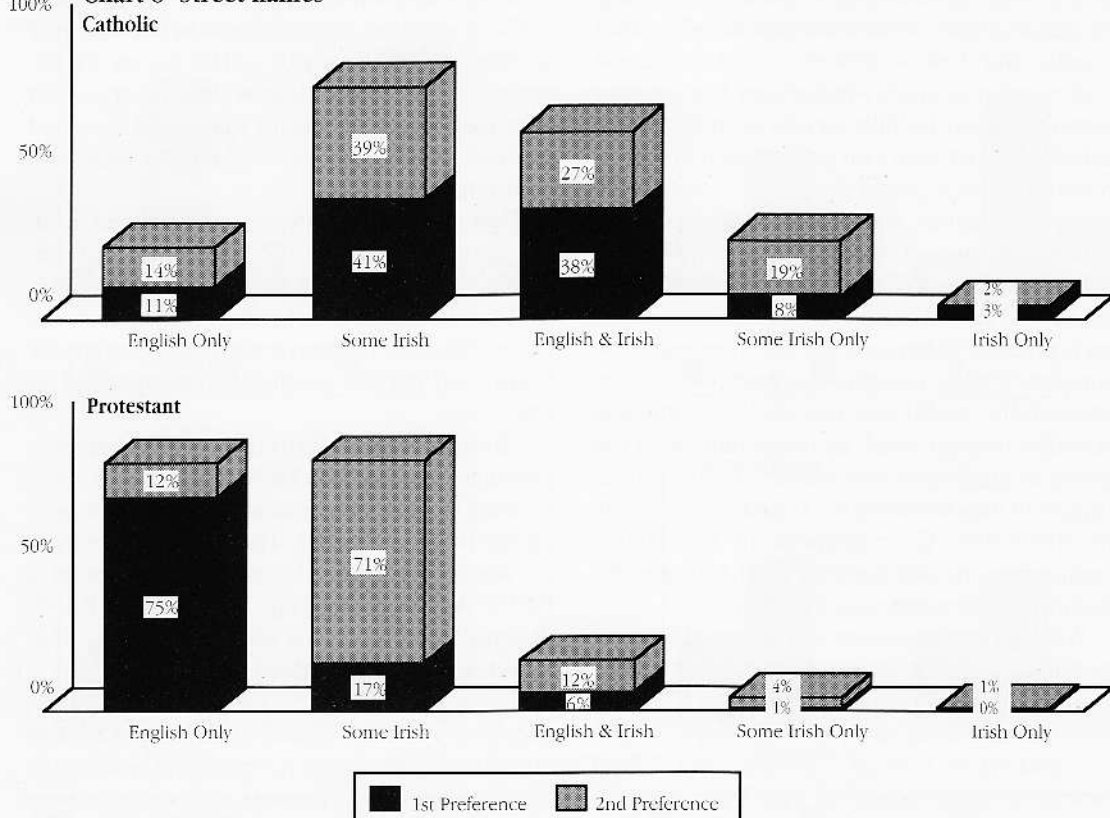
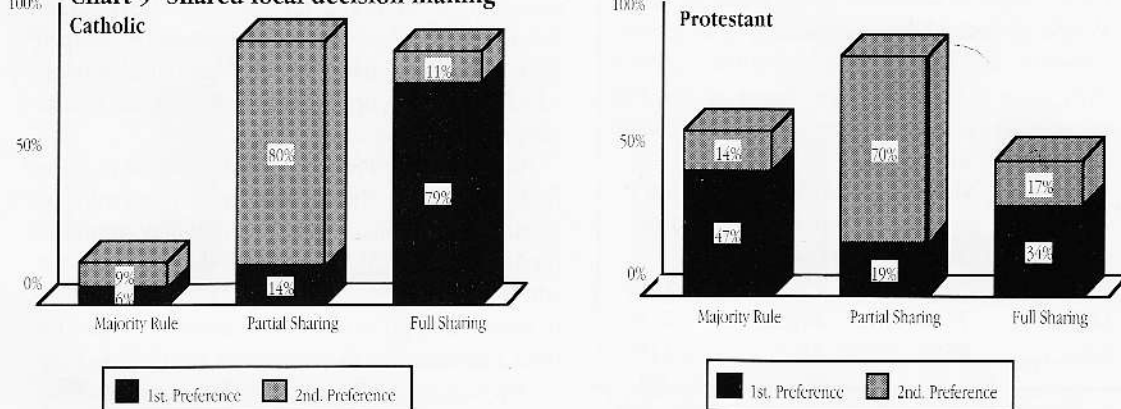


Chart 9 Shared local decision making



Policy action

• Financial incentives and/or legislation should be introduced to support the majority in both communities who want power sharing and communal cooperation in local government

SEPARATION OR SHARING

A major objective of this survey has been to test attitudes on the general issue of separation or sharing: whether people in both main communities in Northern Ireland—and those in between—want to live and work together or apart, whether they want to have shared or separate facilities for education and leisure, and whether they want their political representatives to work together in shared institutions or to establish separate structures within which the two main communities can control their own communal affairs.

Either of these approaches could be made to work. Neither is in any way illegitimate under international law or practice. Belgium, which lies at the heart of the European Union, has over the past few decades successfully established complex constitutional structures through which its two communities can govern themselves on most matters. In Alto-Adige, a region of Italy bordering on Austria in which there are distinctive German-speaking and Italian communities, equally complex legal structures for sharing have been successfully put in place.

When a general question was put on this issue at the end of the questionnaire in this survey a huge majority of both Protestants (80%) and Catholics (94%) chose sharing rather than separation; only a tiny proportion (2% of Catholics and 7% of Protestants) chose separation. (see Table 9 below)

Table 9

Do you think it would be better if the people of Northern Ireland moved towards greater co-operation and sharing in many aspects of their daily lives or would it be better if the two communities established separate institutions to manage their own affairs?

	More sharing	More separation	Don't know
Catholics	94%	2%	5%
Protestants	80%	7%	13%
Other	72%	4%	25%
All	85%	4%	11%

Responses to a general question of this kind, however, may be less significant than the answers to the wide range of more detailed questions set out above. The summary chart 10 opposite on the range of separation and sharing options discussed above show this very clearly. There was much higher

support for sharing in the responses to 'easy' questions on issues like communal cooperation as opposed to 'difficult' questions on marching or the Irish language as shown on previous pages. But the survey has produced clear evidence that on almost every issue a clear majority of the people questioned preferred structures which guaranteed a choice for those who wished to share.

The question for the two governments and for all the parties involved in the talks is whether this evidence of the views of the majority of people in Northern Ireland is to be heeded or subordinated to the more extreme views expressed by some communal leaders and put into practice by paramilitaries on either side.

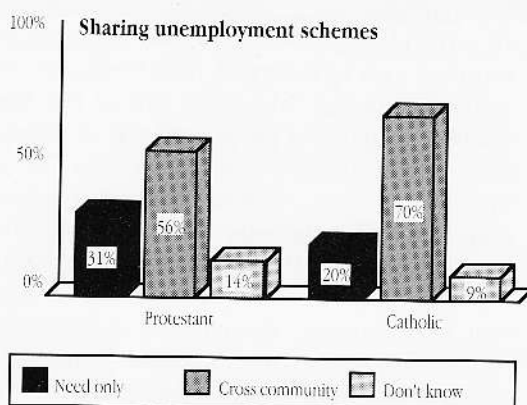
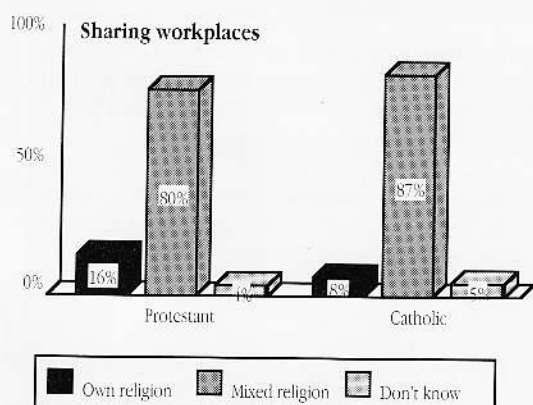
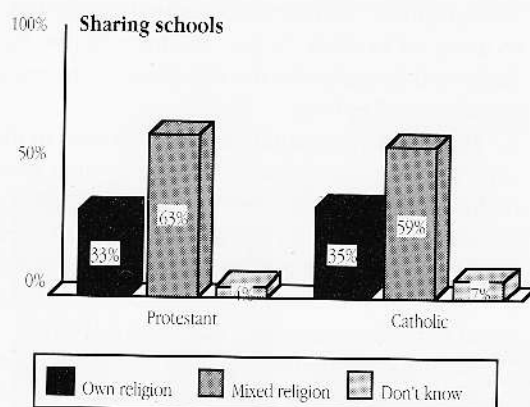
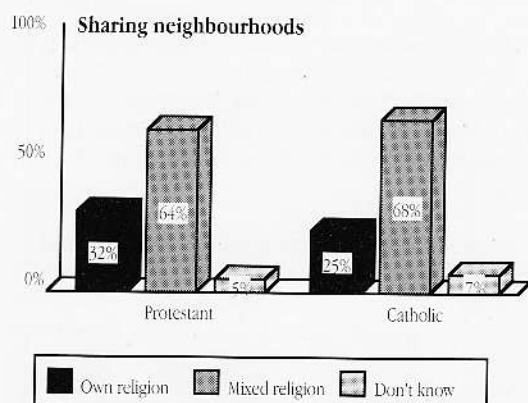
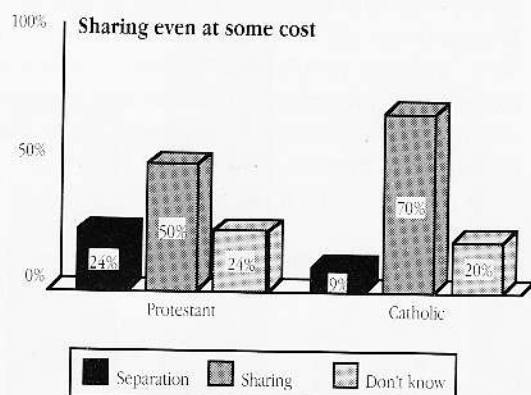
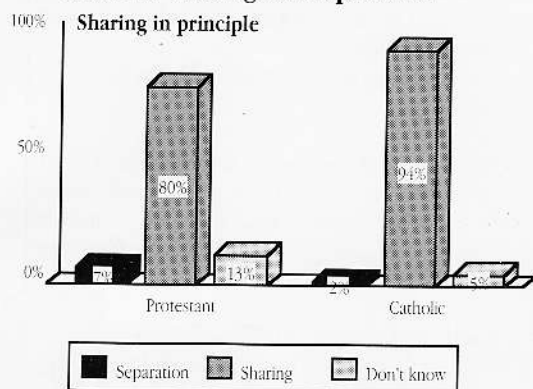
Thus far the main focus in the political process, particularly by the Irish Government, has been on securing equality of treatment and parity of esteem for the two communities. The British Government has already implemented a set of formal guidelines, Policy Appraisal for Fair Treatment or PAFT, designed to achieve this form of equality in all aspects of policy in Northern Ireland.

The implications of this survey are that for most people in Northern Ireland an equally important objective of government policy should be to ensure that its policies do not promote equality of treatment at the expense of guaranteeing choice for those who prefer sharing to separation. An example is the increasingly formal structures and separate status for the Catholic education system being developed through the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools which strenuously opposes any move towards greater integration in education.

An obvious and much needed response to these findings by the British and Irish Governments should be to establish a new form of Policy Appraisal for Separation or Sharing (PASS), in parallel to the current Policy Appraisal for Fair Treatment (PAFT), to ensure that all official policies are assessed for their contribution to communal sharing and the avoidance of any increase, whether intended or not, in the extent of communal separation in Northern Ireland.

SEPARATION OR SHARING

Chart 10 Sharing and separation



Policy action

• The British and Irish governments should establish a new form of Policy Appraisal for Separation or Sharing (PASS), parallel to the current Policy Appraisal for Fair Treatment (PAFT).

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Reaching agreement on constitutional issues in Northern Ireland is clearly going to be difficult. Though this is not necessarily more important to many ordinary people than the more mundane issues of employment, education and policing covered in the survey, most people agree that finding an acceptable constitutional settlement of some kind is essential to longer term peace and stability.

The object of this part of the survey was to identify the kind of constitutional settlement which might gain most support from both communities. It has already been agreed in the talks process that the agreement of a majority of elected representatives from both main communities on a particular issue will constitute 'sufficient consensus' for the talks to move on to other issues. So this criterion has been used in analysing the responses to the main constitutional options.

The range of constitutional options used in the survey are set out opposite. A large number were included to permit members of both communities to state not only their aspirations but also their preferences between various possible compromise positions. And each option was outlined in some detail to make clear what would be involved.

The responses to this question, set out in Chart 11, show clearly that there is very little support from either community for 'separate institutions': this option got only 22% of the first four choices of all respondents. There was also, as might be expected, very little support from Protestants for unification into an 'Irish state' (6% of first four choices), though that got a high level of support from Catholics (32% of first choices and 53% of first four choices). Conversely there was little support from Catholics either for 'full incorporation into a British state' (16% of first four choices) or for an 'independent Northern Ireland state' (23% of first four choices), though both of these got considerable support from Protestants - almost half (49%) of first choices for 'full incorporation' and 53% of first four choices for an 'independent Northern Ireland'.

- **Separate Northern Irish state** - The complete separation of Northern Ireland from both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and the establishment of a separate state within the European Union.

- **Full incorporation into the British state** - Direct rule from Westminster and local government similar to the rest of the United Kingdom with no Northern Ireland Assembly or separate laws for Northern Ireland and no Anglo-Irish Agreement.

- **Continued direct rule (no change)** - The continuation of direct rule from London in consultation with the Irish Government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

- **Power sharing and the Anglo-Irish Agreement** - Government by a Northern Ireland Assembly and power sharing Executive under the authority of the British Government but in consultation with the Irish Government under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

- **Power sharing with North South institutions but no joint authority** - Government by a Northern Ireland Assembly, power-sharing Executive and a number of joint institutions established with the Republic of Ireland to deal with matters of mutual interest. But these arrangements will not include joint authority between the British and Irish Governments.

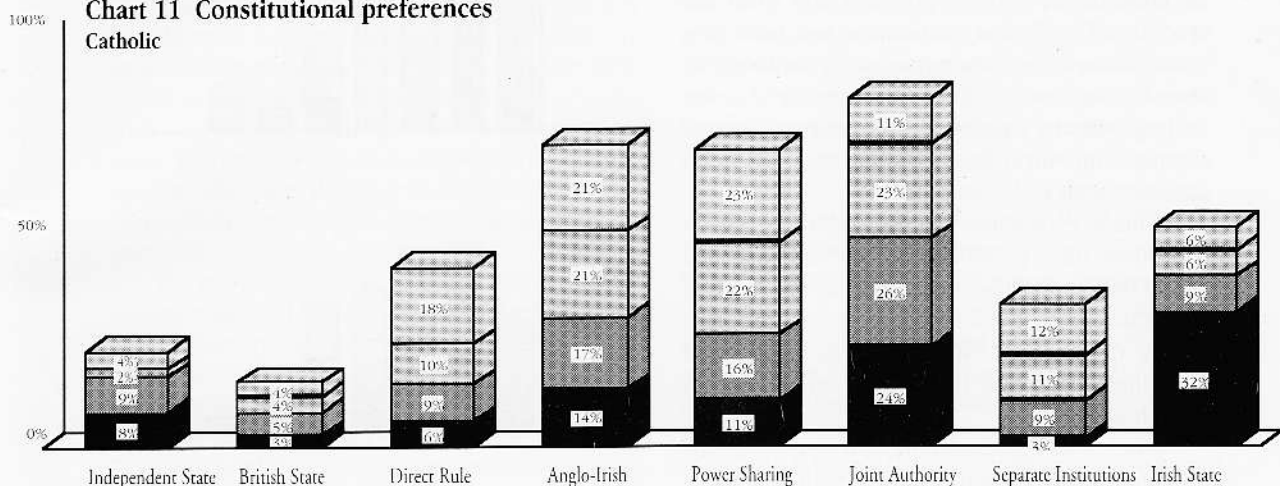
- **Joint authority and power sharing** - Government by joint authority between the British and Irish Governments in association with an elected power sharing Executive and Assembly.

- **Separate institutions for the two main communities** - Creation of separate structures for the government of each of the two main communities in Northern Ireland, subject to joint authority by the British and Irish Governments.

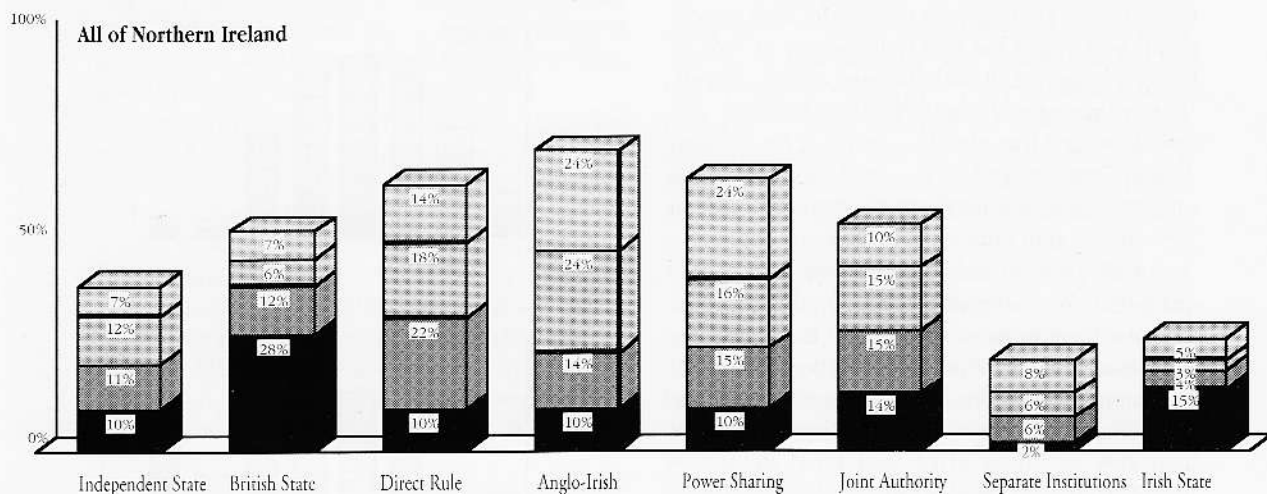
- **Full incorporation into the Irish state** - Full incorporation of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland to create a single state within the European Union.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

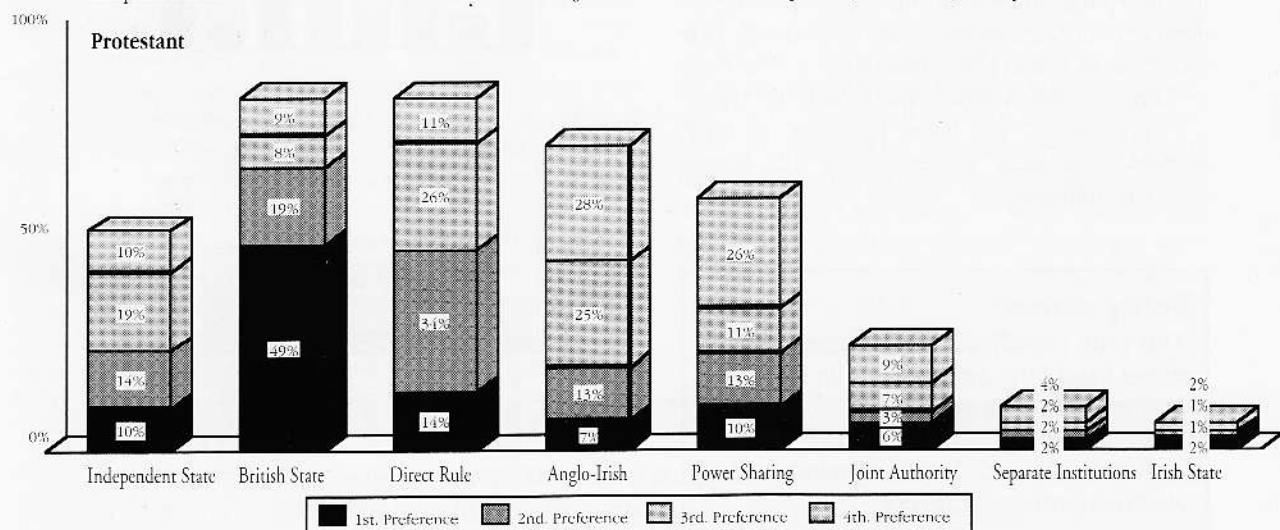
Chart 11 Constitutional preferences
Catholic



All of Northern Ireland



Protestant



CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

So none of these four options would meet the criterion of sufficient consensus and none is a starter for a political compromise. What about the other four options: 'continued direct rule', 'power sharing with the Anglo-Irish Agreement', 'power sharing with North-South institutions' and 'joint authority with power sharing'?

Of these, Protestants clearly preferred 'continued direct rule' (85% of first four choices) and would find 'joint authority' hard to accept (25% of first four choices); Catholics preferred 'joint authority' (84% of first four choices) and would find 'continued direct rule' hard to accept (43% of first four choices).

This leaves the remaining two options as the most acceptable compromises for both communities. 'Power sharing with the Anglo-Irish Agreement' was one of the first four choices of 73% of both Protestants and Catholics and of 72% overall. 'Power sharing with North-South institutions' was one of the first four choices of 60% of Protestants, 72% of Catholics and 65% overall. These were the only options which met the test of getting more than 50% of first four choices in both communities.

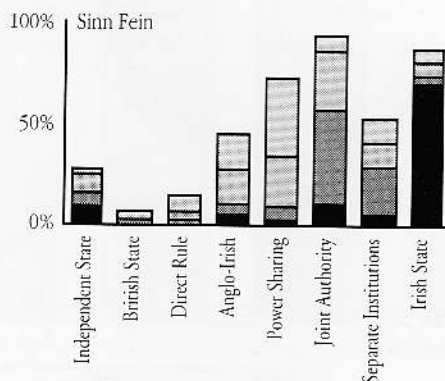
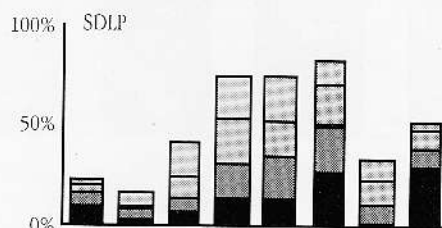
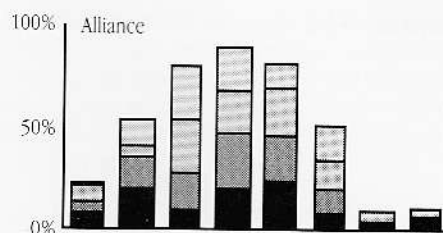
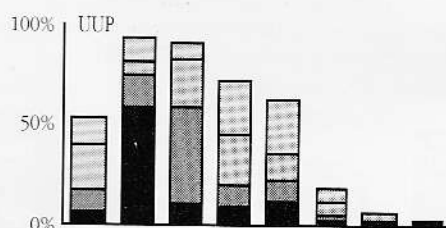
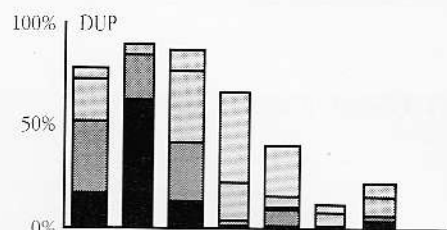
Another way of analysing the responses to this question is by party affiliation. On this basis, as shown in the summary charts below, there is clearly more chance of a compromise deal being accepted by supporters of the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP than those of the DUP and Sinn Féin. More than 70% of both SDLP and UUP supporters included power sharing with the Anglo-Irish Agreement or with North-South institutions in their first four choices, while fewer than 50% of Sinn Féin supporters included 'power sharing with the Anglo-

Agreement' and fewer than 50% of DUP supporters included 'power sharing with North-South institutions'.

Policy action

The only constitutional options with more than 50% acceptance in both communities were:

'Power sharing and the Anglo-Irish Agreement' and 'Power sharing and North-South institutions'.



These findings on the constitutional issue indicate that the settlement with the best chance of securing majority support in both communities is one which includes both power-sharing and either the continuation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement or some agreed North-South institutions. This should not come as any great surprise. Most opinion polls have shown greatest cross community support for power sharing and some kind of North/South cooperation.

The more important question is whether popular support of this kind—including second, third and fourth as well as first preferences—could assist in the process of reaching a settlement.

The British and Irish Governments are already committed to seeking popular approval, in referendums North and South, for any settlement reached in the talks. But that is not the only way in which the people could help. Referendums could also be held in advance of agreement between the parties or in the event of a break down in the talks.

There are a number of possibilities. One is to ask the people whether they want the parties to reach a compromise settlement. This was the strategy used by President De Klerk in **South Africa** when he faced the prospect of a revolt by whites against the peace talks with Nelson Mandela and the ANC. In March 1994 he put a simple question to all white voters: 'Do you support the continuation of the reform process which the State President began on 2 February 1990 and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiation?' He secured a 69% majority and was able to proceed to his historic accord with the ANC.

Another possibility is to give the people a choice between a number of different options in what is sometimes called a preferendum. For instance, in 1995 a choice of voting systems was offered to voters in **New Zealand** before they opted for a PR system in place of the old first-past-the-post system.

A more directly relevant but older example was the series of referendums held in 1949 to decide on the constitutional future of **Newfoundland**. The parties to their talks process decided to offer the voters a choice between continuing self-governing status and a form of direct rule. But after a popular campaign a third option, joining with Canada, was added. In the first referendum

none of the three got a clear majority. The least popular option was then excluded and in a second referendum the Canadian option was voted in by a small majority.

It is also theoretically possible to devise systems for finding the most acceptable compromise by allocating different numbers of points for first, second and subsequent preferences in a (p)referendum. One such system was devised by De Borda in 1784 and another has been developed by Peter Emerson here in Northern Ireland. But points systems typically give only marginally more points to one or other option and it is not clear that the result would necessarily be seen as legitimate. When the Emerson system was tried on the constitutional options in this survey none emerged as a clear winner.

It is also important to distinguish between using a (p)referendum as a kind of official opinion poll to assist those involved in the talks and as a way of making the final decision. The government has the legal power to do either. The *Northern Ireland (Entry into Negotiations) Act* allows the Secretary of State 'from time to time [to] direct the holding of a referendum for the purpose of obtaining the views of the people of Northern Ireland on any matter relating to Northern Ireland'.

The best approach to the use of this power will depend on the progress of the inter-party talks. If good progress is made it could be used to seek approval for a final package. But if the talks stall or break down the government could put some possible options to the people in a formal (p)referendum to provide some guidance on what is most likely to secure an overall majority in both communities. That could be assessed by publishing first, second, third and all other preferences constituency by constituency since the communal make up of each is known. The results could form the basis of renewed inter-party discussions. One or more referendums could then be held to approve a single final proposal, as under the Irish Constitution, or to choose between two or three potentially acceptable packages as in Newfoundland. But in either case a weighted majority would be required to establish sufficient consensus in both communities.

Policy action

- If the talks fail the government should hold a (p)referendum on a number of acceptable options to establish which has the support of a majority in each community.

THE PEACE PROCESS

A final set of questions was directed at issues which are bound to emerge at some stage in the peace process, though as yet they have been overshadowed by the dispute over decommissioning.

After every serious internal conflict the question arises of what to do about those who have committed serious criminal or human rights violations. Should there be a general amnesty? Should there be some kind of 'truth commission' to establish what happened in the most notorious incidents and perhaps to authorise an amnesty for those who tell the truth, as in the current Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa? Or should the ordinary criminal law be allowed to take its course? And at what stage should any emergency laws adopted during the conflict be repealed?

On the first of these issues three options were put:

• **Prosecution and standard remission** - Prosecute all crimes committed by members of paramilitary groups and the security forces to the full extent of the law; sentence those found guilty in accordance with standards of practice found in the rest of the UK.

• **Prosecution and amnesty** - Prosecute all crimes committed by members of paramilitary groups and the security forces but allow those serving sentences to be freed subject to terms negotiated as part of a political settlement.

• **Public admission of guilt and immunity from prosecution** - Allow members of paramilitary groups and the security forces to confess their crimes to a public 'Truth Commission' in return for immunity from prosecution and allow those serving sentences for such crimes to be freed.

The responses to this question, set out in Chart 12, show a clear preference in both communities for prosecution rather than any form of amnesty. This was the first preference of 90% of Protestants, 52% of Catholics and 74% overall. But there was considerably greater support from Catholics (48% of first preferences) for either prosecution and amnesty or a truth commission than from Protestants (only 10% of first preferences). And as might be expected the highest level of support for these options came from Sinn Féin supporters (77% of first preferences). If the parties representing republican and loyalist paramilitaries want any form of

amnesty to form part of an overall settlement, as has happened in the aftermath of many other conflicts, there will clearly need to be a major effort to change popular attitudes. And that cannot easily happen while the violence continues.

The second set of questions was about the retention or repeal of emergency legislation. Four options were offered:

• **Repeal emergency legislation now** - Immediately repeal emergency legislation brought in to deal with terrorism.

• **Repeal emergency legislation when 'Mitchell' is accepted** - Repeal emergency legislation brought in to deal with terrorism when all the political parties and paramilitary organisations accept the Mitchell recommendations for decommissioning and the peace process.

• **Repeal emergency legislation when a political settlement is reached** - Repeal emergency legislation brought in to deal with terrorism when all the political parties and paramilitary organisations accept the terms of a negotiated political settlement for the future of Northern Ireland.

• **Keep emergency legislation** - Keep emergency legislation 'on the books' so that the police and courts will always have the powers of search, seizure and internment of suspected terrorists.

On this issue there was significantly greater support among Catholics for the repeal of emergency legislation as part of the peace process than among Protestants. (see Chart 13) The first preference of 39% of Catholics was for 'repeal when a settlement is reached' and of 26% for 'repeal when Mitchell is accepted'. Most Protestants (55%) gave 'keep emergency legislation' as their first preference, though 27% supported 'repeal when a settlement is reached'. When first and second preferences were combined, however, the greatest degree of consensus was for 'repeal when a settlement is reached': this was supported by 73% of Protestants and 71% of Catholics.

THE PEACE PROCESS

Chart 12 Prisoners and the peace process

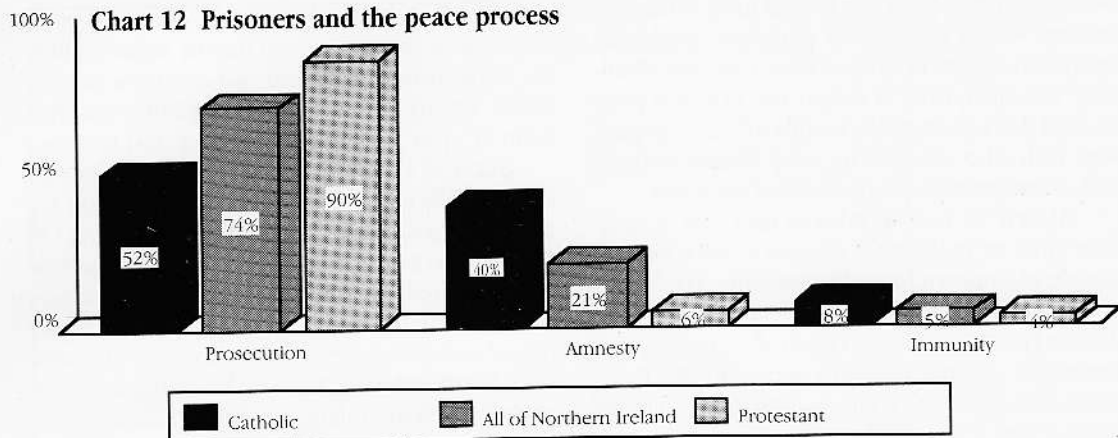
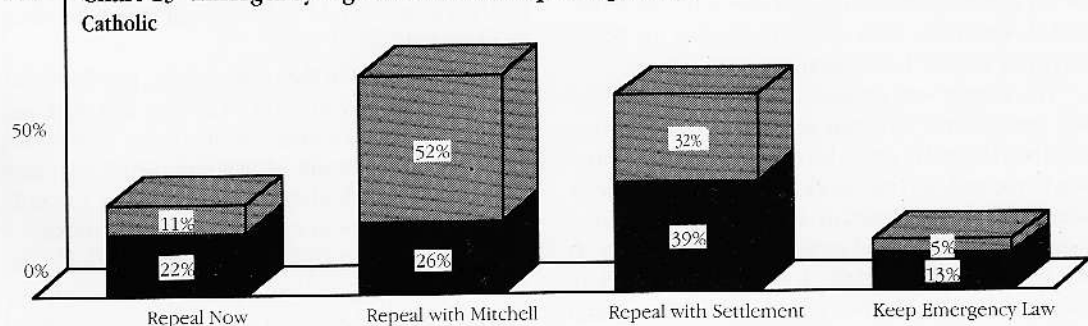
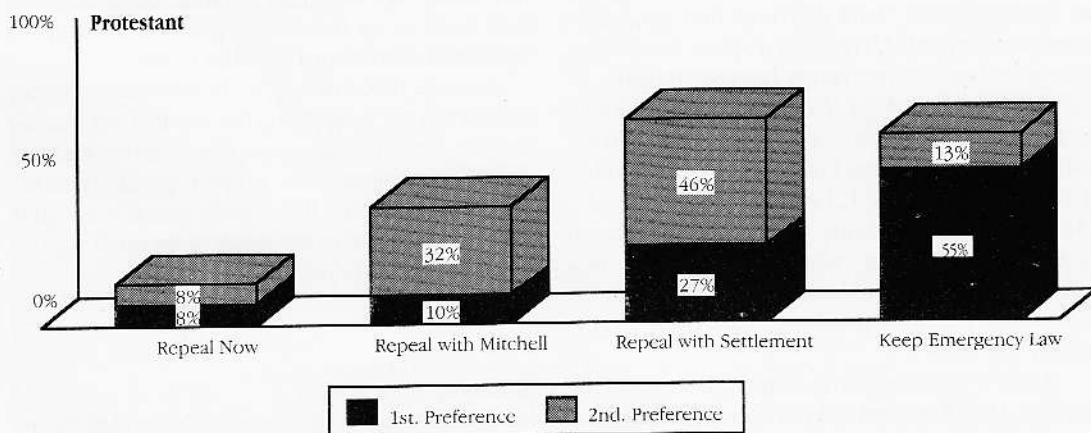


Chart 13 Emergency legislation and the peace process

Catholic



Protestant



Policy action

- There is currently no general popular support for any form of amnesty or truth commission.
- The greatest degree of consensus is that emergency legislation should be repealed only when a political settlement is reached.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

No one survey method can be said to be better than another. Rather each has its particular advantages and disadvantages in terms of time, cost, confidentiality, size and quality of sample etc. With this point in mind it is very useful to be able to draw comparisons with other research by using similar methods and, where possible, some identical questions.

At first we had intended to use 'face to face' interviews of individuals selected from a random sample of Northern Ireland households. The Northern Ireland Social Attitudes (NISA) survey and Continuous Household Survey employ this method. Unfortunately we did not have access to the Rates Collection Agency (NI) ratings list so we produced a random sample of individuals from the 1996 Register of Electors. We were, however, able to include a selection of attitudinal questions from the NISA survey in our questionnaire and our principle demographic questions were taken from either the NISA survey or the 1991 Census form.

The sample was generated in two stages. Firstly, 100 wards were selected at random from across Northern Ireland to give a broad geographic distribution while making field work a manageable proposition. All District Councils were included. Allowances were made for the variation in size of wards. It was then possible to select 20 individuals at random from each ward to give a total of 2000 potential informants. From these we received back 715 filled out questionnaires, hand delivered and hand collected where possible. Those who requested assistance were given help but most people had few problems.

Fairly high rates of 'Non Contact' can be expected using this method as individuals are more difficult to 'contact' than households. 519 individuals fell into this category. 121 individuals had 'Moved', 38 properties were 'Vacant', 65 individuals got classified as some 'Other' reason. And finally, 542 individuals 'Refused' to participate in the survey or 27% which is a little more than the NISA survey refusal rate of 20%.

Table 2 provides some demographic statistics from the 1994 Northern Ireland Social Attitude survey, the 1991 Census and our survey. Although there are a few differences they are minor and, for the most part, should not prevent comparisons being drawn between these different pieces of research. The religious break down of our sample is closer to the 1991 Census than the NISA survey perhaps, in part, because we used the Census rather than the NISA

question. The variation between the three surveys on questions of gender, age and marital status is much the same. However we had two questions on economic activity that produced a range of results that seem to 'span' the NISA survey and 1991 Census.

'Standard Occupation' seems to vary quite a bit with the 1991 Census. But when the AB and C1 categories are combined as well as the C2 and DE categories to give a 'working' and 'middle' class the variation is reduced to almost zero so the differences could, in part, be attributable to coding and a higher refusal rate on this question. The low rate of returns from Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants is more difficult to explain. A number of factors, such as, recent increases in home ownership, sample wards 'missing' housing estates, a high housing estate refusal rate or even a low rate of voter registration on housing estates could all have combined to produce this low statistic.

This anomaly in the demographic profile of our sample is also in keeping with the fact that our household incomes are a little up on the 1994 NISA data. Although our survey was completed two years later we were still slightly concerned that a middle class bias could have crept into our sample. With this point in mind we correlated the 'Non-Contact', 'Refusal' and 'Interview' etc. rates with the economic 'Targeting Social Need' (TSN) values for each of our 100 wards. We also used the total electorate from each ward as an index of population density. No significant correlations could be found.

Given the robustness of all the other demographic statistics in our sample and the fact that our method seems to invite candid and sophisticated responses to sensitive and sometimes complex questions we believe the results of this survey are a reasonably accurate reflection of the views of the adult population of Northern Ireland.

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

		1994 NISA survey	1991 Census	1996 Rowntree ¹ N.I. survey
Religion	Protestant	56	50	47
	Roman Catholic	36	38	40
	No Religion	10	4	4
	Non-Christian	-	-	1
	Unwilling to say	1	7	8
Gender	Male	50	48	49
	Female	50	52	51
Age	18-24	15	16	14(17-24) ²
	-34	20	21	18
	45-54	19	18	21
	-54	17	15	18
	55-59	7	6	7
	60-64	5	6	6
	65 and over	18	18	16
Marital Status		23	28	26
	Married/cohabiting	62	59	63
	Widowed	9	9	7
	Divorced/separated	6	9	4
Economic Activity	Working	53	49	56 to 42
	Unemployed	6	9	4 to 8 ³
Standard Occupation	AB	-	17	11
	C1	-	26	33
	C2	-	25	19
	DE	-	32	38
	AB+C1	-	43	44
	C2+DE	-	57	57
Tenure	Owner occupied	64	62	77
	Rented, NIHE	28	29	17
	Rented, other	8	8	6
Household Income	Less than 4,000	11	-	4
	4,000-7,999	24	-	15
	8,000-11,999	14	-	13
	12,000-17,999	15	-	17
	18,000-19,999	4	-	4
	20,000 and over	19	-	25
	Unknown	13	-	22

1. 'n' varies a little from question to question depending on how many individuals answered each question.

2. The Electoral Register starts at age 17 for those who will reach the age of 18 during the 12 month period following registration.

3. Different questions produce different results.

