



***VIEWS ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD:
FINDINGS FROM THE MARCH 2001 NORTHERN IRELAND
OMNIBUS SURVEY***

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The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is a continuous survey conducted several times each year by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). It is designed to provide a snapshot of the behaviour, lifestyle and views of a representative sample of the people of Northern Ireland. Three questions concerning public views towards the Northern Ireland Policing Board were included in the March 2001 survey. The sample of those surveyed was drawn from the Valuation and Lands Agency list, the most up-to-date listing of private households. At each address one person aged 16 or over was interviewed. From an eligible sample of 1,939 individuals, 1,076 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 55%.

KEY FINDINGS

- ◆ More than half of all respondents (59%) had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (Figure 1).
- ◆ Males (64%) were more likely to have heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board than females (55%) (Figure 2).
- ◆ Older respondents were more likely to have heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board with 68% of those aged 50-64 saying this was the case (Figure 3).
- ◆ More than two-thirds (69%) of those surveyed thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 5).
- ◆ Females (72%) were more likely than males (65%) to think that the Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 6).
- ◆ More Catholics (73%) than Protestants (67%) said that they thought the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 7).
- ◆ Almost two-thirds (61%) of those surveyed thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police while over a quarter (26%) thought the Board would be part of the police (Figure 8).
- ◆ Males (70%) were more likely than females (54%) to think that the Policing Board would be independent of the police (Table 4).
- ◆ Proportionately more Protestants (63%) than Catholics (59%) thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police (Table 7).

INTRODUCTION

1. The Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland was created as part of the Good Friday Agreement and its aim was to:

‘make recommendations for future policing arrangements in Northern Ireland including means of encouraging widespread community support for these arrangements’.

In their report, the Commission recommended that a new Policing Board should be created to replace the the present Police Authority and that the statutory function of this Board would be to hold the Chief Constable and the police service publicly to account. The Board would also be responsible for securing the maintenance of an efficient and effective police service.

2. In an attempt to gain an understanding of the levels of public awareness and knowledge of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, it was decided to include some questions in the March 2001 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey.

3. The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is a continuous survey conducted several times each year by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), and is designed to provide a snapshot of the behaviour, lifestyle and views of a representative sample of the people of Northern Ireland.

4. The survey comprises two distinct parts: core information, which remains the same for each survey, and extra commissioned client modules. Three questions concerning public views towards the Northern Ireland Policing Board were included in the March 2001 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. The questions asked were:

- ◆ *‘Have you ever heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board?’*
- ◆ *‘Do you think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job?’*
- ◆ *‘Do you think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police?’.*

This bulletin is based on the responses to each of these questions and focuses on analyses by gender, age, area of residence and religion.

5. The sample of those surveyed was drawn from the Valuation and Lands Agency list, the most up-to-

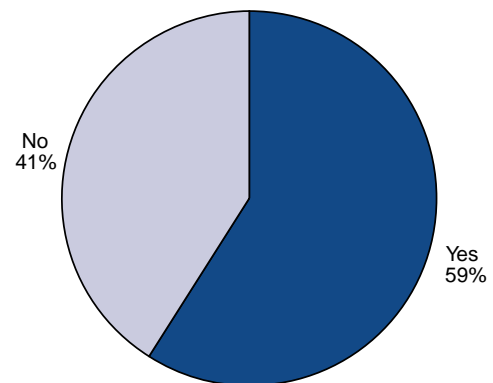
date listing of private households. At each address one person aged 16 or over was questioned. From an eligible sample of 1,939 individuals, 1,076 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 55%. Further information relating to various aspects of the survey are detailed in the methodological note.

FINDINGS

Question 1: Have you ever heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board?

6. Overall, 59% of those surveyed had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board while 41% of respondents said they hadn’t heard of the Board (Figure 1).

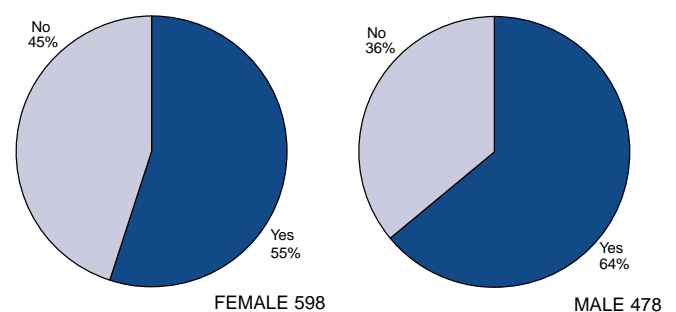
Figure 1: Respondents’ knowledge of the Northern Ireland Policing Board



GENDER

7. Although the majority of respondents had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board this was more likely to be the case for males than females. Almost two-thirds of males (64%) and more than half of females (55%) had heard of the Policing Board (Figure 2). This difference between the knowledge that males and females have of the Policing Board is statistically significant.

Figure 2: Respondents’ knowledge of the Northern Ireland Policing Board: by gender

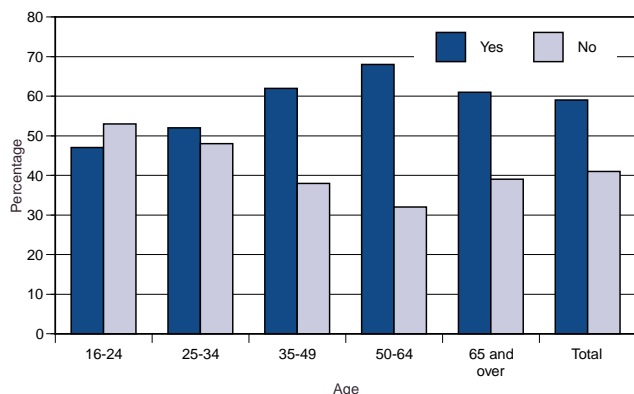


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AGE

8. With the exception of those aged 16-24 years, the majority of respondents within each age group had heard of the Policing Board. Over two-thirds (68%) of those respondents aged 50-64 years and 62% of those aged 35-49 years had heard of the Board. However, the majority of 16-24 year olds (53%) had not heard of the Policing Board (Figure 3). These differences between each of the five age groups and their knowledge of the Policing Board is statistically significant with respondents aged 50-64 years old most likely to have heard of the Board.

Figure 3: Respondents' knowledge of the Northern Ireland Policing Board: by age



AREA

9. The majority of respondents in each of the three areas of Northern Ireland said they had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board: 63% of those surveyed in the East of Northern Ireland, 56% of those surveyed in the West of the country and 54% of those surveyed in Belfast said this was the case (Table 1). These differences between each of the areas in Northern Ireland and respondents' knowledge of the Policing Board are statistically significant with those in the east of Northern Ireland most likely to have heard of the Board.

Table 1: Respondents' knowledge of the Northern Ireland Policing Board: by area

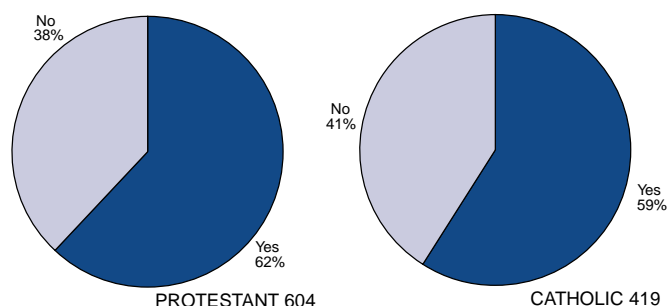
Area	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Belfast	54%	46%	-	195
East	63%	38%	-	528
West	56%	44%	1%	353
Total	59%	41%	0%	1076

RELIGION

10. Proportionately, more Protestants (62%) than Catholics (55%) had heard of the Northern Ireland

Policing Board, however this difference was not found to be statistically significant (Figure 4).

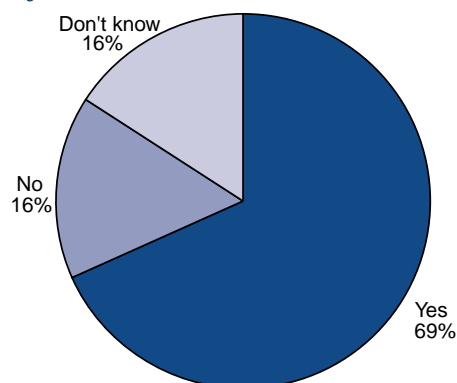
Figure 4: Respondents' knowledge of the Northern Ireland Policing Board: by religion



Question 2: Do you think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job?

11. Overall, more than two-thirds (69%) of those surveyed thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job, 16% thought that it wouldn't help and a further 16% said they didn't know whether the Board would help or not (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job

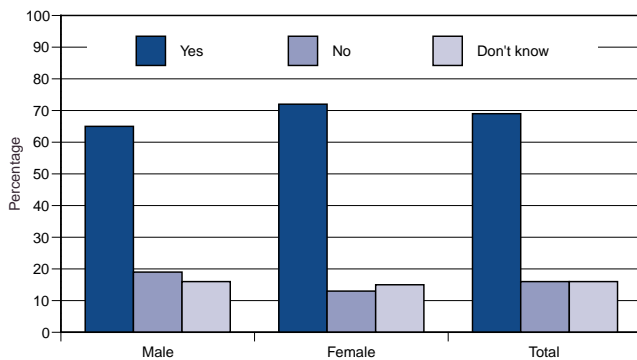


GENDER

12. In terms of gender, proportionately more females (72%) than males (65%) thought that the Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job. Males (19%) were more likely than females (13%) to say that the Board would not ensure that the police did a good job while similar proportions said they didn't know (Figure 6). These differences in views amongst males and females are statistically significant.

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Figure 6: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job: by gender



AGE

13. The proportions of those who thought that the Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job was high for all age categories. Almost three-quarters (74%) of those aged 16-24 years and those aged 35-49 years agreed that the Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Table 2).

Table 2: Respondents' views on how the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job: by age

Age	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
16-24	74%	15%	11%	164
25-34	65%	17%	17%	212
35-49	74%	13%	13%	271
50-64	65%	15%	19%	229
65 and over	65%	18%	17%	200
Total	69%	16%	16%	1076

14. Respondents aged 65 and over and those aged 25-34 years were most likely to say that the Policing Board would not help ensure that the police do a good job (18% and 17% respectively), while almost a fifth (19%) of those aged 50-64 didn't know.

AREA

15. Over two-thirds of respondents in each of the three areas in Northern Ireland said that they thought the Policing Board would help ensure the police do a good job (Table 3).

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job: by area

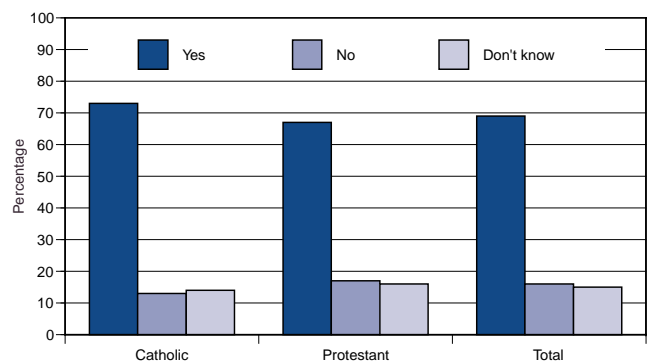
Area	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Belfast	68%	16%	15%	195
East	69%	16%	14%	528
West	69%	14%	17%	353
Total	69%	16%	16%	1076

16. Respondents from both Belfast and the East of Northern Ireland were more likely to say that the Policing Board would not help the police do a good job (16%), while respondents from the West of Northern Ireland were most likely to say they didn't know (17%).

RELIGION

17. Proportionately more Catholics (73%) than Protestants (67%) said that they thought the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job. 17% of Protestant respondents said that this would not be the case compared to 13% of Catholics (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job: by religion

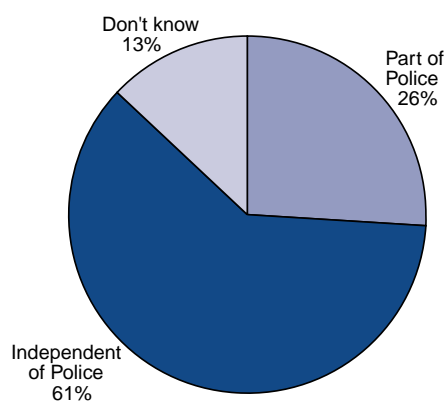


Question 3: Do you think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police?

18. Overall, almost two-thirds (61%) of those surveyed thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police; 26% thought the Board would be part of the police and 13% said they didn't know (Figure 8).

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Figure 8: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police



GENDER

19. Males were more likely than females to say that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police: almost three-quarters (70%) of males said this would be the case compared to just over half (54%) of females (Table 4).

Table 4: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police: by gender

Area	Part of the police	Independent of the police	Refusal	Don't know	Total
Male	21%	70%	-	10%	478
Female	30%	54%	0%	15%	598
Total	26%	61%	0%	13%	1076

20. Proportionately more females (30%) than males (21%) said that the Board would be part of the police and females (15%) were also more likely than males (10%) to say that they didn't know. These differing views between males and females on the status of the Policing Board are statistically significant.

AGE

21. Although the majority of respondents in each age group believed that the Policing Board would be independent of the police, respondents aged 50-64 (66%) and those aged 25-34 (64%) were most likely to say that this was the case (Table 5).

22. Over a third (35%) of respondents aged 16-24 years and 30% of those aged 35-49 thought that the Policing Board would be part of the police, while over a fifth (21%) of those aged 65 and over, and 16% of those aged 50-64 said that they didn't know. These

differences in responses between each of the age groups are statistically significant.

Table 5: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police: by age

Age	Part of the police	Independent of the police	Refusal	Don't know	Total
16-24	35%	53%	-	11%	164
25-34	28%	64%	-	8%	212
35-49	30%	61%	-	9%	271
50-64	18%	66%	-	16%	229
65 and over	19%	59%	0%	21%	200
Total	26%	61%	0%	13%	1076

AREA

23. Respondents from Belfast and the East of Northern Ireland were more likely to say that the Policing Board would be independent of the police. 64% of those from Belfast and 63% of those from the East of Belfast said this was the case.

24. However, almost a third (32%) of those respondents living in the West of Northern Ireland thought that the Policing Board would be part of the police. The proportions of those respondents who didn't know were similar at 12-13% in all three areas (Table 6).

Table 6: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police: by area

Area	Part of the police	Independent of the police	Refusal	Don't know	Total
Belfast	22%	64%	0%	13%	195
East	24%	63%	-	13%	528
West	32%	56%	-	12%	353
Total	26%	61%	0%	13%	1076

RELIGION

25. Proportionately more Catholics (29%) than Protestants (24%) thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be part of the police. This compares to 63% of Protestants and 59% of Catholics who thought that the Board would be independent of the police. A similar proportion of Catholics (12%) and Protestants (13%) said that they didn't know (Table 7).

Table 7: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police: by religion

Religion	Part of the police	Independent of the police	Refusal	Don't know	Total
Catholic	29%	59%	0%	12%	419
Protestant	24%	63%	-	13%	604
Total	26%	61%	0%	13%	1023

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

26. The sample of those surveyed was initiated from the Valuation and Lands Agency list, the most up-to-date listing of private households. The complete list of private addresses was stratified into three regions – Belfast, East Northern Ireland and West Northern Ireland, and a random sample drawn from each stratum.

27. At each address the interviewer lists all members of the household eligible for inclusion in the sample, that is all persons aged 16 or over. The interviewer's computer then randomly selects one person from each household to complete the interview. From an eligible sample of 1,939 individuals, 1,076 interviews were achieved giving a response rate of 55%.

28. The overall sample profile for the March 2001 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey compared to the 1999 Community Attitudes Survey and is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Sample profile

	Community Attitudes Survey 1999	Omnibus Survey 2001
Sex		
Male	46%	44%
Female	54%	56%
Age Group		
16-24	17%	15%
25-44	35%	38%
45-59	24%	22%
60-74	17%	16%
75+	7%	9%
Religion		
Catholic	39%	39%
Protestant	57%	56%
Other/None/Missing	4%	5%

29. Selecting only one individual for interview at each address means individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than individuals living in smaller households. The data presented in this bulletin has

been weighted to prevent a bias towards smaller households.

30. Statistical significance tests were carried out on the observed findings from the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. These tests are used to establish the degree of confidence with which we can infer the observed findings as an accurate reflection of the views of the total population.

31. For the purpose of this bulletin all tests are reported at the 95% level of probability. This means that for any observed result that is found to be significant, we are 95% confident that this has not happened by chance. This is typically taken as a high degree of confidence.

32. However, a non significant result does not necessarily indicate that a difference does not exist in the population, but rather inferences cannot be drawn about such differences with a high degree of confidence. It should be noted that some non-significant results just missed the 95% threshold.

33. It is worth noting that the term 'significant' is used only in the statistical sense (i.e. at the 95% level of probability) and not in any other sense of 'important' or 'meaningful'.

34. The area analysis was based on District Council boundaries and is detailed in Table 9.

Table 9: Areas of Northern Ireland by District Council

Area	District Councils
Belfast	Belfast
East of Northern Ireland	Antrim, Ards, Ballymena, Banbridge, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Craigavon, Down, Larne, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down
West of Northern Ireland	Armagh, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Limavady, Derry, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newry & Mourne, Omagh, Strabane.

35. Due to rounding errors percentages denoted in both tables and figures made not add to 100%.

36. In the tables the following notation is used: if the figure is less than 0.5% the cell is denoted with a '0%' and if the cell does not have a value that cell is denoted with a '-'.

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