



Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service

Findings from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

October 2021 – December 2021



**Public
Prosecution
Service**

Contents

About the Public Prosecution Service	Page 3
Background	Page 3
The Survey	Page 3
Official Statistics	Page 4
Copyright	Page 4

Part One

Key Findings	Page 6
---------------------------	--------

Results for each Question	Page 8
----------------------------------------	--------

Q1 Had you heard of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, 'the PPS'?

Q2 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service is effective at prosecuting people accused of committing a crime? (Very Confident, Fairly Confident, Not Very Confident, Not At All confident)

Q3 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service provides a fair and impartial prosecution service?

Q4 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service takes its prosecution decisions independently? (that is, independent of police, Government or any other body).

Part Two

Results Excluding 'Don't Knows'	Page 11
----------------------------------------------	---------

Results Including 'Don't Knows'	Page 13
----------------------------------------------	---------

Technical Details of the 2021 Survey	Page 17
---------------------------------------------------	---------

Ethical approval	Page 17
------------------------	---------

Survey content	Page 17
----------------------	---------

Pilot and mainstage fieldwork	Page 17
-------------------------------------	---------

Sampling design	Page 18
-----------------------	---------

Sampling errors and confidence intervals	Page 19
------------------------------------------------	---------

Weighting	Page 19
-----------------	---------

Comparisons with other data sources	Page 20
-------------------------------------------	---------

About the PPS

The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS), which is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. In addition to taking decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the police, it also considers cases investigated by other statutory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs. The primary role of the PPS is to reach decisions to prosecute or not to prosecute and to have responsibility for the conduct of criminal proceedings.

A range of options is also available for dealing with offenders other than through prosecution. These options include cautions, informed warnings and youth conferencing. Prosecutors may also refer offenders to the National Driver Alertness Scheme or to a Community Restorative Justice Scheme.

Background

Between 2013 and 2018, the PPS published 'Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service: Findings from the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey', including results from a module of 5 questions relating to public awareness and public confidence in the PPS. Survey information is used by the PPS for a variety of purposes, such as informing the development of policy and assessing the effectiveness of communication. Data in respect of the PPS's effectiveness and its fairness and impartiality are also used as key performance indicators for the Service. Findings from Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service can be found on the PPS website [here](#).

Due to the discontinuation of the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey in 2018, the PPS commissioned a module for inclusion in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2018. This particular survey was selected due to its methodology broadly matching that of the Omnibus Survey and its representativeness across Northern Ireland. The PPS commissioned a module in the survey again in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey was launched by the University of Ulster and the Queen's University of Belfast 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 attitudes and behaviour develop on a wide range of social policy issues. The survey is run on a modular format and aims to provide a local resource for use by the general public and a data source for public and academic debate. The survey consists of a number of different modules, each based on a specific topic. The modules included in the 2021 survey were: Introductory questions, respect, attitudes to minority ethnic groups, good relations, mental health, COVID and work, income and poverty, criminal justice system, political attitudes and background.

Whilst the NILT Survey closely mirrors the Omnibus Survey in terms of the methodology for selecting respondents, there are some differences. For example, the NILT Survey tends to focus on a small range of related policy issues, involving in-depth questioning, whereas the Omnibus Survey usually involved a larger number of unrelated modules. This has provided a new context for the PPS module to that of the Omnibus Survey.

The Survey

A total of four questions specific to the PPS were included in the 2021 NILT Survey in order to gauge the following:

- Public awareness of the PPS (Question 1).

- Public perceptions of the PPS's effectiveness in prosecuting people accused of committing a crime (Question 2).
- Public perceptions of the PPS's fairness and impartiality (Question 3).
- Public perceptions of the PPS's independence (Question 4).

Question 1 was asked of all respondents. Questions 2, 3 and 4 relate only to those respondents who had heard of the PPS (i.e. respondents who had answered 'yes' at question 1).

In order to achieve the objectives of the research while considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a multi-modal approach was used. A large-scale Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) survey was developed and this was supplemented with Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI). The survey was designed to be as inclusive as possible, presenting participants with a range of ways in which they could complete the survey.

Detailed notes have been supplied, which provide an account of the technical aspects of the survey, including the origin of the sample, response rates and its representativeness and they can be found at the end of this report.

This report provides information in respect of the 2021 NILT Survey, conducted between October 2021 and December 2021. As this is the fourth year the PPS has commissioned a module in the Survey, comparisons can be made across the four years. Analysis of each of the PPS questions is available across ten key variables, as follows: Age-group, gender, religion, partnership status, limiting health condition/disability status, dependant status, employment status, qualification level, socio-economic classification and PPS Region. For the purposes of this report, the analysis has been limited to age, gender and religion. However, data in respect of any of the remaining variables can be provided on request.

It should be noted that the 2021 NILT Survey has produced a relatively high proportion of people who answered 'don't know' in response to the questions. These 'don't knows' have been excluded from the main body of the report. As such, the focus of the bulletin is on those people who have offered an opinion regarding the PPS. However, in the interests of transparency, the full results (including the 'don't know' responses) have been set out in the second part of this bulletin.

Note that the total responses for each question presented within the main body of the report are based on weighted data. Percentages in the tables may not add to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted base numbers across the tables will vary due to the exclusion of 'don't knows'. Unless otherwise stated, the figures throughout this bulletin will exclude 'don't knows'.

Official Statistics

The statistics within this report are 'Official Statistics' as defined in Section 6 of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007. Statisticians from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency are seconded to the PPS and are responsible for ensuring that the statistics produced comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

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Part One

Key Findings

Q1 Had you heard of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, 'the PPS'? (Yes, No)

Of the respondents that were surveyed, 87.2% had heard of the PPS.

The age group 45-64 contained the largest proportion of respondents answering 'yes' to this question (96.6%) with those aged under 25 containing the lowest proportion (62.9%).

A greater proportion of male respondents (90.3%) than female respondents (84.0%) had heard of the PPS.

A smaller proportion of Catholic respondents (86.0%) than Protestant respondents (91.3%) had heard of the PPS.

Q2 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service is effective at prosecuting people accused of committing a crime? (Very Confident, Fairly Confident, Not Very Confident, Not At All Confident)

Just over half (52.5%) of all respondents were either very or fairly confident that the PPS is effective at prosecuting people accused of committing a crime. This compares with 47.5% who stated that they were either not very or not at all confident.

Respondents aged 65+ showed most confidence in the PPS's effectiveness at prosecuting with 61.1% stating that they were either very or fairly confident.

Similar proportions of male and female respondents (53.3% and 51.9% respectively) felt either very or fairly confident in the PPS's effectiveness at prosecuting.

Similar proportions of Protestant (53.8%) and Catholic (52.0%) respondents were either very or fairly confident in the PPS's effectiveness at prosecuting.

Q3 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service provides a fair and impartial prosecution service?

Around three fifths (60.7%) of all respondents were either very or fairly confident that the PPS provides a fair and impartial prosecution service, while 39.3% were either not very or not at all confident.

Respondents aged 65+ showed most confidence in the PPS's fairness and impartiality with 69.6% stating that they were either very or fairly confident.

Similar proportions of male and female respondents (61.7% and 60.1% respectively) were either very or fairly confident in the PPS's fairness and impartiality.

More than three fifths of Protestant respondents (63.5%) felt very or fairly confident in the PPS's fairness and impartiality. The proportion of Catholic respondents who were very or fairly confident was 57.9%.

Q4 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service takes its prosecution decisions independently? (that is, independent of police, Government or any other body).

Just under three fifths (58.7%) of all respondents were either very or fairly confident that the PPS takes its prosecution decisions independently, while 41.4% were either not very or not at all confident.

Respondents aged 65+ showed most confidence in the PPS's independent decision taking with 69.7% of those surveyed stating that they were either very or fairly confident.

Similar proportions of male and female respondents (58.6% and 59.1% respectively) were either very or fairly confident in the independence of the PPS's decision taking.

A greater proportion of Protestant respondents (63.7%) than Catholic respondents (55.6%) stated they were very or fairly confident in the independence of the PPS's decision taking.

Q1 Had you heard of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, 'the PPS'?

Of the respondents surveyed, 87.2% had heard of the PPS. This compares with 90.7% in 2020.

The age group 45-64 contained the largest proportion of respondents answering 'yes' to this question (96.6%) with those aged under 25 containing the lowest proportion (62.9%). The proportions were similar in 2020.

A greater proportion of male respondents (90.3%) than female respondents (84.0%) had heard of the PPS. The proportions in the 2020 survey were similar, males 94.2% and females 88.3%.

A smaller proportion of Catholic respondents (86.0%) than Protestant respondents (91.3%) had heard of the PPS.

Fig. 1

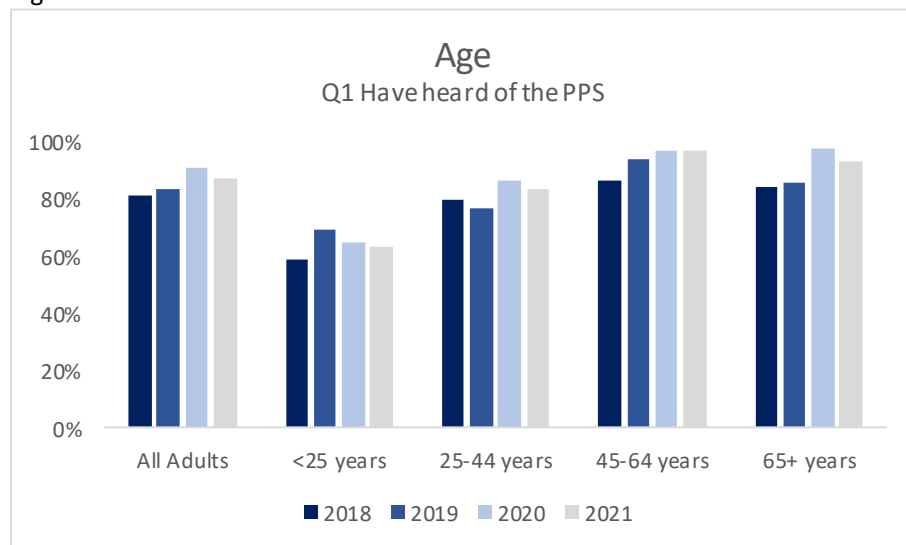


Fig. 2

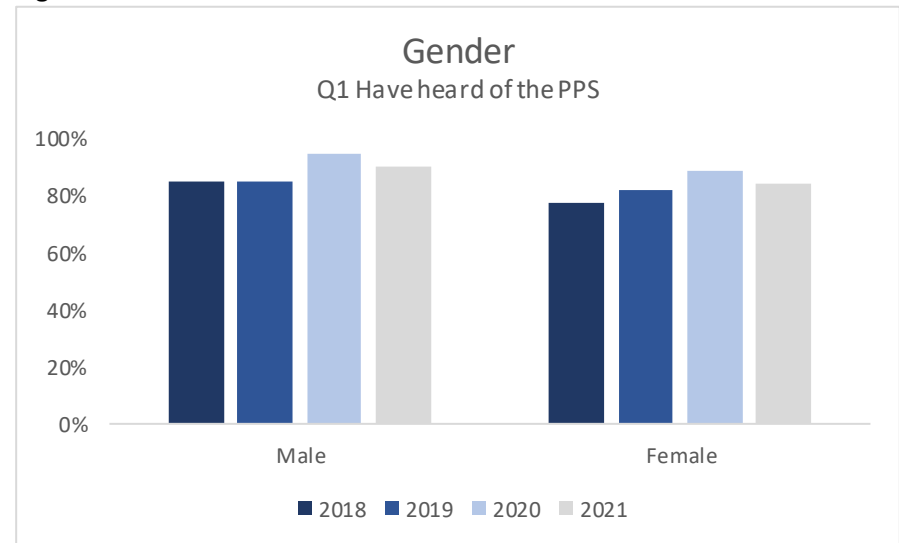
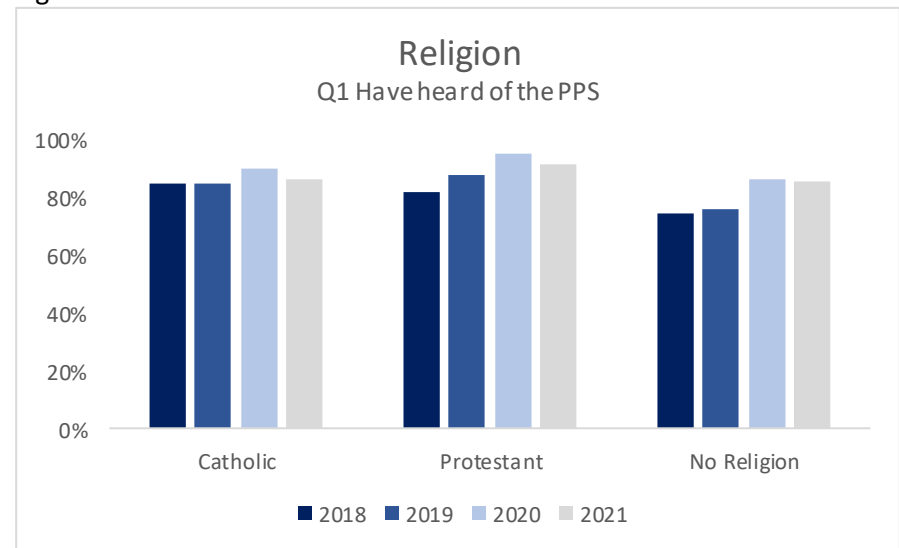


Fig. 3



Q2 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service is effective at prosecuting people accused of committing a crime?

Just over half (52.5%) of all respondents were either very or fairly confident that the PPS is effective at prosecuting people accused of committing a crime. This compares with 62.1% in 2020, responding either very or fairly confident.

Respondents aged 65+ showed most confidence in the PPS's effectiveness at prosecuting with 61.1% stating that they were either very or fairly confident. By comparison, findings were broadly similar across age groups in 2020.

Similar proportions of male and female respondents (53.3% and 51.9% respectively) felt either very or fairly confident in the PPS's effectiveness at prosecuting.

Similar proportions of Protestant (53.8%) and Catholic (52.0%) respondents felt either very or fairly confident in the PPS's effectiveness at prosecuting.

Fig. 4

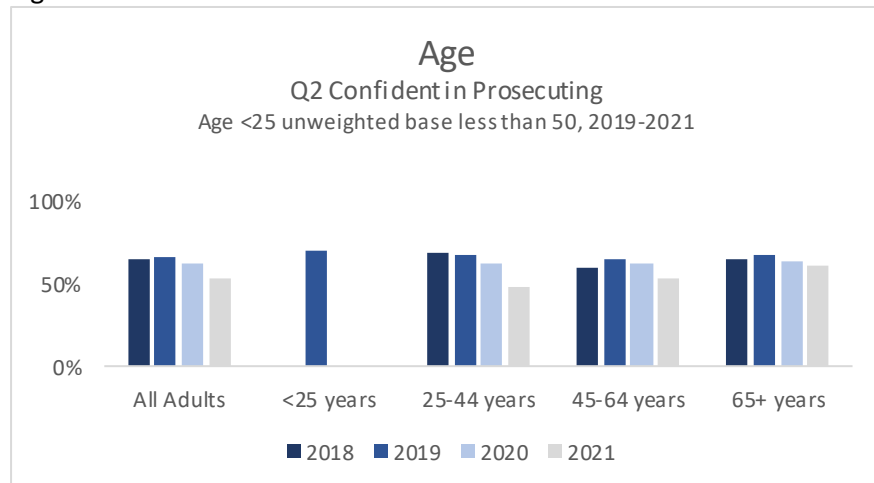


Fig. 5

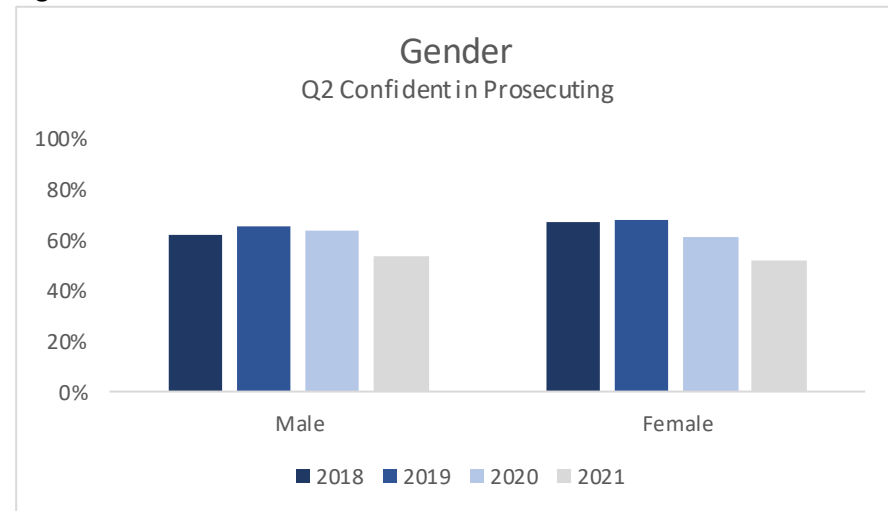
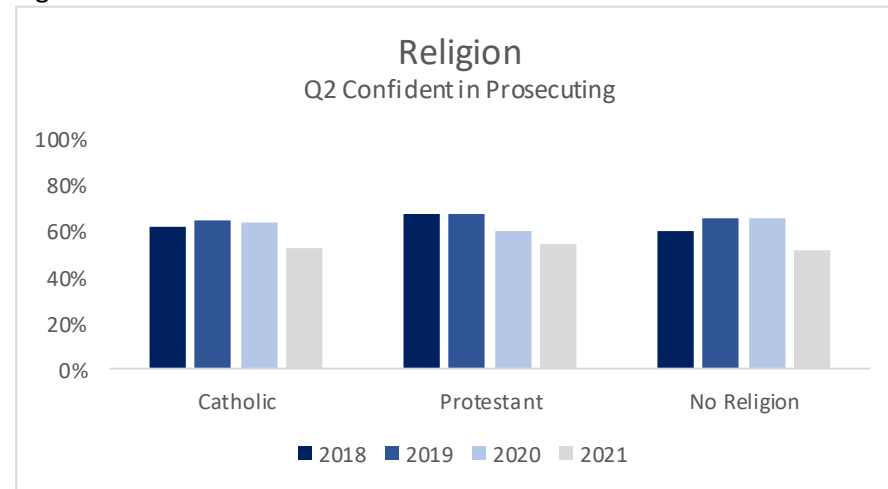


Fig. 6



Q3 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service provides a fair and impartial prosecution service?

Around three-fifths (60.7%) of all respondents were either very or fairly confident that the PPS provides a fair and impartial prosecution service. In 2020, 70.3% of all adults surveyed responded either very or fairly confident.

Respondents aged 65+ showed most confidence in the PPS’s fairness and impartiality with 69.6% stating that they were either very or fairly confident.

Similar proportions of male and female respondents (61.7% and 60.1% respectively) were either very or fairly confident in the PPS’s fairness and impartiality.

Just over three fifths of Protestant respondents (63.5%) and just under three fifths of Catholic respondents (57.9%) felt very or fairly confident in the PPS’s fairness and impartiality. In 2020, the comparable proportions were 68.8% for Catholics and 69.5% for Protestants.

Fig. 7

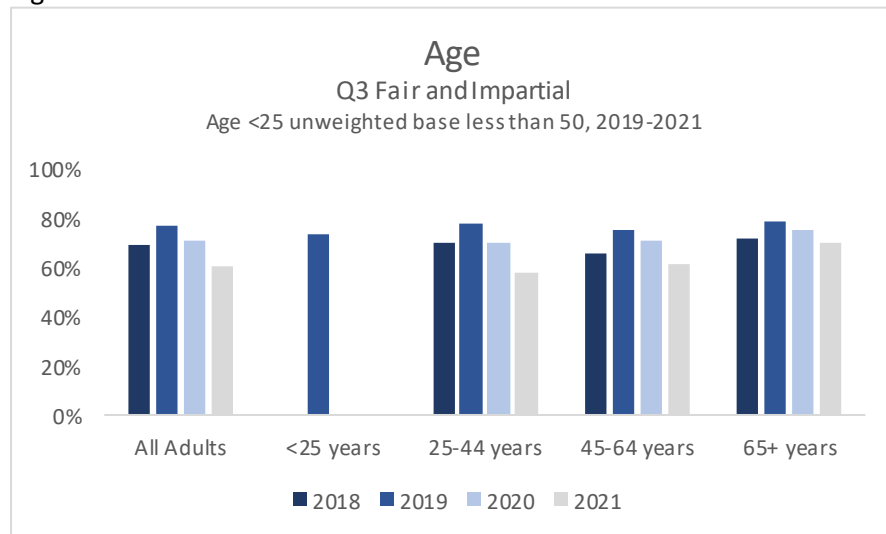


Fig. 8

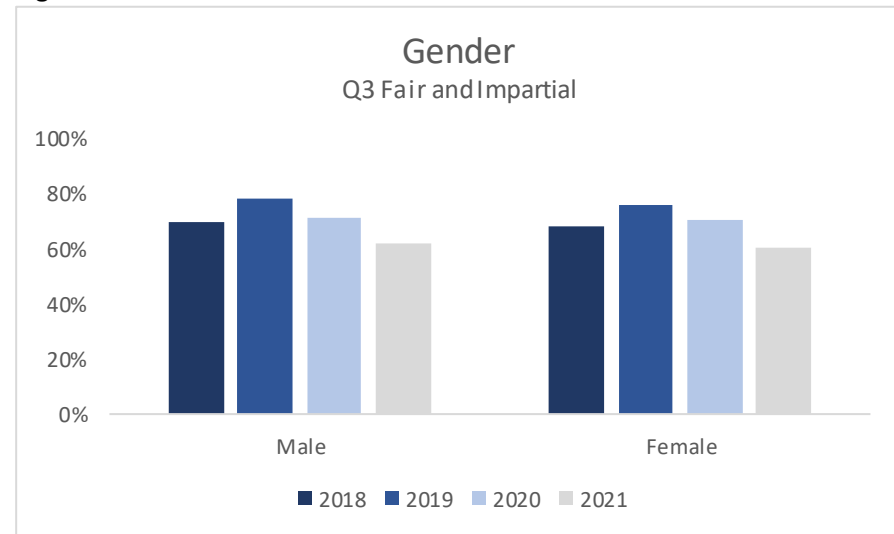
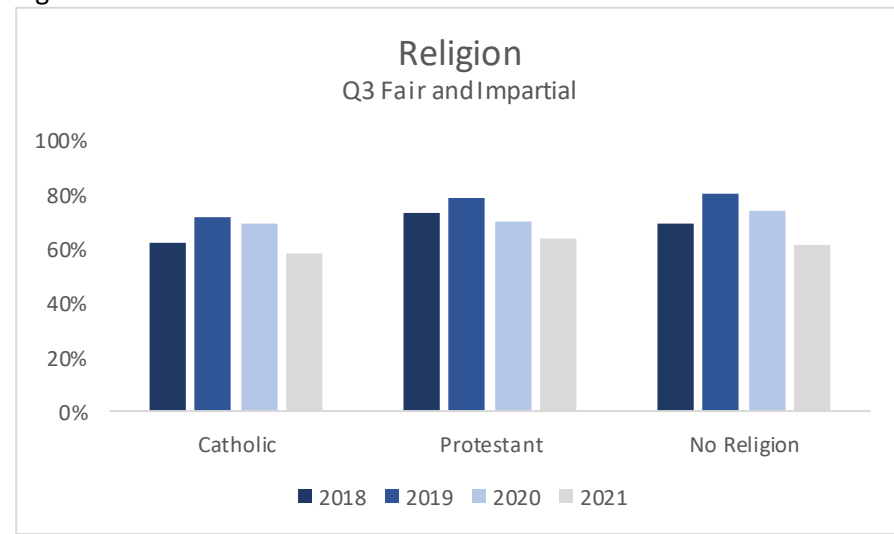


Fig. 9



Q4 How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service takes its prosecution decisions independently? (that is, independent of police, Government or any other body).

Just under three-fifths (58.7%) of all respondents were either very or fairly confident that the PPS takes its prosecution decisions independently. In 2020, the proportion of adults responding either very or fairly confident was 69.1%.

Respondents aged 65+ showed most confidence in the PPS’s independent decision taking with 69.7% stating that they were either very or fairly confident.

Similar proportions of male and female respondents (58.6%, 59.1% respectively) were either very or fairly confident in the independence of the PPS’s decision taking. Proportions were also similar in 2020 (68.4%, males and 69.8%, females).

A greater proportion of Protestant respondents (63.7%) than Catholic respondents (55.6%) stated they were very or fairly confident in the independence of the PPS’s decision taking. In 2020, proportions were similar by religion (69.4%, Protestants, 66.1%, Catholics).

Fig. 10

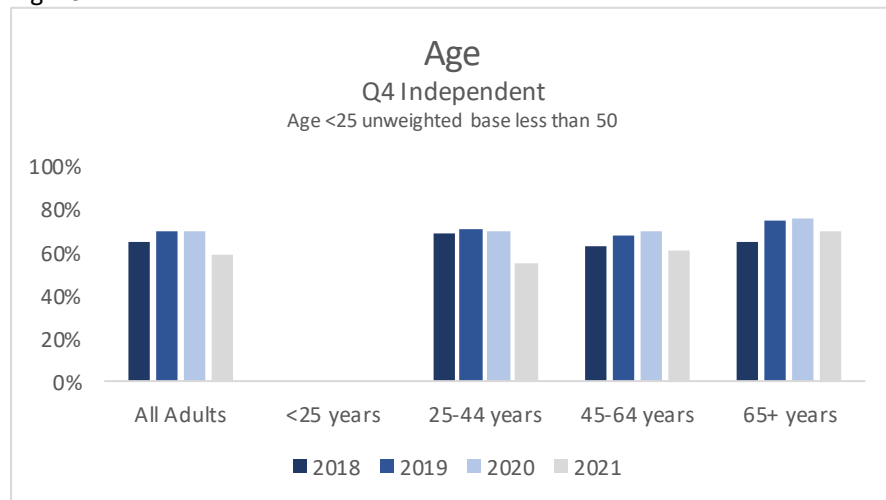


Fig. 11

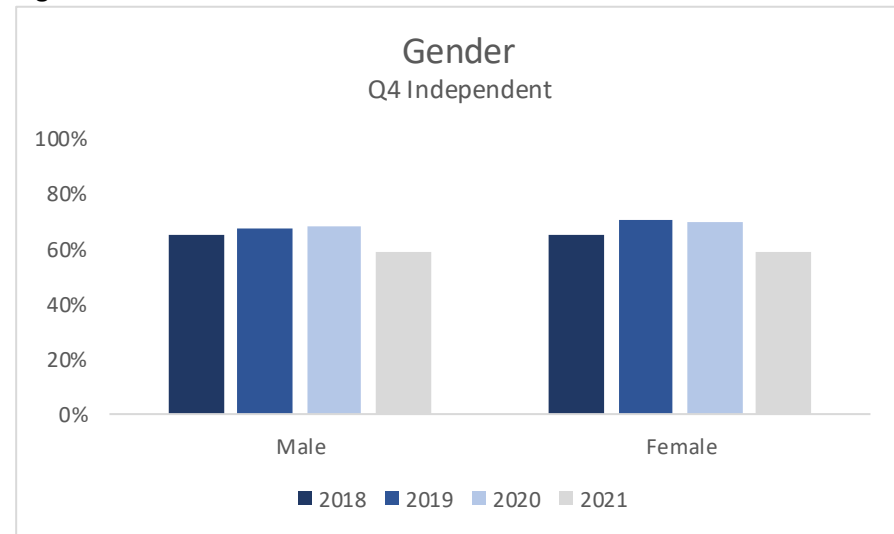
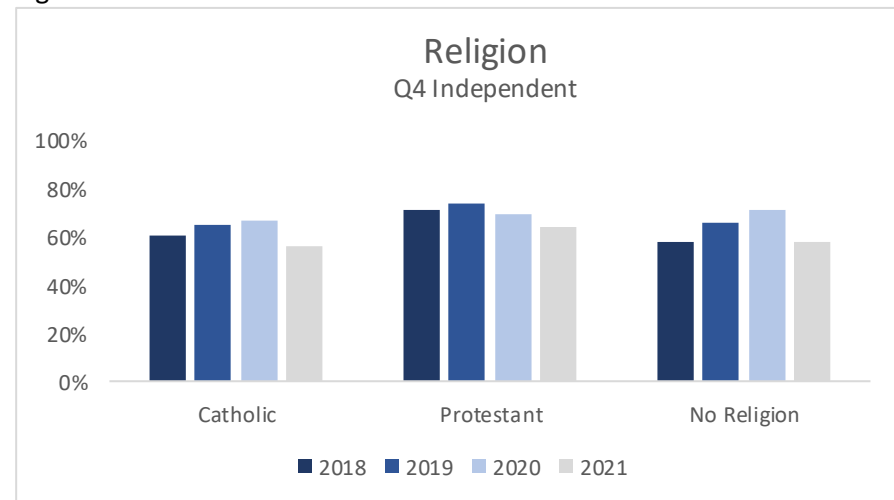


Fig. 12



Part Two

Results Excluding 'Don't Knows'

Question 1 - Had you heard of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, 'the PPS'?

Fig. 13

Year	Response	All					Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
		Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years					
2020	Yes	90.7%	64.6%	86.1%	97.0%	97.3%	94.2%	88.3%	90.1%	95.2%	86.3%
	No	9.3%	35.4%	13.9%	3.0%	2.7%	5.8%	11.7%	9.9%	4.8%	13.7%
	Unweighted Base	1,268	76	469	461	257	511	754	344	512	367
2021	Yes	87.2%	62.9%	83.4%	96.6%	93.1%	90.3%	84.0%	86.0%	91.3%	85.6%
	No	12.8%	37.1%	16.6%	3.4%	6.9%	9.7%	16.0%	14.0%	8.7%	14.4%
	Unweighted Base	1,353	56	427	570	300	611	735	422	532	358

Question 2 - How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service is effective at prosecuting people accused of committing a crime?

Fig. 14

Year	Response	All					Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
		Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years					
2020	Very/Fairly Confident	62.1%	N/A	62.3%	61.8%	63.8%	63.2%	61.3%	63.6%	59.6%	64.9%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	37.9%	N/A	37.7%	38.2%	36.1%	36.8%	38.7%	36.3%	40.4%	35.2%
	Unweighted Base	1,031	N/A	351	402	228	441	588	280	449	274
2021	Very/Fairly Confident	52.5%	N/A	48.0%	53.1%	61.1%	53.3%	51.9%	52.0%	53.8%	51.8%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	47.5%	N/A	52.0%	46.9%	38.9%	46.7%	48.1%	48.0%	46.2%	48.2%
	Unweighted Base	1,061	N/A	304	483	246	519	537	324	437	276

Note: 'N/A' indicates that the unweighted base was less than 50 and therefore the breakdown was not valid

Question 3 - How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service provides a fair and impartial prosecution service?

Fig. 15

Year	Response	All Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
2020	Very/Fairly Confident	70.3%	N/A	69.7%	70.5%	75.1%	70.8%	70.2%	68.8%	69.5%	73.5%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	29.7%	N/A	30.4%	29.5%	24.9%	29.1%	29.9%	31.2%	30.5%	26.5%
	Unweighted Base	1,014	N/A	342	399	227	442	570	270	445	273
2021	Very/Fairly Confident	60.7%	N/A	57.5%	61.6%	69.6%	61.7%	60.1%	57.9%	63.5%	61.0%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	39.3%	N/A	42.5%	38.4%	30.4%	38.3%	39.9%	42.1%	36.5%	39.0%
	Unweighted Base	1,037	N/A	288	472	248	513	519	319	431	265

Note: 'N/A' indicates that the unweighted base was less than 50 and therefore the breakdown was not valid

Question 4 - How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service takes its prosecution decisions independently? (That is, independent of police, Government or any other body).

Fig. 16

Year	Response	All Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
2020	Very/Fairly Confident	69.1%	N/A	69.2%	69.2%	74.9%	68.4%	69.8%	66.1%	69.4%	70.7%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	30.9%	N/A	30.8%	30.8%	25.1%	31.5%	30.2%	34.0%	30.5%	29.3%
	Unweighted Base	979	N/A	346	375	211	435	542	261	421	274
2021	Very/Fairly Confident	58.7%	N/A	54.2%	60.1%	69.7%	58.6%	59.1%	55.6%	63.7%	57.2%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	41.4%	N/A	45.8%	39.9%	30.3%	41.4%	40.9%	44.4%	36.3%	42.8%
	Unweighted Base	993	N/A	273	457	236	499	489	299	411	262

Note: 'N/A' indicates that the unweighted base was less than 50 and therefore the breakdown was not valid

Results Including 'Don't Knows'

Question 1 - Had you heard of the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland, 'the PPS'?

Fig. 17

Year	Response	All					Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
		Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years					
2021	Yes	84.0%	56.2%	80.4%	94.6%	91.7%	88.7%	79.3%	83.9%	88.9%	83.0%
	No	12.3%	33.1%	16.0%	3.3%	6.8%	9.5%	15.2%	13.7%	8.5%	13.9%
	Don't know	3.6%	10.7%	3.6%	2.0%	1.5%	1.8%	5.5%	2.4%	2.6%	3.1%
	Unweighted Base	1,394	63	444	582	305	619	768	431	544	368

Question 2 - How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service is effective at prosecuting people accused of committing a crime?

Fig. 18

Year	Response	All					Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
		Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years					
2021	Very/Fairly Confident	45.6%	N/A	40.7%	47.0%	54.1%	49.1%	42.3%	44.4%	47.7%	44.9%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	41.4%	N/A	44.2%	41.6%	34.4%	43.0%	39.3%	40.9%	41.0%	41.8%
	Don't Know	13.1%	N/A	15.1%	11.3%	11.5%	8.0%	18.4%	14.7%	11.3%	13.3%
	Unweighted Base	1,223	N/A	359	551	279	564	652	380	497	317

Note: 'N/A' indicates that the unweighted base was less than 50 and therefore the breakdown was not valid

Question 3 - How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service provides a fair and impartial prosecution service?

Fig. 19

Year	Response	All Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
2021	Very/Fairly Confident	51.7%	N/A	46.5%	53.3%	61.9%	56.3%	47.2%	48.8%	55.6%	50.8%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	33.4%	N/A	34.4%	33.3%	27.0%	34.9%	31.4%	35.4%	32.0%	32.5%
	Don't Know	14.9%	N/A	19.1%	13.4%	11.1%	8.8%	21.4%	15.7%	12.5%	16.7%
	Unweighted Base	1,223	N/A	359	551	279	564	652	380	497	317

Note: 'N/A' indicates that the unweighted base was less than 50 and therefore the breakdown was not valid

Question 4 - How confident are you that the Public Prosecution Service takes its prosecution decisions independently? (That is, independent of police, Government or any other body).

Fig. 20

Year	Response	All Adults	<25 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	Male	Female	Catholic	Protestant	No Religion
2021	Very/Fairly Confident	47.7%	N/A	41.7%	50.5%	59.4%	51.4%	43.9%	43.4%	52.6%	47.7%
	Not Very/Not At All Confident	33.5%	N/A	35.2%	33.5%	25.8%	36.4%	30.3%	34.7%	30.0%	35.6%
	Don't know	18.8%	N/A	23.1%	16.0%	14.8%	12.2%	25.8%	21.8%	17.4%	16.7%
	Unweighted Base	1,223	N/A	359	551	279	564	652	380	497	317

Note: 'N/A' indicates that the unweighted base was less than 50 and therefore the breakdown was not valid

Technical details of the 2021 survey

The 2021 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey involved 1,397 interviews with adults aged 18 years or over. In order to achieve the objectives of the research, while considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a multi-modal approach was used. A large-scale Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) survey was developed, and this was supplemented with Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI). The survey was designed to be as inclusive as possible, presenting participants with a range of ways in which they could complete the survey. Fieldwork was carried out by Ipsos UK.

Ethical approval

The 2021 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast, where the survey coordinator is based.

Survey content

The survey consists of a number of different modules, each based on a specific topic. The modules included in the 2021 survey are: Introductory questions, Respect, Attitudes to minority ethnic groups, Good relations, Mental Health, COVID and work, Income and poverty, Criminal Justice System, Political attitudes and Background.

Some of these questions were also included in the Young Life and Times survey of 16 year-olds – see www.ark.ac.uk/ylt.

Pilot and mainstage fieldwork

Once Ipsos UK received approval from the NILT project team, the CAWI survey link was activated. At this stage, Ipsos mailed the advance letters and monitored the real-time progress of the survey, as householders began completing it. The CATI script was also released to the interviewing panel, for those participants who wanted to complete the interview with an interviewer over the phone.

Ninety-eight percent of the total interviews completed used Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI), the remaining 2% using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Interviewing was conducted between 12th October 2021 and 22nd December 2021, and interviews lasted 59.5 minutes, on average.

Ipsos' field team was responsible for all aspects of data collection. This included managing the online sample, preparing the briefing notes for CATI interviewers, allocation and scheduling of work and monitoring of progress. The fieldwork was conducted by a team of highly experienced interviewers. Interviewers were fully briefed on the project's aims and target audience, and to familiarise them with the questionnaire and any sensitive or complex questions within it.

The fieldwork was split into two phases: a pilot phase preceded the mainstage fieldwork. The purpose of the pilot was to assess the reliability and accuracy of the questionnaire and script, and to allow for any changes to be made ahead of the mainstage fieldwork. Question wording and understanding was tested, alongside any routing and filtering.

Following a successful pilot, the mainstage fieldwork was launched with some changes to the questionnaire, including removing some questions and adjusting the ordering of the questionnaire sections. During fieldwork, all interviewers worked in accordance with the ISO 20252 system which

incorporates much of the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) and the old MRQSA/BS7911. Advance letter

Ipsos developed four different letters to be sent to the selected households. The initial letter informed participants about the study, its importance and how they could take part, with the subsequent letters acting as reminders to households. The initial letter contained a copy of the Ipsos privacy policy and a copy of the NILT information leaflet. Individuals were informed how their personal data would be handled in line with GDPR, and about their right to withdraw from the research at any stage, if they did not want to take part.

Each letter that was sent contained that household’s unique URL survey link. This URL would grant access to the survey for the person in the household who was to complete the survey, i.e. the person with the next birthday. Alternatively, the participant could call a freephone number and book a telephone interview.

Sampling design

The sample for the 2021 survey consisted of a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF) database of addresses. The PAF is the most widely used sample frame for high quality social surveys in the UK. It is the most up to date and complete a list of addresses in the United Kingdom and is maintained by the Royal Mail. Business addresses were removed from the database prior to sample selection.

A total of 10,000 address were selected for invitation. To provide a random sample of Northern Ireland households, the sample was stratified proportionately by District Council area. The Postcode Address File (PAF) provides a good sampling frame of addresses but contains no information about the number of people living at an address. Further selection stages were therefore required to convert the listing of addresses to a listing of individuals from which one person (the ‘selected respondent’) is chosen to complete the survey.

The person to be interviewed was randomly selected using the ‘next birthday’ rule. Each letter sent to the selected addresses clearly stated that only the person with the next birthday was eligible to complete the survey online. At the beginning of the interview, the participant also had to confirm that they were the person within the household with the next birthday.

Fig. 21

Breakdown of response		
	Number	Percent
Total co-operating	1,397	14%
- Fully co-operating	1,397	14%
- Partially co-operating	0	0
Refusal to co-operate	85	1%
Non-contact	8,499	85%
Other	13	0%
Total	10,000	100%

Sampling errors and confidence intervals

This table sets out sampling errors and confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level relating to a Systematic Random Sample design as used in the survey. These intervals are based on unweighted data.

Fig. 22

Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted data)		
	%	Margin of Error
Age		
18-24	4.5	1.1
25-34	14	1.8
35-44	18	2
45-54	20.3	2.1
55-64	21.3	2.1
65 and over	21.8	2.2
Sex		
Male	44.3	2.6
Female	55.2	2.6
Religion		
Catholic	30.9	2.4
Protestant	38.5	2.5
None	26.3	2.3
Other	2	0.7
Refused/Don't Know	2.2	0.8

Source: NILTS 2021

Weighting

Please note that all analyses of the adult data should be weighted to ensure representation of the Northern Ireland population. The weighting variable is called WTFactor.

As is common practice for a CAWI survey of this nature, the data are subsequently weighted to ensure representation of the general population of Northern Ireland. Weighting is the process of correcting for sample differences by increasing the relative importance (or weight) of underrepresented groups and decreasing the importance of overrepresented groups (where over/under representation is determined by comparing to a target).

Given the method of collection, a weighting variable to account for age, gender and location based on Northern Ireland Census data (2011) was added. Random Iterative Method (RIM) weighting was selected as the most appropriate technique as this is most commonly used to weight market research data to known demographics, without intrinsically altering the findings of the raw data. Northern Ireland Census targets were used, given that Census data are the most accurate counts of the population at a specific point in time.

A RIM weighting factor was calculated by comparing the NILT data population proportions to the known population statistics for each variable (age, gender and location). This weighting factor was

calculated using an advanced analytics tool which accounts for the differences in the survey population to the general population of Northern Ireland using a pre-calculated algorithm. When applied, the weighting factor (WTFactor) will weight the data accordingly to ensure research findings are representative of the general population in Northern Ireland.

Comparisons with other data sources

For comparative purposes, the tables below provide NILT data alongside two data sources:

Continuous Household Survey – undertaken by the Central Survey Unit within the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. This survey provides an ongoing snapshot of social and economic conditions in Northern Ireland based on a representative sample of households across Northern Ireland. For more information, see www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/central-survey-unit/continuous-household-survey.

2011 Northern Ireland Census – this was designed to collect information on the usually resident population of Northern Ireland on 27 March 2011. Whilst this data is old, it provides the most recent data population-level available

Fig. 23

Representativeness of the NILTS 2021 sample by age and gender			
Individual Characteristics	NILTS 2021 (weighted)	CHS 2020/21 (weighted)	Northern Ireland Census 2011
		%	
Age			
18-24 years	4.5	11	13
25-34 years	14	16	18
35-44 years	18	16	18
45-54 years	20.3	18	18
55-64 years	21.3	17	14
65 and over	21.8	23	19
Gender			
Male	44.3	50	49
Female	55.2	50	51
Base=100%	1,397	1,759	1380100*

Sources, NISRA, NILTS 2021

Fig. 24

Representativeness of the NILTS 2021 sample by religion			
Individual Characteristics	NILTS 2021 (weighted)	CHS 2020/21**	Northern Ireland Census 2011
%			
Religion			
Protestant	35	44	48
Catholic	32	35	45
Other or no religion*	30	21	6
Missing/refused	2	0	1
Base=100%	1,397	1,676	1,108,630

Source: NISRA, NILTS 2021

**Includes 'no religion' and religion not stated*

*** Supplemented from household membership*

If you have any feedback, questions or requests for further information about this bulletin, please contact us as follows:

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