



PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service

Findings from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

Summary Quality Report

October 2021 – December 2021



Dimension: Assessment by the author.

Introduction: Context for the quality report.

In 2022 the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) published statistical bulletin ‘Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service: Perceptions of the Public Prosecution Service: Findings from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey’. It includes findings from four questions within the 2021 survey pertaining to public awareness and attitudes towards the PPS and specifically confidence in the PPS. The 2021 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILTS) was the fourth year that this module was included.

Relevance: The degree to which the statistical product meets the user needs in both coverage and content.

The statistics provided within this publication are required to measure public awareness and attitudes towards the PPS. Measurement of confidence in the PPS, in particular, is a commitment within the PPS business plan. In addition, the publication of reliable and timely statistics related to public attitudes is essential in building trust and to ensuring transparency. These statistics are required on an annual basis and must provide coverage from across the whole of Northern Ireland.

The NILTS is a public attitudes survey conducted across Northern Ireland annually. Using a systematic random sample of addresses from the Postcode Address File (PAF) database of addresses, the survey provides a representative sample covering the whole of Northern Ireland. The data is also weighted to mitigate the fact that, due to the selection of only one individual for interview at each sampled address, the probability of selection for the survey is inversely related to the size of the household. In other words, individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than individuals in small households.

Comparison is also provided with the equivalent time frame from the previous financial year. Findings are broken down by key demographic details; age, gender and religion. The statistical bulletin includes statistical tables, graphs and associated commentary to communicate the findings to users.

Accuracy and Reliability: The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value.

Like all surveys, the NILTS is subject to both sampling and non-sampling error and is unlikely to reflect precisely the characteristics of the population. Below details the range of sampling and non-sampling errors associated with the NILTS.

Sampling Errors

Because NILTS estimates are subject to sampling error, differences between population subgroups may occur by chance. Table 1 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. Note that the margin of error for all sample estimates is within the parameters of + 2.6%.

Table 1

Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted data)			
	%	Margin of Error	95% Confidence Limits
Age			
18-24	4.5	1.1	3.4-5.6
25-34	14	1.8	12.2-15.8
35-44	18	2	16.0-20.0
45-54	20.3	2.1	18.2-22.4
55-64	21.3	2.1	19.2-23.4
65 and over	21.8	2.2	19.6-24.0
Sex			
Male	44.3	2.6	46.9-41.7
Female	55.2	2.6	52.6-57.8
Religion			
Catholic	30.9	2.4	28.5-33.3
Protestant	38.5	2.5	36.0-41.0
None	26.3	2.3	24.0-28.6
Other	2	0.7	1.3-2.7
Refused/Don't Know	2.2	0.8	1.4-3.0

Source: NILTS 2021

Non-Sampling Errors

Representativeness

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. Before analysis, all households which provided a selected respondent are examined and the data are weighted in relation to the number of eligible adults at the address derived from the details of household structure recorded by interviewers on the questionnaire. This weighting process adjusts the results to those that would have been achieved if the sample had been drawn as a random sample of adults rather than of addresses. The data is then presented in the bulletin weighted to prevent a bias towards smaller households.

To assess how accurately a survey sample reflects the population of Northern Ireland, the characteristics of the sample are compared with the characteristics of the Northern Ireland population from 2011 Census of Population. The NILTS sample has also been compared to the achieved sample of the Continuous Household Survey. Table 2 shows this comparison and Table 3 provides a profile of the survey sample.

Table 2

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

Table 3

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

Non-Response

As in any voluntary survey, the NILTS is subject to non-response error.

Don't know and refusal responses

Refusal and don't know responses are excluded from the analyses and from unweighted bases quoted in tables.

Input Error

In order to minimise any input error or missing data at field work stage, a number of standard procedures are in place to validate and check the data. The fieldwork is conducted using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) software. The software is designed to ensure that the data is

captured in a controlled way, ensuring no questions are missed, that the numerical responses are within range and that the range of answers are controlled. In addition, a number of stages of data 'cleaning' are implemented. These include checks against the original word-processed questionnaire, the removal of dummy variables, recoding, weighting and the running of simple frequencies for sense checks. All these measures help the quality of the data at the completion of fieldwork.

Timeliness and Punctuality: Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.

The fieldwork for the 2021 survey was carried out between 12th October 2021 and 22nd December 2021. The results were made available to PPS in April 2022 and PPS published the statistical bulletin on 26th May 2022. This meant there was a maximum of just over nine months of a time gap between the reference period and publication, and a two month time gap between PPS receiving the results and publishing the report.

The report was published on the planned date, as pre-announced on the PPS webpage and Gov.uk.

Accessibility and Clarity: Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.

Publication schedules are published on the PPS website and the Official Statistics publication calendar on gov.uk at least 4 weeks in advance of publication.

Like all PPS statistical bulletins, this release is published on the PPS website (links to which are also available on the Official Statistics publication calendar on gov.uk). Technical notes on methodology are included within the bulletin and are also available in full on the ARK/QUB website (<https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/datasets/technotes.html>).

The full NILTS dataset, including data from the PPS module, is also published for open access on the ARK QUB website (<https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/datasets/>).

Trade-offs between output quality components: Trade-offs are the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other

The number of cases upon which analysis is based is important as it influences the precision (standard error) of the estimates. In turn, the PPS does not routinely publish estimates based on less than 50 cases which may result in statistics for some subgroups not being presented in the reports.

Assessment of user needs and perceptions: The process for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.

All published releases include contact details for users to provide feedback on the content or presentation of the statistics. A statistical users list has been established and regular contact is maintained with users.

Performance, cost and respondent burden: The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.

The cost to the PPS in respect of the 2021 NILTS was £3,897. NISRA statisticians on loan to PPS undertake the publication of the results on behalf of the PPS.

Confidentiality, transparency and security: The procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.

The NILTS data received by PPS have been anonymised. The dataset is stored on a secure network which is only accessible to staff working on the publication.

Statistics and Research
Policy and Information Unit
Public Prosecution Service
for Northern Ireland
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

www.ppsni.gov.uk

statistics.research@ppsni.gov.uk

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