



VIEWS ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD: FINDINGS FROM THE OCTOBER 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 October 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 1,838 individuals, 1,176 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 64%.

KEY FINDINGS

- ◆ More than three quarters of all respondents (77%) had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board in the October 2001 Omnibus Survey (Figure 1). This compared to 59% of respondents to the March 2001 Omnibus Survey who had heard of the Policing Board.
- ◆ Males (86%) were more likely to have heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board than females (71%) (Figure 2).
- ◆ Older respondents were more likely to have heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board with 84% of those aged 50-64 saying this was the case (Figure 3).
- ◆ More than two-thirds (70%) of those surveyed in the October 2001 Omnibus Survey thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 5). This compared to 69% of respondents to the March 2001 Omnibus Survey who thought that the Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job.
- ◆ Females (72%) were more likely than males (67%) to think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 6).
- ◆ More Catholics (75%) than Protestants (66%) said that they thought the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 8).
- ◆ Almost two-thirds (63%) of those surveyed in the October 2001 Omnibus Survey thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police whilst a quarter (25%) thought the Policing Board would be part of the police (Figure 9). This compared to 61% of respondents to the March 2001 Omnibus Survey who thought that the Policing Board would be independent of the police.
- ◆ Males (71%) were more likely than females (57%) to think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police (Table 3).
- ◆ Proportionately more Protestants (66%) than Catholics (60%) thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police (Table 5).

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 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. The Northern Ireland Policing Board came into effect in November 2001.

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 questions in both the March 2001 and October 2001 Northern Ireland Omnibus Surveys.

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 and October 2001 Northern Ireland Omnibus Surveys. 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. The bulletin also examines changes in respondents views between the March 2001 Survey and the October 2001 Survey.

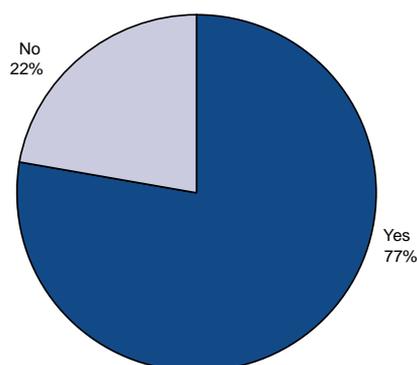
5. The sample of those surveyed was drawn from the Valuation and Lands Agency list, the most up-to-date listing of private households. At each address one person aged 16 or over was questioned. From an eligible sample of 1,838 individuals, 1,176 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 64%. Further information relating to various aspects of the survey are detailed in the Technical Notes section.

FINDINGS

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

6. Overall, 77% of those surveyed had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board while 22% of respondents said they hadn't heard of the Board (Figure 1). This compares to 59% of respondents to the March 2001 Omnibus Survey who had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. The difference in respondents knowledge of the Policing Board between the March 2001 Survey and the October 2001 Survey was found to be statistically significant.

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

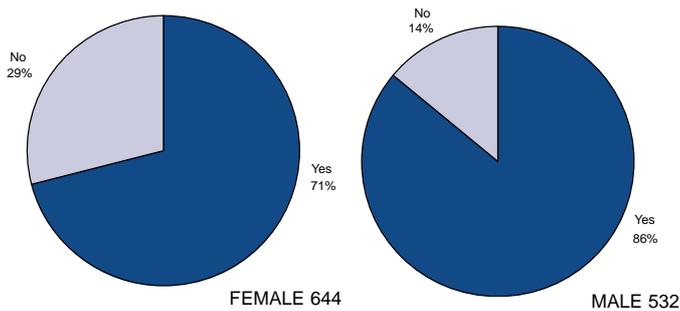


GENDER

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. More than four-fifths of males (86%) and nearly three-quarters of females (71%) 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.

8. The proportions of both males and females who had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board from the October 2001 Survey (86% and 71% respectively) were higher than those recorded in the March 2001 Survey (64% and 55% respectively).

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

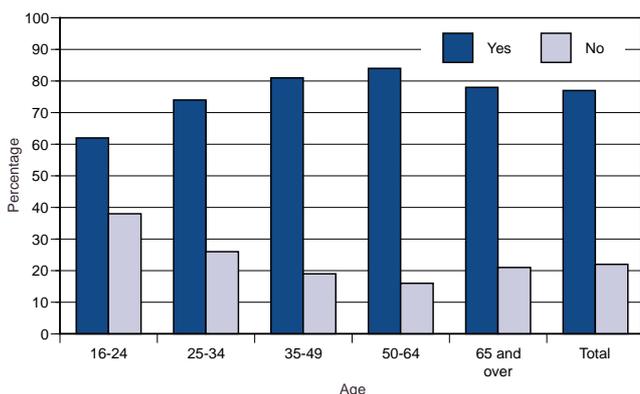


AGE

9. The majority of respondents within each age group had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (Figure 3). More than four-fifths (84%) of those respondents aged 50-64 years and 81% of those aged 35-49 years had heard of the Board. Respondents aged 16-24 years old were least likely to have heard of the Board (62%). The difference in knowledge of the Policing Board between the five age groups is statistically significant.

10. Proportionately more persons in all age groups had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board in the October 2001 Survey compared to the March 2001 Survey. The 25-34 age group showed the largest increase in knowledge from 52% in March 2001 to 74% in October 2001.

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



AREA

11. The majority of respondents in each of the three areas of Northern Ireland said they had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board: 80% of those surveyed in the East of Northern Ireland, 76% of those surveyed in the West of the country and 74% 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 not statistically significant.

12. Proportionately more persons in all three areas had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board in the October 2001 Survey compared to the March 2001 Survey. The proportion of respondents in the East of Northern Ireland who had heard of the Policing Board increased from 63% in March 2001 to 80% in October 2001; the proportion of respondents in the West of Northern Ireland who had heard of it increased from 56% in March 2001 to 76% in October 2001; and the proportion of respondents in Belfast who had heard of it increased from 54% in March 2001 to 74% in October 2001.

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

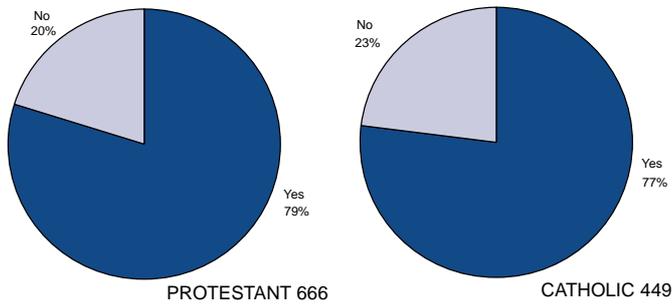
Area	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Belfast	74%	26%	-	189
East	80%	19%	0%	566
West	76%	24%	-	421
Total	77%	22%	0%	1176

RELIGION

13. A similar proportion of Catholics (77%) and Protestants (79%) had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (Figure 4). There was no significant difference between Catholics and Protestants in their knowledge of the Policing Board.

14. Proportionately more Catholics and Protestants had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board in October 2001 compared to March 2001 with the largest increase in knowledge being that of Catholics, 77% of whom had heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board in October 2001 compared to 55% in March 2001.

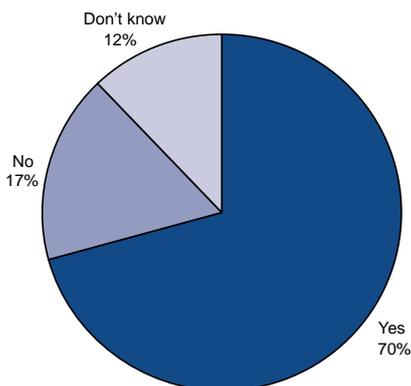
Figure 4: Respondents' knowledge of the Northern Ireland Policing Board: by religion



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

15. Overall, more than two-thirds (70%) of those surveyed thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job, 17% thought that it wouldn't help and a further 12% said they didn't know whether it would help or not (Figure 5). This compares to 69% of respondents to the March 2001 Survey who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job, 16% of respondents who didn't think it would help and 16% of respondents who said they didn't know whether it would help or not. The difference in respondents views on whether the Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job between the March 2001 Survey and the October 2001 Survey was not found to be statistically significant.

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

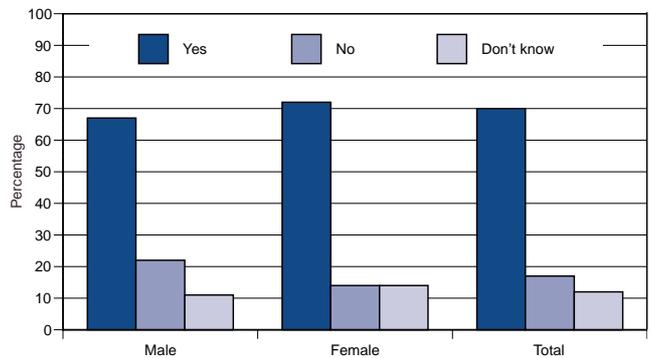


GENDER

16. Proportionately more females (72%) than males (67%) thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 6). Males (22%) were more likely than females (14%) to think that the Board would not ensure that the police did a good job while similar proportions said they didn't know. These differences in views between males and females are statistically significant.

17. Identical proportions of females thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job in the March 2001 and October 2001 Surveys (72%) whilst the proportion of males who thought it would help increased from 65% in March 2001 to 67% in October 2001.

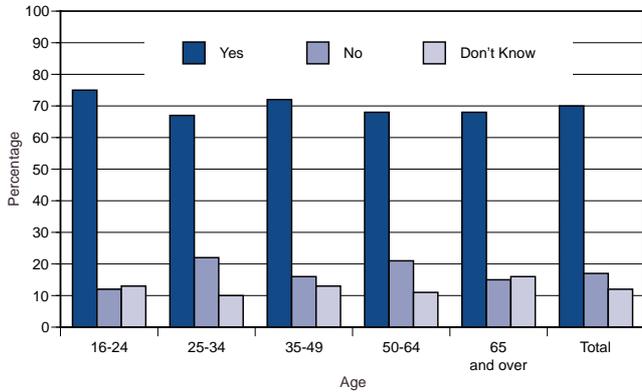
Figure 6: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job: by gender



AGE

18. The proportions of respondents who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job was high for all age categories (Figure 7). Three-quarters (75%) of those aged 16-24 years and almost three-quarters (72%) of those aged 35-49 years thought that the Board would help ensure that the police do a good job. The difference in views between age groups was not statistically significant.

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



19. Respondents aged 25-34 years and those aged 50-64 years were most likely to think that the Policing Board would not help ensure that the police do a good job (22% and 21% respectively), while 16% of those aged 65 and over didn't know.

20. The proportions of all age groups who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job were similar in both the March 2001 and the October 2001 surveys with only the 35-49 age group showing a slight decrease in the proportion of respondents who thought it would help.

AREA

21. Over two-thirds (70%) of respondents in each of the three areas in Northern Ireland said that they thought the Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Table 2).

Table 2: 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	70%	10%	20%	189
East	70%	19%	11%	566
West	70%	19%	11%	421
Total	70%	17%	13%	1176

22. Respondents from both the East and the West of Northern Ireland were more likely to say that the Policing Board would not help the police do a good job (19%), while respondents from Belfast were more likely to say they didn't know (20%). These differences between each of the areas in Northern Ireland and respondents views of the Policing Board are statistically significant.

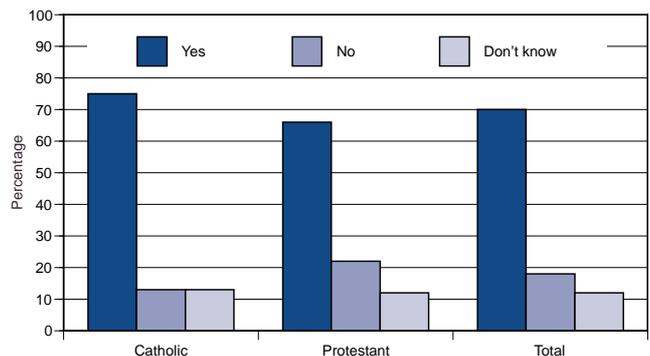
23. The proportions of respondents in all three areas who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help to ensure that the police do a good job were slightly higher in the October 2001 Survey compared to the March 2001 Survey.

RELIGION

24. Proportionately more Catholics (75%) than Protestants (66%) said that they thought the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 8). Over one-fifth (22%) of Protestant respondents said that this would not be the case compared to 13% of Catholics. These differences in views amongst Catholics and Protestants are statistically significant.

25. The proportion of Catholic respondents who thought the Northern Ireland Policing Board would help to ensure that the police do a good job increased from 73% in March 2001 to 75% in October 2001 whilst the proportion of Protestant respondents who thought the Board would help fell from 67% in March 2001 to 66% in October 2001.

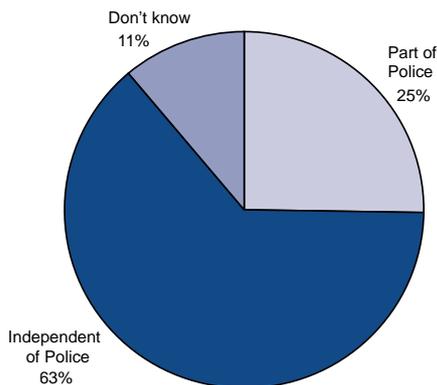
Figure 8: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will help ensure that the police do a good job: by religion



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

26. Almost two-thirds (63%) of those surveyed thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police; 25% thought the Board would be part of the police and 11% said they didn't know (Figure 9). The proportion of respondents who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police increased from 61% in March 2001 to 63% in October 2001. The difference in respondents' views on the independence of the Policing Board between the March 2001 Survey and the October 2001 Survey was not found to be statistically significant.

Figure 9: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police



GENDER

27. Males (71%) were more likely than females (57%) to think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police (Table 3).

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police: by gender

Gender	Part of the police	Independent of the police	Refusal	Don't know	Total
Male	21%	71%	0%	7%	532
Female	28%	57%	0%	15%	644
Total	25%	63%	0%	11%	1176

28. Proportionately more females (28%) than males (21%) thought that the Board would be part of the police and females (15%) were also more likely than males (7%) to say that they didn't know. The views of males and females on the independence of the Policing Board are statistically significant.

29. The proportion of males who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police increased slightly from 70% in March 2001 to 71% in October 2001 whilst the proportion of females who thought it would be independent increased from 54% in March 2001 to 57% in October 2001.

AGE

30. Respondents aged 35-49 (73%) and those aged 50-64 (67%) were most likely to think that the Policing Board would be independent of the police. This compares to 48% of respondents aged 16-24 years who thought that it would be independent of the police (Figure 10).

31. Over two-fifths (41%) of respondents aged 16-24 years and 31% of those aged 25-34 thought that the Policing Board would be part of the police, whilst a fifth (20%) of those aged 65 and over, and 13% of those aged 50-64 said that they didn't know. These differences in responses between each of the age groups are statistically significant.

32. The proportions of persons aged 16-24, 25-34 and 65 and over who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police were slightly lower in the October 2001 Survey compared to the March 2001 Survey. The proportions of those aged 35-49 and 50-64 who thought that it would be independent increased between the March 2001 Survey and the October 2001 Survey with the 35-49 age group showing a marked increase.

Figure 10: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police: by age

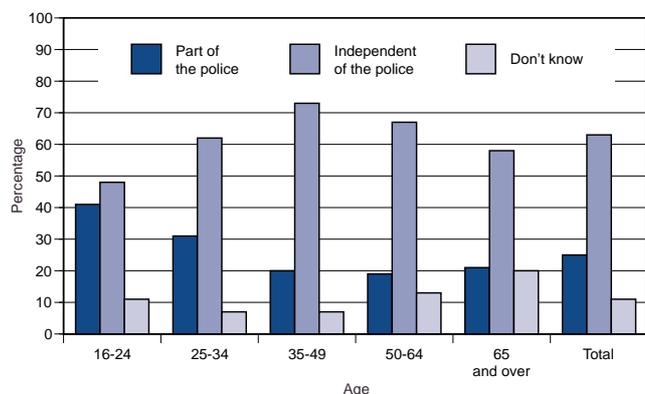


Table 4: Respondents' views on whether the Northern Ireland Policing Board will be part of the police or independent of the police: by area

Area	Part of the police	Independent of the police	Refusal	Don't know	Total
Belfast	26%	63%	-	11%	189
East	21%	67%	1%	12%	566
West	30%	59%	0%	11%	421
Total	25%	63%	0%	11%	1176

AREA

33. Respondents from Belfast and the East of Northern Ireland were more likely to think that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police. Over two-thirds (67%) of those from the East of Northern Ireland and 63% of those from Belfast thought this was the case (Table 4).

34. Almost a third (30%) of those respondents living in the West of Northern Ireland thought that the Policing Board would be part of the police. The proportions of respondents who didn't know were similar at 11-12% in all three areas. The difference between each of the areas in Northern Ireland and their views on the independence of the Policing Board is statistically significant.

35. The proportions of respondents living in the East and the West of the province who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police were slightly higher in October 2001 compared to March 2001 whilst the proportion of respondents in Belfast who thought it would be independent fell slightly.

RELIGION

36. Proportionately more Catholics (30%) than Protestants (22%) thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be part of the police (Table 5). This compares to 66% of Protestants and 60% of Catholics who thought that the Board would be independent of the police. A similar proportion of Catholics (10%) and Protestants (12%) said that they didn't know. The difference in the responses of Catholics and Protestants is statistically significant.

37. The proportions of both Catholics and Protestants who thought that the Northern Ireland Policing Board would be independent of the police increased slightly between March 2001 and October 2001. The proportion of Catholics who thought it would be independent of the police in March 2001 was 59% compared to 60% in October 2001 and the proportion of Protestants who thought it would be independent of the police was 63% in March 2001 compared to 66% in October 2001.

Table 5: 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	30%	60%	0%	10%	449
Protestant	22%	66%	-	12%	666
Total	25%	64%	0%	11%	1115

TECHNICAL NOTES

38. 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.

39. 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 1,838 individuals, 1,176 interviews were achieved giving a response rate of 64%.

40. The overall sample profile for the October 2001 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey compared to the 2000 Community Attitudes Survey is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Sample profile

	Community Attitudes Survey 2000	Omnibus Survey Oct 2001
Sex		
Male	48%	45%
Female	52%	55%
Age Group		
16-24	16%	14%
25-44	37%	34%
45-59	23%	24%
60-74	18%	19%
75+	7%	8%
Religion		
Catholic	37%	38%
Protestant	61%	57%
Other/None/Missing	3%	5%

41. 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.

42. 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.

43. 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. 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.

44. 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'.

45. The area analysis was based on District Council boundaries and is detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: 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.

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

47. 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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