

Northern Ireland Assembly Election Study 2022

**Technical report prepared for Queen's
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Karen Paden



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Technical details

Introduction and objectives

In early 2022, Queen's University Belfast (QUB) commissioned Ipsos Northern Ireland to undertake a large-scale quantitative survey to explore voting behaviour and citizens' democratic behaviour immediately following the 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly election on Thursday 5th May 2022. This survey is being carried out across Northern Ireland among 2,000+ adults ages 18 and over.

The overall aim of the research is to understand:

- The political attitudes of the public in Northern Ireland;
- How political attitudes relate to how people voted in the 2022 Assembly election; and,
- The political attitudes of people who did not vote.

This academic study has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and is led by Professor John Garry of the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics. The academic research team includes academics from Queen's University Belfast, Edinburgh University and the University of Pennsylvania.

Sampling

Sampling approach and sample size

Overall, 2,000 interviews were completed for the Election study. In order to the yielded sample was representative of the population, a random stratified sampling design or quota sampling approach was implemented, whereby the sample was stratified by location/region within Northern Ireland.

From this, quotas were applied to key demographic variables, specifically age, gender, socio-economic grouping and constituency, to ensure that the sample is not clustered to particular parts of Northern Ireland and to different demographic groupings in the population. A monitoring quota was also placed on the community background variable also.

The two stages involved in the sampling of the Election Study were as follows:

- Selection of geographical points; and,
- Selection of respondents within geographical points.

250 sampling points were selected across Northern Ireland; different points are selected for each individual study we conduct to ensure we are not revisiting the same houses and/or areas frequently and oversampling in some areas over others. The sampling points were chosen at random from Northern Ireland's 285 electoral wards. Each sampling point can incorporate up to three wards depending on the population of the area. Study participants were identified by following a route plan for the addresses interviewers have been given. Interviewers were tasked to visit every nth home in the set area they had been provided and did so until they had fulfilled all study quotas.

The number of sampling points were selected to include urban and rural districts in proportion to the number of interviews to be completed, using a computer programme based on Wards. Ipsos selected

250 sampling points to maximise the range of areas included in this study and help ensure that the study achieve the most representative sample possible. The number of sampling points meant that we only conducted 8 interviews per sampled area, to avoid any degree of clustering.

Sample points were allocated to interviewers who we provided with a list of addresses at which they can call and obtain interviews with participants who fulfil the pre-set quotas at each point. Specific measures were also employed to ensure that the approach to sampling was high quality, notably:

- issuing specific addresses to be attempted (rather than a purely random 'walk');
- interspersing the addresses with priority addresses which must be attempted first; and,
- specifying a 50% proportion of interviewing to be conducted at evening/weekend periods.

Interviewers were instructed to call at as many addresses as necessary within the sampling points until the specified quota of participants has been achieved. The quotas applied to the sample at an overall Northern Ireland level and were set in accordance with the most recent Census data. Although quotas were applied at an overall level, each interviewer was provided a target number of participants in each category for each sample point that they were assigned. For example, should an interviewer be required to achieve 10 interviews at a sampling point, they were told they must achieve a certain number of interviews with males and females, those of different age ranges and socio-economic groups at this point. This ensures greater control over sampling and achieved rates over the course of the project.

The table below outlines the number of target quotas versus the achieved quotas.

Table 1.1: Quota targets versus achieved quotas

Demographic variable	Target quotas	Achieved quotas
Age		
18-29	440	409
30-44	540	540
45-59	500	479
60+	520	572
		2,000
Gender		
Male	980	960
Female	1,020	1040
		2,000
SCG		
ABC1	937	889
C2DE	1083	1107
REF		4
		2,000
Constituency		
Belfast East	104	107
Belfast North	104	89
Belfast South	120	113
Belfast West	96	95
East Antrim	96	80

East Londonderry	104	92
Fermanagh	120	116
Foyle	120	124
Lagan	104	89
Mid Ulster	104	105
Newry	128	130
North Antrim	120	113
North Down	96	85
South Antrim	128	124
South Down	144	125
Strangford	96	69
Upper Bann	120	109
West Tyrone	96	103
Non-voter, no constituency*	-	132
	2000	2,000

* Please note when reporting quotas we have added the non-voter or no constituency option to account for those who did not give a constituency, as they did not vote.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by the QUB project team. Given an element of tracking between Election Studies, it was essential that components of the questionnaire were kept as consistent as possible with previous years. Ipsos worked in conjunction with QUB to develop the questionnaire to its final stage.

The final version of the questionnaire was scripted on the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing platform, Dimensions. This platform sits within UNICOM Intelligence SPSS software (formerly IBM SPSS Dimensions), which is fully compatible with SPSS V22. UNICOM Intelligence is an integrated suite of software tools for designing surveys and conducting CAPI surveys and is a well-established tool used industry-wide in the administration of complex and large-scale social surveys. It enables the scripting and implementation of engaging surveys on the go. When completing CAPI interviews, Interviewers can focus on the interview itself, while UNICOM Intelligence Remote Admin manages project and data synchronization. Ipsos makes use of the UNICOM Intelligence Author Professional and Interviewer Desktop, which offers a powerful, survey scripting language, based on Microsoft® technology, for creating surveys of any type or level of complexity for deployment through any channel. This software has been carefully selected, as it facilitates advanced survey creation capabilities, survey building with complex logic, and enables collaboration and efficiency through one platform at all stages of design, implementation & delivery.

The questionnaire was divided into 3 main sections as follows:

- **Section A:** Voting behaviour in the 2022 election and political party affiliations;
- **Section B:** Political outlook and political representation which includes questions around Northern Ireland's position in the UK, Irish Unification and the Northern Ireland Protocol; and,
- **Section C:** Demographics.

Data collection

Survey implementation

All fieldwork was undertaken using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), by Ipsos highly trained interviewers. In addition, interviewing was only permitted in participant's homes, and due to the sensitive nature of the survey, no interviewing took place in public or on street.

COVID19 measures fieldwork measures

During the course of a survey, a number of COVID-19 precautionary measures were exercised by interviewers. Interviewers were required to continue to wear face masks when interviewing in home. They were also required to sanitise their hands regularly when in field and wipe their tablet with antibacterial wipes.

Health risk assessments were asked at the beginning of the script and interviewers continuously conducted agile risk assessments ensuring that there is good ventilation when in home, and practiced social distancing by retaining a distance of 2 metres from the participant and limiting any contact with other household members/touch points in the home.

Undertaking fieldwork

Interviewing commenced on Friday 6th May 2022, the day immediately following the 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly Election. 2,000 interviews were conducted in total, between 6th May and 14th September 2022.

The average length of the interview in field was 43 minutes. 33 outliers have been removed from this average.

Fieldwork management

The Northern Ireland Fieldwork Operations team were responsible for all aspects of data collection. This included preparing the briefing notes for interviewers, allocation and scheduling of work and monitoring of progress.

The Head of Fieldwork Operations, along with a team of Executives and Supervisors oversaw the running of data collection, allocating work to the interviewers and monitoring progress in their designated areas. The Fieldwork Operations team were in daily contact with interviewers in the field to monitor progress, identify any issues and responding to those issues as they emerged.

In addition, we utilised Ipsos' survey management system which manages sample allocation, check digit calculation, allocation to interviewers, collation and preparation of progress reports using data from the field department and identification of discrepancies.

Quality checking of interviews

Validations on completed interviews are always carried out by Ipsos' Fieldwork Team using specially trained validators working from the Northern Ireland virtual Telephone Centre. Throughout the fieldwork period 10% of all completed interviews were validated. In addition, details in the survey responses to the survey were checked and validated against recorded responses for these interviews. No errors in the recorded data were identified during this process and no quality issues were uncovered by the validations.

Data preparation

As described earlier in this report, the survey data was captured through the CAPI software package, UNICOM Intelligence. The data from all the interviews was collated together into one database with both numerical data and text from the open-ended questions. The data was exported into the statistical software package SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and was fully cleaned and validated according to an agreed data processing specification.

As would be common practise for a CAPI 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).

Weighting factors were calculated by the QUB research team to account for the differences in the survey population and the general population of Northern Ireland in terms of three demographic variables (gender, age and location) and vote choice in the 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly Election. Each data entry point within the QUB datafile subsequently has weighting factors attributed, that when applied to the dataset, will weight the data accordingly to ensure research findings are representative of the general adult population in Northern Ireland.

Our standards and accreditations

Ipsos' standards and accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a "right first time" approach throughout our organisation.



ISO 20252

This is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911/MRQSA and incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). It covers the five stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partnership

By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos endorses and supports the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commits to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation. We were the first company to sign up to the requirements and self-regulation of the MRS Code. More than 350 companies have followed our lead.



ISO 9001

This is the international general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994, we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



ISO 27001

This is the international standard for information security, designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018

Ipsos is required to comply with the UK GDPR and the UK DPA. It covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.



HMG Cyber Essentials

This is a government-backed scheme and a key deliverable of the UK's National Cyber Security Programme. Ipsos was assessment-validated for Cyber Essentials certification in 2016. Cyber Essentials defines a set of controls which, when properly implemented, provide organisations with basic protection from the most prevalent forms of threat coming from the internet.



Fair Data

Ipsos is signed up as a "Fair Data" company, agreeing to adhere to 10 core principles. The principles support and complement other standards such as ISOs, and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

For more information

3 Thomas More Square
London
E1W 1YW

t: +44 (0)20 3059 5000

www.ipsos.com/en-uk
<http://twitter.com/IpsosUK>

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