

**University of Liverpool**

**NI General Election Survey 2019**

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**Contacts details:** Prof. Peter Shirlow [p.shirlow@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:p.shirlow@liverpool.ac.uk) or Prof. Jon Tonge  
[j.tonge@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:j.tonge@liverpool.ac.uk)

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## NI General Election Survey 2019

### 1. Introduction

In December 2019, Social Market Research (SMR) was appointed to conduct the 2019 Northern Ireland General Election Survey. The survey was commissioned by Professor Jon Tonge of the University of Liverpool (project lead) on behalf of academics from the following universities: Institute of Irish Studies (Liverpool), University of Leeds, The London School of Economics and Political Science, and the University of Aberdeen. The survey was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC<sup>i</sup>). The project includes those who support remaining in the union, reunifying with Ireland and those who are undecided. The survey is based on a representative sample of Northern Ireland electors aged 18+. In total, interviews were conducted **with 2003 electors representing each of the 18 Northern Ireland parliamentary constituencies**. The survey was administered on a face-to-face basis in respondent's homes using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing or CAPI. 3.1.1 Sampling.

Given the importance of the survey, and the contribution of the survey results to improving understanding of electoral trends, it was essential that the sampling methodology produced survey results representative of all Northern Ireland electors. To this end, the survey was conducted using quota sampling with tightly controlled quotas applied for: age; sex; and, social class (Table 1). The sample was also stratified by area of residence. Table 1 presents the sample profile compared with known population parameters and shows that sample estimates are broadly in line with census estimates.

**Table 1: Sample Profile**

	<b>Sample</b>	<b>NI Population</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	52	51
Male	48	49
<b>Age</b>		
18-29	20	21
30-44	27	25
45-64	33	33
65+	20	21
<b>Social Class</b>		
ABC1	47	49
C2DE	53	51

## 2. Executive Summary

### 2.1 Truth and Reconciliation

- Since 2017 there has been a significant shift in favour of a truth and reconciliation commission. In 2017 31.5% agreed/strongly agreed. This has now risen to 45.7%.
- When removing those who did not express an opinion the share who wish for a truth and reconciliation commission rises to 73.6%.
- Sinn Féin's (SF) share of voters who support a truth and reconciliation commission has risen from 33.4% to 58.1%. When removing those who did not express an opinion the share who wish for a truth and reconciliation commission rises to 90.4%.
- Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) share of voters who support a truth and reconciliation commission has risen from 34.3% to 49.1%. When removing those who did not express an opinion the share who wish for a truth and reconciliation commission rises to 73.4%.

### 2.2 Issue Based Politics

- The two most important issues were Brexit and the NHS. Combined, they captured 46.4% of all responses regarding the most important election issues. Renewable Heating Initiative (RHI) was next at 9.1%
- 62.8% would now vote to remain in the EU. A mere 10.6% said they would not vote in a 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum.
- Regarding checks on goods travelling between Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the East-West border), 68.5% of those who stated an opinion believed that it was **unacceptable**.
- Regarding checks on goods travelling across the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland (the North-South border), 68.5% of those who stated an opinion believed that it was **unacceptable**.
- A mere 26.3% agreed or strongly agreed that immigration is good for the economy and society.
- 69.5% of Catholics, compared to 10.7% of Protestants and 22.4% of the non-religious support an Irish Language Act.
- 72.1% supported the right to an abortion in some circumstances. In addition, 17.5% stated that they did not know. Younger people are significantly more supportive.
- The growth in liberal attitudes highlights that a profound divide between younger people and their parents and grandparents continues. SF and DUP voters are less socially liberal and inter-community minded than most other groups.

- Non-voters and those who do not state a religion also tend to be more socially progressive. Younger Catholics and Protestants, especially non-voters, generally agree on social and inter-community issues.
- This shift and agreements across the community divide has largely been ignored.
- 56.1% of SF and 47.5% of DUP voters would prefer to send their children to an own-religion school. SF are the only group with a majority preferring own religion schooling.
- A mere 18.6% of young Catholics non-voters and 14.8% of young Protestant non-voters agreed (aged 18-44). Overall 33.4% agreed that they would prefer to send their children to an own-religion school.
- When asked 'would you mind if a close relative was to marry someone from a different religion?' 61.7% stated that they 'would not mind'.
- 83.7% of younger Protestant non-voters and 69.0% of younger Catholics non-voters agreed. Only 54.5% of DUP and 47.7% of SF voters agreed.
- On whether 'it was right to make same sex marriage legal in Northern Ireland', 51.4% agreed.
- Again, younger Protestant non-voters were most supportive at 73.7%. 62.7% of their Catholics equivalent agreed. 59.9% aged 18-45 compared to 43.7% aged 45+ agreed.
- 51.6% of SF compared to 42.6% of DUP voters agree to marriage equality.
- Mixed or non-religious marriages and relationships are growing and more common among young people. Nearly a quarter (23.0%) of 18-25-year olds are living with a partner/married to someone from another or no religion.

### **2.3 Union of Unity?**

- Between 2010 and 2019 the share of Protestants who support remaining in the union grew from 90.3% to 94.5%.
- In the same period the share of Catholics supportive of remaining in the union declined from 17.8% to 13.6%.
- More voters agree (40.3%) than disagree (30.9%) that the reunification of Ireland will happen.
- 76.9% of non-voters who stated a preference are pro-remain within the UK. In 2019 non-voters numbered c500k. Unionism has a significant problem in not attracting pro-union members of the electorate to vote compared to nationalists and republican parties.
- The electoral success of the SDLP has changed their voter profile since 2017. The SDLP in gaining votes, primarily in Foyle and South Belfast, have ended up with a 22.6% decline in their voters who wished to remain in the UK.

- In parallel, Alliance gained 18.6% of their vote from former DUP voters and the share of their vote that is pro-union grew by 14.4%. Those who voted against remaining in the EU grew between 2017 and 2019 by 18.6% although most of their voters remain pro-Remain.

### **3. Voting Preference/Practice**

#### **Voted 2019:**

- 46.6% of those who did not vote in 2017 voted either DUP or Alliance in 2019 (Table 5).

#### **Voting by Age:**

- 30.7% of all respondents believed the voting age should be lowered to 16, compared to 48% who opposed.
- The majority of those aged 18-29 did not vote (52.6%).
- At least 70%+ of other age groups voted (Table 9).
- Table 14 shows that roughly two-thirds of young (aged 18-25) Protestants who identify as unionist and young Catholics who identify as Catholics voted.
- Only a third of those who are neither unionist or nationalist voted.
- 55.9% of 18-29-year olds who stated an identity preference are neither nationalist (23.6%) or unionist (20.3%).
- In sum, most young people who do not vote are generally from a socially progressive group and do not subscribe to being unionist or nationalist.
- 18-29 year olds are without doubt critical to any future border poll. At present, among those who do not state an identity preference 51.1% support remaining in the UK, 26.1% support the reunification of Ireland and 22.7% do not know.
- Around two-thirds of young Catholics and Protestants aged 18-44 who do not vote are neither unionist nor nationalist. Again, a significant share of young people who are generally socially progressive are not attracted to vote.

#### **Voting by Qualification:**

- Since 2017, there has been a 15.2% growth in those who hold a degree and who vote (Table 10). Those with degrees are more likely to vote than those who do not hold a degree.

#### **Identity Preference and Voting:**

- Since 2010, there has been a growth in all sections who are either unionist, nationalist or neither who vote.
- Although 49.1% who did not vote in 2019 are neither unionist or nationalist.
- Over the same period there has been a small growth in 18-45- year olds who are unionist, and a small decline in those who are nationalist or neither. Among 45+ a significant decline in those who are unionist and a small increase in those who are nationalist and neither (Table 12 and 13).
- Among those who are neither nationalist nor unionist the majority stated a preference to stay in the UK.
- Overall 28.4% state they are unionist and 24.6% nationalist<sup>ii</sup>. The largest group at 39.6% are neither unionist nor nationalist.
- Table 3 highlights the dominant role that religion plays upon voting practice. Only the Alliance Party attracted a near equal share of voters by religion.
- Among those who did not vote, 16.4% did not state a religion, 38.8% were Catholics and 55.2% stated that they were Protestants or other faiths (Table 4).
- Table 5 indicates that Alliance and the DUP gained nearly half of those who did not vote in the previous Westminster election. This supported a wider trend in new voters or returning voters to the Alliance Party.
- As shown in Table 6, SF (92.9%), DUP (87.8%) and SDLP (86.6%) generally maintained votes from those who had voted for them in 2017.
- The UUP maintained 66.9% of their previous voters but gained 15.4% of their total vote from previous DUP voters.

### **Alliance Party:**

- The Alliance Party had the most interesting electoral performance in that they gained most of their vote from other political parties.
- Notable is their share of those who had voted DUP (18.6%) or SF (11.6%) in 2017.
- 16.4% of their total vote came from those who did not vote in 2017.
- It had been assumed that they had gained more votes from previous UUP voters.
- The Alliance Party continues to grow in terms of vote share.
- It is the party with the most mixed share of voters by religion (Table 3).
- As shown in Table 6, they were the only Party to capture a share of their vote from all other parties.

We here present the findings regarding voting practice regarding the five main political parties who received 90.6% of all votes.

The survey was within -0.1% to 3.0% of voting recorded and the share of the vote received in the 2019 Westminster election (Table 2).

**Table 2: Party Voted for Compared to Actual Vote<sup>iii</sup>**

Party	Survey	Actual Vote	Difference
DUP	29.8	30.6	+0.8
Sinn Fein	22.9	22.8	-0.1
SDLP	14.1	14.9	+0.8
UUP	10.0	11.7	+1.7
Alliance	13.8	16.8	+3.0

**Table 3: Those who voted by religion**

Party	No Religion/Catholics	Protestant and other religions
DUP	2.4	97.6
UUP	5.1	94.9
Alliance	48.9	51.1
SDLP	89.5	10.5
Sinn Fein	97.6	2.4
Did not Vote	55.3	44.7

**Table 4: Voting and non-voting by religion**

	Voted	Did not Vote
No religion <sup>iv</sup>	42.1	57.9
Catholics	71.5	28.5
Protestant and other religions	71.8	28.2

**Table 5: Vote shares among those who did not vote in 2017 but voted in 2019 by Political Party<sup>v</sup>**



	DUP	SF	SDLP	UUP	Alliance
<b>% share</b>	22.5	12.9	12.9	11.2	24.1

**Table 6: Voters by Party compared to 2017<sup>vi</sup>.**

	DUP 2019	SF 2019	SDLP 2019	UUP 2019	Alliance 2019
DUP 2017	89.1	0.0	0.5	15.9	18.6
SF 2017	0.0	94.4	15.1	0.0	11.8
SDLP 2017	0.0	1.9	77.2	1.5	5.4
UUP 2017	3.6	0.2	0.0	68.9	2.7
Alliance 2017	1.7	0.6	2.7	3.0	40.1
Did not Vote 2017	23.5	2.6	3.6	6.0	12.6
Other 2017	1.5	0.0	0.5	4.5	8.2
<b>% Change 2017-19 Voted to Leave EU</b>	-1.5	+0.9	+4.0	+0.9	+18.6
<b>% Disagree Marriage Equality</b>	39.8	28.8	17.2	32.0	17.0
<b>% Change 2017-19 Remain in UK</b>	+1.0	+5.3	-22.6	+1.5	+14.4

**Table 7: Voters by age group**

Age	DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance
18-29	11.6	17.7	16.2	16.7	15.9
30-44	27.4	25.2	20.6	26.0	31.2
45-64	36.6	36.8	37.5	37.0	33.3
65+	24.3	20.3	25.7	20.3	19.6

**Table 8: Share of all voters by age**

Age	DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance
18-29	3.5	4.1	1.6	2.4	2.2
30-44	8.2	5.7	2.0	3.7	4.4
45-64	10.9	8.4	3.8	5.2	4.5
65+	7.2	4.7	2.6	2.9	2.7

**Table 9: Voters and Non-Voters by Age**

Age	Voted	Did Not Vote
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18-29	48.4	51.6
30-44	72.0	28.0
45-64	77.0	23.0
65+	71.1	28.9

**Table 10: Turnout by those holding a degree 2010-2019**

	<b>Degree</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>67.0</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>67.6</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>78.5</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>82.2</b>

**Table 11: Voted by Gender**

	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>57.8</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>60.3</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>60.1</b>	<b>60.3</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>63.8</b>

**Table 12: Turnout by political identity**

	<b>Unionist</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Nationalist</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>81.2</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>83.7</b>

**Table 13: Identity Preference Change 2010 to 2019 by Age<sup>vii</sup>**

	<b>Unionist</b>	<b>Nationalist</b>	<b>Neither</b>
<b>2010 18-45</b>	24.3	26.3	49.4
<b>2010 45+</b>	44.8	21.6	33.6
<b>2019 18-45</b>	25.1	26.0	48.9
<b>2019 45+</b>	35.7	27.0	37.3
<b>% Change 18-45</b>	+0.8	-0.3	-0.5
<b>% Change 45+</b>	-9.1	+5.4	+3.7

**Table 14: 18-25-year olds by Identity Preference and Voting/Non-voting<sup>viii</sup>**

	<b>Younger Protestant Voters</b>	<b>Younger Protestant non-voters</b>	<b>Younger Catholics Voters</b>	<b>Younger Catholics non-voters</b>
Unionist	64.5	29.6	0.0	0.0
Nationalist	0.0	0.0	68.5	28.7
Neither	32.2	63.7	25.4	64.3

#### **4. The Institutions**

- Table 15 shows that 81.4% supported the NIA and Executives restoration.
- Regarding ‘legislation should require support from a majority of Unionist and Nationalist Assembly members’, the majority (55.4%) agreed compared to 7.6% who opposed (Table 16).
- About ‘devolved Power Sharing v Direct Rule’, 43.8% support devolution compared to 15.1% who support Direct Rule (Table 17).

**Table 15: The Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive should be restored?**

Strongly Agree/Agree	81.4%
Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know	15.4
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	2.0

**Table 16: Legislation should require support from a majority of Unionist and Nationalist Assembly members?**

Strongly Support/Support	55.4
Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know	35.5
Strongly Oppose/Oppose	7.6

**Table 17: Devolved power-sharing between parties is better than direct rule from Westminster?**

Strongly Agree/Agree	43.8
Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know	40.0
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	15.1

## **5. Unity or Reunification**

### **The Sample:**

- As shown in Table 18, 53.5% of the sample support remaining in the UK. This rises to 61% of voters and 65% of the sample when excluding do not knows, other preferences and refused options.

### **Don't Knows:**

- What is most interesting is that 30.9% of non-voters do not know what the long-term constitutional future of NI should be.
- This is twice the sample average. Their ambiguity may change, and like young people they are critical to the decision to call a border poll.

### **What should be long-term policy for NI by religion?**

- Between 2010 and 2019 the share of Protestants who support remaining in the union grew from 90.3% to 94.5%. In the same period the share of Catholics who support remaining in the union declined from 17.8% to 13.6%.
- Regarding those who are not religious (Table 21) nearly twice as many support remaining within the union than support re-unification.
- 63.1% of those who do not know what the long-term constitutional future should be (15.2% of the sample) are Catholics. If they shifted either way, they would have a significant impact upon a border poll.

### **What should be long-term policy for NI by voters and non-voters?**

- As Table 20 indicates, when broken down by voters and non-voters who stated a preference, 29.5% of those who support remaining in the union do not vote compared to 16.9% of those who seek reunification.
- This shows that those who wish for the reunification of Ireland are more likely to vote. In terms of a border poll, election results may be a less accurate a guide to the desire for reunification especially when it is considered that 76.9% of non-voters who stated a preference are pro-union. In 2019, non-voters numbered c500k. Unionism has a particular problem in not attracting pro-union members of the electorate to vote.

### **What should be long-term policy for NI by party voted for?**

- Over 90% of UUP and DUP voters support remaining in the union compared to lower shares for SF (81.1%) and SDLP (70.3%) voters.

- Alliance voters are split, with 58.8% for the union and 25.6% for reunification.
- 29.1% of SDLP voters are undecided or pro-union.

**It has become more likely that NI will eventually join the Republic of Ireland by party voted for?**

- More voters agree (40.3%) than disagree (30.9%) that reunification will happen.
- As shown in Table 23, 59.7% of non-voters neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know.
- Obviously, any shift in those who are ambiguous will have electoral implications.
- When considering voters by party, 21.2% of DUP voters believe there will be a united Ireland.
- Nearly half of the generally pro-union Alliance voters agree (Table 24).

**It has become more likely that NI will eventually join the Republic of Ireland by age:**

- As indicated in Table 25, there is a near three way split across the electorate regarding agreement, disagreement and not knowing.
- However, over half (53.2%) of 18-25-year olds do not know or express an opinion.

**Generational Change:**

- In terms of a border poll, surveys and election results are critical.
- Elections clearly indicate trends but are only reflective of those who vote.
- Surveys bring a capacity to examine the constitutional preference of non-voters.
- In 1998, Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement referendum turnout was 81.1%. This fell to 69.8% in the subsequent election for the NIA.
- The survey suggests that if a similar turnout was achieved and non-voters engaged, then the result would be to remain within the union. This is based on the finding that most non-voters are presently pro-union.
- Unionist political parties do not capture the share of the potential pro-union vote compared to the SDLP and SF. This may be due to the pro-union non-voters holding more progressive social views.
- When examining Westminster election results, we find that the DUP/UUP share rose by 2.1% while the SDLP/SF share fell by 4.3%. Since 2010, 91,653 voters have gone to Alliance. The vote for other unionists such as Sylvia Hermon, UKIP and TUV has declined by 59,289. Nationalist candidates have gained 9,814 votes.
- What further complicates the reading of election results has been the decline of c8% of those who vote since 1998. Voters, except for Alliance, can be read as highly supportive of their chosen candidates' constitutional position.

- The inclusion of non-voters is critically important in balancing the debate concerning a border poll.
- Brexit and the increasing debate on the constitutional question has led to an increase in Protestants who are pro-union but also a decline in Catholics who were.
- Furthermore, the significant share of the electorate who are undecided or indeed ambiguous indicates that political parties need to win support from non-voters and convert those who have yet to decide. This latter point is critical for nationalists and republicans.

**Table 18: To remain in UK or to reunify with Ireland (2017 and 2019)?**

	Survey	Sample <sup>ix</sup>	Voters <sup>x</sup>	Non-Voters
To remain part of the UK	53.5	65.0	61.5	76.9
To reunify with the rest of Ireland	28.3	35.0	38.5	23.0
Don't Know	15.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Refused	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Survey 2017 to Remain part of the UK	54.9	66.6	63.3	73.2
Survey 2017 to reunify with the rest of Ireland	27.5	33.3	36.6	26.7
<b>% Change remain part of the UK 2017-19</b>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>-1.6</b>	<b>-1.8</b>	<b>+3.7</b>
<b>% Change reunify with Ireland 2017-19</b>	<b>+0.8</b>	<b>+1.7</b>	<b>+1.9</b>	<b>-3.7</b>

**Table 19: What do you think the long-term policy should be voters by Voters and Religion (2010 and 2017)?**

	Share 2010	Protestant	Catholics	Share 2019	Protestant	Catholics
To remain part of the UK	56.0	90.2	17.8	55.5	94.5	13.6
To reunify with the rest of Ireland	34.6	4.2	71.4	34.7	2.3	72.3
Don't Know	1.2	0.6	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.9
Other	7.8	4.8	8.8	6.9	1.6	10.5
Refused	0.4	0.2	0.4	1.0	0.0	1.7
<b>% Change To remain</b>				<b>-0.5</b>	<b>+4.3</b>	<b>-4.2</b>
<b>% Change to Reunify</b>				<b>+0.1</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>+0.9</b>

**Table 20: To Remain in UK or to reunify with Ireland by Voters and Non-Voters who state a preference**

	Voters	Non-Voters	Share of those who stated a constitutional preference who did not vote
To remain part of the UK	70.5	29.5	76.9
To reunify with the rest of Ireland	83.0	16.9	23.0
% Share all Respondents	67.5	31.1	31.1

**Table 21: To remain in UK or to reunify with Ireland by religion or non-religion<sup>xi</sup>**

	No religion	Catholics	Protestant and other faiths	% Share of Survey
To remain part of the UK	9.1	11.1	79.2	53.5
To reunify with the rest of Ireland	4.0	91.5	4.5	28.3
Do not know	18.0	63.1	18.9	15.2

**Table 22: To remain in UK or to reunify with Ireland by Political Party<sup>xii</sup>**

	DUP	SF	Alliance	SDLP	UUP
To remain part of the UK	96.5	10.0	58.8	20.3	94.8
To reunify with the rest of Ireland	1.9	81.1	25.6	70.3	0.7
Do Not Know	0.9	5.8	11.7	8.8	2.2
Other	0.4	2.9	3.7	0.0	2.2



**Table 23: It has become more likely that NI will eventually join the Republic of Ireland <sup>xiii</sup>**

	<b>Voters</b>	<b>Non-Voters</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Agree/Strongly Agree	40.3	21.6	35.3
Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know	25.9	59.7	37.0
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	30.9	17.8	26.4

**Table 24: It has become more likely that NI will eventually join the Irish Republic by Party**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Agree/Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know</b>	<b>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</b>
DUP	21.2	28.9	49.2
Sinn Fein	69.0	22.9	7.4
SDLP	64.5	22.8	12.5
UUP	16.1	22.7	61.0
Alliance	45.5	23.2	31.3

**Table 25: It has become more likely that NI will eventually join the Irish Republic by Age**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Agree/Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know</b>	<b>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</b>
18-25	26.4	53.2	20.3
<b>26-40</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>24.3</b>
<b>41-50</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>
50-60	35.2	32.2	31.1
60+	37.0	34.1	26.9

**Table 26: Electoral Performance Westminster 2010-2019<sup>xiv</sup>**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>% share 2010</b>	<b>% share 2019</b>
DUP/UUP	270847	375596	337251	40.2	42.3
SF/SDLP	282912	334334	300590	42.0	37.7
Alliance	42762	64553	134415	6.3	16.8
Other Nationalist	0	708	9814	n/a	1.2
PBP/Greens	6478	12961	9492	0.9	1.4
Other Unionist	68781	23325	7120	10.2	0.9

## **6. Economy and Society**

### **Marriage Equality**

- 51.4% agreed or strongly agreed that it was right to make same sex marriage legal compared to 23.7% who disagreed or strongly disagreed
- As shown in Table 27 50.6% voters compared to 57.3% of non-voters support marriage equality.
- Those who tended to be most in favour were aged under 40 (64.5%).
- Only those aged 60+ had less than a 50% share who disagreed (Table 28).
- The highest level of support was among those who were not religious (62%) compared to around half of those who stated a faith.
- Table 29 shows that a near equal share between Protestants and Catholics agree with marriage equality.

### **Issues of Most Importance**

- The two most important issues were Brexit and the NHS, which captured 46.4% of all responses and which may indicate a growing desire for issues-based politics. 9.1% stated RHI.

### **Mixed Relationships**

- Table 31 shows that nearly a quarter (23.0%) of 18-25-year olds are living with a partner or married from another or no religion.
- This compares to 13.0% of 51-60s and 10.2% of 60+.
- When asked ‘...if you mind if a close relative was to marry someone from a different religion’ 61.7% stated that they would not mind.
- Non-voters were more supportive, especially younger Protestant non-voters, at 83.7%. Only 47.7% of SF voters stated that they would not mind.

### **Integrated Education**

- Regarding ‘if you were deciding where to send your children to school....?’ we find only SF voters produce a majority (56.1%) who agree with own religion school.
- DUP voters are next highest on 47.5%.
- Those who do not vote or who are younger had below average shares regarding this issue.

### **Immigration good for economy and society?**

- A mere 26.3% agreed or strongly agreed that immigration is good for the economy and society.
- 44.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 46% of Catholics and Protestants disagreed.
- Overall 50.4% of voters disagreed (Table 35).

## **Abortion**

- Regarding the question ‘which of these come closest to what you think should be the law on abortion for Northern Ireland?’, 72.1% supported the right to an abortion under a range of circumstances.
- In addition, 17.5% stated that they did not know.
- Of those who stated a preference around half supported ‘only when a mother’s life was in danger’.
- Around a quarter agreed to ‘up to 12 weeks of pregnancy’.
- Non-voters were nearly 3 times more likely (15.2%) than voters to support up to 28 weeks (Table 36).
- Those who did not state a faith were more supportive of abortion at 28 weeks (Table 37).
- As shown in Table 38, the issue of abortion is linked to age.
- Those aged 45+ were more supportive if a mother’s life was in danger.
- Those aged under 45 showed higher levels of support regarding up to 12 to 28 weeks.
- Those aged 18-29 were in particular more supportive up to and post 12 weeks of pregnancy (Table 38).
- Women (9.2%) compared to men (5.4%) were more supportive of abortion up to 28 weeks.

## **Brexit**

- Table 40 shows that 62.8% would vote to remain in the EU.
- A mere 10.6% said they would not vote (Table 40).
- Regarding checks on goods travelling between Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the East-West border), 68.5% of those who stated an opinion believed that it was unacceptable (Table 41).
- The same share stated that checks on goods travelling across the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland (the North-South border) was also unacceptable.

## **Irish Language Act**

- Responses to ‘there should be an Irish Language Act?’ remains linked to religious affiliation.
- 69.5% of Catholics agreed.
- 10.7% of Protestants and 22.4% of the non-religious agreed (Table 43).

**Economic Prosperity is growing in NI?**

- Around 40% of all faiths and none agreed.
- Those mostly likely to disagree were Protestants and other faiths (33.0%) (Table 44).

**Academic transfer tests and selection for schools should stop?**

- There is a near equal split by faith that is also reflected across the political parties (Table 45).

**Table 27: It was right to make same sex marriage legal<sup>xv</sup>?**

	<b>Voter</b>	<b>Non-Voter</b>
Yes	50.6	57.3
No	29.0	29.0
Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know	20.3	13.5

**Table 28: It was right to make same sex marriage legal by age?**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Agree/Strongly Agree with marriage equality</b>
18-25	64.5
26-40	60.4
41-50	54.0
50-60	51.8
60+	41.3

**Table 29: It was right to make same sex marriage legal by religion**

	<b>Agree/Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know</b>	<b>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</b>
No religion	62.6	20.7	15.5
Catholics	53.6	25.0	20.4
Protestant and other faiths	47.9	21.5	29.2

**Table 30: Which issues are most important?**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>% Share</b>
Brexit	23.4
NHS	23.0
RHI	9.1
Employment	6.6
Northern Ireland's place in UK	6.3
Education	4.9
Future of Assembly and Power Sharing	4.7
Irish Unity	3.5
Immigration	3.1
Abortion	2.6
Equality	2.5
Crime	2.1
Bias against my community	1.8
Irish Language Act	1.6
Environment	1.3
Welfare	1.2
Poverty	0.9
Housing	0.6
Integration of Communities	0.3

**Table 31: Mixed relationships by Age**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Single Religion Relationship</b>	<b>Mixed/No religion Relationship</b>
18-25	77.0	23.0
26-40	80.3	19.7
41-50	78.9	21.1
51-60	87.0	13.0
60+	89.8	10.2

**Table 32: If you were deciding where to send your children to school....<sup>xvi</sup>**

	<b>Own Religion Only</b>
Sinn Fein Voters	56.1
DUP Voters	47.5
Younger Catholics Voters	44.2
Older Voters	42.2
Voters	40.7
Younger Protestant Voters	39.3
Younger Voters	38.6
45+	37.1
<b>Sample Average</b>	<b>33.4</b>
18-45	29.4
Older Non-Voters	22.7
Non-Voters	18.6
Younger Catholics Non-Voters	18.6
Younger Non-Voters	15.6
Younger Protestant Non-Voters	14.8

**Table 33: Would you mind if a close relative was to marry someone from a different religion?**

	<b>Would Not Mind</b>
Younger Protestant Non-Voters	83.7
Non-Voters	75.1
Older Non-Voters	72.7
Younger Catholics Non-Voters	69.0
<b>Sample Average</b>	<b>61.7</b>
Younger Voters	59.5
18-45	59.5
Younger Protestant Voters	59.1
Younger Non-Voters	59.1
45+	58.1
Voters	56.3
Younger Catholics Voters	55.8
DUP Voters	54.5
Older Voters	54.0
Sinn Fein Voters	47.7

**Table 34: It was right to make same sex marriage legal in Northern Ireland?**

	<b>Agree/Strongly Agree</b>
Younger Protestant Non-Voters	73.3
Younger Non-Voters	65.2
Younger Catholics Voters	62.7
18-45	59.9
Younger Voters	57.9
Non-Voters	57.0
Younger Protestant Voters	55.4
Younger Catholics Non-Voters	55.0
Sinn Fein Voters	51.6
<b>Sample Average</b>	<b>51.4</b>
Voters	49.7
Older Non-Voters	45.8
45+	43.7
Older Voters	43.7
DUP Voters	42.6

**Table 35: Immigration is good for economy and society**

	<b>Agreed/Strongly Agreed</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>
Catholics	25.1	27.7	46.7
Voter	25.6	23.8	50.4
Protestants and Other Faiths	26.3	25.3	46.9
Non-Voter	29.7	35.5	34.7
No Religion	30.8	39.5	29.3

**Table 36: Which of these come closest to what you think should be the law on abortion for Northern Ireland Voters and Non-Voters?**

	<b>Voters</b>	<b>Non-Voters</b>
Allowed only where the mother's life is in danger	50.0	40.9
Allowed up to 12 weeks of pregnancy	27.8	24.1
Allowed up to 24 weeks of pregnancy	6.3	8.7
Allowed up to 28 weeks of pregnancy	4.3	15.2
Other (please specify) <sup>xvii</sup>	11.3	10.9



**Table 37: Which of these come closest to what you think should be the law on abortion for Northern Ireland by Religion**

	No Religion	Catholics	Protestants and Other Faiths
Allowed only where the mother's life is in danger	34.9	52.7	47.2
Allowed up to 12 weeks of pregnancy	26.1	27.9	25.9
Allowed up to 24 weeks of pregnancy	11.9	6.7	4.9
Allowed up to 28 weeks of pregnancy	14.2	5.5	6.9
Other (please specify)	12.6	6.9	14.9

**Table 38: Which of these come closest to what you think should be the law on abortion for Northern Ireland by Age**

	18-29	30-44	45-65	66+
Allowed only where the mother's life is in danger	37.0	43.0	49.7	60.1
Allowed up to 12 weeks of pregnancy	27.2	30.9	28.3	18.5
Allowed up to 24 weeks of pregnancy	9.1	6.2	7.0	5.5
Allowed up to 28 weeks of pregnancy	15.6	8.9	4.5	2.0
Other (please specify)	10.8	10.7	10.3	13.6

**Table 39: Which of these come closest to what you think should be the law on abortion for Northern Ireland by gender**

	Male	Female
Allowed only where the mother's life is in danger	52.2	43.1
Allowed up to 12 weeks of pregnancy	24.3	29.1
Allowed up to 24 weeks of pregnancy	7.8	6.2
Allowed up to 28 weeks of pregnancy	5.4	9.2
Other (please specify)	10.1	12.2

**Table 40: How would you vote if there was another referendum on Brexit?<sup>xviii</sup>**

I would vote to Remain in the EU	46.3
I would vote to Leave the EU	27.4
I would not vote	10.6
Don't Know	10.3
Refused	5.5
I would vote to Remain in EU (excluding do not know/refused/would not vote)	62.8
I would vote to Leave the EU (excluding do not know/refused/would not vote)	37.1

**Table 41: Checks on goods travelling between Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the East-West border)**

Acceptable	21.9
Unacceptable	47.7
(Don't know)	27.7
Refused	2.7
Acceptable (excluding do not knows/refused)	31.4
Unacceptable (excluding do not knows/refused)	68.5

**Table 42: Checks on goods travelling between Northern Ireland and Ireland (the North- South border)**

Acceptable	21.9
Unacceptable	47.7
(Don't know)	27.7
Acceptable (excluding do not knows)	31.4
Unacceptable (excluding do not knows)	68.5

**Table 44: There should be an Irish Language Act**

	Yes	No	Neither Agree/Disagree/Do not Know
Catholics	69.5	2.5	26.0
Protestant and other faiths	10.7	58.9	28.9
No Religion	22.4	32.3	43.6

**Table 44: Economic prosperity is growing in Northern Ireland**

	<b>Strongly Agree/Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree/Do Not Know</b>	<b>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</b>
Catholics	40.2	29.5	29.4
Protestant and other faiths	37.4	28.5	33.0
No Religion	37.3	38.0	23.0

**Table 45: Academic transfer tests and selection for schools should stop**

	<b>Strongly Agree/Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree/Disagree/Do Not Know</b>	<b>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</b>
Catholics	38.7	29.4	31.4
Protestant and other faiths	35.0	23.2	41.0
No Religion	36.2	28.2	34.5

## 7. Dealing with the Past

### Only innocent peoples can be called victims of the Troubles:

- Overall 54.4% of the total sample agreed/strongly agreed.
- Unionists (UUP 80.1% and DUP 72.3%) were those most likely to concur.
- SF voters at 41.0% were the least likely to agree (Table 46).

### Those who admit to carrying out acts of violence during the Troubles should be given an amnesty?

- A mere 14.3% of all respondents and 16.8% of those who voted agreed.
- The highest level of agreement was within SF (21.3%) and the SDLP 28.1% (Table 47).

### There should be a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to look at all deeds committed during the Troubles?

- As noted, this question has led to one of the major shifts since the survey conducted in 2017. In 2017, 31% agreed or strongly agreed. This has now risen to 45.7%.
- If we exclude those who did not agree or disagree, 73.6% support a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (Table 48).

**Table 46: Only innocent peoples can be called victims of the Troubles**

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
UUP	80.1	13.2	6.6
DUP	72.3	16.8	10.9
Alliance	61.4	23.3	15.3
SDLP	58.9	25.0	16.1
<b>Sample All Parties</b>	<b>58.9</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>15.7</b>
Survey Sample	<b>54.4</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>14.1</b>
SF	41.0	33.9	25.2

**Table 47: Those who admit to carrying out acts of violence during the Troubles should be given an amnesty**

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know/Neither Agree or Disagree
UUP	10.3	22.1	67.6
Alliance	11.6	22.2	66.1
DUP	12.1	32.2	55.7
<b>Sample All Parties</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>51.8</b>
<b>Survey Sample</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>48.5</b>	<b>31.7</b>
SF	21.3	34.2	44.5
SDLP	28.1	28.6	43.2

**Table 48: There should be a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to look at all deeds committed during the Troubles**

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Excluding Do Not Knows/Undecided	Agree/Strongly Agree 2017 Survey
SF	58.1	35.8	80.4	33.4
SDLP	52.6	34.4	80.1	35.7
DUP	49.1	33.0	73.1	34.3
<b>Sample All Parties</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>75.5</b>	<b>41.4</b>
<b>Survey Sample</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>73.6</b>	<b>31.5</b>
UUP	41.9	32.4	61.9	30.7
Alliance	40.2	34.9	61.7	32.2

<sup>i</sup> Study Rationale and Objectives: Northern Ireland has been experiencing profound and fast-moving events since the last UK general election in 2017. The collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly in January 2017, the implications of Brexit and the current crisis with power-sharing make the 2019 study vitally important. These matters are profoundly important to the people of Northern Ireland, especially when confronted with the new challenges of BREXIT, and fears and uncertainties concerning the

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possible re-imposition of border controls and customs on the island. It is proposed that the current study will address the following:

- Implications of BREXIT (UKEXIT) for Northern Ireland.
- Borders: What if any kind of borders and customs arrangements are likely to be necessary?
- 'Border poll': Should there be a constitutional referendum on the status of NI?
- Constitutional futures: What are the likely constitutional impacts on NI of UKEXIT and the possible independence of Scotland?
- Current crisis with power-sharing. After 10 years of mostly successful power-sharing, the institutions collapsed in 2017 and have only recently been restored. What is the public's view of this?
- Rule Changes? Some suggest that reforms and amendments to the Belfast Agreement are necessary (community designation, petitions of concern, etc.)

Given the above factors, and the need for comparability with previous surveys in the series, the 2019 study sought:

- To provide a comprehensive study of how the electorate voted in the General Election in N Ireland;
- To analyse the basis of the voting behaviour and party choices of the Northern Ireland electorate;
- To explore the extent to which, if at all, the sectarian / confessional ethno religious divide in Northern Ireland politics has been breached a) by voting for candidates from the 'rival' community and b) by the growth of non-unionist/non-nationalist parties such as Alliance;
- to examine the degree to which long-standing divides are being superseded in salience by 'normal' political concerns of economic performance, the delivery of health and educational services, crime and immigration;
- To assess where voters place the political parties on a range of political and valence issues;
- To analyse the perceptions of voters in terms of the extent of powers that should be devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive;
- To explore the electorate's views on a range of post-conflict issues;
- To study the social and political priorities of electors with devolution embedded but confronted by local and national financial constraints.

ii 7.4% refused or did not know.

iii Excludes 9.4% refused or who voted for other parties or candidates.

iv No religion was 8.7% of sample.

v Excluding those who voted for other parties/candidates or did not respond.

vi Do not know and refused removed

vii Do not know and refused removed

viii Total sample.

ix Excluding don't know, other and refused.

x Excluding do not know etc.

xi Excludes those who refused

xii Excludes those refused

xiii Total sample.

xiv 2019 column total 100%+ due to rounding

xv Excludes those who refused

xvi Younger mean 18-44

xvii 8.1% or 162 respondents expressed other values. The majority related to sexual assault/rape and foetal abnormality/quality of life of child. Others mention choice woman's right, as long as safe and performed by medical staff, depending on circumstances, all cases are different and other timescales other than asked in survey.

xviii Excludes those who refused.