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NORTHERN IRELAND TODAY

a survey of public attitudes
to life in Northern Ireland

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An Ulster Television Survey
conducted by Opinion Research Centre
for "Counterpoint"

February 1978

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Ulster Television's current affairs programme, "Counterpoint", commissioned Opinion Research Centre to conduct this survey about people's attitudes to life in Northern Ireland today. The purpose behind the survey was to collect an up-to-date measurement of what people in Northern Ireland think about a range of aspects of life, which directly affect the population today.

This report gives details of the major results of the survey, and a summary of the main findings.

1.2. Survey Method

The technical appendix at the back of this report contains full details of the survey design, together with a copy of the questionnaire used. In brief, however, the survey is based on the results of interviews with 1009 people aged 16 and over resident in Northern Ireland.

The interviews were carried out in a sample of twenty five D.C.A.'s spread throughout Northern Ireland in proportion to the population. Within each sample point interviewers carried out personal interviews with a representative sample of the population of the area. All interviews were carried out in respondents' homes and were completed between 3rd January 1978 and 15th January 1978.

2. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- 2.1. More than eight people out of ten in Northern Ireland feel that they are no better off today than they were a year ago, and half of these actually feel that they are worse off. Nor do they view the future with optimism in this respect. More than six out of ten feel that they will be no better off this time next year, while only 21% think they will be better off.

Allied to this general pessimism is the overwhelming feeling that things are better in the rest of the United Kingdom. Only 6% of the population think that the standard of living in N. Ireland will do better over the next year than elsewhere in the U.K., while 51% think it will do worse. Similarly the vast majority (78%) recognise that the cost of living is higher in N. Ireland than elsewhere in the U.K.

- 2.2. Despite this only about one person in ten feels unhappy about living in N. Ireland these days (those who do attribute it almost universally to the troubles or the economic situation), and only 19% claim to have thought seriously about moving away in the past year. This latter figure may at first sight seem high but it is very easy in an interview situation to claim this while not having really given very serious thought to it. Nevertheless it is interesting that the figure rises considerably to 33% among those aged under 35. Those who have considered moving away mainly thought about Great Britain (29%), Canada (22%), Australia/New Zealand (22%) and the U.S.A (12%). Only 3% considered moving to the Republic of Ireland.

- 2.3. Not surprisingly parents in Northern Ireland worry about bringing up their children - as indeed all parents do. However, the fact that only one in five worries "a great

deal" is an indication that most of them have considerable confidence in the province.

On the subject of integrated education, few people (19%) think that there should be separate schools for Protestants and Catholics. Even among the Catholic population, who one might expect to be more in favour of involuntary separation in education, only a quarter favour this approach. However, the great majority who approve of the alternative approach (i.e. parents being able to send their children to any school) do not feel that there should be forced integration. Only 22% support this approach, so the majority are in favour of leaving it up to the parents.

Another educational policy - comprehensive education - failed to receive much support either. Only 24% thought that all children should go to comprehensive schools, with the vast majority wanting parents to have the choice of sending their children to grammar schools, providing they were good enough.

- 2.4. On the political front, few people in Northern Ireland (28%) would like to see the continuation of direct rule. About twice as many would like to see some sort of control over their own affairs. If direct rule were to end, less than one person in ten would like to see complete independence, but 48% would like to have control over all internal affairs including security while still staying within the U.K. A milder form of self control, without control over security, has the support of 24%. Catholics, and SDLP voters, are less clear in their views with roughly a third supporting each possible method of government.

Although power sharing has so far failed to work effectively 63% of the population are still in favour of it, and

significantly 49% of Ulster Unionist supporters also support it, despite contrary indications from the party leadership.

- 2.5. On the whole most people, but particularly Catholics, believe in some sort of special relationship between the North and the South. This is reflected in the almost universal support for extradition of criminals both from South to North and vice versa.

On another legal matter just over half the population (54%) support the use of the death penalty for terrorists found guilty of murder - Catholics however are against it by 61% to 24%. This shows a much milder attitude to capital punishment than in Great Britain.

- 2.6. 38% of the Northern Irish population (and 51% of those living in Greater Belfast) have personally witnessed an act of terrorism. For the most part this has involved buildings being blown up and street rioting, but 5% of the population (8% in Greater Belfast) have seen a member of the public shot, and 4% have seen a member of the security forces shot.

H/ 17722
(- 5)

OPINION RESEARCH CENTRE
30 WELBECK STREET, LONDON W1

(6 - 9)

CARD 1 (10)

NORTHERN IRELAND TODAY

Respondent's Name.....

Address.....

.....Tel. No.....

Interviewer's Name.....

Date of interview.....Length of Interview.....

Accompanied by supervisor

☐

Back Checked

☐

(11)

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

9 0 X Y

Area of Interview (WRITE IN).....

AGE	(12)	Occupation of Head of Household
16-24.....	1
25-34.....	2	Industry
35-44.....	3
45-44.....	4	No. Responsible for.....
55-64.....	5	Qualifications.....
65+.....	6

SOCIAL GRADE

SEX	
Male.....	8
Female.....	9

AB

C1

C2

DE

(14)

1

2

3

4

MARITAL STATUS	(13)
Married.....	1
Single.....	2
Widowed, Divorced, Separated.....	3

RELIGION

(ASK WHERE POSSIBLE,
IF NOT ESTIMATE)

Roman Catholic

Protestant

Don't Know, etc

6

7

8

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon/evening I am Mrs..... from Opinion Research Centre. We are carrying out a survey on the views of people in Northern Ireland today.

First, I would like to ask your opinion of the economic situation in Northern Ireland.

Q.1. Do you personally feel that you are better off, worse off, or about the same as you were a year ago?

Better off

Worse off

About the same

Don't Know

(15)

1

2

3

4

Q.2

Q.2. And how do you think you will be in a year's time? Do you think you will be better off, or worse off, or about the same as you are now?

Better off

Worse off

About the same

Don't Know

(16)

1

2

3

4

Q.3

Q.3 Over the next year do you think that the standard of living of people here will not do as well as for people in the rest of the United Kingdom, or will it do better, or will it be the same?

Will not do as well here

Will do better here

Will be the same

Don't Know

(17)

1

2

3

4

Q.4

Q.4 In your opinion, is the cost of living in Northern Ireland, higher than the rest of the United Kingdom, or lower than in the rest of the U.K., or about the same?

Higher

Lower

Same

Don't Know

(18)

1

2

3

4

Q.5

Q.5 Can you tell me if you are working either full time or part time at the moment?

Full Time (30 hours+)

Part time (8-29 hours)

Not working

Not answered

(19)

1

2

3

4

Q.6

Q.6 ASK ALL FULL OR PART-TIME WORKERS

How secure do you feel your job is at the moment. Would you say it is:

READ OUT

Very Secure

Fairly secure

Not very secure

Don't Know

(20)

1

2

3

4

Q.7

Now I would like to go on to ask you about how you feel about life these days.

Q.7 Overall, how do you feel about living in Northern Ireland these days.
Are you

READ OUT:

Very happy living in Northern Ireland	(21)	
Fairly happy living in Northern Ireland	1	
Not very happy living in Northern Ireland	2	Q.9
Not at all happy living in Northern Ireland	3	
Don't Know	4	Q.8
	5	Q.9

Q.8. ASK ALL NOT VERY OR NOT AT ALL HAPPY

Why aren't you happy to be living in Northern Ireland these days?
Any other reasons?

IF ANSWERS BELOW GIVEN CODE THEM OTHERWISE WRITE IN

Violence/The troubles etc

Poor economic future/standard of living

Unemployment/Lack of jobs

Bad housing conditions

Bad for bringing up children

WRITE IN

(22)	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6 7 8 9	
0 X Y	
(23)	
1 2 3 4	
5 6 7 9	
9 0 X Y	Q.9

Q.9. Have you or your family seriously thought about moving away from Northern Ireland in the past year?

Yes

No

Don't Know

(24)	
1	Q.10
2	
3	Q.11

Q.10 ASK ALL SAYING 'YES' AT Q.9

Where have you thought of moving to?

England/Scotland/Wales

Republic of Ireland

U.S.A.

Canada

Australia/New Zealand

European Country

Elsewhere

Don't Know

(25)	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	Q.11

Q.11 Can you tell me if you have any children living at home now?

	(26)	
Yes	1	Q.12
No	2	Q.14

Q.12. ASK ALL WITH CHILDREN AT HOME

Do you worry at all about bringing your family up in Northern Ireland these days?

	(27)	
Yes	1	Q.13
No	2	Q.14

Q.13 ASK ALL SAYING YES AT Q.12

Do you worry about it?
READ OUT:

A great deal
Quite a lot
Not very much
or Very little
Don't Know

	(28)	
A great deal	1	
Quite a lot	2	
Not very much	3	
or Very little	4	
Don't Know	5	Q.14

ASK ALL

There has been a lot of talk lately about the education system here.

Q.14 Do you think that parents should be able to send their children to any local school whatever the religion is, or do you think that there should be separate schools for Catholic and Protestant children?

	(29)	
Parents should be able to send children to any school	1	Q.15
Separate schools for Catholic and Protestant children	2	
Don't Know	3	

Q.15 a ASK ALL WHO THINK THAT PARENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEND CHILDREN TO ANY SCHOOL

Should education authorities encourage integrated schools by sending children of both religions to one school, or should the choice be up to the parents?

Authorities should send children of both religions to one school
Should be up to parents
Don't Know

	(30)	
Authorities should send children of both religions to one school	1	
Should be up to parents	2	
Don't Know	3	Q.15b

Q.15b Should parents have freedom to send children to Grammar School as at present if they are good enough, or do you think all children should go to Comprehensive Schools?

Should be free to send children to Grammar School
All children should go to comprehensives
Don't Know

	(31)	
Should be free to send children to Grammar School	1	
All children should go to comprehensives	2	
Don't Know	3	Q.16

Now can we go on to ask your views on the alternative types of government which are possible for Northern Ireland.

Q.16 At the moment Northern Ireland is governed directly from London like all other parts of the United Kingdom. Do you prefer direct rule like this, or do you prefer N. Ireland to have some control over its affairs?

Prefer Direct Rule

Prefer some control over own affairs

Don't Know

(32)

1

2

3

Q.17

Q.17 If Direct Rule was ended would you prefer to.....(READ OUT)
Be completely independent of the United Kingdom

or To stay within the U.K. and to have control over all internal matters including security

or To stay within the U.K. and to have control over most internal matters but not security.

Don't Know

(33)

1

2

3

4

Q.18

Q.18. Now I would like to ask what you think of power sharing. That is when representatives of all the political parties have a say in Cabinet Government. If Direct Rule was ended would you be in favour of power sharing, or would you be against it?

In favour of power sharing

Against power sharing

Don't Know

(34)

1

2

3

Q.18

Q.20a

Q.19 ASK ALL IN FAVOUR OF POWER SHARING

Would you favour power sharing as a permanent situation, or would you favour it just until the situation has returned to normal?

As a permanent situation

Till situation is normal

Don't Know

(35)

1

2

3

Q.20a

Q.20a If there were an election today for a Northern Ireland Assembly to govern the province which party would you vote for? CODE IN BELOW

Q.20b ASK IF DON'T KNOW OR REFUSED

Which one would you be most likely to support?

Ulster Unionist Party

S.D.L.P.

Democratic Unionist Party

Alliance Party

Other

Don't Know/Refused

Q.20a
Vote For

1

2

3

4

5

6

Q.20.b
Support

7

8

9

0

X

Y

Q21

Q.21 Which of these three alternative types of Government would you prefer to see now in Northern Ireland?
SHOW CARDS A, B, AND C

- An upper tier of Local Government
- A separate administration with law making powers in domestic matters
- A separate administration with full law making powers, including security
- Don't Know

(37)

1

2

3

4

Q.22

Q.22 Do you think that there should be a special relationship of some kind between the two countries, or should the Republic of Ireland be treated just like any other foreign country.

(38)

Some special relationship

1

Like any foreign country

2

Don't Know

3

Q.23

Q.23 If someone who is wanted for a serious crime in the Republic of Ireland is caught in Northern Ireland, should the authorities here return him to the South for trial or not?

(39)

Should be returned to the South for trial

1

Should not be returned to the South for trial

2

Don't Know

3

Q.24

Q.24 And if someone who is wanted for a serious crime here is caught in the South, should the authorities there return him to Northern Ireland for trial or not?

(40)

Should be returned to Northern Ireland for trial

1

Should not be returned to Northern Ireland for trial

2

Don't Know

3

Q.25

Q.25 Are you for or against the use of the death penalty against terrorists found guilty of murder?

(41)

For

1

Against

2

Don't Know

3

Q.26

Q.26 Are you for or against bringing legislation in Northern Ireland on matters such as divorce or homosexuality into line with the more liberal interpretations presently used in Great Britain.

(42)

For

1

Against

2

Don't Know

3

Q.27

Can we just return for a moment to how the situation in Northern Ireland affects you personally.

Q.27 Have you personally seen an act of terrorism in N.Ireland?

Yes

No

Refused

(43)

1

2

3

Q.28

Q.29

Q.28 ASK IF YES AT Q.27

What was this?

Bomb being placed

Building blown up

Vehicle hi-jacked

Member of the public shot

Member of the security forces shot

Street rioting

Others (WRITE IN)

(44)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7 8 9

0 X Y

Q.29

Q.29 Finally, what are your main sources of information on the situation here, PROBE IF NECESSARY. Is it the papers, the television, the radio, what other people say or what?

Newspapers

Television

Radio

Other peoples' comments

Others (WRITE IN)

(45)

1

2

3

4

5 6 7

8 9 0

X Y

Q.30

Q.30 How important is the television in keeping you in touch with the situation here? READ OUT

Extremely important

Very important

Fairly important

Not very important

Not at all important

Don't Know

(46)

1

2

3

4

5

6

THANK RESPONDENT FOR THEIR HELP AND CLOSE INTERVIEW.