



**Northern Ireland
Review of Public Administration**

**RESEARCH BULLETIN 5
LOCAL IDENTITY: RESULTS FROM THE JANUARY 2005 NORTHERN
IRELAND OMNIBUS SURVEY**

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This bulletin is based on information obtained from the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey, carried out over a 5-week period in January and February 2005 by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). A total of 1,182 people were surveyed, representing a response rate of 63%. The Review of Public Administration team commissioned a series of questions to be included in this survey (see Appendix 1). The questions related to the public's perception of, and views on, issues related to local identity and local government in Northern Ireland.

KEY POINTS

- Proportionately more respondents had a very or fairly strong feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood or village (80%) and to their town or nearest town (73%) than their council (48%) or parliamentary constituency (32%) (Table 1).
- 91% of those respondents who had been involved in activities in their area had a very or fairly strong feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood or village, compared to 69% of respondents who had not been involved. Similarly, participation strengthens identity with political boundaries: of those who participated in local activities, 69% and 56% identified very or fairly strongly with their council and parliamentary constituency respectively, compared to 25% and 7% of respondents who had not been involved (Table 5).
- When asked how much respondents knew about local councils and the services they provide, over two-thirds (67%) replied either 'not very much' or 'nothing at all'. Almost a third (30%) stated that they knew 'a fair amount' (Figure 2).
- Almost half (48%) of respondents replied they would like to know what local councils are doing, but are happy to let them get on with their jobs (Table 10).
- Almost half (49%) of respondents stated that quality of service is more important than the size of a council area. A further 16% see quality of service as more important than local accountability, while 12% stated that their local council was important to their sense of local identity (Table 12).
- Quality of services (66%); cost/value for money of services (48%); being accountable to local people (48%); responding to local peoples wishes (43%); ease of contacting the council (28%), are all issues that need to be taken into account if there were to be fewer councils with more responsibility (Table 14).
- Over half (57%) of respondents thought that their local councillor would be most effective in dealing with a local issue. Over a fifth (21%) thought it would be their MP while 10% thought their MLA would be most effective (Figure 3).

Sense of Belonging to Specified Areas

Respondents were asked how strongly they felt they belonged to a list of specified areas.

Overall

Table 1 indicates that proportionately more respondents had a very or fairly strong feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood or village (80%) and to their town or nearest town (73%).

Table 1: Feeling of belonging (%)

	Neighbourhood	Town	County	Council area	Parliamentary constituency
Very strongly	42	33	33	16	8
Fairly strongly	38	40	33	32	24
Not very strongly	13	16	18	27	27
Not at all strongly	5	9	12	19	30
No opinion	2	2	4	6	10
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	1

Interestingly, proportionately more respondents had a very or fairly strong feeling of belonging to their county (66%) than to their council (48%) or parliamentary constituency (32%).

Area

This sense of belonging to the county was much more prevalent in the West of Northern Ireland (72%) than in the East (66%) or in Belfast (54%) (Table 2). This finding was statistically significant.

Table 2: Respondents feeling a very or fairly strong sense of belonging (%)

Location	Belfast	East	West
Neighbourhood	72	79	86
Town	82	69	75
County	54	66	72
Council	37	48	54
Parliamentary	24	33	35

Respondents from rural areas were significantly more likely to feel very or fairly strongly that they belonged to their neighbourhood/village (82%) than to their nearest town (62%), while respondents from urban areas were more likely to feel they belonged to both their town/nearest town (81%) and their neighbourhood/village (79%).

Age

Older respondents were significantly more likely than younger ones to have a very or fairly strong sense of belonging to specific areas.

Table 3 indicates that respondents aged 50 and over had a consistently greater sense of belonging to their neighbourhood/village, town/nearest town, county, local council and parliamentary constituency than those aged 34 and under.

Table 3: Respondents feeling a very or fairly strong sense of belonging (%)

Age-group	Neighbourhood	Town	County	Council area	Parliamentary constituency
16 – 24	74	64	59	41	24
25 – 34	69	66	57	38	22
34 – 49	81	73	64	46	32
50 – 64	87	76	74	50	35
65 and over	88	86	74	64	48

Length of time in area

The longer a person has lived in an area the greater their sense of belonging to the area.

For example, in terms of their village or neighbourhood, 91% of respondents who had lived there for all their life had a very or fairly strong sense of belonging compared to those who had lived there for over 2 years – 5 years (71%) or less than 1 year (44%).

The time people lived in an area mattered less for council and parliamentary constituency boundaries. For example, in terms of their local council area, 58% of respondents who had lived there all their life had a very or fairly strong sense of belonging compared to those who had lived there for over 2 years – 5 years (43%) or for less than 1 year (40%).

Level of Involvement in the Community

Activities

Respondents were asked if they had been involved in a specified list of activities in their area. Respondents could list more than one activity.

Overall

Over half (54%) of all respondents said that they had not participated in any activities in their area: 28% had participated in organised groups; 26% had been involved in informal/unorganised community activities and 5% had formally presented their views in some way (Table 4).

Table 4: Involvement in activities in area

Activity	N	%
Organised groups	336	28
Informal/unorganized community activity	302	26
Presenting your views	63	5
None of these	644	54
Don't know	1	0

Sense of belonging

Table 5 indicates that those respondents who had some level of involvement in activities in their area had a much stronger sense of belonging to each of the specified areas.

For example, 91% of those respondents who had been involved in activities in their area had a very or fairly strong feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood or village, compared to 69% of respondents who had not been involved in activities. These findings were statistically significant.

Table 5: Feeling of belonging by level of involvement in activities in area (%)

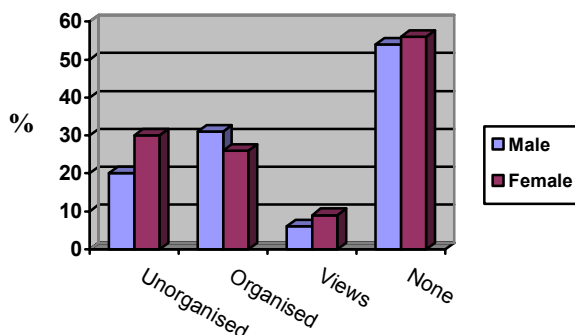
	Neighbourhood	Town	County	Council area	Parliamentary constituency
Involvement					
Very strongly	51	42	42	24	13
Fairly strongly	40	44	40	45	43
Not very strongly	9	15	17	31	44
Not at all strongly	0	0	0	0	0
No opinion	0	0	0	0	0
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	0
No Involvement					
Very strongly	32	25	22	7	2
Fairly strongly	37	35	26	18	5
Not very strongly	16	18	19	23	9
Not at all strongly	11	18	25	39	62
No opinion	3	4	8	12	20
Don't Know	0	0	0	1	2

Similarly, participation strengthens identity with political boundaries. For example, of those who participated in local activities, 69% and 56% identified either very or fairly strongly with their council and parliamentary constituency respectively, compared to 25% and 7% of respondents who had not been involved in activities (Table 5).

Gender

Whilst females (44%) and males (46%) were equally as likely to be involved in activities, females (30%) were significantly more likely to have participated in informal/unorganised community activities than males (20%), while males (31%) were significantly more likely to have participated in organised groups than females (26%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Involvement in activities in area, by gender (%)



Area

Respondents from rural areas (50%) were significantly more likely than those from urban areas (42%) to be involved in activities in their area.

Respondents from rural areas (31%) were more likely to have participated in informal/unorganised community activities than those from urban areas (22%), while proportions participating in organised groups were similar, 30% and 28% respectively.

Age

Respondents aged 16-24 (52%) were most likely to be involved in activities in their area compared to other age groups: 25-34 (40%), 35-49 (49%), 50-64 (48%) and 65 and over (34%).

With the exception of those aged 50-64, all age groups were more likely to have participated in organised groups rather than informal/unorganised community activities or presenting their views in some way. These findings were statistically significant.

Groups

Respondents were then asked if they had participated in any of a specified list of organisations. Again, respondents could list more than one group in their answers.

Overall

Over three-quarters (76%) of respondents reported that they did not participate in any local groups or associations: 16% said that

they participated in a church group; 4% participated in a community association and 3% participated in each of the following groups: the PTA, a residents association or the scouts/brownies etc (Table 6).

Table 6: Involvement in groups in area

Group	N	%
Church group	190	16
Community association	43	4
PTA etc	40	3
Residents association	36	3
Scouts/brownies etc	34	3
Political party	7	1
Neighbourhood watch	6	1
Tenants association	5	0
Citizens advice bureau	3	0
None of these	896	76

Marital status

A higher proportion of those respondents who were single (84%) or separated (82%) reported that they had not participated in local groups or associations than those respondents who were widowed (62%) or married (71%).

Age

Respondents aged 65 and over (27%) reported higher levels of participation in a church group than any other age group, in particular those aged 16-24 (10%) and 25-34 (11%).

Involvement in local issues

Respondents were also asked if they had involved themselves in some form of communication on local issues. Again, respondents could list more than one group in their answers.

Overall

Almost four-fifths (79%) of respondents replied that they had not involved themselves in some form of communication on local issues (Table 7). However, 11% had written or spoken to a local councillor about an issue; 8% had been to a meeting of a local committee or organisation and 3% had written to their MP/MLA about a local issue.

Table 7: Involvement in communication on local issues

Form of communication	N	%
Written/spoken to councillor	135	11
Meeting of local committee	92	8
Written to MP/MLA	34	3
Public meeting held by council	30	3
Written to local newspaper	24	2
Council committee meeting	11	1
Radio phone-in	10	1
Council meeting	8	1
Meeting of a political party	6	1
None of these	932	79

Occupation

Just over half (51%) of those respondents who had written or spoken to a local councillor about an issue were from the ‘managerial and technical’ socio-economic group.

Marital status

Almost two-thirds (65%) of those respondents who had written or spoken to a local councillor about an issue were married. Similarly, almost three-quarters (73%) of those who had been to a meeting of a local committee or organisation were married.

Age

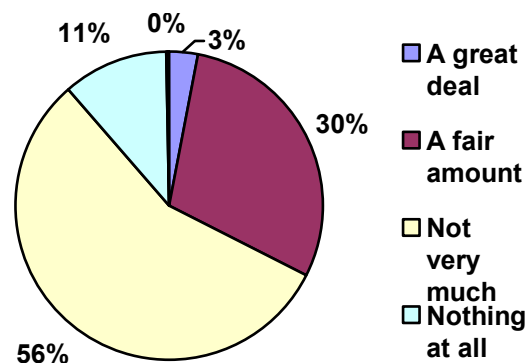
Just over four-fifths (81%) of those respondents who had written or spoken to a local councillor about an issue were aged 35 and above.

Knowledge of local councils and services they provide

Overall

When asked how much respondents knew about local councils and the services they provide, two-thirds (67%) replied either ‘not very much’ or ‘nothing at all’. Almost a third (30%) stated that they knew ‘a fair amount’ (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Knowledge of local councils and services they provide (%)



Gender

Males (38%) were significantly more likely than females (28%) to report ‘a fair amount’ or ‘great deal’ of knowledge about local councils and the services they provide.

Disability

People with disabilities (27%) were significantly less likely than those people without disabilities (33%) to report ‘a fair amount’ or ‘great deal’ of knowledge about local councils and the services they provide (Table 8).

Table 8: Knowledge of local councils and services they provide, by disability (%)

	Disabled	Non-disabled
A great deal	1	3
A fair amount	26	30
Not very much	56	56
Nothing at all	17	10

Age

Respondents aged 50-64 (41%) and 35-49 (36%) were more likely than those aged 16-24 (18%) to report ‘a fair amount’ or ‘great deal’ of knowledge about local councils and the services they provide. These findings were statistically significant.

Marital status

Table 9 indicates that married respondents (39%) were significantly more likely to report

‘a fair amount’ or ‘great deal’ of knowledge about local councils and the services they provide than those who were single (23%), widowed (26%), divorced (30%) or separated (31%).

Table 9: Knowledge of local councils and services they provide, by marital status (%)

Level of knowledge	Single	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
A great deal	1	4	6	2	1
A fair amount	22	35	25	28	25
Not very much	64	52	47	58	57
Nothing at all	13	9	20	13	16

Views on local councils and services they provide

Local council

Overall

When asked about their views on the local council in their area, almost half (48%) of respondents replied they would like to know what local councils are doing, but are happy to let them get on with their jobs (Table 10).

Table 10: Views on local councils and the services they provide

View	N	%
Like to know what councils do, happy to let them get on with job	566	48
Not interested in what council does so long as they do their job	317	27
More of a say in what councils do and services they provide	184	16
Not interested in what council does or if they do their job	90	8
Work for/involved with council and services they provide	13	1
Don't know/Refused	12	1

Age

The majority of respondents aged 25-34 (53%) and 50-64 (53%) would like to know

what local councils are doing, but are happy to let them get on with their jobs.

Forty-four percent of those aged 35-49 would like to know what local councils are doing, but are happy to let them get on with their jobs and a further 21% would like to have more of a say in what councils do. These findings were statistically significant.

Dependents

While the same proportions (48%) of respondents with dependents and those without said they would like to know what local councils are doing, but are happy to let them get on with their jobs, over a fifth (21%) of those with dependents would like to have more of a say in what councils do than those without dependents (13%). These findings are statistically significant.

Area

Respondents in Belfast (52%) were significantly more likely to say that they would like to know what local councils are doing, but are happy to let them get on with their jobs than those in the East (49%) and West (45%) of Northern Ireland (Table 11).

Table 11: Views on local councils and the services they provide, by area (%)

View	Belfast	East	West
Like to know what councils do, happy to let them get on with job	52	49	45
Not interested in what council does so long as they do their job	24	24	32
More of a say in what councils do and services they provide	13	17	15
Not interested in what council does or if they do their job	6	9	6
Work for/involved with council and services they provide	2	0	2
Don't know/Refused	4	1	0

In addition respondents in the West of Northern Ireland (32%) were more likely to say they weren't interested in what councils were doing as long as they got on with the job, compared to the East of Northern Ireland (24%) and Belfast (24%).

What is important to you?

Overall

When asked their strongest view, almost half (49%) of respondents stated that the quality of service delivery is more important than the size of a council area. A further 16% replied that the quality of service is more important than local accountability, while 12% stated that their local council was important to their sense of local identity (Table 12).

Table 12: Strongest view on local councils and the services they provide

View	N	%
Quality is more important than size of council area	584	49
Quality is more important than local accountability	189	16
Local council is important to sense of local identity	136	12
Reduction in number of councillors would reduce quality of public services	59	5
Reduction in number of councils would reduce local accountability for services	46	4
Local political representation is important to sense of local identity	34	3
Local political representation is more important than quality of service	28	2
Don't know/Refusal	106	9

Area

The majority of respondents from the East of Northern Ireland (55%) reported that quality of service delivery is more important than the size of a council area, compared to 47% in Belfast and 43% in the East of Northern Ireland (Table 13).

Persons in the West of Northern Ireland (18%) were more likely to say that their local council is important to their sense of local identity than those in the East (8%) and Belfast (8%). These findings were statistically significant.

Table 13: Strongest view on local councils and the services they provide, by area (%)

View	Belfast	East	West
Quality is more important than size of council area	47	55	43
Quality is more important than local accountability	19	17	13
Local council is important to sense of local identity	8	8	18
Local political representation is more important than quality of service	7	1	2
Reduction in number of councils would reduce local accountability for services	4	3	5
Local political representation is important to sense of local identity	3	2	4
Reduction in number of councillors would reduce quality of public services	3	4	8
Don't know/Refusal	10	10	7

Age

The majority of those aged 35-49 (55%), 25-34 (53%) and 50-64 (52%) thought that quality of service delivery is more important than the size of a council area, compared to 35% of those aged 16-24 and 48% of those aged 65 and over (however these were the highest proportions within those age-groups). Again, these findings were statistically significant.

Overall

In terms of the second strongest view of respondents, of those 889 respondents who gave a second view, over a third (35%) replied that the quality of service is more important than local accountability and a further 20%

said that the quality of service delivery is more important than the size of a council area.

Twelve percent of respondents said that a reduction in the number of local councils would reduce local accountability for public services and a further 11% replied that a reduction in the number of local councillors would reduce the quality of public services.

Issues to be addressed with less councils and more responsibility for councillors

Respondents were asked what should be taken into account if the number councils were to be reduced and councillors given more responsibility.

Overall

Over half (52%) of the respondents gave 4 answers to this question. Responses included: quality of services (66%); cost/value for money of services (48%); being accountable to local people (48%); responding to local peoples wishes (43%); ease of contacting the council (28%) (Table 14).

Table 14: Issues to be taken into account for reduced councils and more responsibility for councillors

Issues	N	%
Quality of services	783	66
Cost/value for money of services	570	48
Accountable to local people	568	48
Responding to local people's wishes	512	43
Ease of contacting council	327	28
Ease of access to councillors	247	21
Level of information about council and services	207	18
Size of population covered	183	15
Sense of local community	127	11
Historical/traditional place names	93	8
None apply	20	2
Other	4	0
Don't know/refusal	46	4

Religion

While it was the main priority to be taken into account for both religions, Protestants (70%)

were significantly more likely to list quality of services than Catholics (63%) (Table 15). Protestants (52%) were also more likely to prioritise cost/value for money than Catholics (42%).

Table 15: Issues to be taken into account for a reduced number of councils and increased responsibility for councillors, by religion (%)

Issues	Catholic	Protestant
Quality of services	63	70
Cost/value for money of services	42	52
Accountable to local people	51	47
Responding to local people's wishes	41	46
Ease of contacting council	31	25
Ease of access to councillors	24	19
Level of information about council and services	19	16
Size of population covered	17	15
Historical/traditional place names	12	6
Sense of local community	11	11
None apply	2	2
Don't know/refusal	3	4

Catholics were significantly more likely to list ease of contacting the council (31%) and ease of access to councillors (24%) than Protestants (25% and 19% respectively).

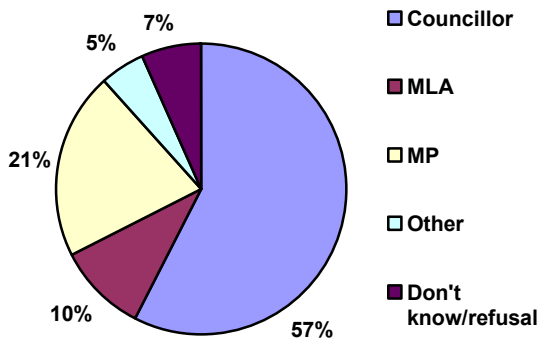
Effective point of contact on local issues

Respondents were asked which elected representative they believed would be most effective in dealing with a concern about a local issue.

Overall

Over half (57%) of respondents thought that their local councillor would be most effective in dealing with a local issue. Over a fifth (21%) thought it would be their MP while 10% thought their MLA would be most effective (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Most effective point of contact on local issues



Religion

The majority of both Catholics (65%) and Protestants (54%) would contact their local councillor to deal with a local issue. This was significantly more the case for Catholics.

A significantly higher proportion of Protestants (26%) than Catholics (13%) would contact their MP.

Area

Although the majority in each area, respondents in the West of Northern Ireland (65%) were significantly more likely than those in Belfast (56%) or the East of Northern Ireland (53%) to contact their councillor (Table 16).

Table 16: Most effective point of contact on local issues, by area (%)

Contact	Belfast	East	West
Councillor	56	53	65
MLA	13	10	8
MP	20	24	17
Other	7	5	4
Don't know/refusal	5	8	7

Almost a quarter of respondents in the East of Northern Ireland (24%) would contact their MP compared to a fifth (20%) in Belfast and 17% in the West of Northern Ireland.

Respondents in rural areas (63%) were significantly more likely to contact their councillor than those in urban areas (53%). In

addition those in urban areas (22%) were more likely than those in rural areas (19%) to contact their MP.

Age

Almost two-thirds (65%) of those aged 16-24 would contact their councillor in relation to a local issue, while over a quarter (27%) of those aged 50-64 would contact their MP (Table 17).

Table 17: Most effective point of contact on local issues, by age (%)

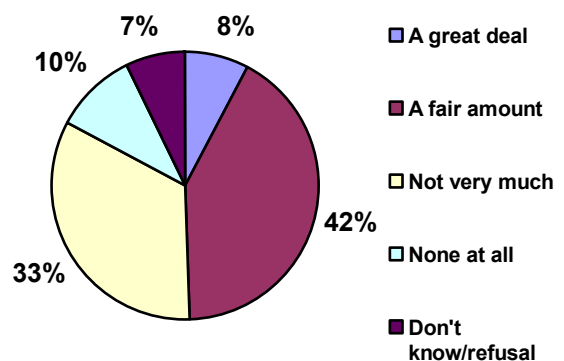
Contact	16-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65 & over
Councillor	65	58	56	52	57
MLA	5	13	8	13	11
MP	16	15	23	27	21
Other	3	6	7	5	3
Don't know/refusal	11	8	6	3	8

Elected Representatives

Overall

When asked to what extent they felt that elected representatives reflected their views when speaking publicly on local issues, a half (50%) of respondents thought that their local elected representatives reflected their views 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' when speaking publicly about local issues (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Extent to which views are reflected by elected representatives



A third (33%) thought ‘not very much’ while 10% felt ‘none at all’ (Figure 4).

Religion

A significantly higher proportion of Catholics (56%) thought that their local elected representatives reflected their views ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’ when speaking publicly on local issues, compared to 46% of Protestants (Table 18).

Table 18: Extent to which views are reflected by elected representatives, by religion (%)

Extent	Catholic	Protestant
A great deal	10	7
A fair amount	46	39
Not very much	27	36
None at all	11	9
Don't know/refusal	5	9

Similar proportions of Protestants thought that their views were reflected either ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’ (46%) by their elected representatives or ‘not very much’ or ‘none at all’ (45%).

Area

Those in the West of Northern Ireland (56%) and Belfast (55%) were significantly more likely to think that their views were reflected ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’ by their local elected representative when speaking on local issues than those in the East of Northern Ireland (43%)

The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is 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.

The survey comprises two distinct parts: core questions about the respondents and their individual circumstances, and a variety of mainly attitudinal questions commissioned by clients. Fifteen questions commissioned by the Review of Public Administration team were included in the January 2005 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. The questions asked were:

1. How long have you lived in this area?

- (a) Less than 1 year
- (b) 1-2 years
- (c) 3-5 years
- (d) 6-10 years
- (e) 11-20 years
- (f) Over 20 years
- (g) All my life
- (h) Don't know/can't remember/refused

2. In which town or area is your main place of work?

3. If you were in a town in Northern Ireland that you had never visited before and met someone for the first time who asked you where you live, what would you say?

4. Overall, which neighbourhood, village, town or city would you currently most associate yourself?

5. How strongly do you feel that you belong to each of the following areas?

- (a) This neighbourhood/this village
- (b) This town/the nearest town
- (c) Your county
- (d) Your local council area
- (e) Your Parliamentary constituency

6. People do different types of activities in their areas. Have you recently been involved in any of the following activities?

- (a) Informal /unorganized community activity (helping a neighbour, babysitting, giving advice about something, helping someone with form filling or letter writing)
- (b) Organised groups (e.g. sports clubs or teams, religious organizations, residents or tenants associations, parish councils)
- (c) Presenting your views (e.g. taking part in a consultation on local issues, presenting your views to a local councillor/MP, campaigning on local issues)
- (d) None of these
- (e) Don't know/refused

7. Are you a member of or participate in any of these organisations?

- (a) Resident's Association
- (b) Community Association
- (c) Tenant's Association
- (d) Church group
- (e) Neighbourhood Watch
- (f) PTA/School Governors
- (g) Citizens Advice Bureau
- (h) Scouts/Brownies/similar organization
- (i) A political party
- (j) None of these
- (k) Don't know/refused

8. Which of the things on this list, if any, have you done in the last year in your area?

- (a) Written or spoken to a local councillor about an issue
- (b) Been to a meeting of a local committee or organization
- (c) Spoken on a radio phone-in about a local issue
- (d) Written to a local newspaper about a local issue
- (e) Been to a meeting of a local branch of a political party
- (f) Written to your MP/MLA about a local issue

- (g) Been to a council committee meeting
- (h) Been to a council meeting
- (i) Attended a public meeting run by the council
- (j) None of these
- (k) Don't know/refused

9. How much would you say you know about local councils and the services they provide?

- (a) A great deal
- (b) A fair amount
- (c) Not very much
- (d) Nothing at all
- (e) Don't know/refused

10. Which of the statements on this card, if any, comes closest to your view of the local council in this area?

- (a) I'm not interested in what local councils do or whether they do their job.
- (b) I'm not interested in what local councils do, as long as they do their job.
- (c) I'd like to know what local councils are doing, but I'm happy to let them get on with their job.
- (d) I would like to have more of a say in what local councils do and the services they provide.
- (e) I already work for, or am involved with, local councils and the services they provide.
- (f) Don't know/refused

11. Which of the statements on this card, if any, comes closest to your view?

- (a) My local council is important to my sense of local identity.
- (b) Quality of service delivery is more important than the size of a council area.
- (c) Quality of service is more important than local accountability.
- (d) Local political representation is more important than quality of service.
- (e) Local political representation is important to my sense of local identity.
- (f) A reduction in the number of local councillors would reduce the quality of public services.

- (g) A reduction in the number of local councils would reduce local accountability for public services.

12. Which of the statements on this card, if any, comes second closest to your view?

- (a) My local council is important to my sense of local identity.
- (b) Quality of service delivery is more important than the size of a council area.
- (c) Quality of service is more important than local political representation.
- (d) Local political representation is more important than quality of service.
- (e) Local political representation is important to my sense of local identity.
- (f) A reduction in the number of local councillors would reduce the quality of public services.
- (g) A reduction in the number of local councils would reduce local accountability for public services.

13. At the moment, Northern Ireland is divided into 26 local council areas. If we were to reduce the number of councils, make them responsible for more services and change their boundaries, which of the things on this list, if any, do you think should be taken into account

- (a) Ease of contacting the council
- (b) Ease of access to local councillors
- (c) Being accountable to local people
- (d) Historical or traditional place names
- (e) Cost/value for money of services
- (f) Level of information about the council and its services
- (g) Quality of services
- (h) Responding to local people's wishes
- (i) Sense of local community
- (j) Size of population covered
- (k) Other (please specify)
- (l) None of them apply
- (m) Don't know/no opinion/refused

14. If you had a concern about a local issue, which of your elected representatives do you believe would be most effective in dealing with it?

- (a) Local councillor
- (b) MLA
- (c) MP
- (d) Other (specify)

15. To what extent, if any, do you feel that your local elected representatives reflect your views when speaking publicly about local issues?

- (a) A great deal
- (b) A fair amount
- (c) Not very much
- (d) None at all
- (e) Don't know/refused

The sample of those surveyed in the January 2005 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey was drawn from the Valuation and Lands Agency list, the most up-to-date listing of private households in Northern Ireland. The complete list of private addresses was stratified into three regions – Belfast, East of Northern Ireland and West of Northern Ireland, and a random sample drawn from each region.

At each address, the interviewer lists all members of the household eligible for inclusion in the sample, i.e. 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 1,864 individuals, 1,182 interviews were achieved, giving an overall response rate of 63%.

Selecting only one individual for interview from each address means that 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 have been weighted to prevent a bias towards smaller households.

To assess how accurately a survey sample reflects the population of Northern Ireland, the characteristics of the sample are compared with the characteristics of the current Census of Population.

Statistical significance tests were carried out on a range of group differences observed in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey findings. 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 Northern Ireland population.

For the purposes of this bulletin, the term “significant” is used only in the strict statistical sense. This means that if a comparison is reported as being significant (between the views of older and younger people for example) we are confident that there is a real difference between these groups in the sample and that the result has not occurred by chance. The term “significant” is not used in any other sense such as “important” or “meaningful”.

Area analysis was based on District Council boundaries and is detailed in Table 7. Councils listed in this table were used to form each of the three areas (Belfast, East of Northern Ireland, West of Northern Ireland) described in this bulletin.

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

The totals in some tables are greater than the number of respondents. This is because respondents were able to give multiple responses to some questions.

Due to rounding, percentages noted in figures and tables may not add to 100%.

The Socio-Economic Classification used in this bulletin groups occupations into eight socio-economic classes with the implication that occupation is a meaningful indicator of social welfare.

- I Professional
- II Managerial and Technical
- III Skilled Non-Manual
- IV Skilled Manual
- V Partly Skilled
- VI Unskilled Manual
- VII Never Worked
- VIII Full-time Students

Further information and additional copies of this bulletin can be obtained by contacting Laura Hague on 028 9027 7603, by fax on 028 9027 7610, or by email to laura.hague@rpani.gov.uk.