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UCD Geary Institute
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Irish Social Attitudes in 2018-19

Topline Results from Round 9 of the
European Social Survey

Funded by:



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

The logo for the European Social Survey, featuring a large white 'E' shape on a red background, with the text 'European Social Survey' to its right.

European
Social
Survey



Introduction

The National Coordinating Team at the Geary Institute for Public Policy at University College Dublin, in partnership with the Irish Research Council, is pleased to present the first national report ever produced for the European Social Survey in Ireland. Without peer, the European Social Survey has recorded the perspectives, aspirations, and concerns of the Irish population for nearly 20 years. Ireland has participated in each round of the biannual survey since the first (2002) and has already begun preparations for the 10th round, which will enter the field in 2021. This report offers an accessible and comprehensive overview of the main findings of the 9th round, which was collected by face-to-face interview between late 2018 and early 2019.

The intention is to inform a broad audience and contextualise Irish public opinion over a period of significant economic uncertainty and demographic transformation. We hope readers will enjoy this effort on two levels. First, this can act as a standalone overview of Irish society, covering

public sentiment in relation to core social domains. Second, this report offers a resource upon which academics, engaged practitioners of public policy and the general public can initiate a deeper dive into the underlying data. Although an effort has been made to be as comprehensive as possible, space and the goal of accessibility limit the perspectives covered in this report. It is worth reiterating that the European Social Survey is a public resource, publicly funded and publicly available without charge. As a public good, its core obligation is to inform public and academic conversations well beyond what these pages cover.

This report offers snapshots and time trends covering a variety of topics. From the perspective of social cohesion, the European Social Survey measures trust in others and trust in a number of public institutions/figures (health care, education, democracy, legal system, Garda, parliament, politicians and political parties). Wellbeing is addressed by recording life satisfaction, self-reported health, economic satisfaction and perception of job security. Sociodemographic

and political change, indicated by religion, national identity, perspectives on the European Union, Irish unity and immigration, cover some of the crucial societal transitions over the past decades.

Our role as National Coordinators here at UCD has benefited greatly from the support of the Irish Research Council. We would like to thank our colleagues, Daniel Capistrano, who was the de-facto coordinator of the 9th round of ESS in Ireland, and Susan Butler, who ably project-

managed the research programme. In the completion of this report, and as we look toward the 10th round of this survey, the insights and societal benefit that the European Social Survey provides Irish society has never been clearer.

As many contemporary debates suffer from selectively informed perspectives, it is refreshing to see a much-needed, publicly-funded effort to shed light, not heat, on some of the most important questions Ireland confronts.



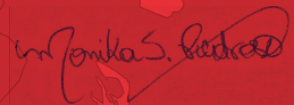
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Key findings



Trust in Others

- In general, Irish society is trusting. However, levels of trust in others declined between 2004 and 2012, when Ireland was characterised by economic instability and fiscal austerity. Levels of trust in others recovered after 2012, but they may have flattened out or even deteriorated between 2016 and 2018. Individuals with tertiary education tend to be far more trusting of others than those with lower levels of educational attainment.

Trust in Institutions



- About **two-thirds** of people in Ireland have high levels of trust in the Garda Síochána and more than half have high levels of trust in the legal system. Trust in politicians and political parties is much lower: about **55%** have low levels of trust in politicians or political parties, while just over a quarter have high levels of trust. Trust in politicians and political institutions fell during the economic crisis and has recovered in recent years.
- In general, a greater proportion of Irish residents hold pro-European than Eurosceptic sentiments. In fact, a greater proportion have more trust in the European Parliament (**46%**) than in the Dáil. Almost one-third of respondents tend to consider that European unification has gone too far, while **40%** are closer to the other end of the scale in preferring that the process of European unification should go further. While one-quarter of Irish residents have a relatively low level of emotional attachment to Europe, almost **60%** have a relatively strong attachment to Europe.

Health



- Overall, people in Ireland largely report that their health is very good, although there has been a slow decline over the period 2002-2018 in the percentage that report their health to be very good, and the percentage reporting poor health was at its highest in 2018.
- There is a strong social gradient in health: for example, 48% of those who have completed third-level education report very good health, compared to 23% of those with lower secondary or less.
- Age is strongly related to health. There is a steady decline in self-reported health as age increases, with the oldest being least likely to report very good health. Satisfaction with the health-care system is highest among those in the older age groups, so that satisfaction with the health-care system is highest among the age group that is most likely to be in need of health care.

Life Satisfaction, Happiness and Health



- Irish people's satisfaction with life and their level of happiness remains high, although they have not recovered to the levels found before the economic crash a decade ago.
- There is a social gradient in people's perception of their general health, with those on a higher income more likely to report good health compared to those in the bottom third of the income distribution.

Economic Satisfaction and Household Income Adequacy



- Overall, **54%** of the Irish population were satisfied with the state of the economy when ESS9 was conducted. However, there are some differences by age group. Relative to the overall population, the least satisfied are those within a decade of retirement (aged between 56-65 years) while those who are retired for more than a decade (aged 76 years plus) are the most satisfied.
- Given their household's current income, the ESS found that **40%** of the population believe they are 'living comfortably' while a further **45%** are 'coping'. One in eight households (**12%**) are 'finding it difficult' to live on their current income with **3%** 'finding it very difficult'.
- At the bottom of the income distribution, more than one-third of households find it difficult or very difficult to live on their current income, while among, the **top 20%** of the income distribution, seven in ten households are **living comfortably**.

Religion



- Just over two-thirds of the Irish population (**68%**) indicate that they belong to a particular religion or denomination. Religiosity has steadily declined over the last decade and had been at or over 80% of the population prior to 2006.
- The ESS results show that religious belief is **greater among females**, those with lower levels of completed education and those living in rural locations. Across the age groups, religious belief increases with age; with only **those aged above 56 years** possessing a greater level of religiosity than the average for the population.

Immigration



- Immigration has been perceived positively for most of the period covered by the European Social Survey, 2002-2018. There was a decline in the average perception of the impact of immigration on the economy, on culture and on the quality of life between 2006 and 2010, during the Great Recession, but perceptions of the impact of immigration have become much more positive with economic recovery.
- Those with higher levels of education are more likely than those with lower levels of education to see immigration as economically beneficial, culturally enriching and an improvement on life in Ireland. Similarly, those in paid work are more likely than the unemployed to view the impact of immigration positively.

Irish Unity



- Almost 46% of respondents consider that policy should be for Northern Ireland “to re-unify with the rest of Ireland”, while 37% believe that it should remain part of the United Kingdom. When the substantial group of those who refuse to answer the question, or who don't know, are excluded, almost 54% are in favour of Irish unity.
- When asked how respondents would vote in a referendum on whether Northern Ireland should leave the UK and unite with the Republic of Ireland, almost 53% opted for Irish unity. However more than a quarter refused to answer or responded that they would not vote in such a referendum: when these groups are excluded, the majority who would vote for Irish unity increases to 71%.

Job Security



- **76% of Irish workers have job security**, a figure that has improved over recent years in line with economic recovery.
- **One in four workers experience job insecurity.** Younger workers are more likely to experience job insecurity than is the case among all workers. Job security is strongest among those living in households at the top of the income distribution while more than one-third of workers in the bottom twenty percent experience job insecurity.

Key findings 1 – Trust in Others

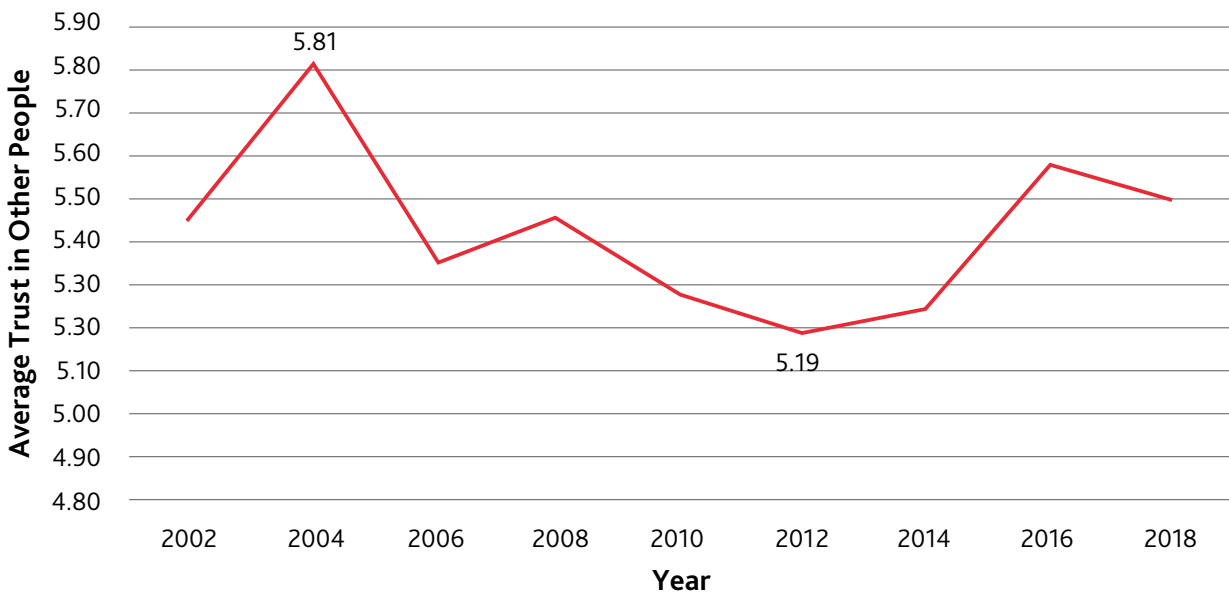


Figure 1.1: Average response to the question “generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” in Ireland: 2002-2018

In general, Irish society is trusting. Figure 1.1 shows the trend over time in the average level of trust reported in Ireland defined by an 11-point scale that

ranges from “(0) you can’t be too careful” to “(11) most people can be trusted”. After a peak in 2004, a notable erosion in trust characterised the first half of the decade. Between 2016 and 2018, the most recent period for which data is available, evidence suggests a flattening or decline. Given that these same years are defined by significant economic instability, the pattern underlines the secondary consequences of crisis, austerity and recession.

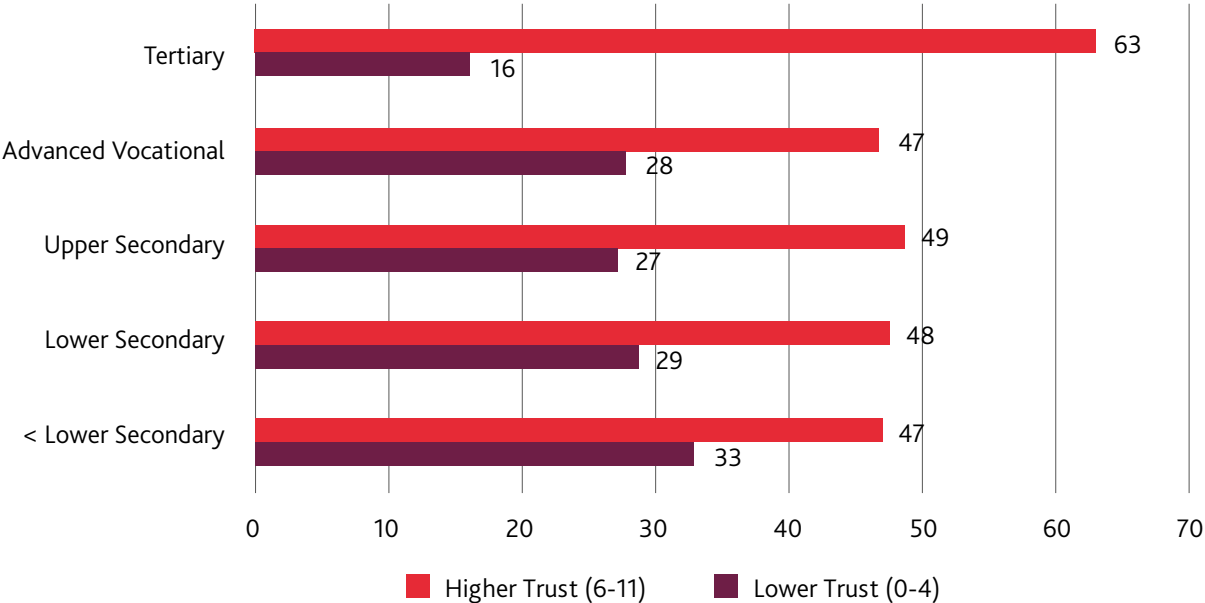


Figure 1.2: Response to question “generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” in Ireland: 2018

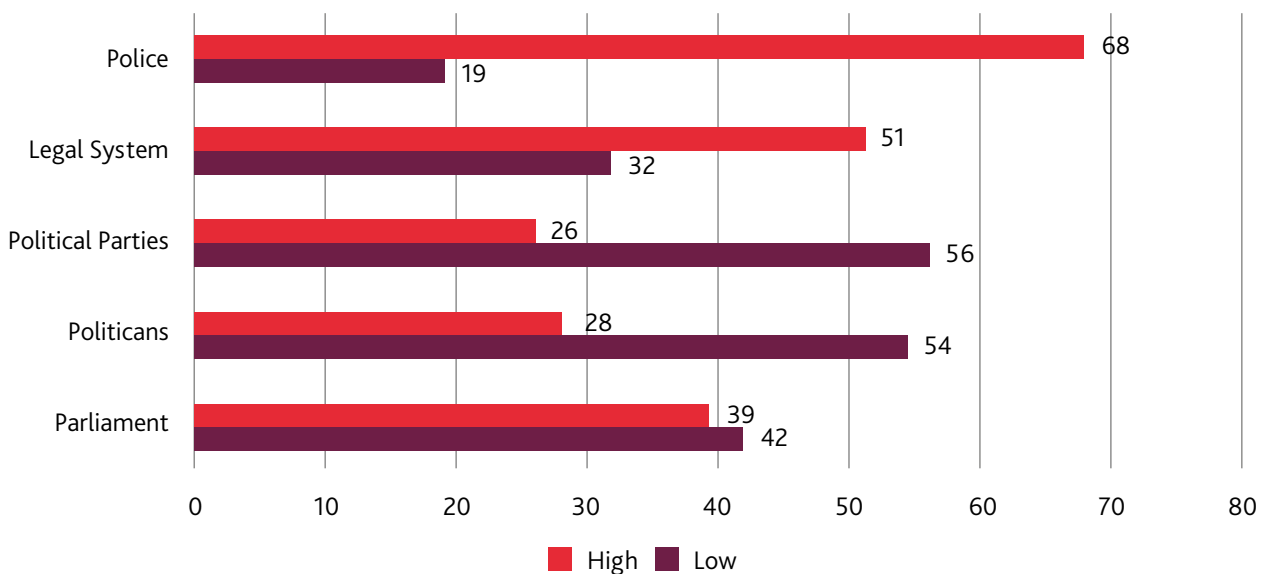
Nearly half of respondents are closer to feeling that most people can be trusted than not. Not all view others with the same degree of trust or suspicion. The trend in the average response masks notable differences within the population of Ireland. Education is particularly influential. Although there

is little variation between most levels of completed education, individuals with tertiary education stand apart. Nearly 63 per cent of respondents with a university education report higher trust, defined as values of 6 or higher on the 11-point scale. Across all levels of education more respondents gravitate toward trusting in others.

Key findings 2 – Trust in Institutions

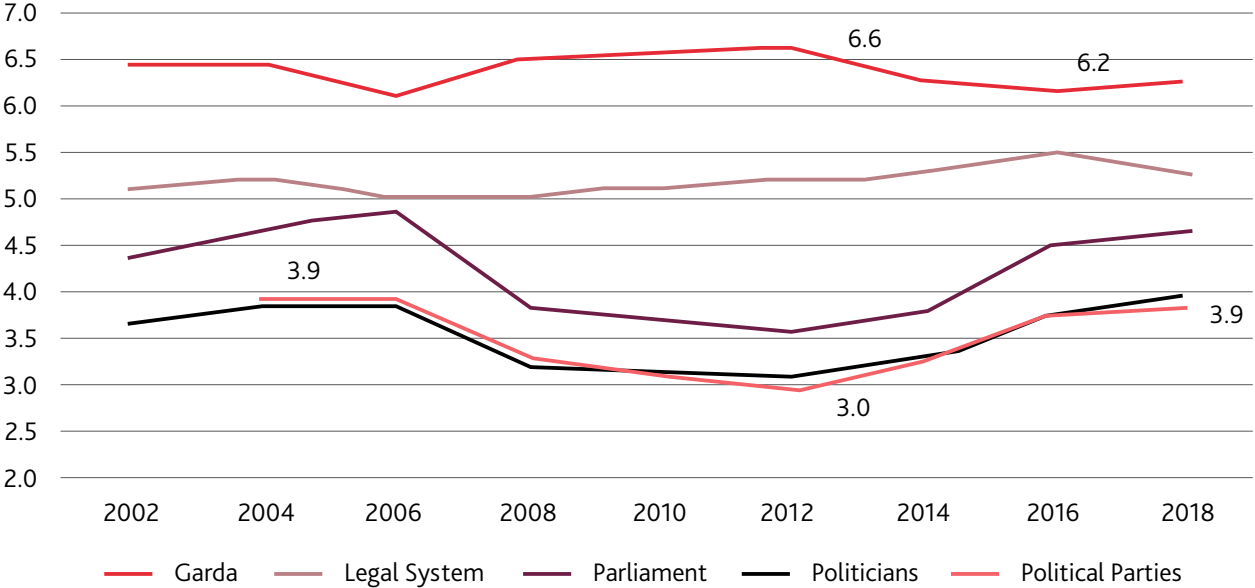
About two thirds of people have relatively high levels of trust in the Garda Síochána, scoring 6 or above on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 - 'No trust at all', to 11- 'Complete trust'. About 50 per cent of people have relatively high levels of trust in the legal system. However, trust in politicians and political institutions is far lower. About 55 per cent

of people respond that they have low levels of trust (from 0, 'No trust at all' to 4) in politicians or political parties, while just over one-quarter have relatively high levels of trust in politicians or political parties. Just 40 per cent have relatively high levels of trust in the Dáil.



Note: High trust is indicated by a response of 6-10 and low trust is indicated by a response of 0-4 on the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust).

Figure 2.1: Per cent Indicating Low and High Trust in Political Actors and Institutions: 2018

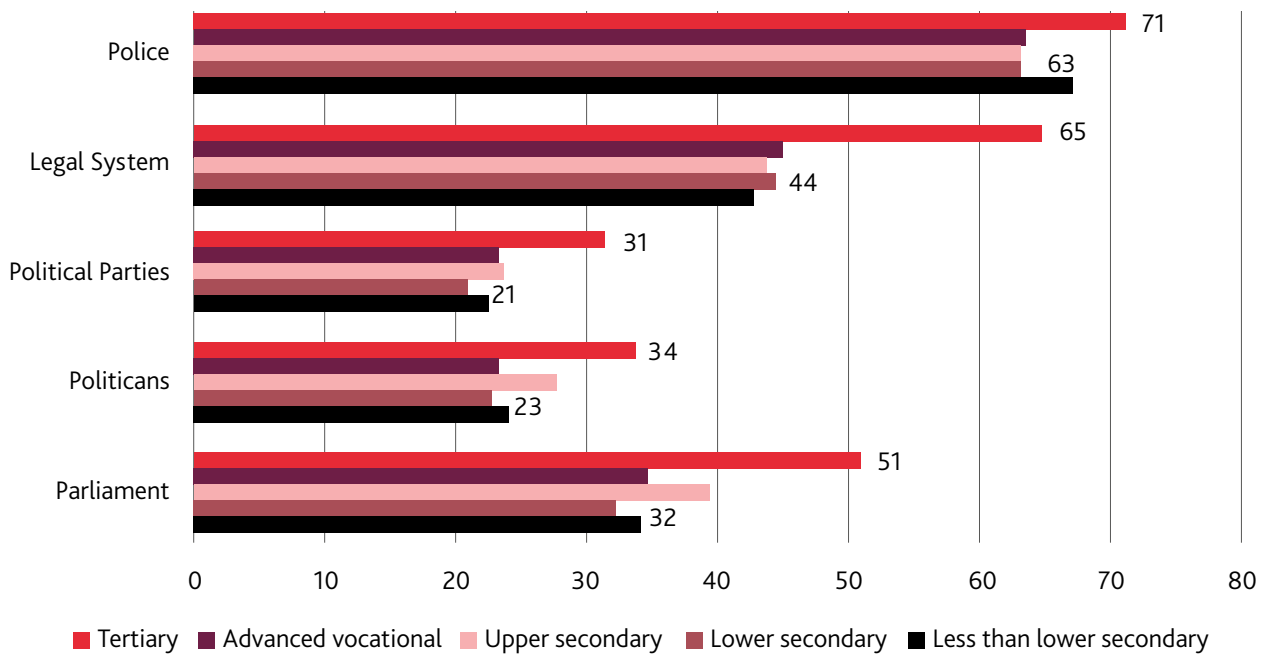


Note: Reported values are the weighted average response on the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust).

Figure 2.2: Mean Levels of Trust in Political Actors and Institutions, 2002-2018

Mean levels of trust in the Garda have been high throughout much of this century, although they declined somewhat in the wake of a series of scandals about corruption and abuse of power that emerged in the years since 2012. Trust in the legal

system has also been high and has varied little over time. Trust in various aspects of the political realm fell during the economic crisis, from about 2008 to 2012, and have recovered in recent years.



Note: High trust is indicated by a response of 6-11 on the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (no trust at all) to 11 (complete trust).

Figure 2.3: Per cent Indicating Relatively High Levels of Trust in Politics and Institutions: 2018

In general, levels of trust are greater among those with higher levels of education: there is a clear demarcation between those with tertiary education and the other levels of education. Nevertheless, the comparatively low levels of trust in politicians is replicated across all educational levels. While 71 per

cent of those with tertiary education have relatively high levels of trust in the Gardaí, only 31 per cent have high levels of trust in political parties; and while 63 per cent of those with lower secondary education have high levels of trust in the Gardaí, just 21 per cent have trust in political parties.

Key findings 3 – Health and Health Services

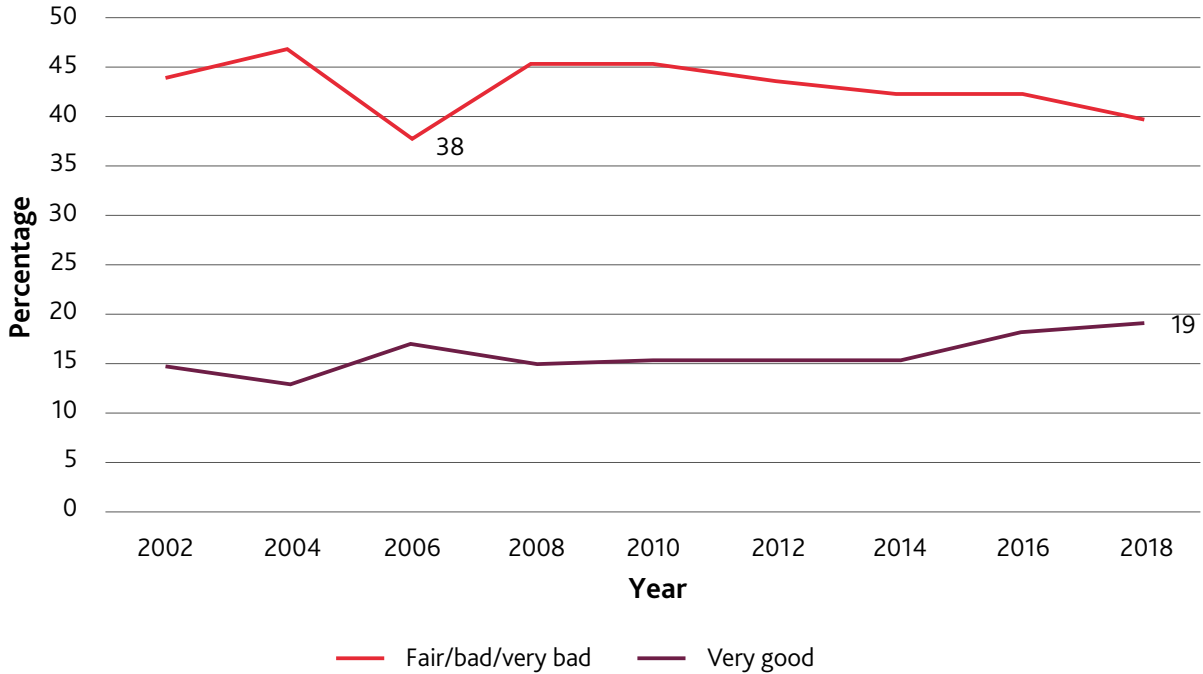


Figure 3.1: The percentage of the population who report “Very Good” or “Fair/Bad/Very Bad” health in Ireland: 2002-2018.

Figure 3.1 compares the percentage that report poorer health to those who consider their health to be very good. Overall, people in Ireland largely

report their health to be good. A notable dip appeared in 2006 at the tail end of a period of extended economic growth. The general pattern is one of stability, although there is some cause for concern as 2018, which is the most recent year for which data is available, records the highest percentage in poorer health since the inception of the European Social Survey in 2002.

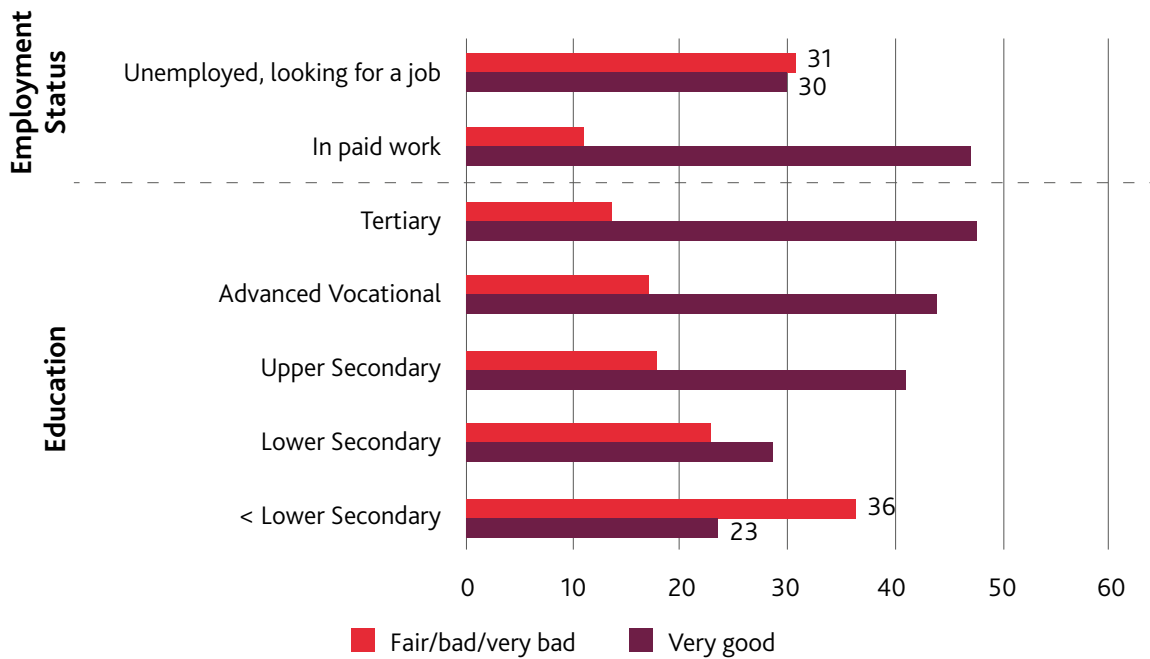


Figure 3.2: The percentage of the population who report “Very Good” or “Fair/Bad/Very Bad” health by employment status and education in Ireland: 2018

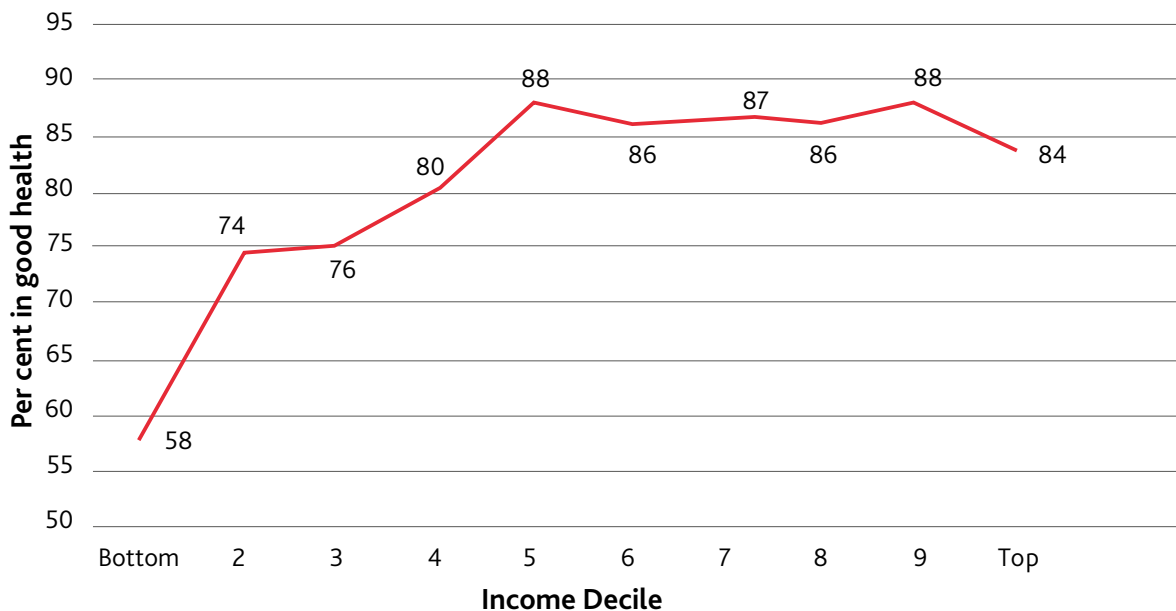
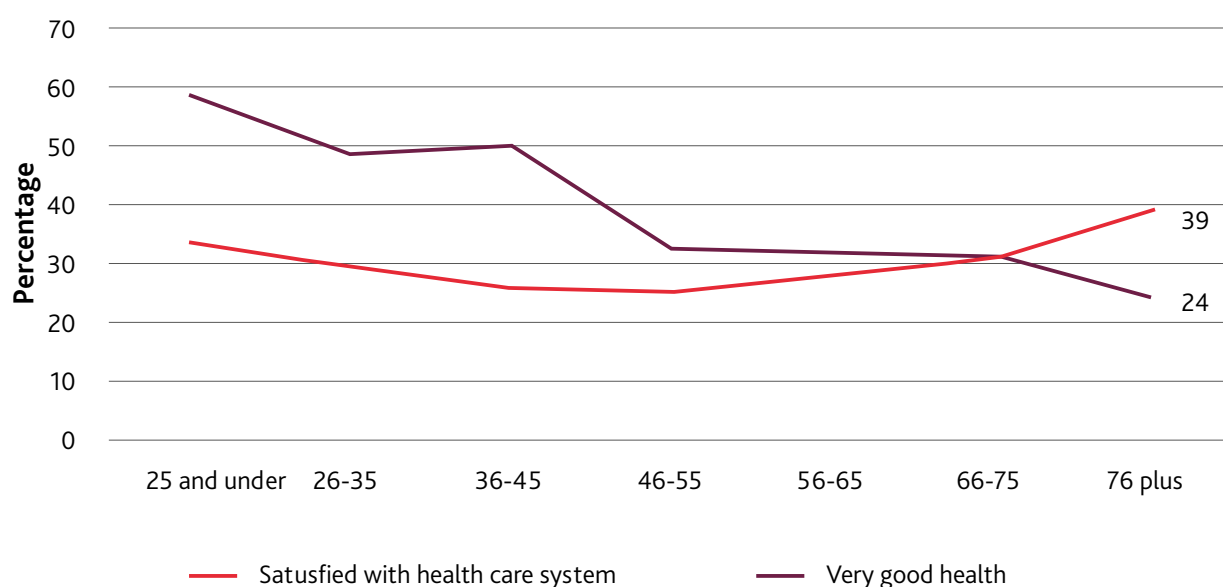


Figure 3.3: Health and the Income Distribution: 2018

Although the overall story of self-reported health in Ireland is one of good health, this positive perception is not shared by all members of Irish society. As Figure 3.2 shows, there are notable differences in outcomes when compared by employment status and completed education levels. Among those with the lowest level of completed education poorer health is reported by

more respondents (36 per cent) relative to very good health (23 per cent). As education levels increase perceptions of poor health decline. A similar social gradient is visible across the income distribution with at least 84 per cent of individuals in the top five deciles reporting good health compared to much lower proportions in the bottom three deciles. – Figure 3.3.



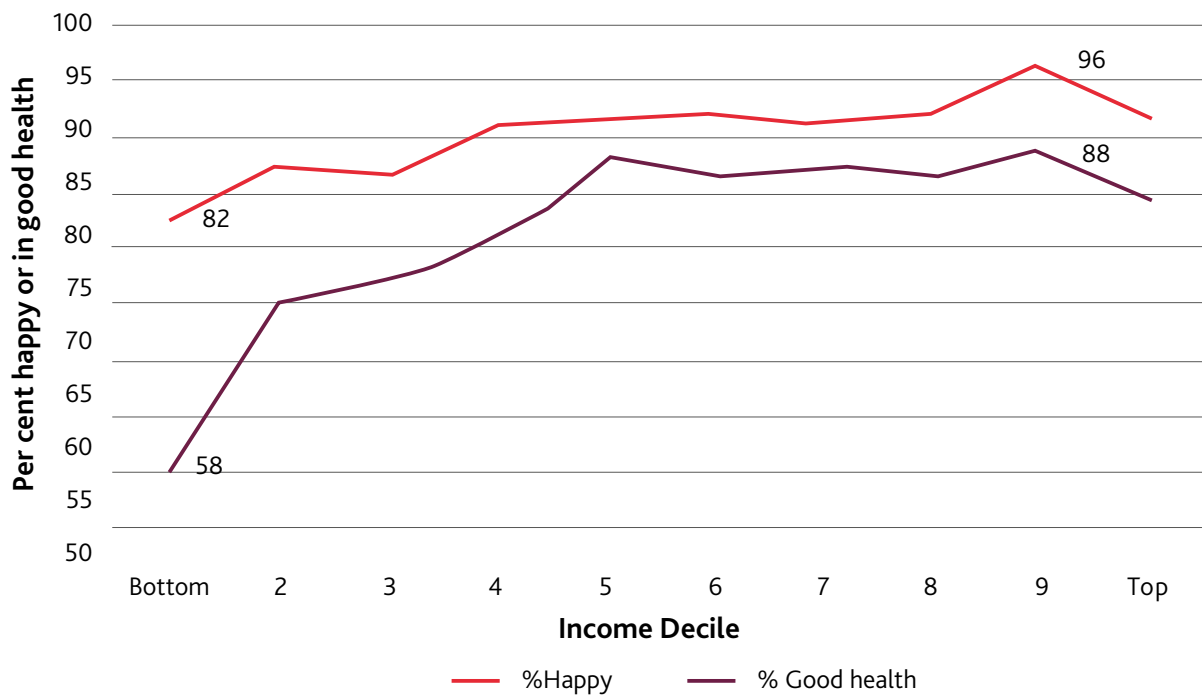
Note: Higher satisfaction is indicated by reported 6 or higher on the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (bad) to 10 (very good) in response to the question "what you think overall about the state of health services in Ireland nowadays?".

Figure 3.4: The percentage of the population who report higher satisfaction with the health care system in Ireland and "very good" health by age categories: 2018

The ESS results also provide an insight into people's satisfaction with Ireland's health care system. Satisfaction is highest among the youngest and oldest members of the population and reaches a peak among those aged 76-plus who are most likely

to be reliant on the system and who record the lowest level of self-perceived very good health.

Age, as expected, patterns the perception of good health. There is a near-monotonic decline in the percentage that report very good health across the age range with the eldest respondents being the least likely to view their health very positively. Of note, this same stage in life is when satisfaction with the provision of health care in Ireland is at its highest point. This pattern suggests that at the point in life when health care is likely to be of most use, it is seen relatively more positively. Although there is some evidence that satisfaction with health care declines after the 20's, it is encouraging that the older ages are a time of increased satisfaction with health care service provision in Ireland.



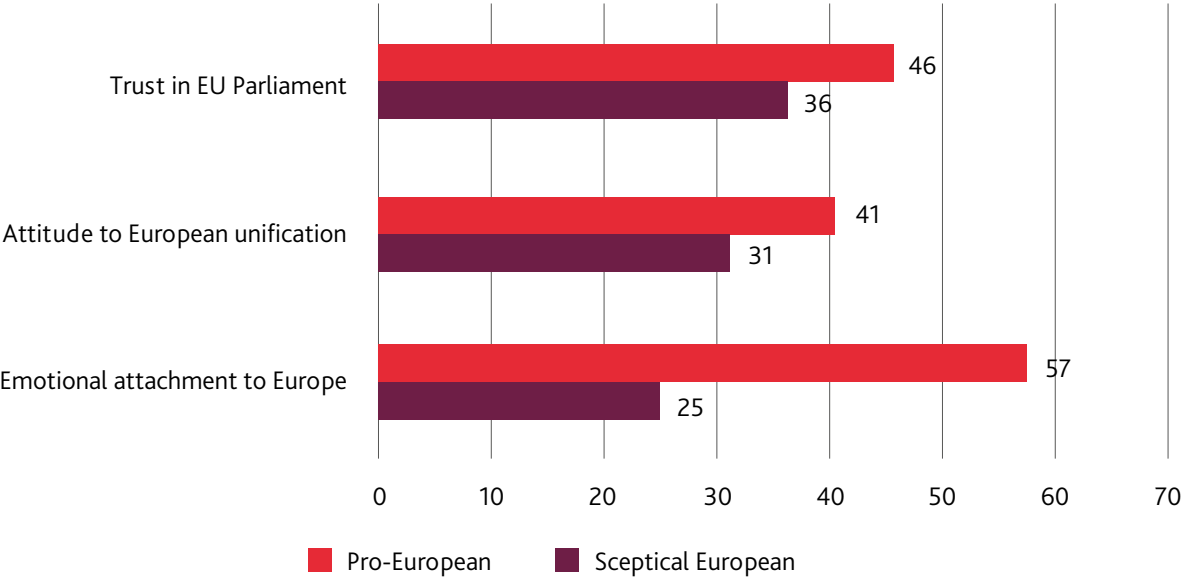
Notes: Happy includes those reporting between 6-10 on an 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (extremely unhappy) to 10 (extremely happy). Good health includes those reporting that their self-perceived level of general health is good or very good.

Figure 3.5: Happiness, General Health and the Income Distribution: 2018

The 9th round of the European Social Survey (2018) also includes a variable asking respondents 'how is

your health in general?' Figure 3.5 summarises these results across the income distribution and reports the proportion of each decile whose self-reported general health status is either good or very good. The data demonstrate a social gradient in people's assessments; at least 84 per cent of individuals in the top five deciles report good health compared to much lower proportions in the bottom three deciles. Levels of happiness also vary across the income distribution, although the social gradient is not as pronounced.

Key findings 4 – European Unification and Attachment to Europe



Note: Each of these indicators is measured on an 11-point scale. The questions about trust in the EU Parliament ranges from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust). Attitudes to European Unification range from 0 ('Has already gone too far') to 10 ('Should go further'). Emotional attachment to Europe ranges from 0 ('Not at all emotionally attached') to 10 ('Very emotionally attached'). Pro-European sentiments are measured as scores 6 or higher; Sceptical European sentiments are measured as 0-4 on these scales.

Figure 4.1: Pro- and Sceptical attitudes to Europe: Trust in Parliament, Attitudes to further EU Unification, and Emotional Attachment to Europe: 2018

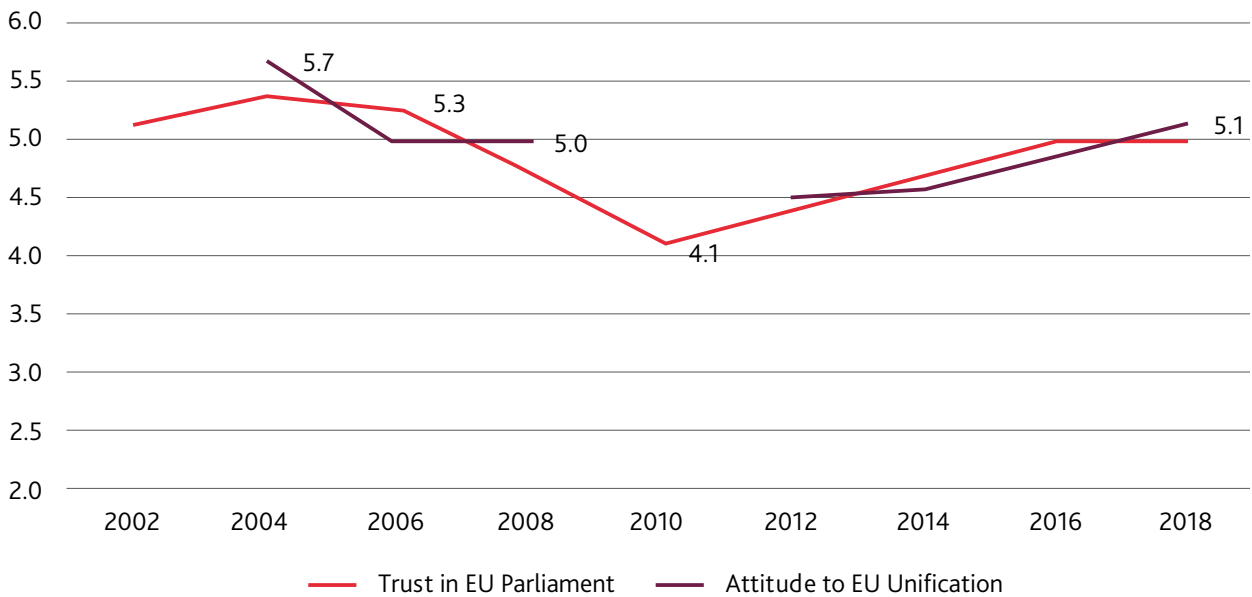
Irish residents appear to have more trust in the European Parliament than in the Irish parliament: 46 per cent have relatively high levels of trust in the EU parliament, compared to 39 per cent in the case of the Dáil (as shown in Figure 2.1). Moreover, while 42 per cent have relatively low levels of trust in the Irish parliament, this is true of just 36 per cent in relation to the European Parliament.

When asked about European unification using an 11-point scale in which a zero score indicates that the EU unification has "already gone too far", and 10 indicates that the process "should go further", over

Irish Social Attitudes in 2018 -19

31 per cent are not supportive of further unification, scoring 4 on the scale. In this question, “unification” is taken to refer to the process of progressive European integration. Another 41 per cent respond between 6 and 10, indicating a preference that EU unification should go further.

Less than 25 per cent of Irish people have a relatively low level of emotional attachment to Europe, while 58 per cent have relatively strong attachment to Europe. By way of comparison, 88 per cent indicate strong attachment to Ireland.

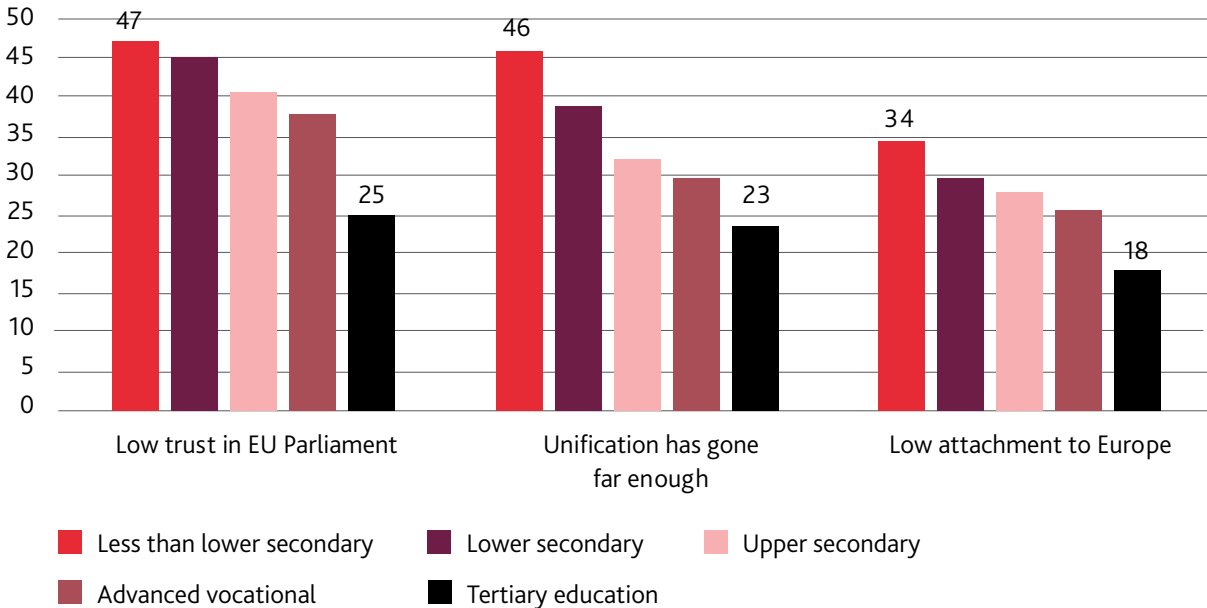


Note: The reported values are the average weighted score for the 11-point scale. The questions about trust in the EU Parliament ranges from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust). Attitudes to European Unification range from 0 ('Has already gone too far') to 10 ('Should go further').

Figure 4.2: Trust in the EU Parliament and Attitudes to EU Unification: 2002-2018

Trust in the EU Parliament declined sharply in Ireland during the economic crisis, reaching a nadir around the time that Ireland was drawn in to the EU-ECB-IMF Economic Adjustment Programme in 2010. While trust in the EU parliament increased in

subsequent years, it has not returned to its pre-crisis level. Attitudes to European unification have not been collected in every round of ESS, but appear to closely track trust in the Parliament.

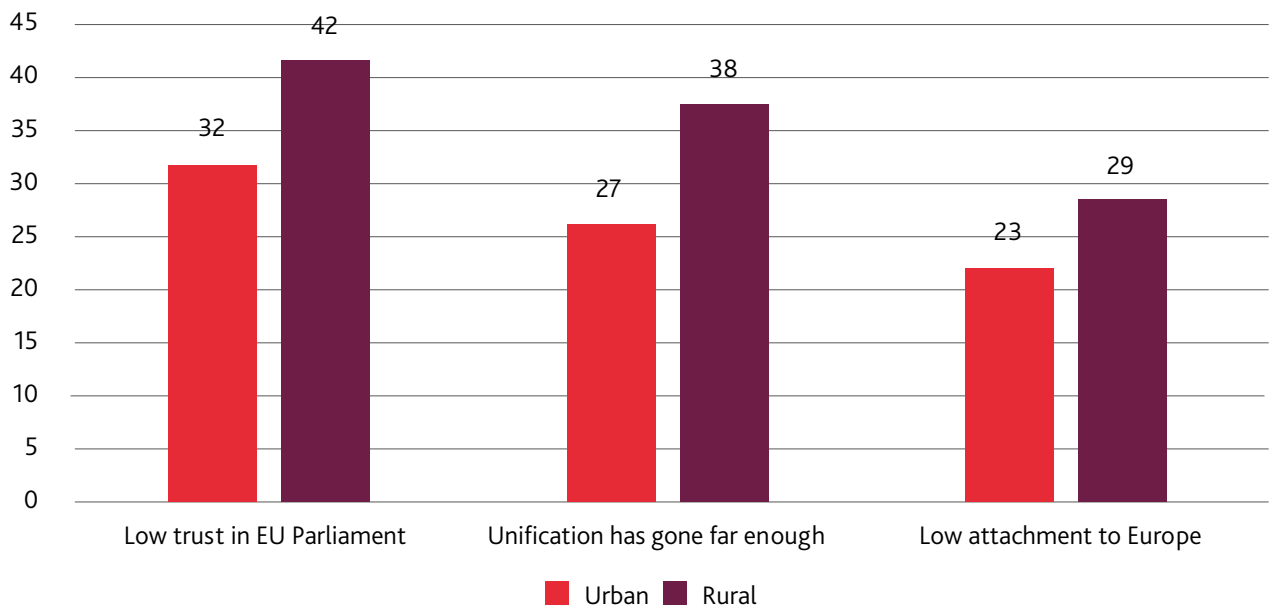


Note: Eurosceptic sentiments are measured as scoring 0-4 on each of these scales

Figure 4.3: Per cent Reporting Relatively Low levels of Trust in EU Parliament, Support for EU Unification and Attachment to Europe by Educational Attainment: 2018

These various dimensions of Euroscepticism appear to decline with educational attainment. For example, while 45 per cent or more of those with lower secondary education or less express low levels of trust in the European Parliament, this is true of less than 25 per cent of those with tertiary education. We see a similar education gradient in

relation to support for unification. The gradient is more compressed, but not less steep in relation to attachment to Europe: 34 per cent of those with less than lower secondary education indicated relatively low levels of attachment to Europe, compared to 18 per cent of those with tertiary qualifications.

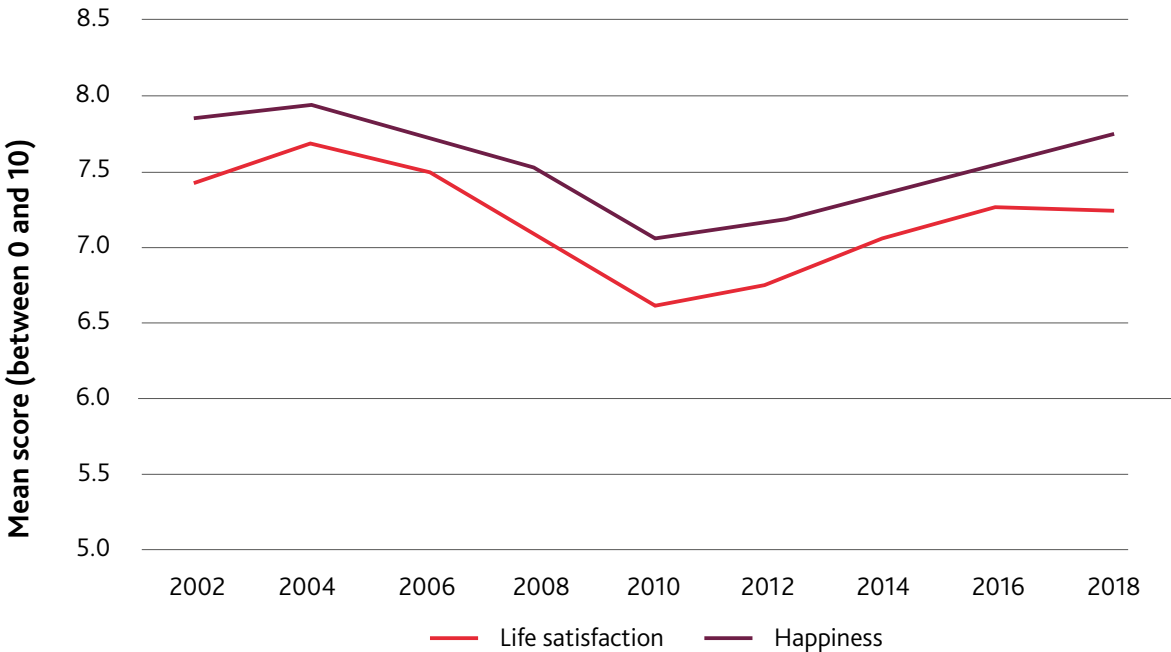


Note: Eurosceptic sentiments are measured as scoring 0-4 on each of these scales

Figure 4.4: Per cent Reporting Relatively Low levels of Trust in EU Parliament, Support for EU Unification and Attachment to Europe by Urban and Rural Residence: 2018

Rural residents in Ireland are consistently more sceptical of the European Union than their urban counterparts: they exhibit lower trust in the European Parliament; they are more likely to indicate that they believe that EU unification has already gone far enough; and they indicate lower levels of emotional attachment to Europe.

Key findings 5 – Life Satisfaction and Happiness



Note: Reported values are the weighted average response to the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (extremely dissatisfied/unhappy) to 10 (extremely satisfied/happy).

Figure 5.1: Average Level of Life Satisfaction and Happiness among the Irish Population: 2002-2018

Results from the 9th round of the European Social Survey (2018) indicate a stabilisation in people's

level of life satisfaction when compared to the results from ESS8 in 2016. When asked to rate "how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?" on a scale from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied), the average response in 2018 was just over 7. Over time, people's life satisfaction has remained high, between 7.0-7.7, although it dipped to its lowest level (6.6) in 2010 (see Figure 5.1). People's level

of happiness, measured on a scale from 0 (extremely unhappy) to 10 (extremely happy), follows a similar pattern. Results from the 9th round of the ESS (2018) show that average happiness levels continue to improve although they

remain below the peak levels reported from the first two ESS waves. A more detailed decomposition of these two 9th round indicators finds that both show minimal differences across genders, age groups and completed education levels.

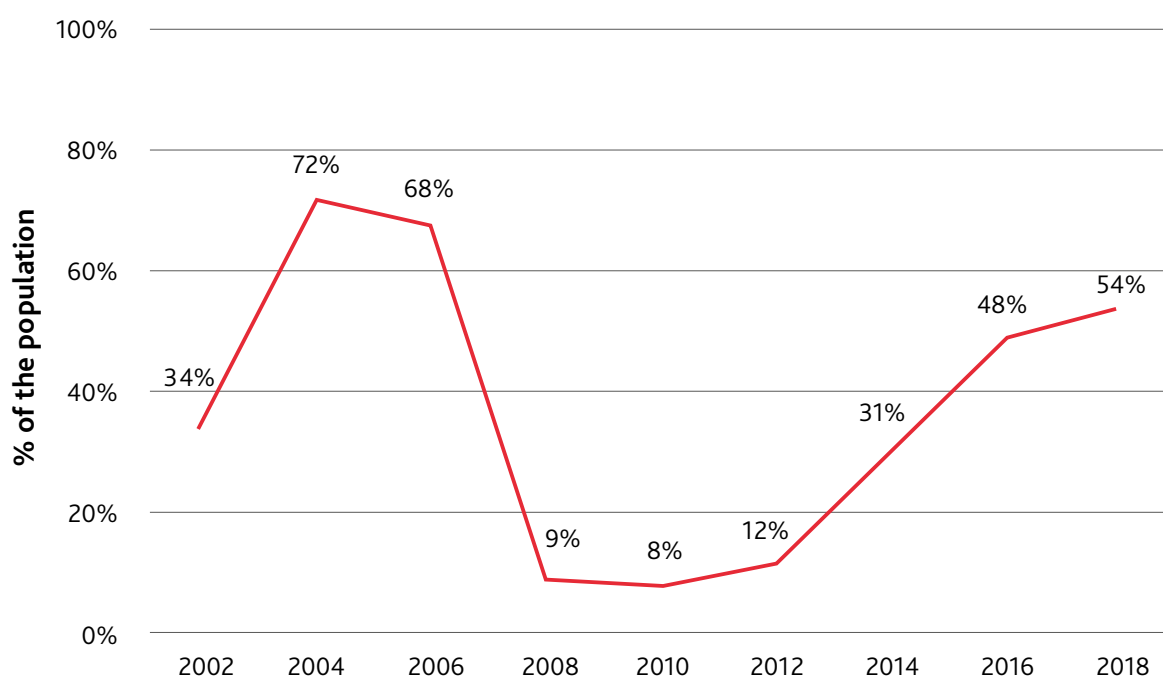
	per cent Satisfied	per cent dissatisfied
In paid work	82.6	17.4
Unemployed, looking for a job	66.9	33.1
Inactive (not looking for a job)	80.4	19.6
Refusal/ Don't know	60.0	40.0
Total Population	81.0	19.0

Note: Satisfied indicates those scoring in the range 6-10 and dissatisfied includes those scoring in the range 0-5 on an 11-point ranges from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).

Table 5.1: Life Satisfaction and Employment Status in 2018

Table 5.1 highlights one interesting decomposition of the 2018 life satisfaction variable. It outlines the proportion of individuals who are satisfied or dissatisfied by employment status. Unsurprisingly, the results reflect the scarring nature of unemployment with a much greater proportion of those without a job reporting that they are dissatisfied.

Key findings 6 – Economic Satisfaction and Household Income Adequacy

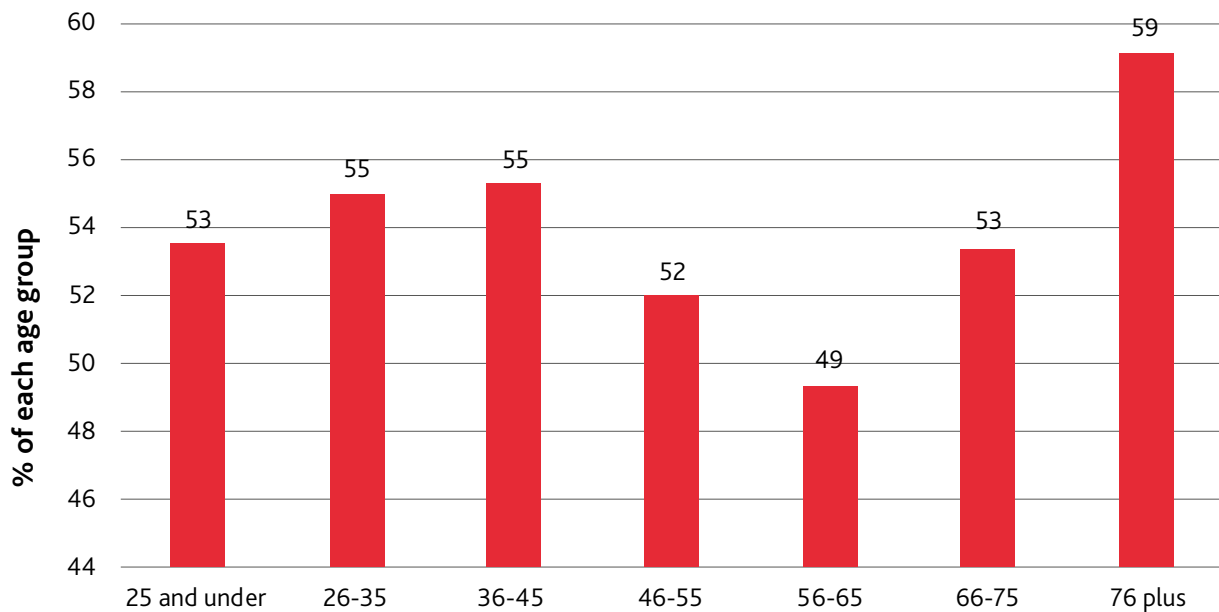


Note: Satisfied includes those scoring in the range 6-10 on the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).

Figure 6.1: Proportion of the Population Satisfied with the Present State of the Economy: 2002-2018

Results from 9th round of the European Social Survey (2018) indicate that the Irish population's satisfaction with the state of the economy

continues to improve. In 2018, 54 per cent of the population express satisfaction compared to 48 per cent in 2016. Over the nine waves of the ESS the results from this indicator offer another insight into people's experience of the period of economic boom, bust and recovery over the past two decades. The results from 2008 onwards reveal people's protracted experience of the economic crash and the subsequent slow economic recovery.



Note: Satisfied includes those scoring in the range 6-10 and the 11-point scale ranges from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).

Figure 6.2: Satisfaction with the Present State of the Economy, by age group in 2018

The 9th round also reveals substantial differences in people's perception of the current state of the economy when assessed by age-group (see Figure 6.2). Relative to the overall population, the least satisfied are those within a decade of retirement (aged between 56-65 years) while those who are

retired for more than a decade (aged 76 years plus) are the most satisfied. The survey also found differences in satisfaction between urban residents (57 per cent) and rural residents (49 per cent).

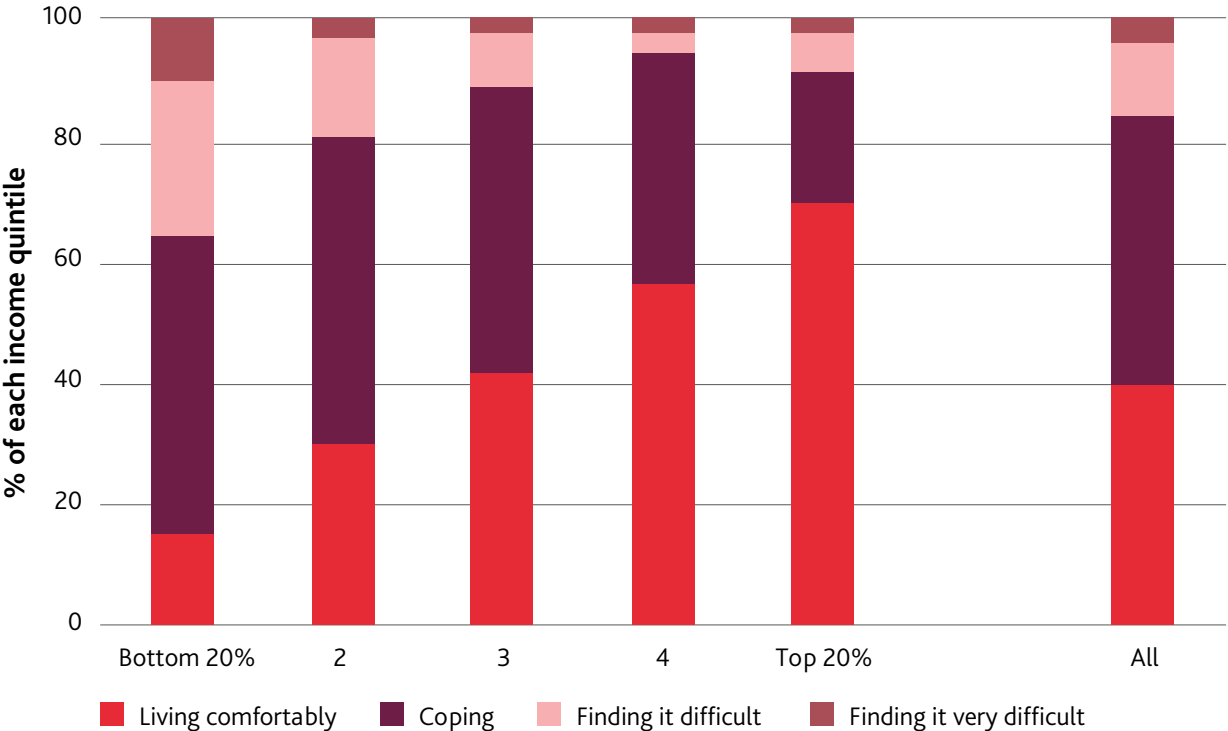
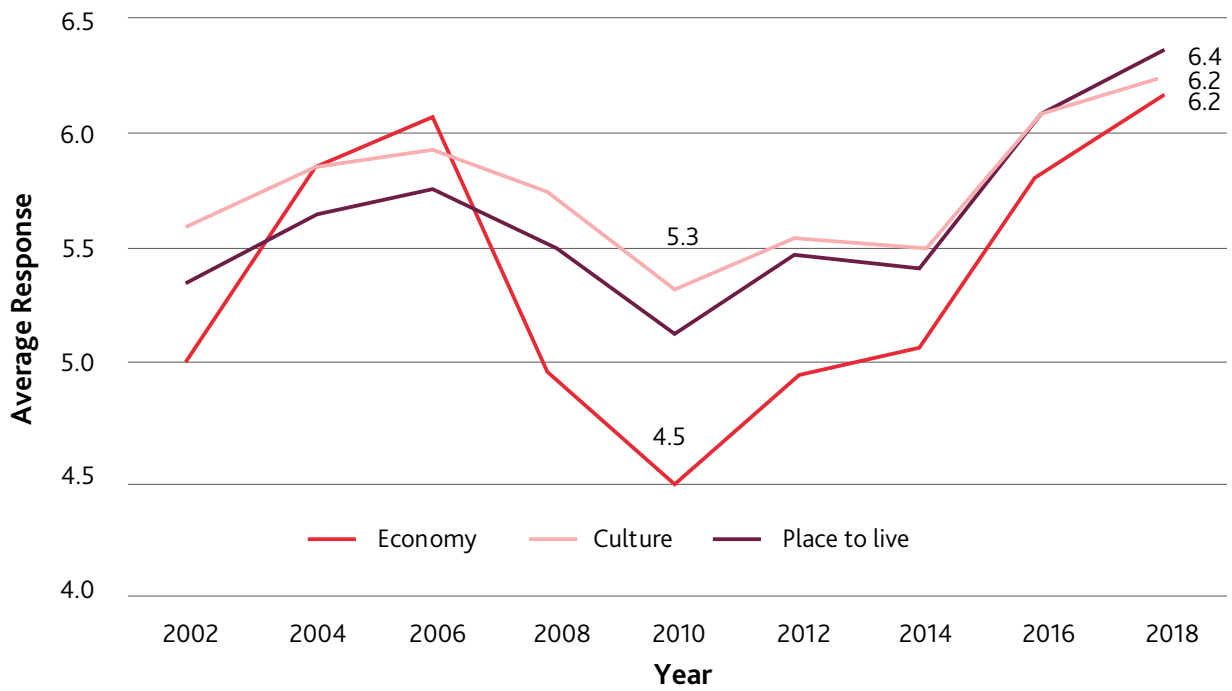


Figure 6.3: How you feel about your Household's Income, by income quintile in 2018

Complementing these perceptions of the macroeconomic environment, the 9th round (2018) also asked respondents about their perception of their household's current income. The results, summarised in Figure 6.3, show that 40 per cent of the population believe they are 'living comfortably' while a further 45 per cent are 'coping'. One in eight households (12 per cent) are 'finding it difficult' to

live on their current income with 3 per cent 'finding it very difficult'. At the bottom of the income distribution more than one-third of households find it difficult or very difficult to live on their current income while among the top 20 per cent of the income distribution seven in ten household are living comfortably.

Key findings 7 – Immigration



Note: Reported values are the weighted average response to the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (bad / undermine / worse) to 10 (good / enrich / better).

Figure 7.1: Average Perception of the impact of immigration on the economy, culture and life in Ireland: 2002-2018

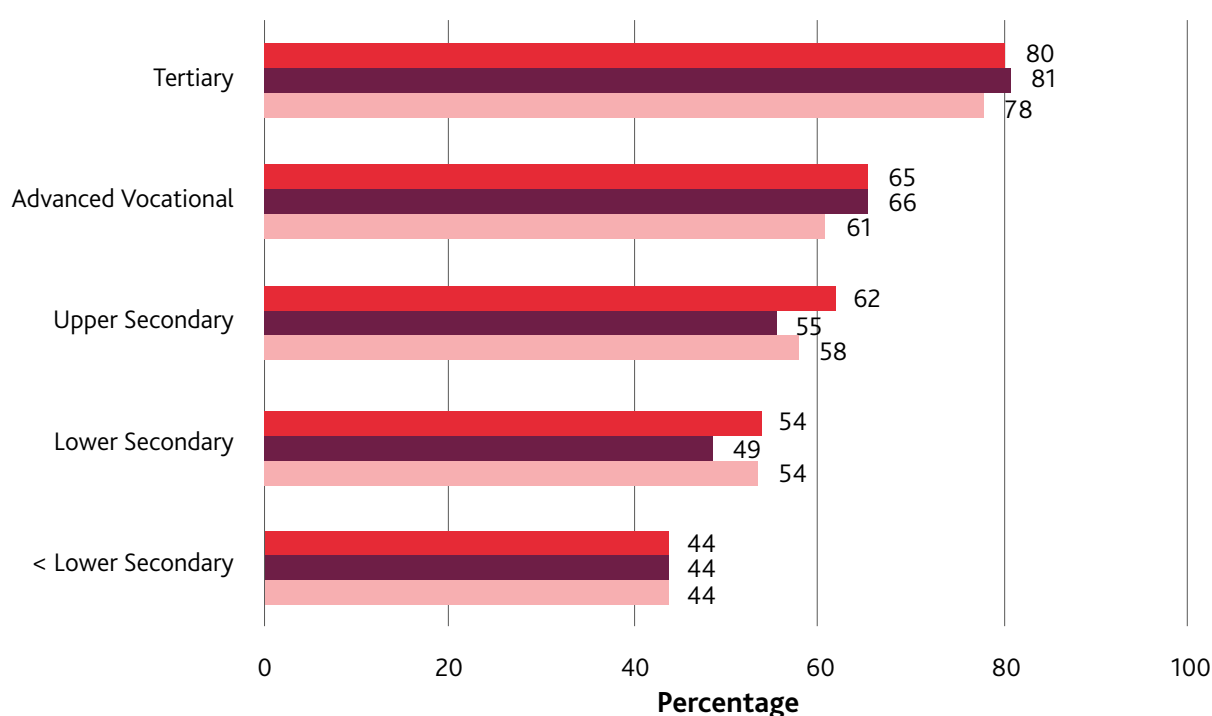
Ireland has a close recent and historical relationship with immigration. With few exceptions, immigration has been perceived positively on average over the past decade. Figure 7.1 reports three related questions about how the impact of immigration is perceived with each measured by an 11-point scale. Respondents report how they see immigrants' economic role [(0)Bad....(10)Good],

cultural influence [(0)Undermine...(10)Enrich] and impact on life [(0)Worse...(10)Better] in Ireland. Higher averages indicate relatively more positive perception of the role of immigration. Despite distinct dimensions measured by each of the three questions, they are notably similar in terms of their general trend over time.

Two general patterns emerge. First, there is a

notable decline in the average perception of the impact of immigration between 2006 and 2010. It is during this period, and only during this period, that the average perception of the economic impact of immigrants leans toward the negative, recording a value of 4.5 in 2010. This corresponds to a notable period of economic instability and, perhaps intuitively, the largest decline is in the previously quite positive perception of the economic impact of

immigration in Ireland. Second, the post-2010 period shows a rapid increase in the positive perception of immigration across all domains converging at a value over 6 in 2018. These two patterns indicate that attitudes toward immigrants, at least those openly expressed in the European Social Survey, are sensitive to the economic context.



Note: A positive view of immigration is indicated by responses of 6 or higher on the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (bad / undermine / worse) to 10 (good / enrich / better).

Figure 7.2: Percentage who positively view the impact of immigration on the economy, culture and as a place to live by education in Ireland: 2018

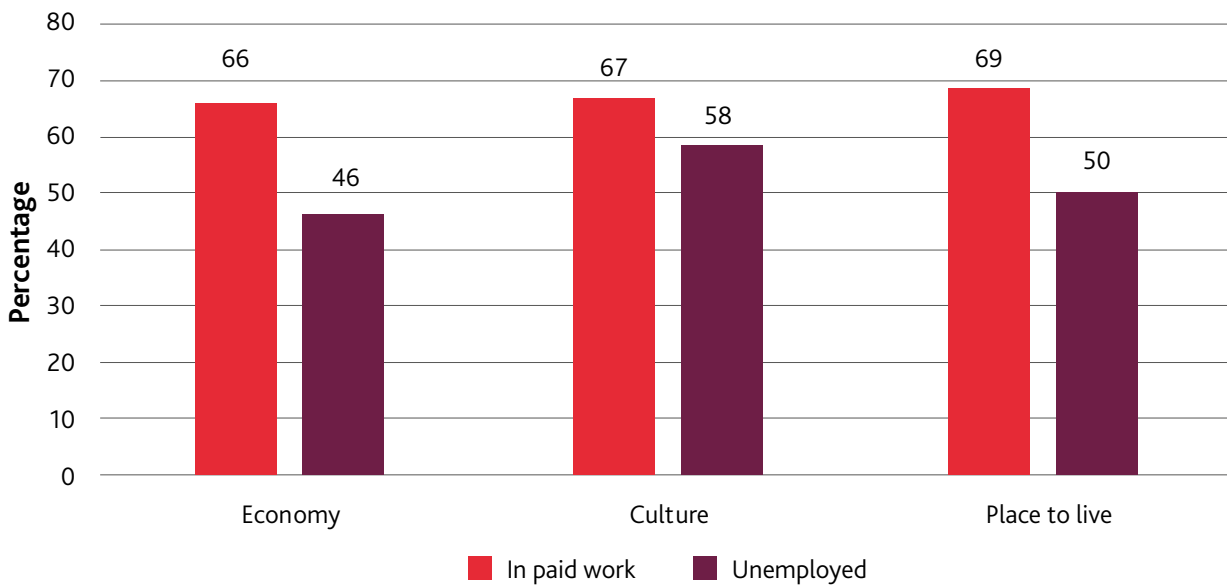
Education is a marker for many aspects of Irish society, capturing differences in formal schooling, mobility in the labour market and access to cultural capital. Many of these characteristics are clearly linked to the perception of immigration. Figure 7.2

depicts the percentage of the population that reports a value of 6 or more on the 11-point scale used to measure attitudes toward the impact of immigration on the economy, culture and life in Ireland. This percentage is interpretable as the part

of Irish society that sees immigration as economically beneficial, culturally enriching and an improvement on life in Ireland.

Little variation emerges within levels of education, with perspectives on the economic, cultural and life impact of immigration remaining notably comparable. However, when one considers differences between levels of completed education, large gaps become apparent. For example, among

the least educated less than half of respondents (44 per cent) see immigration positively, regardless of the type of impact assessed. In contrast, among those with a tertiary education, largely comprised of university-degree recipients, the vast majority (~80 per cent) see immigration as economically beneficial, culturally enriching and an improvement on life in Ireland. This is nearly a doubling across the education gradient.



Note: A positive view of immigration is indicated by responses of 6 or higher on the 11-point scale that ranges from 0 (bad / undermine / worse) to 10 (good / enrich / better).

Figure 7.3: Percentage who positively view the impact of immigration on the economy, culture and as a place to live by employment status in Ireland: 2018

The economic circumstances of the respondent, defined by employment status, patterns the perception of immigration. Figure 7.3 compares those employed to those unemployed, but seeking employment. As with Figure 7.2, the percentage captures the percentage of the population that reports a value of 6 or more on the 11-point scale and is interpretable as the part of Irish society that

sees immigration as economically beneficial, culturally enriching and an improvement on life in Ireland. The gaps are large and, as would be expected, largest (20 percentage points) when evaluating the economic impact of immigration. That said, the pattern is not substantively different across the distinct immigration impacts examined in the ESS.

Key findings 8 – Religion

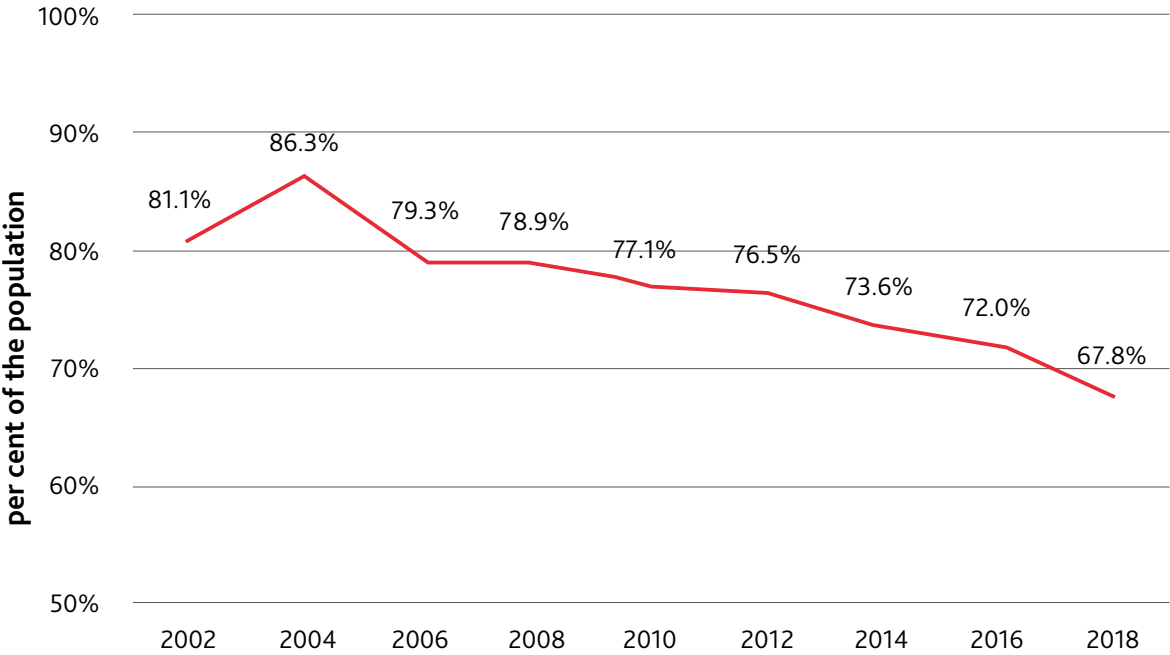


Figure 8.1: Proportion of the Population Belonging to any particular Religion: 2002-2018

Just over two-thirds of the Irish population (67.8 per cent) indicate that they belong to a particular religion or denomination in the 9th round of the European Social Survey (2018). As Figure 8.1 illustrates, religiosity has steadily declined over the

last decade and had been at or over 80 per cent of the population prior to 2006. In 2018, among those indicating a religious affiliation the vast majority were Roman Catholic (90 per cent).

	per cent Yes	per cent No
Total Population	67.8	32.2
Gender		
Male	63.0	37.0
Female	72.2	27.8
Age		
25 and under	51.7	48.3
26-35	58.7	41.2
36-45	58.6	41.4
46-55	66.4	33.6
56-65	74.6	25.4
66-75	81.1	18.9
76 plus	92.4	7.6
Highest Completed Education		
Less than lower secondary	84.4	15.6
Lower secondary	71.5	28.5
Upper secondary	66.2	33.8
Advanced vocational	64.5	35.5
Tertiary education	64.6	35.4
Location		
Urban	63.2	36.8
Rural	74.7	25.3

Table 8.1: Belonging to any particular Religion or Denomination, by various characteristics in 2018

Using the results from the 9th round of the ESS (2018), Table 8.1 provides an insight into the composition of those who do and do not possess a particular religious affiliation. It shows that religious belief is greater among females, those with lower

levels of completed education and those living in rural locations. Across the age groups, religious belief increases with age; with only those aged above 56 years possessing a greater level of religiosity than the average for the population.

Key findings 9 – Irish Unity

A participant country can ask for additional, contextually relevant questions to be included in each round of the European Social Survey. For the

ninth round, the Irish survey included a series of questions about Irish unity.

	All	Excluding refusal/ don't know
Remain part of UK with Direct Rule	13.5	15.8
Remain part of UK with devolved government	23.1	27.1
Reunify with the rest of Ireland	45.8	53.7
Other	2.9	3.4
Refused/don't know	14.6	0
	100	100

Table 9.1: Responses to question about long-term policy for Northern Ireland: 2018

In response to the question asking “Do you think the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be...”, 46 per cent of respondents, all residents of the Republic of Ireland, responded that policy should be for Northern Ireland “to re-unify with the rest of Ireland”, while 37 per cent responded that it

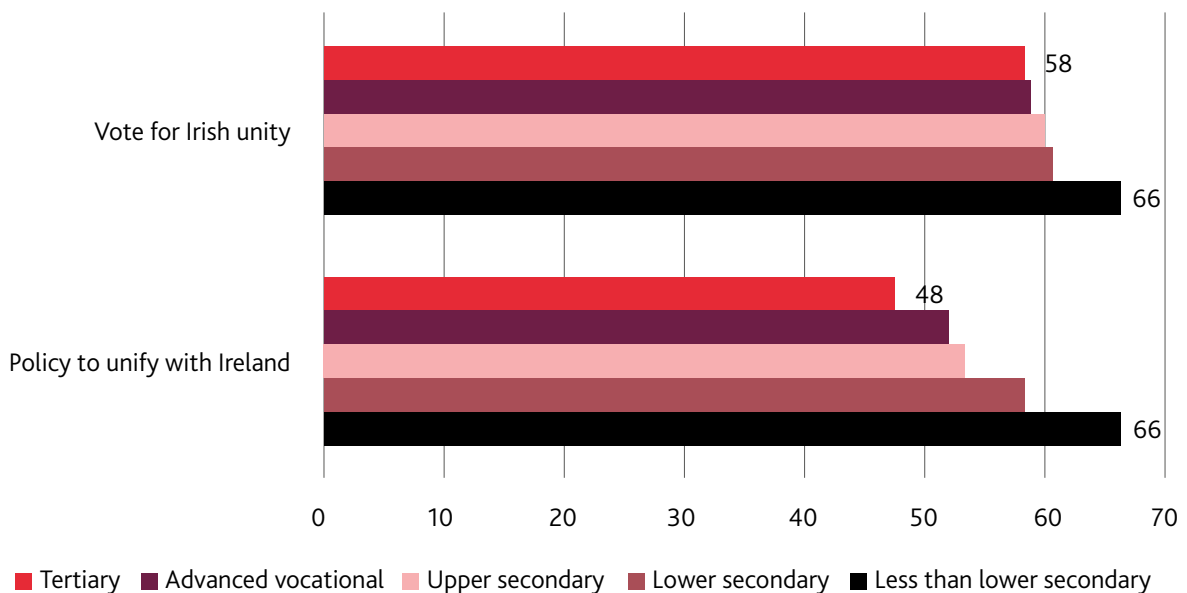
should remain part of the UK, with or without direct rule. However, a substantial proportion refused to answer the question or did not know. When the refusal/don't knows are excluded, almost 54 per cent are in favour of Irish unity.

	All	Excluding non-voters
NI to remain part of UK	21.9	25.0
NI to unite with ROI	52.6	60.0
I wouldn't vote	12.4	0
Refused/don't know	13.2	15.1
	100	100

Table 9.2: Responses to question: "How would you vote in a referendum on whether Northern Ireland should leave the UK and unite with the Republic of Ireland?": 2018

When asked how the respondent would vote in a referendum on whether Northern Ireland should leave the UK and unite with the Republic of Ireland, almost 53 per cent opted for Irish unity, although 13 per cent refused to answer and another 12 per cent responded that they would not vote in such a

referendum. When the non-voters are excluded, 60 per cent of the remainder would vote for unification. If those who refused or indicated that they did not know are also excluded the majority in favour of Irish unity would increase to 71 per cent.

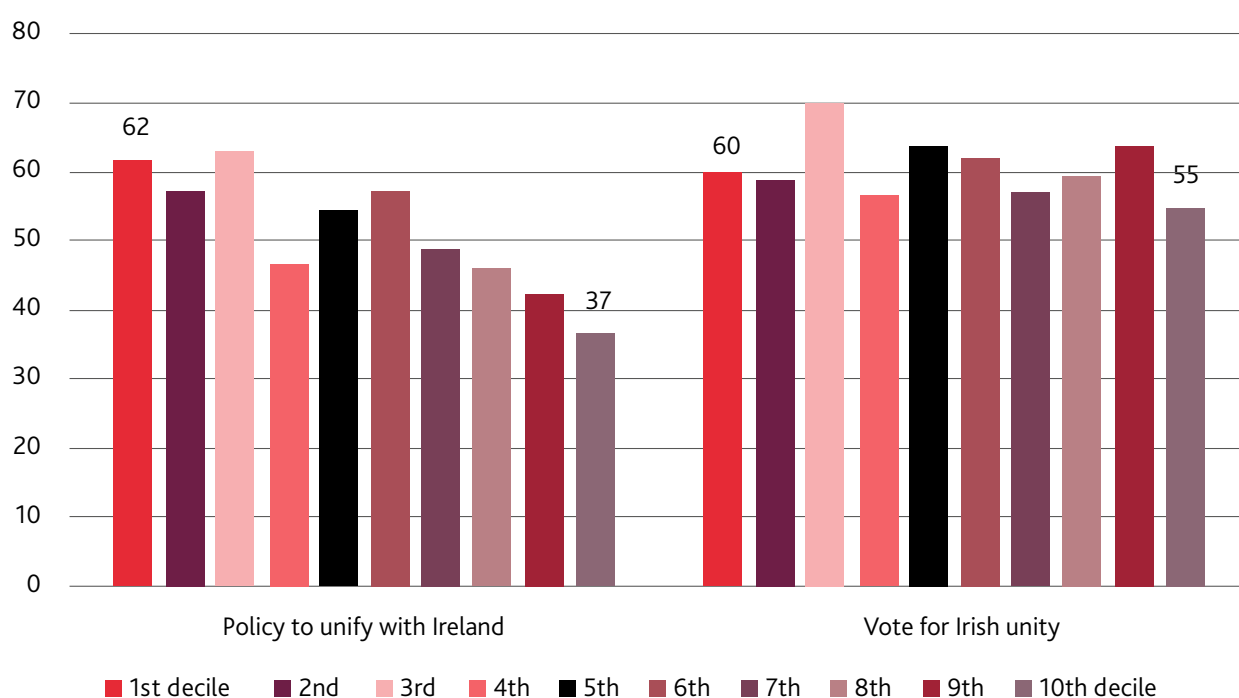


Note: The voting indicator excludes those who indicated that they would not vote in a referendum on Irish unity. The policy preference indicator excludes 'Refusal/Don't know' responses.

Figure 9.1: Policy and voting preferences in relation to Irish Unity by education: 2018

There is a clear inverted educational gradient in relation to policy preferences for Irish Unity: the higher the level of education, the lower the proportion in favour of unification. Less than 48 per cent of those with tertiary education would favour a policy of unification, compared with 66 per cent of those with lower secondary or less. However, there is much less variation in voting preferences by

education: respondents at most educational attainment levels are close to the overall average of 60 per cent indicating that they would vote for unification (the figure excludes those who indicated that they would not vote in such a referendum). The exception here is the group with lower secondary or less education, 66 per cent of whom would vote for Irish unity.



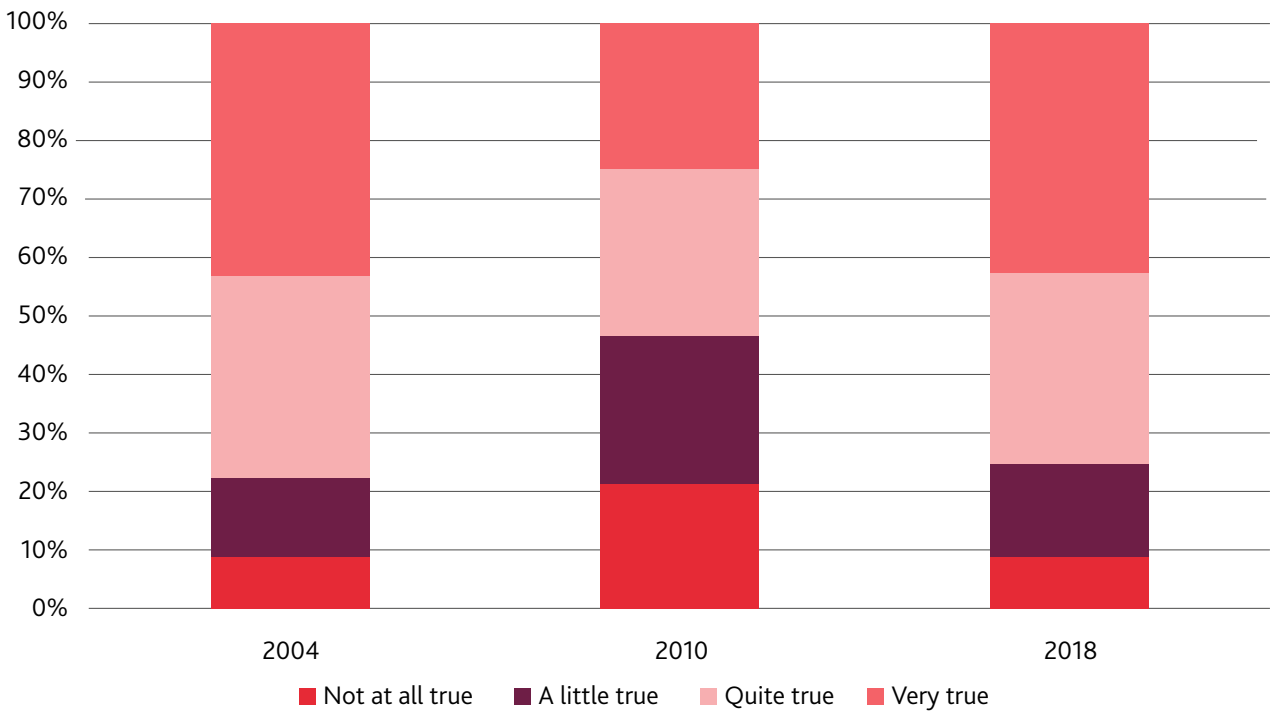
Note: The voting indicator excludes those who indicated that they would not vote in a referendum on Irish unity. The policy preference indicator excludes 'Refusal/Don't know' responses

Figure 9.2: Policy and voting preferences in relation to Northern Ireland by income decile: 2018

Support for a policy of unification is higher among lower income than higher income groups. For example, 62 per cent in the lowest income decile would support a policy of Irish unity, compared to just 37 per cent in the top decile. Again, however,

there is much less variation in voting inclinations: about 60 per cent in the bottom decile, and 55 per cent in the top decile, would vote for Irish unity in a referendum. However, almost 70 per cent in the 3rd decile would vote for unity.

Key findings 10 – Job Security



Note: The percentages are responses to the question asking workers if my current job is secure.

Figure 10.1: Proportion of workers who perceive their current job as secure: 2004, 2010 and 2018

The results from the 9th round of the European Social Survey (2018) indicate that most workers in Ireland in 2018 had job security. Just over three-quarters (76 per cent) of workers respond 'quite true' or 'very true' when asked if their current job is secure. Conversely, about one quarter of workers experience job insecurity, with 16% of all workers believing it to be 'a little true' that their job is secure, while 8 per cent respond that it is 'not at all true' that their job is secure. As Figure 10.1

illustrates, the experience among all workers of job security and insecurity has returned to levels recorded prior to the economic crash, in 2004, when round two also asked this question. These results contrast with the significant increase in job insecurity recorded during the economic crisis in 2010 (round five) where 47 per cent of workers expressed uncertainty about the security of their job.

	per cent Insecure	per cent Secure
All workers	24.4	75.6
Gender		
Male	24.0	76.0
Female	24.8	75.2
Age		
25 and under	30.4	69.6
26-35	25.4	74.6
36-45	22.2	77.8
46-55	28.2	71.8
56-65	22.3	77.7
Highest Completed Education		
Less than lower secondary	17.6	82.4
Lower secondary	27.5	72.5
Upper secondary	23.2	76.8
Advanced vocational	28.1	71.9
Tertiary education	21.6	78.4
Income Quintiles		
Bottom 20 per cent	34.2	65.8
2	28.7	71.3
3	29.5	70.5
4	17.0	83.0
Top 20 per cent	18.4	81.6

Note: Job security categories based on responses to question asking workers if my current job is secure. Secure = 'quite true' and 'very true'. Insecure = 'a little true' and 'not at all true'.

Table 10.1: Perceptions of Job Security among Workers, by various characteristics in 2018

Table 10.1 examines the composition of job security and insecurity across workers in 2018. While there is limited difference by gender, younger workers are more likely to experience job insecurity than is the case among all workers. Job security is strongest

among those living in households at the top of the income distribution while more than one-third of workers in the bottom quintile experience job insecurity.

Overview of the European Social Survey

Methodology

The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted across Europe since its establishment in 2001. Every two years, face-to-face interviews are conducted with newly selected, cross-sectional samples. The survey measures the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of diverse populations in more than thirty nations. Ireland has been a participant in all rounds of the ESS survey, supported by funding from the Irish Research Council.

The ESS sample is designed to be representative of all persons aged 15 and over (no upper age limit) resident within private households in each country, regardless of their nationality, citizenship or language. Individuals are selected by strict random

probability methods at every stage. Following the principles of the ESS sampling strategy, the Irish sample for the 9th round of the survey in Ireland had three stages. Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) selected at the first stage were geographical clusters of addresses (minimum 500 addresses per cluster). At the second stage, six addresses were selected from each PSU. At the final stage, one person was selected from each dwelling by interviewers in the field using the last-birthday method. On behalf of the UCD based national coordination team, Behaviour & Attitudes conducted fieldwork in Ireland between November 2018 and May 2019 through face-to-face interviews with a total of 2,217 individuals, achieving a response rate of 62%.

Key Questions and Variables Used in this Report

1. Trust in others

A4. Would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

You can't be too careful											Most people can be trusted											(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10												77	88

2. Health and Health Services

C7. How is your health in general?

very good	1
good	2
fair	3
bad	4
very bad	5
(Refusal)	7
(Don't know)	8

B32. What do you think overall about the state of health services in Ireland nowadays?

Extremely bad											Extremely good		(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88
													77	88

3. Trust in Institutions

B6-B10. How much do you personally trust each of the following institutions?

	No trust at all											Complete trust		(Refusal)	(Don't know)
	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88
B6. Ireland's parliament?	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88
B7. The legal system?	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88
B8. The police?	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88
B9. Politicians?	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88
B10. Political parties?	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88

4. European Unification and Attachment to Europe

B11. How much do you personally trust the European Parliament?

No trust at all											Complete trust		(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10			77	88
													77	88

B37. Some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. What number on the scale best describes your position?

Has already gone too far						Should go further					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

C10. How emotionally attached do you feel to Europe?

Not at all emotionally						Very emotionally attached					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

5. Life Satisfaction and Happiness

B27. How satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?

Extremely dissatisfied						Extremely satisfied					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

C1. How happy would you say you are?

Extremely unhappy						Extremely happy					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

6. Economic Satisfaction and Household Income Adequacy

B28. On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in Ireland?

Extremely dissatisfied						Extremely satisfied					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

F42. Which of the descriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?

Living comfortably on present income	1
Coping on present income	2
Finding it difficult on present income	3
Finding it very difficult on present income	4
(Refusal)	7
(Don't know)	8

7. Immigration

B41. Would you say it is generally bad or good for Ireland's economy that people come to live here from other countries?

Bad for the economy						Good for the economy					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

B42. Would you say that Ireland's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?

Cultural life undermined						Cultural life enriched					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

B43. Is Ireland made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?

Worse place to live						Better place to live					(Refusal)	(Don't know)
00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	77	88

8. Religion

C11. Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?

Yes	1
No	2
(Refusal)	7
(Don't know)	8

C12. Which one?

Roman Catholic	1
Church of Ireland/other Protestant	2
Eastern Orthodox	3
Other Christian denomination	4
Jewish	5
Islamic	6
Eastern religions	7
Other non-Christian religions	8
(Refusal)	77

9. Irish Unity

X7. Do you think the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be for it ...

to remain part of the United Kingdom, with direct rule	1
to remain part of the United Kingdom, with devolved government	2
or, to reunify with the rest of Ireland?	3
Other (please specify [TYPE IN])	4
(Independent State)	5
(Refusal)	7
(Don't know)	8

X9. How would you vote in a referendum on whether Northern Ireland should leave the UK and unite with the Republic of Ireland?

I would vote for Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK	1
I would vote for Northern Ireland to unite with the Republic of Ireland	2
I wouldn't vote	3
(Refusal)	4
(Don't know)	5

10. Job Security

X5. Please tell me how true the following statements is about your current job: My job is secure

Not at all true	1
A little true	2
Quite true	3
Very true	4
(Refusal)	7
(Don't know)	8

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