**Good Relations**

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT)[[1]](#footnote-1) deals with the attitudes, values and beliefs of the people in Northern Ireland on a wide range of issues, including relations between Protestants and Catholics.

The NILT survey asks respondents:

* What about relations between Protestants and Catholics? Would you say they are better than they were 5 years ago, worse, or about the same now as then?
* And what about in 5 years time? Do you think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better than now, worse than now, or about the same as now?

For the combined years of 2021, 2022 and 2023, almost 85% of respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough believe that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better (41.9%) or about the same (42.6%) as they were 5 years ago. Just over 10% of respondents believed that relations were worse now than they were 5 years ago which is an increase on the previous results for the combined years 2020-22 when just 8.9% of respondents believed that relations were worse now than they were 5 years ago. In Northern Ireland overall, almost 38% of respondents believe that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now than they were 5 years ago which is 4 percentage points lower than Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough. Almost 45% of respondents in Northern Ireland overall believe relations are about the same as 5 years ago while 12.3% believe relations are worse now than 5 years ago.

For the combined years of 2021, 2022 and 2023, 31.8% of respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough believe that relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in 5 years time. This is a reduction of almost 5 percentage points on the previous year. Just over 45% of respondents in the borough believe relations will be about the same as they are now while 13.7% believe that relations will be worse in 5 years time, when compared with last years results this is an increase of more than 2 percentage points. Just over 7% of respondents in the borough responded don’t know to this question. In Northern Ireland overall 32.4% of respondents believe relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in 5 years time, slightly higher than the borough. A lower proportion of respondents in Northern Ireland (43.6%) than the borough (45.2%) believe relations will be about the same 5 years from now while 14.7% believe relations will be worse. Just 7.1% of Northern Ireland respondents answered don’t know.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Relations between Protestants and Catholics** | | | |
|  | **5 years ago** | | **In 5 years time** | |
| **ABC** | **NI** | **ABC** | **NI** |
| **Better** | 41.9% | 37.9% | 31.8% | 32.4% |
| **Worse** | 10.3% | 12.3% | 13.7% | 14.7% |
| **About the same** | 42.6% | 44.9% | 45.2% | 43.6% |
| **Other** | 0.4% | 1.1% | 2.1% | 2.2% |
| **Don’t know** | 4.8% | 3.8% | 7.2% | 7.1% |

*Table 1: Percentage of people who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better, worse, or about the same as 5 years ago and 5 years from now in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021 - 2023. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

*Figure 1: Percentage of people who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better, worse, or about the same as 5 years ago and 5 years from now in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021 - 2023. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

The NILT survey also asks:

* In some areas the communities are divided and Protestant and Catholics tend to go to different local shops or use different GP surgeries and other services. Thinking about this area, would you say this happens a lot, a little or not at all?

Respondents to the survey in the combined years of 2021, 2022 and 2023 in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough believe that Protestants and Catholics tend to go to different local shops, GP surgeries and other services a lot (28.3%) or a little (33.4%) while 21.4% do not think this happens at all. 17% of respondents in the borough answered don’t know. In Northern Ireland overall, a higher proportion of respondents stated that that this doesn’t happen at all (27.1%) while a lower proportion stated that it happens a lot (23.9%). Compared to the results for the previous combined period 2020-22, slightly less people (-2.9 percentage points) in the borough believe that Protestants and Catholics tend to go to different local shops, GP surgeries and other services either a little or a lot. In Northern Ireland, the total proportions are relatively unchanged from a total of 58.8% in 2020-2022 to 58.6% in 2021-2023.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon** | **Northern Ireland** |
| **A lot** | 28.3% | 23.9% |
| **A little** | 33.4% | 34.7% |
| **Not at all** | 21.4% | 27.1% |
| **Don't know** | 17.0% | 14.3% |
|  | **100.0%** | **100.0%** |

*Table 2: Percentage of people who think Protestants and Catholics use different local shops, GP surgeries and other services in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-2023. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK). Figure 2: Percentage of people who think Protestants and Catholics use different local shops, GP surgeries and other services in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-2023. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

The NILT survey further asks:

* Do you think leisure centres in this area are ‘shared and open’ to both Protestants and Catholics?
* Do you think that parks in this area are ‘shared and open’ to both Protestants and Catholics?
* Do you think that libraries in this area are ‘shared and open’ to both Protestants and Catholics?
* Do you think that shopping centres in this area are ‘shared and open’ to both Protestants and Catholics?

In Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 74.5% of respondents to the combined years of the 2021, 2022 and 2023 survey think that leisure centres are definitely ‘shared and open’ while 19.9% think they are probably ‘shared and open’. This compared to 62.4% of respondents in Northern Ireland overall answering that leisure centres are definitely ‘shared and open’ while 25.8% think they are probably ‘shared and open’.

When respondents in the borough were asked about parks, 71.9% answered that they are definitely and 18.7% probably ‘shared and open’. Comparing these to Northern Ireland overall responses were 63.5% and 24.9% respectively.

Agreement that libraries are definitely or probably ‘shared and open’ to both Protestants and Catholics was slightly higher in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough (95.2%) than Northern Ireland (92.4%).

Shopping centres are thought to be ‘shared and open’ by 96.9% of respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough (80.7% yes definitely, 16.3% yes probably). This is slightly higher than the responses from Northern Ireland overall (94.2%).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ….. In this area are 'shared and open' to both Protestants and Catholics | | | | | | | |
|  | **Leisure Centres** | | **Parks** | | **Libraries** | | **Shopping Centres** | |
|  | **ABC** | **NI** | **ABC** | **NI** | **ABC** | **NI** | **ABC** | **NI** |
| Yes, definitely | 74.5% | 62.4% | 71.9% | 63.5% | 76.7% | 68.4% | 80.7% | 72.3% |
| Yes, probably | 19.9% | 25.8% | 18.7% | 24.9% | 18.5% | 23.9% | 16.3% | 21.9% |
| No Probably not | 1.5% | 6.2% | 6.0% | 7.1% | 1.4% | 3.1% | 0.8% | 2.7% |
| No Definitely not | 0.6% | 1.5% | 1.0% | 1.7% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| None in this area | 0.7% | 1.2% | 0.0% | 0.5% | 1.0% | 0.9% | 0.6% | 0.8% |
| Don't know | 2.7% | 3.0% | 2.5% | 2.3% | 2.2% | 2.8% | 1.8% | 1.8% |

*Table 3: Percentage of people who think, in their area, leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres are ‘shared and open’ to both Protestants and Catholics in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021 - 2023. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

*Figure 3: Percentage of people who think, in their area, leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres are ‘shared and open’ to both Protestant and Catholics in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

The following questions also refer to relations between Protestants and Catholics.

* If you had a choice, would you prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of only your own religion, or in a mixed-religion neighbourhood?
* And if you were working and had to change your job, would you prefer a workplace with people of only your own religion, or a mixed religion workplace?
* And if you were deciding where to send your children to school, would you prefer a school with children of only your own religion, or a mixed-religion school?

For the combined years of 2021, 2022 and 2023, just over 13% of respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough stated that they would prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people only of their own religion while almost 73% would prefer to live in a mixed-religion neighbourhood.

When it comes to workplace, almost 87% of respondents would prefer a mixed religion workplace and less than 4% would prefer a workplace only with people of their own religion. With regards schools, a much higher proportion (28.7%) of those who responded stated that they would prefer a school only with people of their own religion while almost 62% said they would prefer a mixed religion school for their children.

*Figure 4: Percentage of people who prefer mixed religion neighbourhoods / workplaces / schools in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

*Figure 5: Percentage of people who prefer neighbourhoods / workplaces / schools with people of their own religion only in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

With regards those who would prefer places with only people of their own religion, the above chart compares the results for the Borough with the Northern Ireland average. While the percentage of people preferring to live in a neighbourhood or work in a place with only people of their own religion is similar for the Borough and Northern Ireland, when it comes to schooling, a much lower percentage of people in Northern Ireland overall stated that they would prefer a school with children of only their own religion, 22.3% in NI compared to 28.7% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough.

Respondents to the survey were also asked if there has been any time in the last year when they have felt intimidated or annoyed by either

* Republican murals, kerb paintings or flags
* Loyalist murals, kerb paintings or flags

For the combined years of 2021, 2022 and 2023, 32.8% of respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough stated that in the past year they had felt intimidated by Republican murals, kerb paintings or flags while 42% had felt annoyed by them. The figures for Northern Ireland overall were slightly lower with 27.2% of respondents feeling intimidated by Republican murals, kerb paintings or flags and 38.7% feeling annoyed by them. With regards those feeling intimated or annoyed by Loyalist murals, kerb paintings or flags, the percentages were slightly higher in both the Borough and Northern Ireland overall. In Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, 42% of respondents reported feeling intimidated compared to 38.7% in Northern Ireland overall. While almost 48% of respondents in the Borough reported feeling annoyed by Loyalist murals, kerb paintings or flags, over 53% of respondents in Northern Ireland overall stated that they felt annoyed by them.

*Figure 6: Percentage of people who felt intimidated or annoyed in the last year by republican or loyalist murals, kerb paintings or flags in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements including the following:

* The culture and traditions of the Catholic community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society
* The culture and traditions of the Protestant community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society
* The culture and traditions of people from different minority ethnic groups add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society
* I feel that my own cultural identity is respected by society

*Figure 7: Percentage of people who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

For the combined years of 2021, 2022 and 2023, 64.2% of respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough agreed or strongly agreed that the culture and traditions of the Catholic community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society compared to 70.1% in Northern Ireland overall.

In the Borough, 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the culture and traditions of the Protestant community add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society which was much the same as Northern Ireland overall where 64% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Almost 60% of respondents in the Borough agreed or strongly agreed that the culture and traditions of people from different minority ethnic groups add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society compared to 66% in Northern Ireland overall.

Finally, just 43.8% of respondents in the Borough felt that their own cultural identity is respected by society, the equivalent figure for Northern Ireland was 48.1%. For all statements, there was less agreement from respondents in the Borough compared to the Northern Ireland average.

Keeping with the theme of cultural identity, respondents were also asked the following questions:

* Thinking about your workplace, is it a place where you feel you can be open about your own cultural identity? (Inc only those who have a workplace)

In the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough for the combined years 2021, 2022 & 2023, just over three quarters of respondents felt that they could be open about their own cultural identity in their workplace while almost 21% felt that they could not. The figures were much the same for the Northern Ireland overall.

*Figure 8: Percentage of people who feel their workplace is a place where they can be open about their own cultural identity in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

* And thinking about the schools that your children attend – if you have children at school – are all these schools places where your children feel that they can be open about their own cultural identity? (Inc only those who have children at school)

For those that have children at school just over 78% of respondents felt that schools were places where their children could be open about their own cultural identity while less than 10% felt that they could not. In Northern Ireland, the equivalent figures were 78.3% and 11.5%. In the Borough, just over 7% of respondents felt that it would depend on the school as to whether or not the children could be open about their own cultural identity.

*Figure 9: Percentage of people who feel their schools are a place where their children can be open about their own cultural identity in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

* And thinking of the neighbourhood where you live, is it a place where you feel you can be open about your own cultural identity?

With regards to the neighbourhood that people live in, over 80% of respondents in both the borough and Northern Ireland overall felt that their neighbourhood was a place where they could be open about their own cultural identity. Surprisingly though, approximately 15% of respondents live in a neighbourhood where they don’t feel that they can be open about their own cultural identity.

*Figure 10: Percentage of people who feel their neighbourhood is a place where they can be open about their own cultural identity in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021-23. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

The NILT survey asks respondents:

Supposing there was an event that you wanted to go to in a nearby town. How safe do you think you would feel going if it was to be held in these premises?

* A GAA club (Gaelic Sports club)
* An Orange hall
* A Catholic secondary school
* A Protestant secondary school

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | A GAA club (Gaelic Sports club) | | An Orange Hall | |
|  | **Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon** | **Northern Ireland** | **Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon** | **Northern Ireland** |
| Very Safe | 35.0% | 39.3% | 28.1% | 24.1% |
| Quite Safe | 25.2% | 24.9% | 32.7% | 28.2% |
| Neither safe nor unsafe | 13.7% | 14.9% | 14.4% | 18.4% |
| Quite Unsafe | 10.7% | 8.8% | 8.2% | 12.6% |
| Very Unsafe | 8.0% | 6.9% | 9.1% | 10.4% |
| I don't know | 7.2% | 5.0% | 7.3% | 6.1% |
| Prefer not to say | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| Grand Total | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** |

*Table 4: How safe people would feel attending events in nearby towns, results for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021 - 2023. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

For the combined years 2021, 2022 and 2023, approximately 60% of respondents in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough stated that they would feel either quite safe or very safe attending an event in a GAA Club in a nearby town. This is lower than the average for Northern Ireland at 64%. In the Borough, almost 19% of respondents stated that they would feel either quite unsafe or very unsafe attending an event in a GAA Club in a nearby town which is higher than the average for Northern Ireland at just under 16%.

With regards attending an event in an Orange Hall in a nearby town, almost 61% of respondents in the Borough stated that they would feel very safe or quite safe compared to just 52% in Northern Ireland overall. Approximately 17% of respondents stated that they would feel either quite unsafe or very unsafe attending an event in an Orange Hall in a nearby town which is almost 6 percentage points lower than the average for Northern Ireland at 23%.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | A Catholic secondary school | | A Protestant secondary school | |
|  | **Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon** | **Northern Ireland** | **Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon** | **Northern Ireland** |
| Very Safe | 44.8% | 50.4% | 47.7% | 46.4% |
| Quite Safe | 31.8% | 29.9% | 35.7% | 34.2% |
| Neither safe nor unsafe | 12.3% | 11.1% | 8.7% | 11.8% |
| Quite Unsafe | 5.7% | 3.8% | 3.6% | 2.9% |
| Very Unsafe | 1.9% | 1.7% | 0.9% | 1.4% |
| I don't know | 3.4% | 2.9% | 3.2% | 3.0% |
| Prefer not to say | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| Grand Total | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** | **100.0%** |

*Table 5: How safe people would feel attending events in nearby towns, results for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough and Northern Ireland 2021 - 2023. Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK).*

With regards events in nearby towns held in secondary schools, in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, 83.4% of respondents would feel safe attending an event in a Protestant school compared to 76.6% who would feel safe attending an event in a Catholic School. In Northern Ireland overall, the proportions are much the same with approximately 80% of respondents stating that they would feel safe attending an event in either a Catholic secondary school or a Protestant secondary school in a nearby town.

Further information can be found via the following links:

<https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/>

<https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Home.aspx> and type Northern Ireland Life and Times into the search bar.

1. Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (ARK) - <https://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)