

Taskforce on Active Citizenship

*Statistical Evidence
on Active Citizenship
in Ireland*



Taskforce on
active
citizenship

TASCFHÓRSA UM SHAORÁNACHT GHNÍOMHACH

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Preface:

The Taskforce on Active Citizenship was appointed by the Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern T.D. in April 2006 to, amongst other things, ‘review the evidence regarding trends in citizen participation across the main areas of civic, community, cultural, occupational and recreational life in Ireland’ and to ‘examine those trends in the context of international experience and analysis.’

This report provides an overview of some of the statistical evidence about Active Citizenship in Ireland, and in particular, a *Survey of Civic Engagement* (SCE) which the Taskforce commissioned. This was conducted in September 2006 as part of the monthly *Economic and Social Research Institute* EU Consumer Survey. The results of this survey are reviewed alongside other statistical information.

This report is one of a range of background papers produced by the Taskforce, which include papers on ‘The Concept of Active Citizenship’ and ‘Active Citizenship in faith-based communities’.

These reports, as well as the Taskforce’s Report to Government (March 2007) and other relevant information are available on the Taskforce website www.activecitizen.ie.

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1. Introduction

It is not easy to quantify 'Active Citizenship'. It is a very broad concept involving many different dimensions of the attitudes, lives and experiences of people. The meaning and interpretation of questions relating to Active Citizenship (volunteering, trust, participation etc.) can vary across different social, cultural and ethnic groups not to mention over time as expectations and values change. Ireland is no exception to these difficulties.

Nevertheless, there are some very partial and limited data available in relation to levels and trends in volunteering, civic participation, voting and social contact in Ireland. Much of the evidence refers to statistical surveys undertaken relatively recently – not allowing comparisons over a long stretch of time and often not in a way that is directly comparable from one survey to the next. This paper reviews some statistical evidence in relation to surveys undertaken in the last 15 years as well as a specially commissioned survey undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute for the Taskforce in September 2006. Trends and patterns of engagement in the 1990s and early years of the current decade are analysed in section 2 of this paper. More recent trends in volunteering and organisational membership are described in section 3 – based on the findings of the ESRI Survey. In section 4, these findings are extended to other areas of active citizenship such as inter-personal trust as well as specific spheres of social engagement such as sports and organised religion. The findings are then set in an international context in section 5. Finally, emerging issues for public policy and research are highlighted in section 6.

An important qualification to underline at the outset of this paper is that 'Active Citizenship' is more than just volunteering outside the home or civic-political engagement through the democratic process. Active Citizenship also refers to the unpaid caring work of huge sections of the population in families. It is important not to lose sight of that vital and wide-scale aspect of Active Citizenship even though it is not covered in the data reported in this paper.

It is also important to recognise the scale of caring for others that does not appear in statistics of volunteering and community engagement frequently defined and measured in terms of activity *outside* households or families. According to the *Eurobarometer*, in 2002 over 18% of adults in European Member States provided informal care to family persons with long-term illness, who were handicapped or elderly. The corresponding figure for Ireland was 22% (Eurobarometer, 2002)¹. Alber and Kohler (2004) have found that informal care outside the home is most prevalent in those EU States where formal community services are most developed – contradicting the notion that public service and informal care are necessarily substitutes for each other.

¹ Question read as: 'Some people have extra family responsibilities because they look after someone who has a long-term illness, who is handicapped or elderly. Is there anyone living with you who has a long-term illness, who is handicapped or elderly, whom you look after or give special help to? And do you provide some regular service or help to such a person NOT living with you?'



2. Patterns of Active Citizenship over the period 1990-2002

There have been growing concerns in Ireland, as elsewhere, about the extent to which people are prepared to be involved in their communities. Pressures of time, work, commuting and patterns of changing values and lifestyles have raised questions about whether there is a 'crisis' of volunteering and community. Added to this, trust in institutions, politics and capacity of communities for collective action are under strain. But, is 'Active Citizenship' (or 'social capital') really declining? Or, is it just changing in ways that are hard to summarise? Perhaps, good will, neighbourliness and concern about the public good are as strong as ever but they are not put to effect as much as before because of factors outside people's direct control. We may be facing more a challenge of disempowerment than involvement in voluntary associations or communities. It is difficult to answer these questions with any firm and comprehensive data.

What sources of data are available suggest that, over the last 15 years, levels of volunteering and community involvement in Ireland have not declined in any marked or noticeable way. This is surprising given that popular perceptions have indicated that people are less involved. As indicated in the public consultations of the Taskforce, the vast majority of people who provided responses to questions about trends said that they believed volunteering was in decline (90% said so)². At the same time, in direct response to a question about difficulties experienced in recruiting and keeping volunteers, just a little over one half (53%) of persons belonging to voluntary and community groups who made submissions to the Taskforce said that it had become more difficult.

The main source of data on trends in volunteering in the 1990s is the National College of Ireland survey of volunteering first undertaken in 1992 and repeated in 1998 (Ruddle and O'Connor, 1999, and Ruddle and Mulvihill, 1999). It showed a decline of 6 percentage points in volunteering among the adult population between 1992 and 1998 from 39% to 33%. Another source is the *European Values Survey*. It showed an increase in membership of associations from 49% of the adult population in Ireland in 1990 to 57% in 1999 with an increase in the proportion doing unpaid voluntary work for an organisation from 27% to 33% over the same period (NESF, 2003). These are the only two known data sources on trends in volunteering in Ireland over the period of the 1990s.

Respondents in the *European Values Survey* were also asked about whether they trusted other people. This indicator shows no clear pattern over time – with an increase from 1981 to 1990 and a fall from 1990 to 1999. Likewise trust in institutions has been fairly stable over the period 1990-1999. Hence, there is no obvious downward trend in Active Citizenship in the course of the 1990s – judging by just two data sources and a very limited number of questions addressed to survey respondents.

2 Public Consultation Paper: <http://www.activecitizen.ie>

In 2002, as part of its work on the policy implications of social capital, the *National Economic and Social Forum* commissioned survey work on the level and distribution of social capital. This survey is not comparable with earlier surveys cited above (including the *European Values Survey*). Hence, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about trends between 1990 and 2002 when the NESF Survey was undertaken. However, the 2002 survey (NESF, 2003: 49-66) confirmed what was already known from work undertaken by Ruddle, Mulvihill and O'Connor in the 1990s (and reported in *National Committee on Volunteering*, 2002:16):

- Volunteering and community involvement was higher among people in mid-life (40 yrs-64 yrs)
- Persons with disabilities and older members of the population were much less likely to be involved in their community, and
- Level of educational attainment – and by association socio-economic status – were very strongly related to engagement measured by volunteering or active community organisation membership

From these sources, it is possible to conclude that Active Citizenship as measured by volunteering and membership of community organisations is positively related to age, educational background, marital status and socio-economic status. Different patterns emerge on some other measures including voting, trust and informal social contact and support. Informal social contact and support were much lower for particular disadvantaged groups including the unemployed and persons with a disability.

The NESF Survey (as well as a CSO survey of voting in 2002 – CSO, 2003) indicated higher rates of voter turnout among older persons (50 yrs and over) and somewhat lower rates among the young and amongst young males. It showed that over 55% of those aged under 25 had not voted in any election since they became eligible to do so.

Further analysis of the 2002 Survey data (Healy, 2005: 17) showed that, other things equal, people who are well educated, married, with children and who are settled in a particular geographical location for a long time are more likely to give time in volunteering or community activities. It also emerged that participation by women in the labour force did not appear to be associated with lower levels of volunteering and community involvement – even controlling or comparing for other factors such as income, education etc.

In summary, from the extremely limited data available, no clear trend (upwards or downwards) emerged from an analysis of civic behaviour and attitude in the 1990s. Rates of turnout at election time have tended to fall (although the rate rallied in 2004 in the local elections possibly due, in part, to the timing of those elections with a referendum). However, at any one point in time, clear patterns do emerge when we analyse measures of active citizenship by age, education, family and social situation.



3. More recent trends since 2002

The Taskforce commissioned a *Survey of Civic Engagement* (SCE) in September 2006. 1,045 persons aged 16 and over were interviewed on landline telephones as part of the monthly *Economic and Social Research Institute* EU Consumer Survey. Details of the SCE Questionnaire are shown in Appendix A. The Survey served three purposes:

- To track trends, over the previous 4 years since the NESF Survey in 2002, in key measures of Active Citizenship
- To confirm known patterns of engagement by age, gender, location and socio-economic background, and
- To explore some new indicators of Active Citizenship not asked in previous surveys here

What emerged from the 2006 *Survey of Civic Engagement* in 2006 very much matched the results of the 2002 Survey³. Many of the questions asked in the 2006 Survey were identical, by intention, to those posed in the 2002 Survey so as to test for any shifts in behaviour or perception in recent years. Surprisingly, perhaps, some measures showed an increased level of engagement in the community. In Tables 1, 2 and 3 two measures are used: (i) unpaid and regular volunteering (outside the home) and (ii) active involvement in the community in the previous 12 months. The precise wording of these questions (refer to Appendix A) is vital to any comparisons over time. Hence, the wording in the case of these two measures was kept identical in both surveys.

Taken together, Tables 1, 2 and 3 suggest a likely upward trend across the whole adult population between 2002 and 2006 in levels of engagement and volunteering across the main demographic, socio-economic and location characteristics of individuals. Regular volunteering increased from 17.1% of the adult population in 2002 to 23.1% in 2006 while active community involvement went up from 21.7% to 29.0% in the same period (Table 1).

As in the 2002 Survey, active engagement in community organisations and volunteering is highest among those aged in their 40s; those with higher education or Leaving Certificate completion and in rural areas. On average, rural areas seem to attract more volunteers or active community members as a proportion of total population in those areas. An interesting finding in both the 2002 and 2006 Surveys is that those in paid employment or paid self-employment are much more likely to be actively involved than those who are not – including homemakers, the unemployed⁴ and students. As in all sample surveys care is needed in drawing any general conclusions especially with regard to any particular sub-group or domain⁵.

³ 1,185 was the total number of respondents in the 2002 Survey undertaken by the ESRI.

⁴ An exception being rates of volunteering among the unemployed reported in 2002.

⁵ Further analysis will be undertaken in 2007 on the combined impact of many variables on Active Citizenship. As in the analysis of 2002 data (Healy 2005) multi-variate regressions of volunteering indicate that the following factors are significantly related to volunteering: age, level of education, marital status and whether or not there are children in the household and length of residence in a community. In other words, by taking all factors into account at the same time, level of education, age etc. are positively related to volunteering. This finding does not show that these factors necessarily cause higher levels of volunteering. However, they indicate patterns of association that are familiar in the literature on social capital and confirm previous findings in 2002.

Has there really been an increase across the board in regular volunteering, active community involvement and various types of civic-political engagement. These apparent increases in participation and active engagement seemed to apply across the board for most groups. It is difficult to reconcile these apparent increases with popular perceptions about recent trends in volunteering and community participation. Is it possible that these increases are due to sampling fluctuation or other shifts in reporting that do not reflect the reality on the ground? It is difficult to give a definitive answer. However, bearing in mind the technical issues described in Appendix B it seems unlikely that these increases are down to some underlying differences in survey conditions between 2002 and 2006 or random sampling error. The indications are that levels of volunteering, active community membership and civic-political engagement have increased somewhat over the last 4 years.

Table 1 Trends in Volunteering and Community Engagement by sex, age and marital status, 2002-2006

Percentage of adults who: (A) undertook any type of unpaid, regular voluntary activity or service outside the home or workplace; (B) were actively involved in any type of voluntary or community group in the last 12 months

	A. Regular Volunteer		B. Actively engaged in Community	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
All respondents	17.1	23.1	21.7	29.0
Male	18.9	23.7	25.3	31.4
Female	15.4	22.5	18.4	26.7
Age				
29 yrs and under	16.9	14.7	24.8	25.0
30-39 yrs	19.3	23.2	20.7	31.2
40-49 yrs	22.8	33.2	25.7	39.7
50-64 yrs	18.5	31.2	25.5	29.7
65 yrs and over	6.1	14.8	7.3	19.1
Marital status				
Married or with partner	20.3	28.6	26.4	36.2
Widowed	9.1	13.8	8.4	15.4
Never married	16.8	16.0	20.8	21.0
Separated/divorced	12.3	23.1	19.6	20.5

Sources: ESRI SCE Survey, 2006 and 2002 (NESF, 2003: 51) and Healy (2005)



An additional way of measuring Active Citizenship is to ask people about the extent to which they are involved in political or local community action around a variety of issues and problems in the community. This involves critical awareness, action with others or on one's own as well as more sustained political involvement through active membership of an organisation. Loosely, these areas of engagement may be referred to as 'civic-political engagement' – not to suggest that volunteering and active community membership are also examples of civic engagement – but to distinguish political or issues-based campaigning from activities that do not refer to citizens consciously acting to bring about some change in social arrangements. Civic-political engagement – measured as participation in at least one of eight possible areas of activity within the previous 12 months – was up from 30.8% to 37.2% over this period (Table 4). Once again, there is no prima facie evidence for a generalised decline in 'social capital' or 'Active Citizenship' as measured in these available, but limited, indicators.

Table 2 Trends in Volunteering and Community Engagement by educational attainment and employment status, 2002-2006

Percentage of adults who: (A) undertook any type of unpaid, regular voluntary activity or service outside the home or workplace; (B) were actively involved in any type of voluntary or community group in the last 12 months

	A. Volunteered		B. Actively engaged in Community	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
All respondents	17.1	23.1	21.7	29.0
Highest level of completed education				
Primary	6.3	10.3	11.0	9.5
Junior Certificate	15.5	20.5	16.4	29.1
Leaving Certificate (or equivalent)	21.3	31.2	25.8	40.1
Post-Leaving Certificate/Other	24.1	19.6	29.5	21.6
Third Level	27.0	28.2	39.7	34.6
Employment Status				
At work	19.5	27.1	27.1	34.4
Retired	10.6	17.4	10.1	24.4
Full-time education	19.8	22.1	24.8	28.0
Unemployed/sick/disability	26.4	19.8	25.5	16.5
Homemakers	10.5	16.3	11.0	24.0

Sources: ESRI SCE Survey, 2006 and 2002 (NESF, 2003: 51)



Table 3 Trends in Volunteering and Community Engagement by size of location, 2002-2006

Percentage of adults who: (A) undertook any type of unpaid, regular voluntary activity or service outside the home or workplace; (B) were actively involved in any type of voluntary or community group in the last 12 months

	A. Volunteered		B. Actively engaged in Community	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
All respondents	17.1	23.1	21.7	29.0
Open countryside	19.8	29.8	26.7	38.4
Villages (less than 1,500 inhabitants)	21.7	23.3	35.0	28.2
Small towns (1,000-4,999 inhabitants)	21.8	21.6	21.6	37.4
Large towns (5,000-9,999 inhabitants)	24.6	29.1	23.0	13.9
Cities or large towns (10,000 or more inhabitants)*	10.6	16.9	12.0	22.9
Dublin City and County	15.3	16.7	21.4	22.2

**other than Dublin. Sources: ESRI SCE Survey, 2006 and 2002 (NESF, 2003: 51)*

Table 4 Trends in civic-political engagement, 2002-2006

Percentage of adults who engaged in various types of civic-political behaviour

Type of civic-political engagement (previous 12 months)	2002	2006
At least one type of engagement	30.8	37.2
Attended a public meeting	17.5	18.8
Contacted a public representative	14.0	15.3
Contacted an organisation	10.7	17.3
Joined an action group	5.5	4.5
Contacted/appeared on radio/TV	4.5	4.6
Wrote to a newspaper	3.5	3.6
Undertook voluntary work for a political party	3.1	2.8



If the apparent increases in measurable Active Citizenship are real in the general population, it is possible that they reflect shifts in behaviour arising from diverse factors including increased income, changing lifestyles, rising education levels as well as greater awareness about the issue of Active Citizenship and social participation. Closer examination of the details underlying participation may yield insights with respect to which types of organisations or activities are enjoying growth. Table 5, below, shows a percentage breakdown of organisations mentioned in respect of those adults who reported being active in a community or voluntary organisation in the previous 12 months⁶. The results are ranked in order of magnitude in 2006. As in 2002, around one quarter of organisations mentioned by actively engaged persons were sports organisations. Next in importance were various community associations including residents followed by voluntary or charitable organisations working in support of the needy (deprived, older people, special needs) and then religious, church or parish based organisations. Various advocacy, political, professional and 'single issue' organisations account for relatively much less of active community engagement.

Comparing the proportionate breakdown in organisation type between 2002 and 2006 it is possible to identify those areas of active engagement that lay behind the apparent increase in overall active community engagement. The two types of engagement that grew the most were: community/residents' associations and voluntary/charitable organisations.

An interesting feature of the data is the pattern of engagement by gender. Respondents were asked to mention up to three organisations of which they were active members. Taking the first organisation out of three mentioned by actively engaged adults, the overall distribution between men and women is about equal. However, women account for 72% and 61%, respectively, of Church and Community/resident association organisations mentioned. By contrast, men account for 73% of sports organisations mentioned.

⁶ Respondents were able to mention up to three organisations. All mentions have been taken into account for the purposes of Table 5.



Table 5 Trends in Active Community Engagement by Organisational Type, 2002-2006

Percentage distribution of organisations mentioned by adults who reported being actively engaged in community and voluntary organisations in the previous 12 months

Organisational type	2002	2006
Sports	26.4	24.8
Community/Residents' Association	9.2	14.3
Social welfare services (older people, disability, deprived)	10.8	12.2
Religious or Church organisations	20.2	10.9
Voluntary organisations on health	3.9	4.7
Education	0.7	4.3
Youth work	3.9	4.3
Other Groups	3.0	4.3
Schools/Parents associations/Board of Management	5.1	4.3
Recreation	3.2	3.0
Women's groups	1.8	2.4
Political parties/groups	2.1	2.4
Third World/human rights	1.1	1.9
Trade Unions	1.6	1.7
Arts, culture, music	2.1	1.5
Local community action (poverty, employment, housing, racial equality)	1.1	0.9
Professional associations	3.4	0.2
Conservation, environment, ecology, animal rights	0.2	0.2
Missing/Don't know	0.0	1.7
Total	100	100

In light of these apparent increases are there grounds for concern about patterns of civic participation and volunteering? The answer is yes. Two significant problems are identified. First, a large majority of the population is not engaged actively in any community organisation or form of regular volunteering. Similarly, only a minority of persons engage in at least one type of civic-political engagement (Table 4). Second, the pattern of engagement is very unevenly spread across the population with particular groups being much less involved than others. This finding raises major concerns on grounds of social equity and potential access to political and community decision-making. The fact that a majority of people in the population are not 'active' – in the narrow sense of volunteering outside the home or active



membership of a community organisation – may be difficult for some to reconcile with the impression that many areas – rural and urban – are teeming with activity, sports volunteering and volunteering in the evening time or at weekends. At just 29% of the adult population, an estimated 860,000 persons were involved as active members of their community in 2006. Yet, over 2 million adults were not. Similarly, close to 700,000 adults were involved in regular volunteering but 2.3 million were not. By combining questions on volunteering, community involvement and civic-political engagement it is possible to estimate the size of a population group that were not involved in any of these three aforementioned areas. In all, there were an estimated 1.4 million persons who were neither regular volunteers or actively involved in their communities or who had not undertaken one of eight possible areas of civic-political engagement in the previous 12 months (refer to Table 4 for details of these areas). By contrast, 1.6 million adults were engaged under at least one of these headings. According to this measurement of engagement, there were relatively more to be found among those over the age of 65, those not in the labour force or at study (especially homemakers), those on low income (less than €300 per week) and those who left school early.

As stated above, it is important not to infer from these findings that persons who do not report regular volunteering outside the home and workplace or who do not report active membership of some community organisation are not active citizens. Hundreds of thousands of parents – mainly women – work long hours at home and elsewhere caring for children, and in some cases, older people or others with special needs. This form of unpaid and voluntary activity is sometimes undertaken in conjunction with paid work in the labour market and sometimes not – and often unrecognised and under-valued – provides a vital investment in national prosperity and well-being both for now and into the future. Others in the adult population for reasons of health, age or other circumstances are not readily able to take an active role in their community⁷.

Many commentators have associated declining or depressed levels of community engagement with increased commuting and travel to work time. As house prices soar in Dublin and other areas many younger couples and individuals move long distances to live and commute to work in Dublin and other centres. Are these changes impacting negatively on volunteering and community engagement in the new estates and suburbs? In the 2002 Survey, for all respondents who undertook some paid work, the average total daily travel time (home to work and back again) came to 61 minutes. By 2006 this average was 70 minutes. The pattern of regular volunteering in each year by amount of travel time is shown in Table 6. The relationship is not as clear-cut as might have been expected. Only persons with very long commutes of over 3 hours per day (in both directions combined) are much less inclined to volunteer on a regular basis. However, these comparisons need to take account of other characteristics of individuals including their age, household composition, education etc.

⁷ *That said, every means should be found to encourage their involvement to the greatest extent possible. Everyone has something important to give.*

Table 6 Active Citizenship and commuting
Rates of regular volunteering by total amount of time spent travelling between home and work each day (for persons in paid employment only)

	2002	2006
Less than 45 minutes	21.4	31.8
45 mins - 1hr 14 mins	21.0	20.9
1hr 15 mins - 1hr 44 mins	17.9	17.1
1hr 45 mins - 2hr 14 mins	26.2	34.6
2hr 15 mins - 2hr 44 mins	11.8	27.3
2hr 45 mins - 3hr 14 mins	25.0	25.0
3hr 15 mins or greater	7.1	13.6
Total volunteering rate for all persons in employment	20.3	27.0
(overall rate of volunteering)	(17.1%)	(23.1%)
Average daily travel time	61 minutes per day	70 minutes per day

An important question has emerged in relation to the increased levels of inward migration and growing diversity in the population. Are recently arrived immigrants more or less likely to be active in the community? Feldman et al. (2005) has noted a significant growth in a range of voluntary and community organisations led by members of minority groups. A question on nationality was asked in the 2006 Survey (but not in the 2002 Survey). Just under 6% of the sample said that they were not Irish citizens. About one half of these were under the age of 30 compared to one quarter in the case of Irish nationals (thus biasing any direct comparison with the rest of the population in the absence of an adjustment for age). Notwithstanding the small absolute size of newcomers in the overall sample (62 out of a total of 1,036 that answered the question on nationality), some interesting patterns of engagement emerge. Only 14.5% of newcomers were regular volunteers compared to 23.6% in the case of Irish nationals. Similar results arose in the case of active community involvement where 18.3% of newcomers were involved compared to 29.6% in the case of Irish nationals. The pattern was reversed in the case of civic-political engagement where reported engagement was higher among newcomers (42.6%) compared to the rest of the population (36.8%).



4. Other findings in relation to Active Citizenship in 2006

In this section a wider range of indicators of Active Citizenship are examined.

The issue of community efficacy has been raised in the public consultations about Active Citizenship – the extent to which people believe that their actions can make a difference locally or nationally. In the 2006 Survey (but not in 2002) respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement that: ‘you can influence decisions affecting your local area’. Just over one half of all adults agreed with this statement (Table 7). About one in ten of respondents ‘definitely disagreed’ and this proportion did not vary much by age or gender. However, it did vary a lot by gross weekly income of respondents: just over one in four of low income households (on less than €300 gross income per week) disagreed compared to less than one in ten in high income households (on more than €1,250).

Table 7 Community Efficacy


Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?

	Definitely agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Definitely disagree
All respondents	14.0	39.5	35.5	11.0
Male	15.4	40.4	33.3	11.0
Female	12.7	38.8	37.6	10.9
Age: Less than 29yrs	12.3	41.0	36.9	9.7
30-39yrs	13.2	45.4	30.7	10.7
40-49yrs	14.8	38.8	35.0	11.5
50-64yrs	18.2	36.8	34.4	10.5
65+yrs	11.5	33.8	41.4	13.4

Respondents were also asked about their interest in politics. Just over 38% of all respondents reported being either ‘definitely’ or ‘somewhat’ interested in politics. This proportion increased with age and was significantly higher for men than for women.

Voting and registration for voting are important issues of policy interest. In all, 88.5% of all respondents said that they were registered to vote. It is not clear how many of these were actually registered to vote at their current address according to the register published on 1 November 2006 following the Survey in September. The proportion claiming to be registered was over 90% for all age-groups over 29 but was only 76% for the 20-29 age-group⁸. The Referendum Commission commissioned

⁸ It was not possible to disaggregate 16-19 year olds into 16-17 year olds and 18-19 year olds separately – hence, a composite figure for 18-24 year olds cannot be shown.



research in 2004 which found that three out of four in the 18-24 year age bracket were registered. Analysis by the CSO (CSO, 2003) has shown that lack of registration and student mobility exceed, by far, lack of interest or presence of disillusionment in the list of reasons given by young people for not voting. Given the relatively low level of political participation and voting in particular areas of disadvantage and among some groups there is a need for further research on the barriers in terms of interest, opportunity and capacity for civic engagement.

No analysis of volunteering and active community engagement in an Irish context would be complete without a consideration of the role of sports – coaching, participation and active membership. Recent work by the ESRI (Delaney and Fahey, 2005) has highlighted the key role of sport in helping social engagement. It showed that around 15% of adults volunteer for sporting activity in the course of the sporting year. An estimated 30% of all adults are members of some type of sports club (40% for men and 20% for women). The GAA is the dominant sports organisation for which people volunteer. Volunteer rates also vary by socio-economic position, with professionals about twice as likely to volunteer as semi-skilled or unskilled workers, and those at work. Events such as the Special Olympics in 2003 as well as the on-going levels of participation in sports at a local and national level suggest that there is a lot of engagement and goodwill – if it can be tapped into and people are asked and enabled to play a role.

The 2006 ESRI Survey commissioned by the Taskforce confirms that 29% of all adults were ‘actively involved in any type of voluntary or community group in the last 12 months’. Of these, 37% of respondents reported being actively involved in at least one sports organisation (26% of first mentions and 37% of all three mentions in this Survey taken together). So, in all, an estimated 10.5% of all respondents reported being actively involved in a voluntary or community group associated with sport. These figures are not inconsistent with broad patterns found in other Surveys including the earlier ESRI Survey referred to above. It should be borne in mind that the precise wording of the Survey Questionnaire is crucial in determining or comparing levels of engagement.

Other sources include the *European Social Survey (ESS)* (Delaney and Keaney, 2005) undertaken in 2002 which showed a rate of 33% membership of sporting organisations among the adult population in Ireland. The ESS showed that 17% of adults in Ireland played sport while 6% actually volunteered in sports organisations. Interestingly, among European countries, Ireland had the highest proportion of people who had ‘personal friends’ in sports organisations.

The NESF Report on Social Capital (NESF, 2003) cited European Values Survey data showing a 28% membership rate of sports and recreational organisations compared to 16% on average across 32 European countries in 1999. 13.5% of respondents in Ireland carried out ‘unpaid voluntary work’ for a sports organisation (compared to 7% on average across 32 countries).

Organised religion continues to represent a significant source of social interaction in Irish society – shaping people’s behaviour and values. Underlying the various religions and spiritualities that go to create modern-day Ireland, is a sense that we are obliged to love and care for one another and to play our part in establishing a more just world. These values also permeate various non-religious ways of life and

belief. Apart from the impact of belief and value systems, various types of religious organisations help to engage people in voluntary and community activities. At the same time, some aspects of religious behaviour and belief could also undermine community cohesion and mutual respect and tolerance. Care is needed in interpreting the complex inter-play between beliefs, values and behaviour especially as they impact differently according to circumstances.

Data on the extent to which people are involved in religious organisations and are regular participants in religious services could provide an important clue as to its significance in explaining not only active community involvement but the opportunities that people of all ages and backgrounds have to find support, identity and belonging in their weekly and daily lives – not all of which are through the mechanism of formal volunteering and membership of community groups. In Table 5, above, we have seen how religious organisations account for about 11% of all community and voluntary organisations mentioned by actively engaged survey respondents in 2006 (the figure was down from 20% in 2002). Tables 8A and 8B, below, provide a comparison of the proportions within each age group that attend religious services according to their frequency. These tables indicate a marked increase in frequency of attendance as age increases. Cohort and lifecycle effects are difficult to disentangle in cross-sectional data such as these. It is likely that some people change their pattern of attendance over the course of their own lives.

A comparison of 2002 and 2006 does not show any major changes. Overall, 'regular attendance' is down from around 65% to 60%. This fall seems to be concentrated in the mid-years (30-64) than among younger or older persons. Compared to patterns of attendance at religious services in other European countries, Ireland still remains among the very few where large proportions of the population still attend religious services on a fairly regular basis. Even amongst young people only 35.8% are 'non-participants' – defined as not attending at all or any more than once a year⁹.

In Table 8C, rates of volunteering and active community involvement are cross-tabulated against 'regular' and 'non-participant' groups. There is clear evidence of higher involvement and volunteering among the more frequent Church-goers. However, further analysis is required to adjust for age and other factors that are highly correlated with frequency of Church-going. It should be emphasised that statistical correlation, alone, does not prove causality: other factors simultaneously associated with both religion and volunteering may be driving this behaviour.

⁹ However, this figure is 46% for the 20-29 age-group in the Dublin area.

Table 8A Frequency of attendance at religious services in 2006

	less than 29 yrs	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-64 yrs	65+ yrs	All
Overall 'regular' ¹ attendance	38.7	53.8	60.9	69.5	88.8	59.7
More than once a week	2.2	3.8	5.0	14.6	24.4	9.0
Once per week	27.3	37.3	46.9	43.2	59.4	41.0
Once per month	9.2	12.7	8.9	11.7	5.0	9.8
Several times per year	24.4	17.9	18.4	15.0	3.1	16.8
Once a year	17.0	10.4	3.4	3.8	0.6	8.0
Less often	5.9	3.3	6.7	3.3	3.1	4.5
Never	12.9	12.3	10.6	8.5	4.4	10.1
Refused	1.1	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8
'Non - participants' ²	35.8	25.9	20.7	15.5	8.1	22.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

¹ at least once per month. ² 'once per year' or less frequently or 'never'.

Table 8B Frequency of attendance at religious services in 2002

	less than 29 yrs	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-64 yrs	65+ yrs	All
Overall 'regular' attendance	40.2	60.2	68.7	77.5	88.4	64.5
More than once a week	2.8	2.2	5.1	17.2	25.4	9.9
Once per week	27.3	44.6	53.0	53.6	58.6	45.5
Once per month	10.1	13.4	10.6	6.7	4.4	9.1
Several times per year	25.2	19.4	15.2	10.1	1.1	15.3
Once a year	11.7	8.6	4.1	3.7	2.2	6.5
Less often	7.4	3.8	3.2	1.9	4.4	4.3
Never	15.6	8.1	8.8	6.4	3.9	9.3
Refused	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.1
'Non - participants'	34.7	20.4	16.1	12.0	10.5	20.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0



Table 8C Patterns of Volunteering and Community Engagement by frequency of attendance at religious services, 2002-2006

Percentage of adults who: (A) undertook any type of unpaid, regular voluntary activity or service outside the home or workplace; (B) were actively involved in any type of voluntary or community group in the last 12 months

	A. Regular Volunteer		B. Actively engaged in Community	
	2002	2006	2002	2006
All respondents	17.1	23.1	21.7	29.0
Regular participants	19.5	28.5	23.9	31.2
Non-participants	14.4	15.3	19.7	24.9

Donation of blood provides yet another indicator of positive and altruistic civic behaviour (Table 9). Respondents were asked, in 2006, if they had donated blood at any time during the previous 12 months. Just over one in ten of the population said that they had donated blood. Not surprisingly, due to health and other factors, the rate is much lower for persons over 65.

A measure of general inter-personal trust is frequently used as a measure of Active Citizenship. The extent to which people trust each other at different points of time may indicate an overall sense of confidence that others including various institutions will deliver on what they promise or might be expected to give. Table 10 shows trends in a standardised question on inter-personal trust asked in 2002 and 2006. Little has changed in levels of trust judging by this measure. A new indicator was added in the 2006 Survey based on a hypothetical question regarding loss of one's own wallet or purse. Over one half of the population think that a lost wallet/purse, if it were returned to them, would be returned without anything missing (Table 11).

Table 9 Blood Donation

Percentages who donated blood in previous 12 months

	Yes	No	Tried but was not accepted on health grounds
All respondents	11.2	85.9	2.7
Male	13.9	82.9	3.2
Female	8.4	88.9	2.3
Age: less than 29yrs	12.0	87.6	0.4
30-39yrs	15.5	80.2	4.3
40-49yrs	12.6	82.2	5.2
50-64yrs	11.0	87.1	1.9
65+yrs	3.2	93.0	2.5



Table 10 Trends in Inter-personal trust, 2002-2006

Percentage of adults who reported trust in others

	2002	2006
'Most people can be trusted'	25.7	22.4
'Can't be too careful'	34.6	35.9
'Depends on the people in question'	39.0	40.5
'Don't know'	0.7	1.1
All	100	100

Table 11 The Case of the Lost Wallet/Purse

Percentage of adults who thought that if they lost a wallet or purse in the their neighbourhood it would be returned without anything missing

Gross weekly income €	Very likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Total
less than 300	18.9	22.6	36.0	22.5	100
300-399	22.3	33.0	27.1	17.7	100
400-499	20.7	31.9	27.9	19.6	100
500-749	24.0	33.6	32.0	10.4	100
750-899	30.4	24.1	26.7	18.8	100
900-1,249	14.1	47.2	25.5	13.2	100
greater than 1,249	24.0	35.6	33.2	7.2	100
All	22.8	32.9	28.9	15.4	100

To complete the picture of Active Citizenship it is useful to look at a number of indicators of informal social contact and support. Respondents were asked how many 'close friends' they had: 'people whom you feel at ease with, whom you can talk to about personal matters, share a confidence with, seek advice from or call upon for practical help'. Exactly 50% of respondents said that they had 8 'close friends' or more from a combined total of the following: neighbours, work associates, relatives (with whom they did not live) and others. The corresponding figure for 2002 was 56%.

Turning to comparisons of Irish nationals and newly arrived immigrants clear differences in patterns of social support emerge. Asked how many 'close friends' they had, Irish nationals averaged 2.5% among neighbours, 4.2% among relatives (not living with them), 1.3% at work and 2.2% among others. When asked how many 'close friends' they had among persons of other nationalities, only one in five Irish nationals had a close friend from among other nationalities living here. Newcomers appear to be much less connected to neighbours (1.7%) and relatives (3.0%) than Irish nationals.



5. International comparisons

Most of the evidence considered, extremely limited as it is, suggests that Ireland:

- is average to slightly below average in terms of reported group membership and volunteering across OECD countries¹⁰ (Tables 12 and 13), and
- is rich in terms of informal social networks compared to many other economically developed countries (Table 14)

Evidence with regards to European comparisons, reviewed in NESF (2003: 61), indicates that:

...Ireland is about average or above average for European countries on most indicators of social capital – for example, membership of voluntary or community associations, volunteering, interpersonal trust, trust in various institutions and voter/political engagement. Informal social contact is likely to be higher in Ireland – although the evidence is very limited. As in all international comparisons, care is needed with respect to the basis of comparison, the meaning and interpretation of particular data findings given the diversity of cultures, institutions and patterns of social interaction, and the set of comparator countries chosen.

More recently, OECD has published statistical comparisons of group membership based on the *World Values Survey*. These show that Ireland is average to just below average in a ranking of OECD countries (OECD, 2005: 84-5). Hence, there are grounds for some concern.

¹⁰ However, membership of groups is higher, here, than in most European countries. Refer to NESF (2003: 63)

	Average number of groups to which respondent belongs	Proportion of respondents who do unpaid work for at least one group
United States	3.26	64.7
Sweden	3.24	53.9
Slovak Republic	1.12	48.6
Netherlands	3.06	47.3
Korea	1.47	47.1
Canada	1.96	46.8
United Kingdom ^b	0.61	43.1
Greece	1.25	38.0
Finland	1.86	36.5
Mexico	0.89	36.3
Denmark	1.91	33.2
Iceland	2.70	31.9
Belgium	1.65	31.4
Luxembourg	1.45	30.0
Czech Republic	1.02	29.8
Ireland	1.15	28.4
Austria	1.48	28.3
Italy	0.77	25.0
France	0.61	21.9
Germany	0.84	19.5
Japan	0.84	15.6
Spain	0.48	15.6
Hungary	0.43	14.3
Poland	0.40	12.1
Portugal	0.33	11.6
Turkey	0.03	1.5
Australia ^a	2.69	n.a.
Norway ^a	2.47	n.a.
Switzerland ^a	2.24	n.a.
OECD average	1.34	31.2

Source: OECD (2005: 84-5) *Society at a Glance and the World Values Survey 1999-2002*, Inglehart et al. (2004).

a) Data for Australia, Norway and Switzerland refer to 1995-96. Unpaid work data for these countries are missing. n.a. = Not available. b) Data for the United Kingdom refer to Great Britain only. c) The OECD average excludes New Zealand.


Table 13 Membership of various types of voluntary or community associations (OECD member countries, 1999-2002)

	Sports or cultural	Other groups	Political or Unions	Church or religious
Netherlands	69.6	65.7	40.5	34.7
Australia	64.3	45.2	44.0	47.4
Switzerland	59.3	35.4	34.3	47.4
United States	55.7	61.1	49.6	57.1
Sweden	52.3	53.1	73.0	71.4
Norway	49.8	48.5	58.7	32.1
Iceland	42.9	33.3	73.2	71.1
Denmark	41.7	38.1	62.3	11.9
Canada	39.2	43.3	35.5	29.5
Belgium	37.2	42.1	29.7	11.9
Korea	36.1	24.4	19.6	42.1
Luxembourg	35.5	35.6	21.6	9.5
Finland	33.1	36.1	39.4	47.0
Germany	32.1	15.2	13.9	13.5
Ireland	31.7	25.0	20.7	16.2
Austria	31.5	31.5	30.0	25.4
Greece	30.2	30.7	24.3	6.7
Czech Republic	28.9	29.1	20.1	6.6
Slovak Republic	23.1	27.9	28.2	16.6
France	21.5	17.7	9.5	4.4
Japan	21.4	20.3	13.4	10.6
Italy	18.5	18.3	16.7	10.3
Mexico	13.8	18.3	13.9	23.3
Spain	12.8	12.5	8.1	6.6
United Kingdom	12.0	21.0	13.2	5.0
Portugal	10.8	9.0	4.2	5.6
Hungary	6.5	7.3	11.5	12.1
Poland	4.6	9.1	14.5	5.7
Turkey	0.4	0.7	1.5	0.6
OECD average	31.6	29.5	28.4	23.5

Source: OECD (2005: 84-5) *Society at a Glance and the World Values Survey 1999-2002*, Inglehart et al. (2004). The category "Sports or Cultural" includes recreational activities. 'Other' includes youth work, welfare service for older people, conservation and ecological groups and single issue movements such as health, peace, human rights and womens groups. 'Political or Unions' includes political parties, local political groups, labour unions and professional associations. Data for Australia, Norway and Switzerland are from the 1995-96 wave of the World Values Survey. Data for the United Kingdom refer to Great Britain only.

Table 14 Proportion of respondents who rarely or never spend time with friends, colleagues, or others in social groups* (OECD member countries, 1999-2002)

	Rarely	Never	% living alone
Japan	15.3	1.7	6.8
Mexico	14.1	4.7	1.8
Czech Republic	10.0	1.2	9.7
Portugal	9.6	1.4	5.0
France	8.1	1.5	11.5
Italy	7.7	1.6	7.4
Austria	7.6	1.0	11.7
Korea	7.5	1.3	n.a.
Finland	7.4	0.5	17.6
Spain	6.8	1.5	4.1
Canada	5.8	0.8	10.0
Iceland	5.5	0.2	n.a.
Belgium	5.1	1.7	26.0
Great Britain	5.0	1.2	12.0
Greece	3.7	0.2	6.7
Germany	3.5	0.5	17.8
Denmark	3.3	0.4	17.9
United States	3.1	0.6	10.2
Ireland	2.9	1.0	7.5
Netherlands	2.0	0.3	16.2
OECD average	6.7	1.2	n.a.

Source: OECD (2005: 82-3) Society at a Glance and the World Values Survey 1999-2002, Inglehart et al (2004).

*Question: 'How often do you spend time with friends, or with colleagues from work, or with people from church, sport/cultural groups?'

n.a. - not applicable



6. Emerging issues for public policy


What can be concluded about trends and patterns of Active Citizenship in Ireland from this very limited and incomplete overview of available data? On the basis of this paper, the following can be suggested:

- there is no apparent decline, in recent years, in levels of volunteering, active membership of community and voluntary organisation or in various measures of political engagement such as joining action groups, writing to politicians etc.
- neither is there any evidence of decline in levels of trust between persons
- there is clear evidence of declining rates of electoral turnout over time in line with international trends¹¹
- however – the other side of the story is that various surveys including the ESRI Survey commissioned by the Taskforce points towards sharp differences in patterns of participation by age, employment status, educational level and household composition
- these differences may also be associated with unequal access to power, decision-making and the democratic process in general
- for every person actively involved in their community whether as a volunteer or member of an organisation there are another two persons who are not – Active Citizenship is still for a minority – at least in terms of how it is defined and measured in these data sources
- Sport, religion, schools, various community and residents' groups still provide the backbone of active community engagement – there is no evidence that new social movements or forms of engagement have displaced these, and
- Informal sociability, trust and positive norms of civic behaviour remain very difficult to assess or compare over time – not least due to lack of comparable data questions

That social capital is not declining may surprise some. However, a review of some international evidence by Dekker and Broek (2005) confirms similar patterns elsewhere – at least in Europe. It may be that we are focussing too much on some measurable aspects of social capital such as volunteering, membership and trust among persons and not enough on more subtle issues around people's sense of empowerment, participation in decision-making and the way that political power and decision-making is distributed in the population especially by age, gender, socio-economic status and migrant status.

Further evidence will be available, in due course, on aspects of voluntarism and civic engagement from sources such as the 2006 *Census of Population* and the 2006 *Quarterly National Household Survey* module on social capital and sport. The *European Social Survey* (ESS) also enables researchers to compare some measures of civic engagement in Ireland with other countries in Europe. Other sources of information on public confidence in various institutions (civil service, parliament,

¹¹ Although it is difficult to be precise about trends in Ireland due to the unreliability of electoral register as an accurate information guide to the eligible population of voters.



courts, media etc) are already available from the *European Values Survey*, *Eurobarometer* as well as the ESS. These indicate average to above average levels of public trust in institutions (Fahey, Hayes and Sinnott, 2005, and Delaney and Keaney, 2005). A survey of time-use undertaken by the ESRI on a pilot basis in 2005 could be extended, in the future, to cover a broader range of activities as well as a larger sample size.

Clearly, more information is needed across a wider range of topics from volunteering to political engagement to informal social ties and support. This information needs to be comparable with international data sources at least in some respects and we need to invest, in the long-term, in sources of information on how citizens engage in the democratic process and community life around them. Quantitative information needs to be complemented by qualitative sources and insight from the experience and stories of various communities. Active Citizenship should now be a priority area for investment in data, information, knowledge and policy application.



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Appendix A. ESRI Survey of Civic Engagement Questionnaire

Now, I would like to ask you a few questions on the amount of time you spend on various activities in the community...

- S1 Do you take part in any type of unpaid voluntary activity or service outside your own home or workplace on a REGULAR basis? Examples of such voluntary activity would include helping with fund-raising; visiting the elderly; St. Vincent de Paul or other charity work; coaching in a sports club etc.

Yes 1 How regularly? _____ No 2

- S2 In the last 12 months have you been actively involved in any type of voluntary or community group such as a sports, residents or professional association, parish group, political party, trade union etc. By active involvement I mean attending meetings, being a committee member or taking responsibility for some activity? [Int. Please note that attendance at mass or church service is not included].

Yes, actively involved 1 GO TO S3
No, not actively involved 2 GO TO S5

- S3 Please name up to three of the most important voluntary or community organisations in which you were actively involved.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

[INT. IF CHURCH IS MENTIONED MAKE SURE THIS IS NOT ATTENDANCE AT MASS OR SERVICE ONLY. AMEND S4 IF NECESSARY].

- S4 Thinking of all the voluntary or community organisations you have been actively involved with in the last 12 months, would you say you take part in some group activity...

At least once a week 1

Less than once a week but at least once a month . . . 2

Less than once a month 3

Other(specify) 4 _____



S5 Could you tell me how much time you spend travelling between home and work on an average day?

(a) Home to work ____ hrs ____ mins

(b) Work to home ____ hrs ____ mins

(c) N A/No paid work 1

S6 How much time would you spend watching TV on an average weekday?

____ hrs ____ mins

S7a Which of the following would you say best describes how often would you generally attend religious services?

More than once per week 1 Once a year 5

Once per week 2 Less often 6

Once per month 3 Never 7

Several times per year 4 Refused 8

S7b Some people are willing to donate blood, others would prefer not to. What about you, would you be willing to donate blood?

Willing. 1

Willing, but cannot for health reasons 2

Would prefer not to 3

Unsure. 4

S7c Have you donated blood in the last twelve months?

Yes 1

No 2

Tried, but was not accepted on health grounds 3



My next questions are about public affairs...

S8 During the last 12 months have you:

[INT. TICK YES OR NO FOR EACH]

- | | Yes | No |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Attended a public meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 2. Joined an action group of any kind | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 3. Contacted an appropriate organisation to deal with a particular problem (e.g. a local county council or residents' association). | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 4. Contacted a T.D., public official or local representative. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 5. Undertaken unpaid voluntary work in a political party | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 6. Made a voluntary donation of money e.g. to charities, school, church. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 7. Written to a newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 8. Contacted or appeared on radio/TV | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |

S9 Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?

- Definitely agree 1 Tend to agree 2
 Tend to disagree 3 Definitely disagree. 4

S10 How interested are you in politics and national affairs? Are you very interested, somewhat interested, only slightly interested, or not at all interested?

- Very interested 1 Somewhat interested 2
 Only slightly interested 3 Not at all interested 4
 Don't Know. 5 Refused 6



S11 Are you currently registered to vote?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Not eligible to vote 3
- Don't Know 4
- Refused 5

S12 As you may know, a lot of people do not vote in general or local elections. How likely is it that you will not vote in the future:

- Not at all likely 1
- Not very likely 2
- Fairly likely 3
- Very likely 4
- Don't Know 5

My next questions are about your contact with others...

S13 In the past 4 weeks have you visited anyone in their home, **apart from a family member or other relative**, as part of a social visit or perhaps to provide them with some form of voluntary help or assistance in their home?

- Yes . . . 1 No . . . 2

S14 In the past 4 weeks has anyone visited **you in your home**, apart from a family member or other relative, as part of a social visit or perhaps to provide you with some form of voluntary help or assistance in your home?

- Yes . . . 1 No . . . 2

S15 I would now like to ask you about the number of 'close friends' you have. When I talk about, "close friends" I mean people whom you feel at ease with, whom you can talk to about personal matters, share a confidence with, seek advice from or call upon for practical help. So how many CLOSE FRIENDS would you say you have among your:

- Neighbours _____
- Relatives who don't live with you _____
- Work Associates _____
- Others _____

S16 Ireland is becoming increasingly multi-cultural with many different nationalities living, studying and working here. Thinking about these CLOSE FRIENDS, how many would you say are from other nationalities?

And I now I would like to ask you some general questions...

S17 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people or it depends on the people in question?

- Most people can be trusted 1 You can't be too careful 2
 Depends on the people in question . . . 3 Don't know 4

S18 Suppose you lost your [IF MALE: WALLET/IF FEMALE: PURSE] in the neighbourhood where you live. How likely is it that it would be returned with nothing missing?

- Very likely 1 Quite likely 2
 Not very likely 3 Not at all likely 4

S19 All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days. Where would you place yourself in terms of overall satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10 where '0' means you are "very dissatisfied" to '10' which means you are "very satisfied"

[INTERVIEWER CIRCLE ONE NUMBER 0 TO 10 TO INDICATE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION].

Very Dissatisfied —————> Very Satisfied

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

S20 All how would you describe your overall state of health these days?
 Would you say it is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor

- Excellent 1 Very Good 2 Good 3
 Fair 4 Poor 5 Don't Know 8
 Refused 9



Our last few questions are used to ensure that our sample for this survey accurately reflects the population as a whole...

S21 Thinking about your current address, when did you start living there?

_____ year _____ month

S22 Did you ever live outside Ireland?

Yes . . . 1 No. . . 2

S22b How long have you lived in Ireland?

S23 Are you currently an Irish citizen?

Yes . . . 1 No. . . 2

S24 Which of the following would you say best describes the size of the location where you live?

Open country 1

Village of less than 1,500 people 2

Town of 1,500 – less 5,000 people 3

Town of 5,000 – less than 10,000 people 4

Town or city, 10,000 or more 5

Dublin City or County 6

Appendix B. Description of ESRI Survey of Civic Engagement

Sample selection

The Survey consisted of a module of questions on various aspects of civic engagement added to the monthly EU Consumer Survey undertaken by the ESRI. The main Survey to which the module was attached contains key demographic and socio-economic information on survey respondents: age, income, education level, location etc.

The Survey was conducted over the telephone based on a statistical design referred to as *Random Digit Dialling* techniques (RDD). A three-stage clustered sample selection was adopted.

The first stage was the selection of the Primary Sampling Unit from the GeoDirectory. The ESRI used the GeoDirectory¹² – a nationally comprehensive geo-coded listing of all addresses in the country – to select, at random, 44 locations referred to as *Primary Sampling Units* – from across the country.

The second stage involved the selection of households within each of the 44 sampling units which were selected at the first stage. For each of these 44 sampling locations a bank of 100 randomly generated landline telephone numbers were generated (using a common stem such as, for example, 01845... for a given location). Not all of the numbers generated were actually live telephone numbers in use by private households. For example, some were numbers for businesses. Hence, there was some ‘wastage’ in the 100 random numbers generated in each Primary Sampling Unit.

The third and final stage was the selection of the actual individual within the household who would respond to the questionnaire. A post-stratification selection rule was applied in the selection of the actual individual within each household who would be chosen for interview. This was based on main employment status (at work or not at work); gender and broad age group (in the absence of this post-stratification selection criterion females aged 45 and over would be over-represented in the final sample for analysis).

Following selection, a target was set of 34 completed questionnaires per Primary Sampling Unit.

Concern may be expressed about the possibility of sample bias arising from the use of landline phones as the basis for contacting respondents. Using the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) covering 14,000 individuals in 5,000 households it is estimated that 12% of individuals live in households without a landline. This proportion is higher for men aged 18-24 (14%) and especially for women aged 18-64 (26%). This confirms the view that younger individuals are the most likely to live in mobile phone only households and it is possible that this could increase sample error among this age group and particularly among women.

¹² The GeoDirectory has been jointly created by An Post and the Ordnance Survey of Ireland.



Response Rates			
	Number of Cases	% of Total Sample	% of Adjusted Sample
Completed	1,045	16.2	42.4
Partially Completed	28	0.4	1.1
Refused	981	15.2	39.8
Other Non Response (ill/too busy)	412	6.4	16.7
Total Above	2,466	38.2	100
Not Eligible (Business/Fax/Number non existent/Out of quota)	2,515	39.0	-
Non Contact	1,474	22.8	-
Total	6,455	100	-


Post-Survey re-weighting

The sample was statistically adjusted or re-weighted to ensure that the results were representative of the total population from which they had been selected. This ensures that the sample for analysis is fully representative of the population from which it has been selected. To achieve this, the ESRI uses a 'minimum information loss algorithm' for the re-weighting of samples. This involves fitting 'column marginals' derived from the completed sample to generate population totals. The survey was re-weighted using information from the 2002 Census Population. The variables used in this re-weighting procedure were:

- age
- gender
- education
- partner/no partner
- region
- employment status, and
- number of persons ages 18 and over in the household

Sampling error

As in all sample surveys, the results are subject to sampling error. The larger the sample size, the lower the sampling error (e.g. there is a 95% chance that a particular point estimate may be correct to within, for example, plus or minus 3 percentage points).



Taking an estimate of 23.1% for the proportion of adults who said that they volunteer on a regular basis (for example) the margin of error is estimated to be 3.4% (this figure incorporates a 'Design Effect' of 1.6 reflecting the use of non-random sampling methods referred to as *Quota Sampling*). In other words, around the point estimate of 23.1% for volunteering, based on a nationally representative sample of over 1,000 adults, there is a 95% likelihood that the 'true' rate for the whole population is in the range of 19.7% – 26.5%¹³. Hence, the difference between a point estimate of 17.1% in 2002 and 23.1% is statistically significant. In other words, using an identical question on volunteering asked of adults in 2002 and again in 2006, we can conclude that there has been very likely an increase in the proportion of adults who reported that they volunteer on a regular basis. Put in context, though, the increase is not very large and possibly very small given the range of sampling error involved. Furthermore, the salient fact remains that over three quarters of adults in both years report no volunteering on a regular basis.

¹³ This corresponds to a margin of error of 2.7% using a simple random sample approach augmented by a factor of 1.6 to reflect 'Design Effect' due to quota sampling to give +/- 3.4 percentage points.





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