

Appendix A

Description of how the ISPAS survey was conducted

1. Background and Target Population

The Irish Social and Political Attitudes Survey was carried out in late 2001/early 2002. The target population for the survey was all adults aged 18 years and over who were living in private households. This explicitly excluded the population in institutions such as long-term geriatric or psychiatric hospitals, old persons' homes etc. Approximately 2.7 per cent of the total population of the Republic of Ireland are resident in institutions of this sort. A national random sample of the target population was selected as outlined below. All questionnaires were conducted on a personally administered papi basis.

2. The Sampling Frame and Sample Design

The only readily available comprehensive listing of the target population available in Ireland is the Electoral Register. This provides a list of all adults registered to vote in the State.

In selecting the sample for the ISPAS a three-stage clustered sample design based on the electoral register was used.

In the first instance a random sample of Primary Sampling Units (PSU's) was selected from the Electoral Register. [220 DEDs were selected as PSUs with an average of 19.9 cases in each]. In the second, a random sample of households was selected from within each PSU. In the third stage a random person within each household was selected.

The sampling frame used for this study was the most up-to-date national Electoral Register. Electors are recorded in the electoral list in so-called Polling Books. For sample selection purposes these Polling Books were reconstituted into areal units known as District Electoral Divisions. There is a total of 3,400 District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) in Ireland. These DEDs are the most spatially disaggregated areal units in Ireland for which census data are available and are the standard PSU building block for random sample selection. Once the Electoral Register has been re-built into the District Electoral Division structure a random sample of PSUs was selected. Each PSU was made up of the District Electoral Division or aggregate thereof using a minimum population threshold criteria. The PSU's were selected with a probability proportionate to size (on a PPS basis).

When the first stage of PSU selection was completed we then selected a sample of households from within each. This was implemented using a random start and selecting a systematic sample at an appropriate interval to yield a constant number of households per cluster.

At the third stage of sample selection we then randomly selected a target respondent from within each. This was done using a so-called 'next birthday' rule as a randomising criterion. In other words, we selected the person from the household who

had the next birthday from among all household members who were aged 18 years or over. To do this the interviewer simply listed all members of the household aged 18 or more and identified the one who had the next birthday. This 'next birthday' person was the target respondent. No substitution was allowed in cases where that target respondent was unavailable or refused to participate etc.

3. Split Sample Design

The ISPAS sample was designed in such a way as to carry the instruments for two main surveys viz. a number of modules – on social justice, the environment, gender roles and racial minorities – as well as the core ISPAS data. To this end all respondents completed the core ISPAS questionnaire as well as two of the modules. Half of the sample completed the first two modules and half the sample completed the second two modules. The assignment of target respondents to the different modules of the ISSP was undertaken by field-management staff in the Head Office of the ESRI - not by the interviewer. The total number of completed questionnaires was 2,529. All of these completed the core ISPAS questionnaire. Additionally a twenty minute questionnaire containing a range of additional questions on a variety of topics was handed to the respondent and the respondent was asked to fill it in and either hand it to the interviewer or post it to the survey company (ESRI).

4. Response Rates.

The total response to the survey for the core ISPAS survey was as outlined below:

<i>Outcome</i>	All Cases		All Contacts	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Completed	2,529	56%	2,529	58%
Refused	962	21%	962	22%
Not Available throughout fieldwork period	702	15%	702	16%
Other	176	4%	176	4%
Unable to locate	147	3%	-	-
Total	4,516	100%	4,369	100%

From this one can see that when one considers all target addresses (contacts as well as non-contacts) the response rate was 56 per cent. When non-contacts are excluded this increases somewhat to 58 per cent.

4. Field Procedures

All interviews were completed on a personally administered papi basis. A minimum of 5 attempted contacts were made with each household in the target sample - an initial contact plus 4 callbacks. After an initial contact with anyone in the household the interviewer continually called back until a definitive outcome in respect of the target respondent was achieved.

Respondents were entered into a closed draw which has a total of 10 prizes ranging from IR£1,000 to IR£50 (approximately €1,280 to €64).

The survey was piloted prior to main fieldwork.

5. Weighting the data

Ex-post weights or grossing factors were applied to the data. These were derived using a minimum information loss algorithm with marginal constraints based on age; gender; principal economic status; region; marital status; level of educational attainment; household size (number of persons aged 1 year and over). These weights adjust for differences in sample selection probabilities as well as differential non-response probabilities according to respondent characteristics.