

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is a sample face-to face survey which contains questions about a wide range of issues. It is carried out by the Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on a regular basis. 2,200 households are contacted during each fieldwork period.

The survey is designed to provide a snapshot of the lifestyle and views of the people of Northern Ireland. By providing instant information about all the sections of the population, the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey aims to enable government and others to identify community views and use this feedback to inform the decision making process.

The most recent NI Omnibus survey was conducted during the month of September 2012. The Social Security Agency commissioned a range of questions within that survey, the aim of which being to assess public attitudes to various aspects of welfare reform

Answers to each question were analysed by various groups including age, gender, religion, socio-economic group, disability status, dependents status, employment status and various geographical areas (e.g Belfast, East of the Province, West of the Province, Urban/Rural area, education and Library Board and Health and Social Care Trust. The findings can however be summarised as follows:

Q1 Do you think that the current welfare system is working?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Yes, it s giving financial support to the right people	9
No, too many people or the wrong people are receiving benefits	56
No, it s not providing enough financial support to the people who need it?	31
Refusal	0
Don't Know	3
Total	100

Q2 To what extent, if at all, are you aware of the recent or proposed changes to the following aspects of the benefit systems in Northern Ireland ... Assessing the work capability of benefit claimants claiming sickness benefits?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Know a great deal	7
Know a little	44
Heard of but don't know any details	31
Haven't heard of at all	17
Refusal	0
Don't Know	1
Total	100

Q3 To what extent if at all, are you aware of the proposed changes to the following aspects of the benefit systems in Northern Ireland ... Making the system more simple and providing a clear incentive to work?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Know a great deal	5
Know a little	36
Heard of but don't know any details	33
Haven't heard of at all	25
Refusal	0
Don't Know	1
Total	100

Q4 To what extent, if at all, are you aware of the recent of proposed changes to the following aspects of the benefit systems in Northern Ireland ... Changes to how entitlement to a disability benefit will be assessed?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Know a great deal	7
Know a little	33
Heard of but don't know any details	35
Haven't heard of at all	25
Refusal	0
Don't Know	1
Total	100

Q5 What do you think are the main reasons for making changes to the benefit system. Please select up to three, in order of importance (All mentions)

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Cut the cost of welfare	47
Make the benefit system fairer	43
Reduce welfare dependency and improve lives	24
Ensure that working pays more than benefits	38
Reduce fraud and error	49
Reduce the cost of administering benefits	13
Make the benefit system simpler to understand	20
Ensure benefits are targeted at those who need it	42
Refusal	0
Don't Know	4

Percentages may add to more than 100% due to multiple responses

Q6 Thinking about the benefits available to people who are out of work, which of the following come closest to your view?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Benefits for unemployed people are too high and discourage them from finding jobs	38
Benefits for unemployed people are at about the right level	22
Benefits for unemployed people are too low and cause hardship	26
None of these	10
Refusal	0
Don't Know	3
Total	100

Q7 How effective do you think the current benefit system is at encouraging people to work?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Very effective	2
Fairly effective	24
Not very effective	51
Not effective at all	19
Refusal	0
Don't Know	4
Total	100

Q8 Why do you think the current benefit system is not effective at encouraging people to work? Please select up to three reasons, in order of importance (All mentions)

All persons answering 'not very effective' or 'not effective at all' to Q7	Total (%)
Benefits can provide more money than working	67
The system allows people to remain on benefits and avoid work	63
The system is complex so people do not know if working will provide more money than benefits	24
There is a culture of not working in some places/households	64
There are no jobs available	39
People don't have the skills to fill the jobs that are available	19
Don't Know	1

Percentages may add to more than 100% due to multiple responses

Q9 What proportion, if any, of benefit claims do you think are false claims that people are not really entitled to?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Most or all cases	3
A majority of cases	16
About half of cases	38
A minority of cases	35
Few or no cases	3
Refusal	0
Don't Know	5
Total	100

Q10 Do you think the financial support available through disability benefits is being paid to the right people?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Yes, it s about right	11
No, some people who need support don t get it	40
No, too many people who don t need support are receiving it?	44
Refusal	0
Don't Know	4
Total	100

Q11 Under the proposed changes to the welfare system, people aged between 16 and 65 claiming Disability Living Allowance will have to go through an assessment to confirm eligibility for a new disability benefit. This will be carried out by a doctor, nurse or other health care professional. Which of the following statements comes closest to how you feel about this requirement?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Strongly support	39
Tend to support	34
Neither support nor oppose	16
Tend to oppose	6
Strongly oppose	4
Refusal	0
Don't Know	2
Total	100

Q12 Under the proposed changes to the welfare system, the total amount of money payable in benefits to any one household is to be no more than average household earnings after tax, currently £500 per week. Which of these views comes closest to yours about levels of benefit payments?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Every household should receive the amount of benefits that their family circumstances require, no matter how much this is	37
There should be a limit on the amount of money any one household/family can receive in benefits, whatever their circumstances	60
Refusal	0
Don't Know	3
Total	100

Q13 Which of these views comes closest to yours about how benefit payments are paid to people?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
All benefits payments, including housing benefit, should be made in a lump sum like working people are paid their wages	34
Different benefits should be paid separately to make it easier for claimants to budget	61
Refusal	0
Don't Know	4
Total	100

Q14 Which of these views comes closest to yours about how benefit payments are paid to people?

All persons aged 16 and over	Total (%)
Benefit claimants should be paid monthly	16
Benefit claimants should be paid fortnightly to make it easier to budget?	81
Refusal	0
Don't Know	2
Total	100

Future Omnibus Surveys

The SSA has reserved 20 questions in the next four omnibus surveys to be carried out in 2013 during the months of January, April, May and September. The results will be published on an ongoing basis, as they are received.