








**Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)**

*...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland*



## Deliberative Democracy in Northern Ireland

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- Deliberative democracy internationally
- Deliberative democracy in Northern Ireland?
- The context of consociational power-sharing
- Help address long running contentious issues?



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- Flag display
- Experiment
- How did the deliberation happen?
  - Information video
  - Perspectives video
  - Imagined conversation



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#### Level of agreement with the 'compromise' designated days option

##### *Experimental conditions*

A: control	4.28
B: information	4.33
C: information and summary of arguments	4.55
D: information and imagined dialogue	4.74
E: information and summary of arguments and imagined dialogue	4.77



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## Level of agreement with the 'compromise' designated days option

	%
Control group (no deliberation)	47.9
Full deliberation group	59.1



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On some important issues – such as flag display and the issue of welfare reform – the political parties in Northern Ireland find it very hard to agree with each other, and this leads to political crises. When such a crisis happens, there may be a number of ways to try and resolve it. Please tell me to what extent you think each of the following approaches is a good idea or a bad idea



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	general public	MLAs
Get the British government to come up with a solution	42	7
Get the British and Irish governments working together to come up with a solution	54	26
Get the British government and the Northern Ireland parties to come up with a solution	66	61
Get the British and Irish governments and the Northern Ireland parties to come with a solution	64	67
Get someone from outside Britain and Ireland, such as a politician or diplomat from the United States, to chair talks between the Northern Ireland parties and come up with a solution	28	38
Hold a referendum on the issue so that the people can directly decide	61	25
Have an immediate election to try and resolve the issue	25	7
Get a cross section of ordinary citizens on a Citizens Assembly to learn about the issue, listen to a presentation of all the main arguments and then reach a decision on the issue	65	17






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If a *Citizens Assembly* of this kind was introduced do you think it should...

	Public	MLAs
make the final decision	23	0
make a recommendation to be considered by politicians	61	61
not be given any role at all in policy making	<u>16</u>	<u>39</u>
total	100	100

**In general, how good or bad do you think ordinary people would be at making decisions if they were selected to serve on a *Citizens Assembly*?**

	Public	MLAs
Good	56	48
Neither good nor bad	27	35
bad	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>
Total	100	100



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**In a *Citizens Assembly*, do you think ordinary people would try to come to a decision that is good for everyone in Northern Ireland, or would they just try to look after the interests of their own community, or just try to look after their own personal interests?**

	Public	MLAs
...good for everyone in Northern Ireland	41	45
...just try to look after the interests of their own community	41	36
...just look after their own personal interests	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>
Total	100	100



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**Elections, referendums and *Citizens Assemblies* are all possible ways of making democratic decisions, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Taking each one in turn, to what extent are you in favour or opposed to each way of making a democratic decision?**

	<b>Public</b>	<b>MLAs</b>
Elections	51	98
Referendums	54	73
<i>Citizens Assemblies</i>	57	17



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### **Conclusions: Potential Advantages**

- Representative voice of the people
- Addresses problem of apathy
- Addresses problem of bringing young people into politics
- More women in politics
- Our evidence suggests that deliberation leads to greater chance of compromise
- Our evidence suggests the public support the idea
- Our evidence suggests MLAs do not see deliberative democracy as making final decision...
- But could have value in making recommendations



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