

Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey (1990)

Responses to the Self-Completion Questionnaire: Law and Order Module

1. Background

1.1 Following a PPRU presentation to ISG(O) on 12 March, Statistics Branch was asked to obtain a fuller breakdown of the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey (NISAS) findings. A computer disk of the findings was made available to Statistics Branch during July. Since then the technical background to the survey and the content of the two questionnaire schedules used has been assessed.

1.2 The PPRU presentation was based largely on the main questionnaire and has already covered most of the ground relevant to the law and order section. This paper turns attention to the self-completion questionnaire. This questionnaire was left with the respondent for completion and collected by the interviewer on a subsequent visit. It is assumed that CSFC members will be familiar with the PPRU paper which outlined the background to the NISAS.

1.3 The size of the NISAS main questionnaire sample was almost 900 individuals. Of these individuals 88% returned a self-completion schedule 63% of whom were Protestant and 37% Catholic. Given the relatively small number of persons in the sample (particularly the Catholic sub-sample) it would not be wise to further sub-divide respondents to the level where sub-groups contain numbers below 40 or so persons.

1.4 Notwithstanding the limitations on disaggregation it is possible to present data categorised by religion, age, sex, socio-economic group etc. Further breakdowns of the responses are possible and can be provided on request. However, where sample sizes become too small to be reliable indicators of community attitudes an appropriate caveat will be necessary.

2. Results

2.1 For the purposes of this paper respondents are only categorised by religion. The paper overlaps slightly with the PPRU paper but an attempt has been made to keep this to a minimum. It is possible to organise the results in various ways but this paper contains three main sections:

(i) *The right to protest (including media access to supporters of violence),*

(ii) *Justice: the Law, Courts and Prisons*

(iii) *The Future*

2.2 It is intended to produce a full digest of tables covering all law and order issues in the survey. This will be accompanied by a summary of the tables using text and graphical presentation.

2.3 The survey can be analysed in an almost infinitely varied number of ways and it would be useful to be guided by the needs of members of the CSFC. Members should note that the 1990 survey is subject to contractual arrangements under which it is not possible to use or refer publicly to any of the results until after Social and Community Planning Research publish their book at the beginning of November 1991.

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6 September 1991

LAW AND ORDER MODULE

SELF COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE

SEPTEMBER 1991

STEPHEN DONNELLY

STATISTICS BRANCH

N.I.O.

NORTHERN IRELAND

SOCIAL ATTITUDES

SURVEY 1990

1. CITIZENS

The NISAS drew a distinction between a person's right to protest and a 'revolutionary's' right. Most respondents think that people should be allowed to protest but as regards revolutionaries, fewer respondents think they should be allowed to hold public meetings or publish books.

Table 1: Should citizens be allowed to behave in the following ways if they strongly oppose a government action?

% Who Think People Should Be Allowed To:	Religion	
	Protestant	Catholic
Hold Public Meetings	76%	80%
Organise Protest Marches/Demonstrations	58%	68%
Organise A Nationwide Strike Of All Workers Against	24%	41%

LAW AND ORDER MODULE

SELF COMPLETION QUESTIONNAIRE

2. REVOLUTIONARIES

SEPTEMBER 1991

Table 2: Should people who want to overthrow the government by revolution be allowed to engage in the following actions?

% Who Think Revolutionaries Should Be Allowed To:	Religion	
	Protestant	Catholic
Hold Public Meetings	33%	49%
Publish Books	48%	56%

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THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

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1. CITIZENS

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3. MEDIA ACCESS TO SUPPORTERS OF TERRORISM

On the question of media access to supporters of terrorism Protestants are much less likely to

2. REVOLUTIONARIES

Catholics. Figures 1 to 3 show that about 80% of Protestants and about half that percentage of Catholics agree that the law should deny media access to such people. It is interesting that 14% or so of Catholics are uncertain of their opinion on this

Table 2: Should people who want to overthrow the government by revolution be allowed to engage in the following actions?

% Who Think Revolutionaries Should Be Allowed To:	Religion	
	Protestant	Catholic
Hold Public Meetings	33%	49%
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3. Even though very few people endorse favourable views towards revolutionaries 2% of Protestants and 7% of Catholics stated feeling personally favourable towards such people.

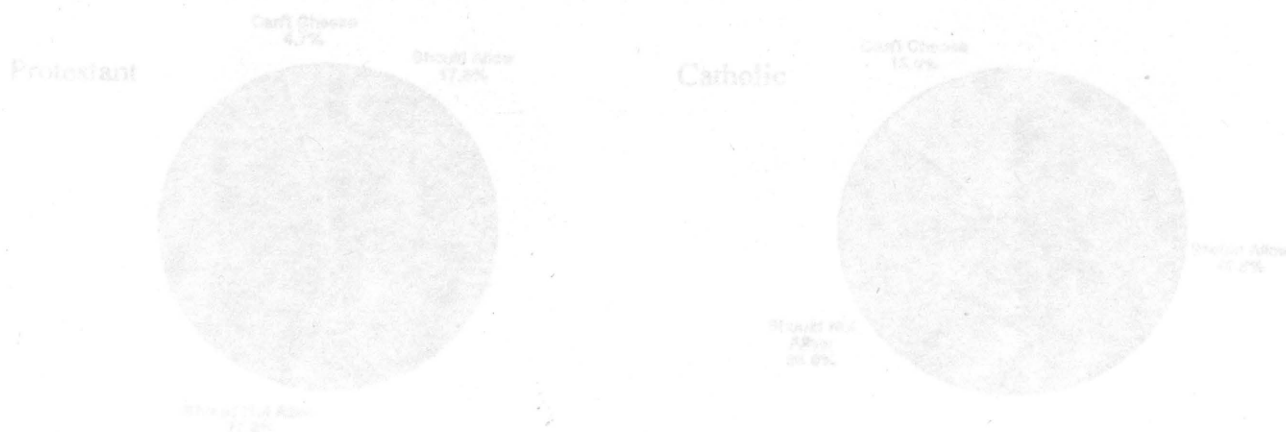
Table 3: Your personal feelings about people who want to overthrow the government by revolution.

Personal Feelings	Religion	
	Protestant	Catholic
Extremely Favourable	1%	2%
Favourable	1%	5%
Neither	15%	27%
Unfavourable	30%	33%
Extremely Unfavourable	43%	22%
Can't Say/Not Answered	10%	10%

3. MEDIA ACCESS TO SUPPORTERS OF TERRORISM

On the question of media access to supporters of terrorism Protestants are much less likely to endorse such access than Catholics. Figures 1 to 3 show that about 80% of Protestants and about half that percentage of Catholics agree that the law should deny media access to such people. It is interesting that 14% or so of Catholics are uncertain of their opinion on this question.

Figure 3: "Should the law allow people who support acts of terrorism in the UK to publish books expressing their views?"



4. Media access to supporters of terrorism.

Figure 1: "Should the law allow newspapers to publish interviews with people who support acts of terrorism in the UK?"

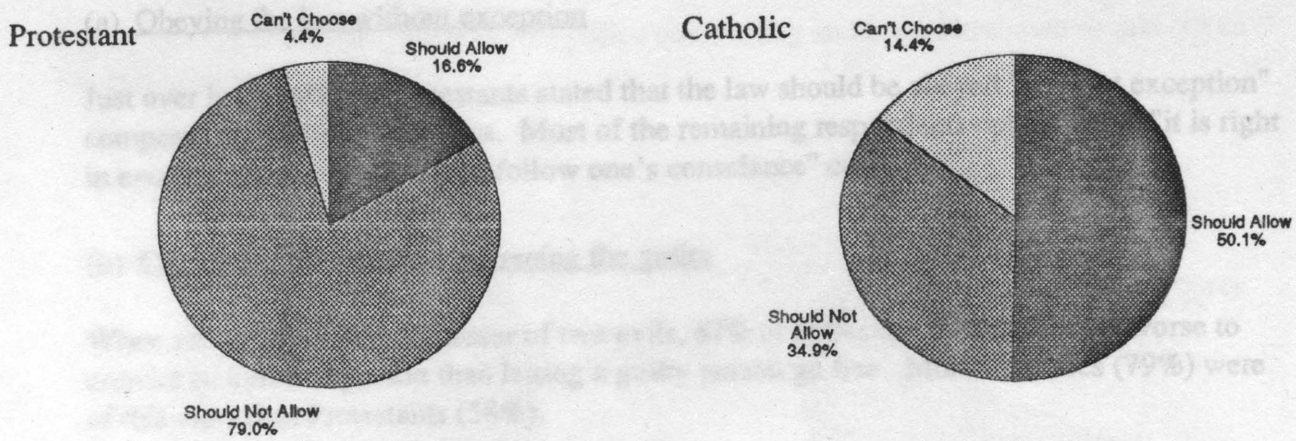


Figure 2: "Should the law allow television to show interviews with people who support acts of terrorism in the UK?"

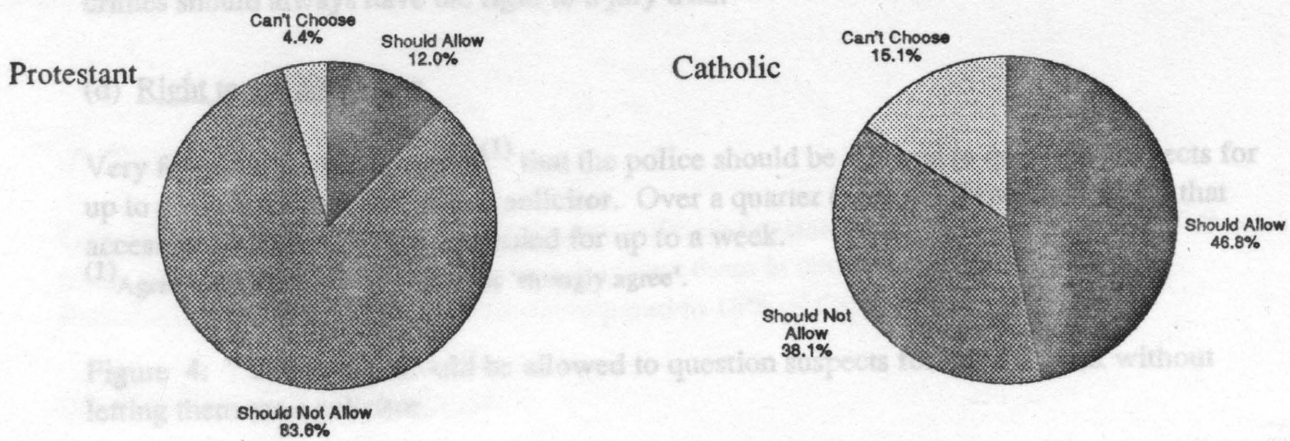
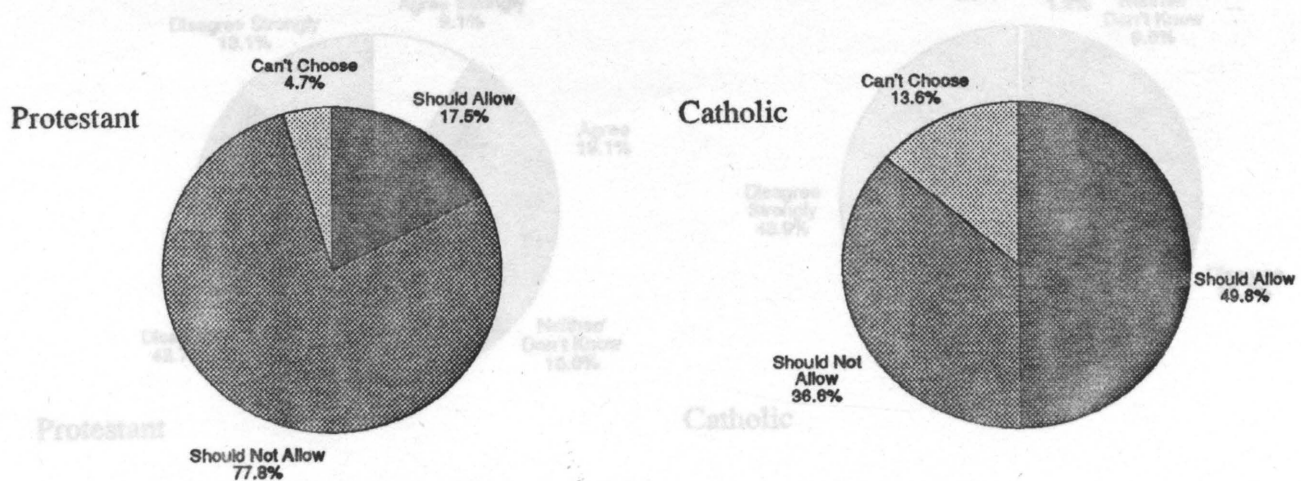


Figure 3: "Should the law allow people who support acts of terrorism in the UK to publish books expressing their views?"



JUSTICE

THE LAW, COURTS AND PRISON.

(a) Obeying the law without exception

Just over half (54%) of Protestants stated that the law should be obeyed "without exception" compared to (42%) of Catholics. Most of the remaining respondents opted for the "it is right in exceptional circumstances to follow one's conscience" category.

(b) Convicting the innocent or freeing the guilty

When asked which was the lesser of two evils, 67% of respondents considered it worse to convict an innocent person than letting a guilty person go free. More Catholics (79%) were of this view than Protestants (58%).

(c) Right to a Jury Trial

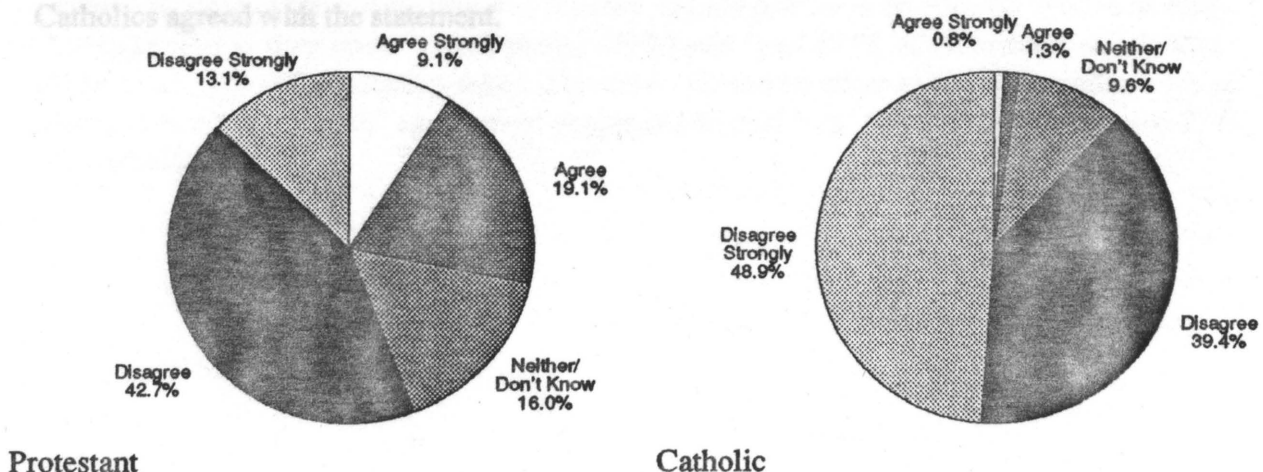
More Catholics (65%) than Protestants (28%) believe that a defendant charged with serious crimes should always have the right to a jury trial.

(d) Right to see a solicitor

Very few Catholics (2%) agree⁽¹⁾ that the police should be allowed to question suspects for up to a week without access to a solicitor. Over a quarter (28%) of Protestants agree that access to a solicitor should be denied for up to a week.

(1) Agree includes those who 'agree' or 'strongly agree'.

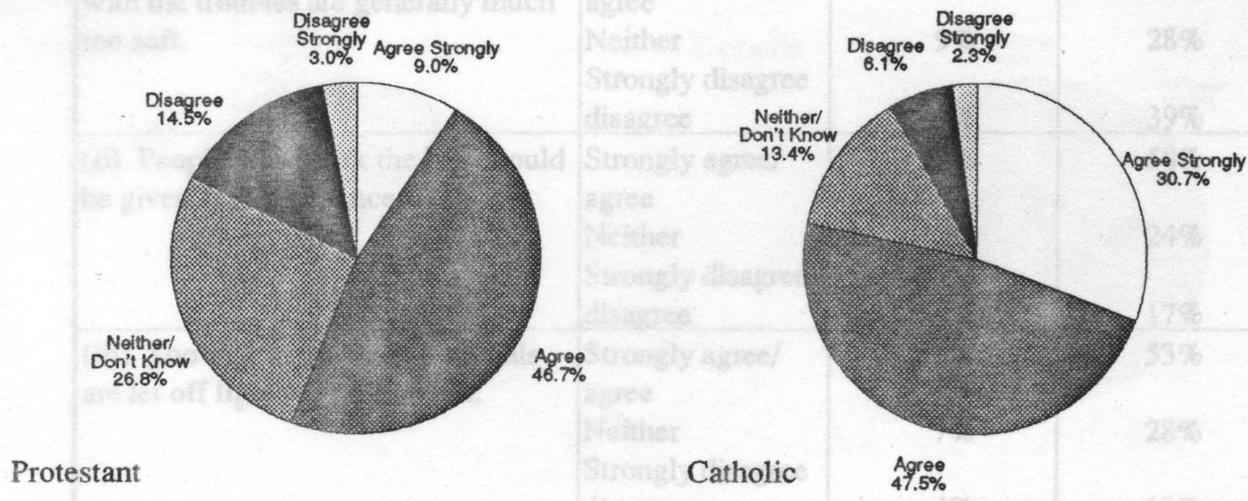
Figure 4: "The police should be allowed to question suspects for up to a week without letting them see a solicitor."



(e) Confessions made during police questioning

Most respondents were in agreement with the statement "A confession made during police questioning and later withdrawn should not be enough to convict someone." 78% of Catholics were in favour with this statement compared to 56% of Protestants.

Figure 5: "A confession made during police questioning and later withdrawn should not be enough to convict someone."



(f) The right to silence

Less than half (43%) of the respondents agreed with the statement "If someone remains silent under police questioning, it should count against them in court." However, 61% of Protestants agreed with the statement compared to 16% of Catholics.

(g) Searching the homes of suspects

One person in four (25%) agreed with the statement "The police should not need a warrant to search the homes of suspects." Over one third of Protestants (35%) compared to 10% of Catholics agreed with the statement.

(h) Four statements (given below) were made in respect of sentencing. Protestants favour stiffer sentencing than compared to Catholics.

Table 4: Sentencing

Statement		Religion	
		Protestant	Catholic
(i) Sentencing for crimes connected with the troubles are generally much too soft.	Strongly agree/ agree	83%	30%
	Neither	9%	28%
	Strongly disagree/ disagree	5%	39%
(ii) People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences.	Strongly agree/ agree	79%	58%
	Neither	15%	24%
	Strongly disagree/ disagree	4%	17%
(iii) Too many convicted criminals are let off lightly by the courts.	Strongly agree/ agree	88%	53%
	Neither	7%	28%
	Strongly disagree/ disagree	4%	19%
(iv) The prisons contain too many people who ought to be given a lighter punishment.	Strongly agree/ agree	29%	47%
	Neither	32%	34%
	Strongly disagree/ disagree	37%	17%

(i) Prisoners access to books and letters

Even though Protestants and Catholics tend to differ on their attitudes to sentencing there is a good deal of agreement between them regarding prisoners access to books and letters. When asked "As long as there is no threat to security, should prisoners be allowed to have as many books to read as they wish?" most people (89%) said 'yes' (87% of Protestants and 95% of Catholics). When the question asked if prisoners should be allowed to "Write and receive as many letters as they wish" again, most people (82%) said 'yes' (78% of Protestants and 92% of Catholics).

(j) Capital Punishment

Figures 6 to 8 indicate that on the issue of capital punishment, Protestants and Catholics have very dissimilar opinions. About three-quarters of Protestants are in favour of capital punishment for "Murder in the course of a terrorist act" whereas about three-quarters of Catholics are against it.

Figure 6: Terrorist Act Of Murder

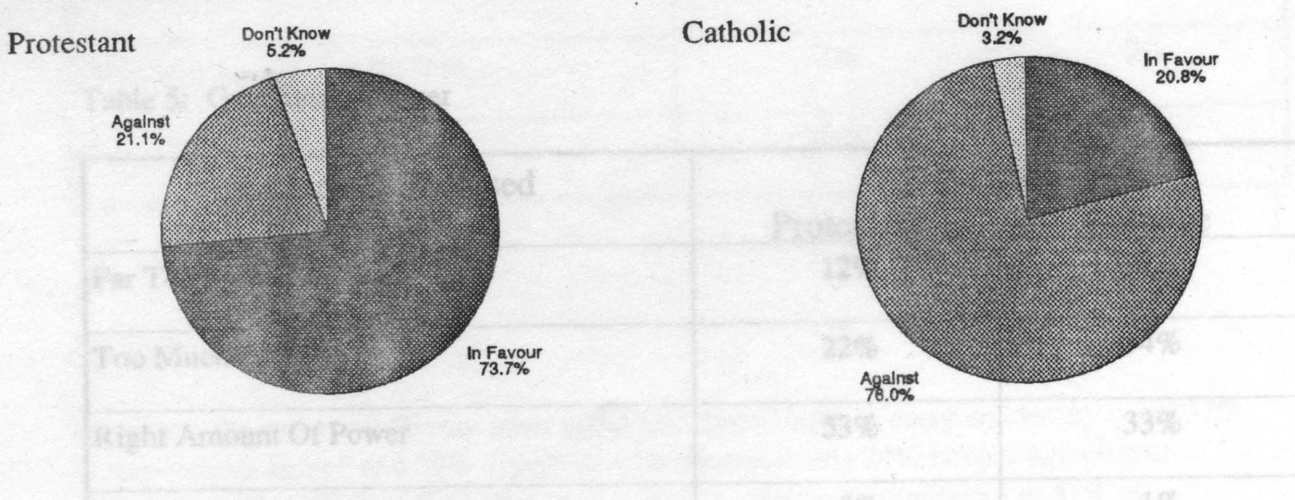


Figure 7: Murder Of A Police Officer

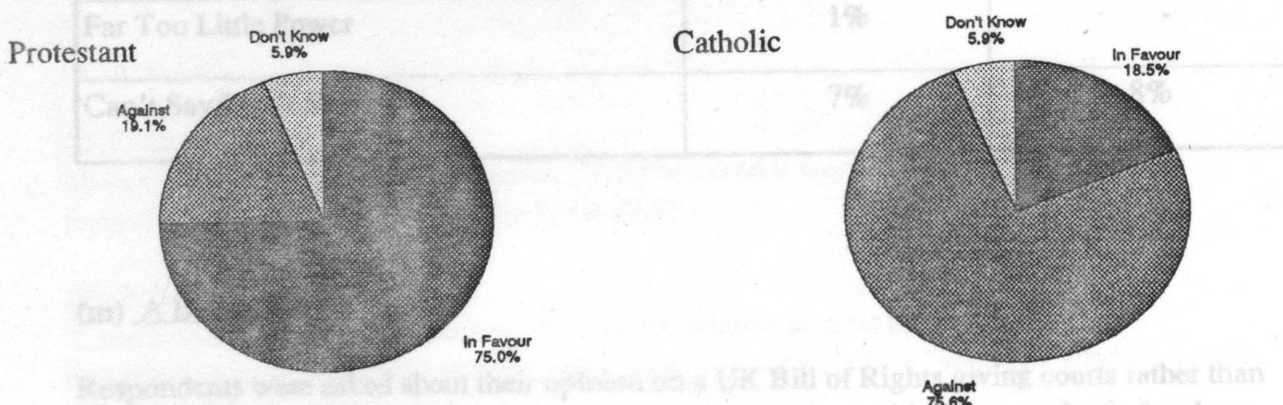
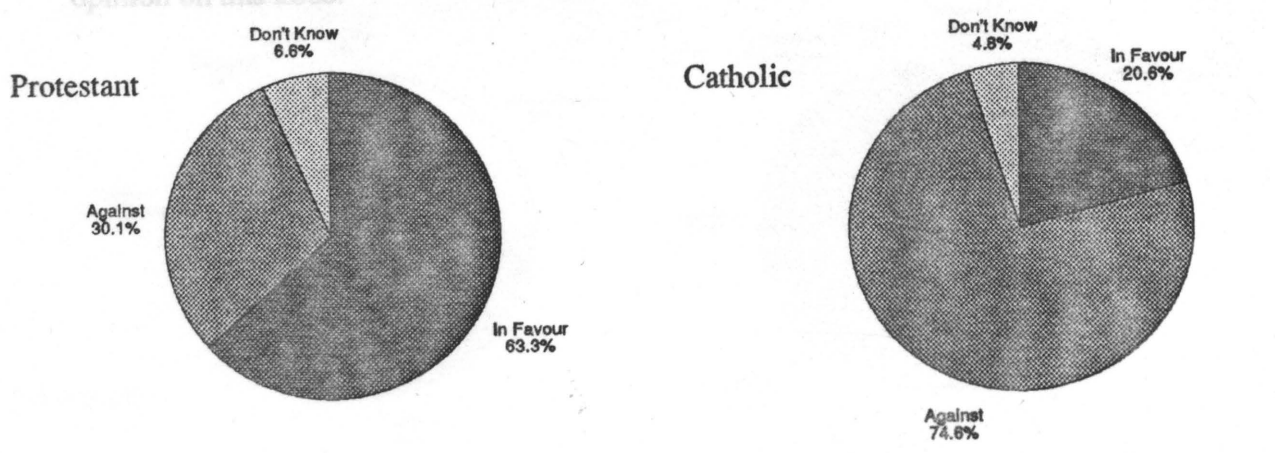


Figure 8: Other Murders



(k) Electronic Tagging

Protestants (69%) were more likely to support the use of electronic tagging of people on remand or probation than Catholics (39%).

(l) Government Power

When asked if the government had too much or too little power 34% of Protestants and 59% of Catholics thought it had "Too much" or "Far too much" power.

Table 5: Government Power

Statement Endorsed	Religion	
	Protestant	Catholic
Far Too Much Power	12%	25%
Too Much Power	22%	34%
Right Amount Of Power	53%	33%
Too Little Power	5%	1%
Far Too Little Power	1%	-
Can't Say/Don't Know	7%	8%

(m) A Bill Of Rights

Respondents were asked about their opinion on a UK Bill of Rights giving courts rather than Parliament "The final say on any laws or government actions which threaten basic freedoms. "Most people (58%) stated that there definitely or probably should be a Bill of Rights (52% of Protestants and 66% of Catholics). About one in four respondents could not give an opinion on this issue.

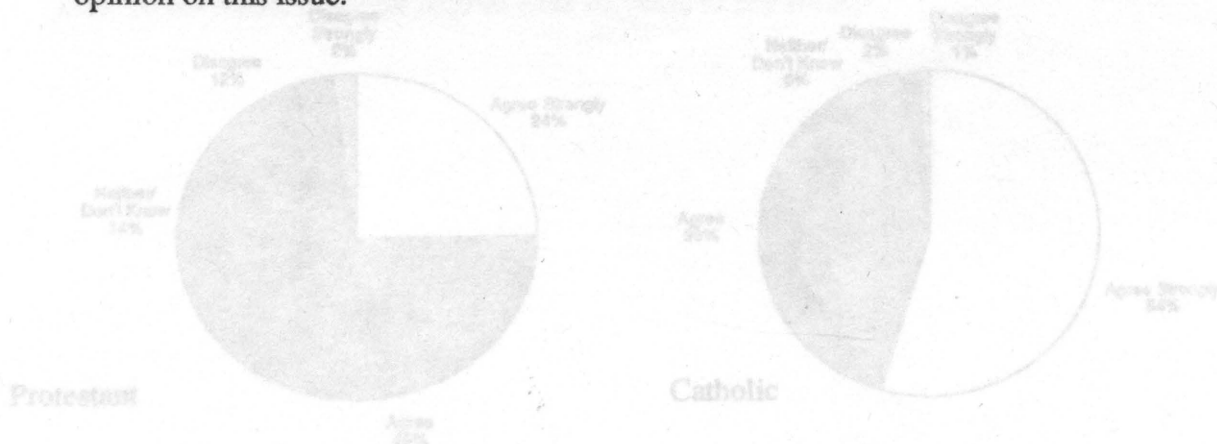


Table 6: A Bill Of Rights

A Bill Of Rights	Religion	
	Protestant	Catholic
Definitely Should Be One	17%	28%
Probably Should Be One	34%	38%
Probably Should Not Be One	16%	7%
Definitely Should Not Be One	4%	2%
Can't Say/Not Answered	28%	25%

(n) ID Cards

In reply to the statement "Every adult in the UK should have to carry an identity card" 37% of respondents agreed and 39% disagreed with the remaining 24% neither agreeing or disagreeing. Only 22% of Catholics agreed with the statement compared to 47% of Protestants.

(o) The RUC

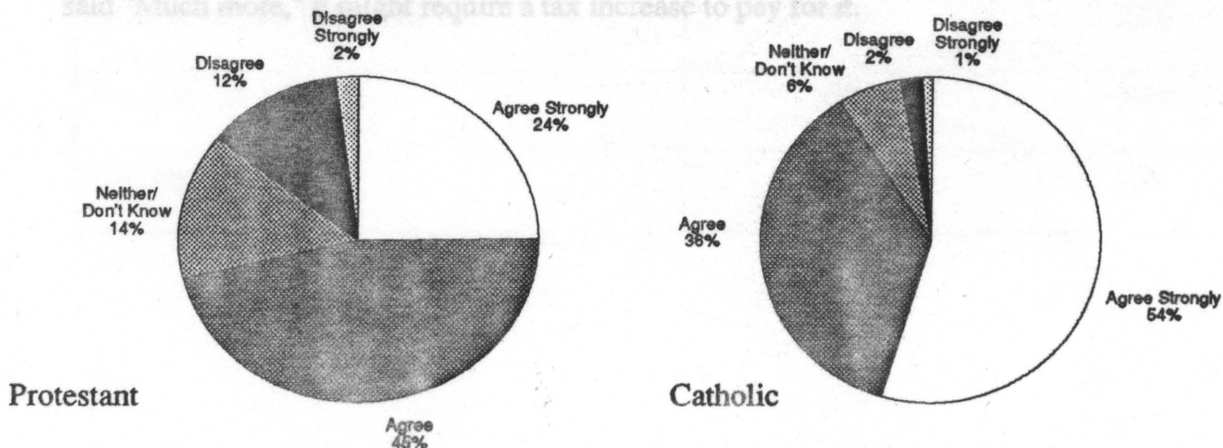
(i) Catholics in the RUC

More Catholics (63%) than Protestants (54%) believed it would be better for Northern Ireland if there were more Catholics in the RUC.

(ii) Police Complaints

When presented with the statement "Serious complaints against the police should be investigated by an independent body, not by the police themselves" 90% of Catholics agreed and 69% of Protestants agreed.

Figure 9: Should there be an independent body to investigate police complaints?



THE FUTURE

Respondents were given a list of predictions and asked to say how likely or unlikely each one was "to come true within the next 10 years." Protestants are more pessimistic than Catholics in thinking of future civil unrest and terrorism in the UK.

Table 7: Predicting Future Events

Prediction		Religion	
		Protestant	Catholic
(i) Acts of political terrorism in the UK will be common events.	Very or quite likely	74%	62%
	Not very likely/Not at all likely	22%	34%
(ii) Riots and civil disturbances in our cities will be common events.	Very or quite likely	69%	56%
	Not very likely/Not at all likely	28%	41%
(iii) The police in our cities will find it impossible to protect our personal safety on the streets.	Very or quite likely	48%	48%
	Not very likely/Not at all likely	49%	48%

GOVERNMENT SPENDING PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked to show if they would like to see more or less government spending in a number of areas. More Catholics are in favour of increased government spending than Protestants (except on police/law enforcement related expenditure). The rank order of areas mentioned is similar for Catholics and Protestants. Respondents were reminded that if they said "Much more," it might require a tax increase to pay for it.

Table 8: (a) Government Spending

Area Of Government Spending	% Who Said Spend More Or Much More	
	Protestant	Catholic
Pensions	88%	92%
Health	86%	92%
Education	65%	79%
Environment	50%	54%
Unemployment Benefits	40%	70%
Police And Law Enforcement	41%	22%
Arts/Culture	8%	16%
Military/Defence	8%	6%

Table 8: (b) Government Spending

Area Of Government Spending	% Who Said Spend Less Or Much Less	
	Protestant	Catholic
Pensions	0%	0%
Health	1%	1%
Education	3%	1%
Environment	5%	4%
Unemployment Benefits	15%	4%
Police And Law Enforcement	4%	23%
Arts/Culture	39%	34%
Military/Defence	27%	59%