



IRISH CATHOLIC  
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
COMHDHAIL EASPAГ CAITLICEACH EIREANN

# Religious Practice and Values in Ireland

## A summary of European Values Study 4<sup>th</sup> wave data

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## **Introduction**

The European Values Study was initiated by the European Value Systems Study Group (EVSSG) in the late 1970s, at that time an informal group of academics. Now, it is carried on in the setting of a foundation, using the (abbreviated) name of the group: European Values Study (EVS).

The original EVSSG researchers aimed at exploring the moral and social values underlying European social and political institutions and governing conduct. At the time of the first survey, the first elections for the European Parliament were approaching, a conference was organized and questions were raised such as:

- Do Europeans share common values?
- Are values changing in Europe and, if so, in what directions?
- Do Christian values continue to permeate European life and culture?
- Is a coherent alternative meaning system replacing that of Christianity?
- What are the implications for European unity?

Previous surveys took place in 1981, 1990 and in 1999/2000. The 4<sup>th</sup> wave of surveys was conducted in Ireland between July and October of 2008. In Ireland, the National Coordinator is Dr Michael Breen, at the Department of Media and Communication, University of Limerick. The research is funded through universities, research institutes, national science foundations and charitable trusts. The survey organisation in the Republic of Ireland is TNS MRBI, a mainstream Dublin-based commercial survey organisation. Data for Northern Ireland is also collected by TNS MRBI and an analysis is included in this report. The sampled data is analysed separately from the UK population, unlike other large scale datasets. NI data can be aggregated with the data from the Republic and maintain its statistical representativeness. This report compiles data from each jurisdiction separately and jointly for a select number of variables.

What follows is a report on the religiously-specific data from these surveys. It includes the most up to date data for Ireland. A comparative and historical data report will be prepared shortly. The Council for Research & Development of the Irish Episcopal Conference is specifically concerned with longer term trends in Mass attendance, prayer and related social values. The survey contains a vast range of other data, which are not outside the interests of the Council and the Episcopal Conference, but for brevity, it was considered appropriate that a small number of select data were analysed in detail.

The following table outlines the sample size for the survey in the Republic and Northern Ireland in the 4<sup>th</sup> wave of the EVS:

| <b>EVS 2008 (4<sup>th</sup> wave)</b> | <b>Total Sample</b> | <b>Number of Catholics</b> | <b>Number of Catholics as a percentage of total sample</b> | <b>Catholics as a percentage of the area's population (Source: CSO and NISRA)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| Republic of Ireland                   | 1,013               | 827                        | 82%  | 87% (2006)  |
| Northern Ireland                      | 500                 | 170                        | 34%  | 43% (2009-10)   |

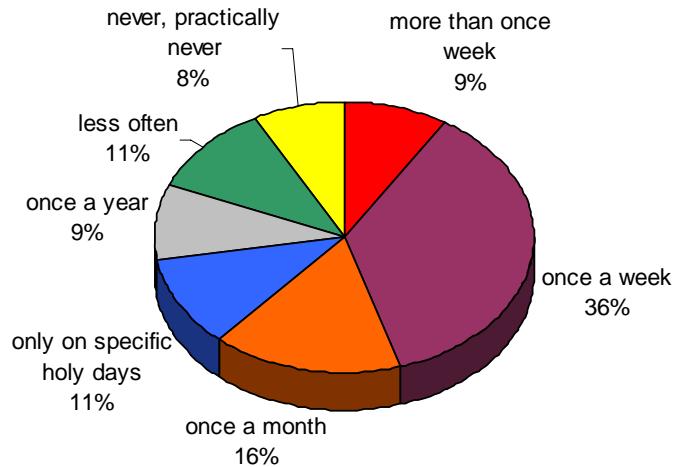
As can be seen from this table, the proportion of Catholics in the Republic's sample is lower than the proportion counted in the last Census in 2006. In Northern Ireland, the Catholics as a proportion of the total sample is lower than the 2001 Census figure. In this respect, the data analysed here with respect to the Catholic population are under- and over-represent within the populations as a whole. For the purposes of analysis, this does not adversely affect the general results.

## **Mass attendance amongst Catholics on the island of Ireland**

Measurements of religiosity, or how religious people are, are highly contested. Some argue that how religious people are cannot be measured by their regular attendance at church services such as Mass, particularly when aggregated. Others argue that religious sentiment is seen through this attendance to the celebration of Mass and other rites. As a snapshot of religiosity, large scale surveys have their limitations but still provide one of the best means by which to understand religious behaviour in public settings. In the 1970s, regular Mass attendance (meaning weekly) for Catholics in Ireland was recorded at between 88% and 95%. In the 1980s, this figure remained relatively stable until the later part of that decade when it dropped below 80%. Since the early 1990s, there have been significant changes to the composition of the group of people who go to Mass weekly. The European Social Survey data from 2006 recorded a weekly only Mass attendance figure of 43% of all Catholics in Ireland. This figure rose to 56% of Catholics when those who attend more often than weekly were included. At that time, it was suggested that a new norm of monthly Mass attendance was firmly established for a majority of Catholics in Ireland.

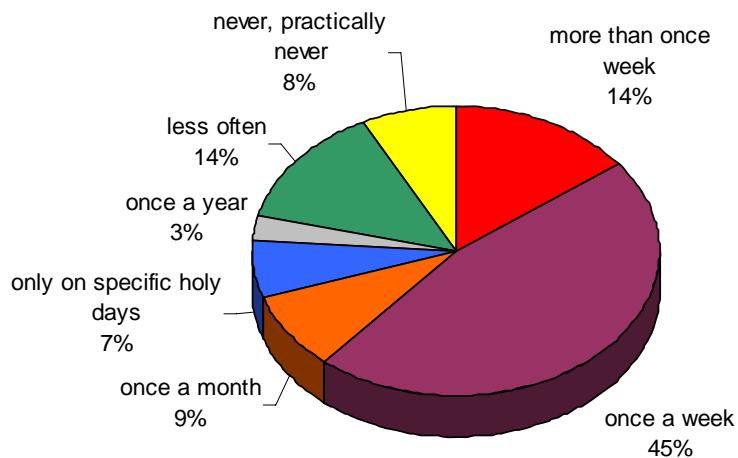
The data from the EVS 4<sup>th</sup> wave survey tells us that among Catholics living in the Republic of Ireland, 45.2% attend Mass on a weekly or more often basis. The graph below shows these data for the Republic of Ireland.

**Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days? (Base: Catholics in R of Ireland; source: EVS)**



For Catholics who live in Northern Ireland, the EVS 4<sup>th</sup> wave data tells us that 59% attend Mass at least once per week or more often outside of weddings, funerals and christenings.

**Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days? (Base: Catholics in N Ireland; source: EVS)**



45% of Northern Catholics attend Mass once per week with a further 14% attending more often than once per week. This contrasts with the data for the Republic, as can be seen from the two charts above. It can be seen as well that a larger percentage of the Republic's Catholics attend Mass once per month when compared with Catholics in Northern Ireland. More frequent Mass attendance is seen amongst Catholics in NI when compared to Catholics in the Republic.

For the island as a whole, there is not too much variation from these particular data. As can be seen from the table below, over 48% of the Catholic population on the island as a whole attend Mass once per week or more often. As we have seen above, the proportion is higher because the proportion of Catholics in Northern Ireland going to Mass more often than Catholics in the Republic. Almost 8% of the island's Catholics never or practically never attend Mass which begs questions concerning self-identification.

| Percentage of all Catholics |      |
|-----------------------------|------|
| more than once week         | 9.8  |
| once a week                 | 38.1 |
| once a month                | 15   |
| only on specific holy days  | 10   |
| once a year                 | 8.2  |
| less often                  | 11.3 |
| never, practically never    | 7.7  |

Within each jurisdiction there are some regional and age differences in Mass attendance. Both jurisdictions are divided into territorial units using the NUTS3 classification system<sup>1</sup>. The EVS data allows some cross tabulation of data using these

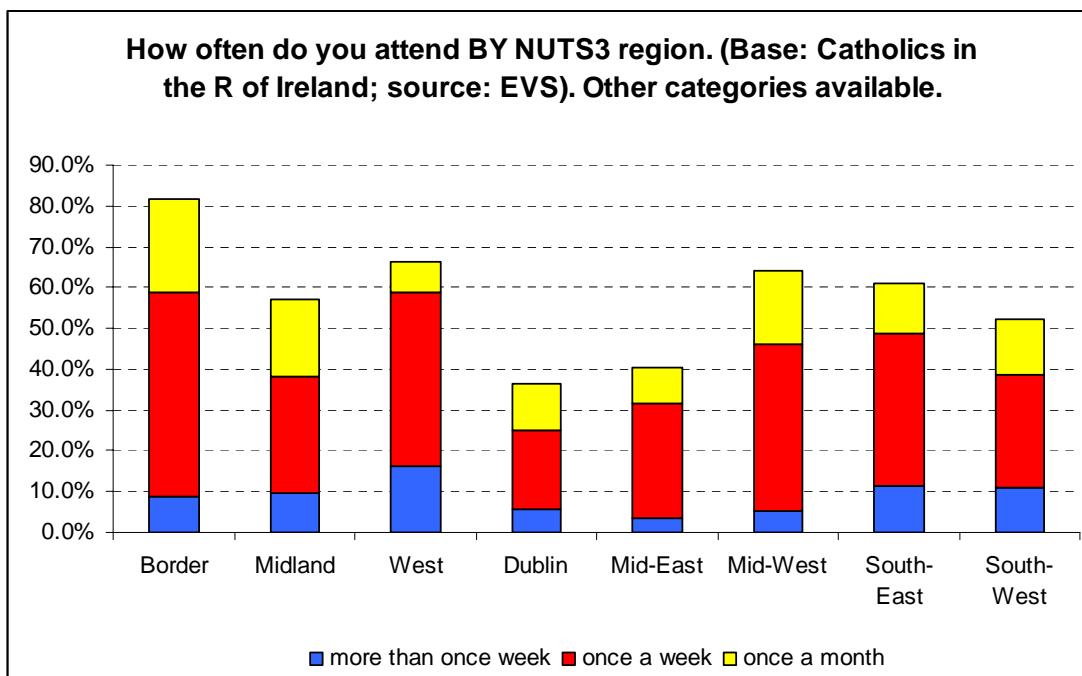
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<sup>1</sup> NUTS: Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics

spatial units. Under this classification, Northern Ireland is divided into 5 units and the Republic into 8. These are:

1. **Belfast**
2. **Outer Belfast** (Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down)
3. **East of Northern Ireland** (Antrim, Ards, Ballymena, Banbridge, Craigavon, Down, Larne)
4. **North of Northern Ireland** (Ballymoney, Coleraine, Derry, Limavady, Moyle, Strabane)
5. **West and South of Northern Ireland** (Armagh, Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Magherafelt, Newry and Mourne, Omagh)
1. **Border** (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo)
2. **Midland** (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath)
3. **West** (Galway, Mayo and Roscommon)
4. **Dublin** (Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin along with Dublin City Council)
5. **Mid-East** (Kildare, Meath and Wicklow)
6. **Mid-West** (Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary)
7. **South-East** (Carlow, Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford)
8. **South-West** (Cork and Kerry)

Based on these units, we can see some interesting comparative data for both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In the graph below, only the data from those who attend most frequently are displayed, i.e. more than once week, once a week, once a month. The other data is displayed in [the table below each graph](#).



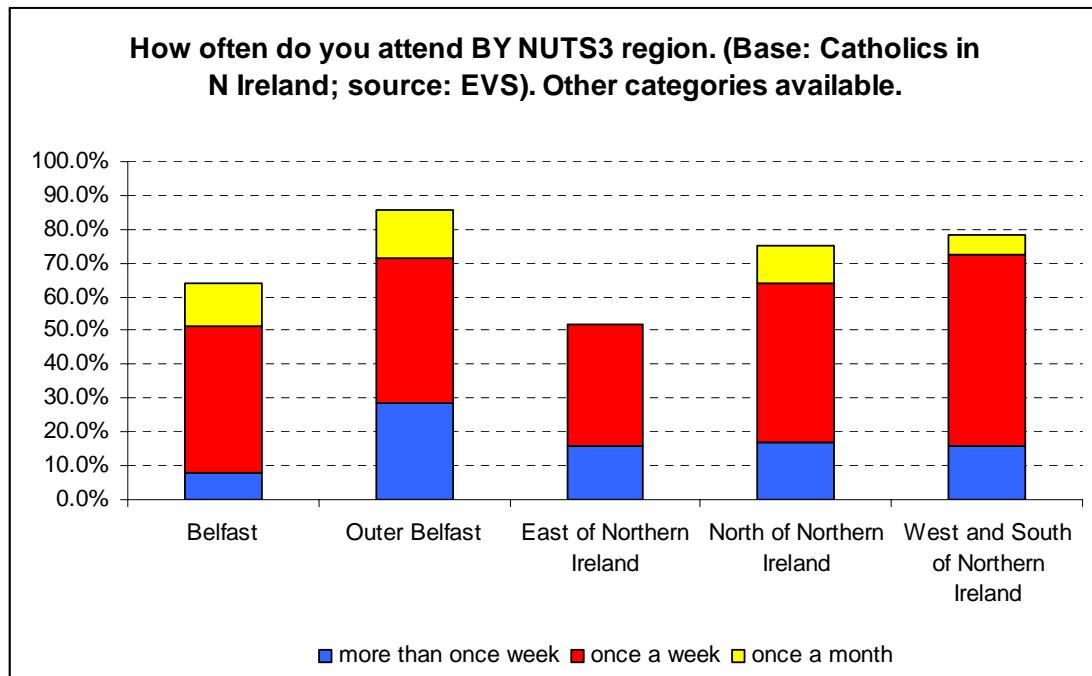
In the Republic, 50% Catholics living in the Border region go to Mass once per week only, compared to 28% in the Mid-East region and 19% in the Dublin region. Combining the proportions who attend once per month or more often, we note significant regional differences in regular Mass attendance. Regular Mass attendance is lowest in the Dublin and Mid-East regions and highest in the Border and West regions. This confirms the defined regional trends of recent large scale surveys on religious service attendance. These data do not mean that where people live *determines* how frequently they attend Mass; nor do they point to a simplistic

(sub)urban / rural divide in attendance. Varying Mass attendance rates amongst Catholics is seen in different regions for many reasons. These reasons are reflected upon by people themselves, further alter behaviour and thereby alter their self-perception. Declining Mass attendance, as part of a more general secularisation process, is not a process that sweeps across regions uniformly, for example from east to west. Within each of these NUTS3 regions, there is also considerable variation. In contrast, among those Catholics who say they never attend Mass, the highest proportions are found in Dublin (22%) and the Mid-East region (almost 25%).

|                                   | <b>Border</b> | <b>Midland</b> | <b>West</b> | <b>Dublin</b> | <b>Mid-East</b> | <b>Mid-West</b> | <b>South-East</b> | <b>South-West</b> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <i>more than once week</i>        | 8.7%          | 9.5%           | 16.3%       | 5.9%          | 3.5%            | 5.4%            | 11.3%             | 11.1%             |
| <i>once a week</i>                | 50.0%         | 28.6%          | 42.4%       | 19.0%         | 28.1%           | 40.5%           | 37.4%             | 27.4%             |
| <i>once a month</i>               | 23.1%         | 19.0%          | 7.6%        | 11.7%         | 8.8%            | 18.0%           | 12.2%             | 13.7%             |
| <i>only on specific holy days</i> | 5.8%          | 17.5%          | 14.1%       | 11.7%         | 14.0%           | 6.3%            | 8.7%              | 8.5%              |
| <i>once a year</i>                | 4.8%          | 4.8%           | --          | 10.3%         | 8.8%            | 8.1%            | 11.3%             | 15.4%             |
| <i>less often</i>                 | 4.8%          | 9.5%           | 10.9%       | 19.4%         | 12.3%           | 10.8%           | 9.6%              | 3.4%              |
| <i>never, practically never</i>   | 2.9%          | 11.1%          | 8.7%        | 22.0%         | 24.6%           | 10.8%           | 9.6%              | 20.5%             |

Almost one quarter of these self-declared Catholics in these regions, do not attend Mass outside of funerals, weddings and christenings. About one quarter of Catholics in Dublin attend Mass weekly or more often.

Turning to the same data for Northern Ireland, there are also regional variations in the proportions attending Mass at various levels of frequency. Those Catholics in the east of NI attend frequently but in small numbers. The highest regular attendances for Catholics in NI are seen in the west and south of Northern Ireland where almost three quarters of attend once per week or more often. This tends to reflect the high rates of weekly attendance in the Border region of the Republic.



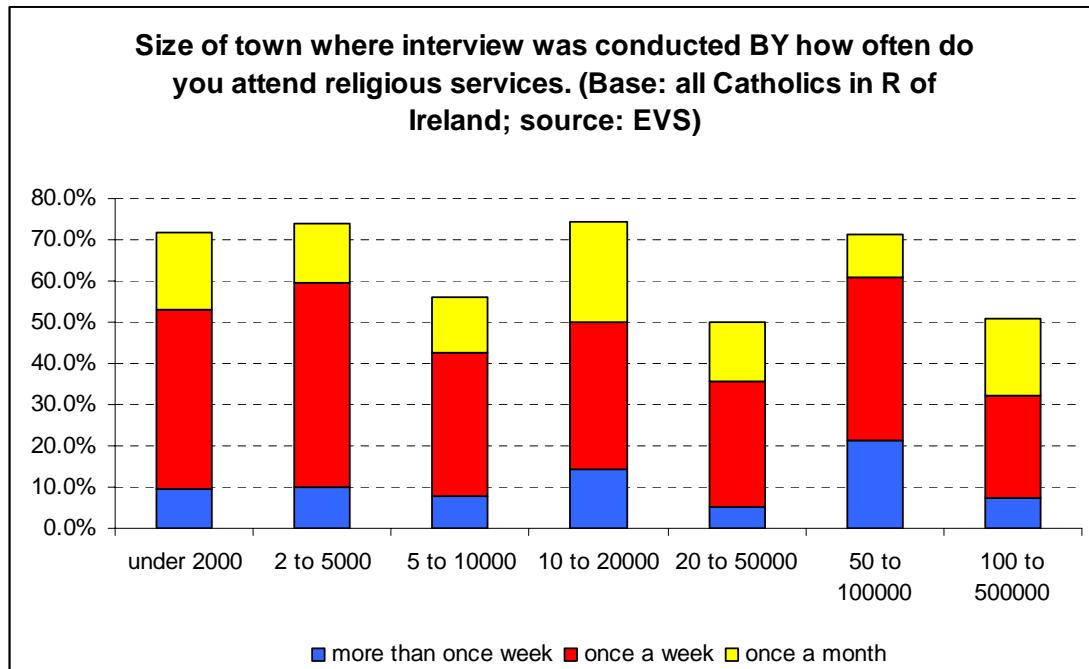
In the Belfast and Outer Belfast regions, regular Mass attendance is relatively high in an all-island context, perhaps against popular understandings of secularisation as infrequent practice amongst urban dwellers. Among the areas that make up the greater Belfast area, 72% of the Catholic population attend Mass once per week or more often. It is in the northern part of NI that we can see the highest rate of non-attendance at Mass among that area's Catholics: almost 14%. In general, we might say that the Mass attendance rates of Catholics in NI as a whole tend to be less spread out than those among Catholics in the Republic, that is they are concentrated at either end of the scale.

|                                   | Belfast | Outer Belfast | East of Northern Ireland | North of Northern Ireland | West and South of Northern Ireland |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>more than once week</i>        | 7.7%    | 28.6%         | 16.1%                    | 16.7%                     | 15.7%                              |
| <i>once a week</i>                | 43.6%   | 42.9%         | 35.5%                    | 47.2%                     | 56.9%                              |
| <i>once a month</i>               | 12.8%   | 14.3%         | --                       | 11.1%                     | 5.9%                               |
| <i>only on specific holy days</i> | 2.6%    | 14.3%         | 16.1%                    | --                        | 7.8%                               |
| <i>once a year</i>                | 2.6%    | --            | 6.5%                     | 2.8%                      | --                                 |
| <i>less often</i>                 | 23.1%   | --            | 19.4%                    | 8.3%                      | 9.8%                               |
| <i>never, practically never</i>   | 7.7%    | --            | 6.5%                     | 13.9%                     | 3.9%                               |

The survey allows a comparison between rates of Mass attendance and the kind of area that the respondent currently lives in, based on their population size. Once again, this does not mean that people in densely populated areas are somehow less religious; it is merely a mode of analysis that disaggregates data on to other scales.

The graph below displays only the data from those who attend most frequently, i.e. more than once week, once a week, once a month. The remaining data is displayed in

the table below each jurisdiction's graph. In the Republic, those areas where the population is under 5,000 tend to have more frequently attending Catholics – between 43% and about 50% of all Catholics in these areas. Larger towns with populations of between 50,000 and 100,000 people attend Mass more than once per week in larger proportions than Catholics in other areas.

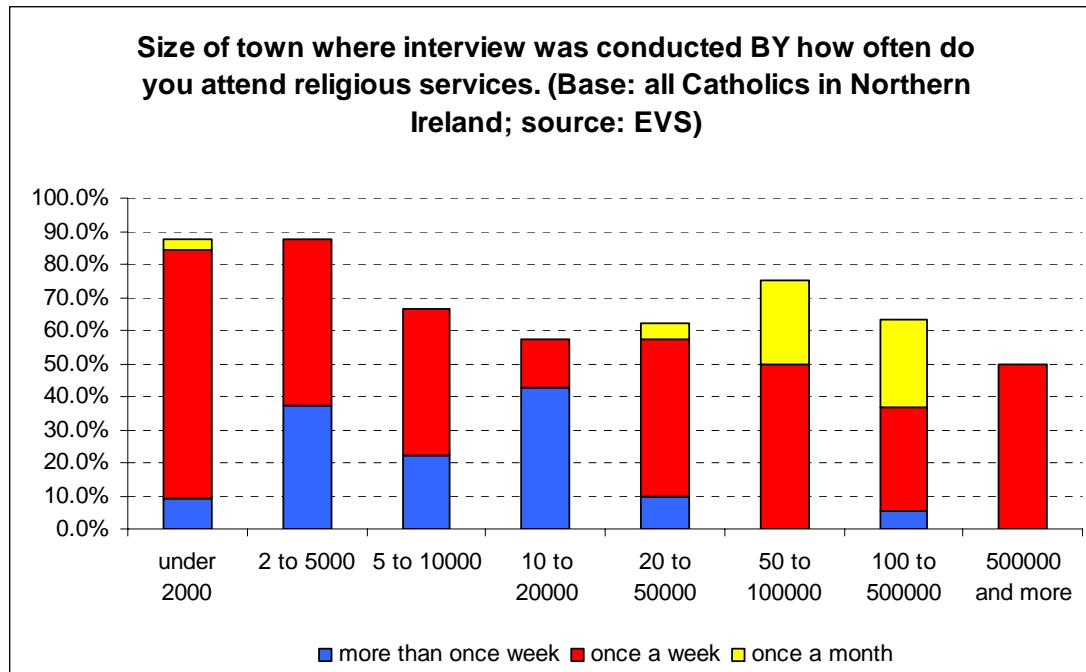


Those who live in areas of population of between 10,000 and 20,000 are also regular attendees at Mass although more likely than not these Catholics are attending once per month. From the table below we can see that 24% of those living in areas with populations of this size attend Mass once per month. People who live in these medium sized towns have the second highest rate of more than weekly Mass attendance at 14.5%.

|                            | under 2,000 | 2 to 5,000 | 5 to 10,000 | 10 to 20,000 | 20 to 50,000 | 50 to 100,000 | 100 to 500,000 |
|----------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| more than once week        | 9.6%        | 10.1%      | 8.0%        | 14.5%        | 5.4%         | 21.4%         | 7.5%           |
| once a week                | 43.4%       | 49.3%      | 34.7%       | 35.5%        | 30.4%        | 39.3%         | 24.5%          |
| once a month               | 18.7%       | 14.5%      | 13.3%       | 24.2%        | 14.3%        | 10.7%         | 18.9%          |
| only on specific holy days | 9.0%        | 4.3%       | 10.7%       | 9.7%         | 12.5%        | 10.7%         | 15.1%          |
| once a year                | 6.6%        | 14.5%      | 10.7%       | 3.2%         | 21.4%        | 10.7%         | 9.4%           |
| less often                 | 7.8%        | 4.3%       | 13.3%       | 4.8%         | 10.7%        | 3.6%          | 9.4%           |
| never, practically never   | 4.8%        | 2.9%       | 9.3%        | 8.1%         | 5.4%         | 3.6%          | 15.1%          |

Examining the data from the right-most column, we might note that the major cities of Republic of Ireland have the highest non-attendance rate of all, 15%. About 51% of these areas' populations (that is Dublin, Cork, perhaps greater Galway and Limerick)

attend once per month or more often. In Northern Ireland, there is a very different distribution of those who attend Mass frequently. A cross-jurisdiction comparison is provided later but from the graph and table below we can note that weekly (or more often) Mass attendance is highest in areas of population smaller than 2,000 people, 75%.



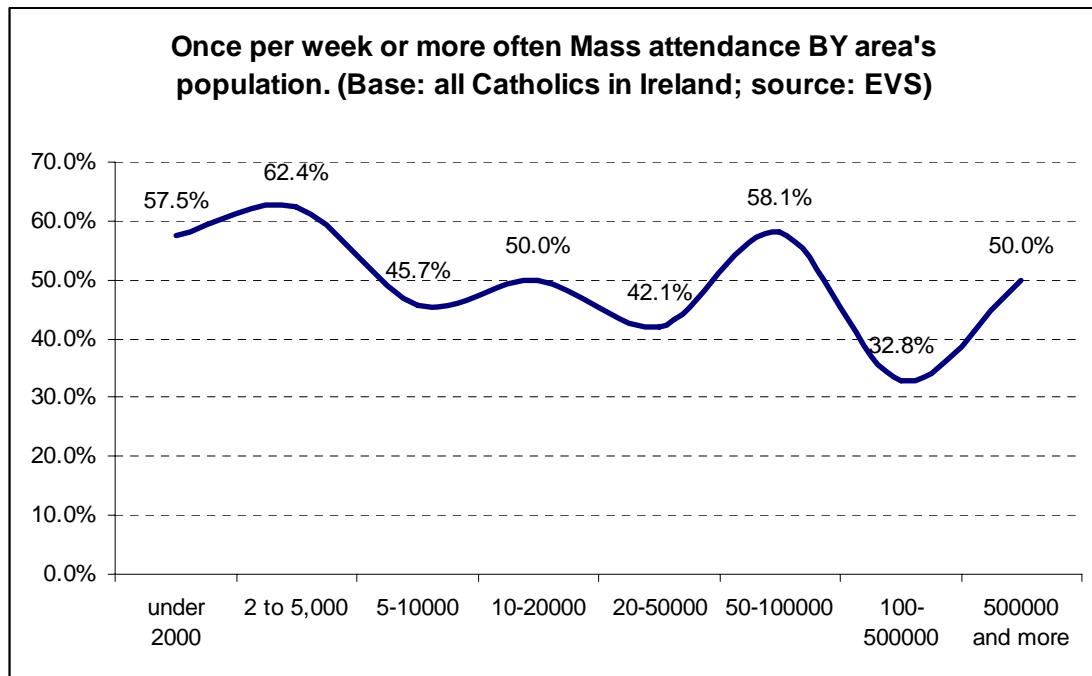
Generally speaking, in areas of smaller populations (<5,000 people), weekly Mass attendance is not only very popular but is the predominant pattern for Catholics in Northern Ireland. Once per week and once per month attendance is also popular amongst those in areas of populations between 50,000 and 500,000. (NI has one further category of a half million people or more but this represents such a small subsample that the results are not significant.) As can be seen from the table below, reflecting the full analysis of the data for Northern Ireland, there are considerable differences in the Mass attendance patterns in areas of varying populations, between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Republic has more ‘once per month only’ attendees, most particularly in mid-sized towns. In Northern Ireland, frequent Mass attendance is seen amongst people in areas of population between 10,000 and 20,000 and in areas with populations smaller than 5,000.

|                                 | under<br>2000 | 2 to<br>5000 | 5 to<br>10000 | 10 to<br>20000 | 20 to<br>50000 | 50 to<br>100000 | 100 to<br>500000 | 500000<br>and<br>more |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>more than once week</i>      | 9.4%          | 37.5%        | 22.2%         | 42.9%          | 9.5%           | --              | 5.3%             | --                    |
| <i>once a week</i>              | 75.0%         | 50.0%        | 44.4%         | 14.3%          | 47.6%          | 50.0%           | 31.6%            | 50.0%                 |
| <i>once a month</i>             | 3.1%          | --           | --            | --             | 4.8%           | 25.0%           | 26.3%            | --                    |
| only on specific holy days      | 6.3%          | --           | --            | 14.3%          | 14.3%          | --              | 5.3%             | --                    |
| <i>once a year</i>              | --            | --           | 11.1%         | --             | 9.5%           | --              | --               | --                    |
| less often                      | 6.3%          | --           | 22.2%         | --             | 9.5%           | --              | 26.3%            | 50.0%                 |
| <i>never, practically never</i> | --            | 12.5%        | --            | 28.6%          | 4.8%           | 25.0%           | 5.3%             | --                    |

For the island as a whole (data in the table directly below), we can see some variation of attendance by the area's population although it is not vastly different from the NUTS3 regional analysis presented above. For areas where the population is under 5,000, the more than weekly Mass attendance is highest, between 58% and 62% of Catholics in these areas.

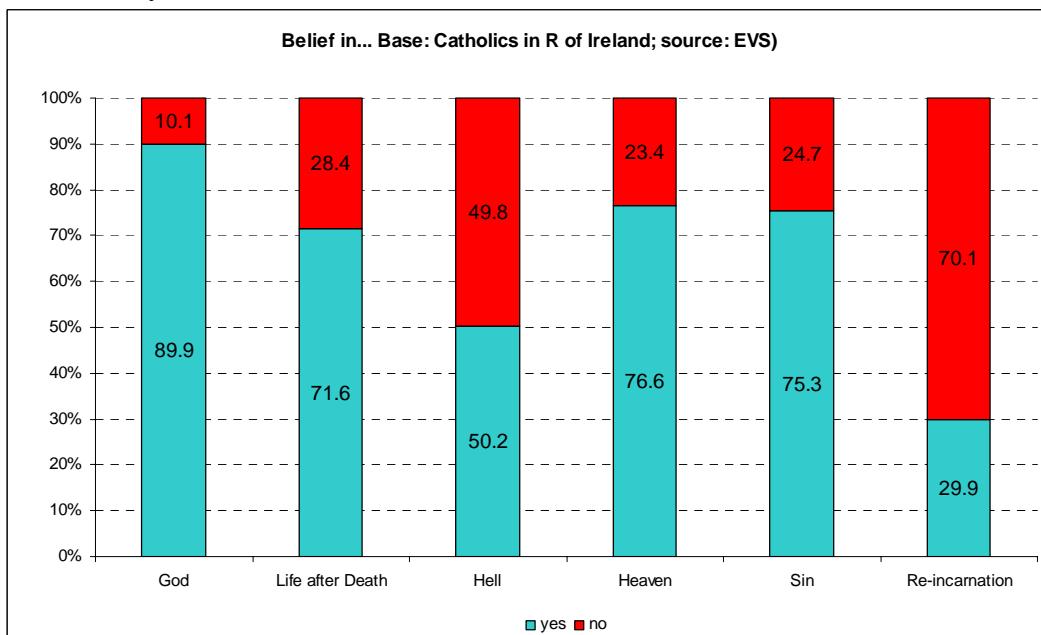
| <b>Island of Ireland</b>        | <b>under<br/>2000</b> | <b>2 to<br/>5,000</b> | <b>5-<br/>10000</b> | <b>10-<br/>20000</b> | <b>20-<br/>50000</b> | <b>50-<br/>100000</b> | <b>100-<br/>500000</b> | <b>500000<br/>and<br/>more</b> |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>more than once week</i>      | 9.5%                  | 13.0%                 | 9.6%                | 17.1%                | 6.6%                 | 19.4%                 | 6.8%                   | --                             |
| <i>once a week</i>              | 48.0%                 | 49.4%                 | 36.1%               | 32.9%                | 35.5%                | 38.7%                 | 26.0%                  | 50.0%                          |
| <i>once a month</i>             | 16.5%                 | 13.0%                 | 12.0%               | 21.4%                | 11.8%                | 12.9%                 | 20.5%                  | --                             |
| only on specific holy days      | 9.0%                  | 3.9%                  | 9.6%                | 10.0%                | 11.8%                | 9.7%                  | 13.7%                  | --                             |
| <i>once a year</i>              | 5.5%                  | 13.0%                 | 9.6%                | 2.9%                 | 18.4%                | 9.7%                  | 6.8%                   | --                             |
| less often                      | 7.5%                  | 3.9%                  | 14.5%               | 4.3%                 | 10.5%                | 3.2%                  | 13.7%                  | 50.0%                          |
| <i>never, practically never</i> | 4.0%                  | 3.9%                  | 8.4%                | 11.4%                | 5.3%                 | 6.5%                  | 12.3%                  | --                             |

Across the island, there is no specific pattern for weekly or more often Mass attendance based on the respondent's geographic location. Those in larger towns attend Mass only slightly less often than those in small towns and in rural areas. The largest disparities between these figures occur between those people living in the island's largest cities with those who live in the smaller towns. In many ways, people living in these areas differ in many more ways than just Mass attendance.



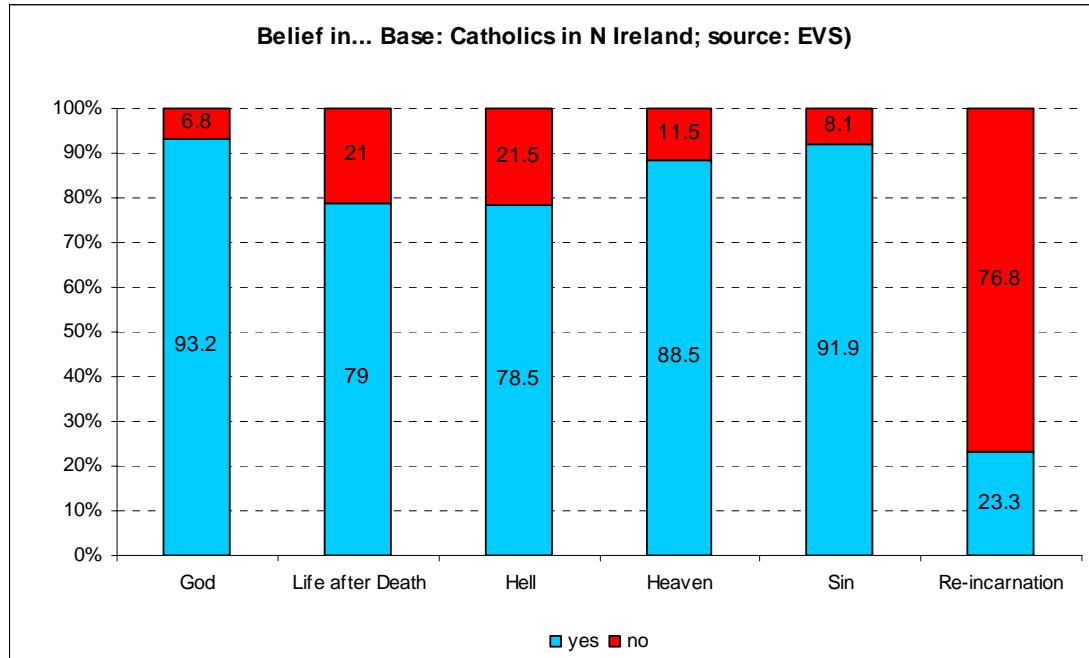
## Prayer and belief among Catholics in Ireland

The European Values Survey asks a number of questions about the frequency of prayer and belief in various parts of religious life. These are attempts to understand people's religious beliefs in a little more detail. They also provide other ways in which we can understand changes in these beliefs over time. The respondents are asked if they believe in God, life after death, hell, heaven and sin. The data below



show the results of these data for the Republic, Northern Ireland as well as the island as a whole. As can be seen, almost 90% of Catholics believe in God, almost 77% believe in heaven and just over three quarters believe in sin. While there is no subtlety in these data (because respondents are merely asked to state their belief or lack of it),

they provide a useful opening for further analysis later on. Just over one half of Catholics in the Republic of Ireland believe in hell. Looking at similar data for Northern Ireland, we can see a slightly different pattern emerging. Almost 77% of Northern Catholics do not believe in re-incarnation, about one fifth do not believe in hell or life after death and just 7% do not believe in God.

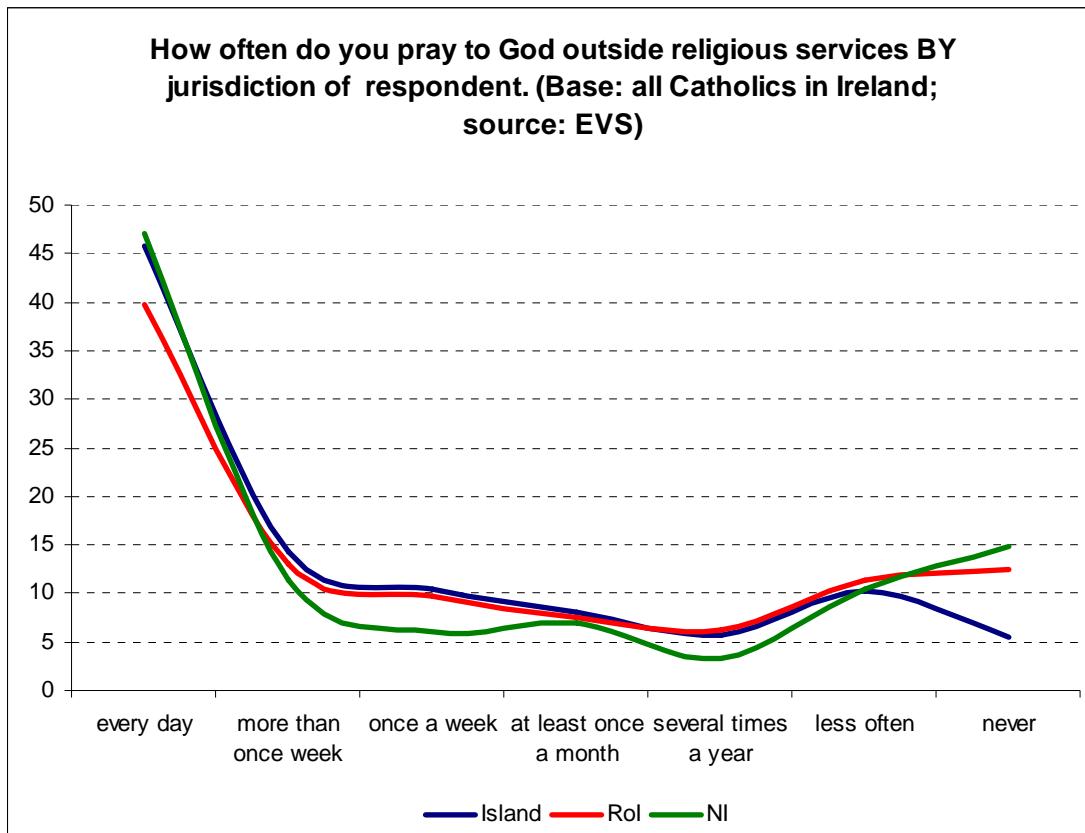


In these data, we can see a higher proportion of Catholics in Northern Ireland indicating positively that they believe in these items on the list when compared to Catholics in the Republic. The table below shows the data for the two jurisdictions and the island as a whole.

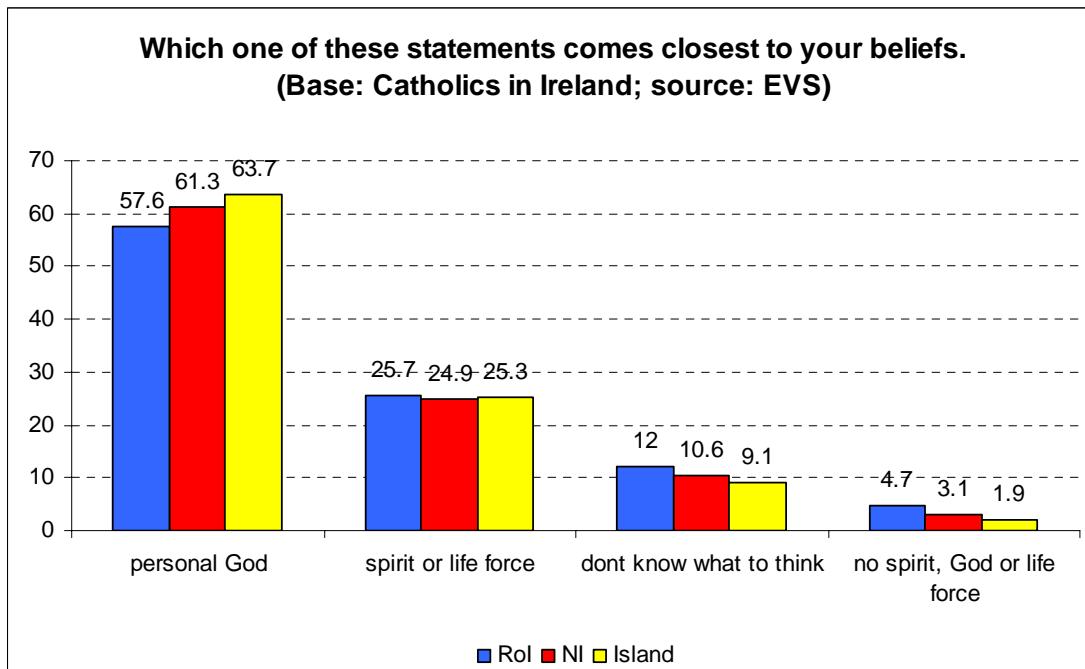
|        | <b>God</b> | <b>Life after Death</b> | <b>Hell</b> | <b>Heaven</b> | <b>Sin</b> | <b>Re-incarnation</b> |
|--------|------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|-----------------------|
| RoI    | 89.9       | 71.6                    | 50.2        | 76.6          | 75.3       | 29.9                  |
| NI     | 93.2       | 79                      | 78.5        | 88.5          | 91.9       | 23.3                  |
| Island | 95.6       | 79.7                    | 61.5        | 85.3          | 84.2       | 30.2                  |

Almost 96% of the Catholics on the island believe in God, just short of 4 in 5 believe in life after death and similar proportions of the population believe in heaven and sin. Belief in hell is much lower amongst Catholics in the Republic when compared to Catholics in Northern Ireland. Belief in re-incarnation is higher amongst Catholics in the Republic than amongst those in Northern Ireland.

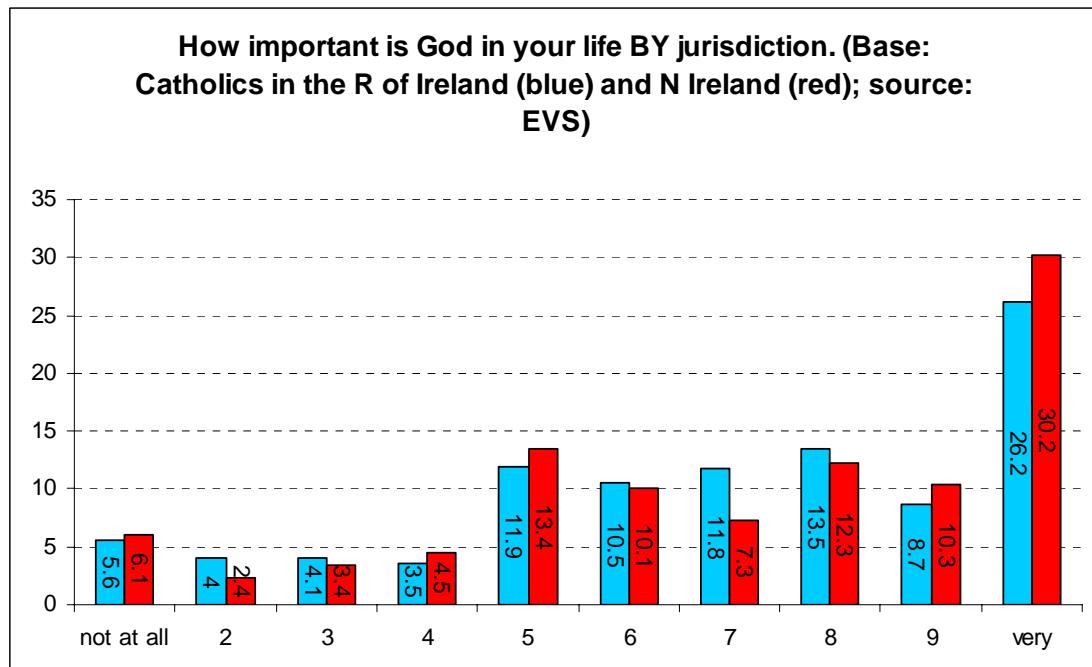
Turning to prayer as a marker of faith, we can see from the data displayed below in the graph that prayer continues to retain an importance for Catholics in Ireland. For those Catholics in the Republic, daily prayer is not as a big a feature of their spiritual lives than for those in Northern Ireland – 40% as opposed to 47%. Daily and once per



week prayer (outside of religious services) is recorded in about 60% of the Catholics on the island. From this and other representative surveys of Irish and European Catholics, frequent prayer is still important to many and some have characterised this as a relationship with a personal God. Other data presented in the survey results also



point to this orientation toward a personal God. Almost 64% of the Catholics in Ireland believe in a personal God when presented with a series of representations of their beliefs. The chart above shows how these data compare across the two jurisdictions and the island. About one quarter of all of the Catholics in Ireland, believe that God is a spirit or a life force. Irrespective of how they conceive of God in



these ways, the respondents were also asked to rate on a scale how important God is in their life. The chart above shows the respondents' data for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. While 30% of Catholics in NI state that God is very important in their life, just over 26% of the Republic's Catholics do. Importance tends to cluster around the mid- to high-points of the scale. It is worth noting though that between 5% and 6% of the Catholic population as a whole state that God is not important at all in their life. God is important to most Catholics' lives and they tend to believe in God as a personal God.

One final question on this matter of relationships to God: the EVS presents a statement to respondents that states "I have my own way of connecting with the Divine without Churches or religious services." This is a further measure of a personal religious faith, and not necessarily a religion in communion with God and others. The respondents are asked to choose a point on the scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents complete disagreement and 5 complete agreement. The table below shows the data for Catholics in Ireland as an island, in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.

|            | <b>RoI</b> | <b>NI</b> | <b>Island</b> |
|------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| not at all | 13.1       | 12.3      | 10.4          |
| 2          | 7.9        | 6.9       | 7.1           |
| 3          | 18.2       | 17.5      | 18.5          |
| 4          | 25.5       | 27.9      | 27.9          |
| very much  | 35.2       | 35.6      | 36.1          |

Between 10 and 13% of Catholics in Ireland state that they do *not* have their own way of connecting with the Divine. Across the various points of this scale, there is a consistency, north and south, which is not seen for other measures of religiosity. About 35% of Catholics in Ireland state that they 'very much' have their own way of connecting with the Divine

without Churches. As can be seen from the data in this table, a majority of Catholics in Ireland tend toward believing that they have their own way of connecting with the Divine.

## The Church in the world

This section of the report examines the data relating to the place of religion, belief and faith in the world, and not individual practice and rite. The European Values Survey asks respondents to state how much confidence they have in different institutions. The survey also asks about religion's influence on the political world. These are limited measures of what might be termed secularisation in some form in that they frame the Church's standing in the world alongside other institutional forms and its place in politics. While secularisation is a much more complex process than these measures, they are indicative of people's views on the institutional Church rather than just their own beliefs.

Firstly, respondents are asked to respond to a list of 17 institutions and decide how much confidence they have in each institution. The institutions, listed alphabetically, are:

|                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Armed forces                | Major companies        |
| Church                      | NATO                   |
| Civil Service               | Parliament             |
| Education system            | Political parties      |
| Environmental organisations | Social security system |
| European Union              | The police             |
| Government                  | The press              |
| Health care system          | Trade unions           |
| Justice system              | UN organisation        |

Although many of these are generic titles, the European Values Survey is a survey carried out across many countries and so country-specific labels would not be appropriate for cross-national comparison. For this report, these 17 have been split into three loosely defined groups:

1. State functions
2. Media and NGO, and
3. Cross-national organisations.

Each group is compared with the results of the survey for the confidence shown in the Church from the list. For brevity, only the first two (positive) choices available to respondents are presented in the analysis below. The remaining two choices were 'not very much' and 'none at all'. The data for the Republic and Northern Ireland are examined first.

|     | <b>a great deal of confidence</b> | <b>quite a lot of confidence</b> | <b>not very much confidence</b> | <b>none at all</b> |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| RoI | 18.6                              | 35.1                             | 33                              | 13.2               |
| NI  | 38.5                              | 28.8                             | 25.9                            | 6.8                |

13% of the Republic's Catholics and just under 7% of the Catholics in Northern Ireland had no confidence at all in the Church as an institution. 33% of the Catholics in the Republic had not very much confidence in the Church compared with just under 26% of the Catholics in NI. Generally, fewer Catholics in the Republic have confidence in the Church when compared with Catholics from Northern Ireland. In the first section, the Church is compared with state functions such as the police and civil service.

## State functions

When compared with the options such as confidence in the education system and the police, it can be noted from the table on the left that about many more Catholics in NI

|                        | <b>ROI</b>   |             | <b>NI</b>    |             | state that they have a great deal of confidence in the Church (38%) than they do in the Republic (almost 19%). High degrees of confidence in the Church are seen in NI. 28% of Northern Ireland Catholics and 35% of the Republic's Catholics stated |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--|
|                        | a great deal | quite a lot | a great deal | quite a lot |  |
| <i>Church</i>          | 18.6         | 35.1        | 38.5         | 28.8        |  |
| Education system       | 21.7         | 53.8        | 17.6         | 54          |  |
| Armed forces           | 19.7         | 51.9        | 21.1         | 46.1        |  |
| The police             | 18.2         | 52.4        | 15.7         | 46.9        |  |
| Social security system | 8            | 49.8        | 9.6          | 44.6        |  |
| Civil Service          | 8.1          | 53.9        | 7.8          | 45.8        |  |
| Health care system     | 6.5          | 25.5        | 14.9         | 47.3        |  |
| Justice system         | 7.4          | 43          | 5.6          | 37.4        |  |
| Government             | 5.4          | 32.3        | 2.8          | 19.8        |  |
| Parliament             | 5.8          | 43.3        | 4.5          | 27.5        |  |

that they have quite a lot of confidence in the Church. When compared with other institutions, the Church is the third highest placed institution with a great deal of confidence (18.6%) amongst the Republic's Catholics and the highest placed institution (38.5%) amongst Catholics in Northern Ireland. Parliaments, Government and the Justice systems in both jurisdictions do not fare very well when it comes to having a great deal of confidence in these institutions. However, the proportions are very different when it comes to those who indicate that they have quite a lot of confidence in them.

## Media and NGO

The next group of institutions with which the Church is compared is the media and NGO group. As can be seen from the table on the left, the Church ranks highly among

|                             | ROI          |             | NI           |             |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
|                             | a great deal | quite a lot | a great deal | quite a lot |
| <i>Church</i>               | 18.6         | 35.1        | 38.5         | 28.8        |
| Environmental organisations | 12           | 52.7        | 8.1          | 56.5        |
| Trade unions                | 9.5          | 44.8        | 4.6          | 29.7        |
| The press                   | 7.1          | 34.1        | 1.8          | 14.8        |
| Political parties           | 3.4          | 28.2        | 1.1          | 16.6        |

Catholics when compared with other institutions in this group. In the Republic of Ireland, the Church ranks highest amongst those with a great deal of confidence and

first in NI. Amongst the Catholics polled in NI, there is quite a lot of confidence in environmental organisations but the Church is a third placed institution in this ranking, after trade unions. In this comparison, the Church as an institution ranks highly for those who have a great deal of confidence in these media organisations and NGOs.

## Cross-national organisations

Finally, the data for the other cross-national organisations is compared with respondents' confidence in the Church. As can be seen from the table on the left,

|                 | ROI          |             | NI           |             |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
|                 | a great deal | quite a lot | a great deal | quite a lot |
| <i>Church</i>   | 18.6         | 35.1        | 38.5         | 28.8        |
| UN organisation | 14           | 47          | 7.4          | 40.7        |
| NATO            | 11           | 43.5        | 6.7          | 35.5        |
| European Union  | 10.4         | 47.4        | 4.8          | 36.7        |
| Major companies | 4.3          | 44.9        | 1.8          | 36.9        |

when compared to these other organisations, 18% of Catholics in the Republic and 38% of the Catholics in NI had a great deal of confidence compared to 10% for the EU in the Republic and just under 5% of NI Catholics.

Once again, however, the favourable regard for the Church when compared with these cross-national organisations amongst those who have quite a lot of confidence in these institutions is variable. For Catholics in the Republic, 35% of them have quite a lot of confidence in the Church compared with 43% who have quite a lot of confidence in NATO. In Northern Ireland, about 29% have quite a lot of confidence in the Church compared with about 41% who have quite a lot of confidence in the UN organisation.

For both jurisdictions and when compared with other national and cross-national institutions, the Church compares well when we examine the data for those who hold a great deal of confidence in the Church. However, when data for those who hold quite a lot of confidence in the Church are examined, the institution does not fare so well. This would suggest a core group of Catholics who have a great deal of confidence in the Church but these are outnumbered by Catholics who have quite a lot

of confidence in it. There is evidence to suggest that this latter group did not feel enough confidence in the Church to choose the highest ranked choice.

A comprehensive and ranked list of all of these data for the island of Ireland is presented below. Again, only two of the four choices are presented and the columns are ranked first by the ‘a great deal’ option and then by ‘quite a lot’ option. As can be seen here, when ranked in this manner, the Church ranks highest of all of the institutions. This, however, is a partial representation of the entire dataset. There is also a pattern whereby Catholics in Ireland, if they have quite a lot of confidence in the Church, tend to do so in smaller proportions compared to the civil service or the police service, for example.

| <b>Island of Ireland</b>    | <b>a great deal</b> | <b>quite a lot</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Church                      | 23.2                | 38.9               |
| Education system            | 20.5                | 55.1               |
| Armed forces                | 19.2                | 48.8               |
| The police                  | 17.5                | 51.4               |
| UN organisation             | 12.4                | 48.4               |
| Environmental organisations | 11                  | 55                 |
| NATO                        | 10.1                | 44.5               |
| European Union              | 9                   | 49.1               |
| Trade unions                | 8.8                 | 45.6               |
| Social security system      | 8                   | 50.6               |
| Civil Service               | 7.6                 | 54.1               |
| Health care system          | 7.1                 | 30.1               |
| Justice system              | 6.9                 | 42.4               |
| The press                   | 6.5                 | 32.6               |
| Government                  | 5.1                 | 31.7               |
| Parliament                  | 5                   | 42.9               |
| Major companies             | 4                   | 44.2               |
| Political parties           | 3                   | 27.4               |

The Church is well regarded in Ireland but this does not translate to regular weekly Mass attendance or individual professions of belief in some of the tenets of Christian teaching. The limitations of a survey such as this are evident from these last data presented (although some characterise this as *a la carte* Catholicism). On the other hand, the nature of what it is to believe has undergone serious change in Ireland and elsewhere in the world in recent decades.

Respondents were also asked to rank their agreement and disagreement with two statements concerned with the mixture of politics and religion.

Respondents were presented with ‘Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office’. This statement seeks to understand agreement / disagreement with an appropriate cross-over between religion and politics quite generally. It is a further measure of a form of secularisation. As we can see from the table below, a majority of Catholics in Ireland, both north and south either strongly disagree or disagree with this statement. 61% of Catholics in Republic of Ireland disagree or strongly disagree

|                    | <b>RoI</b> | <b>NI</b> | <b>Island</b> |
|--------------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| agree strongly     | 5.5        | 5.9       | 5.6           |
| agree              | 9.5        | 17.4      | 12.4          |
| agree nor disagree | 24         | 24.4      | 22.3          |
| disagree           | 32.3       | 38.6      | 36.3          |
| disagree strongly  | 28.7       | 13.7      | 23.4          |

compared with 52% of Catholics in Northern Ireland. A higher proportion of Catholics in the north (17%) agree with this statement than in the south (9%) and for the island as a whole (12%).

Catholics in the Republic of Ireland are more tolerant of politicians who do not believe in God than their cross-border counterparts. On the island as a whole, about 1 in every 6 Catholics agrees to some degree that atheistic politicians are unfit for public office.

Respondents were presented with ‘Religious leaders should not influence government decisions’. This is a statement that seeks to understand agreement / disagreement with the role of religious leaders in governmental decisions. There is no differentiation

|                    | <b>RoI</b> | <b>NI</b> | <b>Island</b> |
|--------------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| agree strongly     | 30.1       | 12.9      | 24.7          |
| agree              | 29.6       | 35.9      | 33.9          |
| agree nor disagree | 23.4       | 24.3      | 21.8          |
| disagree           | 12.9       | 22.5      | 15.4          |
| disagree strongly  | 3.9        | 4.2       | 4.2           |

made in the question if religious leaders are from a particular religion or other denomination. The table below shows the level of agreement with the statement in the Republic of Ireland, in Northern Ireland and on the island as a whole amongst Catholics. Almost 60% of the Republic’s Catholics but only 49% of

NI’s Catholics agree to some extent that religious leaders should not influence government decisions. Many Catholics cannot agree or disagree with the statement and this about the same proportion in both jurisdictions. For the island as a whole, just fewer than 20% of Catholics believe that religious leaders should influence government decisions.

Taken as a pair of questions and as measures of some form of secularism / separation of churches from states, we can see that there is broad agreement in both Northern and the Republic of Ireland that politicians who do not believe in God can publicly serve and that religious leaders should not influence government decisions.



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