21st Century Faith

Results of the Survey of Laypeople in the Republic of Ireland & Northern Ireland

By Dr Gladys Ganiel, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin
Acknowledgements

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Cover Photo:

Stained Glass Window at St Macartan’s Cathedral, Clogher. Photo by Brian O’Neill.

You can keep up-to-date on our research project via our website, www.ecumenics.ie.

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of a survey of laypeople in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland entitled, ‘21st Century Faith,’ which was posted online at our website www.ecumenics.ie. This survey was a companion to a similar survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic and Northern Ireland. Both surveys are part of a wider research project undertaken by the Irish School of Ecumenics (ISE), Trinity College Dublin, entitled: ‘Visioning 21st Century Ecumenism: Diversity, Dialogue and Reconciliation.’ This project is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS).

The research project was inspired by ISE’s desire to mark the centenary of the 1910 Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which is regarded as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. We saw the upcoming 100th birthday of ecumenism as an opportunity to ‘audit’ or ‘take stock’ of religious diversity on the island of Ireland, including (but not limited to) perceptions of ecumenism and levels of ecumenical activity. We wanted to think about how ecumenism has moved on from its origins – both internationally and on the island of Ireland – and to identify its current priorities. Given the changing contexts in both the Republic and Northern Ireland, we were in search of insights around what we consider core questions, put simply as: How are churches and faith communities responding to increased immigration and ethnic and religious diversity? Ten years after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, do churches and faith communities see ‘reconciliation’ as a priority and if so, what are they doing about it? And, finally, does ecumenism matter today?

The information presented in this report analyses what the laypeople who responded to our survey think about those core questions, and raises new ones besides. We see this information as a starting point for discussion – with people of all faiths and none – about these questions. We are grateful to everyone who took the time to take our survey for getting that discussion started. Our survey went live on 15 April 2009 and was closed on 31 July 2009. This survey was potentially open to everyone living in the Republic or Northern Ireland, of all religious persuasions or none. We conceived of the lay survey as an exploratory exercise, through which we hoped to solicit a wide range of views about immigration, diversity, reconciliation and ecumenism.

So we should be clear from the start that we cannot claim that our lay survey is ‘representative’ of the views of people in the Republic and Northern Ireland. A representative survey would have required a targeted sample of people, proportionate to their actual presence in the population. Our survey was obviously limited to people who first of all heard about it (through the various channels we employed), and then were interested enough in the topic to visit our website and had the technical skills to complete it.

The main channels through which we sought to make our survey known were through the media, email requests through clergy/pastors/faith leaders, and postings on websites of related interest. For example, the surveys were mentioned on RTE’s ‘Morning Island’ radio programme, BBC Northern Ireland’s ‘Sunday Sequence’ radio programme, and local radio stations in Galway and Limerick. Information about it appeared in the Irish Times, Irish News, and Belfast News. In terms of email requests, whenever clergy, pastors, or faith leaders chose to provide us with an email address after completing the survey, we then emailed them with a request that they forward information about the lay survey to people who they thought would be interested in taking it. Finally, we posted information about the survey on various chat sites or blogs, such as Slugger O’Toole and the Ikon list-serve. From 15 April–31 July 2009, these strategies yielded 976 responses, of which 910 were usable.

Throughout the report, we compare the findings from this survey with the findings from our survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders. We are not claiming that these figures ‘should’ match, especially since the surveys are indicative or exploratory, and because we collected the data in such different ways (direct email or postal requests for clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders; and an open website for laypeople). However, we anticipated that people would be curious for us to make these comparisons. The nature of the data collected means that we cannot make definitive statements about the way in which the findings compare. On the other hand, comparing the findings may provide us with indications of important trends, and open up avenues for further research. We open this report with a short summary of the key findings. This is followed by sections with more detailed analysis of the data.
Summary of Key Findings

General Findings

- Our survey respondents were more likely to attend weekly religious services than the general population, with 53% on the island as a whole (52% in the Republic and 58% in Northern Ireland) doing so.

- Respondents demonstrated quite ‘individualistic’ religious outlooks. When asked about the most important influences on their thinking about religion, faith or God, the most popular choices were ‘personal reflection,’ ‘reading scripture,’ and ‘reading other books about faith or religion.’ On the island as a whole, the influence of local faith leaders was ranked sixth of the ten choices which we provided.

- Atheists want the religious to hear them. 12% of the respondents on the island as a whole identified themselves as atheist, agnostic, no religion, etc. – which is disproportionate to their numbers in the general population. Atheists reported that they felt discriminated against and left out of conversations with religious people, as well as in the public sphere.

- Evangelicals also responded to our survey in numbers disproportionate to their numbers in the general population. In Northern Ireland 42% identified themselves as evangelical while in the Republic 20% identified themselves as evangelical.

- Our survey respondents were 55% male and 45% female. 41% of the respondents had a third level degree or diploma and 31% were between the ages of 36-50.

Immigration & Diversity

- On the island as a whole, 73% reported that immigrants or ethnic minorities were part of their parish/congregation/faith community.

- 61% of laypeople on the island as a whole (62% in the Republic and 57% in Northern Ireland) reported that their leader had preached or taught on immigration, diversity or ‘welcoming strangers’ within the last 12 months. 75% of ‘Other Christians’ reported that this had happened within the last 12 months.

- 25% of laypeople on the island as a whole (27% in the Republic and 19% in Northern Ireland) reported that the native languages of ethnic minorities had been used in religious services within the last 12 months. This was most common among ‘Other Christians’ (37%).
Reconciliation

- 87% of people on the island as a whole responded that it was important to preach and teach about reconciliation (86% in the Republic and 90% in Northern Ireland).

- We asked people to tell us if they had had preaching and teaching on reconciliation between various groups. On the island as a whole, in the Republic and in Northern Ireland, people were most likely to have had preaching and teaching about reconciliation between ‘individuals and God’ and ‘between individuals’ within the last 12 months. People were least likely to have had preaching and teaching about reconciliation between different religions.

- On the island as a whole, people thought it was very important to preach and teach about reconciliation between individuals (61%) and between individuals and God (61%). In the Republic, the third most popular category was reconciliation between different ethnicities and nationalities, while in Northern Ireland the third most popular category was reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

- 28% of laypeople on the island as a whole had accessed general resources on reconciliation (25% in the Republic and 38% in Northern Ireland). The most likely to have done so were people from Other Religions (47%) and Other Christians (38%).

- 25% of laypeople on the island as a whole reported accessing resources on reconciliation between people of different religions.

- On the island as a whole, 36% said that their denomination or wider faith community had provided them with adequate training for promoting reconciliation (37% in the Republic and 35% in Northern Ireland). Other Christians were the most likely to say they had been provided with adequate training (60%). This contrasts sharply with the result from the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, where 52% on the island as a whole said they had been provided with adequate training.

- When asked what was the appropriate amount of time (as a percentage per year) to spend on preaching and teaching about reconciliation, 28% on the island as a whole were unsure. After that, the most commonly chosen category was 11-25%, with 25% on the island as a whole (25% in the Republic and 25% in Northern Ireland) choosing it. 11-25% was the most popular category chosen in the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders.
Ecumenism

- When asked what ecumenism includes, the most popular option was Interchurch Dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. This also was the most popular option chosen in the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders.

- The laypeople who responded to our survey were more likely to indicate that good civic relations and dialogue with Other Religions is part of ecumenism, than were the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders who responded.

- Laypeople are more likely to be involved with ecumenical activities at the local rather than international/national level. 21% on the island as a whole (20% in the Republic and 24% in Northern Ireland) reported that they had been involved in ecumenical activities in the last 12 months. People from the Church of Ireland (40%) were most active at the local level.

- 27% on the island as a whole (28% in the Republic and 24% in Northern Ireland) said it was appropriate for faith communities to spend 11-25% of their time per year on ecumenical activities. In contrast to the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, this was the most common category chosen (the most common category for clergy was less than 10%).

- 67% of the individuals who responded to our survey reported a positive conception of ecumenism (70% in the Republic and 58% in Northern Ireland). 9% reported a negative conception, 13% were indifferent, and 11% were unsure.

- On the island as a whole, 45% of respondents thought their denomination or wider faith community had a positive conception of ecumenism. 45% also thought that their local parish, congregation or faith community had a positive conception of ecumenism. People who responded to our survey for clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders were more likely to say that their denominations’ and congregations’ perceptions of ecumenism were positive.

- In open ended responses, some people admitted they had no idea what ecumenism was, or expressed very strong negative feelings about it. Therefore, these ‘positive’ conceptions of ecumenism should be put in that context.
About the Survey

We conceived of our online survey for laypeople as an exploratory exercise, which would give people who were interested in these topics and our research the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings. We did not anticipate that the survey would yield a ‘representative’ sample of people in the Republic or in Northern Ireland. We thought that those who would be most likely to hear about it and respond to it would be very interested in religion and probably sympathetic to ecumenism. Bearing this in mind, we still thought it would be worthwhile to post the survey, gathering ideas from as many people as we could.

Like the survey for clergy/pastors/faith leaders\(^1\), the lay surveys included a range of questions, including open-ended questions, one-answer multiple choice questions, and questions where respondents could choose more than one option. People were given the option of exiting the survey after completing a series of demographic questions, questions about what most influenced their faith, and what they thought were the most influential issues facing faith communities. This portion of the survey could be completed in 5-10 minutes. Then, if they chose, people could proceed to questions about immigration, diversity, reconciliation and ecumenism. This part of the survey took 15-20 minutes to complete. It was quite common, however, for respondents to skip questions, or to leave open-ended questions blank. The survey was confidential in that we did not ask people to provide their name or contact information. We did, however, provide a space where they could supply this information if they wished.

Given that we wished to canvas as wide a range of views as possible, we counted all usable responses even from ‘incomplete’ surveys. So, for instance, if a respondent omitted the question about county of residence, we did not throw out this survey altogether. This meant, however, that such surveys could not be counted when we analyzed the data by the categories ‘Republic of Ireland’ and ‘Northern Ireland.’

On the island as a whole, 46% of respondents identified as Roman Catholics, followed by Other Christians (16%), Atheist/Agnostic/No Religion/Not Stated, etc (12%), Church of Ireland (12%), Presbyterians (8%), Other Religions (4%), and Methodists (2%). The tables below break this information down for both the Republic and Northern Ireland, comparing it to census data about the religious demography of each geographical unit, as well as the percentages of clergy who responded to our other survey.\(^2\) The purpose of these comparisons is simply to provide contextual information. Table 1 compares the data from the Republic.

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\(^1\) We are aware of sensitivities around language of many of the terms used in this report. It is never our intention to cause offence, or to imply a particular standpoint by the words we use. That is why we have attempted to be inclusive in referring to this as a survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the hope that this will cover the terms that most churches or faith communities use for their leaders. Similarly, we refer to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. When we write about the ‘whole island’ or the ‘island as a whole,’ we are referring to combined results from the Republic and Northern Ireland. We also use some abbreviations throughout, especially in tables. At times, ‘clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders’ is abbreviated to ‘clergy’ in tables, simply because this is the shortest word. Other abbreviations include ROI (Republic of Ireland), NI (Northern Ireland), RCC (Roman Catholic Church), COI (Church of Ireland) and PCI (Presbyterian Church in Ireland). In the actual survey itself, we used the terms ‘Roman Catholic’ and ‘Catholic’, for different questions. We are aware that for some people the use of ‘Roman’ before ‘Catholic’ can be contentious. However, when we asked people to choose a denomination we wrote ‘Roman Catholic,’ so as to avoid any confusion with other churches that at times use the term Catholic. In this report we also use both the terms ‘Roman Catholic’ and ‘Catholic.’ In no case are we implying that our institution, or ourselves personally, have a preference for either term.

Table 1: Comparison of Census Data and Responses, Republic of Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Percentage of the Republic of Ireland by Religion (2006 Census)</th>
<th>Percentage of those in ROI who responded to Lay Survey</th>
<th>Percentage of Clergy in ROI who responded to Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Church of Ireland</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian + Other Religion</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>14.8% Other Christian + 3.9% Other Religion = 18.7%</td>
<td>12.8% Other Christian + 4.4% Other Religion = 17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion/Atheist</td>
<td>4.4% No Religion + 1.7 Not Stated = 6.1%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 compares the data from Northern Ireland. Again, this simply provides context.

Table 2: Comparison of Census Data and Responses, Northern Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Percentage of Northern Ireland Population by Religion (2001 Census)</th>
<th>Percentage of those in NI who responded to Lay Survey</th>
<th>Percentage of Clergy in NI who responded to Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated/Atheist</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also asked people if they considered themselves evangelical Christians. In Northern Ireland, 42% identified themselves as evangelical, while in the Republic 20% identified themselves as evangelical. This is much lower than the respective figures for clergy in Northern Ireland (68%) and the Republic (45%), but still higher than would be expected in both jurisdictions given the demographics.

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4 Source: CAIN, [http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/popul.htm#3](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/popul.htm#3), retrieved on 31 August 2009.
of the island as a whole. For instance, it is estimated that less than 1% of the population of the Republic is evangelical\(^6\), while about 25% of Protestants in Northern Ireland are evangelical.\(^8\)

Throughout the survey, most results are presented in the following categories: on the island as a whole, in the Republic, in Northern Ireland\(^7\), and among Catholics, Church of Ireland, Presbyterians, Methodists, Other Christians, and Other Religions. Most tables display percentages and the number ‘n’ – the actual number of respondents who answered a particular question. This allows the reader to see both the percentage and ‘how many’ respondents are in each category. The reader will notice the following trends: in general, fewer respondents answered all the questions the closer they got to the end of the survey (this ‘question fatigue’ phenomenon is quite common in surveys), and by the end of the survey the overall numbers of respondents is quite small, especially for Presbyterians, Atheists, Methodists, and Other Religions.\(^8\) For instance, only 13 Methodists and 19 people of Other Religions answered the final question of the survey – so results from these smaller denominations and groups should be read with extreme caution.

As with the other survey, we thought that those most likely to take it would already be ecumenically inclined or especially concerned about the issues on which the survey focused. It is interesting, then, that both evangelicals and atheists responded disproportionately to their numbers in the general population. Men (55%) were more likely than women (45%) to take the survey. On the island as a whole, the highest level of education for 41% of our respondents was a third level degree or diploma. After that, 22% had a master’s, 15% had a secondary degree, 14% had a professional qualification, 7% had a doctorate, and 1% had a primary degree. When it came to identifying their occupations, the single most popular choice was retired (13%), followed by student (11%), education related (5%) and clerical/admin (5%). In terms of age, 31% were age 36-50, 27% were 51-65, 19% were 26-35, 14% were over 65, 9% were 18-25, and 1% were under 18.

On the island as a whole, 53% reported attending religious services four times per month (52% in the Republic and 58% in Northern Ireland). Our figures can be compared to the actual figures for religious attendance in the Republic and Northern Ireland. In 2003, weekly church attendance for all adults in the Republic was reported at 50% and weekly church attendance for all adults in Northern Ireland was reported at 42%.\(^7\) So our respondents were more likely to attend weekly religious services, especially our respondents from Northern Ireland. Indeed, the ‘four times per month’ option was the most popular for all our respondents, although the second most popular response was less than once per month (this was chosen by 27% on the island as a whole, 28% in the Republic, and 20% in Northern Ireland). Further, on the island as a whole, 39% reported attending other religious meetings during the week (36% in the Republic and 52% in Northern Ireland).


\(^3\) The figures for these three geographical categories should be read with caution, bearing in mind the differing response rates among the denominations.

\(^4\) There is a strong case for combining the results of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Other Christian responses (due to the overall small sample size). In this report, however, we have left these distinctions intact, believing they would be of interest to the readership. This also allows for comparison with the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders. These comparisons should be read with extreme caution.

We then asked respondents to rate, on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being the least influential and 5 being the most influential), ‘how much each of the following influence your thinking about faith, religion, or God: the leaders of my parish/congregation/faith community; the national level leaders of my parish/congregation/faith community; reading scripture; reading other books about religion; family; friends; personal reflection; religious or inter-religious training courses/programmes/conferences offered outside of my own church or faith community; and religious or inter-religious training courses/programmes/conferences offered within my own church or faith community.’

Figure 1 shows the responses to these questions on the island as a whole. It is clear from the graphics that ‘personal reflection’ was the most popular choice for influencing people’s thinking about faith, religion or God, followed by reading scripture and reading other books about religion.

Table 3 shows the most popular response for each of our ten options, broken down by geographical locations and denominations/communities. Each box includes the number (1-5) that was chosen the most frequently for that option and a percentage, which is the percentage of people who chose that option. So, the ‘personal reflection’ box for the Whole Island should be read this way: the most frequently chosen number was 5 (most influential), and 53.9% of people chose number 5. The total number of people who answered the question was ‘n’=737.

Table 3: Influences on thinking about faith, religion or God

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Reflection</td>
<td>53.9% (#5)</td>
<td>55.4% (#5)</td>
<td>48.4% (#5)</td>
<td>51.3% (#5)</td>
<td>47.9% (#5)</td>
<td>47.4% (#5)</td>
<td>43.8% (#5) &amp; (#4)</td>
<td>73.8% (#5)</td>
<td>58.0% (#5)</td>
<td>57.1% (#5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Scripture</td>
<td>26.9% (#5)</td>
<td>28.3% (#1)</td>
<td>36.9% (#5)</td>
<td>24.9% (#1)</td>
<td>28.7% (#3)</td>
<td>50.0% (#5)</td>
<td>43.8% (#5)</td>
<td>76.0% (#1)</td>
<td>55.0% (#5)</td>
<td>46.4% (#5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading other books: faith/religion</td>
<td>24.2% (#4)</td>
<td>24.2% (#4)</td>
<td>38.0% (#4)</td>
<td>26.0% (#4)</td>
<td>35.5% (#4)</td>
<td>41.7% (#4)</td>
<td>43.8% (#3)</td>
<td>35.1% (#1)</td>
<td>31.9% (#4)</td>
<td>15.7% (#3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>23.9% (#4)</td>
<td>24.7% (#1)</td>
<td>27.4% (3)</td>
<td>28.0% (4)</td>
<td>31.2% (3)</td>
<td>35.0% (4)</td>
<td>31.3% (4)</td>
<td>62.8% (#1)</td>
<td>28.0% (#1)</td>
<td>32.0% (#1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>25.8% (#3)</td>
<td>24.9% (both #1&amp;#3)</td>
<td>29.1% (4)</td>
<td>26.0% (3)</td>
<td>32.3% (3)</td>
<td>40.0% (4)</td>
<td>37.5% (4)</td>
<td>59.7% (#1)</td>
<td>29.4% (#4)</td>
<td>32.1% (both #1&amp;#3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own faith leaders</td>
<td>31.5% (#1)</td>
<td>34.1% (#1)</td>
<td>27.1% (#3)</td>
<td>30.6% (#1)</td>
<td>31.6% (#4)</td>
<td>31.3% (#3)</td>
<td>31.3% (#4)</td>
<td>89.3% (#1)</td>
<td>27.1% (#4)</td>
<td>32.0% (#2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intern level faith leaders</td>
<td>43.1% (#1)</td>
<td>41.9% (#1)</td>
<td>46.4% (#1)</td>
<td>31.6% (#1)</td>
<td>34.8% (#1)</td>
<td>49.2% (#1)</td>
<td>50.0% (#1)</td>
<td>88.3% (#1)</td>
<td>50.9% (#1)</td>
<td>36.0% (#1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level faith leaders</td>
<td>44.2% (#1)</td>
<td>44.5% (#1)</td>
<td>42.2% (#1)</td>
<td>35.0% (#1)</td>
<td>38.7% (#1)</td>
<td>36.2% (#1)</td>
<td>37.5% (#1)</td>
<td>92.2% (#1)</td>
<td>50.0% (#1)</td>
<td>35.7% (#1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses within community</td>
<td>53.2% (#1)</td>
<td>51.0% (#1)</td>
<td>43.6% (#1)</td>
<td>51.4% (#1)</td>
<td>38.2% (#1)</td>
<td>41.1% (#1)</td>
<td>37.5% (#1)</td>
<td>94.6% (#1)</td>
<td>34.5% (#1)</td>
<td>30.8% (#1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses outside community</td>
<td>55.1% (#1)</td>
<td>58.3% (#1)</td>
<td>45.4% (#1)</td>
<td>57.5% (#1)</td>
<td>48.9% (#1)</td>
<td>41.4% (#1)</td>
<td>11.1% (#1)</td>
<td>87.7% (#1)</td>
<td>39.0% (#1)</td>
<td>59.3% (#1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Reflection, then, was most influential for people both in the Republic (55% chose most influential) and Northern Ireland (48% chose most influential), and across most denominations and other groups. Atheists were most likely to choose personal reflection as most influential at 74%, followed by Other Christians (58%) and Other Religions (57%). Presbyterians were the only group for which personal reflection was not chosen as the most influential factor by the most people—it was narrowly edged by reading scripture, which was chosen by 50% as opposed to 48% as most influential.

Reading scripture was the next most popular choice as most influential for all groups except atheists (76% rated it as least influential), people in the Republic (28% chose least influential), Roman Catholics (25% chose least influential), and Church of Ireland, where reading other books was more popular (35% chose #4 for this category).

**Individualism: Some Questions Raised**

What is interesting here is that on the island as a whole, basically across the board, it is the most individualistic activities that people deem the most influential for their thinking about faith, religion or God. Personal reflection, as well as reading scripture and reading other books about religion, are the most popular categories and these can be done on one’s own—with or without a faith community. Family and friends come next in importance. It is only after that when people begin to perceive the influence of the leaders of their own faith community. Here, on the island as a whole, in the Republic, among Roman Catholics and among atheists, the greatest percentage of people rated their influence as least important. The exceptions here were people from the Church of Ireland, Methodists and Other Christians. For these groups the most popular choice was #4, with 32% from the Church of Ireland, 31% of Methodists, and 27% of Other Christians choosing this more influential option. All of the remaining categories (international level faith leaders, national level faith leaders, courses within the faith community and courses outside the faith community) were most likely to be rated as least influential.

We asked these questions because we wanted to know what factors people perceived as most important for helping them in their faith or religious practice. The individualistic nature of the responses should give us pause for thought—people do not rate the influence of faith leaders or clergy very highly. Given that many of the questions that followed in this survey (and the questions in our companion survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders) asked people what was preached and taught about in their churches or faith communities, we should ask ourselves just how important preaching or teaching actually is for the ‘punters in the pews.’
Opportunities and Challenges

Before moving to the bulk of the survey and its questions about immigration, diversity, reconciliation and ecumenism, we provided people with the opportunity to tell us what they liked about their faith community, and what they saw as the biggest challenges facing their local faith communities and their wider denominations or faith communities. These took the form of open-ended questions. Again, we realised that our research questions might not be the ones that our respondents would perceive as most important or relevant, so we wanted to gain some idea of the range of experiences and issues which they thought were important.

When we asked people what they liked the most about the parish, congregation or faith community which they attend regularly, many of these responses focused on people’s positive feelings of belonging and the sense of community they experienced with others. For example:

We have friends there. We are known. We are part of something. We have values that we share. We are all different and yet we share the same faith and hope in Jesus Christ. It is a combination of this and more. – Female, Evangelical Christian, Co. Dublin

I have a history and family tradition there. It gives me a sense of rootedness. – Male, Catholic, Co. Tyrone

It makes me feel I belong. – Male, Catholic, No Location Provided

Close knit, supportive and family oriented. – Female, Jewish, Co. Dublin

The community spirit and taking the time to think of an even bigger picture than the Irish economy. – Female, Catholic, Co. Kilkenny

Not a big fan of the Catholic Church but like meeting friends and neighbours. – Male, Catholic, Co. Tipperary

Others focused on singing, taking part in the choir, the architectural beauty of their church building, the quality of sermons, and the chance to reflect. Or they mentioned the inspiring examples of their local clergy, pastor, minister or faith leader. For example:

I love our Parish Priest. He works really hard to keep the show on the road despite his huge workload looking after a rural congregation as well as our town. He gives great practical sermons! – Female, Catholic, Co. Kildare

Meet family, the priest tells good stories instead of preaching. – Male, Catholic, Co. Monaghan

Our parish priest is a genius! – Female, Catholic, Co. Meath

Other examples, demonstrating the variety of responses, include:

No guilt in life is one of my most favourite songs we sing there. That sums it up. I’m accepted as I am. No judgements. I do not need to wear fancy clothes (cannot afford them anyway) or talk in fancy language. God, and the church, just accepts me as I am. Of course, repentance is central. But, my church does not add a whole list of other things you have to do or be to be welcome. – Female, Co. Antrim, Denomination not Provided

Family oriented and the link with the Orange Order provides links to the other Protestant churches. – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Fermanagh

It’s online, so it’s always there, it’s free thinking and easy to contribute to the debate. – Male, Ex-Catholic, Co. Cork

The energy of the young people. Using the web through Facebook and Twitter to contact people in the modern ways of communication. – Female, Christian, Co. Kildare
The children's choir, they sing with such gusto and enthusiasm, truly inspirational. The perseverance of priests in these troubled times. Of course, the Mass and reception of the Eucharist. Eucharistic adoration and spending 'quiet time'. – Female, Catholic, Co. Cavan

It helps me further my relationship with God, enriching my entire life. – Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

I like making a connection with other people who believe as I do. Obviously, being part of a "minority" faith, it is nice to be able to check in with other people, who believe as I do and when I am having difficulties with my practice to be able to talk to people who may be able to help. Staying in contact helps me to be more disciplined about my practice and intentions. – Female, Buddhist, Co. Cork


Openness to embrace peoples of differing faiths and beliefs and enable this to be maintained, as something is true only to the degree that it is true for you. – Male, Scientologist, No Location Given

I am a Polish immigrant and I try to attend the masses in a church which unfortunately is far from my house, the Dominican church. But also recently I try to attend the local church which offers services in English only. I prefer the Polish masses because I know by heart every single word. Also the Polish masses are more lively, full of young people and young priests who seem to take religion and god more seriously and with greater devotion to their job. They often organise wonderful retreats, they invite outstanding priests from different parts of Poland, I have learned and developed much more here thanks to this Polish Dominicans in Ireland. – Female, Catholic, living in Co. Dublin

Plain and simple, no added man made dogma, based on the bible and only the bible. – Male, Presbyterian, Co. Longford

The lack of dogma, respect for other religious teachings and perspectives. Support of human rights, the environment, the gay community. – Male, Unitarian, Co. Dublin

Restored marriages, healed relationships, genuine compassion for "the least of society", the hungry get fed, the naked clothed. Today some friends of mine from church helped to clean out a woman’s sewage system which was blocked up. She lives in an area of distinct social and economic disadvantage. It had meant that the family (including two kids) were defecating in the garden/sink. No one was supporting her even the city council. Now she has a new system and they are cleaning up the garden as I type this. That is church! Also - priesthood of all believers - I genuinely was unsure which form to fill in (clergy/layperson) on this survey. I believe every Christian is a priest - we ordain people who work in Tesco’s! – Male, Independent Evangelical, Dublin City

The mix of multiple religious influences - reading one week from the Koran and the next from the bible etc. – Male, Unitarian Humanist, Co. Dublin

When asked what they saw as the biggest challenges facing the denomination (or wider faith community), congregation or faith community of which they were a part, we received a range of responses, including: apathy, secularism, a lack of leadership from elderly priests, the scandals over the abuse of children in the Catholic Church, the collapse of the Presbyterian Mutual Society, meeting the congregation’s financial commitments, declining attendance – especially among the younger generations, dealing with the challenges of materialism and consumerism, increasing the participation of women and laypeople in general, and helping the economically disadvantaged. Here is a range of the responses, selected to illustrate the broad spectrum of views:

Being real. People are broken. Lives are messy. Daily life is not straightforward. Churches need to face divorced, homeless, fatherless and widows with a message of hope AND, the odd gift of £1000 to pay the mortgage. Meeting for prayer and saying we’ll be thinking of you is not sufficient. Christ ACTED. – Female, Co. Antrim (no denomination specified)
Education on a level appropriate to the congregations most of whom now have 3rd level education. — Female, Church of Ireland, Dublin City

Moving people away from individualism and back to self-giving, we live in a self-obsessed consumerist society. Jesus Christ taught the exact opposite of individualism. — Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

Adjusting to change, maintaining a prophetic voice, developing a more flexible 21st century structure. — Male, Methodist, Belfast City

Negative anti-church attitude and media propaganda. Lack of strong spiritual leaders, inability to engage people and lead them, inability of priest to show that religion can change lives, it can help deal with family and social problems. There are empty churches because there are not enough religious leaders and those that are there are very old and inactive. There is no pro-active approach but only reactive in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Just one priest and 2 Sunday masses are not enough to engage people in the parish. — Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

Men are bored of Christianity. It does not speak into everyday issues that most people have to deal with from Mon-Fri. It is not in touch with the moods, aspirations, fears, etc of society at large. — Male, Non Denominational Christian, Co. Antrim

Lack of recognition as a religion. — Male, Scientologist, Dublin City

Recognition of Sikh identity in Irish public and private life. — Male, Sikh, Co. Dublin

Always - remaining a place where practice and critical thinking are central rather than repeating familiar and comforting habits. — Male, Buddhist, Dublin City

Being more than just a church/religious place/venue for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Our church and community is very popular for social action projects and services to the community, but not particularly engaged on a spiritual level — it’s hard to introduce God to people in the spiritual dimension - but it is easy through service. I hope it will be more outspoken as a community on behalf of poor and excluded but this becomes an integral part of its theology. — Female, Methodist, Belfast City

The secular pressure of individualism. Christ is not seen a radical by the young but as a meek ineffectual. Any celeb is much more influential. — Male, Catholic, Co. Derry/Londonderry

Mismatch between liturgy and belief. — Male, Catholic, Co. Dublin

The growing propaganda that all religions are of equal benefit or validity to mankind. — Male, Catholic, Co. Dublin

The desire of some to consign religious beliefs to the private realm with no public face whatsoever, in the name of equality and anti-discrimination. That in itself is discriminatory. (liberalism, while appearing to have delivered so much for modern society, is ultimately intolerant). — Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

Since I am a member of a Christian congregation I think the biggest challenge is developing a renewed emphasis on being disciples of Jesus rather than believers in particular doctrines and working out ways of practically living that out in a radical and counter cultural way. — Male, Presbyterian, Co. Dublin

Islamophobia, lack of understanding — Male, Muslim, Co. Wexford

Freedom of practising religion in Ireland. — Male, Sikh, Co. Dublin
From the Perspective of Atheists ...

Atheists, people of no religion, agnostics, etc. were of course welcome to complete this survey, as it was freely available on-line and we hoped to solicit as wide a range of views as possible. But as is clear from the nature of some of the questions we asked, such as those about challenges facing faith communities, preaching and teaching, and so forth, our survey questions were framed in terms that are relevant to people who believe in a god and/or participate in religious practices. This led several atheists to write in the open-ended responses that our survey was ‘discriminatory’ against atheists. From the comments, some seemed angry, annoyed, or disappointed that our survey was not asking different kinds of questions about religion. For example, by the time some had reached the questions about immigration and diversity, they were leaving responses to open-ended questions such as: ‘crap survey’ (Male, Non-Religious, Cork City), ‘mumbo jumbo’ (Male, Unattached, Dublin City), or ‘nonsense questions’ (Male, Atheist, Wicklow). A female atheist from Dublin City wrote as an answer to the final question of the survey:

This survey is absolutely, utterly ridiculous. Have you even considered hiring a professional to develop it? Clearly not, or even worse, you did not want to. The survey ASSUMES that one IS a religious person, and all questions are developed accordingly. But what about Atheists? You did NOT specify that the survey did not address them.

Even so, some atheists persisted in answering our questions, and their responses have been considered and analysed along with the others.

So, for instance, on the question about what they liked best about their community, we received responses such as these:

I do not attend a parish/congregation/faith community and find the lack of inclusion of atheists discriminatory. When I did attend (familial obligation) I found the parish etc offensive, anti-scientific and rooted in either outdated beliefs of wide eyed and frightening zealotry. – Male, Atheist, Belfast City

We value reason, logic, science and truth!! – Female, Non-Religious, Cork City

Rational, critical enquiry; robust debate; a reliance of fact and evidence rather than rhetoric and superstition; the openness to change position in the light of new evidence. – Male, Dublin City

Although I do not attend a congregation, those people I know that express a belief similar to my own take personal responsibility for their behaviour rather than transferring responsibility to a deity. – Male, No Affiliation, Co. Westmeath

The place of importance that logic and rationality hold for its people. The importance of living life consistently with principle and stated positions rather than saying one thing and doing another or acting in manner solely designed to maintain a hierarchical power structure. – Female, Atheist, Dublin City

On the question about challenges facing the (faith) community they attend regularly, some took the opportunity to condemn religious belief and practice:

People coming to their senses and leaving the scam. – Male, Galway, No Religion

People are waking up and realising that Christianity has been one of the biggest frauds of the last two millennia (good thing). – Male, Limerick, Atheist

The information age. More and more people are finding out religion is just lies, bollocks and superstition. – Male, Dublin, Realist

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21 All surveys – whatever their topic – are framed so they gather data about the questions about which the researchers are most interested. Surveys cannot be all things to all people. Our research project is concerned primarily with how churches and faith communities are addressing (or not) immigration, diversity, reconciliation and ecumenism. That does not mean that other questions and perspectives are not valid, rather that they are simply beyond the scope of a particular research project. The fact that so many atheists/people of no religion responded to our survey indicates that their perspectives could be a topic of further research.
Others seemed to conceive of atheists as belonging to an atheist community, and answered accordingly. For them, the biggest challenge they identified was discrimination against atheists:

*Trying to lead a secular life in a non-secular state.* – Male, Co. Cork, Atheist

*Hostility from religious people (I am referring to UCC Atheist Soc when I answer questions on my 'faith community').* – Female, Co. Cork, Atheist

*Dislodging churches from positions of influence in western society and encouraging them to get on with their own beliefs without bothering other people.* – Male, Co. Waterford, Rationalist

*Publicly admitting atheism would have severe negative consequences on any career where you are answerable to the wider Irish community; anti-atheist prejudice runs high around here.* – Male, Galway City

In and of itself, it is interesting that atheists responded to our survey disproportionate to their numbers in the general population of the island as a whole. It also is interesting that those who responded persisted in answering our questions even when it became obvious that it was perhaps not the kind of survey they were expecting. Some atheists presented their beliefs in a positive light and then followed this with a clause in which religious beliefs were compared unfavourably to their own (see examples above). These comments, in a way, perhaps illustrate why some laypeople, clergy, ministers, pastors and faith leaders who took our surveys were concerned about the ‘challenge’ of atheism or secularism. But the experiences and examples of discrimination provided by some atheists give pause for thought: some people of faith perceive atheists as threatening and possessing the power to push religion out of public life, but some atheists feel like an oppressed minority.

**Immigration and Diversity**

In this part of the survey, we wanted to find out if our respondents were part of diverse religious communities and if so, how diverse they were and if anything was being done to accommodate that diversity. Again, we cannot claim that the findings here are ‘representative’; but these findings can provide fresh perspectives and insights about how diversity impacts on individuals’ lives and in particular faith communities.

First, we simply asked people if there were immigrants or ethnic minorities in their faith communities. On the island as a whole, 73% said yes (78% in the Republic and 62% in Northern Ireland), 11% said no (8% in the Republic and 21% in Northern Ireland), and 16% were unsure (15% in the Republic and 18% in Northern Ireland). We then asked those who had answered yes to estimate what percentage of their congregation was composed of immigrants or ethnic minorities. Table 4 summarises the results.
Table 4: Percentage of Ethnic Minorities in Congregation/Parish/Faith Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 10%</th>
<th>11-20%</th>
<th>21-40%</th>
<th>41-50%</th>
<th>51-60%</th>
<th>61-75%</th>
<th>76-90%</th>
<th>More than 90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Island</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI (n=408)</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI (n=99)</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic (n=279)</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COI (n=62)</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCI (n=35)</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist (n=10)</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist (n=25)</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian (n=91)</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions (n=11)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most popular choice on the island as a whole was less than 10%, with 63% (58% in the Republic and 88% in Northern Ireland) choosing this option. The only group for which this was not the most popular choice was Other Religions, where 45% chose the 21-40% category most often. After Other Religions, Other Christians were the most diverse group, with 25% choosing the 21-40% category and 21% choosing the 11-20% category. However, we must stress that these results should not be interpreted as representative. Rather, they simply allow us to see the levels of diversity that our respondents are experiencing within their faith communities.

Next, we asked people if their faith community’s leader(s) had preached or taught on immigration, diversity, or ‘welcoming strangers’ over periods of time (within the last 12 months, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, more than 10 years ago, or never). On the island as a whole, 61% had heard teaching or preaching on those topics in the last 12 months (62% in the Republic and 57% in Northern Ireland). Those most likely to have heard were Other Christians (75%), followed by Roman Catholics (61%) and Church of Ireland (61%). On the island as a whole, 25% reported their leader(s) never preached or taught on these topics (25% in the Republic and 26% in Northern Ireland). The least likely to have heard preaching or teaching on these topics were atheists (53% reported never), followed by Methodists (31%).

Table 5 compares these results from the lay survey to the results of a similar question on our survey for clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders. These figures should be considered with caution. We are not claiming that these figures ‘should’ match, especially since we collected the data in such different ways (direct email or postal requests for clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders; and an open website for laypeople). Also, since clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders presumably attend their religious services every week or nearly every week, it can be expected that they will have had more opportunities to hear preaching or teaching on these topics – especially if they are the ones saying the homily or sermon or preparing the lesson! Laypeople, by contrast, may not attend church every week and as one respondent pointed out to me in a personal email after completing the survey, he often had a hard time remembering what was preached about the previous week, let alone over the course of a year! Bearing that in mind, in all denominations except Presbyterians, laypeople reported hearing preaching or teaching on these topics more than clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders reported preaching or teaching on them. This, at the least, validates the responses of our clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders.
Table 5: Comparison of Preaching/Teaching on Diversity, Lay & Clergy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lay Heard in Last 12 Months</th>
<th>Clergy Preached/ Taught Last 12 Months</th>
<th>Lay Never Heard</th>
<th>Clergy Never + Never but would consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Island</td>
<td>60.9% (n=544)</td>
<td>53.8% (n=558)</td>
<td>25.0% (n=544)</td>
<td>18.8% (n=558)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>62.0% (n=408)</td>
<td>52.7% (n=319)</td>
<td>24.8% (n=408)</td>
<td>16.6% (n=319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>56.8% (n=125)</td>
<td>54.8% (n=219)</td>
<td>26.4% (n=125)</td>
<td>21.9% (n=219)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>61.3% (n=274)</td>
<td>56.2% (n=217)</td>
<td>24.5% (n=274)</td>
<td>12.4% (n=217)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland</td>
<td>60.5% (n=76)</td>
<td>49.0% (n=157)</td>
<td>19.7% (n=76)</td>
<td>22.9% (n=157)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>57.1% (n=49)</td>
<td>63.2% (n=76)</td>
<td>26.5% (n=49)</td>
<td>14.5% (n=76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>46.2% (n=13)</td>
<td>47.7% (n=44)</td>
<td>30.8% (n=13)</td>
<td>29.5% (n=44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>43.3% (n=30)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>53.3% (n=30)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>75.3% (n=85)</td>
<td>50.9% (n=55)</td>
<td>16.5% (n=85)</td>
<td>23.6% (n=55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>52.6% (n=19)</td>
<td>37.5% (n=8)</td>
<td>21.1% (n=19)</td>
<td>62.5% (n=8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We then asked about the use of the native languages of ethnic minorities in religious services over periods of time (within the last 12 months, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, more than 10 years ago, or never). On the island as a whole, 25% said that the languages of ethnic minorities had been used in services over the last 12 months (27% in the Republic and 19% in Northern Ireland). This was most common among Other Christians (37%) and Other Religions (30%) and least common in the Church of Ireland (8%). On the other hand, 68% on the island as a whole (65% in the Republic and 78% in Northern Ireland) reported that minority languages had never been used in their services. Table 6 compares what the laypeople reported to what the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders reported in our other survey. Again, these figures should be compared with caution, for all of the reasons outlined in the previous paragraph. Except for Methodists, laypeople were more likely than clergy to report the use of the languages of ethnic minorities.

Table 6: Comparison of Use of Minority Languages, Lay & Clergy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lay Heard Last 12 Months</th>
<th>Clergy Used Last 12 Months</th>
<th>Lay Never Heard</th>
<th>Clergy Never + Never but would consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Island</td>
<td>24.8% (n=561)</td>
<td>15.3% (n=557)</td>
<td>68.1% (n=561)</td>
<td>71.1% (n=557)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>26.9% (n=416)</td>
<td>19.2% (n=317)</td>
<td>65.1% (n=416)</td>
<td>64.4% (n=317)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>18.5% (n=135)</td>
<td>11.4% (n=219)</td>
<td>77.8% (n=135)</td>
<td>79.5% (n=219)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>26.6% (n=278)</td>
<td>16.9% (n=219)</td>
<td>68.7% (n=278)</td>
<td>69.9% (n=219)</td>
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<td>Church of Ireland</td>
<td>8.3% (n=72)</td>
<td>7.2% (n=153)</td>
<td>80.6% (n=72)</td>
<td>83.7% (n=153)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>17.3% (n=52)</td>
<td>9.0% (n=78)</td>
<td>80.8% (n=52)</td>
<td>74.4% (n=78)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>23.1% (n=13)</td>
<td>34.9% (n=43)</td>
<td>69.2% (n=13)</td>
<td>53.5% (n=43)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>13.8% (n=29)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>79.3% (n=29)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>36.7% (n=98)</td>
<td>27.3% (n=55)</td>
<td>49.0% (n=98)</td>
<td>50.9% (n=55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>30.0% (n=20)</td>
<td>25.0% (n=8)</td>
<td>50.0% (n=20)</td>
<td>75.0% (n=8)</td>
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</table>

Finally, we asked people to tell us what had been the most positive and challenging aspects of immigrants' and ethnic minorities' contributions to their faith community. Among the positive aspects mentioned included diversity, enthusiasm, exuberance in worship,
broadening people’s perspectives on the world (which benefits both adults and children), deepening people’s appreciation of the universality of their faith, providing new perspectives, sharing new foods, making new friends, and increasing the numbers of people attending religious services. Some examples include:

The choir has benefited greatly from African influence and life is interesting when your parish is diverse...you grow more as a person through interaction. — Male, Catholic, Co. Kildare

Because we follow Tibetan Buddhism specifically, we have a lot of teachers who come from Tibet. Our faith believes in the fact that all humans are interconnected, so having different cultures, involved is extraordinary helpful in understanding different perspective and increasing our capacity for compassion. — Female, Buddhist, Co. Cork

Immigrants give us a global perspective on our faith and remind the church of our underlying unity in Christ. Northern Ireland evangelicalism can be quite parochial at times. Immigrant brothers and sisters from other nations give us a healthy international perspective. A church composed of such people is a foretaste of heaven which will consist of people of every race, tribe and language. — Male, Baptist, Belfast City

There is no Us and Them - we are all one community. We get an insight into how things are done in their countries. They add spice. — Male, Buddhist, Cork City

Information on Atheist experience in other countries. — Female, Atheist, Co. Cork

The attendance at our Irish language services of the parents of immigrant children who are being educated in local Gaelscoileanna (Irish medium schools), efforts on my part to learn the courtesies of language greetings in Polish and the opportunities afforded to me to speak French, participation of strong young Nigerians on our local hurling teams. — Male, Catholic, Co. Dublin

They’ve brought with them a deep love of their religion which is reflected in their attitude to their faith. Some of these people have suffered for reasons of faith in the past, and they bring home to us how easy life has been for us here in Ireland. — Female, Catholic, Dublin City

Not sharing the taken-for-granted cultural assumptions of middle Ireland! — Male, Buddhist, Dublin City

The magnificent spirit, courage and erudition of the Baha’is from Iran. — Female, Baha’i, Co. Sligo

As for challenges, some claimed that there had been no challenges — that their experiences of immigrants and people from different ethnic groups had only been positive. But others identified challenges including: the language barrier, cultural differences (such as timekeeping and styles of worship — although a Realist from Co. Dublin put it quite playfully by writing: ‘Getting them to drink Guinness.’), racism on the part of some Irish (a Catholic man from Dublin City wrote of ‘unspoken racism,’ while a Catholic woman from Dublin City said it was challenging, ‘Facing my own prejudices and assumptions’), understanding different social, economic and cultural needs, and immigrants’ tendency not to remain in one location for too long. Other comments seemed to indicate that some people felt threatened by aspects of immigrants’ and ethnic minorities’ interaction in everyday life, such as:

Society as a whole is too PC, people who come here must adapt to our ways and traditions if they want to stay. Why should I change my beliefs and traditions?? — Male, Catholic, Co. Meath

They must accept Irish culture and not expect indigenous Irish to accept theirs especially Muslims. — Male, Atheist, Co. Cork

People from some countries look down on others; very little interaction of adults from other countries although they want very much to put their kids in our school. — Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Tipperary
Others observed the cultural, social, economic and political difficulties immigrants and ethnic minorities were going through (inside churches and faith communities as well as in the wider society), and named these as challenging, such as:

A realisation of the level of racism and discrimination that some members of our Faith Community actually harbour… it hurts your sense of community to see it in action. – Male, Catholic, Co. Kildare

Perceived to be getting housing "owed" to local very disadvantaged families. – Female, Church of Ireland, Belfast City

Others concluded that immigrants and ethnic minorities were, unfortunately, simply ignored:

Irish acceptance of others on more than a superficial level. For example, ethnic youth are ignored because the leaders refuse to connect with them. Ethnic people identified by the ethnicity first and as people way down the list. – Female, Pentecostal, Dublin City

Nothing. They haven't really impacted!! Business as usual for us!! (Hope you don't think I'm being too tongue-in-cheek for this survey but you asked for my opinion.........) – Male, Catholic, Co. Dublin

To me, there is no challenge because we don't seem to acknowledge that they are there in any meaningful way (a disappointment). But then, in a Catholic mass there is not a lot of audience participation anyway (also a disappointment). – Female, Catholic/Presbyterian, Belfast City

Other comments on the challenges included:

Integrating them in ways that are more than just token - i.e. more than just the prayer in their language at the carol service - that can be patronising. – Male, Independent Evangelical, Dublin City

Nothing challenging, except for one or two Irish members who feel that the leadership not being Irish is a problem… but mostly we feel the more diversity we have, the better our community will be. We also try to invite other religious groups to our services and activities, like Hindu and Sheik leaders. – Male, Unification Church, Dublin City

The perception among the religious community that the prevalence of atheism among eastern Europeans due to the USSR education system implies atheism is linked with communism, and more generally totalitarianism of all kinds. – Male, No Religion, Galway City

I attend a small village parish. The local town has a Polish Mass which I do not agree with, I would prefer to see the Service inclusive and meaningful to all, not having separate liturgies according to nationality. I regard this as divisive. – Female, Catholic, Co. Wexford

I am one! & for me the main difficulty is feeling welcomed & accepted as resident/ long term community member/ Irish!, as opposed to foreigner/ visitor. It is easy to find some sort of 'job' - a lot of volunteers at this church are immigrants, but hard to feel at 'home'. – Female, Presbyterian, living in Co. Dublin

The most challenging aspect of ethnic minorities is to keep all of them equally cared for and happy. All tend to have slight variations on practices such as prostrations and bowing or kneeling and may feel uncomfortable with adapting these to Antiochian practices. However, our priest states repeatedly that there is no need to conform to Antiochian practices and that it is equally acceptable to stand or to kneel if this is what people are used to. – Female, Orthodox, Belfast City

Bridge cultural differences, stop talking about "them" and "us", it should be ALL the same?? – Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin
Summary of Findings on Immigration & Diversity and Questions Raised

73% of the laypeople who responded to our survey reported that immigrants or ethnic minorities were a part of their church or faith community. For 63% of them on the island as a whole (58% in the Republic and 88% in Northern Ireland), immigrants or ethnic minorities make up less than 10% of the community. While these figures do not necessarily provide us with an accurate representation of the religious demography of the Republic or Northern Ireland, they do indicate that the people responding to our survey likely have had the chance to engage with issues about immigration and diversity within their faith communities. Their responses to the open ended questions revealed a range of experiences – both positive and negative.

Laypeople were more likely than those who responded to the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders’ survey to report that there had been preaching or teaching on immigration and diversity, and the use of minority languages in religious services, within their faith communities in the last 12 months. This, to some extent, could be seen to validate the finding from the clergy survey that these activities are taking place.

What do these percentages tell us about congregations and faith communities in the Republic and Northern Ireland? What can the various comments from laypeople tell us about what multiethnic faith communities are really like in the Republic and Northern Ireland today? Are our congregations and faith communities responding adequately to immigrants and ethnic minorities?

Reconciliation

We began by simply asking people to define, in a few short words, what reconciliation meant to them. As with our survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, this was intended to get an idea of the range of definitions in people’s heads as they answered the questions about reconciliation which followed. Some responded with what could be described as negative or cynical definitions of reconciliation, such as:

*It means giving up your principles and beliefs to appease others.* – Male, Presbyterian, Co. Londonderry/Derry

*People need to quit arguing over whose imaginary friend is better.* – Male, No Religion, Co. Galway

*A large-scale repentance for one’s sins, though popularly and improperly equated with a need to compromise religious principles often out of reckless pandering to the whims of others.* – Male, Free Presbyterian, Co. Armagh

*It brings to mind men in dresses being hypocritical.* – Female, Atheist, Co. Wicklow

*Nothing. It’s not encouraged by the Catholic Faith it seems, as they do not seem to tolerate any other faiths.* – Male, Catholic, Co. Dublin

*Others suggested that defining reconciliation in a few short words was simply impossible, or that it would depend on the context:*

*Not in a few short words.* – Female, Presbyterian/Buddhist, Co. Mayo

*It can mean so much depending on the context. In a religious context it is reconciling the historical differences which have meant different Christian congregations have emphasised different aspects of the tradition to the exclusion of other perspectives. In an inter-religious context it is reconciling ourselves to the fact that ours is not the only one true way.* – Male, Catholic, Dublin City

*Others chose to focus on what they thought reconciliation includes, such as forgiveness, striving for understanding, repentance, or making amends, among other things. Some examples include:*
It means respecting differences and not expecting "the other side" to do all the compromising. — Female, Catholic, Belfast City

Restoring of broken relationships whilst recognising that hurt/damage has been done and that either or both parties has done wrong. — Female, Presbyterian, Belfast City

Reconciliation with the truth - the scientific method and removing superstition. — Male, No Religion, Co. Cork

I am back in favour with God because of what Christ did on Calvary. — Male, Evangelical Christian, Co. Clare

Asking for forgiveness, forgiving, sharing common ground, having fun. — Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

The acceptance of others’ opposing background faiths and beliefs. — Female, Jewish, Co. Dublin

Though holding different cultural, political and religious views I believe it means ‘doing unto others as you would be done by.’ — Male, Hindu/Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Belfast City

What it is meaning is one group is walking on another, but it should mean they should walk side by side, and enjoy each other’s marches and parades. Live and let live. — Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Cork

It means building bridges, admitting you’ve erred, saying you’re sorry because of your error and moving on. — Female, Catholic, Co. Kildare

Subsuming your pride/ego and learning to love each person as you would like to be loved, the lord teaches us the importance of humility, which really helps with matters of reconciliation. — Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

I think it’s a peculiarly Christian language which doesn’t mean much to me! I can see that it makes sense for institutions whose members have recently been involved in killing each other, obviously. As a member of a minority religion in Ireland, I wouldn’t mind an *apology* from the established churches for the ongoing attempt to force their religion on the rest of us in schools, hospitals, vis-a-vis sex and marriage, etc, but I don’t expect I’m likely to get it. Beyond that, there are particular issues in e.g. Sri Lanka or Burma where the Buddhist sangha has its own nationalist agenda and is implicated in ethnic conflict, but here what is needed is not reconciliation but an end to religious nationalism. — Male, Buddhist, Dublin City

Reconciliation means forgiveness and openness to others. It means receiving the grace of God through the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist. To be close to God through the Sacraments, personal prayer and charity brings you closer to others. — Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

Bringing people together who were and are divided. But not those that are still abusing e.g. Priests. Domestic Violence Abusers. Parents who abuse etc. — Female, Humanist, Co. Clare

See that the other side has a view even if you think it is in error and talk. — Male, Atheist, Co. Cork

In faith terms reconciliation seems to me people setting aside some of their beliefs. Personally I believe all these faiths have something to suit my soul. In general terms I think reconciliation is good if it stops killing. Otherwise people should be left alone to be who they want to be. — Female, No Religion, Co. Dublin

For me, reconciliation means realignment of one’s personal will (in a free and loving manner) with the One Universal Will which is in and behind everything. — Male, Theosophist, Co. Tipperary

To have peace with God through what Christ has done for us (Romans 5). In the social sphere this manifests itself in a willingness to recognise and give thanks for the faith of brothers and sisters from other faith traditions (Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, etc.) and to celebrate our shared hope and love of Christ. — Male, Baptist, Belfast City
Then we asked if people thought it was important to preach and teach about reconciliation. Overwhelmingly, the answer was yes. On the island as a whole, 87% said yes (86% in the Republic and 90% in Northern Ireland). The most enthusiastic about reconciliation were Methodists, with 100% saying it was important. Next were people from the Church of Ireland at 96%. Even 65% of atheists said this was important, although atheists were also most likely to say that it was not important (20%). These results are summarised in Table 7.

**Table 7: Important to Preach & Teach on Reconciliation?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Island (n=590)</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI (n=444)</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI (n=134)</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Roman Catholic (n=279)</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
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<td>Church of Ireland (n=80)</td>
<td>96.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
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<td>Presbyterian (n=50)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Atheist (n=51)</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
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<td>Other Christian (n=98)</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions (n=19)</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We followed this by asking a series of questions about how often the leader(s) of their community had preached or taught about reconciliation between various groups (between individuals and God, between individuals, between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, between Catholics and Protestants on the whole island, between different religions (i.e. Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, etc), between people of different religions (i.e. Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, etc), and between people of different ethnicities or nationalities over time (within the last 12 months, the last 1-5 years, the last 6-10 years, during the troubles, or never). By far people indicated that they had heard more preaching about reconciliation between individuals and God (79% on the island as a whole in the last 12 months, 76% in the Republic and 89% in Northern Ireland) and between individuals (74% on the island as a whole in the last 12 months, 73% in the Republic and 78% in Northern Ireland). We asked a similar question in the clergy survey, and those two categories were also by far the most popular. Also in line with the clergy survey, the third most popular category on the island as a whole was preaching and teaching about reconciliation between people of different ethnicities or nationalities (43%, 46% in the Republic and 37% in Northern Ireland). Within Northern Ireland, people were more likely to have heard preaching or teaching about reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (49%) than preaching or teaching about reconciliation between different ethnicities or nationalities. This also echoes the pattern from the clergy survey.

Again, as with the clergy survey, lay people were least likely to have heard preaching and teaching on reconciliation between different religions (27% on the island as a whole). Other Religions were again the exception to this trend, with 65% reporting preaching and teaching on this topic. However, on the island as a whole, people were more likely to report preaching and teaching on reconciliation between PEOPLE of different religions (34%) than between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (31%) and Catholics and Protestants on the island as a whole (30%). This pattern held for the Republic but not for Northern Ireland, where people were more likely to report preaching or teaching on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and Catholics and Protestants on the entire island, than on reconciliation between PEOPLE of different religions.

Table 8 summarises the percentages of lay people who heard preaching and teaching on reconciliation between these various groups over the last 12 months. It also compares these percentages to the percentages of clergy which reported preaching or teaching on these
topics over the last 12 months. Again, these comparisons should be read with caution, given the differences in the ways we gathered the data in the two surveys.

Table 8: Preaching & Teaching on Reconciliation Over the Last 12 Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individuals &amp; God</th>
<th>Individuals C&amp;P NI</th>
<th>C&amp;P whole island</th>
<th>Diff Relig</th>
<th>People Diff Relig</th>
<th>Ethnicities/Nationalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Island as a whole</td>
<td>79.0% n=513</td>
<td>74.1% n=479</td>
<td>30.9% n=482</td>
<td>30.3% n=472</td>
<td>26.6% n=481</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.0% n=481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Island as a whole</td>
<td>84.2% n=568</td>
<td>81.8% n=559</td>
<td>42.7% n=518</td>
<td>43.7% n=519</td>
<td>30.3% n=531</td>
<td>39.1% n=529</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51.4% n=527</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lay, ROI</td>
<td>76.4% n=386</td>
<td>73.3% n=363</td>
<td>25.7% n=358</td>
<td>29.7% n=357</td>
<td>28.8% n=361</td>
<td>36.6% n=361</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45.6% n=360</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clergy, ROI</td>
<td>82.0% n=323</td>
<td>79.7% n=315</td>
<td>25.9% n=282</td>
<td>39.1% n=307</td>
<td>31.1% n=299</td>
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<td>46.9% n=309</td>
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<td>Lay, NI</td>
<td>89.0% n=118</td>
<td>77.6% n=107</td>
<td>48.7% n=115</td>
<td>33.3% n=108</td>
<td>19.8% n=111</td>
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<td>Clergy, NI</td>
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<td>85.6% n=222</td>
<td>66.1% n=215</td>
<td>51.0% n=192</td>
<td>29.1% n=213</td>
<td>41.4% n=210</td>
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<td>53.1% n=179</td>
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<td>Lay, Roman Catholic</td>
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<td>43.9% n=148</td>
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<td>73.2% n=41</td>
<td>42.9% n=42</td>
<td>28.6% n=42</td>
<td>14.0% n=43</td>
<td>18.0% n=39</td>
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<td>34.2% n=41</td>
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<td>89.9% n=79</td>
<td>62.9% n=70</td>
<td>53.7% n=67</td>
<td>9.6% n=73</td>
<td>38.7% n=75</td>
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<td>60.0% n=15</td>
<td>72.2% n=18</td>
<td>46.7% n=15</td>
<td>46.7% n=15</td>
<td>64.7% n=17</td>
<td>70.6% n=17</td>
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<td></td>
<td>72.2% n=18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Other Religions</td>
<td>50.0% n=8</td>
<td>88.9% n=9</td>
<td>33.3% n=9</td>
<td>37.5% n=8</td>
<td>77.8% n=9</td>
<td>77.8% n=9</td>
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<td>66.7% n=9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheists</td>
<td>14.3% n=28</td>
<td>48.2% n=27</td>
<td>33.3% n=27</td>
<td>29.6% n=27</td>
<td>31.2% n=28</td>
<td>44.8% n=29</td>
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<td>41.4% n=29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We also asked people to indicate, using a scale from 1-5 (with 5 being the most important), how important they thought it was to preach and teach on reconciliation between these various groups. Table 9 shows what percentage of people and clergy chose ‘5—most important’ for each of these categories. Again, the comparisons should be read with caution.

On the island as a whole, people thought it was very important to preach and teach about reconciliation between individuals (61%) and individuals and God (61%). Although these were also the two most popular categories for clergy, clergy were more likely to say that it was very important to preach and teach about reconciliation between individuals and God (80%) and individuals (70%). In the Republic, and among Roman Catholics, Other Religions and Atheists, laypeople were more likely to rank reconciliation between individuals as very important. In Northern Ireland and among Church of Ireland, Presbyterians, Methodists and Other Christians, laypeople were more likely to rank reconciliation between individuals and God as very important.

After these two categories, the next category in which laypeople on the island as a whole rated reconciliation as very important was between different ethnicities and nationalities (37%). This was next in the Republic (40%), and among Roman Catholics (40%) and Other Christians (44%). For laypeople in Northern Ireland, reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland was the next most popular (36%), as well as for people from the Church of Ireland (32%) and Presbyterians (30%). The next most popular category for Other Religions (39%) and Atheists (31%) was People from different religions.

---

11 I have omitted the ‘n’ values for this table due to space restraints. These can be made available upon request.
Table 9: Percentage Who Thought it is Very Important to Preach & Teach on Reconciliation Between ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religion</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Individual s (61.2%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (62.8%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (64.8%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (65.3%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (63.6%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (72.9%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (61.5%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (79.6%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (44.4%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (46.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Individual s &amp; God (79.9%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (77.6%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (85.0%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (76.9%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (76.4%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (89.9%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (87.8%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (85.2%)</td>
<td>Individual s &amp; God (83.3%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (40.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Individual s &amp; God (61.1%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (60.0%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (55.4%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (54.6%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (45.8%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (53.9%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (71.0%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff Ethnicities / nationalities (43.6%)</td>
<td>Lay, People Diff Religions (38.9%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Individual s (70.5%)</td>
<td>Individual s (72.2%)</td>
<td>Individual s (68.0%)</td>
<td>Individual s (72.2%)</td>
<td>Individual s (67.9%)</td>
<td>Individual s (65.4%)</td>
<td>Individual s (80.5%)</td>
<td>Individual s (71.7%)</td>
<td>Lay, People Diff Religions (31.0%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (37.0%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (39.8%)</td>
<td>Lay, Catholics/Protestant s in NI (36.2%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (40.2%)</td>
<td>Lay, Catholics/Protestant s in NI (32.5%)</td>
<td>Lay, Catholics/Protestant s in NI (30.4%)</td>
<td>Lay, Catholic s/Protestants in NI (8.3%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (43.6%)</td>
<td>Lay, People Diff Religions (38.9%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Catholics/Protestant s in NI (39.1%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities / nationalities (37.7%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestant s in NI (45.6%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestant s in NI (44.6%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestant s in NI (40.4%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestant s in NI (31.9%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestants in NI (52.5%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities / nationalities (43.8%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (50.0%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (31.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Catholics/Protestant s in NI (30.9%)</td>
<td>Lay, People Diff Religions (33.7%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (26.8%)</td>
<td>Lay, Catholics/Protestant s whole island (34.4%)</td>
<td>Lay, Catholics/Protestant s whole island (29.9%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (28.3%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff religions (22.0%)</td>
<td>Lay, Catholics/Protestants whole island (30.5%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff Religions (38.9%)</td>
<td>Lay, Individual s (75.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Diff ethnicities / nationalities (36.8%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestant s whole island (33.8%)</td>
<td>Diff ethnicities / nationalities (35.4%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestant s whole island (37.4%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestants whole island (36.2%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestants whole island (31.4%)</td>
<td>Catholic s/Protestants whole island (52.5%)</td>
<td>Diff Religions (22.0%)</td>
<td>People of Diff Religions (44.4%)</td>
<td>Lay, Diff Religions (31.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trinity College Dublin
Then, we asked people if they had accessed any resources on reconciliation in general, and between various groups. On the island as a whole, 28% of laypeople had accessed resources on reconciliation in general (25% in the Republic and 38% in Northern Ireland). The most likely to have done so were people from Other Religions (47%) and Other Christians (38%). The least likely were atheists (22%) and Methodists (23%). In Northern Ireland, the most popular category was reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (41%), followed by reconciliation in general (38%).

The next most popular category on the island as a whole was resources on reconciliation between people of different religions (25%), followed by resources on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (23% on the island as a whole). This
differs from the clergy survey, where the second most popular category after reconciliation in general was reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Table 10 compares the percentages of laypeople with the percentages of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders who reported accessing resources on reconciliation. These should be read with our usual caveats about comparison. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, clergy were more likely to access these resources across the board. However, it is interesting the different priorities of the laypeople who took our surveys. As noted above, reconciliation between people of different religion seems more important to the laypeople than the clergy.

### Table 10: Percentage Accessed Resources on Reconciliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
</tr>
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<td>Lay Reconciliation in General</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.1%</td>
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<td>51.4%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
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<td>n=79</td>
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<td>n=94</td>
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</tr>
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<td>25.2%</td>
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<td>21.3%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>7.7%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>n=77</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38.4%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>26.2%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>n=143</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next we asked if people if they thought that their denomination or wider religious community had provided them with adequate training or resources for promoting reconciliation. On the island as a whole, 36% said yes (37% in the Republic and 35% in Northern Ireland). By denomination or faith community, Other Christians were most likely to say that they had been provided with adequate
training (60%), followed by Other Religions (56%). The least likely to say they had been provided with adequate training were Catholics (28% said yes) and Methodists (30% said yes). This contrasts with the responses from clergy, ministers, pastors and faith leaders, who were more likely to say they had been adequately trained in reconciliation. Also, Other Christian leaders were among the least likely to say they had been adequately trained – while Other Christian lay people were the most likely to say they had been adequately trained. And among Methodists, clergy were among those most likely to say they had been adequately trained, while Methodist laypeople were among the least likely to say they had been adequately trained. However, not much can be concluded from this due to the small sample size of Methodist laypeople.

Table 11: Denomination or Religious Community has provided adequate training for promoting reconciliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
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<td>59.5%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>n=46</td>
<td>n=10</td>
<td>n=84</td>
<td>n=18</td>
<td>n=33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Yes</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>n=553</td>
<td>n=318</td>
<td>n=215</td>
<td>n=213</td>
<td>n=159</td>
<td>n=77</td>
<td>n=40</td>
<td>n=54</td>
<td>n=9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

We then asked how much time (as a percentage per year) people thought was appropriate to preach and teach about reconciliation. The most commonly chosen category on the whole island was unsure, with 28% choosing this option (30% in the Republic and 22% in Northern Ireland). Atheists were most likely to choose unsure (48%), followed by Other Christians (34%).

After that, the most commonly chosen category on the island as a whole was 11-25%, with 25% choosing this option (25% in the Republic and 25% in Northern Ireland). This was the single most common category chosen among laypeople in Northern Ireland. People from the Church of Ireland (39%) and Roman Catholics (29%) were more likely than the other groups to choose 11-25%.

Table 12 compares the responses of the laypeople to the responses of the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, to the same question in our other survey. Laypeople are more likely to choose unsure than the clergy, but after that, 11-25% is the most common category for both laypeople and clergy.
### Table 12: Time Appropriate to Preach & Teach on Reconciliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Whole Island (lay n=574; clergy n=542)</th>
<th>ROI (lay n=433; clergy n=306)</th>
<th>NI (lay n=130; clergy n=215)</th>
<th>RCC (lay n=273; clergy n=210)</th>
<th>COI (lay n=79; clergy n=153)</th>
<th>PCI (lay n=48; clergy n=77)</th>
<th>Meth (lay n=12; clergy n=41)</th>
<th>Other Christian (lay n=99; clergy n=52)</th>
<th>Other Religions (lay n=18; clergy n=8)</th>
<th>Atheist n=46</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Less than 10%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>17.0%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
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<td>21.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, 11-25%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
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<td>39.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clergy, 11-25%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lay, 26-50%</td>
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<td>16.2%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
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<td>25.0%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clergy, 26-50%</td>
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<td>18.1%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, 51-75%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, More than 75%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
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<td>17.1%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lay, Unsure</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Unsure</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Findings on Reconciliation and Questions Raised

As with the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, there was a great deal of diversity when it came to defining reconciliation. Some people are enthusiastic about the term, others think it is tainted or used by the churches in a hypocritical manner. Knowing that the word ‘reconciliation’ conjures up such different things for people when they hear it should give pause for consideration. Is ‘reconciliation’ a useful word to use in the public sphere? If so, when?

As with the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, most laypeople understood reconciliation primarily in individualistic terms. People thought that reconciliation between individuals, and between individuals and God, were the two most important kinds of reconciliation. These were also the two types of reconciliation which they were most likely to have had teaching and preaching about. Again, this raises questions about how appropriate it is for conceptions of reconciliation to focus so much on the individual. Is this done at the expense of other forms of reconciliation?

Compared to the clergy, however, the laypeople who responded to our survey were less likely to have accessed resources on reconciliation from any source – whether through their denomination or faith community or on their own initiative. There also were more likely than the clergy to say that they did not think that their denomination or wider faith community had provided them with adequate training for promoting reconciliation. With a majority of laypeople feeling unprepared by their wider community to promote reconciliation, and only a slim majority of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders feeling that they have been adequately prepared to preach and teach on it, it raises the question if more could be done? If so, how could it be ensured that laypeople would engage with materials from this level of leadership? After all, most people reported that they did not consider their local, national or international faith leaders as very influential to their thinking about faith, religion or God. Would they listen to what the leaders had to say about reconciliation?

Further, laypeople seemed more interested than clergy, pastors, ministers or faith leaders in accessing resources on reconciliation between people of different religions. Could this be an area of reconciliation in which laypeople have more of an interest than the clergy? (Bearing in mind the nature of the sample of people who responded to our survey this is a tentative question, but one that can be asked all the same.)

Ecumenism

We opened the section of questions on ecumenism by asking people to define what ecumenism means to them. Some admitted that they would need a dictionary to define it, that they had no idea what it was, or that it was irrelevant to them. Some associated the term with its use on the sitcom ‘Father Ted,’ rather than anything they had learned through their faith communities. Several responded simply with the catchphrase from the sitcom – ‘That would be an ecumenical matter!’ For example:

*I honestly don’t know. It is likely related to the word ecumenical that I remember once being in a Father Ted episode. Other than that I do not know.* – Male, Pentecostal, Co. Kerry

*Not confidently - to be honest the first time I heard the word being used in any sense was on Father Ted "that would be an ecumenical matter" so I suppose my definition would be a vague one - about matters relating to faith.* – Female, Catholic, Co. Longford
Others responded with definitions of ecumenism that put it in a decidedly negative light:

It has come to mean those who have different theological views being prepared to cease the promotion of their distinctive view of faith so as not to offend others and so promote reconciliation. … However such a basis for reconciliation runs contrary to Paul’s view of preaching Christ crucified despite the ‘opinions’ of others. – Male, Presbyterian, Co. Antrim

Diluting the Protestant faith. Going back on what the Reformation was all about. – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Fermanagh

Religious political correctness. – Male, Independent Evangelical, Co. Down

I’m not a fan. I feel it is a watering down of what each denomination believes in. It’s "PC" and ultimately pointless. – Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Tipperary

A pain in the arse. – Male, Christian, Galway City

Had to look it up - "unity among Christian churches" - a waste of time, as Christian churches vie with each other for control. – Male, Catholic, Dublin City

Faith based view of a community that is based on a perception of a god or gods and that never allows for atheism to be discussed or included. – Male, Atheist, Co. Wicklow

The Blind leading the Blind. – Male, Realist, Co. Waterford

I experience Christians in particular as feeling a great need to make links between religions as religions and (as with this survey, I’m afraid!) an inability to grasp that other people may frame the question in different ways, and (for example) think that other groups or movements may be closer to what we do than other "religions". – Male, Buddhist, Dublin City

It seems that ecumenism means agreement between all faith-based denominations, with the exclusion of the non-religious. This questionnaire proves my point. It would be nice to see this anomaly addressed in the future. – Male, Atheist, Co. Cork

See the Oxford dictionary describes it as striving for the worldwide unity of Christians, but feel the issue of inter faith dialogue also needs exploration. The term has become politicised and like so many faith terms is now becoming a confusing label. – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

Creating a melting pot of the different Christian denominations. This dilutes the individual flavours. The energy used in promoting ecumenism could be better spent! – Female, Dublin, No Religion

Bureaucracy. Power for the hierarchy by imposing roles to maintain that power. Out of touch. – Male, Catholic, Co. Dublin
While other’s definitions gave more positive slants on the term:

A joyous and positive thing! I believe that there is more to unite all Christians of all persuasions than there is to divide. – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Down

The opening of dialogue between the denominations to bring a greater level of right relationship and understanding/fellowship…knowing there can be no return to a single branch but hoping that we can work as a single branch in our unique ways. – Male, Catholic, Co. Kildare

Being exposed to other traditions. Making friends with people from other faiths. – Female, Presbyterian, Belfast City

We are all one family in Jesus (this means, importantly, that we’re stuck with one another just as you are in any family - even with the Paisleys of this world and the others you’d much rather leave behind). The divisions hurt. The causes of them are far less important than the things we hold in common, and we belong together, not apart. So we live towards each other, not away from. – Female, Catholic/Presbyterian, Belfast City

An understanding and a respect for everyone’s belief, and even lack of belief. – Female, Catholic, Dublin City

Elimination of sectarianism so that we can all be Christians albeit with different local tags if necessary, as we are European though with our local nationalities. – Female, Catholic, Co. Galway

I was brought up by some in the evangelical church to believe it was the ‘work of the devil’ but have since changed my opinion over time to believe it is vital, and a work of God. – Male, Presbyterian, Co. Donegal

At worst it is just people having cups of tea together. At best it is seeing real church unity - Christians worshipping together and loving their enemies together. – Male, Independent Evangelical, Dublin City

Realising that we are all children of the One God although we worship in different forms. Seeing the faith as a jewel and each denomination has its own sparkle. – Male, Catholic, Co. Waterford

Universality - thinking of the whole world. Unlike this website and survey - Ecumenism is not just related to religion. I think it is a very good think - teaching people to think about other living things on the planet (not just humans) but if driven purely by religious preaching it loses its attraction as we still have separatism. – Male, No Religion, Co. Galway

The unity of all Christian churches and an understanding that, despite small differences in beliefs, we are all on the same team. – Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

Religion is based on the natural law so let us define the common denominators. I will never condone or reconcile to a religion that offends the natural law or personal justice. I am also guided by the International declarations made by the UN and other similar organisations. – Male, Catholic, Co. Mayo
While finally, others defined it in terms of unity of belief – or in terms of unity amidst a diversity of beliefs:

*A return to the one church founded by Christ. I see, for example, Lutheranism as a reform movement never intended to be a separate church. We can only come together in truth and love.* – Male, Catholic, Co. Louth

*My understanding of it has changed since becoming Orthodox. Now, beyond the grass root level work of getting to know one another, for me it ultimately means going back to beyond the time when the differences in Christianity arose and finding our unity in Christ in His original Church, which is the mother of all Christian traditions. The vehicle is humility and love and the anointing mercy of God.* – Female, Orthodox, Belfast City

*It means to me, worldwide religious unity which is something I don’t oppose.* – Male, Atheist, No Location Provided

Ecumenism means to me reconciliation between all Christians but without requiring uniformity of belief between all religions. – Male, Church of Ireland, Belfast City

So, when considering the results for the questions about ecumenism that follow, these responses to the open-ended questions should be kept in mind, especially the considerable uncertainty and hostility that arose when people were asked to define ecumenism.

Following on from this, we asked people to indicate what they thought ecumenism included by providing them with a list of 13 options. They could tick as many options as they liked. The following table records the frequencies of all the options as they were ticked, comparing the results of both the lay and clergy/pastors/ministers/faith leaders surveys. Across the board, laypeople and clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders chose interchurch dialogue between Catholics and Protestants the most often. However, laypeople on the island as a whole and in the Republic rated shared social action between Catholics and Protestants second, while laypeople in Northern Ireland and clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole, the Republic and Northern Ireland chose good civic relations between Catholics and Protestants with the second most frequency.

The third most popular choice for laypeople on the island as a whole and the Republic was good civic relations between Catholics and Protestants. Clergy on the island as a whole, laypeople in Northern Ireland, and clergy in Northern Ireland chose shared social action between Catholics and Protestants third most often. For clergy in the Republic, interchurch prayer between Catholics and Protestants was the third most popular.

The fourth most popular choice for laypeople on the island as a whole, in the Republic and in Northern Ireland was good civic relations with other religions, while clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders chose interchurch prayer between Catholics and Protestants fourth most often on the island as a whole and in Northern Ireland. The fourth most chosen option for clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic was shared social action between Catholics and Protestants.

Overall, it seems that laypeople (especially on the island as a whole and in the Republic) are more likely than clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders to consider good civic relations and dialogue with Other Religions as part of ecumenism. The results are summarised in Table 13.
Table 13: Ecumenism includes? Frequencies by geographical location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lay, Whole Island</th>
<th>Lay, ROI</th>
<th>Lay, NI</th>
<th>Clergy, Whole Island</th>
<th>Clergy, ROI</th>
<th>Clergy, NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (453)</strong></td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (488)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (341)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (275)</td>
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<td>Good Civic Relations Catholic/Protestant (476)</td>
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<td>Shared Social Action Catholic/Protestant (467)</td>
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<td>Interchurch Worship Catholic/Protestant (294)</td>
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<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (39)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (45)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Among denominations/faith communities, interchurch dialogue between Catholics and Protestants was chosen the most frequently. The second most popular choice among Catholic, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian laypeople was shared social action. Laypeople from Other Religions prioritized activities that included other religions, with a three-way tie for the most frequent choice between: shared social action with other religions, interfaith dialogue with other religions, and good civic relations with other religions. Results are summarised in Table 14.
### Table 14: Ecumenism includes? Frequencies by denomination/faith community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lay, RCC</th>
<th>Clergy, RCC</th>
<th>Lay, COI</th>
<th>Clergy, COI</th>
<th>Lay, PCI</th>
<th>Clergy, PCI</th>
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<th>Clergy, Meth</th>
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<td>Interchurch Worship Catholic/Protestant (64)</td>
<td>Interchurch Worship Catholic/Protestant (11)</td>
<td>Interchurch Worship Catholic/Protestant (37)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (68)</td>
<td>Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant (45)</td>
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<td>Shared Social Action Catholic/Protestant (136)</td>
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<td>Shared Missionary Catholic/Protestant (22)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Catholic/Protestant (7)</td>
<td>Interfaith Dialogue Other Religions (21)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Catholic/Protestant (45)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Catholic/Protestant (23)</td>
<td>Interfaith Prayer Other Religions (8)</td>
<td>Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interfaith</strong></td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>Interchurch</td>
<td>interchurch</td>
<td>Interfaith</td>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>Interchurch</td>
<td>Interchurch</td>
<td>Interfaith</td>
<td>Interchurch</td>
<td>Interchurch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*The following are the frequencies for atheists: Good Civic Relations Other Religions 24, Interchurch Dialogue Catholic/Protestant 21, Shared Social Action Other Religions 20, Good Civic Relations Catholics/Protestants 20, Shared Social Action Catholic/Protestant 19, Interfaith Dialogue Other Religions 18, Shared Worship Catholic/Protestant 12, Interchurch Communion Catholic/Protestant 12, Interchurch Prayer Catholic/Protestant 11, Shared Missionary Catholic/Protestant 10, Interfaith Worship Other Religions 10, Shared Missionary Other Religions 9, Interfaith Prayer Other Religions 8.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prayer Other Religions (163)</th>
<th>Missionary Catholic/Protestant (119)</th>
<th>Missionary Catholic/Protestant (52)</th>
<th>Communio n Catholic/Protestant (85)</th>
<th>Communio n Catholic/Protestant (18)</th>
<th>Interchurch Communio n Catholic/Protestant (17)</th>
<th>Prayer Other Religions (7)</th>
<th>Social Action Other Religions (20)</th>
<th>Communio n Catholic/Protestant (19)</th>
<th>Communio n Catholic/Protestant (17)</th>
<th>Worship Other Religions (7)</th>
<th>Interchurch Communio n Catholic/Protestant (17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (120)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (86)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (40)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (64)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (14)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (10)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (6)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (32)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (17)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (6)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (31)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (119)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (80)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (32)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (57)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (11)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (10)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (6)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (31)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (15)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (6)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (31)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interchurch Communio n Catholic/Protestant (105)</td>
<td>Interchurch Communio n Catholic/Protestant (31)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (28)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (44)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (8)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (3)</td>
<td>Interfaith Worship Other Religions (6)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (26)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (14)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (6)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (26)</td>
<td>Shared Missionary Other Religions (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also sought to gauge laypeople’s level of involvement in ecumenical bodies and activities, at the international/national and local levels. Table 15 shows percentages of people who have participated in international/national ecumenical bodies and activities and local ecumenical bodies and activities in the last 12 months, on the island as a whole, in the Republic, in Northern Ireland, and by denominations/faith communities. It also shows the percentages who have never taken part in ecumenical bodies and activities, and those who have never taken part but would consider doing so.

As with the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, laypeople were more likely to have been involved in local rather than international/national ecumenical bodies and activities within the last 12 months. On the island as a whole, 21% of laypeople reported that they were involved in local ecumenical bodies and activities in the last 12 months (20% in the Republic and 24% in Northern Ireland). People from the Church of Ireland were the most active at the local level (40%), followed by Other Christians (23%).

At the international/national level, 14% on the island as a whole reported ecumenical involvement (13% in the Republic and 17% in Northern Ireland). Here, Other Christians were most likely to report involvement (21%), followed by Presbyterians (17%).
Table 15: Involvement in Ecumenical Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Last 12 months</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>5.56%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=548</td>
<td>n=412</td>
<td>n=127</td>
<td>n=260</td>
<td>n=78</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>n=91</td>
<td>n=18</td>
<td>n=46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Never</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=548</td>
<td>n=412</td>
<td>n=127</td>
<td>n=260</td>
<td>n=78</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>n=91</td>
<td>n=18</td>
<td>n=46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int/Nat Never, would</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consider</td>
<td>n=548</td>
<td>n=412</td>
<td>n=127</td>
<td>n=260</td>
<td>n=78</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>n=91</td>
<td>n=18</td>
<td>n=46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local, Last 12 months</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=538</td>
<td>n=405</td>
<td>n=123</td>
<td>n=258</td>
<td>n=75</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>n=88</td>
<td>n=19</td>
<td>n=44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local, Never</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
</tr>
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<td>n=405</td>
<td>n=123</td>
<td>n=258</td>
<td>n=75</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>n=88</td>
<td>n=19</td>
<td>n=44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local, Never, would</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consider</td>
<td>n=538</td>
<td>n=405</td>
<td>n=123</td>
<td>n=258</td>
<td>n=75</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>n=88</td>
<td>n=19</td>
<td>n=44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then we asked people to describe their involvement in ecumenical activities as ‘frequent,’ ‘never,’ or ‘occasional.’ On the island as a whole, 11% considered their involvement frequent, 41% considered it occasional, and 48% reported never engaging in ecumenical activities. Laypeople in Northern Ireland were more likely to describe their involvement as frequent (13%) than those in the Republic (10%). Denominationally, people from the Church of Ireland were most likely to describe their activity as frequent (19%), followed by Other Christians (16%). Atheists, unsurprisingly, were least likely to describe their activity as frequent (2%). They were followed by Other Religions (5%).

Table 16 compares these responses to those of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders. They were more likely than laypeople to describe their ecumenical activities as frequent, and less likely to report never participating in ecumenical activities. This is probably unsurprising, given that many ecumenical activities take place at the clerical or leadership level.

Table 16: Self Evaluation of Level of Ecumenical Activities, Comparison of Laypeople & Clergy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Frequent</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=550</td>
<td>n=415</td>
<td>n=124</td>
<td>n=261</td>
<td>n=79</td>
<td>n=44</td>
<td>n=13</td>
<td>n=90</td>
<td>n=19</td>
<td>n=46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Frequent</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>n=9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=550</td>
<td>n=311</td>
<td>n=215</td>
<td>n=211</td>
<td>n=156</td>
<td>n=75</td>
<td>n=38</td>
<td>n=54</td>
<td>n=38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Never</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Never</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>n=9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=550</td>
<td>n=415</td>
<td>n=215</td>
<td>n=211</td>
<td>n=156</td>
<td>n=75</td>
<td>n=38</td>
<td>n=54</td>
<td>n=54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Occasional</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Occasional</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>n=9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=550</td>
<td>n=311</td>
<td>n=215</td>
<td>n=211</td>
<td>n=156</td>
<td>n=75</td>
<td>n=38</td>
<td>n=54</td>
<td>n=54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next we asked how much time, as a percentage per year, people thought it was appropriate for faith communities to devote to ecumenical activities. The category that laypeople chose most often was 11-25%, with 27% on the island as a whole, 28% in the Republic and 24% in Northern Ireland choosing this option. This contrasts to the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, where the most popular category was less than 10%. Denominationally, the laypeople most likely to choose 11-25% were from the Church of Ireland (46%), followed by Roman Catholics (32%). The least likely to choose 11-25% were Atheists (5%) and Other Christians (5%). For both of these groups, the most popular category was less than 10%.

These results give pause for thought, for while laypeople are less likely than clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders to say they are actually involved in ecumenical activities, they are more likely to say that they think faith communities should spend more time on ecumenism. However, laypeople are also more likely than clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders to say that they are unsure how much time faith communities should devote to ecumenical activities. Results are summarised in Table 17.

**Table 17: Time Appropriate to Devote to Ecumenical Activities?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lay, Less than 10%</th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christians</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=542</td>
<td>n=411</td>
<td>n=122</td>
<td>n=263</td>
<td>n=78</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=12</td>
<td>n=90</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, 11-25%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, 26-50%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, 51-75%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, More than 75%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Less than 10%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>n=9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, 11-25%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>n=9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, 26-50%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, 51-75%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, More than 75%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Unsure</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Unsure</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, we asked people to tell us if their personal conception of ecumenism was positive, negative or indifferent. They also could say if they were unsure. On the island as a whole, 67% reported positive individual conceptions of ecumenism (70% in the Republic and 58% in Northern Ireland). People reported negative perceptions of ecumenism at a rate of 9% on the island as a whole, 8% in the Republic, and 13% in Northern Ireland. Denominationally, Roman Catholics were most likely to report positive conceptions of ecumenism (80%), followed by people from the Church of Ireland (71%). The most likely to report negative perceptions of ecumenism were Other Religions (21%), followed by Presbyterians (20%). Other Christians were most likely to be unsure (19%), while Atheists were most likely to be indifferent (48%). Results are summarised in Table 18.

Table 18: Individual Perceptions of Ecumenism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island n=555</th>
<th>ROI n=416</th>
<th>NI n=126</th>
<th>RCC n=265</th>
<th>COI n=77</th>
<th>PCI n=44</th>
<th>Meth n=13</th>
<th>Other Christian n=93</th>
<th>Other Religions n=19</th>
<th>Atheist n=46</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual positive</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual negative</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Indifferent</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual is Unsure</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, we asked people to describe their denomination/wider faith community and their congregation/local faith community’s conception of ecumenism as positive, negative, or indifferent. They could also choose to answer that they were unsure. On the island as a whole, 45% reported their denomination’s conception as positive (48% in the Republic and 35% in Northern Ireland). People most likely to see their denomination’s conception as positive were Methodists (85%), followed by people from the Church of Ireland (68%). These results, however, contrast to the results when clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders were asked the same question in our other survey. Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders were more likely than laypeople to see their denomination’s conception of ecumenism as positive (see comparisons in Table below). Those most likely to see their denomination’s conception of ecumenism as negative were Presbyterians (32%), followed by Other Religions (28%).

As for congregations, 45% reported that their congregation’s conception of ecumenism was positive (45% in the Republic and 36% in Northern Ireland). These figures are very close to those produced for laypeople’s perceptions of their denominations’ conceptions of ecumenism. As with conceptions of ecumenism, clergy were more likely to see their congregation’s conception of ecumenism as positive, than were laypeople. While with clergy there was a general trend that denominations were perceived as more positive about ecumenism than congregations, this trend was not so obvious among the lay respondents. Only among people from the Church of Ireland and Methodists did denominations score as more positive about ecumenism than congregations. The difference was most stark among Methodists, where 85% thought their denomination’s perception of ecumenism was positive and only 38% thought their congregation’s perception of ecumenism was positive. (However, the small sample of Methodists, n=13, who answered this question should be taken into account, especially given the pass-it-on email chain method of gathering responses to the lay survey. It is possible a significant chunk of the Methodists who responded to our survey came from a single congregation or a few congregations with a negative conception of ecumenism.) Further, laypeople were more likely than clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders to report that they were unsure about their denominations’ and congregations’ perceptions of ecumenism. Results are summarised in Table 19.
### Table 19: Denominational & Congregational Perceptions of Ecumenism (Lay & Clergy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whole Island</th>
<th>ROI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RCC</th>
<th>COI</th>
<th>PCI</th>
<th>Meth</th>
<th>Other Christian</th>
<th>Other Religions</th>
<th>Atheist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Denomination Positive</td>
<td>44.6% n=540</td>
<td>47.8% n=408</td>
<td>35.3% n=122</td>
<td>46.6% n=266</td>
<td>68.4% n=79</td>
<td>15.9% n=44</td>
<td>84.6% n=13</td>
<td>36.3% n=91</td>
<td>44.4% n=18</td>
<td>12.1% n=33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Denomination positive</td>
<td>66.9% n=549</td>
<td>70.3% n=310</td>
<td>61.2% n=214</td>
<td>76.2% n=214</td>
<td>73.4% n=154</td>
<td>18.2% n=77</td>
<td>89.7% n=39</td>
<td>60.8% n=51</td>
<td>88.9% n=9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Denomination negative</td>
<td>13.0% n=540</td>
<td>11.5% n=408</td>
<td>16.4% n=122</td>
<td>10.9% n=266</td>
<td>3.8% n=79</td>
<td>31.8% n=44</td>
<td>0.0% n=13</td>
<td>18.7% n=91</td>
<td>27.8% n=18</td>
<td>12.1% n=33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Denomination negative</td>
<td>8.9% n=549</td>
<td>6.1% n=310</td>
<td>13.6% n=214</td>
<td>2.8% n=214</td>
<td>2.6% n=154</td>
<td>41.6% n=77</td>
<td>2.6% n=39</td>
<td>11.8% n=51</td>
<td>0.0% n=9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Denomination indifferent</td>
<td>20.9% n=540</td>
<td>19.6% n=408</td>
<td>26.2% n=122</td>
<td>22.9% n=266</td>
<td>10.1% n=79</td>
<td>27.3% n=44</td>
<td>0.0% n=13</td>
<td>19.8% n=91</td>
<td>11.1% n=18</td>
<td>39.4% n=33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Denomination Indifferent</td>
<td>16.0% n=549</td>
<td>16.1% n=310</td>
<td>16.4% n=214</td>
<td>14.5% n=266</td>
<td>13.6% n=154</td>
<td>28.6% n=77</td>
<td>5.1% n=39</td>
<td>21.6% n=51</td>
<td>11.1% n=9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Unsure about Denomination</td>
<td>21.5% n=540</td>
<td>21.1% n=408</td>
<td>22.1% n=122</td>
<td>19.6% n=266</td>
<td>17.7% n=79</td>
<td>25.0% n=44</td>
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<td>2.6% n=39</td>
<td>5.9% n=51</td>
<td>0.0% n=9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Congregation positive</td>
<td>45.4% n=540</td>
<td>48.4% n=409</td>
<td>35.5% n=121</td>
<td>52.3% n=264</td>
<td>53.9% n=78</td>
<td>29.6% n=44</td>
<td>38.5% n=13</td>
<td>39.6% n=91</td>
<td>47.4% n=19</td>
<td>5.9% n=34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clergy, Congregation positive</td>
<td>57.3% n=541</td>
<td>65.1% n=306</td>
<td>47.4% n=211</td>
<td>68.6% n=210</td>
<td>52.0% n=154</td>
<td>40.5% n=74</td>
<td>55.3% n=38</td>
<td>52.0% n=50</td>
<td>77.8% n=9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay, Congregation negative</td>
<td>8.2% n=540</td>
<td>6.1% n=409</td>
<td>15.7% n=121</td>
<td>3.8% n=264</td>
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<td>27.3% n=44</td>
<td>7.7% n=13</td>
<td>12.1% n=91</td>
<td>0.0% n=19</td>
<td>17.7% n=34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, Congregation negative</td>
<td>8.0% n=541</td>
<td>3.3% n=306</td>
<td>13.2% n=211</td>
<td>0.5% n=210</td>
<td>9.1% n=154</td>
<td>21.6% n=74</td>
<td>13.2% n=38</td>
<td>14.0% n=50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lay, Congregation Indifferent</td>
<td>26.5% n=540</td>
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<td>29.0% n=541</td>
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<td>8.0% n=50</td>
<td>11.1% n=9</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Be that as it may, the contrast between these results again can give pause for thought. With laypeople less likely to see their denomination’s conception of ecumenism as positive – or to be unsure about it – it could be that denominations are not as effective as they could be in communicating their conceptions of ecumenism.

The last two questions of the survey asked people what they thought should be the priorities for people involved in ecumenical activities in Northern Ireland, and the priorities of those involved in ecumenical activities on the island of Ireland. Some people who did not live in a particular area replied that they did not feel comfortable commenting on what priorities should be for people living in the other area. A Catholic woman from Co. Galway expressed it this way: ‘Northern Ireland has been - and remains - beyond my understanding.’

Beyond that, as with the responses to other open-ended questions, there were a number of diverse perspectives. Some indicated that they just didn’t know, like this Catholic woman from Co. Kildare, who wrote: ‘Having lived through the 40 years of the Troubles, I just don’t know.’ Others indicated that they thought it would be better if ecumenism simply went away:

*Doing something more useful instead.* – Male, Independent Evangelical, Co. Down

*To go back to sola scriptura and stop whoring itself to Rome.* – Male, Presbyterian, Co. Londonderry/Derry

*To keep their opinions to themselves.* – Male, Realist, Co. Dublin

*Shouldn’t be doing it!!* – Female, Methodist, Belfast City

*Making Ireland a united Island, an Irish 32 county island and not calling our six counties N.I. N.I. is protestant, IRELAND is CATHOLIC.* – Male, Catholic, Co. Monaghan

*Sort out the problems within their own religions before considering ecumenics.* – Male, ‘lapsed’ Presbyterian, Dublin City

Others offered suggestions including promoting reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants, moving beyond reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants to include other groups in society, helping people to heal from the Troubles, focussing on ‘social justice’ issues, ending segregation in children’s education (although as a Catholic man from Co. Louth wrote: ‘Stop attacking Catholic schools and blaming them for the problems.’), involving youth in cross community activities, shunning political power, developing better ecumenical theology, and getting laypeople more involved. Some examples include:

*Keeping kids involved in cross-community activities.* – Male, Presbyterian, Co. Londonderry/Derry

*From personal experience the issues (and forms of words) of mixed marriages, "women’s issues" and integrated education are some of the elephants in the room.* – Male, Hindu/Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Belfast City

*Promoting civic rather than religious engagement. Difference needs to be respected. I am not interested in becoming Protestant, but I am interested in better and closer relationship with my Protestant neighbours. Strong fences make good neighbours.* – Male, Catholic, Co. Down

*Smooth out the apparent difficulties in taking shared communion, intermarriage issues. … Share and encourage success.* – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Donegal

*To be more theological and less cross-community focussed.* – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Dublin

*To strive to maintain steady progress by building on what has already been achieved and to focus on educating and encouraging the younger generation in the importance of ecumenical matters.* – Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Kildare
To find ways of healing old hurts using religious tools. To increase understanding between the sides and to provide a theological underpinning for the equality focus in the civil arena. – Male, Catholic, Dublin City

To look and learn from non-church community groups and spiritual communities in Ireland (Eg. Environmental movement, Women’s Spirituality groups) which I believe can serve as models of how to transcend many traditional barriers. – Female, Presbyterian, Co. Dublin

Don't listen to Church leaders. – Male, Atheist, Co. Limerick

Dismantling their own institutional links to ethnic power structures (on both sides), and working on anti-racism. – Male, Buddhist, Dublin City

I know much good work is going on but a lot of it seems to be unnoticed. I think more information needs to be available to schools and churches etc. I think the ecumenists need to challenge the conservatives in Northern Ireland and not worry so much about offending them. They seem to have no such scruples. – Female, Presbyterian, Co. Down

Looking to see how churches can work together to radically love the least in society by addressing economic inequalities. Maybe give all their money to the poor or something! – Male, Independent Evangelical, Dublin City

Shared learning; inter-faith dialogue in light of an increased number of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers (I believe this should be prioritized more highly than Catholic-Protestant dialogue). – Female, No Religion, Belfast City

Listening and showing the children that there are always several narratives on history politics and ethnicity and that no one has all the justice on its side. – Male, Society of Friends, Cork City

The only way forward I can see for Northern Ireland is for religious activities to disappear out of the public realm. – Female, Atheist, Co. Wicklow

Ensure that ecumenical activities also include social activities to draw ecumenism into everyday life. – Male, Catholic, Co. Dublin

To move beyond unity of ecclesiastical structures and to address an 'ecumenism of the heart' in which all who know and love Christ can share in a common hope. – Male, Baptist, Belfast City

As for ecumenism on the island of Ireland, some indicated that the priorities for the island as a whole were the same as those for Northern Ireland. On the other hand, this Catholic man from Co. Tipperary said: ‘We don’t really have time for that kind of thing in the Republic - we’re busy trying to make a living.’ But some listed other priorities, such as cross-border activities, including ‘other religions’ in ecumenism, dealing with immigration and increasing diversity, helping people in ‘mixed’ marriages, addressing the challenges of secularism, understanding the perspectives of Protestants in the Republic, north-south church partnerships, shared Eucharist or communion, and repentance for contributing to divisiveness in the past. As before, some of the responses had a disappointed, negative or cynical tone:

When preaching on ecumenism to make it sound as though they actually mean what they say. – Male, Catholic, Co. Meath

Recognising that if ecumenism succeeds fully, it leads those involved to understand that all religions are equally invalid and have nothing true to say about anything. – Male, No Religion, Dublin City

In light of the increasing laicisation of both parts of Ireland, I sometimes fear that ecumenism, despite its best intentions, has echoes of “moving the life-boats on the Titanic”. – Male, Catholic, Co. Derry/Londonderry
Shared worship, but that can never happen as long as Catholic Churches refuse Communion to those who are not Catholic. The welcoming notices, as in - say - St Martin's in the Fields, welcoming ALL to the altar do NOT appear in RC churches, indeed I have see one (not in Ireland) in a cathedral forbidding non-Catholics to approach the altar. This negates my understanding of Christianity. – Female, Catholic, Co. Galway

Other responses included:

Show the positive side of Christianity instead of highlighting divisions, for example rows over President McAleese receiving communion at a Church of Ireland service. Jesus Christ would not mind this!! – Female, Catholic, Belfast City

Include atheists :) – Male, Atheist, Belfast City

Ensuring Protestants are no longer discriminated against in the Republic of Ireland by using dialogue at a local level - but not sharing church services. – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Fermanagh

Ireland is becoming increasingly secular with many people needing to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and be reconciled to Him. – Male, Presbyterian, Co. Armagh

Helping Protestants to feel more comfortable as a minority in Ireland. – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Antrim

More honesty, openness and not be afraid to accept criticism in a constructive manner. – Male, Church of Ireland, Co. Cork

Prevention from and recovery of depression and prevention of suicide through complimentary therapies such as; counselling, arts and crafts, speech and drama, music, organic farming and self sustainability. – Female, Catholic, Co. Cavan

To achieve a situation where all Christian peoples can receive Holy Communion in Churches of any Christian denomination. I see the current situation as a blockage. Once cleared, progress in other areas should be more easily achieved. – Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Kildare

Widening out the net from just a Catholic/Church of Ireland/Protestant faiths to include, particularly Muslims (as their faith is misunderstood, I believe) and other faiths/spirituality. – Female, Buddhist, Co. Cork

In a phrase of Hans Kung when he visited Trinity College in the late seventies ecumenism is not about liturgical tourism. There is a Lutheran / Roman Catholic common declaration on justification. Let’s get the finger out and get a common declaration on Eucharist and inter-communion. It pains me hugely that the Roman Catholic Church is so slow to move on inter-communion and the few areas like retreat houses where it was possible are now coming under fire. I obviously do not understand enough about the complexities but I feel these complexities are part of turf wars. With the wave of secularism Christians need to affirm common values or at least admit others of good faith to share in the Eucharist and let God worry about their worthiness or understanding or whatever. In a typical congregation of Roman Catholics the range of actual understandings of Eucharist is wide indeed. So why not admit others with different views as long as they are respectful to our table. I have been impatient about this for more than twenty years. – Male, Catholic, Dublin City

I feel there should be more meeting face to face of those from North and South. This can be very productive. Perhaps people from the ROI will be willing to come to the North. I understand that there is a reluctance, perhaps even, an indifference, and who can blame them? But I think it would be good for some in the North to meet Catholics from the South to begin to understand each other. Both Protestants and Catholics in the North can have a siege mentality and I think contact with others from the South would help to dispel it. There is too much history here at times. In understanding each other, I hope we can understand strangers who come to live among us. – Female, Presbyterian, Co. Down
Use every opportunity to talk. Promote respect as the key word and get the youth involved. — Female, Jewish, Co. Dublin

To emphasise what unites us rather than what divides us. Gain more media coverage for ecumenical events. Praise Mary McAleese for her efforts to meet people from across the board. — Male, Catholic, Co. Down

Accepting that it happens in a culture in which overt belief is declining and that ecumenism largely fails to include non-belief or non-practised belief in its terms of reference. — Male, Society of Friends, Co. Dublin

Similarly to realise that supporting a secular state is the best approach to tolerance for all religions. — Male, No Religion, Co. Dublin

A breaking down of language barriers such as the use of words Protestant and Catholic, which are used in a totally different way in England. — Male, Catholic, Co. Kerry

To keep up whatever joint activities have been begun and not to become despondent. Not to confine joint activities to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity! — Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Wexford

To promote a humanistic view, everybody just wants to be happy while they on this planet we share, border and religions have in equal amounts caused such division and pain. — Female, Catholic, Co. Roscommon

To truly respect each other’s position. I think it would have been helpful if you had included a question about people’s experiences at a personal/family level, i.e. inter-faith marriages. I think it is important to acknowledge that the very fact that there are more inter-church marriages can expose people to situations that just would not arise 30+ yrs ago. Also now that folk quite happily attend e.g. funerals in churches other than their own can expose differences. It is hard to explain to RC friends and relations the hurt one feels at being denied access to the Lord’s table and C of I folk do not always appreciate the gesture that R.C’s are making by receiving in a C of I Eucharist. — Female, Church of Ireland, Co. Cork

To face the common enemy of secularism. — Male, Muslim, Co. Wexford

Standing together on the right to religious freedom for all peoples against a rising tide of secularism and an emerging intolerant brand of liberalism in Ireland. Standing together on social justice issues and on moral/ethical issues. — Female, Catholic, Co. Dublin

Focus on a freedom of thought. — Male, Catholic, Dublin City

Tolerance of other views as well as questioning your own. Male, Baha’i, Co. Louth

To explore the rich Celtic tradition of the Irish saints and to engage with the issues of how the emerging church conversation and new monastic spirituality could speak into the contemporary Irish context. — Male, Baptist, Belfast City

Breaking down cross border barriers is at least as important as those across different denominations. — Male, Methodist, Belfast City
Summary of Findings on Ecumenism and Questions Raised

Although 67% of people who responded to our survey claimed to have a positive conception of ecumenism, our survey revealed some people willing to admit that they didn’t know what it was, that it was a waste of time, or that it was irrelevant. Responses to our open-ended questions captured this range of opinions, including a great deal of emotion about the term as well as some Father Ted inspired playfulness.

Like the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, most of our lay respondents thought of ecumenism as including dialogue between Catholics and Protestants, followed by shared social action and good civic relations between Catholics and Protestants. After that, however, laypeople rated dialogue and shared social action with Other Religions more highly than other forms of activity between Catholics and Protestants (such as prayer, worship, mission, communion/Eucharist, etc). This is in contrast to the results from the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, where these other Catholic-Protestant activities were ranked higher than most activities with Other Religions. This could cause us to ask if there is a greater willingness among laypeople rather than Christian clergy to see Other Religions as partners in ecumenism? Again, the nature of the sample that responded to our survey means this finding is not generalizable, but that does not prevent us from raising the question all the same. What level of engagement (if any) with Other Religions is appropriate and can and should be pursued?

Laypeople were much less likely than clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders to be involved in ecumenical activities. This is not surprising, given the nature of the job of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders. That said, 27% of laypeople who responded to our survey reported that they thought that their faith community should spend 11-25% of its time per year on ecumenical activities. This was the most popular category for our laypeople, while less than 10% was the most popular category for the clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders who responded to our survey. Laypeople were also more likely than clergy to think that their denominations/wider faith communities and local congregations/communities did not have positive conceptions of ecumenism. Given the finding from our other survey that clergy are not able to spend as much time on ecumenical activities as they would like, the desire of these laypeople for more ecumenism points to a gap between ecumenical theory and practice. What, if anything, could be done to bridge that gap? Are our conventional forms of ecumenism up to the task, or are they superficial and unable to capture the imaginations of laypeople who would like to be more involved?

Next Steps

We hope that this report will stimulate plenty of debate and discussion about these issues. In the next phase of the research project, we plan to conduct eight case studies of congregations, parishes, and faith communities, identified through this survey, throughout the Republic and Northern Ireland. This will provide us with deeper insight about the dynamics of how people in churches and faith communities are actually addressing these issues. Our other goals include: 1. To facilitate the appropriation of a context-sensitive ecumenics to stimulate further theological research in related theological subdisciplines (e.g., ecumenical ecclesiology, socio-religious reconciliation; contextual theology and social ethics); and 2. To equip churches and other faith communities with theological resources for a new ecumenical vision and praxis for the 21st century.

You can keep up-to-date on our research project via our website, www.ecumenics.ie.