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Please note:
Increases, Decreases and Comparisons where noted can be read as statistically significant

The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) provides a regular source of information on a wide range of social and economic issues in Northern Ireland, and has been running since 1983.

The survey is based on a random sample of 4,500 domestic addresses. Interviews are sought with all adults aged 16 and over in the selected households.

Smoking

Just under a quarter (23%) of adults were smokers in 2007/08, a decrease from 25% the previous year. The proportion of male smokers remained unchanged while females decreased from 26% to 23%.

Attitudes on passive smoking

When asked to indicate what illnesses if any were caused by passive smoking over half (57%) mentioned cancer (in general) and damaged lungs or lung cancer (51%). 2% thought passive smoking posed no risk to health. 78% agreed that children were more at risk from passive smoking than adults.

Table 1: Illnesses caused by passive smoking

	2007/08
Cancer (in general)	57%
Damaged lungs / Lung cancer	51%
Respiratory problems	35%
Asthma	32%
No risks or problems	2%
All Persons (100%)	3,393

Household Composition

In 2007/08 the average household size in Northern Ireland was 2.5. Single occupant households accounted for 28% of households; this has remained relatively unchanged for the last decade (26% in 1997/98).

Three quarters (76%) of families were headed by a married or cohabiting couple, a fifth (22%) by a lone mother and 2% by a lone father.

34% of males aged 25-29 years lived with their parents compared to 15% of females of the same age.

The nature and aims of the CHS are similar to those of the General Household Survey (GHS-L) carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in Great Britain.

In addition to this bulletin, a wide range of additional results and technical details are available on-line. Information on how to access these is provided at the end of this bulletin.

Smoking in the home

61% of individuals stated that smoking was not allowed anywhere in their home, 18% allowed it in certain places and 16% allowed smoking anywhere in their home.

Nine out of ten smokers (89%) believed that the smoking ban in public places would not affect the rules about smoking in their home.

Reasons to quit Smoking

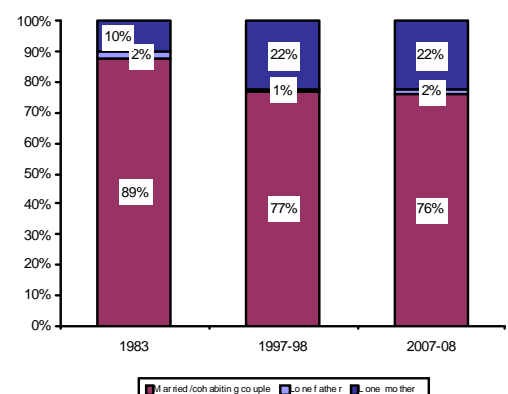
55% of smokers were planning to quit smoking. Three-quarters (74%) of smokers cited concern for their personal health as a reason to quit smoking, this was followed by the price of cigarettes (70%) and setting an example for children (64%).

Nicotine-Replacement Therapies

70% of smokers had tried to quit smoking on at least one occasion; of these 75% had two or more attempts at quitting.

44% of smokers and those who successfully quit in the previous 6 months used nicotine replacement therapy in an attempt to quit.

Fig 1: Families with dependent children



Debt

Credit Facilities

Half of individuals (51%) aged 16 or older had at least one form of credit facility. Credit cards were the most common credit facility with 47% having one.

Methods used to borrow money

One quarter (23%) borrowed money in the previous 12 months. 9% had a bank overdraft, 5% had taken out a fixed term loan from a bank or building society and 5% had received a loan from a credit union.

83% reported never having difficulty meeting repayments for debts, 13% had difficulty sometimes. When asked to describe their current level of borrowing, two-thirds (66%) thought they could afford more credit but preferred to avoid it.

Table 2: How often individuals have problems repaying debts

	2007/08
Almost all the time	2%
Quite often	2%
Only sometimes	13%
Never	83%
All Persons (100%)	3,311

Budgeting Money

Just over half (55%) reported having money over at the end of all or most months or weeks –whichever they use to budget.

Help if in financial difficulties

Individuals were asked who they would contact if they were in financial difficulty. The most common answers were family or friends (62%) followed by bank or building society personnel (27%). One in ten (10%) said they would not contact anyone for help.

Household Debt

Just over one third of households (37%) were paying for a mortgage in 2007/08. A small proportion (4%) of households reported being behind with one or more household utility bills.

60% of households reported managing very well or quite well financially; less than 1% reported being in deep financial trouble.

One in ten households (12%) said their financial situation had got worse during the previous 12 months. With regards to the future, 69% believed their situation would continue as it is, while a minority (7%) thought it would get worse.

Internet Access

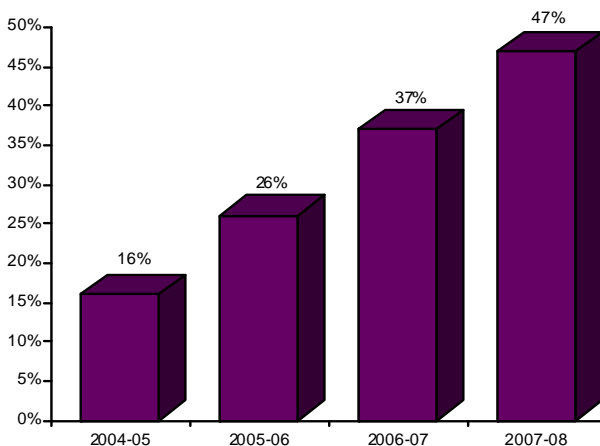
Household Internet Access

61% of households had a home computer. Half of households (55%) had access to the internet through at least one method, 53% of households doing this via a home computer.

Broadband Internet Access

The proportion of households with broadband internet connection has increased significantly every year from 16% in 2004/05 to 47% in 2007/08. Among those household with internet access 86% had broadband access.

Fig 2: Households with Broadband Internet Connection



Individual Internet Access

Three out of five (60%) adults reported accessing the internet; an increase from 58% in 2006/07. Internet access among males has consistently been higher than for females over the last seven years (62% compared to 58% in 2007/08; 37% compared to 32% in 2001/02).

Methods of Accessing the Internet

One third (35%) of individuals accessing the internet used more than one method to do so. Nine out of ten (89%) accessed the internet via a home computer, while just over a third (36%) used a computer at work.

Frequency of accessing the Internet

Just over half (52%) of those who used the internet did so at least once a day, 29% accessed it several times a week, and 10% once a week.

Individuals reasons for accessing the Internet

The most common reasons for accessing the internet were to use email (55%), finding out about goods and services (47%), general browsing (45%) and buying or ordering tickets (44%).

Individuals reasons for not accessing the Internet

Individuals who did not use the internet mentioned lack of interest (47%), not having a computer (36%), lack of confidence (18%) and feeling too old (15%) as their reasons for not doing so.

Health

Self-Reported General Health

The majority of individuals (83%) reported their health as being good or fairly good in the previous 12 months.

Long-Standing Illness

One third of adults (35%) reported having a long standing illness and a quarter of adults (25%) reported having a long-standing illness that limited their activities. More females (26%) than males (23%) reported a limiting long-standing illness.

Consultations with an NHS GP

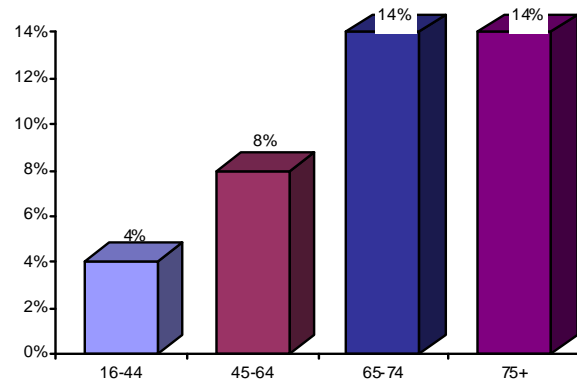
15% had visited an NHS GP in the 14 days prior to being interviewed a similar proportion as reported in 1983 (14%). Almost half (47%) spent between ten and twenty minutes with their GP on their last visit, 41% spent less than ten minutes.

The majority (79%) of individuals last consulted their GP at a surgery or health centre, 14% did so by telephone while 3% had a GP visit their home.

Consultations with a Practice Nurse

A minority (7%) had seen a practice nurse at their GPs surgery in the previous two weeks. 14% of those aged 65-74 years and those aged 75 years or more had seen a practice nurse during this period.

Fig 3: Consultations with a practice nurse in last 14 days



Sport and Leisure

Participation in Sports

Half (49%) of individuals aged 16 years or more had participated in sport in the previous 12 months compared to 52% in 2006/07.

Reasons for not enjoying sport or physical activity

Individuals were asked if any factors put them off participating in sport or physical activity. The most common factors were not having enough time (28%), being unfit (21%) and feeling too old (17%).

Table 3: Factors which put people off participating in sport

	2007/08
I don't have enough time	28%
I am not fit	21%
I am too old	17%
Have a medical condition that restricts me	17%
I am not interested in sport	15%
All Persons (100%)	3,342

Attendance at Sporting Events

One third (33%) of adults had attended a sporting event in Northern Ireland as a spectator in the previous 12 months, while 15% had attended a sporting event outside Northern Ireland. 59% were very or fairly satisfied with sports provision in Northern Ireland.

Participation in the 'Arts'

Respondents were asked to indicate which 'Arts' activities they had participated in in the last year. 38% had read for pleasure, while a quarter (25%) had bought or received a novel, book of stories or plays. The most common reasons for not participating more in the Arts were a lack of interest (34%) and time (22%).

Attendance at the 'Arts'

47% had been to see a film in the previous 12 months, 21% had seen a play or drama and 17% had seen another type of theatre performance.

Fig 4: Arts Events attended in previous 12 months

	2007/08
Film at a cinema or other venue	47%
Play or drama	21%
Another type of theatre performance	17%
Rock or pop music performance	17%
All Persons (100%)	3,406

Use of Public Libraries

Two-thirds (66%) reported never visiting a public library, 17% had visited a library at least once a month. 77% of those who had used a public library did so to borrow or renew books. One third (33%) of those who did not use a library stated not being interested as a reason for not visiting.

Factors encourage use libraries more often

60% of individuals said that nothing would encourage them to use public libraries more often. One in ten said they would use it if they had more free time (13%), if there was a better selection of books (12%) or if there were longer opening hours (9%).

Visits to Museums In Northern Ireland

32% had visited a museum in Northern Ireland in the previous 12 months. One third (31%) stated that exhibitions or topics of interest would encourage them to visit museums more often, one fifth (21%) said more information about events, while 37% thought nothing would encourage them.

Environment

Important Environmental Problems

Four out of five (81%) households were very or fairly concerned about the environment. The most commonly mentioned environmental problems were climate change (39%), household waste disposal (34%), traffic exhaust fumes and urban smog (31%), traffic congestion (30%) and pollution in rivers (28%).

Environmental Phrases

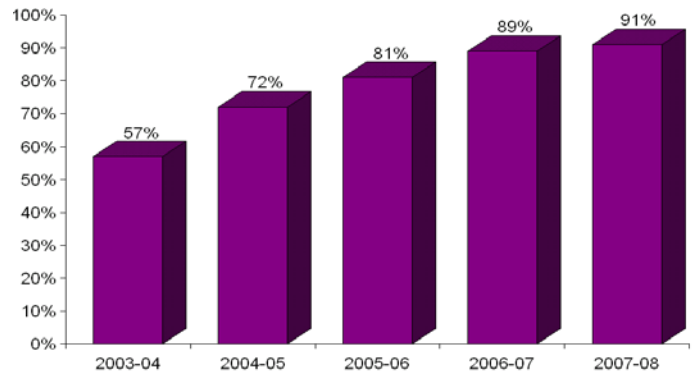
The majority (93%) of adults had heard of at least one environmental phrase. There was a significant increase in the proportion of adults aware of 'biodiversity' and 'sustainable development' from 2006/07 to 2007/08 (from 34% to 39% and from 33% to 36% respectively).

Household Recycling

Nine in ten households (91%) in Northern Ireland regularly recycled at least one of the following; glass, cans or paper. There has been a significant increase each year in the proportion regularly recycling from 2003-04 (57%). 88% of households regularly recycled paper, 82% cans and 69% glass.

Nine out of ten households (89%) had recycled at least one other type of material; three quarters recycled plastic bottles (77%) or cardboard (76%).

Fig 4: Households who regularly recycle



Reasons for not regularly recycling

The most common reasons for not regularly recycling were having little or no glass, cans or paper (35%) and having no kerbside collection (30%). The proportion of households stating that recycling facilities were too far away decreased from 20% in 2006/07 to 16%.

Environmentally friendly actions

Half (51%) of households had used energy saving light bulbs and 40% had reduced the amount of energy used in their home; compared to 47% and 37% the previous year.

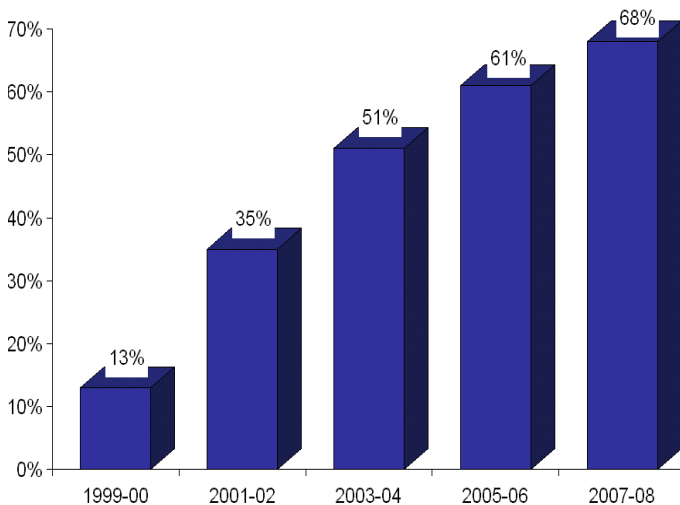
Mobile Phone

Mobile Phone Ownership

84% of individuals aged 16 years or more owned a mobile phone in 2007/08 an increase from 82% the previous year.

Mobile phone ownership among those aged 50+ (68%) has increased continuously from 1999/00 when 13% reported owning a mobile phone.

Fig 5: Mobile Phone ownership among those aged 50+



Job Applications

One in ten (9%) of those aged 16-74 years had applied for a job in the previous 12 months; of these 60% had applied for two or more positions. Just under half (48%) had been successful in their application and 95% of these accepted the job offer.

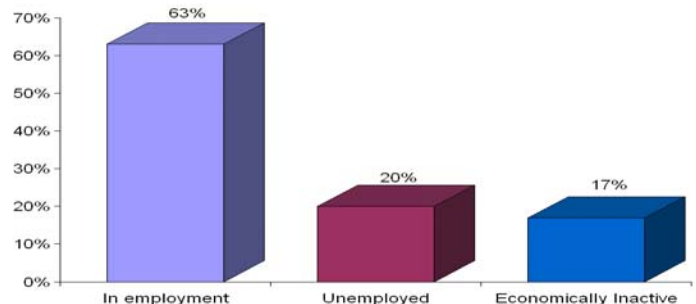
Employment Status when making job application

63% of those who applied for a job in the previous 12 months were in employment at the time of their application while one fifth (20%) were unemployed.

Application Process

71% of applicants completed an application form, 61% were interviewed while 37% provided references from a previous employer.

Fig 6: Employment Status at time of job application



For additional copies of this bulletin or for more detailed tables and technical report, please contact

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