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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 of all adults aged 16 and over in the selected households.

## Household Composition

Household sizes have decreased steadily in the past two decades, from 3.14 in 1983 to 2.61 in 2003-04.

The largest change which has taken place is the proportion of one person households, increasing from 20% in 1983 to 26% in 2003-04.

One occupant households under pension age more than doubled from 6% in 1983 to 13% in 2003-04. Most of this increase occurred between 1983 and 1997-98 when it doubled to 12%.

## Tenure

The proportion of homes owned with a mortgage or as part of a co-ownership scheme has increased significantly in the last two decades, accounting for 42% of houses in 2003-04 compared to 20% in 1983.

The proportion of households renting Housing Executive homes has more than halved over the same period from 39% in 1983 to 15% twenty years later. A large proportion (69%) of those houses rented from the NIHE are terraced.

Table 1: Household Tenure

	1983	1992/93	2003/04
Owned Outright	32%	28%	31%
Owned - Mortgage	20%	36%	42%
Rented- NIHE	39%	28%	15%
Rented Other	8%	7%	10%
Rent Free	2%	1%	2%
All Households	2,940	3,093	2,717

The nature and aims of the CHS are similar to those of the General Household Survey (GHS) 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.

## Families

Families with dependent children headed by a married or cohabiting couple accounted for three-quarters (75%) of families in 2003-04, a decrease from 89% in 1983.

Lone parent families headed by a female have more than doubled from 10% in 1983 to 24% two decades later.

The average number of children per family (2 children) has remained relatively unchanged from 1983 when it was 2.2 children.

## Consumer Durables

Many electrical items which were in only a minority of households in 1983 are now found in almost all, in particular, video recorders (86%), and microwave ovens (91%).

Almost all (95%) homes are fully centrally heated compared to under half (43%) in 1983. The proportion of households with more than one car has steadily increased to 31% from 11% in 1983.

Table 2: Household Durables

	1983	1992/93	2003/04
Home Computer	8%	17%	51%
Video	15%	63%	86%
Deep Freezer	33%	71%	92%
Telephone	66%	82%	94%
Microwave Oven	2%	52%	91%
Tumble Dryer	22%	33%	53%
Dishwasher	6%	14%	38%
Central Heating	55%	86%	98%
2 or more cars/vans	11%	19%	31%
All Households	2,940	3,096	2,716

## Environmental Issues

Concern for the environment and any actions taken for environmental reasons were asked of all households for the first time in 2003/04.

### Environmental Concerns

Traffic exhaust fumes and urban smog (38%) was the environmental problem mentioned by most people surveyed as being the one of their top three concerns, followed by concerns about household waste disposal (33%) and traffic congestion (29%). 8% stated that environmental problems did not worry them.

### Environmentally Friendly Actions

Using low energy light bulbs (42%) is the most common action taken for environmental reasons. One-third of households reported buying toilet or kitchen paper made of recycled paper (35%), using bottled water because of poor quality tap water (33%) or encouraging wildlife in their garden (31%).

### Household Recycling

Half of households (50%) in Northern Ireland regularly separated papers from rubbish for recycling or took them to a paper bank. Over a third (35%) regularly recycled glass, while 28% did so with cans. Just one in ten (10%) made compost from their kitchen waste.

Table 3: Households reasons for not regularly recycling paper, glass and cans inclusively

Small amount of paper/cans/glass	30%
Recycling facilities are too far away	27%
No kerbside collection	27%
Lack of time or desire	22%
Little storage space at home	13%
No recycling facilities at all	10%
Other reason	8%
No reason	6%
Will have little effect on the environment	1%
Households who don't recycle paper, glass and cans inclusively	2,073

## Internet Access

### Household Internet Access

42% of households have access to the internet through at least one method. Three-times as many homes have access to the internet through a home computer than in 1999-00 (40% at present, 13% in 1999-00).

### Individual Internet Access

Half (51%) of all adults in Northern Ireland access the internet, 16% more than 2 years previously. Some individuals use more than one method. 40% use a home computer, while one fifth (21%) use a computer at work.

Adults over the age of 49 (28%), and those persons who are unemployed (45%) or economically inactive (32%) are much less likely to have internet access.

Table 4: Methods used for Individual Internet Access

	2002-03	2003-04
Home Computer	30%	40%
Work Computer	17%	21%
Library Computer	N/A	2%
Digital Television	1%	2%
Mobile Phone	2%	3%
Other	4%	4%
All Persons	5,075	4,820

### Individual Reasons for Accessing the Internet

The most common reason for using the internet is to access e-mail (57%), followed by getting information about goods or services (46%), browsing (40%), and buying or ordering tickets (39%).

### Individual Reasons for Not Accessing the Internet

Of those individuals who do not access the internet the most commonly cited reasons are a lack of interest (40%) and not having a computer (33%).

Table 5: Individuals reasons for not accessing the internet

Lack of interest	40%
Do not have a computer	33%
Feel too old to use the internet	14%
Lack of confidence	13%
No need	11%
No equipment	10%
Cost of access too high	6%
Cost of software too high	5%
Have not got around to it	5%
Nobody in the household knows how to use it	5%
Individuals who don't access the internet	2,373

## Mobile Phones

Ownership of a mobile phone has increased dramatically over the past 5 years with almost three-quarters (72%) of individuals owning one in 2003-04 compared to a quarter (26%) in 1999-00.

While this increase has occurred across all age groups the biggest increase has been in the 16-19 age group, rising from 26% in 1999-00 to 92% in 2003-04.

## Accidents at Work

14% of individuals reported having an accident which resulted in injury at work. Males were three times more likely to have an accident than females, 23% and 7% respectively.

A slightly smaller proportion (9%) of individuals have had an illness which was either caused by or made worse by their work.

# Health

## Self-reported General Health

The proportion of adults in Northern Ireland perceiving their health to be good or fairly good has remained consistently high over the last two decades, 86% in 1983 and 84% in 2003-04.

## Consultations with an NHS GP

Individuals visiting an NHS GP in the two weeks prior to interview have slightly increased from 14% in 1983 to 18% in 2003-04.

The proportion of females has been consistently higher, with 17% in 1983 and 21% in 2003-04 in contrast to 11% and 14% for males.

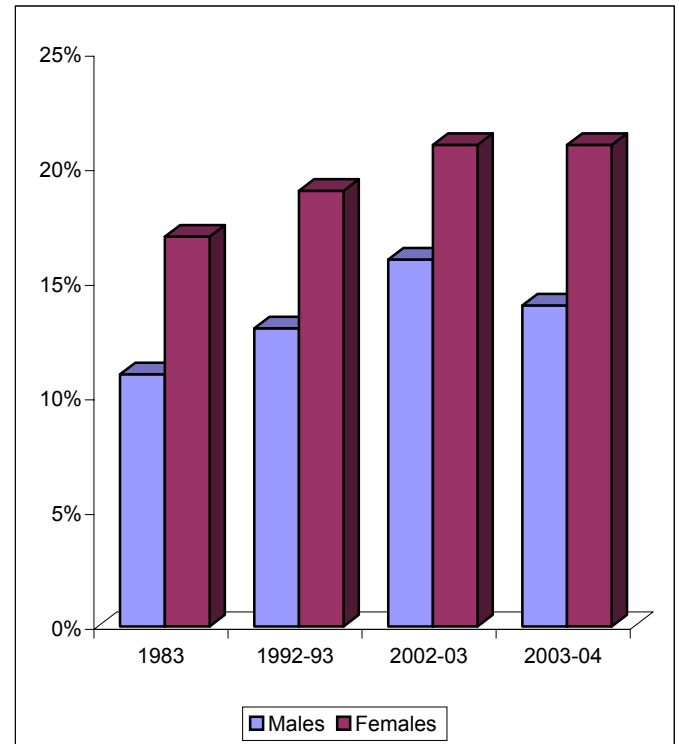
## Long-Standing Illness

While the proportion of individuals with a long-standing illness has increased slightly between 1983 (29%) and 2003-04 (35%), it has remained relatively steady from 1998 (35%).

## Limiting Long-Standing Illness

One-quarter (25%) of adults in Northern Ireland have a long-standing illness which limits their activities. This has remained relatively unchanged over the past two decades, 21% in 1983.

Figure 1: Consultations with an NHS GP



# Eyesight and Hearing

## Adult Eyesight

Less than half (42%) of all adults consider themselves to have an abnormal eye condition or problems with their eyesight. Twice as many people aged 45-64 (54%) have sight problems as those aged 16-44 (25%).

Two-thirds (63%) of adults wear glasses or contact lenses, with more females wearing them than males, 66% in comparison to 57%.

## Adult Hearing

15% of adults in Northern Ireland reported having difficulties with their hearing. A slightly larger proportion of males have difficulties than females, 18% and 13% respectively.

18% of those who report having hearing difficulties wear a hearing aid.

# Child Health

## Child Long-Standing Illness

12% of children are reported as having a long-standing illness, a slight decrease since 1997-98 (15%).

Only a minority (6%) of children under 16 have a long-standing illness which limits their activities. This figure has remained fairly consistent since 1997-98 (8%).

## Child NHS GP Consultations and Hospital Visits

Less than one in ten (9%) children had visited an NHS GP in the previous two weeks or attended a hospital out-patient department in the last 3 months (7%).

A small minority of children were day-patients (3%) or in-patients (4%) in hospital within the last year.

## Child Eyesight

One in ten children (10%) in Northern Ireland wear glasses or have problems with one or both of their eyes.

# Immunisations

Most parents (82%) of children aged under 2 years report that their child has received a polio or hib vaccination. Almost two-thirds (63%) of children have received the MMR vaccination.

Table 6: Parents who consider vaccines to be completely safe

	1999-00	2003-04
MMR	34%	43%
Polio	55%	75%
Hib	43%	64%
DTP (Diphtheria)	48%	71%
Tetanus	56%	85%
Pertussis	37%	63%

Almost all parents felt informed of the benefits (92%) and side effects (86%) of immunisation prior to their child being immunised.

Two-thirds (68%) strongly agree that they would have another child immunised.

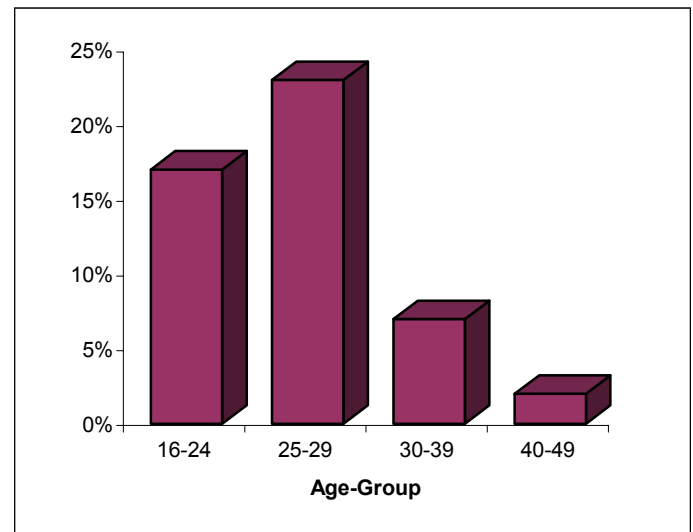
## Family Planning

11% of women aged 16 to 49 have used emergency contraception in the last 2 years, with 63% of those using it on only one occasion. The morning after pill is used more often than other emergency contraceptives, such as an IUD with 11% of women having used it in comparison to >1% making use of the latter form of contraceptive.

Own GP (61%) is the most common place to avail of emergency contraceptive, followed by family planning clinics (28%). Only a small proportion visit another GP (5%) or accident and emergency departments (4%).

The contraceptive pill is the most commonly used regular method of contraception with 40% using one form. A quarter (26%) regularly use condoms, while a small proportion use abstinence (7%), intra-uterine device (IUD) (6%), injections (6%), safe period (5%) or diaphragm (2%).

Figure 2: Females who have used emergency contraception in the last 2 years



## Sport and Leisure

Over half (55%) of all adults interviewed participated in some form of sport in the previous 12 months. Of those who have played sport almost half (46%) went swimming or diving, while over a third (38%) did aerobics, keepfit, yoga or dance exercise. One fifth went cycling (19%), played golf (21%), went jogging (17%), played snooker (21%) or tenpin bowling (18%).

Two out of five (40%) people attended a sporting event as a spectator in the last year. Almost two-thirds (62%) are satisfied with the sport provision in Northern Ireland.

### "The Arts" in Northern Ireland

Less than half (45%) attended an arts performance during the last year, with 7% having participated in the arts. A very large proportion (60%) have watched art on television or gone to the cinema. One quarter (25%) attended a play or theatre. Most are satisfied with the museums (73%) and arts provision (60%) in Northern Ireland.

Table 7: Cultural Attractions in Northern Ireland ever visited

Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Cultra	71%
Ulster Museum, Belfast	63%
Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh	61%
W5, Odyssey Centre	35%
Armagh County Museum	12%
All Persons	3,985

### Use of Public Libraries

40% of people visited a public library in the last year, with 14% of these using it on a weekly basis. A minority (15%) have never used a public library.

One third (32%) of those who did not use a public library stated their reason as a lack of interest, with the next most common reason being that the individual buys all the books that they require (27%).

## Social Capital

Questions on social capital were included for the first time in 2003-04. Social Capital attempts to measure the social structure that exists in communities. One-third (34%) of individuals describe the area in which they live as a housing estate or development, 16% as a townland, 13% a collection of streets, and 11% a street.

The majority (71%) had not taken any action to resolve problems affecting local people. 13% contacted an appropriate organisation, 8% a local councillor or MP while 6% attended a public meeting (6%) in order to address a local problem.

Table 8: Individuals perceptions of their area

Happy for locals to keep an eye on property	86%
Area is a friendly place to live	83%
People in the area look out for each other	62%
Most people in the area trust each other	60%
Area is a tight close knit community	53%
Often see strangers in the area	38%
All Persons	2,310

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