

Background to the Voter participation and abstention module

A module on Voter participation and abstention was previously included on the QNHS in the third quarter of 2002. A short module was included in the second quarter of 2011 to update the main findings of the 2002 module following the 2011 general election. The questions focused on the main reasons for not voting in the election and were asked of all respondents who were eligible to vote in the general election. The questions used in the 2011 module relating to the reasons for not voting were not the same as those used in the 2002 module. Therefore, the results of the two modules are not directly comparable.

The questions used in the 2011 module were as follows:

1. Did you vote in the most recent general election?

Yes

No

(If the respondent did not vote)

2. Were you registered to vote in the most recent general election?

Yes

No

(If the respondent did not vote but is registered to vote)

Could you tell me the main reason that you did not vote?

1. I am not interested in politics
2. I am disillusioned with politics
3. I did not have enough information/knowledge
4. I had difficulty getting to polling station (e.g. no transport, illness)
5. I was away from home at that time (e.g. for work, on holiday)
6. I am living too far from the address where I am registered to vote
7. Other

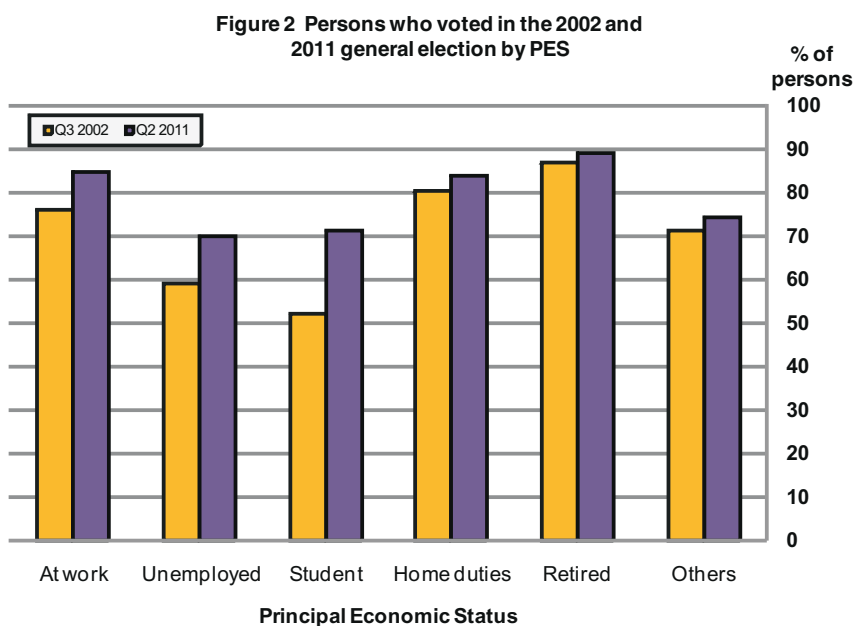
Section 1 Profile of Voters and non-Voters

The percentage of respondents who said they voted in the last general election increased from 76% in the 2002 module to 82% in 2011. See table 1.

- ◆ Notable changes in voting habits took place between the two survey periods in certain regions. In the South-West region there was an increase in the percentage of people who voted from 75% in 2002 to 85% in 2011. In the Dublin region the percentage of people who voted increased from 71% in 2002 to 80% in 2011.
- ◆ The percentage of people living in urban areas who voted increased from 72% in 2002 to 81% in 2011.
- ◆ As in the 2002 survey, younger people were considerably less likely to vote in 2011 than those in older age groups. While 92% of people in the 55 to 64 year age group voted in 2011, this compares with 62% of those aged between 18 and 24 and 73% of those aged between 25 and 34.

Although turnout remained lowest among young people, students and unemployed people, there were considerable increases in voter turnout within these groups between 2002 and 2011:

- ◆ In the 2002 survey only 50% of those aged between 18 and 24 said they voted in the most recent general election, but in the 2011 survey this had increased to 62%.
- ◆ While 52% of students stated that they voted in the 2002 general election, 71% said they voted in 2011.
- ◆ Just under 60% of unemployed people said they voted in 2002, compared with 70% in 2011.



Section 2 Reasons for not voting

Just over one third of respondents who were eligible but did not vote in the 2011 general election were not registered to vote. See table 2. Just under one third of respondents who did not vote said the main reason was a practical issue:

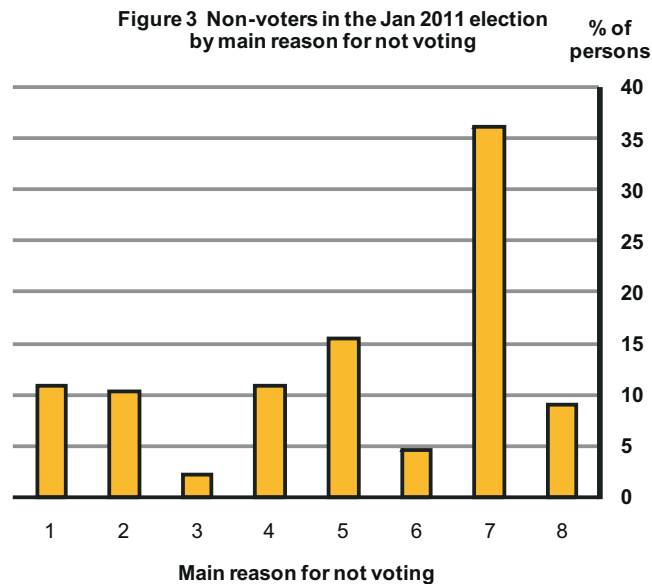
- ◆ 15% were away from home on polling day
- ◆ 11% had difficulty getting to the polling station
- ◆ 5% were living too far from the polling station.

A further 11% of non-voters in the Q2 2011 survey said that the main reason they did not vote was because they were not interested in politics and 10% said they were disillusioned with politics. Only 2% of non-voters cited a lack of information or knowledge as the reason they did not vote. An additional 9% gave some other reason for not voting.

Points of note include:

- ◆ Respondents educated to primary level or below (18%) were more likely to say that they did not vote because they were disillusioned with politics compared with those educated to secondary level (8%).
- ◆ While 45% of non-voters in the youngest age category (18-34) were not registered to vote, this compares with 13% of those aged 55 and over.
- ◆ Only 6% of non-voters aged 18-34 said the reason they did not vote was that they were disillusioned with politics, compared with 15% of those aged 35-54 and 14% of those aged 55 and over.
- ◆ Difficulty getting to the polling station was particularly common among non-voters aged 55 and over (27%), compared with younger non-voters (7%).

In the 2002 module on voter participation respondents were asked to indicate all of their reasons for not voting in the general election. In the 2011 survey respondents were asked the main reason they did not vote. Therefore, the results of the two surveys are not comparable and these 2002 results have not been included in this release.



KEY

- 1 Not interested in politics
- 2 Disillusioned with politics
- 3 Lack of knowledge/information
- 4 Difficulty in getting to the polling station
- 5 Away from home on polling day
- 6 Living too far from polling station
- 7 Not registered to vote
- 8 Other (including not stated)

Table 1 Persons who were eligible to vote in the general election classified by whether they voted or not, May-June 2002 and April-June 2011¹

% of persons aged 18+ eligible to vote

	Voted in the general election				Unweighted sample (Number of persons aged 18 years and over ²)	
	Yes		No		Q3 2002	Q2 2011
	Q3 2002	Q2 2011	Q3 2002	Q2 2011		
State	76	82	24	18	24,802	8,810
Sex						
Male	76	82	24	18	9,627	3,553
Female	76	82	24	18	15,175	5,257
Region						
Border	79	86	21	14	3,967	1,000
Midlands	80	84	20	16	1,721	474
West	80	83	20	17	2,212	898
Dublin	71	80	29	20	6,792	1,997
Mid-East	72	77	28	23	2,509	907
Mid-West	80	85	20	15	1,337	982
South-East	81	83	19	17	2,607	1,078
South-West	75	85	25	15	3,657	1,474
Highest education level attained						
Primary or below	80	83	20	17	7,915	1,880
Lower secondary	75	80	25	20	4,175	1,347
Higher secondary	71	80	29	20	4,983	1,924
Post leaving cert	78	83	22	17	2,505	1,099
Third level	76	85	24	15	4,953	2,496
Not stated	73	79	27	21	271	64
Urban/rural location						
Urban areas	72	81	28	19	14,419	4,708
Rural areas	82	84	18	16	10,383	4,102
Age group						
18-24	50	62	50	38	1,502	453
25-34	66	73	34	27	4,006	1,437
35-44	82	85	18	15	5,368	1,894
45-54	87	89	13	11	4,760	1,621
55-64	88	92	12	8	3,854	1,445
65+	86	88	14	12	5,312	1,960
Principal Economic Status						
At work	76	85	24	15	12,420	4,175
Unemployed	59	70	41	30	882	790
Student	52	71	48	29	565	256
Home duties	80	84	20	16	7,061	1,904
Retired	87	89	13	11	3,171	1,265
Others	71	74	29	26	703	420

¹ Results from 2002 are based on seasonal QNHS quarters. The 2011 survey was conducted after the introduction of calendar quarters to the QNHS.

² Persons who were eligible to vote in the 2002 and 2011 general elections.

Data may be subject to sampling or other survey errors, which are greater in respect of smaller values or estimates of change.

Table 2 Persons who were eligible but did not vote in the February 2011 general election classified by main reason for not voting

% of persons aged 18+ who were eligible to vote and did not vote

	Main reason for not voting in 2011 general election								Not registered to vote	Unweighted sample (number of persons aged 18 years and over who did not vote ²)
	Not interested in politics	Disillusioned with politics	Lack of knowledge/information	Difficulty in getting to the polling station	Away from home on polling day	Living too far from polling station	Other (including not stated)			
State	11	10	2	11	15	5	9	36	1,311	
Sex										
Male	11	12	2	9	14	4	8	39	528	
Female	10	9	2	13	17	5	11	31	783	
Region										
Border, Midland and Western	9	14	1	9	17	3	14	33	316	
Southern and Eastern	11	9	2	12	15	5	8	37	995	
Highest education level attained										
Primary or below ¹	12	18	1	22	9	1	11	25	295	
Secondary	12	8	3	9	13	3	11	40	539	
Third level (incl. Post leaving cert)	8	9	1	8	21	8	7	37	477	
Urban/rural location										
Urban areas	11	10	3	11	14	6	9	36	780	
Rural areas	11	11	1	10	18	2	11	36	531	
Age group										
18-34	12	6	3	7	12	6	8	45	529	
35-54	10	15	2	7	17	3	12	35	460	
55+	10	14	1	27	23	2	9	13	322	

¹ Includes not stated

² Persons who were eligible to vote in the 2011 general election

Data may be subject to sampling or other survey errors, which are greater in respect of smaller values or estimates of change.

Background Notes

Reference period	A module on Voter Participation was included in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) in the three months from April to June 2011 (quarter 2). The questionnaire referred to voter participation in the January 2011 general election. A voter participation module was also included on the QNHS in the third quarter of 2002. However, it should be noted that in 2009 the QNHS moved from seasonal to calendar quarters. Therefore, the 2002 survey was conducted from June to August.
Purpose of survey	The QNHS began in September 1997, replacing the annual April Labour Force Survey (LFS). The purpose of the survey is the production of quarterly labour force estimates and occasional reports on special social topics. The survey meets the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No. 577/98, adopted in March 1998, which requires the introduction of quarterly labour force surveys in EU member states.
Grossing effect	The QNHS grossing procedure aligns the distribution of persons covered in the survey with independently determined population estimates at the level of sex, five-year age group and region.
Statistical significance	All estimates based on sample surveys are subject to error, some of which is measurable. Where an estimate is statistically significantly different from another estimate it means that we can be 95% confident that differences between those two estimates are not due to sampling error. Unless otherwise stated, changes and differences mentioned in the text have been found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
Urban/rural location	<p>The country is divided up into 8 strata based on population density. These areas are further classified into urban and rural areas as follows:</p> <p>Urban</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cities• Suburbs of cities• Mixed urban/rural areas bordering on the suburbs of cities• Towns and their environs with populations of 5,000 or over (large urban)• Mixed urban/rural areas bordering on the environs of larger towns• Towns and their environs with a population of 1,000 to 5,000 (other urban) <p>Rural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mixed urban/rural areas• Rural areas.

NUTS2 and NUTS3 regions

The regional classifications in this release are based on the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units) classification used by Eurostat. The NUTS3 regions correspond to the eight Regional Authorities established under the Local Government Act, 1991 (Regional Authorities) (Establishment) Order, 1993, which came into operation on 1 January 1994. The NUTS2 regions, which were proposed by Government and agreed by Eurostat in 1999, are groupings of the NUTS3 regions. The composition of the regions is set out below.

Border, Midlands and Western NUTS2 Region

Border	Cavan Donegal Leitrim Louth Monaghan Sligo
Midland	Laoighis Longford Offaly Westmeath
West	Galway City Galway County Mayo Roscommon

Southern and Eastern NUTS2 Region

Dublin	Dublin Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Fingal South Dublin
Mid-East	Kildare Meath Wicklow
Mid-West	Clare Limerick City Limerick County North Tipperary
South-East	Carlow Kilkenny South Tipperary Waterford City Waterford County Wexford
South-West	Cork City Cork County Kerry

Principal Economic Status Classification

Results are also available using the Principal Economic Status (PES) classification which was used in the Labour Force Survey and the Census of Population. The PES classification is based on a single question in which respondents are asked what is their usual situation with regard to employment and given the following response categories:

- At work
- Unemployed
- Student
- Engaged on home duties
- Retired
- Other

Highest level of education attained

This classification is derived from a single question and refers to educational standards that have been attained and can be compared in some measurable way and it is included in the core QNHS on an ongoing basis.

The question is phrased as follows:

What is the highest level of education or training you have attained?

QNHS Social Modules

While the main purpose of the QNHS is the production of quarterly labour force estimates, there is also a provision for the collection of data on social topics through the inclusion of special survey modules. The selection of the major national modules undertaken to date has been largely based on the results of a canvass of users (over 100 organisations) that was conducted by the CSO in 1996, 2002, 2006, 2008 and most recently 2011. The results of the canvass are presented to the National Statistics Board and they are asked to indicate their priorities for the years ahead.

The schedule for social modules in any given year is based on the following structure:

Quarter 1	Accidents and Illness module and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Survey
Quarter 2	EU module (always covered under EU legislation)
Quarter 3	National module
Quarter 4	National module

The table below outlines the social modules published to date in the QNHS

Reference Quarter	Social Module
Q4 2010	Equality
Q3 2010	Health
Q2 2010	Cross Border Shopping
Q2 2010	Educational Attainment
Q1 2010	Crime and Victimisation
Q4 2009	Pensions
Q3 2009	Caring
Q2 2009	Union Membership
Q2 2009	Cross Border Shopping
Q3 2008	Lifelong learning
Q1 2008	Pension provision
Q4 2007	Childcare
Q3 2007	Health
Q2 2007	Union Membership
Q1 2007	Work-related Accidents and Illnesses (Q1 2003 – Q1 2007)
Q1 2007	ICT household survey
Q4 2006	Crime and Victimisation
Q3 2006	Sport and physical exercise
Q1 2006	ICT household survey
Q4 2005	Pension provision
Q4 2005	Special Saving Incentive Accounts (SSIAs)
Q3 2005	ICT household survey
Q3 2005	Recycling and energy conservation
Q2 2005	Reconciliation between work and family life
Q2 2005	Educational attainment
Q1 2005	Childcare
Q4 2004	Equality
Q3 2004	ICT household survey
Q2 2004	Union Membership
Q2 2004	Work organisation and working time
Q4 2003	Crime and Victimisation
Q3 2003	Housing
Q3 2003	ICT household survey

Social modules yet to be published:

Reference Quarter	Social Module
Q1 2009-2011	ICT household survey
Q2 2011	Response of households to economic downturn
Q3 2011	Adult education survey