**A Changing NI?**

**Part 1:** The link between population change and constitutional change is understood as linear with the prediction that the rise of a pro-unification population is inevitable. This may be the case but before coming to that point there are very subtle changes in identity, inter-community marriage/partnerships and other minorities who are not factored into a more robust analysis of the electorate. The following paper breaks down some of those subtleties and provides a more nuanced reading of population change. This does not obviate against the overall trend of CNR growth but it does suggest that a pro-union majority is more significant than is assumed.

**Part 2:** Liverpool Election Survey (2017) (LES) data is presented that indicates a more nuanced understanding of the electorate. It points to intergenerational difference, example of near agreement between communities and remaining sites of fracture.

**The Catholic Share of the Population is Growing?**

* We were told there was a massive growth in the Catholic population. In fact it grew by 0.6%.
* The Catholic population grew by 59571. Of that population around 28000 or 4.1% were from outside the UK and Ireland. They generally do not have a strong position on the constitutional question.
* The no religion and religion not stated section of the electorate grew by 71563 (3%). This was the most significant growth between 2001 and 2011. Only 14% of that group state that they are Irish.

**Table 1: Religion stated by respondents to the 2001 and 2011 censuses.**

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|  | **2001** | **% Share** | **2011** | **% Share** |
| **Total population** | **1,685,267** | **100.0** | **1,810,863** | **100.0** |
| Other religion | 5,028 | 0.3 | 14,859 | 0.8 |
| Methodist Church in Ireland | 59,173 | 3.5 | 54,253 | 3.0 |
| Other Christian | 102,221 | 6.1 | 104,380 | 5.8 |
| Church of Ireland | 257,788 | 15.3 | 248,821 | 13.7 |
| Presbyterian Church in Ireland | 348,742 | 20.7 | 345,101 | 19.1 |
| **Catholic** | **678,462** | **40.2** | **738,033** | **40.8** |
| **(Total non- Catholic Christian)** | **767,924** | **45.6** | **752,555** | **41.6** |
| **(No religion and Religion not stated)** | **233,853** | **13.9** | **305,416** | **16.9** |

* The University of Liverpool (2017) Election Survey (LES) found that c65% of those who do not state their religion are pro-union.
* The 2011 Census also showed that 71.6% of the population stated that they were Northern Irish, British/other British.
* Of all the people born outside of NI/Ireland by national identity 33.6% are British or Northern Irish and 11% are Irish. Among ethnic groups there is nearly a 2:1 ratio among those who state they are British/NI compared to Irish.

**What does LES tell us?**

* In 2107 LES found that the share of voters by religion was similar. The previous LES found that the difference was usually Catholic c5-8%**+**.
* 54.5% of all voters wish to remain in the UK compared to 27.6% who want unification. 14.5%, a significant share, stated Don’t Know but even if all were pro-unification the majority of voters remain pro-union. Although, slowly declining there is still a significant share of Catholic pro-union voters.
* 61% of those ages 18-29 did not vote.

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| **Table 2: Did you vote in the 2017 General Election?** |
|   | **Voter** | **Non-voter** |
| Protestant | 45.8 | 37.6 |
| Catholic | 44.2 | 38.3 |
| Other | 5.0 | 18.2 |
| Don't know | 0.0 | 0.7 |
| Refused | 4.9 | 5.3 |

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| **Table 3: And what do you think the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be? (VOTERS)** |
|  | Total | Protestant | Catholic |
| United Kingdom | 54.5 | 90.5 | 17.8 |
| United Ireland | 27.6 | 2.8 | 56.2 |
| Other | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.4 |
| Don’t Know | 14.5 | 4.6 | 23.1 |
| Refused | 2.1 | 1.0 | 1.4 |

* The media and other sections read election results as a narrowing of support for pro-unionism. That does not factor in non-voters (c45% of the electorate). LES shows that the majority of non-voters are pro-union and that there is no significant diminution in that choice among younger (18-30 years old) Protestants. It would be expected that non-voters are more likely to engage in a referendum. The Don’t Know group (24.9%) is more significant within the non-voting group and this may be more a case of disinterest more than choice. Young Catholic non-voters are less supportive of unification than Catholic voters. They are much more likely than their Protestant counterparts to state Don’t Know (6.2% compared to 43.2%).

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| **Table 4: And what do you think the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be? (NON-VOTERS)** |
|  | Non-voters | YoungerNon-voters | Younger Protestant Non-voters | YoungerCatholic Non-voters |
| United Kingdom | 51.7 | 50.7 | 85.2 | 18.5 |
| United Ireland | 18.9 | 19.0 | 4.9 | 34.6 |
| Other | 1.7 | 2.7 | 3.7 | 2.5 |
| Don’t Know | 24.9 | 25.3 | 6.2 | 43.2 |
| Refused | 2.9 | 2.3 | 0 | 1.2 |

* Identity and constitutional preference are not aligned as previously was the case. Although, constitutional preference remains aligned to Catholic/Protestant categories some 45.7% of young Protestant and 55.6% of young Catholic non-voters do not adopt the label unionist or nationalist.
* Voting is more common among those who identify as unionist and nationalist. Non-voting is higher among those who do not accept these labels. This suggests that identity is more fluid and nuanced whereas constitutional preference is not.

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| **Table 5: Do you think of yourself as Unionist, Nationalist or Neither?** **PROTESTANT** |
|   | PVoters  | P Non Voters  | **Younger P Voters**  | **Younger P non-Voters**  |
| Unionist | 85.7 | 49.7 | **80.4** | **48.1** |
| Nationalist | 0.6 | 0.6 | **1.0** | **1.2** |
| Neither | **11.3** | **43.3** | **14.4** | **45.7** |
| Don't Know | 0.3 | 2.5 | **1.0** | **2.5** |
| Refused | 2.1 | 3.8 | **3.1** | **2.5** |

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| **Table 6: Do you think of yourself as Unionist, Nationalist or Neither?** **CATHOLIC** |
|  | **Catholic Voters** | **C non-Voters** | **Younger C Voters** | **Younger C Non-Voters** |
| Unionist | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.9 | 0.0 |
| Nationalist | 68.5 | 36.9 | 67.9 | 33.3 |
| Neither | 21.6 | 53.8 | 19.6 | 55.6 |
| Don't Know | 1.5 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Refused | 8.0 | 8.1 | 10.7 | 9.9 |

**LES and Cultural/ Attitudinal Issues**

* There is strong support for an ILA within the Catholic community across all ages and voters/non-voters. SF voters are more supportive (83.6%) compared to Catholic electorate although the latter remains at 60.5%. The Protestant community is generally unsupportive.
* The division over support for marriage equality is a generational phenomenon. Support above 66% includes SF voters, those aged 18-40, younger voters, younger Protestant non-voters and young Catholic voters. Majority rejection is located among older Protestant voters, DUP voters and older Catholic non-voters. Abortion is also divided by generational responses. Majority or near majority support is located among young Catholics and Protestants.

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| **Table 7: There should an Irish Language Act** |
|  | % Support / Strongly Support |
| **DUP Voters** | **9.9** |
| Protestant | 11.7 |
| Non-voters | 24.2 |
| Younger Non-voters | 28.1 |
| **Sample** | **33.8** |
| Younger voters | 38.6 |
| Voters | 39.4 |
| Younger Catholic Non-voters | 51.9 |
| **Catholic** | **60.5** |
| **Younger Catholic voters** | **63.4** |
| **Sinn Fein voters**  | **83.6** |

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| **Table 8: Same-sex marriage should be made legal in Northern Ireland** |
|  | % Agree / Strongly Agree |
| **DUP Voters** | **44.2** |
| **Older Catholic Non-voters** | **44.3** |
| **41+** | **46.0** |
| Older Voters | 49.0 |
| Non-voter | 52.4 |
| Sample | 54.1 |
| Voter | 55.4 |
| Younger Protestant voters | 62.9 |
| Younger Catholic Non-voters | 64.2 |
| Younger Non-voters | 64.7 |
| **Sinn Fein Voter**  | **66.1** |
| **18 - 40** | **66.5** |
| **Younger voter** | **69.1** |
| **Younger Protestant Non-voters** | **71.6** |
| **Younger Catholic voters** | **73.2** |

* When the question was asked which of these statements comes closest to your views on the flying of national flags on public buildings in Northern Ireland the following was observed. Around 40% of Catholics believed that no flags should fly or union flags on designated days. A fifth believed only the Irish national flag should fly. Around 70% of Protestants believed the union flag should be flown permanently.

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| **Table 9: Abortion should be legal in Northern Ireland**  |
|   | % Agree / Strongly Agree |
| Older Catholic Non-voters | 22.8 |
| Older Protestant Non-voters | 23.7 |
| Older Non-voters | 25.9 |
| Sinn Fein Voter  | 31.7 |
| 41+ | 35.0 |
| **Older Catholic voters** | **35.8** |
| Catholic | 36.2 |
| Younger Catholic voters | 36.6 |
| Non-voter | 37.6 |
| Older Voters | 38.6 |
| **Older Protestant voters** | **39.7** |
| Sample | 40.1 |
| **DUP Voters** | **41.2** |
| Voter | 41.7 |
| Protestant | 42.7 |
| **Younger Non-voters** | **48.0** |
| **Younger voter** | **48.5** |
| **Younger Catholic Non-voters** | **49.4** |
| **Younger Protestant Non-voters** | **51.9** |
| **Younger Protestant voters** | **58.8** |

* Within regard to Orange Order parades and the Protestant community there is a near equal split between those supportive of parading without restrictions and those who favour agreements with local residents. The more divisive issue concerns flags which clearly remain as a significant totem of community identity.
* With regard to schooling there is a near equal split supportive of both own religion and mixed-religion education. SF voters (65.6%) are the group most opposed to mixed-religion schools.

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| **Table 10: Orange Order Parades** |
|  | Protestants | Protestant Voters | Protestant Non- Voters | DUP Voters |
| The Orange Order should be able to parade wherever it wants, without restrictions | 40.9 | 44.9 | 33.1 | 46.9 |
| The Orange Order should be able to parade past mainly nationalist areas only if there is prior agreement with local residents | 40.9 | 42.6 | 38.2 | 42.5 |
| The Orange Order should not be allowed to parade past mainly nationalist areas | 4.0 | 3.6 | 5.1 | 2.4 |
| Other | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0 | 1.0 |
| Don't Know | 10.7 | 6.5 | 19.7 | 5.8 |
| Refused | 3.0 | 1.8 | 3.8 | 1.4 |

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| **Table 11: Schooling** | Own religion only | Mixed-religion school | Don't Know | Refused |
| Sample | 41.9 | 43.9 | 11.1 | 3.1 |
| Protestant | 45.2 | 40.9 | 12.3 | 1.6 |
| Catholic | 44.2 | 46.9 | 7.0 | 1.9 |
| **DUP Voters** | **44.6** | **42.1** | **12.4** | **0.9** |
| **Sinn Fein Voter**  | **65.6** | **24.6** | **8.2** | **1.6** |

* The majority of each community would not mind if one of their close relatives were to marry someone of a different religion. Such support higher among Catholics but is near equal among those under 40.
* With regard to the question regarding which group benefited most from the peace and political process 42.9% of 18-29 year olds stated that they had no opinion. They were nearly twice as likely to state disinterest/lack of knowledge compared to other age groups.

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| **Table 12: Would you yourself mind or not mind if one of your close relatives were to marry someone of a different religion?** |
|   | Would mind a lot | Would mind a little | Would not mind | Don't Know | Refused |
| DUP Voters | 7.7 | 27.0 | 61.4 | 3.4 | 0.4 |
| Protestant | 6.5 | 23.2 | 62.7 | 6.5 | 1.2 |
| Sinn Fein Voter  | 6.0 | 21.3 | 62.8 | 8.2 | 1.6 |
| Sample | 5.0 | 17.7 | 68.1 | 6.8 | 2.3 |
| Catholic | 4.3 | 14.7 | 74.2 | 5.4 | 1.4 |

* 16.7% of 18-29 year olds do not consider themselves to be a victim of the troubles compared to around a third of those aged 40+.
* With regard to the question ‘all those people who were bereaved as a result of the conflict should be treated equally’ 85% of Catholics compared to 64.5% of Protestants agreed. Again this is near equal in terms of agreement among those under 40 irrespective of their religion.
* With regard to immigration to Northern Ireland and that it ‘has been good for the economy and society’ 48.9% of Catholics and 52.5% of Protestants disagreed.