

## Understanding Irish Attitudes to Poverty and Wealth

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## Irish Social @ Political Attitudes Survey 2002

- National random sample of 2,500
- 'Split design' questionnaires: one with core module + two topic modules: Environment and Race
- Second module with core and modules on Family and Social Justice
- Effective sample size of 1,200 (c)

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## Objectives of Study

- Identify norms about fairness
- Perceptions of prosperity and wealth
- Preferences in social policy
- Attitudes to poverty and wealth
- Total of xxx items

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## Theoretical background

- First generation research on class (Runciman, Golthorpe, *et al*)
- Second generation on the Welfare State, social policy (British Social Attitudes surveys)
- Third generation of comparative studies (Inglehart, ISSP, European Values Surveys)

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## Irish Attitudes to Poverty; Individualist vs Social?

- Left-Right continuum in Ireland?
- Catholicism as the underlying belief?
- Begrudgery and limited reference groups?
- Mediating impact of the Celtic Tiger and of public and political discourses?
- Are attitudes shaped by beliefs AND experience?

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## Examples of Questions

- *In Ireland today some people are very well off-- Other people are very badly off-- need social welfare--*
- *I am now going to read out a few statements on income differences--*
- *I would like to ask you about people's opportunities in Ireland today - whether everybody has an equal chance to get on--*

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### Statement Items- Individualist and Social

- The people who are badly off just waste the money they have
- Hard work is what makes the difference between making a lot of money and making very little
- People with talent or ability will always make money
- The Government does not give enough money to people on social welfare
- The only people who can make a lot of money are the people with the right connections
- You have to be dishonest to make a lot of money

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### More items

- Some people just don't make the effort to help themselves
- Everybody has an equal chance to get on
- Everybody in Ireland is much better off than 5 years ago
- Great differences in wealth and income are unfair
- To become well off you have to start out with some money to begin with
- The poor are getting left behind

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### Findings 1: General Support for Individualist Items: % Agreeing

- 77%; Some people don't make the effort
- 69%; Hard work is what makes the difference
- 66%; People with talent or ability always make money
- 76% Everybody in much better off now than 5 years ago

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### Findings 2; Less Support for Social Items: % Agreeing

- 49%; The government does not give enough money to people on social welfare
- 53%; Great differences in wealth and income are unfair
- 60%; To become well off you have to have money to begin with
- 50%; The only people who can make a lot of money are the people with the right connections

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### Findings 3. Little support for 'extreme' items: % Agreeing

- 27%; People who are badly off just waste the money they have
- 18%; You have to be dishonest to make a lot of money
- 43%; You can't really have equal opportunities – in the end it's all down to social class

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### Socio-economic differences and 'Split consciousness Hypothesis'

- (a) Support for individualist views is general- across all social classes
- (b) While supporting individualist views, those in lower socio-economic groups are more likely to have social interpretations of poverty and negative social interpretations of wealth.

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### Socio-economic differences. % Agreeing

Item	Low SE	Mid SE	High SE	S. Sig.
--Right connections	44	35	20	.01
--Not enough social welf.	38	37	27	.01
--You have to be dishonest	17	69	70	.01

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### Individual and Social –Two Dimensions?

- Factor analysis of a variety of selections of items
- Usual criteria for identification of factors
- Constuction of two scales – reliability coefficients of .71 (social) and .70 (individualist)

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### Explaining scale values

- Individualist scale
- Social Scale
- Age
- Socio-economic status
- Third-level education
- Able to make ends meet
- Unemployment experience
- Supervisory role

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### Age and Social items

Age	Weak agreement %	Strong Agreement %
16-34	45	55
35-54	39	62
55+	32	68

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### Education and Individualist Items

Education	Weak Agreement %	Stong Agreement %
Third level	39	62
Secondary level	55	44

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### Classifying Respondents %

	Weak Individualism	Strong individualism
Weak Societalism	14.4 (Free-floaters)	28.6 (Liberals)
Strong Societalism	24.4 (Lefties)	32.7 (Left libertarians)

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## Implications

- General trend towards 'individualism'?
- Impact of age and lived experience on attitudes
- Weak support for redistributive social policies?

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