



**UCD Geary Institute  
for Public Policy**

RESEARCH | ANALYSIS | EVIDENCE

# Irish Social Attitudes: Key findings from ESS 2018-19

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**IRISH  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL**  
An Chomhairle um  
Thaighde in Éirinn



BEHAVIOUR & ATTITUDES

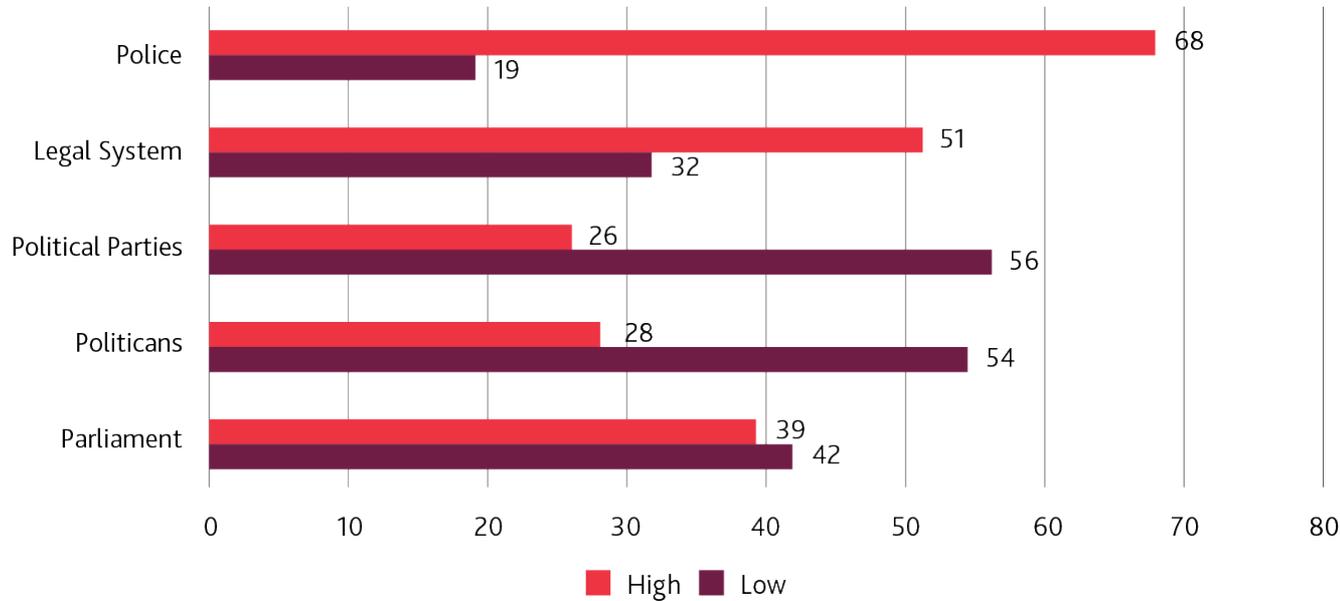
# The European Social Survey

- Academically driven cross-national comparative survey
- Attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns
- All residents aged over 15 in private households
- Every 2 years since 2001
- More than 30 countries
- Ireland has participated in each of the 9 rounds with support from Irish Research Council
- Round 10 due for fieldwork when conditions permit

# ESS9 in Ireland

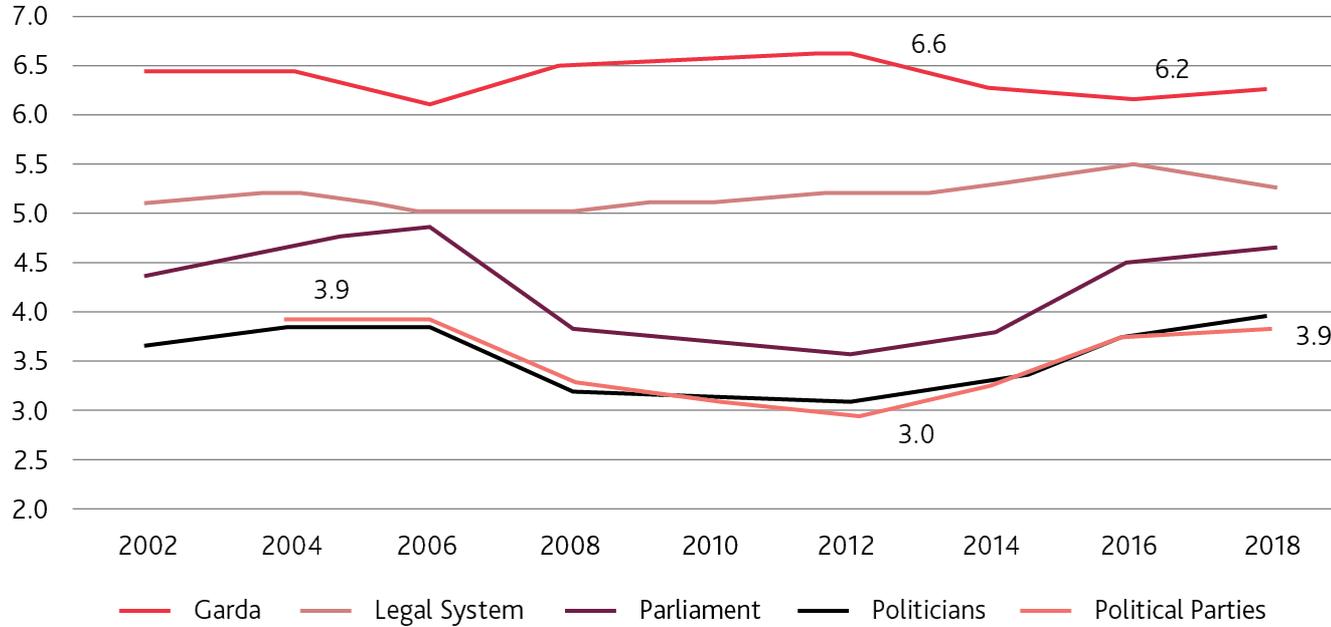
- Fieldwork: Nov 2018-April 2019 by **Behaviour & Attitudes**
- Random probability sample of households
- Random selection of respondent *within* household (*1<sup>st</sup> birthday*)
- Face-to-face interviews of 2,217 individuals
- Response rate: 62%
- Irish ESS Coordinator Team:
  - P.I.s: O'Connell, Collins & Creighton
  - De-facto coordinator: Daniel Capistrano
  - Project Manager: Susan Butler

# 1. Trust in Institutions



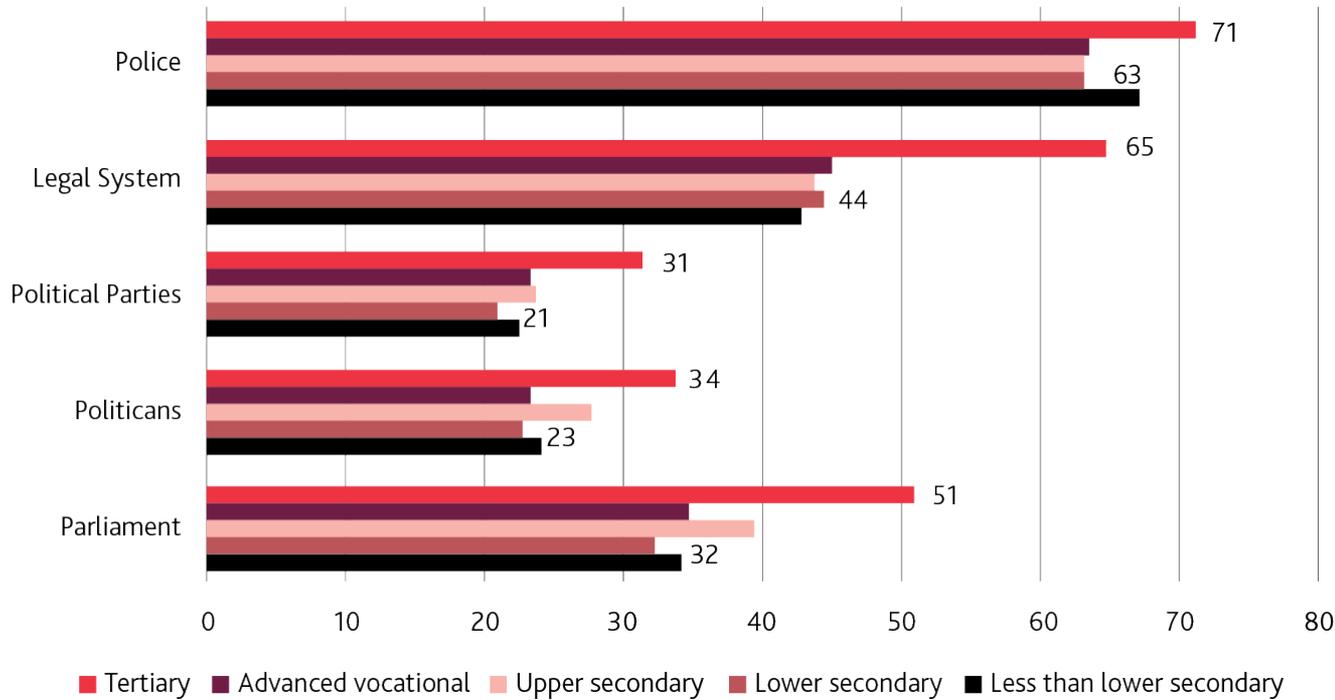
## Trust in Political Actors and Institutions, 2018

Two-thirds have high levels of trust in Gardai, and half have high trust in legal system  
Trust in politicians and parties is much lower – 55% have low levels of trust



### Mean Levels of Trust in Political Actors and Institutions, 2002-2018

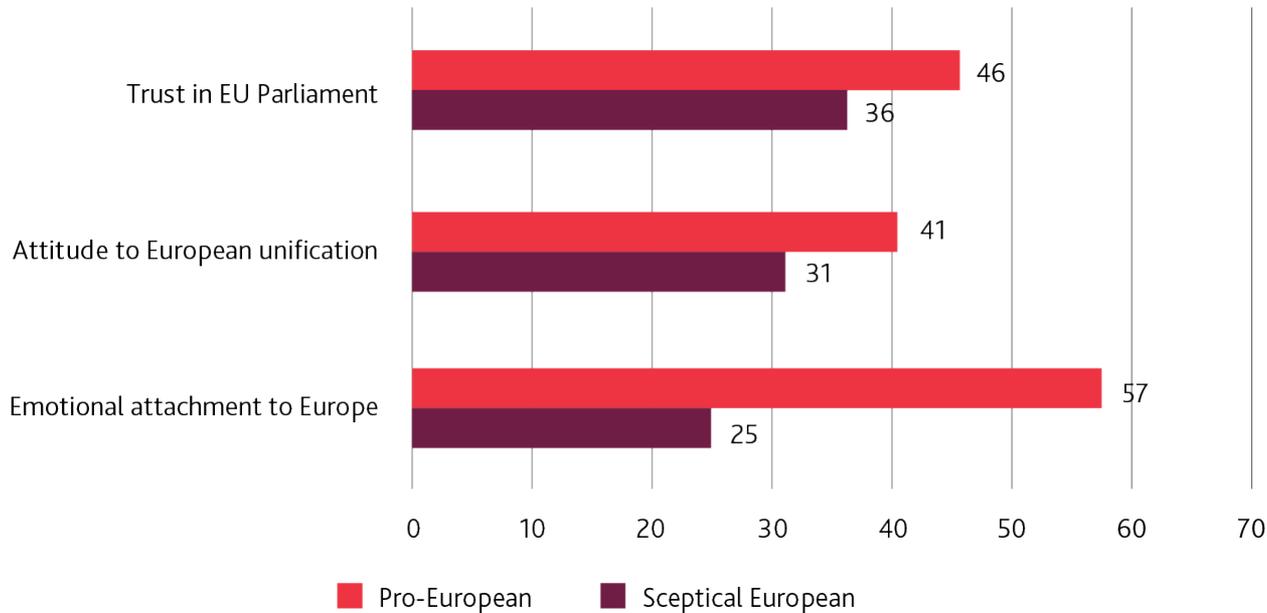
Trust in Gardai and legal system has been stable over time, while trust in politicians and political institutions fell during Great Recession and recovered in recent years



### Per cent Indicating High Levels of Trust in Politics and Institutions: 2018

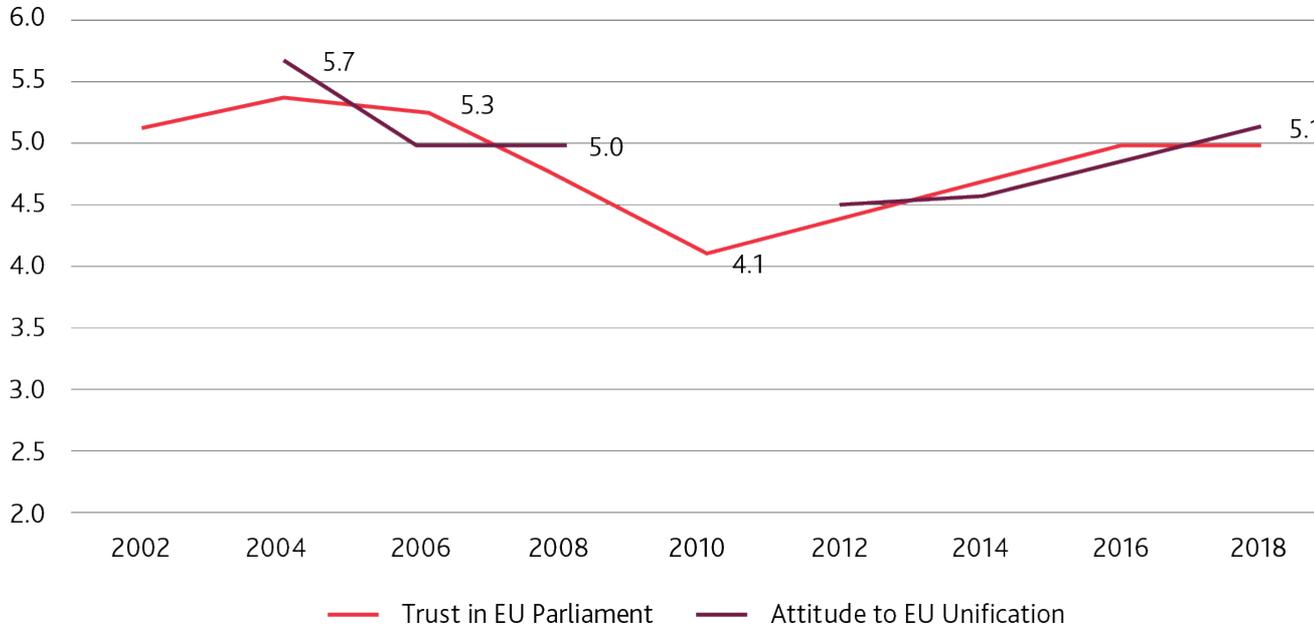
Levels of trust are greater among those with higher levels of education, although comparatively low trust in politicians is pervasive

# 2. Perception of the EU



## Pro- and Sceptical attitudes to Europe

Irish residents have more trust in European Parliament than in the Dail and more trust than distrust EU Parliament. 31% are not in favour of further EU unification, but 41% favour further integration. 57% have relatively strong attachment to Europe.



### Trust in the EU Parliament and Attitudes to EU Unification: 2002-2018

Trust in EU Parliament fell sharply during Recession and reign of EU-ECB-IMF Troika and recovered since, but not fully. Attitudes to EU unification follow similar pattern

# 3. Irish Unity / Referendum

# Attitudes to Policy on Irish Unity

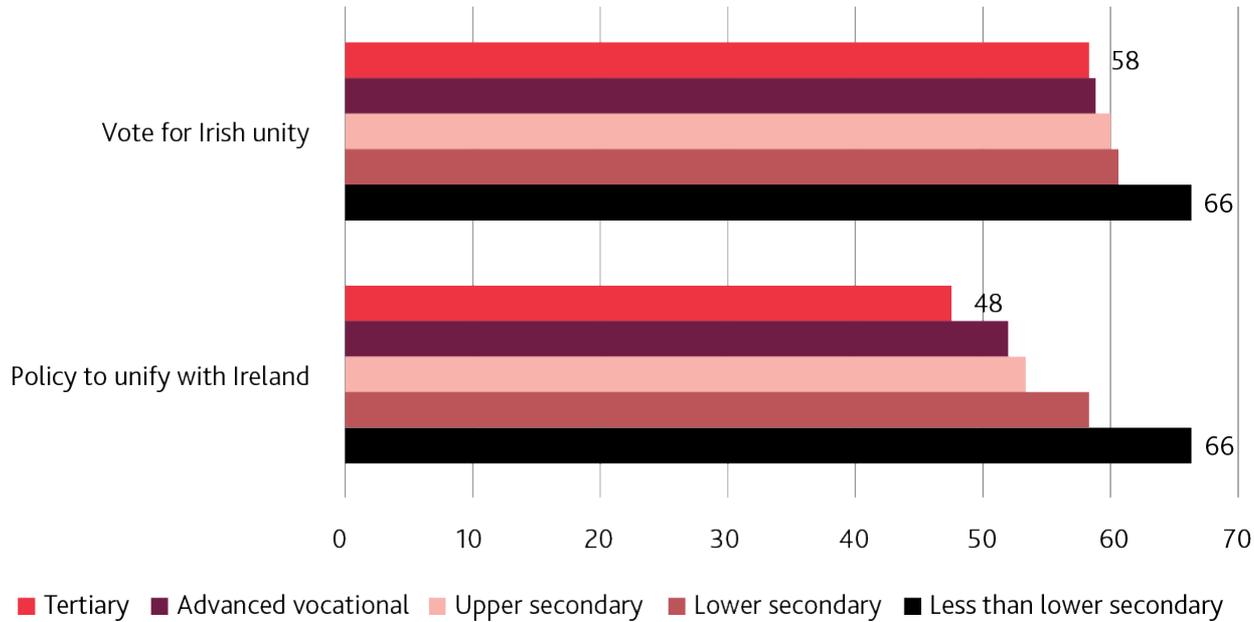
- When asked about long-term policy, 46% opted for Irish unity, but many refused or did not know.
- Excluding refusal and don't know, 54% are in favour of Irish unity

Do you think the long-term policy for Northern Ireland should be for it....	All	Excluding refusal/don't know
	%	%
to remain part of the UK with Direct Rule	<b>13.5</b>	<b>15.8</b>
to remain part of the UK with devolved government	<b>23.1</b>	<b>27.1</b>
or, to reunify with the rest of Ireland	<b>45.8</b>	<b>53.7</b>
Other	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Refused/Don't know	<b>14.6</b>	--
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

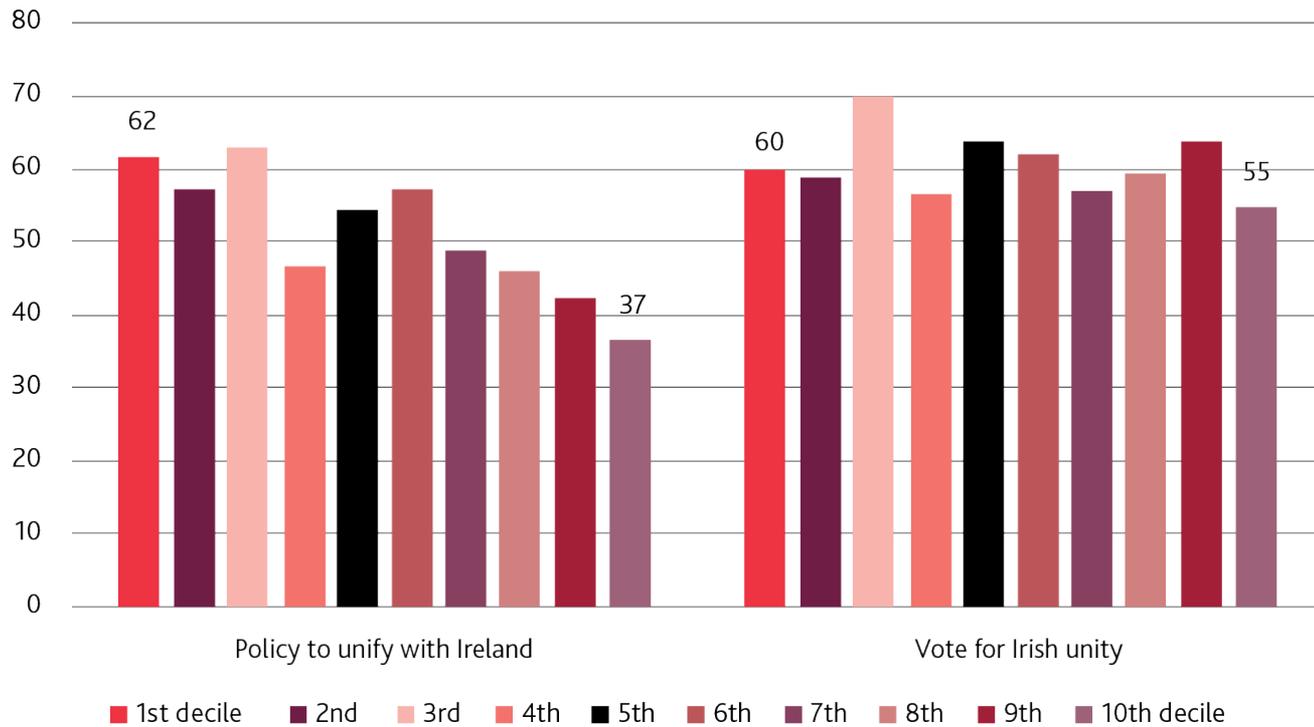
## Voting Preferences in a Referendum

- Almost 53% would vote for Irish unity in a referendum, but many refused or responded they would not vote .
- If non-voters were excluded, 60% would vote for unification
- If both non voters and refusals were excluded, the majority on favour of unity would be over70%

How would you vote in a referendum on whether Northern Ireland should leave the UK and unite with the Republic of Ireland?	All	Excluding non-voters
	%	%
I would vote for NI to remain part of UK	21.9	25.0
I would vote for NI to unite with ROI	52.6	60.0
I wouldn't vote	12.4	--
Refused/Don't know	13.2	15.1
	100	100

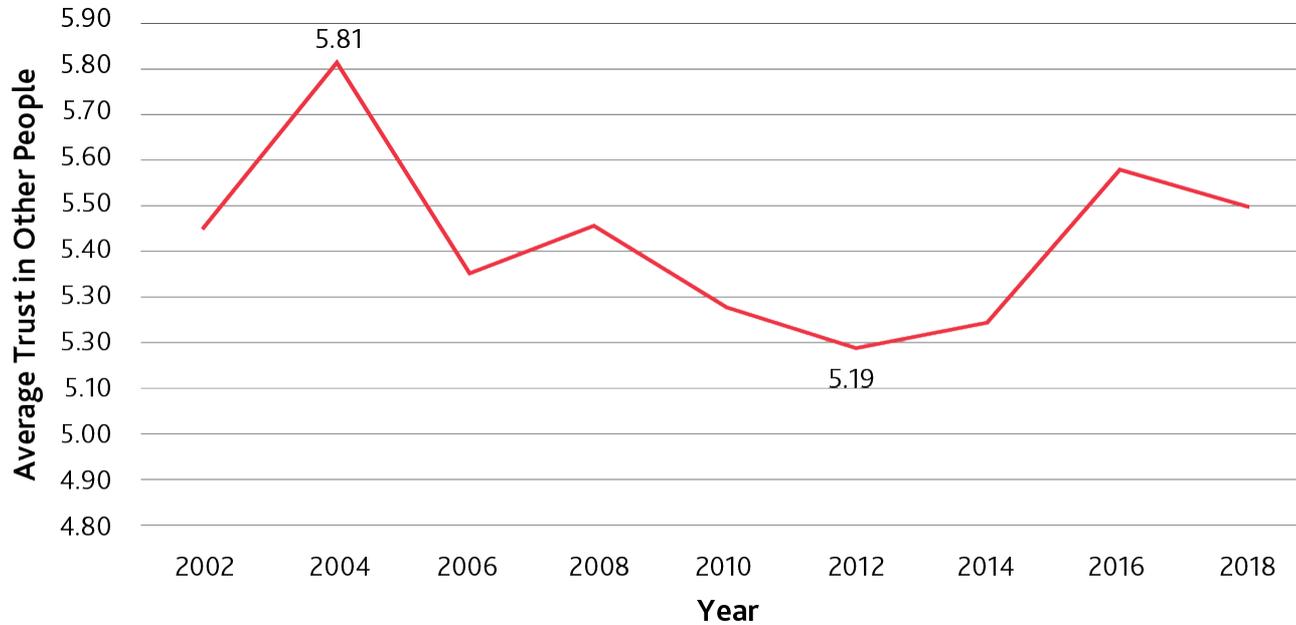


Policy and voting preferences in relation to Irish Unity by education: 2018

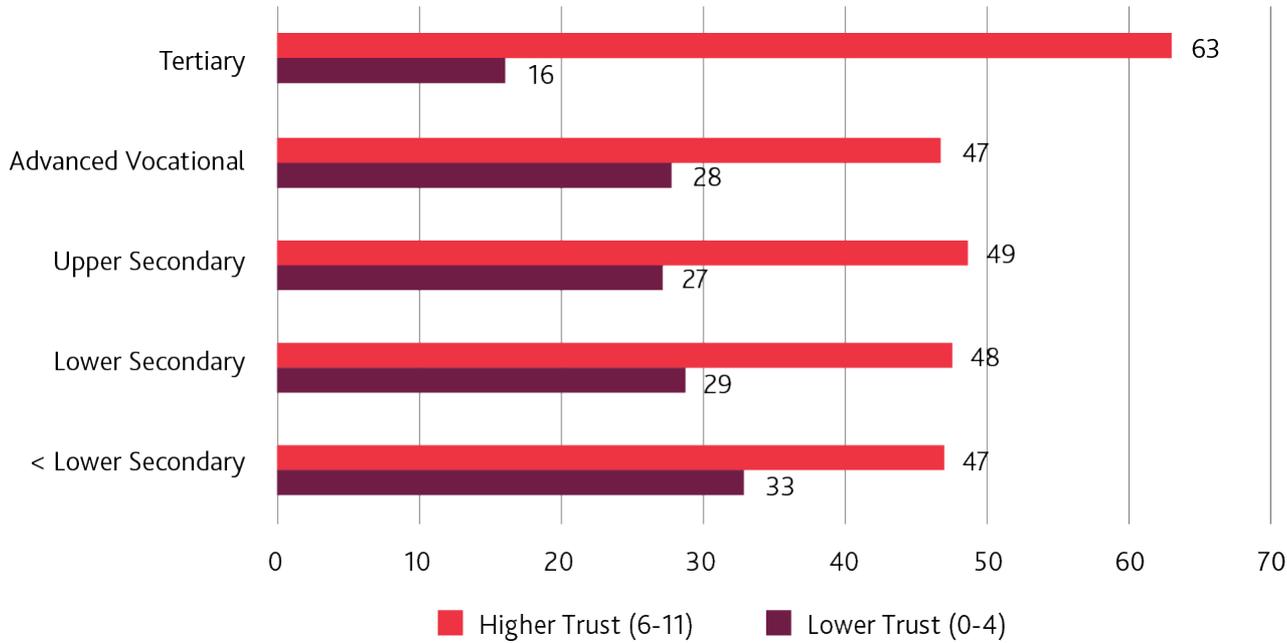


Policy and voting preferences in relation to Northern Ireland by income decile: 2018

# 4. Trust

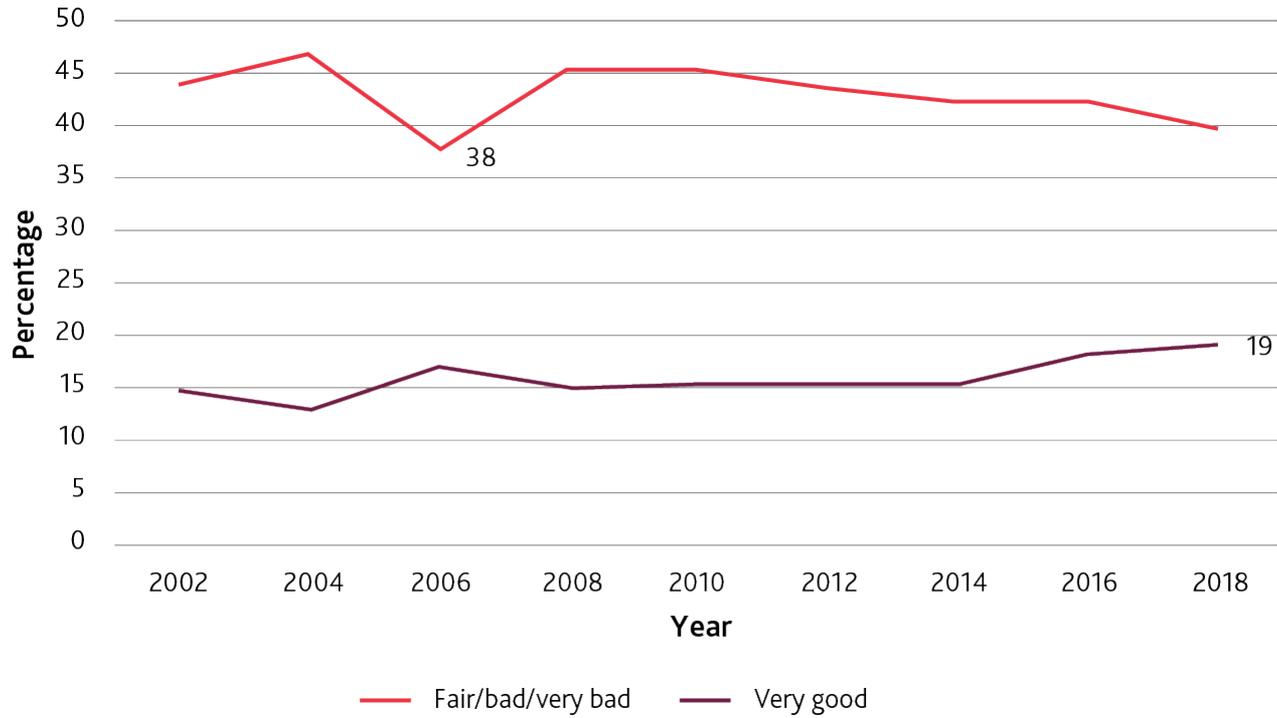


Average response to the question “generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” in Ireland: 2002-2018

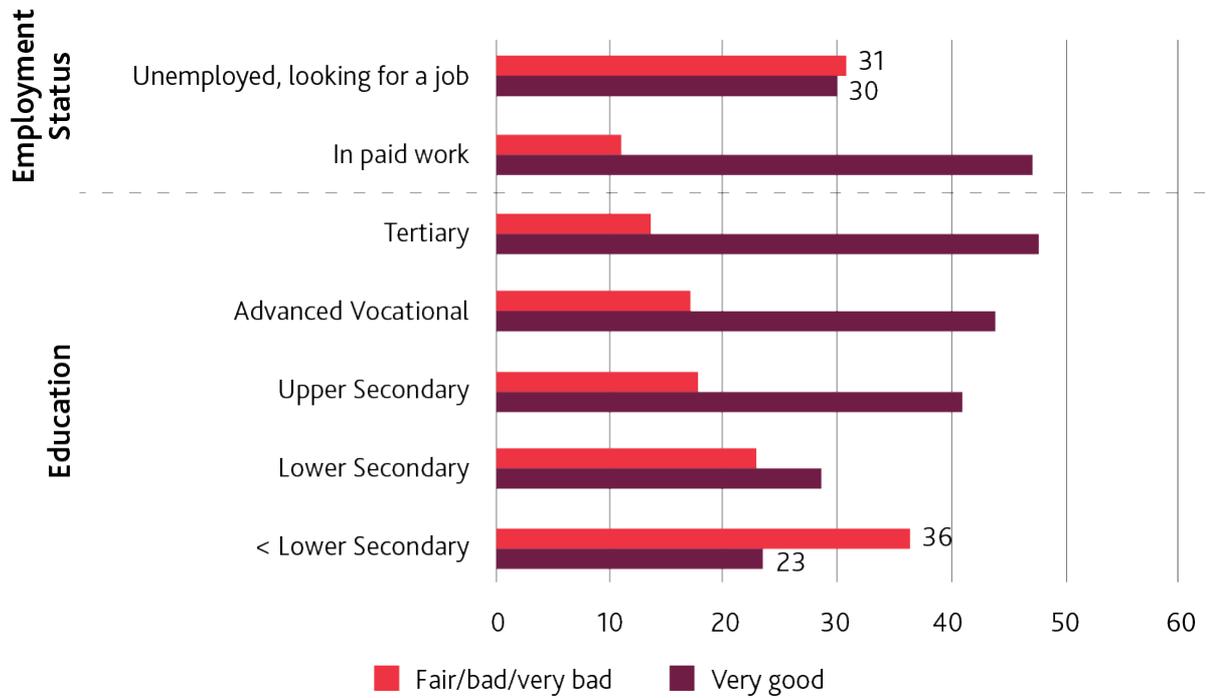


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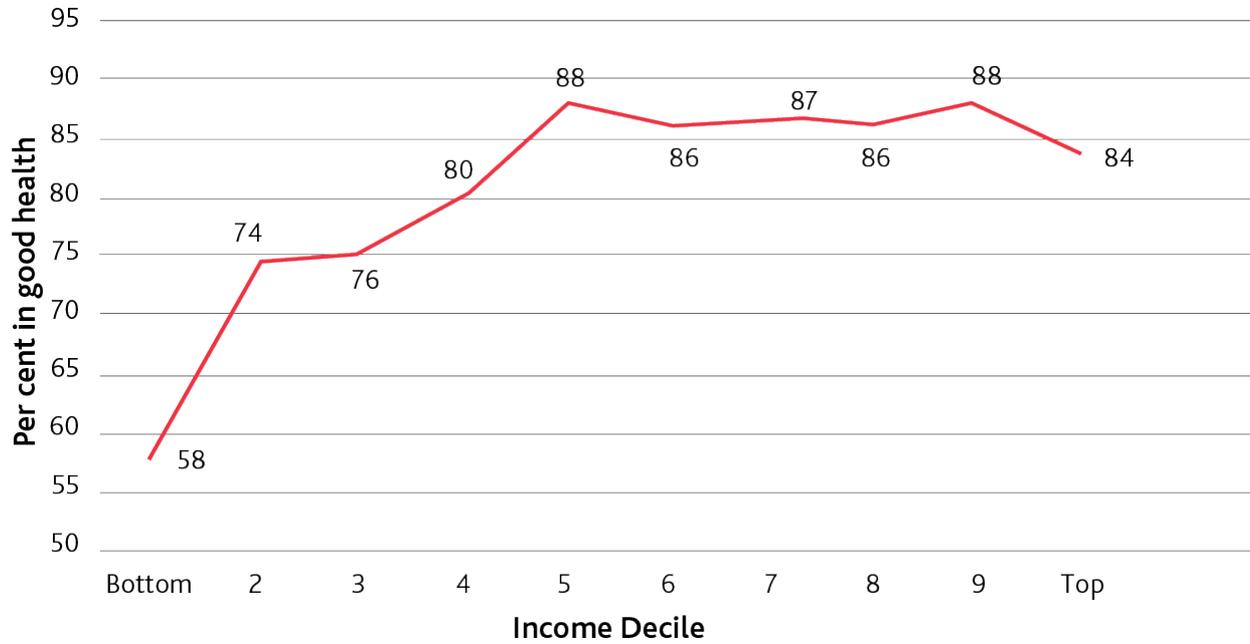
# 4. Health and Health Services



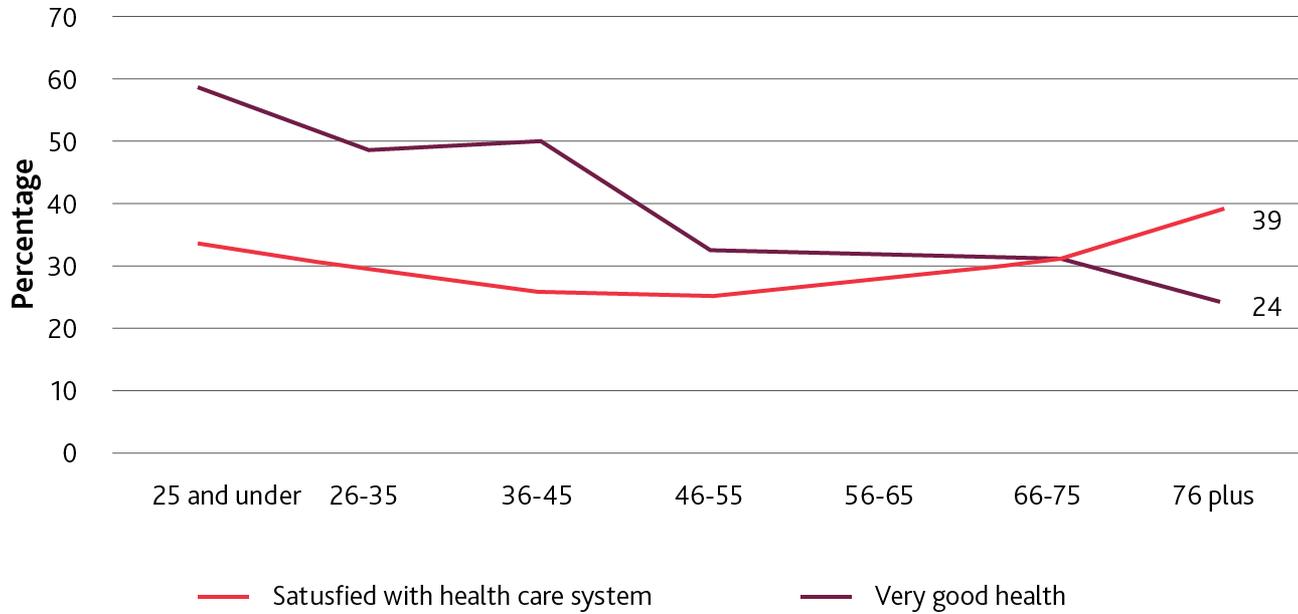
The percentage of the population who report “Very Good” or “Fair/Bad/Very Bad” health in Ireland: 2002-2018.



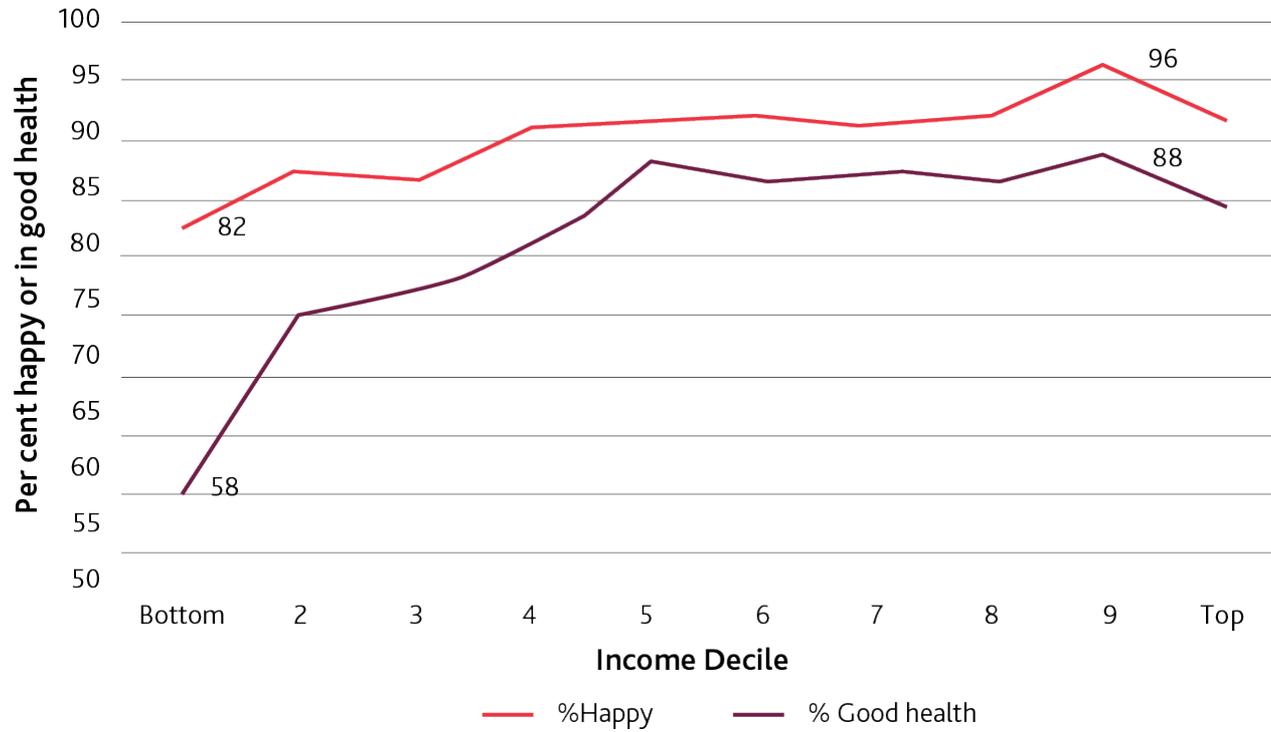
The percentage of the population who report “Very Good” or “Fair/Bad/Very Bad” health by employment status and education in Ireland: 2018



Health and the Income Distribution: 2018



The percentage of the population who report higher satisfaction with the health care system in Ireland and “very good” health by age categories: 2018

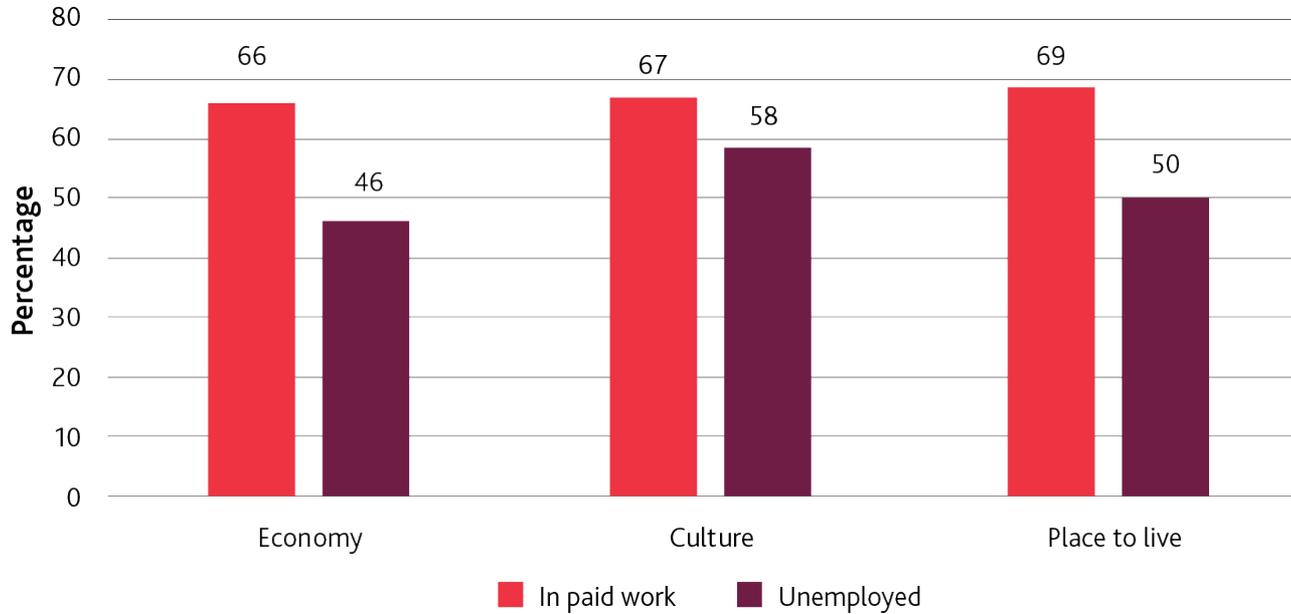


Happiness, General Health and the Income Distribution: 2018

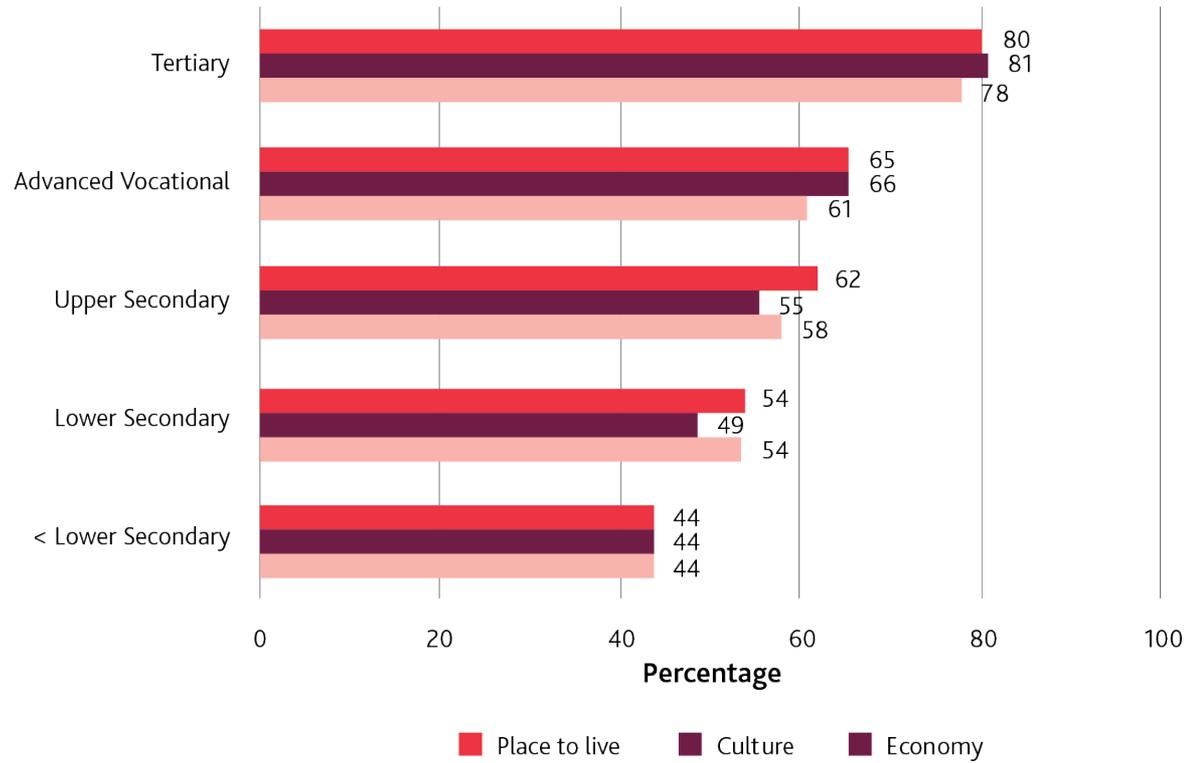
# 5. Immigration



Average Perception of the impact of immigration on the economy, culture and life in Ireland: 2002-2018

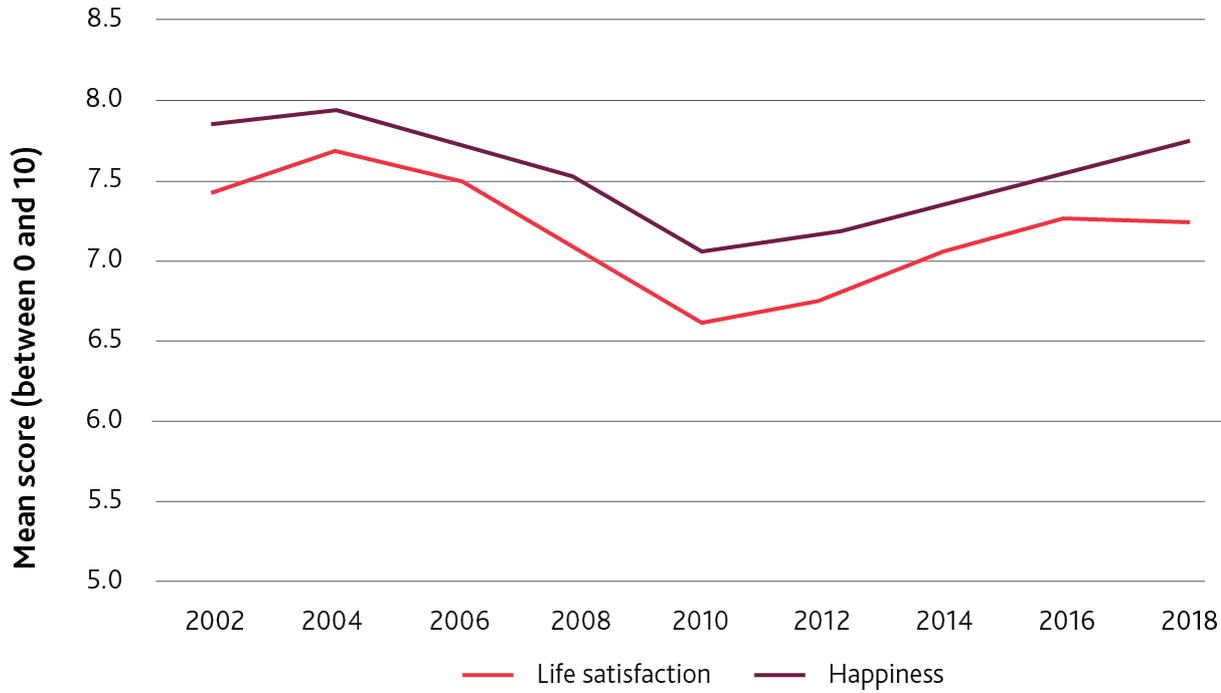


Percentage who positively view the impact of immigration on the economy, culture and as a place to live by employment status in Ireland: 2018

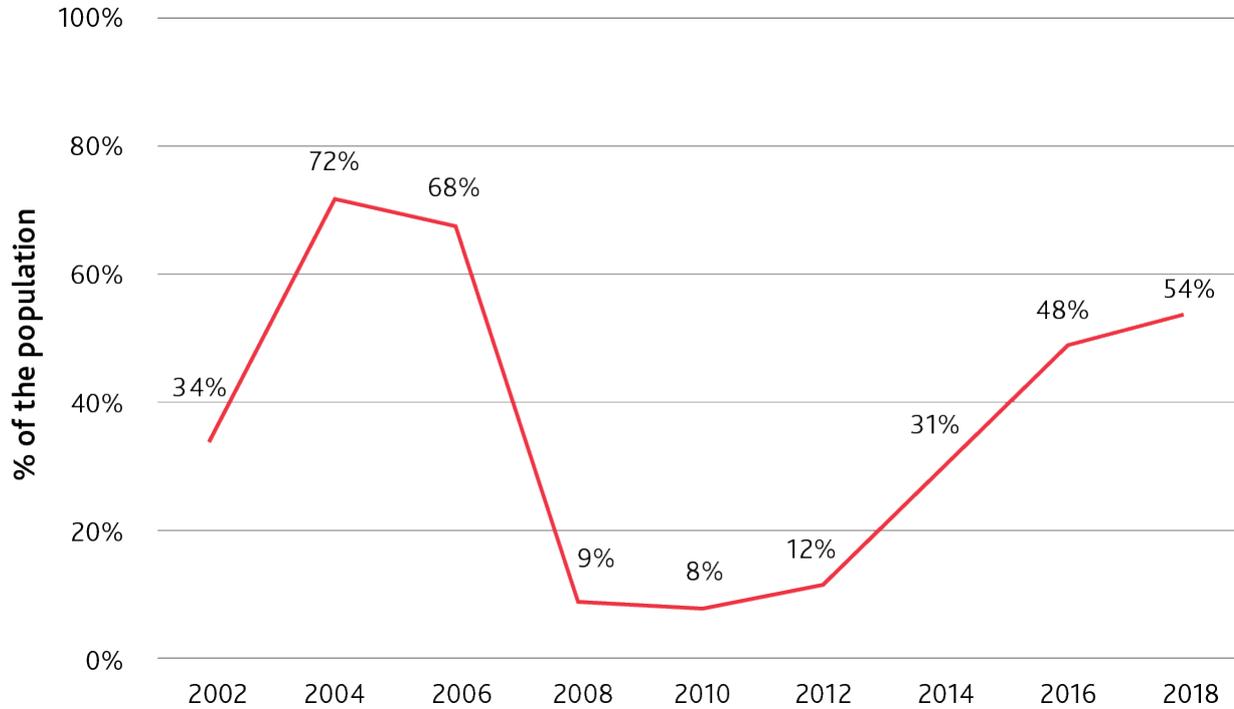


Percentage who positively view the impact of immigration on the economy, culture and as a place to live by education in Ireland: 2018

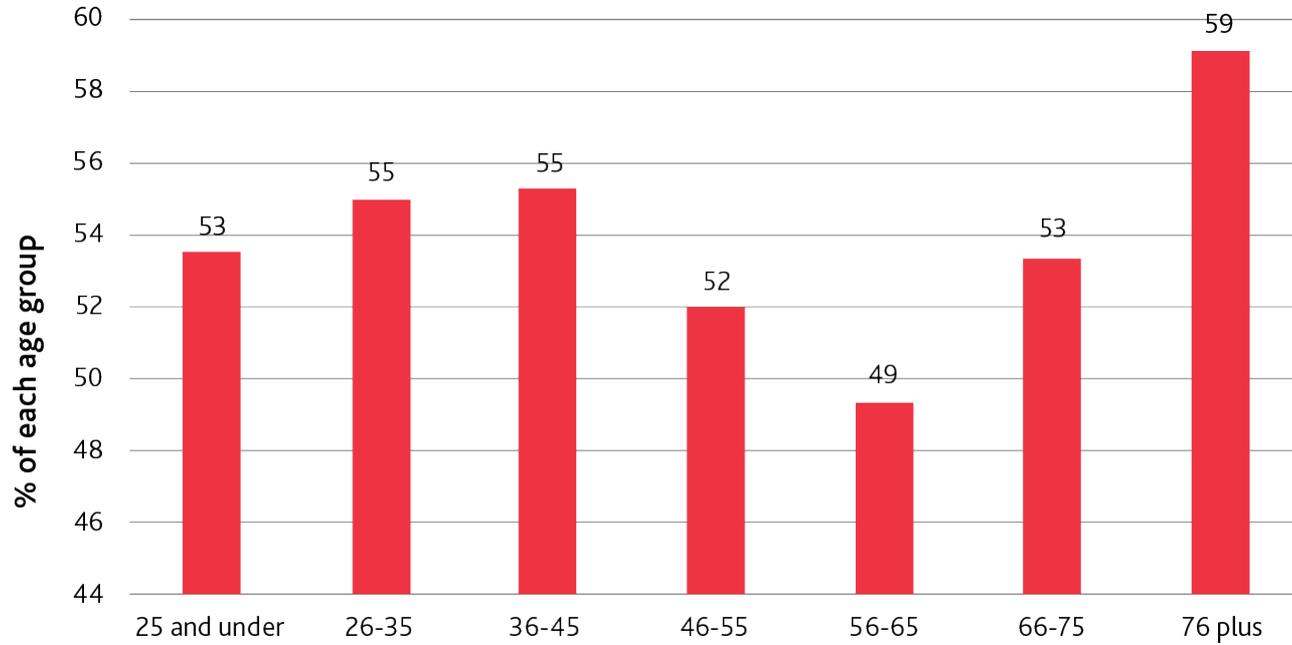
# 6. Satisfaction



**Figure 5.1:** – Average Level of Life Satisfaction and Happiness among the Irish Population: 2002-2018

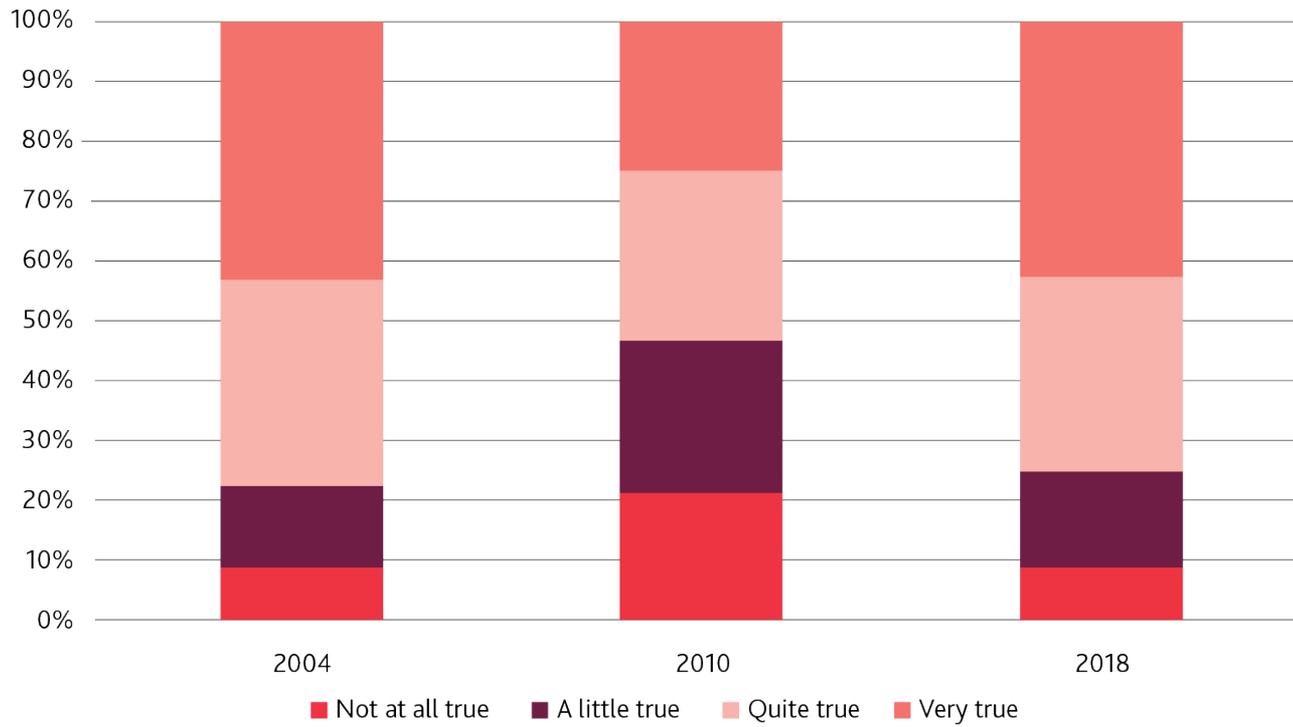


Proportion of the Population Satisfied with the Present State of the Economy: 2002-2018

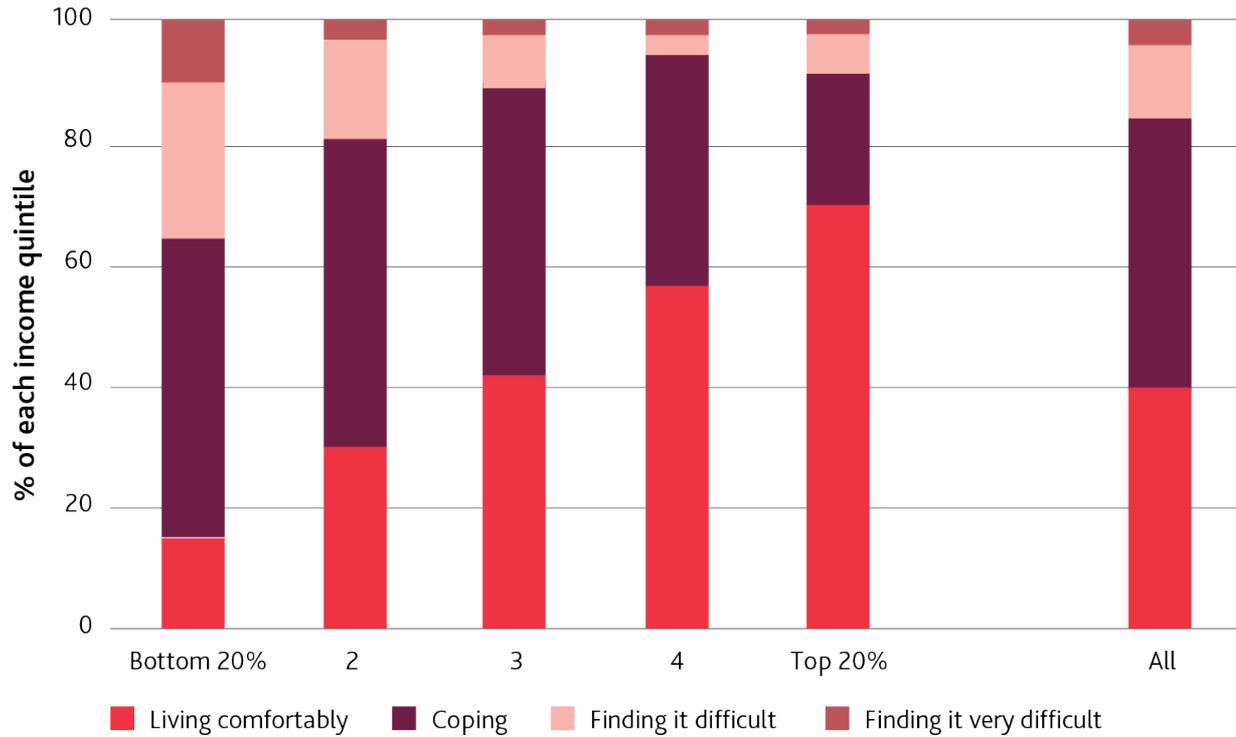


Satisfaction with the Present State of the Economy, by age group in 2018

# 7. Precarity

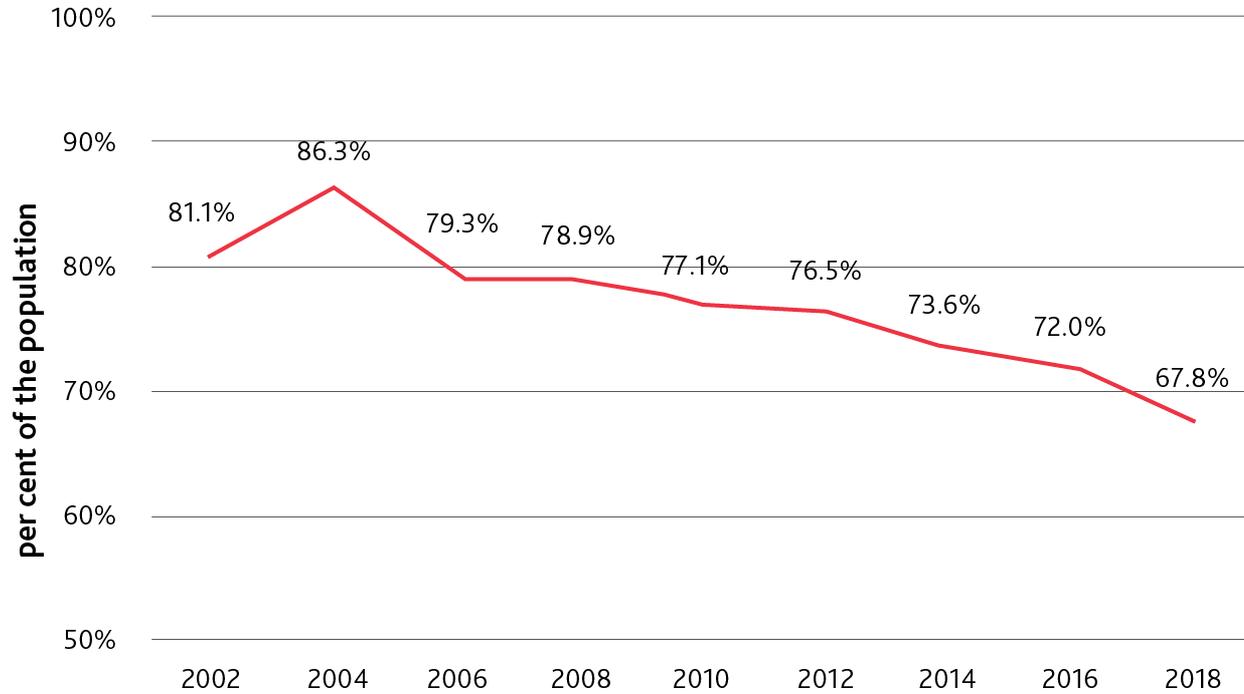


Proportion of workers who perceive their current job as secure: 2004, 2010 and 2018



How you feel about your Household's Income, by income quintile in 2018

# 8. Religion



Proportion of the Population Belonging to any particular Religion: 2002-2018

# Conclusion

- ESS provides unique representative portrait of behaviours and attitudes in Ireland
  - Comparatively and over time
- *Irish Social Attitudes in 2018-19* is available at [http://gearybackup.ucd.ie/ESS\\_Geary\\_Round9.pdf](http://gearybackup.ucd.ie/ESS_Geary_Round9.pdf)
- All ESS data are available at: [www.europeansocialsurvey.org/](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/)
- Preparations are under way for ESS10
  - Including a special module on Covid-19