

THE HARD GOSPEL
DEALING POSITIVELY WITH DIFFERENCE
IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

A SCOPING STUDY REPORT TO THE
SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

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I know people in all faith and honesty are doing their best...I would go back many years...it took so long for us to walk over and shake the other person's hand, and in the same way that's where we're struggling through times [today] when we should be twenty steps on rather than where we are at the moment. And again, to be making peace, but peace on our terms, or peace with our flock in mind isn't necessarily peace, and it mightn't even be the right starting point. Making peace looks at the rightness of the situation, not trying to support our own church or our own group. And if we have to make hard decisions and we lose what we call support because of them, well that's fine. That's my view, anyway. So maybe...this [is] the first step in that. – **Rector, Summer 2002**

I want to see a return to the *hard* gospel. This is the solution to the problem of sectarianism. The *hard* gospel is...that you love God and love your neighbour as yourself. End of story. – **Retired rector, Summer 2002**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a substantial study of attitudes toward, experiences of, and needs regarding dealing positively with sectarianism and difference in the Church¹ of Ireland. It is one of the most comprehensive pieces of research yet attempted into one church or denomination in Ireland. The Sectarianism Education Project (SEP) of the Church of Ireland commissioned research which involved interviewing a representative sample of clergy and lay people across the church; all the clergy of the church were also given the opportunity to contribute through written questionnaires.

Its findings are summarised and grouped in the following areas:

Hopes for the Process

- There is a clear recognition by respondents that sectarianism is not compatible with Christian faith.
- The Sectarianism Education Project represents the hope that members of the Church of Ireland would be equipped to become more confident in their inclusive Christian identity, engage in good citizenship, make a positive impact on society, and experience the freedom to be truly Christian and part of a diverse but united church.
- There is an aspiration to deal effectively with important issues in church government (rather than the potential pre-occupation with 'technical matters'). There is a recognition that dealing with sectarianism may encourage the possibility of renewal in the church.
- Respondents acknowledge that the cost of sectarianism is too high for the Church of Ireland to continue paying, and that the church must develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to equip its members to challenge sectarianism and other negative forms of dealing with difference, while articulating and living out a positive alternative.

Defining Sectarianism

- Respondents see sectarianism as an important issue for the church, feel that the church needs to improve how it addresses this, and most are generally open to change.
- Respondents are often unclear about what 'sectarianism' actually means and find it difficult to imagine what might replace it.
- Some respondents do not feel that sectarianism, as they understand it, is a pressing issue for them.
- Some respondents recognise that other forms of difference are often approached negatively and should be addressed as part of the SEP process.

¹ A note on terminology: In this report the use of the word 'church' is meant as follows: 'Church' with a capital 'C' refers to the wider Christian Church, while 'church' with a small 'c' refers to the Church of Ireland.

Church of Ireland Identity

- Respondents believe that Church of Ireland identity is inclusive and that being known as a Christian is more important than denominational identity.
- With some exceptions, respondents generally do not identify with the term 'Protestant', usually due to its perceived negative connotations in Northern Ireland.
- Respondents did not, on the whole, consider national identity to be a matter of contention.
- There are differences in Church of Ireland identity expressed in terms of those parts of the church based in separate political and legislative jurisdictions.
- The Drumcree controversy negatively colours many respondents' perceptions of Church of Ireland identity and this often contributes to misunderstanding between both those parts of the church based in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and those with little or no direct relation to or experience of the local Drumcree context.

Church Government and Structure, Synod and Public Leadership

- Parish ministry is the key vessel and core expression of the Church of Ireland, and the diocesan structure is vital to the development of the SEP.
- Diocesan strategies may tend to be reactive; the potential of the diocese for positively assisting clergy in responding to difficult issues should be explored.
- Lay ministry is not given a high priority and there is both a lack of understanding of the limits placed on Select Vestries by the constitution and regret that Select Vestries are constitutionally limited to focus on technical issues such as finance and property rather than sharing responsibility for spiritual leadership.
- There is little connection in terms of agenda, style and output between parish ministry and General Synod, often to the extent where General Synod is considered irrelevant in the context of everyday parish ministry.

North-South Difference

- There are both obvious and subtle differences between the context, experience, attitudes, and activities of those parts of the Church of Ireland based in Northern Ireland and those in the Republic.
- Most (but not all) respondents in the Republic believe that sectarianism is an issue confined to Northern Ireland.
- Some Northern Ireland-based respondents feel insecure and potentially threatened by the southern representation of church members from the Republic of Ireland at the General Synod, although most respondents appreciate the diversity such representation brings. These

responses were not simply expressed in relation to interpretations of 'democratic method' and political sensitivities, but also related to a broader range of cultural differences that are perceived to distinguish the character of the church in the two areas.

- Respondents from the West of Ireland sometimes feel isolated from the rest of the church.
- There is a lack of practical relating between the parts of the church based in Northern Ireland and the Republic and between the culturally distinct elements of the church in different parts of the island.

Ethnic Difference And Asylum Seekers

- The issue of ethnic minorities and asylum seekers has only recently emerged for the Church of Ireland and, although some good practice exists, most respondents have little or no experience in the area.
- Public leadership on this issue, particularly from Archbishops Eames and Empey, was supported by many respondents.
- There is mostly good will toward perceived church policy on ethnic minorities and asylum seekers, although more conservative attitudes prevail among a minority of respondents.
- Clergy do not, on the whole, feel resourced to respond to the issue.

Political Difference

- Although the Church of Ireland holds within it people of diverse political views, political difference is often ignored or inadequately handled.
- It is widely perceived that there is an identification of the church within Northern Ireland with the unionist world view; some respondents see this as unhealthy or unhelpful.
- Some members of the Church of Ireland who are conservative unionists may feel that the church undervalues them or does not recognise their integrity.
- Some parishes face particularly contentious political issues in everyday ministry, or at certain times of year, and may need further support from the wider church.
- The proper use of flags and emblems is an issue about which there are diverse views.

Theological Differences

- Theological differences exist widely throughout the Church of Ireland; and the church's diversity can be a strength but can also hamper the possibility of dialogue about controversial issues.
- Theology and culture are easily conflated; and some respondents feel that their own theological conservatism counts against them in the context of the wider church.

- There is a lack of context for discussion of theology among clergy and lay people; lay people are not usually equipped theologically beyond the basics.
- There is some understanding of sectarianism and difference as being issues that require a theological response, but this has not yet been fully developed.
- It is important to recognise that the question of sectarianism and difference is not ultimately resolvable by the church alone.
- It must always be borne in mind that addressing sectarianism and difference is a spiritual, as well as a practical, task; specific liturgical resources may be useful in helping to address it.

Relationship With Other Churches And Inter-Church Activity

- Some Church of Ireland parishes have substantial relationships with other local churches, usually Methodist, Roman Catholic or Presbyterian; although there are north-south variations.
- There are sometimes practical (distance, time commitment) and philosophical (doctrinal differences, styles of leadership) challenges to deeper inter-church relations.
- Some respondents felt relations with more conservative Protestant denominations were often negative.
- Ecumenism does not necessarily challenge difficult and emotive issues. There may be a need to define an agenda for inter-church relations that goes beyond shared worship, or enables those with a philosophical objection to participate in such relations.

World Religions

- Like ethnic minorities and asylum seekers, the issue of relating to world religions is a relatively recent development for the Church of Ireland.
- Discussions about the issue are at an early, undeveloped stage.
- There is a diversity of views within the church about relating to world religions, ranging from 'no experience' (majority view), to advocacy of cordial relations or co-operation on social matters only, to a small number of respondents who support ecumenism in an inter-faith context.
- There is a concern to maintain the church's teaching on the uniqueness of Christ without denying the possibility of learning from other world religions.
- Some respondents recognise that the issue of relating to world religions will become increasingly important for the church in the future.

Peace/Addressing Sectarianism Initiatives: Priorities, Attitudes, Experiences

- There seems to be a relationship between theological perspective and attitudes toward initiatives that aim to build peace and challenge sectarianism.

- There is openness to using such initiatives, but other time commitments may inhibit this.
- There is a consensus that Sunday services are a key resource of the church and may be the only forum in which most people encounter the SEP.
- Awareness and experience of such initiatives is somewhat limited; clergy generally do not feel equipped to facilitate such initiatives.
- There are similar philosophical challenges as with inter-church activity; perhaps especially the perception that these initiatives 'preach only to the converted', or do not get to the heart of the matter.
- Some respondents acknowledged that other forms of difference are similar to sectarianism and may be approached in similar ways.

Strategy For The Sectarianism Education Project

- The clergy are seen as the gatekeepers of change and should be involved closely in the development of, and commitment to, a sectarianism education project.
- Respondents feel that the SEP should model the values of good practice it aspires to; this includes setting realistic goals and tangible outcomes, with a defined beginning and end to the first phase of the project, and a long-term strategy for the future.
- Many respondents still feel that the relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order has not been resolved, and should be addressed as part of the SEP.
- Local strategy is required to implement the vision of the SEP and this should be developed in a partnership, rather than imposed 'from above'; different approaches may be required in different places.
- Some kind of centralised resourcing, especially regarding communication and envisioning may be required; this could include (at a minimum) both human resources and a website.
- Partnership with other agencies could be extremely valuable and help avoid the pitfalls of duplication.

Challenges For The Sectarianism Education Project

- Many respondents are wary of the bureaucracy of the church and fear that this may stifle the SEP.
- Some clergy feel unprotected or ill equipped to respond to potentially controversial issues.
- Lay people may not be sufficiently confident in their own faith identity to engage in meaningful dialogue with others.
- Some respondents have had negative experiences of peace/addressing sectarianism initiatives; this may inhibit their participation in future.
- Some feel that men may not participate.

- The time pressures of parish life may inhibit the development of the SEP.
- The temptation exists to seek an immediate solution, which may, conversely, create more challenges.

The Loyal Orders And Drumcree

- The Drumcree situation is still one of the most controversial issues facing the church, eliciting a wide range of responses.
- Some respondents acknowledge that it may be too easy to propose solutions to a problem at General Synod without the cost of having to implement them; the General Synod may not be the appropriate forum to take such decisions. It does not appear, to some, to have the authority to implement them.
- Many respondents would like the SEP to continue to address the relationship between the church and the Orange Order.
- It may be the case that the attempt to resolve Drumcree at the micro-level has inhibited the process of addressing sectarianism and other forms of difference at both wider and local levels.
- The Church's stance towards the constitutional position of Northern Ireland perhaps needs to be further clarified; it may be perceived by some that part of the church's role should be to defend the union of Northern Ireland with Great Britain.

Welcoming/Involving New Members And Boundaries Between Believers And Non-Believers

- There is a perception that there are 'softer' boundaries in the Church of Ireland between believers and non-believers than other churches.
- There is a challenge to help people to make a transition from being 'visitors' to being 'family'.
- There is a challenge also to help people to make a transition from nominalism to committed faith and practice.
- There is sometimes no strategic process in place for existing members to welcome new people, and people are unsure of what will be expected of or offered to new members once they begin integrating into parish life.
- Respondents acknowledge the challenge to evangelism, but there is a wide range of views regarding this.

Gender Differences And Sexuality

- Gender differences are not generally seen as contentious, although some respondents feel that traditional stereotypical gender roles prevail within the church and some parishes would apparently not accept a female rector.
- There is a consensus that issues of sexuality are some of the most difficult to respond to and usually the most inadequately handled by the church.
- Most respondents agreed that there should be a wider discussion of these issues; such a discussion should not be seen as 'giving way' on historical teachings, but simply addressing the issues as presented in contemporary society.
- The SEP may not be able to deal adequately with the issue of sexuality; this may perhaps be approached in co-operation with the Church in Society committee.

Young People

- Young people often feel that the church is not relevant to them and many leave the church soon after confirmation. Many have a deep commitment to Christ, and wish to be involved in the life of the church, but feel excluded for a variety of reasons.
- Young people are often more engaged in peace/addressing sectarianism work than older people due to their experiences at school and through other initiatives.
- There is a lack of youth work provision in some parishes. There is a need to assess the relationship between extra-parochial youth work and parish work. Can young people be best served by para-church initiatives? Is there an unhelpful repetition of resources across various youth agencies due to lack of communication or strategic relations?
- The example of Summer Madness should be noted by the SEP. Summer Madness has not sought to be an explicit 'anti-sectarian initiative', but has organically become one.
- There is a need to examine how the church can creatively approach age differences, and the potential for inter-generational conflict or misunderstanding.
- It is vital to include young people in the SEP as part of addressing sectarianism and difference for future generations.

Older People

- Older people are one of the most valuable resources of the Church of Ireland; this may be of particular interest to the SEP, which may wish to engage retired people in the delivery of the project as resource persons or intercessors.
- Respondents generally feel that the needs of older people are well catered for by the church.
- However, there may be a lack of strategy for utilising their potential.
- The contribution of older people to the church should not be underestimated.

Responding To Society In General

- The church must find a strategic way of addressing the question of a changing society.
- Respondents are pessimistic about the credibility and effectiveness of the church in contemporary society, but maintain the belief that there is a vital role for the church to play.
- There is a need for churches and other agencies to continue to work together to meet the challenges of a changing world.
- The training/resourcing of the clergy and lay people needs to address the development of post-modernity and globalisation as the two key sociological phenomena of contemporary society.

Training/Resourcing Of Clergy

- There is a consensus that the training/resourcing of clergy requires significant adaptation to meet the changing needs and expectations of ministry in contemporary society.
- Training/resourcing in issues pertaining to sectarianism, difference and Christian peacemaking has usually been *ad hoc* rather than strategic and not considered a core part of training.
- The question of more extensive lay involvement in parish ministry may need to be prioritised at all levels of the church.
- The clergy training process may lack adequate opportunities for 'hands-on' experience in parishes before new curates are released into full-time ministry.
- Clergy want in-service training to be frequent, strategic, well thought-out, and offered in a manner that facilitates minimum inconvenience on the part of clergy participants; it should involve experts in the fields pertinent to this Scoping Study (such as Partners in Transformation, Corrymeela, and ECONI).
- Some clergy also feel that a mechanism should be created whereby they may input their perceived needs for assistance and in-service training anonymously. A website resource could also be created for the purpose of sharing information between clergy on such things as models of good practice in contemporary ministry issues, helpful resources, and so on.
- Stress amongst clergy continues to be a major issue; and some feel that bishops lack a clear strategy for resourcing/equipping and caring for clergy. The General Synod may need to urgently examine clergy roles with a view to changing patterns of life (and therefore ministry) in the 21st century.
- There is currently no liturgical/prayer resource to assist with explicitly addressing sectarianism and other forms of difference.

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Christ exemplified a pattern of responding positively, and often unconventionally, to difference, from his crossing of ethno-religious/sectarian boundaries in his choice of disciples, to his welcome of traditional 'enemies' such as Samaritans and the so-called 'unclean', to his non-violent subversion of oppressive social mores. All people were welcome in his radical community. The Church, as steward of his Gospel, is responsible for the incarnation of such a welcoming, grace-filled community: to cross boundaries, to love 'enemies', to offer healing, and challenge oppression in all its forms. It is a truism that the Christian churches in Ireland have not always risen to the task. It could be argued that Ireland experiences the longest running ethno-religious conflict in European history, and no one has been untouched by its implications, from mere inconvenience or unpleasant social attitudes through to the tragedy of violence, injury, and bereavement. Many people are confused about sectarianism and difference. But many people also want to respond better to sectarianism and difference.

The Church of Ireland, among others, is leading the way of change, through the establishment of the Sectarianism Education Project (SEP), whose first project has been the Scoping Study whose results you now hold in your hands. This is possibly the most comprehensive piece of research ever attempted into one Christian denomination/church in Ireland, and has involved people at all levels of the church. It is admirable that the Church of Ireland has invited relative strangers to examine it in detail. The research consultants have been afforded a generous welcome, which is not always the case in research of this nature. This Scoping Study report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the issues surrounding sectarianism and other forms of difference and summarise some ideas of how the church might better respond to these in future. As with all good Christian documents, this report begins with a story:

Some time ago the world's leading manufacturer of drill bits found itself in a financial crisis. After decades as the market leader, the company appeared on the verge of disappearing. The company's executives were confounded at this turn of events, and did what any self-respecting multi-national corporation does these days – they engaged the services of consultants. A large consultancy firm spent six months examining the balance sheet, investigating the market and competitors, and interviewing at every level of the company. When the time came to report the (very expensive) findings of the research, the firm sent one of their top consultants to present to the drill bit company's Board of Directors. He began his presentation with a PowerPoint display. Introducing the first slide, he said, 'We have spent half a year investigating your company's problem. We have spared none of your expense to do so; the good news is, we think we have diagnosed the problem.'

Slide One appeared on the overhead screen. The company executives were somewhat surprised to find that it contained only six words:

YOU THINK YOU MAKE DRILL BITS

Just in case the directors hadn't got the message, the consultant repeated the words on the screen, savouring each word, to ensure everyone heard. Then he clicked on his hi-tech button, and presented Slide Two. It was similar to Slide One, but was one word fewer:

YOU DON'T MAKE DRILL BITS

'You don't make drill bits' repeated the consultant, barely concealing a smile. Some executives shifted nervously in their seats, while others simply looked dismayed. Was the man joking? Had they wasted hundreds of thousands of pounds for this? Before they could think about this for too long, the consultant pressed his button once more, revealing Slide Three:

YOU MAKE HOLES

The consultant went on to say that the company was losing its market position because it had failed to keep up with modern drill technology. Laser drilling was far more efficient, precise, and cost-effective for the construction industry than its manual antecedent. When the Board of Directors realised that they had become fixated on maintaining their company as the world's leading manufacturer of drill bits, rather than the world's leading producer of holes, they took decisive action. The company is now once again the market leader, having re-directed its energies and investment toward modern processes. The company had confused the drill bits with their purpose. To put this in theological terms, it had equated idols with icons, and failed to see that their historic position was more clearly found in facilitating drilling holes than manufacturing metal.

The drill bit story, although somewhat apocryphal, is a helpful introduction to this Scoping Study report. The research on which the report is based took place throughout 2002. Its purpose was to investigate the range of attitudes, perceptions, and experience of clergy and lay people throughout the church, in relation to dealing positively with sectarianism and difference. Its findings should be of significant benefit to the SEP, and the church generally, as it seeks to determine future vision and strategy for this keystone area of ministry. And although detailed findings follow, perhaps the key result of the research is illustrated in the story of drill bits and holes. If the consultants to this research were to be given enough latitude, they might make a similar three-slide PowerPoint presentation to the SEP. At the risk of raising eyebrows at the very outset of this report, it might look something like this:

IT IS EASY TO THINK YOU ARE HERE TO MAINTAIN THE MINISTRY AND STRUCTURES OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

BUT YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT HERE TO MAINTAIN THE MINISTRY AND STRUCTURES OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

YOU'RE HERE TO HELP INCARNATE THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF THIS SOCIETY

This Scoping Study report provides a comprehensive, credible, but accessible analysis of the Church of Ireland as it was in 2002. There are signs of encouragement, of struggle, of hope, of pain, of vision for the future, and hankering after the past. It is the aim of the Church of Ireland to respond adequately, and more than adequately, to the twin evils of sectarianism and intransigence. It is the SEP committee's responsibility to articulate a vision that is strategic and can excite the interest of the key stakeholders in the church. It has been a privilege to undertake the research, and it is the sincere hope of the consultants that this report will assist in that process.

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METHODOLOGY

This study emerged from the work of the Church of Ireland Sectarianism Committee and its report to the General Synod of 1999, as well as the work of the Education Sub Committee. Having been invited by Standing Committee in 1998 to develop a programme responding to the issue of sectarianism and living with difference, a Scoping Study was commissioned, to ascertain the attitudes toward, needs regarding, and experiences of approaching sectarianism and living with difference in the Church of Ireland. Rev. Doug Baker and Dr Cecelia Clegg of Partners in Transformation and Dr Gareth Higgins were retained as consultants to the project. Dr Higgins was commissioned to develop a methodology for the Scoping Study, which was approved by the Project Committee in January 2002. The Scoping Study was carried out by Dr Higgins, with research assistance from Mr Michael Blythman, Ms Cathy Curran, and Mrs Sarah Parkinson. Partners in Transformation was commissioned to assist the Committee in the development of appropriate actions in response to the Scoping Study.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The two main aspects of the programme envisaged by the Committee are:

- Assisting parishes throughout the island to increase their capacity for dealing positively with sectarianism and difference.
- Exploring how dealing positively with sectarianism and difference will impact the decision-making level within the Church of Ireland.

It was recognised early in the process that the question of difference *per se* should be included in the Scoping Study rather than maintaining an exclusive focus on sectarianism. Many people do not identify with the issues surrounding sectarianism, especially in the Republic of Ireland; 'difference' generally, is, however, an issue with which most people can recognise. And it is likely that similar methodologies could be employed in approaching both sectarianism and other forms of difference. Whether the issue is Protestant/Catholic, ethnic, world religions, theological controversy, or otherwise, the main purpose of the SEP is to help people deal positively with difference, and live together more peaceably. The main aim of the Scoping Study is to provide a picture of attitudes and identify what is happening throughout the Church of Ireland in response to the issue of sectarianism and difference.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Scoping Study was four-fold:

- To 'map the landscape' of the Church of Ireland, North and South, in relation to the issue of sectarianism and dealing with difference.
- To ascertain the attitudes, experiences and needs of clergy and lay people, throughout the Church of Ireland, regarding this issue.
- To articulate this analysis in a manner that provides a sound basis for the Project Committee to respond by, among other things, commissioning programmes and initiatives that serve the

church in regard to sectarianism and living with difference, and for Partners in Transformation to assist the Committee in developing appropriate materials and actions. In other words, the Scoping Study aims to provide a foundation for the Committee to build on, with the appropriate involvement of Partners in Transformation.

- To ensure that this analysis is representative of attitudes, needs and experiences throughout the Church of Ireland. The Committee was concerned that all levels of the church had the opportunity to participate in the Scoping Study, including younger members.

PROJECT PLAN

The Scoping Study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods (in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups). A representative sample of parishes in the Church of Ireland was selected and studied in detail, but all clergy throughout the church were also invited to complete a questionnaire, and offered the chance to participate further if they wish. The results of the Study have been condensed² and are presented here in a document that includes both statistics and qualitative narrative.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The comprehensive methodology was as follows:

- Background reading of relevant literature produced or affirmed by the Church of Ireland on the issue of sectarianism and living with difference, and the terms of reference for this Scoping Study. This included policy statements and the definition of sectarianism adopted by Standing Committee in 1999.
- Collation of sampling frame from the church database. Put simply, this is the total number of dioceses and the proportion of parishes within them.
- Construction of representative sample of 10% of the parishes,³ sampled according to size of diocese, and clergy profile (age group and gender). There were 474 parishes/parish unions in March 2002. This resulted in a representative list of 48 parishes. This list was submitted to the chair of the Committee, the chair of the Working Group and two other members of the Working Group to confirm its reliability. Five substitutions were made on the basis of biographical factors such as age. The list was confidential to these representatives of the

² Interview transcripts, completed questionnaires, and focus groups have all been comprehensively assessed. Both the confidentiality agreed with respondents, and the sheer volume of data accrued make it impossible to include these verbatim.

³ 10% is a relatively large sample in social scientific research, and is widely accepted as being more than adequate to provide credible results. Any concerns about how this sample may exclude parts of the Church are addressed as the sample was broadly representative of the dioceses in terms of their respective sizes, and the age group and gender of clergy, and all clergy throughout the Church of Ireland were given the opportunity to participate by completing a questionnaire.

Working Group and the consultants. All interview and Focus Group respondents' identity have been kept confidential, and quotations are anonymous, with only the diocese and role of the respondent recorded in this report.

- Questionnaire design. A comprehensive questionnaire⁴ was designed to collect statistical information on the needs in relation to, experiences of, and attitudes concerning sectarianism and living with difference. This questionnaire was submitted to the SEP Committee for its input before being distributed to all rectors and lay people in the representative sample. A condensed version of this questionnaire⁵ was sent to all incumbents and bishops in the Church of Ireland, and all members of Standing Committee. The response rate to the condensed questionnaire was high; with 189 Questionnaires being returned by incumbent clergy (of whom there were 404 in total). This is a response rate of 47%. In social science research, a response rate of around 30% is considered good, so the Committee should be encouraged that Church of Ireland clergy have been willing to respond in such large numbers. The response rate among members of the Standing Committee was 63.3%, as 38 out of a possible 60 members (of whom 12 respondents were rectors) returned questionnaires.
- Interview structure design. A comprehensive in-depth interview structure was designed for use with the 48 clergy in the sample. 41 of the 48 clergy in the sample agreed to take part and were available for interview. 38 of these 41 respondents completed in-depth questionnaires which form the basis of the statistics marked 'Interviewed rectors'. Of the remaining 7, 2 declined to participate, and the remaining 5 were either uncontactable, or the parish had become vacant during the period between sampling and carrying out the research, or no time could be arranged to suit both the consultant and the clergy. This represents an extraordinarily high response rate of 85%. The ten bishops and two archbishops of the church were contacted and invited to participate in an in-depth interview; both archbishops, and seven bishops participated, while the remaining bishops completed a questionnaire. The interview structure included reference to experiences, attitudes, and needs in relation to sectarianism and dealing positively with difference; respondents were invited to indicate the full range of their perspectives, including positive and negative responses. The interview structure was piloted and revised with representatives of the Working Group before being used in the research proper.
- Focus Group structure and content design. A comprehensive but accessible structure was designed for use in Focus Groups to maximise the information received from lay respondents. The comprehensive questionnaire used in clergy interviews formed the basis for discussion at Focus Groups.

⁴ Copies of the questionnaire are available from the SEP.

⁵ Copies are available from the SEP.

- Focus Group sampling frame design. Focus Group respondents were drawn from each of the parishes in the representative sample, with one lay leader, and two lay people (approximately) from each. These respondents were accessed through their respective clergy, and provide a broad representation of church members (from a wide range of ages, beginning at secondary school age), from a wide range of backgrounds and leadership roles in the church, including (but not exclusive to) youth leaders, Sunday School teachers, and members of Select Vestry. Attempts were made to involve some less active parishioners in some of the Focus Groups. Two supplementary Focus Groups were carried out with young people from Northern Ireland and the Republic respectively. Out of a total possible number of 144 participants, 88 (49 men, 39 women) actually attended Focus Groups, representing a high response rate of 61%. Despite this, some Focus Groups proved difficult to arrange; this may reflect a number of factors, such as apathy among lay people, the lack of commitment of some clergy to arranging Focus Groups, and simple human forgetfulness. It does, however, indicate the challenge of persuading lay involvement in the programme envisaged by the SEP.
- Advice of Working Group on which other groups and individuals to include in the research. Representatives of the Corrymeela Community, ECONI, and the ISE were interviewed to ascertain their assessment of working with the Church of Ireland in relation to sectarianism and dealing positively with difference. Other appropriate individuals or bodies in the church or outside it who are relevant to this research were interviewed. 22 such interviews were conducted, with, among others, members of Standing Committee, retired Church of Ireland clergy, clergy from other denominations, heads of relevant agencies, journalists, a teaching psychologist, youth workers, and academics.
- Letter to all clergy, informing them of the research, and inviting a response from all clergy to the condensed version of the questionnaire. This letter was from the SEP Committee, and included a brief outline of the context for the Scoping Study. This was an attempt at ensuring genuine action in response to the Scoping Study from throughout the church, and to enable those who may feel that their voices are not always 'heard' to participate.
- Article in *The Church of Ireland Gazette* to inform the whole church of the existence, value, potential outcomes and needs of the Scoping Study. This article included an invitation for anyone in the church to respond. This invitation was taken up by a small number of people, who either emailed or telephoned their comments.
- Construction of Focus Group sample in consultation with clergy in the Scoping Study sample.
- In-depth interviews with representative sample of parish clergy⁶. Interviews usually took place at the rectory or office of the respondent, although some were carried out at the General Synod. The consultant travelled widely in Ireland in the process.

⁶ Respondents' age, gender, and dioceses are outlined in **Figs. 1-12**

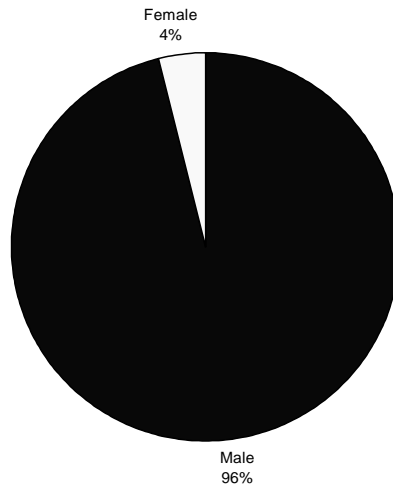
- Focus Groups with sample of lay people from the representative sample of parishes. All Focus Group respondents completed the comprehensive questionnaire for statistical data. Two of the research assistants travelled long distances to carry out a total of 17 Focus Groups, which ranged in size from 2 to 9 participants each. 88 lay people participated in these groups, out of a possible total of 144 (3 from each of 48 parishes). Groups included among male participants, 1 youth group member, 1 youth leader, 1 church warden, 6 ordinary lay members, 1 church secretary, 2 organists, 1 Sunday School teacher, 3 secretaries of Select Vestry, 11 members of Select Vestry, 1 parish reader, 2 parochial nominators, 2 General Synod delegates, 1 member of diocesan council, 1 secretary of a fund-raising committee, 2 diocesan lay readers, 4 choir members, 3 Glebe Wardens, 2 Hon Treasurers, 2 Diocesan Synod representatives, 1 Parish magazine representative, 1 Member of Standing Committee, and 1 Member of Diocesan Council. Female participants included 1 Parish Reader, 2 Secretaries of Select Vestry, 15 members of Select Vestry, 2 members of the Safeguarding Trust committee, 1 Brownie leader, 2 Hon Sec/Treasurers, 12 Sunday School Teachers, 3 Sunday School Superintendents, 1 Organist, 3 Youth leaders, 1 Boys Brigade Officer, 1 Member of Lady's Guild, 1 Member of Diocesan Youth organisation, 1 Sexton, 1 Parish administrator, 12 members of Mother's Union, 1 Mother's Union executive member, 2 Mothers Union secretaries, 1 Chair of Mother's Union, 1 Crèche leader, 1 Children's singing group leader, 1 Youth worker, 9 Choir Members, 6 Lay members, 5 church wardens, 2 Diocesan readers, 1 Member of Diocesan Synod, 1 Member of Diocesan council, 1 member of Glebes committee, 1 Diocesan press officer, 1 Secretary of women's fellowship, 1 Parish reader, and 1 Trainee lay reader. Focus Groups were somewhat difficult to arrange, with some rectors unable to provide lay people to participate, although others were extremely helpful. There was a still a very good attendance rate of 61%. The research associates, Ms Cathy Curran and Mr Michael Blythman carried out the task of Focus Group facilitation, travelling extensively in the process.
- Background reading of relevant policy documents, public statements, Synod documents. A selection of documents relevant to the issue of sectarianism and living with difference (including the report of the Sectarianism Steering Group, etc.) was employed to provide background information to the consultant.
- Regular meetings with representatives of Working Group to update and advise on progress, etc. The consultant met at least monthly with the Chair of the SEP to update on progress and verify invoices.
- Write-up of the Scoping Study report.
- Outcomes to be determined by the SEP.

NOTE ON QUOTATIONS

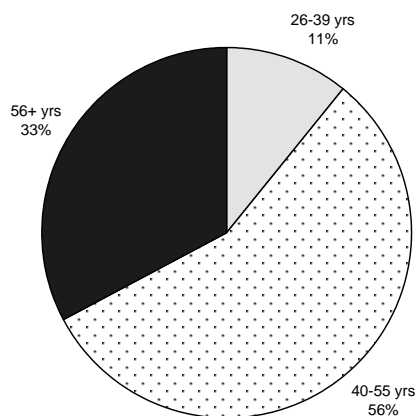
Quotations in this Scoping Study report are made in a personal capacity and do not necessarily represent the opinions of any official body in the Church of Ireland. Quotations are attributed by role in the church and diocese. The diocesan attribution has been withheld in a small number of cases because the quotation may identify others.

RESPONDENTS BIOGRAPHICAL DATA⁷

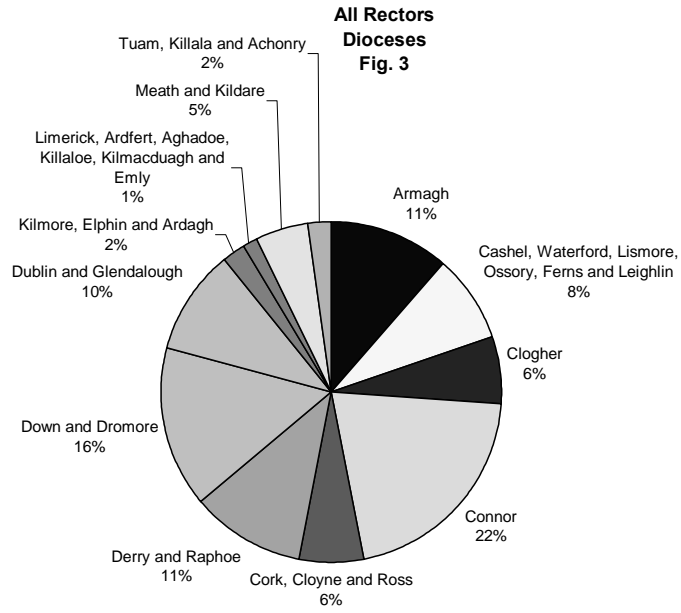
All Rectors
Gender
Fig. 1



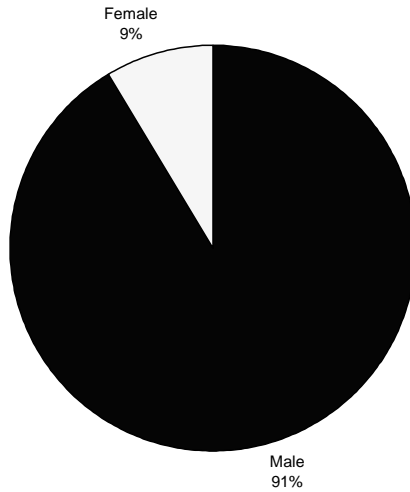
All Rectors
Age
Fig. 2



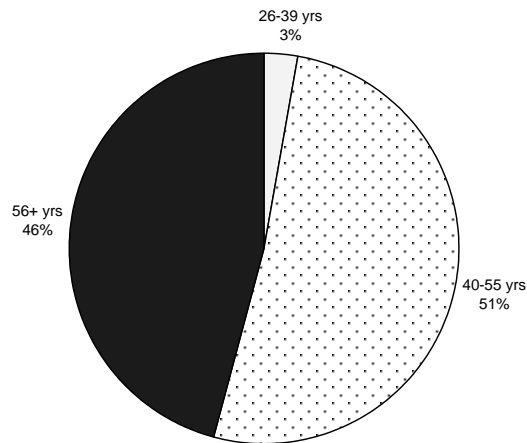
⁷ Statistics throughout this report are based on questionnaires completed by or with respondents. Charts are entitled as follows: 'Lay people' refers to the 88 lay people who participated in Focus Groups, 'Interviewed rectors' to the 38 rectors from the clergy sample, 'All rectors' to the 189 rectors who returned completed questionnaires, and 'Standing Committee' to members of Standing Committee, including those members of Standing Committee who are also rectors. Some of the statistical totals in the charts do not add up to 100%; this is due to non-completion of certain questions by some respondents. The method of sampling, and the proportion and type of respondents should be borne in mind when judging the validity, meaning, and relevance of the statistics.



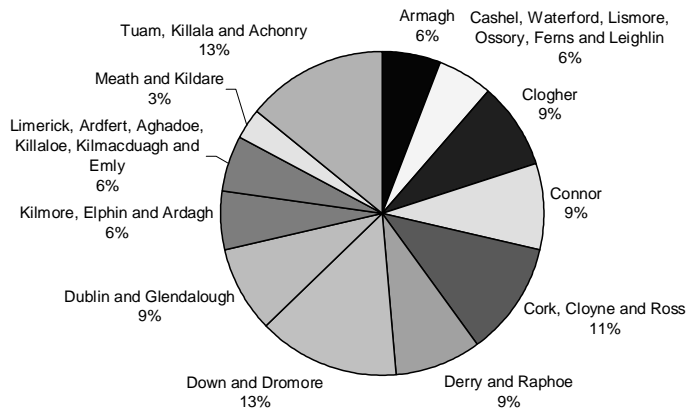
**Standing Committee
Gender
Fig. 4**



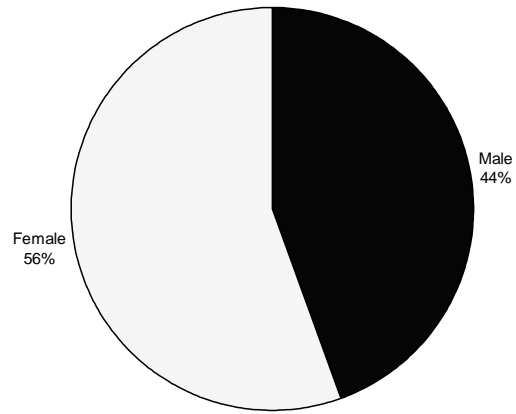
**Standing Committee
Age
Fig. 5**



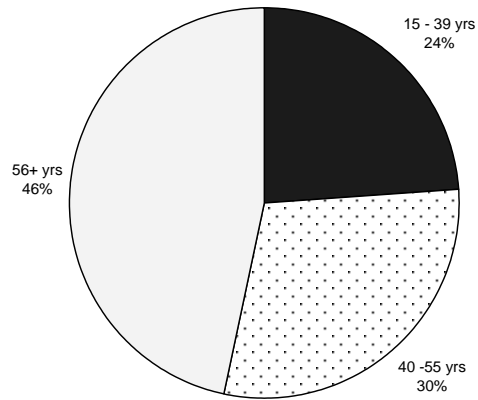
**Standing Committee
Dioceses
Fig. 6**



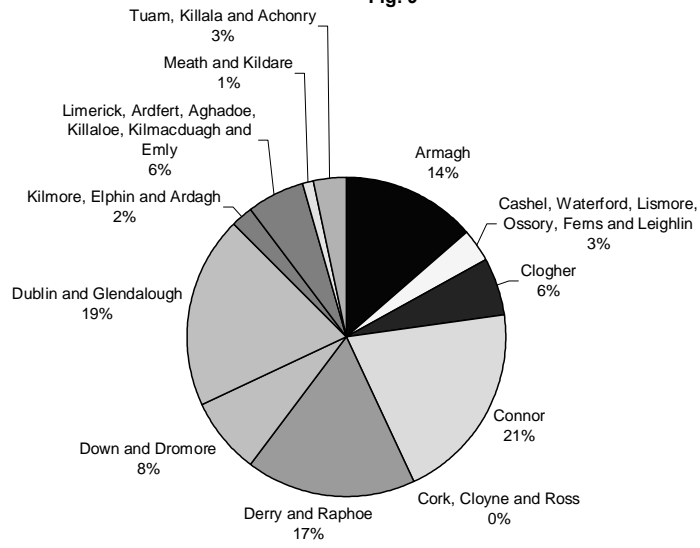
**Lay People
Gender
Fig. 7**



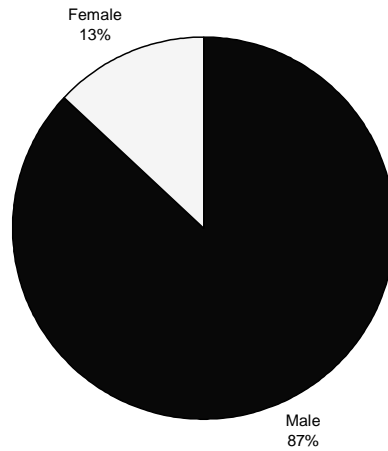
**Lay People
Age Range
Fig. 8**



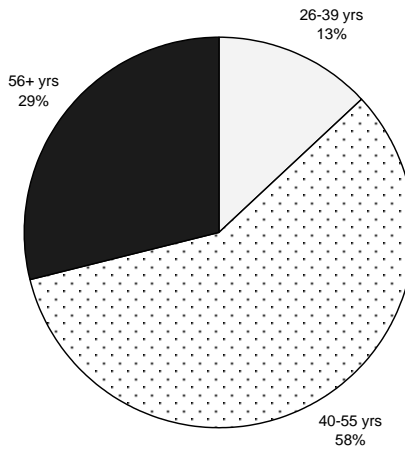
**Lay People
Dioceses of Respondants
Fig. 9**



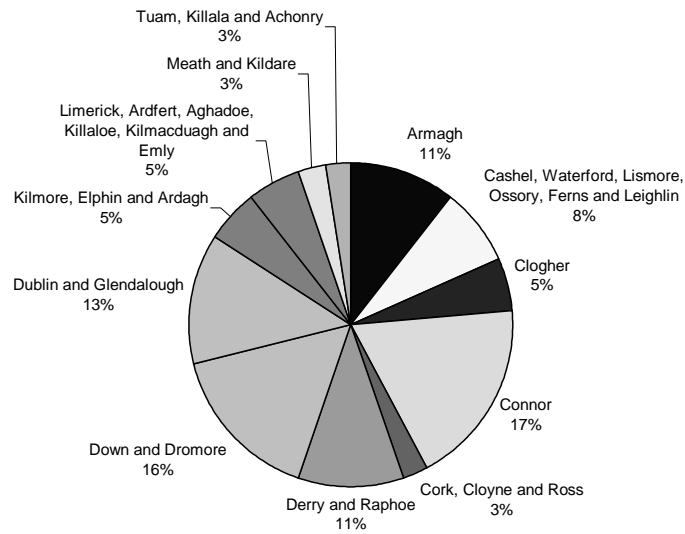
**Interviewed Rectors
Gender
Fig. 10**



**Interviewed Rectors
Age
Fig. 11**



**Interviewed Rectors
Dioceses
Fig. 12**



there may be people whose theological or other principles serve as significant inhibitors to their participation in any such initiative. Put simply, sectarianism can exist at the deepest level among those who are ostensibly most committed to its eradication. That is, it is all too easy to assert friendship and boundary crossing between Protestants and Catholics; but some Protestants have not treated their conservative co-religionists with the same respect. Whether or not this respect would be met with dialogue is a moot point. Quotations below provide a 'flavour' of the views presented:

My hope would flow from the statement of Jesus, the truth will set you free. My hope would be that ... this whole process would be a process of utter honesty, openness, where people express what they genuinely feel and think, in however they understand sectarianism...That we would be the kind of church where we would feel comfortable with difference within our own tradition; that there would be a respect for difference within our own tradition, and that that would be reflected...in the respect that we show for [people] from other traditions. **Bishop**

If we go for practical solutions, I think that a lot will come out of it...If it's seen as a Northern thing, I think that from a practical point of view Southerners will divorce themselves from it. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

I want people to be saying, 'It's absolutely crazy that people should be barricaded into a small area like Short Strand, or the same thing in the Ardoyne, in Glenbryn. I want them to be saying, 'we do not actually want a world where we don't listen to each other, where we don't value what each other has to say.' ...I want to see us involved in *creating* a non-sectarian society, not just aspiring to it. **Bishop**

But maybe [seeing if we're] getting worse would help us to get better. The sectarianism issue is deep, and I think the fact that we have started on it is a massive undertaking. **Lay person, Connor**

What would you like to see coming out of this process?

More communication. Because any time there's a problem, if you've a lack of communication you exacerbate it. **Curate, Armagh**

[This] is the vehicle for providing more significant renewal in the church. Now it wasn't designed with that in mind...but it will [make] room for those other things to happen. And at the end of it, I actually think we will have a more united church than we have had for the last two decades, but the end of it is a long way off...Commissioning...research [is] the way the church has to work in the future. We have attempted to resource ourselves from within our own limited resources. **Bishop**

There is great hurt, fear, and sense of injustice...Could there be discussions towards a major and joint act of repentance/reconciliation/forgiveness by church leaders? **Rector, Connor**

The danger for Anglicans is that they will always go for talking about second level or third level issues...things that are relatively inconsequential and insignificant, like the moving of a pew or the putting up of a plaque, or which particular service book is used. **Bishop**

In my view – and my experience – no church...which does not seriously address these issues can hope or expect to experience renewal. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

[We need to] learn to be less defensive of our 'own' territory. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

If the House of Bishops felt it was a priority of the church to seriously engage in some bridge-building at parish level, to 'seriously take to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions', then clergy like myself might sit up and take notice and begin to open up our eyes in the parishes to see how sectarian we are. Is not our spiritual health being jeopardised by it? **Rector, Armagh**

The church should teach...the message of love our neighbour in such a way that we are all challenged to understand diversity. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

[We must contribute to] peace because [we] know the price of violence. **Rector, Armagh**

The Scoping Study shows that there is an enormous amount of goodwill in the Church of Ireland toward dealing positively with sectarianism and other forms of difference. None of the respondents is content with 'the way things are'. All want to see change of some kind. Of course, there are differing views about the nature of that change and some respondents feel insecure about the possibility of change occurring too quickly or without adequate consultation. It is to the issues for which change may be appropriate that we now turn.

HOPES FOR THE PROCESS

- *There is an aspiration for members of the Church of Ireland to experience the freedom in the expression of their Christian faith.*
- *The building of greater understanding and sense of common purpose in the church between the two jurisdictions and between the northern and southern provinces with all their cultural and ecclesial diversity is a goal of the Sectarianism Education Project (SEP) process..*
- *Good citizenship is seen as a Christian imperative.*
- *The social impact of the church may have waned in recent years and the SEP may contribute to addressing this.*
- *Dealing with sectarianism may be painful but worthwhile.*
- *There is an aspiration to better communication around dealing with contentious issues.*
- *Respondents assert that the church should be willing to resource itself from outside.*
- *Security in the individual and communal identity and spirituality of the Church of Ireland should be an outcome of the process.*
- *Respondents hope that ways would be found at every level of church government to focus more on mission than maintenance.*
- *Holding different 'churchmanships' together is an aspiration held by many.*
- *Dealing with sectarianism may release the possibility of renewal in the church.*
- *Many respondents expressed the hope that the church would be prepared to face the cost of dealing with sectarianism, even at the risk of alienating members, or 'losing' in other ways.*

2: DEFINING SECTARIANISM

In 1999, the Standing Committee of the Church of Ireland adopted the following definition of sectarianism:

Sectarianism...

Is a system of attitudes, beliefs and structures

- *at personal, communal, and institutional levels*
- *which always involves religion and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics, which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity, and the free expression of difference*

...and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating:

- *hardening the boundaries between groups*
- *overlooking others*
- *belittling, dehumanising, or demonising others*
- *justifying or collaborating in the domination of others*
- *physically or verbally intimidating or attacking others*

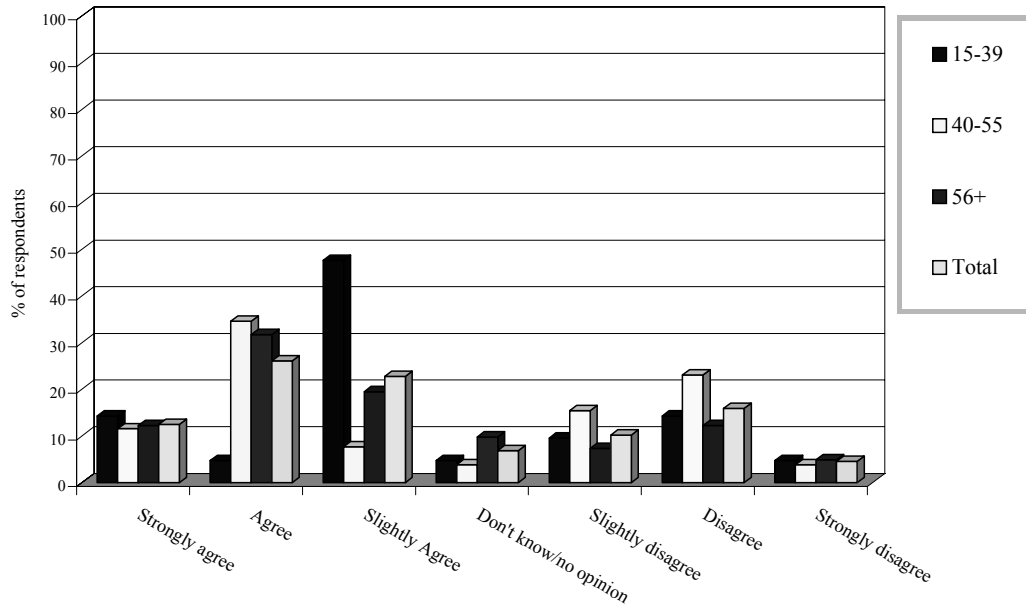
The Committee noted that 'the definition is not perfect. Sectarianism is one of those areas in which people often know what they mean but find a concept hard to define.'⁸

Respondents were made aware of this definition before interviews began. It became clear during the research that even the *definition* of sectarianism can be contentious or confusing. As the Standing Committee acknowledged, sectarianism is a difficult concept to articulate, and may mean different things to different people. **It is therefore advisable that an early part of any sectarianism education process in the church pays particular attention to helping people understand what sectarianism is and is not.** One of the common misconceptions is that 'sectarianism' refers only to acts of violence, discrimination, or ill will against Catholics or the Catholic community, rather than being the system of difference that can manifest at many different levels, in many different directions, for many different reasons. It is clear that respondents in the Republic often reflect the prevailing popular attitude that 'sectarianism is a northern problem', although some respondents did acknowledge both their own sectarian attitudes and a degree of anti-Protestant sectarianism in their own life experience. The Scoping Study shows that there has been a lack of reflection by the clergy on what sectarianism is, especially as a system. There are, however, both warm hearts and openness to change. **Figs. 13-18** show that, while there may be confusion over what 'sectarianism' actually means, there is a great deal of goodwill toward responding positively. (The age group of respondents is indicated on the chart legend as '15-39, 40-55, 56+'.)

⁸ Report of Sub-Committee on Sectarianism to General Synod, 1999.

SAMPLE CHART

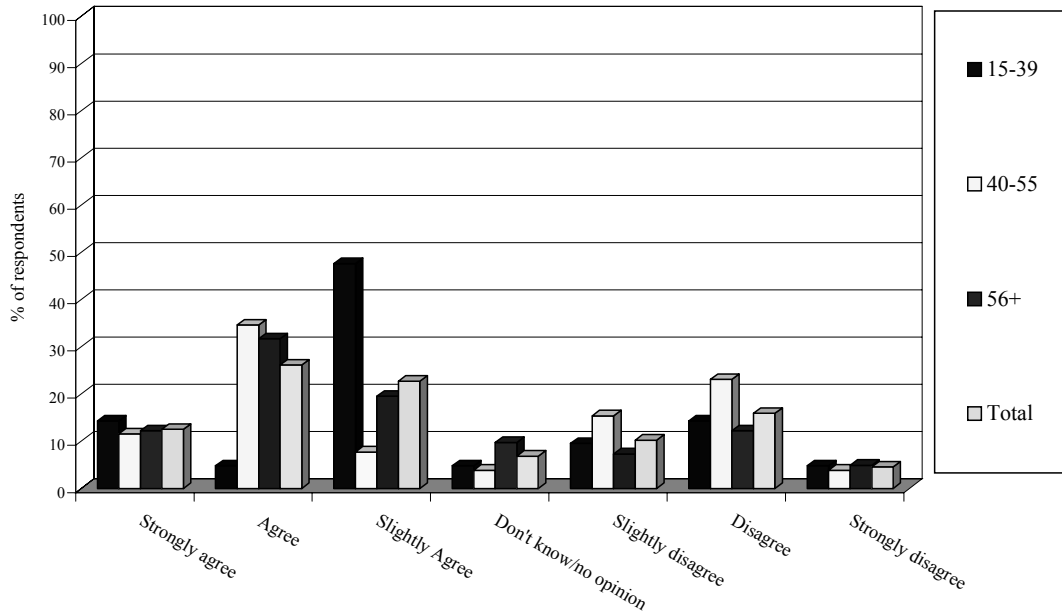
Lay People
 Sectarianism is one of the most important issues facing the Church of Ireland
 Fig. 13



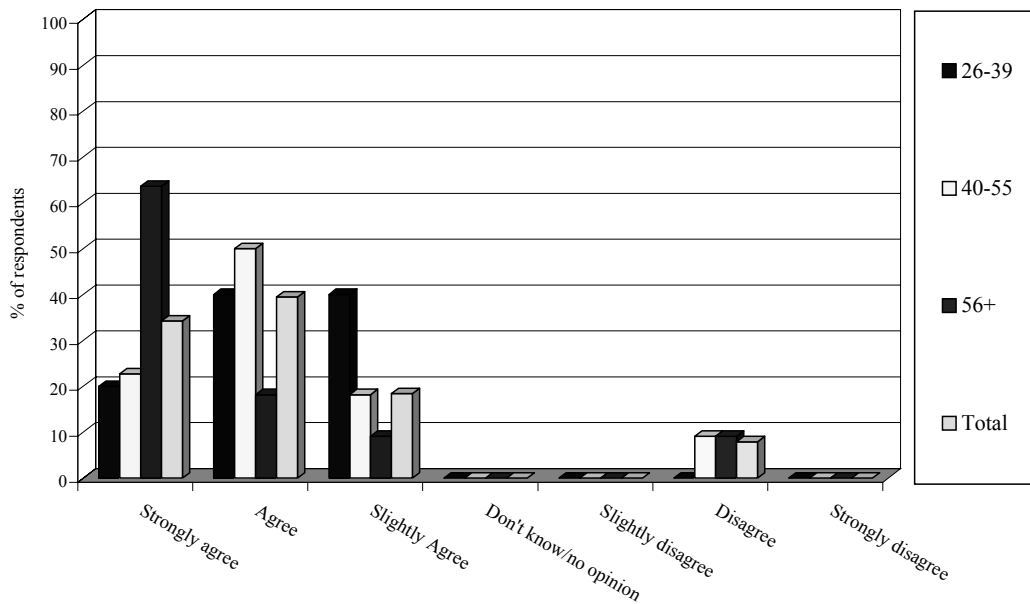
This chart is provided as an explanatory example. Charts in this study are explained as follows:

The **title of the chart** refers to the population studied (lay people, interviewed rectors, all rectors, or Standing Committee members) and the question asked. The **chart legend** on the right hand side refers to the age group and total percentage of respondents. In the interests of clarity, the top-down legend always reads from left-right on the charts, with the younger age group further to the left. Charts follow for the 'Defining Sectarianism' section of the study.

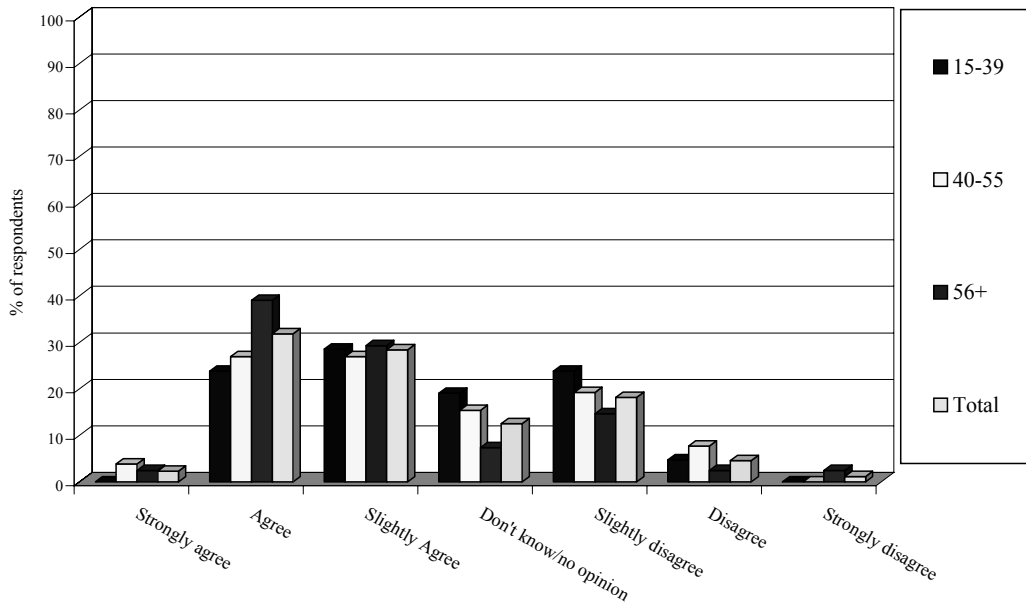
Lay People
Sectarianism is one of the most important issues facing the Church of Ireland
Fig. 13



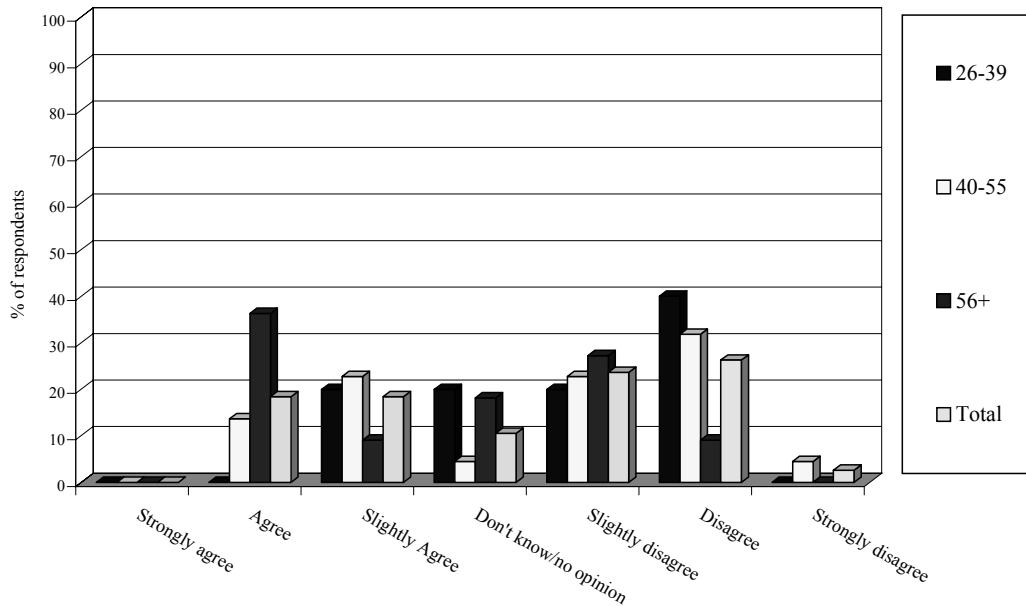
Interviewed Rectors
Sectarianism is one of the most important issues facing the Church of Ireland
Fig. 14



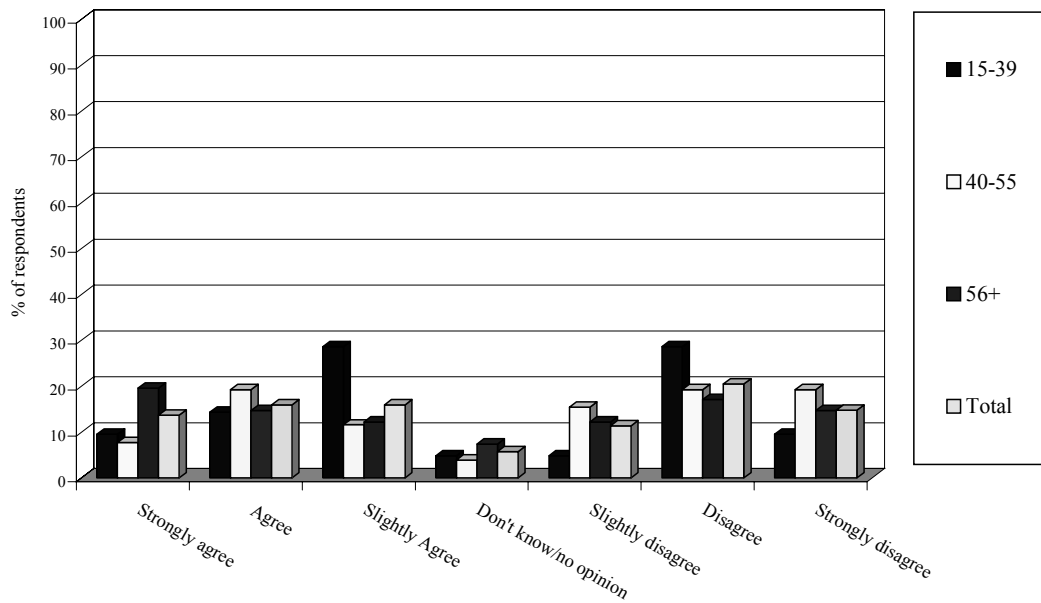
Lay People
The Church of Ireland copes reasonably well with sectarianism
Fig. 15



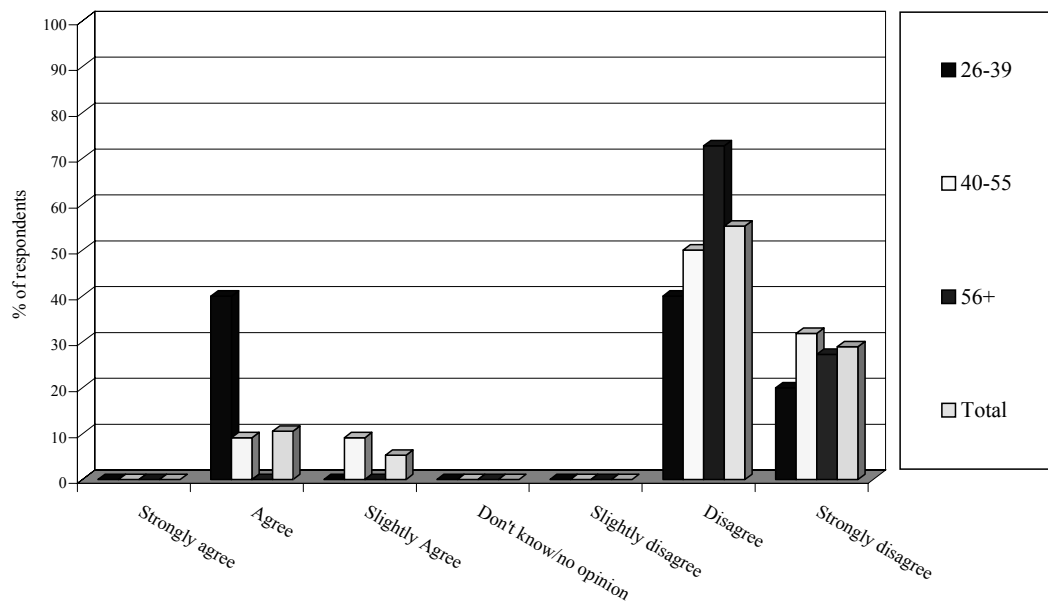
Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland copes reasonably well with sectarianism
Fig. 16



Lay People
Sectarianism is not a religious issue
Fig. 17



Interviewed Rectors
Sectarianism is not a religious issue
Fig. 18



The responses obtained to questions about sectarianism may be open to more than one interpretation. As well as those respondents who identified sectarianism closely with violence and therefore felt that if there was no violence, there was no sectarianism, there was also a range of understanding apparent in responses to the statement "Sectarianism is not a religious issue" (See Fig 18). The strong response may equally cover those who feel that sectarianism is an issue that the church ought to be tackling, as well as those who feel that sectarianism is present within the church.

The set of responses obtained in the survey suggests that more discussion needs to take place about the nature of sectarianism in order to develop a broadly shared understanding of the issues for the church. This debate might be one of the things tackled at a diocesan level. The charts show that 92% of rectors, and 67% of lay people felt that sectarianism 'is one of the most important issues facing the Church of Ireland'.

There was a broader spread of responses to the statement 'The Church of Ireland copes reasonably well with sectarianism', with, among rectors (lay people) respectively, around 50% (24%) disagreeing, 40% (62%) agreeing, and 10% (14%) indicating 'no opinion/don't know'. This may be due to the frequent assertion by some lay respondents that sectarianism 'isn't an issue round here', arising from the lack of conspicuous or explicit violence in the local vicinity. Additionally, 80% of rectors and only 42% of lay people perceived sectarianism to be a religious issue. Some quotations follow to exemplify the kinds of responses given to the Scoping Study that reflect respondents' perception that sectarianism is 'not an issue for them'.

Does sectarianism always include religion? Most people contributing to sectarianism are not religious. Does this definition of sectarianism include all Ireland? Because if it involves verbal abuse and attacking others, you don't see that 'down here'! **Lay person, Armagh**

We don't really have a problem here and are keen to ensure that we will not have. We are sensitive however to the enormous challenges and problems elsewhere. **Rector, Connor**

This definition is just appropriate to Northern Ireland. We know nothing about this. If you start thinking about these issues don't you think you're not stirring up a hornet's nest? **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

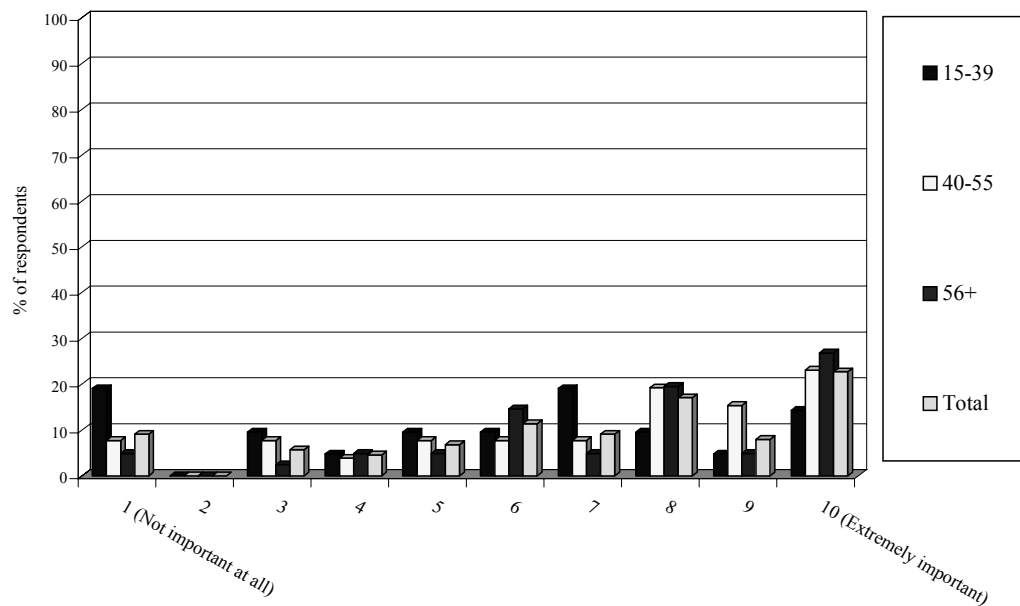
DEFINING SECTARIANISM

- *Respondents are open to change. They see sectarianism as an important issue for the church and feel that the church needs to improve how it addresses this.*
- *Respondents are often unclear about what 'sectarianism' actually means.*
- *The definition of sectarianism adopted by Standing Committee has not been adequately disseminated among clergy and lay people.*
- *A vision statement, reflecting what the SEP hopes a world without sectarianism and other negative ways of dealing with difference would be like, could be of great value.*
- *Some respondents do not feel that sectarianism, as they understand it, is a pressing issue in their locality, either because they equate sectarianism with violence and, if violence is absent in their area sectarianism is not an issue, or because in the case of a number of respondents living in the Republic, sectarianism was felt to be an issue relevant to Northern Ireland only.*
- *There is also a lack of understanding of practical steps that may be taken to address sectarianism, such as those outlined in Clegg and Liechty's 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism' (Columba Press, 2001).*

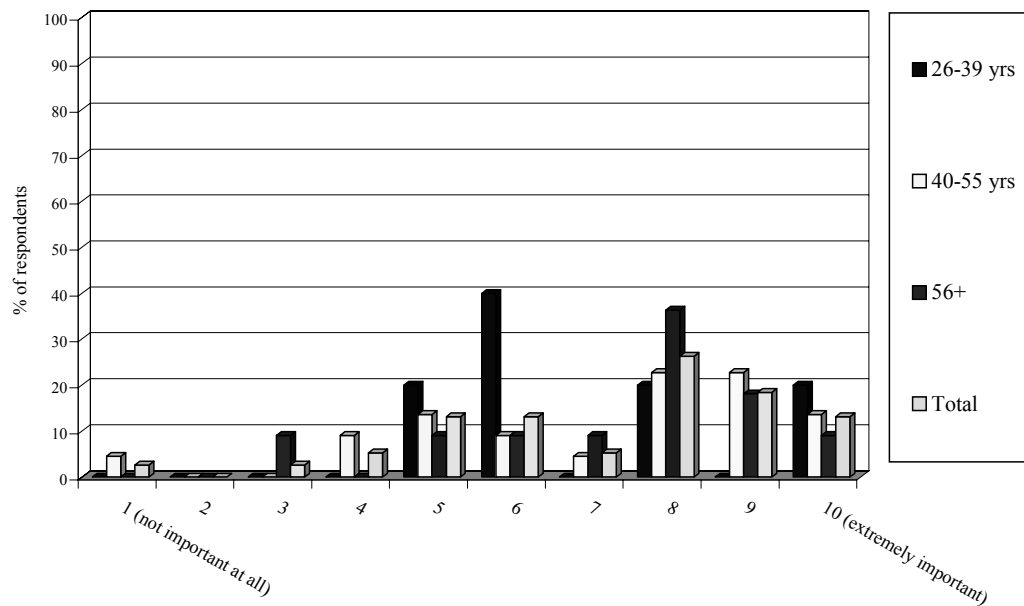
3: CHURCH OF IRELAND IDENTITY

The Scoping Study sought to ascertain the views of respondents on the nature of Church of Ireland identity. There was much agreement on this topic, with most respondents asserting that Church of Ireland identity is not exclusive and suggests good relationships with other Christian traditions. Some felt that the name 'the Church of Ireland' may be perceived to be exclusive, but none considered this important enough to warrant changing the name. The historic perception of the church as a *via media* or bridge between traditions was mentioned by a number of respondents, but the meaning of this in practice is indeed a matter of perception. Some respondents, particularly in the Republic, felt that the image of the church has been if not tainted, significantly affected by the Drumcree controversy. It is not novel to suggest that the Drumcree situation is one of the phenomena most associated with the Church of Ireland in the public mind. This, of course, is part of the reason for the commissioning of the Scoping Study and the SEP should be encouraged that respondents from both within and without the Church of Ireland were eager to emphasise other elements of Church of Ireland identity and to develop other areas of ministry, even while Drumcree remains unresolved.

Lay People
 How important is the label 'Church of Ireland' to you?
 Fig. 19



Interviewed Rectors
How important is the label 'Church of Ireland' to you?
Fig. 20



Figs. 19, 20: What does it mean to be Church of Ireland? Respondents were broadly divided across a range of responses, from seeing Church of Ireland identity as not very important, to extremely important. However, no more than 25% of the total respondents agreed about any of the options. People feel generally loyal to the Church of Ireland, but do not consider it the 'be-all and end-all' of their identity. In other words, Church of Ireland identity is considered basically important, although not held too exclusively by respondents.

Church of Ireland identity is clearly important to a large proportion of respondents:

My whole life is tied up in the Church of Ireland. The way the Church of Ireland worships reflects the way I need to worship...we are both Catholic and Protestant, so we have this medium. **Curate, Armagh**

I went to a Protestant primary school and was in a...Roman Catholic secondary school. I was one of two Protestants in it. So my Church of Ireland identity...became something that was very meaningful for me. [As for identity labels,] even 'Protestant' I think I would leave out, simply because I believe in the Catholic Church. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

The generalised inclusiveness of the church was criticised by a small number of respondents:

I would see the Church of Ireland as very much in the catholic but reformed tradition...I would have difficulty in a sense with the word 'Protestant'...I'm not sure that the identity that I would have...would necessarily be one that all members of the Church of Ireland would share. **Rector, Armagh**

But most respondents believe that there are more important elements to identity than denominational or church background:

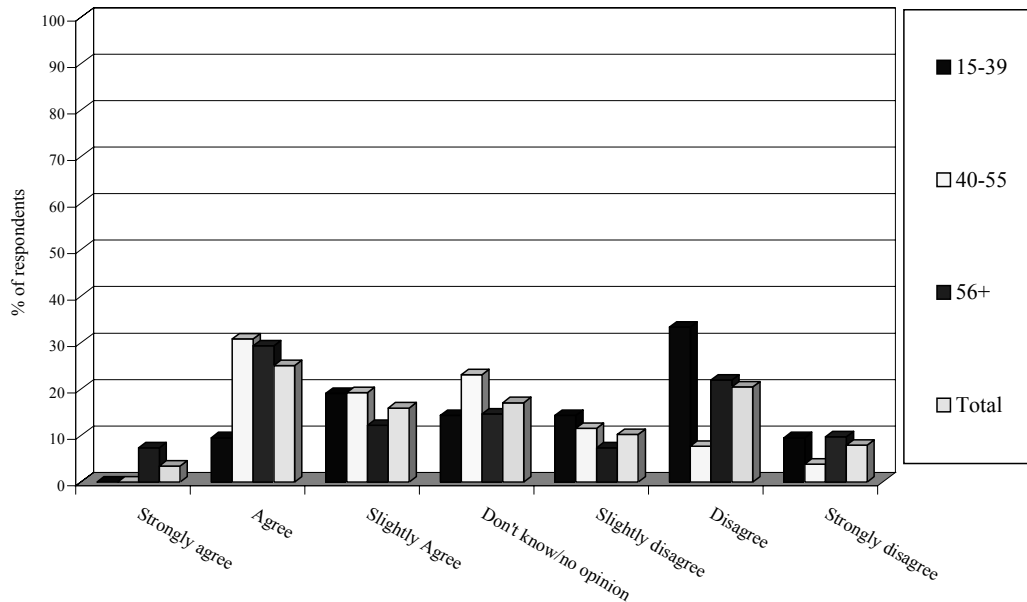
I think being a Christian is more important than defining yourself as Church of Ireland...I went to see a boy [in a juvenile justice centre] who was down on the list as being Church of Ireland...and he said, 'No...I'm...Church of Northern Ireland.' He obviously thought the Ireland bit was not for him. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

[To be Church of Ireland means] to minister in and be part of a reformed Episcopal Church, with a clear confession of faith: the thirty-nine articles. The answer would have been stronger...if that understanding of the Church of Ireland was more widely shared in the Church of Ireland. **Rector, Clogher**

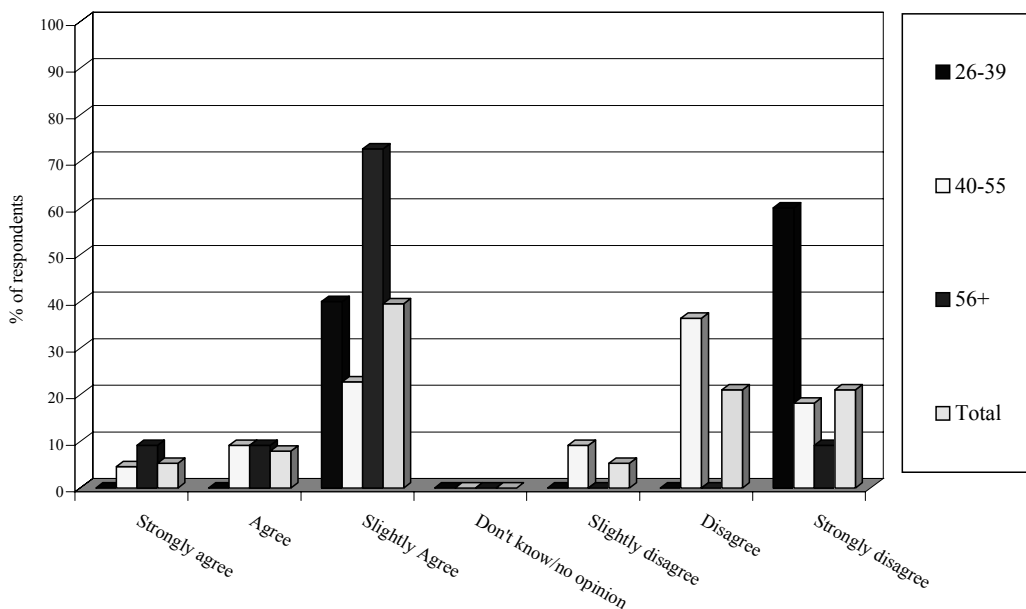
There certainly is [a] kind of heavy and unhealthy mix of 'we are right and nobody else is right', and I don't just mean one group when I say that....I don't know how we deal with that, but it comes out in issues about the theological college, it comes out in...General Synod, it comes out in correspondence pages of *The Church of Ireland Gazette*, and some people want to act as though it's not there. **Bishop**

The question of the relative importance of Church of Ireland doctrine was raised:

Lay People
The Church of Ireland teaches truer doctrines of Christian faith than other Churches
Fig. 21

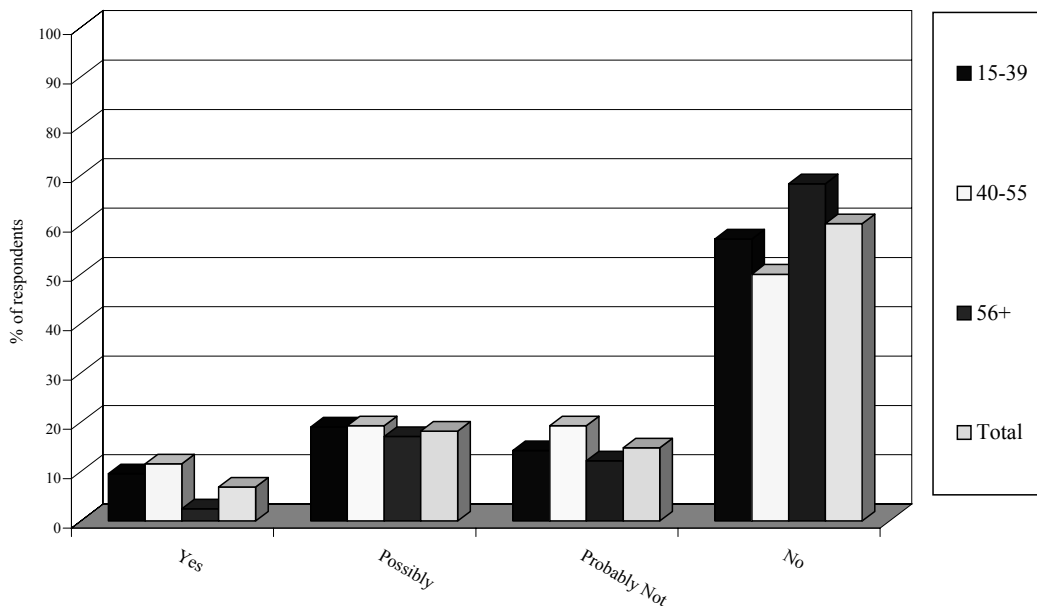


Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland teaches truer doctrines of Christian faith than other churches
Fig. 22

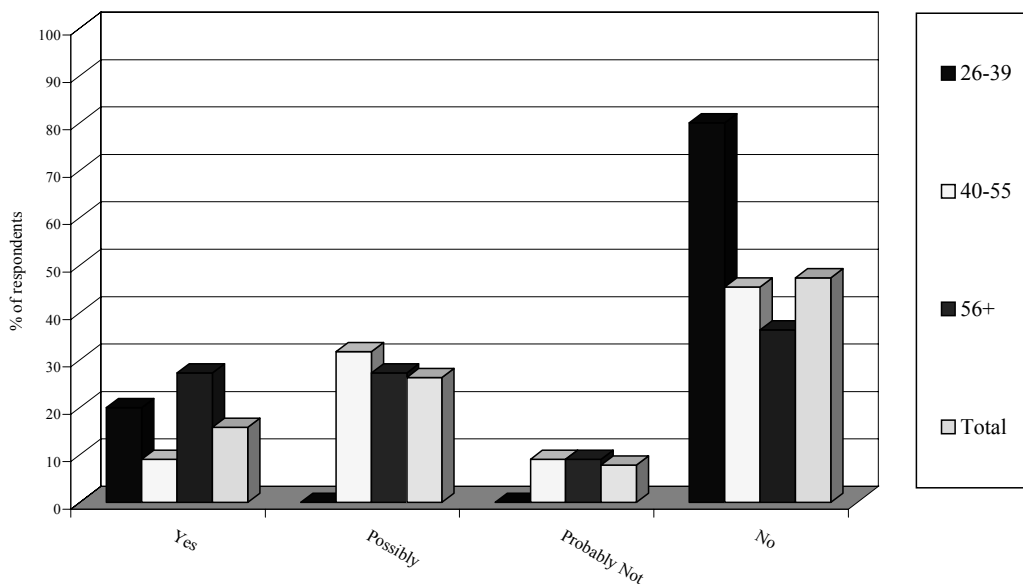


Figs. 21, 22: When considering doctrine taught within the Church of Ireland compared with that taught by other Christian churches, most clergy respondents tended toward not agreeing with the statement 'The Church of Ireland teaches truer doctrines of Christian faith than other churches', with only 38% of the total indicating slight agreement, and around 10% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Lay people were more evenly divided across a range of responses. The consensus was that the Church of Ireland is one of many valid expressions of Christian faith, and that even those who thought the church 'taught truer doctrines' did not believe this meant the church had a monopoly on Christian teaching.

Lay People
Could the name 'Church of Ireland' be sectarian?
Fig. 23



Interviewed Rectors
Could the name 'The Church of Ireland' be sectarian?
Fig. 24



Figs. 23, 24 show that respondents were asked if they thought the name 'the Church of Ireland' could be sectarian. Around 70% of both clergy and lay respondents said 'probably not' or 'no'. Many indicated that they had never considered this possibility, and some reflected that the Roman Catholic Church could be considered exclusive for the same reason as one might accuse the Church of Ireland. No one felt that the name should be changed urgently, although a few respondents said that a change from the 'Church of Ireland' to something like the 'Episcopal Church *in* Ireland' might be helpful.

It's only very recently that I gave this any thought...[when] a colleague...said, 'think how the Roman Catholics must feel when we refer to ourselves as The Church of Ireland'. **Rector, Armagh**

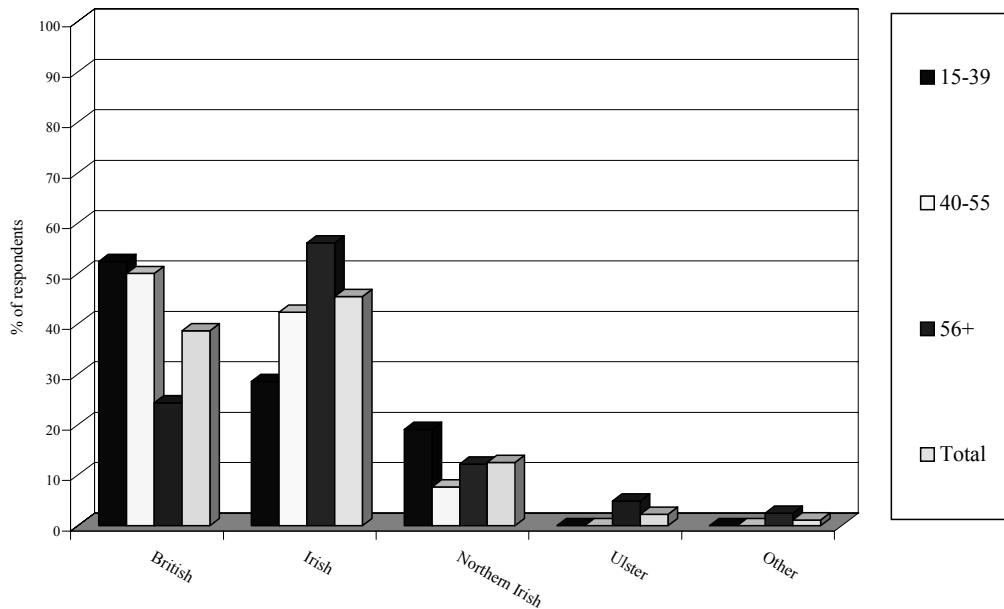
In no way does the Church of Ireland have a monopoly on true Christian doctrine, nor does the Roman Catholic Church. **Lay person, Armagh**

Calling it *the* Church of Ireland may be sectarian, but it's infinitely preferable to 'Anglican'. I prefer to be called Church of Ireland as opposed to Protestant; the latter is an offensive term, obscuring denominational identity and can be used in a derogatory way, such as 'black prod'...the term is used where people are seen to be...anti-Catholic. I also consider it offensive to insist upon addressing people as Roman Catholics when their own self-identity is expressed as Catholic. **Lay person, Armagh**

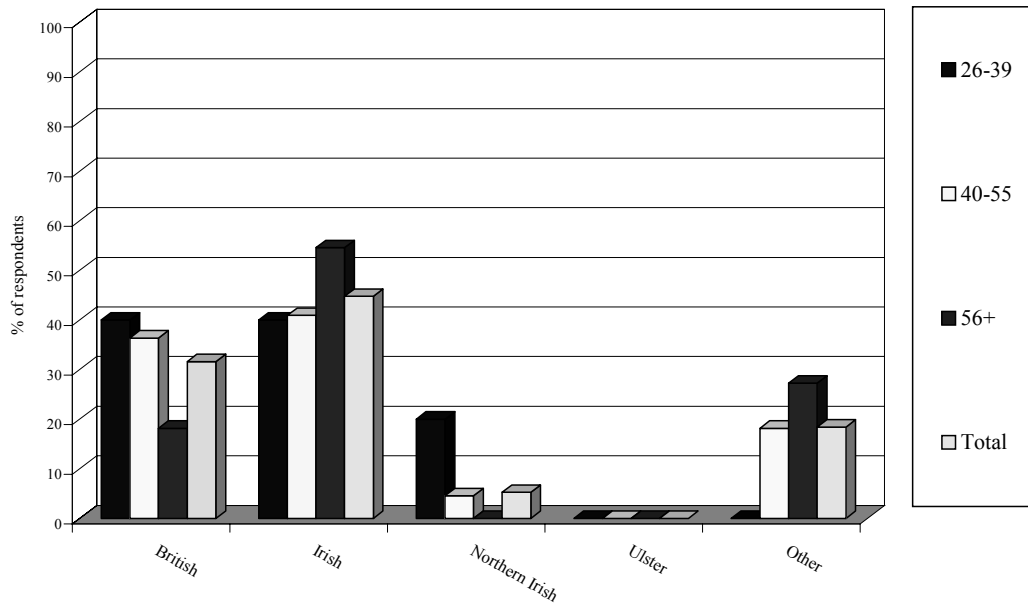
I was horrified when growing up at the terminology of 'being saved' and the notion that there [has to be] an exact time and place of the event. This was not at all my own experience. **Lay person, Armagh**

How can it be sectarian? The question is provocative in itself. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

**Lay People
National Identity
Fig. 25**



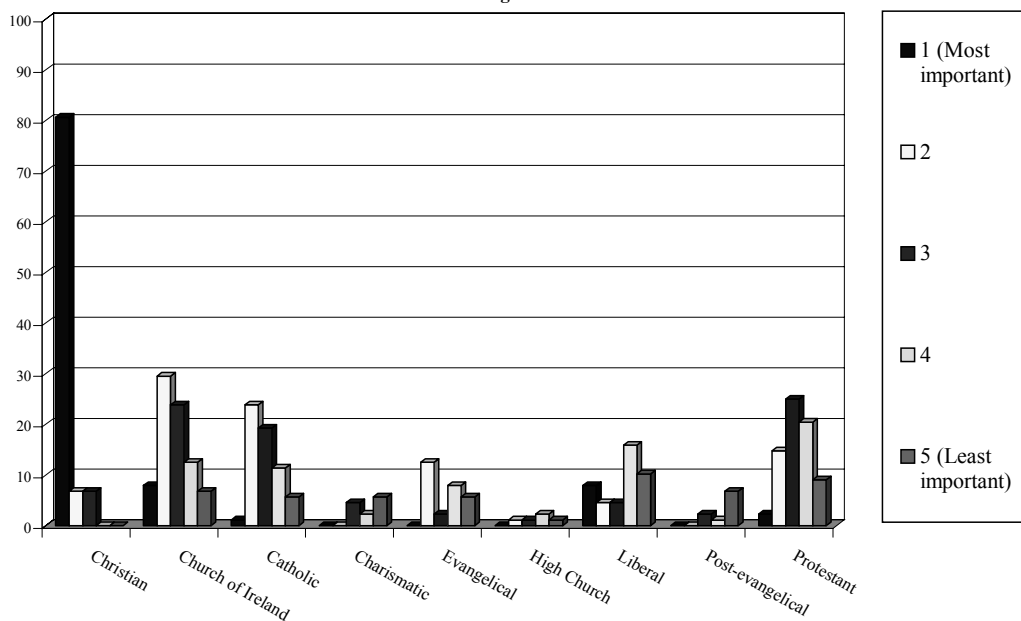
**Interviewed Rectors
National Identity
Fig. 26**



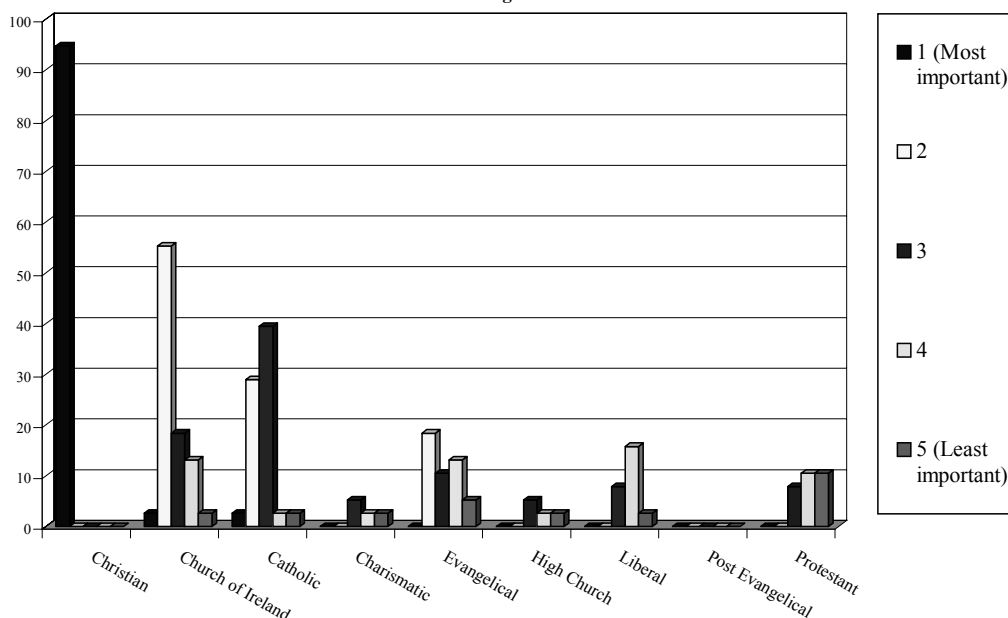
Figs. 25, 26: National identity was an uncomplicated matter, with respondents almost evenly distributed between British/Northern Irish and Irish. None of the respondents indicated any defensiveness regarding national identity and seemed to feel that their identity was not threatened and, in some cases, affirmed by the church, for instance:

Any linkage between having to 'feel' British to be 'Protestant' in the Republic of Ireland is not as prevalent now as in times gone by. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

**Lay People
Please rank the following identity labels as you feel they apply to you
Fig. 27**



Interviewed Rectors
Please rank the following identity labels as you feel they apply to you
Fig. 28



Figs. 27, 28: The range of suggested responses to the question on identity was agreed in consultation with the SEP committee. Both clergy and lay respondents considered 'Christian' to be the most important identity label that they apply to themselves. 'Church of Ireland' was the next most important, closely followed by 'Catholic' (as in 'one Catholic Church'). Rectors then indicated 'evangelical' as the fourth most important label, although lay people's fourth preference was 'Protestant'. It is noteworthy that 58% of lay respondents, but only 28% of clergy respondents, gave this label any preference at all. 'Protestant' was often considered a 'loaded' term, with negative connotations, especially in Northern Ireland. Many respondents said they preferred to see themselves as 'reformed' rather than 'Protestant' because of what they saw as the exclusive popular perceptions of 'Protestantism' in the context of sectarianism.

I think that the single identity issue is an important one, because perhaps re-discovering or affirming your own identity can give a necessary and important contribution towards understanding the identity of others, and recognising the importance of the different outlooks, attributes coming together in a positive way for the overall good. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Any on that list you would eliminate immediately? Where would Protestant come?

Last of all...In Northern Ireland it has so many negative connotations. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Being known as a Christian is more important, and being Church of Ireland is secondary. Being a follower of Jesus...having been forgiven and trusting Jesus, that's the first thing. **Rector, Connor**

The church should address our own identity first to be clear in what it means to be a Christian; i.e. that political affiliation is not a part of faith. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

We have to get our own...people to understand that our own history is not perfect...that we have to make a new beginning, not always referring to our glorious past. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Presbyterians are more likely to...vent anger about their denomination...whereas people in the Church of Ireland say, 'I hate the Church of Ireland, but I love it. I can't stand the bureaucratic rigmarole, but I've

a deep loyalty to it...And we're certainly more diverse than the [other churches may] think [they are].
Youth Worker, unknown diocese.

What does the word Protestant mean to you? Would you use it to describe yourself?

No, because I always associate the word Protestant with meaning protesting against something, and I don't see that I am. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

Charismatic and Evangelical are labels that mean nothing to me. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

What's evangelical mean? I don't know much about it!...In [a nearby town] C of I identity isn't important, but 10 miles away it is, especially for the older people. **Lay person, Tuam, Killala and Achonry**

I think it's very important – it's an important label. I think it's just one tiny branch of Christianity, but it's the one into which I was born, and the one that I love dearly – but not in any exclusive sense, not that it's superior to any other. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

[Often] in the Church of Ireland there is a denial of the problem, especially through the use of the term 'via media'. If it's [really] a bridge, is anyone crossing it? **Anonymous respondent**

Some said that the Church of Ireland is a 'safe place to fail', but that blandness too easily becomes the order of the day:

So what's gone wrong with the Church of Ireland, and what's gone right? What do you like about it?

Freedom to fail...I saw something at our church that really thrilled me. It was a bunch of flowers...lying on the porch; it had been on the communion table – at the front of the church and the back of the church – and it really meant that no matter how dry or dead they became they shouldn't be thrown out.

Do [people] hate them being thrown out because they don't want to give the impression of being bad people, or because they really want to keep them?

I think a certain mediocrity has to be achieved in the Church of Ireland, or you'll go too far. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

It's been good to be able to fail and still be welcome, but there's a certain sort of failing that at times goes on, among congregation and leadership, in the Church of Ireland that unfortunately just drifts on by, and no-one ever asks a question or two about why...Stuff like declining numbers, and inability to impact communities, or even love people who aren't a part of us. There's a kind of failure out there that we don't ask questions about. Why, if the gospel is the power of the salvation...does it seem to be so irrelevant? And it isn't the gospel that's irrelevant, but there's something has failed about how we even live it. **Ordained Youth Worker, Down and Dromore**

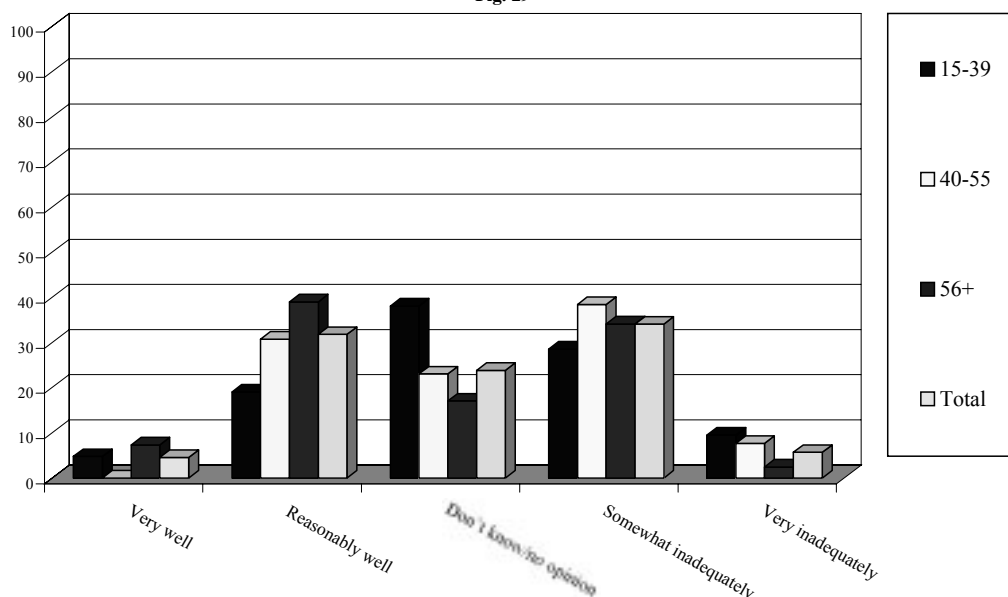
CHURCH OF IRELAND IDENTITY

- Respondents believe that Church of Ireland identity is inclusive. There is no serious concern that the name 'The Church of Ireland' may itself be sectarian.
- Being known as a Christian is seen as more important than being known as a member of the Church of Ireland.
- Sometimes Church of Ireland members feel 'looked down on' by the members of other reformed churches.
- Respondents generally did not identify with the term 'Protestant', usually because it is perceived by many to have negative connotations in Northern Ireland.
- Respondents did not, on the whole, consider national identity to be a matter of contention.
- The Drumcree controversy negatively colours many people's perceptions of Church of Ireland identity.
- Some respondents in the Republic of Ireland do not want to 'be like' the Northern church. There is a perception that 'the north is not like the south'.
- The Church of Ireland can be undemanding in a positive sense, but this sometimes expresses itself at the expense of striving always for the best.

4: CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND STRUCTURE, GENERAL SYNOD AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

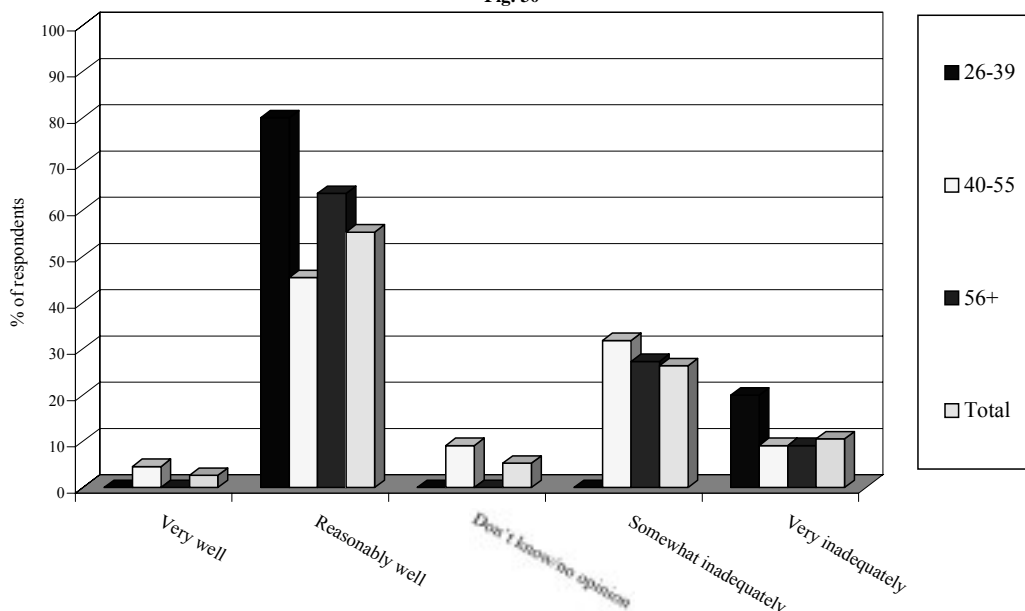
The question of church government elicited a consensus that might be best summarised as follows: Parish ministry is the keystone of the Church of Ireland. The influence of Select Vestries at the parish level is far greater than either diocesan or General Synod. In some cases, General Synod is considered to be irrelevant to parish life. As one lay respondent from Down and Dromore said: 'Progress will depend on real commitment from the top and actual involvement at parish level'. Approximately 35% of both clergy and lay respondents felt that differences surrounding the governmental decision making process are inadequately handled (see **Figs. 29, 30**; these and other similar charts reflect responses to questions beginning 'How well do you feel the Church of Ireland handles [the following]?'). This is manifested in a range of cases, from simple 'everyday tasks' squeezing out the space for wider reflection on policy, to the perception of several respondents of inadequate consultation on the new hymn book, to the assertion by one rector that 'if my parishioners knew what the Synod thinks about Drumcree, my job would be that much harder'. A number of lay people said that the process of getting involved in church structures is cumbersome and uninviting. There is a need for better relations between parishes, dioceses, and General Synod. As one respondent said, 'There is a need for a redefinition of structures – what is the place of the various governmental agencies in the Church of Ireland? The body of Christ needs each other – sectarianism is a severed arm but [we need] a prescription for the entire body.'

Lay People
How well do you feel the Church of Ireland handles differences surrounding the way decisions are made in church government?
Fig. 29



Interviewed Rectors
How well do you feel the Church of Ireland handles differences surrounding the way decisions are made in church government?

Fig. 30



Respondents' opinions on church government and public leadership are illustrated by the following quotations:

Church government is viewed with a degree of confusion or suspicion by some:

Vestries are like secret societies. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

There is definitely no consultation by the hierarchy when it comes to decision making and decisions are made without any information or feedback being given (referring to specific issue of property sale). **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

Decision-making is not generally well handled; there is often inadequate consultation or management of change. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

The average bum on the pew couldn't care less about hierarchical level and couldn't tell you what a dean/archdeacon is (a criticism as much as an observation). **Lay person, Connor**

It is never clear who is speaking on behalf of the church. The 'hierarchy' is sometimes a catch-all term which does not clearly identify who is voicing opinion. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

Not all ideas made at hierarchical level are realistic or their implications properly thought out. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

The need to do more than 'say kind words' about sectarianism and difference was mentioned:

Sectarianism will not end with the publication of findings. The Church of Ireland needs a monitoring scheme for years to come that will ask 'is there a sectarian issue?' at each stage of our central as well as local work. **Bishop**

What would Jesus do in the face of sectarianism? [This] must be taught and lived out by us Christian leaders. We must lead others – be an example to them. **Rector, Armagh**

The relationship between parishes and Synods, both diocesan and general was highlighted:

I think [my parishioners] would feel part of the wider church, but there always seems to be an attitude, 'Them up in Armagh'. Now it's not necessarily critical, but it's just that decisions are made in Armagh. **Rector, Armagh**

Most of [my parishioners] would accept, bishop knows best. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Do lay people feel they have a stake in the way decisions are made in the church?

I think on paper we all have a say. Now how that works out in practice is slightly different, and...I always get the feeling, rightly or wrongly, that most decisions have been made in advance. **Rector, Armagh**

We had our Diocesan Synod yesterday, and people don't know each other. There's really no forum for getting to know each other. **Rector, Connor**

Do lay people have a stake in decision-making?

They can do. If they're really obnoxious and wish to push their point the avenue is there to do it. But most of them don't know they can do it. **Rector, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

Here we are self-contained and don't need to think about other things. Maybe we are just not aware of the big, wider world. **Lay person, Armagh**

It's ok at the local level, not at the diocesan or [General] Synod level; people are intimidated by the processes. Often the same people are repeatedly elected. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do lay people feel that they have a stake in the decision-making process in your experience?

Yes, when it comes to parish and diocesan things...But not enough people take part in the election process.

That seems to be a common pattern...

Yes, but...in recent years, on my return [from] General Synod, [I have] given a report the Sunday afterwards, there are a number of people afterwards who say how much they value that, to be included...The biggest thing that's misunderstood [is the] fact it is put there by themselves, for themselves. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

A distinction was made however, that the General Synod is select, since not everybody can necessarily afford to go to the Synod, or would even have the interest in going in the first place. The point was made that after Synod more information should be related back to ordinary people. **Focus Group report, Derry and Raphoe**

Church government was considered important by some, although it did not always reach its potential:

If you have sloppy government, everything falls apart as well. You do need a structure. And yet I wouldn't put that at the top of my list. But it is very important. **Curate, Armagh**

The view was strongly expressed that the issue of sectarianism within parishes must be challenged and that efforts to do this differ greatly from parish to parish, yet the church must take the lead and be seen to be doing something. **Focus Group report, Down and Dromore**

What [the] church is doing right? I believe the sectarianism document adopted by the 1999 General Synod is an excellent example of how the subject can be dealt with thoroughly and honestly. Also its investigation of the church's relationship with the Orange Order is explored with similar rigour, and arrives at clear conclusions. But, as happens so often...a problem is accurately identified, then a case of continue on the old 'sweet' way. **Patsy McGarry, Irish Times**

The danger of strategy being imposed 'from above' was of concern to some respondents:

Well it shouldn't be a top-down thing, and we need to go back to make sure that the process which started this bottom-up doesn't become a top-down. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Synod needs to change...The Synod before [last], we spent most of Synod time going through liturgy, and...one day to the best of my memory was discussing where 'the', 'and' and 'no' should be, and dots, and you name it, and commas and semi-colons. That is not the business of Synod. And whenever you get back *The Church of Ireland Gazette* talks about that, most people say, 'What a waste of time, and why do our rectors go down and spend three days in Dublin if that's all they're doing?...It's an irrelevancy,...in this parish anyway. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

So in your wildest dreams what would you like the Synod to say next year?

That denomination is no longer relevant...I will preach that from my pulpit. How can I bring tomorrow two young people to the communion rails and unite them as one, if I still think as a denominational person? It's a mockery. We have a tradition that is very valuable, and we have a way of doing things that's very valuable, but to be Church of Ireland as a name or a flag isn't the important thing to me. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

It is unrealistic for an Archbishop of Armagh to have the international role that he has, and also to have day-to-day running of his diocese. So there should be a domestic bishop to look after the diocese of Armagh...There ought [also] to be a bishop for Belfast. There is a city split between two dioceses, and a whole range of issues. And it would be better to have somebody who's identified as giving a measure of leadership within the city. I don't believe the Archbishop is properly resourced by the church. I think it is totally unacceptable...The research facilities he has are nil, the office facilities he has are at best rudimentary: he's got a wonderful secretary, but...he has a very, very difficult diocese...You don't want to leave hostages to fortune, and he's Archbishop, so he can afford to take fewer risks than some of the rest of us...What we ought to be doing is giving him cover. **Anonymous respondent**

And the public role of the church was mentioned as an important resource that is not always properly resourced or used to its best potential:

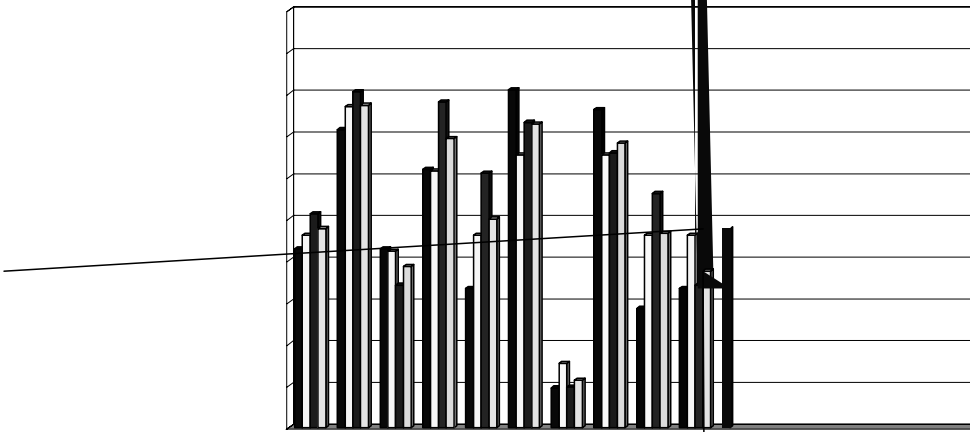
There was a concern that the Church of Ireland does not make enough public statements; it is not good at taking a pro-active stance in relation to social issues. **Focus Group report, Derry and Raphoe**

We sometimes water all our leadership down by saying, 'Well each bishop has his own voice,' and whatever else. And that's where the Presbyterian Church came through very well in the last while in Northern Ireland. Whether or not it was supportive of its own grouping, it spoke out – it gave leadership. And I think we owe it to our church members to do that. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

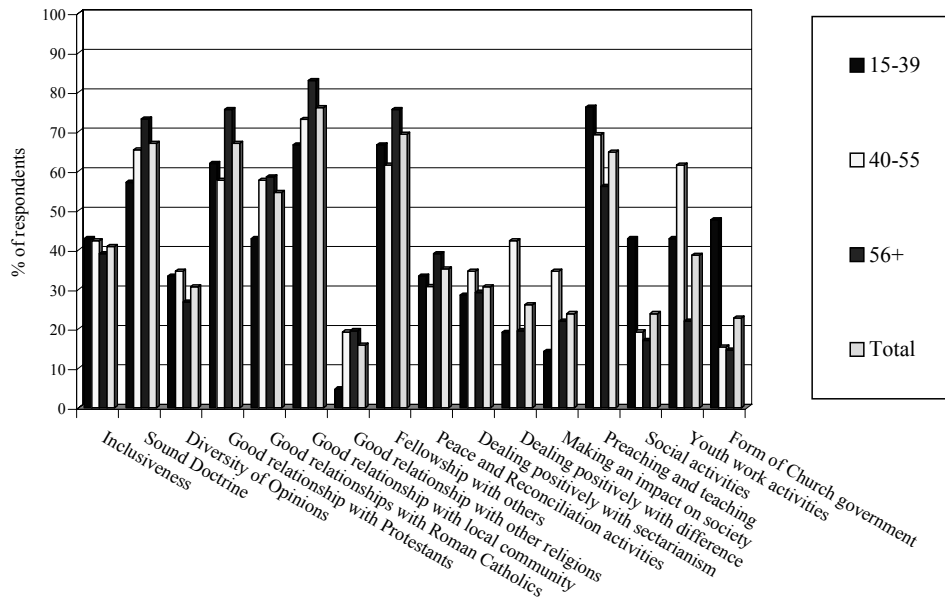
Bishops, etc. could be more courageously outspoken and less concerned to wait for the carefully crafted statement giving the so-called 'definitive' C of I viewpoint. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

The church needs a structure which, while recognizing the wide diversity of its constituency, can respond to community needs with an identified voice. Who speaks for the Church of Ireland? Bishops, General Synod, etc? The creation of a new Church in Society Committee...may help – but situations often demand an immediate response. Often it is the opinion of the Primate or an individual bishop which is perceived to be the '*voice of the Church of Ireland.*' Adequate research is necessary and [the Primate] does not have access to that at present. **Bishop**

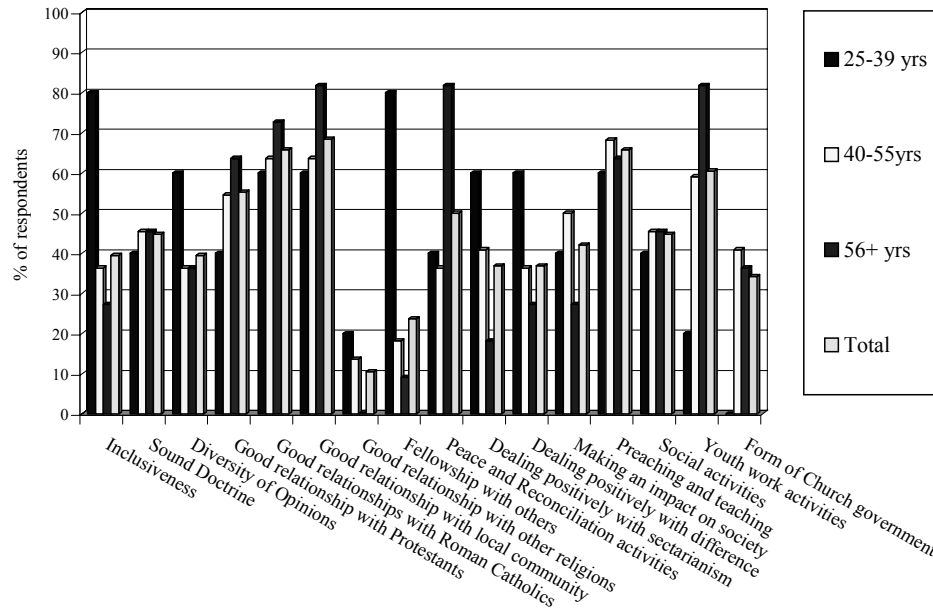
Every diocese within the Church of Ireland is different, with distinct traditions and patterns of ministry. The particular emphases of bishops clearly influence the life of the diocese, but perhaps no more or less so than questions of tradition, history, and so on. Obviously this Scoping Study cannot draw detailed conclusions on a diocesan basis, but **Figs. 31-34** show respondents' views of the characteristics of Church of Ireland identity in general, illustrated by the quotations that follow the charts. This is not an exclusive list – respondents were invited to indicate the 3 or 4 characteristics that they considered or perceived to be most important.)



Lay People
Which are important characteristics of Church of Ireland identity?
Fig. 33



Interviewed Rectors
Which are important characteristics of Church of Ireland identity?
Fig. 34



The charts show that 40-50% of clergy respondents, and 25-35% of lay respondents felt that peace and reconciliation activities, dealing positively with sectarianism, and dealing positively with difference were currently important characteristics of Church of Ireland identity. It should be noted that **'peace and reconciliation activities', 'dealing positively with sectarianism', and 'dealing positively with difference' were ranked relatively low** on the list of characteristics that respondents considered to be the current reality in their own dioceses. On the whole, **diocesan twinnings were not considered to be of particular value** by respondents, although this may be more due to lack of experience in this area than any substantial critique. It is clear that the **diocesan context**, perhaps naturally, **impinges more on the life of parishioners than the General Synod**, and the SEP should strategically employ the diocesan structure in its future work. That said, for many in the Church of Ireland, life beyond the particular parish is difficult to imagine, and may have little or no impact on the lives of members. The most obvious implication is that the SEP must focus proportionately on life at the parochial level as well as making appropriate use of diocesan structures. While statements made at Synod, or policies adopted by Standing Committee have their place, there is no substitute for practical work at the level of people's everyday lives. Some examples of responses are provided for illustration:

[Diocesan twinnings] tend to go over people's heads. It's a nice idea, but I'm not sure just how much it hits the ground. **Rector, Connor**

I see very little value in [diocesan twinnings], of what we can give to them or they can give to us. I would think if there's going to be twinning – I was out in Africa last September, and we saw a church there in need – I think financially we would have a lot to give to them, and maybe historically we could have certain things to give to them. Twinnings like that, where there's going to be definite advantage one way or the other, or both. **Rector, Connor**

Certainly I would regard the diocese...almost personified in the Archbishop himself, as encapsulating the idea that we should deal positively with difference...And part of the strength...of the whole Church of Ireland, is to try and hold in tension all of these differences, and that's done certainly at diocesan level in relation to the various theological outlooks of the clergy. **Rector, Armagh**

Evangelism should be high [on my list]...it really means getting out there, and gospel warts and all...and if people don't like what you're saying then tough.

And what form do [your] peacemaking opportunities take?

I think not just necessarily standing on a peace line on the Garvaghy Road or anything like that, but even trying to bring peace to situations in schools, between parents and teachers or between parents and children, things like that. Not being afraid to allow yourself to be there as an intercessor if people need one, and that people would know you're accessible and available from that point of view. There are so many conflicts that need to be resolved within our every day parish situation as opposed to a paramilitary environment. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

I'd have to distinguish here of course between my diocese and the diocese of Raphoe, not Derry and Raphoe; they're very different. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

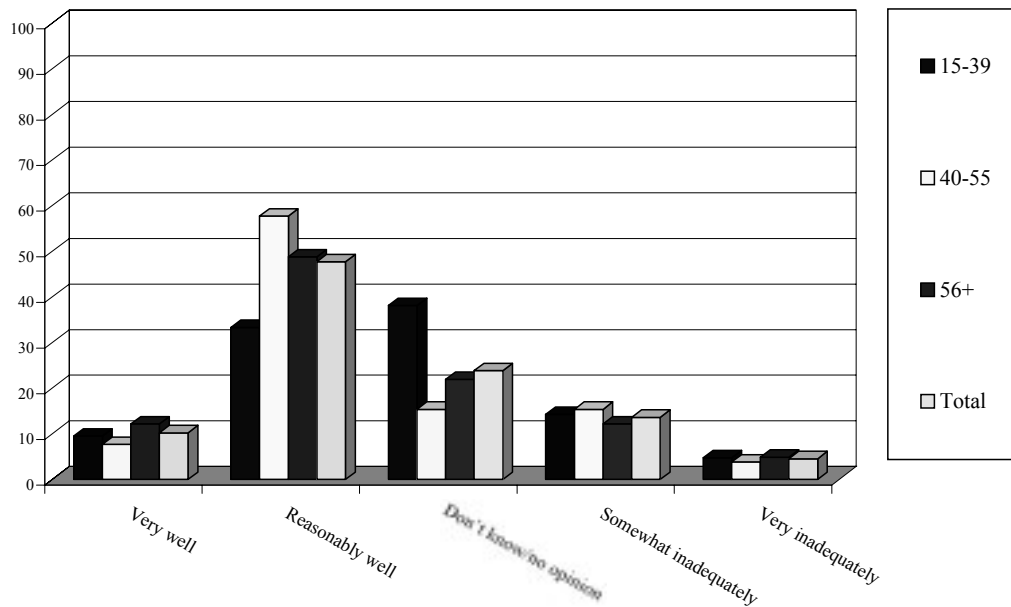
I think this diocese is being – I think the bishop is trying to make the diocese...in his own image, and I don't think that's going to happen. **Rector, diocese withheld**

Inclusiveness is [considered] more important than sound doctrine. **Rector, Clogher**

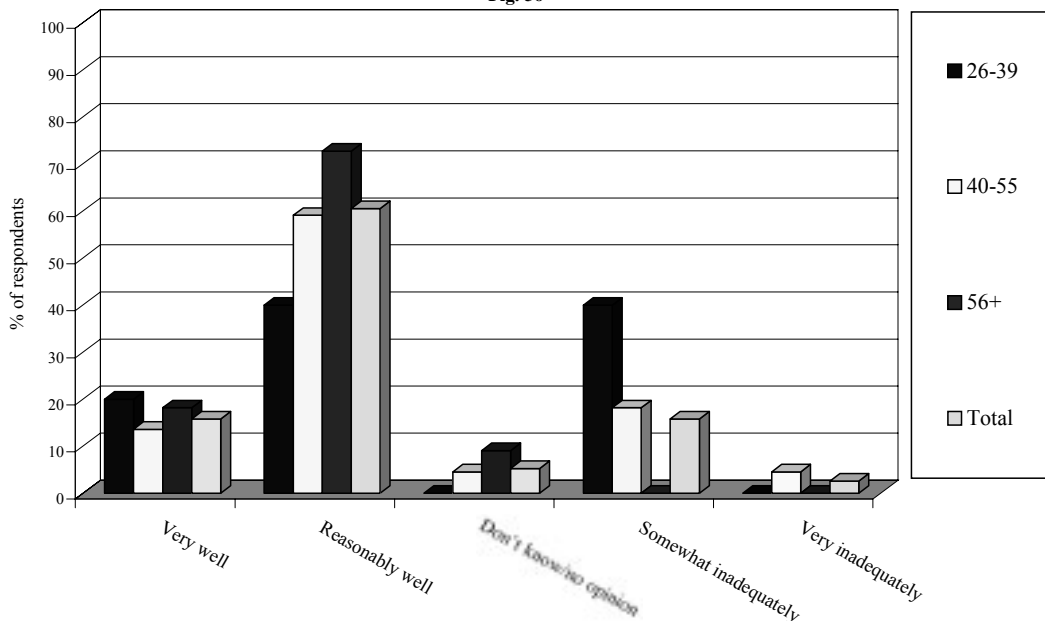
The role of the clergy differs between denominations, and the role of the Church of Ireland rector is very distinctive. There is also a difference between the way the church government describes itself and the manner in which people perceive it. As one respondent said:

The Church of Ireland most definitely does not have a hierarchy...The Church of Ireland General Synod has a House of Bishops. That is the only collective we have to describe this grouping of office bearers!...I make this point for a very serious reason. It is too easy for all of us, clergy and laity alike, to behave as though someone above us is responsible. This report is based on the premise that we all have a burden of responsibility for this issue and its resolution. **Anonymous respondent**

Lay People
Handling Clergy / Laity difference
Fig. 35



Interviewed Rectors
Handling Clergy / Laity difference
Fig. 36



A large majority - 75% - of rectors felt that clergy/laity difference was handled well, with about 18% saying it was handled somewhat or very inadequately (see **Figs. 36, 36**). 15% of lay people felt the issue was handled inadequately, with around 55% saying it was well handled, although 20% said they had no opinion or did not know, usually due to having no experience of the issue arising. Obviously there will always be local situations of clergy/laity difference, but in everyday experience, these seem to be not too controversial. However, a few respondents related examples of some controversy, often surrounding such bureaucratic issues as church property sales, which go to the heart of the issues raised in the section on church government. And there have been several cases of pseudo-political conflict surrounding the relationship between the Orange Order and the Church of Ireland, some of which are well known to the SEP, and will be discussed later in the report. Some examples follow:

If the clergyman wants a particular service but the lay people want something different, who wins? **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

There was a perception that when differences arise between clergy and lay people, what often tends to happen is that clergy are simply shunted off to a new parish. The question was asked as to whom does the hierarchy support: – clergy or lay people? **Focus Group report, Connor**

I think this parish...looks to me as a leader, and they'll challenge [some things], but there's...a degree of trust that I'm the boy that's got the job and I have to do it, but that also means that you get everything to do...Often I feel that I know ninety-five percent of the ministry. If a difference appears with laity and me it's because they only know fifty-five percent of it. **Rector, Connor**

My style of leadership would be to involve everybody...But because of the fact that...previous clergy...have allowed them to do their own thing, I now have a power struggle going on between myself and some of the people that don't see me as being the rector. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

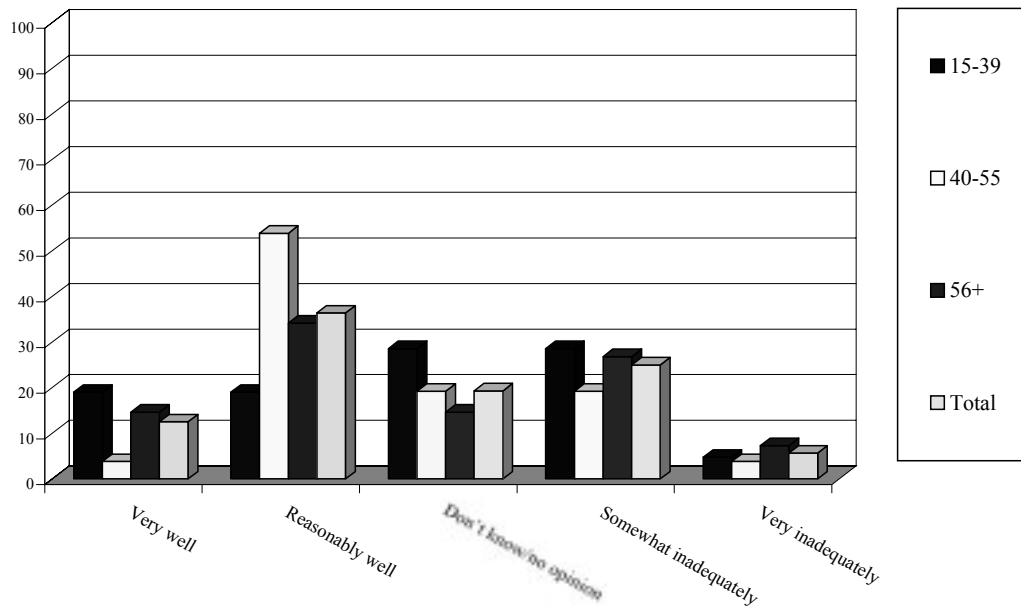
CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND STRUCTURE, SYNOD AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

- *The parish is the core expression of the life of the Church of Ireland.*
- *Lay ministry is not given adequate priority. There is regret that the responsibilities of Select Vestries are limited to focus on technical issues such as finance and property rather than shared responsibility for spiritual leadership.*
- *Every diocese is different and may require a distinct strategy. Dioceses are vital to the development of the SEP.*
- *Many people believe that dioceses are personified in the bishop; relations between bishops and clergy are key, and tend to vary according to the bishop's style.*
- *Diocesan twinnings are not, on the whole, considered useful in their current form.*
- *Diocesan strategies tend to be reactive. The potential of a diocese for pro-actively assisting clergy in responding to difficult issues should be explored.*
- *There is little connection in terms of agenda, style and output between parish ministry and General Synod. General Synod is often considered irrelevant in the context of everyday parish ministry.*

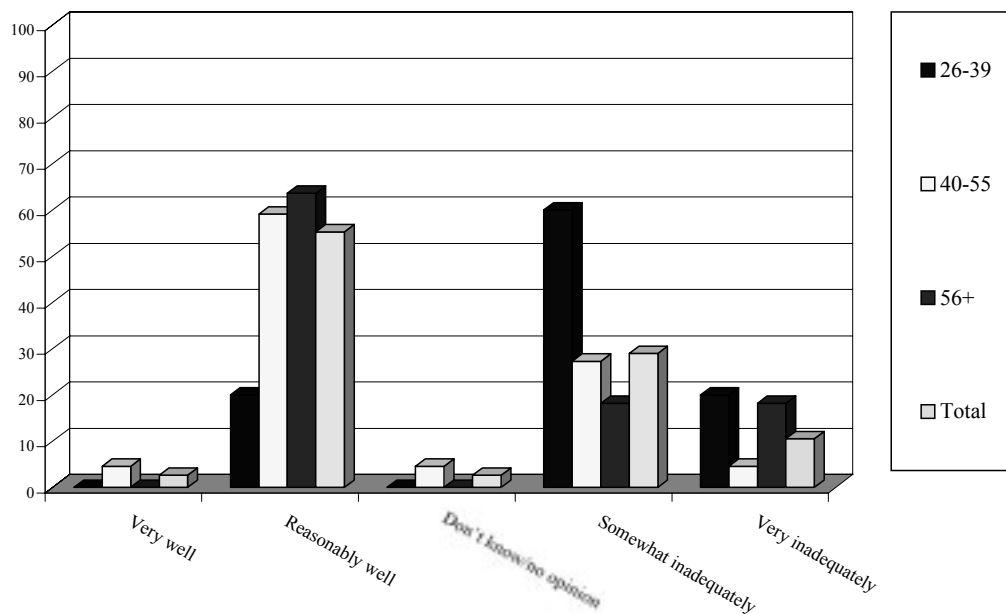
5: NORTH-SOUTH DIFFERENCE

One of the most striking issues raised in the research is the question of North-South difference (i.e. between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland). As one of the few Anglican Provinces that straddles such a contentious national border, the church is in an extraordinary position, and it is useful to note the contrasts between northern and southern respondents.

Lay People
Handling North-South difference
Fig. 37



Interviewed Rectors
Handling North-South difference
Fig. 38



Charts show that 53% of clergy, and 40% of lay people felt that the differences were well handled, which means that a significant proportion see room for improvement (see **Figs. 37, 38**).

It is striking that the substantial majority of lay people in the Republic associate sectarianism exclusively with Northern Ireland, as exemplified in the following quotations from a Focus Group report:

As the focus group progressed it became clear that there was complete dissociation of the focus group members with any part of sectarianism. It was also clear that they equate sectarianism with Northern Ireland. Consequently, as the process of the questionnaire continued and the questions became more explicitly focused on attitudes to sectarianism, the group became more critical of the North. This criticism was generic to Northern Ireland rather than to the Church of Ireland in the North. The criticism became increasingly angry although it was couched in tones of good-humoured bon-homie. There was [no acknowledgement] of any complicity in sectarian attitudes or behaviour and no recognition of the [potentially] sectarian nature of their own remarks and observations as the questionnaire progressed.
Focus Group report, Dublin and Glendalough

I couldn't live in the north because of the bigotry. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

My impression would be that the Church of Ireland in the north is largely captive to its Protestant Unionist population and really does not take a stand against sectarianism. Drumcree has fizzled out rather than been solved and a lack of clarity and courage has done the church enormous damage.
Rector, Dublin and Glendalough

Some would suggest that we are too far south to be of interest [to this study]. **Rector, Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

The peace and reconciliation questions are only appropriate for the North. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

People from Northern Ireland have much more to learn from the Church of Ireland in the South than vice versa. **Lay person, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

This does not, however, mean that respondents from the Republic believe themselves to be 'without sin', for instance:

If you think the word 'sectarianism' is a Northern thing, what are the issues that you think this committee can deal with in your context? If the Protestant/Catholic difference thing is the big one, what are [the others]?

I would have thought racism, discrimination against minorities such as asylum seekers, refugees, the homeless...**Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

We do not have the troubles like they do and they think that C of I people in the south have a cosy existence...they forget the fact that we are numerically smaller. **Lay person, Armagh**

We have visitors who would come from the North for holidays, so we would certainly be reasonably...supportive of the differences. But...those people who come on holiday, they come to church and then they go. So there's never any in-depth understanding. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

So are you embarrassed by Drumcree, or is it other things?

Yes – it would be Drumcree, it would be the Orange Order, it would be the ongoing troubles of the North. We're embarrassed, but we're empathetic as well. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

I think the most striking difference is the...political one...The really painful ones are the political ones, and no doubt members of the Church of Ireland almost entirely in the Republic of Ireland are now identified with the State...that doesn't mean for one moment that they're anti-British...I think our people are certainly not like that, but they're very identified with the State here. And then of course we look across the border and we see that the vast majority of our people are utterly British, and feel a very strong British identity, and they're often confused as to how they can cope with also having some kind of

Irish identity and how to express that...And then that is a problem, and the differences around that are very marked. And it has the potential to pull us apart, particularly because of the undercurrents in Northern Ireland, and the history of violence. And the Protestant community...I know well, feeling alienated and hurt, and wounded, and above all afraid. I firmly believe [that most] sectarianism is based on fear. And they are afraid. And they haven't been reassured about being bombed and shot at for donkeys years now, so I think that's very deep in Northern Ireland, and that's the biggest division in the Church of Ireland. I hope that division won't lead to a greater gulf between the two parts of the Church of Ireland. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Nor does it mean that all northerners feel alienated from the Church in the Republic:

In terms of North/South differences, there were none recognised. **Focus Group report, Connor**

However, some respondents do feel misunderstood by the Church in the Republic:

The south doesn't really understand what's going on in the north. **Lay person, Connor**

If you closed your eyes at General Synod you'd think you were listening to republicans. For example in [dioceses in the Republic] they don't want any flags in churches, but they have no experience of the issues. The church is silent about [this]. **Lay person, Armagh**

Some respondents felt that being from the West of Ireland meant they were more isolated than any other part of the Church of Ireland:

The differences are East/West; while there was no animosity, it was suggested that the Church of Ireland concentrates on North-South and rarely if ever consults the west; they get all their information from *The Gazette*. Respondents felt that 'the people and issues of the West of Ireland tend to be airbrushed out of existence simply because no one takes the time and/or effort to ask...them'...The reality of sectarianism was in no way denied but that it was not an issue at all in the awareness of these [respondents]. **Focus Group report, Tuam, Killala and Achonry**

There is a small, but substantial minority of Northern clergy and lay people who feel aggrieved by the 2002 General Synod's decision not to discuss the question of North-South representation, some of whom contend that it is 'easy for difficult decisions to be taken by people for whom they will have no effect in practice'. It was apparent during the research that the rationale for not employing equal proportionality as the method for deciding General Synod representation is not widely understood. As for North-South representation on the General Synod, and north-south difference in general:

I think that the Synod is very generous in allowing over-representation to the dioceses in the South, and I appreciate that. I also regard it as perhaps being an advantage, in the sense that it helps to maintain a reasonably moderate ethos within the Synod, and also it's probably fair to say that the level of church commitment is higher in the Republic than it is in the North. **Rector, Limerick and Killaloe**

I think...the...political situation in the last thirty years in the North of Ireland has meant that the Church of Ireland north of the border has almost of necessity had to take a particular position, and I'm certainly not convinced that the position it was forced into as a result of the Troubles is where the Church of Ireland should be. I think that the Church of Ireland south of the border, and the direction it's taking, is where the Church of Ireland should be going in terms of its relationships with...the Roman Catholic Church...Neither do I think it's helpful to have members of the Church of Ireland clergy involved in what is a sectarian organisation...the Orange Order.

So do you want to say the church isn't split yet but it might be in the future...?

I think there are dangers there, because if you have a situation where certainly the future ordinands are coming out of the divided situation within Northern Ireland, and the ethos...which they bring with them, is not only an evangelical ethos, which I have no problem with, but if it's sectarian it intrudes. If it takes the Orange Order view of Roman Catholicism, and that gets somehow built in to the Church of Ireland, then there's grave dangers in that. **Rector, Armagh**

On the surface we are one church, and I appreciate that, and value that, that we are one church across the land. But I think when one analyses a little more deeply, one is conscious of a division there. **Rector, Armagh**

The General Synod, RB and Standing Committee need to address urgently the inner sectarianism of lack of proportionate representation for the North of the church vs the South and the implicit distrust of the North by the South. **Rector, Connor**

Well that's what I said to you, that it's very easy for us in the South to solve the problems of the North, because we're not here. And I really think that we should stand back and shut up. **Curate, Armagh**

I think there is certainly a lack of awareness on the part of people locally of...being blinkered, and saying, well this is happening in the North, it doesn't happen in the South. There are [in fact] some fairly strong disagreements and discussions about Republicanism/Unionism [in the Republic]. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

It is in this context Southern members can play a particularly significant role. In the south the image of the church is also so much more ecumenical than in (certainly parts of) the North. Where inter-church marriage, communion, education, health care etc. are concerned this (RC sectarianism) could be highlighted to a greater degree and towards the benefit of all in the development of a truly tolerant, pluralist society. Certainly the image of the church in the South is positive at the moment. For many it has become 'the acceptable face of Christianity'...This is not the case in the North, and it is the relationship of some members with the Orange Order which is most fundamental to that. **Patsy McGarry, Irish Times**

There are two different emphases – north and south – of what the Church of Ireland sees itself to be; there are urban rural differences, age differences, and [sometimes] suspicion between the two. **Bishop**

C of I is unique in that its Synod is the only place where you have people drawn from both unionist and nationalist perspectives debating and subsequently agreeing with each other on certain issues. **Lay person, Armagh**

Are there two Churches of Ireland?

There are...You've got four churches...there is an evangelical/liberal split within the Church of Ireland...There is a North/South split. A lot of those parishes would have more affinity with the politics, cultural expression and churchmanship of Northern parishes than they would with their Southern neighbours. But yes, there most certainly is that split there. And it's handled appallingly. **Rector, Clogher**

Well in a sense there are [two Churches of Ireland]. It wouldn't be my wish that it should be so...The interesting thing is that...the Church of Ireland in the Republic turns itself inside out to prove how Catholic we are, and the Church of Ireland in the North turns itself inside out to show how Protestant they are. I mean that's not an original quotation, but I think it is very true. **Rector, Limerick and Killaloe**

It seems to me that there is a sense in which people want to get rid of the eyesore so that it doesn't look like the Church of Ireland is sectarian any more...I mean when you talk about a split North-South, it's a potential split in terms of disowning an unpleasantness. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

At the General Synod a couple of weeks ago, the issue of North/South representation was raised, and the Synod declined to discuss the issue in any depth. Do you think that that was the right way to proceed?

Well my personal reaction to that was to accept the Synod's verdict, on the basis that they'd had...four or five years discussing Synodical structures. They had a three-year working project that went into the whole business in very fine detail...and decisions were taken on that basis by the full Synod...

In spite of the fact that those discussions had happened, do you think that it masks sectarianism within the Church of Ireland?

No. I take the view that the present structure as we have it at the moment and the representation is a genuine attempt to represent the whole Church of Ireland throughout the island. It's part of our character. It's not easy to define, and it's not just about numbers. **Former rector, Connor**

The North-South link is a potential source of creativity rather than an actualised one. **Anonymous respondent**

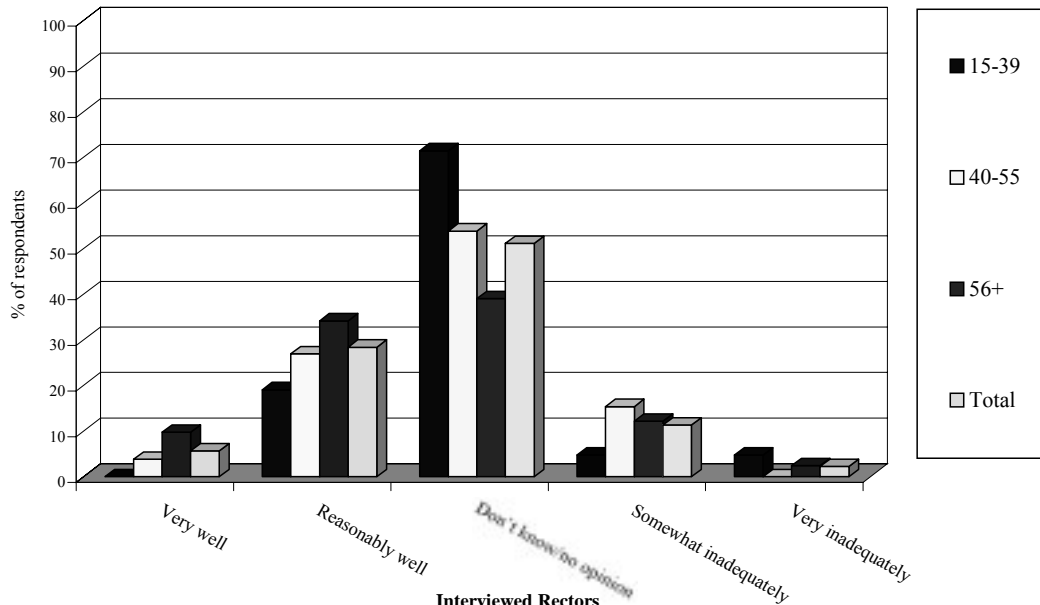
NORTH-SOUTH DIFFERENCE

- *There are both obvious and subtle differences between the parts of the Church of Ireland based in Northern Ireland and the Republic.*
- *Most (but not all) respondents in the Republic believe that sectarianism is a northern issue. This is reinforced by the widespread perception of the Drumcree controversy as the epitome of sectarianism.*
- *Some northern respondents feel insecure and potentially threatened by the disproportionate southern representation on General Synod. Many respondents, both north and south, appreciate the diversity such representation brings.*
- *Respondents from the West of Ireland sometimes feel isolated from the rest of the church.*

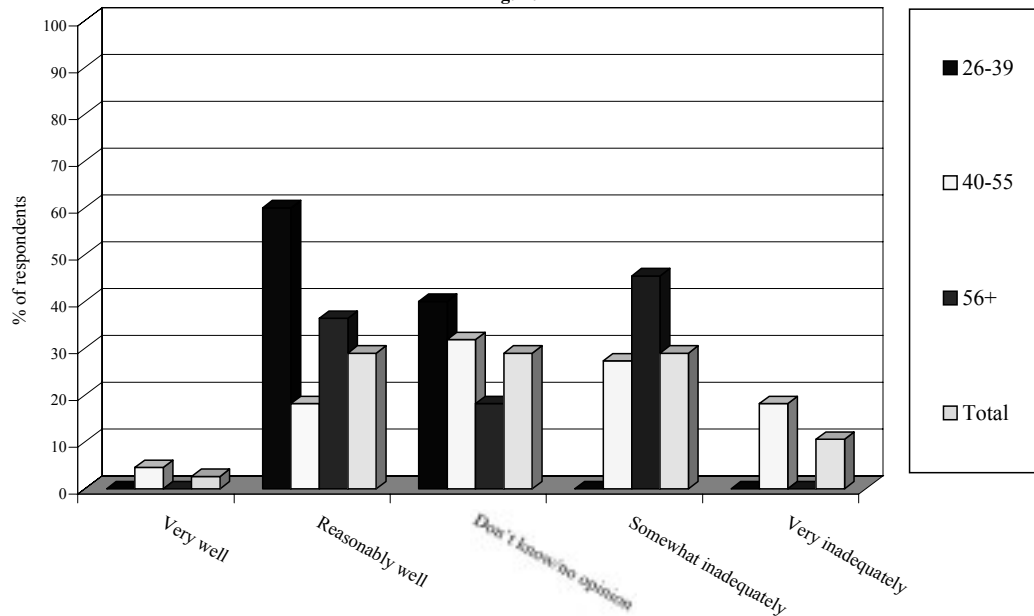
6: ETHNIC DIFFERENCE AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Republic of Ireland is now one of the leading destinations for economic migrants. Northern Ireland is beginning to show similar patterns of immigration, and, sadly, racially motivated attacks or xenophobia appear (from anecdotal evidence) to be on the rise. It is important to distinguish between the local ethnic minority population and asylum seekers, as these two types of people appear to be conflated in some people's minds, as the following findings illustrate:

Lay People
Handling Ethnic difference
Fig. 39

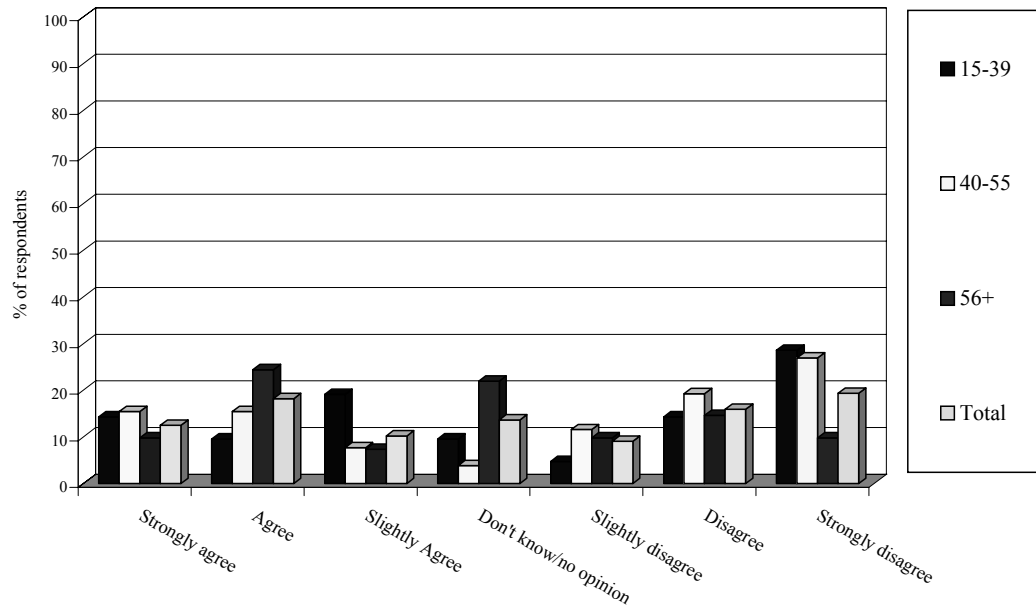


Interviewed Rectors
Handling Ethnic difference
Fig. 40

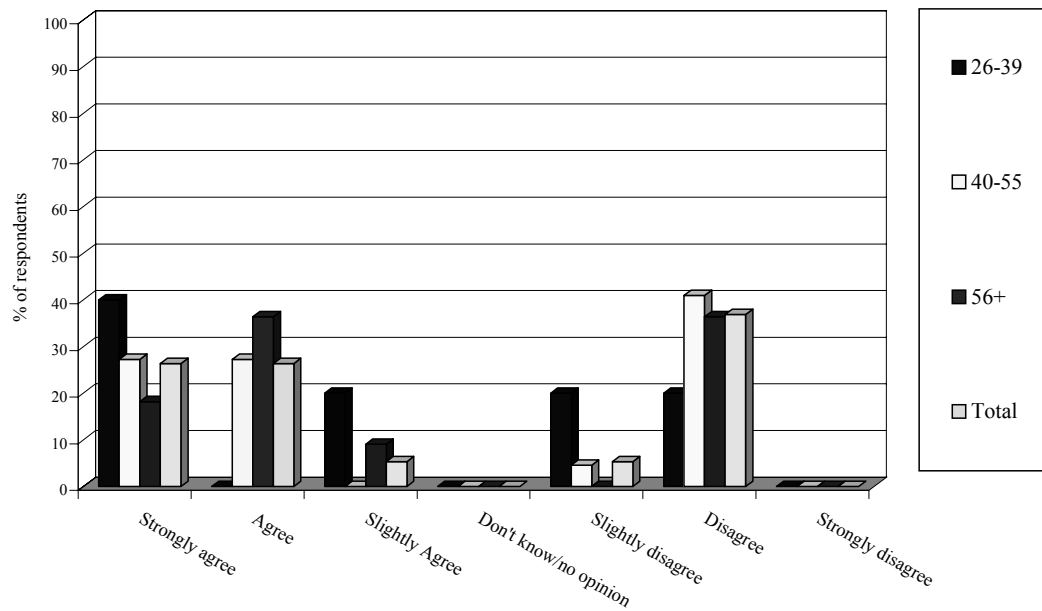


NB: An 'agreement scale' was used for the following, and later similar charts instead of simple 'yes/no' options because a prescriptive answer was not appropriate for all respondents. Levels of relationship are often a 'grey area' and not best suited to yes/no answers.

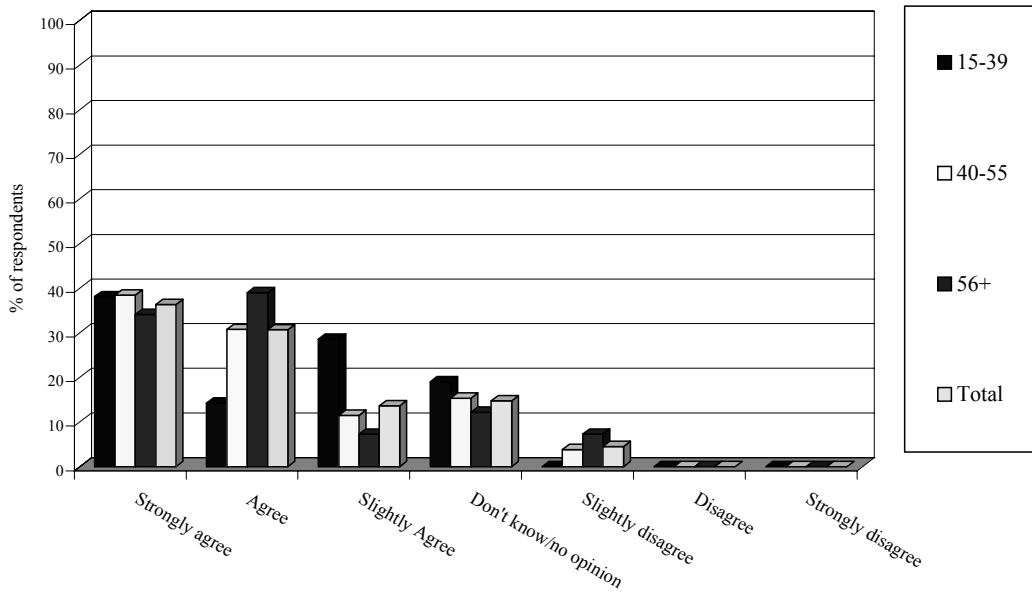
Lay People
I have at least one friendship with a member of an ethnic minority
Fig. 41



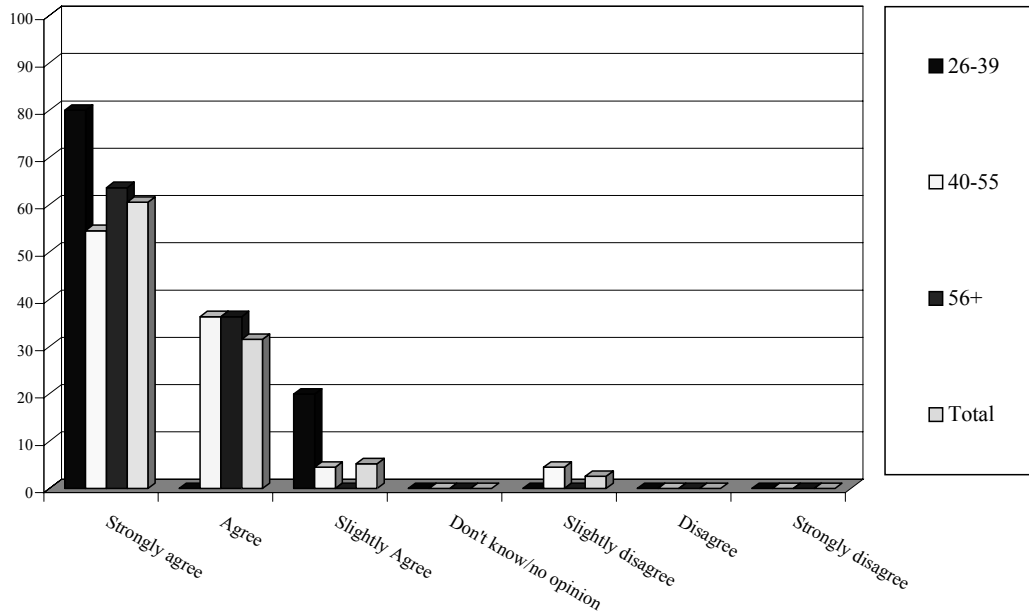
Interviewed Rectors
I have at least one friendship with a member of an ethnic minority
Fig. 42



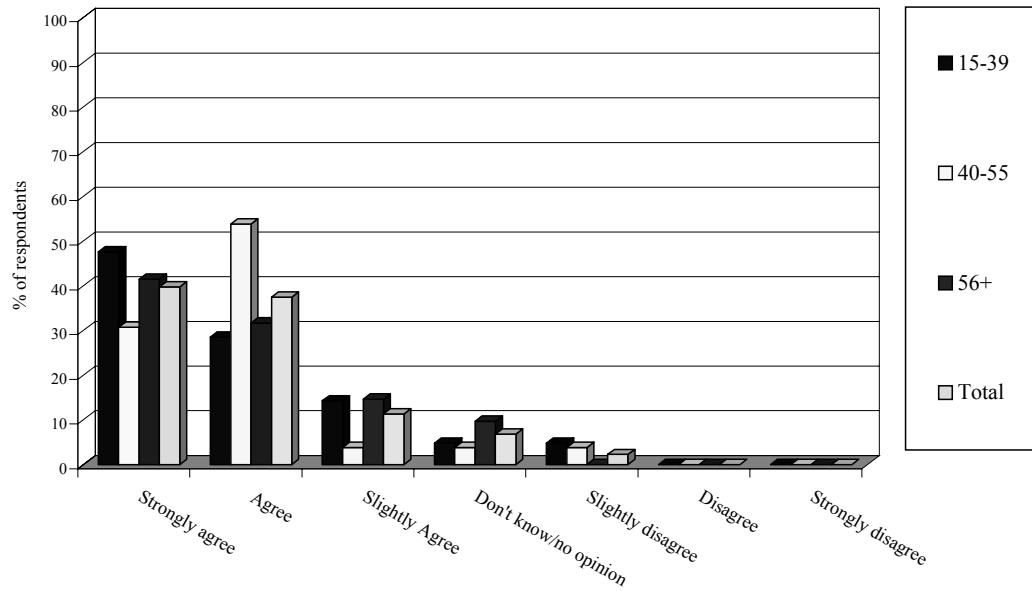
Lay People
The Church of Ireland should help its members to relate positively to ethnic minorities
Fig. 43



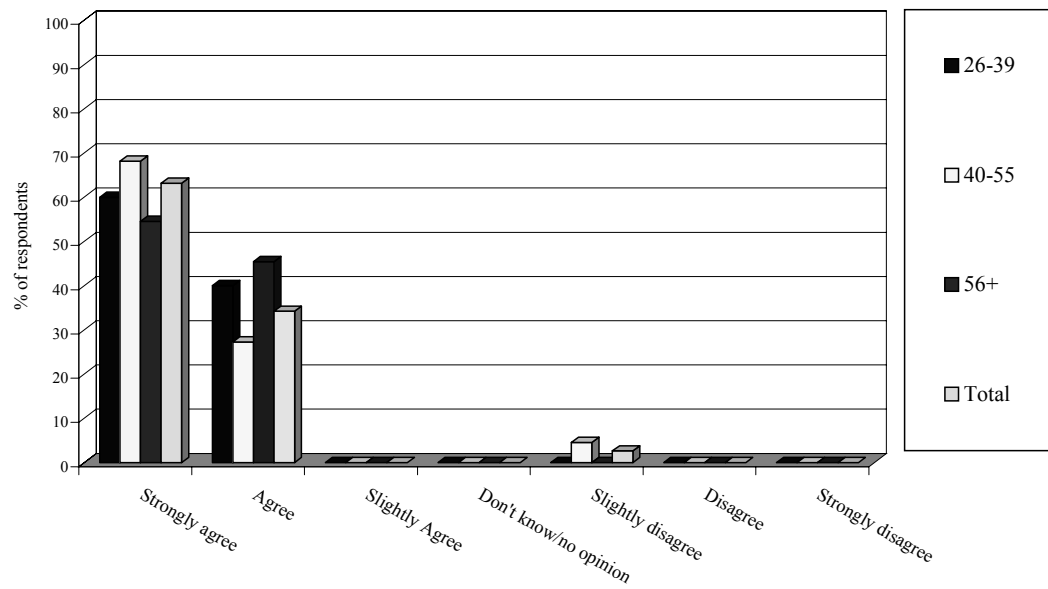
Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland should help its members to relate positively to ethnic minorities
Fig. 44



Lay People
The Church of Ireland should take steps to ensure that it is welcoming to members of ethnic minorities
Fig. 45



Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland should take steps to ensure that it is welcoming to members of ethnic minorities
Fig. 46



Rectors were asked how they felt ethnic differences are handled in the Church of Ireland. Responses were evenly split between well/don't know/inadequate; while 50% of lay people said they had no experience of the issue. Over 60% of rectors felt that the needs of ethnic minorities were inadequately attended to by the church, while only 22% of lay people felt these needs were well attended to (see **Figs. 39-46**). 40% of lay people, and 55% of clergy respondents said they had at least one friendship with a member of an ethnic minority. This is itself reflective of the challenge to ethnic integration faced in Ireland today. It is also noteworthy that respondents did not automatically consider the Irish travelling community to be an ethnic minority, but once this was mentioned, often made useful comments.

Examples of relevant experience are noted below:

[This town] has 2000 asylum seekers and a total population of 30000. There has been a special effort to help children integrate into the school, extra English tuition etc. Nigerians have a different attitude to education than Romanians/Croatians, and so each are viewed differently by the general populace.

Layperson, Armagh

Some respondents expressed good will toward ethnic minorities and asylum seekers:

We don't question people's motives for being in this country. Obviously there are people within the parish with differing views as to whether they should or shouldn't be here, but from a parochial point of view we deal with them on the basis that they are here, that some of them are in need of help, and if we can provide it we will. **Rector, Armagh**

The Archbishop of Dublin has spoken out about the way in which minorities have been treated – I think we have a bounden duty to do that if we're true to Christ. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

We've made a real effort to reach out to people of different ethnicity, and the churches have held collaborative welcoming parties (C of I and RC). Also on a joint basis, the local clergy do house visitations around the new housing estates giving information about church and community. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

They're not held at arms length.

Absolutely not. We here in this parish have had quite an influx of non-nationals, and at all levels of growth if you like – not only have they been accepted, but we have a sort of – I don't know what you call it – 'mentor' kind of system, where a particular Irish family would have taken a particular incoming family under their wing, and would have helped them in relation to housing, or rent, or whatever it was. **Rector, Armagh**

And others emphasised the challenges of ministry (and need for fresh training/resources) in an ethnically diverse society:

I've met some Indian people who now live in Northern Ireland, and they would have said they felt very unwelcome in Church of Ireland churches. The Church that welcomed them mostly was the Methodist Church. I think too, our church is so dependent on the book that anybody with a language barrier there is going to find it hard to follow the worship, because everything has to be read. **Rector, Connor**

Racism is the broader scope of sectarianism and is something to be attended to urgently. **Bishop**

Do you have any reflections on how the church should approach the issue of ethnic minorities?

I think that if the church is going to be truly Christian, in terms of what Christ taught and the example he gave, then I think the church has got to be willing to open not just its doors, but also its fellowship and its friendship, to not just ethnic minorities but also to others who are classed as minority, or disadvantaged, or excluded from some quarters of society. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

[Two] Nigerian families turned up two Sundays on their own, neither of whom – neither family had been spoken to or asked even – and I've been to visit them both because they were new, but they weren't complaining. They expected it because it's what they'd met elsewhere. Irish people are incredibly hospitable and very welcoming, but...I don't think people coming from abroad are not fitting in very well and easily yet. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

We ran a thing lately for all the ethnic people, or people who had come recently to Ireland, and very few people turned up, and it was for the whole united diocese. Certain people would be interested, but I mean if you ask someone within the parish to share the sign of peace during a service, they have all sorts of hang-ups about that. Touching someone else. The fact that it's a Roman Catholic tradition. If they can't shake one another's hands in a parish church, how are they going to reach [out to others]? **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do you feel equipped to deal with that?

No, because where I'm from I would deal with the Northern context. The traveller stuff is new to me, because I never really met a traveller personally until I came into the South, so there's a lot of it I don't understand. **Rector, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

In order to fully attend to the needs of or encourage the potential of asylum seekers, there needs to be a considerable degree of community education initiated and sustained throughout society in general (including the Church). When children are simply put straight into school, there is a range of issues, which can arise which in turn militate against acceptance and integration within the wider body politic. For example, in a number of cases the children of asylum seekers have not had the same advantage of immunisation programmes as indigenous children. Consequently, if an outbreak of measles or tuberculosis occurs, it is blamed on these children and they, along with their families, are ostracised by the wider community and the children experience difficulties in school which are totally unrelated to their academic progress/ability. A number of instances have already arisen where community action groups have been formed which have a negative bias towards asylum seekers. **Layperson, Down and Dromore**

[In this area] white newcomers would be accepted, but it's a different situation vis a vis asylum seekers. **Lay person, Armagh**

One parish welcomed travellers to use parish grounds but there was a lot of theft so parishioners told the rector not to allow them to stay again...They suss out houses and come back later during funerals or after accidents to thieve. I think they're a curse! **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

There was a little bit of discussion amongst the focus group members as to why immigrants to the area were going to other denominational churches in preference to their own: - "Are they more welcoming than we are? There are more hostels in [another town] and none in [our town]...thank God!" **Focus Group report, Cashel and Ossory**

In terms of the membership of the church, if ten travelling people arrived and wanted to join the church, would it cause problems?

Well I would say probably that people would...either move, and certainly move from their seats, they might even say, 'Look, we've been sitting here before, therefore you shouldn't be sitting there, you've no business...' but I suppose it depends again on the condition of – whether they're – if they're clean, tidy, neat, that sort of thing it might not be a problem...I mean if people come to the church, then obviously you make them welcome in the church, make them welcome in the service...But then I think people are generally afraid that if they do get involved, that's their commitment. So again how much do I get involved in helping people that come over here – if we give them money at the end of the Sunday collection, we know what's going to happen next Sunday. They're going to be back again. Other people are going to be back again, and is that the right thing to do? The only thing that possibly could be done is – I don't like giving out money, but if there was say something in the church that after Sunday service we had a soup kitchen, we had sandwiches or something like that, to which they could come and join in, but the problem really is that our schedules don't permit us to be involved in that. On Sunday you have three services, your last finishes at one o'clock. By the time you're finished all you want to do is go home. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

It is also the case in places that the church feels pressured from both the ethnic minority community to provide help, and also the 'native' community to hold the minority at arm's length:

Well I mean we have – I certainly as a leader of the local community, and clergy again, would be very much aware of how these people are stuck in the middle of nowhere, and how we should reach out and try to make them feel welcome, and try to help them in any way that we can, through all the churches in the town. And there are some dreadful crooks and chancers amongst them. But then there are also crooks and chancers in the wider community. But we've had appeals for assistance for them, providing them with record players and that kind of thing, and it's been quite a good response. But somehow I feel that the wider community by and large is not entirely with us in that regard. You hear a lot of people talking about these people, that they're living off Irish society and so on, and so forth, but they would be a bit reluctant to say that to the clergy. **Rector, Limerick and Killaloe**

A clergy respondent offered the following critique of church policy:

Do you have any other thoughts on the issue of ethnic minorities?

Not greatly, because I suppose I've never actually faced the issue at all. The other concern I would have about all this is that again, the church's public contribution to the whole debate about asylum and immigration is too easily – it becomes the voice of the political left, and it does not necessarily follow that being a Christian is equivalent to having a view on asylum laws equivalent to *The Guardian*. **Rector, Clogher**

But for most respondents, the issue has not arisen:

We have little exposure to ethnic communities. Most of the travelling community come from the RC tradition. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

Ethnic issues are for the cities. Here we are just busy in our own little world. **Lay person, Armagh**

We have very little experience of asylum seekers here. **Lay person, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

The SEP should be encouraged that respondents asserted, on the whole, that the Church of Ireland should seek to better address these issues, through helping its members to relate positively to ethnic minorities and taking steps to ensure that it is welcoming (including such things as offering bilingual literature and translation). Several respondents praised the public position adopted by such figures as former Archbishop Empey, and encouraged the development of a practical strategy for parishes with a significant ethnic minority/asylum seeker population. Any such strategy should stress that ethnic minorities and asylum seekers are human beings, not 'an issue' to be categorised.

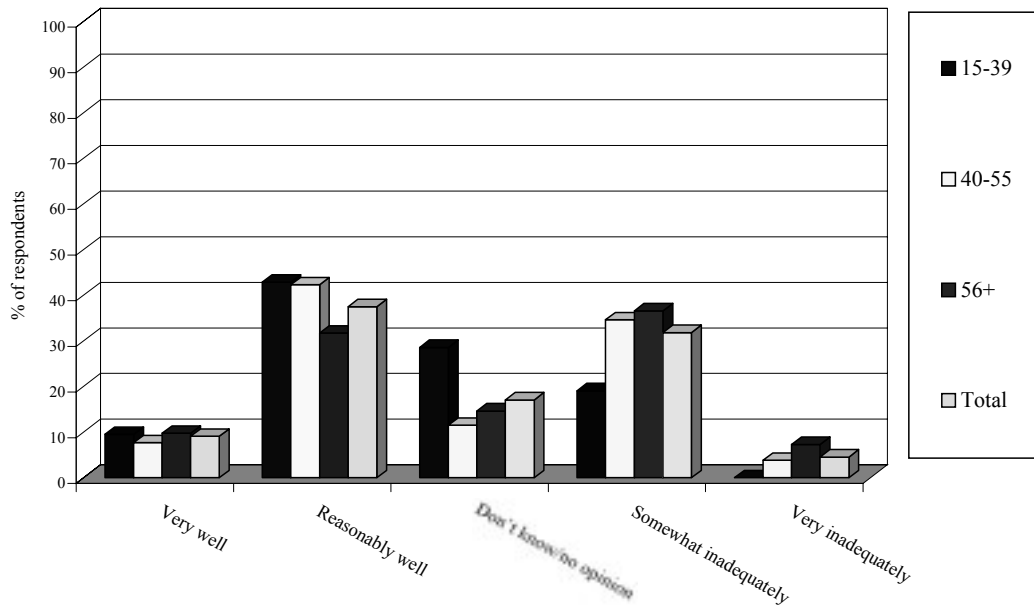
ETHNIC DIFFERENCE AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

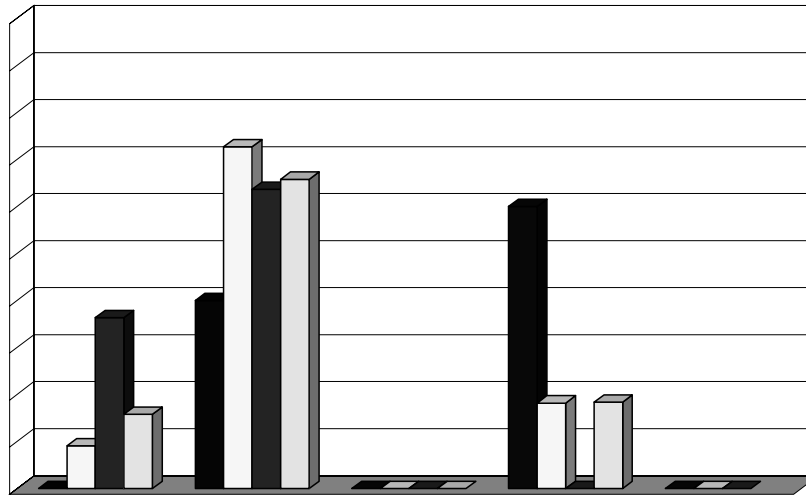
- *This is a relatively new issue for the Church of Ireland.*
- *Although some good practice exists, most respondents have little or no experience in the area.*
- *Many respondents supported public leadership on this issue, particularly from Archbishops Eames and Empey.*
- *Clergy do not, on the whole, feel resourced to respond to the issue.*
- *There is mostly good will toward perceived church policy on ethnic minorities and asylum seekers, although more conservative attitudes prevail among a minority of respondents.*
- *Respondents did not automatically consider the travelling community to be an ethnic minority.*
- *Ethnic minorities and asylum seekers are often seen as 'two sides of the same coin', or confused with each other by respondents.*
- *The language barrier must be taken into account in addressing the needs of ethnic minorities.*

7: POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

People in Northern Ireland and the Republic are probably more highly politicised than most other Western populations. And there are obvious differences between the two jurisdictions. The church in the North has been caricatured as the ‘Unionist Party at prayer’, and there may be some (not necessarily pejorative) truth to this assertion, due to the complexities of political allegiance in Northern Ireland (although some have alleged that the northern church in recent years has looked more like an ‘inoffensive’ centre ground party). The church in the Republic is more politically diverse. There is apparently little political *conflict* in the church, but this may be due more to the fact that people are less open about their politics in church than elsewhere. 43% of lay respondents and 78% of interviewed rectors felt that political differences were well handled in the church (Figs. 47, 48).

Lay People
Handling political differences
Fig. 47





These are interesting statistics, for they imply significant disagreement between clergy and the lay people interviewed for this research. It is probably the case that the statistics reflect the fact that lay respondents were skewed toward politically interested people, who may have reason to feel that political differences are not well handled, while most lay people do not explicitly bring their politics into church. The question of the church's political identity (and its role in influencing politics and holding politics to account) is of huge importance to its ministry in the future – as is its relationship with the Orange Order. Put simply, the churches in Ireland must take seriously the sociological truism that people outside the Church are antipathetic toward *party-politicised* Christianity, although not toward socially engaged discipleship. In other words, the general public are easily alienated by the appearance of political posturing on the part of spiritual leadership, but are often attracted by non-party social engagement, such as in the form of the multi-agency 'Drop the Debt' campaign. This is the reason why the Church of Ireland must endeavour to articulate a vision for bridge building that avoids the perception of being either party-political on one hand, or too generalised to achieve anything credible on the other. These are difficult issues with which to grapple; and a nuanced response from all sides is required if the challenges of ministry in a pluralist society are to be met. However, it remains the task of the church to be socially and politically engaged without countenancing sectarianism or party politics. It will take theologians as well as sociologists to respond adequately to this issue! The SEP is well placed to advise the government of the church in this regard.

Some respondents commented on the level of politicisation within the church, and whether or not people of different political persuasions or allegiances would feel comfortable there:

A nationalist...would maybe be at home in the Church of Ireland in the South, but not so much in the North. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

So if I was an SDLP voter and joined the parish, would I need to keep my head down?

Well probably you would need to keep your head down as much as anybody else in the parish keeps their head down.

So then the question is, is that handling political differences very well or very inadequately, to not talk about them? And I don't know the answer to that.

Neither do I, because it's not an issue. Why make it an issue if it's not an issue? People's political views are their business. I'm not going to drag that potential conflict into church. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Is God on the side of any of the political parties? Cannot a Christian who loves his neighbour be either pro- or anti-Agreement in a valid sense? The Church of Ireland needs to avoid [taking] sides in the debate. **Anonymous respondent**

In a former parish I could have had difficulty with certain members. We could have had problems there because I didn't see eye-to-eye with them, nor they with me. So depending I think on the area you're in, if there has been political tension, I think a minister's on the sticky wicket. **Rector, Connor**

Some welcomed what they saw as the political diversity in their own parish:

Your question initially was 'are there political differences within your parish,' and I would say yes. I hope that's a healthy thing if there are political differences.

And are they handled well?

I'm not conscious of any antagonism.

Are they differences [within] unionism, or are they unionist and nationalist in your parish?

To be honest I don't know. I don't think it's my business, as long as they try to live the Christian life and are not hurting or killing one another. I think a person's political beliefs are really essentially a private matter. **Rector, Armagh**

Some respondents commented on the contentious political situation faced locally by some parishes, as the following comments illustrate:

There are [loyalist] murals on the walls on either side of the church yet the church 'ignores' them. The murals are tacitly accepted as part of the surrounding community's identity...There is no way the murals will be removed otherwise they fear that the church would at best be boycotted by the community and at worst attacked. The church liaises and negotiates with local community leadership around specific issues, such as the placement of "boni-wood" (bonfire wood for the 11th July) away from the gable wall of the church...As the church witnesses in this area the murals are accepted even though Christians are not happy with them [and] rather everyone turns a blind-eye to them, for instance:

'We live and let live.'

'The minister has to be sensitive in preaching at all times.'

'If someone from a Nationalist perspective were to preach then Orangemen and others would boycott the church. There would be a fear that the church would be torched.' **Focus Group report, Connor**

I would find it useful if the C of I had a policy or guidelines with regard to the use of parish halls for political parties' constituency organisations. **Rector, Connor**

Is there political conflict within the church?

To be honest I think no. When things get tense, then you know about it, because being Church of Ireland, being North – I would say 99.99% of my congregation would lean towards the Unionist Party. So no.

Do nationalists have to change culturally to feel part of the Church of Ireland?

Yes. But not a wild lot. [This] is a funny place, in that our primary school [here] is a...real [melting] pot. The board of governors is similar. And we get on very well there, but I think at the moment – talking about now, the feeling that I [detect in my] congregation is that we as Protestants are being sold down the river...You've got Drumcree on Sunday, you've the twelfth coming up and they're...sitting there

waiting to see what's going to happen, and...thinking, 'We're now hard done by.' And if violence works for one side...so you've got that sort of tension. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

A minority of respondents felt that politics and religion should be kept apart:

Should the church be used to raise these issues? I think it should be done at community level. However it's difficult here to do anything without things becoming contentious or without one church taking charge. **Lay person, Armagh**

From the pulpit you're not really there to make politics your whole ministry; you're meant to preach the Gospel. **Lay person, Dromore**

And North-South differences were raised in this context too:

[These issues are] better handled in the south than the north. **Lay person, Armagh**

In the Republic people's political differences aren't that marked.

They're not that marked, and wouldn't be a source...of antagonism, or anger, or conflict, whereas political labels and political differences in Northern Ireland...mean something else – they're much more painful, much deeper. As to how we handle them in the church, I've always been pleased at least when we meet at General Synod...that despite the fact that we have people coming with diverse political views, we've held them together...We would be hugely weakened if we were to suddenly say, 'We want to cut ourselves off either way across the border. Because they're so different, we can't live together.' I'd hate that to happen, and we have to make sure it doesn't happen. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

I think...the six northern bishops...signed a public statement supporting the Good Friday Agreement. Now I voted 'yes'...but 40% of unionists didn't vote 'yes', and aren't given a voice within the Church of Ireland structurally...The Church of Ireland has not begun to...gauge unionist opinion at all. It was my experience in theological college, there was a group of...three of us who were fairly convinced unionists, and in any political debate you were excluded, and it's been like that each step along the way...I have not met any senior church officers, bishops, archdeacons, who I've come away from thinking they understand what makes the average unionist tick. **Rector, Clogher**

Flags and emblems were mentioned by a small number of respondents:

Flags in churches are fine if they have historical value – e.g. Second World War regiments. You should honour the flag of the country you are in, but why should it fly from a church? A flag means much more than it did – now it's political. It has lost its original meaning and it's now just used to rub the nose of the other community. **Focus Group report, Derry and Raphoe**

I like to see [flags] treated with respect. I prefer not to see it used in church circumstances. I'm not so sure even that youth organisations should be encouraged to carry flags of any sort...When the Synod asked that no flags be flown from Church of Ireland churches I reported the decisions of the Synod here. Now, they fly a flag in the church spire for a fortnight in July [here]. I have made my views clear on it, but it's still flying. I don't go up and remove it, and don't think I ever would. I'd rather get the people who put it up to see there's no need to have it flying from the church. **Rector, Armagh**

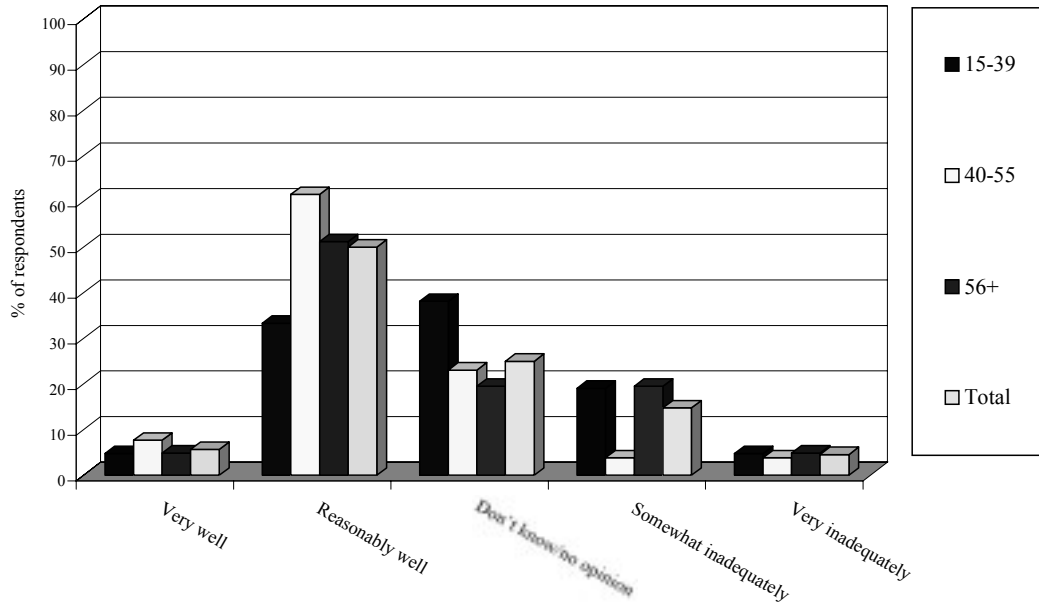
I do not want people to be distracted by symbols that are not gospel-related...It has been difficult [to address this], but has led people to reflect on 'What is a church for?' **Bishop**

POLITICAL DIFFERENCE

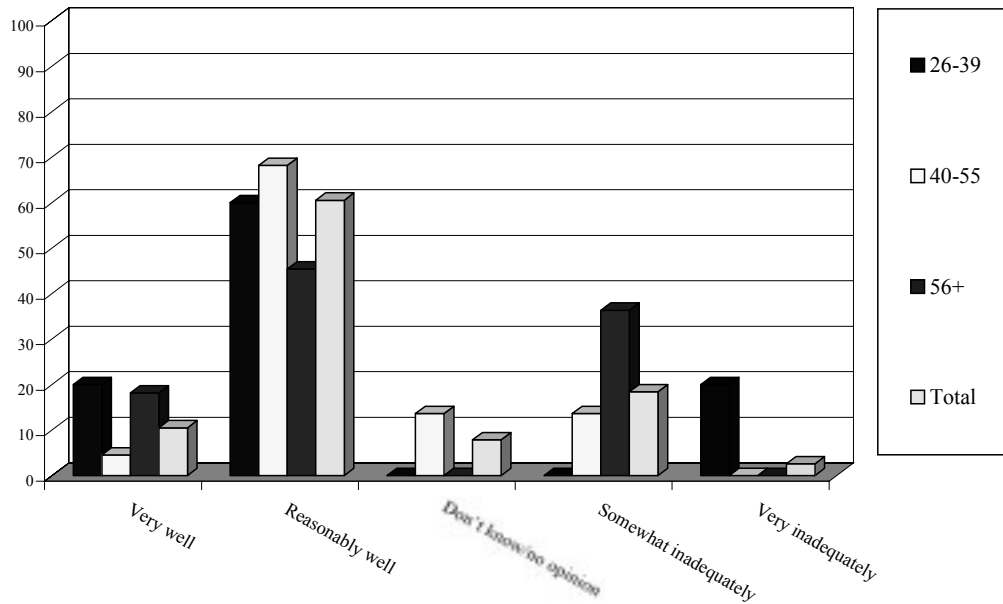
- *Although the Church of Ireland holds within it people of diverse political views, political diversity is often ignored or inadequately handled.*
- *People may also struggle to find common understanding across class differences.*
- *There is only minority objection to the church addressing political issues.*
- *It is widely perceived that there is an identification between the northern church and the unionist world view. Some respondents see this as unhealthy or unhelpful.*
- *Some members of the Church of Ireland who are conservative unionists may feel that the church undervalues them or does not recognise their integrity.*
- *Some parishes face particularly contentious political issues in everyday ministry, or at certain times of year, and may need further support from the wider church*
- *The proper use of flags and emblems is an issue about which there are diverse views.*

8: THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

Lay People
Handling Theological differences
Fig. 49



Interviewed Rectors
Handling Theological differences
Fig. 50



Theological difference within the Church of Ireland is apparently not often raised at parish level, which some people may feel is a positive thing. As **Figs. 49, 50** show, a majority of respondents felt these differences were handled well (although 22% of lay respondents indicated 'don't know/no opinion'). But the lack of conspicuous controversy or even measured debate is not necessarily a mark of health. Lay people are often not equipped by the church to engage in theological discussion or to examine the import of theology for their own lives; it is left to those lay people for whom amateur theology is a hobby to be a 'thorn in the side' of their rector or Vestry. But the recent public controversy regarding the Dean of Clonmacnoise provoked an interesting response to the Scoping Study. **Clergy, quite simply, may feel unable to express their own theological questions, not necessarily because they feel afraid of the consequences, but because there is simply no forum in which to do so.** There is great theological diversity in the Church of Ireland, on issues ranging from evangelism to pastoral care. But there are also many clergy who wish to discuss their theological diversity in a mutually beneficial environment. And semi-regular meetings with a bishop who differs theologically are not the ideal context for such discussion!

When you say theological differences are handled well. Does that mean people just live and let live, or is there a dialogue?

Well I mean if there were a bible study...maybe if something came up, they would give their opinion, but they're willing to let everybody have their own opinion and just live on. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

How well does the Church as a whole handle theological differences?

Well we had the extreme example I suppose of [the Dean of Clonmacnoise]. But in relation to theological differences within the church I would say that we haven't been doing great. I remember when I was a curate...we had a huge thing in relation to homosexuality...That was handled extremely badly, and it was almost done in a way that...is almost, put your head in the sand, pretend it doesn't exist...

So this was a clergyman who was gay, and he was exported?

He was exported, yes...So while I would say that where there are issues theologically that we need to face up to them ourselves, and deal with them ourselves.

And you don't?

We don't. **Rector, Armagh**

[The most recent public theological controversy was announced at a] clergy conference, and it was broken down into three distinct schools. People who said, 'Yeah, we got rid of that b*****.' And then there were others who were saying, 'Isn't it terrible it had to go to a court case?' And then there were people saying, 'Well now it's time to pray for him.' So he couldn't have had a more fair vision than [the bishop]...But how do you deal with a situation like that? Whereas if it was the Roman Catholics – and I'm not a batterer of the Roman Catholic Church – but I know he wouldn't have been able to open his mouth, he would have been silenced. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

It's disturbing that someone within our church could actually believe what [the Dean of Clonmacnoise] believed and get so far as to become a dean. Makes you wonder if those at the top are off the wall! **Lay person, Armagh**

Do people peacefully co-exist within the church that have different theological views?

We should be able to, but many of us from our wing feel that we're not given a fair say.

Our wing?

Evangelical, bible teaching. It's a well-known fact that...at the theological college...evangelicals...do not get a fair crack at the whip. The material taught is more liberal, and it's been brought up with the Archbishop, and bishops, and committees of bishops. Nothing has been done, and I think...the hierarchy holds the higher ground and the rest of can't get near to make a difference. **Rector, Connor**

Rector: I think we underestimate the extent to which people do have theological discussions about God, not in a terribly academic way, or a terribly sophisticated way, but they can in simple terms sometimes discuss things that are really of quite deep significance.

And they handle them well?

Rector: I don't know, I think they probably feel – I suppose all of us feel at times so inadequate in matters of theology, that I think...there is a search sometimes.

Curate: There is. One of your elderly parishioners asked me the other day why – so many good, church-going people have steadily lost a number of members of family in tragic circumstances, and she asked me why I thought that had happened, and I – now she was searching. I had a very inadequate answer for her, but she would provide her own answer to her own thing.

Rector So I include myself then when I say we are all children in matters of theology. **Rector and Curate, Armagh (Interviewed together)**

Theological difference should not even exist nor should there be any wavering to and fro if we are based on the word of truth, the 39 Articles. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

The Church of Ireland doesn't have deep enough theological discussions, and space enough for people to talk about theology in depth, and to think things through. It wasn't as if what he said was a particularly new option of theology. Well you see these are things that you can deal with obliquely, and one of the things that I'm sure you've heard said was that [recent theological controversy] it made people in the diocese.. think much more. But I feel that you can't always deal with these things in sermons, although I try to say these are the territories, and talk about [them], but having smaller discussion groups I think is a way. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Theological differences get swept under the carpet, ignored, or the person with the difference is shouted down. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

I don't remember anyone in the Church of Ireland expressing a theological opinion! **Lay person, Armagh**

I would say theological differences within the church, anyway – certainly within my own – would not be brought up. When I go back home I shall tell them my news as to what came through from the Synod, I don't expect anyone to challenge me on any theological issue on that.

Because they wouldn't, because they agree with you, or because they don't...?

They probably wouldn't be equipped to understand the ins and outs of it, and would expect me to...

And I suppose some would say that's handling differences very well, some would say it's handling them inadequately. What would you think?

Well I suppose, you see – I don't know that they've been taught to question, really. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

I think one of the big differences that hasn't been spoken of and isn't spoken of, is – I suppose coming from my own journey...would be the need to recognise the violence that lies behind some theological attitudes...It is the difference between sacrificial understanding of passion, and a self-giving understanding...

Because sacrifice is a violent image?

It is a violence at heart that lies behind all the scapegoating – it is part of the scapegoating mechanisms, which we use in so many levels in so many ways. And so I am increasingly uncomfortable with those who talk as if the only theory of the atonement is the substitution theory, without asking who pays who for what.

Lay people don't generally have big theological differences...

No, no. Because sadly, in a way – and this is not meant to be an arrogant statement, but it's a factual statement that by and large lay people no longer know enough theology.

They're not equipped.

Yes. And so there's good and bad about that. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

In my pastoral visiting...not one person has mentioned [theological controversy]. The thing they will mention – and this is going back a few years ago – is our bishop attending a football match on a Sunday. That would cause them far more concern than [the Dean of Clonmacnoise]. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Surface activities are of no real use, we need more open discussion...less 'Well we're all the same anyway!'. **Rector, Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

Do lay people care about theology in your experience?

Yeah I think that overall I would look at the whole idea of sectarianism as a lack of understanding of what the gospel and theology says to us, so in other words maybe we're not challenged enough, or maybe we don't know enough to be able to make those decisions. So theological differences are very much there, but it's historical theology that they bring – they haven't maybe grown to meet society as it is today.

I believe that the Church of Ireland is losing membership because it is engaging in ecumenism without first dealing with the theological background. People are afraid of being asked to compromise their faith to achieve unity. **Rector, Connor**

We preach and teach and pray about [theological] differences, and about the inclusiveness of [Christ] but I sometimes feel there's a barrier. It's not being received. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

[We should develop] a forum for theological reflection about diversity/pluralism and the contemporary challenges in theology. **Bishop**

It is clear that theological differences exist widely throughout the Church of Ireland. The Church's diversity can be one of its great strengths, but also hamper good ministry, especially if people feel unable to discuss their theological questions openly. Some clergy in particular feel able to talk to a research consultant about matters that they would not tell either their parishioners or fellow clergy. And yet there currently exists no formal context for theological discussion, particularly regarding controversial issues, in the Church of Ireland. The following proposals made by respondents are suggestive of future good practice:

- Diocesan forums for theological discussion among clergy, with confidentiality assured, could be established.
- The General Synod could examine the uses and development of both deeper and more accessible theological discussion in the Church of Ireland among both clergy and lay people.
- Theology needs to be made accessible to lay people. Perhaps a lay theological conference could be run on an annual basis to help meet this need.

The liturgy of the Church of Ireland could be adapted to include explicit reference to the issues of sectarianism and difference. These have been named by the Church as two of the most important, if not the key issues facing society. If this is indeed the case, a response should be a cornerstone of ministry in the Church of Ireland. As the Church's liturgy is the main vessel for this ministry, it is remiss for sectarianism and difference not to be explicitly mentioned in the liturgy. It has been suggested to the SEP that the existing litany has the potential to be employed in this respect, and that the Moravian Church's liturgy for reconciliation could be integrated into the Book of Common Prayer. This suggestion and others should be examined by the SEP. The Scoping Study findings do not, however, suggest that

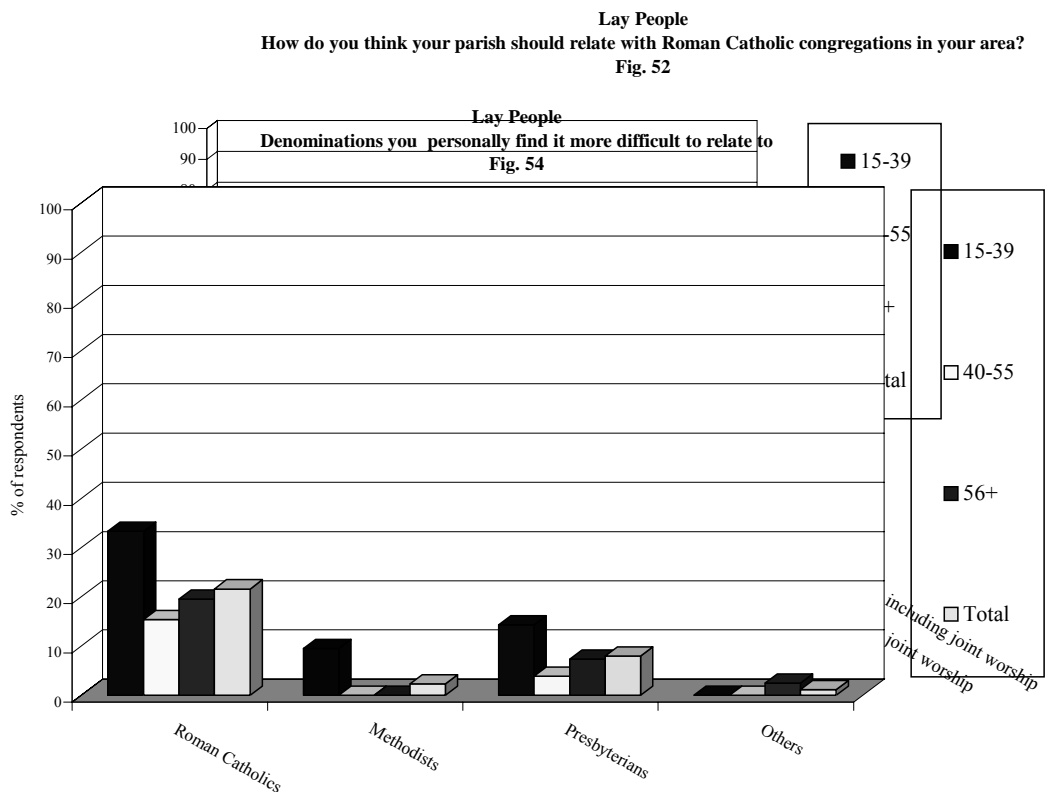
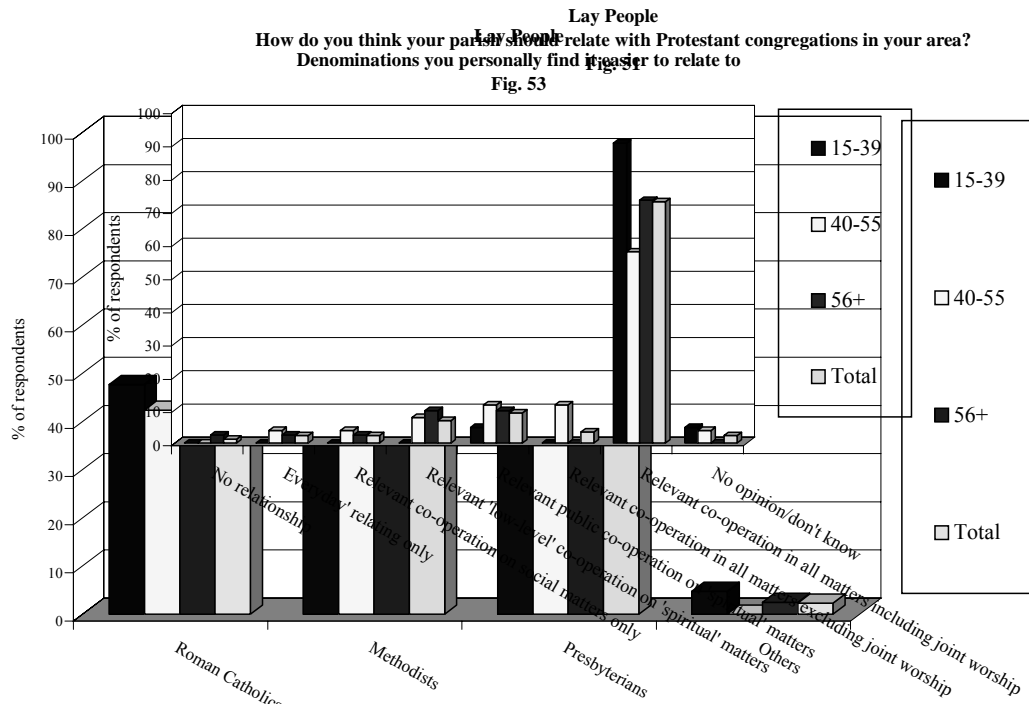
the task of the church is to make its lay people into expert theologians, but to equip them theologically for discipleship. To be a follower of Christ is not synonymous with being an intellectual, in spite of what some sociologists of religion might suggest!

THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE

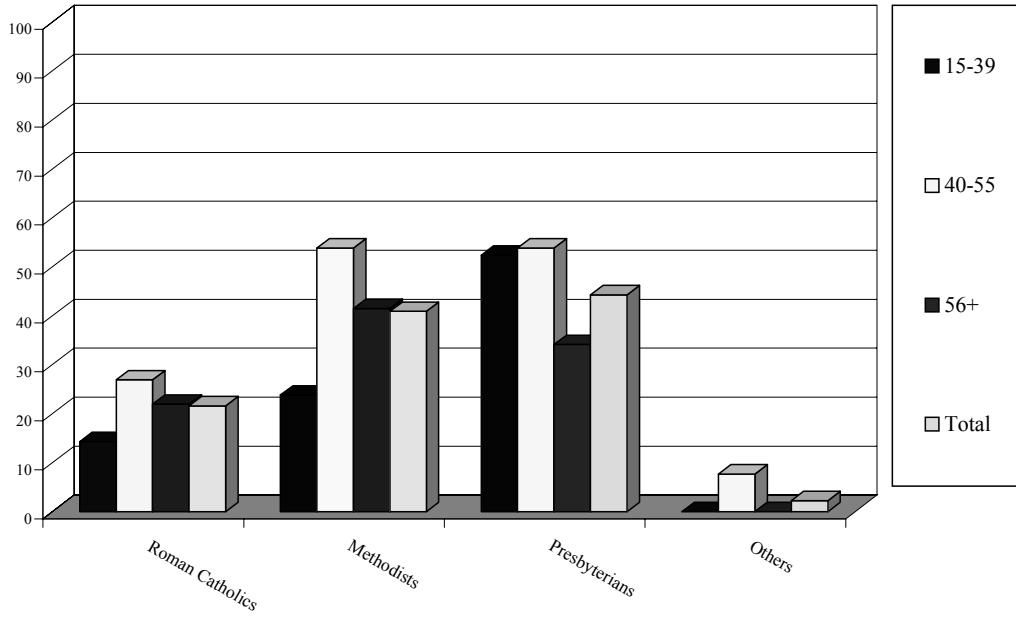
- *Theological differences exist widely throughout the Church of Ireland. The church's diversity can be a strength but can also hamper the possibility of dialogue about controversial issues.*
- *Theology and culture are easily conflated. Some respondents feel that their own theological conservatism counts against them in the context of the wider church.*
- *There is a lack of context for discussion of theology among clergy and lay people; lay people are not usually equipped theologically beyond the basics.*
- *It is evident that the Church of Ireland is often pastorally, rather than ideologically driven.*
- *There is some understanding of sectarianism and difference as being issues that require a theological response, but this has not yet been fully developed.*
- *It is important to recognise that addressing sectarianism and difference cannot be done by the church alone.*
- *Members of the SEP have stressed the role of prayer. It must always be borne in mind that addressing sectarianism and difference is a spiritual, as well as a practical, task; specific liturgical and biblical resources may be useful in helping to address it with authority through affirming its importance, and offering opportunities for both repentance and envisioning.*

9: RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES AND INTER-CHURCH ACTIVITY

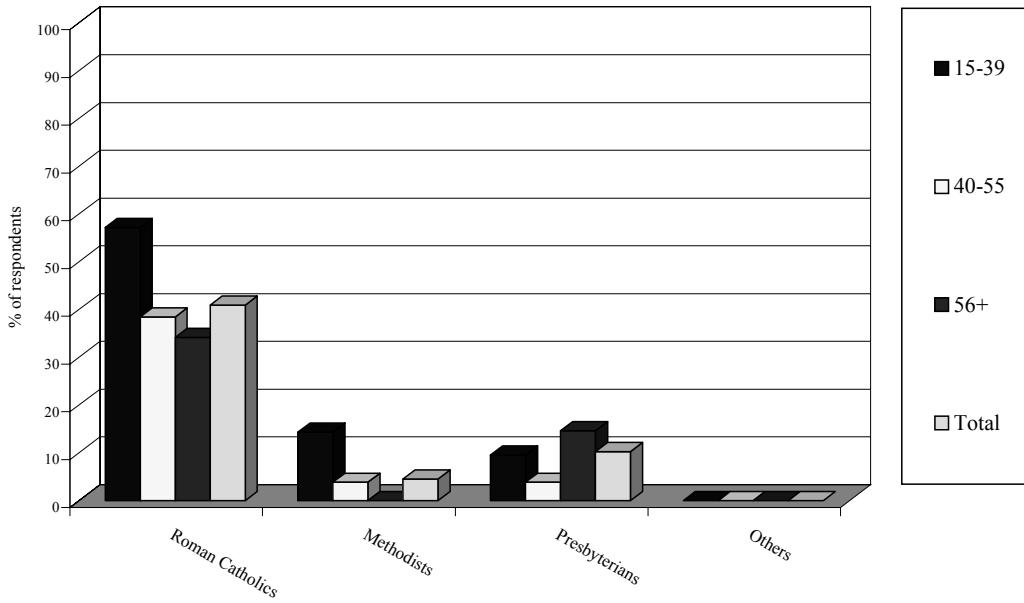
Respondents were invited to discuss the relationship between their own parish and other Christian denominations (See Figs. 51-66).

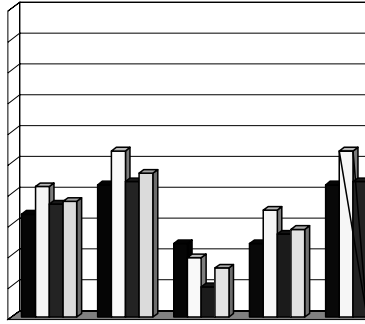


Lay People
Denominations you think it is easier for your parish to relate to
Fig. 55

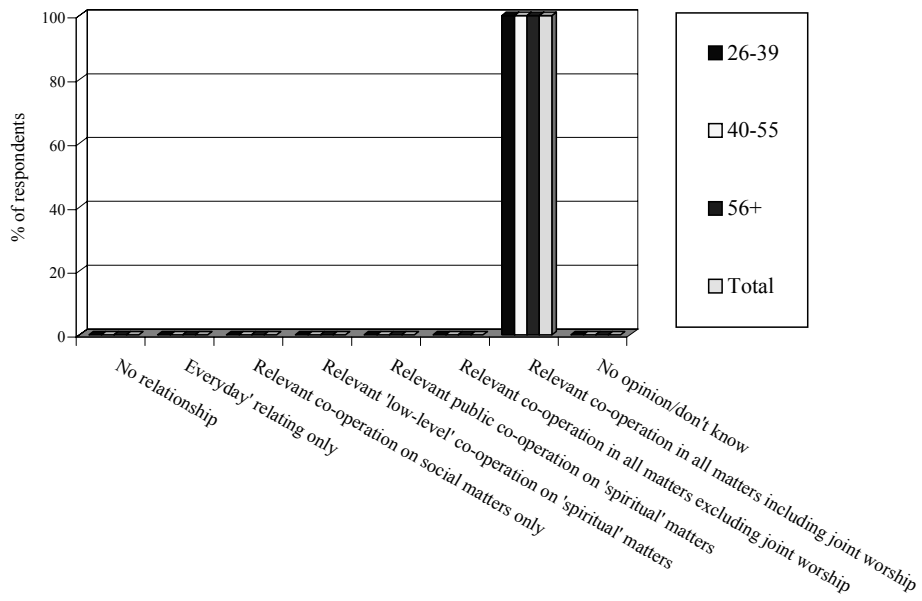


Lay People
Denominations you think it is more difficult for your parish to relate to
Fig. 56

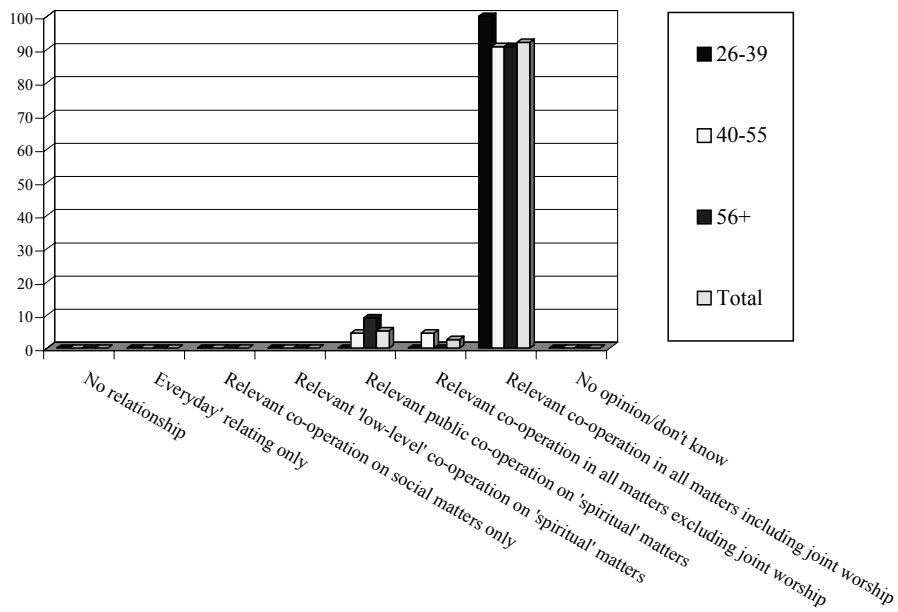




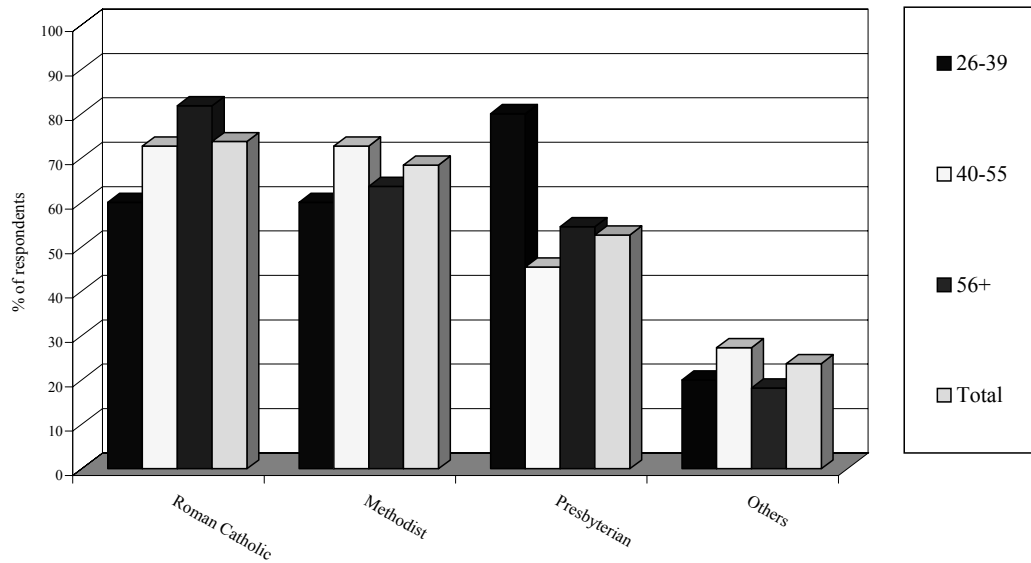
Interviewed Rectors
How do you think your parish should relate with Protestant congregations in your area?
Fig. 59



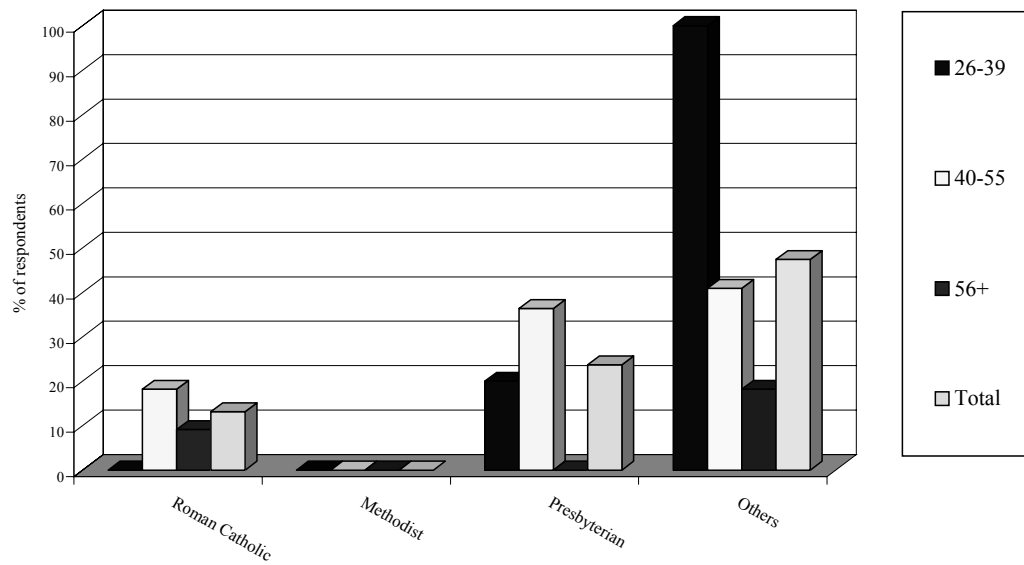
Interviewed Rectors
How do you think your parish should relate with Roman Catholic congregations in your area?
Fig. 60



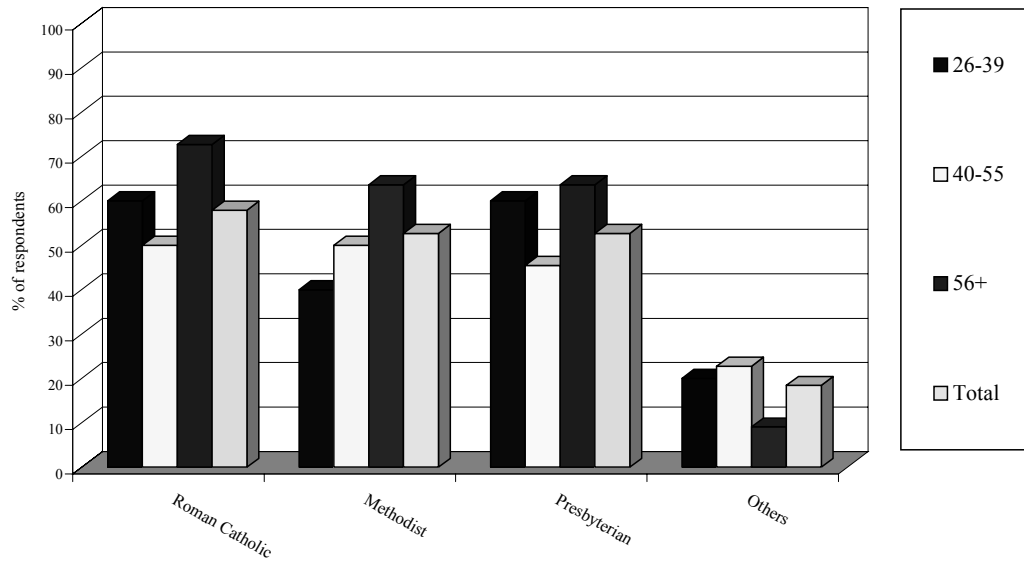
Interviewed Rectors
Denominations you personally find it easier to relate to
Fig. 61



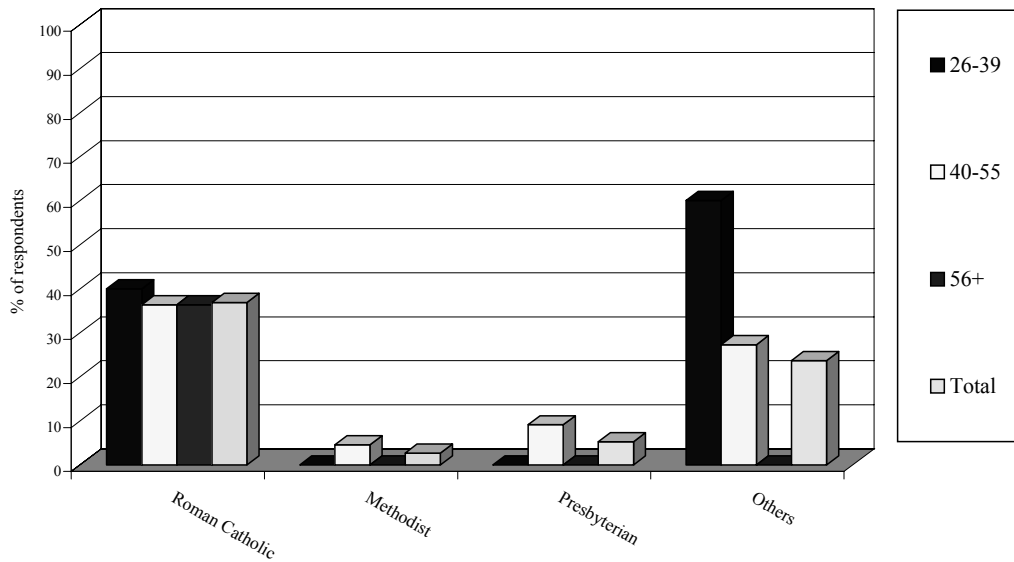
Interviewed Rectors
Denominations you personally find it more difficult to relate to
Fig. 62



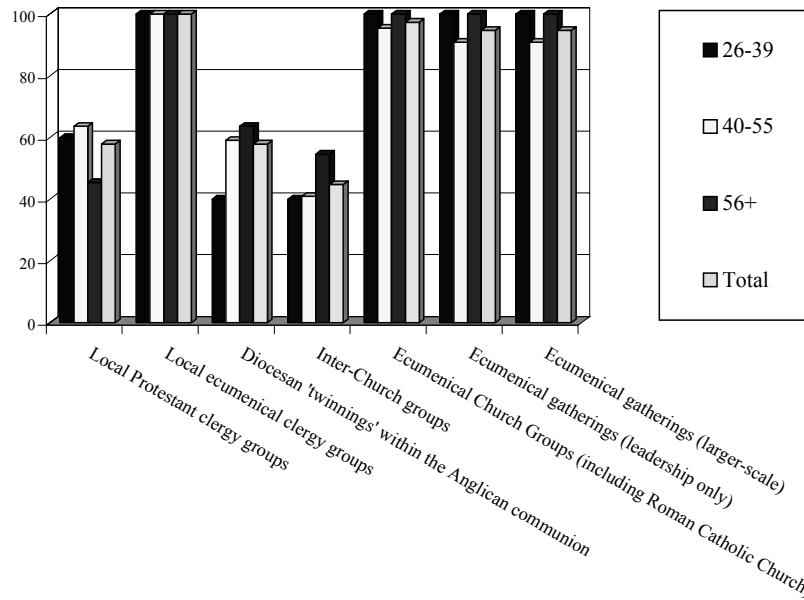
Interviewed Rectors
Denominations you think it is easier for your parish to relate to
Fig. 63



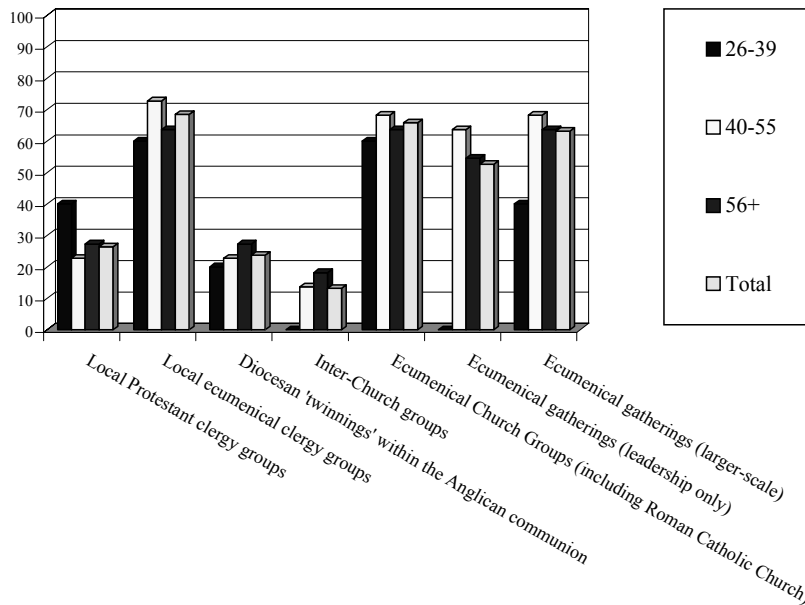
Interviewed Rectors
Denominations you think it is more difficult for your parish to relate to
Fig. 64



Interviewed Rectors
Which do you consider to be potentially valuable?
Fig. 65



Interviewed Rectors
Which do you find useful in practice?
Fig. 66



A series of questions was asked concerning relationships with other churches and inter-church activity. The results to these questions, while interesting, need to be interpreted with caution. Because of the peculiar demographics pertaining to religious populations in Northern Ireland and parts of the Republic, it is possible for a particular parish to exist in a degree of isolation from other churches. For instance, in parts of the north-east, there are fewer Roman Catholic churches. This has an obvious impact on responses in **Figs. 53, 54, 55, 56, 61, 63 and 64**, where the answers given are likely to relate to actual past or present experience and, the absence of experience of contact with a particular group may seem intimidating.

The results bear out some of the public perception of the church, with respondents generally having more affinity with the Methodist and Roman Catholic churches, followed by Presbyterians and other non-separatist Christian churches, and most respondents were happy to share worship with any other Christian denomination, although some challenges to this were acknowledged. Few respondents felt that they or their parish related well with conservative evangelical churches such as the Free Presbyterian Church or independent gospel halls, although this was often due to reluctance on the part of these other churches. Some respondents suggested that traditional forms of ecumenism had become 'tired' and needed to be renewed, or were in fact no longer relevant in a pluralist society. Many respondents maintained a cordial relationship with other churches, but did not engage in much practical co-operation, usually for reasons of other time commitment. It is noteworthy that the results may serve as a corrective to some of the popular perceptions of the Church of Ireland, with the vast majority of respondents, North and South saying that they aspire to good relations, and acknowledging common purpose with their Catholic neighbours. Some respondents indicated that they or their parishioners had a diversity of views on inter-church relations:

Would you say they would find it difficult to relate with the Catholic Church?
Some might.

What would the majority feel?
One third would have problems. One third would have quiet reservations but would be prepared to explore, and one third would have no problems at all. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

I think I would find it more difficult to relate to more extreme Protestant groups...

Why is that?
Well because I think they represent what would seem to me to be a negative exclusive form of Christianity. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

There were some examples of substantial relationships among local churches:

I must tell you that nowadays, the local Roman Catholic Clergy and myself, and the local Methodist minister [regularly] go out for a few pints, and we have a tremendous personal relationship between us. [We have never managed to do this until recently], because usually the Roman Catholic clergy tend to be a bit conservative. **Rector, Limerick and Killaloe**

We would have a special relationship with the Roman Catholic [parish]...At the time of a confirmation a group of our parishioners would go to their confirmation, and when it's our confirmation a group of their parishioners would come down to our service, and we find that beneficial. So certainly as far as the Roman Catholic congregations are concerned, there wouldn't be any problem about worshipping together. And I would on occasions – for example with mixed marriages we would have the Roman Catholic priest sharing the service, and even have had a baptism together as well. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Would you feel happier if clergy groups included or excluded the Roman Catholic clergy?
I'd feel happier if it was all of them. I mean if the Roman Catholic priests had excluded themselves from coming to that, then I would still go along to it. But I wouldn't go along if it were a group that had decided to exclude. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

Because people in the locality know we meet together [as a clergy fraternal] it sets an example and also means that clear lines of communication are maintained. **Rector, Armagh**

In principle as far as this parish is concerned we share worship with other denominations in general, for instance in united carol services, but also with denominations in particular. For example, within the past year we've had one service of evening prayer here with our own Catholic brethren, at which the parish priest has preached and I've conducted evening prayer.

Do you find ecumenical gatherings useful?

Very useful...It builds up trust between us, but also, it's helpful because for a start we have the resources of the four churches...And this year we decided that we would invite people from other world religions, and I think it is necessary for the wider community to not only appreciate the differences within itself, but can also appreciate the differences that can exist in the world around us, and I think that can more effectively be done by coming together as representative. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

There was a series of meetings within the parish together with members of the local Methodist congregation in order to discuss the proposed Methodist/Church of Ireland Covenant. The focus group members who attended these meetings reported that they had been very informative and instructive about church structures etc. They also thought that there was very little difference between the two churches/denominations. **Focus Group report, Connor**

We invite the local parish priest to Harvest and Carol Services; members of his flock also attend and we have excellent relations without our Church of Ireland ethos being compromised. **Standing Committee lay member, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

[Our parish] has a twice-yearly church swap with the local Presbyterian church. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

We are very grateful for the support of the Roman Catholic community in our fundraising events; we could not exist without them. **Standing Committee lay member, Derry and Raphoe**

We need to commit ourselves to relate to the newer churches. **Rector, Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

The Church of Ireland should initiate an ecumenical covenant with other Christian bodies, clearly indicating the aims of mutual respect and tolerance; Christians across the island should be invited to sign this covenant. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

We're going to have four Sundays in October and November, where all members of all congregations will be invited to one church. And the idea is...that we show members of other Christian denominations our worship...We shut down – I'll have an eight o'clock service in the morning, but my eleven o'clock will be a joint Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist. But it'll be our worship. And then because there's no Methodist Church [here], I've given the Methodists my church for their Sunday. But it'll be Methodist worship in our church, but they will conduct it. And we'll be going down to [the Catholic] Cathedral, and they will have their ordinary mass...The idea is that each denomination sees the others' worship at its best. So we'll have two weeks preparation for that here actually, we meet here and whoever wants to come to those preparatory sessions can. Normally about forty people will come to that. But we're hoping this year to reach out to a wider audience. **Rector, Armagh**

Some examples of negative inter-church relations were mentioned, such as members of one Focus Group who felt that they were treated as second class citizens by many Presbyterian people who 'look down their noses at the Church of Ireland' despite never having been inside a Church of Ireland church. One person said they felt the attitude was: 'Sure in the Church of Ireland you don't believe anything', and that 'Catholics are the only ones who don't look down on the C of I.' Other examples include the following:

Some young people in the Republic said that they experience sectarianism in Roman Catholic schools due both to sport and to the mono-denominational religious practice there. Perhaps the SEP could sensitively engage in a respectful dialogue with the Catholic schools over this issue. On a more sinister note, some young respondents from the Republic said they had had stones thrown at them because they were Protestants. **Youth Focus Group report, Republic of Ireland**

Again personalities come into it. On occasions in parishes that I've been at, I find Presbyterians difficult to relate to. I suppose you could also say the smaller denominations, because they're always out to poach your people. So it's difficult sometimes to be completely open. **Rector, Armagh**

People seem to say that conservative evangelical churches tend to want to keep themselves to themselves, so while you might want to relate with them, it isn't reciprocated.

Well I think that's possibly true. I would find parishioners being invited to functions or even services in a church of that nature, and they might be quite happy to go. What they often find if they reciprocate the invitation, it's not accepted. **Rector, Armagh**

Possibly because in my experience I have found [Presbyterians] them to be a little bit more narrow.

A little more sure of themselves?

Yes. Having said that I've appreciated their guidance and leadership on matters in the North over the last few years. They've been very strong, and that's been much appreciated. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Children in schools think you are not a real Christian because you belong to the Church of Ireland. **Lay person, Armagh**

[I have experienced] prejudice from others – sometimes the sentiment of being 'so close to Rome as almost to be a Catholic'...Any Baptists I have met personally are very condescending about other less 'vigorous' denominations. **Lay people, Derry and Raphoe**

It is a great pity that the Roman Catholic Church do not accept the Church of Ireland as a true church...[or] share communion with us. This needs to be dealt with at the decision making level within the Church of Ireland. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

And some respondents explained why they had difficulty relating to certain churches:

Extreme charismatics I have problems with...Some of their doctrines I think are not right. Some of them go on singing in their services and have no time for the preaching of the Bible. People who wave hands about, and want to be laying hands on everybody without listening to what God says, I really have problems with that. I also have problems with liberals from Church of Ireland or any other churches, who don't accept the authority of the Bible...I do find value in [clergy] getting together. We can talk our problems over, we can seek support from each other, and the priest could do that too. So I wouldn't have a problem with that. It just so happens that in this set-up the priest is not in it, but that's the way it's been from before I came. **Rector, Connor**

We would find it difficult to relate to Roman Catholics because of the troubles...some parishioners would resist strongly against any worship with Roman Catholics. **Lay person, Clogher**

Simply by being a Roman Catholic doesn't make someone a Christian; simply by being Church of Ireland does not make you Christian.

So it's a theological reason rather than being an anti-Catholic reason?

Yes. I believe there are certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that are wrong. Now that's not being sectarian or hostile. I believe that certain of their teachings are wrong. If a Roman Catholic comes to genuine Christian faith I think initially he should certainly stay in his own church, until he feels within himself that he's not being fed – if he feels he's not being fed spiritually, and if he feels that the teaching he's receiving is not according to the Bible, that would be for him to decide. But I certainly would not immediately say to someone who comes to faith from the Roman Catholic Church, 'Right, you must get out.' He may have a good influence by staying in his church. But he has to balance that by, 'Am I being taught right?' **Rector, Connor**

Members of the Roman Catholic Church are Christians only if they have a genuine personal faith in Jesus Christ, if they are born again, only in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, if they have personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord...Members of any Christian church are Christians only if they have a genuine personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

Some respondents were clearly surprised that the question of how well they related with other churches (particularly Roman Catholics) was even being asked:

Are members of the Roman Catholic Church Christians? What an offensive, ridiculous question. I take umbrage against these questions. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

No wonder we have sectarianism: - this questionnaire is creating it!

This is really wrecking me because I really don't relate to much of this.

If I'd known what the Archdeacon was getting me into, I wouldn't be here. I feel guilty sitting here even considering these things and I feel as if I'm letting down my Roman Catholic friends. I would be embarrassed if they knew I was doing this questionnaire.

Is the person who designed this questionnaire from a northern background?

If I thought that I belonged to a church which had a majority of people who had these views then I would seriously consider leaving.

Doctrines are simply an accident of birth. No one denomination's doctrines are better or worse than anyone else's, although everyone thinks their own is right.

Roman Catholics are of course Christians - they believe in Christ!

The focus of the Gospel is 'love thy neighbour'.

Coming together at any time of different people from different backgrounds is very important and it helps understanding. Where there is ignorance and fear of the unknown then bigotry prevails. **Lay people, Derry and Raphoe**

How does anybody else define another's faith? Church going doesn't define Christianity. The most dangerous people are those with too much religion and not enough Christianity. Many excellent Christians never go to church. You should always treat people as you would like to be treated. **Lay person, Meath and Kildare**

And the practical and philosophical challenges of inter-church relations were raised by a number of respondents:

There are no other Protestant congregations in the area within a twenty-mile radius. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

In a...struggling inner city parish...near an interface...the need is to build confidence in their own faith and its...implications regarding respect for all made in God's image. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Inter-church events depend on the ministers concerned. **Lay person, Armagh**

I have found that a lot of ecumenical activity is done because there is a feeling it needs to be seen to be done. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

[Colleagues said recently] 'We don't exactly invite our Catholic neighbours for tea', and 'If Roman Catholics came to our church, there would be people in the congregation who would not be in church the following Sunday'. This is a statement of the problem from 'nice' people in a 'nice' parish, who think that they are not sectarian. **Rector, Armagh**

People in my parish are suspicious of everything that is associated with Roman Catholicism – this includes 'sharing the peace', distribution of ashes, candles, crosses. The Church of Ireland should clearly state the 'official' view on many of these issues in order that I can tell my parish. That would help a bit. **Rector, Armagh**

While the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland continues its sectarian position of non-recognition of Anglican Orders and the position of 'Dominus Iesus' and 'One Bread, One Body' then it is difficult to see much progress to full ecumenical understanding. **Rector, Armagh**

Generally these activities are the preserve of the 'core' of the respective faith communities. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

I may love and be kind towards my Catholic neighbour yet also believe they are in error concerning papal infallibility, transubstantiation and Marian devotion. **Anonymous respondent**

There is no support for the ecumenical prayer group from the local Roman Catholic clergy. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

The Catholic church tends to take over any project after a while: they feel they need to be in control. **Lay person, Armagh**

It would be a real breakthrough if...there were public mutual understanding in respect of marriage discipline where two churches are involved. **Rector, Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

In the town there is an invisible boundary that everyone respects and handles very courteously. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

Here in this parish, beyond co-operation on social matters there can't be any other co-operation...for political reasons. The parishioners of the [local] Roman Catholic church, even though they may never be at mass, have murdered parishioners from here. That's the bottom line. And that's the major stumbling block. My own personal, theological convictions – I would have no problems with joint civic services. I would maybe have hesitation about moving beyond that for fear of it being interpreted as a blurring of theological boundaries. **Rector, Clogher**

I would say [joint worship] – the only difficulty I would have would be in the context of a mass... In [this town] we [often] do things together...and that would include Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist...We're open with each other, we're honest with each other as well...[Although] theologically I would [struggle with] the Roman Catholic Church because...interventions that have been made by senior clerics in the Roman Catholic Church have made it very difficult, and I find myself digging in my heels and saying, 'Okay, if you don't want us, well I certainly don't want you.' **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

If the leadership recommends participation and attendance at inter-church events/worship then it will happen (even if on a small scale), but otherwise it will not. **Lay person, Connor**

I think there's work to be done on single identity and part of a cultural thing that is Protestant. I think that's almost the fear sometimes, 'We can't do this, we have to know who we are ourselves.' It's very difficult to move out with Roman Catholics or Jews or anybody, because we don't know who we are...I don't know how you bring that together...Something about leading in our own identity, and being proud of that, not always having to be something because we're not something else. **Rector, Connor**

I'd like to share worship [in the Catholic parish], but we haven't been invited. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

What about local Roman Catholic congregations, what level of relationship do you think your parish should have?

We should probably have more or less the same, but we don't...Possibly because – why would that be? Orange Order? History?

You're more open to it than the lay people are, is that what you're saying?

I'm saying that, yes. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Ecumenical activity...is most effective on a small group basis rather than large...worship events. **Rector, Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

Too much of the ecumenical movement is a bureaucratic movement that really doesn't hit at where local churches are at.

What would you like to see as a substitute, then?

There needs to be real dialogue...Beginning on our shared convictions concerning the apostolic faith... And then a charitable dialogue about our theological differences. **Rector, Clogher**

It might be assumed by some that relations with the Roman Catholic Church are the nub of a Scoping Study on dealing positively with sectarianism and difference, but some respondents indicated the converse:

I think the nub in this is not in many Church of Ireland parishes how we relate to the Roman Catholics, but actually how we relate to Free Presbyterians, Baptists, Brethren. And my personal feeling is that in many parts of the Church of Ireland sectarianism is actually focused more on other Protestant reformed groupings...than...on Roman Catholics. I think there is a geographical dimension to this, in that there are certain parts of the island where...the focus has been primarily on our relationships with Roman Catholic folks, but outside of church it also relates to our attitudes to people who are politically...different to ourselves. What I would love to see is that we would have as much respect for those who have a different view on a united Ireland or the United Kingdom than we have, and that...that is accepted as a valid viewpoint rather than being demonised or...one of them being aligned with God's will and the other not being. **Bishop**

Respondents distinguished between good inter-church relations and co-operation on issues of common concern, and ecumenical initiatives involving shared worship. Some mentioned the challenges associated with sharing worship with the Roman Catholic Church, and the question of inter-church marriage:

The local Catholic priest is very ecumenical and turns a blind eye to inter-communion. **Lay person, Armagh**

The annual ecumenical service is not attended by the rector but some parishioners go as individuals. **Lay person, Armagh**

Would you be happy to share non-Eucharistic worship?

Absolutely. I'm also a joint chaplain in the community school. The only problem with our relationships with the Roman Catholic Church on a personal level is that the parish priest has severe difficulty with what I am, a former Roman priest.

Is the issue of inter-faith marriage arising?

Inter-faith marriage doesn't arise. I'd spend a lot of my time trying to re-educate people that questions seven and eight on the Roman Catholic pre-nuptial enquiry form, having studied canon law for three years, it is not couched in terms that the Protestant – or non-Catholic party – must agree to the child being raised Catholic. What the person agrees to is that the child can be informed of the Catholic faith, no matter what faith it's baptised in. So I spend a lot of time doing that, and then I clash with my Roman Catholic colleagues...but it's good-natured. 'You're trying to steal my parishioners again', and vice versa...Many a truer word is said in jest, so we mark our territory in a bantering way over a pint or over a cup of tea. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Would you participate in Inter-Church groups (Protestant only)?

No...because in the community you don't just have Protestant churches. I mean local clergy, Protestant clergy yes, because that's where you're living, and here that's the only other ministers I would meet, but inter-church no, I mean I think you have to mix more. [I do have questions about Roman Catholic doctrine.] I think...the doctrine – the Mary thing, also the infallibility thing would be the main things. Because I mean, knowing the Roman Catholics that I know, they're great people, but they're just – they're just blinkered on these things. [I reconcile my views with participation in ecumenical gatherings] because they're part of the community. I may not agree with what they teach, but they're precious in God's eyes, so therefore...as long as they don't encroach on my doctrine at a worship gathering I won't encroach on theirs. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

I wouldn't see a problem if we were to come together for a carol service. There might be other areas of worship where I mightn't feel so comfortable, you know. But I think there could be some participation of joint worship that I could agree with and feel happy with. **Rector, Dromore**

I am in an inter-church marriage and my two sons have been baptised RC and C of I respectively but I have never received in a Roman Catholic Church...when the priest asks non-Catholics to come up for a blessing they mean well, but it is so patronising. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

[Shared worship] could be encouraged because I have parishioners here who are dropped off here and the partner goes to chapel, and then they're lifted up on the way home. I have no problem with it, but I think we're still not at the stage where they could happily come into my church. I do weddings in the parish, but because of the [situation] they will choose to do them in St Patrick's, which is my other wee church, because it's better for photographs, plus there's no religious or loyalist paraphernalia...I can encourage them to go to the ecumenical service during Christian Unity Week because the last year a Presbyterian was preaching and a Church of Ireland guy was preaching, but they felt it was safe to go. **Rector, Connor**

When asked about which denominations the parishes get on with more easily, one person quipped, "Just add a cup of tea and our parishioners will go anywhere!". **Focus Group report, Connor**

I feel guilty, because I know I should be supportive [of ecumenical gatherings], but I don't because I'm lazy. And I like it when there are ecumenical gatherings of the hierarchy. It's good to see the four church leaders together, more often. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

I would like to see our parish being more friendly towards another church, especially the Roman Catholic Church.

I would like to see the Church of Ireland getting its feet a little more wet. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

North-South differences impact inter-church relations also:

But I think [there's] a feeling in the Republic that we've moved on, because those issues do not preoccupy us...In fact ecumenical efforts have dwindled, not because people have become disillusioned, but because people don't see the point of these big things. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Historically...we did have a connection with the ecumenical movement, we had meetings of groups of lay Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland and Methodists and so on, but the thing has kind of faded out, and the whole ecumenical thing has gone rather stale...**Rector, Limerick and Killaloe**

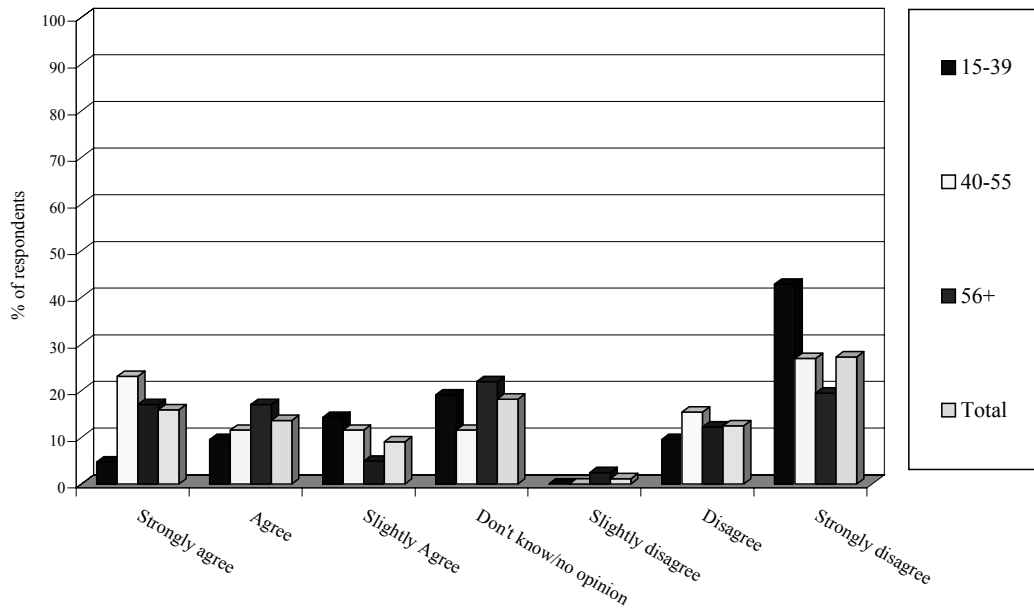
RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES AND INTER-CHURCH ACTIVITY

- *There is a diversity of views on inter-church relations; North-South difference impacts these relationships.*
- *Some Church of Ireland parishes have substantial relationships with other local churches, usually Methodist, Roman Catholic or Presbyterian.*
- *There are sometimes practical (distance, time commitment) and philosophical (doctrinal differences, styles of leadership) challenges to deeper inter-church relations.*
- *Some maintain theological objections to shared worship in an ecumenical context, but still participate in other forms of relating with local Roman Catholic parishes; for some others, ecumenism is no longer inspires enthusiasm.*
- *Some respondents felt that relations with more conservative Protestant denominations were often negative, and should be prioritised.*
- *Respondents often feel that ecumenical relationships, gatherings and structures avoid important difficult and emotive issues.*
- *Some respondents feel there is a need to define an agenda for inter-church relations that goes beyond shared worship, or enables those with a philosophical objection to participate in such relations. What are the other things that churches can usefully do together?*

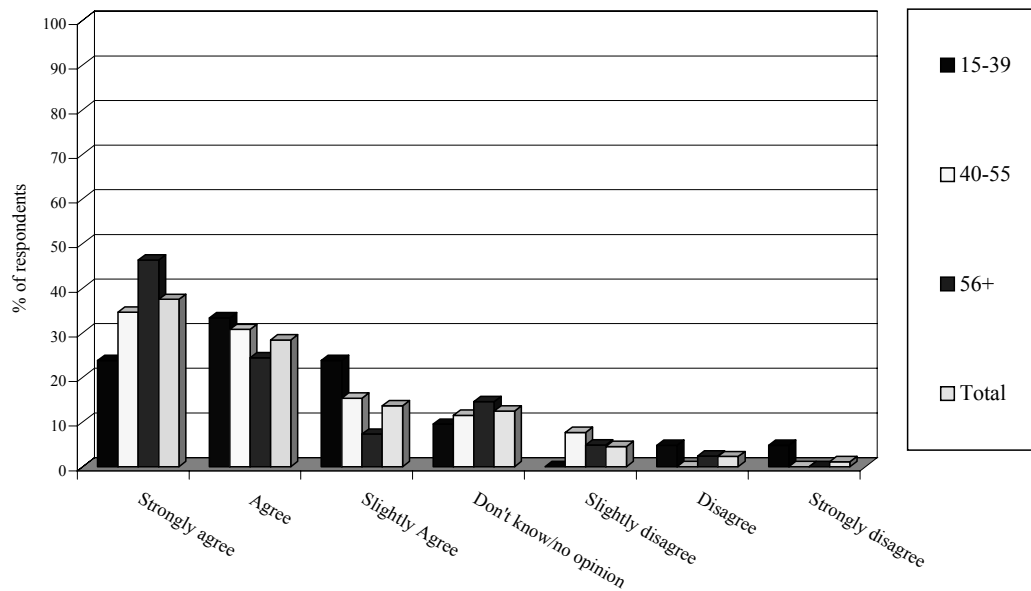
10: WORLD RELIGIONS

The presence of other world religions in Ireland has a long history, but has recently become more conspicuous due to the development of pluralism, post-modernity, globalisation and increased immigration. The SEP remitted the Scoping Study to examine respondents' attitudes toward, and experiences of other world religions. Statistical findings are found in **Figs. 67-72**.

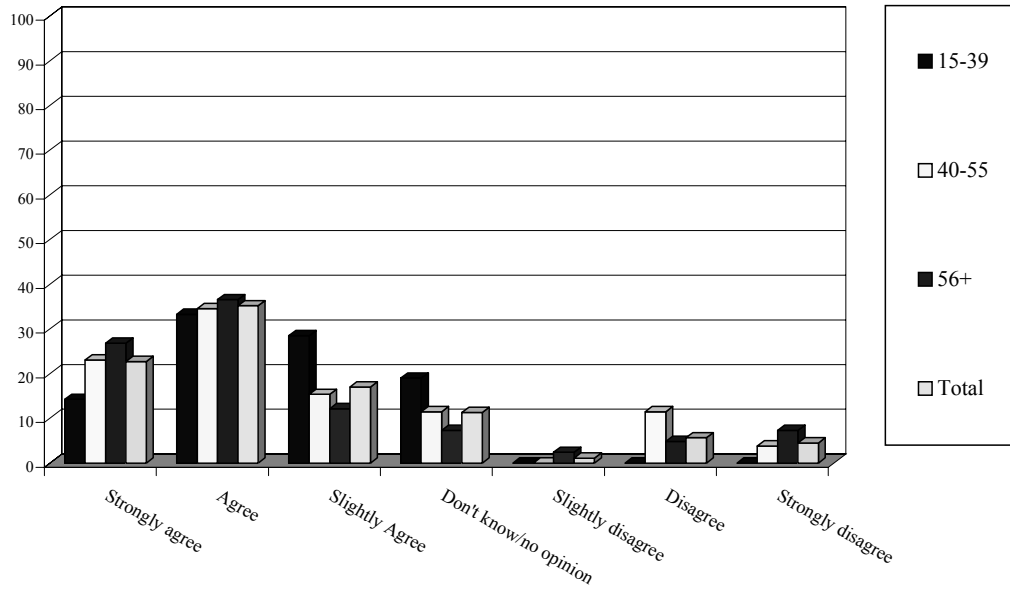
Lay People
I have at least one friend who is a member of another world religion
Fig. 67



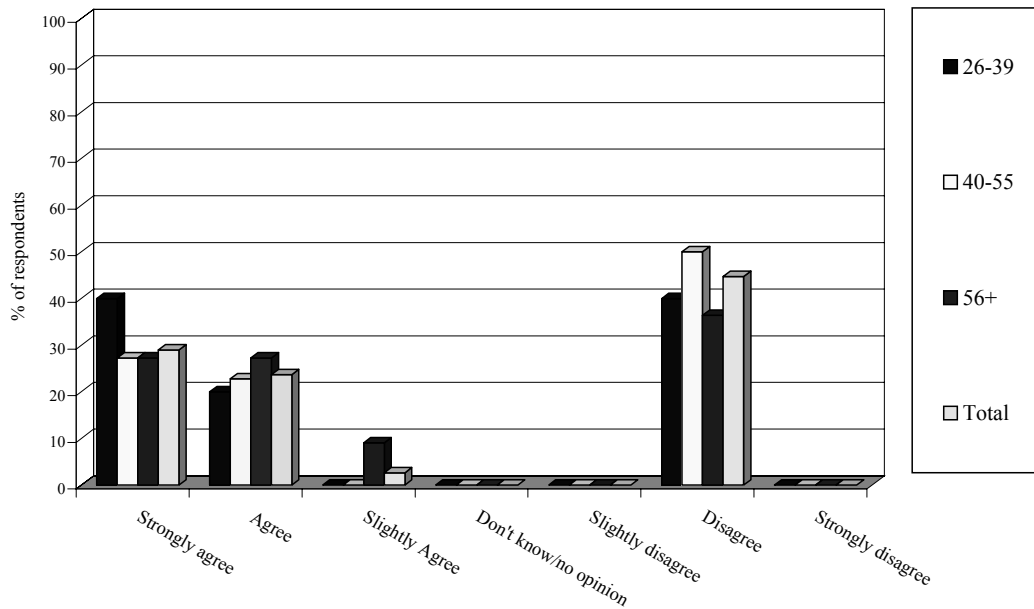
Lay People
The Church of Ireland should help its members to better understand other world religions
Fig. 68



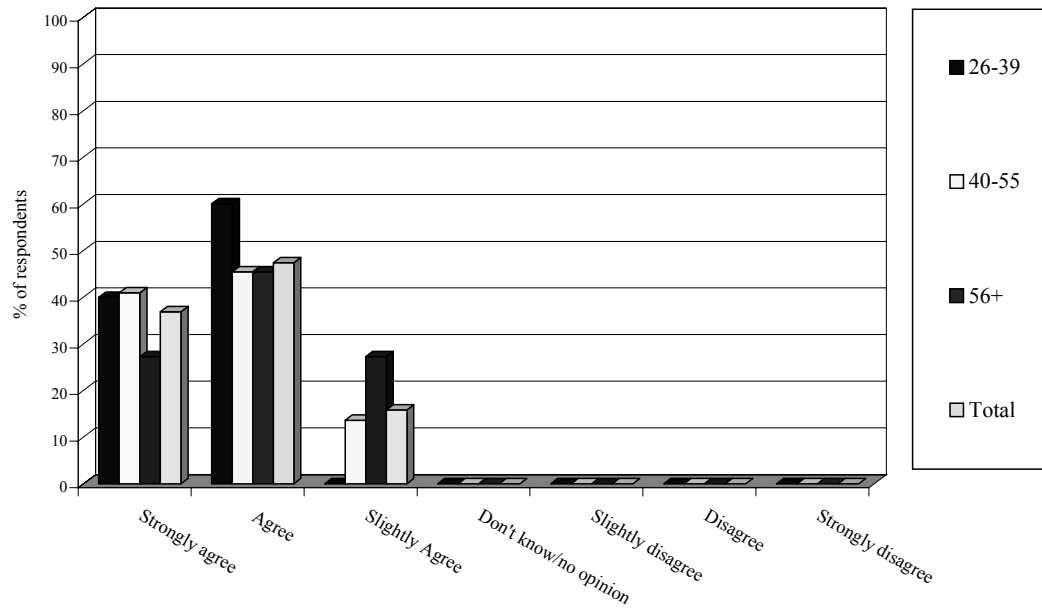
Lay People
The Church of Ireland should have formal non-ecumenical relationships with other world religions
Fig. 69



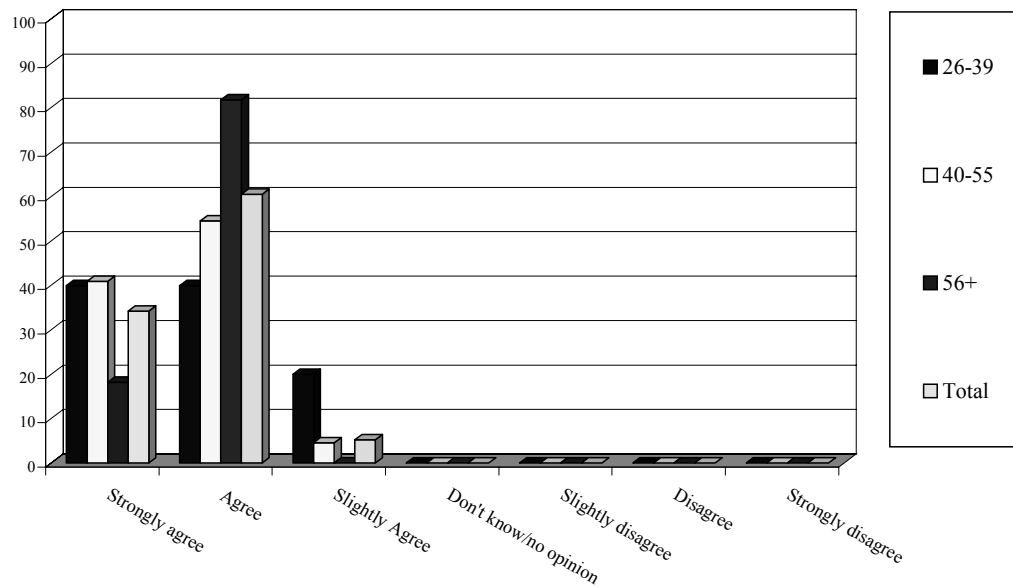
Interviewed Rectors
I have at least one friend who is a member of another world religion
Fig. 70



Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland should help its members to better understand other world religions
Fig. 71



Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland should have formal non-ecumenical relationships with other world religions
Fig. 72



92% of clergy respondents, and 72% of lay respondents agreed that the church should help its members better understand other world religions, and 96% of clergy/68% of lay respondents believed that the Church of Ireland should engage in formal non-ecumenical relations with other world religions. (It was explained to respondents that formal non-ecumenical relations might include, for instance, participation in a Jewish-Christian dialogue group, or co-operation on social issues, but not shared inter-faith worship, for instance). There was an unsurprising lack of experience in this area, although 35% of lay people, and 49% of rectors said they had at least one friend who is a member of another world religion.

The nature of relations between the Church of Ireland and other world religions, including inter-faith worship was discussed:

Dialogue with other world religions, including atheists is helpful; but ecumenism a blurring of boundaries.
Lay person, Derry and Raphoe

I would [support inter-faith worship], provided it was not just a face-save, it wasn't just window dressing. Provided it was thought through, we knew what we were doing, and we knew what we were trying to achieve, and it was to the glory of God and not to some sort of...theological compromise as it were – [if] it was a genuine act of worship and reconciliation. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

How might [you reach out to other world religions]?

How might they do that? By inviting people of other religions to come and share fellowship – not necessarily at a Sunday morning service, but to come where you could have fellowship, you could have a meal. Like the Alpha programme, have a big meal. And just discuss, and talk, and then again have people from other traditions come and say a few words...Because the idea that the Christian churches, and the Anglican Church, and the Church of Ireland as a whole have the truth...is to deny what's going on in the world. And...especially as Ireland becomes more of a pluralistic society and more of a multi-cultural society, how do you know that your [child] is going to take up with a Sikh, or a Muslim, or a Hindu?

Would you like to say anything else about how the church should approach...other world religions?

We should not sell ourselves short. As Christians, of all denominations, we tend to be very lovey-lovey towards other churches who don't allow us to have cathedrals or churches in their countries, and don't allow our Christians to practice openly, so I don't see why we should apologise all the time for being Christians. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

There were differing views about evangelism in the context of other world religions:

I suppose you want good relationships with all. That's the Christian thing, and I suppose the problem for the Christian is you also want to uphold the uniqueness of Christ...You don't want just a big wishy-washy religious conglomerate, if you believe in Christ. **Rector, Armagh**

How should relationships be conducted given theological reservations?

It's a case of working at local level, and maybe on social levels...if there is a social issue of injustice, or of poverty, or of lack of housing etc. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

I think perhaps it would be more important that they would understand what world beliefs are. Our church isn't going to disagree that much with Presbyterianism and Methodism, but it's going to disagree quite a bit with Islam and Buddhism and so on. So I think there's a place to teach our church people what other faiths believe, to point out from the Bible where the other churches are wrong. That might sound awful, but that's the way I feel.

Is there anything else you'd like to say about other world religions?

Evangelism. I know it sounds arrogant, but I believe that the doctrine is the truth, and our thirty-nine articles, I think they are absolutely biblical. Therefore I believe we are right, and that people who try to find a way to God other than through Jesus, I believe they are wrong. Therefore I think we have the responsibility to reach out to them with the gospel we believe is right. So it's evangelism, not just to get on well with people, I think Jesus calls us to something much stronger than that. **Rector, Connor**

Because of September 11th...there was a lot of dealings in relation to...Islam. So I decided...to look during Lent at the other world religions...So we [looked at] Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism...The response was absolutely tremendous...We have a tendency to look at other world religions and see them as very monolithic things, but each of them...has their own [internal] divisions. The sort of general consensus was...that each of these religions was authentic in their own right, and that a genuine follower of these religions was a genuine seeker after God, in the same way that we would see ourselves as that. And certainly it would be the general consensus that these people have something to say to us, and that we should be getting more involved and getting together more.

And what are the implications for evangelism of that?

Well I mean I have never been an advocate of Christians going around the world beating Christianity into what we call – certainly not. I think we should certainly go in terms of – well something like the way CMS would have gone, for instance, in terms of agricultural projects and in that sort of way, but the idea of going out there – which is a nineteenth century idea – I think has no place now. **Rector, Armagh**

Jesus is the way, and he's unique, but I do feel that there's lots of enlightenment in other religions. They've discovered all sorts of things that we're blinkered to. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

A few respondents commented on the potential encroachment of other world religions into people's everyday lives:

What's the name of the ones who go round annoying people? Jehovah's Witnesses. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

The Church of Ireland should be more interested in its own church. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

But most respondents who had experience of the issue of other world religions contended that approaching this form of difference may well be as important as facing other forms of sectarianism, and that the challenge will only increase in the coming years:

I think we need to get to grips with an increasingly large number of people of other world religions, particularly in the Dublin area. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

It is almost hilarious to reflect upon how backward we are – we are still debating Holy 'Spirit' vs Holy 'Ghost', when on the world stage it is Allah and God and Buddha; we are being left behind, re-arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic! **Rector, Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

As well as the Protestant/Roman Catholic sectarianism explicit and implicit in the church, we have become aware of the anti-Semitism [that] has infested the church since the early centuries. This too needs to be addressed in any project dealing with sectarianism. **Retired rector, Down and Dromore**

WORLD RELIGIONS

- *Like ethnic minorities and asylum seekers, the issue of relating to world religions is a relatively recent development for the Church of Ireland.*
- *Discussions about the issue are at an early, undeveloped stage.*
- *There is a diversity of views within the church about relating to world religions, ranging from 'no experience' (the majority view), to advocacy of cordial relations or co-operation on social matters only, to a small number of respondents who support ecumenism in an inter-faith context.*
- *There is a concern to maintain the church's teaching on the uniqueness of Christ without denying the possibility of learning from other world religions.*
- *Some respondents recognise that the issue of relating to world religions will become increasingly important for the church in the future.*

11: PEACE/ADDRESSING SECTARIANISM INITIATIVES: PRIORITIES, ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES

In spite of the appearance to the contrary, Northern Ireland has a highly developed peace and reconciliation sector, sometimes referred to as an 'industry' due to its often highly bureaucratic and systematised nature. Just as this society is in danger of being 'research-saturated', there appear to be far more peace and addressing sectarianism initiatives than one would think necessary for such a conflict, in such a small society. Respondents were given an opportunity to discuss their experiences of and attitudes toward such initiatives. Questions were put to respondents in the Republic as well as to those based in Northern Ireland. However, the results, perhaps predictably, include a large group of 'don't know/no opinion'. This may reflect three things. One, a perception on the part of some Republic-based respondents that sectarianism is a Northern Irish issue. Two, that materials generated largely within the Northern Irish context are not publicised widely outside that area and therefore are unknown to respondents living elsewhere. Three, a lack of awareness within Northern Ireland of the available resources. Theological perspectives (see Figs. 73-75) and attitudes toward such initiatives may well be linked, so the first relevant question was as follows:

Please indicate the statement below that comes closest to your opinion:

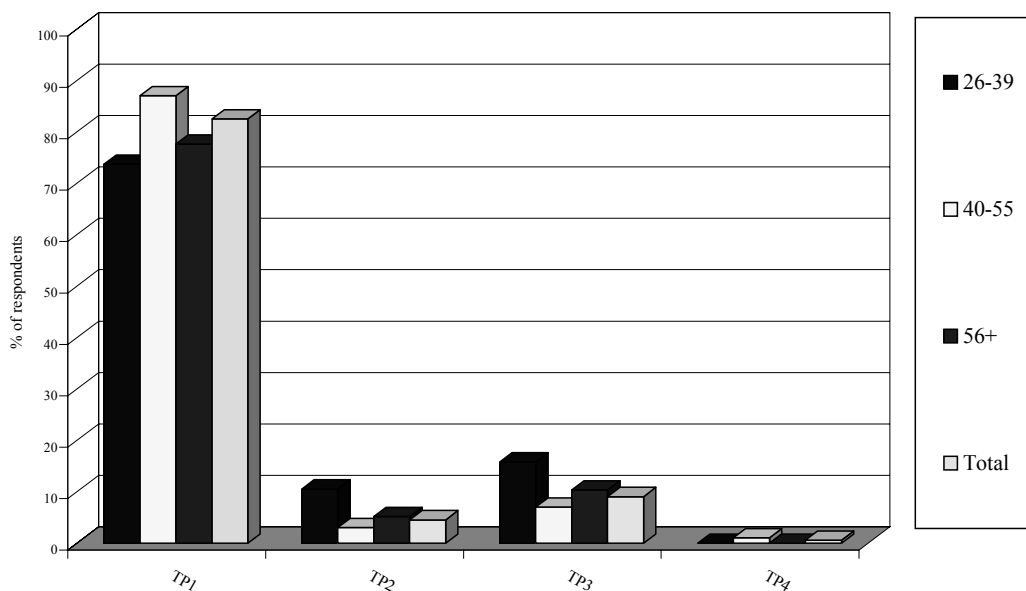
TP1: *Being a Christian includes crossing the boundaries in this society. This will mean getting involved in peace and reconciliation work. Our relationship with Catholic neighbours may include worshipping together.*___

TP2: *Being a Christian includes crossing the boundaries in this society. This will mean getting involved in peace and reconciliation work. However, our relationship with Catholic neighbours should not include worshipping together.*___

TP3: *Some kind of peace and reconciliation work is important, and it may be appropriate for Christians to be involved in it. We should usually not be involved in joint worship with Catholic groups due to doctrinal differences; but we should co-operate at other levels.*___

TP4: *Any level of cross-community work may be a distraction from the true meaning of the gospel. We should love our neighbour but need to lead others to the truth. Peace and reconciliation work can sometimes confuse the issue, and it is sometimes too similar to ecumenical work.*___

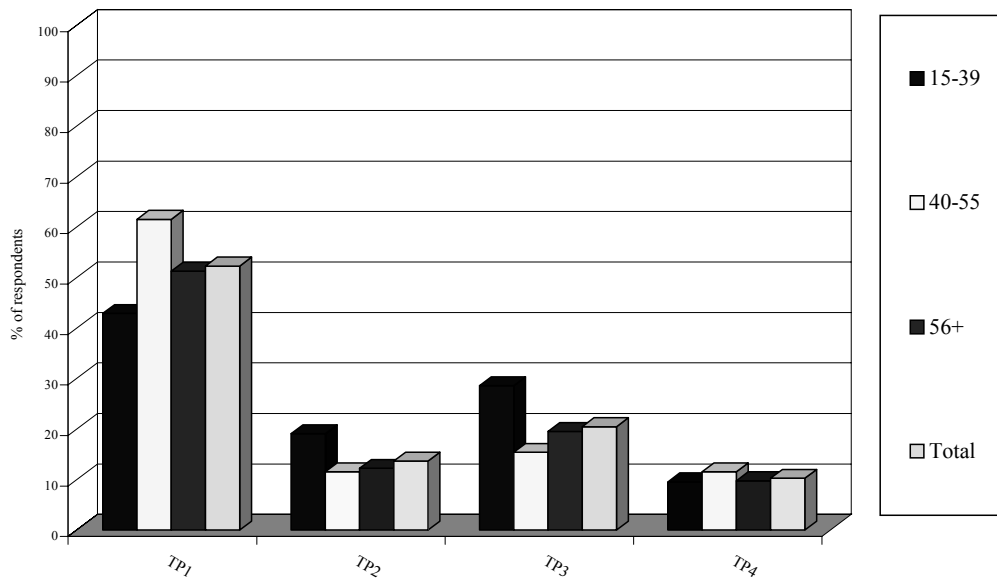
All Rectors
Theological Perspectives
Fig. 73



Lay People
Theological Perspectives
Fig. 74

Confidential

5/19/2003



Standing Committee
Theological Perspectives
Fig. 75



The vast majority of clergy respondents (80%) agreed with statement 1, while 50% of lay people concurred. Only 1% of the rectors and 9% of lay respondents indicated statement 4. It is noteworthy that the clergy respondents who indicated statement 4 (which does not affirm shared worship) still disavowed sectarianism. The statistics for this chart are encouraging for the SEP, for they imply a great deal of good will toward bridge-building work, while also serving as a reminder that some people have genuine concerns about the conflation of peacemaking with ecumenism. Although none of the statements is perfect, this question was an attempt at eliciting true information, rather than 'skewing' results in the direction that some people may assume is the SEP's preference. It is also noteworthy that it was only respondents from within Northern Ireland (or dioceses that include both Northern Ireland and the Republic) that indicated statement 2 or 3. Ecumenism and cross-community encounters, whatever the challenges, appear (naturally) to be much more a part of everyday experience for the Church of Ireland in the Republic. Some respondents underlined the value of addressing sectarianism and other forms of difference as a core element of discipleship, as exemplified by the following comments:

We need to develop a discerning mind, which marries a commitment to biblical truth as our basis for belief and a selfless love for others – whoever the others are. **Bishop**

I would not recommend any attempt to achieve uniformity of all branches of the Church but rather to develop a spirit of understanding and respect for those whose views/doctrines differ from our own. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

There has been a lack of reflection among the clergy about the system of sectarianism and the manner in which other forms of difference manifest themselves at the level of the social structure, and often a sincerely-held but possibly incomplete view that 'preaching the gospel' alone is an adequate response:

My feeling is, if we're about our real business, the sectarian issues are dealt with.

And your real business is the gospel?

It's spreading that gospel. It's making that gospel available to all people. **Rector, Armagh**

Prayer life, peace and reconciliation, and I think evangelism in its best sense [are my priorities]...But it may not be the formal sort of peace and reconciliation that you would tick in a box. It may be done among neighbours who have been neighbours for a hundred and fifty years...It has become fashionable in the last few years to talk about this, largely sparked off I think by the Archbishop drawing attention, focusing, building it up. Building up the awareness of the problem. I think we've faced up to it, the fact that you're doing this survey means that we're trying to cope with it. I don't know yet how well we're coping with it, and I don't know if any other churches are coping with it any better. The worry about that question...is, 'this may mean getting involved.' It's not something that's starting now – it's something that's ongoing. *Being* involved, rather than getting involved. **Rector, Armagh**

None of the [theological perspectives in the questionnaire] resembles my own! Joint prayer and worship is perfectly acceptable and welcome but it should happen naturally and not because everyone is pressured into 'peace and reconciliation work'. **Rector, Armagh**

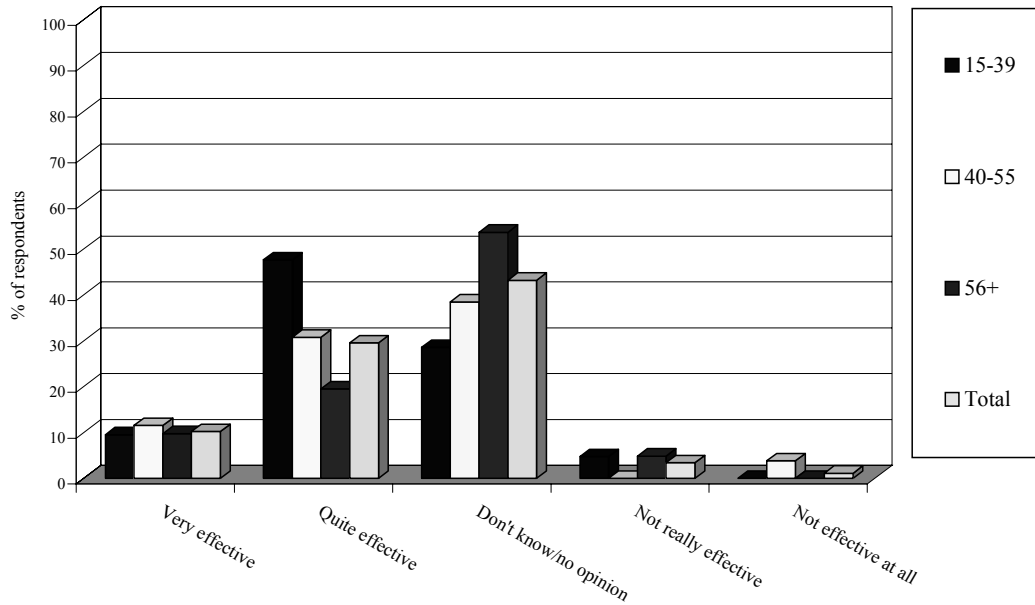
You should be told that [sectarianism] is not part of Christian discipleship. Not a part of it at all...But generally our church teaching from the pulpit would be co-existence with people...

So you wouldn't see active peace and reconciliation work as...?

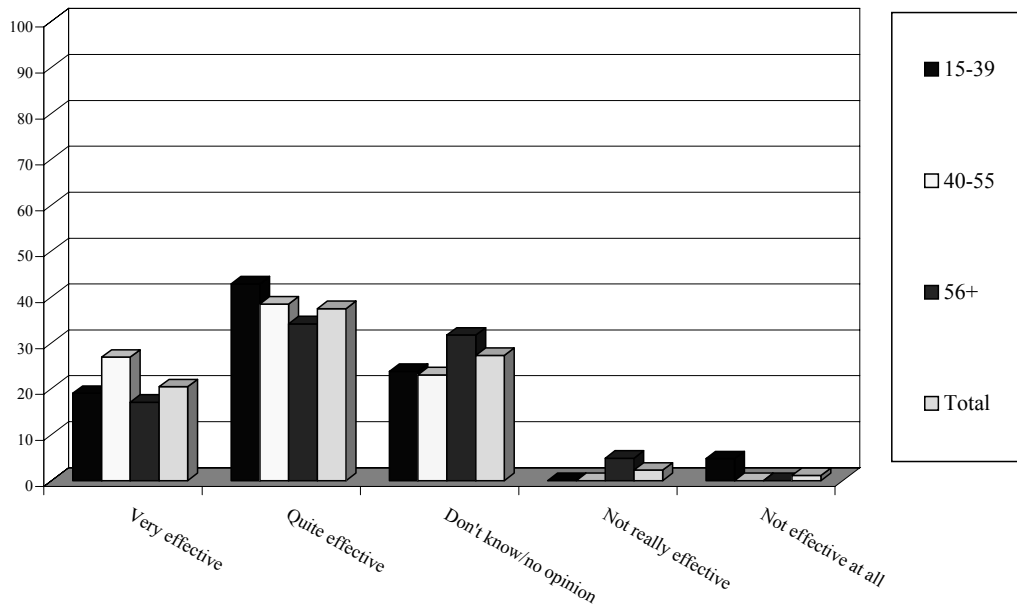
We have been involved in it. Not between Protestant and Roman Catholic. Between Protestant and pagan. Because the pagans are our problem, as far as community relations goes. There are no real...difficulties between...the main churches here...It's the people with little or no church connection. **Rector, Connor**

Respondents were asked to judge the value of different kinds of initiatives; they commented on the effectiveness of initiatives with which they were familiar as follows (see Figs. 76-97):

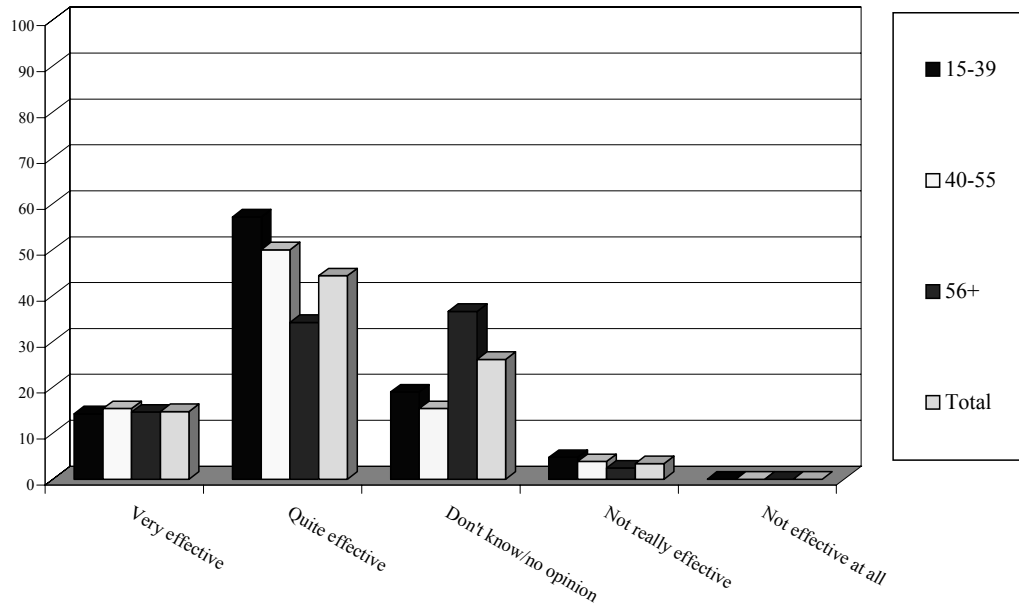
**Lay People
Single Identity work
Fig. 76**



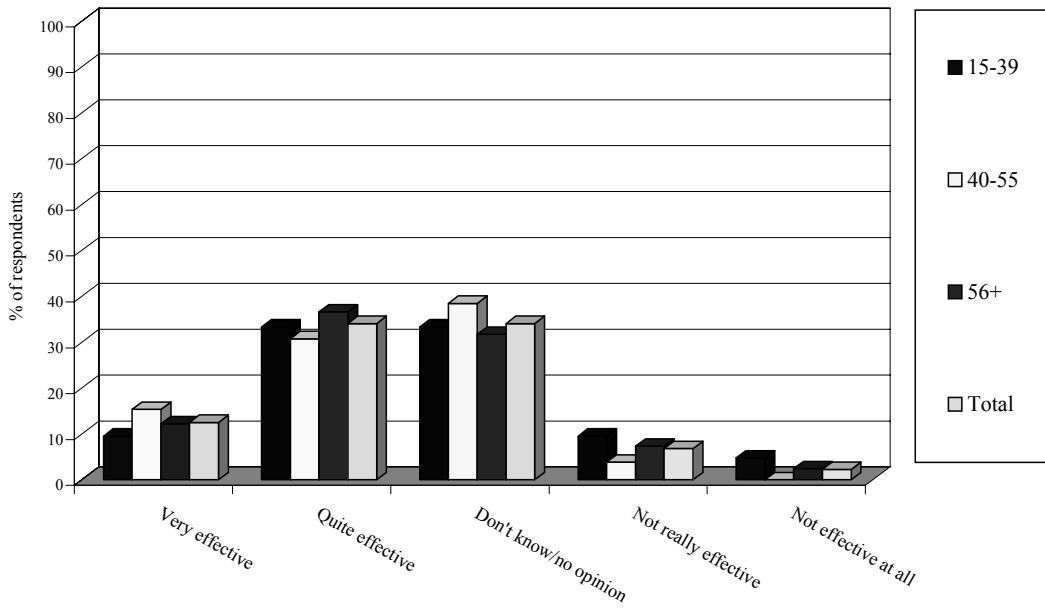
**Lay People
Cross-community 'encounter' group
Fig. 77**



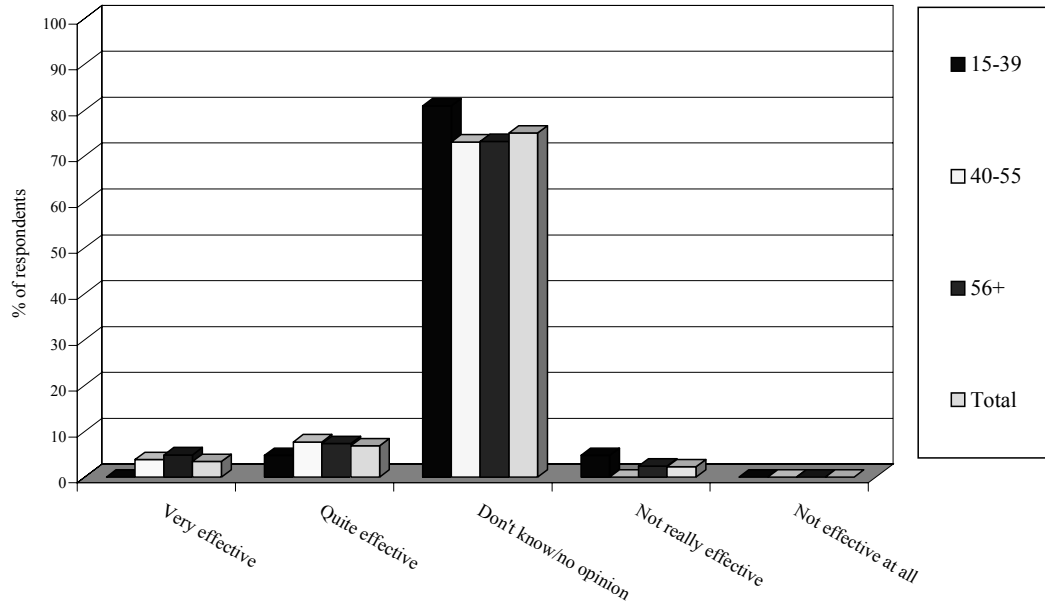
Lay People
Cross-community project work
Fig. 78



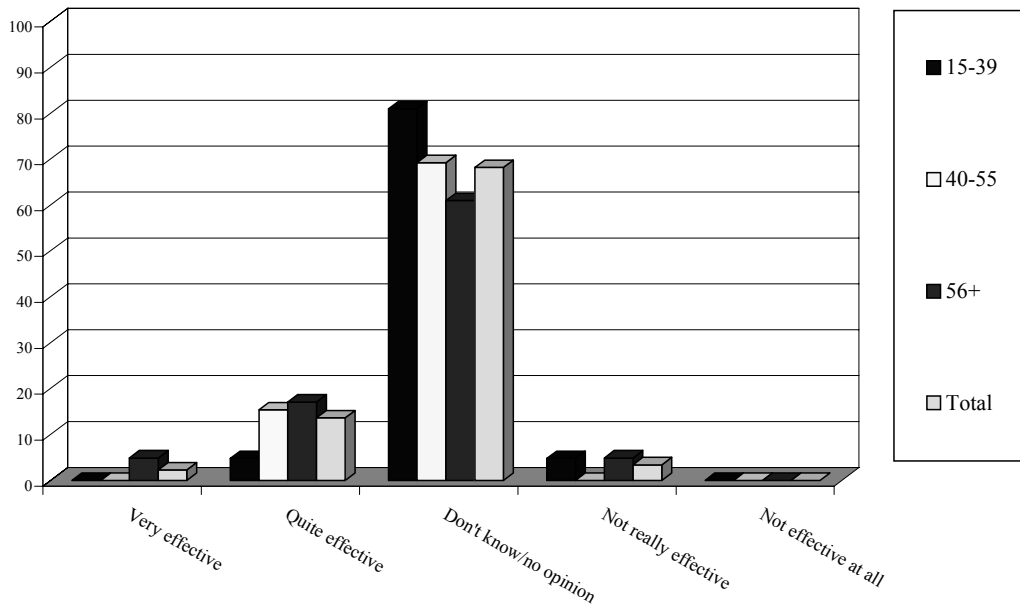
Lay People
Ecumenical activity
Fig. 79



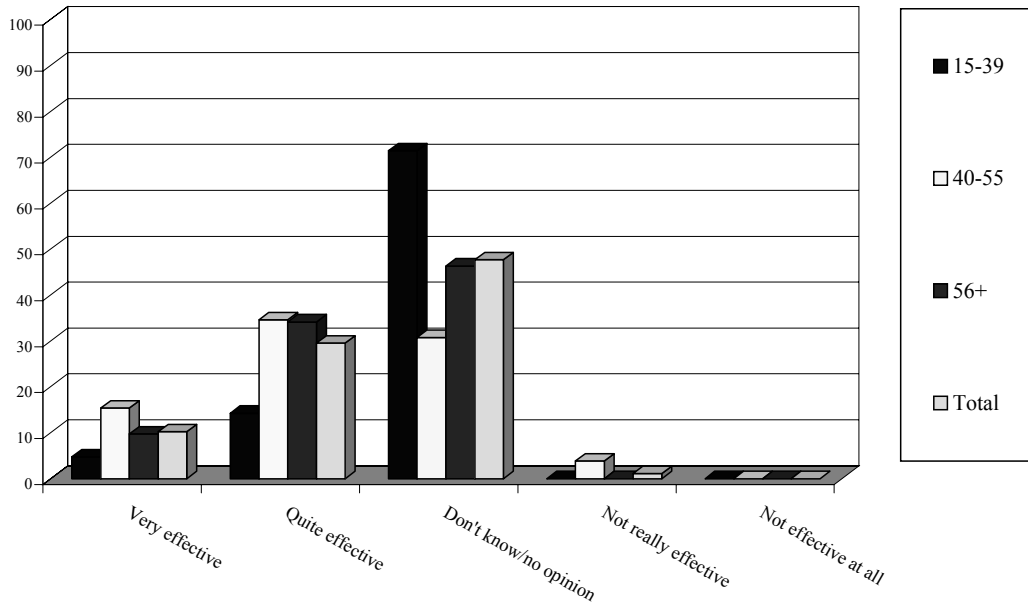
Lay People
ECONI resources
Fig. 80



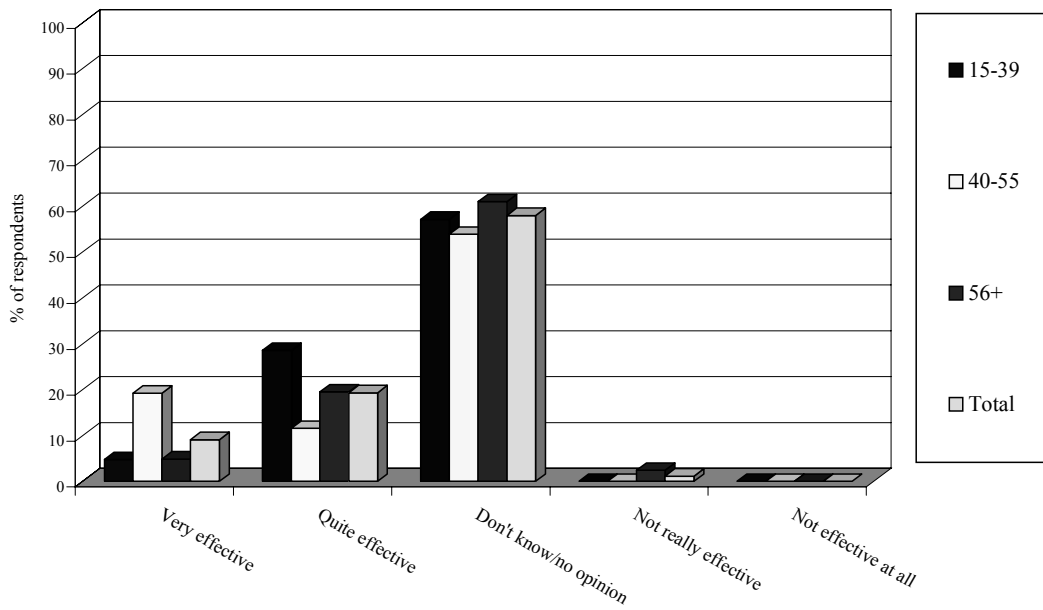
Lay People
ISE resources
Fig. 81

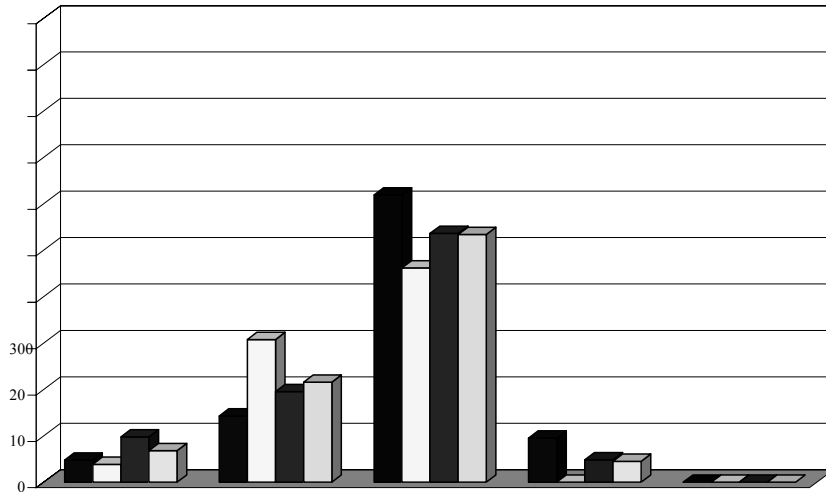


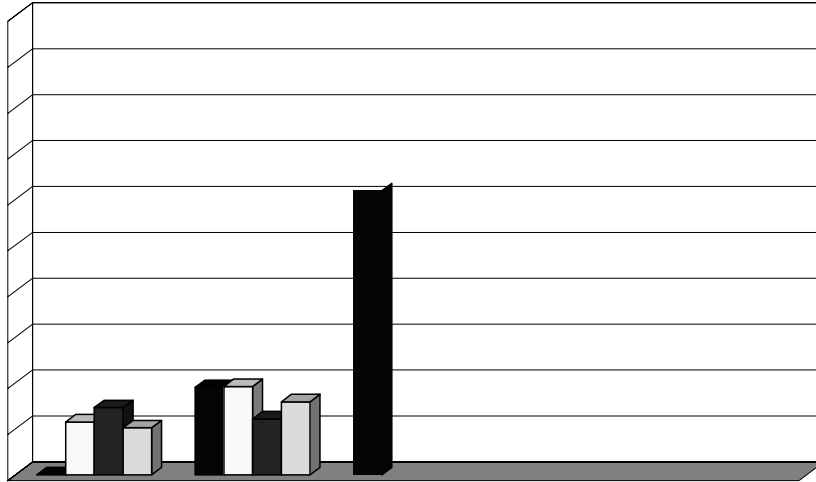
**Lay People
Corrymeela resources
Fig. 82**



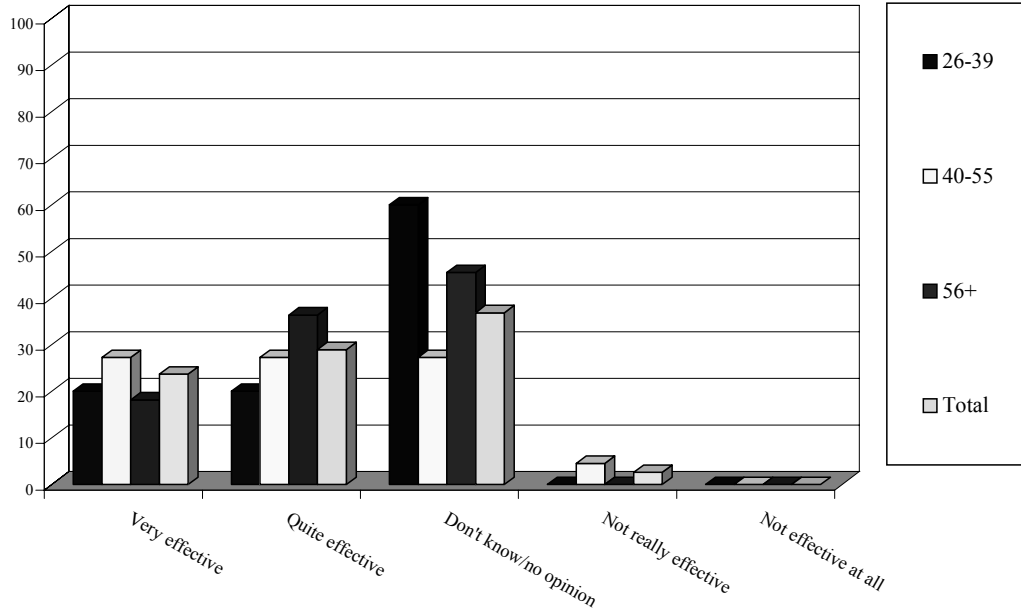
**Lay People
Youthlink resources
Fig. 83**



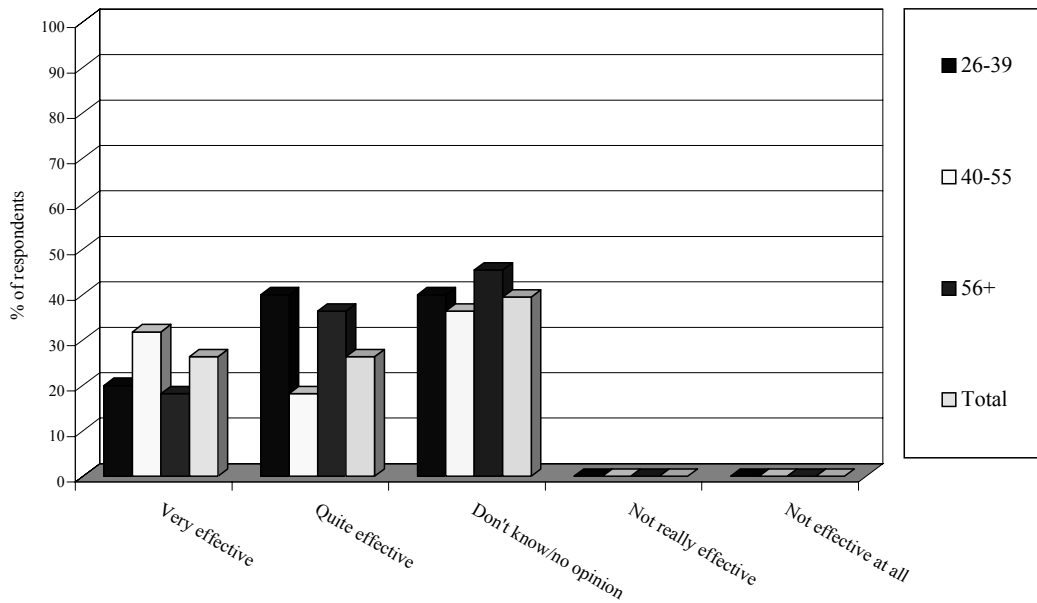




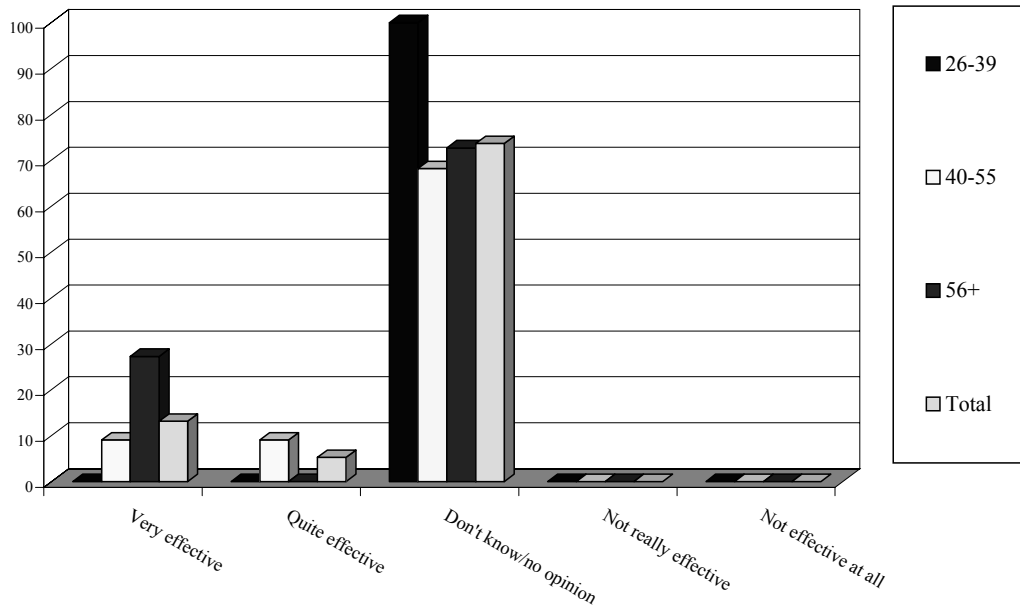
Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community 'encounter' group
Fig. 88



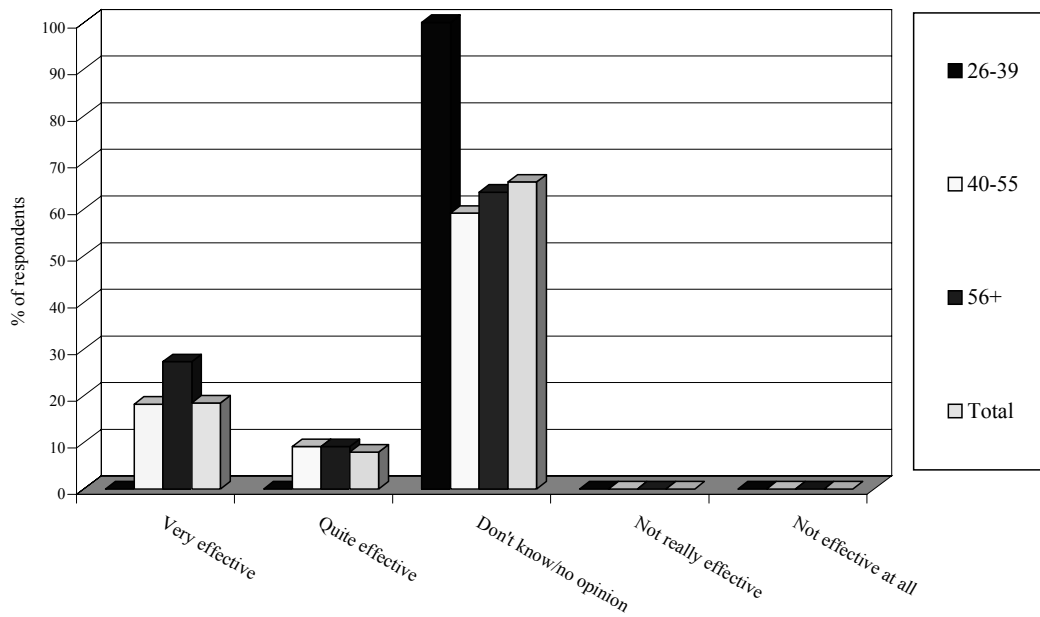
Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community project work
Fig. 89



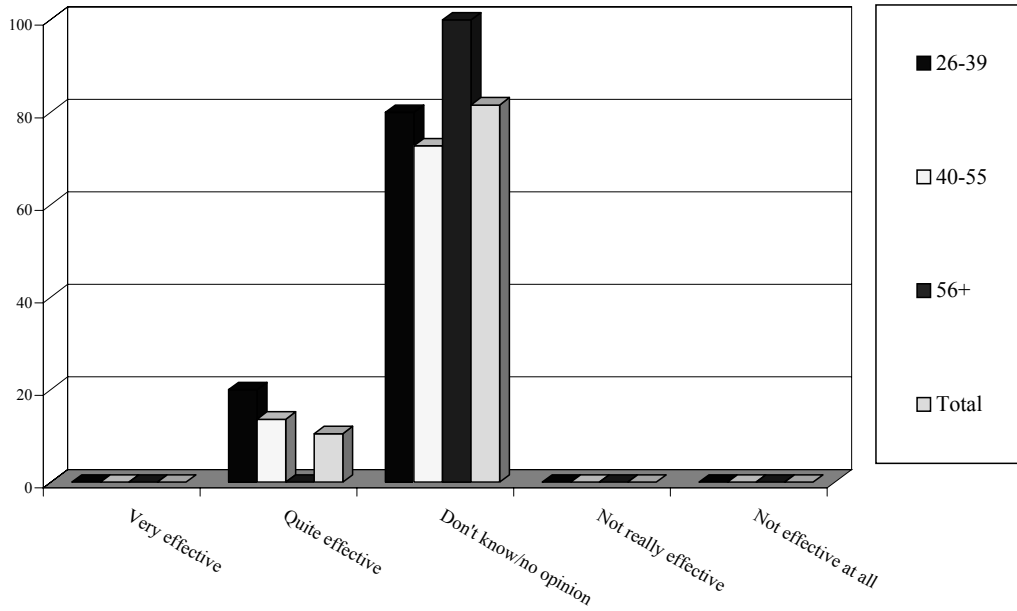
**Interviewed Rectors
Irish School of Ecumenics resources
Fig. 92**



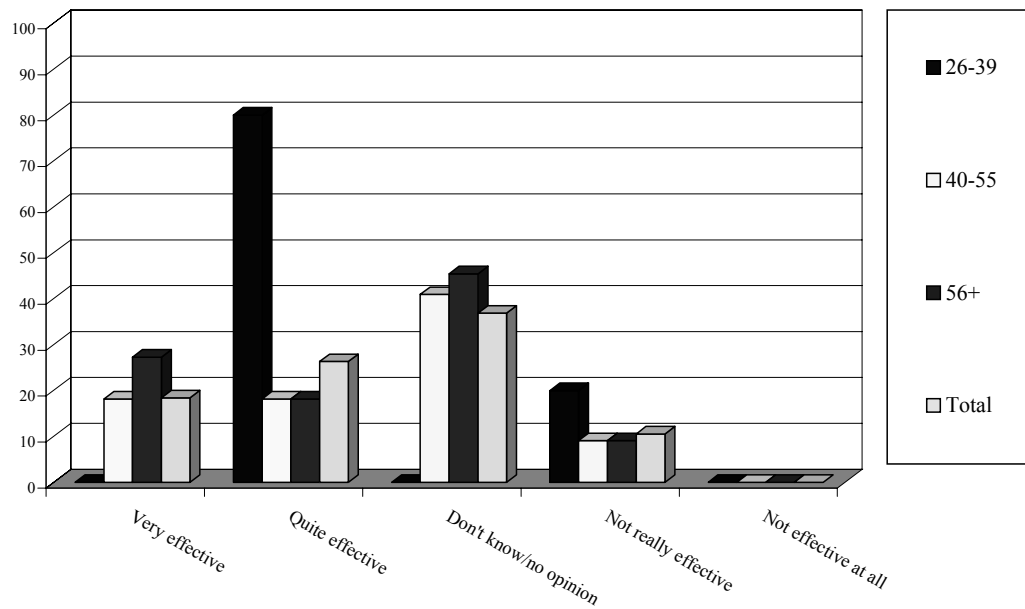
**Interviewed Rectors
Corrymeela resources
Fig. 93**



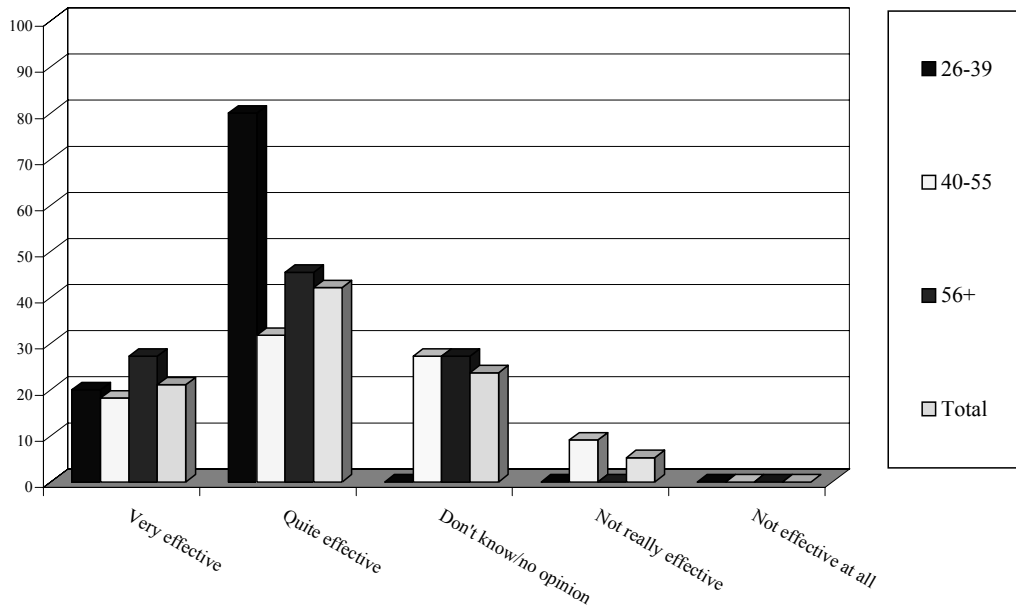
Interviewed Rectors
Youthlink resources
Fig. 94



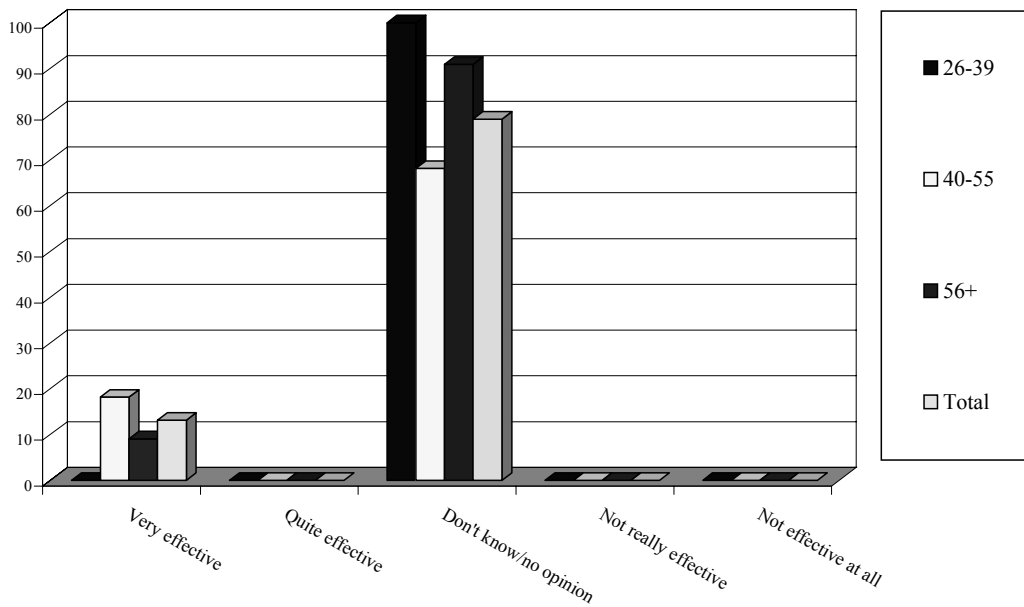
Interviewed Rectors
Local Church Forum
Fig. 95



**Interviewed Rectors
Clergy Fraternal
Fig. 96**



**Interviewed Rectors
Inter-Faith Forum
Fig. 97**



How effective did you find the...project?

I think [an international cross-community exchange] was quite effective in a limited way, because...our resources were not great,small numbers. But it left lasting contacts. **Rector, Armagh**

Those [activities] do go on, but they may not be all that well supported. **Rector, Armagh**

We had a school exchange with a Catholic school, but people stayed in their own groups. **Young lay person, Connor**

I have found that they do not instantly solve the problem of sectarianism – but they are valuable forms of working at helping all of us deal with the problem. **Rector, Connor**

My personal experience has been positive...However I am not convinced that such activities have a significant impact on challenging sectarian attitudes as those involved are often 'the converted'. **Bishop**

In our [locality] the external input of 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism' was the first major initiative towards making several individual Christian communities face their own inherent prejudices. **Rector, Connor**

Participation in these initiatives is a powerful means of promoting the growth of trust and understanding among people from both sides of the sectarian divide. They led to a realisation of the relative insignificance of theological differences compared with cultural and political differences. **Rector, Connor**

[These initiatives] have been helpful but there still remains a distrust at grass roots level...This is in a large way due to the unstable peace process which many in our own worshipping community no longer trust...These projects...may not go to the heart of our problems in Ireland. **Rector, Armagh**

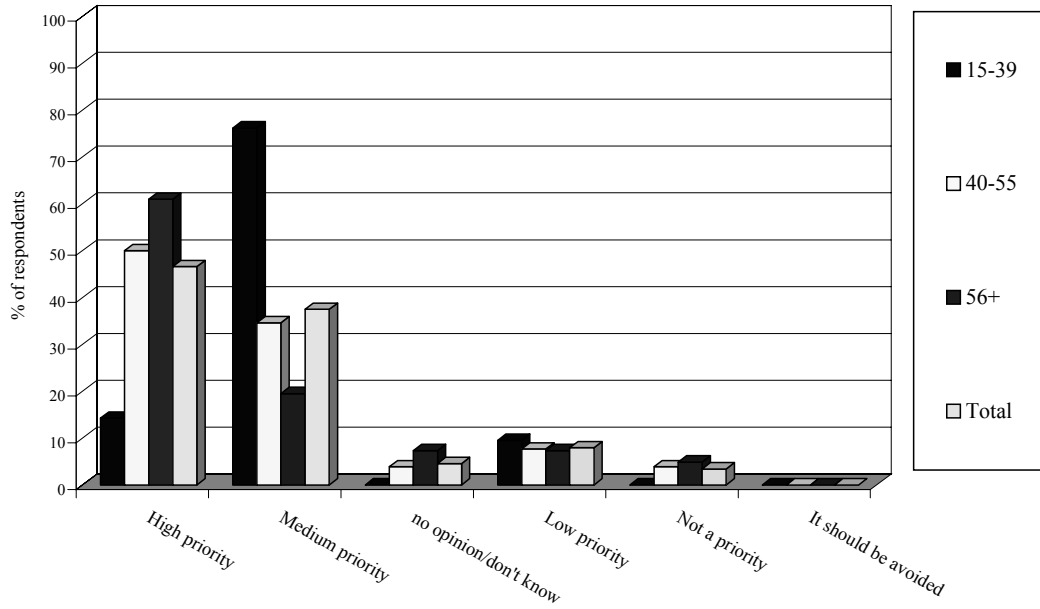
Ecumenical and fraternal experience has always left [me] with the 'us' and 'them' feeling unchanged...Everyone retreats into their own ghettos. **Rector, Armagh**

It is good to study and *pray* with believers from other churches. Clergy fraternals are also a source of encouragement personally and a place for prayer and study together. As a result a more balanced view concerning sectarianism is gained and outreach can be planned. **Rector, Armagh**

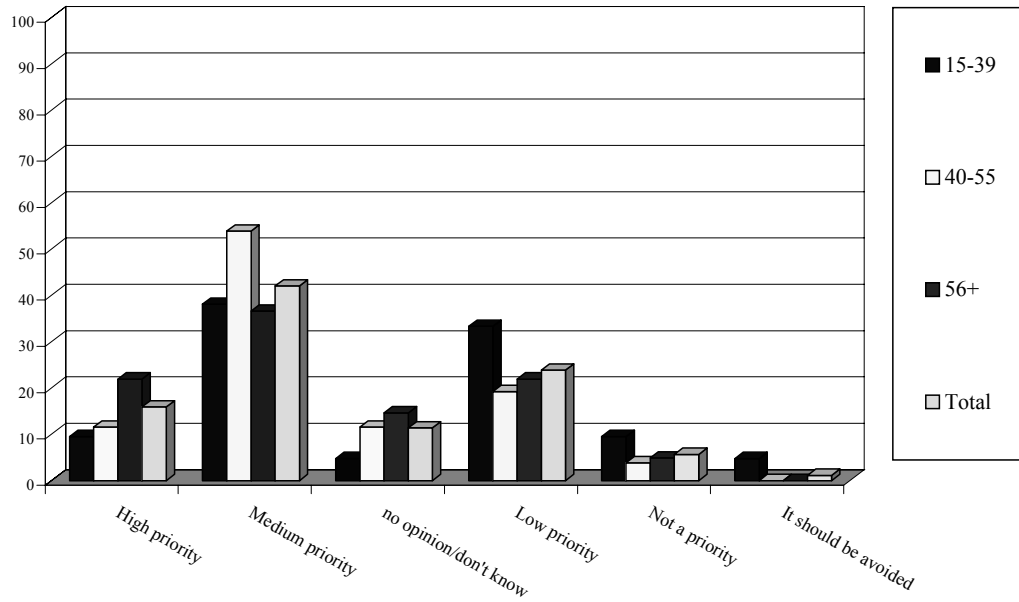
Cross-community and inter-church projects...tackling cross-community problems, i.e. drug abuse can have a much greater...effect in promoting reconciliation than most imagine. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Respondents who had used resources from, in particular, Corrymeela, ECONI, or the ISE praised them highly, often remarking that they had been impressed by the biblical content of some initiatives. There was significant openness (although limited hands-on experience) toward using peace and addressing sectarianism resources in local parishes. Respondents often suggested that sectarianism and other forms of difference might be best approached through existing structures such as Sunday services, Mothers' Union, Men's Fellowships, Youth groups, etc. It is useful to compare the views of lay people with those of the clergy regarding the priority and practice of initiatives to challenge sectarianism and other forms of negatively approaching difference (see **Figs. 98-135**):

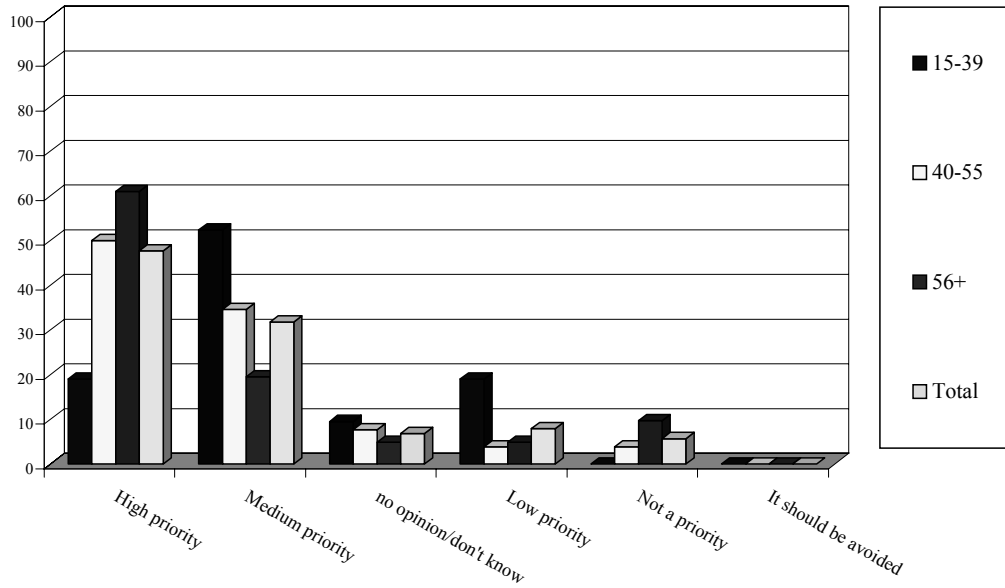
Lay People
What priority would you like peace and reconciliation work to have in your parish?
Fig. 98



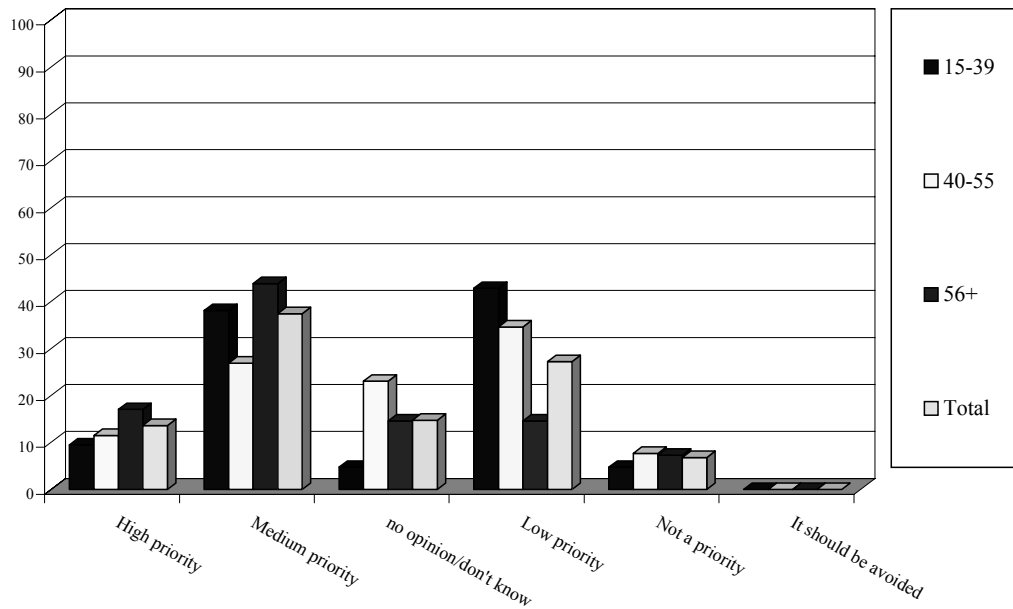
Lay People
What priority is peace and reconciliation work given in your parish?
Fig. 99



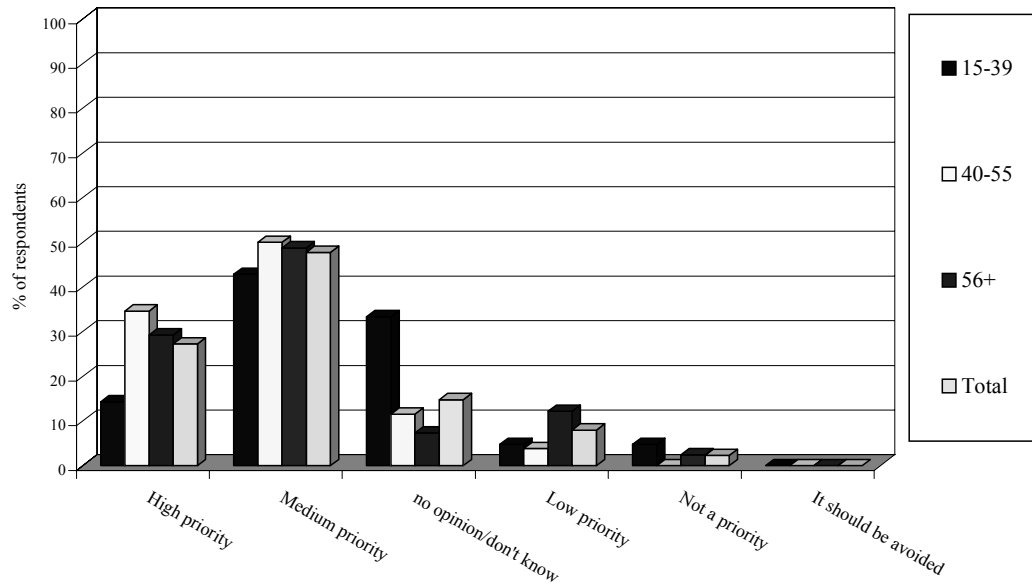
Lay People
 What priority would you like dealing positively with sectarianism to have in your parish?
 Fig. 100



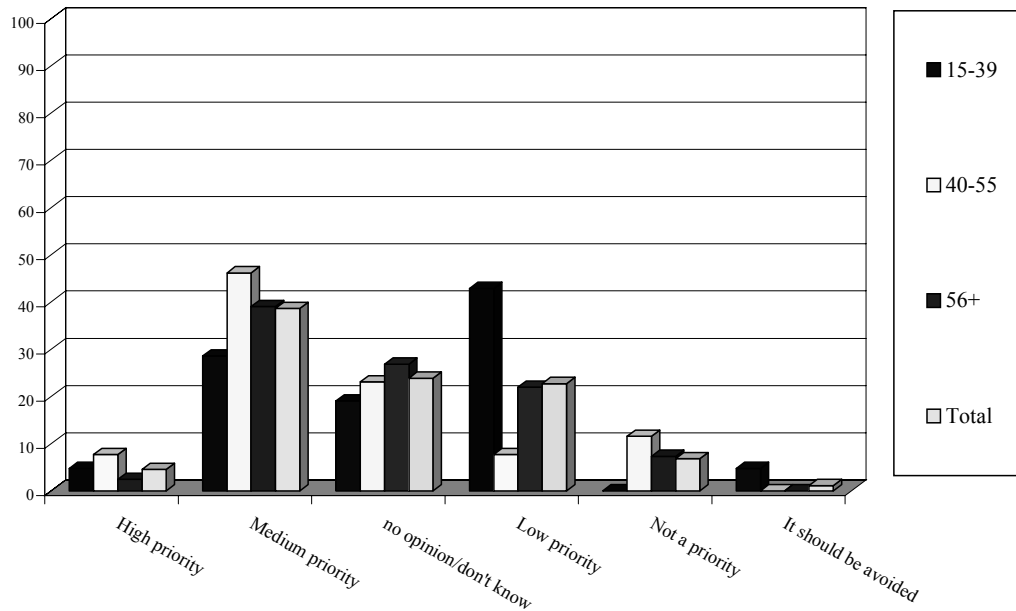
Lay People
 What priority is dealing positively with sectarianism given in your parish?
 Fig. 101



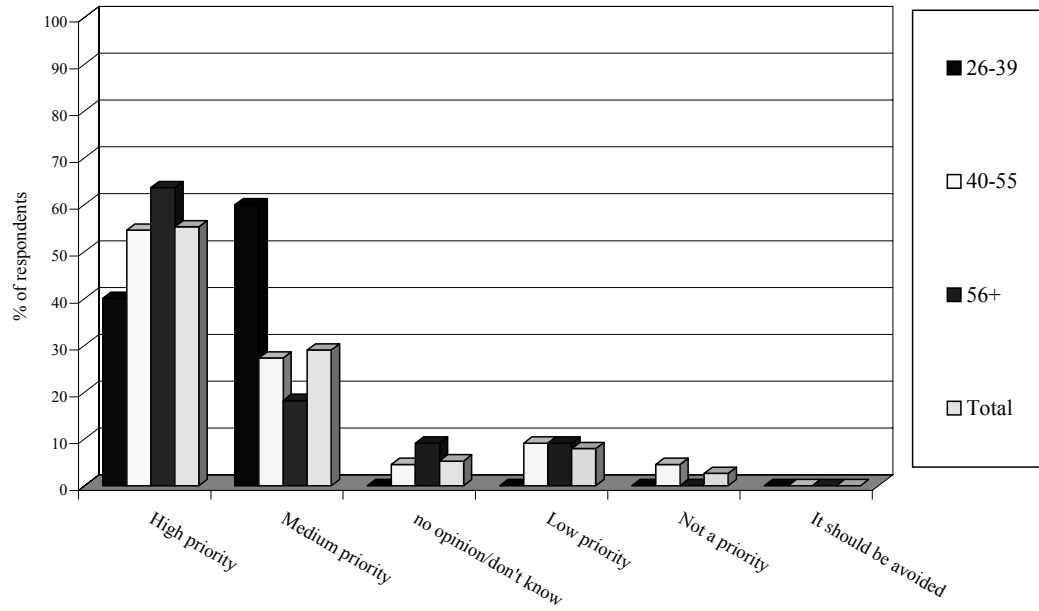
Lay People
What priority would you like dealing positively with other forms of difference to have in your parish?
Fig. 102



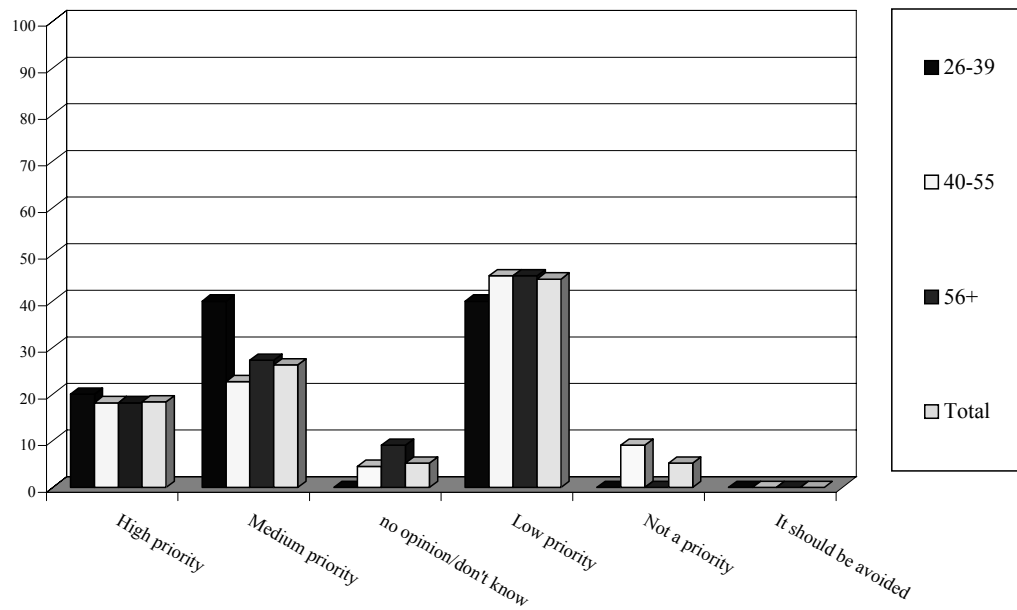
Lay People
What priority is dealing positively with other forms of difference given in your parish?
Fig. 103



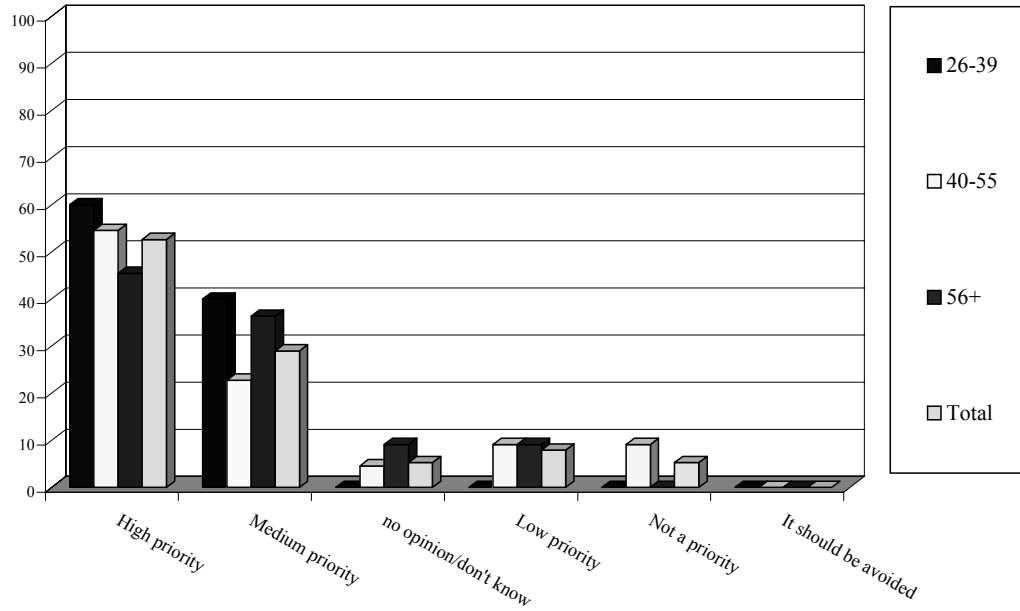
Interviewed Rectors
What priority would you like peace and reconciliation work to have in your parish?
Fig. 104



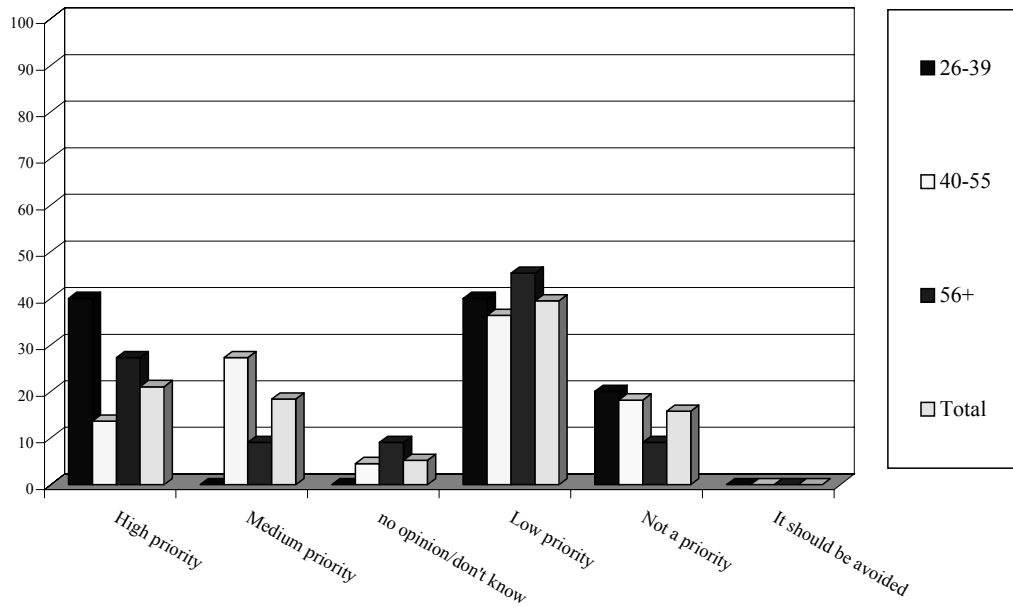
Interviewed Rectors
What priority is peace and reconciliation work given in your parish?
Fig. 105



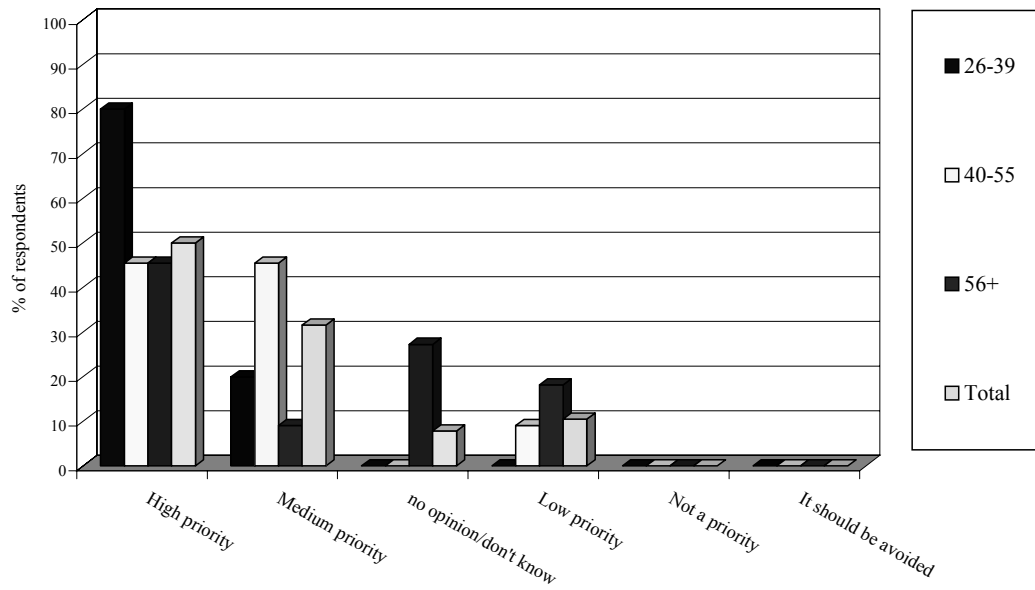
Interviewed Rectors
What priority would you like dealing positively with sectarianism to have in your parish?
Fig. 106



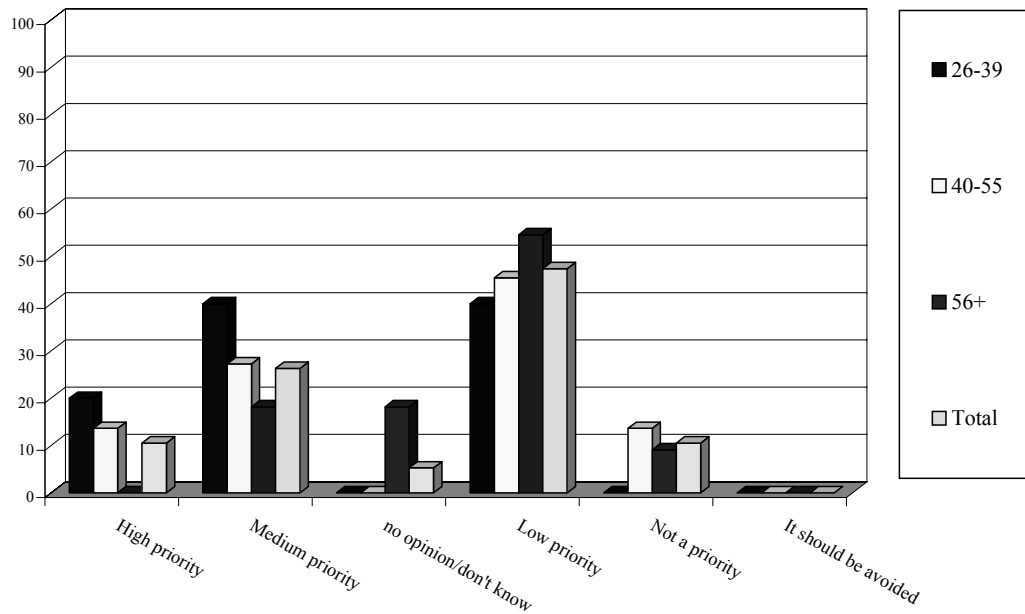
Interviewed Rectors
What priority is dealing positively with sectarianism given in your parish?
Fig. 107



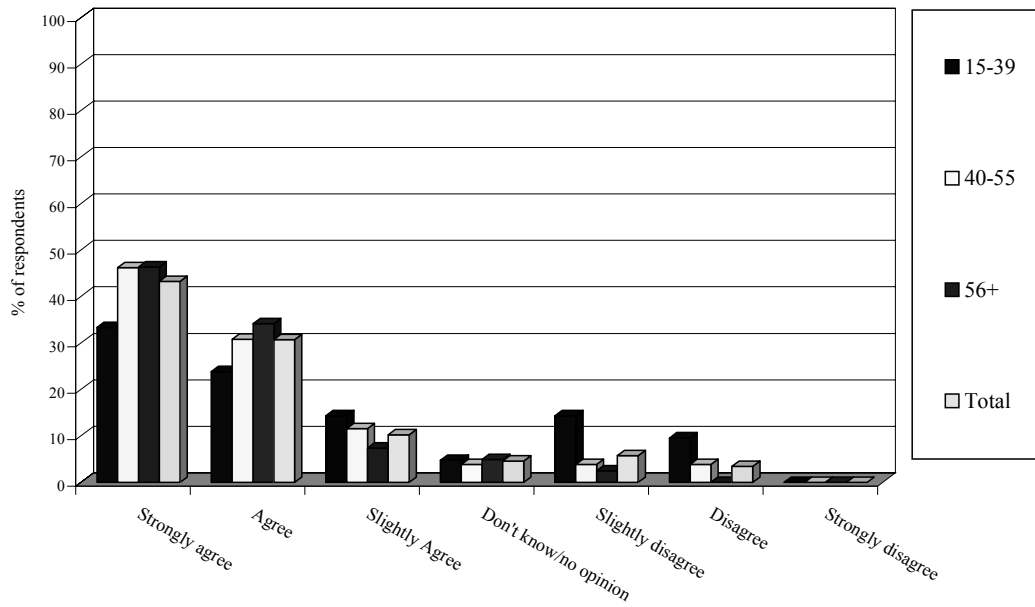
Interviewed Rectors
What priority would you like dealing positively with other forms of difference to have in your parish?
Fig. 108



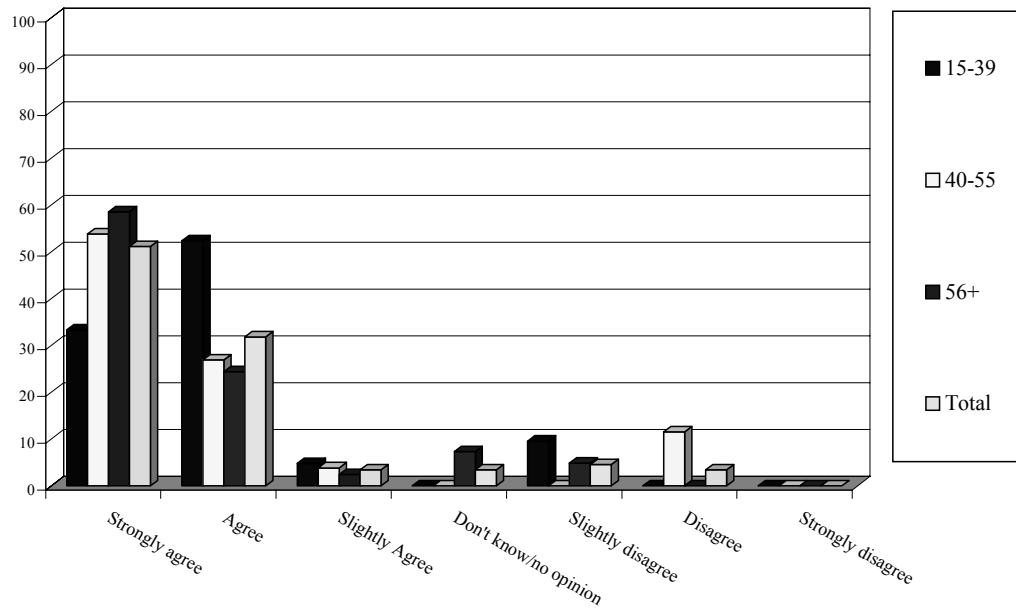
Interviewed Rectors
What priority is dealing positively with other forms of difference given in your parish?
Fig. 109

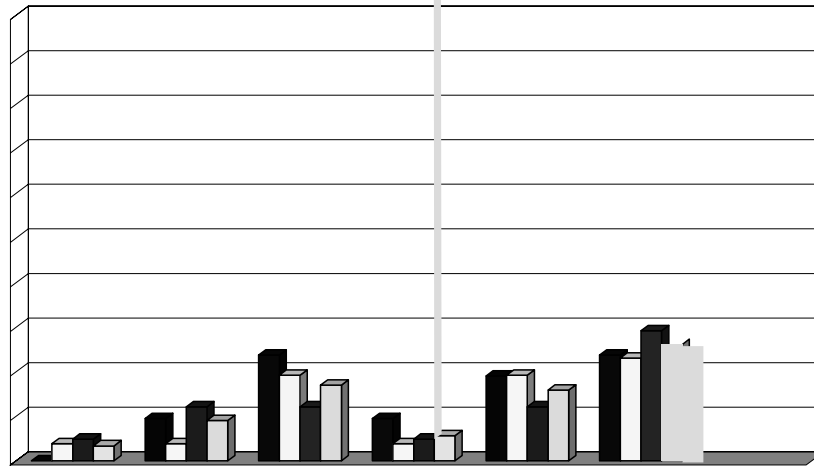


Lay People
Cross community work is an important part of being a Christian in Ireland
Fig. 110

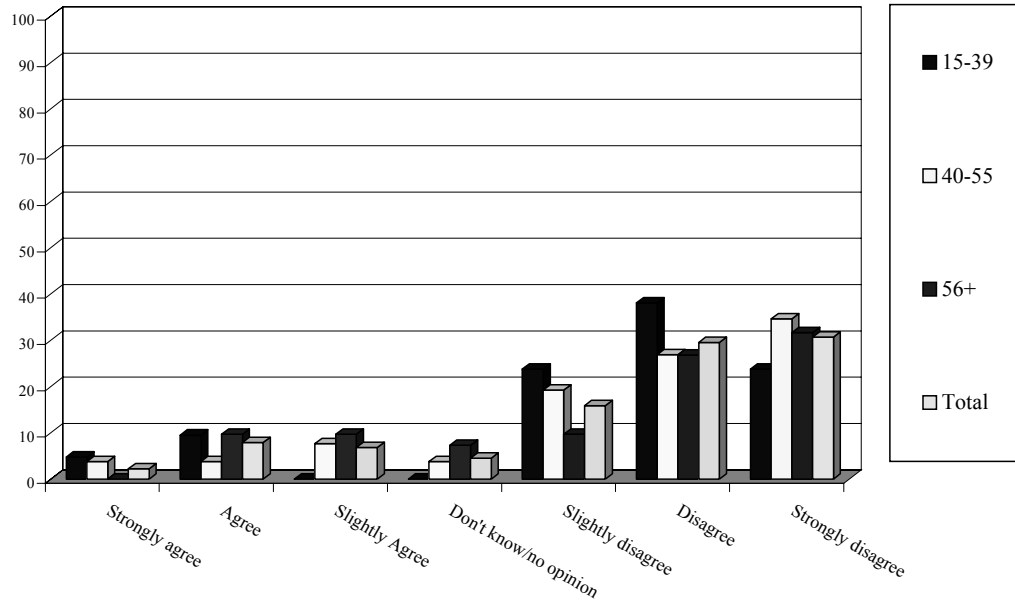


Lay People
Peacemaking in society is a central part of Christian faith
Fig. 111

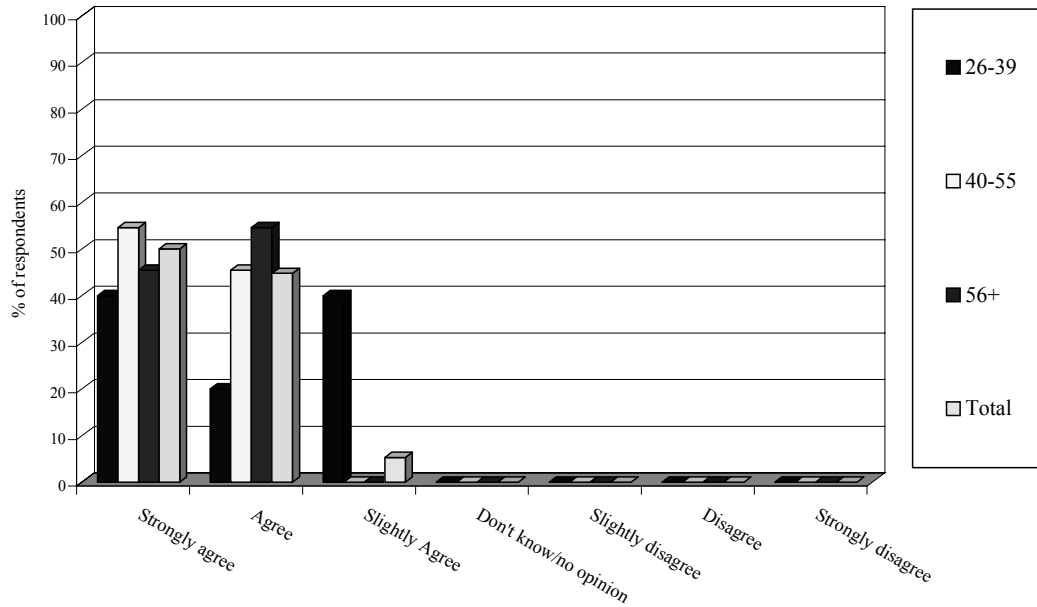




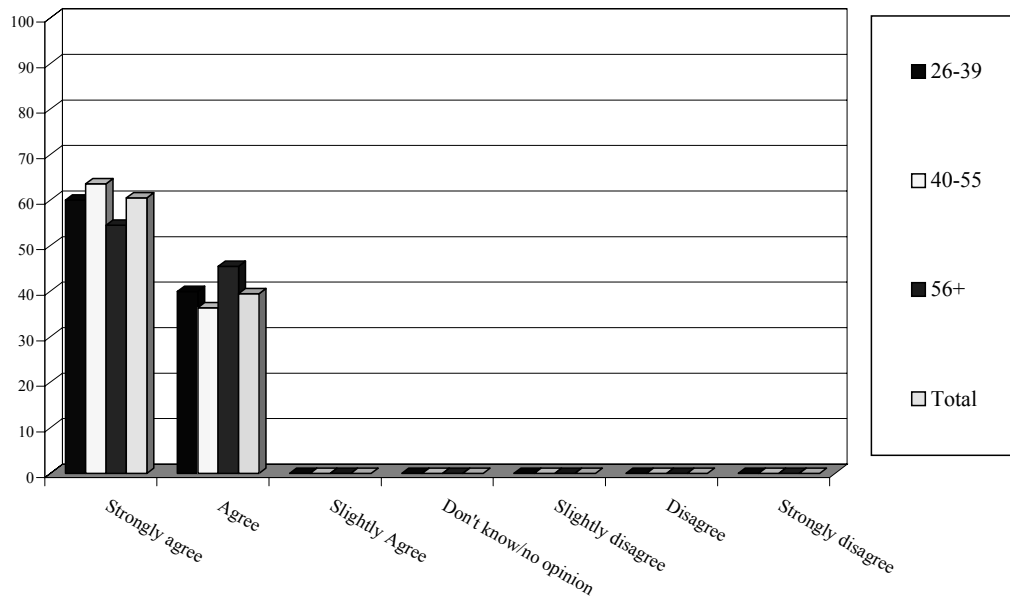
Lay People
Peace and reconciliation work is not really the church's responsibility
Fig. 114



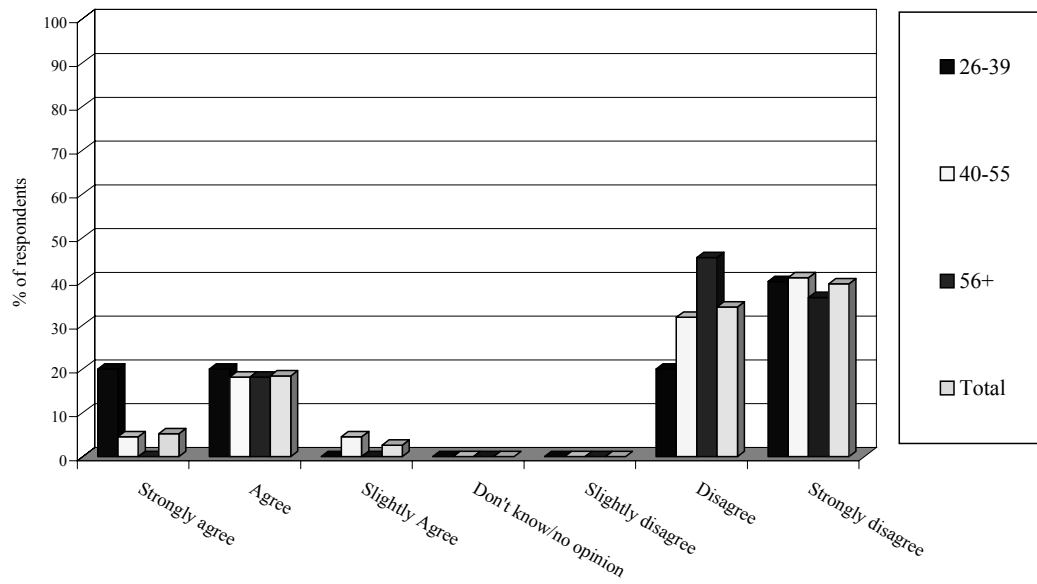
Interviewed Rectors
Cross community work is an important part of being a Christian in Ireland
Fig. 115



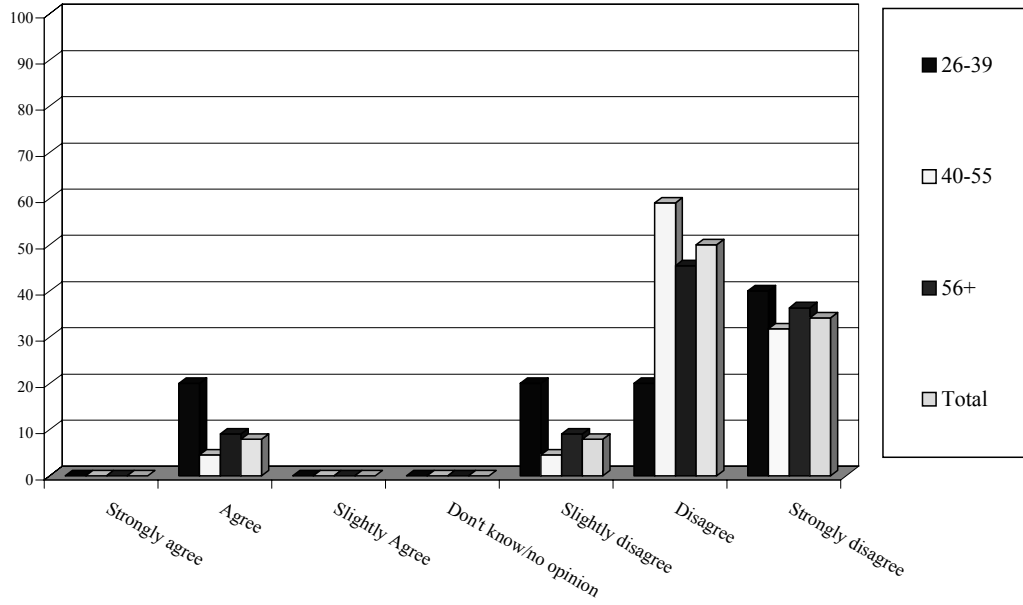
Interviewed Rectors
Peacemaking in society is a central part of Christian faith
Fig. 116



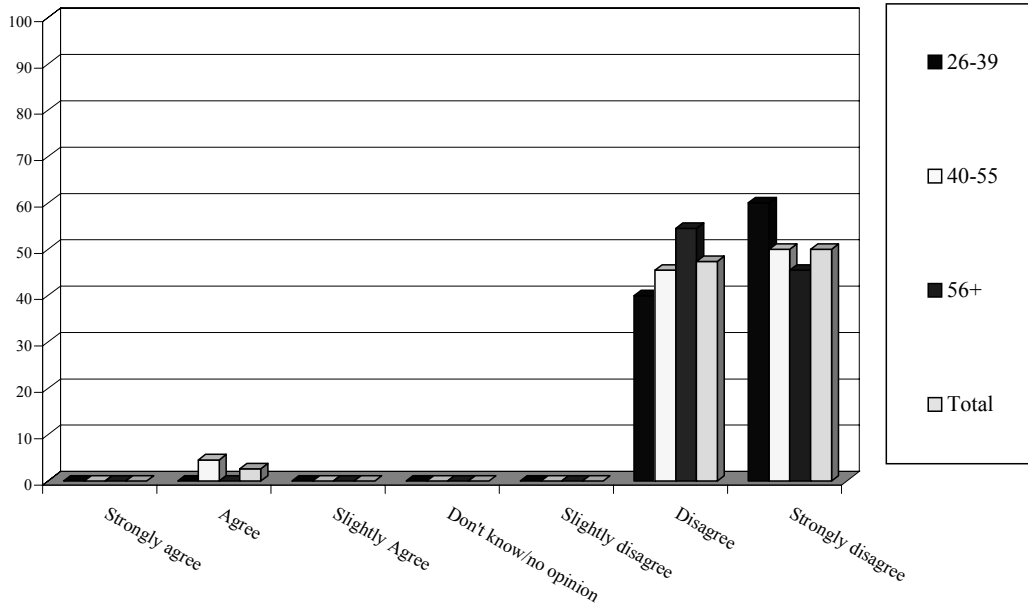
Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community work can be problematic because it means too much co-operation with the Roman Catholic Church
Fig. 117

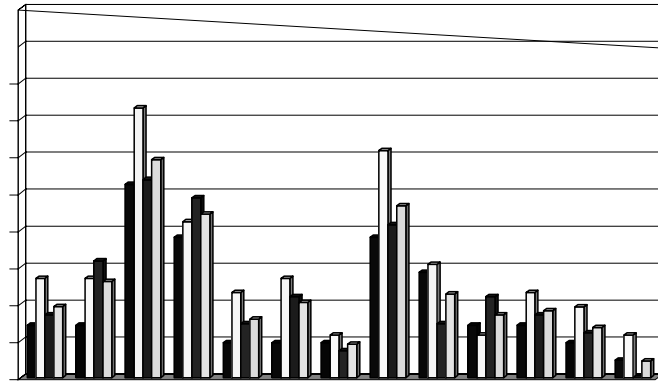


Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community or anti-sectarian work is a distraction from the real issues of being a Christian
Fig. 118

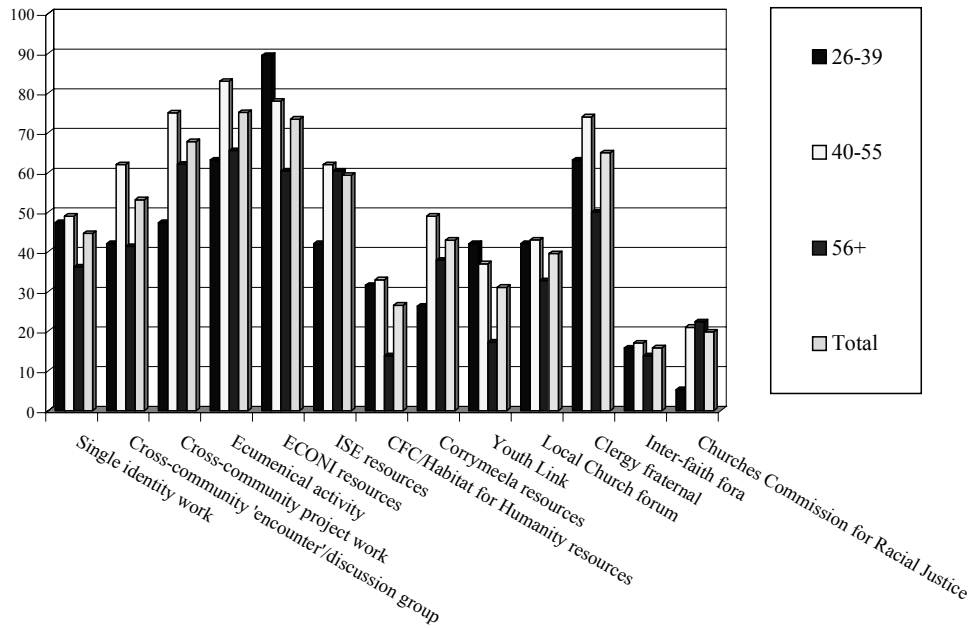


Interviewed Rectors
Peace and reconciliation work is not really the church's responsibility
Fig. 119

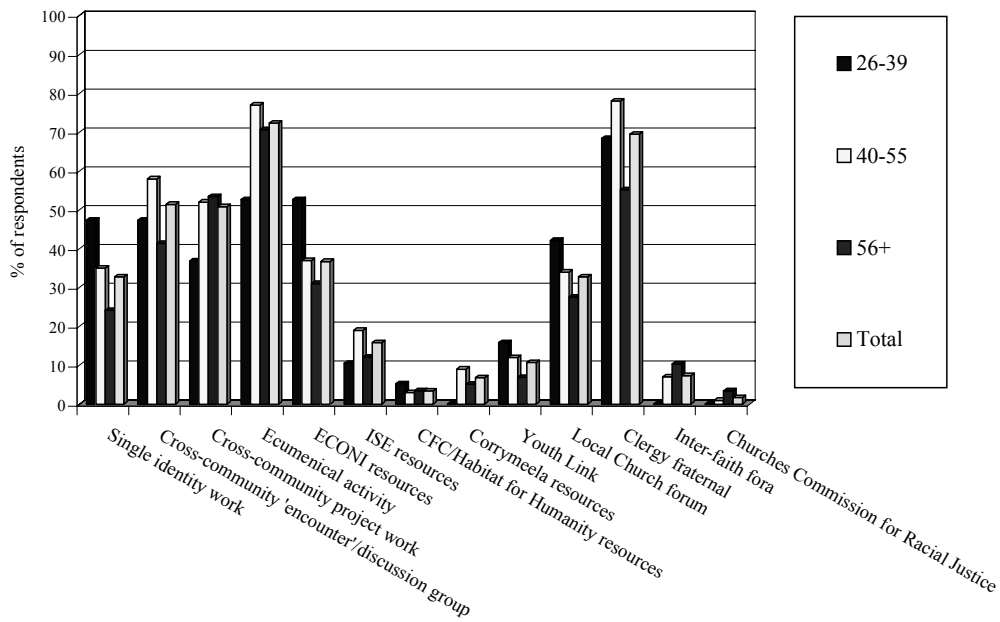




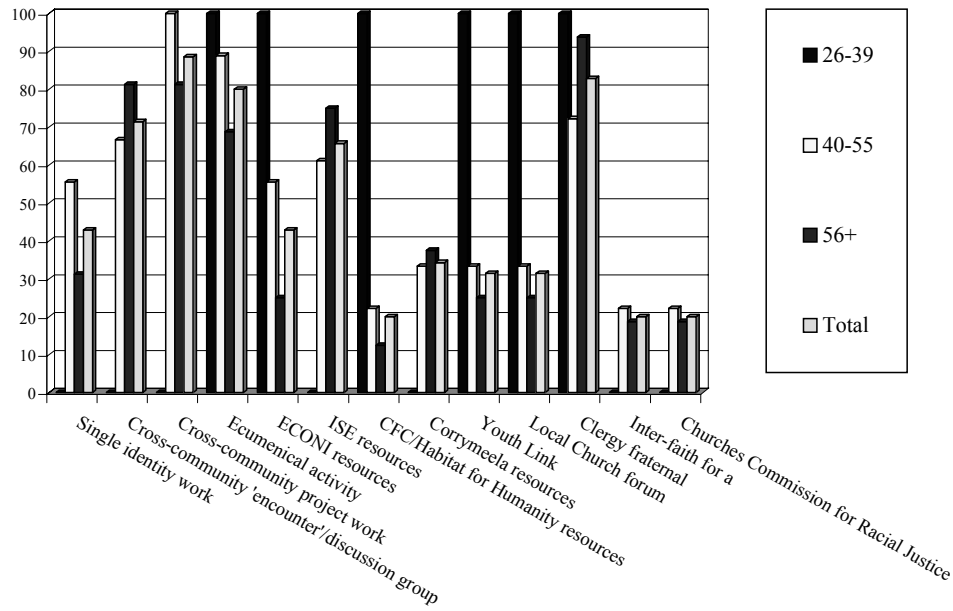
All Rectors
Initiatives / Resources you are aware of
Fig. 122



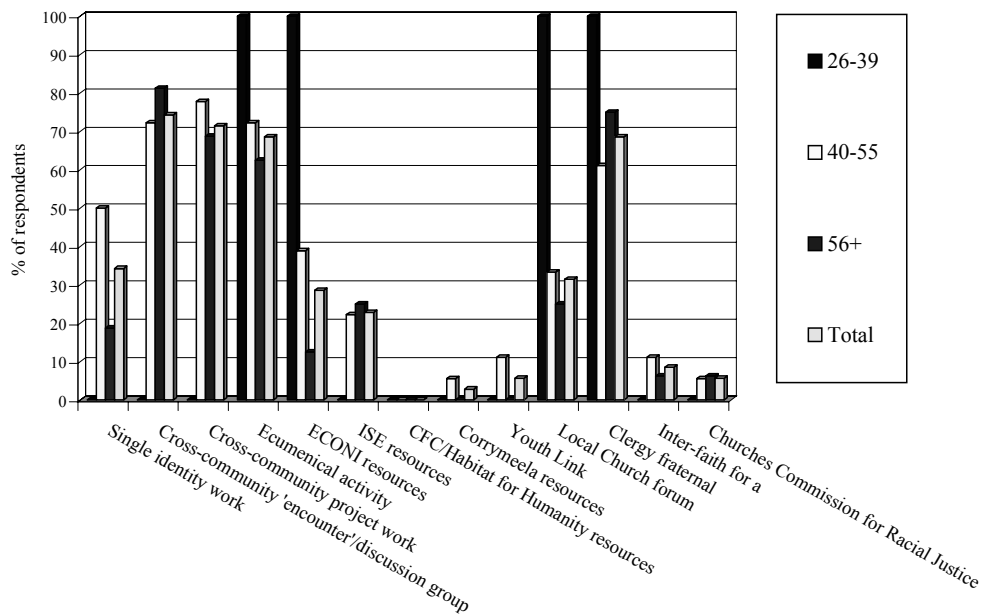
All Rectors
Initiatives / Resources you have participated in
Fig. 123



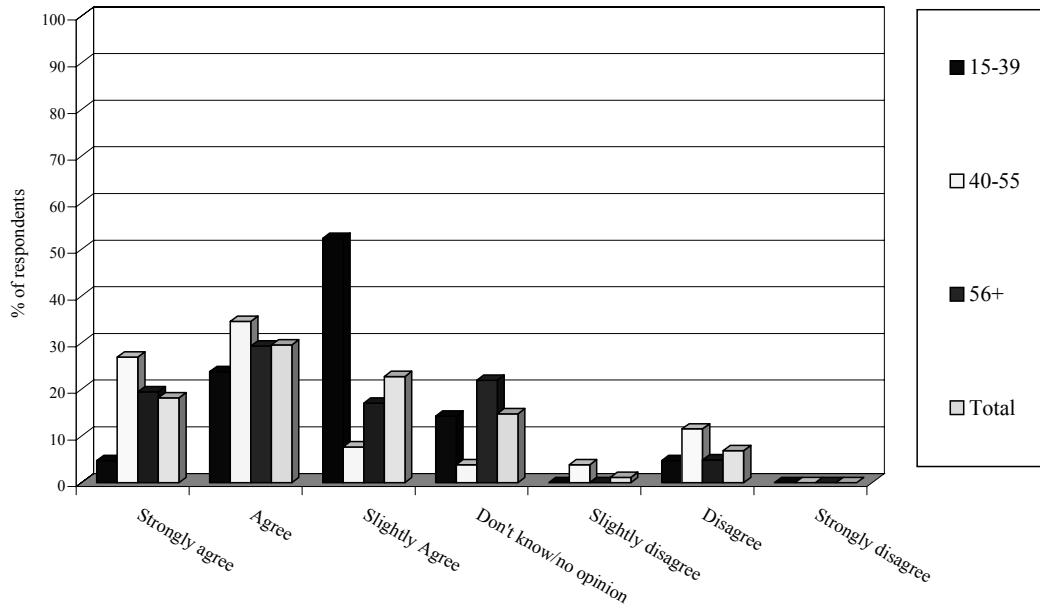
Standing Committee
Initiatives / Resources you are aware of
Fig. 124



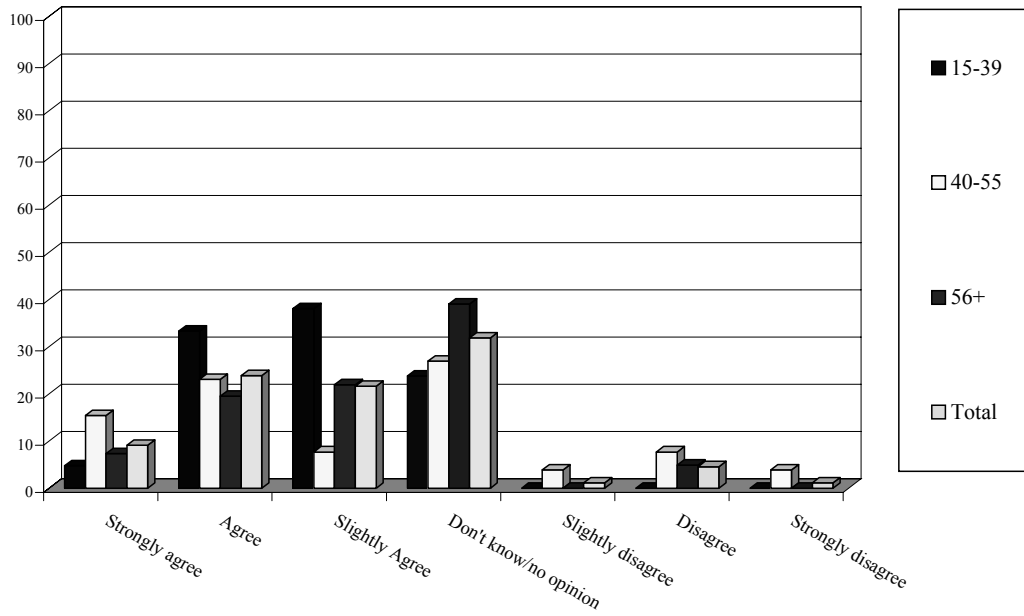
Standing Committee
Initiatives / Resources you have participated in
Fig. 125



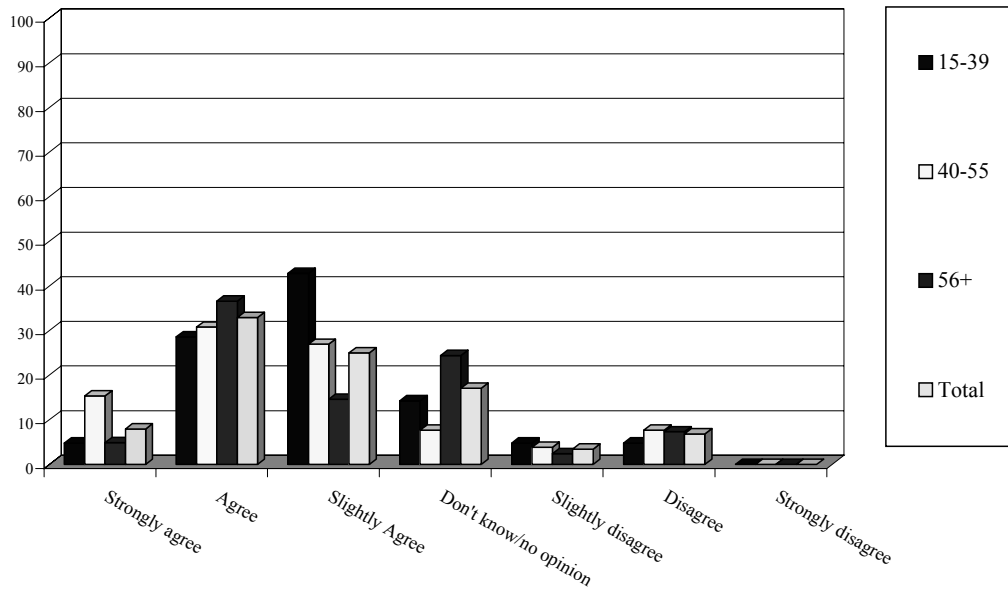
Lay People
I would like to participate in some form of cross-community initiative
Fig. 126



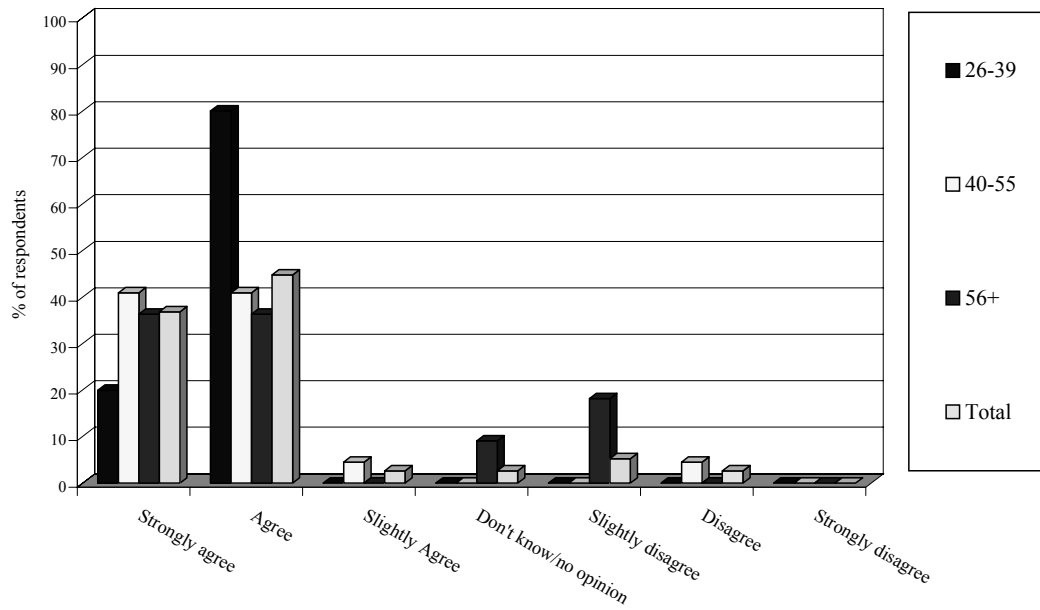
Lay People
I would like to participate in some form of single identity work
Fig. 127



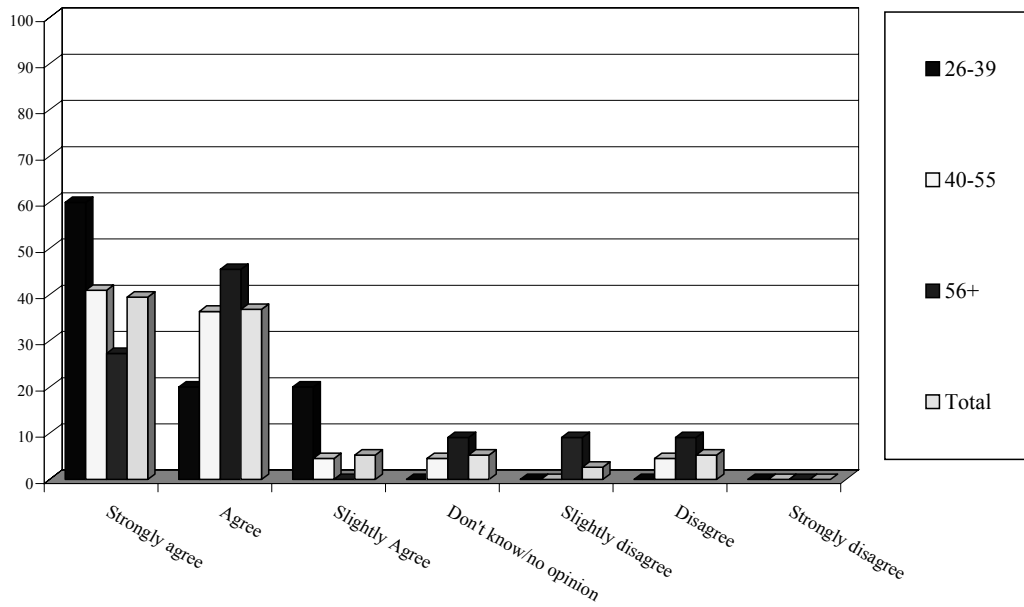
Lay People
I would like to participate in some form of dealing positively with other areas of difference
Fig. 128



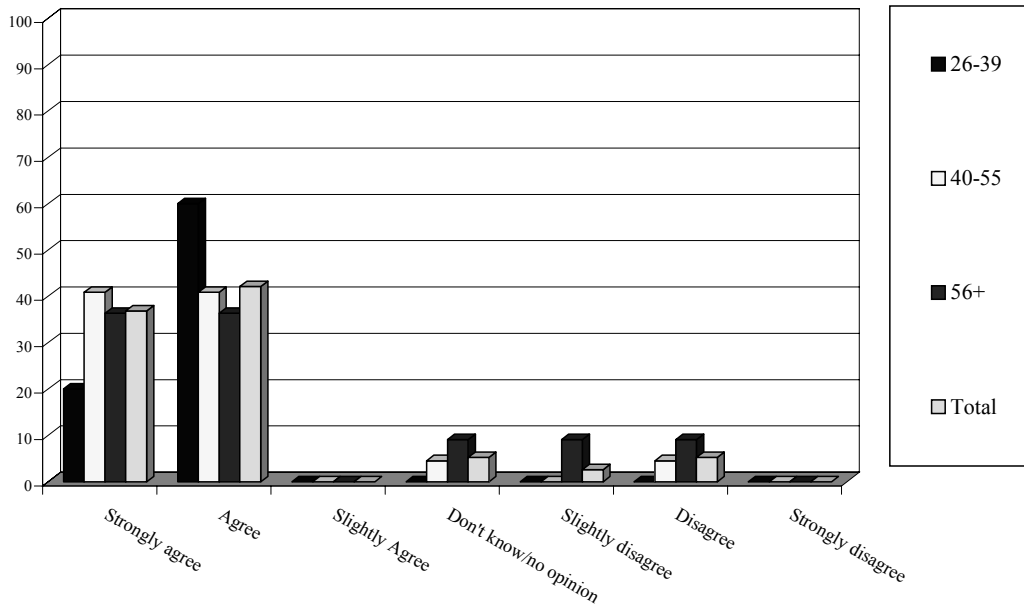
Interviewed Rectors
I would like to participate in some form of cross-community initiative
Fig. 129



Interviewed Rectors
I would like to participate in some form of single identity work
Fig. 130



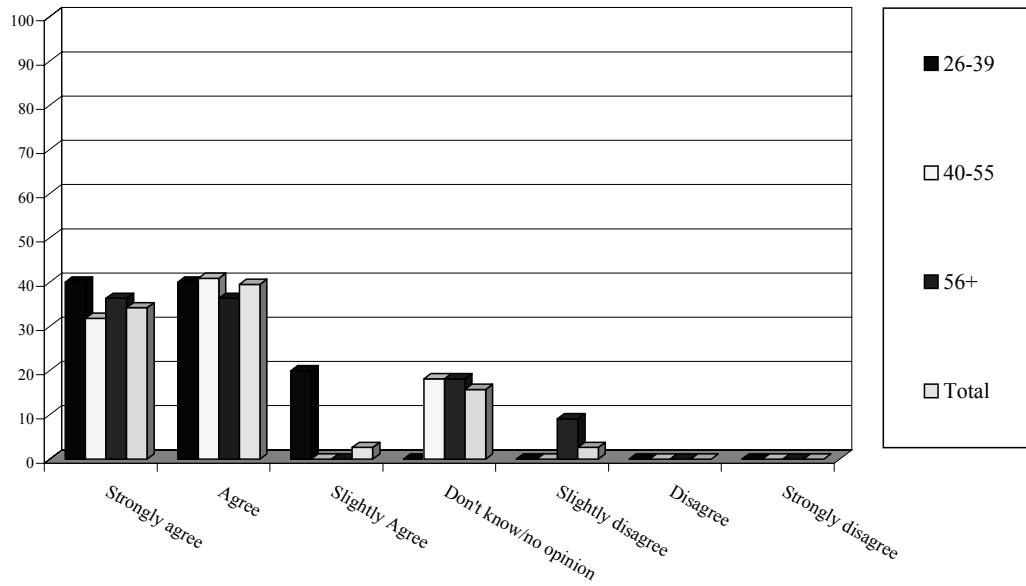
Interviewed Rectors
I would like to participate in some form of dealing positively with other areas of difference
Fig. 131



Interviewed Rectors

I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of peacemaking initiative

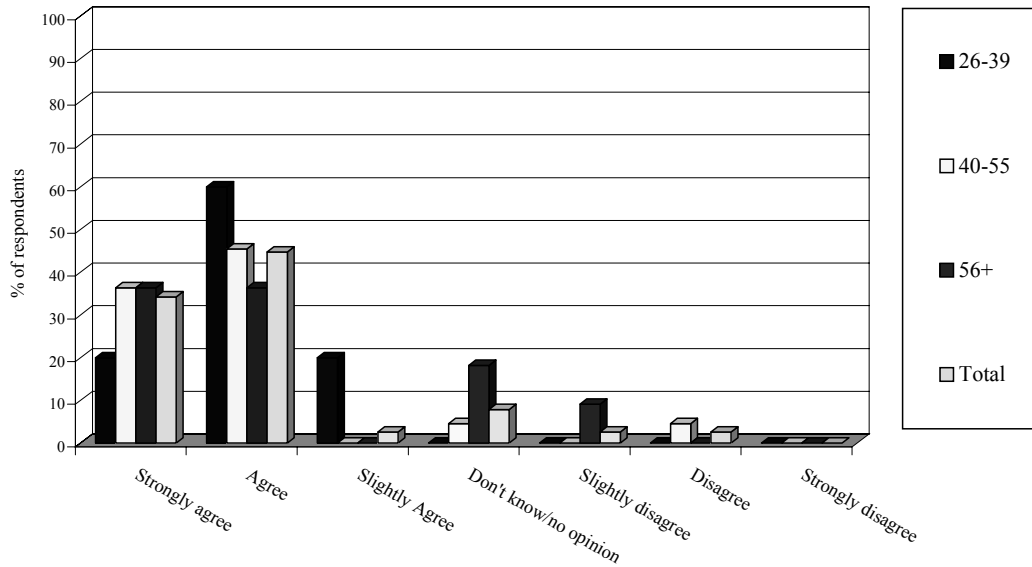
Fig. 132



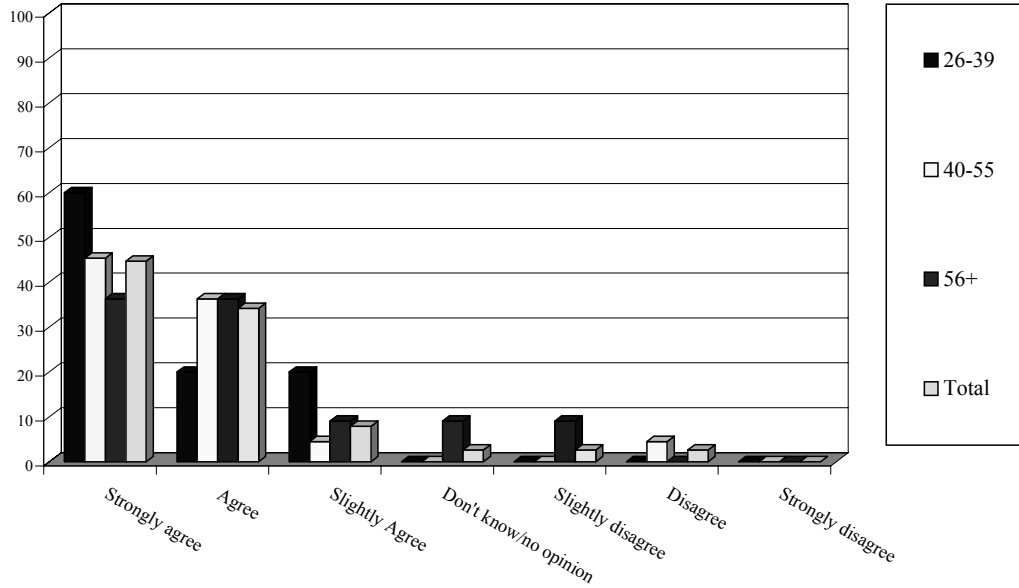
Interviewed Rectors

I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of cross-community initiative

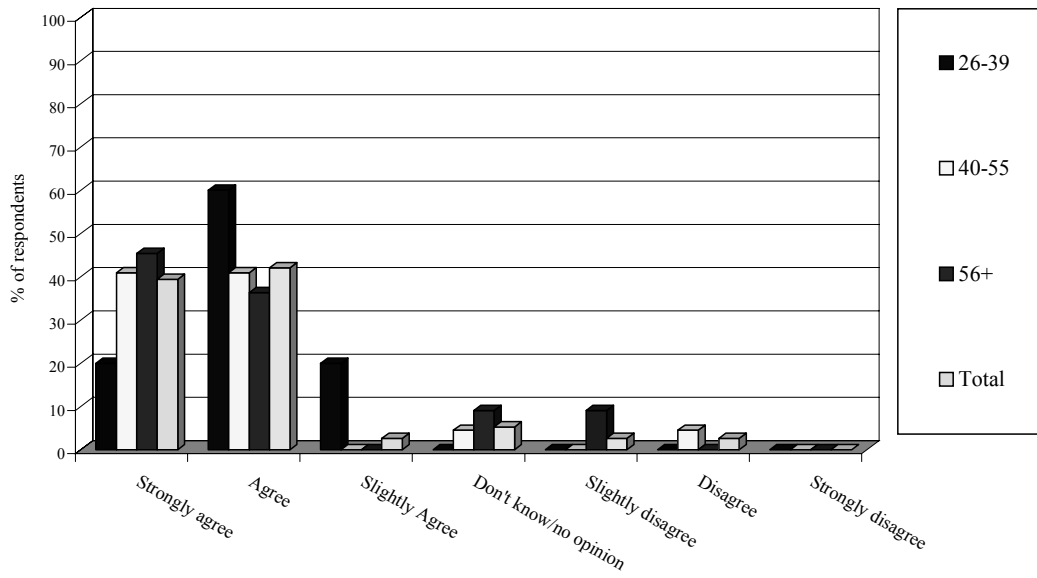
Fig. 133



Interviewed Rectors
I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of single identity work
 Fig. 134



Interviewed Rectors
I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of dealing positively with other areas of difference
 Fig. 135



Some respondents felt that such initiatives were unnecessary in their locality:

I think our parish copes well with peace and reconciliation; no one wants to fight in our parish. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

I tend to disengage from peace and reconciliation activities, it isn't really the issue here – sectarianism doesn't really apply either. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Some respondents mentioned particularly difficult challenges of approaching the issue of sectarianism and dealing positively with difference:

I remember a young fellow was [killed by his own bomb]...So when it came to light that this fellow was a local, my predecessor...actually went to offer his condolences to the family and attended the funeral. He didn't so much get flak from parishioners, because the parishes would be very well integrated, but it was in the national media that he had done this. So he got quite a number of threatening letters, I think there were death threats as well. So it was a situation where you could have sat back as a Church of Ireland rector and said, 'Well it's got b***** all to do with me. He was trying to scupper the peace process, so I'm not going.' So you're caught between a rock and a hard place. There are one or two in the parish who will be still very Orange, and will be up at Drumcree in the summer and that. But they have to keep themselves to themselves, because they'd be in the minority...It did heal a lot of wounds for people, that...the Anglican community were there as well supporting the family, even though...the family were very republican...That's neither here nor there. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

I hadn't experienced this kind of prejudice till I moved here...perhaps it's because people feel threatened that they adopt these principles. **Lay person, Connor**

Maybe it should be [a higher priority], but the reality of it for most people...we get on with life and it's not something that we're consciously thinking of or doing much about, generally speaking. The problem is that the issue really surfaces more as we come into July...There's a certain tension...you can feel...People react in different ways – some people...want to get away out of the place. It's a very emotive issue, you always like to be careful what you say and where you say it, amongst certain people.

What should the church do about that?

It's a very difficult one...I don't think the gospel, the teaching of the bible – I think it confronts that whole attitude really. True Christianity is not sectarian. **Rector, Dromore**

Have you ever run any specific peace and reconciliation initiatives?

No. If you give something a label you tend to find that's when people start to bring out the placards. If you leave something open, then whoever comes, comes, and you can argue about it after the event. The way I'm trying to do this is as quietly as I possibly can. People come and we mix, and staunch loyalists mix – those on the Green side, some of them very staunch, and meet over a cup of tea and a biscuit and can talk, and then it's only afterwards you can sort of say, 'Well we were speaking to him the other day, and he's not as bad as you probably thought.' **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

The key thing that will decide whether the reconciliation strand of Think Again works or not – the key deciding factor – I think will be whether actual projects happen on the ground. **Bishop**

For the marching season...we are producing a credit-card size card with scripture sentences; 'blessed are the peacemakers,' or 'swords into ploughshares,' and then a prayer, and we're giving those out to everybody, so that during this season they can carry them in their wallet, and use them to get congregations to pray...as a community for peace. It's to empower the whole community – rather than just me praying on a Sunday morning. **Rector, Connor**

[Clergy] seem to be afraid to encourage their church members to take part in inter church events. **Standing Committee lay member, Derry and Raphoe**

Perceptions of much peace and addressing sectarian work are sometimes negative, but these usually (although not exclusively) come from respondents who had little or no personal experience of the initiatives:

When you mention 'cross-community work' it puts people off. **Lay person, Armagh**

When asked about whether or not the parish should have the opportunity to participate in some form of peace making it was stated that "this could open up a minefield." **Focus Group report, Connor**

Because of the way peace and reconciliation work is generally defined and practiced in Northern Ireland, I'd want it to have a very low priority...It is relativism at large, normally. It is devoid of Christian foundation. It is – if I can use a colloquialism – it's touchy-feely, and it is frightened of objective truths.

And does this come from your experience at your sectarianism workshop?

Yes. **Rector, Clogher**

Some respondents felt that cross-community work could be difficult because of the levels of co-operation implied with the Roman Catholic Church. It is important to note that respondents who acknowledged a difficulty in this regard usually said that it was simply a fact of life, rather than a reason not to engage in such work:

That's why I can't talk to my Presbyterian neighbours, because they know that we would speak to [Catholics], so probably indirectly it is...

But not because you don't like Catholics.

Not because I don't like Catholics, but because of the impact that has on some other folks. I did a course with the diocese with ECONI on sectarianism, and it was brilliant. **Rector, Connor**

Sadly I'd have to strongly agree with that.

But that's not a reason for not doing it?

Oh no. No, but it's reality. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

But [you think it's] problematic because it might pose difficulties for your own people, or problematic because Catholics might try to get you to do things you don't want to do, or...?

It's problematic because a) they feel inadequate about themselves, and their own identity and understanding of faith, and b) because they don't want to be pressured.

[Does that] mean you shouldn't do the work, or is it just too problematic to handle?

The whole secret is finding out what people can accept, and working from where they are. **Rector, Connor**

Some respondents were enthusiastic, deeply committed to and had participated in peace and reconciliation and addressing sectarianism initiatives:

Well I won't go to the [local] Ministers' Group.

Because it doesn't [include the Catholic] priest ?

Yes. It seems a wee bit bizarre because it's turning on its head what I said earlier, that I think a congregation needs to be involved in some single identity work.

But there's something about the exclusivity...

Yes. **Rector, Connor**

Cross-community project work is very important if we are to carry out our Lord's command 'To love our neighbour as ourselves'. **Standing Committee lay member, Derry and Raphoe**

There isn't enough cross-community work, that's the problem. **Lay person, Armagh**

Such [initiatives] are a necessary adjunct to Christian living – perhaps it is more true to say that they form a central part of Christianity. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

If peace and reconciliation work is not really the church's responsibility, then what is the church's responsibility? **Lay person, Armagh**

I was involved in setting up [a] Churches Advice Centre...Hugely encouraged by that creative and positive time in my life and ministry. Ecumenical prayer study groups, all of that...Can we build relationships by doing [practical] things together rather than sitting and staring at each other and

contemplating the problems?...I think that can be very effective...with the proviso that they aren't sufficiently superficial – that we just make-believe. They're effective but they need to have a certain focus and people need to be willing to look about hard issues, and to be very honest about problems. As long as there's an honesty and an integrity about them I'm very happy with them. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

We've done some single identity work...That was with – Down and Dromore had this programme called Think Again, and they had a reconciliation officer who came to do a night with us all about that. [As for a] cross-community encounter/discussion group...the clergy group that met put together a programme for Lent which was very, very useful. We started off and the Church of Ireland watched a video about our church and then the clergy answered questions. Then we moved on to the Catholic church, the Methodist church, and ended up in the Presbyterian church with the same programme – watched a video about this tradition and asked the questions...To me that's the first step. Building up the confidence of their own traditions, and then we're going to progress on, and I'd like to do...a pilgrimage of the churches. That makes a huge difference actually. **Rector, Connor**

And does the opportunity to be involved in something like a peacemaking initiative, some sort of addressing sectarianism thing appeal to you?

It's not so much an appealing thing as an obligation for me, that when the opportunity arises and you see that there is something to be done, that needs to be done and we have the opportunity to take action or to meet with people I think we should take it, as...our Christian obligation. **Former rector, Belfast**

Above all we need to look at it in educational terms, and help people to realise that some of these attitudes and so on are simply not consistent with following Jesus. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Respondents often indicated that while they support such initiatives in principle, the priorities of parish life squeeze out the space for either wider reflection on the issues, or implementing specific strategies to address them:

I believe...that I have certain priorities in the ministry, and they take my time. [So peace and reconciliation activities are] not high on the list. We do have occasion to meet together to try to reach out to these people who cause trouble, and say to them, there's other ways. But it's not a regular, set fixture...I am probably fairly narrow in how I see the role of the Christian Church. I think time is short, I think my life is short, and therefore I should be prioritising all the time. And there are so many people outside of God, not knowing Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sin – I think that has to be my priority. Other things are going on around me in the world, in society, and if I can contribute to make it a better place I'll do so, so long as I'm not diverted from my main aim. **Rector, Connor**

You could say yes to loads of these but the problem is having the time to do it. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

I think just generally [my priority is] church attendance...I would probably slightly agree that [sectarianism] does play a part, especially...coming up to the summer, and Drumcree...People home in on it. But it is an issue, and I suppose the fact that we've been told to do this proves that it is an important issue for the hierarchy...[But] at this point it's not one of the most important for me. It is an issue, but I mean I think...where I work there are more important things to deal with at the minute.

And those are..?

Really just to bring people...to faith, because in my view whenever...they have God working in their lives, they're then able to deal better with people who have differences...Definitely it is an issue in the villages, but I think to get people to a point where they can see God's point of view is more important at the minute. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

And some respondents said that they were confused by the apparent inconsistency of how the Church of Ireland approaches sectarianism and other areas of difference:

There seems to be a lack of a strategy within parishes for dealing with the issues of differences [and] a lack of consistency as regards what happens in different dioceses...Even in the manner with which people are sent...for selection, some dioceses would...have conferences beforehand of several people, and go into it in detail, and other places are just more [ad hoc]. And also there's very little follow-up afterwards, amongst those who are successful or unsuccessful. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

And some respondents were unsure of what peace/addressing sectarianism initiatives actually are:

It's hard to say what priority you would like peace and reconciliation to be given when you're not sure what it means. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

Many respondents stressed their belief that the **key time for Church of Ireland ministry to impact the issues of sectarianism and other forms of difference is the Sunday service**. That is obviously the time when most people come into contact with the church, and it is self-evident (especially because most people either do not want, or simply do not have the time to participate in extra programmatic initiatives) that it should also be the time when the priorities of ministry regarding sectarianism and other forms of difference are enfolded:

How do you feel about the kind of programmatic initiatives that are available?

I think [it is difficult to] get Protestant people to do more than their Sunday morning worship – I could be wrong, but if I organised a course I'm not sure what response I would get. To me my prime slot is Sunday morning. **Rector, Clogher**

Some respondents felt that the issues of sectarianism and difference are not discussed at local parish level, and left for the diocesan structures or General Synod to deal with:

There is a discrepancy between the priority afforded at parish level to peace and reconciliation to that at hierarchical level – there is a meeting of minds on the issue at hierarchical level and it is a topic for active discussion; it doesn't seem to have the same importance at local level. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

And some respondents acknowledged the connection between sectarianism and other forms of difference, for example:

I think the problem with sectarianism and dealing with difference in all walks of life [is] very similar, and dealing with difference I think almost is a bigger problem than is dealing specifically with sectarianism. People don't realise that. I think if they can't get on with themselves within their own parish, it augurs badly for dealing with major difference between political communities...Whether sectarianism creates an inability to deal with difference, or whether not dealing with difference produces sectarianism is a difficult thing...I would recognise...a lot of the difficulties in parish ministry are certainly aggravated at least because of the political problems of the thirty years, and people's intransigence about things, underlying it all is a sense of insecurity which comes down to the problems in the community. **Rector, Connor**

PEACE/ADDRESSING SECTARIANISM INITIATIVES: PRIORITIES, ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES

- *Theological perspective seems to affect attitudes toward initiatives that aim to build peace and challenge sectarianism.*
- *There is openness to using such initiatives, but other time commitments may inhibit this.*
- *There is a consensus that Sunday services are a key resource of the church and may be the only forum in which most people encounter the SEP.*
- *Theological training of clergy may be limited to the notion that 'preaching the gospel' is an adequate response to sectarianism.*
- *Clergy generally do not feel equipped to facilitate such initiatives, nor are many of them aware of where outside facilitation could be found.*
- *Awareness and experience of such initiatives is somewhat limited; some respondents feel such initiatives are unnecessary or inappropriate.*
- *There are similar philosophical challenges as with inter-church activity; perhaps especially the view that these initiatives 'preach only to the converted'.*
- *There is some concern about engagement with Roman Catholic structures, usually centred on the perception that one side will seek to control the process.*
- *Some respondents acknowledged that other forms of difference are similar to sectarianism and may be approached in similar ways.*

12: STRATEGY FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

Strategy for the SEP will be defined in response to the Scoping Study and its reception process in 2003, and the following are examples of responses given to the consultants in interviews and Focus Groups.

Clarification only comes through doing the thing. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

We need to put time into trust-building before we 'tell the truth' to each other, to create a safe space where *everyone* can be themselves. This is not a process of manipulation...And we need to continue financial investment – we get nothing for nothing. We may not be able to have one blueprint – different approaches in different places...But we had best do something small now than wait five years till we [think] we're ready...Perhaps there should be one event per year in each parish to begin with as a minimum...We should define a beginning and an end to the first stage of the project, perhaps an initial commitment of 3 years. **Anonymous respondent**

The strategy has to be local, to help people reflect on their own sectarianism...[This includes] the 'hidden smiling' sectarianism against refugees, asylum seekers, etc. **Bishop**

So often there are lots and lots of papers and files but no action. I would hope that there would be money for the implementation stage rather than the research. **Lay person, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

What do you think the Church can do to contribute to the future of reconciliation on this island?

- (a) Continual emphasis on opposition to all forms of sectarianism.
- (b) Greater involvement of other denominations in Church of Ireland activities.
- (c) More active participation in inter-Church and inter-community affairs.
- (d) Take the initiative in approaching other interest groups e.g. [the Primate's] dialogue with political parties, etc. **Bishop**

I really hope there is a significant outcome to this whole process. I actually think the work of dealing with sectarianism goes on day after day, week after week, month after month, in the Church. It is something we will be dealing with until the Lord returns. No special commission is going to be the final word on it...I actually see it as part of God's calling to being his people on planet earth, amongst the people he loves, whatever their background, whatever their marginalization, culture, whatever their feelings. This is just part of what it means to be a Christian and a follower of Christ. The friend of sinners, the marginalized, the outsider, the rejected. And I think we need to rediscover that concept of Christ, because our welcome as a Church has been selective. **Bishop**

I think the links between the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order have got to be looked at. That's first. **Rector, Armagh**

The clergy still are the gatekeepers of change, of progress in churches, and unless the clergy are on board with something, it is very difficult to move and to have congregations in that direction. In terms of youth work...there are initiatives and programmes...that in a sense fast track a wee bit of that. But in terms of the Church as a whole attacking the issues, I do agree in a sense it has to begin with clergy...You can't have a strategy without tackling that issue. The other one is – maybe this is a bugbear of mine, but the Church too frequently preach to the converted, and I don't know how many of those who practice violence are in the churches...The churches have a huge input to schools,...How many agencies and how many people [are] employed in all sorts of peace and reconciliation and addressing sectarianism organisations, and it would be enough to staff a large school, and there seems to be little co-ordination amongst those initiatives. **Youth Worker**

Part of the problem is that we deal more easily with failure than we do with success: that we can sociologically in all sorts of ways justify failure, but we never can quite come to terms with success. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

I think some sort of education programme that...emerges naturally rather than an artificial thing that's imposed. Because if my people feel that something is worthwhile and something is good, they'll support it. If they feel it's just a talk shop that is in order to tick boxes, [they] would be resentful. Maybe they

inherit that from me! If something is good and worthwhile we'll certainly look at it and hopefully support it.
Rector, Armagh

This is a more positive anxiety than a negative one – is that there is a lot of good work going on, in dioceses, in parishes all over the place. People are devising resources, but there again – would you believe in 2002 the lack of communication? So that a parish in Ballyholme could be devising a booklet on let's say St Columba, which would be something to do with reconciliation, let's say, and somebody in Derry could be doing the same. Now that is a) a misuse of resources and b) is producing – it's a duplication that's unnecessary. So there needs to be some kind of central resource centre, or you have a website where people communicate on...I would actually like to see some kind of structure [perhaps a full-time office] created within the church that would actually have the specific remit for community relations, moving beyond sectarianism, anti-sectarian education from infants to adults.

I think there actually is a very important point there. I would actually want to argue that there's a whole of a lot more that's going on in a quiet way than is recognised. There is something in the Church of Ireland temperament that precludes us from boasting or going public about things. **Bishop**

Your constituency has got to be from cradle to grave. I'm really serious about this; the education project has to come in at labour...The Church of Ireland needs to aim at a commitment that is a structured commitment. It's not just good enough for the Archbishop to say, 'We want you to sign on for something.' It's got to be more thoroughgoing than that. It has to go through Diocesan Synods, down to...rural deaneries...Now what I mean by structure is, it should not be just a diocesan structure, but should be a parish structure. There should be some kind of learning available to clergy and leading lay people, not necessarily Vestries, on how they set up a sectarian education project structure within the parish.

So that [would be facilitated by a resource person for] about one in every ten parishes?

One in every ten parishes. Something like that...Now it might not be full time work, it could be a part-time work. It could be a retired person who's prepared to do an evening a week...Or it could be bought in [from an outside agency].

How would you make those changes, and how would you measure them?

It's very difficult as you know to measure qualitatively how people change, and into what do they change. It's so much easier to see butterflies coming out of cocoons. But within the church the qualitative change would be more measurable in the way that they relate...That's not the end of the story, of course, because I believe that – a further thing that that has got to be either a yearly or two-yearly or even three-yearly re-visit, review, re-commissioning, re-evaluation. You've got to have these intervals of getting it on board again. And that's why a lot of reports have gathered dust. They were never re-visited. **Former rector, Down and Dromore**

[We] have to do it along with other churches. It has to be a Church of Ireland initiative, but it should be set up as an initiative in concert with other churches, and possibly other faiths. Because it isn't our baby, necessarily. We didn't invent it, we didn't start it, and we'll not finish it. **Rector, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

Clergy should be actively encouraged by their bishop to make their Christmas Carol Service and Harvest Service ecumenical occasions. **Rector, Armagh**

To be honest with you I think that someone outside the parish would be far, far better at doing something like this than the rector or even a member of the laity within the parish. Simply because they don't know the people. They come in and it's a blank sheet. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

I think it would be good if the Church of Ireland as a body had some sort of guidance for different things, but it does depend a lot on where you minister. Because what would be relevant maybe in the middle of Belfast isn't relevant in the middle of the country...

So some kind of centralised resourcing.

Where you could go if you needed information or you needed encouragement or guidance, somebody who knew what they were talking about and could tell you how to do certain things if you wanted to. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Well actually seriously we need to learn about our own religion as a primary, and then – well there's the academic learning, but there's also the meeting of our people, and I think that's the best way. And you're prepared if you know where you stand yourself. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Perhaps a Joint Church of Ireland/Roman Catholic Working Group on sectarianism and difference might help. This could be consultative and informative – a 'mediative' group to field questions and disseminate information. **Rector, Armagh**

The clergy can't [always] be protected, but they need to be assured that they're being supported...We need a kind of informative database about what [resources are] out there, and also we need to be able to put people in touch with one another so that they can talk about what works and what doesn't...You could be confident that the person that you are calling in has been given the skills to deal with them, with all of the problems, including the problem of conflict resolution...People need to be reassured that there is that resource in place available at a diocesan level. But ultimately the choices have to be made at parish level, because those are the [people] that actually know the people that they're dealing with...

Do you think that the [SEP] committee needs to have some imagination about where and when it meets?

We would do much better to have fewer but more intensive maybe residential meetings. **Bishop**

STRATEGY FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

- *Many respondents believe that to address sectarianism is an essential part of being a Christian.*
- *The clergy are seen as the gatekeepers of change and should be involved closely in the development of, and commitment to a sectarianism education project.*
- *Respondents assert that the SEP should set realistic goals and tangible outcomes. It is not likely to solve all the issues surrounding sectarianism, but may succeed in helping people to relate better to one another.*
- *Many respondents still feel that the relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order has not been resolved, and should be addressed as part of the SEP.*
- *Local strategy is required to implement the vision of the SEP; this should be developed in a partnership, rather than imposed 'from above'; there is no 'one size fits all' solution - different approaches may be required in different places. The project will only succeed if there is an attempt to gain commitment from local parishes.*
- *The SEP committee may need to review its structure and pattern of meetings in order to process the findings of the Scoping Study. Members have stated that the committee itself must model the values of good practice aspired to by respondents.*
- *There should be a defined beginning and end to the first phase of the project, and a long-term strategy for the future.*
- *Respondents do not want the project to be delayed - clarification comes through action.*
- *Some kind of centralised resourcing, especially regarding communication and envisioning is required; this could include (at a minimum) both human resources and a website.*
- *Partnership with other churches would be extremely valuable, and help to avoid the pitfalls of duplication*
- *Some respondents suggested that the SEP should have a full time office.*

13: CHALLENGES FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

Although the consultants were welcomed by most respondents (only 2 clergy in the sample declined to take part), there are evident challenges for the SEP. Some of these are illustrated in the quotations that follow:

1: Inertia and the bureaucracy of the church:

So many committees – not only in the Church of Ireland – form just as a talking shop. It's comfortable, and there are people who don't have hands-on experience. **Lay person, Connor**

This is a full time job for the church – ongoing yet fraught with difficulties, and hard to keep the motivation going. **Standing Committee lay member, Limerick and Killaloe**

[Cross-community work is] valuable in furthering relationships and contacts, but limited in [its ability to] heal areas of division politically. **Rector, Armagh**

I think it probably will gather dust...I've seen so many of these initiatives over the years...and by the time anything [comes of it] the time has passed. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

It'll only gather dust if those of us who have taken part in it decide to remain anonymous and don't push and ask – 'Well, where's the report on it? What's going on? What's happening with it?' **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

I think it could just disappear up the tubes. People would say, 'Oh, that is not to our liking entirely, so would you take another year and go and explore further'. In other words, keep on putting it off. Unless the church becomes quite rigorous...in its directive. **Lay person, Connor**

My hope is that they will take it seriously, because that's what I think is in doubt, the depth of their commitment to examining these issues. Because it seems to me the church has issued very good reports in the past...but [they] just disappeared off the landscape. And it seems to me...that anyone like ourselves who tries to raise these issues meets a brick wall, and that's very polite, civilised and smiling, and they don't tell you to shut up but they just go on their own way. **Retired Rector, Connor**

The Church of Ireland is too good at setting up structures and committees; its weakness is in actually getting things implemented on the ground where it matters. **Rector, Connor**

What good will it do when all this research is finished? **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

2: Insecurity on the part of the clergy or laity:

Well I know the Synod have heard it already, but I'll quote it again from my rector. The Church of Ireland is full of good people, and they're good for nothing.

Because they don't use their goodness? Because they don't risk their goodness?
Yes. **Youth Worker**

I find this immensely difficult. In a deeply entrenched loyalist working class community a sense of security is, I think, a prerequisite for attempting anything. The more vulnerable the community feels, the less it is able to address these issues. **Rector, Connor**

There is sometimes a sense that 'we have to hold onto everything', that it would be a betrayal if we let go; [this is accompanied by] a loss of morale and confidence. So we need to learn more about the management of change. **Bishop**

I once [took a stand against sectarianism]. The resulting hate mail, abuse, etc. would have been easier to handle if a network could be set up of those with similar experiences. **Rector, Connor**

One of the big issues is those who are involved in the paramilitaries in our own area, and if there's any way of trying to talk to them – I don't even know them, but...they don't live a mile away from here. I might even meet them on the street and not know who they are...

Can you think of a way of doing that?

I think many people in the community are crippled with fear and they daren't speak it. In a sense I suppose I daren't speak out too strongly either. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

One of the real problems of the Church of Ireland is a theology of 'niceness'...There is a superficiality and a pc attitude in not wishing to offend. Blandness results...Because the Church of Ireland is a small church a critique of principles is often viewed as an attack on personalities. We need to get over this hang-up. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

3: Philosophical objections, misinterpretations or negative experiences of peace/addressing sectarianism initiatives:

It's to do with relationships. It's not to do with worshipping together...It's not about dogmas, it's not about doctrines, it's not about doctrines, it's not about worshipping and using a liturgy, and all that sort of stuff. It's to do with relationships, and building that together, and trying to understand differences and appreciate them, then eventually to celebrate them. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Those who do not want to respond to any initiatives cannot be forced to do so. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

In the Church of Ireland there are too many pushing their own opinions and agendas under the guise of anti-sectarianism (i.e. anti-Orange). **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

[At] the training workshop on sectarianism in our post-ordination training...I was told the difference between me and the loyalist paramilitary is that I was educated, and I went to grammar school and he wasn't. He isn't able to think for himself, he goes out and uses a gun, but that's the only difference between him and me. It's wrong.

Now when you say you were told that, do you mean you interpreted what was said that way?

Oh no, that's what [the facilitator] said to us...I remember responding to her that no, I was brought up in a working class housing estate...I didn't go to grammar school until I was sixteen, and the difference between me and a loyalist paramilitary is that my parents taught me that God said, 'You shall not kill.' You don't bear false witness against your neighbour. Love your neighbour as yourself. That's the difference. So that even if – are there sectarian attitudes in me? Yes, there are. Are they qualitatively and quantitatively the same as the Shankill Butchers'? Not a bit...Within the diocese [peace and anti-sectarian initiatives are] not pushed because I would guess there's a nervousness within diocesan authorities. So many of those from bishop, archdeacon et cetera will have liberal political views, and if they're seen to push anti-sectarianism projects it's interpreted by an overwhelming unionist laity as a political agenda, trying to make the Church become the Alliance Party...Sectarianism is a weasel word within the Church of Ireland at present. It's been hollowed out of content, and a new content has been

The fact that [misinterpretations and principled reluctance to participate exist] requires to be registered. It's important that they be given the opportunity to voice the issues that are important to them, but we have to deliver despite that, and if that means difficult times, so be it. I'm not worried about it. **Bishop**

4: The social context:

A lot will depend on what happens politically. The background of politics affects the foreground of the church, and these issues can't be resolved easily. **Bishop**

In a polarised area like ours, little can be done to cross bridges in a practical way. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

We must recognise and challenge the sophisticated sectarianism of the middle class while...not forgetting lower socio-economic groups who are often the most threatened. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Instead of...middle-class people meeting each other it would be more useful to look at the processes of social exclusion that drive people to a violent sectarian disposition. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

5: The possible propensity for men to not participate:

Could men not become involved in a Day of Prayer and invite all churches to pray for Christian unity? **Standing Committee lay member, Derry and Raphoe**

6: Time pressures:

In introducing sectarianism into the education curriculum, there [is] a real danger of overload; it is important to ensure that it [is] seen as an integrated package and not a competing element. **Anonymous respondent**

7: The internal divisions of the church:

The effect of [such initiatives] is curious: it may serve to lessen the chances of conflict with people and structurally beyond 'our' boundaries, but at the same time it can serve to increase the chances of stress and agreement within! **Bishop**

8: The desire for a 'quick fix' or the potential misattribution of resources:

There is not much profit to be gained by expending huge sums of money in programmes for the church at large but areas of working class conurbations should be targeted to identify the root causes of sectarianism and prejudice. **Rector, Armagh**

We're in for a long haul here, and there's no instant answers...[We must not] suggest [that] once we've finished our work, we've got a report, we will be transformed, and we will eliminate sectarianism within the Church of Ireland..For me...the whole thing is about growing...in maturity. **Former rector, Connor**

CHALLENGES FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

- *Many respondents are wary of the bureaucracy of the church, and fear that this may stifle the SEP.*
- *Some clergy feel unprotected or ill equipped to respond to potentially controversial issues.*
- *Lay people may not be sufficiently confident in their own identity as Church of Ireland to engage in meaningful dialogue with others.*
- *Some respondents have had negative experiences of initiatives that aim to build peace and challenge sectarianism; there are also philosophical objections; this may inhibit their participation in future.*
- *Some feel that men may not participate in the SEP.*
- *The time pressures of parish life may inhibit the development of the SEP.*
- *The temptation exists to seek an immediate solution, which may, conversely, create more challenges.*

14: THE LOYAL ORDERS AND DRUMCREE

The General Synod has already examined in detail the question of the church's relationship with the Loyal Orders, and specifically the issue referred to in the public sphere simply as 'Drumcree'. There is no need to rehearse the arguments here, not least because these issues were not a key part of the remit for the Scoping Study. Some quotations are included, however, as illustrative of the relevant issues (and it is noteworthy that some respondents declined to comment on these issues at all):

How do we [communicate the General Synod's decision about Drumcree and the Orange Order] to the membership of the Orange Order who are members of the Church of Ireland? We can't say it to anybody else in a sense, while at the same time acknowledging their right to be members of these things, and in practice I welcome the county Grand Lodge for a service each year, I have preached at it. But it's how to at the same time as being open to them as people, to somehow say that responding to Christ today cannot be done in the terms of the seventeenth century or Reformation questions, which are no longer the same questions as people face in their lives today. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

There are a lot of different opinions, and I think people just get on with it. The only time it really would come out would be in the summertime, if they wanted to hold an Orange parade or something. And there would be different opinions within the two parishes, some would be all for it and some wouldn't. So I don't know – handling political differences – if we have to do a service, we do a service, and we don't make too big an issue of it.

And in your view is that handling it well or inadequately?

From my point of view it's a situation that I find myself in – I've inherited it, so I do it to the best of my ability, but I don't make a big thing about it. They're invited to come and join the evening service, but I wouldn't be so keen on having a separate service for them, because I think they should be integrated into the church. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

The [church and the Orange Order] should not be inextricably linked. We can't throw them all out of the church, but I wouldn't like a situation where the Orange Order compelled me to hold a service. I think we've got to hold our autonomy. **Rector, Connor**

Some found this difficult – suggesting that it may be the 'hidden agenda' of the research. **Focus Group report, Armagh**

Media representation has given a bad name to the C of I in Drumcree – it is tarred with Orangemen and bigots. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

I think at the official church level, in relation to the four main churches in particular, there is a need to get across to those who are willing to listen to us, the idea that there is a genuine respect for one another, that there is genuine trust there, and to cut the ground from under those people who would want to portray a particular group in a sectarian or whatever way. And I came up with the idea at that stage of the four church leaders producing an agreed statement in which they recognised the history in which they've permitted themselves to work together. **Rector, Armagh**

Drumcree – I think something ought to have been done a long time ago. If it means stopping that service, to break the cycle of violence, then stop the service. There is no doubt the service has been hijacked, and that I think throws the Christian Church up in a very bad light. I think the church – whether you're talking about the local rector, or who, I'm not sure, but something ought to have been done.

What about the relationship between the Orange Order and the Church of Ireland?

I don't think there [should be] a relationship. The Church of Ireland is there to proclaim the gospel, to teach the Christian way, now if the Orange Order wants to buy into that, that's up to it. If individual members are members of both, that's up to them, but I don't think the church should be involved. **Rector, Connor**

I think the word 'listen' is very important. I think the church needs to listen, and not just to shut its doors. I feel doors need to be kept open, because what's happening is there's a community out there trying to

articulate its culture. Culture and Church now are two separate things. [We need to bear] that in mind, because if the one gets totally entangled with the other we have the problem that we've got now. But the Church needs to respect the culture that there is, okay, but also needs to highlight the parts of that culture that are in conflict with the gospel of Christ. **Rector, Connor**

I think I grew up blissfully unaware of either my own self-prejudices, or those of my peers and in the church. In [the parish] there was quite a hullabaloo about the moving of flags and things, and you get that kind of local situation being very explosive and very difficult without some backing from the church as a whole on certain issues. And again is that the situation in Drumcree? I'm not saying it is or isn't, but in what way does the church at large give [the parochial leadership] guidance or support? [Are they] really at the mercy of the local situation? **Youth Worker**

Border parishes feel differently towards Drumcree than, say, people in Bangor, because of having families wiped out/eldest sons shot by rogue republicans trying to stir up trouble. **Lay person, Armagh**

As a member of the Orange Order and a rector in the Church of Ireland it would be helpful not to be demonised/stigmatised for expressing my cultural identity. Throwing bricks instead of using them to build would seem to be the norm at the moment. **Anonymous respondent**

The Church itself [has] gone as far as it possibly can because of the present laws of the church. It cannot go any further...If you knock [Drumcree parish] church down tomorrow, or if the Archbishop took the licence away, closed the church, or if new laws were passed at Synod, the Orangemen would still march...and hold an open air service. So it's not going to go away...I'm also very disappointed on occasions when I hear the Archbishop saying, 'I have worked tirelessly since Christmas behind the scenes.' Why behind the scenes? Why not openly? Why not announce in the press, 'I am going to a meeting tonight with the Garvaghy Road Residents' Association'? He's been to meetings all over the place, according to what's been said. And why have we not got that out? I believe the church has not been aggressive in a positive way. **Lay person, Belfast**

Do you have an opinion on Drumcree and how it should be resolved?

Generally speaking it's all too easy to have simplistic answers to what is in fact a complex social, religious and an enormous problem with all sorts of dimensions to it. Even though I've had some experience of ministry in the North I don't know. **Rector, Limerick and Killaloe**

The C of I should stop fudging on the relationship with the Orange Order. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

Some of the things that people suggest should be done may not be the best. And the motivation for it I think is questionable. Because the motivation for doing something about Drumcree is to take embarrassment off my particular shoulders, rather than to...solve everything that Drumcree [represents]. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

They should ban all flags, all marches. Let them do it in their own place. At this stage no Christian church should be banging drums and celebrating the annihilation of other people. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

I want to go to Drumcree myself. The silent and peaceful majority want to go and worship and should be allowed to go and worship. If they exclude Orangemen then they could split the church in two. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

The media has done all denominations a terrible disservice. The archbishop was doing a good job trying to resolve the Drumcree situation but the media tore him to shreds. The terminology they used was wrong; they used the phrase 'secret meeting' and this made it sound very devious, like an accusation. Media spin turns things around...pressure is put on because of the media and it's not easy when the world's media turns it up and starts making TV stars out of people. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

Drumcree has been an impediment to [North-South unity in the Church of Ireland]. **Bishop**

The first reaction of some in the Republic to Drumcree was to distance ourselves from it; this caused hurt. Then we began to realise that many of the issues important to us were redolent with sectarianism,

for example, in the controversy over the sale of property, [some people seemed to feel that] 'we don't want to lose face, they were frightened and insecure. **Bishop**

It gauges the tension of my parish...If Drumcree goes off well...all in the garden is quiet. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

It is important to acknowledge that, for many people, Drumcree represents the crux of the issue of dealing positively with sectarianism and difference in the Church of Ireland. There is a prevalent view that 'solving Drumcree will somehow solve all the challenges facing the Church'. It may well be that a disproportionate amount of energy has been invested by the Church in addressing Drumcree specifically, while the everyday sectarianism and negative patterns of relating at the micro-level may have been relatively disregarded. A sociological analysis would caution against this. The questions raised at Drumcree may well be irresolvable in the terms in which they are presented. The perception of repeated failure, and indeed the widespread public perception that the Church of Ireland is not 'doing enough' to address Drumcree obviously do not help the process of responding positively to sectarianism and difference. In other words, it should be stressed that this Scoping Study report does not specifically seek to provide the tools for the resolution of Drumcree, but rather shift the focus to the wider issues of sectarianism and difference in the Church of Ireland. Drumcree should neither be scapegoated (allowing others to claim 'there's no sectarianism on our patch'), nor, of course, ignored; but it should not be allowed to monopolise the agenda and resources of the church. A much deeper and wider process is required to address the issues of sectarianism and difference throughout the Church of Ireland.

THE LOYAL ORDERS AND DRUMCREE

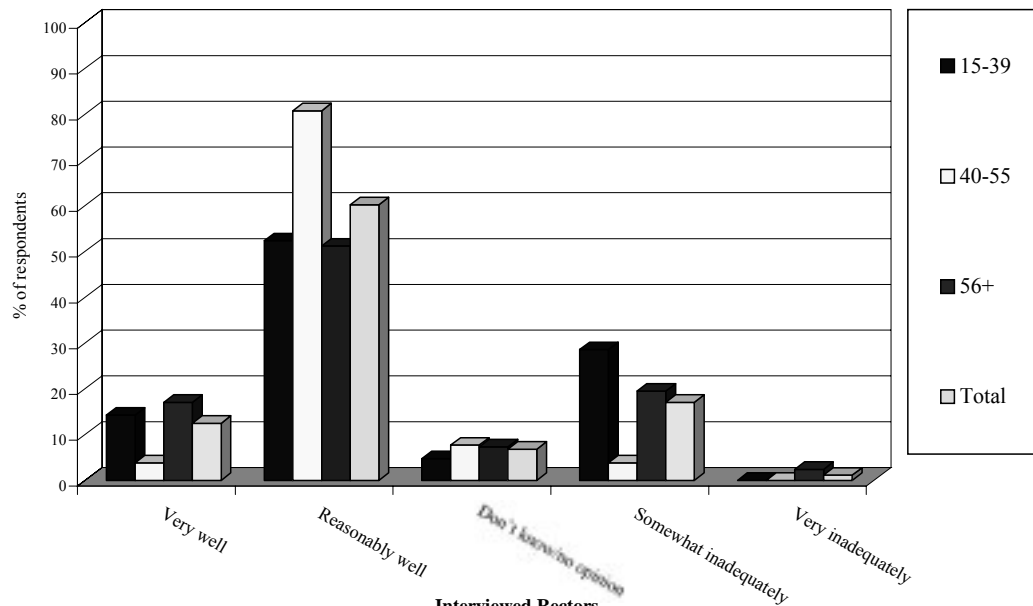
- *This is still one of the most controversial issues facing the church, and it elicits a diversity of responses, ranging from proposing the closure of Drumcree parish, to the full support of the church for the Orange Order (these are both minority views).*
- *Some respondents acknowledge that it may be too easy to propose solutions to a problem at General Synod without the cost of having to implement them. The General Synod may not be the appropriate forum to take such decisions, nor does it appear to have the authority to implement them.*
- *Some respondents feel that the church has done as much as it can to resolve the matter and should distance itself from the Drumcree situation.*
- *It may be the case that the attempt to resolve Drumcree at the micro-level has inhibited the process of addressing sectarianism and other forms of difference at both wider and local levels.*
- *The church's stance towards the constitutional position of Northern Ireland perhaps needs to be further clarified. It may be perceived by some that part of the church's role should be to defend the union.*

SECTION TWO

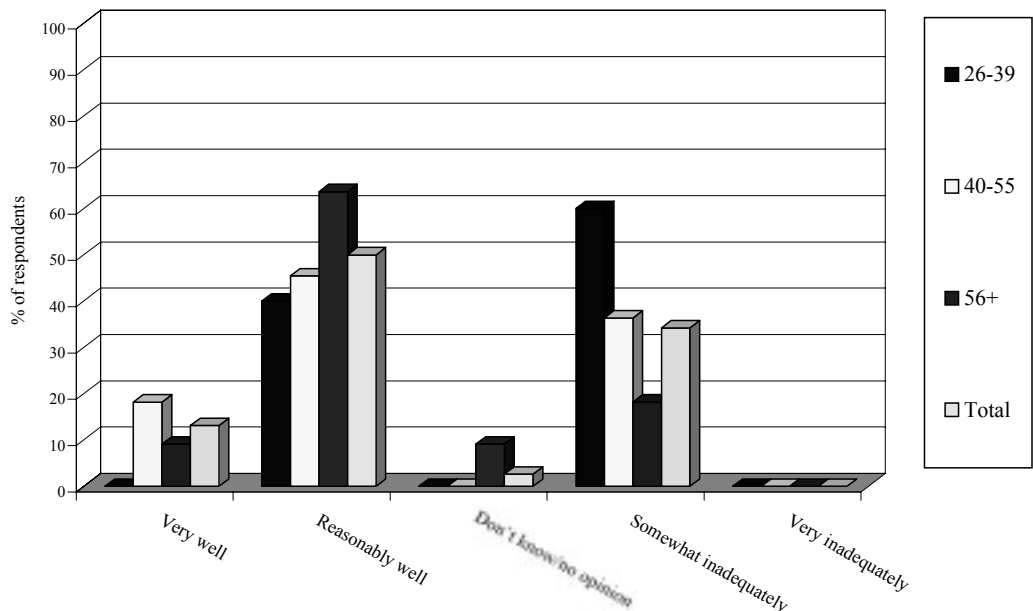
15: WELCOMING/INVOLVING NEW MEMBERS AND BOUNDARIES BETWEEN BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS

One aspect of dealing positively with difference is the way in which new parishioners are welcomed and invited to participate in parish activities (see Figs. 136, 137). This can also include handling differences between Christian believers and those with no specific faith commitment (see Figs. 138, 139).

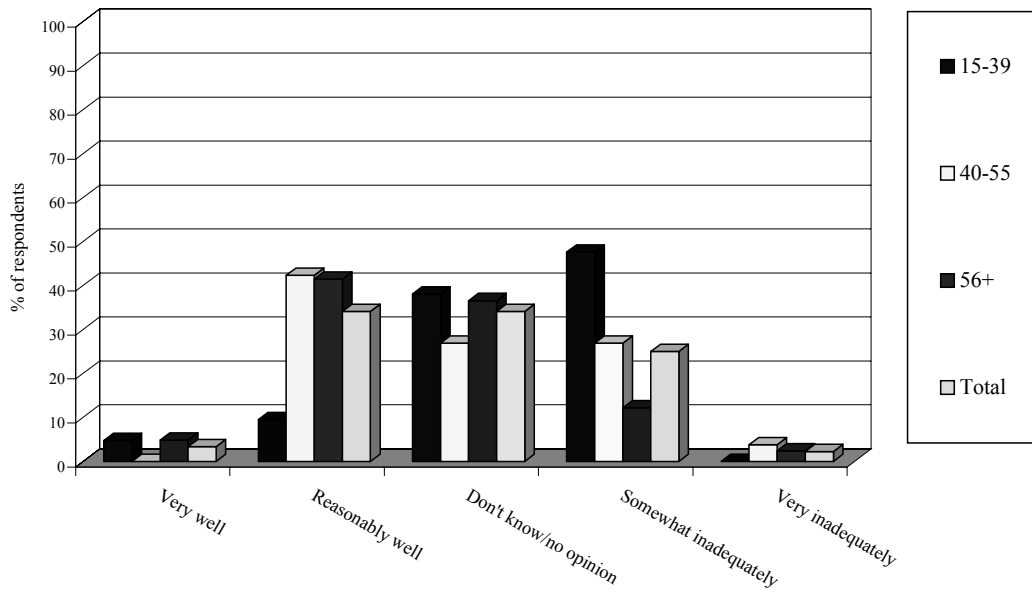
Lay People
Handling differences surrounding long-time/newly arrived members of a parish
Fig. 136



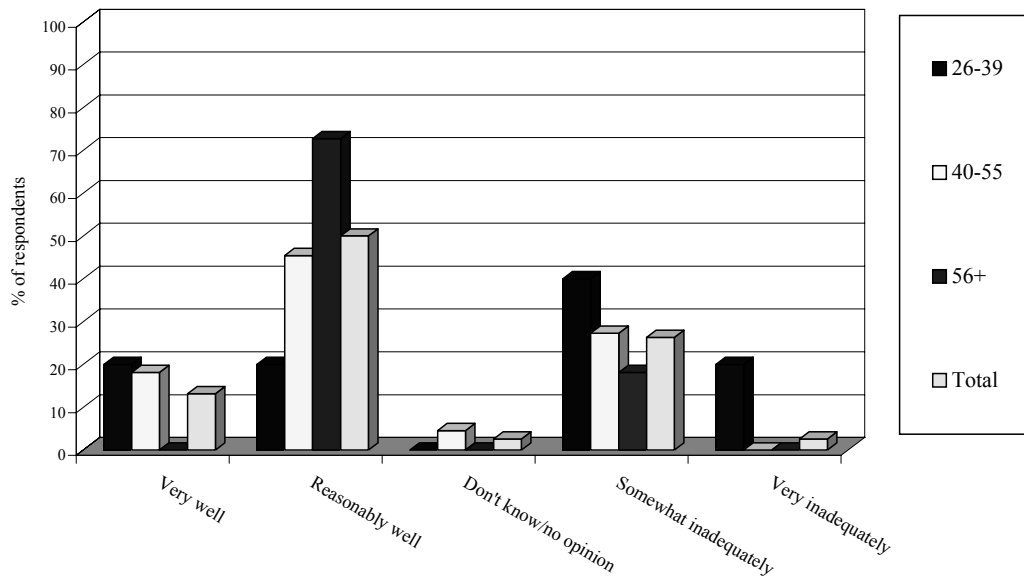
Interviewed Rectors
Handling differences surrounding long-time/newly arrived members of a parish
Fig. 137



Lay People
Handling difference between Christian believers and those of no specific faith commitment
Fig. 138



Interviewed Rectors
Handling difference between Christian believers and those of no specific faith commitment in the wider society
Fig. 139



Unsurprisingly, the manner in which new members are welcomed, or how non-believers may be treated varies between parishes, and statistics are of limited use in this regard, but the following quotations are provided as representations both of the challenges and some good practice in this area.

Respondents were approximately evenly divided over the question of handling difference between Christian believers and those with no specific faith commitment, with around 30% indicating that they thought these were well handled, 30% saying they were inadequately handled, and 30% saying they did not know or had no opinion. This was an unusual question, because some respondents felt that it was not their place to judge the commitment of another. Where respondents had had a positive experience of welcoming someone who had no specific faith commitment, this was usually in the context of parish life (as opposed to 'outreach'), while some respondents felt that evangelism can sometimes 'label' people as 'outside the camp' in an unhelpful way. It is noteworthy that significantly more clergy than lay people felt the church was better at handling these differences. This may be because it often falls to the clergy to respond to the issue, or because some lay respondents may have themselves been in the position of being without a conspicuous or explicit personal faith commitment. In spite of this, respondents generally felt that the Church of Ireland is more welcoming to those with no specific faith commitment than conservative evangelical denominations, which are perceived as dealing somewhat harshly with 'non-believers'. There will likely be a variety of responses to this, as some within the Church of Ireland feel that evangelism must be prioritised, and that it is not a mark of health that people can be long-term members of the church without maintaining a personal faith commitment; while others believe that the process of evangelism may include the possibility of welcoming people whatever their beliefs. Differences between long-term and newly arrived members of a parish were felt to be well handled generally, although some negative examples were given.

New parishioners are welcomed but there is no real follow up. **Lay person, Armagh**

[I try to make] sure that when somebody comes to the church they're not sitting there [alone]...I have my church wardens...go over, sit beside them and...show them where the service is in the book, and they'll help them with it. If people come into the area, if I can't take them into our school, which is running at maximum, I try and pass them onto another smaller school that they can get children into...It can be inadequate, because you do have people who are sitting in the same pews – and I even saw it with my wife, going to a church recently, and I was there as the guest preacher, and she sat on one seat and another woman said, 'Oh no, no, you can't sit there, come over here and sit beside me because so-and-so sits there.' And really I thought the days of buying pews was gone...Some people move into a parish and they were involved in their last and would like to be involved in their new parish, and whilst the help is appreciated, people still look down. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Certainly I [integrated smoothly]...given the fact that I'm English as well. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

In the different places I've worked, both as a curate and as a rector, I have felt a reluctance generally on the part of long-established members, not so much to see new people coming in, but to see them being given a place of responsibility...I don't think that's just Church of Ireland, I think that's across the board. **Rector, Connor**

There isn't a proper mechanism in place to welcome new members. It's difficult to be anything other than a 'blow in'. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

You can't encroach upon new visitors to the parish and you don't want to get in their way...just take a little at a time and gradually get to know them or get them involved. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

Our rector is very welcoming, but the main area of difficulty is breaking down barriers within the established congregation: The older members seem to think they will be around forever and they won't let new blood take over.' Meanwhile, apathy means that some people just don't want to get involved; armchair critics meaning some people get elected to Vestry repeatedly; but 'the danger of showing interest is that you get elected!' **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

They don't have to have been born in the parish to be accepted?

No. In fact, some of our newest folk have retired from England, and within a year and a half of coming here, I appointed him as my warden...I positively discriminate in favour of the newcomer, and try and get them involved in either church government or clubs, societies or whatever...I think the sad thing about a rural parish can be that the church, after a period of time, can appear to belong to certain families or certain groups. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

There might be within the parish a group set up to welcome new people, which would then invite new people into the existing organisations. That would be helpful...[Although] people who have been there for a long time have their little jobs, and they might feel threatened by somebody else coming in...Which really means that they've never been taught to share, and to say, 'Well maybe my day for doing something has come to an end.' **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

In some of the more staunchly evangelical churches there seems to be a clearer boundary between believers and non-believers. In the Church of Ireland that seems a little more blurred...Thankfully...I believe the Church of Ireland is a welcoming church. The doors are open to anyone of any faith persuasion, colour, creed, you name it. It's an open church. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

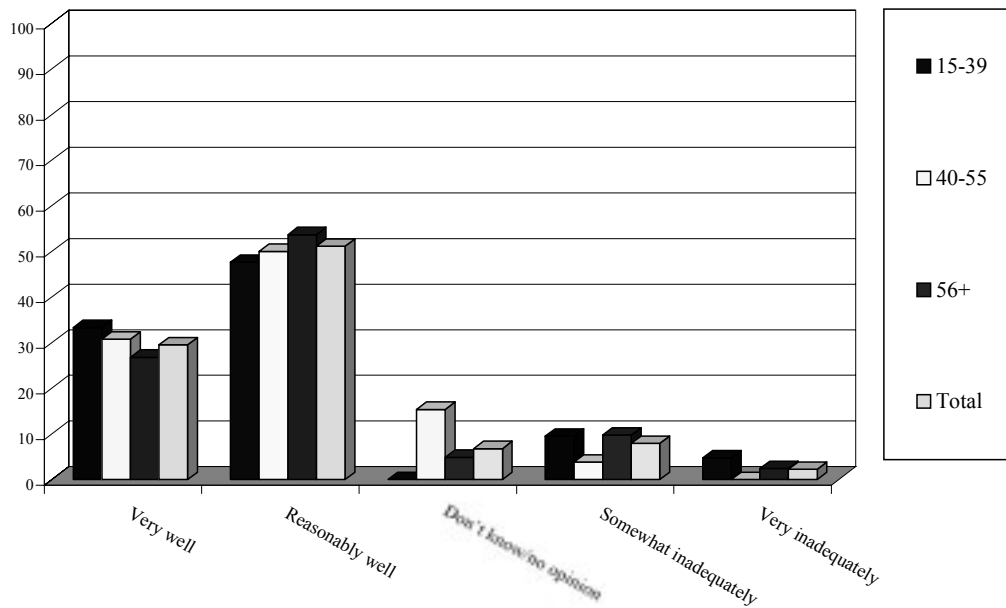
**WELCOMING/INVOLVING NEW MEMBERS AND BOUNDARIES BETWEEN
BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS**

- *There is a perception that there are 'softer' boundaries in the Church of Ireland between believers and non-believers than in other churches.*
- *There is a challenge to helping people to make a transition from being 'visitors' to being 'family'.*
- *There is a challenge also to help people to make a transition from nominalism to committed faith and practice.*
- *There is sometimes no strategic process in place for existing members to welcome new people. People are often unsure of what will be expected of or offered to new members once they begin integrating into parish life.*
- *Respondents acknowledge the challenge to engage in evangelism, but there is a wide range of views regarding this.*

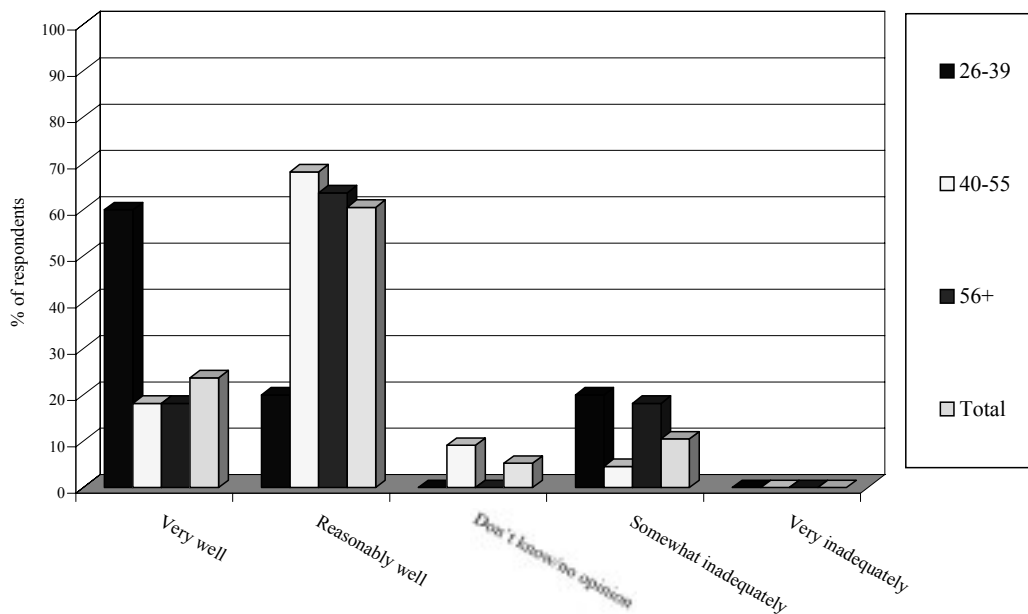
16: GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SEXUALITY

It is difficult to ascertain the extent of negative gender stereotyping in the Church of Ireland, as the Scoping Study relies on respondents' opinions. However, **Figs. 140 and 141** show that the substantial majority of respondents felt that these differences were handled well.

Lay People
Handling Gender differences
Fig. 140



Interviewed Rectors
Handling Gender issues
Fig. 141



Some respondents (a small minority) disagree with the church's teaching on women in ministry, and generally very few people (if any) would wish to admit, or even be aware of their own gender prejudice. Additionally, the Church of Ireland exists in a sociological context wherein the roles of women still reflect traditional 'norms' in relatively conservative terms. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the consensus among respondents was that women should be, and indeed are, increasingly represented on such bodies as Select Vestries. There is still a long path to travel toward full equality, if indeed that is the goal of the church, and perhaps some element of the SEP could address the question of gender in a more systematic way.

Inclusive language is in my opinion irrelevant. **(Male) Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

[One issue is] inadequate toilet provision for women. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

Are women still relied on to make the tea and so on?

Well...they can be. But they take a full role in the parish life, on Vestries and...

Do you think your parish could cope with a woman rector?

I think they would, yes. **Rector, Armagh**

I think there could still be difficulty there...Women tend not to be very highly representative on church [government] be it at national Synod level or at local parish Vestry level. Certainly they're very much involved in the life of the parish as a church, but there's still an imbalance at decision-making levels. Many people would not automatically assume that it would be important that a group would be adequately representative of gender. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

If the ladies wish to make the tea, then we won't stop them. **(Male) Lay person, Armagh**

Out of the four churchwardens, three of them are women. In Vestry – sixty percent women. And that's not because the men aren't around. Some of these people are skilled in their own right and wish to serve the church. **Rector, Connor**

The church has been an equal opportunities employer longer than many secular businesses.

I would say that that's a bit of a fallacy. Because – for example, say there's a parish vacant and I decide that oh yes, God's calling me to this parish, or I feel a strong inclination to make an application to this parish, if the nominators of that parish decide that they don't wish to have a woman about the place, they're allowed to get away with that. **Rector, Connor**

If women aren't represented then it is because women don't propose other women. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

I think [women] are still probably expected to do the mundane things...The thing I think would be that the church caters reasonably well for women. It doesn't cater for men...I mean we don't have any men's groups or societies other than whist and bowls, that kind of thing. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

There has traditionally been a perception within the church that any position of leadership is 'a man's job'. However, this is beginning to change. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

In general the C of I ducks the whole issue of gender differences. The church has not taken up the issue of women, of [spousal abuse], etc. Ireland has relied on the EU to promote women's rights rather than the churches. **Lay person, Armagh**

Is this a church that handles gender issues well?

Appallingly when I first came; I had a great deal of struggle when I first came.

Is it getting better?

It's actually now, in the last – I would say – and it isn't just since I took over [this parish] – I would say that it's really changed drastically. That there's much more, 'Well this is how it is, we'd better get on with it.' And a very healthy, positive attitude, I find. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do women feel adequately represented? Just because you have female clergy, has that changed attitudes towards women?

I think they do, provided we don't continue to think of women as being the tea makers and everything else. Certainly in our parish, without them we would have nothing. They are still the mothers of Ireland, who teach and share their faith, and they who come to church. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

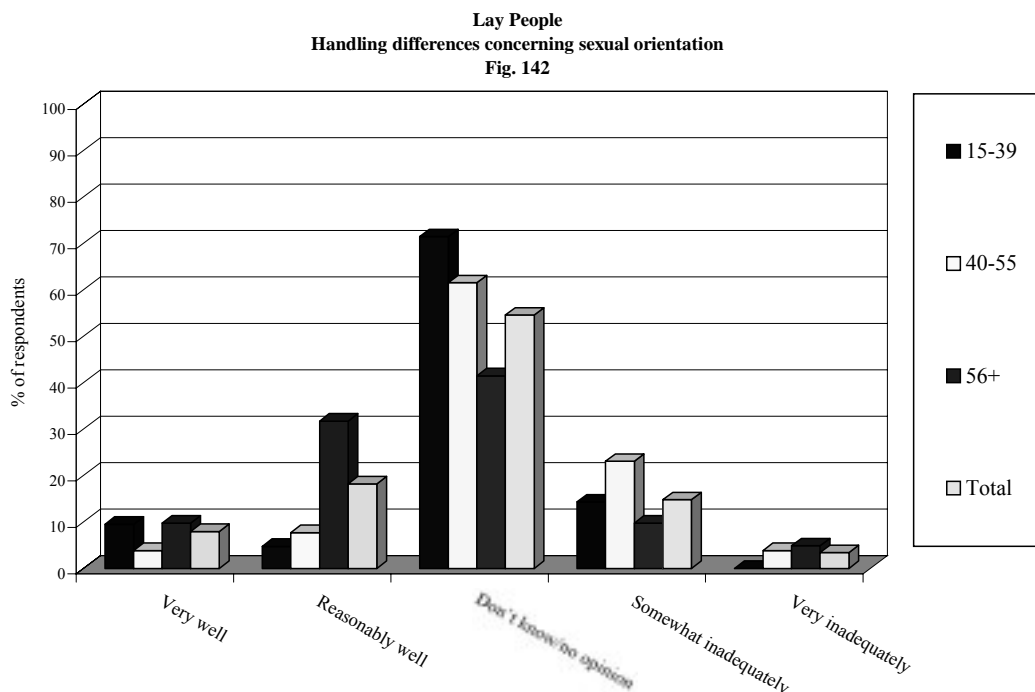
I haven't really had any problems. I know that other women might say differently. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

There's very little attempt to engage women, unless those women of course happen to sign up to the theological agenda that the hierarchy have, in which case they're welcomed. But at the institutional, structural level at the top, there still is a problem. They're not engaging where the majority of women in the Church of Ireland are. At parish level there's also a problem, depending on where the parish is. In an area like this here, women do make the tea, make the buns.

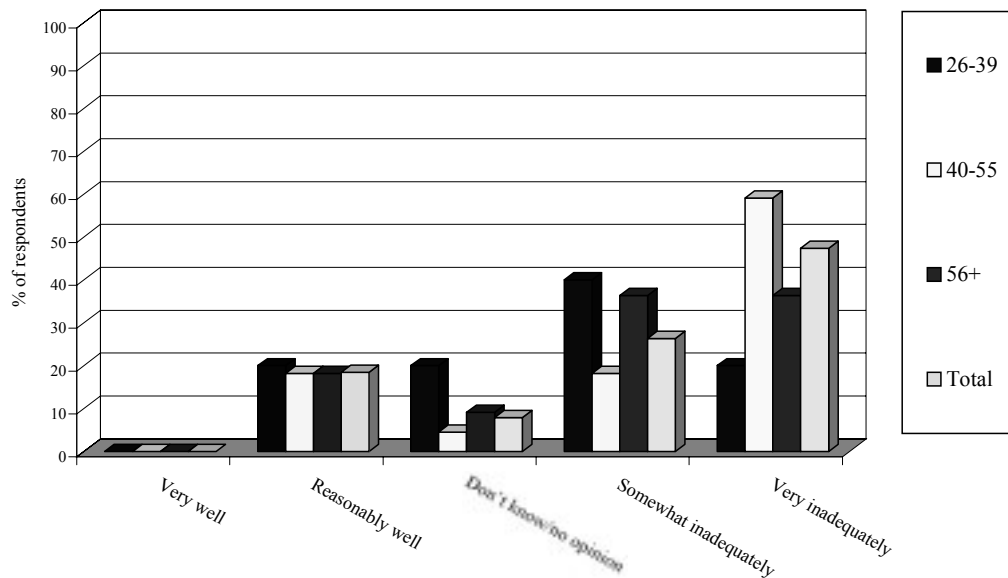
Would your parish accept a woman priest?

Well they might do, but then they would have to find a new rector, because I'd be going. I'm opposed to the ordination of women. I'm sure that yes, they might accept a woman rector, because they need someone at the front to lead the service. **Rector, Clogher**

The Scoping Study also raised the question of sexuality; this was not only one of the topics that respondents considered to have the most contemporary relevance, but also elicited some of the most comprehensive responses (see **Figs. 142, 143**).



Interviewed Rectors
 Handling differences concerning sexual orientation
 Fig. 143



The remit of this report is to focus on sectarianism, and so it is important that the issue of sexuality does not obscure the task in hand. It is therefore suggested that the Church in Society committee be informed of the findings of the Scoping Study in relation to sexual ethics and encouraged to pursue this matter further. It is clearly one of the areas where clergy feel most ill equipped to respond to a changing world, and there currently appears to be no forum for formal or strategic discussion of such issues in the Church of Ireland. It is also the case that a substantial minority of clergy may appear to maintain a pastoral position in contrast to the stated doctrines of the Church of Ireland. This should come as no surprise, for the clergy of all denominations have always reserved the right to prioritise pastoral needs over particular interpretations of doctrine. However, the sheer weight of opinion in favour of an open discussion about the range of sexual ethics, from divorce and remarriage, to sexual orientation, to pre- or non-marital cohabitation, underlines the need for a comprehensive response on the part of Standing Committee to this part of the Scoping Study.

It was noted that the Church of Ireland does not handle the question of sexual orientation well, and that there is some confusion surrounding the issue, but that this is not a challenge exclusive to the Christian Church:

In relation to the church's handling of differences concerning sexual orientation, it was noted that the church was too uncomfortable with the issue, but that it was not alone as none of the churches handled the issue well. **Focus Group report, Down and Dromore**

I think it's somewhat inadequate in society as well, because on the one hand we're saying 'Love the sinner, hate the sin,' and yet we're crucifying some of our own members, not only clergy but laity as well. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Dare I say we're getting rid of the problem? Usually when something happens we are exporting it, either internally into another diocese, or...

And do you think the exportation of the problem is the best way to handle it?

No. Which is why I'm hesitant. I'm saying 'reasonably well' because for the parish it doesn't cause ructions.

Because they don't know about it.

Exactly. And it's away. Therefore they get rid of it. But I think again it's just moving the problem on, and it's not really dealing with the problem.

Do you have any theories about how it might be better to respond?

I've not thought of that, no. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Do you feel the church handles it well?

No, I feel the church handles it terribly. Very badly. That's one of the worst, actually.

Could you elaborate on that?

I think there is a general – I mean the church is part of society, so the general homophobic attitudes that exist in the North of Ireland, which are very strong, would apply within the church. And people actually assume if you're clergy that you're against gay people. They just assume that, which I'm not. I think people have a right to express their own – whatever their sexual preference is. **Rector, Connor**

Fire and brimstone sermons are very insensitive when parents are present who have a gay child. How would Jesus deal with the problem? **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

And how do you feel the church as a whole approaches this issue?

Absolutely terrified of it. I just don't think – I think really the church just doesn't want to discuss it, and I think one of the difficulties is that the church has never really looked at theology of sexuality at any level, and there would be I think a real fear that opening the debate would be basically uninformed on all sides. **Rector, Connor**

I am confused over this matter, as I know it is referred to in the bible as being wrong, yet I can't believe that if they are born different they are bad. **Lay person, Armagh**

One respondent reflected on what he saw as the ironic inconsistency of the diversity of views, and the sociological influences in this regard.

Once again there would be a diversity. But – we're middle class, and being gay in a middle class context isn't as taboo as being a drunken wife-beater. Whereas in North Belfast it's the other way around. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

As for the question of how to better address the issue, respondents expressed diverse views:

I don't think [policy] needs to change – from my point of view I think the church has to encompass those people and be with them, and do all that. But...I think the church still needs to point to what's right. **Rector, Connor**

How do you think the issue should be dealt with?

Educatively, and slowly, and led up to, and not be a crisis issue. **Rector, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

I believe from the Bible that homosexual activity is wrong...And therefore for a practising homosexual to be in ordained ministry is totally out of the question, as far as I'm concerned. I understand that some people are born with an inclination towards people of the same sex, and I think the church has to care for them, and minister to them. Point out to them their behaviour is wrong according to the Bible. I don't think it should be swept under the carpet. I think it has to be handled very sensitively. [But that's not to say] that we should do nothing about it, or quietly hope it'll go away. **Rector, Connor**

One of the Lambeth resolutions in 1998 was that each – well that the bishops would listen to people who were gay telling their experience. Now I have actually been asking myself over the last couple of weeks,

'how do I do that in this society?' In other words, are there people who will come and talk to me? And I find that in our society there is absolute denial of all these issues, and I think sadly there's a denial among many of the clergy as well. **Bishop**

Membership of the church requires heterosexuality since this is in line with biblical teaching. The church should be more forward in speaking out against gay and lesbian communities – as in God's word. **Lay person, Connor**

I cannot see the parishioners of our church opening their arms lovingly to anything other than the norm. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

Sexual orientation is a personal choice: perhaps the church should support people. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

C of I has homosexual priests and no one is speaking out against [a leading gay member of the church]...live and let live, but draw the line at formal recognition of gay relationships through marriage or the adoption of children. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

There are other patterns that are making a big change, and that is what sociologists and other people will call co-habitation...different patterns of betrothal and so on, which were the equivalent of establishing yourself first, and consolidating it afterwards, and I think that the judgemental thing has gone out of it to a great degree because of the way people – the realities as you say of housing and things like that have made people say, 'Well this is different,' and they're looking at the quality of the relationship now much more than in the past. The convention predominated. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

How would the church respond to gay couples?

Well I think – that's a very difficult one, because I mean scripturally I suppose we would say that the Bible would teach that no homosexuals get into heaven. I mean this is it, unless they sort of repent of their sin and change their lifestyle, okay, that's speaking about it biblically. But then on the other hand, as a rector, you would have a pastoral responsibility to these people, and – I'm saying 'these people' as being something that would be odd, or separate – so that's what I suppose one's got to get out of the mind, that their orientation is different but they're human beings at the same time, and they're potentially God's children. I mean they are God's children, and somehow we've got to try and help them to realise that there's a different way of life. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

What would you like to see happen?

A clear statement of biblical teaching that any sexual act outside of heterosexual marriage is sinful, and that the bishops implement a pastoral policy that ensures that their clergy are either faithful within heterosexual marriage or they're celibate. And I think that needs to be done, while at the same time seeking to challenge homophobic behaviour and attitude, and realising too that's probably more impacting the larger urban areas than it does here. I mean I've mentioned it to Vestries here, about the whole issue, and they looked at me blankly as if they hadn't heard the word 'gay' before. **Rector, Clogher**

Do you think that the blessing of same-sex marriages will eventually happen?

I don't think it will happen in my lifetime. I would support it, but I can't see it happening in my lifetime, and I think that if clergy were to say they would support that, they would have to have very definite support from the hierarchy. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do you think anything needs to be done about it?

Well under the challenge of inclusiveness I think it does, and there needs to be – address the variety of creation. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

Some respondents discussed their sense of being ill equipped to respond to the issue of sexual orientation:

Rector I think it handles it rather anxiously. The church would like to believe that everybody is heterosexual and normal and there are no problem cases anywhere, and I think in many cases the

church tries to ignore aberrations. In other cases, export them, in other cases, sweep them under the carpet and keep it all as quiet as possible, and make sure that no scandal happens...

Curate That is not a non-issue. Sorry, I misunderstood. I can't see – the gender difference is a non-issue. I can't see anybody who's gay coming to ask me for advice.

Because you wouldn't know what to do?

Curate I wouldn't know what to say. I'd try. **Rector and Curate, Armagh (Interviewed together)**

Respondents often said they had no experience of the issue and did not know if the issue had been put to the test in parishes. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

One clergy respondent reflected on what he saw as the challenge to change:

Has the issue of sexual orientation arisen in your experience?

It does arise. I would again see the inclusiveness of God's love, but...I think a lot of people have still got a big barrier there...

[It has been] said that it would be the church's role to stop [people] being gay.

No, I couldn't see that at all. I couldn't see that at all. I think we must simply love them in Christ's name, and openly in Christ's name...

So what do you think is going to happen?

I think there'll be twenty-one years talking about this, from time to time. And again, it's the lack of dealing – the church is as blind as our laity can be blind at times. We do need that leadership...

Would you like to say anything else about difference within the Church of Ireland?

Well I still think that certainly where I live and work, the church is a comfortable club, and anything – whether it's driven by the rector, or by anyone outside, or by any other influence, they don't really want to be disturbed too much. So that means that the status quo will be there. Within the church, I suppose things that worry us would be the fact that so much has changed in forty years. Before that everything could have stayed the same for generations, but now all these things that impinge on us open our eyes, open our ears, and yet the church seems to stand back over there, almost in isolation, and I think that that's very, very difficult. And if we don't open our minds, people in our generation will actually lose what's happening, and the theology will become more and more irrelevant, and the Church's role more and more irrelevant, which is why I think a lot of young people are – and adults – are walking away from the institution of the church. We're not real anymore. And when you get a Dean of Clonmacnoise and he raises questions and he gets thrown out, then we look even less real. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

It is clear that the question of sexual orientation, and sexual ethics in general, are key issues for the future of ministry in the Church of Ireland. Only around 20% of clergy and lay respondents felt that these issues were being handled well by the church, with 45% of clergy saying the response is 'very inadequate'. As post-modernity and pluralism become the guiding norms of wider society, the church's historic response is no longer adequate. This does not necessarily mean that it must re-assess its theology (although a substantial minority of respondents suggested it should), but that its methods and language may require re-interpretation. *The Church of Ireland Gazette* in Summer 2002 reported that the question of homosexuality has not been discussed at General Synod since 1976. This is merely one example of why it is not difficult to imagine why the church lacks credibility in wider society in regard to the issue of sexual ethics.

It is, however, difficult to imagine what kind of process the church may adopt to examine this issue. It seems that the challenges are (at least) four-fold:

- Lack of equipping for clergy to respond adequately to the issue.
- Social norms in opposition to the church's teaching.
- Diversity of views among clergy and lay people about the issue.
- Lack of an adequate structure for an open discussion about the issues.

Several respondents were pessimistic about the possibility of these challenges being met. Most assumed that the issue would be 'swept under the carpet'. It is likely, however, that social processes will lead to the issue continually re-surfacing until the church makes a comprehensive response, through deep theological, sociological, and pastoral reflection, new equipping for clergy, and a continuing open discussion about the range of issues regarding sexual ethics. As previously noted, this may lie outside the remit of the SEP, and therefore the Church in Society committee might be remitted to examine the issue further.

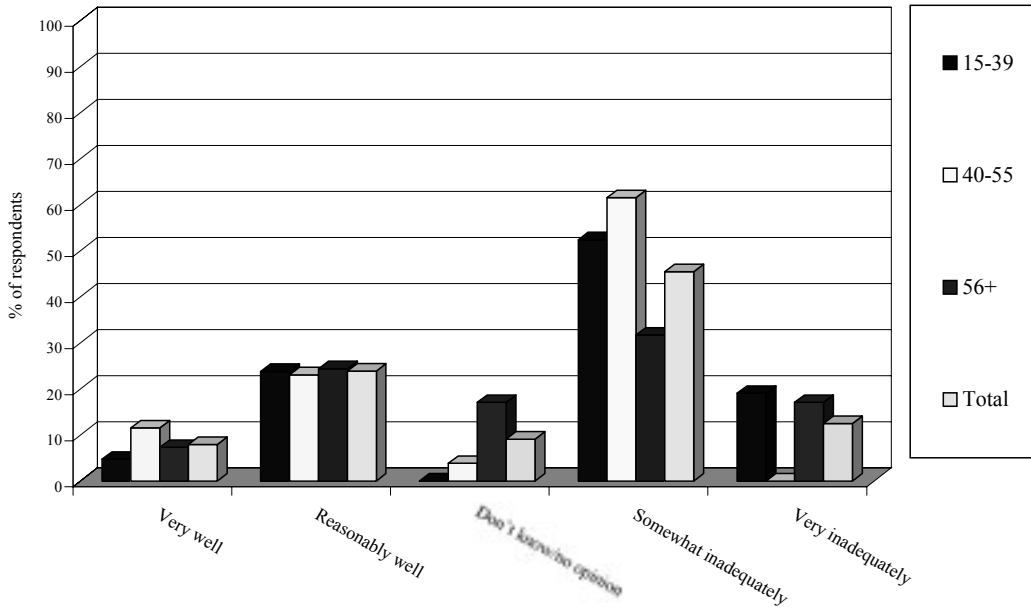
GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SEXUALITY

- *Gender differences are not generally seen as contentious. Some respondents, however, feel that traditional stereotypical gender roles prevail within the church. Some parishes would apparently not accept a female rector.*
- *Some acknowledge that teaching on sexuality tends to be monopolised by older married men, who may not be able to bring the most comprehensive analysis. Engagement by a broader range of people is necessary.*
- *There is a consensus that issues of sexuality (including co-habitation, sex outside marriage, sexual orientation, same-sex partnerships, ordination of gay clergy, etc.) are some of the most difficult to respond to, and usually the most inadequately handled by the church.*
- *There is sometimes a difference between the pastoral practice of clergy and the discipline of the church.*
- *Most respondents agreed that there should be a wider discussion of these issues; such a discussion should not be seen as 'giving way' on historical teachings, but simply addressing the issues as presented in contemporary society.*
- *The SEP may not be able to deal with the issue of sexual ethics; this perhaps lies more within the remit of the Church in Society committee.*

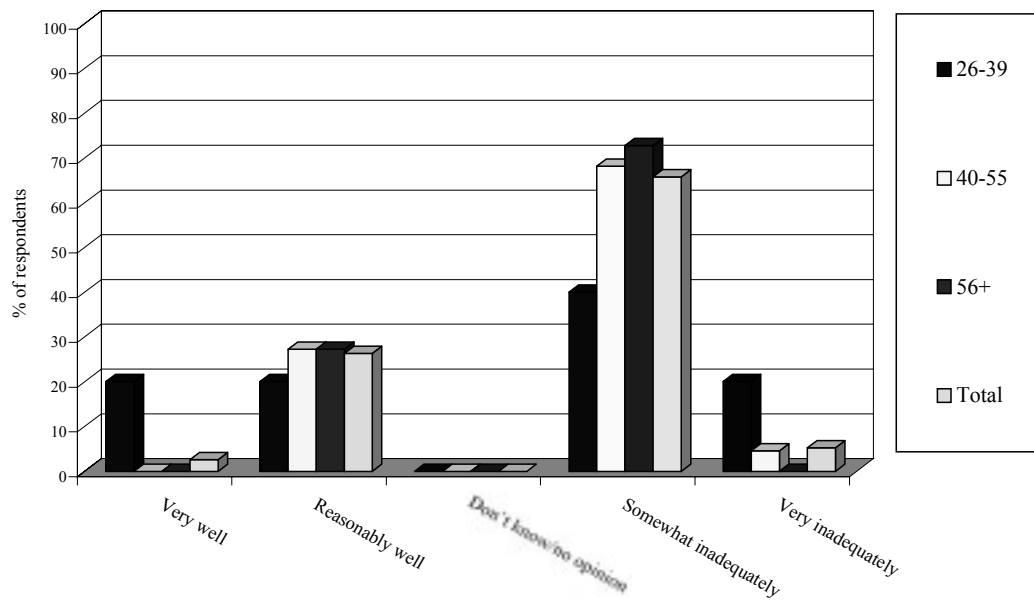
17: YOUNG PEOPLE

As with several other issues, there was significant consensus regarding the issue of ministry to young people (see Figs. 144, 145).

Lay People
Attending to the needs of / utilizing the potential of young people
Fig. 144



Interviewed Rectors
Attending to the needs of / utilizing the potential of young people
Fig. 145



The substantial majority of respondents, both clergy and lay, felt that the church's response to young people was either somewhat or very inadequate. Unsurprisingly, younger respondents were less critical of youth ministry, possibly because those most closely engaged in youth ministry tend to be younger people themselves (although of course this is not an absolute elision). This does not mean that respondents believed that the church was not trying to address this issue. Many respondents felt that the church's youth ministry was hampered by sociological factors such as youth apathy, pressure on young people's time, and the stronger attraction of other choices. However, the fact remains that there are a significant number of young people occupying pews in Church of Ireland parishes who wish to be more fully involved in the ministry of the church. Two focus groups held with young people from both Northern Ireland and the Republic reflected this most strongly.

Confirmation [is like] a 'passing out ceremony'. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

There is a large gulf between old and young parishioners. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

In our parish we have forgotten what young people are! **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

There's always a...difference between the way young people understand things and look at things, and the way older people do. I think sometimes older people misunderstand younger people, and can be a bit harsh or judgemental towards them. Of course young people can become impatient with older people. I think young people can be quite impatient with the way the church is so slow to change.

Is there anything you'd like to suggest to remedy some of the ways difference is dealt with?

Part of the problem is that so many young people have just given up on the church. I think if they were to come in and get involved and begin to express themselves more and participate more and could be listened to. Because older people would say, 'we need younger people, we need to have them in the life of the church,' but they look round and they don't see them. **Rector, Dromore**

There's so much that goes on within the town for young people anyway. I don't think the church could offer anything that could match what's being provided by other groups within the town. But certainly...I don't think their spiritual need is addressed as well as they like. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

There seems to come...a stage at which they feel they outgrow institutional church. I think there's a certain laziness about the approach of some of the young people...that they don't want any sort of discipline, and I think in the Church of Ireland there should be more discipline as well as just benefits. I am not the type that says, 'we must go absolutely gimmicky and have the latest fashion and so on in order to attract.' By the same token I have my concerns and my anxieties about the lack of young people there regularly. **Rector, Armagh**

C of I is currently a two-tier system, which de facto excludes young people from having any authoritative input, or voice until they are 18 when they can be elected to Select Vestry, by which stage it is too late for many of them. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

We don't have a lot of young people in the churches. They're in the villages but they won't come, and excuses are made that the church is too far out of the village, and the service is too early. We've tried different things to get them to come, but they won't. We've tried youth fellowship; some of them come for a while and then drop out. It's really trying to get younger leaders that will appeal to the younger people, and with being a more senior parish we don't have the younger leaders. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

In short, there are two kinds of young people on whom the church should focus in particular: disenfranchised youth currently untouched by the church's ministry, and young people who are members of the church and wish to participate, but feel alienated or at least not actively engaged by the

culture of the church. For instance, a young respondent from the Republic said she was willing to fully

want to go down the road of a sort of trendy, politically correct, 'Well let's sit down and listen to young people and let them create our agenda for us.' **Rector, Clogher**

Sectarianism was mentioned as an issue facing young people:

[Being educated with Catholics] defined the boundaries for my children, who grew up in the south but when they came north found themselves being defined as outsiders. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

Sectarianism makes young people look 'big'; but older people do it because they believe in it. **Young lay person, Connor**

The Church of Ireland in the Republic needs to examine the reason for the existence of C of I schools...some travel [a long distance] rather than going to a local school run by the Roman Catholic Church. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

We need to affirm for young people what Protestantism *can be*, not just *what it once was*. **Youth worker, Down and Dromore**

It is a clichéd truism that young people are the future of the church – but at this point in history, the validity of even that statement is questionable. The post-modern breakdown of absolutes, the increasing pace of life, the insecurity of early adult life in terms of financial security, stable community network, career and purpose, and the exponential growth of a panoply of identity markers and social choices is a challenge that Christian churches have yet to meaningfully engage on a long-term basis. For it is now possible, for the first time in modern history, that mainstream denominations will simply not have young members present; the significant decrease in membership rolls and especially attendance figures in the Church of England and particularly the Methodist Church in England present a potentially depressing picture. But, from a sociological perspective, the church should view the crisis of emptying pews as an opportunity. It is clear that the issue of youth ministry is considered a major priority by clergy and lay people throughout the church. It is also clear that, with some notable exceptions, particularly in the Youth Department itself, there is little articulate sense on a wide scale of what approach might best be taken to address the challenges; and there is a degree of disagreement among some clergy over whether 'cultural relevance' in youth ministry is an appropriate vessel for ministry, or a compromise of values. In many ways, the manner in which the church responds to the issues facing young people will define the success of its approach to all the other issues facing the church; the question here is not so much 'How can the church be more relevant to youth?' but 'How can the church capture the imagination of the culture at large?'

Young people are sometimes criticised for their apathy. This may be a reasonable assertion, but it will not change the fact that the younger generation is more unchurched than ever. The ability of the SEP and the wider Church to consider radical responses is vital. This is a moment in history unparalleled in the lives of anyone reading this document. Post-modernity has wrought, and continues to provoke, the deepest and most epoch-making cultural changes since the industrial revolution. The Church changed enormously during the transition from an agrarian economy to the industrial age; it behoves the stewards of today's Church to respond to the lessons of the past, and prepare for further change.

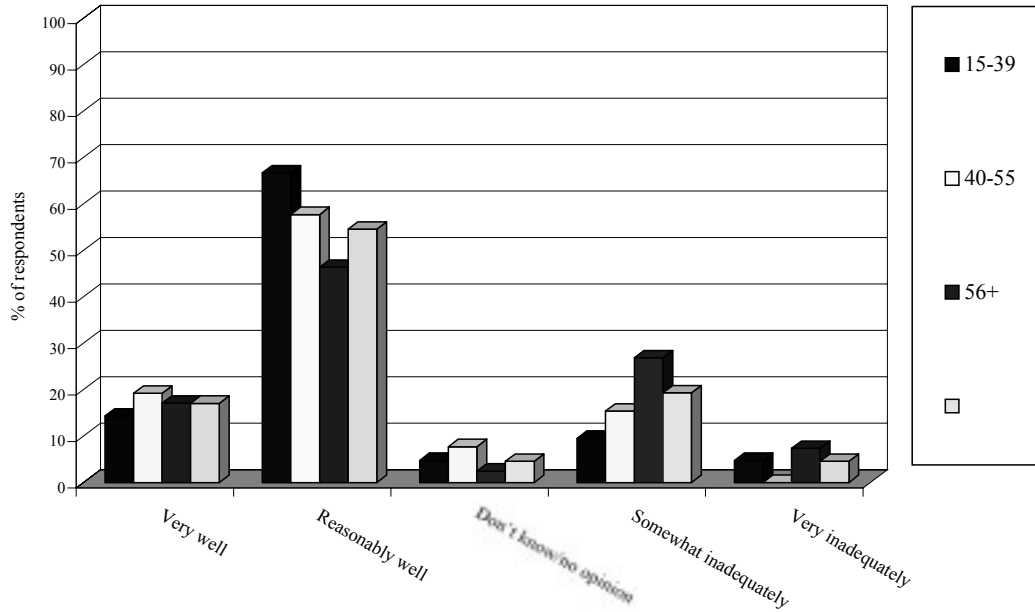
YOUNG PEOPLE

- *Young people often feel that the church is not relevant to them and many leave the church soon after confirmation. Some respondents suggest that the church must consider the potentially unhelpful implications of confirmation practice.*
- *Many have a deep commitment to Christ, and wish to be involved in the life of the church, but feel excluded for a variety of reasons.*
- *There is a lack of youth work provision in some parishes; there may be a need for each parish or appropriate group of parishes to be strategically funded to appoint a full-time youth worker. Alternatively, lay people with time on their hands could be trained and facilitated in relevant volunteer youth ministry.*
- *Young people are often more engaged in peace/addressing sectarianism work than older people due to their experiences at school and through initiatives such as Summer Madness.*
- *Young respondents suggested that a good first step would be to offer opportunities for younger people (and other lay people generally) to participate in organising and leading public worship. Another suggestion was to develop the model of small group ministry already established in some parishes to accommodate all young parishioners, with leadership shared between young people and older adults.*
- *It was suggested that various youth initiatives might find themselves working at cross-purposes, through the duplication of resources, or simply a lack of communication. One short-term response to this could be a website for the sharing of resources, best practice, and better communication.*
- *There is a need to assess the relationship between extra-parochial youth work and parish work, and to ask whether young people can be best served by para-church initiatives.*
- *The example of Summer Madness should be noted by the SEP. It is noteworthy that Summer Madness has not sought to be an explicit 'anti-sectarian initiative', but has organically become one. Sometimes inputs and outputs can be confused with each other – sectarianism does not always require a strategic initiative to oppose it; it can be transcended as a consequence of organic, incarnational Christ-centred ministry*
- *There is a need to examine how the church can creatively approach age differences and avoid the potential for inter-generational conflict or misunderstanding.*
- *It is vital to include young people in the SEP as part of addressing sectarianism and difference for future generations.*

18: OLDER PEOPLE

Another topic that met with significant consensus in the Scoping Study was the question of how the church attends to the needs and utilizes the potential of older people (See **Figs. 146, 147**).

Lay People
Attending to the needs of / utilizing the potential of older people
Fig. 146



As the age profile of Church of Ireland members appears to be increasing (as with most institutionalised churches), much of the activity of the church centres on old people and their needs. Statistics show that a significant majority of respondents believe the church attends to the needs and utilizes the potential of older people well. As there was little disagreement over this issue, a few quotations will suffice to provide a 'flavour' of the responses.

I would say that the older people are better cared for than the younger, and I use most of mine. **Rector, Glendalough**

Does the church provide services for older people?

Well we do here. Obviously we look after our nursing homes. We have regular Eucharists within those...On the first Friday of every month...I have a central celebration and then I take the communion to them from that central celebration...They realise that by taking part in that particular celebration...they feel part of the Christian community because they know that there were other people from the parish taking part in that. **Rector, Armagh**

I think the needs are well attended to, as in those that are chronically ill and need a lot of care. Utilising the potential of older people – it depends what you define as an older person. People maybe who retire at 55 have lots of potential, and they're not maybe used.

It's not lack of will, it's just strategy.

It's strategy, yes. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

The majority of church organisations are top-heavy with those in the 50+ bracket, but not in a bad way. They have a wealth of experience. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

If we didn't attend to the needs and utilise the potential of older people we would have precious little people on our Vestries or committees or anything. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

70+ I consider old but not inactive! **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

Does anything cross your mind in relation to the potential of older people?

Well it just occurs to me that perhaps we don't adequately deal – or fail to recognise that they have a lot to contribute. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Older people who are ill should be visited more regularly. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

The church simply has to deal with older people because its members are all old! **Lay person, Armagh**

[We need to guard against being] reactive rather than pro-active. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

Some felt that the church was better at meeting the needs of older people than considering them as a valuable resource, while others expressed the opposite view:

I think the church utilises the potential of older people when they are able and willing to help. I'm not so sure if it attends to their needs. **Lay person, Armagh**

Often older people can be looked on as a need to be met rather than a resource to be utilised...I wouldn't see them as a need – they're some of the most dependable, have the most time some times. I think we're much stronger in that regard than we are with young people. **Rector, Armagh**

OLDER PEOPLE

- *The topic of older people was the least contentious of any in the Scoping Study.*
- *Older people are one of the most valuable resources of the Church of Ireland; this may be of particular interest to the SEP, which may wish to engage retired people in the delivery of the project as resource persons or intercessors.*
- *There is a distinction between early retired people and the elderly.*
- *There is sometimes conflict between older and younger people, especially over the nature of the church; this is an important issue to face, as the credibility and appeal of the church is eroded among the young.*
- *Respondents generally feel that the needs of older people are well catered for by the church.*
- *There may be a lack of strategy for utilising the potential of older people.*
- *The contribution of older people to prayer should not be underestimated.*

19: RESPONDING TO SOCIETY IN GENERAL

It is evident that one area where the morale of both clergy and lay people is low is that of responding to society in general. The epoch-making social changes wrought in the past 30 years, which sociologists have come to categorise under the triumvirate of labels 'post-modernism, globalisation, and pluralism' are a major challenge to the Christian Church. Most social theorists agree that no moment in history since the Industrial Revolution has included so much change and uncertainty. For many people, these changes are experienced in simple terms, that might be best characterised as follows:

'We know what we used to think, but it doesn't work anymore.'

But things are *not* getting worse. There was no such thing as 'the good old days'. One social paradigm, or world-view, namely 'modernity' has simply been replaced by another. And while it may look like society is spiralling away from 'Christian values', this is most definitely not the case. The modern paradigm certainly included much that churches could take comfort in, from the wide acceptance of conservative moral values (ostensibly basic Christian teaching, but this is debatable), to the more stable home and family, to a less frantic pace of life. But it also included such things as deeply unjust employment conditions, the imposition of religious belief systems on ostensibly democratic populations, and the indignity of the gender division of labour, and lack of appreciation of non-salaried work in the home, almost always done by women. On the other hand, post-modernity (and globalisation/pluralism) has often been criticised by Christians as being the start of a slippery slope for the erosion of the gospel, because it establishes a panoply of truth-claims, rather than 'one big story' for a pluralist people to inhabit. However, it also engenders new opportunities for creativity, tolerance, and mutual understanding, not to mention the human rights discourse that, whatever its failings, has laid the foundations for fairer work practices, the equality of women and men, and protection for the disenfranchised. So, in simple terms, the emergence of post-modernity is not so much the death knell for the Church, but merely raises a different set of problems (and, indeed, solutions) than before. The Church must, therefore, come to grips with the underlying reasons why it may lack credibility in wider society. The Scoping Study sought to engage respondents in a discussion about this, and the results are briefly illustrated as follows:

Anything else you'd like to say about the impact of the church on wider society?

I think it's just a case of being aware of the differences, being aware of what's happening in your area, and trying then to take every opportunity that you have to forge links with people whichever way you can do. Visiting prisons, the hospitals, the elderly...*it's no good sitting at home and waiting for people to come to you any longer.* **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

Would you like to say anything else about difference in wider society and how the church approaches it?

Again I would probably say somewhat inadequately. It's something probably we need to be educated on. Maybe again because we're hiding our heads in the sand. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

I see the term evangelism as – and I suppose that's coming from my Northern background – as 'having a wee mission'. And all that sort of thing. And that's probably why I picked medium. I would see evangelism as being a much wider thing, than – when you said it, that was immediately what I thought, you know. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

There are problems of society which are 'lumbered' on the church. Thus it is seen as a scapegoat. These problems should be dealt with at the societal level rather than the church. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

I've been a member of Diocesan Synod for 18 years. Apart from a discussion with [the last bishop] around the issue of abortion, we don't even talk about such issues. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

RESPONDING TO SOCIETY IN GENERAL

- *The church must find a strategic way of addressing the question of a changing society.*
- *Such initiatives as the SEP, the Church in Society committee, and the Anglican Commission on Ministry are of potentially enormous value, and should be resourced with the very best expertise available.*
- *There is a need for churches and other agencies to continue to work together to meet the challenges of a changing world.*
- *A strategic partnership between the church and sympathetic academics would be one major step in the right direction; this has already begun with the commissioning of the Scoping Study.*
- *The training/resourcing of the clergy and lay people needs to address the development of post-modernity and globalisation as the two key sociological phenomena of contemporary society.*

20: TRAINING/RESOURCING OF CLERGY

The clergy interviews in particular showed that the training/resourcing of clergy is a hugely significant issue. It is clear that many clergy not only feel themselves to be over-stretched, but also are indeed unable to comprehensively provide the kind of service expected of them by parishioners today. It is quite simply impossible for one person to adequately carry out all the tasks that parish ministry requires or implies. Although a small number of clergy respondents appeared to prefer this situation to a more 'grass roots' approach, they are certainly in the minority. Not only is the question of gifting (square pegs in round holes) brought into focus in this regard, but also issues associated with training and resourcing of clergy, as well as the role of the laity in parish ministry. Some parishes have implemented imaginative structures that make more efficient use of their resources, but there are many whose incumbents feel burdened by expectations (traditional or otherwise) that they are the 'minister' while lay people are merely recipients of the ministry. This report is not the first to raise this issue, but unless the church takes serious cognisance of it, it will not be the last. More urgently, in the context of such high pressure on clergy time, it is unlikely that the SEP will make a significant impact, unless lay people are actively facilitated in taking on the roles required by the project in local parishes. The Church of Ireland is well placed to take the lead in developing a more professional approach to ministry, while guarding against the twin challenges of over-bureaucratisation, and the potential enervation of mission by an ostensibly professional 'sheen'.

There was significant consensus among the respondents that the training and resourcing of clergy requires significant change:

In the next few years in the Church of Ireland, our greatest priority...is training, training, training. [Both] prior to ordination, post-ordination – we no longer live in a static culture. **Bishop**

Our attitudes...are not simply based on religious considerations. Unawareness of the main features of Irish history on the part of so many of our members (and leaders) contributes to our difficulties where perceptions are concerned. **Standing Committee lay member, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do you feel your training prepared you for the realities of parish life?

Yes. But that was – a quick rider on this one – that was because I went to England.

And you did in-service training?

I did in-service training. I was also sent out into different parishes [and it gave me a pretty good grounding.

If issues arise like asylum seekers, like sectarianism, do you feel resourced to be able to deal adequately with that?

Not really.

Would you know who to talk to in the church?

No, I wouldn't. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

My training was good, I got to know the Bible, but they only ever claimed it was an introduction. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Every rector that I have interviewed has agreed on absolutely to the letter...that training is [inadequate].
Oh it's a joke. It is a joke. And it's across the board. It's not just the Anglican Church. It's the Roman Catholic Church as well. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Without wanting to be rude about the theological college, do you feel that your training equipped you for anything?

Well – slightly agree!...It was more academic, I suppose.

One of the things that is coming through is that clergy feel un-equipped. They feel un-resourced. They weren't trained to deal with sectarianism.

Well you see I was trained some time ago...Even in my day I think there was less practical than what they would have, I would have thought, now. They're out doing time in parishes and things...I have very fond memories of the college, and that, but it was a wee world of its own when I think of it. And things that the wider world does not care two hoots about were major things. **Rector, Armagh**

I find myself reacting [to] anger constantly, and wanting some help...with how...a reformed congregation living in a loyalist community react to that community with grace and mercy.

You are talking about the need for the church to resource its ministers theologically?

Absolutely. That would be great. And psychologically. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Pastoral training needs to engage social scientists, and engage an on-going training infrastructure, looking at such issues as sexuality, conflict, violence, secularisation, evangelical/liberal division, social isolation, young people. **Research and Teaching Psychologist and Lay Member**

Fundamentally, the Church of Ireland needs to communicate the theological basis for reaching out to those who are different. **Rector, Connor**

Ethics is not limited to personal morality...There must be applied/contextual training to equip clergy to face the issues of today. Clergy need to be exposed to the stuff lay people are thinking, saying, trying to articulate about the church. This may require a strategic think tank, to help develop leadership models for the 21st century. **Anonymous academic respondent**

Several respondents mentioned the possible lack of strategy for curacy, for instance:

Your very first job as a curate anywhere is to revive the youth work, because the person before had been allowed to fail. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Clergy stress was also acknowledged:

Some years ago we had a report at General Synod about clergy stress, and I think one of the things that causes a lot of stress is the fact that they're put into situations where they're on their own, and they have to think on their feet and sometimes they make mistakes...I also think that...sometimes...it's very important for you to have someone say, 'You did that job well, or you could have done it better,' or something like that. And there's no formal once a year chat...**Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

Some clergy said that they do feel equipped, but struggle with challenges:

Rector: Not in my own parish, but as Archdeacon I would have had to tidy up some situations I think [were] difficult.

To offer support to the rector, or to try...

Rector: No, to try and find a way through and find a common sense solution to it, rather than taking sides. But that's in my precise role as Archdeacon.

And you feel equipped to do that?

Curate: I can tell you, I have seen that he is. **Rector and Curate, Armagh (Interviewed together)**

As a rector in a staunchly Protestant working class area...a diocesan support system to raise awareness of sectarianism would be appreciated – it can be a temptation in a small parish to 'let sleeping dogs lie'; it can be difficult to fulfil the twin role of prophet and priest in one's own community. **Rector, Connor**

Some clergy said that they struggle with the lack of a forum for discussion of difficult issues:

For example last summer here...we were deluged with what I would have called sectarian flags – you know...paramilitary [flags]. And I said to our people that I was writing letters of complaint to the local authorities, encouraged them to do the same. I would have liked to have had an issue like that discussed in a clergy forum, but it wouldn't be picked up. Another issue, not on the sectarian side, is [in this parish] we have a lot of vagrants – people begging for money, and with alcohol problems. And the way that our clergy group have handled it was to go to complain to the police, why can't they handle these people and get them sorted.

So that's what you talk about – needing to listen, and bridge gaps. Do you feel resourced to do that? Did your training equip you to do those kinds of things?

No...because when I came to the parish I was immediately confronted with a delegation from the Orange Order, wanting to know if they could hold their services in our church...I would have liked to have been able...to approach that meeting with something on paper to say, 'these are our diocesan regulations...' – you know, the codes that we have to follow about an outside organisation like the Orange Order coming into church to be a part of the service. And I asked the bishop could anything be put on paper, and he said, 'what a good idea,' but I never heard anything since. **Rector, Connor**

Suggestions for strategy were made, along with an acknowledgement of the realities of training in a world that is rapidly changing, and the need for standards to be reached in terms of education on sectarianism and other forms of difference

We need to train clergy in...the skills of transitioning congregations...What I need is not people who will inherit parishes, but people who will create them. **Bishop**

Who resources the bishops? [Perhaps] the church should appoint full-time or retained advisors – sociologists and psychologists – working at diocesan and inter-diocesan level. These people could be responsible for identifying the salient issues and suggesting future strategy. We need to not ignore lay ministry and lay professionals. I deeply believe that [the mission of the church] is not being worked out because of the perceived psychological and sociological costs to the parish. **Research and Teaching Psychologist and Lay Member**

Can I put it back to you in another way? I know little about clergy training, although I've a brother who's just retired from being a rector – so I've heard a fair bit about it. But I would...say I don't think I've ever met a teacher, or possibly even a doctor or dentist who has said, whenever they have gone out into the reality of GP or classroom that they were prepared for it, and the trouble is that with all of these professions the attitude of the trainers has been to try and raise the academic standard, and get them to degree level, rather than prepare them for the outside. And possibly some kind of a sandwich course might be a useful idea...

Go away for a year?

Well six months anyway, let's say, out in a parish. The other thing is that unless inside the course the trainee – I hate to keep saying this, but unfortunately in the work that I've done and the experiences I have, unless it is examined, unless what they do, say on the sectarianism, or ecumenism, or the history if you don't want to be controversial about it – on the historical side – if they're not tested on their knowledge or their experience, and have to do even a piece of coursework on it which is part of their final course, then they'll not do it. If it's only an option or it's only an add-on, or it's something you can go to if you want to, or you can read about it if you want to – if it's not tested they'll not do it... Surely if they're prepared to suggest the standard must be reached in Hebrew or whatever – I know as I said it's a crude way of putting it, but it must be acceptable in some way. There must be some way that you can set out a course with objectives, aims and objectives, and say, 'these are the things we think we must cover, and at the end of it you must prove that you have covered those.' Even though we may not agree with them...but at least you've been led through these and you've an understanding of what these things

are. If that's not in place, then you can't argue and say, 'Well why did they come out without knowledge?' **Lay person, Belfast**

You can't force anyone to do in-service training. It's always going to be costly. Bishops need to be prepared to pay a higher cost. **Bishop**

What we need most...are biblical resources and a biblical perspective on issues like forgiveness, inclusion, and reconciliation. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Is it the case that, as someone said to me the other day, 'My training would have equipped me if my role was to translate Greek into English, but two days after I arrived as a curate, the rector was on holiday and I had to do a funeral, and hadn't a clue what to do'?

It depends on the person who is ordained. I went through my training...seventeen years ago. And certainly it was a strong emphasis on the academic side, and very little on parish life, and I suppose I had a good inkling of what was in store because I had grown up in a rectory. But I really felt that some people were thrown out and put in at the deep end – that they really had no idea. And I think since then things may have improved...but one criticism I really would level is that the staff in our theological college have little or no background in the Church of Ireland...They're theologians...We do want more training. This is something that's coming up again and again. We do want more, and we want the opportunities to have more. In all aspects. I mean I'm thrown into prison ministry without ever having darkened the door of a prison, and without anybody saying, 'Would you like to go on a course?' So you're feeling your way all the time. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do you think your training equipped you for the realities of parish life?
Absolutely not. **Rector, Connor**

TRAINING/RESOURCING OF CLERGY

- *The Church of Ireland struggles with the tension between what might be called the 'professional' and the 'prophetic'. Some alternatively suggest that it is all too easy for churches to fall into an unprofessional, slapdash approach that ill-serves mission.*
- *There is a consensus that the training/resourcing of clergy requires significant adaptation to meet the changing needs and expectations of ministry in contemporary society.*
- *Training/resourcing in issues pertaining to sectarianism, difference, and Christian peacemaking has usually been ad hoc rather than strategic, and not considered a compulsory part of training.*
- *There is a question of credibility and authority regarding the delivery of training/resourcing: who provides it, how is it ratified, what relationship is there between 'trainers' and 'practitioners'? A good first step in addressing these issues would be to clearly define how the clergy 'job description' has changed over time.*
- *The question of more extensive lay involvement in parish ministry may need to be prioritised at all levels of the church, perhaps especially at Diocesan Council.*
- *Some feel that curacy is not strategically resourced as part of training, with curates seen as 'junior rectors' rather than continuing their ministry training. The clergy training process may lack adequate opportunities for 'hands-on' experience in parishes before new curates are released into full-time ministry. It should also be noted that ordinands are not currently strategically exposed to the realities of parish life in Northern Ireland and the Republic, nor offered some form of training by clergy with experience of parish ministry in the North.*
- *Clergy want in-service training to be frequent, strategic, well thought-out, and offered in a manner that facilitates minimum inconvenience on the part of clergy participants.*
- *Experts in the fields pertinent to this Scoping Study (such as ISE, Corrymeela, and ECONI) are a valuable resource that may be contracted to provide at least some of the regular in-service training required. Partners in Transformation could be involved due to the on-going facilitation work done by its representatives with the SEP. A list of resources provided to the SEP in June 2002 should also prove useful in determining resources to use.*
- *Some clergy also feel that a mechanism (possibly internet-based) should be created whereby they may input their perceived needs for assistance and in-service training anonymously. A website resource could also be created for the purpose of sharing information between clergy on such things as models of good practice in contemporary ministry issues, helpful resources, etc.*
- *Stress amongst clergy continues to be a major issue; and some feel that bishops lack a clear strategy for resourcing/equipping and caring for clergy.*
- *The General Synod may need to urgently examine clergy roles with a view to changing patterns of life (and therefore ministry) in the 21st century.*

21: ISSUES OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE OR SOLE REMIT OF THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

A comprehensive study of this nature is bound to raise issues outside its immediate remit. The main issues outside the immediate remit of the Scoping Study are listed below for information, and it is suggested that the relevant bodies within the church should note these:

- Class and economic difference
- Disability; legislative procedures are not adequate to address the issue
- Economic, time, and state pressure on young working families
- Timing church services to suit rural needs
- Integrated education
- Secularisation
- Personal discipleship
- Materialism
- Evangelism
- Prayer – both education in prayer and facilitation of opportunity to pray together (this may be viewed as an issue both within the remit of the SEP, and too broad to be dealt with by the SEP alone)
- Relationships between geographically close Church of Ireland parishes
- Perceived lack of confidence among Church of Ireland people – in their own faith identity as part of a 'bridge' church
- Falling numbers and closing churches
- The perception that the focus of Select Vestries is unduly given to finances and 'bureaucracy' rather than spiritual leadership

CONCLUSION

Professor John Brewer, one of the leading analysts of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and South Africa, and a proponent of reconciliation initiatives, has theorised that sectarianism and other forms of difference exist at three levels – the social structure, the level of ideas, and the level of individual behaviour (see **Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland 1600-1998, by Brewer with Higgins, 1998, Macmillan Press**). They must therefore be challenged at each of these three levels. The Church of Ireland is well placed to work imaginatively at the level of the social structure through its public role, in education and the media, and where church representation is afforded on public bodies; and parish ministry is, if nothing else, concerned with the ideas and individual experience of parishioners. The church can challenge existing unhelpful norms and encourage the development of fresh thinking and behaviour through holistic Christ-centred ministry. In this regard, the Church of Ireland is facing a similar challenge to most churches in the Western world of the early 21st century. Christendom has crumbled, and post-modern values are becoming entrenched as the social norm. Ignoring or complaining about this will not undermine the fact of its existence as the context in which the church is called to minister. Christ incarnated many roles – of which the peacemaker, the healer, the social critic, the proposer of wide-reaching welcome, the non-violent bringer of justice, and the culturally relevant missionary are only a few. But these must be among the priorities of ministry for the church in a post-modern world. So, in simple terms, this study encourages the following general steps:

- The Church of Ireland may need to help its clergy and parishioners *understand* themselves, and the changing world in which they live.
- The Church of Ireland may need to address and educate its members in the *whole gospel*. Neither pietism nor solely political gospels provide the whole answer to the human condition. Clergy need to be resourced to preach more than pietism; and the strategic priorities of the church should reflect practical action in the keystone areas of sectarianism and other forms of difference.
- The Church of Ireland may need to recognise the core implications of this study for the whole church. The issues of sectarianism and difference will not be resolved by a committee or an education project alone. The Church of Ireland may need to re-evaluate the role of the clergy in contemporary society, and be prepared to consider a much greater role for lay people in ministry.
- The Church of Ireland may need to be prepared to take risks, and perhaps 'lose' in the short term if it is to incarnate such a radical gospel. Members may leave. Property may be lost.

People may be misunderstood. But that was Jesus' lot also. Success in Jesus' view appeared to be less to do with increasing numbers and fortunes and more connected with the substance of redeeming and healing the world. If the church is not willing to lead by example in this area, then it has probably ceded its authority to a business model rather than the ministry of the suffering servant. And there is much in this report that should affirm and encourage the steps the SEP and the church are continuing to take in this direction.

It is appropriate that the last word be reserved for a member of the Church of Ireland:

I know people in all faith and honesty are doing their best...I would go back many years...but it took so long for us to walk over and shake the other person's hand, and in the same way that's where we're struggling through times when we should be twenty steps on rather than where we are at the moment. And again, to be making peace, but peace on our terms, or peace with our flock in mind isn't necessarily peace, and it mightn't even be the right starting point. Making peace looks at the rightness of the situation, not trying to support our own church or our own group. And if we have to make hard decisions and we lose what we call support because of them, well that's fine. That's my view, anyway. So maybe...this [is] the first step in that. -
Anonymous respondent

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