

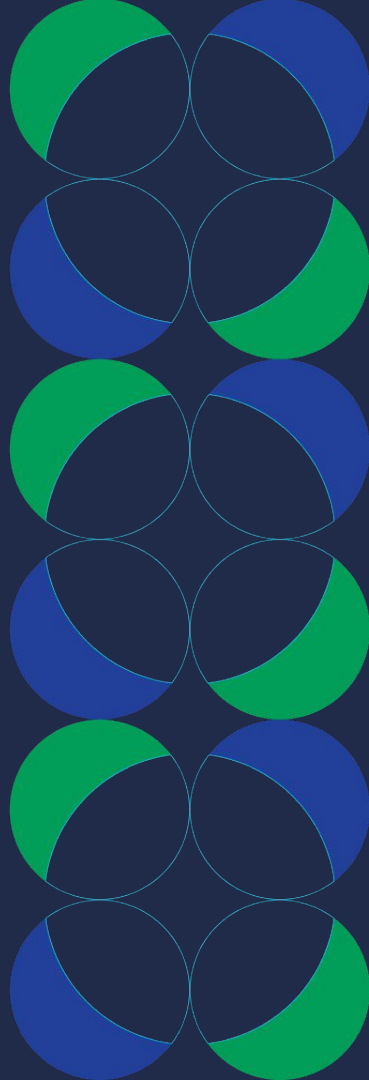


More in
Common

Drumcree

What Northern Ireland Thinks

October 2026



Foreword

For the last month, politics and public life in Northern Ireland have been dominated by Drumcree. Across radio, television, newspaper columns and social media feeds, there has been room for little else. There is good reason for this, as the dispute raises important questions that go well beyond one road or one parade in Portadown. It speaks to how far Northern Ireland has come, or not come, since 1998; why disputes seem settled for some people and not for others; and what identity, culture and respect mean for different communities in Northern Ireland in the 2020s.

Debates like this need to hear from a wide range of voices: the people willing to go on air and talk about their views, those willing to turn up to a rally in support of one side or the other, and those happy to share their views online about Drumcree and what they think it means more broadly. But these more certain, and sometimes louder, voices are only part of the picture on what Northern Ireland thinks on Drumcree.

This report is **More in Common's contribution to understanding how people in Northern Ireland, drawn from a representative sample of the public, are thinking about Drumcree and navigating the debates around it.** The poll was fielded in the days after the Secretary of State's decision to block the parade. It examines attitudes to Drumcree itself and explores views on decisions taken by politicians, the Parades Commission and other institutions across Northern Ireland. It also tries to go upstream and ask a series of broader questions about what the resurfacing of the Drumcree dispute means for Northern Ireland in the years ahead.

Foreword

Some of what we found will surprise few. Most Catholics side with the Garvaghy Road residents, while most Protestants think the Secretary of State was wrong to block the parade. Each community believes the Parades Commission favours the other side, and Catholics believe the same of the PSNI. The divides on Drumcree, like the divides on many of the issues that matter most in Northern Ireland, are deep, and this research does not find otherwise.

But nor do we find a public split neatly down the middle. Almost three in five Protestants say they understand why the Garvaghy Road residents feel as they do, and over half of Catholics say the same about the Portadown Orangemen. Asked what matters most in how the dispute ends, people of every party and both communities give the same answer: that it ends without violence. And of the seven ways of ending the dispute we tested, one is acceptable to voters of every party – the Lodge's right to parade is confirmed, and it chooses not to use it.

Our hope is that this research does justice to the different shades of opinion on Drumcree: that it takes seriously the divisions between communities here, and takes just as seriously the common ground between them.

More in Common will return to these questions as we build out our work in Northern Ireland, with deeper studies on culture and commemoration and on migration planned in the months ahead, and more detailed political and electoral analysis in the run-up to the Assembly election.

Executive Summary

Where the public stand on Drumcree

Most think the Parades Commission got it wrong and the Secretary of State got it right. Half (53%) say the Commission's determination was wrong and the same proportion (53%) back the Secretary of State's decision to block the parade on the Garvaghy Road. Nationalist and Alliance voters overwhelmingly support the Secretary of State's decision; unionist voters mostly think it was the wrong decision, but Protestants as a whole are more divided (54% wrong, 28% right).

More sympathise with the Garvaghy Road residents (38%) than the Portadown Orangemen (21%), but two in five pick neither. Among Protestants, more don't take a side (44%) than back the Orangemen (42%). TUV voters strongly side with the Orangemen (79%), as do DUP voters (59%), but half of UUP voters don't pick a side.

Most understand the other side's perspective in the dispute. Almost three in five (57%) Protestants say they understand why the Garvaghy Road residents feel as they do and over half (51%) of Catholics say the same of the Orangemen. Those following the dispute most closely are more likely to say they understand where the other side are coming from.

Avoiding violence matters far more to the public than the parade going ahead or not. Four in five (82%) say it matters that the dispute ends without violence, with two in three voters of every party saying it matters a great deal. The gap between the most and least supportive voter groups is just 15 points on an issue where gaps elsewhere can run up to 60 or 70 points.

Executive Summary

Where the public stand on Drumcree

Of the seven ways to end the dispute we tested, only one is acceptable to voters of every party: the Portadown Lodge's right to parade is confirmed, but it chooses not to use it. Half (50%) would find that acceptable and around one in six (16%) would not find it acceptable. The figures are the same for Catholics and Protestants. Every other option is either rejected by unionist voters on one side or nationalist and Alliance voters on the other.

Three in five (60%) want the parading arrangements that have kept the peace left alone, even if one side feels they are unfair, and the same share want the Portadown Lodge to accept the decision and stop applying. Protestants are more likely than Catholics to say a fair outcome in this dispute means both sides giving ground (58% to 38%).

Three in five people are on one side or the other of Drumcree, but two in five are not. Our analysis of answers across 14 questions on Drumcree finds four perspectives: *the Road* (38%) want no parade and side with the Garvaghy Road residents, *the Hill* (22%) think the parade should have gone ahead and side with the Portadown Orangemen, *the Bridge* (29%) see a case on both sides and would accept almost any ending, and *the Bypass* (11%) are not following the dispute closely and take no side.

Executive Summary

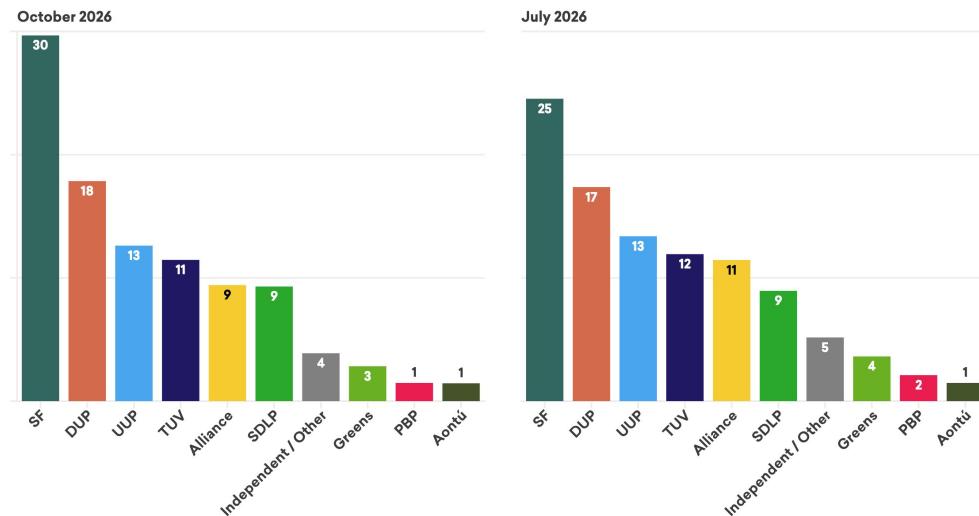
More in Common's first Northern Ireland voting intention

More in Common's first published Northern Ireland voting intention finds **Sinn Féin is up five to 30% (25% in July)** and **the DUP broadly unchanged on 18% (17% in July)**.

Against the 2022 Assembly election, the DUP is down three, the UUP is up two points and the TUV is up three. Alliance has fallen furthest, from 14% to 9%. Sinn Féin (30%) and the SDLP (9%) are broadly where they were at the last Assembly election.

A full account of the methodology – including weighting and how we treat undecided voters – is available on our website.

Changes in voting intention between summer and autumn 2026 (Northern Ireland Assembly)



Section 1

How Northern Ireland feels today



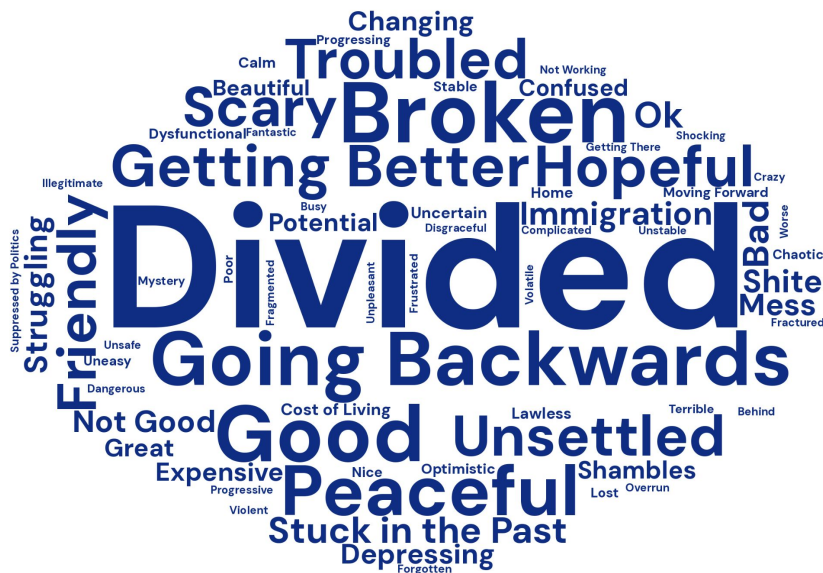
Northern Ireland in a word: divided

When asked to describe Northern Ireland in one word, the public's most popular answer is **divided**. This was also the most common answer after the June riots.

Reflecting recent events at Drumcree, the public also described Northern Ireland as *going backwards*, *troubled* and *unsettled*. More optimistic words – such as hopeful, getting better, peaceful – are there too, but from a minority.

Overall, **two thirds (68%) say Northern Ireland is somewhat or very divided**; less than a fifth say it feels united (14%).

In one or two words, how would you describe Northern Ireland in 2026?

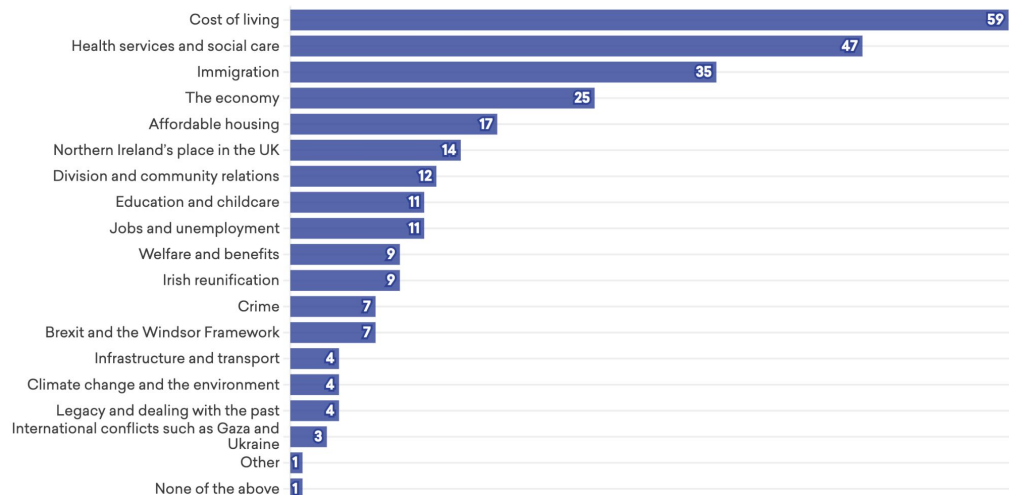


Everyday concerns endure: cost of living and health remain public's biggest worries

Cost of living (59%) and health and social care (47%) remain the public's two principal concerns, broadly unchanged since our last polling in June. Immigration remains the third top issue, but levels of concern have fallen from 44% to 35%, as has concern about crime which was at 16% in June and is now at 7%.

Some of the broader issues around Drumcree have increased in salience. Concern about Northern Ireland's place in the UK has risen (10% to 14%), as has the salience of division and community relations (8% to 12%), while Irish reunification has edged up.

Which of the following are the most important issues facing Northern Ireland today? Select up to three (%)



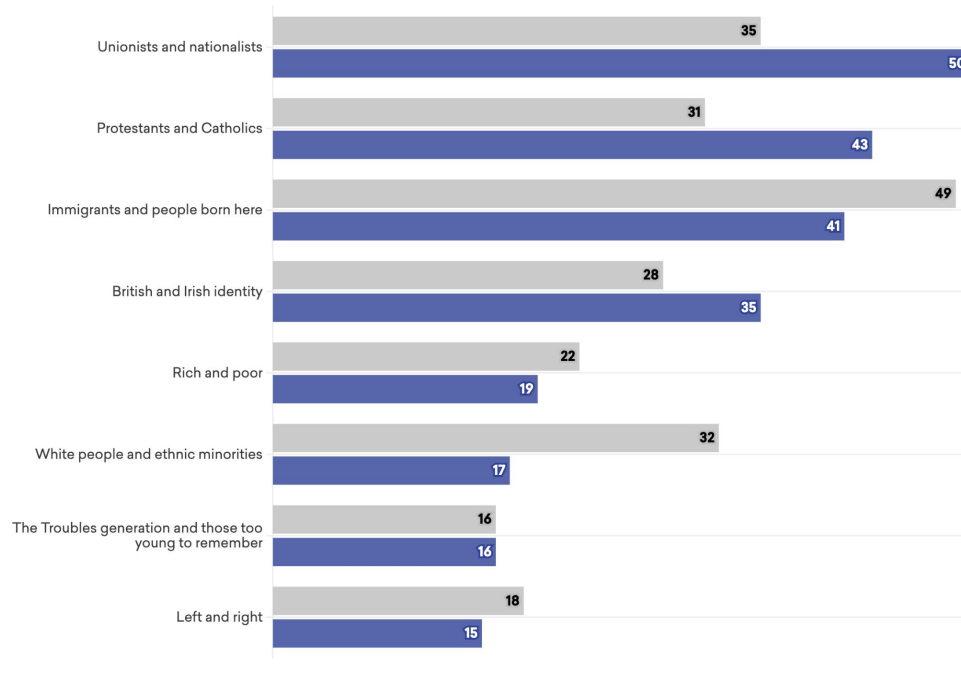
Perceptions of division have shifted towards green and orange again

Following the Drumcree dispute, **the public are more likely to say that society is most divided along traditional community lines** than between immigrants and those born in Northern Ireland, which was what the public viewed as the biggest divide after the riots in June. This holds for both unionists and nationalists.

Different generations describe similar divides using different phrases. Older people are more likely to frame the biggest divides through the language of 'unionist and nationalist', while younger people are more likely to describe them as between 'Protestants and Catholics'.

In what ways is our society most divided today? Select up to three (%)

● June 2026 ● October 2026



Fewer people feel safe than in June and the steepest fall is in how safe unionists are seen to be

People in Northern Ireland feel less safe in the aftermath of Drumcree than they did in the aftermath of the riots in June.

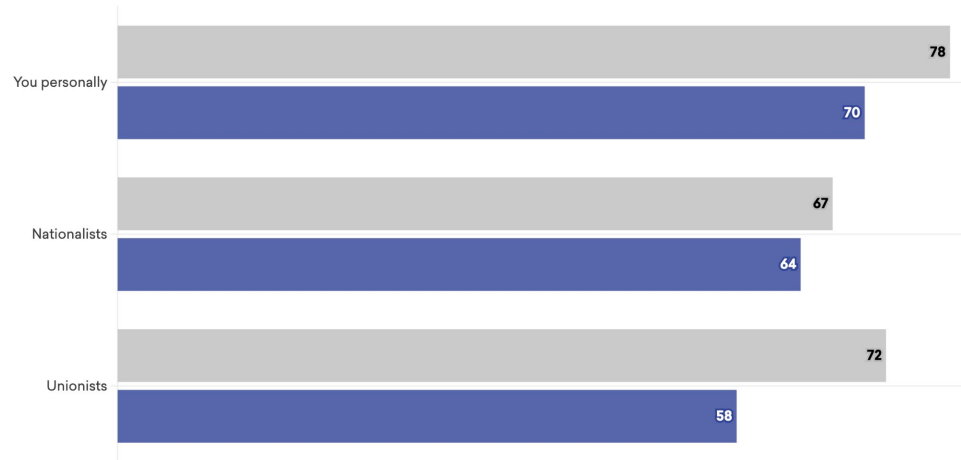
The share who feel personally safe has fallen from 78% to 70% since June. The drop is sharper among Protestants (83% to 71%) than Catholics (77% to 69%), and the share of Protestants who feel very safe has halved.

There have been falls in perceptions of how safe Northern Ireland is for both nationalists and unionists. On net figures, perceptions that Northern Ireland is safe for nationalists have fallen 10 points (to +47) and for unionists 26 points (to +36).

Catholics have become more worried about both communities by a similar amount (–15 on nationalists, –12 on unionists). Protestants have barely shifted on perceived feelings of nationalist safety (–8) but collapsed on perceptions of unionist safety (–42).

Is Northern Ireland in 2026 a safe place for... – % saying very or mostly safe

● June 2026 ● October 2026



Disillusionment about the system endures

Disillusionment with the political and social institutions in Northern Ireland was already deep before the recent resurfacing of the Drumcree dispute.

In our polling in June, almost half (46%) leaned towards the ‘just let them all burn’ side of the spectrum; in October that has remained effectively unchanged at almost half (48%). **A majority continue to believe that our political and social institutions are worth preserving and improving, but only just.**

This disillusionment is the background against which the public and political leaders are discussing the implications of Drumcree – but the dispute did not create this disillusionment in the first instance.

Which comes closest to your view? (%)

● 1 – Our political and social institutions are worth preserving and improving, not destroying ● 2 ● 3
● 4 – When I think about our political and social institutions, I cannot help thinking “just let them all burn”

Fieldwork wave



Source: More in Common, 9–20 October 2026, 1,019 adults in Northern Ireland.



“People who work against each other for brownie points instead of tackling the important issues like NHS and housing” – DUP voter

“More people are affected by the spiralling cost of living than by whether they are green or orange” – Sinn Féin voter

“Stagnant and distracted by the same old issues” – Alliance voter

“I despair of Northern Ireland and its politicians. They do not work for the benefit of all the people” – TUV voter

Section 2

Starting points on Drumcree



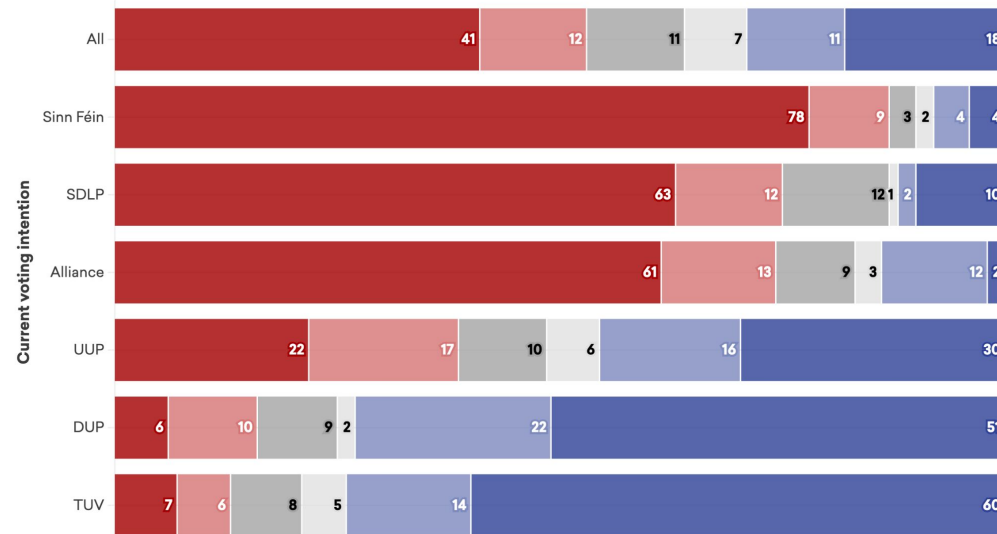
Most think the Parades Commission decision on Drumcree was wrong

Over half the public (53%) say that the decision from the Parades Commission was “definitely” or “probably” wrong, compared to 29% who say it was the right decision. Only 9% of nationalist voters say it was the right decision to allow the parade, while just under a quarter of unionist voters (22%) say it was the wrong decision.

Those who have followed Drumcree closely are more likely to say that allowing the parade was the wrong decision. Over-65s are the age group most split on the decision – 46% right decision versus 44% wrong decision – and are also more polarised with a third (34%) saying it was “definitely” the right decision, and another third (35%) saying it was “definitely” the wrong decision.

In September, the Parades Commission issued a determination allowing the Portadown District Orange Lodge to parade along the Garvaghy Road with conditions on the parade's size, timing and music. This is the first time the Commission has permitted the parade to return on the Garvaghy Road since 1998. Residents and supporters who object have blocked the road and the parade has not yet gone ahead. Legal proceedings are ongoing. In your view, was the Parades Commission's decision to allow the parade along the Garvaghy Road... (%)

● Definitely the wrong decision ● Probably the wrong decision ● Neither the right nor the wrong decision ● Don't know
● Probably the right decision ● Definitely the right decision



Most think the Secretary of State's decision to block the parade was right

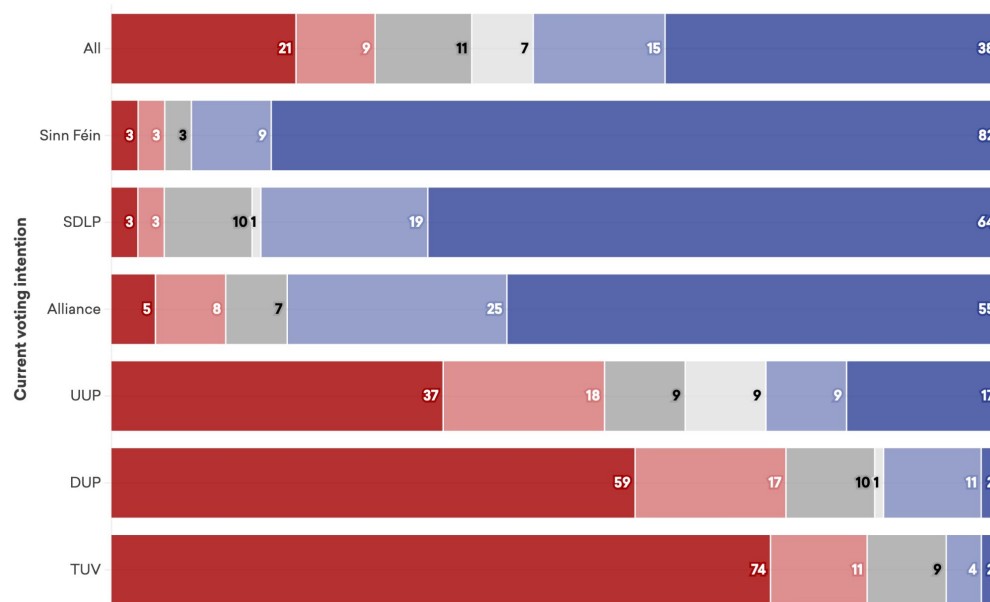
More than half the public (53%) back the Secretary of State's decision to block the parade at Drumcree.

Nationalist voters back the decision by a wide margin (91% of Sinn Féin and 83% of SDLP voters think it was the right decision), and most Alliance voters (81%) also support the Secretary of State's decision.

Most unionist voters think the Secretary of State's decision was the wrong one – opposition to the decision is strongest among TUV voters (85% wrong decision), but also includes a majority of DUP (76%) and UUP (55%) voters. Those from a Protestant background are more evenly divided – over half (54%) say it was the wrong decision, while almost three in ten (28%) say it was the right decision, and 12% neither right nor wrong.

In your view, was the Secretary of State's decision on Friday evening that the parade cannot go ahead as planned... (%)

● Definitely the wrong decision
 ● Probably the wrong decision
 ● Neither the right nor the wrong decision
 ● Don't know
 ● Probably the right decision
 ● Definitely the right decision



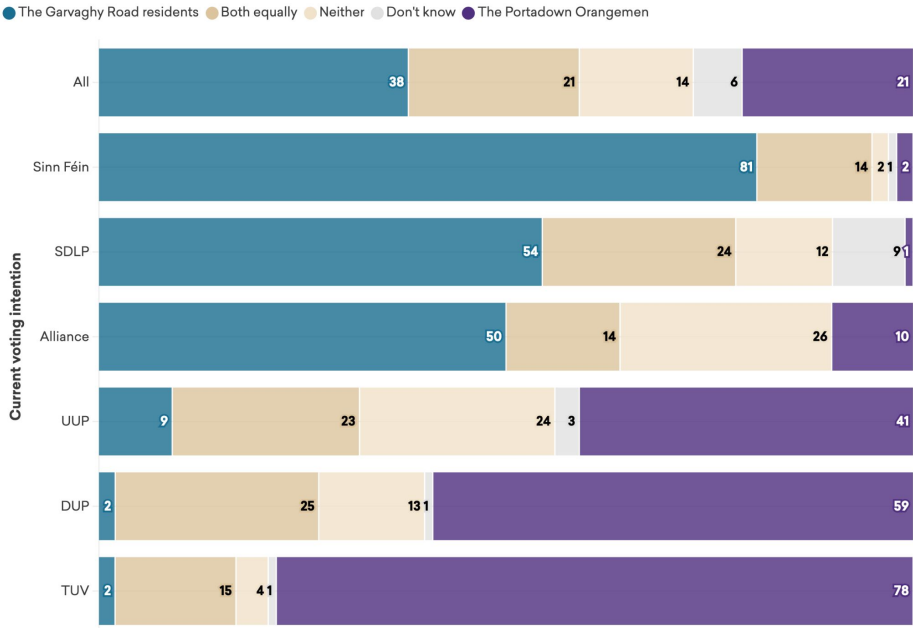
More sympathise with the residents than the Orangemen, but two in five don't pick a side

Just under two in five (38%) sympathise more with the Garvaghy Road residents in the Drumcree dispute, with just over a fifth (21%) sympathising more with the Portadown Orangemen. Over two fifths (41%) say neither side, both sides or don't know.

Nationalist voters side with the Garvaghy Road residents. Four in five (81%) Sinn Féin voters and half (54%) of SDLP voters sympathise more with the residents, and almost none with the Portadown Orangemen.

Unionist voters are more divided. TUV voters are as supportive of the Orangemen (79% sympathise more with the Orangemen) as Sinn Féin voters are of the residents. Three in five (59%) DUP voters side with the Orangemen. UUP voters are more torn: half don't pick a side, 41% back the Orangemen, and 9% back the residents. Among Protestants as a whole, more do not pick a side (44%) than those who back the Orangemen (42%). One in seven Protestants (14%) sympathise more with the residents.

Who do you sympathise with more in the Drumcree dispute? (%)



Each community thinks the Parades Commission favours the other side

Only around a fifth of those from either a Catholic or Protestant background are confident that the Parades Commission makes fair decisions about parades. Just under half (46%) of Catholics believe the Parades Commission favours unionists over nationalists, while two in five (41%) Protestants believe that it favours nationalists over unionists.

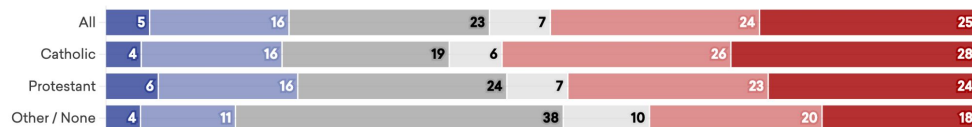
Only around a quarter of each community believes that the Parades Commission treats both equally.

Catholics are more likely than Protestants to say that Parades Commission decisions since 1998 have done more to ease tensions (30% for Catholics vs 21% for Protestants).

How confident are you, if at all, that the Parades Commission makes fair decisions about parades? (%)

● Very confident ● Somewhat confident ● Neither confident nor unconfident ● Don't know ● Not very confident ● Not at all confident

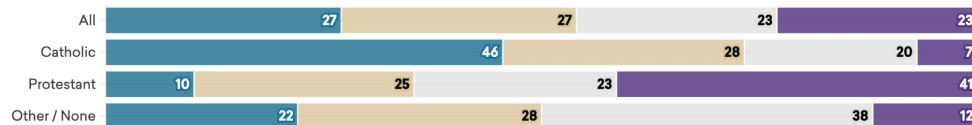
Community background



Do you think the Parades Commission generally... (%)

● Favours unionists over nationalists ● Treats both communities equally ● Don't know ● Favours nationalists over unionists

Community background



● More often than not the Parades Commission gets it right ● Don't know ● More often than not the Parades Commission gets it wrong

Community background



Most are following the situation in Drumcree closely

Two in three people in Northern Ireland (65%) are following the Drumcree dispute closely. A third of Catholics are paying close attention (following very closely) to the situation compared to a fifth of Protestants.

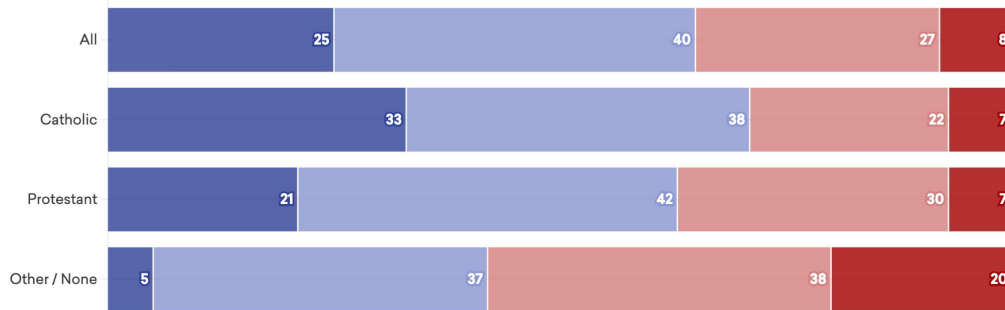
Those living in the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council area, which includes Drumcree, are almost **twice as likely as people in Belfast to be following the situation very closely** (38% vs 22%).

Younger people are less actively following the news on Drumcree. Only 45% of 18–24 year olds are following closely, compared to around 70% of over–65s.

How closely have you been following the situation at Drumcree? (%)

● Very closely ● Fairly closely ● Not very closely ● Not at all

Community background



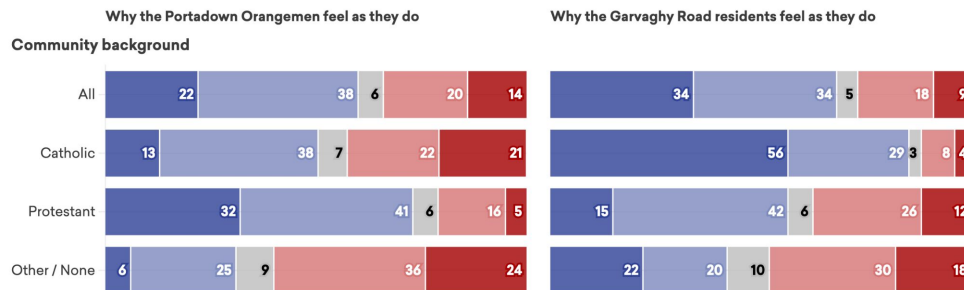
Many people understand the other side, even if they don't side with it

Almost three in five (57%) Protestants say they understand why the Garvaghy Road residents feel as they do, and over half of Catholics (51%) understand why the Portadown Orangemen feel as they do.

Those following the dispute closely are more likely to say they understand the perspectives on both sides of the dispute. Among Catholics, understanding of the Portadown Orangemen is 61% among those following very closely, compared with 35% among those following less closely. Among Protestants following the dispute very closely, 59% say they understand why the Garvaghy Road residents feel as they do, compared with 49% of those following less closely.

How much do you understand why... (%)

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Don't know ● Not very much ● Not at all



Source: More in Common, 9–20 October 2026, 1,019 adults in Northern Ireland.

46%

of people in Northern Ireland can understand both how the Garvaghy Road Residents and the Portadown Orangemen feel as they do

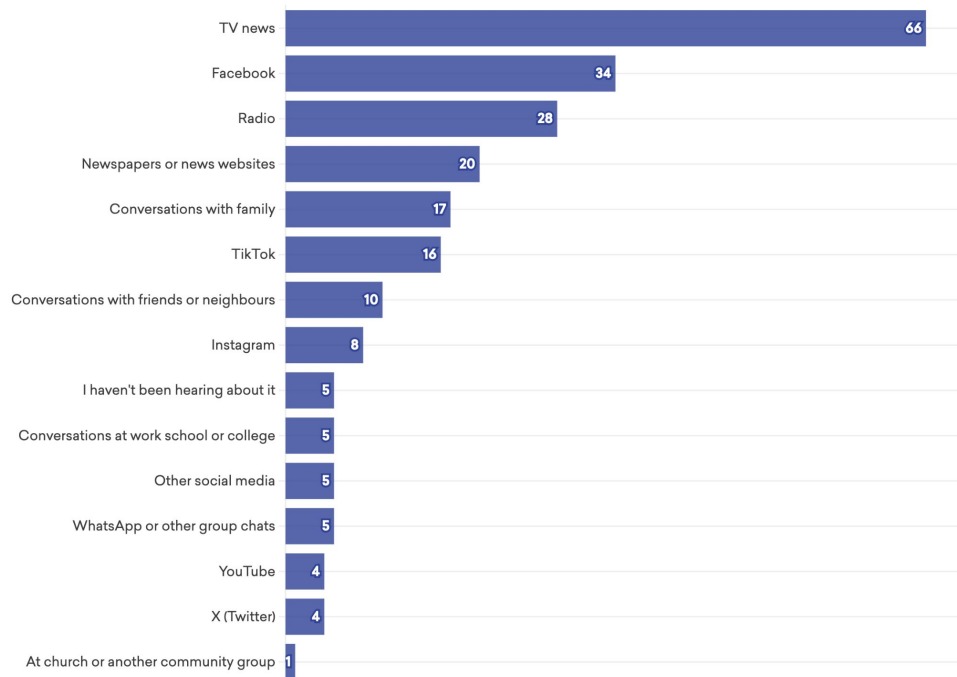
TV news and Facebook dominate how people heard of Drumcree

People in Northern Ireland are most likely to have heard about Drumcree on the TV news, but that masks a generational divide in where people get their news. For example, 18–24 year olds were more likely to be following Drumcree on TikTok (41%) than on TV news (31%).

Facebook is a platform for news on Drumcree that crosses generations, used by between around a quarter and over two fifths of under 65s.

While many debates about Drumcree might have played out on X/Twitter in recent weeks, **only 1 in 25 people in Northern Ireland have been hearing about the situation in Drumcree on X/Twitter.**

In the last few weeks, where have you mainly been hearing about Drumcree? Select up to three (%)



TikTok's Drumcree audience is the most sympathetic to the residents

People who heard about Drumcree on TikTok are the most sympathetic to the Garvaghy Road residents: 56% side with the residents and only 16% with the Orangemen, against 38% and 21% for the public as a whole.

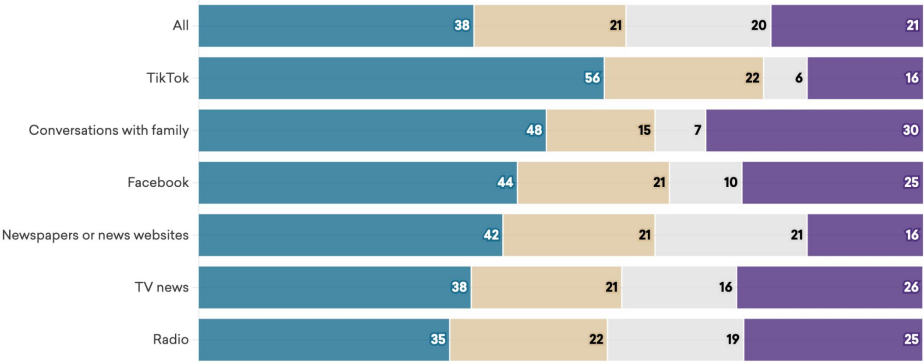
Three in five of those hearing about Drumcree on TikTok are from a Catholic background, compared with 45% of the public; while TV news viewers skew towards those from a Protestant background.

Facebook is the one source with an even community background mix, and its audience sits close to the overall figures.

Who do you sympathise with more in the Drumcree dispute? (%)

The Garvaghy Road residents Both equally Neither / Don't know The Portadown Orangemen

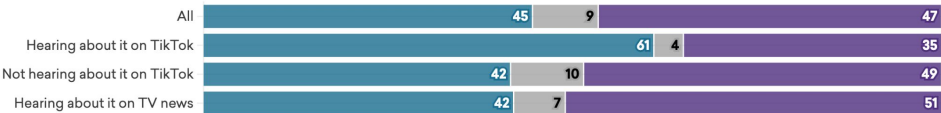
Where they have mainly been hearing about Drumcree



Community background of people who have been hearing about Drumcree on TikTok (%)

Catholic Other / None Protestant

Where they have mainly been hearing about Drumcree



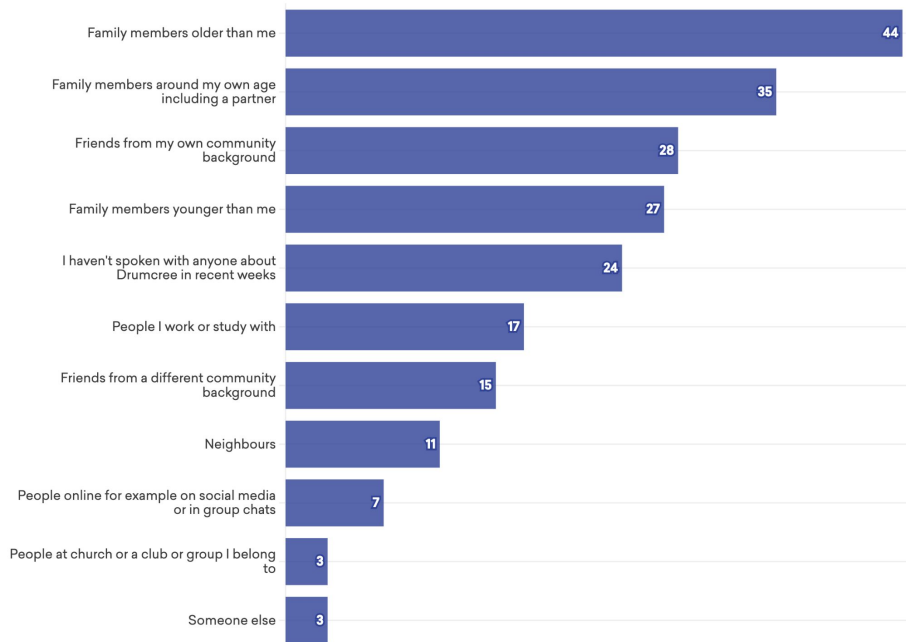
Drumcree is being talked about in families rather than across community divides

Around a third of people in Northern Ireland today weren't born when the Parades Commission made its first determination on Drumcree in 1998, so it is little surprise that more than **two in five people in Northern Ireland have been talking about Drumcree with family members older than them.**

Nearly three in five under 45s (57%) say they've had conversations with family members older than them about Drumcree in recent weeks. The oldest people in this age group were still at school in 1998 and many of that group had not yet been born.

What's also clear is that conversations across lines of division on Drumcree have been uncommon in recent weeks (15%). The share of people saying they've been posting online or in group chats about Drumcree (7%) is significantly lower than what might be expected from the online conversation.

And have you talked about Drumcree with any of the following in the last few weeks? Select all that apply (%)



Many believe outside involvement in the Drumcree dispute made the situation worse

Across the board, **people in Northern Ireland are more likely to think that outsiders' involvement in the Drumcree dispute made the situation worse rather than helped.** However, there is a divergence in how the two communities view outside help.

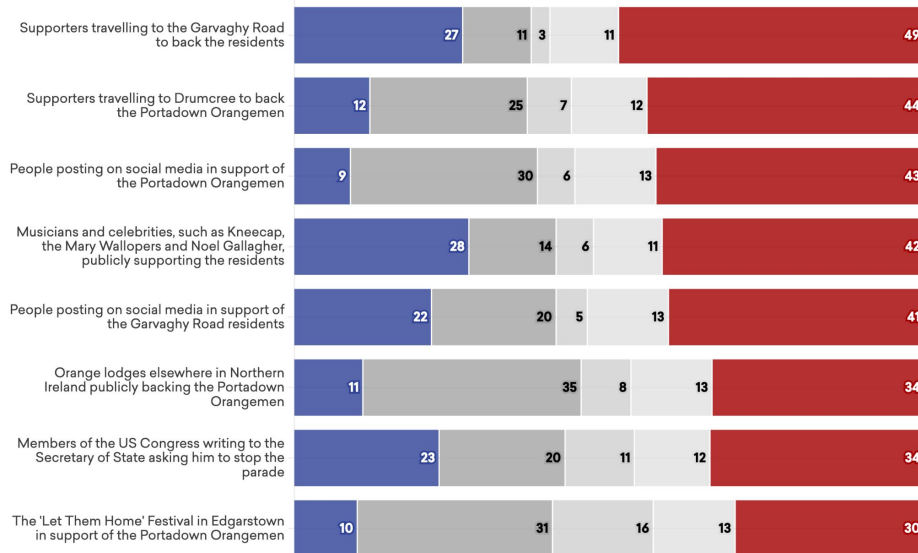
More than three in four Protestants (77%) say supporters travelling to support the Garvaghy Road Residents made things worse, but fewer than half of Protestants (47%) hold the same view about people travelling to support the Portadown Orangemen.

Catholics are more likely to welcome outside help such as the Residents' supporters (52% helped) and the musicians who backed them (53%), while two in five (41%) say the Orangemen's supporters made things worse.

On favourability, the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition are also significantly more popular with Catholics (net favourability of +52) than others involved in showing their support for the community such as Kneecap (net favourability of +20).

People from outside Portadown have got involved in the Drumcree dispute. Has each of the following helped the situation or made it worse? (%)

● Helped the situation ● Made no difference ● I hadn't heard about this ● Don't know ● Made the situation worse



[illegible]

Section 3

Ending the Drumcree dispute



The outcome voters of all parties can live with: confirm the Orangemen's right to parade, then don't use it

Of the seven ways to end the dispute that we tested, only one is acceptable to voters of every party: **the Portadown Lodge's right to parade is confirmed, but it chooses not to use it.**

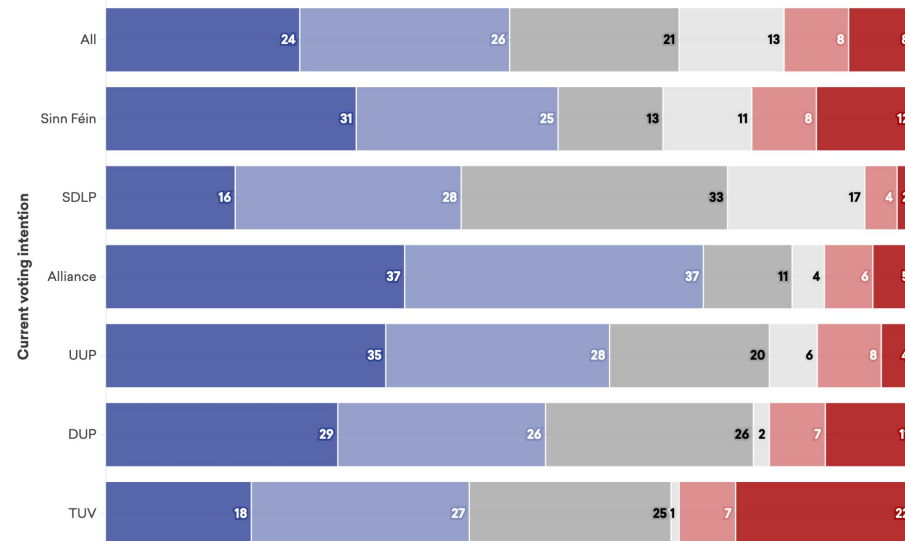
Half the public (50%) say it would be an acceptable way to end the dispute, against 16% who say unacceptable – and the figures are the same for Catholics and Protestants (51% and 52% acceptable).

By voters of different parties this proposal is acceptable to a majority of Sinn Féin (56%), Alliance (75%), UUP (62%) and DUP voters (55%), and a plurality of SDLP (44%) and TUV voters (45%). For SDLP voters, it falls short of a majority mainly because more answered "don't know" or "neither acceptable nor unacceptable".

Support is lower among the under-35s (42%) and those not following the dispute (36%), mostly because more of them are unsure, not because more oppose it.

Would each of the following be an acceptable or unacceptable way to end the dispute? – The Lodge's right to parade is confirmed, but it chooses not to use it (%)

● Completely acceptable
 ● Somewhat acceptable
 ● Neither acceptable nor unacceptable
 ● Don't know
 ● Somewhat unacceptable
 ● Completely unacceptable



All the other options to end the dispute are unacceptable to one side

The other six options tested are unacceptable to one side or the other. **Unionist voters reject the 'no parade' options, while the 'parade ahead in some form' options are unacceptable to nationalist and Alliance voters.**

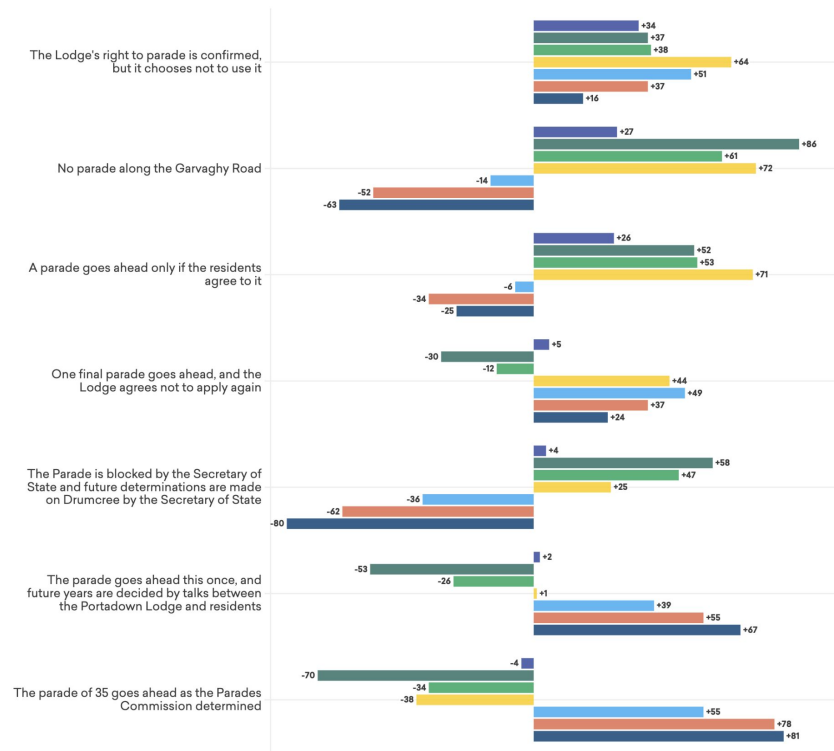
Alliance voters are the swing voters on what is acceptable on ending this dispute. They reject almost anything that lets the parade down the Garvaghy Road and accept anything that stops it.

The **exception to this is the so-called 'one and done' option** which commands strong support among Alliance and UUP voters and lower levels of opposition from SDLP voters, and softer opposition from Sinn Féin voters than to a parade with no conditions attached. Opposition from Sinn Féin voters remains significant.

Would each of the following be an acceptable or unacceptable way to end the dispute?

Net acceptability: % acceptable minus % unacceptable.

● All ● Sinn Féin ● SDLP ● Alliance ● UUP ● DUP ● TUV



People care far more about avoiding violence than any other outcome

When asked about what matters in how the dispute in Drumcree ends, **the public's clear priority is that the dispute ends without violence.**

It's a view shared across Northern Ireland – Catholics and Protestants (69% and 65% matters a great deal), those who sympathise with the Portadown Orangemen and those who sympathise with the Garvaghy Road Residents (64% and 72% a great deal). Two in three voters of every party say avoiding violence matters a great deal.

The same applies for those who are in or have family in a Loyal Order. Three in five (58%) say it matters a great deal that it ends without violence, against 37% who say the same about a parade going ahead.

How much does each of the following matter to you personally? (%)

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Don't know ● Not very much ● Not at all



"Let's hope it can be sorted peacefully without the police being battered by either side. They are always piggy in the middle."
DUP voter

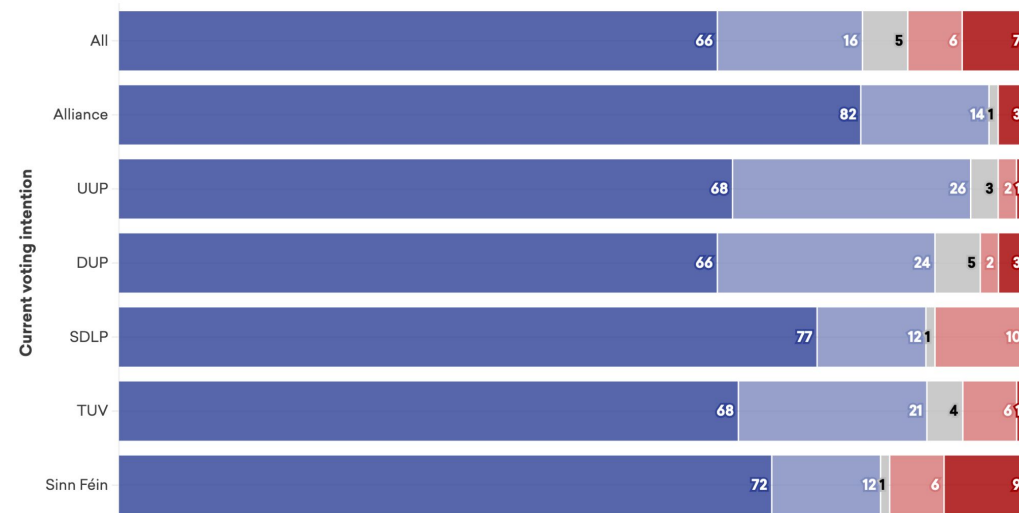
Two in three voters of every party say avoiding violence matters a great deal

Avoiding violence in settling the Drumcree dispute is the shared priority across voters of all political parties in Northern Ireland. Those who feel most strongly about this are Alliance (81%) and SDLP voters (77%), but at least two thirds of voters of all main political parties in Northern Ireland say avoiding violence matters a great deal to them.

Drumcree is an issue where the gaps between voter groups in Northern Ireland can run to 60 or 70 points. On avoiding violence, the difference between the most supportive and the least supportive is only 15 points. **When asking voters what matters to them in ending this dispute, avoiding violence is the clearest, strongest and most widely shared priority.**

How much does each of the following matter to you personally? That this dispute ends without violence (%)

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Don't know ● Not very much ● Not at all



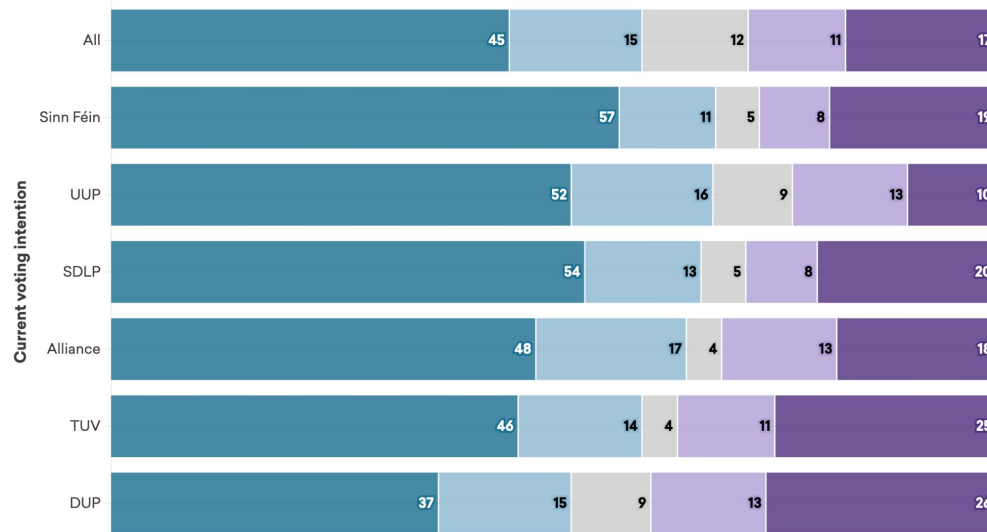
Three in five want current parading arrangements to be left alone rather than reopened

Three in five people in Northern Ireland (60%) say the parading arrangements that have kept the peace in Northern Ireland should be left alone, even if one side feels they are unfair. Fewer than half as many (28%) say they should be open to being looked at again, even if it risks reopening old disputes.

Sinn Féin (68%), UUP (68%) and SDLP (67%) voters are most in favour of accepting the parading arrangements as they have been. DUP and TUV voters are more open to revisiting parading arrangements, but even among these groups, more want to see the current arrangements left in place than looked at again by a margin of 52%–39% among DUP voters and 60%–36% among TUV voters.

Which comes closer to your view? (%)

1 – Parading arrangements that have kept the peace for years should be left alone, even if one side feels they are unfair
 2 – Don't know
 3 – Parading arrangements should be open to being looked at again, even if that risks reopening old disputes
 4 – Parading arrangements should be open to being looked at again, even if that risks reopening old disputes



Whoever is marching, most say the organisers should find another route

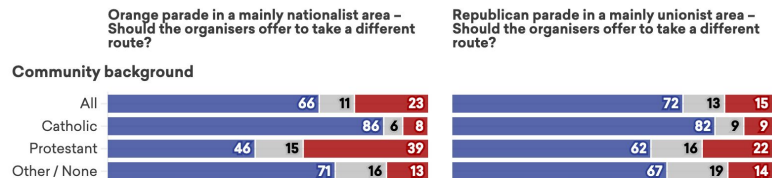
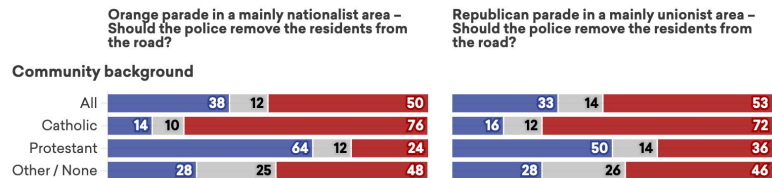
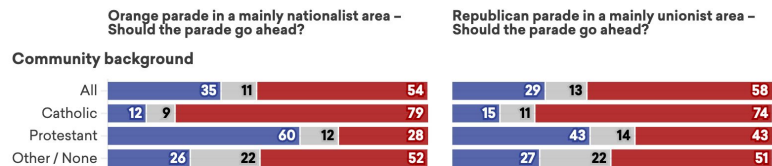
In recent weeks, there has been some debate over whether unionists would accept a republican parade marching through a predominantly unionist area. More in Common explored this idea by presenting respondents with two mirror-image scenarios.

Overall, in both scenarios, **around a third say that the parade should go ahead, around half say the police should not remove protesting residents, and two in three say that organisers should offer another route.**

Catholics and Protestants start from a different position on parading. Catholics are against contentious parades in both directions, while Protestants are more pro-parade in general. Protestants are more likely to back an orange parade in a nationalist area (60% back it), however a significant minority (43%) of Protestants would also back a republican commemoration parade in a unionist area.

Imagine a [local Orange Lodge / republican community group] notifies the Parades Commission of an [Orange parade / republican commemoration parade] along a road in a [mainly nationalist / mainly unionist] area. The Parades Commission determines the parade can go ahead. Residents who object block the road. (%)

● Yes ● Don't know ● No



Fewer than one in three want the Portadown Orangemen to keep applying to parade on Garvaghy Road

With the courts upholding their right to parade and the Secretary of State blocking it under section 11 of the Public Processions (NI) Act 1998, the Portadown Lodge faces a choice on whether or not to continue trying to parade down the Garvaghy Road. **Three in five (60%) say they should accept the decision and not apply again, while fewer than a third (29%) say they should keep pressing.**

Nationalist and Alliance voters overwhelmingly want the Orangemen to accept the decision and not press for future parades. Most TUV and DUP voters want the Orangemen to keep pressing for a Garvaghy Road parade. UUP voters are more evenly divided – 47% want them to keep pressing, while 41% would prefer that they did not.

The Portadown Orangemen had their legal right to parade along the Garvaghy Road upheld by the Courts, but the Secretary of State has now stopped the parade going ahead. Which comes closer to your view? (%)

1 – The Orangemen should keep pressing to parade the Garvaghy Road in future years 2 – Don't know 3 – 4 – The Orangemen should accept the decision and not apply to parade the Garvaghy Road again



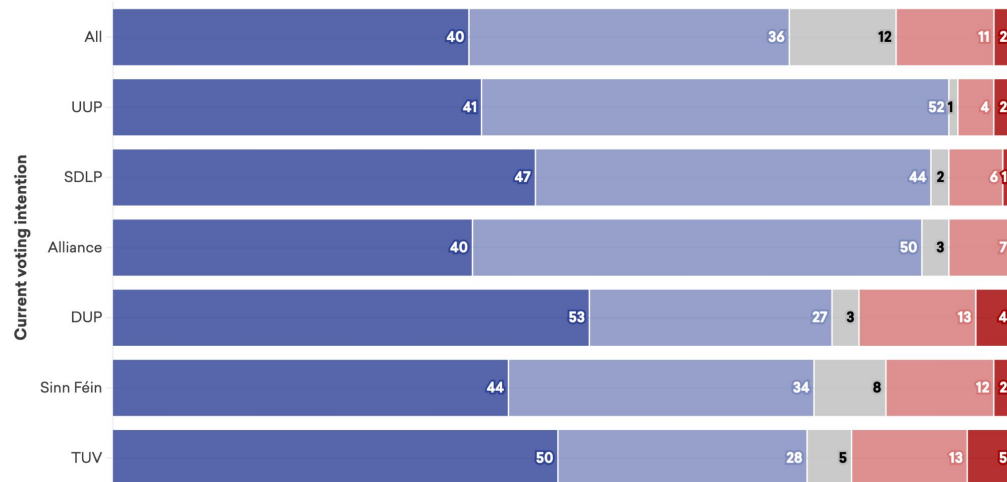
Across the political spectrum, the public worries about attacks on politicians and activists

Politicians, lawyers and activists involved in both sides of the Drumcree dispute have reported their experiences of significant threats and abuse that they've faced, both online and in-person, in recent weeks.

Three in four people (76%) consider it a serious issue and four in ten (40%) consider it to be a very serious issue. At least three in four voters in every main political party consider it to be a serious issue – regardless of what position they take on the Drumcree dispute.

Some politicians, lawyers and campaigners involved in the Drumcree dispute have reported receiving threats and abuse. How serious an issue, if at all, do you think this is? (%)

● Very serious ● Somewhat serious ● Don't know ● Not that serious ● Not serious at all



Protestants more likely than Catholics to say a fair outcome means both sides giving ground

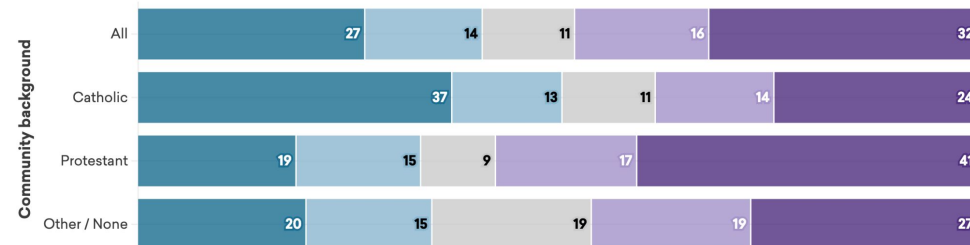
Asked what a fair outcome is in Drumcree, **the public leans towards both sides giving some ground (48%) rather than one side getting its way (41%)** – but the two main communities lean in opposite directions.

Protestants are more likely to favour a fair outcome for all sides in this dispute (58% both sides give to 34% one side is right) **while Catholics are more likely to favour one side getting its way in this dispute** (50% one side is right to 38% both sides give).

Few expect that giving ground would be reciprocated. **Fewer than one in five (18%) people expect the other side to give ground at Drumcree if they gave ground.**

Which comes closest to your view? (%)

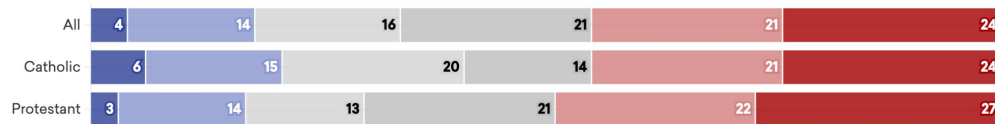
1 – One side is in the right at Drumcree and a fair outcome means that side getting its way 2 – Don't know 3 – Both sides have a case and a fair outcome means each giving some ground



If your community gave some ground at Drumcree, how likely is it that the other community would give ground in return? (%)

Very likely Fairly likely Don't know I don't see myself as part of either main community Fairly unlikely Very unlikely

Community background



Section 4

The politics of Drumcree



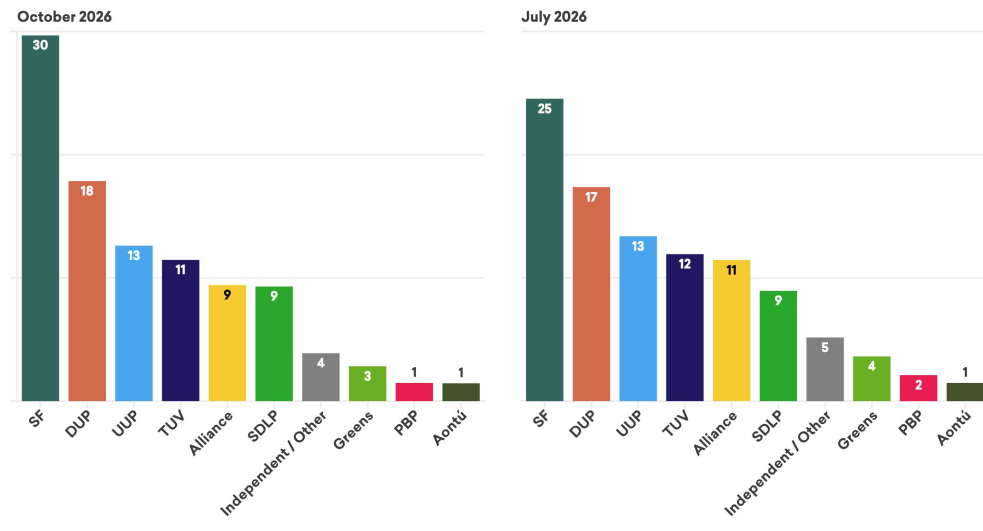
Sinn Féin up five, unionist vote unchanged

This is **More in Common's first published Northern Ireland voting intention**, with a July reading alongside it for comparison.

A full account of the methodology – including weighting and how we treat undecided voters – is available on our website.

Sinn Féin is up five points since the summer, from 25% in July to 30% today. The unionist vote is unchanged in total since July: the DUP is up one, the UUP is flat and the TUV is down one, so the three parties come to 42% of first preference votes, as they did in July. Alliance has slipped from 11% to 9% and the SDLP holds at 9%.

Changes in voting intention between summer and autumn 2026 (Northern Ireland Assembly)

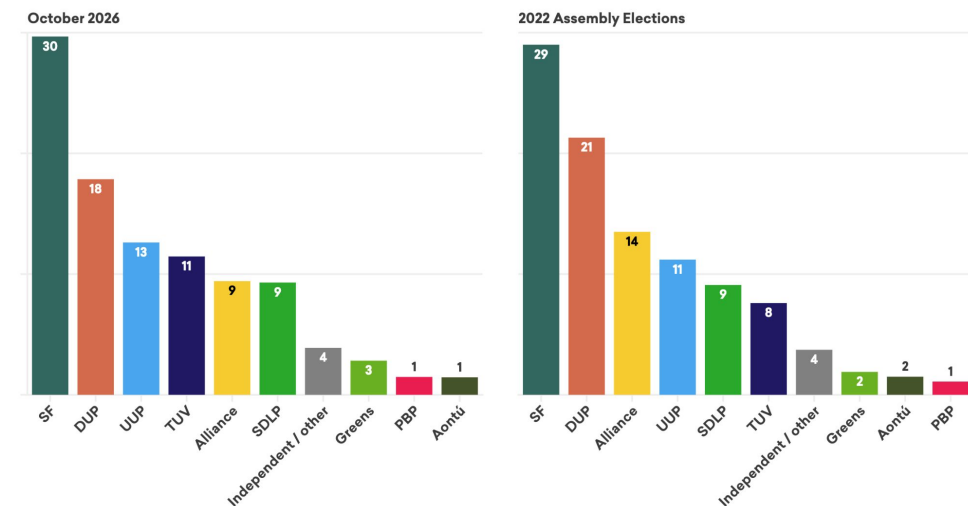


Since 2022: Alliance and the DUP down, TUV and UUP up, Sinn Féin and SDLP steady

Compared with first preferences at the May 2022 Assembly election, **the biggest change is the fall in Alliance support, from 14% to 9%.** The DUP is down three, from 21% to 18%, while the UUP (11% to 13%) and TUV (8% to 11%) have both gained. Sinn Féin is where it was, at 30% against 29% in 2022, and the SDLP is unchanged on 9%.

Taken together, **the unionist parties are slightly up on 2022 (40% to 42%) but the vote within unionism has moved away from the DUP towards both its rivals.** The nationalist parties are level (38% to 39%). The ground Alliance has lost has not gone to any one party.

Changes in voting intention in Northern Ireland since the last Assembly election (October 2026 vs May 2022)



Few are seen by the public as calming things down – and each community credits its own leaders

Of the 18 public figures and institutions tested, not one is seen by the public as having calmed things down more than made them worse in response to Drumcree.

Social media, the media and the Parades Commission are seen across communities as having made the dispute worse rather than calmed things down. **Many of the individuals are credited by their own side and blamed by the other side.** The most polarising figure between Catholics and Protestants is Michelle O'Neill with a 92 point gap between Catholics (+18) and Protestants (-74). Jamie Bryson is the unionist figure tested that Protestants are most likely to think made things worse (-20); Jim Allister MP (-6) and Carla Lockhart MP (-5) also have net negative views among Protestants.

The smallest gap is for Stephen Nolan. Catholics (-28) and Protestants (-30) both agree he made things worse during the dispute.

During the dispute, has each of the following calmed things down or made things worse?

Net score: % calmed things down minus % made things worse, by community background

Community background ● Catholic ● Protestant ● All



Unionist voters split on who calmed things down on Drumcree

Emma Little-Pengelly is credited by every unionist voter group with calming things down on Drumcree: DUP, UUP and TUV voters all say she is more likely to have calmed things down than made them worse.

Gavin Robinson scores higher with DUP and UUP voters for calming things down, but TUV voters are evenly split on him.

Carla Lockhart gets the strongest credit of anyone from DUP voters, but UUP voters think she made things worse. Jim Allister gets the strongest credit from TUV voters, and UUP voters think he too made things worse.

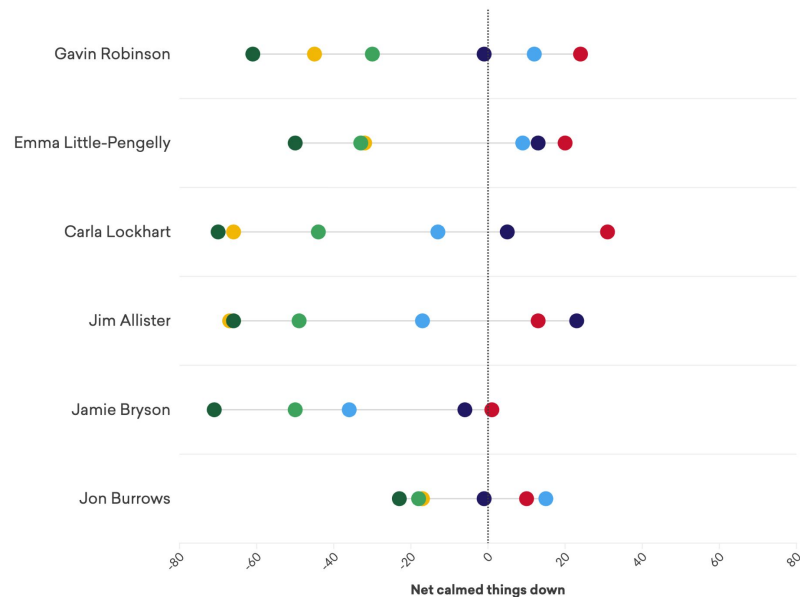
Jamie Bryson is not seen as having calmed things down. DUP voters are split and TUV voters lean against him.

Jon Burrows is credited as having calmed things down with UUP and DUP voters, and nationalist and Alliance voters are least likely to say he made things worse during the Drumcree dispute.

During the dispute, has each of the following calmed things down or made things worse?

Net score: % calmed things down minus % made things worse, by current voting intention

Current voting intention ● DUP ● UUP ● TUV ● Alliance ● SDLP ● Sinn Féin



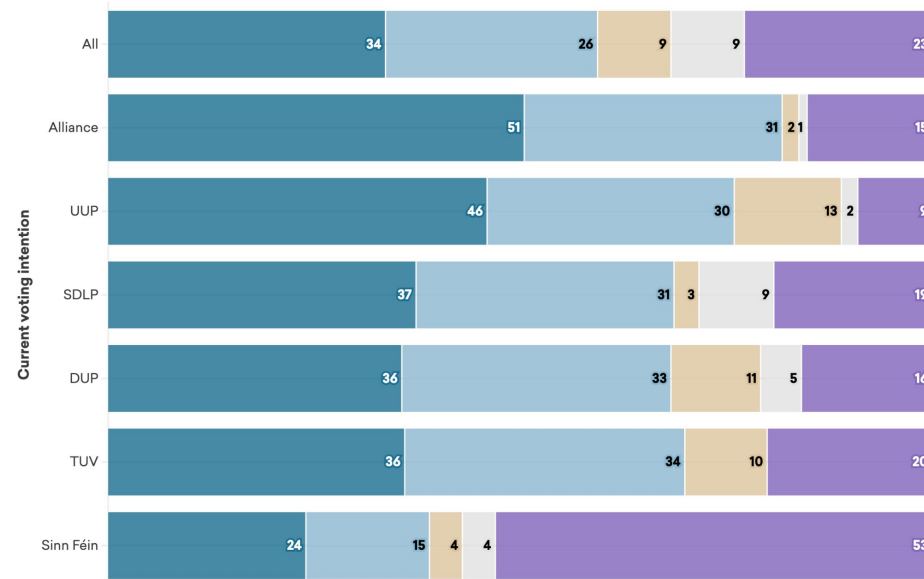
Most people want politicians to work with the other side, though Sinn Féin voters differ

Asked what politicians should mainly do in a dispute like Drumcree, **a third (34%) say work with the other side to find a way out, a quarter (26%) say make their community's case but stay away from parades and protests and fewer than one in four (23%) want politicians standing with their own community in person.**

Alliance and UUP voters are most in favour of working across the divide, but SDLP, DUP and TUV voters lean the same way. Sinn Féin voters are the outlier with more than half wanting politicians standing with their community in person.

During a dispute like this, what should politicians mainly do? (%)

● Work with the other side to find a way out
 ● Make their community's case but stay away from parades and protests
 ● Stay out of it
 ● Don't know
 ● Stand with their own community in person



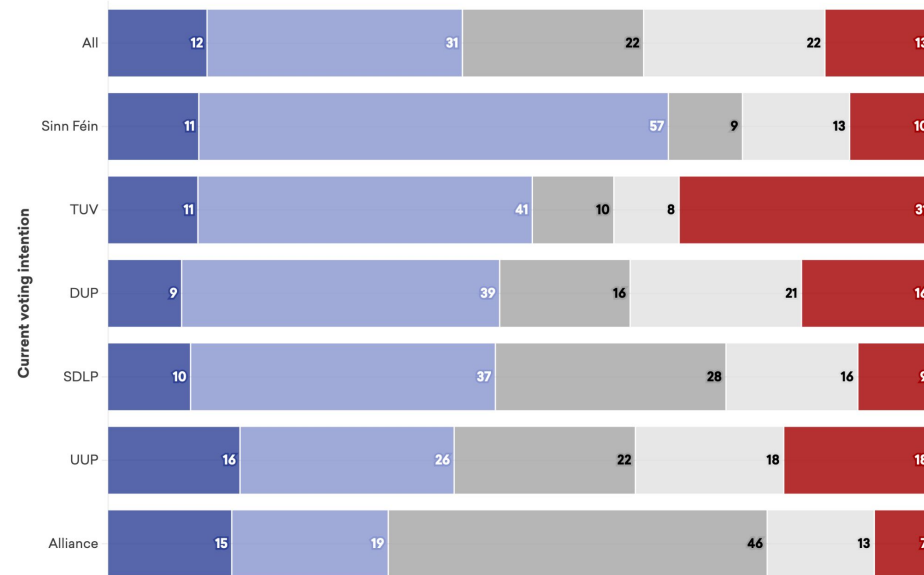
Sinn Féin voters think their politicians got Drumcree right – other voters are less sure

Asked whether politicians from their own side got Drumcree right or have taken a harder or softer line than people in their community want, **Sinn Féin voters are the only group where a majority (57%) say about the right line.**

Unionist voters who think their politicians got it wrong are more likely to say they were too soft than too hard. Almost a third of TUV voters (31%) say politicians took a softer line than most people want, almost twice as many as the DUP voters (16%) and UUP voters (18%) who hold the same view.

Thinking about Drumcree, are politicians from your community taking... (%)

■ A harder line than most people in your community want
 ■ About the right line
 ■ I don't see myself as part of either main community
 ■ Don't know
 ■ A softer line than most people in your community want





Two in three say Stormont makes little or no difference to their lives

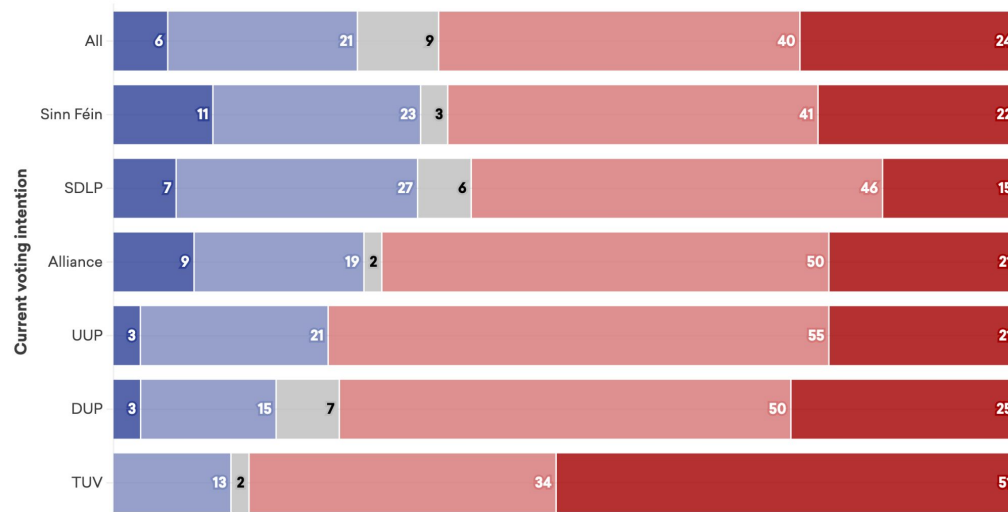
Two in three people (64%) say having the Assembly and Executive makes not very much or no difference to their own lives; one in four say it does, and only 6% say a great deal.

There is very little difference in perception across the political spectrum. Even among Sinn Féin and SDLP voters, the most positive about the institutions, more than three in five say little or none (Sinn Féin 63%, SDLP 60%); among UUP and DUP voters it's 76% and 75%.

TUV voters stand out as the most negative about the impact of Stormont in their own lives – half (51%) say Stormont makes no difference at all, and not a single TUV voter surveyed says Stormont makes a great deal of difference to their life.

How much difference does having the Assembly and Executive make to your own life? (%)

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Don't know ● Not very much ● None at all



Nationalist and Alliance voters are most concerned by a potential Stormont collapse, unionist voters less so

If the institutions at Stormont collapsed again, **the public would be more concerned (39%) than not concerned (32%), but many are also indifferent (22%) or unsure (7%).**

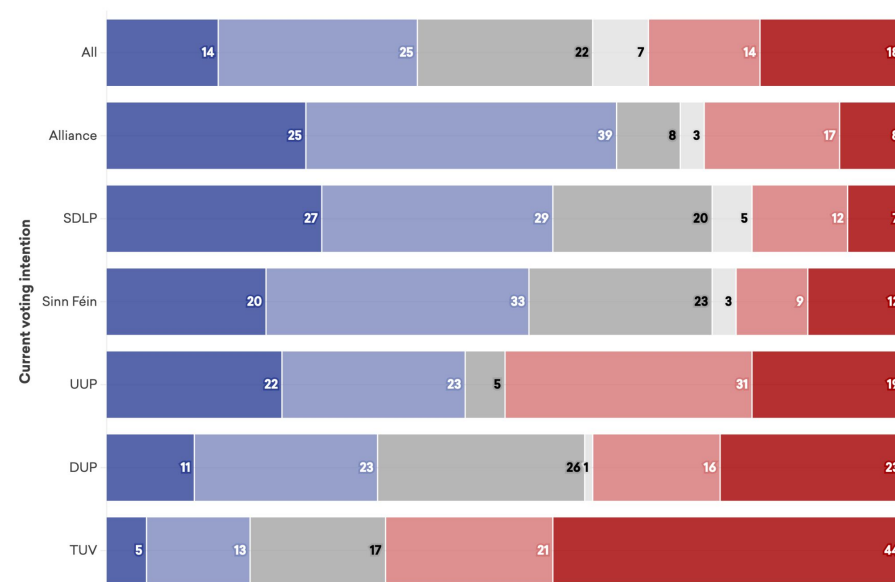
Alliance voters would be most concerned about another Assembly collapse (64%), followed by SDLP voters (56%) and Sinn Féin voters (53%).

Unionist voters are less likely to be concerned about another collapse of the institutions. Two thirds of TUV voters would not be concerned about collapse, while UUP voters are more evenly divided. DUP voters are more likely than others to say neither concerned nor unconcerned, though a plurality (39%) say they would not be concerned.

Concern at a collapse rises with income in both communities – from 41% to 63% among Catholics and from 22% to 42% among Protestants between the lowest and highest income bands. The same pattern holds for graduates and non-graduates.

If the Assembly and Executive collapsed, how would you feel? (%)

● Very concerned ● Somewhat concerned ● Neither concerned nor unconcerned ● Don't know ● Not very concerned ● Not at all concerned



Half say Drumcree is not a good enough reason to collapse Stormont

Half the public (49%) say Drumcree is not a strong enough reason for any party to pull out of the Executive; just over a quarter (27%) say it is, and a quarter don't know.

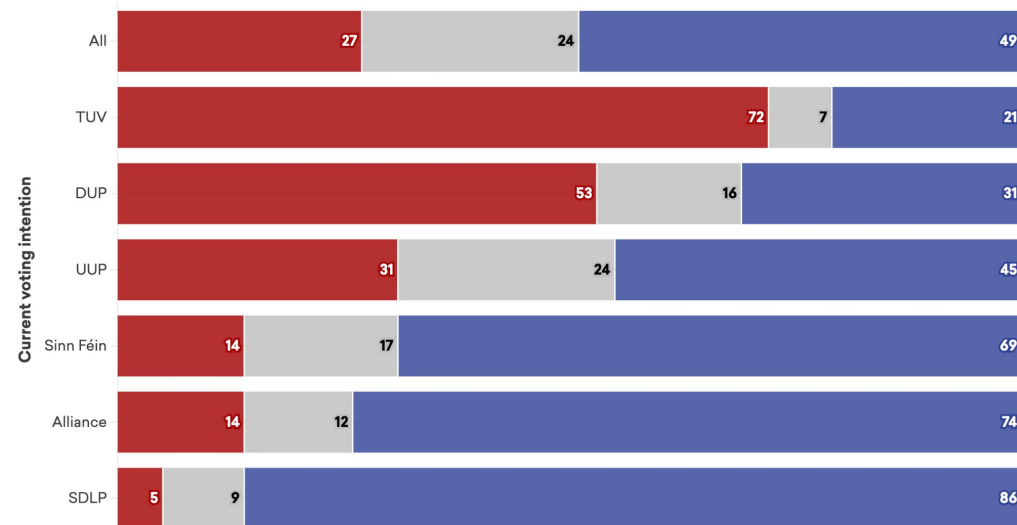
Unionist voters are more open to it, but they are split. UUP voters are more likely to say Drumcree is not a good enough reason (45%) than that it is (31%); half (53%) of DUP voters say it is and a third (31%) say it isn't; TUV voters are the only group where a clear majority (72%) would back a walkout.

Nationalist and Alliance voters are firmly against a Stormont collapse over Drumcree: 69% of Sinn Féin, 74% of Alliance and 86% of SDLP voters say Drumcree is not a reason for any party to leave.

Protestant women under 35 are the least likely Protestants to say it is reason enough (25%), whereas Protestant men over 55 are the most likely to say it is a good enough reason to pull out of the Executive (53%).

Is the Drumcree dispute a strong enough reason for any party to pull out of the Executive? (%)

● Yes ● Don't know ● No



The varying reach of different leaders within unionism

Within unionism, four unionist figures in the Drumcree dispute draw support from different places.

Gavin Robinson MP has a net positive rating of +49 with DUP voters (58% positive, 9% negative), +36 with UUP voters (51% positive, 15% negative) and +14 with TUV voters (45% positive, 32% negative).

Carla Lockhart MP is more popular with her party's base with a net rating of +57 among DUP voters (65% positive, 8% negative), and nearly as popular with TUV voters (+49 net popularity, 64% positive, 15% negative), but a more lukewarm response with UUP voters +12 net popularity (35% positive, 23% negative).

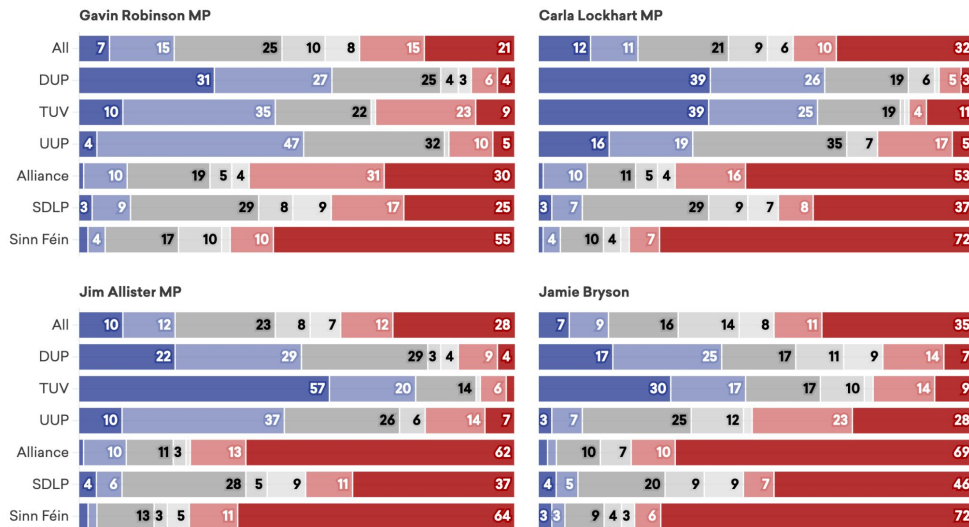
Jim Allister MP is overwhelmingly popular with his own voters (+71), has strong net popularity with DUP voters (+39, 52% positive, 13% negative), but is weaker with UUP voters (+26, where 21% view him negatively).

Jamie Bryson is more popular than not with TUV voters (+24) and DUP voters (+21), but half of UUP voters view him negatively (-41).

Do you have a positive or negative view of each of the following? (%)

By current voting intention

● Very positive
 ● Somewhat positive
 ● Neither positive nor negative
 ● Haven't heard of them
 ● Don't know
 ● Somewhat negative
 ● Very negative



Section 5

The four perspectives on Drumcree



Four different perspectives on Drumcree

To understand the patterns in people's views on Drumcree, we grouped respondents by their answers across the Drumcree questions (a latent class analysis). Four perspectives emerge and each is summarised on the following slides.

The broad pattern from the analysis shows that three in five people in Northern Ireland are on one side or the other, there's an 'in-between' group (29%) who sympathise with both sides and are open to many different ways of ending the dispute, and then there's a smaller, more disengaged group (11%).

The names of these perspectives have been chosen to describe areas in Drumcree, the Garvaghy Road and the surrounding area.

Four different perspectives on Drumcree:

The Road (38% of the public): side with the Garvaghy Road residents, think the Secretary of State was right to block the parade, want the Lodge to stop applying and no parade is the most acceptable outcome.

The Hill (22% of the public): side with the Orange Order, think that the Secretary of State's ban was wrong, that the parade should go ahead and the Portadown Lodge should continue trying to find ways to march down the Garvaghy Road.

The Bridge (29% of the public): sympathise with both sides or neither, can see the case from both sides and would be open to almost any ending to the dispute.

The Bypass (11% of the public): not following the dispute closely and don't take a side

The Road (38% of the public)

No parade on the Garvaghy Road

The 'Road' is the most commonly and confidently held perspective on the Drumcree dispute. Almost everyone in this group (98%) thinks the Secretary of State was right to block the parade and the Parades Commission's initial determination was wrong. Only 8% of this group say Parades Commission determinations should always be followed.

Any sort of parade without the consent of the Garvaghy Road residents is unacceptable to this group.

This group is three quarters (77%) Catholic and almost two thirds of Catholics in Northern Ireland (65%) are in this group.

This group contains four in five (79%) Sinn Féin voters, three in five SDLP voters (59%) and also half of Alliance voters (52%) and one in seven Protestants (14%).

This is a group that is fairly evenly spread across age and class groups, slightly more female (55%) than average.

It is also a group following the dispute closely – three in four (76%) say they are following the dispute fairly or very closely.

The Hill (22% of the public)

The parade should have gone ahead

The Hill perspective is held by one in five people in Northern Ireland. They are the mirror image of the Road – they think the Secretary of State's blocking of the parade on the Garvaghy Road was wrong, that the initial Parades Commission determination was right and that the parade should go ahead. They also think the Portadown Lodge should keep pressing for a Garvaghy Road parade.

This group believes that Commission rulings should be followed, but object to the Secretary of State's intervention. They are open to a range of potential ends to the Drumcree dispute which involve a parade of some form. They reject endings where there is no parade, where the Secretary of State decides in the future, or a parade only with local residents' consent.

This is a group which is 92% Protestant and holds 44% of Protestants in Northern Ireland. It holds 70% of DUP voters, 78% of TUV voters, but only 39% of UUP voters.

This is an older perspective on the Drumcree dispute. Three in five are over 55 and only 11% are under 35. It is a slightly more male group (53%), but is evenly distributed by class.

A third (35%) are in a loyal order or marching band or have a close family member who is, and three in five of the Hill (62%) live near a parade route.

The Bridge (29% of the public)

Both sides have a case

People with the Bridge perspective sympathise with both sides or neither. They think the Secretary of State was right (50% to 24%) but that the Commission's determination was wrong (31% right, 41% wrong). They want the Portadown Lodge to accept the decision (59% to 27%) and not press ahead with a march.

They would accept almost any ending: the right confirmed but not used (63%), one final parade (63%), a parade with residents' consent (61%), no parade (52%) and the determined parade (49%).

They are more Protestant (54%) than Catholic (37%), and identify as British (51%), Northern Irish only (30%) or Irish (12%).

They hold half of UUP voters (48%), two in five Alliance voters (41%), three in ten SDLP voters (29%) and a quarter of Catholics (24%), but only 23% of DUP voters.

They are equally common in both social classes (29% each). Younger and graduate Protestants are the most likely to be on the Bridge. Three in five (57%) follow the dispute fairly or very closely.

The Bypass (11% of the public)

Taking no side

One in nine adults have no side and no view on Drumcree. They answer 'neither' or 'don't know' to most of the questions – 78% on the Secretary of State's decision, for instance – and make up three quarters (73%) of everyone who could not say which side they sympathise with.

Two in five (40%) are not following the dispute at all; only 23% follow it closely.

They are the least attached to either community: just under two in five are Catholic (39%), slightly fewer are Protestant (37%) and a quarter are neither (24%).

They are the youngest of the four groups (41% under 35), the most female (60%) and the lowest income – a third (35%) have a household income under £20,000 and a third (32%) are struggling to make ends meet.

They are the least likely to think Northern Ireland is a divided place: 39% say it is, against between two thirds and three quarters of the other three perspectives on Drumcree.



Section 6

Policing and the rule of law

Most back the PSNI's decision not to remove protesters

On 27 September and in the subsequent weeks, the PSNI chose not to remove the protesters blocking the Garvaghy Road, and the Portadown Lodge's parade did not go ahead.

Half the public (50%) say that was the right call, against 30% who say the police should have cleared the road so the parade could pass.

Three in four Catholics (75%) back the PSNI's decision, while fewer than one in ten (9%) Catholics say the protesters should have been removed. Protestants lean the other way with half (52%) saying the PSNI were wrong and a quarter (28%) saying the PSNI were right not to remove the protesters.

Thinking about 27 September, when the Portadown Lodge tried to parade along the Garvaghy Road, which comes closer to your view? (%)

● The PSNI was right not to remove protesters, even though it meant the parade could not go ahead ● Don't know ● The PSNI should have removed protesters so that the parade could go ahead

Community background



Protestants want to see prosecutions, Catholics want prosecutions limited to violent offences

If the protesters who blocked the Garvaghy Road are found to have broken the law, **two in five (38%) say anyone who did should be prosecuted, a third (33%) say only those involved in violence or serious offences, and one in five (21%) say it is better to draw a line and move on.**

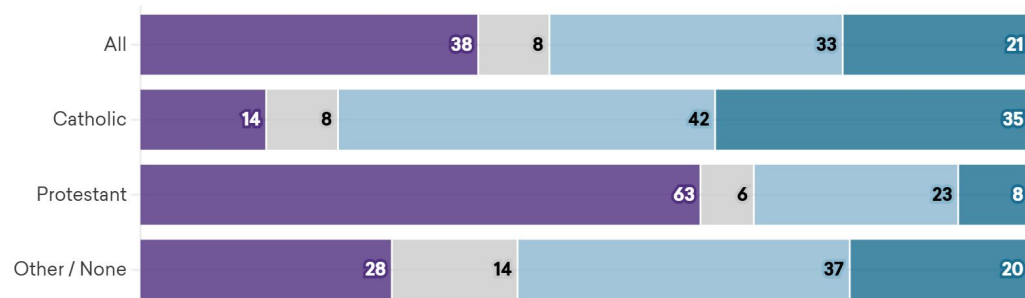
Nearly two in three Protestants (63%) want anyone who broke the law prosecuted, while only 14% of Catholics want everyone who broke the law prosecuted.

A plurality of Catholics (42%) would limit prosecutions to violence or serious offences, ahead of the 35% who would rather draw a line and for prosecutions not to take place.

If those protesting the Orange parade by blocking the Garvaghy Road are found to have broken the law, should they be prosecuted? (%)

- Yes, anyone who broke the law should be prosecuted
- Don't know
- Only those involved in violence or serious offences should be prosecuted
- No, it is better to draw a line and move on

Community background



Fewer than half think the PSNI treats both communities equally

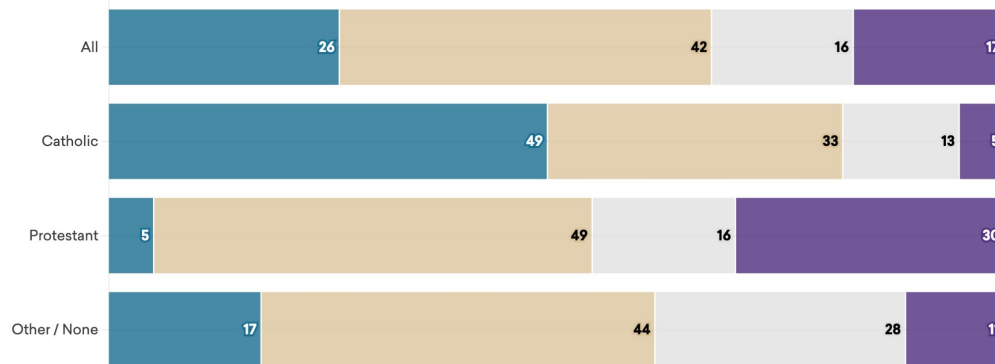
Fewer than half (42%) think the PSNI treats everyone equally regardless of community background, down from 50% in June. Since then the share saying it favours Catholics has risen from 10% to 17%, while the share saying it favours Protestants has increased slightly (22% to 26%).

Catholics think the police favour Protestants; while almost half of Protestants think the police treat people equally regardless of community background. Half of Catholics (49%) say the PSNI treats Protestants more favourably; three in ten Protestants (30%) say it favours Catholics, and only 5% on either side think it favours their own. Protestants are more likely to say it treats both equally (49% to 33%).

Do you think the PSNI generally... (%)

● Treat Protestants more favourably than Catholics
 ● Treat everyone equally regardless of their community background
 ● Don't know
 ● Treat Catholics more favourably than Protestants

Community background



Do you think the PSNI generally... (%)

● Treat Protestants more favourably than Catholics
 ● Treat everyone equally regardless of their community background
 ● Don't know
 ● Treat Catholics more favourably than Protestants



More would discourage a relative from joining the police than encourage them

Asked what they would say to a close relative thinking of joining the PSNI, **more people would discourage them (36%) than encourage them (28%); most of the rest would do neither.**

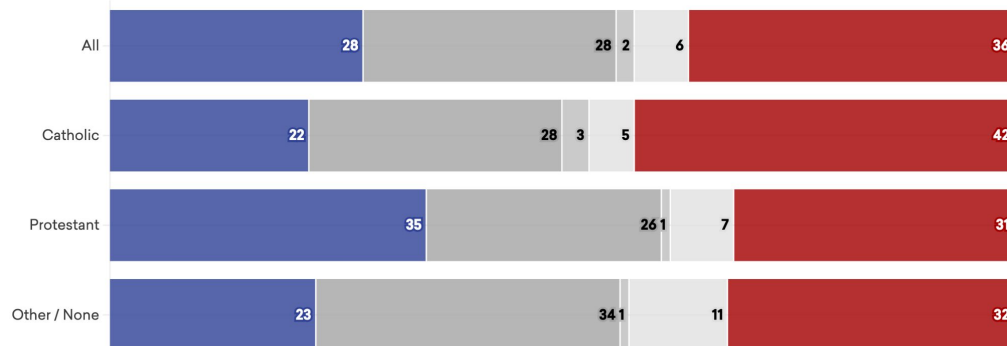
Catholics are more discouraging – 42% would warn a relative off and only 22% would encourage them. Protestants are narrowly more encouraging, 35% encourage to 31% discourage.

Almost 25 years on since the PSNI was established, there remain clear public perception challenges that shape the ability of the PSNI to recruit across the community.

Suppose a close relative of yours was thinking about becoming a police officer here in Northern Ireland. Would you encourage them to join, discourage them from joining, or neither? (%)

● Encourage ● Neither ● It depends ● Don't know ● Discourage

Community background



Source: More in Common, 9-20 October 2026, 1,019 adults in Northern Ireland.

Both communities split the same way on policing bonfires and flags

On bonfires and paramilitary flags, the public leans towards enforcement over discretion – half (51%) say the police should enforce the law in every case even if it risks confrontation, while under two in five (38%) say they should use judgement and avoid confrontation even if some law-breaking goes unchallenged.

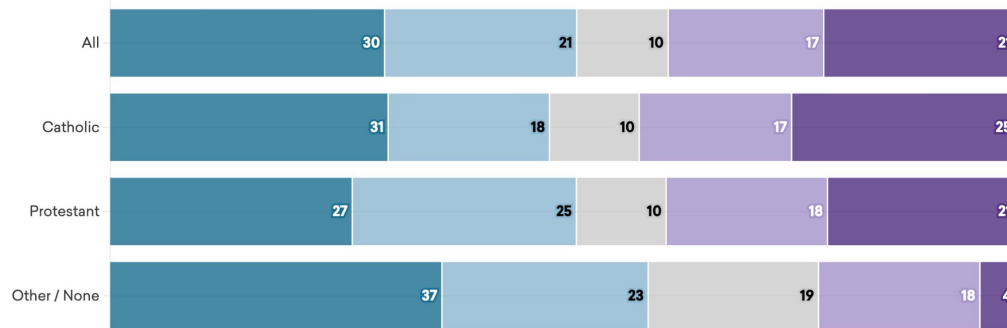
On this, Catholics and Protestants split the same way – 49%–52% for enforcement and 42%–39% for using judgement and discretion.

There is a narrow preference in both communities for the police to apply the law.

Which comes closer to your view? (%)

1 – The police should enforce the law on bonfires and paramilitary flags in every case, even if that risks confrontation 2 Don't know 3 4 – The police should use judgement and avoid confrontation, even if that means some law-breaking goes unchallenged

Community background



Both sides doubt the other would be held accountable over Drumcree

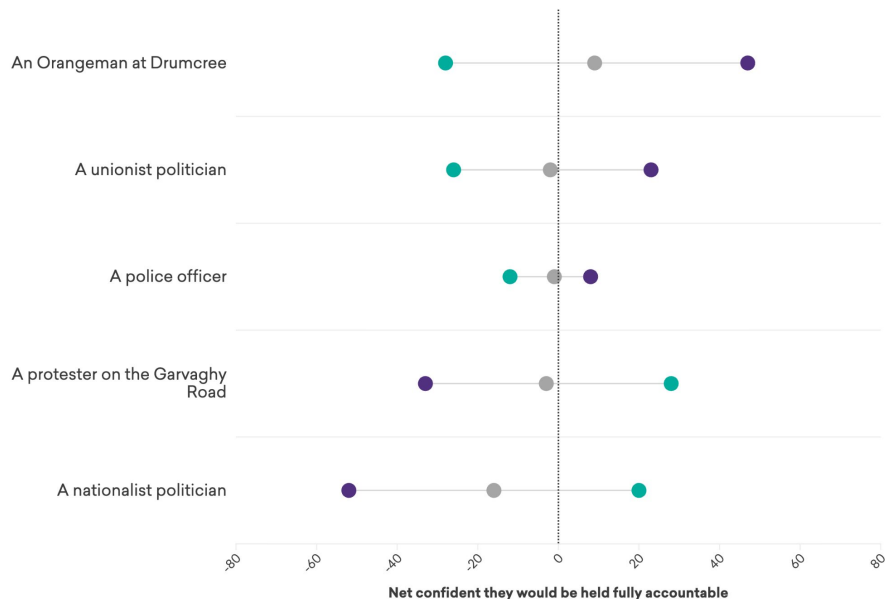
Asked how confident they are that each side would be held fully accountable for breaking the law during the dispute, **each community is confident about its own people being held accountable and doubtful about the other side's.**

Protestants are confident an Orangeman would be held to account (+47 net) and doubt a nationalist politician would be (-52 net), a gap of 99 points. For Catholics the equivalent gap, between a Garvaghy Road protester (+28 net) and a unionist politician (-26 net), is just over half that at 54 points.

How confident are you that each of the following would be held fully accountable if they broke the law during the dispute?

Net score: % confident minus % not confident, by community background

Community background ● Catholic ● Protestant ● All



Three in four think some people are treated differently by the law

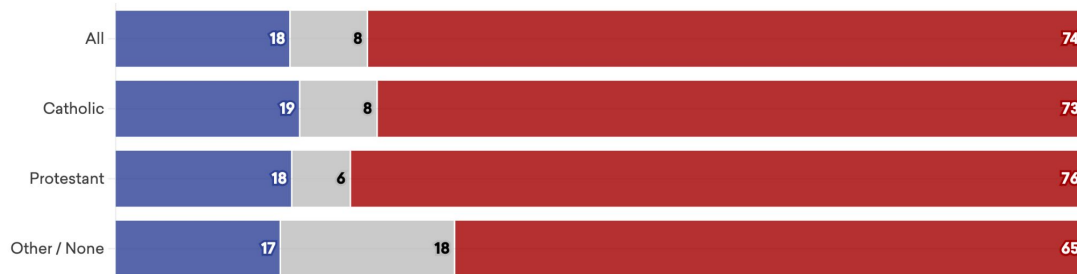
Three in four people (74%) say that in Northern Ireland some people are treated differently by the law than others; fewer than one in five (18%) say everyone is treated equally. Catholics (73%) and Protestants (76%) say so in almost identical numbers.

The challenge facing those administering justice and applying and enforcing the law in Northern Ireland is that each community believes the law comes down harder on its own side than the other side.

Which of the following statements do you agree with most? Please choose one, even if you do not agree with either completely. (%)

- In Northern Ireland, everyone is treated equally under the law ● Don't know
● In Northern Ireland, some people are treated differently by the law in comparison to others

Community background



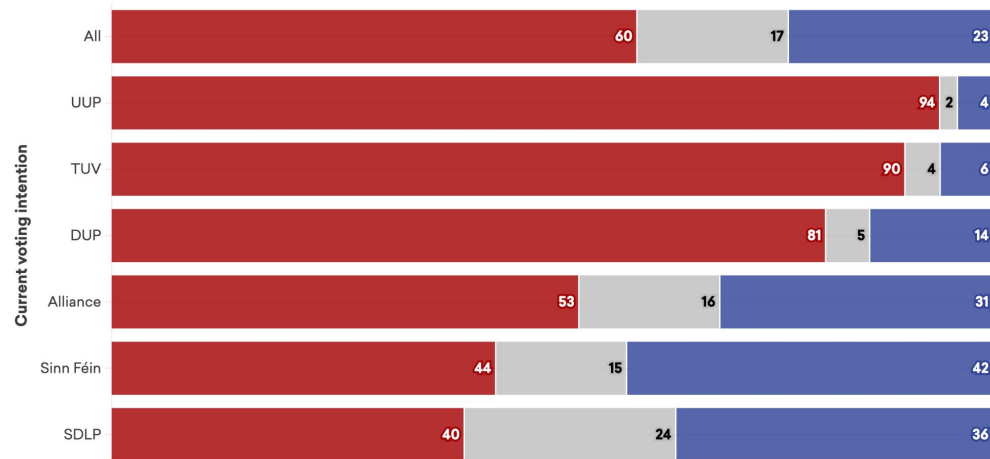
Three in five say that respect for the rule of law is under threat today

Three in five people (60%) in Northern Ireland think respect for the rule of law is under threat in Northern Ireland today, while fewer than a quarter (23%) think it is not.

This sense of threat to the rule of law is the overwhelming view among unionist voters, a majority view among Alliance voters, while nationalist voters are more evenly divided.

Thinking about respect for the rule of law in Northern Ireland today, which of the following comes closest to your view? (%)

● Respect for the rule of law is under threat in Northern Ireland today ● Don't know ● Respect for the rule of law is not under threat in Northern Ireland today



Disagreement about whether the law and Parades Commission determinations must always be obeyed

Asked whether people should obey the law even when they believe it is wrong, or are sometimes justified in breaking a law they believe is wrong, **the public leans towards obedience to the law by a margin of 56% to 38%.**

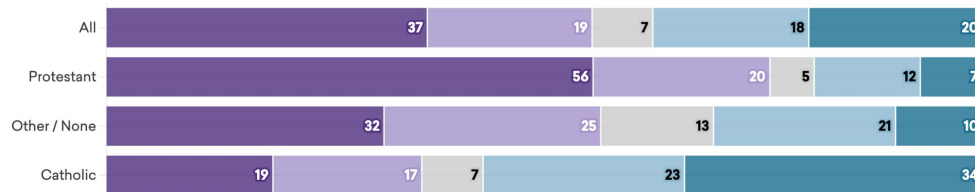
Three in four Protestants (75%) say obey the law regardless, while Catholics lean the other way with more than half (58%) saying breaking a law that you believe is wrong is sometimes justified.

Both communities are markedly less willing to follow Parades Commission determinations than to obey the law in general – just over half of Protestants (56%) and just under a fifth of Catholics (17%) say rulings should be followed even by those who think they are wrong.

Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? (%)

1 – People should obey the law even when they believe it is wrong 2 – Don't know 3 – People are sometimes justified in breaking a law they believe is wrong 4 – People are sometimes justified in breaking a law they believe is wrong

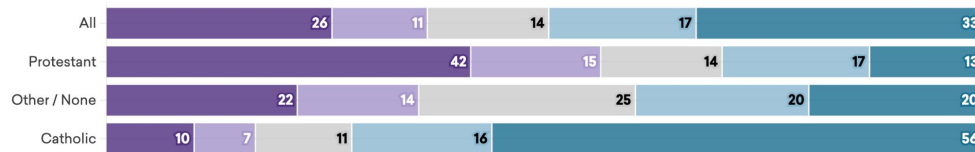
Community background



Which of the following comes closest to your view? (%)

1 – Parades Commission determinations should be followed even by people who think they are wrong 2 – Don't know 3 – People are sometimes justified in breaking a law they believe is wrong 4 – People are sometimes justified in breaking a law they believe is wrong

Community background



Section 7

Culture and respect



People are more likely to say Irish culture is respected than British culture

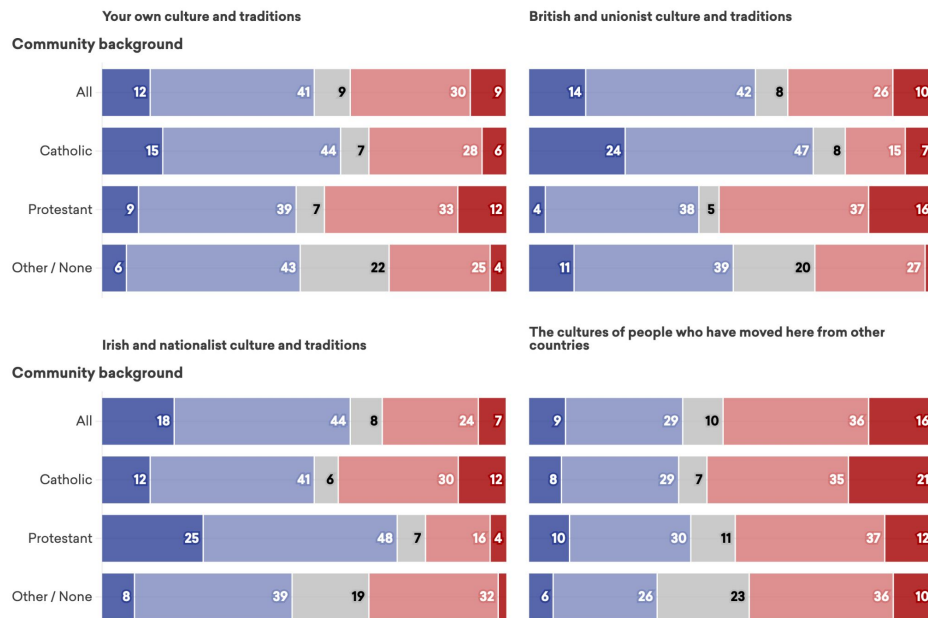
Asked how well different cultures are respected here, **the public rates Irish and nationalist culture (62% well) above British and unionist culture (56%),** and both far above the cultures of people who have moved here from elsewhere (38%).

Catholics say British culture is respected well (71%) more than Irish culture is (53%); Protestants say Irish culture is respected well (73%) more than British culture is (42%).

Asked about their own culture, **Catholics are more content with how their own culture is respected (59% well) than Protestants are about theirs (48%),** with 45% of Protestants saying their traditions are respected not very well or not at all.

How well do you think each of the following is respected in Northern Ireland today? (%)

● Very well ● Fairly well ● Don't know ● Not very well ● Not at all



Sport is often a shared space; bonfires and parades are more contested

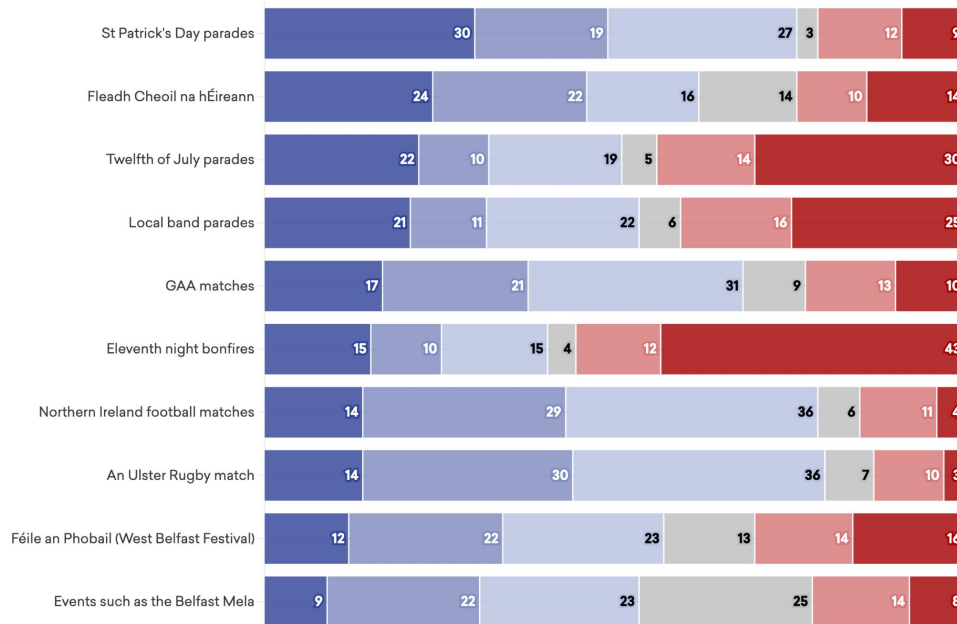
More in Common tested a series of 10 events (either specific events or types of events) in the Northern Ireland sporting and cultural calendar – testing views and engagement from ‘I go to this’ to ‘I’d rather this didn’t happen’.

Sport sits at the welcoming end of the spectrum – where most people are either open to going or relaxed or indifferent about them happening.

Parades and bonfires are a different matter. Three in ten would rather the Twelfth of July parades didn’t happen and a quarter say the same about local band parades, and a plurality (43%) would rather the Eleventh night bonfires didn’t happen.

Which comes closest to how you feel about each of the following? (%)

● I go to this ● I don't go, but I would if someone asked me ● It's not for me, but I'm glad it happens ● Don't know
 ● It's fine, but not near where I live ● I would rather it didn't happen



Half of Catholics would rather the Twelfth didn't happen; a quarter of Protestants say the same about the Fleadh

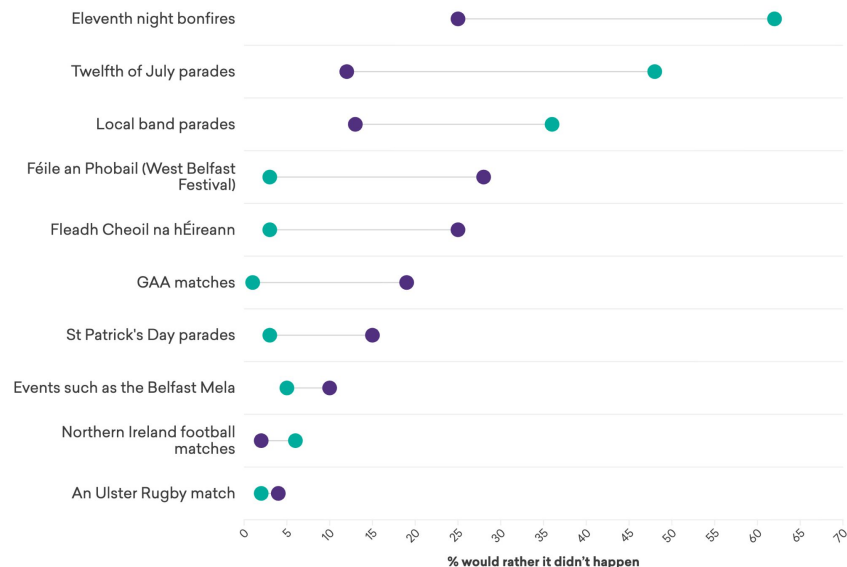
Half of Catholics (48%) would rather Twelfth of July parades didn't happen, 36% say the same of local band parades, and 62% of Eleventh night bonfires.

Among Protestants, the equivalent figures for the big nationalist events are around a quarter: 28% for Féile an Phobail, 25% for the Fleadh, 19% for GAA matches.

Living near a parade softens Protestant objections but not Catholic ones. Protestants near a parade route are much less likely to object to Eleventh night bonfires (20% against 36%). However, among Catholics those near a parade are slightly more likely to object to the Twelfth (52% against 44%).

Which comes closest to how you feel about each of the following? % saying "I would rather it didn't happen", by community background

Community background ● Catholic ● Protestant



Protestants see the Orange Order as faith, tradition and a family day out, Catholics see sectarianism and dominance

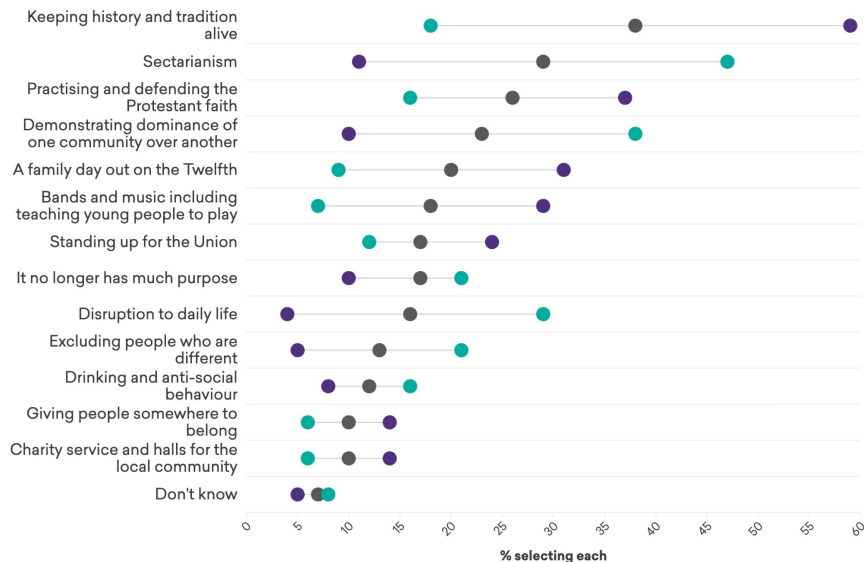
Catholics and Protestants have two different views of what the Orange Order signifies in our society today.

Asked what the Orange Order is about today, Protestants say history and tradition (59%), protecting the Protestant faith (37%) and a family day out for the Twelfth (31%). Catholics see a different picture of sectarianism (47%) and dominance of one community over another (38%).

Which of the following best describe what the Orange Order is about today? Select up to three. (%)

% selecting each option, by community background

Community background ● All ● Catholic ● Protestant



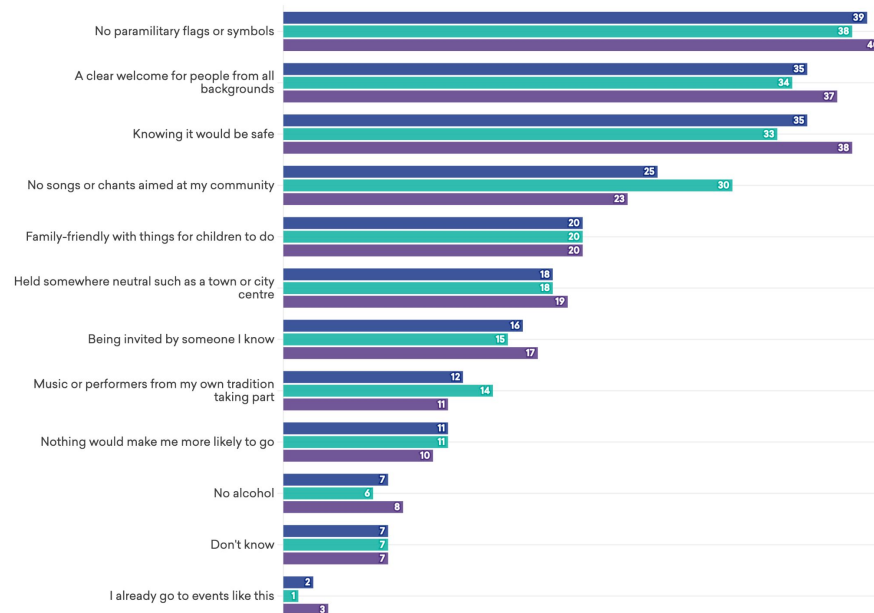
Catholics and Protestants have the same expectations before going to the other side's events

Asked what would make them more likely to go to an event from a tradition other than their own, **Catholics and Protestants have the same answer**: no paramilitary flags or symbols (38% and 40%), a clear welcome for people from all backgrounds (34% and 37%), and knowing it would be safe (33% and 38%).

Family-friendly events, a neutral venue and a personal invitation each matter to roughly one in six or one in five on both sides. **Only one in ten (11%) say nothing would make them more likely to go.**

Which of the following, if any, would make you more likely to go to an event from a tradition other than your own?
Select up to three. (%)

● All ● Catholic ● Protestant



Most think the Fleadh was good for Belfast and half plan to go next year

Seven in ten people (72%) say the Fleadh was good for Belfast and only 7% say it was bad. Half (52%) say they are likely to go when it returns next year.

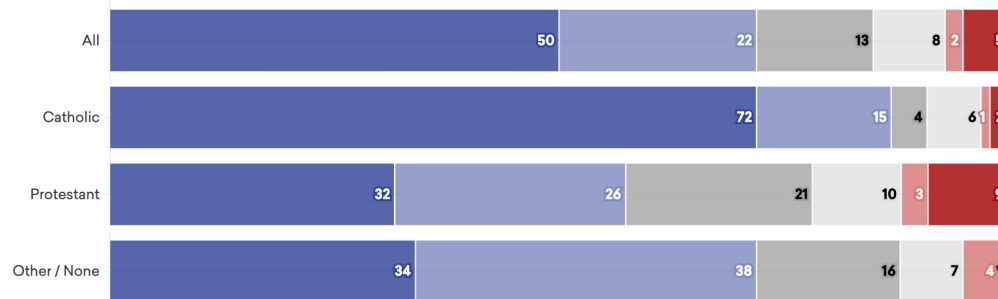
The verdict on the Fleadh crosses the divide in Northern Ireland. Almost nine in ten Catholics (87%) think the Fleadh was good for Belfast, and almost three in five Protestants (58%) hold the same view.

When thinking about attending next year, three in four Catholics (73%) say they are likely to go, and more than a third of Protestants (36%) say the same.

Overall, do you think the Fleadh was good or bad for Belfast? (%)

Very good Fairly good Neither good nor bad Don't know Fairly bad Very bad

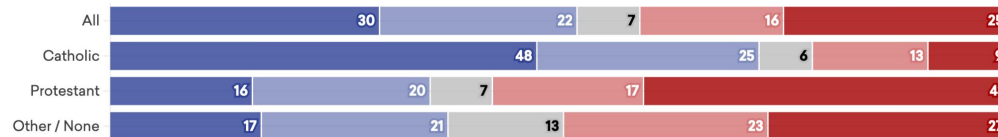
Community background



The Fleadh returns to Belfast next year. How likely are you to go? (%)

Very likely Fairly likely Don't know Not very likely Not at all likely

Community background



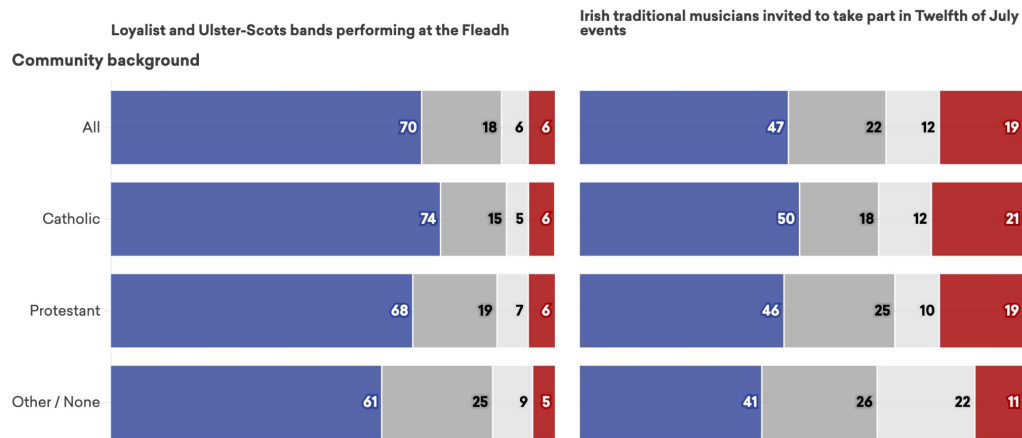
Seven in ten welcomed Loyalist bands at the Fleadh, half would welcome Irish trad musicians at the Twelfth

Loyalist and Ulster-Scots bands played at the Fleadh this summer, and **seven in ten people (70%) say that was a good thing; only 6% say it was bad**. Catholics (74%) are slightly more positive than Protestants (68%), but both communities welcomed it by a margin of more than ten to one.

When testing the hypothetical cultural exchange the other way – **inviting traditional Irish musicians to the Twelfth of July celebrations** – support is lower than for Loyalist and Ulster-Scots bands at the Fleadh, but **the public, across communities, are more than twice as likely to think it would be a good thing than a bad thing**.

Loyalist and Ulster-Scots bands were among those who performed at the Fleadh. Do you think it was a good or a bad thing that these bands took part? / And do you think it would be a good or a bad thing if Irish traditional musicians were invited to take part in Twelfth of July events? (%)

● A good thing ● Neither a good nor a bad thing ● Don't know ● A bad thing



Expectations that Orange culture would be respected in a united Ireland are low

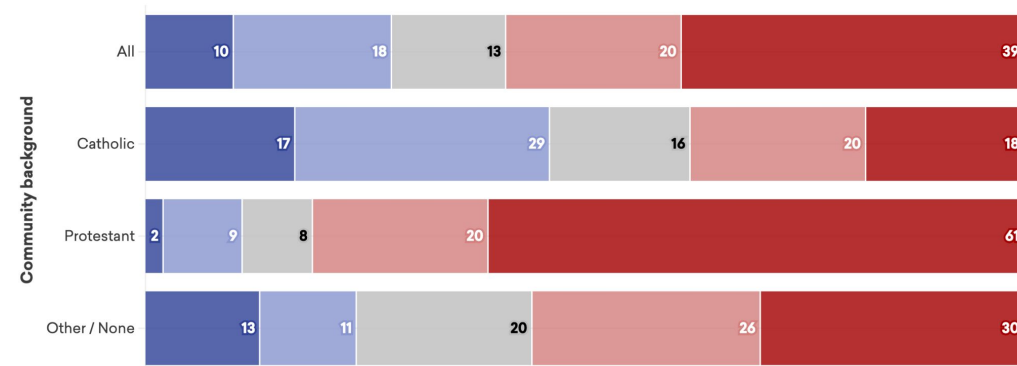
Asked whether Orange culture – parades, bands and lodges – would be respected in a united Ireland, **three in five (59%) say unlikely and fewer than three in ten (28%) say likely. Two in five (39%) say very unlikely.**

The view that Orange culture is unlikely to be respected in a potential united Ireland is an almost unanimous view among Protestants in Northern Ireland. Only 2% of Protestants say Orange culture is very likely to be respected, whereas four in five (81%) say that it's unlikely (61% very unlikely).

Catholics are more evenly divided – almost half (46%) think Orange culture would be respected in a united Ireland, while almost two in five (38%) think it would not, and 16% say they don't know.

If there were a united Ireland, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that Orange culture, such as parades, bands and lodges, would be respected? (%)

● Very likely ● Fairly likely ● Don't know ● Fairly unlikely ● Very unlikely



Protestants and Catholics as likely as each other to say Irish culture is respected in Northern Ireland

When asked about how Irish culture is respected in Northern Ireland today, **three in five (62%) think that Irish culture is well respected in Northern Ireland today, while fewer than a third (29%) think it is not.**

This is a view held consistently across communities in Northern Ireland. Almost two thirds of Protestants (65%) and Catholics (62%) say Irish culture is well respected today.

Compared to views about respect for Orange culture in a united Ireland, there is a clear contrast. People in Northern Ireland are confident that Irish culture has a secure place in Northern Ireland today; but are less confident that Orange culture would have a similar respect in a united Ireland.

How well, if at all, do you think Irish culture, such as the Irish language, GAA and traditional music, is respected in Northern Ireland today? (%)

● Very well respected ● Fairly well respected ● Don't know ● Not very well respected ● Not at all respected



Section 8

After Drumcree



More say the public's response to the Drumcree dispute made them less hopeful than more hopeful

Asked whether the way ordinary people responded to Drumcree has made them more or less hopeful about Northern Ireland, more (36%) say less hopeful, while just over a quarter (27%) say more hopeful; and a similar proportion (26%) say neither.

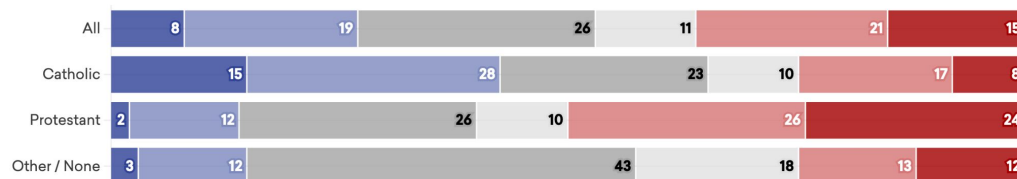
Catholics are more hopeful about the response to Drumcree – 43% more, 24% less – **while Protestants are much less hopeful about the response to Drumcree** – 50% less hopeful, 14% more hopeful.

Just over a third (36%) say there was more tension than they had anticipated, against 25% who said less. Protestants (41%) are slightly more likely than Catholics (34%) to say it has been more tense than expected.

Has the way most ordinary people have responded to Drumcree made you more or less hopeful about Northern Ireland? (%)

● Much more hopeful
 ■ Somewhat more hopeful
 ■ Neither more nor less hopeful
 ■ Don't know
 ■ Somewhat less hopeful
 ■ Much less hopeful

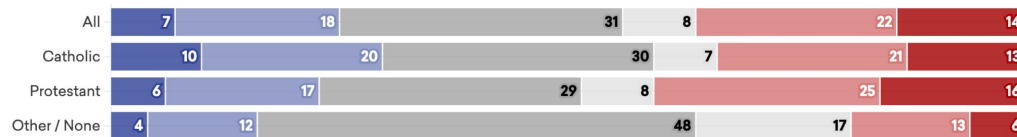
Community background



Thinking about the last few weeks surrounding Drumcree, has there been more or less tension in Northern Ireland than you expected? (%)

● Much less than I expected
 ■ A little less than I expected
 ■ About what I expected
 ■ Don't know
 ■ A little more than I expected
 ■ Much more than I expected

Community background



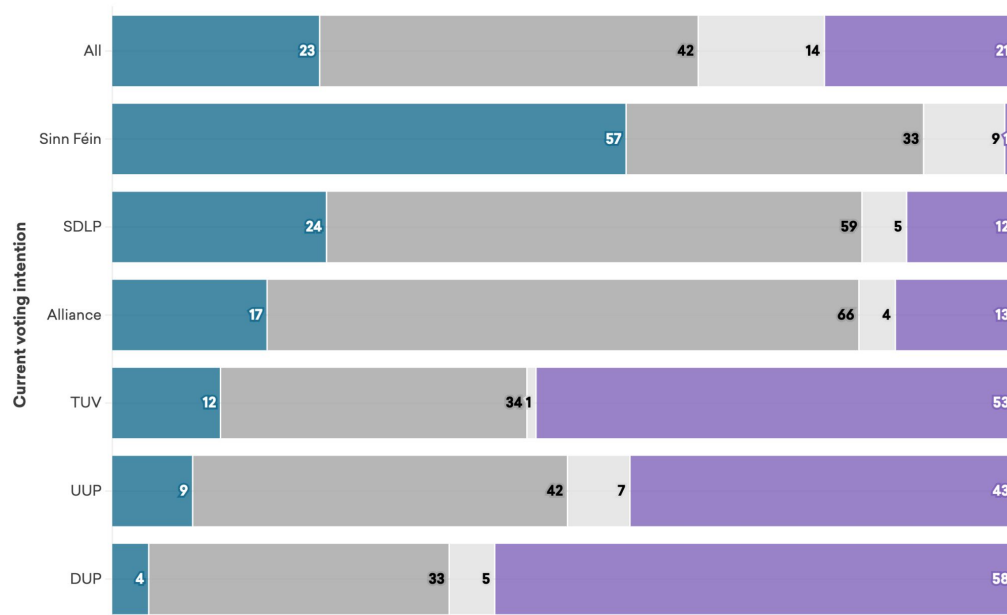
Drumcree changes few minds on the constitution

Asked what Drumcree tells us about Northern Ireland's constitutional future – union or unity – the most common answer is nothing. A plurality say it makes no difference to the case either way, just under a quarter (23%) say it strengthens the case for Irish unity and just over a fifth (21%) say it strengthens the case for the union.

The strongest supporters of the union and unity have both taken the fallout from Drumcree as confirming what they already believed. Alliance voters and SDLP voters are more likely to say it hasn't made a difference one way or the other.

Which comes closest to your view of what the Drumcree dispute tells us about Northern Ireland's constitutional future? (%)

● It strengthens the case for a united Ireland
 ● It makes no difference to the case either way
 ● Don't know
 ● It strengthens the case for remaining in the United Kingdom



Three in five say Drumcree shows NI hasn't moved on much since the 1990s

Asked whether Drumcree shows Northern Ireland has moved on from the 1990s or not, **three in five (60%) say it hasn't moved on much, while fewer than a third (30%) say it has moved on a great deal.**

Catholics are more divided – 53% not moved on, 39% moved on a great deal – and are twice as likely as Protestants to sit at the most optimistic end of the scale (19% to 10%).

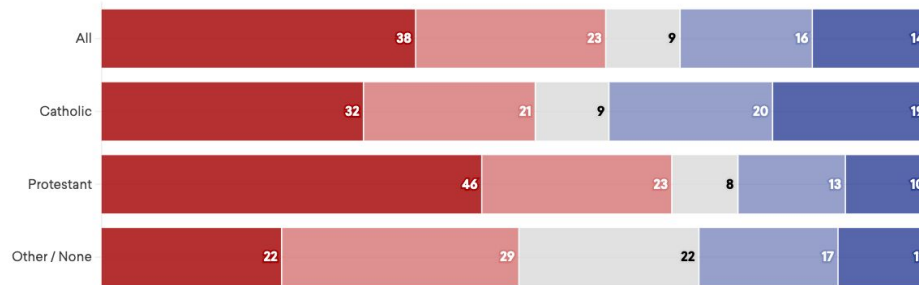


The dispute re-opens old divisions and I worry that the Secretary of State has made things worse by his determination, that it will lead to violence. I despair of Northern Ireland and its politicians. They do not work for the benefit of all the people
Protestant respondent (open-text)

Which comes closer to your view? The current Drumcree dispute shows Northern Ireland... (%)

● 1 – has not moved on much since the 1990s ● 2 ● Don't know ● 3 ● 4 – has moved on a great deal since the 1990s

Community background



Source: More in Common, 9–20 October 2026, 1,019 adults in Northern Ireland.

Drumcree is certainly still a sensitive subject, and too recent in our history for people to have forgotten about it... None of us want to go back to what this country was. Unfortunately there are small pockets of our society where people are brought up with a hatred towards others from different backgrounds
Catholic respondent (open-text)

Two in three still believe that Northern Ireland's best years are ahead of us

Two in three (66%) lean towards Northern Ireland's best years being ahead, up from 60% in June.

Among Catholics, "best years ahead" has jumped from 58% to 71% since the polling conducted immediately after the June riots, and the share who say so most strongly from 30% to 40%. Among Protestants it is broadly unchanged (63% to 59%).



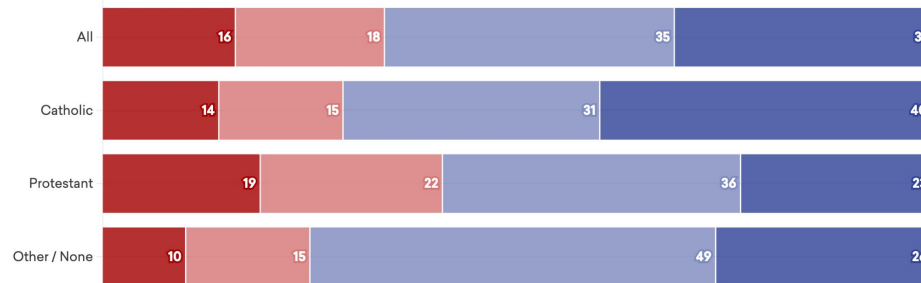
When I look at the success of the Fleadh this year, where both communities enjoyed a weekend full of music and tradition, I was especially proud that this could happen. I am a Protestant and I have absolutely no interest in politics – all I want is a peaceful life, and to get on with my neighbours, many of whom are Catholic

Protestant respondent (open-text)

Which of the following comes closest to your view? (%)

● 1 – Northern Ireland's best years are behind us ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 – Northern Ireland's best years are ahead of us

Community background



Source: More in Common, 9–20 October 2026, 1,019 adults in Northern Ireland.

The majority of both sides don't want to go back to trouble – both sides were living in peace till this issue arose. While I can see both sides, for others they will never back down due to hurt in the past and past principles. It's time to meet in the middle and find a ground that both sides are willing to compromise on

Catholic respondent (open-text)

What the public want to end the Drumcree dispute

82%

say it matters that the dispute in Drumcree ends without violence – this is twice the share who say the same about the parade not going ahead, and almost three times the share who say so about it going ahead (30%)

60%

want current parading arrangements to be left alone even if one side feels they might be unfair, rather than reopening them

50%

say confirming the Portadown Orangemen's right to parade but not using it would be an acceptable way of ending the dispute – the only acceptable ending for voters of all parties

Methodological note

Fieldwork dates: 9th October 2026 – 20th October 2026

Sample size: 1,019

Population effectively represented: Adults in Northern Ireland aged 18 and over using computer assisted web interviewing.

Sample detail: Respondents have been weighted according to age/sex interlocked, local council area, 2022 Assembly election vote, ethnicity, education level and community background.

Note on sub-group sizes: Findings for groups of fewer than 100 respondents – UUP, TUV, Alliance and SDLP voters, as well as Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon council area, Catholics and Protestants with household income under £20,000, Protestant women under 35 and Protestant men over 55 – are indicative and carry a higher margin of error. Smaller parties are not reported separately.

For further information, please contact: northernireland@moreincommon.com

Latent Class Analysis Methodology note

The input was 14 questions from the poll: who respondents sympathise with, whether the Secretary of State and the Parades Commission were right or wrong, whether the Lodge should keep pressing or accept the decision, whether one side is right or both have a case, whether the dispute should be settled soon or on their community's terms, whether Commission rulings should be followed or resisted, and whether each of seven possible endings to the dispute would be acceptable or unacceptable. Each answer was collapsed to three levels – one side, the other side, or neither / don't know – so that the groups reflect which way people lean, not how strongly.

Models with one to six groups were fitted to all 1,019 respondents, weighted as in the published figures. Fit statistics kept improving as groups were added, as they usually do with this many questions, so the choice of four rests on interpretability: a fifth group split an existing one without adding a distinct pattern of views. The four-group solution separates people cleanly – on average, respondents are placed in their group with 95 to 97 per cent certainty, and around nine in ten (85% to 93%, depending on the group) are placed with better than 90 per cent certainty. Overall classification certainty (entropy) is 0.94, where 1 would mean every respondent placed with no doubt.

The groups were then named by More in Common's researchers.



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