



# Survey of public attitudes towards conduct in public life 2006

Prepared for the Committee on  
Standards in Public Life

Prepared by Ipsos MORI Social  
Research Institute

**Ipsos MORI**  
Social Research Institute

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

## **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

### **Integrity**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

### **Objectivity**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

### **Openness**

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

### **Honesty**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword by the Chairman of the Committee, Sir Alistair Graham</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>List of tables</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>List of figures</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1. Overall perceptions of standards in public life</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2. Trust in public office-holders</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>3. National politicians: expectations and perceptions of standards</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4. Senior public officials: expectations and perceptions of standards</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>5. MPs and voting in Parliament</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>6. Views on public sector recruitment practice</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>7. Media scrutiny and the private lives of public office-holders</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>8. Public office-holders and accountability</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>9. Attitudes in Scotland</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>10. Attitudes in Northern Ireland</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>A. The political context and possible influences on public opinion</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>B. Technical appendix</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>About the Committee</b>	<b>Inside back cover</b>



# FOREWORD

## Sir Alistair Graham, Chairman of the Committee



I am delighted to publish this report on the Committee's second national survey into public attitudes towards standards of conduct in public life. It was commissioned by the Committee and carried out by Ipsos MORI Social Research.

This second survey provides the first opportunity to assess public attitudes, expectations and perceptions towards the behaviour of those in public life, against the baseline data established by the first survey published in 2004.

This report has an important addition to the first survey. As a result of financial contributions from the Scottish Executive and Northern Ireland Administration we were able to increase the survey sample size in Scotland and, for the first time, survey the public in Northern Ireland. This has enabled us to produce disaggregated information about the attitudes of members of the public in these two parts of the United Kingdom, and to compare these with public attitudes in England and Wales. The result is a report that is rich in comparative data and we hope that this UK-wide approach, with disaggregated results for its constituent parts, can be continued for future surveys.

This second survey broadly confirms the finding of the first: that although the public is moderately positive about standards of conduct overall, they hold some negative perceptions about the behaviour of national politicians, and to a lesser extent, senior public officials. These are views that are also largely shared by the public in Scotland and Northern Ireland, albeit with interesting differences in some of the detail.

The public's perceptions about the extent to which national politicians fail to demonstrate some key behavioural attributes may help explain the low levels of trust the public continues to place in these public office-holders. It must be a matter of concern that levels of trust remain low and that, for example, Government Ministers now appear second from bottom in the list of professions people would generally trust to tell the truth.

A further possible cause for concern is the apparent shift in the proportion of people who, in 2004, were confident in the financial probity of MPs and Ministers, but who now say they are unsure. This is an area we will wish to look closely at in the next survey to try to establish whether this is an early indication of a shift in the public's previously relatively high opinion of the financial probity of national politicians.

I believe again that this research gives some key pointers to the changes in behaviour that might start to address negative public perceptions and increase confidence in the political system. I would continue to urge all those in public life to reflect on the findings and consider how their own and their organisation's behaviour matches up to the expectations placed upon them by the public.

Finally I must thank the Committee's Research Advisory Board and the Ipsos MORI Research team for their hard work producing this report. Our thanks also goes to all those members of the public who gave up their time to respond to the detailed and comprehensive questionnaire. It is their insights that are presented in this report.

*Alistair Graham*

# LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table A: Behavioural attributes used in the research	8
Table B: Important qualities for MPs and ministers	29
Table C: Perceptions of MPs' actual behaviour	30
Table D: Perceptions of ministers' actual behaviour	31
Table E: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials	37
Table F: Perceptions of senior public officials' behaviours	39
Table G: Changes in the perceptions of incorrect recruitment procedures	48
Table H: The extent to which the authorities clamp down on incorrect recruitment procedures	49
Table I: Confidence in authorities / the media regarding standards in public life across the UK	54
Table J: Ratings of standards of conduct in Scotland/ Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom	58
Table K: Ratings of standards of conduct in Northern Ireland/ Scotland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom	68
Table L: Factors commonly mentioned that might influence people's views	Appendix A
Table M: Key political events April 2004 – December 2005	Appendix A
Table N: Key political events between January and April 2006 (survey fieldwork period)	Appendix A
Table O: Key political events in Scotland 2004 – 2006	Appendix A
Table P: Key political events in Northern Ireland 2004 – 2006	Appendix A
Table Q: Fieldwork outcomes and response rates	Appendix B
Table R: Sample profile – Area	Appendix B
Table S: Sample profile – Rim Weights/ Area	Appendix B
Table T: UK Standard Errors, Design Effects and Design Factors for selected variables	Appendix B
Table U: GB Standard Errors, Design Effects and Design Factors for selected variables	Appendix B
Table V: Regressions of overall ratings of standards in public life on types of public figures trusted: unstandardised regression coefficients: Great Britain	Appendix B
Table W: Regressions of overall ratings of standards in public life on types of public figures trusted: unstandardised regression coefficients: Scotland	Appendix B
Table X: Regressions of overall ratings of standards in public life on types of public figures trusted: unstandardised regression coefficients: Northern Ireland	Appendix B
Table Y: Social grade definitions	Appendix B

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Overall ratings for standards of conduct	11
Figure 2: Trust in different professional groups	13
Figure 3: Perceptions of MPs' vs. government ministers' vs. senior public officials' actual behaviour	14
Figure 4: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs	15
Figure 5: Confidence in authorities and the media	16
Figure 6: Overall ratings for standards of conduct	19
Figure 7: Perceived change in standards of conduct	20
Figure 8: The UK compared to elsewhere in Europe	21
Figure 9: Trust in different professional groups	24
Figure 10: Importance of different behaviours	28
Figure 11: Perceptions of MPs' vs. government ministers' actual behaviour	32
Figure 12: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials	36
Figure 13: Perceptions of MPs' vs. senior public office-holders' actual behaviour	38
Figure 14: MPs and voting in Parliament	42
Figure 15: Factors most likely to influence MPs when voting	44
Figure 16: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs	46
Figure 17: Perceptions of unfair recruitment	47
Figure 18: Private lives of public office-holders	51
Figure 19: Confidence in authorities and the media	53
Figure 20: Overall ratings for standards of conduct: Scotland views	57
Figure 21: Trust in different professional groups: Scotland views	59
Figure 22: Importance of different behaviours: Scotland views	61
Figure 23: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials: Scotland views	62
Figure 24: MPs and voting in Parliament: Scotland views	63
Figure 25: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs: Scotland views	65
Figure 26: Confidence in authorities and the media: Scotland views	66
Figure 27: Overall ratings for standards of conduct: Northern Ireland views	67
Figure 28: Trust in different professional groups: Northern Ireland views	69
Figure 29: Importance of different behaviours: Northern Ireland views	70
Figure 30: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials: Northern Ireland views	72
Figure 31: MPs and voting in Parliament: Northern Ireland views	73
Figure 32: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs: Northern Ireland views	75
Figure 33: Confidence in authorities and the media: Northern Ireland views	76

## Note to reader

This report presents the findings of a survey of a representative cross-section of 1,849 residents of *Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, which took place between 29 December 2005 and 11 April 2006.

A previous survey was conducted of 1,097 residents of *Great Britain only* between 5 November 2003 and 7 April 2004. It is anticipated that the survey will be conducted in future years across the United Kingdom as has been done this year.

In the main body of this report (chapters one to eight) comparisons are made between Great Britain as a whole in 2004 and 2006. In order to make comparisons more straightforward, results in Northern Ireland and Scotland are also compared with the Great Britain totals.

In the summary reports (chapters nine and ten), on attitudes in both Scotland and Northern Ireland, findings are compared with results in England and Wales.



# INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a national survey of public attitudes towards the standards of conduct of public office-holders in the United Kingdom. The survey was commissioned by the Committee on Standards in Public Life as part of a long-term study to track public opinion about standards in public life. The survey was carried out in 2005/06 by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute. A previous survey was carried out in 2003/04 across Great Britain by BMRB. The Scottish Executive and the Northern Ireland Administration provided financial contributions to enable this survey to be conducted on a UK-wide basis.

## Background and objectives

The Committee on Standards in Public Life was set up in October 1994 by the then Prime Minister, Rt Hon John Major MP. Its terms of reference are:

*To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards in public life.*

The terms of reference cover a range of categories of public office-holder, encompassing elected and appointed public office-holders at national and local level.

In its First Report in 1995, the Committee drew up the Seven Principles of Public Life, as a statement of the values “inherent in the ethic of public service”. These Principles have been central to each of the Committee’s subsequent reports, which have covered most of the major groups of public office-holders. The Seven Principles, which are intended to apply to all public offices, are: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. The scope of each Principle, as it relates to the conduct of public office-holders, is defined by a short explanatory statement. The Seven Principles have been widely adopted by public institutions, and are broadly in line with the most common ethical principles adopted in the 29 OECD countries.

In 2001, it was decided that the Committee should undertake research in order to explore whether the Principles reflect the general public’s priorities in relation to the conduct of public office-holders; and to gauge public opinion on how well public office-holders measure up to the Principles. A survey was carried out in 2003/04 across Great Britain by BMRB and this 2005/06 study is a follow-up of that survey. In addition, the size of the survey sample was increased to enable disaggregated results of public attitudes in Scotland and Northern Ireland to be produced.

This report compares findings from the 2005/06 survey in Great Britain with those from the 2003/04 survey, as well as offering comparisons between the different countries<sup>1</sup> of the United Kingdom. Future surveys can be compared with 2005/06 on a UK-wide basis.

---

<sup>1</sup> Booster surveys were carried out in Scotland and Northern Ireland to enable results to be compared with the rest of the United Kingdom. No such booster survey was carried out in Wales so the results obtained in Wales will not be assessed as an individual country.

The aims and objectives of the survey were as follows.

1. To track what the public sees as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of elected and appointed holders of public office.
2. To track how far the public believes that the behaviour of holders of public offices is, for the most part, acceptable or unacceptable.
3. To track how far the public believes that holders of public office are effectively held responsible and accountable for their conduct.

## Methodology

The questionnaire for the survey was largely based on the 2003/04 questionnaire, with further refinements made by the research team at Ipsos MORI in consultation with the Committee's Research Advisory Board. Table A displays how the behavioural attributes asked about in the questionnaire correspond to the Seven Principles of Conduct.

**Table A: Behavioural attributes used in the research**

<b>Behavioural attribute</b>	<b>Which of the Seven Principles the attribute relates to</b>
They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public	Selflessness
They should not use their power for their own personal gain	Selflessness; Objectivity
They should not take bribes	Selflessness; Integrity
They should own up when they make mistakes	Accountability; Openness
They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	Accountability; Openness
They should make sure that public money is used wisely	Fiscal prudence – identified as an important consideration for some respondents in earlier qualitative work and included in the 2004 survey, not covered by the Seven Principles
They should set a good example for others in their private lives	Private behaviour – identified as an important consideration for some respondents in earlier qualitative work and included in the 2004 survey, not covered by the Seven Principles
They should tell the truth	Act in an honest manner – identified as an important consideration for some respondents in earlier qualitative work and included in the 2004 survey. Distinct from 'Honesty' Principle which is concerned with declaring private interests and resolving conflicts of interest.
They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important	Identified as an important consideration for some respondents in earlier qualitative work and included in the 2004 survey, not covered by the Seven Principles
They should be competent at their jobs	Identified as an important consideration for some respondents in earlier qualitative work and included in the 2004 survey, not covered by the Seven Principles

To reduce the average length of the questionnaire from 40 to around 30 minutes, certain questions from the 2003/04 questionnaire were identified for deletion or amendment. A few questions were tailored for Scotland and Northern Ireland, and a couple of extra questions were asked in these countries.

The questionnaire was pilot tested in October 2005. Face-to-face paper-based interviews were carried out in respondents' own homes by Ipsos MORI interviewers and observed by members of the Ipsos MORI research team. Twenty-seven pilot interviews were completed in total. A final version of the questionnaire was then prepared and approved in early December 2005 by the Committee's Research Advisory Board.

The main survey was conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) between 29 December 2005 and 11 April 2006. Interviews were conducted by fully-trained interviewers from Ipsos MORI's national face-to-face fieldforce. A total of 1,849 interviews were conducted with adults aged 18 and over across the UK. 1,044 interviews were conducted with a representative sample of adults across Great Britain and a further 402 in Scotland and 403 in Northern Ireland in order to facilitate comparisons with different countries of the UK. The booster interviews in Scotland added to the interviews in Scotland achieved as part of the Great Britain survey give a total of 491 interviews in Scotland. The average interview length across the UK was just under 32 minutes.

When fieldwork was closed, 1,989 addresses in 153 postcode sectors had been issued for the Great Britain survey, yielding a total of 1,044 usable interviews from 1,888 addresses that fell within the scope of the survey<sup>2</sup>. This represents a response rate at eligible addresses of 55.3%.

## Reporting conventions

The commentary in the following chapters is supported by summary tables and figures. These give the unweighted base of respondents answering the question(s) concerned for the sample as a whole and for any subgroups shown in the table or figure. The statistics reported in tables and figures are generally percentages, unless otherwise stated. The symbol "\*" in a table represents less than 0.5%, but not zero which is shown as "0".

In the main body of the report (chapters one to eight) comparisons are made between views among adults living in Great Britain as a whole between 2004 and 2006. In order to make comparisons more straightforward, results in Northern Ireland and Scotland are also compared with the Great Britain totals. In the summary reports (chapters nine and ten) attitudes in Scotland and Northern Ireland findings are compared with results in England and Wales.

Differences reported in the commentary between subgroups within the sample are either statistically significant at the 95% confidence level<sup>3</sup> or are judged by the researchers to reflect real differences, on the basis of similar findings elsewhere in the study.

<sup>2</sup> All addresses except those that were untraceable; not yet ready for occupation or empty; derelict or demolished; business or institutional premises; contained nobody aged 18+; or were out-of-scope for another reason.

<sup>3</sup> See the technical appendix for an explanation of sampling errors, confidence intervals and design effects.

## Report Layout

Following this introduction and an executive summary, the report is divided into the following sections:

1. Overall perceptions of standards in public life
2. Trust in public office-holders
3. National politicians: public expectations and perceptions of standards
4. Senior public officials: public expectations and perceptions of standards
5. MPs and voting in Parliament
6. Views on public sector recruitment practice
7. Media scrutiny and the private lives of public office-holders
8. Public office-holders and accountability
9. Attitudes in Scotland
10. Attitudes in Northern Ireland

A chapter on the political context and self-reported influences on the survey respondents, together with technical details of the survey methodology, is appended.

## Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Dr Richard Jarvis (Secretary to the Committee on Standards in Public Life) for his support during the course of the project. We would also like to thank the Committee's Research Advisory Board, Professor Dame Hazel Genn, Professor Charlie Jeffery, Jean Martin, Dr Mark Philp and Peter Riddell, as well as Neill Jackson (Northern Ireland Administration) and Kevin Moroso (Scottish Executive) for their input and feedback throughout. We would also like to thank the field management team at Ipsos MORI, namely Brenda Boyd, Kate Foley, Justin Keir and Alastair Townend, for their management of the fieldwork, and over 150 Ipsos MORI interviewers. The Committee on Standards in Public Life also acknowledge the financial contributions of the Scottish Executive and Northern Ireland Administration to enable this survey to be conducted on a UK-wide basis.

Above all, we would like to thank the 1,849 members of the public who took part in the interviews.

August 2006

*Mark Gill, Ipsos MORI*

*Dr Declan McHugh, Hansard Society*

*Dr Roger Mortimore, Ipsos MORI*

*Naomi Pollard, Ipsos MORI*

*Caroline Simpson, Ipsos MORI*

*Gideon Skinner, Ipsos MORI*

*Gary Welch, Ipsos MORI*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Aims and objectives

This report presents the findings of a 2005/06 survey of public attitudes in the United Kingdom, commissioned by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and conducted by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute; comparisons are made with a previous survey which was carried out in 2003/04 across Great Britain by BMRB. The Scottish Executive and the Northern Ireland Administration provided financial contributions to enable this survey to be conducted on a UK-wide basis.

It aims to explore what the public considers acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the part of elected and appointed holders of public office; how far the public believe that the behaviour of holders of public office is acceptable or unacceptable; and how effectively the public feel office-holders are held responsible and accountable for their conduct.

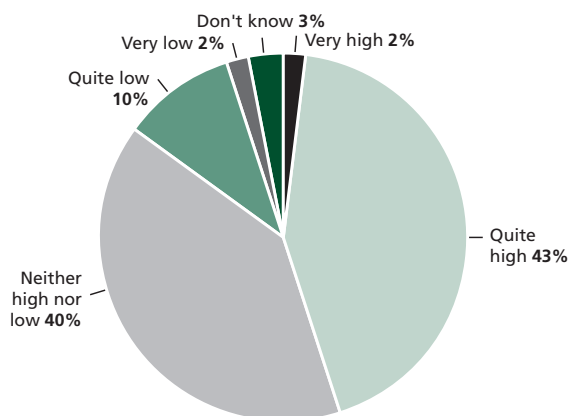
## Overall perceptions of standards in public life

People in Great Britain tend to see the overall standards of conduct of public office-holders in moderately positive terms. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, though only one in eight (12%) consider that standards are low, less than half say they would rate them as high (45%). More than two in five adults in Britain say either that overall standards in public life are neither high nor low (40%), or that they don't know (3%).

Only 2% consider standards to be “very high”, although equally only 2% rate them as “very low”.

**Figure 1: Overall ratings for standards of conduct**

**Q Overall, how would you rate the standard of conduct of public office-holders in the United Kingdom?**



	2004		2006	
	GB	GB	Scot.	N.I.
Very/quite high	46%	45%	46%	35%
Neither	42%	40%	38%	45%
Very/quite low	11%	12%	11%	17%
Don't know	2%	3%	4%	3%

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

There have been few substantial changes in public opinion since the 2003/04 survey: the public are no more likely to consider standards low now than they did then. However, many of the public feel things are changing, though these are roughly balanced between the 27% who feel standards have improved in the last few years and the 30% who think things have got worse.

## Trust in public office-holders

Politicians are much less trusted to tell the truth than members of most professions: while the vast majority of the public say they trust doctors, teachers, judges and police officers, less than a quarter trust government ministers, as few as trust estate agents; three in ten trust “MPs in general”.

On the other hand, almost half trust their local MP, which is twice as many as trust government ministers, and more than trust “top civil servants” or senior managers in local councils. There is a general pattern of higher trust for front-line or local public servants than for managers or administrators in the same service.

Although most of the public say they would not trust MPs in general or government ministers to tell the truth, only a minority – around three in ten – feel that in practice just a few, or no, MPs or ministers do tell the truth. Nevertheless, only one in ten believe that all or most MPs or ministers own up when they make mistakes, and a quarter that they explain the reasons for their actions and decisions.

## Public expectations and perceptions of standards

The integrity of those who hold public office matters to the public. More people say it is very important that MPs and government ministers should not take bribes, that they should tell the truth and that they should not use their power for their own personal gain than think it is very important they should be competent at their jobs.

Truthfulness is highly prized. Three-quarters of the public think it is “extremely important” that MPs and government ministers should tell the truth – only the requirement that they should not take bribes is rated as important by more of the public.

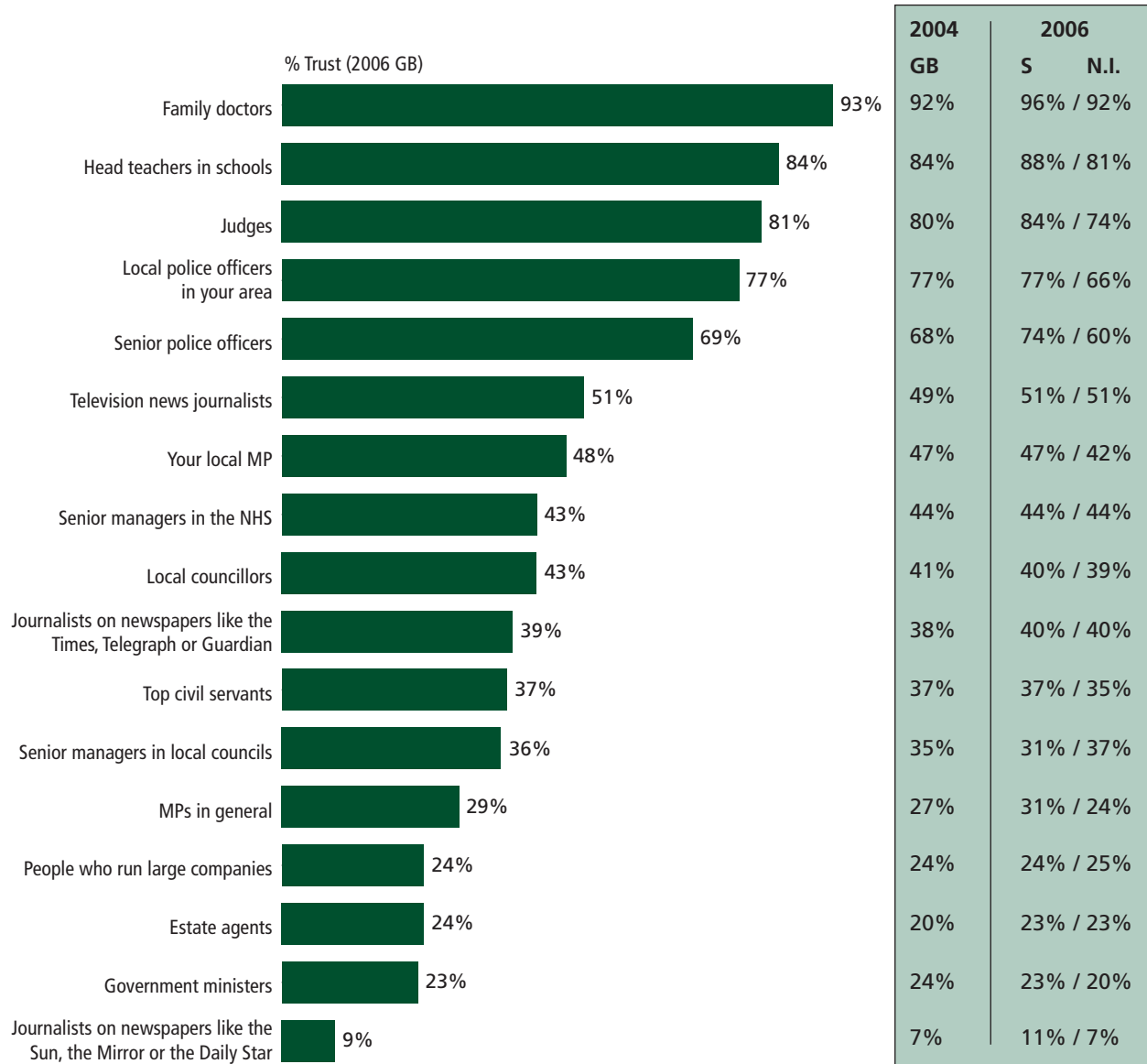
The public also rate highly the importance of those in public office not using their power for their own personal gain: three-quarters think it very important that MPs and ministers do not use their power for their own personal gain (and only a minority believe that most MPs or ministers actually do so).

Few of the public suspect politicians as a group of outright corruption – only 7% say they think “all” or “most” government ministers take bribes, and 6% that all or most MPs do. However, the 2006 survey found a greater degree of public doubt than in 2003/04: while the last survey found 80% saying that few or no MPs take bribes and only 3% that they didn’t know, the present survey found 21% saying “don’t know”, with those prepared to express confidence that such abuse is rare falling to 63%. A similar shift in opinion was found in perceptions of whether government ministers take bribes or not. This sharp change from the results of the previous survey applied only to the question of bribery; there was no movement to any similar degree in other aspects of politicians’ perceived behaviour.

The public apply very similar standards to senior public officials as they do to MPs and government ministers in terms of the behaviour they demand. In general they express somewhat more confidence that officials are meeting those standards than that politicians are doing so.

**Figure 2: Trust in different professional groups**

**Q** *These cards show different types of people. Please put them on this board to show which you would generally trust to tell the truth and which you wouldn't.*



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland,

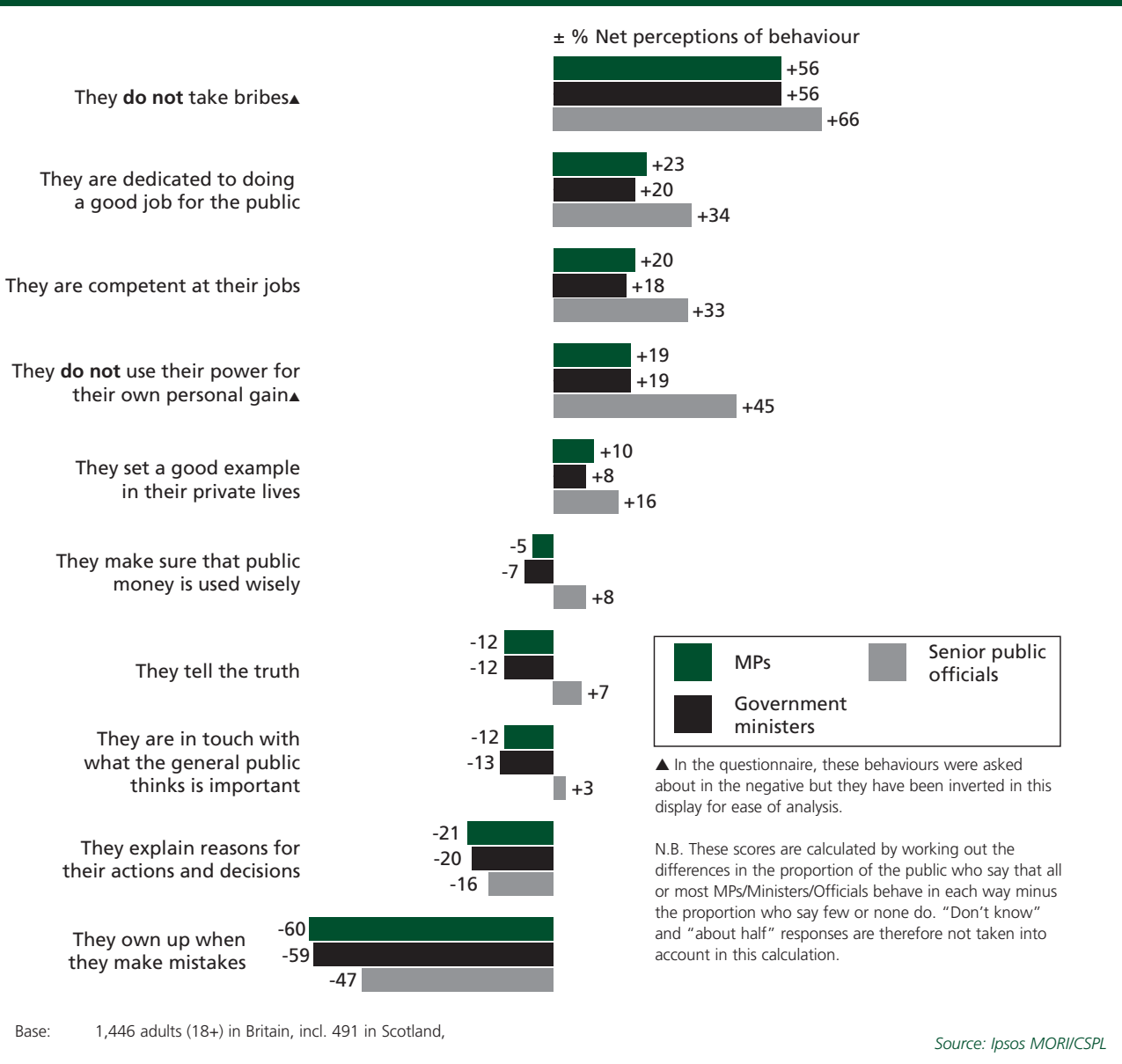
Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

## MPs and voting in Parliament

The vast majority of the public say that it is reasonable for an MP when voting on national issues in Parliament to take into account what would benefit people living in the country as a whole (95%), what the MP's party's election manifesto promised (81%) and what would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency (80%). Over half the public also say it is acceptable to base decisions on what the MP personally believes to be right (71%) and what the MP's local party members would want (58%).

**Figure 3: Perceptions of MPs' vs. government ministers' vs. senior public officials' actual behaviour**



Only a small proportion of the public accept an MP taking into account factors such as what would benefit his/her own family or how the decision might affect his/her career. But while very few (just 2%) think that in practice most MPs would base their decision principally on benefiting their families, a significant proportion (14%) feel that how the decision will affect the MP's career would be the principal factor – almost as many as believe that the main motivation would be what would benefit people living in the country as a whole (17%).

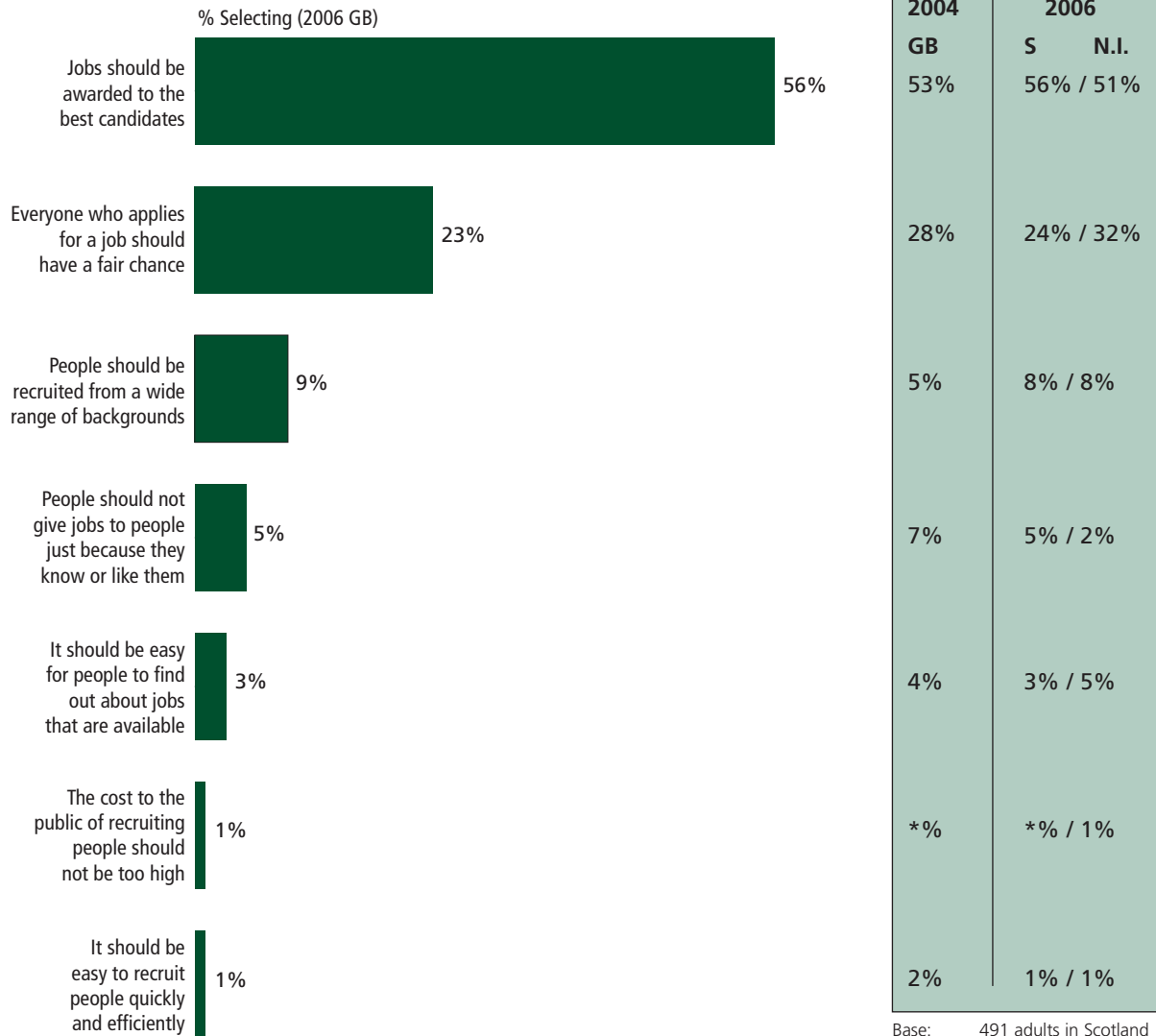
### Views on public sector recruitment practice

When given a straight choice they place more emphasis on the right outcome rather than the process of recruitment: more than twice as many feel it is most important that the best candidate should get the job as that every applicant should have a fair chance. Therefore, although two-thirds believe that people in public office get jobs through someone they know, rather than through the correct procedures, at least a fair amount of the time, this may only generate significant public concern if the perception is that the right person has *not* got the job.



**Figure 4: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs**

**Q** Now I would like to ask you about the way government departments and other public services recruit people for jobs. In your opinion, which ONE of these things is the most important when government departments and other public services are recruiting people for jobs?



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland,

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

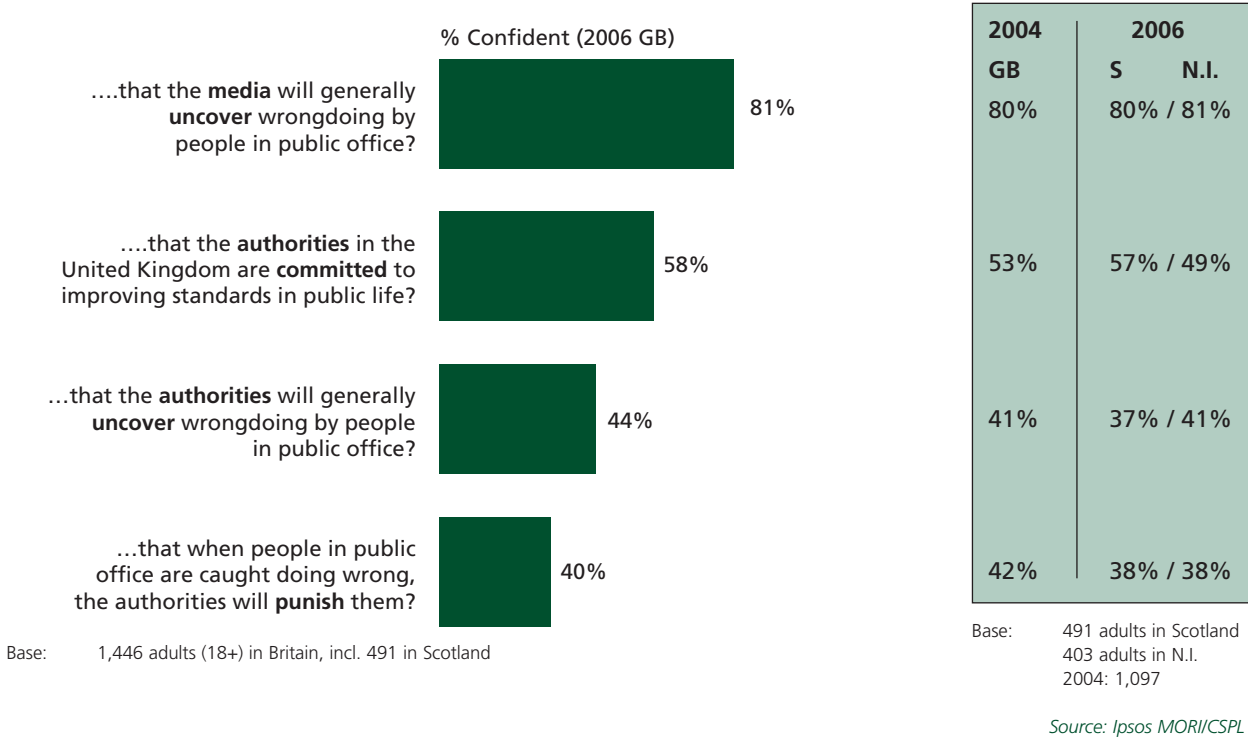
## Public office-holders, accountability and media scrutiny

The public's confidence that office-holders will be held accountable for their conduct is limited. While the majority believe that the UK authorities are committed to improving standards in public life, only a minority (a little over two in five) say they are confident that the authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing or that they will punish those in public office who are caught doing wrong.

Four in five, though, say they have confidence in the ability of the media to uncover wrongdoing by people in public office, which may explain why almost three-quarters feel ministers and MPs must accept some media intrusion into their private lives. Somewhat fewer, but still a majority, feel that local councillors and senior public officials must similarly expect at least some media scrutiny in their private as well as public lives.

**Figure 5: Confidence in authorities and the media**

Q And how confident do you feel...?



## Scotland and Northern Ireland

In the 2006 survey (unlike that of 2003/04) interviews were conducted in Northern Ireland as well as in Great Britain, and extra “booster” interviews were conducted in Northern Ireland and Scotland to provide a robust sample size allowing for comparison with the results for England and Wales. Separate chapters on attitudes in Northern Ireland and Scotland are included in the report.

Attitudes in Scotland are generally in line with attitudes in England and Wales: four times as many adults in Scotland believe that standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK are high as believe they are low. Furthermore, when asked about the position in Scotland, a clear majority of adults in Scotland (58%) believe that standards in Scotland are about the same as in other parts of the United Kingdom.

One significant difference in opinions is that people in Scotland are considerably more likely than those in England and Wales to pick the interests of the constituency as the single most important factor an MP should take into account when voting, 21% in Scotland say that this is most important, almost twice as many as the 12% who say so in England and Wales. Nevertheless, in Scotland as in the rest of the UK the majority say “what would benefit the country as a whole” is the most important factor to take into account, and there are no significant differences between Scottish views and those in England and Wales on which factors, in practice, MPs do take into account.

Scotland is marginally more sceptical than England and Wales about openness by government ministers: more adults in Scotland believe that few or no government ministers would own up when they make mistakes (75% say so, compared to 68% in England and Wales), and similarly fewer adults in Scotland than in England and Wales think all or most government ministers explain the reasons for their actions and decisions (19% and 25%, respectively).

Adults in Northern Ireland rate general standards of conduct of public office-holders lower than do people in Great Britain; nevertheless, around a third of Northern Ireland adults believe standards of conduct are high, twice as many as believe them to be low.

Opinions in Northern Ireland differ somewhat from those in Great Britain on the principles of recruitment to the public sector. Although, as elsewhere, the most frequently chosen criterion is that the best candidate should be awarded the job, a third (32%) in Northern Ireland say that everyone having a fair chance should be the single most important principle – only 23% say this in England and Wales. But people in Northern Ireland are also twice as likely as people in England and Wales to say that people getting public sector jobs “through someone they know rather than through correct procedures” never or hardly ever happens (10% vs. 4% in England and Wales).



# 1. OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

## Overall standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK

People in Britain tend to see the overall standards of conduct of public office-holders in moderately positive terms but with four in ten adults in Great Britain saying that standards are neither high nor low. Among those who do give a rating, standards are seen as *quite high* (43%) or *quite low* (10%), rather than *very high* (2%) or *very low* (2%).

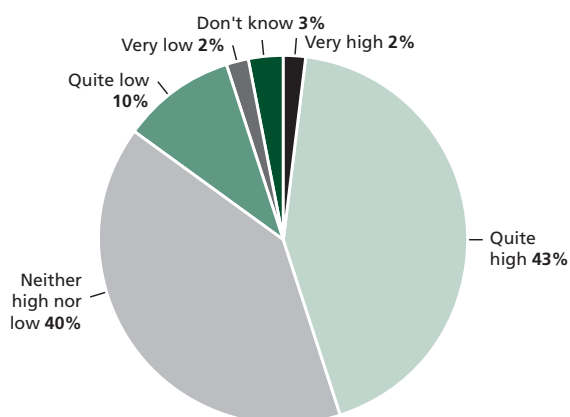
These findings are in line with results reported in 2004.

Across the UK, more men say standards are high than women (47% and 43%, respectively), though the reason for the difference is that women are more likely to give a neutral response than to say standards are low. The difference in views across age groups is more complicated. Over half (53%) of the youngest respondents (those aged 18-24 years) believe standards are high. Yet the next age cohort (25-34 year olds) is least likely to say this (37%). Other key subgroup differences are that at least half of those with higher educational qualifications (57%), social grades ABC1 (51%), public sector workers (55%) and broadsheet newspaper readers (54%) say standards of conduct are high.

While results in Scotland are consistent with findings in Great Britain as a whole, slightly fewer people in Northern Ireland would describe standards of conduct of public office-holders as high (35%) – though this is still twice the proportion who state standards are low (17%). Although Northern Ireland’s class profile differs from that of Great Britain, with a higher working class (C2DE) population, and although middle class respondents in the UK as a whole are more likely to think standards are higher, the higher proportion of working class in Northern Ireland does not explain the

**Figure 6: Overall ratings for standards of conduct**

**Q Overall, how would you rate the standard of conduct of public office-holders in the United Kingdom?**



	2004		2006	
	GB	GB	Scot.	N.I.
Very/quite high	46%	45%	46%	35%
Neither	42%	40%	38%	45%
Very/quite low	11%	12%	11%	17%
Don't know	2%	3%	4%	3%

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

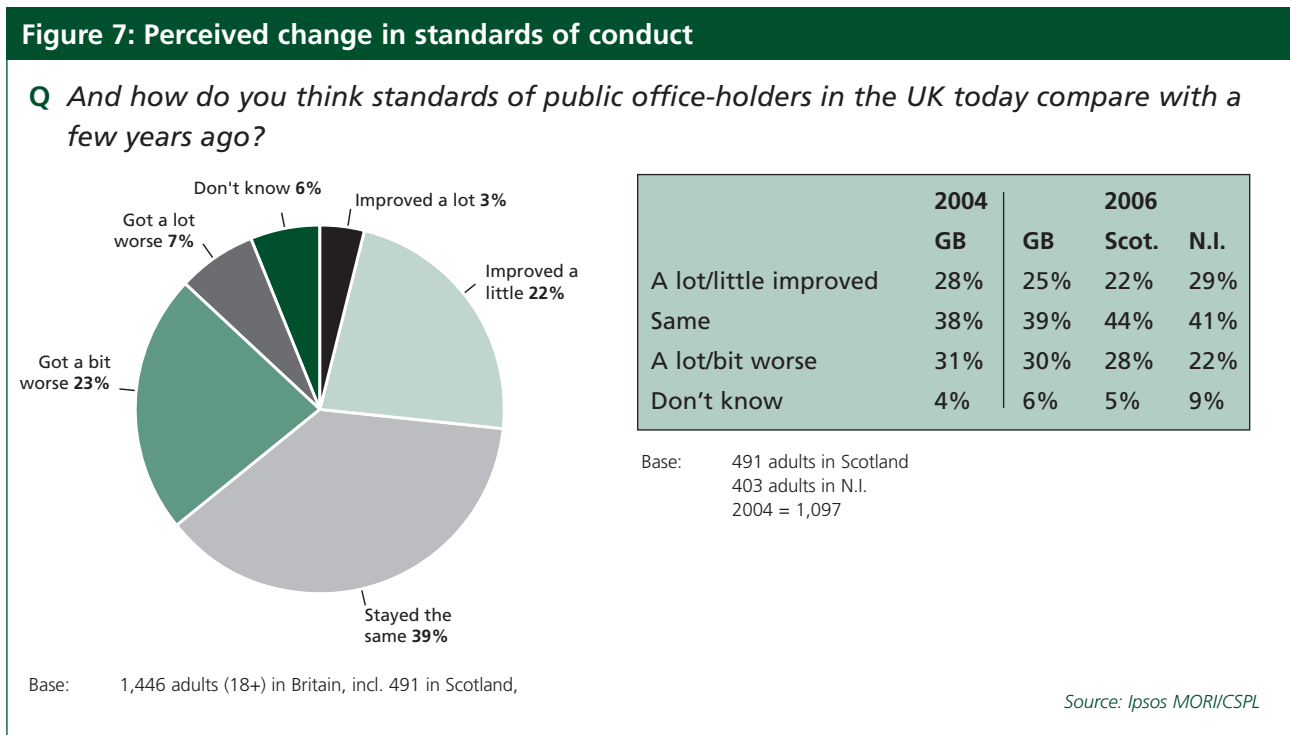
Northern Ireland differences. In fact the difference is almost entirely attributable to the Northern Ireland middle class, who are considerably less likely than their counterparts in Great Britain to say that office-holders' standard of conduct is high (37% compared to 51%).

When interpreting the survey results, it is important to take into account the political party affiliation – 62% of Labour supporters believe standards to be high, compared with around two in five Conservative (43%) and Liberal Democrat supporters (42%).

### Is there a perception that standards are getting better or worse?

Given that there has been no change since 2004 in the proportions of adults in Great Britain who say that standards of conduct among public office-holders are high or low, it is to be expected that the largest group of people in our sample think that standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK<sup>4</sup> are the same as a few years ago (39%). As shown in Figure 7, where there is a perception of a shift in behaviour adults in Great Britain are generally equally divided between those who think standards have improved (25%) and those who think standards have got worse (30%).

Views in Scotland compared to the rest of Great Britain are not significantly different, although adults in Northern Ireland are slightly less likely to believe standards have got worse (22%). Age is the most marked of all the subgroup differences across the UK, as the belief that standards have got worse increases with people's age. As such, the "net improved" score<sup>5</sup> is +23 among 18-24 year olds, and positive even among 25-44 year olds (+5), but negative among 45-64 year olds (-10) and particularly among those aged 65 years or more (-23).



<sup>4</sup> Please note that in 2004 the question asked about standards "in Britain" rather than "in the United Kingdom".

<sup>5</sup> "Net improved" is a calculation of the proportion who say standards have improved (a lot or a little) minus the proportion who say standards have got worse (a little or a lot)

## Standards in the UK compared with elsewhere in Europe

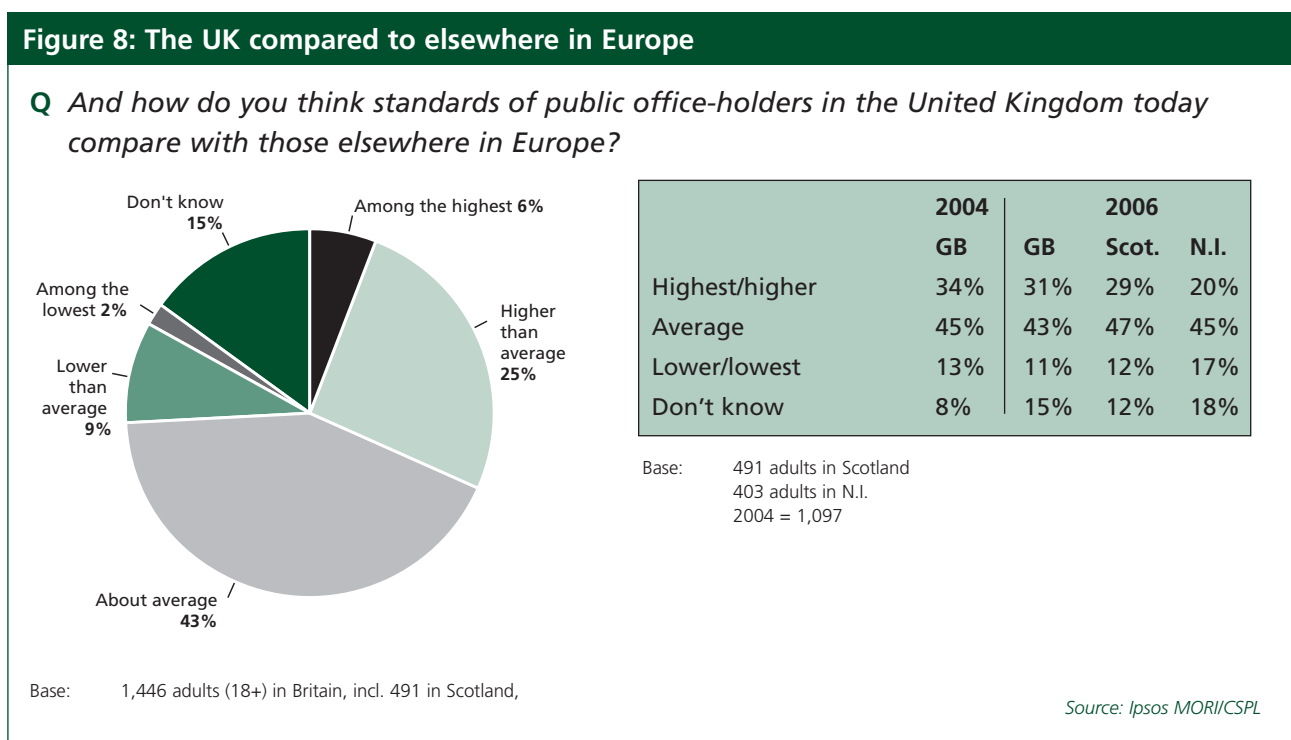
Just over two fifths of adults in Great Britain believe that standards of conduct among public office-holders in the UK are about *average* when compared to elsewhere in Europe. The remainder of adults in Great Britain are split by a ratio of three to one in thinking that UK standards are *higher* rather than *lower* than the European average (31% vs. 11%).

These results are in line with findings from 2004<sup>6</sup>, as illustrated in Figure 8.

Across the UK, more men than women say UK standards are *higher* than elsewhere in Europe (36% vs. 26%), though again most of the difference is explained by a greater proportion of women opting for a neutral answer than saying standards are lower (46% vs. 40%). Younger people (40% of 18-24s), the higher educated (42%) and those interested in current affairs (41%) are most likely to believe UK standards are *higher* than other European countries.

Among adults in Northern Ireland the proportion saying that UK standards are *higher* than in Europe is 20% (11 percentage points lower than the proportion in Great Britain). The proportion in Northern Ireland saying that UK standards are lower than in Europe is 17% – six points greater than the British average. This is in line with respondents in Northern Ireland being less likely to agree that the overall level of standards in the UK is high.

Additional questions were asked of adults living in Scotland and Northern Ireland to test whether residents in these parts of the UK believed that standards of conduct are higher, lower or about the same in their respective administrations compared with the UK as a whole. In Northern Ireland, half of adults (49%) believe standards there to be the *same* as the UK – among the remainder, they are equally divided in thinking they are *higher* (22%) or *lower* (24%). A similar pattern emerges in Scotland – though even more people here consider standards to be the *same* (58%), and with a greater skew towards thinking standards are generally *higher* (20%) than generally *lower* (14%) than the rest of the UK.



<sup>6</sup> Please note that in 2004 the question asked about standards “in Britain” rather than “in the United Kingdom”.





## 2. TRUST IN PUBLIC OFFICE-HOLDERS

Figure 9 (overleaf) shows the proportion of adults in Great Britain who say they would generally trust people from different professions to tell the truth. The figures to the right side of the bars show the proportion of adults in Scotland and Northern Ireland, respectively, who trust each of the professional groups.

It is clear from the survey results that front-line public servants are more trusted than other types of public officials. This mirrors the 2004 survey and reflects what other studies have found; namely, that the closer the public are to an individual or institution (or at least the closer the public perceives them to be), the more likely they are to trust them.

The importance of familiarity and distance applies to how people view their politicians – *local* councillors (43%) and the *local* MP (48%) are both better regarded than MPs in general (29%) and government ministers (23%).

While the low level of trust in MPs generally is a common source of media comment, it should be noted that journalists suffer from a similar trust deficit. In short, the public in Great Britain is sceptical about the honesty of the nation's media. Of the three different types of media professionals asked about in the survey, television news journalists are most trusted – by half the public in Great Britain (51%). Journalists on broadsheet newspapers are trusted by two in five people (39%) – almost the same rating as given to top civil servants (37%); but very few say they would generally trust tabloid newspaper journalists to tell the truth (9%).

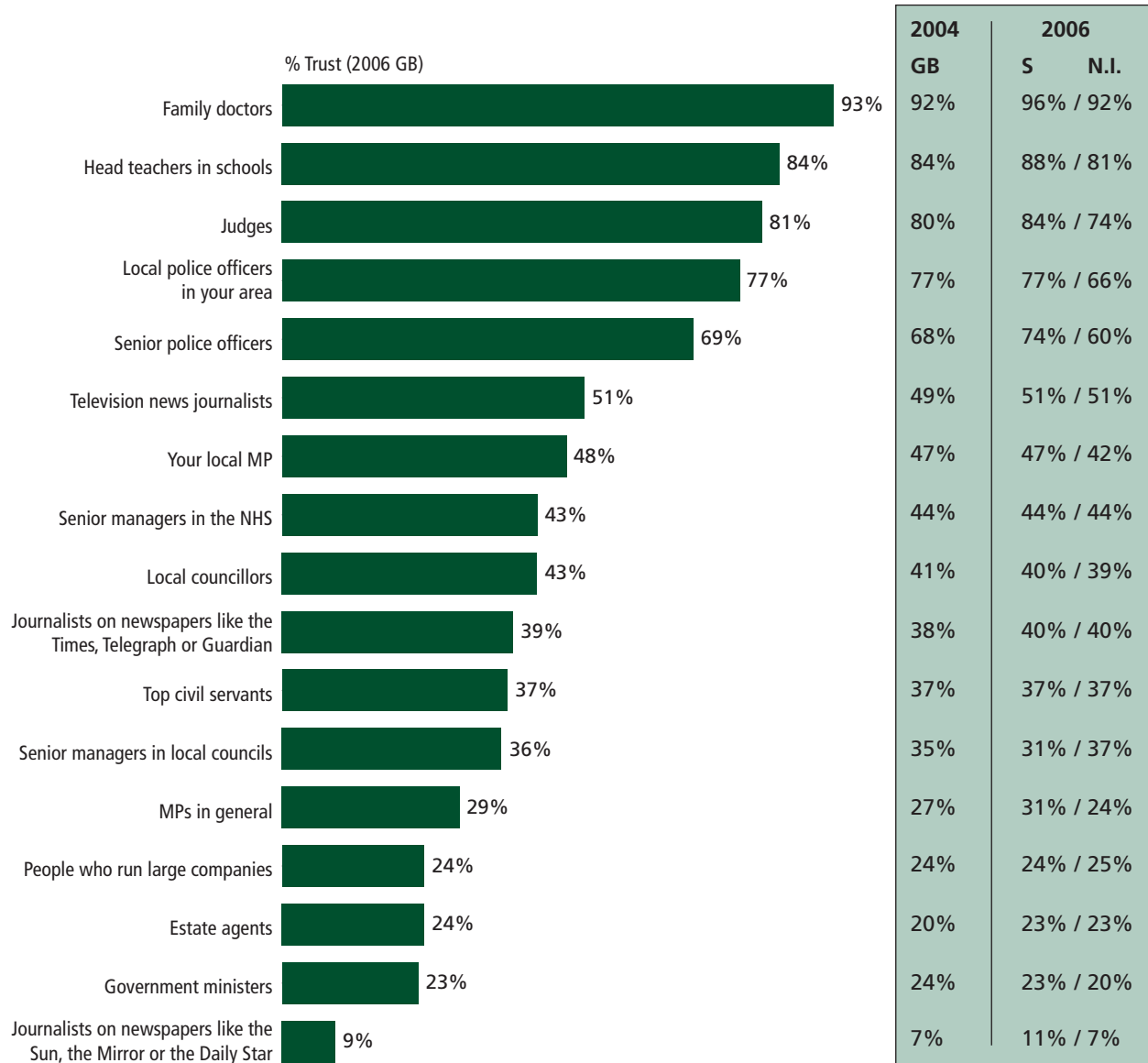
Comparison with the 2004 survey results shows no significant changes in the proportion of the public in Great Britain expressing trust in each of the groups covered in the survey.<sup>7</sup> However, for most of these groups, fewer say they do not trust them to tell the truth than in 2004. The differences are not great, but they are statistically significant, and point to a generally less sceptical attitude among adults in Great Britain to a range of different types of public office-holders. For example, the proportion saying they distrust local councillors has fallen by six percentage points over the past two years, and the proportion not trusting MPs in general is down by seven percentage points. Yet, as noted above, this shift has not resulted in increasing numbers of people in Great Britain saying they trust these groups – instead more are saying they “don't know”.

Compared to attitudes in Great Britain, for a number of professional groups, somewhat fewer adults in Northern Ireland say they would generally trust them. These groups are *local police officers in your area* (11 points lower than the Great Britain average), *senior police officers* (nine points lower) and *judges* (seven points lower). These differences are likely to reflect the recent historical context in this part of the UK.

<sup>7</sup> The one exception to this is a slight increase in the proportion of adults in Britain trusting estate agents up four percentage points since 2004.

**Figure 9: Trust in different professional groups**

**Q** *These cards show different types of people. Please put them on this board to show which you would generally trust to tell the truth and which you wouldn't.*



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

Adults in Scotland express similar levels of trust to adults in Great Britain – although slightly more adults in Scotland express trust in family doctors (three points higher) and head teachers in schools (four points higher), and slightly fewer in senior managers in local councils (five points lower). The survey also asked respondents in Scotland whether or not they generally trusted a *Chair of an Area Health Board*. Exactly half of people in Scotland (50%) say they would, with 37% saying they would not trust them to tell the truth. In Scotland, this places *Area Health Board Chairs* higher than senior managers in the NHS (44% trust) but considerably lower than family doctors (96% trust).

The key statistically significant sub group differences across the UK are that younger people (18-24s) express more trust in some professional groups than other age groups, including MPs in general (46%), government ministers (49%), senior managers in the NHS (59%) and top civil servants (65%).



# 3. NATIONAL POLITICIANS: EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF STANDARDS

## Expectations of MPs and government ministers

Figure 10 (overleaf) shows the proportion of adults in Great Britain (and respective figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland) who rate a series of ten different behaviours as *extremely* important for MPs and government ministers. Respondents had a choice of rating each behaviour on a scale of importance from extremely important, very important, quite important, not very important to not at all important. This is shown in Table B.

The most important characteristic for MPs and government ministers is that they should not take bribes (85% of the public in Great Britain say this is extremely important), which reflects the high value the public place on their elected politicians not to break the law. Following this, around three in four adults in Great Britain say it is extremely important that MPs and government ministers *tell the truth* (75%), *make sure public money is used wisely* (72%) and *not use their power for their own personal gain* (73%). The latter point is also consistent with the findings in Chapter 5, which show that the public rejects personal gain as a legitimate reason for MPs when voting in Parliament.

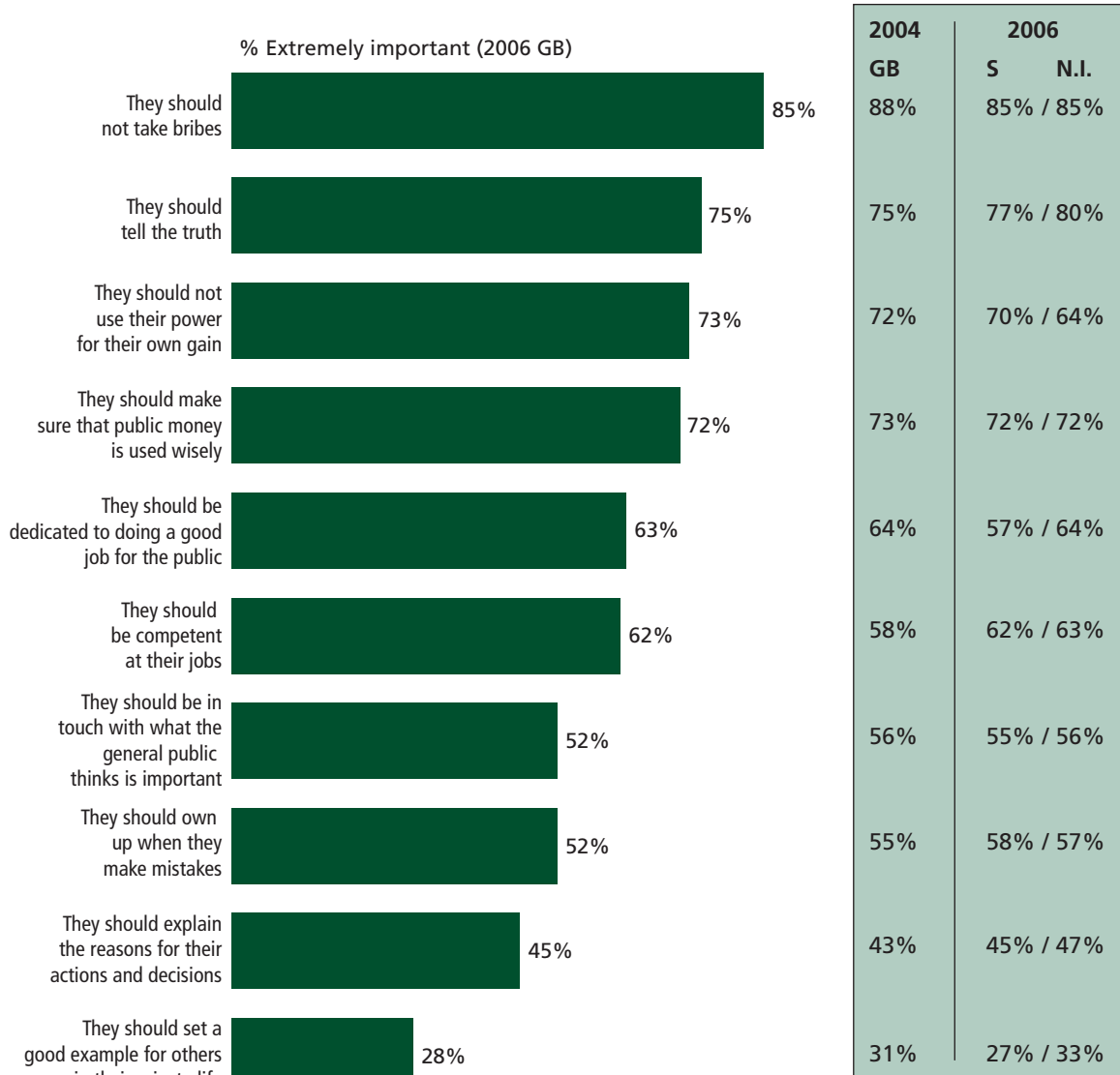
As we would expect, each of the ten types of behaviour covered in the survey are seen as important by the vast majority of the public in Great Britain. Indeed, all but two characteristics are rated as extremely important by more than half the public. The two exceptions are that MPs and government ministers should *explain the reasons for their actions and decisions* (45%), and that they should *set a good example for others in their private lives* (28%). The latter behaviour is the only one measured in this research where there is at least a small minority of adults in Great Britain who say that it is not important that MPs and government ministers do this (13%), as shown in Table B overleaf.

Respondents to the survey were also posed a follow-up question on the salience of these types of behaviour, asking them to select the three most important behaviours for elected national politicians. When measured this way, the three behaviours most often selected are the same as is measured in Figure 10, though in a slightly different order with *telling the truth* being selected most often (53% of adults in Great Britain say that this is the most important, followed by 45% who feel *making sure public money is used wisely* is important and 43% who think it is most important *not to take bribes*).

When analysing the results using the three most important types of behaviours selected by UK respondents, some important subgroup differences in opinions emerge. For instance, more men than women select *should not use their power for their own personal gain* (41% vs. 32%) and *should be competent at their jobs* (28% vs. 22%). In contrast, more women than men select *make sure public money is used wisely* (48% vs. 42%) and *be in touch with what the general public thinks is important* (32% vs. 21%). It is also worth noting that 30% of adults from the middle classes select *competence* as a key behaviour – but only 19% of the working classes say the same. Instead, the latter group places relatively more emphasis than the former on *explaining reasons for actions and decisions* (17% vs. 9%).

**Figure 10: Importance of different behaviours**

**Q** Thinking about these two groups of elected national politicians, please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that MPs and government ministers do the things shown on this card.



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

There has been no shift in public opinion in Great Britain since 2004 in terms of public expectations of the behaviour of MPs and government ministers. This should be expected given that the purpose of these questions is to measure the public's desire for how their elected politicians should behave.

**Table B: Important qualities for MPs and Ministers**

**Q** Thinking about these two groups of elected national politicians [MPs and government ministers], please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that MPs and government ministers do the things shown on the cards.

				<i>Extremely important</i>	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Quite important</i>	<i>Not very important</i>	<i>Not at all important</i>	<i>Don't know/ not sure</i>
A.	They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>63</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	64	31	5	*	*	*
B.	They should not use their power for their own personal gain	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>73</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	72	18	6	2	2	*
C.	They should not take bribes	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>85</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	88	8	2	1	1	*
D.	They should own up when they make mistakes	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>52</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	55	32	11	1	*	*
E.	They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>45</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>1</b>
		2004	%	43	37	17	2	*	*
F.	They should set a good example for others in their private lives	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
		2004	%	31	29	26	11	2	*
G.	They should tell the truth	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>75</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	75	19	5	1	*	*
H.	They should make sure that public money is used wisely	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>72</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	73	23	3	1	*	*
I.	They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>52</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	56	32	11	2	*	*
J.	They should be competent at their jobs	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>62</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>
		2004	%	58	34	8	*	*	*

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

## Perceived behaviour of MPs and government ministers

For each of the behaviours covered in Figure 10, respondents were also asked to say what proportion of MPs (and, separately, government ministers) they thought behaved in these ways. The question was structured in order to determine whether the public thought that all, most, about half, a few or none would behave in each of these ways. The answers given regarding perceptions of the behaviour of MPs and government ministers are displayed in Tables C and D.

To help summarise this data, Figure 11 (overleaf) shows the “net perceptions”<sup>8</sup> of whether these behaviours apply to government ministers and compares these ratings with those for MPs. This clearly shows how the public in Great Britain rate the perceived behaviour of MPs and government

**Table C: Perceptions of MPs' actual behaviour**

**Q** Next, looking at the screen, please say how many MPs you think actually do these things?

				<i>All/most</i>	<i>About half</i>	<i>A few/none</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
A.	They are dedicated to doing a good job for the public	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>46</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>
		2004	%	46	33	20	*
B.	They use their power for their own personal gain	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>29</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>5</b>
		2004	%	30	19	50	1
C.	They take bribes	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>21</b>
		2004	%	8	9	80	3
D.	They own up when they make mistakes	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>3</b>
		2004	%	12	17	69	1
E.	They explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>
		2004	%	29	32	38	1
F.	They set a good example for others in their private lives	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>39</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>8</b>
		2004	%	42	31	27	1
G.	They tell the truth	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4</b>
		2004	%	30	31	39	*
H.	They make sure that public money is used wisely	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>5</b>
		2004	%	32	34	35	1
I.	They are in touch with what the general public thinks is important	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>3</b>
		2004	%	31	38	31	*
J.	They are competent at their jobs	<b>2006</b>	%	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>
		2004	%	40	39	20	1

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland



**Table D: Perceptions of ministers' actual behaviour**

**Q** Next, looking at the screen, please say how many government ministers you think actually do these things?

				<i>All/most</i>	<i>About half</i>	<i>A few/none</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
A.	They are dedicated to doing a good job for the public	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>
		2004	%	41	34	24	*
B.	They use their power for their own personal gain	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>5</b>
		2004	%	33	19	47	1
C.	They take bribes	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>21</b>
		2004	%	9	10	77	3
D.	They own up when they make mistakes	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>3</b>
		2004	%	10	17	72	1
E.	They explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>
		2004	%	29	26	43	1
F.	They set a good example for others in their private lives	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>8</b>
		2004	%	41	29	30	1
G.	They tell the truth	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4</b>
		2004	%	27	29	42	*
H.	They make sure that public money is used wisely	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>5</b>
		2004	%	28	34	38	1
I.	They are in touch with what the general public thinks is important	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>3</b>
		2004	%	23	35	41	*
J.	They are competent at their jobs	<b>2006</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>
		2004	%	40	36	23	1

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

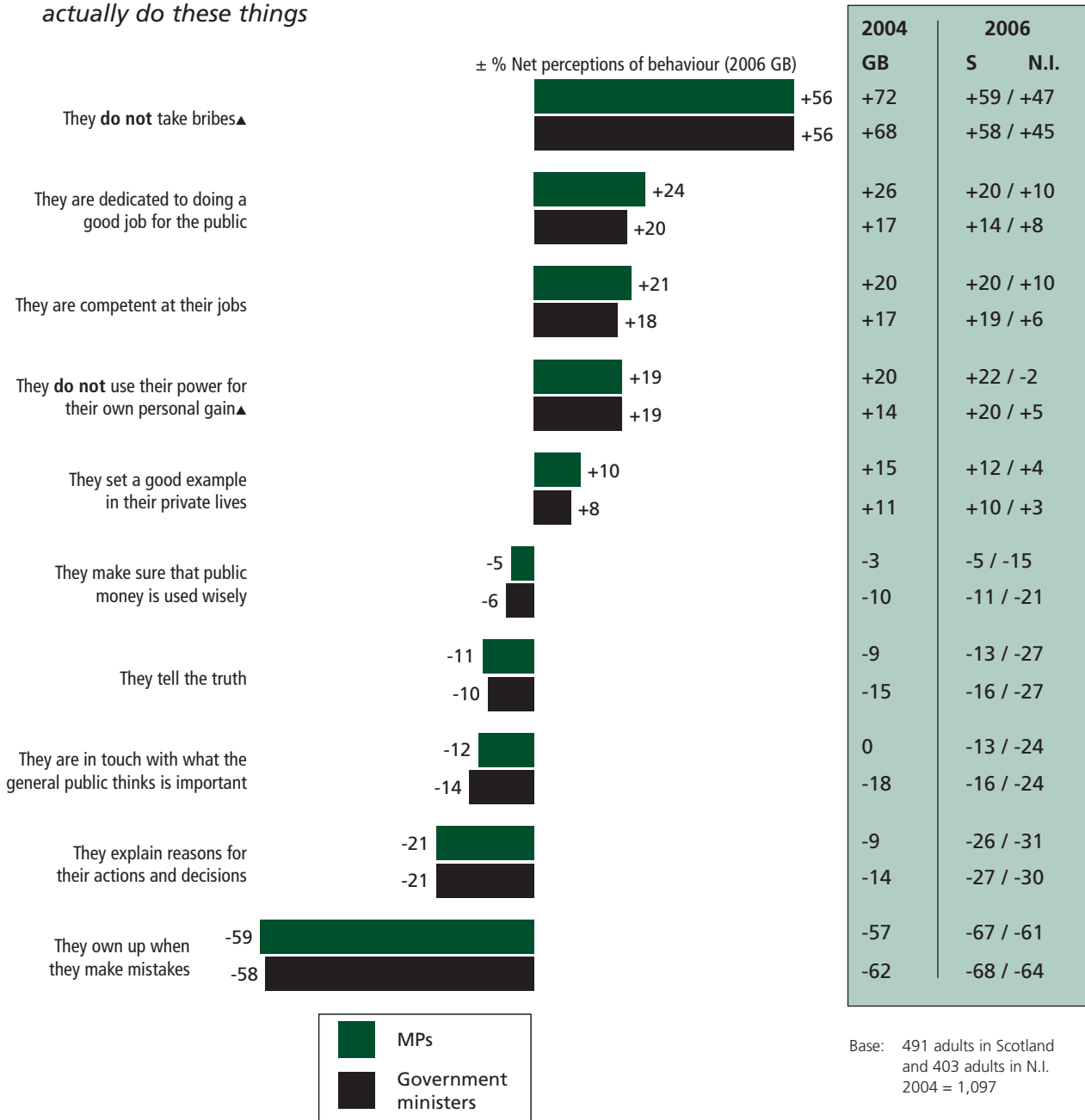
ministers almost identically, suggesting little difference in public knowledge or perceptions about how the two different groups of public office-holders differ.

The net perception data shown in Figure 11 are useful as they illustrate that there is no clear public consensus on the extent to which MPs and government ministers behave in these ways. There are two exceptions to this pattern. First, 63% of the public say that only a few or no MPs or government ministers take bribes. Second, an even greater proportion of the public think that only a few or no MPs or government ministers would own up when they made mistakes.

\* These scores are calculated by working out the differences in the proportion of the public who say that all or most MPs/Ministers behave in each way minus the proportion who say few or none do. "Don't know" and "about half" responses are therefore not taken into account in this calculation.

**Figure 11: Perceptions of MPs' vs. government ministers' actual behaviour**

**Q** Next, looking at the screen, please say how many MPs/government ministers you think actually do these things



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

▲ In the questionnaire, these behaviours were asked about in the negative but they have been inverted in this display for ease of analysis.

N.B. These scores are calculated by working out the differences in the proportion of the public who say that all or most MPs/Ministers behave in each way minus the proportion who say few or none do. "Don't know" and "about half" responses are therefore not taken into account in this calculation.

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

On balance, adults in Great Britain think that five of the ten types of behaviour do apply to MPs and government ministers. By far the most applicable is the belief that MPs *do not take bribes*. This is encouraging given that, as noted above, this behaviour is regarded by more of the public as *extremely* important than any other factor. However, when we examine the detailed findings on this particular characteristic it is clear there has been a dramatic shift in public opinion over the past two

years, with the net perception score falling from +72 to +56. In 2004, 80% of adults in Great Britain thought that no or only a few MPs would take bribes; now just 63% believe this is the case. There has been no corresponding rise in the proportion of the public who think that all or most MPs do now take bribes (8% thought this in 2004, 6% think this now), but there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of adults in Great Britain who say they *don't know* whether MPs take bribes (up from 3% to 21%), implying a distinct loss of confidence in their probity – while there has been no rise in the number positively believing that bribery is widespread, fewer seem absolutely confident that this is impossible.

For five of the behaviours asked about in the survey, adults in Great Britain generally think that these do not apply to MPs. The most significant is *owning up when they make a mistake* where just ten per cent of the public in Great Britain believe all or most MPs would do this compared with 69% who think a few or none would (giving a net apply score of -59).

Compared with 2004, there have been changes<sup>9</sup> in public perceptions of the actual behaviour of MPs on two behaviours – both with the public in Great Britain becoming slightly more negative on balance:

- Whether they *take bribes* (as outlined above)
- Whether they *explain the reasons for their actions and decisions* (29% all or most MPs in 2004 to 23% in 2006); and

There has been some change<sup>9</sup> in public perceptions of government ministers' behaviour since 2004. The most dramatic change, as with perceptions of MPs, has been the large drop in the proportion of adults in Great Britain who think that only a few or no government ministers would take bribes (from 77% to 63%) and the subsequent rise in the proportion saying they *don't know* whether government ministers would behave this way (from 3% to 21%). Compared with 2004, there have been slight changes in public perceptions of the actual behaviour of Ministers on three behaviours – all three with the public becoming more negative on balance:

- Whether they *take bribes* (as outlined above);
- Whether they *explain the reasons for their actions and decisions* (from 29% to 24%); and
- Whether they *set a good example in their private lives* (from 41% to 36%).

In contrast, slightly fewer adults in Great Britain than two years ago now say that only a few or no government ministers *tell the truth* (39% in 2006 vs. 42% in 2004) and *own up when they make mistakes* (69% in 2006 vs. 72% in 2004).

Views among adults in Scotland on the actual behaviour of MPs are consistent with views compared with other parts of Great Britain. This is not the same in Northern Ireland where adults are generally more sceptical about the behaviour of MPs on most types of behaviours covered in the survey. Similarly, adults in Scotland rate the behaviour of government ministers in the same way as do people living in Great Britain. The one slight exception to this pattern is that more adults in Scotland say few or no government ministers *own up when they make mistakes* (75%) than say the same in Great Britain (69%). Again, adults in Northern Ireland tend to be less positive about the behaviour of government ministers than people in Great Britain.

<sup>9</sup> We have made the assumption that there are no design effects due to clustering or stratification in the original 2004 BMRB survey, as we do not have the information necessary to calculate them. For the 2006 survey, we have taken into account a conservative measure for the design effects due to clustering and stratification of 1.6. This design effect and the design effect due to weighting is then used to calculate a new effective base size.



# 4. SENIOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS: EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF STANDARDS

## Expectations of senior public officials

The public make only small distinctions between what they expect of senior public officials and their expectations of MPs and government ministers – this can be observed by comparing results presented in Figures 10 (page 28) and 12 (page 36). When asked to rate characteristics by importance the top four highest rated characteristics for both groups are in the same order (see Tables B and E), with *not taking bribes* at the head of the list, chosen by four in five as extremely important. Absolute differences are small between expectations of elected and of appointed officials – the biggest difference is that more of the public think it is extremely important for officials to *be dedicated to doing a good job for the public* (6 percentage points higher than for MPs/government ministers).

Not only do the public hold appointed officials to the same standards as elected ones in the performance of the jobs, they are also almost as likely to make demands on their behaviour outside their jobs, 52% saying it is extremely or very important for senior public officials to set a good example in their private lives – 56% say the same about MPs/government ministers.

These figures are virtually unchanged since the 2004 survey, except for a five-point drop in the percentage saying it is extremely important for senior public officials to tell the truth (76% to 71%).

There are no dramatic differences between the figures in Scotland and in Northern Ireland when compared with views in Great Britain. People in Northern Ireland put a marginally higher premium on officials telling the truth (75%) than do those in Scotland (68%) or Great Britain (71%), but it is in the top four requirements in both countries.

## Perceptions of senior public officials' behaviour

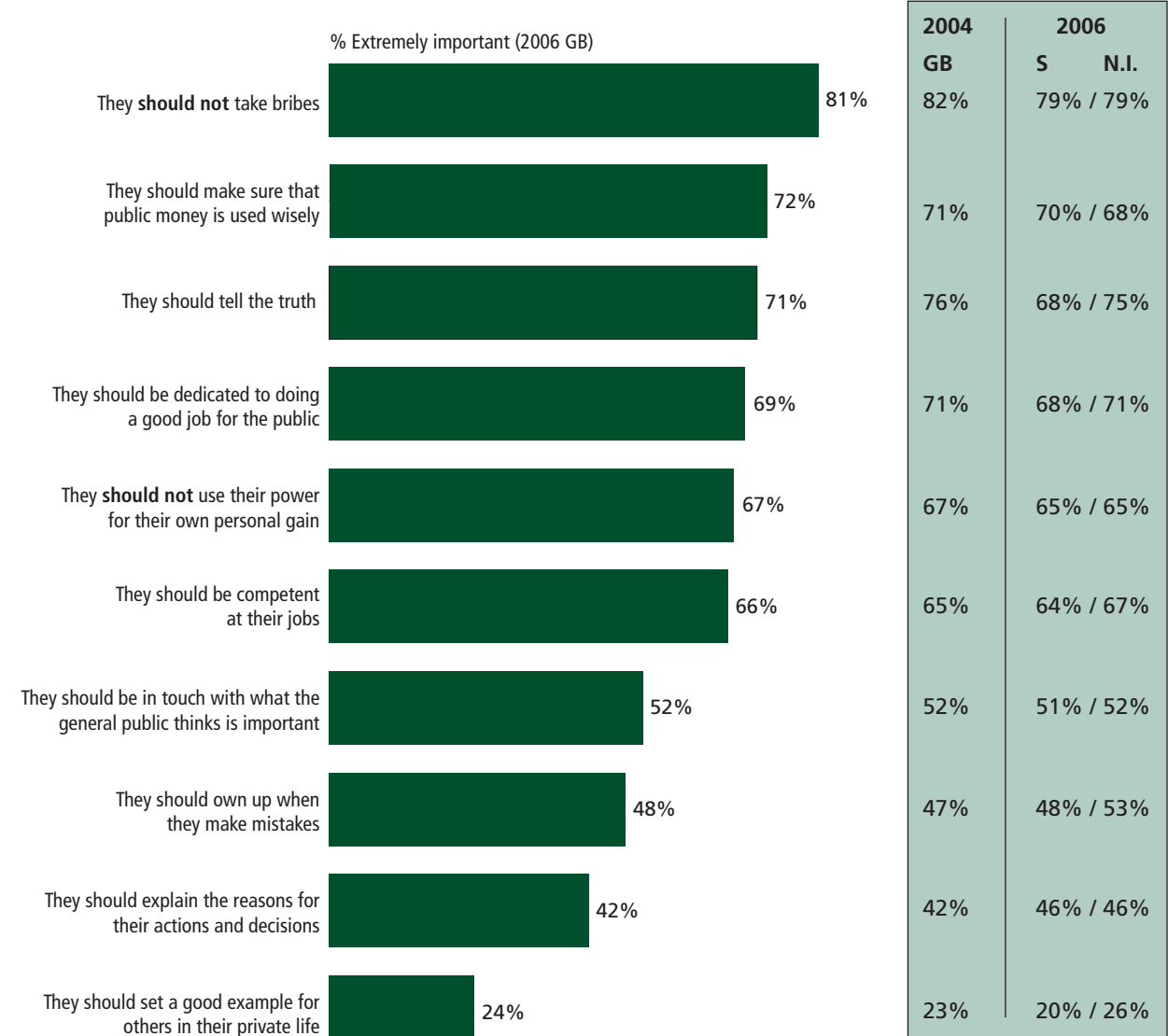
As shown in Figure 13 (page 38), more of the public take a positive than negative view of public officials' behaviour in almost all the respects measured, and in most cases their net perceptions<sup>10</sup> of behaviour are significantly better than those of MPs. Only four per cent think that "most" senior public officials take bribes, whereas 70% say only "a few" or "none", and a majority of the public (51%) feel that most or all officials are dedicated to doing a good job for the public.

Public officials are given their second highest score, and outscore MPs most dramatically, on the perception that they do not use their power for their own personal gain: the net score for officials is +45 (59% think none or only a few do so while 14% think most or all do so) while that for MPs is only +19 (29% think most or all MPs are guilty of this, though 48% say that this is true of none or only a few). Clearly this is the aspect of public life where the public perceives a difference between the motives of elected and unelected politicians.

<sup>10</sup> These scores are calculated by working out the differences in the proportion of the public who say that all or most senior public officials behave in each way minus the proportion who say few or none do.

**Figure 12: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials**

Q Please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that senior public officials do the things shown on the cards.



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

The two respects in which more of the public take a negative than a positive view of public officials is in their perceived failure to explain the reasons for their actions and decisions, and – a more widely held criticism – in not owning up when they make mistakes. Just 13% of the public feel that all or most senior public officials admit their mistakes while four times as many (60%) take the opposite view.

While views in Scotland are broadly in line with the rest of Great Britain, people in Northern Ireland take a more negative view of senior public officials in a number of respects. Twice as many in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain (9% compared to 4%) think that all or most officials take bribes, and a quarter (25%) feel that all or most use their power for personal gain (which only 14% in Great Britain say). When asked if they believe that officials tell the truth, the proportion of adults in Northern Ireland thinking that only a few or none do far outweighs those who trust most or all of them (40% compared to 28%), whereas in Great Britain the balance is the other way round.

**Table E: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials**

**Q** Please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that senior public officials do the things shown on the cards.

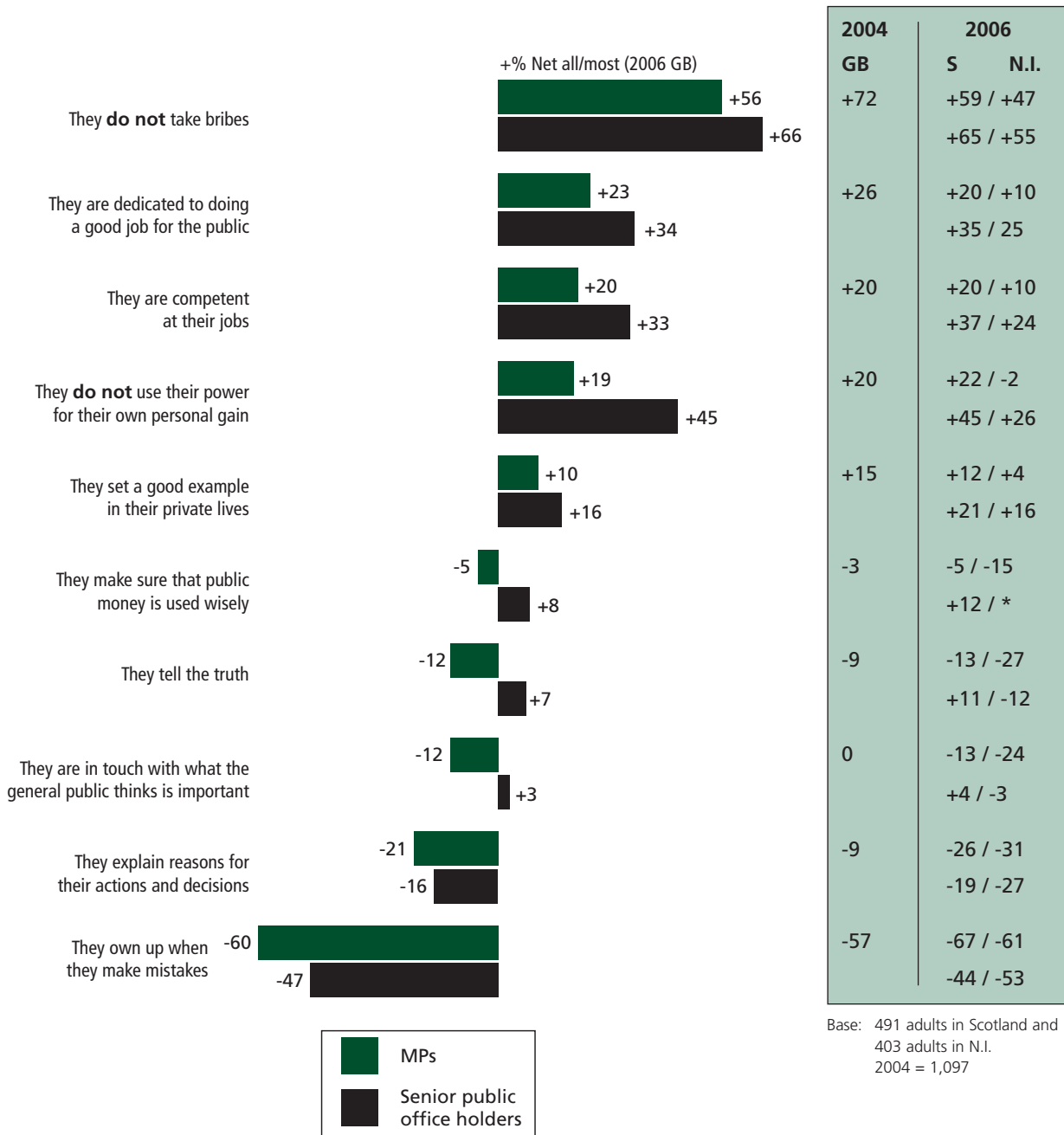
				<i>Extremely important</i>	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Quite important</i>	<i>Not very important</i>	<i>Not at all important</i>	<i>Don't know/ not sure</i>
A.	They should be dedicated to doing a good job for the public	2006	%	69	26	3	*	0	1
		2004	%	71	24	4	*	*	*
B.	They should not use their power for their own personal gain	2006	%	67	23	7	1	1	1
		2004	%	67	24	6	1	1	1
C.	They should not take bribes	2006	%	81	15	3	*	1	1
		2004	%	82	14	2	*	1	1
D.	They should own up when they make mistakes	2006	%	48	39	11	1	*	1
		2004	%	47	39	12	2	*	*
E.	They should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	2006	%	42	41	14	1	*	1
		2004	%	42	41	15	1	*	*
F.	They should set a good example for others in their private lives	2006	%	24	28	30	13	4	1
		2004	%	23	31	28	13	4	1
G.	They should tell the truth	2006	%	71	23	4	*	*	1
		2004	%	76	20	3	*	*	*
H.	They should make sure that public money is used wisely	2006	%	72	24	3	*	0	1
		2004	%	71	25	2	*	*	*
I.	They should be in touch with what the general public thinks is important	2006	%	52	34	11	1	*	1
		2004	%	52	35	11	1	*	*
J.	They should be competent at their jobs	2006	%	66	29	4	*	*	1
		2004	%	65	29	4	1	*	1

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

However, this higher level of suspicion in Northern Ireland is not confined to views of unelected officials, as there is similarly a greater mistrust of MPs and of government ministers.

**Figure 13: Perceptions of MPs' vs. senior public office-holders' actual behaviour**

**Q** Next, looking at the screen, please say how many MPs/senior public office-holders you think actually do these things. (NB This question was not asked about senior public office-holders in 2004)



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland,

N.B. These scores are calculated by working out the differences in the proportion of the public who say that all or most MPs/senior public officials behave in each way minus the proportion who say few or none do. "Don't know" and "about half" responses are therefore not taken into account in this calculation.

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL



**Table F: Perceptions of senior public officials' behaviours**

**Q** Next, looking at the screen, please say how many senior public officials you think actually do these things?

	<i>All</i>	<i>Most</i>	<i>About half</i>	<i>A few</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A. They are dedicated to doing a good job for the public	3	48	30	17	1	2
B. They use their power for their own personal gain	2	12	19	57	3	7
C. They take bribes	*	4	8	61	8	18
D. They own up when they make mistakes	1	12	23	52	8	5
E. They explain the reasons for their actions and decisions	2	23	31	35	5	5
F. They set a good example for others in their private lives	2	36	26	19	2	16
G. They tell the truth	2	32	33	25	3	4
H. They make sure that public money is used wisely	1	34	32	24	4	5
I. They are in touch with what the general public thinks is important	2	29	37	24	4	3
J. They are competent at their jobs	2	47	32	15	1	4

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland



# 5. MPS AND VOTING IN PARLIAMENT

Perceptions about the factors that ought to guide MPs when voting in Parliament – and the factors believed to actually guide them – provide important insights into how the public view the role of MPs and the behaviour of their elected representatives. The responses to such questions can also provide a useful measure against which to compare public perceptions with reality, highlighting in the process some contradictions and misapprehensions that may exist in the public mind.

## Factors MPs should take into account when voting

The survey finds that the vast majority of adults in Great Britain believe it is reasonable for MPs, when voting on important issues affecting the whole country, to take account of *what would benefit people living in the country as a whole* (95%), *what the MP's party election manifesto promised* (81%) and *what would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency* (80%) Figure 14 (overleaf).

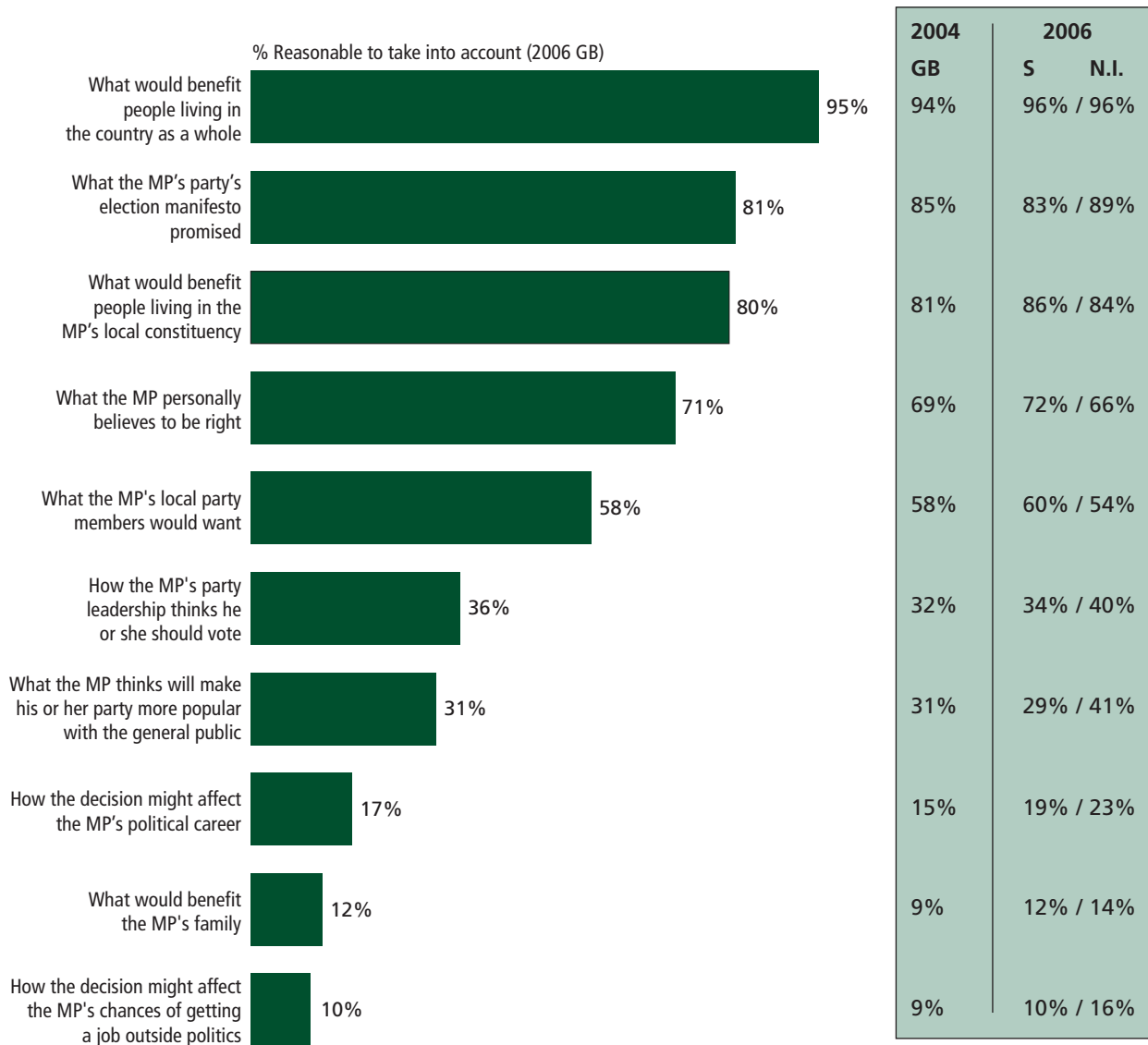
In contrast, the public in Great Britain do not want MPs to prioritise their own interests when voting on national issues. This is not to say that the public feels MPs should discount their own personal view of issues when deciding how to vote (71% believe this is acceptable). Rather, it is an issue of personal gain; over three in four adults in Great Britain say it is not acceptable for MPs to base their decisions on how it *might affect their political career* (77%), how it might *benefit their family* (84%) or how it might *affect their chances of getting a job outside politics* (85%). This might be expected. The public is unlikely to sanction actions designed to produce personal family gain or career advancement while, given that the survey question made explicit reference to 'issues affecting the whole of the UK', it is perhaps unsurprising that the public should place greater emphasis on what would benefit 'the country as a whole', than on an MP's own constituents.

It is the public's view of the appropriateness of party influence that is perhaps most interesting. Adults in Great Britain reject by a ratio of two to one (63% to 31%) that MPs should take into account *what will make his or her party more popular with the general public* but are more willing to accept *what the MP's local party members would want* (58%). Given that much other research has shown public hostility to party politics, it is somewhat surprising that a majority of the public think that it is reasonable for MPs to vote on national issues in light of what his or her local party wants. Perhaps this suggests that the public value accountability and the constituency link – in this case the constituency party link.

What is clear is that the public considers the instruction of party managers to be a much less legitimate influence. Only just over a third of the public in Great Britain (36%) agree that *how the MP's party leadership thinks he or she should vote* is a reasonable factor to take into account. Yet, at the same time, 81% believe it is reasonable for MPs to take into account *what the MP's party's election manifesto promised*. One interpretation of these findings is that the public regard manifesto promises as commitments that parties should honour when elected.

**Figure 14: MPs and voting in Parliament**

**Q** *Suppose there is a vote in Parliament on an important national issue affecting the whole of the UK. Which of these do you think it is reasonable for MPs to take into account when deciding how to vote and which should they definitely not take into account?*



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

Results in Scotland are line with the average in Great Britain, and the overall pattern is also consistent in Northern Ireland. At the same time, people in Northern Ireland are slightly more likely to think it is reasonable for MPs to vote on *what the party manifesto promised* (8 points higher than in Great Britain) and what would *make the MP or his or her party more popular with the general public* (10 points higher).

The differences in subgroups of the UK population are not great. As might be expected, those who feel closer to a political party tend to accept the legitimacy of the influence of political party manifestos more so than those who do not feel they are closer to any political party – this may be because those who identify with a political party express more trust in parties, or it may represent these people having a higher knowledge and understanding of the way in which Parliament works.

One of the most striking differences in views is evident when examining the influence that decisions may have on an MP's future chance of employment outside politics. While all UK subgroups, on balance, reject this as a legitimate reason for voting in Parliament, younger people (21%), those with no formal education (20%) and those not interested in current affairs (18%) are substantially more likely to say that this is a legitimate reason than other types of people.

It is also worth noting that with only one factor do we find a difference in views between those who rate overall standards in public life as either high or low. That is, among adults who believe overall standards to be high, six in ten (61%) say it is reasonable for an MP to take into account what his or her local party members want – just over one in three (34%) say it is not (giving a “net reasonable” score of +27). By contrast, more of those who rate overall standards as low say it is not reasonable for local party members to influence decisions (51%) than it is (44%) – giving a “net reasonable” score of -7.

## Perceptions of what MPs take most account of when voting

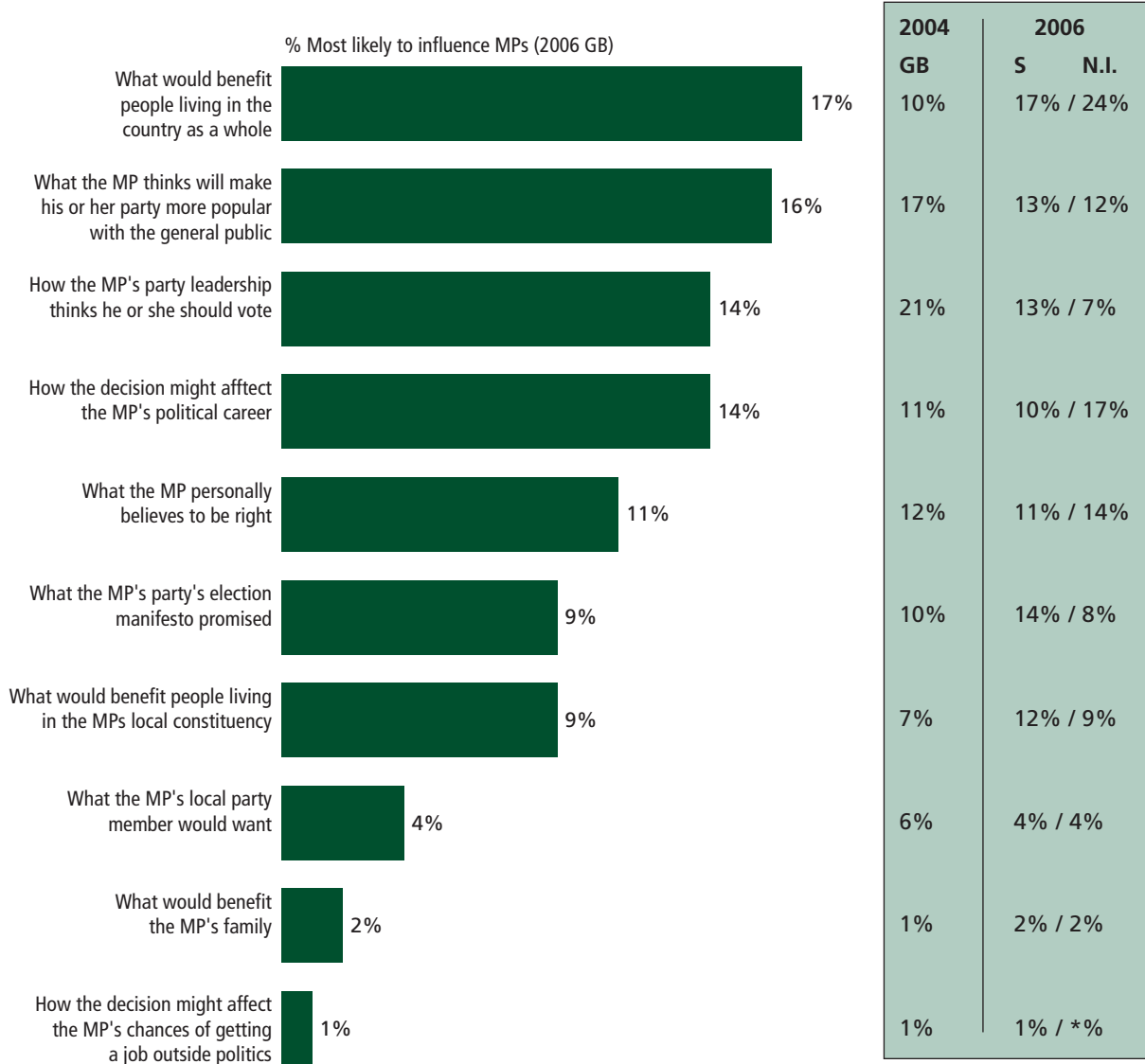
When respondents were asked which of these should be the single most important factor an MP should take into account when voting on a national issue affecting the whole country, there is a clear consensus (66%) that it should be *what would benefit the country as a whole*. However, there is no consensus – or majority view – about the factor MPs actually do base their decisions on Figure 15 (overleaf).

To some extent this may reflect the public's lack of understanding about the role of MPs and the mechanics of the political system. That said, while no single motivating factor is identified substantially above all others, the findings suggest that people generally hold a sceptical view about what influences MPs' voting. For example, notable minorities believe MPs are likely to place greatest reliance on populist policies (16%), the views of their party leadership (14%) or career concerns (14%), none of which are felt to be legitimate influences.

However, an interesting shift has occurred since 2004 in that a third fewer adults in Great Britain now think that an MP would base his or her decision on party leadership orders (from 21% to 14%), while the proportion saying that MPs vote in the national interest has almost doubled (up from 10% to 17%).

**Figure 15: Factors most likely to influence MPs when voting**

**Q** *In practice, which one do you think most MPs would base their decision on?*



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland,

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

## 6. VIEWS ON PUBLIC SECTOR RECRUITMENT PRACTICE

This chapter presents the findings on public attitudes towards public sector recruitment, examining the factors that are considered to be most important when applying for a job in this sector; and particularly looking at perceptions of unfair recruitment and how the authorities are seen to deal with it.

### Jobs awarded to the best candidate is seen as the single most important principle in recruitment to the public sector

The principle that *the job should be awarded to the best candidate* is seen by adults in Great Britain as by far the most important principle when recruiting people to government departments or other public services. As shown in Figure 16, over half of adults (56%) select this principle as the most important when shown a list of seven factors that could be taken into account. This demonstrates that, when the public are given a straight choice, they place more emphasis on the outcome rather than the process of recruitment. When interpreting the following results it is important to remember that respondents were required to choose one factor only – this does not mean that the other factors are not seen as important.

The significance of the *best candidate* principle is evident when we consider that fewer than half as many adults in Great Britain say that *everyone who applies for a job should have a fair chance* (23%) is the single most important factor to take into account. This question does not, however, probe the extent to which the process of recruitment can contribute to securing the best candidate.

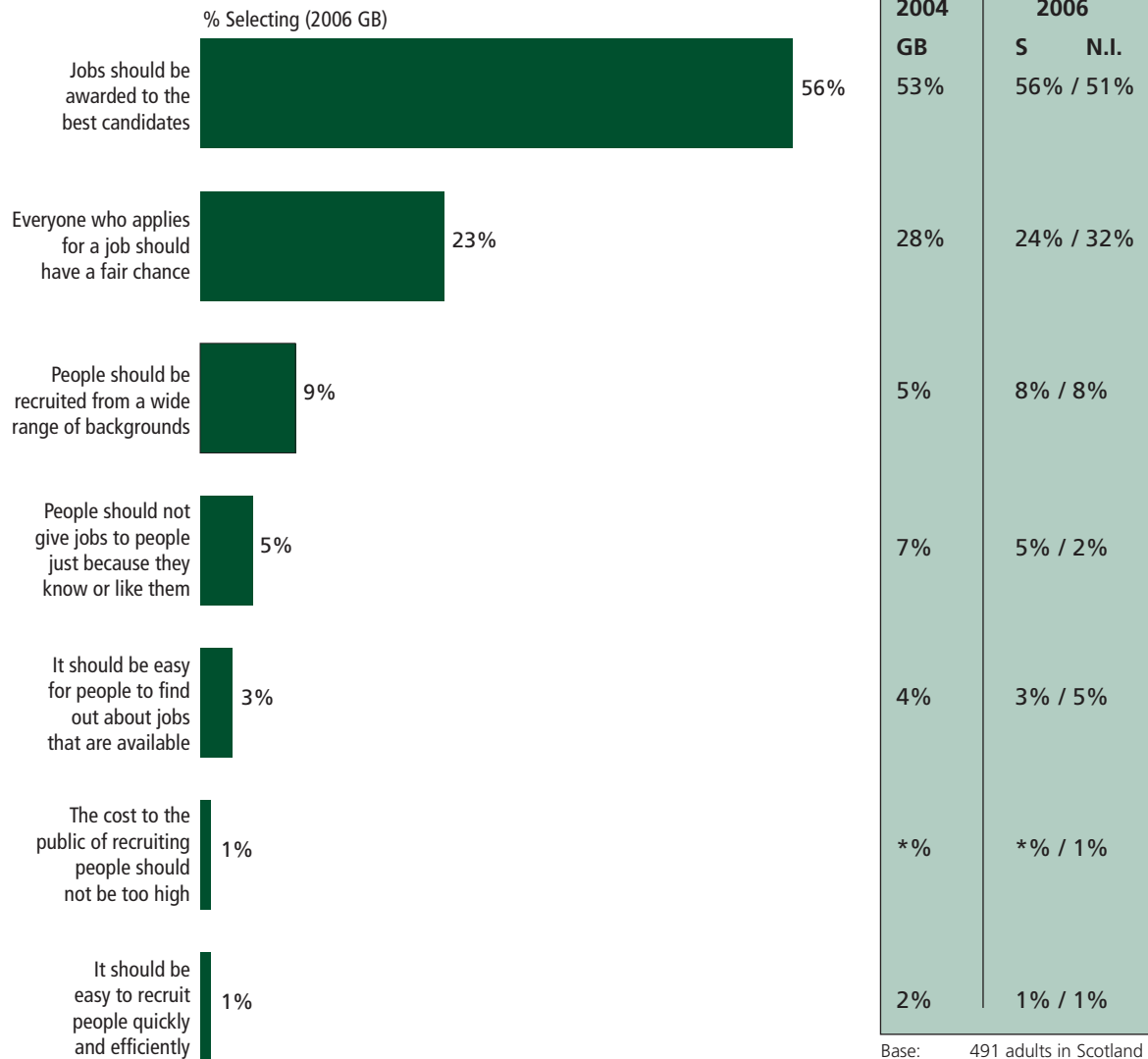
While these two principles are selected as the most important in this order across all subgroups of the public, there are differences of emphasis between some groups. Generally, across the UK, men (61%), those in social grades AB (72%), the higher educated (70%) and people interested in current affairs (65%) put even greater emphasis than the public overall on awarding jobs to the *best* candidates. In contrast, women (27%), under 25s (37%), those in social grades DE (34%) and those not interested in politics (35%) or who do not feel attached to a political party (28%) tend to put a higher emphasis on *fairness*.

To some extent the reason for these differences in opinion could be because different social groups interpret the terms *best* and *fairness* differently. Those types of people who would normally thrive on a purely meritocratic system would be expected to favour recruitment of the best candidate. However, those groups who have been traditionally excluded from public office may not see *best* and *merit* as synonymous, and as such place more emphasis on ensuring recruitment procedures take into account people's backgrounds to ensure a *fairer* entry system (and thereby perhaps resulting in the *best* candidate).

Figure 16 presents the results from adults in Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as the results for Great Britain. This shows that people in Northern Ireland tend to place greater emphasis on fairness (32%) than do people from Great Britain, even though the over-riding factor is still who the best

**Figure 16: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs**

**Q** Now I would like to ask you about the way government departments and other public services recruit people for jobs. In your opinion, which ONE of these things is the most important when government departments and other public services are recruiting people for jobs?



Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults in Scotland  
403 adults in N.I.  
2004 = 1,097

Source: Ipsos MORI/C SPL

candidate is (51%). This is not simply a reflection of the different social class compositions of Northern Ireland compared with Great Britain, as adults in Northern Ireland from both ABC1 and C2DE classes are both more likely to choose fairness as the one over-riding factor compared to similar people in Great Britain. It is worthwhile noting that there are well-established specific provisions concerning fair employment in Northern Ireland.

### The public is sceptical about how public office-holders get their jobs

There is widespread belief that proper procedures are frequently not used when recruiting people to public office – see Figure 17. Two in three adults in Great Britain (66%) think that people do get jobs through someone they know rather than through correct procedures either a lot (19%) or a fair

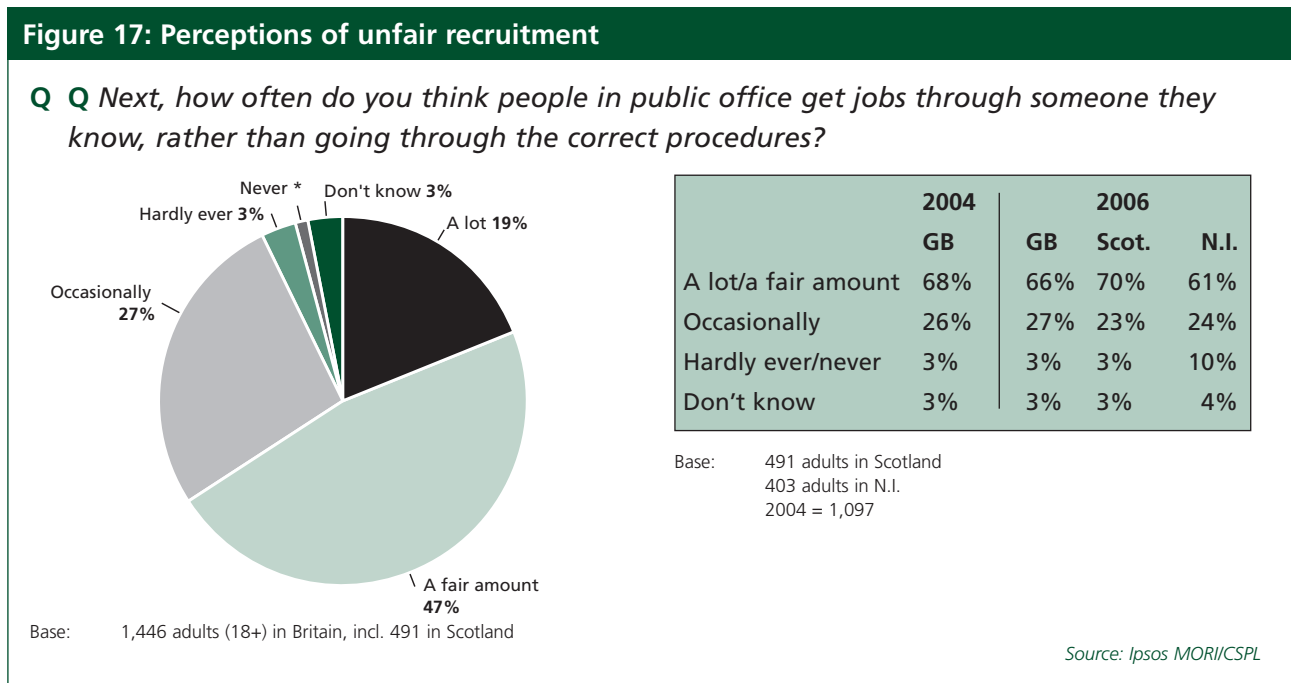


amount (47%) of the time. Only one in twenty-five adults in Great Britain (4%) think this never or hardly ever happens.

These findings are in line with the survey results from 2004, where 68% of adults in Great Britain then believed that this happened either a lot or a fair amount of the time.

There is little variation in perceptions by key demographic sub groups of the population. However, more adults in Northern Ireland are confident in the integrity of recruitment procedures than adults in Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, three in five adults (61%) believe that people in public office get jobs a lot or a fair amount of the time through someone they know rather than going through the correct procedures – and as many as ten per cent (more than twice the level in Great Britain) think this hardly ever or never happens.

Relative to the other principles of recruitment, few people in Great Britain (5%) say that the single most important principle for recruitment is that *people should not give jobs to people because they know or like them* – see Figure 16. Nevertheless, as reported in the 2004 survey, over four-fifths of adults say that this principle is either extremely (57%) or very (25%) important.



### Are recruitment procedures improving or getting worse?

Even though there has been no statistical change in the proportion of people in Britain who think that the correct recruitment procedures are not followed, three times as many believe that this sort of unfair recruitment has increased (34%) over the past few years than has decreased (11%), as illustrated in Table G.

Given that people in Northern Ireland are somewhat more positive about how the system for public sector recruitment currently works, it is not surprising that more adults here compared to Great Britain as a whole believe that unfair recruitment has decreased in the past few years (26% and 11%, respectively).

In terms of demographic differences within the UK public, people aged 65 years or over (5%), those in social grades C2DE (7%) and those with no formal educational qualifications (5%) are least likely to think unfair recruitment has decreased over the past few years.

**Table G: Changes in the perceptions of incorrect recruitment procedures**

**Q** *And do you think this kind of thing [people in public office getting jobs through someone they know rather than going through the correct procedures] has increased or decreased in the last few years or stayed about the same? A lot or a little?*

	Great Britain		Scotland	N. Ireland
	2004 (1,097)	2006 (1,446)	2006 (491)	2006 (403)
	%	%	%	%
Increased a lot	13	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>
Increased a little	21	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>
Stayed about the same	50	<b>47</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>36</b>
Decreased a little	10	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>
Decreased a lot	2	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
Don't know	5	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults Scotland. 403 (NI). 2004 = 1,097

## Authorities are not thought to be clamping down more on unfair recruitment

One in five (19%) adults in Great Britain believe that the authorities are clamping down *more* on unfair recruitment now than they were *a few years ago* – see Table H. A slightly greater proportion (21%), however, believe that the authorities are doing this *less* than before – and half (51%) say about the same. This gives a “net more clamping down”<sup>11</sup> score of -2. When this is compared with the findings from the 2004 research, when the net score was +10, it is clear that, on balance, the public in Britain do not think the authorities are clamping down more on this sort of behaviour.

As Table H illustrates, people in Northern Ireland are more positive than those in Great Britain about the record of the authorities. Twice as many adults in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain believe the authorities are clamping down more on unfair recruitment (37% and 19%, respectively), and the “net more clamping down” score for Northern Ireland is +28 (compared to -2 in Great Britain).

The key subgroup difference is, as we would expect, that people who consider public office-holders’ overall standards to be high are also more positive than those who think these standards are low (28% and 14% respectively). Interestingly there are no differences between the views of people who work in the public sector or private sector on any of the questions covered in the survey relating to public sector recruitment practice. This is a very important finding. Either there is a general climate of opinion that even affects those who ought to have independent knowledge, or this is an accurate statement of the way things work. If we assume that it is not true, and that the public is more cynical than the real position merits, then it appears that even those in the public service do not hold a more positive view. Of course, “public office” may be widely understood to refer in particular to an elite of which most public sector workers will have no first-hand recruitment experience. Even so, it is a depressing thought that many public sector workers appear to lack confidence in the process by which their bosses are appointed.

<sup>11</sup> “Net more” is a calculation of the proportion of the public who say a *lot more* or a *bit more* minus those who say a *bit less* or a *lot less*.

**Table H: The extent to which the authorities clamp down on incorrect recruitment procedures**

**Q** *And do you think the authorities clamp down on this kind of thing [people in public office getting jobs through someone they know rather than going through the correct procedures] more or less than they did a few years ago, or about the same amount as they did?*

	Great Britain		Scotland	N. Ireland
	2004 (1,097) %	2006 (1,446) %	2006 (491) %	2006 (403) %
A lot more	5	2	3	10
A bit more	19	17	16	27
Same amount	54	51	53	44
A bit less	13	15	14	8
A lot less	3	6	5	1
Don't know	6	8	9	10

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults Scotland. 403 (NI). 2004 = 1,097

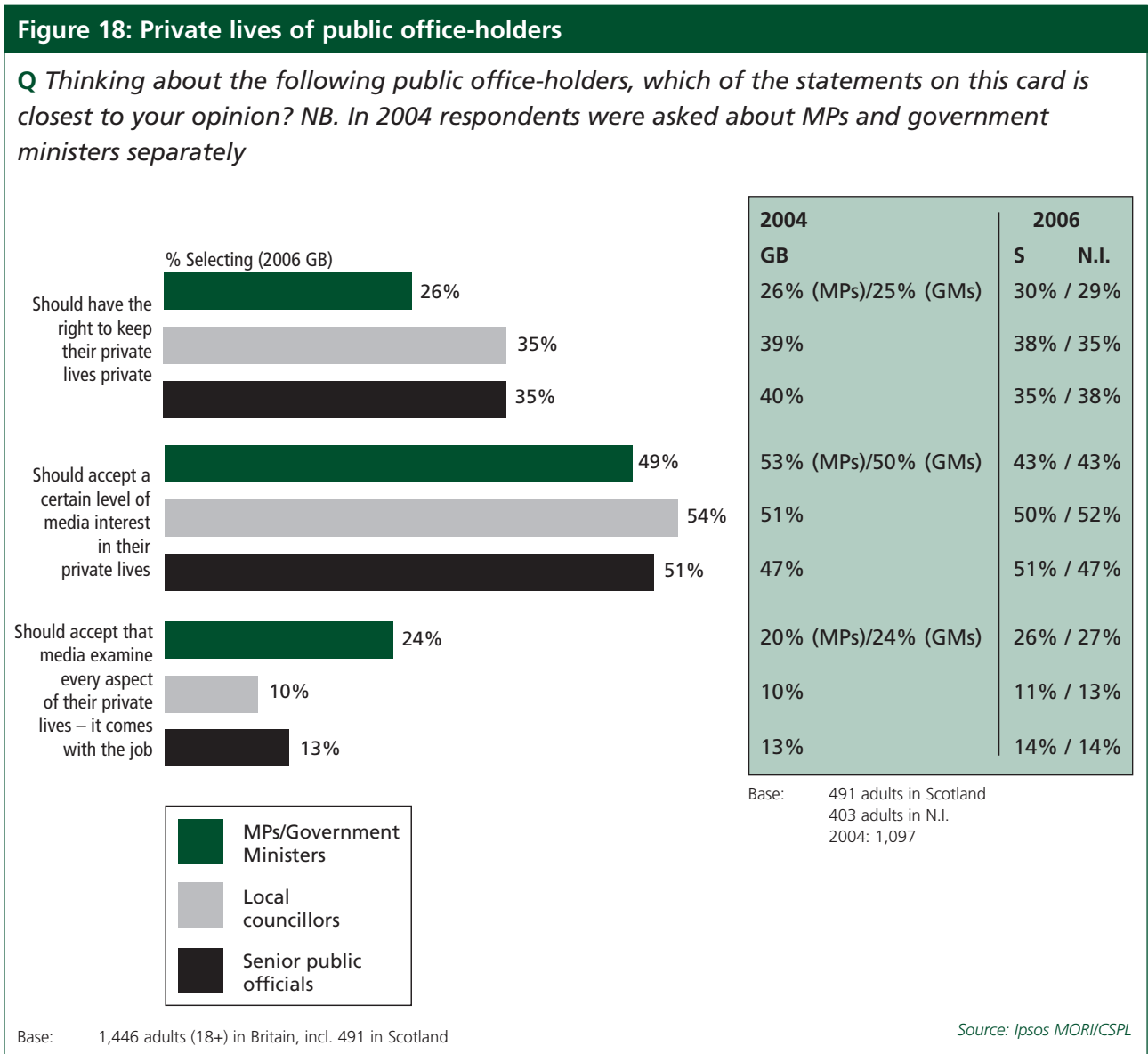


# 7. MEDIA SCRUTINY AND THE PRIVATE LIVES OF PUBLIC OFFICE-HOLDERS

Although the private conduct of public office-holders is not within the remit of the Committee, the public’s beliefs and perceptions in this regard are important, since what people know or have heard about the private conduct of public office-holders may well help shape their overall perceptions of them.

It is important to understand the extent to which the public believe that public office-holders have the right to a private life against differing levels of media scrutiny. The survey was designed to assess this for different types of elected public office-holders as well as senior appointed officials.

Figure 18 presents the findings showing the extent to which the public regard media intrusion as acceptable for the three main types of public officials covered in this research.



## Privacy and media scrutiny

The public in Great Britain hold similar views about the extent to which local councillors and senior public officials should have their private lives scrutinised by the media. A small majority of people believe that both local councillors and senior public officials *should accept a certain level of media interest in their private lives* (54% and 51%, respectively). Only a small minority – around one in ten – would argue that these two groups *should accept that the media examine every aspect of their private lives – “it comes with the job”*. Instead, just over a third of adults in Great Britain say that local councillors and senior public officials groups *should have the right to keep their private lives private*.

Compared with the 2004 survey results there has been a slight drop (of five percentage points) in the proportion of the public in Great Britain who think that senior officials should be able to keep their private lives private. Among local councillors this figure has also dropped by three points – though this is not statistically significant. In future research, it will be important to monitor these results in order to determine whether the apparent change in public attitudes is part of a long-term shift in acceptance of greater media scrutiny in appointed, as well as elected, public officials.

The public in Great Britain takes a slightly different attitude towards MPs and Government ministers with more of the public believing that media scrutiny *comes with the job* (24%) – almost as many who believe they are entitled to a totally private life (26%).

As was reported in Chapter 3, setting a good example in one's private life is seen as a less important characteristic for MPs and government ministers *relative* to other factors measured in the survey – but still over half the public in Great Britain say it is very or extremely important (56%) – four times the proportion who say it is not very or not at all important (13%). The fact that the public seem content for greater media scrutiny of MPs and government ministers is perhaps linked with the higher profile of these groups than for either local councillors or senior public officials. And this also suggests that it is the profile and perceived importance of the role rather than whether a public office holder is appointed or elected that is more important in determining the extent of public acceptability for media scrutiny.

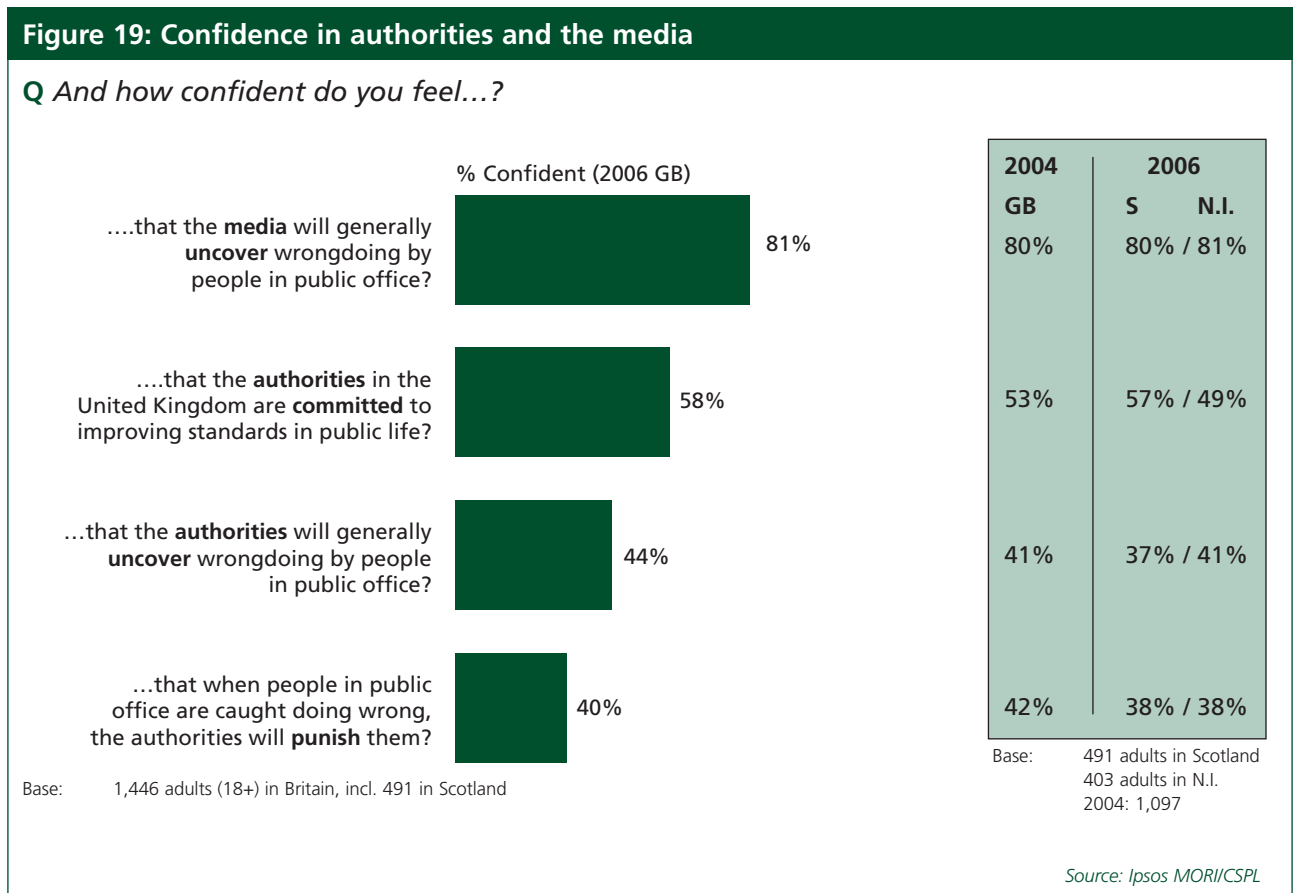
Across the UK, younger people (42% of 18-24s), those from social grades C2DE (33%) place greater emphasis on MPs being able to have a private life than do other main subgroups of the population. This finding may reflect the fact that these groups are simply less interested in politics and how government works, and therefore care less about holding public office-holders to account, or are at least less concerned about the need to investigate all aspects of office-holders' private lives. Alternatively, these differences may be due to certain groups being more realistic that media intrusion comes with the responsibility of public office.

Differences by newspaper readership are also telling. Tabloid readers (30%) are most likely to think MPs and government ministers have a right to keep their private lives private – close to twice the proportion of mid-market readers (17%) who feel the same way, and some way ahead of broadsheet newspaper readers (22%). Those people most likely to see (and have seen) the most sensational coverage are the most likely to be not interested in it!

As is illustrated in Figure 18, views among people in Scotland and Northern Ireland are consistent with results in Great Britain as a whole.

# 8. PUBLIC OFFICE-HOLDERS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As well as measuring public perceptions about the level of standards of conduct of public office-holders and related factors, the 2006 survey tracked key indicators on the public’s confidence in the authorities’ role in relation to upholding high standards. To provide context to these results, respondents were asked about their confidence in the media to uncover wrongdoing as well. The results are presented in Figure 19.



## The role of the authorities in improving standards, uncovering wrongdoing and punishing offenders

Three in five adults in Great Britain (58%) are confident that the authorities in the UK are committed to improving standards in public life. However, two in five (40%) are not confident, which gives a “net confidence” score of +18. It is noteworthy that few adults in Great Britain are either *very* confident (5%) or *not at all* confident (5%).

While, on balance, the public in Great Britain has faith in the authorities’ commitment to improving standards, the same cannot be said about how people rate the authorities’ ability either to uncover

wrongdoing or punish offenders. On balance, adults in Great Britain are not confident that the UK authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing (44% confident; giving a net score of -10) or punish those in public office who are caught doing wrong (40% confident; giving a net score of -18).

It does not seem that increasing public recognition of the authorities' commitment is leading to greater faith in the efficacy of authorities in these respects. True, more of the public who think the authorities are committed to improving standards believe that the authorities will uncover and punish wrongdoers. (60% of those who are confident in the authorities' commitment say they are also confident that the authorities will uncover wrongdoing, while only 23% of those who doubt the authorities' commitment say the same.) Yet the increase in the proportion of people in Great Britain confident that the authorities are committed to improving standards (up six points since 2004) has not resulted in more people believing that the authorities will uncover and then punish wrongdoers.

A clearer discriminator is whether people's perceptions of overall standards in public life are high or low. Those in the UK who believe that standards of conduct are high are considerably more confident in the authorities' abilities to combat wrongdoing than those who think overall standards are low. This is illustrated in Table I below:

**Table I: Confidence in authorities / the media regarding standards in public life across the UK**

**Q** *And how confident do you feel...?*

	<b>GB overall (1,446)</b>	<b>Belief that Standards of conduct are high (790)</b>	<b>Belief that Standards of conduct are low (238)</b>
	<b>% very/fairly confident</b>	<b>% very/fairly confident</b>	<b>% very/fairly confident</b>
That the authorities in the UK are committed to improving standards in public life	58	81	17
That the authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office	44	59	23
When people in public office are caught doing wrong, how confident do you feel that the authorities will punish them	40	52	28
That the media will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office	81	82	83

Across the UK, younger people (73% of 18-24s), the higher social grades (64% of ABs; 60% of C1s) and the more highly educated (67%) tend to put greater confidence in authorities' commitment to improving standards – but these differences are less marked in terms of confidence in uncovering and punishing wrongdoing.

Adults living in Northern Ireland and Scotland do have somewhat different views about the authorities in these respects. Only half (49%) of adults in Northern Ireland are confident that authorities are committed to improving standards (9 points lower than the average across Britain), with as many (47%)



who say they are not confident – giving a “net confidence” score of just +2 (compared with +18 for Great Britain as a whole). However, the views of people in Northern Ireland as to the authorities’ ability to find and punish wrongdoers is in line with those expressed in Great Britain.

In Scotland the reverse is true. People living here are as likely as the Great Britain average to have confidence in the authorities’ commitment to improving standards (57%), but fewer people in Scotland think the authorities are able to uncover wrongdoing (-23 “net confident” compared with -10 in Great Britain).

## **The public express greater confidence in the media than in the authorities to uncover wrongdoing**

As was reported in the 2004 survey report, more adults in Great Britain have confidence in the ability of the media (81%) than in the authorities (44%) to uncover wrongdoing by people in public office. These findings should be expected given that the media believe they have a role in terms of the national interest of uncovering and publicising wrongdoing in public office. Indeed, it is difficult to think of an example of a major case of wrongdoing – that has led, for example, to the dismissal of a senior public office-holder – that has not been initially uncovered or taken up by the media. Even for those cases that may have been originally uncovered by the authorities, it is through the media that the vast majority of the public would become aware of them. In this respect, it is not possible to compare public confidence in authorities as opposed to the media, where the media operate under much different rules.

There are no major subgroup differences in the amount of confidence people place in the media to do this, and results in Northern Ireland and Scotland are in line with findings across Great Britain. Those in the UK who are *not* interested in current affairs register among the lowest levels of confidence in the media (73%); but even among those who *do not* read a newspaper regularly, the vast majority (76%) are confident in the media’s role.

As is illustrated in Table I, different perceptions about the overall standards of behaviour of public office-holders makes no difference to people’s attitudes towards the media’s ability to uncover wrongdoing.

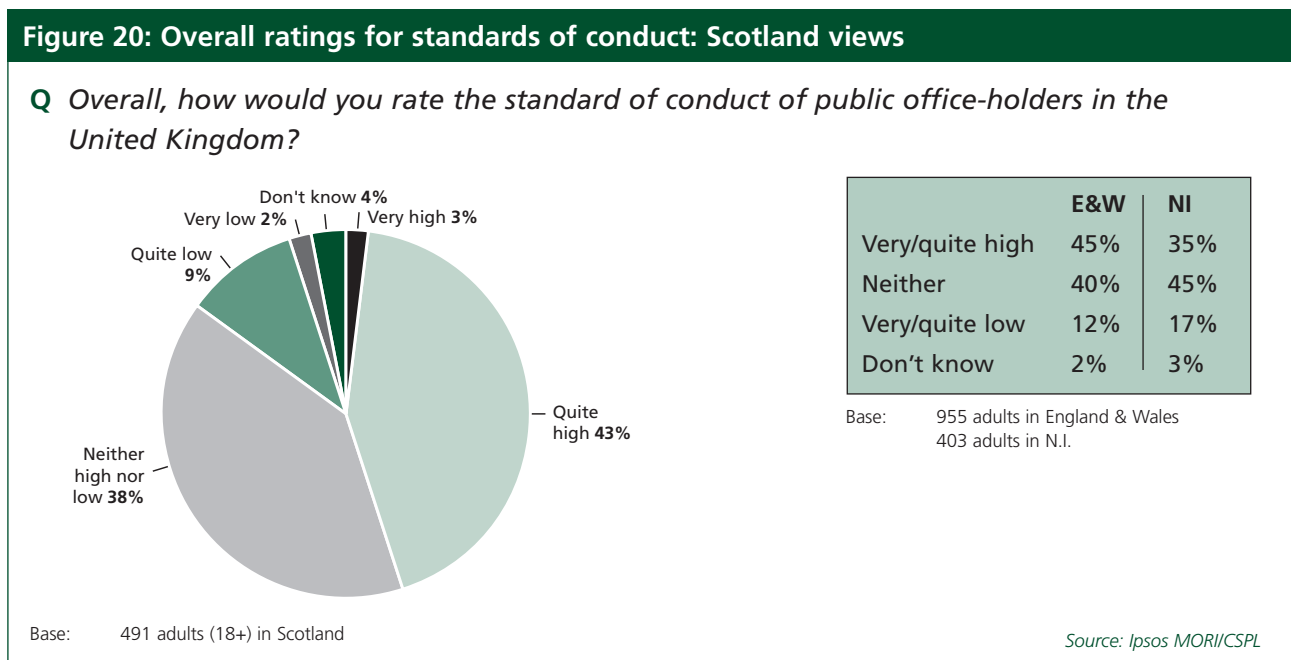


# 9. ATTITUDES IN SCOTLAND

In the 2006 survey, booster interviews were conducted in Scotland to allow for more reliable comparison of views between adults living in Scotland and adults living in England and Wales, and in Northern Ireland. This chapter summarises the key findings from the interviews conducted in Scotland, which prove in only a few respects to be significantly different from views among adults in England and Wales. The booster sample in Scotland was funded with a financial contribution from the Scottish Executive.

## Overall perceptions of standards in public life

As shown in Figure 20, four times as many adults in Scotland believe that standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK are high rather than low (46% say they are high, 11% that they are low).



Adults in Scotland are divided on whether they believe that standards are getting better or worse: the largest single group (44%) think standards are the *same* as a few years ago, but less than a quarter (22%) believe standards have *improved* while 27% say they have got *worse*.

Almost half of adults in Scotland (47%) think that standards of conduct in the UK are *about average* compared to elsewhere in Europe. Of the remainder, more (29%) think that UK standards are higher than elsewhere in Europe than think they are lower (12%).

All the above results of views of people in Scotland are in line with views expressed by people living in England and Wales.

As shown in Table J, when asked to consider how they believe standards of conduct of public office-holders in Scotland compare with the rest of the UK, a clear majority of adults in Scotland (58%) believe that standards in Scotland are about the same as in other parts of the United Kingdom.

**Table J: Ratings of standards of conduct in Scotland/ Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom**

**Q** *And how do you think standards of public office-holders in [Scotland/ Northern Ireland] today compare with those in the rest of the United Kingdom?*

	<b>Scotland</b> %	<b>N. Ireland</b> %
Much higher than the rest of the UK	2	3
Higher than the rest of the UK	18	19
About the same	58	49
Lower than the rest of the UK	12	18
Much lower than the rest of the UK	2	6
Don't know	8	6

Base: 491 adults (18+) in Scotland, 403 in Northern Ireland

## Trust in public office-holders

In Scotland, family doctors are the most trusted group out of the 17 professions covered in the survey – see Figure 21. This is consistent with findings from England and Wales.

Almost all adults in Scotland (96%) say they trust family doctors to tell the truth, putting them ahead of head teachers in schools (88%), judges (84%), local police officers (77%) and senior police officers (74%), the next most trusted groups.

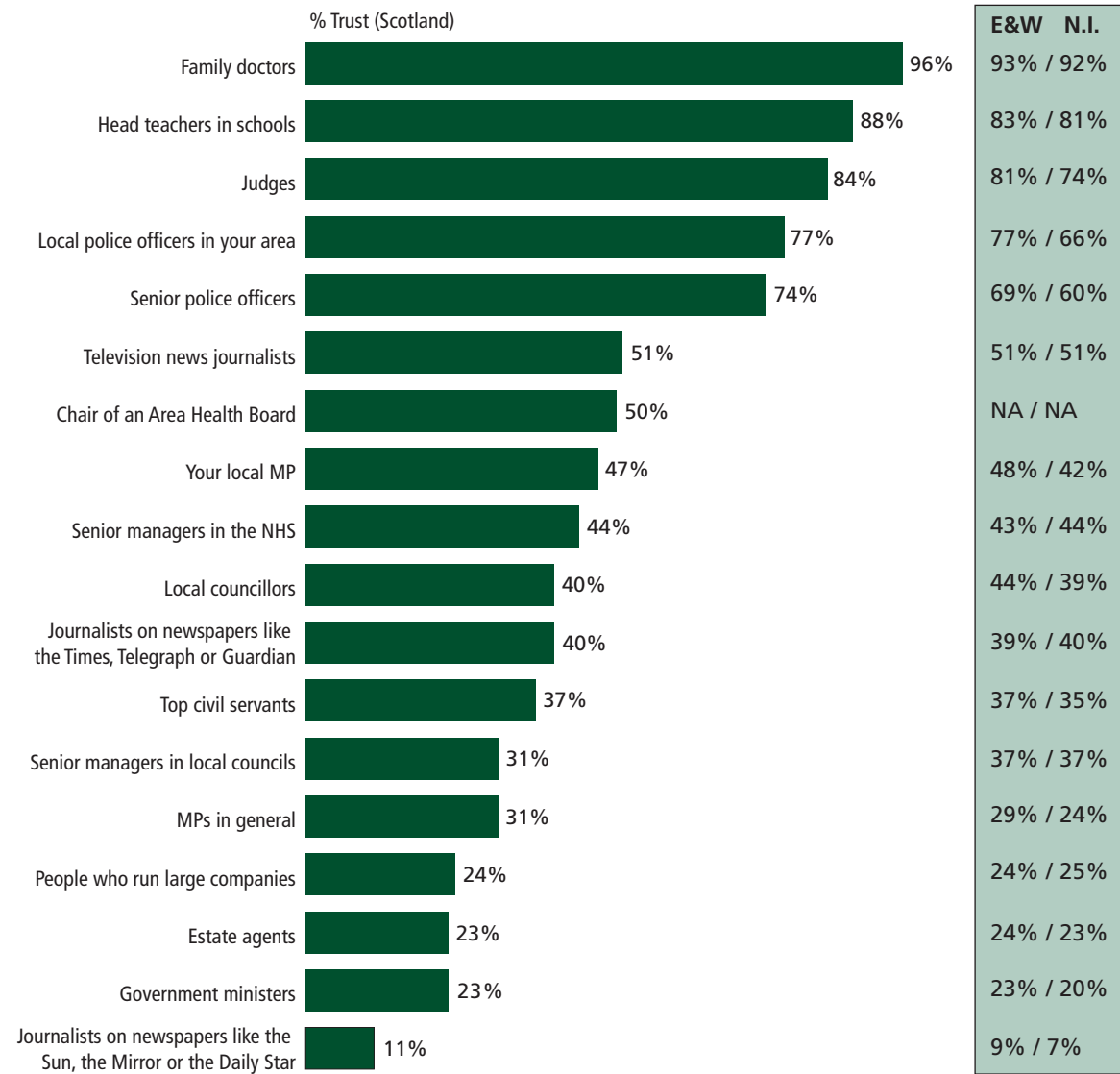
By far the least trusted group in Scotland are journalists on newspapers such as the Sun, the Daily Record or the Daily Star, where only 11% of adults express faith in their honesty. Indeed, the next least-trusted groups are trusted by twice the proportion of adults than these types of journalists: government ministers (23% of adults trust them to tell the truth), estate agents (23%) and people who run large companies (24%).

There are some small differences between results in Scotland and those in England and Wales, with more adults in Scotland expressing trust in family doctors (96% – three points higher) and head teachers in schools (88% – four points higher), but in contrast, fewer expressing trust in senior managers in local councils (31% – five points lower) – though all of these differences are not strictly statistically significant.

The survey also asked people in Scotland whether or not they would generally trust a chair of an Area Health Board to tell the truth. Exactly half of adults (50%) say they would, with 37% saying they would not. This therefore places Area Health Board chairs in Scotland in a higher position of trust than senior managers in the NHS (44% trust) though considerably lower than family doctors (96% trust).

**Figure 21: Trust in different professional groups: Scotland views**

**Q** These cards show different types of people. Please put them on this board to show which you would generally trust to tell the truth and which you wouldn't.



Base: 491 adults (18+) in Scotland

Base: 955 adults (England & Wales)  
403 adults (N. Ireland)

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

## National politicians: expectations and perceptions of standards

Figure 22 shows that the most widespread demand that people in Scotland make on the behaviour of MPs and government ministers is that they should not take bribes: 85% of adults say that it is “extremely important” that they should not do so. Other high ranking factors are that they should tell the truth (77% extremely important), should make sure that public money is spent wisely (72%) and should not use their power for their own personal gain (70%). In contrast, fewer than half of adults in Scotland say it is extremely important that MPs and government ministers should explain the reasons for their actions and decisions (45%) or set a good example in their private lives (27%).

These results are consistent with attitudes expressed by adults in England and Wales.

When asked to select which three types of behaviour are most important, the order of priorities given by adults in Scotland is slightly different from when each behaviour is separately rated for importance. The most frequently chosen are that MPs and government ministers should:

- Tell the truth (51% rate as most important);
- Make sure that public money is spent wisely (47%);
- Be dedicated to doing a good job for the public (38%); and
- Not take bribes (37%).

Just six per cent of adults say one of the three most important is for MPs and government ministers to set a good example in their private lives.

Again, these results are consistent with findings in England and Wales, though adults in England and Wales place not taking bribes (43%) higher than being dedicated to doing a good job for the public (36%).

Views of what MPs and government ministers actually do are also very similar among adults in Scotland to views in England and Wales. Only two statistically significant differences exist and these have little, if any, effect on the overall picture. Firstly, more adults in Scotland believe that few or no government ministers would *own up when they make mistakes* (75% and 68%, respectively). Secondly, fewer adults in Scotland than in England and Wales think all or most government ministers would *explain the reasons for their actions and decisions* (19% and 24%, respectively). See Figure 10 for greater detail on overall responses to this question.

## Senior public officials: expectations and perceptions of standards

When asked to choose which three behaviours are most important for senior public officials to follow, adults in Scotland select making sure public money is used wisely (50%) and being dedicated to doing a good job for the public (49%) as the two key behaviours. This is in line with the expectations of adults living in England and Wales – see Figure 23 (overleaf).

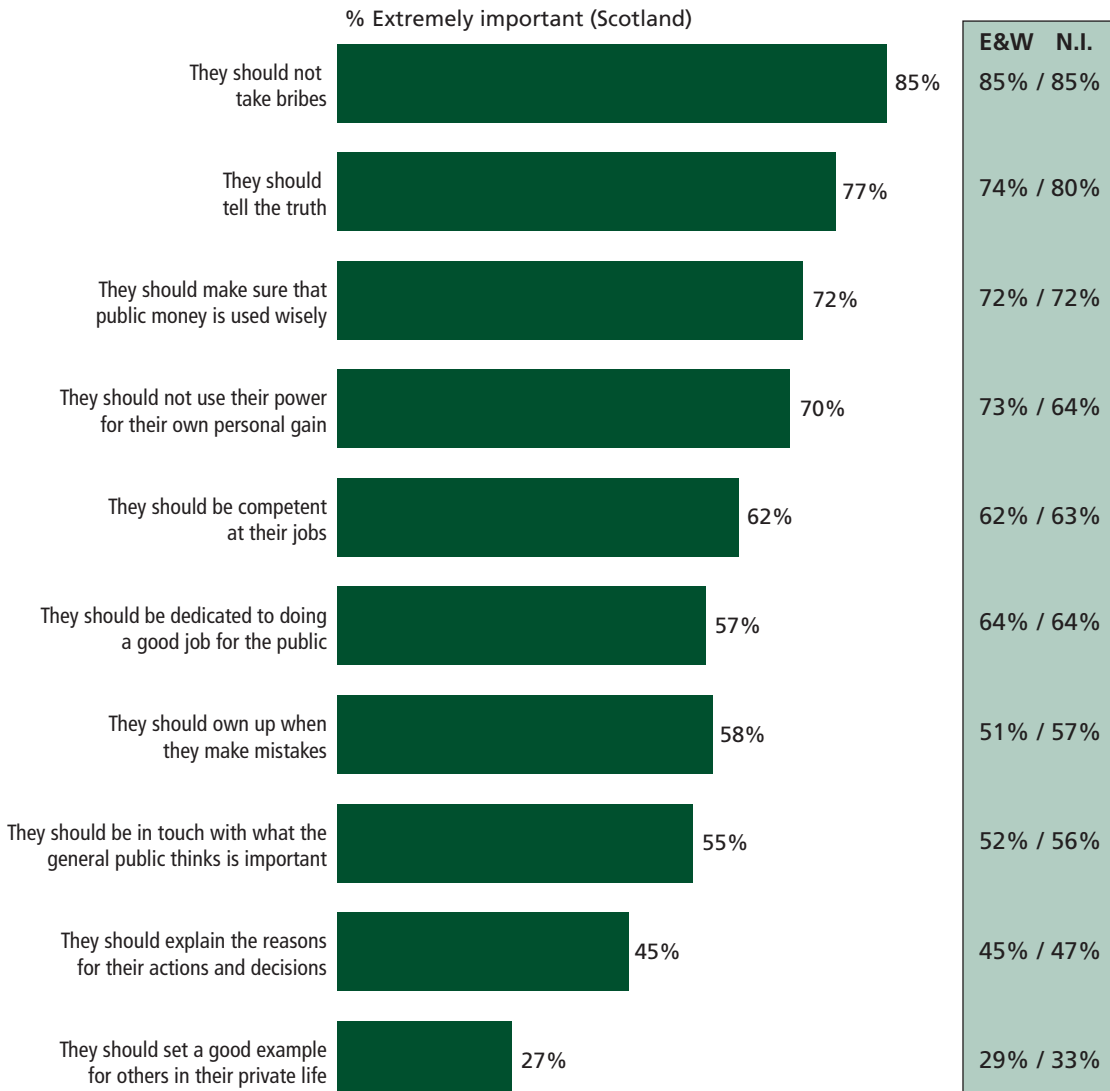
Most adults in Scotland feel that senior public officials are unlikely to take bribes (69% say they think “few” or “none” do so) or use their power for their own personal gain (60% ascribing this to “few” or “none”).

Of the attributes that it is most widely felt that public officials have, half (51%) think all or most are dedicated to doing a good job for the public. Views are fairly divided as to how carefully public officials use public money, with just over a third (36%) saying that all or most make sure that public money is used wisely, while a quarter (24%) think that only a “few” or “none” do so.

Again, these results are in line with findings for adults in England and Wales.

**Figure 22: Importance of different behaviours – Scotland views**

**Q** Thinking about these two groups of elected national politicians, please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that MPs and government ministers do the things shown on this card.



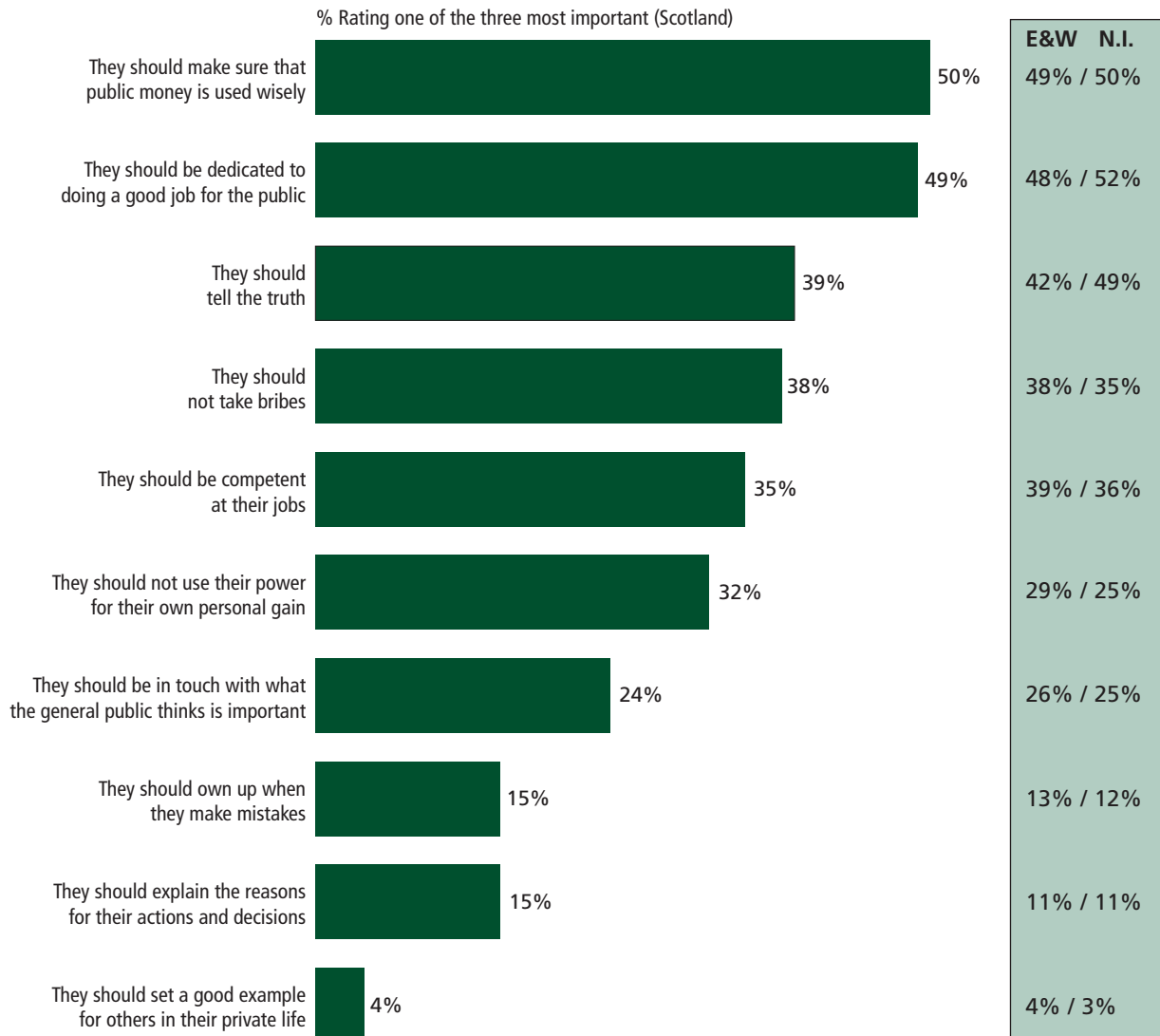
Base: 491 adults (18+) in Scotland

Base: 955 adults (England & Wales)  
403 adults (N. Ireland)

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

**Figure 23: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials: Scotland views**

Q Which of these [behaviours] do you think most important for senior public officials?



Base: All who rated more than three behaviours as important: 487 (Scotland), 946 (England & Wales), 403 (N. Ireland)

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

## MPs and voting in Parliament

Figure 24 shows the proportion of adults in Scotland who believe it is reasonable for MPs to take into account various factors when voting in Parliament on matters affecting the UK as a whole.

Virtually all adults in Scotland (96%) say it is reasonable for MPs to take into account what would benefit people living in the country as a whole and over eight in ten think it reasonable to take into account what would benefit an MP's constituency (86%) and what was promised in a party's manifesto (83%). These are the same top three factors as selected by people in England and Wales, though slightly more adults in Scotland say it is reasonable to take account of constituency interests than do people in England and Wales (86% and 80%, respectively).

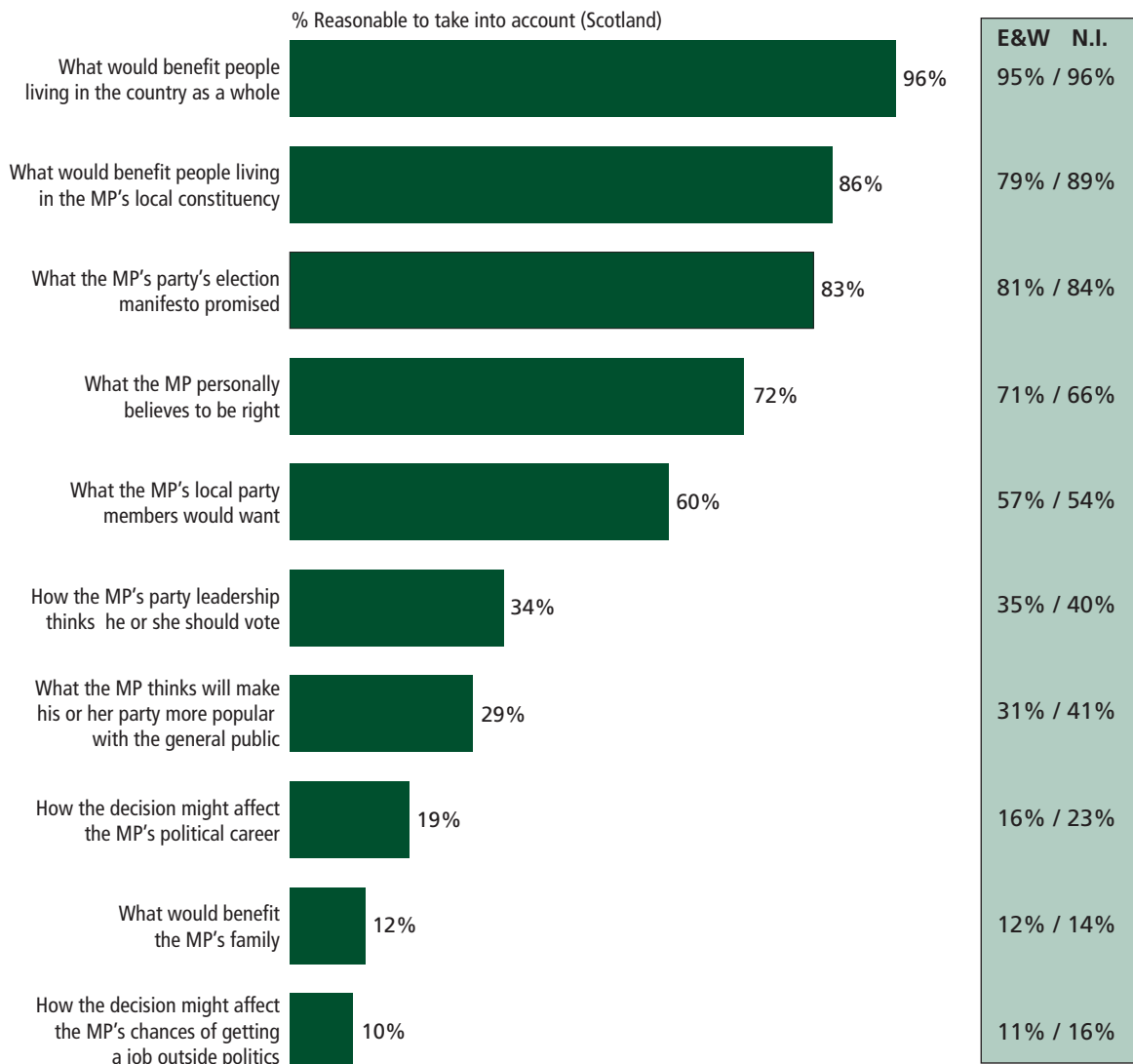


Respondents were also asked to state which of these factors they consider to be the *single* most important for MPs to take into account. By some margin, considering what would benefit the country as a whole is most frequently chosen by adults in Scotland as the *single* most important factor (60% say this).

One in five (21%) select what would benefit the local constituency as the single most important factor – the only other of the ten options chosen by more than one in ten adults in Scotland. This represents a key difference in opinion compared with adults in England and Wales. Adults in Scotland are almost twice as likely to say that the constituency factor is the most important when MPs vote on an issue, as do their counterparts in England and Wales (21% and 12%, respectively).

**Figure 24: MPs and voting in Parliament: Scotland views**

**Q** *Suppose there is a vote in Parliament on an important national issue affecting the whole of the UK. Which of these do you think it is reasonable for MPs to take into account when deciding how to vote and which should they definitely not take into account?*



Base: 491 adults (18+) in Scotland

Base: 955 adults (E&W)  
403 adults in N.I.

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

Respondents were then asked about which factors, in practice, they thought most MPs would base their decisions on. As in England and Wales, there is no consensus among adults in Scotland about which factors most MPs would base their decisions on. The most frequently selected factors are that MPs would vote on what was best for the country (17% of adults in Scotland believe this), followed by what was promised in the manifesto (14%), what would make the party more popular with the general public (13%) and what the leadership instructs (13%). These findings are consistent with perceptions among adults in England and Wales.

## Views on public sector recruitment practice

As illustrated in Figure 25, over half of adults in Scotland (56%) say the single most important principle for recruitment to the public sector should be that the best candidate is awarded the job. The next most frequently selected principle, preferred by 24%, is that the procedures should be *fair*.

Views of adults in Scotland towards public sector recruitment and unfair recruitment to public office are in line with views expressed by people in England and Wales.

However, there is a widespread belief that people in public office do not get their jobs through following the correct procedures. Seven in ten (70%) adults in Scotland believe that people in public office get jobs through someone they know rather than going through the correct procedures either a lot or a fair amount of the time. Indeed, a quarter of adults in Scotland think this happens a lot, compared with only three per cent who believe it happens hardly ever or never.

More than three times as many adults in Scotland believe that unfair recruitment has increased (35%) rather than decreased (10%) over the past few years. About half think this sort of behaviour is happening neither more nor less frequently than a few years ago (48%).

Just over half of adults in Scotland (53%) feel that the authorities are no more or less likely to be clamping down on this sort of unfair recruitment than they did a few years ago. One in five (19%) think that the authorities are doing less about this than a few years ago – although a similar proportion of people (18%) say the authorities are doing more.

## Media scrutiny and the private lives of public office-holders

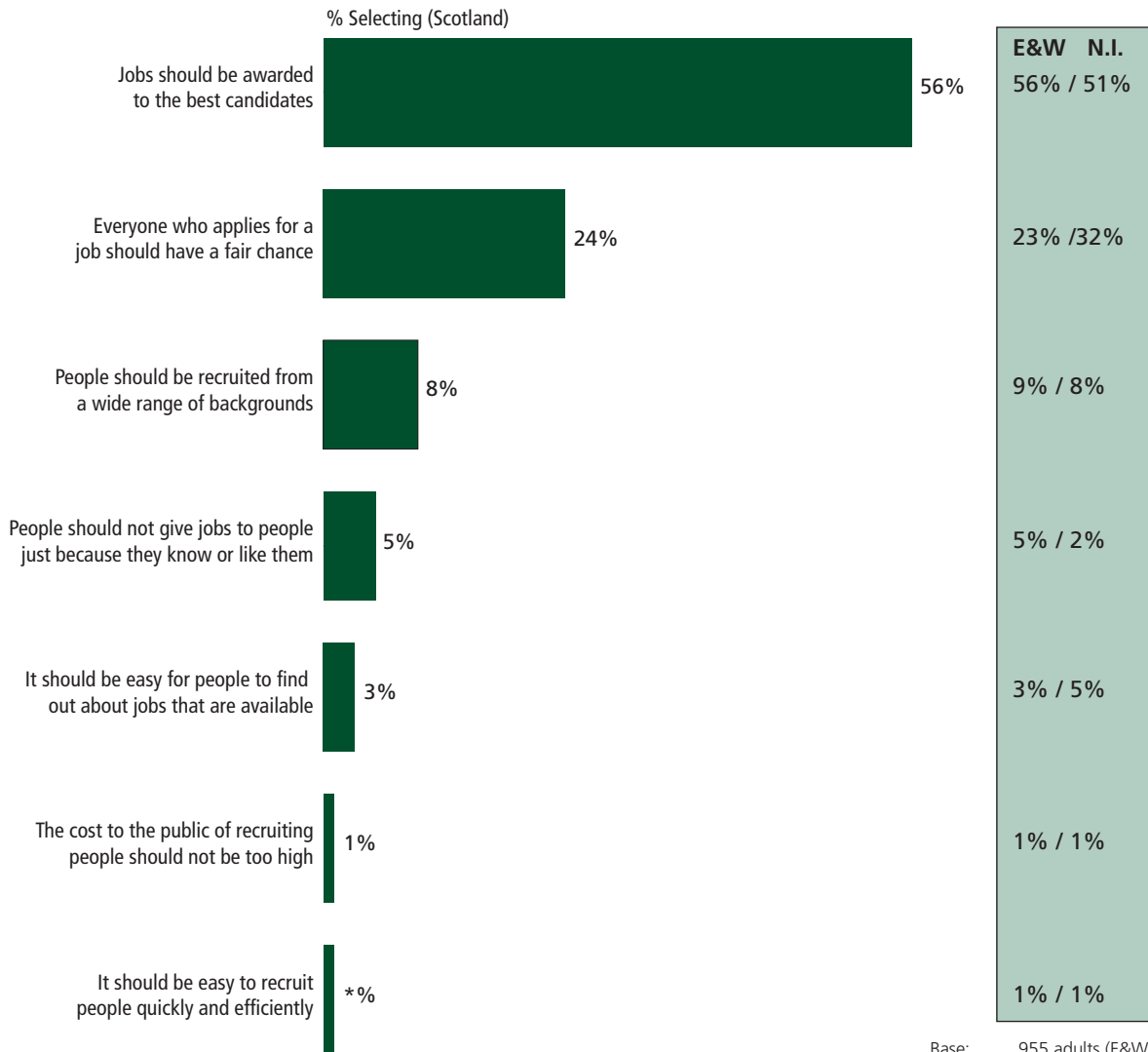
Most adults in Scotland think that MPs and government ministers should accept a certain degree of media interest in their private lives (43%) or even accept that media interest “comes with the job” (26%). Only three in ten (30%) feel that MPs and government ministers have the right to a private life.

The public in Scotland are more prepared to accept that local councillors (38%) and senior public officials (35%) have a right to private lives than do MPs and government ministers (30%). Nevertheless, half of adults in Scotland say that local councillors (50%) and senior public officials (51%) should accept some media interest in their private lives.

Attitudes in Scotland on matters relating to media scrutiny of the private lives of public office-holders match views expressed by people living in England and Wales.

**Figure 25: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs: Scotland views**

**Q** Now I would like to ask you about the way government departments and other public services recruit people for jobs. In your opinion, which ONE of these things is the most important when government departments and other public services are recruiting people for jobs?



Base: 491 adults (18+) in Scotland

Base: 955 adults (E&W)  
403 adults in N.I.

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

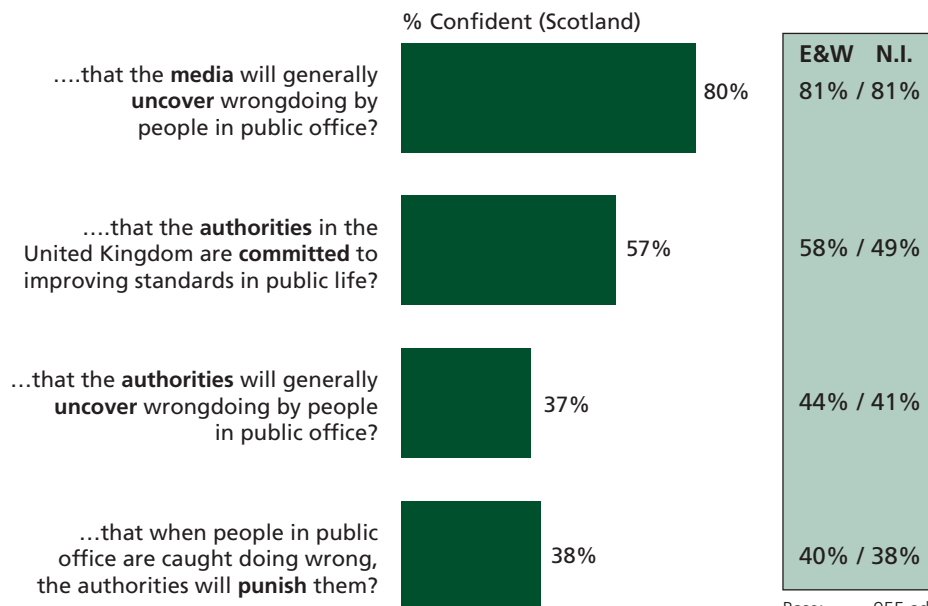
## Public office-holders and accountability

The majority of adults in Scotland (57%) are confident that the UK authorities are committed to improving standards in public life, though two in five (41%) take the opposite view. This is in line with findings in England and Wales, as illustrated in Figure 26. Similarly, people in Scotland are as likely as those in England and Wales to believe that the media will uncover wrongdoing (80% and 81%, respectively), and have the same lack of confidence that the authorities will punish those found doing wrong (38% and 40% confident, respectively).

People in Scotland are slightly less confident than those in England and Wales that the authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office. In Scotland, only 37% are confident that the authorities will do so (59% are not confident), whereas in England and Wales, 44% of adults are confident (58% are not).

**Figure 26: Confidence in authorities and the media: Scotland views**

**Q** And how confident do you feel...?



Base: 491 adults (18+) in Scotland

Base: 955 adults (E&W)  
403 adults in N.I.

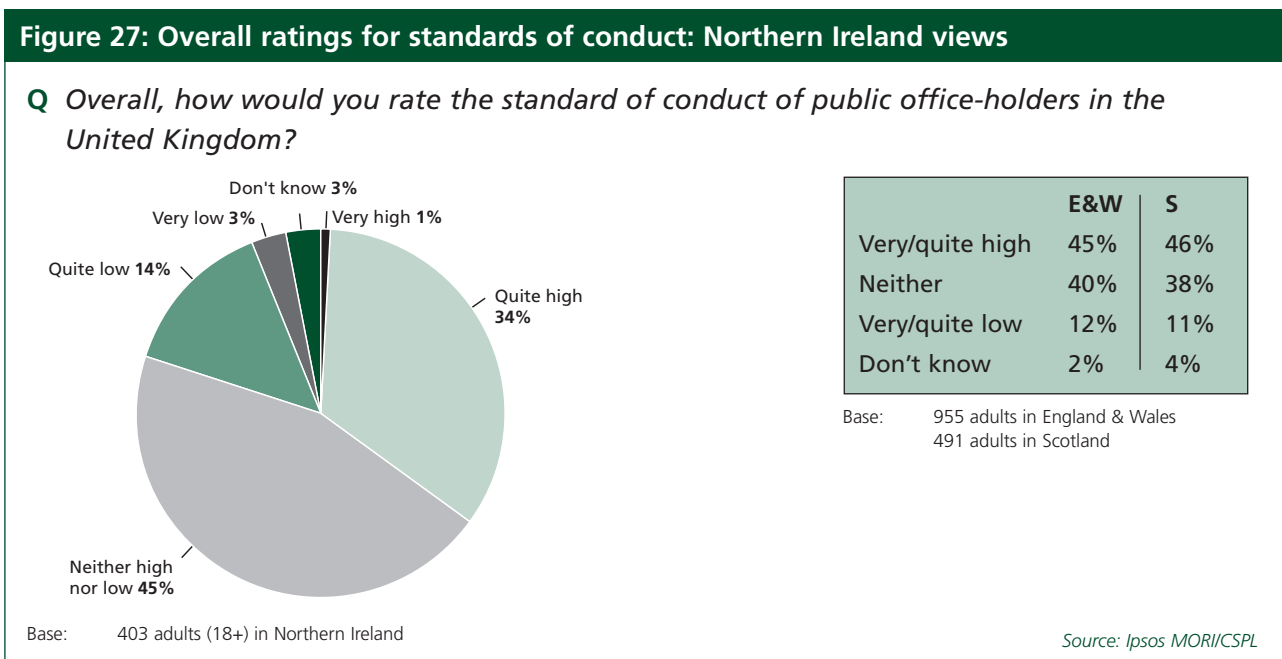
Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

# 10. ATTITUDES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

In the 2006 survey, booster interviews were conducted in Northern Ireland to allow a robust sample size for comparison of results in Northern Ireland with England and Wales, and with Scotland, for the first time. This chapter summarises the key findings from the Northern Ireland results, highlighting the main differences between people living in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The sample in Northern Ireland was funded by financial contribution from the Northern Ireland Administration.

## Overall perceptions of standards in public life

Generally, adults in Northern Ireland rate overall standards of conduct of public office-holders lower than do people in England and Wales. Around a third (35%) of Northern Ireland adults believe standards of conduct are high – twice the proportion who believe them to be low (17%). In England and Wales, the respective figures are 45% and 12%, as shown in Figure 27 below.



Although Northern Ireland’s class profile differs from that of England and Wales, with a higher working class (C2DE) population, this does not explain the difference in attitudes; in fact the difference is almost entirely within the Northern Ireland middle class, who are considerably less likely than their counterparts in England and Wales to say that office-holders’ standard of conduct is high (37% compared to 51%).

On a more positive note, more Northern Ireland respondents say standards of public office-holders have improved (29%) rather than got worse (22%) compared with a few years ago – although the largest

group say things have stayed the same (41%). When compared with the views in England and Wales, fewer people in Northern Ireland say standards have got worse (22% in Northern Ireland versus 30% in England and Wales).

As Table K below shows, half (49%) of people in Northern Ireland say standards in Northern Ireland are the same as in the rest of the United Kingdom. Among the remainder, views are evenly split about whether standards are higher (22%) or lower (24%) than the rest of the United Kingdom.

**Table K: Ratings of standards of conduct in Northern Ireland/Scotland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom**

**Q** *And how do you think standards of public office-holders in [Scotland/ Northern Ireland] today compare with those in the rest of the United Kingdom?*

	<b>N. Ireland</b> %	<b>Scotland</b> %
Much higher than the rest of the UK	3	2
Higher than the rest of the UK	19	18
About the same	49	58
Lower than the rest of the UK	18	12
Much lower than the rest of the UK	6	2
Don't know	6	8

Base: 403 adults (18+) in Northern Ireland, 491 in Scotland

Northern Ireland is also more negative than England and Wales when comparing standards in the United Kingdom to those in the rest of Europe. Northern Ireland respondents are evenly divided on whether they think standards are higher (20%) or lower (17%) than elsewhere in Europe. But people in Northern Ireland are somewhat more likely to say lower (17%) than are people in England and Wales (11%).

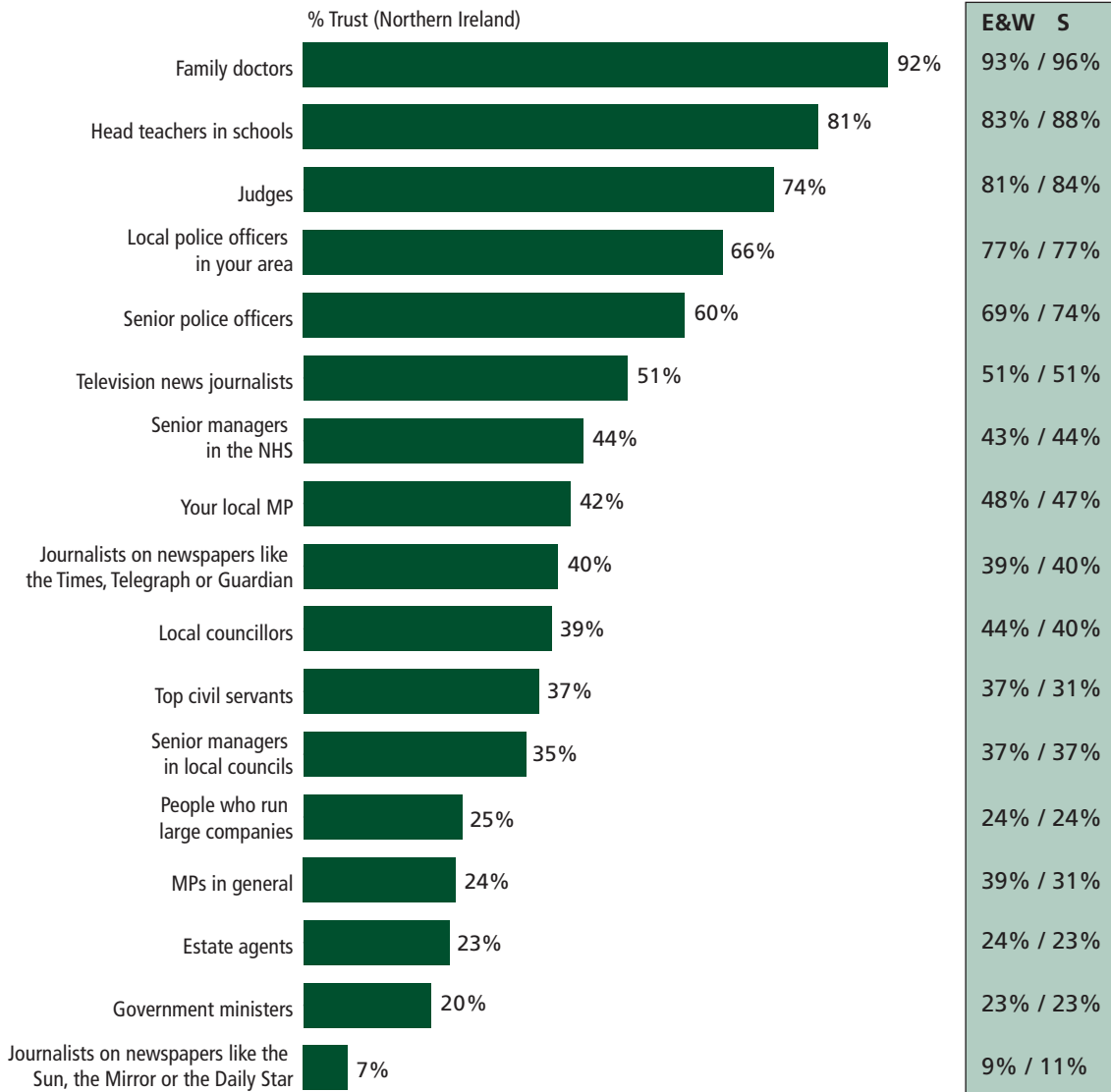
## Trust in public office-holders

Trust in professional groups in Northern Ireland (Figure 28) tends to follow the same pattern as in England and Wales, namely high levels of trust in groups such as family doctors (92%; 93% in England and Wales) and head teachers in schools (81%; 83% in England and Wales). The group which Northern Ireland respondents place the least trust in is journalists on newspapers like the Sun, the Mirror and the Daily Star (7%; 9% in England and Wales).

At the same time, there are some important differences in the relative proportion of adults in Northern Ireland expressing trust in key groups compared to people in England and Wales. Fewer adults in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales say they would generally trust local police officers in their area (66% – 11 points lower than the England and Wales average), senior police officers (60% – 9 points lower) and judges (74% – 7 points lower).

**Figure 28: Trust in different professional groups: Northern Ireland views**

**Q** *These cards show different types of people. Please put them on this board to show which you would generally trust to tell the truth and which you wouldn't.*



Base: 403 adults (18+) in Northern Ireland

Base: 955 adults (England & Wales)  
491 adults (Scotland)

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

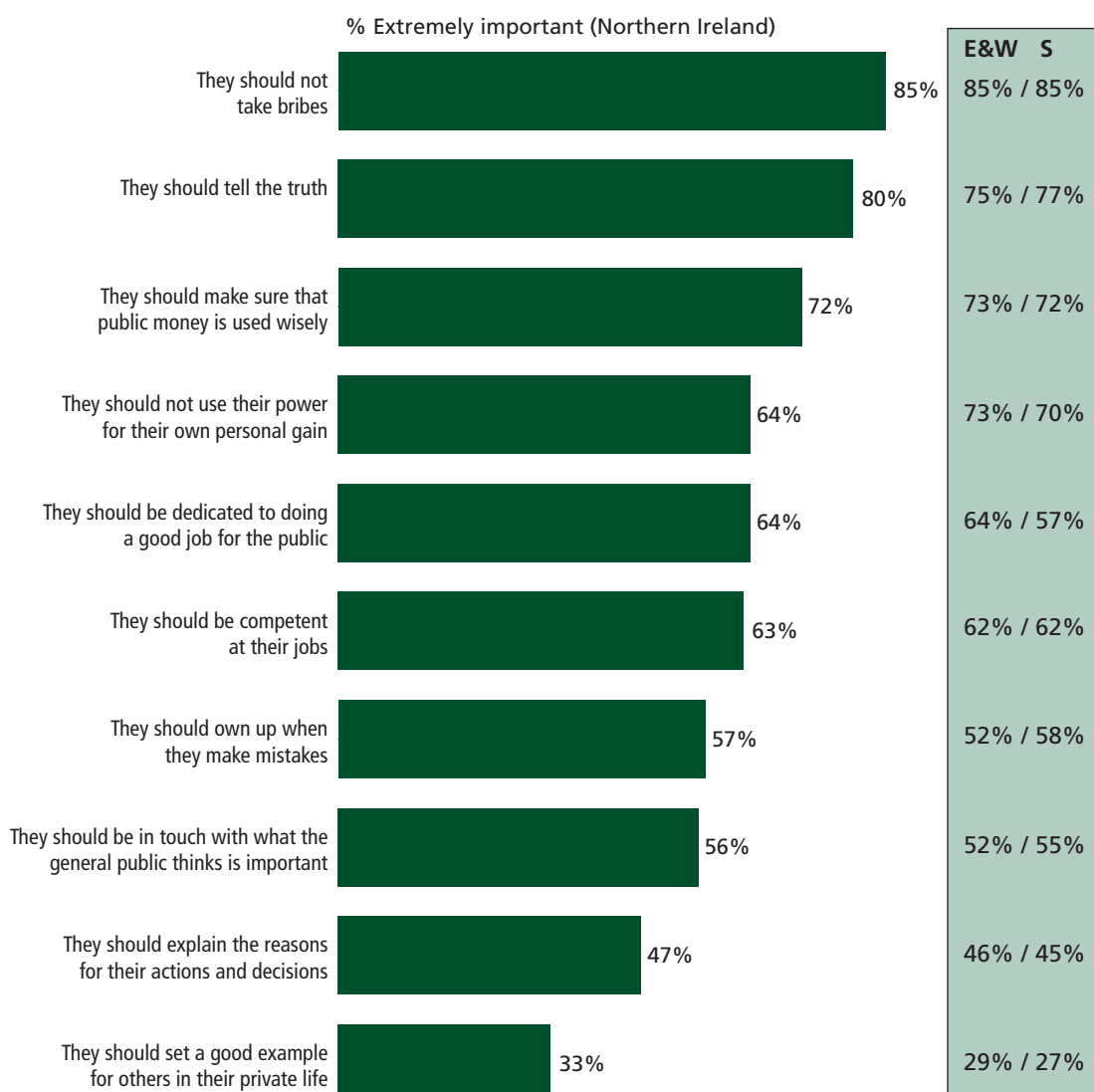
## National politicians: expectations and perceptions of standards

Figure 29 shows that eighty-five per cent of adults in Northern Ireland say that it is extremely important that MPs and government ministers *do not take bribes*. This is the behaviour selected most frequently as being extremely important. The next highest ranking factor is that they *should tell the truth* (80%). The proportions selecting both of these factors are in line with those in England and Wales (85% should not take bribes, 75% should tell the truth).

For only two factors do fewer than half of adults in Northern Ireland say it is extremely important that MPs and government ministers behave in these ways. These are that they should *explain the reasons for their decisions and actions* (47%) and *set a good example in their private lives* (33%). These results are consistent with attitudes expressed by adults in England and Wales (46% explain reasons, 29% set a good example).

**Figure 29: Importance of different behaviours – Northern Ireland views**

**Q** *Thinking about these two groups of elected national politicians, please put these cards on this board to show how important you think it is that MPs and government ministers do the things shown on this card.*



Base: 955 adults (England & Wales)  
491 adults (Scotland)

Base: 403 adults (18+) in Northern Ireland

Source: Ipsos MORI/C SPL



When asked to select which three are the most important behaviours for MPs and government ministers to follow (out of 10 possible options), the top answers in Northern Ireland are that they *should tell the truth* (57%), *make sure public money is spent wisely* (45%), that they should be *dedicated to doing a good job for the public* (41%) and that they *should not take bribes* (39%). These answers are fairly consistent with attitudes expressed by adults in England and Wales, although in the latter *not taking bribes* (43%) is rated importantly more frequently than being *dedicated to doing a good job* (36%). Just eight per cent of adults in Northern Ireland say one of the three most important behaviours is for MPs and government ministers to *set a good example in their private lives* (6% in England and Wales).

As was illustrated in Chapter 3, public attitudes in Great Britain towards the way MPs behave are very similar to how they perceive government ministers to behave. This is also the case in Northern Ireland.

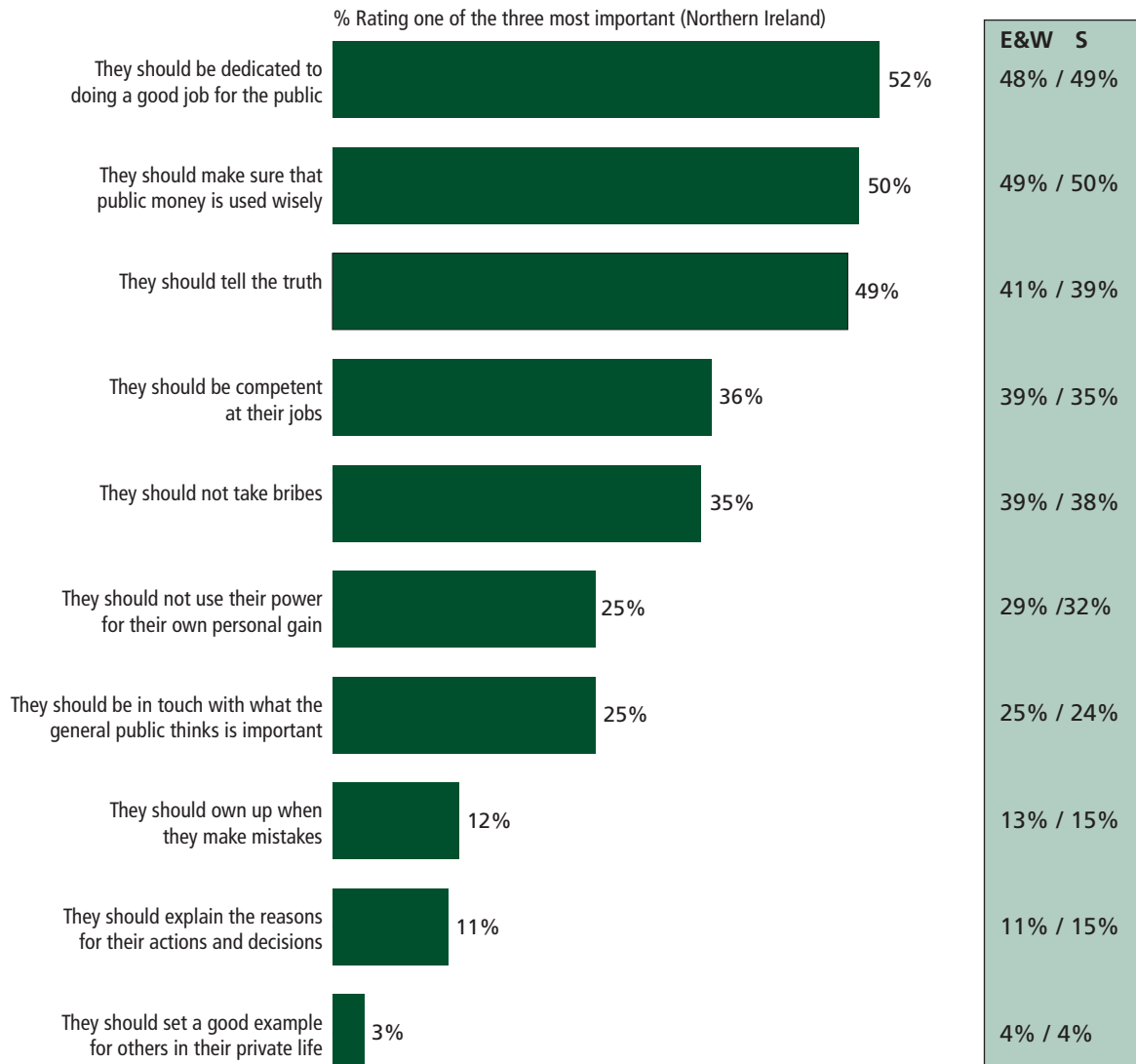
Views of the actual behaviour of MPs and government ministers among adults in Northern Ireland follow a similar pattern to views expressed by people in England and Wales. However, the former are generally, and consistently, more negative about the behaviour of MPs and government ministers. This is most obvious in terms of whether people think MPs *use their power for their own personal gain* – in Northern Ireland 38% of adults think all or most MPs do; among adults in England and Wales this is just 29%. Similarly, 36% of adults in Northern Ireland think all or most MPs are *dedicated to doing a good job*; among adults in England and Wales this figure rises to 46%.

## Senior public officials: expectations and perceptions of standards

In terms of rating each of the 10 different types of behaviour in terms of importance, adults in Northern Ireland hold similar views as those in England and Wales, as seen in Figure 30 (overleaf). Similarly, when asked to select which three of the 10 are most important for senior public officials to do, the top two selected by adults in Northern Ireland (*dedicated to doing a good job for the public* (52%; 48% in England and Wales) and *making sure public money is spent wisely* (50%; 49% in England and Wales) are the same as those selected by adults in England and Wales. The only difference is a slightly higher proportion of adults in Northern Ireland (49%) say it is most important for senior public officials to *tell the truth* (41% in England and Wales).

**Figure 30: Importance of different behaviours for senior public officials: Northern Ireland views**

Q Which of these [behaviours] do you think most important for senior public officials?



Base: 403 adults (18+) in Northern Ireland

Base: 955 adults (England & Wales)  
491 adults (Scotland)

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

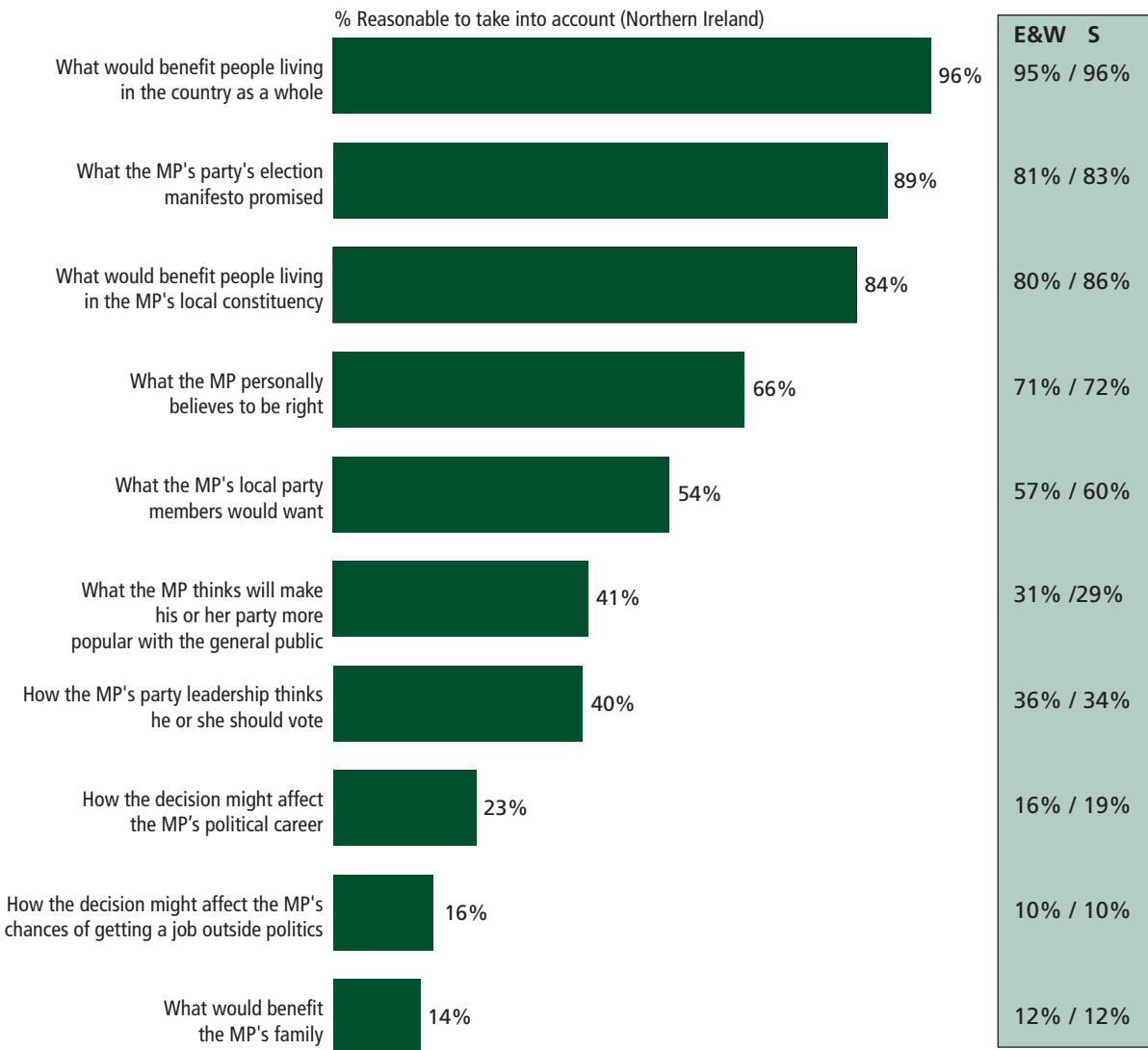
In terms of how adults in Northern Ireland perceive the behaviour of senior public officials, they are generally more sceptical than people in England and Wales. This is most evident in that a quarter (25%) of people in Northern Ireland think all or most senior public officials *use their power for their own personal gain* (14% in England and Wales).

## MPs and voting in Parliament

The top three factors that adults in Northern Ireland say are reasonable for MPs to take into account when voting on national issues are the same ones as selected by adults in England and Wales, as illustrated in Figure 31 below. These are: *what would benefit the country as a whole* (96%), *what the MP's party election manifesto promised* (89%) and *what would benefit people living in the MP's local constituency* (84%).

**Figure 31: MPs and voting in Parliament: Northern Ireland views**

**Q** Suppose there is a vote in Parliament on an important national issue affecting the whole of the UK. Which of these do you think it is reasonable for MPs to take into account when deciding how to vote and which should they definitely not take into account?



Base: 403 adults (18+) in Northern Ireland

Base: 955 adults (E&W)  
491 adults (Scotland)

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

At the same time, there are some important differences of emphasis in views of people in Northern Ireland compared to those living in England and Wales. A slightly greater proportion of adults in Northern Ireland say it is reasonable for MPs to take into account what the manifesto promised (89% versus 81%), what would make the MP's party more popular with the public (41% versus 31%), what would affect the MP's political career (23% versus 17%) and what might affect the MP's chances of getting a job outside politics (16% versus 10%).

When asked to select which one factor should be most important for MPs to take into account when voting, three in five (58%) adults in Northern Ireland say *what would benefit the country as a whole* – this is eight percentage points lower than the proportion of adults in England and Wales selecting this option – but in line with views among adults in Scotland. The difference in emphasis is explained by the fact that adults in Northern Ireland (and Scotland) are almost twice as likely as their English and Welsh counterparts to select *what would benefit the local constituency* as the single most important factor (20% and 12%, respectively).

A quarter (24%) of adults in Northern Ireland think that most MPs would actually vote on *what would benefit the country as a whole* (this is seven percentage points higher than in England and Wales). The next most commonly selected factors in Northern Ireland are *how the decision might affect the MP's political career* (17%) and *what the MP personally believes to be right* (14%) – both in line with views expressed among adults in England and Wales. The main difference between views in Northern Ireland and England and Wales is that half as many adults in Northern Ireland believe that MPs would actually vote on *what the leadership thinks* (7% versus 14% in England and Wales).

## Views on public sector recruitment practice

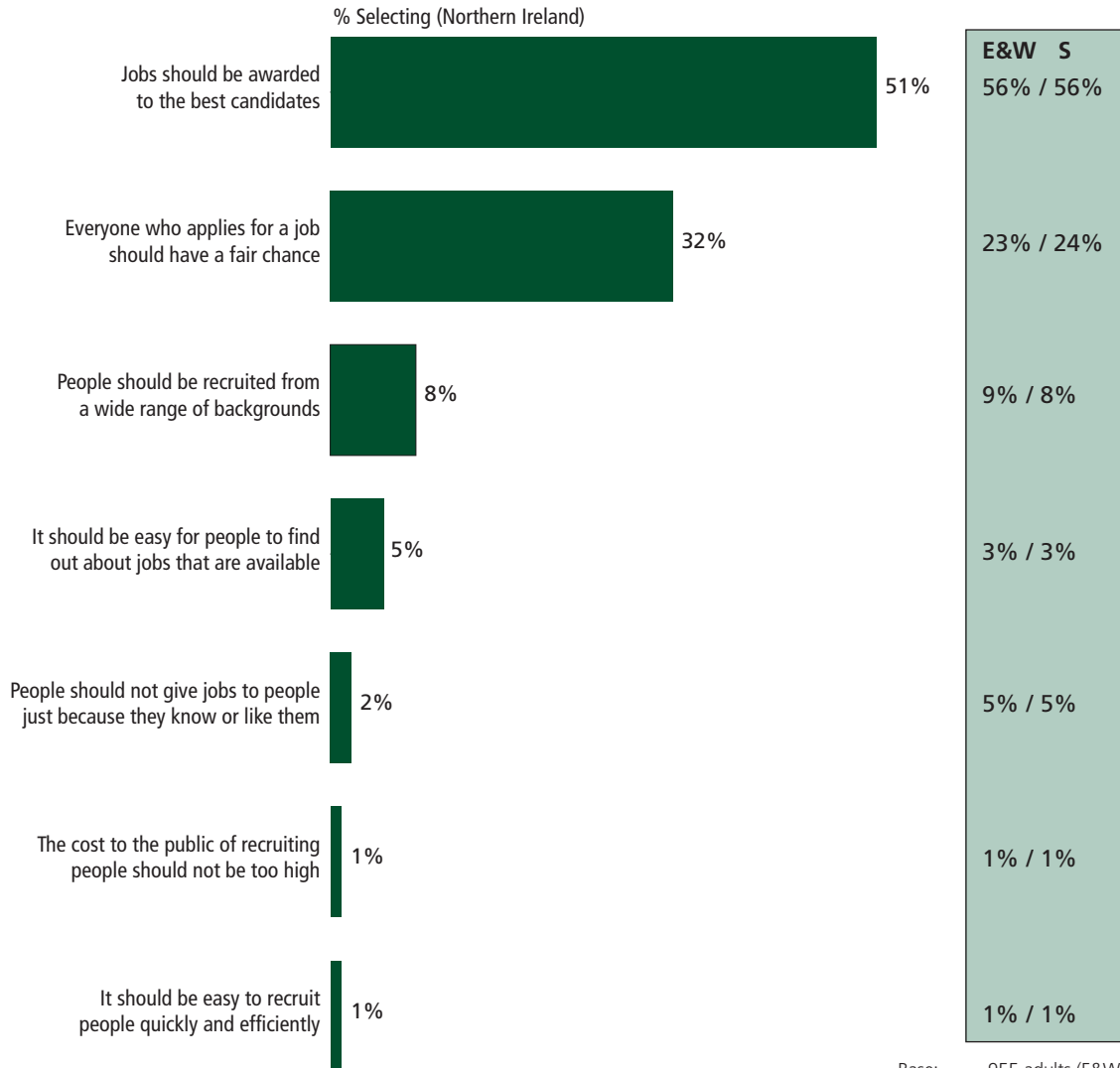
Figure 32 shows that half of adults in Northern Ireland (51%) say that the single most important principle for recruitment to the public sector should be that the *best candidate is awarded the job*. A third (32%) say that *everyone having a fair chance* should be the single most important principle – this is somewhat higher than the proportion selecting this principle among adults in England and Wales (23%)

More than six in ten (62%) adults in Northern Ireland believe that people *get their jobs through someone they know rather than through correct procedures* a lot or a fair amount of the time, with only one in ten (10%) thinking it happens never or hardly ever. People in Northern Ireland are much more likely than those in England and Wales to think that getting a job through 'nepotism' rather than correct procedures has decreased (26% versus 11%, respectively) over the past few years. Even so, in Northern Ireland 29% think this behaviour has increased or is no different (36%) from a few years ago.

Similarly, people in Northern Ireland are much more likely than people in England and Wales to believe the authorities are *clamping down more than they used to in people getting jobs through people they know* (37% and 20%, respectively). Also, they are substantially less likely to say authorities are doing this less than people in England and Wales (9% versus 21%, respectively).

**Figure 32: Most important factors when recruiting for jobs: Northern Ireland views**

**Q** Now I would like to ask you about the way government departments and other public services recruit people for jobs. In your opinion, which ONE of these things is the most important when government departments and other public services are recruiting people for jobs?



Base: 403 adults (18+) in Northern Ireland

Base: 955 adults (E&W)  
491 adults (Scotland)

Source: Ipsos MORI/CSPL

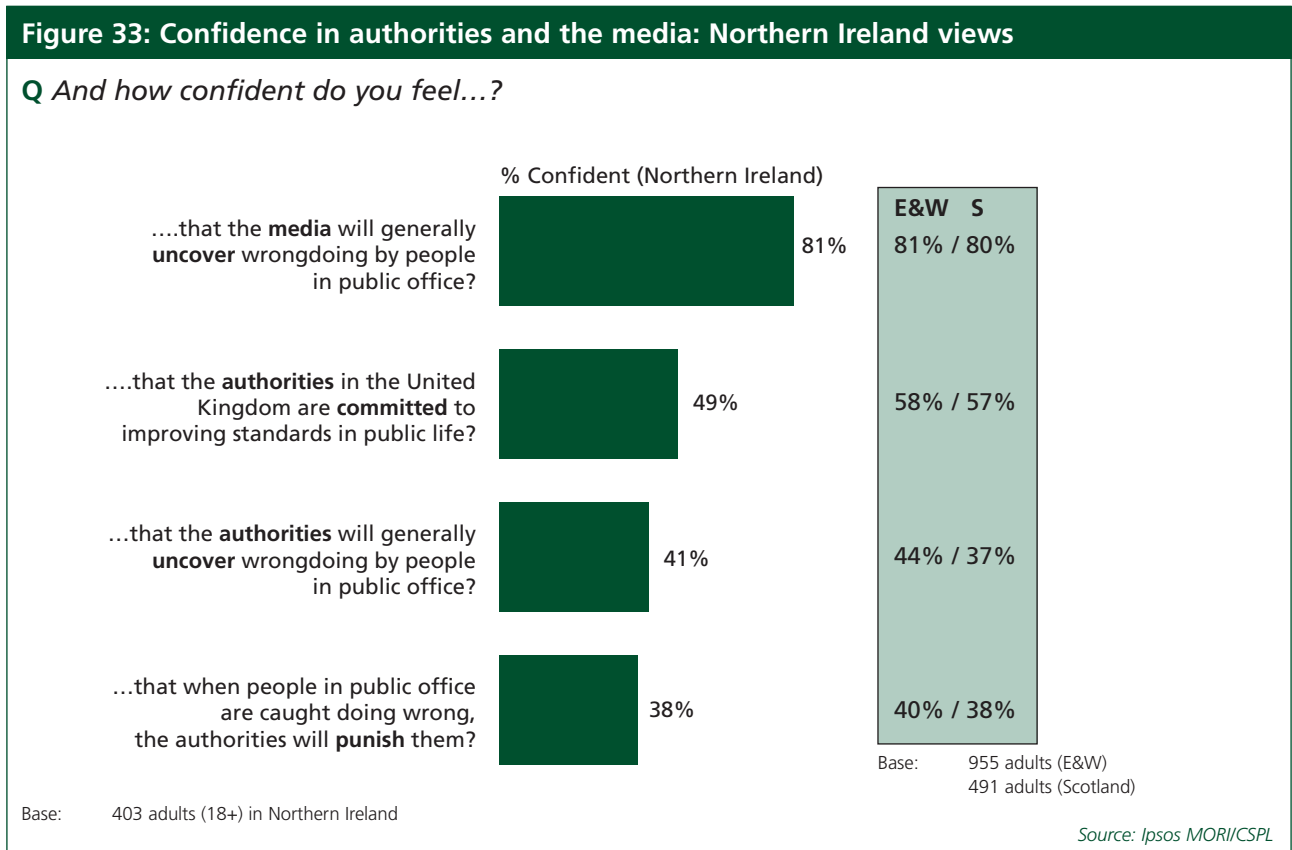
## Media scrutiny and the private lives of public office-holders

In Northern Ireland, 29% people say that MPs and government ministers *have a right to keep their private lives private*, but a greater proportion think MPs and government ministers *should accept a certain degree of media interest in their private lives* (43%) or accept that media interest comes with the job (27%). These views are consistent with those in England and Wales.

Just over a third of adults in Northern Ireland say local councillors (35%) and senior public officials (38%) *have a right to a private life*; half say local councillors (52%) and senior public officials (47%) *should accept some media interest*; and relatively few say local councillors (13%) and senior public officials (14%) should accept that it *comes with the job*.

## Public office-holders and accountability

Just half (49%) of adults in Northern Ireland are confident that the authorities in the United Kingdom are committed to improving standards in public life. Almost as many are not confident (47%). Respondents in Northern Ireland are more sceptical about this than people in England and Wales (58% confident versus 40% not confident).



As Figure 33 displays, with regard to other areas of attitudes towards public office-holders and accountability, views in Northern Ireland are consistent with those found in England and Wales:

- 41% of Northern Ireland adults are confident *the authorities will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office*; 54% not confident (44% and 53% respectively in England and Wales);
- 81% of Northern Ireland respondents are confident *the media will generally uncover wrongdoing by people in public office*; 15% not confident (81% and 16% respectively in England and Wales); and
- 38% of those in Northern Ireland are confident *the authorities will punish people in public office caught doing wrong*, 59% not confident (40% and 58% respectively in England and Wales).

# APPENDICES





# A. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT AND POSSIBLE INFLUENCES ON PUBLIC OPINION

## Self-reported influences

All survey respondents were asked whether their answers to the questions were influenced by any recent events, and if so, which events. Respondents were not prompted with any list as we were attempting to capture spontaneous answers.

Table L shows that over half of our sample (57%) claims not to have been influenced by a recent event – this is consistent with the proportion saying the same in the 2004 survey (60%). This, of course, does not mean that in reality events before or during fieldwork did not influence our respondents' views – but these findings do add further evidence explaining that few results have changed since the last survey took place.

The lack of dramatic changes in public attitudes towards standards in public life – with the key exception of attitudes towards MPs and government ministers taking bribes – seems to have taken place in spite of a very different political environment during the two fieldwork periods. In 2004, respondents who say they were influenced by recent events when giving their answers state two related issues as by far the most influential on their views: the war in Iraq and the Hutton Inquiry. By 2006, these issues remain salient, but not to the same extent as two years earlier.

**Table L: Factors commonly mentioned that might influence people's views**

**Q** *People's opinions are influenced by many different factors. Were your answers to any of the questions in this survey influenced by recent events that you might have heard or read about?*<sup>12</sup>

**Q** *Could you say what events might have influenced your answers?*

	<b>2006 Great Britain (1,446) %</b>	<b>2006 Scotland (491) %</b>	<b>2006 Northern Ireland (403) %</b>
No event influenced answers	57	59	64
The war in Iraq	12	12	12
David Blunkett case	11	8	8
Tony Blair	7	4	4
Lib Dem leadership/ scandals	5	5	4
George Bush	4	5	6
The Hutton Inquiry/inquest into the death of Dr David Kelly	3	4	6
Reports about government spin	2	3	6
The Northern Bank robbery	*	1	6
Scottish Parliament	1	4	*
The Scottish Executive	*	4	*

NB 2004 question was asked without introductory sentence

**MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED ANSWERS SHOWN**

Base: 1,446 adults (18+) in Britain, incl. 491 in Scotland

Base: 491 adults (Scotland), 403 (N.I.)

To assist the reader in understanding and contextualising the 2006 survey findings, we have provided a list of key political events up to, and during, the survey fieldwork period (overleaf).

<sup>12</sup> Wording in 2004 – 'Were your answers to any of the questions in this survey influenced by recent events that you might have heard or read about?'

**Table M: Key political events April 2004 – December 2005**

29 April 2004	Photos emerge of US soldiers allegedly abusing Iraqi prisoners
1 May	<i>Daily Mirror</i> publishes pictures of alleged abuse of Iraqis by UK soldiers
14 May	<i>Daily Mirror</i> editor Piers Morgan sacked after pictures are revealed to be fake
10 June	Ken Livingstone elected for second term as London Mayor
14 July	Butler Report published; questions government's use of intelligence material in run-up to Iraq war
1 October	Tony Blair announces that if he wins next election, he will quit before a possible fourth term
	Iraq Survey Group concludes that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction in run-up to US-led invasion. Blair acknowledges flaws in pre-war intelligence but stands by case for war
19 October	Trial of Saddam Hussein begins in Iraq
25 October	Iraqi constitution ratified after results of 15 October referendum are announced
15 December	David Blunkett resigns for the first time, stepping down from his post as Home Secretary after newspaper revelations
6 May 2005	Blair secures historic third term with a reduced majority; David Blunkett reinstated to Cabinet as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
30 May	France votes to reject draft EU constitution in referendum
1 July	UK begins sixth-month EU Presidency
2 July	'Live8' concert in Hyde Park attracts crowd of 200,000 and TV audience of 10m; part of a series of demonstrations organised by Make Poverty History coalition
6 July	G8 Summit begins in Gleneagles; London selected to host 2012 Olympics
7 July	Suicide bombers in London kill 56 and injure hundreds
15 July	Former Transport Secretary, Stephen Byers, admits in court that he misled a House of Commons select committee in 2001
21 July	Attempted suicide bomb attacks in London fail
22 July	Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian national, is shot dead by police in Stockwell tube station after being mistaken for a suspected suicide bomber
26 September	A report confirming the decommissioning of IRA weapons is handed to the British Government
14 October	High Court Judge clears Stephen Byers of charge of 'malfeasance'
17 October	Byers apologises to House of Commons for giving a select committee 'factually inaccurate' information
2 November	David Blunkett is forced to resign from the Cabinet for a second time
8 November	Tony Blair suffers his first House of Commons defeat as MPs force proposed anti-terror legislation to be revised
6 December	David Cameron elected new Conservative leader by a margin of more than two to one over rival candidate David Davis

**Table N: Key political events between January and April 2006 (survey fieldwork period)**

7 January 2006	Charles Kennedy admits to alcoholism and steps down as Lib Dem leader
12 January	Deputy PM John Prescott apologises after it emerged he had not paid council tax on his Admiralty House flat; Mr Prescott repays the outstanding amount
21 January	Mark Oaten resigns as Lib Dem Home Affairs spokesman and withdraws from party leadership contest after it is revealed he had an affair with a male prostitute
26 January	Simon Hughes, Lib Dem party Chairman and another leadership contender, is forced to apologise after it is revealed he has had homosexual relationships, having previously denied the fact
12 February	Video pictures emerge showing UK soldiers beating Iraqi youths
18 February	Italian magistrates produce evidence that David Mills, the lawyer husband of Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell, was paid a bribe by Italian PM Berlusconi for allegedly lying in court on his behalf; Ms Jowell is dragged into the affair
24 February	Adjudication Panel suspends London Mayor Ken Livingstone for one month after finding him guilty of bringing his office into disrepute following remarks he made to a Jewish journalist on the <i>Evening Standard</i> ; Livingstone later appeals to the High Court against the judgement
28 February	Sir Gus O'Donnell, the Cabinet Secretary, begins investigation into claims that Jowell has breached the ministerial code
2 March	Sir Menzies Campbell wins Lib Dem leadership contest; Tessa Jowell cleared of violating the ministerial code of conduct amidst cries of 'whitewash'
4 March	Tessa Jowell and David Mills announce their separation
5 March	News leaks that the Lords Appointment Commission has refused to rubber-stamp Downing Street's list of political peerages. It later emerges that several nominees had given large undisclosed loans to the Labour party; other parties are also drawn into the row
13 March	Metropolitan Police Chief Sir Ian Blair is forced to issue apology after it emerges he secretly recorded a number of phone conversations, including one with the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith
15 March	Labour Treasurer, Jack Dromey, announces that he was not told about loans of £3.5m that were made to party funds, and begins an internal inquiry
16 March	A review of ministerial responsibilities in the DCA results in Harriet Harman (the wife of Jack Dromey) losing electoral administration and Lords reform from her brief
17 March	Labour discloses that it received £14m in secret loans ahead of the 2005 election; Downing Street announces that Sir Hayden Phillips, a retired civil servant, will conduct an inquiry into the future of party funding
20 March	Labour publishes the names of 12 donors who gave £14m in loans

**Table O: Key political events in Scotland 2004 – 2006**

9 Oct 2004	2004 Scottish Parliament building opens three years late and 10 times over budget
22 Oct 2004	Anne Picking MP for East Lothian, makes highest claim in UK for travel expenses (£39,744), twice as much as neighbouring MP for Midlothian
30 Nov 2004	Mike Watson MSP (Lord Watson of Invergowrie) charged with fire-raising after Scottish Politician of the Year Awards but denies it
4 Jan 2005	Jack McConnell MSP accused of improper behaviour in spending holiday with Kirsty Wark and family
7 Jan 2005	Keith Raffan MSP resigns over £41,154 in travel expenses, mostly mileage, including for days he was not even in the country
10 Feb 2005	Sunday Herald investigates David McLetchie MSP's taxi expenses as he is suspected of charging for trips to his law office and clients
22 Sept 2005	Mike Watson MSP sentenced to 16 months' imprisonment, having changed plea to guilty at last moment
31 Oct 2005	David McLetchie MSP resigns as Leader of Scottish Conservatives over taxi expenses
4 Nov 2005	Brian Monteith MSP resigns Tory party whip after plotting against David McLetchie
2 Mar 2006	Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber evacuated after beam comes loose from ceiling
27 Mar 2006	Ban on smoking in public places takes effect
14 Apr 2006	Campaign team for Mary Scanlon, Tory candidate in Moray by-election, sends handwritten letters to electors purportedly written and signed by two independent councillors who deny either writing or issuing letters

**Table P: Key political events in Northern Ireland 2004 – 2006**

Dec 2004	An armed gang rob the Belfast branch of the Northern Bank of £26.5m – one of the biggest bank robberies in history.
Jan 2005	Robert McCartney, a Catholic, is murdered outside a crowded Belfast bar by a gang allegedly including members of Provisional IRA. Three IRA members are subsequently expelled from the organisation but despite pleas from the McCartney family for witnesses to make statements to the police, no one is charged with murder
Feb 2005	The Independent Monitoring Commission reports that it agrees with PSNI and Garda assessments that Provisional IRA was responsible for the Northern Bank robbery, and that senior members of Sinn Fein gave approval for the action.  Irish Justice Minister Michael McDowell accuses three senior Sinn Fein members of being on the IRA Army Council – a charge they reject.
March 2005	The House of Commons passes motion to withdraw allowances of four Sinn Fein MPs for one year in response to the Northern Bank robbery.  The Orange Order ends its official ties to the Ulster Unionist Party.
May 2005	The Ulster Unionist Party is reduced to one seat following the general election, which sees the Democratic Unionist Party become the largest party in the north of Ireland. David Trimble loses his Upper Bann seat and steps down as UUP leader.
Dec 2005	Denis Donaldson, a Sinn Fein party official, is expelled after revelations that he had worked as a double-agent for British intelligence since the 1980s. He tells the media that the Stormont spying, which led to the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2003, was a fabrication by British intelligence designed to damage Sinn Fein – an accusation the British reject.
April 2006	The body of Denis Donaldson is found shot dead in his isolated County Donegal cottage by Garda, who launch a murder investigation.

# B. TECHNICAL APPENDIX

## 1. Research methods

### 1.1 Questionnaire development

The questionnaire for the quantitative survey was based on the 2003/04 questionnaire, with further refinements made by the research team at Ipsos MORI in consultation with The Committee's Research Advisory Board. Suggestions were also offered by Oliver Cover of Oxford University<sup>13</sup>. In order to reduce the average length of the questionnaire from 40 to 30 minutes, certain questions from the 2003/04 questionnaire were identified for deletion or amendment.

The questionnaire was pilot tested in October 2005 in six locations, two in Northern Ireland, two in Scotland, one in London and one in the Midlands. Face-to-face paper-based interviews were carried out in respondents' homes by Ipsos MORI interviewers and observed by members of the Ipsos MORI research team. A total of 27 pilot interviews were completed. A final version of the questionnaire was then prepared and approved in early December 2005 by the Committee's Research Advisory Board. Feedback was also sought during the pilot stage on the advance letter Ipsos MORI would send out. Two versions of the advance letter were produced, one with a more formal tone and containing more detailed information on the rationale behind the survey. Respondents were then questioned at the end of the interview as to their reactions to each letter. This was specifically regarding which would be more likely to persuade them to participate and which they felt best reflected the survey content.

The main differences between the 2004 questionnaire and the 2006 pilot version comprised:

- giving a UK focus to the survey, rather than a Great Britain one, for example, rating standards of conduct of public office-holders in "*the United Kingdom*" (rather than "in Britain"), and in Northern Ireland, giving the example of 'the Chief Executive of a District Council' as opposed to 'the Head of a Council's Housing Department';
- asking about the Northern Ireland Assembly elections and Government, in addition to the devolved Scotland and Wales administrations;
- including a new question comparing standards in Northern Ireland and Scotland compared to the rest of the United Kingdom;
- asking about trust in the Chair of an Area Health Board in Scotland;
- deleting the sliding-scale questions about attitudes towards different types of office-holders and the question about applying for a senior job at the Council for reasons of questionnaire length;
- similarly, replacing the more detailed questions on socio-economic classification with the simpler social grade classification; and
- deleting questions on tenure and marital status from the 2004 survey and replacing them with questions about working status, chief income earner status, the number of adults in the household, ethnicity and faith. Workers were also asked about whether they worked for a private or public sector company.

<sup>13</sup> Cover, O.J.S. (2005) "Redundant Variables in Dataset SN: 5073 – 'Survey of Public Attitudes Towards Conduct in Public Life, 2003-2004'", (Unpublished manuscript written for the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Research Advisory Board).

Further amendments were made to the questionnaire following piloting stage. Prominent among these were:

- clarifying that ‘national’ refers to the United Kingdom, as opposed to the individual countries that make up the United Kingdom;
- asking how many senior public officials actually do each of the attributes respondents are asked about the importance of;
- combining a question asking about the rights of MPs and Government Ministers to privacy (to reduce the length of the questionnaire);
- deleting the questions relating to respondents’ influence on local area/ the country and the extent to which they feel they can trust most other people;
- deleting the ethnicity, faith and Sunday newspaper questions (to reduce the questionnaire length); and
- adding a question about religion in Northern Ireland.

### 1.2 The national survey

The survey was conducted via face-to-face interviews in respondents’ homes using CAPI between 29 December 2005 and 11 April 2006. Interviews were conducted by fully-trained interviewers from Ipsos MORI’s national face-to-face fieldforce. A total of 1,849 interviews with adults aged 18 and over across the UK were undertaken. Some 1,044 interviews were conducted in Great Britain and a further 402 in Scotland and 403 in Northern Ireland in order to facilitate comparisons with different component countries of the UK. The average interview length was just under 32 minutes.

### 1.3 Sample design

The sample design was similar to that used in the 2003/04 survey, namely a conventional multi-stage clustered random design using the small user Postcode Address File (PAF) as the sample frame for addresses in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The design aimed to produce a representative sample of around 1,000 adults aged 18 and over living in private households in Great Britain, excluding the Highland and Island areas of Scotland. In addition, the design aimed to produce a “booster” sample of c. 400 additional adults in Scotland, as well as another “booster” sample of c. 400 adults in Northern Ireland, consistent with the main Great Britain sample. This is the type of design typically used in high quality, face-to-face interview-based social surveys, such as the British Social Attitudes Survey, the British Election Study and the British Crime Survey.

In summary, the sample design involved the following stages:

1. A proportionately stratified sample of postcode sectors was selected with probability proportional to the address count. A total of 125 postcode sectors were initially chosen across Great Britain for the main survey, 50 additional sectors were selected for the Scotland Booster survey and a further 50 sectors were chosen for the Northern Ireland survey.
2. A sample of 13 addresses was drawn in each sector selected.
3. In the rare cases where a selected address covered more than one dwelling, one dwelling was selected at random, using a Kish Grid.
4. One adult aged 18 or over was selected at random from all dwellings containing private households.

The different stages of the design are outlined in more detail below.

### 1.4 Selection of sectors

Postcode sectors were selected from a listing of all postcode sectors in the United Kingdom. Before selection, small sectors (containing fewer than 750 delivery points) were amalgamated with



neighbouring sectors, in order to ensure that the sample had a reasonable geographic spread in these areas.

Sectors were then stratified, with a view to maximising the precision of survey estimates, as follows:

1. (GB Main stage only) The population of postcode sectors was divided into eleven regions (the nine Government Office Regions (GORs) in England, plus Scotland and Wales);
2. Within each GOR, sectors were stratified by population density, with variable banding used to divide sectors in each GOR into three equal-sized population density strata;
3. Within each population density stratum, sectors were listed in ascending order of the percentage of individuals in non-manual occupations.

A total of 125 sectors (mainstage survey) were then selected with probability proportional to address count by the method of random start and fixed interval (50 sectors each were selected for both the Scotland booster and the Northern Ireland surveys).

### **1.5 Selection of addresses**

Within each sector, 13 PAF delivery points were selected by the method of random start and fixed interval. Addresses were ordered by postcode before selection to maximise the geographic spread within the sector. The selection of sectors and delivery points resulted in a total issued sample size of 1,625 delivery points for the main GB survey and 650 delivery points each for the Scotland booster and the Northern Ireland survey.

### **1.6 Selection of households and individuals in households**

In the relatively infrequent cases where a PAF address generated more than one household, one was selected by the interviewers in the field using a random (Kish grid based) selection method. Individuals aged 18+ in each household were then listed in alphabetical order of first name and one selected for interview by a random (Kish grid based) method.

### **1.7 Additional sample**

A total of 1,625 addresses in 125 postcode sectors was originally issued to interviewers working on the GB survey. On the assumption that around 10 per cent of addresses would not contain a private household and that 65 per cent of selected adults would take part in the survey, this sample would yield around 1,000 interviews.

Some 650 addresses in 50 postcode sectors were originally issued to interviewers working on each of the Scotland and the Northern Ireland booster surveys. On the assumption that around 10 per cent of addresses would not contain a private household and that 65 per cent of selected adults would take part in the survey, this sample would yield around 400 interviews for each of these surveys.

However, because co-operation levels were lower than expected, it was necessary to issue an additional sample for all three surveys. For the main GB survey, an additional 28 postcode sectors were selected during the course of fieldwork and 13 delivery points selected in each. For the Scotland booster survey, an additional 14 postcode sectors were selected during the course of fieldwork and 13 delivery points selected in each. For the Northern Ireland survey, an additional 12 postcode sectors were selected during the course of fieldwork and 13 delivery points selected in each. Selection procedures for the additional sample mirrored those for the original sample.

## 2. Response rates

When fieldwork was closed for the main GB survey, a total of 1,989 addresses in 153 postcode sectors had been issued, yielding a total of 1,044 usable interviews from 1,888 eligible addresses<sup>14</sup>. This represented a response rate<sup>15</sup> at eligible addresses of 55.3 per cent.

For the Scotland booster survey, 832 addresses in 64 postcode sectors were issued, yielding 402 usable interviews from 773 eligible addresses, and for the Northern Ireland “booster” survey, 806 addresses in 62 postcode sectors were issued, yielding 403 usable interviews from 719 eligible addresses. The response rate at eligible addresses was 52.0% for the Scotland “booster” survey and 56.1% for the Northern Ireland “booster” survey.

A detailed breakdown of fieldwork outcomes is provided in Table Q.

## 3. Weighting

Generally speaking, weights are calculated for two reasons:

- to equalise unequal selection probabilities (design weights); and
- to compensate for differential non-response among survey sub-groups (post-stratification weights)<sup>16</sup>.

The sample design used in this survey gave each address an equal probability of inclusion in the sample. However, inequalities in selection probabilities still arise because either one dwelling unit has been selected out of two or more, or (much more commonly) because one individual has been selected out of more than one who is eligible. Design weights were therefore calculated to correct for these inequalities. Before design weights were finalised their distribution was inspected for outliers and it was decided to cap weights at 5.0, with the result that eleven cases had their weights reduced. For convenience, scaling factors were applied to equalise unweighted and weighted sample sizes.

In order to ensure the demographic profile of the achieved sample (after design weighting had been applied) reflected the population profile, and in particular that the Scotland and Northern Ireland interviews were weighted down to their true UK proportions, 5-level demographic post-stratification weights were applied to the file to take into account non response. The weighted and unweighted proportions are displayed in Tables R and S. It should be noted that the table incorporates both the small corrections necessary for differences in response rates and the much larger correction necessary to reduce the boosted sample sizes in Scotland and Northern Ireland to their correct proportions in the U.K. population; if the boosters were excluded the weighting effect would be much lower.

<sup>14</sup> All addresses except those that were untraceable; not yet ready for occupation or empty; derelict or demolished; business or institutional premises; contained nobody aged 18+; or were out-of-scope for another reason.

<sup>15</sup> The response rate is calculated by subtracting the number of invalid/unusable addresses (i.e. those out of scope) from the total number of leads issued. The number of interviews achieved is then divided by the number of eligible addresses (i.e. those in scope).

<sup>16</sup> A method of iterative proportional fitting (rim weighting) was used to weight the sample to the population profile on 5 demographic factors; region, work status within gender, age, social grade and number of adults in household.

**Table Q: Fieldwork outcomes and response rate**

	Great Britain			Scotland Booster			Northern Ireland		
	n	%	%	n	%	%	n	%	%
Addresses issued	1,989	100.0		832	100.0		806	100.0	
<i>Out of scope</i>	101	5.1		59	7.1		87	10.8	
Insufficient address/ Not yet built/ ready for occupation	13	0.7		7	0.8		8	0.1	
Derelict/ demolished	7	0.4		7	0.8		17	2.1	
Empty/ not occupied	56	2.8		28	3.4		44	5.5	
Business/ industrial premises	15	0.8		12	1.4		15	1.9	
Confirmed holiday home/ second home	8	0.4		3	0.4		1	0.1	
Institution	0	0		0	0		0	0	
Nobody in household aged 18+	0	0		0	0		0	0	
Other	2	0.1		2	0.2		2	0.2	
<i>In-scope</i>	1,888	94.9	100.0	773	92.9	100.0	719	89.2	100.0
Refused	482		25.5	172		22.2	230		32.0
Office refusal	25		1.3	4		0.5	4		0.6
Household contact but information refused	254		13.5	109		14.1	134		18.6
Personal refusal by respondent/ on respondent's behalf	195		10.3	59		7.6	91		12.7
Proxy refusal (by warden, etc)	8		*	0		0	1		*
Non-contact	311		16.5	173		22.4	66		9.2
No contact with responsible adult	158		8.4	66		8.5	46		6.4
No contact with selected respondent	153		8.1	107		13.8	20		2.8
Other unsuccessful	51		2.7	26		3.4	20		2.5
Broken appointment	0		0	0		0	0		0
Respondent ill/incapacitated	25		1.3	11		1.4	13		1.8
Respondent away/ in hospital	6		*	2		*	3		*
Language difficulties	4		*	1		*	2		*
Other unproductive	16		0.8	12		1.6	2		*
<i>Full interview</i>	1,044		55.3	402		52.0	403		56.1

Source: Ipsos MORI

**Table R: Sample profile – Area**

	Number of people (unweighted)	Unweighted	Weighted
	n	%	%
<b>Total</b>	1,849	100.0	100.0
East of England	105	6	9
East Midlands	69	4	7
London	132	7	13
North East	54	3	4
North West	124	7	11
South East	144	8	14
South West	90	5	9
West Midlands	90	5	9
Yorkshire	91	5	8
Wales	56	3	5
Scotland	491	27	9
Northern Ireland	403	22	3

Source: Ipsos MORI

## 4. Standard Errors, Design Effects and Design Factors

The survey used a complex multi-stage sample design which involved both stratification and clustering, and which produces data which require weighting in analysis. For this reason it is not legitimate to calculate standard errors and confidence intervals using the standard text-book formulae which are based on the assumption of simple random sampling.

Instead, standard errors should be calculated individually using a method which takes account of both the complexity of sample design and data weighting. The ‘SPSS complex samples’ module is used here to produce standard error, design effect and design factor estimates for 9 of the survey variables. Table T shows the estimates based on the UK sample and Table U shows the estimates for the GB sample including the Scottish booster. Please note that these estimates are calculated based on the complex design of the survey and do not take into account the design effect due to post-stratification and probability of selection weighting. If you want to take weighting into account you will need to multiply the Standard Error of each variable by 1.37 and 1.24 for the UK and GB samples respectively. 1.37 and 1.24 are the design factors due to weighting for each sample.

A design effect is the ratio of the sampling variance for a complex sample design to that for a simple random sample of the same size, and a design factor is the corresponding ratio of standard errors (and therefore the design factor is the square root of the design effect). For example, a sample of 1,000 selected by means of a complex sample design might have a design effect of 1.4. This design would therefore have a design factor of 1.18 (the square root of 1.4) and would have a standard error of 1.87% around a 50% estimate, which is 1.18 times the size of the standard error around a 50% estimate for a simple random sample (1.58%).

Due to the complexity of the sample a simplified single stage version of the design was used to calculate the three quantities in ‘SPSS complex samples’, this is common practice for multi-stage sample designs which would require the use of joint inclusion probabilities to be analysed<sup>17</sup>. Please note ‘SPSS complex samples’ does not support post-stratification weighting.

<sup>17</sup> SPSS resolution 54866 – ‘In cases where you have only the sampling weights and know which variables are stratification and/or clustering variables, the standard way to analyse complex samples data is to specify a single stage design and use estimation as if the sampling was done with replacement (WR). This method is commonly used for government surveys.’

**Table S: Sample profile – Rim weights/ Area**

	<b>England &amp; Wales</b>			<b>Scotland</b>			<b>Northern Ireland</b>		
	n	% unwtd	% wtd	n	% unwtd	% wtd	n	% unwtd	% wtd
<b>Gender/ working status</b>									
Male – working full-time	256	14	26	108	6	2	107	6	1
Male – other	169	9	17	114	6	2	78	4	1
Female – working full-time	161	9	14	86	5	1	62	4	*
Female – other	369	20	32	183	10	3	156	8	1
<b>Age</b>									
18-24	85	5	10	41	2	1	25	1	*
25-34	143	8	15	75	4	1	61	3	*
35-44	182	10	17	104	6	2	93	5	1
45-54	171	9	14	75	4	1	68	4	*
55-64	157	8	13	67	4	1	64	3	*
65+	218	12	18	129	7	2	92	5	*
<b>Social Grade</b>									
AB	296	16	23	107	6	2	199	11	1
C1	232	13	26	124	7	2			
C2	180	10	18	95	5	2	204	11	2
DE	247	13	22	165	9	2			
<b>No. of adults in household</b>									
1	305	17	17	192	10	2	141	8	1
2	531	29	53	243	13	5	217	12	1
3+	119	6	19	56	3	2	45	2	1

**Table T: (UK) Standard Errors, Design Effects and Design Factors for selected variables**

Variable	Unwtd % giving answer	Wtd Standard error% (before DE)	Design Effect	Design factor	Standard error% (after DE)	Weighted sample size (n)
Making sure that public money is used wisely rated as one of the three most important attributes of MPs and Government Ministers	43.1	45.1	2.28	1.51	1.7	1,845
Does not trust MPs	61.1	60.4	1.48	1.22	1.4	1,845
Does not trust government ministers	66.7	64.8	1.6	1.26	1.4	1,845
Not reasonable for MPs to take into account how party leadership thinks they should vote when deciding how to vote in Parliament on an important national issue	55.4	57.1	2.33	1.53	1.8	1,849
Agree that MPs and government ministers have right to keep private life private	27.7	26.9	2.15	1.46	1.5	1,849
Agree that MPs and government ministers should accept a certain level of media interest in their private lives	47.5	49.3	2.03	1.43	1.7	1,849
Agree that MPs and government ministers should accept that the media examines every aspect of their private lives	24.1	23.9	2.52	1.59	1.6	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: very high	2.1	2.2	1.82	1.35	0.4	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: quite high	40.6	42.9	1.74	1.32	1.5	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: neither high nor low	41.0	40.2	2.01	1.42	1.6	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: quite low	10.8	10.4	1.65	1.29	0.9	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: very low	2.1	1.7	2.39	1.55	0.5	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: all	1.1	0.9	2.02	1.42	0.3	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: most	11.5	11.8	1.96	1.40	1.0	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: about half	22.3	22.9	1.91	1.38	1.4	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: a few	50.5	51.8	2.08	1.44	1.7	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: none	10.2	8.0	1.75	1.32	0.8	1,849
Which party closer to: Labour	17.4	21.8	2.46	1.57	2.7	879
Which party closer to: Conservative	11.7	15.7	2.59	1.61	2.6	879

Source: Ipsos MORI

**Table U: (GB only) Standard Errors, Design Effects and Design Factors for selected variables**

Variable	Unwtd % giving answer	Wtd Standard error% (before DE)	Design Effect	Design factor	Standard error% (after DE)	Weighted sample size (n)
Making sure that public money is used wisely rated as one of the three most important attributes of MPs and Government Ministers	43.4	45.1	1.86	1.36	1.8	1,845
Does not trust MPs	59.5	60.2	1.20	1.10	1.4	1,845
Does not trust government ministers	65.4	64.6	1.30	1.14	1.4	1,845
Not reasonable for MPs to take into account how party leadership thinks they should vote when deciding how to vote in Parliament on an important national issue	56.4	57.2	1.90	1.38	1.8	1,849
Agree that MPs and government ministers have right to keep private life private	27.5	25.9	1.75	1.32	1.5	1,849
Agree that MPs and government ministers should accept a certain level of media interest in their private lives	48.3	49.5	1.66	1.29	1.7	1,849
Agree that MPs and government ministers should accept that the media examines every aspect of their private lives	23.4	23.8	2.06	1.43	1.6	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: very high	2.4	2.3	1.47	1.21	0.5	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: quite high	42.3	43.1	1.42	1.19	1.6	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: neither high nor low	39.8	40.1	1.64	1.28	1.7	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: quite low	10.3	10.3	1.35	1.16	0.9	1,849
Overall rating of standards of conduct of public office-holders in the UK: very low	1.9	1.7	1.97	1.40	0.5	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: all	1.0	0.9	1.65	1.28	0.3	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: most	11.9	11.9	1.60	1.26	1.1	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: about half	23.3	23.0	1.56	1.25	1.4	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: a few	51.0	51.9	1.70	1.30	1.7	1,849
Proportion of senior public officials who own up when they make mistakes: none	8.3	7.8	1.45	1.20	0.8	1,849
Which party closer to: Labour	21.6	22.4	2.06	1.44	2.7	879
Which party closer to: Conservative	14.1	16.1	2.18	1.48	2.7	879

## 5. Multiple regression analyses

### 5.1 Regression of overall rating of standards in public life on demographic and newspaper readership variables

The SPSS statistical package was used to run the multiple regressions and to calculate the standard errors for the coefficients. Please note the standard errors for the coefficients do not take into account the complex sampling design which could mean that some of the significant coefficients might not be once we take into account the design effect.

Respondents gave an overall rating of standards of conduct in public life in the United Kingdom on a five-point scale ranging from “very high” to “very low”. This variable was regressed on the following demographic variables:

- age (six age bands);
- highest qualification (two dummy variables: (i) whether had a higher education qualification; (ii) whether had no qualification);
- working status (working or not working);
- whether work for a public/private/charity organisation; and
- whether or not in a managerial/professional or intermediate occupation (Social Grade based on the Chief Income Earner<sup>18</sup>);

Three newspaper readership variables were then added to this basic regression. These were:

- whether or not read a Quality Tabloid (i.e. the Daily Mail or Daily Express) at least twice a week;
- whether or not read one of the Red Top newspapers (Daily Mirror, Sun, Daily Star, Daily Sport or Daily Record) at least twice a week;
- whether or not read one of the Broadsheet newspapers (i.e. Guardian, Independent, Times, Daily Telegraph or Financial Times) at least twice a week; and
- Owner-occupier status, marital status and whether or not a respondent had children were not included as variables as these questions were not asked in 2005/06.

The regression analysis produced a regression model with three demographic variables, when the demographic variables were entered in combination with the newspaper readership variables. These variables were the achievement of a higher education qualification, public sector worker and broadsheet newspaper reader, and are all positive drivers. Although the analysis does manage to produce a model, the R-Sq coefficient is small at 0.026. This indicates that less than 3% of the variation is “explained” by the model, suggesting that the model is an inadequate representation of the drivers of the dependent variable.

### 5.2 Regression of overall rating of standards in public life on who can be trusted to tell the truth

Assessment of overall conduct in public life was also regressed on eight dummy variables, each indicating whether or not one of the following could be trusted to tell the truth:

- Government ministers;
- MPs in general;
- Senior managers in local councils;
- Senior managers in the NHS;
- Head teachers in schools;
- Top civil servants;
- Local councillors; and
- Senior police officers.

<sup>18</sup> In 2004 this variable was based on NS-SEC. In 2006 social grade questions were asked instead of NS-SEC questions.



The aim of this exercise was to assess whether people's overall assessment of conduct in public life was particularly linked to their trust in one or another type of public figure.

Overall the regression was highly significant ( $p \leq 0.0001$ ) and delivered an R-Sq value of 0.15 (indicating that 15% of the variance of overall assessment could be “explained” by variation in the selected variables).

Table V shows the unstandardised regression coefficients for each predictor variable. Each of these shows the expected difference in overall assessment scale score between those respondents who said they trusted a particular type of public figure and those who said they did not, after holding the values of all other predictor variables constant.

It will be noted that all the coefficients of the trust variables are positive. This is because positive overall assessment ratings were associated with *high-scale* scores, and statements of trust in a public figure were scored higher (coded 5) than were statements of lack of trust (coded 1). Note that in the 2004 survey, positive overall assessment ratings were associated with *low-scale* scores. Hence, despite the change in the sign of the coefficients from negative in 2004 to positive in this report, the underlying trends are consistent between the two reports.

The predictor variable with the highest association was HE Qualification obtained, which had a marginally higher association than the highest trust variable of trust in local councillors once the respective scales of the variables are taken into consideration. Trust in MPs, NHS senior managers, head teachers in schools, senior police officers and top civil servants followed in descending order. Trust in senior managers in local councils and in government ministers, and all other demographic variables were not significantly associated with overall rating of standards in public life.

Scotland (Table W): Overall the regression was highly significant ( $p \leq 0.0001$ ) and delivered an R-Sq value of 0.144 (indicating that 14% of the variance of overall assessment could be “explained” by variation in the selected variables).

The predictor variables with the highest associations were trust in senior managers of local councils and in MPs in general, followed by HE Qualification obtained, age and red-top readership. All other trust and demographic variables were not significantly associated with overall rating of standards in public life.

Northern Ireland (Table X): Overall the regression was highly significant ( $p \leq 0.0001$ ) and delivered an R-Sq value of 0.112 (indicating that 11% of the variance of overall assessment could be “explained” by variation in the selected variables).

The predictor variable with the highest association was trust in MPs in general, followed by trust in head teachers and trust in senior managers in local councils. All other trust variables and all demographic variables were not significantly associated with overall rating of standards in public life.

**Table V: Regression of overall rating of standards in public life on types of public figures trusted: unstandardised regression coefficients: Great Britain**

	Unstandardised coefficient	Significance level
<b>Predictor variable</b>		
Trust in top civil servants	0.034	0.003
Trust in senior police officers	0.037	0.002
Trust in senior managers in NHS	0.039	0.000
Trust in head teachers in schools	0.048	0.002
Trust in senior managers in local councils	0.052	0.000
Trust in MPs	0.053	0.000
Higher Education Qualification obtained	0.218	0.000

*Source: Ipsos MORI***Table W: Regression of overall rating of standards in public life on types of public figures trusted: unstandardised regression coefficients: Scotland**

	Unstandardised coefficient	Significance level
<b>Predictor variable</b>		
Age Band	0.047	0.019
Trust in MPs	0.074	0.000
Trust in senior managers in local councils	0.109	0.000
Reader of a 'Red Top' newspaper	0.185	0.033
Higher Education Qualification obtained	0.203	0.005

*Source: Ipsos MORI***Table X: Regression of overall rating of standards in public life on types of public figures trusted: unstandardised regression coefficients: Northern Ireland**

	Unstandardised coefficient	Significance level
<b>Predictor variable</b>		
Trust in head teachers in schools	0.116	0.000
Trust in senior managers in local councils	0.046	0.035
Trust in MPs	0.087	0.000

*Source: Ipsos MORI*

## 6. Social grade definitions

Table Y below contains a brief list of social grade definitions as used by the Institute of Practitioners of Advertising. These groups are standard on all surveys carried out by Ipsos MORI.

**Table Y: Social grade definitions**

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| A  | Professionals such as doctors, surgeons, solicitors or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high ranking grades of the Services. |
| B  | People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, hospital matrons, head of local government departments, middle management in business, qualified scientists, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades of the Services.  |
| C1 | All others doing non-manual jobs; nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions, police sergeants/constables, and middle ranks of the Services.   |
| C2 | Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprentices; foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long distance lorry drivers, security officers, and lower grades of the Services.   |
| D  | Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and people serving apprenticeships; machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, door-to-door and van salesmen.                                       |
| E  | Those on the lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners, casual workers, and others with minimum levels of income.   |







## ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

### Terms of reference

The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established, under the chairmanship of the Rt Hon The Lord Nolan, by the then Prime Minister, the Rt Hon John Major, in October 1994, with the following terms of reference:

*“To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards of propriety in public life.”*

The term “holders of public office“ includes: Ministers, civil servants and advisers; Members of Parliament and UK Members of the European Parliament; members and senior officers of all NDPBs and of NHS bodies; non-Ministerial office-holders; members and other senior officers of other bodies discharging publicly-funded functions; and elected members and senior officers of local authorities.

On 12 November 1997, the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP announced additional terms of reference:

*“To review issues in relation to the funding of political parties, and to make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements.”*

The Committee is an independent advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). The Prime Minister appoints its members for renewable periods of up to three years.

### **The remit of the Committee excludes investigation of individual allegations of misconduct.**

### **Membership of the Committee as at 1 September 2006**

**Chairman:** Sir Alistair Graham

**Members:** Rita Donaghy CBE, Professor Dame Hazel Genn DBE,  
Dame Patricia Hodgson DBE, Baroness Maddock,  
The Rt Hon Baroness Shephard of Northwold JP DL, Lloyd Clarke QPM,  
Dr Elizabeth Vallance, Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL

**Secretary:** Dr Richard Jarvis



**The Committee on Standards in Public Life**

35 Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BQ

Tel: +44 (0)20 7276 2595

Fax: +44 (0)20 7276 2585

Internet: [www.public-standards.gov.uk](http://www.public-standards.gov.uk)

Email: [Standards.evidence@gtnet.gov.uk](mailto:Standards.evidence@gtnet.gov.uk)

**Ipsos MORI**

79-81 Borough Road  
London SE1 1FY

Tel: 020 7347 3000

Fax: 020 7347 3803

Internet: [www.ipsos-mori.com](http://www.ipsos-mori.com)

Email: [info@ipsos-mori.com](mailto:info@ipsos-mori.com)

Part of the Ipsos group

IpsosMORI/25719/GJW/GDS/MAG/RM/CAS/NAO

Ipsos MORI is ISO9001/ISO20252 accredited

September 2006