



**February 2017 – Pre NI Assembly Election Tracker Poll – No. 3
LucidTalk Tracker Poll (Northern Ireland) Results Report
Issues: Voting Intention, Turnout, Outcome of NI Assembly Election 2017
POLL QUESTIONS RESULTS - GENERAL REPORT
27th February 2017**

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Author(s) Bill White – LucidTalk

LUCIDTALK MONTHLY TRACKER POLLS - Introduction and Background

LucidTalk run scheduled regular 'Tracker' polls of their established Northern Ireland online Opinion Panel - usually on a bimonthly basis (every two months). The LucidTalk Opinion Panel (now 6,926 members) consists of Northern Ireland residents (age 18+) and is balanced by gender, age-group, area of residence, and community background, in order to be demographically representative of Northern Ireland. In the build-up to the NI Assembly Election on 2nd March 2017, LucidTalk have run **THREE NI OPINION PANEL 'Tracker' POLLS:**

Poll 1 - NI OPINION PANEL 'TRACKER' POLL: Pre NI Assembly Election 2017
26th to 28th January 2017 – Results: 30th January 2017

Poll 2 - NI OPINION PANEL 'TRACKER' POLL: Pre NI Assembly Election 2017
9th to 11th February 2017 – Results: 13th February 2017

Poll 3 - NI OPINION PANEL 'TRACKER' POLL: Pre NI Assembly Election 2017
24th to 26th February 2017 – Results: 27th & 28th February 2017 – **THIS POLL**

The objective of these scheduled and regular 'Tracker' polls is to research opinion on key issues at key points in time + track changes in trends and opinions about key topics and issues over the period of the NI Assembly Election campaign. These key issues include, in the context of this poll, NI Assembly Election voting intention – both 1st and 2nd preferences, NI Political leader ratings, Election Issues, and estimation of voting turnout.

For this 'Tracker' poll-project our 6,926 member NI Opinion Panel was targeted, and invited to participate, 3,011 responses were received, and after data auditing to ensure:

- (a) 'one person-one vote' responses, and
 - (b) the collation of a balanced representative NI sample,
- 1,580 full responses were recorded and used for analysis in terms of the final results.

Methodology:

Polling was carried out by Belfast based polling and market research company LucidTalk. The project was carried out online for a period of 60 Hours from 11am 24th February to 11pm 26th February 2017 (60 Hours). The project targeted the established Northern Ireland (NI) LucidTalk online Opinion Panel (6,926 members) which is balanced by gender, age-group, area of residence, and community background, in order to be demographically representative of Northern Ireland. 3,011 full responses were received, and a data auditing process was carried out to ensure all completed poll-surveys were genuine 'one-person, one-vote' responses, and also to collate a robust and accurate balanced NI representative sample. This resulted in 1,580 responses being considered in terms of the final results - the results presented in this report.

All data results have been weighted by gender and community background to reflect the demographic composition of Northern Ireland resulting in 1,580 responses being considered in terms of the final results. All data results produced are accurate to a margin of error of +/-3.0%, at 95% confidence.

All surveys and polls may be subject to sources of error, including, but not limited to sampling error, coverage error, and measurement error. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting. NB In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

LucidTalk – Professional Credentials

LucidTalk is a member of all recognised professional Polling and Market Research organisations, including the UK Market Research Society (UK-MRS), the British Polling Council (BPC), and ESOMAR (European Society of Market Research organisations). The BPC are the primary UK professional body ensuring professional Polling and Market Research standards. All polling, research, sampling, methodologies used, market research projects and results and reports production are, and have been, carried out to the professional standards laid down by the BPC.

Note to Publisher: According to agreed British Polling Council and UK IPSO procedure - Parts in Red **MUST** be published - if not in full then in a format that conveys the same meaning. This can be in 'small-type' e.g. in a box at the bottom of the coverage etc. Parts in black type are desirable to be included, but not essential.

FULL REPORT AND COMMENTARY

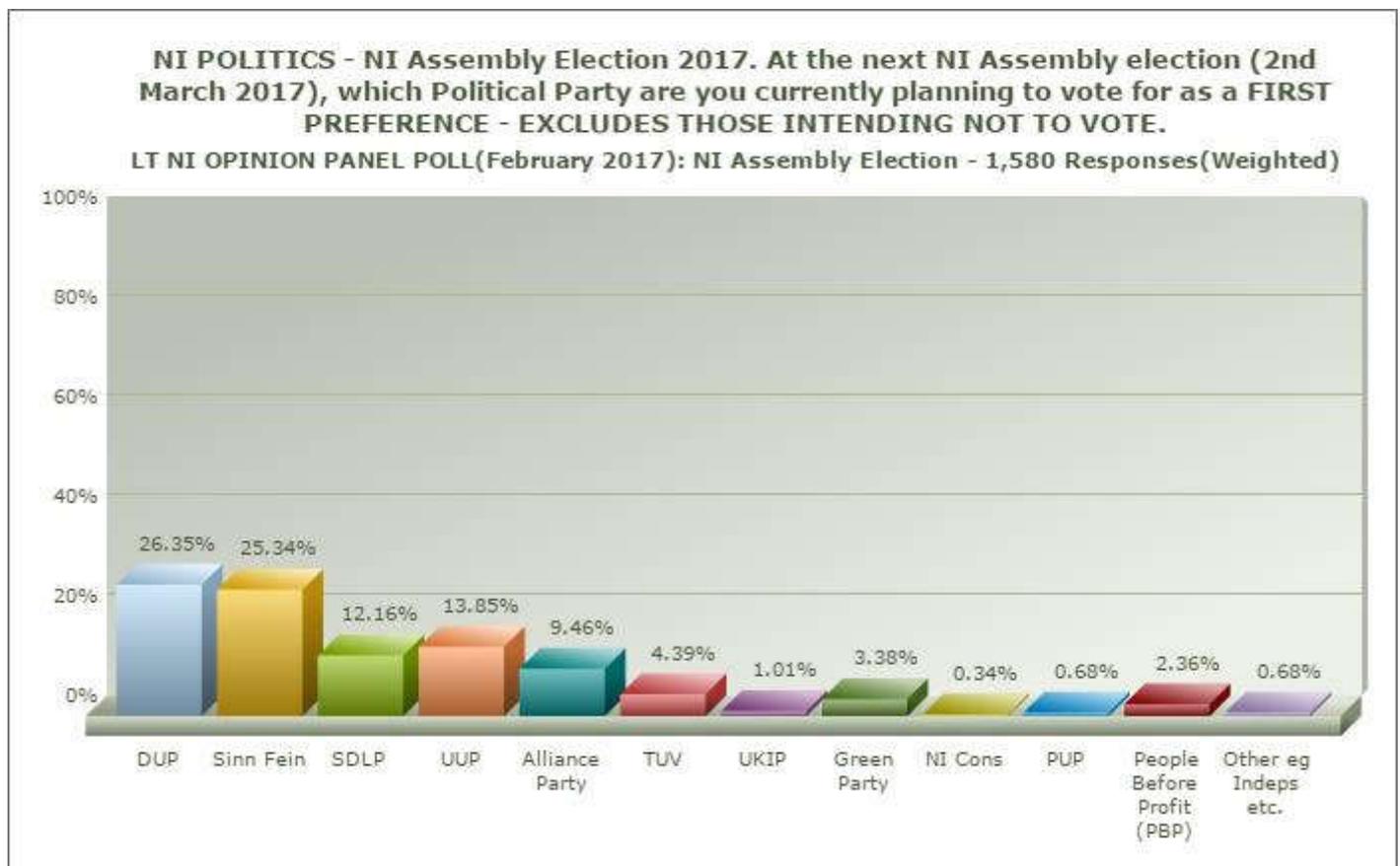
- PRE NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION ‘Tracker’ POLLS: Poll No. 3 – February 2017

- KEY POINTS AND HEADLINES

The benefit of this regular scheduled polling is that it allows us to see changes in trends and opinions at regular intervals over the time of the NI Assembly Election 2017 election campaign.

NB All commentary is provided on the basis of guidance, and for information purposes only. Commentary and analysis is not meant to be absolute determinations from the poll results, as poll and market research results can be subject to differing interpretations, commentary, and conclusions.

QUESTION 1: NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION – VOTING INTENTION – February 2017 Tracker:



Change since NI Assembly Election 2016 and LT January ‘Tracker’ Poll:

Political Party	Feb-17 Poll	Change vs NI Assembly 2016	Change vs Jan 2017 Poll
DUP	26.3%	-2.9%	0.4%
SINN FEIN	25.3%	1.3%	0.2%
SDLP	12.2%	0.2%	-0.2%
UUP	13.9%	1.3%	0.0%
ALLIANCE	9.4%	2.4%	0.5%
TUV	4.4%	1.0%	0.1%
UKIP	1.0%	-0.5%	-0.2%
GREEN PARTY	3.4%	0.7%	-0.5%
NI CONSERVATIVES	0.3%	-0.1%	-0.1%
PUP	0.7%	-0.2%	-0.1%
PBP	2.4%	0.4%	-0.3%
OTHERS	0.7%	-3.6%	-0.1%

Since NI Assembly Election 2016 and January ‘Tracker’ Poll: RED = Significant Decrease, DARK BLUE = Significant Increase, LIGHT BLUE = Small/Medium Increase.

NB Increases/Decreases are specified as significant or not, as measured against the specific political parties’ current poll score – so e.g. a 0.4% growth for PBP which is a ‘35% growth’ from their May 2016 election result of 2%, is defined as significant.

Key Headline Points – January 2017 Tracker Poll. Items/sentences in BROWN are suggested to be important in terms of key ‘headline results’:

- Since NI Assembly Election 2016 the **TOTAL Unionist vote has dropped from 47.9% (NI Assembly election 2016) to 46.6% (in this poll)**. Although this shows a small increase from our January poll which had the total Unionist vote at 46.3%. The **TOTAL Nationalist/Republican vote has gone up from 39.3% (NI Assembly election 2016) to 39.9% (in this poll)** – and NB this includes PBP who tend mostly to attract votes from the Nationalist/Republican sectors (currently at the moment – that may change). This is significant as the total Nationalist/Republican vote has reversed a trend that has been happening over recent years of the total vote from this sector dropping – a growth of 39.3% to 39.9% is small, but quite significant. Plus, the **Alliance/Green ‘middle ground’ vote has gone up from 8.5% to 12.8%**. This is the biggest noticeable ‘growth’ i.e. the Alliance/Green vote from 8.5% (NI Assembly 2016) to 12.8% (this poll). NB since our January poll the Alliance Party have increased again by 0.4% showing a healthy upward trend – although the Green Party have dropped very slightly (in this poll compared to our January poll), they are still showing a small upward trend from last Mays NI Assembly election.

- As can be seen from the above table the **main 'headline' is the drop in the DUP vote of -2.9% from the May 2016 NI Assembly election.** However, a key point is that compared with our January poll the DUP are 'ever so slightly' trending upwards again, with a very small increase compared to our January poll of 0.4% - although this can't be viewed as statistically significant, as it's within the poll error boundaries. However, this basically means they've levelled off, and they'll be relieved the downward trend for their party (i.e. the DUP) seems to have levelled off.
- As we said in our last poll this DUP drop since last Mays NI Assembly election i.e. of 2.9% is still quite a drop, but may not totally translate into dropping a similar relatively large No. of seats in the new NI Assembly. This is because it would take an even larger drop to really feed-into dropping a larger No. of seats in the new NI Assembly. Though this drop could be the difference in terms of them losing 1-2 'extra' seats (i.e. above those they may be expecting to lose anyway).
- A large No. of poll participants who said they voted DUP last May 2016, say they will switch this time to the UUP and other parties. **This is a noticeable swing to the UUP, but at this stage in the campaign, is not overwhelming i.e. the DUP can cope with this swing** (in terms of not being damaged too much overall in terms of seats in the NI Assembly). But the DUP will hope that this poll is correct and that they've 'levelled off' i.e. they can't afford the swing to grow anymore over the course of the last days of the campaign.
- Also noticeable that **Sinn Fein has got a boost, and a bigger jump than the SDLP.** Again this follows the trend from our January poll with Sinn Fein still trending upwards, although the growth seems to have slowed a bit. This possibly shows that the Sinn Fein strategy is working with Nationalist/Republicans – particularly also taking into account that the overall Nationalist/Republican vote has grown overall.
- **The Alliance poll increase of +2.4% compared to last May 2016 NI Assembly election is good healthy score,** and should show that they are well on course to maintaining their current seat tally of 8, with maybe even a possible gain somewhere? Remember this would then represent a 'seat(s) gain' i.e. maintain their current score of 8 seats even though the overall No. of seats in the NI Assembly is dropping from 108 to 90.

QUESTION: NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION - Have you changed? You indicated you're currently planning to vote XXXX party (1st Preference) in the forthcoming NI Assembly Election - Has your NI Assembly Election voting opinion changed since the last election, May 2016, if so please indicate this change (or not) of your voting intention:

Key Points – General, and from 2nd preference vote results – NB We do not quote actual data results for 2nd preferences as these are analysed against the subset of whatever 1st preference the respondents designated, and as such the statistical error is too high to quote actual results. However key trends and patterns can be determined quite accurately – see below:

- **There has been a noticeable increase in the No. of SDLP voters who say they will transfer (i.e. their 2nd preference votes) directly to the UUP, and vice-versa.** This is a noticeable trend and could make a difference (albeit small) in terms of MLA's to be elected last in seats like South Belfast, North Down, and Strangford. However, its noticeable that the SDLP-UUP/UUP-SDLP inter transferring decreases as you move to the West of province.

- **There is also a lowering of transferring between UUP and DUP (and vice-versa)** – 1st preference UUP voters now more likely to transfer to Alliance, Green, SDLP etc. NB This is a trend – it doesn't mean that there isn't still substantial inter Unionist transferring.
- Following on from the above point there has been a **lowering of DUP to UUP transferring, and UUP to DUP transferring** – with the latter being more noticeable than the former. DUP show higher transfer than before to TUV, and likewise so do the UUP (even more so). 1st preference UUP voters are tending now much more to Alliance, Green, and SDLP (in that order) – especially in the Belfast area, and surrounding constituencies. In these constituencies there is a noticeable No. of UUP voters putting the DUP 4th in terms of second transfers from UUP 1st preference voters.
- **Alliance have always been 'transfer friendly' but are now scoring even more healthier in this field i.e. increased No. of Sinn Fein voters saying they will transfer to Alliance just behind SDLP and PBP.**
- **Strong transfer from Sinn Fein to PBP, but not necessarily vice-versa i.e. PBP voters tending in increasing Nos to transfer to Alliance and Green.**
- **TUV 1st preference voters seem more inclined to transfer to the UUP than before** i.e. in the May 2016 Ni Assembly election they tended to transfer mostly to DUP and other Unionists.

QUESTION: How did the NI Political Parties do in the campaign?:

We asked all participants to score each Political **PARTY** from 0 = Terrible/Bad performance, to 100 = Brilliant/Couldn't be Improved performance – in terms of their performance in the overall election campaign. Results below show the overall average scores for each PARTY from ALL poll respondents.

HERE ARE THE TOTAL RESULTS:

NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2017 - CAMPAIGN: QUESTION: Taken 'in the round' - How do you rate each of the NI Political Parties performance during the NI Assembly Election 2017 campaign period e.g. Party Leader performance, Campaigning, Posters/Leaflets, Media performance, Speeches, Policy presentation, etc. (please answer neutrally i.e. disregard your personal political views). For each Political Party - Score 0% to 100% on the slider scale (just move the button up/down the scale) where 0% = Disastrous/Couldn't be worse, 50% = Neutral, to 100% = Excellent/Couldn't be better.

Item	Average	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Total Responses
DUP	32.47	0.00	100.00	25.39	1,580
SINN FEIN	44.60	0.00	100.00	28.20	
UUP	47.52	0.00	100.00	23.94	
SDLP	52.33	0.00	100.00	24.30	
ALLIANCE	55.34	0.00	100.00	27.55	
GREEN PARTY	48.95	0.00	100.00	25.77	
PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT	41.44	0.00	100.00	25.37	
TUV	36.43	0.00	100.00	27.29	
				answered	
				skipped	0

Notes:

- It should be noted that smaller parties are at a bit of a disadvantage with this question because they don't have the large visibility province-wide that the bigger parties do.
- In the context of the above point the DUP's score is a bit lower than it should be for a major party.
- The SDLP and Alliance both score quite well. The UUP would have hoped to have been a bit higher than this taking into account the troubles the DUP have had to contend with in this campaign e.g. RHI etc. However, no party scores very high with this question – and the comments obtained during our polling suggest most people have found the campaign a bit lack lustre (although to fair to the parties, the weather hasn't helped much!).
- **NB – AND THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT: JUST BECAUSE RESPONDENTS DON'T SCORE A PARTICULAR PARTY HIGH IN TERMS OF ITS ELECTION CAMPAIGN, DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THEY WON'T VOTE FOR THAT PARTY ON ELECTION DAY!**

UNIONIST VOTERS ONLY:

NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2017 - CAMPAIGN: QUESTION – UNIONISTS VOTERS ONLY: Taken 'in the round' - How do you rate each of the NI Political Parties performance during the NI Assembly Election 2017 campaign period e.g. Party Leader performance, Campaigning, Posters/Leaflets, Media performance, Speeches, Policy presentation, etc. (please answer neutrally i.e. disregard your personal political views). For each Political Party - Score 0% to 100% on the slider scale (just move the button up/down the scale) where 0% = Disastrous/Couldn't be worse, 50% = Neutral, to 100% = Excellent/Couldn't be better.

Item	Average	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Total Responses
DUP	43.28	0.00	100.00	31.61	736
SINN FEIN	30.24	0.00	100.00	22.85	
UUP	48.41	0.00	100.00	27.08	
SDLP	48.11	0.00	100.00	24.42	
ALLIANCE	39.11	0.00	100.00	26.21	
GREEN PARTY	37.18	0.00	100.00	24.50	
PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT	36.27	0.00	100.00	23.93	
TUV	50.77	0.00	100.00	27.67	
				answered	1,580
				skipped	

Notes:

- It is noteworthy than when Unionists only are considered in terms of answers to this question, the gap between the DUP and UUP gets a lot closer.
- Again we see the long-standing trend of Unionist voters not being particularly 'supportive' of the Alliance party – even though we asked respondents to be neutral when answering this question. Notice that TUV tops this chart – mainly because of Jim Allister (as the comments suggest), although the TUV lead is narrow!

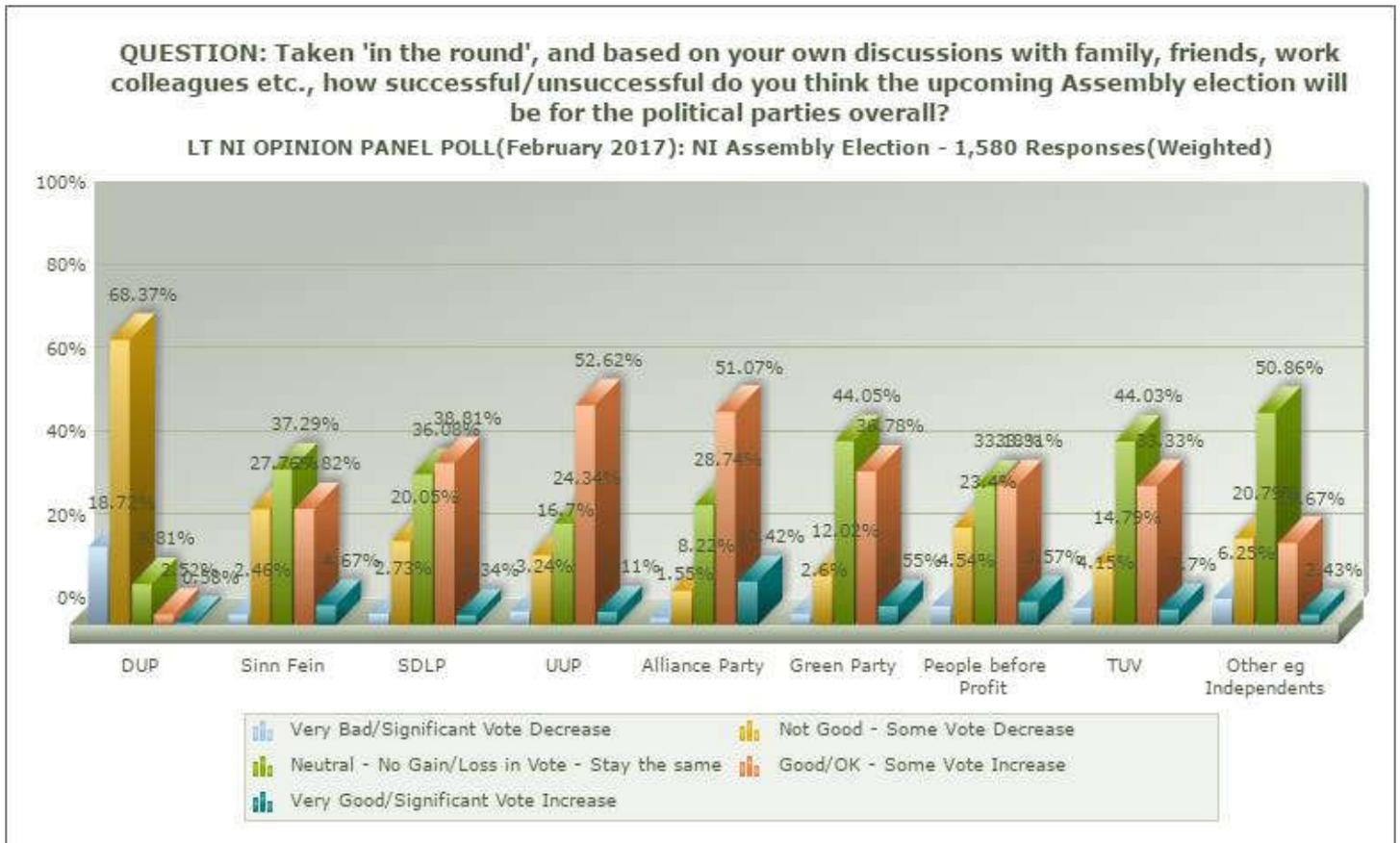
QUESTION: Turnout – What do you expect it to be?

NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION TURNOUT - YOUR OWN VIEW!: QUESTION: Taken 'in the round', and based on your own discussions with family, friends, work colleagues etc., what do you think the voter turnout will be at the upcoming NI Assembly Election (2nd March) - compared to the NI Assembly Election May 2016 turnout (which was 54%). Please answer from: 30%(LHS) = Lowest possible turnout (realistically), through 54% = Same as last NI Assembly Election, to 80%(RHS) = Highest possible turnout (realistically).

Item	Average	Min	Max	Std. Deviation	Total Responses
Turnout in the NI Assembly Election (2nd March) 2017 (54% = same as NI Assembly Election May 2016)	55.64	33.00	80.00	7.39	1580
				answered	1580
				skipped	0

Note: 55.6 means the poll participants think the turnout will go up a bit (very slightly) from NI Assembly Election 2016 but not dramatically so, e.g. maybe to 55-56% or somewhere about that level. When a further 'drill-down' analysis is done on this question we find out that **Nationalist/Republicans are more 'optimistic' of a higher turnout than Unionists i.e. Nationalists/Republicans seem more enthused (slightly more!) to go to the polls than Unionists.**

QUESTION: Overall result, regardless of your own voting intention – How do the poll participants think the NI Assembly Election will go overall for each of the political parties?



LIGHT BLUE/ORANGE (towards left-hand-side of each political party) = Poll participants think parties vote will go down at election, RED/DARK BLUE (towards right-hand-side of each political party) = Poll participants think parties vote will go up at election.

Notes: Alliance has the highest 'Dark Blue' i.e. 'Very good/significant vote increase'. UUP has a high RED i.e. 'Some vote increase', but less of the 'Dark Blue' (i.e. compared to Alliance). DUP has a high 'Orange' - 'Some vote decrease' and 18.7% 'Light Blue' meaning 'Very bad/significant vote decrease'. Like our January 'Tracker' poll, its noteworthy that poll participants think the UUP will sort of 'improve a bit' but that the improvement won't be that large.

QUESTION: NI Assembly Election – Reasons for your voting decision:

QUESTION - NI ASSEMBLY ELECTION: Please list the four top issues you consider as important in making your NI Assembly election voting decision (whether voting or not-voting) - please list this as single words (e.g. Jobs, Health Service, RHI, Equality,..), or short expressions (e.g. Support for Education, NI Constitutional position, Irish Unity,..) etc.

Results – Top 8 Issues ranked by how many 'mentions' were recorded by poll respondents in answers to question above: Health Service: 837, Education: 711, RHI: 687, Equality: 660, Jobs/Economy: 578, Brexit: 571, Irish: 461 (mostly in connection with Irish language act), Unity (mostly in the context of Irish Unity): 363

Notes: The Health Service is the 1st factor uppermost in people's minds when making their voting decision, followed by Education, then RHI – These are the top three issues that voters/potential voters are thinking about when making up their minds who to vote for. However, this is a change from our January poll when RHI came second – it is now third. Yes, it is still up there in the top 3, but it is fading a bit, but will still have an impact on voter's decisions in this election.