



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Mánnystrie O tha Laa

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Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey: Update on the effect of Covid-19 on the 2020/21 and 2021/22 surveys

2020/21 survey

Traditionally the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) is a face-to-face interview survey carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Central Survey Unit (NISRA, CSU), on behalf of the Department of Justice (DoJ). As a result of the current pandemic, changes had been made to how the survey was conducted. Following government advice on Covid-19, the 2020/21 survey moved from face-to-face to telephone and was carried out by a CSU interviewer. If a household had been selected for the survey they will have been asked to contact CSU. The contact number for the NI Safe Community Survey can be found on the [NISRA website \(opens in a new window\)](#) in the Selected for a Survey section.

As a result of the move to a telephone survey, the questionnaire for 2020/21 had to be reduced as a whole, with some modules subsequently being either shortened or removed. This primarily affected the perception-based modules. The methodology for measuring respondents' experiences of victimisation was unchanged and questions within the experience of crime modules were retained. The 2020/21 survey included questions on the following areas:

1. experience of crime
2. perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour
3. confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements
4. overall confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System
5. perceptions of organised crime

With regards to self-completion modules, conducting the survey via telephone has meant that the module on Experience of Domestic Violence and Abuse was not included in the 2020/21 survey. For self-completion modules a respondent would personally complete the module on the interviewer's tablet by themselves. When finished, their answers are hidden and cannot be seen by the interviewer. This gives respondents increased confidence in the privacy and confidentiality of the survey and a telephone survey would not enable this confidentiality to be maintained.

In terms of the survey findings, the move to a telephone interview has resulted in a lower response rate and the subsequent number of completed interviews. In 2020/21 this was approximately 1,100. Analytical Services Group (DoJ) will be considering the effect of the reduced sample size on survey findings, including the effect on headline figures and disaggregated breakdowns and how these will be reported. A further update will be published on this in due course.

2021/22 survey

In terms of the 2021/22 survey, telephone interviewing has continued and will likely continue for the foreseeable future. The 2021/22 survey includes the following modules, again some of which have been reduced:

1. experience of crime
2. perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour
3. confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements
4. overall confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System
5. perceptions of sentencing, modern slavery and cyber crime

The perceptions of sentencing, modern slavery and cyber crime modules have replaced perceptions of organised crime in 2021/22 as these are modules rotated biennially and asked in alternate years.

The Experience of Domestic Violence and Abuse module is also rotated biennially with the self-completion Sexual Violence and Abuse module. The latter was therefore due to be included in the 2021/22 survey. However, as was the case with the experience

of domestic violence and abuse module, the move to a telephone survey and impact on confidentiality has resulted in the sexual violence and abuse module also being removed until face-to-face interviews can resume.

As referred to above a further update outlining any subsequent developments will be released when applicable. However, should you have any queries regarding the content of this update or the survey in general, please contact:

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