Findings from the 2020/21 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey

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CONTENTS

1 | Summary Findings

This bulletin presents findings from modules contained within the Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS) 2020/21 which measure respondents' experience of crime and gauge views on perceptions of crime, perceptions of policing and justice and perceptions of organised crime.

Experience of Crime

- Results from the 2020/21 NISCTS indicate that most adults/households did not experience a crime asked about in the survey. Latest findings estimate that 3.9% of adults were victims of at least one crime measured through the survey during the 12 months prior to interview. An estimated 45,000 incidents of crime occurred during the 12-month recall periods for NISCTS 2020/21.

Perceptions of Crime

- Respondents were more positive in their perception of crime trends in their local area than at the regional level with 25% believing local crime levels had increased in the preceding two years compared with 55% for Northern Ireland as a whole.

- Findings indicate that 6% of participants perceived the level of anti-social behaviour in their local area to be high. Rubbish or litter lying around (31%) and people using or dealing drugs (24%) were most commonly identified as problems in the local area.

- One-in-ten (10%) respondents expressed a high level of worry about burglary with a similar proportion, 8%, very worried about becoming a victim of violent crime. Of vehicle owners, 5% were very worried about becoming a victim of car crime. At 73%, the majority of respondents felt fear of crime has a minimal effect on their quality of life.

1 | Summary Findings

Perceptions of Policing and Justice

▪ Overall public confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements (based on a seven-strand composite measure) was 86% in 2020/21.

▪ In terms of the local police, findings suggest that 62% rated their local police as doing an excellent or good job. When asked about overall confidence in their local police, three-in-four (75%) respondents stated that, when taking everything into account, they had confidence in the police in their area.

▪ With regards to community engagement, the proportion of respondents agreeing that the police and other agencies 'seek people's views about the anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime issues that matter' was 42%, lower than the proportion who felt such issues are being 'dealt with' (50%).

▪ Two-in-three (67%) respondents were very or fairly confident that the criminal justice system as a whole in Northern Ireland is effective while almost three-in-four (73%) felt it was fair.

Perceptions of Organised Crime

▪ Just over one-in-five (21%) participants considered organised crime to be very or fairly widespread in their local area with a quarter of respondents (25%) believing the level of organised crime had increased in their area over the previous 12 months.

▪ When asked about the role members of the public, including themselves, can play in tackling organised crime, the most common response, given by two-in-three (66%) respondents, was to report it to police or other law enforcement bodies.

▪ In terms of paramilitary activity, 15% felt it was widespread in their area. Of those who responded it occurred, more than four-in-five (83%) felt there were either strong or some links between paramilitary activity and ongoing organised crime.

▪ More than two-fifths (43%) felt paramilitary groups had either some or a lot of influence in their local area. Of respondents who considered paramilitary groups to have influence, 45% described it as a 'negative' influence, while a further 31% felt the influence was 'more negative than positive'.

2 | Introduction

2.1 The focus of this publication

The Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) is a representative, continuous, personal interview survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime of adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Traditionally, the NISCS has been a face-to-face interview survey. Following government advice on Covid-19, however, face-to-face interviews were suspended in March 2020 and interviews were subsequently conducted via telephone for the 2020/21 survey year. As a result, a shorter questionnaire was asked to reduce completion time. The 2020/21 survey will therefore be considered as a discrete survey year and will hereafter be referred to as the 2020/21 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS).

Given the reduced questionnaire, change in survey mode and that the focus will be on 2020/21 data, three annual reports that would normally be published separately, have been merged into this combined report for 2020/21. These annual reports are those entitled: Experience of Crime, Perceptions of Crime and Perceptions of Policing and Justice. In addition, findings from a module gauging perceptions of organised crime, asked in the 2020/21 survey, will also be included within this report.

This bulletin therefore presents findings on: 1. experience of crime; 2. perceptions of crime (including anti-social behaviour); 3. confidence in policing and in the fairness and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System; and 4. perceptions of organised crime (including paramilitary activity).

Results are based on a sample of 1,125 respondents (aged 16+). Throughout this report key findings are commented on in the text, with numerical details available in the relevant tables comprising the Tabular Annex (Appendix 1). Figures can also be found in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source (ODS) documents. Further background information on this bulletin, the move to a telephone survey and survey methodology for 2020/21 is available in the Technical Annex (Appendix 2).

> **Note:**
> The estimates contained within this report are the best estimates derived from the 2020/21 survey on the extent of crime and public perceptions. The move to telephone mode and changes to the questionnaire mean results for 2020/21 will not be directly comparable with previous years. However, figures for earlier years are presented in some graphs within this bulletin to illustrate the trend prior to the break in the time series. Results for previous NISCS surveys are also included, where applicable, in the accompanying Excel and ODS tables.
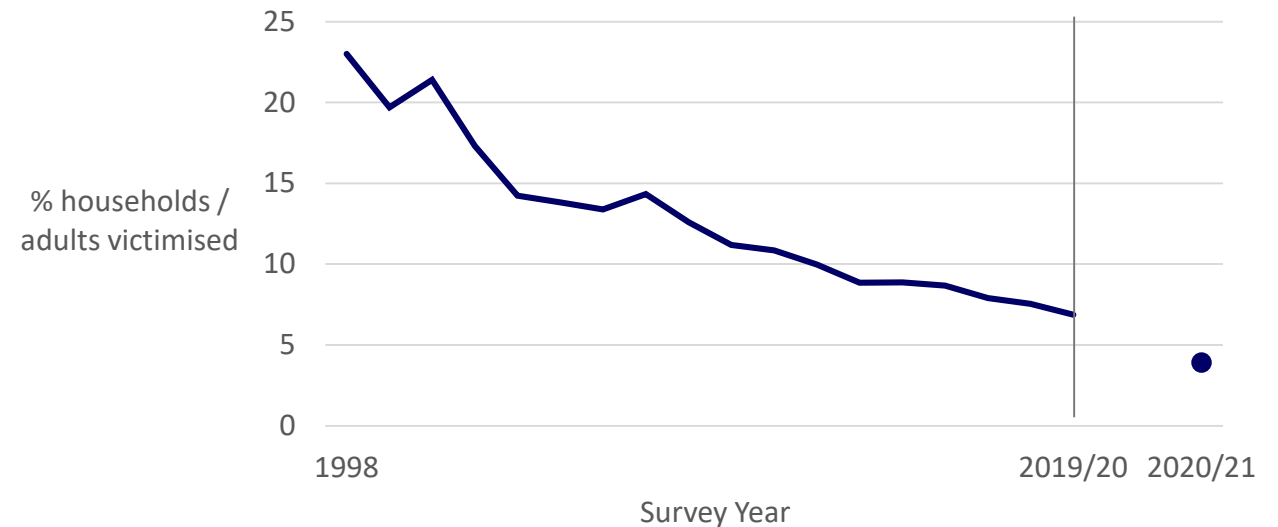
3 | Experience of Crime

3.1 Crime Victimisation (Prevalence) Rates in Northern Ireland

This chapter provides an overview of crime victimisation rates derived from the 2020/21 NISCTS, both prevalence rates and incident numbers. Table 1 contains best (i.e. the average or mean), lower and higher estimates of crime victimisation (prevalence) rates per household or adult in Northern Ireland for the main NISCTS crime categories during the 12 full calendar months immediately preceding each 2020/21 interview. Police recorded crime figures can be found, for reference purposes, in Table 2. The following analyses are based on the best estimates derived from the survey.

- Findings from the 2020/21 NISCTS suggest that most households/adults had not been a victim of any of the crime types covered by the survey with the proportion indicating that they had experienced crime (any NISCTS crime rate) at 3.9%.

- When considering the proportions who had been a victim of any household crime and any personal crime, survey estimates suggest that the household crime prevalence rate was 3.1% compared with a rate of 0.8% for personal crime.

- While the estimates derived from the 2020/21 survey are not directly comparable with rates observed through previous NISCS sweeps, the estimates for the any NISCTS crime prevalence rate, any personal and any household crime lie below the range of those observed in recent years.

Figure 3.1: Household/adult victims of crime once or more in Northern Ireland – any NISCS crime 1998-2019/20 and any NISCTS crime 2020/21 (%)

1. The any NISCS/NISCTS crime rate is calculated treating a household crime as a personal crime.
2. In 2020/21, face-to-face interviews were suspended due to the pandemic resulting in a break in the NISCS time series.

3 | Experience of Crime

3.2 Crime Victimisation (Incidence) Rates and estimated number of NISCTS incidents in Northern Ireland

Table 3 in Appendix 1 gives crime victimisation (incidence) rates per 10,000 households or adults in Northern Ireland for a limited range of crime types. This approach differs from prevalence rates in that it takes into account the number of times each type of incident may have occurred, as opposed to the proportion of households or adults victimised at least once.

It is possible to use these incidence rates along with the household and adult population estimates to produce best, lower and higher estimates of the number of incidents for a range of crime types covered by NISCTS 2020/21, which are presented in Table 4. There is 95% certainty that the actual number of crimes against households and their adult occupants lies between the lower and higher estimates (confidence intervals). It is important to note that, given the limitations of the sample size, these confidence intervals can be relatively wide, particularly for less common crimes.

- Results indicate that an estimated 45,000 incidents occurred during the 12-month recall periods for the 2020/21 NISCTS, of which two-thirds, 30,000, were household offences and the remaining 15,000 personal offences.

- Again, these estimates for incidents of crime are also below the ranges that had been estimated in recent years.

Figure 3.2: Estimated number of NISCTS incidents (thousands)
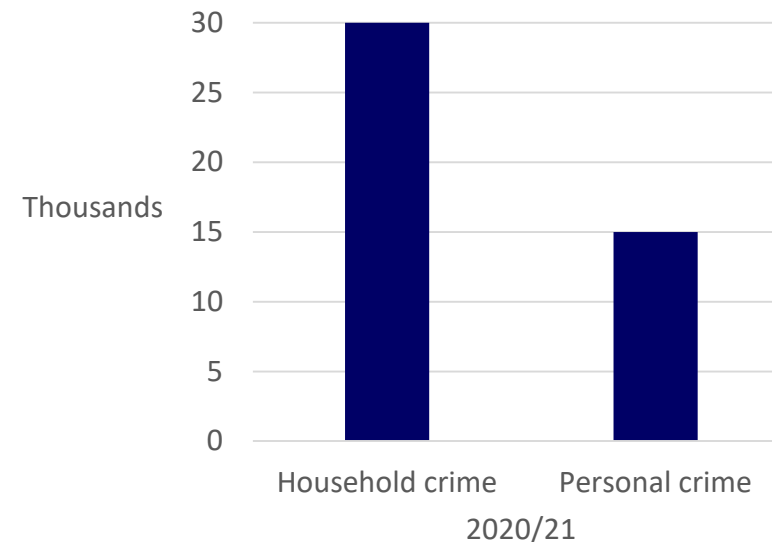
4 | Perceptions of Crime

4.1 Perceptions of change in crime levels

NISCTS 2020/21 participants were asked how they perceived the level of crime to have changed, if at all, in both Northern Ireland and their local area during the two years prior to interview, based on a five-point scale ranging from 'a lot more crime' to 'a lot less crime'. The proportions perceiving there to be either 'a little' or 'a lot' more crime in Northern Ireland comprise the overall 'more crime' figure presented in Table 5. Similarly, the two response options, 'a little less' and 'a lot less' crime have been combined into the 'less crime' figure. Equivalent figures for change in crime levels in the local area are also given in Table 5.

- Findings from the 2020/21 NISCTS show over half (55%) of respondents felt crime had increased in Northern Ireland during the two years prior to interview, comprising 21% believing there was 'a lot more crime' and 34% 'a little more crime'. Just over one-in-three (35%) thought crime levels were unchanged while the remaining 10% of respondents believed crime had fallen.

- Respondents were more positive in their perceptions of crime levels within their local area than at the regional level. A quarter (25%) thought crime in their local area had increased in the preceding two years compared with the 55% believing there was more crime at the Northern Ireland level.

- This difference of 30 percentage points in the more crime figures appears to have resulted in an equivalent difference in the proportions who felt crime levels were unchanged. The proportion who felt the crime level in their local area was about the same was 64% compared with 35% at the Northern Ireland level.

- The proportions who felt crime had fallen over the previous two years were similar at 10% (for Northern Ireland level) and 12% (local area level).

Figure 4.1: Perceptions of changing crime levels in Northern Ireland and the local area, 2020/21 (%)[1,2]
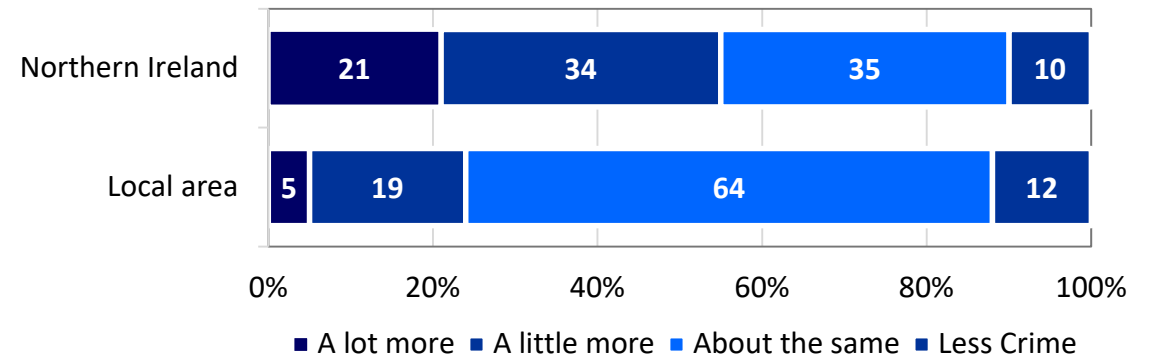
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Local area figures are based on respondents who had been living in their area for more than three years.
3. Percentages may not sum to 100 or total those referenced in the text due to rounding.

4 | Perceptions of Crime

## 4.2 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour in Northern Ireland

Respondents to the NISCTS were asked to rate how much of a problem different types of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are in their area using a four-point scale ranging from 'very big problem' to 'not a problem at all'. Responses to the following seven strands have been used to form a composite measure (see Section 4.3 of the User Guide (Opens in a new window)) to gauge the overall perceived level of ASB in the local area:

    a. abandoned or burnt-out cars.

    b. noisy neighbours or loud parties.

    c. people being drunk or rowdy in public places.

    d. people using or dealing drugs.

    e. teenagers or young people hanging around on the streets.

    f. rubbish or litter lying around.

    g. vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property.

Figures for the composite measure and the seven individual strands are given in Table 6.

- Based on the composite measure, findings from the 2020/21 NISCTS indicate that 6% of participants perceived the level of anti-social behaviour in their local area to be high.

- In terms of the individual ASB strands, respondents were most likely to perceive rubbish or litter lying around (31%) and people using or dealing drugs (24%) as problems with abandoned or burnt-out cars considered least problematic (1%).

Figure 4.2: Perceived high level of ASB in Northern Ireland, NISCS 2003/04-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21 (%)[1]
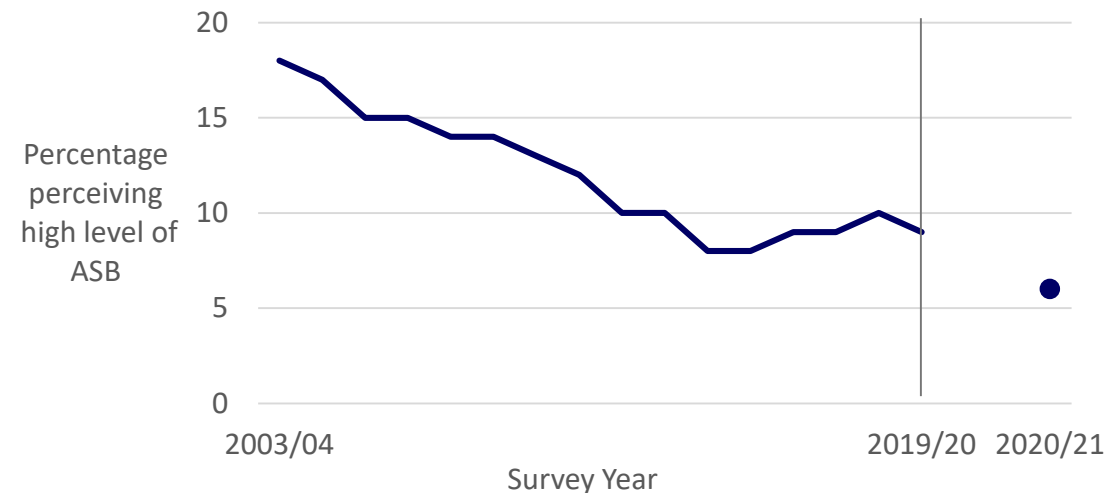
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Perceived high level of ASB derived from responses to the seven individual ASB strands.
3. In 2020/21, face-to-face interviews were suspended due to the pandemic resulting in a break in the NISCS time series.

4 | Perceptions of Crime

4.3 Worry about crime and personal safety in Northern Ireland

Worry about becoming a victim of crime is measured by the survey in two ways: firstly, about specific crimes; and secondly, with regard to personal safety when alone after dark, either at home or walking in the local area.

Respondents to NISCTS 2020/21 were asked how worried they were about becoming a victim of the following crimes using a four-point scale, ranging from 'very worried' to 'not at all worried':

    a. home being burgled.

    b. being mugged and robbed.

    c. physical attack by a stranger.

    d. physical attack because of hate motivations.

    e. rape.

    f. theft of a car.

    g. theft from a car.

Two composite indicators for worry about car crime and violent crime are constructed from the responses to the individual car crime and violent crime questions. These composite indicators, together with the proportion of respondents who claimed to be 'very worried' about burglary, are given in Table 7.

For the worry about car crime indicator, responses to each car crime question of 'very worried' are awarded 2 points and 'fairly worried' 1 point. Those respondents scoring a combined 3 or 4 points are considered to have a high level of worry about car crime. This measure refers only to respondents residing in households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.

A similar approach is used to determine the worry about violent crime indicator, with responses to each violent crime question of 'very worried' being awarded 2 points and 'fairly worried' 1 point. In this instance, the scale ranges from 0 to 8 points and those scoring 4 or more points are deemed to have a high level of worry about violent crime.

Respondents were also asked how worried they are about becoming a victim of (all types of) crime in general, using the same four-point scale ('very worried' to 'not at all worried'). Responses to this question are also included within Table 7.

4 | Perceptions of Crime

- One-in-ten (10%) respondents expressed a high level of worry about burglary with a similar proportion, 8%, very worried about becoming a victim of violent crime. Of vehicle owners, the proportion who were very worried about becoming a victim of car crime was half of that for burglary at 5%.

- With regards to personal safety, respondents were more likely to feel very unsafe while walking alone in their area after dark (6%) than being home alone at night (1%).

Figure 4.3: Worry about crime and personal safety in Northern Ireland, NISCTS 2020/21 (%)[1]

Percentage with a high level of worry/feeling very unsafe
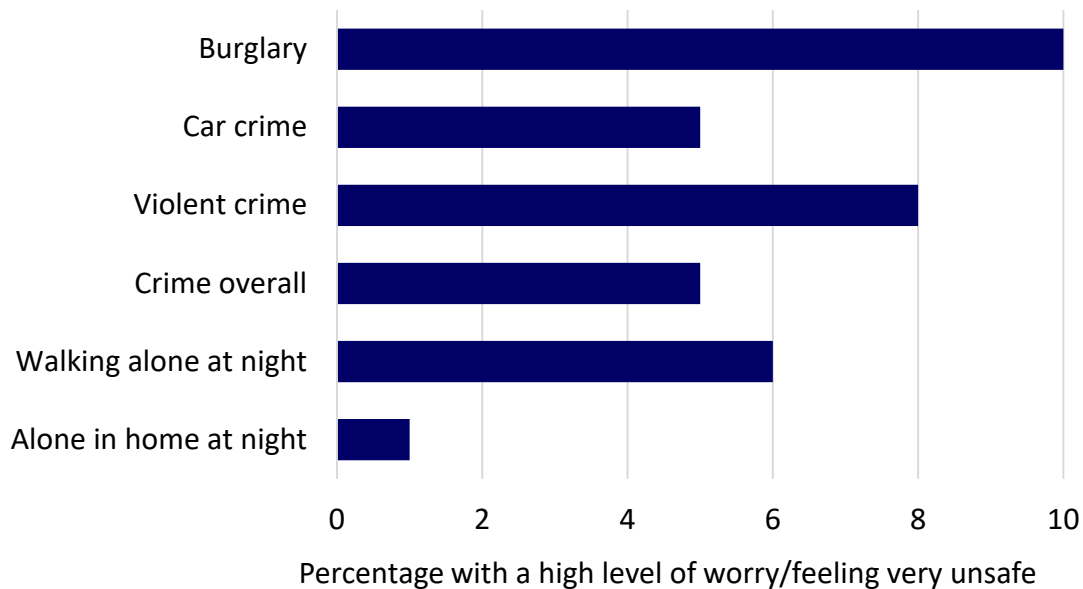
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Car crime refers to vehicle-owners only.

Figure 4.4: Worry about crime in Northern Ireland, NISCS 1998-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21 (%)[1]
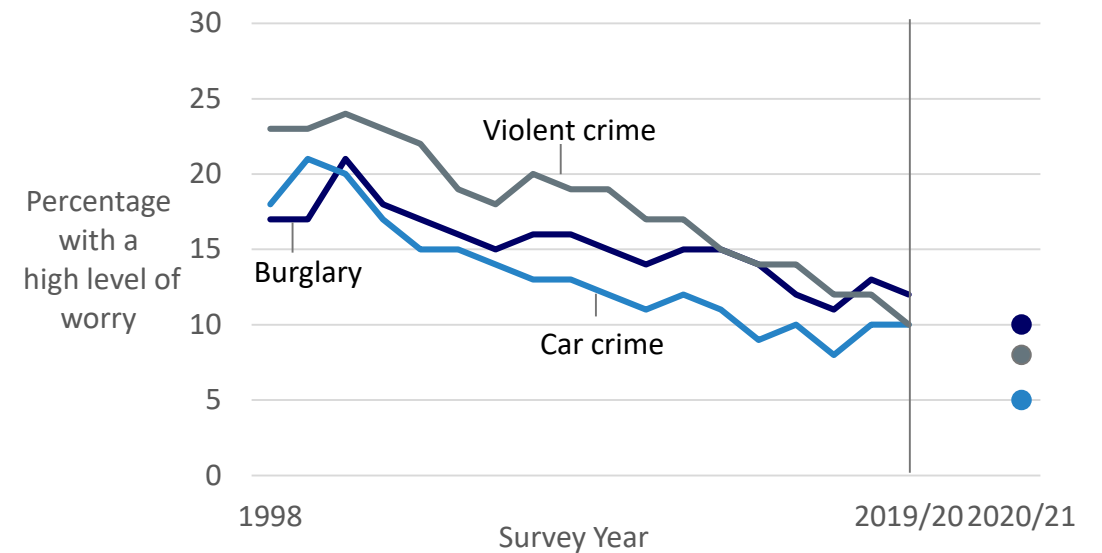
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Car crime refers to vehicle-owners only.
3. In 2020/21, face-to-face interviews were suspended due to the pandemic resulting in a break in the NISCS time series.

4 | Perceptions of Crime

4.4 Perceptions of the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life in Northern Ireland

While a basic level of concern about crime may be beneficial in that it encourages people to take measures to reduce their likelihood of victimisation, 'fear (about being a victim) of crime' can become problematic if it has a detrimental impact on a person's quality of life. Respondents were asked how much their own quality of life is affected by their 'fear of crime' on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no effect and 10 is a total effect. In order to standardise the results, the following conventions have been used to gauge the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life:

    a. minimally affected (responded in the range 1 to 3).

    b. moderately affected (responded in the range 4 to 7).

    c. greatly affected (responded in the range 8 to 10).

Figures are presented in Appendix 1 Table 8.

- Findings from the 2020/21 survey indicate that the vast majority of respondents, almost three-in-four (73%), felt fear of crime has a minimal effect on their quality of life, with 23% reporting that it had a moderate effect. At 4%, respondents were by far less likely to feel that fear of crime was having a great impact on their quality of life.

Figure 4.5: Perceptions of the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life in Northern Ireland, 2020/21 (%)[1]
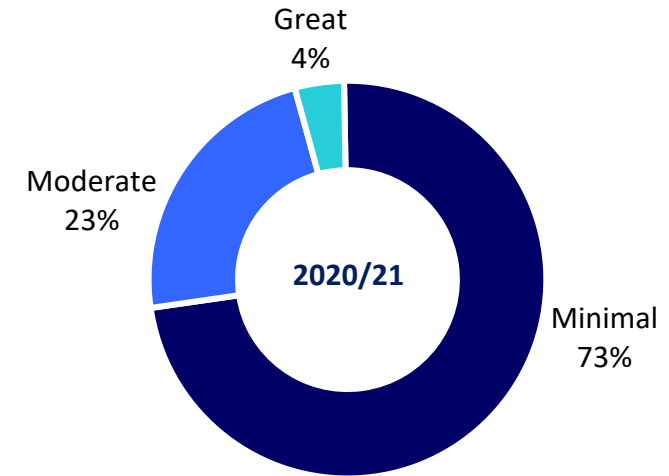
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

Summary: Perceptions of Crime

Respondents were more likely to believe that, in the preceding two years, crime had increased at the Northern Ireland level (55%) than in their local area (25%). Rubbish or litter lying around (31%) and drug dealing (24%) were considered as being most problematic in the local area. The majority of respondents reported that fear of crime has a minimal effect on their quality of life (73%).

5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

5.1 Confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements

Modules were included in the survey which sought views on the police (both in Northern Ireland as a whole and the local area), police accountability arrangements and overall confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, an overview of which is given in this chapter.

A set of seven questions was asked of respondents which elicited views on the fairness and effectiveness of the police and police accountability arrangements. Figures from the 2020/21 NISCTS are presented for these seven indicators in Table 9 and are based on the proportions of respondents who stated that they:

> a. have some, a lot or total confidence in the ability of the police to provide an ordinary day-to-day policing service for all the people of Northern Ireland.

> b. think the police do a very or fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole.

> c. believe the police treat Catholic and Protestant members of the public equally in Northern Ireland as a whole.

> d. think the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) is independent of the police.

> e. think the Policing Board helps ensure that the police do a good job.

> f. think the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI) is independent of the police.

> g. think the Police Ombudsman helps ensure that the police do a good job.

This set of seven questions is then used to construct an overall confidence rating (composite measure). In constructing the composite measure, greater weight is given to the three police indicators (a to c, above), so that the arithmetic mean of their individual confidence ratings is worth two-thirds of the overall confidence rating. The respective means of those relating to the Policing Board (d and e), and the Police Ombudsman (f and g), each account for a sixth of the overall composite measure.

As a note of caution, this seven-strand composite measure should not be misinterpreted purely as personal 'confidence in the police' as its focus is much broader including not only the performance of the police per se but also accountability measures put in place following recommendations set out in the Patten Report to reform policing in Northern Ireland.

5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

- Findings show that, based on the seven strand composite measure, 86% of respondents had overall confidence in policing.

- When considering the three questions relating directly to the police, results suggest that participants were more likely to agree that the police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of Northern Ireland (91%), while results for the remaining two indicators, the police do a very or fairly good job (80%) and treat Catholics and Protestants equally (83%) in Northern Ireland as a whole, were more closely aligned.

- In terms of police accountability arrangements, respondents appeared to be more positive in their perceptions of the Police Ombudsman than the Policing Board. Nine-in-ten (90%) participants believed the Police Ombudsman was independent of police compared with 78% for the Policing Board, while the proportions who felt they helped ensure the police do a good job were 93% and 88% respectively.

Figure 5.1: Confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements in Northern Ireland, NISCS 2003/04-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21 (%)[1]
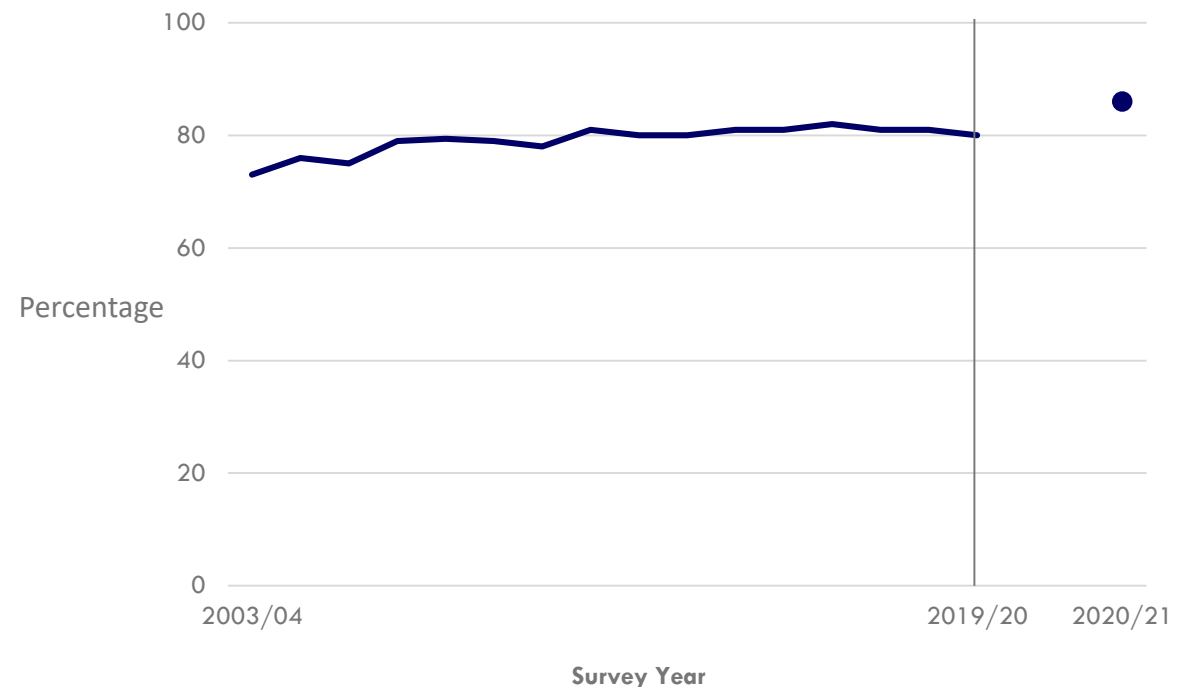
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. In 2020/21, face-to-face interviews were suspended due to the pandemic resulting in a break in the NISCS time series.

5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

5.2 Ratings and perceptions of the local police

In addition to policing in Northern Ireland as a whole, the NISCTS 2020/21 measured perceptions of the local police, both in general terms as well as in specific aspects of their work.

Table 10 considers perceptions of police performance in the local area in Northern Ireland based on the question 'Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing?'.

It should be noted that this question and its response options differ from those covered by the similar question in the previous section 'Do you think the police do a good job or a poor job in Northern Ireland as a whole?' (Section 5.1, Table 9). The focus in this section is on the local rather than on the regional area. It is also possible that, in terms of the local police question, some respondents may have interpreted the middle option ('a fair job') as a positive or satisfactory response, while viewing the 'neither a good nor a poor job' middle option within the previous composite measure question as a neutral response. This may partially explain the lower confidence ratings produced by the question on the local police.

- NISCTS findings show 62% of respondents rated their local police as doing an excellent or good job with the proportion rating their performance as fair around half of this at 32%. At 6%, participants were least likely to perceive local police as doing a poor or very poor job.

Figure 5.2: Ratings of local police performance in Northern Ireland, 2020/21 (%)[1]
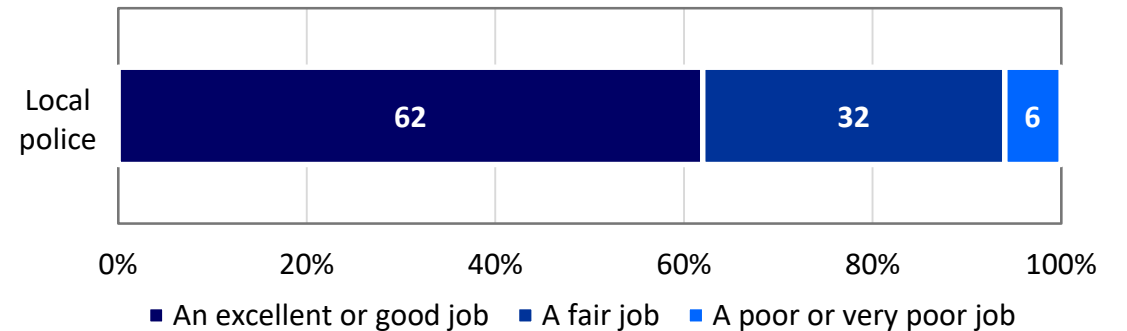
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

Table 11 contains the proportions of NISCTS 2020/21 respondents who claimed they 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' with seven statements concerning the local police. The first six of these (a to f, below) are 'funnel-type' questions, designed to help generate a more considered response to the seventh, overall confidence measure. The statements are, the local police:

  a. can be relied on to be there when you need them.

  b. would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason.

  c. treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are.

  d. are dealing with the things that matter to this community.

  e. help keep this area safe.

  f. have a visible presence in this area.

  g. taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area.

The alternative response options were: 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. Although this presented a neutral option, the emphasis here on specific aspects of local police activity may have contributed to some confidence ratings being lower than those indicators comprising the seven-strand composite measure, which concern general police performance and behaviour at the Northern Ireland level.

- Three-in-four respondents expressed overall confidence in their local police in 2020/21; 75% agreed that 'Taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area'.

- Of the six individual statements concerning specific aspects of their work, respondents were most likely to feel that their local police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them with 92% agreeing with the statement. In contrast, less than two-fifths (39%) of participants agreed that their local police have a visible presence in their area.

Figure 5.3: Confidence in the local police in Northern Ireland, 2020/21 (%)[1]

Percentage agreeing / confident
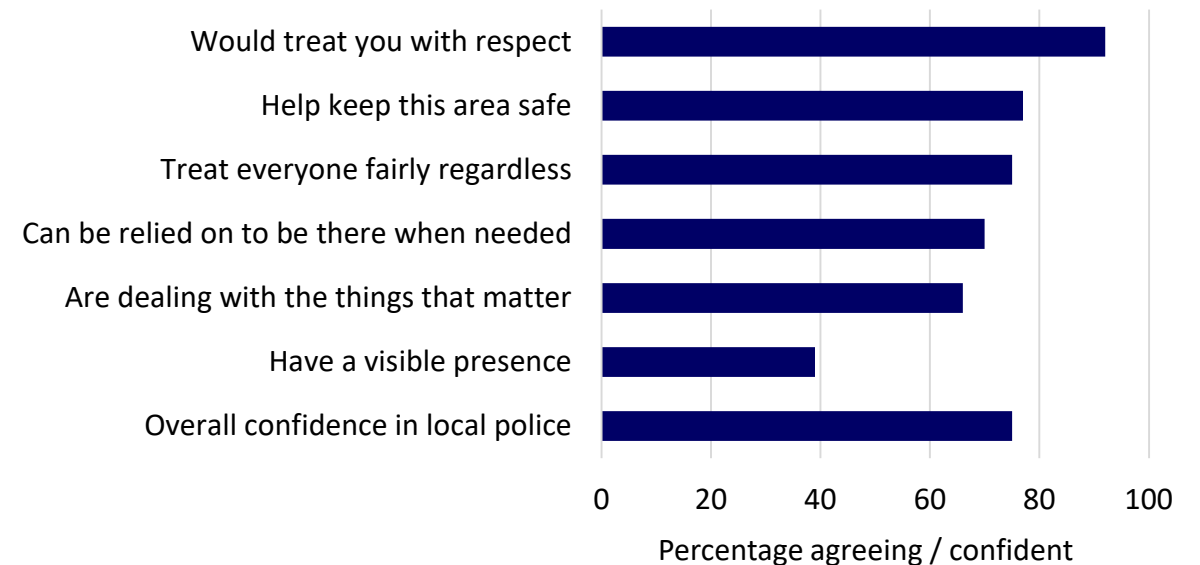
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

5.3 Confidence in community engagement by the local police and partnership agencies in Northern Ireland

The NISCTS measured levels of public confidence in the local police and other agencies working in partnership on anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime issues. Focus is on the proportion of respondents who 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' that the local police and other agencies, including Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and district councils:

a. seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter in this area.

b. are dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter in this area.

The alternative response options for these questions are 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. Results of these two questions have been combined to form a single engagement composite measure ('Overall confidence in engagement'), figures for which are presented in Table 12.

- In 2020/21, just over two-fifths (42%) of respondents agreed that the local police and other agencies seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter, while a higher proportion, 50%, agreed that these issues are being dealt with. Consequently, overall confidence in engagement (composite measure) was 46% over this period.

Figure 5.4: Confidence in engagement in Northern Ireland, 2020/21 (%)[1]
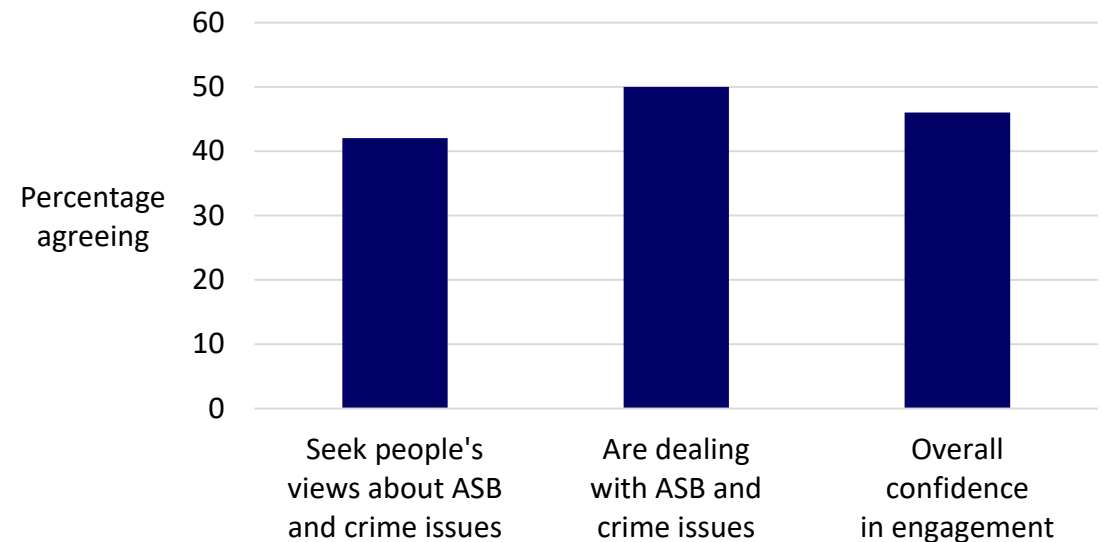
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

5.4 Confidence in the overall fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland

Respondents to the 2020/21 survey were also asked two separate questions regarding how confident they were that the criminal justice system (CJS) in Northern Ireland as a whole is fair and effective. Both questions used a four-point scale with the response options of 'very confident', 'fairly confident', 'not very confident' and 'not at all confident' offered. Results are presented in Table 13.

- Two-in-three (67%) respondents were confident that the CJS as a whole in Northern Ireland is effective, comprising of 58% who were fairly confident and the remaining 9% very confident. A higher proportion, almost three-quarters (73%), thought the CJS as a whole is fair. Again, this proportion expressing confidence consisted mainly of those who were fairly confident (62%).

Figure 5.5: Confidence in the overall fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, NISCS 2007/08-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21 (%)[1]
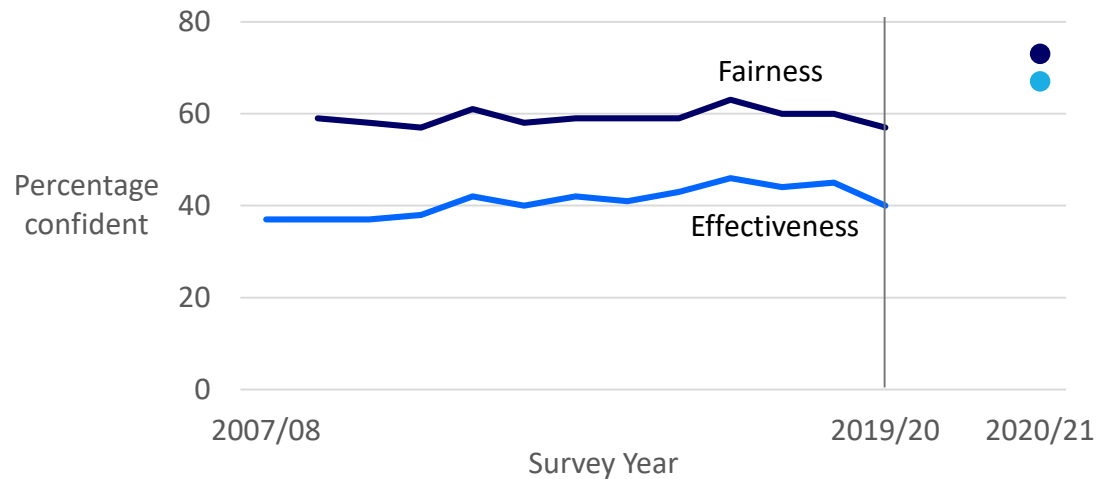
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. In 2020/21, face-to-face interviews were suspended due to the pandemic resulting in a break in the NISCS time series.

Summary: Perceptions of Policing and Justice

- Findings indicate that 86% of respondents had overall confidence in policing in Northern Ireland.
- In terms of local police, three-quarters (75%) expressed overall confidence and, when asked about specific aspects of their work, respondents were most likely to agree local police would treat you with respect if you had contact with them (92%) and least likely to agree that police have a visible presence in their area (39%).
- A slightly higher proportion were confident that the criminal justice system as a whole is fair (73%) than effective (67%).

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

6.1 How widespread organised crime is in the local area and the extent of change in the past 12 months

A number of questions were also included in the survey to gauge perceptions of organised crime and paramilitary groups. This chapter provides an overview of the findings.

NISCTS 2020/21 respondents were initially asked how widespread organised crime was within their local area. The response options were 'very widespread', 'fairly widespread', 'not widespread' and 'does not occur in my local area'. A further two response options, 'I know organised crime occurs in my area but not sure how widespread it is' and 'unsure if organised crime occurs in my area' were also included for respondents who were uncertain as to how prevalent it is. Figures are presented in Table 14, Appendix 1.

▪ A considerable proportion of respondents, almost half (46%), were unsure as to the extent of organised crime in their local area. This is comprised of 24% who responded that they know organised crime occurred but were unsure as to how widespread it was and 22% who did not know whether or not it occurred in their local area.

▪ Findings suggest that around one-in-five respondents believed organised crime was widespread, with 5% considering it to be very widespread and 15% fairly widespread.

Figure 6.1: How widespread organised crime is in the local area, 2020/21 (%)[1]
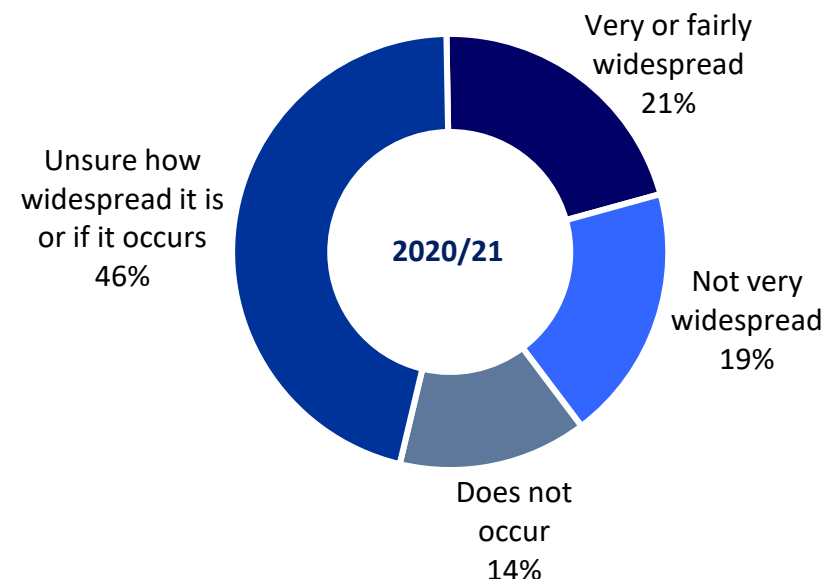
1. Results exclude refusals.
2. Figures for each of the individual response options may not sum to 100 or total those referenced in the text due to rounding.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

Participants were then asked about the extent to which organised crime had changed in their local area in the past 12 months, using a five-point scale ranging from 'a lot more' to 'a lot less' organised crime. The proportions perceiving there to be either 'a little' or 'a lot' more organised crime comprise the overall 'more organised crime' figure included in Table 15.

- The majority of respondents, two-in-three (66%), felt the level of organised crime was unchanged over the previous 12 months, while a quarter (25%) believed there was more organised crime in their local area (7%, a lot more and 18%, a little more).

- The remaining ten per cent of respondents considered the level of organised crime in their area to have fallen in the preceding 12 months.

Figure 6.2: Extent to which organised crime has changed in the local area in the past 12 months, 2020/21 (%)[1]
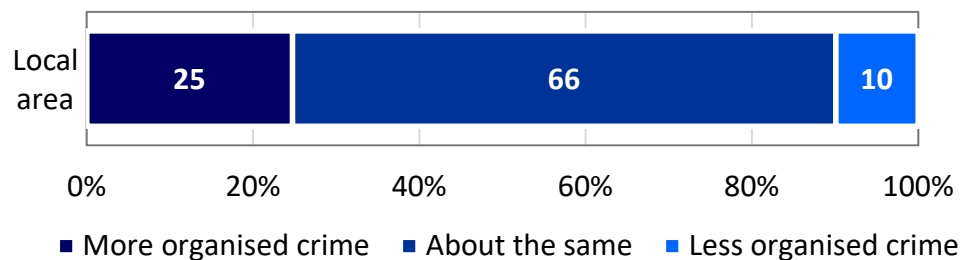
Figure 6.3: More and less organised crime breakdowns, 2020/21 (%)[1]

25% More organised crime	10% Less organised crime
7% A lot more	3% A lot less
18% A little more	7% A little less

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Figures for each of the individual response options may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

6.2 Extent of, and harm caused by, different crime types associated with organised crime

Respondents who had indicated that organised crime occurs in their local area were then asked a set of questions regarding the extent to which certain crime types, that could be associated with organised crime, occur in their local area. More specifically, respondents were asked in turn about each of the following:

- a. drug dealing.

- b. armed robbery.

- c. fuel laundering/fuel smuggling (excise fraud).

- d. cigarette/tobacco smuggling (excise fraud).

- e. trading in counterfeit/stolen goods.

- f. protection/extortion/racketeering.

- g. illegal money lending/loan sharks.

- h. modern slavery (including human trafficking).

- i. prostitution.

- j. illegal waste dumping.

The response options for these questions were 'widespread', 'some extent', 'little extent' and 'does not happen in my local area'. 'I know it occurs in my area but not sure of the extent of it' and 'unsure if this occurs in my area ' options were also included. Results are presented in Table 16, Appendix 1.

Respondents who identified a crime type as occurring in their area (i.e. they responded it was widespread, occurring to some extent or little extent) were then asked a follow-up question with regards to the level of harm they felt it caused. A separate harm question was asked for each crime type identified. The alternative response options were 'extremely harmful', 'fairly harmful' and 'little harm'. Figures are given in Table 17. Given both of these sets of questions were asked only of a subset of respondents, the subsequent sample sizes should be taken into account when considering these findings.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

Extent of the different crime types

- Of the different crime types examined, respondents were more likely to say that drug dealing was widespread (26%) or occurred to some extent (23%) in their local area. This was followed by illegal waste dumping with the proportions at 11% and 25% respectively.

- In contrast, modern slavery (including human trafficking), armed robbery and prostitution were among the crime types least likely to be considered by respondents as being widespread or occurring to some extent. Findings suggest respondents were most likely to report that these three crime types, along with fuel laundering/smuggling, did not occur in their local area.

- For seven of the ten crime types asked about, a substantial proportion of respondents were unsure as to whether it happened in their area with at least 30% providing the 'unsure if this occurs in my area' response. The exceptions were drug dealing, illegal waste dumping and armed robbery where the proportions who were unsure were 11%, 16% and 22% respectively.

Figure 6.4: Extent to which different crime types associated with organised crime occur in the local area, 2020/21 (%)[1]

Percentage saying widespread or some extent
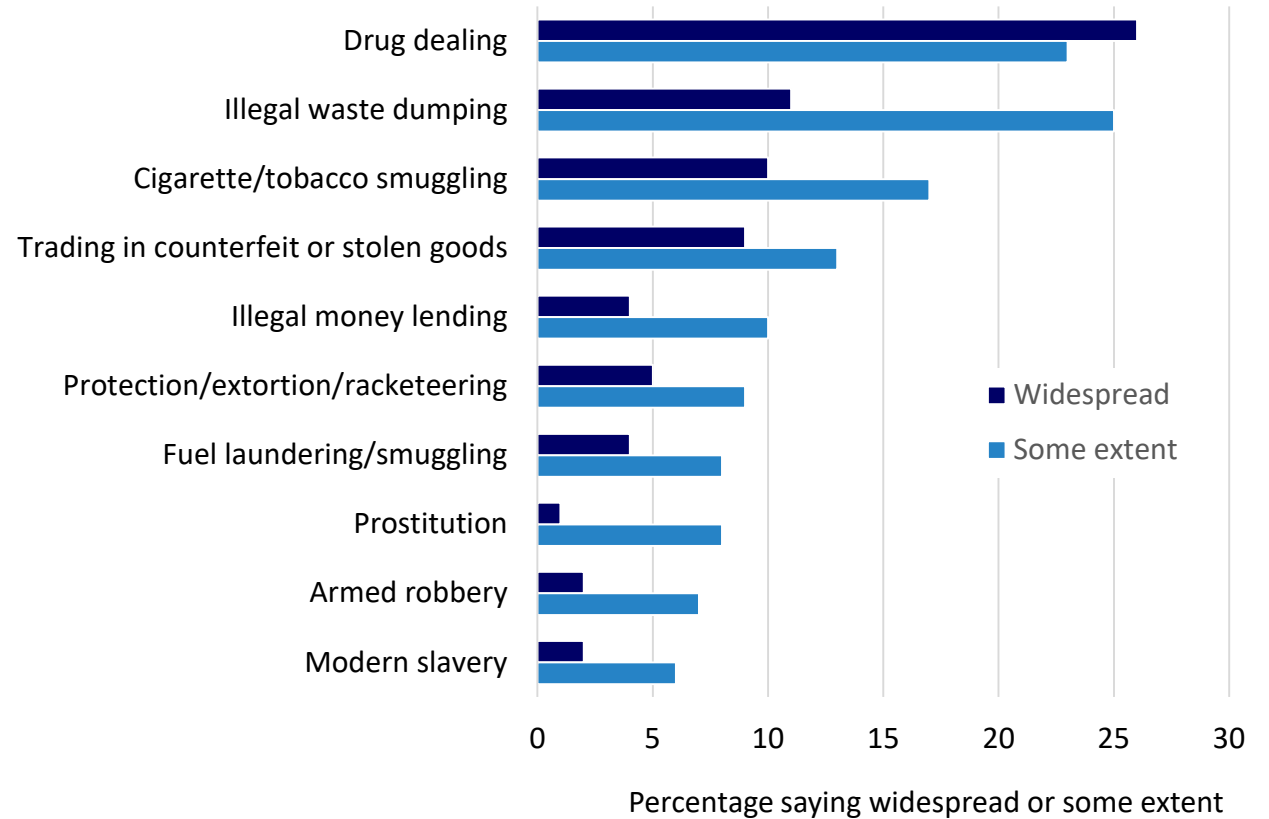
1. Results exclude refusals.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

Harm caused by the different crime types

- Findings show that, when the 'extremely harmful' and 'fairly harmful' response options are combined, drug dealing at 64% and illegal waste dumping at 59% were again among the crime types most likely to be considered harmful to the local area. One of the lowest proportions was observed for fuel laundering/smuggling for which 31% of respondents considered it to be harmful.

- Just under a quarter (24%) of respondents who reported that drug dealing occurred in their area felt that it caused little harm, with the equivalent figure for illegal waste dumping at 32%.

Figure 6.5: Harm caused by different crime types associated with organised crime, 2020/21 (%)[1]

Percentage saying extremely or fairly harmful
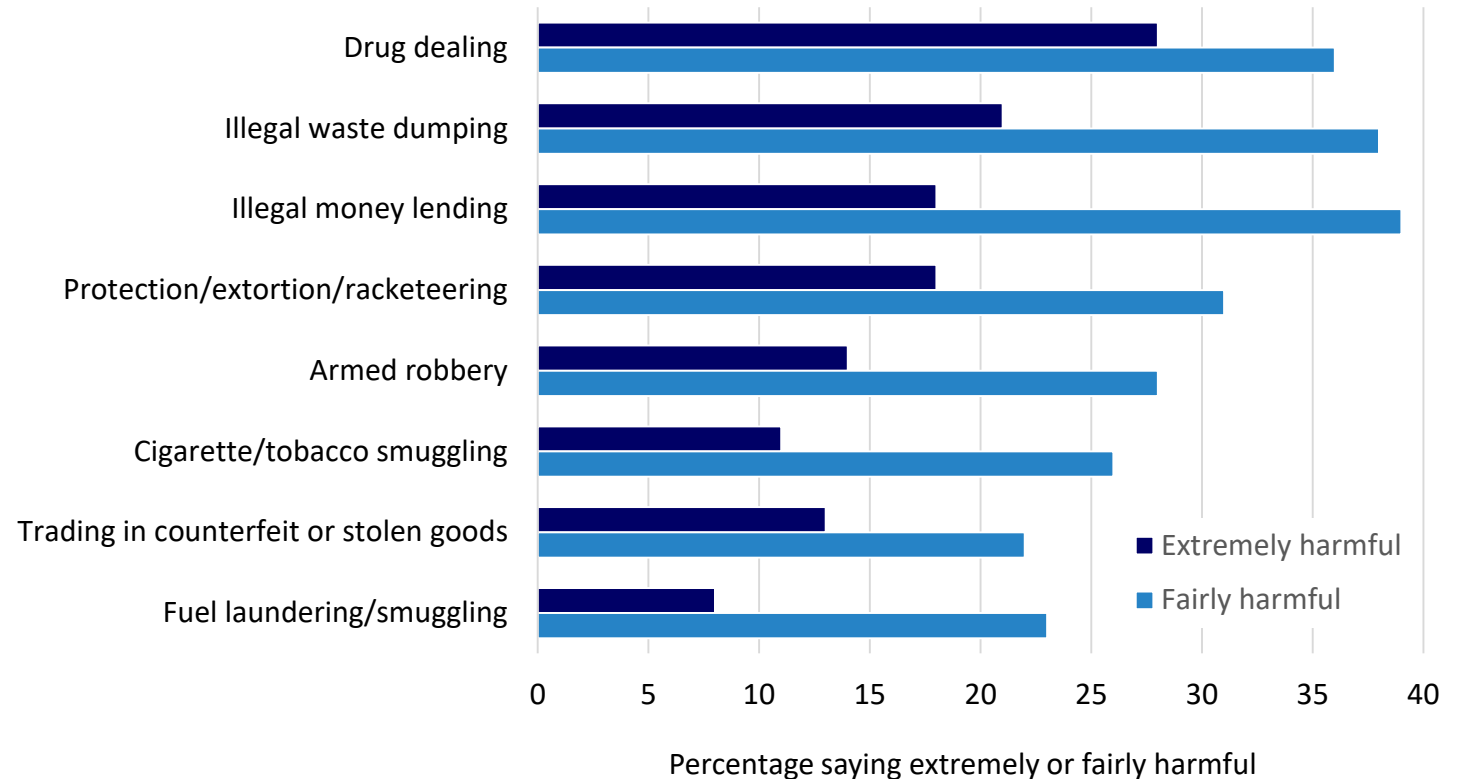
1. Results exclude refusals.
2. Modern slavery and prostitution are not included in Figure 6.5 above as the unweighted bases were less than 100.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

6.3 Role members of the public can play in tackling organised crime

Views were also sought from NISCTS participants on the role, if any, members of the public, including themselves, can play in tackling organised crime. Respondents could select more than one response. Figures are presented in Table 18.

▪ When asked about the role of the public, the most common response, cited by around two-thirds (66%) of respondents, was to report it to the police or other law enforcement body. Refusing to purchase counterfeit or illicit goods or services and to contact Crimestoppers were also common responses, selected by 49% and 48% of respondents respectively. At 16%, respondents were least likely to feel that they didn't have a role in tackling organised crime.

Figure 6.6: Role members of the public can play in tackling organised crime, 2020/21 (%)[1]
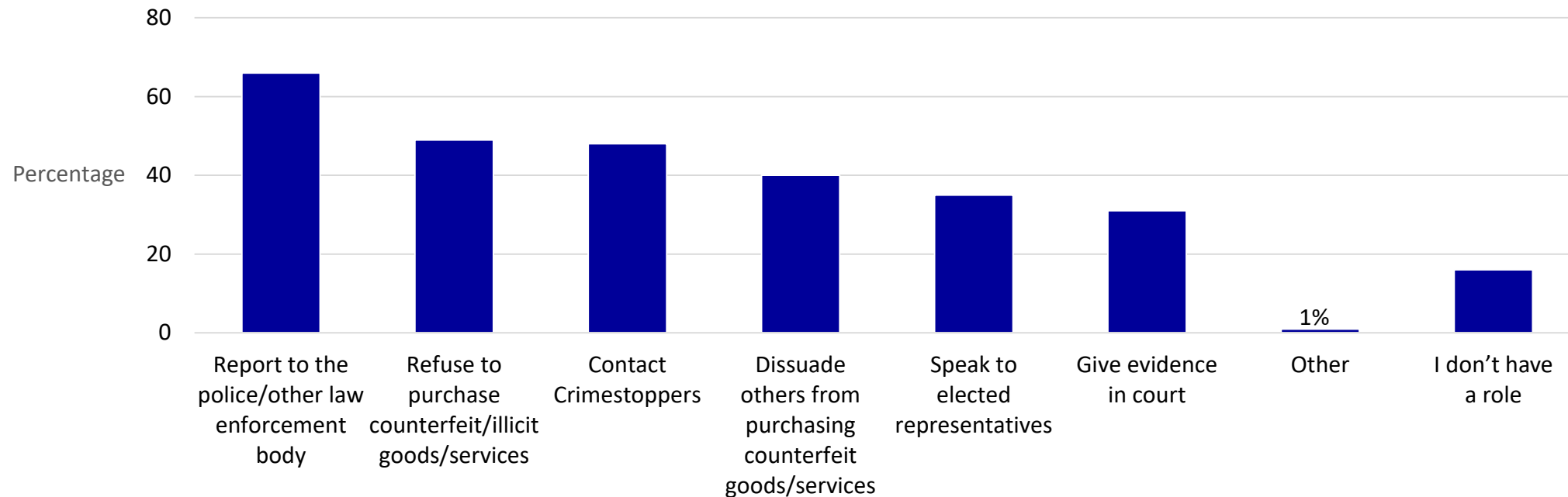
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

6.4 Reporting an incident linked to organised crime

Respondents were then asked to select from a list, the reason(s) that would prevent them from reporting an incident, or suspected incident, linked to organised crime to the police. The list included an option for respondents who felt nothing would prevent them from reporting an incident.

- Just over two-fifths (41%) of respondents stated that nothing would prevent them from reporting an incident, or suspected incident, of organised crime to the police. For those who did provide a reason as to why they would not contact police, fear of reprisal was by far the most likely reason to be given, cited by 50% of participants. Less than one-in-ten selected each of the remaining reasons offered to respondents.

Figure 6.7: What would prevent respondents from reporting an incident linked to organised crime to the police, 2020/21 (%)[1]
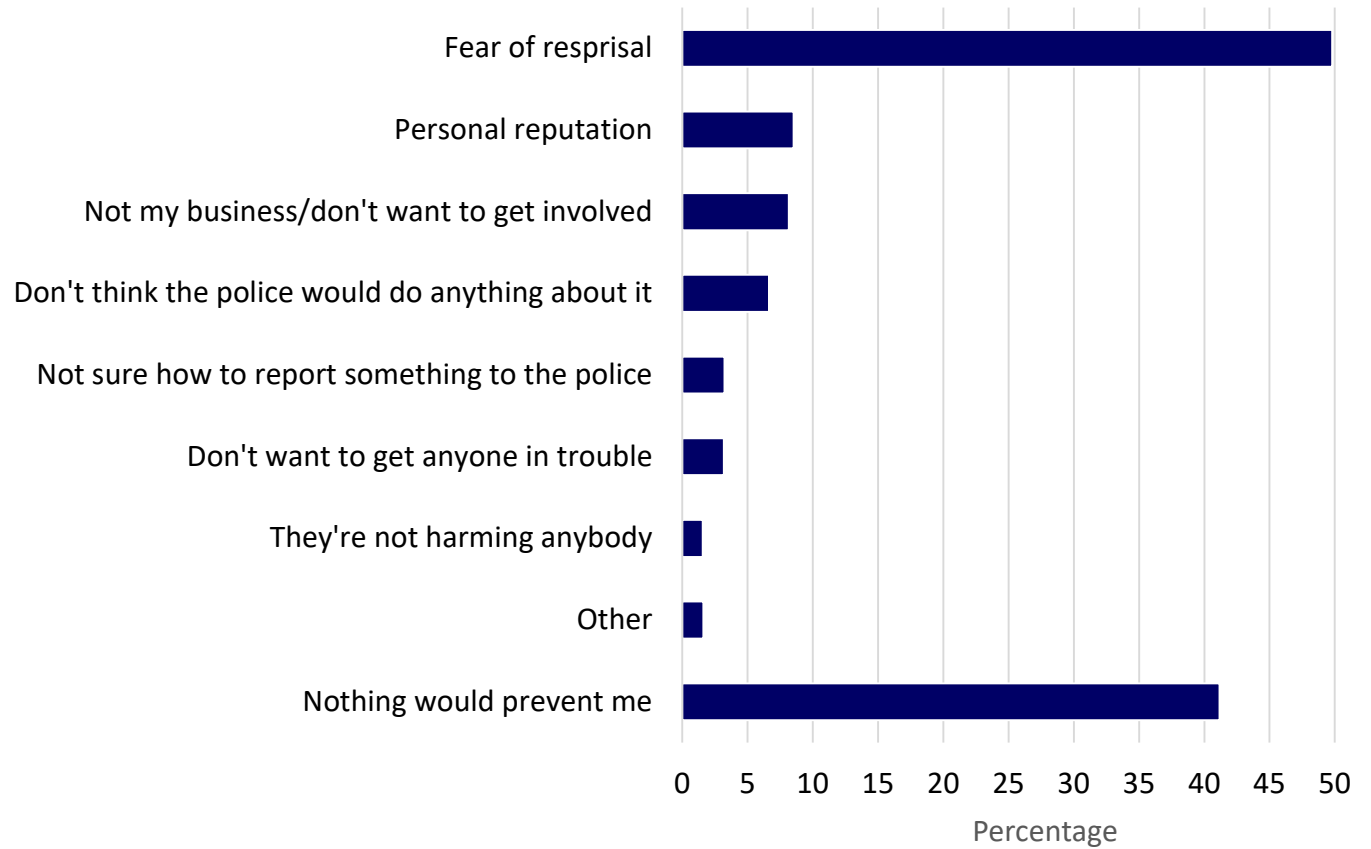
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

6.5 Perceptions of paramilitary groups

Within the organised crime module, respondents' perceptions of paramilitary groups were also measured. More specifically, respondents were asked about how widespread paramilitary activity is in their local area, any links between organised crime and ongoing paramilitary activity, the level of paramilitary influence and how they would describe this influence. Figures are presented in Tables 20-23.

How widespread paramilitary activity is in the local area

When asked how widespread paramilitary activity was in their area, the same response options were offered as the equivalent organised crime question (section 6.1).

- As was the case when asked about the extent of organised crime, a substantial proportion of respondents were uncertain as to how widespread paramilitary activity was in the area in which they lived; 23% responded that they knew there was paramilitary activity but were unsure as to how widespread it was while 27% did not know if it occurred in their area.

- Findings indicate that 15% of respondents felt paramilitary activity was widespread (4% very widespread and 11% fairly widespread) while one-in-five (20%) reported that it didn't occur.

Figure 6.8: How widespread paramilitary activity is in the local area, 2020/21 (%)[1]
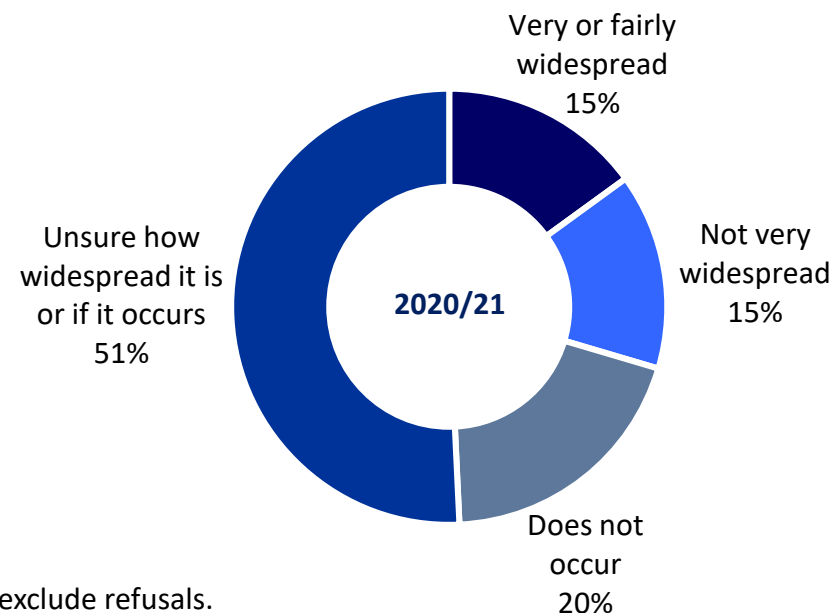
- Very or fairly widespread 15%
- Not very widespread 15%
- Does not occur 20%
- Unsure how widespread it is or if it occurs 51%
- 2020/21

1. Results exclude refusals.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 or total those referenced in the text due to rounding.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

Links between organised crime and paramilitary activity

Asked of respondents who believed paramilitary activity occurred to at least some extent in their area, views were then sought on whether they believed there were links between it and organised crime, results for which are given in Table 21. The alternative response options were 'there are strong links between the two', 'there are some links between the two', 'there are no links between the two, they are totally separate' and 'don't know if they are linked'.

- Results suggest that the vast majority considered there to be links between the two with 39% believing there were strong links and a further 44% perceiving some links between them.

Figure 6.9: Links between organised crime and ongoing paramilitary activity in the local area, 2020/21 (%)[1]

| | 39 | 44 | 3 | 15 |

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

■ Strong links ■ Some links ■ No links ■ Don't know if they are linked
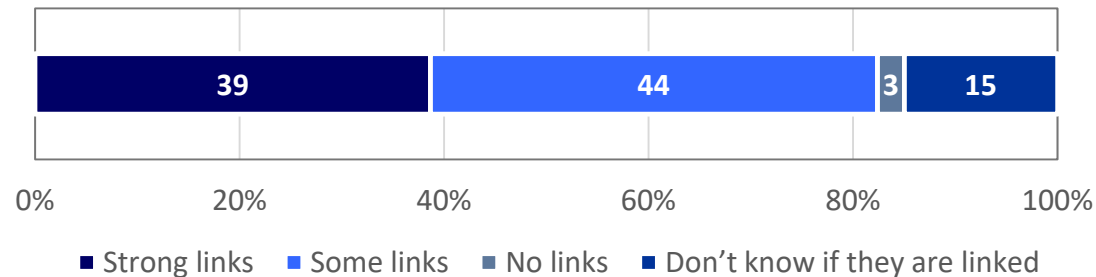
1. Results exclude refusals.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Level of paramilitary influence

This subset of respondents were also asked about the level of influence paramilitary groups have in their local area. Table 22 gives results for each of the response options which were based on a four point scale ranging from 'a lot of influence' to 'no influence'. Again, an unsure of the level of influence option was also included.

- Respondents were more likely to consider paramilitary groups as having at least some influence in their area. Just under three-in-ten (29%) assessed them as having some influence while 14% reported it as a lot of influence. Just under a tenth (9%) considered paramilitary groups in their area as having no influence at all.

Figure 6.10: Level of influence of paramilitary groups in the local area, 2020/21 (%)[1]
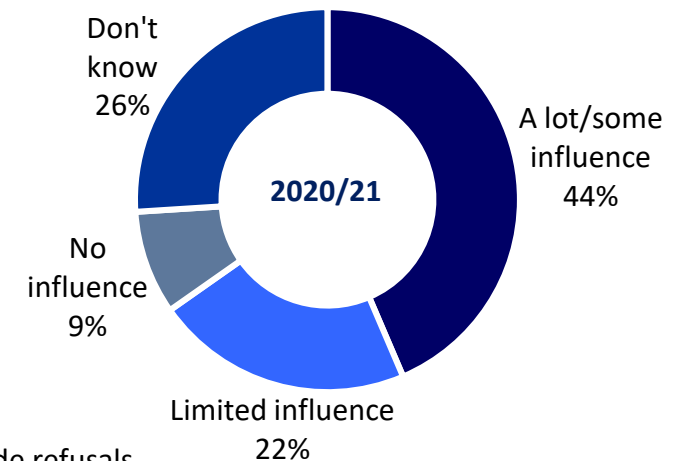
Don't know 26%

A lot/some influence 44%

2020/21

No influence 9%

Limited influence 22%

1. Results exclude refusals.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 or total those referenced in the text due to rounding.

6 | Perceptions of Organised Crime

Perceptions of the influence of paramilitary groups

- Respondents who considered paramilitary groups to have influence in their area were subsequently asked how they would describe this influence, 45% of which considered it as a 'negative' influence, while a further 31% felt the influence was 'more negative than positive'. In contrast, the proportions who viewed the influence as either positive or more positive than negative were substantially lower at 1% and 6% respectively.

Figure 6.11: Description of influence of paramilitary groups in the local area (%)[1]
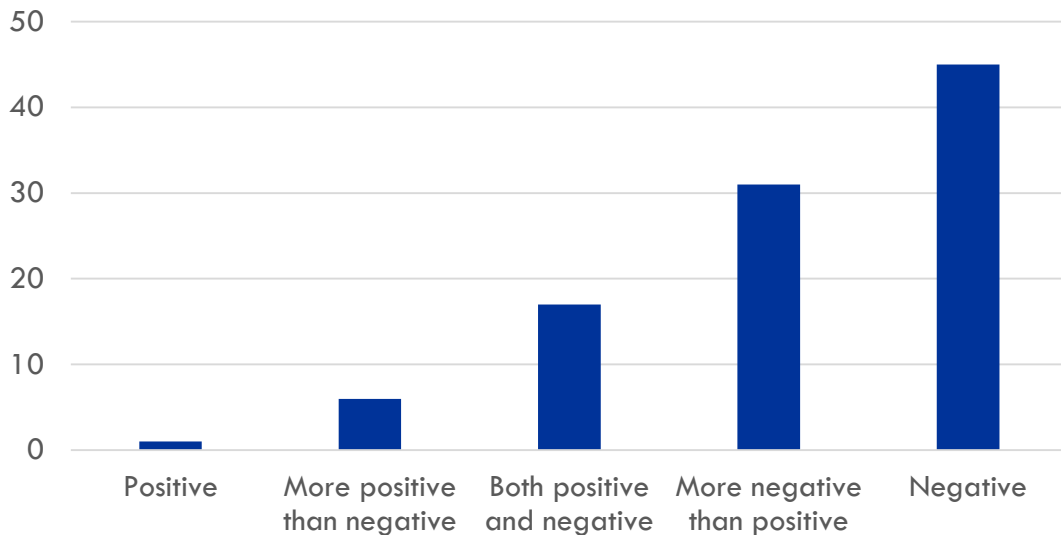
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

Summary: Perceptions of Organised Crime

- Just over a fifth (21%) of respondents considered that organised crime was very or fairly widespread in their local area. A substantial proportion, 46%, were unsure how widespread it was or whether it occurred in their area. Of the crime types considered, respondents were most likely to report drug dealing (49%) as being widespread or occurring to some extent in their area.

- The majority of respondents, 66%, felt reporting it to police or other law enforcement was the main role the public could play in tackling organised crime, with fear of reprisal (50%) the main reason given as to why they would not report an incident linked to organised crime to police.

- A substantial proportion, over half (51%), were unsure as to how widespread paramilitary activity is in their local area.

- Over two-fifths (44%) felt paramilitary groups had a lot or some influence in their area, 45% of whom described this influence as negative and a further 31% as more negative than positive.

Appendix 1: Tabular Annex

Table 1: Household/adult victims of crime once or more by crime type and confidence interval (%) Northern Ireland, 2020/21 interviews

Percentage of households, victims once or more of:	Best Estimate [3]	Lower Estimate [3]	Higher Estimate [3]
Vandalism	1.2	0.6	1.9
Burglary (including attempts)	0.9	0.3	1.4
Vehicle-related theft (including attempts)	0.4	0.1	0.8
Bicycle theft	**0.1**	**0.0**	**0.3**
Other household theft **Other thefts of personal property**	0.6 0.5	0.2 0.0	1.1 0.9
Any NISCTS Violent Crime [2]	**0.3**	**0.0**	**0.7**
ANY HOUSEHOLD CRIME [1] **ANY PERSONAL CRIME [2]**	**3.1** **0.8**	**2.1** **0.2**	**4.1** **1.4**
ANY NISCTS CRIME [4]	**3.9**	**2.7**	**5.2**
Unweighted base	1,125	1,125	1,125

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Prevalence risks for household crime (vandalism, burglary, vehicle-related theft, bicycle theft and other household theft) are based on households.

2. Prevalence risks for violent and personal crime are based on adults and are weighted for household size.

3. The best estimate is the mean figure drawn from the sample. The lower and higher estimates are for the 95% confidence interval. There is 95% certainty that the prevalence risk per household or adult lies between the lower and higher estimates.

4. The Any NISCS crime rate is calculated treating a household crime as a personal crime. It is the estimated percentage of adults who have been a victim of at least one personal crime or have been resident in a household that was a victim of at least one household crime.

Table 2: Notifiable offences recorded by the police: Northern Ireland 2019/20 and 2020/21

	2019/20	2020/21	% change 19/20 to 20/21
VICTIM-BASED OFFENCES			
Violence against the person	**41,305**	**39,284**	**-4.9**
Assault with intent to cause serious harm	1,118	1,126	0.7
Assault with injury	11,509	9,616	-16.4
AOABH	10,950	9,228	-15.7
Grievous Bodily Harm and Wounding	542	379	-30.1
Assault without injury	12,989	11,755	-9.5
Sexual offences	**3,550**	**3,335**	**-6.1**
Robbery	**631**	**501**	**-20.3**
Theft (Including burglary)	**29,147**	**20,467**	**-29.8**
Burglary offences	6,078	4,133	-32.0
Residential	4,521	3,188	-29.5
Theft from the person	475	206	-56.6
Theft in a dwelling (other than from an automatic machine or meter)	471	485	3.0
Theft or unauthorised taking of a pedal cycle	882	731	-17.1
Vehicle offences	3,271	2,498	-23.6
Aggravated vehicle taking	199	197	-1.0
Theft from a vehicle	1,398	909	-35.0
Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle	1,273	1,003	-21.2
Interfering with a motor vehicle	401	389	-3.0
Criminal damage	**18,698**	**17,280**	**-7.6**
Criminal damage to a vehicle	**6,117**	**5,322**	**-13.0**
OTHER CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY			
Drug offences	**7,802**	**8,165**	**4.7**
Possession of weapons offences	**1,100**	**1,094**	**-0.5**
Public order offences	**1,297**	**1,282**	**-1.2**
Miscellaneous crimes against society	**2,964**	**2,931**	**-1.1**
ALL OFFENCES RECORDED (excluding fraud)	**106,492**	**94,339**	**-11.4**

Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland report Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2020/21 (opens in a new window).

Footnotes for Table 2 and figures for previous years can be found in the accompanying tabular spreadsheet for this report.

Table 3: Crime incidence rates per 10,000 households/adults by crime type Northern Ireland, 2020/21 interviews[1]

	Incidence rates per 10,000 households/adults
Vandalism	187
Burglary (including attempts)	89
Vehicle-related theft (including attempts)	53
Bicycle theft	9
Other household theft	71
Other thefts of personal property	49
ALL NISCTS VIOLENT CRIME[2]	49
ALL HOUSEHOLD CRIME[2]	409
ALL PERSONAL CRIME[2]	97
Unweighted base - household/personal crime	1,125

Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Rates for all NISCTS crime are not constructed because rates for household offences are based on rates per household, and those for personal offences on rates per adult, and the two are not combined.

2. Rates for violent offences, personal crime and other thefts of personal property are quoted per 10,000 adults. For property offences, rates are quoted per 10,000 households.

Table 4: Estimated number of incidents of crime by crime type and confidence interval (thousands) Northern Ireland, 2020/21 interviews

	Best Estimate [3]	Lower Estimate [3]	Higher Estimate [3]
Vandalism	14	5	23
Burglary (including attempts)	7	3	11
Vehicle-related theft (including attempts)	4	0	8
Bicycle theft	1	0	2
Other household theft	5	1	9
Other thefts of personal property	7	1	14
ALL NISCTS PROPERTY CRIME[4]	38		
ALL NISCTS VIOLENT CRIME[2]	7	0	16
ALL HOUSEHOLD CRIME[1]	30	19	42
ALL PERSONAL CRIME[2]	15	4	25
ALL NISCTS CRIME[4]	45		
Unweighted base - household/personal crime	1,125	1,125	1,125

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. For household crime (including the property crimes of vandalism, burglary, vehicle-related, bicycle and other household theft), the numbers are derived by multiplying offence rates (incidence rates) by 740,528 households (household projections).

2. For violent crime and personal crime (including violent crime and other theft of personal property), the numbers are derived by multiplying incidence rates by 1,499,694 (population aged 16+).

3. The best estimate is the mean figure drawn from the sample. The lower and higher estimates are for the 95% confidence interval. There is 95% certainty that the number of crimes lies between the lower and higher estimates.

4. Confidence ranges (lower and higher estimates) are not given for either all property crime or all NISCTS crime because these measures are based on a mixture of rates per household and rates per adult.

Table 5: Perceptions of change in crime levels (%) in Northern Ireland and the local area[1]

% saying there is	Northern Ireland	Local Area[2]
More Crime[3]	**55**	**25**
A lot more crime	21	5
A little more crime	34	19
Same	35	64
Less crime	10	12
Unweighted base	1,095	990

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Based on respondents who had been living in their area for more than three years.

3. Comprises the proportion of respondents believing there has been 'a little more crime' or 'a lot more crime'; these figures may not sum to the 'more crime' composite figure due to rounding.

Table 6: Perceptions of different types of anti-social behaviour as very or fairly big problems in Northern Ireland (%)[1]

% saying very or fairly big problem	
Perceived high level of ASB[2]	**6**
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	1
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	6
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	11
People using or dealing drugs	24
Teenagers or young people hanging around on streets	16
Rubbish or litter lying around	31
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	10
Unweighted base[3]	1,125

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. ASB: Anti-social behaviour (measure derived from responses to the seven individual strands in the table).

3. Unweighted base refers to rubbish or litter lying around. Other bases will be similar.

Table 7: Worry about crime and personal safety in Northern Ireland (%)[1]

% with high levels of worry:	
Burglary	10
Car crime[3]	5
Violent crime[4]	8
% very worried:	
Crime overall	5
% feeling very unsafe:	
Walking alone in area after dark	6
Alone in home at night	1
Unweighted base	1,125

Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Car crime based on respondents residing in households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.

3. Unweighted base refers to worry about burglary. Other bases will be similar with the exception of car crime which is based on vehicle-owners only.

Table 8: Perceptions of the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life (%) in Northern Ireland[1]

% saying	
Minimal	73
Moderate	23
Great	4
Unweighted base	1,125

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

Table 9: Confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements in Northern Ireland (%)[1]

% saying	
Overall confidence rating[2]	**86**
The police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of NI	91
The police do a very or fairly good job in NI as a whole	80
The police treat Catholics and Protestants equally in NI as a whole	83
The Policing Board is independent of the police	78
The Policing Board helps the police do a good job	88
The Police Ombudsman is independent of the police	90
The Police Ombudsman helps the police do a good job	93
Unweighted base[3]	1,123

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. This measure is the weighted mean of the responses to the seven individual confidence strands in the table. Greater weighting is given to the three questions on the police.

3. Unweighted base refers to 'police provide an ordinary day-to-day service'. Bases for other police indicators will be similar but will be lower for Policing Board and Police Ombudsman indicators which are based on those who had heard of each organisation.

Table 10: Perceptions of how good a job the local police are doing in Northern Ireland (%)[1]

% saying the local police are doing	
An excellent or good job	62
A fair job	32
A poor or very poor job	6
Unweighted base	1,107

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

Table 11: Confidence in the local police in Northern Ireland (%)[1]

% saying they strongly agree or tend to agree that the local police	
Overall confidence in the local police[2]	75
Can be relied on to be there when you need them	70
Would treat you with respect if you had contact with them	92
Treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are	75
Are dealing with the things that matter to this community	66
Help keep this area safe	77
Have a visible presence in this area	39
Unweighted base[3]	1,122

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Based on respondents agreeing with the statement, 'Taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area'.

3. Unweighted base refers to overall confidence in the local police. Other bases will be similar.

Table 12: Confidence in the local police and other agencies working in partnership on ASB and crime issues in Northern Ireland (%)[1]

% saying strongly agree / tend to agree that the local police and other agencies	
Overall confidence in engagement[2]	46
Seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter in this area[3]	42
Are dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter in this area[3]	50
Unweighted base[4]	1,072

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. This measure is the arithmetic mean of the responses to both strands in the table.

3. ASB: Anti-social behaviour.

4. Unweighted base refers to 'seeking people's views'. Base for 'dealing with the ASB' will be similar.

Table 13: Confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland (%)[1]

% saying they are very or fairly confident the criminal justice system as a whole is	
Fair	73
Effective	67
Unweighted base	1,107

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Unweighted base refers to overall fairness rating. Base for effectiveness rating will be similar.

Table 14: How widespread organised crime is in the local area (%)[1]

% saying	
Very widespread	5
Fairly widespread	15
Not widespread	19
Does not occur in my local area	14
I know organised crime occurs in my area but not sure how widespread it is	24
Unsure if organised crime occurs in my area	22
Unweighted base	1,119

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude refusals.

Table 15: Extent to which organised crime has changed in the local area in the past 12 months (%)[1]

% saying there is	
More organised crime	**25**
A lot more	7
A little more	18
About the same	66
A little less	7
A lot less	3
Unweighted base	558

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

Table 16: Extent to which different types of crime occur within the local area (%)[1]

	Widespread	Some extent	Little Extent	Does not happen in my local area	I know it occurs but not sure of the extent	Unsure if this occurs in my area	Unweighted base
Drug dealing	26	23	16	6	17	11	433
Illegal waste dumping	11	25	19	24	6	16	433
Cigarette/tobacco smuggling (excise fraud)	10	17	15	20	8	30	431
Trading in counterfeit/stolen goods	9	13	17	19	9	33	433
Protection/extortion/racketeering	5	9	13	25	11	38	432
Illegal money lending/loan sharks	4	10	11	25	10	39	434
Fuel laundering/fuel smuggling (excise fraud)	4	8	13	32	8	35	432
Modern slavery (including human trafficking)	2	6	9	34	10	38	427
Armed robbery	2	7	20	41	8	22	433
Prostitution	1	8	10	33	9	38	428

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude refusals.

Table 17: Harm caused by different types of crime in local area (%)[1]

	Extremely harmful	Fairly harmful	Little harm	Don't know how much harm it causes	Unweighted base
Drug dealing	28	36	24	12	283
Illegal waste dumping	21	38	32	9	238
Cigarette/tobacco smuggling (excise fraud)	11	26	32	31	174
Trading in counterfeit/stolen goods	13	22	39	27	159
Protection/extortion/racketeering	18	31	25	26	108
Illegal money lending/loan sharks	18	39	24	19	108
Fuel laundering/fuel smuggling (excise fraud)	8	23	35	34	102
Modern slavery (including human trafficking)	n<100	n<100	n<100	n<100	n<100
Armed robbery	14	28	31	27	107
Prostitution	n<100	n<100	n<100	n<100	n<100

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude refusals.

Table 18: Role for members of the public to play in tackling organised crime (%)[1,2]

% saying	
Report to the police or other law enforcement body (e.g. NCA, HMRC)	66
To refuse to purchase counterfeit or illicit goods or services	49
To contact Crimestoppers	48
To dissuade others from purchasing counterfeit goods or services	40
To give evidence in court	31
To speak to elected representatives	35
Other	1
I don't have a role	16
Unweighted base	1,116

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Respondents could give more than one response.

Table 19: What would prevent you from reporting an incident linked to organised crime to the police (%)[1,2]

% saying	
Fear of reprisal	50
Not my business/I don't want to get involved	8
Personal reputation	9
Don't think the police would do anything about it	7
Not sure how to report something to the police	3
Don't want to get anyone in trouble	3
They're not harming anybody	2
Other	2
Nothing – I would report it	41
Unweighted base	1,052

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Respondents could give more than one response.

Table 20: How widespread paramilitary activity is in the local area (%)[1]

% saying	
Very widespread	4
Fairly widespread	11
Not widespread	15
Does not occur in my local area	20
I know paramilitary activity occurs in my area but not sure how widespread it is	23
Unsure if paramilitary activity occurs in my area	27
Unweighted base	1,114

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1.   Results exclude refusals.

Table 21: Links between organised crime and ongoing paramilitary activity in the local area (%)[1]

% saying	
There are strong links between the two	39
There are some links between the two	44
There are no links between the two, they are totally separate	3
Don't know if they are linked	15
Unweighted base	596

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude refusals.

Table 22: Level of influence of paramilitary groups in the local area (%)[1]

% saying	
A lot of influence	14
Some influence	29
Limited influence	22
No influence	9
I know they are present but don't know how much influence they have	26
Unweighted base	590

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude refusals.

Table 23: How respondents would describe the influence of paramilitary groups in the local area (%)[1]

% saying	
Positive influence	1
More positive than negative	6
Both positive and negative	17
More negative than positive	31
Negative influence	45
Unweighted base	380

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey 2020/21

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

Appendix 2: Technical Annex

Background to the 2020/21 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Central Survey Unit (NISRA-CSU) is commissioned by the Department of Justice to undertake the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS). As a result of the pandemic, the NISCS could not be conducted through the traditional face-to-face interviews and was subsequently conducted via telephone. Consequently, the 2020/21 survey, which will be referred to as the Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS), is being considered as a distinct survey year with results presented as standalone and separate from previous sweeps and trends.

Given the move to telephone mode, a substantial reduction was made to the length of the questionnaire as a whole with some modules subsequently being either shortened or removed in order to reduce completion time. This primarily affected the perception-based modules; the methodology for measuring respondents' experiences of victimisation was unchanged. When considering the modules and questions to be retained, account was taken of those questions that would be more suitable for a telephone interview. Further detail on the questionnaire content is given in the 'Points to note about this publication' section, presented later in this Appendix.

Sampling and Fieldwork

Having been suspended in April, May and most of June 2020 as a result of the pandemic, fieldwork for the 2020/21 survey commenced end June 2020 and continued through to March 2021. The initial NISCTS 2020/21 sample consisted of 7,500 addresses, randomly selected from the NISRA Address Register (NAR). The NAR is developed within NISRA and is primarily based on the Land and Property Services (LPS) POINTER database. A letter was sent to each address inviting the resident to take part in the survey and those interested in participating were asked to register their interest online or to contact NISRA CSU directly. Expressions of interest were then passed to interviewers where an attempt was made to interview one randomly selected adult respondent at the address via CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). The response rate for productive interviews (containing both household details and interview with a selected respondent) was 15% of eligible addresses. This represents 1,125 completed interviews achieved with people aged 16 years and over.

Selecting only one person at each address means that individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than those living in small households. Accordingly, the data presented in this publication have been weighted by household size to prevent a bias towards small household sizes.

Respondents were assured in advance of the interviews that any information they provided would be treated as entirely confidential and that the level of detail produced in publications or in any subsequent analyses would not allow for identification of individuals. The interviews typically lasted under half an hour for non-victims, although those involving respondents who disclosed they were victims of several crimes could last longer.

Measuring victimisation and limitations of NISCTS Data

Respondents to the survey were asked to recall all relevant incidents in the 12 full calendar months prior to the month of interview. Since the NISCTS 2020/21 fieldwork period began in June 2020, this means that the valid recall periods commenced for some respondents as early as 1 June 2019 and finished for others as late as 28 February 2021 (a spread of 21 months). While results of the NISCTS are not being compared with those from earlier sweeps of the face-to-face NISCS, the methodology by which respondents' experiences of victimisation were captured and derived has remained unchanged. Further information can therefore be found in the NISCS User Guide (opens in a new window), available from the NISCS section of the DoJ website.

Although the survey may shed light on the experience of victimisation:

- its coverage is restricted to non-fatal crimes against private households and their adult occupants (it excludes, for instance, homicide, crimes against children, fraud, crimes against businesses, organised crime and so-called 'victimless' crimes);
- it does not facilitate local crime pattern analysis;
- it is subject to sampling and non-sampling errors (see NISCS Quality Report (opens in a new window) (DoJ, 2019b) for further detail).

Examples of non-sampling errors that respondents may introduce include making up an offence, failing to realise that an incident meets the criteria of the questions, failing to recall all incidents, being unable to remember whether an incident occurred within the reference period or not wanting to reveal their experiences as victims (for instance, sexual offences, domestic incidents and victimisation occurring as a consequence of a victim's own criminal involvement). Notably, the NISCTS may undercount crimes where the victim and offender know each other, either because respondents do not think of these as 'real crimes' or they do not wish to disclose the details to an interviewer.

Demographic breakdown

The following socio-demographic (personal, household and area) groups (listed below) are presented in the accompanying Microsoft Excel workbook and Open Data Source tables only. Associated confidence intervals are also presented. The first six relate to equality categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

1. religious belief.
2. age.
3. living arrangements.
4. sex (gender).
5. disability (or illness).
6. household type (child dependants).
7. self-perceived nationality.
8. housing tenure.
9. Household income.
10. type of area (urban / rural).
11. experience of crime reported to the police.
12. multiple deprivation measure rank (MDM 2017).

Due to the low sample size, it is not possible to provide some breakdowns for 2020/21, including age by gender, Policing District and perceived level of ASB. Results by tenure would normally be disaggregated for private and social renters, however, these have been combined into an overall rented category, again due to the sample sixe. Similarly, only high level categories for living arrangements have been included.

Rounding, error and statistical significance

Refusals and non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses. While the majority of analyses also exclude don't know responses, these are included in some tables, where appropriate. Percentages may not always sum to 100 or numbers may not sum to an overall total due to the effect of rounding to the nearest whole number, or because respondents could give more than one response. Figures presented in the tables and graphs within this bulletin have been rounded. Unrounded figures are available in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source versions of the Tabular Annex.

Due to a combination of both sampling and non-sampling error, any sample is unlikely to reflect precisely the characteristics of the population. Because NISCTS estimates are subject to sampling error, differences between estimates may occur by chance. Given the low response rate and achieved sample size in 2020/21, the respective confidence limits of any percentages from the survey will also be wider than would be the case had a higher number of interviews been completed. This should be borne in mind and caution should be taken when considering the results from the survey, particularly estimates of victimisation and the low number of victims upon which the estimates are based. Estimates drawn from the sample will be less precise, particularly for infrequent crimes, such as violent crime.

The Department of Justice does not routinely publish NISCTS estimates where the unweighted base is less than 100 cases, therefore findings for some socio-demographic sub-groups (included in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and ODS workbooks) may not be published. Some findings for the socio-demographic sub-groups examined may present as zero. These findings are based on the selected sample. They do not necessarily suggest that people in that area or among that group do not, for example, worry about crime or personal safety.

Further information on the 2020/21 NISCTS is contained within the accompanying Technical Report (forthcoming, via the NI Safe Community Survey section of the Northern Ireland Department of Justice website).

Points to note about this report

- Given the change in survey mode and 2020/21 being considered a discrete survey year, direct comparisons with previous NISCS surveys have not been made. Figures for previous years however have been included in some graphs to illustrate the trend prior to the break in the time series. Trend data, where available, are included within the accompanying Excel and ODS tables. The impact of the pandemic and change in data collection mode may also have changed behaviour and attitudes and how participants respond to the survey.

- The low sample size will impact on the precision of the estimates derived and the level of detail that can be published. This is particularly so for figures related to crime victimisation, including repeat victimisation, reporting rates and reasons for not reporting crime to the police which are not given due to the low sample size. Only headline figures are presented in this report.

- Previous NISCS reports have presented comparable figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. Due to methodological differences, comparisons have not been made with the 2020/21 Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). Further information on the TCSEW (opens in a new window) can be found on the Office for National Statistics website.

- The content of the questionnaire was substantially reduced with some modules being shortened or removed. The following table gives a brief overview of the content of the 2020/21 NISCTS. The biennial Experience of Domestic Violence and Abuse module, due to be included, could not be asked of respondents. As a self-completion module, the questions would be completed by respondents themselves and their answers hidden immediately afterwards to ensure privacy and confidentiality. However, the move to a telephone survey meant this confidentiality could not be maintained.

Module	
1. Household questions	
2. Perceptions of Crime and Anti-social Behaviour	• perceptions of change in crime levels • perceptions of anti-social behaviour in the local area • worry about crime and personal safety • effect of fear of crime on quality of life
3. Experience of Crime Screener Questions	
4. Experience of Crime Victim Forms	
5. Confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS)	• overall confidence in the fairness of the criminal justice system • overall confidence in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system
6. Confidence in the police	• confidence in local police • confidence in engagement • confidence in policing in Northern Ireland as a whole
7. Confidence in Police Accountability Arrangements.	• Policing Board independence and whether it helps police do a good job • Police Ombudsman independence and whether it helps the police do a good job
8. Perceptions of Organised Crime	• Extent and harm caused by organised crime • Perceptions of paramilitarism
9. Demography module	

Sample profile for NISCTS 2020/21

Group	Sub-Group	Unweighted Number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Sex	Men	497	44	45
	Women	628	56	55
Age Group	16-34	165	15	18
	35-44	151	13	13
	45-54	198	18	20
	55-64	241	21	21
	65-74	228	20	18
	75+	142	13	10
Religion	Catholic	400	36	37
	Protestant	566	50	48
Area Type	Rural	404	36	39
	Urban	721	64	61
Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank [1]	1st quintile (most deprived)	140	12	12
	2nd quintile	214	19	19
	3rd quintile	224	20	20
	4th quintile	256	23	23
	5th quintile (least deprived)	291	26	25
Vehicle-owning households		994	88	92

1. Rank order of super output areas (derived from 2017 Multiple Deprivation Measure).

Appendix 3: Experimental Statistics Status

An Experimental Statistics publication

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

Experimental statistics (opens in a new window) are a sub-set of newly developed or innovative official statistics that are undergoing evaluation.

They are developed under the guidance of the Head of Profession for Statistics (HoP) and published to involve users and stakeholders in the assessment of their suitability and quality at an early stage.

Appendix 4: References

Department of Justice (2019a) Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey User Guide

https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-user-guide (opens in a new window)

Department of Justice (2019b) Northern Ireland Crime Survey Quality Report

https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-quality-report (opens in a new window)

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2021) Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2021

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2021 (opens in a new window)

Police Service of Northern Ireland (2018a) User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland (Updated January 2018)

https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/documents/crime-user-guide.pdf (PDF 1 MB) (opens in a new window)