

# Experience of Crime and Perceptions of Crime and Policing and Justice: Findings from the 2021/22 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey

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# 1 | Summary Findings

This bulletin presents findings from modules contained within the Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS) 2021/22 which measure respondents' experience of crime and gauge views on perceptions of crime and perceptions of policing and justice.

## Experience of Crime

- Results from the 2021/22 NISCTS indicate that most adults/households did not experience a crime asked about in the survey. Latest findings estimate that 3.8% were victims of at least one crime measured through the survey during the 12 months prior to interview, on a par with the 2020/21 rate of 3.9%. An estimated 60,000 incidents of crime occurred during the 12-month recall periods for NISCTS 2021/22.

## Perceptions of Crime

- Respondents from 2021/22 were again more positive in their perception of crime trends in their local area than at the regional level. A quarter, 25%, believed local crime levels had increased in the preceding two years compared with 57% considering crime in Northern Ireland as a whole to have risen.
- Findings indicate that 7% of participants perceived the level of anti-social behaviour in their local area to be high, similar to the 2020/21 figure of 6%. Rubbish or litter lying around (31%) and people using or dealing drugs (26%) were again most commonly identified as problems in the local area.
- One-in-ten (10%) respondents expressed a high level of worry about violent crime with a similar proportion, 8%, very worried about becoming a victim of burglary. Of vehicle owners, 6% were very worried about becoming a victim of car crime. None of these three indicators showed a statistically significant change from the previous year. At 73%, the majority of 2021/22 respondents felt fear of crime has a minimal effect on their quality of life, unchanged from 2020/21, also 73%.

# 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 82% in 2021/22, down from 86% in 2020/21. Six of the seven indicators that comprise the composite measure showed a statistically significant decrease over the same period.
- In terms of the local police, findings suggest that, in 2021/22, 55% rated their local police as doing an excellent or good job, a decrease from 62% in 2020/21. When asked about overall confidence in their local police, the proportion of respondents who stated that, when taking everything into account, they had confidence in the police in their area, fell from 75% to 72%.
- With regards to community engagement, a decrease was also observed in the proportion agreeing that the police and other agencies ‘seek people’s views about the anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime issues that matter’, which fell from 42% to 38% between 2020/21 and 2021/22; the proportion of 2021/22 respondents agreeing these issues are being dealt with (47%) showed no statistically significant change from last year (50%).
- When asked about the criminal justice system (CJS), the proportion of respondents who were very or fairly confident that the CJS as a whole in Northern Ireland is effective was 64%, on a par with the 2020/21 rating of 67%. The proportion confident that the CJS as a whole is fair, however, fell between the two survey years, showing a statistically significant decrease from 73% to 66%.

# 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 and crime-related issues of adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Traditionally, the NISCS had 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 have subsequently been conducted via telephone for both the 2020/21 and 2021/22 survey years. As a result, a shorter questionnaire has since been asked to reduce completion time. Both 2020/21 and 2021/22 will therefore be considered as discrete survey years and are referred to as the Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Surveys (NISCTS). This bulletin focuses on findings from 2021/22; [findings for 2020/21 \(opens in a new window\)](#) have previously been published and reference may be made to 2020/21, where appropriate.

Given the reduced questionnaire and change in survey mode, and similar to the format adopted for 2020/21, three annual reports that would normally have been published separately prior to 2020/21, have again been merged into this combined report for 2021/22. These annual reports are those entitled: Experience of Crime; Perceptions of Crime; and Perceptions of Policing and Justice.

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

Results are based on a sample of 2,838 respondents (aged 16+). Throughout this report key findings are commented on in the text, with full numerical details available in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source (ODS) documents. Any references to table numbers made in the report therefore refer to the respective table in the accompanying Excel and ODS documents. Further background information on this bulletin, the move to a telephone survey and survey methodology for 2021/22 is available in the Technical Annex (Appendix 1).

**Note:**

The estimates contained within this report are the best estimates derived from the 2021/22 survey on the extent of crime and public perceptions. The move to telephone mode and changes to the questionnaire mean results for 2020/21 and 2021/22 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 for all offences

This chapter provides an overview of crime victimisation rates derived from the 2021/22 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 2021/22 interview. Table 2 provides comparable figures for 2020/21 while police recorded crime figures can be found, for reference purposes, in Table 3. The following analyses are based on the best estimates derived from the survey.

- Findings from the 2021/22 NISCTS suggest that most households/adults had not been a victim of any of the crime types covered by the survey. The proportion of 2021/22 respondents indicating that they had experienced crime (any NISCTS crime rate) was 3.8%, similar to the rate of 3.9% in 2020/21.
- In terms of the proportions who had been a victim of any household crime and any personal crime, estimates suggest that the respective rates were 3.5% and 1.0%. Again, these rates were on a par with those observed in 2020/21, 3.1% and 0.8% respectively.
- While the estimates derived from the last two survey years, 2020/21 and 2021/22, are not directly comparable with rates observed through NISCS sweeps prior to this, the estimates for the any NISCTS crime prevalence rate lie below the range of those observed in previous years.

**Figure 3.1: Households/adults victims of crime once or more: any NISCS crime 1998-2019/20 and any NISCTS crime 2020/21-2021/22 (%)**



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.

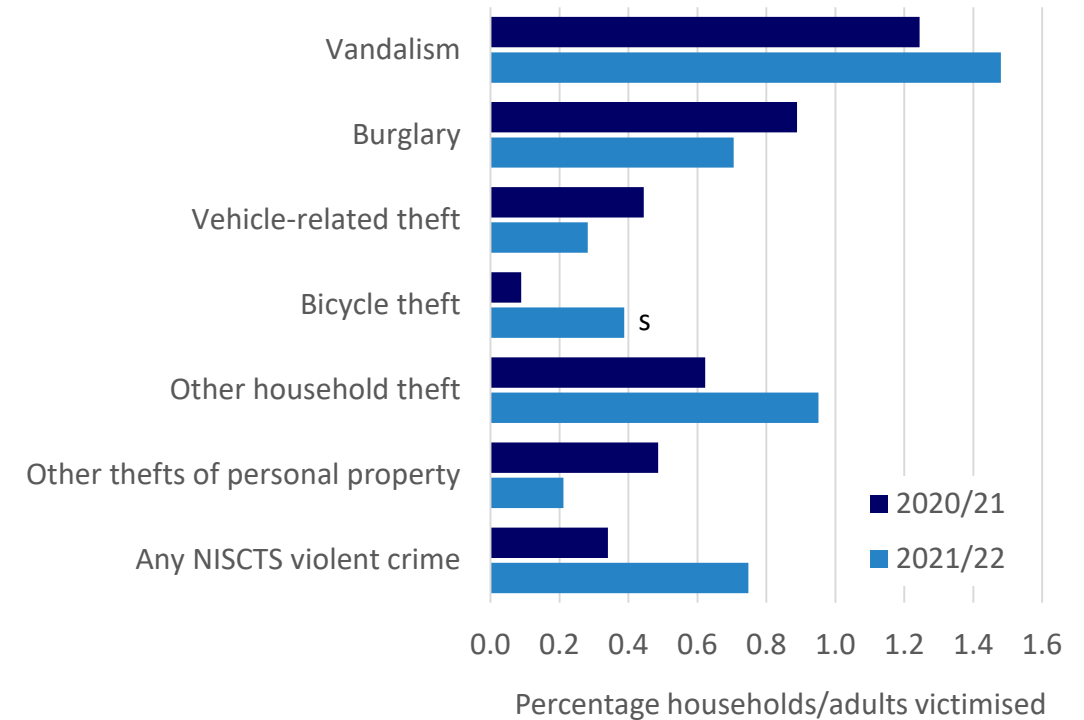
# 3 | Experience of Crime

## 3.2 Crime victimisation (prevalence) rates by offence category

For the main offence categories considered and with the exception of bicycle theft, victimisation (prevalence) rates for NISCTS 2021/22 were generally on a par with those experienced in 2020/21.

- Latest findings indicate that, of the household offences, a statistically significant increase occurred in the prevalence rate for bicycle theft (all households), from 0.1% to 0.4% between 2020/21 and 2021/22. In terms of PSNI recorded crime figures, theft of a pedal cycle offences, however, showed an overall decrease of 20.6% between 2019/20 and 2021/22, from 882 to 700.
- For the other household offences presented, 2021/22 rates were similar to the previous year. The apparent increase in the vandalism prevalence rate, from 1.2% to 1.5%, is not statistically significant. Recorded crime offences for criminal damage (the nearest equivalent to vandalism), however, showed a net decrease of 7.9% between 2019/20 and 2021/22 (from 18,698 to 17,216).
- While the apparent reduction in the burglary prevalence rate, from 0.9% to 0.7%, is not statistically significant, there was a (net) decrease of almost a third (32.6%) in the number of burglary-residential offences recorded by the police, from 4,521 to 3,046.

Figure 3.2: Households/adults victims of crime once or more by offence category (%), 2020/21 and 2021/22



1. Rates for household offences are based on all households.
2. Rates for violent crime and other thefts of personal property are based on all adults and are weighted for household size.
3. Statistically significant change (5% level two-tailed test) from previous year is indicated by an s.

# 3 | Experience of Crime

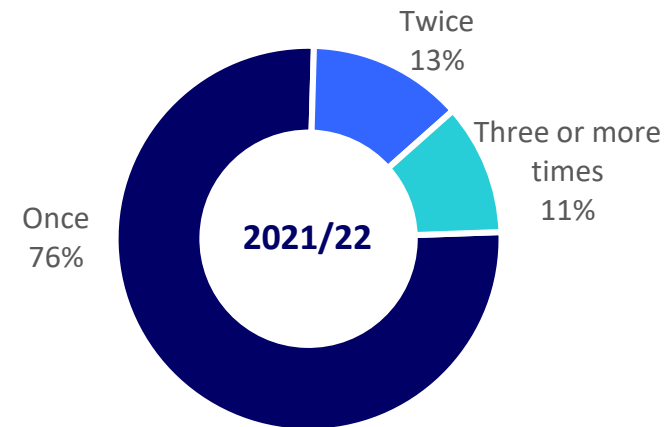
- In terms of violent crime, the PSNI recorded level of violence against the person offences has shown an overall increase of 20.1% over the last two years, from 41,299 in 2019/20 to 49,595 in 2021/22. The proportion of adults who were victims of the (more narrowly focused) NISCTS violent crime has however remained unchanged in 2021/22. While the seeming increase in the NISCTS violent crime prevalence rate, from 0.3% to 0.7%, does not represent a statistically significant change, it may to some extent reflect the increase in police recorded crime.
- Part of any discrepancy in NISCTS and police recorded violent crime estimates may relate to the narrower focus of the NISCTS, the relatively low proportion of respondents affected by violent crime, a possible unwillingness of respondents to disclose domestic incidents to an interviewer (contrasting with an increased willingness to report such incidents to the police), variation within the sample and differences in the time period covered between the two sources.

## 3.3 Repeat victimisation in Northern Ireland

Table 4 presents the frequency of repeat victimisation for any NISCTS crime, based on 2021/22 interviews. Given the limitations of the sample size and the number of victims, rates for NISCTS repeat victimisation should be viewed with caution.

- Findings from 2021/22 indicate that the majority of victims, 76%, were a victim only once in the 12 months prior to interview with almost a quarter (24%) victimised on more than one occasion. Of the latter, 13% were victimised twice and 11% experienced three or more crimes.

**Figure 3.3: Any NISCTS crime - households/adults victims of crime by number of times victimised (%), 2021/22 interviews**



1. The any NISCTS crime rate is calculated treating a household crime as a personal crime and is weighted for household size.



# 3 | Experience of Crime

## 3.4 Crime victimisation (incidence) rates and estimated number of NISCTS incidents in Northern Ireland

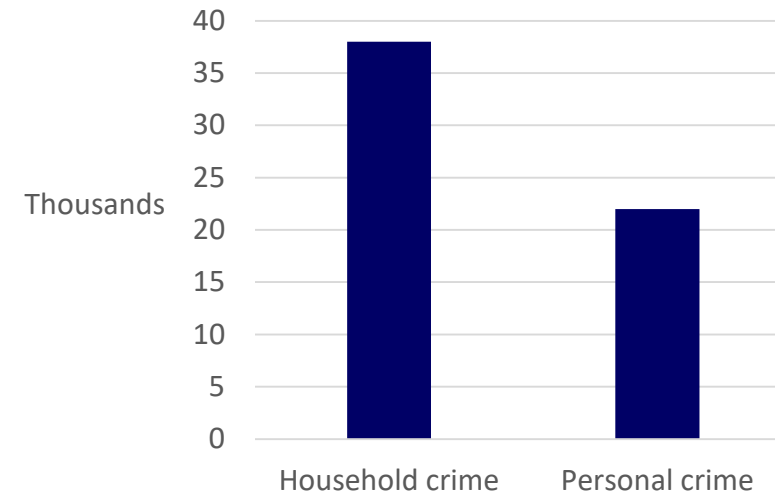
Table 5 gives crime victimisation (incidence) rates per 10,000 households or adults in Northern Ireland for a limited range of crime types. This approach differs from prevalence rates in that it takes into account the number of times each type of incident may have occurred, as opposed to the proportion 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 2021/22, which are presented in Table 6. 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 60,000 incidents occurred during the 12-month recall periods for the 2021/22 NISCTS, of which over three-fifths, 38,000, were household offences and the remaining 22,000 personal offences.

- Results suggest that the 38,000 incidents of household crime estimated from the 2021/22 survey comprised mainly of vandalism (17,000 incidents). Violent crime accounted for the majority of personal crime (18,000 in 2021/22).

**Figure 3.4: Estimated number of NISCTS incidents (thousands), 2021/22 interviews**



1. Incident numbers for household and personal crime are rounded and therefore may not sum to the total number of incidents estimated from the survey.

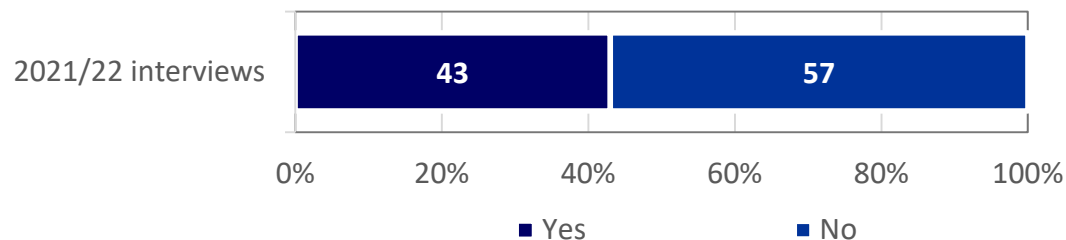
# 3 | Experience of Crime

## 3.5 Crime reporting rates in Northern Ireland

Table 8 presents the proportions of various crime types reported to the police in Northern Ireland. As variation in reporting rates are largely dependent on the type of crime in question, any direct comparison between reporting rates should be carried out cautiously given the limitations of the sample size.

- Latest findings estimate that 43% of all NISCTS crime was reported to the police. In terms of the various crime categories covered, burglary (70%) and vehicle-related theft (55%) displayed some of the highest reporting rates.

**Figure 3.5: Proportion of all NISCTS crime reported to the police, 2021/22 interviews**



1. Estimate is based on NISCTS incidents reported to the police as a proportion of all NISCTS incidents.

## 3.6 Reasons given for not reporting crime in Northern Ireland

Those victims who had not reported the incident to the police were subsequently asked their reason(s) for not doing so, results for which are presented in Table 9.

Victims were able to give one or more reasons.

- ‘Too trivial/no loss/police would not/could not do anything’ (54%) was the most common reason given by NISCTS victims for not having reported a crime to the police. This was followed by ‘private matter/dealt with matter ourselves’, cited by 33% of victims.

### Summary: Experience of Crime

Latest findings from 2021/22 interviews suggest that, at 3.8%, the prevalence rate for any NISCTS crime has remained unchanged when compared with the 2020/21 rate of 3.9%. With the exception of bicycle theft, which increased from 0.1% to 0.4%, prevalence rates for all other crime categories covered showed no statistically significant change over the same period. An estimated 60,000 incidents occurred during the 12 month recall periods for 2021/22 NISCTS respondents, the majority of which, 38,000, were household offences. It is estimated that less than half, 43%, of incidents were reported to police, with ‘too trivial/no loss/police would not/could not do anything’ (54%) as the main reason given for not doing so.

# 4 | Perceptions of Crime

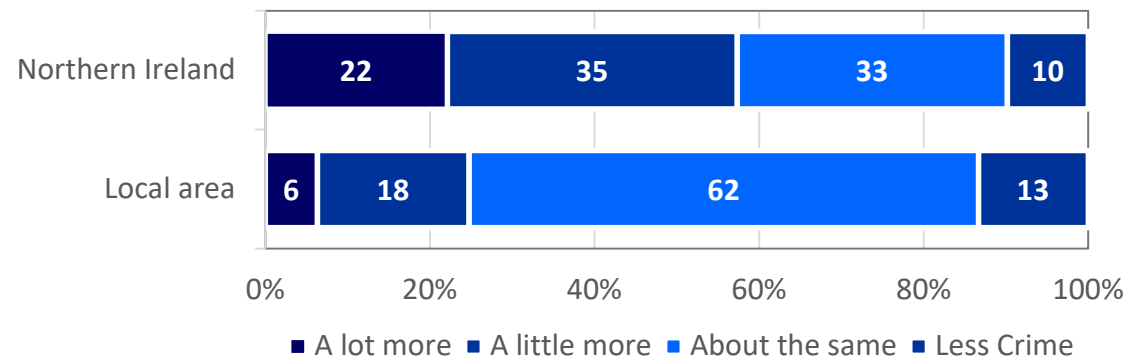
## 4.1 Perceptions of change in crime levels

NISCTS 2021/22 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 14. 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 given in Table 15.

- Findings from 2021/22 indicate almost three-fifths (57%) of respondents felt crime had increased in Northern Ireland, a proportion that showed no statistically significant change from 2020/21 (55%). The 2021/22 figure of 57% comprised 22% believing there was 'a lot more crime' and 35% 'a little more crime'. A third (33%) of 2021/22 participants thought crime levels were unchanged, while the remaining 10% believed crime had fallen, the same proportion observed in 2020/21.
- Respondents continued to be 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 57% believing there was more crime at the Northern Ireland level.

- An almost equivalent difference appears when considering the proportion who felt crime levels in their local area were about the same compared with the proportion who felt there was no change in crime at the Northern Ireland level, 62% and 33% respectively.
- At 13%, the proportion who felt crime had fallen in their local area was on a par with the 2020/21 figure of 12%.

**Figure 4.1: Perceptions of changing crime levels in Northern Ireland and the local area, 2021/22 (%)<sup>1,2</sup>**



- Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
- Local area figures are based on respondents who had been living in their area for more than three years.
- 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

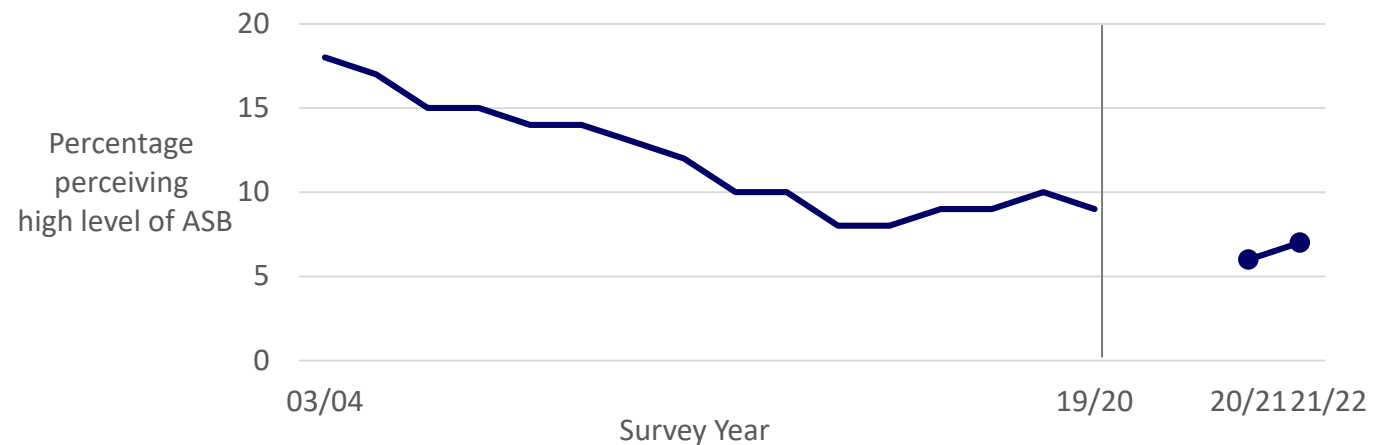
Respondents to the NISCTS were asked to rate how much of a problem different types of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are in their area using a four-point scale ranging from ‘very big problem’ to ‘not a problem at all’. Responses to the following seven strands have been used to form a composite measure (see 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 16.

- Based on the composite measure, findings from 2021/22 indicate that, at 7%, the proportion perceiving the level of anti-social behaviour in their local area to be high was on a par with the 2020/21 figure of 6%.
- In terms of the individual ASB strands, and similar to the previous year, 2021/22 respondents were most likely to perceive rubbish or litter lying around (31%) and people using or dealing drugs (26%) as problems with abandoned or burnt-out cars considered least problematic (2%). None of the seven strands showed a statistically significant change between the 2020/21 and 2021/22 survey years.

**Figure 4.2: Perceived high level of ASB, NISCS 2003/04-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21-2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



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 2021/22 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 17.

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.

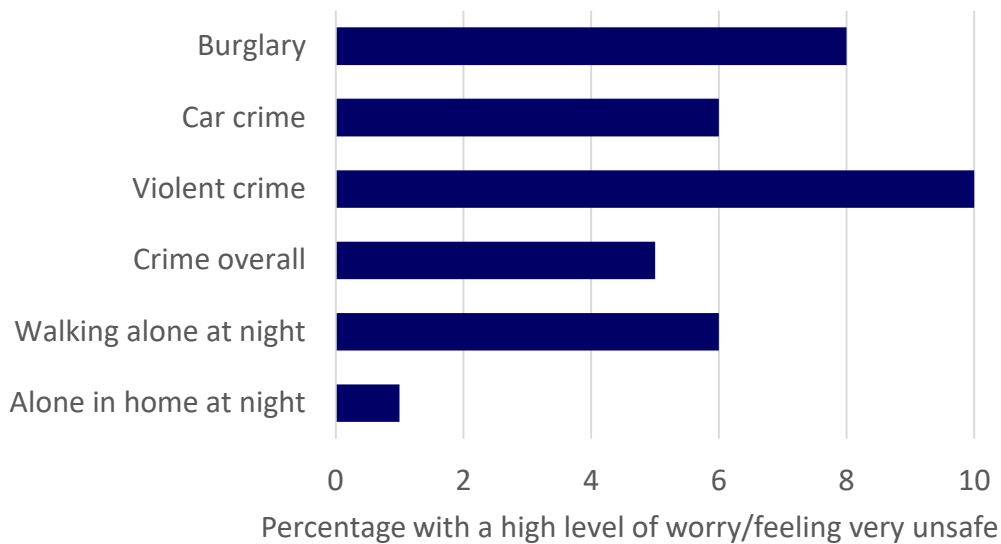
Respondents were also asked how worried they are about becoming a victim of (all types of) crime in general, using the same four-point scale ('very worried' to 'not at all worried'). Responses to this question are also included within Table 17.

# 4

## Perceptions of Crime

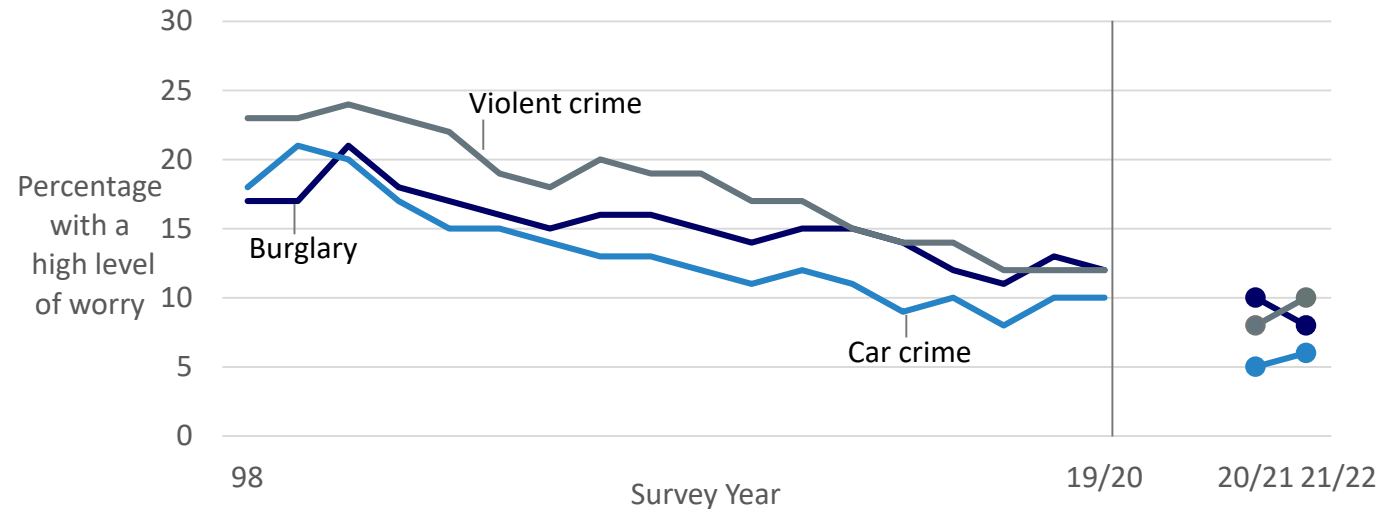
- Latest findings from 2021/22 indicate that, at 8% and 10% respectively, the proportions of respondents expressing a high level of worry about burglary and violent crime were unchanged when compared with 2020/21 rates (10% and 8% respectively). Similarly, of vehicle owners, 6% were very worried about becoming a victim of car crime, also unchanged from the previous year (5%). The apparent changes in the three rates are not statistically significant.
- With regards to personal safety, 2021/22 respondents continued to be more likely to feel very unsafe while walking alone in their area after dark (6%) than being home alone at night (1%). The same proportions were observed the previous year for both.

**Figure 4.3: Worry about crime and personal safety, NISCTS 2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Car crime refers to vehicle-owners only.

**Figure 4.4: Worry about crime, NISCS 1998-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21-2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



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.

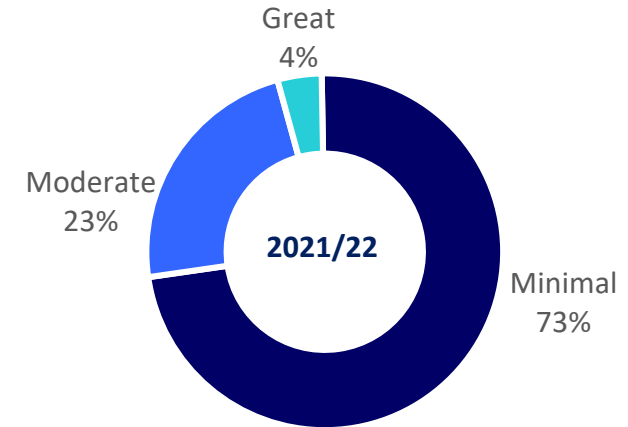
Respondents were asked how much their own quality of life is affected by their ‘fear of crime’ on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no effect and 10 is a total effect. In order to standardise the results, the following conventions have been used to gauge the effect of ‘fear of crime’ on quality of life:

- 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 Table 18.

- For each level of effect, minimal, moderate and great, the proportions observed in 2021/22 were equivalent to those in 2020/21. At 73% in both years, the vast majority of respondents felt fear of crime has a minimal effect on their quality of life, with 23% reporting it had a moderate effect. Respondents were by far less likely to feel that fear of crime was having a great impact on their quality of life with 4% observed in each of the survey years.

Figure 4.5: Perceptions of the effect of ‘fear of crime’ on quality of life, 2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

#### Summary: Perceptions of Crime

When latest figures are compared with the previous year, no statistically significant changes occurred in any of the four perceptions of crime areas considered.

Respondents were again more likely to believe that crime had increased at the Northern Ireland level (57%) than in their local area (25%). Rubbish or litter lying around (31%) and people using/dealing drugs (26%) continued to be considered as being most problematic in the local area, while the levels of worry about crime and personal safety were also unchanged. The majority of respondents again 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 2021/22 NISCTS are presented for these seven indicators in Table 19 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.

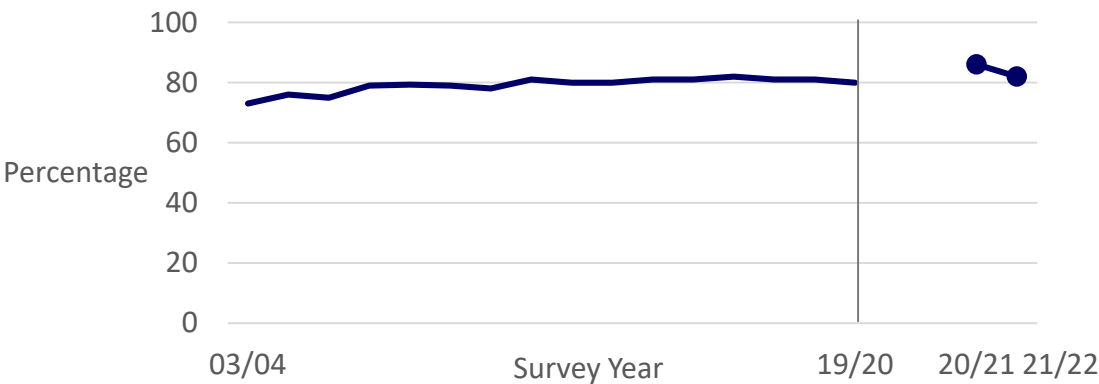


# 5

## Perceptions of Policing and Justice

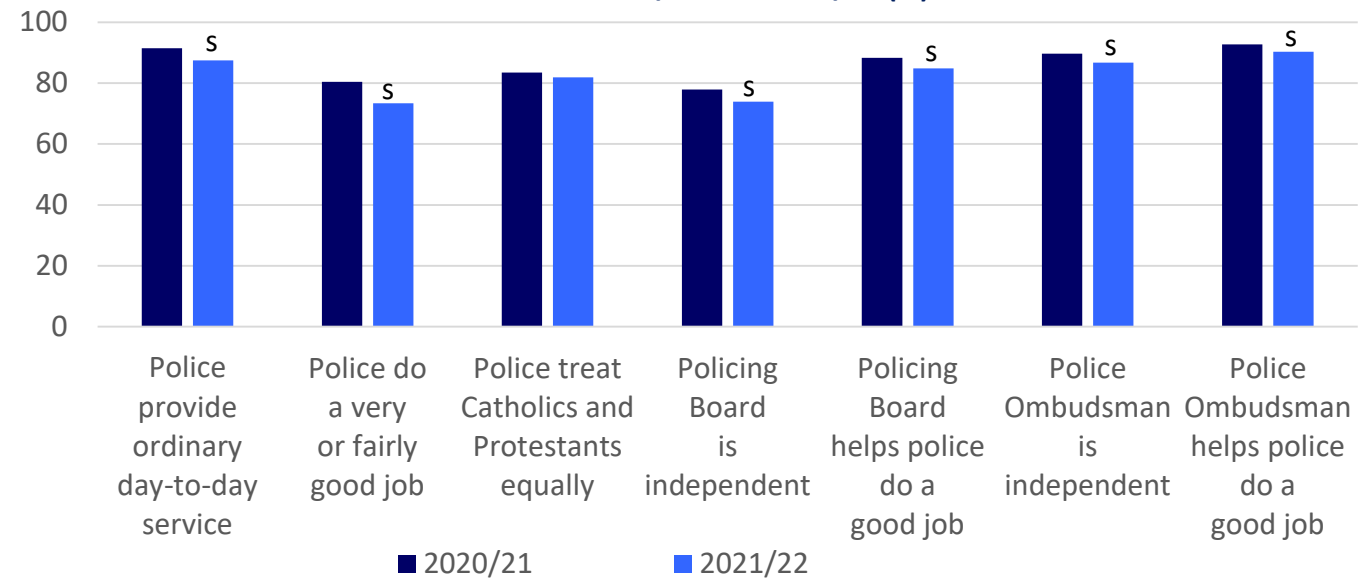
- Just over four-in-five (82%) respondents had overall confidence in policing (seven-strand composite measure), a statistically significant decrease from the 2020/21 figure of 86%.
- When considering the three questions relating directly to the police, statistically significant decreases were observed in two, more specifically in the proportion confident that the police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of Northern Ireland, from 91% to 87%, and in the proportion who thought the police do a very or fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, from 80% to 73%. The proportion agreeing that the police treat Catholics and Protestants equally was similar in both years (82%, 2021/22 and 83%, 2020/21).
- In terms of police accountability arrangements, all four indicators showed a statistically significant decrease between the two survey years. Findings suggest, however, that similar to 2020/21, respondents appeared to be more positive in their perceptions of the Police Ombudsman than the Policing Board.

**Figure 5.1: Confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements, NISCS 2003/04-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21-2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



- Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
- In 2020/21, face-to-face interviews were suspended due to the pandemic resulting in a break in the NISCS time series.

**Figure 5.2: Confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements, NISCTS 2020/21 and 2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



- Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
- Statistically significant change (5% level two-tailed test) from previous year is indicated by an s.

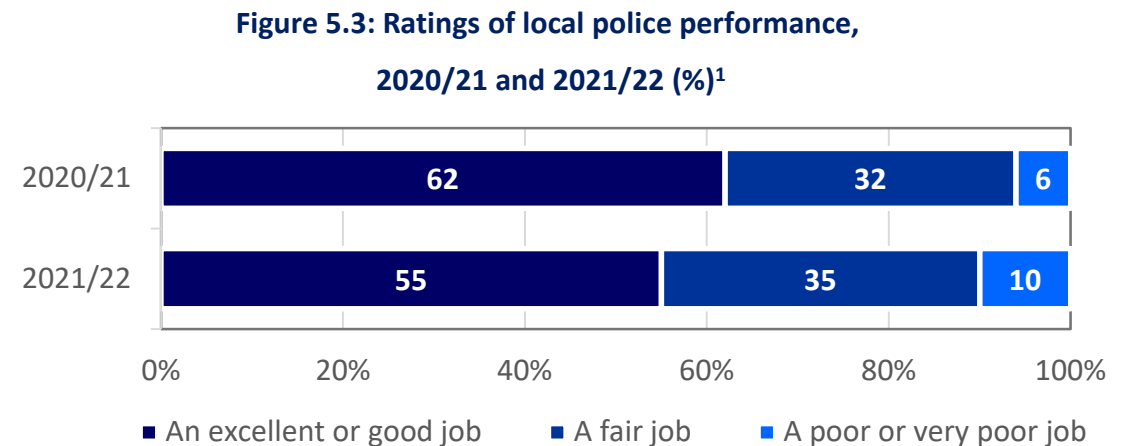
# 5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

## 5.2 Ratings and perceptions of the local police

In addition to policing in Northern Ireland as a whole, the NISCTS measured perceptions of the local police, both in general terms as well as in specific aspects of their work. Table 20 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 19). 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.

- Latest NISCTS findings show 55% of respondents rated their local police as doing an excellent or good job with 35% rating their performance as fair. At 10%, participants were least likely to perceive local police as doing a poor or very poor job.
- The excellent or good rating of 55% in 2021/22 has fallen when compared with the previous year, 62%. In contrast, the proportion considering their local police to be doing a poor or very poor job has risen over the same period, showing a statistically significant increase from 6% to 10%. The apparent increase in the fair rating is not a statistically significant change.



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

# 5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

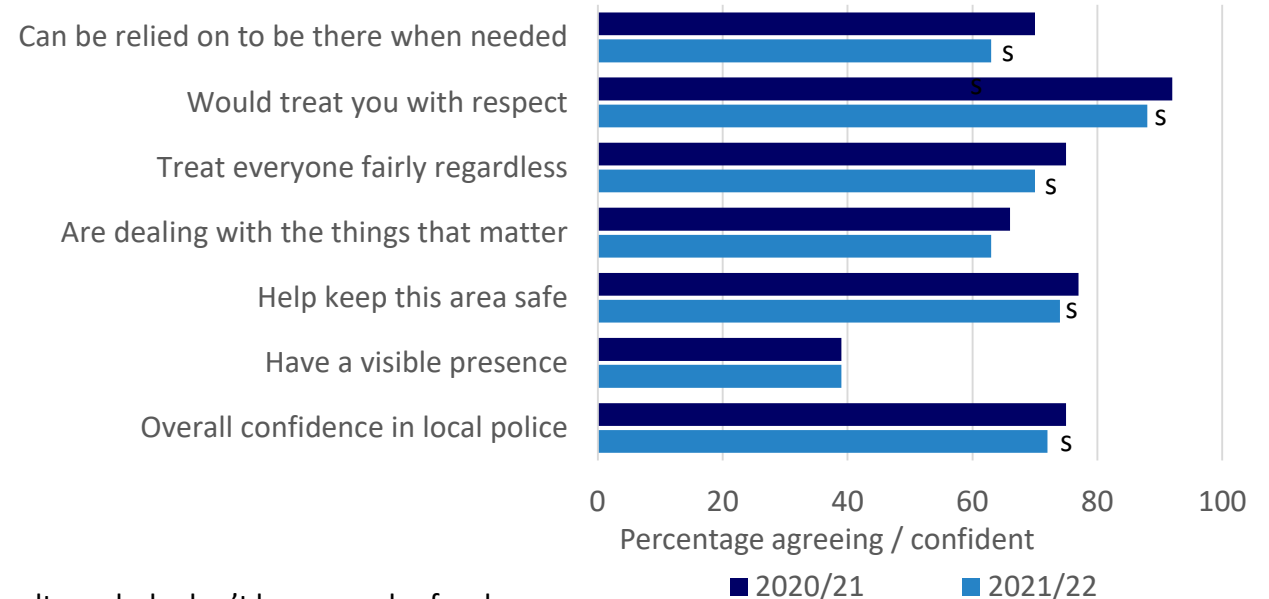
Table 21 gives the proportions of respondents who claimed they ‘strongly agree’ or ‘tend to agree’ with seven statements concerning the local police. The first six of these (a to f, below) are ‘funnel-type’ questions, designed to help generate a more considered response to the seventh, overall confidence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

- Between 2020/21 and 2021/22, a statistically significant decrease occurred in the proportion expressing overall confidence in their local police. The proportion agreeing that ‘Taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area’, fell from 75% to 72% between the two survey years.
- Of the six individual statements, four saw a statistically significant decrease over the same period, the exceptions being the police ‘are dealing with the things that matter to this community’ and ‘have a visible presence in this area’. The largest decrease was observed in the proportion agreeing that the police could be relied on to be there when you need them, which dropped by seven percentage points, from 70% to 63%.

**Figure 5.4: Confidence in the local police, 2020/21 and 2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.  
 2. Statistically significant change (5% level two-tailed test) from previous year is indicated by an s.

# 5 | Perceptions of Policing and Justice

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

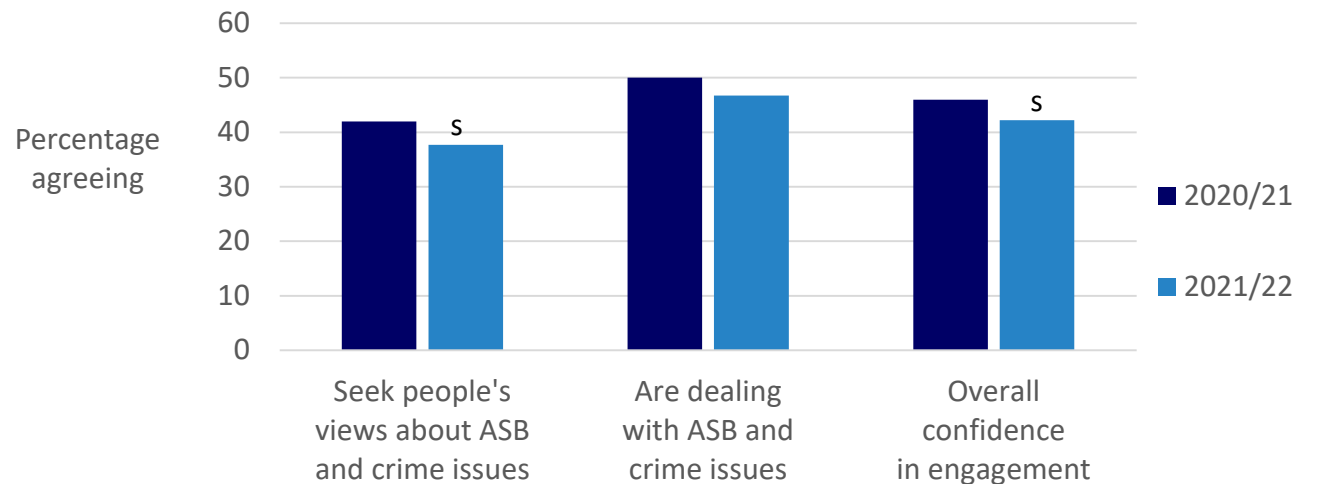
The NISCTS measured levels of public confidence in the local police and other agencies working in partnership on anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime issues. Focus is on the proportion of respondents who ‘strongly agree’ or ‘tend to agree’ that the local police and other agencies, including Policing 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 for these two questions have been combined to form a single engagement composite measure (‘Overall confidence in engagement’), figures for which are presented in Table 22.

- In 2021/22, just under two-fifths (38%) 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, 47%, agreed that these issues are being dealt with. Consequently, overall confidence in engagement (composite measure) was 42% over this period.
- The 38% agreeing that views are being sought was a decrease on the 2020/21 figure of 42%; the apparent fall from 50% to 47% in the proportion who felt ASB and crime issues are being dealt with was not statistically significant. Subsequently, the overall confidence in engagement measure was lower in 2021/22 (42%) when compared with the previous year (46%).

**Figure 5.5: Confidence in engagement, 2020/21 and 2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals
2. Statistically significant change (5% level two-tailed test) from previous year is indicated by an s.

# 5

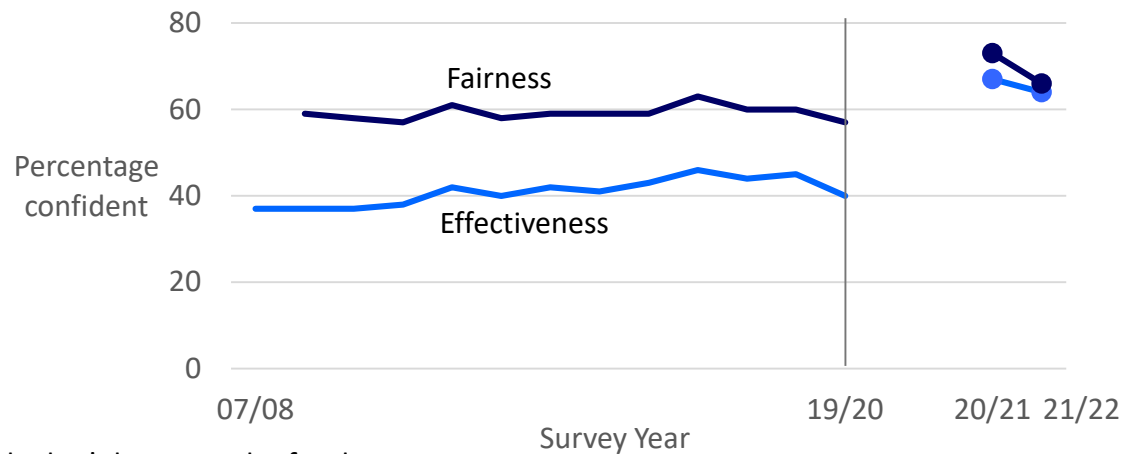
## Perceptions of Policing and Justice

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

Respondents to the 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 included in Table 23.

- Similar proportions of 2021/22 participants were confident that CJS in Northern Ireland as a whole is fair (66%) and effective (64%). While the 2021/22 proportion who were confident in the effectiveness of the CJS remained on a par with the confidence rating in 2020/21 (67%), that for fairness showed a statistically significant decrease from the previous year, down seven percentage points, from 73% to 66%.

**Figure 5.6: Confidence in the overall fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, NISCS 2007/08-2019/20 and NISCTS 2020/21-2021/22 (%)<sup>1</sup>**



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 suggest a number of statistically significant decreases occurred across the perceptions of policing and justice findings, both in overall measures and specific indicators.

Overall confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements, overall confidence in the local police, the proportion rating their local police as doing an excellent job and overall confidence in engagement all fell between 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Decreases were also observed in six of the seven individual strands within confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements, and in four of the six individual measures related to the local police. In terms of engagement, the proportion confident that views on ASB and crime issues are sought also fell, along with the proportion confident the CJS as a whole is fair.

## Appendix 1: Technical Annex

### Background to the 2021/22 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, since 2020/21, has been conducted via telephone. Similar to the 2020/21 survey, the 2021/22 survey year will also be referred to as the Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS). Both 2020/21 and 2021/22 are being considered as distinct survey years with results presented separately from sweeps for the years prior to this.

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, telephone interviews commenced in end June 2020 and have continued since then. The initial NISCTS 2021/22 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. Between April and June 2021, 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. As of July 2021, Knock to Nudge was introduced whereby a letter was issued to the sampled addresses and interviewers could call at the doorstep to obtain a contact number. Any interviews were then carried out by telephone via CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). Visits to addresses by an interviewer from the NISRA Central Survey Unit resulted in an eligible sample of 7,087 occupied addresses. The response rate for productive interviews (containing both household details and interview with a selected respondent) was 40% of eligible addresses. This represents 2,838 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 smaller households.

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 around 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 2021/22 fieldwork period began in April 2021, this means that the valid recall periods commenced for some respondents as early as 1 April 2020 and finished for others as late as 28 February 2022 (a spread of 23 months). While results of the 2021/22 NISCTS are only comparable with those from 2020/21 and not 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 on the methodology used, as well as additional background information, such as the need for both recorded crime figures and the NISCTS, can 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 \(opens in a new window\)](#)) 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. sex (gender).
4. disability (or illness).
5. household type (child dependants).
6. self-perceived nationality.
7. housing tenure.
8. household income.
9. type of area (urban / rural).
10. Local Government District.
11. experience of crime reported to the police.
12. multiple deprivation measure rank (MDM 2017).

## Rounding, error and statistical significance

Refusals and non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses. 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 lower response rate and achieved sample size in 2021/22 (when compared with the more recent face-to-face NISCS sweeps), 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, experience the crime type in question or worry about crime or personal safety.

Further information on the 2021/22 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 and 2021/22 being considered as discrete survey years, direct comparisons with earlier 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 lower 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 figures on repeat victimisation, reporting rates and reasons for not reporting crime to the police. This should be taken into consideration and findings should therefore be viewed with caution.
- Earlier 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 2021/22 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 2021/22 NISCTS. A report presenting findings from the biennial modules will be published separately. The biennial Experience of Sexual 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.

## NISCTS 2021/22 – Content of Questionnaire

Module	
1. Household questions	
2. Perceptions of Crime and Anti-social Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceptions of change in crime levels</li> <li>• perceptions of anti-social behaviour in the local area</li> <li>• worry about crime and personal safety</li> <li>• effect of fear of crime on quality of life</li> </ul>
3. Experience of Crime Screener Questions	
4. Experience of Crime Victim Forms	
5. Confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overall confidence in the fairness of the criminal justice system</li> <li>• overall confidence in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system</li> </ul>
6. Confidence in the police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confidence in local police</li> <li>• confidence in engagement</li> <li>• confidence in policing in Northern Ireland as a whole</li> </ul>
7. Confidence in Police Accountability Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policing Board independence and whether it helps police do a good job</li> <li>• Police Ombudsman independence and whether it helps the police do a good job</li> </ul>
8. Perceptions of Modern Slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• awareness of modern slavery and confidence it is dealt with effectively</li> </ul>
9. Cyber Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• experience of cyber crime, reporting to police and awareness of cyber crime related issues</li> </ul>
10. Perceptions of Sentencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• awareness and perceptions of sentence types</li> </ul>
11. Demography module	

## Sample profile for NISCTS 2021/22

Group	Sub-Group	Unweighted Number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Sex	Men	1,243	43.8	45.1
	Women	1,595	56.2	54.9
Age Group	16-24	185	6.5	9.7
	25-34	367	12.9	13.4
	35-44	485	17.1	16.9
	45-54	437	15.4	16.1
	55-64	531	18.7	18.5
	65-74	499	17.6	15.8
	75+	334	11.8	9.6
Religion	Catholic	1,120	39.5	40.2
	Protestant	1,275	44.9	44.0
Area Type	Rural	1,021	36.0	38.7
	Urban	1,817	64.0	61.3
Policing District	Antrim and Newtownabbey	217	7.6	7.8
	Ards and North Down	269	9.5	8.9
	Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	326	11.5	11.5
	Belfast	495	17.4	16.5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	226	8.0	8.1
	Derry and Strabane	215	7.6	7.8
	Fermanagh and Omagh	213	7.5	7.7
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	222	7.8	8.1
	Mid and East Antrim	218	7.7	7.7
	Mid Ulster	167	5.9	6.7
	Newry, Mourne and Down	270	9.5	9.4
Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank <sup>1</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> quintile (most deprived)	480	16.9	14.9
	2 <sup>nd</sup> quintile	550	19.4	19.8
	3 <sup>rd</sup> quintile	594	20.9	21.8
	4 <sup>th</sup> quintile	625	22.0	22.5
	5 <sup>th</sup> quintile (least deprived)	589	20.8	21.1
Vehicle-owning households		2,370	83.5	88.3

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

## Appendix 2: 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 3: References

Department of Justice (2021) 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 (2019) 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) (2022) Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2022

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022> (opens in a new window)

Police Service of Northern Ireland (2022) Police recorded crime Annual Trends 1998/99 to 2021/22

<https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics> (opens in a new window)

Police Service of Northern Ireland (2022) User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland (Updated December 2022)

<https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics> (opens in a new window)