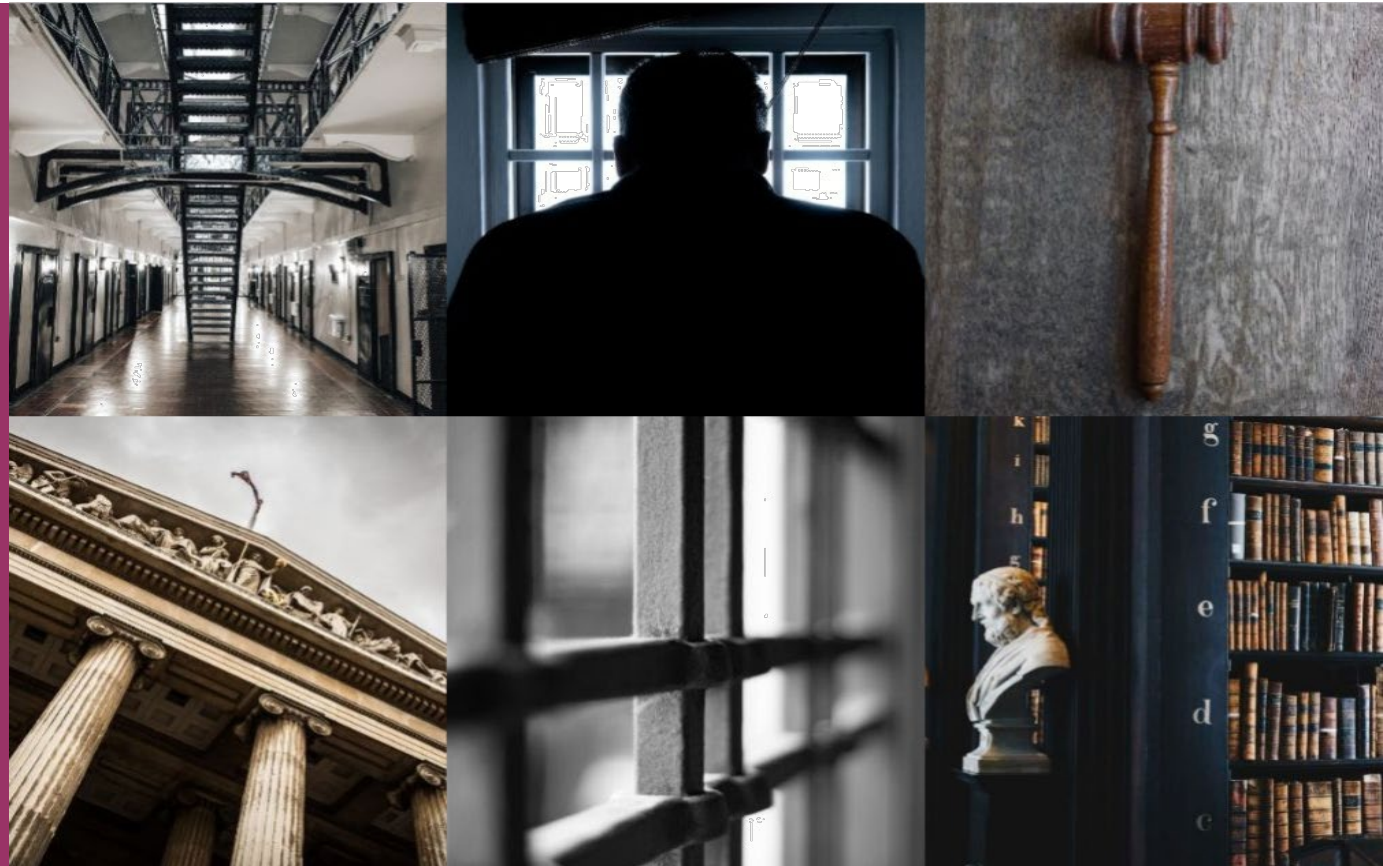


Perceptions of the Youth Justice Agency: Findings from the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys

September 2022



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Díl agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa

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Feedback on this publication can be provided directly to Analytical Services Group at the email address listed above.

1 Introduction

1.1 The focus of this publication

This bulletin draws on findings from the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys (NISCS). The survey was formerly known as the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) but was renamed following a review in 2017/18. NISCS is a representative, continuous, personal interview survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime of 3,710 adults (2019/20) living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Previously conducted on an ad hoc basis in 1994/95, 1998, 2001 and 2003/04, the survey began operating on a continuous basis in January 2005.

Since 2009, the survey has included three questions relating to the Youth Justice Agency (YJA), which aims to make communities safer by helping children to stop offending and works with children aged 10-17 years old who have offended or are at serious risk of offending. The questions aim to measure the level of awareness of the YJA, more specifically whether respondents have heard of the agency and how aware they are of the work it does, along with confidence levels on whether it is effective at reducing re-offending by young people aged 10-17.

From 2018/19, an additional question gauging whether respondents had had contact with the YJA was also included.

While the focus of this publication is largely on findings from the 2018/19 and 2019/20 survey years, results for previous sweeps are also presented and referred to, as appropriate. Throughout the report key findings are commented on in the text, with numerical details on each section available in the relevant tables comprising the Tabular Annex (Appendix 1). The tables in the Tabular Annex present trend data from 2010/11, the first full year for which data are available. Results are also presented in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source documents.

Further background information on this bulletin is available in the Technical Annex (Appendix 2). Additional NISCS 2019/20 reports on [Experience of Crime \(opens in a new window\)](#) (Campbell, Rice and Ross, February 2021), [Perceptions of Crime \(opens in a new window\)](#) (Ross and Campbell, March 2021) and [Perceptions of Policing and Justice \(opens in a new window\)](#) (Campbell, Ross and Rice, June 2021) have been published separately.

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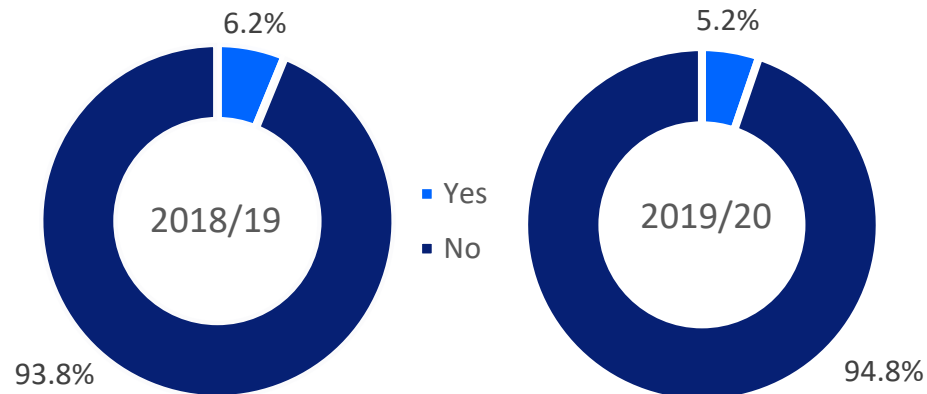
Knowledge of the Youth Justice Agency

2.1 Knowledge of the Youth Justice Agency

Added in 2018/19, NISCS respondents were initially asked to indicate whether they had come into contact with the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) in any capacity over the previous 12 months. Respondents who had not had any contact with the YJA were subsequently asked whether they had heard of the agency. Results for both questions are presented in Tables 1 and 2 (respectively), Appendix 1.

- Findings show that the vast majority of respondents indicated that they had not come into contact with the YJA. In 2019/20, 94.8% reported that they had had no contact over the previous 12 months with the remaining 5.2% having had contact in some capacity. Similar figures were observed in 2018/19 at 93.8% and 6.2% respectively.

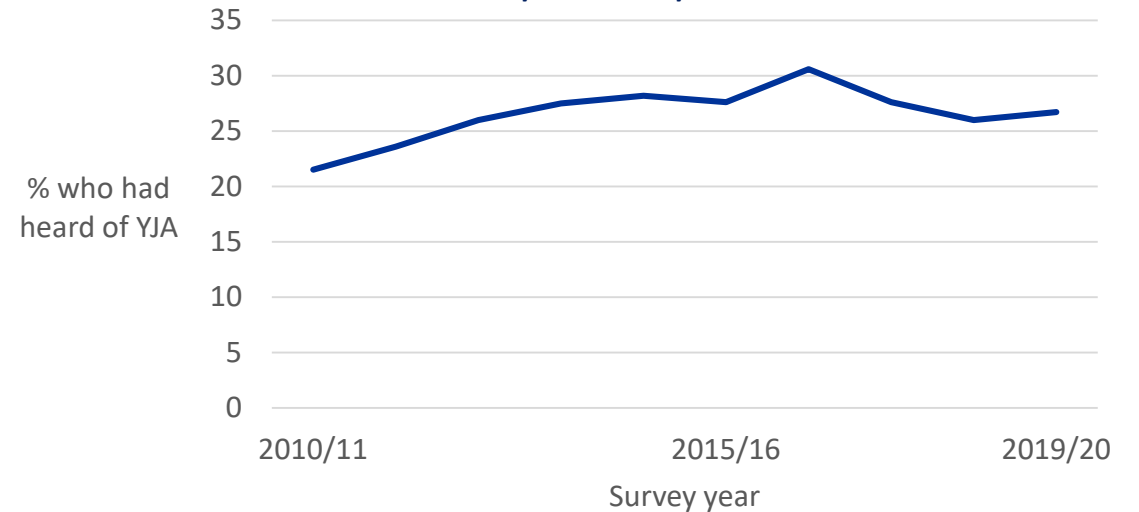
Figure 2.1: In the past 12 months, have you come into contact with the Youth Justice Agency in any capacity? (%), 2018/19 and 2019/20



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

- Of the respondents who had not had any contact with the YJA, just over a quarter (26.7%) had heard of the agency, a similar proportion to 2018/19 (26.0%). Both the 2018/19 and 2019/20 figures show an overall increase when compared with the 21.5% observed in 2010/11.

Figure 2.2: Have you ever heard of the Youth Justice Agency? (%), 2010/11 to 2019/20



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

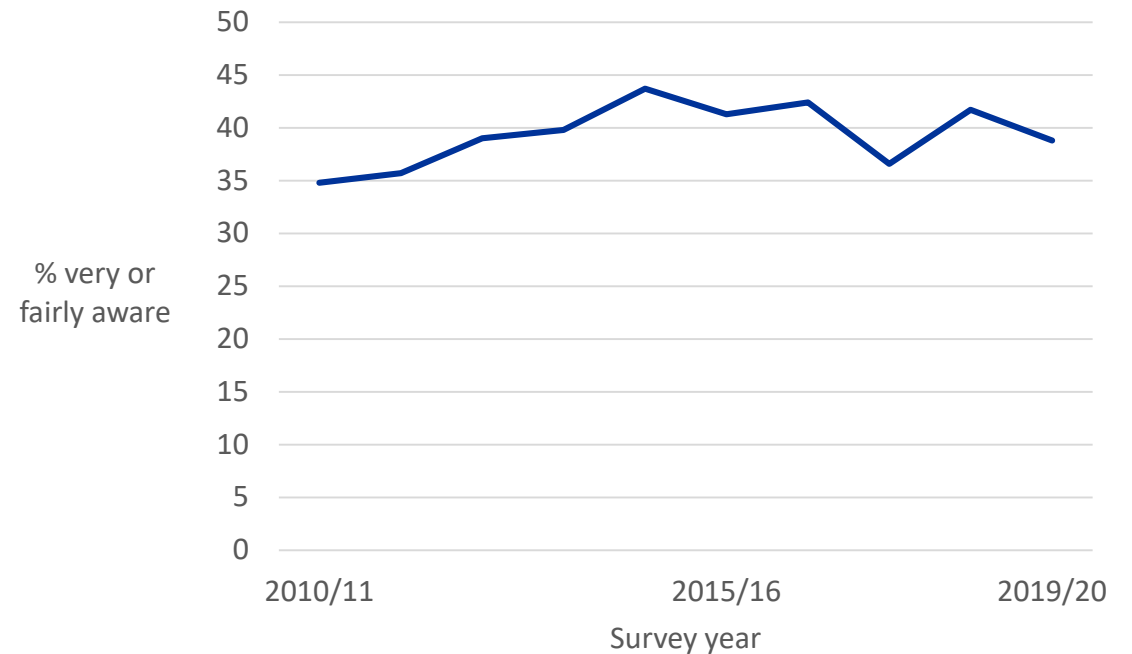
3 | Awareness of the work of the Youth Justice Agency

3.1 Awareness of the work of the Youth Justice Agency

NISCS respondents who had either been in contact with, or had heard of, the YJA were then asked about their level of awareness regarding the work of the agency, using a four-point scale ranging from 'very aware' to 'not at all aware'. Figures are presented in Table 3.

- Almost two-fifths (38.8%) of 2019/20 respondents were either very or fairly aware of the work undertaken by the YJA, with the remaining 61.2% of participants indicating that they were not very or not at all aware of the work the agency does. These figures showed no statistically significant change from 2018/19 when the proportions were 41.7% and 58.3% respectively.
- The figure of 41.7% observed in 2018/19 represents an increase on the 2010/11 figure of 34.8%. While the proportion who were very or fairly aware in 2019/20, 38.8%, also appears to remain higher than the 2010/11 figure, this is not statistically significant.

Figure 3.1: How aware are you of the work the Youth Justice Agency does? (%), 2010/11 to 2019/20



1. Results exclude refusals.

4 | Confidence in the Youth Justice Agency

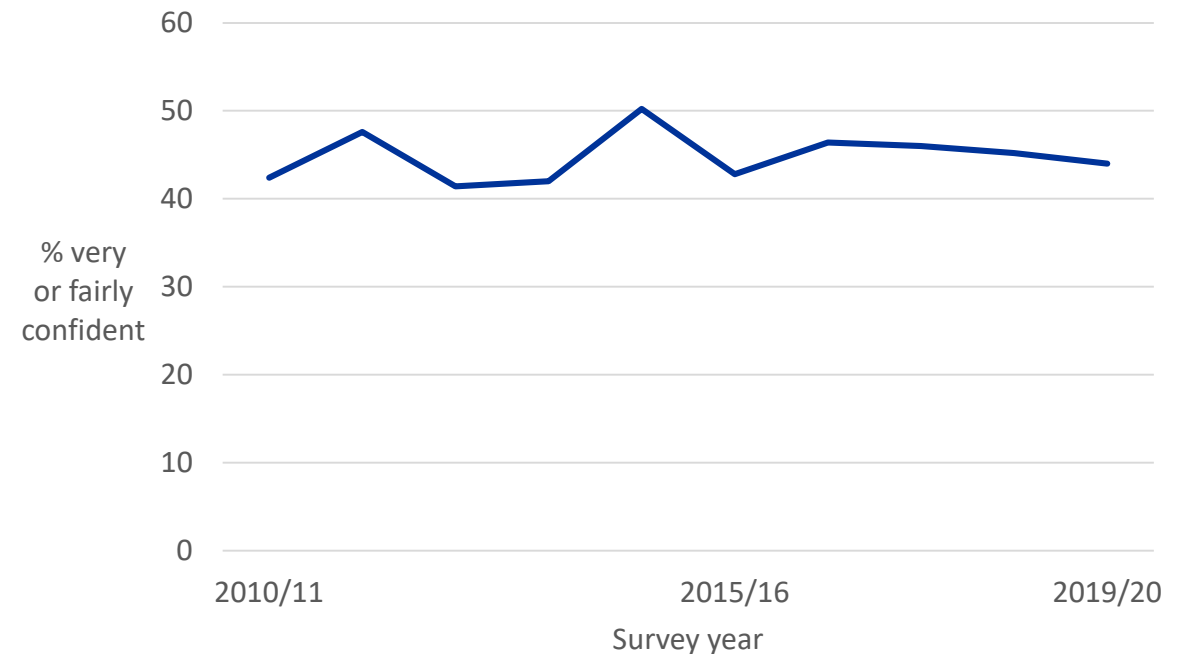
4.1 Confidence in the effectiveness of the Youth Justice Agency

A question was also included to gauge confidence levels in the YJA with respondents being asked how confident they are that the agency is effective at reducing re-offending by young people aged 10-17. Results are based on those who had heard of the YJA and, from 2018/19, also those who had had contact with the agency (Table 4). Table 5 subsequently presents these confidence levels disaggregated by awareness of the work undertaken by the YJA (covered in section 3.1). The proportions who were unsure and gave a don't know response are also presented in both tables.

- Results for 2019/20 show just over two-fifths (44.0%) of respondents were very or fairly confident that the YJA is effective at reducing re-offending by young people, with an almost equal proportion expressing little or no confidence (44.2%). The remaining respondents, 11.8%, were unsure how effective the YJA is at reducing re-offending.
- All three proportions remained unchanged when compared with the previous year when the respective figures for 2018/19 were 45.2%, 41.4% and 13.4%

- The proportion who were confident fluctuated between 2010/11 and 2015/16, showing statistically significant changes year-on-year for most of this period. Since then, however, the figure has been relatively stable with no statistically significant changes observed in recent years.

Figure 4.1: How confident are you that the Youth Justice Agency is effective at reducing re-offending by young people aged 10-17? (%), 2010/11 to 2019/20

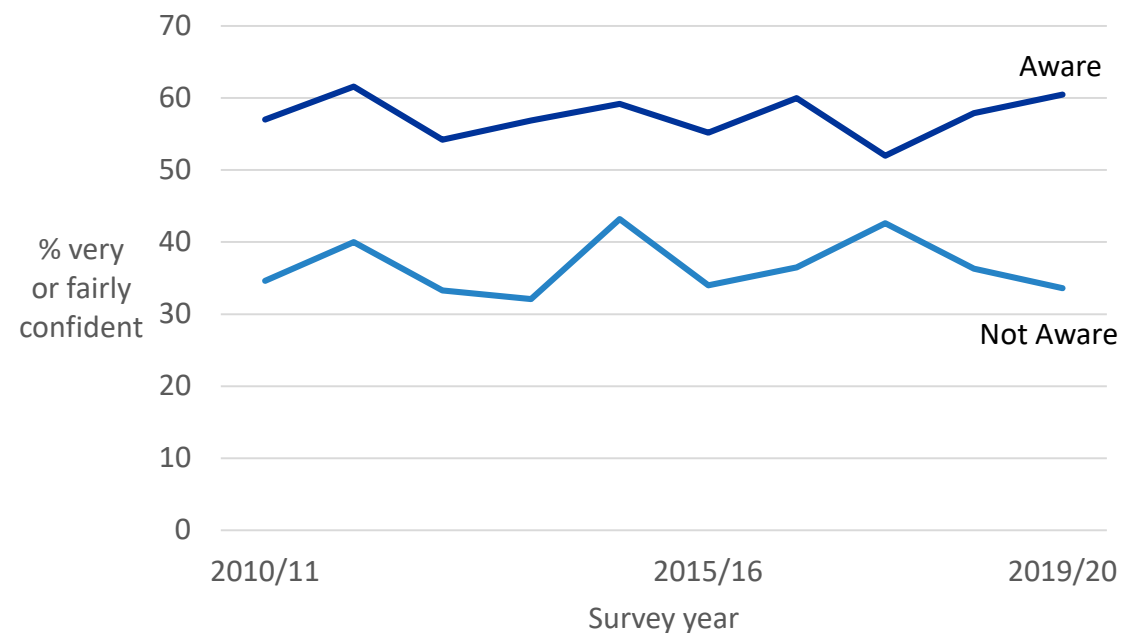


1. Results exclude refusals.

4 | Confidence in the Youth Justice Agency

- When confidence levels are disaggregated by awareness, 2019/20 findings suggest that, of those who were aware of the work of the YJA, three-fifths (60.5%) were very or fairly confident that the agency is effective at reducing re-offending; 37.4% were not very or not at all confident. Both proportions showed no statistically significant change from 2018/19 (57.9% and 39.7% respectively) nor when compared with 2010/11 (57.0% and 40.2%) .
- In terms of respondents who were not aware of the work undertaken by the agency, confidence in reducing re-offending was lower. In 2019/20, a third (33.6%) of these respondents reported being very or fairly confident with 48.6% expressing little or no confidence (not very or not at all confident responses). However, a higher proportion of these respondents were unsure, providing a don't know response (17.8% compared with 2.2% of those who were familiar with the work of the YJA). Again, all of these proportions were similar to those observed in 2018/19, showing no statistically significant change.
- This same pattern appears to emerge in previous years whereby confidence levels among those who are aware of the work of the YJA were higher than those who were not familiar with it, with the latter respondents more likely to provide a don't know response.

Figure 4.2: How confident are you that the Youth Justice Agency is effective at reducing re-offending by young people aged 10-17? (by awareness level) (%), 2010/11 to 2019/20



- Results exclude refusals.
- The 'Aware' category refers to participants who responded that they were 'very' or 'fairly' aware of the work of the YJA. The 'Not Aware' category includes those who were 'not very' or 'not at all' aware.

Appendix 1: Tabular Annex

Table 1: In the past 12 months, have you come into contact with the Youth Justice Agency in any capacity? (%)¹

| % saying | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ² |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---|
| Yes | 6.2 | 5.2 | ns |
| No | 93.8 | 94.8 | ns |
| Unweighted base | 3,317 | 3,597 | |

Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19 and 2019/20

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated in the respective column by an (s). Where there is no statistically significant change between the two years, this is represented as (ns).

Table 2: Have you ever heard of the Youth Justice Agency? (%)^{1,2}

| % saying | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20³ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| Yes | 21.5 | 23.6 | 26.0 | 27.5 | 28.2 | 27.6 | 30.6 | 27.6 | 26.0 | 26.7 | ns |
| No | 78.5 | 76.4 | 74.0 | 72.5 | 71.8 | 72.4 | 69.4 | 72.4 | 74.0 | 73.3 | ns |
| Unweighted base | 4,071 | 4,046 | 4,043 | 3,586 | 2,069 | 1,966 | 1,865 | 1,572 | 3,205 | 3,503 | |

Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 2010/11 to 2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19 and 2019/20

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. From 2018/19, this question was asked of respondents who had not had any contact with the YJA in the previous 12 months.
3. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated in the respective column by an (s). Where there is no statistically significant change between the two years, this is represented as (ns).

Table 3: How aware are you of the work the Youth Justice Agency does? (%)^{1,2}

| % saying | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20³ |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| Very or fairly aware | 34.8 | 35.7 | 39.0 | 39.8 | 43.7 | 41.3 | 42.4 | 36.6 | 41.7 | 38.8 | ns |
| Not very or not aware | 65.1 | 64.0 | 60.8 | 60.2 | 56.2 | 58.7 | 57.6 | 63.3 | 58.3 | 61.2 | ns |
| Don't know | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | ns |
| Unweighted base | 857 | 928 | 1,007 | 961 | 567 | 533 | 568 | 437 | 1,024 | 1,109 | |

Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 2010/11 to 2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19 and 2019/20

1. Results exclude refusals.
2. Asked of respondents who had either come into contact with, or had heard of, the YJA.
3. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated in the respective column by an (s). Where there is no statistically significant change between the two years, this is represented as (ns).

Table 4: How confident are you that the Youth Justice Agency is effective at reducing re-offending by young people aged 10-17? (%)^{1,2}

| % saying | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ³ |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| Very or fairly confident | 42.4 | 47.6 | 41.4 | 42.0 | 50.2 | 42.8 | 46.4 | 46.0 | 45.2 | 44.0 | ns |
| Not very or not confident | 46.5 | 45.0 | 45.3 | 44.5 | 41.6 | 46.8 | 43.1 | 42.8 | 41.4 | 44.2 | ns |
| Don't know | 11.1 | 7.3 | 13.3 | 13.5 | 8.2 | 10.5 | 10.4 | 11.3 | 13.4 | 11.8 | ns |
| Unweighted base | 853 | 924 | 1,007 | 958 | 566 | 533 | 568 | 436 | 1,023 | 1,109 | |

Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 2010/11 to 2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19 and 2019/20

1. Results exclude refusals.

2. Asked of respondents who had either come into contact with, or had heard of, the YJA.

3. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated in the respective column by an (s). Where there is no statistically significant change between the two years, this is represented as (ns).

Table 5: How confident are you that the Youth Justice Agency is effective at reducing re-offending by young people aged 10-17? (by awareness level) (%)^{1,2}

| Awareness of YJA | % saying | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ³ |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| Very or fairly aware | Very or fairly confident | 57.0 | 61.6 | 54.2 | 56.9 | 59.2 | 55.2 | 60.0 | 52.0 | 57.9 | 60.5 | ns |
| | Not very or not confident | 40.2 | 37.0 | 40.8 | 40.2 | 38.9 | 41.6 | 36.6 | 41.8 | 39.7 | 37.4 | ns |
| | Don't know | 2.8 | 1.4 | 4.9 | 2.9 | 1.9 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 6.1 | 2.4 | 2.2 | ns |
| | Unweighted base | 305 | 339 | 398 | 388 | 244 | 222 | 250 | 164 | 418 | 430 | |
| Not very or not aware | Very or fairly confident | 34.6 | 40.0 | 33.3 | 32.1 | 43.2 | 34.0 | 36.5 | 42.6 | 36.3 | 33.6 | ns |
| | Not very or not confident | 49.8 | 49.7 | 48.3 | 47.3 | 43.7 | 50.4 | 48.0 | 43.4 | 42.6 | 48.6 | ns |
| | Don't know | 15.6 | 10.3 | 18.3 | 20.6 | 13.1 | 15.6 | 15.5 | 14.1 | 21.1 | 17.8 | ns |
| | Unweighted base | 547 | 583 | 607 | 570 | 322 | 311 | 318 | 271 | 604 | 678 | |

Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 2010/11 to 2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19 and 2019/20

1. Results exclude refusals.

2. Asked of respondents who had either come into contact with, or had heard of, the YJA.

3. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated in the respective column by an (s). Where there is no statistically significant change between the two years, this is represented as (ns).

Appendix 2: Technical Annex

About the NISCS

Closely mirroring the format and core questions of the CSEW, the NISCS is an important source of information about community safety issues such as levels of, and public attitudes to, crime and anti-social behaviour. Its results play an important role in informing and monitoring government policies and targets. Within the [2016-21 Draft Programme for Government \(opens in a new window\)](#) (PfG) and the [Northern Ireland Civil Service Outcomes Delivery Plan \(opens in a new window\)](#), the Department of Justice lead on Indicator 1 related to reducing crime. Survey findings also informed the [Northern Ireland Policing Board's Strategic Outcomes for Policing in Northern Ireland 2016-2020 \(opens in a new window\)](#) (NIPB, 2016) and [Annual Policing Plan 2019-20 \(opens in a new window\)](#) (NIPB, 2019).

An alternative, but complementary, measure of crime to offences recorded by the police, the main aims of the NISCS are to:

- measure crime victimisation rates experienced by people living in private households regardless of whether or not these crimes were reported to, or recorded by, the police;
- monitor trends in the level of crime, independent of changes in reporting levels or police recording practices;
- measure people's perceptions of and reactions to crime (for example, the level and causes of crime, the extent to which they are concerned about crime and the effect of crime on their quality of life);
- measure public confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system; and
- collect sensitive information, using self-completion modules, on people's experiences regarding crime-related issues, such as domestic violence.

Recorded crime figures cannot, by their nature, provide an impression of the extent of concern about crime (often described as 'fear of crime') among different sections of the community. Hence, it is necessary to complement the police figures with information drawn from the NISCS, which, for the crime types it covers, provides a more complete measure of the extent and impact of crime against private households and their adult occupants. Further information on recorded crime statistics can be found in the [Police Service of Northern Ireland \(PSNI\) User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics \(opens in a new window\) \(PDF, 1MB\)](#) (PSNI, 2018a). While some of the core interviewer-administered modules for NISCS 2019/20 were (generally) based on CSEW 2019/20, some modification has been necessary to reflect local issues and the fact that the smaller NISCS sample size would not have generated robust results for follow-up questions asked of small sub-sections of the sample.

Frequency and sample size of the NICS/NISCS

Initially, the then NICS was conducted on an ad hoc basis, before becoming a biennial survey in 2001. At that time, the Community Attitudes Survey (CAS) was also being conducted on a continuous basis, facilitating annual reports on topics linked to crime, policing and the criminal justice system. Increasingly, however, the CSEW was becoming a key vehicle to track progress against Public Service Agreement (PSA) and other targets related to the criminal justice and health sectors in England and Wales. Hence, interest increased among officials and Ministers in what the NICS had to offer in terms of direct comparison, while, in light of the improved security situation, many of the issues originally covered by CAS were becoming less relevant.

Accordingly, it was decided that a more effective use of resources would be to discontinue CAS at the end of 2003 and to move fieldwork for the NICS to a continuous basis with effect from January 2005. This would facilitate the monitoring of annual trends and more regular direct comparison with England and Wales. It was also decided to increase the target achieved sample size for the NICS from 3,000 to 4,000. This would contribute to increased accuracy of headline results and generate more robust analyses for various socio-demographic characteristics. However, unavoidable budgetary pressures resulted in the need to reduce the target achieved sample size; a moderate decrease was first made in-year 2013/14, from 4,000 to 3,500, with a full sample reduction to 2,000 first being implemented in 2014/15. Following a review of the survey during 2017/18 (details of which can be found in the [Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#) section of the Department of Justice website), the target sample size has been increased with effect from April 2018 onwards. It is anticipated that around 3,500 interviews will now be achieved annually. Additional information, covering issues such as sampling design and methodology is available within the survey [User Guide \(opens in a new window\)](#) (DoJ, 2022) and associated [Quality Report \(opens in a new window\)](#) (DoJ, 2019).

Sampling and fieldwork

The initial NISCS 2019/20 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. Visits to each address by an interviewer from the NISRA Central Survey Unit resulted in an eligible sample of 6,576 occupied addresses, from which attempts were made to interview one randomly selected adult respondent at each address.

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.

In January 2005, the then NICS began operating on a continuous basis. This bulletin refers primarily to fieldwork undertaken during the financial year 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, which involved complete interviews with 3,710 people aged 16 years and over. This represents an eligible response rate of 56%.

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 an hour for non-victims, although those involving respondents who disclosed several crimes could last much longer.

Rounding, error and statistical significance

Refusals and non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses, while don't know responses have been excluded in some tables. Percentages may not always sum to 100 or numbers may not sum to an overall total due to the effect of rounding. Full 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 NISCS estimates are subject to sampling error, differences between estimates from successive years of the survey or between population subgroups may occur by chance. For the purposes of the survey, where differences emerge as being statistically significant, these are reported at the 5% ($p < 0.05$) level of probability (two-tailed tests). This means that, for any observed result that is found to be statistically significant, one can be 95% confident that this has not happened by chance.

As a result of the sample reduction in recent years, the respective confidence limits of any percentages from the survey were wider than was the case previously and the margin of difference between findings required to achieve 'statistical significance' was widened accordingly. This means that absolute differences in percentages which would previously have been 'statistically significant' with the larger numbers then sampled (and the much narrower range of error for any findings) may not necessarily be found to be statistically significant with the reduced sample size. This should be borne in mind when considering any long-term trends presented in survey tables.

Further information on the 2019/20 sweep of the NISCS is contained within the NISCS 2019/20 Technical Report (forthcoming, via the [Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#) section of the Northern Ireland Department of Justice website).

Appendix 3: National Statistics Status



National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in July 2020 following a [Compliance Check \(opens in a new window\)](#) by the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(opens in a new window\)](#). NISCS statistics last underwent a [full assessment \(opens in a new window\)](#) against the [Code of Practice \(opens in a new window\)](#) in 2012/13.

As part of the recent compliance check, we have made the following improvements:

- published a [Future Programme of Work \(opens in a new window\)](#) that details the list of developments that the department plan to scope in terms of feasibility of implementation.

Appendix 4: References

- Campbell, P, Rice A and Ross, K. (2021) [Experience of Crime: Findings from the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#). DoJ Research and Statistical Bulletin. Belfast: DoJ
- Campbell, P, Ross K and Rice, A. (2021) [Perceptions of Policing and Justice: Findings from the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#). DoJ Research and Statistical Bulletin. Belfast: DoJ
- Department of Justice (2022) [Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey User Guide \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Department of Justice (2019) [Northern Ireland Crime Survey Quality Report \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Northern Ireland Executive (2016) [Programme for Government 2016-21 and Outcomes Delivery Plan \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Northern Ireland Policing Board (2019) [Annual Policing Plan 2019-20 \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Northern Ireland Policing Board (2016) [Strategic Outcomes for Policing in Northern Ireland 2016-2020 \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2020) [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2020 \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (2018) [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland \(opens in a new window\) \(PDF, 1MB\)](#) (Updated January 2018)
- Ross, K. and Campbell, P. (2021) [Perceptions of Crime: Findings from the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#). DoJ Research and Statistical Bulletin. Belfast: DoJ