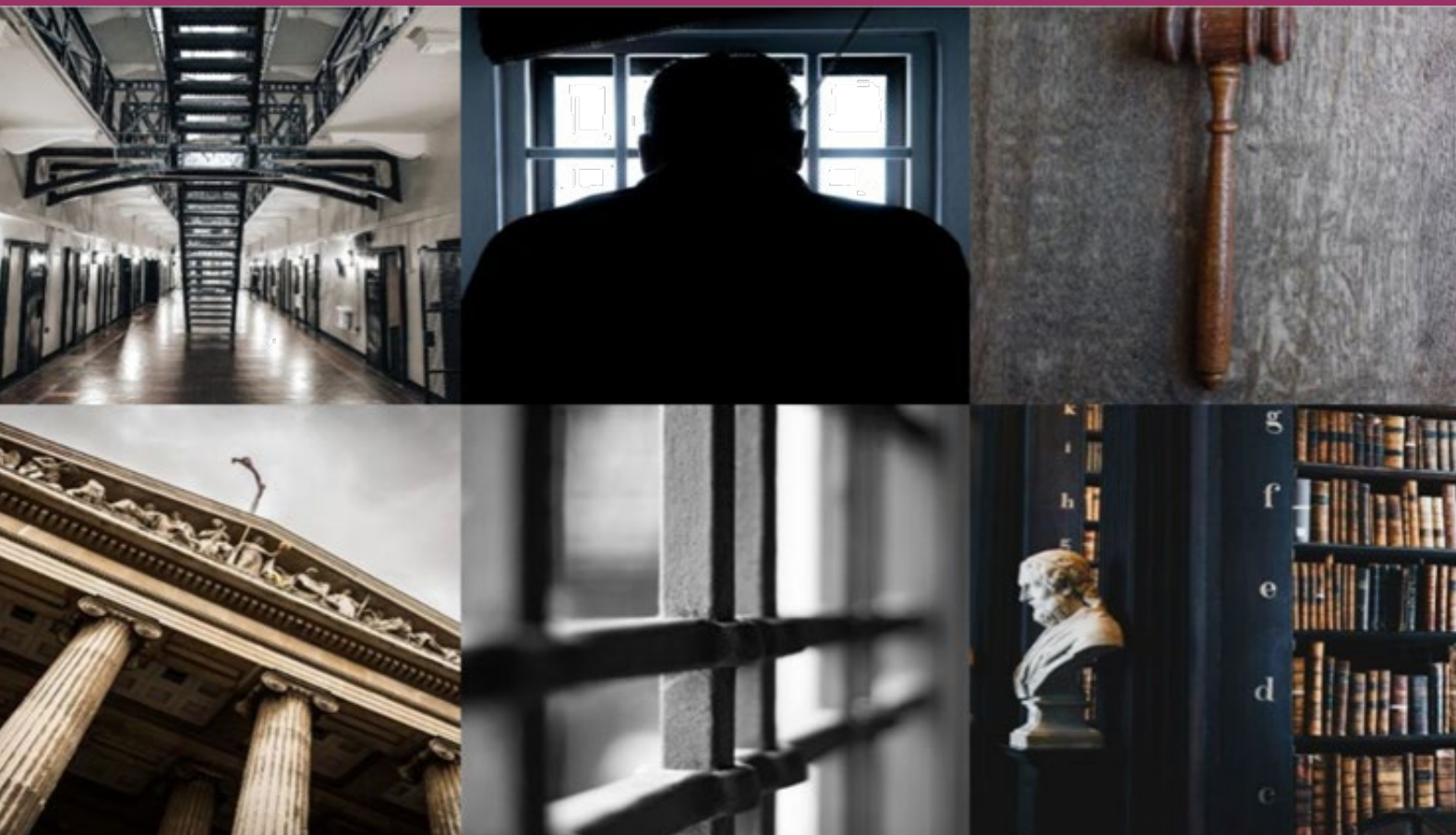


Consultation on the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey

Analytical Services Group

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1. Background to the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey

1.1 The Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS; formerly known as the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS)) is a representative, continuous, personal interview survey in which people aged 16 and over living in private households in Northern Ireland are asked about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to interview, as well as their perceptions of crime-related issues, including policing and justice, sentencing and anti-social behaviour. Self-completion modules are used to elicit information on sensitive topics, such as domestic abuse. The survey is commissioned by the Department of Justice (DoJ) and carried out by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

1.2 During 2017/18, a review of the survey was undertaken, more specifically with regards to its scope and content of the questionnaire. Following a range of consultation exercises, a number of amendments were subsequently made to the survey.

- **Survey name:** The survey was re-named to the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) from April 2018 onwards.
- **Sample size:** Following a reduction in the target achieved sample size from 4,000 to 2,000 annually, the target sample size was subsequently increased again from 2018/19 onwards; it was anticipated that approximately 3,500 interviews would be achieved annually.
- **Content and format:** Changes were made to the content and format of the questionnaire. Some modules were discontinued, while new modules were developed. To accommodate all modules and reduce completion time, the survey moved to a biennial rotation format. Core modules, such as those used to measure victimisation, would continue to be asked annually while some attitudinal-based modules would be rotated biennially and asked in alternate years.

1.3 While these changes took effect from 2018/19, the subsequent pandemic resulted in the survey moving from what was traditionally face-to-face interviews to telephone mode from 2020/21 to 2023/24. As a result, some modules were reduced, some amended, while some were removed altogether in order to further reduce completion time and given that some questions would not have been suitable for a telephone interview. Conducting

interviews by telephone, however, means it has not been possible to include self-completion modules which collect sensitive information such as respondents' experiences of domestic abuse as the confidentiality could not be maintained. Given the subsequent data gap, the survey moved to a mixed mode method (telephone and face-to-face) for 2024/25 using the reduced questionnaire to enable experiences of domestic abuse to be captured from respondents opting for a face-to-face interview.

2. NISCS consultation during 2024

2.1 Analytical Services Group (ASG) within DoJ is undertaking the current consultation of the NISCS to ensure it continues to be a valuable evidence base by providing quality statistics on crime-related topics, meeting the needs of policy makers and data users. It will ensure the survey remains relevant and fit-for-purpose by allowing us to assess the use of current questions and outputs as well as identifying any new potential areas for development.

2.2 To date, we have engaged directly with DoJ policy officials as part of this process, however, we are keen to get input from all interested parties, for example other government organisations, academia and the voluntary sector, to help inform the way forward.

2.3 The three main aims of the consultation are to:

- review the questionnaire content and assess the use of NISCS findings and outputs;
- gauge views on the published reports and outputs from the survey; and
- ascertain views on using a mixed mode methodology going forward.

Aim 1: Review the questionnaire content and assess the use of NISCS findings and outputs

2.4 ASG want to assess how widely the findings from the survey are used, by whom and for what purpose. As referenced, the move to telephone mode in 2020/21 meant some modules were either reduced with some questions being removed, reduced with some questions and/or response options being reworded or the module was removed altogether.

2.5 To ensure all findings from the survey are considered and reviewed when developing the revised questionnaire, this consultation will seek feedback on the content and use of results from not only the more recent, shorter, amended version used for telephone mode but also the full, traditional face-to-face questionnaire, which will include questions previously asked but removed for the telephone interviews.

2.6 Consultation participants will be asked to select from a list, the findings they use and for each module/set of findings selected, feedback around the following will be sought:

- What specific outputs do you use?
- What do you use these for?
- Would you continue to use these findings/outputs going forward?
- Are there any changes you would like to see made to the module? If so, what changes would you like to see?

2.7 The modules that are included in the survey and are to be covered within the scope of this consultation are:

- Perceptions of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Experience of Crime Screener Questions
- Experience of Crime Victim Forms
- Confidence in the Criminal Justice System
- Confidence in the Police
- Confidence in Police Accountability Arrangements
- Confidence in the Youth Justice Agency
- Electronic Monitoring
- Perceptions of Organised Crime
- Experience of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Experience of Domestic Abuse
- Perceptions of Sentencing
- Perceptions of Modern Slavery
- Cyber-Crime
- Experience of Domestic Abuse
- Experience of Sexual Violence and Abuse
- Demographics

Proposal to measure fraud and computer misuse

2.8 As a primary aim of the survey, it is expected that following the consultation, crime victimisation estimates will continue to be measured. However, in terms of these modules, ASG are proposing to include questions to measure fraud and computer misuse.

2.9 While the current NISCS crime estimates cover a range of personal and household crime types captured in the survey, the screener questions and victim form modules (referred to above) do not cover fraud and computer misuse. These offences are therefore not included within the main victimisation estimates. With the changing nature of crime, the use of the internet not only provides new methods by which existing crimes can be committed but has also enabled the emergence of new types of crimes. The exclusion of fraud and computer misuse means current NISCS estimates do not fully reflect the crimes now experienced by adults in Northern Ireland, a limitation of the survey which was recognised by the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(opens in a new window\)](#) (UK Statistics Authority).

2.10 The NISCS has included a cyber crime module biennially from 2019/20, which asks respondents about their experiences of cyber crime. However, this module does not apply the same methodology used for measuring the main victimisation estimates derived from the survey, that is, via screener questions and victim forms. Consequently, these cyber crime statistics do not form part of the overall NISCS victimisation rates. ASG are therefore proposing to include fraud and computer misuse within the main estimates and measure them via the screener questions and victim form methodology. The equivalent surveys in England and Wales and Scotland have already been extended to include these crimes.

2.11 Participants who indicate that they use the crime victimisation estimates will therefore be asked:

- Do you agree or disagree that fraud and computer misuse should be captured within the main crime victimisation estimates?
- Would you use these fraud and computer misuse estimates? If so, how would you use them?

Aim 2: Gauge views on the published reports and outputs from the survey

2.12 ASG are also keen to gather views on the publications themselves to ascertain whether there is any further data that would be helpful to include for users and if there are any improvements that can be made. Consultation participants will be asked:

- Which of the published formats are you most likely to use to review NISCS findings?
- How frequently you use NISCS publications/outputs?
- How satisfied you are with the content, presentation of data, commentary, reliability, timeliness, frequency of reports and the publications overall?
- To what extent do the publications/outputs meet your needs and how could they better meet your needs?

Aim 3: Ascertain views on using a mixed mode methodology going forward

2.13 The recent pandemic and the requirement to adopt an alternative methodology as a result has highlighted the need to futureproof surveys and make them more adaptable going forward. While the move to telephone interviews was necessary to continue data collection, having emerged from the pandemic, ASG are now considering the mode to be applied for future survey years. It was initially assumed that NISCS interviews would return to face-to-face when circumstances permitted, however, the pandemic has caused a more general move away from wholly in-person interviewing.

2.14 ASG has therefore been engaging with NISRA, our survey provider, regarding the future survey mode, including the potential to conduct the NISCS online. However, following this engagement, and having considered findings from scoping work undertaken for the Crime Survey for England and Wales ([Research on Transforming the Crime Survey for England and Wales \(opens in a new window\)](#)) in respect of adopting an online mode, the proposal to move the NISCS online is not considered feasible at this time. An online methodology will, however, continue to be explored for the medium to long term.

2.15 As previously referenced, the 2024/25 survey has moved to a mixed mode methodology whereby respondents have the option of either an in-home face-to-face or telephone interview. This is the first year this multi-modal method has been applied to the NISCS, one of the primary aims of which is to enable the inclusion of the self-completion

module. ASG are proposing to retain this methodology for future years. Some of the benefits and drawbacks of using mixed mode going forward are outlined below.

Benefits:

- Though self-completion modules will only be asked of those selecting in-home interviews, it will enable sensitive information on experience of domestic abuse, for example, to be captured and subsequent headline figures to be produced; telephone-only would not facilitate any collection of self-completion data.
- Mixed mode method is being accepted as a way forward for other NISRA/Office for National Statistics surveys.
- Indications from other NISRA surveys, that had already been using this methodology, suggest response rates are generally on a par with telephone-only rates.

Drawbacks:

- The full questionnaire, previously used for face-to-face interviews, would not be reinstated as some questions within it will still be unsuitable for interviews conducted via telephone. Asking the longer questionnaire would also increase completion time again which had been reduced by asking a shorter survey.
- The mixed mode method has just been introduced for the NISCS and relatively recently for other NISRA surveys. While full-year response rates are available for other surveys, there is some uncertainty at present on the response rate for NISCS specifically and what percentage of interviews would be face-to-face versus those via telephone. Work on comparability with previous years and trends would need to be undertaken.

2.16 We are therefore seeking your views on this proposal to move to mixed mode methodology. In the online consultation, participants will be asked:

- ASG are proposing to retain a mixed-mode methodology for future survey years. Do you agree or disagree with this approach?
- If you disagree, please indicate what your preferred approach would be and why?

3. Your details

3.1 As part of the consultation, you will be asked for your name, e-mail address, whether you are responding to the consultation in a personal or professional capacity and if you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group. An e-mail and organisation being represented are the only mandatory fields.

4. How to respond

4.1 We are interested in feedback from all users of the NISCS. While your feedback would be most helpful if the specific questions posed are answered, any other feedback on the survey more generally is also welcome. We would encourage participants to provide feedback via our online Citizen Space questionnaire which is available at the following link: <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/doj/niscs-consultation> (opens in a new window).

4.2 You can also respond by e-mail to statistics.research@justice-ni.gov.uk or by post to:
Analytical Services Group,
Financial Services Division,
Department of Justice,
Castle Buildings,
Stormont Estate,
Belfast BT4 3SG.
Telephone: 028 9052 0185

5. Consultation details and enquiries

5.1 This consultation was issued on 29/10/24 and will close at 23:59 on 09/12/24. An anonymised summary of responses will subsequently be published. Enquiries should be directed to Analytical Services Group; contact details are provided in the 'How to Respond' section above.

6. Alternative formats

6.1 If it would assist you to access the document in an alternative format or language other than English, please contact statistics.research@justice-ni.gov.uk for assistance.

7. Privacy, confidentiality and data protection

7.1 To be as transparent as possible, we may publish all responses in our Summary of Responses paper when released, except where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity. All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published (please see privacy notice in Annex A below).

7.2 For this reason, in the online consultation, we ask for your name, email address and about the organisation you represent, however, please do not provide any other personal or identifying information. Any personal information, if provided, will be removed from the published responses as will any inappropriate or offensive comments, otherwise we may publish them in full. Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Subject to certain limited provisos, the FOIA gives members of the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, in this case, the Department. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation.

7.3 If you would prefer for your response and/or organisation not to be published, again, please indicate this through the relevant questions in the consultation. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

Privacy Notice

Annex A

Data Controller Name: Department of Justice

Address: Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SG

Email: statistics.research@justice-ni.gov.uk

Data Protection Officer Name: DoJ Data Protection Officer

Telephone: (028) 9037 8617

Email: DataProtectionOfficer@justice-ni.gov.uk

Being transparent and providing accessible information to individuals about how we may use personal data is a key element of the Data Protection Act (DPA) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Department of Justice is committed to building trust and confidence in our ability to process your personal information and protect your privacy.

Purpose for processing

We will process personal data provided in response to consultations for informing the development of our policy, guidance, statistical outputs or other regulatory work in the subject area of the request for views. We may publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves but these will not contain any personal data. We will not publish the names or contact details of respondents but may include the names of organisations responding.

If you have indicated that you would be interested in contributing to further Department work on the subject matter covered by the consultation, then we might process your contact details to get in touch with you.

Lawful basis for processing

The lawful basis we are relying on to process your personal data is Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks in our capacity as a Government Department.

We will only process any special category personal data you provide, which reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious belief, health, disability or sexual life/orientation when it is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest under Article 9(2)(g) of the GDPR, in the exercise of the function of the Department, and to monitor equality.

How will your information be used and shared?

We process the information internally for the above stated purpose. For the time that we are processing this data, it will be held on a secure IT system and access to it will be controlled. We do not intend to share your personal data with any third party. Any specific requests from a third party for us to share your personal data with them will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the data protection laws.

Where do you get my personal data from?

- The personal data will originate from the person responding to the consultation.

Do you share my personal data with anyone else?

- We will not share your personal data with other organisations.

Do you transfer my personal data to other countries?

- No.

How long will we keep your information?

We will retain consultation response information until our work on the subject matter of the consultation is complete, and in line with the Department's approved [Retention and Disposal Schedule \(opens in a new window\)](#).

What are your rights?

- You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being [processed, and access to your personal data \(opens in a new window\)](#).
- You are entitled to have personal data [rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete \(opens in a new window\)](#).

- You have a right to have personal data [erased and to prevent processing \(opens in a new window\)](#), in specific circumstances.
- You have the right to ‘block’ or suppress processing of personal data, [in specific circumstances \(opens in a new window\)](#).
- You have the right to data portability, [in specific circumstances \(opens in a new window\)](#).
- You have the right to object to the processing, [in specific circumstances \(opens in a new window\)](#).
- You have rights in relation to [automated decision making and profiling \(opens in a new window\)](#).

How to complain if you are not happy with how we process your personal information

If you are unhappy with how any aspect of this privacy notice, or how your personal information is being processed, please contact our Departmental Data Protection Officer at:

- Email: DataProtectionOfficer@justice-ni.gov.uk
- Phone: 028 9037 8617

If you are still not happy, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO):

Information Commissioner’s Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: casework@ico.org.uk

[https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/ \(opens in a new window\)](https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/)

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