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Analytical Services Group

**Perceptions of
Electronic Monitoring:
Findings from the
2013/14 to 2015/16
Northern Ireland Crime
Surveys**

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INTRODUCTION

The Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 provided new powers for the increased use of curfews, supported by the use of electronic monitoring. From 1 April 2009, electronic monitoring became available for use as:

- a condition of bail granted by a court;
- a condition of a licence on release from prison;
- a requirement of a probation or combination order;
- a requirement of a Youth Conference Order; and/or
- a non-custodial element of a custody probation or juvenile justice order.

Since September 2012, the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) has included three questions relating to electronic monitoring. These questions aim to measure: the level of understanding of electronic monitoring among respondents; confidence levels on whether it assists in managing an individual's curfew; and whether electronic monitoring is effective at protecting the public by monitoring an individual's curfew. This is the first report published, with findings covering each of the financial years from 2013/14 to 2015/16.

LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF ELECTRONIC MONITORING

NICS respondents were asked to indicate how much of an understanding they had of electronic monitoring using a five-point scale, ranging from 'very good' to 'very poor'.

- ◆ NICS 2015/16 findings show 39.3% of respondents indicated that they had either a very or fairly good understanding of electronic monitoring, 17.8% stated they had neither a good nor poor understanding, while the remaining 42.9% felt they had a fairly or very poor understanding of electronic monitoring in Northern Ireland. These figures were unchanged ($p < 0.05$) when compared with NICS 2014/15 (Table 1).

Table 1: Level of understanding of electronic monitoring¹

| Percentage (%) | NICS 2013/14 | NICS 2014/15 | NICS 2015/16 | Statistically significant change 2014/15 to 2015/16? ² |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Very / fairly good | 35.1 | 36.4 | 39.3 | |
| Neither good nor poor | 20.3 | 18.1 | 17.8 | |
| Very / fairly poor | 44.6 | 45.6 | 42.9 | |
| <i>Unweighted base</i> | 3,552 | 2,060 | 1,961 | |

1. Results exclude non-valid responses.
 2. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated by a double asterisk (**).

CONFIDENCE IN ELECTRONIC MONITORING

NICS respondents were also asked how confident they were that electronic monitoring assists in managing an individual's curfew.

- ◆ Over three-fifths (64.3%) of respondents felt either very or fairly confident that electronic monitoring assists in managing an individual's curfew. This represents a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) from the previous year (60.0%, NICS 2014/15). In 2015/16, 15.3% of respondents claimed that they were not very or not at all confident, while just over a fifth (20.5%) stated that they didn't know or were unsure as to whether electronic monitoring assists in managing an individual's curfew. The proportions who were not

very/not at all confident or unsure remained on a par with those observed in 2014/15 (17.0% and 23.0% respectively) (Table 2).

Table 2: Confidence levels that electronic monitoring assists in managing an individual's curfew¹

| Percentage (%) | NICS 2013/14 | NICS 2014/15 | NICS 2015/16 | Statistically significant change 2014/15 to 2015/16? ² |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Very / fairly confident | 59.1 | 60.0 | 64.3 | ** ↑ |
| Not very / not at all confident | 19.1 | 17.0 | 15.3 | |
| Don't know / unsure | 21.8 | 23.0 | 20.5 | |
| <i>Unweighted base</i> | 3,474 | 2,027 | 1,939 | |

1. Results exclude non-valid responses.

2. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated by a double asterisk (**).

A similar pattern was observed when examining the proportion of respondents who felt that electronic monitoring was effective at protecting the public by monitoring an individual's curfew.

- ◆ Almost three-fifths (59.0%) of NICS 2015/16 respondents were either very or fairly confident that electronic monitoring is effective at protecting the public by monitoring an individual's curfew, a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) when compared with NICS 2014/15 (54.7%). The proportions of NICS 2015/16 respondents who were not very or not at all confident (20.8%) or were unsure as to whether electronic monitoring is effective at protecting the public (20.2%) remained unchanged ($p < 0.05$) since the previous year (23.2% and 22.1% respectively) (Table 3).

Table 3: Confidence levels that electronic monitoring is effective at protecting the public by monitoring an individual's curfew¹

| Percentage (%) | NICS 2013/14 | NICS 2014/15 | NICS 2015/16 | Statistically significant change 2014/15 to 2015/16? ² |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Very / fairly confident | 53.1 | 54.7 | 59.0 | ** ↑ |
| Not very / not at all confident | 24.8 | 23.2 | 20.8 | |
| Don't know / unsure | 22.1 | 22.1 | 20.2 | |
| <i>Unweighted base</i> | 3,478 | 2,026 | 1,942 | |

1. Results exclude non-valid responses.

2. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated by a double asterisk (**).

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the Northern Ireland Crime Survey please contact: Analytical Services Group, Department of Justice, 1st Floor, Laganside House, 23-27 Oxford Street, Belfast BT1 3LA; Telephone: 028 9072 4529; Email: statistics.research@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk

This update and other Department of Justice research and statistical publications are available at: www.justice-ni.gov.uk

TECHNICAL NOTES

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 households. Don't knows, refusals and non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses.

Because of a combination of both sampling and non-sampling error, any sample is unlikely to reflect precisely the characteristics of the population.

Statistical significance tests have been carried out on a range of differences observed between various sweeps of the NICS. These tests are used to establish the degree of confidence with which we can infer the observed findings as an accurate reflection of the perceptions of the population.

For the purposes of this update, where differences have emerged as being statistically significant, these have been 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.

Where differences are described as not statistically different, this means that the results do not differ beyond the levels expected by chance fluctuation (as judged at the 5% level).

With effect from April 2014 the sample size of the NICS was reduced from 3,500 interviews to 2,000 interviews. This reduction was occasioned by the need to make savings generally in the levels of Departmental spending. As a result, the confidence limits of any percentages from the survey are now wider than was the case previously and the margin of difference between findings now required to achieve 'statistical significance' has 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 now be found to be statistically significant with the reduced sample size.

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