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**Justice**

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Analytical Services Group

**Perceptions of Policing,  
Justice and  
Anti-Social Behaviour:  
Quarterly Update to  
March 2016**

November 2016

## INTRODUCTION

This update presents statistics on the level of public confidence in policing and the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland as well as public perceptions of anti-social behaviour. The data are drawn from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) with the findings being based on interviews conducted during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. Findings for the same period the previous year, and any statistically significant changes between the two, are also included in the main report. Trend data with comparable figures for the last five years (where available) are included in the Annex.

NICS in-year results (i.e. quarterly updates based on the 12-months to June, September and December) are provisional and are subject to revision during end-of-year validation procedures.

## CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE AND POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS

Public confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements across Northern Ireland as a whole (referred to collectively as 'policing') is measured through a series of questions contained within the NICS. An overall (composite) confidence in policing measure is derived from responses to seven individual strands as outlined in Table 1.

- ◆ The proportion of NICS 2015/16 respondents who expressed overall confidence in policing (81.5%) remained on a par<sup>2</sup> with that observed in 2014/15 (80.6%) (Table 1).
- ◆ Two of the seven strands that comprise the composite measure showed a statistically significant change ( $p < 0.05$ ) between NICS 2014/15 and 2015/16. Statistically significant increases ( $p < 0.05$ ) were observed in the proportions of respondents who were confident that: the 'Policing Board (NIPB) helps ensure police do a good job' (from 81.0% to 84.3%); and the 'Police Ombudsman (OPONI) helps ensure police do a good job' (86.0% to 89.7%). The five remaining indicators were unchanged ( $p < 0.05$ ) over the same period (Table 1).

**Table 1: Confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements<sup>1</sup>**

% confident that the...	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Overall confidence rating<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>81.5</b>	
Police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of NI	85.0	86.1	
Police do a very or fairly good job in NI as a whole	75.0	74.2	
Police treat Catholics and Protestants equally in NI as a whole	81.5	81.3	
Policing Board (NIPB) is independent of police	70.1	72.8	
Policing Board (NIPB) helps ensure police do a good job	81.0	84.3	** ↑
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) is independent of police	85.8	86.3	
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) helps ensure police do a good job	86.0	89.7	** ↑

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

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

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

## CONFIDENCE IN THE LOCAL POLICE

In addition to policing within Northern Ireland as a whole, the NICS also measures the level of public confidence in the local police, both overall and in specific aspects of their work. As part of a series of questions, respondents were asked to what extent they agree / disagree with seven statements concerning the local police; the first six are 'funnel-type' questions leading to a seventh overall confidence measure.

- ◆ At 68.3% in both NICS 2014/15 and 2015/16, there was no change ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the proportion of adults who expressed overall confidence in their local police (Table 2).
- ◆ Similarly, findings show that between NICS 2014/15 and 2015/16, no statistically significant changes ( $p < 0.05$ ) were observed in any of the six indicators relating to confidence in the local police (Table 2).

**Table 2: Confidence in the local police<sup>1</sup>**

% agreeing that the local police...	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Overall confidence in the local police<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>68.3</b>	<b>68.3</b>	
Can be relied on to be there when you need them	52.1	54.2	
Would treat you with respect if you had contact with them	84.4	84.6	
Treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are	66.6	67.9	
Can be relied on to deal with minor crimes	52.1	53.2	
Understand the issues that affect this community	65.5	66.7	
Are dealing with the things that matter to this community	53.4	55.6	

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

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

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

## CONFIDENCE IN ENGAGEMENT

A set of questions relating to levels of public confidence in the local police working in partnership with other agencies, including district councils, to address local anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime issues is also included within the NICS. Results from two separate questions on 'seeking people's views about' and 'dealing with' local issues have been used to form a composite rating to measure overall confidence in engagement with local communities.

- ◆ At 39.8% in the 12-months to March 2016, overall confidence in engagement showed no statistically significant change ( $p < 0.05$ ) to that observed in the same period the previous year (40.8%) (Table 3).
- ◆ Findings for NICS 2015/16 show the proportions of people agreeing that the police and other agencies both 'seek people's views about' (38.0%) and 'are dealing with' (41.6%) the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area remained on a par<sup>2</sup> with those reported during 2014/15 (38.5% and 43.0% respectively) (Table 3).

**Table 3: Confidence in the level of engagement by the local police and other agencies<sup>1</sup>**

% agreeing that the police and other agencies, including district councils...	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Overall engagement rating<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>39.8</b>	
Seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	38.5	38.0	
Are dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	43.0	41.6	

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

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

3. This measure is the arithmetic mean of the responses to the two individual engagement strands in the table.

## CONFIDENCE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Public confidence in both the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system (CJS) is measured through two separate, single questions contained within the NICS. Both questions are preceded by a series of 'lead-in' questions on the fairness and effectiveness of various aspects of the CJS, designed to encourage a considered response.

- ◆ Based on interviews conducted in the 12-months to March 2016, findings indicate that the proportions of respondents who were confident that the CJS as a whole is both effective (42.9%) and fair (59.2%) showed no statistically significant change ( $p < 0.05$ ) to those observed the previous year (40.9% and 59.3% respectively) (Table 4).

**Table 4: Confidence in the criminal justice system<sup>1</sup>**

% confident that the...	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
CJS as a whole is effective	40.9	42.9	
CJS as a whole is fair	59.3	59.2	

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

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

## PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Respondents to the NICS are asked to rate how much of a problem different types of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are in their area. Since NICS 2003/04, responses to seven individual ASB strands, as outlined in Table 5, have been used to form a composite measure to gauge the overall perceived level of ASB in the local area.

- ◆ Findings from NICS 2015/16 estimate that 8.5% of respondents perceived there to be a high level of anti-social behaviour in their local area, showing no statistically significant change ( $p < 0.05$ ) to that observed in 2014/15 (8.1%) (Table 5).
- ◆ None of the seven individual ASB strands showed a statistically significant change ( $p < 0.05$ ) between NICS 2014/15 and 2015/16 (Table 5).

**Table 5: Perceived level of anti-social behaviour in the local area<sup>1</sup>**

% saying very / fairly big problem	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Perceived high level of ASB<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>	
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	3.2	3.5	
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	6.9	7.3	
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	14.8	15.0	
People using or dealing drugs	21.1	21.8	
Teenagers hanging around on streets	15.0	15.0	
Rubbish or litter lying around	25.6	23.5	
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	15.3	13.2	

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

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

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

NICS respondents are asked how much their quality of life is affected by anti-social behaviour 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 anti-social behaviour on quality of life:

1. minimally affected (responded in the range 1 to 3);
  2. moderately affected (responded in the range 4 to 7); and
  3. greatly affected (responded in the range 8 to 10).
- ◆ For the 12 months ending March 2016, findings show that, when compared with the same period the previous year, a statistically significant increase ( $p < 0.05$ ) was observed in the proportion of respondents who claimed anti-social behaviour has a minimal impact on their quality of life, from 86.8% to 89.0%. The proportions who claimed anti-social behaviour has a moderate or great effect on their quality of life remained unchanged ( $p < 0.05$ ) over the same period (Table 6).

**Table 6: Perceptions of the effect of anti-social behaviour on quality of life<sup>1</sup>**

% saying anti-social behaviour has a...	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
Minimal effect	86.8	89.0	** ↑
Moderate effect	11.3	9.5	
Great effect	1.9	1.6	

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. See Technical Notes. 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, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Laganside House, 23-27 Oxford Street, Belfast, BT1 3LA; Telephone: 028 9072 4529; Email: [statistics.research@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto: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](http://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.

## ANNEX

**Table A1: Confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements<sup>1</sup>**

% confident that the...	NICS 2011/12	NICS 2012/13	NICS 2013/14	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16
<b>Overall confidence rating<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>79.8</b>	<b>79.8</b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>81.5</b>
Police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of NI	85.3	84.8	85.7	85.0	86.1
Police do a very or fairly good job in NI as a whole	72.6	71.7	74.2	75.0	74.2
Police treat Catholics and Protestants equally in NI as a whole	83.1	81.3	78.3	81.5	81.3
Policing Board (NIPB) is independent of police	73.7	73.0	73.7	70.1	72.8
Policing Board (NIPB) helps ensure police do a good job	82.5	80.6	79.0	81.0	84.3
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) is independent of police	84.7	84.7	85.7	85.8	86.3
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) helps ensure police do a good job	83.4	84.9	84.5	86.0	89.7

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. This measure is the weighted mean of the responses to the seven individual confidence strands listed in the table. Greater weighting is given to the three questions on the police.

**Table A2: Confidence in the local police<sup>1</sup>**

% agreeing that the local police...	NICS 2011/12	NICS 2012/13	NICS 2013/14	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16
<b>Overall confidence in the local police<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>65.0</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>68.3</b>	<b>68.3</b>
Can be relied on to be there when you need them	52.1	52.3	53.9	52.1	54.2
Would treat you with respect if you had contact with them	83.9	84.4	84.3	84.4	84.6
Treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are	66.5	66.2	65.4	66.6	67.9
Can be relied on to deal with minor crimes	50.3	52.0	51.1	52.1	53.2
Understand the issues that affect this community	62.6	62.1	62.9	65.5	66.7
Are dealing with the things that matter to this community	50.0	50.8	51.7	53.4	55.6

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Based on respondents agreeing with the statement, 'Taking everything into account, I have confidence in the police in this area'.

**Table A3: Confidence in the level of engagement by the local police and other agencies<sup>1</sup>**

% agreeing that the police and other agencies, including district councils...	NICS 2011/12	NICS 2012/13	NICS 2013/14	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16
<b>Overall engagement rating<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>39.9</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>39.8</b>
Seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	38.5	38.6	40.1	38.5	38.0
Are dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	41.4	41.7	41.6	43.0	41.6

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. This measure is the arithmetic mean of the responses to the two individual engagement strands in the table.

**Table A4: Confidence in the criminal justice system<sup>1</sup>**

% confident that the...	NICS 2011/12	NICS 2012/13	NICS 2013/14	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16
CJS as a whole is effective	41.9	40.1	41.6	40.9	42.9
CJS as a whole is fair	61.2	58.1	59.4	59.3	59.2

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

**Table A5: Perceived level of anti-social behaviour in the local area<sup>1</sup>**

% saying very / fairly big problem	NICS 2011/12	NICS 2012/13	NICS 2013/14	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16
<b>Perceived high level of ASB<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	4.3	3.5	3.8	3.2	3.5
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	8.4	7.8	7.6	6.9	7.3
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	21.0	17.6	16.9	14.8	15.0
People using or dealing drugs	23.1	21.7	22.5	21.1	21.8
Teenagers hanging around on streets	21.7	19.8	17.1	15.0	15.0
Rubbish or litter lying around	25.9	24.5	25.9	25.6	23.5
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	20.0	17.3	15.9	15.3	13.2

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

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

**Table A6: Perceptions of the effect of anti-social behaviour on quality of life<sup>1,2</sup>**

% saying anti-social behaviour has a...	NICS 2012/13	NICS 2013/14	NICS 2014/15	NICS 2015/16
Minimal effect	84.4	86.0	86.8	89.0
Moderate effect	13.8	11.8	11.3	9.5
Great effect	1.8	2.2	1.9	1.6

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. This question has been included within the survey since January 2012.



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**NOTES**

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