



Department of

**Justice**

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Statistics and Research Branch

**Perceptions of Policing,  
Justice and  
Anti-Social Behaviour:  
Quarterly Update to  
March 2012**

August 2012

## INTRODUCTION

This update presents the most recent 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) and are primarily based on interviews conducted during the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

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.

End-of-year NICS 2009/10 results on perceptions of policing and justice (Freel and Toner, 2010) and NICS 2010/11 results on anti-social behaviour (Freel and Campbell, 2012), both including socio-demographic analyses, have been published in separate statistical bulletins.

## CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE AND POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS

Public confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements (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 people who expressed overall confidence in policing in the 12-months to March 2012 showed a statistically significant increase ( $p < 0.05$ ) to that observed in the same period the previous year (from 78.3% to 80.6%) (Table 1).
- ◆ Of the seven individual indicators comprising the composite measure, the three relating directly to the police each showed a statistically significant increase ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the 12-months to March 2012 compared with the previous year: 'police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of Northern Ireland' (from 81.3% to 85.3%); 'police do a very or fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole' (67.9% to 72.6%); and 'police treat Catholics and Protestants equally in Northern Ireland as a whole' (79.9% to 83.1%) (Table 1).
- ◆ In contrast, a statistically significant decrease ( $p < 0.05$ ) was observed in the proportion of respondents who were confident that the 'Police Ombudsman (OPONI) helps ensure the police do a good job' (from 87.0% in 2010/11 to 83.4% in 2011/12). The three remaining indicators on police accountability arrangements remained unchanged since the previous year ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 1).

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

% confident that the...	NICS 2010/11	NICS 2011/12	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Overall confidence rating<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>78.3</b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>** ↑</b>
Police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of NI	81.3	85.3	** ↑
Police do a very or fairly good job in NI as a whole	67.9	72.6	** ↑
Police treat Catholics and Protestants equally in NI as a whole	79.9	83.1	** ↑
Policing Board (NIPB) is independent of police	73.7	73.7	
Policing Board (NIPB) helps ensure police do a good job	81.5	82.5	
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) is independent of police	86.0	84.7	
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) helps ensure police do a good job	87.0	83.4	** ↓

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

2. 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 overall as well as in specific aspects of their work. As part of a series of questions, respondents were asked if they agree with seven statements concerning the local police; the first six are 'funnel-type' questions designed to help generate a more considered response to a seventh overall confidence measure.

- ◆ The proportion of people who expressed overall confidence in their local police in the 12-months to March 2012 showed a statistically significant increase ( $p < 0.05$ ) to that observed during the same period the previous year (from 60.6% to 65.5%) (Table 2).
- ◆ Based on NICS interviews in the year ending March 2012, statistically significant increases ( $p < 0.05$ ) were observed, compared with the same period the previous year, in the proportion of respondents who agreed that the local police: 'can be relied on to be there when you need them' (from 45.7% to 52.1%); 'treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are' (64.1% to 66.5%); 'can be relied on to deal with minor crimes' (46.9% to 50.3%); and 'are dealing with the things that matter to this community' (47.1% to 50.0%) (Table 2).
- ◆ The proportion of respondents who agreed that the local police 'would treat you with respect if you had contact with them' (83.9%) and 'understand the issues that affect this community' (62.6%) remained unchanged since the previous year ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2).

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

% agreeing that the local police...	NICS 2010/11	NICS 2011/12	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Overall confidence in the local police<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>** ↑</b>
Can be relied on to be there when you need them	45.7	52.1	** ↑
Would treat you with respect if you had contact with them	82.1	83.9	
Treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are	64.1	66.5	** ↑
Can be relied on to deal with minor crimes	46.9	50.3	** ↑
Understand the issues that affect this community	60.8	62.6	
Are dealing with the things that matter to this community	47.1	50.0	** ↑

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

2. 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 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' and 'dealing with' these issues have been used to form a composite rating to measure overall confidence in engagement with local communities.

- ◆ Based on the composite measure, overall confidence in engagement in the year ending March 2012 (39.9%) remains on a par with that observed during the same period in the previous year (38.2%) (Table 3).
- ◆ Based on NICS interviews in the year ending March 2012, the proportion of people agreeing that 'the local police and other agencies are dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area' showed a statistically significant increase ( $p < 0.05$ ) compared with the previous year (from 38.4% to 41.4%) (Table 3).
- ◆ The proportion of respondents agreeing that 'the local police and other agencies seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area' remained unchanged since the previous year ( $p < 0.05$ ) (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 2010/11	NICS 2011/12	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Overall engagement rating<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>39.9</b>	
Seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	38.0	38.5	
Are dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	38.4	41.4	** ↑

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. 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 ending March 2012, statistically significant increases ( $p < 0.05$ ) were observed, compared with the same period the previous year, in the proportions who were confident that the CJS overall is both effective (from 37.6% to 41.9%) and fair (57.2% to 61.2%) (Table 4).

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

% confident that the...	NICS 2010/11	NICS 2011/12	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
CJS as a whole is effective	37.6	41.9	** ↑
CJS as a whole is fair	57.2	61.2	** ↑

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. 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 interviews carried out in the 12-months to March 2012, show that the proportion of respondents perceiving a high level of anti-social behaviour in their local area (12.1%) remained on a par with that observed during the same period the previous year (13.0%) (Table 5).
- ◆ Similarly, no statistically significant changes ( $p < 0.05$ ) were observed, between NICS 2010/11 and 2011/12, in any of the seven indicators that comprise the composite ASB measure (Table 5).

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

% saying very / fairly big problem	NICS 2010/11	NICS 2011/12	Statistically significant change since previous year? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Perceived high level of ASB<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>12.1</b>	
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	5.1	4.3	
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	8.3	8.4	
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	20.2	21.0	
People using or dealing drugs	22.3	23.1	
Teenagers hanging around on streets	22.5	21.7	
Rubbish or litter lying around	27.1	25.9	
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	19.9	20.0	

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

2. 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).

## REFERENCES

**Freel, R. and Campbell, P.** (2012). *Perceptions of Crime: Findings from the 2010/11 Northern Ireland Crime Survey*. DOJ Research and Statistical Bulletin 1/2012. Belfast: DOJ.

**Freel, R. and Toner, S.** (2010). *Perceptions of Policing, Justice and Organised Crime: Findings from the 2009/10 Northern Ireland Crime Survey*. DOJ Research and Statistical Bulletin 3/2010. Belfast: DOJ.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the Northern Ireland Crime Survey please contact: Statistics and Research Branch, Massey House, Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SX; Telephone: 028 9052 2658; Email: [statistics.research@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.research@dojni.x.gsi.gov.uk)

This update and other Department of Justice research and statistical publications are available at: [www.dojni.gov.uk](http://www.dojni.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 group differences observed between different 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.

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**NOTES**

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