

Northern  
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Office

Statistics and Research Branch

**Views on Organised  
Crime: Findings from  
the January 2009  
Northern Ireland  
Omnibus Survey**

Research and Statistical Bulletin 3/2009

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## KEY FINDINGS

- ◆ 20% of those surveyed suspected that someone in their own neighbourhood had obtained a large part of their wealth from crime.
- ◆ Irrespective of whether they suspected any specific family or individual, 38% of people believed that there were people living in their local community who had acquired a significant part of their wealth from crime.
- ◆ 90% of respondents would react with at least some anger or concern if someone whose wealth had come largely from the proceeds of crime moved into their immediate neighbourhood.
- ◆ 86% of those surveyed agreed that there are many people in Northern Ireland who are living off the proceeds of crime.
- ◆ 85% of those surveyed agreed that 'many criminals who go to jail manage to hang on to the proceeds of crime and are able to live a wealthy lifestyle when their prison sentence is over'.
- ◆ 82% agreed that wealth confiscation and a prison sentence were equally important objectives in dealing with criminals.
- ◆ 64% of those taking part in the survey thought that paramilitary organisations were mainly responsible for committing offences relating to organised crime.
- ◆ The types of crime most frequently associated with organised crime were drug dealing (82%), fuel smuggling/laundrying (34%), cigarette smuggling (29%) and money laundering (29%).
- ◆ 46% of those surveyed had heard of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF); this was communicated mainly via television (72%).
- ◆ 62% of those who had heard of the OCTF thought that it was fairly effective or very effective in raising awareness about organised crime.

## INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) was established in September 2000 to provide strategic direction for a multi agency approach to tackling organised crime. Chaired by the Policing and Justice Minister, Paul Goggins MP, the OCTF brings together representatives from Government, law enforcement, the business community and other partners. It is a forum where partner agencies can discuss problems, share information and agree priorities.

The OCTF published its 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Report & Threat Assessment of the scale and nature of the problem of organised crime in Northern Ireland together with its strategy to tackle it in June 2008. The Threat Assessment identifies that the level of organised criminality remains high within Northern Ireland.

In order to gain an understanding of the level of public awareness and knowledge of the harm caused by organised crime, the Northern Ireland Office Statistics and Research Branch, on behalf of the OCTF, commissioned a series of questions in the January 2009 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey.

The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is conducted several times each year by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and is designed to provide a snapshot of the behaviour, lifestyle and views of a representative sample of people in Northern Ireland. Further information on sample selection can be found in the Technical Notes section.

The survey comprises two distinct parts: core questions about the respondents and their individual circumstances, and a variety of mainly attitudinal questions commissioned by clients. Where appropriate, differences in relation to gender, area of residence, religion, age and employment status are highlighted.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### **1. Do you suspect that someone in your own neighbourhood has obtained a large part of their wealth from crime?**

- ◆ 20% of respondents suspected that at least one (ie specific) person/family in their neighbourhood had derived much of their wealth from crime. A smaller proportion of those aged 65 and over (13%) thought that this was the case compared with all other age categories.
- ◆ Proportionately, more males (22%) than females (16%) thought that this was the case.

### **2. Do you think there are people in your immediate community, who have acquired a significant part of their wealth from crime?**

- ◆ Irrespective of whether they suspected any specific individual/family, 38% of those surveyed believed there were people in their immediate community who had acquired a significant amount of their wealth from crime. Those aged 65 years and over were less likely to think that this was the case (27%) while those aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to think that this was the case (50%).

- ◆ Those in paid employment were more likely (41%) to believe that people in their immediate community had acquired a significant part of their wealth from crime, compared with those who were not in paid employment (33%).

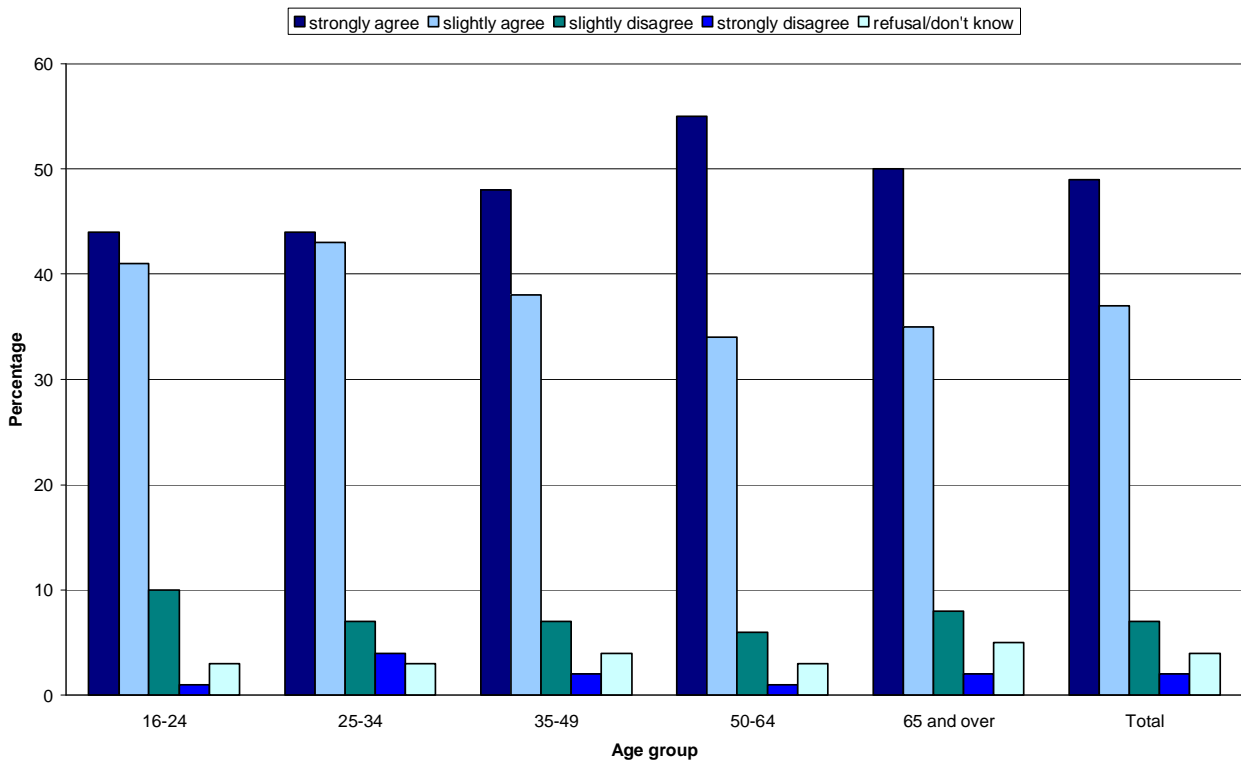
**3. How do you think you would react if you found out that someone had moved into your immediate neighbourhood, lived quietly and caused no trouble, but whose wealth had come largely from the proceeds of crime?**

- ◆ 90% said they would react with at least some anger and concern if someone with wealth derived from crime moved into their immediate neighbourhood.

**4. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: ‘There are many people in Northern Ireland these days who are living off the proceeds of crime’?**

- ◆ 86% of those surveyed were of the opinion that there were many people in Northern Ireland who are living off the proceeds of crime.
- ◆ 55% of those aged 50 to 64 years strongly agreed with this statement compared with 44% of those aged 16 to 24 years and 44% of those aged 25 to 34 years (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Respondents’ views on whether ‘there are many people in Northern Ireland who are living off the proceeds of crime’ by age group**

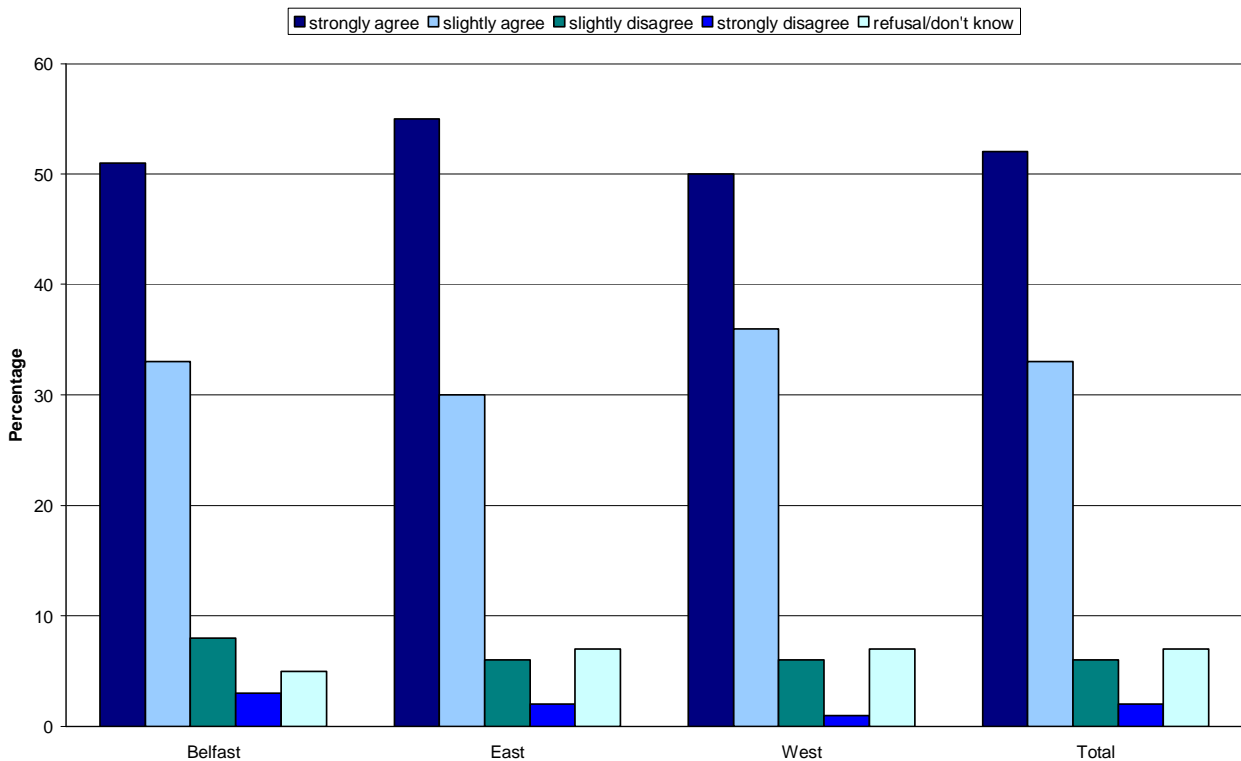


- ◆ 53% of Protestants compared with 48% of Catholics strongly agreed that there were many people in Northern Ireland who were living off the proceeds of crime.

**5. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: ‘There are many criminals who go to jail but manage to hang on to the proceeds of crime, and are able to live a wealthy lifestyle when their prison sentence is over’?**

- ◆ 85% of respondents agreed with this statement – 52% strongly agreed while 33% slightly agreed.
- ◆ 56% of Protestants strongly agreed with this statement compared with 51% of Catholics.
- ◆ 56% of male respondents compared with 49% of female respondents strongly agreed with this statement.
- ◆ 55% of those living in the East of Northern Ireland compared with 50% of those living in the West of Northern Ireland and 51% of those living in Belfast strongly agreed with this statement (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Respondents’ views on whether ‘there are many criminals who go to jail but manage to hang on to the proceeds of crime, and are able to live a wealthy lifestyle when their prison sentence is over’ by area**



**6. Still thinking about people who have grown wealthy from the proceeds of crime, which do you think is more important – ‘to send them to prison’, or ‘to confiscate their wealth’, or do you regard both as equal objectives?**

- ◆ A higher proportion of respondents thought that it was more important to confiscate criminals’ wealth (14%) than to send them to prison (3%).
- ◆ For the vast majority (82%), wealth confiscation and prison were equally important objectives.

**7. Who do you think is mainly responsible for committing offences relating to organised crime in Northern Ireland?**

- ◆ 64% of those surveyed thought that paramilitary organisations were responsible for committing offences related to organised crime in Northern Ireland.
- ◆ Proportionately more Protestants (72%) than Catholics (57%) thought that paramilitary organisations were involved in organised crime.
- ◆ 55% of those living in the West of Northern Ireland thought that paramilitary organisations were responsible for committing offences related to organised crime in Northern Ireland compared with 69% in Belfast and 70% in the East of Northern Ireland.
- ◆ 22% of respondents thought that ‘other’ persons were responsible for carrying out offences relating to organised crime in Northern Ireland, while 13% were unsure of who was responsible for these crimes.

**8. What types of crime<sup>1</sup> would you associate with organised crime in Northern Ireland?**

- ◆ 82% of those surveyed associated drug dealing with organised crime in Northern Ireland, 34% with fuel smuggling/laundry, 29% with cigarette smuggling and 29% with money laundering (Table 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents were probed by the interviewer to think of crimes they would associate with organised crime. Respondents could offer up to 6 types of crime when answering this question.

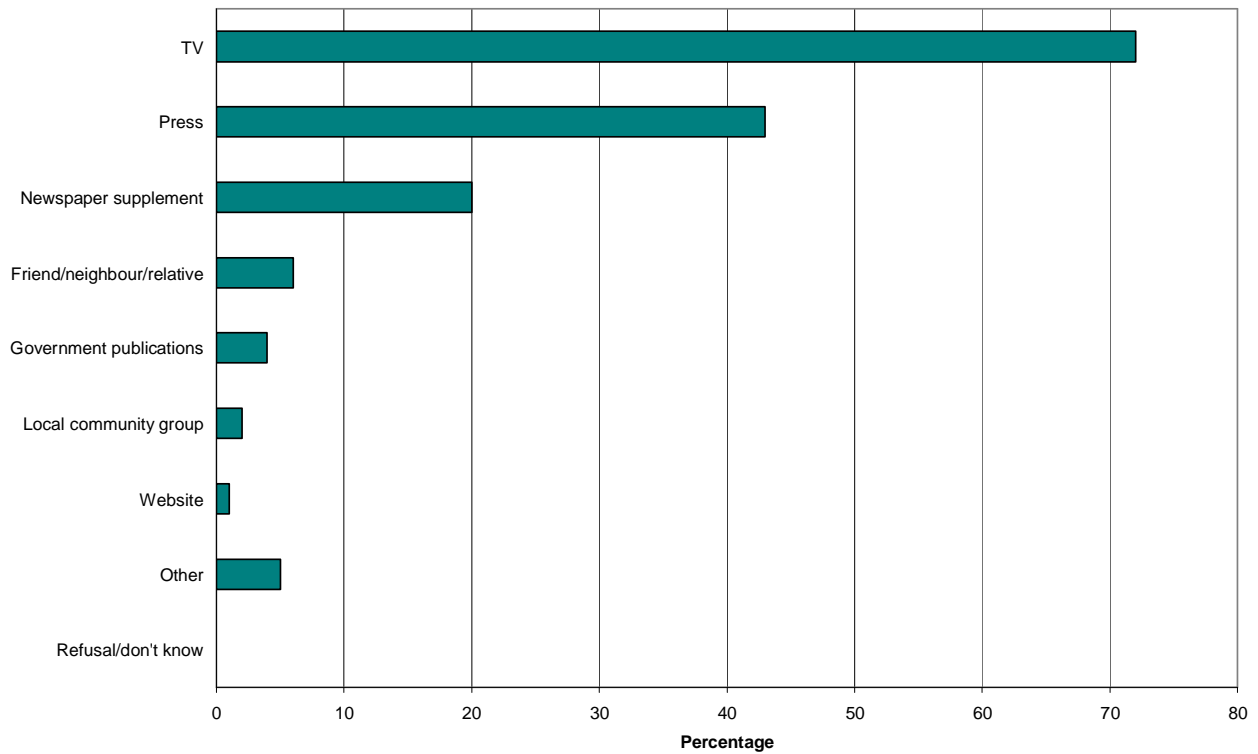
**Table 1: Types of Crime respondents associated with organised crime in Northern Ireland**

	%
Drug dealing	82
Fuel smuggling/laundrying	34
Cigarette smuggling	29
Money laundering	29
Protection/extortion racketeering	27
Domestic burglary	23
Armed robbery	19
Trading in counterfeit goods	16
Tiger kidnappings	15
Cash-in-transit robberies	14
Benefit fraud	10
Handling stolen goods	9
People trafficking for sexual or labour exploitation	7
Prostitution	6
Counterfeit money production	5
Illegal immigration	4
Selling goods and services that don't exist (deception)	1
Other	7
None	0
Refusal/don't know	3
<b>Base</b>	<b>1,126</b>

**9. Have you heard of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF)? If so, how did you find out about it?**

- ◆ 46% of those surveyed had heard of the OCTF – 55% of males and 37% of females.
- ◆ A higher proportion of Protestants (51%) than Catholics (39%) had heard of the OCTF.
- ◆ 51% of those living in the East of Northern Ireland compared with 44% of those living in Belfast and 40% of those living in the West of Northern Ireland had heard of this multi-agency forum.
- ◆ Of those who had heard of the OCTF, this was achieved via the media – TV (72%), Press (43%) and newspaper supplements (20%) (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: How respondents were made aware of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF)**



**10. How effective do you think the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) has been so far in raising awareness about organised crime?**

- ◆ 62% of respondents thought that the OCTF was fairly effective or very effective in raising awareness of organised crime.
- ◆ One fifth of respondents (20%) could not decide whether the OCTF was effective or ineffective.

**TECHNICAL NOTES**

- ◆ The sample of those surveyed in the January 2009 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey was drawn from the Valuation and Lands Agency list, the most up-to-date listing of private households in Northern Ireland. The complete list of private addresses was stratified into three regions – Belfast, East of Northern Ireland and West of Northern Ireland, and a random sample drawn from each stratum.
- ◆ At each address the interviewer lists all members of the household eligible for inclusion in the sample, that is, all persons aged 16 or over. The interviewer’s computer then randomly selects one person from each household to complete the interview. From a set sample of 2,200 addresses, 1,922 were eligible and 1,126 interviews were achieved giving an eligible response rate of 59%.
- ◆ Selecting only one individual for interview at each address means individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than individuals living in smaller households. The data presented in this bulletin have been weighted to prevent a bias towards smaller households.
- ◆ To assess how accurately a survey sample reflects the population of Northern Ireland, the characteristics of the sample are compared with the characteristics of the current Census of Population. Table 2 shows a comparison between the January 2009 Omnibus Survey sample and the mid year population for Northern Ireland for adults aged 16 and over, based on population estimates for 2007.

**Table 2: Sample Profile**

	<b>Mid Year Population Estimates 2007 (16+) %</b>	<b>January 2009 Omnibus Survey %</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	48	48
Female	52	52
<b>Age Group</b>		
16-24	17	12
25-34	17	12
35-49	27	29
50-64	21	27
65 and over	18	20
<b>Base</b>	<b>1,379,080</b>	<b>1,126</b>

- ◆ The area analysis was based on District Council boundaries and is detailed in Table 3. The 26 District Councils listed in this table were used to form each of the three areas (Belfast, East of Northern Ireland, West of Northern Ireland) described in the bulletin.

**Table 3: Areas of Northern Ireland by District Council**

	<b>District Councils</b>
Belfast	Belfast
East of Northern Ireland	Antrim, Ards, Ballymena, Banbridge, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Craigavon, Down, Larne, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down
West of Northern Ireland	Armagh, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Limavady, Derry, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newry & Mourne, Omagh, Strabane.

- ◆ Analysis by religion is based only on those respondents who said that they were either Catholic or Protestant. Respondents who refused to answer the religion question or those who said they were a religion other than Catholic or Protestant were excluded from this analysis.
- ◆ Due to rounding, percentages denoted in both tables and figures may not sum to 100%.
- ◆ In the tables, if the figure is less than 0.5% the cell is denoted with a '0%'.

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