



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

Statistics and Research Branch

Perceptions of Policing,  
Justice and Organised  
Crime:  
Quarterly Update to  
September 2009

February 2010

## 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 the perceived level of harm caused by organised crime. The data are drawn from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) and are based on interviews conducted during the period October 2008 to September 2009.

The focus of this report is on specific results required to measure progress against Key Performance Indicators of the CSR 2007 Northern Ireland Office Public Service Agreement (PSA). In-year results (i.e. data based on the 12-months to June, September and October) are provisional and are subject to revision during end-of-year validation procedures.

## CONFIDENCE IN POLICING

Public confidence in the police and police accountability arrangements (hereafter referred to collectively as 'policing') continues to be measured through a series of questions contained within the NICS as part of NIO's CSR 2007 'Making Communities Safer' PSA. The aim is to achieve a statistically significant increase in the level of confidence in policing in Northern Ireland by 31 March 2011, from a composite baseline of 79.4%.

The overall confidence measure is derived from responses to seven individual strands as outlined in Table 1. This same measure was used to form a target with NIO's previous (SR 2004) PSA. For more information, refer to NIO Research and Statistical Bulletin 15/2008.

- ◆ As shown in Table 1, the proportion of people who expressed overall confidence in policing in the 12-months to September 2009 (79.6%) showed no statistically significant change to that observed at baseline (NICS 2007/08; 79.4%).
- ◆ While the proportion of respondents confident that the police do a good job in Northern Ireland as a whole has increased since baseline (from 66.4% to 68.7%), a decrease has been observed in those who consider the Police Ombudsman to be independent of the police (90.0% to 88.4%) (Table 1).

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

% confident that the...	Baseline NICS 2007/08	Oct 07 to Sept 08	Oct 08 to Sept 09	Statistically significant change since baseline? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Overall confidence rating<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>78.7</b>	<b>79.6</b>	
Police provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of NI	83.4	81.0	82.5	
Police do a very or fairly good job in NI as a whole	66.4	65.7	68.7	** ↑
Police treat Catholics and Protestants equally in NI as a whole	81.5	81.7	81.8	
Policing Board (NIPB) is independent of police	77.0	78.3	76.4	
Policing Board (NIPB) helps ensure police do a good job	81.7	79.2	81.4	
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) is independent of police	90.0	89.8	88.4	** ↓
Police Ombudsman (OPONI) helps ensure police do a good job	87.4	88.0	87.1	

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

2. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two tail tests) 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 ENGAGEMENT

A new set of questions relating to levels of public confidence in the police working with other agencies, including district councils, to tackle the anti-social behaviour (ASB) and crime issues that matter in the local area was included in the NICS from October 2007. Results from two separate questions on 'seeking' and 'dealing' with these issues are used to form a composite rating to measure overall confidence in engagement with local communities. The aim is to achieve a statistically significant increase in the level of engagement by 31 March 2011, from a composite baseline of 42.4%.

- ◆ Latest figures indicate that the proportion of respondents who agree that the local police and other agencies seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter has fallen from 46.0% (baseline) to 43.3%. In contrast, there has been no statistically significant change since baseline (38.9%) in the proportion agreeing that they are dealing with the local issues (38.3%) (Table 2).
- ◆ The overall engagement rating in the year ending September 2009 (40.8%) remained similar to that at baseline (42.4%) (Table 2).

**Table 2: 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 ...	Baseline NICS 2007/08 <sup>2</sup>	Oct 07 to Sept 08	Oct 08 to Sept 09	Statistically significant change since baseline? <sup>3</sup>
<b>Overall engagement rating<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>41.6</b>	<b>40.8</b>	
Seek people's views about the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	46.0	45.4	43.3	** ↓
Are dealing with the ASB and crime issues that matter in the local area	38.9	37.8	38.3	

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Baseline drawn from fieldwork 1 October 2007 to 31 March 2008.
3. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two tail tests) is indicated by a double asterisk (\*\*).
4. This measure is the arithmetic mean of the responses to the two individual engagement strands in the table.

## CONFIDENCE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

A new set of questions to measure confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system (CJS) has also been introduced to the NICS, replacing those questions used to construct a six-strand composite measure adopted as part of the SR 2004 PSA (for more information, refer to NIO Research and Statistical Bulletin 15/2008).

- ◆ Based on interviews in the year to September 2009, findings show that 37.1% of respondents were confident that the CJS as a whole is effective, while 58.3% were confident that the CJS is fair (Table 3).

It is not yet possible to test for significant change in the fairness or effectiveness of the CJS due to sample overlap in the baseline (to December 2008) and latest figures (to September 2009). This will be possible from the next quarterly update (to December 2009) onwards.

**Table 3: Confidence in the criminal justice system<sup>1</sup>**

% confident that the...	Baseline NICS 2008 <sup>2,3</sup>	Oct 08 to Sept 09
CJS as a whole is effective	35.6	37.1
CJS as a whole is fair	58.0	58.3

1. All figures exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Effectiveness baseline drawn from NICS fieldwork 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008.
3. Fairness baseline drawn from NICS fieldwork 1 July 2008 to 31 December 2008.

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE HARM CAUSED BY ORGANISED CRIME

In association with NIO's CSR 2007 'Making Communities Safer' PSA, a set of questions was devised and introduced to the NICS in June 2008 to gauge the perceived level of harm caused by organised crime in Northern Ireland. The results contribute to a Crime Harm And Risk Measurement (CHARM) matrix, a methodology developed specifically to monitor progress against this KPI.

- ◆ NICS findings based on the 12 months to September 2009 indicate that the majority of people (65%) feel that organised crime overall generates a minimal level of harm in the local area. In contrast, 7% of respondents considered organised crime to result in a great level of harm (Table 4).
- ◆ Drug trafficking, either the selling or buying of illegal drugs, is considered to promote the highest level of harm (16%) of the various forms of organised crime examined (Table 4). This proportion compares with 18% generated through NICS interviews to March 2009.

**Table 4: Perceived level of harm caused by organised crime (%) in the local area<sup>1</sup>**

Level of harm (%) caused by...	NICS 2008/09 <sup>2</sup>			Oct 08 to Sept 09		
	Minimal	Moderate	Great	Minimal	Moderate	Great
<b>Organised crime overall</b>	63	28	9	65	28	7
People selling or buying illegal drugs	52	31	18	54	30	16
People selling or buying counterfeit or smuggled goods	61	30	9	63	27	9
Money laundering and fraud <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	72	21	7
Fuel laundering and smuggling <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	72	21	6
Protection or extortion racketeering	74	18	9	76	17	8
Armed robbery	75	16	8	76	17	8

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

2. NICS 2008/09 figures are based on the period June 2008 to March 2009.

3. '-' denotes variable was not included in the survey. Individual questions on 'money laundering and fraud' and 'fuel laundering and smuggling' were introduced to the NICS in May 2009.

- ◆ Results to September 2009 show that similar proportions of people believed that the harm caused by organised crime in the local area had increased (19%) and decreased (18%) during the past year. The majority (63%) were of the opinion that the level of harm had remained similar (Table 5).

**Table 5: Perceived change in the level of harm caused by organised crime (%) in the past 12 months<sup>1</sup>**

% perceiving...	NICS 2008/09 <sup>2</sup>	Oct 08 to Sept 09
More harm	20	19
About the same	63	63
Less harm	17	18

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

2. NICS 2008/09 figures are based on the period June 2008 to March 2009.

## REFERENCES

**French, B.** (December 2008). *Confidence in Policing and the Criminal Justice System: Findings from the 2007/08 Northern Ireland Crime Survey*. NIO Research and Statistical Bulletin 15/2008. Belfast: NIO.

## 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 7157; Email: [statistics.nio@nics.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.nio@nics.gov.uk)

This update and other research and statistical publications are available at: [www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk)

Further information on the Northern Ireland Office CSR 2007 PSA is available at:

[http://www.nio.gov.uk/justice\\_for\\_all\\_-\\_delivery\\_agreement\\_-\\_version\\_2.pdf](http://www.nio.gov.uk/justice_for_all_-_delivery_agreement_-_version_2.pdf)

[http://www.nio.gov.uk/comprehensive\\_spending\\_review-public\\_service\\_agreement-make\\_communities\\_safer.pdf](http://www.nio.gov.uk/comprehensive_spending_review-public_service_agreement-make_communities_safer.pdf)

## 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 household sizes.

Don't knows, refusals and non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses. Percentages may not always sum to 100 due to the effect of rounding to the nearest whole number, or because respondents could give more than one response.

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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