



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

Statistics and Research Branch

Views on Organised  
Crime: Findings from  
the January 2007  
Northern Ireland  
Omnibus Survey

Research and Statistical Bulletin 7/2007

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This bulletin describes public awareness and knowledge of organised crime in Northern Ireland. The findings are based on an analysis of twenty questions which were included in the January 2007 Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. Comparison is also made with corresponding survey findings from January 2006.

## KEY FINDINGS

### What is organised crime?

- ◆ 81% of those surveyed said that they associated drug dealing with organised crime, 50% with armed robbery and 41% with fuel smuggling/laundering.
- ◆ Of those surveyed, almost all (93%) thought that there was a problem with organised crime in Northern Ireland; 48% thought that this problem was very serious.
- ◆ 71% of those surveyed thought that paramilitary organisations were mainly responsible for committing offences related to organised crime.

### Who's Affected?

- ◆ 66% of respondents thought that the individual victim suffered as a result of organised crime.
- ◆ 69% of those taking part in the survey thought that organised crime could lead to fear in the community.

### Your Role

- ◆ Over half (55%) of those surveyed said that they would report someone if they knew they were associated with organised crime.
- ◆ 67% said they would report information on organised crime to the police.
- ◆ 47% of respondents said they would contact Crimestoppers to assist in tackling organised crime.
- ◆ 73% stated that they would never buy items associated with organised crime while 69% stated that they had never knowingly bought any such items.

### Organised Crime Task Force

- ◆ 35% of those surveyed had heard of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF); this was mainly communicated via television (69%).
- ◆ 50% of those respondents who had heard of the OCTF thought that its members included PSNI.
- ◆ 55% of those who had heard of the OCTF thought that its primary role was to develop measures to tackle organised crime.
- ◆ 48% of respondents who had heard of the OCTF thought that it was fairly effective or very effective in raising awareness about organised crime.
- ◆ 51% of those who had heard of the OCTF thought that its partner agencies were fairly effective or very effective in reducing the threat of organised crime.
- ◆ 11% of those respondents who had heard of the OCTF, were aware of this organisation having acted against someone in their locality. Of this proportion, 56% stated that this was done by ARA; however, the same percentage (56%) stated that this did not make them feel any safer.

## INTRODUCTION

1. 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.

2. The OCTF published its 7th 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 2007. The Threat Assessment identifies that the level of organised criminality remains high within Northern Ireland.

3. In order to gain an understanding of the level of public awareness and knowledge of organised crime, the Northern Ireland Office Statistics and Research Branch, on behalf of the Organised Crime Task Force, commissioned a number of questions in both the January 2006 and January 2007 Northern Ireland Omnibus Surveys.

4. 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.

5. 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 (see Annex 1). Where appropriate, differences in relation to gender, area of residence, religion and age are highlighted. Further information relating to these breakdowns can be found in the Technical Notes section.

6. The bulletin also documents changes in respondents' views between the January 2006 and January 2007 Omnibus Surveys. A summary of the main findings of both surveys is tabulated as Annex 1.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### Question 1: Do you think that there is a problem with organised crime in Northern Ireland?

7. Of those surveyed, almost all (93%) thought that there was a problem with organised crime in Northern Ireland.

8. In relation to religion, a higher proportion of Protestants (97%) compared with Catholics (88%) thought that this was the case.

9. 96% of those living in the East of Northern Ireland thought that organised crime was problematic compared with 90% in the West of Northern Ireland and 89% living in Belfast.

10. In the January 2006 Omnibus Survey, 96% of respondents thought that there was a problem with organised crime in Northern Ireland.

### Question 2: How serious do you think the problem with organised crime is in Northern Ireland?

11. Of those who were of the opinion that there was a problem with organised crime in Northern Ireland, 48% thought that this problem was very serious, while 37% thought that this problem was serious.

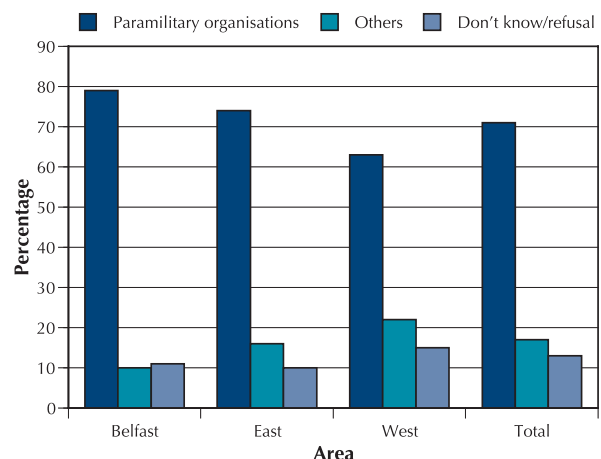
12. In January 2006, 60% thought that there was a very serious organised crime problem in Northern Ireland.

### Question 3: Who do you think is mainly responsible for committing offences related to organised crime in Northern Ireland?

13. 71% of those surveyed thought that paramilitary organisations were mainly responsible for committing offences related to organised crime in Northern Ireland. Proportionately more Protestants (76%) than Catholics (64%) thought that this was the case.

14. Regional differences occurred in relation to opinions on who carried out organised crime in Northern Ireland (Figure 1). A higher proportion of those living in Belfast (79%) suspected paramilitary activity than either those living in the East (74%) or West (63%) of Northern Ireland.

Figure 1: Respondents' views on who is mainly responsible for committing offences related to organised crime in Northern Ireland by area

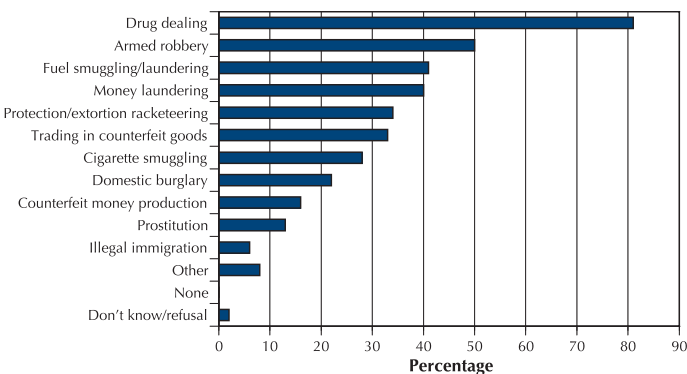


15. 77% of those surveyed in the January 2006 Omnibus Survey thought that paramilitary organisations were responsible for committing offences related to organised crime in Northern Ireland.

**Question 4: What types of crime would you associate with organised crime in Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>?**

16. 81% of those surveyed associated drug dealing with organised crime in Northern Ireland, while 50% and 41% connected armed robbery and fuel smuggling/laundering respectively (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Respondents' views on the type of crimes they associate with organised crime



17. These proportions are similar to those cited in the January 2006 Omnibus Survey where 81% said that they associated drug dealing with organised crime in Northern Ireland, while 52% said armed robbery, and 39% said fuel smuggling/laundering.

**Question 5: Who do you think suffers as a result of organised crime?**

18. 66% of respondents were of the opinion that individual victims suffered as a result of organised crime, 65% of respondents thought that it had an impact on the general public, while 60% thought that it affected local communities.

19. There were several differences between the views of Catholics and Protestants in relation to this question (Table 1). For example, 71% of Protestants thought individual victims suffered compared with 60% of Catholics. With regards to legitimate businesses/retailers being victims, 62% of Protestants thought that this was the case compared with 48% of Catholics.

Table 1: Respondents' views on who they think suffers as a result of organised crime by religion

	RELIGION		
	Catholic %	Protestant %	Total %
Individual victims	60	71	66
General public	61	68	65
Local communities	58	62	60
Legitimate businesses/retailers	48	62	56
Taxman	23	31	28
Other	0	1	1
No-one	1	0	0
Don't know/refusal	2	1	1
<b>Base</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>1,148</b>

20. These results are similar to those documented in January 2006. In this Omnibus survey, 70% were of the opinion that individual victims suffered as a result of organised crime, while organised crime was also thought to be detrimental to the general public (65%) and local communities (64%).

**Question 6: What do you think is the impact of organised crime?**

21. Respondents thought that organised crime could lead to fear in the community (69%), and violence in the community (54%) (Table 2).

22. A higher proportion of females (74%) than males (63%) thought that organised crime could lead to fear in the community, while a greater proportion of Protestants (57%) compared with Catholics (44%) said that legitimate businesses/retailers would lose trade.

Table 2: Respondents' views on the impact of organised crime

	Total %
Fear in the community	69
Violence in the community	54
Damage to victim's health	51
Legitimate businesses/retailers lose trade	51
Small businesses/retailers forced to close	51
Loss of jobs	40
Market flooded with inferior goods	38
Loss of confidence in law enforcement agencies	37
Less money available for public services	30
Reduction in investment by legitimate businesses/retailers	27
Other	0
None	0
Don't know/refusal	3
<b>Base</b>	<b>1,211</b>

23. Similar survey results were found in January 2006, when 73% of respondents thought that organised crime could lead to fear in the community and 57% thought it could lead to violence in the community.

<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.

**Question 7: How likely is it that you would report someone if you knew that they were associated with organised crime?**

24. 55% of those surveyed said that they would report someone (responded either 'likely' or 'very likely') if they knew they were associated with organised crime. This represented 60% of Protestants compared with 47% of Catholics.

25. There were regional differences in relation to how likely respondents would report criminals (Table 3). 62% of those living in the East of Northern Ireland would report someone compared with 49% living in the West of Northern Ireland and 45% living in Belfast.

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether they would report someone if they knew they were associated with organised crime by area

	AREA			Total %
	Belfast %	East %	West %	
Very likely	15	28	24	25
Likely	30	34	25	30
Unlikely	34	23	30	28
Very unlikely	17	12	17	15
Don't know/refusal	4	2	3	3
<b>Base</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>1,211</b>

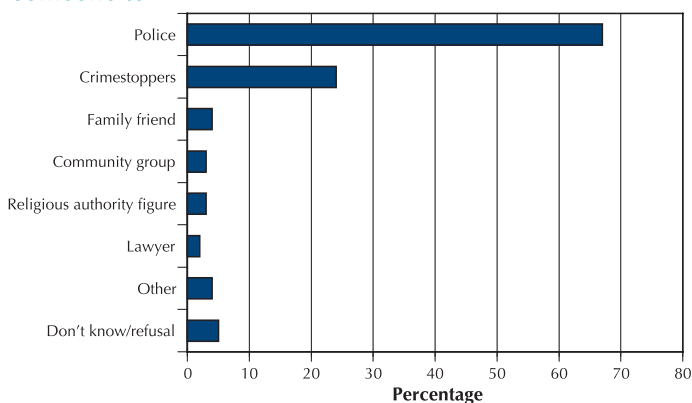
26. 53% of respondents in the January 2006 Omnibus Survey said that they would report someone if they knew they were associated with organised crime.

**Question 8: If you were to report someone, who would you report them to?**

27. 67% of those surveyed said they would report suspects to the police whereas 24% said they would call the confidential telephone line – Crimestoppers (Figure 3).

28. These proportions were identical to those found in the January 2006 Omnibus Survey.

Figure 3: Respondents' views on who they would report someone to



**Question 9: What do you think your role is in tackling organised crime?**

29. 47% thought that their main role in tackling organised crime was to contact Crimestoppers while 45% of people thought that they should refuse to purchase counterfeit or illicit goods (Table 4).

30. 52% of Protestants compared with 39% of Catholics said they would contact Crimestoppers.

31. A greater proportion of respondents in the East of Northern Ireland (52%) stated that they would contact Crimestoppers compared with 46% in Belfast and 40% in the West of Northern Ireland.

Table 4: Respondents' views on their roles in tackling organised crime

	Total %
To contact Crimestoppers	47
Refuse to purchase counterfeit or illicit goods	45
To report criminal activity to police or Revenue and Customs	41
Dissuade others from purchasing counterfeit or illicit goods	35
Speak to elected representatives/community groups	20
To give evidence in court about organised crime/criminals	13
Other	5
Don't know/refusal	7
<b>Base</b>	<b>1,211</b>

**Question 10: Which items related to organised crime have you knowingly bought?**

32. Over two thirds (69%) of those surveyed had never bought any items related to organised crime, while 22% had bought counterfeit CDs or DVDs.

33. A higher proportion of Protestants (73%) than Catholics (63%) had never bought counterfeit goods.

34. There were variations in relation to age on this question. In general terms the older the respondent the less likely they were to have bought counterfeit goods. In contrast, the younger the respondent, the more likely they were to have purchased counterfeit CDs or DVDs (Table 5).

Table 5: Organised crime items which respondents bought by age

	AGE					Total %
	16-24 %	25-34 %	35-49 %	50-64 %	65+ %	
No items	45	47	70	80	92	69
Counterfeit CDs/DVDs	45	40	22	11	2	22
Smuggled tobacco	9	11	7	4	1	6
<b>Base</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>1,211</b>

**Question 11: Which items related to organised crime would you knowingly buy?**

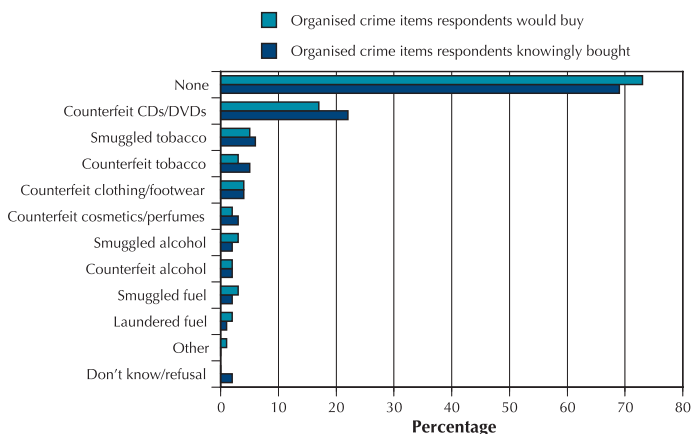
35. 73% said that they would not knowingly buy items related to organised crime - 81% of Protestants and 64% of Catholics. The main items which respondents were likely to buy were counterfeit CDs or DVDs (17%) (Table 6).

Table 6: Organised crime items which respondents would knowingly buy by age

	AGE					Total %
	16-24 %	25-34 %	35-49 %	50-64 %	65+ %	
No items	49	54	79	81	92	73
Counterfeit CDs/DVDs	39	32	13	6	2	17
Smuggled tobacco	8	7	5	4	1	5
<b>Base</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>1,211</b>

36. In general terms, a lesser proportion of most age groups stated that they would buy counterfeit CDs or DVDs, than those who had already bought these items (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Organised crime items respondents have bought compared with organised crime items they would buy



**Question 12: Have you heard of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF)?**

37. 35% of those surveyed had heard of the OCTF – 41% of males and 31% of females.

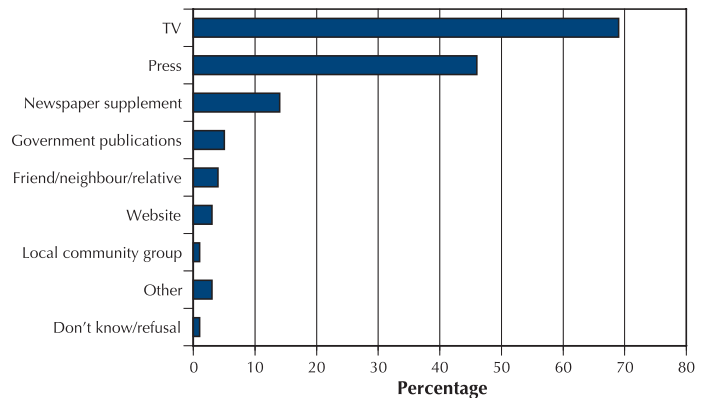
38. Only 18% of those aged 16 to 24 had heard of this criminal justice organisation compared with 47% of those aged between 35 and 49 years.

39. In the January 2006 Omnibus Survey, 30% claimed to have heard of the OCTF.

**Question 13: How did you find out about the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF)?**

40. Of those respondents who had heard of the OCTF, this was achieved via the media – TV (69%), Press (46%) and newspaper supplements (14%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: How respondents were made aware of the OCTF



41. In the January 2006 Omnibus Survey, 77% had heard of the OCTF from the TV, 49% via the Press and 20% by means of newspaper supplements.

**Question 14: Who do you think sits on the OCTF?**

42. 50% of those respondents who had heard of the OCTF thought that the police, and 28% thought that the Assets Recovery Agency (ARA), sat on the OCTF.

43. Almost one third (30%) of those surveyed did not know who sat on the OCTF – 22% of males compared with 37% of females (Table 7).

Table 7: Respondents' views on members of OCTF by gender

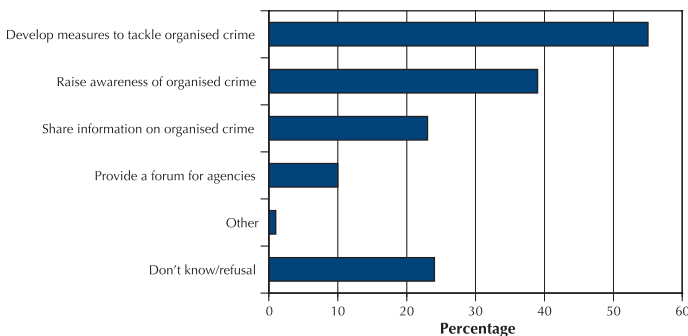
	GENDER		
	Male %	Female %	Total %
Police Service of Northern Ireland	53	46	50
Assets Recovery Agency	33	22	28
Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	23	13	18
Policing Board	18	15	17
Serious Organised Crime Agency	14	12	13
Northern Ireland Office	14	6	10
Federation of Small Businesses	6	3	5
Confederation of British Industry	2	3	3
Home Office	3	3	3
Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce	2	2	2
Other	11	11	11
Don't know/refusal	23	37	31
<b>Base</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>424</b>

**Question 15: What do you think the role of the OCTF is?**

44. 55% of those surveyed thought that the role of the OCTF was to develop measures to tackle organised crime while 39% of those surveyed thought that it was to raise awareness of organised crime. Almost one quarter of those surveyed (23%) were unsure of the OCTF's role (Figure 6).

45. A higher proportion of Protestants (59%) compared with Catholics (49%) were of the opinion that the OCTF was involved in developing measures to tackle organised crime.

Figure 6: Respondents' views on the role of the OCTF



**Question 16: How effective do you think the OCTF has been so far in raising awareness about organised crime?**

46. Almost one half of respondents (48%), who had heard of the OCTF, thought that it was fairly effective or very effective in raising awareness about organised crime. Over one quarter of respondents (28%), could not decide whether the OCTF was effective or ineffective.

47. The January 2006 Omnibus Survey revealed that 52% thought the OCTF was fairly effective or very effective.

**Question 17: How effective do you think the partner agencies of the OCTF have been in reducing the threat of organised crime?**

48. Of those who were aware of the OCTF, 51% of respondents thought that the partner agencies of the OCTF (PSNI, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Assets Recovery Agency, Home Office, Northern Ireland Office, National Criminal Intelligence Service, and other government agencies) were fairly effective or very effective in reducing the threat of organised crime.

49. In the January 2006 Omnibus Survey 60% thought that the partner agencies of the OCTF were fairly effective or very effective in tackling organised crime.

**Question 18-20: Are you aware of any OCTF agencies having successfully acted against someone involved in organised crime living in your area? Which agency or agencies? How did this make you feel?**

50. 11% of respondents (n=50) were aware of OCTF agencies having successfully acted against someone in their local community. Of this proportion, 56%<sup>1</sup> stated that this was done by ARA while 35%<sup>1</sup> stated that this was done by the PSNI. However, even though prosecutions had taken place, 56%<sup>1</sup> stated that they did not feel any safer living in their local community.

<sup>1</sup>Percentage should be viewed with caution due to small sample size (n=50).

## TECHNICAL NOTES

51. The sample of those surveyed in the January 2007 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.

52. 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, 1,993 were eligible and 1,211 interviews were achieved giving a response rate of 61%.

53. 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 has been weighted to prevent a bias towards smaller households.

54. 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 8 shows a comparison between the January 2007 Omnibus Survey sample and the Northern Ireland adult population (16+) from the 2001 Census of Population.

Table 8: Sample Profile

		2001 Census of population (Adults) %	January 2007 Omnibus survey %
<b>Sex</b>	Male	48	44
	Female	52	56
<b>Age group</b>	16 - 24	16	16
	25 - 34	19	16
	35 - 49	27	28
	50 -64	20	23
	65 and over	17	19
<b>Base</b>		<b>1,292,169</b>	<b>1,211</b>

55. The area analysis was based on District Council boundaries and is detailed in Table 9. 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 9: Areas of Northern Ireland by District Council

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

56. 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 analysis by religion.

57. Due to rounding, percentages denoted in both tables and figures may not sum to 100%.

58. In the Tables, if the figure is less than 0.5% the cell is denoted by '0%'.

IEWS ON ORGANISED CRIME

Annex 1: Comparison of January 2006 and January 2007 Omnibus Surveys

Question	Main Finding	January 2006 (%)	January 2007 (%)
1. Do you think that there is a problem with organised crime in Northern Ireland?	Problem with organised crime	96	93
2. How serious do you think the problem with organised crime is in Northern Ireland?	Very serious	60	48
3. Who do you think is mainly responsible for committing offences relating to organised crime in Northern Ireland?	Paramilitary Organisations	77	71
4. What types of crime would you associate with organised crime in Northern Ireland?	Drug dealing Armed robbery Fuel smuggling/laundry	81 52 39	81 50 41
5. Who do you think suffers as a result of organised crime?	Individual victims General public Local communities	70 65 64	66 65 60
6. What do you think is the impact of organised crime?	Fear in the community Violence in the community Legitimate businesses/retailers lose trade	73 57 54	69 54 51
7. How likely is it that you would report someone if you knew that they were associated with organised crime?	Likely/very likely	53	55
8. If you were to report someone, who would you report them to?	Police Crimestoppers	67 24	67 24
9. What do you think your role is in tackling organised crime?	Contact Crimestoppers Refuse to purchase counterfeit goods Report activities to police or Revenue and Customs	- - -	47 45 41
10. Organised Crime items knowingly bought	None Counterfeit CDs/DVDs	- -	69 22
11. Organised Crime items respondents would buy	None Counterfeit CDs/DVDs	- -	73 17
12. Have you heard of the OCTF?	Heard of OCTF	30	35
13. How did you find out about the OCTF?	TV Press Newspaper supplement	77 49 20	69 46 14
14. Who do you think sits on the OCTF?	PSNI ARA Don't know	- - -	50 28 30
15. What do you think the role of the OCTF is?	Develop measures to tackle organised crime Raise awareness of organised crime Share information on organised crime	- - -	55 39 23
16. How effective do you think the OCTF has been so far in raising awareness about organised crime?	Fairly effective/very effective	52	48
17. How effective do you think the partner agencies of the OCTF have been in reducing the threat of organised crime?	Fairly effective/very effective	60	51
18. Are you aware of any OCTF agencies having successfully acted against someone involved in organised crime living in your area?	Yes No	- -	11 86
19. Which agency or agencies? <sup>1</sup>	ARA PSNI	- -	56 35
20. How did this make you feel? <sup>1</sup>	No different Safer	- -	56 42

<sup>1</sup>Due to a small response rate in Q18 (50 respondents), the percentages in Q19 and Q20 should be viewed with extreme caution.

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