

Perceptions of Crime: Findings from the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey

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1 | Summary Findings

This bulletin presents findings from the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) and focuses on respondents' perceptions of crime including worry about crime and the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life.

Causes of Crime, Crime Levels and Anti-social Behaviour

- Drugs (80%), alcohol (56%) and a lack of discipline from parents (40%) were the three factors most commonly identified by 2019/20 respondents as major causes of crime in Northern Ireland today. These three factors were also most likely to be identified by respondents as the major causes in their local area (48%, 35% and 25% respectively).
- Almost seven-in-ten (68%) respondents thought crime levels in Northern Ireland had increased in the preceding two years, a statistically significant increase from 2018/19 (60%). The 2019/20 figure of 68% is, however, 11 percentage points below that observed in 2003/04 (79%). There were subsequent decreases between 2018/19 and 2019/20 in the proportions of respondents who felt there was less crime in Northern Ireland (from 8% to 6%) or that crime levels had not changed in the preceding two years (32% to 26%).
- As in previous sweeps of the survey, latest findings suggest respondents continued to be more positive in their perceptions of crime trends in their local area than at the regional level, with 31% believing local crime levels had increased in the preceding two years.
- Findings from 2019/20 show that 9% of respondents perceived the level of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in their local area to be high, a similar proportion to 2018/19 (10%). Across the individual ASB categories, 'people using or dealing drugs' (31%) and 'rubbish or litter lying around' (27%) were most commonly identified as problems in their local area.

Worry about Crime and Personal Safety

- Latest findings show the proportion of respondents expressing a high level of worry about violent crime has shown a statistically significant decrease compared with the previous year (from 12% to 10%). The two remaining crime categories considered, burglary and car crime, showed no statistically significant change over the last year. At 7% in each of the last two years, the proportion of respondents reporting feeling very unsafe when walking alone in their area after dark also showed no change, while the proportion feeling very unsafe when alone in home at night fell from 2% to 1%; this proportion has remained at 1%-2% through all previous sweeps of the survey.

Effect of 'Fear of Crime' on Quality of Life

- At 71%, the majority of 2019/20 respondents felt that 'fear of crime' has a minimal impact on their quality of life, a further 24% claimed it has a moderate effect, while the remaining five per cent stated their quality of life is greatly affected by their 'fear of crime'.

2

Introduction

2.1 The focus of this publication

This bulletin draws on findings from the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS). This survey was formerly known as the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) but was renamed following a review in 2017/18. NISCS is a representative, continuous, personal interview survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime of 3,710 adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland.

Previously conducted on an ad hoc basis in 1994/95, 1998, 2001 and 2003/04, the survey began operating on a continuous basis in January 2005.

In addition to describing respondents' perceptions of causes of crime, recent changes in crime levels and the extent of anti-social behaviour in the local area, the bulletin illustrates two commonly used measures of concern about crime:

1. worry about crime and personal safety; and
2. perceptions of the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life.

Comparisons are made (where appropriate and available) between the results of the 2019/20 NISCS and those of the 2019/20 [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (CSEW; ONS, 2020), as well as with earlier sweeps of the NICS/NISCS.

Throughout this report key findings are commented on in the text, with full numerical details on each section available in the relevant tables comprising the Tabular Annex (Appendix 1). The tables in the Tabular Annex present trend data from 2010/11. Commentary may refer to findings from earlier years, figures for which can be found in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source documents.

Further background information on this bulletin is available in the Technical Annex (Appendix 2). An additional NISCS 2019/20 report on [Experience of Crime \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (Campbell, Rice and Ross, February 2021) has been published separately. Further bulletins presenting 2019/20 findings will also be published.

3 Causes of Crime, Crime Levels and Anti-social Behaviour

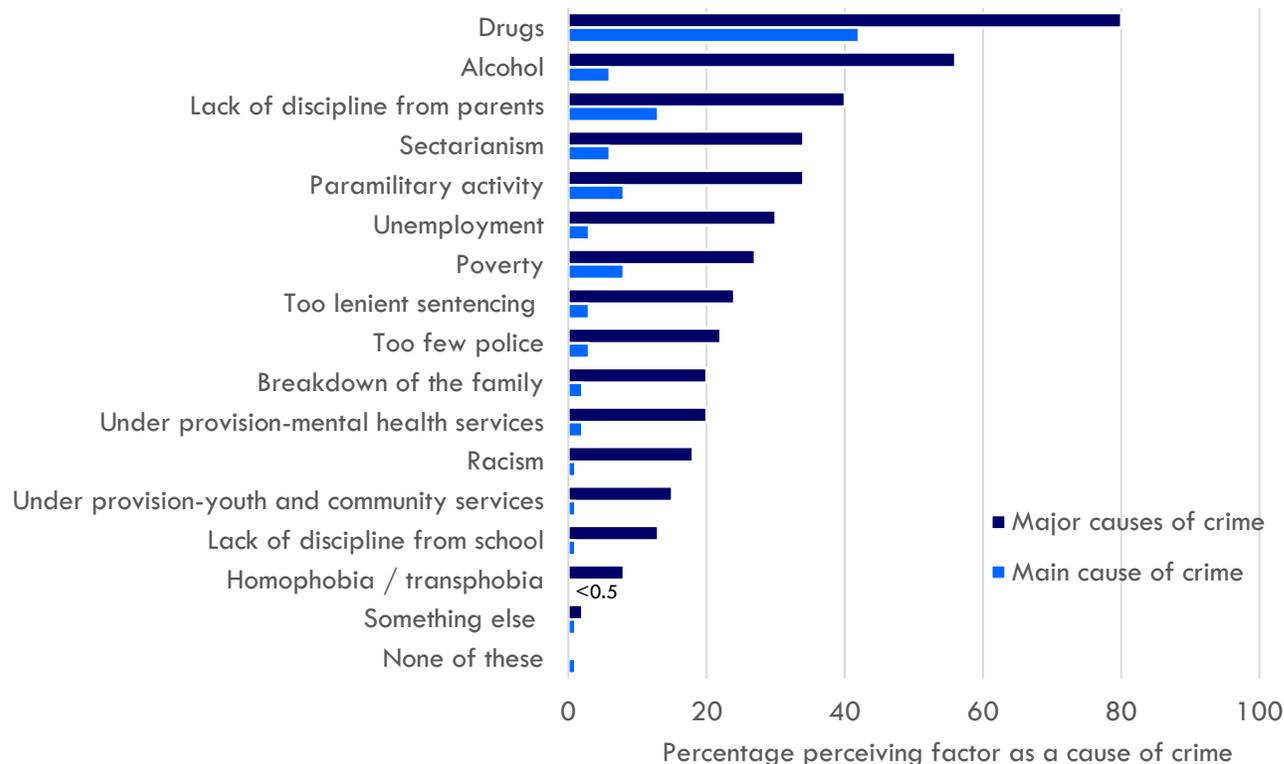
This section provides an overview of NISCS respondents' perceptions of causes of crime, crime levels and anti-social behaviour. Tables 1 to 4 of Appendix 1 provide these figures in full.

3.1 Causes of crime

NISCS respondents were asked to select from a list, the factors they considered to be major causes of crime in Northern Ireland today. If a respondent selected more than one factor, they were then asked which of these factors they believed to be the *main* cause of crime. From 2018/19, respondents were also asked to select both the major and main causes of crime in their local area. Figures for both Northern Ireland and the local area are presented in Table 1.

- Findings from NISCS 2019/20 show that, as in previous years, drugs, alcohol and a lack of discipline from parents (80%, 56% & 40% respectively) remain the three factors most commonly identified as major causes of crime in Northern Ireland today. Similarly, these factors were also most commonly cited by respondents as major causes when focusing on their local area (48%, 35% & 25% respectively).
- From the list of factors presented to respondents, 'homophobia/transphobia' was least likely to be identified as a major cause of crime, in both Northern Ireland (8%) and the local area (1%).
- When asked about the main cause, drugs was most likely to be cited by respondents for both Northern Ireland and their local area, at 42% and 32% respectively.

Figure 3.1: Perceptions of causes of crime (%) in Northern Ireland, 2019/20



Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey 2019/20

1. Respondents could provide 'something else' as an alternative/additional major cause. This was not taken as the main cause. If the main cause was not from the list provided, a 'none of these' response was given.

3

Causes of Crime, Crime Levels and Anti-social Behaviour

3.2 Perceptions of change in crime levels

NISCS participants were also asked how they perceived the level of crime to have changed, if at all, in both Northern Ireland and their local area during the two years prior to interview, based on a five-point scale ranging from 'a lot more crime' to 'a lot less crime'. The proportions perceiving there to be either 'a little' or 'a lot' more crime in Northern Ireland comprise the overall 'more crime' figure presented in Table 2. The two response options, 'a little less' and 'a lot less', have been combined into the 'less crime' figure. Equivalent figures for change in crime levels in the local area are given in Table 3.

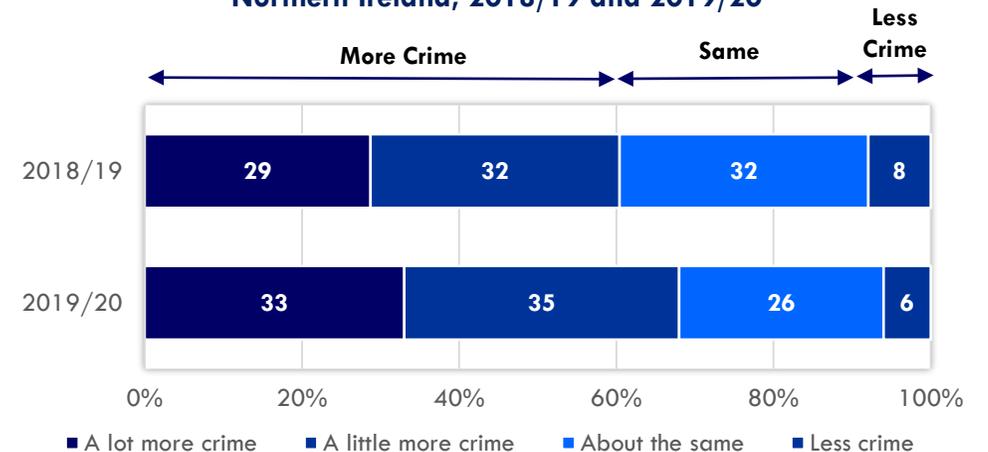
Typically, people can believe crime is on the increase, even if it is not, and that the situation is worse at the regional level than in their own local area. Thus, it is the trend in this proportion, rather than the actual value, that is of primary interest.

Northern Ireland

- Latest findings suggest that the proportions of respondents who believed there was 'a lot more crime' or 'a little more crime' in Northern Ireland both showed a statistically significant increase, from 29% to 33% and 32% to 35% respectively, between 2018/19 and 2019/20. As a result, the combined overall 'more crime' figure was a statistically significant increase from 60% to 68% over the same period.

- While the proportion of respondents perceiving there to be 'more crime' in Northern Ireland has increased from the previous year, it remains lower than the 2003/04 figure, when a high of 79% was observed. This reduction is primarily due to an overall decrease in the 'a lot more crime' proportion. Although this proportion has increased in each of the last two years, the latest figure still represents a decrease from the 49% observed in 2003/04.
- Findings for 2019/20 suggest that, as a result of the increase in the more crime figure, the proportions who felt there was 'less crime' in Northern Ireland, or who felt crime levels had not changed, both showed a statistically significant decrease from the previous year (from 8% to 6% and 32% to 26% respectively).

Figure 3.2: Perceptions of changing crime levels (%) in Northern Ireland, 2018/19 and 2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19-2019/20

1. Percentages displayed may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

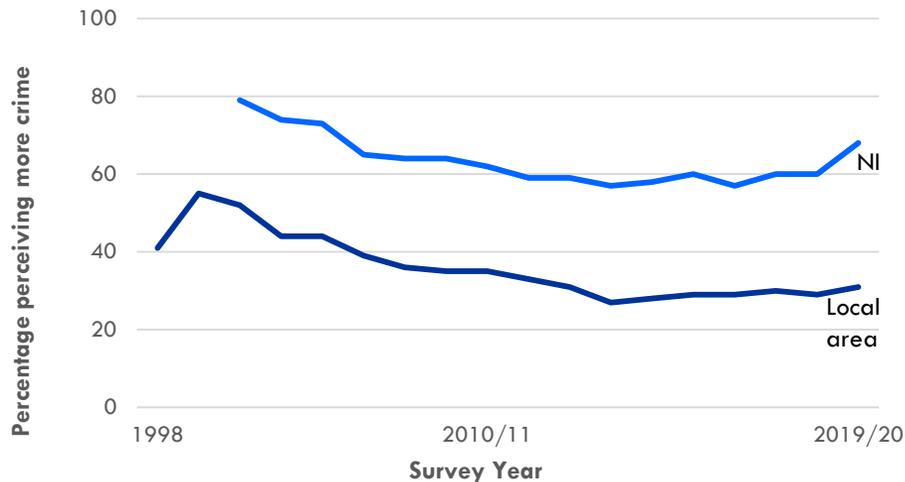
3

Causes of Crime, Crime Levels and Anti-social Behaviour

Local area

- Figure 3.3 shows that, as in previous sweeps of the survey, 2019/20 respondents were more positive in their perceptions of crime levels within their local area than at the regional level, with 31% believing crime in their local area had increased in the preceding two years compared with the 68% believing there was more crime at the Northern Ireland level. While the figure of 31% is similar to the 2018/19 proportion of 29%, it is close to half that of the figure in 2001 (55%).

Figure 3.3: Perceptions of changing crime levels (%) in both Northern Ireland and the local area, 1998-2019/20

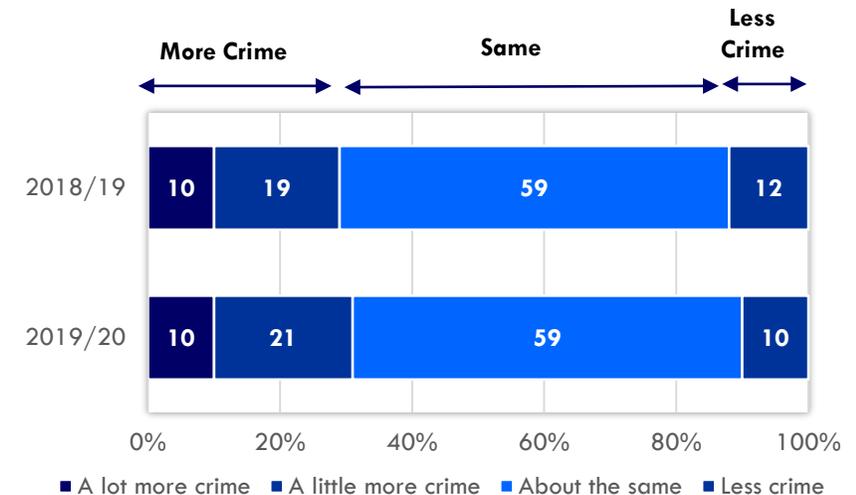


Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 1998-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19-2019/20

- The question relating to change in the NI crime level was not included in the survey until 2003/04.
- Figures for local area are based on respondents who had been living in their area for more than three years.

- Over the years respondents have become less likely to believe crime levels in their local area had increased and more likely to believe crime has stayed the same. The overall reduction since 2001 in the proportion perceiving 'more crime' in their local area, from 55% to 31%, has resulted in an almost equivalent increase in the percentage who felt crime levels hadn't changed, from 36% to 59% over the same period.
- Latest findings show one-in-ten (10%) respondents felt there was less crime in their area, on a par with the 2018/19 figure of 12%.

Figure 3.4: Perceptions of changing crime levels (%) in the local area, 2018/19 and 2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19-2019/20

- Percentages displayed may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
- Based on respondents who had been living in their area for more than three years.

3

Causes of Crime, Crime Levels and Anti-social Behaviour

3.3 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour in Northern Ireland and England and Wales

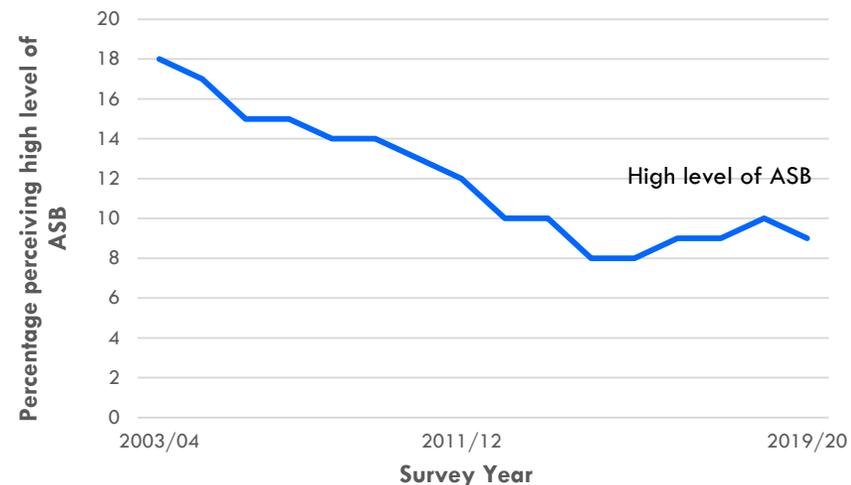
Respondents to the NISCS and CSEW were asked to rate how much of a problem different types of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are in their area using a four-point scale ranging from 'very big problem' to 'not a problem at all'. Since 2003/04, responses to the following seven strands have been used to form a composite measure (see Section 4.3 of the [User Guide \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (DoJ, 2019a, for more information) to gauge the overall perceived level of ASB in the local area:

1. abandoned or burnt-out cars;
2. noisy neighbours or loud parties;
3. people being drunk or rowdy in public places;
4. people using or dealing drugs;
5. teenagers/young people hanging around on the streets;
6. rubbish or litter lying around; and
7. vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property.

Figures for the composite measure and the seven individual strands are presented in Appendix 1, Table 4.

- Based on this composite measure, findings from 2019/20 indicate that 9% of participants perceived the level of ASB in their local area to be high. This finding was not a statistically significant change from the previous year (10%).
- The proportion of respondents perceiving a high level of ASB has had an overall reduction from 18% in 2003/04, mainly due to a combination of non-significant decreases over the years. The equivalent figure for England and Wales (CSEW 2019/20) was lower at 7%.

Figure 3.5: Perceived high level of ASB (%) in Northern Ireland, 2003/04-2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 2003/04-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19-2019/20

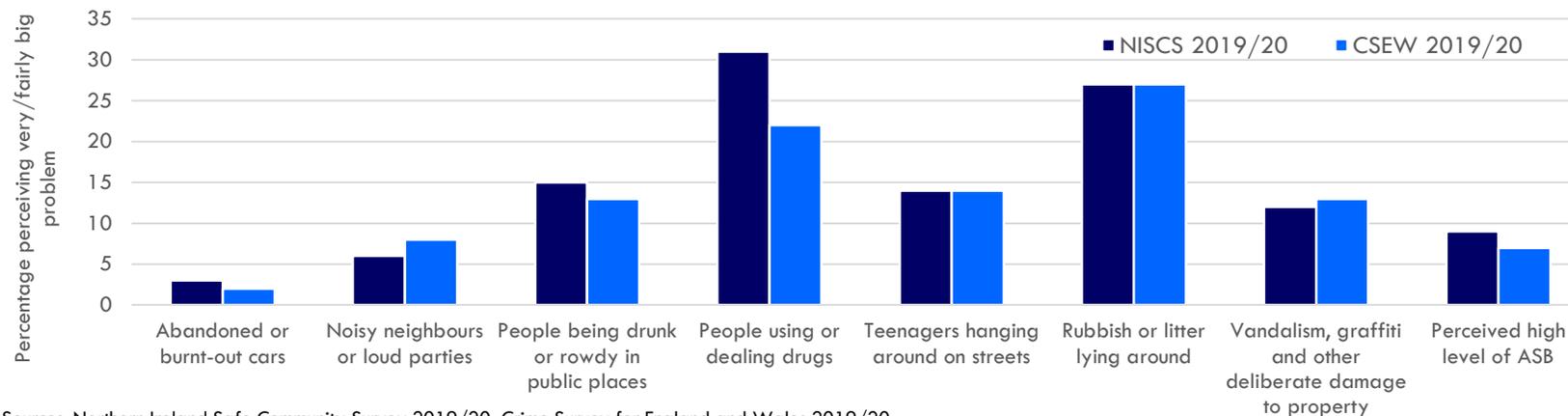
1. Perceived high level of ASB derived from responses to the seven individual ASB strands.

- In terms of the seven individual ASB strands, latest findings suggest 'noisy neighbours or loud parties' was the only strand to show a statistically significant change from last year, decreasing from 7% to 6%. The proportion of respondents perceiving noisy neighbours or loud parties as a problem has been stable across previous survey years and remained at 8% each year from 2006/07 to 2013/14 and thereafter at 7% until 2018/19.

3 Causes of Crime, Crime Levels and Anti-social Behaviour

- While the six remaining strands showed no change from last year, four of them have, however, shown a general downward trend since 2003/04: abandoned or burnt out cars (from 10% in 2003/04 to 3% in 2019/20); people being drunk or rowdy in public places (24% to 15%); teenagers hanging around on streets (31% to 14%); and vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property (28% to 12%). Until recently, the proportion of respondents perceiving people using or dealing drugs as a problem had, on the whole, been falling with the rate reducing from 31% in 2003/04 to 21% in 2014/15. However, the proportion has since risen back to 31%, mainly due to an increase from 25% to 31% between 2017/18 and 2018/19. The proportion who believed rubbish or litter lying around as a problem has remained somewhat more stable over the years (27% in 2019/20).
- As in recent sweeps of the survey, NISCS 2019/20 respondents were most likely to perceive 'people using or dealing drugs' (31%) and 'rubbish or litter lying around' (27%) as problems. From 2003/04, 'abandoned or burnt-out cars' and 'noisy neighbours or loud parties' have been considered the least problematic forms of ASB (3% and 6% respectively in 2019/20). Similarly, rubbish or litter (27%) and people using or dealing drugs (22%) were also identified as the most problematic in England and Wales, though the proportion reporting people using or dealing drugs as a very/fairly big problem was lower in England and Wales than in Northern Ireland (22% v 31%).

Figure 3.6: Perceptions of ASB in Northern Ireland and England and Wales, 2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey 2019/20; Crime Survey for England and Wales 2019/20

1. Perceived high level of ASB derived from responses to the seven individual ASB strands.

Summary: Causes of Crime, Crime levels and Anti-social Behaviour

Drugs, alcohol and a lack of discipline from parents were the three factors most commonly identified by 2019/20 respondents as major causes of crime, in both Northern Ireland and their local area. Almost seven-in-ten (68%) respondents thought crime levels in Northern Ireland had increased, a rise from 60% the previous year. This compares with 31% who believed crime in their local area had risen. Latest findings also show that 9% of respondents perceived ASB to be high in their local area, a similar proportion to the previous year (10%).

4 | Worry about Crime and Personal Safety

4.1 Worry about crime and personal safety in Northern Ireland and England and Wales

Worry about becoming a victim of crime is measured by the NISCS in two ways: firstly, about specific crimes; and secondly, with regard to personal safety when alone after dark, either at home or walking in the local area.

Respondents to NISCS 2019/20 were asked how worried they are about becoming a victim of the following crimes using a four-point scale, ranging from 'very worried' to 'not at all worried':

1. home being burgled;
2. being mugged and robbed;
3. physical attack by a stranger;
4. physical attack because of hate motivations;
5. rape;
6. theft of a car; and
7. theft from a car.

Two composite indicators for worry about car crime and violent crime are constructed from the responses to the individual car crime and violent crime questions. These composite indicators, together with the proportion of respondents who claimed to be 'very worried' about burglary, are compared with CSEW analyses in Appendix 1 Table 5.

For the worry about car crime indicator, responses to each car crime question of 'very worried' are awarded 2 points and 'fairly worried' 1 point. Those respondents scoring a combined 3 or 4 points are considered to have a high level of worry about car crime. This measure refers only to respondents residing in households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.

A similar approach is used to determine the worry about violent crime indicator, with responses to each violent crime question of 'very worried' being awarded 2 points and 'fairly worried' 1 point. In this instance, the scale ranges from 0 to 8 points and those scoring 4 or more points are deemed to have a high level of worry about violent crime.

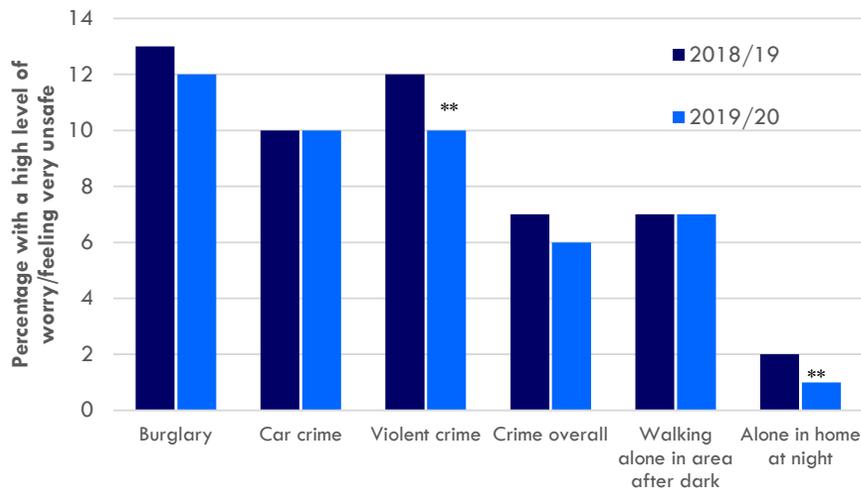
Since 2007/08, respondents have also been asked how worried they are about becoming a victim of (all types of) crime in general, using the same four-point scale ('very worried' to 'not at all worried'). Responses to this question are also included within Table 5.

4

Worry about Crime and Personal Safety

- Findings from 2019/20 show that one-in-ten respondents (10%) displayed a high level of worry about car crime. While there has been no change in the figure from the previous year (also 10%), the rate has reduced by more than half since 2001 (21%).
- Latest findings show that respondents who expressed a high level of worry about violent crime has shown a statistically significant decrease from 12% in 2018/19 to 10% in 2019/20. In relation to burglary, the apparent decrease, from 13% to 12%, was not statistically significant. As with car crime, worry about both these crime types has shown an overall decrease from the earlier survey years. When compared with the rates reported in 2003/04 burglary has fallen from 21% to 12% and violent crime from 24% to 10%. These overall reductions were again, mainly a result of a number of non-significant decreases over the years.
- When asked about crime overall, 6% of 2019/20 respondents reported having a high level of worry, a similar figure to the previous year (7%).

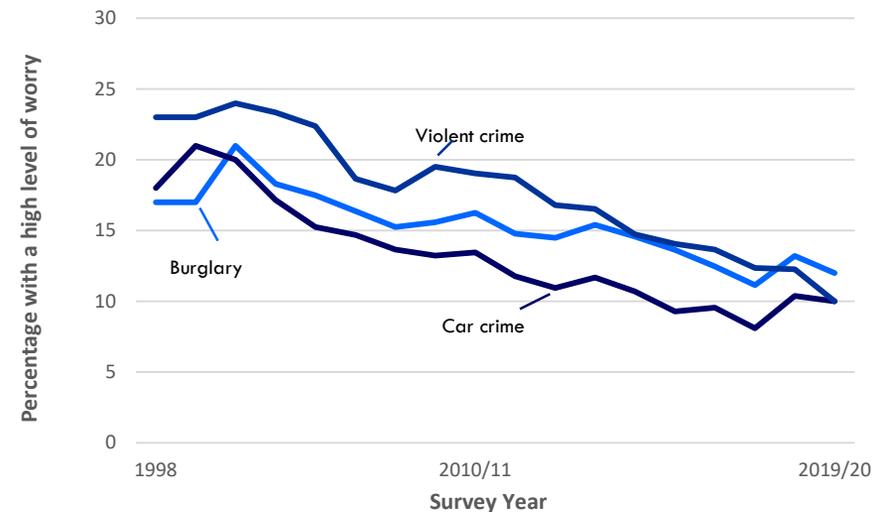
Figure 4.1: Worry about crime and personal safety (%) in Northern Ireland, 2018/19 and 2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19-2019/20

- Car crime based on respondents residing in households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.
- Statistically significant change (5% level two-tailed test) from previous year is indicated by a double asterisk (**). Figures available in Appendix 1 Table 5.

Figure 4.2: Worry about crime (%) in Northern Ireland, 1998 to 2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 1998-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19-2019/20

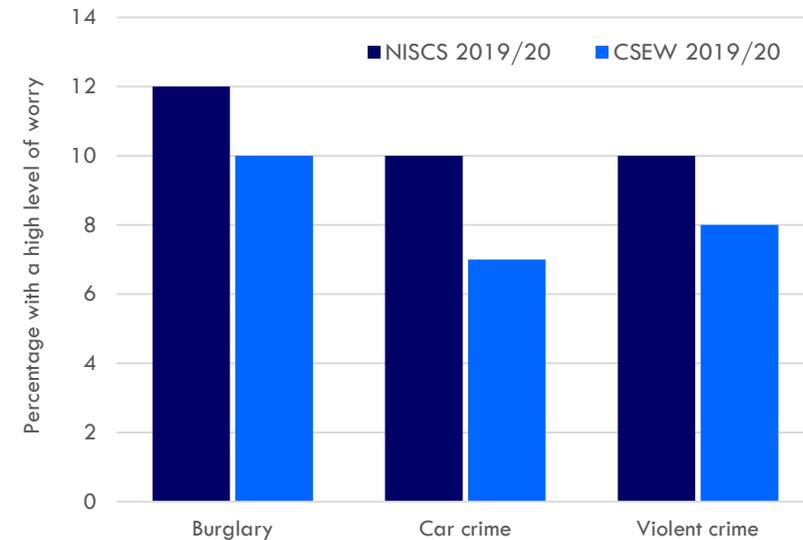
- Car crime based on respondents residing in households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.

4

Worry about Crime and Personal Safety

- With regards to personal safety, latest findings indicate 7% of respondents felt very unsafe walking alone in their area after dark. While this proportion has remained the same as the 2018/19 finding (also 7%), it is nearly half of the rate observed during the 2003/04 survey, where 13% reported feeling very unsafe.
- Over the last two decades, the proportion feeling very unsafe when alone in home at night has remained stable at around 1% or 2% each year. The 2019/20 figure of 1% represents a statistically significant decrease from the previous year (2%).
- Despite a lower prevalence of crime in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales, NISCS 2019/20 respondents were more likely than their CSEW counterparts to express a high level of worry about each of the three crime types considered. For example, 12% of respondents in Northern Ireland were very worried about being a victim of burglary compared with 10% in England and Wales.

Figure 4.3: Worry about crime (%) in Northern Ireland and England and Wales, 2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey 2019/20; Crime Survey for England and Wales 2019/20

1. Car crime based on respondents residing in households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.

Summary: Worry about Crime and Personal Safety

Of the three specific crime types considered, latest findings suggest that violent crime was the only crime type to show a statistically significant change, with the proportion expressing a high level of worry falling from 12% to 10% between 2018/19 and 2019/20. Figures for car crime and burglary remained on a par with the previous year. In terms of personal safety, the 2019/20 proportion who reported feeling very unsafe walking alone in their area after dark was also unchanged from 2018/19. While the 2019/20 proportion of 1% who felt very unsafe when alone in home at night represents a statistically significant decrease from 2% the previous year, the rate has remained around 1%-2% in all survey sweeps from 1998.

5

Effect of 'Fear of Crime' on Quality of Life

5.1 Perceptions of the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life in Northern Ireland and England and Wales

While a basic level of concern about crime may be beneficial in that it encourages people to take measures to reduce their likelihood of victimisation, 'fear (about being a victim) of crime' can become problematic if it has a detrimental impact on a person's quality of life.

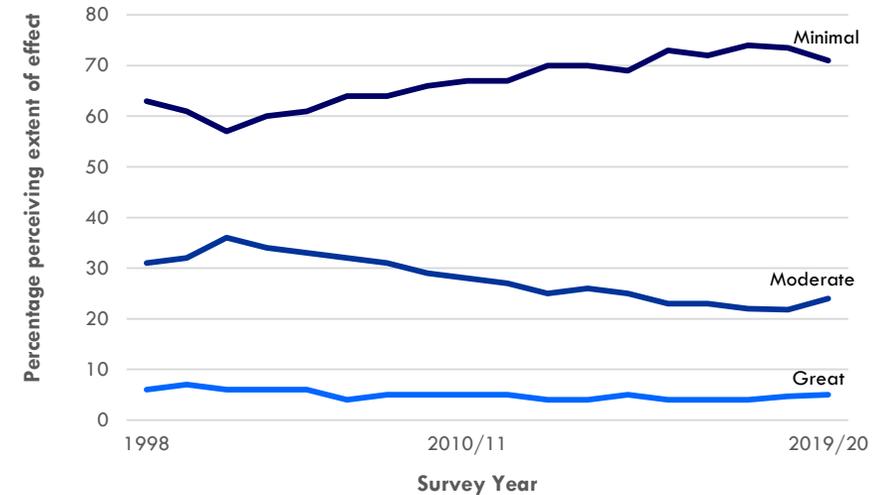
Respondents to NISCS were asked how much their own quality of life is affected by their 'fear of crime' on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is no effect and 10 is a total effect. In order to standardise the results, the following conventions have been used to gauge the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality 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).

Figures are presented in Appendix 1 Table 6.

- As in previous sweeps of the survey, the majority of 2019/20 respondents, seven-in-ten (71%), felt 'fear of crime' has a minimal impact on their quality of life, with 24% reporting a moderate impact. These compare with 74% and 22% respectively in 2018/19. Neither of these apparent changes were statistically significant. The proportion of respondents reporting a great impact has remained at 5% in both years.

Figure 5.1: Perceptions of the effect of 'fear of crime' on quality of life (%) in Northern Ireland, 1998-2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys 1998-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys 2018/19-2019/20

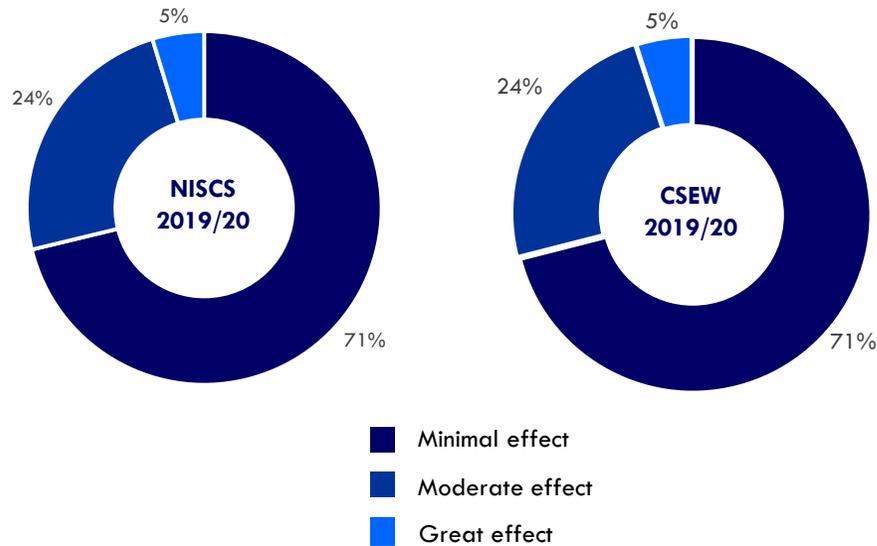
- The proportion of respondents who felt fear of crime has a minimal effect has shown a gradual improvement over the years with the 2019/20 rate of 71% comparing with a low of 57% in 2003/04. This increase has been compensated for primarily by a subsequent reduction in the proportion reporting a moderate effect from 36% to 24% over the same period. The rate observed for a great effect on quality of life has remained relatively stable over the years.

5

Effect of 'Fear of Crime' on Quality of Life

- Findings for England and Wales reflect the trend in Northern Ireland in that the majority of respondents claimed 'fear of crime' has a minimal effect on their quality of life (also 71%; CSEW 2019/20). The proportions of CSEW respondents claiming a moderate and great effect were also the same as the NISCS findings at 24% and 5% respectively.

Figure 5.2: Perceptions of the effect of fear of crime on quality of life (%) Northern Ireland and England and Wales, 2019/20



Sources: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey 2019/20; Crime Survey for England and Wales 2019/20

1. Percentages/values displayed may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Summary: Effect of 'Fear of Crime' on Quality of Life

At 71% in 2019/20, the majority of respondents felt fear of crime has a minimal effect on their quality of life, a proportion which has been increasing over the last fifteen years or so, from 57% in 2003/04. The proportion perceiving a moderate effect has shown a similar decrease over this period (from 36% to 24%). The rate for great effect has largely remained unchanged over the years. In 2019/20, rates in England and Wales were the same as those observed in Northern Ireland (71%, 24% and 5%, CSEW).



Appendix 1: Tabular Annex

Table 1: Perceptions of the causes of crime (%) in Northern Ireland and the local area^{1,2}

	NI major causes of crime ^{3,4}	NI main cause of crime ^{3,4}	Local area major causes of crime ^{3,4}	Local area main cause of crime ^{3,4}
Drugs	80	42	48	32
Alcohol	56	6	35	14
Lack of discipline from parents	40	13	25	14
Sectarianism	34	6	8	2
Paramilitary activity	34	8	10	4
Unemployment	30	3	13	4
Too lenient sentencing	24	3	7	2
Poverty	27	8	11	5
Breakdown of the family	20	2	7	2
Too few police	22	3	19	10
Racism	18	1	3	<0.5
Under provision of mental health services	20	2	6	1
Lack of discipline from school	13	1	5	1
Under provision of youth and community services	15	1	9	4
Homophobia / transphobia	8	<0.5	1	<0.05
Something else	2	1	12	3
None of these	-	1	-	1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3,701</i>	<i>3,684</i>	<i>3,599</i>	<i>3,314</i>

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2019/20

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Respondents were asked to select from a list the factors they considered to be the major causes of crime in Northern Ireland today. If respondents selected more than one factor they were asked which of the factors they believed to be the main cause of crime. If respondents gave only one factor, this was taken as the main cause. Since 2018/19 respondents were also asked about the major and main causes of crime in their local area.

3. When asked about the major causes of crime, respondents were able to select a 'something else' option and offer an alternative or additional cause of crime. Respondents could also select their 'something else' option as the main cause. Main cause excludes those who selected 'something else' as a major cause but then 'none of these' as the main cause.

4. Percentages for major causes of crime may add to more than 100 as respondents could select more than one cause.

Table 2: Perceptions of change in overall crime levels (%) in Northern Ireland¹

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ²
More Crime³	62	59	59	57	58	60	57	60	60	68	**↑
A lot more crime	28	26	25	23	25	25	23	23	29	33	**↑
A little more crime	35	34	34	34	33	35	35	38	32	35	**↑
Same	25	28	29	31	31	30	29	30	32	26	**↓
Less crime	13	12	12	12	10	10	14	10	8	6	**↓
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3,916</i>	<i>3,925</i>	<i>3,898</i>	<i>3,458</i>	<i>2,003</i>	<i>1,914</i>	<i>1,820</i>	<i>1,539</i>	<i>3,330</i>	<i>3,617</i>	

Source: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys (NICS) 2010/11-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys (NISCS) 2018/19-2019/20

1. Results 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. Comprises the proportion of respondents believing there has been 'a little more crime' or 'a lot more crime'; these figures may not sum to the 'more crime' composite figure due to rounding.

Table 3: Perceptions of change in local crime levels (%) in Northern Ireland^{1,2}

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ²
More Crime³	35	33	31	27	28	29	29	30	29	31	
A lot more crime	11	10	10	8	8	8	8	9	10	10	
A little more crime	24	23	21	19	20	21	20	22	19	21	
Same	49	51	53	55	56	57	56	56	59	59	
Less crime	16	16	17	17	16	15	15	14	12	10	
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>3,494</i>	<i>3,497</i>	<i>3,524</i>	<i>3,109</i>	<i>1,816</i>	<i>1,707</i>	<i>1,605</i>	<i>1,375</i>	<i>2,883</i>	<i>3,165</i>	

Source: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys (NICS) 2010/11-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys (NISCS) 2018/19-2019/20

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

2. Based on respondents who had been living in their area for more than three years.

3. Statistical significance of change at the 5% level (two-tailed test) is indicated by a double asterisk (**).

4. Comprises the proportion of respondents believing there has been 'a little more crime' or 'a lot more crime'; these figures may not sum to the 'more crime' composite figure due to rounding.

Table 4: Perceptions of different types of anti-social behaviour as very / fairly big problems (%) in Northern Ireland and England and Wales¹

% saying very/fairly big problem	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ²	CSEW 2019/20
Perceived high level of ASB³	13	12	10	10	8	8	9	9	10	9		7
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	5	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3		2
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	7	6	**↓	8
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	20	21	18	17	15	15	15	14	16	15		13
People using or dealing drugs	22	23	22	23	21	22	25	25	31	31		22
Teenagers hanging around on streets ⁴	23	22	20	17	15	15	14	13	16	14		14
Rubbish or litter lying around	27	26	24	26	26	24	25	26	28	27		27
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	20	20	17	16	15	13	12	13	12	12		13
<i>Unweighted base^{5,6}</i>	<i>4,077</i>	<i>4,063</i>	<i>4,055</i>	<i>3,596</i>	<i>2,071</i>	<i>1,974</i>	<i>1,877</i>	<i>1,582</i>	<i>3,427</i>	<i>3,709</i>		<i>8,550</i>

Source: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys (NICS) 2010/11-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys (NISCS) 2018/19-2019/20

1. Results 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).
4. Prior to 2018/19 question referred to 'teenagers hanging around on streets'. From 2018/19 it refers to 'teenagers/young adults'.
5. Unweighted base refers to rubbish or litter lying around. Other bases will be similar.
6. CSEW unweighted base refers to people using or dealing drugs. Other CSEW bases will be similar.

Table 5: Worry about crime and personal safety (%) in Northern Ireland and England and Wales¹

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ²	CSEW 2019/20
% with high levels of worry:												
Burglary	16	15	14	15	15	14	12	11	13	12		10
Car crime ³	13	12	11	12	11	9	10	8	10	10		7
Violent crime ⁴	19	19	17	17	15	14	14	12	12	10	**↓	8
% very worried:												
Crime overall	9	8	7	7	7	6	7	5	7	6		-
% feeling very unsafe:												
Walking alone in area after dark	9	8	7	7	7	7	6	5	7	7		6
Alone in home at night	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	**↓	-
Unweighted base⁵	4,080	4,061	4,054	3,594	2,073	1,975	1,876	1,581	3,428	3,710		8,569

Source: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys (NICS) 2010/11-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys (NISCS) 2018/19-2019/20

1. Results 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. Car crime based on respondents residing in households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.

4. As described in Section 4.1, the violent crime indicator is constructed from four questions. For the question relating to worry about physical attack because of a hate motivation (referred to in Section 4.1 and the Technical Annex of the main report), the CSEW question refers to skin colour, ethnic origin and religion.

5. Unweighted base refers to worry about burglary. Other bases will be similar with the exception of car crime which is based on vehicle-owners only.

Table 6: Perceptions of the effect of ‘fear of crime’ on quality of life (%) in Northern Ireland and England and Wales¹

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Statistically significant change, 2018/19 to 2019/20 ²	CSEW 2019/20
Minimal	67	67	70	70	69	7	72	74	74	71		71
Moderate	28	27	25	26	25	23	23	22	22	24		24
Great	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5		5
<i>Unweighted base</i>	4,079	4,062	4,054	3,596	2,074	1,975	1,877	1,581	3,427	3,699		3,751

Source: Northern Ireland Crime Surveys (NICS) 2010/11-2017/18; Northern Ireland Safe Community Surveys (NISCS) 2018/19-2019/20

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

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

Appendix 2: Technical Annex

About the NISCS

Closely mirroring the format and core questions of the CSEW, the NISCS is an important source of information about community safety issues such as levels of, and public attitudes to, crime and anti-social behaviour. Its results play an important role in informing and monitoring government policies and targets. Within the [2016-21 Draft Programme for Government \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (PfG) and the [Northern Ireland Civil Service Outcomes Delivery Plan \(Opens in a new window\)](#), the Department of Justice will lead on Indicator 1 related to reducing crime. Findings contained within this bulletin will be used by the Department to inform the Delivery Plan for this Indicator. Survey findings will also inform the assessment of the impact of the [Community Safety Strategy PDF \(2.46MB\) \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (DoJ, 2012) and the [Northern Ireland Policing Board's Strategic Outcomes for Policing in Northern Ireland 2016-2020 PDF \(0.98MB\) \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (NIPB, 2016) and [Annual Policing Plan 2019-20 \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (NIPB, 2019).

An alternative, but complementary, measure of crime to offences recorded by the police, the main aims of the NISCS are to:

- measure crime victimisation rates experienced by people living in private households regardless of whether or not these crimes were reported to, or recorded by, the police;
- monitor trends in the level of crime, independent of changes in reporting levels or police recording practices;
- measure people's perceptions of and reactions to crime (for example, the level and causes of crime, the extent to which they are concerned about crime and the effect of crime on their quality of life);
- measure public confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system; and
- collect sensitive information, using self-completion modules, on people's experiences regarding crime-related issues, such as domestic violence.

Recorded crime figures cannot, by their nature, provide an impression of the extent of concern about crime (often described as 'fear of crime') among different sections of the community. Hence, it is necessary to complement the police figures with information drawn from the NISCS, which, for the crime types it covers, provides a more complete measure of the extent and impact of crime against private households and their adult occupants. Further information on recorded crime statistics can be found in the [Police Service of Northern Ireland \(PSNI\) User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics PDF \(1MB\) \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (PSNI, 2018a).

While some of the core interviewer-administered modules for NISCS 2019/20 were (generally) based on CSEW 2019/20, some modification has been necessary to reflect local issues and the fact that the smaller NISCS sample size would not have generated robust results for follow-up questions asked of small sub-sections of the sample.

Frequency and sample size of the NICS/NISCS

Initially, the then NICS was conducted on an ad hoc basis, before becoming a biennial survey in 2001. At that time, the Community Attitudes Survey (CAS) was also being conducted on a continuous basis, facilitating annual reports on topics linked to crime, policing and the criminal justice system. Increasingly, however, the CSEW was becoming a key vehicle to track progress against Public Service Agreement (PSA) and other targets related to the criminal justice and health sectors in England and Wales. Hence, interest increased among officials and Ministers in what the NICS had to offer in terms of direct comparison, while, in light of the improved security situation, many of the issues originally covered by CAS were becoming less relevant.

Accordingly, it was decided that a more effective use of resources would be to discontinue CAS at the end of 2003 and to move fieldwork for the NICS to a continuous basis with effect from January 2005. This would facilitate the monitoring of annual trends and more regular direct comparison with England and Wales. It was also decided to increase the target achieved sample size for the NICS from 3,000 to 4,000. This would contribute to increased accuracy of headline results and generate more robust analyses for various socio-demographic characteristics. However, unavoidable budgetary pressures resulted in the need to reduce the target achieved sample size; a moderate decrease was first made in-year 2013/14, from 4,000 to 3,500, with a full sample reduction to 2,000 first being implemented in 2014/15. Following a review of the survey during 2017/18 (details of which can be found in the NISCS [‘User Documentation’](#) [\(Opens in a new window\)](#) section of the research and statistics website), the target sample size has been increased with effect from April 2018 onwards. It is anticipated that around 3,500 interviews will now be achieved annually.

Additional information, covering issues such as sampling design and methodology is available within the survey [User Guide \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (DoJ, 2019a) and associated [Quality Report \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (DoJ, 2019b).

Sampling and fieldwork

The initial NISCS 2019/20 sample consisted of 7,500 addresses, randomly selected from the NISRA Address Register (NAR). The NAR is developed within NISRA and is primarily based on the Land and Property Services (LPS) POINTER database. Visits to each address by an interviewer from the NISRA Central Survey Unit resulted in an eligible sample of 6,576 occupied addresses, from which attempts were made to interview one randomly selected adult respondent at each address.

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.

In January 2005, the then NICS began operating on a continuous basis. This bulletin refers primarily to fieldwork undertaken during the financial year 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, which involved complete interviews with 3,710 people aged 16 years and over. This represents an eligible response rate of 56%.

Respondents were assured in advance of the interviews that any information they provided would be treated as entirely confidential and that the level of detail produced in publications or in any subsequent analyses would not allow for identification of individuals. The interviews typically lasted under an hour for non-victims, although those involving respondents who disclosed several crimes could last much longer.

Demographic breakdown

The following socio-demographic (personal, household and area) groups (listed below) are now presented in the accompanying Microsoft Excel workbook and Open Data Source tables only. Associated confidence intervals are also presented. The first six relate to equality categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

1. religious belief;
2. age;
3. living arrangements;
4. sex (gender);
5. disability (or illness);
6. household type (child dependants);
7. self-perceived nationality;
8. housing tenure;
9. type of area (urban / rural);
10. policing district;
11. perceived level of anti-social behaviour in area;
12. experience of crime reported to the police; and
13. multiple deprivation measure rank (MDM 2017).

Rounding, error and statistical significance

Don't knows, refusals and non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses. Percentages may not always sum to 100 or numbers may not sum to an overall total due to the effect of rounding to the nearest whole number, or because respondents could give more than one response. Figures presented in the tables and graphs within this bulletin have been rounded. Unrounded figures are available in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source versions of the Tabular Annex.

Due to a combination of both sampling and non-sampling error, any sample is unlikely to reflect precisely the characteristics of the population. Because NISCS estimates are subject to sampling error, differences between estimates from successive years of the survey or between population subgroups (presented in the accompanying Microsoft Excel workbook) may occur by chance.

For the purposes of this bulletin, 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.

As a result of the sample reduction in recent years, the respective confidence limits of any percentages from the survey were wider than was the case previously and the margin of difference between findings required to achieve 'statistical significance' was 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 be found to be statistically significant with the reduced sample size. This should be borne in mind when considering the long-term trends presented in the tables.

The Department of Justice does not routinely publish NISCS estimates where the unweighted base is less than 100 cases, therefore findings for some socio-demographic sub-groups (included in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and ODS workbooks) may not be published. Some findings for the socio-demographic sub-groups examined may present as zero. These findings are based on the selected sample. They do not necessarily suggest that people in that area or among that group do not, for example, worry about crime or personal safety.

Further information on the 2019/20 sweep of the NISCS is contained within the NISCS 2019/20 Technical Report (forthcoming, via the [Safe Community Survey \(Opens in a new window\)](#) section of the Northern Ireland Department of Justice website).

Points to note about this publication

- *Causes of crime (Section 3.1)* - new response options have been included from 2018/19: 'paramilitary activity', 'under provision of mental health services', 'under provision of youth and community services' and 'homophobia/transphobia'. Since then, respondents are also asked about causes of crime in their local area. In 2019/20, the 'something else' option was also added as an option to the main cause of crime questions.
- *ASB (Section 3.3)* - prior to 2018/19, the anti-social behaviour indicator relating to 'teenagers hanging around on streets' referred to teenagers only. From 2018/19, this now refers to 'teenagers/young adults'.
- *Worry about crime (Section 4.1)* - from 2018/19, the worry about car crime questions, i.e. worry about having your car stolen and having things stolen from your car, have been extended to include worry about car or van. An amendment has also been made to the wording of the question related to worry about physical assault because of a hate motivation, which is used to derive the violent crime composite measure. The list of potential hate crime motivations has been amended slightly and are now listed on a display card shown to the respondent.
- Publications prior to 2018/19 included statistics relating to perceived risk of becoming a victim of crime, however, this module has been removed from 2018/19 onwards following a review and consultation of the survey undertaken during 2017/18.

Sample profile for NISCS 2019/20

Group	Sub-Group	Unweighted Number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Sex	Men	1,662	45	46
	Women	2,048	55	54
Age Group	16-24	211	6	9
	25-34	491	13	13
	35-44	597	16	16
	45-54	610	16	18
	55-64	681	18	18
	65-74	653	18	16
	75+	467	13	10
Religion	Catholic	1,523	41	42
	Protestant	1,636	44	44
Area Type	Rural	1,382	37	40
	Urban	2,328	63	60
Policing District	Antrim and Newtownabbey	281	8	8
	Ards and North Down	305	8	8
	Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	427	12	12
	Belfast	676	18	17
	Causeway Coast and Glens	296	8	8
	Derry and Strabane	329	9	9
	Fermanagh and Omagh	256	7	7
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	281	8	8
	Mid and East Antrim	261	7	7
	Mid Ulster	255	7	8
	Newry, Mourne and Down	343	9	9
Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank ¹	1 st quintile (most deprived)	727	20	18
	2 nd quintile	747	20	19
	3 rd quintile	751	20	21
	4 th quintile	749	20	21
	5 th quintile (least deprived)	736	20	20
Vehicle-owning households		3,019	81	86

1. Rank order of super output areas (derived from 2017 Multiple Deprivation Measure).

Appendix 3: National Statistics Status



National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in July 2020 following a [Compliance Check \(Opens in a new window\)](#) by the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(Opens in a new window\)](#). The statistics last underwent a full assessment against the [Code of Practice \(Opens in a new window\)](#) in 2012/13.

As part of the recent compliance check, we have made the following improvements:

- published a [Future Programme of Work \(Opens in a new window\)](#) that details the list of developments that the department plan to scope in terms of feasibility of implementation.

Appendix 4: References

Department of Justice (2019a) Northern Ireland Crime Survey User Guide

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-user-guide> (Opens in a new window)

Department of Justice (2019b) Northern Ireland Crime Survey Quality Report

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-quality-report> (Opens in a new window)

Department of Justice (2012) Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities A Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2017

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/cs-strategy-20122017.pdf> PDF (2.46MB) (Opens in a new window)

Northern Ireland Executive (2016) Programme for Government 2016-21 and Outcomes Delivery Plan

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/programme-governmentoutcomes-delivery-plan> (Opens in a new window)

Northern Ireland Policing Board (2019) Annual Policing Plan 2019-20

<https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/publication/annual-policing-plan-2019-20> (Opens in a new window)

Northern Ireland Policing Board (2016) Strategic Outcomes for Policing in Northern Ireland 2016-2020

<https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/sites/nipb/files/media-files/Strategic-outcomes-for-policing-2016-2020.pdf> PDF (0.98MB) (Opens in a new window)

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2020) Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2020

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020> (Opens in a new window)

Police Service of Northern Ireland (2018a) User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland (Updated January 2018)

<https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/documents/crime-user-guide.pdf> PDF (1MB) (Opens in a new window)

Campbell, Rice and Ross. (2021) Experience of Crime: Findings from the 2019/20 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey. DoJ Research and Statistical Bulletin. Belfast: DoJ

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/experience-crime-findings-201920-northern-ireland-safe-community-survey> (Opens in a new window)