



# **INDEPENDENT REPORTING COMMISSION**

## **EIGHTH REPORT**

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## Executive Summary

This is the Independent Reporting Commission's (IRC) Eighth Report since its creation in 2017. The IRC monitors progress towards ending paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland and makes recommendations to inform government priorities and commitments. November 2025 marked the tenth anniversary of the Fresh Start Agreement, and our Eighth Report uses this milestone to take stock of what has been achieved and what still remains to be done on tackling and ending paramilitarism.

2024/25 is the first financial year since records began in 1969 in which there were no security related deaths reported by the PSNI in Northern Ireland. We welcome this positive development. Additionally, we note that the security situation data shows that violent crime linked to paramilitarism is declining, and the Northern Ireland-related Terrorism Threat Level has not risen following its reduction to 'substantial' in March 2024. That said, however, paramilitarism remains a live and serious issue, with paramilitary groups still posing a threat to communities, individuals, and society. The intimidation, coercive control, and threats linked to paramilitary groups persist, and the structures of paramilitary groups that continue intact can be used to facilitate organised crime and other forms of violence. A particularly serious manifestation of that reality over the last two years has been the link between paramilitarism and racist violence connected to the issue of immigration.

The comprehensive and innovative approach of the Fresh Start Agreement remains the correct direction of travel, and a dedicated focus on paramilitarism continues to be required. We advocate for the 'Twin Track' approach: acknowledging that policing and criminal justice measures are essential in bringing paramilitarism to an end, but they must be accompanied by specific policies and practice to address the socioeconomic disadvantages and vulnerabilities of individuals and communities most affected.

We make three Recommendations in this Report:

- 1. Sustained, strategic investment in the policing and criminal justice system is required.**
- 2. A particular focus on paramilitarism needs to be maintained after the end of the current mandate for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime in March 2027.**
- 3. A whole-system approach to tackling paramilitarism, with collaboration, suitable structures, and ownership of responsibilities.**

The Twin Track approach requires sustained, strategic investment in the criminal justice system, including policing and problem-solving justice. This must be supported by focused work to build safer and more resilient communities. This work is an investment in Northern Ireland's future. If paramilitarism is not brought to an end, it will continue to impose major strain on public finances through its direct and indirect harms. The mandate and funding for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) are scheduled to end in March 2027. It is crucial that the focus on paramilitarism does not end with it. Northern Ireland has a particular history and political context; this must be reflected in the policies and projects which tackle paramilitarism and its specific harms.

The success of the work in both Tracks relies on a whole-system approach, with cross-Executive and intergovernmental collaboration supported by suitable governance structures. The importance of the community and voluntary sector should not be underestimated, and there must be appropriate mechanisms for its contributions and expertise to be taken into account, now and beyond the scheduled end of EPPOC in March 2027.

Our previous reports recommended the appointment of an Independent Person to scope out the feasibility of direct engagement with paramilitary groups to assist with Group Transition. We welcomed the announcement in February 2025 that the two Governments accepted that Recommendation, and Fleur Ravensbergen has now been appointed to undertake a scoping and engagement exercise.



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# Section One

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## Introduction

An overview of the functions and duties of the Independent Reporting Commission, the key elements of this Report, and a note on language.

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## Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Eighth Report of the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC), established in 2017 to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. The IRC is governed by an international treaty agreed by the UK and Irish Governments which reflects the terms of the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement.
- 1.2 The IRC has a statutory duty to report annually to both governments and the Northern Ireland Executive on progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland, and on the implementation of the relevant measures by the Government of Ireland, the Government of the United Kingdom, and the Northern Ireland Executive. As part of this, the IRC can make recommendations on how to achieve the goal of ending paramilitary activity.
- 1.3 As 2025 marks the tenth anniversary of the Fresh Start Agreement, we will be using that milestone as an overall backdrop to this Report, on the basis that this is a particularly timely moment to take stock of what has been achieved and what still remains to be done in terms of tackling and ending paramilitarism.
- 1.4 This Report comprises six sections and is primarily concerned with activity in the financial year, April 2024 to March 2025; however where relevant there is some detail on activity between the end of the financial year and the date of publication. Section One, the Introduction, provides an overview of the Report. Section Two summarises a set of Recommendations, which are further contextualised in Section Five. Section Three sets out our overall analysis of the nature of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today. Section Four gives an overview of paramilitary activity in the reporting year 2024/2025 and Sections Five and Six outline the measures taken by the various initiatives established to tackle paramilitarism, arising from the Fresh Start Agreement.
- 1.5 One of the key outcomes of Fresh Start was the creation of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime, hereafter referred to as EPPOC or the Programme, which was based on the Recommendations made in




the May 2016 Report of the Three Person Fresh Start Panel on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland, an initiative provided for in the Fresh Start Agreement.

- 1.6 Previous IRC reports have included detailed consideration of EPPOC. The Programme's mandate and funding are due to end in March 2027, and as it reaches its conclusion, the Programme Team are conducting an extensive internal review of its impacts. We welcome this review, which should provide a level of detail critical for making informed decisions on what will happen at the end of the Programme. Our focus in this Report will be on a high-level analysis of the Programme's activities during 2024/25 and some recommendations for post-2027 planning. These recommendations have been prepared in the context that, at the time of publication, the Programme is scheduled to conclude in March 2027. We recognise that planning for post-2027 is underway, but we expect that this may not replicate the format of Phase Two of the Programme in its entirety.
- 1.7 We have developed our analysis based on engagement with a wide range of groups and individuals. Our meetings are held on a confidential basis. We engage with people who are living and working in communities where paramilitary groups are present, people who have been harmed or threatened by paramilitaries, representatives of the community and voluntary sector, and representatives from a range of statutory organisations, nationally and internationally. We have referred in previous Reports to 'critical friends': individuals and groups working behind the scenes to advance movement on ending paramilitarism. We renew our thanks to them and everyone who has met with us, informed our analysis, and challenged our thinking. We are profoundly grateful for their time and their insights. In addition to our engagements, our analysis is informed by key statistics which have been collected by statutory bodies in Northern Ireland.
- 1.8 We set out in Section Three of our Report a detailed outline of our analysis of the nature of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today. One element of that analysis has been our belief in the need to explore engagement with paramilitary groups

themselves with a view to bringing about their transition to disbandment, and we made recommendations to that effect in previous Reports. We welcomed the two Governments' announcement, on the day of the publication of our last Report in February 2025, that they were accepting our Recommendation to appoint an Independent Person to scope out the feasibility of such engagement. Fleur Ravensbergen has been appointed as the Independent Expert, and given her independent role we will not be commenting further until her work is completed.

1.9 Section Three also sets out the other dimensions of our analysis, which we sum up as a Twin Track approach. Track One comprises policing and justice measures and Track Two includes measures to address the systemic socioeconomic challenges facing individuals and communities where paramilitaries operate. The work currently being supported by EPPOC falls into the categories of both Track One and Track Two, although that is our description of that work rather than theirs. Under their description, projects supported by EPPOC contribute to three key benefits: keeping people safe, protective factors, and community resilience. There are a wide range of projects and agencies contributing to the achievement of these goals including through law enforcement, community development, youth work, support for people involved in the criminal justice system, support for education and families, support for women's development and leadership in their communities, and the development of a trauma-informed approach to policy and services.

1.10 Paramilitarism has proven itself a resilient phenomenon and, in our view, ending it will require the continuation of the concentrated efforts and effective work of the last number of years, as exemplified by EPPOC. We strongly believe that the need will remain for continued resourcing of these measures across the board, which is a key theme of this Report. We appreciate that this is a time of budgetary constraint. However, resolving the issue of paramilitarism is fundamental to consolidating the peace process as well as ensuring Northern Ireland achieves its full social and economic potential. Conversely, if that work does not succeed, the implications will be felt not just in the communities affected, but across all levels of society. We maintain that the work to tackle paramilitarism is a



worthwhile and necessary investment in Northern Ireland's future peace and prosperity.

- 1.11 Victims and survivors of the Troubles/conflict remain at front of mind in our work. We commend the work of Victims and Survivors Groups to ensure that people are supported, their voices are heard, and their experiences are acknowledged. Paramilitarism has been a key cause of the suffering they have encountered and endured. While we cannot undo the harm that has been inflicted in the past, our work seeks to ensure there are no further victims of paramilitarism. In our engagement with victims and survivors the overwhelming message has been the prevention of any future harm. It is a key reason why the work of ending paramilitarism, once and for all, remains an urgent one.
- 1.12 We commend our Eighth Report to the two Governments, the Northern Ireland Executive and relevant stakeholders.

### A note on language

- 1.13 Language is important, as it carries particular weight in Northern Ireland. Throughout this Report we refer to ‘paramilitarism’ and ‘paramilitary organisations’ to mean both Republican and Loyalist groupings. We acknowledge that these terms are contested; however, this is the language used in the Fresh Start Agreement, and our use of these terms in this Report is consistent with other government and legislative documentation.
- 1.14 Throughout this Report, reference will be made to ‘Loyalist’ and ‘Republican’ groups, and occasionally ‘Loyalist criminal activity’ and ‘Republican criminal activity’. We recognise that Loyalism and Republicanism are legitimate political positions, and the majority of those who identify as belonging to either group are committed to peaceful and political means. The use of the broader terms to describe the violent and criminal activity of a subset of either group should not be interpreted as an attempt to suggest that these actions represent mainstream Loyalism or Republicanism. An important point to note here is that we are not an assessment body; our role is to monitor and report on progress in tackling and ending paramilitarism in the context of the comprehensive and innovative approach set out in the Fresh Start Agreement.
- 1.15 We understand that some may feel uncomfortable or disagree with such terms, but we hope that the substance of the Report and its recommendations can be read in the spirit in which they are intended: as a tool to reflect on the broad picture of paramilitarism in 2024/25; as an acknowledgement of the progress made towards ending it; and as a realistic assessment of the work that remains to be done.



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# Section Two

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## Recommendations

In this section of our Report, we set out the three Recommendations we are proposing on this occasion, to add to those we have made in previous Reports. Our Recommendations are set out in detail here, and are later placed in the context of the Twin Track approach in Section Five.





## Recommendations

### *1. Sustained, strategic investment in the policing and criminal justice system is required*

We acknowledge the competing priorities of the Department of Justice, and that the fiscal environment can be challenging. However, there are longstanding challenges facing the Northern Ireland criminal justice system which have impacted public confidence in the rule of law and thereby hampered efforts to end paramilitarism. These include adequate resources for all criminal justice agencies, police recruitment, issues with bail and remand, prison overcrowding, and delays across the court system. This means a renewed commitment to sustained, strategic investment in all areas of the criminal justice system, including policing, is necessary if the Fresh Start goal of definitively ending paramilitarism is to be achieved.

We recommend as follows:

a) Introducing organised crime legislation

For more than six years, since our first report in 2018, we have called for the acceleration of work on organised crime legislation for Northern Ireland. There have been challenges in progressing legislation, particularly when the Executive was not functioning, but the continuing absence of organised crime legislation in Northern Ireland leaves a significant vacuum in terms of the effective tackling of paramilitarism.

b) Maintaining law enforcement cooperation and focus

We welcome the specific focus which the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) has brought to tackling criminality linked to paramilitary groups and the new structures which facilitated greater interagency cooperation. PCTF has had considerable successes, in particular in tackling illegal drugs. Decisions about the future of PCTF must prioritise how that focus can be sustained and interagency cooperation maintained.

c) Increasing investment in neighbourhood policing

Neighbourhood policing is essential to building relationships with communities and, therefore, to the tackling of paramilitarism. Properly resourced neighbourhood policing teams can be more responsive, creating a greater sense of safety and reducing any lingering perception among communities that paramilitaries are needed to maintain safety or public order. While we commend the efforts of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to develop innovative ways to mitigate the strain on neighbourhood policing and build relationships with the public, this alone will not resolve the issue. We call for greater investment in neighbourhood policing teams.

d) Expanding problem-solving justice

Problem solving justice approaches, such as Substance Misuse Courts and the Domestic Abuse Contest Court established by the Lady Chief Justice, have proven to be effective and powerful tools in improving access to and outcomes from the justice system. The PSNI is working to disseminate and embed problem-solving approaches across the organisation. Other agencies should be encouraged to consider this approach with a view to adopting problem-solving justice solutions where relevant, and resources should be provided to expand specialist courts.

***2. A particular focus on paramilitarism needs to be maintained after the end of the current mandate for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime in March 2027***

In our view, a dedicated focus on paramilitarism needs to continue after the end of the current mandate and funding for the Programme in 2027, including through new obligations to take account of paramilitarism in policy making and funding allocation, as we believe that the task of addressing all of the factors surrounding paramilitarism in Northern Ireland will not be completed by March 2027. We set out

again in this Report our analysis of the complex range of factors involved, including, in particular, the needs of communities most affected by paramilitarism. This requires a continued strategic and integrated policy approach across government. Acknowledging that the involvement of paramilitarism is an additional factor in racist unrest in Northern Ireland, that strategic approach should include explicit reference to the role of paramilitaries in that regard. In some cases it will be most effective to incorporate and build on the lessons learned through EPPOC in mainstream policies and programmes. In other cases, bespoke interventions will be needed. Communities are varied and have different characteristics, so flexibility and the consideration of local circumstances is essential.

We recommend as follows:

- a) Policy decision-making for departments and statutory bodies should include a requirement to consider the impact of their work on tackling paramilitarism

The Northern Ireland Executive should introduce a requirement across all departments and statutory bodies to actively consider the impact on tackling paramilitarism for new and revised policy and project proposals. This should embed a process whereby addressing paramilitarism is not limited to measures or programmes with a dedicated focus on ending paramilitarism, and could include the associated training and awareness raising measures for public servants that we proposed in our Seventh Report.

- b) Specific consideration of tackling paramilitarism in investment and funding decisions to support community development and resilience

The voice of the community and voluntary sector should be central to decision-making in order to meaningfully build community resilience with community-based expertise. The Executive and the two Governments should consider how funding and investment addresses the lasting economic harm done to communities where paramilitaries have been active. This should include increased ‘bottom-up’ input from communities experiencing paramilitary harm, ensuring priorities and investments reflect their needs. This requires the increased involvement of communities, local councils, and community organisations in decision-making, acknowledging their voices as ‘experts through



experience', ensuring their input is actively sought, listened to, and considered when decisions are being made. There should be a proportionate approach to risk management in funding, where funders can achieve a balance between targets and priorities, while still maintaining a degree of flexibility to reflect local circumstances and respond agilely. Community work should not be viewed as a means of outsourcing state functions, but as a valuable tool in its own right.

### ***3. A whole-system approach to tackling paramilitarism, with collaboration, suitable structures, and ownership of responsibilities is required***

We see close collaboration at leadership level across all the entities involved as essential to the achievement of the shared goal of ending paramilitarism once and for all. We welcome the clear commitment in the Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government to “tackling paramilitarism and organised crime and... to support the cross-Executive efforts aimed at addressing them”. We also welcome the establishment of the new Ministerial Advisory Group aimed at providing further political leadership to the work of EPPOC, augmenting the leadership input at official level of the Programme Sponsor Group.

Paramilitarism touches on the work of almost every department and meaningful interdepartmental work with a shared focus is critical to the mission of tackling and ending it. This requires individual ministers and their departments to take ownership of paramilitarism-linked issues within their area of responsibility. It is also crucial that local councils engage with their role in tackling paramilitarism and take the appropriate steps to ensure that mechanisms like Police and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) are actively engaged in this work.

Central coordination is also required to ensure organisations are connected and working collaboratively. Structures must be designed to ensure that information flows as needed between local councils, government departments, statutory agencies, the voluntary and community sector, and the UK and Irish governments.

We recommend as follows:

Programme oversight structures must deliver a whole-system approach, with central coordination in place that brings together all relevant departments

Programme oversight structures must support a collaborative approach to tackling paramilitarism beyond the conclusion of the Programme's mandate and funding in March 2027. This should consider central ownership of these structures to ensure continued leadership and commitment across the Executive. We see this as a timely undertaking in the context of devising a new phase in the tackling of paramilitarism, avoiding the risk that it is seen exclusively as a Justice issue.



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# Section Three

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## **Analysing Paramilitarism**

In this Section of our Report, we take a closer look at the nature of paramilitarism today and the different dimensions of its makeup in the Northern Ireland context.



## Analysing Paramilitarism

- 3.1 In each of our Reports, analysing the nature of paramilitarism is a foundational dimension of our work. We acknowledge the impatience in the public domain that paramilitarism continues to exist almost three decades after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. There is a strong moral and logical force to that position. The provisions of the Agreement, and its endorsement by the people in both parts of the island in May 1998, charted a future based entirely on peaceful, democratic means with no place for paramilitary organisations or groups who choose militant means as a way to pursue their ends.
- 3.2 Over the course of the years since the Agreement, much progress was made in terms of advancing its principles and structures, with the nature and impact of paramilitarism declining over time. However, paramilitarism did not end completely, and further intervention by the two Governments along with the political parties was required with the Fresh Start Agreement in November 2015. The measures introduced, as noted in our Reports since 2018, have contributed to a reduction in the scale of paramilitarism, but so far have not resulted in ending it. This section of our Report seeks to explore further why this is the case, what the nature of paramilitarism is today, and what continues to be needed if the goal of the Fresh Start Agreement to end paramilitarism is to be achieved.
- 3.3 A key early question in analysing paramilitarism is the extent of its relationship to criminality and organised crime. In our view, paramilitarism today is a complex phenomenon, comprising several categories of people and groups. A central requirement in the tackling of this issue is the accurate identification of each of those categories and elements, and charting appropriate responses; in particular, ensuring an overall approach that joins those responses together. We recognise that for many commentators, paramilitarism is entirely the same as organised crime. Their case is that paramilitary organisations have had plenty of opportunity and time to ‘get off the stage’, and those that remain do so purely in furtherance of their aims as criminal groups.

- 3.4 Undoubtedly, in what we call the ‘landscape of paramilitarism’, there are individuals and groups who use paramilitarism as a cloak for overt criminality. This involves a wide gamut of illegal activities, including murder, violence, assault, extortion, drug dealing, threats, illegal money lending, trading counterfeit goods, money laundering, sexual exploitation, and child criminal exploitation, alongside racist and sectarian intimidation. Those people and groups cause devastating harm to individuals as well as the communities in which they live. We cannot overstate the extent to which a robust, well-resourced and targeted set of policing and justice measures is vital to address that dimension of the landscape of paramilitarism.
- 3.5 However, there are other categories of people and groups on this complex landscape. There are those who get involved because of personal circumstances and vulnerabilities related to addiction, mental health, poverty, and a lack of educational and employment opportunities. They get drawn into a world in which they interchange between being victim and perpetrator. In that regard, we have highlighted in all our Reports the geographic overlap between paramilitary activity levels and areas of high deprivation and socioeconomic disadvantage.
- 3.6 In addition, others are involved in paramilitarism for cultural and ideological reasons related to issues such as identity, history, tradition, and family ties. Our analysis is that paramilitarism today, while different in many ways to what it was at the height of the Troubles/conflict, continues to have some direct connection to that period, with deep historical roots in which political violence played a central part. We have witnessed this over recent years when various political controversies have arisen, especially where the actions of paramilitary groups have formed part of the public discourse during these controversies. In describing this reality, we in no way condone it, and – mindful that membership of paramilitary organisations remains a criminal offence – it is our conclusion that paramilitarism today has a residual political dimension which has to be taken into account in crafting sustainable ways to end it.
- 3.7 There is another aspect to this landscape of paramilitarism and that is the nature of the relationship between paramilitary groups and the communities in which

they operate. We have stated in previous Reports that paramilitary groups are not 'other'. They are seen as part of the community, often integrated into its fabric through family and social ties; as one observer put it to us, "they are my father, my uncle, my brother, my cousin, my neighbour". As others have noted, in some cases the paramilitary groups provide 'services', such as money lending, that individuals living in those communities feel unable to source from elsewhere when needed. The continuation of this practice is unacceptable, but highlights yet another dimension of the complexity in responding to the ending of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland.

3.8 Addressing the question of how paramilitarism operates currently compared to the height of the Troubles/conflict, we hear 'it is different'. We readily agree that there are differences, given that it has declined in scale. However, the fact that it is still a problem is due to factors echoing back to the Troubles/conflict, as well as new elements which are different. One difference is the increasing fragmentation of groups compared to the decades prior to the Good Friday Agreement. The phrase 'hyper-local' has been used to capture the reality that the paramilitary groups are mostly confined to their own neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, an additional complexity is that some continue to operate through a centralised structure which also has to be factored in.

3.9 The outcome is that paramilitarism still exists, and that is hugely damaging for Northern Ireland as a society. We have spoken before of the coercive control over communities and people which is central to paramilitarism. Ten years after Fresh Start, it is clearly an unacceptable situation for all involved. Beyond those communities, even for the majority of people whose lives are not affected by the issue on a daily basis, there are risks and broader implications for Northern Ireland through ongoing paramilitarism.

3.10 We have consistently argued that the very fact of the continuation of the infrastructure of paramilitarism is in itself an example of that risk. These structures and linkages, and the perceived status that the membership of these organisations hold, all have implications at various levels. For instance, they can



contribute to the enhanced mobilisation of large groups of people quickly, particularly when combined with the impact of social media.

3.11 In our last Report, we referred to the growing evidence of interaction between members of some paramilitary organisations and emerging organised crime groups. We also referred to the involvement of paramilitaries in intimidation around housing and compelling evidence of a paramilitary dimension to race and hate crime. In each of our Reports we have highlighted the connectivity between drugs and paramilitarism. This connectivity has many dimensions, from the elements of paramilitarism actively involved in the sale and distribution of drugs, to its being the means by which vulnerable young people are lured into paramilitarism, through running up drug debts and getting involved in the activity of the group being the only means of paying those off. This relates to our point about some members combining being victim with being perpetrator. In our Report last year, we highlighted Aisling Swaine's research which illustrates the link between ongoing paramilitarism and domestic violence which heightens the fear for female victims and increases the risk of further abuse when seeking support services.

3.12 In 2024/25 there was evidence of paramilitary involvement in racist incidents that occurred around the highly charged issue of immigration. The PSNI has indicated that it does not have evidence of a direct role by paramilitary groups in orchestrating these actions in an organised way, but their intelligence points to individual members having been involved. We note that involvement does not have to be organised: the very fact of the continued existence of paramilitary structures and paramilitarism itself heightens the likelihood and danger of expansion by members into activities of this kind. This, in our view, is another reason why there remains a pressing need to maintain the focus on bringing paramilitarism to an end.

3.13 Based on the analysis above, we conclude that paramilitarism in Northern Ireland is different to criminality and organised crime elsewhere in the UK and beyond. There are clear overlaps between paramilitary groups and organised crime

groups, but there are significant differences too, and those differences have to be taken into account when devising policy responses.

3.14 What constitutes paramilitarism in Northern Ireland today, as shown above, is by no means an exhaustive list, but it serves to highlight the complex landscape of paramilitarism. As we have said, it is only by designing responses to all dimensions of the issue that a sustainable way of ending it can be found.

3.15 That is why we continue to believe that the comprehensive and innovative approach of the Fresh Start Agreement, the recommendations for the Strategy flowing from it drafted by the Three Person Panel, and the Executive Action Plan for Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime which was developed from that and has evolved over the last several years, remains the correct direction of travel. As mentioned in Section One, we have characterised this approach as a Twin Track, reflecting the comprehensive set of policing and justice measures to directly respond to the active criminality dimension of paramilitarism on the one hand, and the wide range of actions and projects addressing socioeconomic disadvantage and vulnerabilities on the part of individuals and communities most affected on the other.

3.16 We have added in our Reports since 2019 our view that in addition to this Twin Track approach, an initiative was also needed to explore direct engagement with the paramilitary groups to bring about their transition to disbandment. This ultimately



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can be found*



materialised into our Recommendation in our Fifth Report in December 2022 that the two Governments appoint an Independent Person to scope out the feasibility of such engagement. We welcome the announcement by two Governments in February 2025 that they accepted that Recommendation, and their recent appointment of Fleur Ravensbergen to that position.

3.17 We will not be commenting in this Report on the substance of the engagement question, although we emphasise here that the work of Fleur Ravensbergen, from which we are independent, is a necessary part of a comprehensive approach to bringing paramilitarism to an end.

3.18 There is one other issue that we wish to refer to which we feel is connected to the resolution of paramilitarism and that is the legacy of the past. We have noted in our Reports to date that the two issues are connected and while the legacy of the past does not fall under our purview, we have consistently argued that bringing paramilitarism to an end will have implications for dealing with the legacy issue and vice versa. We noted, therefore, the announcement of the two Governments in September 2025 of a new Legacy Framework aimed at rebuilding trust in the belief that legacy issues can be properly addressed. It is not for us to comment on the detail of what they have agreed, but we await further detail on how this will now be taken forward.

3.19 In closing this section, we note that while paramilitarism continues to exist, considerable progress is being made in addressing it. We believe that the comprehensive strategies and approaches that followed the Fresh Start Agreement and the recent decision by the two Governments to appoint the Independent Expert are bearing fruit. We commend the dedication and hard work of the various bodies and individuals involved, both at statutory and community level. Much good work has been undertaken, which in turn is contributing to the goal of ending paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. The task now is to continue to build on that, and what is needed to do so is set out in Sections Four, Five, and Six of this Report.



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# Section Four

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## Paramilitary activity in 2024/25

This section of our Report provides an account of paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland during the reporting period April 2024 – March 2025.



## Paramilitary activity in 2024/25

- 4.1 A number of high-profile paramilitary-linked incidents are noted in this reporting period, including very severe forms of violence, as well as incidents connected to the illegal drugs trade, feuds within and between groups, and riots connected to racism and anti-immigration sentiment. While some criminal acts were explicitly paramilitary, others were more difficult to define, such as where a paramilitary dimension was suspected but where the PSNI did not publicly attribute responsibility to paramilitary leaders. In our Seventh Report we encouraged the PSNI to specifically state paramilitary involvement in actions and the harm it causes. We continue to acknowledge that it can be challenging to attribute responsibility in complex cases; however we consider this to be an important aspect of tackling paramilitarism.

### Understanding the limitations of statistics

- 4.2 As part of our analysis on paramilitarism in Northern Ireland, we review the latest security statistics alongside a range of quantitative data on paramilitary-linked activity from a variety of statutory bodies. We share some of these data points below, and links to the original sources, where publicly available, can be found in Appendix Four. These numbers paint a useful picture of the high-level situation across the region. However, it should be noted that these statistics do not tell the full story. Our analysis, upon which our recommendations are based, is the result of extensive engagement with stakeholders which allow us to interpret and understand data, and point us to the gaps in these formal records.
- 4.3 As explored in detail in Section Three, paramilitarism today is a complex landscape, comprising several categories of people and groups. One result of that complexity is that accurate reporting on the levels of paramilitarism is difficult because of: the interlinked and interchangeable relationships of individuals to paramilitary groups; the coercive control exercised by those groups in communities; their self-appointed roles as enforcers and gatekeepers of their own form of justice (with or without the consent of the community); and their use

- 4.4 of violence. There are many reasons people may choose not to report a crime, whether due to fear of paramilitary groups, mistrusting the police, or believing the criminal justice system will not deliver for them.
- 4.5 Further, there is no single definition of 'paramilitary activity'. In some communities activity that could be considered under this umbrella is not viewed as such, because it is normalised, or it is not at a level of criminality that offers clear routes for reporting and measurement. The bottom sections of the paramilitary harm triangle identify some of the unseen and unreported harms that impact peoples' lives, but which are not easily captured in official statistics.

## Paramilitary harm

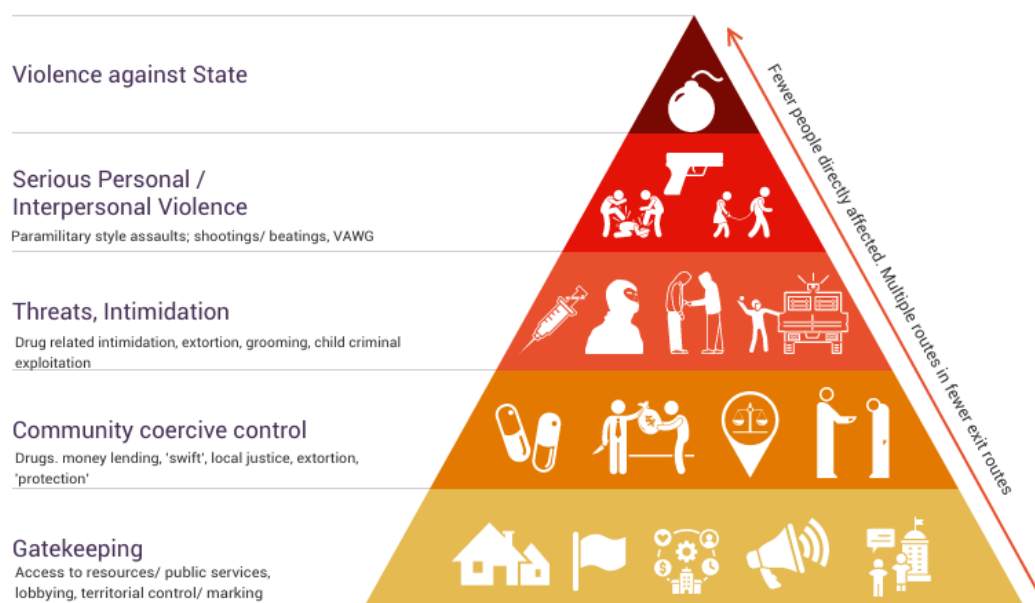


Figure 1: The Paramilitary Harm Triangle, developed by EPPOC

4.6 Security statistics indicate that violent crime linked to paramilitarism is declining. However, the wider damage and risks, outlined above, continue to be facilitated by the ongoing existence of paramilitary structures and infrastructure. That said, 2024/25 was the first financial year since records began in 1969 that there were no security related deaths. Moreover, assaults and shootings were at their lowest levels in 41 and 17 years respectively.<sup>1</sup> In this reporting period there were five bombing incidents, a ten-fold reduction from 2015/16, when there were 52.

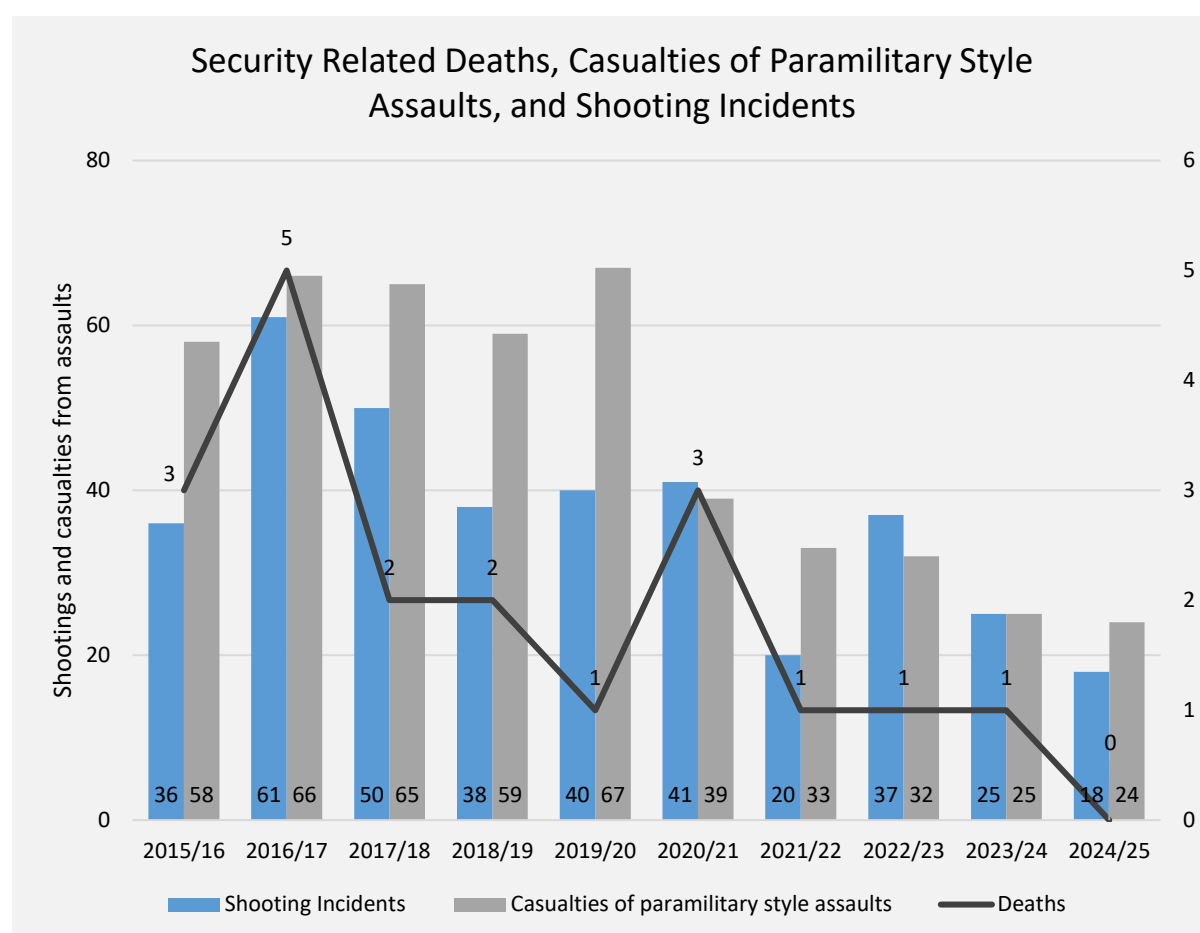
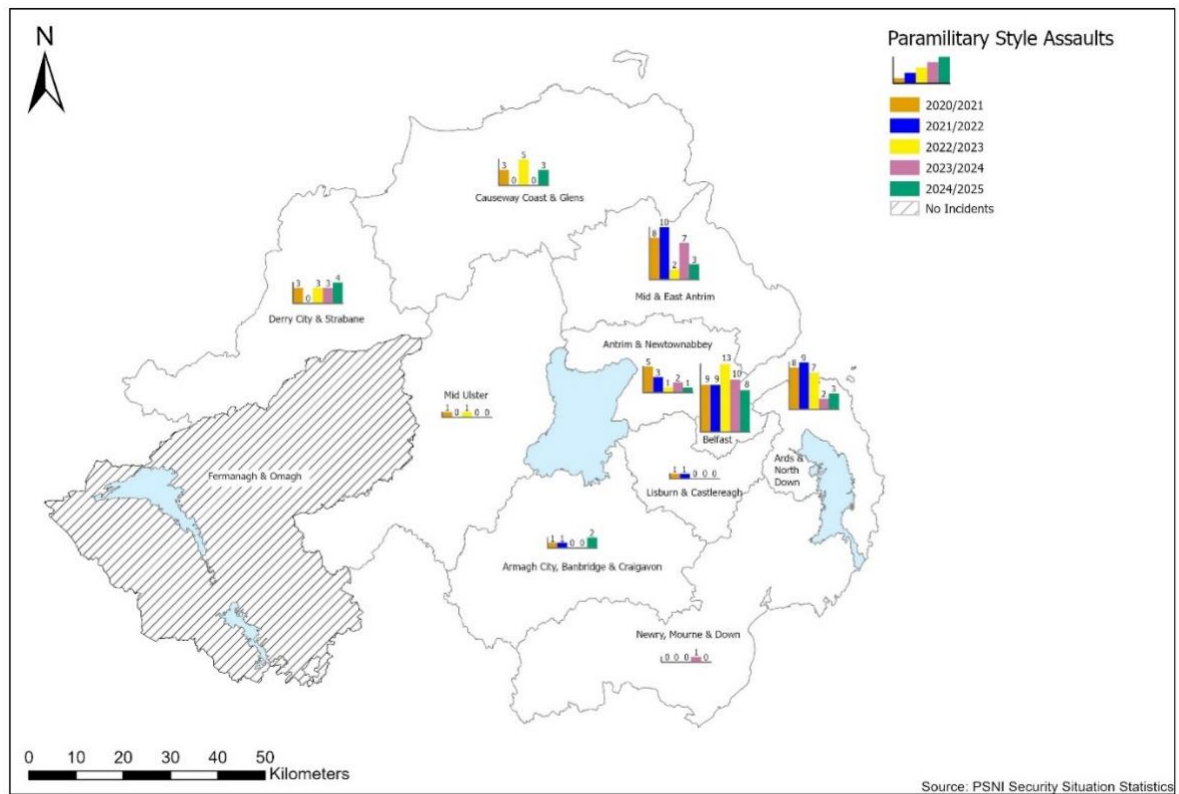


Figure 2: Graph showing security related deaths, shootings, and casualties of paramilitary style assaults between 2015/16 and 2024/25. Data taken from PSNI Recorded Security Situation Statistics bulletins

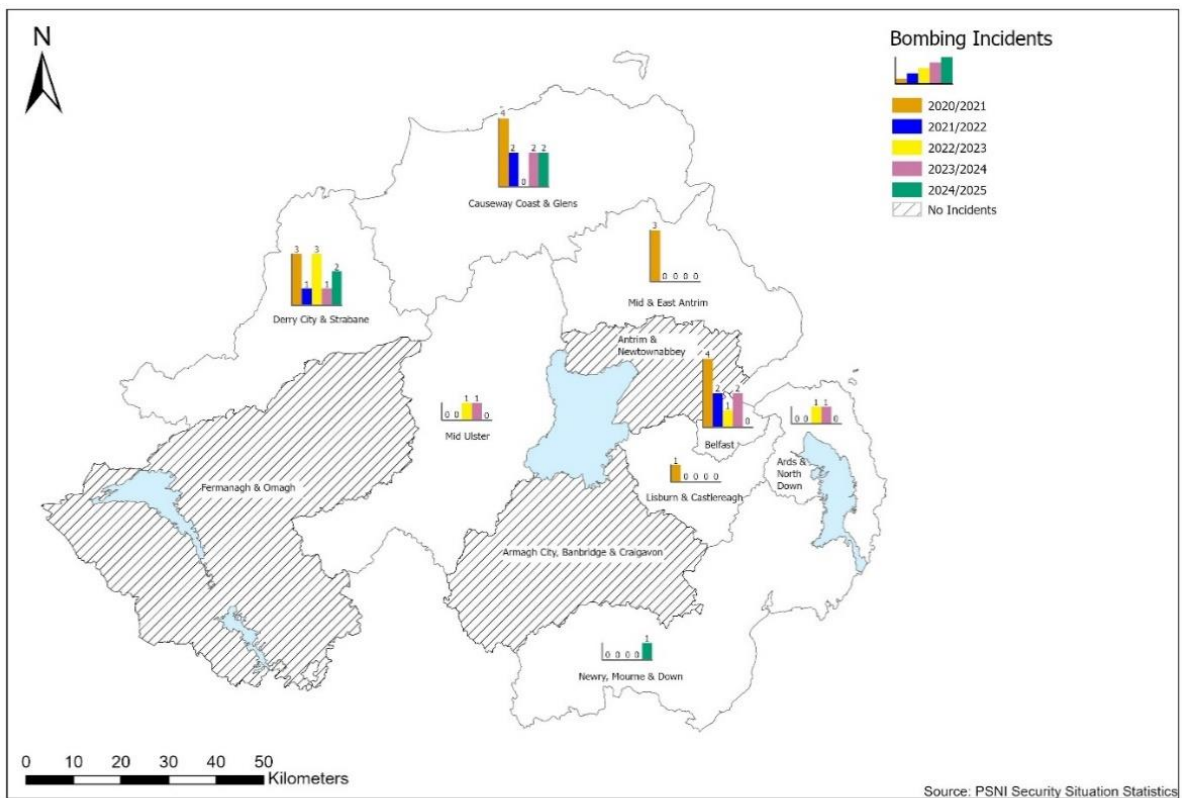
<sup>1</sup> PSNI Recorded Security Situation Statistics FY 24/25:  
<https://www.psnipolice.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/Security%20Situation%20Statistics%20to%20March%202025.pdf>





Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are counted as security related deaths and not included in the casualties of paramilitary style assaults/shootings figures.

Figure 3: Map showing non-fatal paramilitary style assaults 2020/21-2024/25

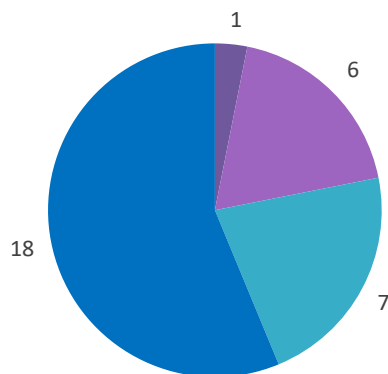


Individual bombing incidents involve one or more explosive devices. Incidents include explosives and defusings. Incidents involving hoax devices, petrol bombings or incendiaries are excluded.

Figure 4: Map showing bombing incidents 2020/21 – 2024/25

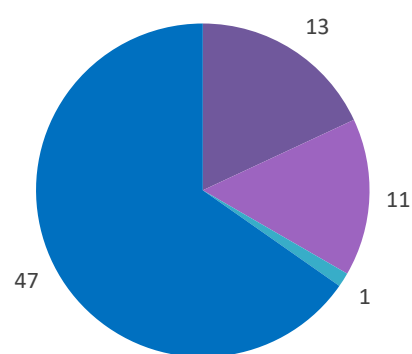
- 4.7 In 2024/25 there were 24 casualties of paramilitary style assaults, a reduction from 58 in 2015/16. Loyalist groupings were responsible for the majority of casualties arising from paramilitary style assaults in 2024/25 (18, compared to six attributed to Republicans), which is consistent with each of the last ten years.
- 4.8 In this reporting period there were eight casualties of paramilitary style shootings, a reduction of six compared to 2015/16. In 2024/25 there were more casualties arising from Loyalist shootings than from Republican shootings (seven, compared to one).<sup>2</sup>
- 4.9 Paramilitary style shootings, historically referred to as ‘punishment shootings’, are generally conducted by paramilitary groups on members of their own community, usually resulting in the injured party being shot in the knees, elbows, feet, ankles or thighs. These incidents are strongly linked to urban centres, with the majority of past incidents taking place in Belfast; however there have been no paramilitary style shootings in Belfast since September 2023.

Attribution of Shooting and Assaults 2024/25



■ Casualties resulting from Republican shootings  
 ■ Casualties resulting from Republican assaults  
 ■ Casualties resulting from Loyalist shootings  
 ■ Casualties resulting from Loyalist assaults

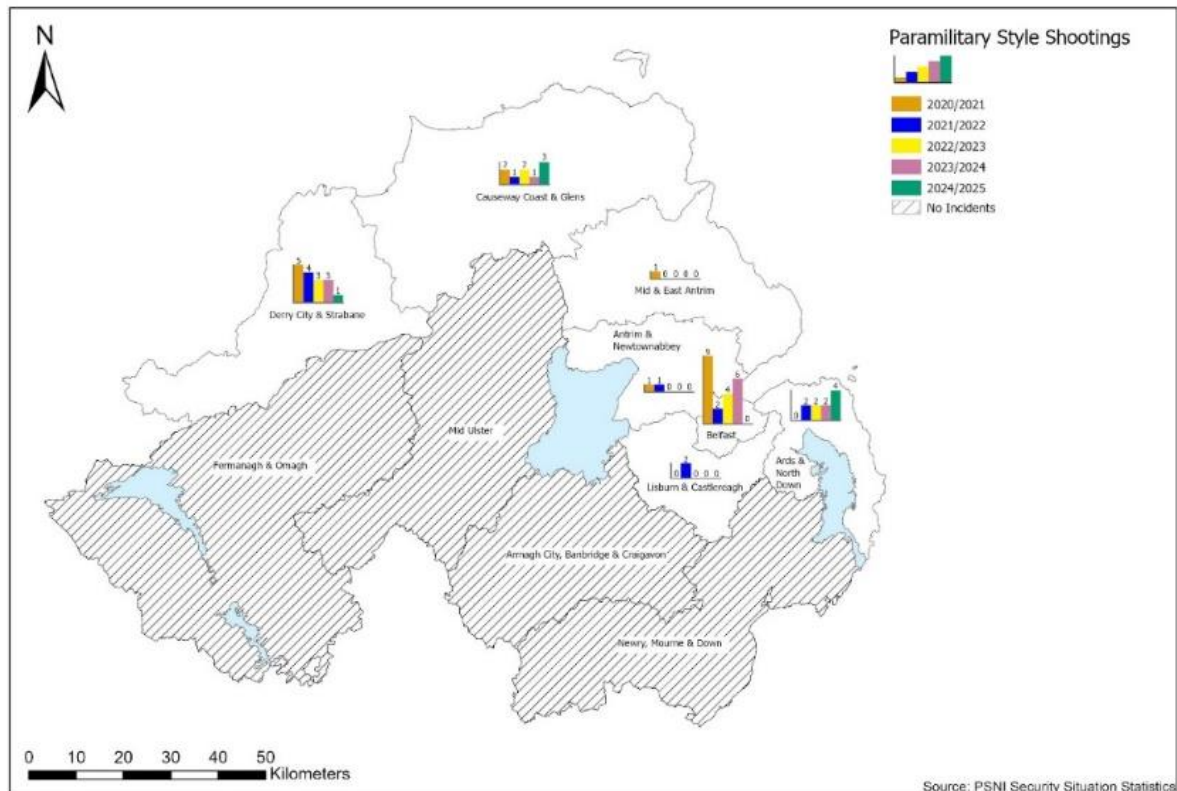
Attribution of Shooting and Assaults 2015/16



■ Casualties resulting from Republican shootings  
 ■ Casualties resulting from Republican assaults  
 ■ Casualties resulting from Loyalist shootings  
 ■ Casualties resulting from Loyalist assaults

Figure 3: charts showing the attribution of shootings and assaults in 2024/25 and 2015/16

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*



Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are counted as security related deaths and are not included in the casualties of paramilitary-style assaults/shootings figures.

Figure 4: Map of paramilitary style shootings 2020/21 – 2024/25

4.10 Statistics on Northern Ireland anti-terrorism legislation are published annually by the Northern Ireland Office<sup>3</sup>, and since 2021 these cover calendar years, rather than the financial year on which most other statistics in this report are based. The figures below relate to January-December 2024. In March 2024, the risk of Northern Ireland-related terrorism (NIRT) was reduced from 'severe', meaning an attack is highly likely, to 'substantial', meaning an attack is likely.

4.11 The numbers of people both detained and convicted of offences under anti-terrorism legislation in Northern Ireland fell in 2024 compared to 2023, in line with general trends over the past ten years. In 2024, 68 people were detained under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, ten of whom were charged. 28 charges have been brought against those ten individuals, including seven charges for firearms offences, six for explosives offences and five for preparation of terrorist acts.

<sup>3</sup>Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation: Annual Statistics 2024:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d3bff0ca266424b221b230/Northern\\_Ireland\\_Terrorism\\_Legislation\\_Annual\\_Statistics\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d3bff0ca266424b221b230/Northern_Ireland_Terrorism_Legislation_Annual_Statistics_2024.pdf)



4.12 Five persons detained under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 were charged with a total of six offences under that Act. Three of these charges were related to membership, one related to directing a terrorist organisation, one was for possession for terrorist purposes, and one for collection of information. Five others detained under Section 41 were charged with an offence under the Terrorism Act 2006, relating to the preparation of terrorist acts. Prosecutions are pending on all cases.

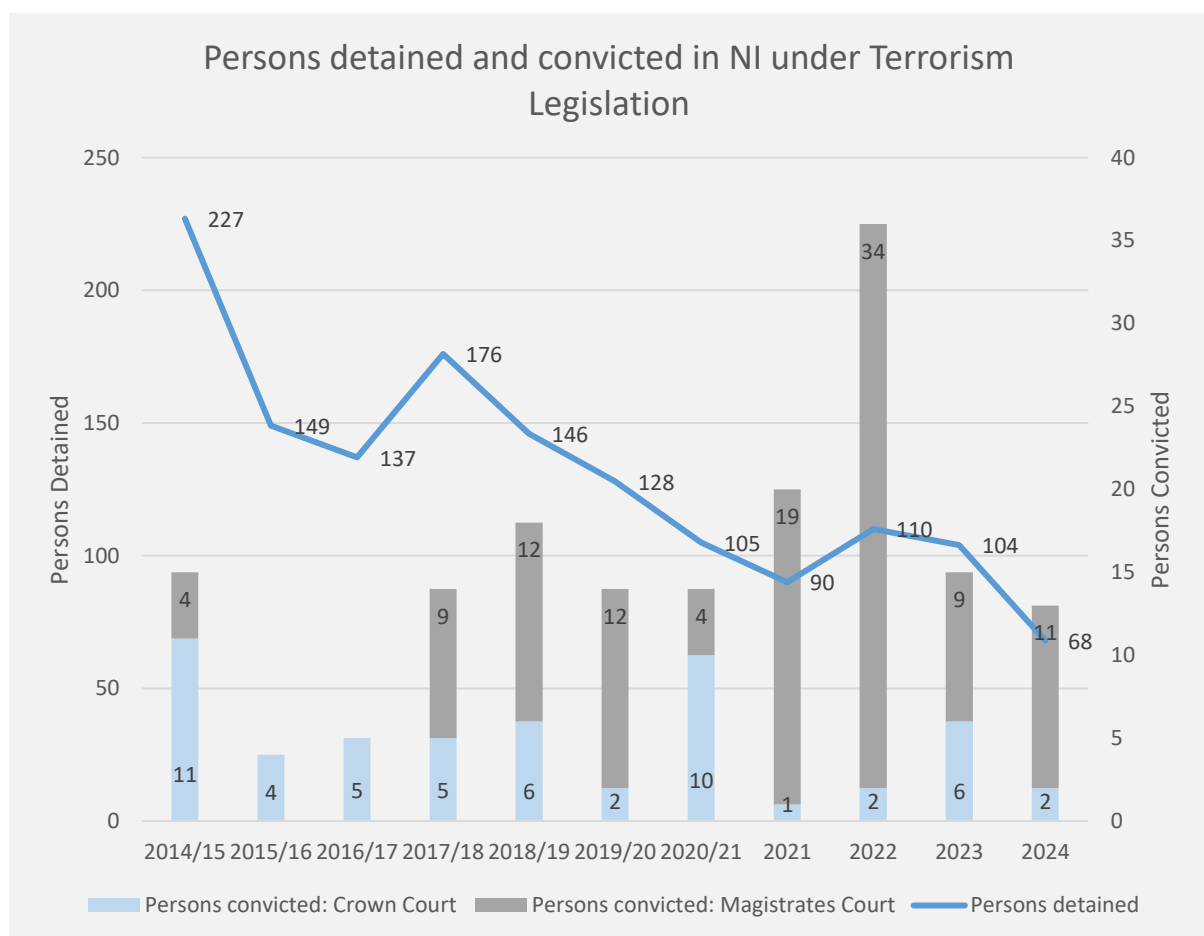


Figure 5: Persons detained and convicted under Terrorism Legislation 2014/15 – 2024/25. Data from Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation Annual Statistics

## Paramilitarism and race-related violence

4.13 As referred to in Section Three, the continuation, at times even the tolerance, of paramilitary structures within communities lends itself to other dangers. We have referred in previous Reports to the connection between paramilitarism and racism. The anti-immigration riots in the summer of 2025 fall outside of this reporting period, but they represented one part of the problem of ‘orchestrated racist intimidation’<sup>4</sup> in Northern Ireland.

4.14 Throughout 2024/25, there was a notable rise in violence and criminality which was recorded as having a race hate motivation. This reporting period saw the highest number of recorded race hate incidents and crimes in the 20 years since such data has been recorded by the PSNI.<sup>5</sup>

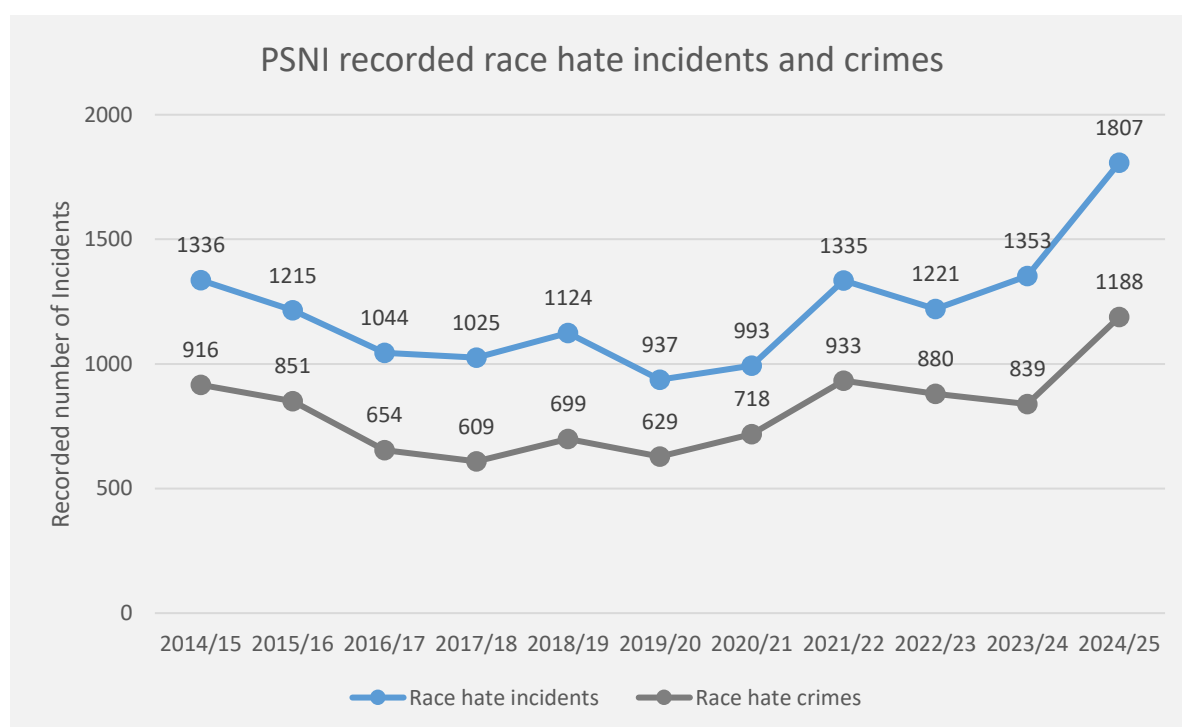
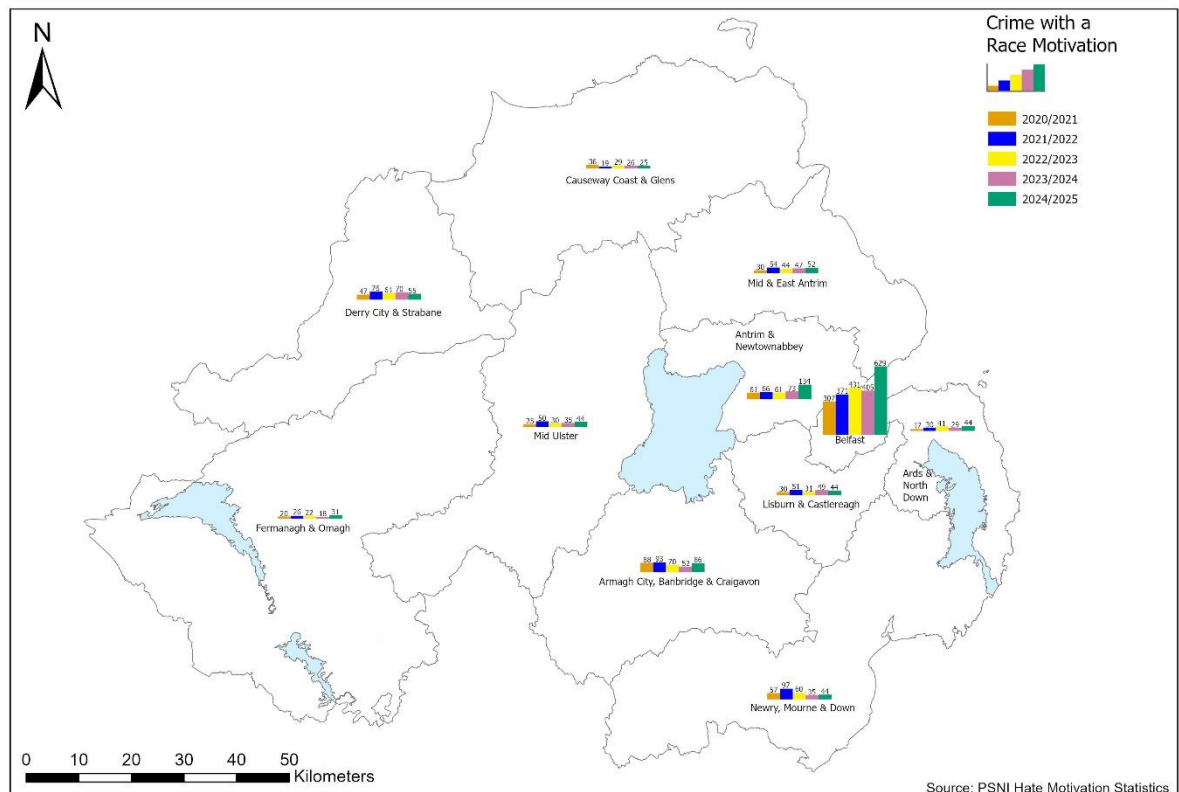


Figure 6: Race hate incidents and crimes, 2014/15 – 2024/25. Data from PSNI Hate Motivations Bulletins

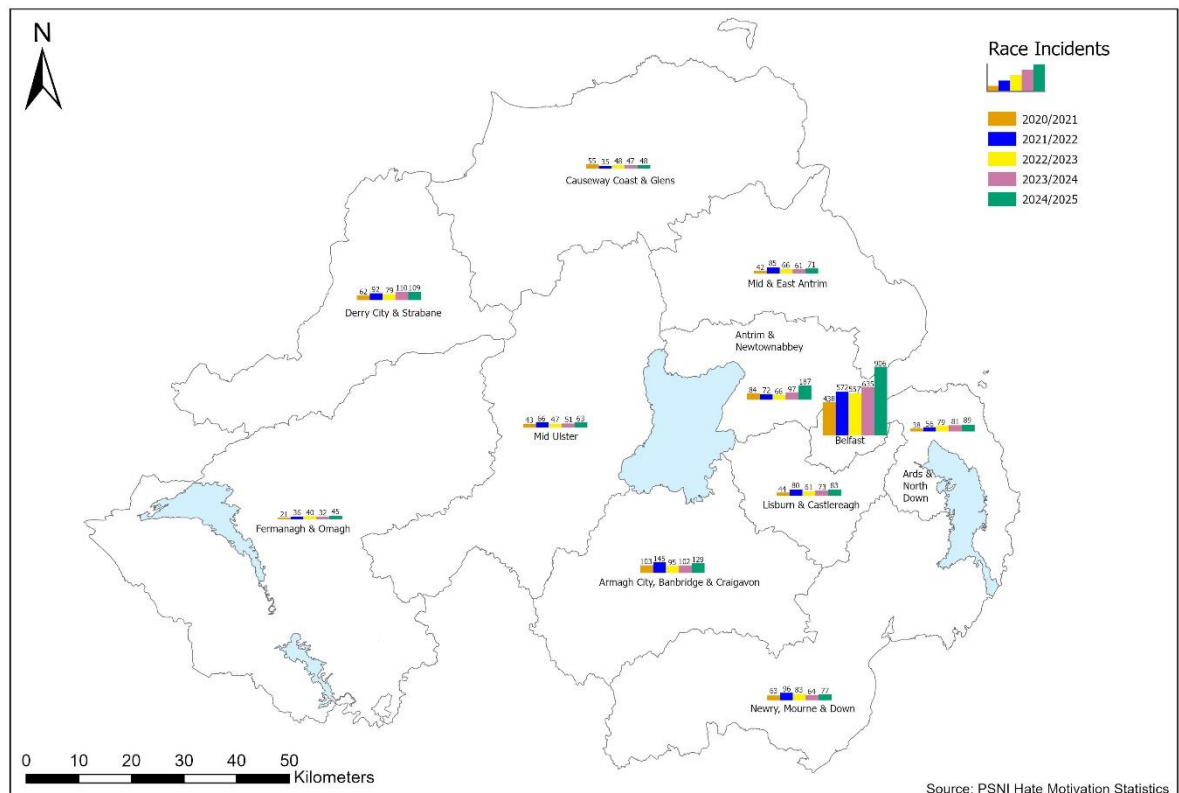
<sup>4</sup> <https://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Mapping-Far-Right-Activity-Online-in-Northern-Ireland-Project-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2025-05/1192831144/Hate%20Motivations%20Bulletin%20Period%20ending%2031st%20March%202025.pdf> Note that hate-motivated crimes and hate-motivated incidents should not be added together, as crimes for each motivation strand are included in the incident count for each hate motivation strand



PSNI Hate Motivation Statistics: Police Recorded Crime with a Race Motivation, by Policing District. April 2020 - March 2025

Figure 7: Map of Crime with a Race Motivation 2020/21 – 2024/25.

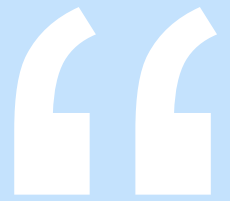


PSNI Hate Motivation Statistics: Police Recorded Race Incidents, by Policing District. April 2020 - March 2025

Figure 8: Map of Recorded Race Incidents 2020/21-2024/25.from PSNI Hate Motivations Bulletins

4.15 The PSNI has acknowledged that there is “no doubt” of a paramilitary element in recent racist unrest connected to the immigration issue; however, they lack conclusive evidence that these attacks were organised and sanctioned at group leadership level<sup>6</sup>, and indeed there are reports that some leaders may have acted to de-escalate tensions. As we noted previously, the point is not whether the involvement was ‘organised’ or not. The reality is that the participation of individuals and groupings of individuals with clear links to paramilitarism in racist violence has undoubtedly served to exacerbate the situation in Northern Ireland in terms of anti-immigration unrest. This deeply worrying development, as we note elsewhere, is further evidence of the risks attached to the continuation of paramilitarism and its structures, and further underlines the urgency on bringing it to an end.

4.16 Another concerning factor in the racist unrest in Northern Ireland is the level of involvement by young people. We recall the exploitation of children during the riots of spring 2021 where (according to Colm Walsh’s report ‘Beyond the Spark’<sup>7</sup>) paramilitary groups were alleged to have encouraged and facilitated young people’s participation in violent disorder. Similar indicators of child criminal exploitation are alleged to have also been present in

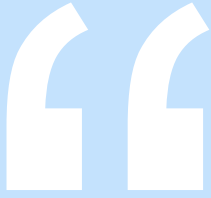


*The participation of individuals and groupings of individuals with clear links to paramilitarism in racist violence has undoubtedly served to exacerbate the situation in Northern Ireland in terms of anti-immigration unrest*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rte.ie/news/2024/0806/1463578-belfast-unrest/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/beyond%20the%20spark.pdf>



*The UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination called for robust measures to prevent and combat paramilitary racist violence and intimidation against ethnic minorities and migrants in Northern Ireland*

the unrest during 2024/25. It is concerning that so many children have come into contact with the criminal justice system as a result of their involvement, and many do not appear to understand the potential life-long consequences of their actions.

4.17 The Committee on the Administration of Justice has published two reports examining far-right activity<sup>8</sup> and racist disorder in Northern Ireland.<sup>9</sup> These reports reflect the complexity of the situation in Northern Ireland compared to similar racist unrest in England in 2024, attributed in part to Northern Ireland's history and the continued existence of paramilitarism. In September 2024, the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination expressed concern over "reports of paramilitary groups and affiliated individuals perpetrating acts of racist violence and intimidation to deter persons belonging to ethnic minorities and migrants from taking up housing or establish business in certain areas" and called for robust measures to prevent and combat paramilitary racist violence and intimidation against ethnic minorities and migrants in Northern Ireland.<sup>10</sup> These concerns were echoed in February 2025 by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights with each report underlining the ongoing impact of continuing paramilitarism.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Mapping-Far-Right-Activity-Online-in-Northern-Ireland-Project-Report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://caj.org.uk/publications/reports/inciting-a-pogrom-social-media-and-the-racist-disorder-in-ballymena-and-beyond-during-summer-2025/>

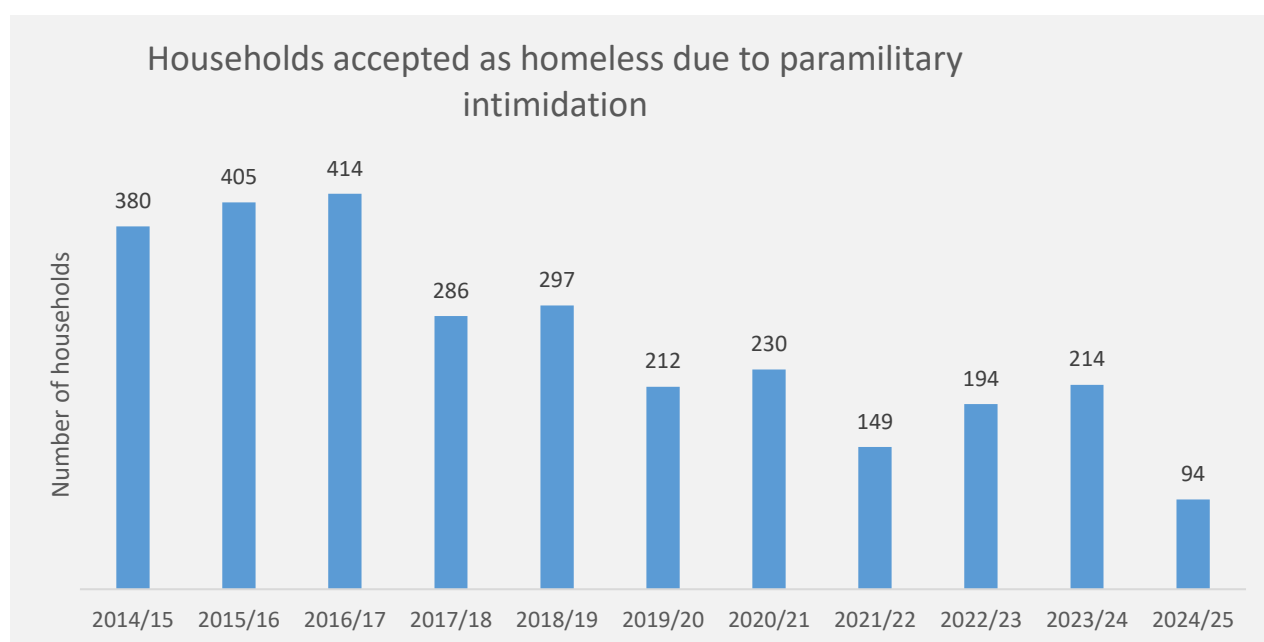
<sup>10</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4062539?ln=en&v=pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4078754?ln=fr&v=pdf>

## Paramilitarism and housing

4.18 In 2024/25, 10,855 households were accepted as statutorily homeless, broadly in line with annual averages over the last five years.<sup>12</sup> Intimidation accounts for 1-2% of homelessness acceptances, with paramilitary intimidation given as the cause in the majority of cases. Housing allocation is based on a needs-based points system. Up to the end of March 2025, households accepted onto the common housing waiting list as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation would receive an additional 200 points. This process ended at the beginning of the financial year 2025/26, which is commented on further in this Report at Section 5.40.

4.19 In 2024/25, 94 households were accepted as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation, a significant decrease from 214 households in 2023/24.<sup>13</sup>



*Figure 9 Households accepted as homeless due to paramilitary intimidation, 2014/15 – 2024/25. Data from Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin.*

<sup>12</sup> <https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/communities/northern-ireland-housing-statistics-2024-25.html>

<sup>13</sup> Northern Ireland Homelessness Bulletin October 2024 - March 2025: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-homelessness-bulletin-october-2024-march-2025>. It should be noted that in FY 2018/19, the period covered in the statistics moved from the financial year April-March, to July-June. The figures in the table are those published in the NI Homelessness Bulletin.

## Sectarian incidents and crimes

4.20 The number of sectarian incidents and crimes decreased in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. There were 910 sectarian incidents recorded by the PSNI, a decrease of 181 on the previous 12 months. The number of sectarian crimes recorded fell to 588, a decrease of 142 on the previous year. Sectarian violence against the person offences decreased by 56, while offences of theft, burglary and criminal damage fell by 79. All other offences decreased from 24 to 17.

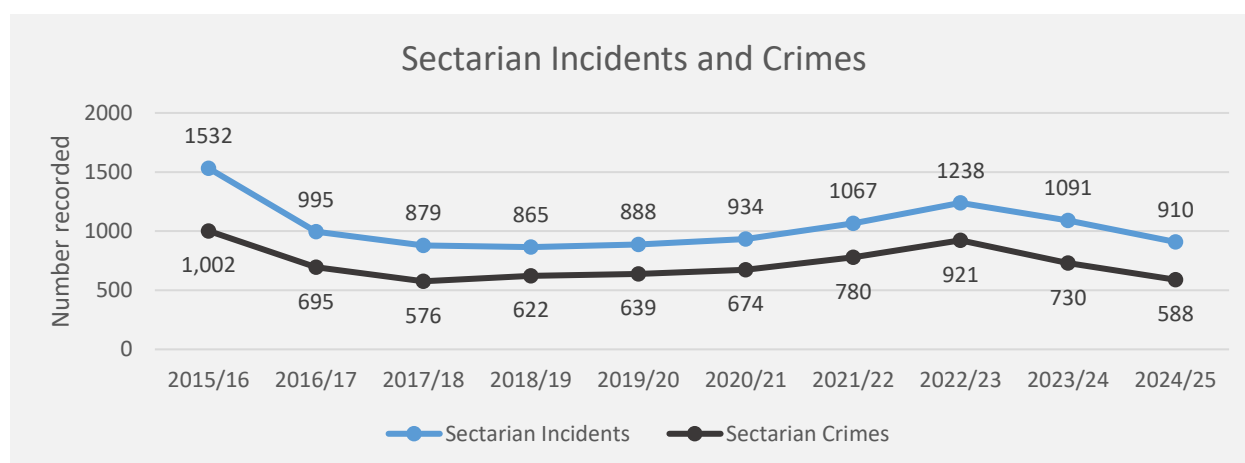


Figure 10 Sectarian Incidents and Crimes, 2015/16-2024/25.

4.21 As the number of sectarian incidents has decreased, the volume of race hate incidents has risen. However, the geographic mix of incidents is different. Belfast accounts for a third of sectarian incidents, but half of the race incidents. 14% of 2024/25 sectarian incidents took place in Derry City & Strabane, but only 6% of the race incidents.

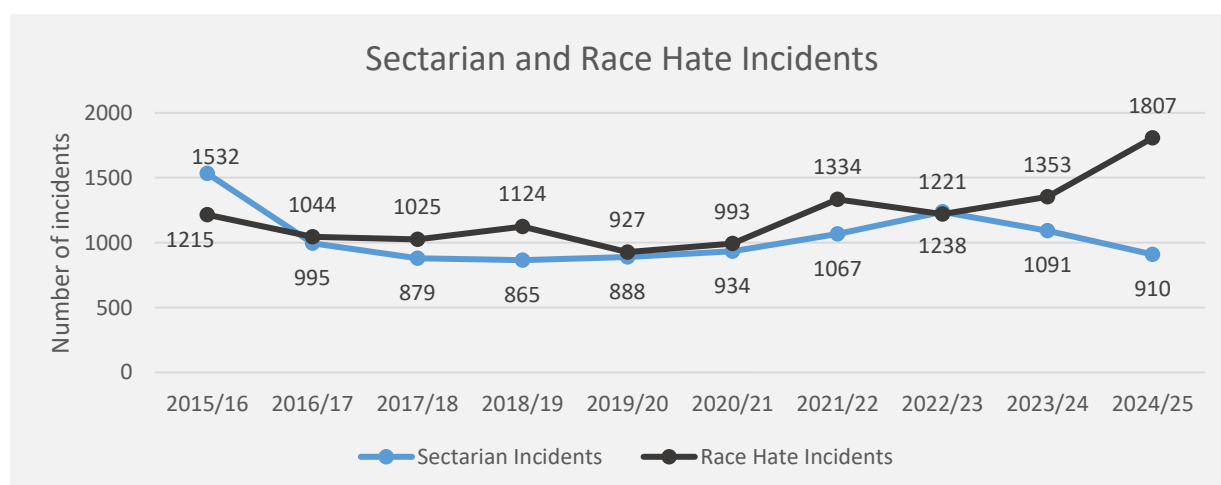


Figure 11 Sectarian and Race Hate Incidents, 2015/16-2024/25.

## Paramilitarism and drugs

4.22 While the issues of the illegal drugs trade and the impact of substance misuse and addiction are not unique to Northern Ireland, the culture and structures of paramilitarism add a particular dimension in this jurisdiction. Paramilitary groups and their members can play many different roles in the trade, from directly importing and distributing drugs to indirectly benefiting by ‘taxing’ drug dealers in the community. The data on drug arrests and seizures do not differentiate between those that are linked to paramilitarism and those that are not; however, the broad trends are still of interest.

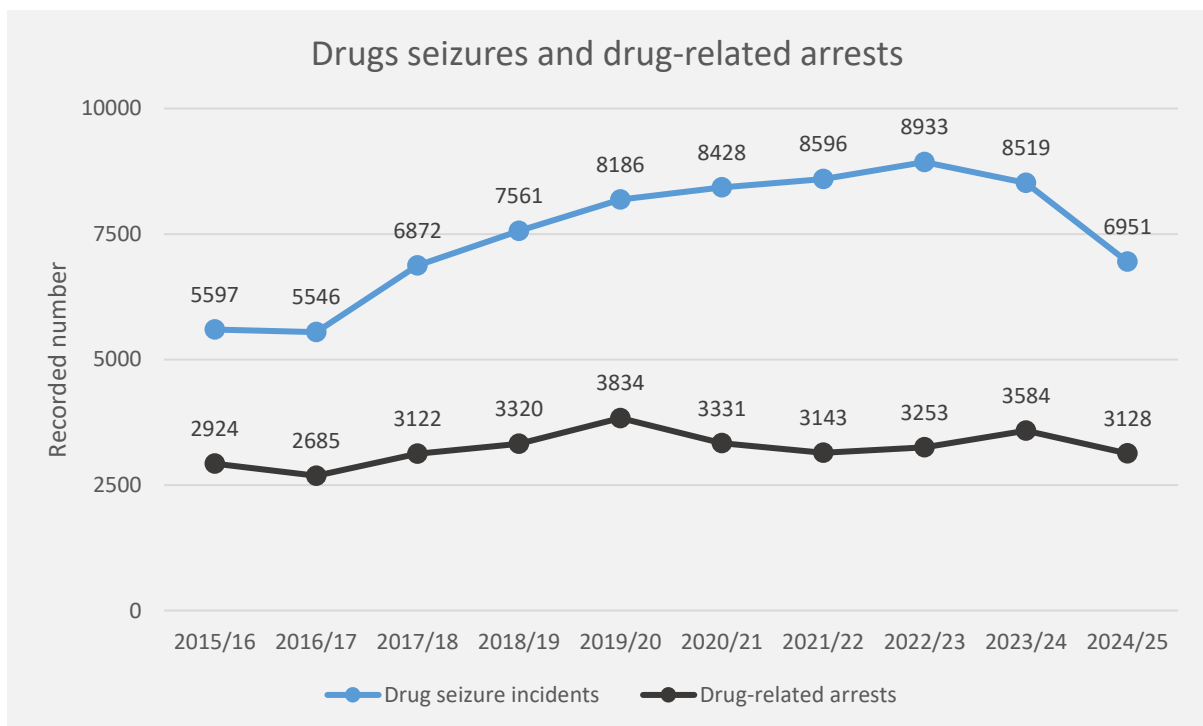


Figure 12 Drug Seizures and Drug-Related Arrests, 2015/16-2024/25.





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# Section Five

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## **Tackling paramilitarism in 2024/25**

In this section of our Report, we outline the progress made in 2024/2025 by the various measures and initiatives to tackle paramilitarism that are currently underway. We look at these measures and initiatives through the lens of the Twin Track approach, and contextualise our Recommendations along these tracks



## Tackling paramilitarism in 2024/25

- 5.1 As we have set out in this Report, we believe that a Twin Track approach is needed to tackle paramilitarism. Track One consists of a robust and targeted set of law enforcement measures addressing paramilitarism, coupled with an effective wider criminal justice response. Track Two entails comprehensively tackling the deep-rooted socioeconomic conditions which are linked to the continuing existence of paramilitarism today, such as deprivation and lack of educational opportunity. While we describe these as Twin Tracks, it is clear that they are interrelated, and both are vital in the task of tackling and ending paramilitarism.
- 5.2 The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime was set up in 2016, based on the Report and Recommendations of the Three Person Panel and is funded jointly by the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government. The cross-Executive Programme provides funding to a range of projects which contribute to the three key benefits of keeping people safe, building protective factors, and community resilience. The mandate and funding for the Programme are due to come to an end in March 2027. It is important to recognise that efforts to deal with paramilitarism extend beyond EPPOC and its delivery partners: many departments and agencies which are not involved in EPPOC nevertheless have a role to play in dealing with paramilitarism. Acknowledging this does not create new responsibilities, rather it recognises the connections linking issues together, like deprivation, the built environment, health, and community safety.
- 5.3 In previous years we have provided a detailed overview of each project funded by the Programme. This year we provide a brief, high level analysis of work carried out through the Programme, as we recognise that an extensive internal review is being carried out by EPPOC into the Programme as a whole. Given the pivotal reflections that are underway at the moment, we also address the question of what should happen in terms of tackling paramilitarism after the expected conclusion of the Programme in March 2027.

## **Track One: Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice**

- 5.4 As we have frequently made clear, paramilitarism cannot be dealt with without a robust policing and criminal justice response. However, such a response alone will not be sufficient to eliminate paramilitarism, hence our Twin Track analysis.
- 5.5 In order to provide a robust policing and criminal justice response, frontline services must be adequately resourced. We are cognisant of the financial realities of the public sector, but it is clear that the budget for the Department of Justice is out of step with other departments, and around 65% of that already squeezed budget is spent on policing. The Northern Irish Prison Service is operating at close to its capacity for adult male prisoners, and has re-opened accommodation facilities previously closed in 2020 to respond to the increased population, exacerbated by high levels of remand.<sup>14</sup> The PSNI budget has remained at almost the same level since 2010, which, when adjusted for inflation, represents 15 years of real-terms cuts.<sup>15</sup> Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the PSNI is facing a £23m budget shortfall and growing officer shortages.<sup>16</sup>
- 5.6 Police are on the frontline of dealing with paramilitarism, so it is essential that they are appropriately resourced. The Chief Constable, Jon Boutcher, has repeatedly raised the challenges the PSNI faces in carrying out their duties with their current budget allocations. The PSNI is reported to have experienced the largest expenditure reduction of any UK police force since 2010.<sup>17</sup> This has had an impact on officer numbers, which have fallen as low as 6,233, significantly less than the 7,500 recommended in the 1999 Patten report.<sup>18</sup> Another element in building public trust in policing is representation. The 50:50 recruitment policy, which meant there was one Catholic recruit for every one person from a Protestant or other background, ended in 2011. However, in recent years its

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/2024-25%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%20-%20Northern%20Ireland%20Prison%20Service.PDF>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/html-document/reducing-costs-psni#toc-6>

<sup>16</sup> [chief-constables-accountability-report-to-the-northern-ireland-policing-board.pdf.pdf](https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/html-document/reducing-costs-psni#toc-6)

<sup>17</sup> [committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/134462/pdf/](https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/134462/pdf/)

<sup>18</sup> <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/police/patten/patten99.pdf>

reintroduction has been the subject of some debate, given the continued underrepresentation of some groups in the PSNI.<sup>19 20</sup> We welcome the August 2025 publication of the Race and Ethnicity Action Plan 2025-2030, which is intended to address race and ethnicity-related under-representation.

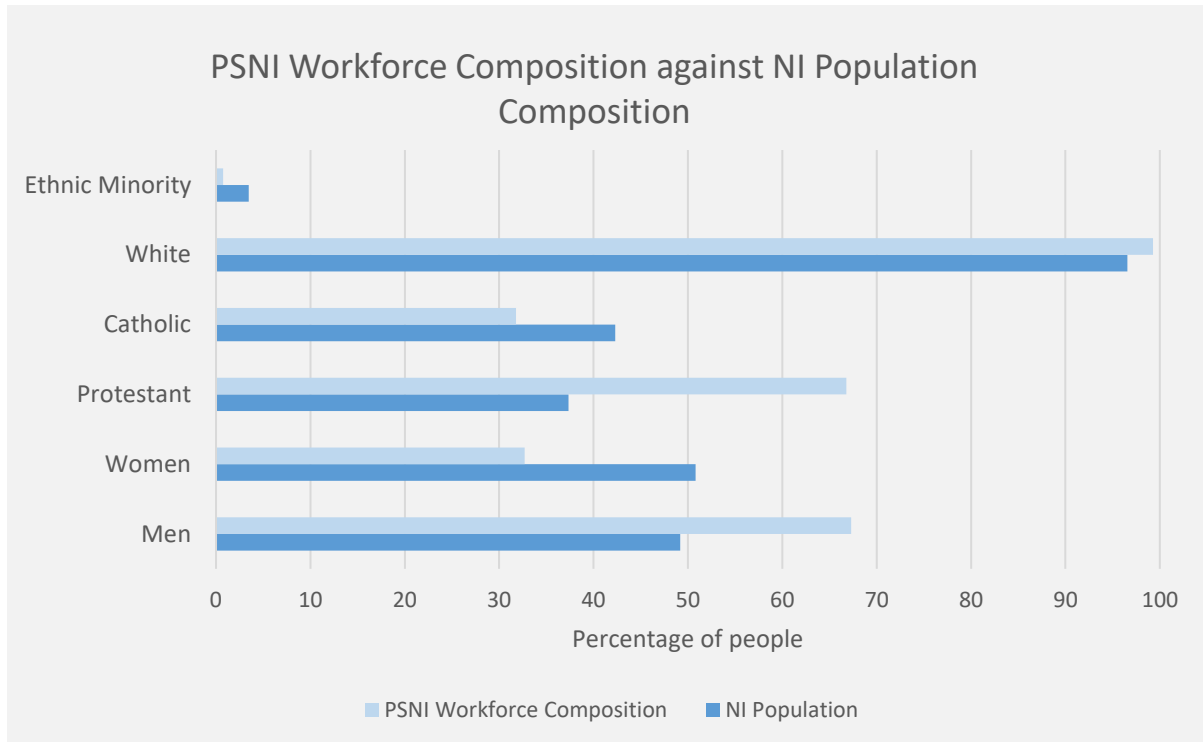


Figure 13 PSNI Workforce Composition against NI Population Composition. The PSNI data reports on perceived identity. Data from PSNI workforce composition statistics as of October 2025 and 2021 Census data published by NISRA.

5.7 The PSNI has developed a Recovery Business Case, outlining plans to increase officer numbers to 7,000 and staff numbers to 2,572 over the course of the next three years. Implementing this will require additional funding of £84m in 2026/27, £154m in 2027/28, £216m in 2028/29, and £269m in 2029/30. However, while the business case was approved in June 2025, no additional funding had been allocated by the time of this Report's publication in December 2025.

5.8 The Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) is a joint endeavour by the PSNI, HMRC (the UK tax authority) and the National Crime Agency, and is funded by the Programme. It has continued to show good results in terms of arrests,

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.psnipolice.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/our-publication-scheme/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/workforce>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/census-2021-main-statistics-demography-tables-age-and-sex>

disruptions, and seeing its work progress to charges and convictions. This collaboration between key agencies, including those not directly within the PCTF, informs wider activity, strengthening the overall response. Significant seizure of assets and other enforcement action sends a clear message to communities and to those in groups involved in criminality: that crime will not be tolerated. It is vital that all the relevant agencies give tackling paramilitary-related criminality the priority that it needs, particularly recognising the impact that coercive control and fear has on communities and individuals.

5.9 The PCTF continues to make significant inroads: seizing assets and proceeds of crime, arresting suspects and disrupting paramilitary-linked criminality, including drug dealing. In the period since its inception in November 2017 to March 2025, the PCTF conducted 1,270 searches, recovered over £8.2m of controlled drugs, seized 421 weapons and firearms, made 522 arrests, charged or reported 566 people for prosecution, seized over £1.4m of cash and almost £2.4m worth of property, obtained almost £1.9 million in Property Recovery Orders and prevented over £82m in revenue loss.

5.10 However, as noted in the Chief Constable's Accountability Reports, visible crime figures tell only part of the story. The ongoing resourcing pressures faced by the PSNI make delivering proactive and preventative policing, community reassurance, and public safety an enduring challenge. In particular, the decline in the number of Neighbourhood Officers working on the ground in communities reduces the ability of the PSNI to engage and address the needs of those communities. These pressures will only increase when EPPOC funding falls away, unless there is a clear mechanism for its replacement. As March 2027 approaches, there is as yet no clarity for what will happen to PCTF when Programme funding is no longer available. The responsibility for setting out that clarity lies with the PCTF partners, and developing plans for mainstreaming the most effective parts of this work has been a condition of EPPOC's funding of PCTF for the last three years. Other specialist parts of the PSNI such as Organised Crime Branch, Terrorism Investigation Unit and the Tactical Support Groups also play important roles in tackling paramilitarism. Whatever structures

are put in place, it is important that they should be designed to allow for a dedicated focus on paramilitarism to be maintained and to facilitate effective cooperation, both within the PSNI and with other agencies.

*“We remain convinced that Neighbourhood Policing is vital to effectively dealing with paramilitarism”*

5.11 We remain convinced that Neighbourhood Policing is vital to effectively dealing with paramilitarism. Neighbourhood Policing has been particularly affected by the PSNI’s resourcing issues, and the number of Neighbourhood Police officers has dropped to 558; 394 fewer than the 952 the PSNI has said it needs to provide an effective Neighbourhood Policing service to its communities.<sup>21</sup> With officers frequently redeployed to temporarily cover other duties, and levels of personnel turnover that stakeholders have reported as high, it is difficult for Neighbourhood Police to maintain a visible, stable presence and develop relationships with communities. These relationships of trust underpin public faith in the police, and enhancing communities’ relationships with the police is an important part of dealing with the conditions which allow paramilitary groups to maintain a presence in those communities. Over the last five years, the number of Neighbourhood Police has consistently fallen, and in parallel, the percentage of respondents to the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey who agree that the PSNI keeps their community safe has dropped from 55% to 34%.

5.12 Our Seventh Report drew attention to the concerns from stakeholders about the use and frequency of stop and search powers, and the impact they can have on families and communities, leading to allegations and perceptions of ‘two-tier policing’: that one community is policed in a different way from another. The

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<sup>21</sup> <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/psni-inspection-of-police-effectiveness-and-efficiency-2025/>



PSNI's pilot for community background monitoring of those stopped and searched under counter terrorism legislation is a useful step in ensuring safeguarding and oversight in the use of these powers. We believe there is value in expanding similar models of background monitoring to other types of stop and searches. On the overall use of all stop and search powers by the PSNI, we note that there has been a downward trend, from 27,539 in 2014/15 to 18,096 in 2024/25.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, we note the 52% decrease in the number of stop and searches carried out under counter terrorism legislation - the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 - in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. Between April 2024 and March 2025, the PSNI reported that 2,653 stops and searches were carried out under the 2000 Act and 2007 Act, which is 2,863 less than 2023/24.<sup>23</sup>

5.13 The criminal justice system is complex, with many different organisations playing critical roles in collaboration. The individual parts of the system need to function well and must be able to work together for justice to be done swiftly and effectively in a way that can inspire public confidence. There has been some progress in this area over the last year: in 2024/25, the average time taken to complete a case across all courts was 189 days, a day less than the previous year (190 days) and faster than during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21 (193 days).<sup>24</sup> However, prior to Covid-19, the average time to complete a case was 149 days.<sup>25</sup>

5.14 Delays in trials can lead to people serving extended periods on remand. In recent years greater numbers of people have been placed on remand, and periods spent on remand have lengthened. 37% of the Northern Irish prison population

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.psnipolice.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/PSNI%20Stop%20and%20Search%20Report%20Q4%202024\\_2025.pdf](https://www.psnipolice.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/PSNI%20Stop%20and%20Search%20Report%20Q4%202024_2025.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Stop and Search Statistics | PSNI Bulletin covering April 2024 to March 2025: <https://www.psnipolice.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/stop-and-search-statistics>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-08/Case%20Processing%20Time%2024\\_25%20WEB%20VERSION\\_0.pdf](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-08/Case%20Processing%20Time%2024_25%20WEB%20VERSION_0.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/case%20processing%20time%20for%20criminal%20cases%20dealt%20with%20at%20courts%20201920%20-%20accessibility.pdf>



are held on remand<sup>26</sup>, compared with 18% in England and Wales, 28% in Scotland, and 19% in Ireland. In our previous Reports we have recognised the complex balance of competing rights which needs to be struck between victims of crime, communities, and those accused but not yet convicted of committing an offence. A further cause for concern is the perception that people charged with serious paramilitary offences may quickly be returned to communities in close proximity with victims or witnesses, and the question of observance and enforcement of bail conditions is significant. We note the ongoing work of the Speeding Up Justice team in the Department of Justice which is intended to drive improvement on these fronts.

5.15 In order for justice to be done, and to be seen to be done, proportionate and fair sentences must be given to those convicted of crime. We are cognisant of the ongoing work across the criminal justice system, and note that sentencing must be considered as a core part of this work. We welcome the attempts to improve transparency in sentencing decisions that have included the release of judicial reasoning. We are supportive of the work of the Lady Chief Justice in promoting ongoing reform, including through her requests for legislative change to allow for the broadcasting of sentencing remarks. The sentencing of those charged with crimes where there is also a paramilitary element is an area of additional complexity in Northern Ireland. In previous Reports we have suggested that judges receive training specific to paramilitarism, and we repeat that call here.

5.16 The prison population in Northern Ireland continues to grow. By the end of financial year 2024/25 it had risen to 1,964, a 4% increase on the previous year and a 26% increase over the past three years.<sup>27</sup> Prisons have a vital role in rehabilitation and supporting prisoners to prepare to reintegrate in society after release. Delivering these supports becomes progressively more difficult as prisoner numbers increase and this is a cause for concern, both for individual

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/2024-25%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%20-%20Northern%20Ireland%20Prison%20Service.PDF>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/2023-24%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%20-%20Northern%20Ireland%20Prison%20Service.pdf>

prisoners who lose access to these services and for wider society. The separated regime (for republican and loyalist prisoners) continues to exist and we recognise the important role of the Independent Assessment Team who engage on this issue on an ongoing basis.

5.17 The work of preparing people who have committed offences to reintegrate into society continues on exiting prison with the Probation Service having a critically important role in supporting reintegration and reducing the risk of reoffending. EPPOC provides funding to the Probation Board for two projects for people at higher risk of paramilitary involvement and harm: Aspire, for young men; and Engage, for women. Both projects support participants to develop coping skills and resilience. Providing these enhanced levels of support can be costly, but we remain convinced of their value and support the continuation of this work, either as standalone projects or mainstreamed into Probation Board business, beyond the conclusion of the Programme in March 2027.

5.18 The monitoring of Terrorist Risk Offenders (TROs) is a complex issue in Northern Ireland, which is reflected in the Multi-Agency Review Arrangements (MARA). Since 2021, in response to threats against the Probation Service related to their supervision of TROs, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service has been commissioned by the Department of Justice to provide supervision for a number of individuals managed under the MARA. A review of the efficacy and sustainability of this model by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate is currently underway and is expected to report in early 2026. While concerns have been raised that these arrangements do not provide value for money and duplicate some of the work of the Probation Board, we understand that there would be significant sensitivities that would require careful management if there were proposals to return this responsibility to staff teams in Northern Ireland. This issue again highlights the specific complexities of paramilitarism in Northern Ireland.

5.19 Over the years, our Reports have recognised growing efforts to take a more holistic approach to justice and community safety issues. This includes restorative justice and problem-solving justice, both of which we support. Across

the justice system valuable work has been done on embedding trauma-informed approaches, which seek to identify and understand the root causes of complex issues in the lives of those coming into contact with the justice system. The PSNI's ongoing commitment to problem-solving, which has received funding from the Programme, and the establishment of a Substance Misuse Court and the Domestic Violence Contest Court by the Lady Chief Justice, supported by the judiciary and court service, are two positive examples of problem-solving justice in action in Northern Ireland, which we hope will be expanded.

5.20 Restorative justice organisations across Northern Ireland are doing valuable and important work to reduce conflict and repair relationships. With funding and support from EPPOC, a revised Restorative Justice Protocol was published in July 2023 and an Interim Protocol Lead was appointed in February 2024 to implement the Protocol. The Department, with the Protocol Lead has developed a new Practice Standards and Accreditation Framework, which was published in October 2025.<sup>28</sup> The Framework should ensure high standards and consistency across organisations delivering restorative justice services in communities, whether they are dealing with serious and complex cases, diversionary disposals, or other tensions and conflicts. The Justice Bill currently before the Assembly legislates for this new approach. It is welcome that the importance of the work undertaken by these organisations is recognised and frameworks are being introduced to support them and the people they serve.

5.21 Organised crime legislation is an important tool for the state in tackling groups involved in organised crime. We have discussed elsewhere the growing and increasingly complex connections between paramilitary groups and organised crime. The Fresh Start Panel Report said that the Department of Justice should urgently review the legislation relating to serious and organised crime in Northern Ireland to make sure that it is as effective as possible, and since our First Report in 2018 we have sought further progress in this area. We understand that the Justice Bill, currently before the Assembly, will create new offences of directing

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/Adult%20Restorative%20Justice%20%20%20Practice%20Standards%20and%20Accreditation%20Framework%202026.pdf>

and participating in organised crime. This legislation already exists in Great Britain and Ireland. The current vacuum and extensive delay are most regrettable. We continue to urge that the Bill be progressed swiftly, subject to the appropriate parliamentary scrutiny and process.

5.22 We have also long been advocates of increased use of asset recovery powers to tackle the financial aspects of involvement in criminality, whether by paramilitary organisations or organised crime groups.<sup>29</sup> Civil Recovery and Tax powers under Parts 5 and 6 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) can be powerful tools in tackling paramilitarism and organised crime, and when used effectively their enforcement against key individuals in paramilitary groups sends a clear message that groups can and will be disrupted. In 2024/25 the NCA undertook extensive assessment of 27 individuals to identify potential asset denials. One Recovery Order was granted and resulted in the recovery of assets worth approximately £100,000. We reiterate our calls for these tools to be used as fully as possible to deter criminality and for seized assets to be reinvested to support the communities worst affected by paramilitarism and organised crime, as is the case in Scotland and Ireland.

5.23 Policing and Community Safety Partnerships provide a model for bringing together local councils, statutory services and communities to develop an approach that responds to community safety priorities and encourages meaningful engagement with local government. The importance of cooperation and collaboration cannot be overstated. The flow of information between partners including the PSNI, between communities and service providers, and between central and local government is vital to effective cooperation and future initiatives and services should consider how this can be made better.

5.24 The experiences of victims and witnesses as they engage with the criminal justice system are critical indicators of how well the system overall is functioning. In autumn 2024, a survey of victims found that 82% were not confident they could

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/asset-recovery-statistics-financial-years-ending-2020-to-2025>

receive justice by reporting a crime and 79% were not confident that the criminal justice system as a whole was fair. These figures represent an improvement compared to 2023.<sup>30</sup> Further efforts are needed across the criminal justice system to support victims and witnesses and build society's faith in the criminal justice system.

### Conclusion and Recommendation for Track One

5.25 The full detail of the three Recommendations in this Report can be found in Section Two. They fall into three categories: policing and criminal justice measures relating to Track One, socio-economic measures relating to Track Two, and the third Recommendation relating to cooperation and leadership. The headlines of the Recommendations are repeated below. The first of these relates to improving the efficacy of Track One measures.

We recommend that:

#### **Sustained, strategic investment in the policing and criminal justice system is required**

##### **We recommend:**

- a) Introducing organised crime legislation**
- b) Maintaining law enforcement cooperation and focus**
- c) Increasing investment in neighbourhood policing**
- d) Expanding problem-solving justice**

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.cvocni.org/files/cvocni/2025-06/RPT-VictimSurveyReportJune2025-25062025.pdf>

## **Track Two: Socioeconomic conditions**

- 5.26 EPPOC funds support a wide and varied range of projects which aim to tackle the systemic socioeconomic conditions linked to the continuing existence of paramilitarism today. These projects range from youth work by the Education Authority, to individual supports for victims of paramilitary harm through the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO), educational supports for families through the WRAP programme, together with many others. Due to the ongoing EPPOC review of these projects, we do not propose to comment in detail here on any individual project but will comment more broadly on some key themes and developments.
- 5.27 Communities in Transition (CiT) is a core part of the Programme. It works in eight areas across Northern Ireland to improve community resilience through a range of initiatives and projects, with the aim of supporting these areas to transition into communities where paramilitarism no longer plays a role. It is important to recognise the positive benefits which have resulted from these projects. During the period April 2024 to March 2025 there were 181 CiT initiatives that centred on building the capacity of individuals and groups to affect positive change for themselves and their communities. The data from the entrance and exit surveys completed by CiT participants indicates improved confidence to questions such as: “My community is resilient to paramilitarism” (31% increasing to 40%); “I feel confident in my ability to have a say in my community” (37% increasing to 51%); and “I have had the opportunity to increase my skills and expertise to make my community more resilient” (46% increasing to 65%). In response to the question “I feel that paramilitary groups have a controlling influence in my community” there was a small decrease (45% down to 41%). There was also clear evidence of increased trust in the police.
- 5.28 Throughout our engagements this year, there was recognition of the value of CiT and some concern about how communities would continue to be supported once EPPOC comes to an end. Ensuring some continuity of support into the future is important to allow progress to be consolidated and further built. It needs to be recognised that the progress to date could deteriorate if supports are withdrawn

especially in those communities which remain vulnerable to paramilitaries. We heard some frustrations that priorities set at central government level did not always reflect community priorities, but there was acknowledgement of the flexibility built into CiT, which proved beneficial. Concerns about sustained support for communities and getting input from communities when designing projects and initiatives are important considerations for the future of many Programme projects, not just for CiT.

- 5.29 Some projects funded by the Programme focus on support for individuals, such as InSync, a project delivered by NIACRO to support people living with trauma from paramilitary violence. Others focus on communities as a whole, such as the CiT-sponsored projects which seek to reimage and improve the physical landscape or develop community safety structures. Given the complexity of paramilitarism, interventions need to take place at both individual and community level to be effective in the long-term: individual progress will be undermined if communities are not strengthened, and communities will struggle to combat the influence of paramilitaries if individual vulnerabilities are not addressed. Naturally, this includes partnering with third sector organisations in service delivery, but that partnership should go beyond the use of third sector organisations simply as vehicles to which the operational delivery of government policy is outsourced. Rather, the localised expertise and lived experience of people and organisations who are from those communities, and doing work in

*“Work with children and young people is a critical part of addressing paramilitarism”*

those places, must be properly utilised to build lasting resilience and strengthen communities in the long term.

- 5.30 Work with children and young people is a critical part of addressing paramilitarism. The Education Authority has trialled, developed and expanded initiatives to engage with the children most vulnerable to paramilitary harm and exploitation in



the most effective way possible. Across the Programme there are many projects which seek to engage and support children, young people and their families, including through sport, culture, education and training. Work on the Another Way project was ongoing throughout 2024/25, and it launched in September 2025. Another Way uses an evidence-based approach called a focused deterrence, drawing lessons from the wider Programme to deliver joined-up, trauma-informed engagement with young people at risk of criminal exploitation, including exploitation by paramilitary groups. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of this initiative as it progresses.

5.31 A major success of the Programme has been its role in creating a response to Child Criminal Exploitation. EPPOC was the driving force behind the Departments of Health, Justice, and Education developing a shared definition of Child Criminal Exploitation and an action plan to tackle it in September 2024. This is an example of the cross-cutting and collaborative work needed to address the complex problems which underpin the continued existence of paramilitary groups. This work also builds on the Programme's efforts to develop an evidence base and a collaborative approach, which is very much to be commended and should serve as an example for other parts of the public sector grappling with cross-cutting challenges.

5.32 It is important to recognise the work being done outside the Programme to support and strengthen communities, both by statutory services and the community and voluntary sector. Effectively dealing with the problem of paramilitarism will mean addressing a number of interconnected issues related to: education, including integrated education; employment opportunities; housing, including shared housing; poverty and deprivation; physical and mental health; and the built environment. Dealing with these issues requires sustained, strategic support for communities over the long term, and this means strategic focus and collaboration across government.

5.33 In previous Reports, we have included a focus on issues such as Memorialisation, Shared Housing and Integrated Education, as we believe they are important components in addressing the contextual factors that contribute to

the enduring presence of paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. Since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, a number of intergovernmental agreements (the Stormont House Agreement, Fresh Start Agreement and New Decade New Approach) have recognised the value of integrated education in reconciliation in Northern Ireland. It is increasingly popular, with 66% of responses in the 2024 Good Relations Indicator Report expressing a preference for mixed religion schools, up ten percentage points from 2013. We note that the UK Government announced £2m for Integrated Education at the 2025 Spending Review. However, this remains an area of political contention. While it falls outside of our reporting period, in October 2025 the High Court upheld the Department of Education's interpretation of a requirement for 'reasonable numbers' of children from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds enrolling and prospectively enrolling in a school before it can become, or be established, as Integrated.

5.34 Similarly, there is growing support for mixed religion neighbourhoods, which is now at 76%, up five percentage points from 2013.<sup>31</sup> It remains the case that the majority of public housing in Northern Ireland is segregated. Building integrated communities is a complex task, complicated by factors including the lack of housing stock and the fact that, in many housing estates, a majority of properties are now privately owned. This limits the ability of NIHE to develop fully integrated housing estates; however, we welcome their Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy 2024-2029 which sets a clear action plan for how they will continue to work towards greater integration and cohesion.

5.35 In 2024 the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) became responsible for the 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme. The Shared Housing Programme emerged from the Together: Building United Communities Strategy (T:BUC), and was previously managed by the Department for Communities. The 'Housing for All' Programme has, at the time of this Report's publication, supported 12 Housing Associations with 85 developments and a total of 2,925 homes across Northern Ireland. 49 developments have construction completed

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<sup>31</sup> Good Relations Indicators 2024 Report: <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/good-relations-indicators-2024-report>



*EPPOC has brought a focus to dealing with the many complex issues linked to paramilitarism's continued presence in communities, and we recognise the important contributions of the Programme in recent years*

and are 'celebrated as shared', and 36 are under development, to be allocated or 'celebrated as shared'. Those Housing Associations work on delivery of the Shared Housing Programme with 37 Local Advisory Groups, supporting five-year Good Relations Plans.

- 5.36 Memorialisation is another important dimension of the goal of definitively ending paramilitarism. The establishment of the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression in October 2025 falls outside our reporting period, but it could help to resolve issues such as memorialising paramilitaries, and we encourage it to include this in its scope of work. We await with interest its impact on the promotion of cultural pluralism and social cohesion. We understand that there has been engagement between the PSNI and the Department for Infrastructure to discuss improving the current Memorandum of Understanding on the handling of 'public displays', including the erection of paramilitary flags. We welcome this, and the commitment by the PSNI to ensure that officers have clear guidance.

The future of the Executive Programme on  
Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC)

- 5.37 The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime has brought a focus to dealing with the many complex issues linked to paramilitarism's continued presence in communities, and we recognise the important contributions of the Programme in recent years. It has been innovative and trialled new approaches which have generated important insights into what works and how services can be delivered more effectively.

5.38 At this stage, a key consideration is what happens when the Programme's mandate and funding come to an end in March 2027. In our last Report, we strongly recommended that the kind of bespoke, paramilitary-focused work for which the Programme has been responsible should continue beyond 2027, while also ensuring that consideration is given to those elements of the work of tackling paramilitarism that could be integrated into mainstream policies.

5.39 We recognise that planning is underway to bring the Programme to an end without an abrupt conclusion of funding or activities, and that the requirement to develop plans to mainstream key parts of the Programme within Departmental work has been a condition of funding for the past three years. Departments and agencies have taken ownership of some specific initiatives and are disseminating the lessons learned from them into the rest of their work. We recognise that some projects will come to an end when the Programme does, and this is a normal part of the policy cycle of testing new initiatives and reallocating resources to the interventions which deliver the best results.

5.40 However, what is critical is ensuring that the focus on paramilitarism and coordination of efforts do not end when the Programme does. While not connected to the Programme, the removal of housing intimidation points from the Common Selection Scheme in early 2025 is an example of a change in policy where paramilitarism is being treated in the same way as other factors. While we understand that a balance had to be struck between competing considerations, and that the full impact of this particular policy change is not yet clear, the development highlights a continuing challenge surrounding a complex dimension of paramilitarism. While we recognise that the purpose of Intimidation Points was not to deal with paramilitarism *per se*, but was to provide housing priority to those impacted by terrorist violence, we do consider the removal of that specific measure relevant to our view that it is risky to assume that generic policies or projects can deal with paramilitarism or the specific harms it causes. We welcome the innovative new projects which aim to tackle this issue, and we have no doubt that they will create life-changing interventions in some cases. However, these can only be one part of the solution: as we note in Section Three, Northern Ireland has a particular history and political context which makes it

different from other jurisdictions and so we cannot assume that policy interventions from other places can be imported to deal with paramilitarism as part of one of a suite of issues. We believe, therefore, that an ongoing, dedicated focus on paramilitarism continues to be needed, combined with sensitivity to local dynamics and careful adaptation of policy ideas from elsewhere to reflect the realities of society in today's Northern Ireland.

### Conclusion and Recommendation relating to Track Two

5.41 Our second recommendation concerns the valuable work undertaken as part of Track Two and mitigating against the loss of this when the Programme ends.

We recommend that:

**A particular focus on paramilitarism needs to be maintained after the end of the current mandate for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime in March 2027**

**We recommend:**

- a) Policy decision-making for departments and statutory bodies should include a requirement to consider the impact of their work on tackling paramilitarism**
- b) Specific consideration of tackling paramilitarism in investment and funding decisions to support community development and resilience**

## **The foundation of the Twin Track approach: Cooperation and leadership**

5.42 EPPOC has done work to map all the different government strategies which have some connection to paramilitarism and has identified close to 80. This illustrates the complexity and cross-cutting nature of the issue. In our last Report, we called for a joined-up, whole of government approach to tackling paramilitarism, and in our view this remains essential, particularly when making plans for what will happen when the Programme is expected to end in March 2027.

5.43 This year, we have had many discussions about the leadership needed as part of a whole of government approach and the kind of structures that can facilitate this. As we noted in our last Report, sustained political leadership and efforts to tackle paramilitarism from every quarter are vital. The Programme has recently created a new Ministerial Advisory Group which will include all Executive ministers, not just those whose departments are part of EPPOC. This is a positive development which reflects the reality that paramilitarism touches every part of society, and we hope that once the group is embedded it will work well to facilitate cooperation and political leadership.

5.44 In our previous Reports, we have highlighted the importance of the Programme Sponsor Group, which was established some years ago to provide leadership to the Programme at senior official level and which is chaired by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. We welcomed the acknowledgement this gave to the importance of a joined-up approach to governance of the Programme, and that this was recognised at senior level in the various departments, agencies and bodies involved. In our view, an important part of what happens after the Programme ends in 2027 is ensuring that successor arrangements have the right governance, oversight and leadership structures in place to sustain strategic focus and collaboration. We believe that useful lessons can be learned from how the Programme's oversight structures have performed to date, and this should be used to plan for the structures which should be maintained, adapted or introduced after the conclusion of the Programme.

## Conclusion and Recommendation relating to cooperation and leadership

5.45 Our third and final recommendation in this Report is made in regard to how these measures can be practically implemented. As mentioned throughout this Report, and as the Executive itself has acknowledged, tackling paramilitarism is a complex task that requires effort from many stakeholders.

We recommend that:

**A whole-system approach to tackling paramilitarism, with collaboration, suitable structures, and ownership of responsibilities is required.**

**We recommend:**

**Programme oversight structures must deliver a whole-system approach, with central coordination in place that brings together all relevant departments**






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# Section Six

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## **Open actions from the Executive Action Plan and Fresh Start**

In our Fifth Report we reviewed in detail actions that we considered to be complete or largely complete from the original Executive Action Plan (EAP). As there had been significant progress against many of them, and a new approach was being taken in Phase Two, in our subsequent reports we have highlighted actions from the EAP where we believe further progress is required. We also update on various co-operative actions being undertaken under the Fresh Start Agreement arrangements by the two Governments.



## Open actions from the Executive Action Plan

<b>Further work required:</b>	<b>Organised crime legislation</b>
<b>Comment</b>	In the body of this Report, we refer to the current status of organised crime legislation and once again call for the introduction of this legislation to be accelerated. This is a significant gap in legislation, and while we acknowledge the delays caused by factors including the collapse of the Executive, this must be prioritised.

<b>Further work required:</b>	<b>Removing barriers to employment for ex-prisoners, as well as improving access to financial services (including lending and insurance), adoption, and travel</b>
<b>Comment</b>	Last year, we noted that further work is required to remove barriers to employment, including amending the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998, as recommended by the Ex-Prisoner Review Group. We also called for further work to address issues faced by ex-prisoners and their families, including barriers to travel. There has been little progress since then and we reiterate the necessity of progressing these issues.

<b>Further work required:</b>	<b>Removing avoidable delay; bail and sentencing</b>
<b>Comment</b>	<p>In the body of this Report, we provide a brief overview of some of the concerns arising in relation to delay and to bail and sentencing and once again call for further efforts to address these longstanding but admittedly complex issues. We welcome the innovative and focused work of the Department of Justice's Speeding Up Justice Programme, which focuses on tackling delays in the Northern Ireland justice system through a holistic, cross-agency approach.</p> <p>We note the progress on the key workstreams including Committal Reform, Early Engagement, Digital transformation, Out of Court Disposals, and expanding Magistrates' Court Remit, each led by different justice bodies.</p> <p>We also note the challenges such as limited funding and resources, complex case types, and the need for legislative change to support digitisation. It will be important that the Department of Justice continues its momentum to progress pilot projects, including reviewing the use of penalty notices and the integration of restorative justice.</p>

<b>Further work required:</b>	<b>A dedicated restorative justice fund and Centre of Restorative Excellence</b>
<b>Comment</b>	<p>In the body of this Report, we reiterate our support for the use and expansion of restorative practice in Northern Ireland, both within the criminal justice system and more broadly. We welcome the Department of Justice's recently published Restorative Justice Practice Standards and Accreditation Framework, and its aim to introduce restorative justice conferences more broadly across the criminal justice system. However, we reiterate here the importance of maintaining a focus on paramilitarism. The expansion of these restorative practices is intended as an addition to, rather than a replacement of, the ongoing workloads of restorative justice organisations, and efforts should be made to ensure that this expansion does not limit the ability of those excellent organisations to continue their vitally important work.</p>

<b>Further work required:</b>	<b>Independent Review of the separated regime in prisons</b>
<b>Comment</b>	<p>As we recognised in our last Report, the management and administration of the separated regime, as well as the efforts of the Independent Assessment Team, remain complex and important. While this recommendation is politically challenging, the possibility of a review should remain open for consideration in the future.</p>

<p><b>Further work required:</b></p>	<p><b>Improve the educational and employment prospects of children and young people in deprived communities, focusing particularly on those who are at greatest risk of educational under-attainment</b></p>
<p><b>Comment</b></p>	<p>The Department of Education are running a number of projects focused on tackling educational disadvantage, many of which are the result of 2021's 'A Fair Start' report. This initiative recommended in 47 actions, on which varying degrees of progress have since been made, however the funding allocated to these has been far off the £180m recommended in the report. Some of the work of EPPOC has been targeted at improving young people's education and employment prospects, notably WRAP, which focuses on educational under attainment and its links to paramilitarism. Some of the work within the Department of Education, notably the RAISE programme which was announced in October 2024, has the potential to replace some of the work that currently falls under WRAP, but cross-departmental working will be key to manage this transition and ensure that the young people who benefit from these initiatives, among some of the most vulnerable in Northern Ireland, do not suffer as a result of the loss of EPPOC. We repeat here that while we are cognisant of the difficult funding situation which has also impacted the Department of Education, these early interventions which focus on education and employability are life-changing, and must be adequately funded.</p>



<p><b>Further work required:</b></p>	<p><b>Accelerate and build on the Executive’s existing Good Relations Strategy to measurably reduce segregation in education and housing and set ambitious targets and milestones to achieve measurable progress as quickly as possible</b></p>
<p><b>Comment</b></p>	<p>We acknowledge the Executive’s vision of a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation. We note the positive increases in the Good Relations Indicator Report for 2024 that shows 47% of adults and 37% of young people think that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now than they were five years ago. While we note that there has been little change in preference for mixed religion neighbourhoods and schools since the last Good Relations report in 2023 there have been significant increases since the Executive launched its Together: Building a United Community strategy in 2013. Since then, preference for mixed religion neighbourhoods increased 5 percentage points (2024: 76%; 2013: 71%) and preferences for mixed religion schools increased 10 percentage points (2024: 66%; 2013: 56%).</p> <p>We continue to believe that reducing segregation in education and housing is vital in addressing the contextual factors that contribute to the enduring presence of paramilitaries in Northern Ireland and reiterate our call for ambitious targets in these areas, as well as a focus on delivery</p>

<p><b>Further work required:</b></p>	<p><b>The Executive and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Policing Board, should review their protocols for engaging with representatives of paramilitary groups. This change in approach should also apply to other public community bodies and public representatives.</b></p>
<p><b>Comment</b></p>	<p>The appointment of Fleur Ravensbergen as the Independent Expert tasked with carrying out a short scoping and engagement exercise to assess whether there is merit in, and support for, a formal process of engagement to bring about paramilitary Group Transition to disbandment is a positive step. Her Recommendations next year will necessarily influence how the question of engagement with representatives of paramilitary groups is dealt with by the public sector in Northern Ireland.</p>



## Fresh Start Actions owned by the UK and Irish Governments

*In this Section, we comment further on commitments made by the UK and Irish Governments. We continue to ask the Governments for updates on these matters, as we still consider them important to ongoing and future efforts to tackle paramilitarism.*

<b>B14</b>	<b>The UK and Irish Governments should consider a mechanism being put in place for a limited period to deal with any future decommissioning of residual weapons or material.</b>
<b>Action Plan commitment (2016)</b>	If there is a need identified for a decommissioning mechanism, both the Government of Ireland and the Government of the UK have advised that they will consult to consider this recommendation.
<b>Lead responsibility</b>	The UK and Irish Governments
<b>Updates received</b>	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Office continues to review the need for such a mechanism through engagement with other partners and in the context of progress on the Northern Ireland Executive's work to tackle paramilitarism and the scoping exercise to assess whether there is merit in and support for a formal process that ensures the transition to disbandment of paramilitary groups.</p> <p><i>Irish Government update:</i></p> <p>The Government of Ireland will continue to keep this commitment under review in accordance with the wider policy aim of transitioning groups away from violence.</p>
<b>IRC comment</b>	<p>We welcome the ongoing commitment of the two Governments to keep the need for any such mechanism to deal with any future decommissioning of residual weapons or material under review.</p> <p>This is something which may become more significant following the conclusion of the Independent Expert's scoping exercise next year.</p>

<b>C3</b>	<b>The UK and Irish Governments should review the legislation relating to paramilitary groups (e.g. the Terrorism Act 2000) to ensure that it remains in step with the transitioning status of groups in NI.</b>
<b>Action Plan commitment (2016)</b>	The Government of the UK and the Government of Ireland have advised that they continue to keep relevant legislation under review to ensure its effectiveness
<b>Lead responsibility</b>	Northern Ireland Office, the Executive, Department of Justice
<b>Updates received</b>	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Office continues to keep under review UK legislation to ensure it remains effective in supporting Northern Ireland Executive-led efforts to tackle paramilitarism. This includes engagement with the Northern Ireland Executive and other partners on the role of UK legislation in tackling terrorism in Northern Ireland, as well as the role of devolved legislation in challenging paramilitary and organised crime groups.</p> <p>The Crime and Policing Bill, introduced by the Home Office in the summer of 2025 includes a new youth diversion order (YDO) to disrupt young people involved in terrorist offending at an earlier stage and divert them from the wider criminal justice system, including prosecution. This builds on a recommendation from the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (IRTL) to introduce a new diversionary civil order to better manage terrorist risk from young people whilst reducing the need for further involvement in the criminal justice system. The Bill also proposes amending Section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to enhance</p>

police powers to seize items or articles linked to a proscribed organisation displayed in public places, if it arouses reasonable suspicion that an individual is a supporter or member of a proscribed organisation, without the need for the article to be used in criminal proceedings.

The IRC will be aware that the Northern Ireland-specific non-jury trial provisions contained in the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 are time-bound and expire after two years unless renewed by an affirmative Order approved in both Houses of Parliament. As these provisions were due to expire in July 2025 the Northern Ireland Office conducted a public consultation to inform the Secretary of State's decision on whether to seek to renew these provisions for a ninth time. In 2021 a Non-Jury Trials Working Group identified indicators that could be used to determine when the provisions would no longer be necessary. In addition to the consultation responses, these indicators contributed to the evidence base that informed the Secretary of State's decision on this matter. The Secretary of State laid a statutory instrument in the summer to extend the provisions, and this came into force on 16 July 2025.

Following careful consideration of the IRC's recommendations on potential mechanisms to support the transition of paramilitary groups to disbandment, and recommendations from others including the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, the UK Government and Irish Government agreed to appoint an Independent Expert to carry out a scoping exercise to assess whether there is merit in and support for a formal process that ensures the transition to disbandment of paramilitary groups. Fleur Ravensbergen has been appointed to the role and is expected to produce a report on this issue by mid-August 2026.

	<p>The UK Government will continue to review relevant legislation to ensure that it remains in step with any related developments.</p> <p><i>Irish Government update:</i></p> <p>An Independent Review Group carried out a comprehensive review of the law in this area, and the majority and minority reports of the Group were published in June 2023. In May 2025, the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs, and Migration accepted in principle the recommendations of the majority report, following extensive consultation and a close examination of the reports from a policy, governance, and legislative perspective. The Minister's decision was noted by Government as was his intention to return to it with detailed proposals in due course.</p>
<b>IRC comment</b>	<p>We note that the recommendations which result from the work of the Independent Expert may touch upon this topic and welcome the commitment of both governments to keep this under review.</p>

<b>C5</b>	<p><b>The UK Government should resource the NCA and HMRC to appropriately prioritise intensive work to tackle all organised crime linked to paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland</b></p>
<b>Action Plan commitment (2016)</b>	<p>The UK Government supports efforts to tackle paramilitarism and organised crime in Northern Ireland by providing £25 million of funding through the Fresh Start Agreement to help ensure that the relevant agencies are appropriately resourced to fulfil that commitment.</p>

<b>Lead responsibility</b>	The UK Government
<b>Updates received</b>	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>UK Government funding supports the NCA and HMRC to continue to operate in Northern Ireland. The NCA's successes in Northern Ireland in 2024/25 are detailed in six monthly performance reports provided to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. In addition to their direct successes in Northern Ireland, their work to tackle organised crime across the UK and internationally has an impact on the activities of organised crime groups operating in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In addition to directly supporting the work of the NCA and HMRC in Northern Ireland, UK Government funding (c.£8m in financial year 25/26) for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime has also supported ongoing work by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF).</p> <p>The UK Government has committed a further £8m to the Executive Programme for 2026/27.</p>
<b>IRC comment</b>	<p>In the body of our report, we comment on the need for the focus and interagency cooperation represented by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force to continue past the end of the Programme in March 2027, and this will include ensuring adequate funding is provided for all of the agencies involved.</p>

<b>C8</b>	<p><b>The UK Government, the Executive and law enforcement agencies, working with their partners in Ireland, should ensure that tackling organised criminal activity is an integral part of their efforts to deal with Northern Ireland-related terrorism.</b></p>
<b>Action Plan commitment (2016)</b>	<p>The Executive supports this recommendation and affirms its commitment to continue and build upon existing efforts in this area. The Secretary of State, Justice Minister and Chief Constable meet regularly to discuss the threat and our combined strategic response. Within the Executive, the Justice Minister chairs the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), bringing together law enforcement agencies to provide a multi-agency partnership that also includes civil society and the business community.</p> <p>Under the Fresh Start Agreement, a cross-jurisdictional Joint Agency Task Force was established in December 2015 to enhance efforts to tackle cross-jurisdictional organised crime and paramilitary activity. On a North/South basis, the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice and the Irish Minister of Justice meet at least twice a year under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Agreement on co-operation on criminal justice matters.</p> <p>The Government of Ireland has also restated its commitment to tackling paramilitarism, criminality and organised crime, and its full support for the work of the cross-border Joint Agency Task Force established under the Fresh Start Agreement.</p>
<b>Lead responsibility</b>	<p>UK Government, Northern Ireland Executive, Government of Ireland and law enforcement agencies in both jurisdictions.</p>

<p><b>Updates received</b></p>	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>The response to the threat from Northern Ireland-related terrorism is the responsibility of the UK Government, and the response to wider paramilitary activity and organised crime is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive. However, given the overlaps in relation to some of the drivers of terrorism, paramilitarism and criminality and the nature of organisations involved in this activity, there are areas of interdependence in the responses that are required to bring a sustainable end to the threat and harm posed to communities in Northern Ireland. None of these threats can be dealt with sustainably in isolation. A whole system response is required.</p> <p>A number of mechanisms are in place to help ensure there is close coordination on both policy and delivery. The NIO participates at senior official level in the Sponsor Group for the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime, and also participates at working level in the range of coordination meetings supporting delivery of the Programme, including benefits realisation groups. The Secretary of State and senior officials meet regularly with the Northern Ireland Justice Minister and the Chief Constable on matters of interest. UK Government and Irish Government officials regularly discuss shared security challenges.</p>
<p><b>IRC comment</b></p>	<p>Cooperation between agencies within and across jurisdictions in order to tackle organised crime is of vital importance, particularly where there are links to paramilitarism. We welcome the publication of a new cross-border policing strategy for 2025-27 to support and provide structure for this important law enforcement work. Good work</p>



	in this area continues and we encourage that that be maintained and indeed enhanced.
<b>D3</b>	<b>Agreement on a way forward for dealing with the past should be reached as soon as possible and the agreed mechanisms should be completed in a time-limited period.</b>
<b>Action Plan commitment (2016)</b>	There remains a need to resolve the outstanding issues relating to the past. The Executive, the UK Government and the Irish Government are reflecting on how to achieve this.
<b>Lead responsibility</b>	The UK and Irish Governments
<b>Updates received</b>	<p><i>UK Government update:</i></p> <p>On 14 October 2025, the Government introduced the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill, taking a significant step in fulfilling its King's Speech commitment to repeal and replace the Legacy Act. The introduction of the Troubles Bill follows the announcement of the Joint Framework with the Irish Government on 19 September 2025. The Joint Framework sees the UK and Irish governments once again working in partnership to address legacy issues, recognising that this is a shared responsibility. The UK Government's legislation seeks to implement the commitments the UK Government has made as part of that Framework. This includes fundamental reform of the Independent Commission, establishment of a more fair and transparent disclosure regime, and the restoration of inquests that had started and were halted by the Legacy Act.</p>

The Government has also laid a Remedial Order under the Human Rights Act. That Order will remove the previous government's much-criticised immunity scheme and remove the current prohibition on Troubles related civil proceedings. The Government has also brought forward strong safeguards for veterans that were not included in the 2023 Act, responding directly to the concerns expressed during engagements that the Government has undertaken. The Government recognises that, given the different views held by so many people, it is impossible to provide legislation that gives everybody everything that they want. It is the Government's hope that those who want to see a fair and effective approach to legacy, which can command greater public confidence, will recognise that these measures represent fundamental reform and should therefore be given a chance to succeed.

*Irish Government update:*

The Government of Ireland remains committed to working with the UK Government, political parties in Northern Ireland, and victims, survivors and families, to address the painful legacy of the Troubles. The Government of Ireland's consistent position has been that any path forward on legacy must command the support of victims and families and be compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights.

On 19 September 2025, the two Governments announced The Legacy of the Troubles: A Joint Framework, a comprehensive package designed to provide truth and accountability for victims and families who have lost loved ones.

Both Governments' respective commitments should now be faithfully implemented in a timely fashion.

As part of this implementation, the Government of Ireland is fully committed to:

- Enabling cooperation by relevant authorities with the Legacy Commission, once it is established.
- Establishing a dedicated unit within An Garda Síochána as a central point of contact for victims and families in relation to Troubles-related investigations undertaken by An Garda Síochána. This is alongside the commitment of An Garda Síochána to investigate all unresolved Troubles-related incidents within its jurisdiction and ensure that any potential investigative opportunities are proactively pursued.
- A financial contribution of €25m over three years to include the costs of participation and representation of victims, survivors and next of kin in legacy processes.

The Government of Ireland is also committed to the establishment of the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR), by way of international agreement with the United Kingdom, in line with our commitments under the Stormont House Agreement.

Outside of the Framework's commitments, the Government of Ireland has taken a number of steps in recent years to facilitate co-operation on legacy, including through the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 2019, as well as further instruments facilitating the sharing of information to assist ongoing legacy reviews and processes in Northern Ireland.

	<p>On 15 April 2025, the Government of Ireland agreed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the sharing of Irish State materials with the Omagh Inquiry. This is an important demonstration of the Government’s commitment in the Programme for Government to “play our full part in legacy processes and address the legacy of the conflict in this jurisdiction, including facilitating and supporting the Omagh Inquiry”. The MoU is being implemented and requests for documentation from the Inquiry are being dealt with.</p> <p>The Government of Ireland is also committed to legislation dealing with the taking of oral evidence from witnesses in the State. The aim is to have the legislation enacted in advance of the Inquiry’s evidential hearings commencing in March 2026, if possible.</p>
<b>IRC comment</b>	<p>We note the publication of the new Legacy framework by both governments in September 2025, although it falls outside of the timeframe considered in this report (financial year 2024/25). We continue to state that while Legacy is not part of the IRC’s mandate, it is a relevant contextual factor that has an impact on any process of Group Transition and efforts to tackle paramilitarism. The recommendations made by the Independent Expert next year may also be relevant in this respect as we have identified co-operation with legacy bodies as one of the possible steps in a formal Group Transition process.</p>



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# Appendices

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**One:** Commissioner bios

**Two:** Background and history of the IRC

**Three:** Acronyms and abbreviations

**Four:** Links and further reading

## **Appendix One: Commissioner Bios**

### **John McBurney**

John McBurney is an experienced solicitor practising in Northern Ireland. He qualified in 1979 and has significant experience in major litigation, commercial transactions, conveyancing and estate management. He has supported victims and survivors of the Troubles in his legal work. John was one of three persons tasked by the First and deputy First Ministers in December 2015 to make recommendations for a strategy to disband paramilitary groups and was subsequently nominated to the Commission by the Executive to report on progress towards that goal. In March 2023, John was appointed an independent member of a DUP-appointed consultation group/panel to report on views about the Windsor Framework.

### **Monica McWilliams**

Monica McWilliams is an academic and former politician. She is a graduate of Queen's University Belfast and the University of Michigan, and was Professor of Women's Studies and Social Policy at Ulster University where she holds the position of Emeritus Professor. She co-founded the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and led its negotiating team in the multi-party talks leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. She was elected to the legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland from 1998 – 2003.

She was Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005 – 2011 and a former Chairperson of Interpeace. Monica was one of three persons tasked by the First and Deputy First Ministers in December 2015 to make recommendations for a strategy to disband paramilitary groups and was subsequently nominated to the Commission by the Executive to report on progress towards that goal. Monica works with a number of charities: she is a Trustee for David Ervine Foundation (for disadvantaged children) and the John and Pat Hume Foundation (for peaceful change), and is patron of WAVE Trauma Centre (for people affected by the Troubles/conflict in Northern Ireland). Monica sits on the Governance Board of Operation Kenova. She published a book entitled Stand Up,

Speak Out: My Life Working for Women's Rights, Peace and Equality in Northern Ireland and Beyond, and she contributes to capacity building work with women in a range of countries. She continues to engage in events, and working groups, at home and abroad on matters relating to equality and rights, legacy, the future of Northern Ireland and to support peace and reconciliation. Monica was nominated to the Commission by the Executive.

### **Tim O'Connor**

Tim O'Connor is a native of Killeedy in West Limerick. After a two-year stint as a teacher he joined the Civil Service in Dublin in 1974, moving to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1979. Most of his time there was spent working on the Northern Ireland peace process and he was part of the Irish Government Negotiating Team for the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. He was the inaugural Southern Joint Secretary of the North/South Ministerial Council, based in Armagh, from 1999 to 2005. He has also served terms as Director of the Africa Unit and of the Human Rights Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs. His foreign postings included the Embassies of Ireland in Bonn and Washington DC, and from 2005-2007 he served as the Consul General of Ireland in New York, USA. Tim served as Secretary General to President Mary McAleese at Áras an Uachtaráin from 2007 to 2010. Since retiring from the Civil Service in 2010 he has been dividing his time between his own advisory business and voluntary work, both in the public sector and with NGOs. In 2020, he chaired the Implementation Advisory Group for the directly elected mayor with executive functions for Limerick City and County. From February 2019 to February 2021, Tim was Chairman of the Golf Ireland Transition Board. He is a member of the Board of GOAL, the international humanitarian assistance NGO. Tim was nominated to the Commission by the Irish Government.



**Mitchell B. Reiss**

Mitchell B. Reiss is a former United States Special Envoy to the Northern Ireland Peace Process with the rank of Ambassador. He was also Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, has worked at the National Security Council and served as a consultant to Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories. Outside of government, he has been a Partner at the Brunswick Group, helping lead their geopolitical practice, President and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and President of Washington College. Mitchell is former Chairman of the International Churchill Society and currently is Chairman of the Imperial War Museum Foundation. He is a Distinguished Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute and has published widely on national security and US foreign policy; he is a frequent commentator on UK radio and television. Mitchell was nominated to the Commission by the UK Government.

## Appendix Two: Background and History of the IRC

- 1.1. The IRC was established in 2017 under the terms of the Fresh Start Agreement to report annually on progress towards that goal. The Commission is mandated by an International Treaty agreed between the two governments to report on:
  - Progress towards ending continuing paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland; and
  - Implementation of the relevant measures of the Government of Ireland, the Government of the United Kingdom, and the Northern Ireland Executive, including the Executive's Strategy, to inform the Strategy's implementation.
- 1.2. The treaty describes the context of this reporting function as "promoting progress towards ending paramilitary activity connected with Northern Ireland and supporting long term peace and stability in society and stable and inclusive devolved Government in Northern Ireland".
- 1.3. The IRC mandate is based on a series of documents agreed in 2015/2016:
  - The 2015 Fresh Start Agreement
  - The 2016 Report of the Three Person Fresh Start Panel on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland
  - The 'Executive Action Plan', adopted by the Executive in July 2016, leading to the establishment of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme, now known as the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime
- 1.4. In the New Decade, New Approach Agreement in January 2020, a commitment was made to continue this work, including through a second phase of the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme on Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime.
- 1.5. The IRC is made up of four Commissioners who were appointed in 2017. In March 2025 their appointments were extended until 30 September 2026. They are: John McBurney and Monica McWilliams (nominated by the Northern Ireland Executive); Tim O'Connor (nominated by the Irish Government); and Mitchell B. Reiss (nominated by the UK Government). Further information on the Commissioners can be found in Appendix One.
- 1.6. The IRC is supported by a joint secretariat of seconded civil servants from the UK and Irish Governments.

## Appendix Three: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Action Plan	The Executive's Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime
Assembly	The Northern Ireland (Legislative) Assembly
CiT	Communities in Transition
EAP	Executive Action Plan
EPPOC	Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime - the Programme
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (UK Tax Authority)
IRC	Independent Reporting Commission
IRTL	Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation
MARA	Multi-Agency Review Arrangements
NCA	National Crime Agency
NIACRO	Charitable company formerly known as the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
NIRT	Northern Ireland-related terrorism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCTF	Organised Crime Task Force
PCTF	Paramilitary Crime Task Force
POCA	Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
Programme Team	Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme Team
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RAISE	Department of Education supported programme
T:BUC	Together: Building a United Community
TROs	Terrorist Risk Offenders
The (NI) Executive	Northern Ireland Executive
WRAP	Department of Education supported projects
YDO	Youth Division Order

## Appendix Four: Links and Further Reading

In order of appearance:

1. **Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics**

<https://www.psnl.police.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/Security%20Situation%20Statistics%20to%20March%202025.pdf>

This annual bulletin, published by the PSNI Statistics Branch, presents finalised security situation statistics for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

2. **Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation: Annual Statistics 2024**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d3bff0ca266424b221b230/Northern\\_Ireland\\_Terrorism\\_Legislation\\_Annual\\_Statistics\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68d3bff0ca266424b221b230/Northern_Ireland_Terrorism_Legislation_Annual_Statistics_2024.pdf)

This annual report, produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, presents key statistics related to terrorism for the period January to December 2024.

3. **Mapping Far Right Activity Online in Northern Ireland Project Report**

<https://caj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Mapping-Far-Right-Activity-Online-in-Northern-Ireland-Project-Report.pdf>

Published in May 2025, the report by the Committee on the Administration of Justice examines case studies on the role of social media in anti-immigration protests and racist incidents.

4. **Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland**

[https://www.psnl.police.uk/system/files/2025-05/1192831144/Hate\\_Motivations\\_Bulletin\\_Period\\_ending\\_31st\\_March\\_2025.pdf](https://www.psnl.police.uk/system/files/2025-05/1192831144/Hate_Motivations_Bulletin_Period_ending_31st_March_2025.pdf)

A quarterly bulletin published by the PSNI Statistics Branch in May 2025 reports figures on the levels and trends of police-recorded incidents and crimes with a hate motivation.

5. **Loyalist paramilitary link to violence in Belfast, says PSNI,**

<https://www.rte.ie/news/2024/0806/1463578-belfast-unrest/>

An article published by RTÉ in August 2024 reported that the PSNI had identified a possible link between racist unrest and paramilitary activity.

6. **Beyond The Spark**

[https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/beyond the spark.pdf](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/beyond_the_spark.pdf)

Colm Walsh's 2021 report, *Young People's Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Riots*, explores youth views on the causes and impact of the 2021 unrest.

7. **'Inciting a Pogrom?' Social Media and the Racist Disorder in Ballymena and beyond during summer 2025**

<https://caj.org.uk/publications/reports/inciting-a-pogrom-social-media-and-the-racist-disorder-in-ballymena-and-beyond-during-summer-2025/>

A report by the Committee on the Administration of Justice, published in October 2025, which examines the racist violence that erupted in Ballymena in June 2025 and quickly spread across Northern Ireland.

8. **Concluding observations on the combined 24th to 26th periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4062539?ln=en&v=pdf>

A report published in September 2024 by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reviews the UK's compliance with international obligations on racial equality, highlighting concerns around hate crime, discriminatory policing practices, and the treatment of minority communities.

9. **Concluding observations on the 7th periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4078754?ln=fr&v=pdf>

A report published in March 2025 by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights assesses the UK's progress in fulfilling its obligations

under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with particular focus on issues such as housing, healthcare access, education, and protections for marginalised communities.

**10. Northern Ireland Housing Statistics 2024-25**

<https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/communities/northern-ireland-housing-statistics-2024-25.html>

Published in September 2025 by the Department for Communities, this report provides data and analysis across a range of housing-related areas.

**11. Northern Ireland Homeless Bulletin October 2024 – March 2025**

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-homelessness-bulletin-october-2024-march-2025>

The Northern Ireland Homelessness bulletin is a biannual publication which contains information on a range of areas relating to homelessness.

**12. Northern Ireland Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25**

[https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts - Northern Ireland Prison Service.PDF](https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-07/2024-25%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%20-%20Northern%20Ireland%20Prison%20Service.PDF)

Annual Report and Accounts for the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) for the year ending 31 March 2025.

**13. Reducing Costs in the PSNI**

<https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/html-document/reducing-costs-psni>

A report by the Northern Ireland Audit Office analysing the impact of reduced funding allocated to the PSNI, and examining how budget constraints have affected operational capacity, service delivery, and strategic planning within the police force.

**14. Accountability Report**

<https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/files/nipolicingboard/2025-10/chief-constables-accountability-report-to-the-northern-ireland-policing-board.pdf.pdf>

Published in September 2025, the PSNI Accountability Report outlines the Police Service of Northern Ireland's performance, governance, and transparency measures, including updates on operational priorities, community engagement, and responses to public concerns.

**15. Written evidence submitted by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, relating to funding and delivery of public services: Follow up inquiry**  
[committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/134462/pdf/](https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/134462/pdf/)

Written evidence provided by the PSNI in January 2025 for Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's follow-up Inquiry into "The funding and delivery of public services in Northern Ireland".

**16. The Police Service of Northern Ireland: An inspection of police effectiveness and efficiency**  
<https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publication-html/psni-inspection-of-police-effectiveness-and-efficiency-2025/>

Report published in April 2025 by HMICFRS which assesses how good the PSNI is in two areas of policing: preventing and deterring crime, antisocial behaviour and vulnerability; and managing offenders and suspects.

**17. Workforce Composition Statistics**  
<https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/our-publication-scheme/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/workforce>

Statistics on staffing published by PSNI in October 2025.

**18. Census 2021 main statistics demography tables – age and sex**  
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/census-2021-main-statistics-demography-tables-age-and-sex>

Published in September 2022 by NISRA, the statistics demography tables related to age and sex from the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland.

**19. Report of The Independent Reviewer, Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007: Seventeenth Report**



<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68484a91ddc1cbd280bcb8bf/E03376217 - IRJSA Report 25 Accessible 1 1 .pdf>

An independent report by Dr Jonny Byrne sets out findings from a review of powers exercised under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 during the period August 2023 to July 2024.

**20. Stop and Search Statistics**

<https://www.psnl.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/stop-and-search-statistics>

Statistics published by PSNI for the period April 2024 - March 2025.

**21. Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases dealt with at Courts in Northern Ireland April 2024 to March 2025**

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-08/Case Processing Time 24 25 WEB VERSION 0.pdf>

Statistics on court processing times published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in August 2025.

**22. Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases dealt with at Courts in Northern Ireland April 2019 to March 2020**

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/case%20processing%20time%20for%20criminal%20cases%20dealt%20with%20at%20courts%20201920%20-%20accessibility.pdf>

Statistics on court processing times in the year 2019/20 published by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in September 2020.

**23. Asset recovery statistics: financial years ending 2020 to 2025**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/asset-recovery-statistics-financial-years-ending-2020-to-2025>

Six-year data snapshot of asset recovery for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and data on the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme, published by the Home Office in September 2025.

**24. Victim Survey Report 2025**

<https://www.cvocni.org/files/cvocni/2025-06/RPT-VictimSurveyReportJune2025-25062025.pdf>

The report, published by the Commissioner for Victims and Crime, presents findings from a survey of 257 individuals who reported their experience of crime to the police since 2019.

**25. Adult Restorative Justice: Practice Standards and Accreditation Framework 2025**

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/Adult%20Restorative%20Justice%20%20%20Practice%20Standards%20and%20Accreditation%20Framework%202026.pdf>

A new initiative launched in October 2025 by the Department of Justice.

**26. Good Relations Indicators 2024 Report**

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/good-relations-indicators-2024-report>

The latest results of the surveys undertaken to monitor progress against T:BUC objectives, published by the Northern Ireland Executive in October 2025.

**27. A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland (The Patten Report)**

<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/police/patten/patten99.pdf>

This report, published by the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland in September 1999, recommended a radical overhaul of the police service, then called the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as well as the 50:50 Catholic: Protestant recruitment policy. It detailed the numbers of officers recommended for optimal policing in Northern Ireland.

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978-1-5286-6030-3