



Review of Community Safety in Northern Ireland

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This bulletin was produced by Analytical Services Group and is downloadable via PDF on the Department of Justice webpage.

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1 Community Safety in Northern Ireland

1.1 What is Community Safety?

Community safety means different things to different people, however, it is defined broadly within the Justice (NI) Act 2002 as not only the reduction of crime, but also the reduction of anti-social behaviour and the addressing of other factors that affect people's perceptions of safety. The Department's ongoing approach to addressing community safety issues has been to:

- (i) Provide local solutions to local problems;
- (ii) Place prevention and early stage intervention as the primary aim;
- (iii) Focus on wider social issues, including anti-social behaviour, fear of crime, quality of life issues, and related public health, social and economic factors;
- (iv) Deliver through a partnership approach, involving the statutory, voluntary and private sectors, as well as community groups and individual citizens; and
- (v) Offer holistic and problem-oriented solutions.

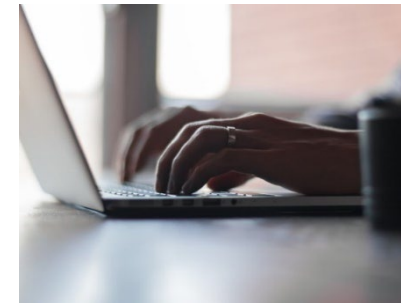
Community safety is about helping communities be and feel safe. It is important that everyone feels safe where they live, work or spend their leisure time. The Government's current strategic focus is to create safer communities, where people feel safe and protected and have the confidence they need to live productively and engage fully in society. People may not feel safe in their communities for a number of reasons, including crime and broader issues in relation to anti-social behaviour (ASB) which do not meet the criminal threshold. It is important to recognise and address all issues which

cause communities to feel unsafe and damage confidence, including through tackling and reducing crime, and addressing the issues of underlying harm and vulnerability that can lead to offending behaviour. Community safety is a shared issue, that requires a collaborative response to help understand and address changing and emerging issues, at regional and local level.

1.2 The Focus of this Publication

Following recommendations from the Criminal Justice Inspectorate (CJINI), this review has been undertaken on behalf of Safer Communities Directorate by statisticians from Department of Justice (DoJ) Analytical Services Group (ASG), seconded from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The aim of this review is to provide an up-to-date understanding of community safety issues in Northern Ireland, recognise the scale and scope of these issues, and highlight potential areas of focus for delivery moving forward. This will provide an evidence base towards the delivery of a new DoJ Community Safety Strategy which:

- (i) aligns with the goals and strategies of the Criminal Justice System and partner organisations that contribute to community safety in Northern Ireland;
- (ii) is based on up-to-date best evidence; and
- (iii) reflects the views and needs of the local population.



2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

This section looks at the prevalence of issues and crime types that may be considered as impacting upon community safety in Northern Ireland. Information has been collated from sources including DoJ, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and Northern Ireland Life & Times Survey (NILT) and highlights changing trends and the most recent position in relation to specific community safety issues in Northern Ireland. For further information see '06 Data Sources'.

2.1 Annual Crime Trends

Source: Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 2022/23, PSNI

PSNI annual crime statistics provide a good basis for understanding the landscape of crime and community safety in Northern Ireland. As Figure 1 shows, in the years prior to the current cohort, overall crimes have generally fluctuated between 100,000-110,000 per year. However, following the lowest levels in 2020/21 (100,084), linked to Covid-19 restrictions, annual rates have increased and the latest figure for 2022/23 indicates the highest number of police recorded crimes (116,242); this represents a 13.1% increase over the last decade. During this time, the Northern Ireland population has increased by around 4%, suggesting that the increasing crime rate is disproportionate to population growth¹.

Of the crimes recorded for the latest annual cohort, just under half (44.8%) fell into the violence against the person (VAP) category (Figure 2). This was followed by theft (including burglary) (22.1%), criminal damage (15.4%) and drugs (8.1%). A smaller proportion of other² offences (5.7%) and sexual offences (3.8%) were recorded during 2022/23. Over the years, there has been changes in the distribution of these main crime types. Decreases in crime have mainly been experienced with property-type offences such as robbery, burglary, theft and criminal damage, while VAP, drugs and sexual offences in particular have shown upward trends. It is noted by PSNI that the increase in the number of drug offences has influenced the rise in other crime types³. More detail in relation to this can be found in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 1: Annual number of police recorded crimes, 2013/14 to 2022/23

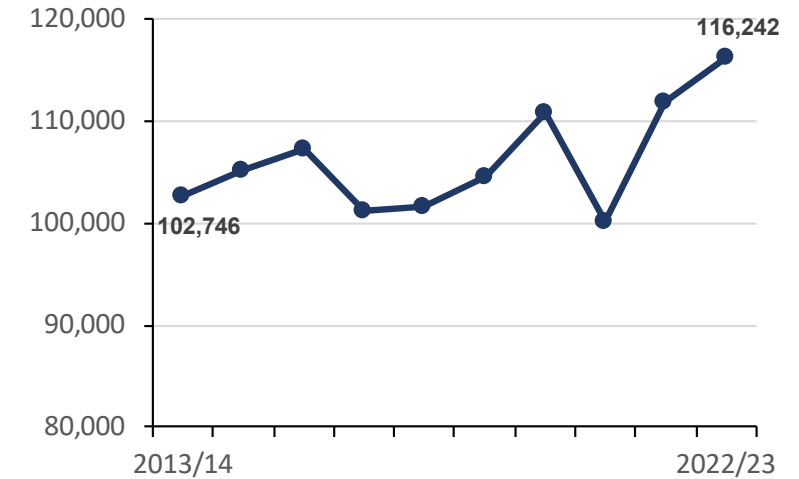
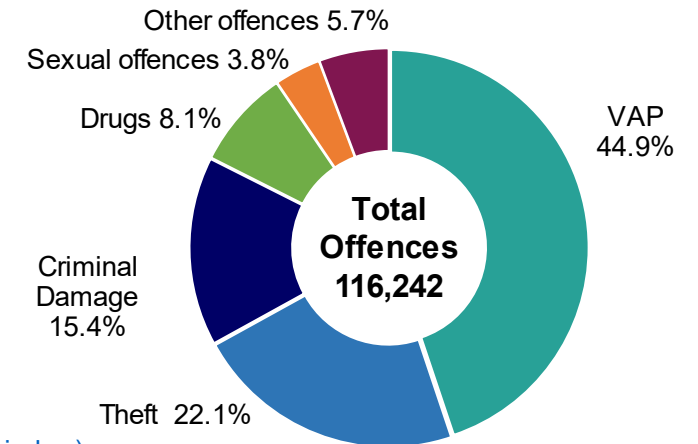


Figure 2: Police recorded crime by offence type, 2022/23²



1. [2022 Mid-Year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\) \(opens in a new window\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2022-mid-year-population-estimates-for-northern-ireland).

2. Other includes robbery, possession of weapons, public order and miscellaneous. These have consistently recorded lowest annual number of crimes over the last 10 years.

3. Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2022/23: [Police Recorded Crime Statistics | PSNI \(opens in a new window\)](https://www.psni.gov.uk/publications/police-recorded-crime-statistics).

2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

There has been a steady rise in the annual number of VAP offences, which have increased by 54.4% over the last 10 years (Figures 3 and 4). Ten years ago, the highest annual number of police recorded crimes were for theft (including burglary), however this has decreased by 31.5% and has been overtaken by VAP from 2015/16 onwards. Drugs, sexual offences, possession of weapons and miscellaneous offences have also increased over the last decade. In particular, while still lower in overall numbers, police recorded drug offences have increased by 90.5% and sexual offences by 89.5%. In contrast, alongside theft, there have been decreases in the annual number of robbery, public order and criminal damage offences. Whereas the proportion of crime represented by robbery, theft and criminal damage would have accounted for 56.4% of all recorded crimes 10 years ago, this has fallen to 38.0% for the most recent year. Alongside this, the proportion of VAP and sexual offences has increased from 34.3% of all offences in 2013/14 to almost half (48.6%) of all crimes recorded in 2022/23.

To help understand trends further, it is useful to look into patterns of specific offences, including anti-social behaviour, drug seizures and domestic abuse, as well as understanding trends in motivating factors, such as sectarianism, race, religion and sexual orientation which may have safety implications within and across local communities in Northern Ireland.

Figure 3: Annual number of police recorded crimes by offence type, 2013/14 to 2022/23¹

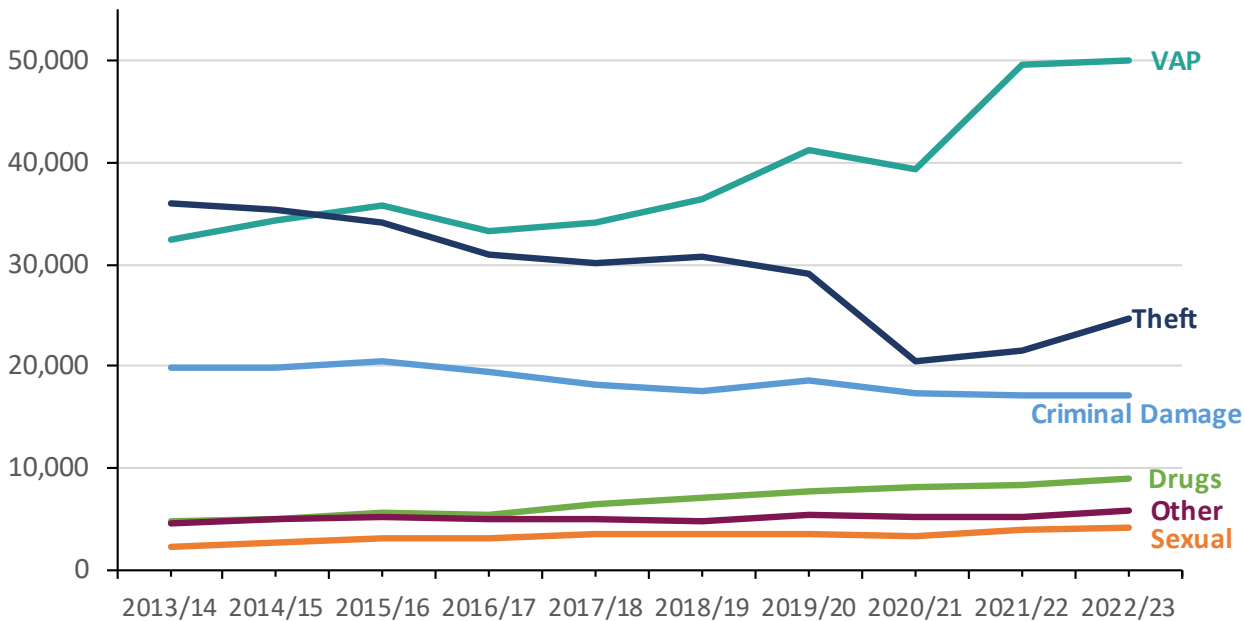
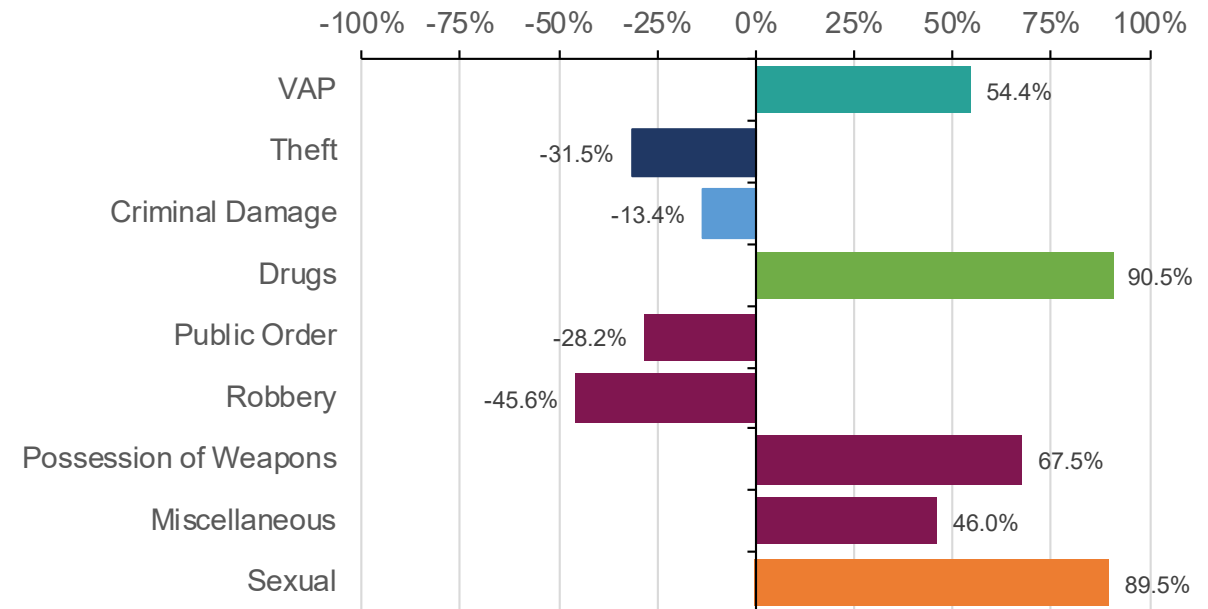


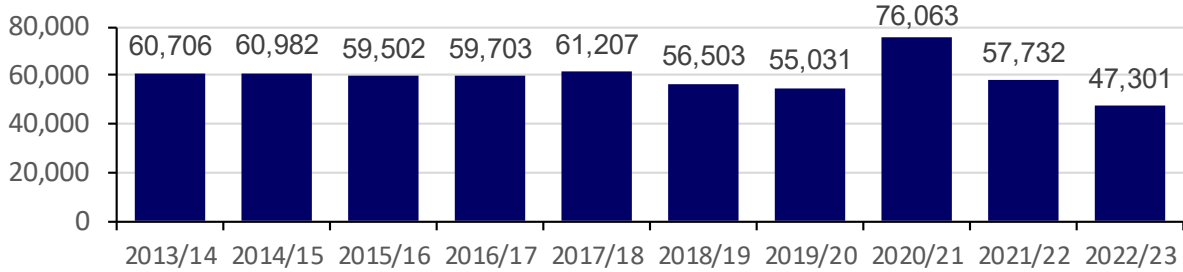
Figure 4: Change in annual number of police recorded crimes over the last ten years



1. Other includes robbery, possession of weapons, public order and miscellaneous. These have consistently recorded lowest annual number of crimes over the last 10 years.

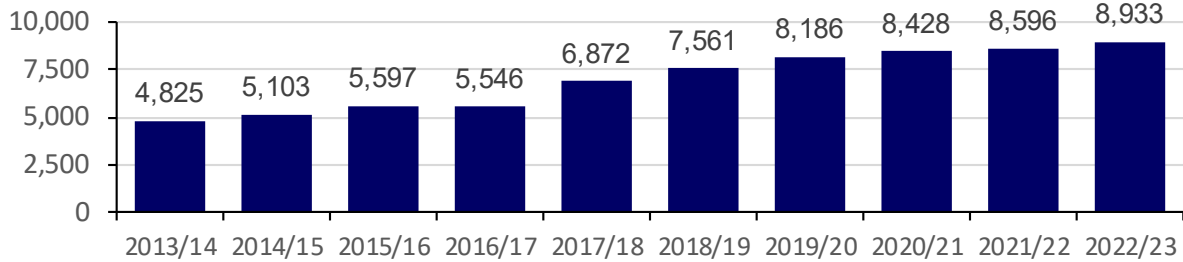
2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

Figure 5: Anti-social behaviour incidents, 2013/14 to 2022/23



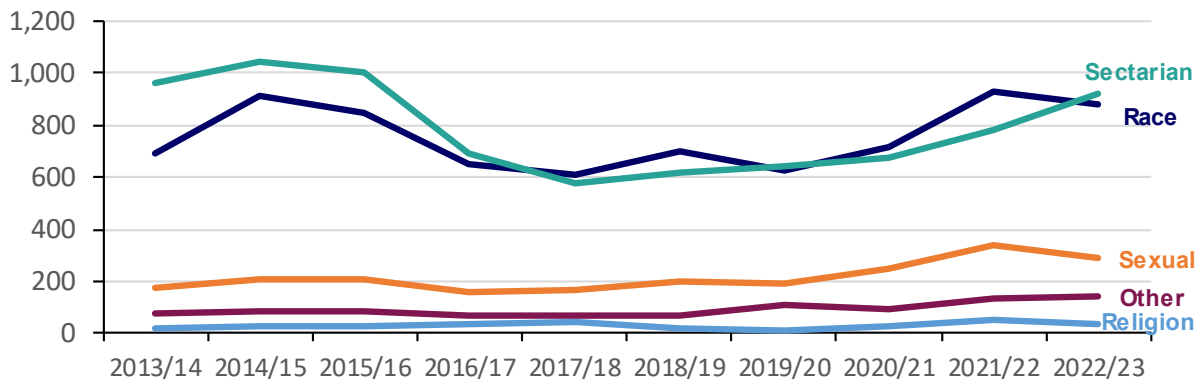
Over the last 10 years, there has been a general decline in the number of ASB incidents recorded. Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were introduced on 23rd March 2020 and had a substantial impact on ASB levels. The number of ASB incidents recorded in 2020/21 rose by 38% compared with 2019/20 and was the highest level recorded over the last ten years. As restrictions eased there was a substantial fall in the number of ASB incidents, to the lowest recorded figure in 2022/23.

Figure 6: Drug seizure incidents, 2013/14 to 2022/23



In line with the increase in the number of drug offences, drug seizure incidents have also increased each year since 2013/14, with the exception of a slight fall in 2016/17. The number of drug seizure incidents recorded in 2022/23 (8,933) showed an increase of 337 (3.9%) when compared with 2021/22 and is almost twice that of the level of drug seizure incidents recorded ten years ago in 2013/14 (4,825).

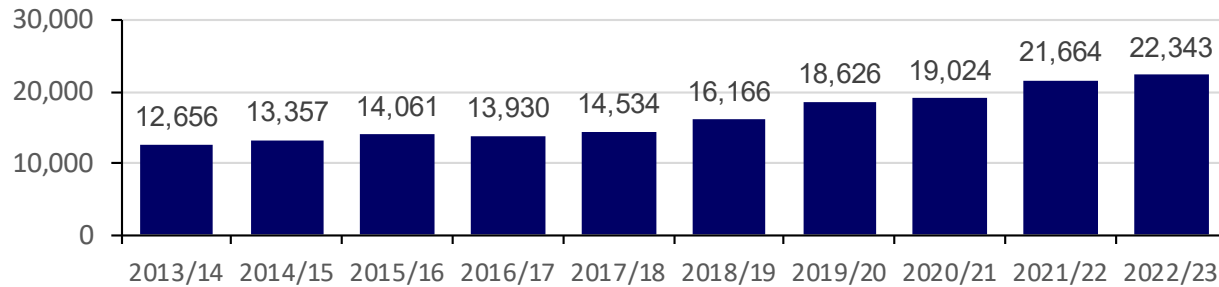
Figure 7: Hate crime incidents, 2013/14 to 2022/23



From 2013/14 to 2016/17, sectarian crimes accounted for the largest number of crimes recorded under any of the hate motivation strands. In 2017/18, this was overtaken by crimes motivated by race. In recent years, racially motivated hate crime has accounted for the largest number of crimes, this is with the exception of 2019/20 and most recent figures for 2022/23, where a higher number of sectarian crimes have once again been recorded. Despite being low in numbers, other hate motivated crimes have also increased over the last decade, including a rise in crimes motivated by sexual orientation, faith/religion and other types of hate crime, which includes those motivated by disability and gender identity.

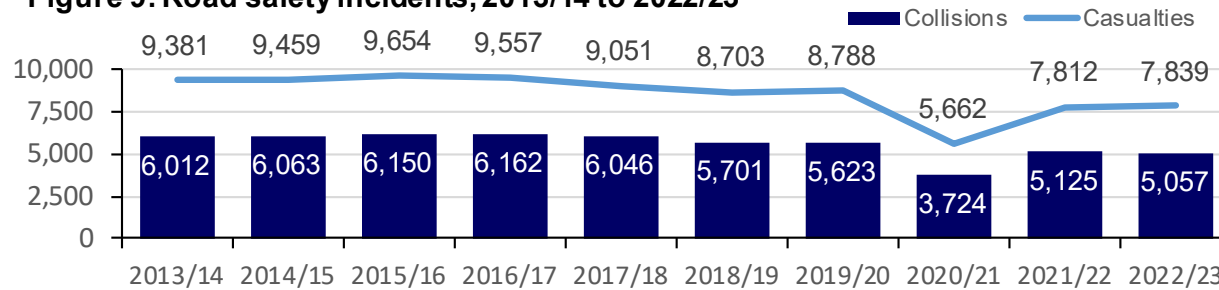
2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

Figure 8: Domestic abuse incidents, 2013/14 to 2022/23



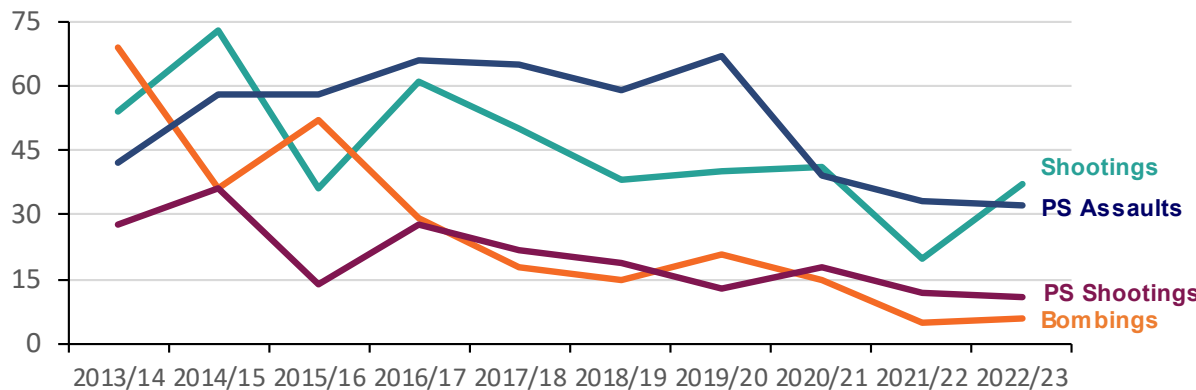
Domestic abuse crimes have shown an increasing trend over the years. The latest figure of 22,343 is the highest since the data series began and is almost double that of the level recorded ten years ago in 2013/14. The proportion of crimes with a domestic abuse motivation has also increased with these representing a fifth of all crimes in 2022/23 compared with 8.3% of crimes in 2004/05.

Figure 9: Road safety incidents, 2013/14 to 2022/23



The number of injury collisions recorded by PSNI from 2013/14 to 2017/18 was fairly consistent at around 6,000 and ranging around 9,000-9,500 casualties per year during this time. In 2018/19 and 2019/20 the number of collisions and casualties fell slightly and in 2020/21, in line with Covid-19 restrictions, both fell to the lowest levels recorded. The last 2 years have seen numbers increase but figures have not reached pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 10: Security incidents, 2013/14 to 2022/23



There were 37 shootings recorded in 2022/23; this is 17 more than in the previous year but half that of the 73 which were recorded in 2014/15. The number of bombing incidents over the past 5 years (62) has decreased by over two thirds (70%) compared to the number that occurred during the previous 5 years (204 incidents).

In terms of paramilitary-style (PS) attacks, there were 11 casualties of PS shootings during 2022/23 which is the lowest number since 2007/08 when there were 7 shootings. Similarly, the 32 casualties of PS assaults in 22/23 was the lowest recorded since 83/84.

2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

As with all data, there are strengths and limitations of police recorded crime statistics. The most obvious limitation is that these do not include crimes that have not been reported to police. To provide a more comprehensive picture, there are additional measures that can be used to complement this. One such measure, the NI Safe Community Survey, details respondents experiences of crime. This may include crimes not reported to police, crimes against business and 'against the state' (e.g. possession of drugs which has no immediate victim).

2.2 Experience of Crime

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS) 2022/23, DoJ

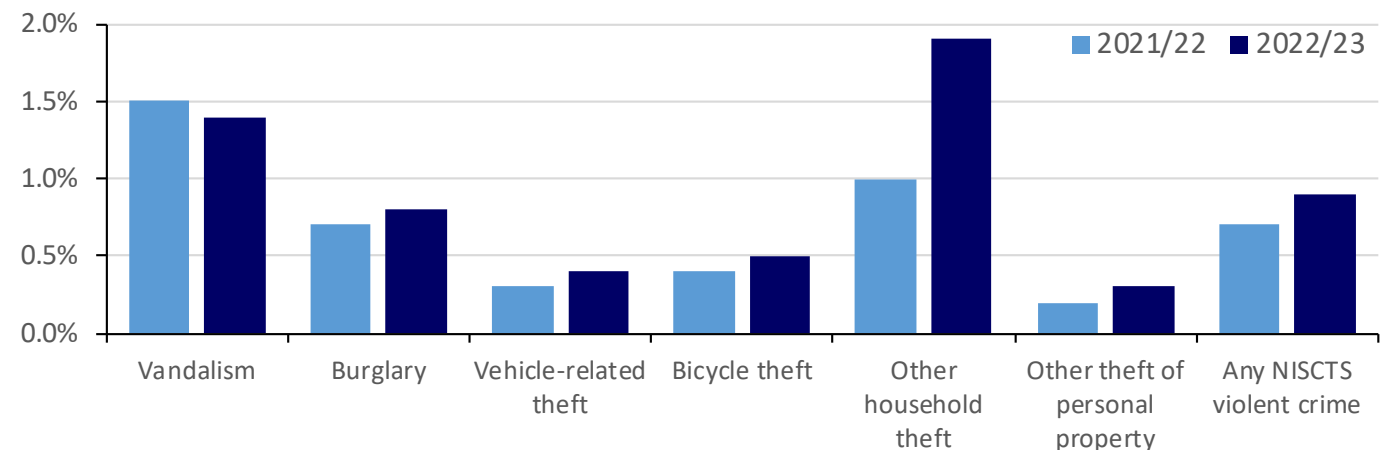
Latest findings estimate 5.1% of respondents were victims of at least one NISCTS crime over 12 months prior; a significant increase from 3.8% for 2021/22. An estimated 80,000 incidents occurred during this 12 month period. In terms of the proportion who had been victim(s) of crime, 4.3% had been a victim of any household crime and 1.3% of any personal crime; again following a similar pattern to the previous cohort. The majority of victims (72%) were a victim once 12 months prior, 14% were victimised twice, and 13% experienced three or more crimes.



In comparison with police-recorded crime figures during the same time:

- NISCTS found a statistically significant increase in household theft, similar to the increase seen in PSNI recorded crime figures for theft in a dwelling
- NISCTS indicated no change in vandalism, similar to police-recorded crime figures for criminal damage (the nearest equivalent) which have showed little change in recent years
- PSNI recorded VAP offences have increased by more than one quarter over the last two years, while the proportion of NISCTS respondents who were victims of (more narrowly focused) violent crimes has also significantly increased over the last two years.

Figure 11: Proportion of NISCTS respondents who reported being victims of recorded crime types



2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

2.3 Reoffending

Source: Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2020/21 Cohort), DoJ

In terms of who offends, it has been suggested that (notwithstanding the impact of Covid-19) specific cohorts of prolific offenders may be disproportionately reoffending. Over the last decade, there has been a significant decrease in the annual number of people released from custody or receiving a non-custodial disposal, however this has been decreasing at a slower rate over the last five years. A similar pattern can be seen in the numbers reoffending, but this is decreasing at a smaller rate than the overall cohort, resulting in a higher proportion of individuals reoffending (Figure 12).

In terms of characteristics of those who reoffend:

- Almost half of those who reoffend do so within three months of release from custody or receipt of non-custodial disposal; this pattern has remained consistent over the last five years
- One-fifth (20.1%) of males and 13.1% of females reoffended
- Males aged 17-29 had the highest reoffending rates
- Those convicted of burglary, robbery or criminal damage were most likely to reoffend
- Within one year, adults who reoffended committed an average of 3 reoffences, while youths committed an average of 5 reoffences¹

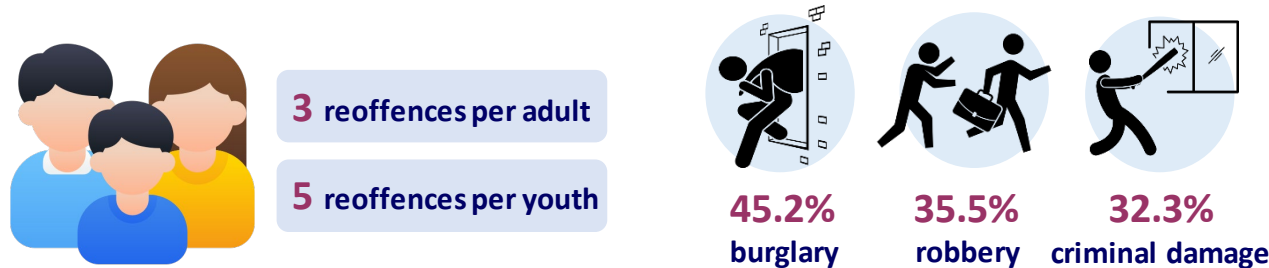


Figure 12: Overall reoffending trends, 2010/11 to 2020/21

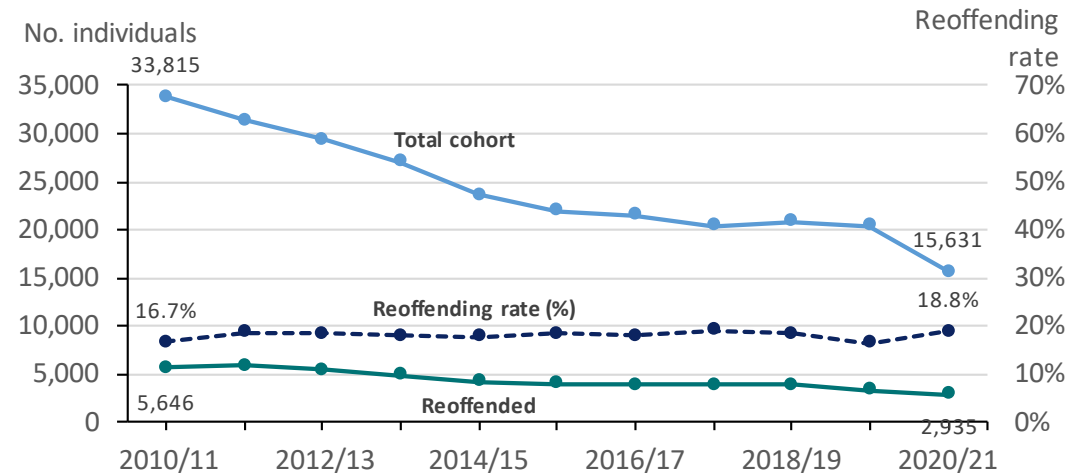
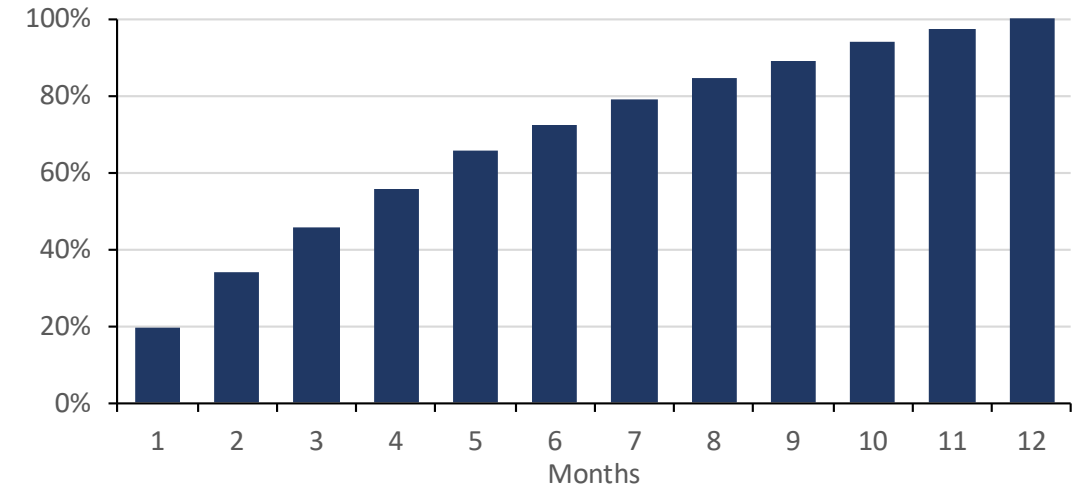


Figure 13: Reoffending rate by length of time until first reoffence, 2020/21



1. It should be noted that adults make up 95.5% of the overall cohort (14,923 individuals) and youths make up the remaining 4.5% (708).

2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

2.4 Gender-Based Violence

Source: Northern Ireland Life & Times Survey (NILT) 2022, ARK
 As part of the strategy to end violence against women and girls, a NILT module was commissioned by the Executive Office (TEO) to ask respondents about their experience(s) of violence in Northern Ireland.

On surveying 1,182 adults, findings indicated that:

- More than one in five respondents (22%) had experienced at least one type of violence
- Psychological violence was the most experienced type of violence (16%)
- One in ten females (11%) and one in 50 males (2%) had experienced sexual violence
- Those aged 18-39 experienced more violence than older age groups; one in four (25%) had experienced psychological violence and almost one in five (18%) online violence
- Catholics and Protestants experienced less violence than those from other religions

Table 1: Proportion who experienced types of violence over the last five years by demographics (%), 2022

Demographic	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Psychological violence	Online violence	Economic violence
Gender: Male	8%	2%	12%	8%	3%
Gender: Female	10%	11%	20%	10%	3%
Age: 18 to 39	14%	10%	25%	18%	3%
Age: 40 to 49	5%	5%	14%	6%	4%
Age: 50 to 59	10%	4%	13%	4%	3%
Age: 60 and over	3%	3%	7%	3%	3%
Religion: Catholic	8%	5%	15%	8%	3%
Religion: Protestant	7%	4%	10%	7%	2%
Religion: Other	12%	9%	23%	13%	4%
Overall	9%	6%	16%	9%	3%

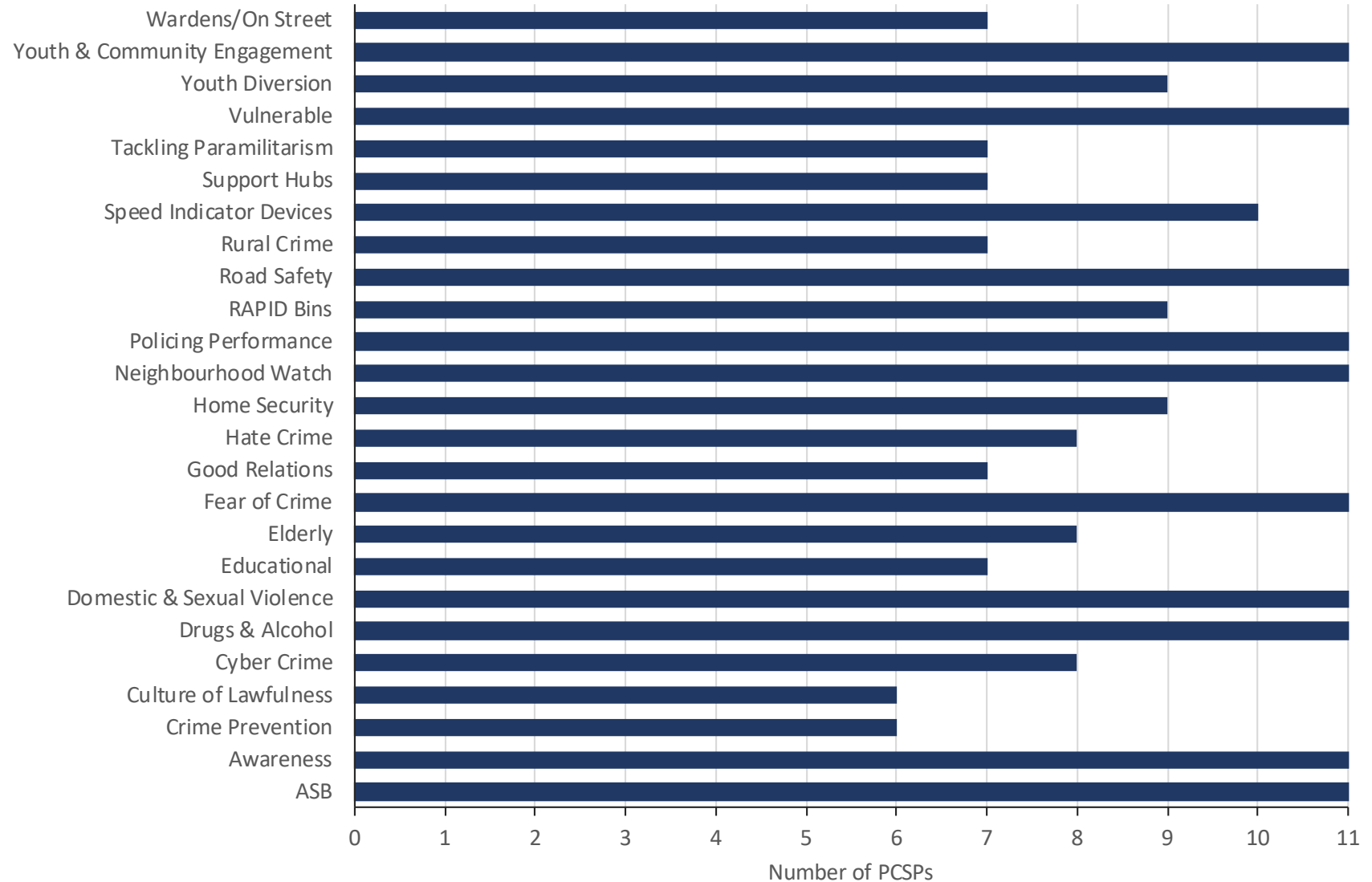
2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

2.5 Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)

Source: PCSP Annual Effectiveness Report, 2022-2023

Policing & Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) carry out ongoing work to help address various issues impacting upon community safety in Northern Ireland. As part of this, each of the 11 local PCSPs have examined the underlying causes of community safety issues within their area, such as deprivation, poverty, health issues, unemployment and education inequalities, as well as social and economic challenges. This has helped them identify key thematic areas for delivery, each relating to community safety issues within their local area. A number of these themes are widespread across Northern Ireland. The chart to the right details all issues impacting more than half of PCSPs across NI. Widespread themes across all PCSPs include anti-social behaviour, awareness of PCSPs, drugs and alcohol, domestic and sexual violence, fear or crime, neighbourhood watch, policing performance, road safety, vulnerable individuals and youth and community engagement.

Figure 19: PCSP thematic areas, 2022/23



2 Prevalence of Community Safety Issues

2.6 Prevalence Summary

CRIME TYPE



- There appears to be a general increase in crime, particularly violent crime; this is a consistent trend across data sources.
- PSNI reported crime figures indicate that acquisitive crime, though generally decreasing, remains the second highest crime type, while NISCTS experiences of household theft have significantly increased in recent years. This ties with the finding that acquisitive crimes generally have the highest reoffending rates alongside criminal damage.
- There have also been large increases in police recorded drug-related and sexual offences over the last decade. In line with this, reported domestic abuse has almost doubled.
- Consideration should be given here to police insight that suggests the increase in drug offences may be a driving factor for increases in other crime types.

MOTIVATING FACTORS



- Sectarianism and race consistently remain the biggest motivating factors for hate crime, with both increasing in the last five years.
- Hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation are also on the rise and have reached their highest levels over the last few years.
- However, the security situation appears to have improved with paramilitary-style attacks showing an overall decrease.
- There has also been a general decrease in anti-social behaviour incidents.

EXPERIENCE OF CRIME



- According to NISCTS, around five in 100 people reported being a victim of crime over the last 12 months.
- In line with police-reported crime trends, the most common types of crime experienced were household theft, vandalism and burglary.
- Similarly, in line with rising police-recorded violent crime, more than one in five NILT respondents reported experiencing at least one type of violent crime, with psychological violence most common.
- One in ten females reported experiencing sexual violence (compared with one in 50 males).
- Younger age groups were more likely to have been victims of violence, as were those from other religions compared with Protestants and Catholics.

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY SAFETY ISSUES



- Similar trends are apparent between police-recorded crime and reported experiences of crime.
- There is already an awareness for a number of these key themes, with PCSPs working to address issues such as anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic and sexual violence.
- Further consideration could be given to specific cohorts who may be vulnerable to these specific crime types.

3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues

This section looks at community sentiment towards safety issues; in other words, people's perceptions of crime and how safe they feel living in their local area. Information has been collated from sources including NILT, Policing Board (NIPB), TEO and Housing Executive (NIHE). For further information see '06 Data Sources'.

3.1 Perceptions of Crime

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey (NISCTS) 2022/23, DoJ

As well as detailing experiences of crime, the NISCTS also asks respondents questions regarding their perceptions of crime. The latest findings show almost three-fifths of respondents (59%) felt that crime has increased in NI, while just under one-third (31%) felt crime levels remained unchanged (Figure 20). Respondents were more positive in their perceptions of crime within their local area, with around one-fifth (22%) feeling like this had increased and under two-thirds (64%) who felt no change.

Approximately 4% of respondents worried about crime overall (Figure 22). Just under one in ten (8%) expressed a high level of worry about violent crime and 7% expressed worry about burglary and walking alone at night. Of vehicle owners, 5% were very worried about becoming a victim of car crime. With regards to personal safety, respondents were more likely to feel very unsafe when walking alone at night than being home alone at night (1%). The vast majority of respondents (76%) felt fear of crime had a minimal effect on their quality of life, with one-fifth (20%) reporting it had a moderate effect. A small proportion of respondents (3%) felt fear of crime greatly impacted their quality of life.

Figure 20: Perception of crime over the last two years, 2022/23

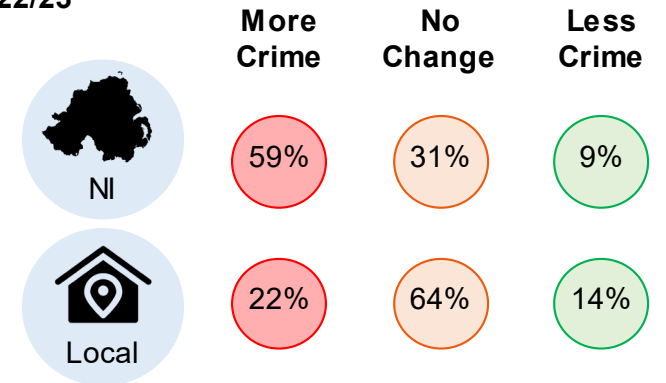


Figure 21: Proportion who perceive different types of anti-social behaviour as a big problem, 2022/23

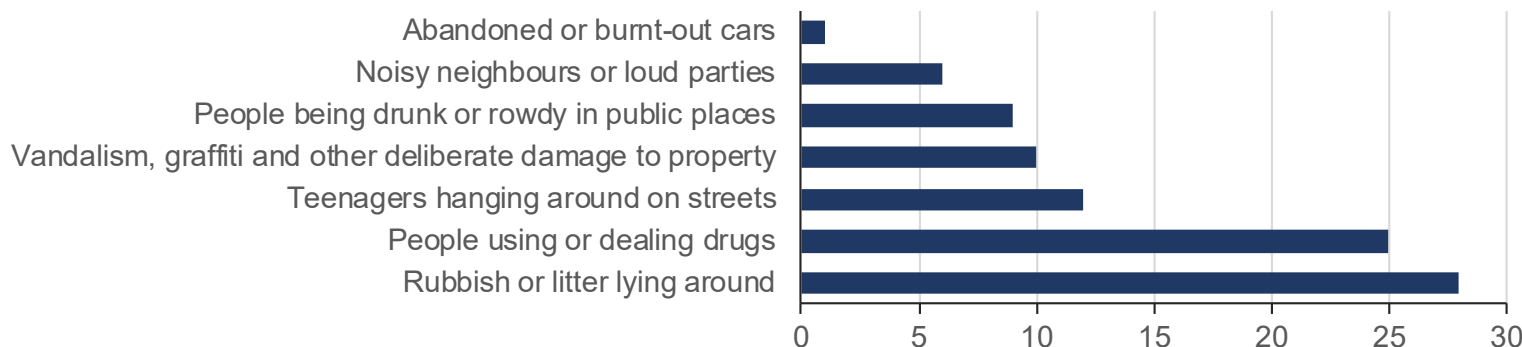
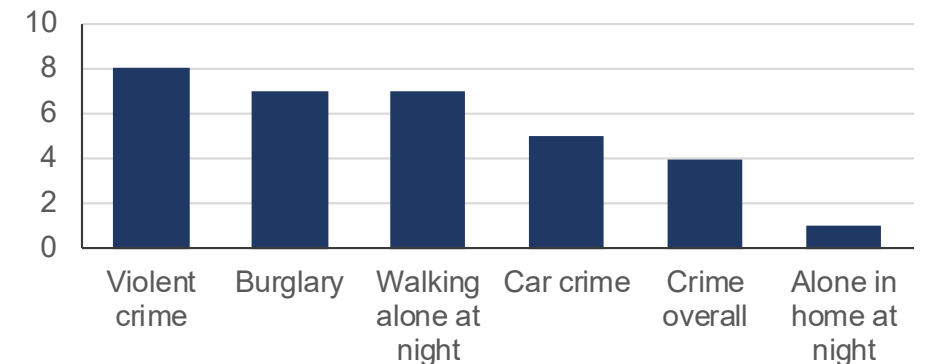


Figure 22: Proportion worried about community safety issues, 2022/23



3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues

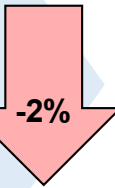
3.2 Perceptions of Paramilitarism

Source: Northern Ireland Life & Times Survey (NILT) 2022, ARK

The Cross-Executive Programme for tackling paramilitarism has an overall outcome of 'safer communities, resilient to paramilitarism, criminality and coercive control'. To measure the impact of the programme upon this outcome, NILT has been commissioned annually to monitor public perceptions of and attitudes towards paramilitary influence and activity in Northern Ireland; this includes questions relevant to respondents perceptions of safety within their local areas. Most recent findings are detailed below alongside trend information highlighting significant changes in responses over the last five years¹. Five areas have seen no significant changes over the last five years, while four areas have significantly worsened.

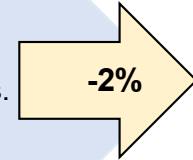
95% felt safe living in their area

Those aged 18 to 34 were less likely to feel safe than older ages. Protestants, those from rural areas and those in neither Loyalist nor Republican areas were more likely to feel safe.



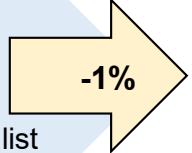
55% felt people in their area were confident reporting crime and ASB to police

This was lower for 18 to 34 year olds than over 65's. It was also lower for Catholics, those living in urban areas and those in mainly Republican areas.



17% felt there was a lot of crime, drugs and ASB among young people in their area

Those aged 18 to 34 and those in urban areas were more likely to agree with this. People in neither Loyalist nor Republican areas were less likely too agree.



40% believe PSNI keep their area safe

There was lower agreement from Catholics than Protestants and from those living in mainly Republican areas.



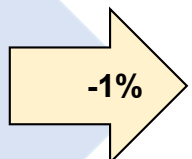
52% said people in their area felt protected by the law and justice system

Those aged 65+ were more likely to agree. Catholics and those in mainly Republican areas felt less protected than Protestants and those in mainly Loyalist areas.



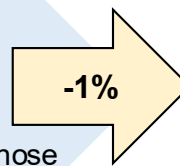
13% believed paramilitary groups had a controlling influence in their area

Those aged 18 to 34, those in urban areas, those in mainly Loyalist areas and those with a religion other than Catholic or Protestant were more likely to agree.



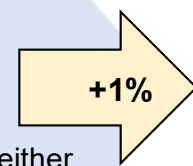
82% felt people in their area generally abide by the law

Agreement was higher for 65 and over, Protestants, those from rural areas and those in neither Loyalist nor Republican areas.



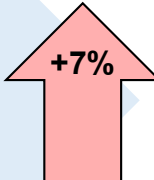
65% agreed there were low levels of crime, drugs and ASB in their area

Females, 18 to 34 year olds, Catholics and those in urban areas were less likely to agree. Those from neither Loyalist nor Republican areas were more likely to agree.



29% agreed paramilitaries contribute to crime, drug dealing and ASB in their area

Males, those in urban areas, those in mainly Loyalist areas and those with a religion other than Catholic or Protestant were more likely to agree with this.



1. Arrows indicate significant changes between 2017 baseline figures and most recent figures for 2022. The colour reflects the nature of the change (yellow = no significant change, red = negative change).

3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues

3.3 Community Safety in Local Areas

Source: Northern Ireland Policing Plan Survey 2023, Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB)

The NIPB is an independent public body that oversees policing in NI to ensure it is effective and efficient. The Board sets targets and monitors how well PSNI performs against them. The main outcomes for policing to deliver are (i) we have a safe community, (ii) we have confidence in policing, and (iii) we have engaged and supportive communities. The Policing Plan Survey is used to monitor outcomes and explore public perceptions of policing and engagement with the community. Regarding feelings towards community safety, the survey found:



93% felt safe in their local community

- Males were more likely to feel safe (95%) than females (92%)
- Victims of a crime were three times more likely to feel unsafe (18%) than non-victims (6%)
- Those in private rented (9%) or social housing (12%) were more likely to feel unsafe than home owners (6%)



77% felt PSNI were effective in keeping their community safe

- Almost four out of five 17-24 year olds (79%) felt PSNI kept their community safe; this rose to 84% for aged 75+
- Victims of crime were significantly more likely to think PSNI were ineffective at keeping their community safe (31%) compared to those who had not been a victim of crime (18%)



41% were concerned about crime in their local area

- Concern generally rose with age, with aged 17-24 least concerned (30%) and 45-64 most concerned (49%)
- Those with a disability were more likely to be concerned about crime (51%) than those without a disability (39%)
- Recent victims of crime were more concerned (52%) than those who had not been victims (40%)

3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues



85% felt safe going to their local town centre

- Males (90%) were more likely to feel safe than females (81%)
- Victims of a crime were nearly twice as likely to feel unsafe in their town centre (23%) than non-victims (13%)
- Those living in the most deprived quintile were most likely to feel unsafe



55% thought police weren't visible in their area

- Those aged 17 to 24 (65%) were twice as likely to think police were visible compared to those aged 65 to 74 (35%)
- Unionists were more likely to think police were not visible or not very visible (58%) compared to Nationalists (52%)
- Over half those in rented or social housing thought police were visible (54%) compared with home owners (41%)



46% were satisfied with levels of police patrols in their area

- Those who had been victims of crime within the last two years were more likely to be dissatisfied with the level of police patrols (34%) in their area than those who had not been victims (25%)
- Catholics (49%) were most satisfied with police patrols compared with Protestants (44%) and all others (41%)

Reasons for town centre feeling less safe: (in descending order of frequency)

- Drugs
- Anti-social behaviour:
 - Drunk and rowdy people
 - Alcohol abuse
 - Teenagers hanging around
 - Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage
- Hate crime
- Lack of police presence
- People not from the area
- Burglary/muggings and crime
- Fighting/violence
- Harassment/fear of being attacked
- Homelessness
- Murders
- Paramilitaries
- Mental health
- Road safety

3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues

3.4 Key Community Safety Issues

Source: Community Policing Survey 2023, Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB)

To assist in informing the Policing Plan, and add to the information gathered by the Policing Plan Survey, NIPB undertook an additional Community Policing Survey to understand more about the experiences of individuals within their community and evaluate the impact of partnership working between PSNI and local communities. A total of 269 responses were received from individuals responding on behalf of themselves, neighbourhood/community groups, charity organisations, schools/colleges and local businesses. As Figure 23 shows, these individuals and organisations throughout local communities were found to be working with PSNI in relation to a number of key issues. The most common of these was anti-social behaviour (17%), followed by drugs (including use, addiction and dealing) (14%) and traffic issues (10%). Together, domestic abuse, sexual abuse/violence and violence against women and girls also made up 16% of responses.

Of the small number who responded 'other' (3%), an additional number of key issues were highlighted. The most common 'other' issues identified included:

- Sectarianism/paramilitarism,
- Road safety, and
- Availability and visibility of police in local areas.

Respondents were asked the status of these issues following local partnership working with PSNI; two in ten felt issues had improved, while six in ten felt they were no better than before or recurring (Figure 24).

Figure 23: Key issues respondents are involved in alongside PSNI (%), 2023

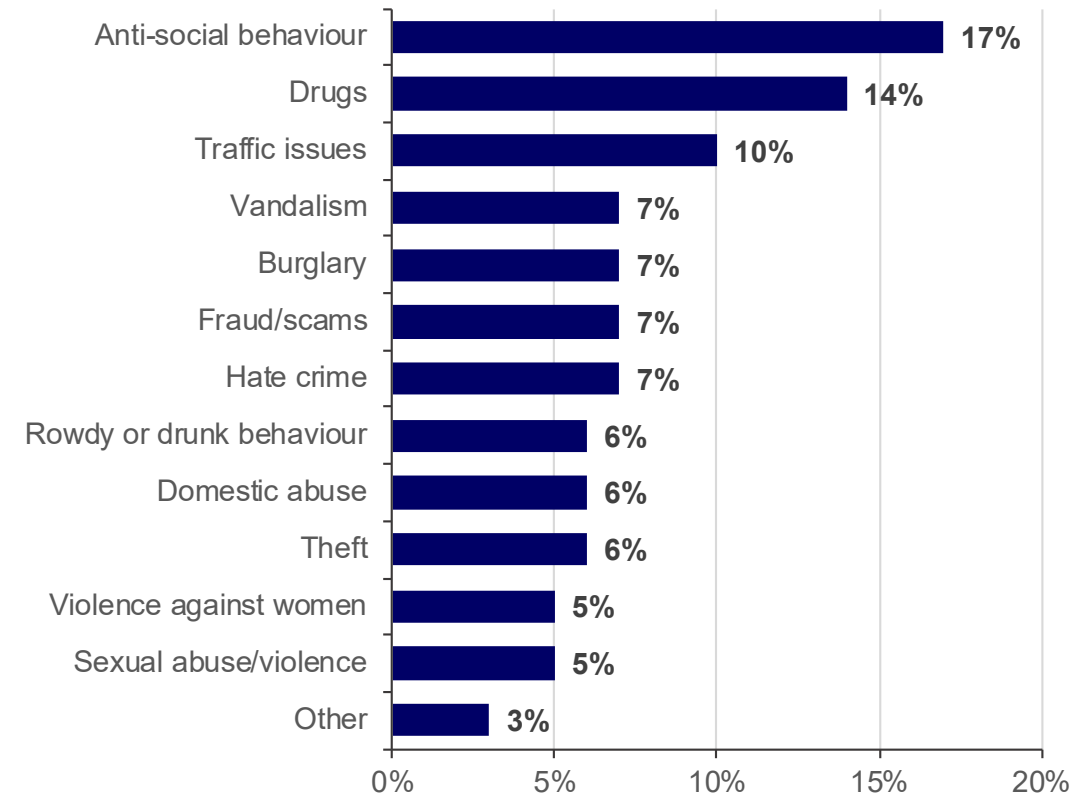
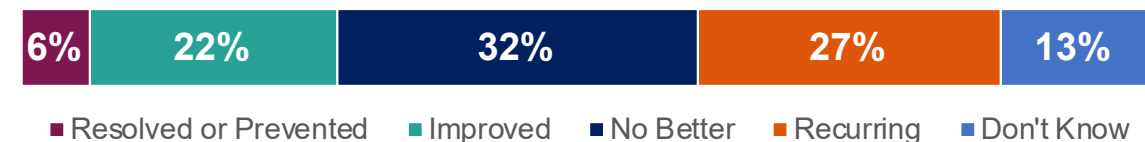


Figure 24: Status of key issues, 2023



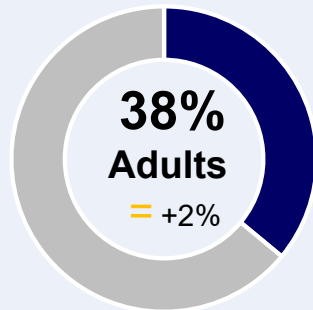
3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues

3.5 Community Relations

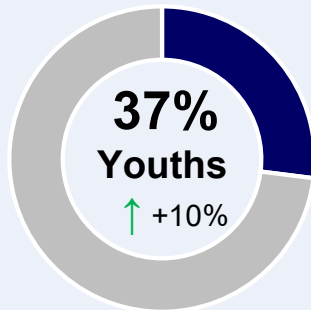
Source: Good Relations Indicators 2022, TEO

The Good Relations strategy was published by the NI Executive in May 2013 and set out a range of actions and commitments to build a united community and achieve change against four key strategic priorities. These were (i) our children and young people, (ii) our shared community, (iii) our safe community, and (iv) our cultural expression. A number of indicators were developed to monitor progress against these priorities, some of which have relevance in relation to community safety. The indicators show that:

- There is a significant increase in the number of youths who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now than they were five years ago
- Almost three quarters (74%) said they would prefer a mixed religion neighbourhood
- Around nine in ten people feel that local leisure centres, libraries, parks and shopping centres are shared and open spaces
- Over two-fifths (43%) see town centres as safe and welcoming places for people from all walks of life; this is a significant decrease of 7% from the previous year
- Approximately 4 out of 5 adults said they felt 'very' or 'quite' safe going to events in Protestant and Catholic Secondary Schools; over three in five (64%) felt safe going to an event in a GAA club, while just over half (51%) felt safe going to events held in an Orange Hall



Felt relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now than they were five years ago



Proportion who agreed that local facilities were 'shared and open' to both Catholics and Protestants:



Leisure Centres
90%



Parks
89%



Libraries
93%



Shopping Centres
94%

Proportion who felt safe attending events in these places:

64%

GAA Club

80%

Protestant Secondary School

51%

Orange Hall

81%

Catholic Secondary School

3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues

3.6 Area Satisfaction

Source: Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) 2021, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)

The CTOS is the main way NIHE monitors customer satisfaction and identifies areas for improvement. The survey is also used to monitor wider housing issues, some of which relate to local safety. Findings show:

- Satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live increased with age; approximately eight in ten of those aged 16 to 44 were satisfied, with this increasing to nine in ten for those aged of 45 and over (Figure 25).
- Almost three quarters felt anti-social behaviour wasn't a problem in their area; however nearly one-fifth felt it was a minor problem (18.1%) and almost one in ten (7.7%) thought it was a major problem.
- Of those who felt ASB was a problem, nearly three quarters (73.6%) said this had remained the same or worsened over the last 12 months, while 21.5% thought it had lessened and 4.9% didn't know. Additionally, 15.7% had personally experienced or witnessed at least one incident of ASB in their area.
- The main behaviours experienced were alcohol abuse, criminal damage, drug abuse, noisy neighbours and public nuisance. Of those who experienced ASB, two fifths (43.0%) did not take action, 32.1% contacted the police, and 25.6% contacted the Housing Executive.

Figure 25: Proportion satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, 2021

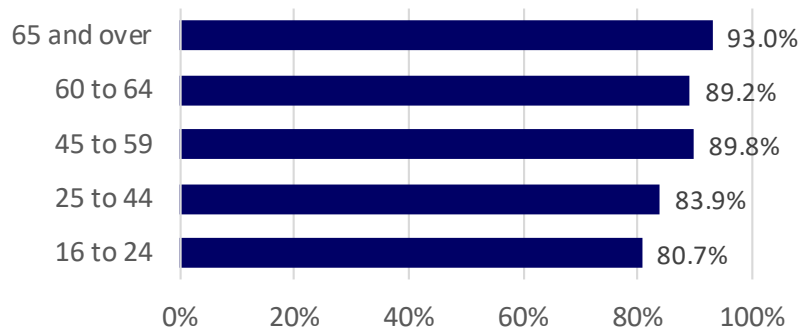


Figure 26: ASB in estate/area, 2021

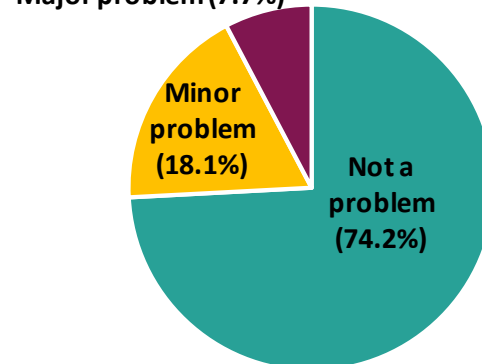
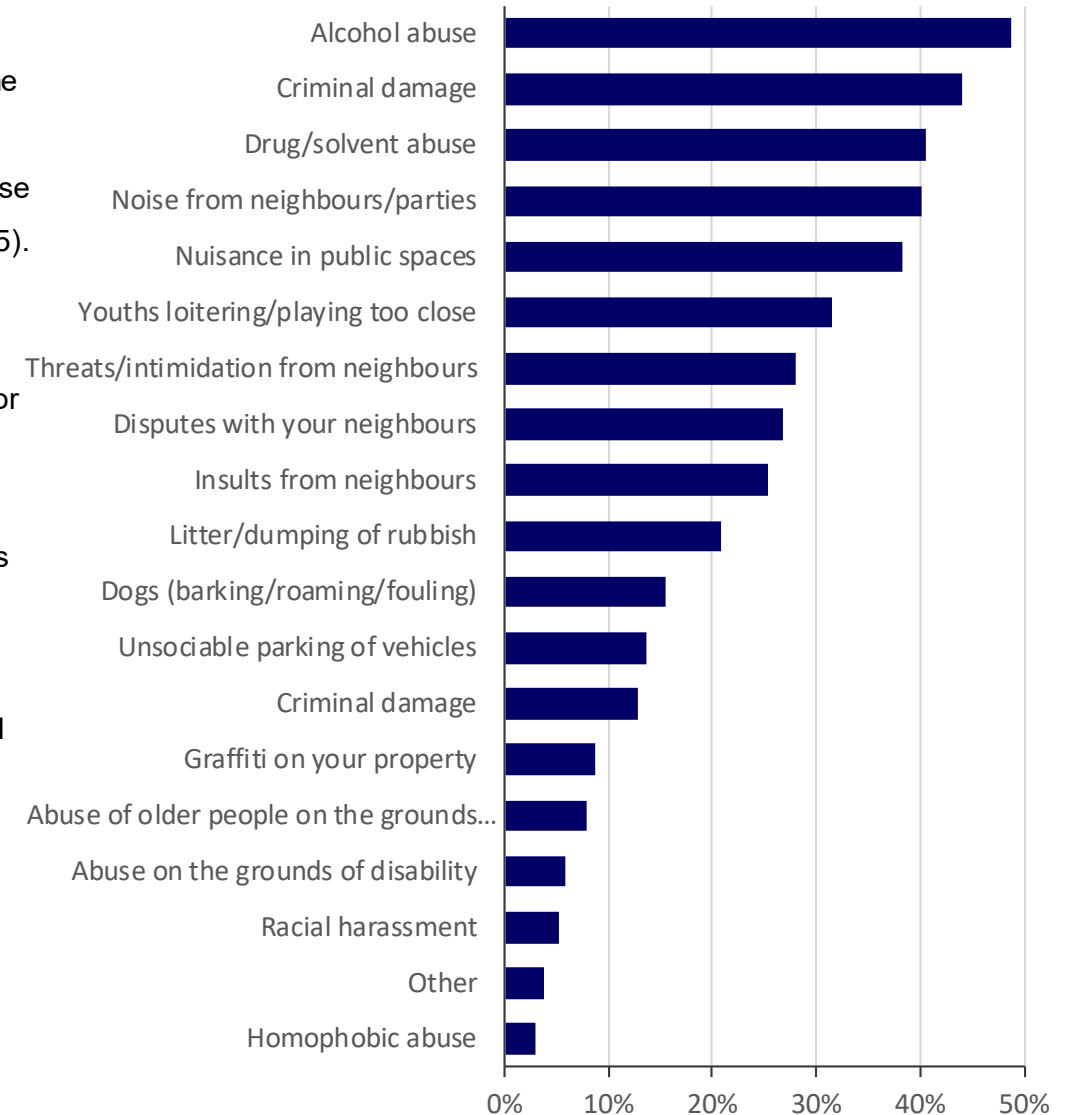


Figure 27: Anti-social behaviours experienced in estate/area, 2021



3 Community Sentiment Towards Safety Issues

3.7 Sentiment Summary

PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME



- According to NISCTS, people generally feel there is more crime across NI as a whole, but this has not necessarily increased in local areas.
- Around 4% are worried about crime; of those who are worried, most worry about violent crime and burglary, followed by car crime and walking alone at night.
- This community sentiment ties in with reported experiences of crime and types of crime experienced.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR



- People feel the biggest issues within their local areas are rubbish or litter lying around and people using or dealing drugs.
- Separately, one-quarter of CTOS respondents, in NIHE housing, felt anti-social behaviour was an issue within their area or estate.
- In line with previous findings, the most common issues experienced were alcohol abuse, criminal damage, drug abuse, noisy neighbours and public nuisance.
- It should be noted that two-fifths of these individuals said they did not take any action on ASB-related issues.
- Similar to PCSP initiatives, respondents to NIPB's Community Policing Survey report working with police to help address issues such as ASB, domestic and sexual abuse, drugs and traffic issues.

FEELINGS OF SAFETY



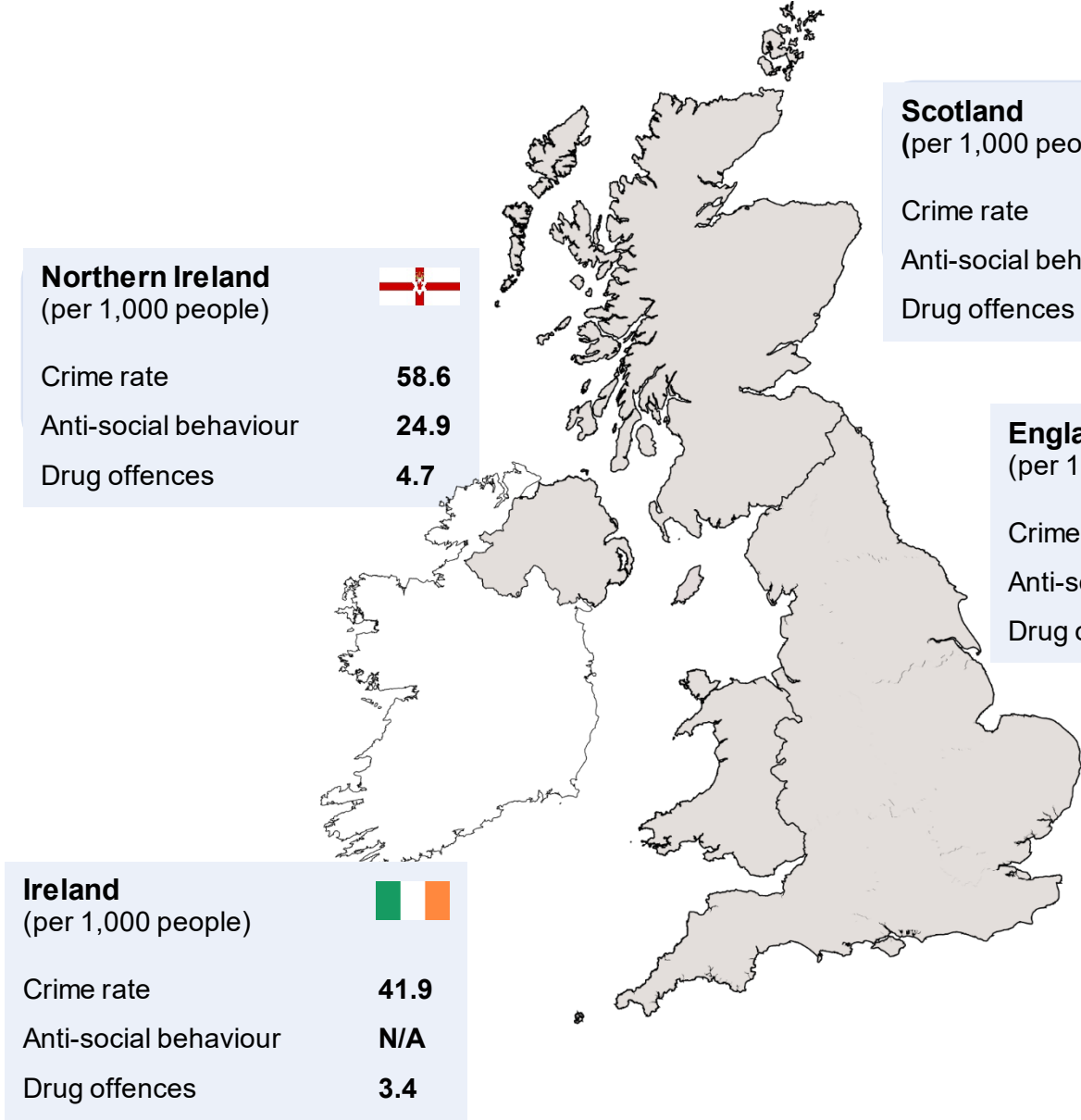
- While feelings of safety generally remain high, NILT found a significant decrease in people who feel safe living in their local area.
- This coincides with a decrease in people who feel PSNI keeps their area safe and who feel protected by the law and justice system.
- This also coincides with a significant increase in those who feel paramilitaries are contributing to crime, drugs and ASB in their area.
- However, nearly three-quarters of NISCTS respondents said fear of crime had minimal impact on their quality of life.

SAFE AND OPEN SPACES



- More than 4 in 5 people (85%) felt safe going into their local town centre (Policing Plan Survey).
- Contrastingly, Good Relations noted over two-fifths (43%) felt town centres were safe and welcoming places for people from all walks of life; a significant decrease from previous years.
- In terms of relations, significantly fewer adults and youths felt relations between Protestants and Catholics had improved over the last five years.
- However, approximately 9 out of 10 people felt leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres were shared and open to both sides of the community.

4 Community Safety in Other Jurisdictions



Using published recorded crime rates, alongside separate population estimates for each jurisdiction, crime, ASB and drug offence rates have been calculated per 1,000 people as an estimate of community safety issues across the UK and Ireland. Please note some figures are based on approximations (Table 1) and there may be differences in recording of offences across jurisdictions, therefore care should be taken when interpreting trends. Information on data sources can be found in Section 6.

Estimates for 2022/23 suggest England & Wales have the highest crime rates per 1,000 people (93.6), followed by Northern Ireland (58.6), Scotland (52.8) and Ireland (41.9). NI appears to have higher rates of anti-social behavior (24.9), followed by England & Wales (16.8) and Scotland (9.1). No published ASB figures were available for Ireland. Finally, Scotland (4.8) and NI (4.7) had a similar rates of recorded drug offences while Ireland and England & Wales had lower rates of 3.4 and 3.0 respectively.

Table 2: Recorded crime by country in the United Kingdom & Republic of Ireland, 2022/23

Jurisdiction	Population	Recorded Crime ¹	ASB	Drugs
England & Wales	59,641,829	5,584,888	1,000,000(approx.)	177,994
Scotland	5,479,900	289,352	50,094	26,443
Northern Ireland	1,904,563	111,571	47,301	9,013
Ireland	5,149,139	215,500	N/A	17,683

1. Excluding fraud and computer misuse

5 Community Safety Summary

There appears to be a general increase in crime, particularly in relation to violent crime



Acquisitive crime also remains an issue (particularly household theft and burglary); this links with reported experiences of crime and reoffending trends



There is an increasing prevalence of drug-related, domestic and sexual offences; PSNI suggest increases in drug offences may be a driving factor for other crime types



Drug and anti-social behaviour rates appear to be among the highest in the UK and Ireland



Sectarianism and race remain the highest motivating factors for crimes



Younger age groups are more likely to have been victims of violent crime, as are those from other religions when compared with Protestants and Catholics



Around 4% of people are worried about crime, particularly violent crime, burglary, car crime and walking alone at night



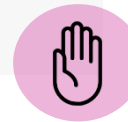
The biggest issues in terms of ASB are littering, drugs and alcohol, criminal damage and public nuisance; two-fifths do not take action on ASB issues



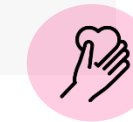
There has been a significant decrease in people who feel safe living in their area, coinciding with decreasing feelings of protection from the PSNI and justice system



An increasing number of people feel paramilitaries are contributing to crime, drugs and ASB in their local area



Four in five feel safe going into their local town centre, while nine in ten feel local leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres are shared and open spaces



PCSPs and local communities are already working to address some of the community safety issues highlighted here



6 Data Sources

Source	Cohort	Published by	Link ¹
Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland	2020/21	Department of Justice	Adult and Youth Reoffending in Northern Ireland (2020/21 Cohort) Department of Justice (justice-ni.gov.uk) (opens in a new window)
Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents Recorded	2023	Police Service of Northern Ireland	Anti-Social Behaviour Statistics PSNI (opens in a new window)
Census of Population	2022	Central Statistics Office	Census of Population 2022 - Summary Results - CSO - Central Statistics Office/ (opens in a new window)
Community Policing Survey	2023	Northern Ireland Policing Board	Community Policing Survey 2023 Northern Ireland Policing Board (nipolicingboard.org.uk) (opens in a new window)
Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey	2021	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	The Housing Executive - Attitudes to landlord services (nihe.gov.uk)(opens in a new window)
Crime in England & Wales	2022/23	Office for National Statistics	Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)(opens in a new window)
Good Relations Indicators	2022	The Executive Office	Good Relations Indicators 2022 Report The Executive Office (executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)(opens in a new window)
Mid-Year Population Estimates UK	2021	Office for National Statistics	Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)(opens in a new window)
Northern Ireland Life & Times Survey	2022	ARK	Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey: 2022 (ark.ac.uk)(opens in a new window)/
Northern Ireland Policing Plan Survey	2023	Northern Ireland Policing Board	Policing Plan Survey Northern Ireland Policing Board (nipolicingboard.org.uk)(opens in a new window)
Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey	2022/23	Department of Justice	Findings from the Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey Department of Justice (justice-ni.gov.uk)(opens in a new window)
PCSP Annual Effectiveness Report	2022/23	Department of Justice	PCSP Annual Effectiveness Reports Department of Justice (justice-ni.gov.uk)(opens in a new window)
Recorded Crime in Scotland	2022/23	Police Scotland	Recorded crime in Scotland - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)/(opens in a new window)
Recorded Crime Incidents	2022/23	Central Statistics Office	Recorded Crime Q2 2023 - Central Statistics Office (opens in a new window)
Trends in Police Recorded Crime	2022/23	Police Service of Northern Ireland	Police Recorded Crime Statistics PSNI (opens in a new window)

1. Links accurate at time of publication