

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE, PCSPs AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**REPORT BASED ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
MODULE OF THE JANUARY 2015 OMNIBUS SURVEY**

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THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Northern Ireland Policing Board is an independent public body which oversees policing in Northern Ireland. It was set up on 4 November 2001 as a result of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. The Policing Board operates at arms length from Government and has strong independent powers to carry out its work. The Board consists of 19 Members; 10 Political Members from the Northern Ireland Assembly and 9 Independent Members appointed by the Minister of Justice.

The main role of the Board is to ensure that the Police Service of Northern Ireland is effective and efficient. The Board holds the Chief Constable to account for all his actions and those of his staff. This means that the Chief Constable must answer to the Board on any aspect of policing in Northern Ireland. However, the Policing Board cannot, and does not, direct or control the Chief Constable. He has the right to take independent policing decisions based only on the need to uphold law and order which is called operational responsibility. But he must in turn answer for his actions to the Policing Board. This process is what effective accountability is all about.

The Board must also keep itself informed as to:

- Trends and patterns in recruitment to the police and the police support staff; and
- The extent to which membership of the police and support staff is representative of the community in Northern Ireland;

It must also assess the effectiveness of measures taken to secure that the membership of the police service is representative of the community.

The Board, acting on behalf of the Joint Committee, which consists of representatives of the Department of Justice and the Board, assesses:

- The level of public satisfaction with the performance of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (DPCSPs).

In order to gauge public satisfaction and consider the views of the public on policing, the Board conducts a programme of consultation with and research of a range of groups and

organisations. The results of this consultation and research are published by the Policing Board to ensure openness and transparency.

January 2015 Omnibus Survey

The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is conducted several times each year by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and is designed to provide a snapshot of the behaviour, lifestyle and views of a representative sample of people in Northern Ireland. The survey comprises two distinct parts: core questions about the respondents and their individual circumstances, and a variety of mainly attitudinal questions commissioned by clients, which seek the views of the public on a range of issues, including policing.

The sample for this survey consisted of a random sample of addresses selected from the Land and Property Services Agency list of private addresses, the most up-to-date listing of private households in Northern Ireland. At each address, one person aged 16 or over was selected to participate in the survey. From an eligible sample of 1,861 households, 1,114 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 60%. Interviews were conducted between 5 January and 9 February 2015. Analyses by religion are based only on those 962 respondents who said they were either Catholic or Protestant. Respondents who refused to answer the religion question or who said they were a religion other than Catholic or Protestant are excluded from these analyses.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board uses Omnibus Survey results to assess the level of public satisfaction with the performance of the Police and of PCSPs and DPCSPs.

The following symbols are used in the accompanying results tables:

- Category not applicable – Cell is empty
- Category result less than 0.5% – Cell contains a zero (“0”)

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Statistical significance

Statistical significance tests have been carried out on the findings between the January 2014 and January 2015 Northern Ireland Omnibus Surveys. These tests are used to establish the degree of confidence with which we can infer the observed findings as an accurate reflection of the views of the population. In this publication, where differences have emerged as being statistically significant, this has been reported at the 5% ($p < 0.05$) level of probability (two-tailed). This means that, for any observed result that is found to be statistically significant, one can be 95% confident that this has not happened by chance. Figures in **bold** denote a statistically significant change between survey waves.

Summary of findings

Public Perceptions of the Police

- In January 2015, almost five in six respondents (84%) had some, a lot, or total confidence in the police's ability to provide a day-to-day policing service for everyone in Northern Ireland, a statistically significant decrease compared to the January 2014 finding of 89%.
- Just over two in five respondents (44%) were very/fairly satisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, a statistically significant decrease on the January 2014 finding of 52%.
- One in six (17%) thought that the overall standard of policing in their area had got worse, a statistically significant increase from the January 2014 finding of 12%

Public Perceptions of PCSPs

- In January 2015, under one in two respondents (45%) had heard of PCSPs, similar to the January 2014 finding of 46%
- In January 2015, almost two in five respondents (37%) who had heard of PCSPs felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area on a par with the January 2014 finding. There was a statistically significant increase for Protestant respondents (from 33% to 42%). However, there was a statistically significant decrease for Catholic respondents (from 45% to 32%).

Public Perceptions of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

- In January 2015, three in four respondents (75%) who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board is working at least adequately, similar to the January 2014 finding of 74% (Table 16). The percentage of respondents who thought that the Board is working poorly/very poorly increased from 12% in January 2014 to 17% in January 2015, a statistically significant increase. There were statistically significant increases for both Protestant and Catholic respondents (Protestants, from 13% to 18% and Catholics, from 11% to 16%).

PERFORMANCE OF THE POLICE

Q1. How do you rate the job the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) do in your area?

In January 2015, over two out of three respondents (67%) thought that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, similar to the January 2014 finding of 68% (Table 1). A similar proportion of Protestant and Catholic respondents thought that the PSNI were doing a very/fairly good job in their area. One in eight respondents (12%) rated the performance of their local police as very/fairly poor, on a par with the January 2014 findings.

Table 1: Performance of local police												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	54	64	59	64	67	65	65	69	68	66	67	67
Neither good nor poor	26	22	24	21	24	23	24	19	21	20	19	20
Very/fairly poor	19	14	16	14	9	10	9	12	10	11	13	12
Don't know/refusal	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1

Q2. Do you think that the PSNI does a good job or a poor job in Northern Ireland as a whole?

In January 2015, over seven out of ten respondents (72%) thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, similar to the January 2014 finding of 71% (Table 2). A higher proportion of Protestant respondents (73%) thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole than Catholic respondents (67%).

One in nine respondents (11%) thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly poor job in Northern Ireland as a whole, which is a statistically significant increase on the January 2014 finding of 8%. The Protestant respondent finding showed a statistically significant increase from 7% in January 2014 to 11% in January 2015.

Table 2: Performance of police in Northern Ireland as a whole												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	63	73	69	63	76	70	70	73	71	67	73	72
Neither good nor poor	23	16	19	24	15	20	20	19	20	21	15	17
Very/fairly poor	12	11	11	12	7	10	8	7	8	11	11	11
Don't know/refusal	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1

Q3. How satisfied are you that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole?

In January 2015, seven out of ten respondents (70%) were very/fairly satisfied that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole similar to the January 2014 finding (73%). The percentage of Protestant respondents who were very/fairly satisfied fell from 77% in January 2014 to 71% in January 2015, a statistically significant decrease.

Table 3: Satisfaction that PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	62	74	68	67	80	73	68	77	73	67	71	70
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21	17	19	19	15	17	21	13	17	19	15	17
Fairly/very dissatisfied	15	8	12	14	4	9	10	10	10	13	12	12
Don't know/refusal	2	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1

Q4. How much confidence do you have in the PSNI's ability to provide an ordinary day-to-day policing service for all the people of Northern Ireland?

In January 2015, almost five in six respondents (84%) had some, a lot, or total confidence in the police's ability to provide a day-to-day policing service for everyone in Northern Ireland, a statistically significant decrease compared to the January 2014 finding of 89% (Table 4). There were statistically significant decreases for both Protestant and Catholic respondents (Protestants, from 88% to 82% and Catholics, from 89% to 84%). The percentage of respondents who had little or no confidence at all rose from 11% in January 2014 to 16% in January 2015, a statistically significant increase. There were statistically significant increases for both Protestant and Catholic respondents (Protestants, from 12% to 18% and Catholics, from 10% to 15%).

Table 4: Confidence in the police's ability to provide an ordinary day to day policing service for all the people of Northern Ireland												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Total confidence	7	11	9	10	11	10	9	10	10	8	12	11
A lot of confidence	31	37	35	34	36	35	34	42	39	33	34	34
Some confidence	41	40	40	40	42	42	46	36	40	43	36	39
Total/A lot of/Some	79	88	84	84	89	87	89	88	89	84	82	84
Little confidence	15	9	12	11	9	10	7	10	8	11	14	12
No confidence at all	6	3	5	4	1	2	3	2	3	4	4	4
Little/No confidence	21	12	17	15	10	12	10	12	11	15	18	16
Don't know/refusal	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0

Q5. How satisfied are you with the levels of police patrols in your area?

In January 2015, just over two in five respondents (44%) were very/fairly satisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, a statistically significant decrease on the January 2014 finding of 52%. There were statistically significant decreases for both Protestant and Catholic respondents (Protestants, from 49% to 42% and Catholics, from 54% to 44%). Just under three in ten respondents (29%) were very/fairly dissatisfied, which is a statistically significant increase from the January 2014 finding of 22% (Table 5). There were statistically significant increases for both Protestant and Catholic respondents (Protestants, from 27% to 34% and Catholics, from 17% to 25%).

Table 5: Satisfaction with the levels of police patrols												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	41	42	41	48	43	46	54	49	52	44	42	44
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	27	28	28	25	29	28	28	23	26	29	24	26
Very/fairly dissatisfied	31	29	30	27	27	26	17	27	22	25	34	29
Don't know/refusal	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

Q6. Over the last year, has the overall standard of policing in your area...?

In January 2015, just over seven out of ten respondents (71%) thought that the overall standard of policing in their area had remained the same over the last year, which is a statistically significant decrease from the January 2014 finding of 77%. One in six (17%) thought that it got worse, a statistically significant increase from the January 2014 finding of 12% (Table 6). There was a statistically significant increase for Protestant respondents (from 15% to 21%). Protestant respondents (21%) were more likely to think that the overall standard of policing in their area got worse than Catholic respondents (13%).

Table 6: Perception of the overall standard of policing over the last year												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Got better	14	8	11	9	7	8	11	5	9	13	6	9
Remained the same	69	71	71	78	77	77	77	77	77	71	71	71
Got worse	15	18	16	11	15	13	10	15	12	13	21	17
Don't know/refusal	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	3

Q7. How safe do you feel in your local community?

In January 2015, nine out of ten respondents (89%) felt very/fairly safe in their local community, similar to the January 2014 finding (Table 7).

Table 7: How safe do you feel in your local community?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very safe	34	32	33	40	38	38	39	37	38	40	40	40
Fairly safe	55	55	55	51	54	53	53	53	52	51	48	49
Very/fairly safe	89	87	88	91	92	91	92	90	90	91	88	89
Neither safe nor unsafe	6	8	7	5	7	6	4	6	5	5	7	6
Fairly unsafe	4	4	4	2	1	2	4	3	3	2	4	3
Very unsafe	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	1
Fairly/very unsafe	6	5	5	2	1	2	5	4	4	4	5	4
Don't know/refusal				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

2: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF PCSPs

Q8. Have you heard of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)?

In January 2015, under one in two respondents (45%) had heard of PCSPs, similar to the January 2014 finding of 46% (Table 8). Protestant respondents (47%) were more likely to have heard of PCSPs than Catholic respondents (42%).

Table 8: Have you heard of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)?									
Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2014 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	40	60	51	42	52	46	42	47	45
No	60	40	49	58	48	54	58	53	55
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Q9. Do you know how to contact your local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety?

In January 2015, under one in three respondents (31%) knew how to contact their local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety (Table 9).

Table 9: Knowledge of how to contact PCSP about local policing and community safety			
All those who have heard of PCSPs Rating	Percentage of respondents		
	2015 (January)		
	C	P	All
Yes	31	32	31
No	69	68	69

Q10. Do you feel that your local PCSP has helped to improve policing in your local area?

In January 2015, almost two in five respondents (37%) who had heard of PCSPs felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area on a par with the January 2014 finding (Table 10). There was a statistically significant increase for Protestant respondents (from 33% to 42%). However, there was a statistically significant decrease for Catholic respondents (from 45% to 32%). Over two in five respondents (42%) who had heard of PCSPs felt that their local PCSP has not helped to improve policing in their local area, a statistically significant increase on the January 2014 finding of 35%. There was a statistically significant increase for Catholics respondents (from 29% to 40%). There was also a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of respondents who indicated that they didn’t know or refused to answer, from 27% to 21%. There was a statistically significant decrease for Protestant respondents (from 26% to 16%).

Table 10: Has your local PCSP helped to improve local policing?									
All those who have heard of PCSPs Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	38	36	36	45	33	38	32	42	37
No	36	43	41	29	40	35	40	42	42
Don't know/refusal	26	21	23	27	26	27	27	16	21

3. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

Q11. Have you heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (Policing Board)?

In January 2015, over four out of five respondents (84%) had heard of the Policing Board (Table 11) which is on a par with the January 2014 finding. A higher proportion of Protestant respondents (87%) had heard of the Policing Board than Catholic respondents (83%).

Table 11: Heard of the Policing Board?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	83	87	84	80	86	82	81	90	84	83	87	84
No	16	13	15	20	14	17	19	10	16	17	13	16
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Q12. Do you think that the Policing Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job?

Seven out of ten respondents (70%) who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job, on a par with the January 2014 finding of 72% (Table 12). One in six Catholic respondents (16%) thought that the Board does not help ensure that the PSNI do a good job, a statistically significant increase on the January 2014 finding of 10%.

Table 12: Does the Policing Board help to ensure that the PSNI do a good job?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	70	69	69	79	71	74	75	70	72	69	69	70
No	18	16	17	10	17	14	10	17	14	16	19	17
Don't know/refusal	12	14	14	11	11	11	14	13	14	15	12	13

Q13. Do you think that the Policing Board is part of the police or independent of the police?

In January 2015, three out of five respondents (57%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police, similar to the January 2014 finding of 57% (Table 13). A higher proportion of Protestant respondents (62%) correctly thought that the Policing Board is independent of the police than Catholic respondents (52%).

Table 13: Is the Policing Board part of the police or independent of the police?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Part of the police	29	21	24	41	29	34	35	36	36	41	32	36
Independent of the police	66	73	71	52	66	60	56	58	57	52	62	57
Don't know/refusal	6	6	6	6	5	6	9	6	7	7	6	6

Q14. What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?

In January 2015, three out of four respondents (76%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board's primary role is "to oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account" (Table 14).

Table 14: What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
To actively direct police operations	11	10	10	21	11	15	15	11	13	19	12	15
To oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account	82	81	81	67	81	76	72	79	76	73	77	76
To tell the Chief Constable what to do	2	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	4
Other	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Don't know/refusal	4	4	4	6	3	4	8	5	7	3	5	4

Q15. Do you think the Policing Board is made up of ...?

In January 2015, three in four respondents (76%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is made up of “a mix of politicians and independently appointed members”, similar to the January 2014 finding of 75% (Table 15). Almost one out of six respondents (15%) who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board is made up of “independently appointed members”.

Table 15: Do you think that the Policing Board is made up of...?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Politicians	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	4	3
Independently appointed members	20	19	20	19	13	16	16	15	15	16	13	15
A mix of politicians and independently appointed members	72	74	73	72	76	74	73	75	75	75	78	76
Other	1	0	1	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
Don't know/refusal	5	5	5	6	6	6	8	6	7	7	5	5

Q16. Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?

In January 2015, three in four respondents (75%) who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board is working at least adequately, similar to the January 2014 finding of 74% (Table 16). The percentage of respondents who thought that the Board is working poorly/very poorly increased from 12% in January 2014 to 17% in January 2015, a statistically significant increase. There were statistically significant increases for both Protestant and Catholic respondents (Protestants, from 13% to 18% and Catholics, from 11% to 16%).

Table 16: Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2012 (January)			2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very well	7	5	5	4	4	5	6	3	4	6	4	4
Well	29	26	27	30	23	26	28	26	27	26	26	26
Adequately	43	46	45	46	46	46	40	45	43	46	42	45
Very well/Well/Adequately	79	77	87	80	73	77	74	74	74	78	72	75
Poorly	10	9	9	6	14	10	9	11	10	14	15	14
Very poorly	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
Poorly/very poorly	13	12	12	7	15	11	11	13	12	16	18	17
Don't know/refusal	9	11	11	12	11	12	15	13	14	7	9	8



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