



# PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE, DPPs AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**REPORT BASED ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD  
MODULE OF THE SEPTEMBER 2010 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 whose job it is to oversee 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 is not controlled by Government and has strong independent powers to carry out its work. The Policing Board consists of 19 Members, and comprises Political Members and Independent Members who have been appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The main role of the Policing Board is to ensure that the Police Service of Northern Ireland is effective and efficient. The Policing 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 Policing 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. This 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.

Finding out what the community wants from their police service; what they think about the service that is delivered, and how it is performing, is vital if the Board is to carry out that role.

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 police support staff is representative of the community in Northern Ireland;

and assess:

- The effectiveness of measures taken to secure that the membership of the police service is representative of the community; and
- The level of public satisfaction with the performance of the police and the District Policing Partnerships (DPPs).

In order to gauge public satisfaction and consider the views of the public on policing, the Policing Board conducts a programme of consultation and research activities involving a range of groups and organisations. The results of this consultation and research are published by the Policing Board to ensure openness and transparency, and to advise the public of its findings.

## BACKGROUND TO THE SEPTEMBER 2010 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 1,955 households, 1,179 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 60%. Interviews were conducted between 31 August and 30 September 2010. Analyses by religion are based only on those 1,102 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 fulfil its responsibilities under Section 3 (3) (d) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 to “assess the level of public satisfaction with the performance of the police and of district policing partnerships”.

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 September 2009 and September 2010 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. Such statistically significant results are clearly noted in the text above each table.

## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE POLICE

### Q1. Do you think that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) does a good job or a poor job in your area?

In September 2010, less than three out of five respondents (58%) thought that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, similar to the September 2009 finding (Table 1). One in six respondents (18%) rated the performance of their local police as very/fairly poor, a statistically significant decrease from 23% in September 2009. More Protestant respondents (61%) thought that the PSNI does a very/fairly good job in their area than Catholic respondents (57%). The proportion of Protestant respondents who stated that the PSNI does a very/fairly poor job in their area fell from 23% in September 2009 to 16% in September 2010, a statistically significant decrease.

Table 1: Performance of local police

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	59	64	62	59	69	64	55	57	56	57	61	58
Neither good nor poor	20	16	18	24	14	18	19	18	19	21	21	21
Very/fairly poor	19	18	18	16	15	16	24	23	23	20	16	18
Don't know/refusal	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2

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

In September 2010, two out of three respondents (67%) thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, a statistically significant increase from 63% in September 2009 (Table 2). One in eight respondents (13%) thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly poor job in Northern Ireland as a whole, a statistically significant decrease from 19% in September 2009. More Protestant respondents (73%) thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole than Catholic respondents (62%). The finding for Protestant respondents is a statistically significant increase from 65% in September 2009.

Table 2: Performance of police in Northern Ireland as a whole

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	66	71	68	67	79	73	61	65	63	62	73	67
Neither good nor poor	19	16	18	18	11	14	19	16	17	22	15	18
Very/fairly poor	13	11	12	13	10	11	21	17	19	14	12	13
Don't know/refusal	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1

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

In September 2010, over two out of three respondents (68%) were very/fairly satisfied that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole, while one in eight respondents (12%) were very/fairly dissatisfied (Table 3). More Protestant respondents (74%) thought that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole than Catholic respondents (62%). One in six Catholic respondents (16%) were very/fairly dissatisfied that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole, compared with one in ten Protestant respondents (10%).

**Table 3: Satisfaction that the police treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	63	75	70	64	78	71	66	75	71	62	74	68
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19	15	17	22	11	16	19	14	16	20	14	17
Very/fairly dissatisfied	15	8	11	13	10	12	13	9	11	16	10	12
Don't know/refusal	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2

### 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?

As in September 2009, four out of five respondents (80%) 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 (Table 4). Almost one in five respondents (18%) had little or no confidence at all.

**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											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Total confidence	8	10	9	6	12	10	7	10	8	5	9	7
A lot of confidence	28	39	35	30	39	34	26	32	29	34	37	35
Some confidence	48	36	42	48	38	43	48	39	43	39	37	38
Little confidence	7	12	10	12	8	10	14	13	13	17	14	15
No confidence at all	6	2	4	4	2	3	5	6	6	4	2	3
Don't know/refusal	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		1

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

In September 2010, over two out of five respondents (41%) were very/fairly satisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, a statistically significant increase from 37% in September 2009. One in three respondents (32%) were very/fairly dissatisfied, a statistically significant decrease from 41% in September 2009 (Table 5). More Catholic respondents (45%) were very/fairly satisfied, compared with Protestant respondents (38%). Conversely, more Protestant respondents (34%) were very/fairly dissatisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, compared with Catholic respondents (28%). The proportion of Catholic and Protestant respondents who were very/fairly dissatisfied decreased from September 2009 and both are statistically significant decreases.

**Table 5: Satisfaction with the levels of police patrols**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	41	42	42	41	43	42	40	34	37	45	38	41
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24	20	21	27	22	24	20	22	21	26	28	27
Very/fairly dissatisfied	35	37	36	32	35	33	39	43	41	28	34	32
Don't know/refusal	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1

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

In September 2010, seven out of ten respondents (71%) thought that the overall standard of policing in their area had remained the same over the last year. One in nine respondents (11%) thought that it had got better and one in eight (13%) thought that it had got worse, which is a statistically significant decrease from 17% in September 2009 (Table 6). Protestant respondents (16%) were more likely to think that the overall standard of policing in their area had got worse than Catholic respondents (10%).

**Table 6: Perception of the overall standard of policing over the last year**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Got better	13	7	10	15	10	12	14	8	11	13	9	11
Remained the same	74	74	74	71	72	72	71	67	69	72	70	71
Got worse	10	15	13	12	14	13	12	21	17	10	16	13
Don't know/refusal	3	4	4	2	4	3	2	4	3	5	4	5

### Q7. Do you know the names of or recognise the police officers policing your local area?

As in September 2009, one in eight respondents (12%) knew the names of or recognised the police officers policing their local area (Table 7). Catholic respondents (11%) were slightly less likely to know the names of or recognise the police officers policing their local area than Protestant respondents (12%).

**Table 7: Recognition of police officers policing your local area**

Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	11	16	13	13	12	12	11	12	12
No	88	83	86	87	86	86	89	88	88
Don't know/refusal	1	1	1	1	2	1	0		0

### Q8. Have you been in contact with the PSNI over the past 12 months?

In September 2010, over one in four respondents (27%) had been in contact with the PSNI over the past 12 months (Table 8). More Protestant respondents (29%) than Catholic respondents (25%) had been in contact with the PSNI.

**Table 8: Contact with the PSNI**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	28	27	28	22	27	25	24	24	24	25	29	27
No	72	73	72	78	73	75	76	76	76	75	71	73
Don't know/refusal					0	0				0		0

### Q9. What form(s) did the contact take?

As in September 2009, the largest category for respondents being in contact with the PSNI over the past 12 months was reporting a crime (23%, Table 9). More Protestant than Catholic respondents had been in contact with the PSNI to report a crime (28% compared with 16%) and being the victim of a crime (20% compared with 17%).

**Table 9: What form(s) did the contact take?**

Respondents who had contact with the PSNI	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
You were the victim of a crime	25	23	24	15	22	20	21	16	19	17	20	19
You reported a crime	28	30	29	21	29	26	26	24	25	16	28	23
Giving a statement	20	18	18	25	22	23	18	16	16	8	15	12
Reporting anti-social behaviour	17	16	16	24	20	22	11	19	16	17	16	16
Proof of driving documents or involved in road traffic accident	9	7	8	22	17	19	9	10	9	14	12	13
Dispute with neighbour	6	3	4	5	2	3	4	4	4	4	5	5
Renewing firearms licence	2	3	3	5	1	2	2	7	4	4	5	5
Seeking advice or information	16	13	14	15	15	16	17	17	17	10	11	11
Other	14	12	13	20	17	17	26	13	19	30	22	26

Percentages may add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

### Q10. Were you satisfied with the PSNI during this contact?

In September 2010, almost two out of three respondents (65%) were satisfied with the PSNI during their contact, similar to the September 2009 finding (Table 10). Catholic respondents (65%) were slightly more satisfied than Protestant respondents (64%) with the PSNI during their contact.

**Table 10: Satisfaction with PSNI contact**

Respondents who had contact with the PSNI	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	74	70	72	74	70	70	75	58	67	65	64	65
No	26	30	28	26	28	29	25	41	33	35	36	35
Don't know/refusal					2	1		0	0			



## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF DPPs

### Q14. Have you heard of District Policing Partnerships (DPPs)?

In September 2010, over three out of five respondents (63%) had heard of DPPs, similar to the September 2009 finding (Table 14). More Protestant respondents (66%) had heard of DPPs than Catholic respondents (61%).

**Table 14: Have you heard of District Policing Partnerships (DPPs)?**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	53	65	59	58	63	60	58	66	62	61	66	63
No	47	35	40	42	37	40	42	34	38	39	34	37
Don't know/refusal							0		0			0

### Q15. How much confidence do you have that DPPs help address local policing problems?

In September 2010, almost three out of four respondents (74%) who had heard of DPPs had some, a lot or total confidence that DPPs help address local policing problems (Table 15). Almost one in five respondents (19%) had little or no confidence at all that DPPs help address local policing problems.

**Table 15: Confidence that DPPs help address local policing problems**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Total confidence	4	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
A lot of confidence	20	20	19	21	16	18	18	16	17	22	19	20
Some confidence	48	46	46	48	56	53	52	54	53	52	53	52
Little confidence	14	14	15	15	15	15	15	17	17	13	15	15
No confidence at all	7	6	6	4	3	3	5	5	5	3	4	4
Don't know/refusal	7	11	9	10	7	8	6	5	6	7	7	7

### Q16. Are you prepared to contact your local DPP to raise issues/ask questions about local policing?

In September 2010, almost three out of five respondents (57%) who had heard of DPPs were prepared to contact their local DPP regarding local policing issues (Table 16). Protestant respondents (62%) were more willing to contact their local DPP than Catholic respondents (52%). The proportion of Protestant respondents prepared to contact their local DPP increased from 54% in September 2009, which is a statistically significant increase.

**Table 16: Prepared to contact local DPP about local policing**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	51	58	56	50	55	54	55	54	54	52	62	57
No	47	40	42	48	43	45	42	45	44	46	38	41
Don't know/refusal	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	2	2	1	1

### Q17. Do you feel that your local DPP has helped to improve policing in your local area?

In September 2010, one out of three respondents (33%) who had heard of DPPs felt that their local DPP has helped to improve policing in their local area, similar to the September 2009 finding (Table 17). More Catholic (38%) than Protestant (27%) respondents thought that their local DPP has helped to improve policing in their local area.

**Table 17: Has your local DPP helped to improve local policing?**

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	39	33	35	31	35	33	38	28	32	38	27	33
No	39	38	39	43	39	41	42	48	46	36	46	42
Don't know/refusal	21	29	26	26	27	26	20	23	22	25	26	26

## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

### Q18. Have you heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (Policing Board)?

In September 2010, six out of seven respondents (86%) had heard of the Policing Board (Table 18). More Protestant respondents (90%) had heard of the Policing Board than Catholic respondents (83%).

Table 18: Heard of the Policing Board?

Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	79	87	84	86	86	86	84	90	87	83	90	86
No	21	12	16	13	14	14	16	10	13	17	10	13
Don't know/refusal				0	0	0		0	0		0	0

### Q19. Do you think that the Policing Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job?

As in September 2009, two out of three respondents (67%) who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job (Table 19).

Table 19: 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											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	63	66	64	72	71	71	68	67	67	67	68	67
No	22	21	22	19	19	20	21	23	22	17	19	18
Don't know/refusal	15	13	14	9	10	9	11	10	11	16	13	14

### Q20. Do you think that the Policing Board is part of the police or independent of the police?

In September 2010, over seven out of ten respondents (72%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police, similar to the September 2009 finding (Table 20). More Protestant respondents (74%) correctly thought that the Policing Board is independent of the police than Catholic respondents (69%).

Table 20: Is the Policing Board part of the police or independent of the police?

All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Part of the police	22	21	21	23	17	20	27	16	21	24	19	22
Independent of the police	69	74	72	71	78	75	66	77	73	69	74	72
Don't know/refusal	9	5	6	6	5	5	6	7	6	6	6	6

### Q21. What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?

In September 2010, over three out of four respondents (77%) 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". This was a statistically significant decrease from 82% in September 2009 (Table 21). More Protestant respondents (79%) correctly knew the Board's role than Catholic respondents (75%).

Table 21: What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?

All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
To actively direct police operations	16	9	12	12	9	10	11	10	10	14	13	14
To oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account	73	81	78	78	85	82	80	82	82	75	79	77
To tell the Chief Constable what to do	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3
Other		1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Don't know/refusal	7	6	6	5	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5



**Q22. Do you think the Policing Board is made up of ...?**

In September 2010, almost three out of four respondents (73%) 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 September 2009 finding (Table 22). More Catholic respondents (74%) correctly knew the Board’s composition than Protestant respondents (71%).

**Table 22: Do you think that the Policing Board is made up of...?**

All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Politicians	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	2	2	2
Independently appointed members	20	23	22	20	17	18	15	18	17	17	22	19
A mix of politicians and independently appointed members	70	68	69	70	74	72	76	75	75	74	71	73
Other	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0			
Don't know/refusal	7	6	6	5	5	5	7	4	5	7	5	6

**Q23. Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?**

In September 2010, four out of five respondents (79%) who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board is working at least adequately, similar to the September 2009 finding (Table 23). Almost two out of five respondents (37%) who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board is working well/very well. More Catholic respondents (39%) thought that the Board is working well/very well than Protestant respondents (35%).

**Table 23: Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?**

All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2008 (September)			2009 (April)			2009 (September)			2010 (September)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very well	6	7	6	5	5	5	7	7	7	5	3	4
Well	32	31	31	35	36	35	36	26	30	34	32	33
Adequately	38	42	41	42	43	43	39	48	44	39	46	42
Poorly	12	9	10	9	7	8	10	9	9	10	12	11
Very poorly	1	2	1	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	0	2
Don't know/refusal	10	10	11	5	7	6	7	7	7	10	7	8



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#### DOCUMENT TITLE

**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE, DPPs AND THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD SEPTEMBER 2010 OMNIBUS SURVEY**

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