

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

**REPORT BASED ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD
MODULE OF THE APRIL 2016 OMNIBUS SURVEY**

Contents

	Pages
Index of Contents	1
The Northern Ireland Policing Board: Who we are	2
Background to the April 2016 Omnibus Survey	3-4
Summary of findings	5-6
Public Perceptions of the Performance of the Police	7-10
Public Perceptions of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships	11-12
Public Perceptions of the Northern Ireland Policing Board	13-16
Public Perceptions of the National Crime Agency	17

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.

April 2016 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 2,200 households, 1,020 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 46%. Interviews were conducted over two months, between 4th and 30th April, and between 3rd and 29th May 2016. Analyses by religion are based only on those 878 respondents who identified as either Catholic or Protestant. Respondents who refused to answer the religion question, or who indicated their religion as other than Catholic or Protestant, are excluded from this analysis.

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 2015 and April 2016 Northern Ireland Omnibus Surveys. These tests are used to establish the degree of confidence with which the observed findings as an accurate reflection of the views of the population can be inferred. 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 instances.

Summary of Findings

Public Perceptions of the Police

- In April 2016, just over two thirds (68%) of respondents indicated that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, a similar proportion to the January 2015 figure (67%), with around three quarters of respondents (75%) indicating that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, a statistically significant increase on January 2015 (72%).
- A large majority (88%) of respondents indicated either total, a lot, or some confidence in the PSNI's ability to provide an ordinary day-to-day service for all the people of Northern Ireland, a statistically significant increase on January 2015 (84%).
- In April 2016, 91% of respondents indicated that they felt very/fairly safe in their local community, a similar figure to January 2015 (89%). Analysis by religion revealed a statistically significant increase in this respect for Protestant respondents, from 88% in January 2015 to 92% in April 2016.

Public Perceptions of PCSPs

- In April 2016, just under half of respondents (49%) had heard of PCSPs, a small increase on the January 2015 figure of 45%.
- Just over a third of respondents (37%) who had heard of PCSPs, felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area, the same proportion as in January 2015.

Public Perceptions of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

- In April 2016, a large majority of respondents (85%) had heard of the Policing Board. Just under three quarters (73%) of the respondents who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job, a small increase on the January 2015 figure of 70%.
- Almost three quarters of respondents (74%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police, a statistically significant increase on the January 2015 finding of 57%, and a marked increase on the 2014 (57%) and 2013 (60%) figures.
- More than three quarters of the respondents (79%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that the Board is working either adequately, well or very well, a statistically significant increase on the January 2015 figure of 75%.

Public Perceptions of the National Crime Agency

- In April 2016, just over half of respondents (54%) indicated that they had heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA).
- More than two thirds of the respondents (68%) who had heard of the NCA indicated that the Agency is working either adequately, well or very well.

PERFORMANCE OF THE POLICE

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

In April 2016, just over two thirds (68%) of respondents indicated that they thought that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, similar to the January 2015 finding of 67% (Table 1). Almost three quarters (73%) of Protestant respondents indicated that they thought the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, a statistically significant increase on the January 2015 figure (67%), with 64% of Catholic respondents indicating very/fairly good local police performance. 11% of respondents rated the performance of their local police as very/fairly poor, a marginal decrease from the January 2015 findings.

Table 1: Performance of local police												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	64	67	65	65	69	68	66	67	67	64	73	68
Neither good nor poor	21	24	23	24	19	21	20	19	20	21	16	20
Very/fairly poor	14	9	10	9	12	10	11	13	12	15	10	11
Don't know/refusal	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1

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

In April 2016, around three quarters (75%) of respondents indicated that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole, a statistically significant increase on the January 2015 figure of 72% (Table 2). The proportion of Protestant respondents (81%) who thought that the PSNI was doing a very/fairly good job in Northern Ireland as a whole saw a statistically significant increase from the previous year (73%). 7% of respondents overall described the performance of the PSNI in Northern Ireland as a whole as very/fairly poor, a decline from the January 2015 figure of 11%.

Table 2: Performance of PSNI in Northern Ireland as a whole												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	63	76	70	70	73	71	67	73	72	68	81	75
Neither good nor poor	24	15	20	20	19	20	21	15	17	18	15	16
Very/fairly poor	12	7	10	8	7	8	11	11	11	11	4	7
Don't know/refusal	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	1

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

In April 2016, almost three quarters (73%) of respondents were very/fairly satisfied that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole, a small increase on the January 2015 figure (70%). The percentage of Protestant respondents who were very/fairly satisfied saw a statistically significant increase from 71% in January 2015 to 77% in April 2016. There was a statistically significant decrease (from 12% in January 2015 to 9% in April 2016) in the proportion of overall respondents indicating that they were fairly/very dissatisfied.

Table 3: Satisfaction that PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	67	80	73	68	77	73	67	71	70	66	77	73
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19	15	17	21	13	17	19	15	17	21	16	18
Fairly/very dissatisfied	14	4	9	10	10	10	13	12	12	11	8	9
Don't know/refusal	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0

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 April 2016, 88% of respondents indicated that they 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 increase from the January 2015 finding of 84% (Table 4). There was a statistically significant increase for Protestant respondents in this respect (from 82% to 90%). The percentage of respondents who had little or no confidence at all decreased from 16% in January 2015 to 11% in April 2016, a statistically significant decrease. There was a statistically significant decrease for Protestant respondents in this respect (from 18% to 10%).

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											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Total confidence	10	11	10	9	10	10	8	12	11	10	15	12
A lot of confidence	34	36	35	34	42	39	33	34	34	32	39	37
Some confidence	40	42	42	46	36	40	43	36	39	42	36	39
Total/A lot of/Some	84	89	87	89	88	89	84	82	84	84	90	88
Little confidence	11	9	10	7	10	8	11	14	12	10	8	9
No confidence at all	4	1	2	3	2	3	4	4	4	3	2	2
Little/No confidence	15	10	12	10	12	11	15	18	16	13	10	11
Don't know/refusal	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1

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

In April 2016, almost half of respondents (48%) were very/fairly satisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, an increase on the January 2015 figure of 44%. Just over a quarter of respondents (28%) indicated that they were very/fairly dissatisfied (Table 5), with a statistically significant decrease for Protestant respondents in this respect (from 34% in January 2015 to 28% in April 2016).

Table 5: Satisfaction with the levels of police patrols												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	48	43	46	54	49	52	44	42	44	51	46	48
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	25	29	28	28	23	26	29	24	26	26	26	27
Very/fairly dissatisfied	27	27	26	17	27	22	25	34	29	23	28	28
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1

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

In April 2016, almost three quarters (74%) of respondents indicated that the overall standard of policing in their area had remained the same over the last year. 15% of respondents indicated that they thought that the standard had worsened (Table 6), with a statistically significant decrease in Protestant respondents (from 21% to 15%) choosing this option from January 2015 to April 2016.

Table 6: Perception of the overall standard of policing over the last year												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Got better	9	7	8	11	5	9	13	6	9	10	7	8
Remained the same	78	77	77	77	77	77	71	71	71	72	75	74
Got worse	11	15	13	10	15	12	13	21	17	14	15	15
Don't know/refusal	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	4	3	3

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

In April 2016, a large majority of respondents (91%) indicated that they felt very/fairly safe in their local community, a marginal increase on the January 2015 figure (89%, Table 7), with a statistically significant increase for Protestant respondents (from 88% in January 2015 to 92% in April 2016).

Table 7: How safe do you feel in your local community?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very safe	40	38	38	39	37	38	40	40	40	42	42	42
Fairly safe	51	54	53	53	53	52	51	48	49	46	50	49
Very/fairly safe	91	92	91	92	90	90	91	88	89	88	92	91
Neither safe nor unsafe	5	7	6	4	6	5	5	7	6	5	5	5
Fairly unsafe	2	1	2	4	3	3	2	4	3	5	3	4
Very unsafe	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	0	1
Fairly/very unsafe	2	1	2	5	4	4	4	5	4	6	3	5
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	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 April 2016, just under half of respondents (49%) had heard of PCSPs, a small increase on the January 2015 finding of 45% (Table 8). Protestant respondents (53%) were more likely to have heard of PCSPs than Catholic respondents (45%).

Table 8: Have you heard of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)?									
Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	42	52	46	42	47	45	45	53	49
No	58	48	54	58	53	55	55	47	51

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

In April 2016, just over a third of respondents (34%) who had heard of PCSPs knew how to contact their local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety, a small increase on the January 2015 figure (31%, 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)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	31	32	31	33	33	34
No	69	68	69	67	67	66

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

In April 2016, just over a third of respondents (37%) who had heard of PCSPs, felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area, similar to the January 2015 finding (Table 10). 39% of the respondents that had heard of PCSPs felt that their local PCSP has not helped to improve policing in their local area.

Table 10: Has your local PCSP helped to improve local policing?									
All those who have heard of PCSPs Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	45	33	38	32	42	37	37	37	37
No	29	40	35	40	42	42	43	37	39
Don't know/refusal	27	26	27	27	16	21	20	26	23

3. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

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

In April 2016, a large majority of respondents (85%) had heard of the Policing Board (Table 11), a similar proportion to January 2015 (84%). A higher proportion of Protestant respondents (92%) had heard of the Policing Board than Catholic respondents (79%). The proportion of Protestant respondents who had heard of the Policing Board saw a statistically significant increase from January 2015 to April 2016 (from 87% to 92%). Similarly, the proportion of Protestant respondents who had not heard of the Board saw a statistically significant decrease over the same period (from 13% to 8%).

Table 11: Have you heard of the NI Policing Board?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	80	86	82	81	90	84	83	87	84	79	92	85
No	20	14	17	19	10	16	17	13	16	21	8	15
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?

In April 2016, just under three quarters (73%) of the respondents who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job, a small increase on the January 2015 figure of 70% (Table 12). The proportion of Catholic respondents who agreed that the Board helps to ensure that the PSNI do a good job saw a statistically significant increase, from 69% in January 2015 to 76% in April 2016.

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											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	79	71	74	75	70	72	69	69	70	76	70	73
No	10	17	14	10	17	14	16	19	17	13	19	16
Don't know/refusal	11	11	11	14	13	14	15	12	13	11	11	11

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

In April 2016, almost three quarters of respondents (74%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police, a statistically significant increase on the January 2015 finding of 57% (Table 13) and a marked increase on the 2014 (57%) and 2013 (60%) figures. Analysis by religion revealed that the proportions of both Catholic and Protestant respondents who correctly indicated that the Policing Board is independent of the police saw statistically significant increases to April 2016 (from 52% to 70%, and 62% to 75% respectively).

Table 13: 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											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Rating												
Part of the police	41	29	34	35	36	36	41	32	36	24	20	21
Independent of the police	52	66	60	56	58	57	52	62	57	70	75	74
Don't know/refusal	6	5	6	9	6	7	7	6	6	6	4	5

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

In April 2016, a large majority of respondents (83%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly indicated that the Board's primary role is "to oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account" (Table 14). This was a statistically significant increase on the January 2015 figure (76%). The proportion of Catholic respondents correctly identifying the Board's primary role saw a statistically significant increase from 73% in January 2015, to 81% in April 2016. The proportion of Catholic respondents who indicated the option "to actively direct police operations" saw a statistically significant decrease from 19% to 9% over the same period.

Table 14: What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Rating												
To actively direct police operations	21	11	15	15	11	13	19	12	15	9	10	9
To oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account	67	81	76	72	79	76	73	77	76	81	82	83
To tell the Chief Constable what to do	5	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	4	3	3	3
Other	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Don't know/refusal	6	3	4	8	5	7	3	5	4	6	4	5

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

In April 2016, just over two thirds of respondents (67%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly indicated that they thought that the Board is made up of “a mix of politicians and independently appointed members”, a statistically significant decrease on the January 2015 figure of 76% (Table 15). Around a quarter of respondents (25%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that they thought that the Board is made up of “independently appointed members”. Analysis by religion revealed that the proportions of both Catholic and Protestant respondents who correctly indicated that the Policing Board is made up of “a mix of politicians and independently appointed members” saw statistically significant decreases to April 2016 (from 75% to 66%, and 78% to 68% respectively).

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											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Politicians	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	3
Independently appointed members	19	13	16	16	15	15	16	13	15	27	24	25
A mix of politicians and independently appointed members	72	76	74	73	75	75	75	78	76	66	68	67
Other	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Don't know/refusal	6	6	6	8	6	7	7	5	5	4	5	4

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

In April 2016, more than three quarters of the respondents (79%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that the Board is working either adequately, well or very well, a statistically significant increase on the January 2015 figure of 75% (Table 16). The proportion of respondents who thought that the Board is working either poorly or very poorly saw a statistically significant decrease from 17% in January 2015 to 12% in April 2016. Analysis by religion revealed statistically significant decreases for both Protestant and Catholic respondents indicating that the Board is working either poorly or very poorly (from 18% to 12%, and from 16% to 13% respectively).

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											
	2013 (January)			2014 (January)			2015 (January)			2016 (April)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very well	4	4	5	6	3	4	6	4	4	5	4	5
Well	30	23	26	28	26	27	26	26	26	28	26	28
Adequately	46	46	46	40	45	43	46	42	45	45	50	46
Very well/Well/Adequately	80	73	77	74	74	74	78	72	75	78	80	79
Poorly	6	14	10	9	11	10	14	15	14	11	10	10
Very poorly	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2
Poorly/very poorly	7	15	11	11	13	12	16	18	17	13	12	12
Don't know/refusal	12	11	12	15	13	14	7	9	8	9	8	9

4. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY

Two additional questions were added to the Northern Ireland Policing Board module of the Omnibus survey in April 2016 in order to measure public perceptions of the National Crime Agency (NCA). The data referenced in Tables 17 and 18 is a snapshot of public perception at April 2016.

Q17. Have you heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA)?

In April 2016, just over half of respondents (54%) indicated that they had heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA). Almost two thirds (61%) of Protestant respondents indicated that they had heard of the NCA, compared with less than half (46%) of Catholic respondents (Table 17).

Table 17: Have you heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA)?			
Rating	Percentage of respondents		
	2016 (April)		
	C	P	All
Yes	46	61	54
No	54	39	46
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0

Q18. Overall, how well do you think the NCA is working?

Over two thirds of the respondents (68%) who had heard of the NCA indicated that the Agency is working either adequately, well or very well (Table 18). 8% of respondents indicated that the NCA is working either poorly or very poorly, with almost a quarter (24%) of respondents indicating a 'Don't know' response. Analysis by religion revealed that Catholic respondents were more likely to indicate that the Agency is working either poorly or very poorly (13% compared with 6% of Protestant respondents).

Table 18: Overall, how well do you think the NCA is working?			
Rating	Percentage of respondents		
	2016 (April)		
	C	P	All
Very well	4	4	4
Well	18	25	23
Adequately	43	41	41
Very well/Well/Adequately	65	70	68
Poorly	11	5	7
Very poorly	2	1	1
Poorly/very poorly	13	6	8
Don't know	23	24	24



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