



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

**REPORT BASED ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD  
MODULE OF THE MAY 2018 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 arm's 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.<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the absence of an established Executive following the Northern Ireland Assembly elections in March 2017, the Policing Board could not be legally constituted to discharge its full range of legislative duties as required by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000.

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

## **BACKGROUND TO THE MAY 2018 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 systematic random sample of addresses selected from Pointer database 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. A total of 2,200 addresses were selected for interview.

From an eligible sample of 1,761 addresses, 917 interviews were achieved, giving a response rate of 52%. Interviews were conducted over two months, between 1<sup>st</sup> May and 7<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Analyses by religion are based only on those 772 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 April 2017 and May 2018 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 May 2018, over two thirds (68%) of respondents indicated that they thought that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 finding of 74%.
- A large majority (86%) of respondents indicated either total, a lot or some confidence in the PSNI's ability to provide an ordinary day-to-day policing service for everyone in Northern Ireland, a statistically significant decrease from the April 2017 finding of 90%.

### **Public Perceptions of PCSPs**

- In May 2018, 44% of respondents had heard of PCSPs.
- 32% of the respondents who had heard of PCSPs, felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 finding of 41%. Over one quarter of respondents (29%) recorded a 'Don't know' response or did not respond to this question.

### **Public Perceptions of the Northern Ireland Policing Board**

- In May 2018, a large majority of respondents (85%) had heard of the Policing Board. Over two thirds (70%) respondents who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 figure of 76%. 14% of all respondents who had heard of the Policing Board recorded a 'Don't know' response to this question, a statistically significant increase from 10% in April 2017.
- Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police.

## **Public Perceptions of the Police, PCSPs, the NIPB , and the NCA– May 2018**

- In May 2018, more than three quarters of the respondents (78%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that the Board is working either adequately, well or very well.

### **Public Perceptions of the National Crime Agency**

- In May 2018, over half of respondents (58%) indicated that they had heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA).
- Over two thirds (70%) of respondents who had heard of the NCA indicated that the Agency is working either adequately, well or very well. 10% of respondents indicated that the NCA is working either poorly or very poorly, with 20% of respondents indicating a 'Don't know' response.

## 1. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE POLICE

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

In May 2018, over two thirds (68%) of respondents indicated that they thought that the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 finding of 74% (Table 1). 71% of Protestant respondents and 65% of Catholic respondents indicated that they thought the police were doing a very/fairly good job in their area, with the latter a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 figure (73%). 10% of respondents rated the performance of their local police as very/fairly poor.

Table 1: Performance of local police												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly good	66	67	67	64	<b>73</b>	68	<b>73</b>	76	<b>74</b>	<b>65</b>	71	<b>68</b>
Neither good nor poor	20	19	20	21	16	20	<b>17</b>	14	<b>15</b>	21	18	<b>20</b>
Very/fairly poor	11	13	12	15	10	11	10	9	10	12	10	10
Don't know/refusal	2	1	1	1	1	1	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	1	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	2

### Q2. How satisfied are you that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole?

In May 2018, almost three quarters (74%) of respondents were very/fairly satisfied that the PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 figure (78%). Analysis by religion revealed no statistically significant change in opinion from the previous year's results.

Table 2: Satisfaction that PSNI treat members of the public fairly in Northern Ireland as a whole												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (January)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	67	<b>71</b>	70	66	<b>77</b>	73	<b>73</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>78</b>	68	81	<b>74</b>
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19	15	17	21	16	18	16	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	18	12	15
Fairly/very dissatisfied	13	12	12	11	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	10	5	8	12	7	9
Don't know/refusal	1	<b>1</b>	1	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>	2	<b>1</b>	1



**Q3. 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 May 2018, 86% 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 decrease from the April 2017 finding of 90% (Table 3). The percentage of respondents overall who had a lot of confidence saw a statistically significant decrease from 42% in April 2017 to 37% in May 2018.

<b>Table 3: Confidence in the police’s ability to provide an ordinary day to day policing service for all the people of Northern Ireland</b>												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Total confidence	8	12	11	10	15	12	12	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	9	<b>14</b>	13
A lot of confidence	33	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	32	39	37	<b>39</b>	45	<b>42</b>	35	41	<b>37</b>
Some confidence	43	36	39	42	36	39	37	<b>27</b>	<b>32</b>	40	32	36
<b>Total/A lot of/Some</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>84</b>	84	<b>90</b>	<b>88</b>	88	93	90	84	<b>87</b>	<b>86</b>
Little confidence	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	10	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	9	7	8	11	10	10
No confidence at all	4	<b>4</b>	4	3	2	<b>2</b>	3	1	2	3	2	3
<b>Little/No confidence</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	13	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	12	8	10	14	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
Don’t know/refusal	1	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	0	<b>0</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>

**Q4. How satisfied are you with the levels of police patrols in your area?**

In May 2018, 41% of respondents were very/fairly satisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, a statistically significant decrease on on the April 2017 figure of 51%. 45% of Catholic respondents and 38% of Protestant respondents were very/fairly satisfied with the levels of police patrols in their area, with the latter a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 figure (52%).

<b>Table 4: Satisfaction with the levels of police patrols</b>												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very/fairly satisfied	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>51</b>	46	48	51	52	51	45	<b>38</b>	<b>41</b>
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	29	24	26	26	26	27	26	24	25	30	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>
Very/fairly dissatisfied	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>29</b>	23	<b>28</b>	28	22	23	<b>23</b>	24	27	24
Don’t know/refusal	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	1	<b>0</b>	1	1	<b>0</b>	1	1	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

**Q5. Over the last year, has the overall standard of policing in your area...?**

In May 2018, over three quarters (77%) of respondents indicated that the overall standard of policing in their area had remained the same over the last year. Analysis

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by religion revealed no statistically significant change in opinion from the previous year's results (Table 5).

<b>Table 5: Perception of the overall standard of policing over the last year</b>												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Got better	13	6	9	10	7	8	10	9	9	8	7	7
Remained the same	<b>71</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>71</b>	72	75	74	73	76	74	78	74	77
Got worse	13	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	14	<b>15</b>	15	13	14	13	11	17	13
Don't know/refusal	2	2	3	4	3	3	5	2	3	3	2	3

## 2: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF PCSPs

### Q6. Have you heard of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)?

In May 2018, less than half of respondents (44%) had heard of PCSPs (Table 6). Analysis by religion revealed no statistically significant change in opinion from the previous year’s results.

<b>Table 6: Have you heard of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)?</b>												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	42	47	45	45	53	49	45	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	44	43	44
No	58	53	55	55	47	51	55	<b>58</b>	<b>57</b>	56	57	56

### Q7. Do you know how to contact your local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety?

In May 2018, almost one third of respondents (31%) who had heard of PCSPs knew how to contact their local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 figure (38%, Table 7). The proportion of Protestant respondents who knew how to contact their local Policing and Community Safety Partnership about local policing and community safety saw statistically significant decrease from 40% in April 2017 to 28% in May 2018.

<b>Table 7: Knowledge of how to contact PCSP about local policing and community safety</b>												
All those who have heard of PCSPs Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	31	32	31	33	33	34	35	40	38	36	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>
No	69	68	69	67	67	66	65	59	62	64	<b>72</b>	<b>69</b>

**Q8. Do you feel that your local PCSP has helped to improve policing in your local area?**

In May 2018, 32% of respondents who had heard of PCSPs, felt that their local PCSP has helped to improve policing in their local area, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 finding of 41% (Table 8). The proportion of Catholic respondents who agreed that their local PCSP had helped improve local policing saw a statistically significant decrease from 49% in April 2017, to 35% in May 2018. Over one quarter of respondents (29%) recorded a don't know response.

<b>Table 8: Has your local PCSP helped to improve local policing?</b>												
All those who have heard of PCSPs Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	<b>32</b>	<b>42</b>	37	37	37	37	<b>49</b>	37	41	<b>35</b>	31	<b>32</b>
No	<b>40</b>	42	<b>42</b>	43	37	39	34	37	26	39	40	39
Don't know/refusal	27	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	20	<b>26</b>	23	17	27	23	<b>27</b>	30	29

### 3. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

#### Q9. Have you heard of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (Policing Board)?

In May 2018, a large majority of respondents (85%) had heard of the Policing Board (Table 11). Analysis by religion revealed no statistically significant change in opinion from the previous year’s results.

Table 9: Have you heard of the NI Policing Board?												
Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	83	87	84	79	<b>92</b>	85	81	<b>86</b>	83	85	89	85
No	17	13	16	21	<b>8</b>	15	19	<b>13</b>	17	15	11	15
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

#### Q10. Do you think that the Policing Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job?

In May 2018, over two thirds (70%) of respondents who had heard of the Policing Board thought that the Board helps ensure that the PSNI do a good job, a statistically significant decrease on the April 2017 figure of 76% (Table 10). 14% of all respondents who had heard of the Policing Board recorded a ‘Don’t know’ response to this question, a statistically significant increase from 10% in April 2017.

Table 10: 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											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	69	69	70	<b>76</b>	70	73	75	<b>78</b>	76	71	73	<b>70</b>
No	<b>16</b>	19	17	13	19	16	14	<b>12</b>	14	16	14	15
Don't know/refusal	15	12	13	11	11	11	11	9	10	13	13	<b>14</b>

#### Q11. Do you think that the Policing Board is part of the police or independent of the police?

In May 2018, almost three quarters of respondents (73%) who had heard of the Policing Board correctly thought that the Board is independent of the police (Table 11). Analysis by religion did not reveal significant differences in awareness of the Policing Board’s independent status from April 2017 to May 2018.

<b>Table 11: Is the Policing Board part of the police or independent of the police?</b>												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Rating												
Part of the police	41	32	36	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	25	20	22	23	18	20
Independent of the police	52	62	57	<b>70</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>74</b>	69	74	72	71	74	73
Don't know/refusal	7	6	6	6	4	5	6	6	6	6	8	7

**Q12. What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?**

In May 2018, a large majority of respondents (81%) 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 12). Again, analysis by religion revealed no significant difference in awareness of the Board’s primary role from April 2017 to May 2018.

<b>Table 12: What do you think is the primary role of the Policing Board?</b>												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Rating												
To actively direct police operations	19	12	15	<b>9</b>	10	<b>9</b>	11	10	10	14	7	11
To oversee policing and hold the Chief Constable and the PSNI publicly to account	73	77	76	<b>81</b>	82	<b>83</b>	80	84	82	78	84	81
To tell the Chief Constable what to do	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	2
Other	<b>0</b>	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	<b>2</b>	2
Don't know/refusal	<b>3</b>	5	<b>4</b>	6	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	4

**Q13. Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?**

In May 2018, more than three quarters of the respondents (78%) who had heard of the Policing Board indicated that the Board is working either adequately, well or very well, (Table 13).

Analysis by religion revealed a statistically significant decrease for Protestant respondents indicating that the Board is working either adequately, well or very well (77%, from 84% in April 2017).

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<b>Table 13: Overall, how well do you think the Policing Board is working?</b>												
All those who have heard of the Policing Board Rating	Percentage of respondents											
	2015 (January)			2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very well	6	4	4	5	4	5	8	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	7	7	7
Well	26	26	26	28	26	28	28	<b>33</b>	30	25	27	27
Adequately	46	42	45	45	<b>50</b>	46	45	<b>43</b>	44	45	42	44
Very well/Well/Adequately	78	72	75	78	80	<b>79</b>	81	84	82	78	<b>77</b>	78
Poorly	<b>14</b>	15	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	9	<b>9</b>	9	10	9	9
Very poorly	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	<b>0</b>	1	3	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Poorly/very poorly	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	12	<b>12</b>	11	9	10	13	12	12
Don't know/refusal	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	9	9	6	8	9	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>

#### 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).

##### Q14. Have you heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA)?

In May 2018, over half of respondents (58%) indicated that they had heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA). 41% of respondents indicated that they had not heard of the NCA, a statistically significant decrease from the April 2017 figure (46%).

Table 14: Have you heard of the National Crime Agency (NCA)?									
Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Yes	46	61	54	51	58	54	55	61	58
No	54	39	46	49	42	46	45	39	<b>41</b>
Don't know/refusal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

##### Q15. Overall, how well do you think the NCA is working?

Over two thirds (70%) of respondents who had heard of the NCA indicated that the Agency is working either adequately, well or very well (Table 15). 10% of respondents indicated that the NCA is working either poorly or very poorly, with 20% of respondents indicating a 'Don't know' response. Analysis by religion revealed a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of Protestant respondents indicating that the Agency is working either very well, well or adequately (71%, compared with 81% in April 2017).

Table 15: Overall, how well do you think the NCA is working?									
Rating	Percentage of respondents								
	2016 (April)			2017 (April)			2018 (May)		
	C	P	All	C	P	All	C	P	All
Very well	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	6	5
Well	18	25	23	23	30	26	21	23	22
Adequately	43	41	41	37	46	43	45	42	43
Very well/Well/Adequately	65	70	68	64	<b>81</b>	73	70	<b>71</b>	70
Poorly	11	5	7	11	5	7	10	6	8
Very poorly	2	1	1	3	1	2	3	0	2
Poorly/very poorly	13	6	8	14	6	9	13	7	10
Don't know	23	24	24	22	<b>13</b>	19	17	<b>22</b>	20





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## Document Title

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