Police Service of Northern Ireland

Security Statistics
in Northern Ireland:
Quality Report

December 2011

Personal, Professional, Protective Policing

Quality Report: Security Statistics in Northern Ireland.

Dimension	Assessment by the author
Introduction	***Context for the quality report.***
	The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has collated statistics on the security situation since the start of the Troubles in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the early years these statistics were based on paper records and manual collation systems and it was only in the 1990s that a computerised system was introduced for capturing this information.
	All of the information is sourced from the PSNI operational systems based on incidents that were either reported to the police or that came to their attention (i.e. police reporting details of an incident they came across during a patrol). A variety of quality assurance checks are applied to the statistics before they are published to ensure their accuracy and reliability.
	Provisional statistics are reported on a regular basis within a given financial year with the finalised statistics published in May each year. In-year provisional statistics are subject to revision in following in-year updated publications. Finalised end of year statistics are not subject to revision. All statistical reports are placed on the PSNI website in accordance with our pre-announced publication timetable.
	Further details on the uses of the statistics and the methodology used to collate and report them are available in the [Security Statistics User Guide](#) on our [website](#).
Relevance	***The degree to which the statistical product meets user needs in both coverage and content.***
	As the security situation is unique to Northern Ireland, the statistics are not directly comparable to any other region or police force in the UK. There are no internationally accepted standards for recording many of the security related statistics but we do work with colleagues in the rest of the UK in providing input to UK wide and EU terrorism related statistical publications, especially in relation to the numbers of persons arrested and charged with terrorism related offences.
	The statistics have developed over time to reflect changes in the ongoing security situation and changes in the different terrorist approaches adopted by Loyalist and Republican groups.
	The statistics continue to provide useful information on the security situation following the Good Friday agreement and subsequent ceasefires, albeit that the numbers of such incidents are much reduced in comparison to the pre-ceasefire years.
	User needs are identified through our consultation process and any proposed actions to address identified needs are highlighted in the relevant section of the PSNI Statistics Branch website. Incidents in GB or across the border in the ROI are not included in the statistics collated by the PSNI as they are outside the organisation's jurisdiction.
	Security statistics are used by a variety of organisations and individuals in the public and private sector as well as by the media and wider public to monitor current trends in the security situation and also to conduct research into historical trends over the period of the Troubles. Further details are available from the [Security Situation Statistics User Guide](#) on the website.

Accuracy and Reliability	*The proximity between an estimate and the unknown true value.*
	The statistics are gathered from internal PSNI operational systems and while statisticians from the branch have been involved in the design and output requirements of this system it relies on the accuracy of the information collated and recorded by police officers in dealing with such incidents. Staff from the PSNI's Statistics Branch monitor these incidents on a daily basis and select those that meet the criteria of a security related incident and add the details to a separate security statistics database.
	Statistics Branch staff then undertake a number of validation processes and checks to ensure that the data are as accurate as possible. This includes checking the details of each incident with the relevant investigating officer and also cross-referencing other incidents with local police Districts and the Crime Operations Dept. to ensure that they agree with our classification of certain security related incident types. As we manage and maintain the security statistics database within the branch, the data quality is generally good, although obviously there may be some discrepancies in historical data when processes were less computerised and the number of ongoing security incidents was significantly greater than now experienced.
Timeliness and Punctuality	*Timeliness refers to the time gap between publication and the reference period. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.*
	Monthly updates on the security situation are provided on the PSNI website within two weeks of the end of the reporting period, as provisional figures. The dates are pre-announced on the publication schedule.
	Finalised figures for the financial year are published mid-May and are also pre-announced on the PSNI website.
Accessibility and Clarity	*Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice.*
	Security situation statistics are published on the PSNI website to pre-announced schedules. These web-based releases contain contact details for the responsible statistician if a different format or further explanations are required.
	We are also currently considering plans to include the security situation statistics on the NI Neighbourhood Information System (NINIS) website, managed by NISRA.
	Information about consultation exercises and user surveys is provided in the User Consultation and User Feedback sections which can be found on the Official Statistics page of the PSNI website. Further background information on the PSNI's security statistics is provided in the relevant Security Situation Statistics User Guide.
Coherence and Comparability	*Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain.*
	As all the information contained in the Security Statistics publication is derived from the same source, coherence is not an issue.
	Given the uniqueness of the Northern Ireland security situation and the history of the Troubles, comparability outside N Ireland is problematic. However, we work with colleagues across the rest of the UK to provide terrorism related statistics for the UK and for EU. These mostly relate to the numbers of arrests and charges of individuals for terrorism related offences.

	We provide trend information back to 1969 where possible to allow users to compare changes over time. *Common mistakes made with the security statistics include:* *-some users don't realise that incidents which occurred outside Northern Ireland are not included in the statistics (eg. shootings or bombings in ROI or GB),* *-paramilitary style assaults and shootings are conducted by paramilitaries on members of their own communities as a punishment. Occasionally users would mistakenly assume that these would be conducted by paramilitaries on the other community.* *-many users assume that our security statistics database and crime databases are linked and that we can identify recorded crimes that are security related. This is not the case. There are two separate databases and any cross referencing is a laborious manual exercise.*
Trade-offs between Output Quality Components	***Trade-offs are the extent to which different aspects of quality are balanced against each other.***
	While we do try to ensure that all security related incidents reported to the police are included in the statistics, we recognise that a small number may be accidently omitted due to police officers not recording the fact that they were security related. We also recognise that discrepancies may occur with some of the historical data when processes were less automated and when large numbers of such incidents were occurring on a daily basis.
Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions	***The processes for finding out about users and uses, and their views on the statistical products.***
	User consultation is an important part of our work. It informs our work schedules and statistical planning process. Our Customer Service and Engagement Statement is available on our website and it highlights our aims and standards for dealing with key users and requests from members of the public. *We completed a branch-wide user satisfaction survey in October / November 2011 and the survey results are available on the Official Statistics page of the PSNI website.* *The main uses of the PSNI's security related statistics are highlighted in the Security Situation Statistics User Guide.*
Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden	***The effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the statistical output.***
	The security statistics are collated by a small number of staff within PSNI's Statistics Branch. There is no additional burden placed on the public or on businesses as a result of collation of these statistics.
Confidentiality, Transparency and Security	***The procedures and policy used to ensure sound confidentiality, security and transparent practices.***
	The PSNI's Statistics Branch complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics in relation to Principle 5: Confidentiality. A Confidentiality Protection Arrangements document is available on the statistics section of the PSNI website. It outlines the arrangements for maintaining confidentiality of statistical data and covers: • *Physical security* • *Technical security* • *Staff training* • *Statistical Disclosure Control* • *Sharing of data with a third party.*