



Use of Stop and Search Powers by the Police in Northern Ireland

1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024

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Key Statistics

During the 12 months between 1 October 2023 and 30 September 2024:

- 20,796 persons were stopped and searched/questioned, 20% fewer than the previous 12 months.
- 71% of stops were conducted under the Misuse of Drugs Act* and 13% of stops were conducted under the Police and Criminal Evidence Order*.
- 12% of stops were conducted under the Justice and Security Act Section 24* and 2% under the Justice and Security Act Section 21*.
- there was a decrease in the use of all powers, except the Terrorism Act, compared to the previous 12 months. In particular, the use of the Justice and Security Act* decreased by 44% (from 5,354 to 2,990) and the use of Misuse of Drugs Act* by 17% (from 17,878 to 14,784). Use of the Police and Criminal Evidence Order, the Firearms Order and other less frequently used powers also decreased, albeit by smaller amounts. Conversely, the use of the Terrorism Act* increased by 84% (from 299 to 551).
- 23% of stops resulted in some form of outcome. The arrest rate was 8%, compared to 6% in the previous 12 months.
- all 11 police districts carried out fewer stops than the previous 12 months.
- 8% (1,763) of those stopped were aged 17 and under. Of these, approximately 2 out of every 3 (64%) were stopped and searched under the Misuse of Drugs Act*.
- 84% of those stopped were male, while 37% were aged 18 to 25.
- there were 11 persons stopped for every 1,000 people in Northern Ireland.

** alone, or in combination with other powers.*

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1. Things you need to know about this release

Coverage

Stop and search statistics for Northern Ireland are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

Stop and Search is an operational tool used to prevent, detect and investigate crime as well as to bring offenders to justice. Police officers have a legal power to stop and search members of the public in certain circumstances, from dealing with incidents of anti-social behaviour, to suspecting an individual is carrying drugs, a weapon or stolen property through to countering terrorism. There are a range of legislative powers available to an officer to carry out this task, including the Police and Criminal Evidence Order (PACE), the Misuse of Drugs Act, the Terrorism Act (TACT) and the Justice and Security (NI) Act (JSA). In most circumstances a police officer will need grounds to search an individual. Some stop and search powers (those under the Justice and Security Act) allow individuals to be searched without grounds, for example, to counter terrorism. Further advice and information regarding stop and search can be found [here](#).

Officers are required to make a record of the details of a stop and search at the time of encounter as outlined in the [PACE code of practice](#). This data is downloaded from a stop and search database, validated and published on a quarterly basis. Statistics are presented on a rolling 12 month basis and this quarterly bulletin presents stop and search statistics for the period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024. An [accompanying spreadsheet](#) is available on our website which outlines the data in this bulletin and historic trends.

Details of how these statistics are collated, reported and used is included in the [Stop and Search User Guide](#). Further information about this publication, including the legislation reported on, can be found in the Background Notes section at the end of the report. The next quarterly update will be published in February 2025.

Users and uses of the statistics

Uses of the statistics, based on user engagement, information requests and satisfaction survey feedback include policy making and policy monitoring, performance monitoring and public interest, by a range of users including PSNI, the Policing Board, media and academics. Full details can be found in the [Stop and Search User Guide](#).

PSNI Statistics Branch welcomes any user feedback on these statistics, which can be provided via the email address on the cover page.

Official Statistics

This bulletin is an Official Statistics publication meaning it complies with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) as follows:

- Trustworthiness: the statistics are impartial, independent and released in an open and transparent manner in accordance with a pre-announced publication schedule
- Quality: the statistics are produced using robust and relevant data sources which undergo continuous quality improvement and assurance checks
- Value: the statistics strive to meet user needs informed by ongoing feedback, providing sufficient detail which is widely accessible.

2. Summary Statistics

Table 1: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned under all legislative powers during October 2023 to September 2024 compared to the previous 12 months

October 2022 - September 2023		October 2023 - September 2024		Percentage change in number of persons stopped
Number of persons stopped	Subsequent arrest rate	Number of persons stopped	Subsequent arrest rate	
26,106	6%	20,796	8%	-20%

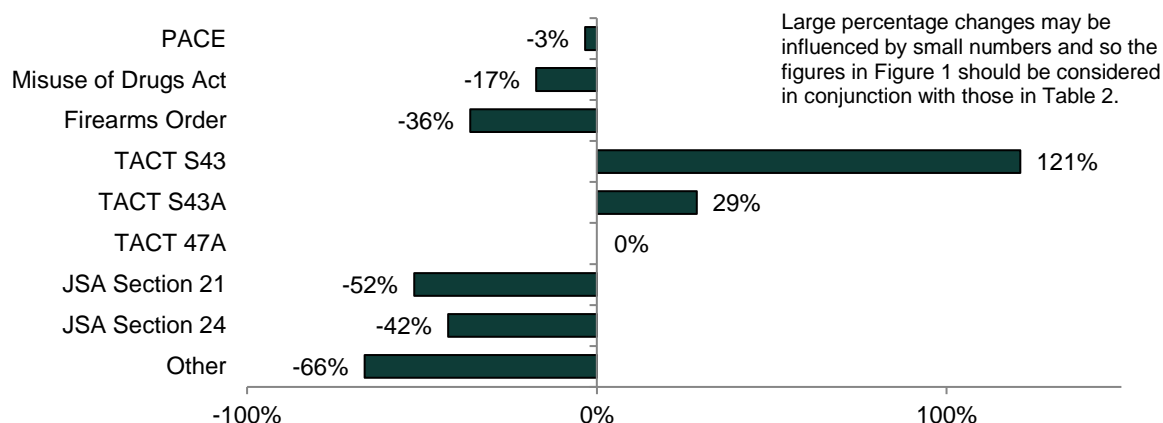
More than one legislative power can be used to stop and search/question a person. For this reason the total number of powers used will be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned. For example, an individual stopped under PACE and Misuse of Drugs Act will be counted as one person in Table 1 but will have a count of 1 in both the PACE and Misuse of Drugs categories in Table 2, and other subsequent tables displaying the use of each power.

Table 2: Number of times each power was used for a stop and search/question during October 2023 to September 2024 compared to the previous 12 months⁽¹⁾

Legislation	October 2022 - September 2023		October 2023 - September 2024	
	Number of persons stopped	Subsequent arrest rate ⁽²⁾	Number of persons stopped	Subsequent arrest rate ⁽²⁾
PACE	2,728	20%	2,637	24%
Misuse of Drugs Act	17,878	5%	14,784	6%
Firearms Order	69	32%	44	18%
TACT S43	180	2%	398	1%
TACT S43A	119	0%	153	1%
TACT 47A	0	.	0	.
JSA Section 21	918	1%	439	1%
JSA Section 24	4,436	1%	2,551	1%
Other ⁽³⁾	104	4%	35	3%

- (1) As more than one legislative power can be used to stop and search/question a person, the sum of the powers used will be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned.
- (2) For those persons stopped under a combination of legislative powers (1% of stops) and subsequently arrested, the arrest will be counted under each power. Reason for arrest may not be linked to the initial reason of the stop and search. Arrest rates are rounded to the nearest whole number.
- (3) 'Other' legislative powers are listed in Section 10.2

Figure 1: Percentage change in the number of stop and searches/questions by power during October 2023 to September 2024 compared to the previous 12 months



3. Levels of stop and search over the longer term (by financial year)

Figure 2: Ten year trend in the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned

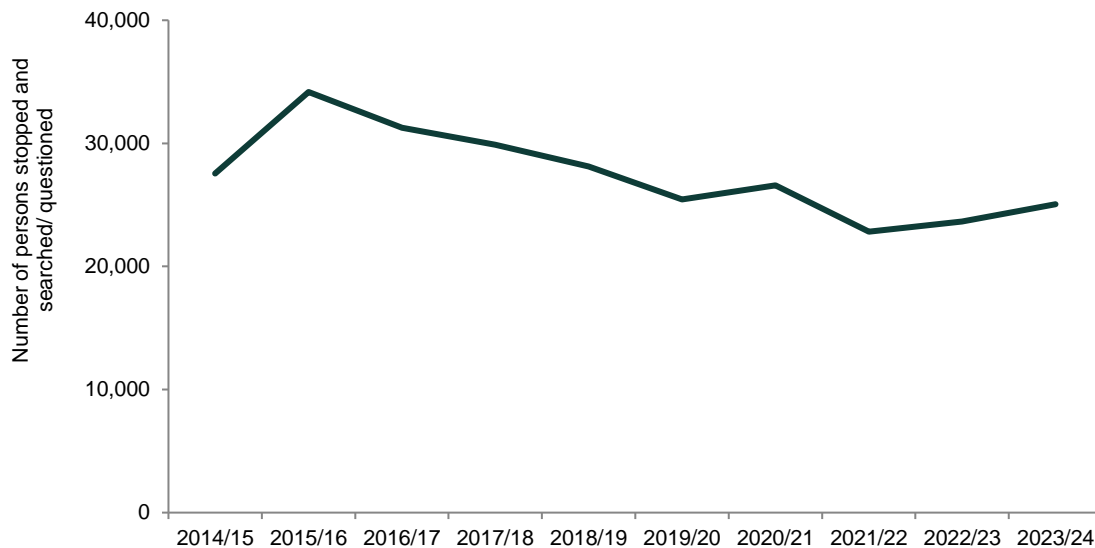


Table 3: Ten year trend in the use of stop and search/question powers

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
PACE / Misuse of Drugs / Firearms	22,189	25,151	21,876	22,628	21,062	19,842	22,530	19,136	19,977	19,902
TACT - Section 43/43A	192	344	265	118	74	38	35	57	91	584
- Section 47A ⁽³⁾	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSA - Section 21	1,922	2,812	2,200	1,505	1,283	997	456	471	616	753
- Section 24	3,906	6,980	7,935	6,245	6,035	4,818	3,739	3,195	3,037	4,179
Other legislative powers	190	97	140	32	79	21	49	93	85	45
Total uses of each legislative power ^(2,4)	28,399	35,384	32,416	30,528	28,533	25,716	26,809	22,952	23,806	25,463
<i>Total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned ^(2,4)</i>	<i>27,539</i>	<i>34,171</i>	<i>31,274</i>	<i>29,882</i>	<i>28,116</i>	<i>25,450</i>	<i>26,590</i>	<i>22,823</i>	<i>23,650</i>	<i>25,054</i>

Table 4: Percentage of stops carried out under non-counter terrorism powers and counter-terrorism powers

PACE / Misuse of Drugs / Firearms	78%	71%	67%	74%	74%	77%	84%	83%	84%	78%
Counter Terrorism Powers ⁽⁵⁾	21%	29%	32%	26%	26%	23%	16%	16%	16%	22%
Other legislative powers	0.7%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%
All Powers ^(6,7)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

(1) Figures in this section are based on financial year.

(2) The difference between **total uses of each legislative power** and **total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned** will be due to persons stopped under combinations of powers being counted under each legislation used (e.g. someone stopped under PACE and the Misuse of Drugs Act will have a count of one under each of these powers).

(3) TACT Section 47A has been in place since March 2011 although the power has only been authorised for use during one period in May 2013.

(4) Searches under the authority of a warrant and searches that have been carried out after an arrest have been excluded from the 2017/18 figures onwards (impact is an approximate 2.5% reduction in the total number of persons stopped).

(5) TACT S43, S43A and JSA S21, S24.

(6) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

(7) Figures from 2004/05 can be found in the accompanying spreadsheet.

4. Persons stopped and searched during the past 12 months

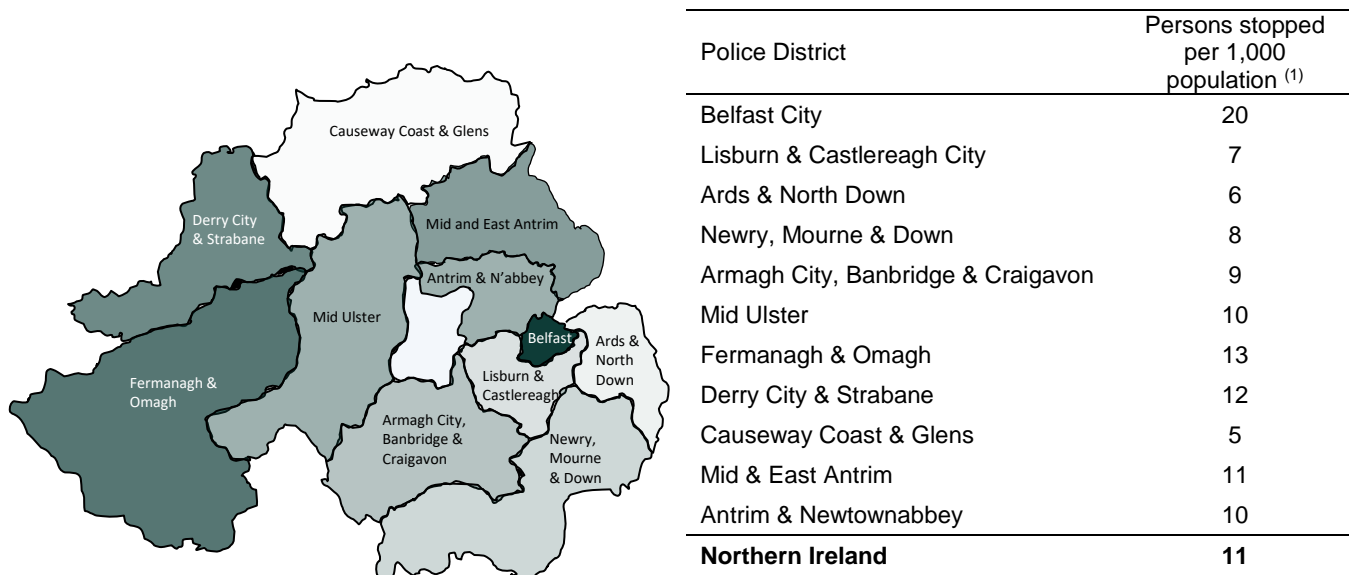
4.1 By policing district

Table 5: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned and subsequently arrested under all legislative powers during October 2023 to September 2024 by police district

Police District	Total persons stopped	Total persons arrested	Arrest rate ⁽¹⁾
Belfast City	6,975	737	11%
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	1,115	89	8%
Ards & North Down	962	77	8%
Newry, Mourne & Down	1,427	97	7%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	1,900	114	6%
Mid Ulster	1,455	73	5%
Fermanagh & Omagh	1,492	47	3%
Derry City & Strabane	1,861	127	7%
Causeway Coast & Glens	678	49	7%
Mid & East Antrim	1,542	91	6%
Antrim & Newtownabbey	1,389	89	6%
Northern Ireland	20,796	1,590	8%

(1) Although the arrest rate can be used as an indicator of the effectiveness of a stop and search there are a number of other possible outcomes that could indicate a successful search, which are presented in Section 4.3 (Table 11).

Figure 3: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned under all legislative powers per 1,000 population in each police district during October 2023 to September 2024



(1) Rates per 1,000 are calculated using NISRA's mid-2022 [population estimates](#), the latest available data at police district level.

4.2 By age, gender and ethnicity

Table 6: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned and subsequently arrested under all legislative powers during October 2023 to September 2024, by age and gender

Age Group ^(1,2)	Persons stopped and searched/questioned				Persons subsequently arrested			
	Male	Female	Unknown/Other	Total	Male	Female	Unknown/Other	Total
12 and under	46	5	0	51	3	0	0	3
13 to 17	1,424	282	6	1,712	60	13	0	73
18 to 25	6,395	1,272	6	7,673	342	50	0	392
26 to 35	4,837	969	2	5,808	533	88	0	621
36 to 45	2,991	490	4	3,485	292	54	1	347
46 to 55	1,212	193	0	1,405	82	27	0	109
56 to 65	503	49	0	552	29	5	0	34
Over 65	96	9	0	105	9	1	0	10
Not specified	1	3	1	5	0	1	0	1
Total	17,505	3,272	19	20,796	1,350	239	1	1,590

(1) Age may be officer perceived.

(2) Figures are provided in the accompanying spreadsheet by single year of age for the 13 to 17 year group.

Table 7: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned and subsequently arrested under all legislative powers during October 2023 to September 2024, by ethnicity

	Persons stopped and searched/questioned	Persons subsequently arrested
White	19,490	1,441
Irish Traveller ⁽¹⁾	355	57
Other Ethnic Group	343	36
Black	284	25
Asian	234	28
Mixed	87	3
Not specified	3	0
Total	20,796	1,590

(1) Ethnicity may be officer perceived. A degree of undercounting may exist for the Irish Traveller category as some Irish Travellers are likely to be categorised as White.

Table 8: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned and subsequently arrested during October 2023 to September 2024, by gender and power ⁽¹⁾

	Persons stopped and searched/questioned ⁽¹⁾				Persons subsequently arrested ^(1,2)			
	Male	Female	Unknown / Other	Total	Male	Female	Unknown / Other	Total
PACE	2,172	458	7	2,637	524	109	1	634
Misuse of Drugs	12,255	2,522	7	14,784	797	128	0	925
Firearms	40	4	0	44	7	1	0	8
TACT S43	384	14	0	398	3	0	0	3
TACT S43A	149	4	0	153	1	0	0	1
TACT 47A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSA Section 21	368	70	1	439	3	0	0	3
JSA Section 24	2,342	205	4	2,551	28	3	0	31
Other	33	2	0	35	1	0	0	1

(1) As more than one legislative power can be used to stop and search/question a person, the sum of the powers used will be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned. Similarly, the sum of arrests will be greater than the total number of persons arrested. (2) Reason for arrest may not be linked to the initial reason of the stop and search.

Table 9: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned during October 2023 to September 2024, by age and power ⁽¹⁾

	Persons stopped and searched/questioned									Total
	12 and under	13 to 17	18 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	Over 65	Not specified	
PACE	37	489	649	753	468	149	74	18	0	2,637
Misuse of Drugs Act	14	1,111	6,282	4,356	2,172	623	201	22	3	14,784
Firearms Order	0	6	12	9	7	5	4	1	0	44
TACT S43	0	0	52	33	133	134	38	8	0	398
TACT S43A	0	0	24	12	51	46	18	2	0	153
TACT 47A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSA Section 21	0	14	92	110	96	74	41	12	0	439
JSA Section 24	0	85	599	556	638	431	196	44	2	2,551
Other	0	12	9	10	3	1	0	0	0	35

(1) As more than one legislative power can be used to stop and search/question a person, the sum of the powers used will be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned.

(2) Age may be officer perceived.

(3) Figures are provided in the accompanying spreadsheet by single year of age for the 13 to 17 year group.

Table 10: Percentage of persons stopped and searched/questioned in each age group by power during October 2023 to September 2024

	Persons stopped and searched/questioned							
	12 and under	13 to 17	18 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 to 55	56 to 65	Over 65
PACE	73%	28%	8%	13%	13%	10%	13%	17%
Misuse of Drugs Act	27%	65%	81%	75%	61%	43%	35%	21%
Firearms Order	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Counter Terrorism ⁽¹⁾	0%	6%	10%	12%	26%	47%	51%	62%
Other	0%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

(1) TACT S43, S43A and JSA S21 and S24.

(2) Age may be officer perceived.

(3) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

4.3 Outcomes of stop and searches/questions

Table 11: Principal outcome of persons stopped and searched/questioned under all legislative powers during October 2023 to September 2024

Outcome	Number	%
Arrest	1,590	8%
Community Resolution	1,881	9%
Report to PPS	1,373	7%
Penalty Notice for Disorder	17	<1%
No Further Action Disposal	15,935	77%
Total	20,796	100%

(1) The outcome may not be linked to the initial reason of the stop and search.

(2) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

5. Frequency of use of powers

Table 12: Number of times all powers were used during October 2023 to September 2024 by quarter ⁽¹⁾

	October to December	January to March	April to June	July to September	Total
PACE	753	697	591	596	2,637
Misuse of Drugs Act	4,299	4,027	3,237	3,221	14,784
Firearms Order	20	11	8	5	44
TACT S43	127	87	80	104	398
TACT S43A	93	35	20	5	153
TACT 47A	0	0	0	0	0
JSA Section 21	132	130	85	92	439
JSA Section 24	671	862	563	455	2,551
Other	8	0	3	24	35
Total ⁽¹⁾	6,103	5,849	4,587	4,502	21,041

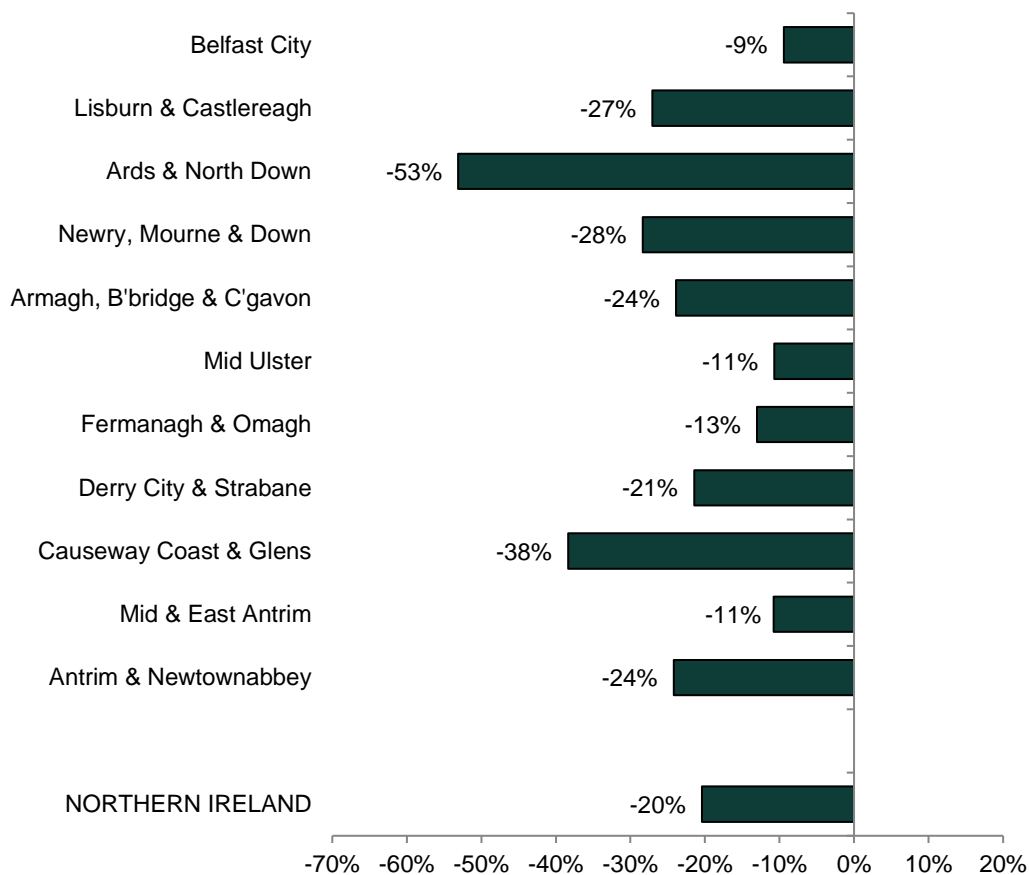
(1) As more than one legislative power can be used to stop and search/question a person, the sum of the powers used will be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned.

Table 13: Number of times all powers were used during October 2023 to September 2024 by police district ⁽¹⁾

Police District	PACE	Misuse of Drugs	Firearms Order	TACT S43	TACT S43A	TACT 47A	JSA S21	JSA S24	Other
Belfast City	1,090	4,705	12	347	140	0	159	668	19
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	171	736	8	6	3	0	35	165	0
Ards & North Down	119	546	4	0	0	0	110	190	0
Newry, Mourne & Down	176	1,104	2	2	0	0	16	134	0
Armagh City, B'bridge & C'gavon	198	1,567	1	9	2	0	18	116	0
Mid Ulster	160	1,129	0	22	5	0	31	128	0
Fermanagh & Omagh	125	1,298	0	0	0	0	20	46	7
Derry City & Strabane	167	993	8	9	3	0	20	667	0
Causeway Coast & Glens	110	483	8	0	0	0	12	70	0
Mid & East Antrim	181	1,264	0	0	0	0	7	95	0
Antrim & Newtownabbey	140	959	1	3	0	0	11	272	9
Northern Ireland	2,637	14,784	44	398	153	0	439	2,551	35

(1) As more than one legislative power can be used to stop and search/question a person, the sum of the powers used will be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned.

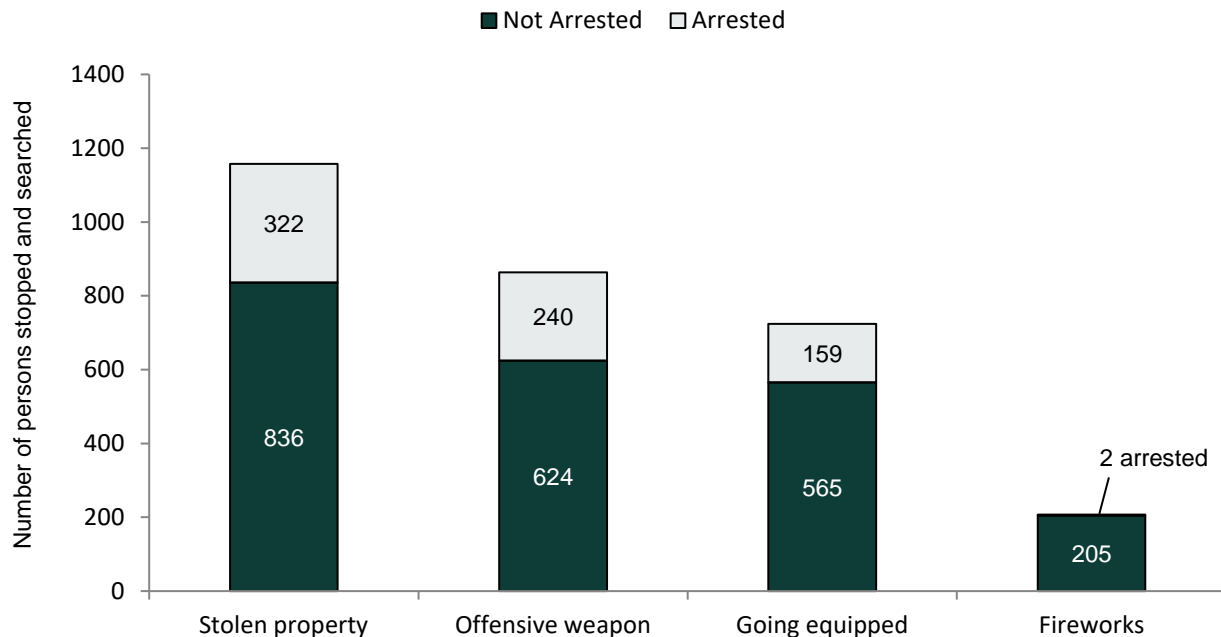
Figure 4: Percentage change in the use of all legislative powers by policing district during October 2023 to September 2024 compared to the previous 12 months



(1) The percentage change in the use of individual powers by policing district can be found in the accompanying spreadsheet.

6. Reason for search under PACE

Figure 5: Number of persons stopped and searched under PACE during October 2023 to September 2024 by reason for search



- (1) As more than one reason can be used to stop and search a person, the sum of the reasons may be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched under PACE.
 (2) The reason for arrest may not be linked to the initial reason of the search.

7. Vehicles stopped and searched during the past 12 months

Vehicle searches include vehicle-only searches as well as those in which a vehicle was searched together with any persons in it. **Therefore figures in Table 14 should not be added to other figures in this report to get the total number of stop and searches** as this would result in the double counting of an occupant of a vehicle searched.

Table 14: Number of times each power was used to stop and search a vehicle during October 2023 to September 2024 compared to the previous 12 months ⁽¹⁾

Legislation ⁽²⁾	October 2022 - September 2023 Number of vehicles stopped	October 2023 - September 2024 Number of vehicles stopped	Percentage change
PACE	514	409	-20%
Misuse of Drugs Act	6,999	5,717	-18%
Firearms Order	32	21	-34%
TACT S43	118	315	167%
TACT S43A	119	163	37%
TACT 47A	0	0	-
JSA Section 24	5,812	2,744	-53%
Other	49	4	-92%

- (1) As more than one legislative power can be used to stop and search a vehicle, the sum of the powers used will be greater than the total number of vehicles stopped and searched.
 (2) JSA S21 is excluded from this table as it is a stop and question power.

8. Comparison with England and Wales 2022/23 (by financial year) ⁽¹⁾

Figure 6: Number of stops per 1,000 population during 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 by police force ^(1,2,3)

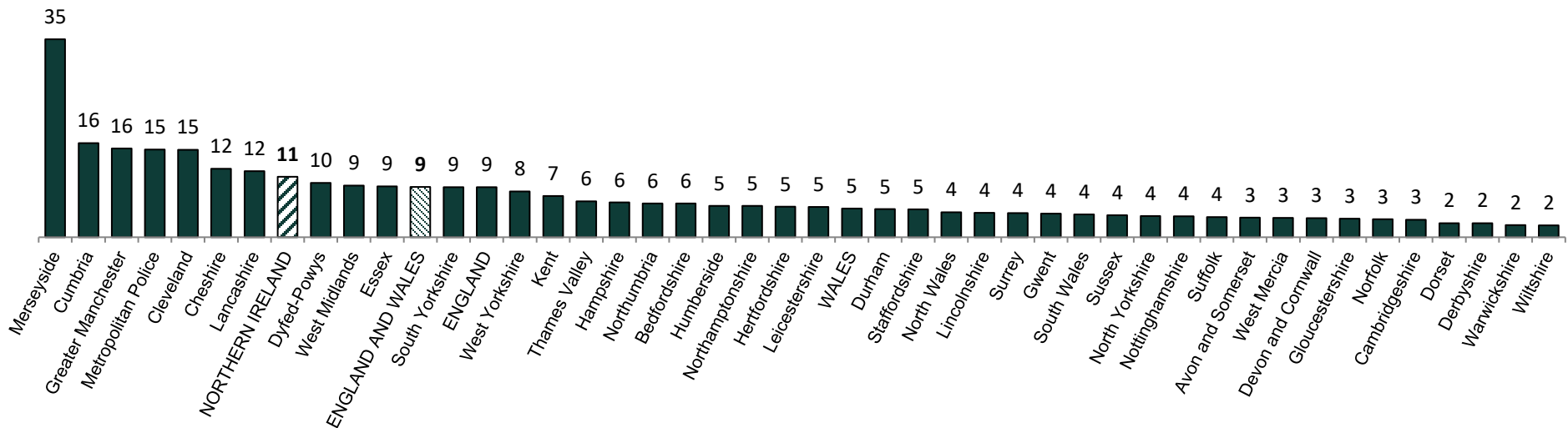
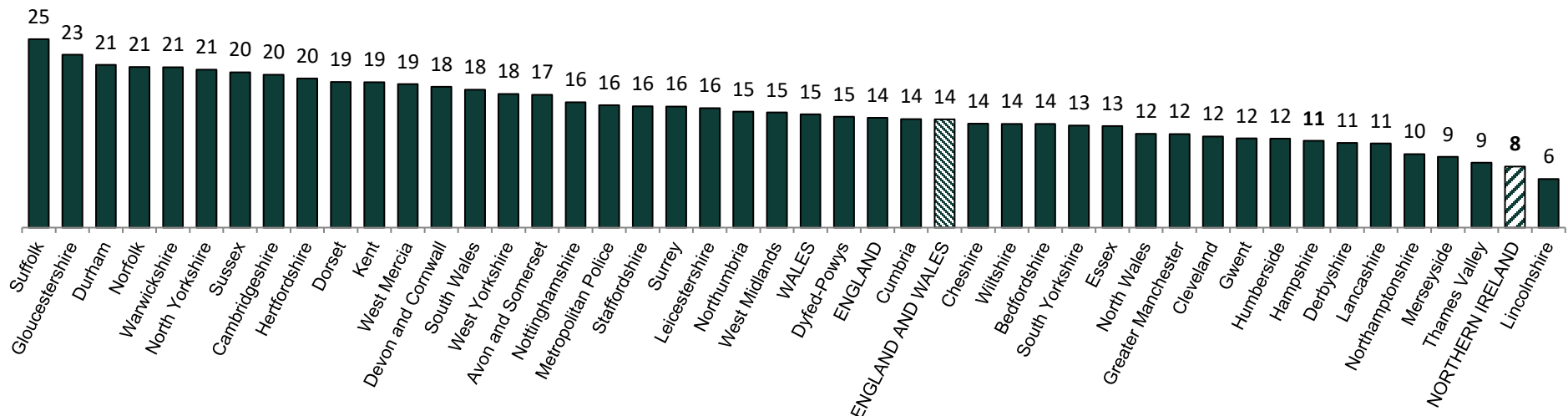


Figure 7: Percentage of stops resulting in an arrest during 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 by police force ^(1,2)

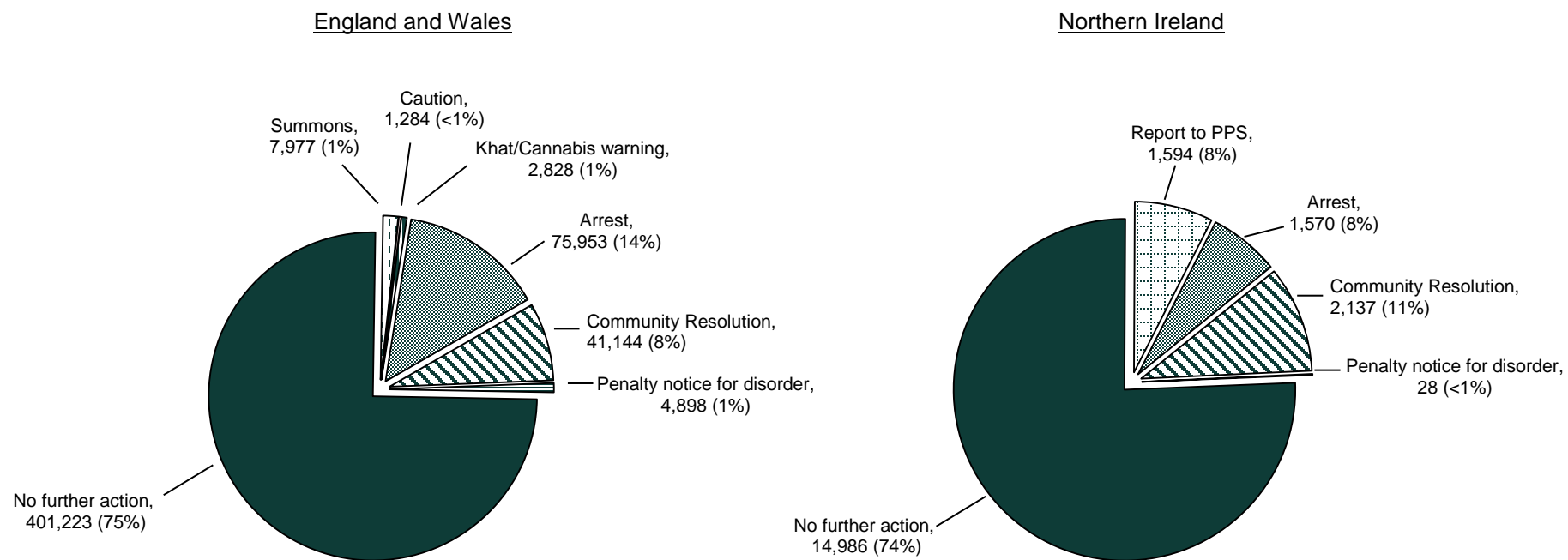


(1) The latest data available for England and Wales is 2023/24 (*Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending March 2024*). For comparability, the 2023/24 NI figures are also shown.

(2) In the interest of comparability, the NI figure excludes stops under JSA Section 21 and 24.

(3) Rates per 1,000 are calculated using NISRA's mid-2023 [population estimates](#).

Figure 8: Principal outcome of stop and search during 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024^(1,2)



25 out of every 100 stops in England and Wales resulted in an outcome

26 out of every 100 stops in Northern Ireland resulted in an outcome

- (1) The latest data available for England and Wales is 2023/24 (*Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending March 2024*). For comparability, the 2023/24 NI figures are also shown.
- (2) In the interest of comparability, the NI figure excludes stops under JSA Section 21 and 24.
- (3) England and Wales figures include vehicle only searches (3% of all searches). Northern Ireland figures do not.
- (4) 'No further action' figures for England and Wales include voluntary attendance, verbal warning, seizure of property, guardian intervention and other action.
- (5) Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

9. Background Notes

Further information on how these statistics are collated, reported and used is included in the Stop and Search User Guide which can be found [here](#).

10.1 Persons, vehicles or both searched

Officers record if each stop and search involved (i) only a person, (ii) only a vehicle or (iii) both.

All of the statistics reported in this publication, except Table 14, are a count of persons stopped and searched, that is, those stops under (i) **plus** those stops under (iii). Table 14 presents the number of vehicles stopped and searched, that is, those stops under (ii) **plus** stops under (iii).

Therefore figures in Table 14 should not be added to other figures in this report to get the total number of stop and searches as this would result in the double counting of an occupant of a vehicle searched.

The figures in this report are the number of stop and search incidents rather than the number of unique individuals stopped and searched, that is, multiple searches on the same people are counted as separate incidents.

10.2 Stop and search legislation

The following table summarises the legislative powers available to a PSNI officer to perform a stop and search.

Legislation	What the police can search for
The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, Section 3	Stolen property, going equipped to steal, offensive weapons including a blade or point, fireworks.
Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, Section 23	Controlled drugs
Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, Section 53	Firearms
Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007, Sections 21 and 24	Section 21 gives a police officer the authority to stop and question an individual to establish their identity and movements. Section 24 gives a police officer the authority to search for munitions and wireless apparatus. This can be done if (1) an officer has reasonable suspicion that he will find such items, or (2) he was authorised from an ACC.
Terrorism Act 2000, Section 43 and 43A	Anything which may constitute evidence that the individual is a terrorist, where an officer must have reasonable suspicion of terrorism-related activity. Section 43 gives a police officer the authority to search an individual. Section 43A gives a police officer the authority to search a vehicle as well as any individual he reasonably suspects to be a terrorist.
Terrorism Act 2000, Section 47A	Anything which may constitute evidence that the individual is a terrorist, but an officer may not necessarily have reasonable suspicion of terrorism-related activity but the search must occur within an area authorised made by a senior police officer and where necessary confirmed by the Secretary of State.

The PSNI have a number of other legislative powers that give them the authority to carry out a stop and search. These are:

- Section 139B of the Criminal Justice Act 1988
- Schedule 5 to the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011
- Article 6 Crossbows (Northern Ireland) Order 1988
- Article 25 Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985
- Article 23B of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987
- The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

These are less frequently used powers and are reported collectively under '*Other legislative powers*' in this report.

Further information on these powers can be found at legislation.gov.uk.

10.3 Longer term trend comparability

An internal review was carried out to assess the PSNI's compliance with PACE legislation governing the recording of stop and searches under Articles 3-5. The review found that searches under the authority of a warrant and searches carried out after an arrest had been recorded, and subsequently reported, as searches under Articles 3–5 when in fact they are governed by other articles of PACE. In order to fully comply with PACE legislation and more accurately report the usage of stop and search powers, searches under the authority of a warrant and searches that have been carried out after an arrest have been excluded from the 2017/18 figures onwards. Figures reported for the period pre-2017/18 still contain such searches. The impact is an approximate 2.5% reduction in the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned from 2017/18 onwards.