



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

1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

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PSNI Statistics Branch
Lisnasharragh
42 Montgomery Road
Belfast
BT6 9LD

[PSNI Statistics](#)

☎ 02890 650222 Ext. 24135

✉ statistics@psni.police.uk

Key Statistics

During the 12 months between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026:

- 20,597 persons were stopped and searched/questioned, 14% more than the previous year (18,096) but still the second lowest number of stops in the past 18 years.
- non-counter-terrorism powers, the Police and Criminal Evidence Order, the Misuse of Drugs Act and the Firearms Order, collectively accounted for 82% of all stop and search powers used while counter-terrorism powers, the Justice and Security Act and the Terrorism Act, collectively accounted for 17% of all powers used.
- there was an overall increase (12%) in the use of non-counter-terrorism powers compared to the previous year; the use of the Misuse of Drugs Act increased by 15% (from 13,063 to 14,966) compared to the previous year, while the use of the Police and Criminal Evidence Order decreased by 4% (from 2,435 to 2,349). The use of the Firearms Order and other less frequently used powers increased, albeit by smaller amounts.
- there was an overall increase (37%) in the use of counter-terrorism powers compared to the previous year; although the use of the Justice and Security Act decreased by 8% (from 2,241 to 2,063) and was at its lowest level in the past 17 years. Conversely, the use of the Terrorism Act increased by 281% (from 412 to 1,570) and was at its highest level in the past 15 years.
- 23% of stops resulted in some form of outcome. The arrest rate was 7%, compared to 8% the previous year.
- 8% (1,686) of those stopped were aged 17 and under. Of these, nearly two-thirds (65%) were stopped and searched under the Misuse of Drugs Act*.
- 86% of those stopped were male, while 35% were aged 18 to 25.
- there were 11 persons stopped for every 1,000 people in Northern Ireland, compared to 9 for every 1,000 people the previous year.

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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 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. 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 August 2026.

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 April 2025 to March 2026 compared to the previous 12 months

	Number of persons stopped	Arrest rate ⁽¹⁾	Overall outcome rate ⁽¹⁾
April 2024 - March 2025	18,096	8%	25%
April 2025 - March 2026	20,597	7%	23%
Annual percentage change	14%		

(1) Outcomes may include arrest, community resolution, report to the PPS or penalty notice for disorder. Arrest rate is included in overall outcome rate.

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 April 2025 to March 2026 compared to the previous 12 months⁽¹⁾

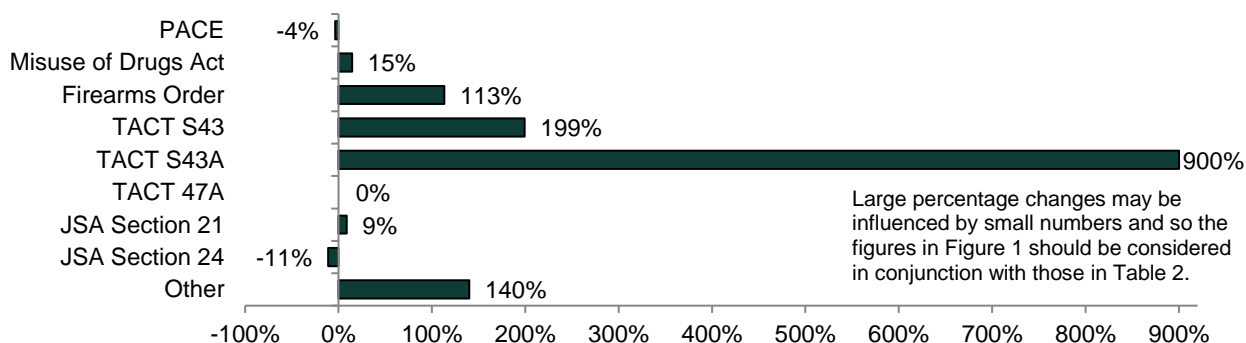
Legislation	April 2024 - March 2025			April 2025 - March 2026		
	Number of persons stopped	Arrest rate ⁽²⁾	Overall outcome rate ⁽²⁾	Number of persons stopped	Arrest rate ⁽²⁾	Overall outcome rate ⁽²⁾
PACE	2,435	25%	37%	2,349	23%	33%
Misuse of Drugs Act	13,063	6%	27%	14,966	6%	26%
Firearms Order	30	23%	27%	64	20%	33%
TACT S43	364	2%	3%	1,090	<1%	1%
TACT S43A	48	2%	2%	480	0%	1%
TACT 47A	0	.	.	0	.	.
JSA Section 21	340	2%	3%	370	1%	2%
JSA Section 24	1,901	1%	4%	1,693	2%	5%
Other ⁽³⁾	45	2%	7%	108	3%	4%

(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) Outcomes may include arrest, community resolution, report to the PPS or penalty notice for disorder. Arrest rate is included in overall outcome rate. For those persons stopped under a combination of legislative powers (2% of stops) the outcome will be counted under each power. The outcome may not be linked to the initial reason of the stop and search. Outcome 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 April 2025 to March 2026 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

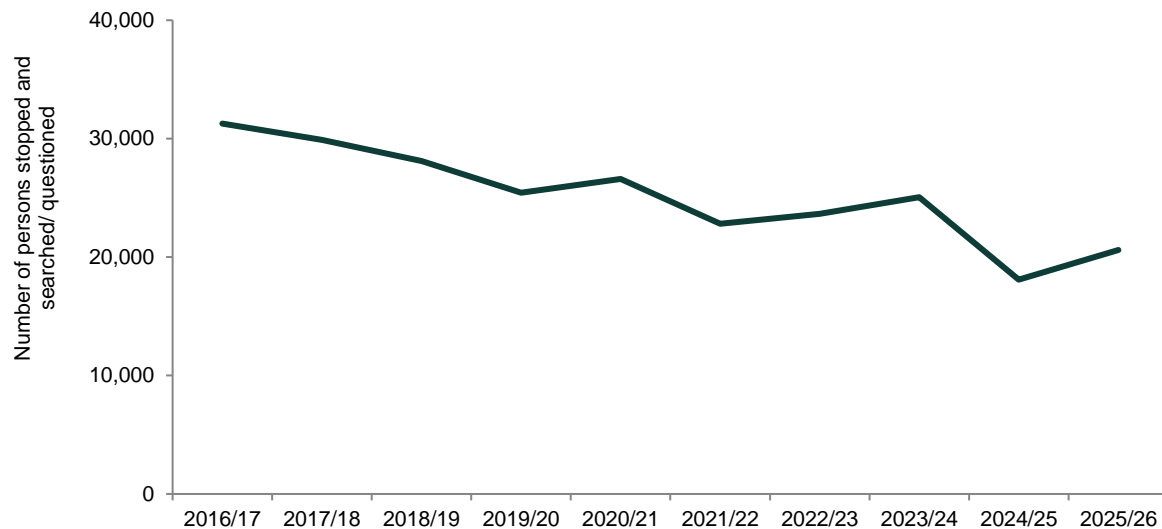


Table 3: Ten year trend in the use of stop and search/question powers

	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
PACE / Misuse of Drugs / Firearms	21,876	22,628	21,062	19,842	22,530	19,136	19,977	19,902	15,528	17,379
TACT - Section 43/43A	265	118	74	38	35	57	91	584	412	1,570
- Section 47A ⁽³⁾	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSA - Section 21	2,200	1,505	1,283	997	456	471	616	753	340	370
- Section 24	7,935	6,245	6,035	4,818	3,739	3,195	3,037	4,179	1,901	1,693
Other legislative powers	140	32	79	21	49	93	85	45	45	108
Total uses of each legislative power ^(2,4)	32,416	30,528	28,533	25,716	26,809	22,952	23,806	25,463	18,226	21,120
<i>Total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned ^(2,4)</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>	<i>18,096</i>	<i>20,597</i>

Table 4: Percentage of all powers used: non-counter terrorism powers and counter-terrorism powers

	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
PACE / Misuse of Drugs / Firearms	67%	74%	74%	77%	84%	83%	84%	78%	85%	82%
Counter Terrorism Powers ⁽⁵⁾	32%	26%	26%	23%	16%	16%	16%	22%	15%	17%
Other legislative powers	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	<0.5%	1%
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

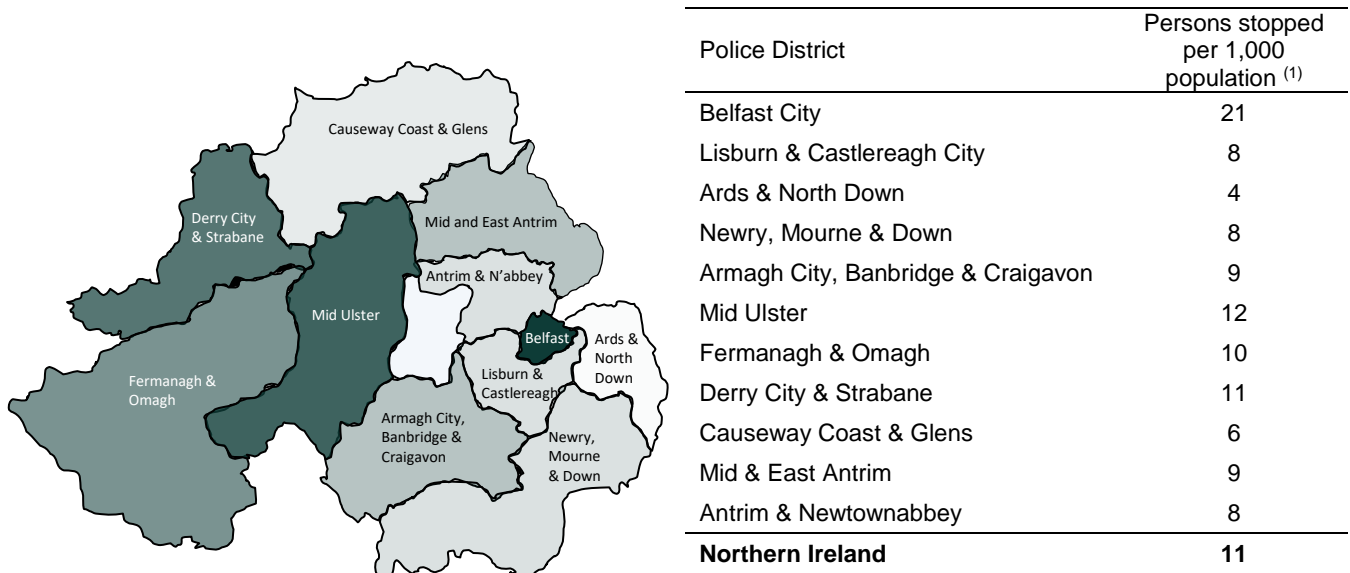
4.1 By policing district

Table 5: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned and subsequently arrested under all legislative powers during April 2025 to March 2026 by police district

Police District	Total persons stopped	Total persons arrested	Arrest rate ⁽¹⁾
Belfast City	7,359	653	9%
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	1,178	92	8%
Ards & North Down	740	58	8%
Newry, Mourne & Down	1,451	82	6%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	2,048	127	6%
Mid Ulster	1,822	88	5%
Fermanagh & Omagh	1,182	45	4%
Derry City & Strabane	1,618	119	7%
Causeway Coast & Glens	798	43	5%
Mid & East Antrim	1,239	68	5%
Antrim & Newtownabbey	1,162	100	9%
Northern Ireland	20,597	1,475	7%

(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 April 2025 to March 2026



(1) Rates per 1,000 are calculated using NISRA's mid-2024 [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 April 2025 to March 2026, 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	35	5	0	40	0	0	0	0
13 to 17	1,395	250	1	1,646	62	7	0	69
18 to 25	5,974	1,127	9	7,110	303	47	1	351
26 to 35	4,815	770	3	5,588	521	56	0	577
36 to 45	3,056	496	1	3,553	303	43	0	346
46 to 55	1,652	160	0	1,812	81	18	0	99
56 to 65	607	39	0	646	24	2	0	26
Over 65	187	6	0	193	6	1	0	7
Not specified	6	0	3	9	0	0	0	0
Total	17,727	2,853	17	20,597	1,300	174	1	1,475

(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 April 2025 to March 2026, by ethnicity

	Persons stopped and searched/questioned	Persons stopped and searched/questioned per 1,000 population ⁽²⁾	Persons subsequently arrested
White	19,167	10	1,297
Irish Traveller ⁽¹⁾	286	110	68
Other Ethnic Groups	420	61	45
Black	398	36	39
Asian	230	7	20
Mixed	92	6	6
Not specified	4	-	0
Total	20,597	11	1,475

(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.

(2) Population figures based on 2021 Census.

Table 8: Number of persons stopped and searched/questioned and subsequently arrested during April 2025 to March 2026, 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	2,001	345	3	2,349	466	79	1	546
Misuse of Drugs	12,642	2,310	14	14,966	798	94	0	892
Firearms	59	5	0	64	13	0	0	13
TACT S43	1,080	10	0	1,090	3	0	0	3
TACT S43A	478	2	0	480	0	0	0	0
TACT 47A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSA Section 21	324	46	0	370	2	0	0	2
JSA Section 24	1,555	138	0	1,693	32	1	0	33
Other	104	4	0	108	3	0	0	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. 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 April 2025 to March 2026, by age and power ⁽¹⁾

	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	Not specified	Total
PACE	31	465	530	645	438	170	53	14	3	2,349
Misuse of Drugs Act	8	1,085	6,106	4,414	2,438	719	171	20	5	14,966
Firearms Order	0	8	18	10	17	5	4	2	0	64
TACT S43	0	2	29	107	211	480	197	64	0	1,090
TACT S43A	0	0	9	36	86	239	84	26	0	480
TACT 47A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSA Section 21	0	14	62	73	70	90	45	16	0	370
JSA Section 24	0	41	348	342	385	343	167	66	1	1,693
Other	1	36	41	13	7	5	4	1	0	108

- (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 April 2025 to March 2026

	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	78%	28%	7%	11%	12%	8%	7%	7%
Misuse of Drugs Act	20%	66%	85%	78%	67%	35%	24%	10%
Firearms Order	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Counter Terrorism ⁽¹⁾	0%	3%	6%	10%	21%	56%	68%	82%
Other	3%	2%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%
	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 April 2025 to March 2026

Outcome	Number	%
Arrest	1,475	7%
Community Resolution	1,797	9%
Report to PPS	1,467	7%
Penalty Notice for Disorder	11	<1%
No Further Action Disposal	15,847	77%
Total	20,597	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 April 2025 to March 2026 by quarter ⁽¹⁾

	April to June	July to September	October to December	January to March	Total
PACE	529	626	689	505	2,349
Misuse of Drugs Act	3,697	3,918	3,636	3,715	14,966
Firearms Order	9	31	17	7	64
TACT S43	182	197	347	364	1,090
TACT S43A	65	112	138	165	480
TACT 47A	0	0	0	0	0
JSA Section 21	88	114	85	83	370
JSA Section 24	588	545	341	219	1,693
Other	19	3	85	1	108
Total ⁽¹⁾	5,177	5,546	5,338	5,059	21,120

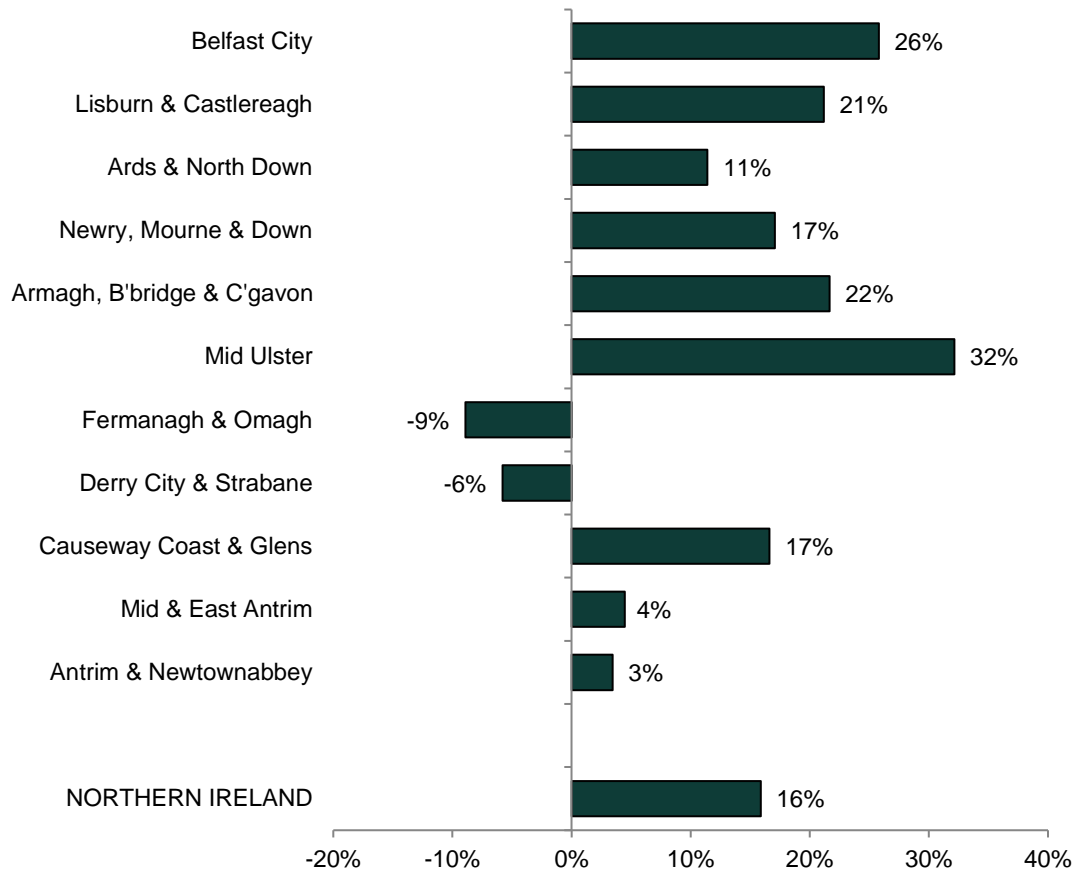
(1) As more than one legislative power can be used to stop and search/question a person, the sum of the powers used will be greater than the total number of persons stopped and searched/questioned.

Table 13: Number of times all powers were used during April 2025 to March 2026 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	993	4,729	22	864	428	0	184	545	15
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	128	883	2	11	7	0	38	121	0
Ards & North Down	85	495	5	3	0	0	48	106	0
Newry, Mourne & Down	147	1,209	7	1	0	0	7	87	2
Armagh City, B'bridge & C'gavon	153	1,716	10	18	0	0	23	133	2
Mid Ulster	162	1,546	4	11	1	0	22	90	2
Fermanagh & Omagh	163	947	8	0	0	0	11	56	2
Derry City & Strabane	170	804	0	178	43	0	7	378	78
Causeway Coast & Glens	79	667	0	0	0	0	10	44	0
Mid & East Antrim	119	1,044	1	0	0	0	4	66	7
Antrim & Newtownabbey	150	926	5	4	1	0	16	67	0
Northern Ireland	2,349	14,966	64	1,090	480	0	370	1,693	108

(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.

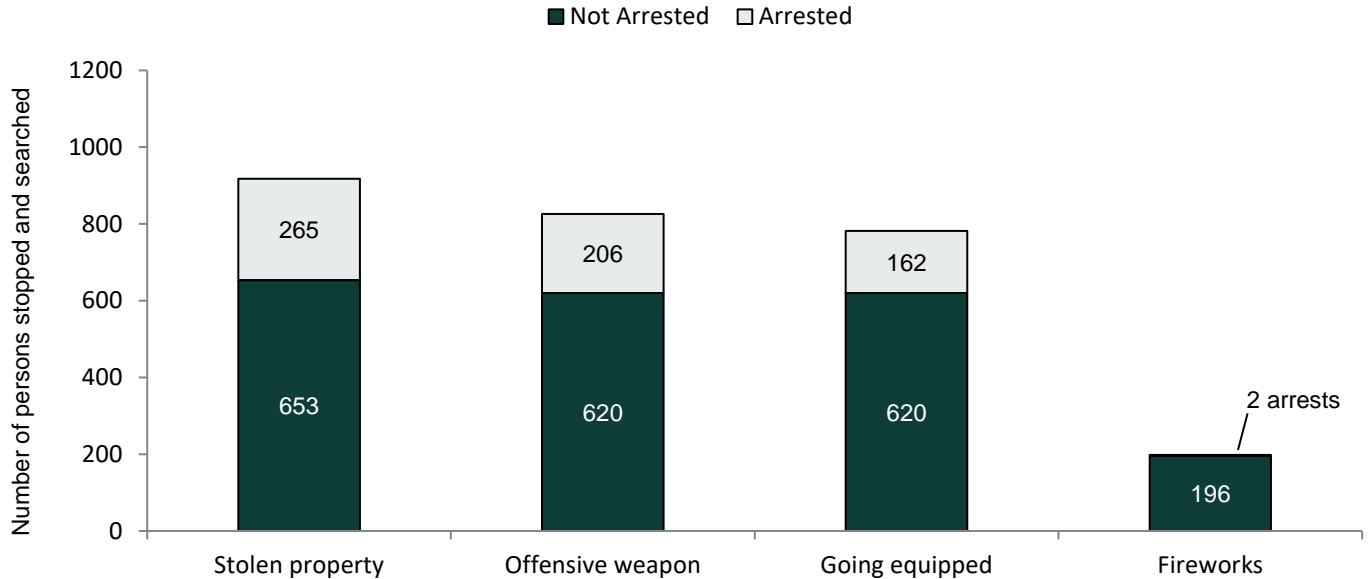
Figure 4: Percentage change in the use of all legislative powers by policing district during April 2025 to March 2026 compared to the previous 12 months



(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 April 2025 to March 2026 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 April 2025 to March 2026 compared to the previous 12 months ⁽¹⁾

Legislation ⁽²⁾	April 2024 - March 2025	April 2025 - March 2026	Percentage change
	Number of vehicles stopped	Number of vehicles stopped	
PACE	383	422	10%
Misuse of Drugs Act	4,993	6,093	22%
Firearms Order	13	27	108%
TACT S43	278	808	191%
TACT S43A	56	476	750%
TACT 47A	0	0	-
JSA Section 24	1,934	1,596	-17%
Other	7	27	286%

- (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 2024/25 (by financial year) ⁽¹⁾

Figure 6: Number of stops per 1,000 population during 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 by police force ^(1,2,3)

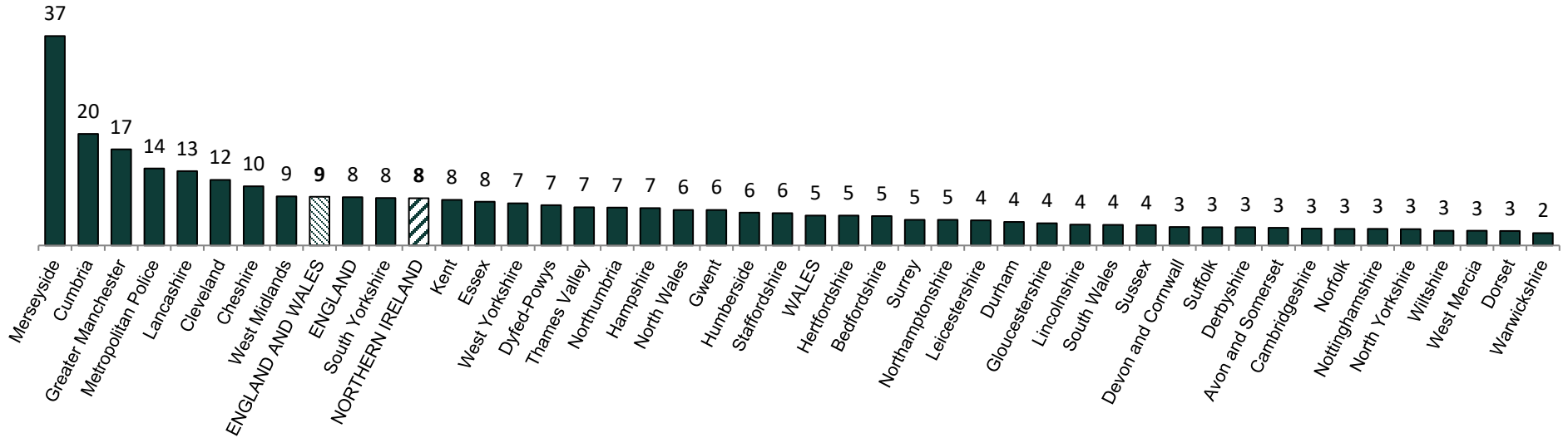
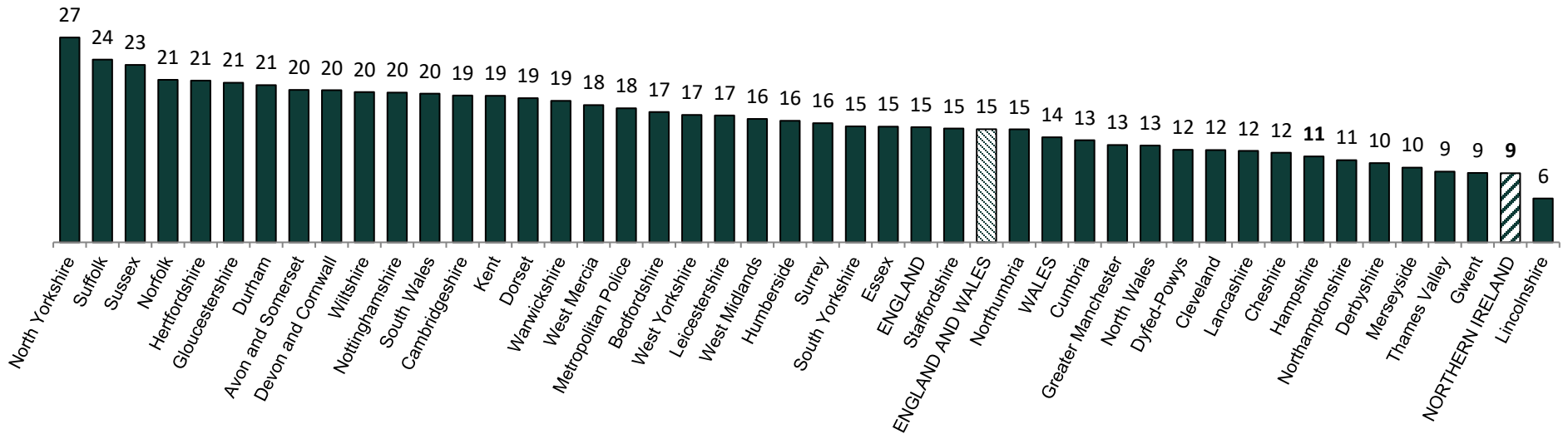


Figure 7: Percentage of stops resulting in an arrest during 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 by police force ^(1,2)

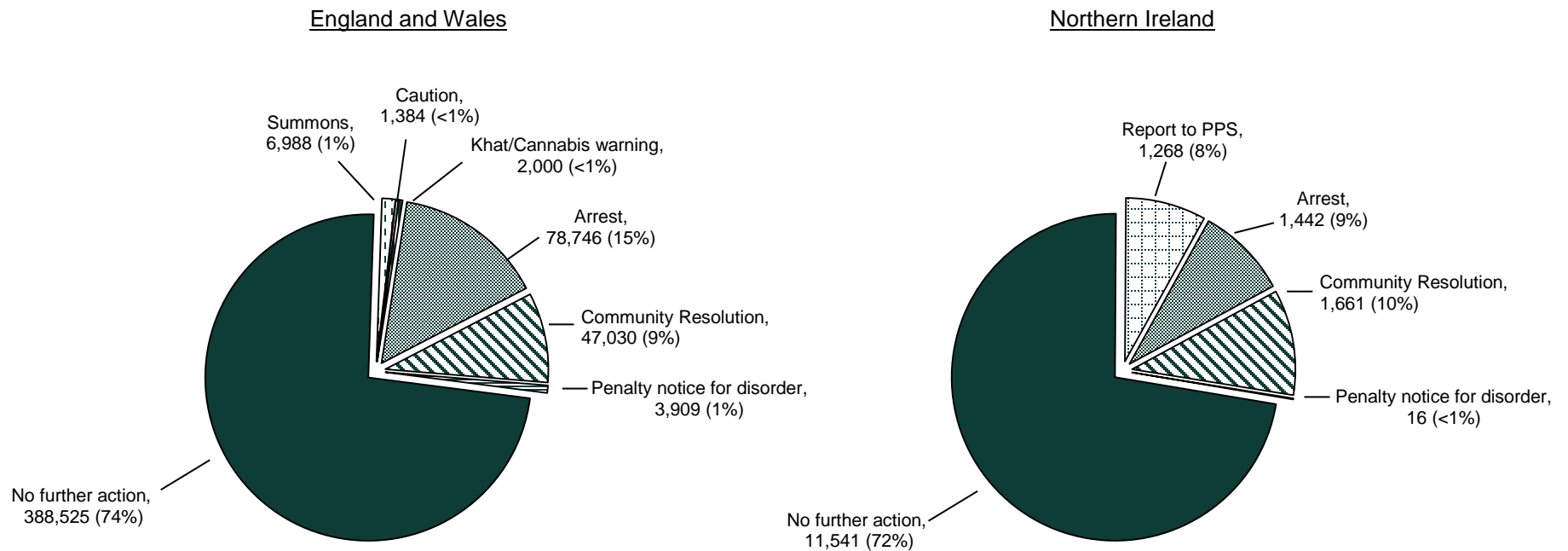


(1) The latest data available for England and Wales is 2024/25 (*Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending March 2025*). For comparability, the 2024/25 NI figures are also shown.

(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 2024 to 31st March 2025^(1,2)



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

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

- (1) The latest data available for England and Wales is 2024/25 (*Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending March 2025*). For comparability, the 2024/25 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 (4% 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.
- Section 50(2) of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

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.