



# Victim Survey Report

2025

COMMISSIONER  
FOR VICTIMS  
OF CRIME

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# Foreword

First and foremost, I want to express my deepest gratitude to all the victims who took the time to respond to this survey. Your courage in sharing your experiences is invaluable and will undoubtedly contribute to improving the system for others. I am pleased to see more people coming forward, with a 55% increase in the response rate compared with our equivalent survey last year. It is my sincere hope that this trend will continue in future surveys.

The findings of this report make it abundantly clear that we have a significant journey ahead if we are to ensure that victims receive the treatment they are entitled to and most rightly deserve. Whilst I appreciate the work undertaken by many committed professionals working across the system, I continue to be saddened when I hear from individuals whose experience of our system bears no resemblance to the criminal justice system standards which we all believe are in place.

I am somewhat encouraged by improvements in some key indicators, as outlined in the summary findings section, compared with our survey last year. I say this with a degree of caution, however, as there may be other explanations for this, not least the increase in sample size for this survey and how that can influence the statistics.

Some indicators of victim satisfaction with the criminal justice system appear to have improved slightly, for example more of those responding to this survey believed they were treated fairly by the PSNI than last year.

Such variation is to be expected in year-on-year surveys which are extremely important in capturing snapshots of victims' experiences. These annual surveys are a crucial part of the puzzle when it comes to capturing victims' views.

These surveys are also the building blocks that allow us to capture consistent, year-on-year data to carry out insightful, long-term, strategic evaluation of how the criminal justice system is experienced by victims of crime.

Whilst not surprising, it remains particularly concerning to note the low levels of awareness regarding the Victim Charter. Despite efforts to increase awareness, such as the ad campaign which I launched jointly with the Justice Minister in February 2024, I continue to meet victims of crime who are unaware of its existence. The responses to key questions also unequivocally demonstrate that victims are not consistently receiving their entitlements as outlined in our statutory Victim Charter.

I am indebted to all those who have found the courage to come forward and tell the story of their experience in our criminal justice system. I am as committed as ever to making sure that the experiences and insights shared can be used as a catalyst for positive change to make things better for victims in the future.

## Geraldine Hanna

*Commissioner Designate for Victims of Crime*



# Introduction

The victim survey was created to capture the experiences of victims of all types of crime in Northern Ireland of its criminal justice system.

It is the only victim survey open to victims of all crime types in Northern Ireland and this is the second year it has been carried out.

Responses provide a unique insight into the real experiences of victims of crime and help to inform the priorities of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime Office in championing victims' rights and perspectives.

The survey was conducted online with respondents completing the survey independently. The survey was open to any victim of crime who reported their experience to the police since 2019 as well as those who chose not to report. 23 respondents to the survey chose not to directly report the crime they experienced to the police. The survey was promoted widely, utilising the networks of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime Office as well as inviting victims that had engaged directly with the office. Posters and promotional material regarding the survey were also disseminated across the court estate in Northern Ireland.

The survey was launched and went live on 21st September 2024 and closed on 23rd December 2024. A portal called Citizen Space was used to administer the survey, gather and analyse responses. The survey used a mix of open-ended (free text) and closed (tick box) questions.




The survey findings have certain limitations. Based on the approach used, the sample used in this research was a self-selecting group and cannot be viewed as representative of all victims. There may be underrepresentation of respondents with limited internet access, who do not use social media or that do not engage with support organisations within and beyond the criminal justice system.

We received a total of 257 responses to the survey this year, which represents a small but not insignificant sample size. This was an increase of 55% on last years' victim survey.







This briefing, produced by the Commissioner for Victims of Crime Office, presents the findings from the victim survey conducted in Autumn 2024. The survey provides key insights into victims' experiences with the criminal justice system, including the police, victim support services, the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), the courts as well as important insights into victims' awareness and understanding of the Victim Charter.

We would like to express our thanks to all those victims who took the time to respond to our survey and share their experiences of the criminal justice system with us. We also thank you the reader for your interest in learning more about the experience of victims of crime and hope you can lend your support to our work to create a society where victims of crime have increased rights to protection, participation, support and redress.

# Summary Findings






-  Signifies a deterioration of 5% on previous year
-  Signifies no / negligible ( $\leq 5\%$ ) improvement/deterioration on previous year
-  Signifies an improvement of 5% on previous year from a victim perspective

## Overall CJS Experience

- 80% (vs 73% in 2023) of respondents had **not heard about the Victim Charter** before completing this survey 
- 55% (vs 56% in 2023) of respondents believe victims are **not fully supported** by the courts 
- 42% (vs 41% in 2023) of respondents stated that they **would not report a crime** if they were a victim in the future 
- 82% (vs 88% in 2023) of respondents are **not confident** they could receive justice by reporting a crime 
- 79% of victims are **not confident** that the CJS as a whole is fair (89% in 2023) or effective (91% in 2023) 
- 57% (vs 66% in 2023) of victims **do not have confidence** that the crime they reported will be fairly investigated 

## PSNI Experience

Victims' experience with the police is mixed and could be significantly improved with improved communication and more thorough investigations.

- 56% (vs 55% in 2023) of respondents felt the police did not investigate the allegations thoroughly 
- 43% (vs 42% in 2023) felt that the police investigation took too long 
- 43% (vs 27% in 2023) believed they were treated fairly and with respect 
- 51% (vs 65% in 2023) of respondents were dissatisfied with how they were treated by the police 
- 34% (vs 43% in 2023) of those that responded would not report a crime again based on their experience with the PSNI 

## PPS Experience

Victims' experience with PPS was fairly evenly split and could be enhanced with improved communication.

- 28% (vs 21% in 2023) of respondents were advised by PPS to accept a lesser plea before or on the day of the trial
- 40% (vs 50% in 2023) of respondents were dissatisfied with how they were treated by PPS
- 32% (vs 21% in 2023) stated that their needs were assessed in advance of the trial
- 38% (vs 50% in 2023) of those that responded said they were not kept up to date on when the case was up at court
- 25% (vs 32% in 2023) of respondents stated they would not report a crime again based on their experience with PPS. (48% (53% in 2023) said they would and a further 27% (14% in 2023) were unsure)



## Support Service Experience

Many victims benefitted from support services though a significant number felt they had to wait too long or the support was not tailored to their needs.

- 55% (vs 57% in 2023) of respondents were referred or self-referred to formal support services
- 31% (vs 33% in 2023) of victims felt that formal support services were not tailored to their needs
- 18% (vs 22% in 2023) of victims reported waiting over 3 months from referral to receiving support
- 40% (vs 28% in 2023) of victims stated that their contact with formal support services helped them to cope with the impacts of the crime
- 33% (vs 41% in 2023) of victims disagreed that it was easy to get access to formal support services



Please note percentages have been rounded to whole numbers, which may result in minor rounding errors in charts throughout.

# Annual Survey Report

## Background of victims and types of crime experienced

We received 257 responses to our 2024 victim survey, which was open to victims of all crime types. As with the 2023 victim survey, this was an online, self-selecting survey. We will therefore compare responses across both years to help identify any trends or patterns.

Of the 257 individuals that completed this survey, 65% (n=166) were female and 32% (n=81) were male. The remaining 10 respondents preferred not to say or did not wish to answer. The age profile of respondents was as follows: 0-15 (n=1/0.4%); 16-24 (n=20/8%); 25-34 (n=26/10%); 35-44 (61/24%); 45-54 (66/26%); 55-64 (54/21%); 65-74 (15/6%); 75+ (3/1%) with 7 respondents preferring not to say and 4 not answering at all. 88% (n=223) of respondents reported being straight/homosexual, with 9% (n=22) stating they were gay, bisexual or of other sexual orientation. 3% (n=8) of respondents preferred not to say.

The geographic spread of responses came from across Northern Ireland as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Geographic spread of respondents

In which county do you reside?	Total	Percent
Antrim (outside Greater Belfast area)	46	19%
Antrim (within Greater Belfast area)	67	27%
Armagh	11	5%
Derry/Londonderry	37	15%
Down	58	23%
Fermanagh	7	3%
Tyrone	15	6%
Prefer not to say	12	5%
Not Answered	4	2%

Of the 253 responses to this question, 65% (n=165) reported living in an urban setting with 28% (n=70) stating they reside outside of urban areas. A further 17 (7%) preferred not to say where they reside.

The ethnic make-up of respondents was predominantly white and is detailed in Table 2:

Table 2: Ethnic make-up of respondents

Option	Total	Percent
Asian/Asian British	3	1%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	1	<1%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	3	1%
White	240	93%
Prefer not to say	4	2%
Other (Please specify):	2	1%
Not answered	4	2%

Table 3 shows a comparison between the profiles of victims that responded this year compared with the previous year in these areas:

Table 3: 2024 v 2023 victim profile

	2024 (2023)	2024 (2023)
Sex	66% (67%) female	32% (29%) male
Sexuality	88% (83%) straight	9% (8%) LGBTQ+
Ethnicity	95% (90%) white	4% (5%) other
Urban / Rural	65% (60%) urban	28% (35%) rural

## Physical Health

64% (n=165) of survey respondents reported living with physical conditions or illness that reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. 105 of those who indicated such physical conditions (14%) stated that this physical condition was related to their experience as a victim of crime.

Table 4 below shows the comparison between responses in 2023 compared with 2024, which indicates around an 8% increase in victims with a physical condition / illness.

Table 4: Victims with Physical Conditions

### Any physical conditions or illnesses that reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

Option	2024 Total	2024%	2023 Total	2023%
Yes	165	65%	95	57%
No	73	29%	59	36%
Prefer not to say	15	6%	11	7%
Not Answered	4	2%	1	1%
Totals	257		166	

## Mental Health

49% (n=123) of respondents have been diagnosed with a mental health condition in the last 12 months. The predominant conditions diagnosed were PTSD (complex & non-complex), anxiety and depression. 105 respondents or 85% of those diagnosed with a condition stated that their mental health condition significantly reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Table 5: Victims with Mental Health Conditions

### Have you been diagnosed with a mental health condition at any point in the last 12 months?

Option	2024 #	2024%	2023 #	2023%
Yes	123	49%	72	44%
No	106	42%	71	43%
Prefer not to say	24	10%	22	14%
Not Answered	4	2%	1	1%
Totals	257		166	

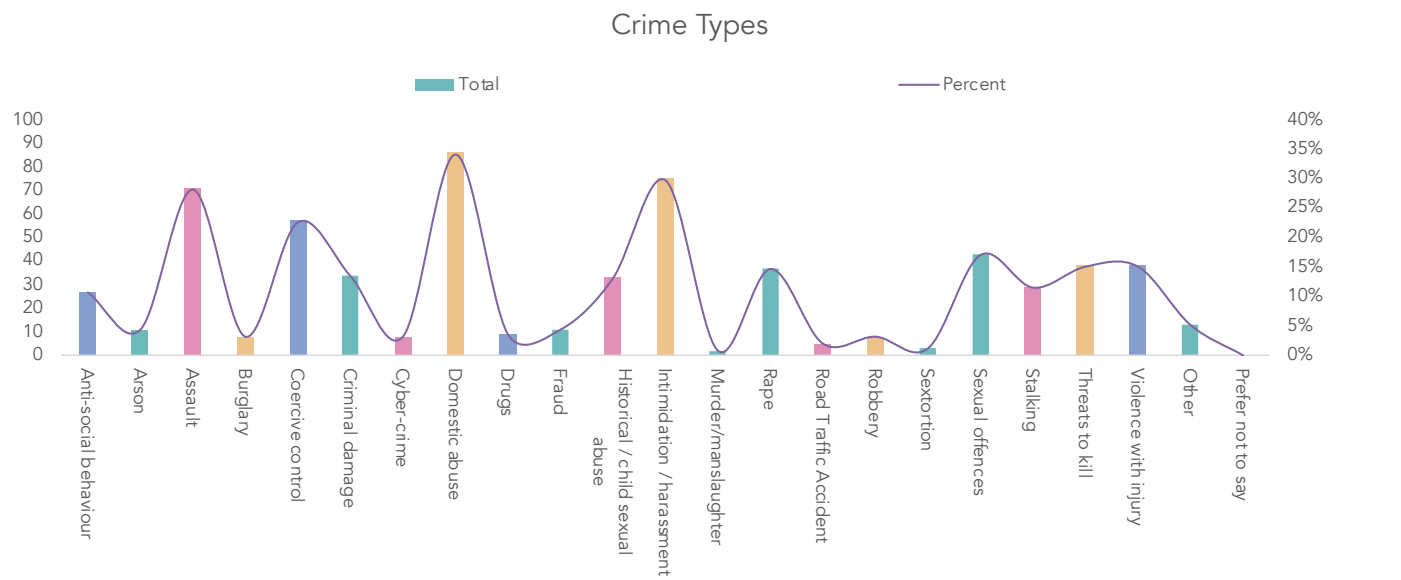


# Crime Types

Domestic Abuse was the most prevalent crime type (reported by 34% of respondents), closely followed by intimidation/harassment (29%) and then assault (28%). Rape, sexual abuse and sextortion combined was reported by 27% of respondents.

Overall, 47% of crime reported was domestically motivated (vs 44% in 2023), while 19% of respondents informed us they were victims of hate crime (vs 17% in 2023). A range of the other crime types listed may also have a domestic motivation though have not been recorded as such.

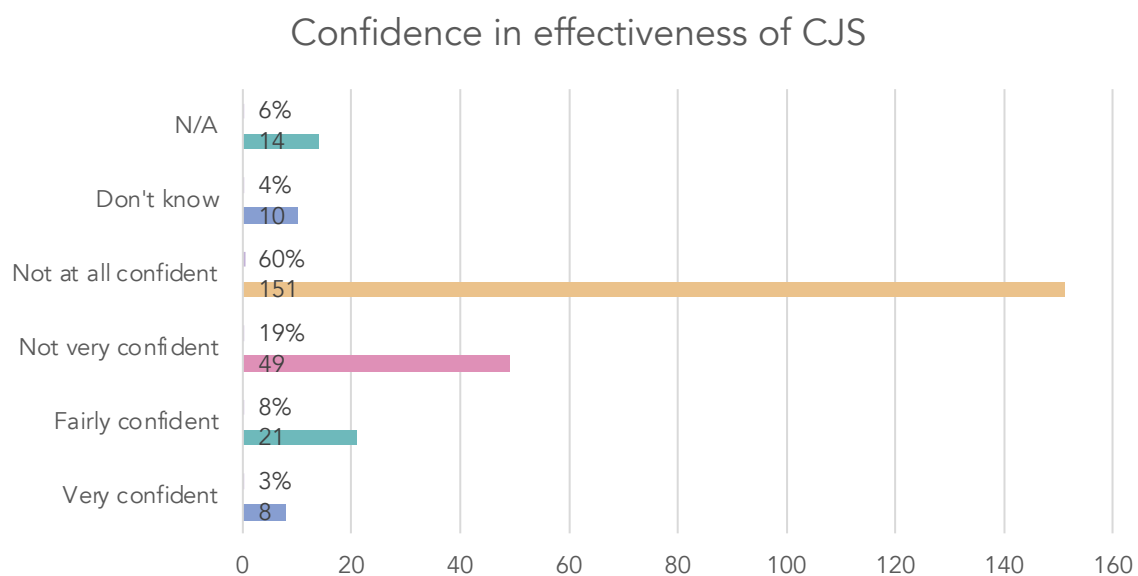
Figure 1: Crime Types



## Overall Criminal Justice System (CJS) perceptions

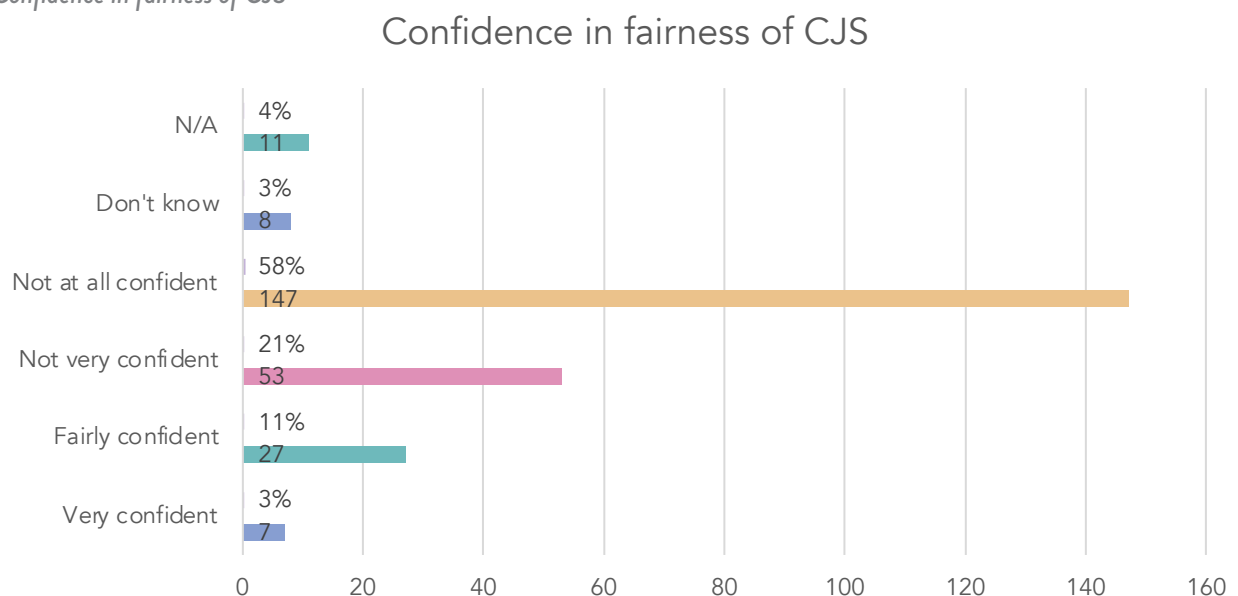
Respondents were asked about their overall confidence in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. As highlighted in Figure 2, 11% stated they were very confident or fairly confident in its effectiveness, with 79% stating they were not very or not at all confident. This compares with 2023 survey data where the figures were 7% and 91% respectively. Smaller sample size of the 2023 survey and the proportion of that sample whose case went forward to prosecution may be a factor in explaining the differential in a 6-9 month period.

Figure 2: Confidence in effectiveness of criminal justice system



Respondents were also asked whether they thought the criminal justice system is fair. 14% were very confident or fairly confident while 79% of respondents were not at all confident or not very confident in the fairness of the system. This compares with 2023 survey data where the figures were 8% and 89% respectively.

Figure 3: Confidence in fairness of CJS



Victims were asked about their confidence in receiving justice by reporting a crime. As Figure 4 illustrates, a significant proportion of those that responded were either not very confident (19%/n=47) or not at all confident (63%/n=159). 9% (n=22) stated they were fairly confident they would receive justice by reporting a crime with just 3% (n=8) being very confident.

Figure 4: Confidence you can receive justice by reporting a crime

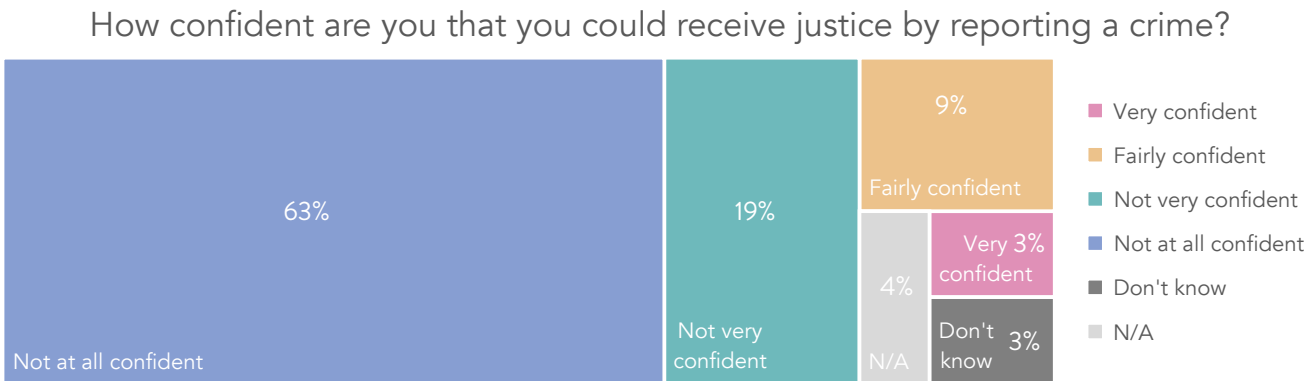
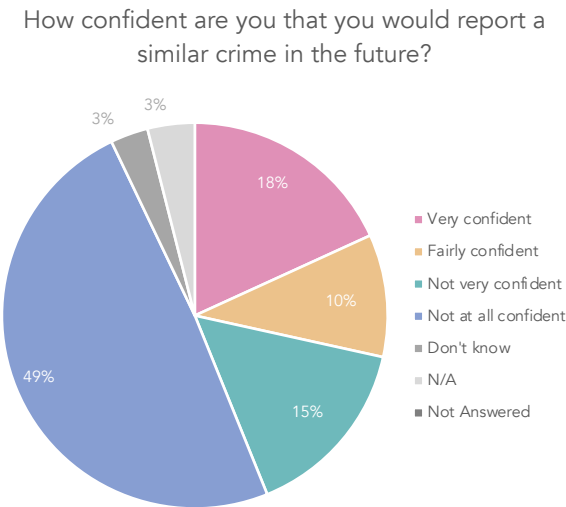


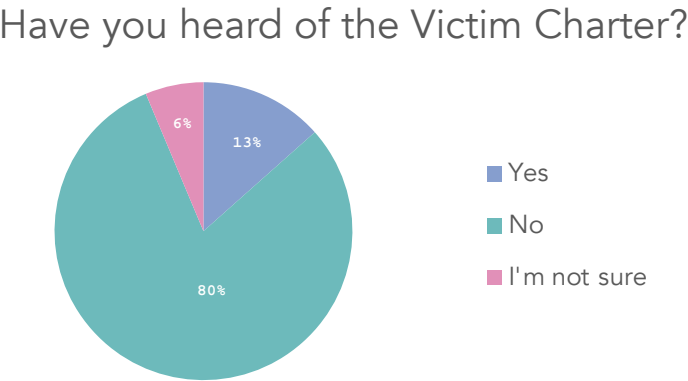
Figure 5: Confidence in reporting a similar crime in the future



Respondents were asked about their confidence to report a similar crime in the future. 28% (n=72) of respondents stated they were very confident or fairly confident they would report a similar crime in the future. 64% (n=163) stated they were not very or not at all confident they would report such a crime in future.

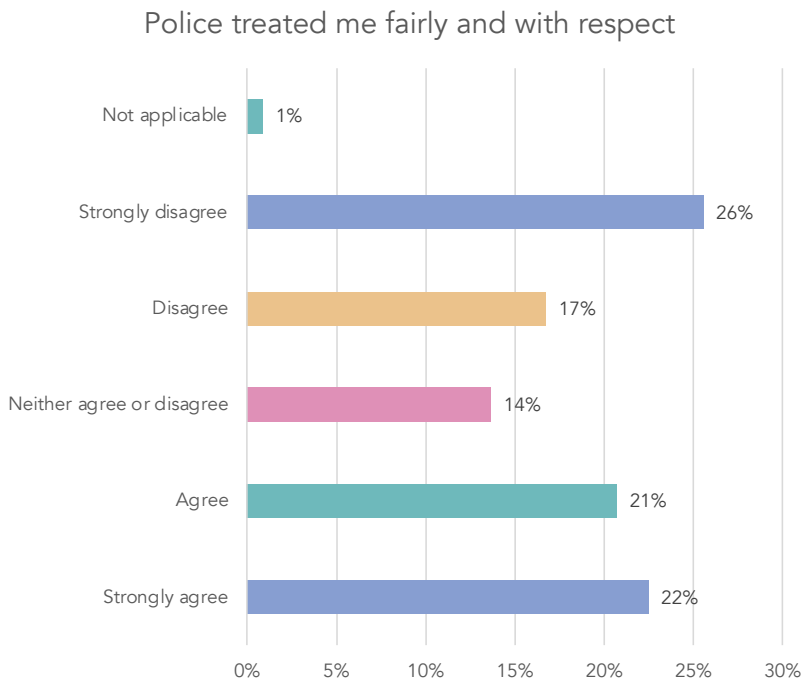
Respondents were asked about their awareness, prior to completing this survey, of the Northern Ireland Victim Charter. 80% (n=203) of respondents said they were not aware of the Charter. 13% (n=34) stated they were aware of the Charter with a further 6% (n=16) unsure whether or not they had heard about it. This compares with 2023 data, which shows 73% were not aware of the charter, 19% were aware and a further 8% unsure.

Figure 6: Victim Charter awareness levels



## Victims' experiences with PSNI

Figure 7: Treated fairly and with respect



43% (n=98) of those that responded to this question stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that the police treated them fairly and with respect. As outlined in the summary findings, this is up from 27% on findings from the previous year's survey. 43% (n=96) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were treated fairly and with respect. A further 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. This shows a fairly even split between victims who felt they were treated fairly / respectfully and those that didn't.

Respondents were asked whether they thought the police investigation took too long. 43% (n=110) of respondents did think the investigation took too long while 21% (n=53) did not. A further 17% (n=43) of those that responded neither agreed nor disagreed.

Survey respondents were asked whether they were kept regularly informed about the police investigation, a key entitlement under the Victim Charter. 22% (n=50) stated that they were kept regularly informed, 61% (n=139) stated they were not and another 11% (n=24) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Figure 8: Kept regularly informed about police investigation

I was kept regularly informed about the police investigation

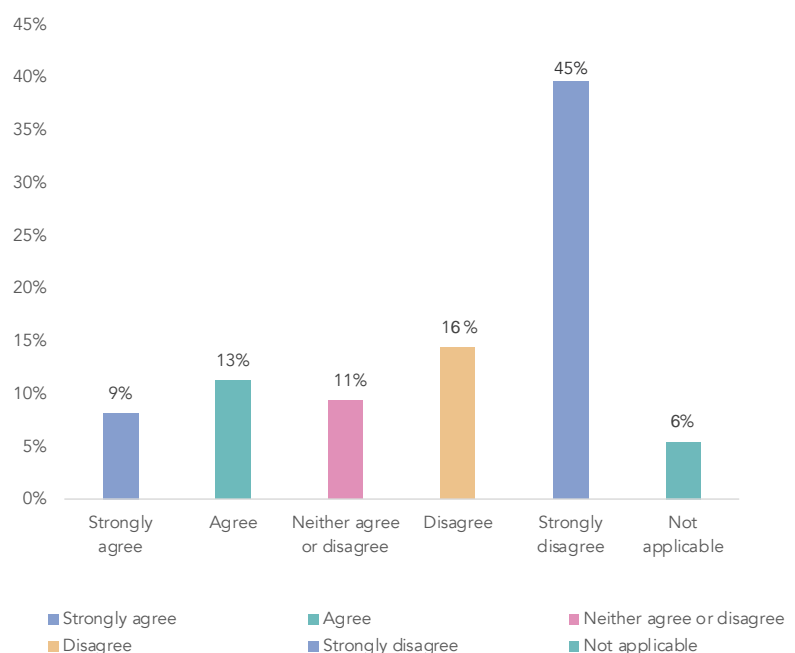
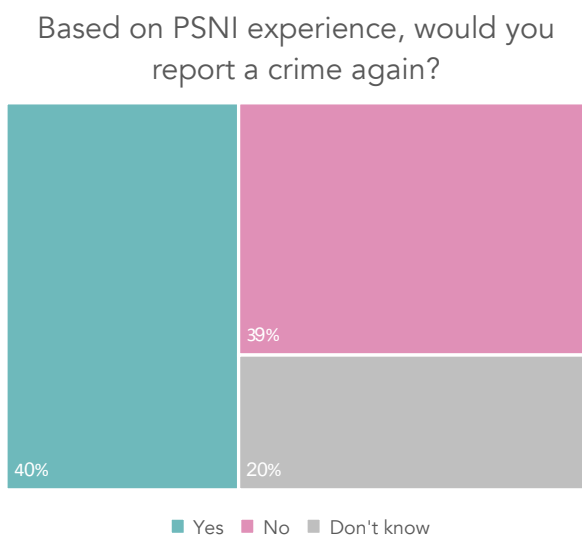


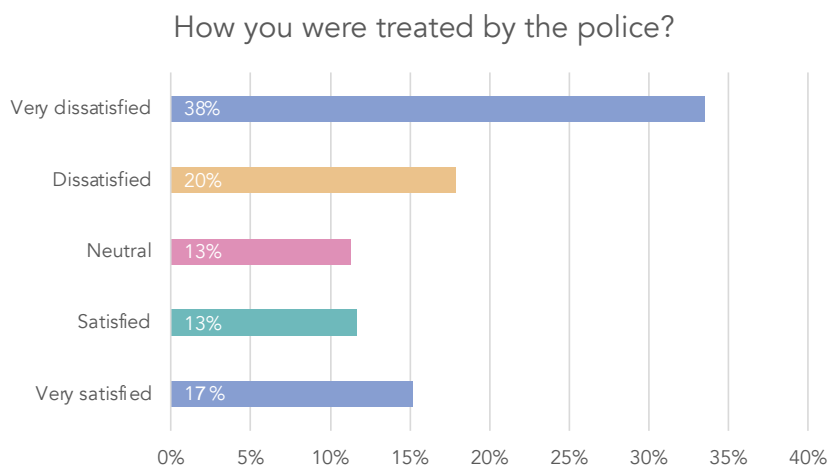
Figure 9: Would you report a crime again to PSNI?



When asked whether they would report a crime again based on their experience of reporting a crime to the PSNI, 39% (n=90) of respondents stated they would not report a crime again while 40% (n=88) stated that they would. A further 20% (n=47) were unsure whether they would report a crime again or not.

Figure 10: Satisfaction level with treatment by the police

30% (n=69) of victims that responded stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with how they were treated by the police. Another 13% (n=29) were neutral on this question with 58% stating they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how they were treated.



Victims were given a free text option and asked to provide reasons for their response. These can be summed up below:

- Police are doing their best under difficult circumstances – they were compassionate and caring
- Lack of updates and correspondence from investigating officer
- Failure to understand/accommodate special needs – eg autism
- Lack of thoroughness of investigation
- Victim blaming or victim shaming
- Lack of sensitivity

Many respondents provided positive words and feedback about their experience with the PSNI and a few of these are provided below:

*'Let me start by saying I am not dissatisfied with the officer who is investigating. He is extremely professional and a credit to the PSNI. The issue is an overworked staff who are underfunded and understaffed with an excessive workload causing a backlog of cases.'*

*'The two lady cops one especially is amazing. She has a heart of gold. She comforted me as I had a meltdown finding out what my ex had been doing to me. I've seen her afterwards & she asked how I was doing. The detective in charge of the investigation was also good natured & professional. There are some bad apples out there. But a lot are good & friendly.'*

*'My investigating officer took the time to explain why things were happening the way they were ie how the case was being built, what was required for strength at court etc. So for that reason although some of the things were horrible, I understood. I was treated like an equal, I wasn't spoke down to and although they were always impartial I always felt believed.'*

*'On the night I called 101, the call handler explained next steps. I then got another call from an officer who said they would happily come out to me but were in uniform and in a marked car. He didn't want to draw attention to me by the neighbours. He asked did I need anything, did I have support. I knew then I could do this.'*

*The IO was exceptional at explaining procedures and reason for things that had to happen. It made all the difference'*

*'Arrived quickly. Listened well. Obtained info from witnesses quickly. Tracked down defendant quickly. Gathered evidence from his home that evening. Speedy Response. Empathetic officers.'*

Others that did not have such a positive experience used quite different language to express how they felt:

*'Initially, I felt that I was taken seriously. However, when the PPS sent the case back to the police for the second time round to follow up other lines of inquiry, the police didn't do their job. They failed to follow up lines of inquiry, they failed to keep me updated, my investigating officer failed to respond to my emails and texts. Following 6 months of hearing nothing I called the rape crime unit and was told by the officer that my investigating officer would call me back; that didn't happen. I waited days, so I called again to ask for the sergeant, and I spoke with the sergeant who also told me that they would get my investigating officer to call me back; that didn't happen.'*

*'The PSNI failed to record the offences I alleged, or investigate them. The other party made counter allegations, during which she admitted to assaulting and falsely imprisoning me. The PSNI never even considered that I might be a victim.'*

*'I was victim shamed. I was made to feel like it was my fault because I was intoxicated. The experience has changed my view on the PSNI.'*

*'Too many crime reference numbers, for the same type of crimes never investigated my crimes when there was evidence, never kept me updated either and never spoke to the perpetrators and further incidents arose, had to keep contacting 101 for an update and the officers never got back to me, never enough police resources to investigate all crimes the whole system from start to finish is a mess'*

*'The police didn't take my concerns seriously. They passed sensitive information on to my abuser, I wasn't kept updated and wish I hadn't bothered to report at all.'*

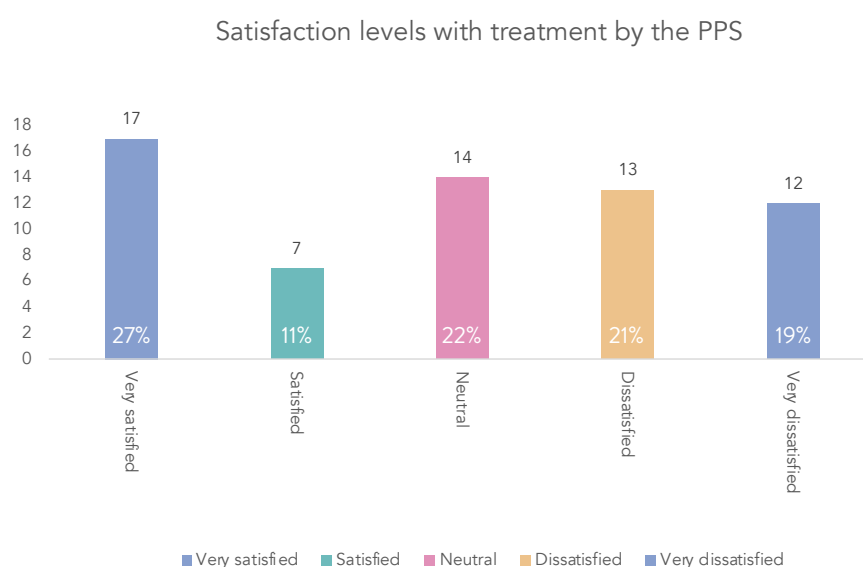
*'The one failing was at the start of the investigation the officer assigned was changed to another and I found it very hard to get replies from either of them. Which could have really put off a less determined witness. It's not good to feel like you're being a nuisance when you need questions answered.'*

## Victims' experience with Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

The response rate for this section of the survey dropped off significantly compared to the earlier section on PSNI. An average of around 64 respondents of the overall number of 257 answered questions in this section, which equates to around 25%. This reflects the fact that many cases reported to the PSNI did not progress to prosecution and tallies with the fact that 26% (n=66) of respondents stated that they were aware that someone was charged with the crime.

When asked about their satisfaction levels with how they were treated by the PPS, 38% (n=24) stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with how they were treated. One respondent stated:

Figure 11: Satisfaction with treatment by PPS



*'They took the accusation seriously even though it was my word against his with very little evidence. PPS met with me when I asked, they explained what I needed and they took my views very seriously'*

Conversely, 40% (n=25) said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with how they were treated by the PPS.

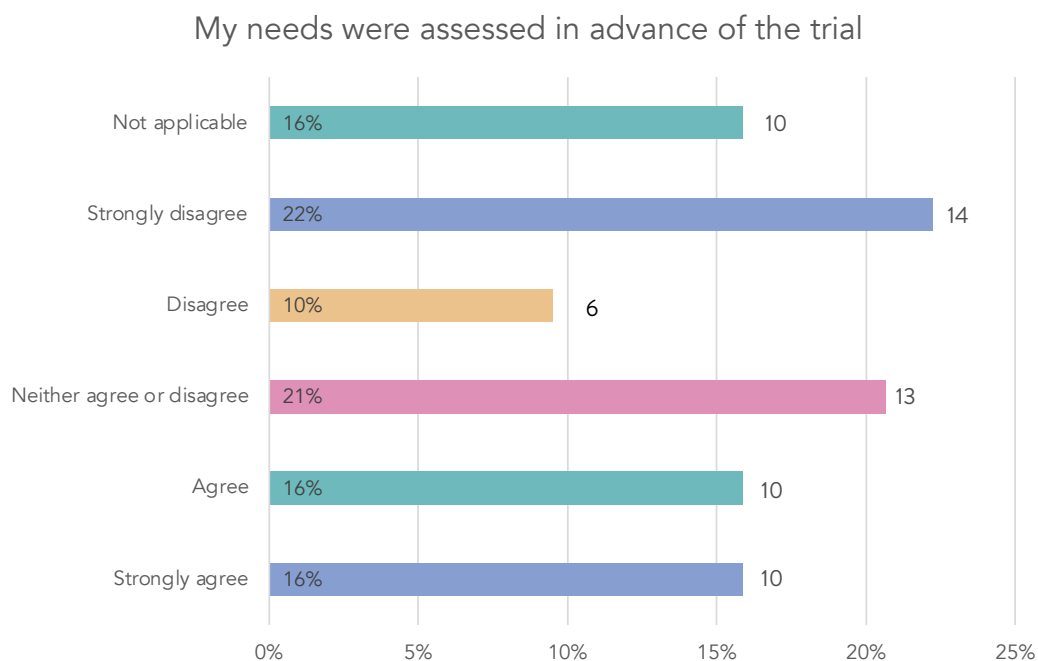
*I got updated that night to advise they had charged him and he would appear in court. After this event it was a struggle to get any information. I had to search the courts website myself for information.*

Another 22% (n=14) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.



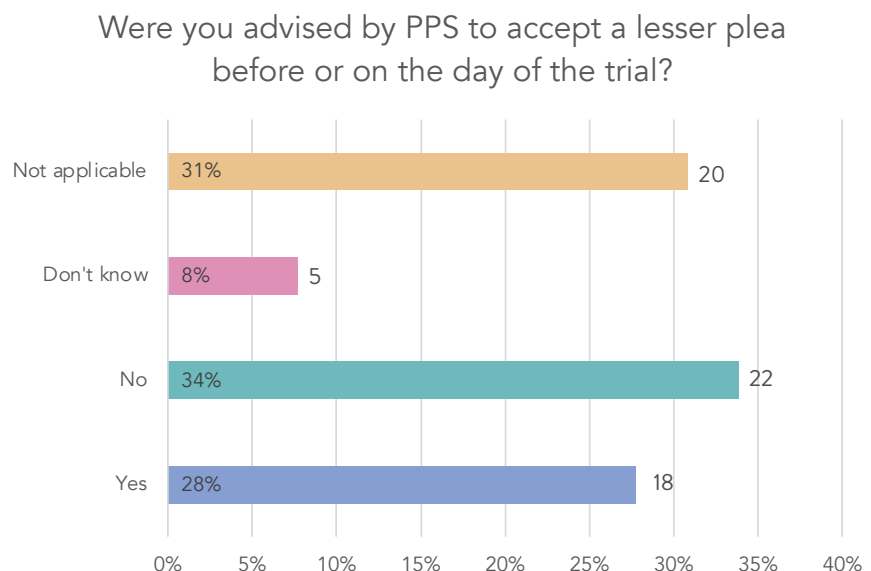
32% (n=20) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their needs were assessed in advance of the court trial while 32% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. 21% neither agreed nor disagreed and a further 16% said it was not applicable to them. Having your individual needs assessed in a timely manner by the police is an entitlement for all victims under the Victim Charter. The purpose of this would be to determine whether, and to what extent, the victim would benefit from additional support or special measures when giving evidence to the police or at court.

Figure 12: Victim needs assessed before trial



Respondents were asked whether they were advised by PPS to accept a plea to a lesser charge before or on the day of trial. As detailed in the this chart 28% (n=18) stated that they were advised to do this with a further 8% (n=5) not knowing. 34% (n=22) stated that they were not advised to accept a lesser plea and another 31% (n=20) said that this was not applicable for them. As some respondents succinctly explained:

Figure 13: Victim advised to accept lesser charge pre-trial

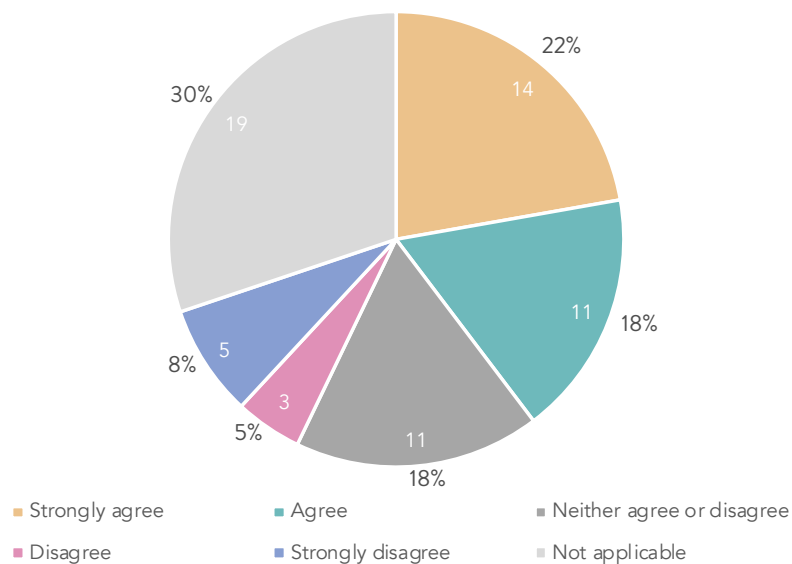


*'The defendant had pled guilty three weeks prior to the court date. I did not know of this until 2 hours after I arrived to court. The PPS came in and told me about the plea and asked me did I want to accept the plea. While I understand why this may have been beneficial, (I was very anxious and did accept) I feel like if I had known this information prior, I wouldn't have accepted. I now regret that I did not stand up in the court and tell my story, as while he was convicted of domestic abuse and common assault, he was let off (not guilty) of another two counts of common assault and threats to kill. I was very upset about him not being found guilty on threats to kill as out of everything, those threats affected me the most.'*

*'Soul destroying. You spend years keeping silent as a DV victim and when you are finally free and brave enough to speak they advise you not to and take the lesser plea.'*

Figure 14: Treated fairly and with respect by VWCU

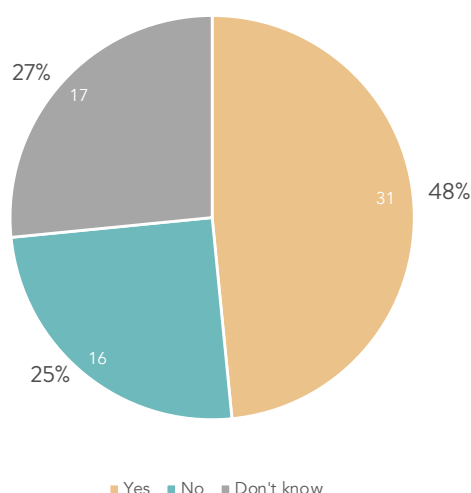
The VWCU staff treated me fairly and with respect



When asked whether they felt they were treated fairly and with respect by the PPS Victim & Witness Care Unit (VWCU), respondents again had mixed views with a majority feeling they were. 40% (n=25) agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated fairly and with respect. 13% (n=8) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. A further 18% (n=11) neither agreed nor disagreed with another 30% (n=19) stating this was not applicable to them.

Figure 15: willingness to report again based on PPS experience

Based on experience with PPS, would you report a crime again?



Finally, respondents were asked if they would report a crime again based on their experience with the PPS. 48% (n=31) stated they would report a crime based on the PPS experience and 25% said they would not. A further 27% (n=17) stated they did not know whether they would report a crime again or not. Below are some of the comments provided, both from a positive and negative perspective:

*'My views were paramount to the prosecution, I knew it was their case and legally I was a witness but I felt in control and an equal, my views and feelings were central to decisions and I am very grateful for that. PPS and barristers met with me whenever I asked which really helped me process and understand the judicial journey.'*

*'Solely working with PPS - yes I would but the judicial process would cause me to say no'*

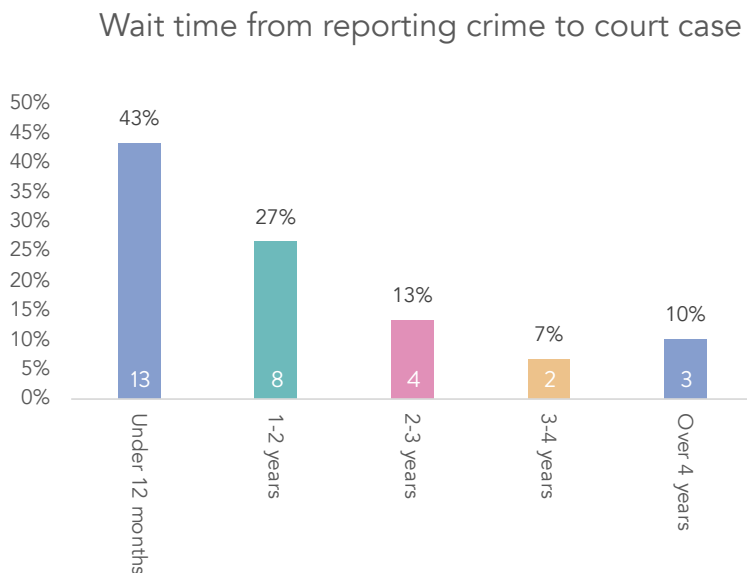
*'The run up to the trial got messier and messier and the VWCU didn't get in touch again. I called multiple times to try and obtain the support originally offered and no one ever got back to me. This left me feeling very isolated and stressed.'*

*'I was proactive in finding out what the role of each barrister was, it was not explained to me unless I researched and asked the questions myself. I was not sent letters to update me on hearing dates or new dates after adjournments. I called VWCU to ask for updates. I felt there was an intentional distance kept between me as a victim and the prosecutor and for a long time I didn't understand what their role was and felt I didn't have any say in the decisions that were being made between council.'*

*'Just communicate more with victims at every stage. We are already struggling with our lives changing dramatically.'*

## Victims' experience with NI Courts & Tribunal Service (NICTS)

Figure 16: Time for reporting crime to court case being heard



Survey respondents were asked how long they had to wait from when they first reported the crime to the police to when the case was heard at court. As Figure 16 outlines, 43% (n=13) of those that responded waited under 12 months, 27% (n=8) waited 1-3 years and a further 17% (n=5) waited more than 3 years.

Victims were asked whether they felt they were given enough support during the court process. Again the picture was mixed with 42% (n=13) stating they agreed or strongly agreed with this, while 48% (n=15) stated they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. The remainder (10%, n=3) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 17: Victims are given enough support through court process

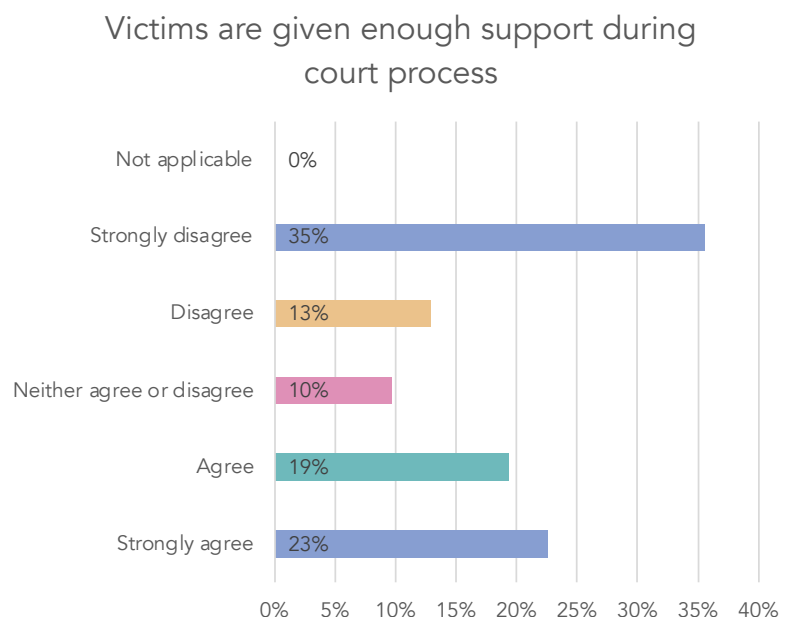
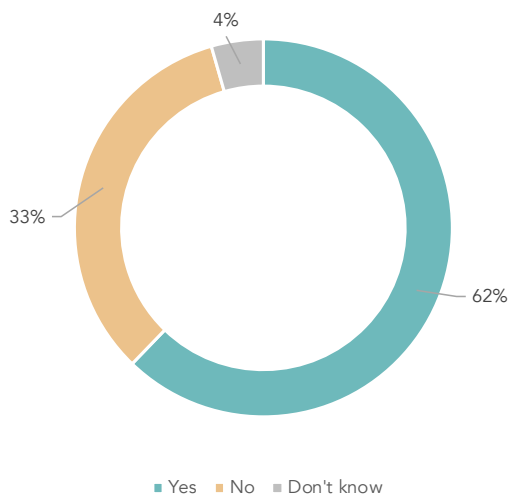


Figure 18: Were victims offered a chance to make a VPS?

Were you offered the chance to make a victim personal statement (VPS)?



Respondents were asked whether they were given the opportunity to make a VPS. Of those that responded, 62% (n=28) said that they were offered the chance with 33% (n=15) stating they were not offered the chance to make a VPS. 4% (n=2) said they did not know whether they were given the opportunity or not.

Victims were asked about their experience in court with defence lawyers and whether they felt they were treated fairly and with respect. 39% of respondents felt they were not treated fairly and with respect by defence lawyers, while 26% (n=8) felt that they were. The largest proportion of respondents, 29% (n=9) neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.

Figure 19: Defence lawyers treated victims fairly and with respect?

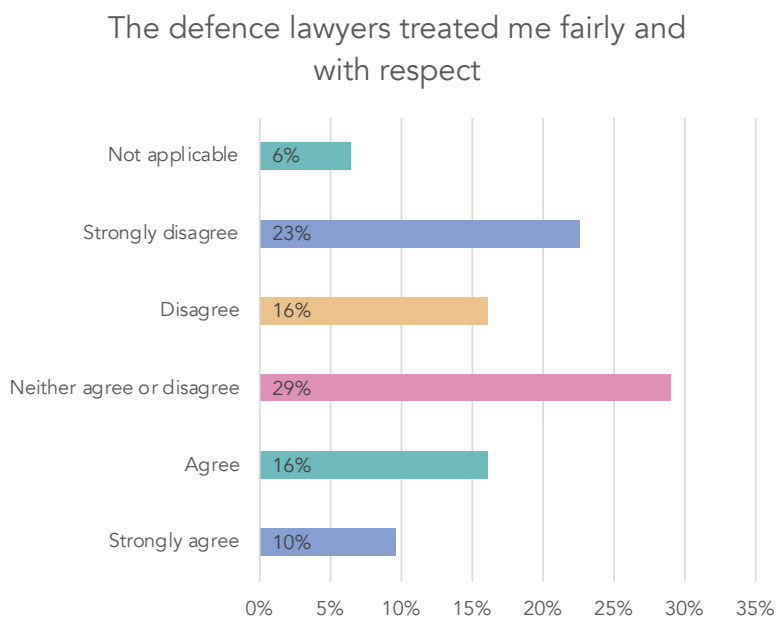
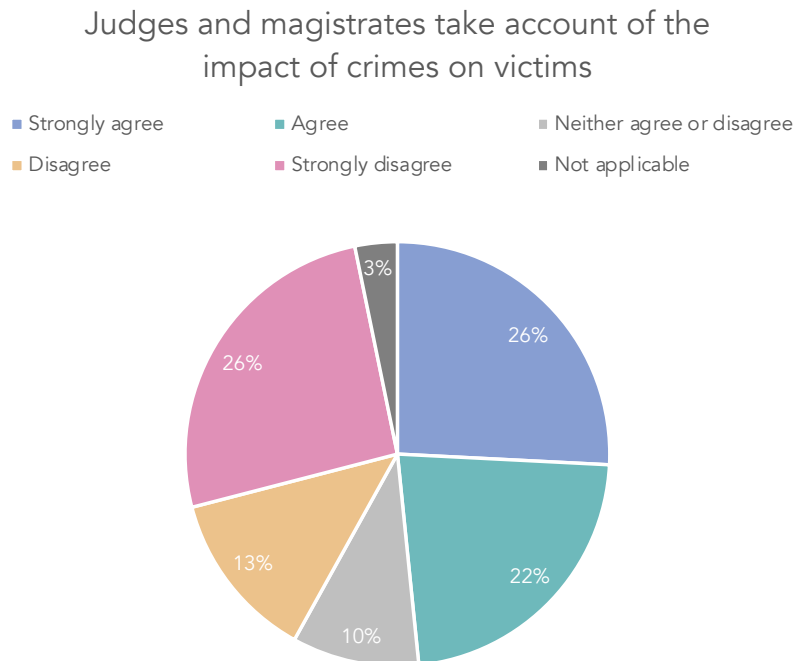


Figure 20: Judges and magistrates take account of impact of crime on victims?



When asked whether they felt the impact of the crimes was taken into account, victims opinions were almost evenly split. As Figure 20 indicates, 48% (n=15) of victims agreed or strongly agreed with this while 39% (n=12) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remainder neither agreed nor disagreed with just one person responding for whom the questions was not applicable. As one victim put it:

*'They should be read in court. Also, the judiciary should be more informed on the long term impact of abuse on victims and not only take into consideration what is assessed by psychologists and victims themselves. The impact is lifelong, life altering, life changing and always negatively impacting victims' lives.'*

Figure 21: Sentence was clearly explained to victim following conviction?

Survey respondents were asked for their views on whether the sentence was explained to them following conviction. Figure 21 shows that while 32% (10) of respondents stated that they did have the sentence clearly explained to them, 45% (14) stated that this wasn't the case.

When the defendant was convicted, the sentence was clearly explained to me

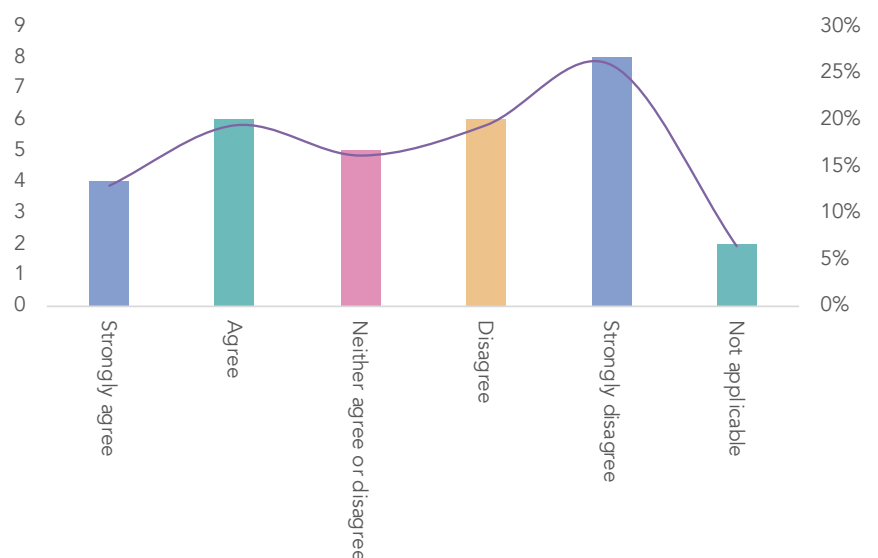
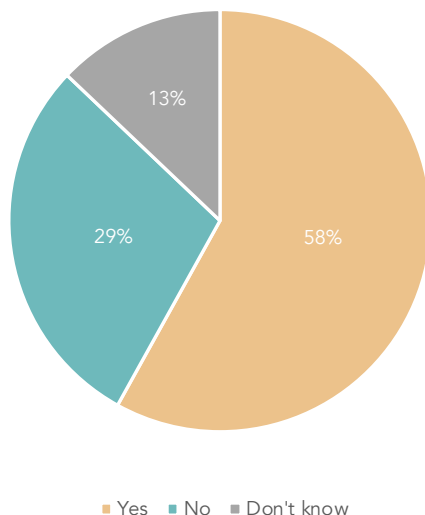


Figure 22: Would you attend court again based on this experience?

Based on your experience of attending court, would you attend again?



Survey respondents were asked whether they would attend court again based on their experience. 58% (n=18) of those that responded stated that they would attend again with 29% (n=9) stating they would not attend again. 13% (n=4) of respondents did not know whether they would attend court again or not.

Victims were also asked to provide reasons why they answered in a certain way. Below are some of the comments they provided:

*'The sentencing was delayed 4 times which was distressing. However my actual experience in court was good, I felt I had a safe space.'*

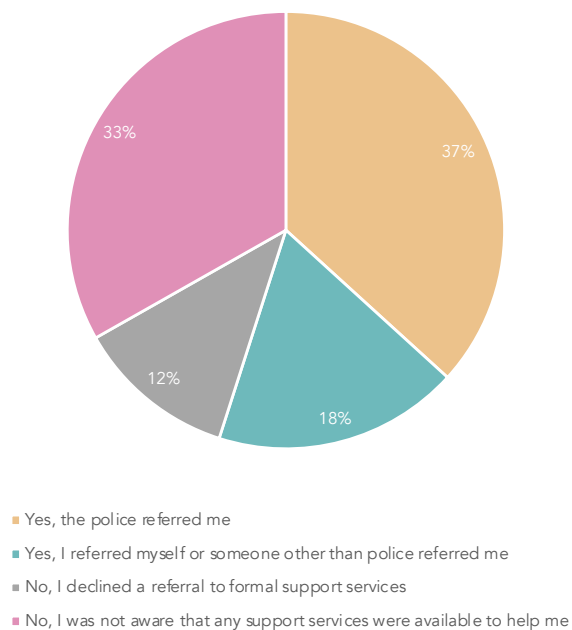
*'Using the same entrance as my abuser meaning I ran into him on the way into court on the morning. The defence barrister was aggressive in his approach, there wasn't enough of the entire process within my control, which is highly triggering as someone who experienced an abuse that removed her control. I was interrogated for a prolonged period of time while my abuser sat and smirked at me.'*

*'On entry to the court as well, my abuser was standing waiting in the entrance hall and was therefore the first person I saw. It was obviously done as an attempt to intimidate and I think a separate entrance should be in place, or at the very least, defendants should be in a room away from witnesses and victims!'*

## Victims' experiences with support organisations

Figure 23: Victim referrals to formal support services

Were you referred (or did you refer yourself) to formal support services?



Survey respondents were asked about their experience regarding support services linked to the criminal justice system. They were firstly asked if they were referred or self-referred to formal support services like Victim Support NI or the NSPCC. While 55% (n=139) of victims were referred or self-referred to one of the available support services, 33% (n=84) reported not being aware of support services available to help them. 12% (n=30) of victims declined a referral to formal support services.

Victims were asked about the referral timeframes and how long they had to wait to get support from the time they were referred. Of the 135 responses, 31% (n=42) reported waiting under 2 weeks to get support, 36% (n=49) waited between 2 and 6 weeks for support and 15% (n=20) waited between 6-12 weeks. 18% (n=24) of respondents stated that they had to wait over 3 months from the initial referral before getting support.

Figure 24: Wait time between referral and receiving support?

How long did you wait between referral and receiving support?

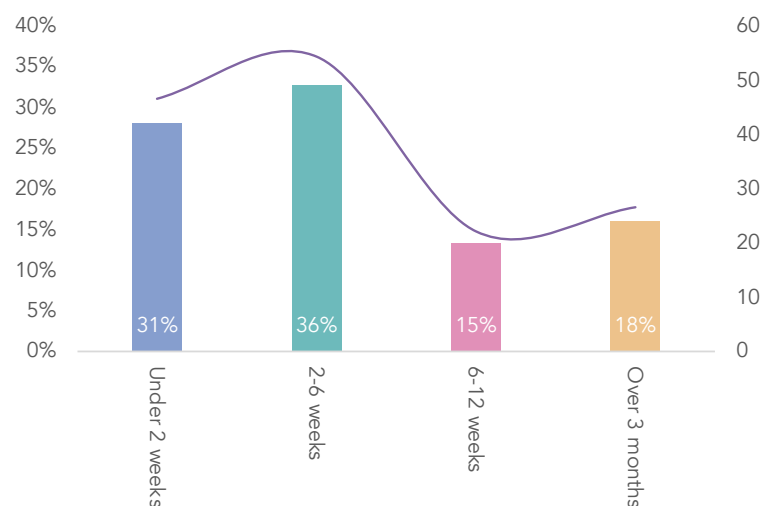
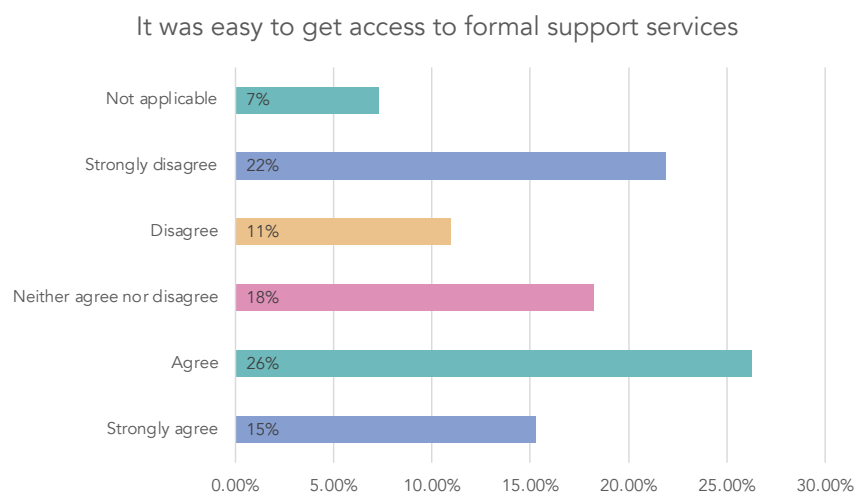




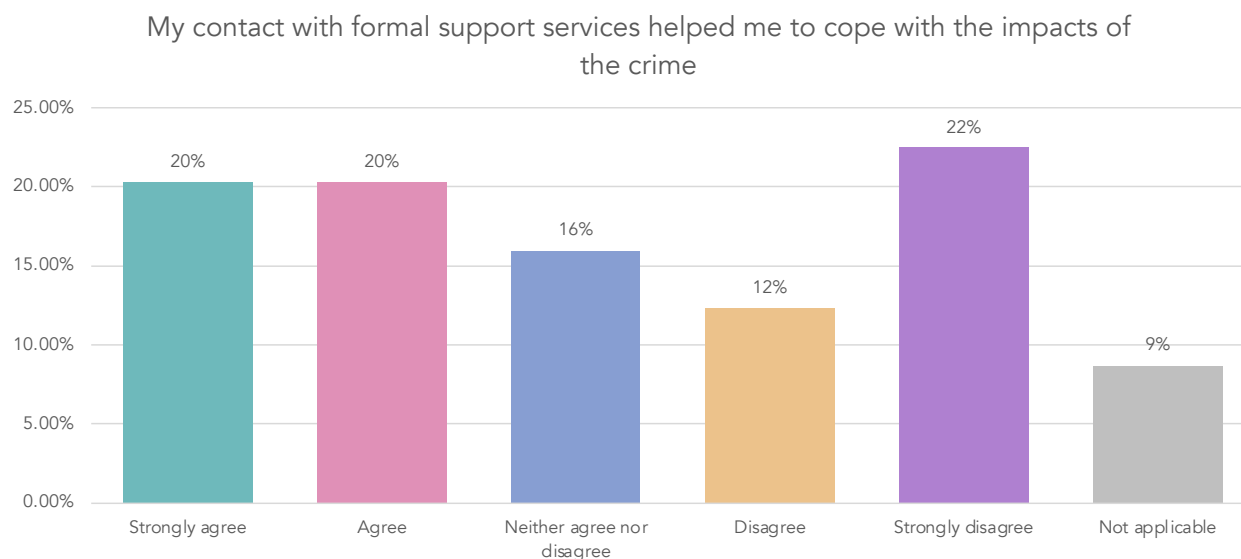
Figure 25: Getting access to formal support services?



A further question was asked of respondents regarding the ease of access to support services. 33% (n=45) of victims did not think it was easy to get access to formal support services, while a further 18% (n=25) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. 41% (n=57) agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to access formal support services.

When asked whether formal support services helped them to cope with the impacts of the crime, victims were quite mixed in their response. As the chart demonstrates 40% (n=56) of victims agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. A further 16% (n=22) neither agreed nor disagreed with 35% (n=48) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Figure 26: Benefits of support services for victims?



Victims provided feedback on their experience and below are a few different perspectives on that experience:

*‘Victims support contacted me via telephone, it felt like it was a Box ticking exercise on their part, I didn’t/don’t feel supported.*

*I also think victim support services need a lot of investment, I had to wait a very long time for counselling and the counselling I did eventually receive ended up being quite detrimental to me rather than helpful.’*

*‘They were helpful but did not maintain contact. I was very unsure about what their role was or how I was to interact with them. Pleasant people, I thought they did care, they expressed concern about how my case was being handled, but I had very limited contact with them - I didn’t really know what I was supposed to do.’*

*‘Victim support were amazing, they were impartial, fair, sensitive and would be the only part of the justice system I have faith left in.*

*Ah, victim support are amazing. They are like a cushion for your fall. Lovely people & so helpful.*

*I visited Victim Support NI myself to ask for support and advice. I was so glad I did. This was the first time I felt that I was genuinely being listened to and heard and it was a huge relief to hear that I have indeed been a victim of crime.’*

*‘The support services are excellent and the only lifeline for victims of crime, Victim Support especially SOLA are incredible. They are victim-centred, they listen and advocate. I don’t know how any victims coped before this service existed.’*

## Conclusion

This is the second year that this survey has been conducted, which includes victims of all crimes, in Northern Ireland and we are grateful to all who took the time to respond. The sample size, while still modest and well below the numbers from whom we would like to receive feedback, was not insignificant and was well above (55% increase) what we achieved in our first year. We look forward to building on this and growing the survey year on year.

At the time of writing, work is underway with key stakeholders to look at the most efficient ways to gather and collate victim feedback that will inform criminal justice agency and system improvement more broadly. We still anticipate that this office will publish a report annually on the victim experience which will be used to advocate for changes and improvements to our criminal justice system.

Our survey findings are disappointing but not surprising as they reflect the concerns that we continue to hear from victims, both directly from those engaging with our office and indirectly through partner organisations and stakeholders working across the criminal justice system. It is clear from our engagement with victims and from the responses to this survey, that significant work is required to ensure that victims and witnesses are central to our criminal justice system.

This survey will be one of a number of mechanisms at the disposal of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime Office to ensure our criminal justice agencies strive to deliver against the promises that we make to those most impacted by crime in our society.





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