

Police Service of Northern Ireland

# Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics

Annual Report covering the period  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

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The PSNI is required to report on its performance on a financial year basis and hence this report covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. These security statistics relate solely to incidents that occurred within the jurisdiction of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Further information on context and background is provided in the Notes section of this bulletin and in the [Security Situation Statistics User Guide](#) on the [PSNI website](#). A further breakdown of the information provided in this report can be found in the [accompanying excel spreadsheet](#) which is also published on the PSNI website, and provides a breakdown of the information at Police Area and Police District levels as well as providing historical trends.

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### **National Statistics**

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

*National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.*

*All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.*

*It is a producer's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.*

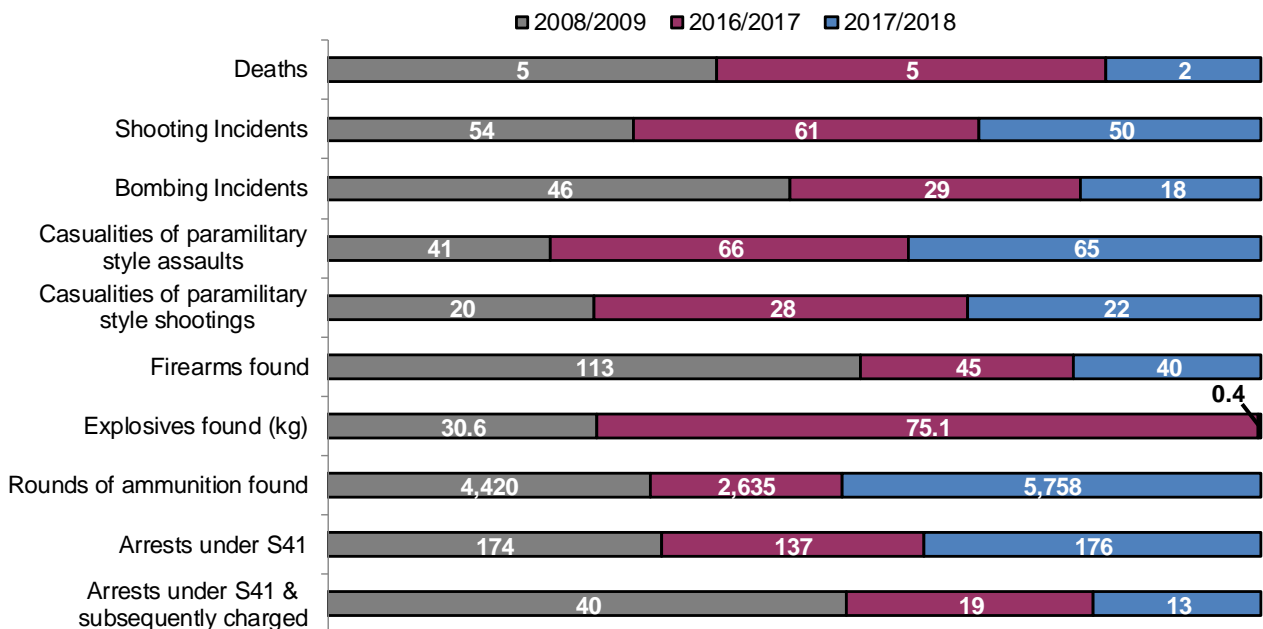
## Section 1 – Security Statistics Summary

Security related deaths, shooting and bombing incidents were at relatively high levels in the early 1990s, decreasing after the first ceasefire in 1994, most markedly in 1995/96. They then gradually increased again in the early 2000s peaking in 2001/02 and 2002/03, albeit at levels well below those pre-ceasefire. After 2002/03 the levels of security related incidents decreased again and have remained relatively consistent over the last 10 years. However, they still pose a significant threat as evidenced by the number of deaths and multiple shooting and bombing incidents that still occur each year.

During 2017/18 there were 2 security related deaths, 3 fewer than occurred during the previous year (2016/17) and the lowest number since 2013/14. The past year saw the number of shooting incidents decrease from 61 to 50. With the exception of 2015/16, this was the lowest number of shootings in the past 10 years. During 2017/18 there were 18 bombing incidents, down from 29 incidents the previous year and the lowest level recorded in 22 years. The number of casualties resulting from paramilitary style assaults saw little change (65 in 2017/18 compared to 66 the previous year) while the number of casualties resulting from paramilitary style shootings fell from 28 to 22. Compared with the previous year, the quantity of explosives and number of firearms seized by the PSNI during 2017/18 decreased while the number of rounds of ammunition seized more than doubled. While 2017/18 saw an increase in the number of persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 (176 in 2017/18 compared to 137 the previous year), the number of persons subsequently charged was at its lowest level since the introduction of the Terrorism Act in 2001.

Figure 1 compares the number of security incidents during the past year (2017/18) with the previous year (2016/17) and ten years ago (2008/2009).

**Figure 1: Comparing security incidents for 2017/18, the previous year 2016/17 and ten years ago (2008/09).**



*\* In addition to the 28 non-fatal casualties of paramilitary style shootings during 2016/17, as shown in Figure 1, there was an additional fatality as a result of a paramilitary style shooting during this period. This occurred in April 2016. Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are counted as 'security related deaths'.*

- During 2017/18 there were 2 security related deaths, 3 fewer than occurred during 2016/17. One of the 2 deaths occurred in Ards and North Down policing district in May 2017 and the other occurred in Belfast City policing district in February 2018.

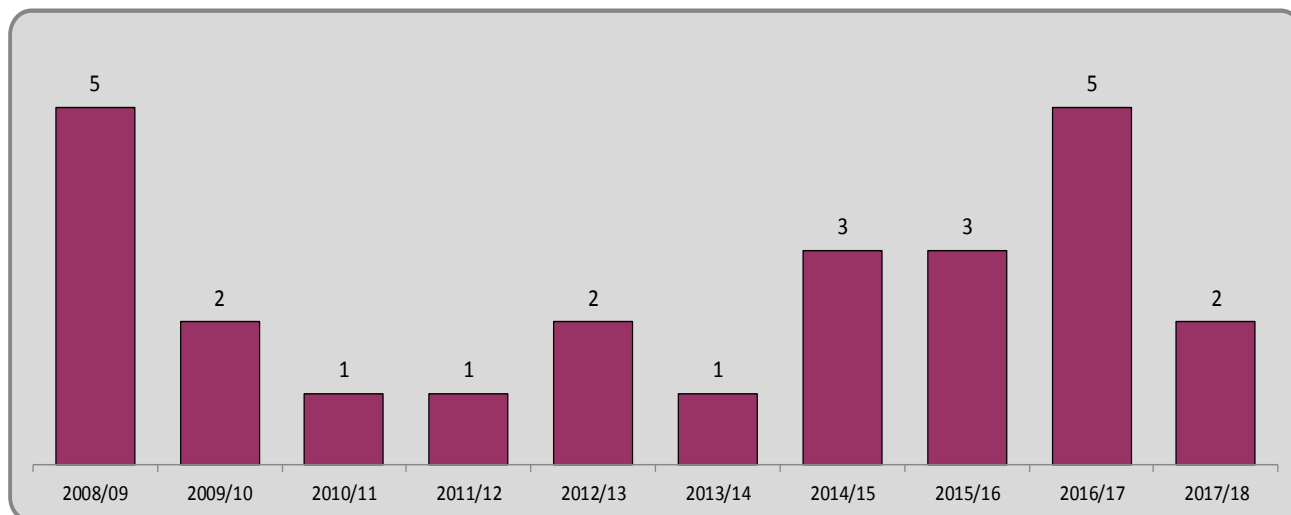
- In 2017/18 the police recorded 50 shooting incidents and 18 bombing incidents as a result of the security situation. This was 11 fewer shooting incidents than in the previous year (2016/17) and 4 fewer than occurred ten years ago in 2008/09. The number of bombing incidents was also 11 fewer than in the previous year (2016/17) and the lowest number per year since 1995/96.
- During 2017/18 there were 22 casualties resulting from paramilitary style shootings, 6 fewer than occurred the previous year, but 2 more than was recorded 10 years ago. Of the 22 casualties during 2017/18 all but one were attributed to Republicans.
- There were 65 casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults in 2017/18, 1 fewer than occurred in 2016/17 but 24 more than the 41 recorded ten years ago in 2008/09. Of the 65 recorded in past year, 50 were attributed to Loyalists and 15 were attributed to Republicans.
- There were 40 firearms seized by the PSNI during 2017/18 compared to 45 seized during the previous year. The 40 firearms seized during the past year was the lowest number seized per year since records began in 1969.
- During 2017/18, 0.43kg of explosives were seized. Like firearms, this was the lowest quantity of explosives seized per year since records began. During 2017/18 there were 5,758 rounds of ammunition seized, more than double that seized during the previous year (2016/17) and 30% more than the 4,420 rounds seized ten years ago in 2008/09.
- In 2017/18, 176 people were arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act of which 13 were subsequently charged with any offence. This was 39 more arrests than the previous year and other than 2014/15, when there were 227 arrests, the past year has seen the largest number of arrests in 7 years. The 13 persons subsequently charged in 2017/18 was the lowest number charged since the introduction of the Terrorism Act in February 2001.

## Section 2 – Deaths due to the Security Situation

During 2017/18 there were two security related deaths in Northern Ireland. One of these deaths occurred in Ards and North Down policing district in May 2017 and the other occurred in Belfast City policing district in February 2018.

The number of security related deaths has fluctuated over the past ten years. After 2008/09, when there were 5 deaths, the number of deaths dropped to one or two per year during the next five years. The following three years saw an increase, reaching five deaths again in 2016/17 before dropping to two deaths during the past year (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Deaths due to the Security Situation 2008/09 – 2017/18<sup>1</sup>**



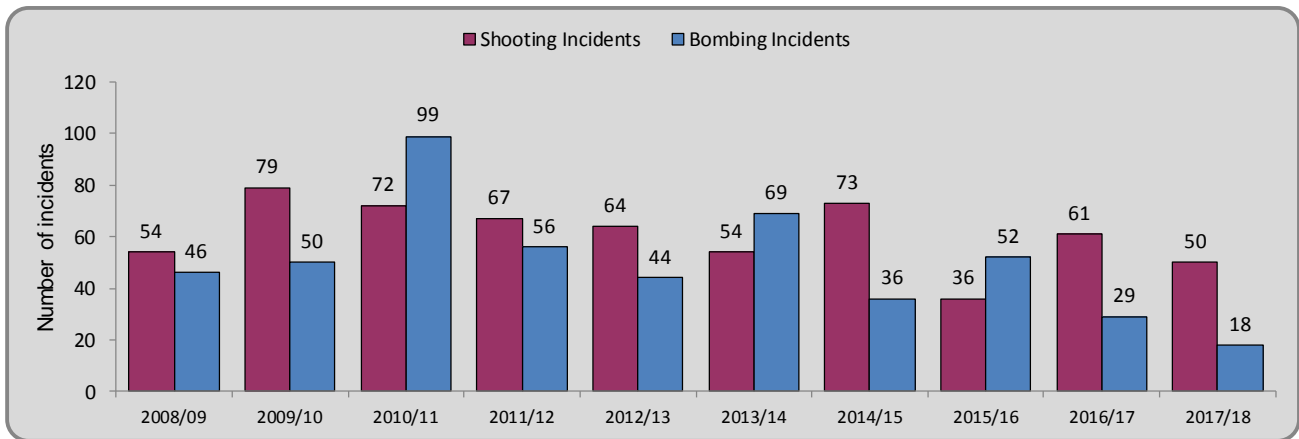
<sup>1</sup> Includes all deaths which are considered at the time of the incident to be directly attributed to terrorism, where the cause has a direct or proximate link to subversive/sectarian strife or where the death is attributable to security force activity.

## Section 3 – Shooting and bombing incidents

There were 50 shooting incidents in Northern Ireland during 2017/18, 11 fewer than during the previous year and the second lowest number in the past 10 years. Figure 3 shows that the number of shooting incidents during the past 5 years (274 incidents) has decreased compared to the 5 years previous (336 incidents), a drop of nearly 20%. The 50 shooting incidents in the past year was 4 fewer than occurred ten years ago in 2008/09 (54 incidents).

During 2017/18 there were 18 bombing incidents, 11 fewer than the previous year and the lowest number of bombings in 22 years (see trend graphs in the annex). The number of bombings has dropped considerably over the past 5 years compared to the 5 years previous. During the period 2013/14 – 2017/18 there were 204 bombing incidents, approximately a third lower than the 295 incidents over the preceding five year period (2008/09 - 2012/13).

**Figure 3: Shooting and bombing incidents 2008/09 – 2017/18<sup>1,2</sup>**

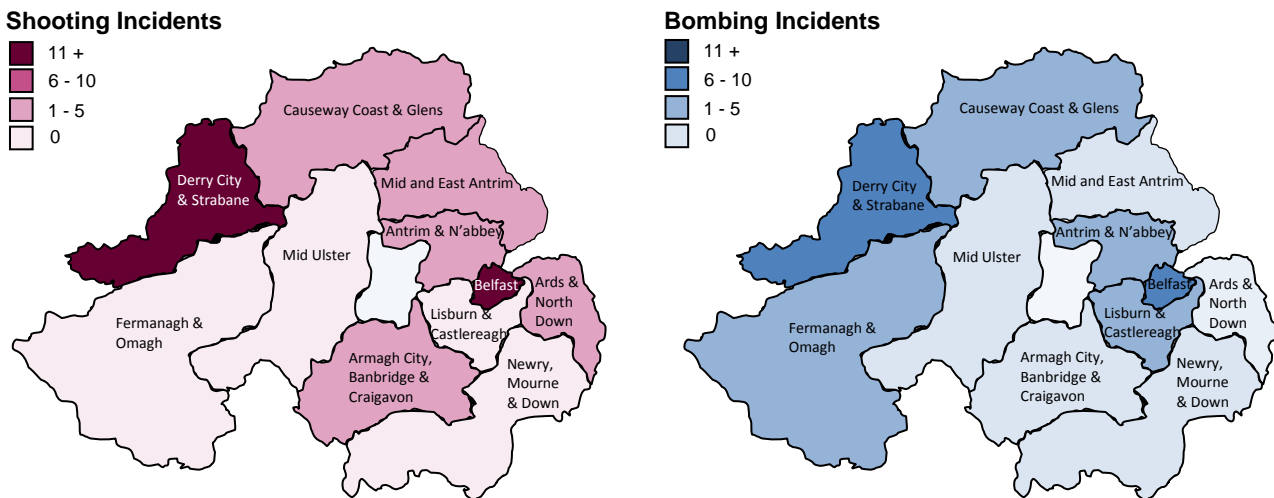


<sup>1</sup> The following types of shooting incidents are included: shots fired by terrorists, shots fired by the security forces, paramilitary-style attacks involving shootings and shots heard (and later confirmed).

<sup>2</sup> An individual bombing incident may involve one or more explosive devices. Incidents recorded include explosions and defusings (devices used). Incidents involving hoax devices, petrol bombings or incendiaries are excluded.

Just over three quarters of all shooting incidents during 2017/18 occurred in Belfast City and Derry City and Strabane policing districts (19 incidents in each), followed by Causeway Coast and Glens policing district (4 incidents) and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (4 incidents). Belfast City policing district experienced the most bombing incidents during 2017/18 (8 incidents), followed by Derry City and Strabane (6 incidents) see Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Number of shooting and bombing incidents by policing district during 2017/18**



More detailed information on shooting and bombing incidents across Police Districts and Areas is available from the accompanying spreadsheet [on our website](#).

## Section 4 – Paramilitary-style attacks (shootings & assaults)

Paramilitary style attacks are usually carried out by Loyalist or Republican groups on members of their own community as a so-called punishment and tend to be in the form of either paramilitary style shootings or paramilitary style assaults. The attribution of each paramilitary style attack as Loyalist or Republican is based on the investigating officer's perception.

The number of casualties as a result of paramilitary-style attacks was considerably lower in the past decade (2008/09 – 2017/18, 830 casualties) than in the preceding decade (1998/99 – 2007/08, 2,142 casualties), as illustrated in the trend graph in the annex. However the same level of downward trend has not continued during the past ten years. The number of attacks has fluctuated since 2008/09 and assaults have shown a generally upward trend since 2012/13 (Figures 4 and 5).

During 2017/18 there were 87 casualties as a result of paramilitary-style attacks, 7 fewer than the previous year. There were 3 times as many casualties of assaults as of shootings during the past 12 months (Table 1).

**Table 1: Casualties as a result of paramilitary-style attacks 2008/09 – 2017/18**

Financial Year	Shootings			Assaults			Total Casualties (Shootings and Assaults)
	Total	By Loyalist Groups*	By Republican Groups*	Total	By Loyalist Groups*	By Republican Groups*	
2008/09	20	2	18	41	28	13	61
2009/10	46	1	45	81	69	12	127
2010/11	33	0	33	50	34	16	83
2011/12	33	0	33	46	31	15	79
2012/13	27	1	26	36	27	9	63
2013/14	28	9	19	42	37	5	70
2014/15	36	6	30	58	42	16	94
2015/16	14	1	13	58	47	11	72
2016/17	28	3	25	66	56	10	94
2017/18	22	1	21	65	50	15	87

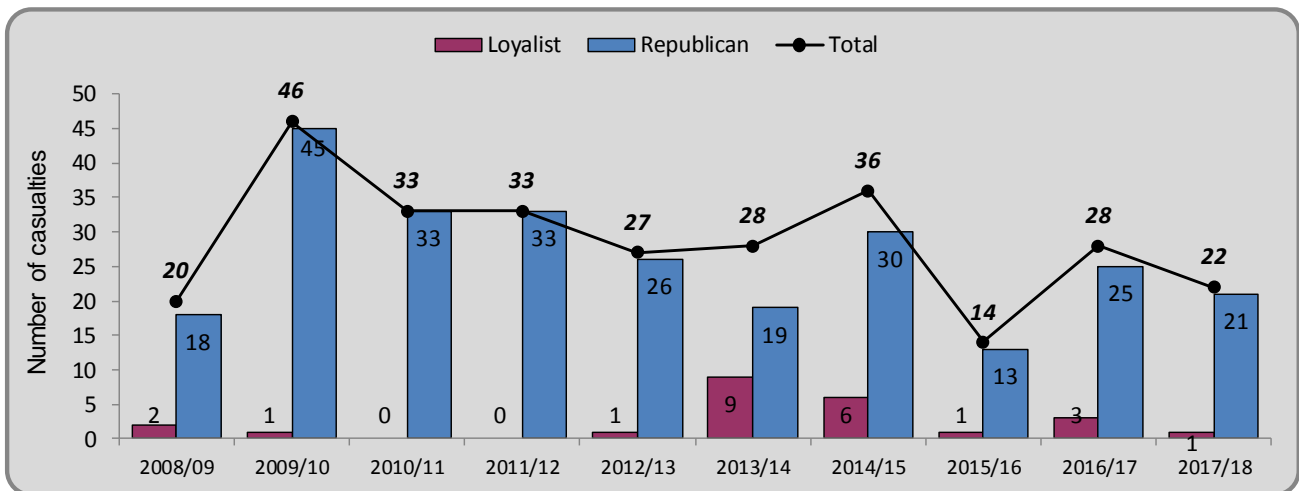
\* Attribution is as perceived by PSNI based on the information available at the time of incident. Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are not recorded as casualties of paramilitary style attacks but are counted as 'security related deaths'.

### Paramilitary-style shootings

During 2017/18 there were 22 casualties as a result of paramilitary style shootings, which is 6 fewer than that recorded in the previous year. There have only been 2 other years in the past 10 in which there have been fewer casualties of paramilitary style shootings, 2015/16 when there was a 10 year low of 14 and 2008/09 when there were 20 casualties (Figure 5). The number of casualties in the past year is lower than the average number of casualties per year during the past decade, which was 29. Almost two thirds (64%) of all paramilitary style shootings in 2017/18 were carried out in Belfast (14 casualties). Of the 8 remaining, 6 were carried out in Derry City and Strabane policing district, 1 in Antrim and Newtownabbey policing district and 1 in Ards and North Down policing district (Figure 7). The majority (92%) of paramilitary style shootings carried out over the past 10 years have been attributed to Republican groups.

Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are not recorded as casualties of paramilitary style attacks but are counted as 'security related deaths'.

**Figure 5: Casualties as a result of paramilitary-style shootings 2008/09 – 2017/18\***

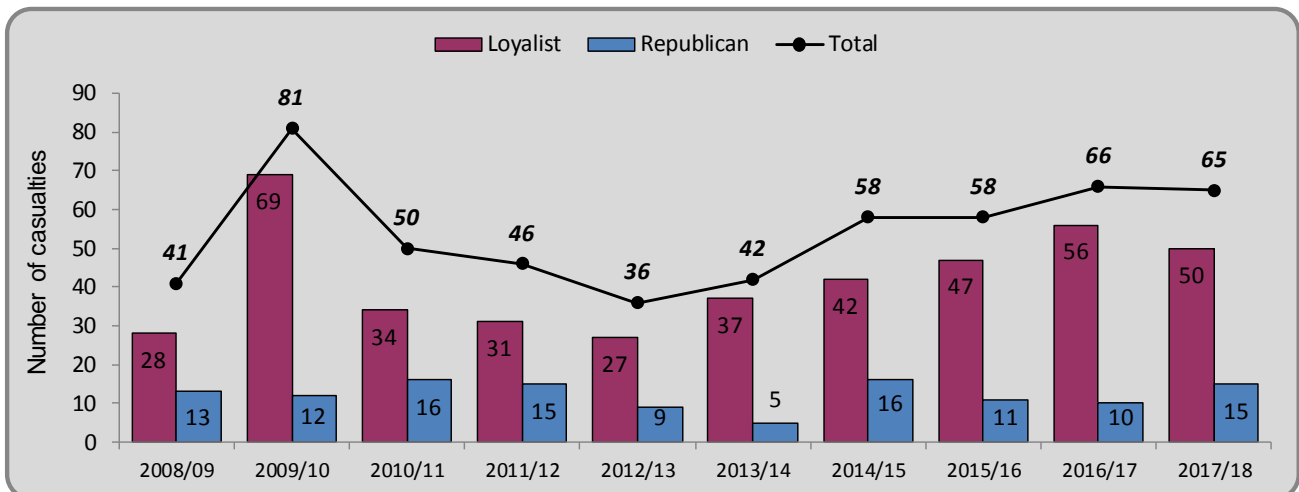


\* Attribution is as perceived by PSNI based on the information available at the time of incident. Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are not recorded as casualties of paramilitary style attacks but are counted as 'security related deaths'.

### Paramilitary-style assaults

During 2017/18 there were 65 casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults, one less than the previous year. There is still little or no evidence of a reversal in the general upward trend in the number of casualties since 2012/13 (Figure 6). In fact, there has been an 81% increase in the number of such casualties over the past 5 years. Responsibility for the majority of paramilitary style assaults conducted in the last ten years has been attributed to Loyalists. In 2017/18, 77% of the 65 casualties resulting from paramilitary assaults were attributed to Loyalists while the remaining 23% were attributed to Republicans.

**Figure 6: Casualties as a result of paramilitary-style assaults 2008/09 – 2017/18\***

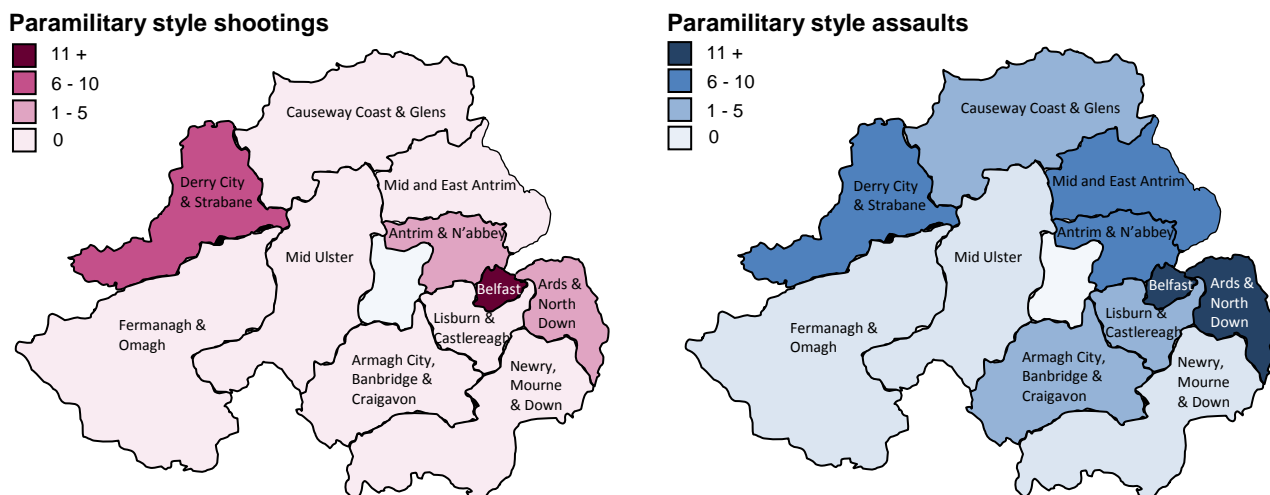


\* Attribution is as perceived by PSNI based on the information available at the time of incident. Paramilitary style assaults/shootings that result in death are not recorded as casualties of paramilitary style attacks but are counted as 'security related deaths'.

Belfast City policing district accounted for just over a quarter (18 casualties) of all paramilitary style assaults in 2017/18, down from just over a half of all assaults in 2016/17. In contrast, Ards and North Down also accounted for just over a quarter (18 casualties) of all assaults in the past year, up from 12% (8 casualties) of all assaults the previous year. Derry City and Strabane and Antrim and Newtownabbey also reported increases in the number the assaults from the previous year with 6 in each District, up from 1 and 2 respectively in 2016/17.



**Figure 7: Number of casualties as a result of paramilitary style shootings and assaults by policing district during 2017/18**



More detailed information on number of casualties resulting from paramilitary style attacks across Police Districts and Areas is available from the accompanying spreadsheet [on our website](#).

### Section 5 – Firearms, ammunition and explosives finds

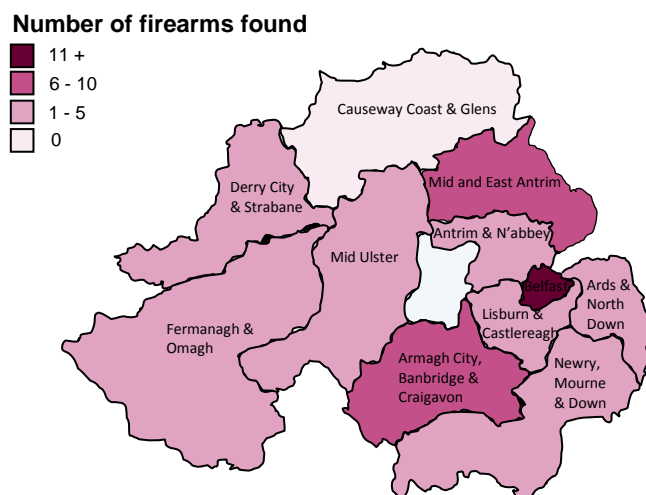
PSNI officers seized 40 firearms and 5,758 rounds of ammunition during 2017/18. Just over one third of the ammunition was found during an incident in Belfast City policing district in March 2018. Compared to the previous year (2016/17), the number of firearms found decreased by 5 firearms and the number of rounds of ammunition more than doubled (from 2,635 rounds). The number of firearms seized during the past year was the smallest number found since records began in 1969. Likewise, the 0.43kg of explosives found during 2017/18 was the smallest quantity found since records began.

**Table 2: Firearms, ammunition and explosives finds 2008/09 – 2017/18**

Financial Year	Firearms	Ammunition (rounds)	Explosives (kg)
2008/09	113	4,420	30.6
2009/10	77	34,962	2.2
2010/11	86	2,574	2.9
2011/12	176	4,064	43.8
2012/13	57	2,589	11.4
2013/14	101	5,057	23.1
2014/15	58	4,569	22.9
2015/16	66	4,418	2.4
2016/17	45	2,635	75.1
2017/18	40	5,758	0.43

The policing districts with the largest number of firearms seizures in 2017/18 were Belfast City (15 firearms seized), followed by Mid and East Antrim (9 firearms seized) and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (6 firearms), see Figure 8. Causeway Coast and Glens was the only policing district in which no firearms were seized during the past year. The three policing districts that recovered the largest number of rounds of ammunition were Belfast City (3,386), Causeway Coast and Glens (886) and Mid Ulster (359) while the explosives were seized in Belfast (0.24kg), Causeway Coast and Glens (0.12kg), Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (0.04kg) and Derry City and Strabane (0.03kg).

**Figure 8: Firearms found/seized in 2017/18**



More detailed information on seizure incidents across Police Districts and Areas is available from the accompanying spreadsheet [on our website](#).

### Section 6 – Persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act and subsequently charged

In 2017/18, 176 persons were arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act (TACT), a 28% increase in the number of arrests made during the previous year. Other than 2014/15, when there were 227 arrests, the past year has seen the largest number of arrests in 7 years (Table 3). The downward trend in the number of persons subsequently charged has continued; in 2017/18 there were 13 persons charged, 6 fewer than the previous year and the lowest number since the introduction of the Terrorism Act in February 2001.

**Table 3: Persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act (TACT) and subsequently charged 2008/09 – 2017/18**

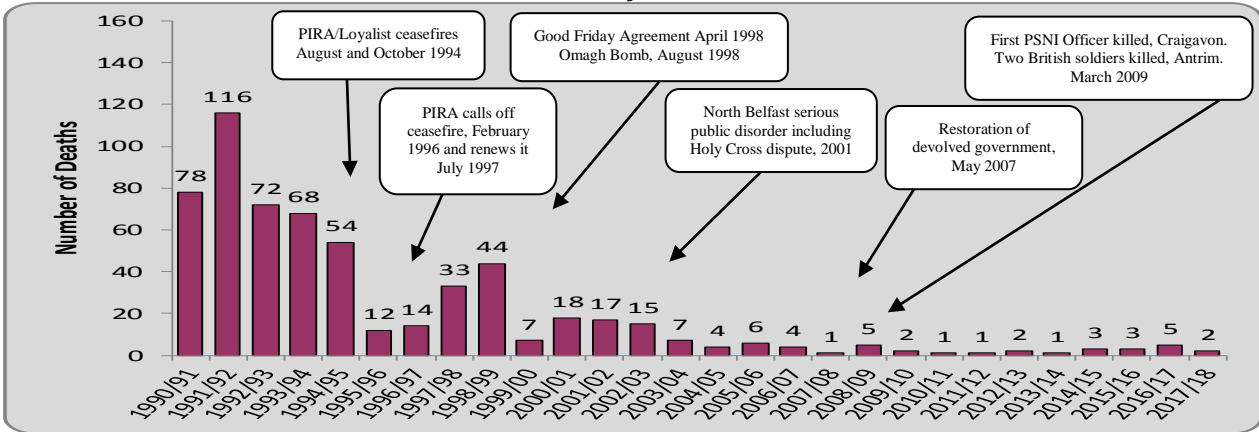
Financial Year	Persons arrested under Section 41 of TACT	Persons subsequently charged <sup>1,2</sup>
2008/09	174	40
2009/10	169	36
2010/11	195	41
2011/12	159	39
2012/13	157	50
2013/14	168	32
2014/15	227	35
2015/16	149	18
2016/17	137	19
2017/18	176	13

<sup>1</sup> Statistics refer to charges brought against a person after the original period of detention (including extensions). Any subsequent charges, additions, deletions to the original charges are not included.

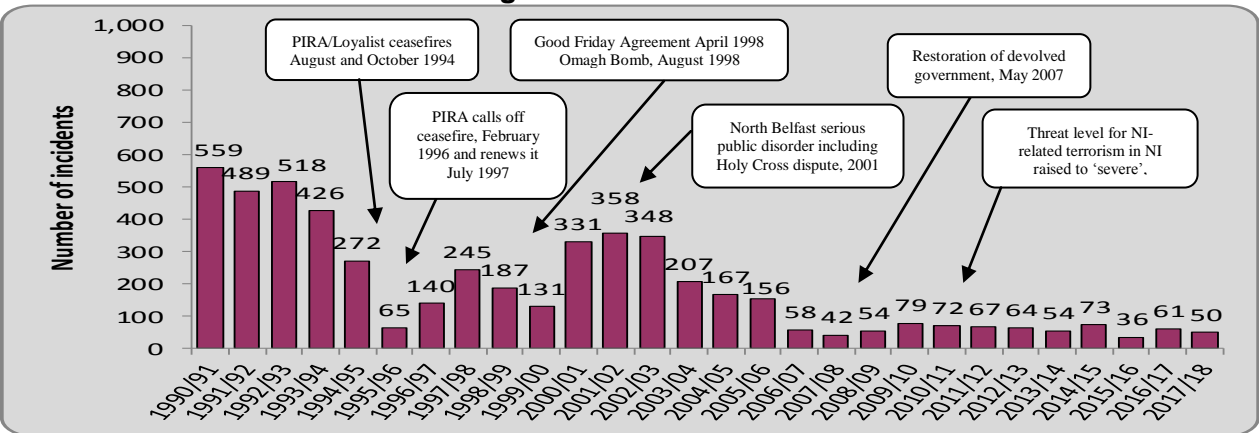
<sup>2</sup> Please note that persons can be charged under legislation other than the Terrorism Act.

## Annex: PSNI Security Statistics: Trends over the last 28 Years

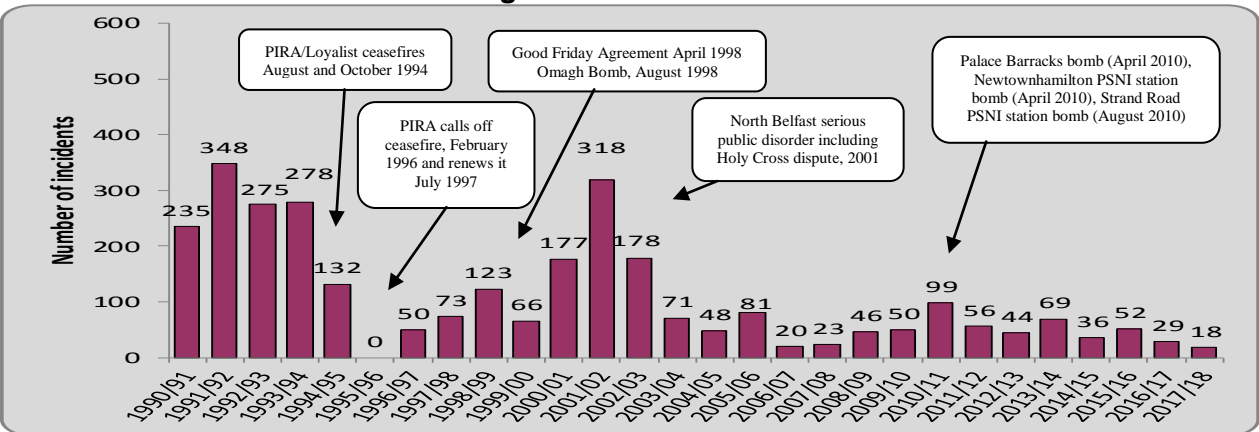
### Deaths Due to the Security Situation 1990/91 – 2017/18



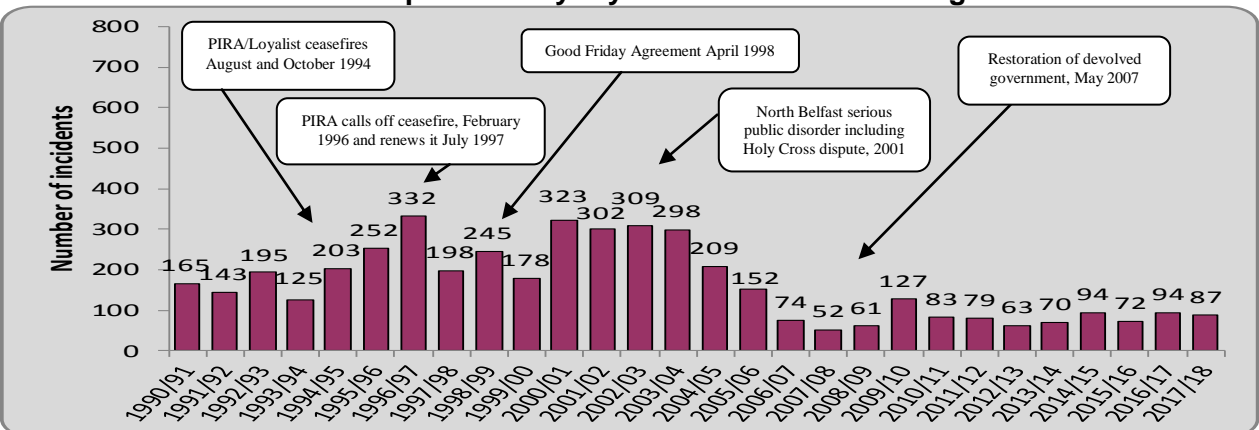
### Shooting Incidents 1990/91 – 2017/18



### Bombing Incidents 1990/91 – 2017/18



### Casualties as a result of paramilitary-style assaults and shootings 1990/91 – 2017/18



## NOTES

Further information on how these statistics are collated and reported are included in the [Security Situation Statistics User Guide](#) available on the [PSNI website](#).

### Strengths and Limitations of the data

#### Strengths

Police recorded statistics relating to the security situation in Northern Ireland are the main source of official information on trends and statistics relating to the security situation throughout the Troubles and up to the present day. They were initially established by the police to provide much needed facts and figures on widespread civil unrest during the late 1960s and early 1970s and then were developed further through the 1980s and 1990s with computerisation. They are a key source of information on the security situation in Northern Ireland since 1969 and are used widely within PSNI and also by colleagues in government departments as well as by the media, academics and members of the public.

#### Limitations

As the security situation figures relate to those incidents that took place within Northern Ireland, they do not include any related incidents that may have happened either in the Republic of Ireland or in Great Britain.

These statistics only include those incidents that are brought to the attention of the police and some such incidents may not have been reported. Therefore a level of under-reporting may exist and users of the statistics should exercise caution when examining trends based on these police statistics. The PSNI's Security Statistics are collated and reported by a small number of experienced staff who manually trawl through PSNI systems on a daily basis to identify all such security related incidents. The reliance on these key individuals means that an element of human error could be involved and that a small proportion of incidents could be missed or incorrectly classified as a result. However, various internal checks and validation processes are in place to ensure that this is kept to a minimum.

#### Revisions

Revisions are carried out in accordance with our [Revisions Policy](#), a copy of which is available in the Official Statistics section of the PSNI Statistics website. Figures within the financial year are provisional and will be subject to slight revision until figures for the full financial year are published. This means that the totals for each month from April 2017 can change each time the figures are published during the financial year. These amendments can happen for a number of reasons, such as an incident being included or excluded following further investigation by an officer, or further data validation. The figures in this report are finalised figures for the 2017/18 financial year.

Since the publication of the previous bulletin up until 28 February 2018, 6 revisions have been made to the data as detailed below:

- The number of persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 in November 2017 decreased by 2 (from 17 to 15).
- The number of persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 in June 2017 and subsequently charged decreased by 1 (from 2 to 1).
- The quantity of explosives seized by the PSNI in December 2017 increased by 0.02kg.
- In February 2018 the number of bombing incidents recorded by the PSNI increased by 3 (from no incidents to 3 incidents), the number of rounds of ammunition seized by the PSNI increased by 12 rounds (from 8 rounds to 20 rounds), and the number of firearms seized increased by 1 (from 1 firearm to 2 firearms).

## Availability of Additional Data

Additional data are available on the Security Situation Statistics section of the PSNI website. The accompanying spreadsheet for the security situation data provides trend information back to 1968 where available, subject to statistical disclosure policies.

## Descriptions of the main security statistics collated

Security statistics generally relate to terrorist and public order type incidents that occur within Northern Ireland and which are recorded on the PSNI's IT systems. The main security related statistics that are collated and reported are as follows:

### a) Security related deaths

Each security related death is checked with the investigating officer to ensure that the circumstances fit in with the standard definition adopted by the PSNI's Statistics Branch guidelines i.e. *'those which are considered at the time of the incident to be directly attributed to terrorism, where the cause has a direct or proximate link to subversive/ sectarian strife or where the death is attributable to security force activity'*. At the end of each year, all security related deaths for that period are checked with the PSNI's Crime Operations Department to ensure that the list is complete and accurate before the finalised figures are published. Furthermore, not all security related deaths involve offences of murder as they also include deaths resulting from the use of force by the security forces or could involve persons being killed while planting a bomb which detonated prematurely.

### b) Bombings incidents

These include all incidents where a bombing device explodes or is defused. A bombing incident can also relate to more than one device - for example a mortar attack with four devices would be recorded as one bombing incident with four devices. When a device partially explodes (i.e. usually only the detonator or fuse) it is recorded as an explosion. However, if a device is found that is not complete or armed, then it is recorded as a 'find' and not as a bombing.

### c) Shooting incidents

These include any shooting incident relating to the security situation and include shots fired by terrorists, shots fired by the security forces, paramilitary style attacks involving shootings and shots heard (and later confirmed by other sources). They exclude the firing of blank rounds.

### d) Paramilitary style shooting casualties

Any such paramilitary style shooting incident can have one or more casualties (i.e. two or more persons could be shot in the same incident). The injured party is usually shot in the knees, elbows, feet, ankles or thighs and the motive is supposedly to punish the person for anti-social activities. These paramilitary style shootings are generally conducted by Loyalist or Republican paramilitary groups on members of their own community. The attribution of such shootings is generally recorded as 'Loyalist' or 'Republican' depending on the investigating officer's view on which groups had conducted the shooting. Paramilitary style shootings that result in death are counted as security related deaths and are not reflected in the paramilitary style shooting figures.

### e) Paramilitary style assaults

As with the paramilitary style shootings, these assaults are usually carried out by Loyalist or Republican groups on members of their own community as a so-called punishment. The assault will involve major or minor physical injury to the injured party typically involving a group of assailants armed with, for example, iron bars or baseball bats. Multiple casualties may result from a single incident. Confirmation of the paramilitary style assault is generally sought from the investigating officer.

#### **f) Finds of ammunition or explosives**

These refer to the seizure or recovery of all illegal firearms, ammunition, explosives, rocket/mortar launchers, detonators and bomb making material/equipment. Replica/blank firing firearms, petrol bombs and petrol bomb making materials, grenades and munitions from World War 1 or World War 2 found on the beach or in attics etc. are not recorded as finds.

#### **g) Incendiaries**

These are different from bombings in that they are used to start fires and not to cause an explosion. They normally consist of a cassette, timer battery and material to cause fire (i.e. petrol, gas or other accelerant) and are usually targeted at commercial property.

#### **h) Persons arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act who are subsequently charged.**

Section 41 of the Terrorism Act enables police officers to arrest persons for the prevention of terrorism. Within the PSNI, weekly returns of all persons arrested under Section 41 are sent to Statistics Branch along with details of any subsequent charges. The charge can relate to any offence (e.g. attempted murder) and does not necessarily need to be an offence listed under the Terrorism Act.

#### **Further Research**

Research into the history of the security situation in Northern Ireland is available from a number of different areas including academics, media and charities. Included below are a few websites which users may find interesting. This list is not exhaustive.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/northern-ireland-terrorism-legislation-annual-statistics-201617>

[www.community-relations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/The-Sense-of-Safety.pdf](http://www.community-relations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/The-Sense-of-Safety.pdf)

[www.cain.ulst.ac.uk](http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk)

[www.conflictresearch.org.uk](http://www.conflictresearch.org.uk)

[www.wavetraumacentre.org.uk](http://www.wavetraumacentre.org.uk)