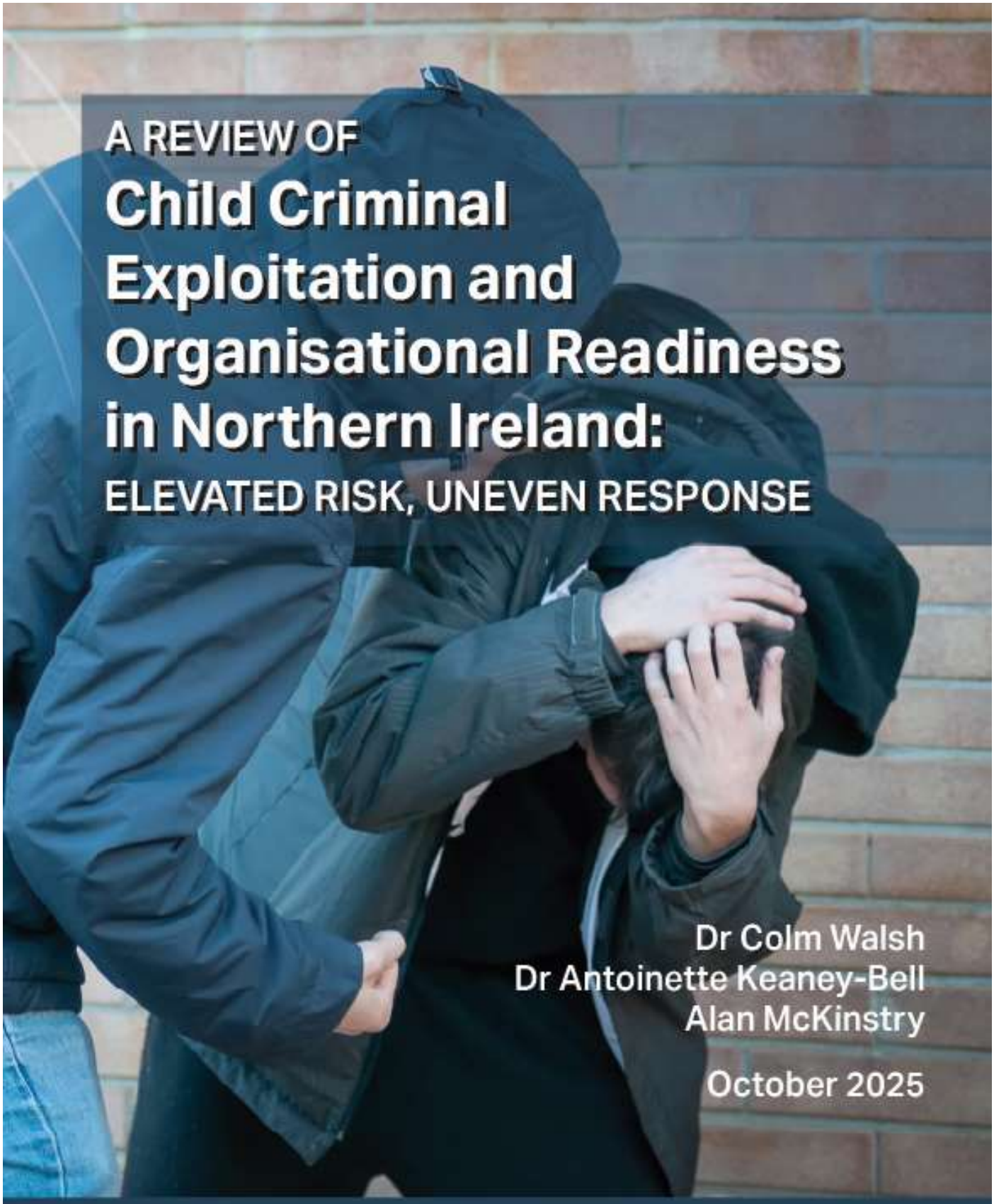

A REVIEW OF

Child Criminal Exploitation and Organisational Readiness in Northern Ireland:

ELEVATED RISK, UNEVEN RESPONSE

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Executive Summary

This report investigates the prevalence, context, and organisational readiness to address **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)** in Northern Ireland (NI). CCE refers to the coercion, control, or manipulation of children into criminal activities by individuals or groups who exploit an imbalance of power. The research highlights how CCE in NI uniquely intersects with deprivation, community violence, and paramilitary influence.

Key Findings:

- **Contextual Harms**: Five main factors elevate the risk of CCE: educational exclusion, youth population density, community deprivation, violent crime, and paramilitary activity. These factors are often compounded within communities, heightening children's vulnerability.

- **Geospatial Analysis**: Using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and multiple public datasets, two predictive models (Search Criteria One and Two) identified specific wards where contextual strains cluster. 76 wards were flagged under Criteria One and 45 under Criteria Two, with the majority located in Belfast and Derry City and Strabane.

- **Organisational Readiness**: A survey of 85 professionals revealed significant gaps in systems, training, and strategic responses. While inter-agency cooperation was generally positive, confidence in data recording, National Referral Mechanism (NRM) usage, and CCE-specific training was low.

- **Implementation domains:** Data storage, recording, reporting and information sharing emerged as areas of critical importance, along with staff supervision and support. The use of ArcGIS dashboards to allow real-time analysis of data which is input to Survey123 by relevant professionals and those working in the CCE domain.

Conclusions: CCE is shaped by complex, overlapping structural harms. Organisational responses across NI are uneven and underdeveloped, despite the presence of vulnerabilities that elevate the risk of children being criminally exploited. There is an urgent need for data-driven targeting of resources and systemic reform to protect at-risk youth and improve frontline responses in NI. This report documents both where CCE is likely to be elevated and how ready organisations are, across various domains, to understand and respond effectively.

Recommendations: It is recommended that organisations improve training and supervision for staff who are likely to encounter CCE. CCE is a complex and intersectoral challenge. This requires joined up planning and delivery. There are challenges with information sharing. It is recommended that consideration be given to a system that can safely facilitate the sharing of information between agencies to better understand and respond to CCE. This system would be GDPR-compliant and should mitigate corporate risk. At the same time, it would reduce the risk of CCE at a local level. One potential option for this system is outlined in the conclusion section of the report.

Section 1: Introduction and literature review

Defining Child Criminal Exploitation

Although there have been calls for implementation (The Children's Society, 2021; Brown, 2022), child criminal exploitation (CCE) does not yet have a statutory definition in UK law. In Northern Ireland (NI), the Northern Ireland Executive (2024) defines CCE as:

> ***"A form of child abuse which occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity. The exploitation may be through violence or the threat of violence but may also appear to be transactional and in the context of perceived relationships and friendships. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be consensual.***
>
> ***Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact. It can also occur through the use of technology and social media.***
>
> ***The criminal exploitation of children and young people can include being exploited into storing drugs or weapons, drug dealing, theft, violence, intimidation, vandalism, forced labour and other forms of criminality through grooming by people that children and young people trust or look up to."***

CCE can take many forms, from involvement in drug supply (Moyle, 2019; Windle *et al.,* 2020), criminal activity encouraged by grooming, force or debt (Walsh, 2023; Robinson *et al.,* 2019), to involvement in public disorder (Walsh, 2021). Although research has shown that individual risks play a significant role as push/pull factors for the criminal exploitation of children (Moyle, 2019), at the heart of the issue remains contextual harms that exacerbate these risks (Firman & Lloyd, 2023).

Examples of CCE and the child protection issues

Drug supply and county lines

Although CCE research on CCE is still in its infancy in NI, studies from other parts of the UK have been growing. CCE gained traction as a topic of importance largely due to increased recognition of county lines drug supply and the trade exploitation of children and vulnerable adults. In research pre-dating this recognition, Hales and Hobbs (2010) noted that the drug supply industry exhibits most of the characteristics of legitimate mainstream business models, including competing on price, and expanding and diversifying to take advantage of new market opportunities. Their research uncovered the expansion of drug supply lines to create new markets that could increase profitability with the benefit of reduced competition (Hales & Hobbs, 2010).

Research anchored to the phenomenon of organised crime has enabled a greater understanding of the expansion of criminal networks and illustrated the implications for children and young people, framing this as 'county lines' (Moyle, 2019; Robinson *et al.,* 2019; Harding, 2020; Windle *et al.,* 2020; Spicer, 2021). This practice is now widely recognised as synonymous with the criminal exploitation of children through mechanisms such as human trafficking, forced labour, and debt bondage. From this research, understanding has increased around the individual and contextual harms experienced by criminally exploited young people, offering insight into potential risk factors and the means used to recruit young people into criminality.

However, young people in NI report different experiences with those who exploit them and the types of activities they are coerced into. Children have situated the criminality in the context of conflict, and the enduring presence of criminal structures- *"The paramilitaries are the gangs, and they control all the wee-er groups anyway"* (Walsh, 2023: 290). Characterised as *"mass deception"* (Walsh, 2023: 291), some young people in NI believe paramilitary groups to be distinct from organised crime gangs and perceive them as keeping the community safe from drugs and anti-social behaviour. In fact, in a representation of this paradox, the presence

of drug dealers was said to provide justification for the continued existence of paramilitary groups (Walsh, 2023).

Political violence:

Although the drugs trade has been integral to CCE research in England, Scotland and Wales, evidence implies that children can be exploited for a wider range of motivating factors, including for political means by non-state actors such as paramilitaries. During the 2021 NI riots, it was reported that children as young as eight were involved in acts of violence (Walsh, 2021). This prompted the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) to call into question paramilitary influence over these children (McLafferty, 2021). This was followed by a government advisory paper calling for a unified strategic response to protect children from harm, including abuse, violence, coercion, and exploitation by organised gangs and groups (McClafferty, 2021).

In the immediate aftermath of the riots, a small number of young people were engaged in in-depth interviews. This revealed that adults linked to paramilitary groups had incited children to take part and had even supplied petrol bombs. One young person stated, *"Kids are doing the paramilitaries' dirty work in that situation"* (Walsh, 2021: 19). Conceived of as highly organised, Walsh's (2023) later research suggests that some young people were instrumentalised to become involved in civil unrest. Alongside other forms of CCE, such as involvement in violence, intimidation, extortion, property damage, and the concealment of weapons, (Walsh, 2023), these practices remain under-recognised and are often perceived as consensual or transactional (Robinson *et al.,* 2019).

Legislative provisions for supporting victims of CCE

In this context, CCE has been contemporarily framed as a modern slavery issue, and modern slavery legislation has been utilised to identify victims. The NRM is employed by the UK Home Office in identifying victims of CCE within a modern slavery framework. Defined as the recruitment, movement, or receipt of individuals or groups via coercion and force, modern

slavery includes the abuse of vulnerability for exploitive means, labour that is exerted through force or debt, and the facilitation of travel in aid of exploitation (Such *et al.,* 2024).

The NRM uses this definition to recognise victims and provide support (UK Home Office, 2024). For CCE victims, this recognition can support the use of a statutory modern slavery defence in criminal cases, prompting the justice system to assess whether prosecuting victims of forced crime serves the public interest (Crown Prosecution Service, 2024). In this way, the NRM has been used to divert children and young people traditionally viewed as offenders away from the criminal justice system whilst repositioning them as a victim. However, modern slavery policies have not been applied this way in NI (McKinstry, 2023), and there are not yet any estimates of CCE prevalence (Walsh 2023).

However, the NRM process has significant limitations. Research has highlighted significant delays in NRM decision-making that leave young people with repeat court adjournments that can stretch to months, and even years (Marshall, 2023). Alongside this, research has also pointed out that victim identification through the NRM process is a binary practice that identifies children as either victims or offenders (*ibid*)*, when this relationship is often more complex.* The process thus fails to recognise the complexity of CCE victimhood. As a result, Marshall (2023) points out that the NRM can obscure the needs of young people deemed 'not exploited enough'.

Importantly, research has begun to explore the wider, contextual factors that increase children's vulnerability to criminal exploitation. These factors can be conceptualised as harmful alone, but in multiples, elevate the risk of criminal harms such as CCE.

Contextual Harms

Marshall (2022) depicts common interpretations of CCE as being based on understandings of passive young people who are devoid of agency, preyed upon, groomed, and exploited. She argues that this narrative *"erases the possibility of recognising young people's involvement in exploitative work as a response to multifaceted and complex experiences of socioeconomic*

marginalisation" (Marshall, 2022: 87). Such marginalisation is rooted in contextual harms such as poverty (Firmin and Lloyd, 2023), exclusion (Craig *et al.,* 2017), and exposure to normalised violence (Fowler *et al.,* 2009). The cumulative impact of these harms may push vulnerable young people towards opportunities provided by crime in their communities, particularly when these vulnerabilities are leveraged by adults (Walsh, 2023). It is often those young people most affected by contextual harm who are at the greatest risk of being criminally exploited (Moyle, 2019; Robinson *et al.,* 2019; Walsh, 2023). The risk factors for such vulnerability are not simply related to higher crime rates but are complex and linked to overall social and financial well-being (Firmin & Lloyd, 2023).

Deprivation

Deprivation has long been implicated in criminality; however, research on CCE has often conceptualised economic and material deprivation as a lever pulled by exploiters for criminal gain (Whittaker *et al.,* 2019). Harding (2020) points out that conditions of deprivation create a wider 'pool of availability' for recruiters, with young people visualising a way out of their difficult circumstances through activities that generate income but increase the risk of violence and arrest (e.g., drug dealing). The strain of deprivation can muddy how victims make sense of their circumstances. Indeed, it is common for victims not to recognise their experiences as harmful (Apland et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2019; Maxwell, 2023).

Exposure to community violence

Sociological and criminological research has consistently found that children involved in offending behaviour have often been victims of crime themselves, with violence being a highly common crime that children are particularly vulnerable to (Baglivio et al., 2021). Figures from the World Health Organization (WHO) illustrate the burden, estimating that around one in every two children aged 2–17 years suffer some form of violence each year, and that one-third of adolescents are victimised by peer-related violence (WHO, 2020). Hillis et al. (2019) also estimate that up to one billion children are affected annually. While younger children are more likely to experience violence within the family home (Bellis et al., 2017), adolescents are at

increased risk of community violence (Walsh et al., 2025). In their systematic review, Fowler et al. (2009) found that both direct and indirect exposure to violence is associated with a range of negative psychosocial outcomes, including, stress-related symptoms (e.g., hypervigilance), maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., substance use), and aggression. In their review of case files of children in the justice system, Walsh et al. (2021) found that those with experiences of violent victimisation were nine times more likely to be convicted of a violent offence. Thus, in keeping with decades of research on the cycle of violence (Widom, 1989), living in areas of elevated violence is also predicted to increase vulnerability to criminal exploitation.

Exposure to paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland

Although research in the aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) has suggested that the focus of paramilitarism has been organised crime (Moran, 2004), current political debates surrounding immigration, Brexit, and the Irish Sea Border have raised concerns about the risk of a return to violence in NI (Walsh, 2021). However, research suggests that such violence has been ever-present for young people in some communities due to its embedded nature (Hamill, 2011; Walsh, 2021; Walsh, 2023). Paramilitary organisations do not stand apart from the community but are woven into its fabric (Walsh, 2021). They are neighbours, family members, and an ever-present source of concern for young people (*ibid*). Indeed, despite reporting feeling unsafe when in unfamiliar areas, young people in Walsh's (2021) research provided overwhelming evidence of having been directly or indirectly affected by violence in the spaces most familiar to them.

Exposure to the strain of violence as a contextual harm affects many aspects of young people's lives. Children have alluded to impacts on their mental health, manifesting in fear, insecurity, paranoia, and unhealthy coping mechanisms (McAlister *et al.,* 2018). Characterised as part of everyday life (Walsh, 2021), violence is perpetrated both among peers and by adults within paramilitary groups, and is associated with deep-rooted notions of coercive control (Hamill, 2011). CCE represents a specific manifestation of this violence, with some young people's involvement in criminality directed for the benefit of adults, with consequences for their safety and wellbeing (Walsh, 2023). Given that research has shown that the normalisation of violence can lead to the tacit acceptance of victimising events (Fowler *et al.*, 2009), there is a

risk that such children will not identify themselves as victims (Robinson *et al.,* 2019), and be met with a criminal justice response as a result.

Alongside continued exposure to violence, research suggests the ongoing recruitment of young people into joining paramilitary groups, regardless of whether the motivating factors have been political or criminal (Walsh & Cunningham, 2019). Akin to the hyperlocal nature of other forms of CCE recruitment elsewhere in the UK (e.g., Harding, 2020), Walsh and Schubotz's (2019: 660) study highlighted "informal" recruitment strategies by paramilitary groups, ranging from being bought alcohol, to being asked to 'do a job' such as breaking into a home or setting a car on fire. Unique to NI, however, is the generational impact of CCE related to paramilitary recruitment. Given the nature of the conflict, participants in McAlister *et al.*'s (2021) study discussed how paramilitary involvement was generational, alluding to how parents involved in paramilitary groups encouraged their children to partake in criminal activity. This was also mirrored in Walsh's (2021) exploration of the 2021 NI riots, where young people reported that the involvement of family members legitimised participation in the unrest.

School engagement

School can be a significant protective factor, particularly in circumstances where challenges exist at home and where violence is prevalent in the community. There is a long history of research which has explored how experiences of school engagement and exclusion are causally linked to serious youth crime. Drawing on the trajectory from being labelled a 'troublemaker' to eventual criminalisation (Arnez & Condry, 2021), research suggests that one contributing factor may be the sense of belonging that excluded young people find among similarly marginalised peers (Briggs, 2010). In this context, peer groups at the community level can become a sanctuary for these young people. With their perceived life chances becoming shaped by these relationships, involvement in crime becomes a means of gaining respect (Briggs, 2010). Sanders *et al.* (2017) point out that these friendships may compensate for the absence of positive and supportive relationships.

Legal practitioners (e.g., Temple, 2020) have highlighted how behaviour in school related to the possession of drugs and/or weapons is understandably met with exclusion. However, Dando *et al.* (2022) point out that this same behavioural change may instead be viewed as an important indicator of CCE. This is particularly relevant given emerging evidence that some behaviours leading to exclusion can be orchestrated by criminal actors as part of furthering the child's exploitation (Temple, 2020). Arnez and Condry's (2021) research highlights the difficulties in establishing causality between such exclusions and the exploitation of children to become involved in crime. Instead, they suggest that these exclusions should be viewed as part of a wider system of contextual factors that leave young people vulnerable to such issues due to "accumulated disadvantage" (Arnez and Condry 2021:23).

Preventing such exclusion is associated with lower levels of criminal conviction during childhood (McAra & McVie 2022), and research suggests that school policies based upon supportive relationships can have a positive impact on young people's vulnerability to involvement in crime (Christie *et al.,* 2010). Sanders *et al.* (2017) point out that greater awareness of the circumstances underlying a young person's negative behaviour in school may be an important factor in overcoming exclusion and focusing upon providing the positive support essential for helping young people avoid involvement in criminality. They point out that if challenging behaviour is addressed by creating learning environments capable of meeting the needs of young people facing contextual challenges, it may be possible to disrupt the progression of this behaviour into contact with the criminal justice system (*ibid*).

In summary, CCE is a phenomenon characterised by the coercion and/or manipulation of children into criminal activity. Despite the paucity of high-quality research, the corpus is beginning to point towards the contexts of children's lives as elevating the risk of such exploitation. These strains, while difficult when experienced in isolation, are found to cluster among those who report criminal exploitation.

They include:

- Areas where there is an elevated youth population
- Living in areas of high deprivation
- Living in areas of elevated violent crime

- Living in areas where there are active organised criminal networks
- Not engaged in or attaining at school

Section 2: Identifying where CCE might cluster

Background

Across NI, there are clusters of activity where communities continue to experience and be impacted by violent crime, gang-related activities and CCE. Within these clusters, where paramilitary activity is prevalent, for paramilitary linked violence alone 40% of adults and 45% of young people are affected, with others still being actively recruited into paramilitary groups (McCalmont, 2024). This section of the report explores a methodological approach that incorporates the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to identify where CCE might cluster via exploring available datasets and potential proxies for strain. This approach is based on research knowledge which uses known strain indicators to identify geographical areas that may be at elevated risk of CCE. Identifying these areas will allow targeted examination of what else may be occurring in these areas and will increase knowledge capacity in this topic area.

Method

A literature review was undertaken and a scoping exercise completed to establish the most appropriate datasets to utilise to address the research question regarding where CCE might cluster. A review of available datasets was undertaken and their suitability assessed regarding their potential use for the purposes of identifying geographical areas which could or should be examined and utilised in relation to their potential for elevated risk of CCE.

Data collection

GIS analysis of six datasets was undertaken across NI to examine the potential of using a range of systemic factors as a potential measure of strain, to identify areas where higher instances of CCE might be situated in a geographical context. This aspect of the investigation is explored throughout this section of the report.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) provides statistical data for the outputs from the census. In this instance, Census 2021 data was used for exploration as it was the most up to date data available and therefore the most relevant datasets for contemporary analysis. The geographies that NISRA provides data for range in size from neighbourhoods to large administrative units such as Local Government Districts (LGDs) (NISRA, 2023). NI is divided into 462 Electoral Wards. Electoral Wards are the spatial units that are used to elect local government councillors in LGDs across NI (NISRA, 2024). Data was manipulated to ensure that it was compatible for the incorporation into ArcGIS for analysis to address the research question in relation to the clustering of CCE. Table 1 outlines the geographical scale of each dataset.

Table 1: Contextual Strains Datasets

Dataset	**Dataset description**	**Geographical scale**
Percentage of residents aged 16 and over with no qualifications	2021 data detailing the number and percentage of all usual residents aged 16 and over with no qualifications. The dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify the usual residents by their highest level of qualification.	Electoral Ward level
Percentage of residents in the age band 5 to 19 years old	2021 data detailing the number and percentage of all usual residents aged: 0-4 to 85-89 (by five-year age bands) and 90+ years. Data was amalgamated to provide insight into the age bands 5 to 19 years for the purpose of this report.	Electoral Ward level
Percentage of violent crime (drug incidents,	Street level crime incidents in NI between the period May 2021 to July 2023. These dates were used as they were the maximum timeframe	Electoral Ward level

possession of weapons and violent and sexual offences) in that ward	available for download from the website. In the context of this research, violent crimes were considered to include: drugs (18,415); possession of weapons (2,652); and violence and sexual offences (115,714). The figures in brackets illustrate the number of incidents for the period May 2021 to July 2023. Review of street level crime broken down by police force, Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) data illustrates that, for activities classified as violent criminal activities, 136,781 separate instances were reported. The publicly available data outlines crime type for the following categories: Anti-social behaviour; Bicycle theft; Burglary; Criminal damage and arson; Drugs; Other crime; Other theft; Possession of weapons; Public order; Robbery; Shoplifting; Theft from the person; Vehicle crime; Violence and sexual offences (sexual offences include rape, sexual assault, sexual grooming, exposure and voyeurism).	
Multiple Deprivation Rank where 1 is the most deprived area and 462 is the least deprived area	Dataset included information relating to the Electoral Ward (Ward 2014) level Domain Measure of Deprivation and the Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017. Measures of spatial distribution of deprivation have been developed and used in NI since the 1970s. This data has played a central role with regards to targeting resources in the most deprived areas (NISRA 2017). The underlying indicators were as up to date as possible to provide	Electoral Ward level

	information on current deprivation; the majority of data relates to the time period 2015/16. Income Domain Rank; Employment Domain Rank; Health Deprivation Rank; Education, Skills and Training Domain Rank; Access to Services Domain Rank; Living Environment Domain Rank; Crime and Disorder Domain Rank.	
Casualties as a result of paramilitary style shootings from 2022 – 2024 by Local Government District (LGD)	The PSNI's Security Situation Statistics are the main source of official information on trends in statistics relating to the security situation throughout the Troubles and up to the present day (PSNI, 2025). Data is supplied annually and was amalgamated to provide information for the number of shootings in the period between 2022 – 2024 for analysis. It is important to note that, in relation to these statistics, these are only the incidents that are recorded by the PSNI and that occur inside NI.	Local Government District
Casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults from 2022 – 2024 by Local Government District (LGD)	The PSNI's Security Situation Statistics are the main source of official information on trends in statistics relating to the security situation throughout the Troubles and up to the present day (PSNI, 2025). Data is supplied annually and was amalgamated to provide information for number of assaults in the period between 2022 – 2024 for analysis. It is important to note that, in relation to these statistics, these are only the incidents that are recorded by the PSNI and that occur inside NI.	Local Government District

Data Analysis: Geospatial analysis using ArcGIS

GIS uses computers and databases to manage, analyse, and display geospatial data. ArcGIS is a comprehensive geospatial platform for professionals and organisations. It provides world-leading capabilities for creating, managing, analysing, mapping, and sharing all types of data (ESRI, 2025). Everything happens somewhere, and for this report, ArcGIS was used to review areas in NI where CCE is expected to be clustered.

Development of a proxy for strains likely to elevate the risk of CCE

Six datasets were analysed to understand individual outputs and localised conditions across NI. Each dataset can be reviewed separately to assess spatial variation across NI, for example, identifying wards with a high percentage of residents aged 16 and over with no qualifications, or those where violent crime represents a low proportion of all recorded crime. While each database provides valuable information in isolation, assessing them collectively provides a powerful mechanism by which the geographic area examined can be reduced from 462 wards (the whole of NI) to a lower number of wards where resources could then be targeted. In order to accomplish this, the statistical information from each dataset was first reviewed individually. The combined database was then interrogated to ascertain areas where certain criteria were met, i.e., if the question is:

> "*In Northern Ireland, are there any areas where instances of CCE might be higher as a result of a number of conditions all merging together in the same geographical locations? Is there anywhere, geographically, where there are high proportions of the population with no qualifications AND there is a large percentage of a young population between the ages of 5-19 AND the areas are experiencing casualties as a result of paramilitary style activity (shootings and assaults) AND the areas are already experiencing difficulties due to deprivation AND where are the areas where there is not only a lot of crime but the type of crime that is happening is particularly of a violent nature in that area*."

Utilising GIS in this report has allowed all of these conditions to be explored to assess if there is anywhere in NI where all of these conditions are present.

This report aims to understand how local statutory systems currently understand and respond to CCE, and has been created within the context of a wider strategic review of responses to CCE. The datasets analysed were reviewed with this question in mind, with the aim of both:

1. Capturing the experiences of those working in sectors relevant to CCE and;
2. Assessing the geographical areas in which CCE is likely to cluster.

To accomplish both aims, the datasets were reviewed and search criteria were defined using a range of systemic factors identified as potential measures of strain. This approach was used to identify areas in NI where higher instances of CCE might be expected, and to understand their geographical locations. Thus, rather examining individual datasets in isolation, they were interrogated to establish geographical locations where there may be a higher need to align local statutory systems with their response to CCE and where areas are likely to experience elevated cases of CCE. GIS was used to:

1. Narrow down the number of wards or locations where resources could be concentrated.
2. Highlight areas where CCE may be elevated based on the search criteria, including locations that agencies may not yet be aware of.
3. Establish a tiering system for areas of concern, this involved reviewing the outcomes of the CCE survey to understand how local statutory systems currently understand and respond to CCE. Also, identifying where there may be “pinch points” and the potential for elevated instances of CCE (based on database search criteria), and where agencies may be limited in terms of resources or protocols in relation to response to CCE cases.

By amalgamating these conditions into search criteria, the number of areas requiring focus can be reduced and evaluated, maximizing time, resources and potential output in terms of benefiting those currently experiencing elevated instances of CCE.

As research in this area continues, learning from organisations and frontline experiences will assist the database and improve the quality of analytical outputs. The information contained within the database can be supplemented and interrogated accordingly as new information is obtained.

Findings

Each of the five strains are taken in turn. Using geospatial data analysis, we present a summary of the key findings for each specific strain (e.g., educational strain). Following this, we present a summary of the aggregated strains when the five domains are clustered for a combined analysis. As expected, the areas experiencing the most strain at the domain level, often change between them as the theme changes. The aim here is to combine various strains to propose a proxy measure of contextual strain where the literature predicts CCE is likely to cluster.

Domains of Contextual Strain

Strain Domain 1: Educational Strain

- Only 6 out of the 462 (1.29%) wards in NI have 10% or less of the population within that ward having no qualifications – i.e., they are doing well with regards to qualifications and have fewer educational strains. Stranmillis is the ward with the least educational strain, with 4.84% of its population having no qualifications. This represents a difference of 41.18% between Stranmillis and the ward with the highest level of educational strain on this measure (see Figure 1).
- 203 out of 462 (43.9%) wards in NI have 25% or more of the population within that ward having no qualifications. Derry City and Strabane and Mid Ulster are the LGDs containing the highest number of wards (29) in this category. Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD has the lowest number of wards, with only 6 wards in this domain experiencing educational strain.

- 86 out of 462 (18.6%) wards in NI have 30% or more of the population within that ward having no qualifications. Derry City and Strabane and Belfast are the two LGD's with the highest number of wards in this category, with values of 17 and 16 respectively.
- 13 out of the 462 (2.81%) wards have 40% or more of the population within that ward having no qualifications.
- 5 of the top 10 wards with the highest percentage of no qualifications (ranging from 43.39% to 45.51%) are in Belfast LGD.

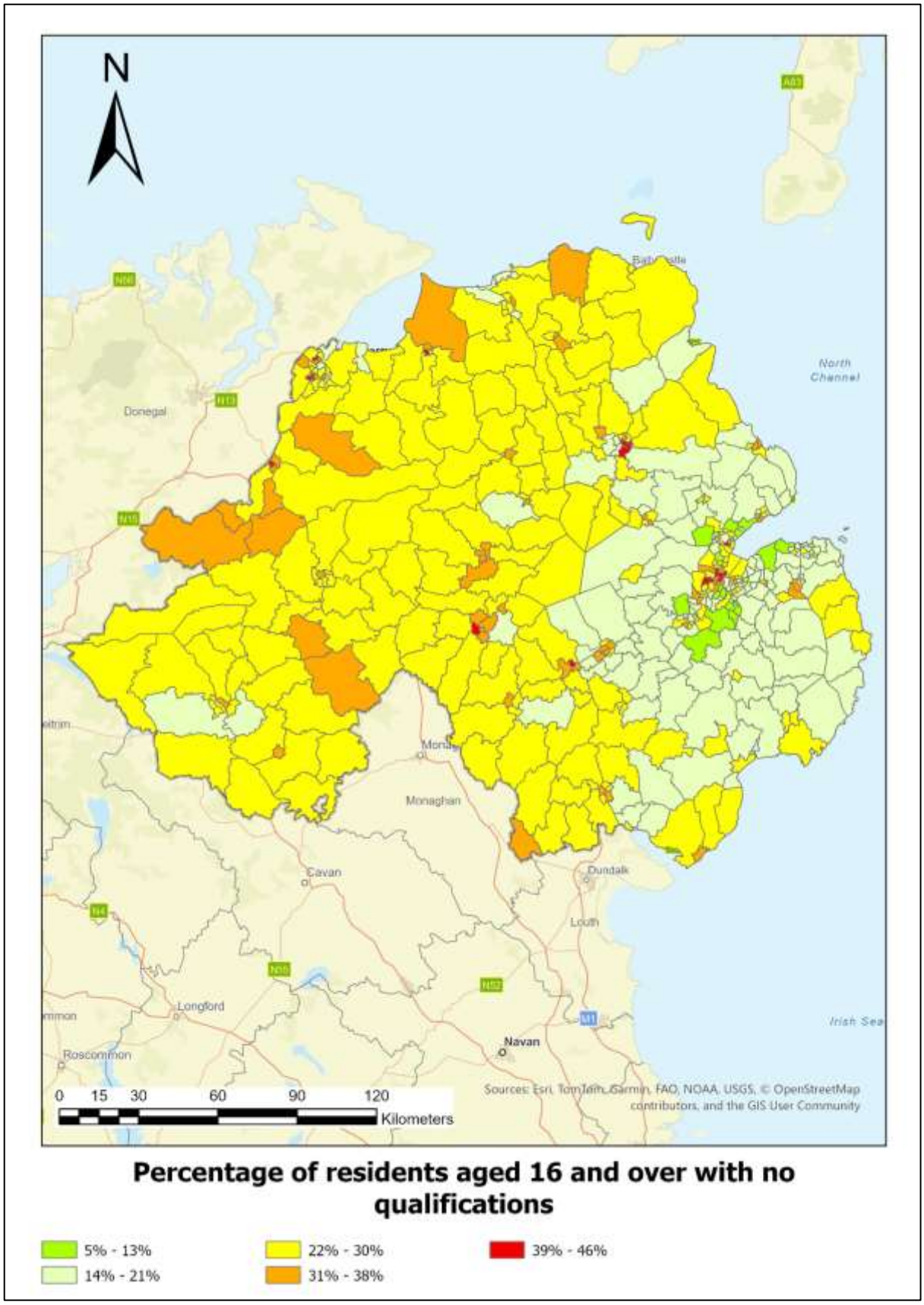


Figure 1: Educational Strains

Strain Domain 2: Concentrated Youth Population

- 43.50% of wards (201 out of 462 wards) have 20% or more of the population that fall within the age band 5 to 19 years old (Figure 2).
- Mid-Ulster is the LGD with the overall highest number of wards (31 wards) where 20% or more of the population fall within the age band 5 to 19 years old in a single LGD.
- Mid-Ulster (31 wards), Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (28 wards), Newry Mourne and Down (25 wards) are the three LGDs with the highest number of wards where 20 wards or more of the population fall within the age band 5 to 19 years old.
- Lisburn and Castlereagh, and Ards and North Down LGDs have the lowest number of wards (8 wards), where 20% or more of the population that fall within the age band 5 to 19 years old.
- Appendix 2 outlines the 10 wards by LGD with 25% or more of the population in the age band 5 to 19. Belfast and Derry City and Strabane are the two LGDs with the highest number of wards (3) in this category (Appendix 2).
- One ward in Belfast had the highest percentage (28.80%) while another, also in Belfast, had the lowest (9.62%); a difference of 19.18%.

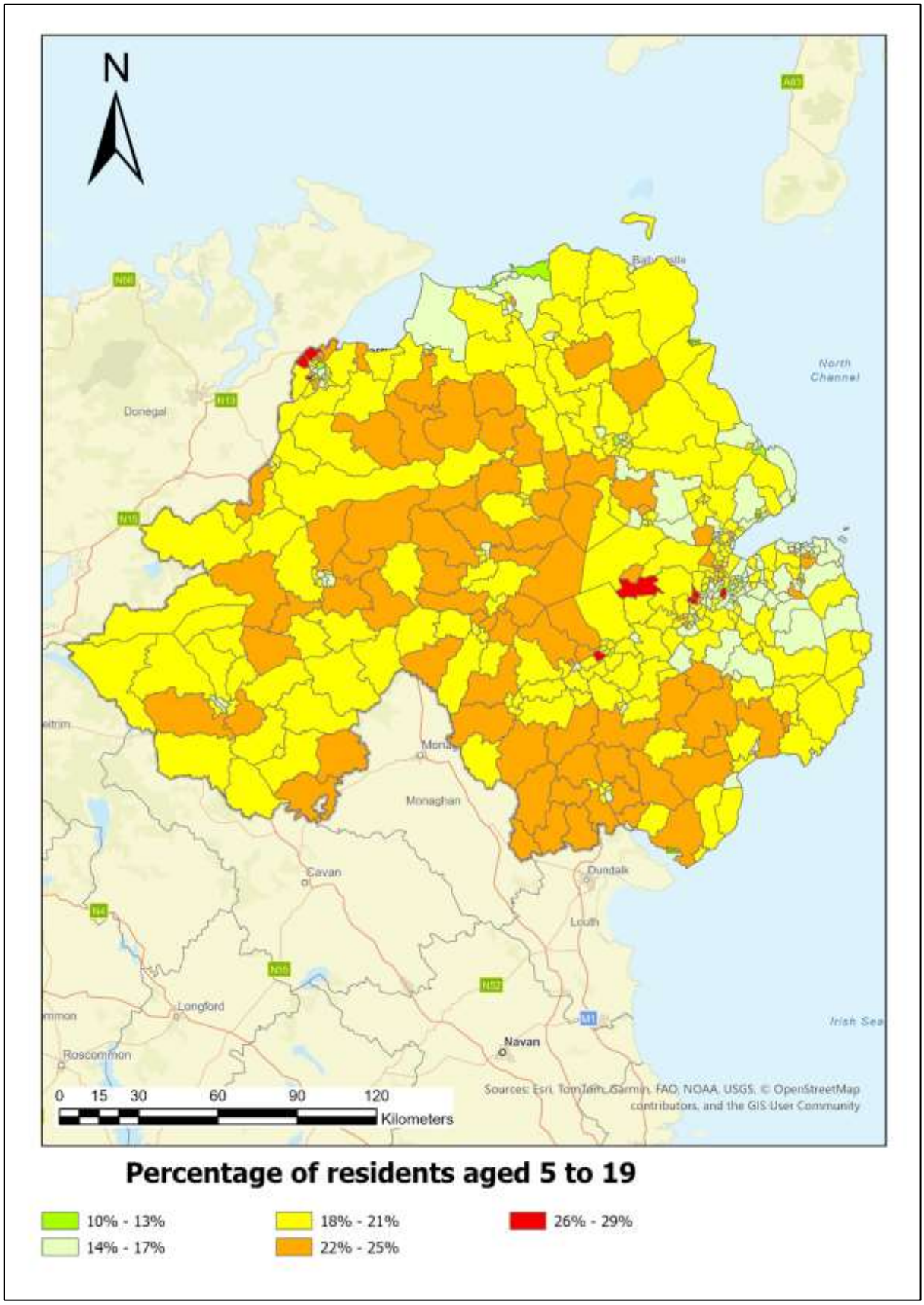


Figure 2: Map of concentrated youth population by ward

Strain Domain 3: Elevated Violent Crime

Like other metrics in this proxy of contextual strain, violent crime is not spread uniformly; it clusters (See Figure 3).

- In almost half of all wards (230 out of 462; 49.78%) in NI, violent crime accounted for at least 40% of all crime in those areas.
- Derry City and Strabane is the LGD with the highest percentage, with 36 wards experiencing concentrated violent crime as a proportion of all crime in those areas.
- Causeway Coast and Glens, Fermanagh and Omagh, and Ards and North Down are the three LGDs with the fewest wards experiencing high concentrations of violent crime relative to all crime levels.
- When the proportion of all crime is enhanced to 50%, only 5.51% of wards (25 out of 462) have such concentrations.
- Antrim and Newtownabbey and Derry City and Strabane have the highest number of wards (N=6). Ards and North Down has 1 ward in this category.
- Indeed, 5 of the top 20 wards with the highest percentage of violent crime are located in Antrim and Newtownabbey.
- Derry City and Strabane contain 4 wards.
- Even though their overall concentration at LGD level is relatively lower, Ards and North Down and Belfast each have one ward in the top 20 wards with the highest proportion of all crime that is violence related.
- One ward in Lisburn and Castlereagh LGD is the ward with the highest percentage of all crime that is violent crime (60.87%).

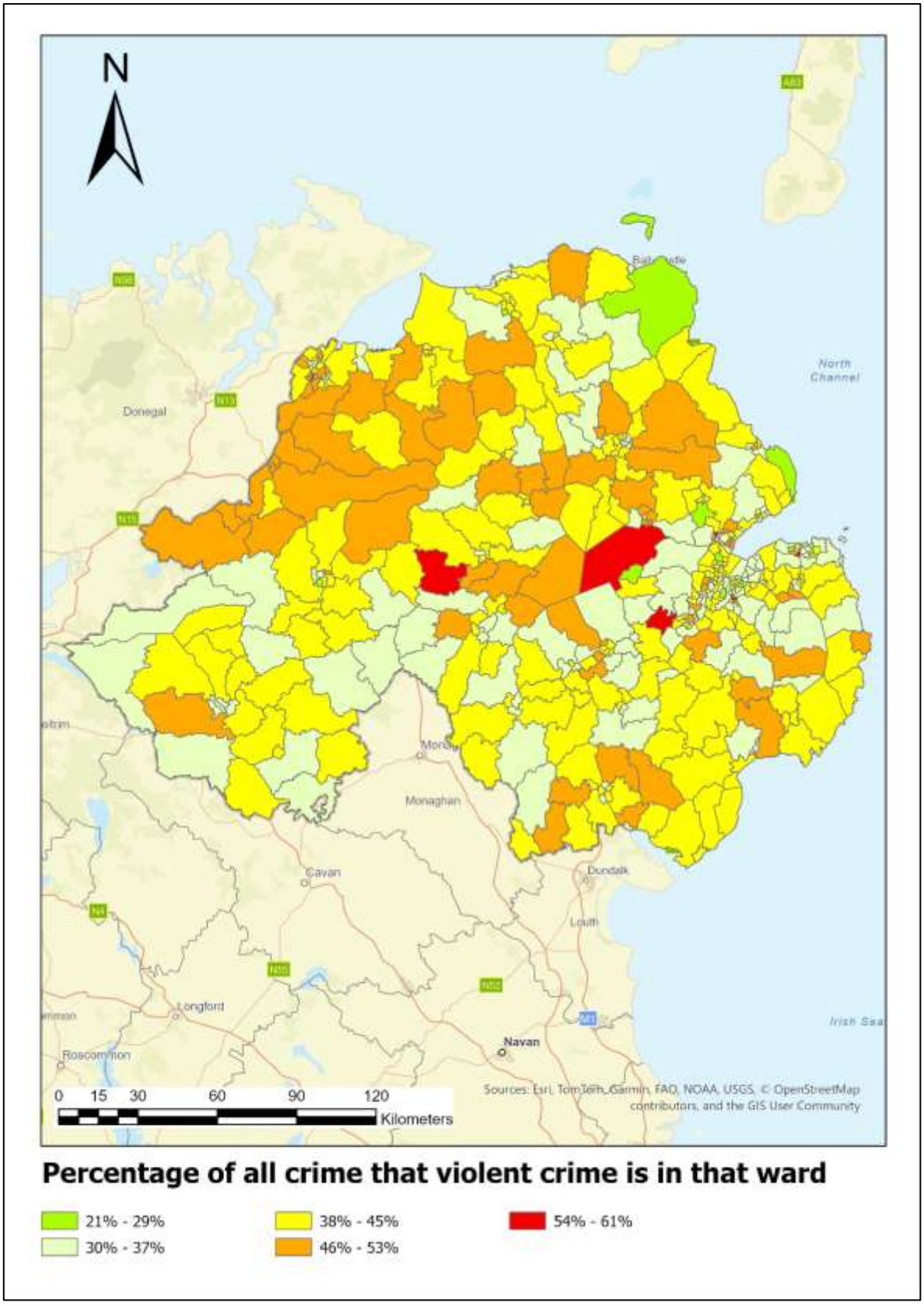


Figure 3: Concentrated violent crime by ward

Strain Domain 4: Deprivation

- 33 of the wards in the top 200 most deprived areas by Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) rank are located in Belfast LGD (Figure 4).
- By comparison, Ards and North Down and Lisburn and Castlereagh contain only 9 and 7 wards respectively (4.5% and 3.5%).
- 24 of the wards in the top 100 most deprived areas by MDM rank are located in Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Fermanagh and Omagh, Newry, Mourne and Down.
- The top four LGDs on measures of multiple deprivation, include: Belfast, Derry City and Strabane, Fermanagh and Omagh, Newry, Mourne and Down. Across these four LGDs, 67% of the top 100 most deprived wards are located.

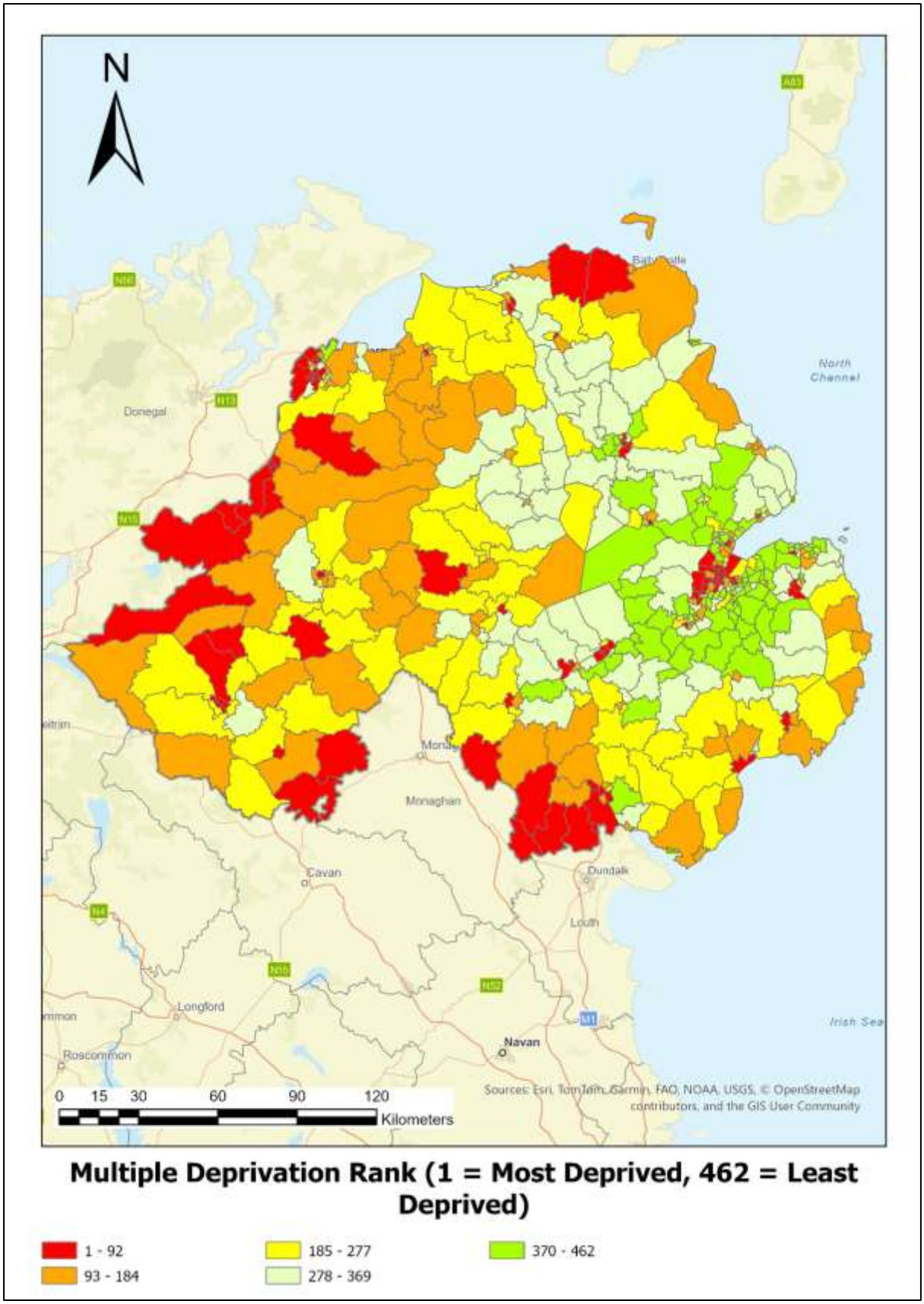


Figure 4: Deprivation by ward

Strain Domain 5: Paramilitary/OCG-Related Activity in the Community

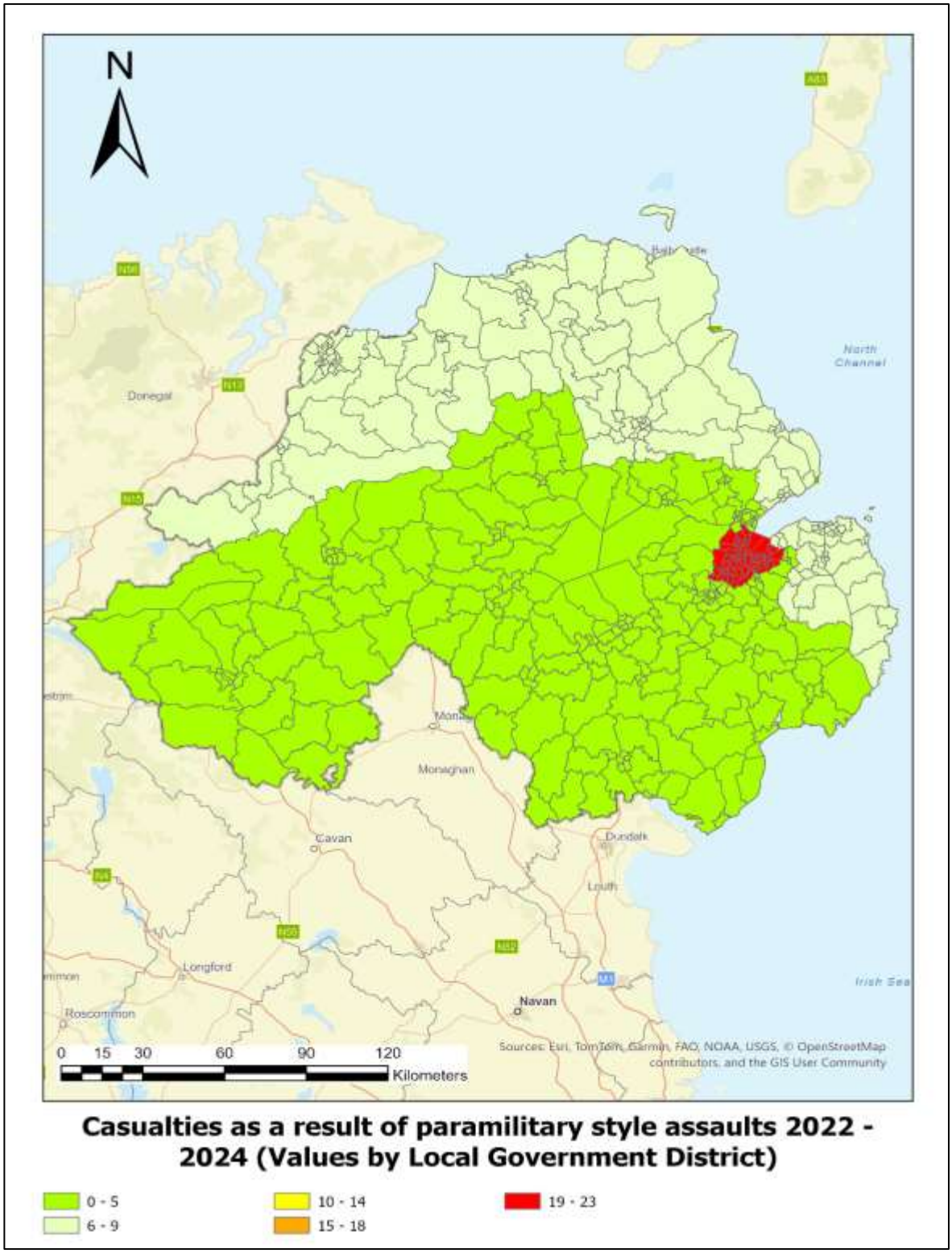
In addition to violent crime, a measure of paramilitary activity was included, given that previous studies have shown that organised crime, particularly paramilitarism, is a strong predictor of certain forms of CCE. This was captured using data on paramilitary-style assaults (PSAs) and shootings.

Table 2: Casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults and shootings between 2022-2024 by Local Government District

Local Government District	**Casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults 2022-2024**	**Casualties as a result of paramilitary style shootings 2022-2024**
Belfast	23	10
Ards and North Down	9	4
Mid and East Antrim	9	0
Derry City and Strabane	6	6
Causeway Coast and Glens	5	3
Antrim and Newtownabbey	3	0
Newry, Mourne and Down	1	0
Mid Ulster	1	0
Lisburn and Castlereagh	0	0
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	0	0
Fermanagh and Omagh	0	0

- Data for PSA's and shootings were obtained at LGD level. Ward level data was not available. Data available for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 was amalgamated to one table for 2022-2024 (Table 2).
- Belfast has the highest number of incidents, with 23 assaults and 10 shootings. Ards and North Down are second with 9 assaults and 4 shootings.

- 7 LGDs recorded zero shootings in the period 2022-2024. These included, Mid and East Antrim/Antrim and Newtownabbey/Newry, Mourne and Down/Mid Ulster/Lisburn and Castlereagh/Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon/Fermanagh and Omagh.
- 3 LGDs recorded zero PSAs. These included, Lisburn and Castlereagh/Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon/Fermanagh and Omagh.
- Ards and North Down and Mid and East Antrim recorded 9 PSAs each.
- Figure 5 and Figure 6 illustrate the geographical spread of both PSAs and shootings connected to paramilitarism.



[1]

Figure 5: Paramilitary style assaults

[1] *Note that for comparative purposes LGD level values have been projected to ward level to allow visual comparison with other ward statistics as data was only available at LGD resolution.

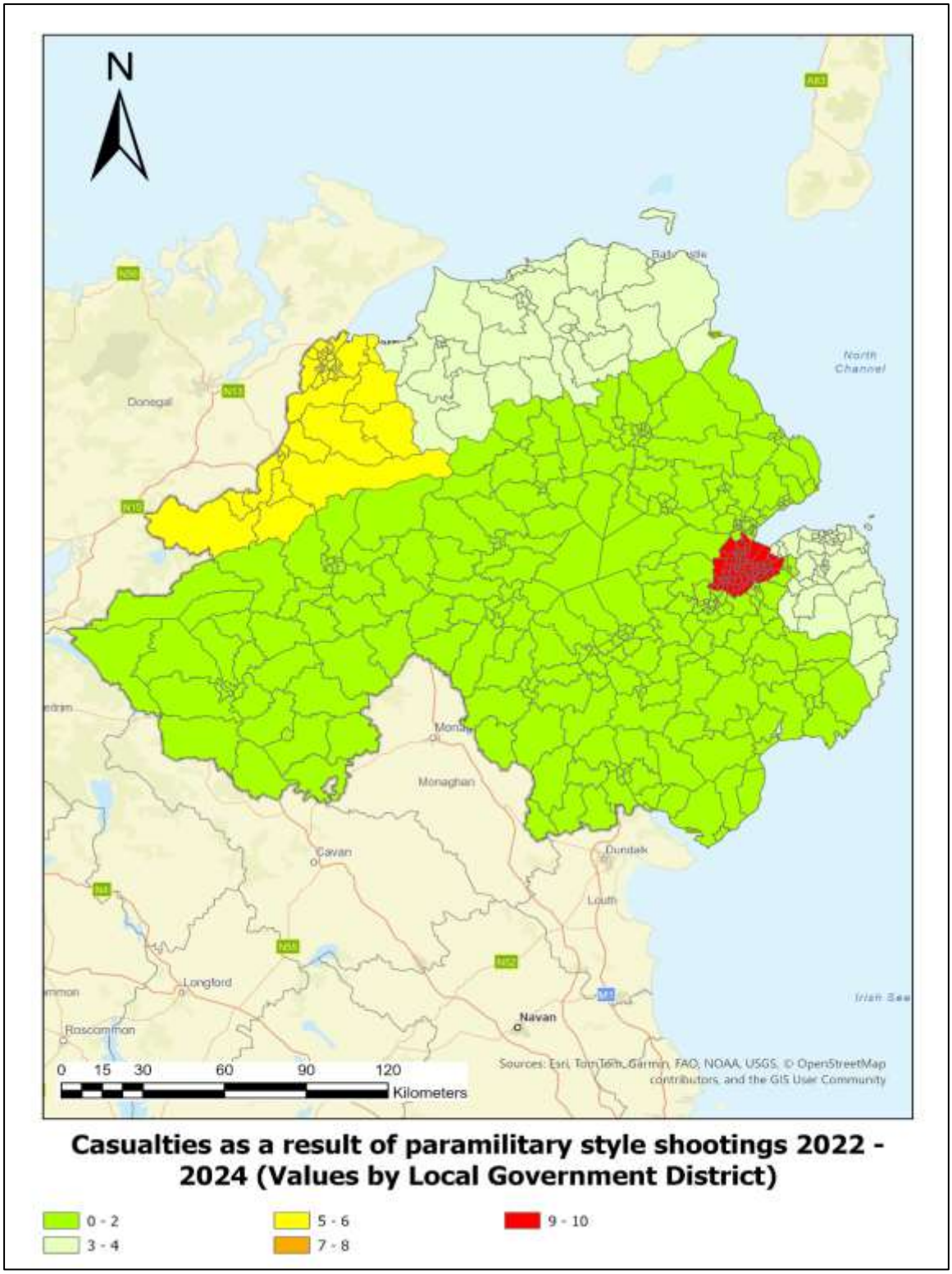


Figure 6: Paramilitary style shootings

A proxy for predicting concentrations of CCE

Each dataset was analysed individually to ascertain an appropriate search criterion to deploy. This was to identify areas in NI where levels of CCE may elevate. The rationale behind this approach was twofold:

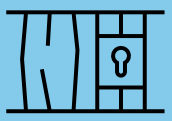
1. Exploratory analysis to identify areas for review that may highlight locations which have not been identified through previous review.
2. Prioritisation of resources. Organisations are increasingly facing challenges regarding maximising financial resources. Analysis of the areas which may experience higher levels of CCE would allow targeted resource application to free up funds in other areas.

It is important to note that this analysis does not occur in isolation. Analysis can be repeated and the database updated accordingly as new information becomes available, creating a more accurate depiction of CCE in NI. This also has implications for both data storage and referral mechanisms in the system.

Based upon the literature and a feasibility analysis to assess the extent of available data, five contextual risks were identified. When combined, these risks could increase our predictive capacity to identify potential clustering of CCE at the community level.

The strain proxy used was informed by the best available literature on CCE, as well as the data available for analyses. Table 3 outlines the types of strain reviewed, along with the search parameters and the criteria applied.

Table 3: Developing a proxy for contextual predictors of CCE

Contextual risk	**Icon**	**Search parameter**	**Search criteria – recommended extents**
Educational strain		No qualifications	Greater than or equal to 20%
Concentrated youth population		Age band 5 – 19	Greater than or equal to 15%
Paramilitary/OCG activity		Casualties as a result of paramilitary style assaults	Greater than or equal to 1
		Casualties as a result of paramilitary style shootings	Greater than or equal to 3
Deprivation		Multiple Deprivation Measure rank	Less than 200 i.e. most deprived
Elevated violence crime		Percentage of all crime that violent crime is in that ward	Greater than or equal to 35%

Combined findings

When the datasets were combined, an aggregated proxy, which consisted of multiple indicators likely to elevate the risk of CCE, was analysed (Figure 8: Map of Northern Ireland 2012 by criteria one

7).

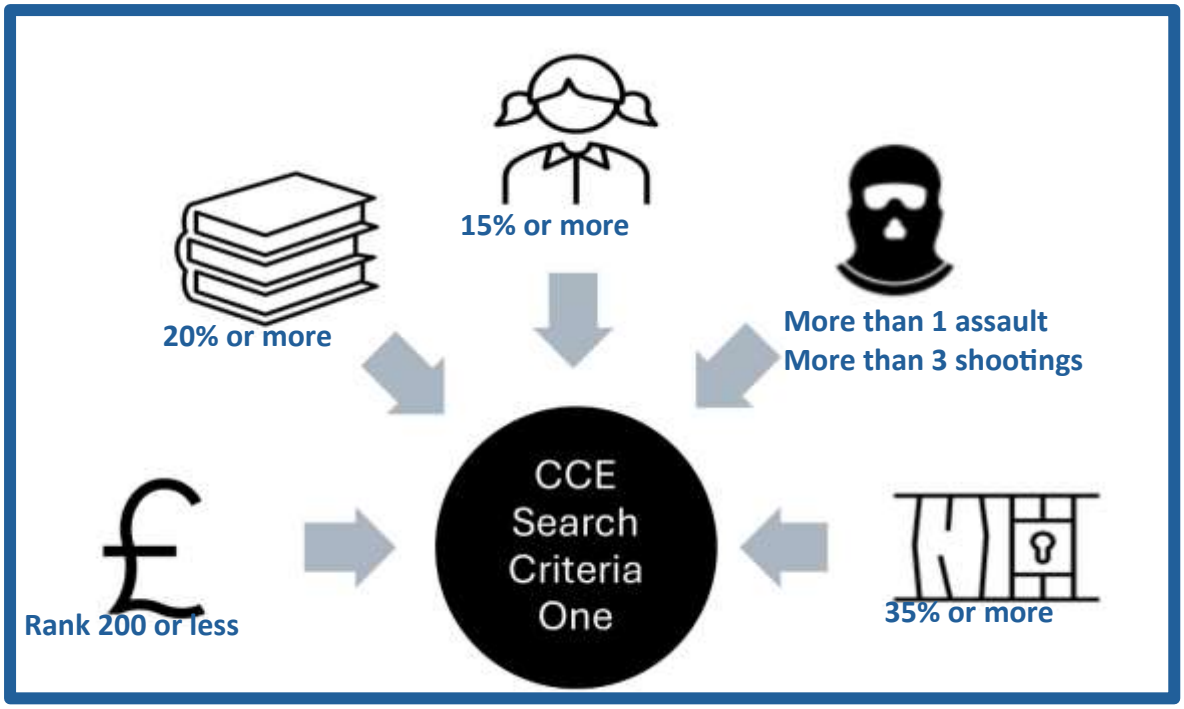


Figure 7: Search criteria one for CCE

In the first search criteria, the search parameters were conditioned by specific search parameters. For instance, areas where it was observed that:

- The area ranked less than 200 on the measure of multiple deprivation.
- There were more than 15% of youth in the age band 5-19.
- There were 20% or more of the population with no qualifications.
- Violent crime accounted for 35% or more of all crime.
- There were documented casualties of PSAs.
- There were 3 or more victims of paramilitary style shootings.

Total outcome - 76 wards identified that met all these criteria.

Figure 8 illustrates the 76 wards that fall into this category and may therefore indicate areas with a potentially elevated risk of CCE, based on the proxies of strain. Appendix 6 (presents the output for all 5 parameters under criteria one) illustrates these wards, with the MDM rank listed from lowest (i.e., most deprived) to highest. This is to provide an example of the way in

which this output could be used. For example, if resources are limited, it may be beneficial to investigate the most deprived areas first, as they may have a greater need for intervention than more affluent areas.

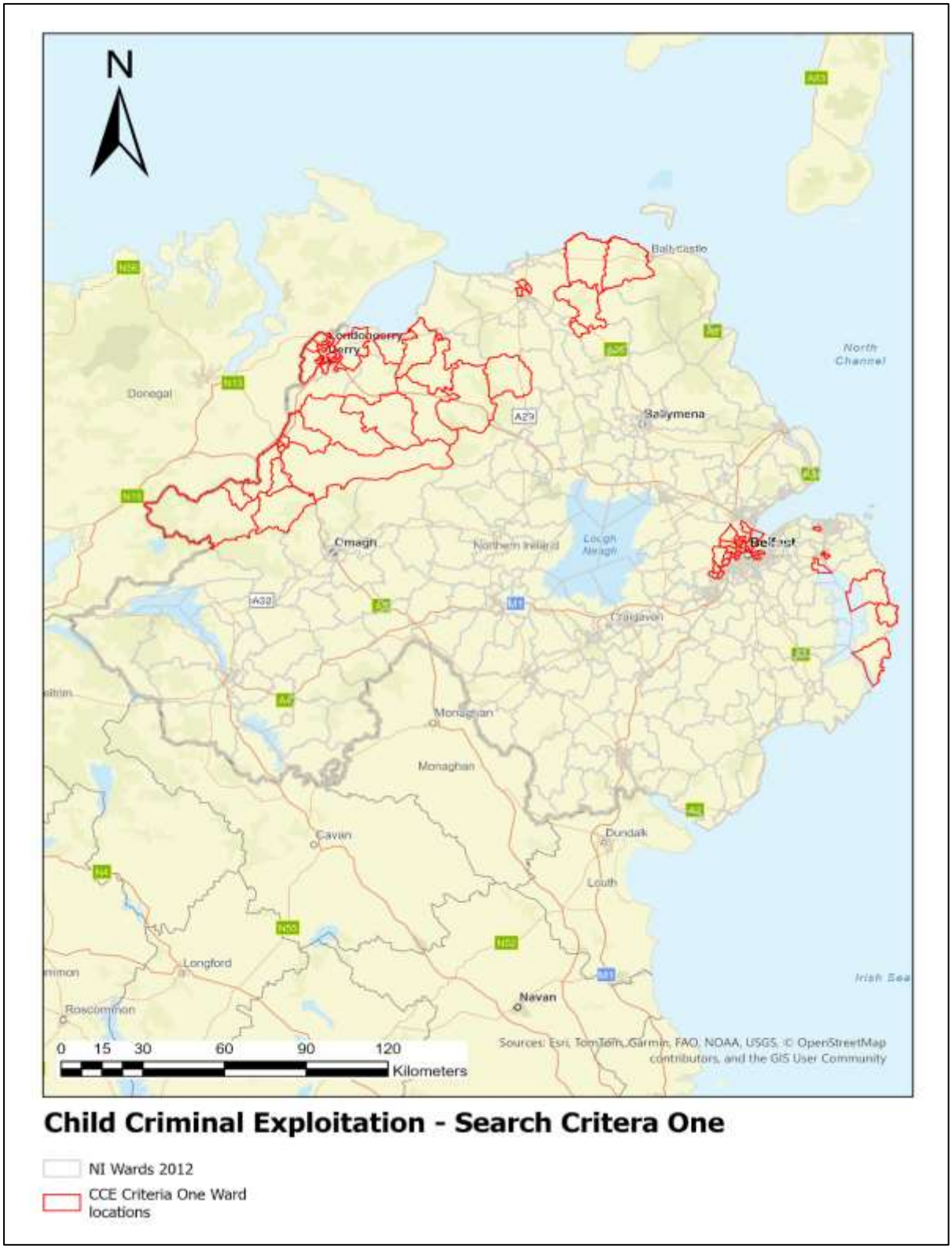


Figure 8: Map of Northern Ireland 2012 by criteria one

Using criteria one, 76 wards across five LGDs were identified as having a clustering of the contextual strains likely to induce CCE. Those LGDs are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of wards in each LGD by criteria one

Local Government District	**Count Wards identified in Search Criteria One**
Derry City and Strabane	29
Belfast	26
Causeway Coast and Glens	15
Ards and North Down	6
Total	76

CCE Search Criteria Two specifications

In addition to the aggregated search using criteria one, a similar but amended version was analysed (Figure 9: Parameter two criteria for CCE). Two of the conditions were changed; those relating to educational strain and those for multiple deprivation. This illustrates how the data could be further reduced if resources are limited. In terms of educational strain and MDM, the outputs for search criteria two show areas where an even higher proportion of the population have no qualifications and fall within the bottom 25% of the population regarding deprivation. These areas may therefore be at greater risk of exploitation through CCE.

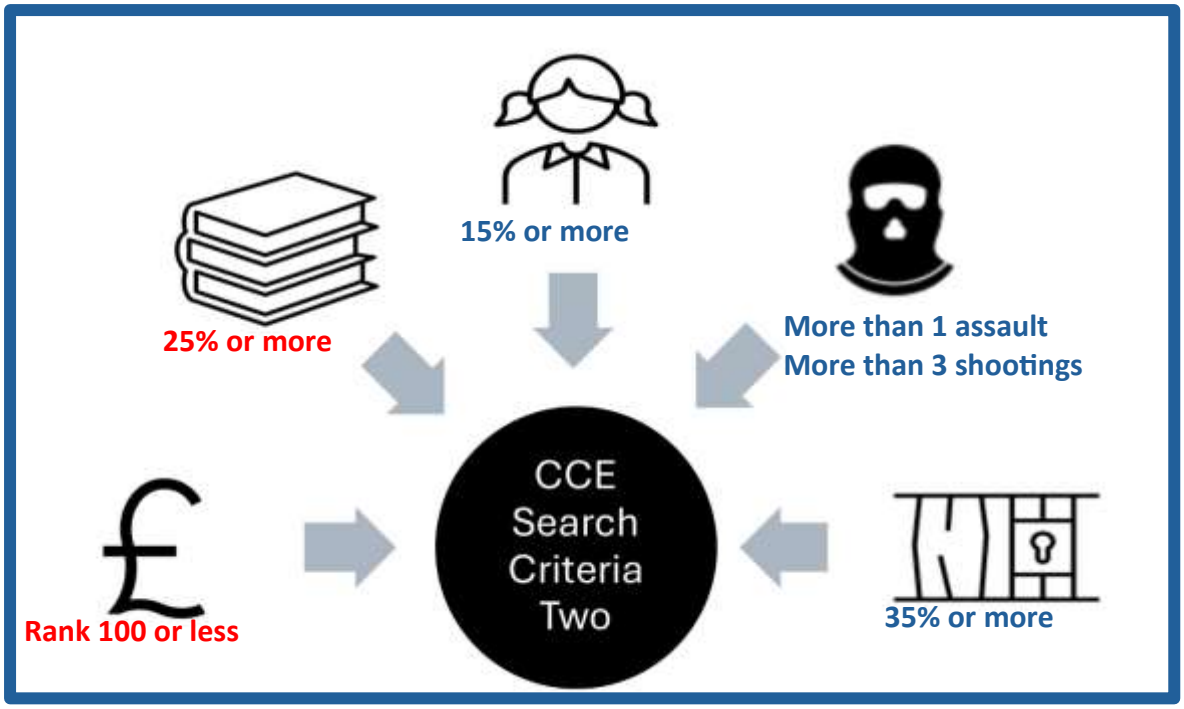


Figure 9: Parameter two criteria for CCE

In this second search, the following criteria was applied:

- The area ranked less than 100 on the measure of multiple deprivation.
- There were more than 15% of youth in the age band 5-19.
- There were 25% or more of the population with no qualifications.
- Violent crime accounted for 35% or more of all crime.
- There were documented casualties of paramilitary style assaults.
- There were 3 or more victims of paramilitary style shootings.

In total, 45 wards were identified across 5 LGDs as having a clustering of the contextual strains likely to induce CCE. Those LGDs are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Number of wards in each LGD by criteria two

Local Government District	**Count Wards identified in Search Criteria Two**
Belfast	20
Derry City and Strabane	17
Causeway Coast and Glens	6
Ards and North Down	2
Grand Total	45

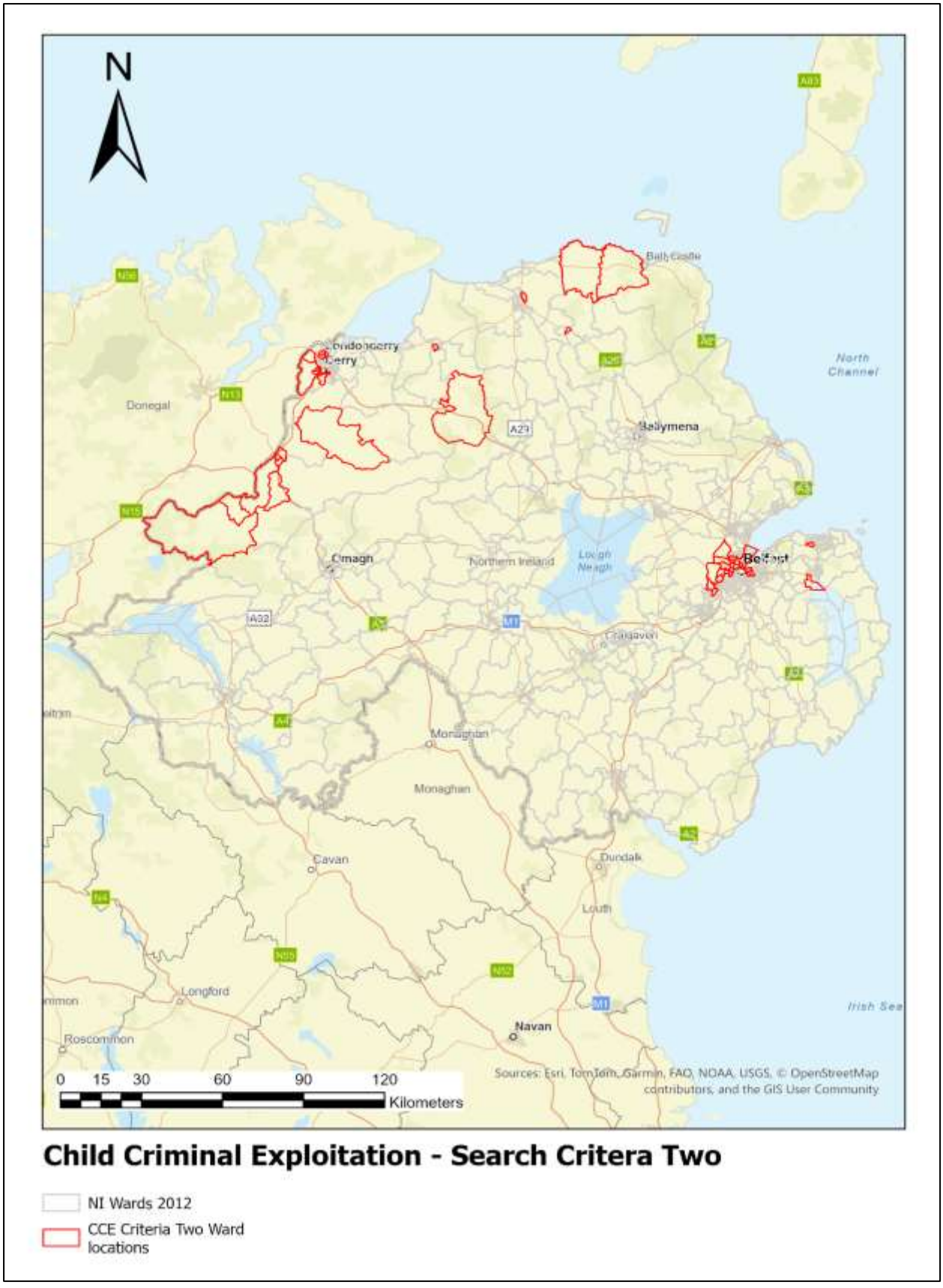


Figure 10: Map of Northern Ireland 2012 wards illustrating Child Criminal Exploitation (Search Criteria Two locations)

Summary of using this proxy for predicting a clustering of CCE

Based on current knowledge of the contextual factors that elevate the risk of CCE, a proxy for contextual strains was formulated. Data providing insight into levels of strain across NI were analysed. Key indicators of strain were aggregated and, using two different search strategies, locations that we predict to be most vulnerable to CCE were identified.

Search one:

GIS analysis identified 76 wards via search criteria one and 45 wards using search criteria two. GIS is a powerful tool that can be utilised to explore these areas further and examine additional information specific to these wards; examples of which are presented in this section. Under search criteria one, 72% of the wards of interest for CCE are located in the LGD of Derry City and Strabane and Belfast (29 and 26 wards, respectively). Ards and North Down have the lowest number of wards of interest, with a value of 6. However, this may identify an area which would require further investigation.

Search two:

In search criteria two, 82% of the wards of interest for CCE are located in Belfast and Derry City and Strabane (20 and 17 wards, respectively). Ards and North Down still have two wards of interest in this search criteria.

This analysis can be used for a variety of purposes:

1. To predict where CCE might cluster. This could be partially tested through retrospective analyses of police records and/or via prospective collection of police recorded crime data that also captures concerns related to CCE.
2. If validated, to inform decisions about where best to deploy resources and to make decisions about which resources could be most effective at protecting children from CCE.
3. To test which domains of contextual strain are most malleable and have the strongest impact in reducing the prevalence of CCE.

While these findings may be useful, the primary purpose of the analyses is to make predictions about where organisations are most likely to understand the phenomenon of CCE and where they are most ready to respond.

The following section summarises responses from an organisational survey. It outlines general levels of readiness, concluding with some observations on whether organisations located in areas predicted, (via the contextual strain proxy) to experience clustering of CCE are more prepared to respond.

Section 3: Organisational readiness for CCE

Methodology

Data collection

A survey tool was adapted from the Organizational Readiness to Change Assessment (ORCA) (Helfrich et al., 2009) and mapped onto the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) (Damschroder et al., 2009) to assess how organisations capture, save, respond to, and share information related to CCE. It also evaluates perceptions of staff training and supervision adequacy relevant to CCE.

Survey Sections include:

1. **Demographics & Organisational Context**
2. **Capturing & Recording CCE Information**
3. **Saving & Managing CCE Information**
4. **Responding to CCE Cases**
5. **Sharing CCE Information**
6. **Training, Supervision & Support**
7. **Implementation Readiness & Barriers**

Each item is rated on a **5-point Likert scale** *(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)* with higher scores being more favourable and a number of items being reverse scored.

The items were analysed as distinct areas of interest, with aggregate scores calculated for each domain (e.g., capturing CCE information) as well as an overall organisational readiness score.

Scores at both the domain level and the total readiness level range from 0 to 5, with 0 indicating considerable challenges and 5 reflecting significant level of organisational readiness.

Across the spectrum, scores are banded into four categories:

- High concerns and major implementation challenges
- Limited readiness and significant barriers
- Moderate readiness and some areas need improvement
- Strong organisational readiness and effective processes

Participants were invited through existing professional networks and organisations represented on the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) Child Exploitation Committee, with a focus on CCE. It was anticipated that those completing the survey would be drawn primarily from the criminal justice sector, however, with the purposive sampling approach also included invitations to professionals from other sectors, such as social care, child protection and youth work.

An online platform (JotForm) was used to collect the survey responses. The survey link was shared via email, and a QR code to the survey was also provided. No personally identifiable information was collected. Respondents completed the survey within their own time and online. Once submitted, responses were collated and downloaded as an Excel file. At this stage, the responses were coded for analyses.

Data analyses

All data was transferred from the Excel file into SPSS V27. Descriptive analyses provide a summary of the number of responses received, the sectors from which they originated, and the level of agreement on key items. Comparisons between categorical variables (e.g., sector and understanding of CCE) were analysed using Chi-square and likelihood ratio tests. Differences in group means (e.g., sectors) based on subscale and total scale scores, are presented using t tests or one-way Anova tests.

Findings

In total, 85 responses were received from professionals actively involved in CCE relevant work. The majority of those who responded were either in managerial or senior managerial (e.g., director) posts (63.2%). However, just over one-third of responses (36.8%) came from front-line practitioners (See **Error! Reference source not found.**).

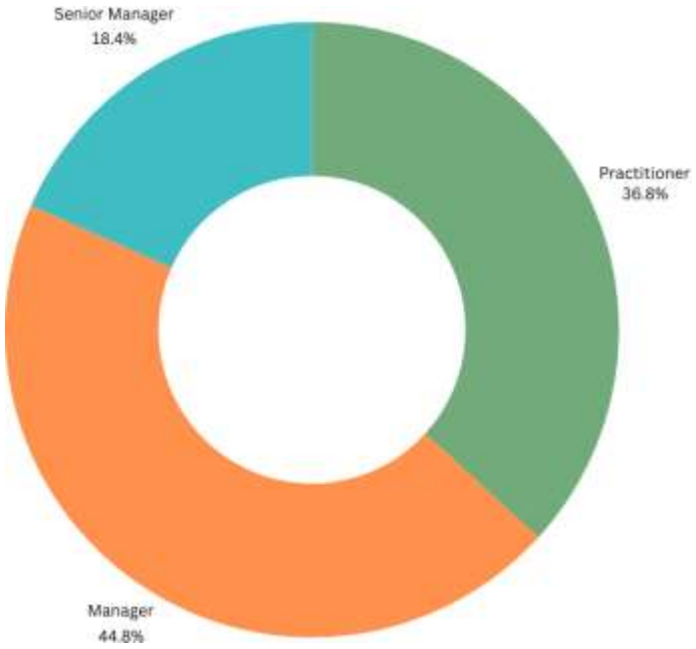


Figure 11: Responses (organisational level)

Understanding of CCE

While these items were not included in the subscale or total readiness score, several items were included to gauge the level of understanding among respondents of the concept of CCE. It was interesting to note that, at a general level, only 76.8% of all respondents reported a full understanding of the concept. Perhaps more interestingly, a higher proportion reported having had concerns about CCE at some time in the past (78%). While it is not clear, it also appears that these concerns were contemporary concerns, as 77.1% of respondents were also currently concerned about at least one case of CCE (Figure 12).

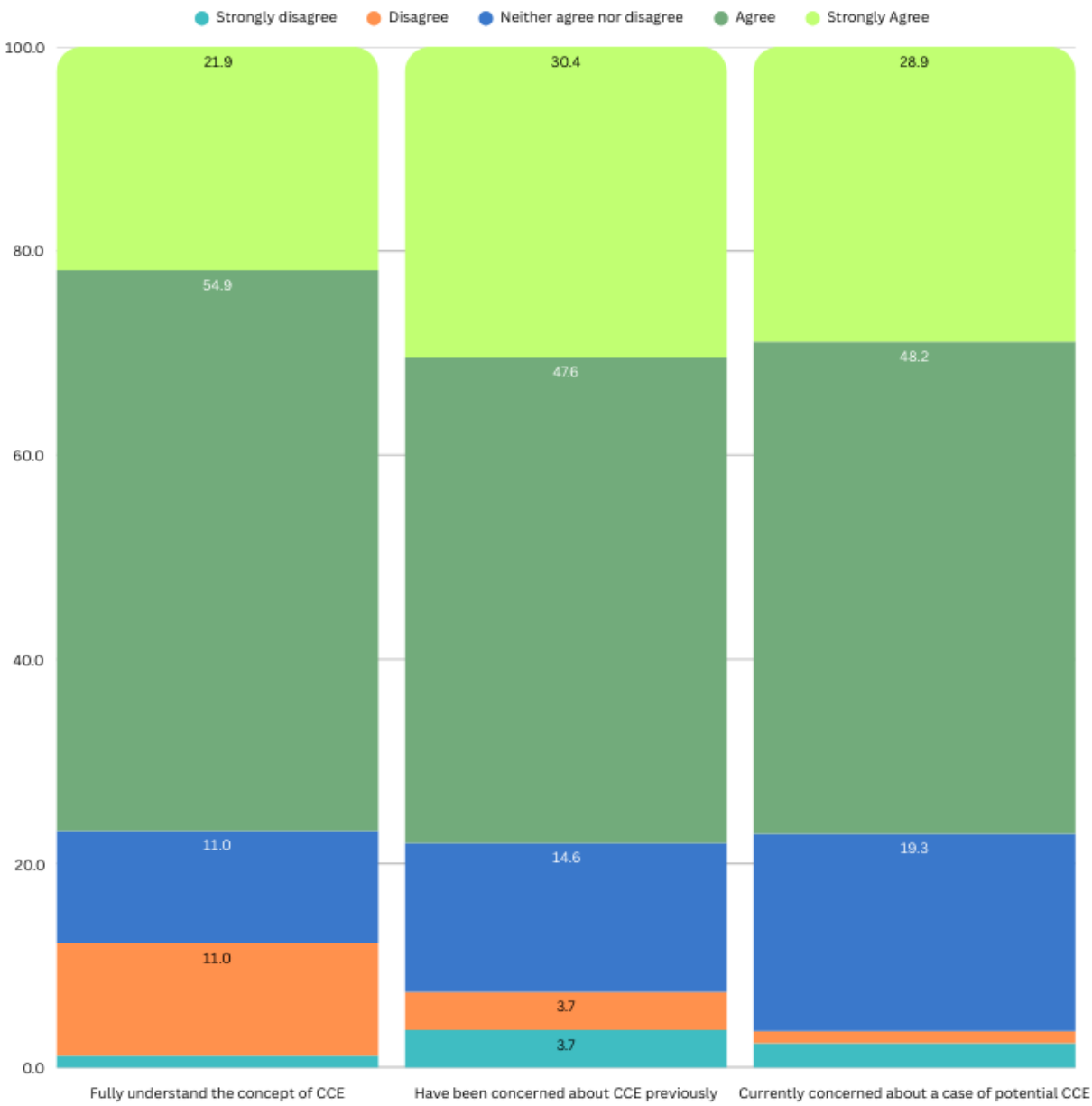


Figure 12: Understanding of CCE

Respondents were asked about their understanding of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and whether they, or their colleagues, had ever enacted it. A total of 55.2% (Figure 13) reported having no knowledge of the NRM and a higher proportion (79.3%) reported that neither they nor their colleagues had ever enacted it. Of concern, even among those who had previously expressed concerns about at least one case of CCE, 75% reported never having enacted the NRM. Among respondents with prior knowledge of the NRM, 56.4% had still never enacted it.

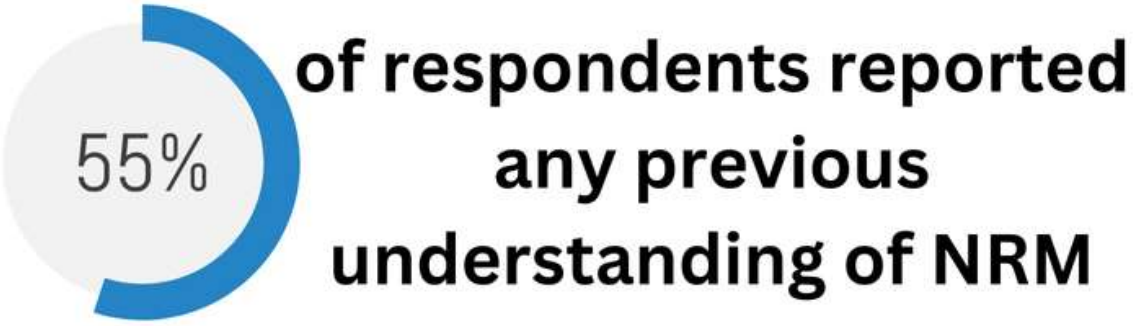


Figure 13: Understanding of NRM

Capturing & Recording CCE Information

Four items explored the extent to which respondents were content with their organisation's systems for effectively capturing and recording concerns regarding CCE. Less than one-third (29.9%) of participants reported that there were clear guidelines in place to document cases of CCE (see Figure 14). The same proportion reported consistency within their organisation regarding how CCE is documented. Additionally, just over one-in-four respondents (25.2%) reported that standardised tools were used in the assessment of CCE.

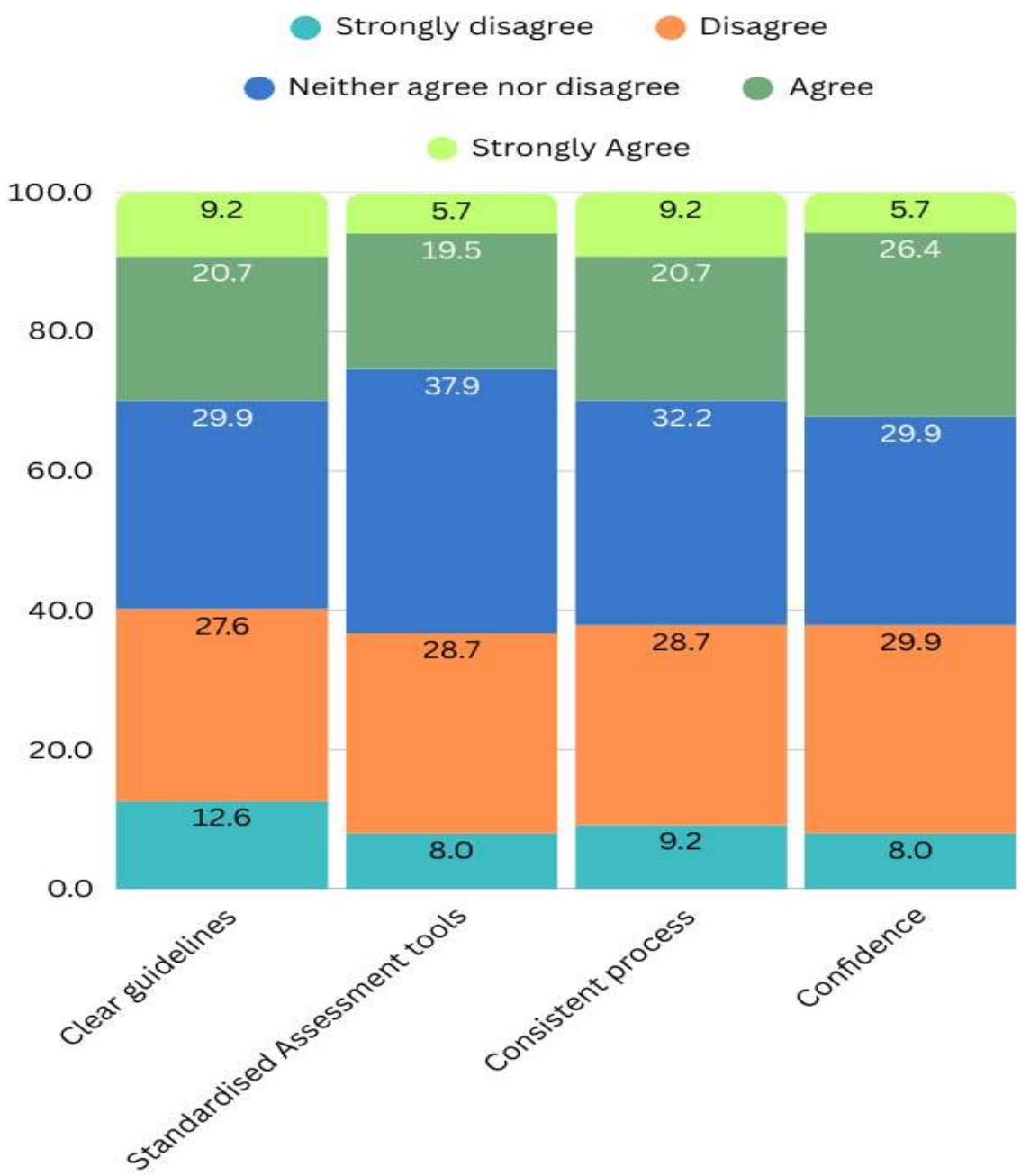


Figure 14: Capturing and recording CCE-related information

In summary, these challenges meant that only 32.1% of participants reported feeling confident in their own ability to record and report concerns related to CCE. Indeed, only 17.2% of respondents were measured as having strong organisational readiness and effective processes for capturing and recording CCE (See Figure 15).

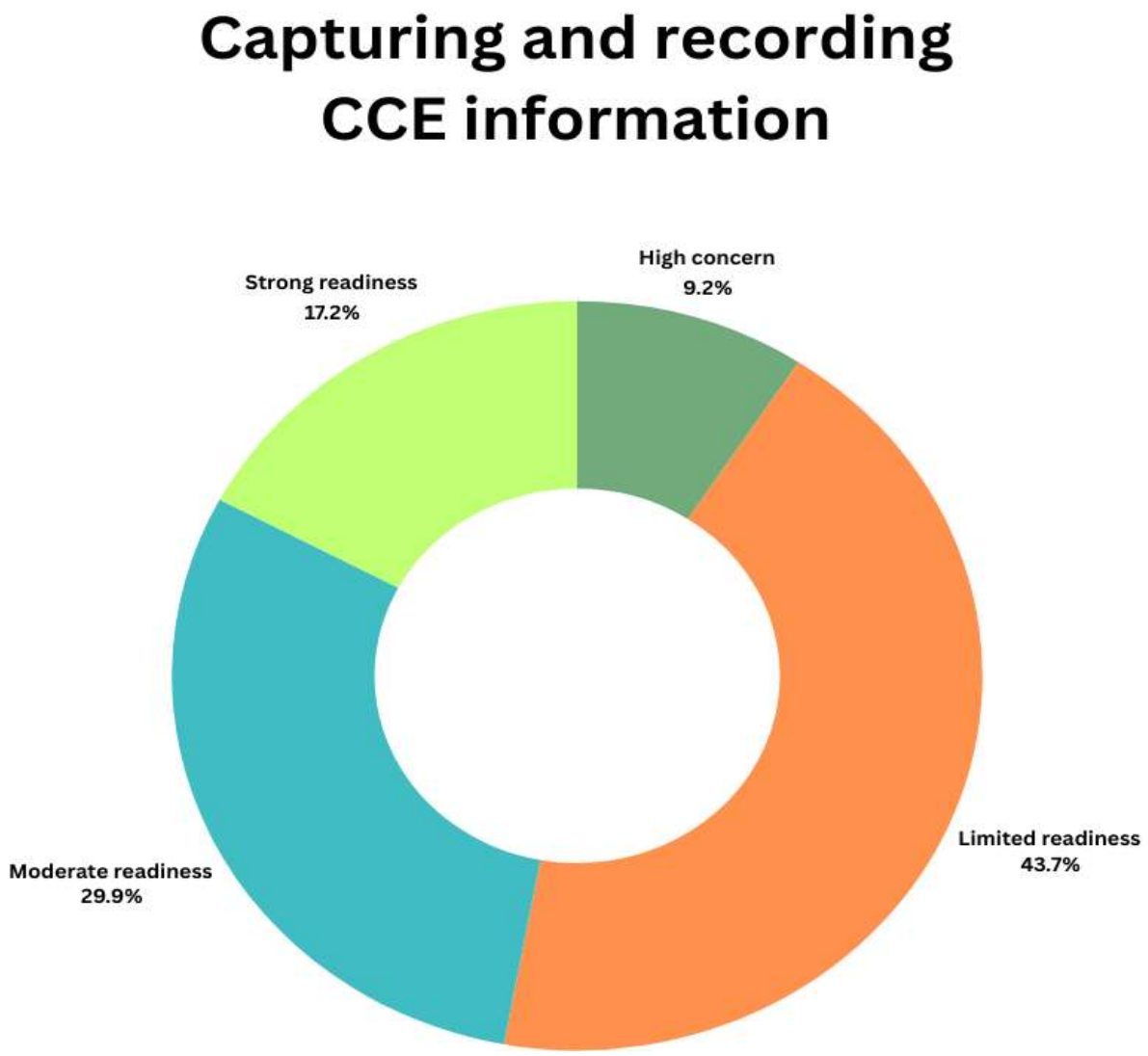


Figure 15: Capturing and recording CCE-related information (bands)

Saving & Managing CCE Information

Three items referred to how CCE-related information is saved and managed within organisations (See Figure 16 & 17). In general, respondents appeared more confident in their organisational systems and processes for managing this type of data.

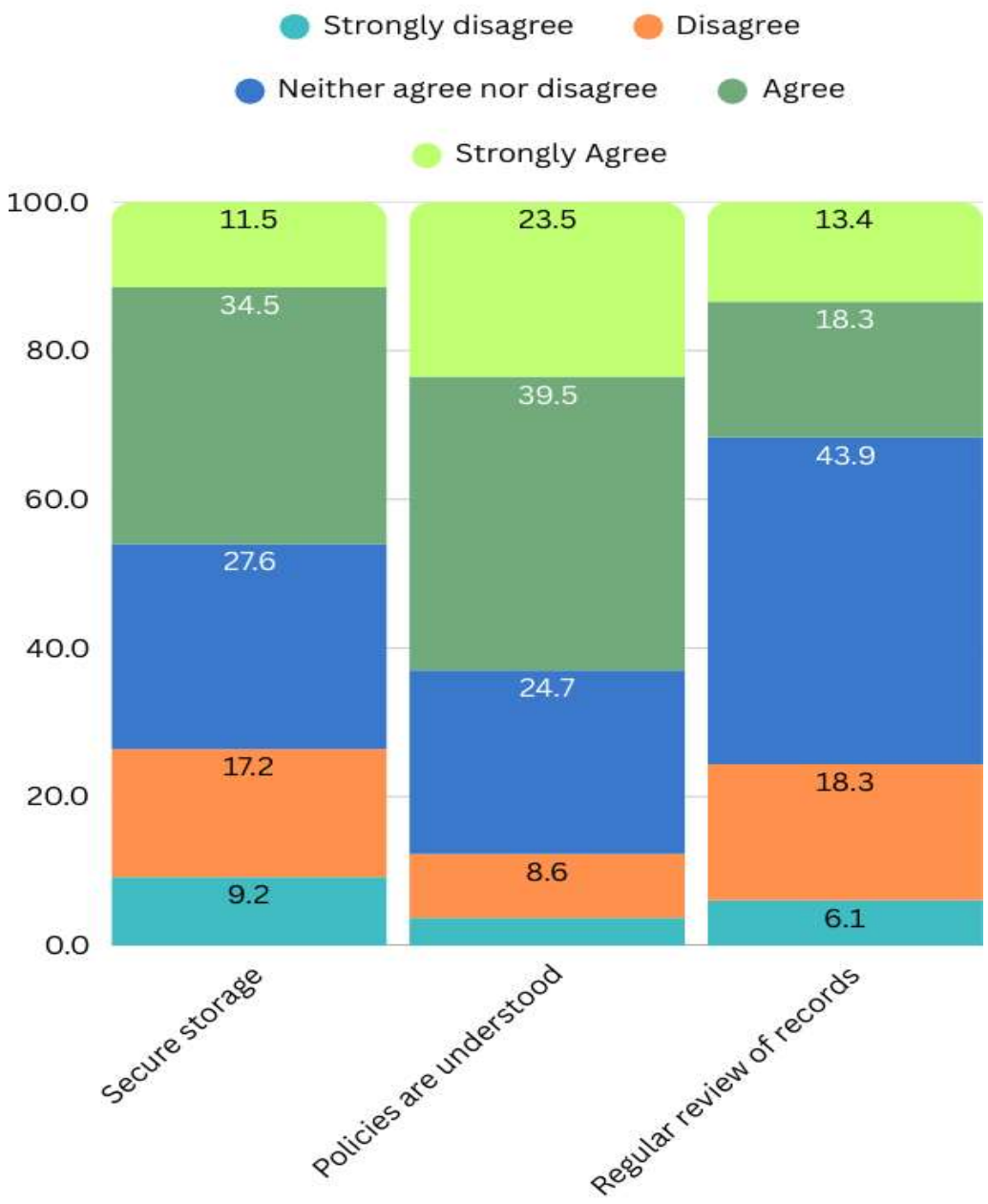


Figure 16: Saving and managing CCE-related information

63% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that data protection policies are well understood in relation to the storage of CCE-related information. Likewise, almost half (46%) reported that CCE-related data is stored securely and is easily accessible internally by relevant colleagues. However, there was less agreement regarding the process for reviewing and updating CCE-related records. Only 31.7% of respondents believed that such a process exists.

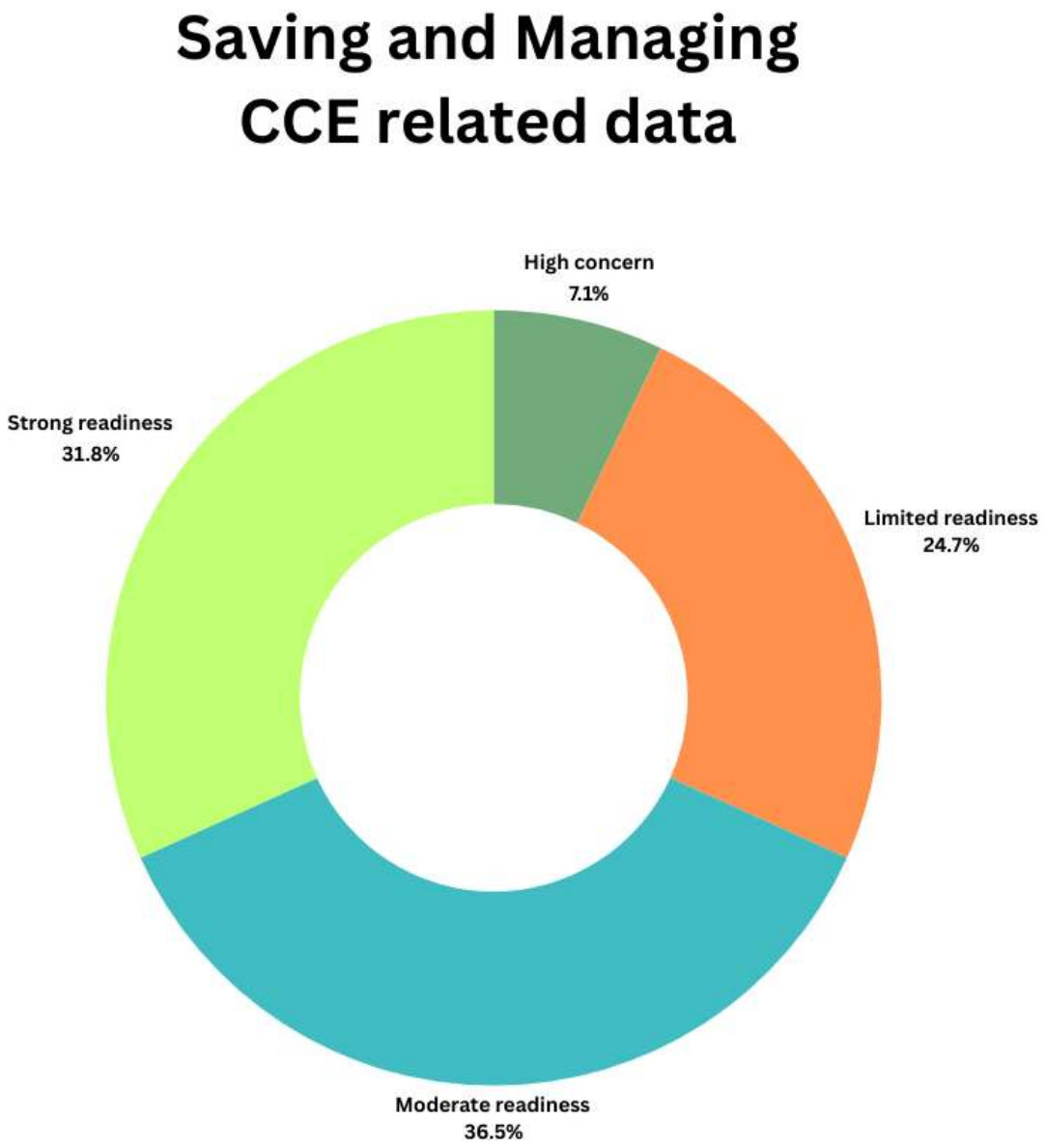


Figure 17: Saving and managing CCE-related information (Band)

Responding to CCE Cases

Reassuringly, 69% of respondents reported that inter-agency cooperation was effective, with a similar proportion (61.9%) of respondents indicating that responses to CCE were timely. However, respondents were less likely to agree on the clarity of protocols for responding to CCE (39.1%) or the presence of a dedicated person within their organisation responsible for dealing with CCE concerns or reports (32%) (see Figure 18).

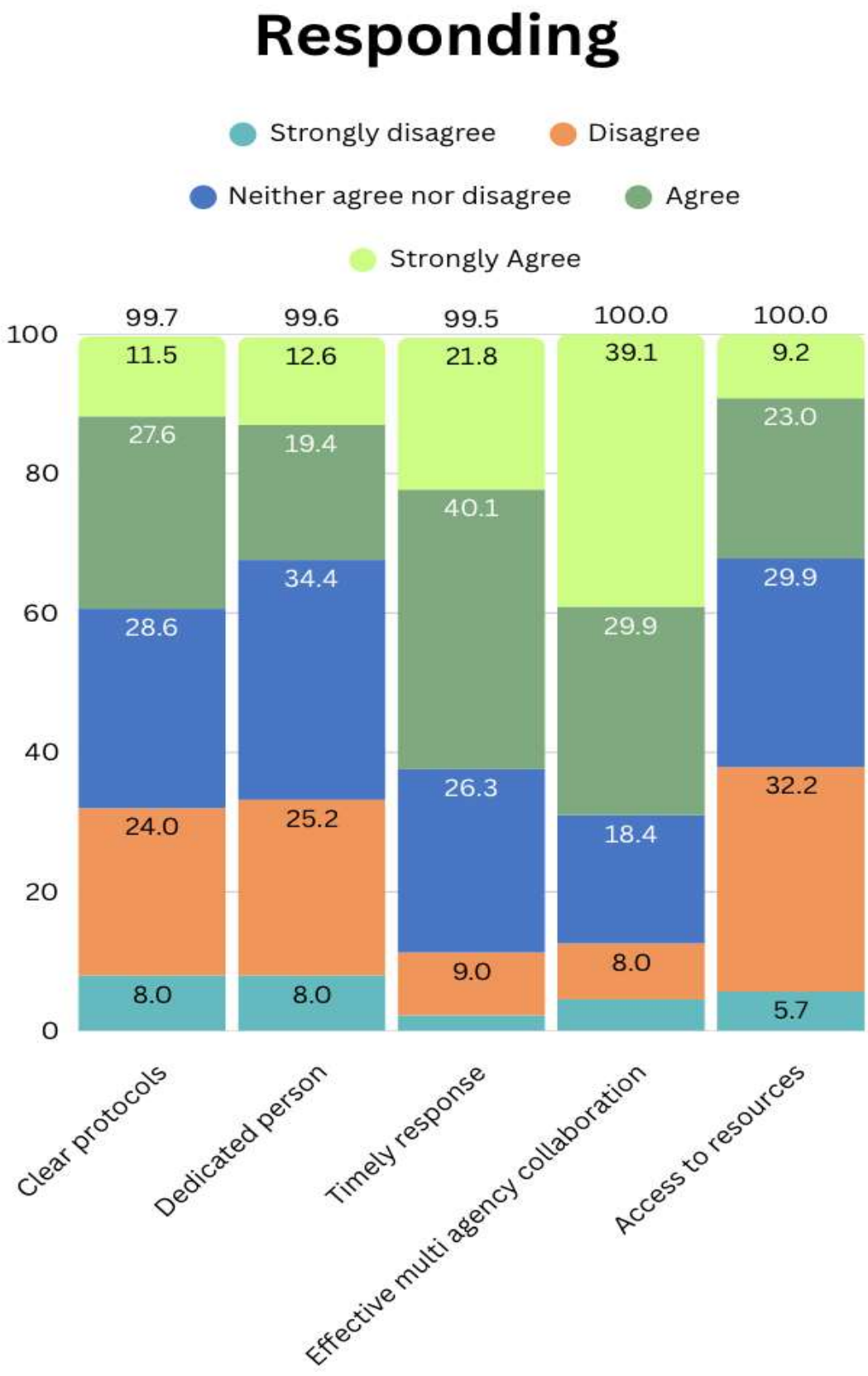


Figure 18: Responding to CCE

As an overall measure of an organisation's ability to effectively respond to CCE, just over one-quarter of respondents (25.6%) scored within the 'strong readiness' band. Almost one-third (29.1%) demonstrated limited readiness, with high concern among 5.8% of respondents (see Figure 19).

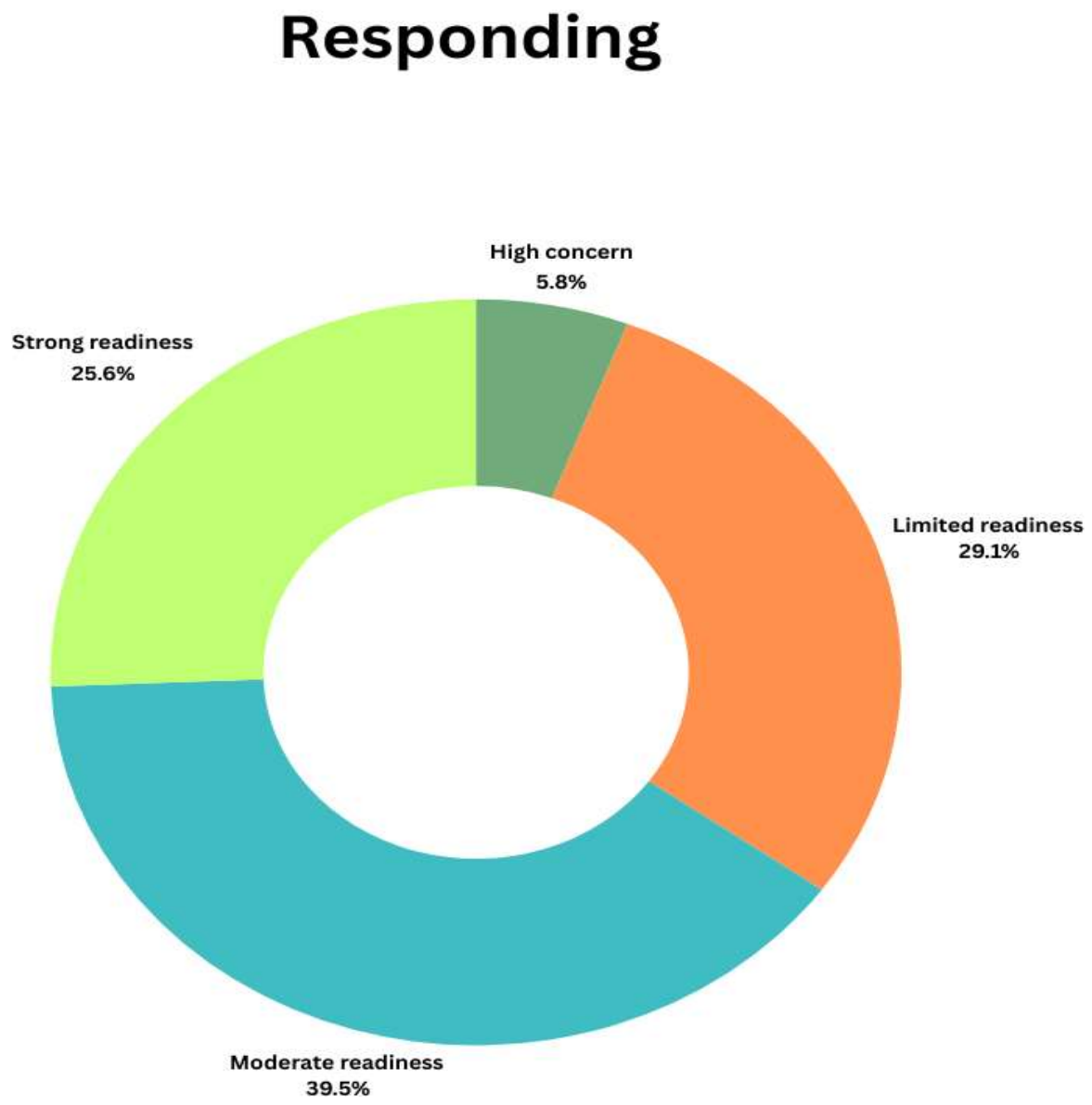


Figure 19: Responding to CCE (Band)

Sharing CCE Information

In general, there was a sense across the respondents that there is greater clarity around data protection and policies governing data sharing (see Figure 20). Despite this, however, there

was less confidence around the practicalities of actually sharing CCE-related data with external agencies, and importantly, there appeared to be more concern about the timeliness of data sharing, which was perceived as not always appropriate. This is interesting and suggests that organisations need to consider more than just having clear policies in place, if staff are to feel confident in sharing sensitive information about vulnerable individuals.

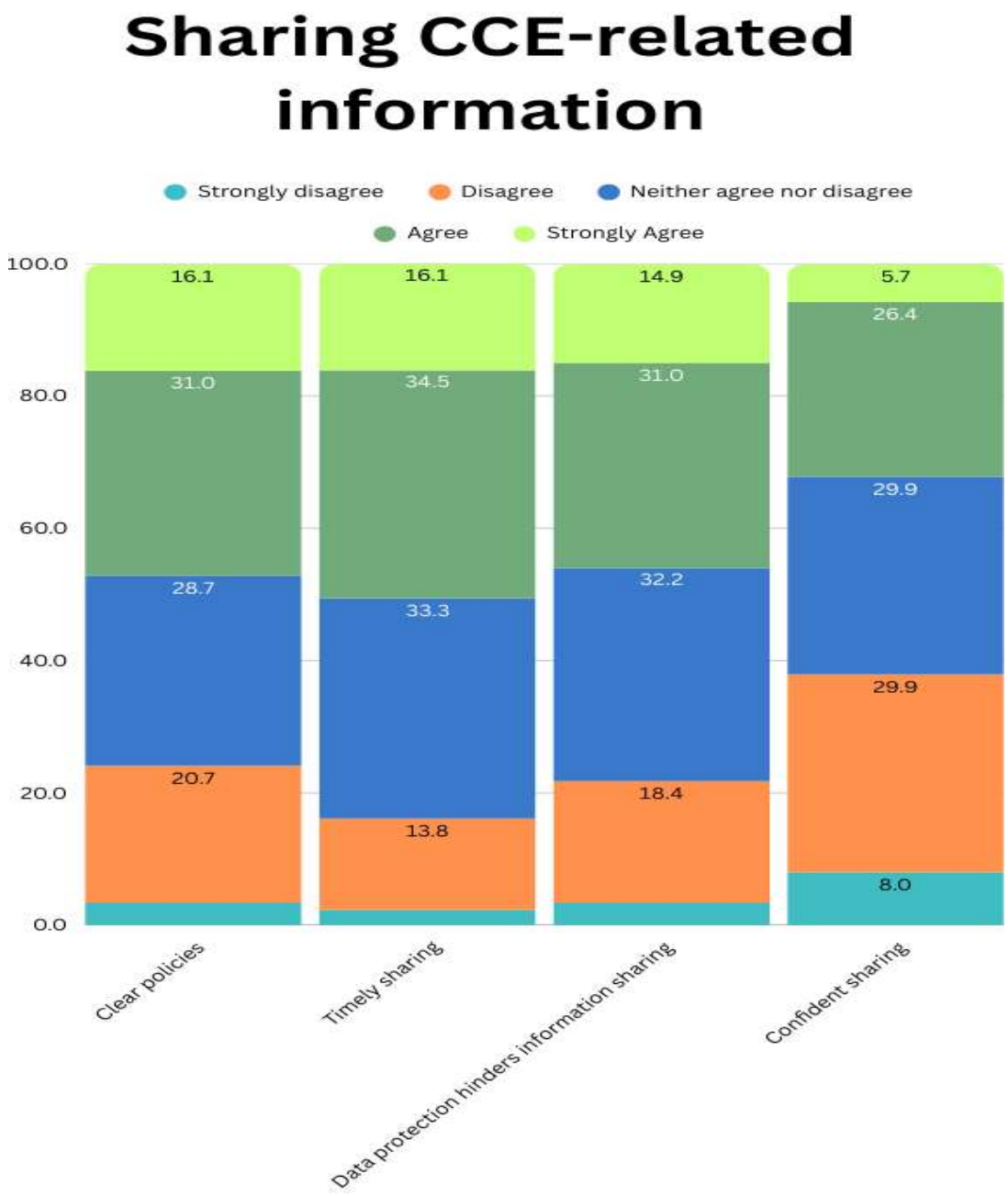


Figure 20: Sharing CCE-related information

Across this sub-scale, less than one-fifth of respondents reported that the organisation was within the 'strong readiness' category. While those with greatest concern were proportionally low (1.1%), more than one-quarter (28.7%) had limited readiness (see Figure 21).

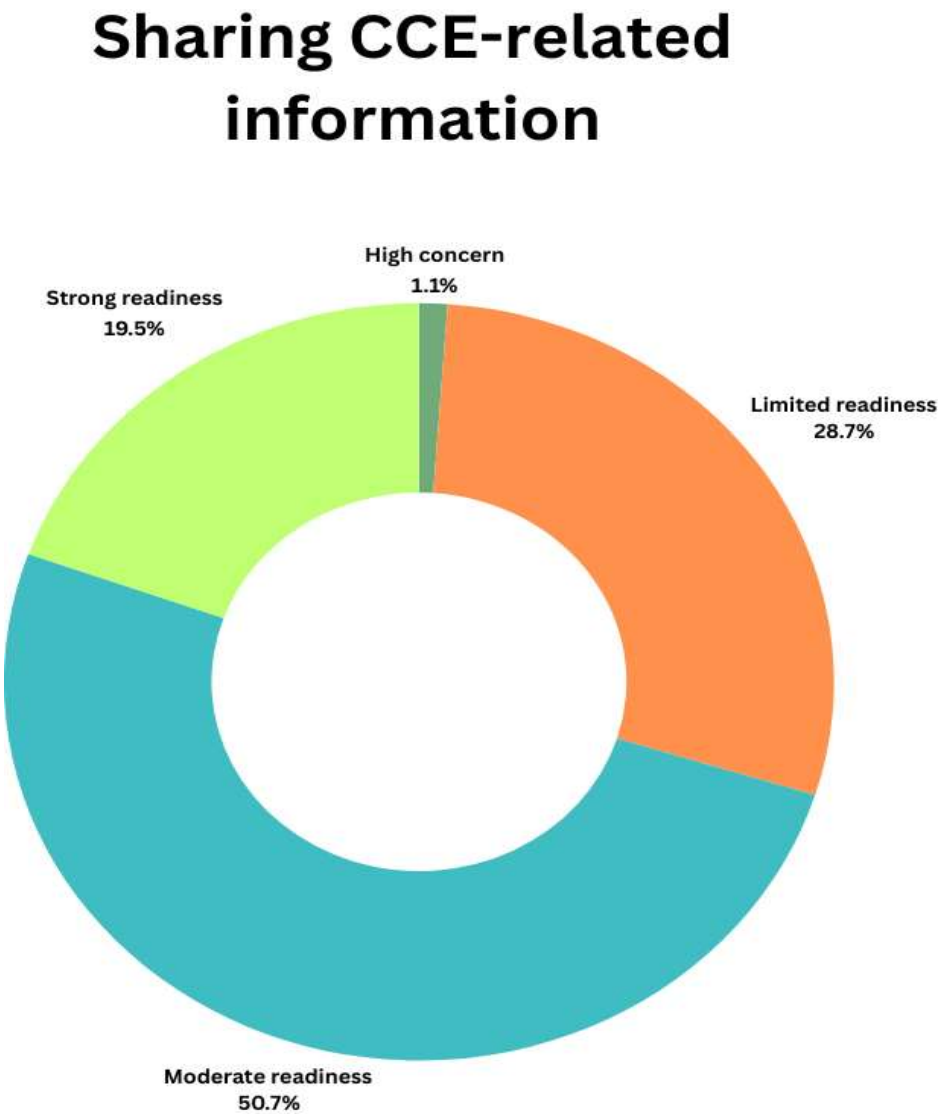


Figure 21: Sharing CCE-related information (Band)

Training, Supervision & Support

Training, supervision, and support are predicted to be important organisational factors for staff working in organisations that address complex issues such as CCE. Overall, respondents were least positive in this domain. Regarding training, only 21.8% of respondents reported

that adequate training was available (see Figure 22). This may be unsurprising, given the relative novelty of CCE as an area requiring agency response. A similar proportion believed that enhancing their capacity to deal with CCE was embedded in ongoing professional development. Only 37.9% of respondents reported having regular supervision where they could discuss CCE-related concerns, and 50.6% reported receiving adequate support from their organisations.

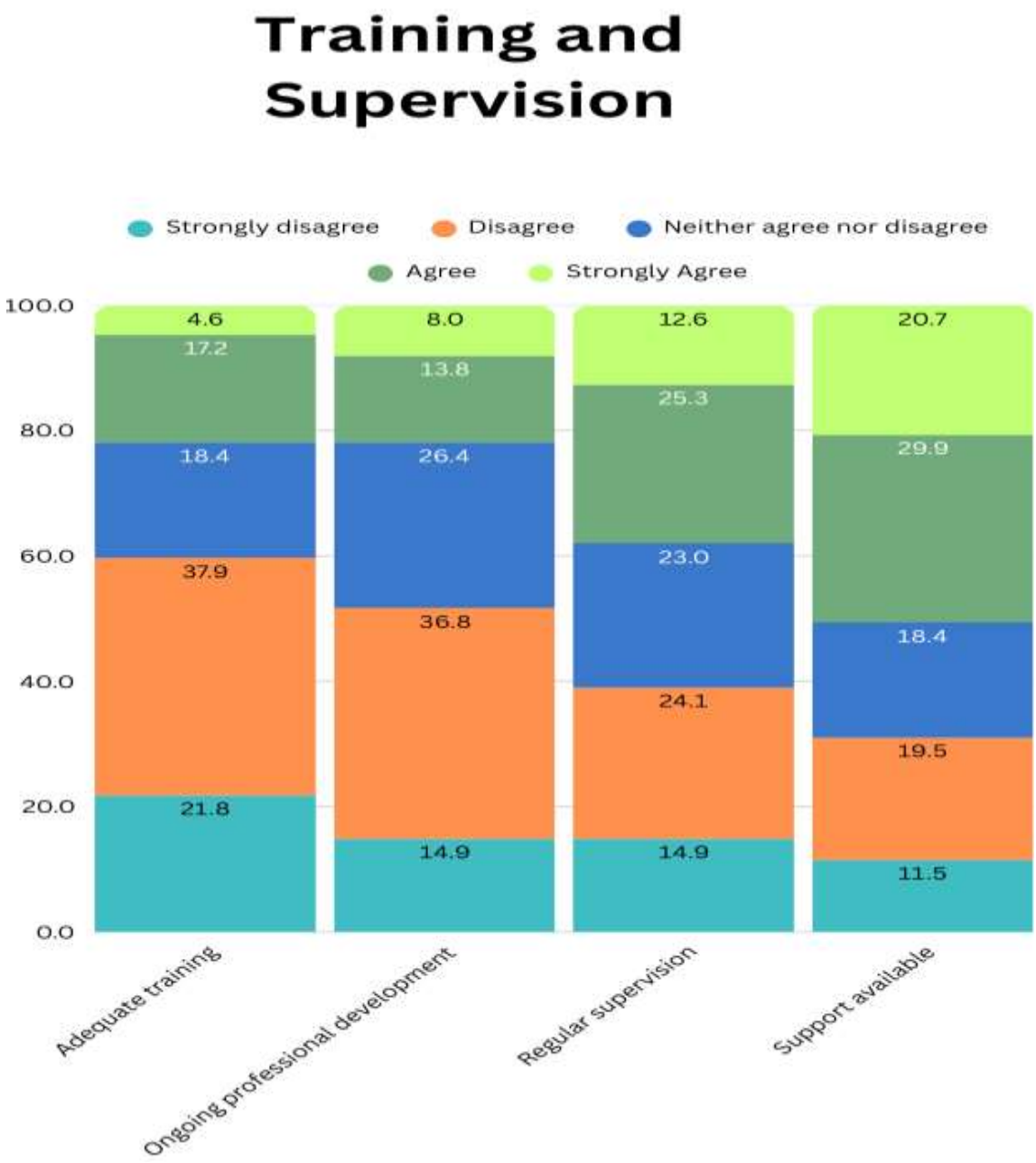


Figure 22: Training and Supervision

Overall, almost one-in-five respondents scored within the 'high concern' category. Additionally, nearly half of respondents (49.4%) reported either moderate readiness or high concern (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Training and supervision (Band)

Implementation Readiness & Barriers

Overall, 59.8% of respondents reported high or moderate readiness (Figure25), with the majority generally perceiving sufficient leadership within their organisations. However, issues such as resource constraints appeared to be significant barriers to effective organisational

implementation. Over half of all respondents (57.5%) indicated that these factors impeded successful responses to CCE, and a similar proposition (49.4%) reported that workload pressures were an additional factor that could conceivably hinder a robust response (Figure 24).

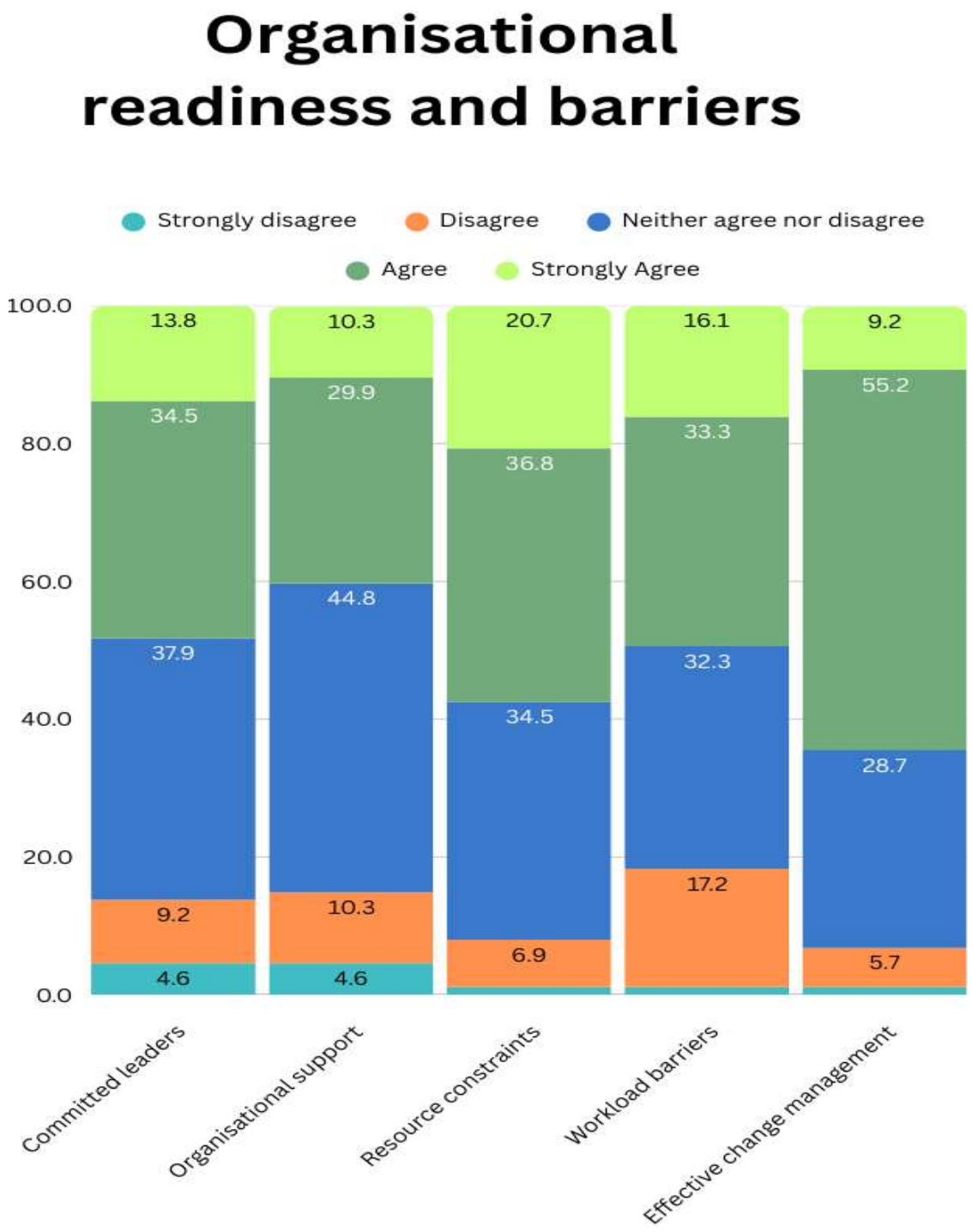


Figure 24: Organisational Readiness

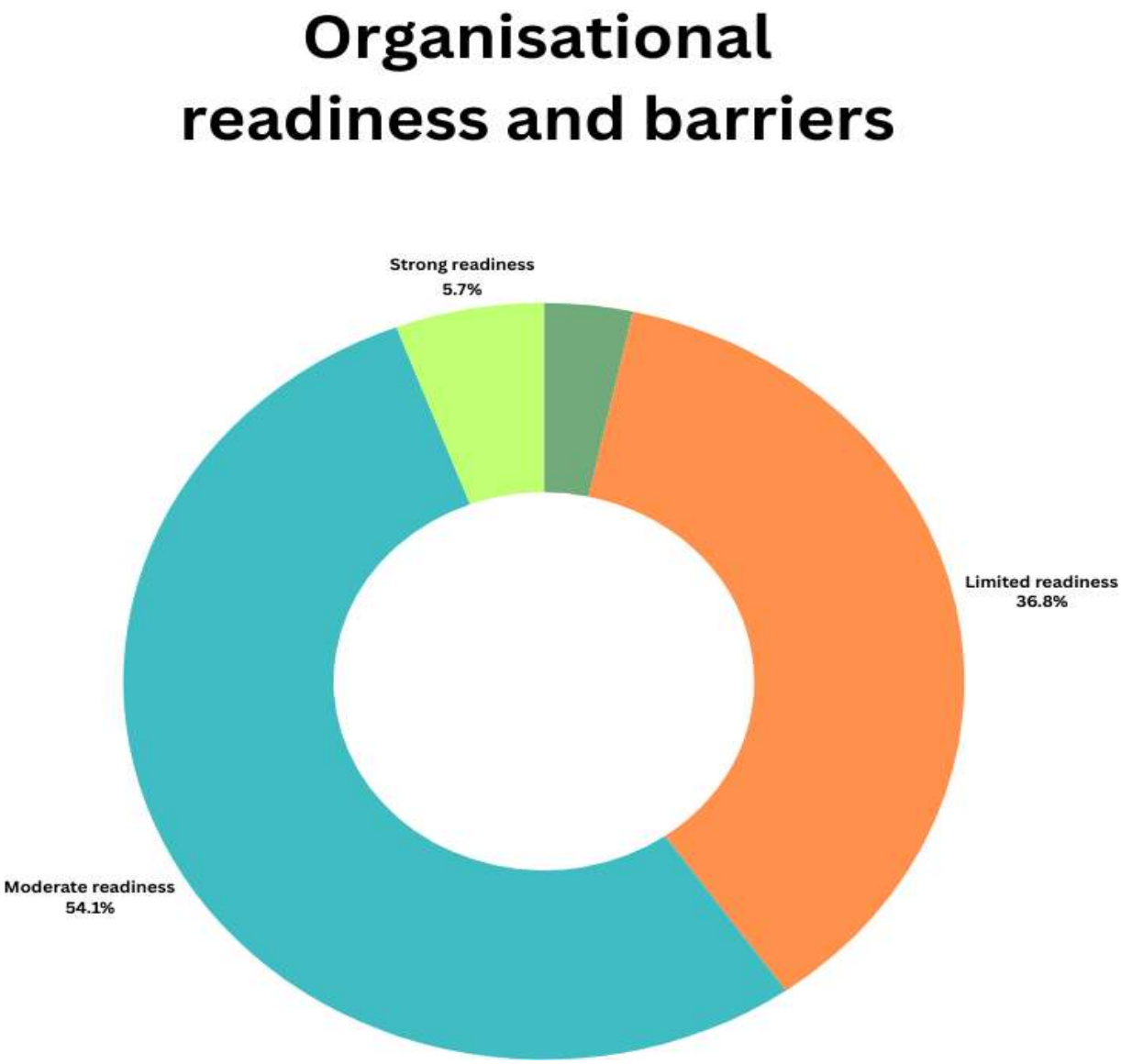


Figure 25: Organisational Readiness (Band)

Overall readiness and Summary

Overall, this exercise suggests that there are areas of organisational readiness with greater capacity to respond to CCE, as well as areas that require some improvement. As illustrated in Figure 26, two areas requiring the most attention are data storage, information sharing, training and supervision. Across these domains, respondents were least likely to score in the high readiness or moderate readiness bands.

Data sharing was the domain most likely to be rated in the positive bands. This is interesting given that issues of inter-agency sharing were least likely to be scored positively. The

difference may not be significant and could be explained by recognising that staff report policies are in place for information sharing and demonstrate high awareness of GDPR-related challenges. However, neither of these factors necessarily indicate a positive response to CCE and may, in fact, represent impediments. Thus, while staff may score highly in understanding their data protection commitments, this could translate into a reduction in the sharing of CCE-related data between agencies.

While this report has intentionally avoided distinguishing between sectors and agencies to protect the respondents, a few general comments can be made. There was a statistically significant difference observed between sectors regarding organisational readiness to respond to CCE. While each of the scores had a minimum and maximum range, police scored lowest on the scale (M=2.8), while statutory youth work scored highest (M=3.7). In terms of banding, this reflected 'limited readiness with significant barriers' for the former, and 'moderate readiness with some areas needing improvement' for the latter. In other words, no sector scored at a level commensurate with high organisational readiness, although some were stronger in specific areas than others.

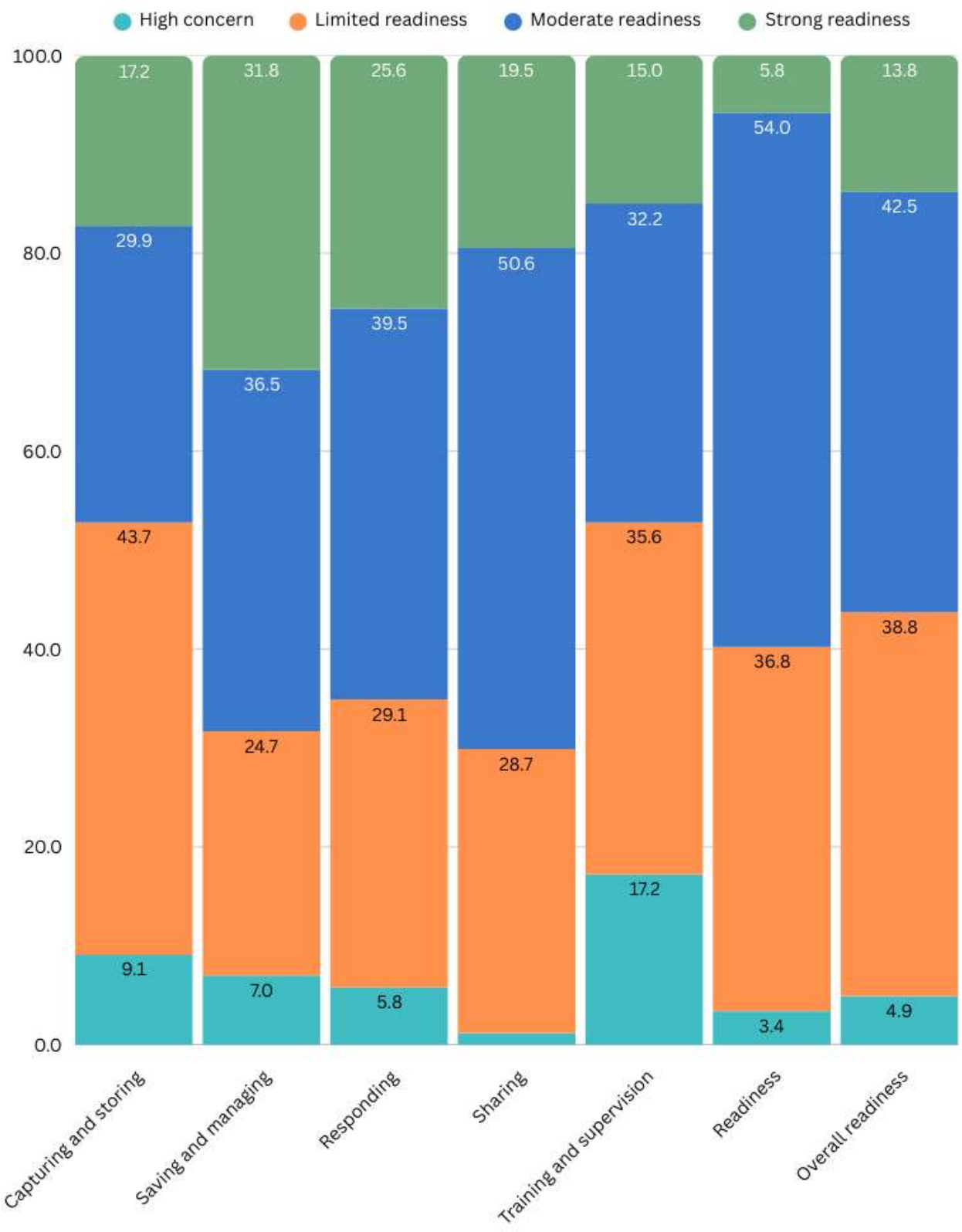


Figure 26: Overall Readiness to deal with CCE

Association between readiness and areas predicted to have elevated CCE

Geo-coding was undertaken for the survey responses by matching the provided postcode details to their corresponding ward levels, allowing for comparative analysis with other data presented in this report. A total of 85 responses were received. Two locations could not be geo-coded as one provided an incorrect postcode and the other due to the postcode being listed simply as "BT." As a result, these could not be geographically mapped. This resulted in 83 responses being analysed on a ward-level basis.

11 out of the 42 survey question responses were mapped (see Appendix 8 for the list of selected questions). These were used as a proxy for organisational readiness and cross-checked against the predicted areas of CCE, presented in Section 2.

In Section 2, two search criteria were used to identify potential areas where CCE might occur, based on specific strain factors. Survey responses were then compared with these predicted areas. Six ward locations matched. Summary results are presented below. It is important to note that this does not imply that other wards identified in the methodology are not experiencing CCE. Rather, these six wards were predicted to be clusters of harm, and the survey responses partially validated that prediction.

- 57% of wards in the responses (26 out of 46) indicated concerns regarding CCE in the previous 12 months ranging from 1 to 70 individuals that respondents were concerned about.
- 52% of the wards (24 of the 46) had MDM ranks of greater than 200. That left 22 wards that could fall into the search criteria specified in this analysis (i.e. wards less than an MDM rank of 200). Of the responses received, 6 of those that were predicted as having CCE using the methodology were verified as having CCE activity in those wards (27%).
- 5 of the 6 wards that were predicted as CCE concern areas had 10, 8, 6, 5 and 1 outlined as an area where someone had concern for CCE in the previous 12 months and indicated how many individuals about whom they were concerned. One ward from the predicted areas has a number of individuals response of zero; however, this area

has an MDM rank of 31, with 21% of the population aged 5–19-year-olds, 32% having no qualifications, 36% of crimes classified as violent, 10 recorded shootings, and 23 assaults. The sole respondent from this ward selected 'neither agree nor disagree' for most questions. However, when asked whether there was a process for regularly reviewing and updating CCE records, the respondent disagreed. This may suggest that no records are being maintained to reflect CCE activity in the area. Additionally, the respondent neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement regarding their understanding of the concept of CCE.

- One ward identified 70 individuals as a concern. It has an MDM rank of 232, with 17% of the population aged 5 – 19, no recorded shootings, 3 assaults, 23% with no qualifications, and 41% of all crime recorded as violent. Interestingly, this ward was not identified as an area predicted to experience a range of contextual harms because its MDM rank was just above the cut-off threshold. All other criteria applied to the predicted search parameters.

Appendix 8 is presented as an illustrative example of the depth of information obtained through this report. As one example, survey responses show that within the same ward, some respondents indicated concerns regarding CCE in the previous 12 months, while others did not. This variation highlights the value of GIS in the analysis. The methodology enables results to be reviewed at macro, meso, and micro levels. The wards that have both 'yes' and 'no' responses, for example, can be examined to determine the specific locations within the ward where concerns are emerging. The interventions that apply in each ward may therefore differ accordingly to reflect differences. These are complex issues that require complex and innovative responses.

The quality of the data produced is enhanced by input from professionals working directly in these areas. The models created to assess where CCE is occurring, or may be occurring, can be validated and improved through input from a variety of employment sectors who are working 'on the ground' in these conditions, dealing with CCE. Survey responses also indicated areas that may require further resourcing, particularly in educating staff who deal with CCE.

In some instances, this may require a NI-wide approach, while in others, where resources are limited, geographically targeted interventions may be more effective in maximising impact.

Section 4: Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

This report provides a comprehensive examination of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) in Northern Ireland (NI), drawing on research evidence, spatial data analysis, and an organisational readiness survey. CCE is increasingly recognised as a complex and under-acknowledged form of child abuse, involving the manipulation, coercion, and control of children for criminal gain. While this phenomenon has gained policy traction in other parts of the UK and Republic of Ireland, NI presents a unique socio-political context, marked by historical and ongoing paramilitary activity, high levels of deprivation, and systemic inequalities.

The review of literature illustrates that community contexts often elevate the risk of CCE. While this cannot be used to identify individual children, it can help agencies understand where CCE is likely to cluster. Specifically, the literature suggests that areas more likely to experience CCE are those where there are:

- Higher proportions of youth living in the area
- Lower rates of academic engagement and attainment
- Higher proportions of violence-related crime
- Heightened paramilitary activity
- Higher rates of deprivation

Building on this hypothesis, the geospatial analysis, using proxy indicators of contextual strain, demonstrated a clear clustering of CCE risk factors within specific communities, particularly in Belfast and Derry City and Strabane. These areas repeatedly emerged as locations where multiple vulnerabilities intersect —such as educational underachievement, a dense youth population, high levels of deprivation, violent crime, and paramilitary activity.

This triangulation, with survey data from professionals working in policing, youth justice, education and youth work, revealed both concern and a lack of confidence in organisational responses to CCE. While many professionals reported awareness of CCE and expressed active concern for young people at risk, a significant number lacked familiarity with formal reporting mechanisms such as the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), and even fewer had ever used it. This reflects systemic issues around the clarity of protocols, role designation, and access to training and supervision.

In summary, this report finds that, while CCE is an emergent and serious issue in NI, the systems in place to respond are fragmented, underdeveloped, and inconsistently applied across sectors. The convergence of high-risk indicators in specific geographic areas suggests an urgent need to develop more localised, targeted, and better-supported interventions.

These findings are aligned with the Cross Executive CCE action plan[2]. Specifically, the insights from this report align to the need for:

Agreeing a CCE data development agenda under the auspices of the Child Protection Senior Officials Group (CPSOG), to ensure all relevant agencies and partners collect, collate and share information to help create and sustain a shared understanding of the nature and scale of CCE in NI. In line with the data development agenda, identify areas for research and evaluation. (Action 1.4).

Establish clear practice guidelines and training to enhance information sharing, ensuring that both address CCE and facilitate and promote the timely sharing of information across and between relevant agencies to protect children and young people. (Action 2.2).

Develop a Child Exploitation risk assessment toolkit and guidance for practitioners, building on the existing CSE toolkit, which clearly identifies risk factors for all forms of exploitation. (Action 3.2)

[2] https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/CCE-action%20plan.pdf

Develop and introduce a training programme for front-line practitioners. (Action 3.3)

Explore the utility of a network mapping exercise to identify where CCE occurs, which identifies actual and potential perpetrators of CCE as part of the system response to prevent CCE and to inform proactive policing and the prosecution of those responsible. (Action 4.4)

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Organisational Readiness

- Develop a standardised CCE response framework for all agencies, supported by tailored training.
- Ensure each organisation designates a named lead for CCE to act as a point of contact and promote inter-agency consistency.
- Build multi-agency teams focused on CCE in identified hotspots, promoting collaborative casework and knowledge sharing.

2. Improve Training, Supervision and Support

- Develop training materials on CCE, including the legal frameworks (e.g., the National Referral Mechanism), trauma-informed practice, and contextual safeguarding to build a shared understanding and readiness. Following this, agencies should then review how this knowledge can be embedded into their specific policies, procedures, and supervision structures, with consideration also given to multi-agency training to strengthen collaboration and consistency in practice.
- Embed CCE-related content into induction and ongoing professional development programmes across youth services, education, justice, and social care sectors.
- Provide structured supervision spaces where frontline practitioners can reflect on complex CCE cases, share good practices, and access peer support.

3. Strategic Use of Geospatial Data for Resource Allocation

- Target prevention and intervention efforts in the 45–76 wards identified through GIS-based strain proxies, with particular focus on high-risk areas in Belfast and Derry City and Strabane.
- Regularly update and refine the GIS model as new data becomes available, incorporating feedback from frontline organisations and community-based intelligence.

4. Enhance Identification and Information Sharing Systems

- Introduce clear guidelines and digital tools for capturing, recording, and managing CCE concerns within organisations.
- Promote consistent and timely information sharing across agencies, ensuring all data handling practices are GDPR-compliant but not risk-averse.
- Explore data sharing systems, particularly in relation to space-based interventions. This includes data sharing mechanisms that provide secure, GDPR compliant data transfer and also data manipulation to support a real-time targeted analysis approach that would benefit all organisations involved.
- Develop standard assessment tools to identify early signs of CCE and guide appropriate responses, including diversion from criminalisation.
- Explore the use of apps linked to the ArcGIS dashboards to establish if this is a beneficial mechanism for obtaining research data. These apps would allow designated professionals to log in to ensure that the information obtained can be traced back for accuracy and on the ground data in relation to their local communities or areas of working. Mechanisms should be developed to anonymise data.

5. Policy and Legislative Reform

- Advocate for a statutory definition of CCE in NI, aligned with UK-wide approaches and international human rights frameworks.
- Explore incorporation of the modern slavery framework, including the NRM, into NI's justice and child protection systems, ensuring young people are recognised as victims rather than offenders.

- Commission population-level, place-based research to estimate the prevalence of CCE, providing a robust evidence base for future interventions and policy design.

6. Further testing of CCE-related predictors

- Build on the current process to robustly test the validity of contextual risks likely to elevate CCE-related challenges.
- Examine whether these predictive approaches enhance responses and assess this using real-time data analysis systems.
- Explore whether frontline practitioners benefit from novel data analysis tools, data exploration, and GDPR-compliant data sharing for information related to proxies for contextual strain.

In sum, CCE is not an isolated phenomenon but a manifestation of wider systemic harms. Effective responses must move beyond punitive models and toward holistic, trauma-informed approaches that centre children's voices and lived experiences. This report provides both the evidence base and suggests some of the tools suitable to support such a shift.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Wards with educational strain

Table 6: Count of wards within LGD with 25% or more of the population with no qualifications

Local Government District	**Count of wards within LGD with 25% or more of the population with no qualifications**
Derry City and Strabane	29
Mid Ulster	29
Belfast	28
Fermanagh and Omagh	26
Causeway Coast and Glens	24
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	17
Mid and East Antrim	15
Antrim and Newtownabbey	12
Newry, Mourne and Down	10
Ards and North Down	7
Lisburn and Castlereagh	6
Grand Total	**203**

Table 7: Count of wards within LGD with 30% or more of the population with no qualifications

Local Government District	**Count of wards within LGD with 30% or more of the population with no qualifications**
Derry City and Strabane	17
Belfast	16
Mid Ulster	12

Mid and East Antrim	9
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	8
Causeway Coast and Glens	8
Antrim and Newtownabbey	4
Fermanagh and Omagh	4
Newry, Mourne and Down	4
Ards and North Down	2
Lisburn and Castlereagh	2
Grand Total	**86**

Table 8: Top 20 wards with highest percentage of population with no qualifications

Ward	**Local Government District**	**Percentage of population in ward with no qualifications**	**Rank**
	Mid Ulster	46.04	1
	Belfast	45.51	2
	Belfast	45.48	3
	Mid and East Antrim	45.25	4
	Belfast	44.20	5
	Belfast	43.70	6
	Belfast	43.39	7
	Causeway Coast and Glens	41.63	8
	Derry City and Strabane	40.41	9
	Mid and East Antrim	40.38	10
	Derry City and Strabane	40.37	11
	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	39.80	12
	Belfast	39.73	13
	Belfast	39.42	14
	Derry City and Strabane	39.19	15

	Mid and East Antrim	39.15	16
	Derry City and Strabane	39.06	17
	Antrim and Newtownabbey	38.02	18
	Derry City and Strabane	37.56	19
	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	37.43	20

Appendix 2: Wards with concentrated youth population

Table 9: Count of wards within LGD with 20% or more of the population in the age band 5 to 19

Local Government District	Count of wards with 20% or more of the population in the age band 5 to 19
Mid Ulster	31
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	28
Newry, Mourne and Down	25
Fermanagh and Omagh	23
Derry City and Strabane	22
Belfast	20
Causeway Coast and Glens	14
Antrim and Newtownabbey	12
Mid and East Antrim	10
Ards and North Down	8
Lisburn and Castlereagh	8
Grand Total	201

Table 10: Count of wards within LGD with 25% or more of the population in the age band 5 to 19

Local Government District	Count of wards with 25% or more of the population in the age band 5 to 19
Belfast	3
Derry City and Strabane	3
Newry, Mourne and Down	2
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	1
Lisburn and Castlereagh	1
Grand Total	10

Table 11: Top 20 Rank Percentage of residents in the age band 5 to 19 years old

Ward	Local Government District	Age band 5 to 19	Rank
	Belfast	28.80	1
	Derry City and Strabane	28.02	2
	Belfast	26.42	3
	Belfast	26.34	4
	Derry City and Strabane	26.06	5
	Derry City and Strabane	25.81	6
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	25.62	7
	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	25.28	8
	Newry, Mourne and Down	24.96	9
	Newry, Mourne and Down	24.78	10
	Newry, Mourne and Down	24.07	11
	Newry, Mourne and Down	24.04	12
	Fermanagh and Omagh	23.92	13
	Newry, Mourne and Down	23.88	14
	Mid Ulster	23.79	15
	Derry City and Strabane	23.77	16
	Mid Ulster	23.68	17
	Fermanagh and Omagh	23.60	18
	Belfast	23.52	19
	Newry, Mourne and Down	23.43	20

Appendix 3: Violent crime at Ward level

Table 12: Count of wards within LGD with 40% or more of all crime that violent crime is in that ward

Local Government District	Count of wards with 40% or more of all crime that violent crime is in that ward
Derry City and Strabane	36
Antrim and Newtownabbey	28
Newry, Mourne and Down	24
Mid Ulster	23
Belfast	21
Lisburn and Castlereagh	19
Mid and East Antrim	19
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	17
Causeway Coast and Glens	17
Fermanagh and Omagh	14
Ards and North Down	12
Grand Total	230

Table 13: Count of wards within LGD with 50% or more of all crime that violent crime is in that ward

Local Government District	Count of wards with 50% or more of all crime that violent crime is in that ward
Antrim and Newtownabbey	6
Derry City and Strabane	6
Lisburn and Castlereagh	3
Mid Ulster	3
Belfast	2
Causeway Coast and Glens	2
Newry, Mourne and Down	2
Ards and North Down	1
Grand Total	25

Table 14: Top 20 wards with highest percentage of all crime that violent crime is in that ward

Ward	Local Government District	Percentage of all crime that violent crime is in that ward	Rank
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	60.87	1
	Ards and North Down	57.56	2
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	54.55	3
	Derry City and Strabane	54.52	4
	Mid Ulster	54.15	5
	Antrim and Newtownabbey	53.18	6
	Antrim and Newtownabbey	53.01	7
	Antrim and Newtownabbey	52.65	8
	Causeway Coast and Glens	52.54	9
	Derry City and Strabane	52.41	10
	Belfast	52.39	11
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	52.21	12
	Antrim and Newtownabbey	52.19	13
	Derry City and Strabane	51.69	14
	Newry, Mourne and Down	51.49	15
	Mid Ulster	51.10	16
	Causeway Coast and Glens	51.07	17
	Derry City and Strabane	50.78	18
	Antrim and Newtownabbey	50.51	19
	Newry, Mourne and Down	50.49	20

Appendix 4: Deprivation

Table 15: Table Illustrating the division of wards by Local Government District

Local Government District	**Number of wards**
Belfast	60
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	41
Newry, Mourne and Down	41
Antrim and Newtownabbey	40
Ards and North Down	40
Causeway Coast and Glens	40
Derry City and Strabane	40
Fermanagh and Omagh	40
Lisburn and Castlereagh	40
Mid and East Antrim	40
Mid Ulster	40
Grand Total	**462**

Table 16: Count of wards by LGD in the top 200 most deprived areas for MDM Rank

Local Government District	Count of wards in top 200 most deprived areas for MDM Rank
Belfast	33
Derry City and Strabane	31
Fermanagh and Omagh	28
Newry, Mourne and Down	24
Causeway Coast and Glens	20
Mid Ulster	14
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	13
Mid and East Antrim	11
Antrim and Newtownabbey	10

Ards and North Down	9
Lisburn and Castlereagh	7
Grand Total	200

Table 17: Count of wards by LGD in the top 100 most deprived areas for MDM Rank

Local Government District	**Count of wards in top 100 most deprived areas for MDM Rank**
Belfast	24
Derry City and Strabane	21
Fermanagh and Omagh	11
Newry, Mourne and Down	11
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	8
Causeway Coast and Glens	8
Mid and East Antrim	6
Antrim and Newtownabbey	4
Ards and North Down	3
Mid Ulster	3
Lisburn and Castlereagh	1
Grand Total	100

Table 18: Count of wards by LGD in the top 20 most deprived areas for MDM Rank

Local Government District	**Count of wards in top 20 most deprived areas for MDM Rank**
Belfast	12
Derry City and Strabane	6
Causeway Coast and Glens	1
Newry, Mourne and Down	1
Grand Total	20

Table 19: Top 20 most deprived areas for MDM Rank by Ward and LGD

Ward	Local Government District	Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank
	Belfast	1
	Derry City and Strabane	2
	Belfast	3
	Belfast	4
	Derry City and Strabane	5
	Belfast	6
	Derry City and Strabane	7
	Belfast	8
	Belfast	9
	Causeway Coast and Glens	10
	Derry City and Strabane	11
	Belfast	12
	Belfast	13
	Derry City and Strabane	14
	Belfast	15
	Derry City and Strabane	16
	Newry, Mourne and Down	17
	Belfast	18
	Belfast	19
	Belfast	20

Appendix 5: Search criteria two (contextual strains for CCE)

Table 20: Ward name and LGD for CCE search criteria two

Ward Name	Local Government District Name
	Ards and North Down
	Ards and North Down
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Belfast
	Causeway Coast and Glens
	Causeway Coast and Glens
	Causeway Coast and Glens
	Causeway Coast and Glens

	Causeway Coast and Glens
	Causeway Coast and Glens
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane
	Derry City and Strabane

Table 21: Breakdown of number of wards identified in search criteria two by LGD

Local Government District	**Count Wards identified in Search Criteria Two**
Belfast	20
Derry City and Strabane	17
Causeway Coast and Glens	6
Ards and North Down	2
Grand Total	45

Appendix 6: Output for all five parameters for search criteria one ordered by multiple deprivation rank most deprived to least deprived

Ward **(Please note, ward names have been omitted to protect their identities)**	**LGD**	**% crime that is violent crime (ward)**	**% (ward) no qualifications**	**Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank**	**Age Band 5 to 19**	**Casualties (Shootings) 2022-2024**	**Casualties (PSA) 2022-2024**
	Belfast	38.88	36.19	1	21.41	10	23
	Belfast	43.15	39.73	3	22.75	10	23
	Belfast	42.45	39.42	4	17.81	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	54.52	40.41	5	17.70	6	6
	Belfast	38.38	45.51	6	18.87	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	43.83	40.37	7	22.93	6	6

	Belfast	39.70	45.48	9	20.36	10	23
	Causeway Coast and Glens	37.33	41.63	10	19.77	3	5
	Derry City and Strabane	45.93	39.06	11	25.81	6	6
	Belfast	48.01	44.20	12	23.52	10	23
	Belfast	37.23	27.18	13	20.47	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	46.84	30.03	14	26.06	6	6
	Belfast	39.33	33.91	15	26.34	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	48.10	33.35	16	19.40	6	6
	Belfast	42.89	34.06	18	19.75	10	23
	Belfast	43.90	35.52	19	19.38	10	23
	Belfast	52.39	43.70	20	20.67	10	23

	Causeway Coast and Glens	44.63	35.54	27	22.18	3	5
	Derry City and Strabane	52.41	36.20	28	18.91	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	47.21	39.19	29	15.92	6	6
	Belfast	38.49	30.04	30	20.74	10	23
	Belfast	36.34	32.88	31	21.30	10	23
	Ards and North Down	47.52	32.00	34	21.94	4	9
	Belfast	40.77	30.41	35	17.57	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	46.51	33.98	36	21.15	6	6

	Derry City and Strabane	43.43	23.93	37	28.02	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	49.78	37.56	40	17.51	6	6
	Belfast	39.57	34.85	43	20.07	10	23
	Belfast	38.64	29.34	44	23.00	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	45.39	25.45	45	21.45	6	6
	Belfast	38.65	26.96	50	16.73	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	40.07	25.55	51	20.95	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	50.78	33.67	54	18.66	6	6

	Derry City and Strabane	48.78	36.99	56	19.03	6	6
	Belfast	50.18	29.14	59	20.68	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	40.39	34.25	60	19.48	6	6
	Belfast	42.81	27.17	65	22.67	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	36.52	33.36	68	19.85	6	6
	Ards and North Down	45.13	26.86	72	21.18	4	9
	Belfast	38.42	29.22	73	21.12	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	49.12	32.57	80	20.31	6	6

	Derry City and Strabane	44.93	24.15	84	16.61	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	47.16	25.63	86	23.77	6	6
	Causeway Coast and Glens	46.15	31.17	88	17.56	3	5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	44.43	32.81	89	17.51	3	5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	39.06	27.05	92	18.60	3	5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	51.07	27.46	95	21.72	3	5
	Belfast	40.30	28.04	102	19.19	10	23
	Belfast	42.52	20.45	103	28.80	10	23

	Derry City and Strabane	43.84	26.35	108	21.86	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	49.09	35.02	111	18.56	6	6
	Causeway Coast and Glens	48.04	28.52	112	21.16	3	5
	Belfast	36.53	24.33	118	15.97	10	23
	Belfast	43.49	28.82	120	20.48	10	23
	Causeway Coast and Glens	41.12	28.04	121	20.00	3	5
	Ards and North Down	48.48	26.67	122	20.68	4	9
	Derry City and Strabane	35.90	26.27	126	17.64	6	6

	Belfast	42.23	23.07	131	18.37	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	51.69	28.34	135	19.81	6	6
	Belfast	37.35	22.41	137	18.32	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	42.65	26.57	140	21.08	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	46.51	22.70	145	21.50	6	6
	Ards and North Down	42.68	21.24	155	18.31	4	9
	Ards and North Down	36.64	24.27	157	17.19	4	9
	Causeway Coast and Glens	46.50	27.88	159	22.55	3	5

	Causeway Coast and Glens	43.24	28.28	161	21.80	3	5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	41.92	24.03	162	19.97	3	5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	37.56	30.18	164	19.24	3	5
	Derry City and Strabane	49.94	26.42	167	19.84	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	46.69	28.91	169	20.49	6	6
	Causeway Coast and Glens	44.95	29.04	171	18.93	3	5

	Derry City and Strabane	43.86	26.48	178	20.20	6	6
	Ards and North Down	42.82	21.25	180	21.32	4	9
	Causeway Coast and Glens	36.99	27.47	182	18.27	3	5
	Derry City and Strabane	41.67	30.63	189	15.69	6	6
	Causeway Coast and Glens	36.42	27.19	193	18.85	3	5

Appendix 7: Output for all five parameters for search criteria two ordered by multiple deprivation rank most deprived to least deprived

Ward (Please note, the names of the wards have been omitted to protect their identities	**LGD**	**% crime that is violent crime (ward)**	**% (ward) no qualifications**	**Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank**	**Age Band 5 to 19**	**Casualties (Shootings) 2022-2024**	**Casualties (PSA) 2022-2024**
	Belfast	38.88	36.19	1	21.41	10	23
	Belfast	43.15	39.73	3	22.75	10	23
	Belfast	42.45	39.42	4	17.81	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	54.52	40.41	5	17.70	6	6
	Belfast	38.38	45.51	6	18.87	10	23

	Derry City and Strabane	43.83	40.37	7	22.93	6	6
	Belfast	39.70	45.48	9	20.36	10	23
	Causeway Coast and Glens	37.33	41.63	10	19.77	3	5
	Derry City and Strabane	45.93	39.06	11	25.81	6	6
	Belfast	48.01	44.20	12	23.52	10	23
	Belfast	37.23	27.18	13	20.47	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	46.84	30.03	14	26.06	6	6
	Belfast	39.33	33.91	15	26.34	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	48.10	33.35	16	19.40	6	6
	Belfast	42.89	34.06	18	19.75	10	23

	Belfast	43.90	35.52	19	19.38	10	23
	Belfast	52.39	43.70	20	20.67	10	23
	Causeway Coast and Glens	44.63	35.54	27	22.18	3	5
	Derry City and Strabane	52.41	36.20	28	18.91	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	47.21	39.19	29	15.92	6	6
	Belfast	38.49	30.04	30	20.74	10	23
	Belfast	36.34	32.88	31	21.30	10	23
	Ards and North Down	47.52	32.00	34	21.94	4	9
	Belfast	40.77	30.41	35	17.57	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	46.51	33.98	36	21.15	6	6

	Derry City and Strabane	49.78	37.56	40	17.51	6	6
	Belfast	39.57	34.85	43	20.07	10	23
	Belfast	38.64	29.34	44	23.00	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	45.39	25.45	45	21.45	6	6
	Belfast	38.65	26.96	50	16.73	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	40.07	25.55	51	20.95	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	50.78	33.67	54	18.66	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	48.78	36.99	56	19.03	6	6
	Belfast	50.18	29.14	59	20.68	10	23

	Derry City and Strabane	40.39	34.25	60	19.48	6	6
	Belfast	42.81	27.17	65	22.67	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	36.52	33.36	68	19.85	6	6
	Ards and North Down	45.13	26.86	72	21.18	4	9
	Belfast	38.42	29.22	73	21.12	10	23
	Derry City and Strabane	49.12	32.57	80	20.31	6	6
	Derry City and Strabane	47.16	25.63	86	23.77	6	6
	Causeway Coast and Glens	46.15	31.17	88	17.56	3	5

	Causeway Coast and Glens	44.43	32.81	89	17.51	3	5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	39.06	27.05	92	18.60	3	5
	Causeway Coast and Glens	51.07	27.46	95	21.72	3	5

Appendix 8: List of chosen survey questions that were used as a proxy in relation to readiness to cross check with the predicted areas of CCE presented in Section 2

Survey question	**Response**	**Additional geographical information**
(Have you had any concerns regarding CCE in the previous 12 months)? If yes, how many individuals were you concerned about?	10 8 6 5 1 0	/
To what extent do you rate the following statements. I fully understand the concept of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	2 – strongly agreed 3 – neither agreed nor disagreed 4 - agreed	/
To what extent do you rate the following statements. I have been concerned about CCE in the past?	2 – strongly agreed 2 – neither agreed nor disagreed 5 – agreed 0 – disagreed or strongly disagreed	/

To what extent do you rate the following statements. I am currently concerned about CCE?	2 – strongly agreed 2 – neither agreed nor disagreed 5 - agreed 0 – strongly disagreed	/
To what extent do you rate the following statements. My organisation has a formal policy for dealing with cases of CCE?	1 strongly disagreed 1 strongly agreed 3 – neither agreed nor disagreed 4 – disagreed 0 - agreed	1 strongly disagree, 1 strongly agree and 2 neither agree nor disagree in same ward
To what extent do you rate the following statements. CCE is an issue that affects children in the area in which I work?	0 – strongly disagreed 4 – strongly agreed 3 – neither agreed nor disagreed 2 – agreed	/
To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I feel confident in identifying and recording CCE cases accurately.	1 – strongly disagreed 1 – strongly agreed 4 – neither agreed nor disagreed 2 – disagreed 1 - agreed	1 strongly agree, 2 neither agree nor disagree and 1 disagree in same ward

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? There is a process for regularly reviewing and updating CCE records.	1 – strongly disagree 1 -strongly agree 3 – neither agree nor disagree 3 – disagree 1 -agree	1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree and 1 agree in same ward
To what extent do you agree with the following statements? When a CCE case is identified, there is timely action taken to safeguard the child.	2 – strongly agree 2 – neither agree nor disagree 1 – disagree 0 – strongly disagree 4 - agree	1 agree, 1 strongly agree, 1 neither agree nor disagree and 1 disagree in same ward
Have you had any concerns regarding CCE in the previous 12 months?	5 – Yes 4 - No	3 yes and 1 no were in the same ward
Have you or any of your immediate colleagues (in your team) ever enacted the NRM?	4 – Yes 5 - No	3 yes and 1 no in same ward

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NORTH SOUTH RESEARCH PROGRAMME

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