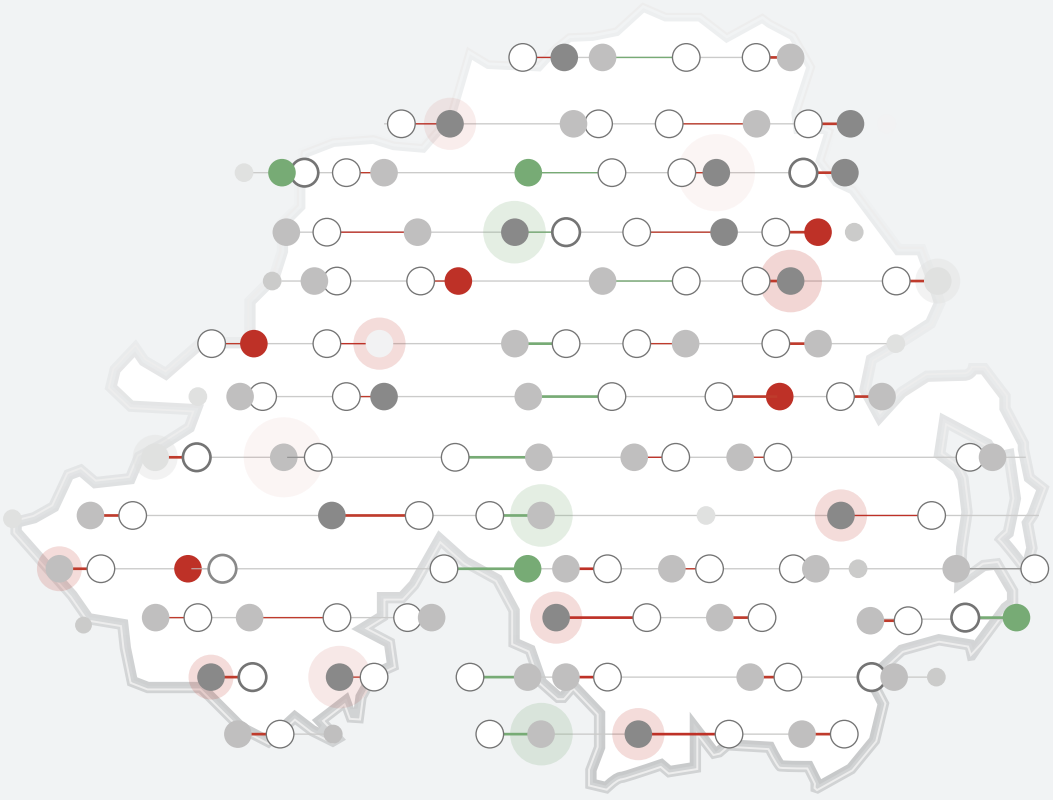
Northern Ireland Peace Index 2026

- Results & Trends
- Northern Ireland's Peace
- UK & Ireland Comparison
- Local Government Districts



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IEP Institute for Economics & Peace



Quantifying Peace and its Benefits

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress. IEP achieves its goals by developing new conceptual frameworks to define peacefulness; providing metrics for measuring peace; and uncovering the relationships between business, peace and prosperity as well as promoting a better understanding of the cultural, economic and political factors that create peace.

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Northern Ireland Peace Index

September 2026

Queen’s University Belfast and Institute for Economics & Peace

Preface

This report proposes using the Institute for Economics & Peace's (IEP) Positive Peace framework to empirically measure and monitor peacefulness in Northern Ireland and as a model for systems thinking-informed peacebuilding.

Positive Peace is defined as the *attitudes, institutions and structures* that create and sustain peaceful societies over the long term, the conditions in which people thrive. The Positive Peace framework is derived from statistical analysis that IEP conducted through almost 50,000 economic and social indicators across 163 countries to identify the factors most strongly associated with peaceful and resilient societies.

Using this methodology, this report provides measurement of both negative peace and Positive Peace in Northern Ireland and at the Local Government District level over time and offers a point of comparison between places around the world. The systems-oriented model suggests ways in which all Government departments can play a role in peacebuilding; it offers alternative ways for non-governmental organisations and agencies to frame their contributions to systemic change; and the broad understanding of peace provides us with policy options that enhance and move beyond the idea of 'good relations'.

We hope this report helps further guide Northern Ireland to a more sustainable peace.

*****

The Good Friday Agreement or the Belfast Agreement was reached in Northern Ireland on 10 April 1998 (hereafter, the 1998 Agreement). It brought to an end three decades of violent conflict that saw 3,720 deaths[1] and approximately 47,540 injuries.[2] Since then levels of political violence, what we will describe under the heading negative peace - *the absence of violence and the fear of violence* - have decreased. However, as this report shows, significant divisions remain. The shared Executive set up under the 1998 Agreement has faltered with six periods when there was no working Government amounting to around 10 years.

The institutional architecture originally conceived under the 1998 Agreement has grown in order to deal with ongoing issues such as 'dealing with the past', policing, as well as contestation over cultural identity such as flags, parades and the use of the Irish language. Issues such as poverty and economic inequality, restructuring of the health service, house building, economic development outside Belfast and shared education have been tackled slowly and only intermittently by a political system which makes developing a progressive and ambitious programme for Government difficult.

Since 1998, solutions were found at the St Andrews Agreement (2006), Hillsborough Castle Agreement (2010), Stormont House Agreement (2014), Fresh Start Agreement (2015), New Decade, New Approach (2020). There have been four Programmes for Government: 2008-2011, 2011-2015, 2016-2021, 2024-2027. There have been three major policy initiatives to encourage peace building: A Shared Future (2005), *Programme for Cohesion*, *Sharing and Integration* (CSI) (2010) and *Together: Building a United Community* (T:BUC) (2013), and many other policies based with local Councils and five rounds of significant funding from the European Union.

In the most recent Programme for Government *Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most* (25 February 2025)[3] the word 'Peace' appears 12 times. It is seen as an overarching concept for the policy areas of People, Planet and Prosperity.

> Our cross-cutting commitment to Peace will make sure that everyone feels the benefit of a growing economy, improved environment and a safer and fairer society. (p.69)

However, nowhere is 'peace' defined and nowhere is the 'cross cutting commitment' explained. There are policies that revolve around peacebuilding including the commitment to 'develop a trauma-informed public sector' and 'ongoing support for the PEACE PLUS programme and Safer Communities', and a promise to refresh the 'Good Relations Programme, Communities in Transition, Together: Building a United Community, Urban Villages, and Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime, and the introduction of a strategic approach to racial equality' (p.87). The key measurement of the latest Programme for Government is the 'Wellbeing Framework', a dashboard of statistics that 'sets out the quality of life here and shows us how Section 75 groups and people living in different parts of Northern Ireland are doing' (p.11).

Coherent, concentrated peace development in Northern Ireland has been weak, relying on a set of institutions produced by a number of agreements, without any major review, and a series of 'good relations' policies in a society becoming more diverse. In the most recent Programme for Government the word 'peace' is used as a placeholder without any strategic explanation or objective.

IEP has identified three broad strategic models used around the world. Some countries develop a Ministry of Peace, others form a Commission or Council to develop a peace process, while many mainstream peace throughout Government. This report offers a framework for peace in Northern Ireland that can identify a strategic, mainstreamed, way forward across Government departments.

Dominic Bryan
Andrew Thomson

Acknowledgements

The Northern Ireland Peace Index is the result of a partnership between Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) and Queen's University Belfast (QUB). The Index applies IEP's negative peace and Positive Peace framework to Northern Ireland for the first time at the sub-national level. Dr Paulina Pijacka and Dr David Hammond from IEP provided technical, methodological, and operational lead in compiling this report. The project was led at QUB by Dr Andrew Thomson (Principal Investigator) and Professor Dominic Bryan (Co-Investigator), both at the Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, QUB's flagship for interdisciplinary research on questions of major societal change.

The research was funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) under the responsive mode: secondary data analysis (round two) scheme, project reference UKRI2422. The project runs for 18 months, from 1 September 2025 to March 2027.

The framework and indicators were tested and refined through engagement with an Expert Panel, comprising Lucy Geddes (Co-operation Ireland), Dr Brendan Sturgeon (QUB) and Dr Vincent Charles (QUB), who met to review the conceptual approach on 23 March 2026 and provided written comments on the draft prior to publication. Three public consultations were held in March 2026 in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry, to discuss the appropriate indicators and data, what these measures capture, and how they could be most useful in practice. The authors are grateful to the Expert Panel members and consultation participants for their valuable time and input.

The authors also thank Enda Young and Serge Stroobants for the early work on Positive Peace in Northern Ireland that brought QUB and IEP together, and to the teams at Cooperation Ireland, the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) programme, and Belfast City Council for their continued engagement throughout the project.

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Executive Summary

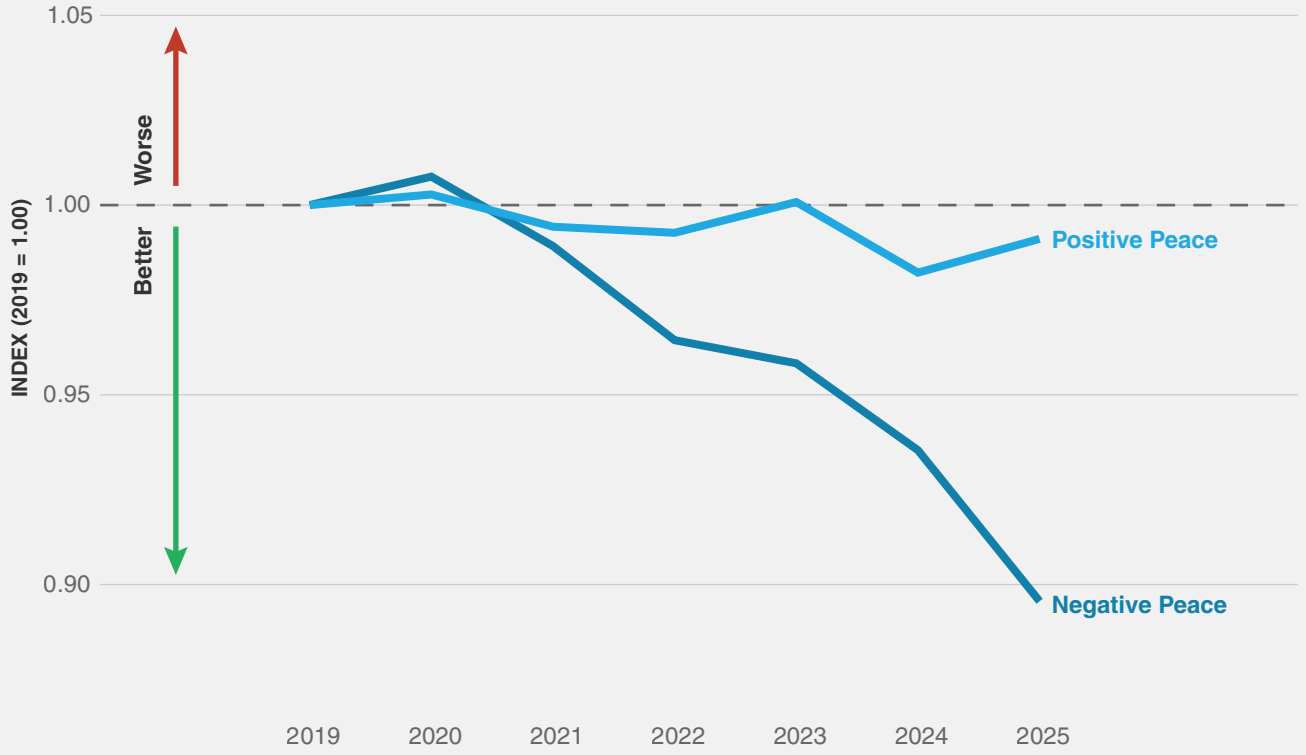
This report presents the first Northern Ireland Peace Index (NIPI): composite measures of negative peace and Positive Peace in Northern Ireland over time and at the Local Government District (LGD) level. In addition, this report introduces the Positive Peace framework as an evidence-based, systems-oriented model and systemic, forward-focused approach to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland (NI).

Northern Ireland has made significant progress since the 1998 Agreement. The core promise of the settlement, an end to sustained political violence, has largely been achieved. The deeper structural foundations of peace that make that relative absence of violence durable are slower to build by nature and remain a work in progress. To this end, the Northern Ireland Peace Index measures both dimensions over the 2019 to 2025 period, against two complementary frameworks: Negative peace defined as *the absence of violence and the fear of violence*, and Positive Peace defined as the *attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies*. The Index is reported at the Northern Ireland level and across the 11 Local Government Districts, with comparison points against the rest of the United Kingdom (UK) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI) on the indicators reported on a directly comparable basis. Together these readings start at the NI level, widen to the wider context around it, then narrow to the council beneath it, situating its peace components within the larger systems it belongs to, and identifying the finer patterns within it.

FIGURE 1

Northern Ireland's Negative Peace and Positive Peace, 2019 to 2025

Negative peace in Northern Ireland has improved more since 2019 than Positive Peace.



Source: IEP

Figure 1 captures the central finding of this report. Both measures use the Institute for Economics & Peace's 1 to 5 scale, on which 1 is the most peaceful outcome and 5 the least, so a falling score marks an improvement. Northern Ireland's negative peace has improved 10.7 per cent on a 2019 baseline, with the steepest gains in the past two years (2023-2025). Positive Peace improved just 1.2 per cent over the same window. The relative absence of violence is consolidating faster than the attitudes, institutions, and structures that are meant to sustain it. Some structural conditions underpinning peace in Northern Ireland are strengthening; others are weakening. The critical question is whether they can keep pace with the peace they support.

The Northern Ireland Positive Peace Framework (Figure 2), adapted from IEP's global Positive Peace framework, comprises eight interconnected pillars that interact in complex and mutually reinforcing ways. Together, they form the foundations that build and sustain peaceful societies.

FIGURE 2

Northern Ireland Positive Peace Framework

All eight pillars are highly interconnected and interact in complex ways.



Source: IEP

Within Northern Ireland Positive Peace, four pillars improved since 2019: *Free Flow of Information, Acceptance of the Rights of Others, Sound Business Environment and Equitable Distribution of Resources*, and four deteriorated: *High Levels of Human Capital, Well-functioning Government, Good Relations with Neighbours and Trust in Institutions* (Figure 3). Progress is strongest where capital and formal policy can move an outcome directly, and weakest on the institutional, human-capital and community-relations dimensions that bear most directly on the long-term consolidation of peace. The movements behind the headline are in both directions, measured as changes in each indicator's normalised scores. *Confidence in the justice system* deteriorated almost 24 per cent on the score over the period, *planning decision efficiency* 41 per cent, *favourability towards the other community* 40 per cent and *research and development (R&D) spending* 34 per cent. *Gigabit broadband*, by contrast, improved almost 57 per cent, *public appointments parity* 33 per cent and *gender pay gap* 13 per cent.

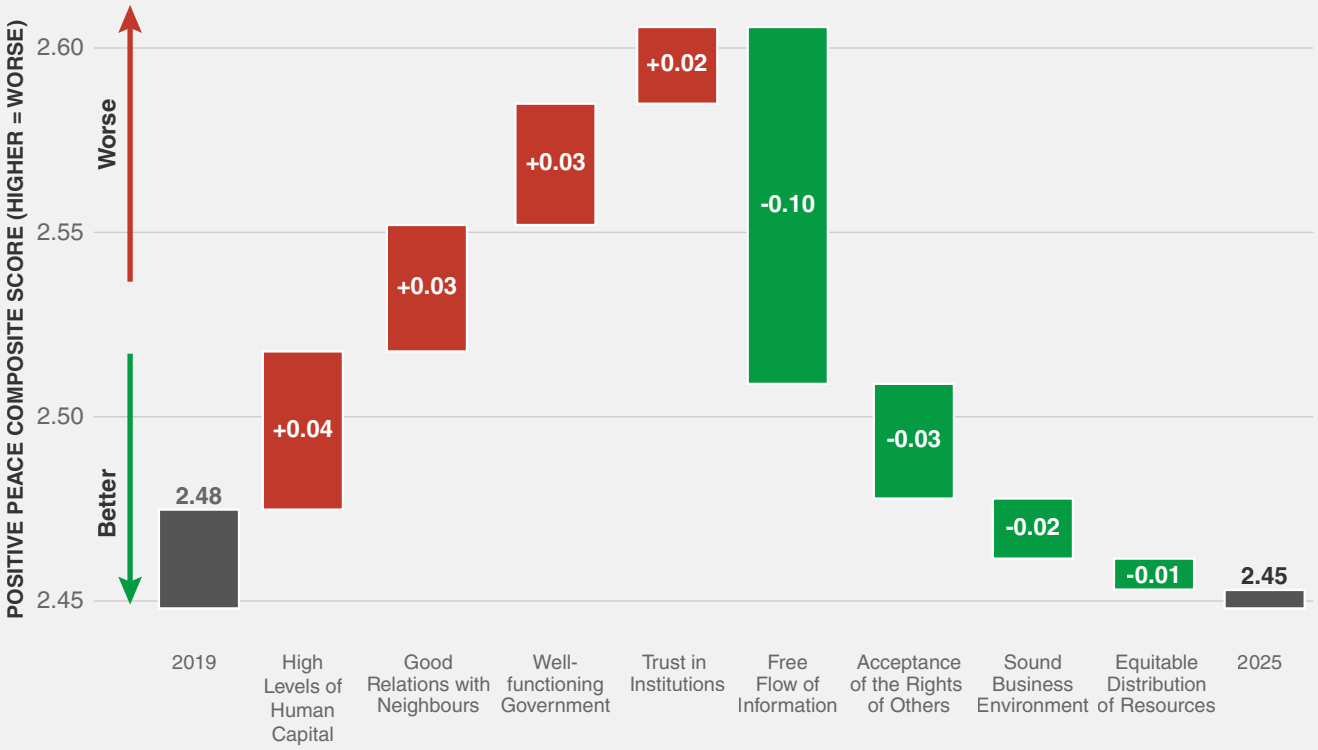
Compared with the rest of the UK on the directly comparable indicators since 2019, Northern Ireland matches or exceeds the British average on the social, equity, and material outcomes that capture how people experience everyday peace. It falls behind on the economic-dynamism indicators that determine its long-term productive capacity: research investment, foreign-capital intensity and output per capita. Against the RoI, the picture partly reverses: on the small set of like-for-like indicators, Northern Ireland trails on most, and the youth-transition and gender pay gap outcomes on which it leads within the UK become shortfalls.

At LGD level, a strong Positive Peace position does not guarantee a strong negative peace position. Belfast records above-average performance on several structural foundations of peace, yet concentrates the highest share of recorded violence among all the council areas. Derry and Strabane, by contrast, lags on a number of Positive Peace indicators, yet

FIGURE 3

Change in Northern Ireland's Positive Peace Pillars, 2019 to 2025

Four pillars improved and four deteriorated over the period.



Source: IEP calculations

has recorded some of the largest improvements on violence-related measures over the same period. The two dimensions can move independently, because each council area's social composition shapes them through different channels, meaning that its standing on one measure is not a reliable guide to its standing on the other.

The areas where peace is least consolidated are those marked by persistent deprivation and entrenched low trust in institutions. The Index maps the structural landscape of that challenge, where the deficits lie, and which districts are most exposed. The path from structural improvements to durable peace runs through generations of social and political change, not annual policy cycles. The relationship is also not one-directional: falling violence may build these conditions as much as they sustain the peace, and the Index measures their presence, not the direction of cause.

The measures of negative peace and Positive Peace and the indicators that comprise them point to certain long-term priorities towards building greater levels of peacefulness. Intervention in such a system is incremental and long-run; it builds the conditions for sustained peace rather than acting directly on violence. The priorities below set a direction of travel, not near-term targets.

1) Strengthen public confidence in the institutions people rely on.
2) Support a stronger domestic economic and research base, so gains in skills and infrastructure are retained locally.
3) Create more shared spaces and services that bring communities together in everyday life.
4) Widen access to opportunity for all, especially where deprivation and division coincide.

Key Findings

Negative Peace

- Negative peace in Northern Ireland improved 10.7 per cent since 2019, with the composite score decreasing from 2.14 to 1.91 in 2025. In 2025, Northern Ireland recorded the lowest levels of violence and fear of violence since 2019.
- Five of the six negative peace indicators improved between 2019 and 2025 in recorded terms. *Homicide* improved most, falling 47.9 per cent, followed by *paramilitary activity* which dropped 44.7 per cent. *Hate crime* was the only indicator to deteriorate, rising 21.5 per cent.
- Negative peace tracks the social fabric, not the economy. It correlates more with social *exclusion, the rate of those not in education, employment or training (NEET), school segregation and social housing processing*, than with macroeconomic indicators.

Positive Peace

- Positive Peace improved only marginally across the same period, from 2.48 in 2019 to 2.45 in 2025 (1.2 per cent), the second-best reading in the series. However, the most recent year shows a partial reversal rather than continued progress.
- Four of the eight Positive Peace pillars have improved since 2019 and four have deteriorated, with gains on material and rights pillars offsetting losses on institutional trust, governance and community relations.
- Two largest indicator improvements since 2019 (*gigabit capable broadband, financial openness*) reflect an infrastructure rollout and a foreign direct investment (FDI) stock recovery from the post-Brexit trough.
- The two largest indicator deteriorations since 2019 (*R&D spending, social housing processing*) are driven by cuts to corporate research budgets and by a widening gap between housing demand and supply.
- Northern Ireland scores highest in 2025 on *Equitable Distribution of Resources, Acceptance of the Rights of Others and Free Flow of Information*, and lowest on *Good Relations with Neighbours, High Levels of Human Capital and Trust in Institutions*.

Northern Ireland Compared with the UK and Ireland

- Northern Ireland records better outcomes than the rest of the UK on the gender pay gap, youth participation (NEET), poverty and broadband, but trails on research and development, inward investment and output per head, reflecting comparative strength on social outcomes and weakness on economic dynamism.
- Northern Ireland trails the Republic of Ireland on three of the four comparable indicators, *NEET, the gender pay gap* and *healthy life expectancy*, and is level on life satisfaction, making the Republic of Ireland a more demanding benchmark than the UK.

Local Government Districts vs Northern Ireland

- At the LGD level, negative peace and Positive Peace do not track each other. A local government council's position on one is not a reliable guide to its position on the other. For instance, Belfast records the strongest aggregate Positive Peace position and the highest concentration of recorded violence, while Derry and Strabane records the weakest Positive Peace position and some of the largest improvements on violence-related indicators since 2019.
- The gap in Positive Peace is not evenly spread across Northern Ireland: Belfast and the eastern metropolitan corridor (such as Antrim and Newtownabbey, Ards and North Down, Lisburn and Castlereagh, and Mid and East Antrim) record stronger institutional, community and infrastructure indicators, as western and rural-peripheral districts (Derry and Strabane, Fermanagh and Omagh, and Causeway Coast and Glens) carry persistent deficits on economic capacity and infrastructure.

Introduction

This report has two fundamental aims. First, it generates the first Northern Ireland Peace Index: composite measures of negative peace and Positive Peace in Northern Ireland. Drawing on measured indicators and publicly available data, it charts how negative peace and Positive Peace have changed over the 2019 to 2025 period and offers points of comparison, both internationally and across LGDs. Because the 2019 baseline predated the COVID-19 pandemic, the series captures peacefulness before that shock and tracks how it has moved since. In doing so, it offers an evidence-based means to gauge the health of the system and a statistical assessment of how the pillars of Positive Peace interrelate. Second, the Positive Peace framework offers a systems-oriented model and a systemic, forward-looking approach to peacebuilding. It provides an alternative lens through which government, civil society organisations and researchers conceptualise and analyse peace and design strategies to strengthen it.

The 1998 Agreement marked the end of sustained armed political violence in one of Western Europe's most protracted modern conflicts. Nearly three decades on, that settlement has held, but the structural, institutional and intercommunal foundations of a fully consolidated peace remain under development. Northern Ireland has come furthest on negative peace, as sustained conflict has ended, but progress on Positive Peace has been slower. It is a peace still taking shape, in its institutions, its society, and its constitutional future.

Northern Ireland's power-sharing institutions are not merely the setting for peace; their design is itself a structural determinant of it. The 1998 Agreement established consociational power-sharing, designed to manage ethno-national division by formally requiring consensus on most major decisions. The arrangement has been highly effective at reducing violence. It has also produced a structure in which political representation is largely anchored in two blocs. The Northern Ireland Assembly has been suspended on six occasions since 1998, most recently between February 2022 and February 2024. In total, Northern Ireland has been without a functioning Executive for approximately 40 per cent of the period since powers were devolved in 1999.[4]

Beneath the institutional picture, society remains divided. Belfast features more than 30 kilometres of interface barriers (commonly known as peace walls) as of 2025, more than at the time of the peace settlement and despite a Northern Ireland Executive commitment to remove all of them by 2023.[5] Approximately 90 per cent of pupils attend schools organised along religious lines, even though surveys prove that two-thirds of the population would prefer integrated education.[6] Working-class interface communities that bore the heaviest burden of the conflict from the late 1960s to 1998 remain physically separated from one another and economically peripheral to the post-1998 regeneration that has transformed central Belfast. The legacy of the conflict itself, 3,720 deaths[7] and approximately 47,540 injuries[8] between 1968 and 1998, continues to manifest in mental-health prevalence challenges around 25 per cent higher than in England, with intergenerational transmission of trauma and adverse childhood experiences documented in successive academic studies.[9]

The constitutional context has also shifted in recent years. Brexit reopened questions about Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom, given its land border with the Republic of Ireland and the new trading arrangements that followed the UK's departure from the European Union (EU).[10] Survey evidence indicates that support for Irish unification has risen over the past decade, most pronounced since Brexit, making the constitutional question more actively debated than at any other point in the post-1998 period.[11] The settlement permits a border poll if a majority appears to favour unity, a structural uncertainty that complicates long-term planning. Constitutional questions are one of several matters still under discussion, as organised paramilitary violence has not entirely disappeared: Loyalist and dissident Republican formations and criminal networks remain active, and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee has identified gaps in the region's enforcement architecture that allow paramilitary networks to operate with relative impunity.[12]

These conditions are what the Index sets out to measure. The sections that follow situate Northern Ireland's peace within the wider literature, then report the results at Northern Ireland level, in comparison with the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and at local-council level.

Situating Northern Ireland's Peace

Before setting out the framework and the findings, it is useful to place Northern Ireland's peace within the wider scholarship,[13] not to settle academic debates, but to establish what this Index is for and how its results should be read. That scholarship broadly agrees that there has been significant progress in Northern Ireland's peace landscape but is still incomplete: the 1998 Agreement ended sustained violence, yet the gap between elite-level political settlement and society-level reconciliation has proved durable. This is because peace was built to manage communal division rather than to transform it, a distinction that runs through the literature and shapes how the Index's results, particularly on community relations, should be read. Because these questions are hard to settle from the Northern Ireland case alone, much of the scholarship argues them comparatively, weighing the 1998 model against other negotiated settlements and asking how far it can be replicated. What that literature has largely diagnosed in qualitative terms, this Index sets out to measure quantitatively: whether the absence of violence now rests on structural foundations that would make it self-sustaining.

Those structural foundations have a specific institutional form: the consociational, power-sharing model established by the 1998 Agreement. The dominant theoretical lens is consociational theory, whose four design principles (grand coalition, proportionality, segmental autonomy and mutual veto) the Agreement is widely held to instantiate. The fullest statement of this view is McGarry and O'Leary's analysis, which argues that the Agreement's layered complexity, combining consociation, federacy, an inter-governmental treaty and a self-determination mechanism, represents an advance on simpler power-sharing formulas.[14]

The consensus has been debated from two directions. Donald Horowitz's analysis argues that the conditions enabling the Agreement (unusual elite consensus, strong external guarantors, and sequenced negotiation under an externally imposed deadline) are unlikely to be widely replicable, and that agreement on institutions is not evidence that those institutions are well matched to the society.[15] Other comparative work emphasises that power-sharing institutions can adapt over time through incremental formal and informal adjustment, a capacity that varies across cases.[16]

Direct comparison underscores how distinctive the Northern Ireland case is. South Africa is the parallel most often drawn, yet Guelke argues the similarities were overstated and the trajectories have since diverged: South Africa's institutions remain comparatively stable, while the 1998 Agreement still depends on favourable external conditions that Brexit has substantially altered.[17] Bosnia offers a cautionary contrast: Dayton's rigid entrenchment of three 'constituent peoples' froze ethnic categories, whereas Northern Ireland's more incremental approach allowed institutional learning over time.[18] Beyond these case-by-case comparisons, a distinct strand of literature has developed around attempts to use Northern Ireland as a template. The recurring conclusion is that the Agreement's value to comparative scholarship lies not in providing a blueprint but in raising generalisable questions about what combination of institutional design, external mediation and sequencing enables peace consolidation in deeply divided societies.[19]

The constraints on consolidation are not only institutional but financial. Research on the EU PEACE programme, Northern Ireland's largest single source of external peacebuilding funding, identifies a substantial policy implementation deficit: strict EU criteria sit awkwardly with the local context, funding has often been captured by local political interests, and implementation can compound rather than ease post-conflict divisions. The implication is that external investment, even at the scale provided by successive PEACE programmes, is not sufficient on its own to close the gap between elite settlement and society-level reconciliation.[20]

This gap is one of the most consistent findings in the survey literature: community division on social and political questions has proved durable even as violence has receded. Knox's analysis, drawing on the Northern Ireland *Life and Times Survey* (NILT), argues that community-relations policy has had limited measurable impact and may have reinforced 'bonding' social capital within communities at the expense of 'bridging' capital across them, and recommends a shift toward tackling the socio-economic inequalities common to both communities.[21] This finding connects directly to the correlation analysis in the present Index, where social-fabric indicators, are the strongest correlates of negative peace.

Flaherty and McAuley find that the shape of inequality in Northern Ireland has changed: ethno-religious gaps have narrowed since the 1970s but have been largely replaced by poverty, deprivation and insecure work.[22] The Index shows the same pattern locally: the districts where peace is least consolidated are consistently the most deprived.

Against these constraints, Carmichael and Knox offer a more positive reading: Northern Ireland's devolved system has shown a resilience and adaptability that devolution literature focused on Scotland and Wales has largely overlooked, persisting even under conditions of institutional precarity.[23]

Taken together, the comparative literature positions Northern Ireland as an important and productive case rather than a model. Its peace is best understood as incomplete in its consolidation: institutionally innovative and more stable than most comparators yet constrained by the design features that made agreement possible, including the elite-level accommodation that has not fully transcended communal identities. The gap between political settlement and social reconciliation remains the central question, and the quarter-century of peacebuilding investment has not yet closed it.[24]

Northern Ireland is also not short of peace-related monitoring. Existing work, most notably the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report, has tracked a range of social, political and security indicators and remains an important descriptive record of how the post-conflict settlement has evolved.[25] In addition, the current Programme for Government is monitored through its Wellbeing Framework, a statistical dashboard tracking quality of life and how different communities and Section 75 groups across Northern Ireland are faring.[26] The annual Good Relations Indicators report assesses the progress of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy by measuring attitudes associated with trust, inclusion, respect, and social cohesion.[27]

The contributions of this Northern Ireland Peace Index are methodological and conceptual. Rather than assembling a curated set of indicators chosen for their topical relevance, the NIPI applies the Institute for Economics & Peace's empirically derived negative peace and Positive Peace frameworks, in which indicators are selected for their association with peacefulness, and reads them through a systems lens that treats the eight pillars as an interacting whole. It also measures peace across the 11 districts, a resolution that region-wide monitoring cannot offer. Where possible, it also benchmarks Northern Ireland against the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland, giving each reading the maximum available comparative relevance. The aim is to complement existing measures with a structural, evidence-based and spatially disaggregated account of where the foundations of peace are strongest and weakest. Beyond measurement, the framework and its associated systems thinking offer a new lens for understanding peacefulness.

Putting that lens to work, rather than to settle the scholarly debates above, is the task of the rest of the report. The Northern Ireland Peace Index is the first sustained attempt to measure peace in Northern Ireland empirically, across both of these dimensions and at both regional and local-authority level, rather than to settle the scholarly debates rehearsed above. The framework that follows defines those two dimensions, negative peace and Positive Peace, and sets out how each is measured.

Framework

Peace is not a single condition. Johan Galtung's foundational insight, first set out in 1969, distinguishes two related dimensions of peace: negative peace and Positive Peace.[28] IEP has built on this conceptual framing, defining negative peace as the *absence of violence and the fear of violence* and Positive Peace as the *attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies*.

Negative peace captures what is absent; Positive Peace captures whether the conditions that make that absence durable are in place. This distinction is often explained with a medical analogy: just because a person is not sick, does not necessarily mean they are healthy. Positive Peace is transformational because it shifts the focus away from an emphasis on the relative absence of violence towards a description of the necessary conditions for peace and society to flourish. It is also conceptually related to many constructive aspects of social development.

One of the distinguishing features of IEP's framework of Positive Peace is that it is empirically derived. This provides an evidence-based approach to conceptualising and measuring Positive Peace. The Positive Peace framework was derived over years of IEP research using statistical analysis of almost 50,000 social, political and economic indicators to empirically capture the specific factors most strongly associated with peaceful and resilient societies. Through this process, IEP identified eight pillars of Positive Peace that form the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. It is this Positive Peace framework that underpins the NIPI.

The expert panel and public consultations pointed to the dimensions of peace that matter most in Northern Ireland, in particular the quality of relations between communities and the level of trust in public institutions. These priorities are reflected in the pillar adaptations made for the analysis in the Northern Ireland Peace Index.

Negative Peace

Negative peace is measured through two complementary types of indicators: recorded indicators of violence (homicide, violent and weapon crime, public disorder, hate-motivated incidents, paramilitary-style activity), and survey-based indicators of the fear of violence (the share of the population that reports worrying about crime). Together, these capture both the experience and the perception of violence in the region. The NIPI applies this framework through six indicators, drawing on the same conceptual structure as IEP's Global Peace Index (which has measured negative peace at country level since 2007) and its national adaptations: the Mexico, United Kingdom, United States and German Peace Indices. The NIPI uses indicators selected for their relevance to the Northern Ireland context (Table 1).

The composite covers the period 2016 to 2025; most indicators are available from 2005 or earlier, while paramilitary activity and worry about crime begin in 2016. All six follow a 'lower = better' direction, where higher recorded incidents or reported worry indicate worse outcomes.

TABLE 1

Northern Ireland Negative Peace, Indicator Structure

Negative peace measures violence and the fear of violence across six indicators.

Indicator	Description
Homicide	Recorded murders, manslaughters, corporate manslaughters, and infanticides per 100,000 population.
Violent and Weapon Crime	Recorded violence with injury, and weapon-possession offences
Public Disorder	Public order offences per 100,000 population
Hate Crime	Race-, sectarian-, and sexual-orientation-motivated incidents
Paramilitary Activity	Composite of security situation incidents (deaths, shootings, bombing incidents, casualties, and arrests)
Worry about Crime	Per cent of adults reporting a high level of worry about crime

Source: IEP

Positive Peace Global Framework

Positive Peace is defined as the *attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies* (Figure 4). The same factors also lead to many other desirable socio-economic outcomes. Higher levels of Positive Peace are statistically linked to greater income growth, better environmental outcomes, higher levels of well-being, better developmental outcomes, and stronger societal resilience.

FIGURE 4

What is Positive Peace?

Positive Peace is a complementary concept to negative peace.



The Pillars of Positive Peace

Positive Peace is based on eight key factors, or Pillars, that describe the workings of the socio-economic system:

Acceptance of the Rights of Others – Peaceful countries often have formal laws that guarantee basic human rights and freedoms, and informal social and cultural norms that relate to the behaviours of citizens.

Equitable Distribution of Resources – Peaceful countries tend to ensure equity in access to resources such as education, health, and economic opportunity.

Free Flow of Information – Free and independent media disseminates information in a way that leads to greater knowledge and helps individuals, businesses and civil society make better decisions. This results in better outcomes and more effective responses in times of crisis.

Good Relations with Neighbours – Peaceful relations with other countries are as important as good relations between groups within a country. Countries with positive external relations are more peaceful and tend to be more politically stable, have better functioning governments, are regionally integrated and have lower levels of organised internal conflict.

High Levels of Human Capital – A skilled human capital base reflects the extent to which societies educate citizens and promote the development of knowledge, thereby improving economic productivity, care for the young, and promotion of political participation and social capital.

Low Levels of Corruption – In societies with high levels of corruption, resources are inefficiently allocated, often leading to a lack of funding for essential services. Low corruption can enhance confidence and trust in institutions.

Sound Business Environment – The strength of economic conditions as well as the formal institutions that support the operation of the private sector. Business competitiveness and economic productivity are both associated with the most peaceful countries.

Well-Functioning Government – A well-functioning government delivers high-quality public and civil services, engenders trust and participation, demonstrates political stability and upholds the rule of law.

The eight Pillars interact systemically. High levels of Positive Peace occur when attitudes make violence less tolerated, institutions are resilient and responsive to society's needs, and structures enable the nonviolent resolution of grievances.

The global Positive Peace Index draws on 24 indicators of socio-economic development from reputable public sources, covering 163 nations and 99.7 per cent of the world's population. Each indicator is selected for its high correlation with the relative absence of violence and fear of violence, as measured by the GPI score.

Positive Peace is therefore an evidence-based measure of what underpins the absence of violence: it captures the structural conditions empirically associated with peaceful societies, rather than setting out a normative list of peace objectives to be achieved. This distinguishes it from outcome-based conceptions of peace, which start from a desired end-state.

Each indicator is allocated to a Pillar according to the nature of the information it conveys. The indicators are harmonised in their directionality: scores close to 5 indicate less socio-economic resilience, and scores close to 1 indicate more. A fuller discussion of the indicators, concepts, methodology and global results can be found in the 2024 Positive Peace Report.[29]

Positive Peace and Systems Thinking

A core feature of the Positive Peace framework is its grounding in systems thinking, an approach to analysing complex phenomena that focuses on the network of relationships within a system rather than on its parts in isolation. Derived from the study of biological, ecological and mechanical systems, it has been applied across fields ranging from public health and urban planning to manufacturing logistics. Its strength lies in revealing the patterns, interdependencies and feedback loops that linear, reductionist analysis tends to miss. Positive Peace applies this lens by treating societies as systems whose performance reflects the interaction of the eight Pillars. A change in one Pillar, such as an improvement in government functioning, tends to ripple across the others, and the strength of the system as a whole determines its resilience to shocks.[30]

For Northern Ireland, the practical implication is that Positive Peace depends less on any single Pillar than on the interaction between them: improvements in cross-community relations, trust in institutions and human capital reinforce one another over time, while a weakness in one Pillar can offset gains in others. A systems view, reading the Pillars and domains together rather than in isolation, is therefore the appropriate lens for assessing how Positive Peace is evolving across Northern Ireland and its 11 LGDs. This is why a high score on one Pillar cannot be read as peace in itself, and why the report reads the indicators relationally, through the correlation analysis that identifies which structural conditions move with the absence of violence, and the council-level analysis that shows how the same Pillars combine differently across districts. These interdependencies are structural and slow-moving: the systems lens describes how the conditions for peace hold together to create a system that does not respond within short policy cycles.

Applying the Framework to Northern Ireland

The NIPI applies the global Positive Peace framework to the Northern Ireland context, adapting its concepts and indicators to match local conditions as closely as the available data allow (see Indicator Selection in the Methodology). Because Positive Peace takes different forms across Northern Ireland's varied geographies, the framework is also tailored so that the Index can speak directly to each of them.

With this in mind, two of the eight Pillars have been reframed in the sub-territorial analysis to reflect what matters most for Positive Peace in Northern Ireland (Figure 5). First, the *Good Relations with Neighbours* Pillar, conceived globally as the quality of relations between states, is operationalised here as the quality of relations between communities, capturing cross-community contact, intergroup attitudes and the use of shared space within Northern Ireland.[31] The *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* Pillar describes relations across society more broadly. As such, both of these contain indicators that collectively capture the quality of social relations. Second, the *Low Levels of Corruption* Pillar is reframed as *Trust in Institutions*. While corruption and institutional trust are closely related, where corruption is high, trust tends to fall, trust is the more sensitive measure in this context, capturing public confidence in the devolved government and the criminal justice system, together with the extent to which communities remain free from non-state paramilitary influence. Both adjustments preserve the global framework's conceptual structure while capturing what is most relevant to the Northern Ireland setting (Table 2). These adaptations build on prior discovery-phase work by Andrew Thomson for the Northern Ireland Executive Office on a refreshed approach to good relations under the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy, which provided the conceptual starting point for adapting Positive Peace to the Northern Ireland context.[32]

FIGURE 5

Northern Ireland Positive Peace Framework

All eight pillars are highly interconnected and interact in complex ways.

Well-functioning Government

A well-functioning government delivers high-quality public and civil services, engenders participation, demonstrates political stability, and upholds the rule of law.

Sound Business Environment

The strength of economic conditions and the formal institutions that support the private sector. Business competitiveness and economic productivity are both associated with the most peaceful countries.

Equitable Distribution of Resources

Peaceful countries tend to ensure equity in access to resources such as education and health, and, to a lesser extent, equity in income distribution.



Trust in Institutions

Public trust in government, the justice system and local institutions underpins institutional legitimacy, cooperation and societal resilience.

Free Flow of Information

Free and independent media disseminates information in a way that builds knowledge and helps individuals, businesses and civil society make better decisions, leading to better outcomes and more rational responses in times of crisis.

Acceptance of the Rights of Others

Peaceful countries often have formal laws guaranteeing basic human rights and freedoms, alongside the informal social and cultural norms that relate to the behaviours of citizens.

Good Relations with Neighbours

Good relations between communities reflect the extent to which people from different backgrounds interact regularly, share public spaces and exhibit mutual favourability. Strong inter-community relations reduce divisions, foster cooperation, and build the social cohesion necessary for a peaceful and resilient society.

High Levels of Human Capital

A skilled human capital base reflects the extent to which societies educate citizens and promote the development of knowledge, thereby improving economic productivity, care for the young, political participation and social capital.

Adapted for the Northern Ireland context

Source: IEP

TABLE 2

Northern Ireland Positive Peace, Pillars and Indicators

Positive Peace spans eight pillars and 24 indicators of the structural foundations of peace.

Pillar	Indicators
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Gender Pay Gap; Perceived Discrimination; Social Exclusion
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Poverty; Primary Healthcare Access; Life Satisfaction
Free Flow of Information	Gigabit Capable Broadband; Trust in Media; Media Impartiality
Good Relations with Neighbours	School Segregation Index; Favourability Towards Other Community; Cross-Community Socialising Frequency
High Levels of Human Capital	Healthy Life Expectancy; R&D Spending; NEET Rate
Sound Business Environment	GDP per Capita; Financial Openness; Planning Decision Efficiency
Trust in Institutions	Confidence in Justice System; Trust in NI Assembly; Non-state Controlling Influence
Well-functioning Government	Prosecutorial Independence; Public Appointments Parity; Social Housing Processing

Source: IEP

BOX 1:

How to Read the Scores

Scores range from 1 to 5, where 1 represents the most peaceful outcome and 5 the least peaceful; a lower score indicates greater peace. Change in the composite and pillar scores is reported as the change in the score itself, in points, with the percentage change given alongside as additional information. In both cases a fall denotes an improvement in peace and a rise a deterioration.

The Index comprises two components: negative peace, which measures the absence of violence and the fear of violence, and Positive Peace, which measures the attitudes, institutions, and structures that sustain peace over time.

Scores should be interpreted in the context of their long-run trend rather than as a single-year snapshot, as year-on-year fluctuations can obscure underlying patterns.

Scores are derived from recorded data and should therefore be read with appropriate caution, as they reflect the influence of reporting practices in addition to actual levels. Thus, the LGD composite provides directional context on a council's position specific to those particular indicators, rather than a reading across all dimensions of the framework. The LGD composite for negative peace is not affected: all six indicators are available at LGD level..

Scores are calculated internally to this Index and are not directly comparable with the scores of other countries or other indices. Some underlying indicators may be broadly comparable across sources where they draw on standardised measures, but the composite scores themselves should not be compared or converted between indices.

A full description of the indicators, data sources and calculation method is provided in the Methodology appendix.

Negative Peace in Northern Ireland

Results

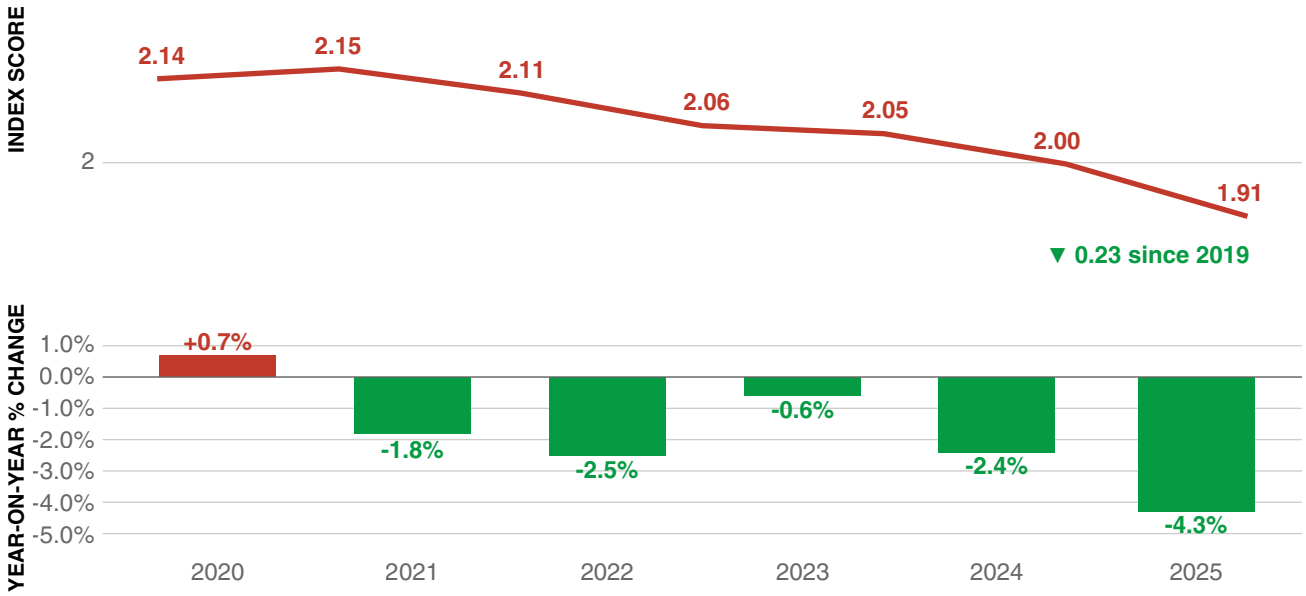
Levels of negative peace in Northern Ireland have reached their best point since the start of the Index. The negative peace score decreased from 2.14 in 2019 to 1.91 in 2025 on the 1 to 5 scale, an improvement of 0.23 points, or 10.7 per cent. This marks five consecutive years of improvement. The only interruption since 2019 was a deterioration in 2020, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 6).

The improvement is broad-based. Between 2019 and 2025, five of the six negative peace indicators improved, with the largest falls in *homicide* and *paramilitary activity*; *hate crime* was the only one to deteriorate over this period. These few reversals are confined to particular time windows. *Homicide* rose modestly in the past year from its 2024 series low. *Violent and weapon crime*, the sole deteriorating indicator over the longer 2015–2025 period, has since turned around, falling 5.5 per cent in the past year and 3.5 per cent since 2019 (Table 3).

FIGURE 6

Northern Ireland Negative Peace Score, 2019–2025

The score improved in every year but one, reaching the lowest level recorded in 2025.



Source: IEP

TABLE 3

Change in Negative Peace Indicators, 2019–2025

Five of six indicators improved between 2019 and 2025. In the past year, four indicators improved on the underlying score and homicide and hate crime rose modestly from the series low recorded in 2024.

Indicator	2019	2025	Score change, 2019–2025	Change, 2019–2025 (%)	Score change, past year
Hate crime	1.79	2.0	+0.21	+21.5	+0.06
Homicide	1.83	1.43	–0.40	–47.9	+0.09
Paramilitary activity	1.64	1.35	–0.29	–44.7	–0.19
Public disorder	1.89	1.86	–0.03	–2.6	–0.10
Violent and weapon crime	2.65	2.57	–0.08	–3.5	–0.13
Worry about crime	3.01	2.26	–0.76	–30.0	-0.25

Source: IEP calculations

Figure 7 shows how each of the negative peace indicators has moved over the 10-year period from 2015 to 2025.

Hate Crime

In recorded terms, *hate crime* rose 5.5 per cent in the past year and is the only negative peace indicator that sits above its 2019 level, 21.5 per cent higher than in 2019. Against a negative peace set in which every other indicator improved, it is the standout deteriorating indicator. The composition behind the headline has also shifted. Sectarian incidents, historically the dominant category, have fallen over the past decade, from 1,044 in 2015 to 588 in 2025. Racially motivated incidents have moved in the opposite direction, rising from 916 in 2015 to 1,188 in 2025, the highest annual total since the series began in 2 (Figure 8).

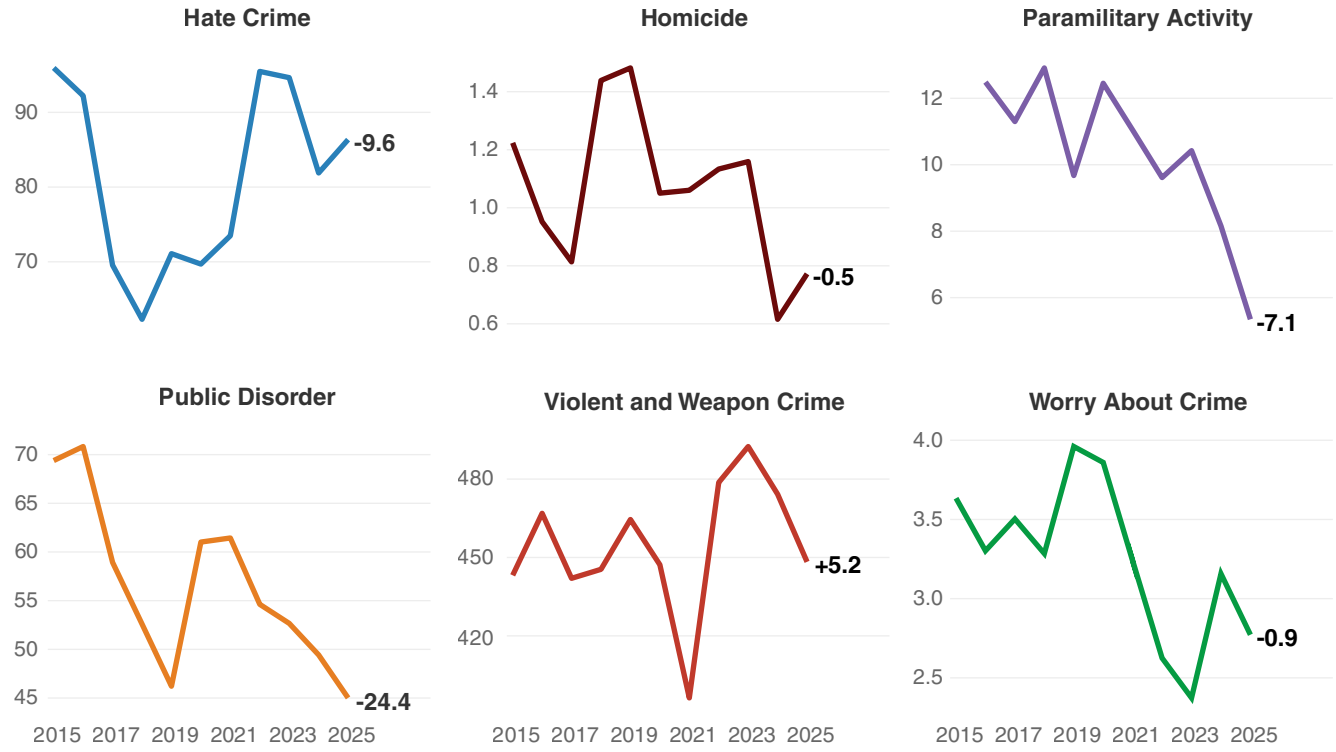
The 2025 total for racially motivated incidents is the highest recorded since the series began in 2005, surpassing the previous peak of 933 in 2022. Sexual-orientation incidents, by contrast, were broadly flat across the decade, 219 in 2025 against 201 in 2019, although their share of the total rose as sectarian incidents fell.

A further dimension of harm sits outside the sectarian, racial and sexual-orientation categories recorded here: violence against women and girls (VAWG). The official records show 21,729 VAWG offences (female victims of violence against the person and sexual offences) in the 12 months to July 2025, a 4.0 per cent fall on the previous year, and domestic abuse ran at roughly 15 to 16 incidents per 1,000 population across 2025.[33] VAWG is among the most prevalent forms of everyday violence in Northern Ireland, yet it is only partially reflected in recorded statistics. Between January 2019 and July 2025, 36 women and girls in Northern Ireland were killed by men.[34] Although violence against women and girls is not one of the Index's indicators, it belongs in any serious discussion of peace: a society can see sectarian and communal violence recede while women continue to face violence in everyday life. It is included here as context for that reason.

FIGURE 7

Northern Ireland Negative Peace Indicators, 2015–2025

Five out of six indicators improved from their 2015 starting point, with the exception of violent and weapon crime.

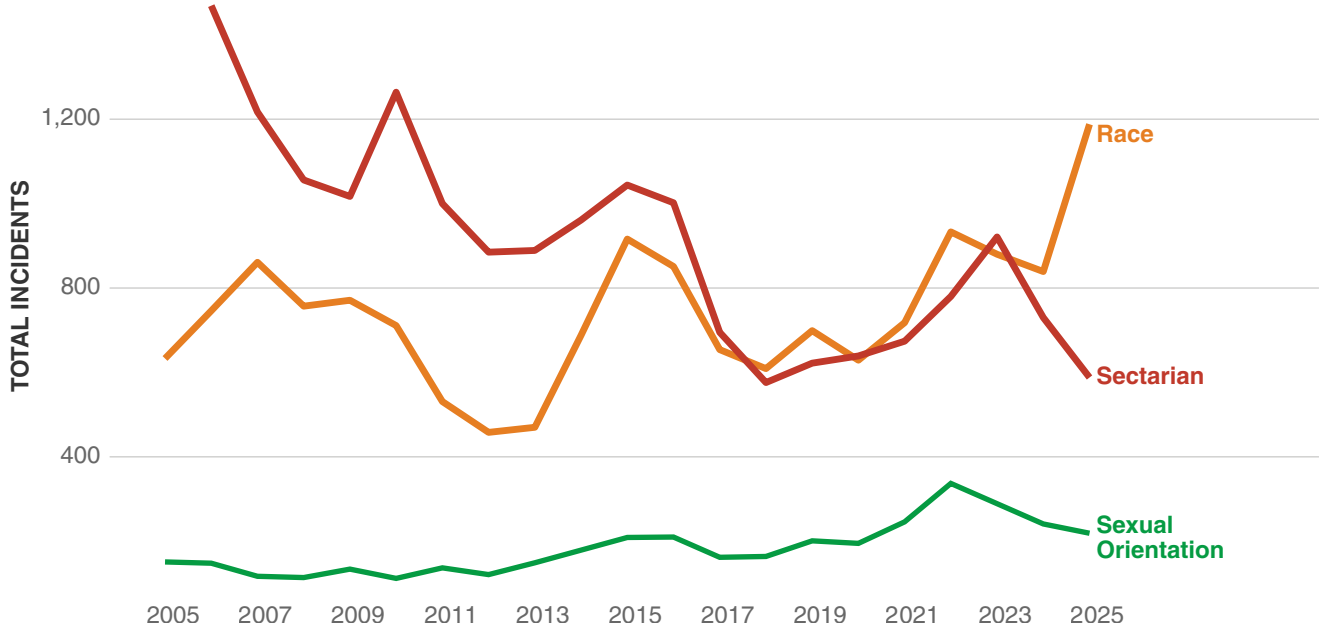


Sources: PSNI Police Recorded Crime Statistics; PSNI Security Situation Statistics; NISRA NI Safe Community Survey, IEP calculations.

FIGURE 8

Hate Crime Incidents in Northern Ireland by Motivation, 2005–2025

By 2022, racially motivated hate crimes surpassed those motivated by sectarian prejudice, marking a compositional shift in the nature of recorded hate crime in Northern Ireland.



Source: PSNI Hate Motivation, IEP calculations.

Homicide

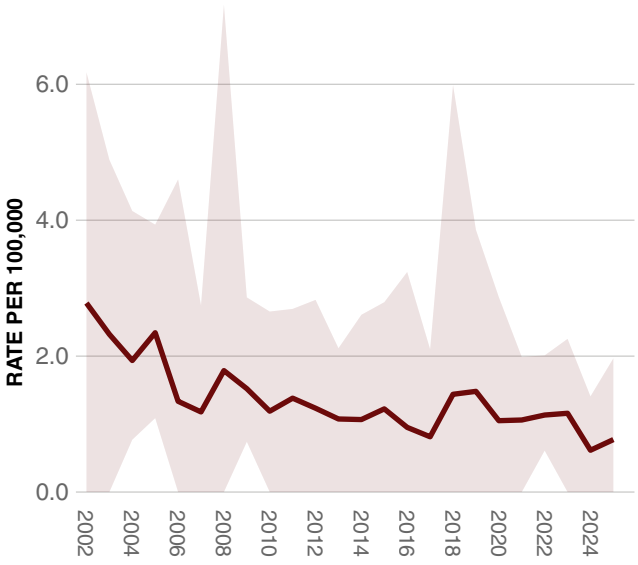
Homicide was the one of the two indicators to deteriorate in the past year. The rate rose from 0.6 to 0.8 per 100,000 population, although the 2025 reading remains close to half the 2019 level of 1.5 and is consistent with the long-run downward trajectory observed across the series. There were 13 recorded *homicides* in 2024, the lowest count since the start of the published recorded crime series in 1998/99, before rising to 16 in 2025. The single-year movement is small in absolute terms and within the year-on-year volatility historically observed in Northern Ireland's homicide series, where annual counts have moved by five or more incidents in either direction in seven of the past 10 years.

Set against the long arc of the post-Troubles period, the 2025 rate of 0.8 per 100,000 is roughly three-quarters below the 2.8 recorded in 2002 (Figure 9). The decline has not been even: the rate rose between 2018 and 2019, again in 2022, and most recently between 2024 and 2025. In each prior episode the rise was followed by a return to the long-run downward trajectory. Council-level dispersion has narrowed in parallel. In 2025, no council recorded a rate above three homicides per 100,000, compared to five councils above that threshold in 2002.

FIGURE 9

Homicide Rate in Northern Ireland, 2002–2025

After reaching a series low of 0.6 per 100,000 in 2024, the rate rose modestly in 2025 but remains around half of the 2019 level, and roughly three-quarters below the 2002 starting point.



Source: PSNI Police Recorded Crime, IEP calculations.
Note: The shaded band shows the range between the lowest and highest local government district rate in each year.

Paramilitary Activity

Paramilitary activity recorded the second-largest improvement of any indicator over the Index period, with the raw rate falling by 34.4 per cent in the past year and normalised score by 44.7 per cent since 2019. The indicator captures multiple dimensions of paramilitary activity, including deaths, shootings, bombing incidents, casualties, and arrests under the Terrorism Act, to capture the prevalence, intensity and changing nature of the violence. In 2024, 17 paramilitary-style shooting incidents and six bombings were recorded, the lowest combined total for those two categories since comparable records began. On the Index's composite measure the record low came the following year, with the rate falling to 5.35 in 2025.

Alongside this fall in the overall rate, the composition of the indicator has also shifted. Paramilitary-style assaults, historically the larger sub-category by count, fell from 56 incidents in 2015 to 26 in 2024; shootings fell from 30 to 17 over the same period (Figure 10). The decline is equally evident in the activity's reach. Geographic concentration has narrowed: in 2024, three councils, Belfast, Derry and Strabane, and Mid and East Antrim, accounted for over two-thirds of all recorded incidents. Terrorism Act arrests also show a clear long-run decline, falling from a peak of 359 in 2003 to a record low of 67 in 2024, with a sustained downward trend since 2019. In March 2024, the Security Service (MI5) reduced the Northern Ireland-related terrorism threat level from severe to substantial, its lowest level since 2010, citing 'the commitment of communities from across Northern Ireland to build a safer place to live and work'.[35]

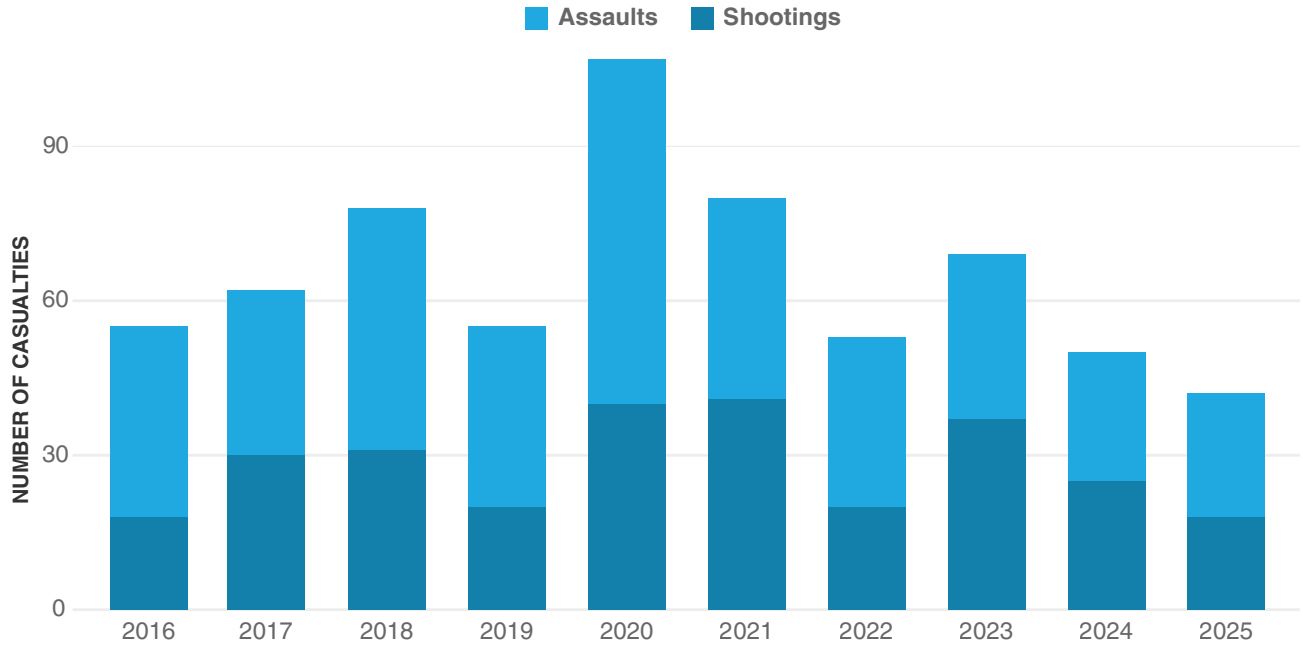
While levels of paramilitary violence have declined significantly, the reduction in violent incidents alone does not capture the full extent to which paramilitary organisations continue to exert influence over communities. The Independent Reporting Commission (IRC), established under the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement,[36] which monitors progress toward ending paramilitary activity, described the trajectory as 'mixed' in its seventh report but noted that 'interventions through the Executive Programme, alongside policing and criminal justice measures, are having a tangible effect on communities where paramilitaries operate'.[37] To account for this, the Positive Peace indicator of *non-state controling influence* measures the proportion of adults who report that paramilitary groups have a controlling influence in their area.

The fragility of the security environment was underlined in 2026. In April, a car bomb in a hijacked vehicle exploded outside Dunmurry police station near Belfast, followed by a similar attempted car bombing at another station in the area.[38] Dissident Republican activity remains small relative to the paramilitary organisations of the Troubles, but it is sufficient to keep the indicator moving year-on-year in ways that the longer trend does not anticipate.

FIGURE 10

Paramilitary-style Shooting and Assault Casualties, 2016–2025

Shootings and assaults have fallen in tandem since 2020.



Source: PSNI Security Situation, IEP calculations.

Public Disorder

Public disorder fell by 2.6 per cent between 2019 and 2025 and by 8.9 per cent in the past year, with most of the decline concentrated in the past year alone. At 975 offences, the 2025 *public disorder* total is the lowest full-year figure since the published series began in 2002 (Figure 11). Offences peaked at 2,007 in 2006 and again reached 1,995 in 2010, before falling by roughly half since then. The series has been shaped by episodic spikes, most notably the 2010 high associated with parading-related disorder, and a 2020–2021 uptick of around 30 per cent coinciding with the pandemic and post-Brexit era.[39]

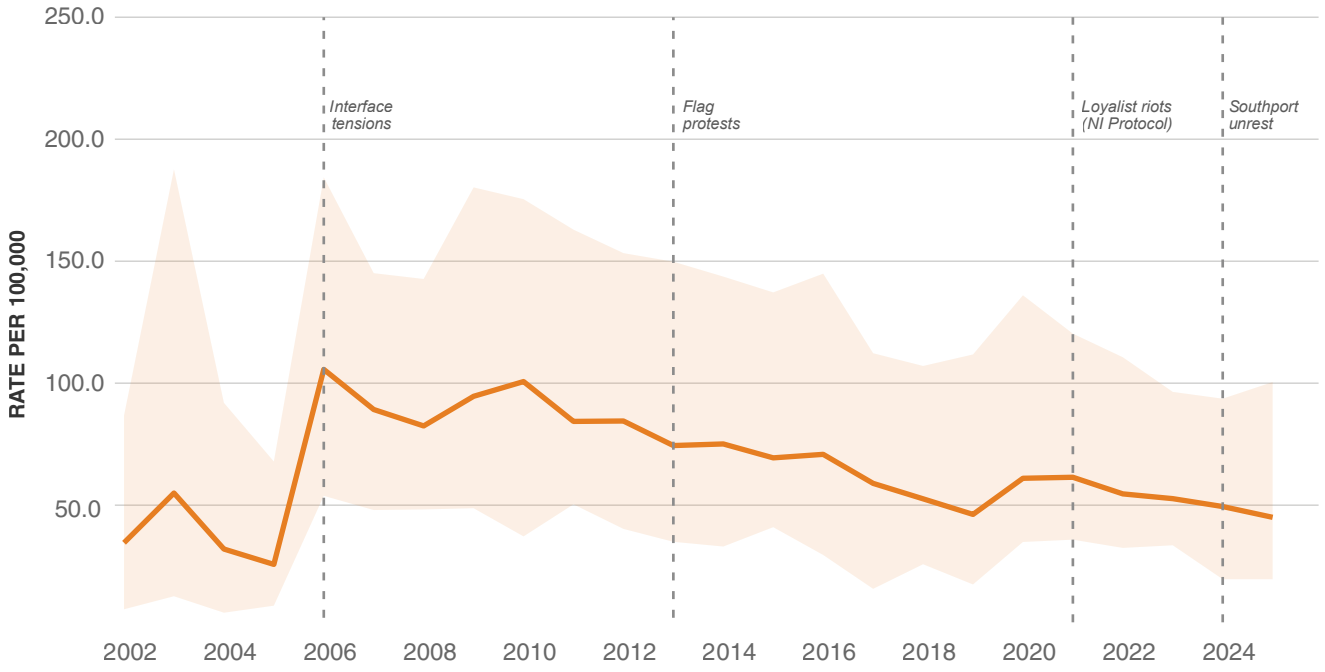
Underlying this is a change in the character of *public disorder* in Northern Ireland. Sectarian flashpoint protests, long the dominant contributor to the indicator, have diminished in frequency and scale. They have been partially replaced by anti-immigration demonstrations fuelled by online misinformation,[40] most prominently a series of protests and associated violence across Belfast in August 2024.[41] Forty-nine arrests were made over the course of those events, during which around 20 officers were injured, and paramilitary groups were identified as 'an element' of the disorder.[42] This was followed by significant public disturbances in Ballymena in the summer of 2025 and in Belfast in June 2026. These instances of public disorder revealed how mobilisation can occur across communities around shared grievances and how digital platforms have become an important means of organising and amplifying disorder. These developments suggest that although sectarianism remains a defining feature of Northern Ireland's social landscape, racism may be becoming an increasingly significant risk to social cohesion. This represents a challenge for community relations policies, which face growing pressure to respond to emerging tensions that cut across longer term ethno-national community divisions.

Geographically, Belfast City accounted for the largest share of 2025 disorder incidents at council level, 36 per cent of the total and more than three and a half times the next highest LGD. Derry and Strabane and Newry, Mourne and Down recorded the second and third highest totals respectively, while the lowest rates were recorded in Mid Ulster and Fermanagh and Omagh. Belfast's share is disproportionate even accounting for its population size. Over the full recorded series since 2002, the council has accounted for roughly 40 per cent of all *public disorder* incidents in Northern Ireland, some 10,569 incidents, more than three times the next highest LGD (Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, at 3,237).

FIGURE 11

Public Disorder Incidents in Northern Ireland by Month, 2002–2025

Public disorder can rise sharply over short periods, even as the overall trend has declined since 2019.



Source: PSNI Police Recorded Crime, IEP calculations.
Note: The shaded band shows the range between the lowest and highest local government district rate in each year.

Violent and Weapon Crime

Violent and weapon crime fell by 3.5 per cent between 2019 and 2025, having recorded a small net rise of 1.2 per cent over the longer 2015–2025 stretch. Recorded violence-against-the-person rose over the period, partly reflecting new stalking (Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022) and coercive control (Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021, recorded from February 2022) offences, added to the expanded Stalking and Harassment classification from 2022 rather than a straightforward increase in violent behaviour.[43] The indicator, however, fell by 5.5 per cent in the past year, consistent with the overall recorded crime total, which fell by 3.3 per cent in 2025 to 93,529 offences, the lowest total since the start of the recorded crime series in 1999.

Recorded violent crime in Northern Ireland has been broadly stable since 2019, with 17,820 offences in 2019 and 17,921 in 2025. That stability masks a pandemic-shaped trajectory in between: offences fell to a trough of 15,128 in 2021 under pandemic-period suppression, rebounded to a post-pandemic peak of 19,330 in 2023, and have fallen in the two years since to return close to the 2019 level.

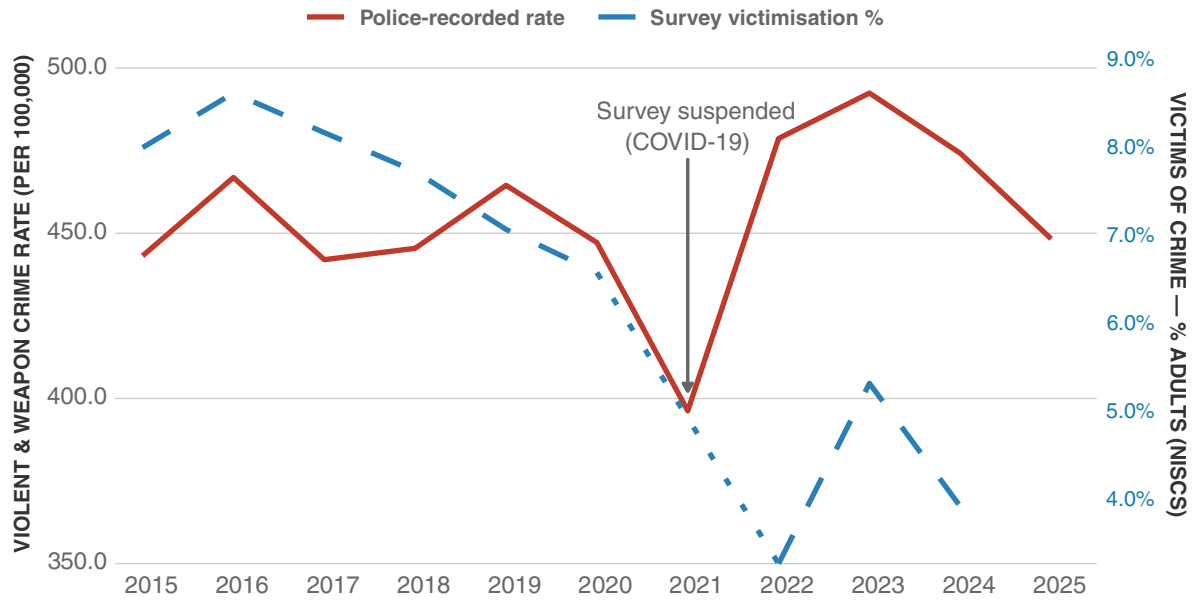
The survey-based measure tells the same story. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Safe Community Survey records self-reported victimisation falling from 5.8 per cent in 2022/23 to 4.5 per cent in 2024/25, the same downward movement seen in the police-recorded figures. Two independent data streams moving together strengthen the reading that the long-run rise in recorded crime has plateaued rather than resumed (Figure 12).

One indicator runs against this picture: possession of weapons offences have roughly doubled since 2013, reaching 1,331 in 2024 before a slight fall to 1,201 in 2025.[44] Set in the wider frame, however, Northern Ireland continued to record the lowest crime rate of any UK police-force area in 2025, at 50.6 recorded crimes per 1,000 population.[45]

FIGURE 12

Recorded Violent Crime and Self-reported Victimisation in Northern Ireland, 2015–2025

Recorded violent crime has returned to its 2019 level after peaking in 2023, and self-reported victimisation has fallen alongside it.



Sources: PSNI Police Recorded Crime Statistics; NISRA NI Safe Community Survey (INDCRIMELGD), NISCS financial year mapped to end year; victimisation = mean across 11 LGDs, IEP calculations.

Worry about Crime

Worry about crime improved in the past year, falling to a score of 2.26 in 2025 from the 2024 figure of 2.50, which had itself risen from the 2023 low of 2.00. The long-run direction remains positive: the 2025 score is 25 per cent below the 2019 figure of 3.01. In the most recent NISRA Safe Community Survey, around one in 12 (8 per cent) respondents expressed a high level of worry about violent crime and the same proportion about burglary.

Demographic disaggregation in the data series shows that the rise was sharper among women than men and sharper among respondents in the most-deprived quintile than in the least-deprived quintile.[46] The rise of worry about crime was not accompanied by an increase in self-reported victimisation: 4.5 per cent of respondents reported being a victim of at least one measured crime in the 2024 survey, down from 5.8 per cent in 2023 (Figure 13).

Trends

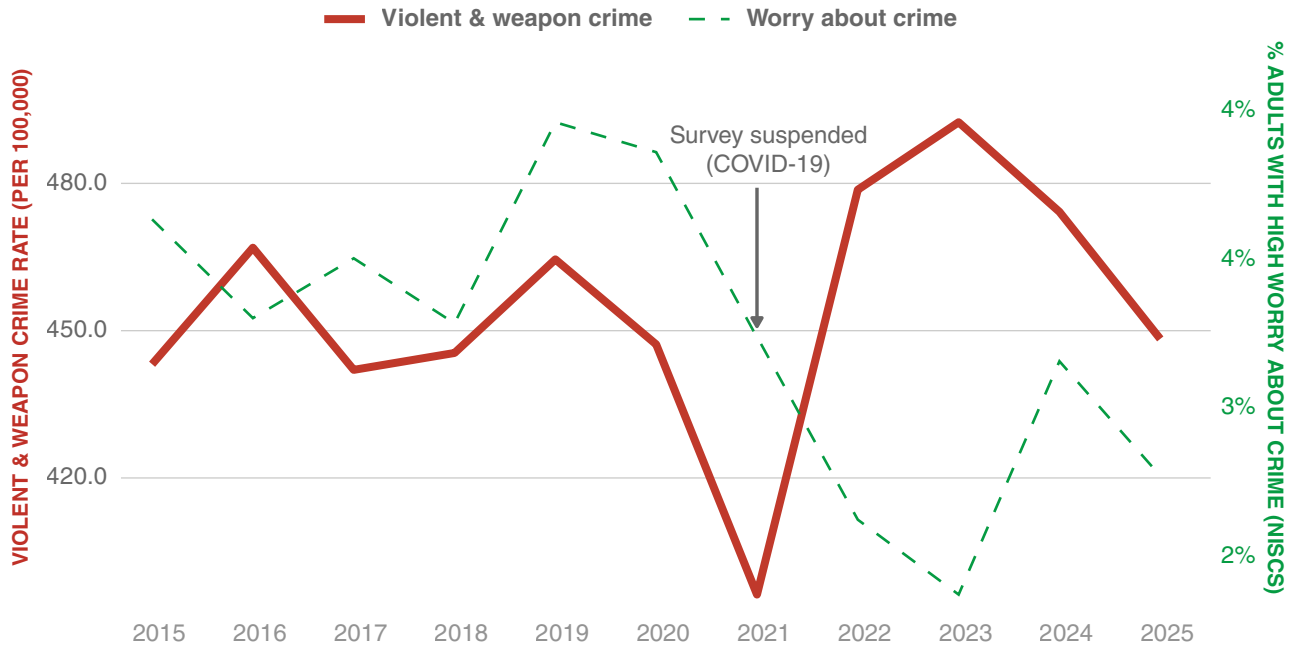
The results for negative peace in Northern Ireland in 2025 show the highest level since the start of the series. The trajectory is best understood against the long arc of the post-Troubles period since the 1998 Agreement in which the signatories committed to 'exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues', together with the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and the normalisation of security arrangements.[47] The improvement the Index registered across the past six years reflects a continuation of that long-run shift. Five inter-related dynamics account for the bulk of the cross-indicator improvement and explain why the pattern of violence in Northern Ireland is changing in form even as it falls in volume.

The first is the reorientation of paramilitarism. The IRC reported in its eighth substantive report that 2024/25 was the first year since 1969 in which there were no deaths in Northern Ireland attributable to the security situation.[48] It has, however, warned that paramilitaries have not disappeared; they persist, but their function has shifted. These structures are now used primarily to facilitate organised crime, coercive control and intimidation rather than politically framed violence.[49] For instance, reports show that the killing of Kevin Conway in Belfast in January 2024, the sole security-related death recorded that year, was linked to an organised-crime group rather than to a paramilitary campaign.[50] As the composite score continues to improve, the distinction between the paramilitary activity measured within negative peace and Positive Peace will become an increasingly important question.

FIGURE 13

Worry about Crime Score and Self-reported Victimisation, 2015–2025

Worry about crime fell to its lowest level since 2015 despite police-recorded violent and weapon crimes reaching their highest point in the same period. In the past four years, they tend to move in tandem.



Sources: PSNI Police Recorded Crime Statistics; NISRA NI Safe Community Survey (INDWORACLGD), Mean across 11 LGDs; worry survey suspended 2020/21 (COVID-19), IEP calculations.

The second dynamic is the partial reconfiguration of the drivers of public disorder. The historical drivers were sectarian flashpoints, parading disputes and interface violence, all of which have diminished in frequency and scale across the Index period. They have been partially displaced by mobilisations that originate outside the ethno-national or sectarian frame, most prominently the 'anti-immigration' racist disturbances. The hate-crime series captures the same shift in net terms: race-motivated incidents have surpassed sectarian incidents in the most recent 12-month total and are continuing to rise in absolute terms. The implication is not that overall social tension has fallen, but that the grievances which mobilise public violence are being reconfigured. However, the institutional response remains oriented towards the legacy of paramilitary activity rather than these emergent tensions. This raises important questions about policy readiness and whether existing community-relations frameworks and programmes are sufficiently able to anticipate and respond to new challenges to social cohesion that cut across traditional sectarian divisions.

The third dynamic is the role of online mobilisation in compressing the lead time between triggering event and on-street disorder. The August 2024 Belfast disturbances and those in summer 2025 illustrate a wider shift in how disorder is organised in Northern Ireland. The result was a short-duration, high-intensity event that did not register as an annual spike in the offence count but produced measurable movement in single-month and survey-based indicators. This pattern also compresses the lead time between a triggering event and on-street mobilisation and increases the cross-jurisdictional reach of organising networks. Paramilitary groups are often 'an element' in the disturbances rather than their primary organisers, suggesting that this infrastructure is now being opportunistically mobilised within events that originate outside it.[51] If sustained, as the June 2025 incidents suggest, this pattern will increase the volatility of the public disorder indicator (Figure 11) and may produce sharper short-run movements in *worry about crime* (Figure 13) related to news-cycle exposure.

The fourth dynamic is the decoupling of perceived harm from experienced harm. The 2024 rise in *worry about crime*, which held in 2025, was not accompanied by a rise in self-reported victimisation. The most plausible mechanism is heightened exposure to news of disorder and of rising racial hate crime, rather than a change in underlying risk. The implication is that the perception indicator and the police-recorded indicators may move in opposite directions for sustained periods, with consequences for both interpretation and forecasting.

The fifth dynamic is the long-running divergence between police-recorded and survey-based measures. As recording practice continues to evolve, the difference between the police and survey streams will be a recurring interpretive issue for both the violent and weapon crime indicator and the hate-crime series.

Taken together, these dynamics suggest that the headline improvement in negative peace in Northern Ireland is not a one-off result. It reflects a slow-moving structural change, in which the volume of violence has declined sharply while the form taken by residual harm is characterised by organised crime, migration-related disorder and cross-jurisdictional online mobilisation.

Positive Peace in Northern Ireland

Trends Since 2019

Northern Ireland's overall Positive Peace score improved from 2.48 in 2019 to 2.45 in 2025 (a fall of 0.03 score points on the 1 to5 scale, or 1.2 per cent). It recorded the sharpest single-year improvement in 2024 reversing the deterioration recorded in 2023, the year after the collapse of the Stormont Executive. The 2025 reading is the second strongest in the series, but the year-on-year direction is one of partial reversal rather than continued improvement (Figure 14).

The headline number conceals substantial change in the underlying composition. Of the eight Positive Peace pillars, four have improved since 2019 and four have deteriorated. The region's net stability is the product of considerable gains on material and rights pillars offsetting losses on institutional, governance and community-relations. The position in 2025 is therefore not the same recorded in 2019: it rests on changing foundations, with infrastructure and equity contributing more, and institutional trust and inter-communal relations contributing less.

Pillar-Level Change Since 2019

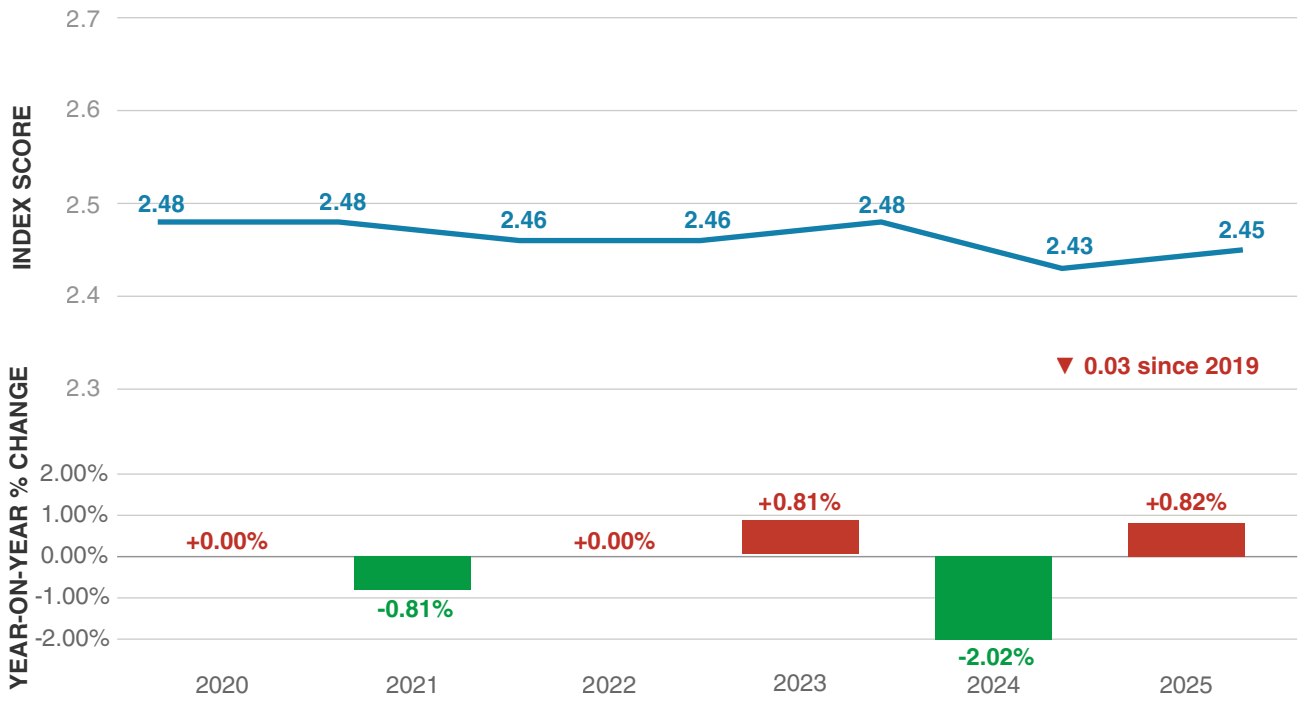
Free Flow of Information records the largest improvement of any pillar since 2019, with its pillar score falling 0.77 points, from 3.04 to 2.27 (25.5 per cent). The improvement is driven by *gigabit capable broadband*, which records the single largest indicator-level improvement in Positive Peace indicators (–56.6 per cent on the score; from 54 per cent of all premises in NI in 2019 to 94.2 per cent in 2025). *Trust in media* (–11.8 per cent) and *media impartiality* (–10.6 per cent) also improved, although both remain among the worst-performing indicators in absolute score terms.

Acceptance of the Rights of Others fell 0.25 points (10.0 per cent) since 2019, supported by improvements on *gender pay gap* (–12.7 per cent, narrowing from 11.2 to 6.6 per cent, on the full-time annual measure), *social exclusion* (–12.8 per cent) and *perceived discrimination* (–3.2 per cent). The pattern is consistent with steady progress on labour-market and attitudinal measures, although the indicator-level gains have decelerated in the most recent observations and *social exclusion* has not yet returned to its pre-2020 baseline.

FIGURE 14

Northern Ireland Positive Peace, Overall Score and Year-On-Year Change, 2019–2025

Northern Ireland Positive Peace improved by 1.2 per cent since 2019.



Source: IEP calculations

This pillar is related to the *Good Relations with Neighbours* and should be understood in relation to shifting dynamics in the social fabric of peace.

Sound Business Environment recorded a small improvement of 0.13 points (–5.0 per cent), masking sharply divergent indicator trajectories. *Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita* improved 13.9 per cent, reflecting Northern Ireland's recent uplift and the dual-market-access position established by the Windsor Framework in 2023.[52] *Financial openness* improved 21.6 per cent. However, this position has not attracted significant additional investment flows. The Windsor Framework created asymmetric economic possibilities that are not yet being exploited due to political constraints and competition for foreign investment with the Republic of Ireland where corporation taxes are significantly lower. Moreover, current gains are partly offset by a 41.1 per cent deterioration in *planning decision efficiency*, the largest single-indicator deterioration recorded across the Index. Northern Ireland's council planning system has not met its 15-week statutory target region-wide since planning powers were devolved in 2015. The Northern Ireland Audit Office has identified the throughput backlog as a structural risk to the systematic planning development programmes, including region's renewables, housing and infrastructure.[53]

Equitable Distribution of Resources improved marginally by 0.07 points (–3.6 per cent), driven by *primary healthcare access* (–10.4 per cent). *Poverty* remained essentially flat (–0.8 per cent on the score; the underlying rate fell from 12.3 to 12.0 per cent). The Anti-Poverty strategy has still not been introduced despite the St Andrews Agreement in 2006 placing a statutory duty on the Northern Ireland Executive to adopt a cross-government strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and deprivation based on objective need.[54] The marginal headline movement sits against a wider literature documenting Northern Ireland as a jurisdiction within the UK with very high levels of poverty,[55] although the underlying methodology has changed during the study period and has been chain-linked in the Index to preserve continuity across the series. The latest survey evidence shows broadly equal poverty rates between the two main communities at around 18 per cent in both.[56] This parity is why some frame inequality in Northern Ireland as a class phenomenon rather than a communal one and concentrated in the most deprived neighbourhoods regardless of identity.[57] *Life satisfaction* worsened marginally (+2.1 per cent on the score).

On the deteriorating side, *Trust in Institutions* worsened 0.17 points (6.5 per cent) since 2019 (Figure 16). *Confidence in the justice system* worsened 23.8 per cent (from 72.5 per cent surveyed in 2019 to 60.0 per cent in 2025). *Prosecutorial independence* and *non-state controlling influence* both deteriorated. The trend coincides with Northern Ireland's prolonged periods without a functioning Executive. The Assembly was not sitting for almost five of the seven years to 2024, and the restoration in February 2024 came only after a two-year boycott over the post-Brexit Northern Ireland Protocol.[58] Simultaneously, some of the legacy institutions and mechanisms for addressing the past, for instance, the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR), have been unable to build victims' families' trust and confidence in the justice architecture.[59]

Good Relations with Neighbours deteriorated 0.27 points (10.5 per cent). The most pronounced indicator-level movement is on *favourability towards the other community*, as the share recording favourable views of the other main community fell from 83.6 per cent to 66.9 per cent. *Cross-community socialising frequency* deteriorated from 66.1 to 61.3 per cent in raw value. The indicator is best read with care: such contact tends to be most concentrated where division runs deepest, so a high reading can signal entrenched division and conflict as much as the strength of integration. The recent trajectory coincided with the anti-immigration disturbances in Belfast in recent years and the rise in racially motivated incidents, as well as the longer-running shift in inter-community attitudes documented in successive Northern Ireland Life and Times surveys.[60]

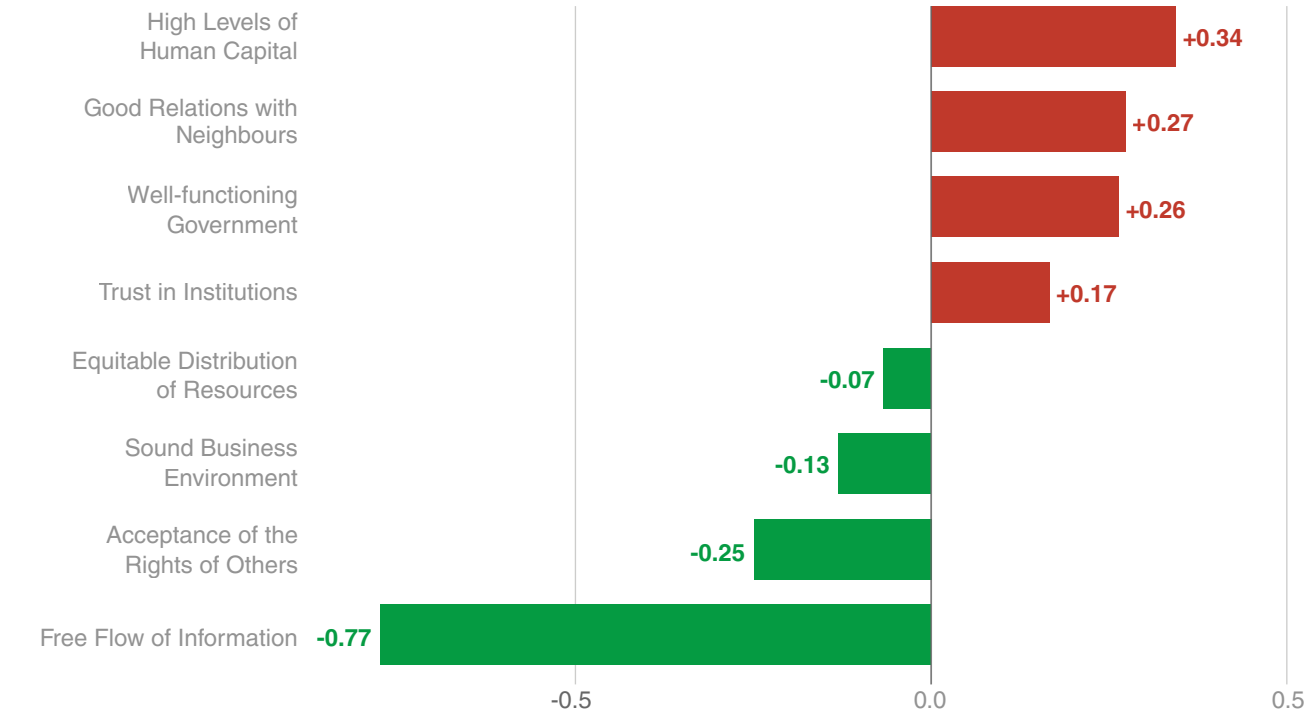
Well-functioning Government deteriorated 0.26 points (11.3 per cent), the third-largest pillar-level decline. *Planning decision efficiency* and *social housing processing* both deteriorated sharply (+41.1 per cent and +27.5 per cent respectively). *Public appointments parity* improved 32.5 per cent since 2019, the only *Well-functioning Government* indicator to do so, although the share of appointees who have not declared their community background has risen since 2020, making the underlying Catholic-to-Protestant ratio harder to verify.[61]

High Levels of Human Capital recorded the largest pillar-level deterioration of 0.34 points (+14.5 per cent). *R&D spending* fell 34 per cent on the score. The *Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)* rate worsened marginally (+2.1 per cent) and *healthy life expectancy* worsened modestly (+3.7 per cent). The pillar deterioration is driven principally by the R&D position; the underlying labour-market and health indicators are more stable (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15

Change in Positive Peace Pillars, 2019–2025

Free Flow of Information recorded the largest improvement while High Levels of Human Capital the biggest deterioration.

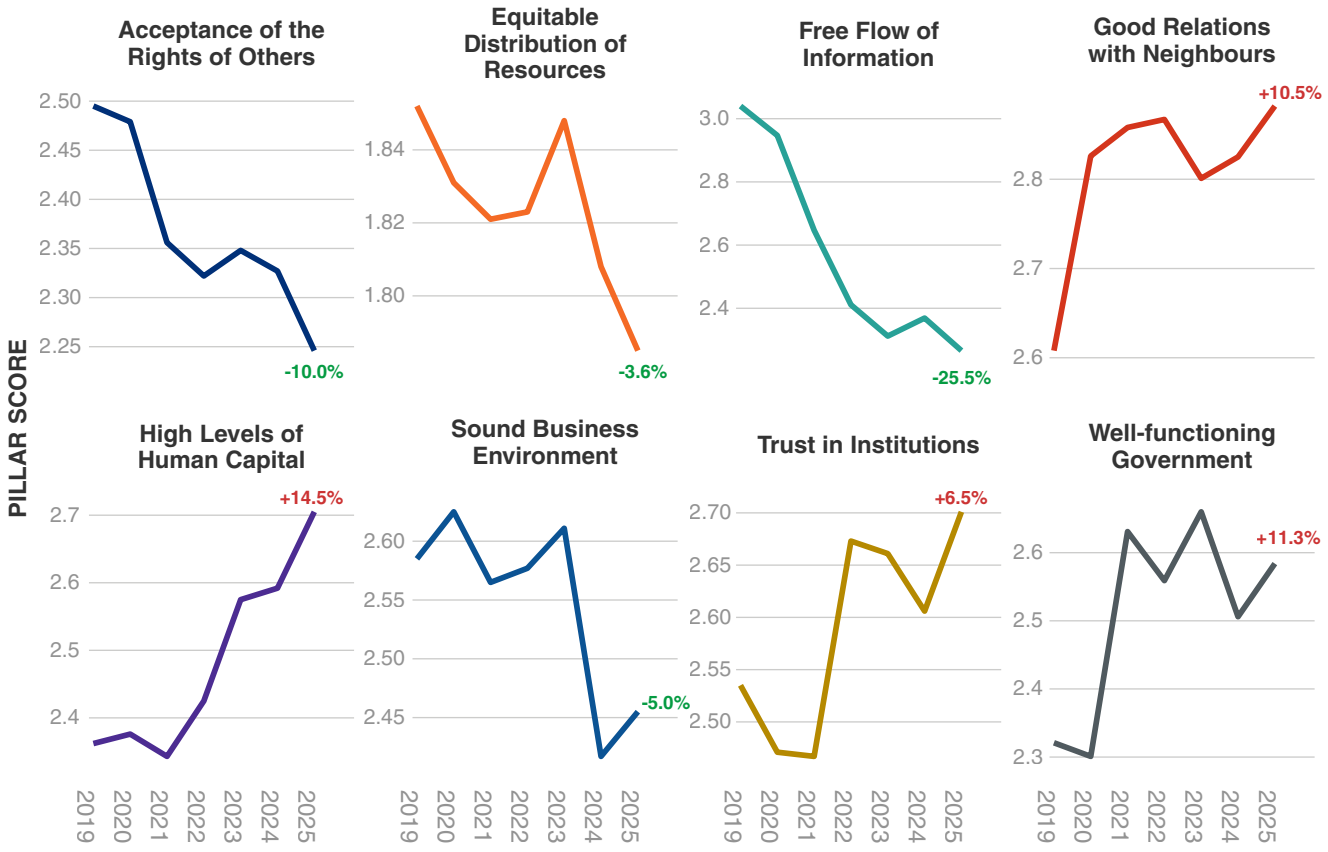


Source: IEP calculations

FIGURE 16

Positive Peace Pillar Trajectories, 2019–2025

Four pillars improved and four deteriorated since 2019.



Source: IEP calculations

Indicator-Level Change Since 2019

Across the 24 indicators, 13 improved and 11 deteriorated between 2019 and 2025. The five largest improvements in absolute score terms are concentrated in connectivity, financial integration, governance throughput and rights-and-information indicators: *gigabit capable broadband, financial openness, public appointments parity, social exclusion and trust in media*. The five largest deteriorations are concentrated in human capital, administrative throughput and institutional trust: *R&D spending, social housing processing, planning decision efficiency, favourability towards the other community and prosecutorial independence*. The pattern is consistent with the pillar-level reading: the region has gained where infrastructure has been built, where foreign capital has accumulated and where appointments throughput has improved; it has lost where research investment, administrative throughput on housing and planning, intercommunal attitudes and institutional trust have weakened (Figure 17).

Two indicators warrant particular attention because they sit at the boundary between the region-wide and the policy-driven. *Gigabit capable broadband* improved sharply because of a large infrastructure programme that has now ended. The indicator's future trajectory depends on Project Gigabit, the £34.6 million successor contract awarded in 2025, rather than on continuation of the past pattern.[62] Conversely, *planning decision efficiency* has deteriorated because of administrative throughput rather than legislative change. The 2024 amendment to the General Development Procedure Order is the principal recent reform, and its effect on the indicator trajectory is not yet visible in the data.[63]

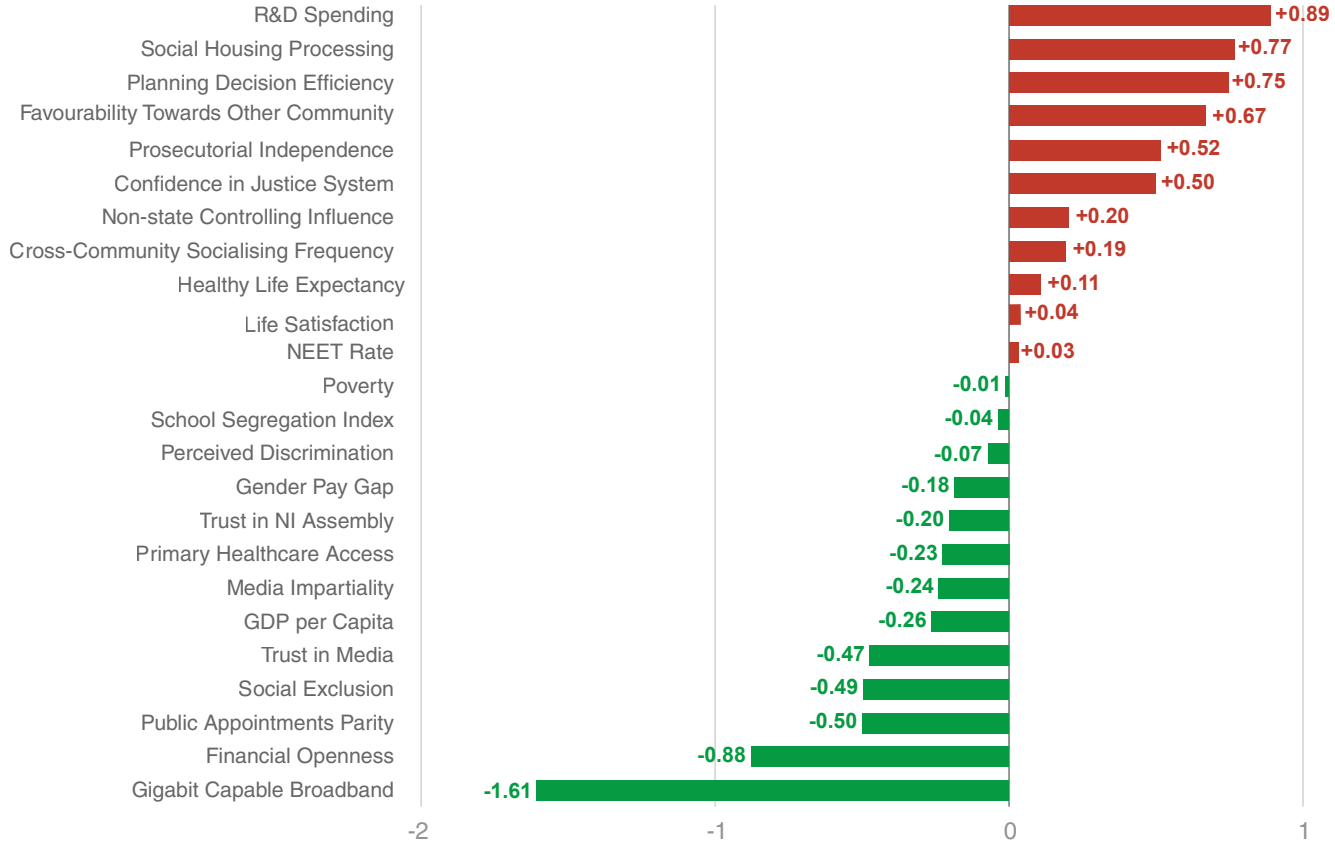
Biggest Deteriorations

The most significant deterioration since 2019 has been in *R&D spending*, reflecting a structural rather than cyclical weakness. Northern Ireland's research and development base is concentrated in a small number of large multinational employers whose investment decisions are taken outside the region. Allstate NI, the

FIGURE 17

Positive Peace Indicator Change, 2019–2025

Eleven of 24 indicators deteriorated since 2019, while 13 have improved.



Source: IEP calculations

region's largest IT employer, peaked at 2,302 staff in 2019 and has reduced headcount in each of the three subsequent years, with around 80 redundancies in 2022, 73 in 2023 and a further 80 or more in 2024. Citigroup, which employs roughly 4,000 staff in Northern Ireland, signalled further job cuts over the same period as part of a global corporate reorganisation, and Deloitte, which employs around 1,000 staff locally, began a redundancy consultation. The official data confirm the firm-level signal: Northern Ireland's total R&D expenditure fell 3.1 per cent in constant prices between 2023 and 2024, against a broadly unchanged UK average, indicating region-specific rather than UK-wide drivers. Around 40 per cent of business R&D is concentrated in Belfast LGD alone, leaving no domestic R&D-intensive sector outside the multinational satellite offices to absorb cuts when global headquarters scale back.[64]

Social housing processing recorded the second largest deterioration in score since 2019. The indicator is a composite signal and measures not just administrative efficiency but the effectiveness of government in enabling access to secure and affordable accommodation, shaped by the interaction of housing supply, market affordability, poverty and allocative capacity. Its worsening state is caused by the growth of the social housing waiting list in Northern Ireland since 2019, which cannot be explained by population growth or rising poverty alone. The population grew by 1.8 per cent over the period, while the waiting list grew by 30 per cent, a divergence that points to structural failures in the housing system rather than demographic pressure. The share of households below 60 per cent of the NI median income fell over the same period, suggesting that those joining the waiting list are not becoming poorer in the traditional sense, but are being priced out of a private market in which house prices and rents have risen sharply since 2019. Working families, single earners and young couples who do not qualify as low-income households are increasingly unable to afford private accommodation and are turning to social housing as the only viable option. At the same time, the supply response has been insufficient on both the private and public sides: private new dwelling starts fell by 23 per cent over the period, social housing development through the Social Housing Development Programme declined by 16 per cent, and subsequent allocations fell by 15 per cent.[65] The result is a system that is simultaneously failing to build enough homes, failing to process enough people off the waiting list, and failing to address the affordability conditions that are driving new applicants onto it, with the waiting list driving the decline in processing as the visible and compounding symptom of all three problems at once.

Biggest Improvements

Gigabit capable broadband records the largest indicator-level improvement on the Index since 2019, with the score falling 56.6 per cent. Coverage rose from 54 per cent of premises in 2019 to 94 per cent in 2025, putting Northern Ireland ahead of England (85 per cent), Scotland (78 per cent), Wales (76 per cent) and the Republic of Ireland (88 per cent), making the region the best-connected jurisdiction across these islands. The gain is the outcome of Project Stratum, the £200 million rural fibre rollout that completed in June 2025 after delivering full-fibre access to 81,000 previously underserved premises, with the £34.6 million Project Gigabit successor contract awarded in December 2025 set to extend coverage to a further 9,000 rural premises.[66] The improvement converts a previously lagging indicator into a comparative strength, and gives the region the digital infrastructure base for remote-work labour markets, distributed software services and rural enterprise. The open question is whether this base translates into the productivity and innovation gains that have not yet materialised in the *High Levels of Human Capital* and *Sound Business Environment* pillars, where Northern Ireland's wider Positive Peace position remains weaker.

Financial openness records the second-largest indicator-level improvement on the Index since 2019, with the score falling 21.6 per cent. The improvement reflects accumulated stock rather than expanded flows: the indicator measures Northern Ireland's inward foreign direct investment stock as a percentage of its GDP, and the underlying ratio nearly doubled from 23.8 per cent in 2019 to 45.7 per cent in 2023, the latest year for which the Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes regional FDI data.[67] The improvement is also a recovery rather than an expansion: per-head FDI stock fell from £10,367 in 2017 to £5,517 in 2019 after a sharp drop in 2018 attributed to Brexit-related uncertainty, and the 2023 figure of £10,515 has returned to the 2017 nominal level but remains roughly 20 per cent below it in real terms.[68] Northern Ireland has been ranked the second-most competitive UK region on inward FDI outside London for each of the past four years, with Belfast fifth among European mid-sized cities in fDi Intelligence's 2025 rankings.[69] Northern Ireland also retains 86 per cent of inward FDI values within the region, the highest retention rate of any UK devolved region.[70] Project flows have softened recently; the FDI project count fell 6 per cent in 2024, but the stock continues to build on the back of earlier investments. The improvement should therefore be read as the accumulated recovery from the post-Brexit trough back towards the pre-Brexit baseline rather than as evidence of additional flows tied to the Windsor Framework's dual-market-access

provisions, which Invest NI has separately stated have not yet translated into measurable additional investment.[71] Because Northern Ireland's foreign investment is concentrated in operational activities, back-office services, customer contact centres and software delivery rather than research-intensive functions, accumulated FDI stock can continue to grow even while R&D budgets are cut. R&D budgets remain vulnerable to global cost-cutting cycles, which is why R&D spending shows the largest deterioration of any indicator since 2019.

Change Since 2024

After the strongest single-year improvement in the series (a 2.0 per cent fall in the overall score in 2024, taking the score from 2.48 in 2023 to 2.43), the 2025 reading of Positive Peace in Northern Ireland a partial reversal of 0.82 per cent, taking the score to 2.45. Five pillars deteriorated and three improved in the past year (Figure 18). The pillar-level pattern of the past-year reversal is clearly different from the longer-run pattern: the institutional-trust and human-capital pillars that drove the longer-run deterioration have continued to weaken, while the rights and information-flow pillars have continued to improve.

High Levels of Human Capital recorded the largest pillar-level deterioration in the past year (+0.11) in score points), followed by *Trust in Institutions* (+0.10), *Well-functioning Government* (+0.08) and *Good Relations with Neighbours* (+0.06). *Sound Business Environment* also deteriorated marginally (+0.04). The largest indicator-level deteriorations were on *prosecutorial independence* (+0.36 score points), *planning decision efficiency* (+0.27), *R&D spending* (+0.21), *favourability towards the other community* (+0.17) and *NEET rate* (+0.15).

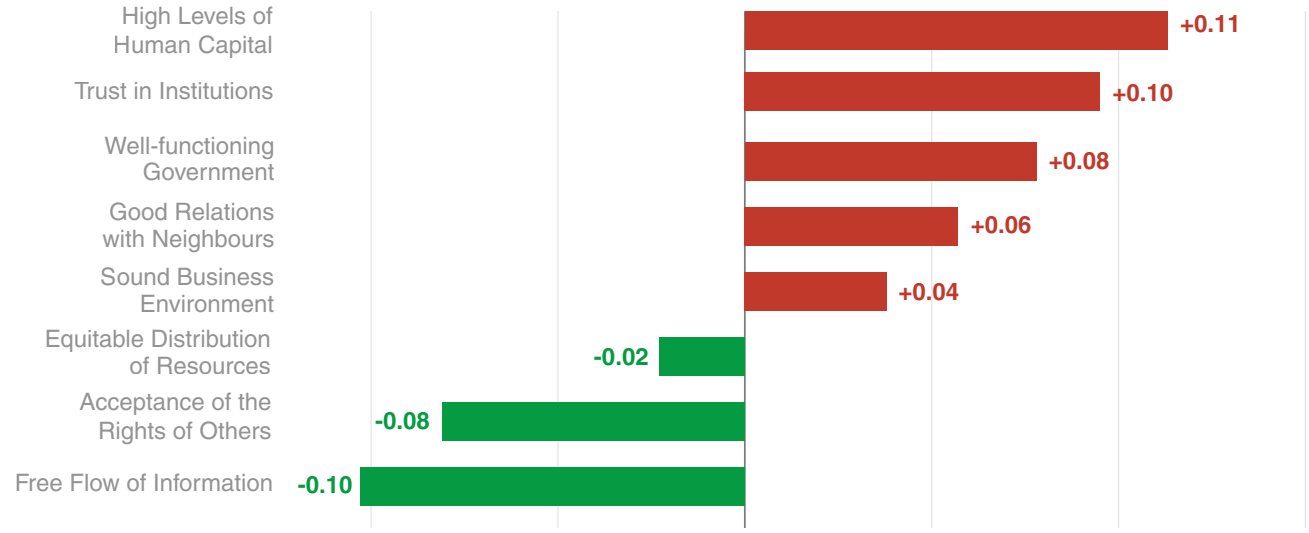
Free Flow of Information improved most in the past year (–0.1 score points), followed by *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* (–0.08) and *Equitable Distribution of Resources* (–0.02). The largest indicator-level improvements were on *trust in media* (–0.24), *financial openness* (–0.11), *gender pay gap* (–0.11) and *social exclusion* (–0.09) (Figure 19).

The 2024 to 2025 reversal is concentrated in the indicators most exposed to the underlying institutional and human-capital weakness identified earlier in this section. *Prosecutorial independence* and *confidence in the justice system* both deteriorated against the background of declining public confidence; *R&D spending* fell in 2024 against the previous year; and *favourability towards the other community* continued to track the broader shift in inter-community attitudes documented in 2024 and 2025. Conversely, the gain on trust in media reflects an indicator specific movement rather than a wider pillar trajectory, while the school segregation index was effectively unchanged.

FIGURE 18

Positive Peace Pillar Change, 2024–2025

Three pillars improved and five deteriorated since 2024.

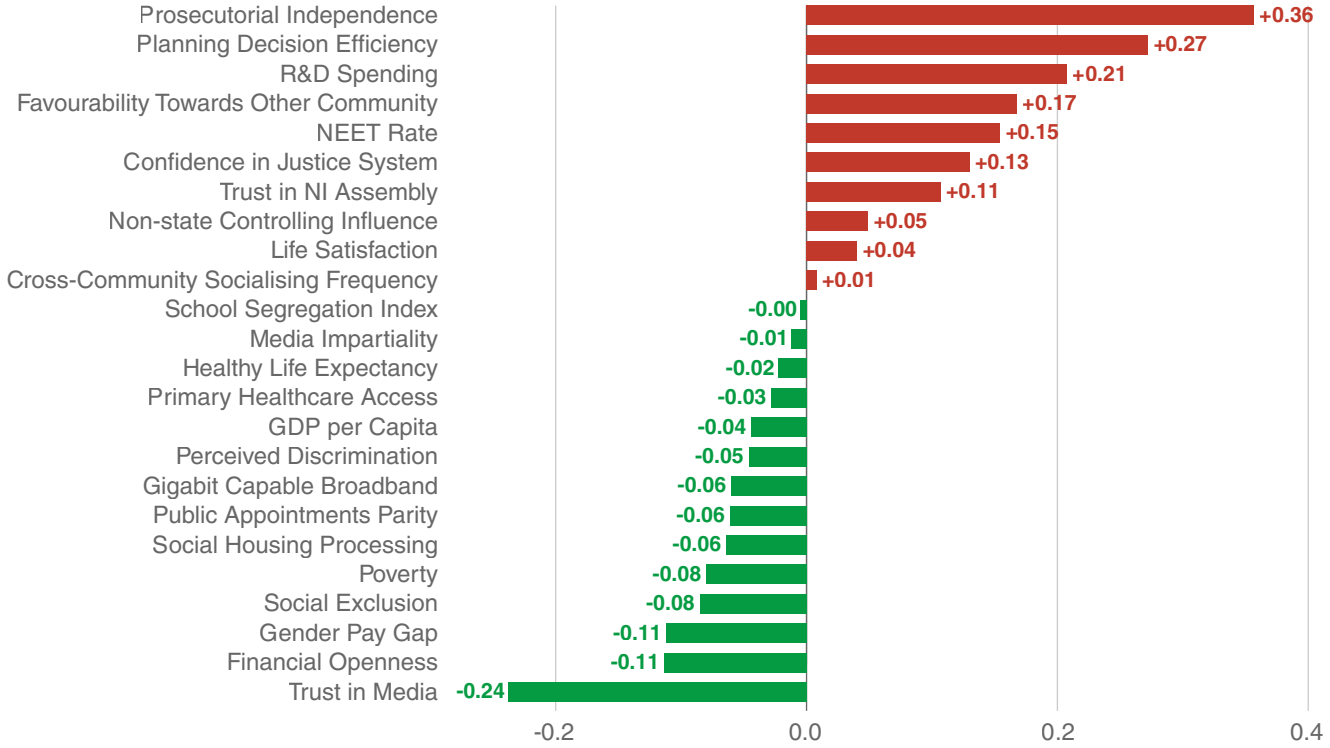


Source: IEP calculations

FIGURE 19

Positive Peace Indicator Change, 2024–2025

14 of 24 indicators improved since 2024.



Source: IEP calculations

Northern Ireland's Positive Peace in 2025

Across the eight Positive Peace pillars, the strongest pillar in 2025 is *Equitable Distribution of Resources*, followed by *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* and *Free Flow of Information*. The weakest pillar (highest score, least peaceful) is *Good Relations with Neighbours*, followed by *High Levels of Human Capital* and *Trust in Institutions*. The strength of *the Equitable Distribution of Resources* pillar is driven by primary healthcare access; poverty has remained essentially flat since 2019 and NI has some of the most persistently high-poverty regions within the United Kingdom. *Sound Business Environmen*t and *Well-functioning Government* sit in the middle of the distribution (Figure 20).

The 2025 pillar profile is consistent with the broader characterisation of Northern Ireland's Positive Peace as managed rather than fully consolidated. Its comparative strengths sit on the material and rights-and-information pillars where capital and policy have moved most directly: healthcare access has improved, gender pay gap has narrowed and broadband has been rolled out almost universally. The region's comparative weaknesses sit on the intercommunal and institutional pillars where trust, attitudes and administrative throughput have deteriorated: cross-community socialising has declined, favourability towards the other community has fallen sharply, confidence in the justice system has weakened and planning and social housing throughput have not kept pace with statutory targets.

FIGURE 20

Positive Peace Pillar Scores, 2025

Equitable Distribution of Resources was Northern Ireland's best performing pillar in 2025.



Source: IEP calculations

Northern Ireland Compared with the UK and Ireland

Northern Ireland does not exist in isolation. It is part of broader systems that include its position in the UK, location on the island of Ireland and within a wider European context. Northern Ireland's Positive Peace is embedded within the wider attitudinal, political, economic and institutional systems of the UK, meaning that its long-term development depends not only on local conditions but also on the performance of the UK system in which it operates. The pillars of Positive Peace in Northern Ireland will also be influenced by the strength of North–South economic integration, shared infrastructure, cross-border institutions, and initiatives such as the Shared Island programme, among other structural variables. These relationships are also embedded within a broader European framework, notably the Windsor Framework and the arrangements that support cross-border cooperation, trade and regional development.

Northern Ireland is not ranked separately in IEP's global indices, so national rankings provide context rather than a like-for-like benchmark. The Republic of Ireland consistently ranks among the world's most peaceful countries, placing 5th in IEP's 2026 Global Peace Index and 2nd in the 2025 Positive Peace Index. The United Kingdom, of which Northern Ireland is a part, ranks 39th on the 2026 Global Peace Index and below Ireland on Positive Peace, a position that has slipped in recent years. Only a limited set of indicators is reported on a directly comparable basis: nine with the rest of the UK and four with the Republic. Consequently, Northern Ireland's Positive Peace depends not only on its own attitudes, institutions and structures, but also on the quality of the wider political, economic and institutional context.

Nine of the 24 Positive Peace indicators are reported on a basis that is directly comparable between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK (an average of England, Scotland and Wales) (Table 4). On six of these nine, Northern Ireland records better outcomes than the rest of the UK in the latest comparable year. On three, the region records worse outcomes. The pattern is structural rather than incidental. Northern Ireland's comparative strengths sit on social, equity and material indicators, while its comparative weaknesses sit on the economic-dynamism indicators that capture research investment, foreign-capital intensity and per-capita output.

The largest favourable gap is on *gender pay gap*, where the Northern Ireland gender pay gap is roughly 34 per cent narrower than the rest of the UK in 2025. The largest unfavourable gap is on *financial openness*, where the inward foreign direct investment stock per capita of population is roughly half the rest of the UK figure. Read together, the region has converged on, and in some cases overtaken, its comparator on inclusion, equity and material outcomes, but has not converged on the economic foundations of contemporary peace.

TABLE 4

Northern Ireland and Rest of the UK, Comparable Indicator Values

Indicator	NI value	Rest of UK value	Year	NI vs UK
Gender Pay Gap	7.2%	10.9%	2025	+34.0% (better)
NEET Rate	9.2%	12.5%	2025	+26.4% (better)
Absolute Poverty (% below a fixed 2010/11 UK income threshold)	13.7%	17.5%	2024	+21.6% (better)
Gigabit Capable Broadband	94.2%	81.9%	2025	+15.1% (better)
Life Satisfaction	7.63	7.44	2023	+2.5% (better)
Healthy Life Expectancy	60.8	59.7	2024	+1.8% (better)
GDP per Capita	£32,944	£35,630	2023	–7.5% (worse)
R&D Spending	£519/head	£911/head	2024	–43.0% (worse)
Financial Openness	£10,515/head	£22,209/head	2023	–52.7% (worse)

Sources: ONS ASHE; HBAI / DWP Family Resources Survey; ONS Annual Population Survey; Ofcom Connected Nations; ONS Health State Life Expectancy; ONS APS NEET; ONS BERD; ONS Foreign Direct Investment Inward Tables; ONS Regional GDP. Rest of United Kingdom calculated as the average of England, Scotland and Wales. IEP calculations. Northern Ireland's values in this table use UK-harmonised (ONS) definitions and differ from those in Table 5; the two are not directly interchangeable.

Strengths Relative to the Rest of the UK

The Northern Ireland all-employee gender pay gap stood at 7.2 per cent in 2025 on the ONS hourly measure, well below the UK figure on the same basis. This is a different measure from the full-time annual gap of 6.6 per cent tracked in the Index series, and the two are not interchangeable. The region has consistently recorded the lowest median *gender pay gap* of any UK region for more than a decade. This is a pattern attributable in part to the dominance of public-sector employment in Northern Ireland (which has narrower internal pay distributions than the private sector) and to industry-mix effects in which Northern Ireland has a smaller share of the high-pay-gap sectors, such as financial services and certain professional services, that drive the rest of the UK figure upwards. This is a narrow measure of gender equality, capturing the distribution of pay rather than women's broader safety and status. Outside the Index indicators, domestic abuse offers the one broadly comparable cross-UK measure: Northern Ireland's rate of roughly 15 to 16 incidents per 1,000 population in 2025 recorded by NISRA, runs some 10 to 18 per cent above the 13.6 domestic abuse-related crimes per 1,000 reported by the ONS for England and Wales.[72] Wider measures of violence against women and girls are not standardised across jurisdictions and cannot be compared reliably, and on female homicide Northern Ireland sits mid-table among European countries.[73] The region's absolute poverty rate (after housing costs) was 13.7 per cent in 2024, against 17.5 per cent across the rest of the UK. Lower housing costs are the main mechanism: Northern Ireland has the lowest median private-rental and home-purchase costs of any UK region, which compresses the post-housing-cost income distribution and reduces measured absolute poverty without necessarily raising disposable income.

Gigabit capable broadband coverage stood at 94.2 per cent of premises in 2025 in Northern Ireland, against 81.9 per cent across the rest of the UK. The region is the best-connected jurisdiction in these islands after the completion of Project Stratum in June 2025, which delivered fibre access to 81,000 previously underserved rural premises. The infrastructure base is now in place to support distributed digital labour markets and rural enterprise, although the related productivity and innovation gains documented elsewhere in this report have not yet materialised.

The Northern Ireland *NEET rate* was 9.2 per cent in 2025, against 12.5 per cent across the rest of the UK. The gap reflects comparatively strong further-education and apprenticeship retention as well as the smaller share of young people in higher-cost rental markets that elsewhere produce labour-market disengagement. *Healthy life expectancy* and *life satisfaction* also sit modestly above the rest of the UK average, although the gaps on these two indicators are too small to read as systemic and are sensitive to single-survey movements.

Weaknesses Relative to the Rest of the UK

Northern Ireland recorded business expenditure on research and development of around £519 per capita in 2024, against £911 per capita across the rest of the UK, a gap of 43 per cent. The deficit is consistent with the wider regional R&D pattern in the United Kingdom, in which research and innovation activity concentrates in London, the Greater South-East and the Oxford-Cambridge corridor,[74] and is reinforced in Northern Ireland by the reliance on satellite operations of US-headquartered multinationals whose research budgets are decided outside the region.

Inward foreign direct investment stock per capita of population stood at around £10,500 in 2023, against £22,200 per capita across the rest of the UK. Improvement on *financial openness* reflects accumulated stock against a small denominator (NI GDP), but the comparable per capita measure indicates that Northern Ireland has roughly half the foreign-capital intensity of the rest of the UK average.

Northern Ireland's *GDP per capita* stood at 92.5 per cent of the rest of the UK in 2023, its strongest position since 2003, when the share reached 92.6 per cent. The series traces a U-shape rather than a steady climb: it slid through the financial crisis to a low of 85.1 per cent in 2014 and has since recovered to where it sat two decades ago. The region has not reached parity at any point over the period.[75] The 2014 to 2023 recovery is partly genuine convergence and partly compositional. The larger public-sector share of Northern Ireland's GDP, around 28 per cent against a UK average of 17 per cent, cushioned the region during the 2020 to 2021 COVID-19 contraction, narrowing the per capita gap mechanically as the rest of the UK's private-sector-heavy economy contracted more sharply. The underlying productivity gap, measured per worker, remains larger than the per capita gap and is the principal mechanism by which the region's economic dynamism deficit transmits into the wider Positive Peace position. On balance, the region matches or exceeds the rest of the UK on the social and equity pillars on which much of contemporary peace rests, but lags on the economic-dynamism pillars that drive long-run capacity. The gap pattern is consistent with the region's Positive Peace trajectory documented earlier in this section, in which *High Levels of Human*

Capital and *Sound Business Environment* have been the slowest-improving pillars.

The open question is whether Northern Ireland can now convert that base into productive economic activity within its own boundaries, rather than supplying skilled labour, low-cost operations and connectivity capacity to economies headquartered elsewhere. That conversion, rather than further gains on the indicators on which Northern Ireland already leads, is the defining strategic question for the region's Positive Peace position over the coming decade.

Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

A narrower comparison is possible with the Republic of Ireland, though only four indicators are currently measured on a like-for-like basis and one of these is directional (Table 5). Because each comparison uses the comparator's harmonised definitions, Northern Ireland's values in Table 5 differ from those in Table 4 and the two are not directly interchangeable. On this small set, Northern Ireland trails its nearest neighbour on three of the four measures. Its NEET rate, at 10.8 per cent, sits well above the Irish rate of 6.4 per cent, and its gender pay gap, at 9.4 per cent, is modestly wider than Ireland's 8.3 per cent. Life satisfaction is effectively level, at 7.7 against 7.6. Healthy life expectancy is higher in Ireland, but the gap of around seven years should be read as directional only, as the two jurisdictions measure the indicator differently.

The comparison is instructive because it partly reverses the picture against the rest of the United Kingdom. On youth transitions and the gender pay gap, Northern Ireland records comparative strengths within the UK but falls behind the Republic of Ireland, a more demanding benchmark on human capital and equity. The set is too small to support broad conclusions, and several potentially informative indicators

Economic comparison between the two jurisdictions is more complex. On headline measures of output per person, the Republic of Ireland appears substantially wealthier than Northern Ireland, gross value added per person was 79,541 purchasing power standards (PPS) in the Republic in 2023, against 27,637 PPS in Northern Ireland. However, this gap overstates the underlying difference between the two economies. The Republic's output figures are inflated by the activities of large multinational firms and reflect corporate accounting more than domestic economic activity. Household-based measures present a different picture: gross disposable household income per person was 21,489 PPS in the Republic and 18,998 PPS in Northern Ireland in 2023, a difference of around 13 per cent. On this measure the gap is narrower than the headline output figures imply, but it does not close: the Republic remained ahead on household income, and Northern Ireland ranked below each of the Republic's three regions.[76]

The Republic of Ireland sets a higher bar for Northern Ireland than the rest of the United Kingdom. The indicators on which Northern Ireland leads within the UK, notably youth participation and the gender pay gap, become shortfalls against the Republic, pointing to scope for improvement on human capital and equity, even as living standards remain far closer than headline output figures suggest.

cannot yet be compared: absolute poverty and research-and-development spending are measured on bases that are not directly comparable, while newer Irish series on output, employment and the disability employment gap have no Northern Ireland counterpart at present. Future editions can widen the comparison as harmonised measures become available.

TABLE 5

Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, Comparable Indicator Value

Indicator	NI value	RoI value	Year	NI vs RoI
NEET rate (%)	10.8	6.4	2025	–68.8% (worse)
Gender pay gap (%)	9.4	8.3	2024	–13.3% (worse)
Life satisfaction (0–10)	7.7	7.6	2025	+1.3% (better)
Healthy life expectancy (yrs)	59.8	66.9	2024	–10.6% (worse)

Source: IEP calculations based on official statistics for Northern Ireland (NISRA and ONS) and the Republic of Ireland (CSO and Eurostat). Comparison limited to indicators measured on a like-for-like basis; see Methodology for definitions and comparability notes.

Negative and Positive Peace at Council Level

The following section presents profiles for each of Northern Ireland's 11 Local Government Districts (LGDs), reading both negative peace and Positive Peace, against the region-wide average and tracing each council's trajectory between 2019 and 2025. The aim is to translate the region-wide picture into the geographies in which peace is experienced and delivered, the councils, partnerships and communities where the structural conditions measured in this Index are lived rather than aggregated. Reading the two dimensions together is the fuller analytical approach: a council's recorded violence and its structural peace foundations are related but distinct, and in several councils, they move in different directions. The profiles that follow examine that relationship directly.

Reading the Indicators

The negative peace framework in Northern Ireland measures the absence of violence and the fear of violence across six indicators. For all six indicators, a higher value denotes worse outcomes and a lower value denotes better outcomes. *Homicide* records unlawful killings. *Violent and weapon crime* measures violence-against-the-person and weapon possession offences, reflecting both serious assault and the willingness of victims to report. *Public disorder* counts public order offences such as riot, affray and disorderly behaviour. *Hate crime* covers hate-motivated incidents across racial, sectarian, sexual categories. *Paramilitary activity* tracks paramilitary-style assaults, shootings and bombings, the most direct measure of legacy paramilitary harm in the Index. *Worry about crime* captures the share of residents reporting concern about crime, an indicator of perceived rather than recorded harm.

Positive Peace measures the systemic capacity that sustains peace across eight pillars: *Acceptance of the Rights of Others, Equitable Distribution of Resources, Free Flow of Information, Good Relations with Neighbours, High Levels of Human Capital, Sound Business Environment, Trust in Institutions and Well-functioning Government*. The full Index is constructed from 24 indicators; the council profiles report 11 of these, for which sub-territorial data are reliably available at LGD level on a basis directly comparable to the region-wide average. These are: *confidence in the justice system, cross-community socialising frequency, GDP per capita, gender pay gap, gigabit capable broadband, planning decision efficiency, poverty, primary healthcare access, R&D spending, school segregation index and social housing processing*. The remaining 13 indicators are reported at region-wide level only and are not reproduced at the council levels. Each indicator is scored on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is the most peaceful outcome and 5 the least peaceful.

Differences in both sets of indicators reflect not only genuine differences in outcomes but also differences in reporting behaviour, policing intensity, administrative coverage and population structure. All indicator readings should be interpreted alongside the long-run trend rather than from a single year in isolation.

Cross-Cutting Patterns in Negative Peace

Five cross-council patterns are visible in the negative peace data since 2019. First, some of the region-wide improvement is broad-based: 10 of the 11 LGDs recorded falls in *worry about crime*, nine in paramilitary *activity* between 2019 and 2025. Second, *paramilitary activity* remains the most geographically concentrated indicator, with four councils above the region-wide level in 2025: Derry and Strabane, Causeway Coast and Glens, Belfast City and Ards and North Down. while Lisburn and Castlereagh, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, and Newry, Mourne and Down record the lowest. Third, *public disorder* and *hate crime* is the most unevenly distributed indicators, the former rising in six councils and falling in five, while the latter falls in five and rises in six. Fourth, only one council, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigon improved across all negative peace indicators. Fifth, *worry about crime* fell in 10 of 11 council areas, the most evenly distributed improvement of the six indicators; Mid and East Antrim is the single exception, where the rate rose 43 per cent since 2019 against a region-wide fall.

The percentage change in the council's and Northern Ireland's real-value recorded rate between 2019 and 2025 is reported by council and indicator (Table 6). For all six indicators a positive entry indicates an increase in the rate over the period, denoting a deterioration on the indicator; a negative entry indicates a decrease, denoting an improvement. Red entries indicate movements that worsened the council's position relative to where it stood in 2019; blue entries indicate improvements; grey entries denote movements within five percentage points of zero. Entries in bold indicate divergences of 30 per cent or more in either direction.

TABLE 6

Northern Ireland Local Government Districts, Change in Indicator Rates, 2019–2025

Improvement since 2019 is broad-based but uneven.

Council	Homicide	Violent and Weapon Crime	Public Disorder	Hate Crime	Paramilitary Activity	Worry about Crime
Antrim and Newtownabbey	n/a[77]	-10.8%	+11.5%	**+90.7%**	**-69.7%**	-14.7%
Ards and North Down	**+95.5%**	-3.0%	-25.1%	+20.5%	**+52.1%**	-30.0%
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	**-51.4%**	-12.2%	-1.4%	-16.3%	**-58.4%**	**-49.2%**
Belfast City	**-35.0%**	+14.3%	-10.1%	**+63.5%**	**-71.3%**	-24.9%
Causeway Coast and Glens	**-100.0%**	-10.6%	**+46.0%**	**-32.7%**	**+39.1%**	-50.4%
Derry and Strabane	-0.7%	+15.4%	+17.4%	+23.0%	**-68.2%**	-27.0%
Fermanagh and Omagh	**-100.0%**	-17.0%	**+30.4%**	**+82.2%**	-0.2%	-18.0%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	0	-19.8%	+21.4%	-11.8%	-100.0%	-38.6%
Mid Ulster	**-41.6%**	-10.0%	+12.2%	**+43.7%**	**-58.3%**	**-66.5%**
Mid and East Antrim	**-100.0%**	-5.4%	**-47.4%**	**-30.6%**	**-60.2%**	**+43.5%**
Newry, Mourne and Down	**-71.7%**	-2.4%	-4.6%	-9.5%	-1.0%	-14.9%
Northern Ireland	-47.9%	-3.5%	-2.6%	+21.5%	-44.7%	-30.0%

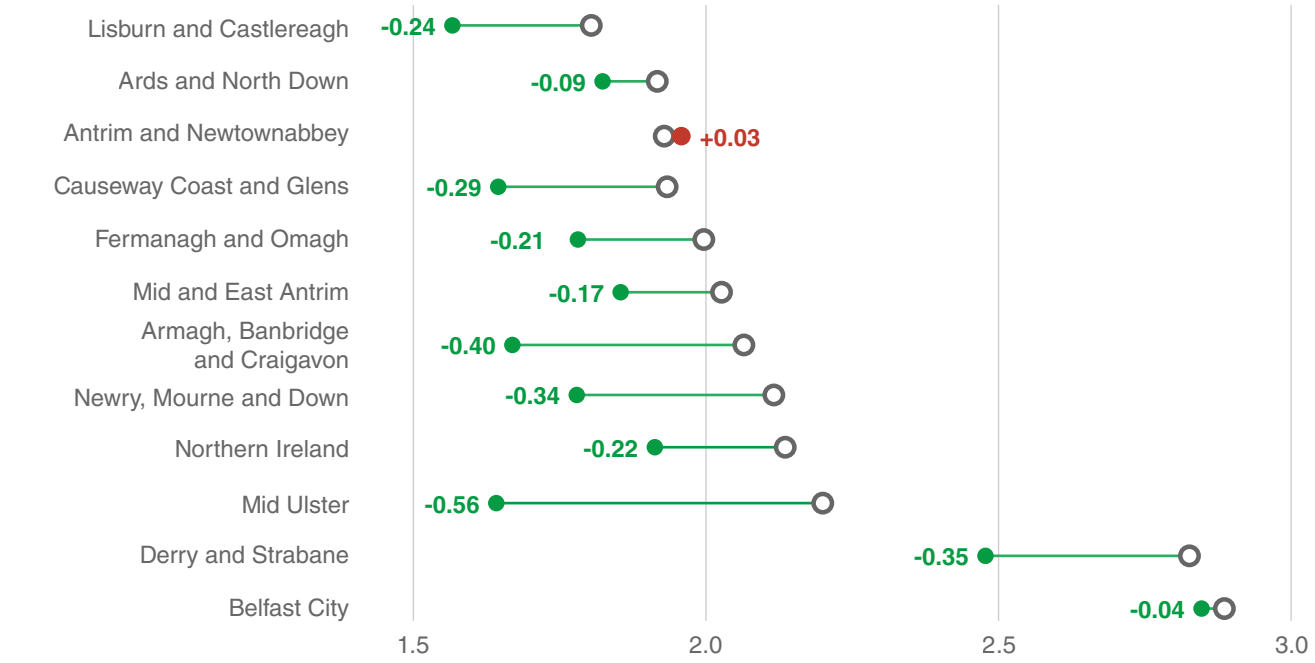
Source: PSNI Police Recorded Crime Statistics, PSNI Security Situation Statistics, NISRA Safe Community Survey, IEP calculations

The same councils and indicators are also shown as changes in the normalised negative peace score that enters the Index, where a negative bar denotes an improvement and a positive bar a deterioration (Figure 21). Because the score is the normalised form of the underlying rate, the two are not proportional: reading them together shows both how large a movement is in real terms and how much it shifts the council's position within the Index.

FIGURE 21

Northern Ireland Local Government Districts, Change in Negative Peace Score, 2019–2025

10 councils improved on negative peace.



Sources: IEP calculations

The gap between the most and least peaceful districts has nearly halved over the period, narrowing from a peak of 2.57 in 2006 to around 1.30 in 2025 (Figure 22). On its face this is a convergence story: Northern Ireland's districts have become more similar to one another in their peace outcomes, which is meaningful evidence of consolidation. However, the convergence is shallow. It has been driven almost entirely by the normalisation of extreme spike years in Belfast rather than by structural improvement across the board. Belfast was the least peaceful district in almost every year between 2005 and 2025, yet its score improved only marginally, from 2.92 to 2.85. The early gap was wide because Belfast recorded extreme spike years between 2006 and 2010, when its score reached as high as 4.35; as those spikes receded the gap closed, even though Belfast's underlying position barely changed.

Between 2005 and 2025, the genuine improvements have come from the middle of the distribution. Mid Ulster improved the most, with its score falling by 0.48, followed by Lisburn and Castlereagh (0.37) and Causeway Coast and Glens (0.35). Only Lisburn and Castlereagh was never among the least peaceful districts: Causeway Coast and Glens was second least peaceful in 2009 and sat in the bottom three for five consecutive years, and Mid Ulster was third least peaceful in 2005. Four districts moved in the opposite direction over the same period: Newry, Mourne and Down deteriorated by 0.15, Fermanagh and Omagh by 0.12, Ards and North Down by 0.04, and Derry and Strabane by 0.02. Derry and Strabane held the second least peaceful position in 15 of the 21 years, was the least peaceful district in 2018, 2020, 2023 and 2024, and returned to second in 2025. Belfast improved by only 0.07 over the same period. Belfast and Derry therefore remain structurally distinct from the rest of Northern Ireland, and the distance between them and the other districts has not closed meaningfully in two decades.

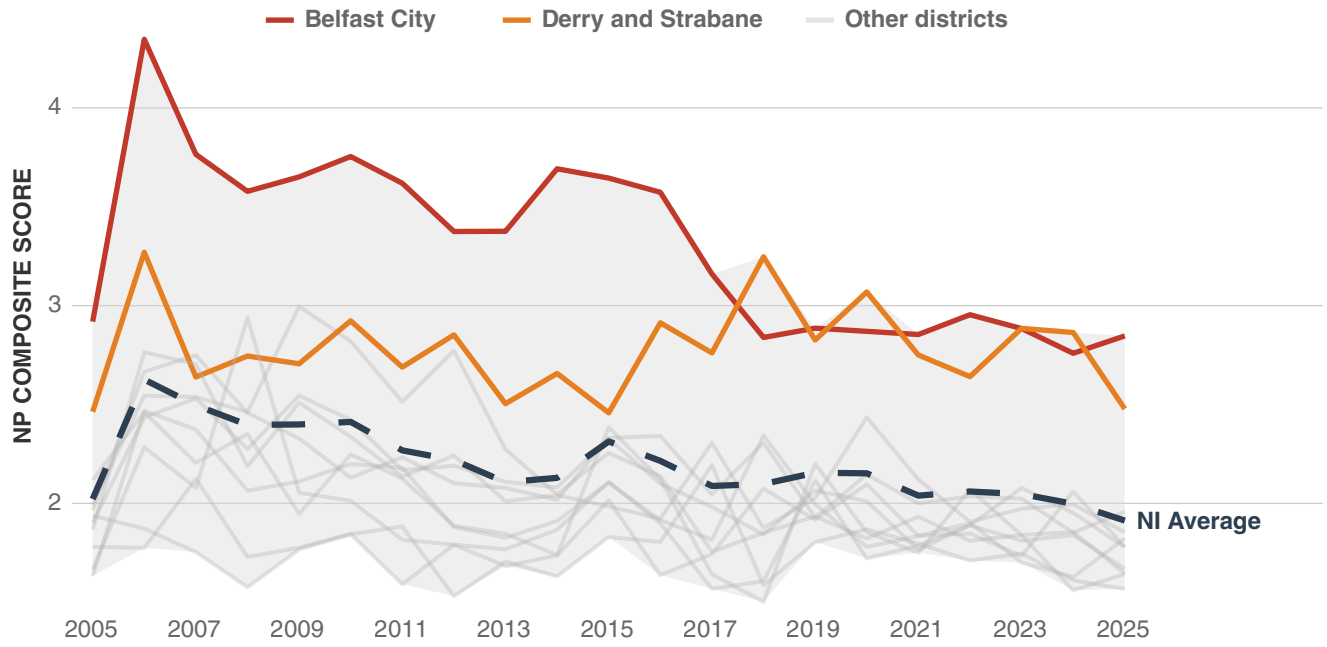
Positive Peace

Five cross-council patterns are visible in the Positive Peace data. First, all 11 LGDs improved their composite score since 2019, but the pace and composition of improvement vary, from 5.5 per cent in Mid and East Antrim to 0.5 per cent in both Derry and Strabane and Ards and North Down. Second, *R&D spending* is the sharpest territorial divide: only Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon records above-average research investment, and five councils record R&D at or near the worst value on the scale. Third, an east-west gradient in economic output has not narrowed over the period, with Belfast at 155 per cent of the region-wide average on *GDP per capita* and Ards and North Down at 44 per cent. Fourth, *school segregation* is entrenched across all eleven LGDs, a region-wide structural condition rather than a geographically specific feature. Fifth, *planning decision efficiency* records the largest single within-region indicator gap in the Index, with Mid and East Antrim's score 1.10 above the NI average and Newry, Mourne and Down's 1.88 below it.

FIGURE 22

District Convergence in Negative Peace, 2005-2025

The gap between the most and least peaceful districts has nearly halved since 2006, but the convergence is shallow.



Source: IEP calculations

The count of indicators of Positive Peace on which each Local Government District (LGD) performs above, below or in line with the Northern Ireland average is shown for the latest available year (Table 7). Above denotes a positive score difference, below a negative score difference, in line a difference of exactly zero (rounded to two decimal places). Cells shaded green denote above-average counts and red denotes below-average counts.

The following sections present an individual profile for each of Northern Ireland's 11 Local Government Districts. Each profile draws on the same six indicators of negative peace and 11 indicators of Positive Peace to describe how that council compares to the Northern Ireland average, and what that picture means for its position in 2025.

TABLE 7

Local Government Districts, Count of Positive Peace Indicators Relative to the Northern Ireland Average, 2025

Belfast is the only council above the Northern Ireland average on most indicators; every other council falls below on a majority.

Council	Above NI	Below NI	In line
Antrim and Newtownabbey	**5**	6	0
Ards and North Down	4	7	0
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	4	7	0
Belfast City	**7**	4	0
Causeway Coast and Glens	1	**9**	1
Derry and Strabane	1	**10**	0
Fermanagh and Omagh	2	**8**	1
Lisburn and Castlereagh	4	7	0
Mid Ulster	2	**9**	0
Mid and East Antrim	4	7	0
Newry, Mourne and Down	1	**9**	1

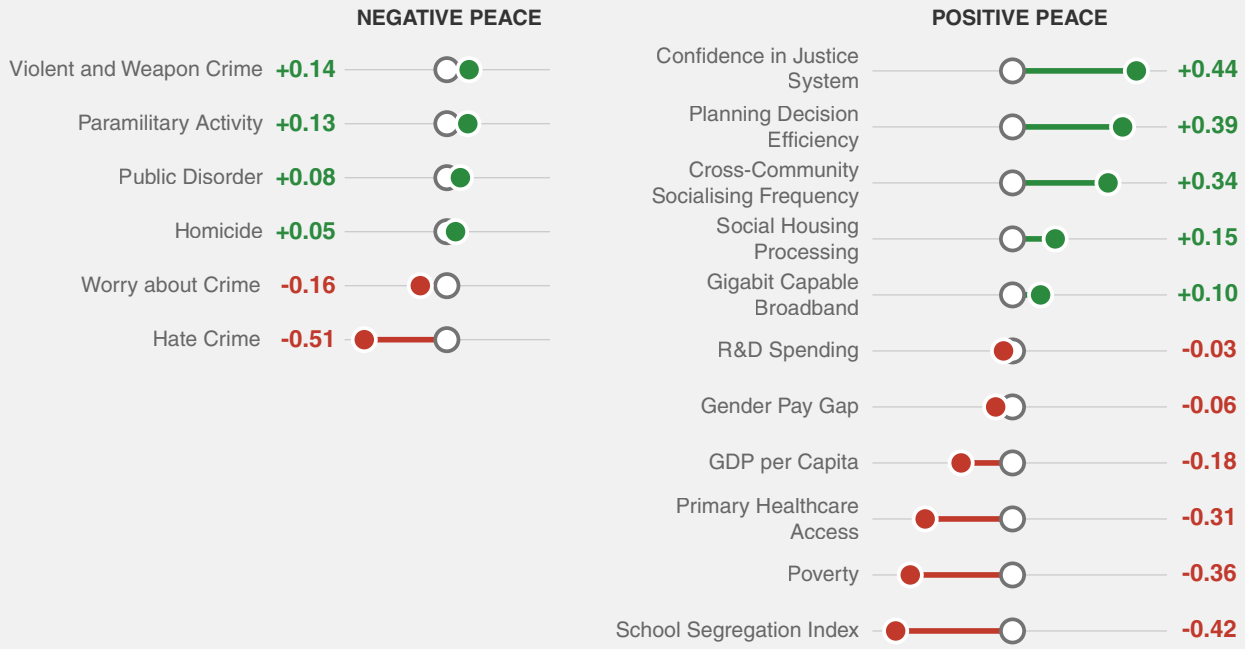
Source: IEP

LGD Profiles

Antrim and Newtownabbey

FIGURE 23

Antrim and Newtownabbey vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Antrim and Newtownabbey sits on Belfast's northern edge, a predominantly suburban council whose economic geography is shaped by the Belfast commute corridor and the legacy industrial belt running through Newtownabbey. That proximity defines its 2025 profile: the council's negative peace and Positive Peace trajectories diverge, and the indicators most exposed to Belfast spillover are the ones that run against the council's otherwise improving direction (Figure 23).

On negative peace, *paramilitary activity* fell 70 per cent between 2019 and 2025, the council's largest single-indicator improvement and one of the steepest falls recorded across the councils. *Hate crime*, by contrast, sat 43 per cent above the region-wide rate in 2025, the second-highest of any council, driven primarily by racially motivated incidents rather than the sectarian pattern that historically defined this category, consistent with the region-wide compositional shift documented in the *hate crime* section, but more concentrated here. *Worry about crime* sits 9 per cent above the NI average; the remaining four indicators, *homicide, public disorder, violent and weapon crime*, and the paramilitary indicator itself, all sit below it.

Year-on-year direction in the latest period is consistent with the 2019 to 2025 trajectory on five of the six indicators.

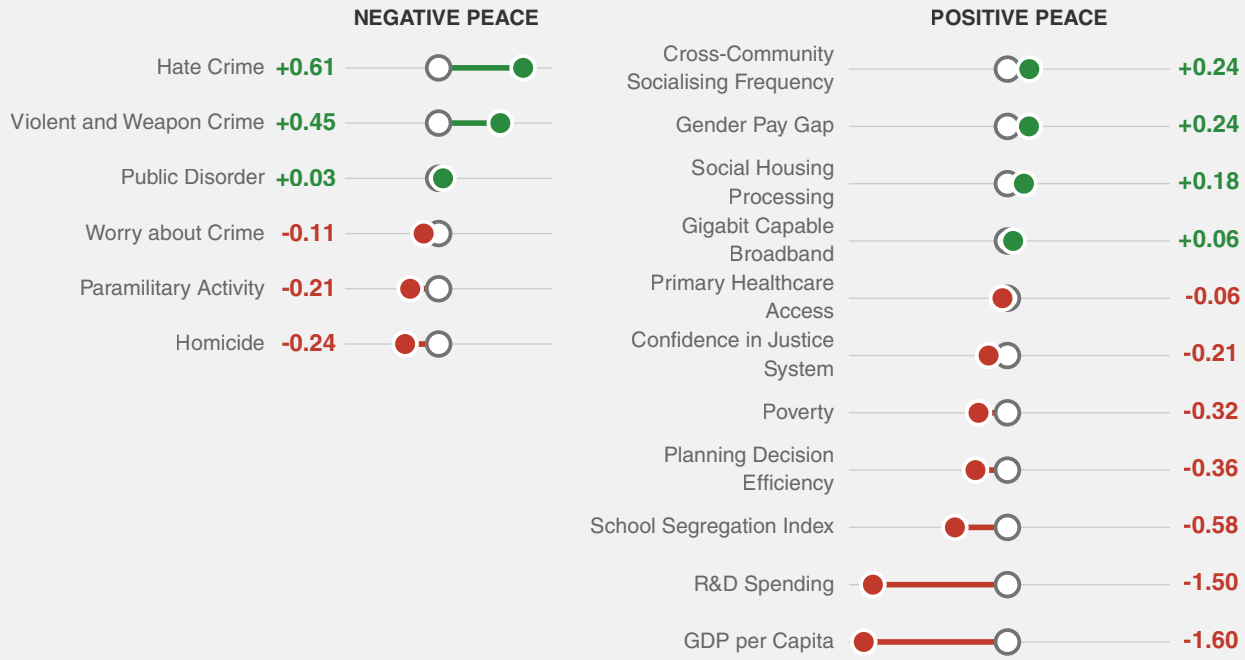
On Positive Peace, the council performs above the Northern Ireland average on the governance and intercommunal pillars, *confidence in the justice system, planning decision efficiency and cross-community socialising*, but trails on *school segregation, poverty and primary healthcare access*. The largest single movement is on *R&D spending*, which fell from 2.4 to 1.6 per cent of gross value added (GVA) between 2019 and 2025, mirroring the region-wide deterioration on this indicator but at a sharper pace from a higher base. The composite Positive Peace score improved 1.9 per cent since 2019, in the lower half of the range recorded across 11 councils. The improvement is concentrated in the institutional dimensions where the council already leads, rather than in the economic and access dimensions where it lags.

The 2025 picture is one of an institutionally strong council with two specific exposures: a persistent hate crime rate, and a weakening economic base with higher *poverty* on which the council's wider Positive Peace position depends.

Ards and North Down

FIGURE 24

Ards and North Down vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Ards and North Down is one of the more analytically complex among the 11 councils. Three of the six negative peace indicators sit above the region-wide average, with two of them moving against the downward NI trend between 2019 and 2025. The Positive Peace position is shaped by a contrast between stronger social and intercommunal outcomes and weaker economic foundations (Figure 24).

On negative peace, *paramilitary activity* stood 58 per cent above the region-wide average in 2025, *homicide* 86 per cent above, and *worry about crime* fractionally above. The remaining three indicators, *hate crime, violent and weapon crime, and public disorder*, sat below the NI level. The shift on *paramilitary activity* is the most analytically distinctive: the indicator rose 52 per cent against the 2019 baseline, making the council one of two, alongside Causeway Coast and Glens, where this indicator has moved against the region-wide downward trend. *Worry about crime* crossed from below to fractionally above the region-wide level over the same period.

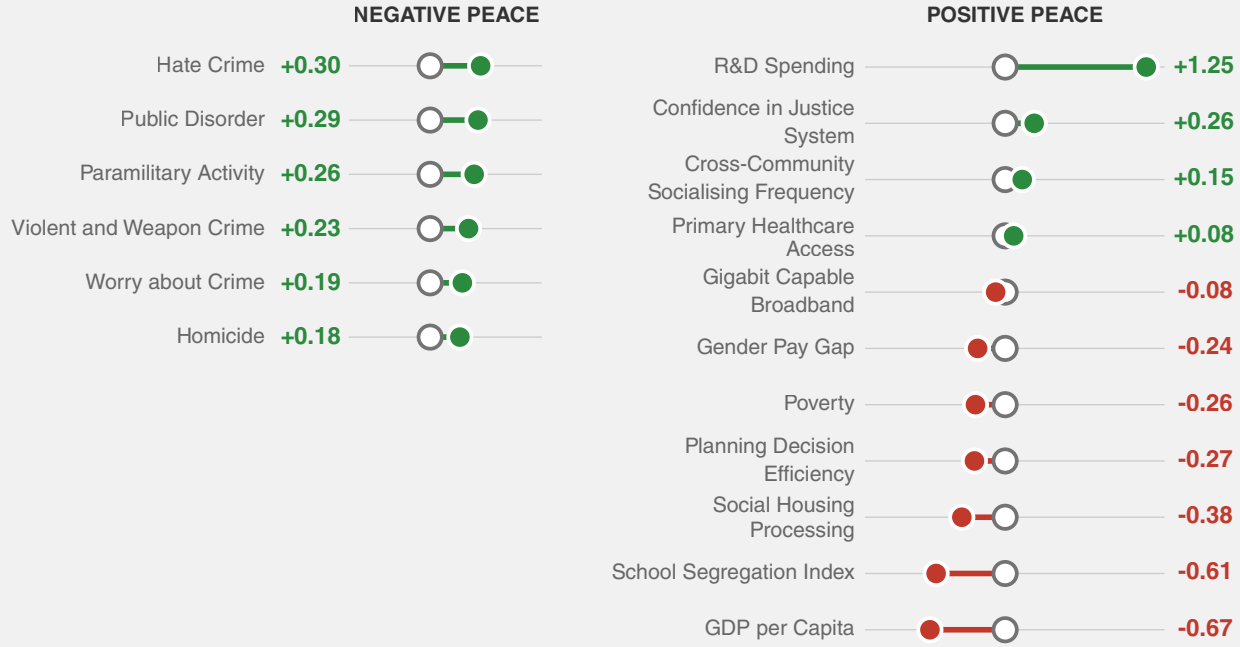
On Positive Peace, *cross-community socialising* and *gender pay gap* both sit above the region-wide level. The economic indicators, such as *GDP per capita*, sit well below it, and *R&D spending* is the lowest on the normalised scale, at 0.19 per cent of GVA.

Read against the NI average, the council's 2025 profile is shaped by weakness spread across the Positive Peace indicators and concentrated on negative peace in a small number of specific dimensions. The gap between the council's economic indicators and the region-wide level is the largest single deficit recorded across the profile, and the only negative peace measure to widen against the region-wide trajectory is paramilitary activity.

Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon

FIGURE 25

Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon records the most favourable negative peace profile of any council and the strongest *R&D position* on the Positive Peace side, a combination that makes it the closest the region comes to a comprehensively improving district, while also illustrating the limits of that characterisation (Figure 25). On negative peace, the council recorded rates below the regional level on all six indicators in 2025, with *paramilitary activity* the second-lowest of any council and *hate crime* down 16 per cent since 2019, among the largest falls on this indicator recorded by any LGD.

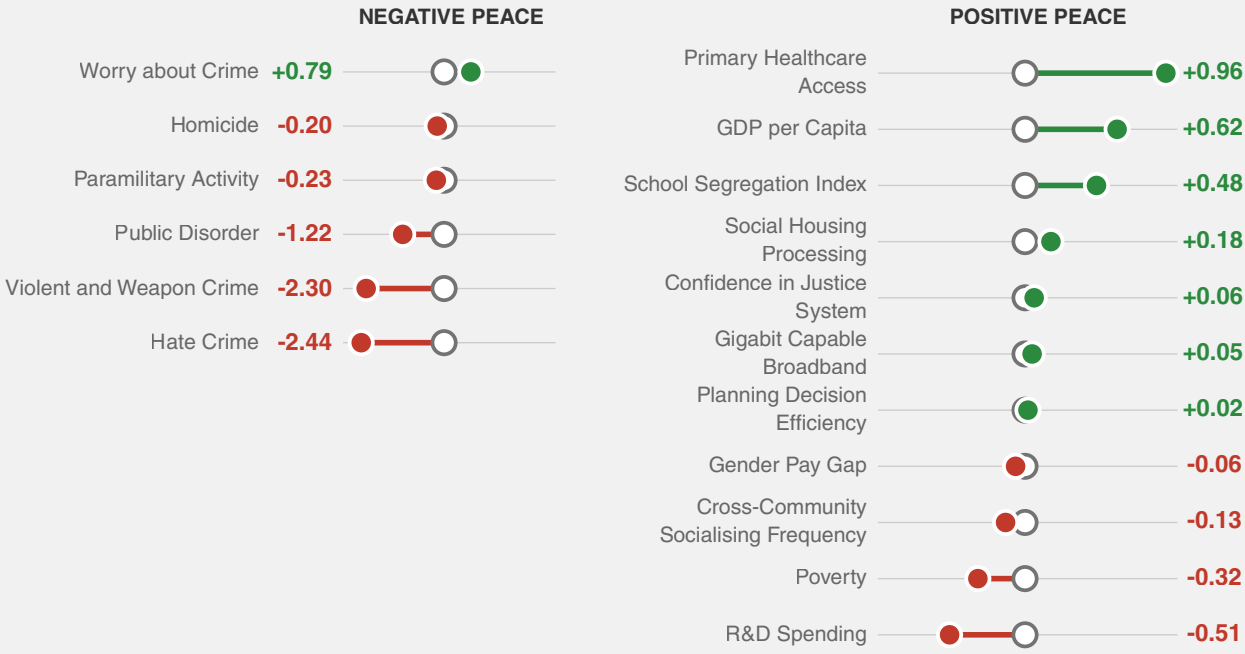
On Positive Peace, the council records the highest *R&D spending* of any LGD at 2.56 per cent of GVA, 1.25 score points above the region-wide average and the largest positive-indicator gap among councils. This sits alongside persistent deficits on *GDP per capita*, *school segregation and social housing processing*. The R&D strength reflects a small cluster of large research active employers rather than a broad-based knowledge economy, and whether it translates into broader economic dynamism is not yet evident in the GDP or equity indicators. The composite Positive Peace score of those indicators improved 3.5 per cent since 2019, one of the stronger improvements among the councils.

In 2025, the council reads as a comprehensively improving one whose Positive Peace gain rests on sectoral concentration rather than systemic depth, leaving the R&D-anchored position sensitive to changes in a small number of large employers.

Belfast City

FIGURE 26

Belfast City vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Belfast's peace record is the most analytically distinctive in the region, simultaneously the council with the highest negative peace and the strongest aggregate Positive Peace position (Figure 26). On negative peace, Belfast recorded *hate crime* at around three times the region-wide rate, the highest of any council; *public disorder and violent and weapon crime* both more than double the regional average; and *paramilitary activity* 65 per cent above. The one indicator below the regional level is *worry about crime*, the second-lowest of the 11 LGDs and markedly below what the council's recorded harm among would imply. The contrast is consistent with an urban environment in which higher baseline incident rates are a persistent structural feature rather than a signal of deteriorating conditions, and where residents adapt their risk perception accordingly.

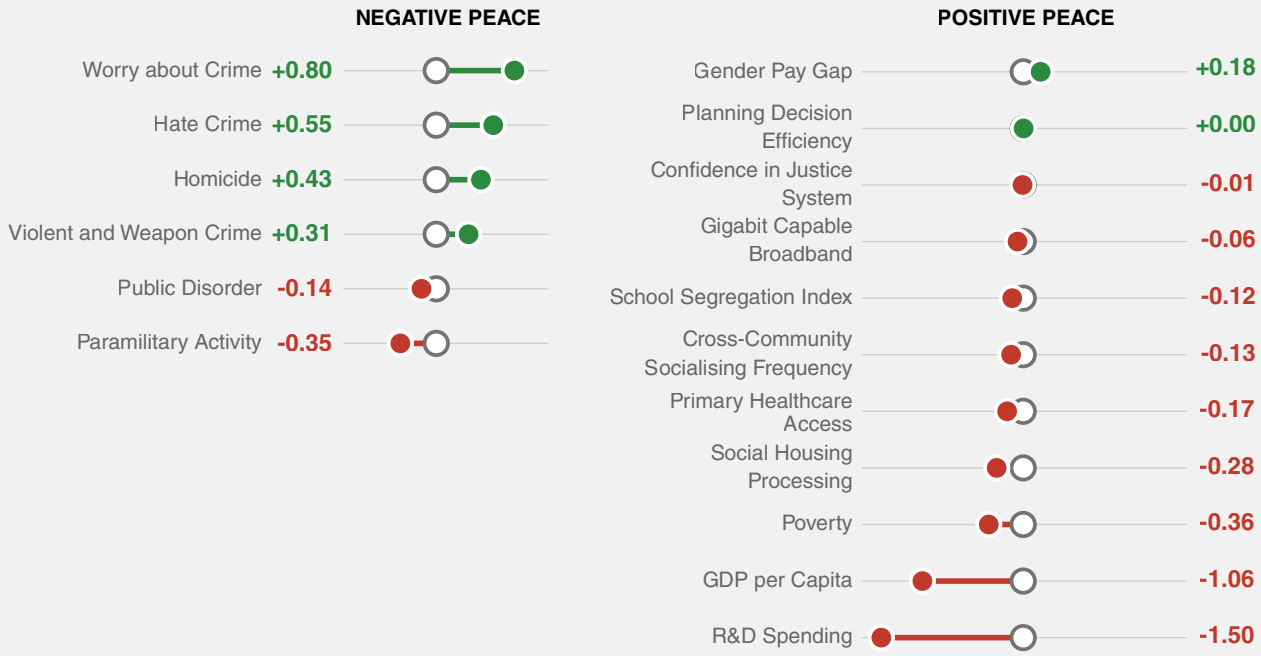
On Positive Peace, Belfast records the strongest aggregate composite among the councils, leading the region on *primary healthcare access, GDP per capita and school segregation*. Against these, *poverty, cross-community socialising and R&D spending*, and *gender pay gap* all sit below the NI average, and R&D spending has fallen from 2.0 to 1.2 per cent of GVA since 2019.

Belfast's 2025 position pairs the strongest structural Positive Peace foundations in the region with the highest recorded violence: a spatial concentration of both economic capacity and persistent harm within the same boundary, typical of a highly urbanised area, and a within-LGD inequality that the aggregate position conceals.

Causeway Coast and Glens

FIGURE 27

Causeway Coast and Glens vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Causeway Coast and Glens presents a peace profile defined by one of the highest *paramilitary activity* rates on the negative peace side, and a broad Positive Peace outperformance with two especially weak indicators, *R&D spending and GDP per capita* (Figure 27).

On negative peace, the council recorded a *paramilitary activity* rate of 11 incidents per 100,000 residents, 98 per cent above the region-wide level and rising in the past year, against rates that trail the region on four of the remaining five indicators. *Homicide* recorded zero in 2025, *hate crime* fell 32.7 per cent since 2019, but remains below the regional average, and *worry about crime* is the lowest of any council. Outside the paramilitary picture, the profile is one of the more favourable among the councils.

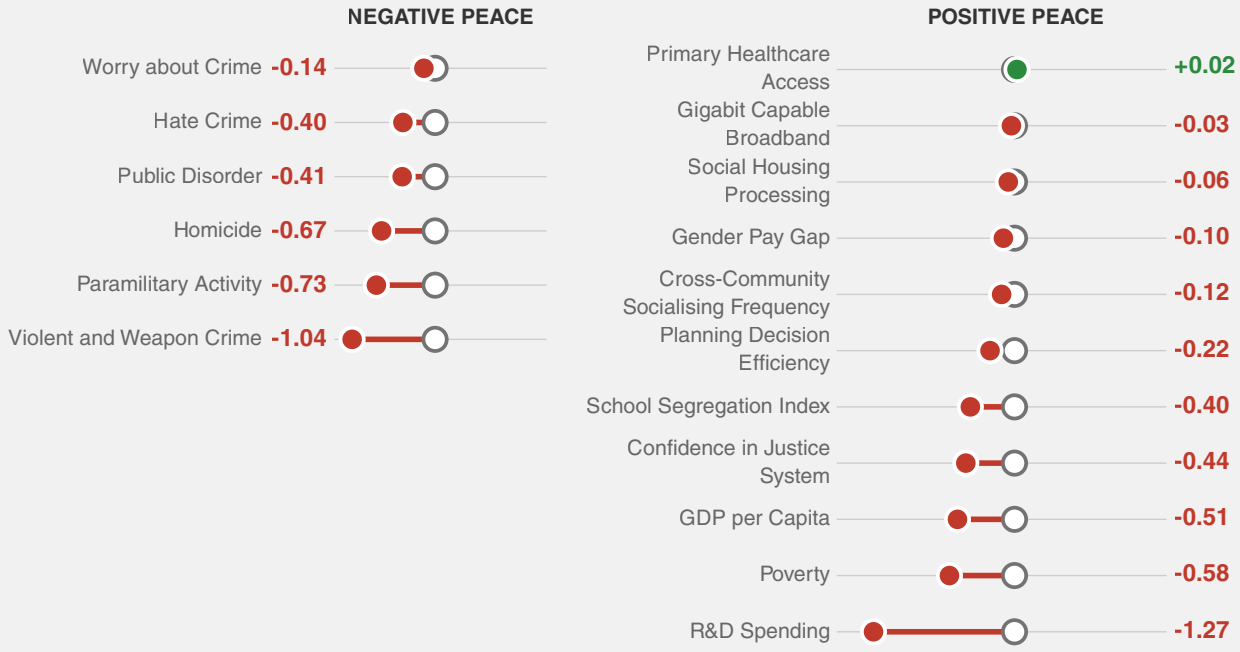
On Positive Peace, *R&D spending* is 0.41 per cent of GVA, the second lowest of any council and *GDP per capita* is 1.06 score points below the NI average, one of the largest economic deficits recorded by any council. *Gender pay gap* is the only indicator above the region level. The composite Positive Peace score improved 3.3 per cent since 2019, but the gain reflects Northern Ireland's overall improvements on the rights and information pillars rather than council-specific economic progress.

What sets Causeway Coast and Glens apart from the region-wide trajectory is concentrated in a few indicators rather than spread across the framework. *Paramilitary activity* has continued to move against the NI downward trend, and the economic base has not converged on the region-wide level on research investment or output. The remaining indicators have broadly tracked the Northern Ireland average across the period.

Derry and Strabane

FIGURE 28

Derry and Strabane vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Derry and Strabane presents the most acute combined peace challenge in Northern Ireland (Figure 28). On negative peace, the council recorded the highest rates of any LGD on *paramilitary activity*, over three times the region-wide figure and exceeding Belfast's, and the highest *homicide* rate, approximately two and a half times the NI average. *Violent and weapon crime* and *public disorder* also sit well above the regional level. *Hate crime* recorded a past-year fall of 20 per cent, the second largest single-year improvement on this indicator across the councils. The *paramilitary activity* rate is structurally embedded rather than transitional. Causeway Coast and Glens, Belfast City and Ards and North Down were the other three councils above the region-wide level in 2025.[78]

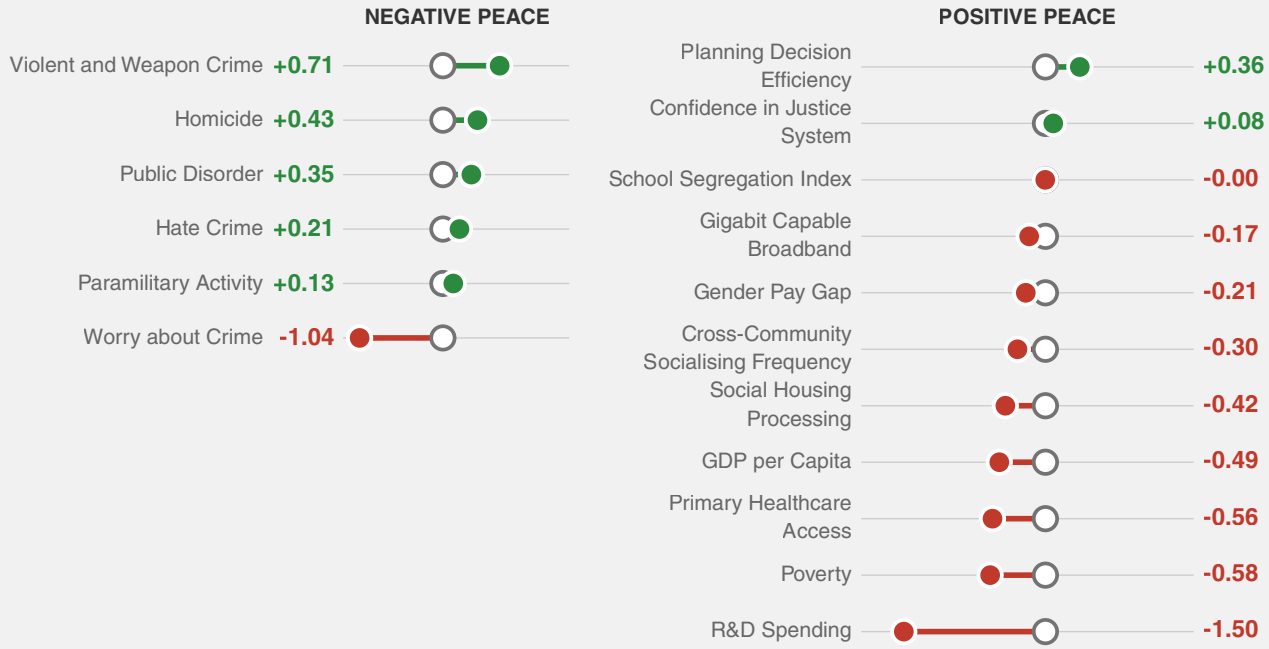
On Positive Peace, Derry and Strabane records the weakest aggregate composite among the councils, with 10 of the 11 indicators trailing the region. *R&D spending* is 1.27 score points below the NI level, *poverty* 0.58 below and *GDP per capita* 0.51 below. The composite improved only 0.5 per cent since 2019, the joint-smallest improvement among all councils. Similarly, a cross-UK Deprivation Index ranked the council, along with Belfast, as one of the most deprived local authorities in the UK, with 45 per cent of its zones in the most deprived 10 per cent UK-wide.[79]

In 2025, both dimensions of peace face structural deficits here, with the sharp single-year improvement on *hate crime* being the most positive movement in the profile and its durability the key indicator to track in the next edition.

Fermanagh and Omagh

FIGURE 29

Fermanagh and Omagh vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Fermanagh and Omagh records one of the widest gaps between high perceived harm and low recorded harm of any council, close behind Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. A combination that is analytically significant for understanding how peace is experienced in the largest council by geographic area and the lowest in population density (Figure 29). Five of the six negative peace indicators sat below the region-wide level in 2025, with *worry about crime* as the single exception. On Positive Peace, two institutional indicators perform above the NI average. The indicators that capture economic capacity and access perform well below.

On negative peace, the council recorded rates below the regional level on five indicators, including the second-lowest *violent and weapon crime rate* and among the lowest *paramilitary activity* rates of any council. The one exception is *worry about crime*, which sits well above the region-wide level. The divergence between low recorded harm and high perceived harm is consistent with the council's older population profile and dispersed rural geography, in which the legacy of conflict-era fear and limited community visibility of policing activity may shape risk perception independently of contemporary recorded incidents.

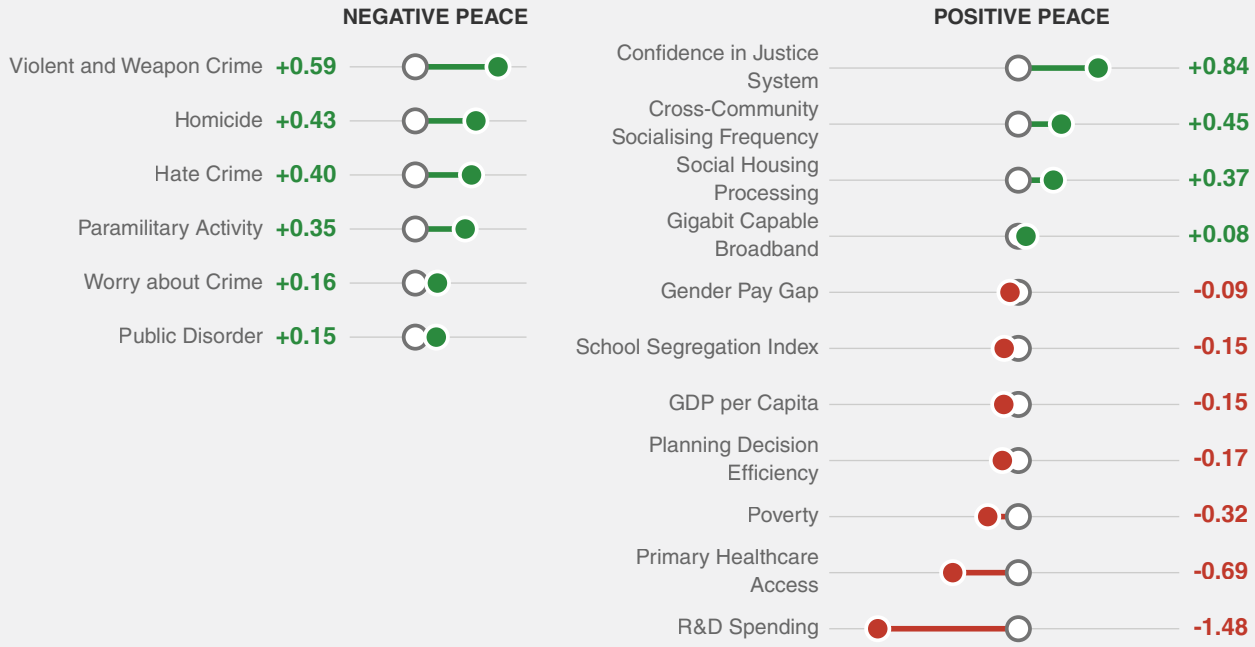
On Positive Peace, the council records *planning decision efficiency* above the NI level and modestly stronger *confidence in the justice system*, against substantial deficits on *R&D spending*, *primary healthcare access and poverty*, the largest *healthcare access* deficit of any council at 0.56 score points below the NI average, reflecting the access constraints of a dispersed rural population. The composite improved 2.6 per cent since 2019.

As of 2025, formal peace is well-established here in the recorded data and governance indicators are functioning adequately, but the principal constraints are structural: economic capacity, healthcare access and a risk-perception gap that the recorded indicators alone cannot explain.

Lisburn and Castlereagh

FIGURE 30

Lisburn and Castlereagh vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Of the 11 councils, Lisburn and Castlereagh records the strongest negative peace performance in the region and the highest institutional confidence indicators on the Positive Peace side (Figure 30). Its overall Positive Peace position, however, sits in the middle of the range. The council is the clearest case in the region of negative peace outperformance not translating into commensurate Positive Peace performance, a pattern driven by indicators of economic dynamism and access rather than by institutional or community-relations weaknesses.

On negative peace, the council recorded rates below the regional level on all six indicators in 2025, including zero *paramilitary activity*, the lowest in the region, and zero *homicide*. The single movement to watch is worry about crime, which rose 24 per cent in the past year, the only deterioration across the six indicators in this profile. However, the rate remains below the region-wide average.

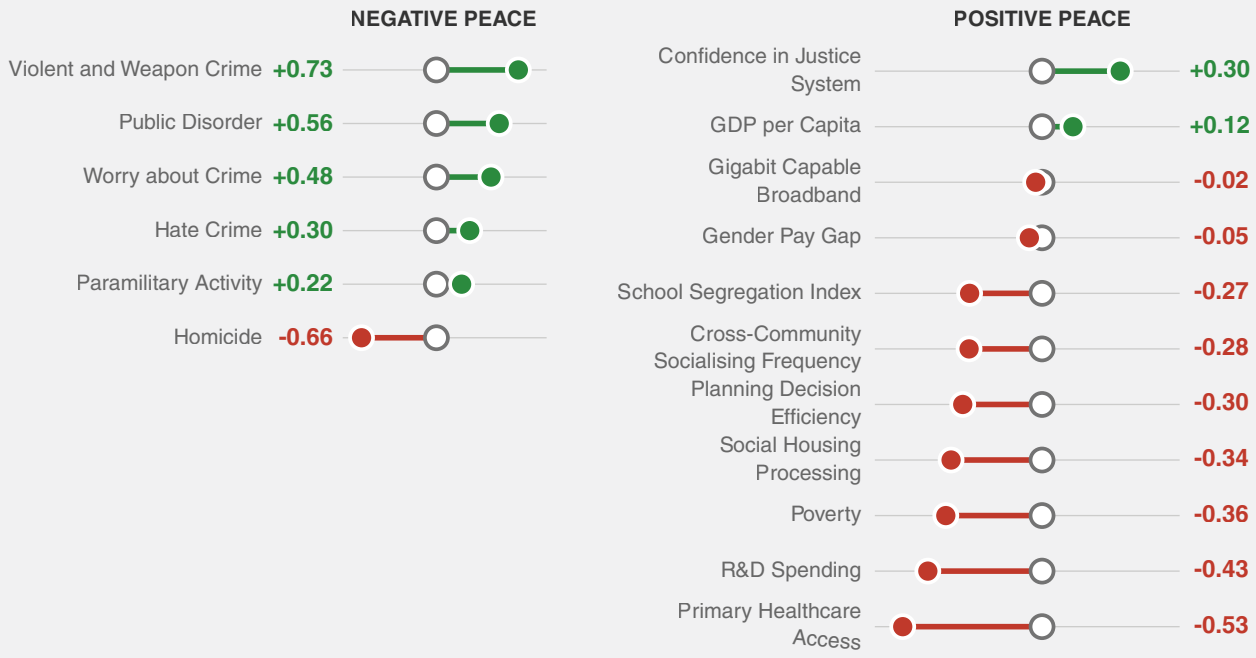
On Positive Peace, the institutional indicators dominate the council's strengths. *Confidence in the justice* system sits 0.84 score points above the NI average, the highest of any LGD. *Cross-community socialising frequency* is also the highest of any council. Against these, *R&D spending and primary healthcare* trail the region. *School segregation and GDP per capita* also are below the region-wide level. The composite improved 2.1 per cent since 2019, in step with the region-wide trajectory.

The decoupling reflects Lisburn and Castlereagh's specific economic geography. The council's affluence is largely residential, anchored in Belfast professional employment that the council does not itself host. Indicators that measure where capital, research and productive activity are located, *R&D spending, GDP per capita*, therefore sit below the indicators that measure resident-level outcomes such as confidence in institutions, and community-relations frequency. The structural reading is that Lisburn imports the conditions of its institutional strength while exporting the labour that would normally generate the economic-dynamism indicators on its own balance sheet.

Mid Ulster

FIGURE 31

Mid Ulster vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Mid Ulster records negative peace better than the NI level on five of the six indicators in 2025, with *homicide* as the single exception (Figure 31).

Five of the six Negative Peace indicators sit below the NI average: violent and weapon crime, public disorder, paramilitary activity, worry about crime, and hate crime. Homicide is the exception, running at roughly 1.5 times the region-wide rate, though the figure rests on small absolute numbers and is sensitive to single events. Within the five below-average indicators, hate crime warrants attention: the rate rose 44 per cent since 2019, outpacing the region-wide rise, even as it remains below the NI average in absolute terms. The broader profile is consistent with a council in which recorded violence has receded materially from the regional level on most dimensions, with one outlier indicator that the small absolute base makes volatile from year to year.

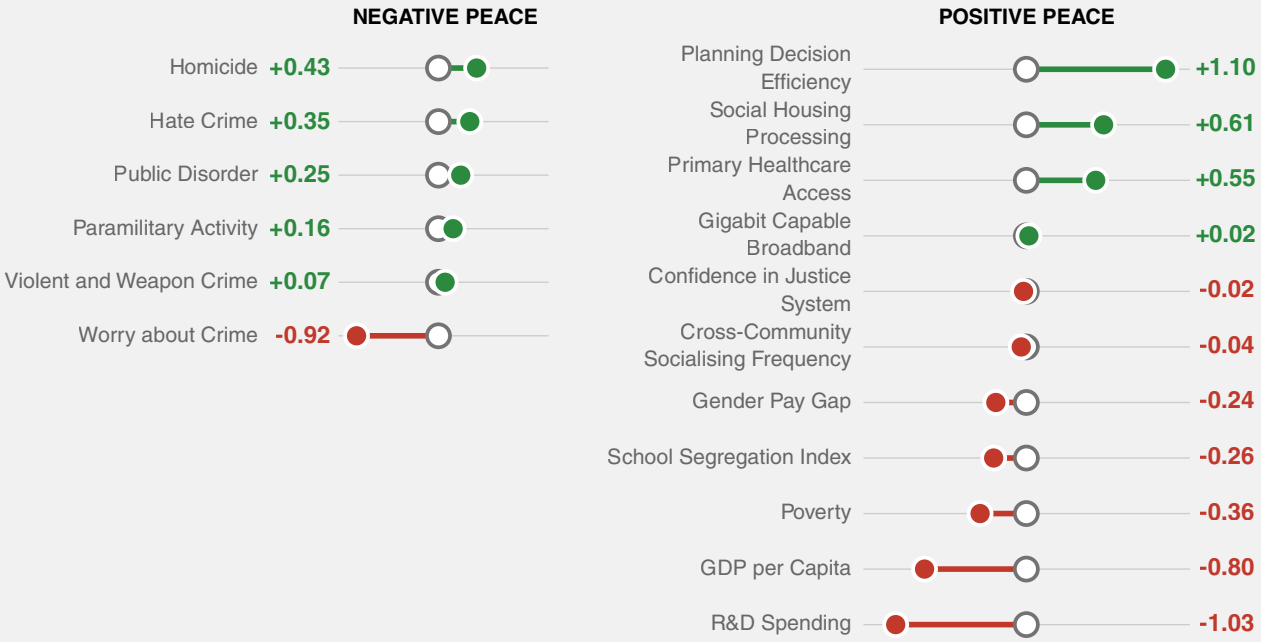
On Positive Peace, 9 of the 11 council-level indicators fall below the regional level. The two exceptions are *confidence in the justice system*, modestly above the NI level, and *GDP per capita*, the only economic indicator ahead of the region. *R&D spending and poverty* record substantial deficits against the region-wide average. The composite of those available indicators improved 3.8 per cent since 2019, among the stronger improvements recorded across the 11 councils.

Mid Ulster's 2025 position pairs broad negative peace performance, marred by a single outlier indicator, with a structurally weaker Positive Peace base that is improving roughly in line with the overall NI trajectory rather than gaining on it. The underlying economic activity, anchored in the manufacturing centres such as Cookstown, Magherafelt and Dungannon, has not yet fed through to the Positive Peace indicators most exposed to economic dynamism, which continue to track the region-wide level from below.

Mid and East Antrim

FIGURE 32

Mid and East Antrim vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

Anchored by the industrial-town corridor of Larne, Ballymena and Carrickfergus, Mid and East Antrim records a negative peace position substantially better than the NI level on recorded violence but significantly worse on perception of safety (Figure 32). On the Positive Peace side, the council imporoved since 2019, though the average hides wide variation between communities.

On negative peace, the council recorded zero *homicide* in 2025, *paramilitary activity* 47 per cent below the NI average, and *public disorder* 25 per cent below. *Worry about crime*, by contrast, sat 52 per cent above the region-wide level. *Violent and weapon crime* sat broadly in line with the NI position. The gap between what the recorded indicators show and what the perception of safety records is the central feature of the negative peace profile. The divergence mirrors the pattern observed in Fermanagh and Omagh: below-average recorded harm alongside above-average fear, consistent with an older population and the legacy of strong paramilitary presence in former industrial communities.

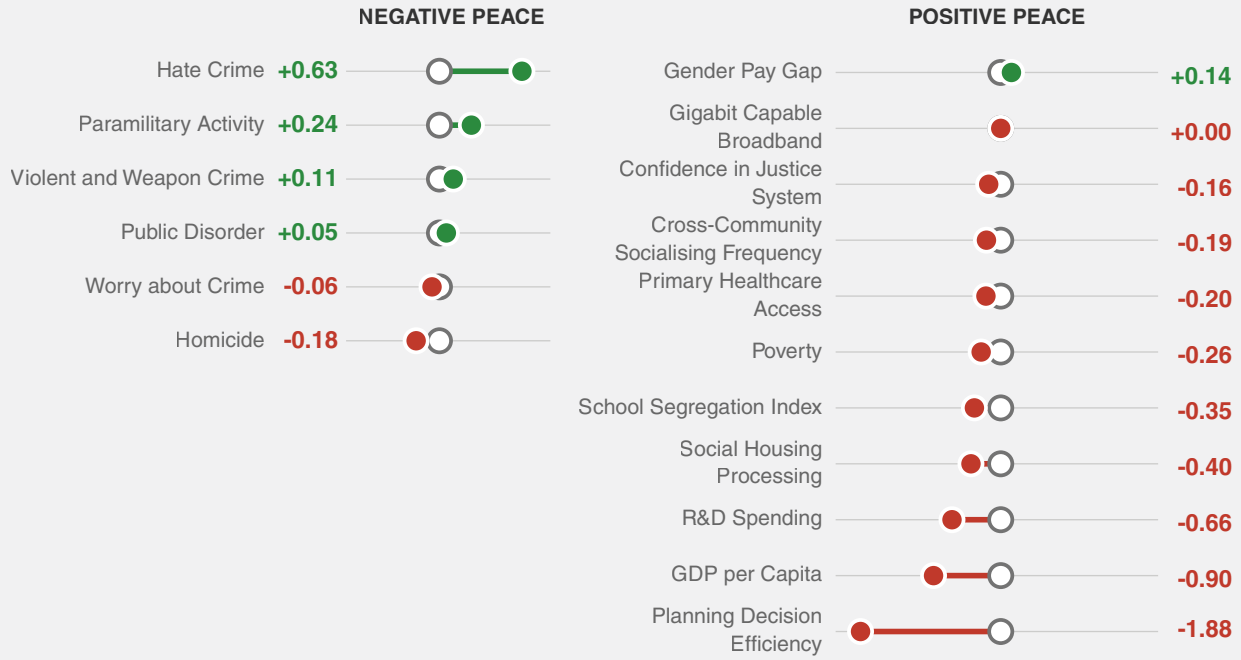
On Positive Peace, *planning decision efficiency* sits 1.10 score points above the NI average, the largest surplus on the council's own profile. *Social housing processing and primary healthcare* access also sit above the region-wide level. Against these, *R&D spending and GDP per capita* sit below the NI level. The aggregate position improved 5.5 per cent since 2019, materially outpacing the region-wide trajectory.

As of 2025, Mid and East Antrim combines the region's strongest administrative throughput and the largest aggregate Positive Peace improvement since 2019 with health outcomes and economic capacity that points to concentrations of structural deprivation.

Newry, Mourne and Down

FIGURE 33

Newry, Mourne and Down vs NI Average, 2025



Source: IEP calculations
Positive values indicate better performance than the Northern Ireland level; negative values indicate worse.

At the south-eastern edge of the region, Newry, Mourne and Down is the most rural and most border-adjacent of the 11 councils, and its 2025 peace profile carries the structural signature of that geography (Figure 33). *Hate crime* is the lowest of any LGD. Conversely, nine of the 11 council-level Positive Peace indicators fall below the regional level, matching Causeway Coast and Glens and Mid Ulster, and behind only Derry and Strabane at 10. These two findings sit on different structural mechanisms. The low recorded violence reflects a density effect common to rural councils: low population concentration, fewer interactions in public space, fewer incidents to record. The weaker Positive Peace position reflects a separate pattern, the concentration of institutional, economic and material capacity elsewhere, which leaves the south-eastern border belt structurally underweight on the indicators the framework measures, regardless of how rural the council is, such as *planning decision efficiency*.

The negative peace findings reinforce that reading. The council's *hate crime* rate is roughly half the region-wide figure, having fallen around 10 per cent between 2019 and 2025 even as the region-wide rate rose. *Paramilitary activity, violent and weapon crime and public disorder* all sit below the NI level. *Homicide* is 41 per cent above the region-wide rate, but the absolute base is small and the rate is sensitive to single events; this is more a methodological caveat than a substantive finding. *Worry about crime* hovers fractionally above the region-wide figure.

Across the Positive Peace framework, the picture inverts. Only one indicator, *gender pay gap*, is modestly above the NI average. *Planning decision efficiency* sits 1.88 score points below the region-wide level, the largest single-indicator deficit recorded anywhere among the councils. *GDP per capita and R&D spending* are substantially below the region, as are *school segregation, cross-community socialising and primary healthcare access,* followed by *social housing processing, school segregation index*. The composite from those indicators improved 3.0 per cent since 2019, ahead of the 0.9 per cent region-wide improvement, but it does so from one of the lowest starting points of any council.

Read together, Newry, Mourne and Down is the structural counterpart to Belfast at the opposite end of the urbanisation gradient. Newry records comparatively low levels of violence. The LGD's 2019 to 2025 trajectory is consistent with the NI average direction, but the position from which it moves is the challenging starting point on the Positive Peace side of the Index. A structural governance constraint, such as the planning system, directly limits the pace at which economic and housing development can respond to the wider challenges.

Summary Analysis

The 2025 Northern Ireland Peace Index confirms two things. Northern Ireland has successfully consolidated a relative absence of violence. At the same time, the structural foundations that would render that absence of violence self-sustaining have not consolidated at the same pace. The gap between the two trajectories is the central finding of this report.

Four structural dynamics account for that gap and are likely to persist absent deliberate intervention.

The first is the institutional constraint embedded in the peace architecture itself. The consociational arrangements established under the 1998 Agreement have been highly effective at eliminating organised political violence. They have also produced a political system in which representation is anchored in communal designation, in which the incentive structure rewards the maintenance of inter-communal difference over cross-community engagement and integration, and in which the absence of consensus produces institutional suspension rather than compromise. The two-year absence of a functioning Executive between 2022 and 2024 is the most recent expression of a pattern that has now repeated itself across the Agreement's history. Each suspension concentrates measurable deterioration across the institutional trust and government functioning indicators; each restoration produces only partial recovery. There is also declining trust in Northern Ireland's legacy justice architecture. Some reports find that the unresolved legacy of the Troubles and changes to legacy institutional mechanisms, such as to the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR), have contributed to a decline in public confidence in Northern Ireland's justice architecture.[80] The net effect since 2019 is that institutional trust has not consolidated alongside the absence of violence; the institutions that the Agreement placed at the centre of the peace settlement remain functional but not yet effective in the eyes of all sections of the population.

The second dynamic concerns the economic base on which peace consolidation depends. The R&D deterioration documented earlier is, in this report's reading, the clearest single measure of the region's choice: whether Northern Ireland converts its improving Positive Peace foundations into self-sustaining economic depth, or remains a high-quality supplier to a system whose centre of gravity sits elsewhere. Without a domestic research-intensive sector, the region's gains on gender pay gap, gigabit broadband and healthcare access produce skilled labour, connectivity and operational capacity that mainly accrue to economies headquartered outside it. This is the mechanism through which the Positive Peace gap with the UK is most likely to widen rather than close, and it is why the R&D indicator carries diagnostic weight beyond its own pillar; its trajectory tells which of the two futures the region is moving toward. The same pattern appears in the comparative data: Northern Ireland matches or exceeds the rest of the United Kingdom on social, equity and material conditions while trailing it on economic dynamism, and sits close to but slightly behind the Republic of Ireland on the small set of directly comparable measures.

The third is that Northern Ireland has delivered rights-based peace faster than social-fabric peace, and the gap between them is a primary risk factor. There is a divergence and in some cases a decoupling between formal progress on rights and equity and the social fabric conditions that are the primary co-movers with violence. The Index records genuine and consistent improvement on gender pay gap, social exclusion, public appointments and perceived discrimination. These are meaningful gains. At the same time, school segregation remains structurally embedded, cross-community socialising has declined, and favourability towards the other community has fallen by 40 per cent on the score since 2019. The indicators that move most strongly with negative peace, namely housing access, school segregation, youth disengagement and social exclusion, are either stalling or reversing in the most recent observations. Formal equality has advanced; the social fabric conditions that underpin durable peace have not followed at the same rate.

The fourth is perceived unfairness relative to measured inequality. The poverty rate has fallen marginally over the period. Confidence in the justice system has worsened by 24 per cent on the score. Trust in the NI Assembly remains low in absolute terms, with fewer than three in ten expressing trust, and gave back part of its post-2019 gain in the latest year. Research consistently shows that the political mobilisation of grievance is driven more by perceived unfairness than by measured deprivation;[81] in a society recovering from violent conflict where institutional legitimacy was a central element of the peace settlement, the direction of those perception indicators carries more weight than their absolute level alone would suggest.

Collectively, these four dynamics describe a peace that is stable but not yet generated its own momentum. The trajectory of Positive Peace is not deteriorating;

it is broadly flat. A flat or stagnant score in a post-conflict society is not a sign of stability. It indicates that the conditions required to move from the absence of violence to a fully functioning peaceful society are not yet in place. These conditions are also unevenly distributed across the region: the council-level analysis shows the challenge is most acute in Derry and Strabane and in the more deprived parts of Belfast, where economic disadvantage, weak social-fabric conditions and the legacy of violence coincide.

Several factors could disturb the current equilibrium. Economic deterioration, particularly if felt unevenly across communities, risks amplifying perceptions of unfairness and fuelling identity-based disorder. Prolonged political breakdown, such as extended suspension of the Assembly, erodes institutional legitimacy and public trust. Demographic change and shifts in constitutional preferences introduce identity-based pressures that the current architecture is not well positioned to absorb. Youth disengagement, particularly among those who did not experience the conflict directly, may reduce both tolerance for the *status quo* and investment in maintaining it. The risk to peace is not driven by deprivation alone, but by the intersection of economic disadvantage, perceived inequality, and weak cross-community integration.

On the one hand, meaningful reform of Agreement legacy institutions must prioritise independent, transparent and human rights-compliant processes and genuine stakeholder engagement if public Trust in Institutions, confidence in the justice system, and *Well-Functioning Government* indicators are to improve. On the other hand, the most viable path to deeper consolidation runs through interventions that are incremental, technically sound and politically low-cost. These operate through institutions that sit outside the most contested space, and are oriented towards shared economic activity, infrastructure and civic systems rather than redistributive transfers. In practice this points to interventions such as more integrated education provision, shared enterprise and innovation hubs that draw their workforce from both communities, university–industry research partnerships, and civic and transport infrastructure sited deliberately to be used in common. Each can be advanced through delivery bodies that sit outside the contested space, and each builds genuine interdependence between communities rather than simply co-locating two separate systems.

Northern Ireland has built the social and digital infrastructure foundations of contemporary peace. The defining question for the coming decade is whether it can convert that base into the institutional confidence, economic depth and intercommunal integration that would make the current peace position durable rather than contingent. As an evidence-based structural measure of peace, the Index also offers a ready instrument for monitoring that progress over time, so that the trajectory of peace consolidation can be tracked alongside the other outcomes stakeholders already monitor.

BOX 2:

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of the 2025 Northern Ireland Peace Index point to four areas where policy intervention is most likely to advance peace consolidation.

- Restoring trust in the NI Assembly, the justice system and public bodies requires both operational improvement and visible accountability. Reforms that reduce the frequency and duration of institutional suspension, including the petition of concern mechanism and the designation system, would address the structural source of periodic collapse rather than its symptoms. Transparency in public appointments, prosecutorial decision-making and council planning performance would address the perception gap between institutional functioning and public confidence in that functioning.
- Northern Ireland's dependence on multinational offices for its most research-intensive activity is a structural vulnerability that cannot be resolved through inward investment alone. University-industry partnerships, domestic R&D incentives and support for scale-up of locally owned businesses in technology, life sciences and renewable energy would begin to build the domestic research base that currently does not exist on a meaningful scale.
- The shared-structure interventions operate through physical and economic channels: transport links between separated communities, shared digital infrastructure, cross-community employment programmes and grant funding tied to diverse hiring practices each create economic incentives for integration that supplement political ones. The critical design principle is that these measures build peace only where they generate genuine interdependence. Where they follow existing community boundaries, they risk consolidating division rather than eroding it.
- Housing access, school segregation and youth disengagement are the structural conditions most strongly associated with worse peace outcomes. This does not establish a short-run causal mechanism; the associations reflect deep structural and geographic patterns rather than year-to-year co-movement, but it does identify where the foundations of sustained peace are weakest. Expanding integrated education provision, accelerating social housing supply and maintaining investment in youth employment and training programmes are supported by the evidence as addressing the right structural conditions, particularly in districts where all three coincide.

Across all four areas, the Index's evidence, structural and correlational rather than causal, supports a preventive, long-run and place-based approach. It identifies where the foundations of peace are weakest and where resources are best targeted, but it does not establish that any single intervention will produce measurable short-term reductions in violence.

Appendix: Methodology

The Northern Ireland Peace Index builds on the Institute for Economics & Peace's established methodological framework for measuring peace, applied through the Global Peace Index, the Positive Peace Index and a series of country- and region-level indices developed since 2007. The Index is constructed entirely from existing data sources (official statistics, administrative records and established survey series) and no primary data was collected for this work. The Northern Ireland Peace Index adapts this framework to a sub-national, post-conflict region and produces two complementary measures. Negative peace in Northern Ireland captures the absence of violence and the fear of violence. Positive Peace in Northern Ireland captures the attitudes, institutions and structures that sustain peace in the long term. Both are reported at the region-wide level and across each of Northern Ireland's 11 Local Government Districts.

What the Index Does and Does Not Measure

The Northern Ireland Peace Index measures the structural conditions associated with the consolidation of peace in Northern Ireland, tracking the six negative peace indicators and eight Positive Peace pillars each year across the 11 Local Government Districts. It captures the current state and trajectory of those conditions rather than the outcome of any specific policy intervention. Its primary function is monitoring and early warning: it is designed to detect stress points and deterioration before they become visible in violence statistics. It also shows how Northern Ireland compares with itself over time and how the districts compare with the region.

The Index does not measure whether specific policies are working. It is a monitoring instrument rather than an evaluation instrument, and causal attribution requires controlled analysis that an annual composite Index cannot provide. It does not capture short-run responses to intervention, because the structural mechanisms through which Positive Peace conditions affect violence operate over generational timescales rather than annual policy cycles; year-on-year stability or improvement does not mean that interventions are succeeding, and deterioration does not mean that they are failing. Nor does it measure the stability of the political settlement directly, as the legitimacy and continuity of the power-sharing institutions are only partially captured through the *Trust in Institutions* pillar, and political shocks such as suspension of the Assembly operate faster and at a different level than the structural indicators the Index tracks. The correlation analysis does not establish causality: the associations between Positive Peace indicators and the negative peace indicators reflect structural and geographic patterns across the period, and while they identify the right domains and the right places for policy attention, they cannot show that improving a given indicator will reduce violence within a measurable timeframe. Read in this light, the Index is understood as a recurring structural health check on the consolidation of peace, identifying where deficits persist, where stress is building, and where the foundations of sustained peace remain incomplete.

Indicator Selection

Construction of both components of the NIPI was preceded by a structured data audit. Approximately 900 candidate indicators were screened against five criteria: conceptual alignment with the IEP framework; robustness and provenance of the source data; geographic and temporal coverage at Northern Ireland and Local Government District level; methodological consistency over the reference period; and relationship with the wider construct.

The audit drew on Northern Ireland-specific from 40 sources, including PSNI crime statistics, NISRA series, the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey, the ARK Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey and Young Life and Times Survey, and data from government departments including the Department for the Economy, the Department for Infrastructure, the Department for Communities, the Department of Health, and the Department of Justice, as well as agencies including the Equality Commission, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Public Health Agency, and Invest NI and others. The screening yielded a final set of six negative peace indicators and 24 Positive Peace indicators for Northern Ireland, the latter distributed across the eight Positive Peace Pillars at three indicators per Pillar. The indicator definitions, sources, coverage windows and direction conventions are set out in Tables A1 and A2.

Indicator selection was further informed by a structured consultation programme. An Expert Panel was convened to review the utility of the application of the conceptual framework and the proposed indicator set. Three public consultation events were held in March

2026: two at Queen's University Belfast and one in Derry-Londonderry. The events tested the relevance of the Positive Peace concept to the Northern Ireland context, the value of a sub-national measure, the indicators it should include, and the local adaptations the framework should incorporate. Outputs from the Expert Panel and the public consultations informed the final selection and interpretation of indicators, including the two Northern Ireland-specific Pillar reframings described in the Framework chapter.

Indicator Structure

Negative Peace Indicators

Negative peace measures violence and the fear of violence across six indicators reported at Northern Ireland level and for all 11 Local Government Districts. The composite covers the period 2016 to 2025, the window in which all six indicators are simultaneously available. This start year reflects a deliberate methodological choice. The Positive Peace indicators are drawn from a wide range of survey and administrative sources with differing start dates, and 2019 is the earliest year in which all 24 are reported together. Anchoring the composite to this window maximises the use of directly observable data and minimises reliance on imputation or back-extrapolation that a longer window would require. It also places the baseline immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic, so that the series captures the full period of pandemic disruption and recovery from a clean pre-shock starting point rather than splitting it across an imputed boundary. Negative peace, whose indicators are available over a much longer period, is reported from 2005 to 2025 as set out below. All six indicators follow a 'lower = better' direction: higher recorded incidents or higher reported worry indicate worse outcomes (Table A1).

TABLE A1

Negative Peace, Indicator Structure

Indicator	Definition	Source	Coverage	Geography
Homicide	Recorded murders, manslaughters, corporate manslaughters, and infanticides per 100,000 population.	PSNI Police Recorded Crime Statistics	2002–2025	NI + 11 LGDs
Violent and Weapon Crime	Recorded violence with injury, and weapon-possession offences	PSNI Police Recorded Crime Statistics	2002–2025	NI + 11 LGDs
Public Disorder	Public order offences per 100,000 population	PSNI Police Recorded Crime Statistics	2002–2025	NI + 11 LGDs
Hate Crime	Sum of race-motivated, sectarian-motivated and sexual orientation-motivated incidents per 100,000 population	PSNI Hate Motivation Statistics	2005–2025	NI + 11 LGDs
Paramilitary Activity	Composite of security situations incidents (deaths, shootings, bombing incidents, casualties, and arrests).	PSNI Security Situation Statistics	2016–2025	NI + 11 LGDs
Worry about Crime	Per cent of adults reporting a high level of worry about crime	NISRA Safe Community Survey	2015–2025	NI + 11 LGDs

Positive Peace Indicators

The Positive Peace framework adapts the Institute for Economics & Peace's eight-pillar Positive Peace framework to Northern Ireland. The framework comprises eight pillars with three indicators per pillar, producing 24 indicators in total. The composite covers the period 2019 to 2025. The eight-pillar structure substitutes *Trust in Institutions* for the *Low Levels of Corruption* pillar used in the global Positive Peace. While corruption and institutional trust are closely related, trust is the more sensitive measure in the Northern Ireland context, capturing public confidence in government and the justice system more broadly than a corruption measure alone would allow. (Table A2).

TABLE A2

Positive Peace, Indicator Structure

Pillar	Indicator	Definition	Source	Coverage	Direction
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Gender Pay Gap	The shortfall in women's median wage relative to men's, expressed as a percentage of the male median	NISRA Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings	2013–2025	Lower = better
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Perceived Discrimination	Per cent reporting prejudice against minority ethnic communities	ARK NILT	2005–2024	Lower = better
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Social Exclusion	Composite of disability employment gap and FSM attainment gap	NISRA; Department of Education	2015–2024	Lower = better
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Poverty	Per cent below 60 per cent of NI median income (chain-linked)	NISRA and Department of Communities	2002–2025	Lower = better
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Primary Healthcare Access	Total GPs per 100,000 population	NISRA	2016–2025	Higher = better
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Life Satisfaction	Mean life satisfaction score (0–10)	NISRA	2015–2025	Higher = better
Free Flow of Information	Gigabit Capable Broadband	Per cent of premises with gigabit-capable broadband	Ofcom Connected Nations	2014–2024	Higher = better
Free Flow of Information	Trust in Media	Per cent trusting media	NISRA	2015–2025	Higher = better
Free Flow of Information	Media Impartiality	Mean importance score for impartial current affairs (1–10)	Ofcom Adult News Consumption Survey	2019–2025	Higher = better
Good Relations with Neighbours	School Segregation Index	Dissimilarity Index across school management sectors	Department of Education NI	2009–2024	Lower = better
Good Relations with Neighbours	Favourability Towards Other Community	Average of favourable views of Catholic and Protestant communities	ARK NILT	2005–2024	Higher = better
Good Relations with Neighbours	Cross-Community Socialising Frequency	Per cent of young people socialising with the other community	ARK YLT	2015–2024	Higher = better
High Levels of Human Capital	Healthy Life Expectancy	Average male and female healthy life expectancy at birth	Department of Health	2014–2024	Higher = better
High Levels of Human Capital	R&D Spending	GERD as a percentage of GVA	NISRA; ONS Regional GVA	2011–2024	Higher = better

High Levels of Human Capital	NEET Rate	Per cent of 16–24-year-olds not in education, employment or training	NISRA Labour Force Survey	2013–2025	Lower = better
Sound Business Environment	GDP per Capita	NI GDP per head as a percentage of UK GDP per head	ONS Regional GDP; Nomis	1998–2023	Higher = better
Sound Business Environment	Financial Openness	NI inward FDI stock as a percentage of NI GDP	ONS FDI Inward Tables; ONS Regional GDP	2015–2023	Higher = better
Sound Business Environment	Planning Decision Efficiency	Per cent of planning applications decided within statutory timescale	Department for Infrastructure NI	2019–2025	Higher = better
Trust in Institutions	Confidence in Justice System	Per cent who think the criminal justice system is fair	NISRA Safe Community Survey	2021–2024	Higher = better
Trust in Institutions	Trust in NI Assembly	Per cent trusting the NI Assembly	NISRA	2015–2025	Higher = better
Trust in Institutions	Non-state Controlling Influence	Per cent agreeing paramilitaries have a controlling influence	ARK NILT	2017–2024	Lower = better
Well-functioning Government	Prosecutorial Independence	Per cent confident the PPS takes independent decisions	ARK NILT	2018–2024	Higher = better
Well-functioning Government	Public Appointments Parity	Catholic representation ratio against population share	TEO Public Appointments (TBUC)	2017–2022	Higher = better
Well-functioning Government	Social Housing Processing	Allocations per 100 households on the waiting list	DfC NI Housing Statistics	2003–2025	Higher = better

UK and Ireland Comparison Indicators

Northern Ireland is not a sovereign country but a constituent nation of the United Kingdom. Establishing a meaningful comparison point therefore requires identifying which Positive Peace indicators are reported on a methodologically consistent basis across the four regions of the United Kingdom, rather than reading Northern Ireland in isolation. Of the 24 indicators in the Northern Ireland Positive Peace, nine are drawn from data sources that publish directly comparable values for Northern Ireland and for the rest of the UK. These nine indicators, spanning five of the eight Positive Peace pillars, form the basis of the comparison set out in the 'Northern Ireland compared with the UK and Ireland section. The remaining 15 indicators are drawn from Northern Ireland-specific surveys and administrative sources for which equivalent UK data are either unavailable or constructed on a methodologically different basis and are not comparable.

Throughout the section, 'rest of the UK' is calculated as the unweighted mean of England, Scotland and Wales, so that each constituent nation contributes equally to the comparison rather than the much larger English population dominating the figure. Indicator values are reported in raw form, in their original units, with comparisons taken for the latest year in which directly comparable values are available for both Northern Ireland and the three other UK nations. Absolute poverty is used in place of relative poverty. Relative poverty is defined against each nation's own median income, so the threshold itself varies between Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales and the resulting rates are not directly comparable, whereas the absolute measure applies a single fixed 2010/11 income threshold (after housing costs) identically to all four nations, supporting valid cross-national comparison (Table A3).

TABLE A3

Comparable Positive Peace Indicators, Northern Ireland and Rest of the UK

Pillar	Indicator	Definition	Source	Direction
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Gender Pay Gap	Gender pay gap (full-time employees): (male median pay – female median pay) / male median pay × 100	ONS ASHE, Nomis	Lower = better
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Absolute Poverty	Per cent of individuals below a fixed 2010/11 income threshold, after housing costs, 3-year rolling average	DWP Households Below Average Income (Family Resources Survey)	Lower = better
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Life Satisfaction	Mean life satisfaction score for adults aged 16+ (0–10 scale)	ONS Wellbeing, Local Authority dataset	Higher = better
Free Flow of Information	Gigabit Capable Broadband	Per cent of premises with access to gigabit-capable broadband, weighted by premises per local authority	Ofcom Connected Nations	Higher = better
High Levels of Human Capital	NEET Rate	Per cent of 16-to-24-year-olds not in education, employment or training, 3-year rolling average	NISRA LFS NEET (NI); ONS Young People NEET (GB)	Lower = better
High Levels of Human Capital	Healthy Life Expectancy	Average of male and female healthy life expectancy at birth, 3-year rolling average	ONS Health State Life Expectancies	Higher = better
High Levels of Human Capital	R&D Spending	Gross Expenditure on Research and Development per head of population	ONS GERD by region (GB); NISRA R&D Back Series 2011–2024 (NI)	Higher = better
Sound Business Environment	GDP per Capita	Gross Domestic Product at current market prices, per head of population	ONS Regional GDP	Higher = better
Sound Business Environment	Financial Openness	Total inward foreign direct investment stock, divided by mid-year population	ONS FDI; Nomis (population)	Higher = better

A separate, indicator-level comparison sets Northern Ireland against the Republic of Ireland. No all-island composite is built, because most Positive Peace indicators have no comparable Republic equivalent. Four indicators are currently measured on a like-for-like basis: the NEET rate, the gender pay gap, life satisfaction and healthy life expectancy. Republic values are drawn from CSO and Eurostat and Northern Ireland values from NISRA and ONS, taking the most recent year common to both series (Table A4).

Each indicator is graded for comparability: three can be quoted directly, while healthy life expectancy is directional only, since the Republic's Healthy Life Years measure and Northern Ireland's self-assessed health differ. Several other indicators are not comparable at present and are left out, including absolute poverty, research and development spending, and economic output, where differences in definitions, denominators or the scale of multinational activity prevent a like-for-like reading.

TABLE A4

Comparable Positive Peace Indicators, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

Pillar	Indicator	Definition	Source	Direction
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Gender Pay Gap	Unadjusted gender pay gap: the difference between male and female median gross annual pay for full-time employees, as a percentage of male pay. Because this measure is hours-inclusive, it is substantially wider than the ONS hourly gap for full-time employees and is not interchangeable with it.	Eurostat, Structure of Earnings Survey (RoI); NISRA, ASHE (NI)	Lower = better
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Life Satisfaction	Mean rating of overall life satisfaction on a 0 to 10 scale (0 = not at all satisfied, 10 = completely satisfied) among adults aged 16 and over.	Eurostat, (RoI); NISRA	Higher = better
High Levels of Human Capital	Healthy Life Expectancy	The expected years lived free of activity limitation, 3-year rolling average.	Eurostat (RoI); ONS/ NISRA (NI)	Higher = better
High Levels of Human Capital	NEET Rate	Share of those aged 15 to 24 (RoI) or 16 to 24 (NI) who are not in employment and have had no formal or non-formal education or training in the preceding four weeks.	Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey (RoI); NISRA (NI)	Lower = better

Local Government Districts Composites

Negative peace and the Positive Peace are reported both at Northern Ireland level and across the 11 Local Government Districts. The LGD-level composites are constructed on a basis separate from the region-wide composites, reflecting the different data structure available at council level.

- For the negative peace in Northern Ireland, the LGD composite is an equal-weighted mean of the six indicators: *homicide, violent and weapon crime, public disorder, hate crime, paramilitary activity and worry about crime*, each normalised to a 1 to 5 scale using min-max normalisation across the full historical range of LGD-by-year observations for each indicator.

- For Positive Peace in Northern Ireland, the LGD composite is an equal-weighted mean of the 11 indicators that vary at LGD level: *confidence in the justice system, cross-community socialising frequency, GDP per capita, gender pay gap, gigabit capable broadband, planning decision efficiency, poverty, primary healthcare access, R&D spending, school segregation index and social housing processing*. The remaining Positive Peace indicators in the region-wide are reported only at Northern Ireland level and are excluded from the LGD composite to ensure that the LGD reading is constructed on directly comparable indicator coverage across the 11 councils. The Northern Ireland reference line used in the LGD plots is itself constructed on the same basis. The reference is the unweighted mean of the eleven LGD composites, with the Northern Ireland-level row excluded throughout, so the reference uses the same indicator-construction rule as the council composites it is being compared with. The composites are therefore internally comparable across LGDs and between any LGD and the NI reference line, even where indicator coverage varies across councils.

For the individual LGD bar charts that show indicator-by-indicator deviation from the region-wide level, the NI reference is the Northern Ireland indicator-level score at its latest reporting year, taken directly from the source data. The bar value is the difference between the NI score and the LGD score: a positive value indicates that the LGD outperforms the region-wide level on that indicator; a negative value indicates that the LGD underperforms.

One main limitation is that the Positive Peace LGD composite is constructed from the 11 indicators that vary at council level, not the full 24-indicator framework reported at Northern Ireland level. Thus, the LGD composite provides directional context on a council's position specific to those particular indicators, rather than a reading across all dimensions of the framework. The LGD composite for negative peace is not affected: all six indicators are available at LGD level.

Data Processing

Imputation and Gap-filling

Where individual indicators have missing observations within their coverage window, gap-filling is applied as follows. Missing values between observed years are filled using linear interpolation. Missing values after the last observed year, within the study period, are

filled using linear extrapolation based on an Ordinary Least Squares trend fitted to all available observations. Missing values before the first observed year, for indicators with start dates after the study baseline, are filled using flat carry-forward of the first observed value, to avoid generating artificial backward trends.

Two specific methodological exceptions apply. The *worry about crime* indicator was not surveyed in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions on face-to-face data collection; the 2021 value is imputed as the simple average of the 2020 and 2022 observations. The *poverty* indicator changed methodology between 2021 and 2022 with the transition from the NISRA PRHSCT series to the Department for Communities Poverty and Income Inequality report; the two series are chain-linked in 2022 to remove the methodology-induced level shift while preserving the underlying trend.

Normalisation

All indicators are normalised to a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 represents the most peaceful outcome and 5 the least peaceful.

For the negative peace in Northern Ireland, normalisation bounds are derived from the full distribution of LGD-by-year observations across each indicator's coverage window (2005-2025). This anchors the score scale to the range of observed sub-territorial variation rather than to NI-level averages alone, providing more stable minimum and maximum reference points and ensuring that NI-level scores sit within the range of district-level variation.

For the Positive Peace in Northern Ireland, normalisation bounds are fixed at theoretical or aspirational endpoints. Bounds are chosen to represent meaningful conceptual extremes, for example, 0 per cent poverty as the theoretical best for the Poverty indicator, or 3.5 per cent of GVA invested in research and development for the R&D Spending indicator, reflecting top-performing OECD economies. Fixed bounds make scores comparable across editions of the Index as new data are added and prevent observed-range compression of the score distribution.

For both components, the formula applied is: for indicators where lower is better, score = 1 + (value – minimum) / (maximum – minimum) × 4; for indicators where higher is better, score = 1 + (maximum – value) / (maximum – minimum) × 4. Scores are clamped to the range [1, 5].

Pillar scores in the Positive Peace are computed as the equal-weighted mean of their three indicator scores. The composite negative peace is the equal-weighted mean of its six indicator scores; the composite Positive Peace is the equal-weighted mean of its eight pillar scores. All weights are equal across the framework.

Limitations

Both components of the index involve methodological choices that shape what can and cannot be measured and how results should be interpreted. The following limitations should be read alongside the results sections and the full methodology.

- All indicators in the Northern Ireland Peace Index are drawn from existing secondary sources, official statistics, administrative data and established survey programmes. No new primary data was collected for this work. The Index is therefore bounded by the coverage, definitions and methodological choices of its source datasets, and inherits any limitations in how those data are collected and reported.
- Positive Peace is reported over a shorter window (2019 to 2025) than negative peace (2005 to 2025), reflecting the later and more varied start dates of its source indicators. Positive Peace results are therefore best read as a current snapshot of the structural conditions rather than as a long-run trend, and they capture less of the deeper historical background than the longer negative peace series. Where longer-run data are available, it has been drawn on to provide additional context on the longer-term situation.
- Several indicators are drawn from surveys with relatively small Northern Ireland samples, including the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey and the NISRA Safe Community Survey. Year-on-year movements on these indicators may reflect sampling variation rather than genuine structural change and should be interpreted alongside the long-run trend.
- The NILT moved from face-to-face to online administration in 2020. This introduces methodological discontinuity that affects the comparability of pre- and post-2020 values on attitudinal indicators, most notably favourability towards the other community and cross-community socialising frequency.
- Where annual data are unavailable for a specific year or LGD, values have been imputed using interpolation or carry-forward methods. Imputed values are flagged and should be treated with additional caution.

- The 11 indicators reported at LGD level represent a subset of the full 24-indicator Positive Peace. The LGD profiles are a partial rather than complete reading of each council's Positive Peace position and should be read alongside the region-wide results.
- For low-frequency indicators such as homicide at the LGD level, small absolute numbers make year-on-year percentage changes sensitive to single events. Long-run trends are more informative than single-year movements for these indicators.
- Recorded crime indicators reflect both actual levels of harm and variation in reporting behaviour, policing intensity and recording practice. Changes in recording standards, particularly for violent crime, can affect the time series independently of real changes in violence.
- Indicator scores are normalised against empirical or theoretical bounds set at the time of Index construction. Where observed values approach the upper or lower bounds, score changes may compress or exaggerate the apparent magnitude of real-world change.
- Negative peace indicators are normalised against Northern Ireland's own observed range, so those scores are internal to this Index and are not comparable across jurisdictions. Positive Peace indicators are normalised against fixed, world-referenced thresholds (such as top-performing OECD benchmarks), which makes them more comparable internationally, though differences in the availability of indicators at sub-national UK level, and in their definitions, mean NIPI results are still not directly equivalent to the IEP's Global Peace Index or Positive Peace Index country scores or to other national indices.
- Gender-based violence, including violence against women and girls, is not part of the Index framework. Given its significance in Northern Ireland, it is included in this report as context rather than as a scored indicator.

Correlation Between Negative Peace and Positive Peace

The Spearman rank correlation, a descriptive measure of how closely two series move together, between the annual negative peace score and each of the 24 Positive Peace indicators is reported over the longest paired observation window available for each pair (Table A5). These are associations, not tested or causal relationships.

TABLE A5

Co-movement Between Negative Peace Composite and Positive Peace Indicators

Negative peace co-moves most consistently with social-fabric indicators.

Pillar	Indicator	p	n
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Social Exclusion	+0.748	10
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Gender Pay Gap	+0.503	12
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Perceived Discrimination	+0.360	19
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Primary Healthcare Access	−0.729	10
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Life Satisfaction	+0.359	11
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Poverty	+0.358	21
Free Flow of Information	Gigabit Capable Broadband	−1.000	6
Free Flow of Information	Media Impartiality	−0.994	8
Free Flow of Information	Trust in Media	−0.476	8
Good Relations with Neighbours	Cross-Community Socialising Frequency	+0.683	9
Good Relations with Neighbours	School Segregation Index	+0.613	16
Good Relations with Neighbours	Favourability Towards Other Community	+0.154	17
High Levels of Human Capital	NEET Rate	+0.659	13
High Levels of Human Capital	R&D Spending	+0.343	14
High Levels of Human Capital	Healthy Life Expectancy	−0.085	10
Sound Business Environment	Planning Decision Efficiency	+0.536	7
Sound Business Environment	Financial Openness	+0.200	9
Sound Business Environment	GDP per Capita	−0.016	19
Trust in Institutions	Confidence in Justice System	+0.800	4

Trust in Institutions	Non-state Controlling Influence	–0.714	8
Trust in Institutions	Trust in NI Assembly	+0.429	8
Well-functioning Government	Social Housing Processing	+0.610	21
Well-functioning Government	Prosecutorial Independence	+0.607	7
Well-functioning Government	Public Appointments Parity	–0.029	6

Sources: IEP calculations

The most credible results come from the indicators with the longest paired series, where the correlation reflects sustained co-movement rather than a small number of coincidental annual readings. Three indicators move together with the negative peace score in the direction the framework would expect: the *school segregation index* (n = 16, p = +0.613), the *NEET rate* (n = 13, p = +0.659) and *social exclusion* (n = 10, p = +0.748). Read together, these indicators trace a single substantive theme: the social fabric of the region moves with violence rather than against it. In years in which schools were more segregated, more young people were out of education and employment and a wider community-level employment and attainment gap was visible, the negative peace composite was worse. Poverty (p = +0.358, n = 21) moves and perceived discrimination (p = +0.360, n = 19) move in the same direction over a long the two longest paired series, more weakly but consistent with the same reading. R&D spending (p = +0.343, n = 14) also moves with the composite over a long record, though it sits outside the social-fabric theme. The primary healthcare access correlation (p = −0.729, n = 10) is strong but reflects a shared time trend rather than a structural link: both negative peace and GP provision improved over the period, and the negative sign arises because the two measures run on opposite scales. A temporal correlation at NI level cannot distinguish a structural relationship between healthcare access and violence from coincident trends, and the direction should not be read as evidence that healthcare access reduces violence. The near-perfect figures on gigabit broadband (p = −1.000, n=6) and media impartiality (p = −0.994, n=8) are of the same kind: each series moves almost monotonically over a very short window, so the co-movement reflects a shared time trend rather than a substantive link and should not be read at face value.

GDP per capita (p = −0.016, n=19), financial openness (p = +0.200, n=9) and favourability towards other community (p = +0.154, n=17) record correlations close to zero, while the Trust in Institutions indicators co-move more strongly but rest on series of only four to eight years.

The most interpretable story from the correlation analysis is therefore one of social fabric. Segregation, youth disengagement, housing deprivation and broader social exclusion are associated with the negative peace composite, while economic indicators are not and the institutional-trust readings rest on series too short to interpret. These associations are observed at NI level over time and reflect co-movement across the period rather than controlled causal estimates; shared underlying trends cannot be ruled out without district-level or quasi-experimental analysis. The relationship is best understood as structural and geographic rather than dynamic: these are slow-moving conditions, so the correlation reflects a standing structural alignment over the period rather than Positive Peace tracking short-run changes in negative peace from year to year. This is consistent with what would be expected in a post-conflict context where structural community divisions and deprivation, rather than macroeconomic conditions, are the principal drivers of residual violence. Three indicators move against the framework expectation: *cross-community socialising, non-state controlling influence and social housing processing,* they move their substantive direction, . On the first, the NILT survey moved from face-to-face to online administration in 2020, breaking comparability across the window. The other two are measured in ways that track violence itself rather than the structural condition they stand for, so their co-movement is not independent of the negative peace composite. The shortest series (*confidence in justice system, 2021-2024; public appointments parity*, six years) are too brief to describe a co-movement and should not be read as findings.

The year-on-year analysis between 2016 and 2025 sharpens the picture. *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* is the only pillar with a consistent signal: all three of its indicators move with the composite in the expected direction, and two do so strongly, social exclusion at +0.81 and perceived discrimination at +0.62. Between 206 and 2025, years in which social exclusion and perceived discrimination worsened were also years in which violence worsened. Northern Ireland's short-term changes in negative peace track immediate conditions of social acceptance rather than the background conditions of economic development or institutional performance, which change too slowly for an annual measure to detect.

Summary Tables

TABLE A6

Negative Peace by Year (NI)

Year	Negative Peace
2015	2.31
2016	2.19
2017	2.07
2018	2.08
2019	2.14
2020	2.15
2021	2.11
2022	2.06
2023	2.05
2024	2
2025	1.91

TABLE A7

Negative Peace Indicators by Year (NI)

Indicator	Metric	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Hate Crime	Score	2.13	2.08	1.77	1.67	1.79	1.77	1.82	2.13	2.12	1.94	2.00
Homicide	Score	1.68	1.53	1.45	1.80	1.83	1.59	1.59	1.63	1.65	1.34	1.43
Paramilitary Activity	Score		1.83	1.75	1.85	1.64	1.82	1.73	1.64	1.69	1.54	1.35
Public Disorder	Score	2.40	2.43	2.17	2.03	1.89	2.21	2.22	2.07	2.03	1.96	1.86
Violent and Weapon Crime	Score	2.55	2.67	2.54	2.56	2.65	2.57	2.31	2.73	2.80	2.70	2.57
Worry about Crime	Score	2.81	2.60	2.72	2.58	3.01	2.95	2.56	2.16	2.00	2.50	2.26

TABLE A8

Negative Peace Indicators by District, 2025

Area	Metric	Hate Crime	Homicide	Paramilitary Activity	Public Disorder	Violent and Weapon Crime	Worry about Crime
Northern Ireland	Score	2.00	1.43	1.35	1.86	2.57	2.26
Antrim and Newtownabbey	Score	2.51	1.38	1.22	1.78	2.43	2.42
Ards and North Down	Score	1.39	1.67	1.56	1.83	2.12	2.37
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	Score	1.70	1.25	1.09	1.57	2.34	2.06
Belfast City	Score	4.44	1.63	1.58	3.08	4.87	1.47
Causeway Coast and Glens	Score	1.45	1.00	1.70	2.00	2.26	1.46
Derry and Strabane	Score	2.40	2.10	2.09	2.27	3.61	2.40
Fermanagh and Omagh	Score	1.79	1.00	1.23	1.51	1.87	3.30
Lisburn and Castlereagh	Score	1.60	1.00	1.00	1.71	1.99	2.10
Mid Ulster	Score	1.71	2.10	1.13	1.30	1.84	1.77
Mid and East Antrim	Score	1.65	1.00	1.19	1.61	2.50	3.18
Newry, Mourne and Down	Score	1.37	1.61	1.11	1.81	2.47	2.32

Positive Peace Summary Tables

TABLE A9

Positive Peace Overall and Pillar Scores by Year (NI)

Pillar	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Positive Peace (overall)	2.48	2.48	2.46	2.46	2.48	2.43	2.45
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	2.50	2.48	2.36	2.32	2.35	2.33	2.25
Equitable Distribution of Resources	1.85	1.83	1.82	1.82	1.85	1.81	1.78
Free Flow of Information	3.04	2.95	2.65	2.41	2.31	2.37	2.27
Good Relations with Neighbours	2.61	2.83	2.86	2.87	2.80	2.83	2.88
High Levels of Human Capital	2.36	2.38	2.34	2.42	2.58	2.59	2.70
Sound Business Environment	2.58	2.62	2.56	2.58	2.61	2.42	2.46
Trust in Institutions	2.54	2.47	2.47	2.67	2.66	2.61	2.70
Well-functioning Government	2.32	2.30	2.63	2.56	2.66	2.51	2.58

TABLE A10

Positive Peace Indicators by Year (NI)

Pillar	Indicator	Metric	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Gender Pay Gap	Score	1.45	1.38	1.34	1.30	1.33	1.38	1.26
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Perceived Discrimination	Score	2.17	2.28	2.21	2.07	2.13	2.14	2.10
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Social Exclusion	Score	3.87	3.78	3.52	3.59	3.58	3.46	3.38
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Life Satisfaction	Score	1.88	1.88	1.96	1.92	1.96	1.88	1.92
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Poverty	Score	1.49	1.49	1.46	1.52	1.60	1.56	1.48
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Primary Healthcare Access	Score	2.18	2.12	2.04	2.03	1.98	1.98	1.96
Free Flow of Information	Gigabit Capable Broadband	Score	2.84	2.84	2.04	1.58	1.35	1.29	1.23
Free Flow of Information	Media Impartiality	Score	2.26	2.30	2.18	2.07	2.04	2.03	2.02
Free Flow of Information	Trust in Media	Score	4.02	3.70	3.72	3.58	3.55	3.79	3.55
Good Relations with Neighbours	Cross-Community Socialising Frequency	Score	2.36	2.46	2.56	2.66	2.44	2.54	2.55
Good Relations with Neighbours	Favourability Towards Other Community	Score	1.66	2.21	2.21	2.14	2.17	2.16	2.32
Good Relations with Neighbours	School Segregation Index	Score	3.81	3.81	3.80	3.79	3.79	3.78	3.78
High Levels of Human Capital	Healthy Life Expectancy	Score	2.89	2.89	2.83	2.80	2.92	3.02	3.00
High Levels of Human Capital	NEET Rate	Score	1.58	1.73	1.68	1.47	1.50	1.46	1.62
High Levels of Human Capital	R&D Spending	Score	2.61	2.51	2.52	3.00	3.31	3.29	3.50
Sound Business Environment	Financial Openness	Score	4.05	3.65	3.41	3.48	3.56	3.29	3.17
Sound Business Environment	GDP per Capita	Score	1.89	1.86	1.77	1.78	1.71	1.67	1.62
Sound Business Environment	Planning Decision Efficiency	Score	1.82	2.37	2.52	2.47	2.56	2.30	2.57
Trust in Institutions	Confidence in Justice System	Score	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.38	2.36	2.47	2.60
Trust in Institutions	Non-state Controlling Influence	Score	1.39	1.50	1.52	1.48	1.57	1.54	1.59
Trust in Institutions	Trust in NI Assembly	Score	4.11	3.81	3.78	4.16	4.05	3.80	3.91
Well-functioning Government	Prosecutorial Independence	Score	2.64	2.68	3.12	2.96	3.28	2.80	3.16
Well-functioning Government	Public Appointments Parity	Score	1.53	1.14	1.28	1.28	1.16	1.09	1.03
Well-functioning Government	Social Housing Processing	Score	2.79	3.08	3.50	3.43	3.54	3.62	3.56

TABLE A11

Positive Peace Indicators by District, 2025

Area	Metric	Confidence in Justice System	Cross-Community Socialising Frequency	GDP per Capita	Gender Pay Gap	Gigabit Capable Broadband	Planning Decision Efficiency	Poverty	Primary Healthcare Access	R&D Spending	School Segregation Index	Social Housing Processing
Northern Ireland	Score	2.60	2.55	1.62	1.26	1.23	2.57	1.48	1.96	3.50	3.78	3.56
Antrim and Newtownabbey	Score	2.16	2.21	1.81	1.32	1.13	2.18	1.84	2.27	3.53	4.19	3.41
Ards and North Down	Score	2.81	2.30	3.23	1.02	1.17	2.92	1.80	2.01	5.00	4.36	3.38
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	Score	2.34	2.40	2.29	1.51	1.32	2.84	1.74	1.88	2.25	4.39	3.94
Belfast City	Score	2.54	2.68	1.00	1.33	1.18	2.55	1.80	1.00	4.01	3.29	3.38
Causeway Coast and Glens	Score	2.61	2.68	2.69	1.08	1.29	2.56	1.84	2.13	5.00	3.89	3.84
Derry and Strabane	Score	3.04	2.66	2.14	1.36	1.26	2.79	2.06	1.93	4.77	4.17	3.62
Fermanagh and Omagh	Score	2.52	2.84	2.11	1.47	1.40	2.20	2.06	2.52	5.00	3.78	3.98
Lisburn and Castlereagh	Score	1.76	2.10	1.78	1.35	1.15	2.74	1.80	2.64	4.98	3.92	3.19
Mid Ulster	Score	2.30	2.82	1.51	1.31	1.26	2.87	1.84	2.48	3.93	4.05	3.90
Mid and East Antrim	Score	2.62	2.59	2.43	1.50	1.21	1.47	1.84	1.41	4.53	4.03	2.95
Newry, Mourne and Down	Score	2.76	2.74	2.53	1.12	1.23	4.45	1.74	2.15	4.16	4.13	3.96

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