**PTSD in Northern Ireland: Prevalence and Comorbidities**

**Prevalence of PTSD in the General Population of Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland has historically experienced a high burden of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), largely attributed to decades of civil conflict during *the Troubles*. Epidemiological research from the **Northern Ireland Study of Health and Stress** (NISHS) found that about **8.8%** of NI adults met criteria for PTSD at some point in their lifetime, and roughly **5.1%** had PTSD within a 12-month period. These figures – based on surveys conducted in the mid-2000s – were the **highest recorded PTSD prevalence** among all countries in the World Mental Health Surveys (even exceeding other post-conflict regions). Conflict-related trauma has been a major factor: nearly 40% of Northern Ireland’s population has experienced a conflict-related traumatic event , and an estimated **one-quarter of all PTSD cases** in NI are linked to Troubles-era violence .

**Recent data** suggest that PTSD remains a significant public health issue in Northern Ireland. In fact, a **2022–2023** representative study reported that approximately **6.1% of adults** in NI currently meet the criteria for **PTSD or its related diagnosis, Complex PTSD** . This **current prevalence (~6%)** is on par with or slightly higher than the earlier post-conflict estimates, indicating that PTSD rates have not substantially declined over time. Experts note that the psychological impact of the Troubles persists across generations – for example, nearly **30% of people in 2023** reported that the historic conflict still negatively affects their mental health. In summary, Northern Ireland’s PTSD prevalence remains elevated relative to other regions, with **long-term historical trauma contributing to a sustained high rate of disorder**.

**PTSD Comorbidity with Chronic Illnesses (Fibromyalgia, ME/CFS, etc.)**

PTSD frequently co-occurs with chronic physical health conditions, and individuals suffering from PTSD are **more prone to chronic illnesses** and pain disorders. In Northern Ireland, this pattern is evident in clinical samples – for example, a study of patients at a pain management clinic in Belfast found that **about 31% of those with chronic pain** screened positive for PTSD symptoms . Chronic pain conditions often include disorders like **fibromyalgia**, which has a particularly strong link with trauma and PTSD. International research (outside NI) has reported **very high PTSD prevalence among fibromyalgia patients** – one study of 395 fibromyalgia sufferers found **45.3% had co-morbid PTSD**, and in two-thirds of those cases the fibromyalgia developed after the onset of PTSD . Similarly, **myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS)** has been associated with higher PTSD rates. A comprehensive study concluded that having a lifetime CFS diagnosis is **“strongly associated” with having lifetime PTSD and current trauma symptoms** .  (Notably, direct NI-specific data on fibromyalgia or CFS comorbidity are sparse, so these findings draw on broader UK/international studies.) These overlaps suggest that **chronic conditions such as fibromyalgia, ME/CFS, and other long-term health issues commonly coexist with PTSD**, underscoring the importance of screening and treating PTSD in patients with chronic illnesses.

**Sources:** Northern Ireland Study of Health and Stress; Ulster University/NICTT PTSD report; NI Department of Justice ACE Study (2025); *Journal of Traumatic Stress* (Bunting et al. 2013); *European Journal of Pain* (Murphy et al. 2023); *Journal of Health Psychology* and *Psychosomatics* (fibromyalgia and CFS studies).

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