



**Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police
Ombudsman for Northern Ireland**

Quarterly Statistical Bulletin up to 31st December 2022

Published January 2023

Statistical Update up to 31st December 2022, published on 26th January 2023.

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Office of the Police Ombudsman (the Office), up to 31st December 2022. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman's Case Handling System (CHS) on the 5th January 2023.

Complaints Received

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2017/18 to December 2022.

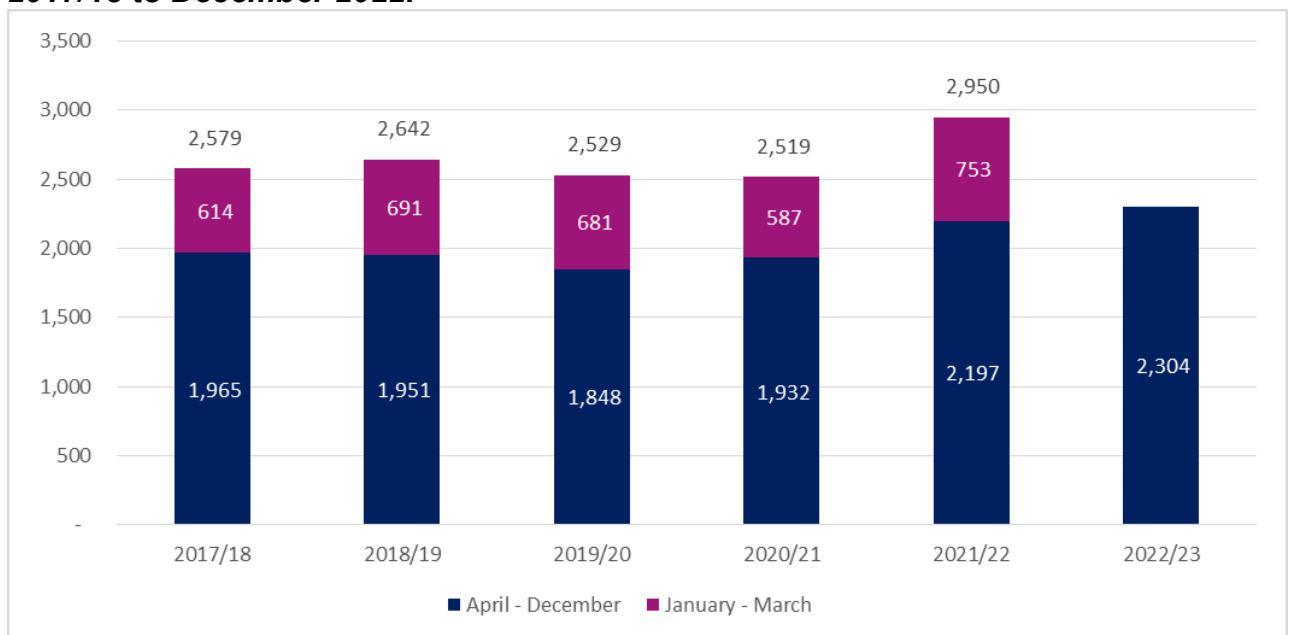


Figure 1 shows that the Office received 2,304 complaints between April and December 2022. This is a 5% increase in the number of complaints received when compared with the same period last year. It is also the highest number of complaints received during Quarter 3 when compared with the previous five years.

Main Complaint Factor

'Criminal investigation' was the most common main factor¹ underlying complaints between April and December 2022. This accounted for 31% of complaints received during this time.

Complaints arising from 'Search' had the largest percentage decrease between April and December 2022 when compared with the same period last year.

Complaints regarding 'Criminal investigation' had the largest percentage increase during this time.

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received during April to December 2021 and April to December 2022.

Main Complaint Factor	April - December 2021/22	April - December 2022/23	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	616	725	109	18%
Arrest	321	325	4	1%
Traffic Incident	188	185	-3	-2%
Domestic Incident	189	171	-18	-10%
Police Enquiries	127	139	12	9%
Search	139	113	-26	-19%
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	30	14	-16	-
Parade/Demonstration	17	11	-6	-
Police enforcing COVID-19 restrictions	31	3	-28	-
Other	477	485	8	2%
Unknown	62	133	71	115%
Total	2,197	2,304	107	5%

Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50

¹ The main complaint factor refers to the main situation giving rise to the complaint.

Complaints received by Police District

The number of complaints increased in 6 of the 11 known police districts between April and December 2022 when compared with last year. District A – Belfast City had the largest increase during this time (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district during April to December 2021 and April to December 2022.

District	April - December 2021/22	April - December 2022/23	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	620	665	45	7%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh	92	106	14	15%
District C - Ards & North Down	160	147	-13	-8%
District D - Newry Mourne & Down	115	144	29	25%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	198	224	26	13%
District F - Mid Ulster	96	83	-13	-14%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	92	122	30	33%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	136	147	11	8%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	171	146	-25	-15%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	152	138	-14	-9%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	179	154	-25	-14%
Unknown/ Other Organisation	186	228	42	23%
Total	2,197	2,304	107	5%

Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50

Allegations Received

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2017/18 to December 2022

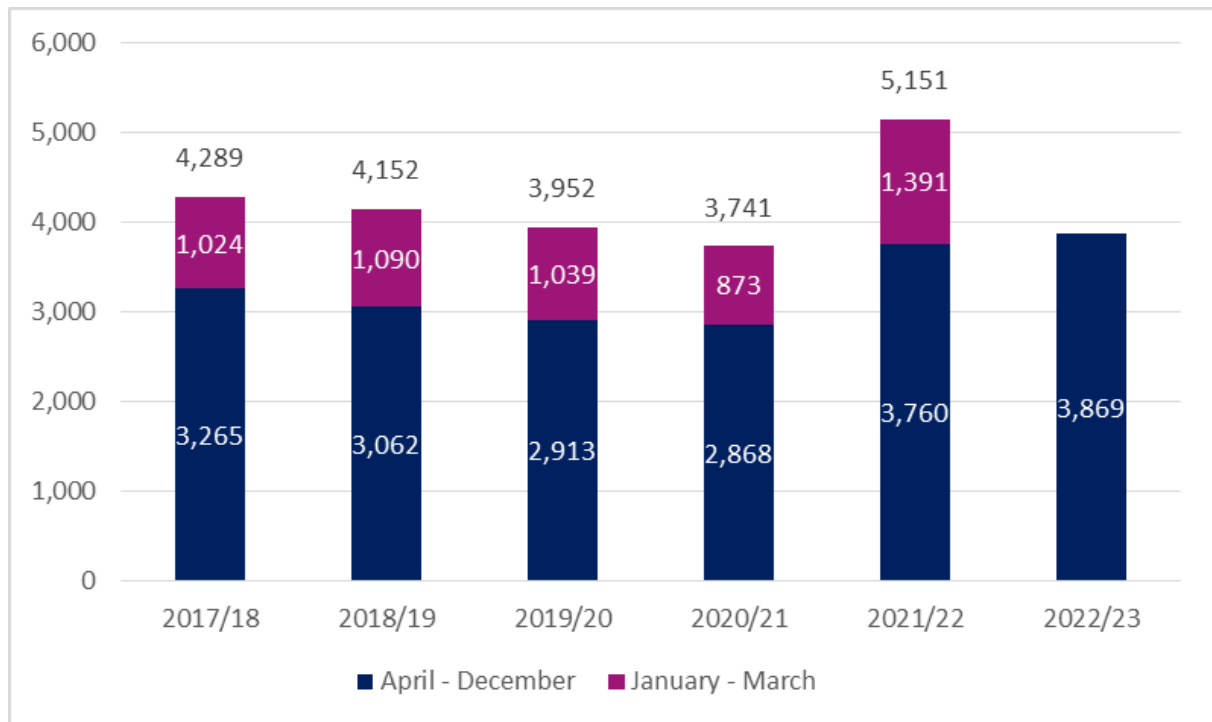


Figure two shows that the Office received 3,869 allegations between April and December 2022. This is the highest number of allegations received during this time period when compared with each of the previous five years. This is also a 3% increase in the number of allegations received when compared with the same period last year.

Allegation Type

'Failure in duty' was the most common allegation type received between April and December 2022, accounting for almost half of all allegations received. Allegations about 'Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention' had the largest percentage increase during this time when compared to last year (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the types of allegations received during April to December 2021 and April to December 2022.

Allegation Type	April – December 2021/22	April – December 2022/23	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	1,770	1,933	163	9%
Oppressive Behaviour	889	872	-17	-2%
Incivility	208	243	35	17%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	148	177	29	20%
Search	151	145	-6	-4%
Mishandling Of Property	76	69	-7	-9%
Traffic	44	49	5	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	39	32	-7	-
Malpractice	36	27	-9	-
Section 55 Referral	29	22	-7	-
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	29	14	-15	-
Other	341	286	-55	-16%
Total	3,760	3,869	109	3%

Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 23 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between January 2022 and December 2022 (Table 4).

Table 4: Officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution, twelve month period ending June 2022, September 2022, December 2022.

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with 3+ complaints formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution
June 2022	20
September 2022	20
December 2022	23

Additional Information

Data Use

The information presented in this document has been produced to meet the needs of our key users who need timely information on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office. The main users of this quarterly bulletin are the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (PONI or the Office), the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). This statistical update is the outcome of consultation with these users, it gives them access to information that they can use to form discussions at their regular meetings.

Understanding the Statistics

The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office includes complaints made by members of the public relating to the conduct of PSNI officers or those employed by other organisations under the Office's remit². The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations³, and any matter that the Police Ombudsman has decided is in the public interest to investigate.

There are a number of factors that may influence whether or not a person makes a complaint to the Police Ombudsman. It is important when drawing conclusions from the statistics not to take a simplistic view but to consider the following factors:

- The number and nature of police operations conducted;
- The performance of police officers;
- The level of interaction between the public and the police;
- The awareness of the Police Ombudsman's Office, knowledge of how to make a complaint, and public confidence in the Office;
- The size of the police service;
- Changes to the PSNI's or the Offices' procedures;
- The level of crime;
- The number of public order incidents; and
- Population demographics.

Each complaint the Police Ombudsman's Office receives is made up of one or more allegations. The allegation describes the types of behaviours being complained about or the separate issues making up the complaint. For example, a person may make a complaint stating a police officer had pushed them *and* was rude. This would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations. The number of allegations received also includes a small number of residual matters, these are matters of concern identified during an investigation that were not originally detailed in the complaint, typically these account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

Care should be taken when comparing the number of complaints or allegations received at police district level as some of the differences between districts may reflect variations in their

² The Office's remit extends to: Police Service of Northern Ireland including Designated Civilians, the Belfast Harbour Police, The Belfast International Airport Police, the Ministry of Defence Police, the National Crime Agency, 'serious' complaints regarding mutual aid police officers from Great Britain and 'serious' complaints regarding certain Home Office employees (immigration officers, designated customs officials and custom revenue officials).

³ The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

composition, such as the degree of urbanization, level of deprivation and the balance between the resident population, day-time population and the night-time economy. It is also important to note that the system is live and data may therefore be subject to future revisions.

Further information

A more detailed break-down of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office over the last five years, as well as presenting information on the outcomes of complaints, is presented in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland'. This is available on the Office's [website](#).

An additional geographic breakdown of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman in previous years is available on the [Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service \(NINIS\)](#).

If you would like information on other statistics published by the Police Ombudsman's Office please see the statistics and research page on the Police Ombudsman's [website](#).

Publication

The Police Ombudsman's Office will publish information in year on a quarterly basis. Where possible, this information will be published on the Police Ombudsman's website at 9:30am on the fourth Thursday of the month following the end of the quarter. In some instances however it may be necessary to publish the bulletin earlier or later in the quarter. A more detailed publication will be published at the end of the financial year concentrating on the trends in the number of complaints and allegations received over the last five years.

The final quarterly update of 2022/23 is due to be published on Thursday 27th April 2023 and it will include statistics up to the 31st March 2023.

User Feedback

We continuously welcome your feedback or comments on the statistics released. If you would like to forward your views or to receive notifications of statistical releases please email your contact details to info@Policeombudsman.org further contact details are available on the back page of this bulletin.



Additional copies of this and other publications are available from:
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These publications and other information about the work of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are also available on the Internet at: **Website:** www.policeombudsman.org