

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland:

Annual report on  
public awareness of the  
Police Complaints  
System in  
Northern Ireland,  
2018/19

*14 June 2019*

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## Introduction

This statistical report presents the findings from the Police Ombudsman's module in the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey, 2018. The results from the survey are used to monitor public awareness and confidence in the Police Ombudsman's Office.

Since 2000 the Police Ombudsman's Office has included a survey module in the Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey. Due to the discontinuation of this survey in 2018, the Police Ombudsman's Office commissioned its module in the NILT survey. This particular survey was selected due to its methodology broadly matching that of the Omnibus survey and its representativeness across Northern Ireland.

This is an Official Statistics publication, which means the statistics are produced to a high standard in-line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and are free from political interference.

## The Life and Times Survey

It was launched by University of Ulster and Queen's University of Belfast in the autumn of 1998. Its mission is to monitor the attitudes and behaviour of people in Northern Ireland annually, to provide a time-series and a public record of how attitudes and behaviour develop on a wide range of social policy issues. The survey is run on a modular format and aims to provide a local resource for use by the general public and a data source for public and academic debate.

Whilst the NILT survey closely mirrors the Omnibus survey in terms of the methodology for selecting respondents, there are some differences. Such as, the NILT survey tends to focus on a small range of related policy issues, involving in-depth questioning, whereas the Omnibus survey usually involved a larger number of unrelated modules. This has provided a new context for the Police Ombudsman's module to that of the Omnibus survey.

Detailed notes have been supplied, which provide an account of the technical aspects of the survey, including the origin of the sample, response rates and its representativeness (see Appendix 2: Technical Notes, page 17).

## About this Report

This report provides information from the Police Ombudsman's module in the 2018 NILT survey. It was conducted between September 2018 and February 2019. As this is the first time the Police Ombudsman's Office has included its annual survey module in the NILT survey, no earlier data are available for comparison purposes.

The results for each of the five questions have been presented by age-group, gender and religion.

There has been a further change in the methodology this year due to changing the survey supplier. This year the NILT survey results had a relatively high proportion of people who answered "don't know" in response to the questions. These "don't know" responses have been excluded from the results in the main body of the report. As the focus of this report is on those people who have are aware of the Police Ombudsman's Office and what their perceptions of the Office are. However, in the interests of transparency, the full results (including the "don't know" responses) have been set out in Appendix 2: Technical Notes, page 17. In previous Omnibus surveys as the proportion of "don't know" responses were small, they were included in the published results. Therefore, this bulletin differs in this respect when compared with previous Omnibus surveys.

Percentages in the tables may not add to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted base numbers within the tables will vary due to the exclusions of "don't know" responses.

Statistical significance tests have been carried out on the findings and differences are reported where they have been found to be statistically significant at the 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ) level of probability (two tailed). This means that for any observed result that is found to be statistically significant one can be 95% confident that this has not happened by chance.

The results from this year's survey have also been published in an excel spreadsheet (Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet 2018) and the results from the previous Omnibus surveys are available in a different excel spreadsheet (Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet Omnibus Data up to 2017).

We are always keen to receive feedback on all our statistical publications. If you have any feedback or comments on this report we would like to hear them. Please contact us by email at: [info@policeombudsman.org](mailto:info@policeombudsman.org) or see our alternative contact details on the back page of this report.

## Target Monitoring

The results are used by the Office to measure its performance against three targets in its Balanced Scorecard, in the “To enhance knowledge and understanding of the complaints system amongst key stakeholders” section. This year the Office achieved all of these targets.

### ***Maintain a level of at least 80% public awareness of the Office***

- Target met as 86% of respondents had heard of the Police Ombudsman

### ***Maintain a level of at least 80% awareness of the independence of the Office***

- Target met as 88% of respondents that had heard of the Police Ombudsman were aware that he is independent from the police

### ***Maintain a level of at least 80% confidence that the Office deals with complaints in an impartial way***

- Target met as 80% of respondents that had heard of the Police Ombudsman were confident that he deals with complaints in an impartial way

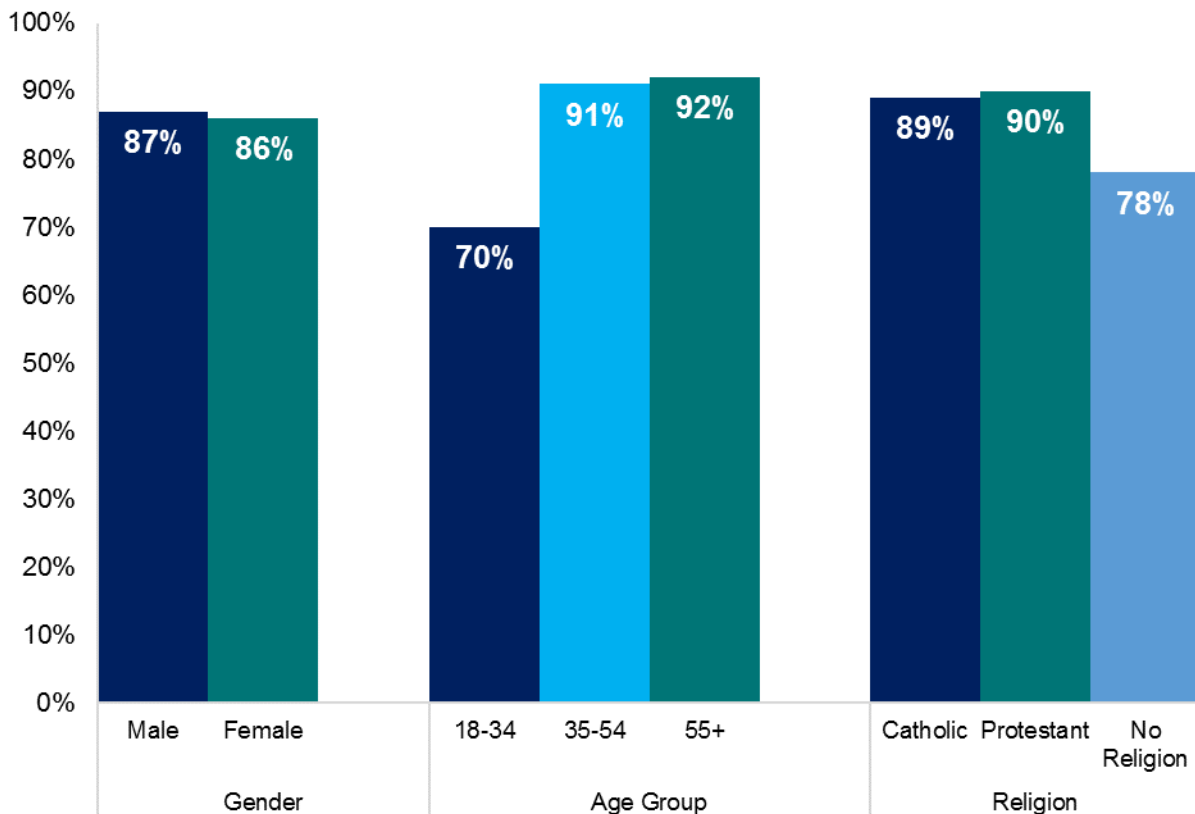
## Survey findings:

### Awareness of the Police Ombudsman

In 2018, 86% of respondents stated that they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

- Awareness of the Office was similar for both males and females.
- Younger respondents, i.e. those aged 18 to 34, were less likely to be aware of the Office than respondents in the older age groups.
- Awareness of the Office was similar between Catholic and Protestant respondents. However, those who reported to have No Religion, were less likely to be aware of the Office.

**Figure 1: Awareness of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2018, by Gender, Age and Religion**



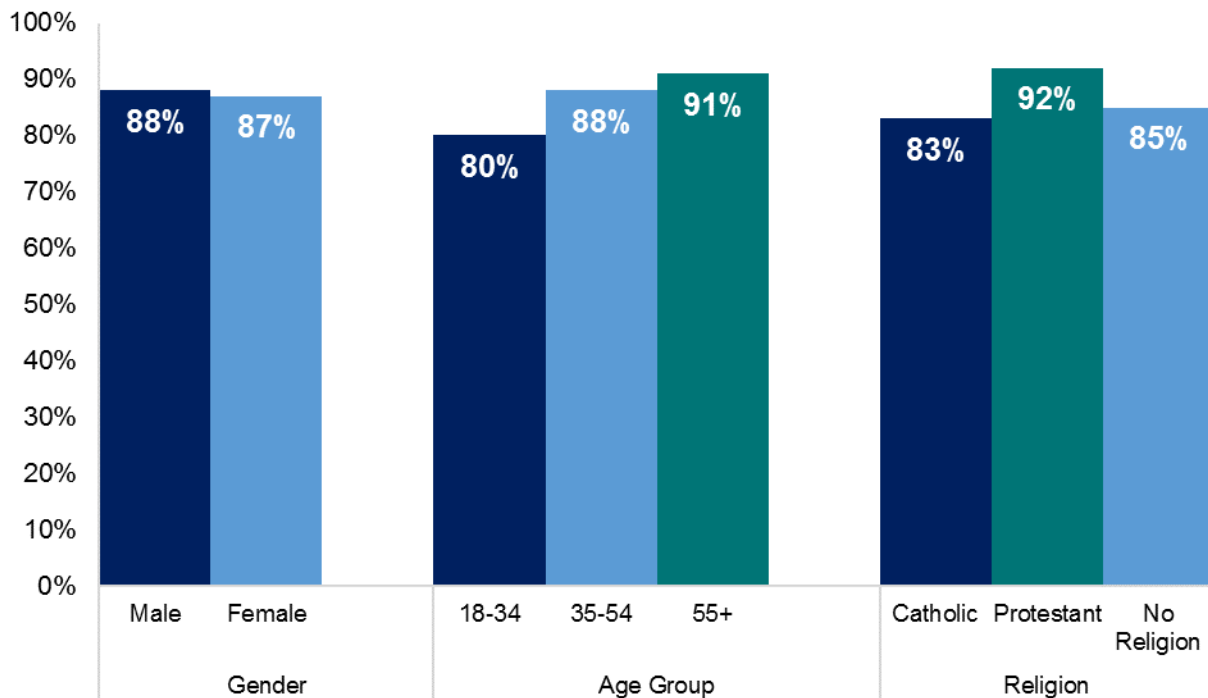
The following results in this report are based only on respondents that answered 'yes' to the question 'Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland?'

## Independence of the Police Ombudsman

In 2018, of those respondents who had heard of the Police Ombudsman, 88% thought he was independent of the police.

- A similar proportion of male and female respondents thought the Police Ombudsman was independent of the police.
- Younger respondents, i.e. those aged 18 to 34, were less likely to think that the Police Ombudsman was independent of the police, when compared with respondents in the older age groups.
- Catholic respondents and those who had No Religion were less likely to think that the Police Ombudsman was independent of the police, when compared with Protestant respondents.

**Figure 2: Perception of independence of the Police Ombudsman, 2018, by Gender, Age and Religion**



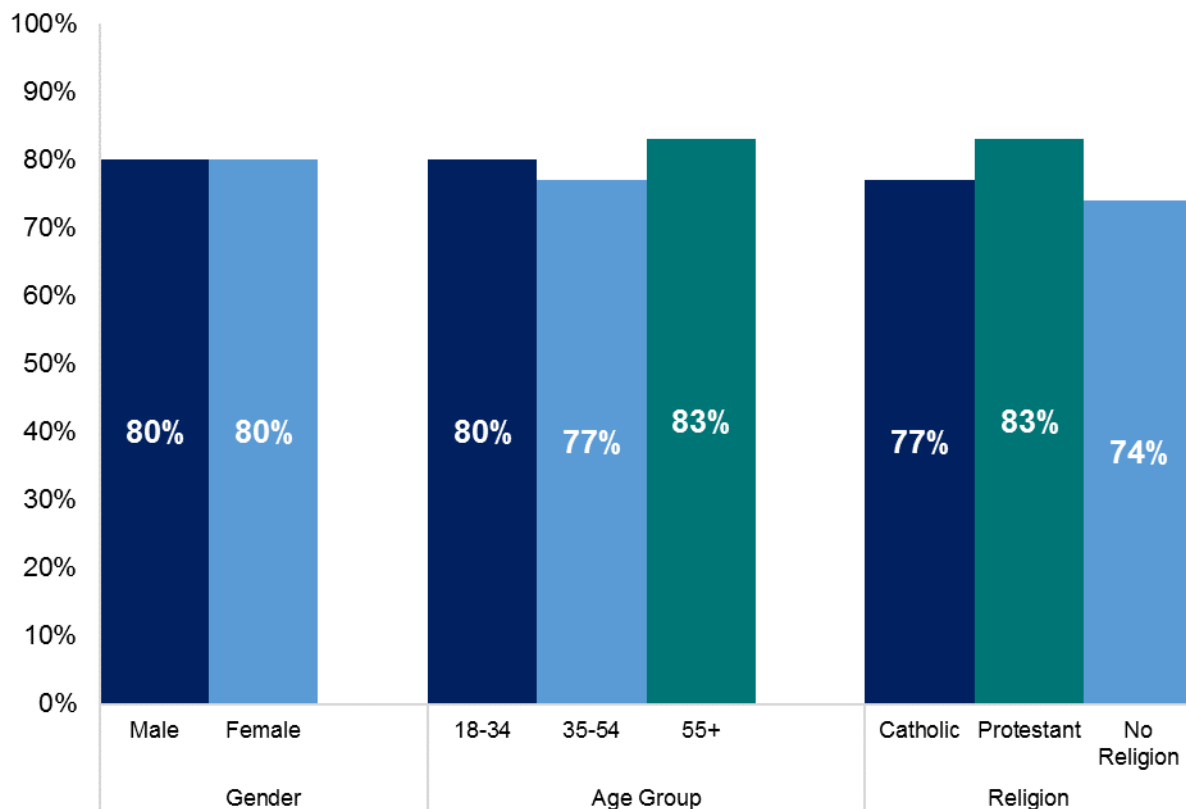


## Impartiality of investigation

In 2018, 80% of respondents who had heard of the Police Ombudsman were confident that he deals with complaints in an impartial way.

- Similar proportions of male and female respondents were likely to think that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints impartially.
- Respondents aged 35-54 were less likely to think that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints impartially when compared with those aged 55 and over.
- Catholic respondents and those with No Religion were less likely to think that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints impartially, when compared with Protestant respondents.

**Figure 3: Level of confidence that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints in an impartial way, 2018, by Gender, Age and Religion**

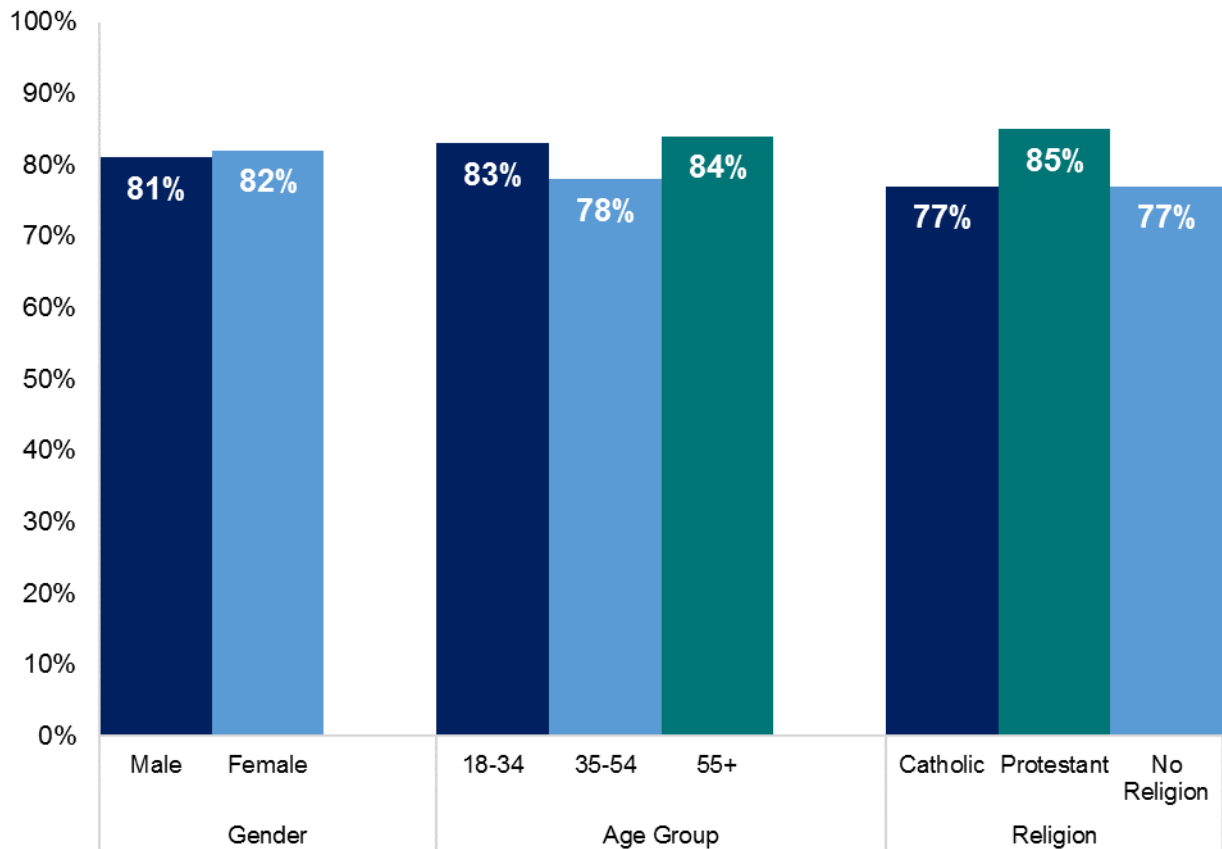


## Fairness of treatment

In 2018, 81% of respondents thought they would be treated fairly if they made a complaint.

- Similar proportions of male and female respondents were likely to think they would be treated fairly if they made a complaint to the Office.
- Respondents aged 35-54 were less likely to think that they would be treated fairly if they made a complaint when compared with those aged 55 and over.
- Catholic respondents and those with No Religion were less likely to think that they would be treated fairly if they made a complaint to the Office than Protestant respondents.

**Figure 4: Perception of fair treatment when making a complaint, 2018, by Gender, Age and Religion**

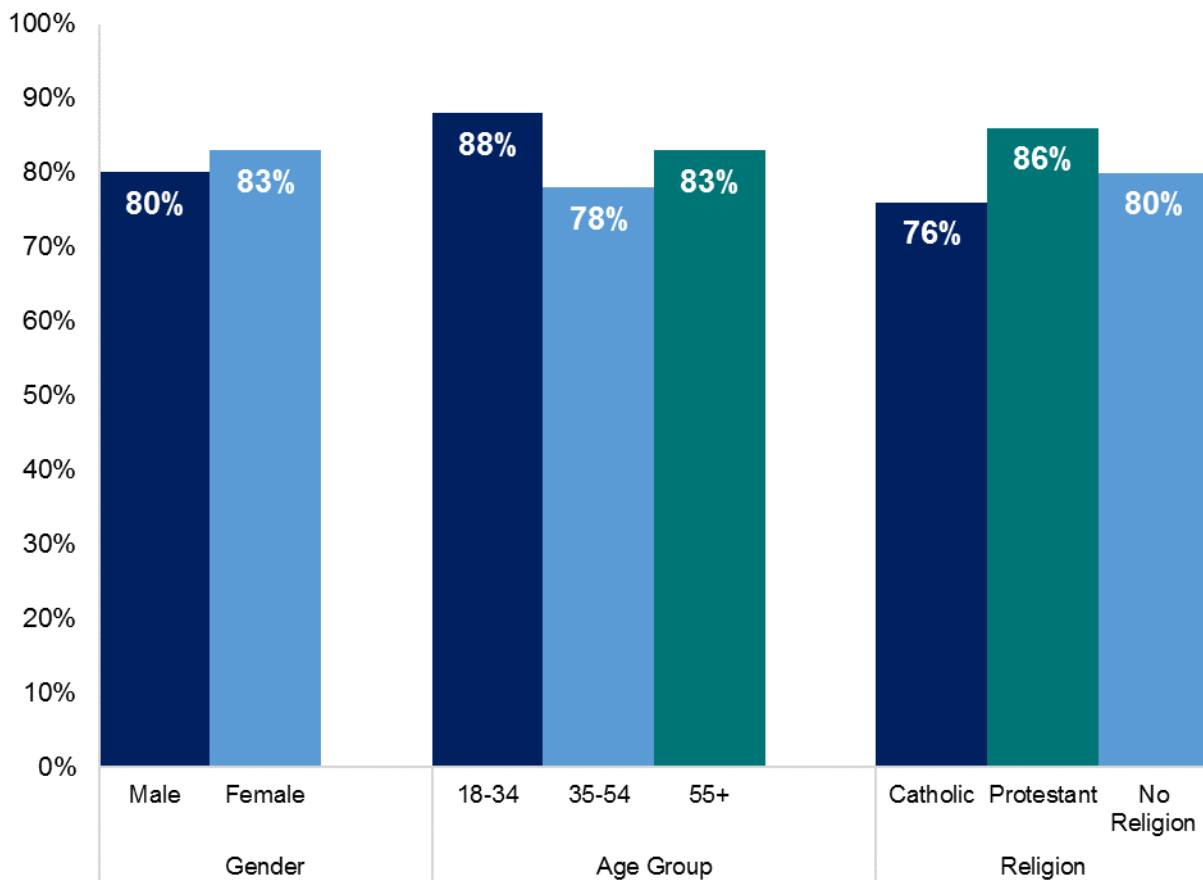


## Effect of Police Ombudsman on policing

In 2018, 82% of respondents thought that the Police Ombudsman would help ensure that the police in Northern Ireland do a good job.

- The results were similar between male and female respondents.
- Respondents aged 35-54 were less likely to think that the Police Ombudsman helps ensure the police do a good job when compared with younger respondents.
- Catholic respondents were less likely to think that that the Police Ombudsman helps ensure the police do a good job when compared with Protestant respondents.

**Figure 5: Belief that the Police Ombudsman will help ensure that the police do a good job, 2018, by Gender, Age and Religion**



## Appendix 1: Tables of Results<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1: Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2018?**

Aware	86%
Not aware	14%
Total survey respondents	1188

**Table 2: Awareness of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland by gender, 2018.**

Male	87%
Female	86%
Total survey respondents	1188

**Table 3: Awareness of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland by age group, 2018.**

18-34	70%
35-54	91%
55+	92%
Total survey respondents	1185

**Table 4: Awareness of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland by religion, 2018.**

Catholic	89%
Protestant	90%
No Religion	78%
Total survey respondents	1119

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<sup>1</sup> These tables are also available in an excel spreadsheet on the Police Ombudsman's website.

**Table 5: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is part of the police or independent of the police, 2018?**

Independent of the police	88%
Part of the police	12%
Total survey respondents	920

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 6: Independence of the Police Ombudsman by gender, 2018.**

Male	88%
Female	87%
Total survey respondents	920

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 7: Independence of the Police Ombudsman by age group, 2018**

18-34	80%
35-54	88%
55+	91%
Total survey respondents	918

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 8: Independence of the Police Ombudsman by religion, 2018.**

Catholic	83%
Protestant	92%
No Religion	85%
Total survey respondents	882

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 9: How confident are you that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints against the police in an impartial way, 2018?**

Very confident	27%
Fairly confident	53%
<b>Confident</b>	<b>80%</b>
Not very confident	13%
Not at all confident	7%
<b>Not Confident</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total survey respondents</b>	<b>876</b>

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 10: Confidence that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints against the police in an impartial way by gender, 2018.**

Male	80%
Female	80%
<b>Total survey respondents</b>	<b>876</b>

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 11: Confidence that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints against the police in an impartial way by age group, 2018.**

18-34	80%
35-54	77%
55+	83%
<b>Total survey respondents</b>	<b>874</b>

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 12: Confidence that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints against the police in an impartial way by religion, 2018.**

Catholic	77%
Protestant	83%
No Religion	74%
<b>Total survey respondents</b>	<b>843</b>

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 13: If you were to make a complaint against a police officer, do you think you would be treated fairly, 2018?**

Treated fairly	81%
Not treated fairly	19%
Total survey respondents	842

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 14: Perception of fair treatment by gender, 2018.**

Male	81%
Female	82%
Total survey respondents	842

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 15: Perception of fair treatment by age group, 2018.**

18-34	83%
35-54	78%
55+	84%
Total survey respondents	840

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 16: Perception of fair treatment by religion, 2018.**

Catholic	77%
Protestant	85%
No Religion	77%
Total survey respondents	811

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 17: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job, 2018?**

Yes	82%
No	18%
Total survey respondents	820

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 18: Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job by gender, 2018.**

Male	80%
Female	83%
Total survey respondents	820

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 19: Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job by age group, 2018.**

18-34	88%
35-54	78%
55+	83%
Total survey respondents	819

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*

**Table 20: Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job by religion, 2018.**

Catholic	76%
Protestant	86%
No Religion	80%
Total survey respondents	794

*Asked to all persons who were aware of the Police Ombudsman*



## Appendix 2: Technical Notes

The technical information has been provided by ARK and is for the NILT 2018 survey.

The survey involved 1,201 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 years or over. The main interview was carried out using computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

All interviews were conducted by Ipsos MORI interviewers in the participant's homes. The pilot interviews with 50 participants were carried out during 4<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The main stage of the fieldwork was undertaken during the period 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018 to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

The sample for the 2018 survey consisted of a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF) database of addresses. This is the most up-to-date and complete listing of addresses. Private business addresses were removed from the database prior to the sample selection.

A total of 2,296 addresses were selected for the survey, 135 of them were deemed to be ineligible (e.g. vacant/derelict/commercial) giving a total sample size of 2,161. In each household only one person was selected to be interviewed, this person was chosen using the 'next birthday' rule. This is the person with the next birthday, at the time of the call is selected for the interviews (of all persons living at the address who were aged 18 or over).

A total of 1,201 persons co-operated giving a response rate of 56%. The fieldwork was undertaken during the period 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018 to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The survey involved face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 years or over. The main interview was carried out using computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI).

The data has been weighted in order to allow for the disproportionate household size.

Table 21 (page 18) sets out sampling errors and confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level relating to a Systematic Random Sample as used in the survey. Note the margin of error for all sample estimates is within the parameters of  $\pm 2.8\%$

**Table 21: Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted data)**

		%	Margin of Error	95% Confidence limits
Age	18 to 24	7.2	1.46	5.7 to 8.6
	25 to 34	14.6	2.00	12.7 to 16.7
	35 to 44	17.1	2.13	15.0 to 19.2
	45 to 54	17.7	2.16	15.5 to 19.9
	55 to 64	16.0	2.07	13.9 to 18.1
	65 & over	27.2	2.52	24.7 to 29.7
Sex	Male	41.6	2.79	38.8 to 44.4
	Female	58.3	2.79	55.5 to 61.1
Religion	Catholic	35.7	2.71	33.0 to 38.4
	Protestant	40.1	2.77	37.4 to 42.9
	None	16.5	2.10	14.4 to 18.6
	Other	2.5	0.88	1.6 to 3.4
	Refused/Don't Know	4.2	1.14	3.1 to 5.3

ARK also publish the survey results. They release them on the internet six months after the end of the fieldwork (<http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt>) with frequencies for every question and a breakdown by age, gender and religion on offer. The website also allows users to download the data in order to carry out their own particular statistical analyses.

The religion category in the dataset has three groups: Catholic, Protestant and No religion. In the analysis in the main body of this report results have been provided by all three categories. While in the previous Omnibus results the breakdown was only presented by Catholic and Protestant.

The Protestant category was created by grouping together the following: Church of Ireland/Anglican/Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Free Presbyterian, Brethren, United Reform Church (URC)/Congregational, Pentecostal, Church of Scotland, Elim Pentecostal, Reformed Presbyterian, Non-subscribing Presbyterian, Salvation Army, Church of Nazarene, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon), Other Protestant, Other Christian, Protestant – no denomination and Christian – no denomination.

For the purpose of transparency the following tables present the results of the NILT 2018 survey with the “don’t know” responses included. This is different from the analysis used in the main body of this report.

Table 22: Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2018?

	All %	Sex		Age group						Religion		
		Male %	Female %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %	Catholic %	Protestant %	No religion %
Yes	85.4	86.5	84.8	59.7	76.5	84.4	93.5	94.7	89.1	88.1	89.5	77.2
No	13.6	13.1	13.9	38.8	21.6	14.1	5.7	5.3	9.7	11.3	9.6	21.3
(Don't know)	1.0	0.4	1.3	1.6	1.9	1.5	0.8	0.0	1.2	0.7	0.8	1.5
N unweighted	1201	501	700	87	175	205	213	192	326	431	496	202

Note: Weighted percentages

Table 23: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is part of the police or independent of the police?

	All %	Sex		Age group						Religion		
		Male %	Female %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %	Catholic %	Protestant %	No religion %
Part of the police	11.3	11.1	11.5	13.0	21.0	10.8	11.8	11.7	5.2	15.3	7.5	14.1
Independent of the police	79.9	82.6	77.7	75.3	67.7	83.8	82.5	79.2	83.4	76.4	83.8	78.8
(Don't know)	8.8	6.3	10.8	11.7	11.3	5.4	5.7	9.1	11.4	8.3	8.7	7.1
N unweighted	1020	438	582	48	133	170	200	181	286	376	442	156

Note: asked only to respondents who reported having heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (weighted percentage).

Table 24: How confident are you that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints against the police in an impartial way, 2018?

	All %	Sex		Age group						Religion		
		Male %	Female %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %	Catholic %	Protestant %	No religion %
Very confident	23.0	21.8	24.0	39.0	23.4	20.2	14.9	27.3	24.0	16.0	29.7	18.1
Fairly confident	45.9	50.8	42.1	39.0	39.0	47.6	51.3	39.4	51.1	50.6	42.4	47.7
Not very confident	11.4	10.9	11.8	10.4	14.6	9.5	13.6	11.1	9.2	11.8	10.3	16.8
Not at all confident	5.8	7.5	4.5	1.3	5.7	7.1	7.9	5.6	4.8	8.0	4.2	5.8
(Don't know)	13.9	9.1	17.6	10.4	17.1	15.5	12.3	16.7	10.9	13.5	13.3	11.6
N unweighted	1020	438	582	48	133	170	200	181	286	376	442	156

*Note: asked only to respondents who reported having heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (weighted percentage).*

Table 25: If you were to make a complaint against a police officer, do you think you would be treated fairly, 2018?

	All %	Sex		Age group						Religion		
		Male %	Female %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %	Catholic %	Protestant %	No religion %
Yes	67.7	69.9	66.3	75.3	60.5	64.3	67.5	65	73.9	65.8	71	64.3
No	15.6	16.8	14.7	11.7	15.3	15.5	21.1	15.2	11.7	19.3	12.4	19.1
(Don't know)	16.7	13.6	19	13	24.2	20.2	11.4	19.8	14.3	14.8	16.6	16.6
N unweighted	1020	438	582	48	133	170	200	181	286	376	442	156

*Note: asked only to respondents who reported having heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (weighted percentage).*

Table 26: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job, 2018?

	All %	Sex		Age group						Religion		
		Male %	Female %	18-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %	Catholic %	Protestant %	No religion %
Yes	66.5	69.5	64.2	87	58.9	62.9	65.5	64.6	69.9	61.1	73.1	66
No	14.9	17	13.4	3.9	12.9	16.2	20.1	15.2	12.7	18.8	12.1	16
(Don't know)	18.6	13.6	22.4	9.1	28.2	21	14.4	20.2	17.5	20.1	14.7	17.9
N unweighted	1020	438	582	48	133	170	200	181	286	376	442	156

*Note: asked only to respondents who reported having heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (weighted percentage).*



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