

Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Quarterly Statistical Update to 31st March 2018

Published April 2018

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

Statistical Update to 31st March 2018, published on 26th April 2018

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31st March 2018. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 10th April 2018.

Complaints Received

The Office received just over 2,560 complaints during 2017/18. This is a 9% decrease in the number of complaints received when compared with last year. The number of complaints received has continued to fall year on year for the past five years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2013/14 to 2017/18



Main Complaint Factor

During 2017/18, criminal investigation was the most common main factor¹ underlying complaints, accounting for almost 30% of complaints received during the year. Arrest was the second most common factor underlying complaints. This continues to be the normal trend observed for complaint factors.

Nine of the ten known complaints factors decreased during 2017/18 when compared with the last year.

The largest percentage decrease was in complaints relating to the 'Troubles' followed by domestic violence and police searches. It should be noted however that the Office receives fewer complaints relating to the 'Troubles' and domestic violence.

Complaints relating to parade/demonstrations was the only complaint factor to increase during this time (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between 2016/17 and 2017/18

	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	852	757	-95	-11%
Arrest	411	396	-15	-4%
Traffic Related Incident	239	207	-32	-13%
Search	224	174	-50	-22%
Domestic Incident	156	136	-20	-13%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	105	102	-3	-3%
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	75	47	-28	-37%
Domestic Violence	54	42	-12	-22%
Parades/Demonstrations	21	32	11	-
Other	521	520	-1	0%
Unknown	155	148	-7	-5%
Total	2,813	2,561	-252	-9%

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 decreased in 8 of the 11 police districts during 2017/18 when compared with the last year. Districts F and H had the largest percentage decrease. The number of complaints increased in Districts E, J and L (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between 2016/17 and 2017/18

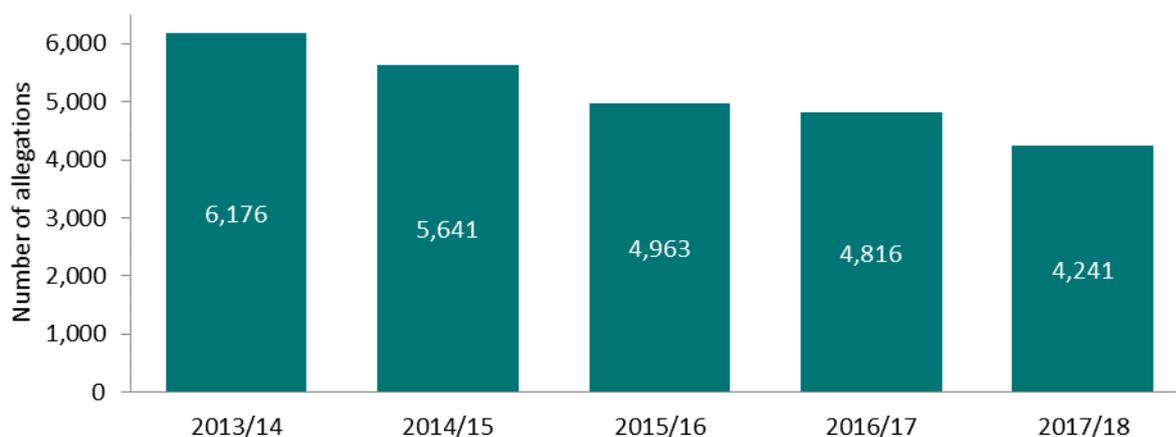
	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	742	626	-116	-16%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	116	110	-6	-5%
District C - Ards & North Down	186	157	-29	-16%
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	165	150	-15	-9%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	217	226	9	4%
District F - Mid Ulster	119	88	-31	-26%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	137	116	-21	-15%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	205	163	-42	-20%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	240	243	3	1%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	171	143	-28	-16%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	171	183	12	7%
Unknown / Other Organisation	344	356	12	3%
Northern Ireland	2,813	2,561	-252	-9%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received over 4,240 allegations during 2017/18. This is the lowest number of allegations received when compared with each of the last five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2013/14 to 2017/18



Allegation Type

All but one of the 12 allegation types decreased during 2017/18 when compared with last year.

Allegations relating to the 'Troubles' and those concerning traffic incidents had the largest percentage decrease, followed by allegations of malpractice (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between 2016/17 and 2017/18

	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	2,266	2,095	-171	-8%
Oppressive Behaviour	1,076	886	-190	-18%
Incivility	283	241	-42	-15%
Search	241	213	-28	-12%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	204	176	-28	-14%
Mishandling of Property	99	106	7	7%
Malpractice	76	49	-27	-36%
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	77	40	-37	-48%
Discriminatory Behaviour	54	40	-14	-26%
Traffic	61	32	-29	-48%
Section 55 Referral	34	25	-9	-
Other	345	338	-7	-2%
Total	4,816	4,241	-575	-12%

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

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 29 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between April 2017 and March 2018 (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 2017, September 2017, December 2017 and March 2018.

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Informal Resolution
June 2017	32
September 2017	31
December 2017	26
March 2018	29

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 for him 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.

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).

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 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 [user guide](#) has been published to give users of these statistics more knowledge about the complaints process, more information regarding the quality of the data and also a glossary of terms used. It is recommended that all users of these statistics should consult the user guide to aid their understanding of the statistics and ensure that they are using them appropriately. Further information regarding the number of complaints and allegations received in 2016/17 is available in the [accompanying excel spreadsheet](#). This spreadsheet also includes the data for the figures and tables in this bulletin.

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, will be presented in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2017/18'. This bulletin will be published by the end of June 2018 and will be made 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 \(NINIS\)](#). This information will be updated later in the year to include figures for 2017/18.

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

This is the fourth year the Police Ombudsman's Office has published quarterly information on the number of complaints and allegations received. The 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 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 first quarterly update of 2018/19 is due to be published on Thursday 26th July 2018 and it will include statistics up to the 30th June 2018.

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.

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This publication and other information about the work of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are also available on the Internet at:

Website: www.policeombudsman.org



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