



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

**Quarterly Statistical Update to 30<sup>th</sup> September  
2018**

**Published October 2018**

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

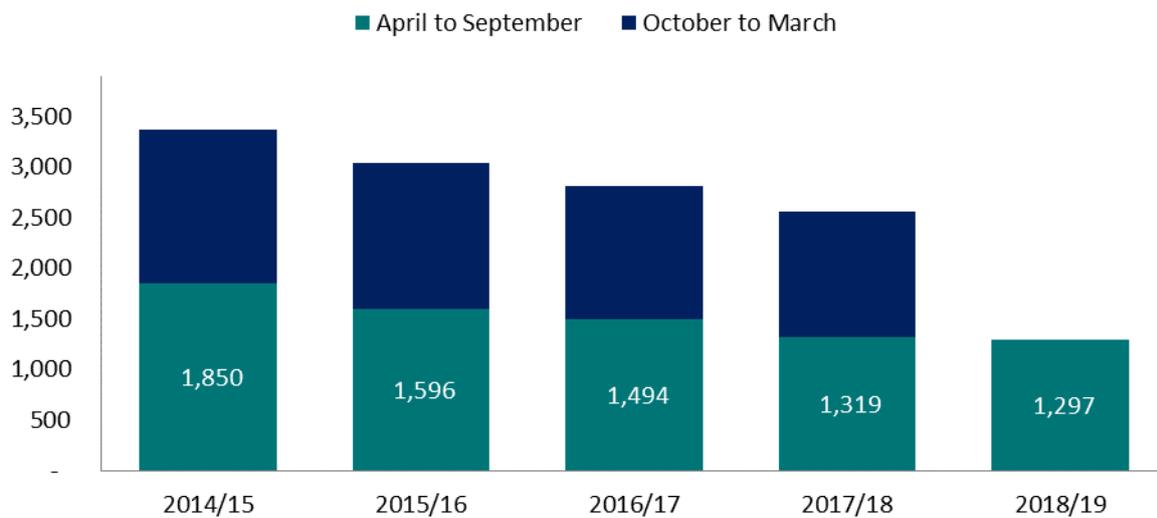
## Statistical Update to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018, published on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

### Complaints Received

The Office received almost 1,300 complaints between April and September 2018. This is a 2% decrease in the number of complaints received when compared with the same time period last year. It is also the lowest number of complaints received during this time when compared with the previous four years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2014/15 to September 2018



## Main Complaint Factor

During the first half of 2018/19, criminal investigation was the most common main factor<sup>1</sup> underlying complaints, accounting for almost 30% of complaints received during that time. Arrest was the second most common factor underlying complaints. This continues to be the normal trend observed for complaint factors.

The largest decrease in complaints arose from 'Other' matters followed by complaints arising from Parade/Demonstrations.

Complaints regarding Domestic Incidents had the largest percentage increase during this time followed by Searches (Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to September 2017 and April to September 2018**

	April-September 2017	April-September 2018	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	369	384	15	4%
Arrest	195	201	6	3%
Traffic Related Incident	110	117	7	6%
Search	80	86	6	8%
Domestic Incident	64	71	7	11%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	61	56	-5	-8%
Domestic Violence	27	18	-9	-
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	24	16	-8	-
Parades/Demonstrations	31	12	-19	-
Other	273	249	-24	-9%
Unknown	85	87	2	2%
Total	1,319	1,297	-22	-2%

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 4 of the 11 police districts between April and September 2018 when compared with the same time period last year. District J had the largest percentage decrease during this time followed by District G while District H had the largest percentage increase (Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to September 2017 and April to September 2018**

	April-September 2017	April-September 2018	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	319	338	19	6%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	53	53	0	0%
District C - Ards & North Down	79	78	-1	-1%
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	71	74	3	4%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	104	109	5	5%
District F - Mid Ulster	48	53	5	-
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	65	52	-13	-20%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	76	91	15	20%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	127	95	-32	-25%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	89	90	1	1%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	90	89	-1	-1%
Unknown / Other Organisation	198	175	-23	-12%
Northern Ireland	1,319	1,297	-22	-2%

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

## Allegations Received

The Office received just over 1,960 allegations during the first half of 2018/19. This is the lowest number of allegations received during this time when compared with each of the previous four years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2014/15 to September 2018



## Allegation Type

Allegations relating to oppressive behaviour had the largest percentage decrease during the first half of 2018/19. Allegations relating to unlawful/unnecessary arrest/detention had the largest percent increase during this time when compared to the same time period last year (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to September 2017 and April to September 2018

	April-September 2017	April-September 2018	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	1,056	944	-112	-11%
Oppressive Behaviour	461	389	-72	-16%
Incivility	134	123	-11	-8%
Search	107	102	-5	-5%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	82	97	15	18%
Mishandling of Property	51	41	-10	-
Traffic	19	24	5	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	14	19	5	-
Malpractice	31	18	-13	-
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	23	15	-8	-
Section 55 Referral	13	11	-2	-
Other	180	178	-2	-1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,171</b>	<b>1,961</b>	<b>-210</b>	<b>-10%</b>

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

## Officers with multiple complaints

There were 26 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between October 2017 and September 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 2018, September 2018.**

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

## 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 remit<sup>2</sup>. The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations<sup>3</sup>, 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 residual matters account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

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<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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 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 2017/18 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, is presented in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2017/18'. 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**

This is the fifth 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 produced 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 next quarterly update of 2018/19 is due to be published on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and it will include statistics up to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 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](mailto: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](http://www.policeombudsman.org)



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