

Annual Report on
Police Officer Satisfaction
with services provided by the
Police Ombudsman's Office in
Northern Ireland
2014/15

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Main Findings:

- The majority of police officers had positive views of Ombudsman staff:
 - 91% felt they were treated with respect,
 - 81% felt they were treated fairly,
 - 92% felt staff were easy to understand, and
 - 76% thought staff were knowledgeable.
- Officers were more satisfied with the explanation of the process, the manner in which they were treated and the clarity of the correspondence than for other aspects of the complaints process.
- Eight out of ten officers felt that we dealt with their complaint independently.
- Almost half of officers stated that they were satisfied with how the Office handled their complaint.
- Over 60% of officers felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable.

Introduction

This is an Official Statistics publication. Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular validation checks to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (the Office) was set up by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 in order to provide an independent system for investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman is committed to providing an independent and impartial investigation process of the highest quality, which is timely and secures the confidence of both the public and police.

This report presents the findings from the Police Officer Satisfaction Survey. This is the first time that this survey has been carried out electronically and thus the methodology has changed¹. For this reason no direct comparisons can be made with previous police officer satisfaction surveys. This report includes information collected from officers who were subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during 2014/15.

A total of 1,313 officers were emailed the questionnaire and 507 questionnaires were returned. This represents a response rate of 39%.

The Police Ombudsman, Dr Michael Maguire, has said he is grateful to every officer who completed the questionnaire and contributed to this response rate. Dr Maguire said he was pleased that the vast majority of officers had positive comments to make about his staff, but also acknowledged that some officers expressed concerns about certain aspects of the police complaints process. He said he will consider those issues carefully and respond in due course.

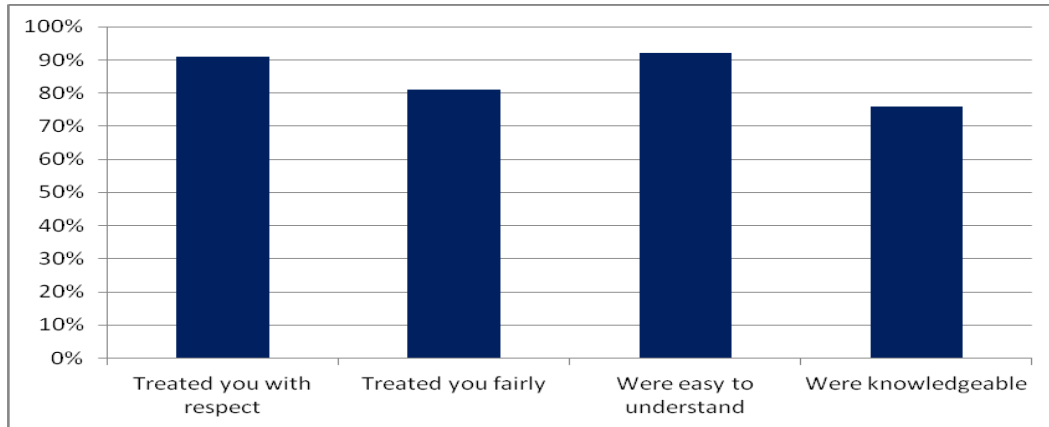
¹ See Appendix for more details

Results

Perception of Ombudsman staff

Police officers were asked if they spoke to a member of staff and if so how staff had appeared to them in relation to a number of characteristics. In 2014/15, 90% of respondents said that they had spoken to a member of staff and of these the majority of them had viewed staff positively (Figure 1, Table 1).

Figure 1: Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff, 2014/15

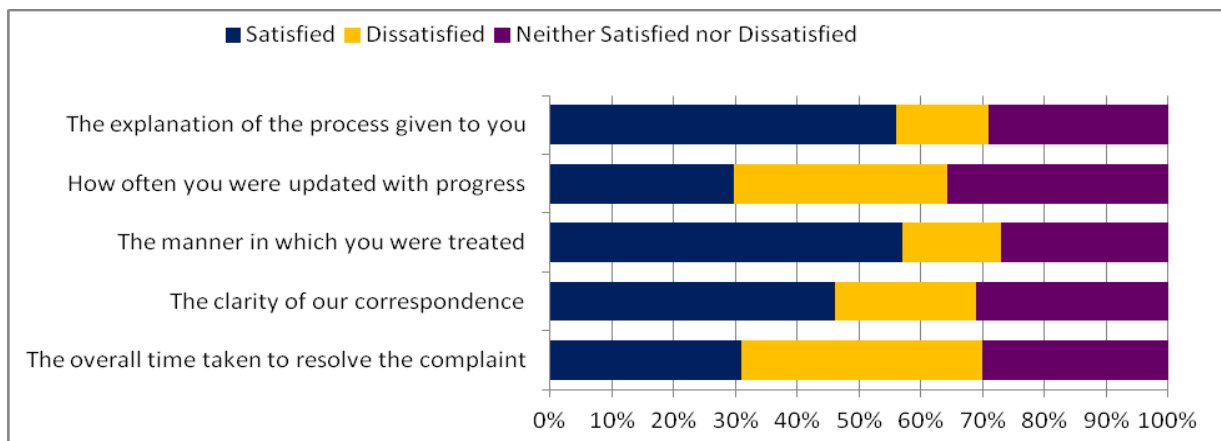


Level of satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

Officers were asked to comment on how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with aspects of the complaints process.

In 2014/15, officers were more satisfied with the explanation of the process, the manner in which they were treated and the clarity of the correspondence. Officers were less satisfied with the frequency of progress updates and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint (Figure 2, Table 2).

Figure 2: Officer satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process, 2014/15

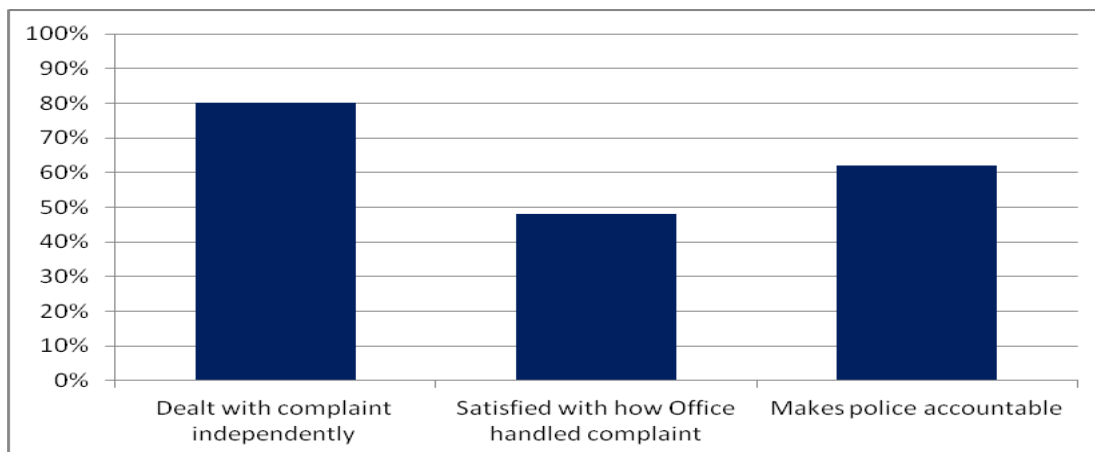


Independence, Satisfaction and Accountability

Officers were asked questions relating to independence, satisfaction and accountability.

- Four out of five officers (80%) felt that the Police Ombudsman's Office dealt with their complaint independently.
- Almost half of the officers who responded to the survey were satisfied with how the Office handled their complaint. A further 27% of officers were dissatisfied and 25% of officers were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- More than six out of ten officers (62%) felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable.

Figure 3: Deals with complaints independently, satisfied with handling of complaint and makes police more accountable, 2014/15



Information from this survey is used by the Office to measure compliance against one of the Office's key performance indicators which deals with quality and effective investigations, levels of satisfaction and confidence in the police complaints system. The Office aims: *'to maintain a level of at least 75% of police officers subject of investigation to be satisfied with the service provided by the Office'*.

Results from this survey show that the Office failed to meet this target with 48% of officers satisfied with the service.

Appendix 1: Results

Table 1: Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff

Perception	Yes	No
Treated you with respect	91%	9%
Treated you fairly	81%	19%
Were easy to understand	92%	8%
Were knowledgeable	76%	24%

Table 2: Police officer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

Aspect	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
The explanation of the process given to you	56%	15%	29%
How often you were updated with progress	30%	35%	36%
The manner in which you were treated	57%	16%	27%
The clarity of our correspondence	46%	23%	31%
The overall time taken to resolve the complaint	31%	39%	30%

Table 3: Do you think we dealt with your complaint independently?

	Yes	No
Dealt with your complaint independently	80%	20%

Table 4: Overall, were you satisfied or dissatisfied with how the Office handled the complaint?

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Satisfaction level	48%	25%	27%

Table 5: Do you feel that police complaints system makes the police more accountable?

	Yes	No
Makes the complaints system more accountable	62%	38%

Appendix 2: Notes to readers

The survey:

Since October 2005, the Police Ombudsman's Office carried out a paper survey of all officers who were subject of an investigation, which asked them to express their views on services provided by the Office. As part of the review of the work of the Statistical and Research Team, the Office began looking at defining the service it intended to deliver to police officers and how best to measure their attitudes to the service received. It was decided that the best way to do this was to firstly amend the questionnaire in order to simplify the way in which questions were asked and secondly to carry out an electronic survey of those officers who had been subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed. The identity of the officers surveyed at the end of 2014/15 was extracted from the Office's Case handling System (CHS). Although some officers had more than one complaint closed during the year, they were asked to complete the survey only once.

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) software was used to carry out the survey and the Statistics Branch within the PSNI facilitated this on our behalf.

The results from this survey cannot be compared to previous police officer satisfaction surveys due to the changes made in the methodology and the changes made to the questions that were asked.

Data use:

The data collected are used by the Office to monitor and evaluate the service provided to those police officers who have been subject to a complaint and identify any issues that arise in a timely manner. This allows the Office to fulfil its statutory duty to secure the confidence of the police in the complaints handling process.

The data are also used by this Office to comply with the key performance indicator whereby the Office maintains: *'A level of at least 75% of police officers subject to investigation to be satisfied with the service provided by the Office.'*

In 2014/15, the Office failed to meet this target achieving 48% satisfaction.



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:

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