

Annual Report on  
Police Officer Satisfaction  
with services provided by the  
Police Ombudsman's Office  
2021/22

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## Introduction

This is an Official Statistics publication. Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for 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 conducted over the three week time period 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022 to the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022. It includes information collected from officers who were subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during 2021/22 and compares the findings to results obtained for the previous years<sup>1</sup>.

In this report, comparisons have been made between the results for this year's survey and the results obtained for previous years. Trend data is available for the seven years that the survey has been carried out in the tables outlined in Appendix 1: Results, page 8. This data is also available in the "Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet – Police Officer Survey 2021/22"<sup>2</sup> should the reader wish to carry out further analysis on the findings of this year's survey. Comparisons for previous year's surveys have already been detailed in reports published in that particular reporting year. These reports are all available on the Office's website (details are on the back page of this report).

The Information & Communication Unit were unable to conduct the police officer survey during 2019/20 due the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of the Office to all but essential staff.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the seventh year that the police officer satisfaction survey was carried out electronically; therefore comparisons can only be made with the previous six years. The survey was not carried out in 2019/20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent closure of the Office.

<sup>2</sup> The Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet is available on our [website](#).

## **Main Findings of 2021/22**

- The majority of police officers had positive views of Ombudsman staff:
  - 88% felt they were treated with respect,
  - 77% felt they were treated fairly,
  - 88% felt staff were easy to understand, and
  - 77% thought staff were knowledgeable.
- Officers were more likely to be satisfied with the manner in which they were treated, the explanation of the process and the clarity of our correspondence than they were with the frequency of progress updates and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint.
- Four fifths of officers surveyed felt their complaint was dealt with independently.
- Less than three fifths of officers felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable.

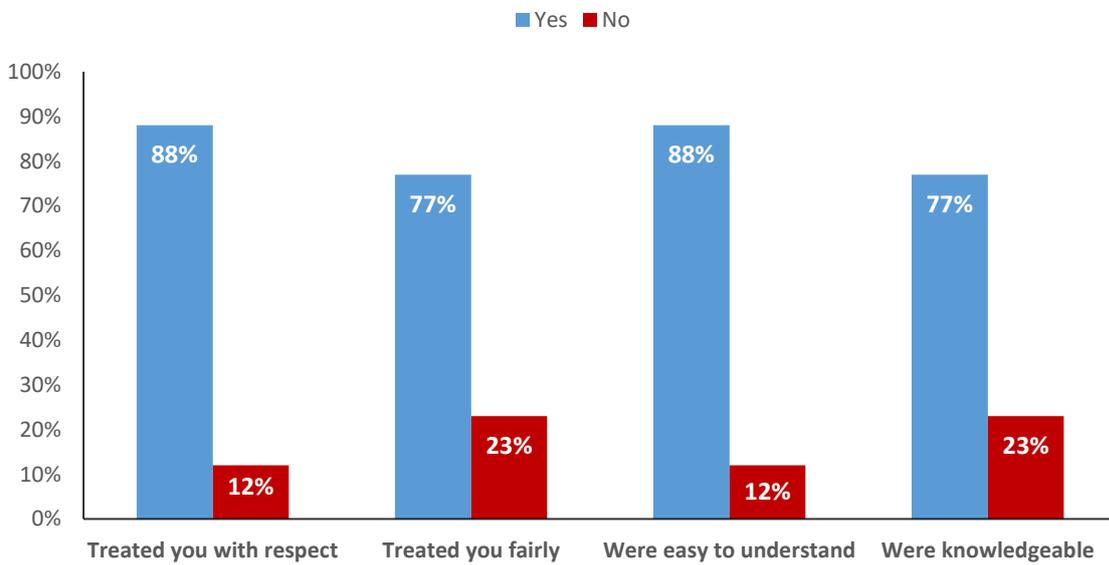
# Results

## Perception of Ombudsman staff

Police officers were asked if they spoke to a member of staff and, if they had, how staff had appeared to them in relation to a number of characteristics. In 2021/22, 62% of officers said that they had spoken to a member of staff and of these:

- 88% thought they were treated with respect,
- 77% thought they were treated fairly,
- 88% thought staff were easy to understand and
- 77% thought staff were knowledgeable (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff, 2021/22

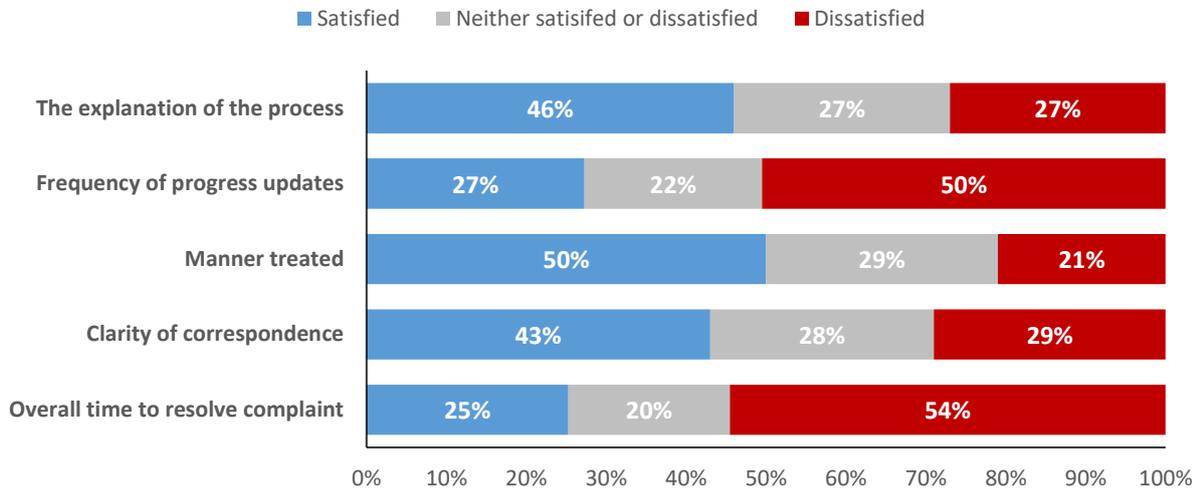


Results showed that the views of police officers in 2021/22, with respect to their perceptions of Ombudsman staff, were similar when compared with previous years (see Appendix 1, Tables 1 to 4)

## Level of satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process<sup>3</sup>

In 2021/22, as seen in previous years, a larger proportion of officers were satisfied with the explanation of the process, the manner in which they were treated and the clarity of correspondence than they were with the frequency of progress updates and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Officer Satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process, 2021/22



- The percentage of officers satisfied with the explanation of the process in 2021/22 was similar to last year however this has decreased when compared with earlier years (i.e. 2014/15 to 2018/19).
- The percentage of officers that were dissatisfied with the frequency of updates was higher in 2021/22 and 2020/21 when compared with the five years between 2014/15 and 2018/19.
- In 2021/22, the percentage of officers who were satisfied with the manner of treatment was similar to last year but has decreased when compared to the levels reported in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- The views of police officers in 2021/22, with respect to the clarity of the correspondence, is similar when compared with previous years.
- The percentage of officers satisfied with the overall time taken to resolve their complaint in 2021/22 was similar to last year however this has decreased when compared with four out of the five previous years; 2015/16 to 2018/19 (see Appendix 1, Tables 5 to 9).

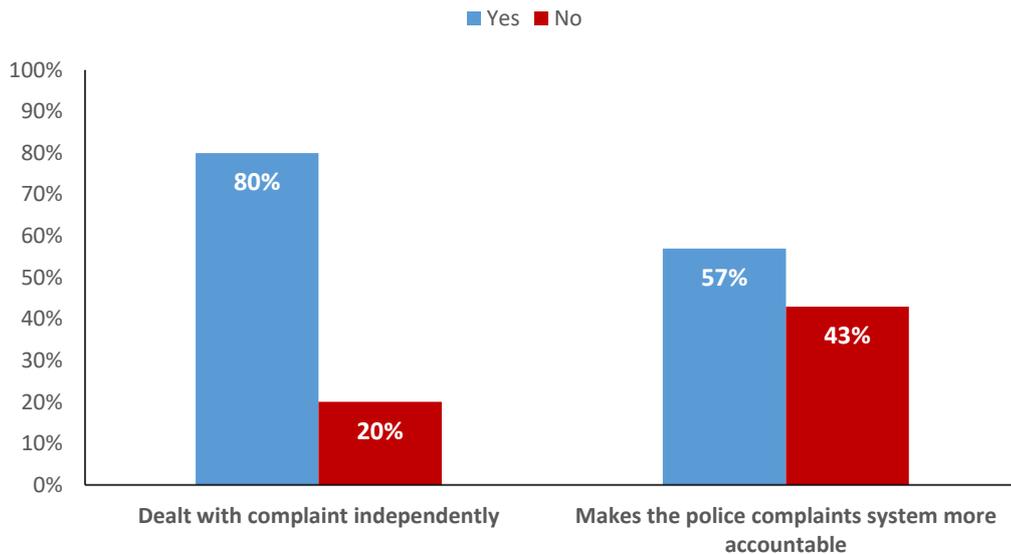
<sup>3</sup>Note: Some of the changes in satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels observed may be as a result of increasing the Likert scale from three to five responses in 2017/18.

## Independence and Accountability

In 2021/22:

- Four fifths of officers felt that the Police Ombudsman’s Office dealt with their complaint independently.
- Under three fifths of officers felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable (Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Deals with complaints independently and makes police more accountable, 2021/22*



### Independence

In 2021/22, the percentage of police officers who thought the Office dealt with the complaint made about them independently, was similar when compared with five of the six previous years; satisfaction levels dipped slightly in 2017/18 (see Appendix 1, Table 10).

### Accountability

The percentage of officers that thought the police complaints system makes police more accountable is similar in 2021/22 when compared with the previous years, apart from 2018/19 when levels were at their highest (see Appendix 1, Table 11).

## Appendix 1: Results

### Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff

**Table 1: Were you treated with respect?**

Answer	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Yes	91%	89%	89%	89%	87%	N/A	91%	88%
No	9%	11%	11%	11%	13%	N/A	9%	12%
No. of respondents	454	397	418	238	248	N/A	117	218

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

**Table 2: Were you treated fairly?**

Answer	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Yes	81%	80%	80%	78%	78%	N/A	79%	77%
No	19%	20%	20%	22%	22%	N/A	21%	23%
No. of respondents	454	397	418	238	248	N/A	117	218

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

**Table 3: Were staff easy to understand?**

Answer	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Yes	92%	90%	89%	87%	90%	N/A	88%	88%
No	8%	10%	11%	13%	10%	N/A	12%	12%
No. of respondents	454	397	418	238	248	N/A	117	218

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

**Table 4: Were staff knowledgeable?**

Answer	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Yes	76%	77%	76%	74%	73%	N/A	74%	77%
No	24%	23%	24%	26%	27%	N/A	26%	23%
No. of respondents	454	397	418	238	248	N/A	117	218

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

## Police officer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

**Table 5: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with explanation of the process.**

Explanation of the process	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Satisfied	56%	54%	55%	58%	55%	N/A	47%	46%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	29%	29%	29%	21%	23%	N/A	28%	27%
Dissatisfied	15%	16%	16%	21%	23%	N/A	24%	27%
No. of respondents	507	461	478	273	279	N/A	197	353

Asked to all officers

**Table 6: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with frequency of updates.**

Frequency of updates	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Satisfied	30%	32%	29%	38%	37%	N/A	28%	27%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	36%	34%	33%	22%	26%	N/A	23%	22%
Dissatisfied	35%	34%	38%	40%	37%	N/A	49%	50%
No. of respondents	507	461	478	273	279	N/A	197	353

Asked to all officers

**Table 7: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with manner of treatment.**

<b>Manner of treatment</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
Satisfied	57%	56%	58%	60%	63%	N/A	53%	50%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	27%	26%	24%	16%	15%	N/A	26%	29%
Dissatisfied	16%	18%	19%	23%	22%	N/A	20%	21%
No. of respondents	507	461	478	273	279	N/A	197	353

Asked to all officers

**Table 8: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with clarity of correspondence.**

<b>Clarity of correspondence</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
Satisfied	46%	47%	46%	50%	51%	N/A	43%	43%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	31%	30%	31%	20%	23%	N/A	28%	28%
Dissatisfied	23%	24%	24%	30%	27%	N/A	29%	29%
No. of respondents	507	461	478	273	279	N/A	197	353

Asked to all officers

**Table 9: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with time taken to resolve the complaint.**

<b>Time taken to resolve complaint</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
Satisfied	31%	33%	32%	40%	41%	N/A	29%	25%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	30%	27%	26%	21%	20%	N/A	21%	20%
Dissatisfied	39%	41%	42%	40%	39%	N/A	50%	54%
No. of respondents	507	461	478	273	279	N/A	197	353

Asked to all officers

## Police officer Perception of Police Ombudsman Independence and accountability

**Table 10: Did we deal with the complaint independently?**

Answer	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Yes	80%	79%	76%	71%	75%	N/A	78%	80%
No	20%	21%	24%	29%	25%	N/A	22%	20%
No. of respondents	507	461	478	273	279	N/A	197	353

Asked to all officers

**Table 11: Do you feel the police complaints system makes police more accountable?**

Answer	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Yes	62%	60%	57%	58%	65%	N/A	63%	57%
No	38%	40%	43%	42%	35%	N/A	37%	43%
No. of respondents	507	461	478	273	279	N/A	197	353

Asked to all officers

## **Appendix 2: Notes to readers**

### **The survey**

This is the seventh year the Office has carried out an electronic survey of police officers who had been the subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during the reporting year.

The identity of the officers surveyed at the end of 2021/22 was extracted from the Office's Case handling System (CHS). Officers who had more than one complaint closed during the year, were asked to complete the survey once.

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) software was used to carry out the survey with their Statistics Branch facilitating this on our behalf.

A total of 701 officers were emailed a link to the survey and 353 responses were submitted. This represents a response rate of 50%.

The "Satisfied" category in Tables 5 to 9 in Appendix 1, include the categories of "Very satisfied" and "Satisfied", while the category on "Not satisfied" include "Dissatisfied" and "Very dissatisfied".

### **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.

## **Appendix 3: Police Officer Satisfaction Survey Questions**

### **Question 1:**

Did you speak to a member of the Police Ombudsman's staff?

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

***If you spoke to a member of staff.....***

### **Question 2:**

Did you think the member of Police Ombudsman's staff...

- Treated you with respect
- Treated you fairly
- Were easy to understand
- Were knowledgeable

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

### **Question 3:**

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with each of the following aspects of service?

- The explanation of the process given to you
- How often you were updated with progress
- The manner in which you were treated
- The clarity of our correspondence
- The overall time taken to resolve the complaint

*Answer 'Very satisfied', 'Satisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied'*

### **Question 4:**

Do you think we dealt with your complaint independently?

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

### **Question 5:**

Do you feel the police complaints system makes the police more accountable?

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

**If you have any further comments regarding your contact with the Police Ombudsman's Office, please detail them below.**



**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:** <http://www.policeombudsman.org>