

Annual Report on
Police Officer Satisfaction
with services provided by the
Police Ombudsman's Office
in Northern Ireland
2017/18

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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. It includes information collected from officers who were subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during 2017/18 and compares the findings to results obtained for the previous three years¹.

A total of 779 officers were emailed a questionnaire and 273 questionnaires were returned. This represents a response rate of 35%.

¹ This is the fourth year that the police officer satisfaction survey was carried out electronically; therefore comparisons can only be made with the previous three years.

Main Findings of 2017/18:

- The majority of police officers had positive views of Ombudsman staff:
 - 89% felt they were treated with respect,
 - 78% felt they were treated fairly,
 - 87% felt staff were easy to understand, and
 - 74% thought staff were knowledgeable.
- Officers were more likely to be satisfied with the explanation of the process and the manner in which they were treated than for other aspects of the complaints process.
- Just over seven out of ten officers surveyed (71%) felt their complaint was dealt with independently.
- Almost three fifths of officers (58%) felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable.

Performance against Targets:

Information from this survey is used by the Office to measure compliance against four key performance indicators which deal with improving delivery against our published standards. The Office aims to maintain or improve performance against its Service Charter and in particular aims to ensure that:

Target 1: 90% of police officers thought they were treated with respect

In 2017/18, the Office failed to meet this target as 89% of police officers felt they were treated with respect

Target 2: 90% of police officers thought staff were easy to understand

In 2017/18, the Office failed to meet this target as 87% of police officers felt staff were easy to understand

Target 3: 80% of police officers thought staff were knowledgeable

In 2017/18, the Office failed to meet this target as 74% of police officers felt staff were knowledgeable

Target 4: 60% of police officers consider that the Office has dealt with their issue in an independent manner

In 2017/18, the Office met this target as 71% of police officers felt their issue was dealt with independently

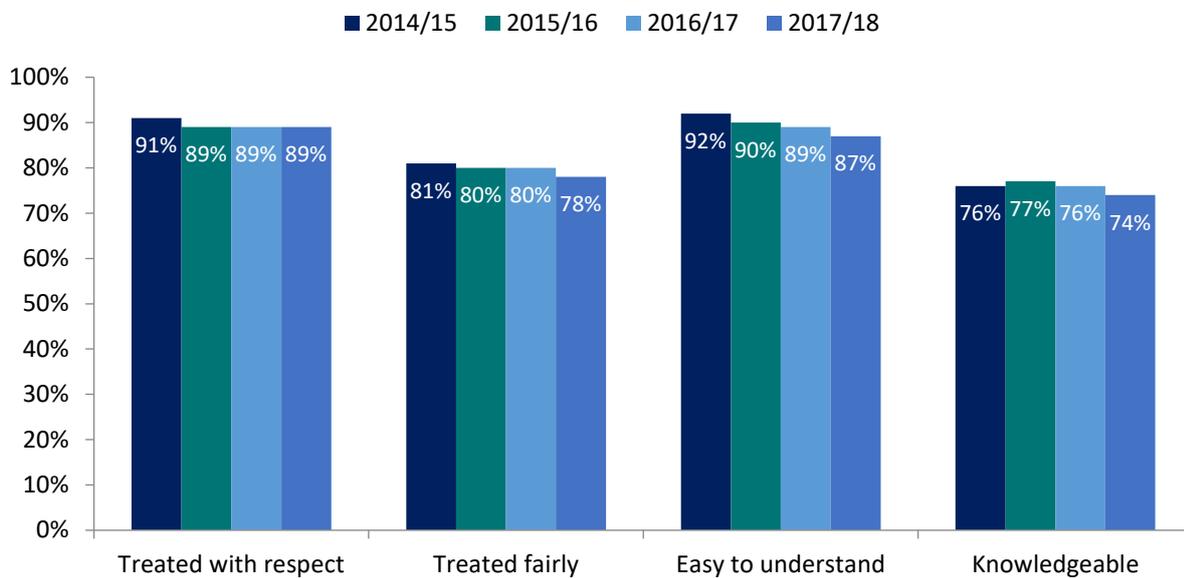
Results

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 2017/18, 87% of respondents said that they had spoken to a member of staff and of these:

- 89% felt they were treated with respect,
- 78% felt they were treated fairly,
- 87% felt staff were easy to understand and
- 74% felt staff were knowledgeable (Figure 1, Tables 1 – 4).

Figure 1: Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff, 2014/15 - 2017/18

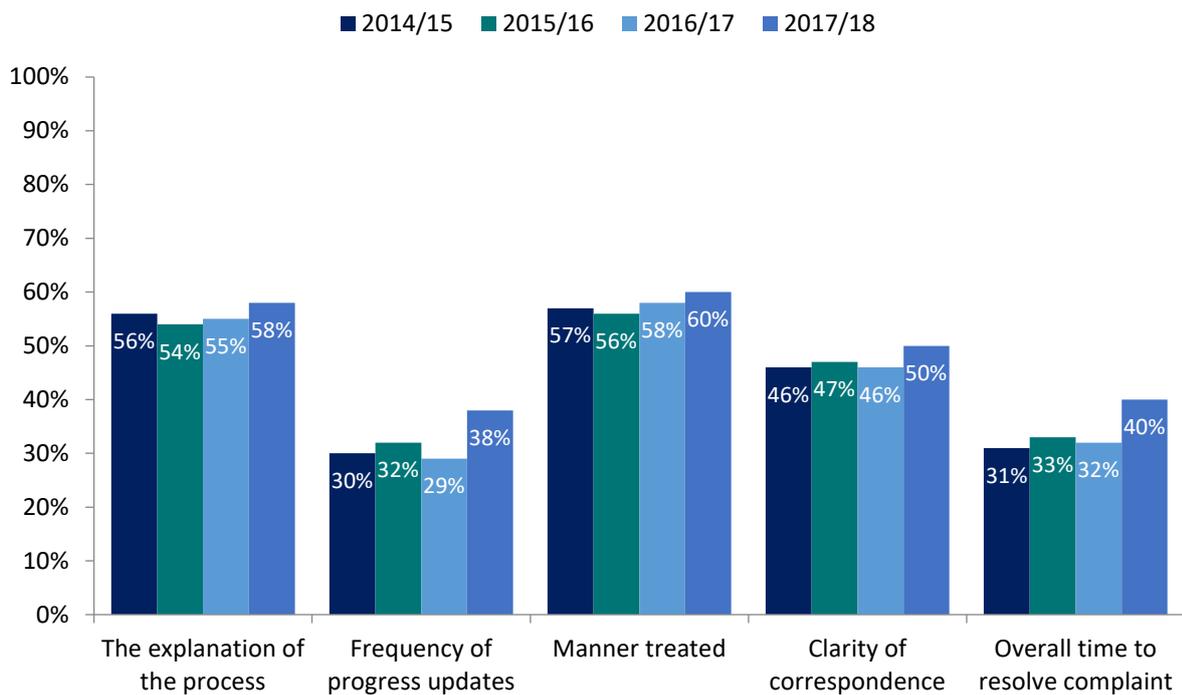


Results show that the views of police officers, with respect to Ombudsman staff, have remained similar over the last four years. In 2014/15, however, officers were more likely to feel that staff were easy to understand than they were in 2017/18.

Level of satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process²

In 2017/18, a larger proportion of officers were satisfied with the explanation of the process and the manner in which they were treated than with the frequency of progress updates, the clarity of the correspondence and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint (Figure 2, Tables 5 – 9).

Figure 2: Officer satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process, 2014/15 – 2017/18



Most of these findings are similar to those reported during the previous three years. The results also show:

- In 2017/18 there was a larger percentage of officers satisfied with the frequency of updates when compared with 2014/15 and 2016/17.
- There was a higher percentage of officers dissatisfied with the manner in which they were treated in 2017/18 when compared with 2014/15.
- There was an increase in the percentage of officers dissatisfied with the clarity of the correspondence in 2017/18 when compared with 2014/15.
- In 2017/18, a larger percentage of officers were satisfied with the overall time to resolve the complaint when compared with the previous three years.

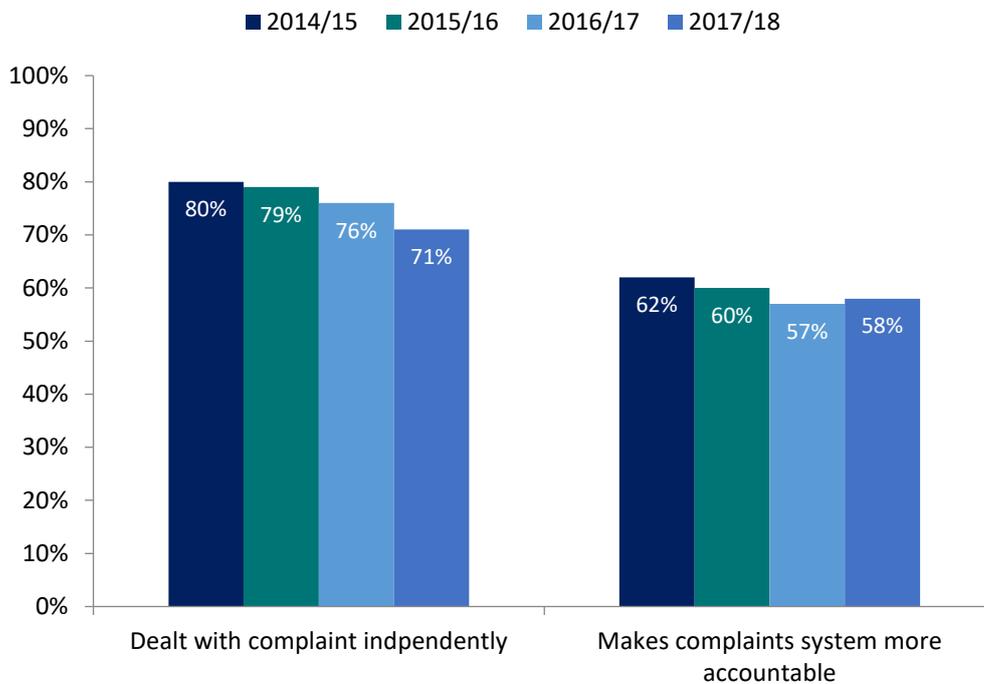
²Note: Some of the changes in satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels observed in 2017/18, may be as a result of increasing the Likert scale from three to five responses.

Independence and Accountability

In 2017/18:

- Just over seven out of ten officers (71%) felt that the Police Ombudsman's Office dealt with their complaint independently.
- Almost three fifths of officers (58%) felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable (Figure 3, Tables 10 & 11).

Figure 3: Deals with complaints independently and makes police more accountable, 2014/15 - 2017/18



With regards to independence, there has been a decrease in the proportion of officers who felt that the Office dealt with their complaint independently this year when compared with 2014/15 and 2015/16. In relation to accountability, the views of police officers have remained similar over the four years.

Appendix 1: Results

Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff

Table 1: Were you treated with respect, 2014/15 - 2017/18?

| Treated with respect | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Yes | 91% | 89% | 89% | 89% |
| No | 9% | 11% | 11% | 11% |

Table 2: Were you treated fairly, 2014/15 - 2017/18?

| Treated fairly | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Yes | 81% | 80% | 80% | 78% |
| No | 19% | 20% | 20% | 22% |

Table 3: Were staff easy to understand, 2014/15 - 2017/18?

| Easy to understand | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Yes | 92% | 90% | 89% | 87% |
| No | 8% | 10% | 11% | 13% |

Table 4: Were staff knowledgeable, 2014/15 - 2017/18?

| Knowledgeable | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Yes | 76% | 77% | 76% | 74% |
| No | 24% | 23% | 24% | 26% |

Police officer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

Table 5: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with explanation of the process, 2014/15 - 2017/18.

| Explanation of the process | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Satisfied | 56% | 54% | 55% | 58% |
| Dissatisfied | 15% | 16% | 16% | 21% |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 29% | 29% | 29% | 21% |

Table 6: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with frequency of updates, 2014/15 - 2017/18.

| Frequency of updates | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Satisfied | 30% | 32% | 29% | 38% |
| Dissatisfied | 35% | 34% | 38% | 40% |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 36% | 34% | 33% | 22% |

Table 7: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with manner of treatment, 2014/15 - 2017/18.

| Manner of treatment | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Satisfied | 57% | 56% | 58% | 60% |
| Dissatisfied | 16% | 18% | 19% | 23% |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 27% | 26% | 24% | 16% |

Table 8: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with clarity of correspondence, 2014/15 - 2017/18.

| Clarity of correspondence | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Satisfied | 46% | 47% | 46% | 50% |
| Dissatisfied | 23% | 24% | 24% | 30% |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 31% | 30% | 31% | 20% |

Table 9: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with time taken to resolve the complaint, 2014/15 - 2017/18.

| Time taken to resolve complaint | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Satisfied | 31% | 33% | 32% | 40% |
| Dissatisfied | 39% | 41% | 42% | 40% |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 30% | 27% | 26% | 21% |

Police officer Perception of Police Ombudsman Independence and accountability

Table 10: Did we deal with the complaint independently, 2014/15 - 2017/18?

| Dealt with your complaint independently | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Yes | 80% | 79% | 76% | 71% |
| No | 20% | 21% | 24% | 29% |

Table 11: Do you feel the police complaints system makes police more accountable, 2014/15 - 2017/18?

| Makes the complaints system more accountable | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Yes | 62% | 60% | 57% | 58% |
| No | 38% | 40% | 43% | 42% |

Appendix 2: Notes to readers

The survey:

This is the fourth year the Office has carried out an electronic survey³ of police officers who had been the subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during the reporting year. The Office decided that this was a more suitable way of measuring the attitudes of police officers, with respect to the service they received.

The identity of the officers surveyed at the end of 2017/18 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 with their Statistics Branch facilitating this on our behalf.

Two amendments were made to the questionnaire in 2017/18. Firstly the Likert scale used for the question on satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the service was increased to a 5-point scale. Secondly rather than having one individual question that measures overall satisfaction, the Office decided to measure satisfaction for each aspect of the service charter individually, therefore the question 'Overall where you satisfied or dissatisfied with how the Office handled the complaint?' was removed from the survey.

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 indicators which deal with improving delivery against the published standards.

³ Prior to 2014/15, police officers who had been the subject of an investigation received a paper survey form from the Office.

Appendix 3: Police Officer Satisfaction Survey

Q1 Did you speak to a member of the Police Ombudsman's staff?

- Yes
- No

Q2 Did you think the member of Police Ombudsman's staff...

| | Yes | No |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Treated you with respect | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Treated you fairly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Were easy to understand | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Were knowledgeable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q3 How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with each of the following aspects of service?

| | Very satisfied | Satisfied | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Very dissatisfied |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| The explanation of the process given to you | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| How often you were updated with progress | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The manner in which you were treated | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The clarity of our correspondence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The overall time taken to resolve the complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q4 Do you think that we dealt with your complaint independently? (i.e. free from influence from others)

- Yes
- No

Q5 Do you feel that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable?

- Yes
- No

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



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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: www.policeombudsman.org