



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

Quarterly Statistical Bulletin up to 30th September 2021

Published October 2021

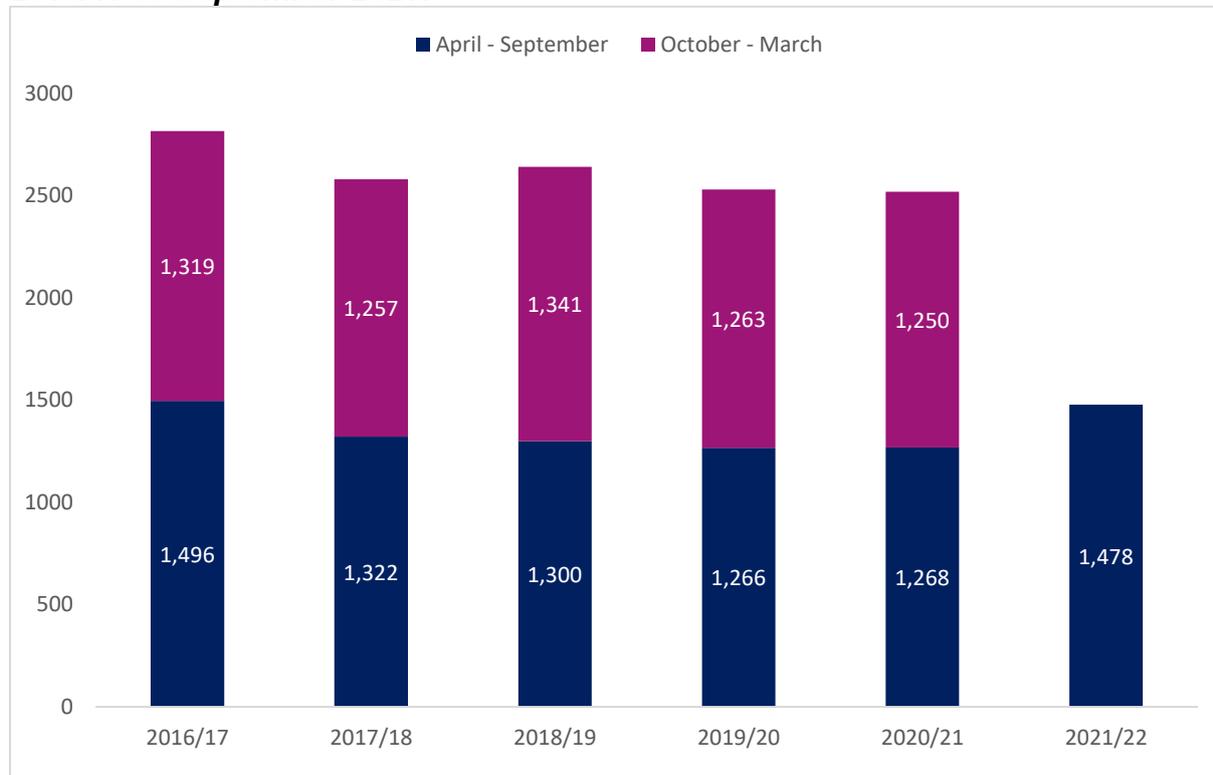
Statistical Update up to 30th September 2021, published on 28th October 2021

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 30th September 2021. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman's Case Handling System (CHS) on the 5th October 2021.

Complaints Received

The Office received just over 1,470 complaints between April and September 2021. This is a 17% increase in the number of complaints received when compared with the same time period last year. It is also the second highest number of complaints received during this time period when compared with the previous five years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2016/17 to September 2021.



Main Complaint Factor

'Criminal investigation' was the most common main factor¹ underlying complaints between April and September 2021. This accounted for over a quarter of complaints received during this time.

Complaints arising from 'Search' had the largest percentage decrease between April and September 2021 when compared with the same time period last year.

Complaints regarding 'Criminal investigation' had the largest percentage increase during this time.

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to September 2020 and April to September 2021.

Main Complaint Factor	April - September 2020/21	April - September 2021/22	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	290	414	124	43%
Arrest	228	219	-9	-4%
Traffic Incident	102	123	21	21%
Domestic Incident	101	117	16	16%
Police Enquiries	93	100	7	8%
Search	92	79	-13	-14%
Police enforcing COVID19 restrictions	22	25	3	-
Parade/Demonstration	25	14	-11	-
Complaints relating to the 'troubles'	5	10	5	-
Other	277	297	20	7%
Unknown	33	80	47	-
Total	1,268	1,478	210	17%

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 increased in 9 of the 11 known police districts between April and September 2021 when compared with the same time period last year. District L – Antrim & Newtownabbey had the largest increase during this time (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to September 2020 and April to September 2021.

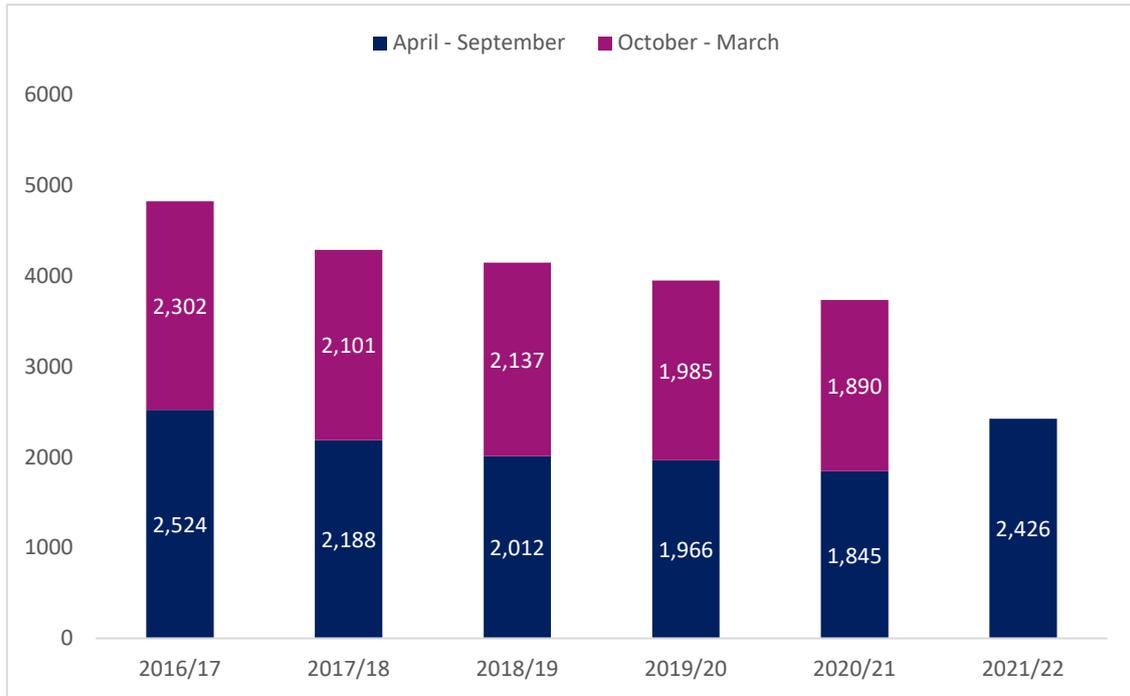
District	April - September 2020/21	April - September 2021/22	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	392	417	25	6%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh	55	65	10	18%
District C - Ards & North Down	89	92	3	3%
District D - Newry Mourne & Down	77	85	8	10%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	113	137	24	21%
District F - Mid Ulster	62	66	4	6%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	58	58	0	0%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	103	96	-7	-7%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	85	115	30	35%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	95	103	8	8%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	67	121	54	81%
Unknown/ Other Organisation	72	123	51	71%
Total	1,268	1,478	210	17%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received just over 2,420 allegations between April and September 2021. This is the second highest number of allegations received during this time when compared with each of the previous five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2016/17 to September 2021



Allegation Type

'Failure in duty' was the most common allegation type received between April and September 2021, accounting for just over 45% of all allegations received. Allegations about 'Oppressive Behaviour' had the largest percentage 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 2020 and April to September 2021

Allegation Type	April – September 2020/21	April – September 2021/22	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	836	1,132	296	35%
Oppressive Behaviour	366	565	199	54%
Incivility	130	125	-5	-4%
Search	70	100	30	43%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	44	98	54	-
Mishandling Of Property	37	47	10	-
Traffic	14	31	17	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	16	27	11	-
Section 55 Referral	5	23	18	-
Malpractice	29	22	-7	-
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	5	9	4	-
Other	293	247	-46	-16%
Total	1,845	2,426	581	31%

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

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 14 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between October 2020 and September 2021 (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 2021, September 2021.

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with 3+ complaints formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution
June 2021	10
September 2021	14

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 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.

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

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).

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 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'. 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

The Police Ombudsman's 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 or later 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 third quarterly update of 2021/22 is due to be published on Thursday 27th January 2022 and it will include statistics up to the 31st December 2021.

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.



Additional copies of this and other publications are available from:
Information and Communications Unit
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
New Cathedral Buildings
St. Anne's Square
11 Church Street
Belfast
BT1 1PG

Telephone: 028 9082 8634

Witness Appeal Line: 0800 0327 880

Email: info@policeombudsman.org

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