

Annual Report on
Police Officer Satisfaction
with services provided by the
Police Ombudsman's Office in
Northern Ireland
2018/19

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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 in April 2019. It includes information collected from officers who were subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during 2018/19 and compares the findings to results obtained for the previous four years¹.

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

Main Findings of 2018/19:

- The majority of police officers had positive views of Ombudsman staff:
 - 87% felt they were treated with respect,
 - 78% felt they were treated fairly,
 - 90% felt staff were easy to understand, and
 - 73% thought staff were knowledgeable.
- Officers were more likely to be satisfied with the explanation of the process, the manner in which they were treated and the clarity of our correspondence than they were with the frequency of progress updates and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint.
- Three quarters of officers surveyed felt their complaint was dealt with independently.
- Fewer than two thirds of officers 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 2018/19, the Office failed to meet this target as 87% of police officers felt they were treated with respect

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

In 2018/19, the Office met this target as 90% of police officers felt staff were easy to understand

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

In 2018/19, the Office failed to meet this target as 73% 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 2018/19, the Office met this target as 75% of police officers felt their issue was dealt with independently

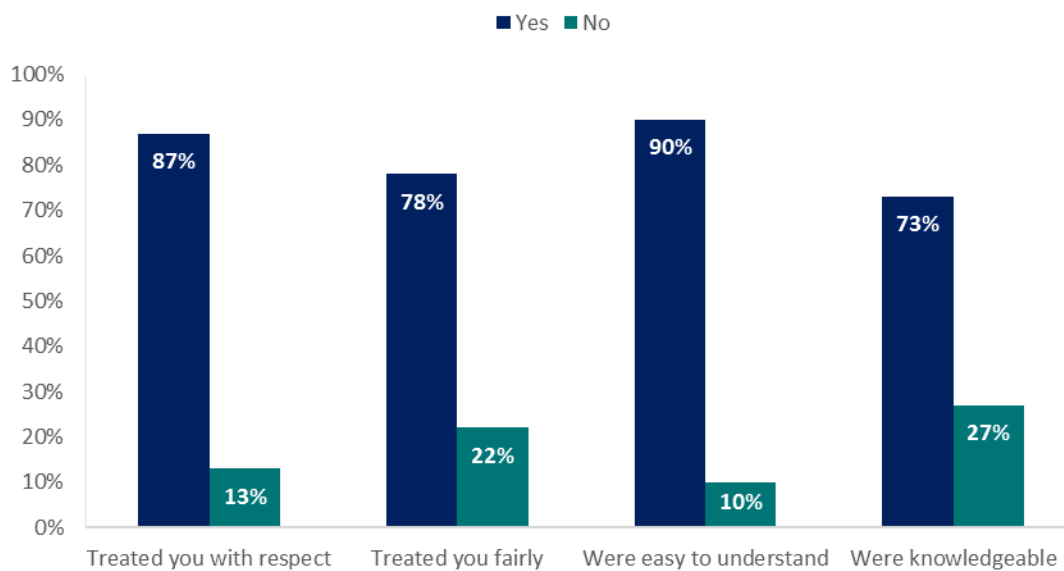
Results

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 2018/19, 89% of respondents said that they had spoken to a member of staff and of these:

- 87% thought they were treated with respect,
- 78% thought they were treated fairly,
- 90% thought staff were easy to understand and
- 73% thought staff were knowledgeable (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff, 2018/19



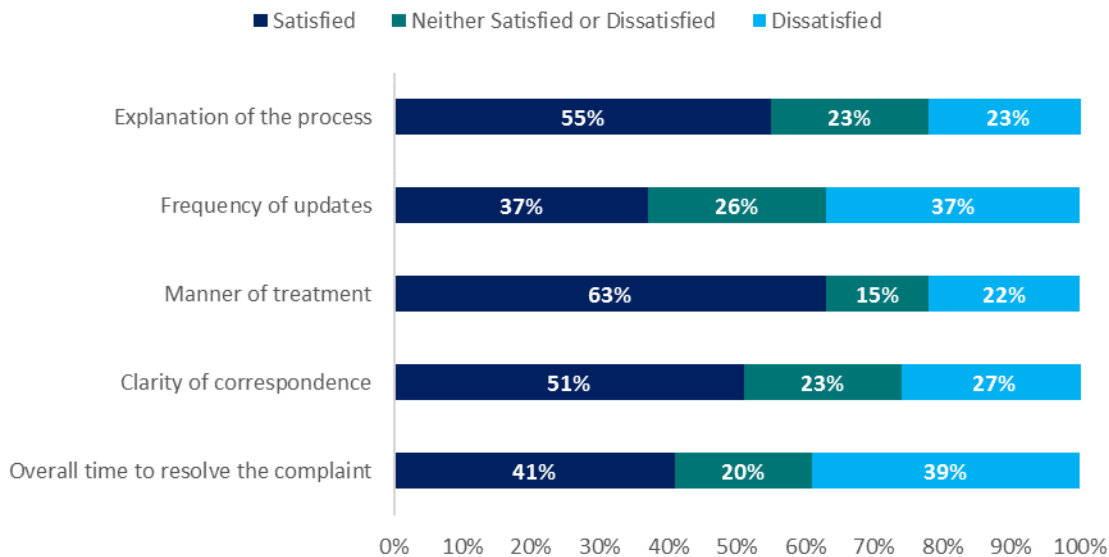
Trend Results (Results Tables 1-4)

Results showed that the views of police officers in 2018/19, with respect to Ombudsman staff, were similar when compared with the previous four years. In 2017/18, however, officers were less likely to feel that staff were easy to understand than they were in 2014/15.

Level of satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process²

In 2018/19, 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, 2018/19



Trend Results (Results Tables 5-9)

Most of these findings are similar to those reported during the previous four years.

The results showed:

- A higher percentage of officers were dissatisfied with the explanation of the process this year when compared with 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- There was a higher percentage of officers satisfied with the frequency of progress updates in the last two years when compared with 2014/15 and 2016/17.
- The percentage of officers who were dissatisfied with the manner of treatment has increased in the last two years 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.
- The percentage of officers who were satisfied with the overall time to resolve the complaint has increased in the last two years when compared with the previous three years.

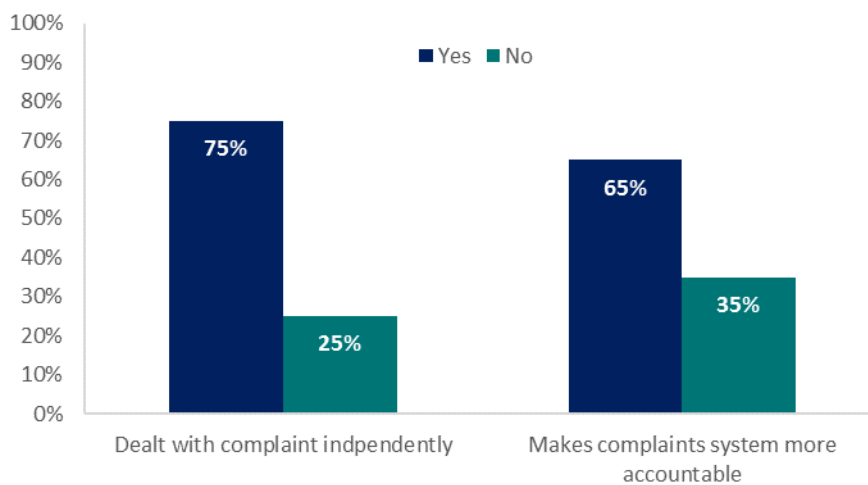
²Note: Some of the changes in satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels observed may be as a result of increasing the Likert scale from three to five responses in 2017/18.

Independence and Accountability

In 2018/19:

- Three quarters of officers felt that the Police Ombudsman’s Office dealt with their complaint independently.
- Over two thirds 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, 2018/19



Trend Results (Results Tables 10 & 11)

Independence

In 2018/19, the percentage of officers who thought the Office dealt with the complaint made against them independently was similar to previous years. In 2017/18, however, the percentage of officers who thought this way decreased when compared with 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Accountability

The views of police officers have remained similar over the years, however in 2018/19 the percentage of officers who thought the complaints system makes the police more accountable increased when compared with 2016/17 when it was at its lowest level in the last five years.

Appendix 1: Results

Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff (Tables 1 – 4)

Table 1: Were you treated with respect, 2014/15 - 2018/19?

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Yes	91%	89%	89%	89%	87%
No	9%	11%	11%	11%	13%

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

Table 2: Were you treated fairly, 2014/15 - 2018/19?

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Yes	81%	80%	80%	78%	78%
No	19%	20%	20%	22%	22%

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

Table 3: Were staff easy to understand, 2014/15 - 2018/19?

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Yes	92%	90%	89%	87%	90%
No	8%	10%	11%	13%	10%

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

Table 4: Were staff knowledgeable, 2014/15 - 2018/19?

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Yes	76%	77%	76%	74%	73%
No	24%	23%	24%	26%	27%

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

Police officer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process (Tables 5 – 9)

Table 5: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with explanation of the process, 2014/15 - 2018/19.

Explanation of the process	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Satisfied	56%	54%	55%	58%	55%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	29%	29%	29%	21%	23%
Dissatisfied	15%	16%	16%	21%	23%

Table 6: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with frequency of updates, 2014/15 - 2018/19.

Frequency of updates	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Satisfied	30%	32%	29%	38%	37%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	36%	34%	33%	22%	26%
Dissatisfied	35%	34%	38%	40%	37%

Table 7: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with manner of treatment, 2014/15 - 2018/19.

Manner of treatment	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Satisfied	57%	56%	58%	60%	63%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	27%	26%	24%	16%	15%
Dissatisfied	16%	18%	19%	23%	22%

Table 8: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with clarity of correspondence, 2014/15 - 2018/19.

Clarity of correspondence	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Satisfied	46%	47%	46%	50%	51%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	31%	30%	31%	20%	23%
Dissatisfied	23%	24%	24%	30%	27%

Table 9: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with time taken to resolve the complaint, 2014/15 - 2018/19.

Time taken to resolve complaint	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Satisfied	31%	33%	32%	40%	41%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	30%	27%	26%	21%	20%
Dissatisfied	39%	41%	42%	40%	39%

Table 10: Did we deal with the complaint independently, 2014/15 - 2018/19?

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Yes	80%	79%	76%	71%	75%
No	20%	21%	24%	29%	25%

Table 11: Do you feel the police complaints system makes police more accountable, 2014/15 - 2018/19?

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Yes	62%	60%	57%	58%	65%
No	38%	40%	43%	42%	35%

Appendix 2: Notes to readers

The survey:

This is the fifth 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 2018/19 was extracted from the Office's Case handling System (CHS). Officers who had more than one complaint closed during the year, were only 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 833 officers were emailed a link to the survey and 279 responses were submitted. This represents a response rate of 33%.

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.

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.**



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>