

Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Quarterly Statistical Update to 31st March 2019

Published April 2019

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

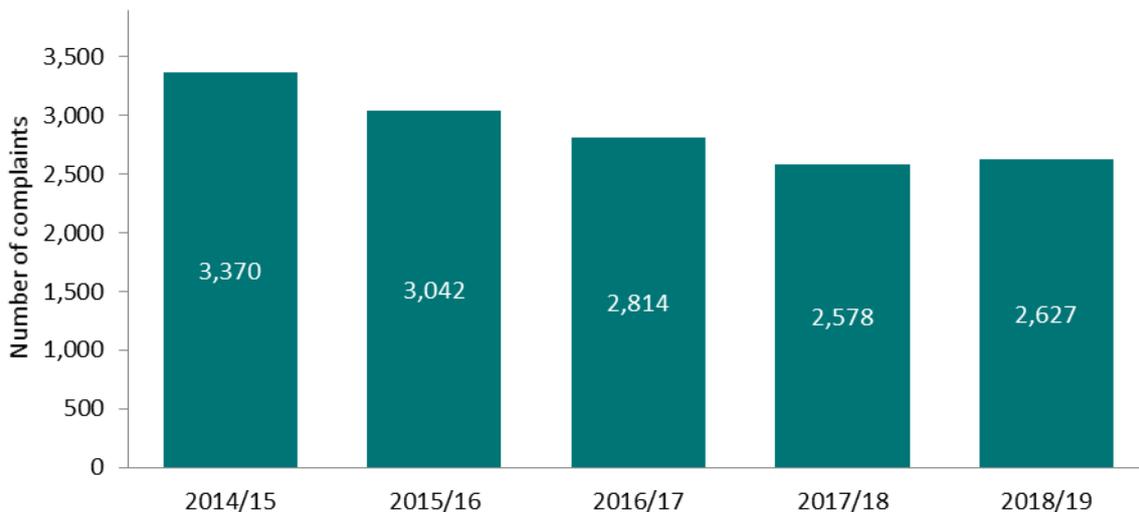
Statistical Update to 31st March 2019, published on 25th April 2019.

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31st March 2019. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman's Case Handling System (CHS) on the 08th April 2019.

Complaints Received

The Office received just under 2,630 complaints during 2018/19. Although there appears to be a 2% increase in the number of complaints received when compared with last year, this may be due to improved recording practises on how notifications from the PSNI are recorded rather than an actual increase in complaint numbers (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Main Complaint Factor

The largest decrease in complaints arose from 'Complaints relating to the Troubles' followed by those arising from 'Parade/Demonstrations'. It should be noted however that the Office receives fewer of these types of complaints.

Complaints regarding 'Police Enquiries (no investigation)' had the largest percentage increase during this time followed by 'Traffic Related Incidents' (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between 2017/18 and 2018/19

	2017/18	2018/19	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	761	754	-7	-1%
Arrest	400	420	20	5%
Traffic Related Incident	210	237	27	13%
Search	174	188	14	8%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	102	150	48	47%
Domestic Incident	136	124	-12	-9%
Domestic Violence	42	32	-10	-
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	48	27	-21	-
Parades/Demonstrations	32	13	-19	-
Other	526	539	13	2%
Unknown	147	143	-4	-3%
Total	2,578	2,627	49	2%

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

Complaints Received by Police District

The number of complaints decreased in 5 of the 11 police districts during 2018/19 when compared with last year.

District L had the largest percentage decrease during this time followed by District J.

District F had the largest percentage increase followed by Districts A and K (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between 2017/18 and 2018/19

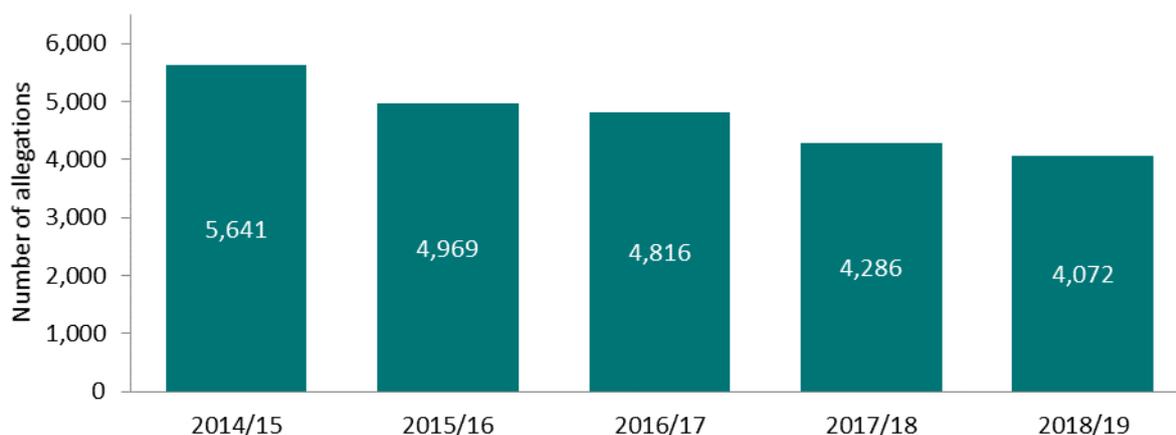
	2017/18	2018/19	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	634	728	94	15%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	111	119	8	7%
District C - Ards & North Down	157	169	12	8%
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	151	141	-10	-7%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	228	219	-9	-4%
District F - Mid Ulster	89	106	17	19%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	120	112	-8	-7%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	165	185	20	12%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	244	201	-43	-18%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	143	164	21	15%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	183	148	-35	-19%
Unknown / Other Organisation	353	335	-18	-5%
Northern Ireland	2,578	2,627	49	2%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received just over 4,070 allegations during 2018/19. This is the lowest number of allegations received when compared with each of the previous four years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Allegation Type

Allegations relating to 'Malpractice' had the largest percentage decrease during 2018/19 when compared with last year, followed by 'Failure in Duty' and 'Mishandling of Property'.

Allegations relating to 'Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention' had the largest percentage increase during this time (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between 2017/18 and 2018/19

	2017/18	2018/19	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	2,120	1,892	-228	-11%
Oppressive Behaviour	892	855	-37	-4%
Incivility	244	265	21	9%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	175	208	33	19%
Search	212	201	-11	-5%
Mishandling of Property	106	94	-12	-11%
Traffic	31	48	17	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	40	43	3	-
Malpractice	55	38	-17	-31%
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	41	26	-15	-
Section 55 Referral	26	23	-3	-
Other	344	379	35	10%
Total	4,286	4,072	-214	-5%

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

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 38 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between April 2018 and March 2019 (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 2018, September 2018, December 2018 and March 2019.

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Informal Resolution
June 2018	26
September 2018	31
December 2018	22
March 2019	38

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 remit¹. The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations², and any matter that the Police Ombudsman has decided is in the public interest for him 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 residual matters account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

¹ 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).

² The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Care should be taken when comparing the number of complaints received at police district level as some of the differences between districts may reflect variations in their 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 [user guide](#) has been published to give users of these statistics more knowledge about the complaints process, more information regarding the quality of the data and also a glossary of terms used. It is recommended that all users of these statistics should consult the user guide to aid their understanding of the statistics and ensure that they are using them appropriately. Further information regarding the number of complaints and allegations received in 2017/18 is available in the [accompanying excel spreadsheet](#). This spreadsheet also includes the data for the figures and tables in this bulletin.

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, will be presented in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2018/19'. This bulletin will be published by the end of June and will be made 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 \(NINIS\)](#). This information will be updated later in the year to include figures for 2018/19.

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

This is the fifth year the Police Ombudsman's Office has published quarterly information on the number of complaints and allegations received. The 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 in the quarter. A more detailed publication will be produced 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 first quarterly update of 2019/20 is due to be published on Thursday 25th July 2019 and it will include statistics up to the 30th June 2019.

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.

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This publication and other information about the work of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are also available on the Internet at:

Website: www.policeombudsman.org



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