

Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Quarterly Statistical Update to 30th June 2018

Published July 2018

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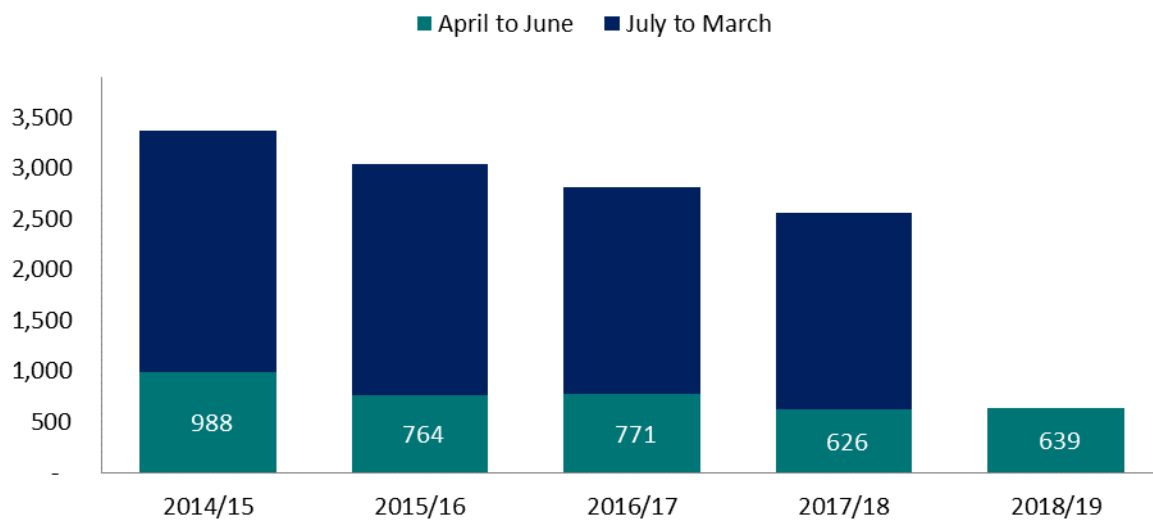
Statistical Update to 30th July 2018, published on 26th July 2018

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 30th June 2018. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 19th July 2018.

Complaints Received

The Office received almost 640 complaints between April and June 2018. While there appears to be a 2% increase in the number of complaints received when compared with the same time period last year, this is due to improved recording practises on how notifications from the PSNI are recorded (Figure 1).

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



Main Complaint Factor

During the first quarter of 2018/19, criminal investigation was the most common main factor¹ underlying complaints, accounting for just over 30% of complaints received during that time. Arrest was the second most common factor underlying complaints. This continues to be the normal trend observed for complaint factors.

As the numbers are still relatively small at this time of the reporting year, care should be taken when interpreting any fluctuations in the numbers of complaints, however, during the first quarter of the year, six of the ten known complaints factors increased in number when compared with the same time period last year.

Criminal investigation increased more than the other complaint factors during this time.

Complaints regarding traffic related incidents had the largest decrease during this time followed by searches (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to June 2017 and April to June 2018

	April-June 2017	April-June 2018	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	183	202	19	10%
Arrest	91	94	3	3%
Traffic Related Incident	60	45	-15	-25%
Search	47	38	-9	-
Domestic Incident	31	38	7	-
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	27	28	1	-
Domestic Violence	12	11	-1	-
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	9	8	-1	-
Parades/Demonstrations	2	5	3	-
Other	120	129	9	8%
Unknown	44	41	-3	-
Total	626	639	13	2%

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 5 of the 11 police districts between April and June 2018 when compared with last year. District A had the largest percentage increase during this time while District J had the largest percentage decrease (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to June 2017 and April to June 2018

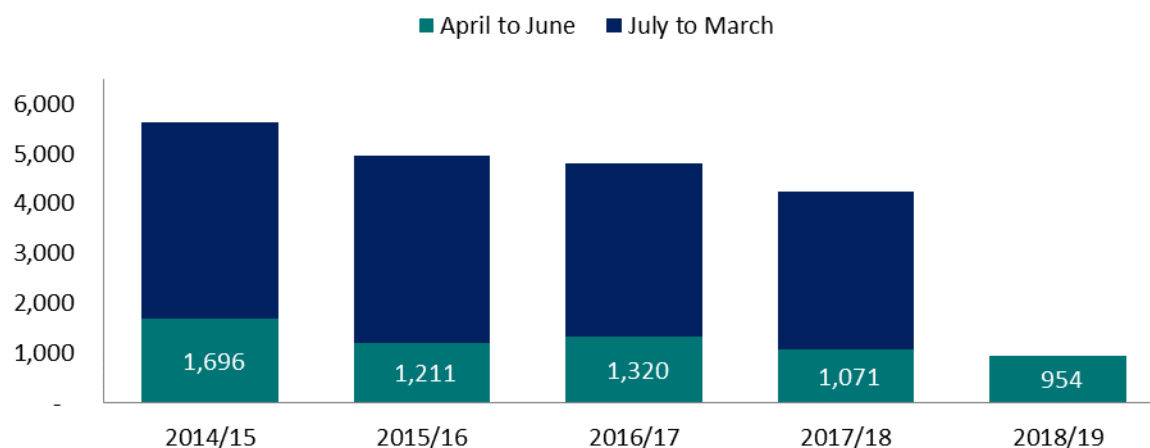
	April-June 2017	April-June 2018	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	150	191	41	27%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	30	29	-1	-
District C - Ards & North Down	41	38	-3	-
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	41	33	-8	-
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	50	59	9	18%
District F - Mid Ulster	22	21	-1	-
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	27	29	2	-
District H - Derry City & Strabane	38	49	11	-
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	60	38	-22	-37%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	45	37	-8	-
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	46	47	1	-
Unknown / Other Organisation	76	68	-8	-11%
Northern Ireland	626	639	13	2%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received just over 950 allegations during the first three months of 2018/19. This is the lowest number of allegations received during this time 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 June 2018



Allegation Type

Allegations relating to police searches had the largest percentage decrease during the first quarter of 2018/19, followed by allegations of oppressive behaviour and failure in duty (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to June 2017 and April to June 2018

	April-June 2017	April-June 2018	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	529	445	-84	-16%
Oppressive Behaviour	234	191	-43	-18%
Incivility	65	67	2	3%
Search	64	51	-13	-20%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	42	46	4	-
Mishandling of Property	23	22	-1	-
Malpractice	16	11	-5	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	8	9	1	-
Traffic	6	9	3	-
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	7	7	-	-
Section 55 Referral	4	5	1	-
Other	73	91	18	25%
Total	1,071	954	-117	-11%

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

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 26 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between July 2017 and June 2018 (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.

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution
June 2018	26

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 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 account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

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).

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 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, is presented in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2017/18'. 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

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 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 next quarterly update of 2018/19 is due to be published on Thursday 25th October 2018 and it will include statistics up to the 30th September 2018.

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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