

Equality Monitoring Report:

Survey of Complainants to the Police Ombudsman

for Northern Ireland, 2017/18

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Introduction

The Police Ombudsman's Office (the Office) collects information on each of the categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Every person that makes a complaint to the Office is asked to complete an equality monitoring form and this is returned to the Statistics and Research Branch within the Office. The information contained within this form is used for statistical purposes only and is not shared with other members of staff.

The survey findings enable the Police Ombudsman to monitor access to the service provided to the public across the categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and to report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The questionnaire includes the categories of age, gender, marital status, employment status, sexual orientation, community background, race, country of birth, disability, dependants and political opinion.

This report covers the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, during which time we recorded 2,561 complaints, of which 2,489 were made by members of the public¹.

Official Statistics:

This is an Official Statistics publication. Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards as set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular data validation checks to ensure that they meet the required standards. They are produced free from political interference.

¹ The Police Ombudsman also investigates matters of public interest and complaints which have been referred to him by the Chief Constable, Policing Board, Minister for Justice or Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. In these cases there is no public complainant and they are therefore excluded from the equality monitoring process.

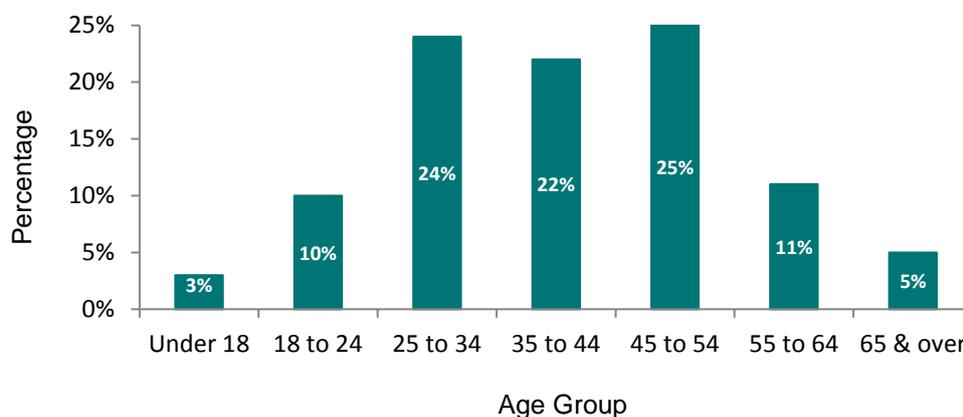
Survey Findings

This section summarises the age and gender profile of most complainants and the main findings from the equality monitoring forms completed and returned by 579 complainants. In Appendix 1, the results are displayed in a series of tables.

Age

Almost one in four complainants (24%) were aged between 25 and 34 or 45 and 54; and a similar proportion were aged between 35 and 44. A smaller proportion of complainants were aged under 25 or aged 55 and over. These results are consistent with previous years (Figure 1, Table 1).

Figure 1: Complainants by age group, 2017/18



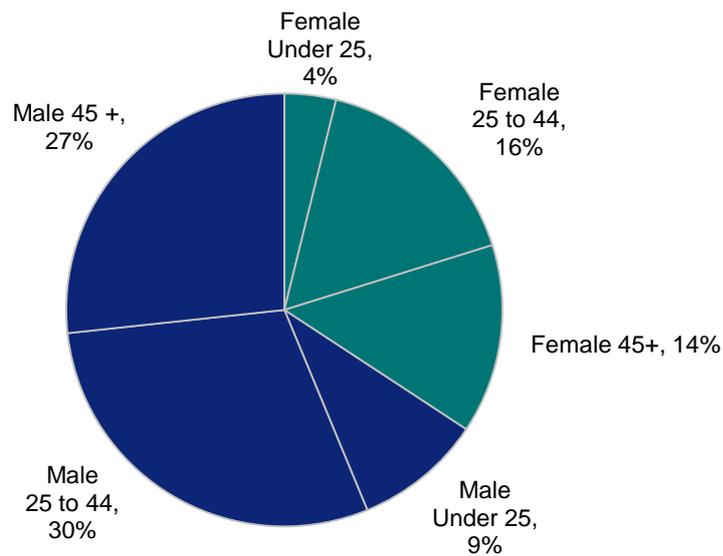
Gender

In 2017/18 males (66%) made nearly twice as many complaints as females (34%). This gender profile of complainants is similar to previous years (Table 2).

Age and Gender

In terms of gender and age combined, around three in ten complaints received during 2017/18 were from females aged over 25 and more than half were from males aged over 25 (Figure 2, Table 3).

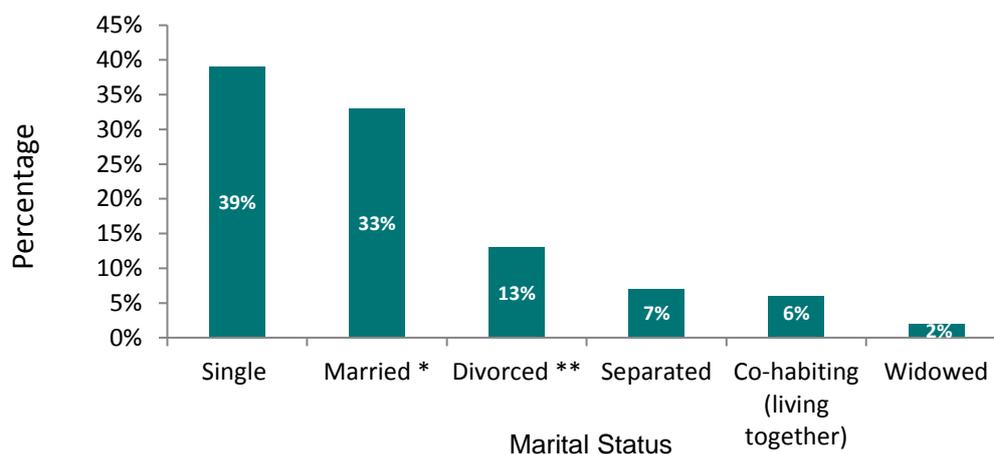
Figure 2: Gender and Age Group, 2017/18



Marital Status

In 2017/18 the largest proportion of complaints were made by single people followed by people who were married or in a civil partnership. Smaller proportions of complaints were made by people who were divorced, separated, co-habiting or widowed (Figure 3, Table 4).

Figure 3: Marital Status, 2017/18



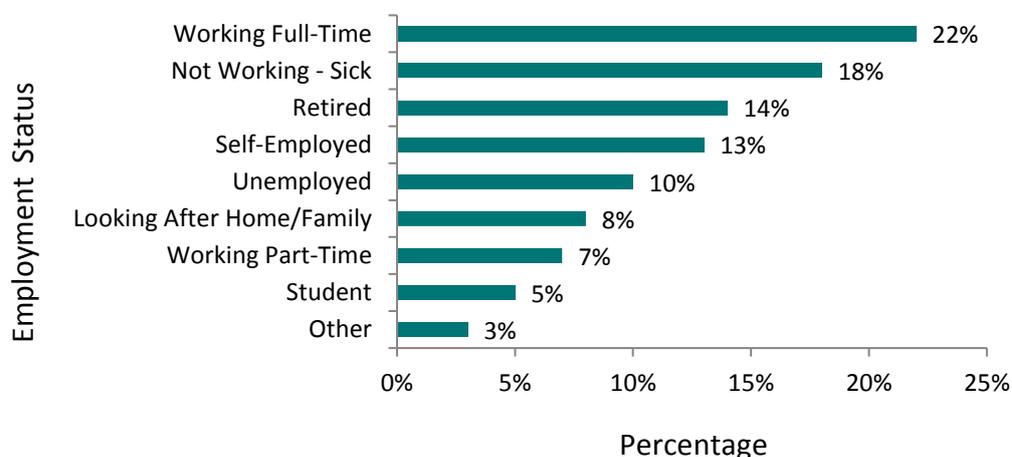
* Married includes Civil Partnerships

** Divorced includes formally in a Civil Partnership which is now legally dissolved

Employment Status

Around two in five (42%) complaints received in 2017/18 were made by a person who reported they were working; either full-time, part-time or were self-employed (Figure 4, Table 5). Almost one in five complainants (18%) were not working as they were permanently sick. Smaller proportions of complaints were made by people who were unemployed, retired, studying; or by people looking after their home or family.

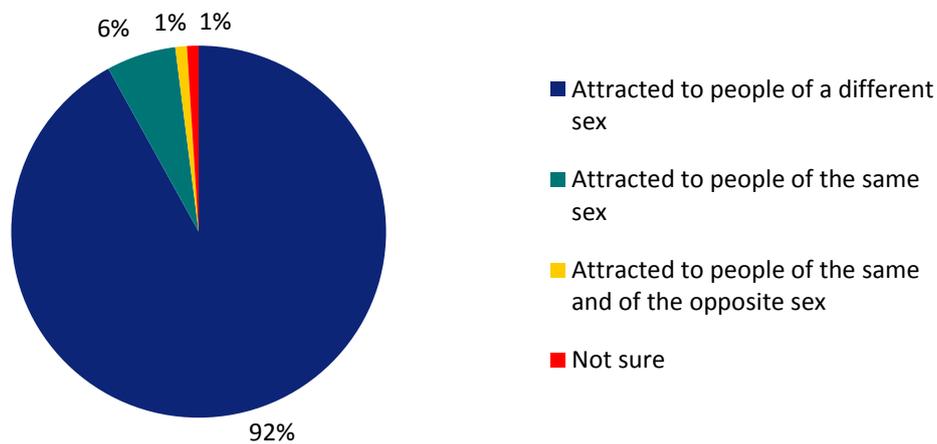
Figure 4: Employment Status, 2017/18



Sexual Orientation

In 2017/18, around nine in ten complaints were made by a person who reported that their sexual attraction was towards someone of the opposite sex. A further 6% reported being sexually attracted to people of the same sex (Figure 5, Table 6).

Figure 5: Sexual Orientation, 2017/18



Community Background

The results in 2017/18 showed that just over half 51% of complainants who returned an equality-monitoring questionnaire were from a Protestant community and 33% were from a Catholic community. A further 15% were from neither a Protestant nor a Catholic community (Table 7).

Racial Group

In 2017/18 the vast majority of complaints were made by people who reported their race to be White (97%). Complainants that were of a minority ethnic group mainly reported being from a Black African, Irish Travelling Community or Mixed Ethnic Group (Table 8).

Country of Birth

The majority (85%) of respondents in 2017/18 stated that they were born in Northern Ireland. A further 5% were born in England, 2% were born in the Republic of Ireland, 2% in Scotland and 1% in Wales. The remaining respondents (5%) were born outside the UK and Ireland (Table 9).

Disability

In 2017/18, more than a third (34%) of respondents self-reported that they had a disability and 66% stated they did not have a disability (Table 10).

Disability is a complex concept and there are a number of ways of defining it. For monitoring purposes we provided respondents with a description of disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which is “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.

Dependants

Nearly half (45%) of respondents in 2017/18 stated that they had dependents and 55% reported that they do not have any dependants (Table 11).

Political Opinion

More than four in ten (42%) respondents who answered the political opinion question in 2017/18 indicated that ‘no political party’ best represented their current political opinion. Around three in ten (31%) respondents indicated that a Unionist party best represented their current political opinion, 16% selected a Nationalist party and 10% selected either the Alliance party or the ‘other’ category (Table 12).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Age Group, 2017/18

	Percentage
Under 18	3%
25 to 34	24%
45 to 54	25%
65 & over	5%

Table 2: Gender, 2017/18

	Percentage
Male	66%
Female	

Table 3: Age group & gender, 2017/18

	Percentage	
	Female	Male
Under 18	1%	2%
25 to 34	8%	15%
45 to 54	8%	16%
65 & over	2%	3%

Table 4: Marital status, 2017/18

	Percentage
Single (never married)	39%
Married/in civil partnership	33%
Divorced/formally in civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	13%
Separated	7%
Co-habiting (living together)	6%
Widowed/surviving member of civil partnership	2%

Table 5: Employment status, 2017/18

	Percentage
Working Full-Time	22%
Retired	14%
Unemployed	10%
Working Part-Time	7%
Other	3%

Table 6: Sexual Orientation, 2017/18

	Percentage
Attracted to people of a different sex	92%
Attracted to people of the same and of the opposite sex	1%

Table 7: Community Background, 2017/18

	Percentage
Member of the Protestant community	51%
Member of neither the Protestant nor Catholic community	15%

Table 8: Race, 2017/18

	Percentage
White	97%
Other	

Table 9: Country of Birth, 2017/18

	Percentage
Northern Ireland	85%
England	5%
Republic of Ireland	2%
Scotland	2%
Other Country	6%

Table 10: Disability (self-reported), 2017/18

	Percentage
No	66%

Table 11: Dependants, 2017/18

	Percentage
Complainant does not have any dependants	55%
Complainant has dependants	

Table 12: Political Opinion, 2017/18

	Percentage
No political party	42%
Unionist party	31%
Nationalist party	16%
Alliance party	6%
Other	5%

Appendix 2: Background and Methodology

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was set up by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 in order to provide an impartial and independent system for investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland.

The Office is committed to fulfilling the obligations laid upon it by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) (the “equality duties”). To help us achieve this we send every complainant² a confidential self-completion questionnaire, asking for information relevant to the ten categories specified in Section 75. As we are committed to providing a service to all individuals and socio-economic groups within our society, we also ask a question on the additional category of employment status, which we consider to be a reliable indicator of economic deprivation.

On receipt of returned questionnaires they are input to the Office’s Case Handling System (CHS) with the complaint data. Only the research staff who are directly involved in the processing of the equality monitoring data have data access permissions. Staff involved in the handling and investigation of the complaint do not, at any time, have access to these data.

The equality database is downloaded and analysed using a combination of DI Diver, Microsoft Excel and SPSS packages.

The figures in this statistical report are based on information received between April 2017 and March 2018. During this period, the Office received back 579 completed questionnaires, representing a sample size of 23% of all complainants. When completing the form not all respondents answered all of the questions (with Sexual Orientation and Political Opinion having the lowest response rates).

There were larger samples of complainants for whom gender and age information was available, from administrative data sources. In addition to those respondents who declared their gender on the monitoring form, it was possible to determine a majority of complainants’ gender from their title or salutation, giving a total sample of 98% for whom gender was

² Apart from a very small number who have asked not to be contacted by the office or for whom we have insufficient contact information.

known. It was also possible to determine complainants' ages from their date of birth, where it was provided, giving an overall sample of 82% for whom age was known.

Figures in tables may not add up to 100% due to the effect of rounding. Figures may also be subject to minor revision. The Police Ombudsman Revisions Policy is available at http://www.policeombudsman.org/revisions_policy.

The Office has conducted the Equality Monitoring Survey since it opened in November 2000. All survey findings are published annually and are available on the Office website at <http://www.policeombudsman.org/publications/equality>.

Data use

The data collected are used by the Office to monitor access to the service provided to the public across the categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and to report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The data may also be used to answer enquiries from the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Department of Justice, Parliament and the public.

Data quality

Equality Monitoring Survey data are considered to be of high quality. Police Ombudsman staff carry out regular quality assurance reviews of all data input into the CHS. For the Equality Monitoring Survey, staff input the data to the CHS and supervisors undertake a 10% data quality check to ensure that transfer of the information is accurate. Where necessary, data may be corrected. There is a possibility of a small number of errors arising from data input, missing data, failure to update data and errors in communication. The Police Ombudsman estimates that the level of error is so small that it has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting. However, where identified, corrections are made to reports as soon as is practicable.

Data limitations

Equality monitoring forms are issued to the vast majority of complainants. However, in some cases forms are not issued, for example when it is impossible to identify the complainant (i.e. the Complaints Officer has recorded the complainant as anonymous), because the complainant's address is not recorded or if only an email address is available. In other cases, complainants may contact the Office to ask to be excluded from future surveys. While staff aim to encourage the complainant to complete the survey by explaining its purpose, there are some cases where the complainant still wishes to be excluded. The Police

Ombudsman also investigates matters of public interest and complaints which have been referred to him by the Chief Constable, Policing Board, Minister for Justice or Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland. In these cases there is no public complainant and therefore forms are not issued.

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

Website: www.policeombudsman.org