

Survey of the Attitudes of Police Officers of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Malcolm Hibberd

SMSR

social and market strategic research

SMSR House 51-52 Market Place Hull HU1 1RQ Tel: 01482 211 200

Fax: 01482 211 201 info@smsr.co.uk www.smsr.co.uk



July 2008



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Executive Summary

A survey of 2,350 police officers serving with the Police Service of Northern Ireland was carried out in February and March 2008, to ascertain and explore their views of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

The response rate for the survey was 27%. Constables, part time constables and volunteer reserve officers were slightly underrepresented in the sample.

Awareness

Awareness of the role of the Police Ombudsman's Office is reasonably high. However awareness was much lower for other aspects of the work of the office, particularly of the staff and outcome of investigations. Awareness was higher among officers of higher rank and those working in headquarters. It was also consistently higher among officers who were younger in service, particularly among those who had joined since the change from RUC to PSNI.

Most found out about the Police Ombudsman's Office from informal sources, with relatively few from official sources such as the website or official documentation of the Police Ombudsman's Office. This is an important finding, as respondents who find out from official sources are more likely to express positive attitudes to Police Ombudsman's Office, as discussed below.

Most respondents – especially those in operational postings – said the possibility of a complaint affects the way they do their job, with nearly a third saying it affects it a great deal. The great majority of these thought the effect was negative. However, about one in six said it helps them to do a better job, which rises to nearly one in four among officers with less than six years service.

Well informed respondents are less likely to say their job is affected negatively by the possibility of a complaint.

Complaints

One fifth of respondents had a complaint currently under investigation; between a third and a half of respondents had had a complaint investigated, the investigation of which is now closed. Respondents were asked to comment on the most recent complaint.

Most of the complaints were about oppressive behaviour, failure in duty, or incivility. Three-quarters said either that the complaint was not substantiated, or that no action was taken. Half were satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, with a quarter dissatisfied. Satisfaction with the way the complaint was handled by the Police Ombudsman's Office was lower – less than forty per cent – with about a quarter dissatisfied.

Just under two-thirds of respondents who had had a complaint investigated said they were contacted by an investigating officer, who was generally described as polite and patient. However, fewer described the officer as

knowledgeable, interested or impartial – with at least one in five saying the officer did not have these qualities.

Less than half said they had received a satisfaction questionnaire from the Police Ombudsman's Office; of these, just over three-quarters said they had completed and returned it. Those who hadn't returned the questionnaire said there was no point, or that they were too busy.

Of those who had had a complaint investigated, nearly three-quarters said they had not been informed of whether the complaint was closed.

Attitudes

Respondents were more likely than not to be confident in thoroughness and knowledge with which the Police Ombudsman's Office conducts investigations; by contrast they were less likely to be confident than not in the impartiality of the investigations.

Confidence in all three areas was higher among officers with less than six years' service. It was also higher among those who felt well informed about different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office, particularly in relation to being well informed about the staff.

Respondents were also asked to rate their agreement with a series of specific attitude statements; their views are summarised as follows:

- two-thirds believed that complaints against the police should be investigated independently (less than one in ten disagreed with this); however, most thought the Police Ombudsman's Office should not investigate complaints arising from historical incidents;
- about half thought investigations of complaints by the Police Ombudsman's Office were biased in favour of the complainant; there was very strong disagreement that there was bias in favour of the PSNI.
- more than half thought that most people who make complaints do so to make mischief;
- about half thought there was less misconduct in the PSNI than in other police services;
- more than a third thought the Police Ombudsman's Office had improved the accountability of the police in Northern Ireland, with fewer – just over a quarter – disagreeing with this; by contrast, fewer thought the Police Ombudsman's Office had improved policing in Northern Ireland, with nearly half disagreeing with this;
- a third thought the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office is likely to make the public more confident in the police; less than a quarter disagreed with this.

Just under a third thought the Police Ombudsman's Office did a good job, with slightly fewer – just over a quarter – saying they did a poor job. Forty per cent expressed mixed feelings. The attitude was more positive among those with less than six years service.

The most striking variation in attitude was related to how well informed respondents said they were about the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office – the better informed they were, the more positive their attitude – in some cases, strikingly so. Furthermore, attitudes were most positive among those who found out about the Police Ombudsman's Office from official sources (official documents, the organisation's website, and personal experience).

Invited to say how the Police Ombudsman's Office could improve, respondents were most likely to suggest providing more updates to officers under investigation, being more impartial, knowledgeable, and professional, and understanding the constraints under which police officers work.

General discussion

The survey has shown a wide range of attitudes expressed by PSNI officers towards the Police Ombudsman's Office. While a substantial number express negative attitudes –perhaps the most consistent concern being with impartiality – there is a consistent tendency for positive attitudes to outweigh negative attitudes, albeit by a small margin.

Those who had had a complaint investigated by the Police Ombudsman's Office were not more negative in their views; but then neither were they more positive, and there were consistent concerns about investigating officers, relating to their (lack of) impartiality and knowledge and understanding of policing, and the need to keep the subject of the complaint better informed about the investigation. So while this overall finding may be encouraging, it is no cause for complacency.

Two striking themes run through the analysis of respondents' attitudes to the Police Ombudsman's Office. The first relates to length of service, with younger officers being consistently more confident and positive in their attitudes. The clearest cut-off point is six years, which of course corresponds to the change from the RUC to the PSNI.

The second relates to how well informed respondents say they are. The better informed the officer, the more positive they are in their views. There is some overlap between these two effects, with younger-service officers tending to say they are better informed. However, if we look only at officers with more than six years service, there is still a strong relationship between how well

informed the respondent is, and how good a job they think the Police Ombudsman's Office does.

While we cannot say for sure that better informed officers are more positive in their views *because* they are better informed, this does seem the most likely interpretation, which makes this a finding of potentially great importance. Confidence in and attitude towards the Police Ombudsman's Office may be improved if officers are better informed about different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office. This is likely to be particularly important in the areas of the staff working for the Police Ombudsman's Office, and the outcomes of investigations – information on which may not only improve general attitudes and confidence, but may also influence the view that investigations are not impartial.

Furthermore, it seems that respondents who find out about the Police Ombudsman's Office from more informal sources, such as hearsay, or general media coverage, are not more positive, whereas those who cite official sources are significantly – and sometimes strikingly – more positive. Consequently, more active attempts to distribute official documents from the Police Ombudsman's Office, to promote the Police Ombudsman's Office website, and to give courses and presentations may do much to improve attitudes.

This report raises some intriguing findings of potentially great practical importance. They are both worrying and encouraging. Worrying in the extent of negative attitudes; encouraging in the slightly greater extent of positive attitudes, and the link with being informed. They offer the prospect of improved attitudes, confidence and satisfaction, as well as practical suggestions of how those outcomes might be achieved. And finally, they lay down a reliable baseline for future research to evaluate the effects of any educational and other initiatives that may be undertaken by the Police Ombudsman's Office, the PSNI, or the representative bodies.

Introduction and Methodology

This report presents the results of the analysis of a survey of the views and attitudes of police officers of the Police Service of Northern Ireland to the Police Ombudsman's Office. The research was carried out by SMSR Ltd, a social and market research agency based in Hull, and Malcolm Hibberd, an independent research consultant; both have extensive experience of work in policing in the United Kingdom.

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire development began with a consultation meeting between Malcolm Hibberd and Ian Mills and the project Steering Group at the Police Ombudsman's Office. Following this, during October 2007, Malcolm Hibberd met with representatives of the Police Federation and Superintendents' Association to ensure that their views were reflected in the content of the questionnaire. In addition to this, Malcolm Hibberd also conducted a focus group to gather the views of some serving officers. The focus group, held on 12 October 2007, was attended by twelve officers, varying in rank from constable to chief inspector, and including officers who had joined since the change from RUC to PSNI.

A draft questionnaire was then developed, taking account of the views gathered in the consultation. This draft was then discussed at a meeting of the Steering Group at the Police Ombudsman's Office in early December. Following a lively discussion of the content and wording of the draft questionnaire among representatives of the Police Ombudsman's Office, PSNI, Police Federation and Superintendents' Association, a revised questionnaire was produced, and agreed, with some minor changes made in response to e-mailed suggestions.

The final questionnaire, a copy of which appears in the Appendix, comprised three main sections, covering respondents' awareness of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office, their experience of having a complaint made against them, and their attitudes to complaints and the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office. Questions about respondents' personal details were asked at the end of the questionnaire.

Sampling

The population defined for the survey was all police officers, reserves and part-time constables serving with the Police Service of Northern Ireland at the time of the survey. All members of the population were to be included in the target survey sample.

A particular concern was that some respondents would be deterred from completing and returning a questionnaire by the fear that their responses and comments would not be anonymous and confidential. This issue was discussed at length in the same consultation meetings and focus groups that were held to inform questionnaire development. The accompanying letter (shown in the Appendix) assured complete anonymity, as follows:

[A]fter the data is inputted from the questionnaires they will be destroyed in a secure location by a confidential waste company under supervision. They will NOT be returned to Northern Ireland.

Personal data is being collected purely for analysis purposes and UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES will an Officer's personal details be referenced to their individual responses.

In addition to this reassurance, a note was included at the beginning of the personal details section of the questionnaire, which, of necessity, asks questions which could potentially identify individuals. The note is quoted here in full.

This questionnaire is strictly anonymous, and will not be used to identify any individual officers.

However, we need to ask you some details about yourself and where you work. There are two important reasons for this.

First, it allows us to check whether the results of the survey are representative of the PSNI as a whole, or to identify any groups of officers whose views are not properly represented.

Secondly, it allows us to find out if officers' views vary between different groups.

HOWEVER, we recognise that in certain circumstances, individual officers may be identifiable through their answers to certain combinations of questions (for example, if you happen to be the only female chief inspector working in a particular DCU).

May we reiterate, and reassure you, that no individual officers will be identified in this survey. The survey has been carried out with the full approval of the PFNI and the Superintendents' Association, whose representatives are confident of this.

No completed questionnaires will be seen by staff from the Police Ombudsman's Office, or by staff from the PSNI. They will be destroyed as soon as the data have been recorded.

However, if you still have concerns about anonymity, we would rather have your views of the Police Ombudsman without all your personal

details. So please feel free to omit any question or questions that you feel could identify you as an individual.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Questionnaires were couriered from the SMSR office in Hull to Northern Ireland for distribution to all police officers of the PSNI, including volunteer reserves and part-time constables. The questionnaires were distributed on 25 February 2008, with an accompanying letter (see Appendix), and a prepaid envelope for return to the SMSR office.

Reminder questionnaires were distributed in the same way on 6 March, with another accompanying letter (see Appendix) and prepaid envelope.

The deadline for return of the questionnaires was 17 March; this was extended to 31 March after consultation with the Police Ombudsman's Office.

The final sample size achieved was 2,350. Assuming the total population size of 8,727¹, this gives an overall response rate of 26.9%.

Analysis

The analysis was carried out on SPSS, by Malcolm Hibberd. Initial frequency distributions were produced for each question (presented as tables in the Results section), following which questions were cross tabulated to allow further exploration of the data, and to test hypotheses relating attitudes to experience, awareness, and personal details.

As a general principle, differences in reported views and experiences between subgroups of respondents are only reported and discussed in the report if they are statistically significant. If a difference is statistically significant, it is unlikely to be a random difference, or mere coincidence, and is likely to reveal an underlying difference in views or experiences.² By general convention in the reporting of the results of social scientific investigations, differences that are not found to be statistically significant are not described as differences.

¹ PSNI website, Statistics/Strength of Police Service, as of 10 June 2008.

² The significance test used throughout is a simple chi squared test of association for contingency tables. It is used with a minimum significance level of $p < 0.05$, which means that differences are reported with 95% confidence.

Results

Presentation of the results begins with a description of the sample from the Personal Details section of the questionnaire, which concluded the questionnaire. Following this, the presentation of the results follows the order of the questions in the questionnaire.

Most of the main results tables set out the pattern of responses for each question, with the question text presented at the foot of each table. Most tables show percentage results, with the percentage base shown as 'n' in the title of the table; this varies from table to table, sometimes because a question was asked of a defined subsample of respondents (e.g. those against whom a complaint had been made), and in other cases because some respondents did not answer certain questions. Tables summarising answers to open ended questions present numbers of responses rather than percentages; this is because the numbers involved tend to be small, in which case percentages can be misleading.

Summaries of cross tabulation – where the results of different questions are related to each other – are mostly embedded as tables or lists within the text.

The sample

Classification questions were asked at the end of the questionnaire; however, they are presented at the beginning in order to inform understanding of the results.

Table A shows the breakdown of the sample by sex.

TABLE A	Q31 Are you...
	%
Male	77.2
Female	22.8

Percentage frequencies by respondent's sex.

Valid sample size, n = 2269; 81 respondents did not answer this question.

This is a very close reflection of the composition of the PSNI as a whole, which has 22.6% female and 77.4% male officers³.

Table B shows the breakdown of the sample by rank, compared for the current breakdown by rank of the PSNI as a whole⁴.

³ PSNI website, Equality and Diversity Office page, as of 10 June 2008.

⁴ PSNI website, Statistics/Strength of Police Service, as of 10 June 2008.

TABLE B	Q32 What rank are you?	
	% SAMPLE	% PSNI
Constable, part time	4.4	9.6
Part time Reserve	1.0	7.6
Full time Reserve	4.5	
Constable	59.2	63.2
Sergeant	16.9	12.9
Inspector	8.1	4.4
Chief Inspector	1.5	1.2
Superintendent	0.9	0.7
Chief Superintendent	0.5	0.3
Chief Constable / Deputy / Assistant Chief Constable	2.9	0.1

Percentage frequencies by respondent's rank, for total sample and PSNI.

Valid sample size, n = 2270; 80 respondents did not answer this question; for PSNI, n = 8727.

The first thing to note about the figures in Table B is the large number of respondents – sixty-six, in fact – who described themselves as having the rank of Assistant Chief Constable or above. Given that there are only eight officers of this rank in the PSNI, this must come as something of a surprise!

A certain amount of flippancy, facetiousness or playfulness might be expected in response to a question such as this, especially given that it comes towards the end of the questionnaire; this might be exacerbated by any residual fears about the anonymity of the responses. It is reassuring that officers who described themselves as ACC or above were not more negative (or positive) in their expressed attitudes; furthermore, the questionnaires from these respondents were examined, and showed no other signs that the questions has not been taken seriously. Because of this, these responses have not been excluded from the analysis.

Leaving this aside, the sample under-represents reserve and part time constable ranks, and constables, with a corresponding over-representation of sergeants and inspectors.

If we look at the numbers of regular officers (and exclude those of ACPO rank), the under-representation of constables and over-representation of sergeants and inspectors is maintained, while the percentage of chief inspectors, superintendents and chief superintendents closely matches that of the PSNI. These results are summarised in Table B1.

TABLE B1	Q32 What rank are you? (Regular officers only; officers describing themselves as ACC or above excluded.)	
	% SAMPLE	% PSNI
Constable	68.0	76.4
Sergeant	19.4	15.6
Inspector	9.3	5.3
Chief Inspector	1.7	1.5
Superintendent	1.0	0.9
Chief Superintendent	0.6	0.4
Constable	68.0	76.4

Percentage frequencies by respondent's rank (constable to chief superintendent) for total sample and PSNI.

Valid sample size, n = 2270; 80 respondents did not answer this question; for PSNI, n = 7221.

Respondents' current postings are summarised in Table C.

TABLE C	Q33 Where are you currently posted?
	%
Headquarters (Including OCU/Garnerville)	24.7
A District	6.9
B District	8.1
C District	10.5
D District	8.2
E District	12.5
F District	8.2
G District	9.3
H District	11.6

Percentage frequencies by District.

Valid sample size, n = 2154; 196 respondents did not answer this question.

The nature of respondents' current postings are summarised in Table D.

TABLE D	Q34 Where are you currently posted?
	%
Sector / neighbourhood	24.7
Response	6.9
Roads policing	8.1
TSG	10.5
District CID	8.2
Crime Operations Department	12.5
HQ	8.2
Other	9.3

Percentage frequencies by respondents' current posting.

Valid sample size, n = 2193; 157 respondents did not answer this question.

Respondents were asked to say how long they had been a police officer. The responses are summarised in Table E.

TABLE E	Q35 How long have you been a police officer?
	%
less than one year	1.8
1 – 2 years	4.4
2 – 6 years	18.4
6 – 10 years	7.2
10 – 20 years	27.4
20 – 30 years	35.8
more than 30 years	5.0

Percentage frequencies by length of service.

Valid sample size, n = 2251; 99 respondents did not answer this question.

Respondents were asked if they had worked in a police force other than the PSNI or RUC. As shown in Table F, just over five per cent had.

TABLE F	Q36 In that time, have you worked as a police officer in a force other than the PSNI or RUC?
	%
yes	5.8
no	94.2

Percentage frequencies by whether respondent has worked for another police force.

Valid sample size, n = 2258; 92 respondents did not answer this question.

Respondents who had worked for another force were asked how long in total they had been a police officer with the PSNI/RUC. The results are summarised in Table G.

TABLE G	Q37 IF YES How long in total have you been an officer with the PSNI / RUC?
	%
less than one year	4.6
1 – 2 years	13.0
2 – 6 years	22.9
6 – 10 years	3.8
10 – 20 years	33.6
20 – 30 years	17.6
more than 30 years	4.6

Percentage frequencies by length of service of respondents who had worked for another police force.

Valid sample size, n = 131; all appropriate respondents answered this question.

Just over forty per cent of respondents had joined the PSNI during the past six years, giving an approximate guide to how many had become PSNI officers since the change from RUC to PSNI.

Section One – Awareness of the Police Ombudsman’s Office IN GENERAL

Respondents were asked first of all to say how well informed they feel about four different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office. The results are summarised in Table 1.

TABLE E	Q1 How well informed do you feel about the following...		
	not well informed	fairly well informed	very well informed
The role of the Police Ombudsman’s Office (n=2341)	24.9	62.2	12.9
The procedure for investigating complaints (n=2341)	49.2	44.8	6.1
The staff working for the Police Ombudsman’s Office (n=2332)	71.8	25.2	3.0
The outcomes of the Police Ombudsman’s Office investigations in general (n=2338)	62.3	34.2	3.5

Percentage frequencies by how well informed respondents feel about different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office.

Valid sample size shown as n against each sub-question.

Respondents felt more informed about the role of the Police Ombudsman’s Office, with three-quarters (75.1%) saying they were *at least fairly well informed*; just over half (50.9%) said they were *at least fairly well informed* about the procedure for investigating complaints.

For the other two items – the staff, and outcome of investigations – well under half said they felt *at least fairly well informed* (28.2% and 37.7% respectively).

How well informed respondents said they were varied by rank, with higher ranking officers consistently more likely to say they were *well informed*. This relationship was strongest for the procedure for investigating complaints, where the percentage who said they were *very well informed* are summarised below:

		%
Constable	n=1336	3.9
Sergeant	n=384	7.6
Inspector	n=185	13.0
Chief Inspector	n=34	29.4
Superintendent/Chief Superintendent	n=31	25.8

While this relationship held for all four aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office that were addressed, it was much weaker for the staff working for the Police Ombudsman's Office.

Respondents who described their current posting as HQ were also more likely to say they were *well informed*, in all four areas addressed.

There was a consistent relationship between awareness and how long the respondent had been a police officer in Northern Ireland. If the sample are split by six years' service (roughly corresponding to the change from the RUC to PSNI), those who have been officers for less than six years are more likely to say they feel *well informed*. This relationship – which does not hold for the procedure for investigating complaints – is summarised below, showing the percentage of respondents who say they feel *at least fairly well informed*.

	per cent <i>at least fairly well informed</i>	
	less than 6 years (%)	more than 6 years (%)
The role of the Police Ombudsman's Office	83.7 (n=533)	72.7 (n=1689)
The procedure for investigating complaints	51.0 (n=551)	50.9 (n=1691)
The staff working for the Police Ombudsman's Office	35.3 (n=549)	20.4 (n=1684)
The outcomes of the Police Ombudsman's Office investigations <u>in general</u>	45.5 (n=551)	35.6 (n=1689)

Officers who had worked for another police force were also more likely to say they were *well informed*; however, this appears to be a reflection of their rank, given that higher ranking officers were more likely to have worked for another police force.

There was no consistent variation by sex in how well informed respondents said they were.

As will be shown below, there is a strong association between how well informed people say they are, and their attitudes to the Police Ombudsman’s Office. This is discussed in greater detail below.

Respondents were also asked an open question inviting them to specify other areas of the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office about which they thought they should be better informed. Just under a fifth of respondents gave an answer to this question; responses given by at least ten respondents are summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2	Q2 Are there any other areas of the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office about which you think you should be better informed?
	Number
How to receive updates during investigations	170
What action taken if an individual makes a malicious complaint	48
The Ombudsman’s qualification to carry out the role	43
How a complaint can be made against the Ombudsman	43
The legislation the Ombudsman uses	28
Who ensures that the Ombudsman is doing its job correctly	18
Timescales involved to reach a resolution to a complaint	16
Number of respondents giving each response (open ended question).	
<i>Valid sample size shown as n against each sub-question.</i>	

Respondents were asked how they found out about the work of the Police Ombudsman. The responses are summarised in Table 3.

TABLE 3	Q3 How do you get to find out about the work of the Police Ombudsman?
	%
Reading official documents produced by the Ombudsman	26.2
Reading other material (such as newspaper reports)	47.9
The media – television and radio	63.6
By visiting the website of the Police Ombudsman	14.2
By visiting other internet sites	2.5
Talks or presentations	20.1
Personal experience	46.0
By talking to colleagues	60.6
Other	2.5

Percentage frequencies for sources of information about the work of the Police Ombudsman.
Valid sample size n = 2324.

Other responses included internal police magazine (34), training courses (11) and word of mouth (7).

Respondents who had been officers for less than six years – who were consistently more likely to say they were well informed about the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office – were considerably more likely to say they had attended talks or presentations – 35.9% (*n*=548), compared to 15.1% (*n*=1677) of those who had been an officer for more than six years.

Respondents who cited certain sources of information – reading official documents or visiting the website of the Police Ombudsman’s Office, talks or presentations and personal experience – were significantly more likely to say the Police Ombudsman’s Office did a *good job*; these findings are presented and discussed in Section Three, following Table 33.

Respondents were asked whether the possibility of having a complaint made against them affects the way they do their current job. The results are summarised in Table 4.

TABLE 4	Q4a Does the possibility that a complaint may be made against you affect the way you do your day to day job <u>in your current post</u> ?
	%
Yes, it affects it a great deal	29.0
Yes, it affects it to some extent	33.3
No, it doesn't affect it at all	37.7

Percentage frequencies by effect of the possibility of a complaint on respondent's work.

Valid sample size, n = 2337.

Nearly two-thirds (62.3%) said the possibility of a complaint affects the way they do their job *at least to some extent*, including nearly a third (29.0%) who said it affects it *a great deal*. These respondents were asked to say whether the affect on their job was positive or negative. The results, summarised in Table 5, show that the great majority said it *prevents them from doing a better job*.

TABLE 5	Q4b IF YES Does this generally...
	%
Help you do a better job	17.1
Prevent you from doing a better job	82.9

Percentage frequencies by nature of effect on respondent's work.

Valid sample size, n = 1371.

Respondents who said the possibility of a complaint affected the way they did their job were asked to say how. The free-text responses are summarised in Table 6, separately for those who thinks the effect is positive, and for those who think the effect is negative.

TABLE 6	Q4B Does the possibility that a complaint may be made against you affect the way you do your day to day job in your current post? ... PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN HOW
	Number
<u>helps do a better job</u>	
ensures I am conscientious when carrying out duties	57
ensures that the correct procedures are carried out	23
ensures officers are accountable for their actions	17
helps me maintain a professional attitude when dealing with the public	9
helps me learn from other officers' mistakes	2
<u>prevents doing a better job</u>	
fear of complaint being made affects judgement when dealing with an incident	297
complaints to the Ombudsman can be used as a weapon by the criminal	191
puts unnecessary stress on an officer when both on and off duty	80
fear of not being treated fairly by Ombudsman	69
leads to unnecessary tasks being performed during incidents to ensure a complaint cannot be made	60
officers hold back when dealing with a potentially violent situation	38
would worry that any initial complaints would be held against me if further complaints were received	19
constant fear of losing job causes low morale	18
prevents officers from being proactive	9
Number of respondents making each comment about the nature of the effect of the possibility of a complaint on respondent's work (open ended question).	
<i>Valid sample size n = 2324.</i>	

Female respondents were less likely to say that that the possibility of a complaint affects the way they do their job. Furthermore, women who did say their job was affected were more likely to say it *helped them to do a better job*. This is summarised below

	Number	%	Comment
Male	1742	30.9	..affects it a great deal
	1054	14.5	..it helps to do a better job
Female	514	22.8	..affects it a great deal
	273	28.9	..it helps to do a better job

There was no significant variation by rank in whether respondents said the possibility of a complaint affects the way they do their job; however, of those who said it *affects it to some extent*, constables and sergeants were least likely to say it *helps them to do a better job*.

Respondents from A and B Districts were more likely to say that the possibility of a complaint affects the way they do their job *a great deal*: 33.3% (n=147) and 36.0% (n=175) respectively, compared to 26.5% for the rest of the sample.

They were also marginally less likely to say it helps them to do a better job; however, the biggest difference here was for respondents working in Headquarters – 11.1% (n=280) of whom said it *helped them to do a better job*, compared to 20.0% for the rest of the sample.

There was also significant and strong variation according to the nature of the respondent's posting. Officers working on TSG, response policing and roads policing were significantly more likely to say the possibility of a complaint *affects the way they do their job a great deal*, as summarised below.

	Number	%
TSG	119	32.0
Response Policing	622	32.0
Roads Policing	103	30.1
Total Sample	2180	28.4

Those from TSG and roads policing – but not response policing – were also significantly less likely to say that it *helps them to do a better job*, as summarised below.

	Number	%
TSG	85	5.9
Response Policing	387	19.1
Roads Policing	63	7.9
Total Sample	1274	17.9

There was also a difference in this by length of service – those who had been working as officers for up to six years were significantly more likely to say the possibility of a complaint made it more likely that they *would do a better job*, as summarised below.

	Number	%
Up to 6 years	336	23.5
More than 6 years	974	15.1

There was also a consistent link between the perceived effect of a possible complaint and how well informed respondents said they were about different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office. This held across all four aspects, and showed that officers who said they were *not well informed* were

- More likely to say that the possibility of a complaint affects the way they do their job *a great deal*, and
- Less likely to say that it *helps them to do a better job*.

Section Two – Complaints made against you

As shown in Table 7, exactly one fifth of respondents had a complaint against them that was currently under investigation by the Police Ombudsman’s Office.

Table 7	Q5 Have you had a complaint made against you that is currently under investigation by the Police Ombudsman’s Office?
	%
Yes	20.0
No	80.0

Percentage frequencies by whether respondent has a complaint currently under investigation.

Valid sample size, n = 2297.

More than half (56.2%) had had an investigation carried out by the Police Ombudsman’s Office where the complaint was (by the time of the survey) closed. The results are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8	Q6a Have you ever had a complaint against you investigated by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, where the complaint is now closed?
	%
Yes	56.2
No	43.8

Percentage frequencies by whether respondent has a complaint that is now closed.

Valid sample size, n = 2298.

Just under forty per cent of respondents (39.5%, or 900 out of 2276) had had no complaints investigated by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, either current or closed.

Those 1292 who had a closed complaint were asked to say how many times this has happened. The results, summarised in Table 9, show the majority

(57.2%) had experienced this once or twice, but that around eight per cent said this had happened more than five times.

Table 9	Q6b IF YES How many times has this happened?
	%
one	35.1
two	22.1
three	13.6
four-five	14.2
six-nine	4.4
ten or more	3.5
can't remember	7.0

Percentage frequencies by number of complaints respondent has had.
Valid sample size n = 1292.

Respondents who had had a complaint investigated and closed were asked more details about that complaint (or, as in the majority of cases where there had been more than one, about the most recent complaint). The nature of the complaint is summarised in Table 10.

Table 10	Q7 What was the complaint about?
	%
don't know	6.8
failure in duty	21.8
incivility	15.7
malpractice	8.7
oppressive behaviour	30.8
racial discrimination	0.7
traffic	3.5
Other	12.1

Percentage frequencies by reason for complaint, for respondents who had had a complaint (i.e. those who answered yes to Q6a).
Valid sample size n = 1286.

Those who replied 'other' reported the reasons as follows

	Number
Assault	113
False Arrest	6
Criminal Damage	6
Attempting to pervert the course of justice	4
Religious Discrimination	3

The following reasons were each given by one respondent only: misconduct, obstructing an investigation, vehicle pursuit resulting in RTC, sexual discrimination, breach of the peace, death in custody, and breach of human rights.

Respondents who had had a complaint were asked to give the month and year for when the complaint was made, and for when the complaint was resolved. The majority of these respondents either said they *couldn't remember* the month, or omitted the month. (In fact out of the 1292 respondents who had had a complaint, only 343 gave a month for when the complaint was made, and 269 for when the complaint was resolved.)

Rather more respondents gave the year of the complaint and its resolution. The responses are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11	Q8 When was the complaint <u>made</u> ? Q9 When was the complaint <u>resolved/closed</u> ?	
	Complaint made	Complaint resolved
	Number	
1998	2	2
1999	3	0
2000	13	4
2001	36	7
2002	32	18
2003	46	27
2004	66	46
2005	125	66
2006	214	24
2007	308	299
2008	19	120
No year given	428	579

Number of respondents who had had a complaint, showing year complaint made, and year resolved.

Valid sample size $n = 1292$.

These respondents were asked about the outcome of the complaint/investigation. The results are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12	Q10 What was the outcome of the complaint / investigation?
	%
complaint not substantiated, no action taken	75.6
informal resolution	6.8
advance and guidance / managerial discussion	5.3
superintendent's written warning	0.6
misconduct charges	0.5
criminal charges	0.5
I was not told	8.2
don't know / can't remember	2.4

Percentage frequencies by outcome of investigation, for respondents who had had a complaint (i.e. those who answered yes to Q6a).

Valid sample size n =1276.

The great majority of respondents reported that the complaint was not substantiated, or that no action was taken. A very small percentage reported a written warning, misconduct charges or criminal charges.

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the outcome. The results are summarised in Table 13.

Table 13	Q11 How satisfied were you with the outcome of the complaint / investigation?
	%
very satisfied	34.3
fairly satisfied	14.9
mixed feelings	24.3
fairly dissatisfied	7.4
very dissatisfied	19.1

Percentage frequencies by satisfaction with outcome, for respondents who had had a complaint (i.e. those who answered yes to Q6a).

Valid sample size n =1292.

As might be expected, satisfaction with the outcome depended on what the outcome was, with very low levels of satisfaction for respondents who reported some sanctions taken against them as a result of the complaint, as summarised below.

	Number	%
Not substantiated/no action taken	968	61.5
Informal Resolution	88	12.5
Sanctions	87	3.4

If the complaint was the subject of misconduct charges, the respondent was asked what happened as a result of the charges. While only six respondents (0.5% of those who said they had had a complaint – see Table 12) said that misconduct charges was the outcome of the complaint, 133 respondents answered this question. Their responses are summarised in Table 14.

Table 14	Q12 If misconduct charges.. What happened to you as a result of the misconduct charges?
	Number
case dismissed	92
caution	7
reprimand	12
fine	6
reduction in pay	7
reduction in rank	6

Number giving each response by outcome of misconduct charges, for respondents answering the question (regardless of whether misconduct charges were reported under Q10).

Valid sample size n =133.

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the way the complaint was handled by the Police Ombudsman’s Office. The results are summarised in Table 15.

Table 15	Q13 How satisfied were you with the way the complaint was handled by the Police Ombudsman's Office?
	%
very satisfied	12.5
fairly satisfied	25.2
mixed feelings	26.0
fairly dissatisfied	14.9
very dissatisfied	21.3

Percentage frequencies by satisfaction with the way the complaint was handled by the Police Ombudsman's Office, for respondents who had had a complaint (i.e. those who answered yes to Q6a).

Valid sample size n =1246.

Satisfaction with the way the complaint was handled by the Police Ombudsman's Office depended on the outcome, although the differences, summarised below, were not as pronounced as for satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint (see above).

	Number	%
Not substantiated/no action taken	941	44.4
Informal Resolution	82	28.0
Sanctions	87	14.9

Respondents answering this question were asked to give the reasons for their judgement. The most frequent reasons are summarised in Table 16, grouped according to whether the comments were positive or negative.

TABLE 16	Q13 How satisfied were you with the way the complaint was handled by the Police Ombudsman's Office? <u>PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN WHY</u>
	Number
<u>positive, favourable comments</u>	
Ombudsman staff were professional and competent	69
investigators were friendly and understanding	26
Ombudsman staff were fair	14
I was kept informed of progress	12
<u>negative, unfavourable comments</u>	
lack of updates during the investigation	247
investigation allowed to continue after complaint was known to be insubstantial;	116
the Ombudsman was unprofessional	65
was assumed guilty until proven to be innocent	60
lack of knowledge of police processes by the investigators	21
police were not exonerated by the Ombudsman after the complaint failed	21
interview in a custody suite was unpleasant	13
Number of respondents making each comment relating to reason for satisfaction / dissatisfaction. (Open ended question; comments made by fewer than ten respondents not included.)	
<i>Valid sample size n = 1292.</i>	

Respondents who had had a complaint were asked whether they were served Form OMB3 (Regulation 9 notification). As summarised in Table 17, just under three-quarters said they had, with just over one in ten saying no, with fifteen per cent don't know.

Table 17	Q14a Were you served Form OMB3 (Regulation 9 notification)?
	%
Yes	73.1
No	11.5
Don't Know	15.4

Percentage frequencies by whether respondent had been served Form OMB3, for respondents who had had a complaint (i.e. those who answered yes to Q6a).

Valid sample size, n = 2160.

Those who said they had been served Form OMB3 were asked further questions about contact they had had with the Police Ombudsman's Office. The first was whether they had been contacted by an Investigating Officers from the Police Ombudsman's Office. The results, summarised in Table 18, show that just under two-thirds said they were contacted.

Table 18	Q14b IF YES Did an Investigating Officers from the Police Ombudsman's Office contact you?
	%
Yes	64.3
No	35.7

Percentage frequencies by whether respondent was contacted by an investigating officer, for respondents who had had a complaint (i.e. those who answered yes to Q6a).

Valid sample size, n = 907.

The 583 respondents who said they had been contacted were asked to rate the Investigating Officer on a series of qualities. The results are summarised in Table 19.

Table 19	Q15 Did you find the officer conducting the investigation to be...		
	<i>yes, very</i>	<i>yes, fairly</i>	<i>no</i>
Polite (<i>n=579</i>)	51.6	44.0	4.3
Knowledgeable (<i>n=561</i>)	27.5	48.8	23.7
Interested in what you had to say (<i>n=565</i>)	31.5	46.0	22.0
Patient (<i>n=557</i>)	32.9	59.2	7.9
Impartial (<i>n=555</i>)	30.8	48.3	20.9
Professional (<i>n=576</i>)	36.8	48.8	14.4
In a rush (<i>n=544</i>)	6.4	14.2	79.2

Percentage frequencies by respondent's rating of investigating officer, for those who had had a complaint, and been contacted by an investigating officer.

Valid sample sizes varied, as not all respondents completed all seven scales, and are shown as n against each sub-question.

These respondents were also asked whether they had received a satisfaction questionnaire from the Police Ombudsman's Office. The results are summarised in Table 20. Somewhat under half of respondents said they had received a questionnaire; however, this will include respondents whose case was not yet closed at the time of the survey.

Table 20	Q16 Following the closure of the complaint, did you receive a satisfaction questionnaire from the Police Ombudsman's Office?
	%
Yes	41.5
No	58.5

Percentage frequencies by whether respondent received a satisfaction questionnaire from the Police Ombudsman's Office, for respondents who had had a complaint investigated.

Valid sample size, n =569.

Respondents who had received a questionnaire were asked if they had completed and returned it. As showing in Table 21, more than three quarters said they had done so.

Table 21	Q17a <u>IF YES</u> Did you complete and return the questionnaire?
	%
Yes	77.8
No	22.2

Percentage frequencies by whether respondent completed and returned the questionnaire, for respondents who had received a questionnaire.

Valid sample size, n = 234.

The fifty-two respondents who said they had not returned the questionnaire were asked why not; the forty-six responses received fell into three categories, as follows:

	Number
I did not feel there was any point	25
It would have wasted time/Too busy	16
I wanted to forget about the complaint	5

Finally, respondents were asked if they had ever had a complaint against them investigated by the Police Ombudsman's Office where they had not been told whether or not the complaint was closed. The results are summarised in Table 22.

Table 22	Q18 Have you ever had a complaint against you investigated by the Police Ombudsman's Officer, <u>where you have not been told whether or not the complaint was closed?</u>
	%
Yes	28.8
No	71.2

Percentage frequencies, by whether respondent had had a complaint investigated and had not been told whether the complaint was closed.

Valid sample size, n = 566.

Section Three – Views on complaints and the Police Ombudsman’s Office

The final section of the questionnaire examined attitudes to complaints and to the Police Ombudsman’s Office.

The first of these questions asked respondents how confident they were in different aspects of the way the Police Ombudsman’s Office conducts investigations of complaints. The results are summarised in Table 23.

Table 23	Q19 How confident do you feel that the Police Ombudsman’s Office conducts investigations of complaints in a way that is...		
	<i>Thorough</i> (n=2320)	<i>Knowledgeable</i> (n=2319)	<i>Impartial</i> (n=2313)
<i>very confident</i>	7.7	4.1	6.0
<i>fairly confident</i>	45.1	40.5	35.6
<i>not very confident</i>	21.4	28.5	25.5
<i>not at all confident</i>	15.1	15.9	23.3
<i>don’t know</i>	10.7	11.1	9.6

Percentage frequencies by confidence in the way the Police Ombudsman’s Office conducts investigation, for respondents who had had a complaint, and been contacted by an investigating officer.

Valid sample sizes shown as n for each sub-question.

In all three areas, male respondents were less likely to be *confident*, and less likely to say they *didn’t know*.

There was also a significant variation by length of service in all areas: officers who had up to six years service were more likely to be confident that Police Ombudsman’s Office investigations were thorough, knowledgeable and impartial, as summarised below.

	% at least fairly confident		
	<i>Thorough</i>	<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Impartial</i>
<i>Up to six years</i>	64.9 (n=550)	58.4 (n=551)	54.1 (n=549)
<i>More than six years</i>	49.6 (n=1679)	40.6 (1676)	37.8 (1674)

In all areas, those respondents who said they were *well informed* about the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office were significantly more likely to be *very confident* and *at least fairly confident* about the thoroughness, knowledge and impartiality of the Police Ombudsman’s Office investigations. The pattern was similar for all aspects of how well informed, and for all aspects of confidence.

Among the strongest relationships were for those who felt informed about the staff working for the Police Ombudsman’s Office, as summarised below.

	% very confident		
	<i>Thorough</i>	<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Impartial</i>
<i>Not well informed</i>	5.4 (n=1656)	2.2 (n=1654)	3.7 (n=1650)
<i>Fairly well informed</i>	11.8 (n=577)	6.8 (577)	8.9 (n=575)
<i>Very well informed</i>	30.4 (n=69)	27.1 (n=70)	37.1 (n=70)

It is noteworthy that there was little link between confidence in the way the Police Ombudsman's Office conducts complaints and experience of complaints. Those who had a complaint currently under investigation did not differ in their confidence in any of the three aspects addressed by the questionnaire. Those who had had a complaint investigated which is now closed were marginally less likely to be *confident* in the thoroughness of the investigation, but did not differ in their confidence of the knowledge or impartiality.

(In all cases, as might be expected, respondents who had a complaint, either current or closed, were less likely to choose the *don't know* option.)

Respondents were then asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a series of attitudinal statements. Their responses are summarised in Tables 24 to 32.

Table 24	Q20 Most people who make complaints against the police do so to make mischief
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	21.1
<i>Tend to agree</i>	35.7
<i>Mixed View</i>	33.9
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	6.4
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2.8

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.
Valid sample size, n = 2322.

The majority of respondents (56.8%) *agreed* with this view, with fewer than ten percent *disagreeing* to some extent.

The great majority of respondents *disagreed* with this view, with approaching half of them *strongly disagreeing*.

Table 26	Q22 The work of the Police Ombudsman's Office is likely to make the public more confident in the police.
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	4.9
<i>Tend to agree</i>	29.3
<i>Mixed View</i>	42.5
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	14.1
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	9.1

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.

Valid sample size, n = 2323.

Although many expressed *mixed views*, around a third of respondents *agreed* with this view (although not many *agreed strongly*); more respondents *agreed* than *disagreed*.

Table 27	Q23 Complaints against the police should be investigated independently.
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	25.6
<i>Tend to agree</i>	42.1
<i>Mixed View</i>	25.0
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	4.8
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2.5

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.

Valid sample size, n = 2332.

Two-thirds of respondents *agreed* that complaints should be investigated independently, with fewer than ten per cent *disagreeing*.

Table 28	Q24 Investigations of complaints by the Police Ombudsman's Office tend to be biased in favour of the person making the complaint.
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	16.1
<i>Tend to agree</i>	31.9
<i>Mixed View</i>	33.7
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	15.6
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2.7

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.
Valid sample size, n = 2325.

In contrast to the results on the corresponding question on investigations by the Police Ombudsman's Office being biased in favour of the PSNI (see Table 25), nearly half of respondents *agreed* that they were biased in favour of the complainant; less than twenty per cent *disagreed* with this view.

Table 29	Q25 The Police Ombudsman's Office should investigate complaints/referrals relating to historical incidents.
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	2.1
<i>Tend to agree</i>	8.4
<i>Mixed View</i>	27.8
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	24.9
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	36.9

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.
Valid sample size, n = 2328.

About ten per cent of respondents tended to *agree* with this view, with more than half *disagreeing*, including more than a third who *disagreed strongly*.

Table 30	Q26 The Police Ombudsman's Office has improved the accountability of the police in Northern Ireland.
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	6.0
<i>Tend to agree</i>	30.8
<i>Mixed View</i>	36.9
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	15.9
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	10.5

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.
Valid sample size, n = 2325.

More respondents *agreed* with this view than *disagreed* – more than a third, compared to just over a quarter.

Table 31	Q27 There is less misconduct in the PSNI than in most other police services.
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	17.2
<i>Tend to agree</i>	35.0
<i>Mixed View</i>	35.0
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	7.9
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4.9

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.
Valid sample size, n = 2257.

More than half of respondents thought that there was less misconduct in the PSNI than in most other police services, with only one in eight *disagreeing* with this.

Table 32	Q28 The Office of the Police Ombudsman has helped to improve policing in Northern Ireland.
	%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	2.0
<i>Tend to agree</i>	16.3
<i>Mixed View</i>	36.8
<i>Tend to disagree</i>	26.2
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	18.7

Percentage frequencies by attitude expressed.
Valid sample size, n = 2323.

More respondents *disagreed* with this statement than *agreed* – about 45%, compared to 18%.

The final attitude scale respondents were asked to complete was a rating of the overall job done by the Police Ombudsman’s Office. The responses for the whole sample are summarised in Table 33.

Table 33	Q29 Overall, do you think the Police Ombudsman’s Office does a ... ?
	%
very good job	2.9
fairly good job	27.9
mixed feelings	39.3
fairly poor job	13.3
very poor job	12.5
Don’t Know	4.2

Percentage frequencies by respondent’s rating of the job done by the Police Ombudsman’s Office.
Valid sample size n =1246.

Respondents were slightly more likely to express a positive than a negative view: 30.8% said the Police Ombudsman’s Office did *at least a fairly good job*, with 25.8% saying they did a *fairly or very poor job*; the largest group expressed *mixed feelings*.

This important summary attitude question showed consistent and striking patterns of variation by demographics, as well as by other aspects of respondents’ views.

Female respondents were somewhat more likely to say the Police Ombudsman's Office did *at least a fairly good job*, and respondents who had been a police officer for less than six years were more likely to say they did a *good job*.

There was significant variation by role, as summarised below, with officers from roads policing and TSG being less likely to say the Police Ombudsman's Office does *at least a fairly good job*, while those from sector/neighbourhood, district and response policing were more likely to express this more positive view.

This important summary attitude question showed consistent and striking patterns of variation by demographics, as well as by other aspects of respondents' views.

	Number	%
Sector/neighbourhood	288	41.0
Response Policing	615	36.1
Roads Policing	102	25.5
TSG	118	24.5
District	122	38.5
Crime Operations Department	324	33.0
HQ	130	33.0
Other	464	30.8
Overall	2163	31.8

There was also significant variation by posting, summarised below. Officers from C, D, G and H Districts were more likely to say the Police Ombudsman's

Office does *at least a fairly good job*, and those from HQ, A and F Districts being less likely to express this view.

	Number	%
HQ	525	23.6
A District	146	38.1
B District	173	33.5
C District	224	38.9
D District	175	38.3
E District	264	33.4
F District	175	29.8
G District	200	37.5
H District	242	38.0
Overall	2124	32.2

There was significant variation by rank, as summarised below, with constables and sergeants (who of course make up the bulk of the sample) are less likely to express a positive view than other ranks, with superintendents and chief superintendents more likely to say the Police Ombudsman's Office does a *good job*.

	Number	%
Constable Part Time	97	40.2
Part Time Reserve	22	45.5
Full Time Reserve	102	31.4
Constable	1325	29.6
Sergeant	377	25.0
Inspector	183	38.8
Chief Inspector	35	34.3
Superintendent/Chief Superintendent	32	53.1
Overall	2173	30.7

Respondents who felt well informed about different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office were significantly – in some cases dramatically – more likely to say the Police Ombudsman's Office does *at least a fairly good*

job. This held true for all aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office, as summarised in the table below, which shows the percentage of respondents who say the Police Ombudsman's Office does *at least a fairly good job*, according to how well informed respondents felt about different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office.

	Number	%
The role of the Police Ombudsman's Office		
Not well Informed	566	11.4
Fairly Well Informed	1435	35.5
Very Well Informed	30	45.0
The Procedure for Investigating Complaints		
Not well Informed	1125	15.9
Fairly Well Informed	1035	44.1
Very Well Informed	141	53.2
The Staff working for the Police Ombudsman's Office		
Not well Informed	1640	21.4
Fairly Well Informed	581	53.3
Very Well Informed	71	37.6
The Outcome of the investigations of the Police Ombudsman's Office		
Not well Informed	1427	19.7
Fairly Well Informed	791	47.1
Very Well Informed	80	70.0

Not only was attitude related to how informed respondents said they were, it also varied according to the sources of information through which respondents said they found out about the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office (see Table 3 for a summary of the responses to the question which asked about this).

Certain sources of information were significantly associated with a more positive attitude, as summarised below (the first figure shows the percentage who said the Police Ombudsman's Office did at least a fairly good job for those who cited that source of information; the second, in parentheses, shows the corresponding percentage who did not cite that source).

	Number	%
Reading official OPONI Documents	604	40.4 (27.2)
Visiting OPONI Websites	323	38.4 (30.9)
Talks or presentations	461	41.3 (28.4)
Personal Experience	1056	32.9 (29.5)

It is noteworthy that the strongest effects were associated with information emanating from the Police Ombudsman's Office. This may suggest that more active communication may not only raise awareness, but also – and here the suggestion is tentative, as cause and effect cannot be confidently established – result in an improvement in attitude.

The most positive attitudes (46.6% saying *at least a fairly good job*) were expressed by those who cited other sources. While this was only marginally significant (owing to small numbers, with only fifty-eight respondents citing other sources), it is worth noting that the most common response among the other sources was internal police magazine, and among the thirty-four respondents who cited this, seventeen of them (50%) said the Police Ombudsman's Office did *at least a fairly good job*.

Personal experience of complaint showed no pronounced relationship with respondents' attitudes to the job done by the Police Ombudsman's Office. The most consistent difference was, quite understandably, that respondents who had had a complaint investigated by the Police Ombudsman's Office were more likely to express a view – i.e. they were less likely to say they *didn't know* in response to this question.

If these *don't know* responses are excluded, there is no significant difference in the attitude to the job done by the Police Ombudsman's Office for those who have a complaint still under investigation. Respondents who had had a complaint investigated which is now closed were more likely to say the Police Ombudsman's Office did *a very poor job*, and correspondingly less likely to have *mixed views*. However, these differences are small.

Conclusions – attitudes to the Police Ombudsman's Office

From the initial analysis of the findings, a number of themes emerge relating to respondents' views of the Police Ombudsman's Office.

Attitudes tend on balance to be positive, but not markedly so. Respondents are more likely to be confident than not in the thoroughness and knowledge of investigation of complaints by the Police Ombudsman's Office; by contrast, they were slightly less likely to be confident in their impartiality. Similarly, overall judgements of the job done by the Police Ombudsman's Office were more likely to be positive than negative, but not markedly so.

Specific attitude statements showed some interesting patterns. There was considerable agreement with the principle of independent investigation of complaints (although not for historical incidents in most respondents' views); however, many thought that investigations by the Police Ombudsman's Office were biased in favour of the complainant (with hardly any taking the view that they were biased in favour of the PSNI), which reflects the slightly lower level of confidence expressed in the impartiality of investigations conducted by the Police Ombudsman's Office. These views should be seen in the light of other findings, relating to the widely held view that most people who make complaints do so to make mischief, and that there is less misconduct in the PSNI than in other police services.

More respondents agreed than disagreed with the notion that the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office is likely to make the public more confident in the police; similarly, they were more likely to agree than disagree that the Police Ombudsman's Office has improved the accountability of policing in Northern Ireland. However, while many respondents thought that the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office improved public confidence and accountability, fewer thought that it had improved policing itself.

Experience of investigation of complaints by the Police Ombudsman's Office was not generally associated with more negative attitudes towards the Police Ombudsman's Office, particularly if the complaint was still under investigation.

Attitudes however were strongly and consistently associated with how informed people felt – the more officers felt they knew about different aspects of the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office, the more positive were their attitudes towards the Police Ombudsman's Office, and the more confident they were in the investigations conducted by the Police Ombudsman's Office.

There were also consistent, but small, variations by sex, such that females were more likely to be positive in their views, but also more likely to say they don't know.

Another consistent variation is by length of service. Differences across all service categories are inconsistent, and not easy to describe. However, if the sample is split by six years – which corresponds approximately to the change from the RUC to the PSNI – a consistent variation emerges: those who have worked as a police officer in Northern Ireland for less than six years are consistently more positive in their views, and more confident in the investigations conducted by the Police Ombudsman's Office. This is partly explained by the finding that officers who have less than six years' service are

more likely to say they feel well informed about the work of the Police Ombudsman's Office (although this does not hold for awareness of the procedure for investigating complaints).

Finally, respondents were asked to name the one most important thing the Police Ombudsman's Office could do to improve the way they do their job.

Nearly three-quarters of all respondents (73.4%, or 1725 out of 2350) made a comment; comments made by at least ten respondents are summarised in Table 34.

Table 34	Q30 What is the ONE most important thing the Police Ombudsman's Office could do to improve the way they do their job?
	Number
provide more updates to officers under investigation	525
stay impartial of political and social issues when dealing with complaints	287
gain better knowledge of police procedures	131
conduct more professional investigations	124
understand the difficulty for police officers making split second decisions	109
put in place a deterrent to stop people making a false complaint	81
gain the trust and confidence of police officers	66
allow officers to make a complaint about the ombudsman service	66
improve communication with officers	51
reduce the timescale of investigations	50
not interview officers under investigation in custody suites where criminals are brought	44
treat officers fairly	42
be more supportive in the media when complaints are found to be false	27
do not investigate minor complaints	24
charge the public a fee to make a complaint	22
interview all concerned with the complaint as soon as possible after the incident	16
inform officers immediately when a complaint has been made against them	12
gain input from members of the PSNI	10
better inform officers and the public of the ombudsman service	10
Number of respondents making each comment relating to how Police Ombudsman's Office can improve the way they do their job (open ended question).	
<i>Valid sample size n = 2350.</i>	

Appendix Item One

Questionnaire

PSNI views and attitudes towards the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI)

Section 1 – Awareness of the Police Ombudsman’s Office IN GENERAL

1. How well informed do you feel about the following...

a. the role of the Police Ombudsman’s Office

- not well informed*
- fairly well informed*
- very well informed*

b. the procedure for investigating complaints

- not well informed*
- fairly well informed*
- very well informed*

c. the staff working for the Police Ombudsman’s Office

- not well informed*
- fairly well informed*
- very well informed*

d. the outcomes of the Police Ombudsman’s Office investigations **in general**

- not well informed*
- fairly well informed*
- very well informed*

2. Are there any other areas of the work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office about which you think you should be better informed?

PLEASE SPECIFY

3. How do you get to find out about the work of the Police Ombudsman?

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- reading official documents produced by the Ombudsman (such as the Annual Report, research reports, etc)*
- reading other material (such as newspaper reports)*
- the media – television and radio*
- by visiting the website of the Police Ombudsman*
- by visiting other internet sites*
- talks or presentations*
- personal experience*
- by talking to colleagues*
- none of the above*
- other*

<u>IF OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY</u>

4a. Does the possibility that a complaint may be made against you affect the way you do your day to day job **in your current post?**

- yes, it affects it a great deal*
- yes, it affects it to some extent*
- no, it doesn't affect it at all*

4b. **IF YES**, does this generally...

- help you do a better job*
- prevent you from doing a better job*

<u>PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN HOW</u>

Section Two – Complaints made against you

5. Have you had a complaint made against you that is currently under investigation by the Police Ombudsman’s Office?

yes
no

6a. Have you ever had a complaint against you investigated by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, where the complaint is now closed?

yes
no **if NO,
please go to
question 19**

6b. **IF YES** How many times has this happened?

one
two
three
four-five
six-nine
ten or more
can't remember

PLEASE NOTE

The following questions only apply to complaints that have been **investigated** and **which you know are now closed**.

If you have had **only one** such complaint, then please answer the following questions about that complaint.

If you have had **more than one** such complaint, please answer the following questions for the **most recent complaint**.

7. What was the complaint about?

- don't know*
- failure in duty*
- incivility*
- malpractice*
- oppressive behaviour*
- racial discrimination*
- traffic*
- other*

<u>IF OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY</u>

8. When was the complaint made? Please write the month and year in the space provided, if you can remember.

month

can't remember month

year

can't remember year

9. When was the complaint resolved/closed? Please write the month and year in the space provided, if you can remember.

month

can't remember month

year

can't remember year

10. What was the outcome of the complaint/investigation?

complaint not substantiated, no action taken

informal resolution

advice and guidance/managerial discussion

superintendent's written warning

misconduct charges

criminal charges

I was not told

don't know / can't remember

11. How satisfied were you with the outcome of the complaint/investigation?

very satisfied

fairly satisfied

mixed feelings

fairly dissatisfied

very dissatisfied

12. If misconduct charges What happened to you as a result of the

misconduct charges?

- case dismissed*
- caution*
- reprimand*
- fine*
- reduction in pay*
- reduction in rank*

13. How satisfied were you with the way the complaint was handled by the Police Ombudsman's Office?

- very satisfied*
- fairly satisfied*
- mixed feelings*
- fairly dissatisfied*
- very dissatisfied*

<u>PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN WHY</u>

14a. Were you served Form OMB3 (Regulation 9 notification)?

- yes*
- no*

14b. IF YES Did an Investigating Officer from the Police Ombudsman's Office contact you?

- yes*
- no*

15. Did you find the officer conducting the investigation to be...

	<i>yes, very</i>	<i>yes, fairly</i>	<i>no</i>
a. polite	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. knowledgeable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. interested in what you had to say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. patient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. impartial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. professional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. in a rush	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Following the closure of the complaint, did you receive a satisfaction questionnaire from the Police Ombudsman's Office?

yes
no

17a. **IF YES** Did you complete and return the questionnaire?

yes
no

17b. **IF NO** Why not?

18. Have you ever had a complaint against you investigated by the Police Ombudsman's Office, where you have not been told whether or not the complaint was closed?

yes
no

Section 4 – Your views on complaints and the Police Ombudsman’s Office

19. How confident do you feel that the Police Ombudsman’s Office conducts investigations in a way that is...

a. thorough

- very confident*
- fairly confident*
- not very confident*
- not at all confident*
- don’t know*

b. knowledgeable

- very confident*
- fairly confident*
- not very confident*
- not at all confident*
- don’t know*

c. impartial

- very confident*
- fairly confident*
- not very confident*
- not at all confident*
- don’t know*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

20. Most people who make complaints against the police do so to make mischief.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>strongly agree</i> | <i>tend to agree</i> | <i>mixed views</i> | <i>tend to disagree</i> | <i>strongly disagree</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

21. Investigations of complaints by the Police Ombudsman’s Office tend to be biased in favour of the PSNI.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>strongly agree</i> | <i>tend to agree</i> | <i>mixed views</i> | <i>tend to disagree</i> | <i>strongly disagree</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

22. The work of the Police Ombudsman’s Office is likely to make the

public more confident in the police.

<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>tend to agree</i>	<i>mixed views</i>	<i>tend to disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>				

23. Complaints against the police should be investigated independently.

<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>tend to agree</i>	<i>mixed views</i>	<i>tend to disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>				

24. Investigations of complaints by the Police Ombudsman's Office tend to be biased in favour of the person making the complaint.

<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>tend to agree</i>	<i>mixed views</i>	<i>tend to disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>				

25. The Police Ombudsman's Office should investigate complaints/referrals relating to historical incidents.

<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>tend to agree</i>	<i>mixed views</i>	<i>tend to disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>				

26. The Police Ombudsman's Office has improved the accountability of the police in Northern Ireland.

<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>tend to agree</i>	<i>mixed views</i>	<i>tend to disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>				

27. There is less misconduct in the PSNI than in most other police services.

<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>tend to agree</i>	<i>mixed views</i>	<i>tend to disagree</i>	<i>strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>				

28. The Office of the Police Ombudsman has helped to improve policing in Northern Ireland.

*strongly
agree*

*tend to
agree*

mixed views

*tend to
disagree*

*strongly
disagree*

29. Overall, do you think the Police Ombudsman's Office does a...

- very good job*
- fairly good job*
- mixed feelings*
- fairly poor job*
- very poor job*
- don't know*

30. What is the **ONE** most important thing the Police Ombudsman's Office could do to improve the way they do their job?

PLEASE SPECIFY

Section Five – Personal details

This questionnaire is strictly anonymous, and will not be used to identify any individual officers.

However, we need to ask you some details about yourself and where you work. There are two important reasons for this.

First, it allows us to check whether the results of the survey are representative of the PSNI as a whole, or to identify any groups of officers whose views are not properly represented.

Secondly, it allows us to find out if officers' views vary between different groups.

HOWEVER, we recognise that in certain circumstances, individual officers may be identifiable through their answers to certain combinations of questions (for example, if you happen to be the only female chief inspector working in a particular DCU).

May we reiterate, and reassure you, that no individual officers will be identified in this survey. The survey has been carried out with the full approval of the PFNI and the Superintendents' Association, whose representatives are confident of this.

No completed questionnaires will be seen by staff from the Police Ombudsman's Office, or by staff from the PSNI. They will be destroyed as soon as the data have been recorded.

However, if you still have concerns about anonymity, we would rather have your views of the Police Ombudsman without all your personal details. So please feel free to omit any question or questions that you feel could identify you as an individual.

Thank you for your co-operation.

31. Are you...

male
female

32. What rank are you?

- Constable Part time*
- Part time Reserve*
- Full time Reserve*
- Constable*
- Sergeant*
- Inspector*
- Chief Inspector*
- Superintendent*
- Chief Superintendent*
- Chief Constable / Deputy or Assistant Chief Constable*

33. Where are you currently posted?

- Headquarters (including Garnerville)*
- A District*
- B District*
- C District*
- D District*
- E District*
- F District*
- G District*
- H District*

34. Which of the following best describes your current posting?

- sector/neighbourhood*
- response*
- roads policing*
- TSG*
- district CID*
- Crime Operations Department*
- HQ*
- other*

35. How long have you been a police officer?

- less than one year*
- 1 – 2 years*
- 2 – 6 years*
- 6 – 10 years*
- 10 – 20 years*
- 20 – 30 years*
- more than 30 years*

36. In that time, have you worked as a police officer in a force **other than** the PSNI or RUC?

yes
no

37. **IF YES** How long **in total** have you been an officer with the PSNI / RUC?

less than one year
1 - 2 years
2 - 6 years
6 - 10 years
10 - 20 years
20 - 30 years
more than 30 years

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix Item Two

Covering letter accompanying questionnaire

SURVEY OF THE VIEWS AND ATTITUDES OF POLICE OFFICERS TO THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Attached to this letter is a survey questionnaire commissioned by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. This survey is supported by the Chief Constable, the Police Federation for Northern Ireland and the Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland.

To ensure effectiveness of questions and impartiality of the analysis, this is being undertaken by Mr Malcolm Hibberd who has worked with the police service since 1982, as a researcher, teacher and advisor. He has worked extensively with the police service in Northern Ireland since 1993, in which time he has worked for the RUC/PSNI, as well as for the Northern Ireland Policing Board, and the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. The draft report will be made available to the Chief Constable and representative organisations for comment.

To add to the independence of this survey, the publication and processing of the questionnaires is being undertaken by Social and Market Strategic Research Ltd, (SMSR) a company based in Kingston upon Hull and specialising in public sector consultation. We ask that you complete the attached questionnaire and return directly to SMSR in the enclosed pre-paid envelope. SMSR operates in full accordance with Market Research Society's professional code of conduct. After the data is inputted from the questionnaires they will be destroyed in a secure location by a confidential waste company under supervision. They will NOT be returned to Northern Ireland.

Personal data is being collected purely for analysis purposes and UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES will an Officer's personal details be referenced to their individual responses.

We urge you to take time in completing this survey as it is important that the views and attitudes of police officers to the Office of the Police Ombudsman are made known. Please return your completed survey in the pre-paid envelope by **Monday 17th March 2008**.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact either:

- your representative organisation
- Darren Hornby at dhornby@smsr.co.uk or Freephone 0800 1380845

We would like to thank you in anticipation of your response

Malcolm Hibberd

Ian Mills SMSR Ltd

Appendix Item Three

Reminder letter

SURVEY OF THE VIEWS AND ATTITUDES OF POLICE OFFICERS TO THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

You may recall we recently sent you a survey questionnaire commissioned by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. This survey is supported by the Chief Constable, the Police Federation for Northern Ireland and the Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland.

We are now sending you a reminder in case you have not completed and returned the original survey form we sent you. If you have already done so, then we apologise for sending you the reminder and please disregard it. **DO NOT** resend it.

The reason for the duplication is, as we stressed in the original covering letter, the surveys forms are strictly anonymous and we have no way of tracking responses and therefore do not know who has/hasn't replied. If you however haven't yet responded can we implore you to do as it is important that the views and attitudes of police officers towards the Office of the Police Ombudsman are made known.

We repeat that personal data is being collected purely for analysis purposes and **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** will an Officer's personal details be referenced to their individual responses.

May we repeat that to ensure effectiveness of questions and impartiality of the analysis, this is being undertaken by Mr Malcolm Hibberd who has worked with the police service since 1982, as a researcher, teacher and advisor. He will write the report which will be made available to the Chief Constable and representative organisations for comment.

Likewise, to add to the independence of this survey, the publication and processing of the questionnaires is being undertaken by Social and Market Strategic Research Ltd, (SMSR) a company based in Kingston upon Hull and specialising in public sector consultation. SMSR operates in full accordance with Market Research Society's professional code of conduct. After the data is inputted from the questionnaires they will be destroyed in a secure location by a confidential waste company under supervision. They will **NOT** be returned to Northern Ireland.

We urge you to take time in completing this survey and that you complete the attached questionnaire and return directly to SMSR in the enclosed pre-paid envelope. Please return your completed survey in the pre-paid envelope by **Monday 17th March 2008**.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact either:

- your representative organisation
- Darren Hornby at dhornby@smsr.co.uk or Freephone 0800 1380845

We would like to thank you in anticipation of your response

Malcolm Hibberd

Ian Mills SMSR Ltd

SMSR

social and market strategic research

SMSR House 51-52 Market Place Hull HU1 1RQ Tel: 01482 211 200
Fax: 01482 211 201 info@smsr.co.uk www.smsr.co.uk

