



Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

**Quarterly Statistical Update to 31st December
2015**

Published January 2016

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

Statistical Update to 31st December 2015, published on 28th January 2016

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31st December 2015. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman's Case Handling System (CHS) on the 21st January 2016.

Complaints Received

The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office includes complaints made by members of the public, matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations¹, and any matter that the Police Ombudsman has decided is in the public interest for him to investigate.

So far this year (up to the end of December 2015), the Office received over 2,300 complaints. This is the fewest number of complaints received during the same time period in each of the previous five years. It is 13% fewer complaints than in the comparable time period of last year (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2010/11 to 2015/16



¹ The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Main Complaint Factor

The main complaint factor refers to the main situation giving rise to the complaint. Criminal investigation was the most common main factor underlying complaints in all but one of the last five years; in 2013/14, Arrest was the most common factor underlying complaints.

The number of complaints decreased for most of the complaint factors between April and December 2015 when compared with the same time period in 2014. Police enquiries (no investigation) saw the biggest decrease in complaint numbers; 61% reduction, when compared with the same time period last year followed by arrests, criminal investigations and domestic incidents. The only known complaint factor which saw an increase in complaint numbers during this time was parade/demonstrations (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to December 2014 and April to December 2015

	April to December 2014	April to December 2015	Difference
Criminal Investigation	646	586	↓ -60
Arrest	492	412	↓ -80
Search	219	200	↓ -19
Traffic Related Incident	183	163	↓ -20
Domestic Incident	196	142	↓ -54
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	174	67	↓ -107
Historic Investigation	68	53	↓ -15
Parade/Demonstration	20	44	↑ 24
Other	528	534	↑ 6
Unknown	113	105	↓ -8
Total	2,639	2,306	↓ -333

Complaints Received by Police Area and District

From 1st April 2015 the PSNI area and district boundaries changed to reflect the new council boundaries in Northern Ireland (see PSNI [website](#) for more details).

The number of complaints received in each of the policing districts decreased between April and December 2015 when compared with the same time period in 2014, with Causeway Coast & Glens and Mid Ulster showing the largest percentage decreases in complaints received (Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage increase/decrease in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to December 2014 and April to December 2015

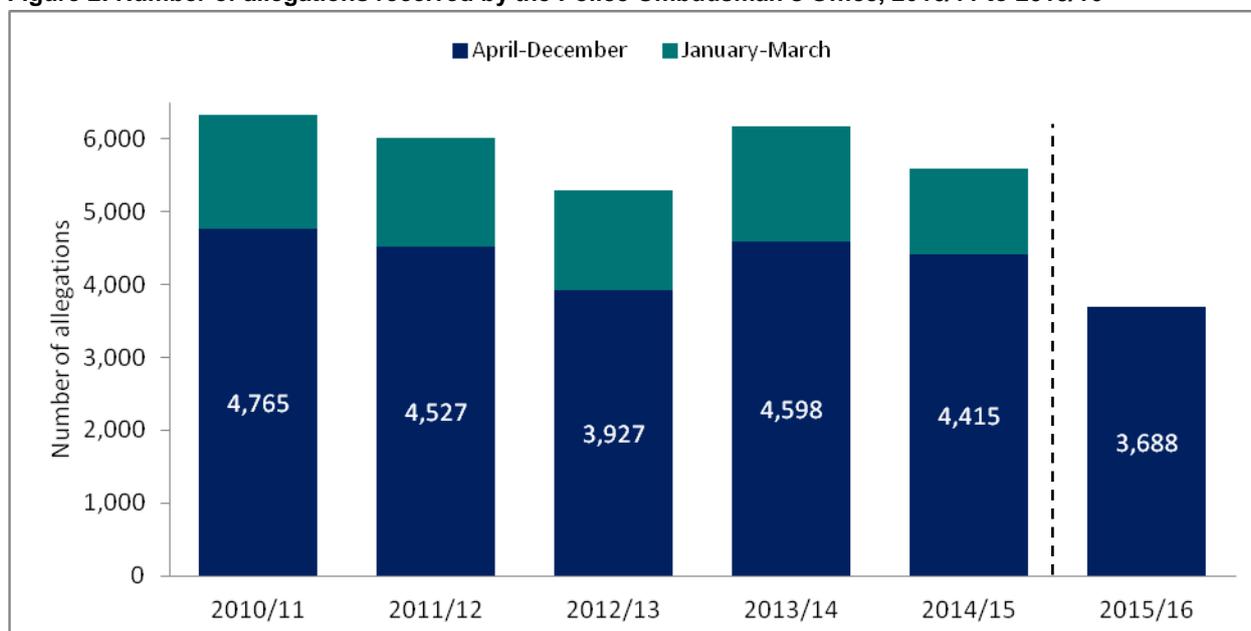
	April to December 2014	April to December 2015	% Increase/Decrease
District A - Belfast City	783	707	-10%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	120	97	-19%
District C - Ards & North Down	156	134	-14%
District D - Newry Mourne & Down	164	141	-14%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	217	177	-18%
District F - Mid Ulster	99	77	-22%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	127	105	-17%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	182	174	-4%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	229	169	-26%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	133	118	-11%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	149	134	-10%
Unknown / Other Organisation	280	273	-3%
Northern Ireland	2,639	2,306	-13%

Allegations Received

Each complaint the Police Ombudsman's Office receives is made up of one or more allegations. The allegation describes the types of behaviours being complained about or the separate issues making up the complaint. For example, a person may make a complaint stating a police officer had pushed them *and* was rude. This would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations. The number of allegations received also includes a small number of residual matters, these are matters of concern identified during an investigation that were not originally detailed in the complaint, typically these account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

So far this year (up to the end of December 2015), the Office received almost 3,700 allegations. This is the fewest number of allegations received when compared to the same time period in each of the previous five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2010/11 to 2015/16



Allegation Type

Allegations are categorised into 11 different types. Since 2010/11, Failure in Duty allegations accounted for the greatest proportion of allegations, followed by Oppressive Behaviour and Incivility.

The number of allegations decreased for almost all allegation types between April and December 2015 when compared with the same time period during 2014. The number of allegations regarding an officers Failure in Duty or Oppressive Behaviour decreased more than for other allegation types during this time. The only allegation types to show any increases during this time were Section 55 referrals and mishandling of property (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to December 2014 and April to December 2015

	April to December 2014	April to December 2015	Difference
Failure in Duty	1,895	1,573	↓ -322
Oppressive Behaviour	1,142	953	↓ -189
Incivility	324	303	↓ -21
Search	236	201	↓ -35
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	201	146	↓ -55
Mishandling of Property	93	98	↑ 5
Section 55 Referral	40	56	↑ 16
Discriminatory Behaviour	54	41	↓ -13
Malpractice	95	40	↓ -55
Traffic	44	27	↓ -17
Other	291	250	↓ -41
Total	4,415	3,688	↓ -727

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 43 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal or Local Resolution between January 2015 and December 2015 (Table 4).

Table 4: Officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal/Local Resolution, twelve month period ending June 2015, September 2015, December 2015

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Local/Informal Resolution
June 2015	66
September 2015	51
December 2015	43

Policing Plan 2014/17 Targets

The 2014/17 Policing Plan sets the strategic policing priorities and objectives over the coming years, along with a range of targets and measures for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to achieve by the end of March 2017. The 2015/16 annual update to this plan, highlights three measures of success that require data from the Police Ombudsman's Office and these are outlined below. These measures are included under the Professional Policing section, and are an indicator of 'Treating People Fairly and with Respect'.

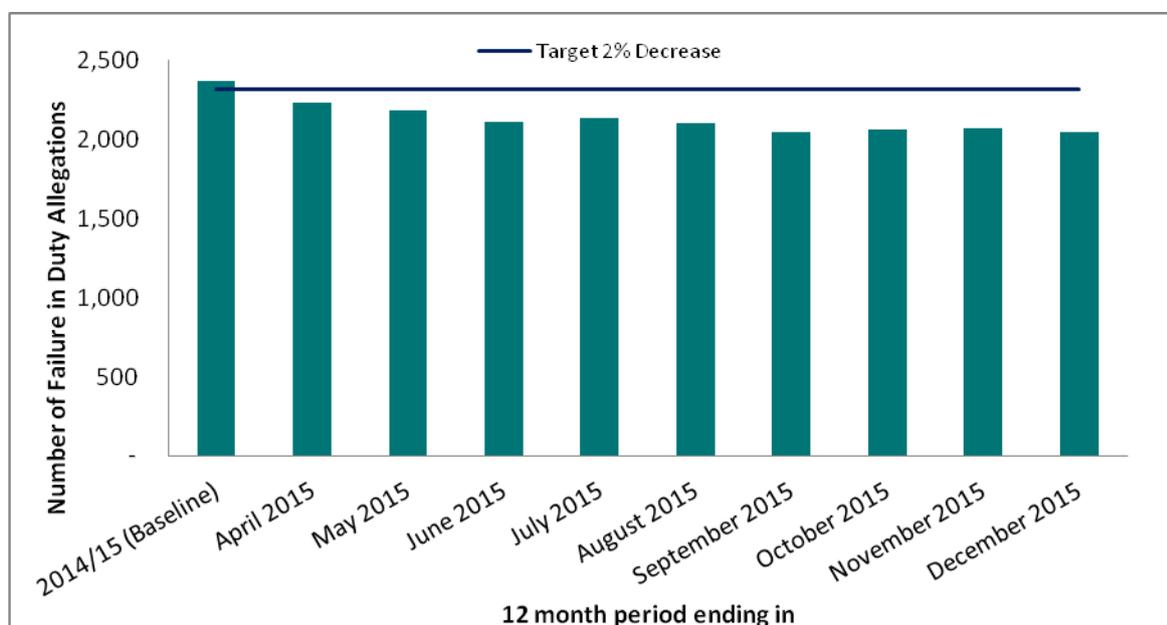
The targets refer to specific types of allegations made against the PSNI only and do not include allegations made against PSNI designated civilians or against any other organisation.

The baseline information for this target is based on the data produced for the Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2014/15' which was published in June 2015. Progress has been tracked on the number of allegations received in the 12 month period up to the most recent month.

To reduce by 2% the number of allegations of Failure in Duty

There were 2,365 allegations regarding the Failure in Duty of PSNI officers in 2014/15. In order to meet this target the number of allegations received has to be lower than 2,318. The PSNI are currently on track to meet or exceed this target this year (Figure 3).

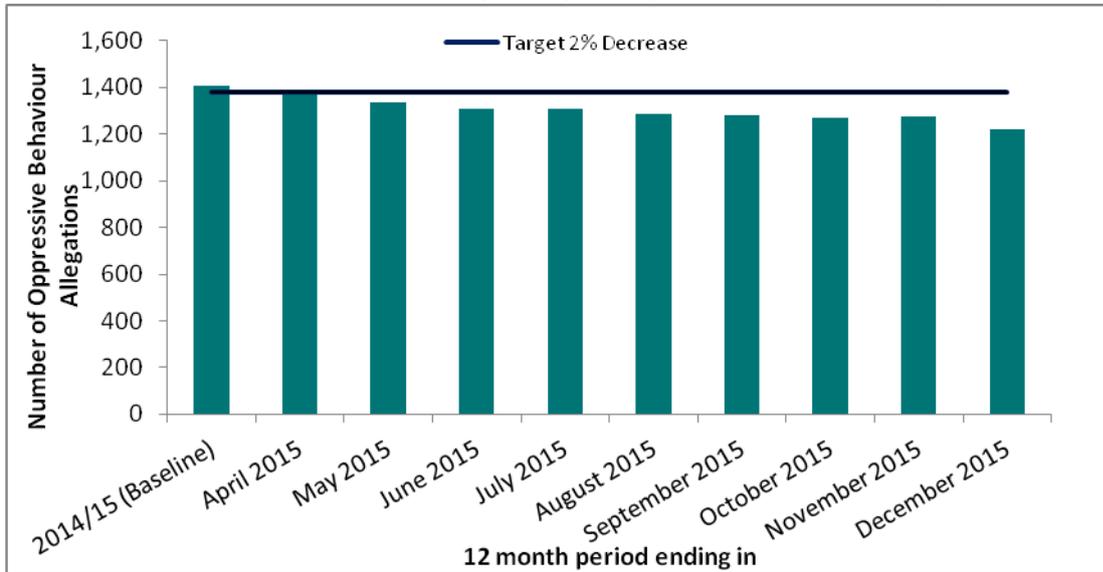
Figure 3: Progress on the Police Plan target to reduce the number of Failure in Duty allegations, from 2014/15 to the most recent 12 month period (January 2015 to December 2015)



To reduce by 2% the number of allegations of Oppressive Behaviour

There were 1,409 allegations regarding the Oppressive Behaviour of PSNI officers in 2014/15. In order to meet this target the number of allegations received has to be lower than 1,381. The PSNI are currently on track to meet or exceed this target this year (Figure 4).

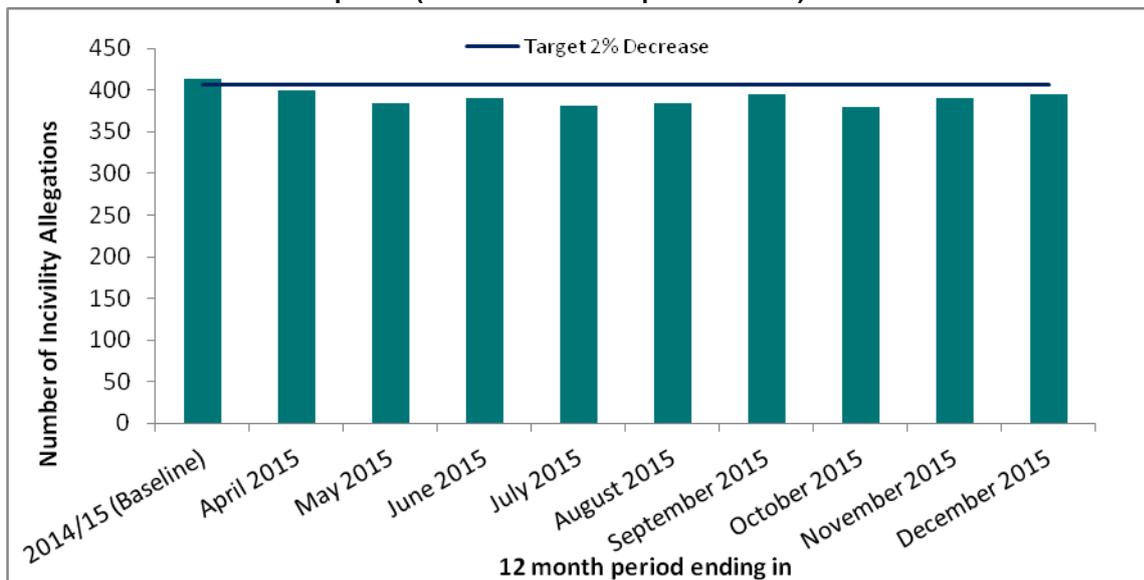
Figure 4: Progress on the Police Plan target to reduce the number of Oppressive Behaviour allegations, from 2014/15 to the most recent 12 month period (January 2015 to December 2015)



To reduce by 2% the number of allegations of Incivility

There were 414 allegations regarding the Incivility of PSNI officers in 2014/15. In order to meet this target the number of allegations received has to be lower than 406. The PSNI are currently on track to meet or exceed this target this year (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Progress on the Police Plan target to reduce the number of Incivility allegations, from 2014/15 to the most recent 12 month period (October 2014 to September 2015)



Additional Information

Data Use

The information presented in this document has been produced to meet the needs of our key users who need timely information on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office. The main users of this quarterly bulletin are the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI), the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). This statistical update is the outcome of consultation with these users, it gives them access to information that they can use to form discussions at their regular meetings.

Understanding the Statistics

There are a number of factors that may influence whether or not a person makes a complaint to the Police Ombudsman. It is important when drawing conclusions from the statistics not to take a simplistic view but to consider the following factors:

- The number and nature of police operations conducted;
- The performance of police officers;
- The level of interaction between the public and the police;
- The awareness of the Police Ombudsman's Office, knowledge of how to make a complaint, and public confidence in the Office;
- The size of the police service;
- Changes to the PSNI's or the Offices' procedures;
- The level of crime;
- The number of public order incidents; and
- Population demographics.

Care should be taken when comparing the number of complaints or allegations received at police district or police area level as some of the differences between areas may reflect variations in their composition, such as the degree of urbanization, level of deprivation and the balance between the resident population, day-time population and the night-time economy.

It is also important to note that the system is live and data may therefore be subject to future revisions.

Further information

A [user guide](#) has been published to give users of these statistics more knowledge about the complaints process, more information regarding the quality of the data and also a glossary of terms used. It is recommended that all users of these statistics should consult the user guide to aid their understanding of the statistics and ensure that they are using them appropriately.

Further information regarding the number of complaints and allegations received in 2014/15 is available in the [accompanying excel spreadsheet](#). This spreadsheet also includes the data for the figures and tables in this bulletin.

A more detailed break-down of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office over the last five years as well as presenting information on the outcomes of complaints is available in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2014/15', which is available on the Office's [website](#).

Additional geographic breakdowns of the types of complaints and allegations received and recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman is available on the [Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service \(NINIS\)](#).

If you would like information on other statistics published by the Police Ombudsman's Office please see the statistics and research page on the Police Ombudsman's [website](#).

Publication

This is the second year the Police Ombudsman's Office has published quarterly information on the number of complaints and allegations received. The Office will publish information in-year on a quarterly basis. This information will be published on the Police Ombudsman's website at 9:30am on the fourth Thursday of the month following the end of the quarter. A more detailed publication will be published at the end of the financial year concentrating on the trends in the number of complaints and allegations received over the last five years.

The next quarterly update is due to be published on Thursday 28th April 2016 and it will include statistics up to the 31st March 2016.

User Feedback

We continuously welcome your feedback or comments on the statistics released. If you would like to forward your views or to receive notifications of statistical releases please email your contact details to info@policeombudsman.org, further contact details are available on the back page of this bulletin.

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

Website: www.policeombudsman.org



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