

**BULLETIN:** February 2006

# Equality Monitoring Report

# Introduction

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was set up by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 in order to provide an impartial and independent system for investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland. The Office is committed to fulfilling the obligations laid upon it by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) (the “equality duties”). To help us achieve this we send every complainant a confidential self-completion questionnaire, asking for information relevant to the nine categories specified in Section 75. As we are committed to providing a service to all individuals and socio-economic groups within our society, we also ask questions on the additional category of employment status, as we consider this to be a reliable indicator of economic deprivation.

This report covers complaints made to the Office of the Police Ombudsman since it opened in November 2000 to 30 March 2005, during which time we recorded 14,064 complaints. Up until August 2004 the questionnaire included the categories of age, gender, marital status, religious belief, race, disability, sexual orientation, employment status and current or most recent job. Since August 2004 the categories of dependants and political opinion have been added.

By the end of March 2005 the Office had received back 4,028 completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of 28.6 per cent.

# Contents

**02**

Introduction

**04**

Summary

**06**

Gender & Age

**08**

Religious Belief /  
Community Background

**09**

Race or Ethnic Group

**10**

Marital Status

**11**

Disability

**12**

Employment

**14**

Political Opinion

**15**

Dependants

**15**

Sexual Orientation

# Summary

Complainants to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland were asked to complete monitoring questionnaires to enable the Office to capture data in relation to Section 75 categories, as well as employment, an indicator of social deprivation. Between November 2000 and March 2005 there were 14,064 complainants to the Office, of whom 4,028 (29 per cent) returned completed questionnaires. The main findings were:

## Gender and Age

- Seventy three per cent of complainants were male and 27 per cent female.
- More than two thirds of complainants were under 45 years old. Only 4 per cent were over 65.
- There was a general upward trend in the proportion of female complainants, from 23 per cent in 2000/01 to 29 per cent in 2004/05.
- Males were over-represented compared to the population generally. Males under 45 years old comprised 27 per cent of the population compared to 48 per cent of complainants.
- Young males were more likely to make allegations of oppressive behaviour while older males tended to make allegations of failures in duty.

## Religious Belief / Community Background

- Thirty eight per cent of complainants were Catholic, 21 per cent Church of Ireland, 24 per cent Presbyterian, 4 per cent Methodist, 8 per cent other, including other Christian, and 6 per cent reported that they were of 'no religion'.
- The proportion of Catholic complainants fell from 41 per cent in 2000/01 to 36 per cent in 2004/05. The proportion of complainants with no religious belief increased from less than one per cent to nine per cent.
- The community background profile of complainants was similar to the general population.
- Catholic complainants were more likely than complainants of other religious beliefs to make allegations of oppressive behaviour.

## Race or Ethnic Group

- Ninety-seven per cent of complainants were White and 0.5 per cent were Irish Travellers.
- The proportion of White complainants fell from 98 per cent in 2000/01 to 96 per cent in 2004/05.
- A higher proportion of complainants were from ethnic minorities compared to the NI census figure of one per cent.
- Allegations of racial discrimination comprised less than one per cent of those made by White complainants but seven per cent of those made by people from ethnic minority groups.

## Marital Status

- Forty-two per cent of complainants were married or living with a partner, 38 per cent were single, 19 per cent separated or divorced and 2 per cent widowed.
- The proportion of complainants who were single fell between 2000/01 and 2004/05, while the proportion who were married increased.
- A greater proportion of complainants were single or separated or divorced compared to the general population.
- Single, separated or co-habiting complainants were more likely to make allegations of oppressive behaviour than other complainants.

## Disability

- Twenty-eight per cent of complainants reported that they had a disability.
- Complainants reported a higher level of disability than found in public survey data.

## Employment

- Twenty-five per cent of complainants worked full time, 19 per cent were not working because of illness or disability, 18 per cent were unemployed, 11 per cent were self-employed, 7 per cent were caring for their family or home, 7 per cent were retired, 6 per cent were working part time, 4 per cent were students and 2 per cent otherwise employed.
- The proportion of complainants stating that they were unemployed fell steadily from 24 per cent in 2000/01 to 15 per cent in 2004/05. The proportion not working due to illness or disability also fell from 20 per cent to 17 per cent.
- More than four times the proportion of complainants compared to the general population were unemployed.
- The unemployed, those not working due to illness or disability and students were more likely than others to make allegations of oppressive behaviour.

## Political Opinion

- Twenty-six per cent of complainants supported the DUP, 8 per cent the UUP, 11 per cent the SDLP, 7 per cent Sinn Fein, 3 per cent the Alliance Party, 4 per cent others and 41 per cent supported no political party
- There were fewer Nationalist supporters among complainants compared to the 2003 Assembly election voting patterns.
- Nationalists were most likely to make allegations of oppressive behaviour. Those outside the Nationalist/ Unionist umbrella were more likely than others to make allegations of incivility.

## Dependants

- Forty-two per cent of complainants reported that they had dependants.
- Females were more likely than males to have dependants.
- The level of dependants amongst complainants overall was similar to the NI Continuous Household Survey finding.

## Sexual Orientation

- Fewer than one per cent of complainants reported that they were homosexual or gay.

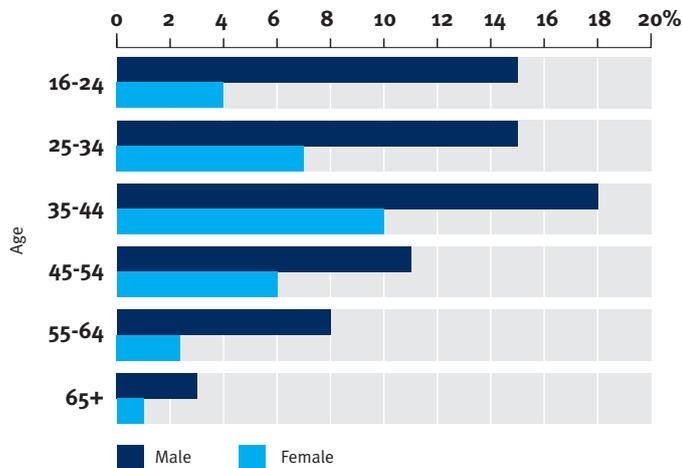
# Gender and Age

In addition to those respondents who declared their gender on the monitoring form, it was also possible to determine a majority of complainants' genders from their title or salutation, so that there was a total sample of 98 per cent for whom gender was known. Of that total, 73 per cent were male and 27 per cent were female.

Of the 4,028 respondents to the monitoring form, 3,969 declared their age, a sample of 28 per cent of all complainants. More than two thirds were under 45 years old; over a quarter (28 per cent) were aged 35-44, 22 per cent were aged 25-34 and 19 per cent were aged 16-24. Only 4 per cent of the sample were aged over 65.

An examination of the profile of complainants based on both gender and age shows that almost half were young men (Figure 1); 18 per cent were 35-44 year-old males, 15 per cent were 16-24 year-old males and 15 per cent were 25-34 year-old males. The largest proportion of females in the sample fell within the 35-44 age range (10 per cent).

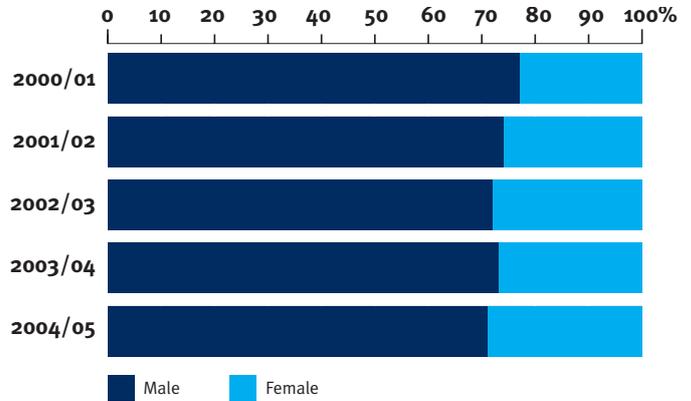
Figure 1: Complainants by Gender and Age Group



## Trends

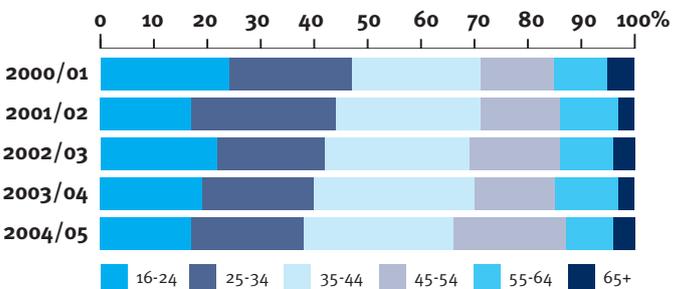
In 2000/01 males made up 77 per cent of complainants monitored and females comprised 23 per cent. There has been a general upward trend in the proportion of females, so that by 2004/05 this had increased to 29 per cent of complainants monitored (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Annual Trends by Gender



In terms of age group, the single biggest group has been 35-44 year-olds, with the proportion they represent increasing from 24 per cent in 2000/01 to 28 per cent in 2004/05 (Figure 3). The proportion of respondents aged 45-54 has also increased over the period, from 14 per cent in 2000/01 to 21 per cent in 2004/2005. The proportion aged 16-24 has fluctuated annually, showing a general downward trend, from 24 per cent in 2000/01 to 17 per cent in 2004/05.

Figure 3: Annual Trends by Age Group

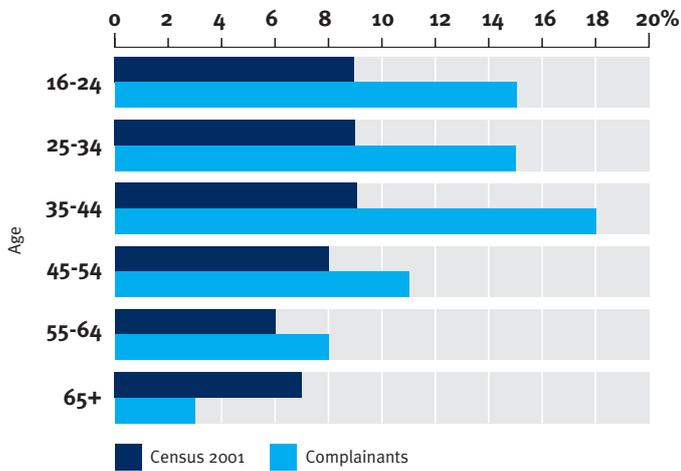


## Representativeness

The age and gender profile of complainants is different to that of the population generally, based on the 2001 census of population<sup>1</sup> (Figure 4).

<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Northern Ireland Census 2001, Key Statistics

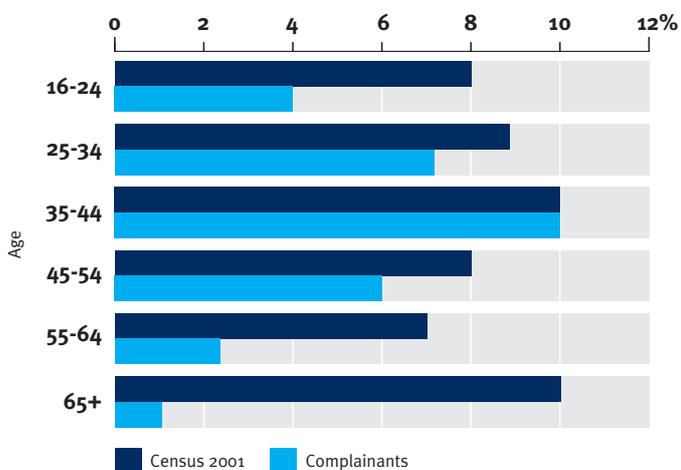
**Figure 4: Age Group (Males), Complainants and Census 2001**



Males are generally over-represented, and young males in particular are over-represented in the sample monitored. Whilst cumulatively males under the age of 45 make up just over a quarter (27 per cent) of the population, they comprise almost half (48 per cent) of complainants. Within the age bands presented the biggest differential is for 35-44 year-old men, who comprise 9 per cent of the population compared to 18 per cent of complainants.

Females are generally under-represented within complainants, comprising 52 per cent of the population compared to 30 per cent of complainants (Figure 5). The greatest differential is for older females; those aged over 65 comprise 10 per cent of the population compared to 1 per cent of complainants.

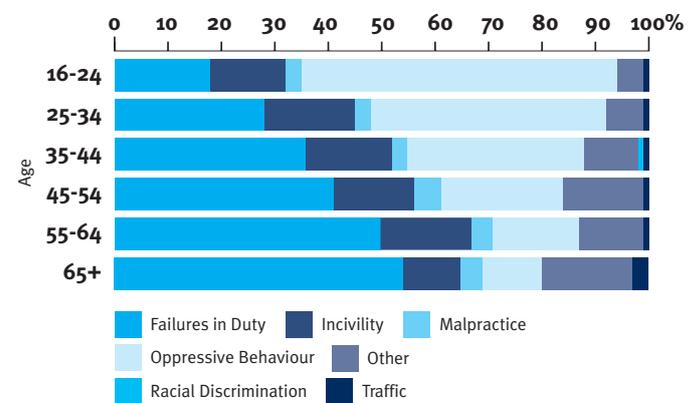
**Figure 5: Age Group (Females), Complainants and Census 2001**



## Allegations

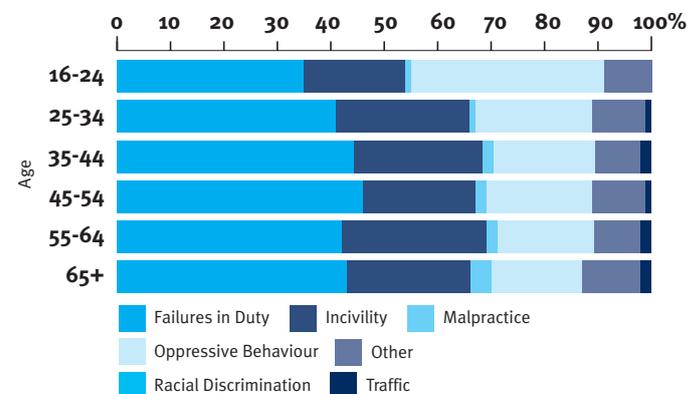
There were differences in the types of allegation made against officers by men and women of different age groups (Figures 6 and 7). Oppressive behaviour accounted for the greatest proportion of allegations made by both 16-24 year-old males (59 per cent) and 25-34 year-old males (44 per cent), followed by failures in duty. However, for each of the older male age groups the proportions of allegations of failures in duty were greater than the proportions of oppressive behaviour.

**Figure 6: Allegations by Age Group (Males)**



For females aged 16-24 the greatest proportions of allegations were almost evenly divided between oppressive behaviour (36 per cent) and failures in duty (35 per cent). For each of the older age groups, women were most likely to make allegations of failures in duty. Female complainants were more likely than male complainants to make allegations of incivility, which accounted for the second biggest proportion of allegations for all female age groups over 24.

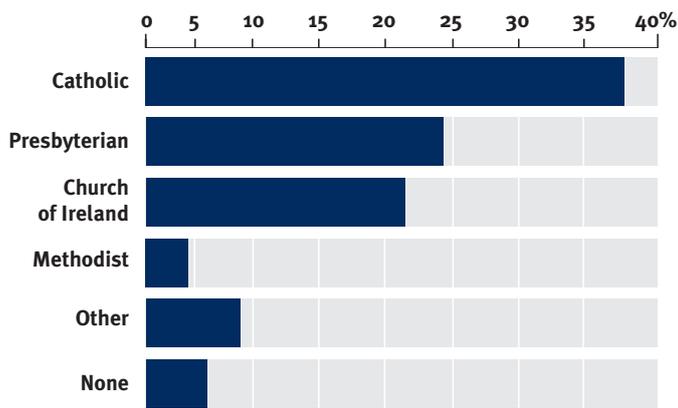
**Figure 7: Allegations by Age Group (Females)**



# Religious Belief / Community Background

Of the 4,028 complainants who returned forms, 3,980 declared their religious belief. This represents a sample of 28 per cent of all complainants. Of those 3,980, 38 per cent were Catholic, 21 per cent Church of Ireland, 24 per cent Presbyterian, 4 per cent Methodist, 8 per cent other, including other Christian, and 6 per cent reported that they were of 'no religion' (Figure 8).

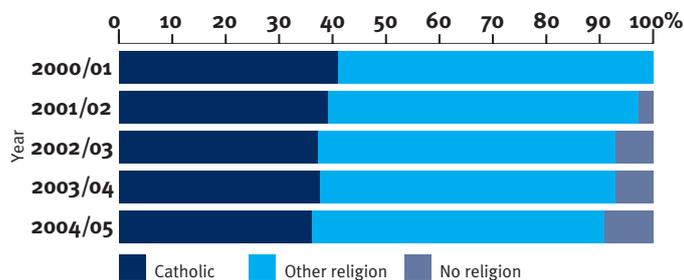
Figure 8: Complainants by Religious Belief



## Trends

In 2000/2001 the proportion of complainants who described themselves as Catholic was 41 per cent, other religious beliefs made up 59 per cent and those stating that they were of no religion represented less than 1 per cent. By 2004/05 the proportion that were Catholic had fallen to 36 per cent of complainants monitored, those of other religious beliefs had fallen to 54 per cent, while those with no religious beliefs had risen to make up 9 per cent (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Annual Trends by Religious Belief

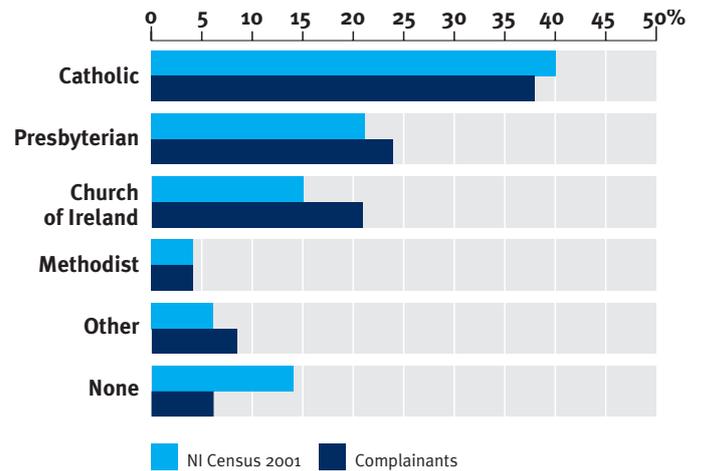


## Representativeness

The community background profile of complainants is quite similar to that of the population generally, based on the 2001 census of population (Figure 10). The most marked

difference was for people who stated that they were of no religious belief, who accounted for 14 per cent of the population, but only 6 per cent of complainants.

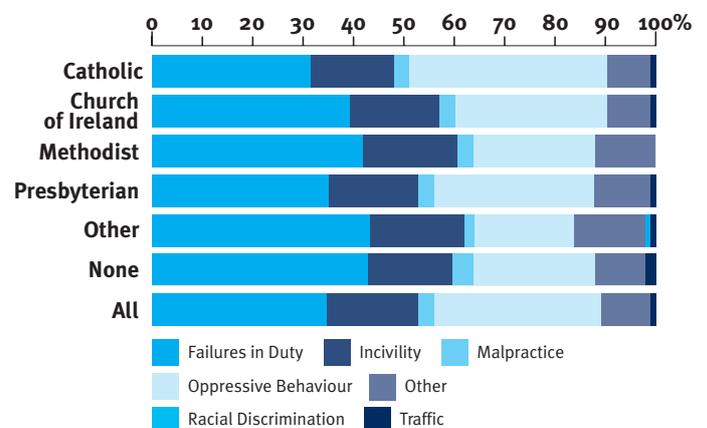
Figure 10: Religious Belief, Complainants and Census 2001



## Allegations

There was little difference in the types of allegation made against officers across the various religious beliefs monitored (Figure 11). Overall, the greatest proportion of allegations related to failures in duty (36 per cent), followed by oppressive behaviour (33 per cent) and incivility (18 per cent). This trend was common across religious beliefs, apart from Catholics, for whom the greatest proportion of allegations related to oppressive behaviour (39 per cent) and the second greatest was in relation to failures in duty (32 per cent). It is only within the category of 'other' religious beliefs that complaints of racial discrimination accumulate to make up one per cent of the total.

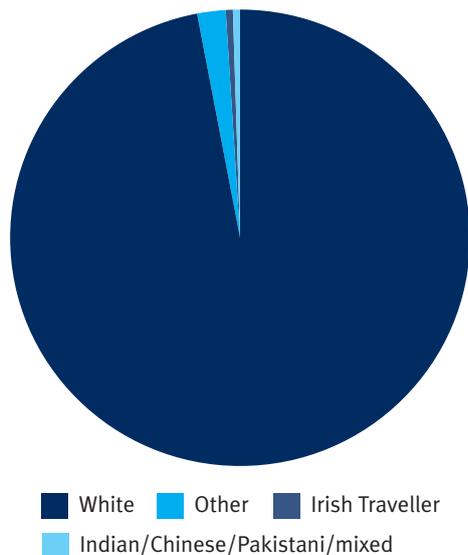
Figure 11: Allegations by Religious Belief



# Race or Ethnic Group

Of the 4,028 complainants who returned forms, 3,937 declared their racial or ethnic grouping. This represents a sample of 28 per cent of all complainants. Of those 3,937, 97 per cent described themselves as White (Figure 12). Two per cent of respondents were from 'other' ethnic groups and about half of the remaining one per cent were Irish Travellers.

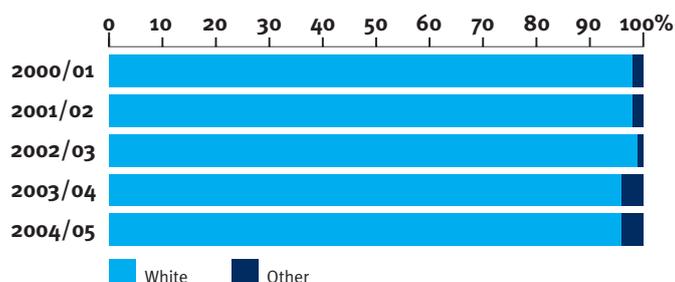
**Figure 12: Complainants by Ethnic Group**



## Trends

In 2000/2001 the proportion of complainants who described themselves as White comprised 98 per cent of those monitored. By 2002/03 this had increased to 99 per cent. However, in 2003/04 and 2004/05 the proportion fell to 96 per cent (Figure 13). Whilst every effort is made within the Office to monitor according to the main racial groups in Northern Ireland, the majority of the non-White respondents to the monitoring described themselves as belonging to 'other' race or ethnic groupings.

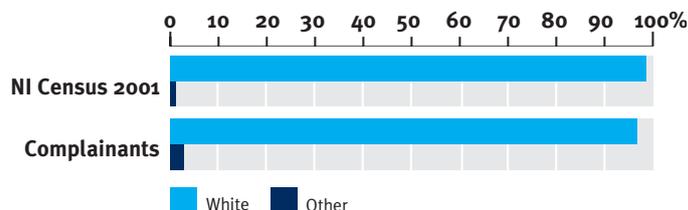
**Figure 13: Annual Trends by Ethnic Group**



## Representativeness

Because of the relatively small proportions of non-White racial groupings in Northern Ireland and the small numbers of complainants involved, it is not possible to do a reliable comparison of the racial profile of complainants against the population generally. However, one general observation is that there appears to be a greater proportion of complainants who are not White than one would expect from the general population, based on census figures (Figure 14). However, this observation should be interpreted with caution, as the differential may be a result of a census undercount of non-White residents rather than a higher propensity for them to make complaints against the police.

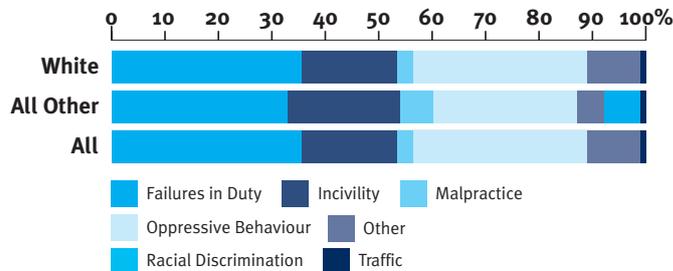
**Figure 14: Ethnic Group, Complainants and Census 2001**



## Allegations

There were some small differences in the types of allegation made against officers by White and by minority ethnic complainants monitored (Figure 15). Overall, the greatest proportion of allegations made by both White and by minority ethnic complainants was related to failures in duty (36 per cent and 33 per cent respectively), followed by oppressive behaviour (33 per cent and 27 per cent respectively). Allegations of racial discrimination comprised fewer than one per cent of allegations made by White complainants, but accounted for seven per cent of those made by complainants from ethnic minorities.

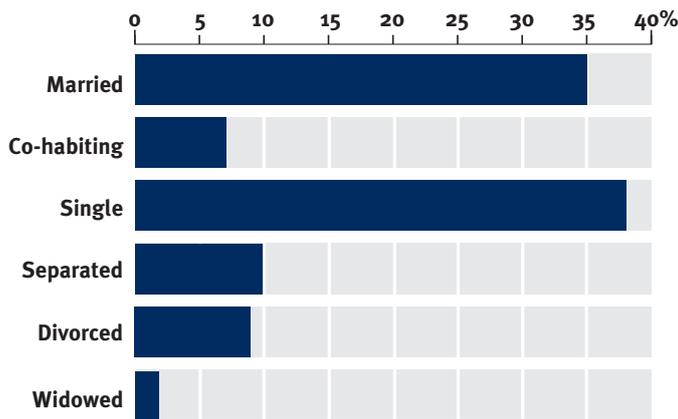
**Figure 15: Allegations by Ethnic Group**



# Marital Status

Of the 4,028 complainants who returned forms, 4,006 declared their marital status. This represents a sample of 28 per cent of all complainants. Of those 4,006, 35 per cent were married, 7 per cent were living with a partner, 38 per cent were single 10 per cent were separated, 9 per cent were divorced and 2 per cent were widowed (Figure 16).

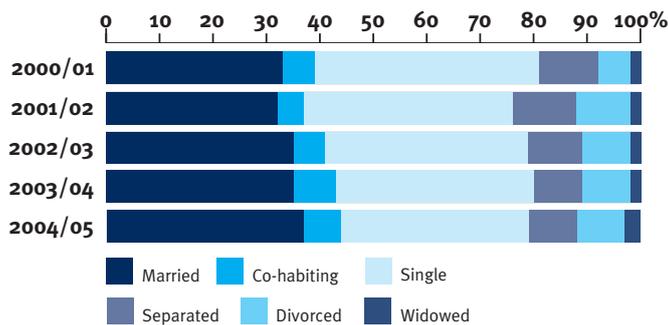
Figure 16: Complainants by Marital Status



## Trends

In 2000/2001 the proportion of complainants who were single accounted for 42 per cent of complainants monitored. This decreased over the following four years, making up 35 per cent in 2004/2005. The proportion of complainants who were married increased from 33 per cent to 37 per cent over the same period (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Annual Trends by Marital Status

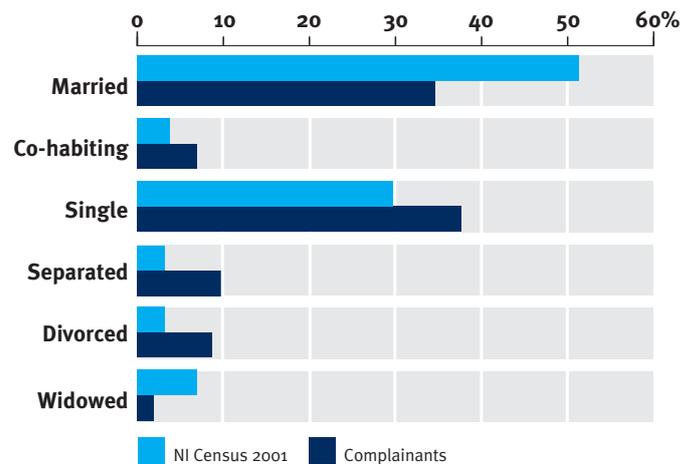


## Representativeness

The marital status profile of complainants is not what would be expected from the population profile based on the 2001 census (Figure 18). There is a greater proportion of single complainants (38 per cent) compared to the population generally (30 per cent). The proportions of complainants who

were separated (ten per cent) or divorced (nine per cent) were also higher than the census figures (three per cent in each category). Married people are therefore under-represented among complainants (35 per cent) compared to the population generally (52 per cent). These findings are probably related to the age profile of complainants described above.

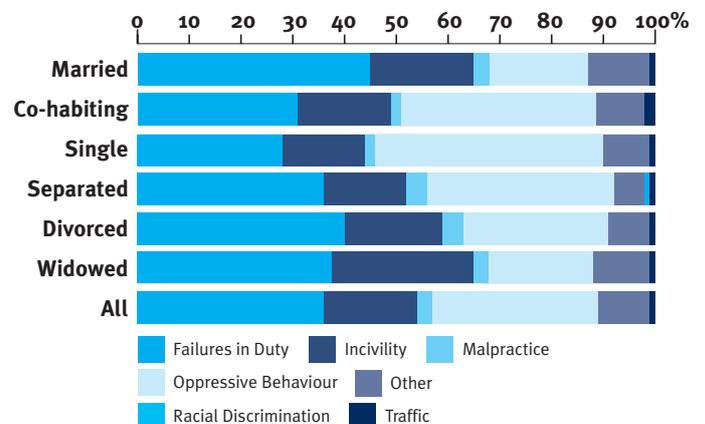
Figure 18: Marital Status, Complainants and Census 2001



## Allegations

There were some differences in the types of allegation made against officers depending on the marital status of complainants (Figure 19). While the greatest proportion of allegations overall was related to failures in duty (36 per cent), the greatest proportions of allegations made by single (44 per cent), separated (36 per cent) and co-habiting complainants (38 per cent) related to oppressive behaviour. Again these findings could be related to the age profile of complainants described above.

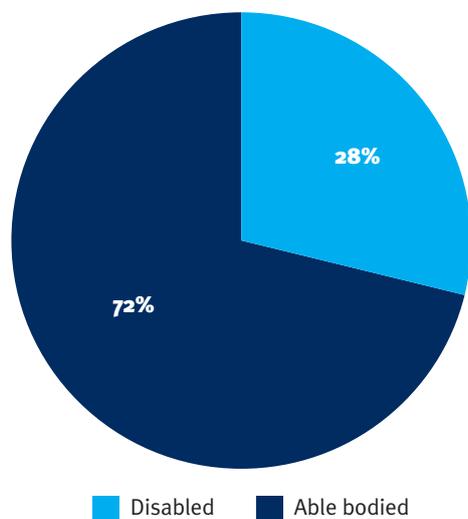
Figure 19: Allegations by Marital Status



# Disability

Disability is a complex concept and there are a number of ways of defining it. For monitoring purposes we provided respondents with a description of disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and asked whether or not they considered themselves to be disabled. Of the 4,028 complainants who returned forms, 3,916 declared their disability status. This represents a sample of 28 per cent of all complainants. Of those 3,916, 28 per cent stated that they had a disability and 72 per cent stated that they did not (Figure 20).

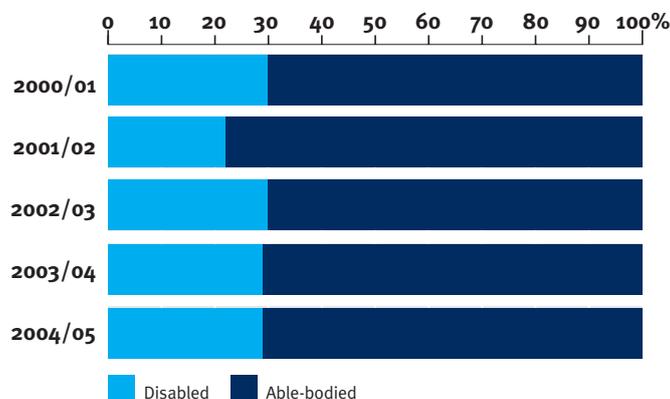
**Figure 20: Complainants by Disability**



## Trends

In 2000/2001 the proportion of complainants who described themselves as disabled was 30 per cent. This proportion stayed close to this level over the following four years, fluctuating between 29 per cent and 30 per cent, apart from during 2001/02, when 22 per cent of complainants stated that they had a disability (Figure 21).

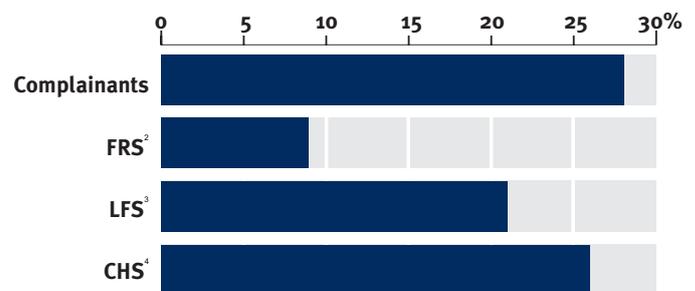
**Figure 21: Annual Trends by Disability**



## Representativeness

There is no one definitive accepted measure of the level of disability in Northern Ireland. A number of government departments have estimated the level based on survey or administrative data, depending on their particular policy needs. The level of 28 per cent reported by complainants is quite high compared to Northern Ireland wide surveys; the Family Resources Survey (FRS)<sup>2</sup> estimated nine per cent of adults to be permanently sick or disabled, the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey (LFS)<sup>3</sup> found 21 per cent of respondents (from the working age population) self-reported as disabled and the NI Continuous Household Survey (CHS)<sup>4</sup> estimated that 26 per cent of adults are disabled (Figure 22).

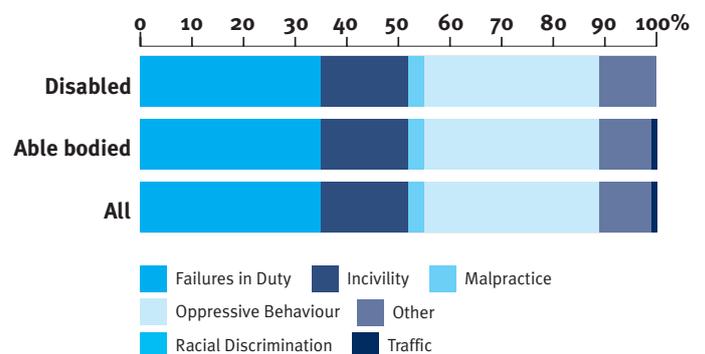
**Figure 22: Disability, Complainants and Survey Measures**



## Allegations

There was no difference in the types of allegation made against officers between respondents with and without disabilities (Figure 23).

**Figure 23: Allegations by Disabled Status**



<sup>2</sup> Department of Social Development, Family Resources Survey 2002/03

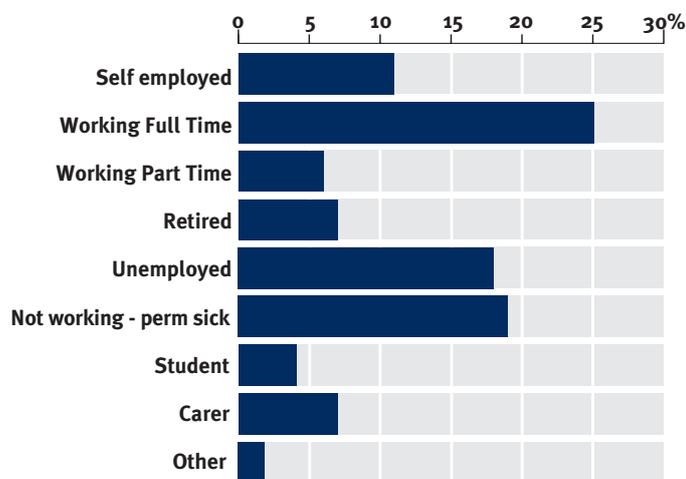
<sup>3</sup> Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Labour Force Survey Dec-Feb 2004/05

<sup>4</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Continuous Household Survey 2002/03

# Employment

Of the 4,028 complainants who returned forms, 3,937 declared their employment status. This represents a sample of 28 per cent of all complainants. Of those 3,937, 25 per cent were full time employed, 19 per cent were not working because they were sick, 18 per cent were unemployed, 11 per cent were self employed, 7 per cent were caring for their family or home, 7 per cent were retired, 6 per cent were part-time employed, 4 per cent were students, and 2 per cent were otherwise employed (Figure 24).

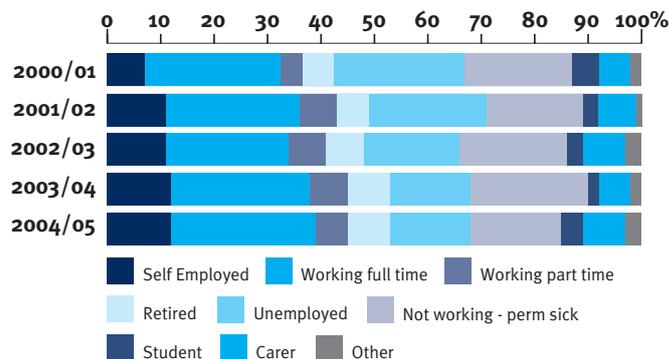
Figure 24: Complainants by Employment Status



## Trends

The proportion of complainants who described themselves as unemployed fell steadily from 24 per cent in 2000/01 to 15 per cent in 2004/05. The proportions who were not working because they were permanently sick also fell over the period, from 20 per cent to 17 per cent. There was an increase from seven per cent to 12 per cent in the proportion who were self-employed (Figure 25).

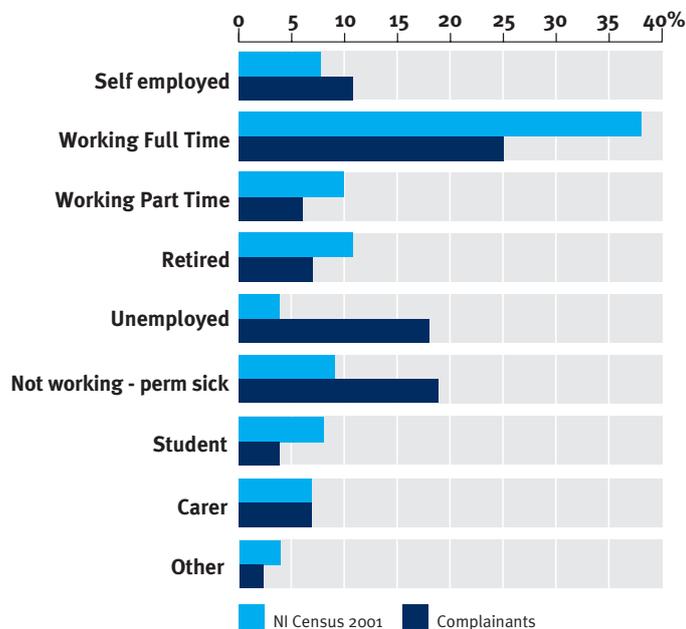
Figure 25: Annual Trends by Employment Status



### Representativeness

The profile of the employment status of complainants is somewhat different to that of the population generally, based on the 2001 census of population (Figure 26). The most marked difference was for unemployed people, who accounted for 4 per cent of the population compared to 18 per cent of complainants. Related to this, complainants are less likely to be working full time (25 per cent) or part time (6 per cent) compared to the general population (38 per cent and 10 per cent respectively). Complainants are also more likely to be out of work due to illness or disability (19 per cent compared to 9 per cent).

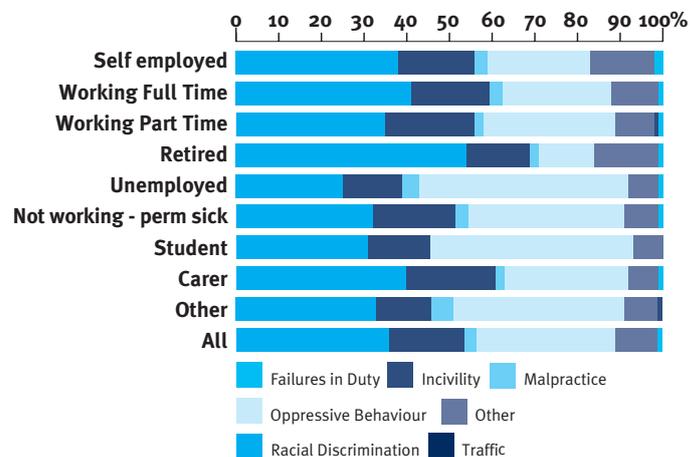
Figure 26: Employment Status, Complainants and Census 2001



### Allegations

There were some differences in the types of allegation made against officers according to the employment status of the complainant (Figure 27). Overall, the greatest proportions of allegations related to failures in duty (36 per cent), oppressive behaviour (33 per cent) and incivility (18 per cent). This trend was common across groups, although for people who were unemployed (49 per cent), sick or disabled (36 per cent), students (47 per cent) or who were otherwise employed (40 per cent) the proportions of allegations of oppressive behaviour were greater than those of failures in duty.

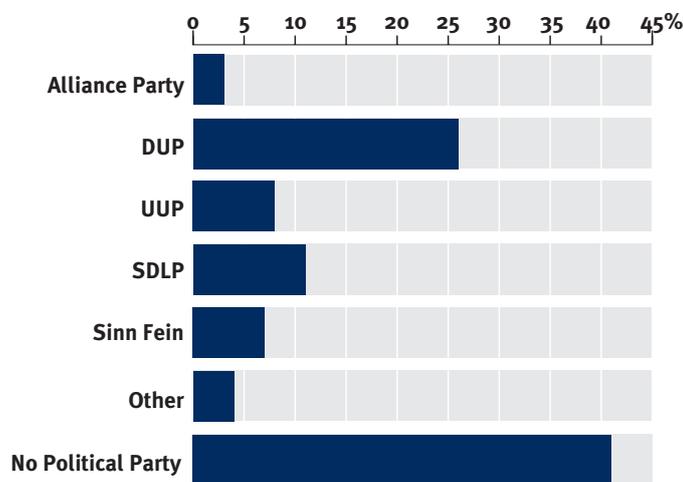
Figure 27: Allegations by Employment Status



# Political Opinion

A question on political opinion was added to the complainant monitoring form in August 2004. By the end of March 2005, 482 complainants who returned forms had answered this question. This represents a sample of 3 per cent of all complainants. Of those 482, 3 per cent supported the Alliance Party, 26 per cent supported the DUP, 8 per cent supported the UUP, 11 per cent supported the SDLP, 7 per cent supported Sinn Fein, 4 per cent supported other parties and 41 per cent declared that they did not support any political party (Figure 28).

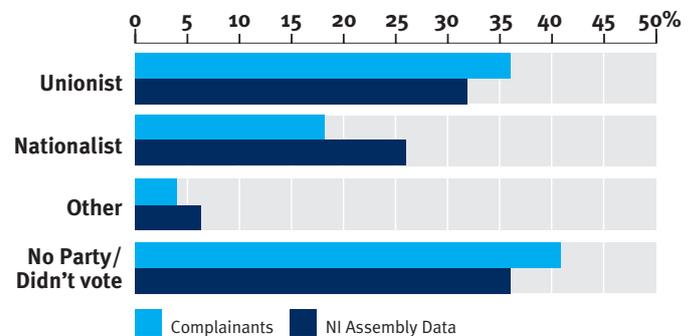
Figure 28: Complainants by Political Opinion



## Representativeness

In terms of the Unionist/Nationalist breakdown, the political opinion profile of complainants is quite similar to that of the population generally, based on voting patterns to the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2003<sup>5</sup> (Figure 29). The proportion of Unionist complainants (36 per cent) was close to the proportion of votes cast for unionist parties in the 2003 Assembly elections (32 per cent). The proportion of Nationalist complainants (18 per cent) is smaller than might be expected compared to the votes cast (26 per cent). The proportions of other parties supported are quite similar; four per cent of complainants compared to six per cent of votes cast. A slightly higher proportion of complainants (41 per cent) stated that they supported no political party, compared to the proportion of the eligible electorate who did not vote in the election (36 per cent).

Figure 29: Political Opinion, Complainants and Northern Ireland Assembly Data

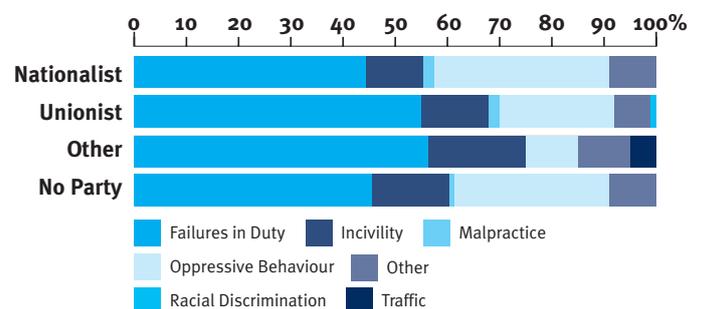


## Allegations

There were some small differences in the types of allegation made against officers according to the political opinion stated (Figure 30). Overall, the greatest proportion of allegations was related to failures in duty (36 per cent), followed by oppressive behaviour (33 per cent) and incivility (18 per cent). This trend was common across all groups, apart from those who supported other parties outside the Nationalist/ Unionist umbrellas, where a greater proportion (19 per cent) made allegations of incivility than oppressive behaviour (10 per cent).

While the overall trends were common across groups, the proportions varied. Nationalists (33 per cent) were more likely than Unionists (22 per cent) or others (10 per cent) to make allegations of oppressive behaviour and other party supporters (57 per cent) were more likely than Unionists (55 per cent) or Nationalists (44 per cent) to make allegations of failures in duty.

Figure 30: Allegations by Political Opinion

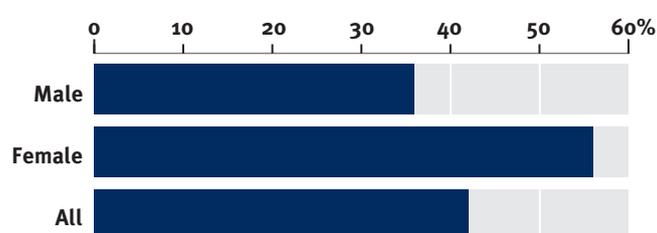


<sup>5</sup> Electoral Office, 2003 Northern Ireland Assembly Elections

# Dependants

A question on dependants was added to the complainant monitoring form in August 2004. By the end of March 2005, 633 complainants who returned forms had answered this question. This represents a sample of five per cent of all complainants. Of those 633, 42 per cent stated that they had dependants and 58 per cent stated that they did not. Female complainants (56 per cent) were much more likely than male complainants (36 per cent) to state that they had dependants (Figure 31). Most complainants stated that their dependants were spouses/partners and children or elderly parents or relatives. However, a number described their dependants as friends or members of their community.

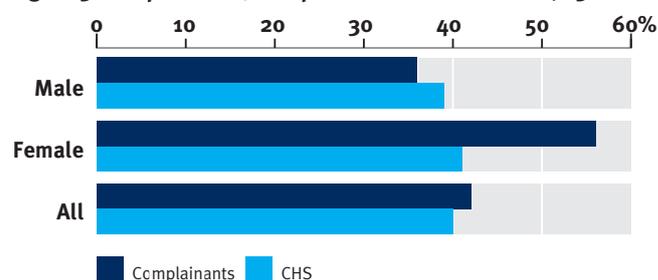
**Figure 31: Complainants by Dependents**



## Representativeness

There is no one definitive accepted measure of the number of individuals in Northern Ireland who have dependants. A number of government departments have estimated the level based on survey or administrative data, depending on their particular policy needs. The Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey (CHS) estimated that 40 per cent of adults have dependant children (39 per cent of males and 41 per cent of females), which is very close to the 42 per cent overall figure estimated by the monitoring data. This will not, however, cover all dependants, including other relatives, friends, neighbours etc., which the complainant data capture and this may account to some degree for the gender differences found (Figure 32).

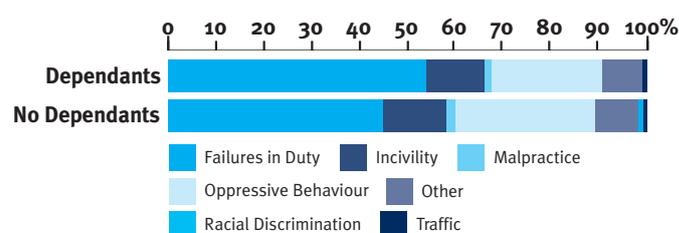
**Figure 32: Dependents, Complainants and CHS 2002/03**



## Allegations

There were some small differences in the types of allegation made against officers according to whether or not the complainant had dependants (Figure 33). Overall, the greatest proportion of allegations was related to failures in duty (36 per cent), followed by oppressive behaviour (33 per cent) and incivility (18 per cent). This trend was common across both groups, with 50 per cent of those with dependants and 44 per cent of those without dependants making allegations of failures in duty. However, 27 per cent of persons without dependants made allegations of oppressive behaviour compared to 21 per cent of those with dependants. As noted earlier, this may be related to the age profile of complainants described above.

**Figure 33: Percentage of Allegations by Dependents Status**



# Sexual Orientation

Overall, less than one per cent of complainants declared that they were homosexual or gay. Due to the small numbers involved it has not been possible to analyse these cases for the purposes of this report.



**Additional copies of this and other publications are available from:**

Policy and Practice Directorate  
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland  
New Cathedral Buildings  
St. Anne's Square  
11 Church Street  
Belfast  
BT1 1PG

**Telephone:** 028 9082 8648

**Fax:** 028 9082 8605

**Email:** [research@policeombudsman.org](mailto:research@policeombudsman.org)

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

Website: [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org)