



Annual Survey Results:

Public Awareness of the Police
Complaints System in Northern
Ireland, 2019



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INTRODUCTION

This statistical report presents the findings from the Police Ombudsman's module in the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey, 2019. The results from the survey are used to monitor public awareness and confidence in the Police Ombudsman's Office.

The Office has been monitoring the public's awareness and confidence in it since 2000. From 2000 to 2017 it was measured through a survey module in the Northern Statistical and Research Agency's (NISRA) Omnibus Survey. Since 2018 it has been measured by a survey module in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey which is jointly conducted by Queens University and Ulster University.

This is an Official Statistics publication. It has been produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics which means the statistics are produced to a high standard in-line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and are free from political interference.

THE LIFE AND TIMES SURVEY

This survey was launched by University of Ulster and Queen's University of Belfast in the autumn of 1998. Its mission is to monitor the attitudes and behaviour of people in Northern Ireland annually, to provide a time-series and a public record of how attitudes and behaviour develop on a wide range of social policy issues. The survey is run on a modular format and aims to provide a local resource for use by the general public and a data source for public and academic debate.

A summary of the technical notes can be found in Appendix 2 of this report. The full technical notes are published by NILT on their website.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the results from the Police Ombudsman's module in the 2019 NILT survey. The results are used to monitor the performance of the Office against some of the indicators in the Office's balanced scorecard.

The survey was conducted between September 2019 and February 2020. The Police Ombudsman's module has five questions and the results for each question have been presented by age group, gender and religion. Along with a comparison from the previous year. If you require a breakdown by another Section 75 category this is available on the [NILT website](#).

It should be noted that a larger proportion of the respondents answer the questions with "don't know" in the NILTS than in the previous Omnibus Survey. For this reason, the "don't know" answers have been excluded from the analysis for the results from the NILT surveys.

Percentages in the tables may not add to 100% due to rounding. Unweighted base numbers within the tables will vary due to the exclusions of "don't know" responses.

Statistical significance tests have been carried out on the findings and differences are reported where they have been found to be statistically significant at the 5% ($p < 0.05$) level of probability (two tailed). This means that for any observed result that is found to be statistically significant one can be 95% confident that this has not happened by chance.

The results from this year's survey will be published in an excel spreadsheet (Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet 2019) a few weeks after this publication and the results from the previous Omnibus surveys are available in a different excel spreadsheet (Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet Omnibus Data up to 2017).

We are always keen to receive feedback on all our statistical publications. If you have any feedback or comments on this report we would like to hear them, our contact details are on the back page of this report.

TARGET MONITORING

The results are used by the Office to measure performance against three targets in its Balanced Scorecard, in the “To enhance knowledge and understanding of the complaints system amongst key stakeholders” section. This year the Office achieved all of these targets.

The three targets and results are provided below:

To maintain a level of at least 80% public awareness of the Office

This target was met as 86% of respondents had heard of the Police Ombudsman.

To maintain a level of at least 80% awareness of the independence of the Office

This target was met as 88% of respondents that had heard of the Police Ombudsman were aware that the Office is independent from the police.

To maintain a level of at least 80% confidence that the Office deals with complaints in an impartial way

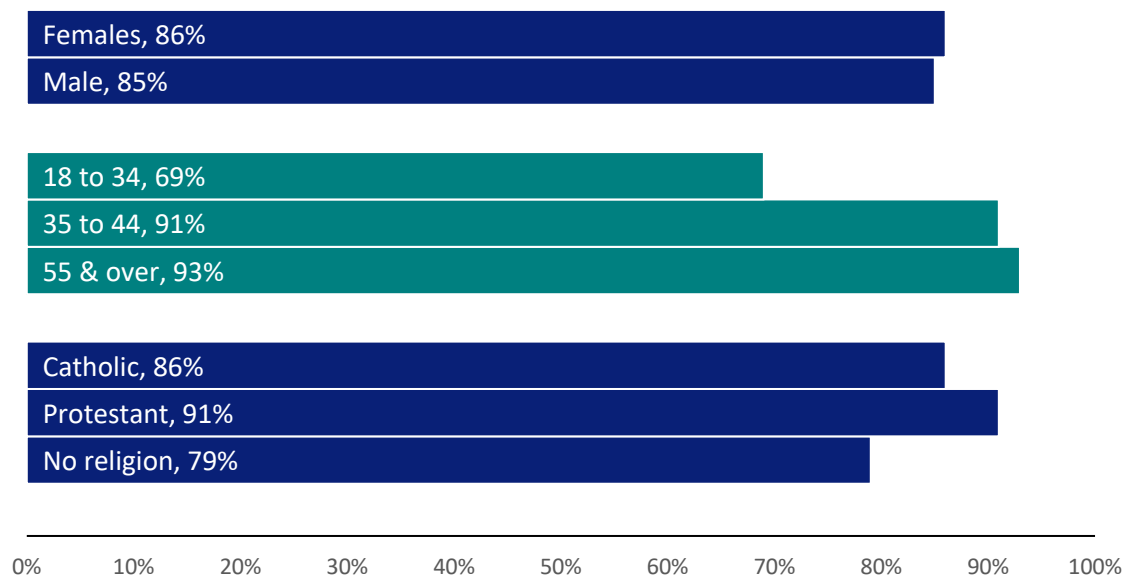
This target was met as 85% of respondents that had heard of the Police Ombudsman were confident that complaints are dealt with in an impartial way.

SURVEY RESULTS:

AWARENESS OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN

During 2019, 86% of respondents stated that they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. This is the same result as for 2018.

Figure 1: Awareness of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2019, by Gender, Age Group and Religion



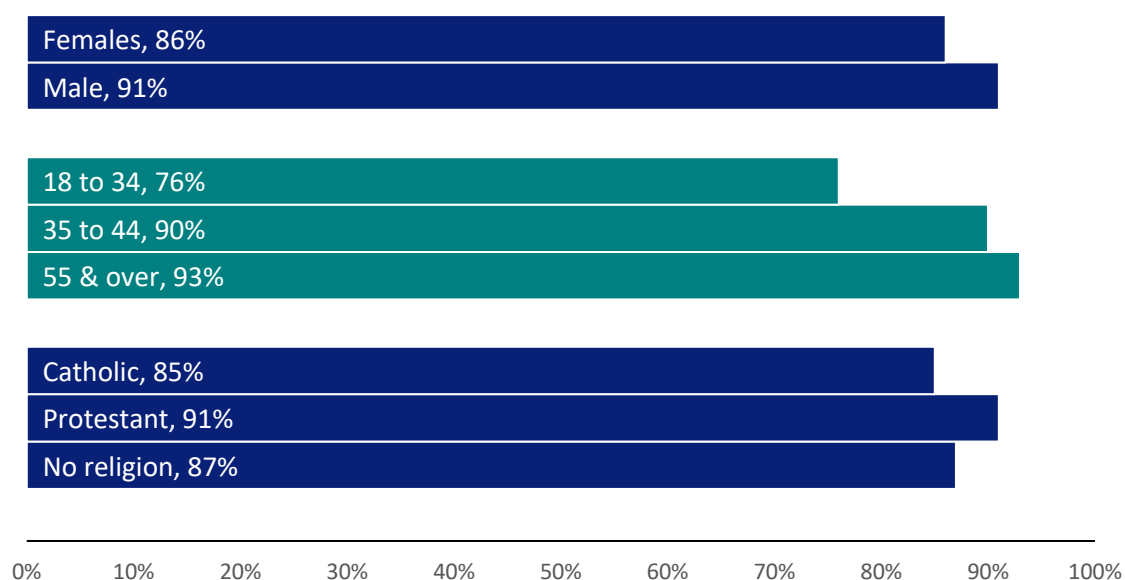
Males and females had similar awareness levels of the Office. The results also showed that respondents aged 35 and over were more likely to have heard about the Office than those aged under 35. The results differ between the three religion groups; Protestant respondents were the most likely to have heard of the Office and respondents who reported not having a religion were least likely to have heard about the Office.

The following results in this report are based solely on respondents who reported they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

INDEPENDENCE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN

During 2019, 88% of respondents that had heard of the Office were aware it is independent from the police. This is the same result as in 2018.

Figure 2: Perception of independence of the Police Ombudsman, 2019, by Gender, Age Group and Religion

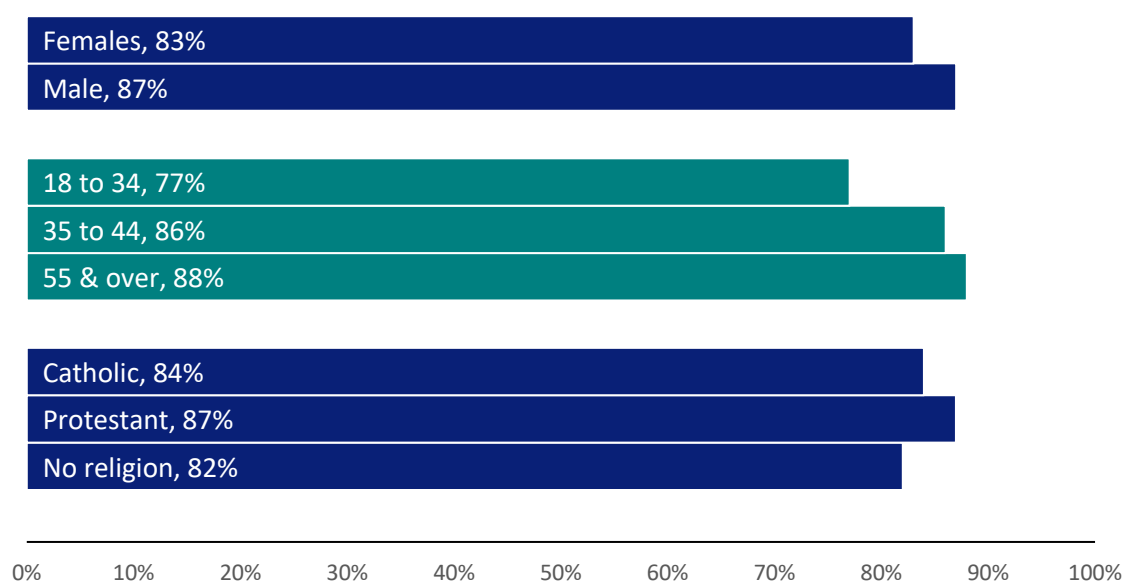


Males were more likely than females to be aware that the Office is independent from police. The results by age group show that those aged 35 and over were more likely to be aware of its independence than those aged under 35. The results between the religion categories were similar.

IMPARTIALITY OF INVESTIGATION

During 2019, 85% of respondents who had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland were confident that complaints are dealt with in an impartial way. This has increased from 80% last year (2018).

Figure 3: Confidence that complaints are dealt with in an impartial way, 2019, by Gender, Age Group and Religion

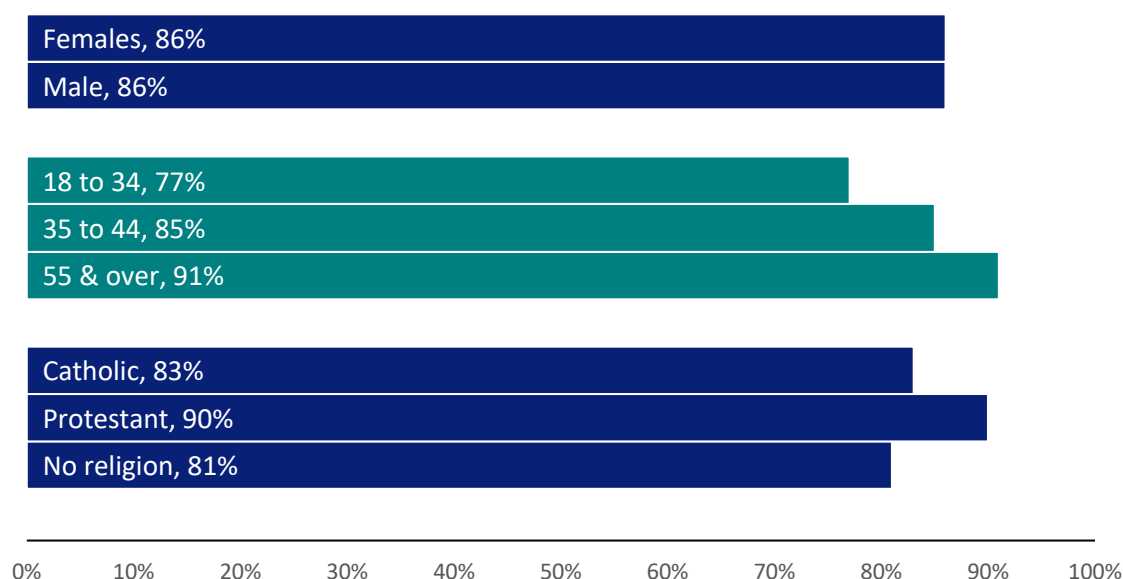


The results were similar between males and females. There was a difference between the results for those in the youngest and oldest age groups; those aged 55 and over were more likely than those aged under 34 to have confidence that complaints are dealt with impartially. The results between the three religion categories were similar.

FAIRNESS OF TREATMENT

During 2019, 86% of respondents that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland thought they would be treated fairly if they made a complaint. This is an increase from 81% during 2018.

Figure 4: Perception of being treated fairly if they made a complaint, 2019, by Gender, Age Group and Religion

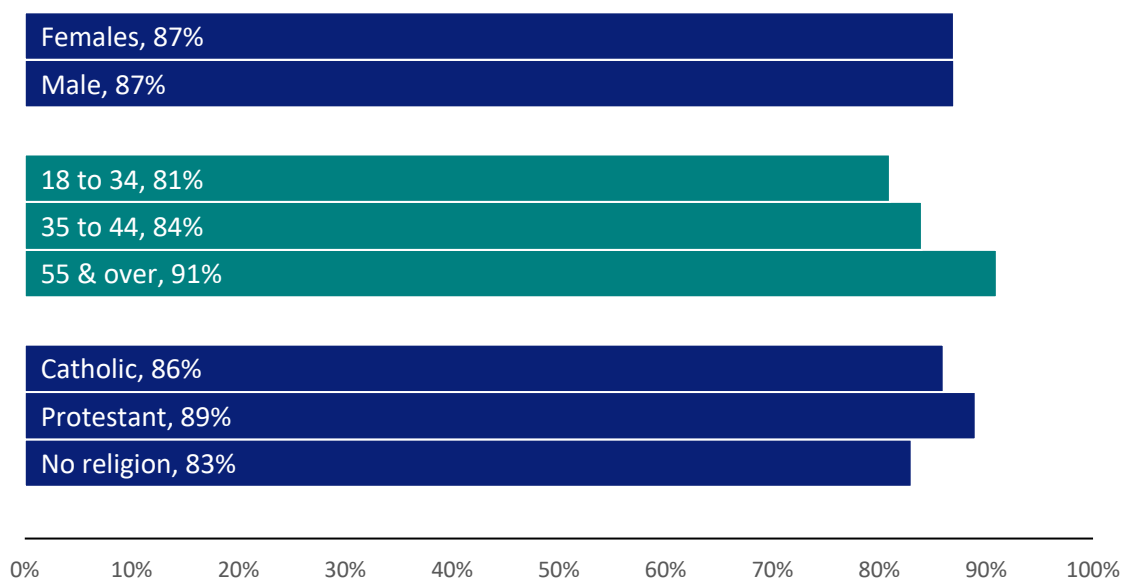


The results were the same between males and females. There was a difference between the results for the youngest age group and the oldest; respondents aged 55 and over were more likely to feel that they would be treated fairly if they made a complaint than respondents aged under 35. There were also differences in the results between the three religion categories; Protestants were more likely to think they would be treated fairly if they were to make a complaint than Catholics and those who reported having no religion.

EFFECT OF POLICE OMBUDSMAN ON POLICING

During 2019, 87% of respondents who had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland thought that it helped ensure that the police do a good job. This has increased from 82% during 2018.

Figure 5: Perception the Police Ombudsman helps ensure police do a good job, 2019, by Gender, Age Group and Religion



The results were the same for males and females. They also showed differences between the three age groups; respondents aged 55 and over were more likely to think the Police Ombudsman helped ensure the police did a good job than respondents in the two younger age groups. The results between the three religion categories were similar.

APPENDIX 1: TABLES OF RESULTS¹

Table 1: Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland?, 2019, by gender, age group and religion

	All	Gender		Age Group			Religion		
		Females	Males	18 to 34	35 to 44	55 & over	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
Aware	86%	86%	85%	69%	91%	93%	86%	91%	79%
Not aware	14%	14%	15%	31%	9%	7%	14%	9%	21%
Number of survey respondents (unweighted)	1,190	649	541	293	324	573	389	496	242

Table 2: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is part of the police or independent from the police?, 2019, by gender, age group and religion

	All	Gender		Age Group			Religion		
		Females	Males	18 to 34	35 to 44	55 & over	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
Part of the police	12%	14%	9%	24%	10%	7%	15%	9%	13%
Independent from the police	88%	86%	91%	76%	90%	93%	85%	91%	87%
Number of survey respondents (unweighted)	921	476	445	184	271	466	308	398	180

Base: respondents who reported that they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

¹ These tables and trend information are available in the accompanying excel spreadsheet on the Police Ombudsman's website which will be published a few weeks after this report.

Table 3: How confident are you that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland deals with complaints against the police in an impartial way?, 2019, by gender, age group and religion

	All	Gender		Age Group			Religion		
		Females	Males	18 to 34	35 to 44	55 & over	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
Very confident	33%	32%	33%	31%	30%	36%	28%	35%	34%
Fairly confident	52%	51%	54%	47%	56%	53%	56%	51%	48%
Confident subtotal	85%	83%	87%	77%	86%	88%	84%	87%	82%
Not very confident	12%	14%	9%	19%	11%	9%	12%	11%	15%
Not at all confident	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%
Not confident subtotal	15%	17%	13%	23%	14%	12%	16%	13%	18%
Number of survey respondents (unweighted)	873	456	417	169	254	450	285	391	166

Base: respondents who reported that they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Table 4: If you were to make a complaint against a police officer to the Police Ombudsman, do you think that you would be treated fairly?, 2019, by gender, age group and religion

	All	Gender		Age Group			Religion		
		Females	Males	18 to 34	35 to 44	55 & over	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
Yes	86%	86%	86%	77%	85%	91%	83%	90%	81%
No	14%	14%	14%	23%	15%	9%	17%	10%	19%
Number of survey respondents (unweighted)	847	449	398	163	250	434	269	388	157

Base: respondents who reported that they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Table 5: Do you think that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job?, 2019, by gender, age group and religion

	All	Gender		Age Group			Religion		
		Females	Males	18 to 34	35 to 44	55 & over	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
Yes	87%	87%	87%	81%	84%	91%	86%	89%	83%
No	13%	13%	13%	19%	16%	9%	14%	11%	17%
Number of survey respondents (unweighted)	805	431	374	153	242	410	254	374	149

Base: respondents who reported that they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

APPENDIX 2: TECHNICAL NOTES

This technical information has been provided by ARK for the NILT 2019 survey and the full technical notes are available on their website (www.ark.ac.uk/nilt).

The survey involved 1,203 face-to-face interviews with adults aged 18 years or over. The main interview was carried out using computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) and the respondent was then asked to complete a self-completion questionnaire. All of the five questions in the Police Ombudsman's module were asked face to face.

All interviews were conducted by Ipsos MORI interviewers in the participant's homes. The main stage of the fieldwork was undertaken during the period 10th September 2019 to 6th February 2020.

The sample for the 2019 survey consisted of a systematic random sample of addresses selected from the Postcode Address File (PAF) database of addresses. This is the most up-to-date and complete listing of addresses. Private business addresses were removed from the database prior to the sample selection.

A total of 2,262 addresses were selected for the survey. Throughout the survey period, an additional 500 addresses were pulled. In total, 2,167 of these household were suitable for inclusion in the survey and an attempt was made to obtain an interview. In each household only one person was selected to be interviewed, this person was chosen using the 'next birthday' rule. This is the person with the next birthday, at the time of the call is selected for the interviews (of all persons living at the address who were aged 18 or over).

A total of 1,203 persons co-operated giving a response rate of 56%.

Table 6 sets out sampling errors and confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level relating to a Systematic Random Sample as used in the survey. Note the margin of error for all sample estimates is within the parameters of $\pm 2.81\%$

Table 6: Sampling errors and confidence intervals for key variables (unweighted data)

		%	Margin of Error	95% Confidence Limits
Age	18 – 24	8.1	1.54	6.6-9.6
	25 – 34	16.7	2.10	14.6-18.8
	35 – 44	14.7	2.00	12.7-16.7
	45 – 54	12.6	1.88	10.7-14.5
	55 – 64	15.4	2.04	13.4-17.4
	65 and over	32.5	2.65	29.9-35.1
Sex	Male	45.3	2.81	42.5-48.1
	Female	54.7	2.81	51.9-57.5
Religion	Catholic	32.7	2.65	30.05-35.35
	Protestant	39.4	2.76	36.6-42.2
	None	20.4	2.28	18.1-22.7
	Other	3.9	1.09	2.8-5.0
	Refused/Don't know	3.6	1.05	2.5-4.7

The data has been weighted in order to take into account disproportionate household size.

The 'no religion' category in this report includes those respondents who reported having no religion, those who reported a religion that was not Catholic or Protestant (other) and those where religion was not stated.

ARK also publish the data and the survey results on their website six months after the end of the fieldwork. This allows users to download the data in order to carry out their own particular statistical analyses.

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