

Background

These reports provide details of all complaints and allegations, recorded by the Police Ombudsman's Office between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012. The figures provided for Northern Ireland are total complaints and allegations made against the PSNI, Airport Police, Harbour Police, Serious and Organised Crime Agency, Designated Civilians and Other/Unknown Organisations

Notes

1. Caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from figures presented in these tables and charts due to the small numbers involved. Small changes in actual numbers can cause large fluctuations in percentages. In some cases percentages have not been included in the reports as a result of the small numbers. Proportions may not always add up to 100% because of the effects of rounding.

2. The tables in this report present numbers and percentages, where appropriate (see above), for each Area Command Unit (April – September and October – March). For comparison purposes the tables also show numbers and percentages for Northern Ireland.

3. Prior to November 2008, the CMS (Case Management System) was used to record all complaints/non complaint matters that were made to the Office. The CMS recorded information at a 'complaint' level whereby allegations were recorded under each complaint.

In November 2008, the CHS (Case Handling System) went 'live'. The CHS records information at allegation level. Currently it is only possible to compare the number of allegations recorded during 2011/12 to 2009/10.

4. A complaint can be defined as being "a complaint about the conduct of a member of the police force made by or on behalf of a member of the public." A complaint consists of one or more allegations. Allegations form part of a complaint and include types of incivility, failure in duty or oppressive behaviour etc...

5. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to have due regard to the equality of opportunity of people in respect of a number of categories including gender, age and religious belief. Equality monitoring information is extracted from forms issued to all complainants once they have made a complaint. Overall, across Northern Ireland, seven hundred and two forms were returned, representing a 25% response rate. Information regarding gender was also determined from complainants' title or salutation so that gender was known for 99% of respondents. In addition to those who declared their age on the form, information was also determined from the date of birth that they provided so that age was known for 65% of complainants.

Twenty-two percent of complainants provided information on religion. The form asks all complainants to provide information on their religious belief, which, in most cases, is a denomination of Christianity. While we have categorised these denominations into the main religious denominations in Northern Ireland according to the Census (2001), there are still quite a number that fall into the category of 'Other Christian'. Within this category there will be a number that could be regarded as Protestant. However, there are also a number where it is unclear as to whether the complainant may consider themselves to be Protestant. Therefore we are unable to provide information on the number of Protestants. The 'Other Christian' category in Table 6 of this report includes Church of Ireland, Methodist, Presbyterian and the category of 'Other Christian' which is taken from the Equality Monitoring Form.

6. When the investigation of an allegation is complete a recommendation for allegation closure is made. Table 13 sets out the recommendation types arising from allegations closed during 2011/12. It should be noted that one allegation may have more than one associated recommendation, for example, when there are a number of police officers linked to an allegation. The 'recommended action' category includes action such as 'criminal charges', 'disciplinary charges', 'Superintendent's Written Warning' and 'Advice and Guidance'. The 'other' category includes recommendations such as 'outside remit', 'withdrawn by the complainant', 'ill founded', 'other' and 'substantiated – no action recommended'.

¹ Includes non complaint referrals which refer to Ombudsman Call-Ins and incidents referred by the Chief Constable, Policing Board, Secretary of State or Director of Public Prosecutions.