



# **Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland**

**Quarterly Statistical Update to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

**Published September 2014**

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

**Statistical Update to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, published on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

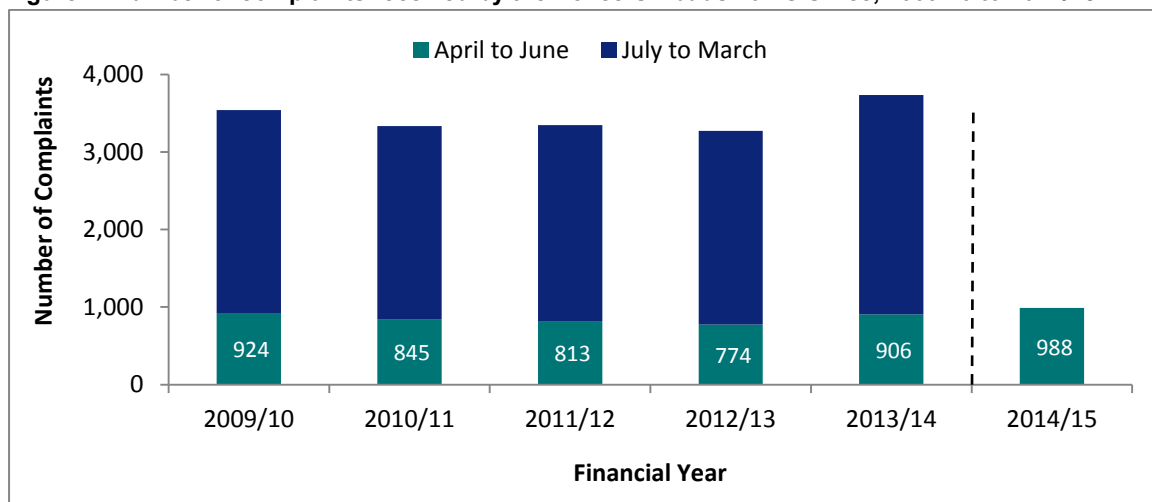
This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling System (CHS) on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014. The 2014/15 figures presented in this bulletin are provisional and are subject to change.

## 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 organisations<sup>1</sup>, and any matter that the Police Ombudsman has decided is in the public interest for him to investigate.

The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office decreased for four consecutive years from 2009/10 until 2013/14 when the Police Ombudsman’s Office received the highest number of complaints since it opened. The number of complaints received in the first quarter of 2014/15 (April to June 2014) is higher than in the same period in each of the last five years; an increase of 9% from quarter one in 2013/14 (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2009/10 to 2014/15**



<sup>1</sup> 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. In the four years prior to 2013/14 Criminal Investigation was the most common factor underlying the complaint while in 2013/14 it was Arrest. In the first quarter of 2014/15 the most common main complaint factor was Criminal Investigation.

When comparing the main complaint factor between quarter one in 2013/14 with quarter one in 2014/15, the number of complaints arising from Domestic Incidents has more than doubled, and there has been an increase in the number of complaints arising from Criminal Investigations. While there has been a decrease in the number of complaints arising from Arrests (Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to June 2013 and April to June 2014**

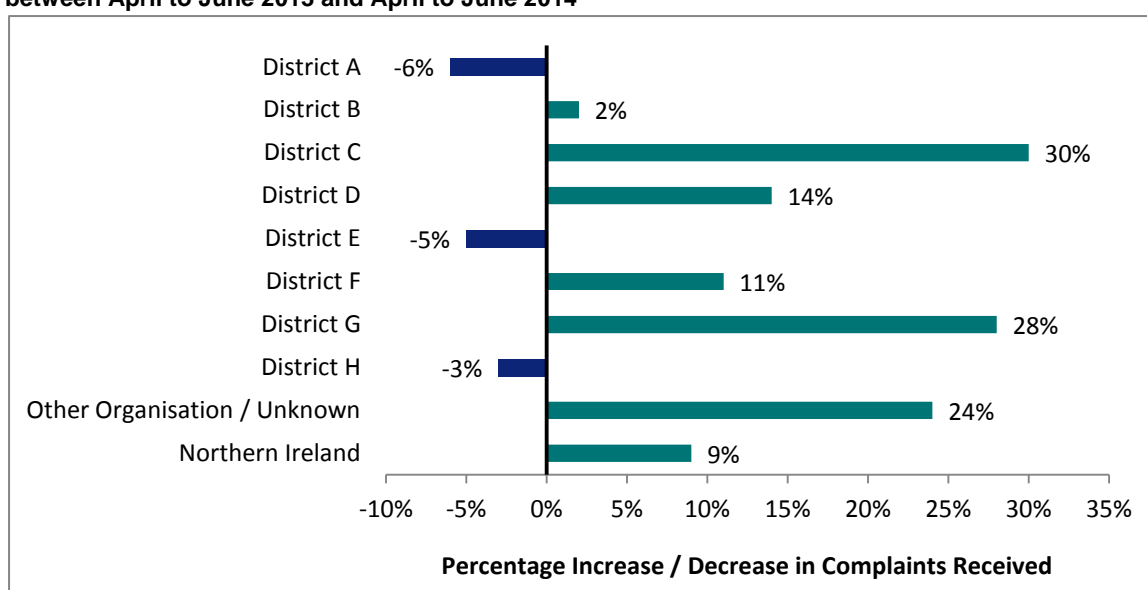
Main Complaint Factor	April to June 2013	April to June 2014	Difference
Criminal Investigation	192	239	↑ 47
Arrest	238	184	↓ -54
Search	85	89	↑ 4
Domestic Incident	40	89	↑ 49
Traffic Incident	65	60	↓ -5
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	46	53	↑ 7
Historic Investigation	22	31	↑ 9
Parade/Demonstration	24	8	↓ -16
Other	181	193	↑ 12
Unknown	13	42	↑ 29
Total	906	988	↑ 82

## Complaints Received by Police District

In previous statistical reports published by the Police Ombudsman's Office a geographical breakdown has been provided for allegations and not for complaints. Due to feedback from key users of the statistics a decision has been made to present this information for complaints only in this bulletin and that information at police area level is available for both complaints and allegations in the accompanying excel spreadsheet on the Police Ombudsman's internet site.

A comparison between complaints received in April to June 2013 and April to June 2014 at police district level shows that District C and District G had the largest percentage increase. While District A and District E had the largest percentage decrease in the number of complaints received (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percentage increase/decrease in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to June 2013 and April to June 2014**



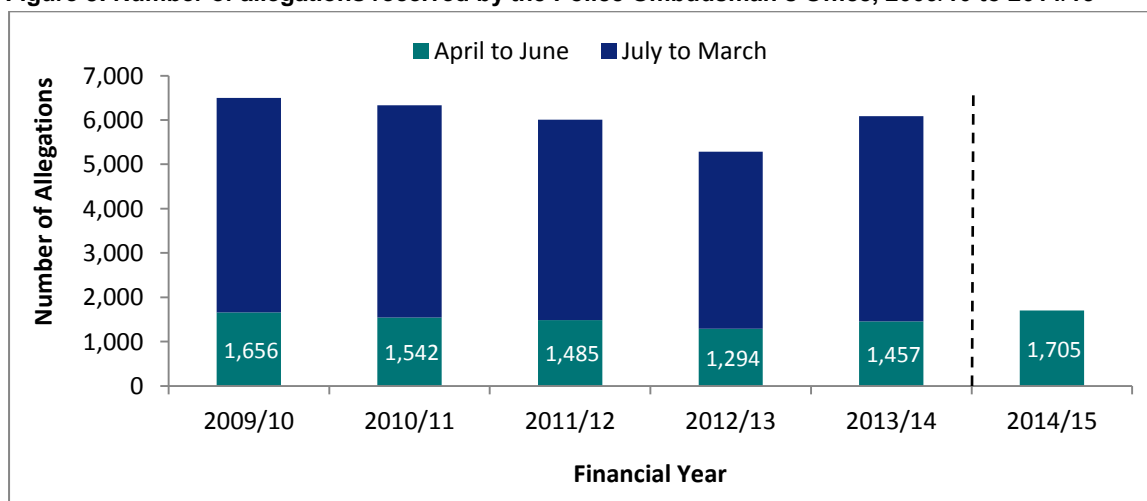
Police District	Police Area
A	North Belfast and West Belfast
B	South Belfast and East Belfast
C	Ards, Castlereagh, Down and North Down
D	Antrim, Carrickfergus, Lisburn and Newtownabbey
E	Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon and Newry & Mourne
F	Cookstown, Dungannon & South Tyrone, Fermanagh and Omagh
G	Foyle, Limavady, Magherafelt and Strabane
H	Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne and Moyle

## 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.

The number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office increased in 2013/14, this was the first time in four years where there had been an increase in the number of allegations received. Similar to the number of complaints received, the number of allegations received in quarter one of 2014/15 is higher than in the same period in each of the last five years. There was a 17% increase in the number of allegations received in April to June 2014 compared with April to June 2013 (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2009/10 to 2014/15



### Allegation Type

Allegations are categorised into 11 different types. Over the last five years (2009/10 to 2013/14), Failure in Duty allegations accounted for the greatest proportion of allegations, followed by Oppressive Behaviour and Incivility. This trend continued into quarter one of 2014/15.

There has been an increase in the number of allegations received regarding a police officer's Failure in Duty and also in the number of allegations received regarding a search from quarter one in 2013/14 to the same period in 2014/15. While the number of allegations regarding a police officer's Oppressive Behaviour decreased over the same period (Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to June 2013 and April to June 2014**

Allegation Type	April to June 2013	April to June 2014	Difference
Failure in Duty	519	701	↑ 182
Oppressive Behaviour	493	447	↓ -46
Incivility	120	124	↑ 4
Search	72	109	↑ 37
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	69	71	↑ 2
Mishandling of Property	41	57	↑ 16
Malpractice	40	35	↓ -5
Discriminatory Behaviour	25	21	↓ -4
Section 55 Referral	11	17	↑ 6
Traffic	12	9	↓ -3
Other	55	114	↑ 59
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,457</b>	<b>1,705</b>	<b>↑ 248</b>

## Policing Plan 2014 – 2017 Targets

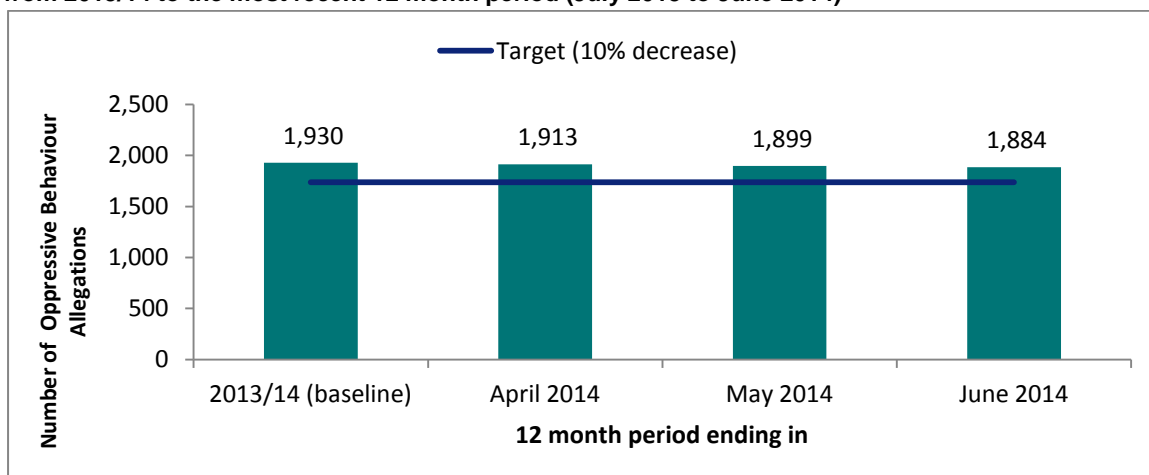
The [2014 – 2017 Policing Plan](#) sets the strategic policing priorities and objectives over this three year period, along with a range of targets and measures for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to achieve by the end of March 2015. Within the plan there are two measures of success that require data from the Police Ombudsman’s Office and these are outlined below. Both measures are included under the Professional Policing section, and are an indicator of ‘Treating People Fairly and with Respect’. The two targets refer to specific types of allegations made against PSNI officers only and do not include allegations made against PSNI designated civilians or against any other organisation.

### To reduce by 10% the number of allegations of Oppressive Behaviour

In 2013/14 the Police Ombudsman’s Office received 1,930 allegations regarding the Oppressive Behaviour of police officers in the PSNI. To meet this target the number of allegations received in 2014/15 needs to be lower than 1,737.

As the baseline information for this target is based on a 12 month period (2013/14) to compare like with like progress has been tracked on the number of allegations received in the 12 month period up to the most recent month. So far there has been a 2% reduction in the number of Oppressive Behaviour allegations received (Figure 3).

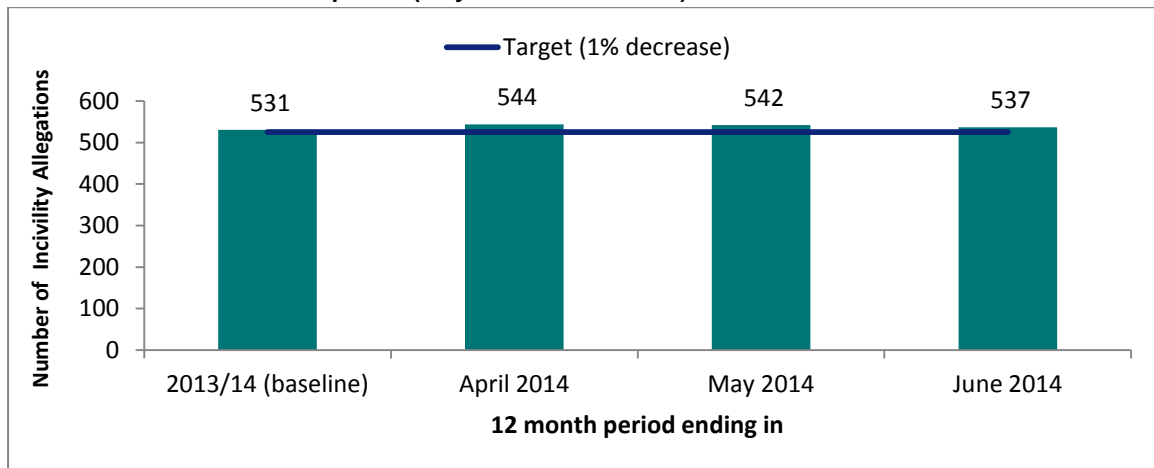
**Figure 4: Progress on the Police Plan target to reduce the number of Oppressive Behaviour allegations, from 2013/14 to the most recent 12 month period (July 2013 to June 2014)**



### To reduce by 1% the number of allegations of Incivility

The Police Ombudsman's Office received 531 allegations regarding incivility by a PSNI police officer in 2013/14. In order to meet a 1% reduction in 2014/15 the number of incivility allegations would have to be fewer than 526. Due to fluctuations in the number of incivility allegations received per month it is difficult to predict if the target is on track at this early stage in the year.

**Figure 5: Progress on the Police Plan Target to Reduce the Number of Incivility Allegations, from 2013/14 to the most recent 12 month period (July 2013 to June 2014)**





## 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.

### 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.

The '[Trends in Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2013/14](#)' report provides 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.

Additional geographic breakdowns of the types of complaints and allegations received and recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman are 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 first time the Police Ombudsman's Office has published quarterly information on the number of complaints and allegations received. From now on the Office will publish information in-year on a quarterly bases, it 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 bulletin is due to be published on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014 and it will include statistics up to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

### **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 [research@policeombudsman.org](mailto:research@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](http://www.policeombudsman.org)



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