



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

**Quarterly Statistical Update to 31<sup>st</sup> December  
2018**

**Published January 2019**

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

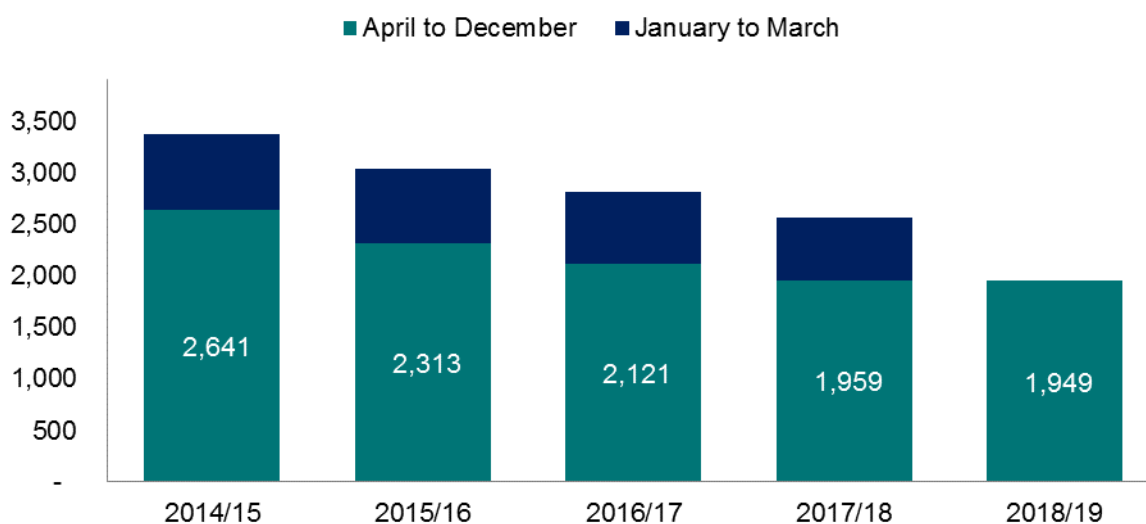
**Statistical Update to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018, published on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019.**

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman's Case Handling System (CHS) on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

### Complaints Received

The Office received just under 1,950 complaints between April and December 2018. This is a 1% decrease in the number of complaints received when compared with the same time period last year. It is also the lowest number of complaints received during this time when compared with the previous four years (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2014/15 to December 2018**



## Main Complaint Factor

The largest decrease in complaints arose from 'Complaints relating to the Troubles' and those arising from 'Parade/Demonstrations'.

Complaints regarding 'Traffic Related Incidents' had the largest percentage increase during this time followed by 'Police Enquiries (no investigation)' (Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to December 2017 and April to December 2018**

	April-December 2017	April-December 2018	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	575	561	-14	-2%
Arrest	300	309	9	3%
Traffic Related Incident	153	178	25	16%
Search	125	136	11	9%
Domestic Incident	105	104	-1	-1%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	84	95	11	13%
Domestic Violence	35	23	-12	-
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	39	20	-19	-
Parades/Demonstrations	32	13	-19	-
Other	396	389	-7	-2%
Unknown	115	121	6	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,959</b>	<b>1,949</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>-1%</b>

**Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50**

## Complaints Received by Police District

The number of complaints decreased in 4 of the 11 police districts between April and December 2018 when compared with the same time period last year.

District J had the largest percentage decrease during this time followed by District L.

District B had the largest percentage increase followed by District A (Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to December 2107 and April to December 2018**

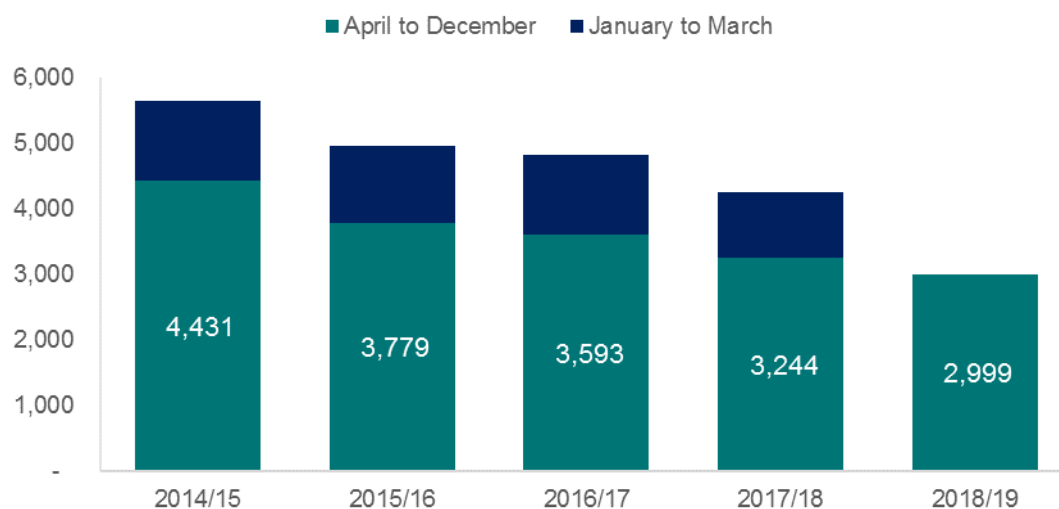
	April-December 2017	April-December 2018	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	481	529	48	10%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	78	87	9	12%
District C - Ards & North Down	115	122	7	6%
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	102	106	4	4%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	161	159	-2	-1%
District F - Mid Ulster	74	77	3	4%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	90	86	-4	-4%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	132	138	6	5%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	189	147	-42	-22%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	116	124	8	7%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	138	118	-20	-14%
Unknown / Other Organisation	283	256	-27	-10%
Northern Ireland	1,959	1,949	-10	-1%

**Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50**

## Allegations Received

The Office received almost 3,000 allegations between April and December 2018. This is the lowest number of allegations received during this time when compared with each of the previous four years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2014/15 to December 2018



## Allegation Type

Allegations relating to 'Mishandling of Property' had the largest percentage decrease between April and December 2018 when compared with the same time period last year.

Allegations relating to 'Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention' had the largest percentage increase during this time (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to December 2017 and April to December 2018

	April-December 2017	April-December 2018	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	1,604	1,414	-190	-12%
Oppressive Behaviour	689	637	-52	-8%
Incivility	183	190	7	4%
Search	153	153	0	0%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	123	151	28	23%
Mishandling of Property	79	63	-16	-20%
Traffic	27	38	11	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	30	34	4	-
Malpractice	44	28	-16	-
Allegations relating to the 'Troubles'	33	19	-14	-
Section 55 Referral	20	19	-1	-
Other	259	253	-6	-2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,244</b>	<b>2,999</b>	<b>-245</b>	<b>-8%</b>

Note: % Difference only reported when base numbers are greater than 50

## Officers with multiple complaints

There were 22 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between January and December 2018 (Table 4).

**Table 4: Officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution, twelve month period ending June 2018, September 2018, December 2018.**

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution
June 2018	26
September 2018	31
December 2018	22

## 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 (PONI or the Office), 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

The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office includes complaints made by members of the public relating to the conduct of PSNI officers or those employed by other organisations under the Office's remit<sup>1</sup>. The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations<sup>2</sup>, and any matter that the Police Ombudsman has decided is in the public interest for him to investigate.

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.

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 residual matters account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office's remit extends to: Police Service of Northern Ireland including Designated Civilians, the Belfast Harbour Police, The Belfast International Airport Police, the Ministry of Defence Police, the National Crime Agency, 'serious' complaints regarding mutual aid police officers from Great Britain and 'serious' complaints regarding certain Home Office employees (immigration officers, designated customs officials and custom revenue officials).

<sup>2</sup> The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Care should be taken when comparing the number of complaints received at police district level as some of the differences between districts 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 2017/18 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 presented in the 'Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2017/18'. This is available on the Office's [website](#).

An additional geographic breakdown of the types of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman in previous years 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 fifth 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. Where possible, 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. In some instances however it may be necessary to publish the bulletin earlier in the quarter. A more detailed publication will be produced 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 final quarterly update of 2018/19 is due to be published on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019 and it will include statistics up to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

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



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