

# Police Officer Satisfaction Survey 2008/2009

October 2009

# Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Methodology	3
Findings	
Perceptions of Investigating Officer	4
Fairness of treatment	5
Satisfaction with service	7
Impartiality and accountability	9
Measures to improve service	10
Appendix 1	
Police Officer Questionnaire	11

## Executive Summary

The Police Officer Satisfaction Survey allows police officers who were subject to investigation by the Police Ombudsman's Office to express their views on services provided by the Office. This report presents the findings from data collected from April 2008 until March 2009.

The main findings are given below:

- The majority of police officers who had spoken to an Investigating Officer from the Police Ombudsman's Office had positive perceptions of staff.
- Eighty three per cent of police officers thought that they were treated fairly by the Police Ombudsman's Office.
- Sixty eight per cent were satisfied with the overall service they received.
- Seventy eight per cent were confident that the Police Ombudsman deals with complaints in an impartial way.
- Sixty nine per cent thought that the Police Complaints system provides for greater accountability of the police.

# Introduction

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was established by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 in order to provide an independent system for investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman is committed to providing an independent and impartial investigation process of the highest quality, which is timely and is best calculated to secure the confidence of both the public and the police.

This survey allows police officers subject to investigation by the Office of the Police Ombudsman to express views on services provided by the Office. The Office began the survey in October 2005. This report contains data concerning officers' views in respect of complaints closed between April 2008 and March 2009.

## Methodology

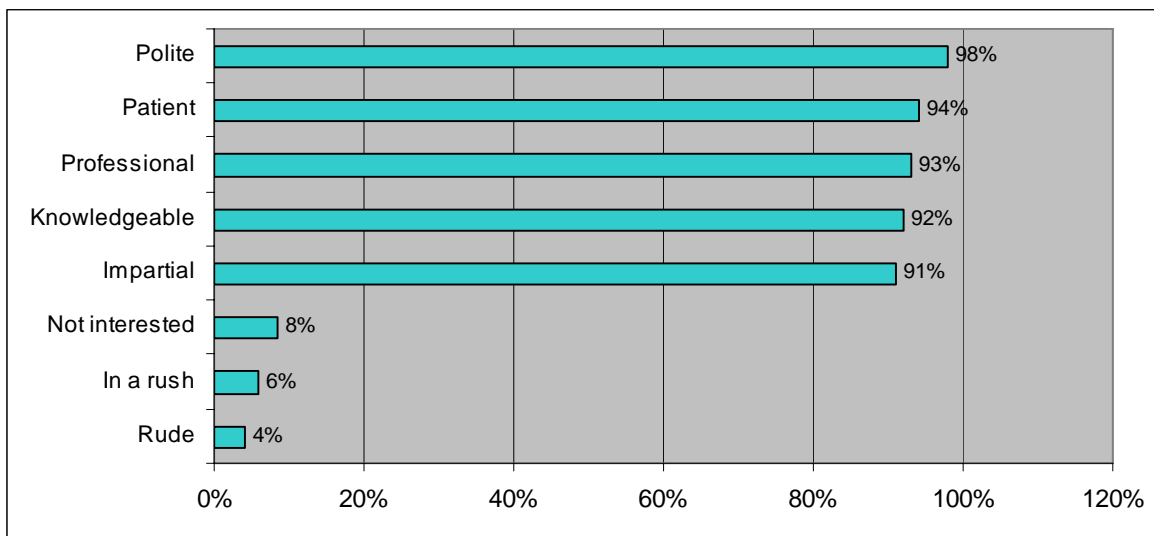
From October 2005 the Office began surveying all police officers subject to Police Ombudsman investigation. Within one month of the complaint being closed a confidential self-completion questionnaire with instructions and a return envelope is sent to the police officer subject to investigation. (Appendix1). From April 2008 until March 2009 a total of 1950 questionnaires were issued. By the end of April 2009, 595 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 31%.

# Findings

This section outlines the findings from satisfaction survey forms returned by police officers subject to Police Ombudsman investigation.

## Perceptions of the Investigation Officer from the Office of the Police Ombudsman

Eighty five per cent of police officers had spoken to an Investigating Officer from the Office of the Police Ombudsman. These officers were then asked how they found the Investigating Officer in relation to a number of both positive and negative characteristics. Figure 1 shows the proportion of respondents in descending order who considered that staff displayed the following characteristics.



**Figure 1: How did you find the Investigating Officer?**

Overall perceptions of staff were very positive and were similar to perceptions held last year.

Over nine out of ten respondents said they found the Investigating Officer polite, patient, professional, knowledgeable or had acted in an impartial manner.

Only a minority of police officers had negative perceptions of Investigating Officers. Eight per cent of respondents thought they appeared disinterested, six per cent thought they were in a rush and four per cent thought they were rude.

## Fairness of treatment

Eighty three per cent of respondents thought that they were treated fairly by the Office. This is similar to the level reported last year (85%).

Those officers who felt that they had not been treated fairly by the Office were asked to say why this was.

A substantial number of the comments referred to the length of time taken to complete the investigation. Several officers also commented on the stress caused by a slow investigation:

*'Complaint made months after incident. Complaint only made after convicted in court. Investigation still took 5 months. Unnecessary stress and worry caused by slow investigation'.*

Officers were also concerned regarding the lack of updates they received.

*'The incident that I was investigated for occurred in 2006. This is 2009 - some 3yrs later. At no time was I ever updated re progression. If I worked at that speed and behaved in that manner I don't believe that I would be in a job'.*

Some officers commented that the investigation should never have progressed to interview stage.

*'I do not believe I should have been interviewed, as there was substantial evidence to prove that this complaint was untrue. I appreciate a complaint was made and required investigation. However other evidence would have negated the stressful time I had as I take great pride in my profession and work'.*

Comments were also received concerning the lack of information received throughout the investigation:

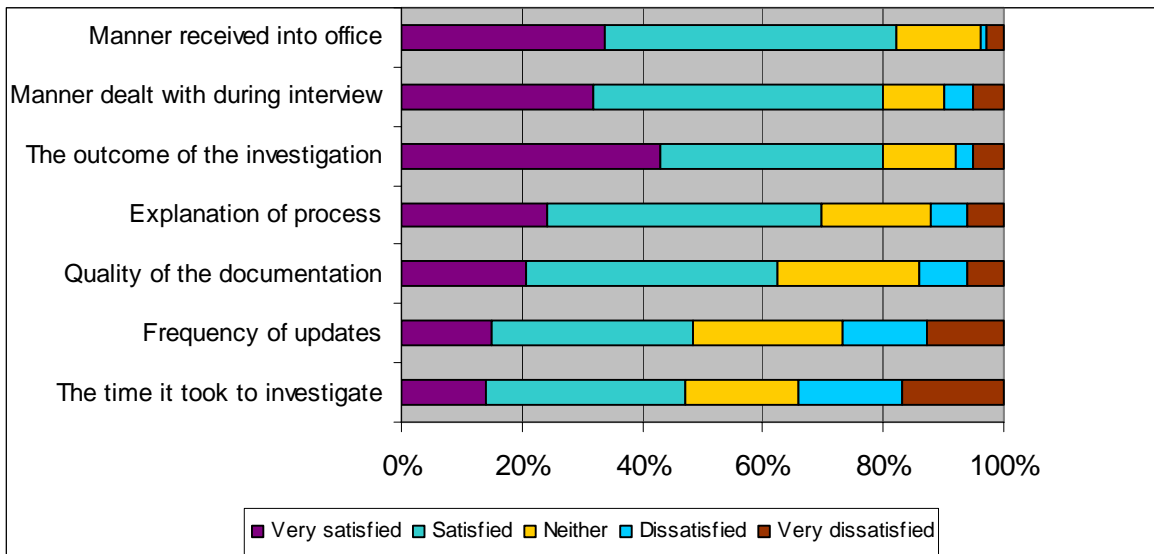
*'Was not aware of full extent of allegation until day of interview. I could have responded appropriately at time of being served with papers by my inspector - may have clarified matters significantly. As it transpired, PONI had already ascertained that the allegation was unfounded prior to arranging interview - you pursued a fruitless course of action'.*

Some officers also reported that they were made to feel like criminals or the investigators treated them as guilty from the start of the investigation.

*'I felt the IO had her mind made up as to my guilt before interviewing me. I feel she made it very clear in interview she did not believe me.'*

## Satisfaction with service

Respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with different aspects of the complaints system. Overall respondents displayed a high level of satisfaction with most aspects (Figure 2). However further analysis shows that these levels have fallen from last year.



**Figure 2: Satisfaction with aspects of complaints system**

Eighty three per cent of officers who had visited the Office were satisfied with how they were received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, including 34% who were very satisfied. Last year 90% were satisfied with this aspect of the service.

Eighty one per cent were satisfied with how they were dealt with during the interview. This has decreased from last year when 87% of officers were satisfied.

Eighty one per cent were satisfied with the outcome of the investigation including 43% who were very satisfied (last year 86% were satisfied).

Sixty nine per cent of officers were satisfied with the explanation of the process given including 24% who were very satisfied (last year 74% were satisfied)

Sixty three per cent were satisfied with the quality of documentation including 21%



who were very satisfied. The level of satisfaction has fallen from last year when 74% satisfied.

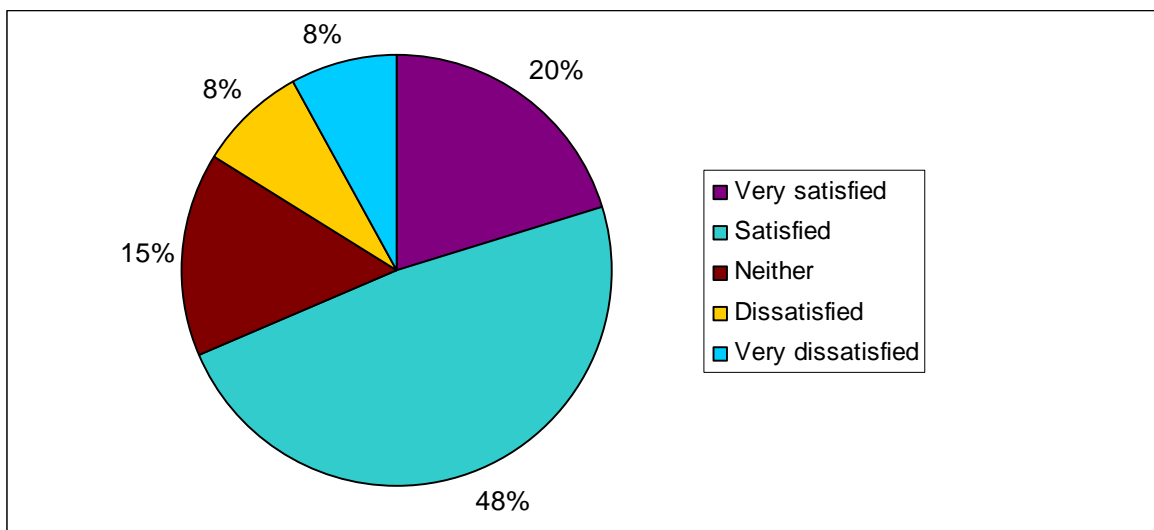
Lower levels of satisfaction were expressed with the frequency of updates and the time it took to investigate.

Only 48% of officers were satisfied with the frequency of updates. The level of satisfaction has fallen from last year (58%).

Forty seven per cent of officers were satisfied with the time it took to investigate. This level is similar to the level reported last year (50%).

Respondents were also asked – ‘Overall taking everything into account how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the overall service you received from the Police Ombudsman?.

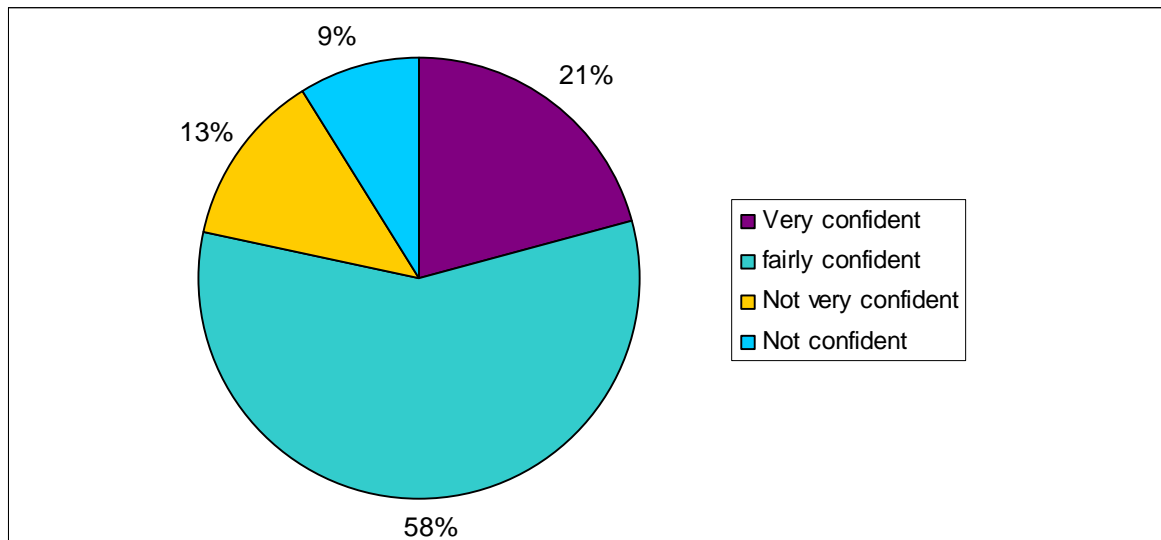
Sixty eight per cent of officers stated they were satisfied including 20% who were very satisfied (Figure 3). Although earlier results show that satisfaction levels have fallen regarding individual aspects of the service received the overall satisfaction rate reported was similar to last year (70%).



**Figure 3: Overall satisfaction with service**

## Impartiality and accountability

Officers were asked how confident they were that the Police Ombudsman dealt with complaints in an impartial way - 78 per cent said they were confident including 21% who were very confident (Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Confidence in impartiality**

Sixty nine per cent of officers considered that the Police complaints system provides for greater accountability of the police (73% in 07/08).

## Measures to improve service

Respondents were asked if there were any measures that the Office of the Police Ombudsman could take to improve its service to police officers.

Around forty officers indicated that in their opinion there were not any measures that the Office of the Police Ombudsman could take or made positive comments regarding the service.

A further 265 officers made comments.

Over one fifth these of comments were regarding serial or malicious complainers.

*'When a complaint is made against an officer by a member of the public and a complaint is found to be totally unfounded/false statement - action should be considered against the person making the false statement. - An effort to discourage false reporting causing undue stress on the officers involved.'*

Around one tenth of the comments were from officers who thought that complainants should be asked to pay to make a complaint which could perhaps deter people from making untrue allegations or perhaps be refunded if the complaint was upheld.

*'Make people pay to make complaints, as in the South, so there is not so much time wasted on stupid complaints'*

Some of these comments were similar to the comments made by officers who thought they had not been treated fairly.

As earlier results show officers also commented on the speed of investigations and the frequency of updates on the progress of their investigation:

*'Personal and telephone updates should be made to officers as a short e-mail does not tell you anything.'*

*'The timescale to deal with the complaint was completely unsatisfactory. If police took so long to investigate complaints action would be taken against the officer involved. This complaint took almost 3 years to deal with. I believe it was an unfounded allegation of incivility - totally unacceptable - how can this delay be justified? No reason has been given to me for this delay.'*

Police officers thought that in general that more information should be provided about the complaint, particularly at the initial stages:

*'More open disclosure of what the complaint is and a more open approach to communication between the PONI and Police Officer'*

# POLICE OFFICER SATISFACTION FORM

A Police Ombudsman investigation arising from a complaint by a member of the public (or non-complaint referral), in which you were identified as a member concerned, has recently been closed by this Office. We are now interested in how well you consider this Office dealt with the matter and would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to complete and return the form.

## 1. DID YOU SPEAK TO AN INVESTIGATING OFFICER FROM THIS OFFICE?

Yes (Please go to Question 2)

No (Please go to Question 3)

## 2. WHEN YOU SPOKE TO THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER FROM THIS OFFICE DID YOU FIND THE OFFICER:

Please tick the appropriate box.

	Yes	No
Polite?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledgeable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not interested?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patient?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rude?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acted impartially?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acted professionally?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was in a rush?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 3. OVERALL, DO YOU THINK YOU WERE TREATED FAIRLY BY THIS OFFICE?

Please tick the appropriate box.

Yes (Please go to Question 5)

No (Please go to Question 4)

## 4. IF YOU THINK YOU WERE NOT TREATED FAIRLY BY THIS OFFICE PLEASE SAY IN WHAT WAY YOU WERE TREATED UNFAIRLY

PLEASE TURN OVER

## 5. HOW SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED WERE YOU WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS?

Please tick the appropriate box on each row.

	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	NOT APPLICABLE
The explanation of the process given to you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The frequency with which you were updated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The manner in which you were received if you visited the Office of the Police Ombudsman	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The manner you were dealt with during interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The time it took to investigate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The outcome of the investigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The quality of documentation received	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## 6. TAKING EVERYTHING INTO ACCOUNT

Please tick the appropriate box.

	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the overall service you received from the Office of the Police Ombudsman?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 7. HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN DEALS WITH COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE IN AN IMPARTIAL WAY?

Please tick the appropriate box.

	VERY CONFIDENT	FAIRLY CONFIDENT	NOT VERY CONFIDENT	NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 8. DO YOU FEEL THE POLICE COMPLAINTS SYSTEM MAKES THE POLICE MORE ACCOUNTABLE?

Please tick the appropriate box.

Yes  No

## 9. IN YOUR OPINION ARE THERE ANY MEASURES THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE OMBUDSMAN COULD TAKE TO IMPROVE ITS SERVICE TO POLICE OFFICERS?

The information contained in this form is strictly confidential and will not be attributed to any individual. It will be used solely for statistical purposes and to contribute to improving the service provided.<sup>12</sup>

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

Research and Performance 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

**Textphone:** 028 9082 8756

**Witness Appeal Line:** 0800 0327 880

**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)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE