



Complaints made to the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Annual Statistical Bulletin
2025/26

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INTRODUCTION

This Statistical Bulletin presents information on complaints and allegations received by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in 2025/26, as well as showing trend information for the last five years.

It was produced independently by Statisticians from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) who are seconded to the Police Ombudsman's Office (the Office) and work alongside Police Ombudsman personnel. It has been produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Why publish statistics?

The information presented in this bulletin has been produced to meet the needs of a variety of individuals and organisations who have a particular interest in the issue of police complaints.

The Police Ombudsman's Office uses these statistics to monitor trends in complaints and allegations received and how they were dealt with. It also uses this information to monitor performance against key performance indicators.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has an interest in knowing about the trends and patterns in complaints made about their officers and use this information to help identify and address particular problems.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) use this material in developing an understanding of what aspects of police conduct are attracting public concern and whether these concerns are of substance.

The Police and Community Partnerships (PCSPs) also use the data to monitor police performance in their areas and to identify any particular concerns.

The general public have a right to know how both their police service and their police complaints service are performing.

Understanding the information in this bulletin

We hope this report will provide readers with a clear understanding of the trends and patterns in complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office over the last five years.

We have provided information on what we believe would be the main questions asked by readers: how many complaints and allegations have we received, what were they about and how were they resolved, for example.

Commentary has been provided throughout, which aims to provide some context and explanation or interpretation of the emerging trends.

However, a concise document like this can only ever provide part of that context. Other factors may be at play which cannot be reflected in this bulletin. Readers may also want to consider issues as varied as the levels of the police budget and the service it can provide, as well as the level of awareness of the police complaints system itself.

Similarly, making comparisons across geographical areas may not always be straightforward. Areas have different levels of population. Even that distinction can have further categories. Whether people travel to an area during normal office hours for their work or move into it in the evening to socialise can have an effect on the number of complaints we receive.

It is also difficult to make valid comparisons between the number of complaints and allegations received across Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and Scotland as each area operates a different system.

Terminology

For those with less knowledge of the Police Ombudsman's Office, we have provided an explanation of the police complaints process in the appendices of this bulletin. We have tried to keep the terminology used in this bulletin 'jargon' free, but where this has not been possible we have provided a glossary with an explanation of those terms.

Could we improve this bulletin?

From the wealth of detailed information within the Police Ombudsman's Office, we have tried to produce a bulletin that focuses on the key issues, which we believe, would be of interest to the public and the police. We have also tried to make that information as clear and easily understood as possible. Have we succeeded? We would be keen to hear any views you have on this bulletin.

If you wish to provide any feedback or comments on this publication, please see our contact details on the back page or email us via info@policeombudsman.org.

Conventions

Percentages in the tables and text are rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus may not always add up to 100.

A SUMMARY OF THE KEY TRENDS IN COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE POLICE

- The Police Ombudsman's Office received 3,037 complaints during 2025/26, a decrease of 2% from the previous year. This is the lowest number of complaints received by the Office in the last four years.
- Criminal Investigation was the most common situation which gave rise to complaints, as it was in each of the last five years.
- Complaints have increased in four of the 11 police districts and have decreased in seven of the 11 police districts. The largest proportional increase was in Derry City and Strabane (H District) where the number of complaints increased by 18%. While, the largest proportional decrease was in Fermanagh and Omagh (G District) where complaints decreased by 40%.
- The most frequent allegations received during the year were allegations of Failure in Duty, of Oppressive Behaviour, and of Incivility.
- Just over two fifths (43%) of complaints dealt with by the Police Ombudsman's Office were subject to a full investigation. In 15% of these complaints, the Office found evidence to substantiate all or part of the complaint or identified another concern during the investigation.
- On 12 occasions during the year, the Police Ombudsman recommended that the Director of Public Prosecutions should prosecute an officer.
- The Police Ombudsman recommended on 196 occasions that a police officer should receive a discipline or a performance action.

COMPLAINTS

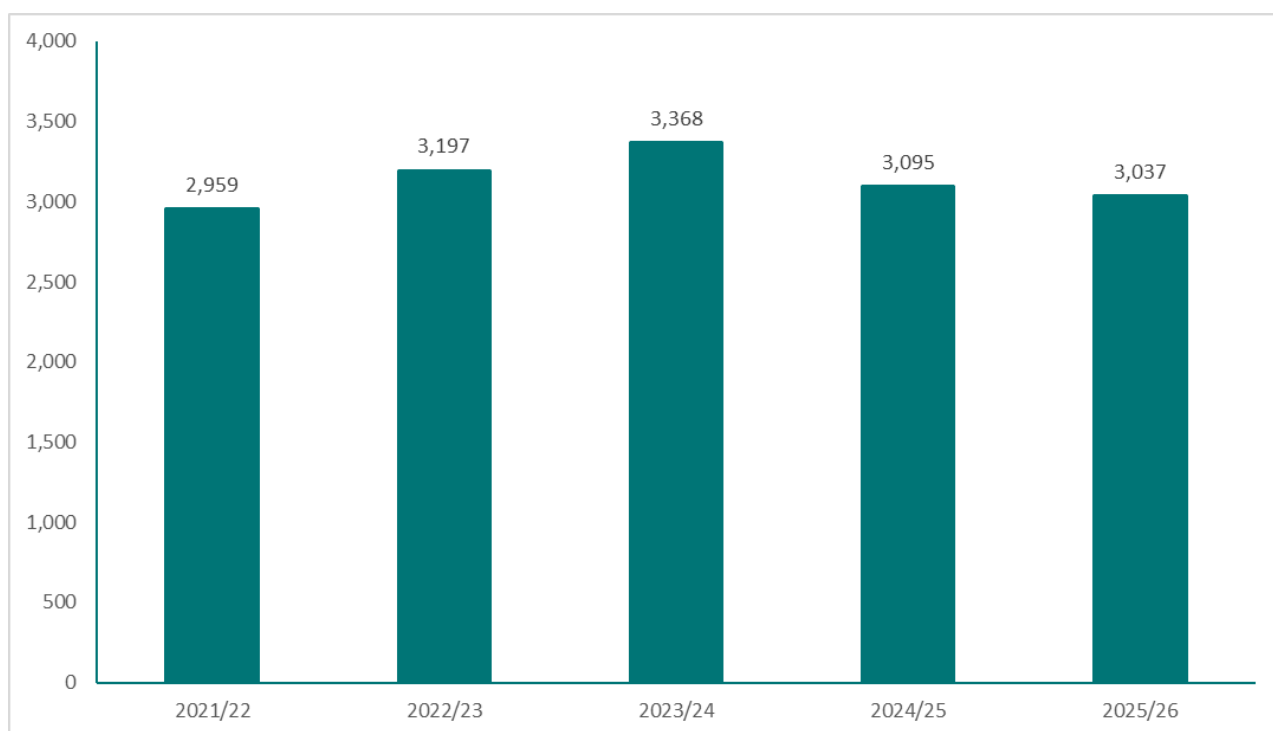
The volume of complaints and matters received

Key Takeaways

- The number of complaints received and matters referred for independent investigations by the Police Ombudsman’s Office during 2025/26 was 3,037 (Figure 1, Table 5).
- This is a 2% decrease from the previous year, 2024/25.
- The number of complaints received in 2025/26 is the lowest number of complaints since 2021/22, when 2,959 complaints were received that year - Please see accompanying spreadsheet for complaint counts since 2000/01.

For the purpose of clarity of reporting, this statistical bulletin will refer to all its incoming work by the term ‘complaints’.

Figure 1: Number of complaints received, 2021/22 to 2025/26



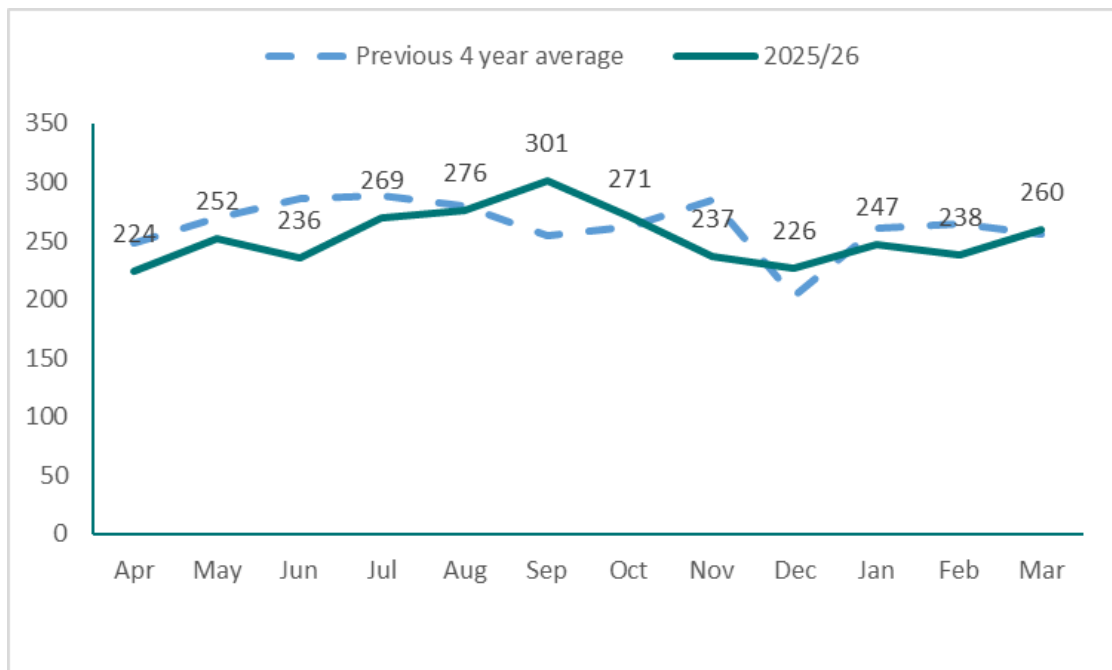
During 2025/26, the majority of complaints (96%) were from members of the public. In addition, 1% were matters referred to the Office for an independent investigation from the PSNI or from another organisation¹ or matters in which the Police Ombudsman has initiated an own motion investigation. A further 3% were classified as ‘Other’. These are mostly comprised of notifications from police which did not result in an investigation (Table 6).

¹ Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) or the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Complaints received each month

During 2025/26, the Office received between 224 and 301 complaints each month. For four of the twelve months the number of complaints received was higher than the monthly average for the previous four years. The seasonality trend that the Office typically receives more complaints in the summer months than in the winter months is evident again this year with the Office receiving 70 more complaints over the summer period than the winter period (Figure 2, Table 7).

Figure 2: Number of complaints received by month, 2025/26 compared to the previous 4 year average



Who people were complaining about

The Police Ombudsman's Office has the remit to investigate complaints about officials from a number of bodies. These include police officers within the PSNI and police officers with the Northern Ireland Airport Constabulary and Belfast Harbour Police. The remit was extended, for serious incidents only, to include certain Home Office Officials in 2014/15 and National Crime Agency Officials from 20th May 2015.

During 2025/26, the majority of complaints received (more than 99%) were about the PSNI, this includes both police officers and 'designated civilians' within the Service (Tables 1 and 8).

Table 1: Complaints received by organisation, 2025/26

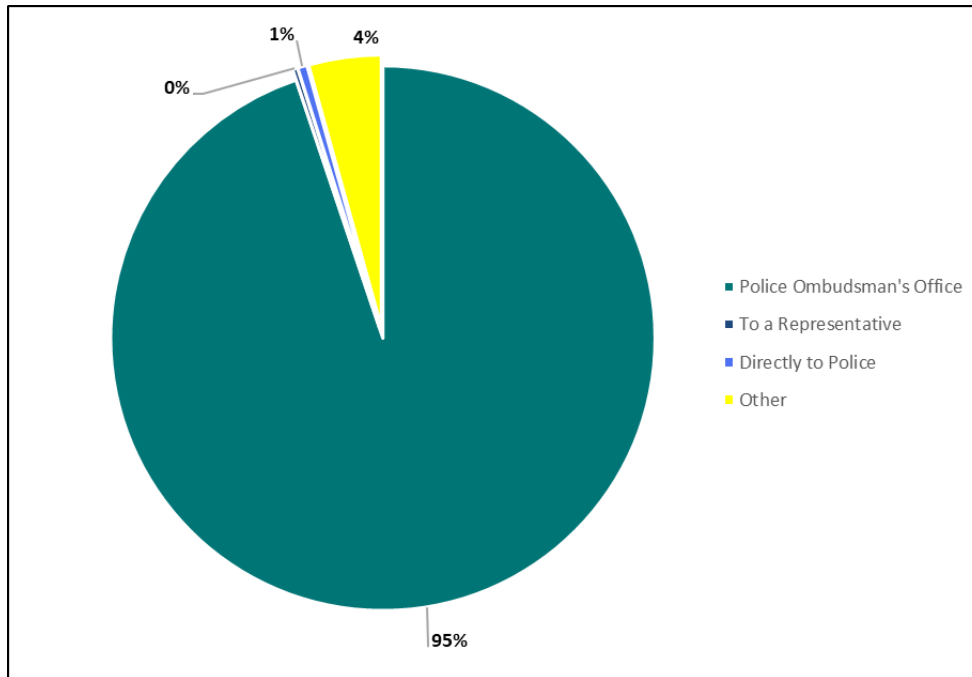
Organisation	No. of complaints received
Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	3,026
Harbour Police	3
UK Border Force & Immigration Enforcement	2
Northern Ireland Airport Constabulary	1
Other / Unknown	5
Total	3,037

Where people initially made their complaints

Although the Police Ombudsman's Office is the only body which can by law deal with complaints about the conduct of police officers, people do not always make their complaints directly to the Office. Sometimes their complaint is made in the first instance to the PSNI itself or to someone such as a solicitor or a political representative.

Over nine in every ten complaints (95%) received during 2025/26 were made directly to the Office without the use of an intermediary (Figure 3, Table 9).

Figure 3: Where people initially made their complaint, 2025/26



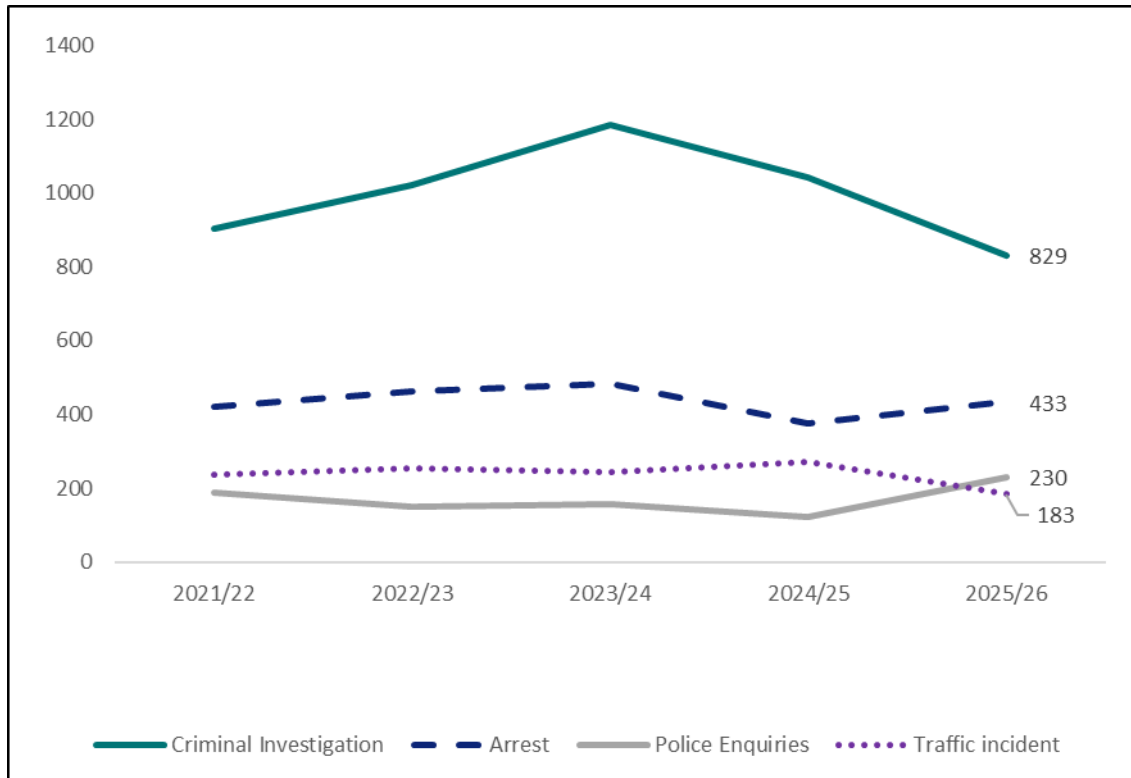
Over the last five years, the proportion of complaints made directly to the Office has increased, from 84% in 2021/22 to 95% in 2025/26. Whilst the proportion received via a representative and via the police decreased.

Situations that gave rise to complaints

In order to try and get a better understanding of what sorts of interactions might give rise to complaints about the police or police conduct, the Police Ombudsman's Office collect information on the background or context to the complaint.

Criminal investigations were the most common situations giving rise to complaints during 2025/26, followed by arrests, police enquiries, traffic related incidents and domestic incidents (Figure 4, Table 10).

Figure 4: Complaints Arising, 2021/22 to 2025/26
Criminal Investigation, Arrest, Police Enquiries & Traffic Related Incidents



During 2025/26, the Office received 829 complaints arising from a criminal investigation. This accounts for 27% of all complaints received. The number of complaints made following a criminal investigation has decreased by 20% this year.

There were 433 complaints arising from arrests during 2025/26. The number of complaints made following an arrest increased by 15% from 2024/25.

There were 230 complaints arising from police enquiries received during 2025/26. They have increased by 90% since the previous year.

There were 183 complaints made following a traffic related incident during 2025/26. The number of complaints made following a traffic related offence has decreased by 32% this year.

There were 178 complaints arising from domestic incidents (such as neighbourhood disputes) received during 2025/26. This is the same number of complaints received in the previous year.

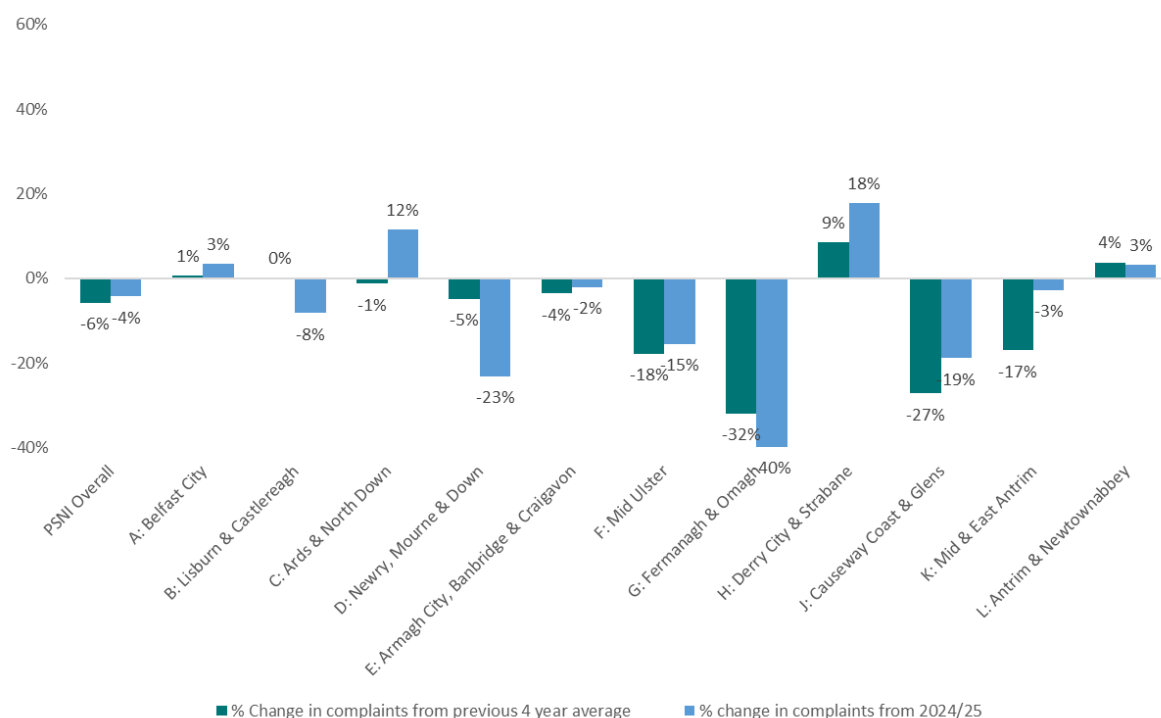
Police searches resulted in 166 complaints. This is a 36% increase from the previous year.

There were a number of new complaint factors added in 2025/26 which include police response to matters reported (140 complaints received) and police response to violence against women and girls (133 complaints received).

Where did the complaints happen?^{2,3}

Three of the 11 police districts in Northern Ireland had an increase in complaints during this year, when compared with the previous four year average (Figure 5, Table 11).

Figure 5: One-year and four-year average change in the number of complaints by police district



The above chart shows that complaints at police district level have increased in three of the 11 districts against the four year average. Seven of the 11 police districts show a decrease in complaints when compared to last year. The paragraphs below examine each police district in more detail, they are in alphabetical order of the police district name (i.e. A District to L District).

We would remind the reader that making comparisons between policing districts is something to be done with caution. Policing districts are not identical and differ on issues such as population numbers, policing numbers, the level of public interaction with police and even issues such as whether they have a vibrant night-time economy.

² This is only for complaints made about the PSNI and does not include any other organisations.

³ This is the location where the incident complained about occurred which may be different from the district that the officer is assigned to.

Belfast City (A District) received the largest number of complaints, 899 during 2025/26. It accounts for three in every ten (30%) complaints received by the Office. Complaints from this district increased by 3% from last year and by 1% from the previous four year average.

Complaints in Lisburn & Castlereagh City (B District) have decreased by 8% from last year to 134 complaints. This is the same number of complaints as the previous four year average.

Ards & North Down (C District) complaints increased by 12% from last year. This, however is a 1% decrease from the previous four year average.

Complaints from Newry, Mourne & Down (D District) decreased by 23% from 2024/25 to 189 complaints. This is a 5% decrease when compared to the previous four year average. It should be noted that the Office received 55 complaints related to a single incident in D District during July 2024.

The number of complaints from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (E District) decreased by 2% from 2024/25. They have decreased by 4% when compared to the previous four year average.

In Mid Ulster (F District) complaints have decreased by 15% compared to 2024/25, and have decreased by 18% compared to the previous four year average.

Complaints from Fermanagh & Omagh (G District) have decreased by 40% from the previous year. The 2025/26 figure of 115 complaints is a decrease of 32% when compared to the previous four year average. This is the largest decrease in complaints of any district this year.

The 218 complaints received in Derry City & Strabane (H District) shows an increase of 18% this year and a 9% increase compared to the previous four year average.

Complaints from Causeway Coast & Glens (J District) have decreased by 19% from last year. This is a 27% decrease compared to the previous four year average.

In Mid & East Antrim (K District) complaints have decreased by 3% this year. Complaints from this police district have decreased by 17% compared to the previous four year average.

Complaints for Antrim & Newtownabbey (L District) have increased by 3% from last year. This is equivalent to an 4% increase when compared to the previous four year average.

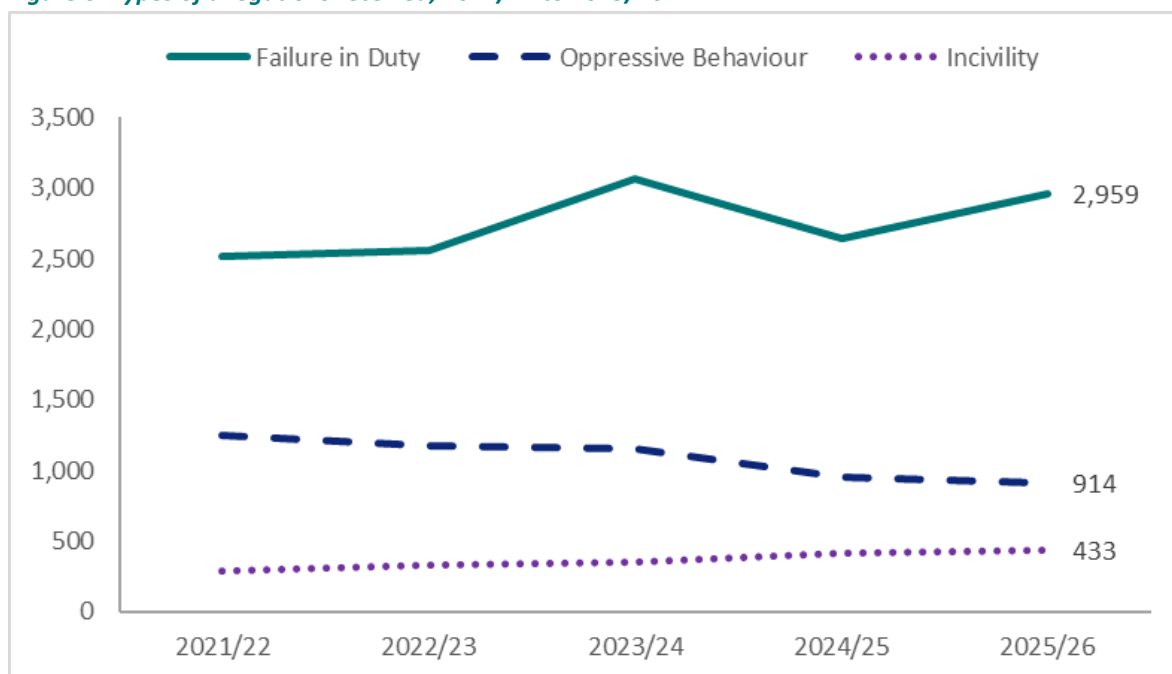
ALLEGATIONS

A person who makes a complaint may express a number of different concerns about the exchange they have had with a police officer. The Police Ombudsman’s Office will record this as one complaint broken down into a number of ‘allegations’.

Key Takeaways

- During 2025/26, the Police Ombudsman’s Office received 5,463 allegations (Table 12). This is a 3% increase on the number of allegations received in 2024/25.
- The most frequent allegations received during the year were allegations of a Failure in Duty, of Oppressive Behaviour, and of Incivility (Figure 6, Table 13).

Figure 6: Types of allegations received, 2021/22 to 2025/26



Failure in Duty allegations

During 2025/26, 2,959 allegations received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office alleged a Failure in Duty. This equates to more than half of all allegations received in the year and is a 12% increase on the number received in 2024/25.

Half (50%) of the Failure in Duty allegations received in 2025/26 related to the conduct of police investigations or police response to incidents (Table 14). This is the same trend as in each of the last five years.

The second most frequently reported Failure in Duty allegations were about failures in contact; such as failing to provide updates, failing to return telephone calls and failing to reply to correspondence. These allegations account for 14% of all the Failure in Duty allegations.

Oppressive Behaviour allegations

There were 914 Oppressive Behaviour allegations received during 2025/26. This is a 4% reduction in the number received during 2024/25.

Just under half (46%) of the Oppressive Behaviour allegations received during 2025/26 alleged oppressive conduct by an officer/s not involving an assault.

Allegations of serious non-sexual assaults and sexual assaults accounted for 5% of all the Oppressive Behaviour allegations received (Table 15).

Incivility allegations

During 2025/26, there were 433 Incivility allegations received. This was a 4% increase from the previous year.

More than half of Incivility allegations were about an officer being uncivil whilst on the telephone (34%) or being uncivil at a domestic residence (22%) (Table 16).

Allegations regarding the use of police equipment

Allegations about the use of police equipment accounted for 2% of all the allegations received during 2025/26 (Table 17). This was lower than in the four previous years

During 2025/26, allegations about the use of Handcuffs accounted for 40% of all allegations concerning police equipment. The use of PAVA spray accounted for a further 24% of all allegations concerning the use of police equipment.

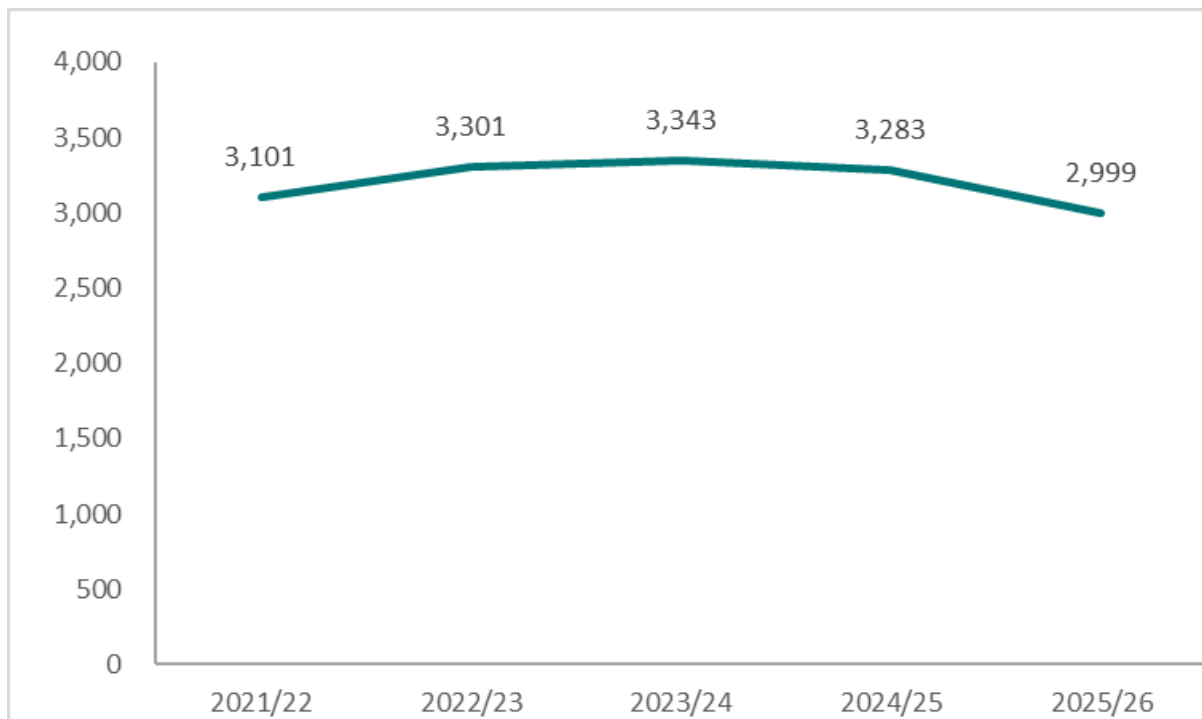
COMPLAINT CLOSURES

The Police Ombudsman’s Office closes complaints once it has reached a view on the matter involved, when the complainant and the police officer have reached a level of agreement on the contested matter or when the person who made the complaint no longer wishes to engage with the process.

Key Takeaways

- The Office closed 2,999 complaints during 2025/26 (Figure 7, Table 18).
- This is a 9% decrease from the previous year.
- It is also the lowest number of complaints closed by the Office in the last five years.

Figure 7: Number of complaints closed by year, 2021/22 to 2025/26



Types of complaint closures

There are four main stages as to when complaints will be closed (Table 2). These are complaints closed following initial assessment, following initial enquiries, resolved informally and following a full investigation. Complaints closed that relate to the 'Troubles' are totalled separately regardless of the stage that they were closed.

Table 2: Complaint closures, 2025/26

Complaint Closures	2025/26
Total Complaints Closed	2,999
Complaints closed following initial assessment	679
Not a matter for the Police Ombudsman	459
Call in/Call out - No Further action or Notification only	92
Other (Initial Assessment)	128
Complaints closed following initial enquiries	713
Complainant did not fully engage	548
Ill-founded	10
Withdrawn	114
Other (Initial Enquiries)	41
Complaints resolved informally	299
Informally Resolved	299
Locally Resolved	0
Complaints closed that relate to the 'Troubles'	22
Investigation unable to proceed due to NI Troubles Act 2023	0
Legacy Complaint	22
Complaints closed following a full investigation	1,286
Complaint substantiated or an issue of concern	196
Not substantiated and no issue of concern identified	1,090

Just under a quarter of complaints (23%) closed during 2025/26 were closed after the initial assessment. These complaints tend to be closed fairly quickly, and often involve issues which were either not a matter for the Police Ombudsman's Office or they were notifications from the PSNI which did not meet the threshold for a full investigation.

A similar proportion of complaints (24%) were closed following initial enquiries. Initial enquiries involves getting more information from the complainant, looking for evidence regarding the matter complained about or making initial contact with the police officer(s) involved. Complaints closed at this stage are normally those where the complainant ceases to engage with the Office.

Complaints that were informally resolved accounted for 10% of all complaints closed. This is an alternative way to resolve less serious complaints such as those alleging rudeness or incivility.

More than two fifths (43%) of complaints closed were fully investigated. This is when a Police Ombudsman's Investigator or Complaint's Officer reaches a conclusion on at least one of the allegations in the complaint. The Office found evidence to substantiate all or part of the complaint or identified another concern during the investigation in 15% of these fully investigated complaints during 2025/26.

Trends in the types of complaint closures

The proportion of complaints being closed within each of the four stages have remained fairly stable over the last five years (Table 18).

Following representation from key stakeholders and in order to make the reporting clearer, it has been decided to report our closures at complaint level. To do this, each of the closures within a complaint have been ranked, and the closure with the highest ranking used as the most representative of the overall complaint closure.

The highest ranking closure is also used to determine at which stage in the complaints process the complaint was closed: after initial assessment, initial enquiries, informal resolution, or following a full investigation. While this method will provide a clear and largely accurate picture in the majority of cases, there will be a few instances when this will not be the case. These discrepancies will only occur between initial assessment and initial enquiries stages.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PPS AND POLICE

Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

Where the Police Ombudsman investigates a matter and identifies that a criminal offence may have been committed, legislation requires that the matter is reported to the PPS. A file will be sent to the PPS that sets out the information that has been established and makes a recommendation as to whether or not the police officer/staff member should face a criminal charge. Irrespective of the Police Ombudsman's recommendation, it will be for the PPS to decide if an officer should be prosecuted.

Key Takeaways

- During 2025/26, the Office sent 143 recommendations to the PPS.
- The Police Ombudsman recommended that the Director of Public Prosecutions should prosecute an officer or staff member on 12 occasions (Tables 3 & 19).

Table 3: Number of prosecution and no prosecution recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman for an officer/staff member to the PPS, 2025/26

Prosecution for an officer/staff member	2025/26
Prosecution recommended	12
No prosecution recommended	131

The numbers of recommendations for Prosecution remain largely unchanged over the last four years.

Recommendations made to the Chief Constable or Chief Officer

Following the conclusion of any criminal proceedings or investigations that relate to misconduct matters, the Police Ombudsman may make a recommendation to the Chief Constable or the Chief Officer, who will consider whether action should be taken against the police officer/staff member who were the subject of the complaint.

Key Takeaways

- During 2025/26, the Police Ombudsman's Office made 196 recommendations that an officer or staff member should receive either a discipline or a performance action (Table 4).
- Three quarters (75%) of these recommendations were for a Performance recommendation.

Table 4: Number of recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman for an officer/staff member to receive a discipline or performance action, 2025/26

Discipline or Performance Actions (Regulations Introduced in June 2016⁴)	196
Performance	147
Misconduct Meeting	43
Misconduct Hearing	6

The number of recommendations for a discipline or performance action the Police Ombudsman has made for an officer/staff member has in general fluctuated over the last five years (Table 20).

⁴ The Police (Performance and Attendance) Regulations (NI) 2016 and The Police (Conduct) Regulations (NI) 2016 came into force on 1 June 2016

Policy recommendations made to the PSNI

Key Takeaways

- The Police Ombudsman's Office forwarded a total of 35 policy recommendations to Police during 2025/26.
- These were made up of two at a strategic level, 30 at an operational level and three areas for minor improvement.

Eleven recommendations were accepted. These were in relation to preliminary breath testing (equipment and records), wording on charge sheets to ensure protection of vulnerable victims from potential risk, custody processes and records, handover of detainee's property to other authorities, and awareness of witness intimidation categories and response to same.

One recommendation was not accepted. This was in relation to information from neighbouring jurisdictions about persons unlawfully at large to be made available on PSNI computer systems without the need for further checks on Police National Computer (PNC).

A response is awaited in respect of the remaining twenty-three recommendations. These relate to various matters including forensic test results, wheelchair accessible vehicles, guidance and training, preliminary breath tests, MOU with NIR/Irish Rail, firearms, digital evidence and victim contact.

INFORMAL RESOLUTION

Complaints made that are of a less serious nature, usually about incivility or certain types of failure in duties, may be considered for Informal Resolution. This involves an officer/staff member speaking to both the officer(s)/staff member(s) complained about and the complainant with a view of reaching a satisfactory resolution. Prior to proceeding with this process the consent of the complainant must be obtained.

During 2025/26, 23% of complaints received were considered to be suitable for Informal Resolution and of these 64% of the persons making the complaint agreed for it to be dealt with through Informal Resolution (Table 22).

During 2025/26, 299 complaints reached a successful conclusion through the informal resolution process (Table 23) which is over three fifths (62%) of all complaints reaching a conclusion from this process.

PSNI OFFICERS

In previous years this report contained information on the number of officers with multiple complaints received within a one year period. Following a review the production of this data ceased in March 2024. Information for previous years is included in the spreadsheet that accompanies this report.

In 2025/26, 38% of the complaints recorded by the Police Ombudsman's Office had an identified officer associated with them. The other complaints which do not identify an officer tend to be those which have been closed at an early stage, such as those which were not a matter for the Police Ombudsman to investigate and those where the complainant did not fully engage.

Most of the officers (86%) identified within complaints in 2025/26 were Constables, while fewer complaints were received about officers of higher ranks (Table 24). This is a similar profile to that of the composition of officers within the police service.

APPENDIX 1: STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 5: Complaints received, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Year	Complaints
2021/22	2,959
2022/23	3,197
2023/24	3,368
2024/25	3,095
2025/26	3,037

Table 6: Complaints and matters, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Complaints/Other Matters	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Complaints from members of the public	2,794	3,056	3,224	2,990	2,906
Matters referred to the Office	21	13	9	11	26
Matters the Police Ombudsman has chosen to investigate	13	16	11	7	17
Other	131	112	124	87	88
Total	2,959	3,197	3,368	3,095	3,037

Table 7: Complaints received by month, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Month Complaint Received	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
April	211	264	286	229	224
May	237	245	343	249	252
June	287	310	314	234	236
July	258	257	295	344	269
August	248	280	325	268	276
September	251	250	273	240	301
October	270	224	285	267	271
November	249	302	300	288	237
December	188	206	200	218	226
January	268	254	258	263	247
February	248	300	241	270	238
March	244	305	248	225	260
Total	2,959	3,197	3,368	3,095	3,037

Table 8: Complaints received by organisation, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Organisation	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	2,898	3,155	3,340	3,083	3,026
Harbour Police	6	0	2	5	3
Certain Home Office Officials	0	2	1	1	2
Northern Ireland Airport Constabulary	1	4	1	3	1
National Crime Agency	1	0	1	1	0
Ministry of Defence Police	4	1	0	0	0
Other / Unknown	49	35	23	2	5
Total	2,959	3,197	3,368	3,095	3,037

Table 9: Complaints received by where the initial complaint was made, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Source of complaints	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Directly with Police Ombudsman's Office	2,485	2,850	3,038	2,920	2,880
Directly with the Police	112	96	71	35	17
Via Representative	197	110	115	35	9
Other (includes referrals)	165	141	144	105	131
Total	2,959	3,197	3,368	3,095	3,037

Table 10: Main situations giving rise to complaints, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Main Situation	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Criminal Investigation	902	1,021	1,186	1,041	829
Arrest	420	462	484	377	433
Police Enquiries	187	149	158	121	230
Traffic incident	236	254	244	271	183
Domestic Incident	230	225	262	178	178
Search	161	203	172	122	166
Police response to matters reported	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	140
Police response to VAWG	n/a	1	3	17	133
Parade/Demonstrations	20	12	20	26	45
Concern for safety/welfare check	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	44
Abuse of Position for Sexual Purposes	7	10	5	20	23
Domestic Violence	29	34	42	37	21
Abuse of Position	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	46	20	14	1	1
Other	645	678	614	753	464
Unknown	76	128	164	126	131
Total	2,959	3,197	3,368	3,095	3,037

Table 11: Complaints received by police district, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Police District	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
A: Belfast City	835	918	948	869	899
B: Lisburn & Castlereagh	120	140	129	146	134
C: Ards & North Down	220	195	257	191	213
D: Newry, Mourne & Down	164	198	186	246	189
E: Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	259	312	295	283	277
F: Mid Ulster	135	125	164	136	115
G: Fermanagh & Omagh	120	180	185	191	115
H: Derry City & Strabane	188	204	226	185	218
J: Causeway Coast & Glens	221	232	224	196	159
K: Mid & East Antrim	230	217	231	184	179
L: Antrim & Newtownabbey	230	205	203	214	221
Other organisation/ Unknown	237	271	320	254	318
Total	2,959	3,197	3,368	3,095	3,037

Table 12: Number of allegations received, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Year	Allegations
2021/22	5,210
2022/23	5,250
2023/24	6,002
2024/25	5,315
2025/26	5,463

Table 13: Types of allegations⁵, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Types of Allegations	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Failure in Duty	2,516	2,561	3,061	2,647	2,959
Oppressive Behaviour	1,244	1,170	1,154	949	914
Incivility	286	325	353	415	433
Police Searches	194	195	228	201	229
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	207	239	273	212	214
Mishandling of Property	106	110	143	97	103
Malpractice	47	47	77	60	74
Discriminatory Behaviour	55	34	67	53	66
Traffic	60	60	55	122	42
Section 55 Referral	34	30	21	21	41
Allegations relating to the 'Troubles'	45	19	8	0	0
Other	416	460	562	538	388
Total	5,210	5,250	6,002	5,315	5,463

⁵ A full breakdown of allegation sub types is available in the accompanying Excel spreadsheet

Table 14: Failure in Duty allegations, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Failure in Duty Allegations	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Conduct of police investigations / incident response	1,278	1,341	1,592	1,366	1,489
Failure in contact	336	296	416	356	420
Failure in record management	263	269	336	263	316
Other failure in duty	260	257	296	296	286
Failure in duty of care	141	148	146	153	181
Conduct in custody suite	124	141	173	141	144
Failure to act impartially	114	109	102	72	123
Total	2,516	2,561	3,061	2,647	2,959

Table 15: Oppressive Behaviour allegations, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Oppressive Behaviour Allegations	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Oppressive Conduct (OC Not Involving Assault)	706	655	663	460	424
Other Assault	348	337	341	330	321
Harassment (Series of Like Incidents)	139	131	122	130	120
Serious non-sexual assault	11	11	13	10	29
Sexual Assault	40	36	15	19	20
Total	1,244	1,170	1,154	949	914

Table 16: Incivility allegations, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Incivility Allegations	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Incivility By Officer On The Telephone	90	98	117	139	146
Other incivility	72	92	88	117	105
Incivility At Domestic Residence	71	73	92	85	97
Incivility At Police Station	24	32	38	43	50
Incivility When Stopped For A Traffic Offence	24	29	17	31	32
Incivility To Person Under 18 Years	5	1	1	0	3
Total	286	325	353	415	433

Table 17: Allegations regarding the use of police equipment, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Police equipment	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Handcuffs	61	58	66	53	42
CS / PAVA spray	20	30	39	31	25
Baton	8	7	12	6	13
Taser	22	11	21	11	8
AEP/Baton Round/Riot Gun	9	6	7	7	6
Misuse/Discharge Firearm	5	7	3	2	6
Spit and bite guards	47	7	11	4	5
Other	2	6	1	5	1
Total	174	132	160	119	106

Table 18: Complaint closures, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Complaint Closures	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total Complaints Closed	3,101	3,301	3,343	3,283	2,999
Complaints closed following initial assessment	580	643	757	772	679
Not a matter for the Police Ombudsman	352	421	516	513	459
Call in/Call out - No Further action or Notification only	142	102	114	90	92
Other (Initial Assessment)	86	120	127	169	128
Complaints closed following initial enquiries	918	854	868	751	713
Complainant did not fully engage	772	678	708	569	548
Ill-founded	21	25	23	15	10
Withdrawn	101	114	105	112	114
Other (Initial Enquiries)	24	37	32	55	41
Complaints resolved informally	279	233	254	213	299
Complaints closed that relate to the 'Troubles'	52	32	27	338	22
Complaints closed following a full investigation	1,272	1,539	1,437	1,209	1,286
Complaint substantiated or an issue of concern	143	203	143	148	196
Not substantiated and no issue of concern identified	1,129	1,336	1,294	1,061	1,090

Table 19: Occasions Police Ombudsman recommended prosecution/no prosecution⁶ for an officer/staff member, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Recommendations to PPS	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Prosecution recommended	30	11	13	12	12
No prosecution recommended	135	168	191	151	131
Total	165	179	204	163	143

Table 20: Occasions Police Ombudsman recommended⁷ a discipline or performance action for an officer/staff member, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Regulations Introduced June 2016)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Performance	108	119	95	118	147
Misconduct Meeting	51	53	113	36	43
Misconduct Hearing	13	20	6	6	6
Total	172	192	214	160	196

⁶ This is the number of times a file was sent to the PPS recommending that either an officer or staff member should be prosecuted or not prosecuted. If multiple complaints are received about the same incident the recommendation will only be counted once.

⁷ This is the number of times a discipline or performance recommendations was sent to the PSNI or another organisation for an officer or staff member. Where more than one complaint was received about the same incident the recommendation is only counted once.

Table 21: Outcome of policy recommendations made, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Policy Recommendations made to PSNI	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Accepted (Full/Partial)	38	31	16	10	11
Already in Place	5	10	2	5	0
Alternative solution	3	1	2	1	0
Not Accepted (Rejected)	1	3	2	4	1
Duplicate	0	1	0	0	0
LIVE (Await response)	3	3	10	28	23
Total	50	49	32	48	35

Table 22: Complaints suitable for Informal Resolution with consent obtained, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Complaints Received	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of Complaints	2,959	3,197	3,368	3,095	3,037
Complaints suitable for IR	601	505	528	537	687
Consent for IR obtained	398	363	363	394	439
Consent for IR not obtained	203	142	165	143	248

Table 23: Outcome of Informal Resolution process, 2021/22 to 2025/26

IR Resolved	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Successful	277	232	259	215	299
Failed	94	102	97	79	106
Withdrawn	0	6	4	8	4
Total	371	340	360	302	409

Table 24: Rank of officer in the PSNI complained about, 2021/22 to 2025/26

Rank	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Constable	1,732	1,792	1,867	1,714	1,919
Sergeant	209	245	276	215	228
Designated Civilian	35	28	14	27	53
Inspector and Above	52	64	63	52	34

APPENDIX 2: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

To help understand the information in this report, we have provided this short summary of the police complaints service in Northern Ireland and how it works.

What we do

The Police Ombudsman's Office provides for the independent and impartial investigation of complaints about the police in Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman is committed to providing a police complaints service in the way they think is best suited to secure the confidence of the public and the police. The Police Ombudsman believes that for such confidence to be forthcoming, it is essential that people are informed about the nature of the work the Office carries out.

The Police Ombudsman has the remit to investigate the conduct of officers within the following organisations which operate in Northern Ireland:

- Police Service of Northern Ireland including Designated Civilians
- Belfast Harbour Police
- Belfast International Airport Police
- National Crime Agency (NCA) officers in Northern Ireland
- Certain Home Office staff using police functions in Northern Ireland
- Ministry of Defence Police in Northern Ireland
- Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery.

The Office deals primarily with complaints made by members of the public about the conduct of police officers. It also deals with matters referred to it by the PSNI Chief Constable. The following are incidents that the Chief Constable is required to refer to the Police Ombudsman:

- Any fatal road traffic collisions involving police officers
- Any death which may have occurred as a result of the actions of a police officer
- Any other serious allegation

It also deals with matters referred to it by the NIPB, the DoJ and the PPS.

The Police Ombudsman also has the power to initiate an investigation without a complaint having been made if it appears to them to be desirable and in the public interest.

In most circumstances the Police Ombudsman can only investigate incidents which have occurred in the previous 12 months. However, there is no time limit on the investigation of grave matters, or where exceptional circumstances exist.

The Police Ombudsman does not investigate complaints about officers whose conduct has been the subject of disciplinary or criminal proceedings; or complaints about off-duty police officers, unless the fact that they are a police officer is relevant to the complaint. The Office also does not investigate matters relating to the direction and control of the police service by the Chief Constable.

How we deal with complaints

All complaints are recorded on our Case Handling System, even where they are later determined to be outside the remit of the Office.

A complaint from a member of the public will invariably include a number of allegations. For example, if a person alleges a police officer pushed them *and* was rude to them, it would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations on the system.

Once a complaint has been received, it will become subject of an initial assessment. This will involve logging it onto our system and making an assessment as to whether the matter is something the Police Ombudsman's Office can deal with and if so, how best to do so.

If the complaint is something we deal with, the Office will consider if the matter can be resolved informally rather than being sent straight for investigation. Before we decide to take the Informal Resolution approach, the person who made the complaint must agree. If this proves unsuccessful, the Police Ombudsman will refer the complaint for investigation.

When a matter is suitable for investigation, a complaints officer or an investigations officer will set about making the initial enquiries necessary before an investigation commences. This will involve getting more information from the complainant, such as an official statement of complaint.

When a formal investigation has been completed, if the evidence indicates that police officers may have committed a criminal offence or breached the police Code of Ethics, the Police Ombudsman can recommend that they are prosecuted and/or disciplined.

Where the Police Ombudsman considers that a criminal offence may have been committed by a member of the police, they must send a copy of the investigation report to the PPS, making appropriate recommendations. The PPS then decides whether or not to prosecute the police officer under investigation.

If the Police Ombudsman decides that no criminal offence has been committed, they are required to consider whether it is appropriate to recommend disciplinary

proceedings. If the Chief Constable is unwilling to administer the recommended discipline, the Police Ombudsman may, direct them to do so.

APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary has been designed to assist users of our statistical information to understand the terms which we use to describe data contained in the statistical bulletin. The terms are listed in alphabetical order.

Allegation

Each complaint can be broken down into one or more allegations. These are all the individual behaviours or issues being complained about. For example, if a person alleges a police officer pushed them *and* was rude to them, it would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations on the system.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by or on behalf of a member of the public about a member of the police service or an officer of another service over which the Office has jurisdiction.

For the purpose of clarity of reporting, the term complaints refer to complaints made by members of the public, matters referred to the Office from other organisation, and matters that the Police Ombudsman has decided to investigate.

Historical Investigation

This is an investigation (potentially criminal and /or misconduct) into the actions of police where the allegation(s) made are considered Grave or Exceptional, "Troubles" related (1969-1998) and predates the establishment of the Good Friday Agreement, 10 April 1998.

Informally resolved (Informal Resolution)

This is a process offered to complainants who have made less serious allegations, e.g. rudeness or incivility. It involves a senior police officer speaking to both the officer(s) involved and the complainant with a view to reaching a satisfactory resolution of the complaint. It requires that a record of the outcome has been obtained from police confirming that the matter has been resolved.

Misconduct Hearing

This is a discipline action under the Police (Conduct) Regulations (NI) 2016 and came into force on 1 June 2016. It is a meeting where the officer may be dealt with by a disciplinary action up to and including a final written warning.

Misconduct Meeting

This is a discipline action under the Police (Conduct) Regulations (NI) 2016 and came into force on 1 June 2016. It is a hearing where the officer may be dealt with by a disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Notification only

These are situations where the Police Ombudsman's Office is notified of an incident but determines at an early stage that there is no requirement for any further investigation.

Performance

A recommendation to initiate unsatisfactory performance procedures for an officer.

Section 55 referral

Not all matters the Police Ombudsman deals with come to us as complaints from members of the public. Certain public bodies, including the PSNI, the Policing Board, the Department of Justice and the Public prosecution Service can refer matters to us for consideration. This is done under section 55 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.

APPENDIX 4: DATA AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY

Statistical information on complaints and allegations is derived from the CHS, an integrated and comprehensive ICT system that covers all key aspects of receiving and processing a complaint. It captures data about the complainant, the complained about parties, the incident and allegations made. Data can be downloaded and exported to a number of commonly used software packages for analysis (Excel, Access, SPSS⁸). In addition the Office uses the DI Diver reporting tool and the CHS has a number of management reports run directly from a menu on the system.

The data used for this publication was extracted from the CHS on the 13th April 2026, and thus includes all information recorded on the system up to the 12th April 2026.

Data quality

CHS data quality is considered to be high. The system has been designed to limit the incidence of inaccurate data through the use of measures such as logical validation checks, drop down menus for data input and a minimum of free text input. The Police Ombudsman has a dedicated team who assure the quality of CHS content. All data input is completely auditable and allows for an effective quality control procedure to review and, where necessary, amend key data for the purposes of accurate reporting. When considered necessary, focused data cleansing exercises of key fields are also conducted. Additionally, complete audits of fields with small numbers associated are conducted.

As stated above, substantial validation and quality control procedures are in place to ensure that the data derived from CHS are of high quality. However, there is still the possibility of a small number of errors arising from data input, missing data, failure to update data and errors in communication. The Police Ombudsman estimates that the level of this error is so small that it has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting. However, where errors are identified, corrections are made to reports as soon as practicable. Further details are set out in the Police Ombudsman [statement of revision and errors strategy](#) .

Revisions

The statistics included in this bulletin are taken from a live system and may be subject to future revisions. This means that total number of complaints and allegations may change slightly between those published in previous bulletins.

Revisions can be made for a number of reasons but are mainly due to more information coming to light during the natural course of the Office's work, and the system being updated accordingly. This includes the identification of residual matters; allegations identified by the Investigator that were not previously complained about by the member of the public, such as, the failure of a police officer to complete their

⁸ SPSS is a statistical software package developed for use by social scientists.

notebook, anomalies in custody records or failure to supervise adequately. They typically account for fewer than 2% of all allegations (approximately between 60 to 100 residual allegations annually).

The tables below shows the scale of revisions made between statistics in this bulletin and those in the previous bulletin in June 2024. It demonstrates that the revisions have little impact on the overall trends presented in this bulletin.

Table 25: Revisions made to the number of complaints received between this publication and the previous publication in June 2025.

Financial Year	Previously Published Figures (June 25)	Current Published Figures (June 26)	Scale of Revision (number)	Scale of Revision
2021/22	2,959	2,959	0	0.00%
2022/23	3,197	3,197	0	0.00%
2023/24	3,368	3,368	0	0.00%
2024/25	3,085	3,095	10	0.32%

Table 26: Revisions made to the number of allegations received between this publication and the previous publication in June 2025.

Financial Year	Previously Published Figures (June 25)	Current Published Figures (June 26)	Scale of Revision (number)	Scale of Revision
2021/22	5,210	5,210	0	0.00%
2022/23	5,249	5,250	1	0.02%
2023/24	6,002	6,002	0	0.00%
2024/25	5,214	5,315	101	1.94%

The Office's full strategy for revisions and errors can be found within the publications section of the [Office's website](#).

Data limitations

Because of the nature of some of the highly sensitive material handled by the Police Ombudsman in the investigation of cases, a small proportion of cases will have only limited information available on the CHS. On balance, the Police Ombudsman considers that the assurance of the privacy of the information and individuals associated with this small number of sensitive cases outweighs the need for full access to the data. In practice, the number of cases is so small that the restriction has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting.

Publication

This is an annual statistical bulletin, and publishes information in accordance with the obligation for the Police Ombudsman's Office to report performance on a financial year basis.

As the statistics were taken from a 'live' case handling system, the figures in this bulletin supersede those previously published.

The next annual statistical report is due to be published in June 2027. The exact date will be announced on the gov.uk [website](#) at least four weeks prior to publication.

In addition to the annual bulletin, quarterly updates are published throughout the year. They provide top level information on the number of complaints and allegations received; they are published on the 4th Thursday in the month following the end of the quarter.

Additional copies of this and other publications are available from:

**Information and Communications Unit
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
New Cathedral Buildings
11 Church Street Belfast
BT1 1PG**

Telephone: 028 9082 8600

Email: info@policeombudsman.org

These publications and other information about the work of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are also available on the Internet at:

[Statistics & Research | Police Ombudsman NI](#)