



# **Report on Complainant Satisfaction with Services provided by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland**

**Annual Survey  
2025/26**

**Published June 2026**

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## Introduction

This statistical report presents the results from the most recent 'Complainant Satisfaction Survey' carried out by the Police Ombudsman's Office (the Office) during 2025/26. The survey has been conducted in one form or another since 2001 with the results being used by the Office to determine how complainants felt about the service they received and how they felt they were treated by the staff who dealt with their complaint.

The results in this report are based on the information supplied in the questionnaires that were issued to complainants whose complaints were closed between April 2025 and March 2026.

During the year, the Information and Communication Unit issued 2,465 questionnaires and 275 were returned representing a 11% response rate. Response rates were higher in previous years (except in 2021/22; 11%) therefore care should be taken when interpreting the overall trend results.

Care should also be taken when comparing results to the 2020/21 survey. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, limits were placed on staff numbers in the Office which may have resulted in delays updating complainants or when dealing with complaints. This may have had a negative impact on the perception of staff and aspects of the service we provide.

This year's data have been compared with the previous nine years i.e. 2015/16<sup>1</sup> to 2025/26. Data for all years is available in the 'Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet 2025/26' which is published alongside this report in the statistics section of our [website](#).

## Official Statistics

This is an Official Statistics publication. Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Compliance with the Code gives confidence that the statistics are of public value, are of high quality and that they can be trusted. They are also produced free from any political interference.

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<sup>1</sup> Comparison made from 2015/16 due to changes in the questionnaire. See pg. 9. Further Information.

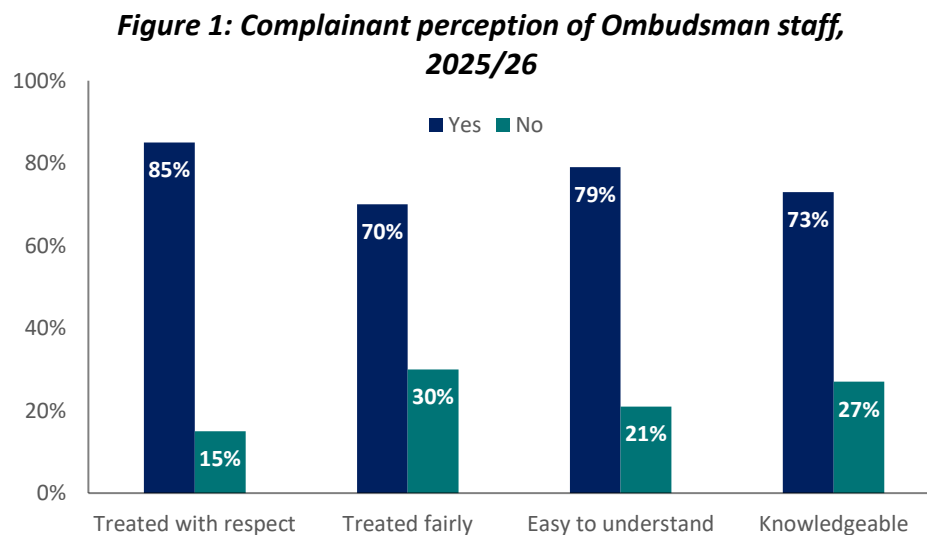
## Survey Findings

### Complainant's Perceptions of Ombudsman Staff

In 2025/26, 81% of respondents reported that they had spoken to a member of staff.

Of these:

- Over four fifths felt they were treated with respect,
- Seven out of ten felt they were treated fairly,
- Just under four fifths thought staff were easy to understand and
- Just under three quarters felt staff were knowledgeable (Figure 1).



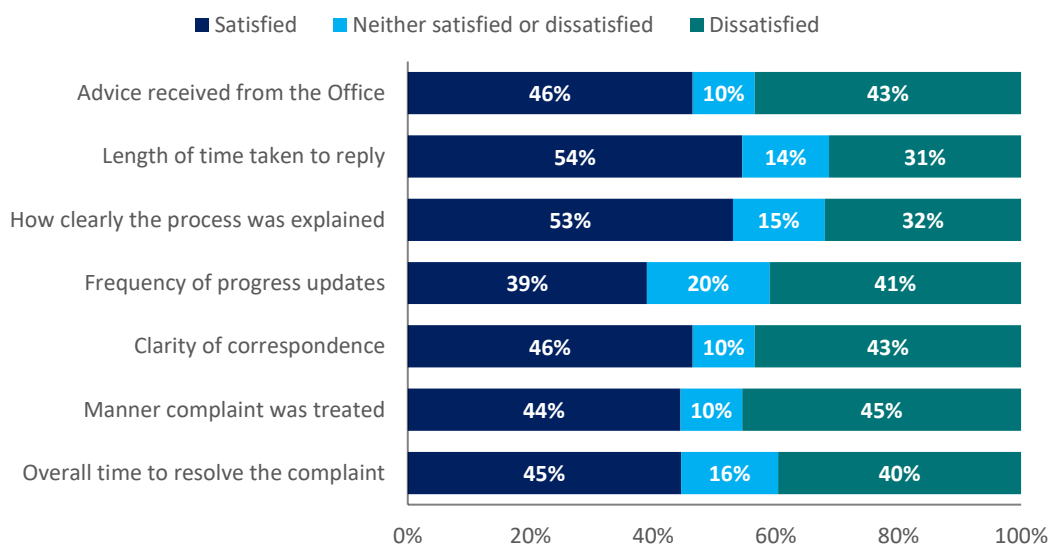
This year's survey shows complainant's perception of Ombudsman staff, when asked if they were treated with respect, treated fairly, easy to understand and if staff were knowledgeable is similar when compared with the previous number of years, despite a slight decrease between 2020/21 and 2021/22. In most cases, complainants perceived staff more favourably in earlier years especially when it came to being easy to understand and being knowledgeable.

**From this point forward the results are based on all respondents and not just those who had spoken with a member of staff.**

## Complainant’s satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

During 2025/26, complainants were more satisfied with the length of time taken to reply after initially making their complaint and how clearly the process was explained to them than they were for other aspects of the process. Complainants were more dissatisfied with the manner in which their complaint was treated, the advice they received from the Office and the clarity of correspondence (Figure 2).

*Figure 2: Complainant satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process, 2025/26*

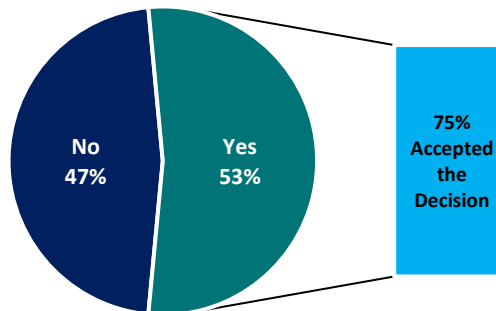


For all aspects of the complaints process, results from the survey show that generally, satisfaction levels have fluctuated over the last four or five years with the results reported this year being higher than last year, 2022/23 and 2020/21 for four aspects of the process; advice received from the Office, length of time to reply after initially making the complaint, the manner in which the complaint was treated and the overall time to resolve the complaint. Results also show that satisfaction levels were higher for all aspects of the complaints process in earlier years, i.e. pre-Covid years.

## Complainant's understanding and acceptance of the final decision

In 2025/26, just over half of complainants reported that they understood the reason the Office gave for reaching the final decision about their complaint. Of those who did understand the reason we gave, three quarters accepted this decision (Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Proportion of complainants that accepted and understood the final decision about their complaint, 2025/26*



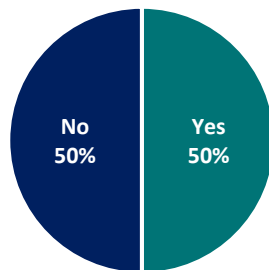
Results have remained consistent over the years although complainants were less likely to understand the reasoning behind the final decision about their complaint in 2020/21 and 2022/23.

Results also show respondents were less likely to accept the final decision about their complaint in 2020/21. However, the proportion of complainants who accepted the final decision about their complaint was higher for all other years with results ranging from 69% to 79%.

## Complaint dealt with independently

During 2025/26, half of complainants felt the Office had dealt with their complaint independently (Figure 4).

*Figure 4: Proportion of complainants that thought the Office dealt with their complaint independently, 2025/26*

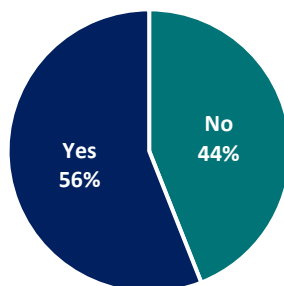


The proportion of complainants that felt the Office dealt with their complaint independently is similar when comparing 2025/26 with six of the previous 11 reporting years. Complainants were less likely to feel the Office dealt with their complaint independently in 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2024/25 than they were this year.

## Contact the Office again

Over half of complainants in 2025/26 reported that they would contact the Office again if they had a new complaint about the police (Figure 5).

*Figure 5: Proportion of complainants that would contact the Office again if they had a new complaint about the police, 2025/26*



Results show, when compared with this year, the proportion of complainants that said they would contact the Office again if they had a new complaint about the police is similar since 2018/19, apart from in 2020/21 when complainants were less likely to answer this question positively. Complainants were more likely to contact the office again if they had a new complaint in earlier years.

## Appendix 1: Results Tables

**Table 1: Perceptions of Ombudsman staff, 2025/26<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Perception</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Treated with respect	85%	15%	206
Treated fairly	70%	30%	193
Easy to understand	79%	21%	194
Knowledgeable	73%	27%	193

**Table 2: Satisfaction / dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process, 2025/26**

<b>Aspect of the complaints process</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Neither satisfied or dissatisfied</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Advice received from the Office	46%	10%	43%	271
Length of time to reply	54%	14%	31%	270
Clarity of explanation	53%	15%	32%	269
Frequency of updates	39%	20%	41%	269
Clarity of correspondence	46%	10%	43%	267
Manner of treatment of complaint	44%	10%	45%	271
Overall time to resolve complaint	45%	16%	40%	270

**Table 3: Final decision, 2025/26**

<b>Final decision</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Understand the final decision	53%	47%	265
Accept the final decision*	75%	25%	138

\* Of those who understood the reason the Office gave for reaching the final decision about the complaint

**Table 4: Dealt with independently & use the Office again, 2025/26**

<b>Independent &amp; Use again</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Dealt with independently	50%	50%	256
Use again	56%	44%	261

<sup>2</sup> Questions asked to complainants who reported they had spoken to a member of staff.

## **Appendix 2: Additional Information**

### **Data Use**

The results of this survey are used to monitor and evaluate the service provided to those who have made complaints to the Office and identify any issues that arise in a timely manner. The data may also be used to answer enquiries from members of the public, key stakeholders and any other departmental body.

### **Data quality**

The survey forms are processed and posted out by the Information & Communication Unit following the closure of a complaint. For instances where there is only an email address provided for the complainant a digital copy of the form is sent. As well as allowing the complainant the opportunity to respond to the survey by post we created a process whereby the individual could scan a QR code on the invitation letter and complete the form online. Out of the 2,465 surveys sent we sent out (by post or email) 66 responses were received as a result of scanning the QR code, representing a 3% response rate to this method. The data from these were recorded in Citizen Space and downloaded at the end of the reporting year. The information that is detailed in the returned forms is entered into a dataset and stored electronically. Supervisors undertake a 10% data quality check to ensure the data has been recorded accurately. The data is considered to be of high quality however there is a possibility of a small number of errors arising from data input, for example, due to missing fields, inaccurate data recording due to human error etc. It is estimated that the level of error is so small as to have no impact on the quality of the statistical reporting.

Acting on government advice, the Office closed in mid-March 2020 to all but essential staff. This resulted in survey forms not being issued for February 2020 and March 2020 closures. The Information & Communication Unit issued all survey forms for 2020/21, however, due to the restrictions on staff numbers in the Office as a result of COVID, we were unable to issue reminders. Issuing reminders is an important way to increase response rates to a survey and as can be seen for 2021/22, if not done, can negatively impact on response rates.

## **Understanding the statistics**

Questionnaires are normally issued to all complainants when their complaint has been closed. However, in some cases forms are not issued, for example when the complainant did not provide their address. Questionnaires are not issued in the following circumstances:

- Complaints that have been closed as 'duplicate' or 'repetitive'
- Complaints where it is known that the complainant is deceased
- When the investigation was not a complaint from a member of the public (Section 55 referral, Call-Ins, notifications or a complaint made on or behalf of an organisation)
- Complaints that were dealt with by the History Directorate (complaints about the 'Troubles')
- When the complainant is under 18 years of age.

Sometimes a complainant will request to not be included in future surveys, whilst staff will try to encourage them to complete the survey, if they still do not wish to be included then no questionnaire will be sent.

## **Changes to the Survey**

No amendments were made to the survey questions during 2025/26. However, the statistics team introduced additional checks during the data processing stages. These additional steps were added to accurately capture any cases that had been re-opened between sending out the original survey and the reminders and to identify any individuals whose address may have been amended so that we could make the necessary changes prior to survey issue.

During 2015/16, several changes were made to the survey to reflect the new service charter produced by the Office. New questions were added and some of the previous questions removed. Also during this year the Likert scale used for the 'satisfaction' question (Question 3) was reduced from five categories to three and from 2017/18 this reverted to five categories. Therefore, the reader should exercise caution when comparing trend information across this time period.

## **Conventions**

Statistics provided in the tables may not add up to 100% due to the effect of rounding. Statistical significance tests have been carried out on the results and any difference are only reported where they have been found to be statistically significant at the 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ) level of probability (two-tailed). This means that for any observed result that is found to be statistically significant one can be 95% confident that this has not happened by chance.

Figures may be subject to minor revisions and these will be notified in accordance with our revisions policy which can be accessed via the Police Ombudsman's website. Details of which can be found on the back page of this report.

The category of "Satisfied" in this report includes "Very Satisfied" and "Satisfied". The category of "Dissatisfied" includes "Very Dissatisfied" and "Dissatisfied".

## **Further information**

Information showing trends from 2006/07 (where applicable) are available in the accompanying excel spreadsheet. Results from surveys prior to 2006/07 can be found on the Office's website.

## Appendix 3: Questionnaire

### SATISFACTION FORM

#### IN CONFIDENCE

Please take this opportunity to tell us about the service you received

**1. Did you speak to a member of staff?**

YES (please go to question 2)

NO (please go to question 3)

**2. If yes, (i.e. you did speak to a member of staff, did you think they:**

Treated you with respect                      Yes or No

Treated you fairly                                Yes or No

Were easy to understand                      Yes or No

Were knowledgeable                            Yes or No

**3. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with each of the following aspects of service?**

*(Using the following answer categories on a Likert scale: very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied)*

The advice you received from the Office

The length of time we took to reply after you initially made your complaint

How clearly the process was explained to you

How often you were told about the progress of your complaint

The clarity of our correspondence

The manner in which we treated your complaint

The overall time taken to resolve your complaint

Thinking about the final closure letter you received:

**4. Did you understand the reasons we gave for reaching our final decision about your complaint?**

Yes or No

**5. Did you accept why we reached this decision?**

Yes or No

**6. Do you think that we dealt with your complaint independently?**

Yes or No

**7. Would you contact us again if you had a new complaint about the police?**

Yes or No

**8. If you have any further comments about the service you received please detail them below.**

THANK-YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY FORM



Additional copies of this and other publications are available from:

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

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