



Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Quarterly Statistical Update to 30th June 2019

Published July 2019

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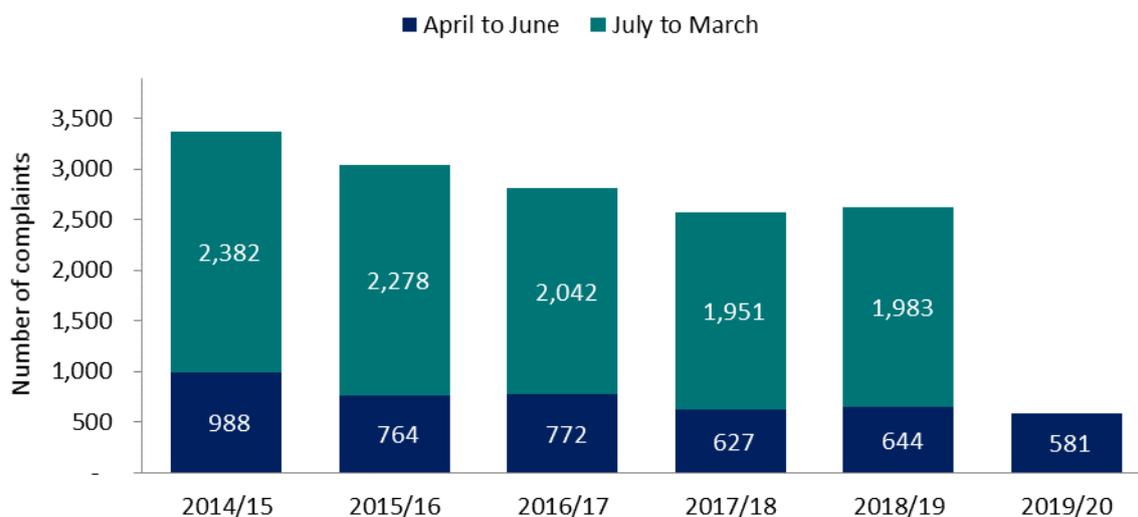
Statistical Update to 30th June 2019, published on 25th July 2019

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 30th June 2019. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 18th July 2019.

Complaints Received

The Office received just over 580 complaints between April and June 2019. This is a 10% 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 period, when compared with the previous five years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2014/15 to June 2019



Main Complaint Factor

During the first quarter of 2019/20, criminal investigation was the most common main factor¹ underlying complaints, accounting for just over 30% of complaints received during that time. Arrest was the second most common factor underlying complaints. This continues to be the normal trend observed for complaint factors.

As the numbers are still relatively small at this time of the reporting year, care should be taken when interpreting any fluctuations in the numbers of complaints, however, during the first quarter of the year, all but three of the ten known complaints factors decreased in number when compared with the same time period last year.

Criminal investigation decreased more than the other complaint factors during this time.

Complaints regarding traffic related incidents had the largest increase during this time (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between April to June 2018 and April to June 2019

	April to June 2018	April to June 2019	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	203	174	-29	-14%
Arrest	93	84	-9	-10%
Traffic Related Incident	45	65	20	-
Search	38	38	0	-
Domestic Incident	38	31	-7	-
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	29	25	-4	-
Domestic Violence	11	12	1	-
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	8	7	-1	-
Parades/Demonstrations	5	3	-2	-
Other	132	120	-12	-9%
Unknown	42	22	-20	-
Total	644	581	-63	-10%

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

¹ The main complaint factor refers to the main situation giving rise to the complaint.

Complaints Received by Police District

The number of complaints decreased in 7 of the 11 police districts between April and June 2019 when compared with last year. District A had the largest percentage decrease during this time (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district between April to June 2018 and April to June 2019

	April to June 2018	April to June 2019	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	193	168	-25	-13%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	29	19	-10	-
District C - Ards & North Down	38	36	-2	-
District D – Newry, Mourne & Down	35	35	0	-
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	60	46	-14	-
District F - Mid Ulster	21	24	3	-
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	29	21	-8	-
District H - Derry City & Strabane	49	41	-8	-
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	39	45	6	-
District K - Mid & East Antrim	37	34	-3	-
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	47	47	0	-
Unknown / Other Organisation	67	65	-2	-3%
Northern Ireland	644	581	-63	-10%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received just under 880 allegations during the first three months of 2019/20. This is the lowest number of allegations received during this time when compared with each of the previous five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2014/15 to June 2019



Allegation Type

Almost all allegation types decreased in number or remained unchanged during the first quarter of 2019/20 when compared with the same time period last year. Allegations about failure in duty had the largest percentage decrease during this time (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between April to June 2018 and April to June 2019

	April to June 2018/19	April to June 2019/20	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	472	408	-64	-14%
Oppressive Behaviour	195	176	-19	-10%
Incivility	66	44	-22	-
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	46	41	-5	-
Search	52	36	-16	-
Mishandling of Property	22	22	0	-
Traffic	9	14	5	-
Malpractice	14	13	-1	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	9	9	0	-
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	7	6	-1	-
Section 55 Referral	5	5	0	-
Other	92	103	11	12%
Total	989	877	-112	-11%

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

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 40 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between July 2018 and June 2019 (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 2019.

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution
June 2019	40

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 remit². The number of complaints also includes those matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman's Office from other organisations³, 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 account for around 1% to 2% of the allegations received.

² 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).

³ 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 or allegations 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 2018/19 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, 2018/19'. 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 \(NINIS\)](#). This information will be updated later in the year to include data for 2018/19.

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 published at the end of the financial year concentrating on the trends in the number of complaints and allegations received over the last five years.

The next quarterly update of 2019/20 is due to be published on Thursday 24th October 2019 and it will include statistics up to the 30th September 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, further contact details are available on the back page of this bulletin.

Contact details:

Information Directorate
Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
New Cathedral Buildings
11 Church Street
Belfast
BT1 1PG

Telephone: 028 9082 8634
Textphone: 028 9082 8756
Witness Appeal Line: 0800 0327 880
Email: info@policeombudsman.org

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



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