



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

Quarterly Statistical Bulletin up to 31st March 2022

Published April 2022

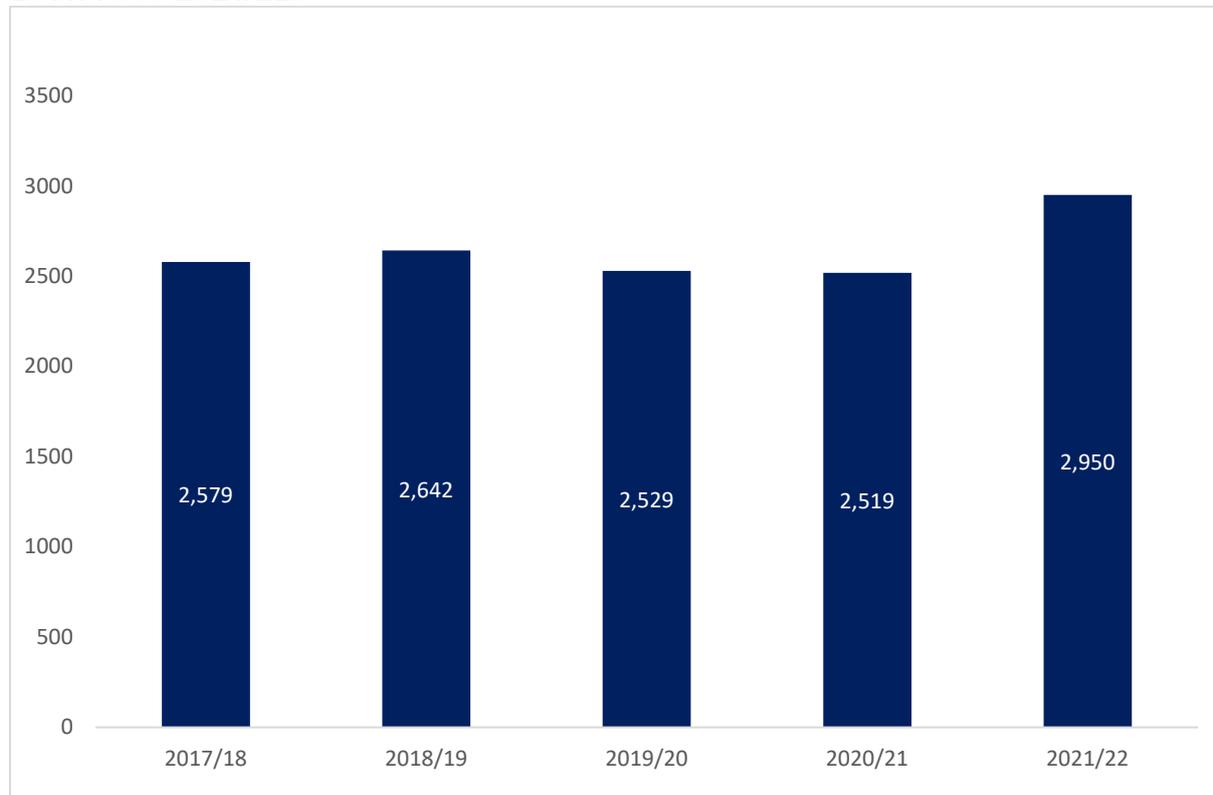
Statistical Update up to 31st March 2022, published on 28th April 2022

This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31st March 2022. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman's Case Handling System (CHS) on the 11th April 2022.

Complaints Received

The Office received 2,950 complaints during 2021/22. This is a 17% increase in the number of complaints received when compared with last year. It is also the highest number of complaints received during when compared with the previous four years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2017/18 to 2021/22.



Main Complaint Factor

'Criminal investigation' was the most common main factor¹ underlying complaints during 2021/22. This accounted for 30% of complaints received during this time.

Complaints arising from 'Police enforcing COVID-19 restrictions' had the largest percentage decrease during 2021/22 when compared with last year.

Complaints regarding 'Criminal investigation' had the largest percentage increase during this time.

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received during 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Main Complaint Factor	2020/21	2021/22	Difference	% Difference
Criminal Investigation	580	889	309	53%
Arrest	451	415	-36	-8%
Traffic Incident	188	237	49	26%
Domestic Incident	201	248	47	23%
Police Enquiries	144	184	40	28%
Search	184	157	-27	-15%
Police enforcing COVID-19 restrictions	53	35	-18	-34%
Parade/Demonstration	40	19	-21	-
Complaints relating to the 'troubles'	21	44	23	-
Other	579	645	66	11%
Unknown	78	77	-1	-1%
Total	2,519	2,950	431	17%

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 increased in 10 of the 11 known police districts during 2021/22 when compared with last year. District L – Antrim & Newtownabbey had the largest increase during this time (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison in the number of complaints received in each police district during 2020/21 and 2021/22.

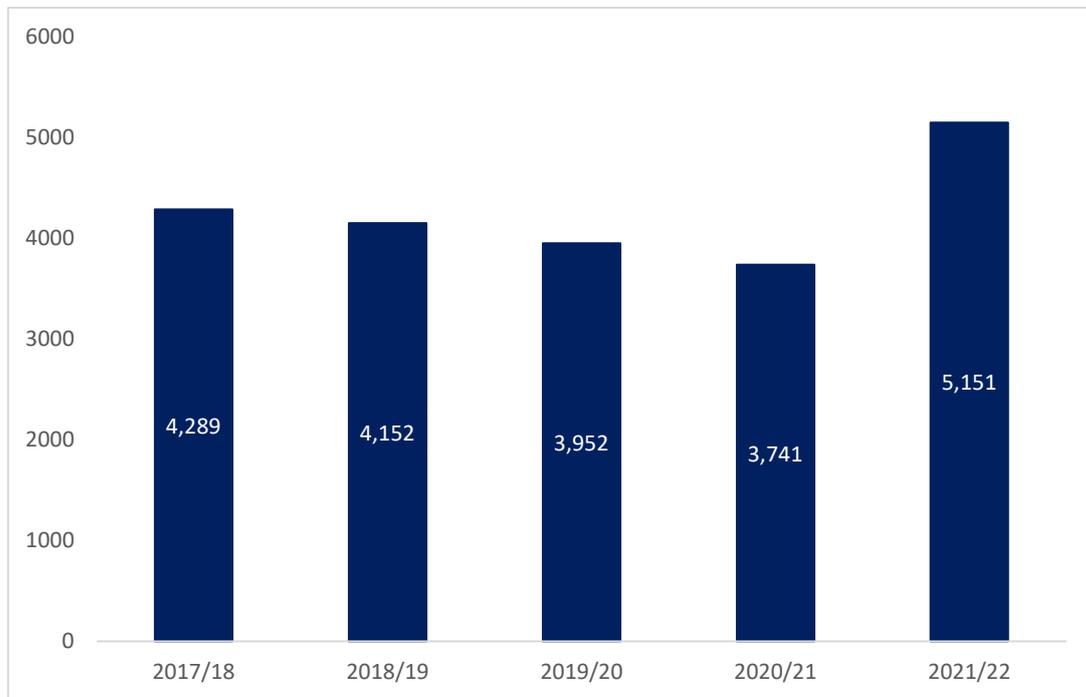
District	2020/21	2021/22	Difference	% Difference
District A - Belfast City	783	828	45	6%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh	116	118	2	2%
District C - Ards & North Down	167	214	47	28%
District D - Newry Mourne & Down	143	160	17	12%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	215	258	43	20%
District F - Mid Ulster	127	134	7	6%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	96	120	24	25%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	207	187	-20	-10%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	180	216	36	20%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	185	230	45	24%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	146	230	84	58%
Unknown/ Other Organisation	154	255	101	66%
Total	2,519	2,950	431	17%

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

Allegations Received

The Office received 5,151 allegations during 2021/22. This is the highest number of allegations received during this time when compared with each of the previous four years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2017/18 to 2021/22



Allegation Type

'Failure in duty' was the most common allegation type received during 2021/22, accounting for almost half of all allegations received. Allegations about 'Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention' had the largest percentage increase during this time when compared to last year (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the types of allegations received during 2020/21 and 2021/22 2022

Allegation Type	2020/21	2021/22	Difference	% Difference
Failure in Duty	1,690	2,484	794	47%
Oppressive Behaviour	764	1,228	464	61%
Incivility	267	283	16	6%
Search	171	192	21	12%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	106	206	100	94%
Mishandling Of Property	82	105	23	28%
Traffic	29	60	31	-
Discriminatory Behaviour	32	54	22	-
Section 55 Referral	12	32	20	-
Malpractice	57	43	-14	-25%
Allegations related to the 'Troubles'	20	43	23	-
Other	511	421	-90	-18%
Total	3,741	5,151	1,410	38%

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

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 22 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal Resolution between April 2021 and March 2022 (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 2021, September 2021, December 2021 & March 2022

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with 3+ complaints formally investigated or dealt with by Informal Resolution
June 2021	10
September 2021	14
December 2021	18
March 2022	22

Additional Information

Data Use

The information presented in this document has been produced to meet the needs of our key users who need timely information on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office. The main users of this quarterly bulletin are the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (PONI or the Office), the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB). This statistical update is the outcome of consultation with these users, it gives them access to information that they can use to form discussions at their regular meetings.

Understanding the Statistics

The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office includes complaints made by members of the public relating to the conduct of PSNI officers or those employed by other organisations under the Office's 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 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.

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

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).

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 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'. 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 will be updated later in the year to include figures for 2021/22.

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

The Police Ombudsman's 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 or later 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 first quarterly update of 2022/23 is due to be published on Thursday 28th July 2022 and it will include statistics up to the 30th June 2022.

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.



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: **Website:** www.policeombudsman.org