



# **Equality Monitoring Report: Survey of Complainants to the Police Ombudsman's Office**

**Annual Survey  
2024/25**

**Published June 2025**

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## Introduction

The Police Ombudsman's Office (the Office) collects data on each of the categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Every person that makes a complaint to the Office is asked to complete an equality monitoring survey form and completed forms are returned to the Information and Communication Unit within the Office. The data contained within these forms are used for statistical purposes only and are not shared with other members of staff.

The survey findings enable the Office to monitor access to the service provided to the public across the categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The questionnaire includes the categories of age, gender, marital status, employment status, sexual orientation, community background, race, country of birth, disability, dependants and political opinion.

This statistical report presents the results from the equality monitoring questionnaires that were issued to complainants for complaints received during 2024/25. During the year, we issued 2,687 survey forms<sup>1</sup> and 701 were completed and returned to the Office. This equates to a 26% response rate based on the number of forms issued and a 23% response rate when based on all public complaints received during the year.

The results detailed in this report are based on the 701 completed questionnaires we received, however we have been able to determine age and gender from information provided during the complaints process. Age therefore is known for 92% of all complainants and gender is known for 100%. All other Section 75 information was obtained from the survey forms only.

## 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> See Appendix 2: Data Limitations

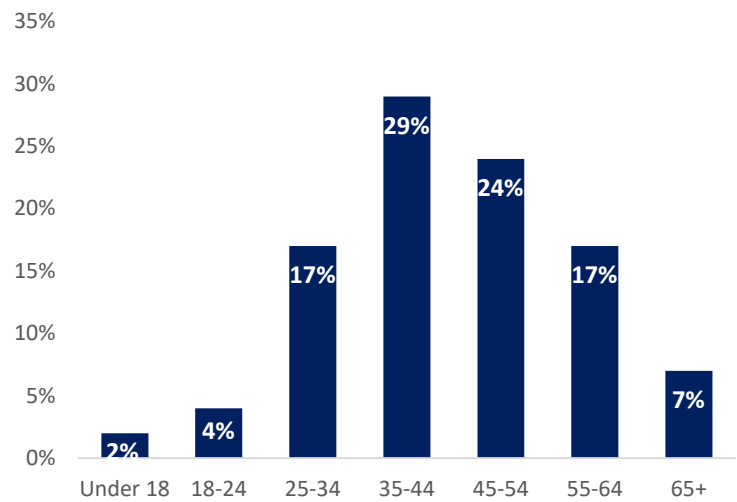
# Survey Findings

This section summarises the main findings from the Equality Monitoring Survey carried out during 2024/25. The data is based on the information supplied by complainants who completed the questionnaire. Age and gender was also determined from the complainant’s date of birth and salutation which was provided during the complaints process. In Appendix 1, the results are displayed in a series of tables.

## Age

During 2024/25, almost three in ten complainants were aged 35 to 44, less than a quarter were aged 45-54 and just under a fifth were aged either 25-34 or 55-64. Smaller proportions of complainants were aged under 25 and 65+ (Figure 1, Table 1).

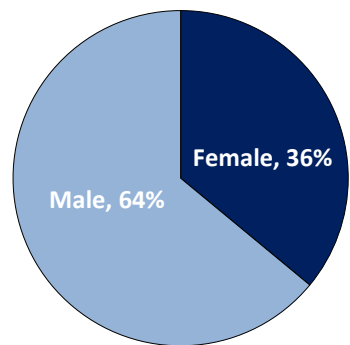
Figure 1: Complainants by Age Group, 2024/25



## Gender

During 2024/25, over three fifths of complaints were made by males and under two fifths were made by females (Figure 2, Table 2).

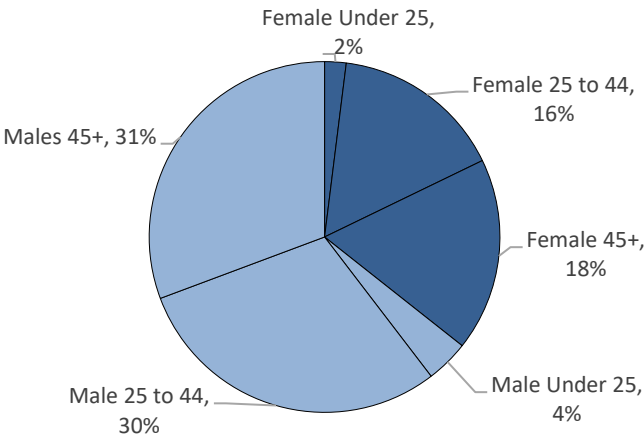
Figure 2: Gender of complainants, 2024/25



## Age and Gender

In terms of gender and age combined, over a third of complaints received during 2024/25 were from females aged over 25. Just over three fifths of complaints were made by males aged over 25 during this time (Figure 3, Table 3).

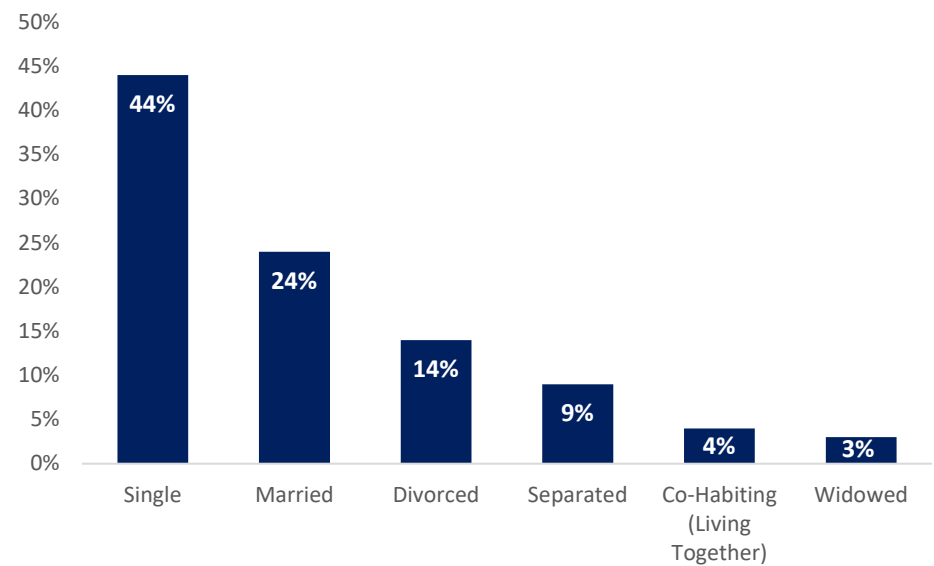
**Figure 3: Gender and Age Group, 2024/25**



## Marital Status

In 2024/25 the largest proportion of complaints were made by single people followed by people who were married or divorced. Smaller proportions of complaints were made by people who were separated, co-habiting or widowed (Figure 4, Table 4).

**Figure 4: Marital Status, 2024/25**



Note: Married includes those in a civil partnership.

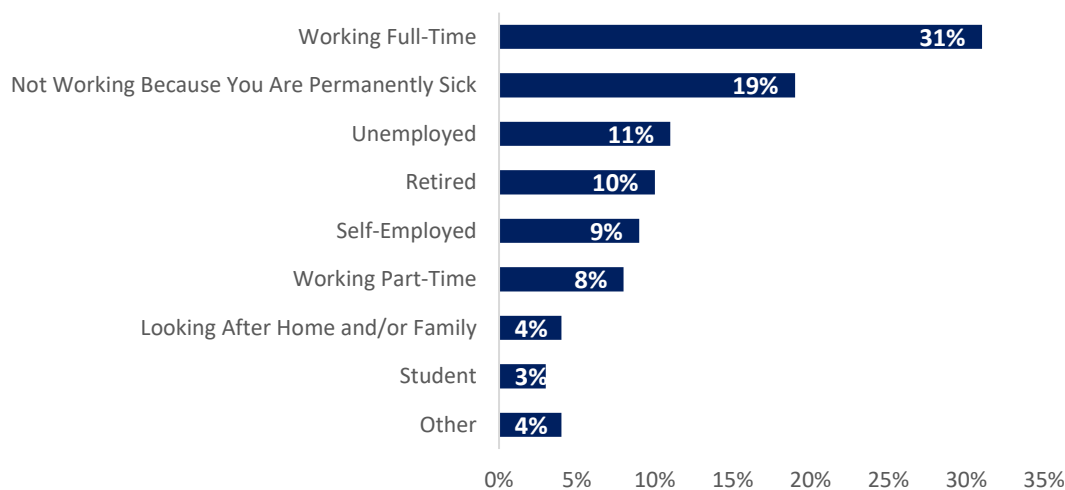
Divorced includes those formally in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved.

Widowed includes those who are a surviving member of a civil partnership.

## Employment Status

In 2024/25, just under half of complaints were made by a person who reported that they were working; either full-time, part-time or were self-employed. Less than a third of complainants were unemployed or were not working as they were permanently sick. Smaller proportions of complaints were made by people who were retired, looking after their home or family or were studying (Figure 5, Table 5).

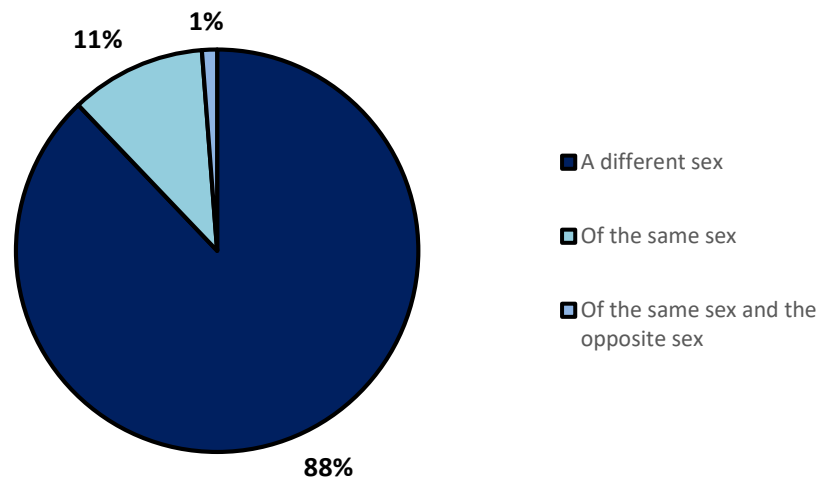
Figure 5: Employment Status, 2024/25



## Sexual Orientation

During 2024/25, almost nine in ten complaints were made by a person who reported that their sexual attraction was towards someone of the opposite sex. Fewer complaints were made by people who reported being sexually attracted to people of the same sex or to people of the same and opposite sex (Figure 6, Table 6).

Figure 6: Sexual orientation, 2024/25



## **Community Background**

In 2024/25, over half (52%) of respondents reported that they were from a Protestant community background and just under a third (32%) reported they were from a Catholic community background. Less than a fifth (15%) reported that their community background was neither Catholic nor Protestant (Table 7).

## **Racial Group**

In 2024/25, the majority of respondents (97%) reported their race to be White. The remaining 3% reported their race to be either Bangladeshi, Black African, Black Other, Chinese, Indian, Irish Travelling Community, mixed ethnic group or Other (Table 8).

## **Country of Birth**

During 2024/25, the majority of respondents (85%) stated that they were born in Northern Ireland. A further 5% were born in England, 2% in the Republic of Ireland, 1% in Scotland and 6% were born in an “Other” country (Table 9).

## **Disability**

Six out of ten (60%) respondents in 2024/25 self-reported that they did not have a disability while two fifths (40%) self-reported that they had (Table 10).

Disability is a complex concept and there are a number of ways of defining it. For monitoring purposes we provided respondents with a description of disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which is “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.

## **Dependants**

Just over three fifths of respondents (62%) in 2024/25 stated that they did not have dependants while almost two in five respondents (38%) reported that they did (Table 11).

## **Political Opinion**

In 2024/25, just under half of respondents (48%) who answered the political opinion question indicated that 'no political party' best represented their current political opinion. Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) indicated that a Unionist party best represented their current political opinion and less than a fifth (17%) indicated that a Nationalist party did. Over one in ten respondents (13%) indicated that either the Alliance party (6%) or an "Other" political party (7%) best represented their current political opinion (Table 12).



## Appendix 1: Tables

**Table 1: Age group, 2024/25**

Age Group	Percentage
Under 18	2%
18 to 24	4%
25 to 34	17%
35 to 44	29%
45 to 54	24%
55 to 64	17%
65 & over	7%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>2,761</b>

**Table 2: Gender, 2024/25**

Gender	Percentage
Male	64%
Female	36%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>2,975</b>

**Table 3: Age group & gender, 2024/25**

Age Group	Female	Male
Under 25	2%	4%
25 to 44	16%	30%
45+	18%	31%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>1,773</b>

**Table 4: Marital status, 2024/25**

Marital Status	Percentage
Single (never married)	44%
Married/in civil partnership	24%
Divorced/formally in civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	14%
Separated	9%
Co-habiting (living together)	4%
Widowed/surviving member of civil partnership	3%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>672</b>

**Table 5: Employment status, 2024/25**

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Working full-time	31%
Not Working because you are permanently sick	19%
Unemployed	11%
Retired	10%
Self-employed	9%
Working part-time	8%
Looking after home and/or family	4%
Student	3%
Other	4%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>665</b>

**Table 6: Sexual Orientation, 2024/25**

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Attracted to people of a different sex	88%
Attracted to people of the same sex	11%
Attracted to people of the same and of the opposite sex	1%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>495</b>

**Table 7: Community Background, 2024/25**

<b>Community Background</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Member of the Protestant community	52%
Member of the Catholic community	32%
Member of neither the Protestant nor Catholic community	15%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>666</b>

**Table 8: Race, 2024/25**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
White	97%
Other	3%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>672</b>

**Table 9: Country of Birth, 2024/25**

<b>Country of Birth</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Northern Ireland	85%
England	5%
Republic of Ireland	2%
Scotland	1%
Other Country	6%
<b>Base Number</b>	<b>674</b>

**Table 10: Disability (self-reported), 2024/25**

<b>Disabled</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	60%
Yes	40%
<b><i>Base Number</i></b>	<b>673</b>

**Table 11: Dependents, 2024/25**

<b>Dependents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Complainant does not have dependants	62%
Complainant does have dependants	38%
<b><i>Base Number</i></b>	<b>654</b>

**Table 12: Political opinion, 2024/25**

<b>Political Opinion</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No political party	48%
Unionist party	22%
Nationalist party	17%
Alliance party	6%
Other	7%
<b><i>Base Number</i></b>	<b>377</b>

## Appendix 2: Background and Methodology

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland was set up by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 in order to provide an impartial and independent system for investigating complaints against the police in Northern Ireland.

The Office is committed to fulfilling the obligations laid upon it by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) (the “equality duties”). To help us achieve this a confidential self-completion questionnaire is sent to every complainant<sup>2</sup>, asking for information relevant to the ten categories specified in Section 75 of the Act. In some instances the complainant only provides us with an email address. During the year we emailed a total of 104 forms and ten were returned to us (10% response rate).

As we are committed to providing a service to all individuals and socio-economic groups within our society, we also ask a question on the additional category of employment status, which we consider to be a reliable indicator of economic deprivation.

On receipt of returned questionnaires, the information supplied is input to the Office’s Case Handling System (CHS) with the complaint data. Only the staff who are directly involved in the processing of the equality monitoring survey forms have data access permissions to this information. Staff involved in the handling and investigation of the complaint do not, at any time, have access to these data.

The equality database is downloaded and analysed using a combination of software including Di Diver, Microsoft Excel and SPSS packages.

The figures in this statistical report are based on the information received between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. When completing the form not all respondents answered each of the questions. The response rates for each category (excluding gender and age as they were also calculated from salutation and date of birth) ranged from 54% to 96%, when based on the number of forms returned, and ranged from 13% to 22%, when based on the total number of public complaints received in 2024/25. Information on the achieved sample for each question is presented in the tables in Appendix 1.

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<sup>2</sup> Apart from a very small number who have asked not to be contacted by the office or for whom we have insufficient contact information.

There were larger samples of complainants for whom gender and age information was available, from administrative data sources. In addition to those respondents who declared their gender on the monitoring form, it was possible to determine a majority of complainants' gender from their title or salutation, giving a total sample of 100% for whom gender was known. It was also possible to determine complainants' ages from their date of birth, where it was provided, giving an overall sample of 92% for whom age was known.

Figures in the tables may not add up to 100% due to the effect of rounding. Figures may also be subject to minor revision. The Police Ombudsman Revisions Policy is available at [http://www.policeombudsman.org/revisions\\_policy](http://www.policeombudsman.org/revisions_policy).

The Office has conducted the Equality Monitoring Survey since it opened in November 2000. All survey findings are published annually and are available on the Office website at <http://www.policeombudsman.org/publications/equality>.

## **Data use**

The data collected are used by the Office to monitor access to the service provided to the public across the categories specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and to report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The data may also be used to answer enquiries from the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Department of Justice, Parliament and the public.

## **Data quality**

Equality Monitoring Survey data are considered to be of high quality. Police Ombudsman staff carry out regular quality assurance reviews of all data input into the CHS. For the Equality Monitoring Survey, staff input the data to the CHS and supervisors undertake a 10% data quality check to ensure that transfer of the information is accurate. Where necessary, data may be corrected. There is a 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 error is so small that it has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting. However, where identified, corrections are made to reports as soon as is practicable.

Caution should be exercised when comparing this report and previous reports to the survey carried out in 2020/21. The number of completed equality monitoring forms

received during 2020/21 was lower than in previous years due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in reminder forms not being issued during the year. The data therefore may be less representative of all complaints received during the year than for previous years and also the margin of error around the results may be higher.

## **Data limitations**

Equality monitoring forms are issued to the vast majority of complainants. However, in some cases forms are not issued, for example when it is impossible to identify the complainant, i.e. when the Complaints Officer has recorded the complainant as anonymous or because the complainant's address is not recorded. In other cases, complainants may contact the Office to ask to be excluded from future surveys. While staff aim to encourage the complainant to complete the survey by explaining its purpose, there are some cases where the complainant still wishes to be excluded.

**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](mailto:info@policeombudsman.org)**

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