

Complaints and Allegations Received by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Quarterly Statistical Update to 31st March 2016

Published April 2016

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

Statistical Update to 31st March 2016, published on 28th April 2016

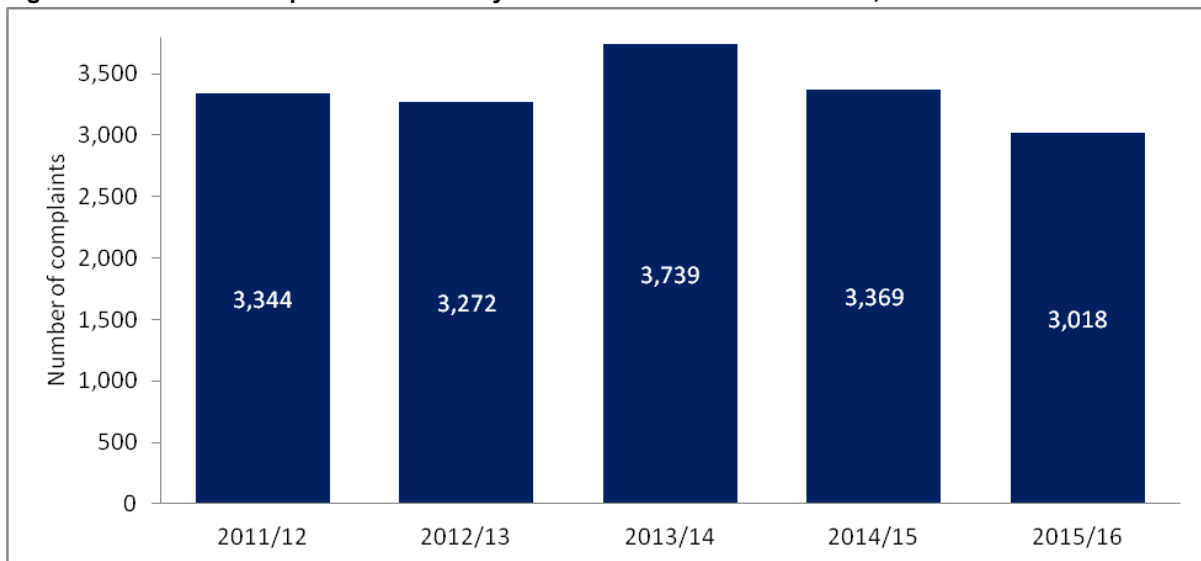
This quarterly bulletin presents the most recent statistics on the number of complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman, up to 31st March 2016. The statistics are based on information extracted from the Police Ombudsman’s Case Handling System (CHS) on the 14th April 2016.

Complaints Received

The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office includes complaints made by members of the public, matters that have been referred to the Police Ombudsman’s Office from other organisations¹, and any matter that the Police Ombudsman has decided is in the public interest for him to investigate.

During 2015/16, the Office received just over 3,000 complaints. This is the fewest number of complaints received during the last five years and is a 10% reduction in complaints compared with last year (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office, 2011/12 to 2015/16



¹ The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Main Complaint Factor

The main complaint factor refers to the main situation giving rise to the complaint. Criminal investigation was the most common main factor underlying complaints in both of the last two years, followed by Arrests.

The number of complaints decreased for almost all of the complaint factors during 2015/16 when compared with 2014/15. Police enquiries (no investigation) saw the biggest decrease in complaint numbers followed by arrests, criminal investigations and domestic incidents. The only known complaint factor which saw an increase in complaint numbers during this time was parade/demonstrations, which almost trebled compared with last year. Some of this increase was due to multiple complaints that were received to the Office regarding the use of CS Spray during a parade.

Table 1: Comparison in the main factor of complaints received between 2014/15 and 2015/16

	2014/15	2015/16	Difference	
Criminal Investigation	833	771	↓	-7%
Arrest	626	562	↓	-10%
Search	288	244	↓	-15%
Traffic Related Incident	244	227	↓	-7%
Domestic Incident	239	179	↓	-25%
Police Enquiries (no investigation)	199	92	↓	-54%
Historic Investigation	90	77	↓	-14%
Parade/Demonstration	22	63	↑	41 ²
Other	684	670	↓	-2%
Unknown	144	133	↓	-8%
Total	3,369	3,018	↓	-10%

² Percentage change has not been reported due to the base number being less than 50.

Complaints Received by Police Area and District

From 1st April 2015 the PSNI area and district boundaries changed to reflect the new council boundaries in Northern Ireland (see PSNI [website](#) for more details).

Almost all of the policing districts saw a decrease in the number of complaints received during 2015/16 when compared with last year, with Causeway Coast & Glens showing the largest percentage decrease in complaints received. The exception to this is Derry City & Strabane where complaint numbers remained virtually unchanged during this time (Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage increase/decrease in the number of complaints received in each police district between 2014/15 and 2015/16

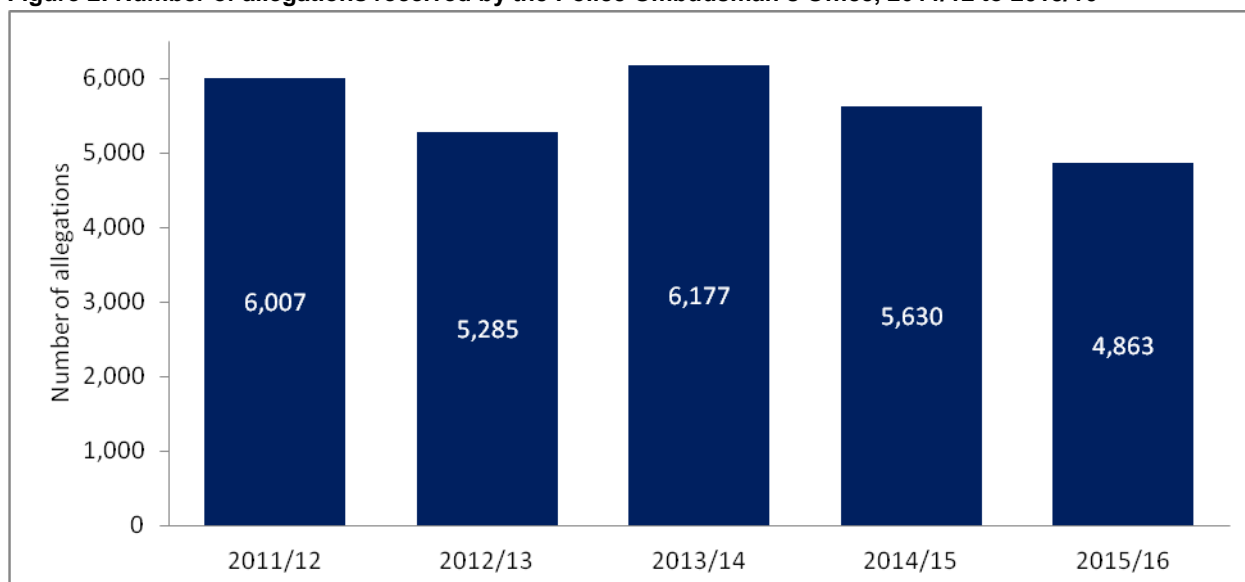
	2014/15	2015/16	% Increase/Decrease
District A - Belfast City	983	911	-7%
District B - Lisburn & Castlereagh City	148	122	-18%
District C - Ards & North Down	190	183	-4%
District D - Newry Mourne & Down	195	181	-7%
District E - Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	282	227	-20%
District F - Mid Ulster	124	105	-15%
District G - Fermanagh & Omagh	164	140	-15%
District H - Derry City & Strabane	233	234	0%
District J - Causeway Coast & Glens	298	227	-24%
District K - Mid & East Antrim	164	146	-11%
District L - Antrim & Newtownabbey	209	181	-13%
Unknown / Other Organisation	379	361	-5%
Northern Ireland	3,369	3,018	-10%

Allegations Received

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.

During 2015/16, the Office received almost 4,900 allegations. This is the fewest number of allegations received over the last five years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office, 2011/12 to 2015/16



Allegation Type

Allegations are categorised into 11 different types. Since 2010/11, Failure in Duty allegations accounted for the greatest proportion of allegations, followed by Oppressive Behaviour and Incivility.

The number of allegations decreased for almost all allegation types during 2015/16 when compared with last year. The number of allegations regarding an officers Failure in Duty or Oppressive Behaviour decreased more than for other allegation types during this time. The only allegation types to show any increases during this time were Section 55 referrals and mishandling of property (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparison in the Types of Allegations received between 2014/15 and 2015/16

	2014/15	2015/16	Difference	
Failure in Duty	2,401	2,100	↓	-13%
Oppressive Behaviour	1,450	1,239	↓	-15%
Incivility	423	378	↓	-11%
Search	309	245	↓	-21%
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	252	205	↓	-19%
Mishandling of Property	127	135	↑	6%
Section 55 Referral	54	69	↑	28%
Malpractice	110	55	↓	-25%
Discriminatory Behaviour	72	54	↓	-50%
Traffic	51	38	↓	-25%
Other	381	345	↓	-9%
Total	5,630	4,863	↓	-14%

Officers with multiple complaints

There were 60 PSNI officers who attracted three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal or Local Resolution between April 2015 and March 2016 (Table 4).

Table 4: Officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by Informal/Local Resolution, twelve month period ending June 2015, September 2015, December 2015, March 2016

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with Local/Informal Resolution
June 2015	66
September 2015	51
December 2015	43
March 2016	60

Policing Plan 2014/17 Targets

The 2014/17 Policing Plan sets the strategic policing priorities and objectives over the coming years, along with a range of targets and measures for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to achieve by the end of March 2017. The 2015/16 annual update to this plan, highlights three measures of success that require data from the Police Ombudsman's Office and these are outlined below. These measures are included under the Professional Policing section, and are an indicator of 'Treating People Fairly and with Respect'.

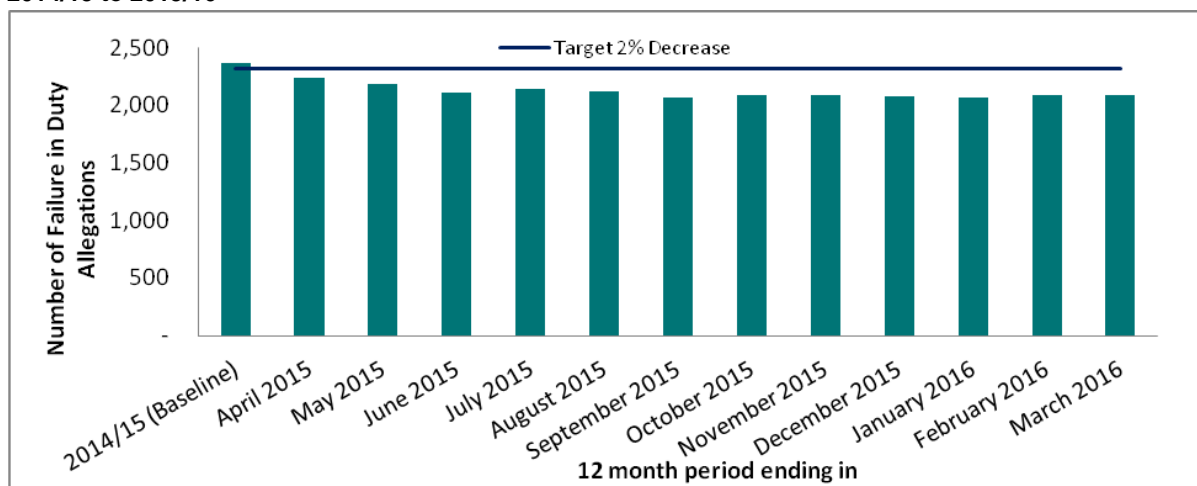
The targets refer to specific types of allegations made against the PSNI only and do not include allegations made against PSNI designated civilians or against any other organisation.

The baseline information for this target is based on the data produced for the Annual Statistical Bulletin of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, 2014/15' which was published in June 2015. Progress has been tracked on the number of allegations received in the 12 month period up to the most recent month.

To reduce by 2% the number of allegations of Failure in Duty

There were 2,365 allegations regarding the Failure in Duty of PSNI officers in 2014/15. In order to meet this target the number of allegations received has to be lower than 2,318. In 2015/16, the PSNI met and exceeded this target by reducing the number of failure in duty allegations by 12% (Figure 3).

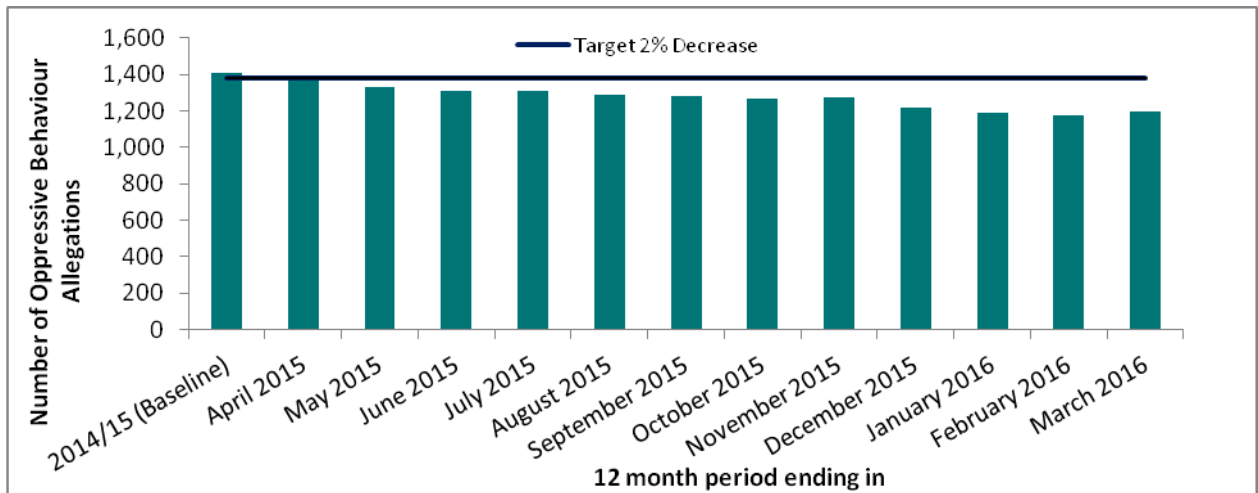
Figure 3: Progress on the Police Plan target to reduce the number of Failure in Duty allegations, from 2014/15 to 2015/16



To reduce by 2% the number of allegations of Oppressive Behaviour

There were 1,409 allegations regarding the Oppressive Behaviour of PSNI officers in 2014/15. In order to meet this target the number of allegations received has to be lower than 1,381. In 2015/16, the PSNI met and exceeded this target by reducing the number of oppressive behaviour allegations by 15% (Figure 4).

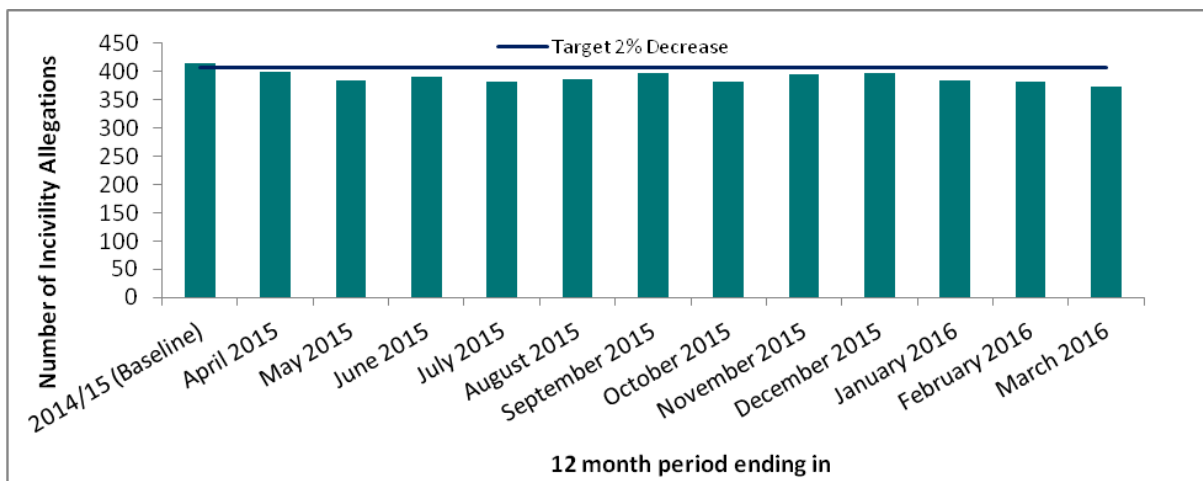
Figure 4: Progress on the Police Plan target to reduce the number of Oppressive Behaviour allegations, from 2014/15 to 2015/16



To reduce by 2% the number of allegations of Incivility

There were 414 allegations regarding the Incivility of PSNI officers in 2014/15. In order to meet this target the number of allegations received has to be lower than 406. In 2015/16, the PSNI met and exceeded this target by reducing the number of incivility allegations by 10% (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Progress on the Police Plan target to reduce the number of Incivility allegations, from 2014/15 to 2015/16



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 (OPONI), 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

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.

Care should be taken when comparing the number of complaints or allegations received at police district or police area level as some of the differences between areas 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 Case Handling System (CHS) 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 2015/16 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 will be available in the forthcoming Annual Statistical Report produced by this Office in June 2016. This report will be made available on the Office's website.

Additional geographic breakdowns of the types of complaints and allegations received and recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman will be made available later this year on the [Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service \(NINIS\)](#).

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 second 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. 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. 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 bulletin for the year 2016/17 is due to be published on Thursday 28th July 2016 and it will include statistics up to the 30th June 2016.

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.

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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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