

Annual Statistical Bulletin
of the Police Ombudsman for
Northern Ireland,
2018/19

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INTRODUCTION

This Statistical Bulletin presents information on complaints and allegations received by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in 2018/19, as well as showing trend information for the last five years.

It was produced independently by Statisticians from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) who are seconded to the Police Ombudsman's Office and work alongside Police Ombudsman personnel. It has been produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Why publish statistics?

The information presented in this bulletin has been produced to meet the needs of a variety of individuals and organisations who have a particular interest in the issue of police complaints.

The Police Ombudsman's Office uses these statistics to monitor trends in complaints and allegations received and how they were dealt with. It also uses this information to monitor performance against key performance indicators.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has an interest in knowing about the trends and patterns in complaints made against their officers and use this information to help identify and address particular problems.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) use this material in developing an understanding of what aspects of police conduct are attracting public concern and whether these concerns are of substance.

The Police and Community Partnerships (PCSPs) also use the data to monitor police performance in their areas and to identify any particular concerns.

The general public have a right to know how both their police service and their police complaints service are performing.

Understanding the information in this bulletin

We hope this report will provide readers with a clear understanding of the trends and patterns in complaints and allegations received by the Police Ombudsman's Office over the last five years.

We have provided information on what we believe would be the main questions asked by readers: how many complaints and allegations have we received, what were they about and how were they resolved, for example.

Commentary has been provided throughout, which aims to provide some context and explanation or interpretation of the emerging trends.

However, a concise document like this can only ever provide part of that context. Other factors may be at play which cannot be reflected in this bulletin. Readers may also want to consider issues as varied as the levels of the police budget and the service it can provide, as well as the level of awareness of the police complaints system itself.

Similarly, making comparisons across geographical areas may not always be straightforward. Areas have different levels of population. Even that distinction can have further categories. Whether people travel to an area during normal office hours for their work or move into it in the evening to socialise can have an effect on the number of complaints we receive.

It is also difficult to make valid comparisons between the number of complaints and allegations received across Northern Ireland, England and Wales, and Scotland as each area operates a different system.

Terminology

For those with less knowledge of the Police Ombudsman's Office, we have provided an explanation of the police complaints process in the appendices of this bulletin. We have tried to keep the terminology used in this bulletin 'jargon' free, but where this has not been possible we have provided a glossary with an explanation of those terms.

Could we improve this bulletin?

From the wealth of detailed information within the Police Ombudsman's Office, we have tried to produce a bulletin that focuses on the key issues, which we believe, would be of interest to the public and the police. We have also tried to make that information as clear and easily understood as possible. Have we succeeded? We would be keen to hear any views you have on this bulletin.

If you wish to provide any feedback or comments on this publication, please see our contact details on the back page or email us via info@policeombudsman.org.

Conventions

Percentages in the tables and text are rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus may not always add up to 100.

A SUMMARY OF THE KEY TRENDS IN COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE

- The number of complaints received by the Police Ombudsman's Office during 2018/19 increased by 2% from the previous year to more than 2,600 complaints.
- Criminal Investigation was the most common situation which gave rise to complaints, as it was in each of the last five years.
- Complaints have increased in 6 of the 11 police districts. The largest increase was in Mid Ulster (F District) where they increased by 19%.
- The most frequent allegations received during the year were allegations of Failure in Duty, of Oppressive Behaviour, and of Incivility.
- Nearly two fifths (38%) of complaints dealt with by the Police Ombudsman's Office were subject to a full investigation. In 21% of these complaints, the Office found evidence to substantiate all or part of the complaint, or identified another concern during the investigation.
- On 8 occasions during the year, the Police Ombudsman recommended that the Director of Public Prosecutions should prosecute an officer.
- The Police Ombudsman recommended on 134 occasions that a police officer should receive a discipline or a performance action.

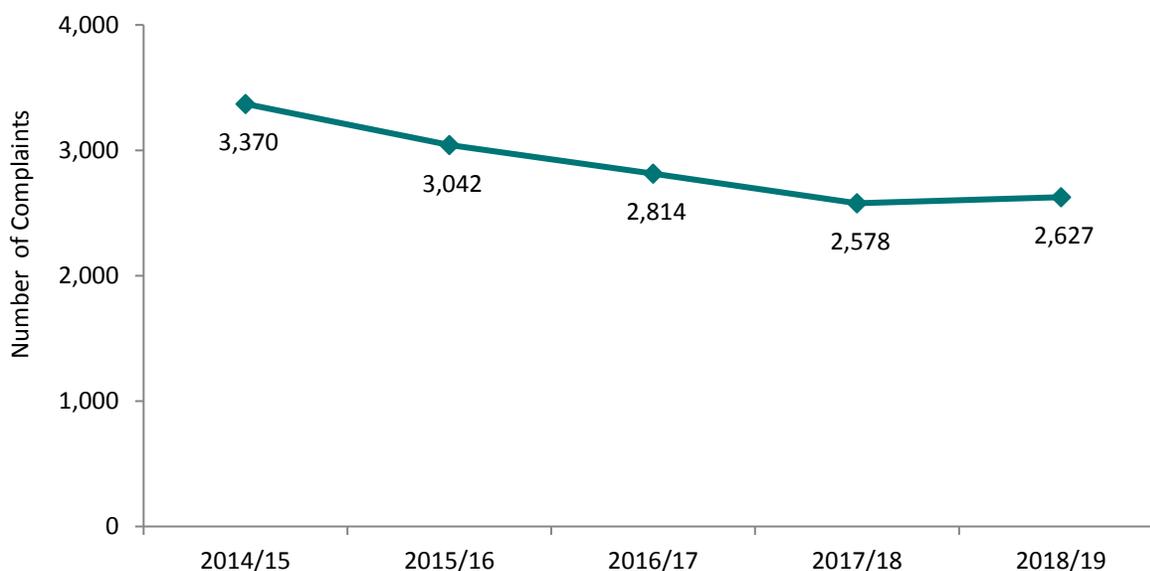
COMPLAINTS

The volume of complaints and matters received

The number of complaints received and matters referred for independent investigations by the Police Ombudsman’s Office during 2018/19 was 2,627 (Figure 1, Table 5). This is a 2% increase from 2017/18 and it is the first time since 2013/14 where the Office has received an increase in complaints from the previous year. This increase is primarily due to the Office improving its recording of notifications it receives from the PSNI, when it considers a matter needs to be brought to the attention of the Office.

For the purpose of clarity of reporting, this statistical bulletin will refer to all its incoming work by the term ‘complaints’.

Figure 1: Number of complaints received, 2014/15 to 2018/19



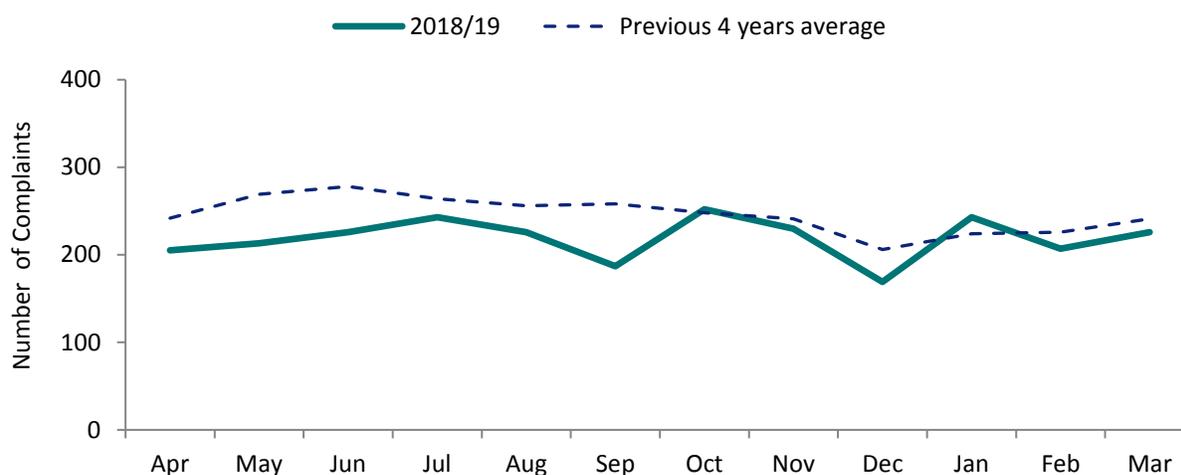
The vast majority of these complaints (95%) were from members of the public. A further 4% were notifications from police which did not result in an investigation, 1% were matters referred to the Office for an independent investigation from the PSNI or from another organisation¹ or matters in which the Police Ombudsman exercised his power to initiate investigations. (Table 6).

¹ Public Prosecution Service (PPS), Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) or the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Complaints received each month

During 2018/19, the Office received between 169 and 252 complaints each month. The number of complaints received each month was fewer than the monthly average for the previous four years, except in October and January. The seasonality trend that the Office typically receives more complaints in the summer months than in the winter months is not evident this year. This year the Office received a similar number of complaints in the first half of the year compared with the latter half of the year (Figure 2, Table 7).

Figure 2: Number of complaints received by month, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Who people were complaining about

The Police Ombudsman's Office has the remit to investigate complaints about officials from a number of bodies. These include police officers within the PSNI and police officers with the Northern Ireland Airport Constabulary and Belfast Harbour Police. More recently, the remit was extended, for serious incidents only, to include certain Home Office officials in 2014/15 and National Crime Agency Officials from 20th May 2015.

During 2018/19, the vast majority of complaints received (99%) continue to be about PSNI officers, including both police officers and 'designated civilians' within the Service (Tables 1 and 8).

Table 1: Complaints received by organisation, 2018/19

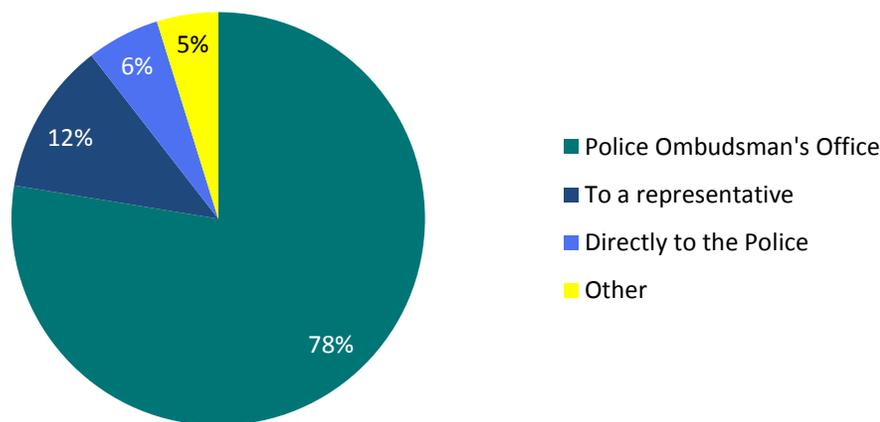
	No. of complaints received
PSNI	2,597
Harbour Police	6
NI Airport Constabulary	0
Certain Home Office officials	1
Ministry of Defence Police	0
National Crime Agency	3
Other / Unknown	20
Total	2,627

Where people initially made their complaints

Although the Police Ombudsman’s Office is the only body which can by law deal with complaints about the conduct of police officers, people do not always make their complaints directly to the Office. Sometimes their complaint is made in the first instance to the PSNI itself or to someone such as a solicitor or a political representative.

More than three quarters of the complaints received during 2018/19 were made directly to the Office without the use of an intermediary (Figure 3, Table 9).

Figure 3: Where people initially made their complaint, 2018/19



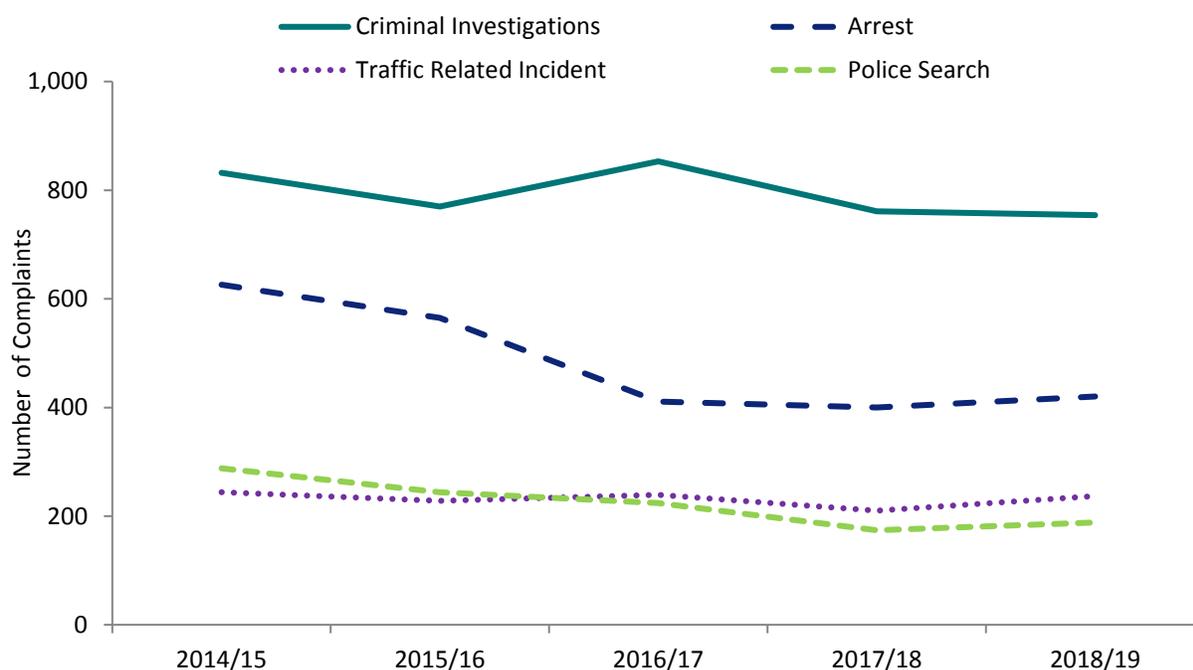
Over the last five years, the proportion of complaints made directly to the Office has increased, from 66% in 2014/15 to 78% in 2018/19. Whilst the proportion received via a representative and via the police decreased.

Situations that gave rise to complaints

In order to try and get a better understanding of what sorts of interactions might give rise to complaints about the police or police conduct, the Police Ombudsman's Office collect information on the background or context to the complaint.

Criminal investigations were the most common situations giving rise to complaints during 2018/19, followed by arrests, traffic related incidents and police searches (Figure 4, Table 10).

Figure 4: Complaints arising from Criminal Investigations, Arrests, Traffic Related Incidents & Police Searches, 2014/15 to 2018/19



During 2018/19, the Office received around 750 complaints arising from a criminal investigation. This accounts for 29% of all complaints received. The number of complaints made following a criminal investigation has remained fairly stable in three of the last five years and has decreased from a high of more than 850 during 2016/17.

There were 420 complaints arising from arrests during 2018/19. The number of complaints made following an arrest has remained fairly stable for the last three years but has decreased from more than 600 complaints five years ago.

Fewer than 240 complaints were made following a traffic related incident during 2018/19. In general, they have remained fairly stable over the last five years.

During 2018/19, nearly 190 complaints were received following a police search. A similar number of these types of complaints were received last year, however, they have decreased by 35% since 2014/15, when nearly 300 complaints were received.

Around 125 complaints arising from domestic incidents (such as neighbourhood disputes) were received during 2018/19. They have decreased by 42% since 2014/15 when more than 210 complaints were received.

Complaints following situations where police made enquires but no investigation took place have increased by 47% since last year, to 150 complaints. This is more complaints than in each of the last three years but it is lower than during 2014/15.

The number of complaints made to the Office connected to events during the period known as 'the Troubles' and which required consideration by its Historical Investigations Directorate has decreased for the third consecutive year. These complaints have decreased from a high of 97 during 2015/16 to 27 during 2018/19.

During 2018/19, there were around 30 complaints arising from how the police dealt with domestic violence incidents. This is 10 fewer complaints than last year.

Complaints arising from parades or demonstrations fluctuate year on year. During 2018/19, there were 13 complaints arising from parades or demonstrations which is more than half the number received in the previous year (32 complaints in 2017/18).

Complaints received by police district^{2,3}

Five of the 11 policing districts in Northern Ireland had a decrease in complaints during this year, when compared with 2017/18. In the remaining six districts, the numbers have increased from the previous year (Figure 5, Table 11). In those districts where the numbers have increased for most, the numbers are still lower than two years ago in 2016/17.

Two changes were made in 2018/19 which may have affected this comparison at district level. Firstly, complaints about 'designated civilians' within the PSNI have been included in the district figures in 2018/19 but are not included in previous years. Secondly, the improved recording of notifications may also affect these comparisons (for more information see the notes on page 74).

We would remind the reader that making comparisons between policing districts is something to be done with caution. Policing districts are not identical and differ on issues such as population numbers, policing numbers, the level of public interaction with police and even issues such as whether they have a vibrant night time economy.

The map on the page 15 shows the percentage difference in complaints for each District, with the palest shade of blue showing the largest decreases and the darkest shade showing the largest increases. The paragraphs below provide trend information for each police district, in alphabetical order (based on the name of the police district opposed to the Council name).

Belfast City District (A District) received the largest number of complaints, around 730 during 2018/19. It accounts for more than one quarter (28%) of all complaints received by the Office. Complaints from this district have decreased each consecutive year between 2014/15 and 2017/18 and then increased by 15% this year

Complaints in Lisburn & Castlereagh City (B District) have also decreased during each consecutive year between 2014/15 and 2017/18 but have increased by 8% this year to nearly 120 complaints.

In Ards & North Down (C District) complaints decreased between 2014/15 to 2017/18 however, increasing in 2018/19. This district received around 170 complaints this year.

² This is only for complaints made against the PSNI and does not include any other organisations such as NCA, certain Home Office officials.

³ This is the location where the incident complained about occurred which may be different from the district that the officer is assigned to.

Complaints from Newry, Mourne & Down (D District) have continued to decrease in each of the last five years. This police district is one of two districts which have had this continuous year on year decrease since 2014/15. Complaints decreased to 141 during 2018/19.

Complaints from Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (E District) have remained fairly stable over the last four years but they have decreased by more than one fifth (22%) since 2014/15. During 2018/19, around 220 complaints were from this District.

In Mid Ulster (F District) complaints have increased by 19% since last year, although, they are still lower than they were two years ago. Around 105 complaints were received this year.

Complaints from Fermanagh & Omagh (G District) have decreased by 7% since last year. This is the only district other than D District to have decreases in the number of complaints in each consecutive year since 2014/15. Over the last five years complaints have decreased by 31% to around 110 during 2018/19.

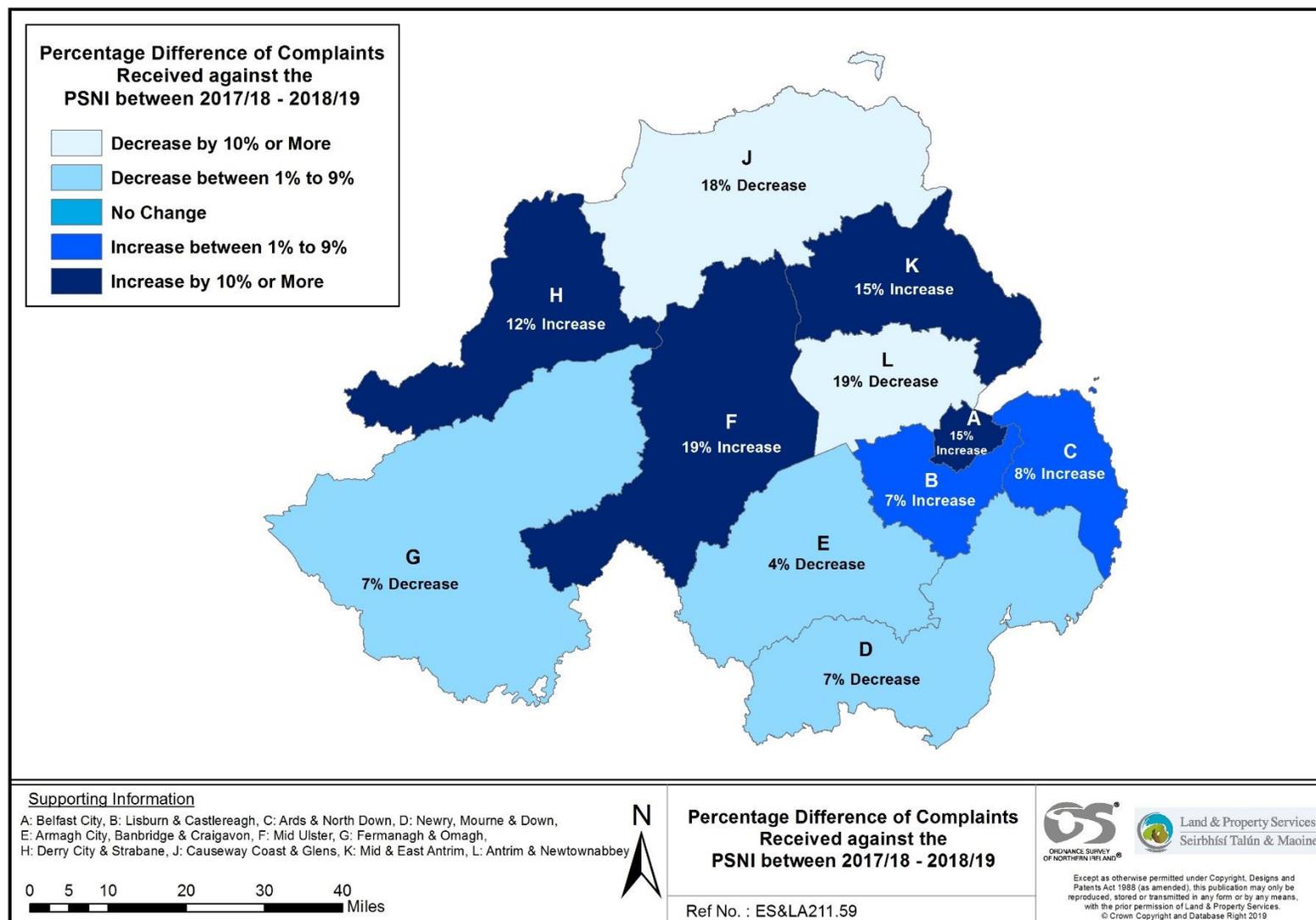
In Derry City & Strabane (H District) complaints have increased this year by 12% but are lower than in any in any of the years between 2014/15 and 2016/17. Around 190 complaints were received during 2018/19.

Complaints from Causeway Coast & Glens (J District) have decreased by 18% since last year. This is the lowest number of complaints received over the last five years. Around 200 complaints received in 2018/19 were from J District.

In Mid & East Antrim (K District) complaints have increased by 15% this year. Complaints from this police district have fluctuated over the last five years. During 2018/19, it received around 165 complaints.

Complaints for Antrim & Newtownabbey (L District) have decreased in general over the last five years to around 150 complaints during 2018/19. This is the lowest number of complaints received over the last five years. It is also the District which had the largest percentage decrease in complaints from last year.

Figure 5: Map showing the percentage change in complaints received by police district, 2018/19



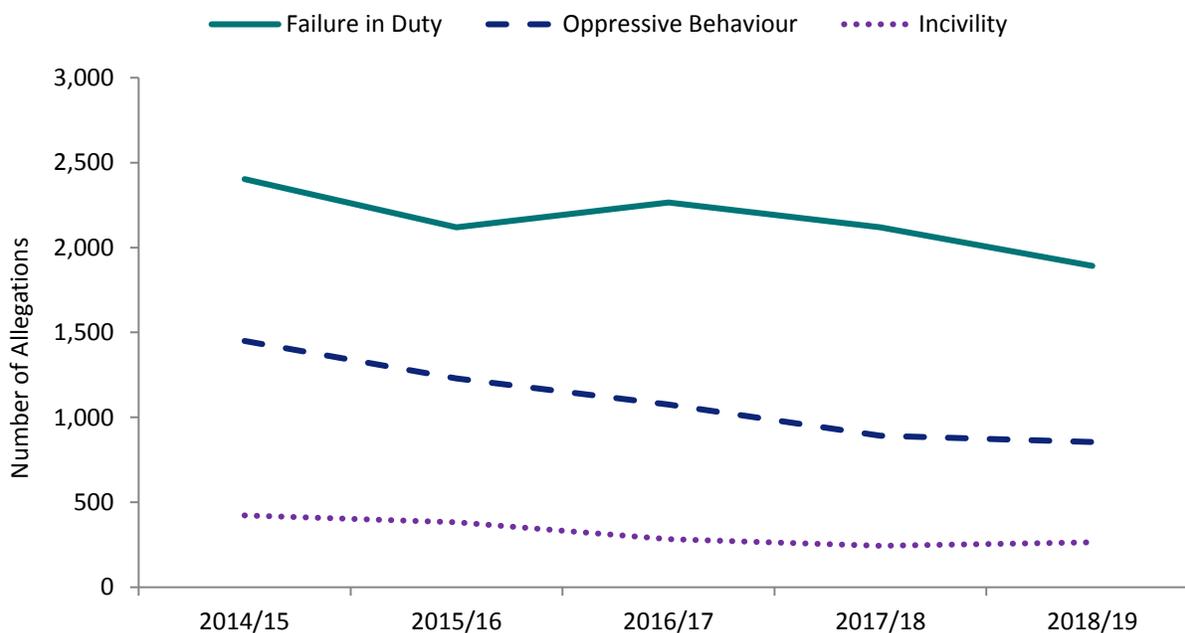
ALLEGATIONS

A person who makes a complaint may express a number of different concerns about the exchange they have had with a police officer. The Police Ombudsman’s Office will record this as one complaint broken down into a number of ‘allegations’.

During 2018/19, the Police Ombudsman’s Office received 4,072 allegations (Table 12).

The most frequent allegations received during the year were allegations of a Failure in Duty, of Oppressive Behaviour, and of Incivility (Figure 6, Table 13).

Figure 6: Types of allegations received, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Failure in Duty allegations

During 2018/19, nearly 1,900 allegations received by the Police Ombudsman’s Office alleged a Failure in Duty by a police officer. This was a decrease of 11% on the number of allegations received in the previous year, and it is the first year they have dropped below 2,000 allegations in the last five years.

More than half (55%) of the Failure in Duty allegations received in 2018/19 related to the conduct of police investigations or police response to incidents (Table 14). This is the same trend as in each of the last five years.

Within the Failure in Duty allegation category all types of allegations decreased in comparison with last year, apart from allegations about a failure in a duty of care which increased.

Oppressive Behaviour allegations

There were 855 Oppressive Behaviour allegations received during 2018/19. This is a 4% decrease in the number received in 2017/18 and it is the second year that they have been below 1,000 allegations in the last five years.

More than two fifths (44%) of the Oppressive Behaviour allegations received during 2018/19 alleged oppressive conduct by an officer/s not involving an assault. Allegations of serious or sexual assaults accounted for 5% of all the Oppressive Behaviour allegations received (Table 15). This is a similar trend to the last two years but is different to the trend between 2014/15 and 2015/16 when allegations of unjustified force or violence⁴ were the most frequently made Oppressive Behaviour allegations.

Allegations of oppressive conduct (excluding assaults) had the largest percentage decrease from 2017/18 (9% decrease). There were two more allegations of a sexual assault and of a serious non-sexual assault during 2018/19 compared with last year.

Incivility allegations

During 2018/19, there were 265 Incivility allegations received. This was a 9% increase from the previous year, but is still lower in number than in any year between 2014/15 and 2016/17.

Around one in four Incivility allegations was about an officer being uncivil whilst on the telephone (25%) or whilst being at a domestic residence (26%) (Table 16).

Other allegations⁵

In addition to Failure in Duty and Oppressive Behaviour allegations decreasing to their lowest levels in the last five years, allegations relating to irregularities in searches, the mishandling of property, malpractice, and allegations relating to Section 55⁶ matters are also all at their lowest

⁴ Referred to 'other assault' in Table 15.

⁵ A further breakdown of allegations are available on the Police Ombudsman's website in the accompanying Excel tables.

⁶ Allegations made via a referral from another organisation (e.g. PSNI, PPS, PBNI or DOJ) or an allegation which the Police Ombudsman has called himself into investigate as it is deemed to be in the public interest.

levels in the last five years (Table 13). Allegations of unlawful/unnecessary arrests/detentions increased by 19% in the last year, although, they are still similar in number to three of the last five years.

Allegations regarding the use of police equipment

Allegations about the use of police equipment accounted for 3% of all the allegations received during 2018/19 (Table 17). This is similar to previous years.

The most commonly received allegations about the use of police equipment during 2018/19 were about the use of handcuffs (58 allegations). This is the same trend as in the previous four years.

During 2018/19, allegations about the use of CS Spray were the second most commonly reported concern about the use of police equipment. This is the same trend as in three of the last four years.

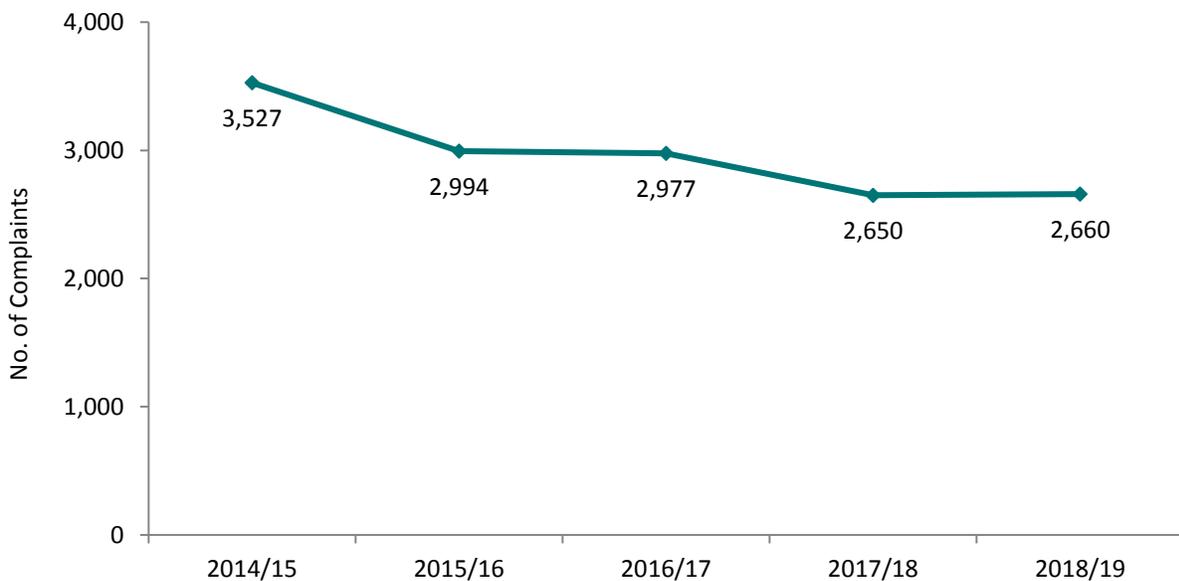
Allegations about the use of police equipment have increased by 15% from 2017/18. This is likely to be due to the improved recording of notifications from the PSNI during 2018/19. Over the last five years, however, these types of allegations have decreased by more than half (54%).

COMPLAINTS CLOSURES

The Police Ombudsman’s Office closes complaints once it has reached a view on the matter involved, when the complainant and the police officer have reached a level of agreement on the contested matter or when the person who made the complaint no longer wishes to engage with the process.

The Office closed 2,660 complaints during 2018/19 (Figure 7, Table 18). This is 10 more complaints than the previous year.

Figure 7: Number of complaints closed by year, 2014/15 to 2018/19



The number of complaints being closed by the Office has decreased over the last five year. This reflects the decrease in number complaints received over the same time period.

Types of complaint closures

There are four main stages as to when complaints will be closed (Table 2).

Table 2: Complaint closures, 2018/19

Complaints Closed	2,660
Complaints closed following initial assessment	424
Complaint was not a matter for the Police Ombudsman	282
Notifications from PSNI	108
Other	34
Complaints closed following initial inquiries	989
Complainant did not fully engage with the police complaints system	667
Ill-founded	218
Withdrawn	92
Other	12
Complaints resolved informally	214
Informally Resolved	214
Complaints closed that relate to the 'Troubles'	26
History Complaints	26
Complaints fully investigated	1,007
Complaint substantiated or an issue of concern identified	211
Complaint not substantiated or no issue of concern identified	796

Nearly two in ten (16%) complaints closed during 2018/19 were closed after the initial assessment. These complaints tend to be closed fairly quickly, and often involve issues which were not a matter for the Police Ombudsman's Office or they were notifications from the PSNI which did not meet the threshold for an investigation.

A larger proportion of complaints (37%) were closed after initial inquiries. Initial inquiries involves getting more information from the complainant, looking for evidence regarding the matter complained about or making initial contact with the police officer(s) involved. Complaints closed at this stage are normally those where the complainant ceases to engage with the Office.

Complaints that were informally resolved accounted for 8% of all complaints closed. This is an alternative way to resolve less serious complaints such as those alleging rudeness or incivility.

Nearly, two in five (38%) complaints closed were fully investigated. This is when a Police Ombudsman's Investigator or Complaint's Officer looks into each allegation within the complaint and reaches a conclusion about it. The Office found evidence to substantiate all or part of the complaint, or identified another concern during the investigation in 21% of these fully investigated complaints during 2018/19.

Trends in the types of complaint closures

The proportion of complaints being closed within each of the four stages have remained fairly stable over the last five years with only a few notable changes (Table 18).

There has been a decrease in the proportion of complaints being closed as ill-founded and an increase in the proportion of complaints being closed as not substantiated since 2017/18. This is due to a change within the Office during 2018/19 on how complaints are processed.

There has been a two percentage point increase in the proportion of complaints being resolved via the Informal Resolution process. For previous years (2014/15 to 2017/18) this remained consistently at 6% of all complaints closed and has increased to 8% during 2018/19. More information on the informal resolution process can be found later in this bulletin.

Note: Following representation from key stakeholders and in order to make the reporting clearer, it has been decided to report our closures at complaint level. To do this, each of the closures within a complaint have been ranked, and the closure with the highest ranking used as the most representative of the overall complaint closure.

The highest ranking closure is also used to determine at which stage in the complaints process the complaint was closed: after initial assessment, initial inquiries, informal resolution, or following a full investigation. While this method will provide a clear and largely accurate picture in the majority of cases, there will be a few instances when this will not be the case. These discrepancies will only occur between initial assessment and initial inquiries stages.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PPS AND POLICE

Public Prosecution Service (PPS)

Where the Police Ombudsman investigates a matter and identifies that a criminal offence may have been committed, legislation requires that the matter is reported to the PPS. A file will be sent to the PPS that sets out the information that has been established and makes a recommendation as to whether or not the police officer(s) should face a criminal charge. Irrespective of the Police Ombudsman's recommendation, it will be for the PPS to decide if an officer should be prosecuted.

During 2018/19, on eight occasions the Police Ombudsman recommended that the Director of Public Prosecutions should prosecute an officer or staff member (Tables 3 & 19).

Table 3: Number of prosecution and no prosecution recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman for an officer/staff member to the PPS, 2018/19

	2018/19
Prosecution recommended for an officer/staff member	8
Prosecution not recommended for an officer/staff member	201

Over the last five years, the total number of recommendations made to the PPS has fluctuated, ranging from 6 recommendations in 2017/18 to 24 during 2016/17 (Table 19).

The Office made more recommendations to the PPS for no prosecution during 2018/19 than in the previous year but fewer than each of the three years prior to that.

Recommendations made to the Chief Constable or Chief Officer

Following the conclusion of any criminal proceedings or investigations that relate to misconduct matters, the Police Ombudsman may make a recommendation to the Chief Constable or the Chief Officer, who will consider whether action should be taken against the police officers who were the subject of the complaint.

During 2018/19, the Police Ombudsman's Office made 134 recommendations that an officer or staff member should receive either a discipline or a performance action (Table 4). Around half of the recommendations (51%) were for misconduct meetings and more than two fifths (41%) were for a performance action.

Table 4: Number of recommendations made by the Police Ombudsman for an officer/staff member to receive a discipline or performance action, 2018/19

Total Number of Recommendations for a Discipline or Performance Action	134
Regulations Prior to June 2016⁷	10
Modification of Designation ⁸	0
Training / Supervision	2
Management Discussion	0
Advice & Guidance	1
Superintendent's Written Warning	3
Formal Discipline Proceedings	4
Regulations Introduced in June 2016⁹ (Discipline or Performance Actions)	124
Performance	55
Misconduct Meeting	69
Misconduct Hearing	0

The number of recommendations for a discipline or performance action the Police Ombudsman has made for an officer/staff member has decreased each year for the last five years (Table 20).

During 2018/19, the number of recommendations for a misconduct meeting decreased by 40% from 2017/18 which is the first full financial year of when the new regulations were introduced.

⁷ Disciplinary Regulations (pre 6th November 2000); a Code of Conduct (6th November 2000 to 13th March 2003); and a Code of Ethics (since 14th March 2003). The date of the misconduct dictates which discipline regime is applicable.

⁸ This sanction is under different Regulations to the other sanctions in this table, they are directed towards 'Designated Civilians' within the PSNI and not police officers.

⁹ The Police (Performance and Attendance) Regulations (NI) 2016 and The Police (Conduct) Regulations (NI) 2016 came into force on 1 June 2016

Policy recommendations made to the PSNI

During 2018/19, the Police Ombudsman's Office made 11 policy recommendations to police for operational changes arising from issues which have been identified during the course of investigations.

Three of these recommendations, which relate to such matters as the recording and audit trails associated with the return of property to detained persons and the procedures associated with the preparation of files sent to the Public Prosecution Service, were not implemented as adequate procedures were deemed by police to be in place already.

A response is awaited in respect of eight of the recommendations, which relate to such matters as consistency in procedures at different Custody Suites¹⁰; current procedures and training in respect of dealing with traffic incidents on motorways; the recommendation to review and update a Service Procedure relating to police response to stalking and harassment; the recommendation to review the processes associated with the completion and updating of search records and the recommendation to provide training and arrange for any necessary process/guidance amendment in respect of a particular police process.

¹⁰ The investigation of the associated complaint also gave rise to a case-specific recommendation, a response to which is also awaited.

INFORMAL RESOLUTION

Complaints made that are of a less serious nature, usually about incivility or certain types of failure in duties, may be considered for Informal Resolution. This involves an officer/staff member speaking to both the officer(s)/staff member(s) complained about and the complainant with a view of reaching a satisfactory resolution. Prior to proceeding with this process the consent of the complainant must be obtained.

During 2018/19, 18% of complaints received were considered for Informal Resolution and of these 67% of the persons making the complaint agreed for it to be dealt with through Informal Resolution (Table 22).

The proportion of complainants consenting for their complaint to be dealt with through Informal Resolution has remained fairly stable since 2014/15, with more than 60% of people agreeing to the process in each of the last five years.

During 2018/19, 210 complaints reached a successful conclusion through the Informal Resolution process (Table 23). This is a 22% increase from the previous year and is also the highest number of successfully resolved cases in the last five years.

PSNI OFFICERS

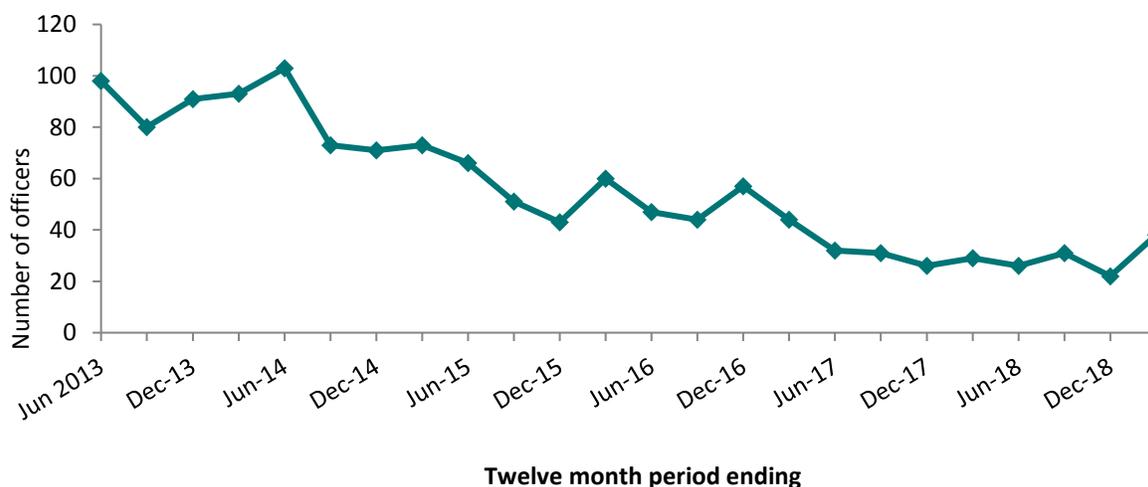
More than half (56%) of the complaints recorded by the Police Ombudsman's Office have an identified officer associated with them. The other complaints which do not identify an officer tend to be those which have been closed at an early stage, such as those which were not a matter for the Police Ombudsman to investigate and those where the complainant did not fully engage.

Most of the officers (87%) identified within complaints were constables, while fewer complaints were received about officers of higher ranks (Table 24). This is a similar profile to that of the composition of officers within the police service.

Information on officers identified within a complaint is shared with the Legacy & Justice Department within the PSNI. The PSNI initiate management intervention when an officer receives three or more complaints that were either formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal or Local Resolution in the previous 12 months.

In general, the number of officers reaching this stage has been decreasing over the last four years (Figure 9, Table 24). This reflects the decrease in complaints received over this time period.

Figure 8: Officers that received three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal or Local Resolution, 2013/14 to 2018/19



Note: During the course of an investigation, officers associated with the complaint can vary; as evidence is gathered more officers can be linked to the complaint and some may be removed. For this reason, to allow direct comparison across time, the information that was reported at the end of each quarter is not updated.

APPENDIX 1: STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 5: Complaints received, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Year	Complaints
2014/15	3,370
2015/16	3,042
2016/17	2,814
2017/18	2,578
2018/19	2,627

Table 6: Complaints and matters, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Complaints/Other Matters	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Complaints from members of the public	3,290	2,951	2,758	2,498	2,501
Matters referred to the Office	48	54	25	14	14
Matters the Police Ombudsman has chosen to investigate	5	16	11	10	7
Other	27	21	20	56	105
Total	3,370	3,042	2,814	2,578	2,627

Table 7: Complaints received by month, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Month Complaint Received	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
April	332	210	247	177	205
May	333	258	259	225	213
June	323	296	266	225	226
July	311	299	236	210	243
August	279	254	223	269	226
September	272	279	264	215	187
October	282	256	219	233	252
November	255	259	226	225	230
December	254	202	182	185	169
January	254	225	194	223	243
February	248	258	215	183	207
March	227	246	283	208	226
Total	3,370	3,042	2,814	2,578	2,627

Table 8: Complaints received by organisation, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Organisation	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	3,308	2,981	2,755	2,523	2,597
Designated Civilian ¹¹	42	44	37	39	n/a
Harbour Police	3	2	2	2	6
Northern Ireland Airport Constabulary	1	3	2	1	0
Certain Home Office Officials	0	3	1	0	1
National Crime Agency	n/a	1	0	1	3
Ministry of Defence Police	0	0	0	1	0
Other/Unknown	16	8	17	11	20
Total	3,370	3,042	2,814	2,578	2,627

Table 9: Complaints received by where the initial complaint was made, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Source of Complaints	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Directly with Police Ombudsman's Office	2,216	2,069	2,103	2,013	2,038
Via Representative	580	541	433	315	313
Directly with the Police	494	341	222	170	150
Other (includes referrals)	80	91	56	80	126
Total	3,370	3,042	2,814	2,578	2,627

¹¹ Since the beginning of 2018/19 complaints made against 'designated civilians' in the PSNI have been recorded as a complaints against the PSNI rather than in a separate category. For more information see notes on page 74.

Table 10: Main situations giving rise to complaints, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Main Situation	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Criminal Investigation	832	770	853	761	754
Arrest	626	565	411	400	420
Traffic incident	244	228	239	210	237
Search	288	244	224	174	188
Domestic Incident	213	152	156	136	124
Police Enquiries	199	92	105	102	150
Complaints relating to the 'Troubles'	91	97	75	48	27
Domestic Violence	26	27	54	42	32
Parade/Demonstrations	22	63	21	32	13
Other	685	674	521	526	539
Unknown	144	130	155	147	143
Total	3,370	3,042	2,814	2,578	2,627

Table 11: Complaints received by police district, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Police District	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
A: Belfast City	988	914	742	634	728
B: Lisburn & Castlereagh City	148	122	116	111	119
C: Ards & North Down	190	183	186	157	169
D: Newry, Mourne & Down	195	180	165	151	141
E: Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	282	227	217	228	219
F: Mid Ulster	124	105	119	89	106
G: Fermanagh & Omagh	163	140	137	120	112
H: Derry City & Strabane	233	235	205	165	185
J: Causeway Coast & Glens	298	227	240	244	201
K: Mid & East Antrim	164	146	171	143	164
L: Antrim & Newtownabbey	209	181	171	183	148
Other organisation / Unknown	376	382	345	353	335
Total	3,370	3,042	2,814	2,578	2,627

Table 12: Number of allegations received, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Year	Allegations
2014/15	5,641
2015/16	4,969
2016/17	4,816
2017/18	4,286
2018/19	4,072

Table 13: Types of allegations¹², 2014/15 to 2018/19

Types of Allegations	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Failure in Duty	2,403	2,120	2,266	2,120	1,892
Oppressive Behaviour	1,450	1,229	1,076	892	855
Incivility	423	383	283	244	265
Police Searches	309	246	241	212	201
Unlawful/Unnecessary Arrest/Detention	252	208	204	175	208
Mishandling of Property	127	133	99	106	94
Allegations relating to the 'Troubles'	20	74	77	41	26
Malpractice	109	58	76	55	38
Traffic	52	43	61	31	48
Discriminatory Behaviour	72	54	54	40	43
Section 55 Referral	54	72	34	26	23
Other	370	349	345	344	379
Total	5,641	4,969	4,816	4,286	4,072

¹² A full breakdown of allegations types are available in the accompanying Excel spreadsheet

Table 14: Failure in Duty allegations, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Failure in Duty Allegations	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Conduct of police investigations / incident response	1,275	1,141	1,232	1,158	1,044
Failure in contact	310	302	314	297	272
Failure in record management	222	139	175	166	142
Conduct in custody suite	128	118	123	119	96
Failure to act impartially	86	92	82	67	57
Failure in duty of care	77	42	45	43	56
Other failure in duty	305	286	295	270	225
Total	2,403	2,120	2,266	2,120	1,892

Table 15: Oppressive Behaviour allegations, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Oppressive Behaviour Allegations	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Oppressive Conduct (OC Not Involving Assault)	549	461	509	414	378
Other Assault	689	582	419	332	330
Harassment (Series of Like Incidents)	158	152	111	104	101
Sexual Assault	38	24	25	27	29
Serious non-sexual assault	16	10	12	15	17
Total	1,450	1,229	1,076	892	855

Table 16: Incivility allegations, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Incivility Allegations	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Incivility At Domestic Residence	108	93	87	53	69
Incivility By Officer On The Telephone	93	76	63	55	65
Incivility At Police Station	59	41	31	33	24
Incivility When Stopped For A Traffic Offence	39	35	28	21	28
Incivility To Person Under 18 Years	6	6	1	2	5
Other incivility	118	132	73	80	74
Total	423	383	283	244	265

Table 17: Allegations regarding the use of police equipment, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Police equipment	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Handcuffs	149	115	82	58	58
CS Spray	34	36	20	16	21
Baton	35	23	19	10	14
Taser	18	14	10	11	14
Misuse/Discharge Firearm	2	5	4	2	4
AEP/Baton Round/Riot Gun	2	6	0	0	2
Other	9	12	3	2	1
No weapon used	5,392	4,758	4,678	4,187	3,958
Total	5,641	4,969	4,816	4,286	4,072

Table 18: Complaint closures, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Complaint Closures	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Complaints Closed	3,527	2,994	2,977	2,650	2,660
Complaints closed following initial assessment	422	352	383	389	424
Not a matter for the Police Ombudsman	360	296	336	318	282
Call in/Call out - No Further action or Notification only	25	19	17	43	108
Other (Initial Assessment)	37	37	30	28	34
Complaints closed following initial inquiries	1,559	1,308	1,203	1,205	989
Complainant did not fully engage	1,084	892	753	726	667
Ill-founded	307	283	338	384	218
Withdrawn	152	125	103	81	92
Other (Initial Inquiries)	16	8	9	14	12
Complaints resolved informally	219	192	182	170	214
Informally Resolved	191	184	182	170	214
Locally Resolved	28	8	n/a	n/a	n/a
Complaints closed that relate to the 'Troubles'	n/a	n/a	3	1	26
History Complaint ¹³	n/a	n/a	3	1	26
Complaints closed following a full investigation	1,327	1,142	1,206	885	1,007
Complaint substantiated or an issue of concern	368	281	268	211	211
Not substantiated and no issue of concern identified	959	861	938	674	796

¹³ A separate closure for history complaints was introduced in 2016/17. Not all history complaints have been closed in this manner. A validation exercise may take place during 2019/20 to look at this.

Table 19: Occasions Police Ombudsman recommended prosecution/no prosecution¹⁴ for an officer/staff, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Recommendations to PPS	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Criminal Charges	11	19	24	6	8
No Criminal Charges	355	253	203	189	201
Total	366	272	227	195	209

Table 20a: Occasions Police Ombudsman recommended a discipline or performance action¹⁵ for an officer/staff, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Discipline Sanctions (Prior to 2016 Regulations)	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Management Discussion	62	36	27	4	0
Advice & Guidance	219	204	98	9	1
Superintendent's Written Warning	80	55	52	8	3
Formal discipline proceedings	4	11	8	2	4
Total	365	306	185	23	8

¹⁴ This is the number of times a file was sent to the PPS recommending that either an officer or staff member should be prosecuted or not prosecuted. If multiple complaints are received about the same incident the recommendation will only be counted once.

¹⁵ Disciplinary Regulations (pre 6th November 2000); a Code of Conduct (6th November 2000 to 13th March 2003); and a Code of Ethics (since 14th March 2003).

Table 20b: Occasions Police Ombudsman recommended¹⁶ a discipline or performance action for an officer/staff, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Regulations Introduced June 2016)	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Performance	0	0	7	54	55
Misconduct Meeting: Management Advice	0	0	45	91	54
Misconduct Meeting: Written Warning	0	0	12	23	14
Misconduct Meeting: Final Written Warning	0	0	0	1	1
Misconduct Meeting: Extension of Final Written Warning	0	0	0	0	0
Misconduct Meeting total	0	0	57	115	69
Misconduct Hearing	0	0	0	3	0
Total	0	0	64	172	124

Table 21¹⁷: Outcome of policy recommendations made, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Policy recommendations made to PSNI	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Fully accepted & being implemented	61	40	14	7	0
Partially accepted & being implemented	0	3	0	1	0
Not accepted	2	7	4	3	3
Already in place	2	2	2	1	0
No longer applicable	2	0	0	0	0
Still under consideration	0	5	27	28	8
Total	67	57	47	40	11

¹⁶ This is the number of times a discipline or performance recommendations was sent to the PSNI or another organisation for an officer or staff member. Where more than one complaint was received about the same incident the recommendation is only counted once.

¹⁷ Only the information in the most recent year is updated in this table. The previous year's information is accurate at the time of the publication for that year.

Table 22: Complaints suitable for Informal Resolution (IR) with consent obtained, 2014/15 to 2018/19

IR Complaints Received	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of Complaints	3,370	3,042	2,814	2,578	2,627
Complaints Suitable for IR	472	462	447	415	462
Consent for IR obtained	291	283	284	267	311
Consent for IR not obtained	181	179	163	148	151

Table 23: Outcome of Informally Resolution process, 2014/15 to 2018/19¹⁸

IR Resolved	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Successful	189	184	178	172	210
Failed	82	80	94	75	94
Withdrawn	3	6	8	5	8
Total	274	270	280	252	312

Table 24: Rank of officer complained about, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Rank	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Constable	2,432	2,164	2,040	1,731	1,652
Sergeant	460	360	320	280	199
Inspector and Above	170	116	84	44	40

¹⁸ Previous year's data is undergoing a validation exercise and thus more trend information will be available when this exercise finishes.

Table 25: Number of officers with three or more complaints that were formally investigated or dealt with by way of Informal or Local Resolution, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Twelve month period ending	Number of officers
June 2014	103
September 2014	73
December 2014	71
March 2015	73
June 2015	66
September 2015	51
December 2015	43
March 2016	60
June 2016	47
September 2016	44
December 2016	57
March 2017	44
June 2017	32
September 2017	31
December 2017	26
March 2018	29
June 2018	26
September 2018	31
December 2018	22
March 2019	38

APPENDIX 2: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

To help understand the information in this report, we have provided this short summary of the police complaints service in Northern Ireland and how it works.

What we do

The Police Ombudsman's Office provides for the independent and impartial investigation of complaints about the police in Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman is committed to providing a police complaints service in the way he thinks best suited to secure the confidence of the public and the police. He believes that for such confidence to be forthcoming, it is essential that people are informed about the nature of his work.

The Police Ombudsman has the remit to investigate the conduct of officers within the following organisations which operate in Northern Ireland:

- Police Service of Northern Ireland including Designated Civilians
- Belfast Harbour Police
- Belfast International Airport Police
- National Crime Agency (NCA) officers in Northern Ireland
- Certain Home Office staff using police functions in Northern Ireland
- Ministry of Defence Police in Northern Ireland

The Office deals primarily with complaints made by members of the public about the conduct of police officers. It also deals with matters referred to it by the PSNI Chief Constable. The following are incidents that the Chief Constable is required to refer to the Police Ombudsman:

- Any fatal road traffic collisions involving police officers
- Any death which may have occurred as a result of the actions of a police officer
- Any other serious allegation

It also deals with matters referred to it by the NIPB, the DoJ and the PPS.

The Police Ombudsman also has the power to initiate an investigation without a complaint having been made if it appears to him to be desirable and in the public interest.

In most circumstances the Police Ombudsman can only investigate incidents which have occurred in the previous 12 months. However, there is no time limit on the investigation of grave matters, or where exceptional circumstances exist. Many of the investigations the Office is undertaking into incidents which happened between 1968 and 1998 (the period known as the Troubles) are matters the Police Ombudsman viewed as grave or exceptional.

The Police Ombudsman does not investigate complaints against officers whose conduct has been the subject of disciplinary or criminal proceedings; or complaints about off-duty police officers, unless the fact that he or she is a police officer is relevant to the complaint. The Office also does not investigate matters relating to the direction and control of the police service by the Chief Constable.

How we deal with complaints

All complaints are recorded on our Case Handling System, even where they are later determined to be outside the remit of the Office.

A complaint from a member of the public will invariably include a number of allegations. For example, if a person alleges a police officer pushed them *and* was rude to them, it would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations on the system.

Once a complaint has been received, it will become subject of an initial assessment. This will involve logging it onto our system and making an assessment as to whether the matter is something the Police Ombudsman's Office can deal with and if so, how best to do so.

If the complaint is something we deal with, the Office will consider if the matter can be resolved informally rather than being sent straight for investigation. Before we decide to take the Informal Resolution approach, the person who made the complaint must agree. If this proves unsuccessful, the Police Ombudsman will refer the complaint for investigation.

When a matter is suitable for investigation, a complaints officer or an investigation officer will set about making the initial inquiries necessary before an investigation commences. This will involve getting more information from the complainant, such as an official statement of complaint.

When a formal investigation has been completed, if the evidence indicates that police officers may have committed a criminal offence or breached the police Code

of Ethics, the Police Ombudsman can recommend that they are prosecuted and/or disciplined.

Where the Police Ombudsman considers that a criminal offence may have been committed by a member of the police, he must send a copy of the investigation report to the PPS, making appropriate recommendations. The PPS then decides whether or not to prosecute the police officer under investigation.

If the Police Ombudsman decides that no criminal offence has been committed, he is required to consider whether it is appropriate to recommend disciplinary proceedings. If the Chief Constable is unwilling administer the recommended discipline, the Police Ombudsman may, direct him to do so.

APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary has been designed to assist users of our statistical information to understand the terms which we use to describe data contained in the statistical bulletin. The terms are listed in alphabetical order.

Advice and Guidance

This is an informal discipline sanction for officers.

Allegation

Each complaint can be broken down into one or more allegations. These are all the individual behaviours or issues being complained about. For example, if a person alleges a police officer pushed them *and* was rude to them, it would be recorded as one complaint with two allegations on the system.

Call in/Call out (no further action)

These are situations where the Police Ombudsman's Office is 'called in' to consider an incident but determines at an early stage that there is no requirement for any further investigation.

Conduct in custody suite

This is a Failure in Duty allegation category. It includes incidents where the complainant was denied access to legal advice or medical attention while they were detained in custody. In addition it covers instances where it is alleged the officer did not inform the detained person of their rights and entitlements, or the officer did not keep accurate custody records.

Conduct of police investigations / incident response

This is a Failure in Duty allegation category and includes allegations where the complainant has alleged that the unsatisfactory conduct of either ongoing or completed police investigations, including the inappropriate disclosure of information. Also included would be allegations that the police failed to carry out any investigation into an incident, or were excessively slow to respond to an incident.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by or on behalf of a member of the public about a member of the police service or an officer of another service over which the Office has jurisdiction.

For the purpose of clarity of reporting, the term complaints refers to complaints made by members of the public, matters referred to the Office from other organisation, and matters that the Police Ombudsman has decided to investigate.

Failure in contact

This is a Failure in Duty allegation. It includes incidents where the complainant has alleged a police officer; failed to keep arranged appointments, return telephone calls, or reply to correspondence. It also includes incidents when an officer failed to keep the complainant updated with progress of an investigation or police enquiries.

Failure in duty of care

This is a Failure in Duty allegation. Where it is alleged that the police officer failed to take appropriate action to ensure the safety or well-being of the complainant or third party for whom they have responsibility.

Failure in record management

This is a Failure in Duty allegation. It involves a failure of police to keep accurate, complete or up to date police records. It also includes the failure of officers to provide information or documentation relating to the complainant or a third party.

Failure to act impartially

This is a Failure in Duty allegation. The complainant alleges an officer failed to adopt an independent approach and/or failed to act in a fair and impartial manner.

Historical Investigation

This is an investigation (potentially criminal and /or misconduct) into the actions of police where the allegation(s) made are considered Grave or Exceptional, "Troubles" related (1969-1998) and predates the establishment of the Good Friday Agreement, 10 April 1998.

Ill-founded

This is a type of complaint closure. These are cases where it became clear during initial inquiries that an allegation was without bases or foundation.

Incivility

This is a category within allegations. It refers to allegations such as the police officer being rude, showing a lack of respect, being abrupt or displaying a general lack of sensitivity.

Informally resolved (Informal Resolution)

This is a process offered to complainants who have made less serious allegations, e.g. rudeness or incivility. It involves a senior police officer speaking to both the officer(s) involved and the complainant with a view to reaching a satisfactory resolution of the complaint. It requires that a record of the outcome has been obtained from police confirming that the matter has been resolved.

Malpractice

These allegations can include any allegation in relation to perjury, other allegations of falsehood, any allegation that evidence was obtained in an irregular manner or under duress and allegations of concealment or tampering with evidence.

Management Discussion:

Management Discussion is an informal discipline sanction. It involves a discussion between the officer concerned and a more senior officer regarding the allegation.

Misconduct Hearing

This is a discipline action under the Police (Conduct) Regulations (NI) 2016 and came into force on 1 June 2016. It is a meeting where the officer may be dealt with by a disciplinary action up to and including a final written warning.

Misconduct Meeting

This is a discipline action under the Police (Conduct) Regulations (NI) 2016 and came into force on 1 June 2016. It is a hearing where the officer may be dealt with by a disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Mishandling of property

This allegation category includes any allegation involving theft or loss of property (including money), unreasonable retention of property, damage to property, failure to account for money or property and improper disposal of property.

Oppressive Behaviour

This is an allegation type and includes situations where the complainant alleged that the officer has behaved in an oppressive manner. They can include allegations of oppressive conduct, harassment, and assault, including sexual assault.

Performance

A recommendation to initiate unsatisfactory performance procedures for an officer.

Residual matters

A small number of residual matters are included in the number of allegations (usually 1-2% of allegations each year). A residual matter is one identified by the Office's Investigator, which has not been previously complained of by the complainant. Examples include failure to complete notebook records, anomalies in custody record, and failure to supervise situations adequately.

Section 55 referral

Not all matters the Police Ombudsman deals with come to us as complaints from members of the public. Certain public bodies, including the PSNI, the Policing Board, the Department of Justice and the Public prosecution Service can refer matters to us for consideration. This is done under section 55 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998.

Superintendent's Written Warning

This is a formal written warning from a police officer's Superintendent.

APPENDIX 4: DATA AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY

Statistical information on complaints and allegations is derived from the CHS, an integrated and comprehensive ICT system that covers all key aspects of receiving and processing a complaint. It captures data about the complainant, the complained against parties, the incident and allegations made. Data can be downloaded and exported to a number of commonly used software packages for analysis (Excel, Access, SPSS¹⁹). In addition the Office uses the DI Diver reporting tool and the CHS has a number of management reports run directly from a menu on the system.

The data used for this publication was extracted from the CHS on the 8th April 2019, and thus includes all information recorded on the system up to the 7th April 2019.

Changes made to the CHS during 2018/19

Two changes were made to the CHS during 2018/19 that may affect some of the results and comparisons provided in this report.

Firstly, the Office improved the recording practices of notifications from the PSNI. These are incidents that police officers have notified the On-Call team about but they do not meet the threshold for the Chief Constable to refer the incident for an independent investigation or the threshold for the Police Ombudsman to use their power to Call themselves into the incident and complete an investigation.

Secondly, is how information about ‘designated civilians’ within the police are recorded on the CHS. In previous, years they had a separate category and were not considered to be complaints against the PSNI and thus in the details neither the complaints nor allegations were assigned to a Police District. Since the beginning of 2018/19, complaints against ‘designated civilians’ were recorded as a complaint against the PSNI and thus both complaints and allegations received will be assigned against a Police District. This may also impact upon some of the discipline recommendations made to the PSNI. This change was made to reflect the change in employment terms of the ‘designated civilian’, on the 7th September 2017 they became direct employees of the PSNI while, previously they were employed via a contract provider.

Data quality

CHS data quality is considered to be high. The system has been designed to limit the incidence of inaccurate data through the use of measures such as logical

¹⁹ SPSS is a statistical software package developed for use by social scientists.

validation checks, drop down menus for data input and a minimum of free text input. The Police Ombudsman has a dedicated team who assure the quality of CHS content. All data input is completely auditable and allows for an effective quality control procedure to review and, where necessary, amend key data for the purposes of accurate reporting. When considered necessary, focused data cleansing exercises of key fields are also conducted. Additionally, complete audits of fields with small numbers associated are conducted.

As stated above, substantial validation and quality control procedures are in place to ensure that the data derived from CHS are of high quality. However, there is still the 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 this error is so small that it has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting. However, where errors are identified, corrections are made to reports as soon as practicable. Further details are set out in the Police Ombudsman [statement of revision and errors strategy](#) .

Revisions

The statistics included in this bulletin are taken from a live system, and may be subject to future revisions. This means that total number of complaints and allegations may change slightly between those published in previous bulletins.

Revisions can be made for a number of reasons but are mainly due to more information coming to light during the natural course of the Office's work, and the system being updated accordingly. This includes the identification of residual matters; allegations identified by the Investigator that were not previously complained about by the member of the public, such as, the failure of a police officer to complete their notebook, anomalies in custody records or failure to supervise adequately. They typically account for fewer than 2% of all allegations (approximately between 60 to 100 residual allegations annually).

The table below shows the scale of revisions made between statistics in this bulletin and those in the previous bulletin in June 2018. It demonstrates that the revisions have little impact on the overall trends presented in this bulletin.

Table 26: Revisions made to the number of complaints and allegations received between this publication and the previous publication in June 2018.

	Previously Published Figures (June 18)	Current Published Figures (June 19)	Scale of Revision (number)	Scale of Revision (%)
Total number of complaints received				
2014/15	3,370	3,370	0	n/a
2015/16	3,042	3,042	0	n/a
2016/17	2,813	2,814	+1	<0.05%
2017/18	2,561	2,578	+17	1%
Total number of allegations received				
2014/15	5,641	5,641	0	n/a
2015/16	4,963	4,969	+6	0.1%
2016/17	4,816	4,816	0	n/a
2017/18	4,241	4,286	+45	1%

The Office's full strategy for revisions and errors can be found within the publications section of the [Office's website](#).

Data limitations

Because of the nature of some of the highly sensitive material handled by the Police Ombudsman in the investigation of cases, a small proportion of cases will have only limited information available on the CHS. On balance, the Police Ombudsman considers that the assurance of the privacy of the information and individuals associated with this small number of sensitive cases outweighs the need for full access to the data. In practice, the number of cases is so small that the restriction has no impact on the quality of statistical reporting.

Publication

This is an annual statistical bulletin, and publishes information in accordance with the obligation for the Police Ombudsman's Office to report performance on a financial year basis.

As the statistics were taken from a 'live' case handling system, the figures in this bulletin supersede those previously published.

The next annual statistical report is due to be published in June 2020. The exact date will be announced on the website at least four weeks prior to publication.

In addition to the annual bulletin, quarterly updates are published throughout the year. They provide top level information on the number of complaints and allegations received, they are published on the 4th Thursday in the month following the end of the quarter.

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Website: www.policeombudsman.org



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