



# **Report on Police Officer Satisfaction with services provided by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland**

**Annual Survey  
2023/24**

**Published June 2024**

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## Introduction

This is an Official Statistics publication. Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular validation checks to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (the Office) was set up by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 in order to provide an independent system for investigating complaints about the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The Police Ombudsman is committed to providing an independent and impartial investigation process of the highest quality, which is timely and secures the confidence of both the public and police.

This report presents the findings from the Police Officer Satisfaction Survey conducted over the three week time period 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024 to the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024. It includes information collected from officers who were subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during 2023/24 and compares the findings to results obtained for the previous years<sup>1</sup>. Throughout this report when there is reference made to officers/police officers the reader should be aware that this includes civilian staff (designated civilians). Civilian staff became direct employees of the PSNI in September 2017, therefore complaints about these civilian staff members are recorded as complaints about the PSNI.

In this report, comparisons have been made between the results for this year's survey and the results obtained for previous years. Trend data is available for the nine years that the survey has been carried out in the tables outlined in Appendix 1: Results, page 8. This data is also available in the "Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet – Police Officer Survey 2023/24"<sup>2</sup> should the reader wish to carry out further analysis on the findings of this year's survey. Comparisons for previous year's surveys have already been detailed in reports published in that particular reporting year. These reports are all available on the Office's website (details are on the back page of this report).

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<sup>1</sup> This is the ninth year that the police officer satisfaction survey was carried out electronically; therefore comparisons can only be made with the previous eight years. The survey was not carried out in 2019/20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent closure of the Office.

<sup>2</sup> The Accompanying Excel Spreadsheet is available on our [website](#).

## **Main Findings**

- Officers had positive views of Ombudsman staff with regards to how they were treated, both respectfully and fairly. They also felt our staff were easy to understand and knowledgeable.
- Officers were more likely to be satisfied with the manner in which they were treated, the explanation of the process and the clarity of our correspondence than they were for the frequency of updates and overall time taken to resolve the complaint.
- Over three quarters of officers surveyed felt their complaint was dealt with independently.
- Almost three fifths of officers felt the police complaints system makes the police more accountable.

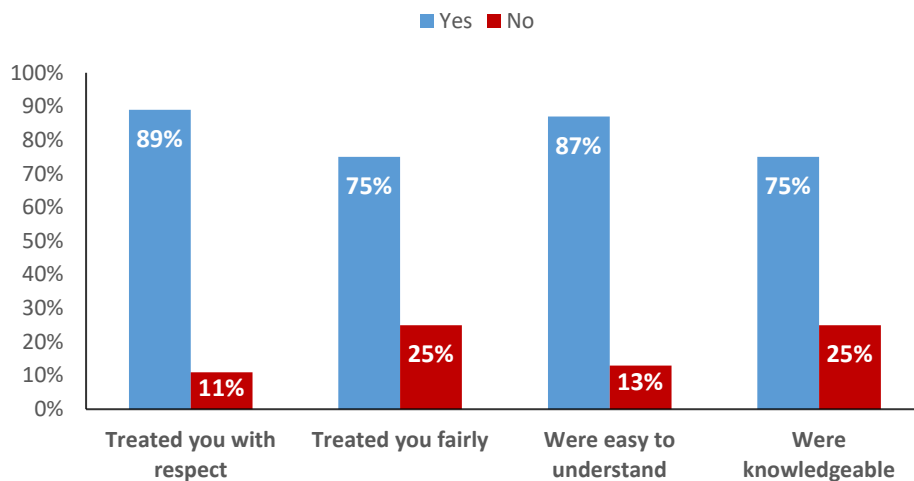
# Results

## Perception of Ombudsman staff

Police officers were asked if they spoke to a member of staff and, if they had, how staff had appeared to them in relation to a number of characteristics. In 2023/24, 70% of officers said that they had spoken to a member of staff and of these:

- Just under nine out of ten officers thought they were treated with respect,
- Three quarters thought they were treated fairly,
- Almost nine out of ten thought staff were easy to understand and
- Three quarters thought staff were knowledgeable (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff, 2023/24



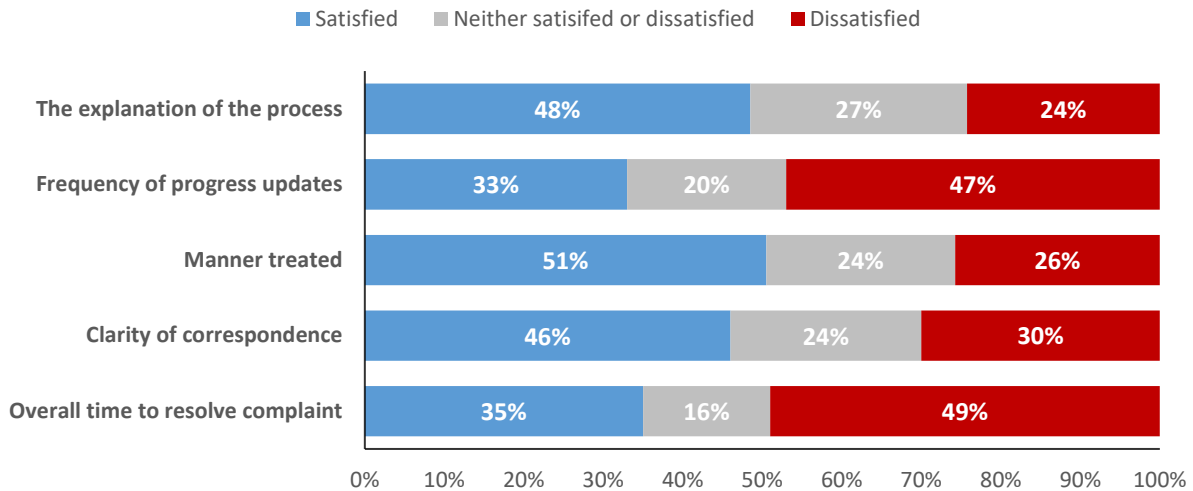
Results generally showed that the views of police officers in 2023/24, with respect to their perceptions of Ombudsman staff, were similar when compared with previous years. There are a few exceptions though:

- Officers were less likely to feel staff treated them with respect and were knowledgeable in 2022/23 when compared with almost all other years.
- Officers were more likely to feel staff were easy to understand in 2014/15, than they were in 2017/18, 2022/23 and 2023/24 (see Appendix 1, Tables 1 to 4).

## Level of satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process<sup>3</sup>

In 2023/24, as seen in previous years, a larger proportion of officers were satisfied with the manner in which they were treated, the explanation of the process and the clarity of correspondence than they were with the frequency of progress updates and the overall time taken to resolve the complaint (Figure 2).

*Figure 2: Officer Satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process, 2023/24*



- The percentage of officers satisfied with the explanation of the process in 2023/24 was similar when compared with previous years, apart from 2017/18, when satisfaction levels were higher for this aspect of the complaints process.
- The percentage of officers that were satisfied with the frequency of updates in 2023/24 was similar to previous years, apart from last year when officers were less satisfied with this aspect of the process.
- In 2023/24, the percentage of officers who were satisfied with the manner of treatment was similar to previous years. However in 2017/18 and 2018/19, officers were more satisfied with this aspect of the process than they were this year.
- The views of police officers in 2023/24, with respect to the clarity of the correspondence, is similar when compared with previous years.
- Officer satisfaction with the overall time taken to resolve their complaint has been fairly similar over the years. However in 2021/22 officers were less satisfied with this aspect of the complaints process. Also, in 2022/23 dissatisfaction levels were at their highest when compared with all but one of the last nine years (see Appendix 1, Tables 5 to 9).

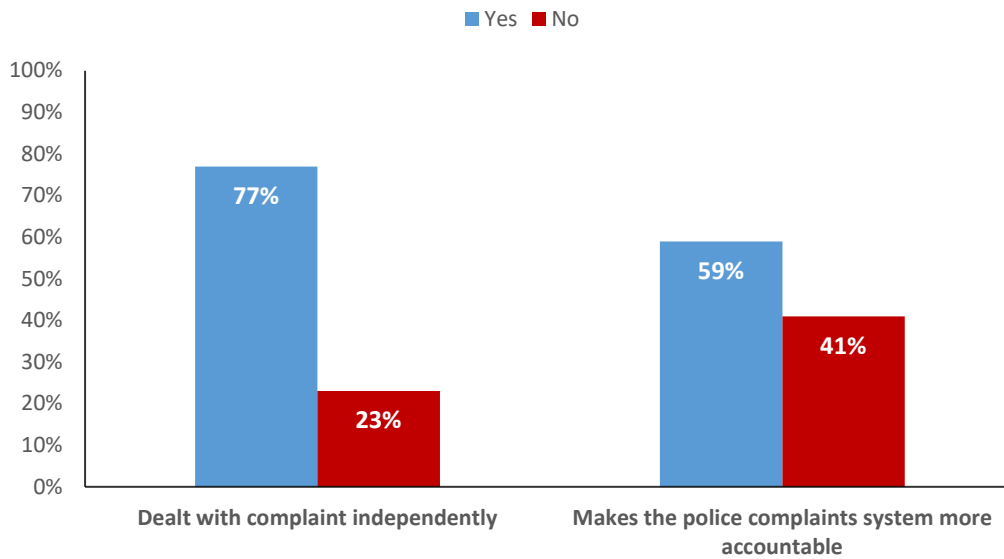
<sup>3</sup>Note: Some of the changes in satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels observed may be as a result of increasing the Likert scale from three to five responses in 2017/18.

## Independence and Accountability

In 2023/24:

- Over three quarters of officers felt that the Police Ombudsman’s Office dealt with their complaint independently.
- Just under three fifths of officers felt that the police complaints system makes the police more accountable (Figure 3).

*Figure 3: Deals with complaints independently and makes police more accountable, 2023/24*



### Independence

In 2023/24, the percentage of police officers who thought the Office dealt with the complaint made about them independently, was similar when compared with previous years (see Appendix 1, Table 10).

### Accountability

The percentage of officers that thought the police complaints system makes police more accountable is similar in 2023/24 when compared with previous years (see Appendix 1, Table 11).

## Appendix 1: Results

### Police officer perception of Ombudsman staff

**Table 1: Were you treated with respect?**

| Answer             | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Yes                | 91%     | 89%     | 89%     | 89%     | 87%     | N/A     | 91%     | 88%     | 80%     | 89%     |
| No                 | 9%      | 11%     | 11%     | 11%     | 13%     | N/A     | 9%      | 12%     | 20%     | 11%     |
| No. of respondents | 454     | 397     | 418     | 238     | 248     | N/A     | 117     | 218     | 165     | 163     |

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

**Table 2: Were you treated fairly?**

| Answer             | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Yes                | 81%     | 80%     | 80%     | 78%     | 78%     | N/A     | 79%     | 77%     | 68%     | 75%     |
| No                 | 19%     | 20%     | 20%     | 22%     | 22%     | N/A     | 21%     | 23%     | 32%     | 25%     |
| No. of respondents | 454     | 397     | 418     | 238     | 248     | N/A     | 117     | 218     | 165     | 163     |

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

**Table 3: Were staff easy to understand?**

| Answer             | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Yes                | 92%     | 90%     | 89%     | 87%     | 90%     | N/A     | 88%     | 88%     | 81%     | 87%     |
| No                 | 8%      | 10%     | 11%     | 13%     | 10%     | N/A     | 12%     | 12%     | 19%     | 13%     |
| No. of respondents | 454     | 397     | 418     | 238     | 248     | N/A     | 117     | 218     | 165     | 163     |

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member



**Table 4: Were staff knowledgeable?**

| Answer             | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Yes                | 76%     | 77%     | 76%     | 74%     | 73%     | N/A     | 74%     | 77%     | 64%     | 75%     |
| No                 | 24%     | 23%     | 24%     | 26%     | 27%     | N/A     | 26%     | 23%     | 36%     | 25%     |
| No. of respondents | 454     | 397     | 418     | 238     | 248     | N/A     | 117     | 218     | 165     | 163     |

Asked to officers who had spoken to a staff member

## Police officer satisfaction/dissatisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

**Table 5: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with explanation of the process.**

| Explanation of the process        | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Satisfied                         | 56%     | 54%     | 55%     | 58%     | 55%     | N/A     | 47%     | 46%     | 42%     | 48%     |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 29%     | 29%     | 29%     | 21%     | 23%     | N/A     | 28%     | 27%     | 24%     | 27%     |
| Dissatisfied                      | 15%     | 16%     | 16%     | 21%     | 23%     | N/A     | 24%     | 27%     | 34%     | 24%     |
| No. of respondents                | 507     | 461     | 478     | 273     | 279     | N/A     | 197     | 353     | 241     | 233     |

Asked to all officers

**Table 6: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with frequency of updates.**

| Frequency of updates              | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Satisfied                         | 30%     | 32%     | 29%     | 38%     | 37%     | N/A     | 28%     | 27%     | 24%     | 33%     |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 36%     | 34%     | 33%     | 22%     | 26%     | N/A     | 23%     | 22%     | 20%     | 20%     |
| Dissatisfied                      | 35%     | 34%     | 38%     | 40%     | 37%     | N/A     | 49%     | 50%     | 57%     | 47%     |
| No. of respondents                | 507     | 461     | 478     | 273     | 279     | N/A     | 197     | 353     | 241     | 233     |

Asked to all officers

**Table 7: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with manner of treatment.**

| <b>Manner of treatment</b>        | <b>2014/15</b> | <b>2015/16</b> | <b>2016/17</b> | <b>2017/18</b> | <b>2018/19</b> | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> | <b>2023/24</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Satisfied                         | 57%            | 56%            | 58%            | 60%            | 63%            | N/A            | 53%            | 50%            | 46%            | 51%            |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 27%            | 26%            | 24%            | 16%            | 15%            | N/A            | 26%            | 29%            | 24%            | 24%            |
| Dissatisfied                      | 16%            | 18%            | 19%            | 23%            | 22%            | N/A            | 20%            | 21%            | 29%            | 26%            |
| No. of respondents                | 507            | 461            | 478            | 273            | 279            | N/A            | 197            | 353            | 241            | 233            |

Asked to all officers

**Table 8: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with clarity of correspondence.**

| <b>Clarity of correspondence</b>  | <b>2014/15</b> | <b>2015/16</b> | <b>2016/17</b> | <b>2017/18</b> | <b>2018/19</b> | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> | <b>2023/24</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Satisfied                         | 46%            | 47%            | 46%            | 50%            | 51%            | N/A            | 43%            | 43%            | 44%            | 46%            |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied | 31%            | 30%            | 31%            | 20%            | 23%            | N/A            | 28%            | 28%            | 20%            | 24%            |
| Dissatisfied                      | 23%            | 24%            | 24%            | 30%            | 27%            | N/A            | 29%            | 29%            | 37%            | 30%            |
| No. of respondents                | 507            | 461            | 478            | 273            | 279            | N/A            | 197            | 353            | 241            | 233            |

Asked to all officers

**Table 9: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with time taken to resolve the complaint.**

| <b>Time taken to resolve complaint</b> | <b>2014/15</b> | <b>2015/16</b> | <b>2016/17</b> | <b>2017/18</b> | <b>2018/19</b> | <b>2019/20</b> | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> | <b>2022/23</b> | <b>2023/24</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Satisfied                              | 31%            | 33%            | 32%            | 40%            | 41%            | N/A            | 29%            | 25%            | 27%            | 35%            |
| Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied      | 30%            | 27%            | 26%            | 21%            | 20%            | N/A            | 21%            | 20%            | 12%            | 16%            |
| Dissatisfied                           | 39%            | 41%            | 42%            | 40%            | 39%            | N/A            | 50%            | 54%            | 61%            | 49%            |
| No. of respondents                     | 507            | 461            | 478            | 273            | 279            | N/A            | 197            | 353            | 241            | 233            |

Asked to all officers

## Police officer Perception of Police Ombudsman Independence and accountability

**Table 10: Did we deal with the complaint independently?**

| Answer             | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Yes                | 80%     | 79%     | 76%     | 71%     | 75%     | N/A     | 78%     | 80%     | 70%     | 77%     |
| No                 | 20%     | 21%     | 24%     | 29%     | 25%     | N/A     | 22%     | 20%     | 30%     | 23%     |
| No. of respondents | 507     | 461     | 478     | 273     | 279     | N/A     | 197     | 353     | 241     | 233     |

Asked to all officers

**Table 11: Do you feel the police complaints system makes police more accountable?**

| Answer             | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Yes                | 62%     | 60%     | 57%     | 58%     | 65%     | N/A     | 63%     | 57%     | 53%     | 59%     |
| No                 | 38%     | 40%     | 43%     | 42%     | 35%     | N/A     | 37%     | 43%     | 47%     | 41%     |
| No. of respondents | 507     | 461     | 478     | 273     | 279     | N/A     | 197     | 353     | 241     | 233     |

Asked to all officers

## **Appendix 2: Notes to readers**

### **The survey**

This is the ninth year the Office has carried out an electronic survey of police officers who had been the subject of an investigation which was subsequently closed during the reporting year i.e. complaints closed between 01<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The identity of the officers surveyed at the end of 2023/24 was extracted from the Office's Case handling System (CHS).

Police Service of Northern Ireland software was used to carry out the survey with their Statistics Branch facilitating this on our behalf. A total of 665 officers were emailed a link to the survey and 233 responses were submitted. This represents a response rate of 35%.

The "Satisfied" category in Tables 5 to 9 in Appendix 1, includes the categories of "Very satisfied" and "Satisfied", while the category of "Not satisfied" includes "Dissatisfied" and "Very dissatisfied".

### **Data use:**

The data collected are used by the Office to monitor and evaluate the service provided to those police officers who have been subject to a complaint and identify any issues that arise in a timely manner. This allows the Office to fulfil its statutory duty to secure the confidence of the police in the complaints handling process.

## **Appendix 3: Police Officer Satisfaction Survey Questions**

### **Question 1:**

Did you speak to a member of the Police Ombudsman's staff?

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

***If you spoke to a member of staff.....***

### **Question 2:**

Did you think the member of Police Ombudsman's staff...

- Treated you with respect
- Treated you fairly
- Were easy to understand
- Were knowledgeable

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

### **Question 3:**

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with each of the following aspects of service?

- The explanation of the process given to you
- How often you were updated with progress
- The manner in which you were treated
- The clarity of our correspondence
- The overall time taken to resolve the complaint

*Answer 'Very satisfied', 'Satisfied', 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'Dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied'*

### **Question 4:**

Do you think we dealt with your complaint independently?

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

### **Question 5:**

Do you feel the police complaints system makes the police more accountable?

*Answer 'Yes' or 'No'*

**If you have any further comments regarding your contact with the Police Ombudsman's Office, please detail them below.**

**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 8634  
Witness Appeal Line: 0800 0327 880  
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