

Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland:

School Pupil's Awareness of the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Results from the 2013 Young Persons'
Behaviour & Attitudes Survey

June 2015

Introduction

This report presents the results on questions relating to the Police Ombudsman from the 2013 Northern Ireland Young Persons' Behaviour & Attitudes Survey (YPBAS). This is a cross-departmental survey that runs every four years, and it covers a range of topics relevant to the lives of young people today.

YPBAS is a school based survey carried out among pupils in Years 8 to 12. It was previously conducted in 2000, 2003, 2007 and 2010. Questions regarding the Police Ombudsman have been included in YPBAS for the first time in 2013, and thus comparisons over time are not available. The 2013 results are based on data which has been weighted by year group, gender and religion in order to reflect the composition of Northern Ireland's post-primary population.

Key Statistics

- 23% of pupils had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Of pupils who had heard of the Police Ombudsman:

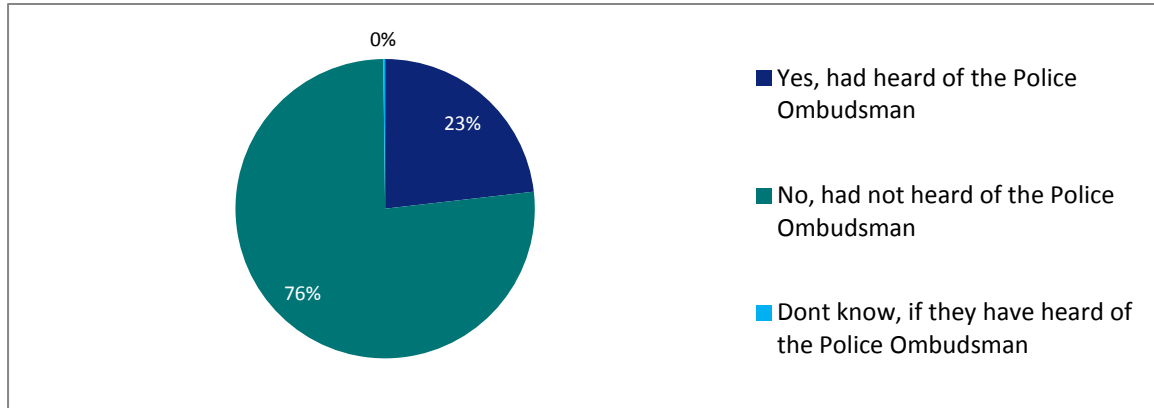
- 43% thought that the Police Ombudsman was a separate organisation from the police.
- 85% thought the Police Ombudsman dealt with complaints fairly.
- 88% thought the Police Ombudsman helped ensure the police do a good job.

- 17% of pupils stated that they thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them.

Awareness of the Police Ombudsman

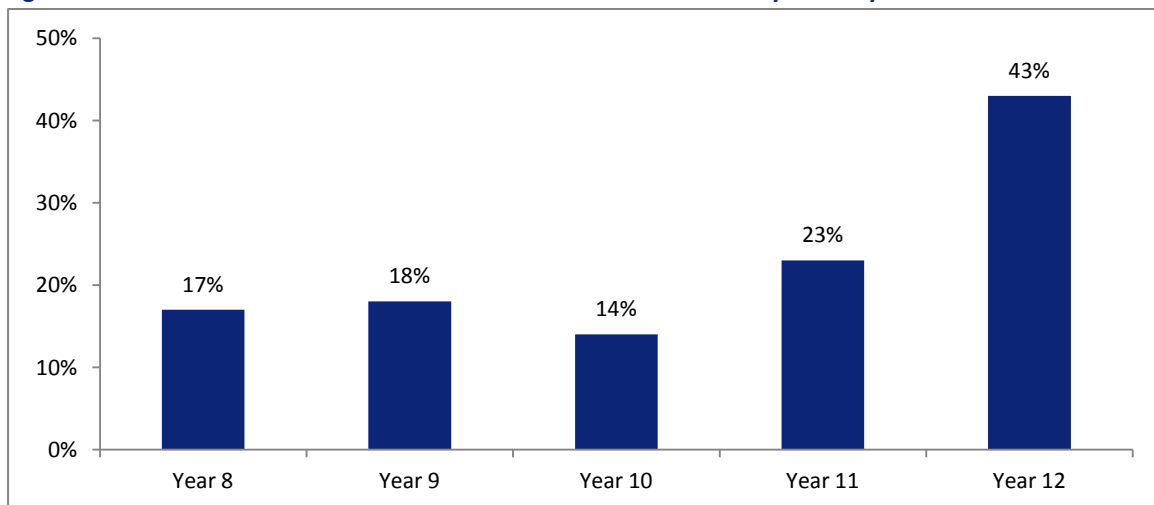
All pupils were asked if they had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and around one quarter of pupils stated that they had (Figure 1, Table 1).

Figure 1: Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland?



Boys were more likely than girls to have heard of the Police Ombudsman and pupils in Year 12 were approximately twice as likely to have heard of the Police Ombudsman than pupils in other school years (Figure 2, Table 1).

Figure 2: Awareness of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland by school year



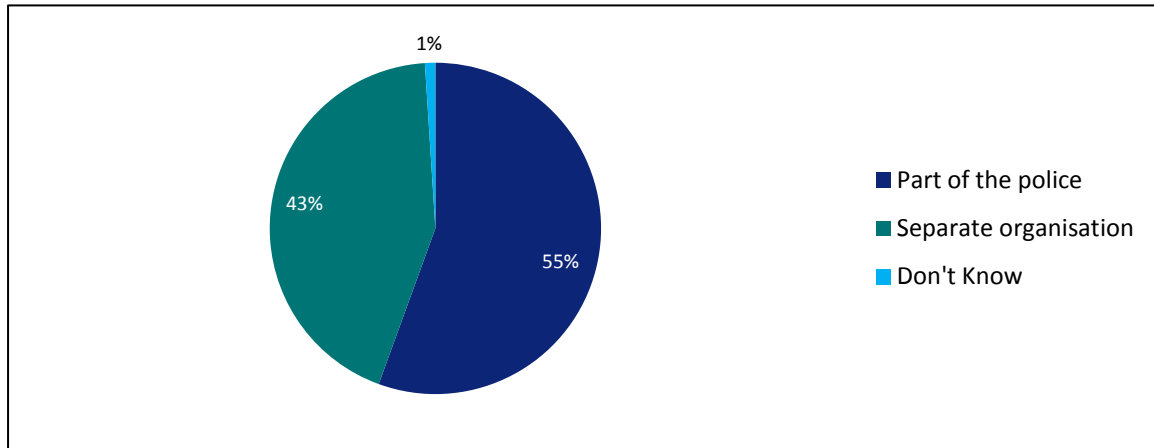
Pupils who were aware of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland were asked “how did you hear about the Police Ombudsman?” The two most frequently reported ways that pupils had heard about the Police Ombudsman were on television and in school (Table 2).

The results in the following three sections (Independence, Fairness and Impact of the Police Ombudsman) are based on pupils *who had heard* of the Police Ombudsman.

Police Ombudsman Part or Separate Organisation from the Police

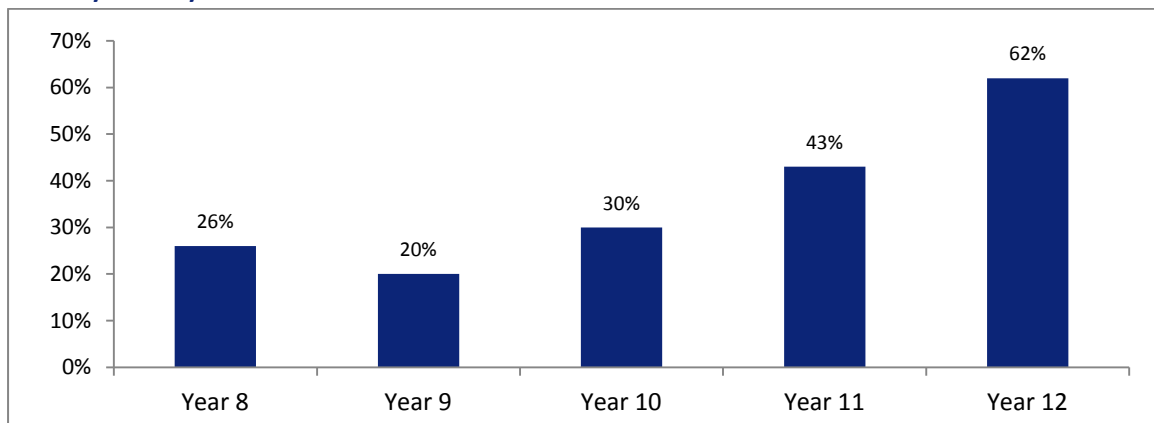
Around two in every five pupils who had heard of the Police Ombudsman thought it was a separate organisation from the Police (Figure 3, Table 3).

Figure 3: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is part of the police or a separate organisation?



Boys were more likely than girls to think it was a separate organisation from the police. Awareness that the Police Ombudsman's Office was a separate organisation from the police in general increased with school year, with pupils in Year 12 being three times more likely than pupils in Year 9 to know this (Figure 4, Table 3).

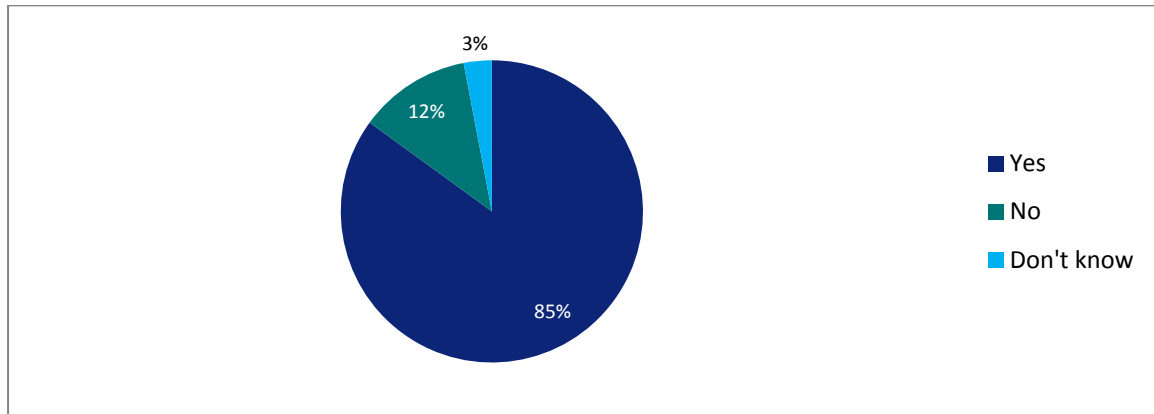
Figure 4: Proportion of Pupils that thought the Police Ombudsman was a separate organisation from the Police by school year



Fairness of the Police Ombudsman

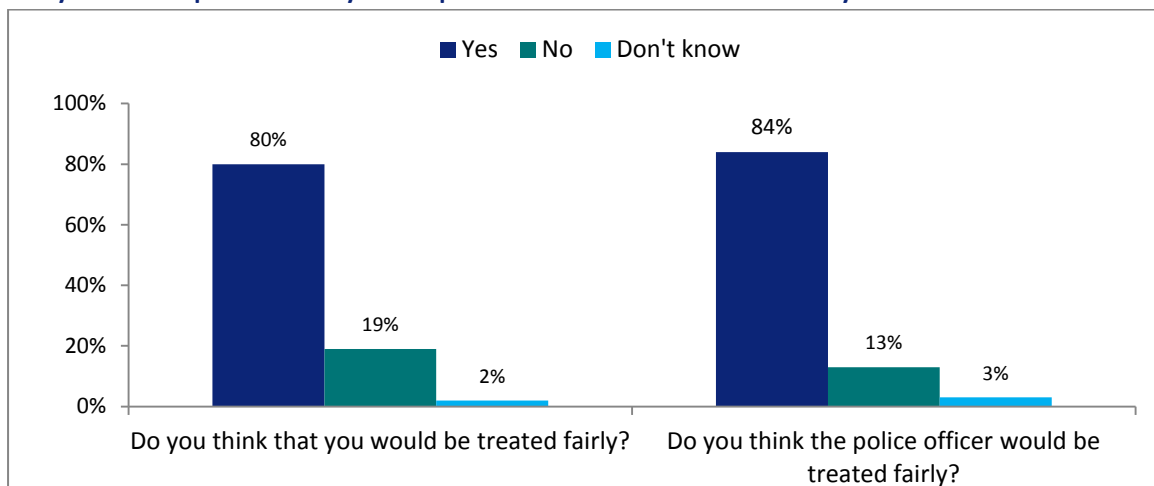
Pupils were asked a series of questions regarding the fairness of the Police Ombudsman. The vast majority of pupils who had heard of the Police Ombudsman thought it dealt with complaints fairly (Figure 5); girls were more likely than boys to report this. Over four fifths of pupils in all school years thought the Office deals with complaints fairly (Table 4).

Figure 5: Do you think the Police Ombudsman's Office deals with complaints fairly?



Pupils were also asked if they were to make a complaint against a police officer to the Police Ombudsman, did they think that the Police Ombudsman would treat them and the police officer fairly. Around four in five pupils thought that the Police Ombudsman would treat them fairly and a similar proportion of pupils thought that the Police Ombudsman would treat the police officer fairly (Figure 6, Tables 5&6).

Figure 6: If you were to make a complaint against a police officer to the Police Ombudsman, do you think that you and the police officer you complained about would be treated fairly?



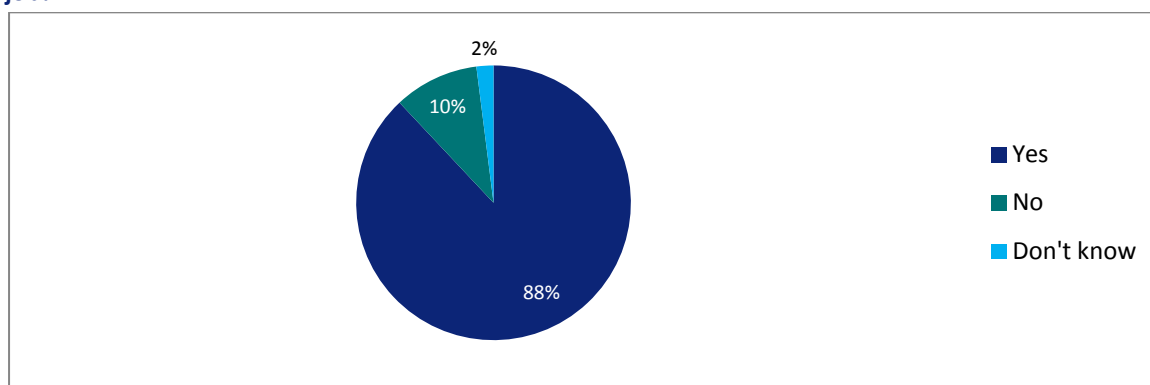
The responses to these two questions were similar between boys and girls, and also similar between pupils in each school year.

Effectiveness of the Police Ombudsman's Office

To help measure the perception of whether or not pupils think the Police Ombudsman has a positive effect on policing, pupils were asked if they thought the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland helped ensure that the police do a good job?

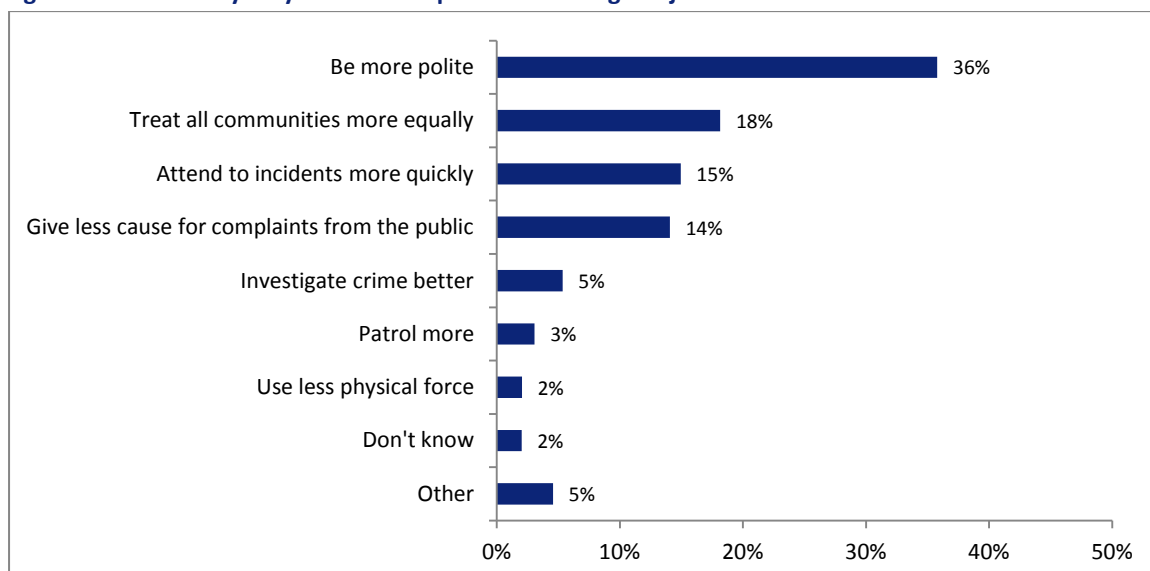
The vast majority of pupils thought that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland helped ensure that the police do a good job (Figure 7, Table 7). Girls were more likely than boys to report this. A large proportion of pupils in each school year reported that the Police Ombudsman helped ensure the police do a good job.

Figure 7: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job?



Those pupils that thought the Police Ombudsman helped ensure the police did a good job were asked the reason why they thought this. The two most commonly stated ways pupils thought the Police Ombudsman contributed to better policing were that the police would be more polite and they would treat all communities in Northern Ireland more fairly (Figure 8, Table 8).

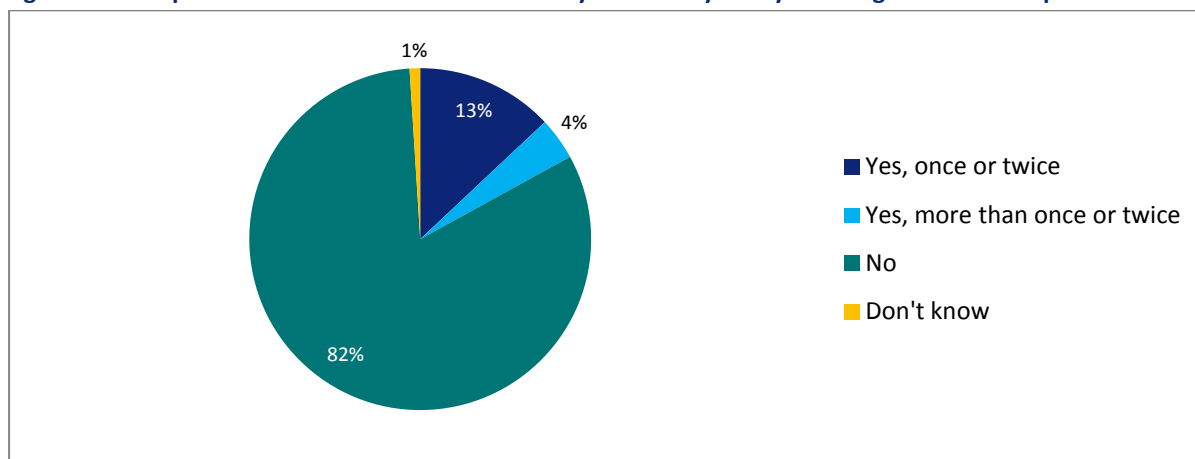
Figure 8: In what way do you think the police will do a good job because of the Police Ombudsman?



Making Complaints against the Police

Almost one fifth of pupils (17%) stated that they had thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them (Figure 9, Table 9). Boys were more than twice as likely than girls to have thought that a police officer had behaved unacceptably towards them. Also pupils in the older school years were more likely than pupils in younger school years to have thought an officer had behaved unacceptably.

Figure 9: Has a police officer ever behaved towards you in a way that you thought was unacceptable?



Pupils who thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them were asked further questions regarding the most recent incident. The rest of this section is based on the 17% of pupils that thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them and not all pupils that participated in the survey.

Regarding the most recent incident, pupils were asked what did the police officer do that they thought was unacceptable? The three most frequently stated answers were that the officer was violent (for example, pushed or struck them), the officer was disrespectful or impolite, and the officer had said the pupil had done something they hadn't (Table 10).

Around one quarter (27%) of pupils made a complaint regarding the most recent incident. Just over half of these pupils made their complaint at a local police station (51%) and seven percent made their complaint with the Police Ombudsman (Table 11 & 12).

Pupils that did not make a complaint regarding the most recent incident were asked what their main reason was for not making a complaint. The two most common reasons for not making a complaint were that they felt it would not be taken seriously and that they felt nothing would be done about it. Six percent of these pupils did not make a complaint as they did not know how to complain about a police officer's behaviour (Table 13).

Pupils that had not previously reported making a complaint against a police officer were asked where they would go *first* if they wanted to make a complaint. Around two in five pupils (42%) stated that they would make their initial complaint at a local police station. Over one quarter (26%) of pupils reported that they would not make a complaint and four percent would make their initial complaint with the Police Ombudsman (Table 14).

Pupils who stated that they would go to another organisation first to make a complaint against a police officer were asked the main reason why they would not go to the Police Ombudsman first. Over half of these pupils (57%) stated that they did not know you could make a complaint directly to the Police Ombudsman and 29% stated it was more convenient to report it elsewhere (for example, at a local police station, or at a solicitors) (Table 15).

Appendix 1: Notes

YPBAS

The YPBAS is conducted by the Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). For further information regarding the survey please see the [methodology section](#) on the CSU website, along with the [technical report](#) and [questionnaire](#).

Data Uses

The Police Ombudsman's Office provides an effective, efficient and accountable complaints system which is independent, impartial and designed to secure the confidence of the public and police. The data collected are used by the Police Ombudsman's Office to monitor and evaluate the service provided to the public and to assess how effective the Office's role is in improving policing in Northern Ireland.

Other notes

- The results are based on data which has been weighted by year group, gender and religion in order to reflect the composition of Northern Ireland post-primary population.
- The percentages in the text and tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Where less than 0.5% of respondents gave a particular answer to a question the percent in the table has been rounded down to 0%. Where no respondents gave the particular answer to a question a " – " indicates this in the tables.
- In certain cases percentages may not add to 100% due to the effect of rounding. Also where respondents are given the option to select more than one answer to a question the sum of the answer will not equal 100%.
- Statistical significance tests have been carried out on the findings and differences are reported where they have been found to be statistically significant at the 5% ($p < 0.05$) level of probability (two-tailed). This means that for any observed result that is found to be statistically significant one can be 95% confident that this has not happened by chance.

Contact Details

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Appendix 2: Tables

Table 1: Have you heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland? By Gender and by School Year

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Yes	23%	27%	19%	17%	18%	14%	23%	43%
No	76%	72%	81%	83%	82%	86%	77%	57%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	-	-

Base: All pupils

Table 2: How did you hear of the Police Ombudsman?

	All
Television	56%
In School	30%
Radio	19%
Friends/family	16%
Newspaper/Magazine	15%
Word of mouth	8%
Website	7%
Leaflets	5%
Through Youth Club	4%
Attended a presentation about the Police Ombudsman	3%
You Tube	3%
Posters	3%
Twitter	3%
Other	6%

Base: Pupils that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Table 3: Do you think the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is part of the police or a separate organisation? By Gender and by School Year

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Part of the Police	55%	52%	59%	73%	74%	70%	57%	37%
Separate organisation	43%	47%	38%	26%	20%	30%	43%	62%
Don't know	1%	1%	3%	1%	6%	-	1%	1%

Base: Pupils that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Table 4: Do you think that the Police Ombudsman's Office deals with complaints fairly? By Gender and by School Year

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Yes	85%	82%	89%	84%	85%	82%	86%	85%
No	12%	16%	6%	12%	12%	14%	10%	12%
Don't know	3%	2%	5%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%

Base: Pupils that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Table 5: If you were to make a complaint against a police officer to the Police Ombudsman, do you think that you would be treated fairly? By Gender and by School Year

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Yes	80%	79%	82%	80%	82%	74%	79%	81%
No	19%	20%	16%	18%	15%	24%	19%	18%
Don't know	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%

Base: Pupils that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Table 6: If you were to make a complaint against a police officer, do you think the police officer would be treated fairly? By Gender and by School Year

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Yes	84%	83%	85%	85%	84%	80%	82%	85%
No	13%	15%	11%	12%	12%	16%	13%	13%
Don't know	3%	2%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	1%

Base: Pupils that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Table 7: Do you think that the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland will help ensure that the police do a good job? By Gender and by School Year

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Yes	88%	85%	93%	91%	88%	86%	90%	87%
No	10%	13%	5%	9%	10%	12%	6%	11%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	4%	2%

Base: Pupils that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

Table 8: In what way do you think the police will do a good job because of the Police Ombudsman?

	All
The police will be more polite	36%
The police will treat all communities in Northern Ireland more fairly	18%
The police will attend to incidents more quickly	15%
The police will give less cause for complaints from the public	14%
The police will investigate crime better	5%
The police will patrol more	3%
The police will use less physical force	2%
Other	5%
Don't Know	2%

Base: Pupils that had heard of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and thought it helped ensure police do a good job.

Table 9: Has a police officer ever behaved towards you in a way that you thought was unacceptable? By Gender and by School Year

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Yes, once or twice	13%	18%	8%	10%	9%	13%	15%	17%
Yes, more than once or twice	4%	6%	2%	2%	2%	5%	4%	7%
No	82%	75%	89%	84%	88%	82%	80%	76%
Don't Know	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%	0%	1%	0%

Base: All pupils

Table 10: Thinking about the most recent incident, what did the police officer do that you thought was unacceptable?

	All
The officer was violent towards you (e.g. pushed or struck you)	19%
The officer was disrespectful or impolite to you	15%
The officer said you had done something you hadn't	10%
The officer swore at you	5%
The officer bothered you	5%
The officer stopped you or searched you without reason	5%
The officer used sectarian, racist or sexist language when dealing with you	4%
The officer didn't do his/her duty properly (e.g. by not investigating the crime properly or not responding to a call)	4%
The officer discriminated against you (for example, because of your race, gender, age or religion)	2%
The officer didn't follow proper procedures	2%
The officer took an item of your property	1%
The officer searched your house without reason	0%
Other	4%
I would prefer not to answer this question	23%

Base: Pupils that had thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them.

Table 11: Thinking again about the most recent incident, did you make a complaint about this?

	All	Boys	Girls	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
Yes	27%	27%	26%	28%	35%	26%	21%	28%
No	72%	73%	73%	68%	65%	73%	79%	72%
Don't know	1%	1%	1%	4%	-	1%	-	-

Base: Pupils that had thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them.

Table 12: Where did you make your complaint?

	All
Local police station	51%
The Police Ombudsman	7%
The Chief Constable of the PSNI	4%
The Policing Board	4%
Solicitor	4%
Your MP/MLA	3%
A local politician (for example, Councillor)	2%
The Citizens Advice Bureau	1%
Other	18%

Base: Pupils that had thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them and had made a complaint regarding the most recent incident.

Table 13: What was the main reason you didn't make a complaint about this?

	All
Felt it would not be taken seriously	28%
Felt nothing would be done about it	15%
Incident was not serious enough	13%
Couldn't be bothered	13%
Didn't know how to complain about police behaviour	6%
Forgot	6%
Didn't want to make trouble for the police	3%
Scared of police revenge	2%
Other	13%

Base: Pupils that had thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them and had not made a complaint regarding the most recent incident.

Table 14: If you wanted to make a complaint against the police, where would you go first of all?

	All
Local police station	42%
Wouldn't make a complaint	26%
Solicitor	6%
The Policing Board	4%
The Police Ombudsman	4%
The Chief Constable of the PSNI	3%
A local politician (for example, Councillor)	2%
Your MP/MLA	2%
The Citizens Advice Bureau	1%
Other	7%
Don't Know	4%

Base: All pupils that had not made a complaint regarding the most recent time they thought a police officer had behaved in an unacceptable way towards them.

Table 15: What was the main reason why you would not go to the Police Ombudsman first of all?

	All
Did not know you could make a complaint directly to the Police Ombudsman	57%
It would be more convenient to go to the place just mentioned	29%
Other	11%
Don't know	3%

Base: Pupils that had either made a complaint but not with the Police Ombudsman **and** pupils that had not made a complaint but if they were to make a complaint they would not initially make the complaint with the Police Ombudsman.

For additional information please contact:

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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