

This report presents information on complaints about **Northern Constabulary** for the year 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

1 All complaints

- At 336, the total number of complaint cases received by Northern Constabulary in 2012-13 is up 12.4 per cent on last year. Scotland as a whole experienced a decline of -1.7 per cent.
- Conversely, at 661 the number of complaint allegations received by the force in 2012-13 is down -3.8 per cent on last year. Scotland as a whole saw a decline of just -0.5 per cent.
- The majority of allegations received concerned on-duty conduct (83.5 per cent), followed by 12.4 per cent for quality of service and 4.1 per cent for off-duty conduct.
- Most of its on- and off-duty allegations received were directed at police officers (95.2 per cent), followed by 4.7 per cent at police staff, 2.6 per cent at special constables - the highest nationally - and two (0.3 per cent) at cadets¹.
- At 643, the total number of allegations disposed of is down -4.7 per cent on last year compared with a rise of just 0.9 per cent nationally.

Table 1: Summary statistics: Northern Constabulary, 2007-08 to 2012-13⁴

Fiscal year	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
Complaint cases recorded	185	176	272	256	299	336
Complaint allegations received: on duty	214	284	417	408	593	552
Complaint allegations received: quality of service	22	16	48	102	74	82
Complaint allegations received: off duty	18	11	11	9	20	27
Complaint allegations received: total	254	311	476	519	687	661
Complaint allegations disposed of: on duty	191	257	469	419	584	539
Complaint allegations disposed of: quality of service	25	15	41	91	78	85
Complaint allegations disposed of: off duty	8	15	11	15	13	19
Complaint allegations disposed of: total	224	287	521	525	675	643
Complaint cases recorded per 10k population: Northern	6.5	6.1	9.4	8.8	10.3	11.5
Complaint cases recorded per 10k population: Scotland	8.3	9.4	8.8	8.1	8.4	8.2
Complaint allegations received per 10k population: Central Scotland ³	8.9	10.8	16.5	17.9	23.7	22.7
Complaint allegations received per 10k population: Scotland ⁴	13.3	16.6	14.8	13.4	15.2	15.0

Reasons for differences in these statistics vary and may include the nature and extent of training undertaken by staff, new procedures becoming established or fluctuating public confidence in reporting dissatisfaction:

- A second consecutive year of rising complaint cases received means that Northern Constabulary's rate per 10,000 population is now the highest in Scotland, more than three points clear of the national average.
- Despite a slight drop in complaint allegations received, its rate here remains the highest in Scotland for the second consecutive year.

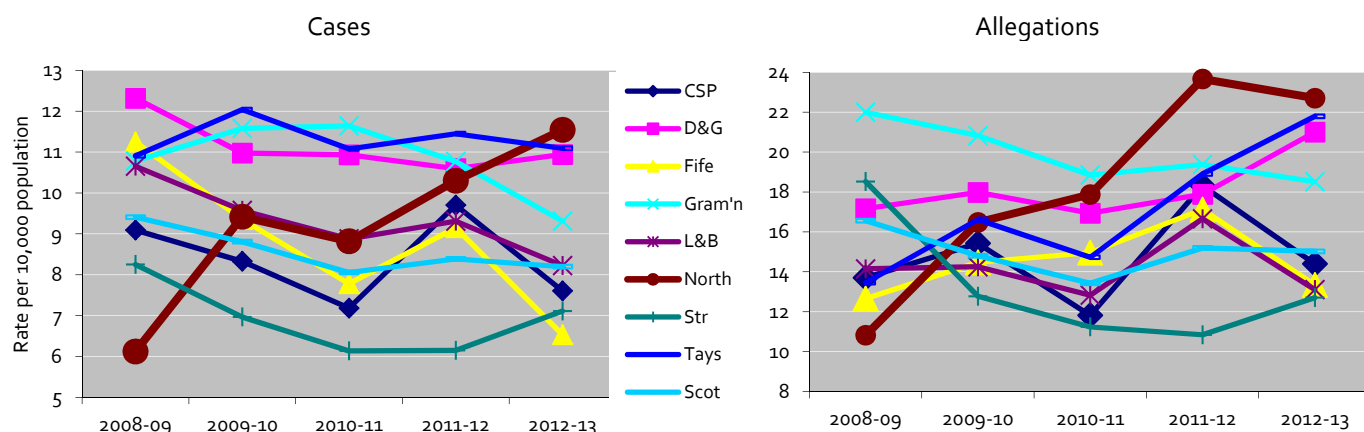
^[1] A single allegation may be directed at more than one member of a police force – hence percentages may not add up to 100%.

^[2] Complaints prior to April 2007 were recorded under an earlier definition that did not include off-duty and quality of service complaints.

^[3] Following recalculation, revised figures are presented for allegations prior to 2009/10 from those in the 2008/09 version of this report.

^[4] Following recalculation, revised figures are presented for allegations prior to 2009/10 from those in the 2008/09 version of this report.

Figure 1: Complaints received per 10k population for all forces and Scotland overall, 2007-08 to 2012-13



2 On-duty complaints

- A total of 83.5 per cent of all allegations received by Northern Constabulary in 2012-13 were allegations concerning on-duty conduct – slightly lower than that for Scotland as a whole (84.5 per cent).
- At 552, the number of on-duty allegations received by the force in 2012-13 is down -6.9 per cent on last year, compared with an overall rise for Scotland over the same period of 2.8 per cent.
- The majority of on-duty allegations received were directed at *police officers* (95.8 per cent compared with 95.7 per cent for Scotland as a whole), followed by 4.0 per cent at *police staff* (5.1 per cent for Scotland), 2.5 per cent at *special constables* (the highest, against a Scottish average of 0.7 per cent), and two (0.4 per cent) against *cadets* (the only force to record such allegations)⁵.
- At 539, the number of on-duty allegations disposed of is down -7.7 per cent on last year, compared with a 3.5 per cent increase nationally.
- The most common types of allegation against on-duty members of the force disposed of were allegations of *irregular procedure* (45.8 per cent), *incivility* (17.1 per cent) and *neglect of duty* (9.5 per cent).
- The most common outcomes of these allegations were *concluded by explanation to the complainer*⁶ (61.0 per cent), *unsubstantiated / not upheld due to insufficient evidence*⁷ (24.3 per cent) and *withdrawn by complainer* (6.3 per cent).

Table 2⁷: Top three allegations types closed by Northern Constabulary, 2007-08 to 2012-13

Fiscal year	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
Irregular procedure - number disposed of	30	45	113	113	185	247
Percentage change on previous year (%)	7.1	50.0	151.1	0.0	63.7	33.5
Incivility - number disposed of	21	33	43	62	74	92
Percentage change on previous year (%)	-21.5	57.1	30.3	44.2	19.4	24.3
Neglect of duty - number disposed of	29	40	86	66	77	51
Percentage change on previous year (%)	-34.1	37.9	115.0	-23.3	16.7	-33.8

- Disposals of allegations of irregular procedure continue to rise, to the extent that they currently account for 45.8 per cent of all Northern Constabulary's on-duty disposals. Disposals of incivility likewise show a more or less consistent rise over the years considered here.
- With the exception of other non-criminal allegations, all other categories are showing at least year-on-year reductions or no change.

^[5] A single allegation may be directed at more than one member of a police force – hence percentages may not add up to 100%.

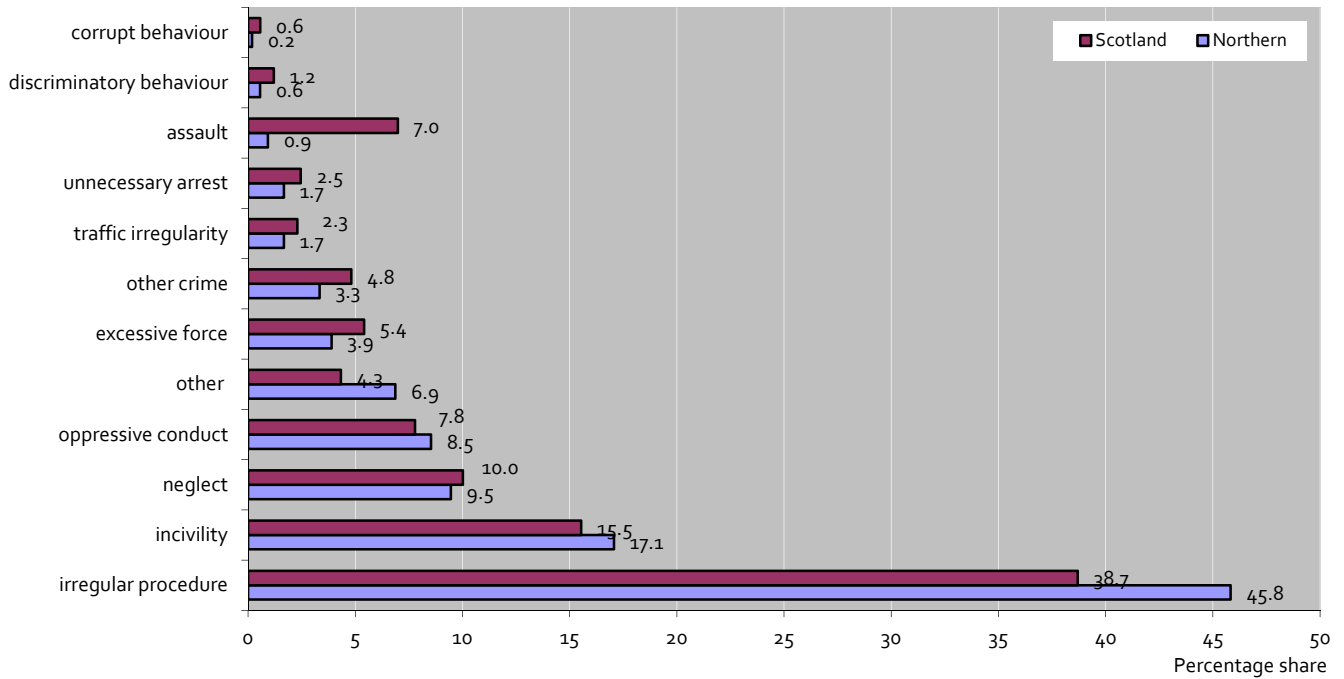
^[6] Resolved by explanation may now include allegations concluded by explanation, regardless of whether or not they were upheld.

^[6] NB: Large percentage changes can be a consequence of small raw numbers.

^[7] "Unsubstantiated" is in the process of being replaced by new closure code 'not upheld due to insufficient evidence'.

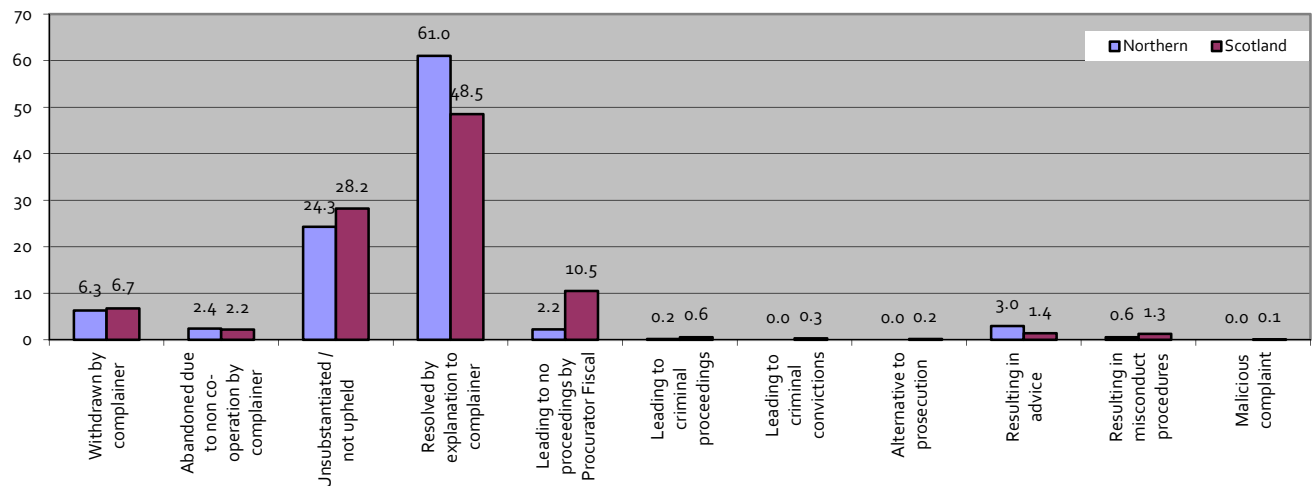
- The force has a higher than (Scottish) average share of a number of allegation types, including irregular procedure and other non-criminal, as well as incivility and oppressive conduct to a lesser extent.
- It has a lower than (Scottish) average share of allegations of others, particularly of assault.

Figure 2: Percentage share of on-duty allegations disposed of - Northern and Scotland 2012-13



- The largest proportion of allegations disposed of by the force in 2012-13 is no longer those *unsubstantiated / not upheld due to insufficient evidence*⁷ but those *concluded by explanation* to complainers (61.0 per cent). Following a substantial rise in *resolved/concluded* disposals this year, the force's share is now the third highest in Scotland.
- Most of the forces have seen a similar change, raising the national average for *concluded* disposals from 20.6 last year to 48.5 per cent and reducing that for *unsubstantiated/not upheld* disposals from 43.8 to 28.2 per cent.
- As well as the fall in *unsubstantiated/not upheld* allegations, the force's proportion of disposals *resulting in advice* to a member of the force has also decreased markedly. Where previously it had enjoyed fairly consistent annual increases, this year saw a drop of more than ten percentage points. Nevertheless, the force's share of this type of disposal is the highest in Scotland. This is because most other forces have experienced similar sharp reductions.

Figure 3: Outcomes of on-duty allegations - Northern and Scotland, 2012-13



3 Off-duty complaints

- Bucking the trend seen in all the other Scottish forces, Northern experienced a rise in its share of off-duty allegations received in 2012-13, reaching 4.1 per cent. The Scottish average fell to 3.1 per cent.
- Similarly in contrast with other forces the number of off-duty allegations received by the force in 2012-13 is up (by 35.0 per cent) to 27, compared with a national decline of -31.9 per cent. So too the number disposed of, up 46.2 per cent on last year to sit at 19, against a national decrease of -19.2 per cent.
- The majority of allegations received were directed at *police officers* (81.5 per cent), with 18.5 per cent directed at *police staff* and 3.7 per cent at *special constables* (NB: an allegation can be directed at more than one person). The equivalent proportions for Scotland as a whole were 80.5, 14.2 and 5.7 per cent respectively.
- The majority (63.2 per cent) of allegations disposed of by the force were of a criminal nature, compared with 73.4 per cent nationally. The most common disposal was for an allegation to be *unsubstantiated/not upheld*⁷.

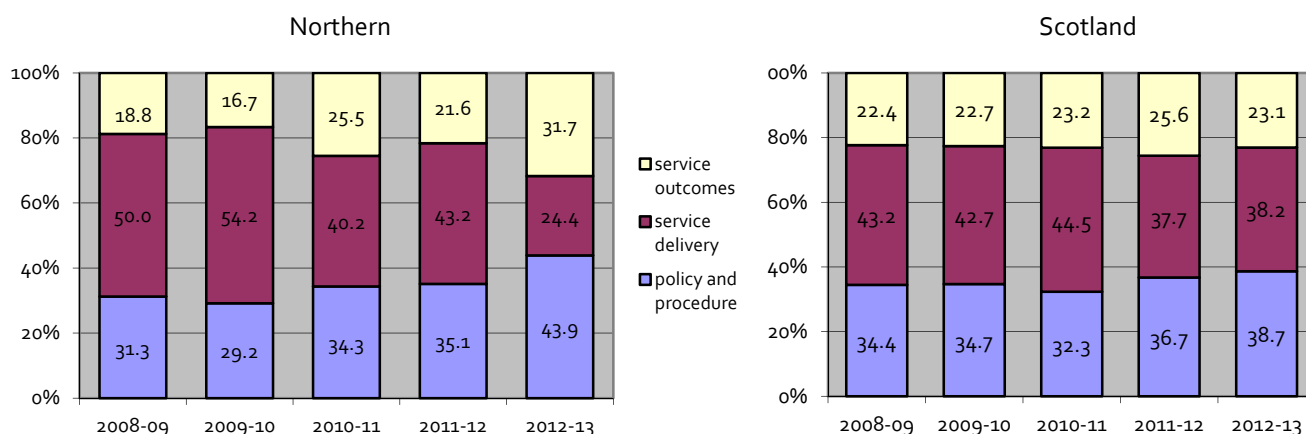
Table 3: Outcomes of all off-duty allegations - Northern and Scotland, 2009-10 to 2012-13

Fiscal year ⁷	Northern Constabulary				Scotland			
	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
% Action taken	36.4	60.0	53.8	31.6	52.9	51.3	50.7	39.3
% Unsubstantiated / Not upheld	36.4	26.7	15.4	42.1	30.1	37.6	38.2	47.6
% Resolved	18.2	13.3	7.7	21.1	11.1	7.4	3.1	12.1
% Withdrawn	9.1	0.0	23.1	0.0	5.3	3.6	7.2	0.3
% Abandoned	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.3	0.6	0	0.8	0.7
TOTAL - number	11	15	13	19	342	417	359	290

4 Quality of service complaints

- Just 12.4 per cent of all allegations received by Northern Constabulary in 2012-13 concerned quality of service. This is exactly the same as the 12.4 per cent for Scotland as a whole.
- At 82, the number of quality of service allegations received by the force in 2012-13 is up 10.8 per cent on last year, in contrast to an overall decrease for Scotland of -9.9 per cent.
- For the first time in five years the majority of allegations received concerned aspects of *policy and procedure* (43.9 per cent), followed by *service outcomes* (31.7 per cent) and finally *service delivery* (24.4 per cent).
- At 85 the number of quality of service allegations disposed of by the force rose by 9.0 per cent on last year, while Scotland as whole experienced a drop of -8.2 per cent.

Figure 4: Percentage share of type of quality of service allegations received, 2012-13



5 Complainer characteristics

- Nearly all complainers (96.7 per cent) made their complaint to the force as opposed to having someone else do so on their behalf. This is similar to the 97.7 per cent recorded nationally. Where someone else did so on their behalf, it was most likely to be someone acting as an agent for the complainer (2.2 per cent).
- The majority of complainers were male (64.7 per cent), slightly higher than the Scottish average of 62.4 per cent. The gender of the complainer was unknown in just 1.1 per cent of cases.
- In 38.0 per cent of cases the age of the complainer was unknown; in similar proportion (36.6 per cent) the occupational status of the complainer was unknown; and in a higher proportion still (39.1 per cent), the ethnicity of the complainer was unknown or not stated. These high proportions mean that we cannot make any further comment about complainer characteristics.

Figure 5a: Age of complainer - Northern and Scotland, 2012-13

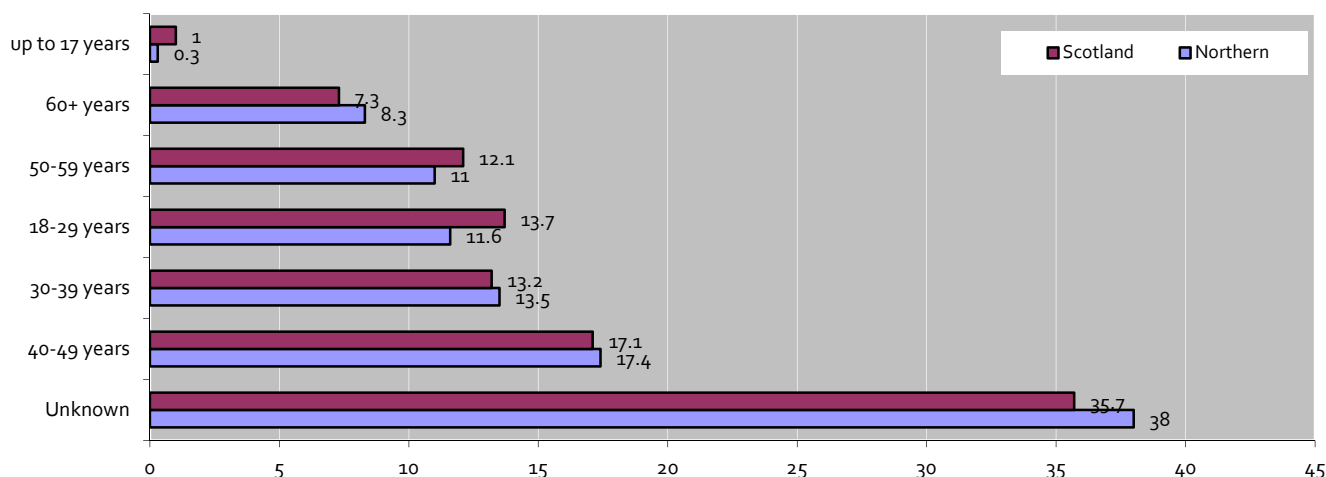
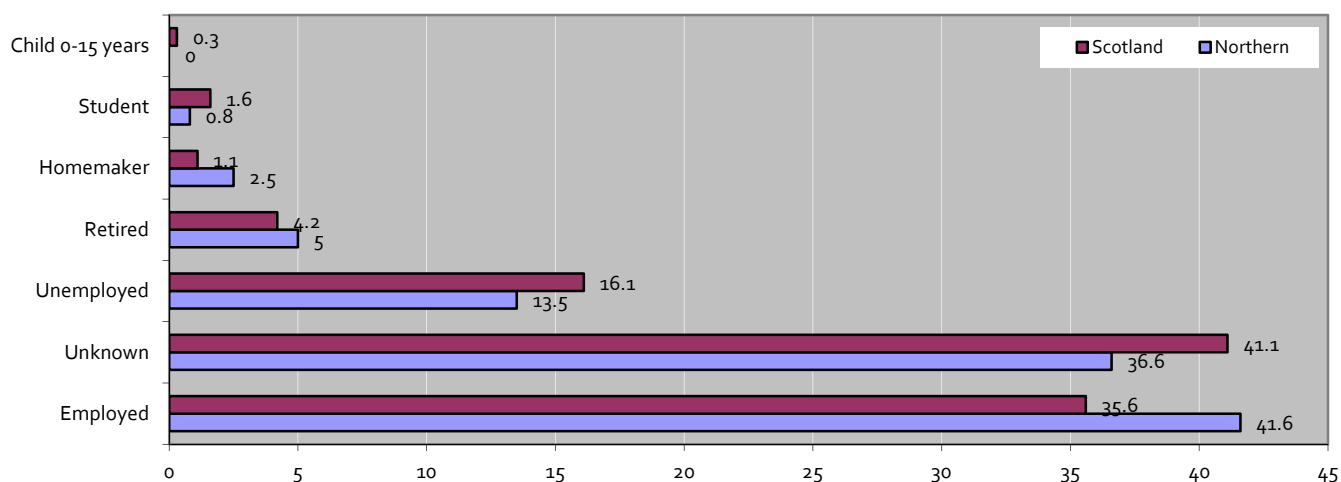


Figure 5b: Occupation of complainer - Northern and Scotland, 2012-13



6 Subject of complaint characteristics

- We have said elsewhere that the majority of subjects of allegations were police officers. Over seven in every ten of all those complained about in the force were male (72.8 per cent), 21.9 per cent were female and 5.2 per cent were unknown. The equivalent figures for Scotland are 72.5 per cent, 20.7 per cent and 6.8 per cent respectively.
- The peak ages for being complained about in the force are 40-49 (32.6 per cent, compared with 28.2 per cent nationally) and 30-39 (20.5 per cent, compared with 27.2 per cent nationally). This is only indicative, however, given that in over a quarter of all cases (25.8 per cent) the age of the subject was unknown.
- Similarly, in 27.2 per cent of cases the ethnicity of the subject of the complaint was also unknown.