



Police Service
of Northern Ireland



Human Rights Awareness Survey:

Summary results

Date of report:

March 2023

Produced by:

Statistics Branch

Introduction

Background

In 2004, the PSNI conducted a survey of all its officers to assess the level of human rights awareness in the PSNI. In 2021, the PSNI accepted a recommendation from the 2021 NI Policing Board Human Rights report to re-assess the human rights culture within the organisation and measure how it has changed.

Survey

On 17th January 2023, an online survey link was emailed to all 9,407¹ officers and staff within the PSNI inviting them to complete and submit an anonymous response electronically to the human rights awareness survey. A total of 1,203 responses were received before the survey closed on 12th February 2023, giving a response rate of 13%.

The survey was also issued externally, to a total of 1,054 persons in the police officer recruitment pool. A total of 270 responses were received, giving a response rate of 26%.

Summary report

This report summarises the findings of the internal and external survey respondents separately.

Percentages may not sum due to rounding and some percentages are based on small numbers.

¹ Figures correct as of 1st February 2023. See <https://www.psni.police.uk/our-publication-scheme/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/strength-police-service-statistics>

Internal human rights awareness survey responses

Job details

Are you:

	Frequency	Percent
Police Officer	876	72.8
Police Staff	327	27.2
Total	1,203	100.0

What is your rank?

	Frequency	Percent
Constable	535	61.1
Sergeant	190	21.7
Inspector	102	11.6
Chief Inspector	29	3.3
Superintendent or above	20	2.3
Total	876	100.0

What is your grade (or closest equivalent)?

	Frequency	Percent
ASO	104	31.8
EO11	69	21.1
EO1	56	17.1
Staff officer	52	15.9
Deputy principal or above	46	14.1
Total	327	100.0

In which Department do you work?

	Frequency	Percent
People & Organisational Development	70	5.8
Corporate Services	23	1.9
Strategic Planning & Transformation	23	1.9
Justice	89	7.4
Operational Support	207	17.2
Local Policing	362	30.1
Crime	334	27.8
Other	95	7.9
Total	1,203	100.0

Do you have gold, silver or bronze command responsibilities in any of the following:

	Frequency*
Public Order	56
Firearms	32
CBRN	6
Investigation	32
Other	26
None of the above	1,075
Total	1,227

*Total may exceed the total responses as a respondent could select more than one option.

What is your current length of service?

	Frequency	Percent
<2 years	87	7.2
2-5 years	118	9.8
6-10 years	137	11.4
11-15 years	236	19.6
16-20 years	296	24.6
21-25 years	126	10.5
>25 years	203	16.9
Total	1,203	100.0

Does your role involve frequent contact with the public? Frequent is defined as more than once a week.

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	639	53.1
No	564	46.9
Total	1,203	100.0

Human rights

Please choose one option for each of the following statements:

The prohibition against inhuman and degrading treatment:

	Frequency	Percent
<u>is an absolute right.</u>	<u>1,040</u>	<u>86.5</u>
is a qualified right that can be restricted so long as the qualification is necessary and proportionate.	85	7.1
is a right that can be restricted if there are sound reasons for doing so.	16	1.3
is no different to other rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.	62	5.2
Total	1,203	100.0

In the course of their duties, police officers should treat people differently on grounds such as race, colour, gender, religion, political or other opinion.

	Frequency	Percent
As they see fit.	7	0.6
Where there is a public demand in doing so.	2	0.2
Where such different treatment can be reasonably and objectively justified.	196	16.3
<u>Never.</u>	<u>998</u>	<u>83.0</u>
Total	1,203	100.0

Police officers can use lethal force where:

	Frequency	Percent
They feel threatened.	3	0.2
They feel political instability.	1	0.1
The force is necessary and appropriate.	269	22.4
<u>It is absolutely necessary to do so.</u>	<u>930</u>	<u>77.3</u>
Total	1,203	100.0

Members of the public:

	Frequency	Percent
have an absolute right to protest, march and hold meetings.	90	7.5
<u>have a right to protest, march and hold meetings but that right can be restricted if the restriction is necessary and proportionate.</u>	<u>1,073</u>	<u>89.2</u>
have a right to protest, march and hold meetings but not if that right offends others.	30	2.5
have no right to protest, march and hold meetings.	10	0.8
Total	1,203	100.0

Police surveillance is an interference with privacy and therefore:-

	Frequency	Percent
is suitable in public places, but never in private places, such as the home.	21	1.7
can be justified so long as it is recorded.	7	0.6
<u>must be lawfully authorised, necessary and proportionate.</u>	1,175	97.7
can never be justified.	0	0.0
Total	1,203	100.0

Police officers can arrest individuals where:

	Frequency	Percent
the arrest may assist a police investigation.	14	1.2
<u>they have reasonable grounds to suspect that an individual has committed an offence.</u>	1,176	97.8
the arrest is properly documented.	9	0.7
the arrest might reveal useful information.	4	0.3
Total	1,203	100.0

Police officers are under a duty to take steps to protect life:

	Frequency	Percent
if resources permit.	4	0.3
if someone could possibly be killed.	36	3.0
<u>if there is a real and imminent risk that someone will lose his or her life.</u>	1,156	96.1
unless the risk to life is self-imposed (e.g. suicide).	7	0.6
Total	1,203	100.0

Firearms can be used only:

	Frequency	Percent
to protect property.	4	0.3
where necessary and proportionate.	466	38.7
<u>where absolutely necessary.</u>	730	60.7
in exceptional circumstances, such as political instability.	3	0.2
Total	1,203	100.0

Informants/covert human intelligence sources:

	Frequency	Percent
can be used, even where they incite criminal offences, so long as they further the police investigation.	144	12.0
<u>can be used, but only if they do not incite criminal offences.</u>	975	81.0
should only be used as a last resort.	80	6.7
should never be used.	4	0.3
Total	1,203	100.0

Access to a lawyer:

	Frequency	Percent
should never be delayed in any circumstances.	292	24.3
can be delayed until after questioning.	8	0.7
can be delayed if waiting for a lawyer will inconvenience an investigation.	96	8.0
can be delayed, but only in exceptional circumstances, such as where access to a lawyer would frustrate the arrest of another.	807	67.1
Total	1,203	100.0

Your assessment of your own knowledge of human rights

I would say my knowledge of human rights is:

	Frequency	Percent
good	366	30.4
adequate	585	48.6
poor	57	4.7
good in some respects but poor in others	195	16.2
Total	1,203	100.0

Your views on the training you have received on human rights.

The training I have received in human rights:

	Frequency	Percent
has greatly assisted me in answering this survey.	272	22.6
has partially assisted me in answering this survey.	629	52.3
has not helped me at all in answering this survey.	143	11.9
I have not received any human rights training.	159	13.2
Total	1,203	100.0

Your assessment of the frequency of human rights issues arising in your work.

Human rights issues crop up in my work:

	Frequency	Percent
most days.	767	63.8
only when I am involved in serious investigations.	45	3.7
very seldom.	316	26.3
not at all.	75	6.2
Total	1,203	100.0

Your views on human rights

As a police officer or member of police staff I believe: (Please tick all that apply)

	Frequency*
I have a duty to respect and protect the human rights of all persons.	1,145
not enough emphasis is placed on respecting and protecting the human rights of victims.	228
there is too much emphasis placed on respecting and protecting human rights in the PSNI	168
I can breach the human rights of those suspected of serious offences.	125
respecting and protecting human rights is not as important as criminal investigations.	40
there is too little emphasis on respecting and protecting human rights in the PSNI.	78

*Total may exceed the total responses as a respondent could select more than one option.

Privacy and social media usage

Police officers' private or off duty use of social media:

	Frequency	Percent
can be viewed in full by their employer at all times.	52	4.3
are protected under Article 8 and cannot be viewed in any circumstances by their employer.	79	6.6
can be accessed by their employer where there is intelligence or evidence that content suggests that they are incapable of discharging their duties impartially.	437	36.3
can be accessed by their employer where there is information, intelligence or evidence that the content is inappropriate.	635	52.8
Total	1,203	100.0

Domestic Violence

Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) forms must be completed:

	Frequency	Percent
following a request by the victim.	18	1.5
for every victim of Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence.	1,169	97.2
for every victim of Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence if time allows.	14	1.2
only when the victim has been injured.	2	0.2
Total	1,203	100.0

Proportionality

Which of the following statements is true?

	Frequency	Percent
The proportionality test is used for all convention rights but protecting the right to life is always more important.	436	36.2
A measure is generally only disproportionate in exceptional cases.	12	1.0
<u>Proportionality is used to balance the right of the individual against the needs of the community when deciding if a measure is incompatible and where the Convention article itself includes the 'necessity test'.</u>	676	56.2
Reasonableness is a similar test to proportionality.	79	6.6
Total	1,203	100.0

Police officers' duty to victims of crime

Which of the following statements is true?

	Frequency	Percent
Officers must protect all victims of crime from further criminal acts.	486	40.4
Officers have an enhanced duty to protect victims of crime from violence.	193	16.0
<u>Officers have a duty to protect victims of crime but human rights law does provide additional protection.</u>	513	42.6
Only criminals, suspects and defendants can take advantage of human rights.	11	0.9
Total	1,203	100.0

External human rights awareness survey responses

Human rights

Please choose one option for each of the following statements:

The prohibition against inhuman and degrading treatment:

	Frequency	Percent
<u>is an absolute right.</u>	<u>202</u>	<u>74.8</u>
is a qualified right that can be restricted so long as the qualification is necessary and proportionate.	26	9.6
is a right that can be restricted if there are sound reasons for doing so.	12	4.4
is no different to other rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.	30	11.1
Total	270	100.0

In the course of their duties, police officers should treat people differently on grounds such as race, colour, gender, religion, political or other opinion.

	Frequency	Percent
As they see fit.	4	1.5
Where there is a public demand in doing so.	0	0.0
Where such different treatment can be reasonably and objectively justified.	48	17.8
<u>Never.</u>	<u>218</u>	<u>80.7</u>
Total	270	100.0

Police officers can use lethal force where:

	Frequency	Percent
They feel threatened.	4	1.5
They feel political instability.	0	0.0
The force is necessary and appropriate.	84	31.1
<u>It is absolutely necessary to do so.</u>	<u>182</u>	<u>67.4</u>
Total	270	100.0

Members of the public:

	Frequency	Percent
have an absolute right to protest, march and hold meetings.	33	12.2
<u>have a right to protest, march and hold meetings but that right can be restricted if the restriction is necessary and proportionate.</u>	<u>222</u>	<u>82.2</u>
have a right to protest, march and hold meetings but not if that right offends others.	15	5.6
have no right to protest, march and hold meetings.	0	0.0
Total	270	100.0

Police surveillance is an interference with privacy and therefore:-

	Frequency	Percent
is suitable in public places, but never in private places, such as the home.	21	7.8
can be justified so long as it is recorded.	4	1.5
<u>must be lawfully authorised, necessary and proportionate.</u>	245	90.7
can never be justified.	0	0.0
Total	270	1000.0

Police officers can arrest individuals where:

	Frequency	Percent
the arrest may assist a police investigation.	9	3.3
<u>they have reasonable grounds to suspect that an individual has committed an offence.</u>	259	95.9
the arrest is properly documented.	2	0.7
the arrest might reveal useful information.	0	0.0
Total	270	100.0

Police officers are under a duty to take steps to protect life:

	Frequency	Percent
if resources permit.	8	3.0
if someone could possibly be killed.	17	6.3
<u>if there is a real and imminent risk that someone will lose his or her life.</u>	245	90.7
unless the risk to life is self-imposed (e.g. suicide).	0	0.0
Total	270	100.0

Firearms can be used only:

	Frequency	Percent
to protect property.	0	0.0
where necessary and proportionate.	85	31.5
<u>where absolutely necessary.</u>	180	66.7
in exceptional circumstances, such as political instability.	5	1.9
Total	270	100.0

Informants/covert human intelligence sources:

	Frequency	Percent
can be used, even where they incite criminal offences, so long as they further the police investigation.	43	15.9
<u>can be used, but only if they do not incite criminal offences.</u>	185	68.5
should only be used as a last resort.	35	13.0
should never be used.	7	2.6
Total	270	100.0

Access to a lawyer:

	Frequency	Percent
should never be delayed in any circumstances.	181	67.0
can be delayed until after questioning.	7	2.6
can be delayed if waiting for a lawyer will inconvenience an investigation.	8	3.0
<u>can be delayed, but only in exceptional circumstances, such as where access to a lawyer would frustrate the arrest of another.</u>	74	27.4
Total	270	100.0

Privacy and social media usage

Police officers' private or off duty use of social media:

	Frequency	Percent
can be viewed in full by their employer at all times.	37	13.7
are protected under Article 8 and cannot be viewed in any circumstances by their employer.	10	3.7
can be accessed by their employer where there is intelligence or evidence that content suggests that they are incapable of discharging their duties impartially.	99	36.7
<u>can be accessed by their employer where there is information, intelligence or evidence that the content is inappropriate.</u>	124	45.9
Total	270	100.0

Proportionality

Which of the following statements is true?

	Frequency	Percent
The proportionality test is used for all convention rights but protecting the right to life is always more important.	85	31.5
A measure is generally only disproportionate in exceptional cases.	4	1.5
<u>Proportionality is used to balance the right of the individual against the needs of the community when deciding if a measure is incompatible and where the Convention article itself includes the 'necessity test'.</u>	170	63.0
Reasonableness is a similar test to proportionality.	11	4.1
Total	270	100.0

Police officers' duty to victims of crime

Which of the following statements is true?

	Frequency	Percent
Officers must protect all victims of crime from further criminal acts.	130	48.1
Officers have an enhanced duty to protect victims of crime from violence.	45	16.7
<u>Officers have a duty to protect victims of crime but human rights law does provide additional protection.</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>35.2</u>
Only criminals, suspects and defendants can take advantage of human rights.	0	0.0
Total	270	100.0