

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

**26 July 2021 / 26 juillet 2021**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service / Chef de police, Service de police d'Ottawa**

**Contact Person / Personne ressource:**

**Inspector Hugh O'Toole / Inspecteur Hugh O'Toole**

***OtooleH@ottawapolice.ca***

**SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO INQUIRY I-21-21: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT  
REPORT**

**OBJET: RÉPONSE À LA DEMANDE DE RENSEIGNEMENTS I-21-21:  
RAPPORT DE L'UNITÉ DES NORMES PROFESSIONNELLES**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du  
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

**INQUIRY**

Could the Service please comment on or explain the 24 per cent increase in public complaints received in 2020 as outlined in the Professional Standards Unit 2020 Annual Report?

**RESPONSE**

The trend over the last three years can be more aptly described as an increase in the number of Public Complaints that are screened-out by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD), while the actual number of Public Complaints that are screened-in and referred for investigation by the OIPRD remains constant.

Although, our Public Complaints were up 24% in 2020 (285) from 2019 (230), only 115 of these 285 complaints were screened in and referred for investigation by the OIPRD. This is four fewer than the 119 complaints that were screened in and referred for investigation in 2019. The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) saw a similar trend last year with 230 Public Complaints representing a 20 percent increase over 2018, but yet a much smaller and comparable number of 116 Public Complaints were screened in and referred for investigation by the OIPRD. For the period of 2018-2019-2020, the OPS is trending at the same number of Public Complaints that are screened-in and referred for investigation by the OIPRD (116-119-115).

S. 60 of the Police Services Act (PSA) provides the legislative framework for the OIPRD Director to decide not to deal with a complaint made by a member of the public. Some of the more common reasons for screening-out a Public Complaint include, but are not limited to:

1. Complaints that are frivolous or vexatious or made in bad faith.
2. Complaints that could be more appropriately dealt with, in whole or in part, under another Act or law.
3. Having regard to all the circumstances, dealing with the complaint is not in the public interest.
4. The complaint is made more than six months after the facts on which it is based occurred.
5. The complainant is not the person at whom the conduct was directed, or with respect to complaints about policies and services provided, the policy or service did not have a direct effect on the complainant.

With respect to identifiable trends in Public Complaints for 2020, there was an uptick in Pandemic related complaints about officers not wearing full or proper PPE when interacting with the public. There were also a small number of complainants who filed multiple Public Complaints. For example, seven complainants alone filed 34 Public Complaints, the majority of which were screened-out by the OIPRD.

The shift in public sentiment towards policing is also likely a contributing factor to the increase in Public Complaints. In 2020, the OPS began tracking bias-related Public Complaints. Of the 32 Public Complaints that alleged racism, 24 were screened-out or unsubstantiated by the OIPRD, five were withdrawn by the complainant, and three are currently under investigation.