IOPC Stakeholder Research 2023

MARCH 2023

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Methodology

This report summarises the findings from online and in-depth telephone interviews with IOPC stakeholders conducted by Yonder between February and March 2023.

+ Stakeholders were taken from a longlist identified by the IOPC as those whose views are important to the overall success of the organisation and its reputation.

+ In-depth interviews were 30-minute discussions using Microsoft Teams, Zoom or the telephone. Quotes in this report are taken from those interviews. Some quantitative measures were included in the discussions and are included as metrics throughout this report.

+ The online survey was conducted between 7 February 2023 – 9 March 2023. The in-depth interviews were conducted between 1 February 2023 – 9 March 2023.

Policing
88 quantitative interviews and 9 in-depth qualitative interviews

Non-policing
79 quantitative interviews and 8 in-depth qualitative interviews

Police accountability
39 quantitative interviews and 8 in-depth qualitative interviews

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1

To understand current perceptions and knowledge of the IOPC among stakeholders.

2

To assess the IOPC's performance on key measures and within certain areas of work.

3

To explore the IOPC's communication and engagement with stakeholders.

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Executive summary

There are several areas of the IOPC's work that stakeholders praise:

+ The IOPC's shared learnings are consistently lauded for their robustness and quality.
+ Stakeholders are extremely pleased with the engagement and communication they have with individual contacts at the IOPC.
+ Stakeholders recognise that the IOPC is making considerable effort to improve issues such as timeliness despite limited resources.

However, there are other aspects of the IOPC's work where stakeholders have concerns:

+ Stakeholders question the IOPC's impact and effectiveness within the police accountability system. They feel in a time of growing mistrust in policing, the IOPC should take a greater leadership role in helping to restore trust and confidence in policing and accountability.
+ Stakeholders are still unsatisfied with the length of time investigations take, referencing the negative impact this has on both members of the public and officers.
+ Stakeholders highlight an information gap among the public around the IOPC and its role within police accountability.

"I think they're trying to do the best they can. The issues are with the resources they've got to deal with the investigations and reviews. They also need to raise their profile. I think they've got, probably unjustifiably, quite a poor perception within the community. It's how they can raise their public profile to get the public on-side, and for the public to understand what they do and how they do it."

Police accountability framework

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Stakeholder conversations highlight opportunities for the IOPC to…

INCREASE & TAILOR COMMUNICATIONS

The IOPC should more clearly communicate around its responsibility, abilities and the process.

During investigations, the IOPC should frequently update both the public and police officers in language sensitive to each party.

Outputs must be accessible to anyone interested and demonstrate the IOPC's impact through robust proof points.

COLLABORATE WITH OTHER BODIES

The IOPC must work more with other police accountability bodies to address current issues of police misconduct.

The police accountability system should present a united front to demonstrate the focus is on improving as a whole.

As an independent body, the IOPC can take a public-facing leadership role in restoring public trust and confidence in policing.

PROVIDE MORE EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Continue to share learnings widely but monitor their impact. Capture proof points about how learnings raise standards in police forces.

Heightened public scrutiny around policing has spurred greater desire from policing stakeholders to implement any learnings the IOPC publishes. The IOPC can leverage this sentiment to establish an enforcement process.

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Stakeholders recognise that the current media environment is increasing pressure on policing and police accountability

2021

2022

2023

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Public Perceptions Tracker data supports stakeholders' concerns that media attention is fueling sustained interest among the public

Public police news story recall June 2022	Public police news story recall November 2022
1. Forces placed under special measures	1. **Sarah Everard**
2. **Sarah Everard**	2. Inappropriate messaging between officers
3. Abuse of stop and search	3. **Police sexual assault**
4. Partygate	4. **Racism in police**
5. Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman	5. **Police misconduct**
6. **Police sexual assault**	6. Police committing crimes
7. **Racism in police**	7. Met misconduct
8. Police not dealing with crimes	8. Inability to sack officers
9. Cressida Dick	9. Protests
10. **Police misconduct**	10. Local crime

When the public are asked if they can recall news stories concerning the police, individual cases tend not to be mentioned repeatedly in the different waves of research. The notable exception is the murder of Sarah Everard, which has been in the top ten stories since the story broke.

As seen in bold, the stories that have staying power across multiple waves reference institutional failings of the police. This showcases that although individual cases are brief media blips, the overarching themes around issues in the police are consistent media fodder. This steady drumbeat of negative press builds an assumption that the police are underperforming or even actively committing crimes themselves.

Q. What news stories involving the police have you noticed recently, if at all?
Sources: Public Perceptions Tracker June 2022 (1,854); November 2022 (2,021)

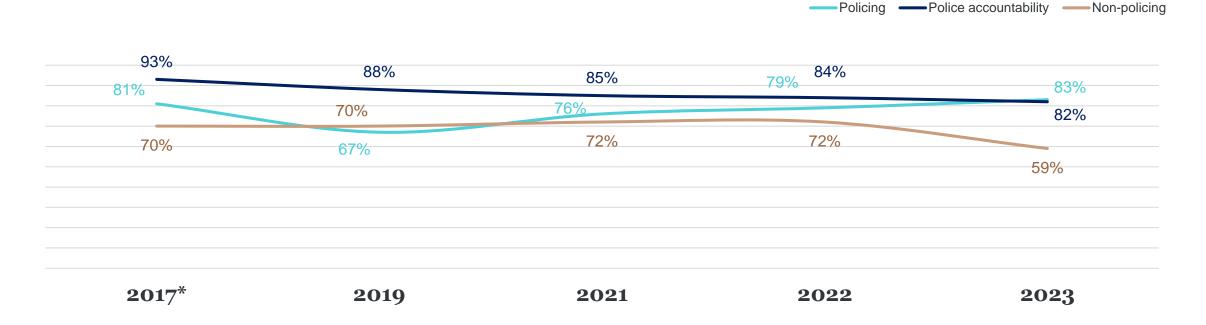IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct .YONDER

Meanwhile, knowledge of the IOPC has remained largely steady with a notable decline amongst non-policing stakeholders this year

Q. How much, or little, do you know about the Independent Office for Police Conduct?

Knowledge of the IOPC over time
('a lot' + 'a fair amount')

Legend: ━ Policing ━ Police accountability ━ Non-policing

Police accountability: 93% (2017*), 88% (2019), 85% (2021), 84% (2022), 82% (2023)

Policing: 81% (2017*), 67% (2019), 76% (2021), 79% (2022), 83% (2023)

Non-policing: 70% (2017*), 70% (2019), 72% (2021), 72% (2022), 59% (2023)

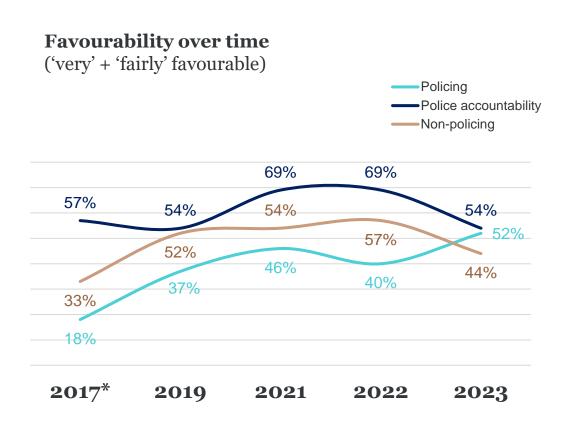| 2017*	2019	2021	2022	2023

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Favourability is up among policing stakeholders but not other groups

Q. How favourable or unfavourable is your overall opinion of the IOPC?

Favourability over time
('very' + 'fairly' favourable)

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

Police accountability: 57% (2017*), 54% (2019), 69% (2021), 69% (2022), 54% (2023)

Non-policing: 33% (2017*), 52% (2019), 54% (2021), 57% (2022), 44% (2023)

Policing: 18% (2017*), 37% (2019), 46% (2021), 40% (2022), 52% (2023)

2017* 2019 2021 2022 2023

Base: Policing (88), Police accountability (39), Non-policing (79)
IOPC – Yonder Stakeholder Research 2023
*IOPC was known as IPCC

*"My interactions with the IOPC are really positive. That's not to say we always agree on things, because we don't, but **conversations are professional, they are constructive, they're productive**. They maintain their independence. We have our position. They're willing, they're professional, they're enthusiastic, they are **generally really good to try to do business with in the really tricky, complex area of policing**."*

Policing

*"They have changed immensely but if anything, **the leadership has become even more remote**. We don't seem to have a strong degree of linkage with them anymore. Especially at the strategic level there needs to be closer working."*

Police accountability

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Unfavourability remains low across all groups, yet it is growing with police accountability and non-policing stakeholders
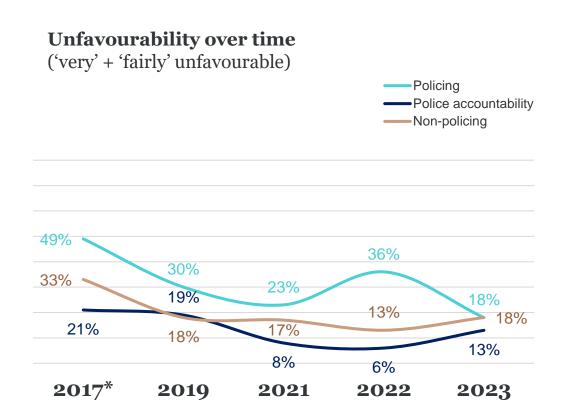
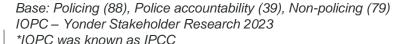Q. How favourable or unfavourable is your overall opinion of the IOPC?

*"I really appreciate that crucial bit around people do think, 'oh, IOPC is weak, and it's failing.' Part of that is because it's weak and it's failing, but **a big part of that is because people think it does something that it is never designed to even do**, really."*

Non-policing

*"If I'm being honest, I probably don't know a great deal about the IOPC. Obviously, I know the work nationally they're doing around public confidence, but **I only really know the buzzwords around it**."*

Police accountability

Unfavourability over time
('very' + 'fairly' unfavourable)

— Policing
— Police accountability
— Non-policing

	2017*	2019	2021	2022	2023
Policing	49%	30%	23%	36%	18%
Police accountability	21%	19%	8%	6%	13%
Non-policing	33%	18%	17%	13%	18%

Base: Policing (88), Police accountability (39), Non-policing (79)
IOPC – Yonder Stakeholder Research 2023
*IOPC was known as IPCC

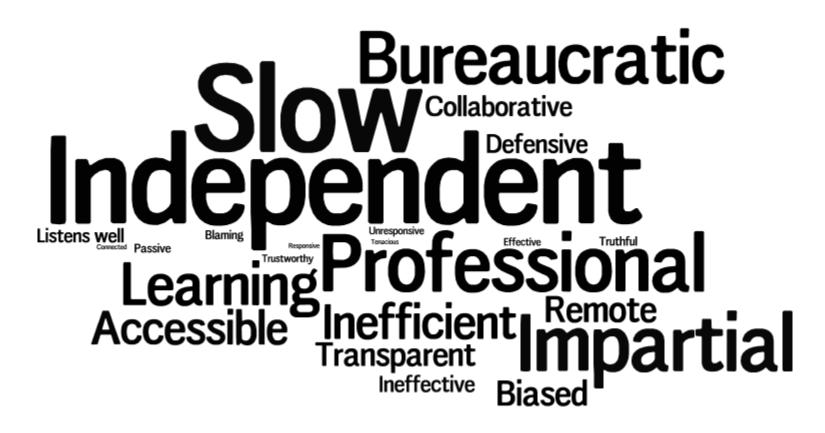IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct   .YONDER

The IOPC is seen as independent but hampered in its progress by slow timelines and perceived red tape inefficiencies

Q. Which, if any, of the following words or phrases do you think best describe the IOPC? Please choose up to three words.
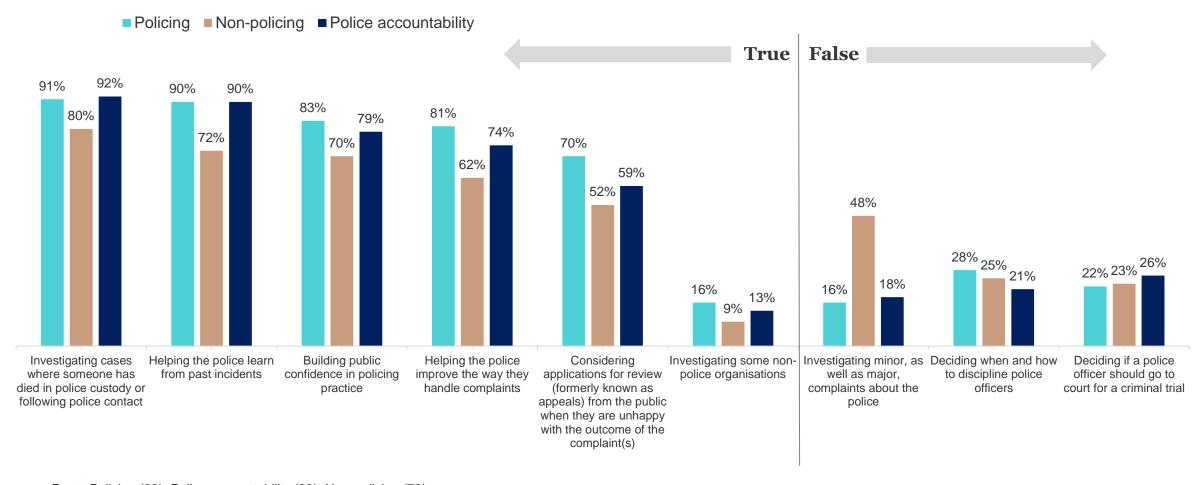
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There is broad understanding of the IOPC's role and responsibilities among stakeholders

Q. Which, if any, of the following do you think the IOPC is responsible for?

Legend: ■ Policing ■ Non-policing ■ Police accountability

True ← | → **False**

Category	Policing	Non-policing	Police accountability
Investigating cases where someone has died in police custody or following police contact	91%	80%	92%
Helping the police learn from past incidents	90%	72%	90%
Building public confidence in policing practice	83%	70%	79%
Helping the police improve the way they handle complaints	81%	62%	74%
Considering applications for review (formerly known as appeals) from the public when they are unhappy with the outcome of the complaint(s)	70%	52%	59%
Investigating some non-police organisations	16%	9%	13%
Investigating minor, as well as major, complaints about the police	16%	48%	18%
Deciding when and how to discipline police officers	28%	25%	21%
Deciding if a police officer should go to court for a criminal trial	22%	23%	26%

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Stakeholders think the IOPC has made substantial progress in recent years – particularly around shared learnings and its areas of focus – and believe it is continuing to head in the right direction

The IOPC has the benefit of the doubt with stakeholders who readily recognise that the IOPC is making considerable effort in these areas and trying to do their best within their powers and resources.

"

"They're heading in the right direction, especially around trying to do learning recommendations and improve their timeliness, and they're aware of the concerns with community confidence."

Police accountability

"They've made really good improvements under Michael Lockwood. They became more expeditious and focused. The restructure helped to improve timeliness and also to open the IOPC up, to understand more of the context of policing, rather than just looking at it in isolation."

Policing

"A lot of the areas I'm interested in the IOPC have probably already worked on, or are working on, but I'm interested in them prioritising race discrimination, violence against women and girls, and wider forms of discrimination including LGBTQ+ issues."

Non-policing

"I know that they're definitely on board with trying to be more representative. They've got the youth council as well and I have seen people from ethnic minority backgrounds give presentations who sound quite senior."

Police accountability

"

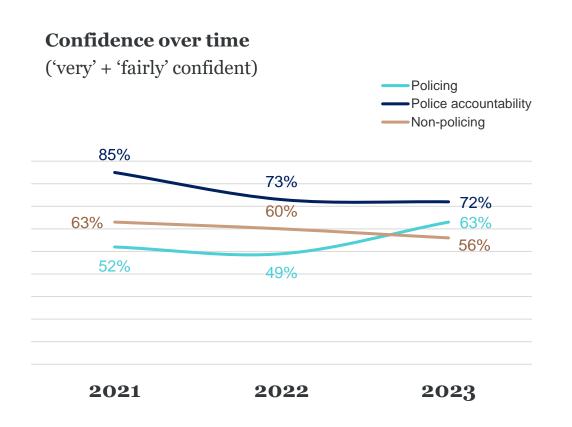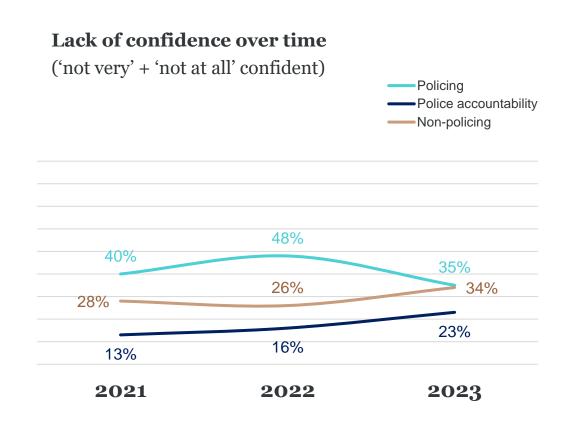IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct   .YONDER

A majority across all groups are confident in the IOPC and that confidence has grown significantly among policing this year

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the IOPC does a good job?

Confidence over time

('very' + 'fairly' confident)

- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

85%
73%
72%
63%
60%
63%
56%
52%
49%

2021   2022   2023

Lack of confidence over time

('not very' + 'not at all' confident)

- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

48%
40%
35%
34%
28%
26%
23%
13%
16%

2021   2022   2023

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However, stakeholders from all groups question the IOPC's effectiveness in fulfilling its role in the police accountability system

Policing

Non-policing

Police accountability

*"The IOPC has a challenge of legitimacy. **It fails to demonstrate how it is trying to support organisational change in the police service.** This week it's misogyny, next week, it could be racism. I don't see how it is supporting organisational change. I don't think it can demonstrate the consistent application of learning and how it's made a difference."*

*"They've done all of this work, loads of things are recommended, but **what has actually happened? Who is actually holding the police to account?** There needs to be a review into accountability in policing. You don't hear a whole lot of good news stories or about the great work that IOPC are doing in actually holding people to account."*

*"**They want to help build trust and confidence** in the communities in policing, **and they are not achieving that aim**, not least because obviously of the recent issues with the Director General. In terms of oversight of policing, they do a reasonable job but again, do they hold forces to account enough and publicly enough?"*

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In order to be more effective, stakeholders suggest the IOPC should collaborate more with other police accountability bodies

"I think **closer links between the IOPC and HMICFRS** will cement critical learning because the framework for assessment will assist forces in providing that sharp focus around those particular areas of policing." *Policing*

"There should be **collaboration between policing and crime commissioners** to track recommendations. Who's going back to check whether they've been implemented? Who's going back to check the impact and how do we actually take that forward? That's not done in a collaborative way." *Police accountability*

"To have a more rigorous approach to police reform **the different bodies all have to be in lockstep together**, you need a united front to push against the grain in policing. You also need a much more united front, at the moment you get standards and recommendations spooling out all over the place; from the College, from the IOPC, from HMICFRS. We want to see those three organisations working much more in lockstep." *Police accountability*

"The IOPC publish their lessons-learnt documents but because they're not an inspectorate, there is no way of gauging the impact on individual forces and how that learning has been applied or what difference it's made. **I think there's a case for a joint IOPC-HMICFRS crossover** around thematic areas of complaints handling like discrimination and use of force." *Policing*

"It's not just about the IOPC. **It's about how it interacts with all of those other agencies**. That's really important for perceptions and confidence, where there is a bit of a void." *Non-policing*

There are also calls from some for the IOPC to take a leadership role in addressing current issues surrounding police misconduct

Non-policing and police accountability stakeholders think the IOPC, as an independent body, has the unique ability to be the primary public interface for the police accountability system.

They want the IOPC to be more effective in proving that action is being taken to address key issues around misconduct. Publicly promoting progress must be a focus for the IOPC going forward to assuage the public's growing concerns.

Key actions for the IOPC:

+ Be more present, vocal in ongoing media coverage.

+ Publish research / data frequently.

+ Position the IOPC as the authority and expert on key issues such as violence against women and girls through research, community events and publications.

"

*"The IOPC have a key role in maintaining or protecting the authoritative legitimacy of the police. That's **seriously under question at the moment**, particularly in the Metropolitan Police over the last 12 to 18 months. **The IOPC have got to be part of trying to resolve this**. It's not just individual police officers; it's something institutional, something systematic about policing that generates these sorts of problems repeatedly. That requires some conversations."*

Non-policing

*"There's so much media attention around especially the Met at the moment, that **if the IOPC don't really jump at that and try and show what they've done** about these things and the part they've played, then **they're missing an opportunity**."*

Police accountability

*"They should **take the lead more with the media**, especially around high-priority investigations, rather than the police and ministers relaying the message. They **just seem to be a silent, faceless entity that sits in the back**. It'd be nice for them take the lead and say, 'We are investigating A, B and C'."*

Non-policing

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Others see the appointment of new leadership as an opportunity for the IOPC to show its commitment to addressing issues within policing

Stakeholders have concerns about the impact of the departure of the previous Director General on public trust and confidence in policing and the IOPC.

Many readily recognise the good work the former Director General did during his tenure, however they have concerns about the reputational impact of his departure among the public.

The new leadership appointment is a crucial decision for the IOPC to show it is continuing to move in the right direction. This is a chance to embody their mission of ensuring trust, confidence and high standards within policing.

Some stakeholders feel this is also a chance to address concerns about the diversity and representativeness of the IOPC workforce.

"

*"The IOPC **have a huge challenge in terms of trust and confidence**. The head of the watchdog of the police has been suspended. That's a huge challenge for them in terms of rebuilding their reputation."*

Police accountability

*"The next leader is very important. It's linked to trust and confidence of communities. **That will have damaged it further, so it is a big challenge** for them. They've got a job of work to do in terms of trust and confidence and this will make it even harder."*

Police accountability

*"The management board, as far as I know, is still all white and the interim DG is a white man and the previous DG was a white man. So, I think **it's got a white problem at the top**."*

Non-policing

*"The **lack of visible diversity in the IOPC is almost as shocking as the police**. You have an underclass of non-white people in IOPC. There appears to be little opportunity for progression for those people."*

Policing

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There is notable uncertainty around whether the IOPC is representative of the communities it serves, suggesting an opportunity for stronger proof points around employee diversity, equity, and inclusion
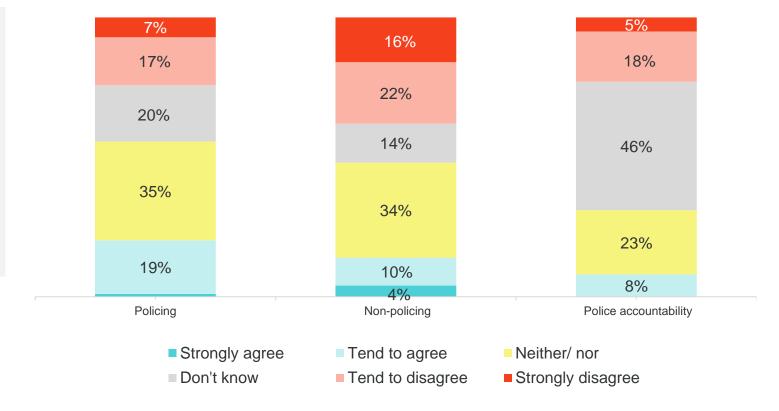
> " "
>
> *"I doubt very much that they are representative of the communities they serve. Again, **I don't know for sure, but I doubt it**."*
>
> Police accountability

> *I think they are making progress only because of what I've seen in London. **I don't know across the country**, but I assume it's not nearly as diverse."*
>
> Policing

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the IOPC is representative of the communities it serves?

Policing
- 7% — Strongly disagree
- 17% — Tend to disagree
- 20% — Don't know
- 35% — Neither/ nor
- 19% — Tend to agree

Non-policing
- 16% — Strongly disagree
- 22% — Tend to disagree
- 14% — Don't know
- 34% — Neither/ nor
- 10% — Tend to agree
- 4% — Strongly agree

Police accountability
- 5% — Strongly disagree
- 18% — Tend to disagree
- 46% — Don't know
- 23% — Neither/ nor
- 8% — Tend to agree

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither/ nor
- Don't know
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree

Base: Policing (88), Police accountability (39), Non-policing (79)
IOPC – Yonder Stakeholder Research 2023

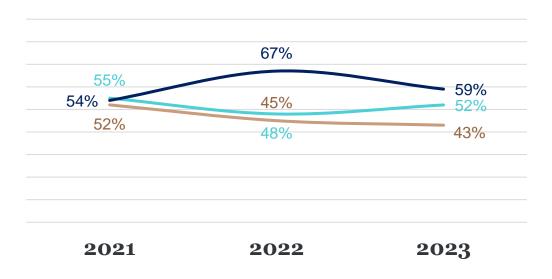IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct   .YONDER

Around half think the IOPC is effective in improving police complaint handling and most think it is effective in holding the police to account
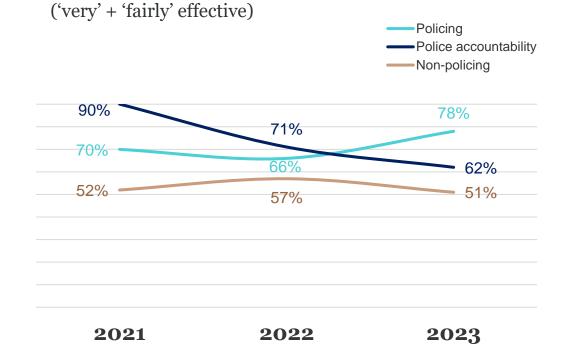
Q. How effective, or ineffective, do you think the IOPC is in the following areas?

Improving the way the police deal with complaints
('very' + 'fairly' effective)

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

2021:
- Policing 55%
- Police accountability 54%
- Non-policing 52%

2022:
- Police accountability 67%
- Non-policing 45%
- Policing 48%

2023:
- Police accountability 59%
- Policing 52%
- Non-policing 43%

Ensuring the police are accountable for their actions
('very' + 'fairly' effective)

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

2021:
- Police accountability 90%
- Policing 70%
- Non-policing 52%

2022:
- Police accountability 71%
- Policing 66%
- Non-policing 57%

2023:
- Policing 78%
- Police accountability 62%
- Non-policing 51%

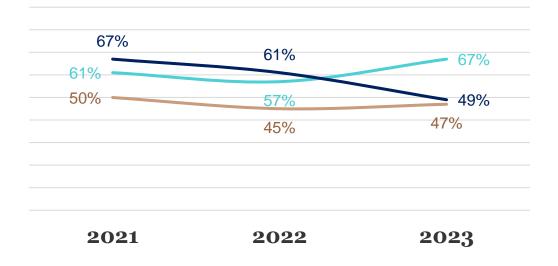IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct

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Policing stakeholders report learning from the IOPC's complaints process, but more could be done to embed these

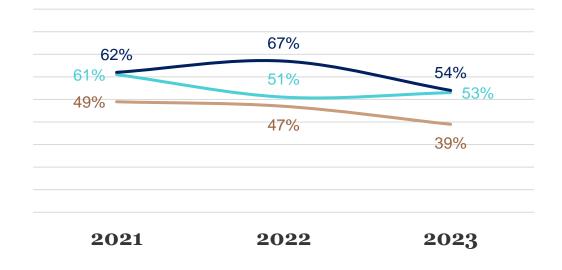Q. How effective, or ineffective, do you think the IOPC is in the following areas?

Ensuring the police service learns from complaints
('very' + 'fairly' effective)

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

67% (2021, Police accountability)
61% (2022, Police accountability)
49% (2023, Police accountability)

61% (2021, Policing)
61% (2022, Policing)
67% (2023, Policing)

50% (2021, Non-policing)
57% (2022, Non-policing)
45% (2022, Non-policing)
47% (2023, Non-policing)

2021   2022   2023

Raising standards to ensure mistakes are not repeated
('very' + 'fairly' effective)

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

62% (2021, Police accountability)
67% (2022, Police accountability)
54% (2023, Police accountability)

61% (2021, Policing)
51% (2022, Policing)
53% (2023, Policing)

49% (2021, Non-policing)
47% (2022, Non-policing)
39% (2023, Non-policing)

2021   2022   2023

Base: Policing (88), Police accountability (39), Non-policing (79)
IOPC – Yonder Stakeholder Research 2023

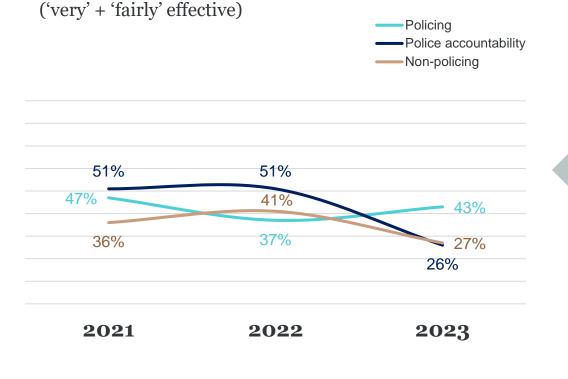IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct   .YONDER

Since 2021, there has been a decline in stakeholders' belief that the IOPC is effective at improving public confidence in police, echoing the steady drop in confidence amongst the public in the same time period
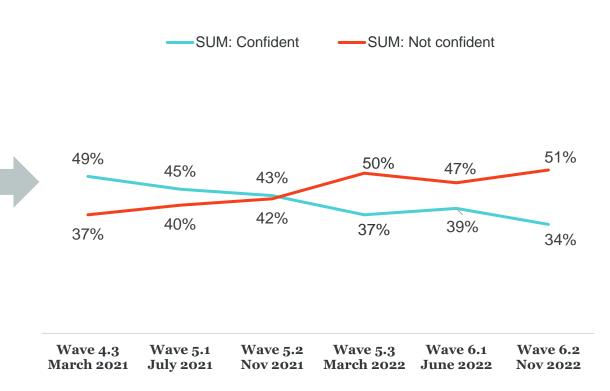
Stakeholder research:
Q. How effective, or ineffective, do you think the IOPC is in the following areas?

Improving public confidence in policing

('very' + 'fairly' effective)

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

Chart data:
- Police accountability: 51% (2021), 51% (2022), 26% (2023)
- Policing: 47% (2021), 37% (2022), 43% (2023)
- Non-policing: 36% (2021), 41% (2022), 27% (2023)

Years: 2021, 2022, 2023

Public Perceptions Tracker:
Q. How confident, if at all, are you that the police deal fairly with complaints made against the police?

Legend:
- SUM: Confident
- SUM: Not confident

Chart data:
- SUM: Confident: 49%, 45%, 43%, 37%, 39%, 34%
- SUM: Not confident: 37%, 40%, 42%, 50%, 47%, 51%

Waves:
- Wave 4.3 March 2021
- Wave 5.1 July 2021
- Wave 5.2 Nov 2021
- Wave 5.3 March 2022
- Wave 6.1 June 2022
- Wave 6.2 Nov 2022

IOPC – Yonder Stakeholder Research 2023; IOPC – Yonder Public Perceptions Tracker Base: Policing (88), Police accountability (39), Non-policing (79)

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Learnings shared by the IOPC are well regarded by all stakeholders, particularly policing

The majority of stakeholders praise the IOPC for the learnings it shares.

There is a recognition by stakeholders, particularly policing and police accountability framework stakeholders, that sharing learnings has been a particular focus of the IOPC's leadership. They praise the work done in this area and hope the IOPC continues to share learnings widely.

Learnings are viewed as collaborative; stakeholders report they have opportunities to feed into learnings which make them more realistic and applicable to individual officers or forces. Learnings are also praised for being in accessible formats and having a human tone of voice.

The Learning the Lessons magazine is pointed out as being particularly effective and of interest.

POLICING

*"They've got a hell of a lot better. One of the things that they introduced some years back is **Focus**, which is the magazine specifically for complaints handlers, giving examples. They've run a million and one workshops, and they engage with us. They do a good job with that now, **from a very low base they have got a lot better**."*

*"They've definitely got better with this over time. They put out a Learning Lessons bulletin, we get consulted on it, and **it gets shared across forces**. I think that's really good."*

*"We get their newsletters and thematics that come out. **It's one of the things that all of my teams actually read**. We get a lot of blurbs from various people, but when the IOPC updates and newsletters come out, it's one of the things that everybody reads. Even in areas that perhaps don't affect us."*

*"**I really like their oversight bulletins**, because of the way they break it down into case studies. I think that **explains it in a really human way**."*

Policing stakeholders' enthusiasm about learnings is dampened by non-policing participants' scepticism about the tangible impacts of this work on day-to-day practice

Some, particularly non-policing stakeholders, question the impact of shared learnings.

Those who are more critical suggest that while sharing learnings is an important part of the IOPC's role, they need to take it a step further to systematically implement improved standards across police forces.

There are also concerns about the nature of learnings. Some call for them to be bolder and challenge police forces more directly than they currently do.

Key actions for the IOPC:

+ Share clear evidence of improvements / positive impact with non-policing groups specifically:

  - Evidence can be case studies, statistics (particularly year to year) or tailored impact bulletins around certain cases or initiatives.
  - Consider holding events for non-policing stakeholders anchored to specific issue areas.

NON-POLICING

*"They are sharing stuff, but **that doesn't mean it's making a difference because no one takes a blind bit of notice**. There is no accountability, and forces don't have to do anything."*

*"We know they do reports, but **where do those reports end up? What is the difference, if any at all**. Because yes you could have lengthy reports, you could talk about what you've done, but is anybody listening, is anyone taking it seriously, is it changing culture?"*

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All stakeholder groups want a stronger follow-up process and/or enforcement mechanism to ensure the IOPC's learnings are being properly implemented by police forces

Stakeholders recognise enforcement is not within the IOPC's current powers but want learnings to be mandated and reviewed.

The IOPC is not expected to gain more legislative powers to enforce recommendations, however many call for the IOPC to follow up more rigorously after recommendations are issued to police forces. This soft, peer-pressure approach would help assuage fears that the police are not implementing necessary change.

Another solution stakeholders volunteer is for the IOPC to work more closely with HMICFRS and the College of Policing to establish a three-pronged, collaborative mechanism to ensure forces follow recommendations.

Compared to research conducted in 2022, more policing stakeholders are calling for follow-ups after recommendations are issued to forces. In previous waves of research, this stakeholder group have not had as much of a concern in this area.

Policing

*"I think if we, in the police community, want the best for everyone, then a **recommendation should be mandatory**. I think it's a two-pronged approach with HMICFRS which has not happened, and both parties seem to be very weak and defenceless against different police services."*

Non-policing

*"I don't think the IOPC has enough power to enforce the outcomes. **The IOPC itself should be able to mandate more action rather than just recommend** and more cases should be dealt with by the IOPC rather than requiring someone to first complain to the police."*

Police accountability

*"The IOPC has got the right amount of power, **it just needs to follow up and report**. Link in with police and crime commissioners and make sure that those recommendations are completed. It's about follow-up."*

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There is little awareness of the IOPC's work on reviews among stakeholders

Stakeholders that are aware of this work have concerns about the ability of the IOPC to carry out reviews effectively and in a timely manner.

As with other aspects of the IOPC's work, some stakeholders have concerns about the IOPC's workload and their ability to effectively carry out reviews within an acceptable time frame. More often than not, they feel these are published beyond the window of opportunity to make a real difference.

The information gap around reviews as compared to other IOPC work leads to uncertainty about the value or impact of them at all.

"

*"**To improve reviews they probably need the resource** to actually be able to look at the complaint in its entirety. The purpose of the review is really to consider if their handling of the complaint was reasonable and proportionate, and they do that, but I just think they could spend a little more time on the cases just to deep dive into the complaint a little bit more. Yes, it will cost more money and take longer, but I think **the benefits of that will outweigh the cost because it should identify more learnings**."*

Police accountability

*"I don't always see the reviews that they deal with. **I'm not aware of many where they've made a big impact**. Sometimes you look at the legislation and you think, 'this could be for the IOPC and not the Police and Crime Commissioner,' but the IOPC will push back, so they could do slightly more on the reviews, quantity-wise."*

Police accountability

*"Reviews are very much behind. They've made some good progress in getting through some tricky cases, but all their review work has hugely suffered. **There is still a big backlog on that side of things**."*

Policing

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Stakeholders from all groups think extended timelines for investigations are blighting the excellent work put into them

Current state of investigations

+ IOPC investigations still take too long despite recent improvements readily recognised by stakeholders.

+ Policing stakeholders comment that the IOPC should have greater sympathy for the impact lengthy investigations have on officers. Non-policing and accountability stakeholders note the negative impact extended timelines have on members of the public involved. Ultimately, timelines are leading to criticism from both sides of the case.

+ Stakeholders are also sympathetic that the workload of the IOPC has increased due to recent initiatives around historic cases, however that sympathy is limited and continues to wane each year the issue persists.

Potential improvements

+ **Better allocation of resources:** the IOPC can better use existing internal resources. Stakeholders recognise that the IOPC has limited resources compared to the increasing numbers of complaints, but there is a belief work can and should be streamlined or designated more effectively.

+ **Greater transparency:** Stakeholders feel that more information shared to complainants and officers during the investigation will go far to assure both parties that progress is being made.

+ **Leverage relationships with the police:** there is a view that if the IOPC established stronger trust with forces then individual officers will cooperate more readily with investigations to prevent delaying them further.

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Stakeholders from all groups think extended timelines for investigations are blighting the excellent work put into them

" Current state of investigations

"Some of the jobs that I've been involved in have grown beards, they've been on that long and the officers have retired. **It seems to take them an inordinate amount of time to cut through the chaff.** *Some of the timeliness has improved dramatically but some cases I've been involved in have just taken too long."*

Policing

*"***Timeliness is a huge issue***. Being kept waiting for a long time, it's not just the community needs the answers but* **if you are a police officer and under investigation, that is really tough.** *I also know that the Fed and police officers don't cooperate and cause all sorts of other problems. The IOPC can do what they can, but they also need the cooperation of the police."*

Police accountability

" Potential improvements

"They should look at resourcing as a whole or **using the resources they have more smartly.** *Stuff takes a long time, and sometimes that's right and proper, because to investigate things thoroughly can sometimes take a long time, but it's not in anyone's best interest for that time to be as long as it sometimes is.* **I know they're working really hard on that, but they need to keep going.***"*

Police accountability

"It's more **communication with the complainant,** *even just a computer-generated letter to say, 'We've still got it, we're still dealing with it, any questions, please contact us rather than the owning force.' Each force should be given a* **monthly update** *as to their timeliness to manage expectations a bit more."*

Policing

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Stakeholders see the IOPC's workload as a key contributor to issues of timeliness, and the ability of the IOPC to carry out its role effectively

Stakeholders recognise that the IOPC's workload has increased significantly.

There are concerns among stakeholders about the preparedness of the IOPC to address the increasing workload.

Some acknowledge that the IOPC has recruited more staff to fix the resourcing challenge, but they are sceptical that this is enough to deal with the tranche of existing cases and influx of new ones.

As with tackling the timeliness challenge, some stakeholders suggest the IOPC should better allocate resources and prioritise more efficiently. Stakeholders accept that some cases are so high-profile and complex they need more attention. However, these cases should not be prioritised at the expense of closing smaller-scale, straightforward cases where people are still waiting in limbo during investigations and reviews.

"

"They've only got a pot of so many people, and you can't do everything, and you can't do everything quickly. You just **have to rely on their internal prioritisation mechanism***."*

Policing

"There's the challenge of how do you manage your time, your pipeline of cases. I think one thing that I would caution them about is massively expanding their remit. I've heard about an advocacy system to encourage more people to make complaints. I'm not against people making complaints, but **they need to make sure that they're not drumming up more business than they can handle***."*

Police accountability

*"****The biggest challenge is going to be volume of work****. There's not a never-ending budget to provide staff to tackle that volume. As we tackle things and uncover things, like the stuff that's come out with the Met, that then brings an influx of issues. It obviously impacts policing, but it's also massively impacting them."*

Policing

"They all want to do a good job and what's right for the public, but they just need the resource to be able to do it. You have to **direct your resources where they're most needed***."*

Police accountability

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Stakeholders regard the composition of the IOPC's staff as a difficult issue as they must balance independence with resourcing needs

Stakeholders understand that the IOPC needs ex-police officers on its staff, however this can raise concerns about independence.

Ex-police officers bring valuable context to IOPC work and investigations, however stakeholders think there should be a thoughtful balance between ex-police and non-policing staff. There is a sense that a high quantity of ex-police will damage the IOPC's reputation for independence.

Considering the IOPC's resourcing crisis, upskilling non-police individuals is key to keeping up with workload and stakeholders are confident investigative skills can be taught to maintain the quality of work.

Stakeholders struggle with solutions to maintaining the balance effectively but encourage the IOPC to share these statistics readily to garner trust among themselves and the public regardless of staff backgrounds.

"

*"Because **investigators come from a policing background, they're more likely to sympathise with officers** and see it from their perspective, rather than look at it from the public complaint point of view. **They need to move away from the reliance on ex-police officers and have a recruitment drive**. There's something that they could do to upskill civilian investigators. They're almost being a little bit lazy, because police officers are already trained in investigations, so you don't have to invest anything in them. That does have a longer term impact on how impartial or independent they appear to be."*

Policing

*"The IOPC is essentially a small police force. **You can't find the investigative skills needed outside of policing**. But you **shouldn't be able to go directly from police to IOPC**. Potentially the College of Policing could have a role in training up people."*

Police accountability

*"A former police officer can bring a lot of operational experience; they can give the context of knowing the policing environment. But if it's an independent organisation that's full of ex-police officers, there could be that **perception of looking to mark your own homework**. They need a general mix."*

Policing

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Staff's ex-police backgrounds raise red flags for stakeholders and contribute to mixed views about the independence of the IOPC

Policing

+ Policing stakeholders think that the IOPC operates in an independent way.
+ However, they have concerns about the impact of high numbers of ex-police officers at the IOPC on public perceptions of independence.

"I know people have come from insurance backgrounds and different investigative backgrounds. **The fact that not all of them are from the police does give that label of independence***."*

Non-policing

+ Some non-policing stakeholders think the IOPC is independent, whilst others think it is too closely linked with the police and should be bolder in its recommendations against forces / officers.

"How is it independent? **If you employ people from the police who were the ones that are being complained about, how are you independent***? You're just bringing in your mates."*

Police accountability

+ Police accountability stakeholders have no doubt that the IOPC is independent, but they have considerable concerns about the public perception of independence.
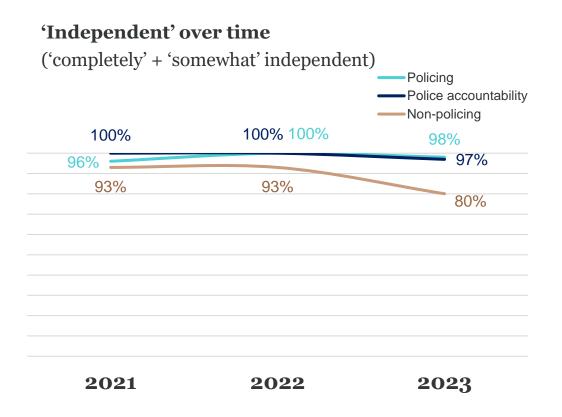
"I have confidence in their independence, but the problem is **people will remark that there's lots of ex-coppers in the IOPC***. They need to try a bit harder to get more people that are non-police because that would help with confidence in the community."*

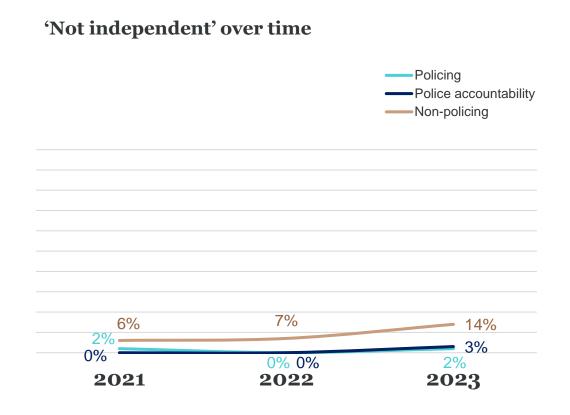IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct

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Stakeholders' perceptions of the IOPC's independence have dropped this year, particularly among non-policing individuals

Q. Do you think the IOPC is independent of the police?

'Independent' over time
('completely' + 'somewhat' independent)

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

100% (2021, Police accountability)
100% 100% (2022)
98% (2023, Policing)
97% (2023, Police accountability)
96% (2021, Policing)
93% (2021, Non-policing)
93% (2022, Non-policing)
80% (2023, Non-policing)

2021   2022   2023

'Not independent' over time

Legend:
- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

6% (2021, Non-policing)
7% (2022, Non-policing)
14% (2023, Non-policing)
2% (2021, Policing)
0% (2021, Police accountability)
0% 0% (2022)
3% (2023, Police accountability)
2% (2023, Policing)

2021   2022   2023

Base: Policing (88), Police accountability framework (39), Non-policing (79)
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Stakeholders highly praise their individual contacts at the IOPC but often have differing views about the organisation at large

Individual, local contacts are frequently applauded for their work and communication.

Stakeholders from different groups praise the day-to-day contact they have with the IOPC. They often comment about good, open and transparent working relationships and communication with individual members. This is often in contrast to their views of the organisation overall, revealing a disconnect between organisational and individual outreach.

However, in some instances stakeholders mention they could benefit from one single point of contact with the IOPC. They feel the turnover leads to inconsistent relationships and thus outcomes from investigations.

> *"We have a **really good working relationship** with people at different levels. I feel the management board level takes us seriously and also staff in stakeholder engagement, comms and policy. The thing that has been more challenging is **how many different people contact us.** We have wanted a single point of contact to avoid multiple requests coming from different directions."*
>
> *Non-policing*

> *"**Our local person is great**. He attends meetings, if we've got queries he's happy to answer them, he's put on training for us - brilliant."*
>
> *Police accountability*

> *"That's become a really good working relationship. I don't feel stupid asking questions, even if I know I've asked them before. **All the communication I've had with the IOPC has been really positive**."*
>
> *Policing*

> *"I'm quite happy with engagement. We've got another oversight officer – she's really good. She's always got back to us when we've had questions. **We've got a good working relationship**. I don't have any issues with that, it's quite healthy."*
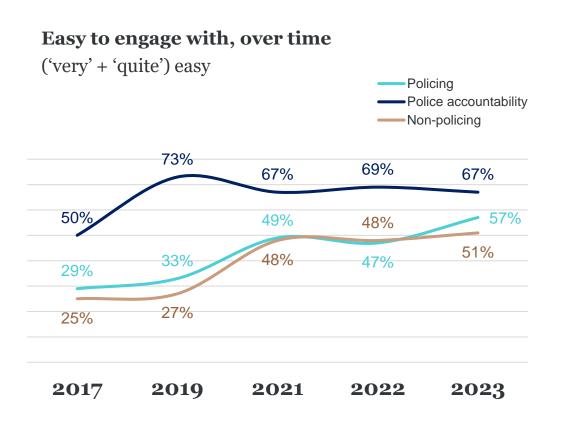>
> *Police accountability*

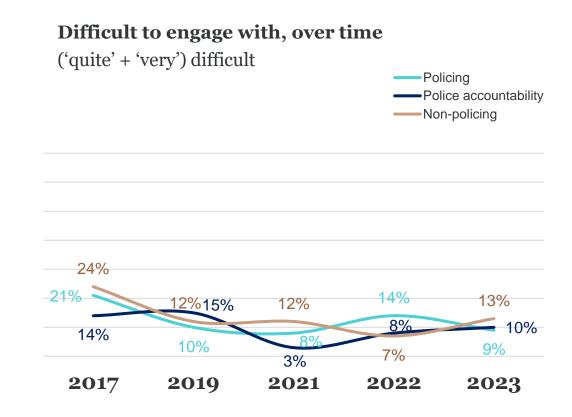IOPC Independent Office for Police Conduct   .YONDER

Stakeholders are again mostly positive about the way the IOPC engages with them

Q. How easy or difficult do you find engaging with the Independent Office for Police Conduct?

Easy to engage with, over time
('very' + 'quite') easy

- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

	2017	2019	2021	2022	2023
Police accountability	50%	73%	67%	69%	67%
Policing	29%	33%	49%	48%	57%
Non-policing	25%	27%	48%	47%	51%

Difficult to engage with, over time
('quite' + 'very') difficult

- Policing
- Police accountability
- Non-policing

	2017	2019	2021	2022	2023
Non-policing	24%	12%	12%	7%	13%
Policing	21%	10%	8%	14%	9%
Police accountability	14%	15%	3%	8%	10%

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When it comes to the public, stakeholders worry that public unawareness of the IOPC is a potential threat to trust and confidence

Public expectations do not match reality, setting the IOPC up to fail.

Whilst most stakeholders have a clear understanding of the IOPC's role within the police accountability framework, they think a lack of understanding among the public of the IOPC's role and purpose contributes to a lack of confidence in the IOPC because the public expect it to do things outside of its remit.

If the IOPC were to better communicate its function, this could lead to increased public confidence in the IOPC and police more generally.

Key actions for the IOPC:

+ Encourage direct, two-way engagement with the public.

+ Issue areas of focus should be long-term to avoid perception of political influence or reactionary strategies.

+ Clearly establish expectations for each investigation.

"

*"It's always going to be difficult for them to prioritise issue areas, because they're always going to be politically influenced. Violence against women and girls is a big priority right, because it is, but also because there's **a lot of political pressure and public pressure**. However, you risk **falling into the trap of becoming very knee-jerk** in dealing with different areas."*

Police accountability

*"Their role is; one, to investigate independently without fear or favour; two, to investigate professionally; three, to **help improve transparency for the public**; and four to ensure that the system operates in the public interest."*

Policing

*"**Communication about their current scope and remit of what they do needs to be really proactively shared**. If I worked for IOPC, I would be thinking 'we need to sort out our comms because people don't really understand what we do, and what's within scope'."*

Non-policing

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Stakeholders especially think the IOPC should do more to engage with vulnerable groups and those that have low confidence in policing

Stakeholders suggest working closely with community organisations and non-governmental organisations to reach vulnerable or low confidence groups.

They recognise that these audiences are unlikely to have an awareness of the IOPC and the role it plays within the police accountability system. Therefore, the IOPC should do more to proactively engage with vulnerable groups and people with low confidence in policing.

There are also calls from stakeholders to make the complaints process more accessible to those who may not have access to the Internet or don't speak English.

Targeted messaging that acknowledges local concerns and utilising social media are also mentioned as methods to initiate two-way communications with communities that have low confidence in policing.

"

*"Young people and people that have no trust in authorities want to see **authentic communication, they want to see the people behind the brand**, and have a chance to pose questions and get real, honest answers not robot corporate answers. If the IOPC carry on presenting a fairly detached, corporate voice in their website and social media, I think **they're going to struggle to really break through that trust boundary**."*

Non-policing

*"You've got to do it **alongside the NGO sector**. There's also working with and **incorporating people with lived experience** of these problems."*

Non-policing

*"It's great having a website, and it's great having different ways, **but some communities don't have access to Wi-Fi**. They're going to need a hardcopy form to complain. It's being able to provide options for people that may need different access points."*

Policing

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Stakeholders provide three focus areas for the IOPC's public communications:

Communicate your role

Stakeholders recognise that the police accountability system is complex, but the IOPC needs to more clearly define its remit to the public to pre-empt frustrations.

Stakeholders believe many members of the public are not aware of the IOPC's role and responsibilities. They think filling this information gap is key to garnering wider support. If members of the public had a better understanding of the IOPC's role they will not expect it to do things outside of its remit, therefore public confidence in the IOPC would increase.

"

*"Instead of just advertising the way to make a complaint, there **needs to be some public understanding of what the IOPC is there for**. That's why the IOPC get inundated by phone calls, because **they've not really explained to anyone the work involved**."*

Policing

*"There's a lack of understanding about what the IOPC do and what role they play. I see all the time, people writing to the IOPC, and you know that actually they can't do anything with what they're complaining about. **They need to do more self promotion and reach out more to the public**."*

Police accountability

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Stakeholders provide three focus areas for the IOPC's public communications:

Adjust public communications outputs

Stakeholders often comment that the IOPC should communicate with the public in a more accessible, humane way.

This is a key area of improvement for the IOPC. Stakeholders acknowledge that case studies and proof points that showcase outcomes are powerful ways of conveying the IOPC's impact, which will help to instill more trust among the public.

Some stakeholders comment that the IOPC currently has a 'police-like' tone of voice and to increase confidence with the public it should have a more authentic, relational voice, particularly during emotional divisive investigations.

"

*"They do the **very traditional, almost police-like communication** from what I've seen. But then, you're only going to read their websites if you're either a cop or someone interested in social justice. I'm not sure what they do to **reach out to communities which are traditionally more fearful of any form of authority**."*

Policing

*"The outcomes from police complaints are a key part of what's going to make people feel that they can trust the service. **Prioritise the visibility of outcomes - evidence, case studies**. There's a lot more they could do in that area. Conveying **authenticity and humanity** as an organisation is important."*

Non-policing

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Stakeholders provide three focus areas for the IOPC's public communications:

Increase proactive outreach

Stakeholders think the IOPC should be more proactive with the way it communicates with the public.

The IOPC should increase frequency of communications with the public and be bolder in those messages. The IOPC should also communicate around smaller cases rather than just the most high-profile investigations.

With high-profile misconduct cases, the IOPC should have a more proactive voice. Stakeholders remark that the IOPC is rarely seen in the media and if it commented more overtly, this could help increase public confidence and control the narratives.

> "
>
> *"They need to trumpet where they have investigated something, found a police officer for want of a better term guilty and they have been removed from the force. They need to* ***demonstrate that they are muscular, that they have the power*** *rather than wishy-washy statements or just not getting into the public consciousness at all."*
>
> *Police accountability*

> *"**They're not proactive in engaging with the public**. They will be immediately after an incident. They need to be out there doing a lot more; educating people, trying to get people onside, and letting them know what's happening. If you're speaking to them before a crisis, **they're more likely to work with you**."*
>
> *Policing*

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