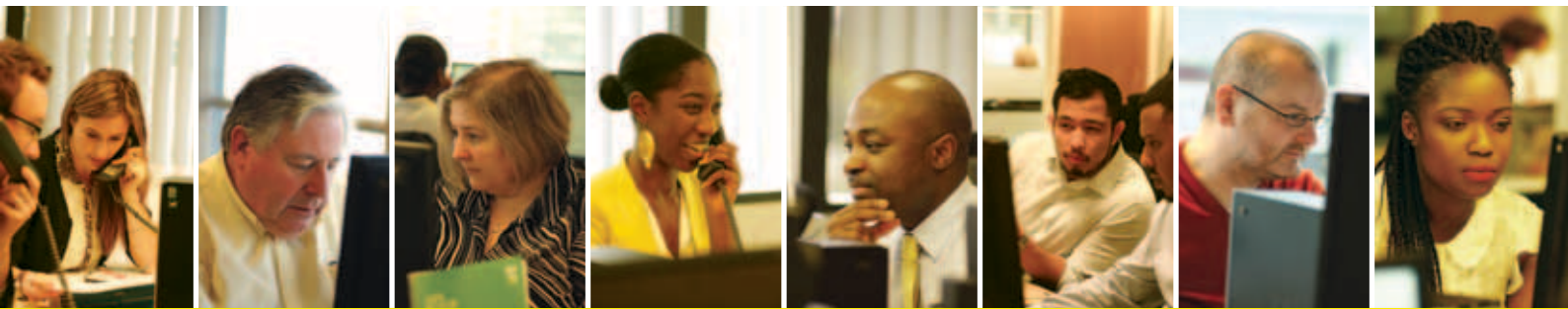
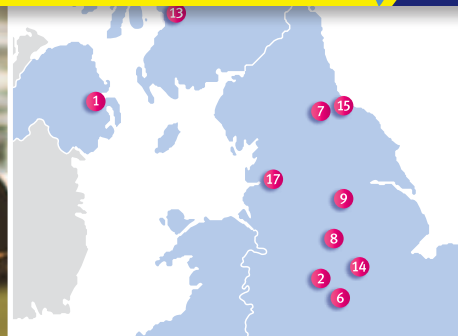


# annual review of consumer complaints about

insurance • credit • banking • savings • investments



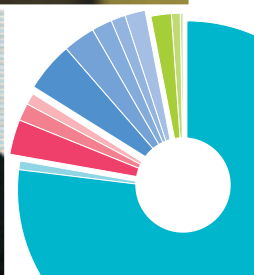
## om-buds-man



not sure what you're up to tonight?  
you should come out with us

not sure what to do about the problem with your bank?  
you should tweet the ombudsman @financialombuds

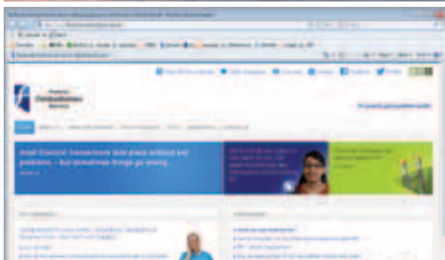
ombudsman



big night out – what shall I wear?  
ask your girlfriends

not happy with your credit card company?  
talk to the ombudsman

0300 123 9 123  
financial-ombudsman.org.uk  
honest answers – to help you move on



financial-ombudsman.org.uk

## financial year 2013/2014

# about the om-buds-man

- We were set up under the *Financial Services and Markets Act 2000* to resolve individual disputes between consumers and financial businesses – fairly, reasonably, quickly and informally.
- We handle complaints about all kinds of money matters – from insurance and mortgages to savings and credit.
- If a financial business isn't able to resolve a customer's complaint, we can step in to settle the dispute. But the business must have the chance to sort things out itself first.
- We are independent and impartial. When we look into a complaint, we listen carefully to both sides of the story and weigh up all the facts.
- Our job is to give honest answers. If we decide a business has treated a consumer fairly, we explain why. But if we decide the business has acted wrongly, we can order matters to be put right.
- Our service is free to consumers.
- Consumers don't have to accept any decision we make. But if they accept an ombudsman's decision, it is binding on both them and the business.
- We are not the regulator. We don't write the rules for financial businesses – or fine them if rules are broken.
- Everyone can learn something from complaints – so that what's gone wrong in the past need not happen again. This is why we have a crucial role in sharing what we see – to help prevent future problems and build confidence.

**our job is to  
give honest  
answers**

# our year at a glance



- We handled 2,357,374 initial enquiries and complaints from consumers – almost 8,000 each working day.
- Around one in five of the initial consumer enquiries we received turned into a formal dispute – a record 512,167 new cases.
- 78% of new cases were about the sale of payment protection insurance (PPI), with the number of PPI complaints rising 6% to 399,939.
- Complaints about “packaged” bank accounts increased by more than threefold, while complaints about credit cards went down by 47%.
- Complaints about investments and insurance remained at broadly similar levels to the last two years.
- 63% of the total number of cases we dealt with related to four banking groups – while 4,504 financial businesses accounted for just 3% of our caseload.
- We resolved a record 518,778 cases – resulting in compensation for consumers in 58% of complaints.
- For cases other than PPI, we resolved 44% of complaints within three months.
- We operated on a cost base of £223 million with 3,526 employees at the end of the year.
- We took part in over 250 seminars, roadshows, exhibitions and events.
- We answered over 600 enquiries from parliamentarians and 24,551 calls to our technical advice desk – our free, expert helpline for businesses and advice workers.
- We featured in 6,000 media stories – and 77% of adults in the UK said they were aware of the Financial Ombudsman Service.

helping build  
confidence

All figures relate to the financial year 2013/2014

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you listened to me  
and cared about what  
I had to say

**512,167 new cases**

referred to our adjudicators and  
ombudsmen for further work

*(see page 42 for more details)*

you gave me clear  
and honest answers and let  
me know where I stood

**31,029 cases resolved  
by our ombudsmen**

making formal decisions at the final  
“appeal” stage of our process

*(see page 75 for more details)*

**2,357,374 initial  
enquiries and complaints**

handled by the  
frontline advisers on our  
consumer helpline

*(see page 20 for more details)*

you got to grips  
with things and used  
common sense

**487,749 cases resolved  
by our adjudicators**

through mediation, recommended  
settlements  
and adjudications

*(see page 74 for more details)*

all figures relate to the financial year 2013/2014

... while we have resolved more **PPI cases**  
than ever before, we see a wide diversity  
of other cases – from **current**  
**accounts** to **car insurance**  
**pensions** to **payday loans**

**Sir Nicholas Montagu KCB**



Another year, another half a million cases in, and another half a million resolved. With a workload like this, there is no question of our dragging our feet or resting on laurels at the Financial Ombudsman Service. Once again the pressures on the service have been intense.

During the year we received the two millionth case referred to us since our beginnings in 2000. What is remarkable about that is how relatively soon it came after we received our millionth case.

In fact, it took a decade to have a million cases referred to us – but then less than three years to see a million more.

I see this as indicative not only of the sheer scale of the issues involved, but also – and more positively – of a greater awareness that our service offers a free and genuinely impartial route to getting a fair decision on complaints against financial providers. Continued outreach activity, to increase awareness and improve our engagement with communities across the United Kingdom, remains a high priority for us.

Yet again this year, complaints about the sale of payment protection insurance (PPI) have dominated the landscape. Even though the torrent of incoming cases on which I commented last year has slackened, we are still measuring our weekly intake of new PPI complaints in thousands. While we have resolved more PPI cases than ever before during the year – a record 389,730 in total – we still have some 400,000 to deal with.

I recognise what that means in terms of people having to wait to know the outcome of their complaints. And I am grateful for the forbearance people have shown. We will continue to work with the banks and other businesses to clear the stock of these cases. And I believe that an end is in sight, if not yet near.

It would be a mistake to let PPI cloud our vision of all the other complaints that we receive and classify as “general casework”. After all, there were over 110,000 of them during the year, and that word “general” conceals a wide diversity of cases – from current accounts to car insurance, pensions to payday loans.

While it would be good to think that the lessons of PPI have been learned, there is no room for complacency. And we are constantly on the lookout for trends which may indicate a cause for concern, and for possible action by the regulator. I am pleased to note the growing strength of our relationship with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) – now just over a year old – and the effectiveness of our cooperation with them.

One of the greatest challenges to the Financial Ombudsman Service is to be sure that we do not let the sheer volume of our current caseload prevent us from raising our eyes to the horizon and thinking about the future. We are mindful that our operating model has remained essentially the same since we began.



And we recognise that the huge developments that have taken place – and are continuing to do so in technology, in particular – create an urgent need to look hard at how best we should be shaping our service to be responsive to the changing needs of consumers and businesses.

New products and new technologies take off every year – think of Bitcoin and Paym, of Vine and FaceTime. This can lead to changing views on what fairness means, and changing expectations of how quick and responsive a service like ours should be.

Someone worried about a financial transaction carried out on a mobile banking app will neither expect nor want a prolonged paper-driven process to resolve their complaint. That points to the need for a more “segmented” service, where a complaint involving payment via a mobile is treated differently from, say, a complex pension or mortgage dispute which may call for detailed delving into the past and the piles of paper that come with it.

We are preparing ourselves to meet these challenges. This involves looking to shape our future round the different needs and expectations of our stakeholders – working with financial providers to help us become less process-driven, and with consumers to better understand what they want from us.

This will build on the work of the latest of our three-yearly reviews – with the Future Foundation giving us insight into how the world is changing and how this is likely to affect the relationship between businesses and their customers over the next decade. I am confident that our dynamic and determined workforce will embrace the certainty of continuing change with their usual dedication and enthusiasm.

My final words are to record my personal thanks to Natalie Ceeney, who stepped down as chief ombudsman in November 2013 after four years with the service. The board and I are very grateful to Natalie for her achievements as head of the ombudsman service – which under her leadership became a *Sunday Times* Best Companies “Top 100” organisation, handling over 2,000 consumer disputes every day. I am also very grateful to Tony Boorman who has taken charge of the running of the service with his customary professionalism.



**Sir Nicholas Montagu KCB**

May 2014

I am enormously **proud** of the fact that we  
have stayed **true** to our original  
**ombudsman** purpose  
and **values** – even though we have had  
to change, and **change rapidly**

Tony Boorman



It's always going to be a challenge for any organisation to deal with a doubling of demand for its services over a short period of time. But anyone who is familiar with our service and previous *annual reviews* will know that for the last two years or so, we have been dealing with precisely this challenge.

We've spent this time scaling up our operation and adapting the way we work – to handle both the unprecedented volumes of complaints and the volatility in the types of cases consumers have been referring to us.

And we have made significant progress in doing so. This year it's been less a question of our bracing ourselves for the challenges ahead, and more one of meeting them head-on.

During the year covered by this *annual review – 2013/2014* – we have resolved a record number of cases. We have given over half a million people honest answers to their complaints. That is a reassuring indication that our operational plans are sound – and that the work of the last few years is paying off.

I am pleased to say that the tide of complaints about payment protection insurance (PPI) finally seems to be turning. But we know how many unresolved cases we still have on our books. And we have been very open about the reality that we are certainly not out of the PPI woods yet.

In spite of all these challenges, I am enormously proud of the fact that we have stayed true to our original ombudsman purpose and values, even though we have had to change – and change rapidly. We exist not only to resolve individual disputes. One of the most valuable functions of any ombudsman scheme is to share what it is seeing – to help make things better in the future. We are uniquely placed to see what is important to customers when they are using financial services. We see what they expect – and we see what happens when those expectations are not being met.

So it is important to share our observations with our stakeholders. But anecdotal evidence can be misleading. It would be all too easy to assume that what we saw in one particular case is evidence of a more widespread problem. It might be, but it might not. Our job is to turn observations into insight. And to do that, we need to gather intelligence from across all our casework teams, and make sense of what it's telling us.

This means having to think laterally. We have to move away from artificial divisions imposed by old processes – those of financial businesses and our own – for handling complaints.

So if, for example, we see problems involving sales, or over-complex terms, or administrative failings in one particular product area, we need to think carefully about what we can learn from these business-consumer interactions that might also help prevent problems elsewhere.

This is something we have been working towards for a long time. Fourteen years ago, the ombudsman started out as a “private” service. We didn't comment in public on the individual cases we handled.

But not long after we were established, we started to open up. We began publishing data on the complaints that were coming to us. Then we started sharing our general approach to particular types of cases. And this year we started publishing each individual decision our ombudsmen make.

But simply publishing individual cases won't always be enough to make improvement happen. We also need to develop thoughtful, *qualitative* insights based on the *quantitative* data we are seeing – and to share this with the wider world. This is where the true value of an ombudsman scheme lies – and it's something we have started doing more during the year covered by this *annual review*.

A few years ago we developed a set of principles for how we want our service to work. We are still committed to each of those principles, and I will use them as a framework to reflect on our performance during the year.

### delivering a trusted, fair and easy to use service

Trust will always underpin the work we do. Our “product” isn't something tangible. It's about making judgements based on the evidence and the facts available to us.

So if people didn't trust our judgement, our role as an ombudsman would be seriously undermined.

During the year, our stakeholders in financial businesses reported increasingly high levels of confidence in the ombudsman service. Three quarters of frontline complaints handlers across all businesses said the financial services sector could have confidence in us. 57% of managers in those businesses said the same – up 19% on last year. This is very encouraging indeed.

Turning to consumers, we know from our face-to-face conversations with thousands of people – at events ranging from independent living exhibitions to student advice fairs – that not everyone understands our role. Some people we meet think we're the regulator – asking “*how can you let them get away with it?*”

On the other hand, some people think we're a consumer champion – saying “*we need someone like you to stand up for us*”. It's important that we work to try and clarify any misconceptions about who we are – and what our role is – from the outset. Trust can only be built on a clear understanding of what to expect.

Despite these tensions, I'm pleased to say that during the year 70% of adults across the UK said they would trust us. And 80% of people whose complaints we handled said they would recommend us to friends and family – even where we hadn't made a decision in their own favour. This is a positive sign that people recognise that we are giving honest answers to their problems.

But we certainly can't afford to be complacent. We know there are many consumers out there who might need our services, but who are not getting in touch with us. During the year our research suggested – once again – that someone's age, socio-economic status and ethnic background can all affect how likely they are to use the ombudsman.

Mindful of this, we have put more time and effort than ever into getting out into local communities and working with particular groups of people – at “melas”, roadshows and other events. We've met people in cinema foyers, supermarkets and football grounds – to hear what they think about the ombudsman. We've worked with regional media and joined forces with local MPs and community leaders to get our messages out across the length and breadth of the UK – including some of the most geographically remote parts.

We also know that people who are experiencing financial hardship might be less likely to come to us with a problem. These people are often trapped in a cycle of debt and might not be sure how to get out of it. Many might not want to admit that they're having problems. The case study on page 29 of this *annual review* shows just how much we were able to help someone in this position.

We might not be the first organisation that springs to mind when it comes to helping people through difficult situations like this. But we often find that our approach – listening to problems, talking things through informally, and looking for pragmatic solutions – lends itself to coming up with a way forward that both the consumer and the business are satisfied with. As this particular case study shows, the effect on people's lives can be profound.

During the year we continued to put a lot of effort into building partnerships with frontline advice workers and charities – locally and nationally – to reach people who might need us. This has included inviting a wide range of charities and support organisations to meet our staff and talk about how we can help people with different needs.

This has involved finding out how we can make ourselves easier to use and more approachable for people who might lack confidence in dealing with “institutions”.

During the year we have also made far more use of social media – having conversations with people in the open and tweeting “real time” trends from our consumer helpline. This is another way of reaching people who might not otherwise be aware of us or comfortable engaging with us.

As this *annual review* shows, we continue to keep a close eye on who is and who isn't using the ombudsman. This will help us make the best use of our resources in the future – and continue to make ours a service for everyone.

### sharing our insight and experience – to help build confidence

Earlier in this report I mentioned our determination to share what we see with the financial services sector. Every ombudsman scheme – whatever its remit – should take responsibility for helping to improve complaints handling. We have had another busy year meeting businesses – from the smallest consumer credit provider to the largest high street bank – to share our insight and experience.

Discussing issues face-to-face can be particularly helpful in the “prevention” side of our role. During the year we have hosted more events than ever for smaller businesses – from Glasgow to Bournemouth, and Belfast to Norwich – to help them get to grips with the ombudsman's role, our approach to complaints, and what to do if they have a complaint referred to us.

Of course, we also continue to work closely with larger businesses. Many of these businesses are more familiar with us – simply because they have significantly more customer complaints referred to us. We have arrangements in place both at an operational and a strategic level to make sure we are sharing insight and experience with these businesses.

This includes talking about the issues we are seeing and, where relevant, working with the businesses involved to find an efficient way of settling large numbers of complaints involving similar issues.

But not everything can be done face-to-face. During the year, we have continued to increase the number of resources we have available on our website – to help complaints handlers understand how we might approach particular types of cases. We have published updated guidance on a wide range of product areas – from pet insurance to portfolio management. Particularly relevant to early 2014, we also updated our online technical guide on disputes involving storm damage and flooding.

We have continued to publish illustrative case studies in *ombudsman news* – and during the year 70% of readers said that what they'd read had influenced the way they approached complaints. And we have been publishing our ombudsmen's *individual* decisions for 12 months – as another way of shedding light on our approach to the cases we see.

During the year our advice desk – our free helpline for businesses and advice workers – received over 24,000 calls. Our team on the advice desk is there to explain how the ombudsman *might* approach a particular complaint.

During the year they helped people deal with problems – like the ones we highlight on pages 148 of this *annual review* – without the need for us to get involved.

The new regulator for the financial services sector, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), has now been up and running for over a year. We have maintained a close working relationship with the regulator. We have kept the FCA abreast of emerging issues that we have come across, as well as where we have seen individual examples of poor practice.

We also worked with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) on changes to the way that consumer credit is regulated. This involved the transfer of responsibility for the regulation of consumer credit from the OFT to the FCA from April 2014. And we have shared our insight into the activities of claims-management companies with the Ministry of Justice and the Legal Ombudsman.

I am determined to make sure we find more ways of sharing our insight – and increasing its impact – over the coming year.



### putting knowledge and expertise at the heart of everything we do

Once again, training and developing our staff has been a high priority for us during the year. With many new ombudsmen and adjudicators joining us – and with a high proportion of relatively new staff – we have provided extensive training to make sure that people have the necessary skills and knowledge to handle cases to the high standards we expect.

We have focused on building people's professionalism – with our ombudsmen as mentors and coaches at the heart of our professional leadership. We have also been re-thinking our approach to “knowledge management” – for example, by introducing “knowledge communities” led by our most experienced members of staff.

We recognise how important it is that our staff should feel stretched and challenged – with their talents nurtured and developed. We also know that there is growing demand for experienced complaints handlers across many sectors. So it's inevitable that some of our staff may decide to develop their careers outside the ombudsman service.

During the year, however, we have been able to retain people as we had hoped to and grow as an organisation to meet the challenges described in this review. We were once again recognised as a “Top 100” organisation to work for in the *Sunday Times* Best Companies survey. Keeping an engaged and enthusiastic workforce helps us deliver the fair and consistent outcomes that our customers rely on.

### being flexible, reliable and effective

Ours is a demand-led service. So although we consult widely on our plans and assumptions, forecasting and planning for demand is very difficult. We also see a high degree of volatility in the types of cases referred to us. So we have to work flexibly, and be ready to deal effectively with whatever we are called on to do.

The number of PPI cases we received during the year far exceeded our – and our stakeholders' – expectations. But the time and effort we have put into scaling up our operation over the last few years has begun to pay dividends. We began the year well placed to deal with growing demand. And we have made significant inroads into our caseload – resolving a record 389,730 PPI cases during the year.

But PPI isn't the whole story. During the year, for example, we have seen a substantial increase in cases about "packaged" bank accounts and significantly fewer cases about portfolio management. This means we need to be flexible in the way we manage our caseload, so that every case we deal with is handled professionally and to the highest standards.

We are fortunate to have a strong team of professional leaders – our ombudsmen – who help make it possible for us to combine flexibility and rigour with pace and precision.

I mentioned earlier in this report that our service is well placed to see the wider "cross-cutting" issues and trends in the complaints referred to us. But to be ready for *future* cases, we also need to be able to anticipate what might be around the next corner. So during the year we have strengthened our "horizon-scanning" capability – to be able to identify new issues quickly and respond effectively to changes in the volumes and types of cases referred to us. This in turn helps us make sure that we have the resources we need to deal with these changes – and that we know where and how to deploy them.

Although I am pleased to see from our surveys and research that businesses and consumers are broadly satisfied with the service we provide, I recognise that our timeliness is something we need to improve. We know that people want their complaints resolved as quickly as possible, and many are still waiting far longer than I would like. I am determined to improve our ability to resolve complaints more quickly – and just as effectively – over the coming year.

## operating an efficient infrastructure

We are funded by the businesses we cover, and we fully appreciate that they rightly expect value for money. In April 2013 we introduced new group-account funding arrangements for the four largest financial services groups – reflecting the fact that together they accounted for some 60% of our caseload.

This new arrangement helped ensure that we received our income in a timely and stable way during the year – enabling us to adjust our resources to respond to volatility in demand. The four groups involved welcomed the transparency of the new arrangements – and recognised that it brought lower administrative overheads and increased efficiency. We have now agreed to extend these arrangements to a further four financial groups for the 2014/2015 financial year.

The unit cost of our service has been rising in recent years, as we have geared up our resources in response to the doubling of our workload. However, in 2013/2014 our unit cost fell. This was a result of the investment we have made in a larger workforce that is now making significant inroads into our stock of cases.

However, we know from our experience of dealing with similar large-scale disputes – for example, mis-sold mortgage endowments in the mid-2000s – that the PPI cases we are dealing with are likely to become increasingly complex and entrenched over the next few years. This is likely to have implications for our unit cost in the future.

During the year we have achieved our aim of handling the vast majority of cases electronically. We have introduced document scanning and electronic-file management across our entire casework operation. This enabled us, for example, to quickly sort out complaints from consumers whose problems had been caused by IT glitches at their bank during the year.

Over the coming year we will be working hard to identify more ways in which we can work differently and more efficiently – to provide value for money to the businesses who fund us, and better customer service for those whose complaints we handle.

### remembering what matters

This *annual review* is full of data. In a few months' time we will publish a *directors' report*, which contains yet more information about the way we run our service. And throughout the year just gone, we have published still more statistics about the trends we have been seeing in product areas, and about the businesses involved in those complaints.

But I come back to where I began this report. Quantitative data is useful – and can tell us a great deal about what's going on when consumers and financial businesses interact. It is vital that we all understand the trends, and what they might mean.

But as well as looking for the numbers – perhaps comparing and contrasting with last year – I urge you to look at the words in this *annual review*. You will find several case studies that are striking reminders of why the ombudsman is here. We include these to bring us back to the reality of the day-to-day work we do – and the people involved.

The ombudsman's job is to make evidence-based decisions.

Our decisions about how we run the organisation, what we prioritise, how we develop and improve, must also be based on evidence. Seeing the year set out in this *annual review* helps us make those decisions for the future.

Looking back at 2013/2014, I believe that everyone at the ombudsman can be proud of the progress we have made. We still have a long way to go. But I'm confident that we are equipped to make even more progress over the coming year – not only in resolving record levels of cases, but also helping businesses and their customers re-establish the trust that underpins a successful financial services sector.



**Tony Boorman**

May 2014



the complaints we received

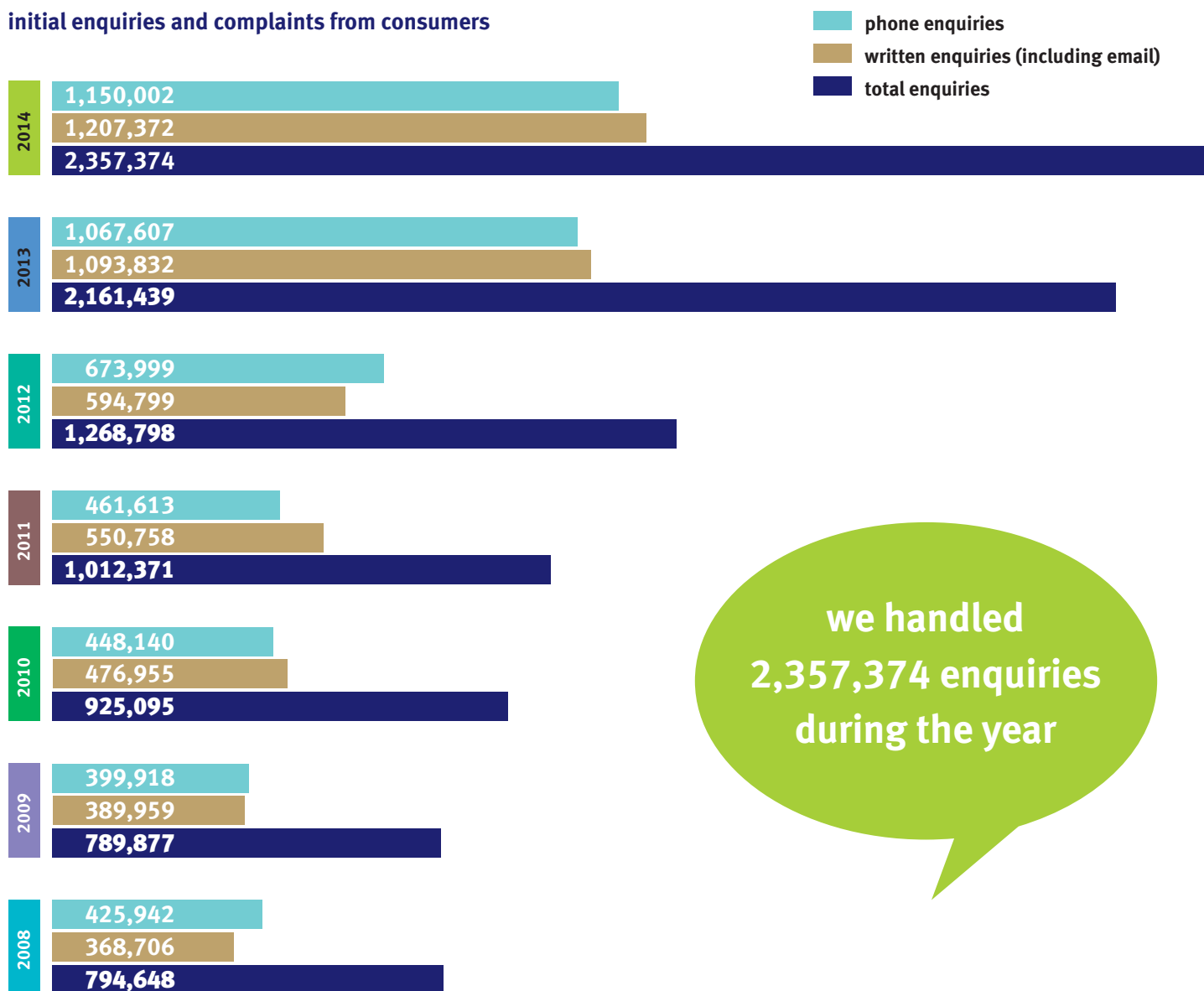
# the complaints we received

## our consumer helpline

During the year consumers continued to contact our consumer helpline in record numbers – with questions, concerns and complaints about their dealings with financial services.

We handled 2,357,374 enquiries during the year – a 9% increase on the previous year. This means that each working day, we replied to an average of almost 8,000 phone calls, letters and emails from consumers.

## initial enquiries and complaints from consumers



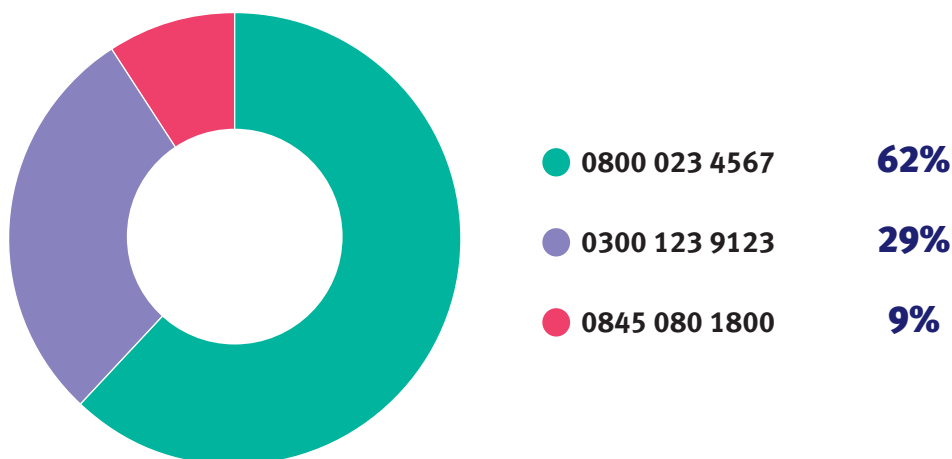
year ended 31 March

we handled  
2,357,374 enquiries  
during the year

Our consumer helpline is the first port of call for everyone who phones the ombudsman service. This year 95% of the 46,000 people we asked said it had been easy to find out how to contact us.

We offer three different phone numbers for consumers to use to call our helpline. Under many phone tariffs, one or more of our numbers will be free for a consumer to call.

**the phone numbers people used to contact our helpline**



The proportion of people phoning our 0800 number rose by 17% during the year. Although this number is usually free to call from a landline, most mobile phone users have to pay for these calls.

Our 0300 number is less expensive for mobile phone users, and free on some tariffs. So we were surprised to find calls to this number fell by 15% over the year. This may reflect the fact that some people aren't yet familiar with the 0300 format – and might not be quite sure how much it costs to call numbers with this prefix.

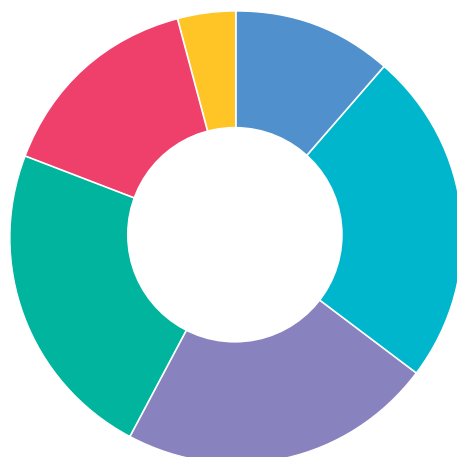
The telecoms regulator, Ofcom, has committed to overhauling and simplifying call charges from July 2015 – including making 0800 calls free from mobiles. So we may see the proportions of people using our different numbers change in the future.

When we launched our original 0845 number, there weren't many cheaper alternatives available for organisations to offer their customers. However, since we launched our freephone 0800 number – more than five years ago – we haven't promoted our 0845 number.

This is reflected in another fall in the number of calls to our 0845 number – from 13% of our total calls last year to 9% this year. We continue to remind those organisations who are still giving out our 0845 number that we have cheaper options – and that they should update their records.

# the complaints we received

## the time of day consumers phoned us



● between 8am and 10am	<b>11.5%</b>
● between 10am and midday	<b>24%</b>
● between midday and 2pm	<b>22.5%</b>
● between 2pm and 4pm	<b>23%</b>
● between 4pm and 6pm	<b>15%</b>
● between 6pm and 8pm	<b>4%</b>

Consumers can contact us from 8am to 8pm on weekdays as well as on Saturday mornings. This helps us meet our commitment to be accessible to everyone, whatever their family situation, work commitments and lifestyle.

We generally receive the most calls on Mondays between 10am and 12 noon. This year we received up to 700 phone calls an hour at this time.

at our busiest times  
we received up to 700  
phone calls an hour

We use call-centre planning tools to manage the volatility in the number of incoming calls. We often experience sudden sharp increases in calls when we feature on the radio or television – as people realise they could have a problem and want to talk about it straight away. Having the flexibility to handle fluctuations in call volumes involves making sure as many of our staff as possible are dealing with phone calls – rather than written enquiries – at the busiest times.

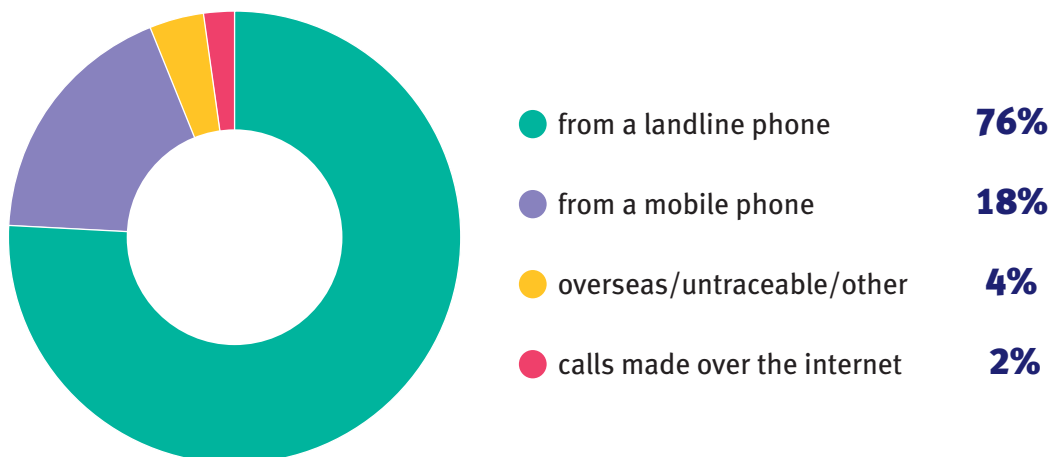
The busiest day for our consumer helpline was Monday 13 May 2013 – when we received 6,165 phone calls about all kinds of problems. 63% of these calls were about payment protection insurance (PPI).

Another spike happened on Tuesday 11 June 2013 when we received 3,845 phone calls just about PPI. This followed a widely reported media story about poor standards of PPI complaints handling by a major bank.

The quietest day for our consumer helpline was Christmas Eve 2013. Friday afternoons in July and August were also quieter times on our phones.



### how people phoned our consumer helpline



The proportion of calls to our consumer helpline from mobiles increased again during the year. However, we know that certain groups of consumers – particularly older people – prefer to use a landline to phone us.

3,224 people called us from payphones – a similar number to last year. We always tell people we’re happy to phone them back if they’re worried about the cost of calling us.

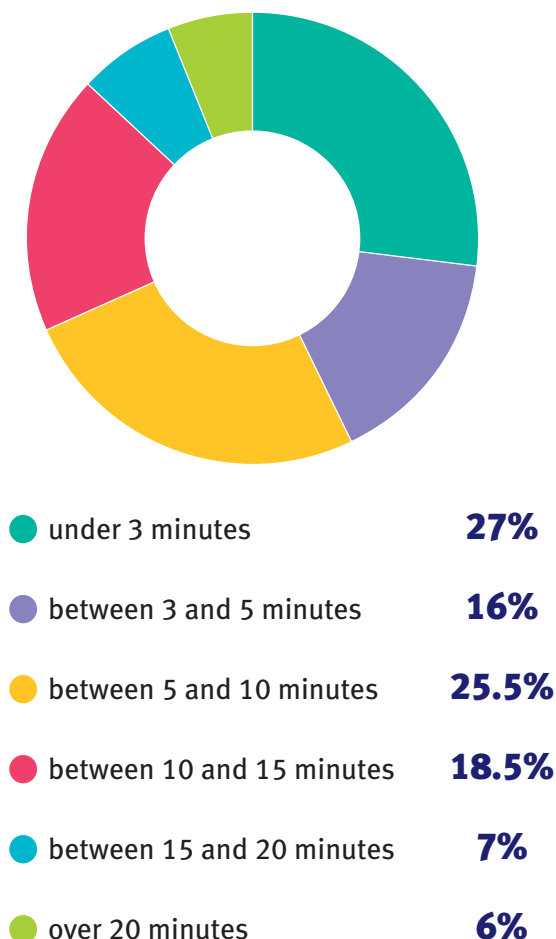
23,215 people phoned us over the internet using services such as Skype – more than three times as many as in the previous year. This includes a small number of consumers who talked to us using online messaging.

We aim to answer 80% of phone calls to our consumer helpline within 20 seconds. This is a widely-accepted standard for organisations receiving the volume of calls that we do. During the year we answered 82% of calls about everything other than PPI within 20 seconds.

Looking only at calls about PPI, we answered 76% of these within 20 seconds – up from 72% in the previous year. Although this is still fewer than our target, it reflects the much larger volumes of calls about PPI than were forecast at the start of the year.

92% of consumers we surveyed over the year said they felt we answered their calls promptly.

### the length of calls to our consumer helpline



**3,224 people called us from payphones**

# the complaints we received

Consumers who phone us hear a welcome message – recorded by our principal ombudsman – asking them to choose one of four options depending on what their call is about.

This way, we can make sure their call reaches someone on our consumer helpline with the right knowledge to give them an answer. As ever more types of financial service come under our remit, filtering calls this way is increasingly important to answering people's questions efficiently.

During the year, the proportions of phone calls taking less than three minutes or more than eleven minutes declined – while those lasting between three and ten minutes increased by 15%.

Longer phone conversations still often involve consumers who are phoning us to ask for help and guidance about making a PPI complaint – rather than paying a claims manager to do it for them.

## online contact

Instead of calling us, many people would rather find out the information they need from our website.

Over the last year, an average of 17,100 people visited our website each day. Though the busiest period remains between 12 noon and 1pm on weekdays, many people take advantage of being able to email us or find an answer online at any time. There were almost 150,000 hits on our website on Christmas Day 2013 – when over a thousand people downloaded complaint forms.

On our website's busiest day last year – 29 May 2013 – over 22,000 people visited to download our newly-published *annual review*.

In total 651,682 complaint forms and 1,632,563 PPI questionnaires were downloaded from our website during the year.

Our PPI questionnaire is the standard form used by businesses, consumer bodies and claims managers. It helps ensure the information we and these organisations collect from consumers is consistent – and all in one place – so complaints can be dealt with as efficiently as possible.

The other most-visited pages on our website last year were:

- Our news page – with 227 news updates added during the year.
- New or updated guidance notes in our “online technical resource”, which sets out our approach to complaints involving a wide range of products and issues – from pet insurance to portfolio management, motor valuations to storm damage.
- Case studies from the online version of our newsletter, *ombudsman news* – which during the year covered 14 different subjects including payday lending, “packaged” bank accounts and complaints involving older consumers.

on the busiest day over  
22,000 people visited  
our website

### the words searched for most often on our website

This year 1,000 organisations linked from their website to ours – from savvywoman.co.uk to shelter.org.uk, bbc.co.uk to thestudentroom.co.uk. There is more information about the people who visited our website in the chapter called “who complained to us”.

We carefully monitor the words that people use in their searches on our website. If we see that a lot of people are searching using a particular word, we see whether we can make the relevant information easier to find.

It’s interesting that such a significant proportion of searches involve simply the word “complaint” – on a website that is almost exclusively about complaints. This reminds us how unfamiliar the language of financial complaints can be for many people – and how much help they might need to articulate their problem.



# the complaints we received

## engaging with people through various channels

During the year we introduced a webchat facility for people to talk to us online. We also got more involved in conversations on social media sites. There is more information about how we use social media in the chapter called “who complained to us”.

Although these channels may not lend themselves to the complexity and sensitivity that some complaints involve, many people tell us they like the control that online contact gives them – which they might not feel if they’re on the phone talking to a stranger about something difficult or unfamiliar.



## how we handle initial enquiries and complaints

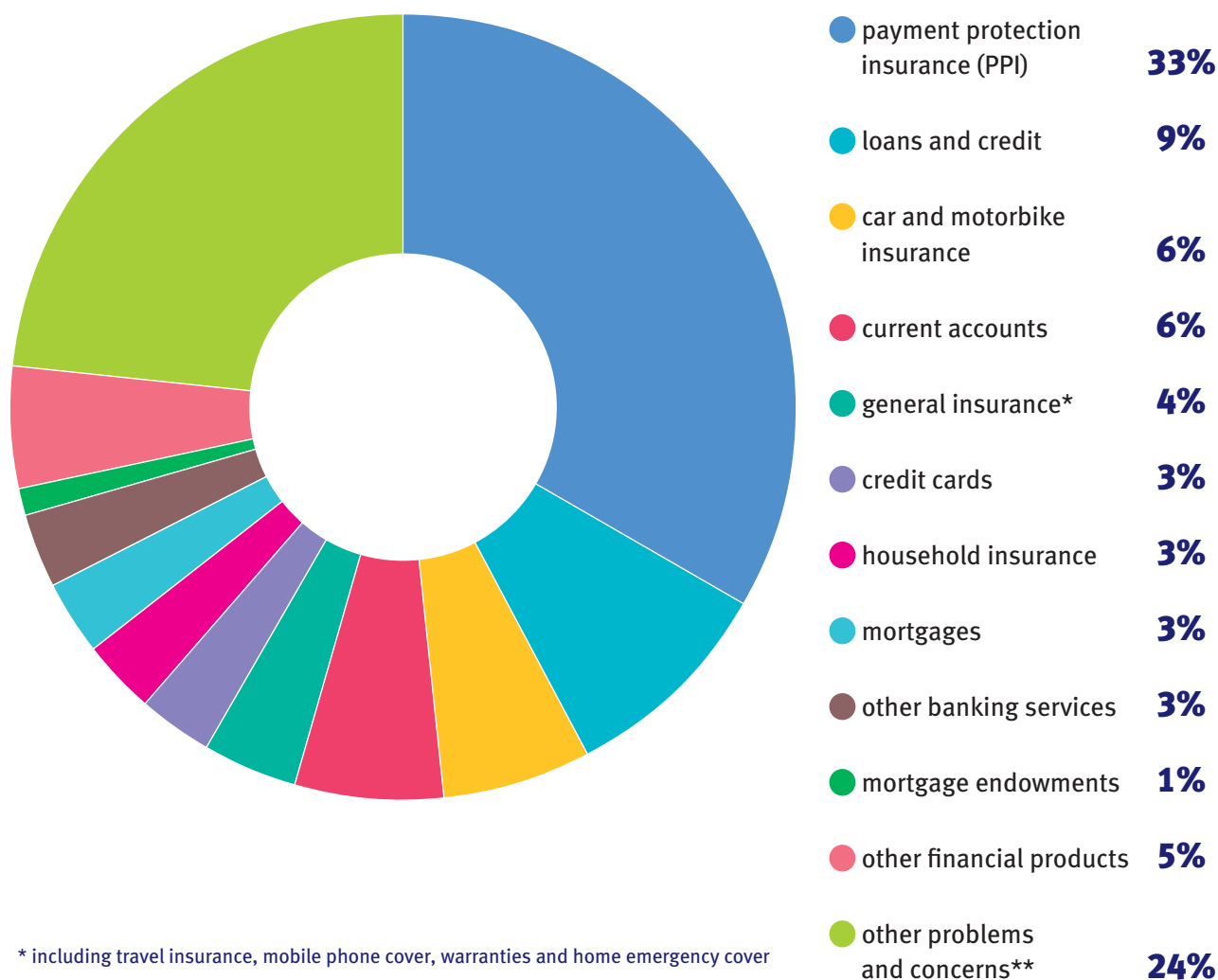
Our consumer helpline deals with all the initial enquiries we receive. We aim to sort out problems and queries at the earliest possible stage – without the more formal involvement of an adjudicator or ombudsman.

Getting things sorted out early can involve:

- Explaining businesses’ complaint procedures – and how we can step in after eight weeks.
- Confirming the details of who consumers need to complain to at a business.
- Reassuring consumers who feel intimidated by the formal process of complaining – and forwarding their complaint to the business if they want us to.
- Clarifying the role of the ombudsman – and the difference between us and the regulator.
- Providing the consumer with the facts they need to resolve their problem themselves – including directing them to our website or other online information.
- Giving our view on the likely outcome of a complaint – based on our experience – which can involve explaining why we think a matter isn’t worth taking further.
- Offering practical suggestions to both sides on how to sort things out informally – without our formal involvement.
- Providing impartial guidance on any compensation already on offer.
- Explaining the rules we have to follow – for example, on time limits for complaining to us.
- Where we can’t help, suggesting other bodies or ombudsman schemes who might be able to.

we engage  
with people through  
various channels

what consumers phoned our helpline about



\* including travel insurance, mobile phone cover, warranties and home emergency cover

\*\* other problems and concerns that people don't know where else to take (for example, debt-related worries, or confusion about what steps to take if something has gone wrong)

During the year we continued to receive a large number of enquiries on our consumer helpline about PPI. However, compared with the previous year these made up a lower proportion of all the enquiries we received. The relative proportions of calls about all other financial products remained broadly similar to those we have seen in previous years.

Interestingly, the one significant growth area in the kinds of calls we were taking on our helpline was “other”. The majority of these calls were from people who were not even close to making a formal complaint, but who were getting in touch with us just to talk through things they were confused or frustrated about in their dealings with financial services.

We see this as an increasingly important part of our work. By getting involved long before things become complaints, we are able to help businesses do more to show their commitment to listening to their customers’ concerns, and to help consumers become more confident and savvy customers.

# the complaints we received

## making it easy to contact us

Both our day-to-day experience and our wider research suggest that certain groups of consumers find complaining more daunting than others.

So although the people who contact our helpline broadly reflect the population as a whole, some consumers are less likely than others to take their complaint further – either with the business involved or by referring it to us.

In particular, younger consumers and people from lower socio-economic groups are generally less likely to make a formal complaint after they contact us initially.

We continue to try to deepen our understanding of why this might be – looking, for example, at the financial products involved, and at the different attitudes that people have towards financial matters – and towards complaining in general.

We are committed to removing any barriers that might prevent people from using us. To help make our service as accessible as possible, we have a team of specially-trained casework advisers who can help consumers who might otherwise struggle with the procedures involved in making a complaint. Some of the ways we supported consumers are highlighted in these case studies.

## lonely at Christmas

Shortly before Christmas a man in his eighties called us to say he was having trouble getting a replacement chequebook from his bank. He told our helpline adviser how lovely it was to talk to someone – because it was the first time he'd done so in weeks.

As the conversation went on, we realised that since the death of his wife two years ago, he was struggling with living on his own. He didn't have any family or a circle of close friends he could turn to for help – and in his own words, he had got himself “into a bit of a pickle”. He only used cheques or cash and hadn't been able to get to the bank, so he had no money and no food in the house.

The first thing we did was talk to his local bank about his situation. They hadn't realised just how much he relied on using his chequebook – but as soon as we told them, they sent a temporary chequebook round to his home.

With the consumer's permission, we spoke to his local branch of Age UK – and they took over from there. The next time we spoke to him, Age UK had paid him a visit and were supporting him through applying for the home-help he was entitled to. He'd also been to number of lunch clubs.

## when words aren't enough

A consumer wrote to tell us she had a problem with her insurance company. Her letter didn't give us much information – and we could tell from the way it was written that it had taken considerable effort to put the situation into words.

In fact, part of the problem seemed to be that the insurance company was telling her she needed to put her claim in writing. The consumer was deaf – and because written English wasn't her first language, she was finding it hard to get across how her car had been damaged.

We sent the consumer a quick message through Text Relay to ask how she'd like to talk to us. Text Relay provides a text-to-voice and voice-to-

text translation service. The consumer came back to us straight away and said she'd like to use British Sign Language – and within 15 minutes we were talking to her through a sign language interpreter using a live video link. For the first time, she was able to explain everything that had happened to her.

As soon as the conversation finished, we contacted the insurer to explain the background to the claim – and the difficulty the consumer had experienced in describing the problem. The insurer then contacted the consumer using a similar video link interpreting service and sorted out her simple claim three working days later.

### at breaking point

A caller to our helpline told us that he was in the process of putting a payment plan in place with several businesses he owed money to. However, one of the lenders had gone into his account and removed a lump sum of money – which hadn't left enough for other agreed payments to be made to other lenders.

He'd received a number of calls from these other businesses – who had said they would be “taking action” against him. As the conversation went on, the consumer became increasingly tearful and distressed – and started to talk about not wanting to “be around” any more.

First, our helpline adviser offered to call the consumer back to save him money – as he was using a pay-as-you-go mobile phone. We then encouraged him to describe his situation in a bit more detail. We established that he had tried to set up the payment plan on his own, but was struggling to deal with the increasing demands from the various businesses involved.

We phoned the lender who had taken the large amount of money from the consumer's account. We explained the impact their actions had had on the consumer and his efforts to pay back all his creditors in a fair way.

The business agreed to refund the money – and to contact the consumer the same day to put an interim, lower payment arrangement in place until he'd got himself sorted out.

We called the consumer back to let him know what was going to happen. We offered to put him in touch with one of the charities we work closely with – who could support him through his financial difficulties and debt issues from now on. The consumer called us a couple of weeks later to say: *“It may sound corny, but it's thanks to you I've reached a more positive phase in my life”*.

Our outreach work across the UK with frontline community and advice workers continues to show that some consumers are reluctant to phone us directly. Instead they prefer the support of someone from their community who they know and trust – who can help them through the call.

This is why we work with a wide range of charities and advice agencies, taking part in three-way phone conversations between them, the consumer and us.

There is more information about our access and inclusion work in the chapter called “who complained to us”.

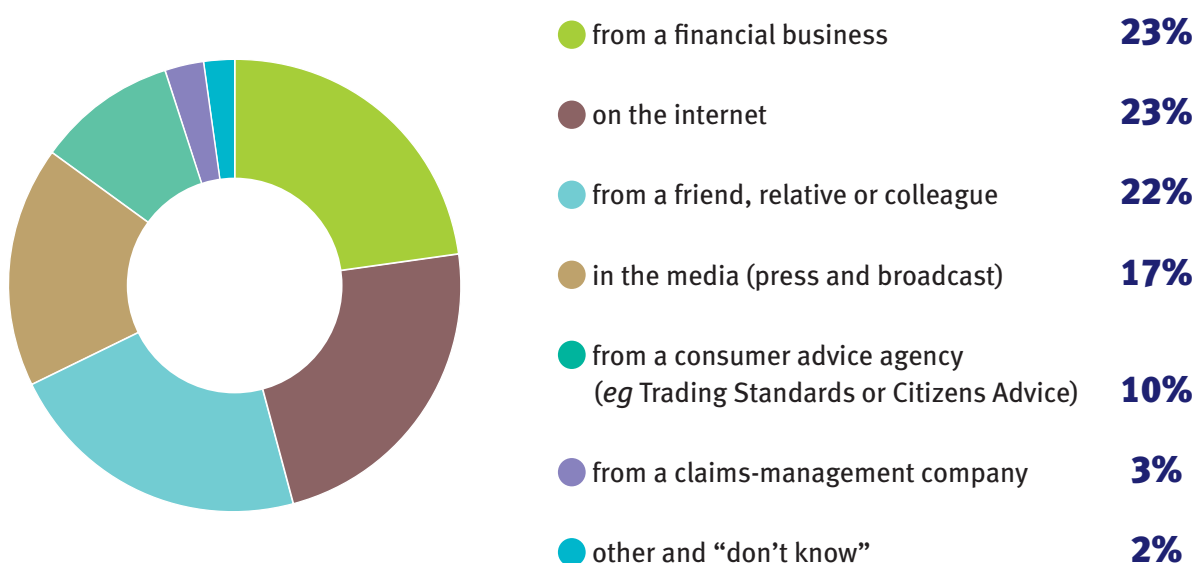
We were set up as an informal alternative to the courts. Part of working informally involves making it easier and more comfortable for people to tell us their side of the story – without feeling confused or intimidated. This *doesn't* make us a consumer champion. We are equally concerned about making businesses' dealings with

us as straightforward as possible – by removing unnecessary processes and paperwork as far as we can.

We are always upfront with consumers about our impartiality – and what we can and can't do. We often explain that we're not the regulator – and that although we can put things right if a consumer has been treated unfairly, it isn't our role to “punish” the business.

# the complaints we received

## how people who contacted our consumer helpline first heard about us



We ask people who contact our helpline how they first heard about us. During the last year we found that consumers were:

- Slightly more likely than in the previous year to have heard about us in the media.
- Slightly less likely than in the previous year to have heard about us from a consumer advice agency.

We also find that people we ask at this early stage give different answers to people who have made a formal complaint to us.

For example, consumers who contacted our helpline early on were:

- Over a third less likely to have first heard about the ombudsman from a financial business than consumers who pursue a formal complaint with us (see page 98).
- Almost a fifth more likely to have first heard about us through word of mouth from a friend, relative or colleague.
- More than twice as likely to have heard about us from a consumer advice agency.



**the value of our early involvement**

It's important that if a consumer has a problem, they should feel listened to and know where they stand. Our research shows that during the year:

- 92% of people who contacted our helpline said we'd clearly explained what would happen next with their complaint.
- 91% said we showed an interest in their enquiry.
- 85% felt that the person they spoke to knew enough to answer their questions.

In 2013/2014 – as a result of our focus on sorting things out as early as possible – only around one in five potential complaints raised with our consumer helpline went on to need our formal involvement.

However, we know the story doesn't end when we don't hear back from someone. So we continue to try to find out more about what happened next to those consumers who didn't go on to make a formal complaint to us – after they'd been in touch with our consumer helpline.

Our latest research shows that 45% of these consumers were able to resolve their problem themselves – without needing further help from us. And 98% of these consumers felt our early involvement had helped them do this.

Of the 55% of consumers who hadn't sorted out their problem, 62% said they were still talking to the business – and might ask us to step in if this didn't work.

However, 38% of consumers said they had let the issue drop – up from 28% last year. Most of these people said it was because they didn't think they would achieve anything.

There is more information on what we've found out about people's attitudes to complaining – and the reasons why they sometimes choose *not* to complain – in the chapter called "who complained to us".



## meeting different needs

We're a service for everyone – so we will always do our best to meet any particular needs people have.

We provide:

- An instant over-the-phone interpreting service to handle calls in languages other than English.
- Information on our website in 25 languages.
- Online video and audio content for people who prefer these formats rather than text.
- Text Relay services and British Sign Language videos.
- Information in alternative formats such as large print, Braille and on CD/DVD.

There is more information about our access and inclusion work in the chapter called “who complained to us”.

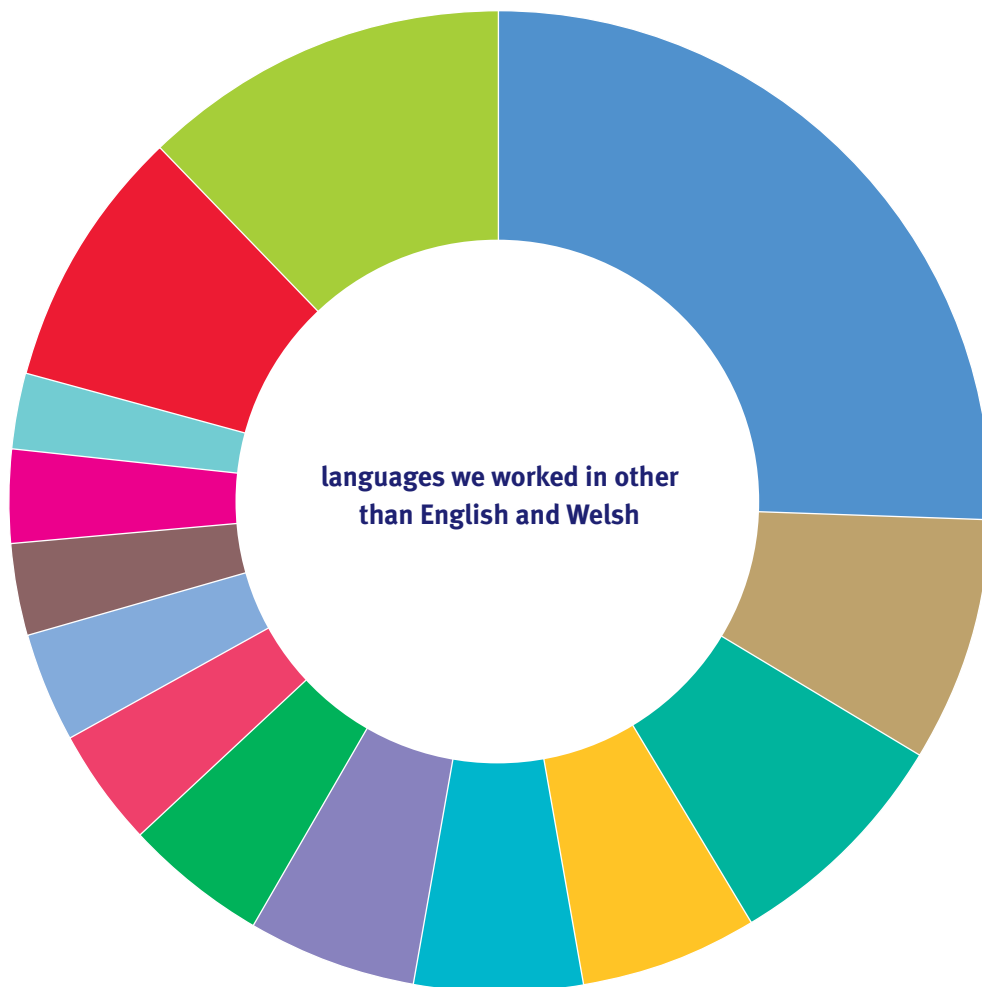
## other languages

UK financial services providers are increasingly international – dealing with customers all over the world. Last year, 2,564 consumers from 112 countries outside the UK brought complaints to us about businesses we cover. And demand for our interpreting and translation services rose again – by 27%.

In 4,484 cases during the year – 0.9% of all those we worked on – we talked to consumers in a language other than English or Welsh. This increased from 3,619 cases in the previous year. In total, we communicated in 50 languages.

The five languages we most frequently work in tend to stay the same from year to year – although levels of demand for them can shift. Once again we saw a decrease in requests for Eastern European languages and a corresponding increase in the proportion of casework in Asian languages. For example, while the proportion of requests to communicate in Polish decreased by 10% this year, the proportion involving Chinese rose by more than a third.

Braille  
large print  
audio  
colour paper  
languages  
video  
translations  
over the phone  
accessible



● Polish	<b>25.5%</b>	● Urdu	<b>4%</b>
● Spanish	<b>8%</b>	● Turkish	<b>3.5%</b>
● Chinese	<b>7.5%</b>	● Punjabi	<b>3%</b>
● French	<b>6%</b>	● Russian	<b>3%</b>
● German	<b>5.5%</b>	● Italian	<b>2.5%</b>
● Portuguese	<b>5.5%</b>	● other European languages	<b>8.5%</b>
● Bengali	<b>4.5%</b>	● other languages	<b>13%</b>

# the complaints we received

## new cases referred to our casework teams

Once a consumer has complained to a business – and tells us they're not happy with the way things have turned out – we ask them to complete our complaint form. From this, we get the basic details about their complaint – and their permission for us to look into it.

If someone phones our helpline we can guide them through the complaint form there and then – and send it to them to check and return. Once we've received a completed complaint form, we check that the complaint is one we can deal with. If it is, we pass it to one of our casework teams to start looking into.

Under the regulator's complaints-handling rules, businesses have up to eight weeks to send a final response to a consumer's complaint before the consumer can refer the problem to us. After eight weeks the consumer can ask us to step in – even if the business hasn't given their response.

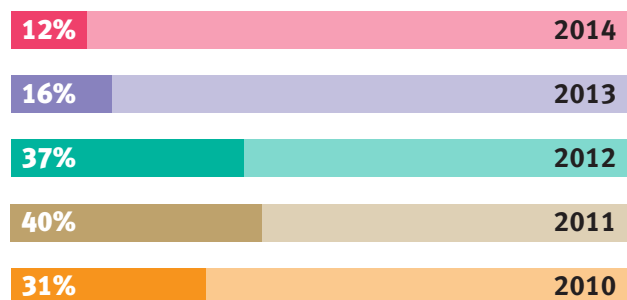
In 12% of the complaints we took on formally last year, the businesses involved hadn't issued a final response within eight weeks. Once again this is an improvement on the previous year – and suggests that businesses are making sustained progress in this area.

We continue to emphasise to financial businesses the importance of handling their customers' complaints carefully, thoughtfully and promptly – and certainly within the timeframe set by the regulator.

This is not just about "compliance". It is about recognising that handling complaints well is central to good customer service. There is more information about the work we do to support businesses in the chapters called "who complained to us" and "other work we have done".

handling complaints well is central to good customer service

## % of cases where the business had *not* sent their customer a final response within eight weeks



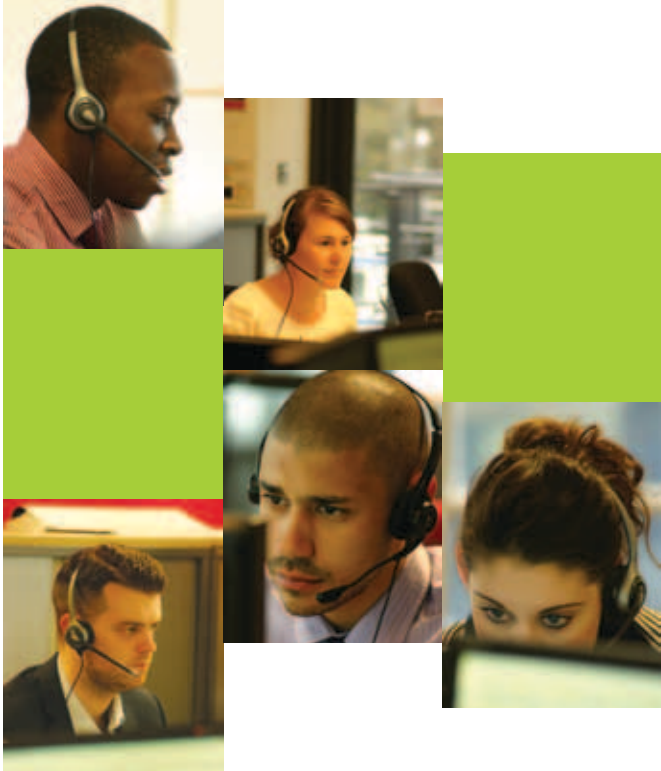
year ended 31 March

The complaints-handling rules set by the regulator also require businesses to tell a consumer – in their final response – about the consumer's right to refer the complaint to us if they're unhappy with the outcome. During the year, 23% of people who contacted our consumer helpline said they heard about the ombudsman service from the business they complained to.

Businesses generally tell their customers about us by sending them our consumer leaflet, *your complaint and the ombudsman*. Businesses send this leaflet out with their own paperwork, so it's important that the consumer can see it's different from the business's own documents. During the year we made our leaflet more eye-catching – as well as working on its readability and accessibility in partnership with the disability charity, Shaw Trust.



In 2013/2014 we distributed over a million copies of this leaflet. We charge businesses for bulk supplies – but they can print it for free themselves under licence from us. We provide copies free of charge to consumer advice agencies, libraries and community centres – in a wide range of languages and formats to meet the needs of different communities.

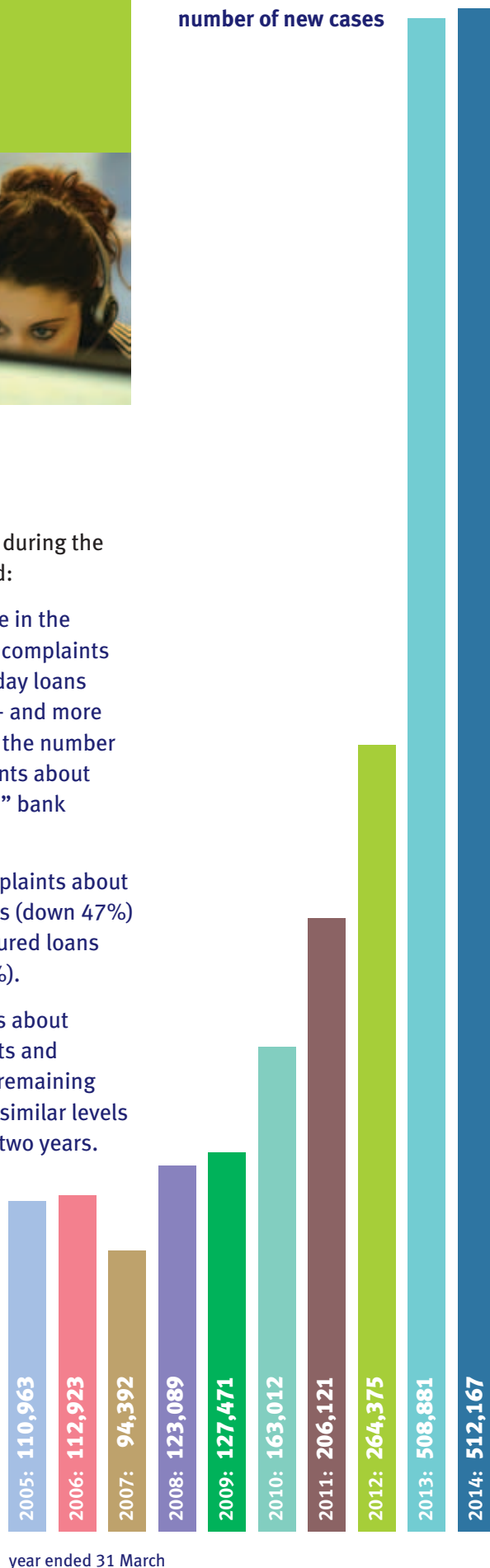


During the year the staff on our consumer helpline referred a record 512,167 new cases to our casework teams for investigation – out of the 2,357,374 initial enquiries they received. This is the highest number of cases consumers have referred to us in any year since we were set up in 2000.

However, the unprecedented volumes of PPI complaints we have been receiving have finally started to level off. We saw an increase of just 6% in these complaints – compared with a 140% increase in the previous year. There is more information about these complaints on page 51.

Other trends during the year included:

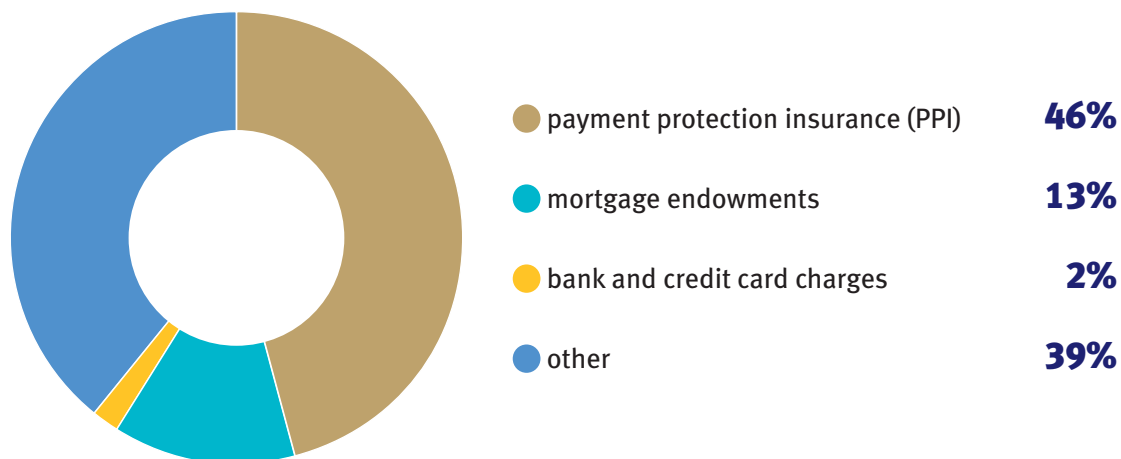
- An increase in the number of complaints about payday loans (up 46%) – and more than triple the number of complaints about “packaged” bank accounts.
- Fewer complaints about credit cards (down 47%) and unsecured loans (down 19%).
- Complaints about investments and insurance remaining at broadly similar levels to the last two years.



# the complaints we received



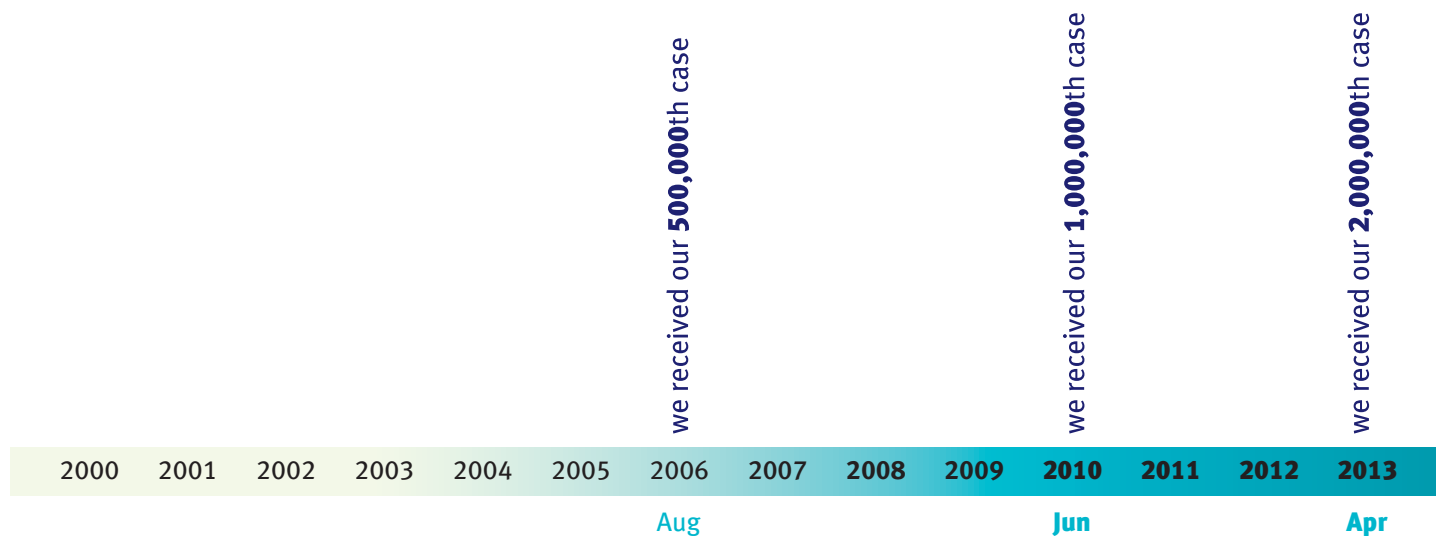
## the most complained-about financial products since we were set up



Since we were set up in 2000 consumers have referred a total of 2,458,142 cases to us – of which 61% have involved just *three* issues:

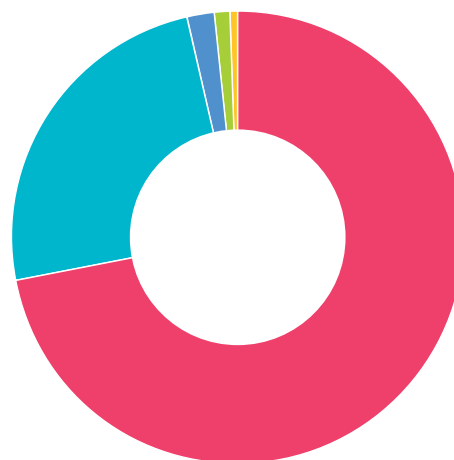
- mortgage endowments
- bank and credit card charges
- PPI

In April 2013 we received our two millionth case. Six months later we received our millionth PPI complaint.



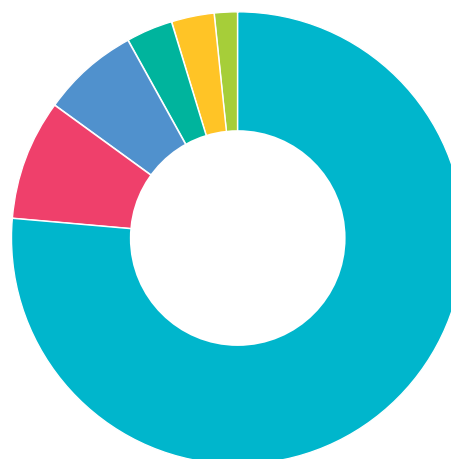
### how PPI complaints were brought to us

- complaints made on behalf of consumers by commercial claims-management companies **72%**
- complaints made by consumers themselves **24.5%**
- complaints made on behalf of consumers by friends and family **2%**
- complaints made on behalf of consumers by professionals (eg lawyers and accountants) **1%**
- complaints made on behalf of consumers by free consumer advice agencies (eg Trading Standards and Citizens Advice) **0.5%**



### how complaints other than PPI were brought to us

- complaints made by consumers themselves **76.5%**
- complaints made on behalf of consumers by commercial claims-management companies **8.5%**
- complaints made on behalf of consumers by friends and family **7%**
- complaints made by smaller businesses **3.5%**
- complaints made on behalf of consumers by free consumer advice agencies (eg Trading Standards and Citizens Advice) **3%**
- complaints made on behalf of consumers by professionals (eg lawyers and accountants) **1.5%**



For complaints involving financial products other than PPI, more than three quarters of the cases were brought by the consumers themselves.

In a small number of cases consumers asked *someone else* to represent them.

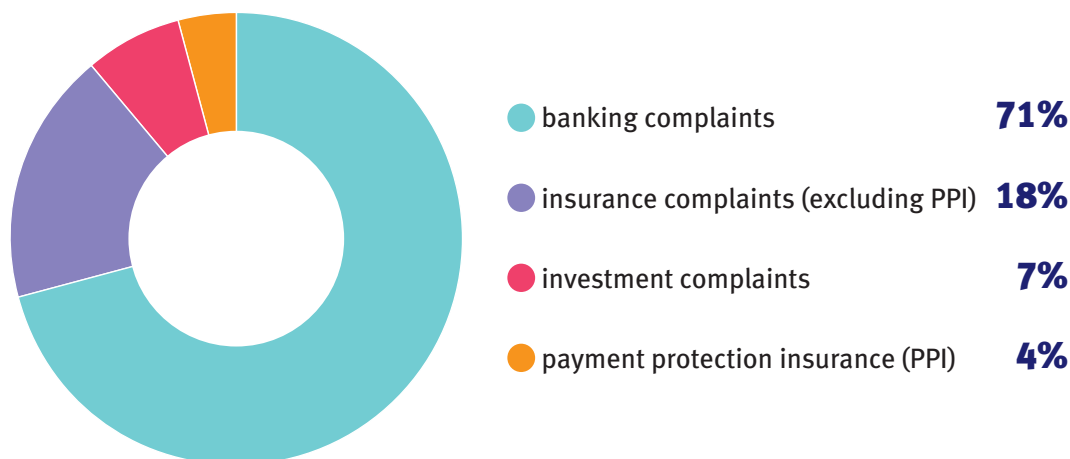
These representatives were usually a friend or family member,

or a representative from a wide range of consumer support organisations – including Citizens Advice and local charities.

For complaints involving PPI, however, a significant proportion of cases were brought to us by claims-management companies. There is more information about these companies on page 39.

# the complaints we received

## complaints from smaller businesses



We can look into complaints made by “micro-enterprises” – a European Union term describing smaller businesses with annual turnovers of up to two million euros and fewer than ten employees.

During the year we received slightly fewer complaints from smaller businesses – 4,469 compared with 4,526 in the previous year.

However, sole traders and small business owners don’t always register their complaint as a business dispute – perhaps feeling that the issues are personal rather than commercial. This is reflected in the fact that the proportion of people who complained to us who said they were self-employed or ran their own business – 13% of the consumers who complained to us – was once again far higher than the 1% of complaints formally registered with us as a business dispute.

We continued to see a wide range of products involved in complaints from smaller businesses. This included:

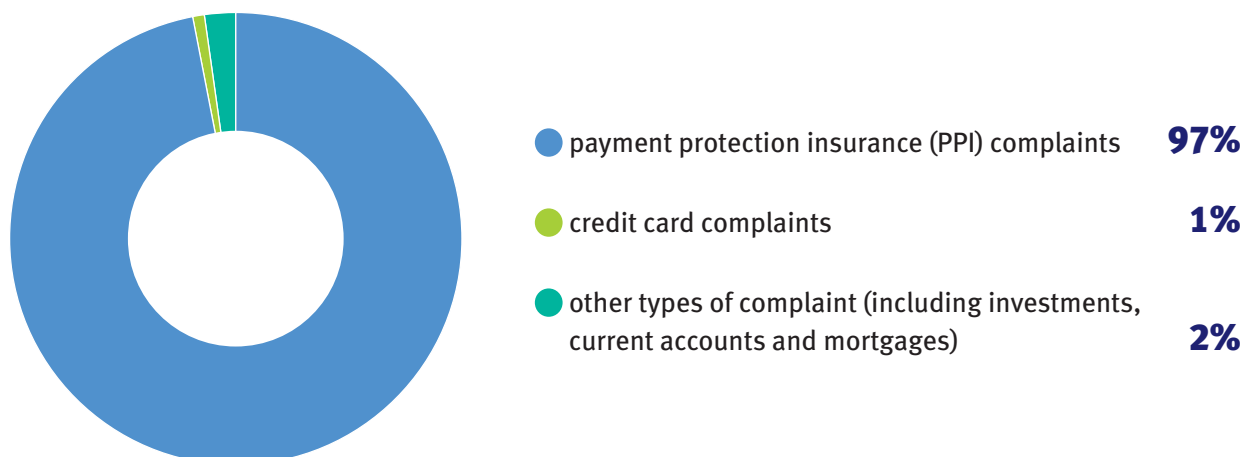
- 274 complaints about business protection.
- 225 disputes about business banking charges.
- 135 complaints about interest-rate hedging products sold by banks.

As in previous years, we continued to promote smaller businesses’ understanding of how we can help with commercial disputes involving financial services. To do this, we worked with trade associations and networks (including our own smaller businesses forum), and we featured in a very wide range of specialist business-to-business publications.

small business owners don’t always register their complaint as a *business* dispute

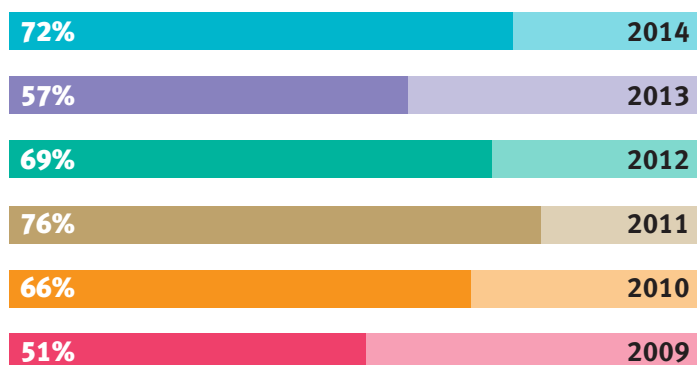


### types of complaint referred by claims-management companies



After falling last year, it is disappointing that the proportion of complaints brought to us by claims managers increased during 2013/2014. This reflects the high volume of PPI cases we received during the year.

### % of PPI cases referred by claims-management companies



year ended 31 March

72% of the 399,939 new PPI cases during the year were brought by claims-management companies (57% during the previous year).

We have continued to tell consumers that they don't need the help of a claims-management company to bring us a complaint. We look at the facts, not at how "professionally" a case is presented to us – and we prefer to hear from people in their own words.

We do everything we can to make our service as straightforward as possible to use. And once again this year, we found no evidence that complaints brought by a claims manager were any more likely to be upheld.

Ten claims-management companies accounted for 40% of the cases we handled during the year where consumers were represented by this type of company. The other 60% of cases involved around 500 other claims-management companies.



We sometimes have to explain to consumers that we can't look into complaints about claims-management companies. The Ministry of Justice has confirmed that this will become the responsibility of the Legal Ombudsman at some point during 2014.

However, we do everything we can to make sure that claims managers understand how we work – so that our dealings with them are as efficient as possible, and so that their involvement doesn't hinder the progress of consumers' complaints. For example, in July 2013 we hosted a conference for the largest claims-management companies to make clear our approach to PPI complaints.

We work closely with the claims-management regulator (part of the Ministry of Justice) and we pass information onto them about poor practice we are seeing in the sector.

There is more information about our work with other regulators in the chapter called "other work we have done".

**we pass on  
information about poor  
practice we see**



what the complaints were about

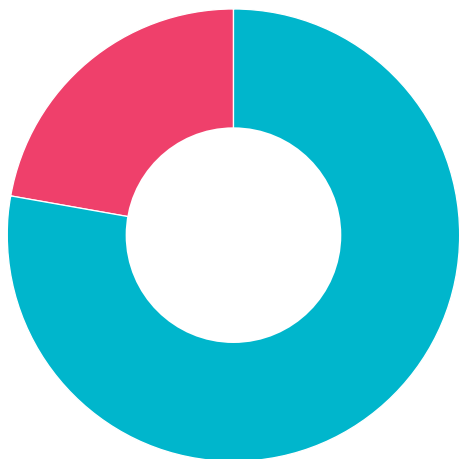
# what the complaints were about

## new cases by area of complaint

- banking and credit
- investments and pensions
- insurance (excluding PPI)
- payment protection insurance (PPI)
- new cases in total



year ended 31 March

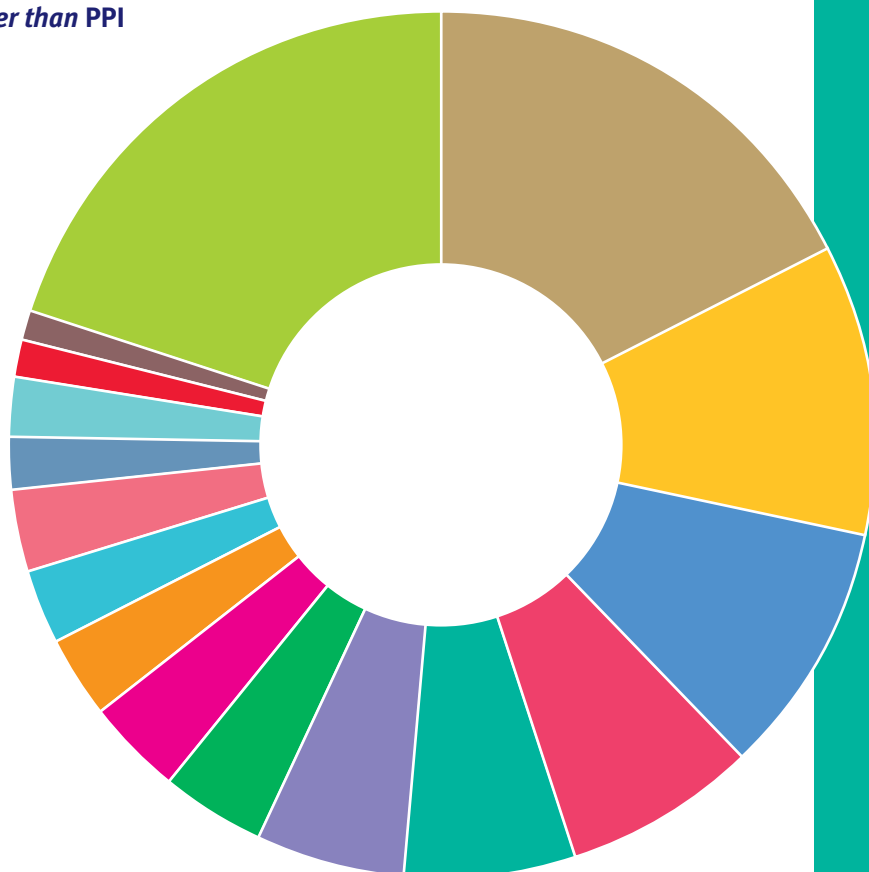


**new cases by financial product**

- payment protection insurance (PPI) **78%**
- complaints about all other financial products **22%**

**new cases involving financial products *other than* PPI**

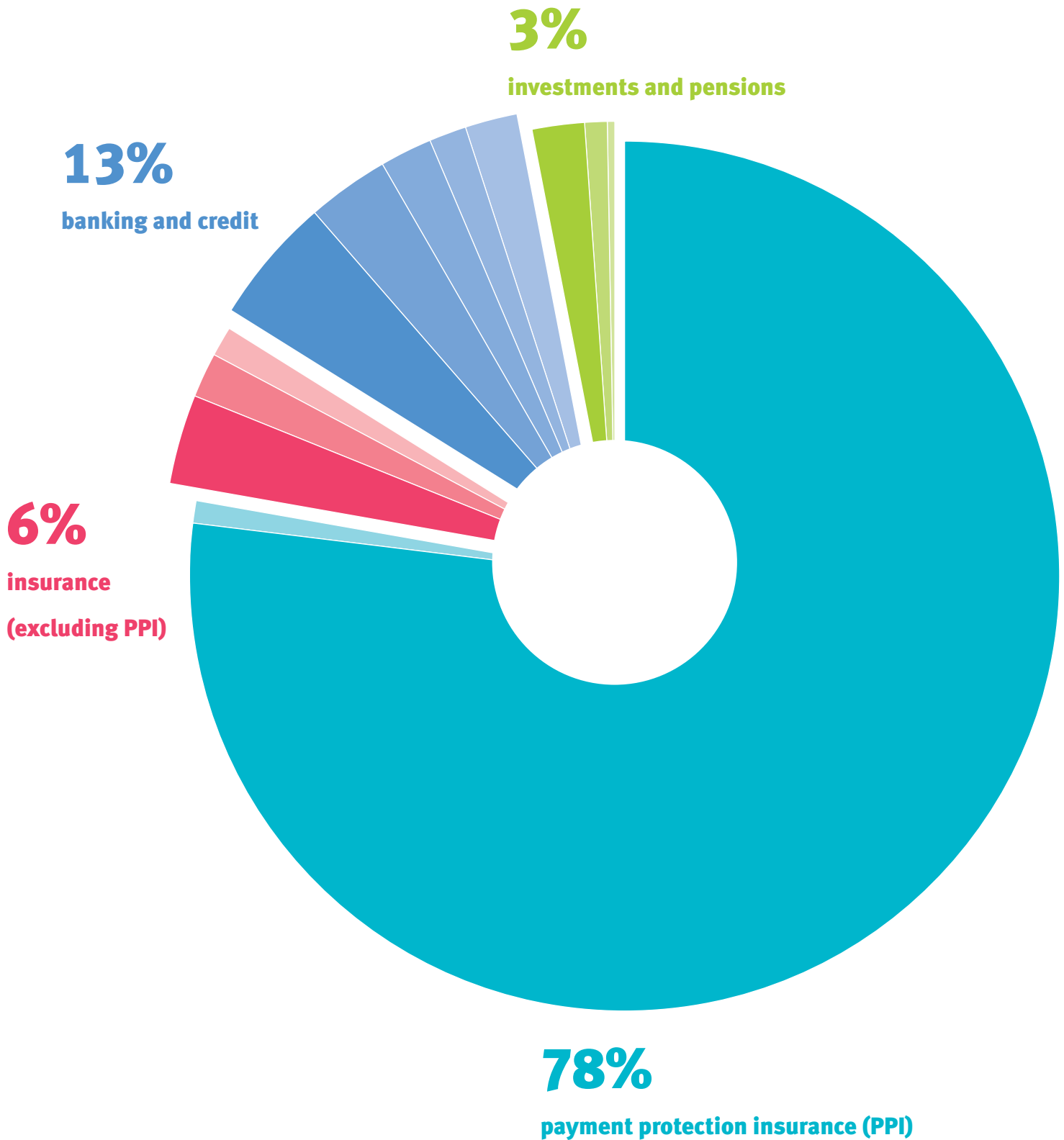
- current accounts **17.5%**
- mortgages **11%**
- credit cards **9.5%**
- consumer-credit products and services\* **7%**
- motor insurance **6.5%**
- unsecured loans **5.5%**
- pensions **4%**
- buildings insurance **3.5%**
- mortgage endowments **3%**
- savings accounts **3%**
- term assurance **3%**
- travel insurance **2%**
- whole-of-life policies and savings endowments **2%**
- contents insurance **1.5%**
- “with-profits” and unit-linked bonds **1%**
- other products **20%**



\*eg hire purchase, debt collecting and catalogue shopping

# what the complaints were about

the issues the new cases involved



## 78% payment protection insurance (PPI)

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<i>of which</i>	● complaints about sales and advice	<b>99%</b>
	● other complaints	<b>1%</b>

## 6% insurance (excluding PPI)

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<i>of which</i>	● complaints about claims	<b>52%</b>
	● complaints about sales and advice	<b>31%</b>
	● complaints about administration	<b>17%</b>

## 13% banking and credit

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<i>of which</i>	● complaints about administration	<b>36%</b>
	● complaints about charges	<b>23%</b>
	● complaints about sales and advice	<b>16%</b>
	● complaints about transactions	<b>10%</b>
	● other complaints	<b>15%</b>

## 3% investments and pensions

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<i>of which</i>	● complaints about sales and advice	<b>64%</b>
	● complaints about administration	<b>28%</b>
	● other complaints	<b>8%</b>

# what the complaints were about

<b>new cases by financial product</b>	<b>year ended 31 March 2014</b>	<b>year ended 31 March 2013</b>	<b>year-on-year change</b>
<b>PPI</b>	<b>399,939</b>	<b>378,699</b>	<b>6% ▲</b>
<b>current accounts</b>	<b>19,878</b>	<b>19,560</b>	<b>2% ▲</b>
<i>including complaints about</i>			
◆ packaged accounts	5,667	1,629	248% ▲
◆ direct debits and standing orders	534	651	18% ▼
◆ business banking charges	225	495	55% ▼
<b>mortgages</b>	<b>12,606</b>	<b>11,920</b>	<b>6% ▲</b>
<b>credit cards</b>	<b>10,472</b>	<b>19,634</b>	<b>47% ▼</b>
<b>consumer credit products and services</b>	<b>7,630</b>	<b>8,470</b>	<b>10% ▼</b>
<i>including complaints about</i>			
◆ point-of-sale loans	1,418	1,939	27% ▼
◆ hire purchase	1,511	1,621	7% ▼
◆ payday loans	794	542	46% ▲
◆ catalogue shopping	792	950	17% ▼
◆ credit broking	649	711	9% ▼
◆ debt collecting	557	817	32% ▼
◆ debt adjusting	530	484	10% ▲
◆ store cards	466	650	28% ▼
◆ hiring, leasing and renting	291	304	4% ▼
◆ home credit	138	98	41% ▲
◆ credit reference agencies	131	109	20% ▲
◆ debt counselling	95	126	25% ▼
<b>motor insurance</b>	<b>7,190</b>	<b>7,785</b>	<b>8% ▼</b>
<b>unsecured loans</b>	<b>6,310</b>	<b>7,809</b>	<b>19% ▼</b>
<b>pensions</b>	<b>4,361</b>	<b>4,401</b>	<b>1% ▼</b>
<i>including complaints about</i>			
◆ personal pension plans	1,748	2,207	21% ▼
◆ small self-administered schemes (SSASs) and self-invested personal pensions (SIPPs)	1,039	697	49% ▲
◆ annuities	601	624	4% ▼
◆ SERPS	527	476	11% ▲
◆ free-standing additional voluntary contribution (FSAVC) schemes	172	95	81% ▲
◆ income draw-down	169	189	11% ▼
◆ pension mortgages	95	100	5% ▼



**new cases by financial product** *(continued)*

	year ended 31 March 2014	year ended 31 March 2013	year-on-year change
<b>buildings insurance</b>	<b>4,095</b>	4,611	11% ▼
<b>savings accounts</b>	<b>3,611</b>	4,967	27% ▼
<b>mortgage endowments</b>	<b>3,573</b>	4,657	23% ▼
<b>other banking services</b>	<b>3,517</b>	3,838	8% ▼
<i>including complaints about</i>			
◆ debit/cash cards	1,177	1,285	8% ▼
◆ money transfer	952	1,036	8% ▼
◆ cheque clearing	569	686	17% ▼
◆ electronic payment	435	400	9% ▲
◆ safe custody	105	120	13% ▼
◆ foreign currency	94	113	17% ▼
<b>term assurance</b>	<b>3,426</b>	3,572	4% ▼
<b>investment-linked products</b>	<b>3,104</b>	4,697	34% ▼
<i>including complaints about</i>			
◆ investment ISAs	929	1,528	39% ▼
◆ unit-linked bonds	791	1,030	23% ▼
◆ guaranteed-income bonds	419	580	28% ▼
◆ “with-profits” bonds	304	675	55% ▼
◆ film partnerships	201	84	139% ▲
◆ unit trusts	109	165	34% ▼
◆ PEPs	55	132	58% ▼
◆ “structured” products	52	108	52% ▼
<b>whole-of-life policies and savings endowments</b>	<b>2,479</b>	3,241	24% ▼
<b>travel insurance</b>	<b>2,271</b>	2,742	17% ▼
<b>contents insurance</b>	<b>1,771</b>	2,027	13% ▼
<b>income protection</b>	<b>1,439</b>	1,481	3% ▼
<b>home emergency cover</b>	<b>1,387</b>	1,284	8% ▲
<b>commercial vehicles and property</b>	<b>1,301</b>	1,319	1% ▼
<b>portfolio management</b>	<b>1,166</b>	1,449	20% ▼
<b>card protection insurance</b>	<b>1,118</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>secured loans</b>	<b>1,053</b>	925	14% ▲
<b>private medical insurance</b>	<b>988</b>	949	4% ▲

*continued overleaf*

# what the complaints were about

<b>new cases by financial product</b> <i>(continued)</i>	<b>year ended</b> <b>31 March 2014</b>	<b>year ended</b> <b>31 March 2013</b>	<b>year-on-year</b> <b>change</b>
stockbroking	913	979	7% ▼
critical illness insurance	906	1,370	34% ▼
extended warranty insurance	755	903	16% ▼
pet and livestock insurance	720	830	13% ▼
legal expenses insurance	707	907	22% ▼
roadside assistance	668	490	36% ▲
mobile phone insurance	551	615	10% ▼
personal accident insurance	477	495	4% ▼
building warranty	384	206	86% ▲
derivatives	342	463	26% ▼
<i>including complaints about</i>			
◆ interest-rate hedging products	135	258	48% ▼
◆ spread-betting	126	148	15% ▼
business protection	274	261	5% ▲
guaranteed asset protection (“gap insurance”)	247	309	20% ▼
caravan insurance	81	79	3% ▲
<b>total number of new cases</b>	<b>512,167</b>	<b>508,881</b>	<b>1% ▲</b>

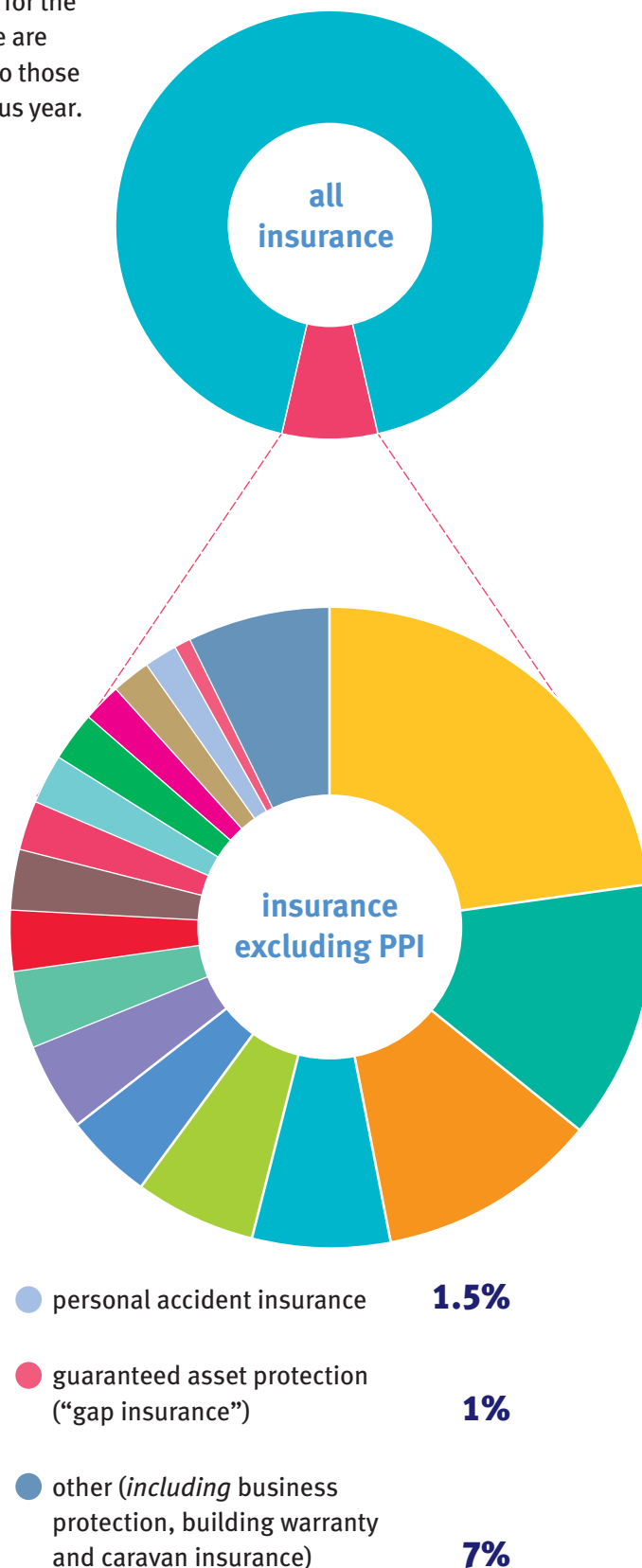
**what the complaints were about: insurance**

Complaints about insurance – including payment protection insurance (PPI) – made up 84% of all the new cases we received during the year (81% in the previous year).

PPI accounted for 93% of all the insurance complaints we received – with other insurance products accounting for the remaining 7%. These are similar proportions to those we saw in the previous year.

The charts below show how these complaints were spread across the different types of insurance.

● PPI	<b>93%</b>
● all other insurance-related complaints	<b>7%</b>
● motor insurance	<b>23%</b>
● buildings insurance	<b>13%</b>
● term assurance	<b>11%</b>
● travel insurance	<b>7%</b>
● contents insurance	<b>6%</b>
● home emergency cover	<b>4.5%</b>
● income protection	<b>4.5%</b>
● commercial vehicle and property insurance	<b>4%</b>
● critical illness insurance	<b>3%</b>
● private medical insurance	<b>3%</b>
● extended warranty insurance	<b>2.5%</b>
● legal expenses insurance	<b>2.5%</b>
● pet insurance	<b>2.5%</b>
● mobile phone insurance	<b>2%</b>
● roadside assistance	<b>2%</b>



# what the complaints were about: insurance

PPI aside, the number of general insurance complaints has been relatively steady during the year. We haven't seen any major new issues arising, and our approach in most areas is well known and published on our website.

It is always disappointing to see a case referred to us where the circumstances suggest that our usual approach would apply – and the complaint could have been resolved much earlier if that approach had already been followed by the business.

During the year we have been working closely with the insurance sector to help improve their understanding of the way we look at insurance complaints – including, for example, issues like “non-disclosure” and fraud.

We continue to see disputes where fraud is central to the issues involved. Fraudulent claims present a significant challenge for many insurers. But alleging that a policyholder has claimed fraudulently is just as serious a matter.

Sometimes it's clear in the cases we see that an insurer *thinks* a consumer's claim is fraudulent. But rather than say so outright, they focus instead on what the consumer hasn't disclosed – and reject the claim straight away.

We have worked with insurers to explain our approach to these sorts of cases. We take the view that a consumer should be given an opportunity to explain any inconsistencies in their account of what happened. After all, there may well be an innocent explanation. People can make mistakes, and insurers are not always clear in what they're asking the consumer to tell them.

Some insurers (and indeed solicitors) seem surprised that fraud must be established to a high degree of probability. But that is the law – and we must take the law into account when we make our decisions.

During the year we also received over a thousand complaints about card protection policies – an area where we hadn't had significant involvement before. Many of the consumers who complained to us about card protection said they wouldn't have taken out a policy to protect their cards against fraud if they'd been told about the automatic legal protection they *already* had in relation to their cards.

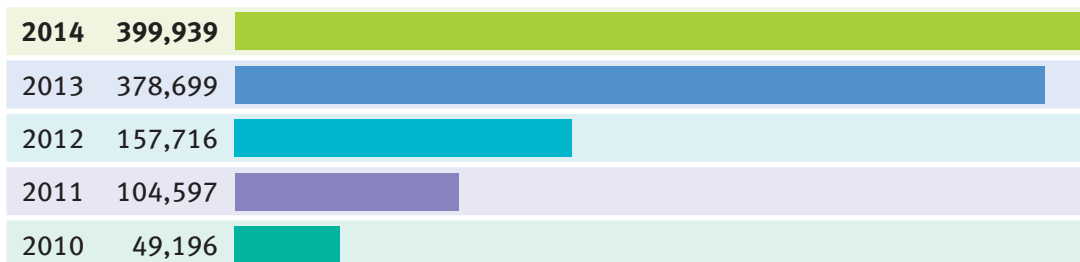
Our work with insurers over the year focused on what can be learnt from complaints – and how insurers can help improve customer service in the future.

For example, as we highlighted in the December 2013 issue of *ombudsman news*, the proportion of cases we upheld against one particular mobile phone insurer halved – once it had acted on our feedback on its handling of customer complaints. This is an area where we continue to uphold a high proportion of cases in the consumer's favour.

We also found that by telling a particular home emergency insurer exactly what our approach would be, complaints about a specific problem we'd expected to be referred to us were sorted out much earlier – and without the need for our formal involvement.

Similarly, we have been looking at issues involving the “auto-renewal” of insurance policies. Our aim in this area is to help insurers prevent problems themselves by being clearer with their customers about how auto-renewal works.

PPI



year ended 31 March

In our last few *annual reviews* we have reported receiving unprecedented volumes of new PPI complaints. This year is no different. Once again, we received more PPI complaints than ever before. In 2013/2014 consumers referred 399,939 new PPI complaints to us – a slight increase of 6% on the number in the previous year.

At its peak last year we were receiving more than 12,000 new PPI complaints every week. In recent months this has fallen to around 6,000. After consulting businesses and other stakeholders, our current plans assume that new complaint volumes will continue to fall over the coming year.

However, we know that the challenges of PPI will be with us for some considerable time to come. In total we’ve now received more than one million PPI complaints – and we received two thirds of those during the last 18 months.

We’ve spent the last two years increasing our case-handling capacity significantly. During 2013/2014 we recruited nearly 1,000 new adjudicators – who joined the 1,000 adjudicators we recruited during the previous year. This has doubled the size of the ombudsman service. We’ve also invested in the support services and other functions that keep our organisation running efficiently.

This investment has helped us resolve 389,730 complaints – double the number we settled in the previous year. But even so, the scale of the PPI challenge means we ended the financial year with a stock of 400,000 PPI cases. This means many people are waiting far longer than we’d like.

And we’ve worked hard to let businesses and consumers know what they can expect to happen. This has included:

- A section on our website called “your PPI case with us: what’s happening?” – with updated FAQs and videos.
- A regular e-newsletter to people who have signed up for updates on PPI-related developments in general.
- Seminars for smaller businesses and claims managers to help them better understand the ombudsman’s approach to handling PPI complaints.
- A “behind the scenes” tour of our offices for people waiting for us to deal with their complaint – for them to see at first hand the efforts we’re making to resolve cases fairly and quickly.

# what the complaints were about: insurance

Our ability to resolve PPI cases efficiently is heavily dependent on how businesses and claims managers handle complaints in the first place.

Once again, the proportion of PPI cases we upheld in favour of the consumer varied significantly from business to business – from 2% to 97%. Although we've seen encouraging signs that some businesses have improved the way they handle PPI cases, we are still concerned that not all are following our well established approach – which was upheld by the courts three years ago.

We've continued to see a substantial proportion of PPI complaints referred to us by claims-management

companies. These are commercial companies who charge a consumer for bringing us their complaint – something we know consumers can do just as easily and effectively for themselves.

Some claims managers have adapted their procedures to better represent the interests of their clients. But it's disappointing that we still see examples of other claims managers making little effort to set out the details of their client's complaint – and supplying only general information rather than specific details about the case in hand.

To help improve this situation, we issued guidance jointly with the Ministry of Justice, the Financial Conduct Authority, and the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. This guidance – which is available on our website – sets out what is expected in complaints that are represented by a paid-for third party.

Where we've seen a financial business or claims manager doing things that are unsatisfactory or simply unreasonable, we have referred the issues to the relevant regulator.

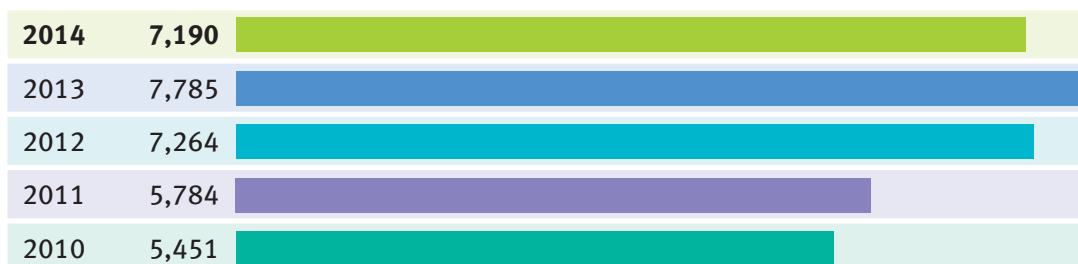
During the year we've been finding that a higher proportion of PPI complaints are raising issues about the way the business calculated redress – rather than about the original mis-selling of the PPI policy.

We've also seen more cases where the business is disputing whether we can look at the complaint in the first place.

We know that PPI is likely to raise increasingly complex issues like these over the coming years, and we have plans in place to make sure we'll be able to deal with these issues effectively.

**we've worked hard to let businesses and consumers know what they can expect to happen**

### motor insurance complaints



year ended 31 March

We see more complaints about car and motorcycle insurance than any other area of insurance – except for PPI. And we find in the consumer’s favour in a relatively high proportion of these cases. This is why we’ve continued to work with motor insurers during the year to make clear how we approach these cases. Our aim is to help insurers resolve their customers’ complaints themselves – without the need for the ombudsman’s involvement.

Disappointingly, we still see a lot of insurers continuing to make forceful arguments in complaints involving “non-disclosure” – even though our long-standing approach is now reflected in the *Consumer Insurance (Disclosure and Representation) Act 2012*, which came into effect in April 2013. A detailed note about the Act and our approach has been on our website for the past year.

During the year we continued to see complaints about delays and poor communication when a consumer made a claim to their insurer. Unnecessary delays are frustrating enough for a consumer. But it’s even more inconvenient for them if their insurer continues to insist on its right of appeal – and an ombudsman has to make a final decision. We will continue to work with insurers to help them better understand the impact that unnecessary delays can have on the day-to-day lives of their customers.

**we continued to see complaints about delays and poor communication**

# what the complaints were about: insurance

## complaints about buildings and contents insurance

	buildings insurance	contents insurance
2014	4,095	1,771
2013	4,611	2,027
2012	4,556	2,089
2011	3,469	1,697
2010	3,437	1,863

year ended 31 March

During the year we've continued to see problems arising where insurers instruct someone else to act on their behalf. We've seen complaints where insurers have failed to take responsibility for the actions (or inaction) of their agents – for example, where investigations by loss adjusters appointed by insurers haven't been as thorough as they should have been.

In these cases, the loss adjusters often tell us that they received poor instructions from the insurer. Many problems could be prevented by insurers being very clear from the outset on the scope of the work they want the loss adjuster to carry out.

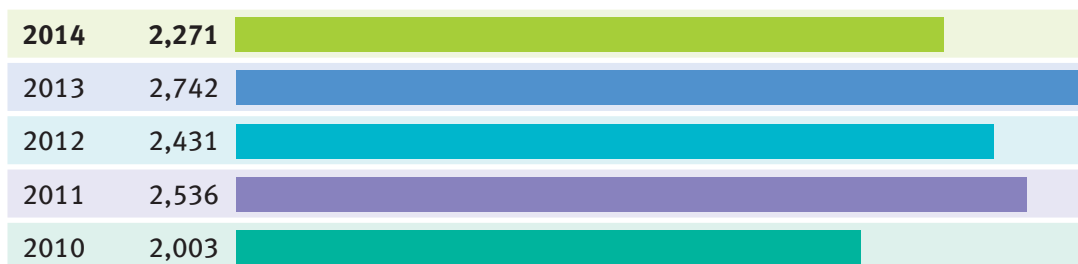
Better communication would also help consumers when their claims are turned down. In the complaints we see, we often find that the insurer hasn't explained clearly exactly why the claim was rejected. In our experience, not many consumers understand technical terms like "insured peril". And in many cases we see, a straightforward and timely explanation could have prevented a complaint from arising in the first place.

Good communication will be increasingly important as insurers start work on the claims arising from the recent flooding and storms. Keeping consumers fully informed can help avoid unnecessary problems during the months of drying-out and disruption that these claims inevitably involve.

**not many consumers understand technical terms like "insured peril"**



## travel insurance complaints



year ended 31 March

Travel insurance policies are often complex products – and consumers tend to buy them when their attention is more focused on their holiday. We know the travel insurance sector is keen to simplify their products and we continue to share our insights in this area.

During the year we again saw a significant number of complaints involving “pre-existing medical conditions” – especially in relation to people who weren’t actually travelling. Consumers can be surprised and upset to find that they might not be able to claim for a holiday they had cancelled because of a relative’s medical condition.

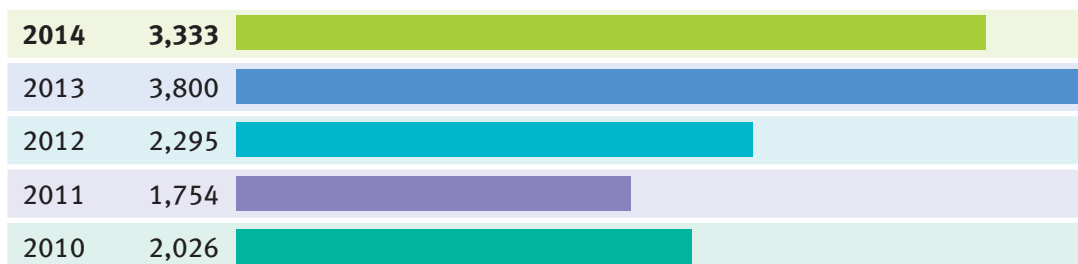
In these situations, insurers must be clear about what they expect the consumer to disclose – bearing in mind, of course, that someone can only disclose what they actually know. Not everyone has details of their relatives’ health conditions. When we look into these cases, we consider very carefully what the consumer knew about the health of the relative in question at the time they took out the policy.

Alcohol continued to feature prominently in travel insurance complaints during the year. In many cases we saw, insurers had clearly assumed immediately that certain injuries must have been alcohol-related. We know that some overseas hospitals can be uncooperative where blood tests are concerned. But in the absence of evidence from blood alcohol tests, we still look to see what evidence the insurer relied on when they made their decision – including evidence from witnesses and CCTV footage where appropriate.

**someone can only disclose what they actually know**

# what the complaints were about: insurance

## health and medical insurance complaints



year ended 31 March

Complaints involving protection products continued at high levels during the year – largely as a result of consumers mistaking some of these “protection” policies with *payment* protection insurance – PPI.

Some complaints involved consumers who had made a claim – and were surprised to find that the cover their policy offered had changed since they first took it out. These cases often involved private medical insurance policies, where cover for different conditions can change from year to year.

Other complaints arose because policies hadn’t kept pace with the increased costs of medical fees – and the limits in the policy had restricted a consumer’s access to medical care.

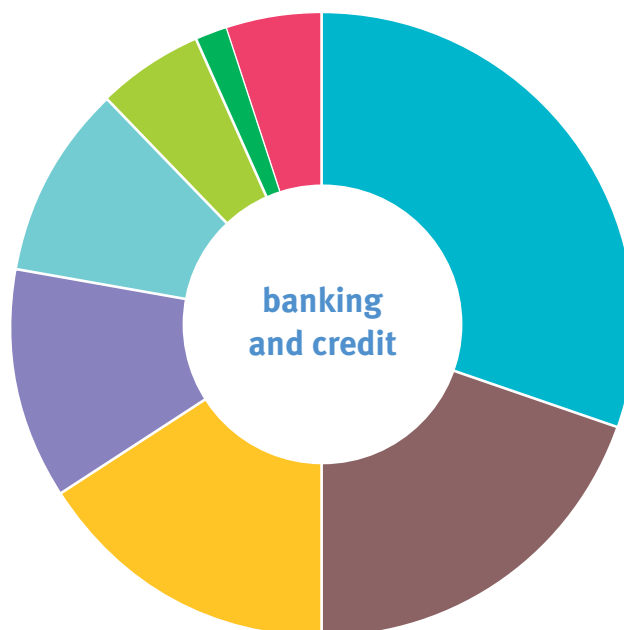
Claims involving mental health issues still make up a significant part of the medical insurance cases we see. We recognise that it can be difficult in these cases for consumers to supply the kind of evidence that some insurers want to see.

Guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) says that most patients’ treatment can be managed by their own GP. But this isn’t always recognised or reflected in the way that insurers handle claims involving mental health. There’s more information elsewhere in this *annual review* about the work we do to help vulnerable consumers – and to make sure we handle their cases sensitively.

### what the complaints were about: banking and credit

Of the complaints we received during 2013/2014, 65,077 involved banking and credit – 13% of our total workload.

This chart shows how these complaints were spread across different products and services.

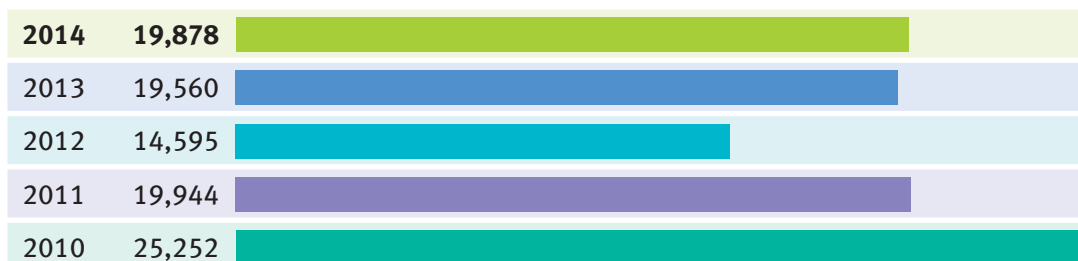


● current accounts	<b>30.5%</b>
● mortgages	<b>19.5%</b>
● credit cards	<b>16%</b>
● consumer-credit products and services*	<b>12%</b>
● unsecured loans	<b>10%</b>
● savings accounts	<b>5.5%</b>
● secured loans	<b>1.5%</b>
● other banking services	<b>5%</b>

\* eg point-of-sale loans, hire purchase and catalogue shopping

# what the complaints were about: banking and credit

## current account complaints



year ended 31 March

Many of the current account complaints we saw during the year involved consumers who told us that they were in financial difficulty – but that their account provider hadn't treated them fairly.

Where a consumer is already in genuine financial difficulty, businesses are expected to treat them positively and sympathetically. What that means in practical terms will depend on the particular circumstances of the case. But it could mean refunding or stopping interest and charges, agreeing payment breaks or repayment plans, restructuring debt – or a combination of these things.

Similarly, where a consumer is on the verge of falling into financial difficulty, we also look to see how sympathetic and positive the business has been towards them. Disappointingly, some businesses appear to take the view that this duty doesn't start until a consumer is actually "in default".

To decide whether an account provider has treated a customer fairly, we look at whether they have considered the consumer's *overall* position. For example, if the consumer has an overdraft, a loan and a credit card from the same provider, we would expect the provider to have taken *all* of these into account in any proposal they had made to the consumer.

Cases involving financial difficulty often require a mediated settlement. This relies on both sides communicating openly and honestly – and working constructively with us and with each other.

We continued to see a significant increase in the number of complaints about "packaged" bank accounts – with 5,668 cases referred to us during the year. These accounts usually charge a consumer a regular fee in return for a range of insurance products and non-insurance benefits – for example, mobile phone insurance, car breakdown cover or preferential borrowing rates.

"Packaged" accounts can be a good option for some consumers, saving them time and money – as long as they know what the benefits are, whether they can use them and what they have to pay for them.

But from the cases we see, we know that these accounts aren't right for everyone. We continued to see complaints from consumers who felt that they'd been sold a "packaged" account that didn't meet their needs – or that they hadn't been given enough information about.

We also saw a growing number of complaints from consumers who said that their accounts had been "upgraded" without their knowledge – or who said they were told they *had to* have a fee-paying account. For these reasons we continue to find in the consumer's favour in a high proportion of these cases.

However, over the course of the year we have seen an encouraging improvement in the way some banks investigate and deal with these complaints. By looking at our decisions and trying to align their approach to ours, they make it more likely that a complaint can be resolved without the need for our involvement.

**we've seen an encouraging improvement in how some banks investigate complaints**

Disputed transactions continue to account for a large proportion of the complaints that consumers refer to us – both in relation to credit cards and current accounts. The current account complaints continue to involve cash machine withdrawals, retail transactions made using a debit card, and payments made using online or phone banking. Although some current account providers are getting information to us faster, others are still confused about which rules are relevant – and how these rules apply in individual cases.

During the year we also received a significant number of complaints about scams involving current accounts. These fraudulent activities can be very sophisticated and are constantly evolving. Most recently we've seen cases involving "vishing" – where a fraudster phones a consumer and tricks them into handing over their security details or their card (sometimes both). Many of those consumers who did as they were asked – thinking they were dealing with their bank or the police – lost significant amounts of money.

While consumers clearly need to be alert to the possibility of fraud, we always consider what the account provider themselves could have done to protect their customer.

We regularly hear from consumers who have spotted a transaction on their account that they don't recognise – and who think they may have been a victim of fraud. However, in these cases it often turns out that these payments have been made legitimately under a "continuous payment authority". These are often used to pay for magazine subscriptions, club memberships, internet services or a short term loan.

During the year we continued to see complaints relating to technical failure – with IT glitches at banks temporarily preventing large numbers of people from accessing their money or using their cards.

In many of these cases, the problems that consumers had experienced were short-term and quickly put right. Typically, consumers hadn't been able to withdraw cash for a few hours, or use their card when they were out shopping.

But in a smaller number of the cases we saw, there were more far-reaching consequences – especially where IT systems were unavailable for longer periods. In the most extreme cases, technical failures had led to delays in paying for medical treatment – or left people unable to pay funeral expenses.

The sheer number of consumers affected by these sorts of IT failures – and the immediacy of the problems they create – mean that banks can be inundated with complaints in a short space of time. This can make it difficult for them to give individual complaints the level of attention needed to put things right satisfactorily. To help them do this, we continued to build on the streamlined approach we had developed during the previous year in response to similar large-scale IT failures.

By working closely with the banks involved, and relying less on the requirement for written communication and paperwork, we can focus on putting things right for their customers as a priority.

**many consumers  
lost significant amounts  
of money**

# what the complaints were about: banking and credit

## complaints about mortgages



year ended 31 March

Following last year's 25% increase, complaints about mortgages and second-charge loans remained at a high level during the year. It's disappointing that we continue to receive so many complaints about straightforward administrative issues – as well as complaints where the lender hasn't identified what the problem really is, or hasn't taken the time to understand the impact the situation has had on their customer.

We again saw a small but steady number of complaints about interest-only mortgages. Most of these complaints came from consumers who were concerned that they'd been given inappropriate advice when they originally took out their interest-only mortgage.

Relatively few complaints came from consumers who had come to the end of their mortgage contract and couldn't repay the capital. From what we have seen, many lenders seem to have been working constructively with customers who had found themselves in this position.

During the year we also received a significant number of complaints involving changes to the interest rates on standard variable-rate mortgages and tracker mortgages. These changes had affected both residential and buy-to-let customers. Although under the "jurisdiction" rules that apply to our service we're not able to look at complaints about the sale of buy-to-let mortgages by *intermediaries*, we can consider complaints about buy-to-let when they involve *lenders*.

We continued to see a large number of mortgage-related complaints involving consumers who were experiencing financial difficulty – but we saw no increase during the year in disputes involving repossession.

With interest rates forecast to rise in the future, it is likely that more people may find themselves struggling – and at that point we may see more mortgage complaints involving hardship.

However, we are increasingly finding that the consumers involved have left it to a very late stage before seeking help for their financial difficulties. And because we can't reverse a repossession, we are limited in how we can put things right for the consumer – even if we agree the business hasn't treated them fairly.

This reluctance to admit to being in financial hardship is a trend we've noticed across all socio-economic groups. We are mindful – and encourage businesses to recognise – that a complaint about an apparently less urgent issue like an interest rate rise could indicate that a consumer is in real difficulty. This year, we continued to work with debt organisations – such as Stepchange and National Debtline – to raise consumers' awareness of how we could help them.

During the year we have received fewer complaints about "porting" (transferring a mortgage to another property). We have also seen fewer complaints about the decision by a lender whether or not to offer a mortgage.

However, we have seen a small but worrying number of cases involving the decisions that lenders have made – for example, to "call in" borrowing or not to vary the terms of lending. In some cases these decisions hadn't been made legitimately – and they had serious consequences for the lives and livelihoods of their customers.

## credit card complaints



year ended 31 March

As in previous years, we received a significant number of complaints involving section 75 of the *Consumer Credit Act 1974*. Under section 75, if the supplier of goods or services has misrepresented them – or breached the contract – the credit card provider shares equal responsibility with the supplier.

The complaints we saw during the year reflected the wide range of purchases that people make using credit cards – from large ones like solar panels, timeshares and holiday clubs, to smaller ones like concert tickets and household appliances.

We continue to see section 75 complaints where the card provider hadn't considered the consumer's complaint properly – or hadn't fully understood the extent of their obligations under section 75. This often led to unnecessary delays and inconvenience for their customer.

During the year we received fewer complaints about “default charges” on credit cards. These include charges that businesses may add to an account if the consumer goes over their credit limit, makes a late payment or misses a payment.

We also saw a significant fall in the number of complaints involving credit card charges brought by claims managers. This may reflect the work that a number of card providers have done to be clearer about the way they calculate and apply their charges.

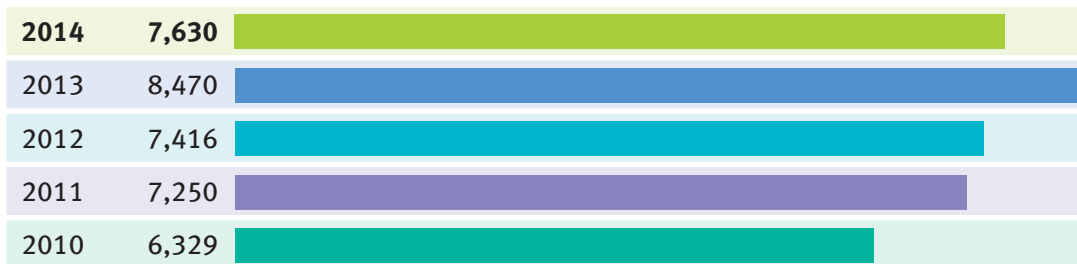
However, we continued to see a substantial number of complaints involving disputed credit card transactions. These complaints can often involve significant sums of money – and it can take extensive work to establish what actually happened where the evidence is not always clear.

To help us deal with complaints about disputed transactions more quickly, we have encouraged some credit card providers to improve their processes – so we can get information from them much more efficiently. This helps us resolve these complaints at a much earlier stage.

But we still see too many cases where a credit card provider doesn't seem to have understood that different rules apply where unauthorised transactions are made using credit cards rather than debit cards. And different rules again apply where a credit card *account* is used – but not the card itself. This is why we continue to work closely with card providers to make sure the rules are fully understood and properly applied.

# what the complaints were about: banking and credit

## complaints about consumer credit



year ended 31 March

Since April 2007 we have covered a range of credit-related complaints – including consumer credit provided by all types of lenders, as well as other regulated consumer-credit activities such as hire purchase and catalogue shopping. From April 2014 responsibility for regulating consumer credit was transferred from the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

During the year we received 46% more complaints involving payday lending than in the previous year. We continued to hear from many consumers that the short-term loans they had been offered were unaffordable. And in many cases, we found that the lender hadn't taken adequate steps to assess the consumer's financial position when the loan was taken out. In particular, we saw cases where the lender clearly did not have an adequate credit-scoring process in place.

Consumers also referred complaints to us where their difficulties had been caused by the payday lender's use of "continuous payment authorities". In some of these cases the lender's repeated attempts to take payments meant the consumer faced a spiral of further charges – and was left without enough money to live on.

During the year we have seen cases involving payday lenders offering "running account" credit (as opposed to "fixed" credit). In these cases the lender had quoted a minimum payment that would only cover the interest accruing on the loan – meaning that the consumer wouldn't repay any of the capital if they only made the minimum payment.

In other cases – even where the minimum payment *did* cover both interest and capital – we found that some lenders hadn't made consumers aware of the consequences of paying only the minimum amount (as they are required to do by the regulator). In some of these cases the documentation was poor – and didn't clearly set out the total cost of borrowing to the consumer.

We also continued to receive complaints about debt collecting – although the number of these cases fell by a third during the year. In some of these cases we were concerned about the approach taken by the debt collector – and decided that the way in which the debt had been pursued amounted to harassment. We also saw a number of complaints involving debt collectors chasing the wrong person for the debt.

**we saw cases where the lender clearly did not have an adequate credit-scoring process in place**



Consumers referred a significant number of complaints to us about loans they had taken out to buy new and used vehicles. In most of these cases, the consumer felt that the vehicle had been defective in some way and they had approached the lender to put things right under section 75.

As we have highlighted in previous *annual reviews*, when we look into these types of complaint, we often find motor credit providers reluctant to accept any liability. During the year some credit providers still tried to insist that the consumer had to sort things out themselves directly with the garage.

In some cases, for example, the lender had initially refused to consider the consumer's complaint, saying that the consumer should make a claim under the car warranty rather than against *them*.

In those cases, we reminded the providers about their responsibilities under the law – and explained that the existence of a warranty did not affect the consumer's statutory rights.

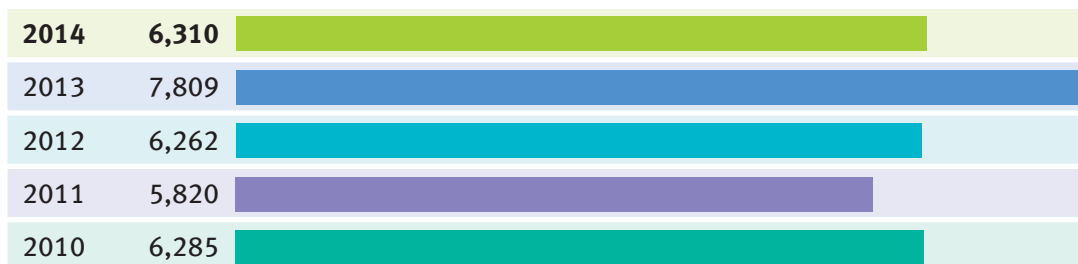
In complaints involving debt management, we continued to see cases where debt managers had failed to give consumers clear information about the fees and charges they had applied. In particular, we came across situations where the consumer hadn't been told that initial payments wouldn't be used to reduce their debt – but would instead go towards the debt manager's own fees and charges.

In other cases, we discovered that the debt manager hadn't passed on the consumer's payments to the people they owed money to. Where we saw this happen, we informed the regulator.

**we continued to see cases where debt managers had failed to give consumers clear information**

# what the complaints were about: banking and credit

## complaints about unsecured loans



year ended 31 March

We continued to see significant numbers of complaints from borrowers – both individuals and small businesses – who were having difficulty making loan repayments. Lenders in these cases generally seemed to be aware of their obligations to treat these people positively and sympathetically.

However, what amounts to “positive and sympathetic” treatment will vary from case to case – so lenders need to be flexible and pragmatic. A standardised approach – with a rigid process and limited options – is unlikely to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

In these cases we look at the extent to which the lender involved their customer in discussions at an early stage – providing an opportunity to talk honestly and constructively about the possible ways forward.

We also continued to see complaints relating to “personal guarantees” on borrowing. In some of these cases, the person bringing the complaint had guaranteed a loan taken out by a family member. We had to remind lenders in a number of cases that they need to ensure guarantors fully understand the nature of the commitment they’re taking on.

In other cases, individuals had acted as guarantor for borrowing taken out by the small company they ran. These loans were often covered by the *Enterprise Finance Guarantee* scheme. Many guarantors were evidently unclear about the detail of this scheme – and we decided that some lenders should have explained far more clearly how the scheme operates.

Interest-rate hedging products continued to feature in a small number of the complaints we received during the year. The cases often involved large amounts of money and were usually very complex. As well as cases where hedging products were sold alongside a loan, we also saw cases where a form of hedging was “embedded” within the loan.

These complaints were usually referred to us by small businesses, who told us that the products they had been sold were unsuitable for their circumstances – and that they hadn’t been made aware of the potentially very high costs of ending the arrangements early.

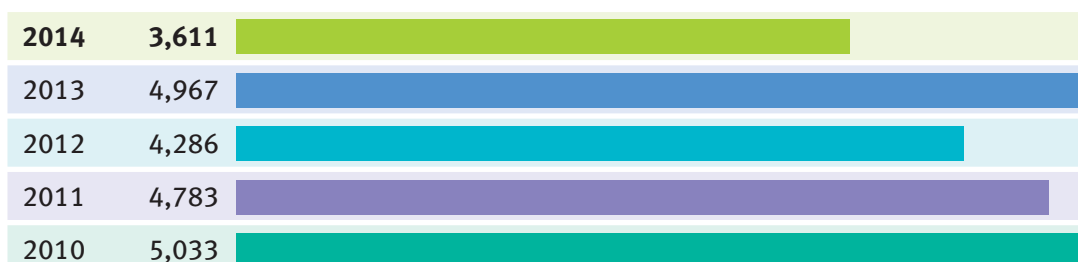
In investigating these cases, we often found that the bank involved hadn’t given the small business enough information to make an informed choice about taking out the product.

Our aim in these cases is to put the small business – as far as possible – in the position they would be in if they had been given sufficient information at the outset. Sometimes we may decide that the business wouldn’t have taken out a hedging product at all. In other cases we decide that they *would* have taken out a hedging product – but of a different type or for a shorter term.

These cases involve complex situations and entrenched positions – often made worse by the bank taking an overly-legalistic approach. This is why a disproportionately high number of these disputes could only be settled by an ombudsman making a final decision.

**we often found that the bank involved hadn’t given the small business enough information to make an informed choice**

## complaints about savings accounts



year ended 31 March

During the year, interest rates on savings accounts have remained at historically low levels. Because of this, many providers have continued to offer accounts with promotional interest rates that apply only for a limited period. The details of these accounts are not always as straightforward as they seem – and in many of the complaints we decided that the account provider hadn’t explained things clearly enough to their customer.

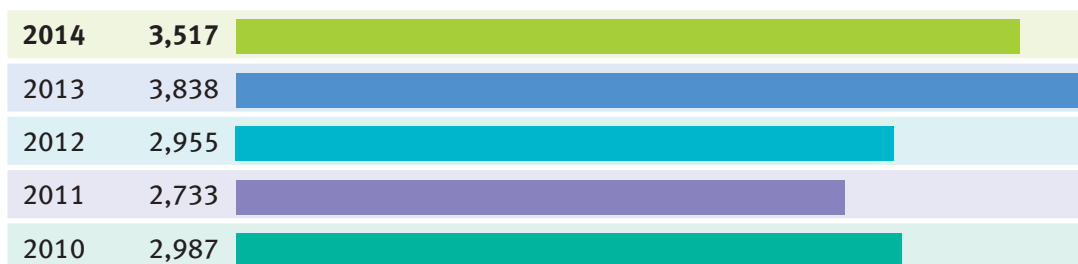
We continued to see a small number of complaints from consumers who felt they should have been personally notified when the interest rates on their savings accounts were reduced. We upheld a significant proportion of these cases.

In some of these cases we found that account providers hadn’t acted in line with the relevant regulations. These regulations say that an account provider needs to decide whether a change in interest rates is “material” – and if it is, they need to notify their customer personally. To decide whether the change is “material”, account providers should consider both the balance of the account *and* the size of the rate change.

Some account providers who *hadn’t* done this argued that they had acted in line with “industry guidance”. But we said that they should have acted in line with the regulations.

# what the complaints were about: banking and credit

## complaints about other banking services



year ended 31 March

During the year we continued to see complaints about “e-money” – usually involving pre-paid accounts that consumers had used online. Most of these disputes had arisen because of administrative errors. Other complaints related to terms and conditions – for example, terms that had allowed the provider to freeze the consumer’s e-money account.

Consumers also complained to us that they’d withdrawn money overseas from their pre-paid account – and felt that their account provider hadn’t told them that a fee would apply. Other consumers were unhappy that the exchange rate that had applied to the currency they withdrew overseas was less advantageous than the rate that had applied when the money was loaded into their account.

Many of the consumers who complained about these issues had thought their account offered them the same protection as a bank account or a credit card. But this isn’t the case. Many protective features don’t apply to these accounts – and different e-money providers have different terms and conditions.

Complaints about the “faster payments service” continued to feature in our work during the year. These payments are almost instant and there are limited things that can be done to put a mistake right. This led to a number of disputes being referred to us where consumers had made a mistake with the relevant account number or sort code details – and money had been sent to the wrong account.

When payments are made online, they are allocated to an account using only the sort code and the account *number* that the consumer provides. There is no check against an account *name*.

This means that if, for example, a consumer makes a mistake typing in an account number – and there is, coincidentally, an account with that number at the same branch – then the money will go into the wrong person’s account.

The UK Payments Council’s guidance says that when consumers make a payment they should be shown a short, prominent warning that only the account number and sort code – and *not* the account name – will be used to process the payment, and that a mistake could lead to delay or loss. We regard this approach as good industry practice – and we take it into account when we decide the outcome of these cases.

We have also continued to see disputes during the year about powers of attorney. Typically the complaints involved problems that arose when someone who had been given power of attorney by the account holder had tried to register it with the bank.

Other consumers complained to us about problems they had faced when they later tried to access the account – or obtain information – under the power of attorney.

We continued to see examples of bank branch staff who had dealt nervously with someone who held power of attorney for their customer – and who could have benefited from more in-depth knowledge about powers of attorney.

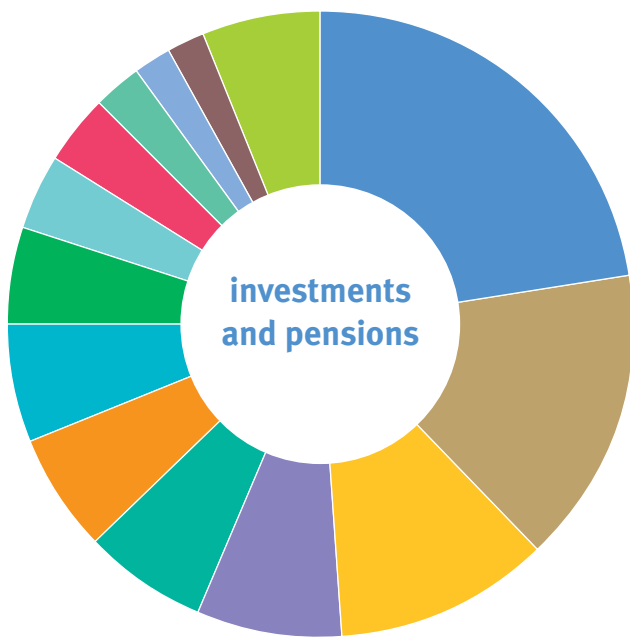
In some cases we found that bank staff had assumed – wrongly – that granting or registering a power of attorney can be effective only if the “donor” (the consumer who has given someone else power of attorney for them) no longer has mental capacity to deal with their own affairs.

As in previous years, we also saw a number of complaints involving stolen or counterfeit cheques. In some cases consumers were given these cheques in payment for goods they had sold through classified adverts. In other cases consumers told us that the cheques had been deposited in their accounts – and the money later withdrawn – without their knowledge or consent.

These cases are often complex – and we sometimes need to obtain information about the accounts of third parties that appear to be connected to the transaction.

Consumers also referred complaints to us during the year about cheques that had been intercepted by fraudsters and paid into accounts with other banks. We are usually able to deal with complaints about this type of problem – even if the consumer was not a customer of the bank into which the fraudster had paid the cheque.

# what the complaints were about: investments and pensions

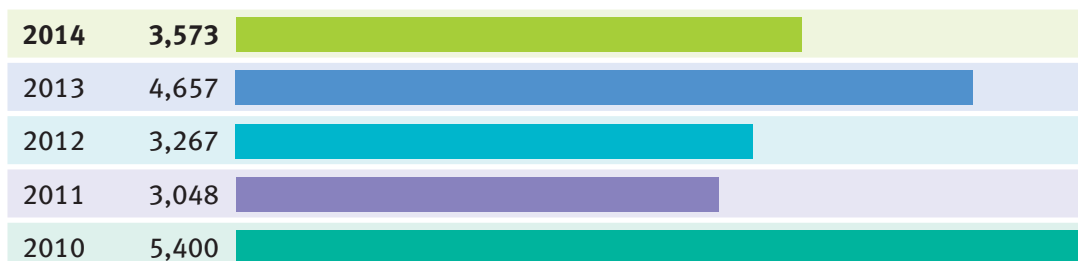


During the year we received 15,938 complaints about investments and pensions. This represented 3% of the total number of new cases we received during the year – a similar proportion to the previous year.

This chart shows how investment and pension-related complaints spread across different products and services.

● mortgage endowments	<b>22.5%</b>
● whole-of-life policies <i>and</i> savings endowments	<b>15.5%</b>
● personal pension plans	<b>11%</b>
● portfolio management	<b>7.5%</b>
● small self-administered schemes (SSASs) <i>and</i> self-invested personal pensions (SIPPs)	<b>6.5%</b>
● investment ISAs	<b>6%</b>
● stockbroking	<b>6%</b>
● unit-linked bonds	<b>5%</b>
● annuities	<b>4%</b>
● SERPs	<b>3.5%</b>
● guaranteed-income bonds	<b>2.5%</b>
● derivatives (including interest-rate hedging products and spread-betting)	<b>2%</b>
● “with-profits” bonds	<b>2%</b>
● other (including unit trusts, “structured” investments and income drawdown)	<b>6%</b>

## complaints about mortgage endowments



year ended 31 March

In last year's *annual review* we reported that the number of complaints we received about mortgage endowments had increased by a substantial 43%. This year complaints fell by 23% – but the number still exceeded the level of new cases in 2011/2012.

At the peak of complaints about mortgage endowments in 2005, we were receiving up to 1,500 cases a week. This followed major publicity campaigns to make consumers aware that their endowment policy might not perform well enough to pay off their mortgage. In 2005 these complaints represented 63% of our total workload. In 2013/2014 that figure was just 0.7%.

For many people referring complaints to us over the last few years, the practical difficulties caused by mortgage “shortfalls” only started to bite as endowment policies they had taken out in the late 1980s – to repay 25-year mortgages – began to mature, usually with disappointing returns.

We can't look at the majority of complaints like this because the then regulator – the Financial Services Authority – set time limits on complaining during the 2000s. This prompted many consumers to take action over any potential shortfall they'd encounter when their policies matured. Those people who took action – and whose policies had been mis-sold to them – received compensation.

Those people who didn't act are now finding that it's too late for them to complain about the sale of their policy. We can intervene only if there is no evidence that the consumer was ever told about the time limit. However, in most cases businesses can show us that they wrote to customers about the time limits.

# what the complaints were about: investments and pensions

## complaints about whole-of-life and term assurance

During the year we received significantly fewer complaints about whole-of-life policies. This may be because of the work we have done with claims managers – encouraging them to establish more precisely the grounds on which a complaint might be referred to us on behalf of a consumer. And as a result of this we have had far fewer cases referred to us that have very little chance of being upheld.

Most of the complaints we received involved “reviewable” whole-of-life policies – where the business carries out a review of the policy some years after the consumer took it out. If the review shows that the business’s original assumptions – particularly in relation to investment returns – haven’t been met, they can reduce the consumer’s cover or say that the premiums need to increase.

Where we are satisfied that the consumer hadn’t been adequately warned that a review might lead to these kinds of changes, we generally uphold the complaint.

We continued to see relatively high levels of complaints about term assurance during the year. This may reflect the fact that people continue to confuse term assurance with PPI – and we find that similar arguments are used in complaints about these types of product.

## complaints about pensions



year ended 31 March

We received slightly fewer complaints about pensions during the year – 4,361 cases compared with 4,401 in the previous year. Some pension-related complaints involve large amounts of money. Although we can now tell a business to pay a maximum of £150,000 to an individual consumer – for new complaints we received after 1 January 2012 – we have seen complaints that involve significantly more money than this.

In last year’s *annual review* we reported that a financial business was seeking clarification from the Court of Appeal on whether a consumer who has accepted an ombudsman’s decision can then go on to pursue the business for further compensation. In February 2014 the Court of Appeal ruled on this matter – and it is now very unlikely that a consumer can do so.

However, not all pension complaints involve large sums of money. We also see complaints from consumers whose pensions are much smaller – and the issues are just as concerning for the people involved. Whatever the sum of money at stake, most people rely on their pension to meet their needs when they retire.

So it’s not surprising that some may be more inclined to pursue a complaint as far as they can, if something goes wrong. These complaints can be among the most legalistic and hard-fought that we see.



During the year 601 complaints involved annuities – the regular annual income a consumer receives as a pension when they retire. Because life expectancy has improved significantly – and interest rates have been consistently low in recent years – many consumers referring complaints to us are unhappy to find that they’re being offered a much smaller annuity than they’d expected.

A consumer’s decision to take an annuity is crucial – not least because they can’t change their mind about it later on. Yet we do find that many consumers take a pension from their original provider without shopping around to see if they can get a better deal somewhere else.

Widespread concern about these kinds of issues is now being addressed by the government following announcements in the March 2014 Budget.

In the pension-related complaints referred to us, we look to see whether the business has provided consumers – whatever their circumstances – with clear information to make sure they understood the options open to them.

During the year we saw a significant increase in the number of complaints from consumers who had taken out self-invested personal pensions (SIPPS). Many of these complaints involved advice to invest in “unregulated collective investment schemes” (UCIS) within a SIPP.

These complaints usually came from consumers who had been looking for better returns than they could achieve through more conventional investments. But the consequences of investing in some of these higher-risk funds can be extremely serious. We find in the consumer’s favour in a relatively high proportion of these cases.

### complaints about investment-linked products



year ended 31 March

When markets are relatively buoyant, we tend to receive fewer complaints about what might be called “conventional” investments – and this was the case during the year.

However, we saw significantly more complaints involving “unregulated collective investment schemes” (UCIS) and similar higher-risk investments.

This might be because, despite better performing markets generally, some of these funds have not done so well.

UCIS complaints often raise difficult jurisdictional questions about whether we can even look into them – particularly where the complaints involve complex relationships between businesses and their appointed representatives.

# what the complaints were about: investments and pensions

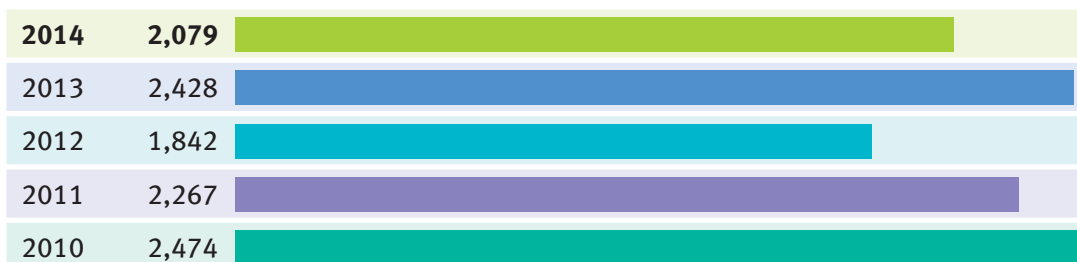
In some cases we have seen, representatives appear to have acted outside the authority given to them by the business – which has left consumers unprotected. The consequences of an inappropriate investment in an “exotic” fund can be serious. We have seen cases where consumers have lost all the money they invested.

The disputes we see in this area are often complex and hard-fought. We often find that the businesses involved employ lawyers to argue their case tenaciously on their behalf. Some of these businesses appear not to have understood that the ombudsman isn’t the same as a court – and that although we must take the law into account, our decisions are based on what we believe is fair and reasonable in the individual circumstances of each case.

The “suitability” of investments remained the main cause of the problems we saw across all complaints in this area – including disputes involving UCIS. With interest rates still at a historic low, we saw complaints from consumers who had sought better returns. But this had exposed them to riskier investments than they really wanted – with more money at stake than they could afford to lose.

During the year we’ve also seen a disappointing number of cases involving straightforward matters like administrative errors and delays. We have also started to see a small number of complaints about fees, charges and “ongoing commission”, following the increased transparency of these arrangements as a result of the regulator’s *Retail Distribution Review* (RDR).

## complaints about stockbroking and portfolio management



year ended 31 March

In last year’s *annual review* we reported that complaints about stockbroking and portfolio management had gone up by a third. Over the last year, the volume of these complaints has declined – largely because of buoyant stock market conditions.

However, it is disappointing that we continued to see a number of complaints about administrative matters, delays and mistakes in calculations – as well as complaints

about increases in dealing charges. Our long-standing approach to resolving these sorts of problems is published in the online technical resource on our website, which we encourage businesses to refer to and learn from.

During the year we saw a marked increase in investment-related complaints involving film partnerships. A significant proportion of these cases were referred to us on behalf of consumers by law firms or claims managers.

The increase may reflect the fact that certain tax benefits associated with film partnerships have been reduced or removed. This may have led some consumers to question the appropriateness of their investment.

We also saw a slight increase in investment-related complaints involving carbon trading and enterprise zone schemes.

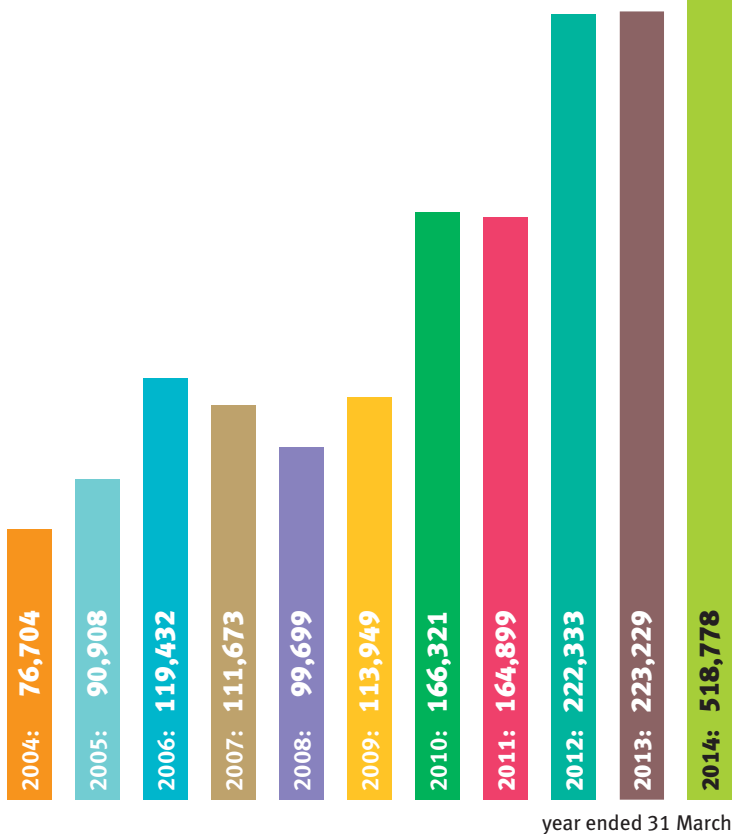


# how we dealt with the complaints

# how we dealt with the complaints

## total number of cases we resolved

During the year we resolved over half a million complaints. This is twice the number we resolved during the previous year – and is by far the highest number of complaints we have settled in any year since we were set up in 2000.



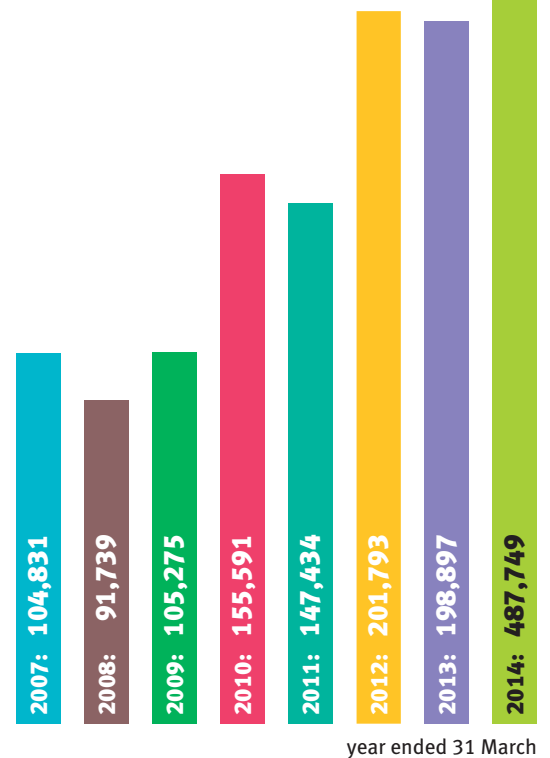
## how we resolved the cases

The approach we take to resolving complaints is largely determined by the individual facts of each case – and by the level of formality needed.

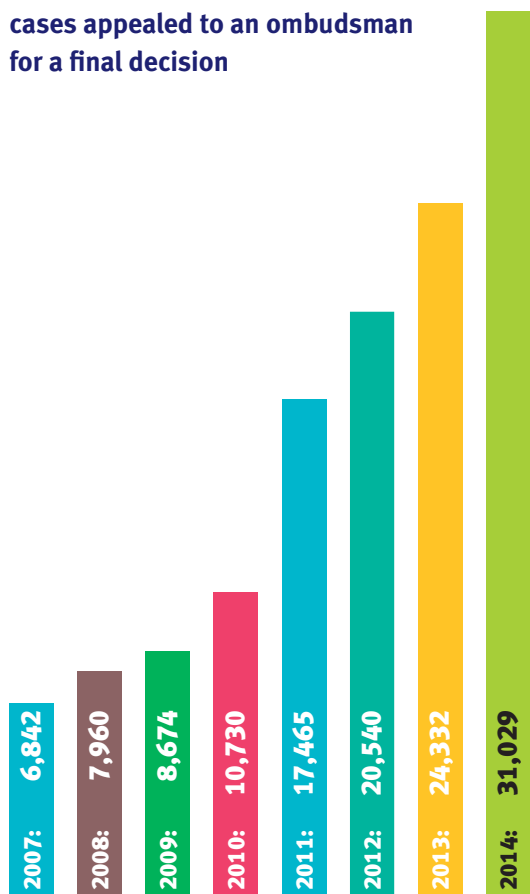
We were set up to resolve complaints informally. So we aim to get both sides to agree at an early stage to the views or informal settlements that our adjudicators suggest.

But more complex or sensitive disputes often require detailed investigations and lengthy reviews. This can include an appeal to one of our panel of 234 ombudsmen for a final decision – as the last stage of our process.

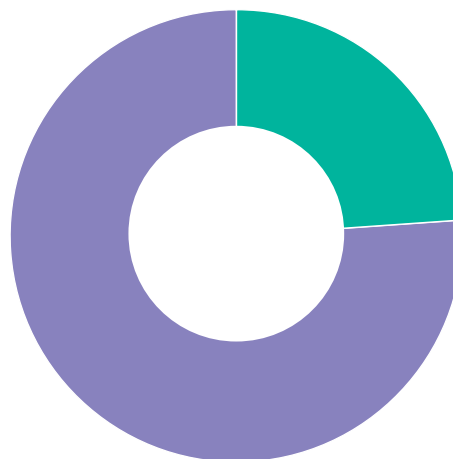
## cases settled by our adjudicators



**cases appealed to an ombudsman for a final decision**



year ended 31 March



- requests for an ombudsman's decision by financial businesses **24%**
- requests for an ombudsman's decision by consumers **76%**

6% of the cases we settled during the year required an ombudsman to make a final decision (11% in the previous year, and 9% in the year before that). This lower proportion reflects the fact that we resolved record volumes of PPI cases without needing an ombudsman's decision. In fact, during the year only 2% of PPI cases were settled by an ombudsman's decision. However, we expect to see this figure increase in future years – as PPI complaints become increasingly complex and entrenched.

For complaints involving products other than PPI, the proportion of cases appealed to an ombudsman has been slowly rising over recent years – from 6% in 2006/2007 to the current figure of 18%.

This reflects the continuing shift towards more complex disputes – with many businesses increasingly taking a harder-fought and legalistic approach, and consumers becoming more demanding and less willing to concede.

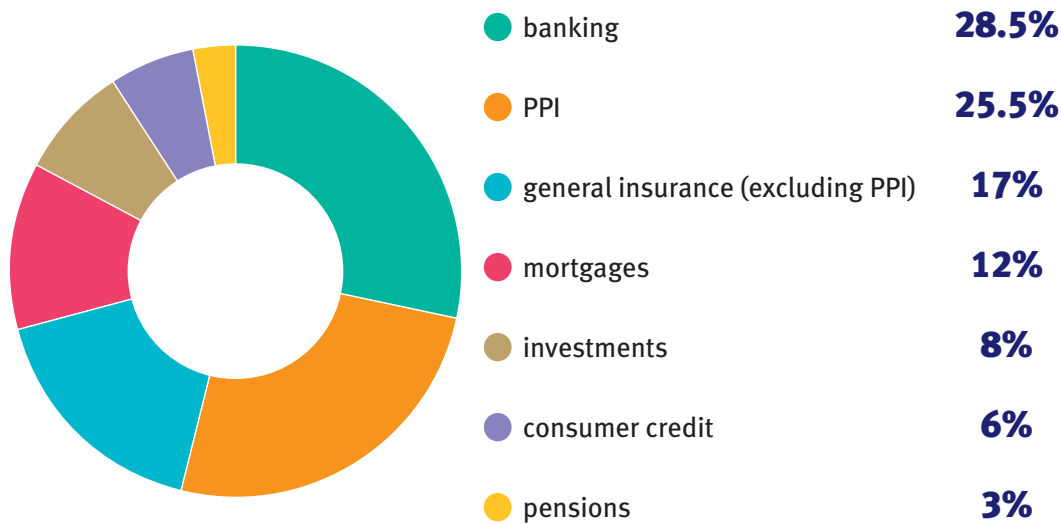
Of the final decisions made by ombudsmen during the year, 24% of requests were made by financial businesses and 76% by consumers (32% and 68% respectively in the previous year).

In 89% of final decisions, ombudsmen reached the same basic conclusions as the adjudicators who handled the cases in the earlier stages. This was a very similar proportion to the previous year. Where ombudsmen came to a different conclusion, there was either a finely-balanced judgement call or, more often, new facts came to light at a very late stage.

# how we dealt with the complaints

The 31,029 final decisions made by ombudsmen during the year were spread across the different areas of complaint as follows.

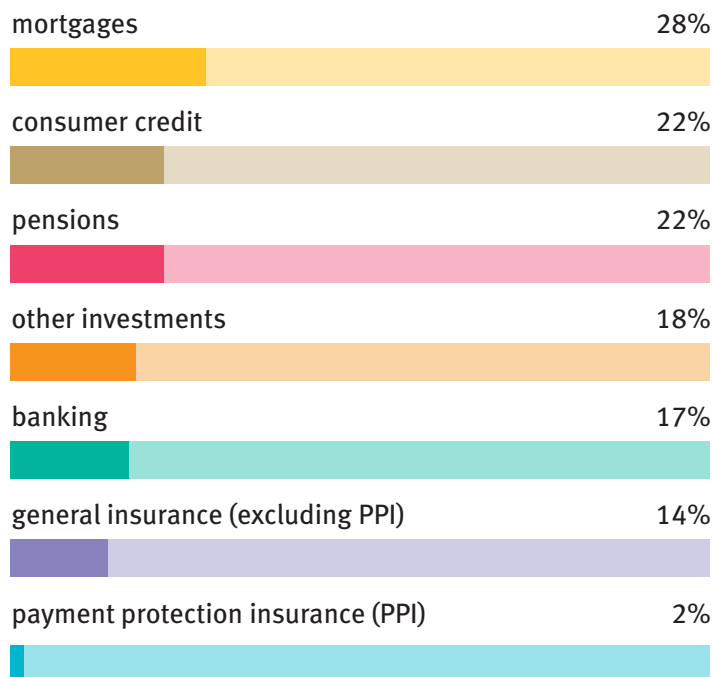
## the financial products involved in ombudsman's decisions



The proportion of cases that involved an appeal to an ombudsman for a final decision varied considerably across product areas.

For example, although 28.5% of all ombudsman decisions related to banking cases, only 17% of the banking complaints we resolved during the year needed a final decision by an ombudsman to settle them. In the other 83% of banking cases, our adjudicators were able to settle the disputes more informally.

## % of cases in each product area that required an ombudsman's decision



During the year we saw a significant increase – from 20% to 28% – in the proportion of mortgage disputes that were referred to an ombudsman for a final decision. This probably reflects the sensitivity and complexity of mortgage problems that can have a direct impact on people's homes and lives.

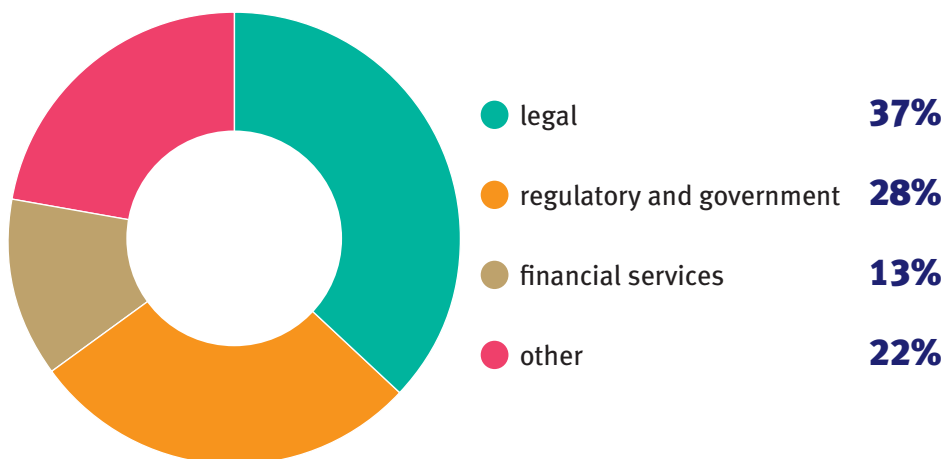
The proportion of men and women who asked for a final decision by an ombudsman remained broadly similar – as did the proportion of requests made by consumers from different faith and ethnic groups. There is more information about the diversity of our customers – and their experience of our service – on pages 92 to 116.

### **publishing ombudsmen's decisions**

Following extensive consultation through 2011 and 2012, we started to publish individual ombudsmen's decisions – made from April 2013 onwards – on our website. The consumers involved in the complaints are anonymised so they can't be identified.

During the year we published 22,968 decisions on our website. This figure differs from the number of decisions that our ombudsmen actually made during the year, because we allow a period of time for the two sides to get the decision in writing first *before* it's published.

### **the backgrounds of our ombudsmen**



By law, our board of non-executive directors is required to appoint ombudsmen who have the appropriate qualifications and experience to make decisions in complaints. For someone to be appointed as an ombudsman, the board must be satisfied that they have the depth of experience necessary to make important decisions involving people's lives, livelihoods and reputations.

Our ombudsmen come from a wide range of backgrounds – and their names and brief career histories are published on our website. Each ombudsman specialises in a particular area of financial complaint.

### **hearings**

As part of our work resolving individual complaints, our rules allow us to hold hearings (face-to-face meetings) in public or private. We do this only where an ombudsman believes a case can't be fairly decided on the basis of the factual material that the two sides have already provided.

If we are asked for a hearing by either a consumer or a business, we consider carefully what value it will add. We don't believe that hearings should be held just to allow either side to confront the other in person. And neither side is given a private meeting with the ombudsman who will decide their case.

In most cases ombudsmen are unlikely to consider that a hearing would add anything to their understanding of a complaint – and they agree to only around 10% of requests to hold hearings.

# how we dealt with the complaints

## how we record the outcome of cases we resolve

We record the outcome of a consumer's complaint as "upheld" in cases where:

- The financial business told the consumer in its final response that it had done nothing wrong – but after the complaint was referred to us, we decided (or the business belatedly accepted) that it *had* done something wrong after all.

or

- The financial business's final response offered the consumer inadequate compensation – but after the complaint was referred to us, we required the business (or it belatedly agreed) to increase its offer to an appropriate level.

We record the outcome of a complaint as "not upheld" in cases where:

- The financial business had done nothing wrong.

or

- The financial business *had* done something wrong, but had already offered the consumer appropriate redress (before the complaint was referred to us).

## % of cases we upheld

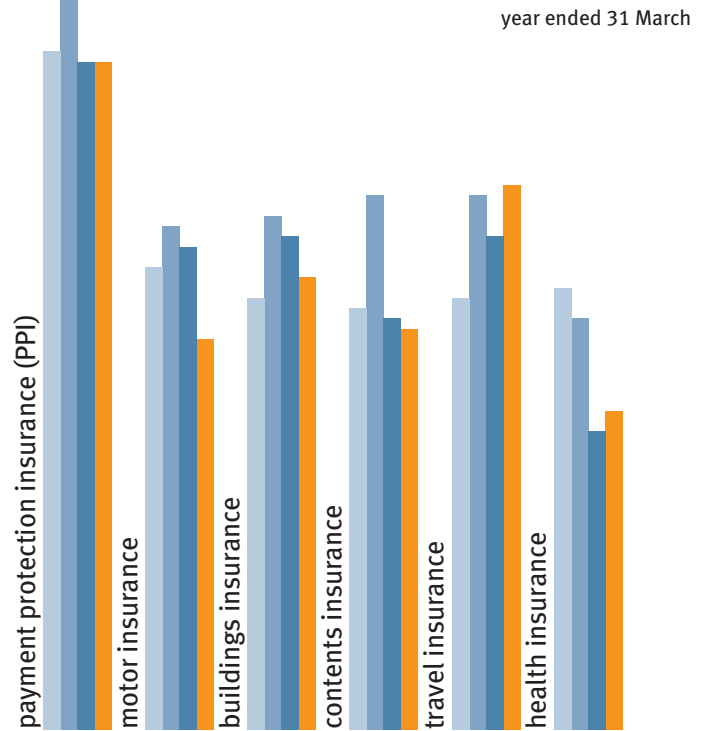
We found in the consumer's favour in 58% of the complaints we resolved during the year – compared with 49% of complaints in the previous year and 64% in the year before that. This largely reflects the fact that we resolved such a large number of PPI complaints during the year – and we have been finding in the consumer's favour in a relatively high proportion of these cases.

For the complaints involving products other than PPI, our overall uphold rate was 37%.

Our uphold rate varied across complaints involving different financial products. For example, during the year we upheld:

- 77.5% of cases involving "packaged" bank accounts.
- 28% of complaints about mortgage endowments.

## insurance complaints



2011	66%	45%	42%	41%	42%	43%
2012	82%	49%	50%	52%	52%	40%
2013	65%	47%	48%	40%	48%	29%
2014	65%	38%	44%	39%	53%	31%

## complaints data about named businesses

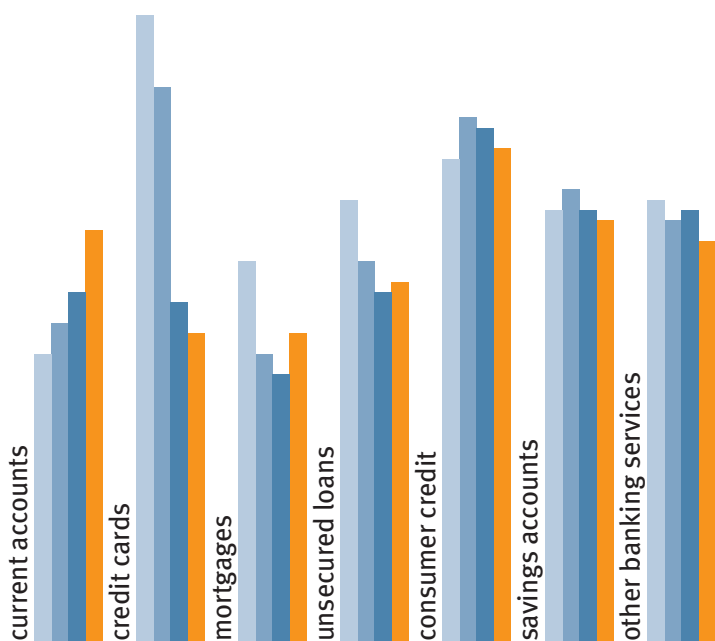
Since September 2009 we have been publishing complaints data on our website every six months about the businesses involved in the complaints referred to us. The data shows the number of new complaints – and the proportion of complaints we upheld in favour of consumers – for named businesses that have 30 or more new cases *and* 30 or more resolved cases in each six-month period.

The complaints data shows that:

- Around 200 businesses (out of 80,000 covered by the ombudsman service) together account for 95% of our complaints workload.
- The number of complaints relating to each individual business ranges from 31 to around 40,000.
- The proportion of cases we uphold in favour of the consumer varies substantially from business to business – between 2% and 94%.

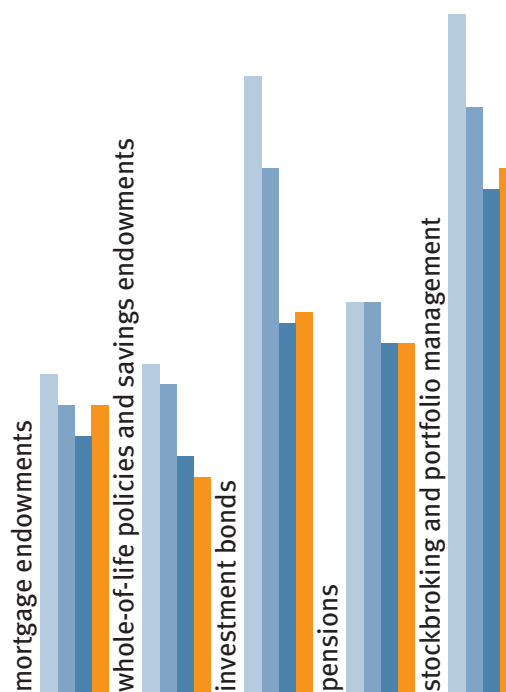


### banking and credit complaints



2011	28%	61%	37%	43%	47%	42%	43%
2012	31%	54%	28%	37%	51%	44%	41%
2013	34%	33%	26%	34%	50%	42%	42%
2014	40%	30%	30%	35%	48%	41%	39%

### investment and pension complaints



2011	31%	32%	60%	38%	66%
2012	28%	30%	51%	38%	57%
2013	25%	23%	36%	34%	49%
2014	28%	21%	37%	34%	51%

#### putting things right

Where we find in a consumer's favour, we must decide how best to put things right – taking into account the individual circumstances of the case. There are various ways we can do this including:

- Telling the business to pay redress – to put the consumer in the position they would now be in if the business hadn't got it wrong in the first place.
- Telling the business to compensate the consumer for the trouble they have been put to – or for the upset the business has caused. We did this in 24,060 cases (9% of the cases we upheld during the year). In these cases the amounts of compensation were generally between £150 and £500.
- Telling the business to do something (or *not* do something) to put right what's gone wrong. This can range from correcting credit references to paying a previously-rejected insurance claim.
- Telling the business to apologise.

Where we *don't* uphold a complaint in favour of a consumer, we aim to give them a clear explanation – from an entirely impartial standpoint – of why we believe the business has done nothing wrong (or has already offered appropriate redress).

# how we dealt with the complaints

## how ombudsmen told businesses to put things right



- telling the business to take actions to put things right that don't have a direct cash value (for example, correcting a credit reference) **31%**
- redress up to £1,000 **19.5%**
- £1,001 to £25,000 **19%**
- £25,001 to £75,000 **2.5%**
- £75,001 to £150,000\* **1.5%**
- more than £150,000\* **0.5%**
- telling the business the basis or formula on which they must pay compensation (for example, where specialist calculations need to be carried out) **26%**

\*The ombudsman can *tell* a business to pay compensation of up to £150,000 (£100,000 for complaints we received before 1 January 2012) – and can *recommend* that the business pay compensation in excess of this amount.

The figures in this chart don't include any additional amounts that we might tell a business to pay – to compensate a consumer for any trouble they have been put to or upset they've been caused.

We continue to see many entrenched disputes that could have been avoided if there had been better communication between the financial business and the customer. Too many problems stem from simple misunderstandings that should have been cleared up at the outset.

We know that sometimes consumers might talk about their problems in an unfocused way – that can make them seem unreasonable to the business they complain to. But we also see some businesses responding to customer concerns unhelpfully and defensively – aggravating problems that a clear, helpful and sympathetic explanation might have resolved.

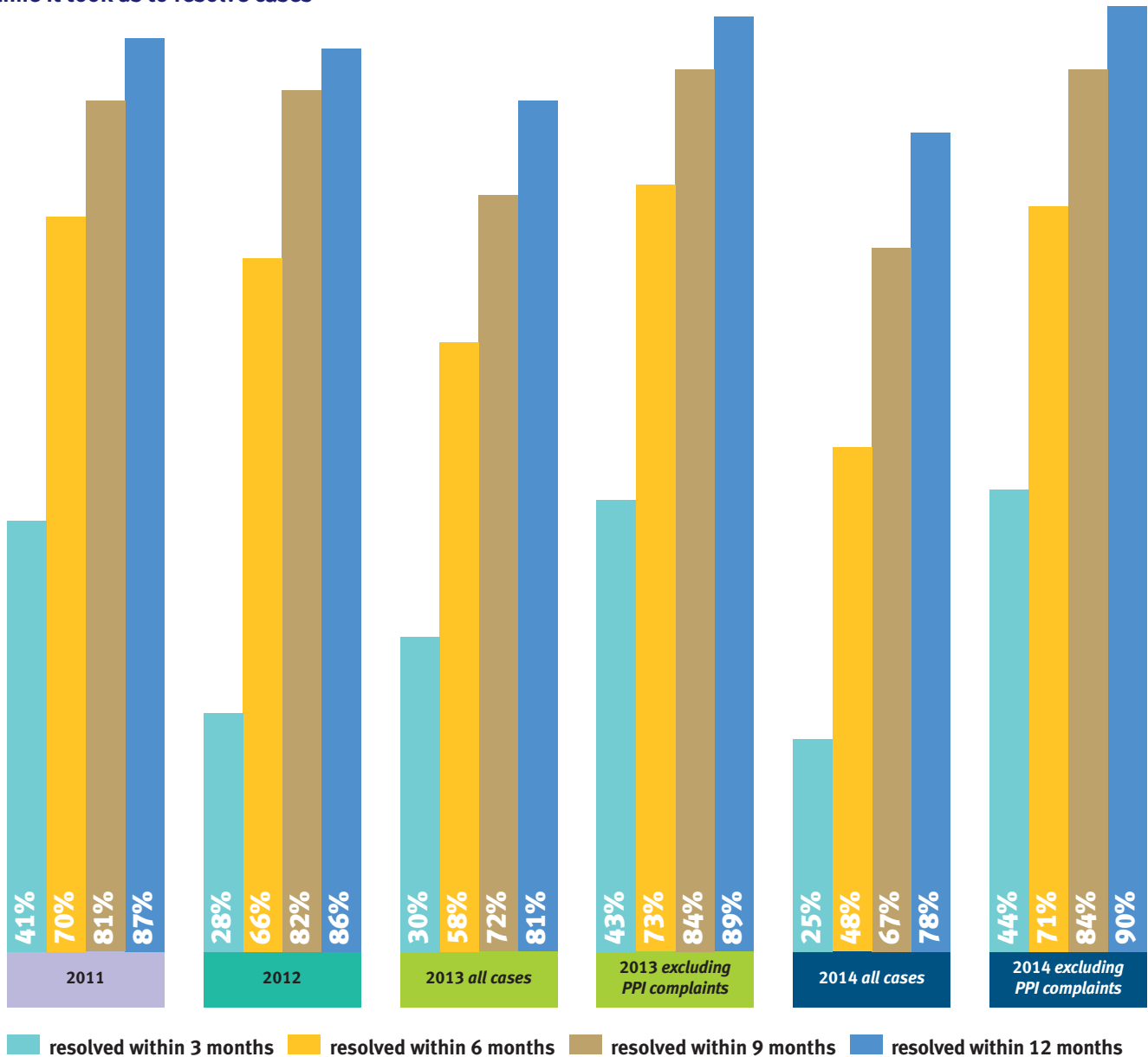
Just because we don't uphold a complaint on its merits does *not* mean that the consumer might not feel upset and let down by the way the business has treated them. Similarly, a consumer's failure to present a reasoned argument does not automatically mean that a case has no merit – or that the complaint should be categorised as “frivolous and vexatious”.

Of the 518,778 complaints we settled during the year, we decided in 30,419 cases (6% of the total) that it would be unfair in the circumstances to charge the business involved a case fee. The vast majority of these cases involved complaints about PPI brought by claims managers – where our enquiries established that the consumer, though understandably concerned, had not in fact been sold a PPI policy.

**our aim is to give a clear explanation from an entirely impartial standpoint**

# how we dealt with the complaints

## the time it took us to resolve cases

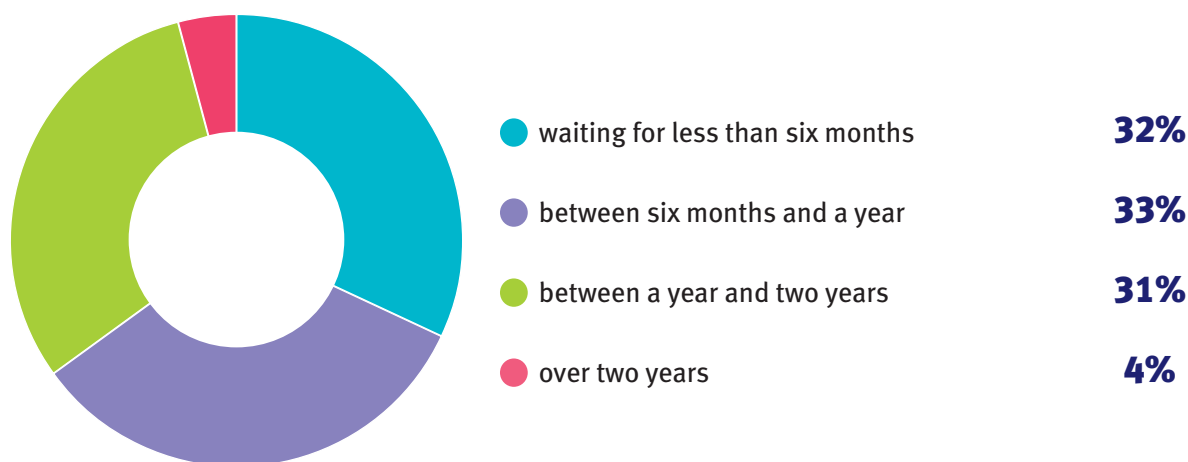


year ended 31 March

We are disappointed that we have not been able to settle all cases as quickly as we – and our customers – would like. During the year we have geared up our resources significantly to make inroads into the large stock of PPI cases that have built up. This will inevitably mean we will be settling greater numbers of cases that have been with us for some time – and this will be reflected in our timeliness statistics.

Meanwhile, we continue to track how consumers feel about having to wait – and we have developed a range of different ways of keeping them up-to-date on what to expect. This may explain why customer satisfaction with our timeliness has in fact improved during the year (see page 122). This tells us how important it is to manage people’s expectations in these difficult circumstances.

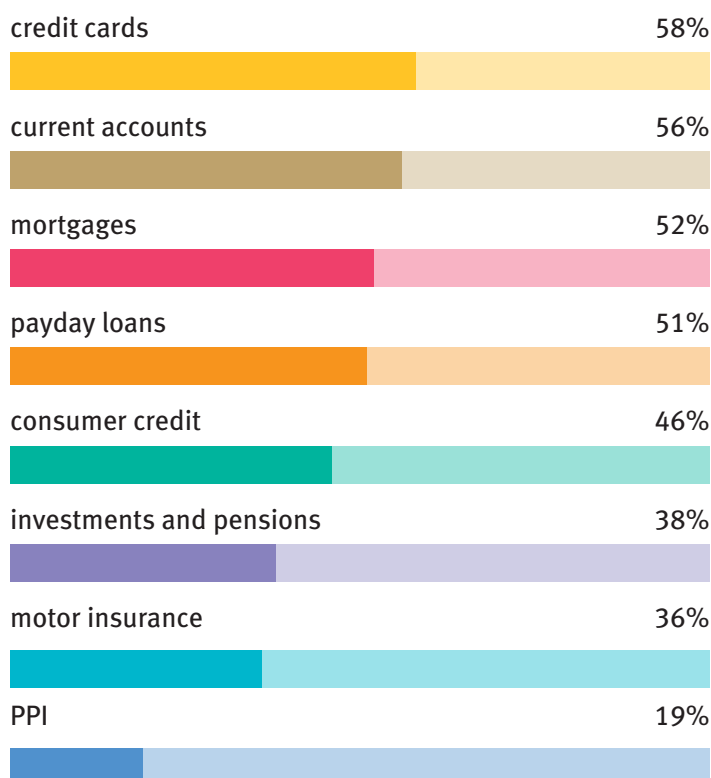
### PPI cases awaiting resolution at 31 March 2014



Wherever possible we have tried to ensure that the delays caused by the volumes of PPI cases do not adversely affect our handling of cases involving other financial products.

Across banking-related cases, for example, we have been able to settle 56% of cases involving current accounts within three months and 81% within six months. And we resolved 51% of payday loan complaints within three months and 80% within six months.

### % of cases resolved within three months – by product area



Reducing the time it takes to resolve banking cases has continued to be a major priority for us during the year. Proportionally fewer businesses tend to be responsible for a high volume of cases in this area – so working closely with those businesses to smooth out the complaints

process has a significant impact on the length of time people have to wait for their problem to be resolved.

We also believe it makes sense to try and match the speed of resolution with the speed of many of the transactions involved.

# how we dealt with the complaints

For example, we worked closely with banks to deal quickly and effectively with complaints from consumers who found themselves unable to use their bank accounts normally following IT glitches during the year.

Many businesses have welcomed the opportunity to cooperate with us – to help improve things for their customers. Disappointingly, others continue to take an overly legalistic approach to handling complaints.

We have also worked closely with Citizens Advice to prioritise and streamline complaints involving payday loans. This is reflected in the fact that we resolved more than half of these complaints within three months.

During the year we identified and prioritised 8,000 cases where financial hardship was a significant issue – a similar figure to the previous year. Around half of these cases involved mortgages. Many others involved current accounts and unsecured loans. We also prioritised cases where a consumer's health meant they needed their complaint resolving particularly quickly.

Of course, prioritising cases like these inevitably means that other complaints can't be moved forward as quickly as we would otherwise like.

**we identified and prioritised 8,000 cases where financial hardship was a significant issue**

### knowledge and expertise

Our adjudicators and ombudsmen need the right knowledge and expertise to do their work to the highest standards. As part of our commitment to this, during the year we have:

- Increased the number of ombudsmen by 50% during the year – from 156 to 234.
- Re-thought our approach to “knowledge management” to make sure all our people have the insight and know-how they need.
- Launched a range of initiatives to help make sure we communicate clearly with our customers – particularly about the way we work and the decisions we have made.

- Hosted fortnightly lunchtime workshops on a wide range of topics – from dealing sensitively with consumers who have Parkinson’s disease to “compensation for distress”, and from “packaged” bank accounts to cases involving consumers who have died. We have also continued to run our well-attended executive question times.
- Continued to offer our development programme for our managers – with each receiving an average of five days of training during the year.
- Digitised our staff newsletters to bring knowledge sharing – which can sound rather theoretical – to life. And we have made more use of audio and video resources to support our more traditional ways of communicating across the organisation.
- Gathered ideas and suggestions from our staff about how we can improve what we do – making the best suggestions happen.
- Provided our people with the skills to deal confidently and sensitively with an increasingly diverse range of customers, including training on disability issues.

### taking pride in our work

Our customers trust us to provide a high quality service. This means that in every case we handle, we should be able to show we have:

- Got the basics right – obvious but important things like getting personal details correct and responding appropriately to someone’s communication needs.
- Made the decision in the right way – getting to the heart of the issue and applying a consistent approach.
- Treated customers well – so that in each case the consumer and the business are satisfied with the level of service we have provided.

**maintaining high standards isn’t all about processes and boxes to tick**

# how we dealt with the complaints

Maintaining high standards isn't all about processes and box-ticking. Everybody at the ombudsman service is responsible for taking pride in their work and for the professional service we provide. We involve everyone in talking and thinking about the impact we have on our customers – and how we can improve what we do.

To maintain our high standards, our work during the year has included:

- Reporting any case-specific feedback from customers *directly* to the individual adjudicator or ombudsman involved – and to their manager.
- Bringing our senior leaders together to discuss quality and professionalism across the service. This has helped them talk consistently to their teams about the standards we expect – and how to meet them.
- Involving our entire senior management team and board members in an assessment of real cases that we've dealt with – asking questions and challenging our assumptions. This involved looking in detail at our correspondence, as well as listening to recorded phone calls between our staff and our customers.

## asking for our customers' views

We carry out extensive stakeholder and customer research – to help give us a deeper understanding of what our customers think and feel, how they rate the service we provide, and where we could do things better. During the year this programme included:

- Running monthly online surveys and six-monthly postal surveys to record and measure how consumers whose complaints we have handled rate aspects of the service we provided.
- Providing an automated feedback option at the end of phone calls – enabling consumers to give instant ratings on various aspects of the quality of our service.
- Carrying out research to monitor the views of the businesses we cover – smaller businesses and larger ones alike – using both online and postal surveys.

- Commissioning research among MPs to get their views on our work in relation to their constituents.
- Monitoring general consumer awareness of the ombudsman service to help with our work on accessibility – ensuring that everyone who needs to contact us knows how to find us.
- Running a survey for our website users to find out more about who they are and what they are looking for on our website.

Results and feedback from our research are shown in more detail in the chapters called “who complained to us” and “who the complaints were about”.

## handling complaints about our own service

Recognising where we've made a mistake, and learning from any shortcomings, is central to offering good customer service. This is why – just like the businesses whose complaints we handle – we have our own formal complaints procedure for people who are unhappy with the level of service we have provided.

We can usually sort out problems as soon as someone tells us they're unhappy with the standard of service they have received. The prompt involvement of the relevant manager – with an immediate phone call to apologise or explain – means we can resolve many issues without the problem escalating into a formal complaint.

But if we're not able to sort out matters at this stage, one of our senior managers will look into the problem. This applies to complaints both from consumers and businesses. The process is entirely separate from the usual process that applies if a consumer or business disagrees with our views on the *merits* of their case – and wants us to re-consider facts and arguments.

we want a deeper understanding of what our customers think and feel



During the year we responded to 2,847 complaints about our service – 450 more than the previous year. However, given our increased total workload during the year, the overall proportion of complaints about our service remained the same.

We were able to resolve 63% of these complaints directly within the teams where the problem arose – and 37% of the complaints were settled with the involvement of a senior manager. 2% of the complaints were made by businesses (3% in the previous year) and the others were all from consumers or their representatives.

We agreed that the level of service we had provided was unsatisfactory in 37% of these cases (32% in the previous year). Where this involved paying compensation – in recognition of the inconvenience caused by delays or administrative errors on our part – the average payment was around £100.

Where we are unable to resolve a complaint about our service, it can be referred to an independent assessor – appointed by the board – for a formal independent review of the level of service we have provided. Each year the independent assessor produces an annual report for our board, setting out findings and recommendations made over the year. We publish this report in full on our website.

### improving the way we work

We know there is always room for improvement in what we do. We run a wide range of projects and initiatives aimed at improving the quality, consistency and efficiency of the ombudsman service.

Making sure we continue to respond effectively to the unprecedented volumes of PPI cases has given us the opportunity to make significant improvements to the way we work. This has included:

- Eliminating (as far as possible) reliance on paper files by using document scanning and electronic-file management across our casework operation.
- Developing our “horizon-scanning” capability so we can quickly identify new issues and respond to changes in the volumes and types of cases referred to us.
- Enhancing the “live” guidance we give our adjudicators to help them navigate their way through cases.
- Working with experts in customer service from outside financial services – to learn from the best in customer experience and to see how we can improve the “customer journey” for people using our service.

**we need to adapt our processes to reflect both business and consumer needs**

# how we dealt with the complaints

During the year we ran a number of casework experiments to test out different ways of handling complaints. We have listened to what people have been telling us, and based our innovation work on what we have heard.

For example, we knew people wanted to be able to tell us about a complaint online. So we selected visitors to our website at random and asked if they would be interested in taking part in webchats with us.

We tested out different approaches – and monitored the responses we received. We found that in many cases we were able to get enough information about the consumer's problem, to help them move things forward even at the earliest stage.

We also tested out an online version of our complaint form. Again, we monitored the results of the experiment carefully – and many consumers told us they found it a convenient way of getting the ball rolling.

Unsurprisingly, running these projects confirmed that consumers want to engage with us where and when it suits them – and in a way that puts them firmly in control.

During the year we also used Twitter and other social media sites to interact with people who think they might have a complaint – but who are only in the early stages of articulating it. We have seen how differently people express their problems over social media.

Although it's still early days, we have found social media to be another useful channel for helping people get their problems sorted out as early as possible – before they escalate into something more serious.

## our budget and funding

We are funded by an annual levy paid by the businesses we cover – and by case fees that we charge businesses for settling individual disputes referred to us about them. To help fund the increased resources we needed to handle unprecedented demand for our services, we increased our case fee for 2013/2014 – having kept it at the same level for the previous three years.

However, at the same time we increased the number of free cases for each business from 3 to 25. This meant that during the year, 92% of businesses that had complaints referred to us paid no case fees at all. There is more information about this in the chapter called “who the complaints were about”.

In April 2012 we introduced a supplementary case fee for complaints involving mis-sold PPI. This supplementary fee was chargeable only when businesses had more than 25 of these cases a year, reflecting where the costs were actually incurred in sorting out PPI mis-selling on this scale.

Now that we have scaled up our operation sufficiently, from April 2014 businesses no longer pay a supplementary fee for PPI cases.

Our budget is calculated on the basis of workload forecasts that we consult on publicly before the start of each new financial year.

Following public consultation in January and February 2013, the board of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and our own board approved a budget for the ombudsman service – for the financial year 2013/2014 – that assumed income of £283.6 million and expenditure of £266.9 million, with a unit cost of £690. Our unit cost is calculated by dividing our total costs (before financing charges and any bad debt charge) by the number of cases we resolve.



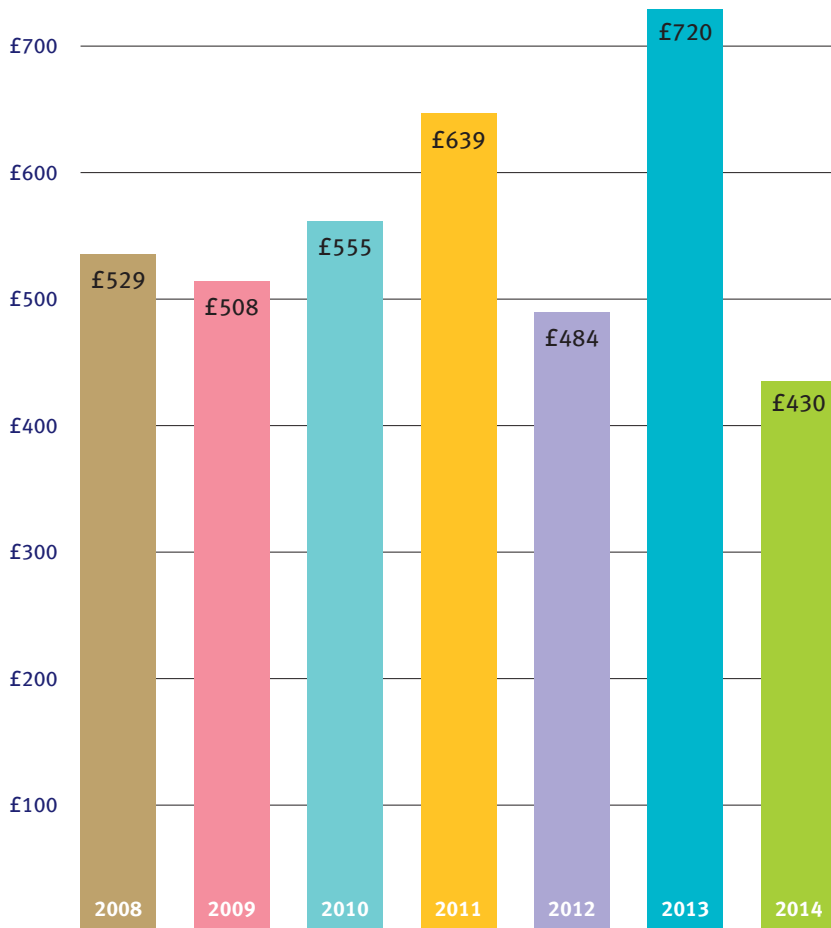
Just spoken to a nice chap @FinancialOmbuds was def worth a call even if he didn't say the words I wanted to hear!

Expand

← Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More



### our unit cost



year ended 31 March

The actual final figures for the year showed total income of £336.4 million, expenditure of £223 million, and a unit cost of £430.

Although the number of PPI cases we received during the year yet again exceeded planning assumptions, we had already scaled up our operations in the previous year to deal with the cases coming in.

We continued to build that capacity during 2013/2014 by recruiting 1,000 more casehandlers – resulting in a record number of cases resolved and a lower unit cost.

However, as we have said elsewhere in this *annual review*, we know from our previous experience of handling “mass disputes” that the further we make inroads into our PPI caseload, the more complex and challenging it’s likely to become. This is likely to affect our unit cost in the future.

# how we dealt with the complaints

## summary of our income and expenditure

	year ended 31 March 2014 £ million	year ended 31 March 2013 £ million	year ended 31 March 2012 £ million
<b>income</b>			
annual levy	25.7	20.8	23.6
special levy	–	–	25.0
group fees	197.2	–	–
case fees	82.9	102.6	102.8
supplementary case fees	30.1	27.1	–
other income	0.6	0.5	0.5
bad debt costs	–	(1.0)	(0.4)
<b>total income</b>	<b>336.5</b>	<b>150.0</b>	<b>151.5</b>
<b>expenditure</b>			
staff-related costs	188.2	126.2	83.4
other costs	28.4	30.2	21.1
financing charges	–	–	–
depreciation	6.4	4.4	2.2
<b>total expenditure</b>	<b>223.0</b>	<b>160.8</b>	<b>106.7</b>
surplus/(deficit)	113.5	(10.8)	44.8

These figures are drawn from our unaudited management accounts and may be subject to change.  
The directors' report and audited financial statements will be available separately on our website once approved.



who complained to us

# who complained to us

## understanding more about consumers

We find out a lot about an individual consumer's circumstances when they refer a complaint to us. But we also need to find out on a more general level how consumers feel and behave – particularly around the financial services they're using and what they do when things go wrong.

As in previous years, the research we carried out in 2013/2014 helps us to:

- Identify and respond to what people want and expect from us.
- Make our service easier to use – for everyone.
- Make sure we are meeting particular accessibility needs.
- Meet our commitment to equality and inclusion.
- Target our outreach and awareness-raising activities.

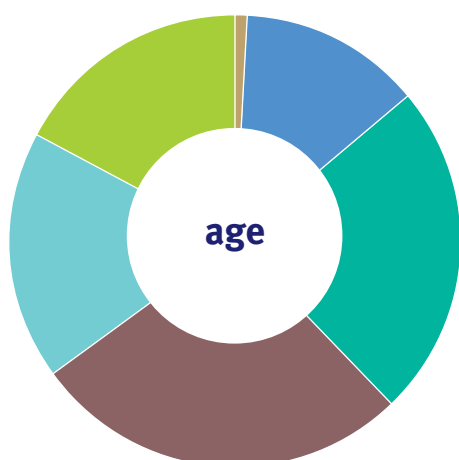
**PPI aside, the over-65s are still our largest consumer group**

## the age of consumers who complained to us

We usually find that the proportion of consumers in each age group stays largely the same each year – irrespective of how many complaints we see in total.

In last year's *annual review* we said that consumers aged over 65 made up nearly one in four of people who used us. This year, we saw a fall in people in this age group. This can largely be explained by the increase in the number of payment protection insurance (PPI) complaints

we resolved – in which proportionally fewer over-65s were involved. PPI aside, however, the over-65s remain our largest consumer age group – referring more than a quarter of the cases we resolved during the year.



- under 25 **1%**
- 25 to 34 **13%**
- 35 to 44 **24%**
- 45 to 54 **27%**
- 55 to 65 **18%**
- over 65 **17%**

The consistently high number of older consumers who bring us complaints might be a result of our outreach work with this demographic over previous years. We talk about how this work continued in 2013/2014 elsewhere in this chapter. It is also likely that, as life expectancy has increased, people are engaging with financial services – and generally being active consumers – for longer.

Seven out of ten consumers who used our service during the year were aged between 35 and 65. This isn't surprising – given the wide range of life events that people can experience between these ages and the wide range of financial products that can go along with them. Our research confirms that people in this age group have a relatively higher awareness of consumer rights – including their right to refer a complaint to us.

Once again, PPI is the most complained-about financial product among consumers of all ages (except the under-25s, whose most complained-about product was bank accounts). However, the proportion of cases from each age group that involved PPI varies considerably – from just under half of complaints from the over-65s to more than three quarters from people aged 35 to 44.

### the most complained-about products – by age group

#### under 25



#### 25 to 34



#### 35 to 44



#### 45 to 54



#### 55 to 64



#### over 65



- payment protection insurance (PPI)
- loans
- bank accounts
- investments and pensions
- car/motorbike insurance
- other products

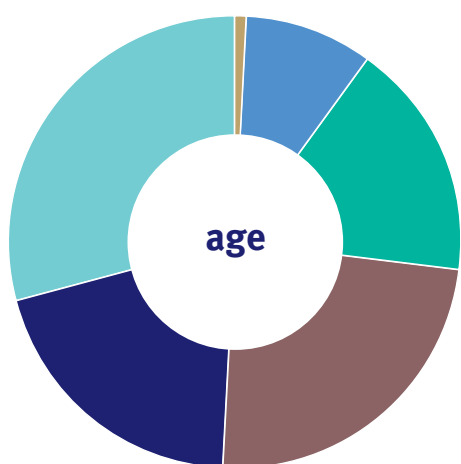
# who complained to us

To better understand how people first get in touch with us, we carry out a range of research. This includes monitoring callers to our consumer helpline – so we can build a picture of which types of consumers are more and less likely to pursue a formal complaint.

Once again we found that age makes no difference here – and that consumers of all ages are just as likely to refer a complaint to us after talking it through with our consumer helpline.

Our research shows that we are slightly less likely to find in the consumer's favour if they are either under 35 or over 65. This is because a relatively lower proportion of PPI complaints – which have a higher “uphold rate” – are referred to us by people in these age groups.

## the age of consumers whose complaints went on to our final “appeal” stage – an ombudsman's decision



● under 25	<b>1%</b>	● 45 to 54	<b>24%</b>
● 25 to 34	<b>10%</b>	● 55 to 65	<b>19%</b>
● 35 to 44	<b>18%</b>	● over 65	<b>28%</b>

In general, the younger someone is, the more likely they are to accept an informal resolution to their complaint early on – and the less likely they are to appeal their case and ask for an ombudsman's decision. Over-65s are the people most likely to take their case to this final stage.

A higher level of confidence in dealing with “official” procedures – which generally comes with experience – could be a factor in this.

However, the trend also reflects changes in the types of financial services people use as they get older.

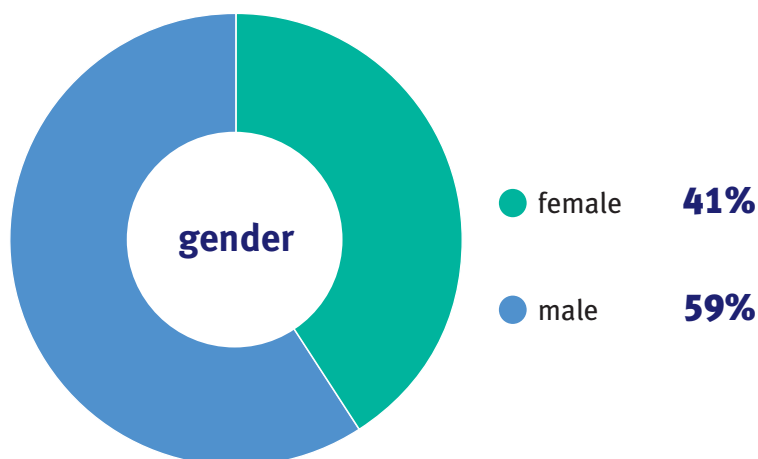
Compared with younger people, older people generally have more investment and pension products. 5% of complaints brought to us by the over-65s this year involved investments and pensions, against fewer than 1% of complaints brought by the under-35s. As these products can involve large amounts of money – and someone's future

plans may depend on them – it's understandable that a consumer might want to take things as far as they can if something goes wrong.

Younger people, on the other hand, complained about their current accounts more than any other group. There is more information later in this chapter about how we raise younger people's awareness of the ombudsman service – as well as their confidence in dealing with their finances.



the gender of consumers who complained to us



Over the last few years the proportion of women who complained to the ombudsman has been fairly constant. But this year we saw an 8% increase in the proportion of women using our service. This largely reflects the fact that slightly more women than men brought us complaints about PPI.

On the whole, however, we are still seeing more men than women refer complaints to the ombudsman. Although we can't be sure exactly why this is, it might have something to do with the fact that a lot of complaints involve accounts or policies that are in joint names – where a male partner's name conventionally appears first.

As part of our research we monitor whether men and women tend to complain about different products.

Our research shows that although women complained slightly more than men about PPI, the three products that women and men alike complained about the most were:

- PPI (70% of women's complaints and 67% of men's).
- Credit cards (4% of women's complaints and 5% of men's).
- Current accounts (4% of women's and men's complaints).

We also asked men and women who *hadn't* brought us a complaint about their attitudes to complaining – to see whether there were any differences between genders. Our research showed that women were 20% less likely than men to say they'd had a problem with a financial product. But although women were less likely to identify a problem in the first place, if they decided something *was* wrong they would be more likely to do something about it.

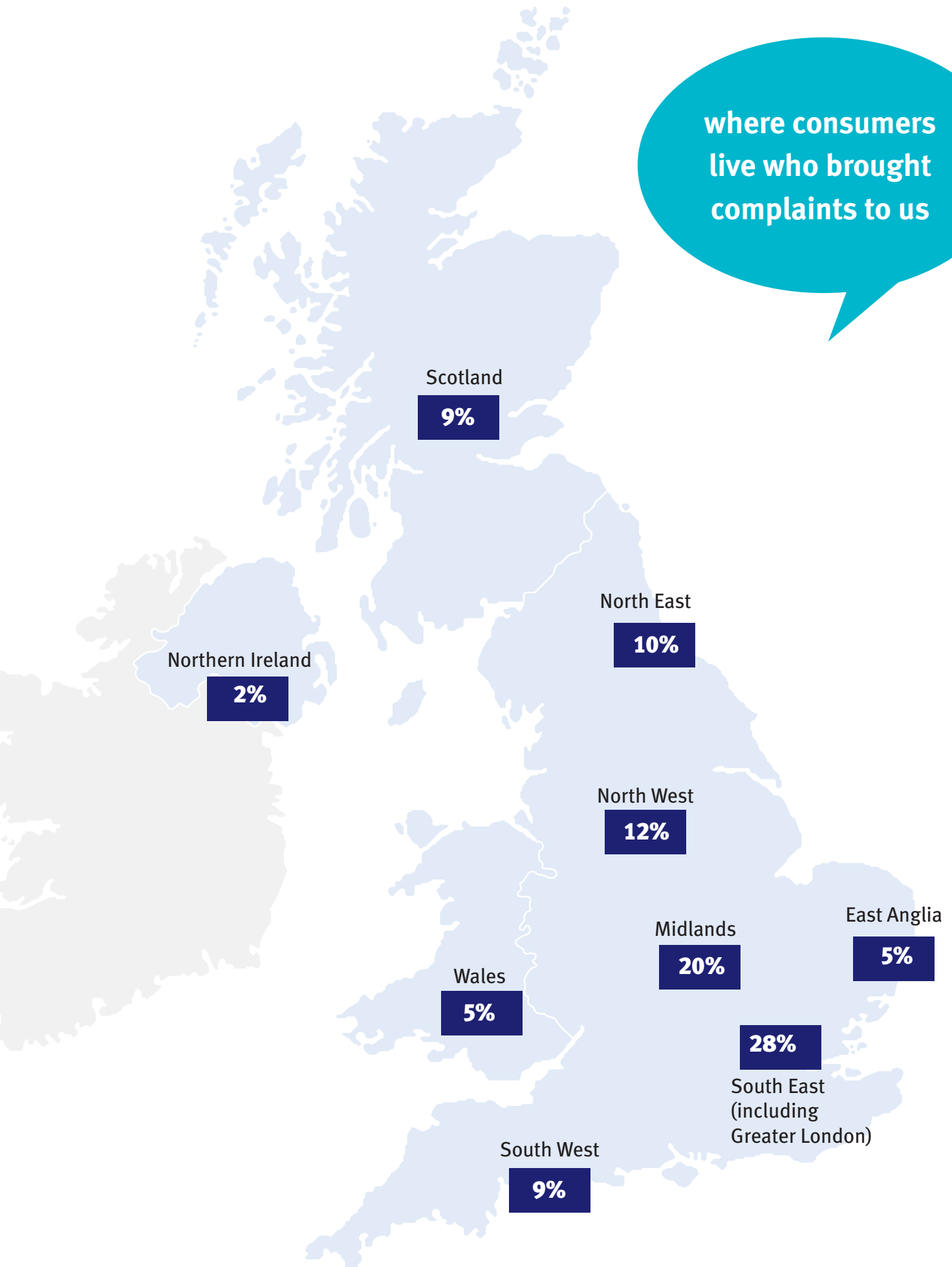
Our research also showed that women were 7% less likely than men to be satisfied with the business's response to a complaint. And 65% of women said they would take their complaint further if they were unhappy with the business's response – compared with 57% of men.

**we saw an 8% increase in the proportion of women using our service**

We also monitor the *outcomes* of complaints by gender. Our research shows that there's no difference in our "uphold rate" between cases brought by men and cases brought by women.

# who complained to us

where consumers live who brought complaints to us



### consumers' complaints – by region and nation

We record where the consumers who bring complaints to us live – so we can monitor levels of usage and awareness of the ombudsman across the UK. In 2013/2014 our customers were spread across the UK in line with the relative populations of the different nations and regions. We've also found this to be the case in previous years.

Although we didn't find any significant regional or national trends in the products that people complained about, there were some variations. For example:

- Complaints about PPI made up 74% of complaints from the North East of England compared with 63% from the South East.
- Current accounts made up 6% of complaints from the South East and 3% of complaints from the North East.

### where people phoned us from the most

- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1 Widnes     | 11 Swansea         |
| 2 Bristol    | 12 Stanmore        |
| 3 Bolton     | 13 Hull            |
| 4 Manchester | 14 Glasgow         |
| 5 Gillingham | 15 Macclesfield    |
| 6 Sale       | 16 Bury            |
| 7 Birmingham | 17 Northampton     |
| 8 Chester    | 18 Burton-on-Trent |
| 9 Leeds      | 19 Nottingham      |
| 10 Salford   | 20 Liverpool       |

We found more of our calls came from densely-populated, urban areas – and fewer came from the more remote parts of Wales and Scotland.

However, we know that consumers in relatively isolated areas can have quite specific needs in terms of financial services – and we continue to visit smaller, rural communities of the UK.

## how consumers with complaints knew about the ombudsman

This year we saw an increase of 38% in the proportion of people who brought us a complaint who said they found out about us through word-of-mouth – from a friend, relative or colleague.

And for the second year running there was a slight increase in the proportion of people who said that they'd heard about us from the financial business they complained to.

This probably reflects the fact that under the complaints-handling rules set by the regulator, businesses covered by the ombudsman service have to mention us when a customer has a complaint that can't be resolved within eight weeks.

Men are more likely than women to say they found out about us from the financial business, whereas women are more likely to say they found out about us from a friend, relative or colleague.

Around a third of people from professional and managerial (AB) backgrounds and skilled and semi-skilled people (C1/C2) told us they found out about us from the business they'd complained to. Last year, we pointed out that for consumers from unskilled

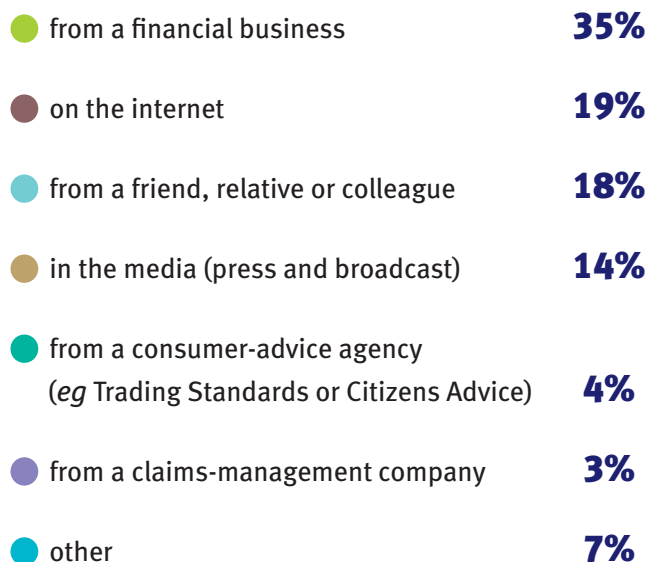
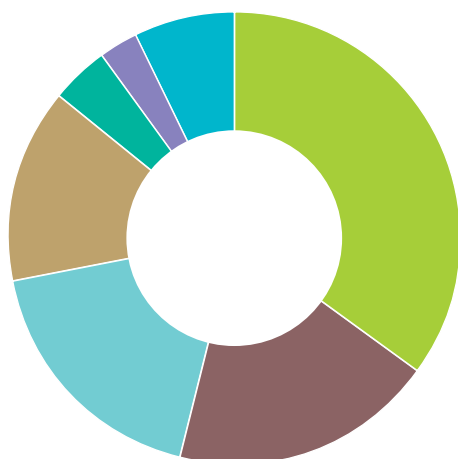
(DE) backgrounds the figure was much lower – at 22%. This year, however, our research suggests that this gap has closed – with 32% of people from unskilled backgrounds saying they'd heard about us from the business.

Our research continues to show that younger people rely far less on the press to find out about us. Compared with people over 55, younger people are twice as likely to hear about us from friends, colleagues and family.

The under-25s are the age group most likely to have found out about us online.

There is more information later in this chapter about general levels of consumer awareness of the ombudsman service.

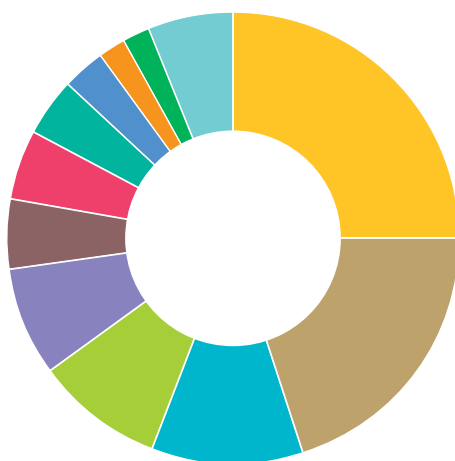
**men are more likely than women to say they found out about us from a financial business**



### newspapers read by the consumers who complained to us

The most popular newspapers among consumers who use us are still the free and regional papers – particularly *Metro*, which is available in 15 urban areas across the UK.

Given the wide distribution and diversity of the readership of the free and regional papers – and generally declining readership of paid-for newspapers – these are particularly effective channels for reaching our customers. However, we continue to find that younger consumers are far less likely than older consumers to have heard about us from a newspaper.



● regional and free papers (including Metro)	<b>25%</b>
● Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday	<b>20%</b>
● Sun	<b>11%</b>
● Mirror	<b>9%</b>
● Times/Sunday Times	<b>8%</b>
● Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph	<b>5%</b>
● Express	<b>5%</b>
● Guardian/Observer	<b>4%</b>
● Financial Times	<b>3%</b>
● Independent/Independent on Sunday	<b>2%</b>
● Star	<b>2%</b>
● other	<b>6%</b>

**the free and regional papers are particularly effective channels for reaching our customers**

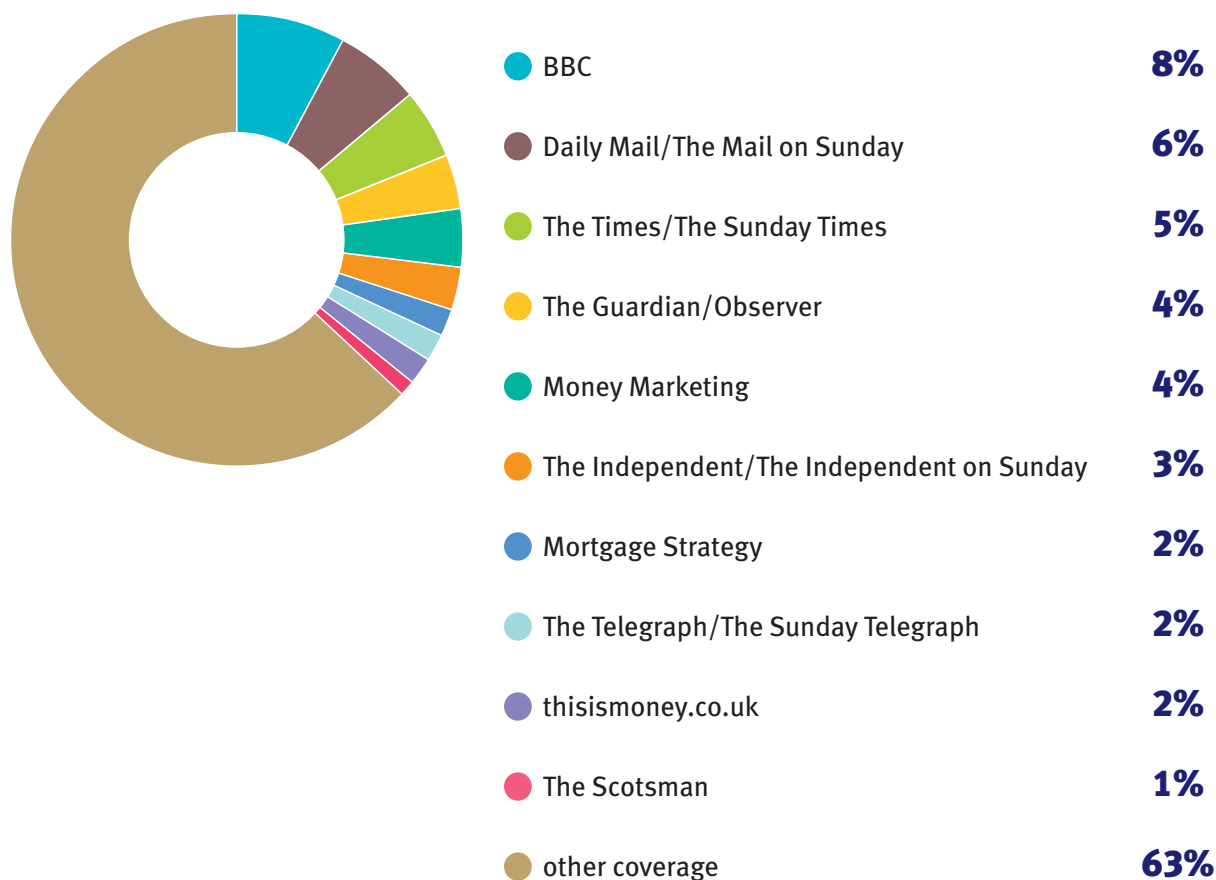
# who complained to us

## media coverage of the ombudsman

Over the last year we've featured in around 6,000 stories – in both the national and the local media. We took part in interviews and phone-ins on national radio stations, and we gave interviews to the national broadcast media – including BBC *Breakfast* and Sky News. We've also featured in more consumer programmes during the year – including the BBC's *Rip Off Britain* and *Watchdog*.

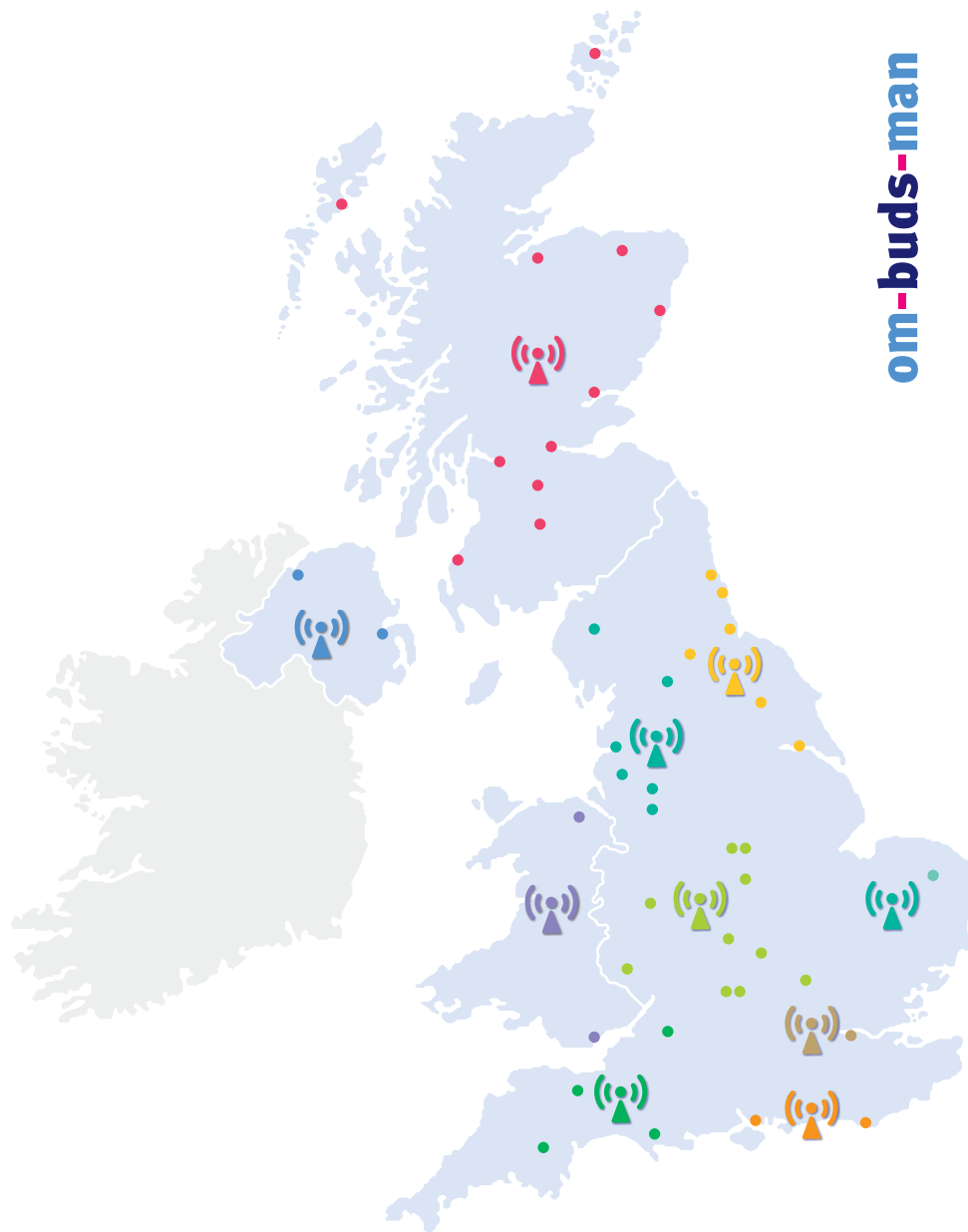
As we explained earlier in this chapter, the regional media is a particularly effective channel for reaching our customers. So we took part in interviews on over 100 local radio stations.

We continued to get significant online coverage. Over 1,000 organisations now link directly from their website to ours – including voluntary and community groups, businesses and business networks, government and public sector bodies, as well as the online versions of traditional newspapers, magazines and trade publications.



local radio regions

-  Scotland
-  North East
-  Northern Ireland
-  North West
-  Wales
-  Midlands
-  East Anglia
-  South East
-  South
-  South West



We have also been increasing our profile on social media sites including Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. During the year our Twitter activities included:

- A partnership with the National Association of Student Money Advisers to tweet student money tips.
- Having direct chats with consumers – and opening up our conversations for other people to join in.
- Tweeting live from our consumer helpline and our technical advice desk to show real-time trends.

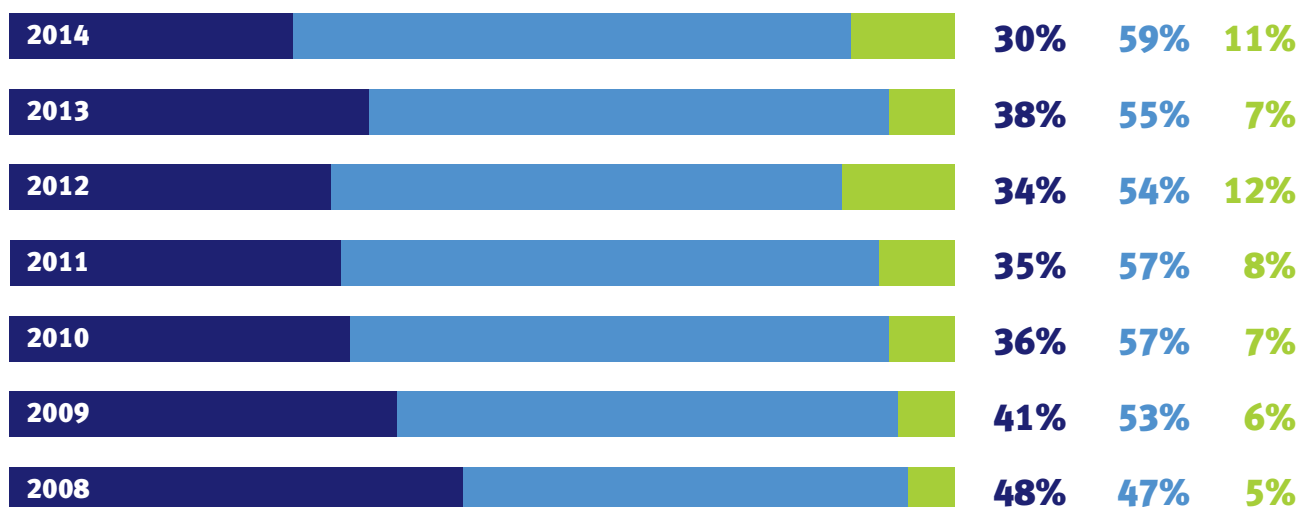
We posted stories on LinkedIn that people working in the financial services sector might find interesting. We also posted stories, video content and graphics on Facebook.

During the year, the number of people who had seen content associated with our Facebook page – by “liking” us, clicking onto our page or seeing it on a friend’s timeline – had almost doubled. There’s more information about the way we used social media during the year on page 88.

Recent research suggests that although young adults are the heaviest users of social media, use is growing the fastest among people aged 50 and over. Engaging all kinds of people over social media is something we plan to do a lot more of over the coming year.

# who complained to us

## the socio-economic background of consumers who complained to the ombudsman



year ended 31 March

- AB professional and managerial
- C1/C2 skilled and semi-skilled
- DE unskilled

Our research suggests that a consumer's socio-economic background influences how likely they are to complain to a financial business. The changes we saw during the year – a higher proportion of complaints from people with skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled backgrounds – partly reflect the fact that we see more complaints about PPI from these consumers.

We also monitor the *outcomes* of complaints from people with different socio-economic backgrounds. During the year – for complaints about *all* financial products – we upheld:

- 51% of complaints from AB consumers – down from 54% last year.
- 59% of complaints from C1/C2 consumers – up from 55% last year.
- 61% of complaints from DE consumers – up from 51% last year.

Again, these differences are likely to reflect the fact that we resolved so many PPI complaints during the year – which a higher proportion of consumers with skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled backgrounds brought to us.

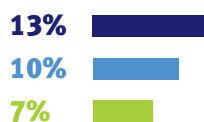


the financial products consumers complained about – by socio-economic background

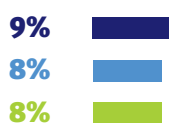
payment protection insurance



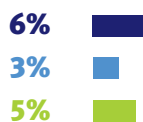
loans



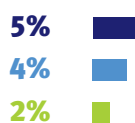
bank accounts



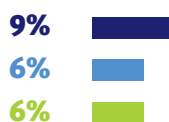
investments and pensions



motor and household insurance



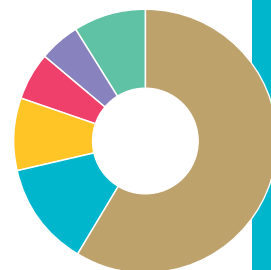
other



During the year we saw more consistency in the products that people from different socio-economic groups complain about. The three most complained-about products – PPI, loans and bank accounts – were the same across all groups.

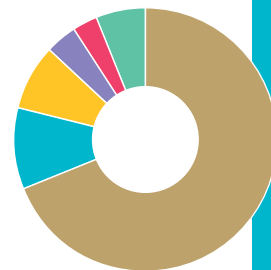
AB professional and managerial

- 60% PPI
- 13% loans and consumer credit
- 9% current and savings accounts
- 6% investments and pensions
- 5% motor and household insurance
- 9% other



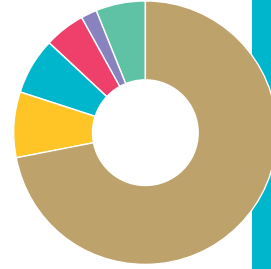
C1/C2 skilled and semi-skilled

- 69% PPI
- 10% loans and consumer credit
- 8% current and savings accounts
- 4% motor and household insurance
- 3% investments and pensions
- 6% other



DE unskilled

- 72% PPI
- 8% current and savings accounts
- 7% loans and consumer credit
- 5% investments and pensions
- 2% motor and household insurance
- 6% other

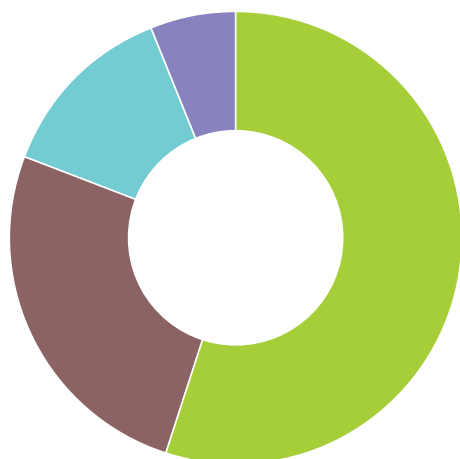


# who complained to us

## the occupational background of consumers who complained to us



● administrative and secretarial	<b>23%</b>
● skilled trades (eg electricians, plumbers, mechanics)	<b>21%</b>
● managers and officials	<b>17%</b>
● professionals	<b>12%</b>
● personal services (eg care assistants, dental nurses)	<b>8%</b>
● sales and customer service	<b>8%</b>
● “elementary” occupations (eg hotel & bar staff, farm workers, postal workers)	<b>7%</b>
● process and plant work (eg machinery operatives, assembly-line workers)	<b>4%</b>



● employed	<b>55%</b>
● retired	<b>26%</b>
● self-employed/running own business	<b>13%</b>
● other	<b>6%</b>

the proportion of employed people using our service went up by 20% this year

The occupational backgrounds of consumers using our service continued to shift during the year. The proportion of professionals fell by 29%, and the number of managers and officials also fell slightly.

The proportion of people working in process and plant jobs rose from 1% to 4% – and, for the first time ever, the group that complained to us the most were people working in administrative and secretarial jobs.

The proportion of employed people using our service went up by 20% during the year. The proportion of retired people fell from 31% to 26%, which is in line with the 7% decrease in complaints from people aged 65 or over.

Although the number of people who told us they are unemployed is still relatively small, we continue to take the needs of jobless people into account in our outreach work.

We've worked closely with a number of agencies that provide people with return-to-work support. We've also visited areas where we have heard that significant redundancies have taken place – and, working in partnership with local community advisers, talked to people about any problems they might be having with loan or credit agreements.

There are more details later in this chapter about our awareness-raising and accessibility work.

We monitor the outcome of the complaints we resolve to make sure we are treating people fairly and equally. The results continue to show that our uphold rate is broadly the same across groups of consumers from different backgrounds.

### access and inclusion

When we were set up by parliament, the intention was to make sure that every consumer in the UK has access to a free ombudsman service.

We continually review how we work to make sure no aspect of anyone's personal circumstances prevents them from being able to reach us. And when they *do* reach us, we want to be certain that there are no barriers to their complaint being decided fairly and impartially.



We also think it's important that the people who work for us reflect the diversity of our customers and stakeholders. There's more information on the diversity of our workforce later in this chapter.

Our equality and diversity strategy is set and monitored by our board and executive team – and we publish it on our website.

During the year we received four independently-assessed awards in recognition of our positive approach to diversity. We are now:

- Accredited *Leaders in Diversity*.
- *Investors in Diversity*, stage one and two.
- For the third year running, a gold standard “diversity assured” organisation.

# who complained to us

Our continued success in this area relies on our working closely with a range of external partners. These include:

- The Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI) – who offer us advice and benchmark us against a range of private and public sector organisations.
- The Equilibrium Network – who assessed our approach to diversity as gold standard.
- The National Centre for Diversity – who accredited us as *Leaders in Diversity*.
- Stonewall, the charity for lesbian, gay and bisexual equality – who help us with recruitment and acknowledge us as a diversity champion.
- A range of disability, mental health and wellbeing charities – including Mencap, CLASP, Samaritans, MIND, Macmillan Cancer Support, Age UK, British Dyslexia Association, National Autistic Society, Action on Hearing Loss, British Heart Foundation, Stroke Association, Parkinson's UK and Alzheimer's Society – who provide training and guidance for our employees on disability issues.

- The National Diversity Awards – whose Positive Role Model for Age award we sponsored and presented this year.
- The British Standards Institute (BSI) – who continue to showcase our partnerships with charities and vulnerable people as part of our early adoption of the voluntary standard BS 18477: *inclusive service provision*.

People from across our organisation meet regularly as our customer service group. The group continually reviews our procedures to make sure we are as easy as possible for our customers to use. Their work this year included running refresher training for colleagues across our casework areas on dealing with customers' different communication needs.



## our omb|assadors

Our omb|assadors are employees who volunteer to help raise awareness of the ombudsman in their own communities – outside work. This helps us reach local groups who are less likely to know about and use our service. In 2013/2014 our omb|assadors:

- Ran a workshop for residents of a life-skills centre for single homeless people.
- Hosted an afternoon tea party and quiz at a local pensioners' club.
- Explained our role to advice workers at a charity providing frontline community and social care.

In the following section, we look at the range of different needs our customers tell us they have – and what we do to meet them.

## disability

Of the consumers whose complaints we resolved during the year, 18% told us they had some form of disability. This remains broadly in line with the government's most recent figures. Most frequently, consumers described their disabilities as relating to mobility, circulation and manual dexterity. And significantly more people than last year said they had a hearing impairment or learning difficulties.



disabilities that consumers with complaints told us about



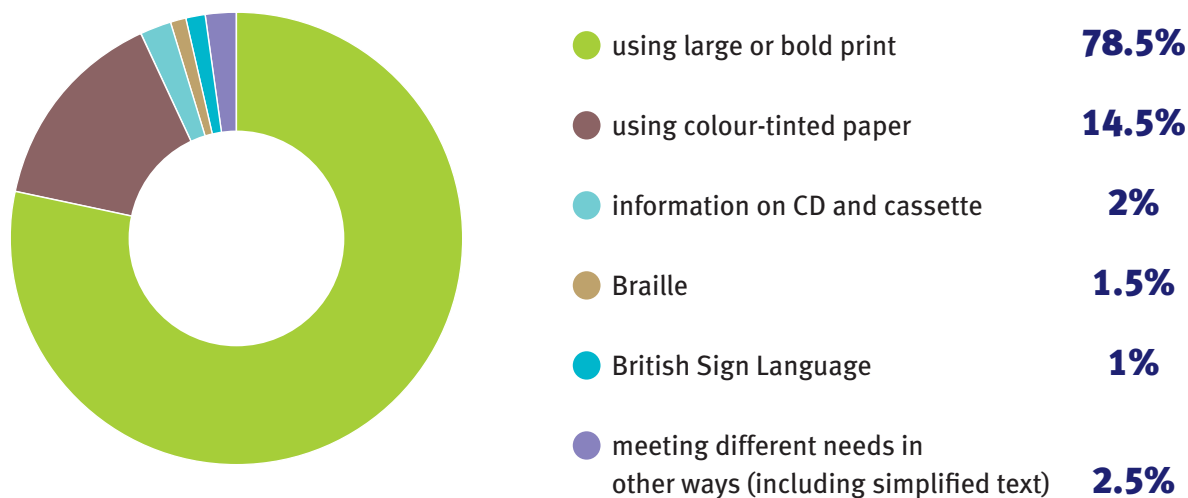
- mobility difficulties **20%**
- arthritis and manual dexterity difficulties **18%**
- hearing impairment **14%**
- heart and circulatory problems (eg stroke) **13%**
- mental health issues **8%**
- organ and nervous-system disorders and disease (eg diabetes, MS) **7%**
- respiratory and breathing difficulties (eg asthma) **6%**
- sight impairment **4%**
- other (including learning difficulties) **10%**



**we provided information in a different format in 3,181 cases**

# who complained to us

## meeting customers' different needs



We ask all consumers when they first contact us if they have any particular needs – and would like us to adapt the way we communicate with them. During 2013/2014 we provided information in a different format in 3,181 cases.

This included using large or bold print in 2,497 cases and colour-tinted paper in 464 cases. And for the first time this year, our new British Sign Language interpreter service allowed customers with hearing difficulties to talk to us in real time.

We train our employees to deal with our customers' different needs with confidence, sensitivity and pragmatism. This includes being perceptive to situations people are experiencing *outside* their complaint – for example, poor physical or mental health, bereavement or unemployment.

Where it's appropriate we use our strong and growing network of support organisations to make sure people get the help they need. These include a range of disability, mental health and wellbeing charities.

In early 2014 the Alzheimer’s Society helped 80 of our staff become “Dementia Friends”. This was in recognition of their understanding of the condition – and the ways they can support people who live with dementia. We were among several independent organisations supporting the Charter for Dementia-Friendly Financial Services – an agreement between financial businesses and the Alzheimer’s Society – which was launched in October 2013.

If a customer tells us they have a particular need or disability we do everything we can to adapt the way we deal with their case – to make our process as easy as possible for them. On page 28, we give some examples of what we did when there was no ready-made solution.

During the year we met people with disabilities – and the carers who support them – at venues ranging from the national *Naidex* exhibition at the NEC to, more locally, Brighton’s *Fed* centre for independent living. And to gain more insight into “hidden” disabilities that our customers might have – such as learning difficulties and mental health issues – we built new relationships with organisations including Mencap and CLASP, the suicide prevention charity.

During the year, we continued to work with disability lifestyle magazines *Able* and *Access* – as well as starting to work with *Pos’ability*. Our own staff talked to these publications about their own different needs – helping to raise our profile as both an accessible service and an inclusive employer.

**WHEELCHAIRS in the WORKPLACE**

We hear from **Nick Atkinson**, an ombudsman at the Financial Ombudsman Service, about how his wheelchair works for him at his place of work

**Can you tell us about your past experience as a wheelchair user?**  
Most people assume that using a wheelchair must make a huge difference to your life, and in some ways it does. I have been a wheelchair user since the age of 16, but odd though it may sound, I don't think too much about my situation. It's not important why I'm a wheelchair user, I simply prefer to get on with life! I've never thought of myself as different to everyone else, so I went to a mainstream school and had a pretty normal upbringing. An approach to life I'm maintaining now that I'm a father.

**How did you come to join the Financial Ombudsman Service?**  
I decided I wanted to go to university, and the opportunity to go to Cambridge came up. I never thought that I would fit in at Cambridge with the type of people who I thought would study there, but I soon changed my mind after visiting and I'm glad I did. My experience taught me to never assume that because you're in a wheelchair you won't fit in.

I graduated with a law degree and took a year off to relax after three years of hard work. I then went on to work as a solicitor for 15 years until I decided I needed a change. A number of possibilities arose, but I saw an advert for a position as an 'ombudsman' and was intrigued. I looked in to what being an ombudsman meant and thought it would be great to have the opportunity to resolve money disputes between consumers and businesses. I get to jettison the legalese and provide straightforward, plain English solutions to problems that can often be complex or distressing.

**How does being a wheelchair user affect your day-to-day life?**  
At work it doesn't make a difference. For me, it's always been about people's attitudes and I'm lucky to work in a place that's in line with my approach to life, in terms of my positivity. If an employer is positive about disability then they'll focus on what's important, like your skills and experience – sorting out the practical matters isn't a big deal.

It's often the day-to-day things that can have the biggest impact. My local authority, for example, was difficult about providing support so I could get out and socialise. They simply couldn't understand why I wouldn't want to just sit at home all the time. More recently I was told I'd have to wait an hour before I could go into a major tourist attraction because they only allowed 'one wheelchair in at a time' – for health and safety!

When I face barriers like that I'll often turn the tables and ask the person responsible if they would accept what they are saying. It's surprising how often that changes their attitude.

**What has been the best moment of your career so far?**  
My first victory in court as a solicitor will always stand out in my mind. Now, I find it very satisfying getting a case where a consumer has a genuine problem that the bank or business has not dealt with properly and being able to put that right for them. Being able to tell a consumer, who has been trying desperately to battle against a big bank, that I agree with them and leaving their relief is up there as a highlight.

**What would your advice be to other wheelchair users returning to work?**  
It's not easy finding a job at the moment, and it's made harder if you have a disability. Focus on the employer with a good attitude. It can be difficult when you get a rejection call or email, particularly if you think it's down to the employer having a bad view of disability. I always think it's worth remembering they're the ones who will miss out on the talent you have to offer. And most of all, good luck!

**Further Information**  
The Financial Ombudsman Service is the free service that can help you sort out problems with your insurance, bank account or credit card provider. If you've faced a problem, give us a call on 0300 123 9 123 or visit [www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk)

# who complained to us

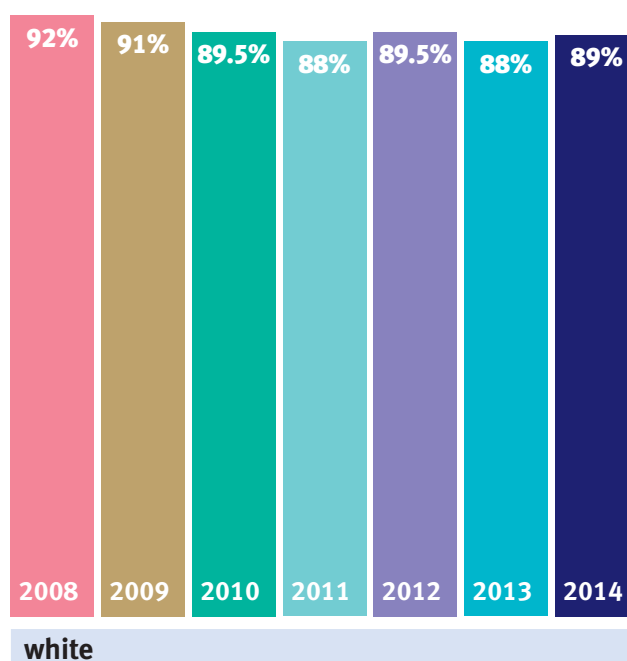
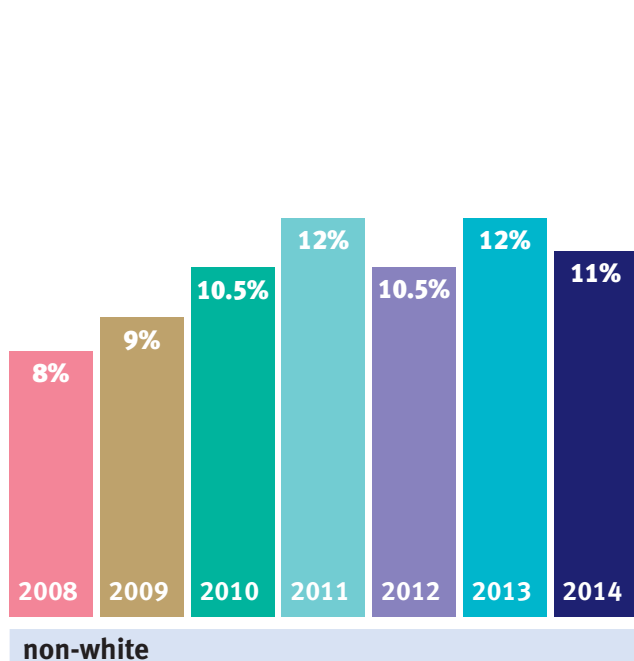
## consumers from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds

Of the consumers who brought complaints to us during the year, 11% told us they came from a non-white ethnic background (a similar proportion to the previous year).

There was some variation in the types of products these consumers complained about. For example, 80% of Black/Black British consumers' cases related to PPI, compared with 47% of complaints from Asian consumers.

White and non-white consumers were equally likely to have their complaints upheld – and also equally likely to ask for an ombudsman's final decision.

## the ethnic background of consumers who complained to us



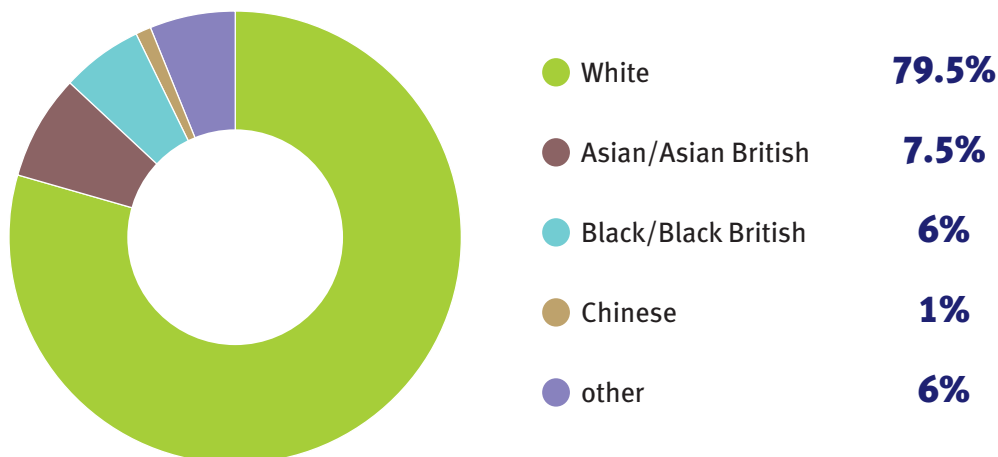
Our targeted media work during the year included partnerships with women's magazines, *Black Hair* and *Pride*. Some of our own staff – who themselves read these magazines – featured in articles on shopping, holidays and relationships. This helped to highlight the relevance of our service in everyday life – and the importance of consumer rights more generally. Our research shows that an increasing number of Black/Black British consumers can

name our service without any prompting – 17% this year, compared with 14% last year.

We continued to share practical financial management tips with readers of *The Asian Today*. And we also talked to consumers face-to-face at multicultural community events – including *melas* (gatherings) in Birmingham, Leicester and London.



the ethnic background of our website users



During the year the biggest percentage rise in requests for our translation service was for Middle Eastern languages. We used six different Middle Eastern languages across 298 cases – nearly half as many again as in 2012/2013.

European languages aside, we handled 1,001 cases in a range of 19 Asian languages (6% more than last year), and 47 cases in three African languages. There is more information in the chapter called “the complaints we received” on the work we have done with consumers whose first language isn’t English.



# who complained to us

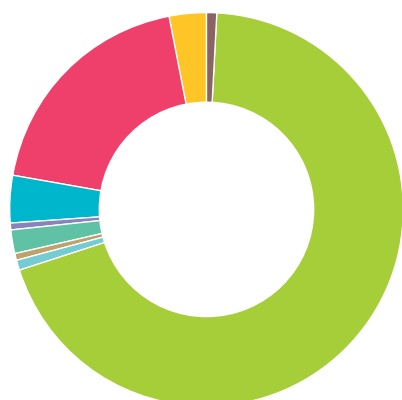
## faith and religion

Once a consumer's complaint has been resolved, we ask them to give us some more information about themselves. The survey we send people includes an optional question about their beliefs.

The information we gather from this question helps us make sure we're both handling complaints and making decisions impartially.



## faith and religion of the consumers who complained to us



● Buddhist	<b>1%</b>
● Christian	<b>69%</b>
● Hindu	<b>1%</b>
● Jewish	<b>0.5%</b>
● Muslim	<b>2%</b>
● Sikh	<b>0.5%</b>
● other religion	<b>4%</b>
● no religion	<b>19%</b>
● prefer not to say	<b>3%</b>

These figures are very similar to those we've seen in previous years. Although they are broadly in line with statistics from the 2011 UK census, we did find one or two slight variations, including:

- More complaints from consumers who told us they were Christian (69% in our survey and 60% across the UK).
- Fewer complaints from consumers who told us they were Muslim (2% in our survey and 4% across the UK).

Looking at the outcome of the complaints we settled this year, we found slight variations between faith groups. For example, we upheld proportionally more complaints involving Christian consumers than Hindu consumers.

This reflects differences in the products that different groups complained about. In particular, Christians made up a large proportion of the consumers who complained to us about mis-sold PPI. And because we uphold a relatively high number of PPI cases, the *overall* uphold rate for Christian consumers was relatively higher.

It is also possible that different religious attitudes towards credit and interest affect the types of complaints consumers refer to us – and therefore the uphold rates between different faith groups.

#### younger people

The under-35s are proportionally under-represented among people who use the ombudsman. The difference is particularly pronounced for the under-25s.

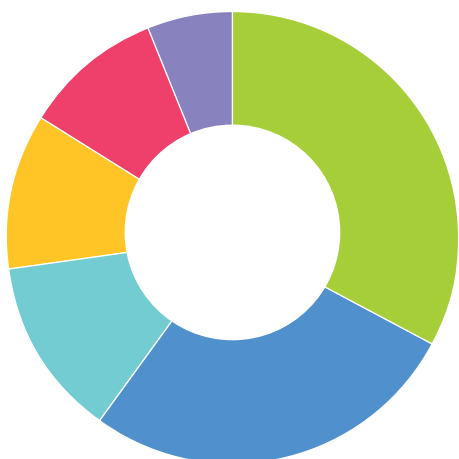
This largely reflects the fact that, in general, people under 25 have fewer financial products than older, more financially-established consumers. That said, it's evident from the complaints we receive from younger people that they *are* using bank accounts, credit cards, loans and insurance products.

**consumers under 25 were the only age group to complain more about their bank accounts than any other product**

Consumers under 25 were the only age group to complain to us more about their bank accounts than about any other financial product. And they were the only age group where PPI wasn't the most complained-about product.

# who complained to us

## what consumers under 25 complained to us about



- bank accounts **33%**
- PPI **27%**
- car/motorbike insurance **13%**
- loans **11%**
- consumer credit **10%**
- other **6%**

In our research among consumers generally – rather than those who had actually used our service – we found that 11% of people under 25 said they’d had a problem with a financial product or service. Although this is almost double the previous year’s figure, it is still significantly less than the proportion of consumers aged 25-35 (18%) and 45-54 (26%).

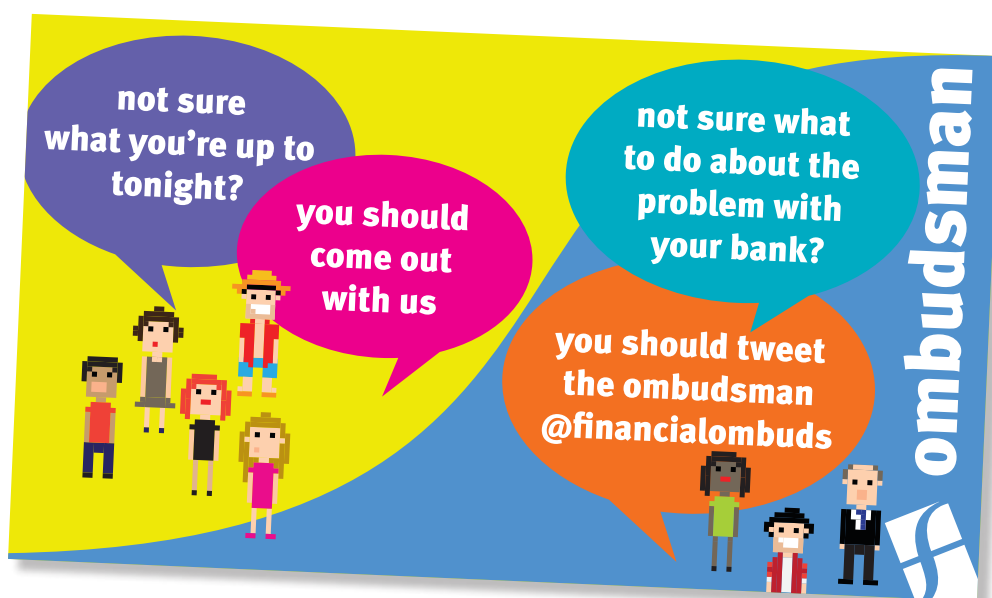
It could be that younger people have fewer financial products than older people – and so haven’t yet encountered a problem.

But there could be more complex reasons. For example, younger consumers – who have grown up with technology that encourages immediate, informal interactions – might prefer to avoid

processes they see as “formal”, like making a complaint. This is why we’re working hard to make ourselves accessible in different ways.

Or it could be that younger consumers are interacting with financial businesses differently – and that the businesses involved are generally resolving queries before they become problems. For example, many financial businesses now have a dedicated customer service Twitter account.

Our research this year found that 57% of people under 25 hadn’t heard of the ombudsman service. However, awareness among the next age group was far higher. One in five consumers aged between 25 and 34 could name us without any prompting.



During the year we continued to try to raise awareness of our service among younger consumers. This included:

- Partnering with publications and websites aimed at younger people – for example, offering tips for money management in *The Festival Guide*, *Gap Year Travel Guide*, and on StudentTimes.org and StudentBeans.com.
- Establishing our presence across a range of social media – and using these to raise awareness of consumer rights, money matters and our role.
- Promoting our service on posters in Glasgow pubs and clubs.
- Working with the National Association of Student Money Advisers on a range of activities – for example, offering money tips on Twitter during National Student Money Week.
- Meeting students at freshers' fairs and providing students' unions with our leaflets and posters.
- Supporting Trading Standards' *Young Consumers of the Year* competition and the young consumers-v-parliamentarians money quiz.
- Promoting the film we made last year with youth workshop SE1 United – which continued to be shown at cinemas across the UK.
- For the second year, sponsoring and presenting a National Diversity Award. The Positive Role Model for Age, Aaron Anderson, overcame childhood trauma and addiction to set up a local business community and help 180 young people gain new qualifications.

### older people

During the year we saw a smaller proportion of complaints from people aged 55 or over (35% compared with 41% in the previous year). We also saw a smaller proportion of complaints from retired people (26% compared with 31%).

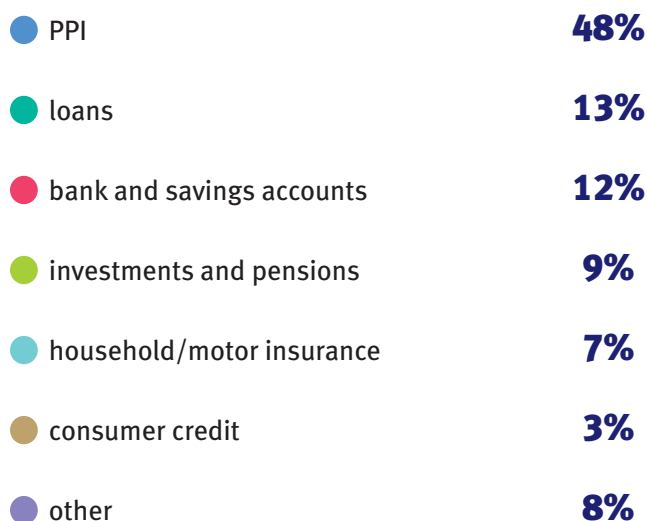
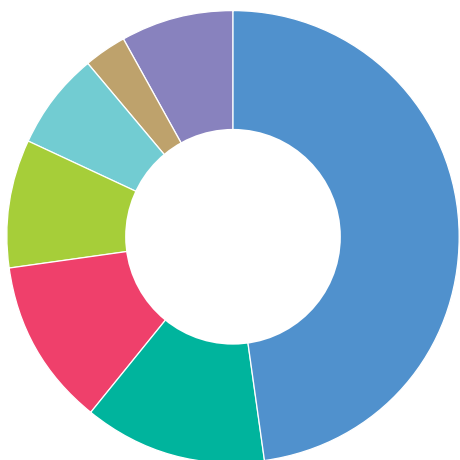
The proportion of consumers over 65 who referred complaints to us was also lower this year. However, people in this age group still account for 17% of the people who use our service.

Consumers over 65 are much more likely to ask for an ombudsman's final decision if they're unhappy with our initial view on their complaint. This perhaps reflects the types of products involved in these consumers' complaints – with older people more likely to have more complex products such as pensions and investments, where more money might be at stake.



# who complained to us

## what people over 65 complained to us about



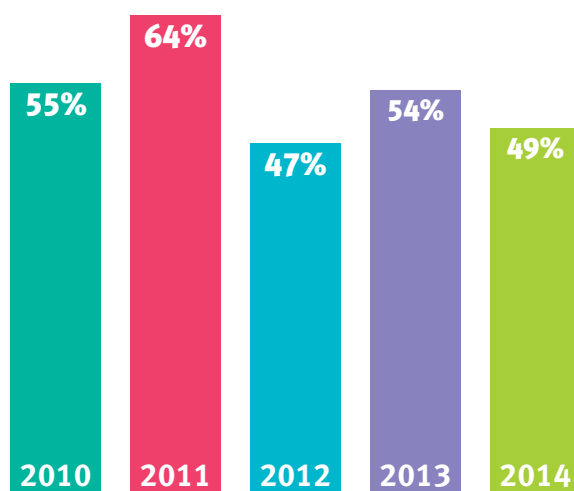
As part of our outreach work we regularly talk face-to-face with older consumers and to the organisations that represent their interests. This gives us a better understanding of the issues that older people might face when they're using financial services. Based on some of the things we'd been hearing, we produced a special issue of *ombudsman news* in August 2013 in partnership with Age UK and Which?

Awareness of the ombudsman service has been steadily rising among consumers over 65. Our research this year showed that over three quarters of people in this age group have some awareness of our service – up from 70% last year – although this is still lower than awareness among people aged 45 to 64.

We mentioned in last year's *annual review* that our research showed a divergence among older people – between those who use technology and those who don't.



## % of over-65s who said they had no internet access



We saw similar results in our research this year, although the percentage of older people who said they didn't have access to the internet went down slightly. 18% of consumers aged between 55 and 64 told us that they didn't have internet access – rising to 49% among the over-65s. In contrast, just 3% of people between 25 and 34 said they didn't have internet access.

### the diversity of our own workforce

The diversity of our workforce stayed broadly the same as we reported last year.

Across our workforce, 45% are male and 55% female. At the end of the year, women accounted for 50% of our non-executive board, 57% of our executive team and 47% of our panel of ombudsmen.

51% of people working at the ombudsman service at the end of the year were aged between 25 and 35 – with 4% of our workforce older than 55. The age of our employees ranged from 17 to 70 years old.

37% of our employees are from non-white backgrounds, 2% have a disability, and 4% have indicated as part of our equal opportunities monitoring that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

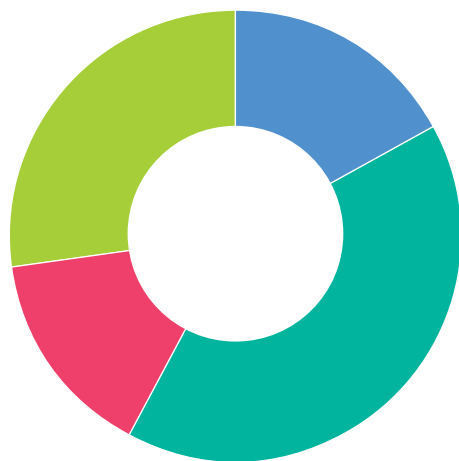
In February 2014 the *Sunday Times* Best Companies survey confirmed once again that we are a “Top 100” organisation to work for. Research suggests that the most motivated and enthusiastic staff provide the best customer service – and taking part in the survey helps us measure how we’re doing in this area.



om-buds-man

who complained to us

### levels of consumer awareness of the ombudsman service



- people who could name us without any prompting **20%**
- people who said they *definitely* knew of us when they were told our name **44%**
- people who said they *may* have heard of us when they were told our name **13%**
- people who didn't recognise our name or know who we were **23%**

Gathering insight into people's attitudes towards their consumer rights – and linked to that, their understanding of “the ombudsman” – is essential to planning our awareness-raising work.

We need to know:

- Who uses us and why.
- Why people might *not* be using us.
- What we can do to make it easier for people to come to us if they need to.

This time last year, 17% people could name us “unprompted” – that is, they named “the Financial Ombudsman” when asked where they would go with an unresolved complaint about a financial business. Our latest results indicate that this has increased to

# who complained to us

one in five people – rising to one in four when looking at consumers aged between 35 and 64.

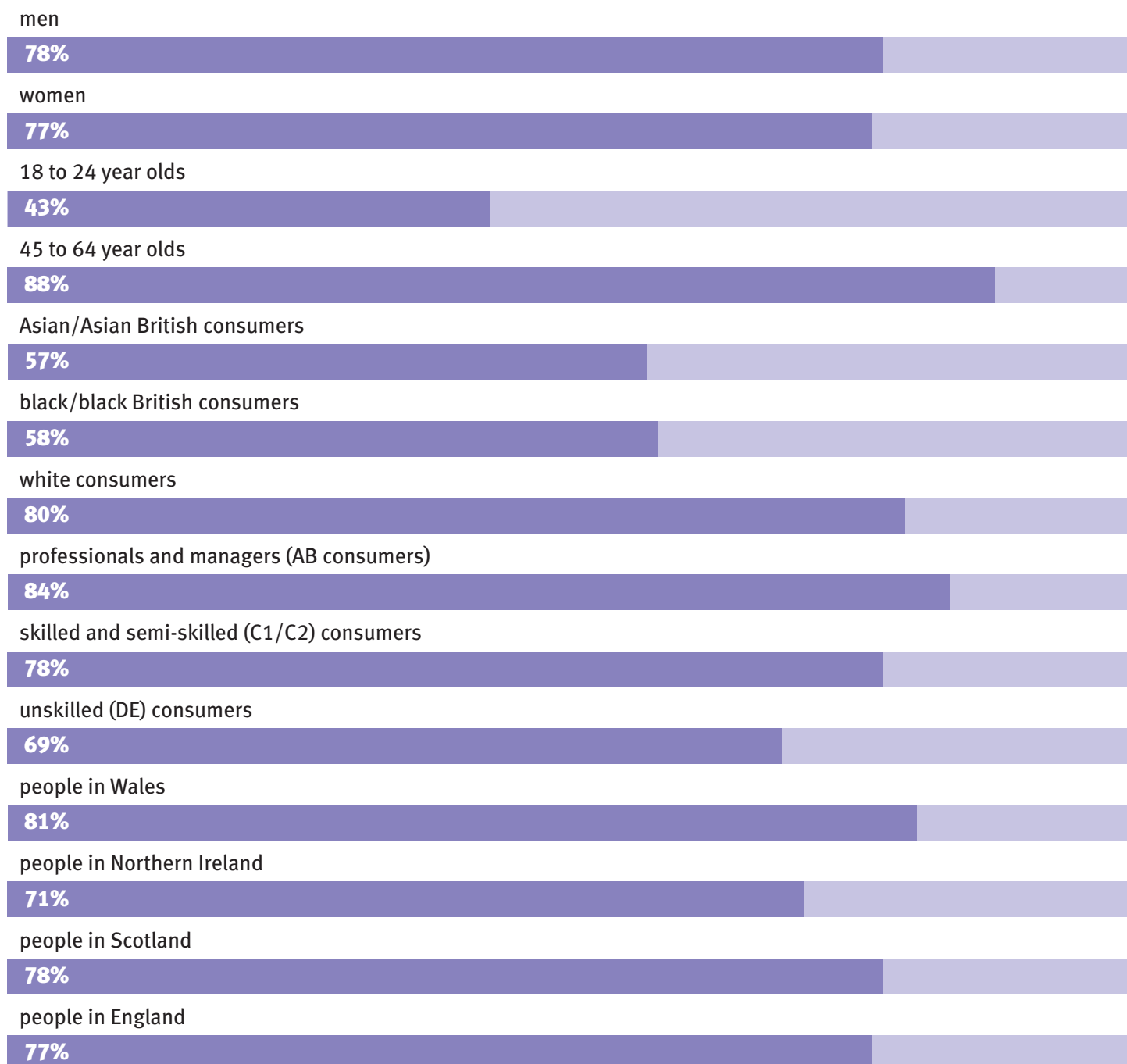
In addition, a further 57% of people said they knew about us when they were prompted with our name.

This means that, in total, 77% of adults were aware of the ombudsman (an increase from 73% in the previous year).

We try never to call ourselves “FOS” – which we know many people find confusing. Instead, we have been focusing on making ourselves more pronounceable – om-buds-man – and more approachable.



## awareness of the ombudsman service across different groups of consumers





**consumers who *don't* use our service**

It's also important that we try to understand how consumers *feel* about making complaints. This helps us better understand people's choices about what to do – and how far to take things – when a problem arises.

This year 18% of people told us they'd had a problem with a financial product or service – compared with 16% in the previous year.

Of these people, nearly two thirds (63%) said they went on to make a formal complaint to the business involved (68% in the previous year). And 72% of the people who made a complaint said they were satisfied with the business's response.

Looking at the 28% of people who weren't satisfied, 39% took no further action – and didn't follow up their complaint with us or with another organisation. This compares with 56% of consumers in the previous year.

We asked the people who had chosen to give up their complaint why they had made this decision.

Their answers are on the next page.

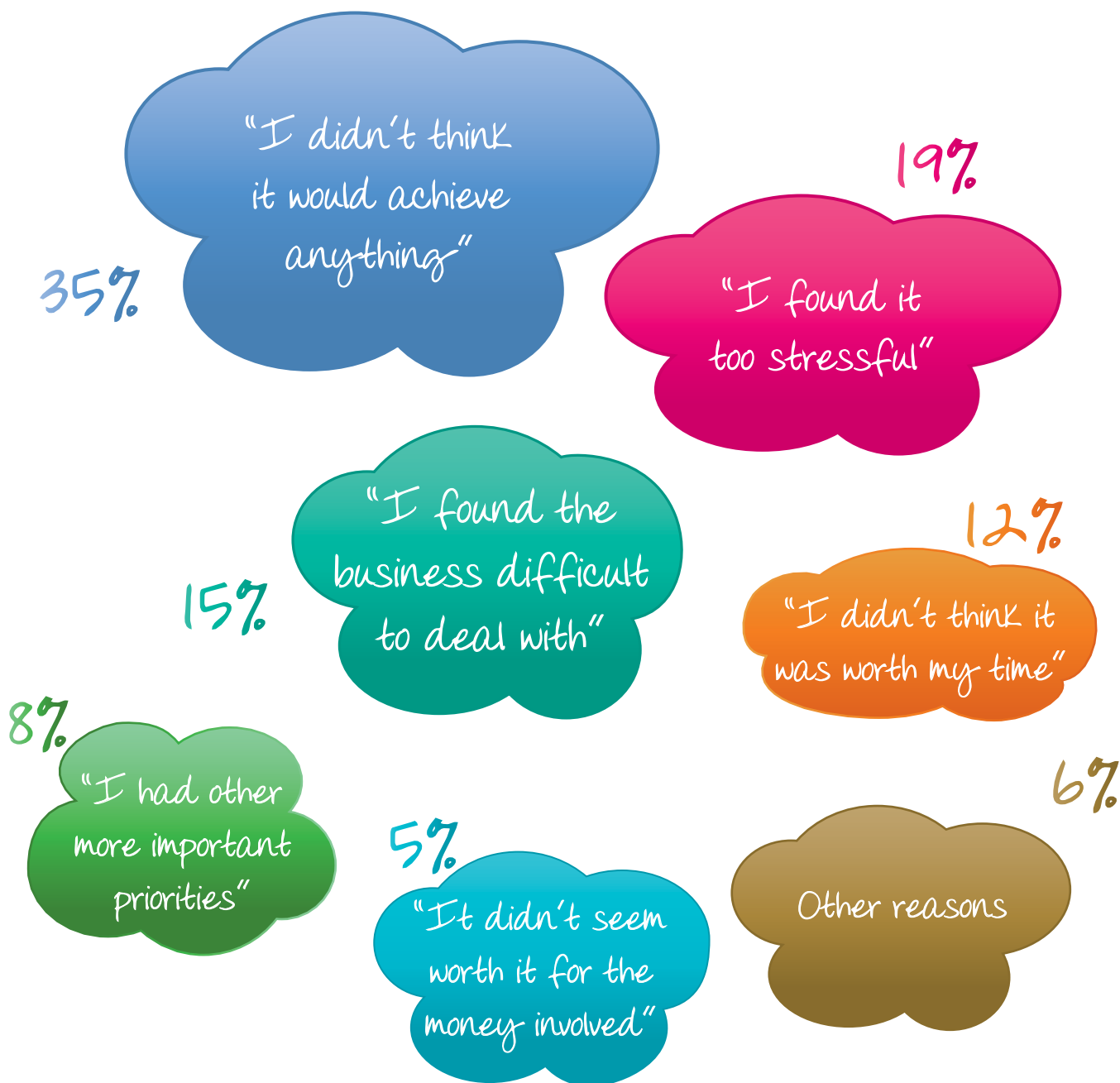
**I had other more important priorities**



**I found it too stressful**

# who complained to us

why consumers said they didn't pursue a complaint – even if they were unhappy with the business's response



The majority of consumers who didn't pursue complaints – either with the business in question or with the ombudsman service – said that they couldn't see the point in complaining, or that they would find complaining too stressful.

During the year the proportion of people who said they didn't pursue a complaint because they "found the financial business difficult to deal with" increased from 11% to 15%.

## trust

It's vital to our work that people trust us to resolve complaints fairly and impartially. However, we know from some of the conversations we have that not everyone understands our role. To change this, we first need to understand people's expectations of "the ombudsman" – and any misconceptions that might exist.

For example, over the past year, we met thousands of consumers face-to-face – at events ranging from disability exhibitions to student advice fairs. Some people thought we were the regulator, asking "*how can you let them get away with it?*" In the eyes of these consumers, we are part of an industry they mistrust – and they might not use our service as a result.

On the other hand, some people thought we were a consumer champion, saying "*we need someone like you to stand up for us*". This is something it is equally important we clarify. It is likely, for example, that someone who thinks we are "on their side" – but whose complaint we don't uphold – will be more disappointed with our service than someone whose complaint we didn't uphold, but who knew from the start that we would be impartial.

Despite these tensions, 70% of adults across the UK say they would trust us. This compares with 75% of people who say they would trust their local Trading Standards, and 81% of people who say they would trust Citizens Advice – both of which *are* consumer bodies.

However, levels of consumer trust in financial services trade associations remain significantly lower at 47%.

Among people who knew who we were but hadn't actually used us, 15% would have total trust in us. This compares with 29% who would trust Citizens Advice completely and 3% who would trust a financial services trade association completely.

However, 65% of the people who had actually used our service had total trust in us – more than four times the level of trust among people who hadn't used us.

**70% of adults  
across the UK said they  
would trust us**

# who complained to us

## how consumers who had an enquiry handled by us rated our service

it was easy to find out how to contact us



the enquiry was dealt with promptly



we showed an interest in the individual enquiry



we knew enough to be able to answer questions



we gave a clear explanation of what would happen next



we did what we said we would do



● consumers who agree ● consumers who disagree

## how consumers who had a complaint decided by us rated our service

we handle complaints efficiently and professionally



we get to the bottom of complaints and deal with the issues thoroughly



our decisions on cases are fair and unbiased



we settle disputes within an acceptable length of time



we provide a good dispute-resolution service for consumers



we provide a service that you would recommend to family and friends



● consumers who agree ● consumers who express no view ● consumers who disagree

**80% of people said they would recommend us**

During the year we asked consumers what they thought about our service. This included email surveys completed by 27,000 people who had phoned our consumer helpline, and postal surveys sent to 11,000 people whose complaints we had looked into.

We were pleased that people rated certain aspects of our service so highly – like our staff’s knowledge and genuine interest in their enquiry. People also said they were more satisfied with our timeliness than in previous years. This may be because of the work we’ve done to explain to people with PPI complaints why they’re having to wait longer than we’d like.

But we know that resolving complaints as quickly as people want is the area where we perform least well – largely because of the surge of PPI complaints and the challenges of gearing up our operations to deal with unprecedented demand. There is more information about our timeliness in the chapter called “how we dealt with the complaints”.

During the year 80% of people whose complaints we handled said they would recommend us to family and friends – up from 72% last year. Having our service recommended by customers is important to us because our research shows that many consumers first heard about us from a friend, relative or colleague.

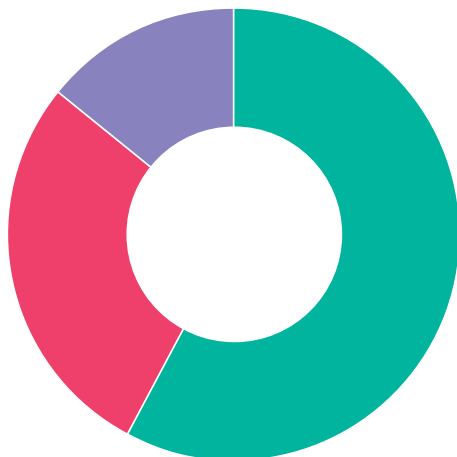
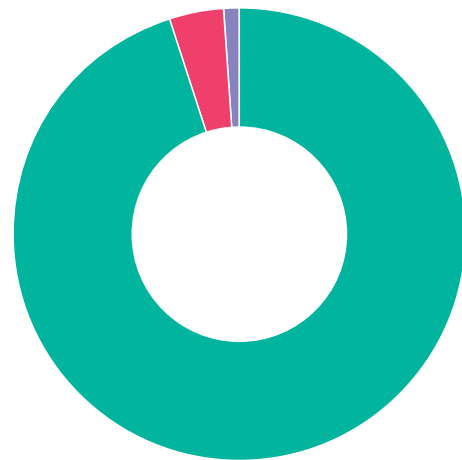
**how many people think we’re ...**

	very	quite	not really	not at all
<b>helpful and approachable</b>	48%	29%	11.5%	11.5%
<b>independent and impartial</b>	49%	28%	11%	12%
<b>authoritative and knowledgeable</b>	51%	27%	10.5%	11.5%
<b>capable and efficient</b>	47%	24%	15%	14%
<b>respected and influential</b>	49%	28%	10%	13%

## how the outcome of a complaint affected consumers' views of our service

In our postal surveys, of those consumers who said they felt they'd "won" their complaint:

- 95% gave us positive feedback on the level of service we provided – up from 90% last year.
- 4% gave us negative feedback – down from 7% last year.
- 1% expressed no view.



In contrast, of those consumers who said they felt they'd "lost" their complaint:

- 58% gave us positive feedback – up from 48% last year.
- 28% gave us negative feedback – down from 39% last year.
- 14% expressed no view.

96% of consumers who felt they had “won” their complaint said they would recommend our service, whereas 65% of people who felt they had “lost” their case said they would recommend us.

Although people would clearly like to have their cases upheld, the following comments from consumers indicate the wider aspects of customer experience that really matter to people.

This shows how people’s perception of our service tends to be influenced by how they see the outcome of their own complaint. Even so, many of those people who didn’t get the outcome they had hoped for still expressed some positive views about their experience of bringing a complaint to us.

*‘It makes me feel as though it’s my fault for not understanding the process.’*

*‘I want to talk to someone who’s real and sensible instead of someone who’s following a script to try and defend themselves.’*

*‘I can’t stand being passed from pillar to post for weeks on end. How hard can it be to just sort it out?’*

*‘I don’t need endless detailed explanations about things that aren’t relevant to me.’*

*‘I just want someone to explain what’s happened and what I need to do.’*

# who complained to us

## our website users

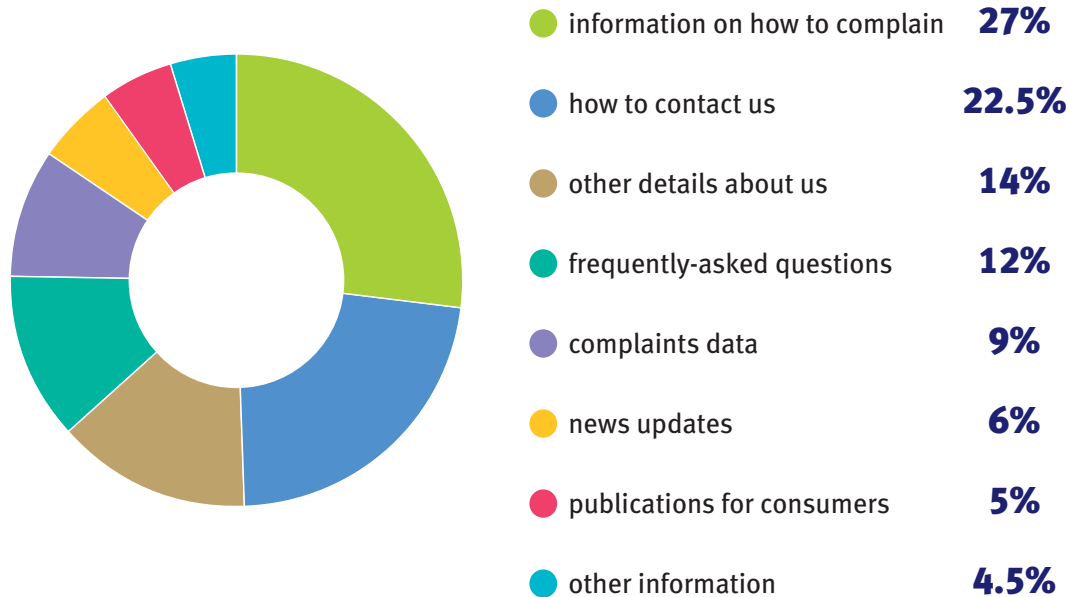
Each day during the year an average of 17,100 people logged onto our website – [www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk). There is more information in the chapter called “the complaints we received” about how our website forms a major part of our frontline service to customers.

To find out more about our website users, we run an online survey each year. This year we found that:

- 87% of users were consumers and 13% were using our website for business purposes.
- 55% of users were male and 45% female.
- 72% of users said they would *definitely* visit our website again and 23% said they would *probably* do so.

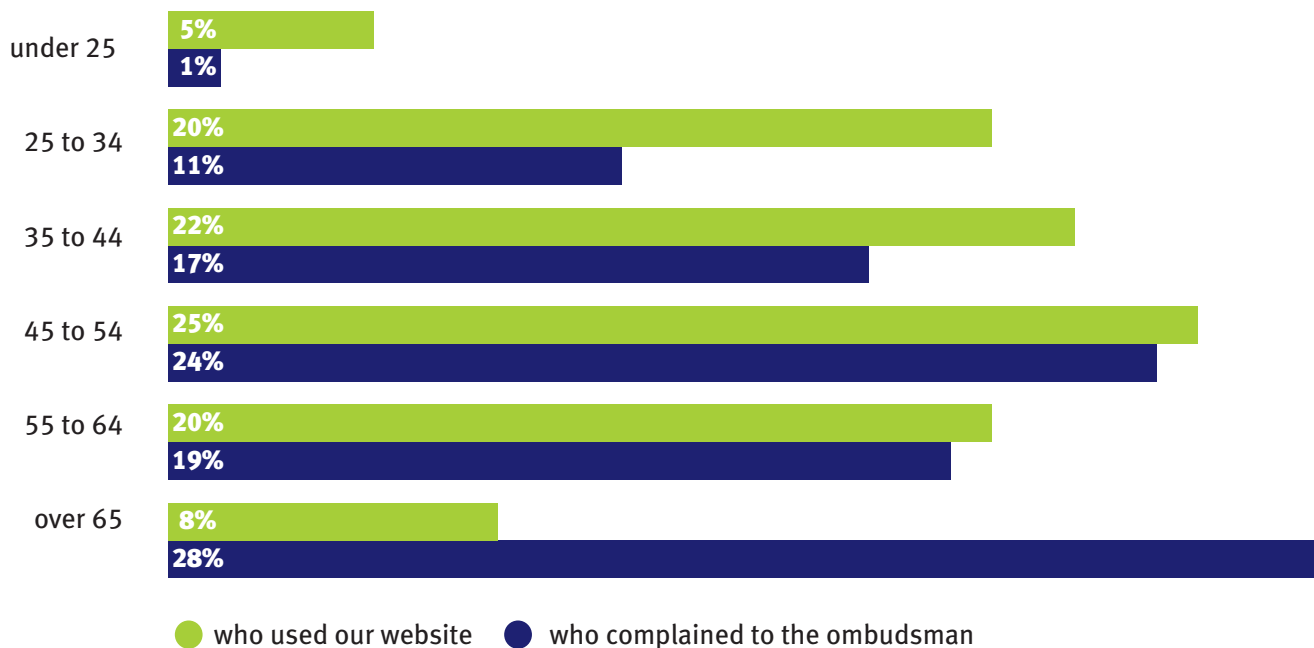
Knowing what kinds of people do and don't use our website helps us make decisions on its design and content. And it helps when we're deciding the best channels of communication to get our messages across effectively.

## the information people looked for on our website





the age of our website users



The proportions of people in each age group who used our website during the year remained very similar to previous years.

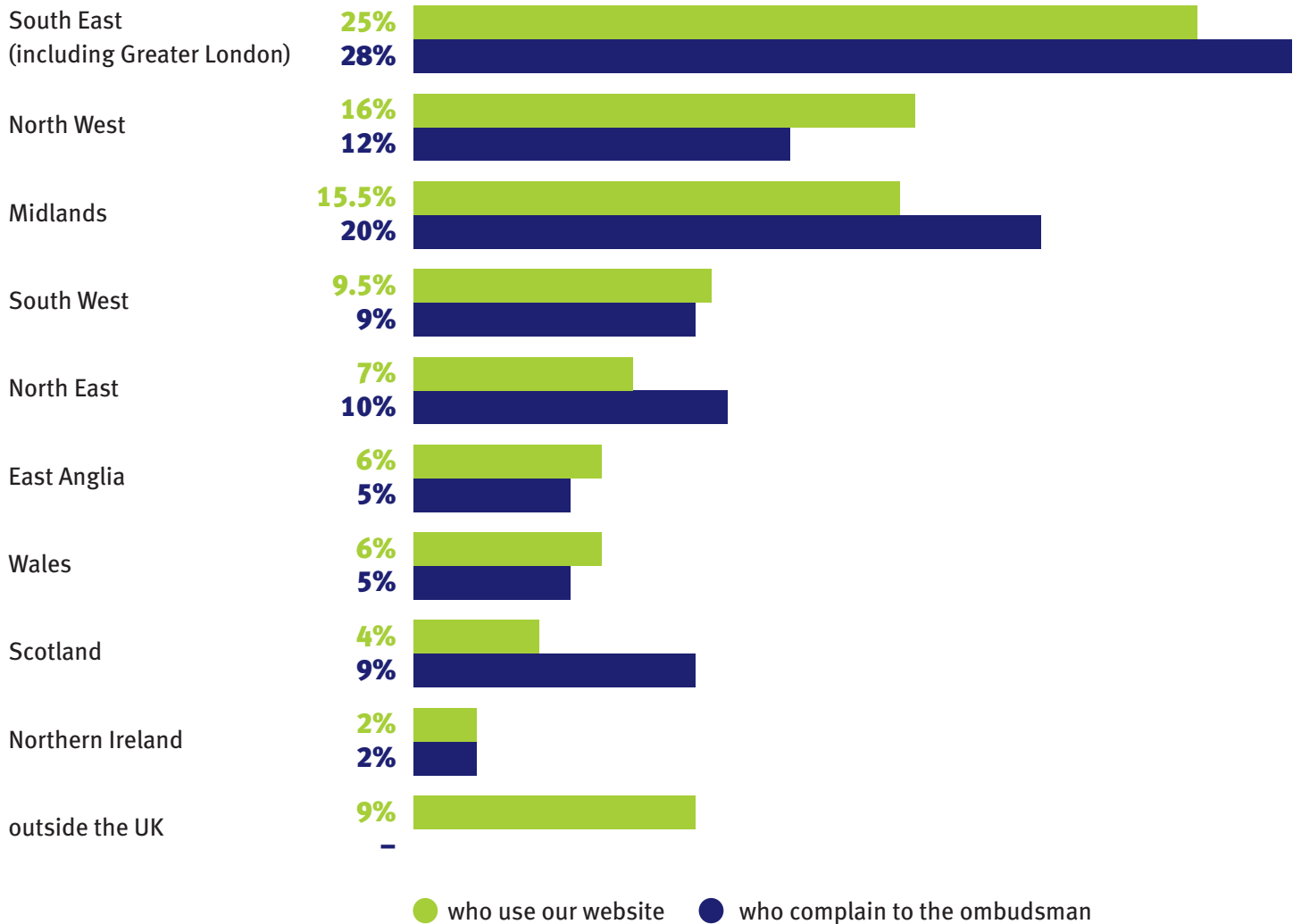
Consumers over 65 continued to be significantly more likely to refer a complaint to us than they are to look at our website. This may reflect the fact that a relatively high proportion of older people still don't – or can't – use the internet.

Research we carried out during the year shows that 18% of people between 55 and 64 who use our service don't have internet access – rising to 49% of the over 65s.

On the other hand, people between 25 and 34 are around twice as likely to visit our website as they are to refer a complaint to us.

# who complained to us

## where our website users came from

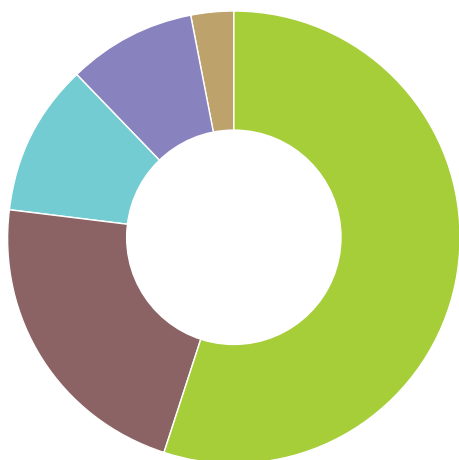


The spread of people using our website across the UK is very similar to previous years.

Our website attracts a significant number of overseas visitors.

Their feedback shows that they are comparing the approach we take to resolving different types of financial complaints in the UK with approaches taken in their own countries.

how people found out about our website



- through an internet search engine **55%**
- from a financial business **22%**
- from a friend or colleague **11%**
- through a link on another website **9%**
- from a newspaper or magazine **3%**

The majority of people continue to say that they found our website through web searches – mostly using Google. Other websites that direct many people to ours continue to include [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk), [moneysavingexpert.com](http://moneysavingexpert.com) and [thisismoney.co.uk](http://thisismoney.co.uk).



the words people search for to get to our website

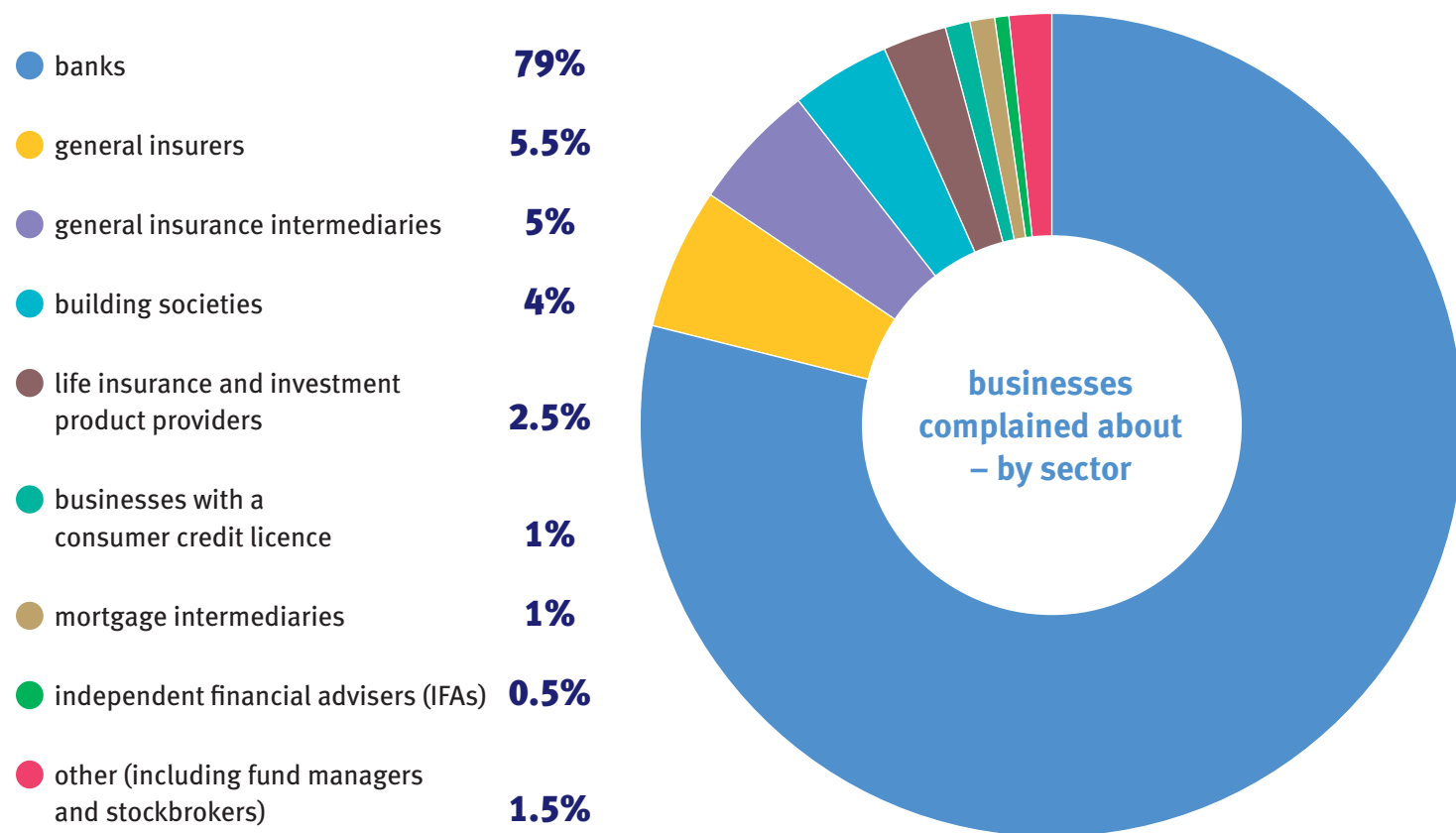




who the complaints were about

# who the complaints were about

## businesses we received complaints about – by sector



These charts show how the new complaints we received during the year were spread across the different sectors of the financial services industry.

Once again, the proportion of complaints involving banks rose during the year – from 76% last year to 79%. This reflects the high proportion of complaints about payment protection insurance (PPI) that we continued to receive during the year.

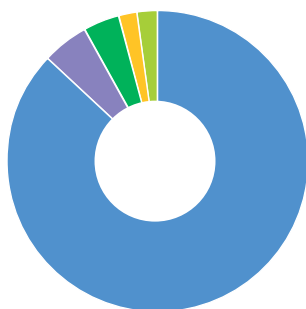
The proportions of cases involving all other sectors remained broadly similar to the previous year.

**products we received complaints about – by sector**

These charts split the new complaints we received into product areas – and show how these complaints were spread across the different sectors of the industry.

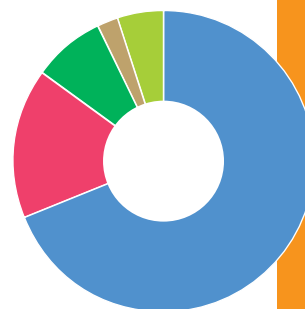
**complaints about PPI**

- 87%** banks
- 5%** insurance intermediaries
- 4%** building societies
- 2%** general insurers
- 2%** other



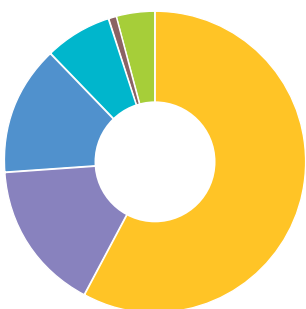
**complaints about mortgages**

- 69%** banks
- 16%** mortgage intermediaries
- 8%** building societies
- 2%** IFAs
- 5%** other (including non-bank mortgage providers)



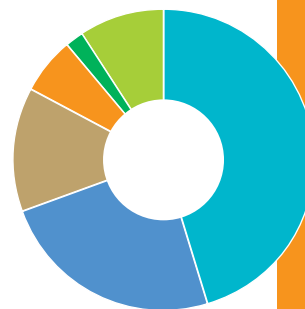
**complaints about general insurance (excluding PPI)**

- 58%** general insurers
- 16%** insurance intermediaries
- 14%** banks
- 7%** life insurance and investment product providers
- 1%** Society of Lloyd's
- 4%** other (including cash-plan health insurers)



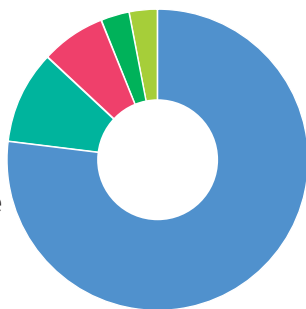
**complaints about investment products**

- 46%** life insurance and investment product providers
- 24%** banks
- 13%** IFAs
- 6%** stockbrokers and fund managers
- 2%** building societies
- 9%** other



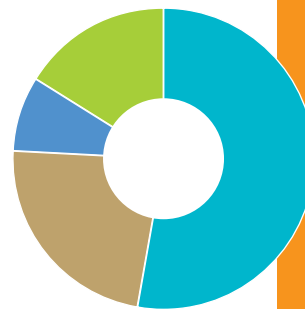
**complaints about banking and credit**

- 77%** banks
- 10%** businesses with a consumer credit licence
- 7%** mortgage intermediaries
- 3%** building societies
- 3%** other



**complaints about pensions**

- 53%** life insurance and investment product providers
- 23%** IFAs
- 8%** banks
- 16%** other



# who the complaints were about

## range of case outcomes

On page 78 we show the outcome of the complaints we handled during the course of the year – split by the different financial products involved. Looking at the outcomes by product, the proportion of cases we upheld in favour of consumers ranged from 2% (in complaints about SERPs) to 80% (in complaints about interest-rate hedging products).

On page 78 we also refer to the six-monthly sets of data published on our website – relating to around 200 individual businesses that together account for 95% of our complaints workload.

This data shows the number of new complaints – and the proportion of complaints we upheld in favour of consumers – for each of these businesses. This uphold rate varied substantially from business to business during the year – from 2% to 94%.

The chart below shows the outcome of cases we handled during the year – by financial sector.

## % of cases we upheld – by financial sector

intermediaries selling PPI

76%

banks

62%

general insurers

52%

businesses with a consumer credit licence

48%

independent financial advisers (IFAs)

42%

intermediaries selling general insurance

39%

intermediaries selling banking and/or mortgage products

37%

life insurance and investment product providers

29%

building societies

9%



## how the complaints referred to us were spread across the businesses we cover

**2,502 businesses** each had **1 complaint** referred to the ombudsman service during the year

**710 businesses** each had **2 complaints** to the ombudsman

**335 businesses** each had **3 complaints** to the ombudsman

**680 businesses** each had **between 4 and 10 complaints** to the ombudsman

**220 businesses** each had **between 11 and 20 complaints** to the ombudsman

**190 businesses** each had **between 21 and 50 complaints** to the ombudsman

**93 businesses** each had **between 51 and 100 complaints** to the ombudsman

**76 businesses** each had **between 101 and 250 complaints** to the ombudsman

**42 businesses** each had **between 251 and 500 complaints** to the ombudsman

**58 businesses** each had **more than 500 complaints** referred to the ombudsman during the year

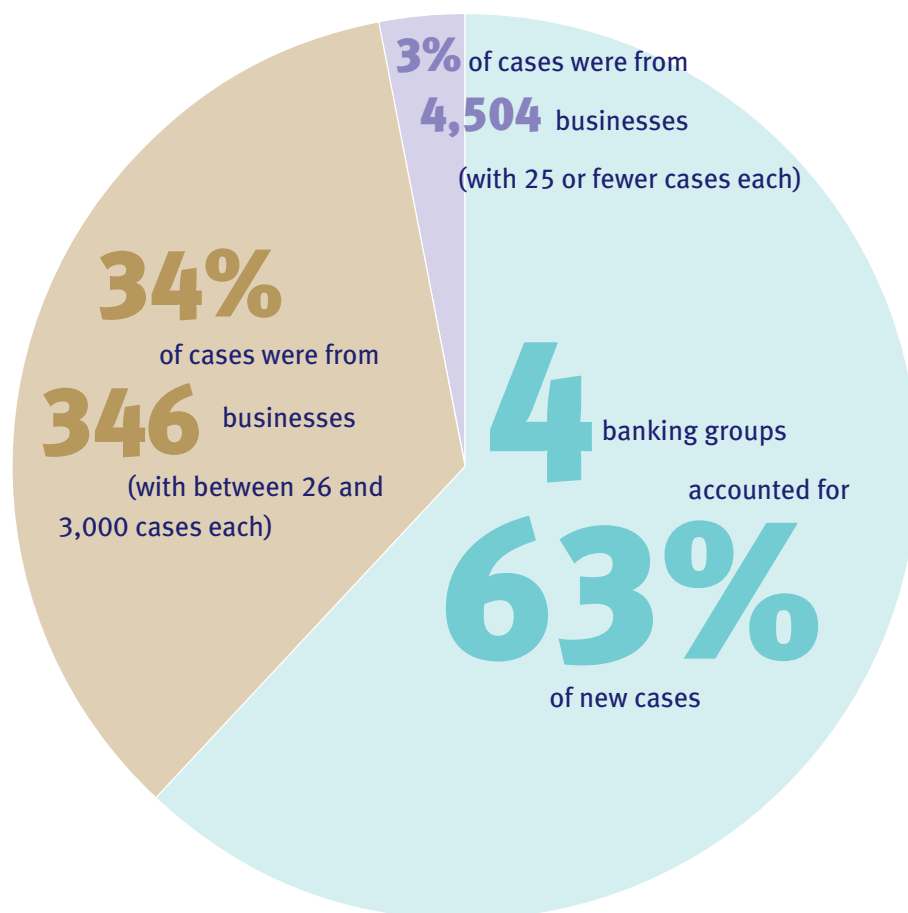
The ombudsman service covers around 80,000 businesses that provide all kinds of financial products and services including:

- 50,000 businesses that offer some form of credit to consumers – and since 1 April 2014 have been subject to the consumer protection rules of the Financial Conduct Authority. Before 1 April 2014 we covered businesses that held a standard consumer credit licence issued by the former Office of Fair Trading.

- 27,000 banking, mortgage, investment and insurance firms regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

The businesses we cover range in size from global financial services groups to sole traders who provide credit as a sideline to their main business. This range in size is reflected in the number of complaints we received about the different businesses we cover. This followed a very similar pattern to previous years.

# who the complaints were about



During the year around 5% of the total number of businesses covered by the ombudsman service had complaints referred to us.

Four of the UK's largest banking groups accounted for 324,093 cases – 63% of all the complaints we received.

At the other end of the scale, 237 cases (0.05% of all complaints) related to friendly societies and 108 complaints involved credit unions (222 in the previous year).

In April 2013 we introduced new case fee arrangements – and raised the number of free cases for each business from 3 to 25.

During the year, 4,504 businesses – out of the 4,906 individual businesses that had complaints referred to us – had *fewer* than 26 complaints. This meant that nine out of ten businesses who had cases referred to us paid no case fees.

**9 out of 10  
businesses paid no  
case fees**

how managers working in financial businesses rated our service

the financial services industry can have confidence in the ombudsman service



our service is good value for businesses who pay the levy/case fees that fund us



our decisions on cases are fair and unbiased



our decisions are consistent



we provide a good dispute-resolution service for businesses



● % who agreed ● % who expressed no view ● % who disagreed

how complaints handlers working in financial businesses rated our service

we handle complaints efficiently and professionally



we get to the bottom of complaints and deal with the issues thoroughly



our decisions are fair and unbiased



we settle disputes within an acceptable length of time



general satisfaction with our service



● % who agreed ● % who expressed no view ● % who disagreed

# who the complaints were about

We carry out regular surveys to see how the businesses we deal with rate our service. These surveys cover all sectors of the financial services industry – ranging from the largest financial groups to smaller businesses that only rarely have complaints referred to us.

We focus our surveys on two different groups of people working in financial businesses. One group includes management – for example, heads of compliance, customer service managers, legal advisers and company secretaries. We may not work with these people regularly in our casework.

The other group includes the people at financial businesses who handle individual complaints and have a more hands-on relationship with us.

The feedback from these two groups is usually different. For example, during the year 68% of complaints handlers were generally satisfied with our service – compared with 56% of managers. However, we were pleased to hear that managers' confidence in the ombudsman service increased significantly during the year – from 48% to 57%.

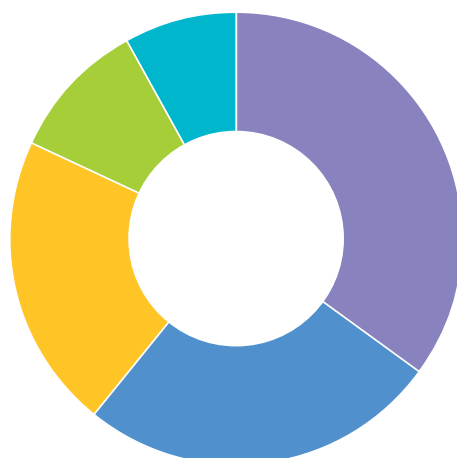
## engagement with financial businesses and trade associations

In the chapter called “other work we have done” we describe our approach to sharing our insight with the financial services sector – to help build confidence. This included training and guidance on complaints handling – as well as the work of our advice desk to support businesses.

During the year we asked businesses what they think about the way we share information with them about our work – and which of our support services they value the most.

**managers' confidence in the ombudsman service increased significantly**

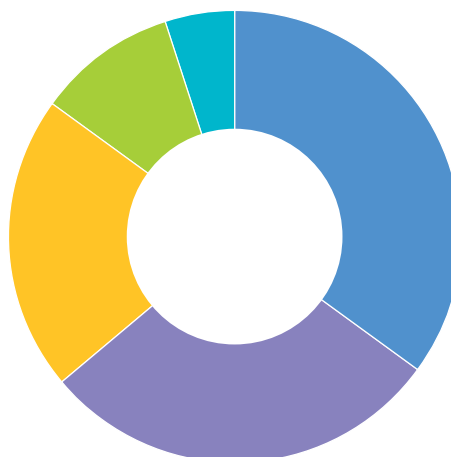
## which of our support services businesses valued most



- *ombudsman news* **35%**
- our website (including our online technical resource) **26%**
- our advice desk **21%**
- events and seminars **10%**
- other publications **8%**

queries businesses raised with our advice desk

- our approach to insurance complaints **35%**
- our approach to banking and credit complaints **29%**
- our casework procedures **21%**
- our approach to PPI complaints **10%**
- our approach to investment complaints **5%**



There is more information about the work of our advice desk in the next chapter – “other work we have done”.

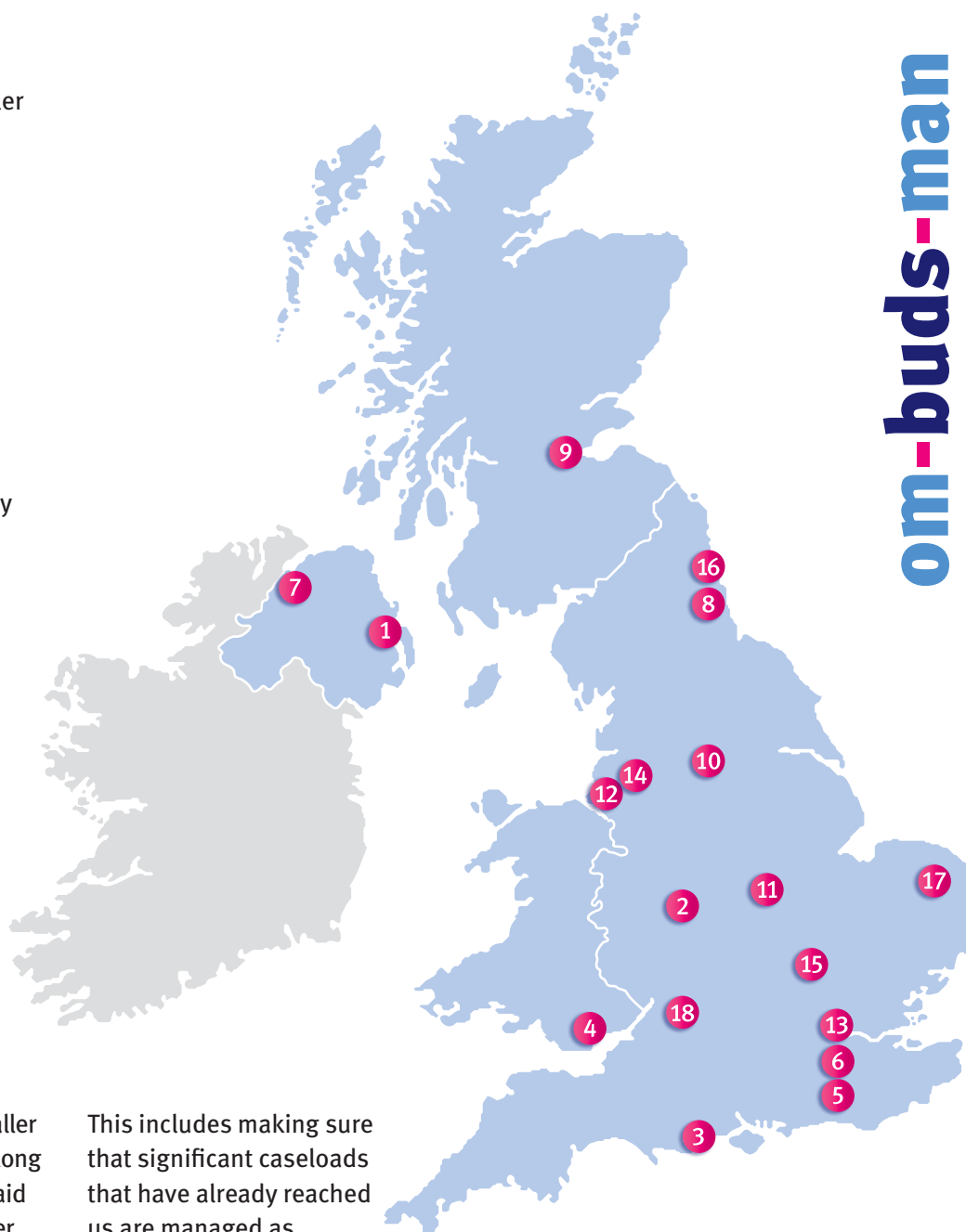
For smaller businesses, we also have an outreach team who work closely with trade associations and networks across the country. Our outreach team run *meet the ombudsman* seminars, where smaller businesses – who are less likely to have direct contact with us – can meet us and ask the ombudsman questions face-to-face.



# who the complaints were about

During the year we hosted events for smaller businesses in:

- 1 Belfast
- 2 Birmingham
- 3 Bournemouth
- 4 Cardiff
- 5 Crawley
- 6 Croydon
- 7 Derry/Londonderry
- 8 Durham
- 9 Edinburgh
- 10 Leeds
- 11 Leicester
- 12 Liverpool
- 13 London
- 14 Manchester
- 15 Milton Keynes
- 16 Newcastle
- 17 Norwich
- 18 Swindon



om-buds-man

91% of people from smaller businesses who came along to one of these events said it had given them a better understanding of complaints handling and the role of the ombudsman – which would change the way they approached customer complaints in the future.

For the largest financial services groups – that account for the vast majority of the complaints referred to us – we work hard to maintain constructive relationships at both a strategic and an operational level.

This includes making sure that significant caseloads that have already reached us are managed as effectively and efficiently as possible – and that any emerging issues are shared and discussed.

We run an industry panel involving 600 financial services practitioners – as well as officials from over 40 trade associations. We keep in regular contact with the panel through a monthly email newsletter and a series of events, including conferences and workshops on complaints-related topics.

During the year the topics we covered in our events included short-term lending, PPI, assessing household insurance claims, redress for investment loss and consumer credit disputes.

We also work strategically with the financial services industry through more formal arrangements. These include a cross-sector steering group, which is chaired by our chairman and made up

of chief executives of major financial services institutions.

At the four meetings we held during the year with this steering group – and at other meetings with senior representatives from the industry – we discussed strategic issues including our funding mechanism and major trends in complaints. Minutes of the various meetings of the steering group are available on our website.



other work we have done

# other work we have done

Our work in settling financial complaints is underpinned by our relationships with our customers and stakeholders. These relationships are very much two-way. We not only share our own knowledge and experience, but also seek formal and informal feedback on our service and how we operate.

This chapter highlights the wide range of stakeholders and customers we engaged with during 2013/2014 – and the particular issues and activities this involved.

## our work with the regulators

Some of our most important relationships are with the financial services regulators – the bodies that set the rules that the businesses we cover must follow.

This year we continued to work closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) – in its first full year of operation since it took over from the Financial Services Authority in April 2013. We also worked with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) – which during the year was responsible for licensing businesses providing consumer credit. This responsibility was transferred to the FCA in April 2014.

Our joint coordination committee – bringing together the ombudsman, the FCA and the OFT – met twice over the year.

These regular discussions help to identify early on any issues that could potentially affect consumers or businesses. The discussions also help determine whether regulatory action is needed.

Our main areas of work with the regulators during the year included:

- Helping to put in place practical measures for the FCA's new remit in relation to consumer credit regulation.
- Sharing information with the OFT – describing patterns of complaints and highlighting areas of poor practice where we found them. For example, we shared our insight into the complaints we were receiving about payday lenders when the OFT reviewed that market.
- Contributing to the FCA's "thematic reviews" of specific products and services. In particular, as part of the FCA's review of how businesses handle complaints, we offered our detailed analysis of trends we see in the complaints that reach us.
- Working together on our plan and budget, which we consult our stakeholders on each year – and which the FCA must approve.

As well as the financial services regulators, we also work with other regulators whose activities have an impact on our own customers and operations.

For example, we regularly provide the Claims Management Regulator (CMR) – part of the Ministry of Justice – with information about the numbers and types of complaints that claims-management companies refer to us. And this year, we worked alongside the CMR as it drafted and consulted on proposals to amend the *Conduct of Authorised Persons Rules* – which relate to the service standards that claims-management companies must meet. If we see that claims managers aren't complying with these rules, we notify their regulator.





### our work with the financial services sector

The everyday working relationships that our casehandlers have with financial businesses are crucial to sorting out consumers' complaints. But we also take a strategic approach to dealing with the businesses we cover. This helps us make sure that our wider messages and objectives are communicated effectively – and at an appropriate level.

We meet individually with the largest businesses that account for the majority of the complaints we receive. One way we do this is through our cross-sector steering group meetings, where our chairman and chief executives from these businesses discuss major issues – for example, our plan and budget and complaint trends. The group met four times last year – and the minutes of those meetings are published on our website.

On an operational level, we share information with businesses about the complaints their customers are referring to us – to help them identify where they can improve their business practices, handle complaints better, and prevent complaints from arising in the first place.

In the chapter called “what the complaints were about” we talk about ways we cooperated with businesses over the year to overcome particular problems they were having. For example, we worked closely with a number of banks that had IT glitches – which had led to many customers not being able to access the money in their accounts for a period of time.

However, we also try to take a longer-term view – working with business and other stakeholders to address broader issues affecting the industry. For example, in 2013/2014 we responded to the Association of British Insurers' proposal to amend the *Critical Illness Insurance Statement of Best Practice*. We also replied to the consultation on Sir Richard Lambert's *Banking Standards Review*.

### our national and international role

A recurring theme in our work with our stakeholders this year was the future of complaints and complaint-handling. At national level, we were asked for our insight at two parliamentary inquiries. And internationally, we were involved in the final stages of plans to improve dispute resolution for consumers across the European Union.

We have close relationships with other ombudsman schemes in the UK – as well as other types of organisation providing a similar service. As we explained in the chapter called “the complaints we received”, we signpost many consumers to other organisations where it looks like we can't deal with a complaint – but someone else could.



# other work we have done

We also cooperate with other organisations through our membership of the Ombudsman Association. This brings together ombudsmen and other “alternative dispute resolution” (ADR) schemes from across Britain and Ireland. Last year we took part in a review of the Association – which aimed to identify how it can go further in promoting best practice and raising consumers’ awareness of the alternatives to court action.

We also took part in two inquiries by the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee into how the public sector – particularly the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman – handles complaints and uses complaints data. Although our service wasn’t directly within the scope of these inquiries – because we deal with complaints about *private* businesses – we were invited to participate based on the strength of our experience.

In December 2013 our chief ombudsman Tony Boorman, answered Committee members’ questions about our work, what the public sector could learn from it, and how ombudsman schemes could cooperate more closely. We also submitted written evidence.

Although we usually refer those consumers we can’t help to other UK-based organisations, we sometimes refer them to overseas bodies. This is why it is important we always take the time to understand each individual situation – so we can get the consumer to the right place at the outset.

One way we maintain relationships with similar organisations outside the UK is through our membership of FIN-NET – the international network of financial dispute-resolution schemes. In November 2013 we hosted FIN-NET’s annual meeting. As well as meeting representatives of established schemes, we also shared our experience with countries in the process of setting up ombudsman schemes – including South Korea, Cyprus, Singapore and Uganda.

In May 2013 the European Commission finalised its Directive on ADR – and the related topic of *online* dispute resolution (ODR). The aim of the Directive is to extend the benefits of ADR – that is, dispute resolution outside the courts, like ombudsman schemes – to as many consumers and businesses as possible.

The Directive will:

- Set EU-wide standards for providing ADR services.
- Create an EU-wide system for resolving complaints about online purchases.
- Require each member state to provide an ADR service for any trader who wants to sign up to one.



We have been active in the European Commission's programme on ADR since it began in 2009. During the year we worked alongside the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills as it talked with the Commission about the content of the Directive and how it should be implemented in the UK. We were also part of the Commission's ODR working group. The UK Government will now consult on its final plans for implementing the Directive and confirm these later in 2014/2015.

### working openly

We aim to be as open and helpful as possible when people ask us for information – as well as meeting our obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act*, which we have been covered by since November 2011.

Last year we received more than 370 requests under the Act, made by a variety of people – from consumers with complaints with us to researchers and academics looking into different aspects of financial services.

The topics we were asked about ranged from our approach to complaints about different financial products to the way our casework teams are structured. We were often able to direct the person making the request to our website – because our policy has always been to publish as much as we can about our organisation and our work.

As part of our regular cycle of three-yearly external reviews, our board invited the Future Foundation to help us understand how consumers' expectations of brands and services are likely to change over the next ten years – and invited our customers' and stakeholders' views on these issues. The research is available on the Future Foundation's micro-site.

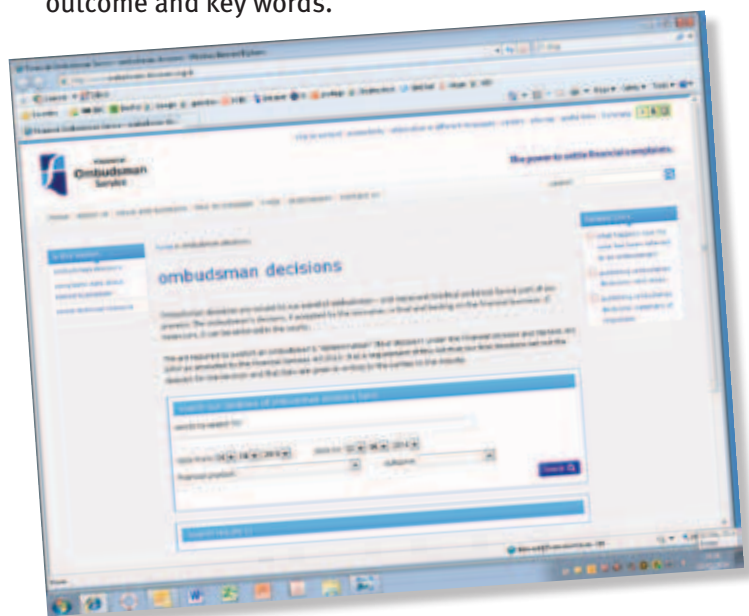


# other work we have done

## **publishing ombudsman decisions**

The *Financial Services Act 2012* came into effect in April 2013 – shortly before last year’s *annual review* was published.

It introduced the requirement that we publish all of our ombudsmen’s final decisions (apart from in cases where it would be inappropriate to do so). During the year we published 22,968 decisions on our online “decisions database”, which can be searched by product type, outcome and key words.



## **sharing our experience face-to-face**

Our outreach and stakeholder-liaison activities form a key part of our commitment to sharing our experience with the outside world.

As our eyes and ears “on the ground”, our outreach team meet our customers and stakeholders face-to-face – listening to their views and concerns about financial services, the ombudsman, and wider issues. In 2013/2014 our work included:

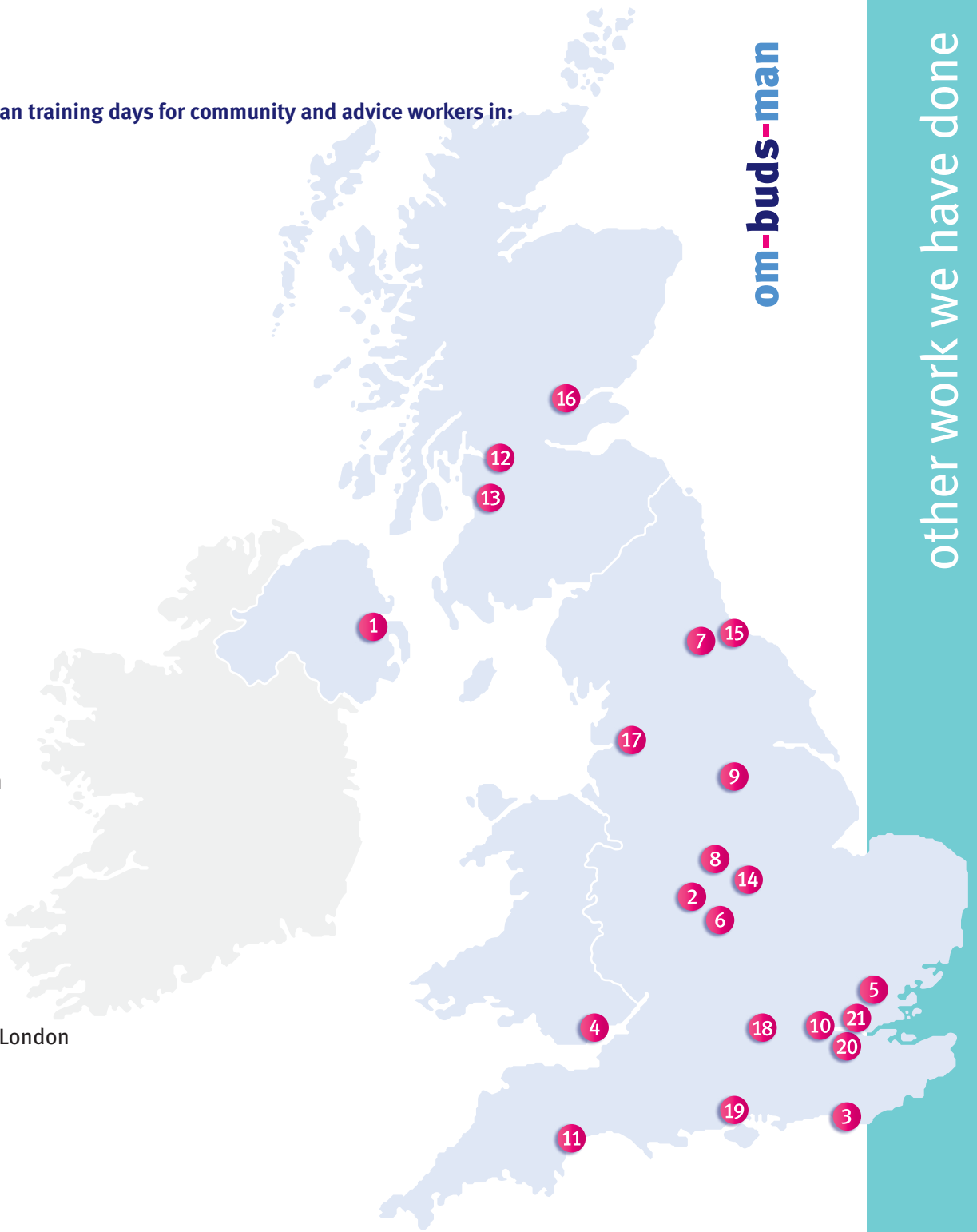
- Running our relationship-management programme for the largest financial services groups – as well as our industry steering group and our industry panel.
- Organising events across the UK – from issue-specific conferences for larger businesses and claims managers, to 25 targeted workshops for businesses who we receive few (if any) complaints about.
- Hosting more than 20 training days for community and advice workers across the UK – sharing our insight and approach with people others turn to for help – and hosting our six-monthly consumer liaison forum for representatives from consumer groups.
- Speaking at external seminars and conferences – hosted by organisations ranging from Age UK and Macmillan Cancer Support to the Association of Professional Financial Advisers.
- Responding to 601 enquiries from MPs – who had contacted us on a particular constituent’s behalf, or asked a broader question about our work.
- Answering over 30 ministerial questions.
- Participating in a range of events for MPs and their caseworkers – including complaints workshops, constituency “drop-in” surgeries, and events held at local supermarkets and food banks.

In addition to our work with policymakers, we also have day-to-day relationships with many parliamentarians – who take an active interest in our work and engage with us regularly. Last year, this involved:



during the year we ran training days for community and advice workers in:

- 1 Belfast
- 2 Birmingham
- 3 Brighton
- 4 Cardiff
- 5 Chelmsford
- 6 Coventry
- 7 Darlington
- 8 Derby
- 9 Doncaster
- 10 Ealing
- 11 Exeter
- 12 Glasgow
- 13 Kilmarnock
- 14 Leicester
- 15 Middlesbrough
- 16 Perth
- 17 Preston
- 18 Reading
- 19 Southampton
- 20 Southwark
- 21 Stratford, East London



om-buds-man

other work we have done



# other work we have done

## our advice desk

Our advice desk is our dedicated service for people dealing with complaints – including complaints handlers in financial businesses, claims managers and advice workers supporting consumers in their local communities. By giving an informal first take on a situation, we can help sort out the problem sooner rather than later – preventing a formal complaint from being escalated.

After receiving a record number of enquiries during 2012/2013, the number of calls to our advice desk continued to increase during the year. We received 24,551 enquiries – a 5% increase on the previous year.

During the year 78% of people who had used the advice desk said they were “very satisfied” with the service.

The following examples illustrate the diversity of questions we answered.

## a lot of hot air

An insurance company called for our take on a farmer’s claim. Frightened by a hot air balloon flying close overhead, the farmer’s cattle had run into some nearby fencing – causing significant damage to it. However, the insurer wasn’t convinced they should pay out – as their buildings insurance policies excluded cover for damage “*caused by aerial devices*”.

We considered the reason behind the exclusion. And we explained to the insurer that we felt it was intended for situations where an “aerial device” *itself* had caused damage. Once we’d pointed this out, the insurer agreed that it would be unfair to apply the exclusion in this case – as the cows, not the balloon, had collided with the fence.

## what’s in a name?

A bank called about a consumer they were taking to court for mortgage arrears. The consumer had undergone gender reassignment surgery – and was now a woman. On the advice of their in-house legal team, the bank had written to the consumer explaining that, to comply with court procedures, the summons needed to mention any previous names they’d had.

Unfortunately, the bank had used a window envelope which clearly showed the consumer’s previous, male name. And the consumer’s male partner, who *hadn’t* known about the surgery, had found out. The consumer had made a complaint – and the bank wasn’t sure how to handle it.

The bank acknowledged that they had caused the consumer upset and embarrassment. We suggested that they should talk to the consumer about the impact their actions had had on her. We felt the complaints handler should consult the bank’s own specialist diversity team – who may have dealt with a similar situation before. However – based on the information we’d heard – we thought compensation of at least £500 would be appropriate, given the upset caused.

## give and take

An advice worker called for our view on how a lender had treated their client. The consumer was in financial difficulties – but, despite being aware of this, the lender had taken money from her current account to repay an outstanding balance on a loan account. This had caused the consumer to go over her agreed overdraft limit – and charges were being applied to her current account.

We explained to the adviser that, generally speaking, lenders *are* allowed to use funds from one account to repay an outstanding balance on another – provided the terms of the account allow this. In this case, however, this had caused the consumer to exceed their overdraft – so we felt the lender had acted unfairly.



our news updates

## **taking the credit**

*31 March 2014*

from getting on the electoral roll to cutting up your old cards, the ombudsman shares some credit scoring tips with 50 plus magazine

## **our plans and budget ...**

*27 March 2014*

... are now finalised and approved for 2014/2015

## **reaching out in Manchester**

*27 March 2014*

visit our stand at the 50 plus show at Manchester Central – to chat with the ombudsman about problems on you mind

## **technically tweeting**

*27 March 2014*

follow our outreach team @financialombuds as we tweet live from our technical helpline

## **talking business in Bournemouth**

*27 March 2014*

we're meeting with financial businesses in Bournemouth, working through case studies and helping them get things sorted for their customers

## **scam emails**

*26 March 2014*

beware fraudulent emails claiming to be from the ombudsman

## **sorting out problems in Peterborough**

*25 March 2014*

we're in Cambridgeshire chatting to consumer advisers about how we can help with payday lending and mortgage problems

## **complaints help keep things on track**

*25 March 2014*

in our latest issue of *ombudsman news*, ombudsman Tony Boorman discusses how complaints can help improve services

## **and so forth**

*24 March 2014*

the ombudsman chats to Edinburgh-based Radio Forth about the complaints we're seeing from the area

## **learning by the Loch**

*21 March 2014*

we're in Inverness, learning about the problems consumer advisers are seeing – and sharing how we can help them help their clients

## **gathering in the Highlands**

*20 March 2014*

we join the knowledge network at the fourth annual Citizens Advice Highland Gathering in Strathpeffer – to talk about our role and how we can help

## **we can work it out**

*19 March 2014*

we're in Liverpool, chatting with local businesses about their experiences with complaints – and explaining how we can help them work things out for their customers

## **spreading the word in Wales**

*19 March 2014*

we're heading to Swansea to meet local community advisers and share our approach to complaints about financial hardship and payday lending

## **up on the Tyne**

*18 March 2014*

we're meeting smaller businesses in Newcastle to share our top tips for sorting out complaints

## **credit where it's due**

*17 March 2014*

Tony Boorman chats to BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours* about the problems an unlucky consumer had with his credit file

## **Workshop workshop**

*14 March 2014*

we're working with local consumer advisers in Worksoop to share our approach to some of the common problems they see

## **Scot a complaint?**

*13 March 2014*

we chat to *Real Radio* Scotland and Dundee-based station *Wave 102* about the complaints we're getting from the area

## **getting complaints on track**

*13 March 2014*

Tony Boorman, ombudsman, talks at the Office of Rail Regulation's annual conference – on how ombudsmen help to make markets work fairly for people with problems

## **forging relationships in Sheffield**

*13 March 2014*

we're listening to community advisers to find out more about the financial hardship faced by people in Sheffield



**reaching out to the forum***13 March 2014*

we're at the Consumer Council's financial forum talking about our outreach work across Northern Ireland

**on the money***12 March 2014*

we chat to BBC Radio 4 *Money Box Live* about all things insurance – and how the ombudsman can help with complaints

**talking credit in Blackpool***12 March 2014*

we're at the Credit Awareness Conference in Blackpool – sharing our approach to complaints about payday lending

**learning in Londonderry/ Derry***10 March 2014*

we're with financial businesses in Londonderry/ Derry, sharing case studies and chatting about the decisions we make

**PPI mis-selling and moving on***5 March 2014*

ombudsman Tony Boorman talks at the launch of the Citizens Advice report on lessons to be learned from the PPI mis-selling scandal

**ombudsman releases latest complaints data on individual financial businesses***4 March 2014***five a day***4 March 2014*

ombudsman Tony Boorman chats to BBC Radio 5 Live about our latest complaints data

**staying savvy***3 March 2014*

Martyn James from the ombudsman chats to Sarah Pennells of SavvyWoman about what people can do if they have a home insurance problem and how the ombudsman can help

**changes to our “voluntary jurisdiction” rules on “eligible complainants”***28 February 2014***Woking 9 to 5***27 February 2014*

we're in Woking meeting with local community advisers – to share our knowledge of dealing with problems about payday lending and people in financial hardship

**breakfast with the ombudsman***26 February 2014*

Martyn James from the ombudsman chats on the BBC1 breakfast show about all things PPI

**live from the ombudsman***26 February 2014*

we tweet live @ FinancialOmbuds from our consumer helpline

**Caroline Tees off with PPI***24 February 2014*

Caroline Wayman from the ombudsman chats to BBC Radio Tees about what's happening with PPI

**as far as possible***24 February 2014*

the ombudsman talks to *Pos'ability* magazine – the UK's biggest disability lifestyle magazine – about why it's so important to look after your pennies

**foundations for the future***21 February 2014*

our latest three-yearly external review is now well underway, with the Future Foundation working with the ombudsman and a wide range of stakeholders on the future of complaint resolution in 2025

**social in Scotland***20 February 2014*

follow our live tweets @ FinancialOmbuds to find out what money matters are troubling our Glasgow community

**heading to Halifax***20 February 2014*

we're meeting members of the Insurance Institute in Yorkshire to talk about the ombudsman and to share our approach to insurance complaints

**chop chop***17 February 2014*

Nadia from the ombudsman shares her top tips with *Blackhair* magazine and tells the story of how she embraced her natural style

**student finance***17 February 2014*

as part of National Student Money Week we're in student unions up and down the UK – to let students know the ombudsman's here to help with bank account problems

## **Court of Appeal ruling on redress after ombudsman**

*14 February 2014*

consumers cannot sue a financial business for additional redress after accepting compensation through the ombudsman, rules Court of Appeal

## **the sky's the limit**

*14 February 2014*

Caroline Wayman from the ombudsman talks to Sky News about annuities

## **advice for stormy times**

*13 February 2014*

if you've been affected by the recent storms and floods – and are worried about your insurance – check out our tips on BBC online

## **it's National Student Money Week**

*11 February 2014*

we're talking to URN – a student radio station in Nottingham – about what young people can do if they run into problems with credit

## **knowing Your Money**

*8 February 2014*

as the banks announce what money they're putting aside to cover PPI claims, we talk to BBC *Your Money* about the story so far

## **5,000 and counting**

*7 February 2014*

we've just been joined on Twitter @financialombuds by our 5,000th follower – so thanks to everyone for taking an interest in what we

## **what's driving complaints?**

*4 February 2014*

Martyn James from the ombudsman joins Simon Mayo on the Radio 2 drive-time show, to chat about what we're seeing with PPI

## **what's the scam?**

*3 February 2014*

we talk on BBC Solent about local victims of "vishing" frauds who've turned to the ombudsman for help

## **fair outcomes for customers**

*31 January 2014*

ombudsman Tony Boorman talks to the Insurance Institute of London about what an insurer should know about its customers

## **carrying the torch to Stratford**

*30 January 2014*

we're near the Olympic park in Stratford, East London, meeting community advisers to talk about the issues they're seeing and how we can help them get things sorted

## **latest figures on the complaints we're seeing**

*28 January 2014*

in our latest issue of *ombudsman news* ombudsman Tony Boorman discusses our plans for the year ahead – and we share our latest figures on the complaints we're seeing

## **Caley call**

*27 January 2014*

we talk to Radio Caley – Glasgow Caledonian University's student radio station – about what happens when there's an IT bank glitch and customers can't get their cash

## **payday loan danger-day**

*24 January 2014*

today's when people are most likely to turn to a payday loan to bridge that gap between Christmas and their next pay packet

## **leading the way**

*21 January 2014*

we talk to financial advisers at the APFA regional seminar in Leeds about resolving complaints and what we're seeing at the ombudsman

## **gone vishing**

*20 January 2014*

we highlight the story of a consumer who was caught out by "vishing" – the scam where people are conned over the phone into transferring money into a fraudster's account

## **cheque this**

*17 January 2014*

the ombudsman's on BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours* to chat about cheque problems

## **banking on land investments?**

*16 January 2014*

we talk to BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours* about so called "land banking"

**Pinterest only***15 January 2014*

check out the ombudsman on Pinterest – the pinboard-style photo-sharing website – for all our videos, magazine articles and pictures from out and about

**all's fair in love and Warwickshire***10 January 2014*

ombudsman Tony Boorman chats to BBC Radio Coventry and Warwickshire about the complaints we're receiving from the area and how the ombudsman is able to help

**ombudsman consults on annual plan and budget***9 January 2014*

the ombudsman consults on plans for resolving an unprecedented number of complaints in 2014/2015 – while reducing the budget by 20%

**out with the old, in with the new***8 January 2014*

The ombudsman talk to *50 plus* – the local magazine for the over 50s – about how you're never too old to get into good spending habits

**weather warnings***7 January 2014*

as severe weather warnings continue across the UK, we've had a surge of enquiries about our approach to storm damage and insurance problems

**new year solutions***2 January 2014*

we chat on the BBC1 breakfast show about getting the year off to a good start moneywise

**good as gold***23 December 2013*

we've been awarded the "Gold Standard" for the third year running by Committed2Equality – in recognition of our commitment to the fair and equal treatment of everyone we deal with

**elf-y finances***20 December 2013*

some of the ombudsman's little helpers give their top Christmas money tips to *Blackhair* magazine

**helping others get things sorted***18 December 2013*

we're in Maidstone talking to Citizens Advice about how the ombudsman can help

**ombudsman news on sorting things out***17 December 2013*

in our latest issue of *ombudsman news* ombudsman Tony Boorman reflects on why people come to us at different stages with problems for us to sort out – and we share case studies on debt collection and mobile phone insurance

**12 tips of Christmas***16 December 2013*

from ladies dancing to savers saving – we share our tips on avoiding a Christmas cash crisis with *Pride* magazine

**ombudsmen go to parliament***10 December 2013*

ombudsman Tony Boorman talks to the House of Commons' Public Administration Committee about the work of the different ombudsman schemes in the UK

**down in Dorset***4 December 2013*

we're meeting consumer advisers in Dorset, looking at cases where the consumer is facing financial hardship

**mind the gap***29 November 2013*

the ombudsman talks about gap insurance on BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours*

**helping out in Hackney***28 November 2013*

we're at the Hackney Foodbank serving up financial advice with Diane Abbott MP – chatting to people in financial hardship and letting them know how we can help

**opening our doors to local advisers***27 November 2013*

the ombudsman hosts a drop-in session for community and advice workers in the local neighbourhood of Tower Hamlets – so they can find out more about what we do

## **vulnerability – a new approach from inside out**

*26 November 2013*

Caroline Wells from the ombudsman talks at the Money Advice Liaison Group's annual conference – about our experience of dealing with cases involving vulnerable consumers in financial hardship

## **live in action**

*25 November 2013*

a group of consumers with PPI complaints come to visit the ombudsman at our office – to meet and chat with staff face-to-face and to see our work on PPI first hand

## **linking up in Londonderry/ Derry**

*19 November 2013*

we're meeting constituency caseworkers who help Mark Durkan MP and Pat Ramsey MP sort out their constituents' financial problems in Londonderry/ Derry

## **meeting MPs and MLAs in Belfast**

*19 November 2013*

we're hosting a drop-in session for Belfast MPs and MLAs – to let them know more about the ombudsman and how we can help their constituents get things sorted

## **building relationships in Belfast**

*19 November 2013*

we're meeting consumer advisers in Belfast – including the Northern Ireland Consumer Council, Advice NI, Belfast Citizens Advice and the money advice team at Belfast City Council

## **is it best to invest?**

*18 November 2013*

we chat to BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours* about unsuitable investments and what your rights are if something goes wrong

## **Natalie Ceeney, chief ombudsman, steps down after four years**

*15 November 2013*

## **kicking off at Crawley Town**

*15 November 2013*

we're at Crawley Town Football Club meeting smaller businesses – to find out more about what they're seeing and to share our approach to complaints handling

## **problem sharing in Portsmouth**

*14 November 2013*

we're talking to community and advice workers in Portsmouth about our approach to complaints involving financial hardship and payday lending

## **Brussel sprouts online innovators**

*13 November 2013*

our webmaster Sally Young takes part in a debate hosted by the EU's Disability Forum – on best practice and innovation for public service websites

## **investing in complaints handling in Birmingham**

*13 November 2013*

our ombudsmen talk with financial advisers in the West Midlands about our approach to resolving investment disputes

## **still doing the right thing**

*11 November 2013*

we introduce our latest work to connect with people in Glasgow who might not think that the ombudsman is for them

## **working with other ombudsman across Europe**

*8 November 2013*

we're hosting the annual meeting of FIN-NET this week – the organisation that brings together financial ombudsman schemes across Europe

## **helping out at the 50 plus show**

*8 November 2013*

we're on the panel at the *50 plus* show in Glasgow – answering money-related questions from the audience and letting them know how we can help them get things sorted

**stormy weather***7 November 2013*

David Cresswell from the ombudsman chats on Radio 4 *You and Yours* about insurance claims for storm damage

**sharing the credit***7 November 2013*

we're meeting new members of the Finance and Leasing Association (FLA) to let them know more about our approach to consumer credit disputes – and how we deal with complaints involving smaller businesses

**sharing our approach to help get things sorted***6 November 2013*

we're meeting smaller financial businesses in London to find out what issues are affecting them

**Irish travels***2 November 2013*

David Cresswell from the ombudsman chats to BBC Northern Ireland's *On Your Behalf* about travel insurance problems

**meeting consumer advisers in Crawley***1 November 2013*

we're in Sussex – where 8,000 people have called us from so far this year – to share our approach to complaints about payday lending and financial hardship

**how dementia-friendly are you?***31 October 2013*

as the population ages, we're likely to be seeing more people affected by dementia – which is why we're supporting the Alzheimer's Society's dementia-friendly financial services charter

**warning! scam phone calls***31 October 2013*

be suspicious if people phone you unexpectedly claiming to be from the ombudsman

**brummie broadcast***29 October 2013*

ombudsman Caroline Wayman gives us the latest on PPI on BBC Radio West Midlands

**leading the way***25 October 2013*

we've been awarded *Leaders in Diversity* status by the National Centre for Diversity

**watch out***24 October 2013*

we're on BBC *Watchdog* talking about "packaged" bank accounts – and how the ombudsman can help if you have a problem

**catching up in Conwy***23 October 2013*

we're in Conwy in North Wales, meeting local consumer advisers to share our approach

**five alive***22 October 2013*

we're on BBC Five Live breakfast show, talking about the complaint numbers we've released today

**ombudsman news***22 October 2013*

the latest issue of *ombudsman news* includes complaints statistics and case studies on travel insurance and credit cards

**hearing what's going on in the Highlands***18 October 2013*

we're in Inverness talking to local businesses about our role in getting complaints sorted – and hosting a drop-in session for consumers with Danny Alexander MP

**the power of listening***17 October 2013*

Natalie Ceeney, ombudsman, speaks at the annual international banking conference about the power of listening to rebuild trust in financial services

**we're in the Western Isles***17 October 2013*

we're meeting Harris and Lewis Citizens Advice to share our approach to complaints where consumers are in financial hardship

## **sorting things out in Stornoway**

*16 October 2013*

complaints from people in the Outer Hebrides doubled last year – so we’re visiting Stornoway to talk about how we can help get things sorted

## **carry on caravanning**

*15 October 2013*

we’re at the Motorhome and Caravan Show at the NEC – one of the busiest consumer events in the UK – letting people know about the ombudsman and how we can help them get things sorted

## **access all areas**

*14 October 2013*

Access magazine features ombudsman, Nic Atkinson, talking about how he makes a wheelchair work for him in the workplace

## **losing out through loyalty**

*14 October 2013*

David Cresswell from the ombudsman talks on Radio 4 *You and Yours* about complaints involving insurance “auto-renewal”

## **pop-in and see us in Preston**

*13 October 2013*

we’re with Mark Hendrick MP in Preston – where 1,200 people called us from last year – talking to local consumers about their money worries

## **getting things sorted with insurers**

*9 October 2013*

we host an event for insurance companies to share our approach to cases where there’s a disagreement over the items being claimed

## **worried about your credit rating?**

*4 October 2013*

we join SavvyWoman’s Sarah Pennells to answer all your credit rating queries

## **communicating in Croydon**

*3 October 2013*

Croydon was one of the top ten places consumers called us from last year – so we’re talking to smaller businesses there about what good complaint handling looks like

## **working together in Maidstone**

*1 October 2013*

we’re crossing the River Medway to meet with community and advice workers in Maidstone and listen to the problems they’re seeing

## **young consumers take on MPs**

*29 September 2013*

school children from Manchester take on MPs in the “young consumer of the year” quiz – an event we host in partnership with Trading Standards to help raise awareness of money-matters with young people

## **working with Age UK**

*25 September 2013*

last year over a quarter of complaints we received were from people aged 65 and over – so we’re talking to Age UK to share how the ombudsman can help people move on

## **young consumers-v-MPs**

*24 September 2013*

Sir Nicholas Montagu, ombudsman chairman, is quiz-master for the young consumers-v-parliamentarians money quiz – that we’re hosting with Trading Standards in Brighton

## **constituency business**

*23 September 2013*

with over 500 people contacting the ombudsman through their local MP each year, it’s important that elected representatives know about our role – and how we can help them help their constituents

## **and the winner is ...**

*20 September 2013*

Caroline Wells from the ombudsman announces the winner of the positive role model for age at the National Diversity Awards

## **meet the ombudsman at Naidex**

*18 September 2013*

we’re at Naidex – the UK’s largest independent living exhibition – meeting with consumers to talk about their financial problems

**ombudsman news***17 September 2013*

the latest issue of *ombudsman news* includes case studies on interest-rate hedging products and “packaged” bank accounts

**helping Citizens Advice help others***17 September 2013*

we’re at the Citizens Advice annual conference talking to consumer advisers about the issues they’re seeing

**gathering in Gloucester***17 September 2013*

we’re meeting community advisers in Gloucester to share our approach to complaints about financial hardship and PPI

**what’s new in Newmarket?***16 September 2013*

we’re getting together with the East of England Trading Standards in Newmarket to hear what’s going on locally – and to let them know how we can help them get things sorted

**banishing money problems in Biggleswade***13 September 2013*

we’re talking to consumers about their money worries – and letting them know how we can help get things sorted – at a drop-in session hosted by Alistair Burt MP

**getting it right from the start***13 September 2013*

we’re giving guidance to financial businesses in Leicester to help them get things right for their customers from the start

**the debt collective***12 September 2013*

Juliana Campbell from the ombudsman talks to debt recovery companies about our approach on people facing financial hardship and debt collecting

**ain’t no mountain high enough***12 September 2013*

we’re meeting Cumbrian Citizens Advice to talk about our approach to complaints involving financial difficulties and consumer credit

**sharing our experience in East Anglia***12 September 2013*

we meet smaller businesses from across East Anglia – to explain the role of the ombudsman and our approach to sorting out problems

**getting things sorted in Norwich***11 September 2013*

we’re meeting community advice workers in Norwich to find out about the issues they’re seeing – and to let them know how we can help get things sorted

**life’s a beach ...***10 September 2013*

from lost luggage to missed flights – if your dream trip turned into the holiday from hell this summer, the ombudsman could help

**up at the lakes***10 September 2013*

we’re heading up to Penrith in the Lake District to talk to the Cumbria Advice Network about the work of the ombudsman and our role helping people

**competition, conduct and complaints***9 September 2013*

Tony Boorman, ombudsman, tells the Regulatory Policy Institute why the voice of the consumer needs to be heard in the boardroom of financial services institutions

**meeting by the Mersey***4 September 2013*

we’re in Liverpool talking to local community advisers about the ombudsman and how we can help people get things sorted

**reaching out across the regions***3 September 2013*

from Northern Ireland to Norwich, the ombudsman joins 12 radio stations nationwide to chat about the record numbers of complaints we’ve sorted out this year

**ombudsman releases latest complaints data on individual financial businesses***3 September 2013*

## **unbundling the package**

30 August 2013

the ombudsman joins debates on radio stations across the UK about different kinds of bank accounts – including “packaged” or “paid for” accounts

## **unwanted PPI text or call?**

29 August 2013

find out how you can avoid nuisance calls by following guidance from Which?

## **catch-up in Coventry**

29 August 2013

we meet the Coventry Consumer Network to find out about the problems consumers are talking to them about – and how we might be able to help

## **mela-tastic**

23 August 2013

we join the multicultural mela celebrations this weekend in London and Leicester – finding out about the money problems people have and helping them get things sorted

## **ombudsman news and older people**

20 August 2013

the latest issue of *ombudsman news* includes case studies involving older people and aging

## **money transfer**

15 August 2013

Martyn James from the ombudsman talks to BBC Radio 4 *You and Yours* about your rights if money transfers go missing

## **sharing lessons in Luton**

14 August 2013

we're in Luton sharing our approach to complaints about financial hardship with consumer advisers – and finding out more about the issues they're seeing

## **Tees time**

12 August 2013

we talk to BBC Radio Tees about the money problems affecting people in the North East of England

## **payday mayday in NI**

5 August 2013

David Cresswell from the ombudsman talks on BBC Northern Ireland's *Talkback* show about problems with payday loans

## **payday mayday**

5 August 2013

Citizens Advice launch their *payday loans: know your rights* campaign – to encourage more people to contact the ombudsman for help with payday loan problems

## **stuck in the Midlands with you**

4 August 2013

Caroline Wells from the ombudsman talks to BBC WM's *Chatback* – a show for Black African and Caribbean communities across the West Midlands – about money matters and the ombudsman

## **the cost of PPI**

2 August 2013

the ombudsman joins Radio 5 Live for the Victoria Derbyshire show – to talk about the impact of PPI on banks, consumers and the ombudsman

## **Orcadian odyssey**

27 July 2013

from trouble with catalogue shopping to disputes involving marine insurance – we listen to people in Orkney talking about their experience of financial services, at a “drop-in” organised with Orkney Islands Council

## **heading to the Highlands and Islands**

25 July 2013

with complaints from people in the Highlands more than doubling last year, we're hosting drop-in sessions in Tain and Thurso for consumers to come and talk about their money problems – in partnership with John Thurso MP

## **high five**

25 July 2013

ombudsman Caroline Wayman chats to Shelagh Fogarty on BBC Radio Five Live about “packaged” accounts

## **training for PPI complaint handlers**

25 July 2013

we're running training sessions for case handlers from motor and high-street retailers – to share our well established approach to PPI complaint handling

## **ask the ombudsman**

24 July 2013

we're meeting 70 consumer credit businesses to answer their questions about the ombudsman – and to share our approach to consumer credit complaints



**spreading the word***23 July 2013*

the ombudsman's running training sessions for the Citizens Advice helpline – explaining our role in getting things sorted

**word up***19 July 2013*

at an event celebrating the winners of the National Diversity Awards, Caroline Wells from the ombudsman teams up with poet Liam Mackin, winner of the positive role model award for disability

**what's occurring?***19 July 2013*

last year 1,500 people called us with money problems from Glamorgan – so we're in Barry working with Alun Cairns MP to help consumers get things sorted

**training for PPI complaints handlers***17 July 2013*

we're running a training day for 120 PPI complaints handlers from building societies and claims management companies – to remind them about our well established approach to sorting out PPI complaints

**catching up in Croydon***17 July 2013*

we visit Croydon to meet front-line community and advice workers – and talk about our approach to financial hardship, payday lending and PPI

**keeping mum***16 July 2013*

check out the latest issue of *Mum's survival guide* – to see how Sarah Quigley found her return to work to the ombudsman after maternity leave

**ombudsman news has wear and tear***16 July 2013*

the latest issue of *ombudsman news* includes case studies involving investment complaints and wear and tear in insurance disputes

**reaching out to smaller businesses***12 July 2013*

we're in Cardiff and Swindon talking to smaller businesses – as part of our series of "meet the ombudsman" roadshows around the UK

**ombudsman at the 50 plus show***11 July 2013*

we're taking part in a consumer question-time about money matters at the *50 plus* show at London Olympia

**aware in Wales***11 July 2013*

with people in Wales already showing the highest awareness of the ombudsman, we listen to their money worries at a drop-in "complaints clinic" in Cardiff, run jointly with Jenny Willott MP

**South Glamorgan's financial forum***8 July 2013*

the ombudsman joins a range of financial businesses in Cardiff to share our insight into good complaint handling

**meet us in the Midlands***5 July 2013*

mela means "gathering" in Sanskrit – and this weekend we'll be gathering with 125,000 visitors at the Birmingham and Sandwell mela as part of our work with the Asian community

**training in Truro***4 July 2013*

the ombudsman's in Truro sharing knowledge and insight with local community advice workers

**keeping it real in Wales***1 July 2013*

the ombudsman talks to *Real Radio Wales* about the complaints we've seen from Welsh consumers

**technical data on redress for mis-sold pensions***1 July 2013*

our technical note is updated with new assumptions (as from 1 July 2013) for calculating redress for mis-sold pensions

**BILA***27 June 2013*

ombudsman Caroline Wayman talks to the British Insurance Law Association (BILA) about the ombudsman's approach to complaints involving mis-sold financial products

## **briefing in Bradford**

*27 June 2013*

we're in Bradford as part of our programme of training days in the North West for front-line community and advice workers

## **South Bank show**

*26 June 2013*

we're meeting local MPs and their caseworkers on London's South Bank – to talk about the work of the ombudsman and the financial issues their constituents are currently facing

## **Wigan wanderers**

*26 June 2013*

the ombudsman's in Wigan meeting community advice workers

## **ship-shape and Bristol finance**

*25 June 2013*

we're at the National Association of Student Money Advisers conference in Bristol – chatting to advisers about how to help younger consumers who are taking on financial products for the first time

## **making sense with CEnTSA**

*24 June 2013*

the ombudsman gets together with Central England Trading Standards Authorities (CEnTSA) in the West Midlands – to share our insight and listen to what's going on locally

## **health check**

*21 June 2013*

we've joined forces with *Healthy Staff* magazine to help employees across 200 NHS trusts spring clean their finances

## **putting a name to a face**

*19 June 2013*

we're in Durham, Edinburgh and Leeds, talking to smaller businesses – as part of our series of "meet the ombudsman" roadshows around the UK

## **keeping up the standards**

*17 June 2013*

we're at the annual Trading Standards conference – highlighting the work of the ombudsman and asking trading standards officers what the ombudsman service means to them

## **stirling talk in Scotland**

*13 June 2013*

the ombudsman joins a complaints forum in Stirling to share our insight into tackling a record 508,881 new money-related disputes over the last year

## **debt in Derbyshire**

*13 June 2013*

we're talking to advice workers at the East Midlands Financial Capability Forum about our approach to financial difficulties and payday lending

## **discussing debt in Birmingham**

*12 June 2013*

we're joining debt advisers at the West Midlands Money Advice Group – to chat about our approach to disputes involving financial difficulties

## **looking after the grey pound**

*11 June 2013*

we're talking to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on ageing and older people – about the complaints we see from consumers aged 65 and over and the challenges they face when dealing with their finances

## **"it wasn't me ..."**

*11 June 2013*

we run our latest conference for businesses in Birmingham – focusing on resolving disputed credit and debit card transactions

## **don't be hoodwinked**

*7 June 2013*

we tell BBC Radio Nottingham how consumers can make a PPI claim without the merry band of claims managers

## **sharing in Sunderland**

*5 June 2013*

we're hearing about local issues from community advice workers in Sunderland

## **non-disclosure**

*5 June 2013*

we've updated our online technical resource with our approach to non-disclosure in insurance complaints – in light of the *Consumer Insurance Act 2012*

### getting together in Glasgow

4 June 2013

we're getting together with advice workers at Money Advice Scotland's annual conference – to talk about consumers in financial hardship and listen to what's going on in the advice sector

### the end

31 May 2013

it's the last showing today of our short film, *do the right thing*, at the Belfast Moviehouse and Bluewater Showcase cinema - but you can still catch it online

### it could be you (and yours) ...

31 May 2013

the *You and Yours* team from BBC Radio 4 pay us a visit this week to get an exclusive look into how we deal with PPI complaints

### stronger consumer voice sees half a million people bring disputes

29 May 2013

the ombudsman publishes *annual review* of personal finance disputes

### on the straight and narrow

24 May 2013

we're meeting insurance brokers, IFAs and consumer credit businesses in Milton Keynes – to share good practice in complaint handling

### Derry calling

23 May 2013

David Cresswell from the ombudsman joins the BBC Radio Foyle breakfast show – to talk about why more people than ever in Northern Ireland are feeling able to stand up and face a financial problem

### getting savvy in Sunderland

23 May 2013

the ombudsman meets with Julie Elliot MP to host a drop-in session for consumers at Sunderland city library

### news in Newcastle

23 May 2013

tune into BBC Radio Newcastle this morning to hear the ombudsman answering your questions on mortgages, PPI, loans and much more

### city of culture

23 May 2013

we're in Derry/Londonderry talking about debt with local advice workers

### money advisers meet up in Manchester

20 to 21 May 2013

We meet advice workers in Manchester at the Institute of Money Advisers' annual conference – to hear about the impact of financial hardship on consumers

### international travel

16 May 2013

ombudsman Caroline Wayman takes part in the international travel conference at Brighton – to explain the ombudsman's approach to resolving travel insurance disputes

### farms, fashion and the financial ombudsman

15 May 2013

we're at the Balmoral Show in Northern Ireland, as part of our ongoing work to reach people who are less likely to know about their rights to complain

### next stop Belfast

14 May 2013

we're on the buses in Belfast to promote *do the right thing* – a short film on managing your money, made by youth group SE1 United and currently showing at the Belfast Moviehouse

### still in Stafford

10 May 2013

we run a complaints drop-in clinic in Stafford town centre with Jeremy Lefroy MP

### a different route...

10 May 2013

the ombudsman goes on the buses in Kent to promote *do the right thing*, a short film made for us by local youth group SE1 United and showing during May at Bluewater Showcase Cinema

### speaking up in Stafford

9 May 2013

we're in Stafford – sharing our knowledge with community advice workers and hearing about local issues of concern to consumers

## **PPI in NI**

8 May 2013

David Cresswell from the ombudsman service answers listeners' questions about PPI – live from the Belfast studio of BBC Northern Ireland's *Talkback*

## **young people show us how to do the right thing**

3 May 2013

check out the short film that local youth group SE1 United made about doing the right thing and being money savvy

## **getting busy in Birmingham**

2 May 2013

we're at Naidex helping consumers sort out their financial problems and running our "meet the ombudsman" event for smaller businesses

## **ombudsman news and payday lending**

30 April 2013

our latest issue of *ombudsman news* includes case studies involving payday lending and individual savings accounts (ISAs)

## **in sickness and in health**

30 April 2013

we run our conference for businesses in Edinburgh – on assessing claims and resolving complaints about health and protection insurance

## **independent living**

30 April 2013

we join the Naidex show at NEC – to meet disabled consumers and carers and find out more about their experience of financial services

## **appointment of our new independent assessor, Amerdeep Somal**

25 April 2013

## **go forth**

23 April 2013

Caroline Wells from the ombudsman talks to Edinburgh's *Forth One* radio about our outreach work in Scotland – including a consumer drop-in with Ian Murray MP

## **hard times**

23 April 2013

we run our latest conference – looking at how financial businesses can approach complaints when consumers are in financial difficulty

## **piping up!**

22 April 2013

the ombudsman's in Scotland sharing our knowledge with advice workers and MPs

## **prevention or cure?**

19 April 2013

ombudsman Clare Mortimer talks to the Building Societies Association – giving advice about preventing complaints

## **DIY PPI**

16 April 2013

the ombudsman joins BBC consumer show, *Don't get done get Dom* – to explain that people don't need to pay a claims manager when they can easily bring a PPI complaint themselves for free

## **Which? on banks' complaints handling**

14 April 2013

David Cresswell from the ombudsman talks to BBC news about the Which? survey into banking complaints

## **keeping on top of credit in York**

11 April 2013

the ombudsman talks to BBC Radio York about credit cards and consumer rights

## **imagine that**

11 April 2013

the ombudsman talks to Cheshire radio stations *Imagine FM* and *Pure 107.8 FM* about getting a complaint sorted

## **stopping off in Stockport again**

11 April 2013

the ombudsman hosts a drop-in session for consumers in Stockport with Ann Coffey MP

## **chatting with Chelmsford insurers**

10 April 2013

we talk to the Insurance Institute of Chelmsford about the role of the ombudsman service

## **stopping off at Stockport**

10 April 2013

community workers in Stockport join the outreach team for our latest training day

## **savvy seniors**

8 April 2013

our latest feature in *Retirement Today* – the lifestyle magazine for the over 50's – focuses on handy hints on how to get the most out of your money

## **non-disclosure and the ombudsman**

5 April 2013

with the *Consumer Insurance (Disclosure and Representations) Act 2012* coming into force on 6 April, we explain how the new legislation reflects the ombudsman's long-standing approach to non-disclosure

## **full of beans**

5 April 2013

students may not be the best at spring cleaning – but it's easy to keep your student finances tidy with our top tips on *studentbeans*

## **Money Box live**

3 April 2013

David Cresswell from the ombudsman service talks on Radio 4 *Money Box* about how consumers can get their PPI complaints and financial problems sorted



Our board members are “non-executive” – they have no involvement in individual complaints. Their job as “public interest” directors is to ensure that the ombudsman service is properly resourced and is able to carry out its work effectively and independently



our board and senior people

## our board

### **Sir Nicholas Montagu KCB chairman**

- chairman of Queen Mary & Westfield Foundation
- chairman of the council of Queen Mary, University of London

### *formerly*

- chairman of the board of Inland Revenue
- a senior civil servant working on issues ranging from pensions to public service reform

### **Gwyn Burr**

- a non-executive board member of Sainsbury's Bank
- a non-executive board member of Wembley National Stadium
- a non-executive board member of Hammerson plc

### *formerly*

- chair of Business in the Community's cause-related marketing leadership team
- customer service and colleague director at J Sainsbury plc
- managing director of the Resultant Team Consultancy
- retail managing director at ASDA/WalMart
- European marketing manager at Nestle Rowntree

### **Alan Jenkins**

- a non-executive board member of the Pension Protection Fund
- a non-executive board member of the Crown Prosecution Service
- a non-executive board member of UK Trade & Investment
- chairman of the board of trustees of Mencap Trust Company Limited
- chairman of the board of trustees of Lattitude Global Volunteering
- director of Gross Hill Properties Ltd, Sydney and London Properties Ltd and Northcourt Ltd

### *formerly*

- vice chairman of the International Institute for Environment & Development
- independent non-executive at PKF UK LLP
- partner & chairman of global markets at Eversheds LLP
- chairman of the board of Eversheds LLP
- trustee of the London Middle East Institute
- managing partner of Frere Cholmeley Bischoff
- governor of Bishop Gilpin Primary School

as at 31 March 2014

**Julian Lee**

- chair of Brighton & Sussex University Hospitals Trust
- Justice of the Peace on the North Sussex Bench
- strategy and risk consultant

*formerly*

- a commissioner at the Legal Services Commission
- a non-executive director of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency & member of the Maritime Advisory Board
- chair of NHS Brighton & Hove & interim chair of NHS Surrey
- a non-executive director of the South East Coast Ambulance Trust
- chairman, then chief executive, of Allied Carpets Group plc
- chief executive, Bricom Group plc
- joint managing director of British & Commonwealth Holdings plc
- partner Arthur Andersen

**Baroness Maeve Sherlock OBE**

- a member of the House of Lords
- currently doing research for a doctorate at Durham University
- chair of Chapel St (charitable social enterprises)

*formerly*

- a commissioner at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- a non-executive director of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission
- chief executive of the Refugee Council
- chief executive of the charity One Parent Families
- a member of the Council of Economic Advisers in the Treasury
- chair of the National Student Forum

**Pat Stafford**

- vice chair of Guide Dogs
- a business adviser, Young Enterprise
- mentor, New Leaf
- chair, Calverton Parish

*formerly*

- a non-executive director of HMRC
- group marketing director at BUPA
- managing director of corporate positioning services and head of brands management at British Airways
- governor at the University of Bedfordshire
- regional board member of the Prince's Trust



# our executive team

**Tony Boorman**  
chief executive and  
chief ombudsman (interim)



**Liz Brackley**  
director of strategic service  
development



**Julia Cavanagh**  
director of finance and  
performance

**David Cresswell**  
director of communications  
and insight



**Chris McDermott**  
operations director

**Caroline Wayman**  
principal ombudsman and  
legal director



**Jacque Wiggett**  
director of human resources  
and organisational  
development



as at 31 March 2013



# our panel of ombudsmen

*there are more details about our ombudsmen on our website*

## **Tony Boorman**

chief ombudsman and  
chief executive (interim)

## **Caroline Wayman**

principal ombudsman  
and legal director

## **lead and managing ombudsmen**

Carole Auchterlonie

Yvette Bannister

Nathan Horner

David Millington

Caroline Mitchell

Clare Mortimer

Charlie Sweeney

Richard Thompson

Richard West

Sue Wrigley

## **ombudsmen**

Tope Adeyemi

Susan Alegre

Emma Ali-Noor

Janine Allen

Claire Allison

Jane Archer

David Ashley

Nicolas Atkinson

Charles Bacon

Timothy Bailey

Hilary Bainbridge

Clair Bantin

Louise Bardell

Gregor Barham

Rosalind Barnett

Audrey Baxter

Phillip Berechree

James Biles

David Bird

Paul Bishop

Angela Black

Graham Booth

Emma Boothroyd

Michelle Boundy

Cathy Bovan

Alexandra Bowen

Michael Boyall

Roxelana Boyce-Bown

Sarah Brooks

Colin Brown

June Brown

Edward Callaghan

Sarah Carter

Nigel Cates

Silas Catling

Julia Chapman

Joanne Chilvers

Julia Chittenden

Carole Clark

Heather Clayton

Melissa Collett

Juliet Collins

Laura Colman

Rebecca Connelley

Terence Connor

Peter Cook

Stephen Cooper

Zoe Copley

Jonathan Coppin

Ross Crawley

Michael Crewe

Alison Cribbs

Paul Daniel

Kim Davenport

Andrew Davies

Elizabeth Dawes

Karen Dennis-Barry

Simon Dibble

Christine Doorly

Katie Doran

Rona Doyle

Paul Doyle

Rachel Ellis

Susan Ewins

Paul Featherstone

Janet Ferrari

Reidy Flynn

Elizabeth Forbes

Laura Forster

Juliana Francis

Andrew Fraser

Christine Fraser

Linda Freestone

*continued* ►

# our panel of ombudsmen

*there are more details about our ombudsmen on our website*

Simon Furse	Laura Layfield	Helene Pantelli	Suzannah Stuart
Geoffrey Futer	Simon Leach	Charles Park	Michael Stubbs
Jane Gallacher	Ruth Lewis	Sharon Parr	John Swain
Christopher Gilbert	Stephen Lilley	Jeffrey Parrington	Charles Sweet
Roderic Glyn-Thomas	Daniel Little	Kim Parsons	Keith Taylor
Michael Goldberg	Rosemary Lloyd	Nimish Patel	Niall Taylor
Joyce Gordon	Daniel Lucas	Jonathan Pattinson	Stephen Thomas
Hamilton Graham	Alexander MacDonald	Athena Pavlou	David Thomas
Dawn Griffiths	Andrew Macnamara	Emma Peters	John Thornton
Sean Hamilton	Naseem Malik	Michelle Peters	Christopher Tilson
Ross Hammond	Amrit Mangra	Susan Peters	Jagdeep Tiwana
Jonathan Hanton	Douglas Mansell	David Poley	William Towers
James Harris	Daniel Martin	Nigel Pope	Stephen Townsley
Carolyn Harwood	Kristina Mathews	Louise Povey	Venetia Trayhurn
Henrietta Hastings	Roy Mawford	Simon Pugh	Govindarajan Varadarajan
Jarrold Hastings	Amanda Maycock	John Quinlan	Susan Webb
Catrin Hennessey	Eimear McAllister	Sandra Quinn	Katherine Wells
Richard Hill	Siobhan McBride	Michael Ranaghan	Karen Wharton
Douglas Hill	Harriet McCarthy	Simon Rawle	John Wightman
Jane Hingston	Melanie McDonald	Roslyn Rawson	Amanda Williams
Clare Hockney	Helen McKenna	Paul Reilly	Anna Wilshaw
Charlotte Holland	Una Mckevitt	Mark Richardson	John Withington
Mark Hollands	Michael McMahan	Stefan Riedel	Lindsey Woloski
Claire Hopkins	Patrick McManus	Philip Roberts	Catherine Wolthuizen
Adrian Hudson	Robyn McNamee	Fiona Robinson	Christian Wood
Garry Hunter	Andrew McQueen	Malcolm Rogers	Elsbeth Wood
Chantelle Hurn	Philip Miller	Kenneth Rose	Rebecca Wood
Lale Hussein-Doru	Janet Millington	Douglas Sayers	Nicola Wood
Michael Ingram	Roy Milne	Mark Sceeny	Chloe Wooles
Claire Jackson	Gideon Moore	Nicole Shinnick	Nicola Woolf
David Johnson	Ashley More	Robert Short	Claire Woollerson
Colin Keegan	Paul Moulder	Nicola Sisk	Kevin Wright
James Kennard	Helen Moye	Kirsten Smart	Lisa Wright
Sharon Kerrison	Raymond Neighbour	Anthony Stafford	Roger Yeomans
Belinda Knight	John Norton	Lesley Stead	Matthew Young
Mark Lancod	Claire O'Connor	Ruth Stevenson	
Raymond Lawley	Geraldine O'Donnell	Caroline Stirling	
Dianne Lawson	Jan O'Leary	Joanne Storey	



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and cared about what  
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with financial complaints.

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with things and used  
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help for consumers and technical  
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with case studies and commentary.

The Financial Ombudsman Service was set up by law as an independent public body. Our job is to resolve individual disputes between consumers and financial services businesses – fairly, reasonably, quickly and informally.

We believe we can best do what we are here for by knowing what matters to us – and standing by our values in all areas of our work. What matters to us is that:

**we do the right thing**

**we treat our customers well and respect their needs**

**we do what we say we'll do**

**we're inquisitive and build everyone's knowledge**



We want to provide our customers – businesses and consumers alike – with a first-rate service. And we are constantly developing and improving what we do and how we do it. To help us in this, we are committed to:

**delivering a trusted, fair and easy-to-use service**

**putting knowledge and expertise at the heart of everything we do**

**operating an efficient infrastructure**

**sharing our insight and experience – to help build confidence**

**being flexible, reliable and effective**



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