

Number of police officers under investigation over race and homophobia is on the rise

Official figures show that Police Scotland is investigating more than 100 officers over race and homophobia complaints, and the number of allegations against officers is rising.

Police officers faced a slew of discrimination allegations last year with combined race and sexual orientation allegations alone totalling 103 compared with 76 the previous year.

Data shows that allegations rose in relation to three out of the six protected characteristics – race, sexual orientation, gender – included in Scotland’s Hate Crime legislation.

Claims of discriminatory behaviour linked to disability and faith showed slight declines while those of age discrimination remained the same as the previous 12 months.

Figures from a force conduct report show 88 officers were accused of alleged race discrimination in 2023/24 – up by a third compared to the previous year (66) and by just over half compared to the five-year average (58).

There were 15 claims relating to sexual orientation, up by 50% on the previous year and 108.3% compared to the five-year average (7).

A further 29 officers are being investigated for alleged gender discrimination, an increase of 45% from the previous year.

There were 22 disability allegations, one fewer (-4.3%) than the previous year, while allegations relating to faith dropped by one to four. There was no change in age discrimination claims with only one allegation recorded.

Scottish Liberal Democrat justice spokesperson Liam McArthur MSP said that “tougher action” to tackle racism and misogyny within the culture of Police Scotland was “long overdue”.

He said: “There are more than 16,000 officers within Police Scotland so it is important to remember that these allegations relate to only a small proportion of the service.

“Likewise, until the claims have been properly investigated there should not be an immediate presumption of guilt.

“However, bad apples can spoil the batch and do enormous damage to community relations.”

Mr McArthur added: “It would be a step forward if people who have had bad experiences with the police could feel confident enough to come forward and trust that their claims will be properly investigated.

“Scottish Liberal Democrats have been clear that tougher action to tackle racism and misogyny by, for example, implementing the recommendations of recent reports into the culture of Police Scotland, is long overdue.”

As women were specifically excluded from protection under hate crime laws, data on allegations of sexism, misogyny and harassment claims were not included in the Police Scotland breakdown. None were available on request.

Data showing discriminatory behaviour allegations on the rise makes uncomfortable reading for Police Scotland whose job it

is to enforce the country's tough hate crime laws.

The figures also show Police Scotland still has work to do after former chief constable Iain Livingstone described it as "institutionally racist and discriminatory" shortly before he retired in August 2023.

He said at the time: "It is right for me, as chief constable, to clearly state that institutional racism, sexism, misogyny and discrimination exist. Publicly acknowledging these issues exist institutionally is essential to our absolute commitment to championing equality and becoming an anti-racist service."

Mr Livingstone also said that acknowledging the issues existed was vital for real change to happen, with a subsequent review uncovering first-hand accounts of racism, sexism and homophobia by serving officers.

It also heard cases where staff had been "punished" for raising concerns with female officers describing Police Scotland being marked by a "boys club" culture.

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL

Former firearms officer Rhona Malone won almost £1million in compensation from the force after an employment tribunal found she had been victimised when she had raised concerns about sexism.

Ex-officer Gemma MacRae accused Police Scotland of failing to tackle a systemic culture of sexism after a former colleague was convicted of sexually assaulting her almost five years after she reported him to bosses and accused police chiefs of paying "lip service" to the public.

Police Scotland is also under pressure due to the ongoing public inquiry into the death of Sheku Bayoh who died in May 2015 after he was restrained by police officers in Kirkcaldy, Fife. The inquiry is investigating the circumstances of the

31-year-old's death and whether race was a factor.



26/10/2024

Kadi Johnson speaking at a vigil for Allan Marshall and Sheku Bayoh held at Bute House

PHOTO Alan Simpson

Police Scotland launched its "Policing Together" strategy in September 2022 to tackle discrimination in the ranks and in the community, with a mandatory leadership programme rolled out to 5000 officers and staff to improve workplace culture.

They say it provides a focal point and platform for the action they are taking to "champion equality, diversity and inclusion".

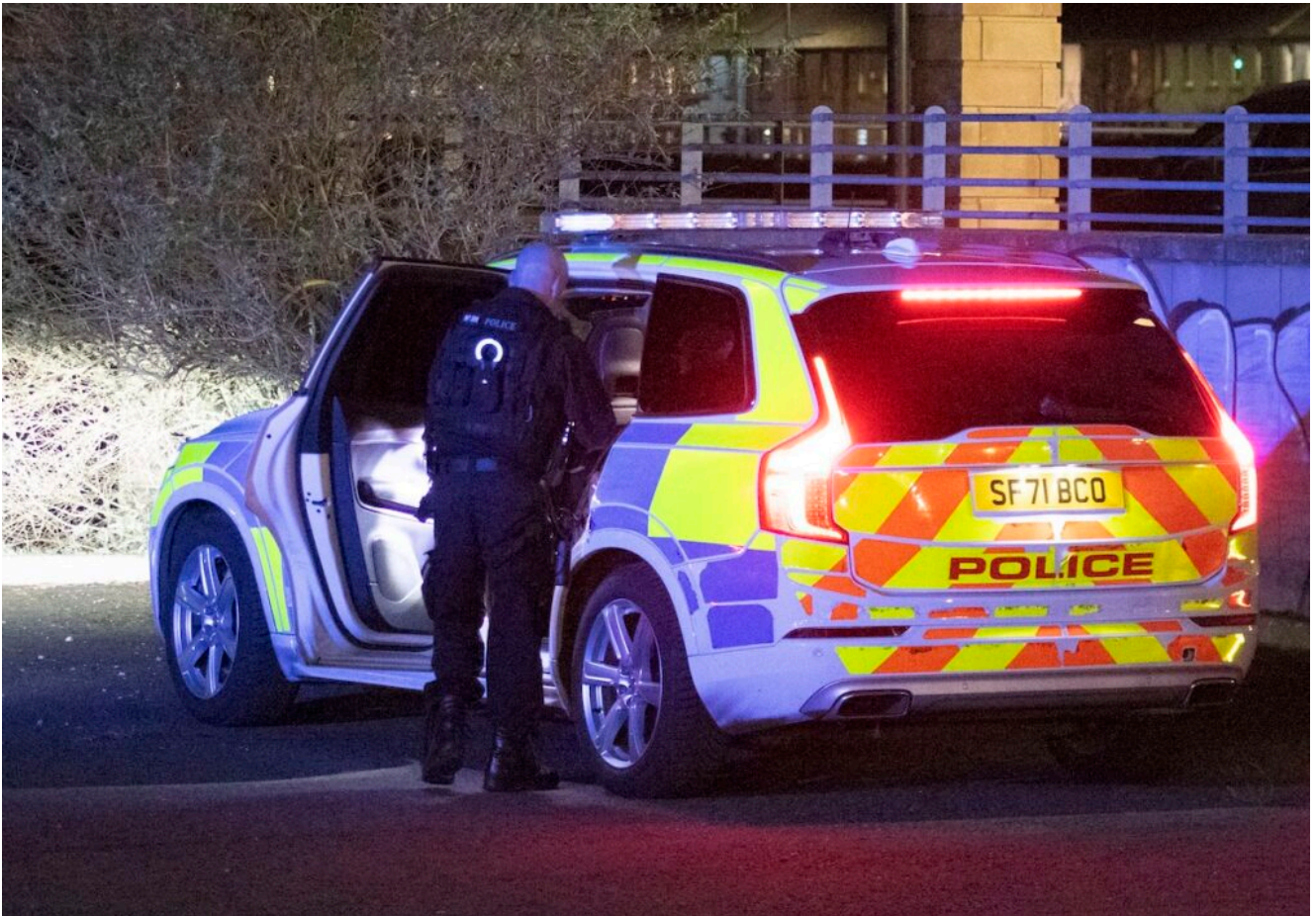
Assistant Chief Constable Catriona Paton said: "We take all allegations of discrimination seriously and every report is fully investigated.

"We have seen an increase in reports of hate crime as people

become more aware of what isn't acceptable, and our officers and staff are not immune to that.

"We are committed to building an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory service and our Policing Together programme drives action for meaningful change across four strategic pillars – leadership, training, professionalism and prevention and communications.

"The police officer job is unique and we look to recruit people who will live by our values of integrity, fairness, respect, and are committed to upholding human rights. Those who do not uphold these values have no place in Police Scotland."



9/12/2024

Police Incident Granton Square PHOTO Alan Simpson