



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2008-05102

**Keyword:** Crime

**Subject:** DETECTION RATE FOR FIREARMS OFFENCES

### Request:

**Under the Freedom of Information Act please disclose what the detection rate was for offences involving firearms in each of the last 10 years, broken down by offence.**

### Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full.

**Please find attached record numbered 01786.pdf.** *Please note that the attached information relates to recorded firearms offences from the years 2001/2002 to 2007/2008 only and not the last ten years as you have asked for. The crime recording system in place prior to 1 April 2001 does not make it readily possible to identify firearms offences.*

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this email.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing [FOI@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:FOI@psni.pnn.police.uk)

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <http://www.psni.police.uk/>

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

**Clearance rates for offences where a firearm<sup>1</sup> was involved<sup>2</sup> in the incident by offence type**

**Northern Ireland**

	2001/02			2002/03			2003/04		
	Recorded	Cleared <sup>3,4</sup>	Clearance Rate	Recorded	Cleared <sup>3,4</sup>	Clearance Rate	Recorded	Cleared <sup>3,4</sup>	Clearance Rate
Class 1. Offences against the person	460	44	9.6%	451	107	23.7%	353	89	25.2%
Class 2. Sexual offences	2	0	0.0%	0	0	-	0	0	-
Class 3. Burglary	10	1	10.0%	14	3	21.4%	10	2	20.0%
Class 4. Robbery	609	1	0.2%	679	70	10.3%	484	67	13.8%
Class 5. Theft	0	0	-	0	0	-	1	0	0.0%
Class 6. Fraud and forgery	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-
Class 7. Criminal damage	136	1	0.7%	86	6	7.0%	190	10	5.3%
Class 8. Offences against the state	68	23	33.8%	95	36	37.9%	90	40	44.4%
Class 9. Other notifiable offences	12	0	0.0%	6	1	16.7%	7	1	14.3%
<b>Total crime</b>	<b>1297</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>1331</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>1135</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>18.4%</b>

	2004/05			2005/06			2006/07		
	Recorded	Cleared <sup>3,4</sup>	Clearance Rate	Recorded	Cleared <sup>3,4</sup>	Clearance Rate	Recorded	Cleared <sup>3,4</sup>	Clearance Rate
Class 1. Offences against the person	304	80	26.3%	296	102	34.5%	172	47	27.3%
Class 2. Sexual offences	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-
Class 3. Burglary	13	4	30.8%	9	3	33.3%	4	3	75.0%
Class 4. Robbery	325	55	16.9%	311	44	14.1%	218	36	16.5%
Class 5. Theft	1	0	0.0%	0	0	-	0	0	-
Class 6. Fraud and forgery	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	-
Class 7. Criminal damage	236	19	8.1%	196	18	9.2%	116	3	2.6%
Class 8. Offences against the state	94	40	42.6%	94	43	45.7%	83	45	54.2%
Class 9. Other notifiable offences	7	1	14.3%	6	1	16.7%	4	1	25.0%
<b>Total crime</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>20.3%</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>22.6%</b>

	2007/08		
	Recorded	Cleared <sup>3,4</sup>	Clearance Rate
Class 1. Offences against the person	213	61	28.6%
Class 2. Sexual offences	3	2	66.7%
Class 3. Burglary	2	0	0.0%
Class 4. Robbery	124	35	28.2%
Class 5. Theft	2	1	50.0%
Class 6. Fraud and forgery	1	0	0.0%
Class 7. Criminal damage	88	0	0.0%
Class 8. Offences against the state	87	49	56.3%
Class 9. Other notifiable offences	24	5	20.8%
<b>Total crime</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>28.1%</b>

*Please note that these figures are provisional and subject to change*

<sup>1</sup> Firearms include rifles, shotguns, handguns, air weapons, BB guns and imitation guns.

<sup>2</sup> The figures relate to offences where a firearm was involved in the incident – it is not known how the firearm was actually used.

<sup>3</sup> **Definition of clearances:** Clearances (or detections as they may alternatively be known) are, broadly speaking, those crimes that have been 'cleared up' by the police. Crimes are counted as 'cleared or detected' in accordance with strict counting rules issued by the Home Office. They are counted on the basis of crimes rather than offenders. For example, if six offenders are involved in a robbery and are all arrested and charged, then this counts as one clearance. Alternatively if only one of the six is identified and charged while the other five remain unidentified and go free, this also counts as one clearance. In this

respect clearance data differs from conviction data as conviction data counts offenders while clearance data counts crimes.

In April 2006 PSNI adopted a higher evidential standard in respect of non-sanction clearances (those where no further action is taken by the police, mainly due to the victim not wanting formal action taken by the police or due to no prosecution being directed). This change was introduced in order to bring these clearance types more closely into line with police services in England and Wales where they have been applying the Crown Prosecution Service evidential test since 2002. In Northern Ireland the equivalent standard only became relevant to PSNI clearances with the establishment of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) in June 2005. Sanction clearances remained unaffected by this change.

The following methods of clearance involve a formal sanction:

- Charging or issuing a summons to an offender;
- Issuing a caution to the offender;
- Having the offence accepted for consideration in court;
- The offender is a juvenile who is dealt with by means of an informed warning or restorative caution.

Up to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, offences not involving a formal sanction but still regarded as 'cleared up' were those where the police took no further action for the following reasons:

- Offender, victim or essential witness is dead or too ill;
- Victim refuses or is unable to give evidence;
- Offender is under the age of criminal responsibility;
- Police or PPS decides that no useful purpose would be served by proceeding;
- Time limit of six months for commencing prosecution has been exceeded.

The Home Office significantly restricted the clearance types available to the police from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, which meant that virtually all clearances resulting in 'no further police action' (i.e. non sanction clearances) could no longer be claimed as a valid clearance. These clearance types accounted for 4 percentage points of the PSNI clearance rate in 2006/07 but only accounted for less than 0.1 of a percentage point in 2007/08 following this latest restriction. This means that the PSNI overall clearance rate and its sanction clearance rate are now virtually one and the same. This same change also applied to all police services in England and Wales from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Relates to recorded firearms offences identified from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001. The crime recording system in place prior to this does not make it possible to identify firearms offences. This may impact clearance figures for those crimes recorded and cleared across different financial years. For example, a recorded firearms related offence having been reported in the 2001/02 financial year may be counted as cleared in 2002/03 depending on the clearance date. This is particularly notable for the 2001/02 clearance figure. This is not comparable with subsequent years as it only includes those offences both recorded and cleared within 2001/02, it does not include offences cleared in 2001/02, which were recorded in previous financial years.