



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-02619

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: Assaults Against Police Officers

Request and Answer:

Question 1

How many PSNI officers were subjected to assaults in year ended April 2012 that required hospital treatment?

Please give comparative figures for 2011.

Question 2

What is the most common form of assault on an officer, and does it include biting or spitting?

Question 3

How many working days are lost as a result of assaults-attacks on officers

Question 4

What is the breakdown (men-women) of those who carry out assaults on officers?

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

It is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the "appropriate costs limit" under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

In an attempt to retrieve the information requested I contacted Central Statistics Branch and the 8 District Command Units and relevant Departments as the information requested for question 3 is not held centrally. Each of the Districts/Departments was asked to provide time estimates as to how long it would take to retrieve the information from their systems. One District alone advised that to retrieve the statistics for the number of working days which are lost as a result of assaults-attacks on officers, that each sick record would have to be individually viewed and this would take an estimated 10 minutes per record. In this particular District there have been in excess of 600 absences within the specified period April 1st, 2011 – March 31st 2012, and it is estimated that this would take well in excess of time permitted under legislation (18 hours). It is therefore estimated that the total time required to extract the information for all districts and relevant departments would take an estimated

158 hours.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit however the nature and structure of the information unfortunately makes this impossible.

Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions.

Although excess cost removes the PSNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, I have attached from Central Statistics Branch a table at the end of this correspondence which provides the number of assault offences where the victim was a police officer on duty, however PSNI Statistics Branch do not hold information on whether the victims received hospital treatment. I have also provided a table providing the breakdown of the gender of linked offenders who have been deemed responsible for the offences.

I trust this is helpful but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

If you have any queries regarding your request or this 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 letter.

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.

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 @ www.psnipolice.uk

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

Recorded assault¹ offences where the victim has been identified as a police officer on duty

Northern Ireland

Injury Classification	2010/11	2011/12
None	2559	2574
Threat	13	13
Minor	835	729
Serious	14	0
Total	3421	3316

Source: PSNI Statistics Branch

Recorded and detected assault¹ offences where the victim has been identified as a police officer on duty

	2010/11	2011/12
Total recorded	3421	3316
Of those recorded, the number since detected ²	3131	2968
Of those offences since detected, the proportion where at least one linked offender was:		
Male	80.7%	78.4%
Female	17.9%	19.1%
Details missing/unknown	1.3%	2.5%

Source: PSNI Statistics Branch

¹ Assault offences have been defined as assault on police offences with/without injury, and Inflicting GBH with/without intent offences where the victim was an officer on duty.

² Figures for recorded offences since deemed as detected may change as a result of ongoing investigations and/or any cases currently being taken forward for prosecution.