



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2017-00123

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Crime and Victimisation

Request and Answer:

Your request for information below has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information you have requested however 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.

Request 1

I am writing to request the following data under the Freedom of Information Act relating to offences within your force area.

Part 1: Victim Age

For each of the last ten years (or for which data is available):

- 2017
- 2016
- 2015
- 2014
- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2010
- 2009
- 2008

The number of recorded victims broken down by age group:

- 1-10,
- 11-16,
- 17-18,
- 19-20,
- 21-25,
- and 26+ years old

For each of the following offences:

- Murder
- Attempted murder
- Manslaughter

- Wounding
- GBH
- ABH
- Robbery
- Armed robbery
- Any offence with a knife
- Any offence with a gun
- Any offence with a gun discharged
- Any offence with acid or corrosive substance
- Any offence (TNO count)

Request 2

Part 2: Victim Ethnicity

For each of the last ten years (or for which data is available):

- 2017
- 2016
- 2015
- 2014
- 2013
- 2012
- 2011
- 2010
- 2009
- 2008

The number of recorded victims broken down by recorded ethnicity (both IC codes and SDE, or whichever of the two might be available).

For each of the following offences:

- Murder
- Attempted murder
- Manslaughter
- Wounding
- GBH
- ABH
- Robbery
- Armed robbery
- Any offence with a knife
- Any offence with a gun
- Any offence with a gun discharged
- Any offence with acid or corrosive substance
- Any offence (TNO count)

I would like this information as I cannot find it published on your website or elsewhere and want to understand the levels of recorded crime and victimisation in the force area over the last decade.

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. Section 12 of FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to either comply with the request in its entirety or confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. The estimate must be reasonable in the circumstances of the case. The ‘appropriate limit’ is currently £600 for central government and £450 for all other public

authorities including PSNI. The relevant Regulations which define the appropriate limit for section 12 purposes are The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulation 2004 SI 2004 No 3244. These are known as the 'Fees Regulations' for brevity.

Regulation 4(3) of the Fees Regulations states that a public authority can take into account the costs it reasonably expects to incur in carrying out the following permitted activities in complying with the request:

- (i) determining whether the information is held;
- (ii) locating the information, or a document containing it;
- (iii) retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- (iv) extracting the information from a document containing it.

Under those regulations PSNI can calculate the time spent on each of these permitted activities at £25 per hour (thus if the activity(s) takes more than 18 hours PSNI will be in excess of the 'appropriate limit').

Enquiries made with Central Statistics Unit (CSU) has identified that retrieval of the requested information would greatly exceed the 18 hour cost limit, set under the FOI Act. CSU has advised that any offence with a gun discharged, if the information is available on the Niche database it is likely it can only be identified through a manual trawl of each individual record. The retrieval process would involve reading through more than 1,900 records involving firearms for the selected offences and although difficult to quantify, it is estimated to take around 320 hours. This could significantly increase depending on the number of additional crimes involving firearms that would be identified for all crimes and not just the selected offences.

In relation to any offence with acid or corrosive substance, again retrieval may require manual intervention to provide the data. It is estimated that the total retrieval time would be in excess of 335 hours, grossly exceeding the 18 hour cost limit.

Under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, if any part of the request exceeds the cost threshold then the whole request will be excess costs and there is no obligation to answer any part of the request.

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.

Subject to any relevant exemptions, Statistics Branch would be able to retrieve offences of murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, wounding, GBH, AOABH, robbery, armed robbery and all offences by the age breakdown requested and by the ethnicity as held on PSNI's Niche database.

Statistics Branch produce knife/sharp instrument figures for selected offences only (certain types of crime that are more violent in nature) and also compile offences involving firearms (including air weapon) for these same selected offences. Subject to any relevant exemptions it may be possible to identify records in this way for crimes over a 10 year period within the 18 hour cost limit.

However, Statistics Branch would require clarification in relation to IC codes and the terms SDE and TNO. Also, clarification would be required to determine if Robbery would include or exclude Armed Robbery.

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.

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.psni.police.uk

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