



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2022-02099

Keyword: Crime/Incident Statistics Theft and Burglary

Subject: Parcel Theft

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) We can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) 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

How many instances of parcel theft (i.e. parcels stolen from somebody's doorstep, or other cases where thieves steal a package, for example by impersonating a delivery person or homeowner) were reported between the following dates:

- 01/08/2021 – 31/07/2022
- 01/08/2020 – 31/07 2021
- 01/08/2019 – 31/07/2020
- 01/08/2018 – 31/07/2019

Request 2

If possible, can you share the number of reported instances of parcel theft (i.e. parcels stolen from somebody's doorstep, or other cases where thieves steal a package, for example by impersonating a delivery person or homeowner) by month for each of the date ranges provided in question one or, if this is not possible, any data that would make it possible to calculate this?

Request 3

If possible, can you share either the total reported value of stolen parcels for the date ranges provided in question one or, if this is not possible, any data that would make it possible to calculate this?

Request 4

If possible, can you share the most common time of day when parcels were stolen (using the date ranges provided in question one) in the following format, or, if not possible, any data that would make it possible to calculate this?

A. 09.01 – 17.00

- B. 17.01 – 22.00
- C. 22.01 – 09.00

Request 5

If possible, can you share the most common age of the people reporting theft (for the date ranges provided in question one) in the following format, or any data that would make it possible to calculate this?

- A. 21 and under
- B. 22-34
- C. 35-44
- D. 45-54
- E. 55-64
- F. 65 and over

Answers

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 in relation to your requests have identified that retrieval of this information would exceed the 18 hour cost limit set under the FOI Act by the Secretary of State. The information requested whilst held electronically on the PSNI’s central database, is not held in a searchable format that provides the information without manual intervention, and a comprehensive search would need to be conducted to retrieve the information.

PSNI can advise while there is a ‘Theft of Mail’ offence there is no way to identify whether property was stolen following or as part of a delivery, therefore a manual examination of all offences classified as ‘Other Theft’ during the timeframe August 2018 – July 2021 would be required. PSNI have identified for the timeframe August 2021 – July 2022 alone there were a total of 6,805 occurrences recorded. Even adding a filter on locations of ‘Dwelling’ and ‘Public / Open Place’ there were 4,376 offences in this period. Allowing 10 minutes to review each individual occurrence to determine whether or not the property was stolen in the circumstances outlined in your requests amounts to

over 700 hours of work, grossly exceeding the legislative timescale of 18 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.

Advice and Assistance

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, we have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit however unfortunately on this occasion PSNI are unable to provide any refinement for this request.

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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 Corporate Information Branch, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.police.uk.

If, following an Internal Review carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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', or use the ICO self-service portal available at www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/

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 their 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.