

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-2573
Date: 20th December 2022



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

I refer to your recent request for information which has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

For ease of reference, your request is replicated below together with the response.

Please note that the figures provided were taken from both the National Missing Persons Application which was introduced in April 2019 and National Missing Persons Database which holds any longer term cases.

1. Between 1st January 2022 and the 30th of November (inclusive), how many missing person reports were filed with Police Scotland?

16,325

2. Of these reports, can you provide the gender of the missing person and their age?

Gender	Number
Choose not to Disclose	3
Female	7,157
Intersex or Non Binary	62
Male	8,896
Other	5
Transgender	194
Unknown	8

Age Range	Total
0-9	277
10-19	9720
20-29	1530
30-39	1733
40-49	1198
50-59	867
60-69	443
70-79	309
80-89	208
90+	30

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3. Of these missing person reports, can you provide a breakdown of the outcome of the reports?

Outcome	Number
Traced Deceased	122
Traced Alive	16,203

4. Of these reports, can you disclose how many involved children (those under 18) in the care system?

Of the reports there are 3,820 Looked after and accommodated children (under 18)

5. Of these reports, can you disclose how the calendar year 2022 compares to the previous 5 calendar years in terms of the number of missing reports filed?

Please note that we hold the requested information in financial year rather than calendar year and I have provided this in the table below.

Year	Number
2017/18	22,967
2018/19	21,333
2019/20	16,411
2020/21	14,384
2021/22	17,249

6. Can you detail how Police Scotland go about investigating a missing person report?

7. Can you detail the criteria used to decide whether someone is a low-risk, medium-risk or a high-risk missing person?

In regards to questions 6 and 7, please be advised that the requested information is publicly available.

As such, in terms of Section 16 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I am refusing to provide you with the information sought. Section 16 requires Police Scotland when refusing to provide such information because it is exempt, to provide you with a notice which:

- (a) states that it holds the information,
- (b) states that it is claiming an exemption,
- (c) specifies the exemption in question and
- (d) states, if that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information that you have requested and the exemption that I consider to be applicable is set out at Section 25(1) of the Act - information otherwise accessible:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it under Section 1(1) is exempt information”

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I can confirm that the information requested is available through our website. I have attached a direct link to the relevant document below:

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/nw5dkcbd/missing-person-investigation-sop-9-00-publication-version.docx>

8. Can you detail how many missing person reports are received from overseas law enforcement agencies and/or diplomatic missions/embassies/High Commissions/consulates?

9. Can you detail how many missing person reports were received from the National Crime Agency?

In regards to questions 8 and 9, I regret to inform you that I am unable to provide you with the information you have requested, as it would prove too costly to do so within the context of the fee regulations.

As you may be aware the current cost threshold is £600 and I estimate that it would cost well in excess of this amount to process your request.

As such, and in terms of Section 16(4) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 where Section 12(1) of the Act (Excessive Cost of Compliance) has been applied, this represents a refusal notice for the information sought.

By way of explanation, reports for missing person reports received from overseas law enforcement agencies and/or diplomatic missions/embassies/High Commissions/consulates or from the National Crime Agency are not received by a central point within Police Scotland and are sent to the relevant territorial division which covers the report. As we do not centrally record statistics on these requests, the only way to obtain reliable figures would be for all emails and correspondence received by our territorial divisions or any officers associated with them to be manually examined.

Police Scotland receives millions of emails on a yearly basis and a manual review of these would take thousands of hours to complete. This is before written correspondence is considered.

Police Scotland have assessed that the £600 cost limit within the Act equates to 40 hours of work and so this part of your request would breach the cost threshold.

Unfortunately I do not believe there is a way your request can be refined to be completed within the cost limits of the Act.

10. Can you detail how many officers are employed within the Missing Persons Unit or other similar unit?

At the time your request was received, our Missing Persons Unit has base posts for 4 officers namely 1 Police Inspector, 1 Police Sergeant and 2 Police Constables.

Should you require any further assistance please contact Information Management quoting the reference number given.

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If you are dissatisfied with the way in which Police Scotland has dealt with your request, you are entitled, in the first instance, to request a review of our actions and decisions.

Your request must specify the matter which gives rise to your dissatisfaction and it must be submitted within 40 working days of receiving this response - either by email to foi@scotland.police.uk or by post to Information Management (Disclosure), Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH.

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of that review, you are thereafter entitled to apply to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner within six months for a decision. You can apply [online](#), by email to enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info or by post to Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS.

Should you wish to appeal against the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner's decision, there is an appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

As part of our commitment to demonstrate openness and transparency in respect of the information we hold, an anonymised version of this response will be posted to the Police Scotland Freedom of Information [Disclosure Log](#) in seven days' time.