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Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-2097
Date: 27 October 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.

How many reports of so-called 'sextortion' have you received in each year: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and so far in 2022? Please break the figures down to show the ages of the victims in the reports.

How many of the reports were about footage or images obtained through webcam recording?

How many of the reports were about footage or images provided by the victim?

How many of the reports involved the victim being demanded money to avoid disclosure?

What was the youngest age of victim?

What was the oldest age of victim?

Having considered your request in terms of the Act, I regret to inform you that I am unable to provide you with the precise and specific 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, Police Scotland record crimes using the Scottish Government Justice Department crime classification codes and are not thereafter sub-categorised.

In this instance, I'm afraid that there is no offence classification specific to sextortion as outlined in your request. Such offences could be recorded under more general classifications such as Fraud, Threats & Extortion, Disclosure of Images etc. The only way to determine whether any reports were relevant to your request, would be to carry out case by case assessment of all potentially relevant crime reports. This would involve individually

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examining thousands of crime reports and this is an exercise which I estimate would far exceed the cost limit set out in the Fees Regulations.

However, by way of assistance I can advise that some specific analysis has been conducted (not related to FOI) in order to attempt to gather some data regarding what could be referred to as 'sextortion'.

On that basis, I can provide you with the following recorded crime data which is the result of that exercise - although I would stress that the data is heavily caveated.

Additionally, please be advised that the data provided below is subject to change. The data may differ from any previously published data, this can be due in part to any non-recent reports that may have been received, any ongoing investigation or when reports are uploaded to the crime system.

The table below provides information details the number of crimes that could be identified as "sextortion" along with the age group of the victim.

Please note that this table does not contain information prior to 2019. Additionally, this data does not cover N Division from July 2020 onward. Finally, data is categorised on a delay. July is the most recent and complete month available therefore data has been provided up to 31 July 2022.

Victim/Complainer Age Group	2019	2020	2021	2022*
<16	13	41	81	103
17-25	77	196	374	256
26-35	26	69	141	93
36-45	16	37	57	43
46-55	9	33	45	24
56-65	5	20	26	16
66-75	4	5	13	5
76<	1	1	1	1
Unknown	75	25	58	70
Total	226	427	796	611

In order to provide some information regarding footage and images obtained via webcam recording, searches of the crime summary were carried out to identify certain key words. These terms described below and the number of occasions that they appeared within identified crimes are detailed within the table.

Keyword/s	2019	2020	2021	2022
Skype	10	8	6	7
Video call/ Videocall	13	24	74	36
video chat	6	6	32	20
Web cam/ Webcam	8	6	5	9

Methodology

This data is based upon Police Scotland recorded crime data and was extracted based upon having a “cybercrime” aggravator. This data was then collated and categorised based upon the available information for each crime and professional judgement. The data provided contains all recorded crimes that are determined to be an instance of “sextortion”, also known as webcam extortion.

Instances of sextortion were deemed to be any instances of sexual material or information (images, videos, written communications, personal details) being obtained and used to extort the victim, whether for money, sexual acts or any other demand.

Caveats/Limitations

- These are not official statistics.
- This data gathering process began in January 2019.
- Police Scotland does not have a single unified crime recording system and as such this data is gathered from legacy police crime systems.
- This data may contain errors as a result of variations in amounts of information provided for each recorded crime, errors in original recording of crimes, changes in methodology, or errors in the manual assessment of crimes.
- Key word searches were based upon the Crime Method summary. These summaries are short and do not contain full details of the crime.
- Data only includes crimes marked with the “cybercrime” aggravator and as such cannot account for instances of sextortion which have not received this marking.
- The years relate to calendar year and not financial year.
- We do not hold a summary of each recorded crime including outcome.
- Not all identified crime reports contain the age of the victim.

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

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.

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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.