| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 24-1049  Responded to: 01 May 2024 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

**I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act. Please could you supply the following information:**

1. **The number of people recorded as missing by the force in each of the years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.**
2. **For each year, please could you provide a breakdown of how many people had previously been recorded as missing/were repeat mispers.**
3. **For each year, how many missing people investigations took place and how many were closed.**

Table 1 provides you with the total number of missing person reports received by Police Scotland in the last 3 financial years, 1 April – 31 March. The table also displays the number of cases that involved an individual who had previously been reported missing, as well as the number of missing person cases closed in the last 3 financial years.

*Table 1: Missing person data by financial year*

|  | **2021/2022** | **2022/2023** | **2023/2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total missing person reports | 17,268 | 17,966 | 16,296 |
| Repeat missing person | 3,622 | 3,784 | 3,162 |
| Missing person cases closed | 17,251 | 17,945 | 16,283 |

1. **For each year, please could you provide a breakdown of the ages, gender and ethnicity of missing people.**

Table 2 provides you with the gender split for missing person reports received by Police Scotland in the last 3 financial years**.**

*Table 2 - Missing persons gender by financial year*

| **Gender** | **2021/2022** | **2022/2023** | **2023/2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Male | 9,571 | 9,923 | 8,982 |
| Female | 7,370 | 7,800 | 7,159 |
| Transgender | 234 | 168 | 114 |

Table 3 provides you with the age range of those reported missing to Police Scotland in the last 3 financial years.

*Table 3 - Missing person age range by financial year*

| **Age range** | **2021/2022** | **2022/2023** | **2023/2024** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0-17 | 9,652 | 10,514 | 9,908 |
| 18-25 | 1,755 | 1,546 | 1,263 |
| 26-45 | 3,399 | 3,367 | 2,954 |
| 46-65 | 1,722 | 1,800 | 1,505 |
| 66+ | 729 | 731 | 661 |

In relation to the ethnicity of each missing person, unfortunately, I estimate that it would cost well in excess of the current FOI cost threshold of £600 to process your request. I am therefore refusing to provide the information sought in terms of section 12(1) of the Act - Excessive Cost of Compliance.

By way of explanation, ethnicity is not a searchable function on the database used to record missing person reports.

In order to accurately answer your question, all missing person reports would have to be manually reviewed. As such, this is an exercise which would exceed the cost limit set out in the Fees Regulations.

**5) For each year, please could you provide an estimation of the cost to the force of missing persons investigations.**

**6) For each year, how many hours of police time were spent on missing persons investigations.**

**7) What is the most the force has spent in estimated costs on an individual missing person investigation.**

**9) What is the average length of a missing persons investigation.**

The information sought is not held by Police Scotland and section 17 of the Act therefore applies.

To explain, each missing person investigation is completely unique. We are generally unable to provide the true cost of any police investigation/ operation or particular type of operation.

The nature of policing means that officers are deployed to wherever their services are most required, and the number of officers required throughout will fluctuate. Officers can also be redeployed to other duties at any time, dependant on their skillsets.

To explain further, officers are drawn from different areas of the Service, based on their skillsets, with the appropriate Division meeting the cost of their core time.  As such detailed records are not held in relation to the number of officers deployed, or to detail the specific costs of any particular piece of work undertaken by them during any specific time period specified.

**8) What is the longest running individual investigation into a missing person carried out by the force.**

The longest running individual investigation is that of Moira Anderson who was reported missing from Bellshill, Glasgow on 23rd February 1957.

**10) How many outstanding missing persons investigations is the force dealing with.**

As of 23rd April 2024, Police Scotland are investigating 192 missing person reports.

If you require any further assistance, please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by [email](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal), by [email](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.