

19 September 2024

REFERENCE: FOI\24\99

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your request for information dated 20th August 2024, as detailed below.

'Please may you provide me with:

- *The number of knife crime offences, broken down by offence, age of suspect, and ethnic appearance of suspect, for each year for the last ten years (broken down by year), up to the most recent data.*
- *The proportion of perpetrators of knife crime who have been classified as looked-after children at some point, for the years 2022 - 2023 and 2023-2024, broken down by year.*
- *The proportion of perpetrators of knife crime who have been excluded from school at some point, for the years 2022 - 2023 and 2023-2024, broken down by year.'*

In relation to part 1 of your request, there is no specific offence relating to knife crime and Departmental prosecutions and convictions datasets do not contain details of the type of weapons used, in relation to knives. Rather, offences relating to the use of a knife may be recorded under more generic descriptions, so information requested under part 1 of your inquiry has been provided in relation to cases where there was a conviction for offences related to possession of bladed or pointed weapons.

Departmental convictions datasets do not contain information on the ethnicity of defendants, so only information on age has been provided in response to this part of your request.

Age band of persons convicted of offences related to bladed weapons, 2014 - 2023

Age band	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
10 - 17	#	#	13	10	#	13	3	5	*	5
18 - 24	44	61	49	63	72	69	46	49	33	38
25 - 29	26	20	32	26	38	49	32	42	37	42
30 - 39	33	23	29	38	41	51	36	49	59	73
40 - 49	18	10	13	18	20	27	22	17	17	23
50 - 59	9	*	#	5	9	9	8	10	11	8
60 & over	*	*	*	3	*	4	3	4	#	3
Total	136	132	150	163	191	222	150	176	161	192

Note:

1. Figures relate to initial disposals at courts. Appeals are not included.
2. Age bands relate to age of defendant at point case was dealt with.
3. Figures relate to cases where there was a conviction for at least one offence relating to possession of an article with a blade or a point in a public place or a school.

Means a figure of 3 or more has been treated to prevent disclosure of a small number elsewhere.

* Means a figure of less than 3 has been treated under rules of disclosure.

While information for convictions at courts has been provided, further information, in relation to part 1 of your request, for offences reported to the police where a knife was used may be available. However, this information is not held by the Department. The recording of offences reported to them is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. The Department is committed to

respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

You may, therefore, wish to direct any query relating to the issues based on knife crime offences raised in the question, to the PSNI. They can be contacted at foi@psni.police.uk

In relation to parts 2 to 3 of your request, the Department of Justice does not hold information on whether persons convicted of crimes were Looked After Children or whether they had been excluded from school at some point, as part of its prosecutions and convictions datasets, so it is not possible to provide information in relation to those two parts of your request.

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you request an internal review please do so in writing stating the reasons to the address above.

If following an internal review you were to remain dissatisfied you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner and ask the Commissioner to investigate whether the DoJ has complied with the terms of the FOIA. You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

The Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out.

Further details on the role of the Information Commissioner and the handling of appeals can be found at: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

If you wish to discuss this please contact the Freedom of Information Team using the contact details provided at the top of the first page. Please remember to quote your reference in any correspondence.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Manager