



Information Rights

bbc.co.uk/foi bbc.co.uk/privacy

John Smith

request-718748-b28ac5ef@whatdotheyknow.com

12 February 2021

Dear Mr Smith

Request for Information – RFI20210098

Thank you for your request to the BBC of 16th January 2021 under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act') seeking the following information (each part of your request has been numbered for ease of reference):

“Dear British Broadcasting Corporation,

- 1. How many people have cancelled their tv license in the last 12 months starting from June 2020?*
- 2. How many people did you you prosecuted for not having a TV licence in the last 12 months starting from June 2020?*
- 3. How many of these people had a lawyer or access to legal aid?*
- 4. How many of these people had a were single parents?*
- 5. How many of these people had a were women?”*

Please note that “TV Licensing” is a trade mark used by companies contracted by the BBC to administer the collection of television licence fees and enforcement of the television licensing system. The majority of the administration of TV Licensing is contracted to Capita Business Services Limited ('Capita'). Over-the-counter services are provided by PayPoint plc ('PayPoint') in the UK, and by the Post Office in the Isle of Man and Channel Islands. Target Group Limited ('Target') is the supplier for the Simple Payment Plan. Marketing and printing services are contracted to RAPP Limited (formerly Proximity London Limited). Media services are contracted to Havas Media Limited. The BBC is a public authority in respect of its television licensing functions and retains overall responsibility.

Please be advised the Act gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities; and that we are not required to create new information to respond to a request, or give a judgement or opinion that is not already recorded.

Part 1

For your information, licences can be cancelled for a variety of reasons by customers who no longer need a licence - for example, if they have moved into an address which already has one. TV Licensing management information is reported on a monthly basis (following the end of each month) and comprises data relating to licences in force where the licence has been cancelled by TV Licensing as a result of payment failure **and** by customers themselves. **As this does not disaggregate the number of licences solely cancelled by customers, we do not hold recorded information that enables us to answer your specific request.**

Under our duty to advise and assist you, please note that a monthly breakdown of all cancellations for the previous financial year (2019/20) is readily available on the TV Licensing website at <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/about/foi-licences-facts-and-figures-ABI8>. These monthly cancellations figures are consolidated at the end of the financial year and intended to be published on the TV Licensing website, following the publication of the TV Licensing Annual Review¹.

Please note that our routine information terms some cancellations as expired, depending on the circumstances of the cancellation, and these are not reported as cancelled licences. To reiterate, the cancellations information on the website relates to licences in force where the licence has been cancelled by TV Licensing as a result of payment failure, and by customers themselves. Therefore these figures cannot be taken to mean solely the number of licences cancelled by customers during this period.

Part 2

By way of background, it is an offence to watch or record television programmes as they are being shown on any channel and on any broadcast platform (terrestrial, satellite, cable and the internet) or download or watch BBC programmes on demand, including catch up TV, on BBC iPlayer without a valid TV Licence. TV Licensing gives people every opportunity to pay as we would prefer not to prosecute. Before we visit addresses, we communicate with unlicensed customers over a period of time on how to spread the cost and detail the independent financial support available. We also work with almost 350 community organisations throughout the UK to help people understand licensing requirements and the legal process.

First-time evaders have several opportunities to buy a licence before a case comes to court. This is explained in our Prosecution Code² which is given to people at their addresses if they are at risk of prosecution, and is also published on the TV Licensing website. TV Licensing will prosecute evaders if it is in the public interest and there is sufficient evidence to do so.

With regard to your specific request, as stated on the TV Licensing website at <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/about/foi-administering-the-licence-fee-AB20> (under the sub-heading “How many licence fee evaders are prosecuted and convicted of not having a valid TV Licence?”); the BBC does not hold official statistics on the precise numbers of people actually prosecuted or convicted for evasion of the Television Licence Fee. For England and Wales this information is

¹ Due to the impact of the Coronavirus, the publication date this year will be delayed.

² <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/about/foi-policies-ABI7>

retained both by the Ministry of Justice and individual magistrates' courts. Further relevant information - including details of the relevant judicial bodies in Northern Ireland and Scotland - is available on the TV Licensing website on the web-link provided.

Parts 3 and 4

The BBC does not hold this information.

Part 5

The BBC does not hold official statistics and I advise that you contact the relevant judicial bodies for this information. Under our duty to advise and assist you, prosecutions and convictions data - including a gender breakdown of defendants - for England and Wales for the period 2014 to 2019 (the most recent data available) can be found at the below link to the Criminal Justice System statistics publication:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2019>

Appeal rights

If you are not satisfied that we have complied with the Act in responding to your request, you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. A request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of receiving the BBC's response to your original request.

If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, Tel: 0303 123 1113 or see <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Rupinder Panesar

Freedom of Information Advisor, TV Licensing Management Team

