



Home Office

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Ollie Persey
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Reference: CR 37180

2 December 2015

Dear Mr Persey,

Thank you for your e-mail of 16 October, in which you ask for:

the data on police use of tasers against mentally ill/emotionally distressed people for the 2010-2015 period in England & Wales.

Your email is being handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I can confirm that we do hold the data you have asked for. We can release some of this information to you: data for the period 2010-2014. The data covering 2015 has been pre-announced and is scheduled for publication: it is therefore exempt from release under section 22 (intended for future publication) of the Act.

The data provided comes from records we hold on the police use of Taser, sorted by police force, firing type, and moderator effects. This data was taken from the Home Office Taser database. You should note that it is not directly comparable with the data included in the Government's Police Use of Taser Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/use-of-taser-statistics>

As highlighted in the Police Use of Taser Statistics publications, there are a number of data capture issues with the Home Office Taser database. This means that the quality of the data used to provide this breakdown for you is not currently of a standard suitable for publication as Official or National statistics. These issues should be recognised and if this data is quoted in the future, it should be caveated as follows:

- the data held on the Home Office Taser database comes from individual police records sent to the Home Office each time a Taser is used. This is a different source to the National Statistics supplied in aggregate form through the National Armed Policing Secretariat which go through more validation checks;
- some of the fields contain data that are police officer assessments;

- moderator effects, such as 'Psychological', 'Mod Mental Health Disorder', 'Mod Psychological', are those assessed by the police officer, not those declared by the individual (see <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/armed-policing/armed-deployment/#environmental-and-behavioural-influencers> and <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/armed-policing/armed-deployment/#dealing-with-individuals-who-are-emotionally-or-mentally-distressed>);
- 'Mod Mental Health Disorder Known' and 'Mod Psychological Known' accounts for whether there is any information accessible to an officer about the individual prior to the use of Taser;
- blank fields in the tables may arise from a lack of the relevant data on the individual record or through implausible data being deleted (e.g. obvious typographical errors).

In regards to part of the request for data covering 2015, this information has been pre-announced and is due to be published (previous information has been published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/use-of-taser-statistics>) and is therefore exempt from disclosure under section 22 (future publication) of the FOI Act. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and there is a requirement for the Home Office to evaluate the public interest in disclosure.

Considerations in favour of disclosing the information immediately

There is a public interest in having access to information regarding the police use of Taser to demonstrate transparency. This allows for closer public scrutiny around the police's use of Taser.

Considerations in favour withholding the information until the planned publication date

In this case, the figures form a part of set of Official statistics relating to the police use of Taser. The Home Office intends to publish this material in the future and should be free to publish information in a time, manner and form of its own choosing. Publication before the planned date would undermine the Home Office's pre-planned publication procedure, and ability to use staff resources in a planned way so that reasonable publication timetables are not undermined.

Conclusion

While the Home Office accepts there is a legitimate public interest in disclosure of this information, given that publication is planned it is not sufficiently strong as to outweigh the factors for withholding it at this stage. The balance of the public interest lies in waiting for the information until the planned publication date.

I hope that this information meets your requirements. I would like to assure you that we have provided you with all relevant information that the Home Office holds, in an accessible format.

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to the address below, quoting reference CR37180. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

Information Rights Team

Home Office
3rd Floor, Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
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e-mail: FOIrequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Yours sincerely

Public Order Unit