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Ministry of Justice
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Penelope Gibbs
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11 June 2018

Dear Ms Gibbs

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request – 180327002

Thank you for your request dated 27 March 2018 in which you asked for the following information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice for the most recent data on how many FTA warrants were issued for defendants who failed to attend court? Ideally this data will be post-2015 and broken down by police force area (in the format of the released FTA 2015 data, broken down by force).

Your request has been handled under the FOIA, and we apologise for the delay in response.

I can confirm that the MoJ holds some of the information that you have requested. However, the information is exempt from disclosure under section 21 of the FOIA, because it is reasonably accessible to you. The information can be accessed via the following link:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/453312/overview-tables-cjstats.xls

The above link opens the last published update to the FTA warrant data series and covers the period to the end of March 2015; it can be viewed in Table Q3.5 at the above link.

The last full set of data tables on FTA warrants collected from police forces was published in the *Criminal justice system statistics quarterly: December 2014* bulletin in the overview tables (see Tables Q3.5 and A3.3) available at the following link:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/430482/overview-tables.xls

Since March 2015, data on failure to appear (FTA) warrants has not been published in the *Criminal justice system statistics quarterly* bulletin, due to data availability issues. Typically, Table Q3.5 presented statistics on the number of FTA warrants received and executed in each police force area in England and Wales, by category of warrant. In the bulletin referenced above, covering the 12 months ending March 2015, we were only able to publish this table with reservations as to the data quality, as reflected within the table footnotes. Most significantly, only 9 months of data was present for the Metropolitan Police, the largest police force area. For subsequent quarters, data availability remained limited to the point that we believe it did not represent a fair national picture. As such, Table Q3.5 was withheld from

subsequent releases and the underlying raw data for later periods were not centrally collated in a format to facilitate the tabulation of Table Q3.5.

In the light of these ongoing data availability concerns, alongside the quarterly bulletin published on 18 February 2015, we consulted users on options for replacing our current table on FTA warrants.

Outside of the scope of the FOIA, you may be interested to note that, following the consultation mentioned above, in November 2016 the MoJ published experimental statistics derived from court data on failure to appear at court during 2015 (distinct from FTA warrants). These data are available at the following link, broken-down by police force area and court type:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570013/fta.zip

Subsequently additional quality issues with the data led us to reassess our ongoing publication of FTA data and we decided that it required further work to validate, quality assure and interpret changes since then to ensure it was of sufficient quality for publication. We are currently working with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) to undertake this work and hope to be able to publish more recent data in the near future.

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to request an internal review by responding in writing to one of the addresses below within two months of the date of this response.

data.access@justice.gsi.gov.uk

Disclosure Team, Ministry of Justice, 10.38, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ

You do have the right to ask the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to investigate any aspect of your complaint. However, please note that the ICO is likely to expect internal complaints procedures to have been exhausted before beginning their investigation.

Yours sincerely

Tristan McAlpine
Enquiries Officer, Dissemination and Enquiries Team
Prison, Probation, Reoffending and PbR Statistics