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| Ministry of Justice | January 2017 |

**Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request –** 109364

You asked for the following information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):

**With the government announcing plans to trial showing ID before voting for the local elections in 2018 I would like to know the following:**

**1) How many allegations of in-person voter fraud were there during the period 1st Jan 2000 to latest available date?**

**2) How many of the above number were investigated by the police and referred to the CPS for prosecution?**

**3) How many were dropped by the CPS, with reasons?**

**and finally 4) How many were prosecuted, with verdicts?**

Your request has been handled under the FOIA.

I can confirm that the MoJ holds some of the information that you have requested.

The attached tables answer question 4, as below:-

* Table 1 has the number of defendants proceeded against at magistrates’ courts and found guilty at all courts of personation, in England and Wales, from 2000 to 2015.
* Table 2 displays the number of defendants found guilty of personation at all courts, in England and Wales, from 2000 to 2015. In terms, of understanding the information in the tables, we would draw your attention to footnote 4.

For reference, personation is how the Representation of the People Act 1983 describes the offence of in-person voter fraud.

Some of the information, which covers 2016, is exempt from disclosure under section 44(1)(a) of the FOIA, which refers to prohibitions on disclosure ‘by or under any enactment’ of the FOIA. In this case, the information you are seeking is prohibited by the Statistics and Registration Services (SRS) Act 2007 and the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008.

The information you have requested is a subset of the Criminal Justice Statistics data held in its final form which we routinely publish. It is intended for publication in May 2017. As such we are required to consider your request in a manner compliant with the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008 further to sections 11 and 13 of the (SRS Act 2007.

The MoJ is obliged under section 13 of the SRS Act to continue to comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics (the Code) for statistics designated as National Statistics. Section 11(3) of the SRS Act regards the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order as being included in the Code. Protocol 2 of the Code reflects the requirements of the Pre-Release Access to Statistics Order. Specifically, it requires producers of official statistics to ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access prior to publication. I can confirm that the MoJ does publish information on court proceedings for offences of personation, for 2016, as part of National Statistics. Therefore, to now disclose as part of your FOI request, will violate the provisions of section 13 of the SRS Act and the Pre-Release Access Order to Official Statistics 2008 and as such engages the exemption under section 44(1)(a) of the FOIA.

Please also be aware that Section 44 is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

The information for 2016 is also exempt from disclosure under section 22(1) of the FOIA, because it is intended for future publication. Please note that whilst quarterly court proceedings and convictions headline data are published and are currently available up to end June 2016, these data are subject to revision as later quarters are published, and are finalised only when the annual publication is made publicly available. To ensure consistency of data released to users, further breakdowns (in this case by specific offences under certain legislation) of 2016 Quarters 1 & 2 (January to June) data are not available until the annual criminal statistics publication is published in May 2017.

This is a qualified exemption which means that the decision to disclose the information is subject to the public interest test. When assessing whether or not it was in the public interest to disclose the information to you, we took into account the following factors:

**Public interest considerations favouring disclosure**

* Disclosure would improve transparency in the operations of Government, and of the justice system in particular.

**Public interest considerations favouring withholding the information**

* It is in the public interest to adhere to the existing publication process for official statistics, which includes time for the data to be collated and properly verified.
* It is in the public interest to ensure that data used in the compilation of official statistics comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and that resulting outputs are produced to the highest quality. Statistics of high quality are produced to sound methods, with all users having easy and equal access that is fair and open, and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest. Premature publication could undermine the principle of making the information available to all at the same time through the official publication process.

We reached the view that, on balance, the public interest is better served by withholding this information under section 22 of the FOIA at this time.

With regard to questions 1, 2 and 3, the MoJ does not hold any information in the scope of this request because we are not the appropriate authority on these subject areas.

With regard to question 1, making an allegation of a crime amounts to reporting a crime. You may wish to contact the Home Office at the below address, who are responsible for enquiries concerning recorded crime:-

crimestats@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

With regard to questions 2 and 3, charging data (which is what question 2 amounts to) and other matters relating to the Crown Prosecution Service, are held by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) themselves. The CPS, which is not part of MoJ, may be able to assist you via the below link:-

<http://www.cps.gov.uk/foi/>