

Reference: 2026-024

Thank you for your email in which you requested the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA):

Please disclose the following information, for the financial years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25. Please provide an individual breakdown for each of the aforementioned years.

- 1. The average cost of an investigation (GBP)**
- 2. The average duration of an investigation (in months)**
- 3. The percentage of investigations which resulted in a positive outcome for the SFO (successful prosecution, fine)**
- 4. The percentage of investigations which were abandoned by the SFO**
- 5. The percentage of investigations which resulted in no action being taken.**

The above refers to investigations into individuals and firms and refers to all investigation types.

Response

Please see below our response to your questions.

Question 1

We do not hold this information in the form requested. Case costs are reviewed on an individual basis rather than as an average and vary significantly depending on factors such as internal and external resources required and the duration of each investigation.

However, you may find relevant collective financial information in our published Annual Reports and Accounts:

[SFO Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25 - GOV.UK](#)

[SFO Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 - GOV.UK](#)

For information from previous years, please visit the National Archive website: [Archive Timeline - UK Government Web Archive](#)

Questions 2 – 5

We confirm that we hold information relevant to your request. However, we consider this information to be exempt from disclosure under section 31(1) of the FOIA.

Section 31(1)(a), (b), and (c) provides that:

Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice—

- (a) the prevention or detection of crime,*
- (b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders,*
- (c) the administration of justice:*

How the exemption is engaged

As a law enforcement agency, the SFO holds highly sensitive information that is of interest to those we investigate. Releasing a precise year-by-year breakdown of the kind requested could allow individuals to identify specific investigations or to draw inferences about the SFO's operational priorities, resource allocation, and the types of cases we are likely to pursue to conclusion. This intelligence could be exploited by potential offenders to structure their activities in ways that reduce the likelihood of successful investigation and prosecution, thereby prejudicing the interests at (a) (b) and (c) above.

Public interest test

Sections 31(a), (b), and (c) are qualified exemptions and require consideration of whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in exempting this data outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. More information about exemptions in general and the public interest test is available on the ICO's website at www.ico.org.uk.

It is recognised that there is a general public interest in publicising information about the SFO, so that the public knows that serious fraud, bribery, and corruption are being investigated and prosecuted effectively, and so that the public can be reassured about the general conduct of our organisation and how public money is spent.

However, having considered the public interest in releasing this information, we consider that the stronger interest lies in maintaining these exemptions of the FOIA. Primarily, the risk that this information could pose to the SFO's operational work against which it is essential to safeguard given the highly sensitive nature of the information held as a law enforcement agency. Releasing sensitive information regarding our investigative data risks compromising the SFO's ability to provide and maintain data security for the cases at pre-investigation, investigation, prosecution stages and beyond.

Having considered the opposing arguments, I believe that the stronger public interest lies in exempting the information from release.