



Date
22 October 2024

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/01264

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (**"Post Office"**) on 16 September 2024, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (**"FOIA"**).

In your email you have requested the information shown verbatim in bold below:

"How many SPM that the Post Office prosecuted in Court up to 2015 for theft or false accountancy were acquitted?"

Clarification:

By cases that Post Office started, I mean instances when a SPM was summonsed to appear in court for either or both, theft or false accountancy. I wish to know how many of these cases resulted in an acquittal on all charges ."

How many cases that the Post Office started against SPM for theft or false accountancy were dropped before reaching Court- again prior to 2015? The start date can be 2000.

We can confirm that Post Office does hold some information you have requested. As your request is asking for the numbers of acquittals or cases which were dropped following prosecutions post Horizon installation IT system in 2000 to 2015, we note the following which impacts the figures we have provided:

1. We have included only cases between 2000 to 2015 when Post Office ceased Prosecutions which were post-Horizon prosecutions (i.e., where Horizon was installed at branch when the offence took place) and included any potential theft or false accounting cases whether relied in whole or in part on Horizon data or not.
2. The figures provided only includes postmasters and does not include other individuals who were prosecuted in the requested period (e.g. assistants and clerks).
3. Only Post Office related prosecutions have been included (i.e. those that were prosecuted by Post Office Limited or Royal Mail Group Limited prior to the separation of the two entities in April 2012), rather than prosecutions undertaken by other prosecutors during the relevant time periods.
4. The figures have been calculated according to the date on which an investigation started, although the prosecution might have occurred in a later year. This is the simplest way to identify cases within the time period of your request, as information as to the date of charge is not always known. Please note also that the numbers between 2000 to 2015 also include cases where the date on which the investigation started is not known, but it is known that the investigation commenced at some point within that respective decade.
5. Overall, given the historical nature of the data concerned, with some dating back 24 years, we cannot be certain about the accuracy or completeness of the information we have provided.

Please note that Post Office continues to receive material from third parties regarding cases. Consequently, the numbers provided in response to this request may change and are correct only as of 03 October 2024, based on current information known to Post Office. Also, we have not specifically undertaken a review of these cases to definitively confirm whether they did in fact involve theft and false accounting charges, but based on their case type, they are likely to have done so.

We can advise there were 10 Postmasters up to 2015 were acquitted following prosecutions for theft and/or false accounting.

There were 771 investigations commenced that did not result in a prosecution of Postmaster's between 2000 and 2015, that would have or may have resulted in charges for theft and/or false accounting.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of this response, you do have a right to request an internal review. You can do this by writing to the address above within 40 working days of receipt of this response stating your reasons for your internal review request or alternatively, by emailing information.rights@postoffice.co.uk.

If, having requested an internal review by Post Office, you are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113
www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team
information.rights@postoffice.co.uk
<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/access-to-information/access-to-information/>

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