Reference: 1937995

Information Requests
information.requests@ofcom.org.uk

30 January 2025

Freedom of Information request: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information about cyber security incidents affecting telecommunications companies.

We received this request on 2 January 2025 and have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the FOI Act").

Your request

I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act to request a list of all incidents reported to Ofcom in which telecommunications companies disclosed a cyber-related breach.

Our response

There is no statutory definition for "Cyber security breaches".

Incidents falling within the category of "Cyber security breaches" which we think you may be referring to may be reported to us under several areas that we regulate including the Communications Act 2003 (as amended by the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021) and the NIS Regulations 2018. You refer to "telecommunications companies" in your question, and as the reporting obligations for this type of company (referred to in the legislation as providers of public electronic communications network and service) fall under the Communications Act 2003, the rest of our response addresses relevant incidents reported under this regime.

Again, this regime does not refer to "cyber security breaches" nor separate these from any other types of reportable event:

- In brief, the legislation provides that 'any security compromise that has' or 'that puts any person in a position to be able to bring about a further security compromise that would have a significant effect on the operation of the network or service' is reportable to Ofcom. "Security compromise" is broadly defined, and includes among other things 'anything that compromises the availability, performance or functionality of the network or service'.

Therefore, whilst some incidents that could be considered as "cyber security breaches" are likely to be among the total set of incidents that have been reported to us, it is not possible for us to reliably separate out those that would be from those that would not.

Accordingly, the remainder of this response relates to all incidents reported to us under this obligation, which will include, but not be limited to, those caused by what you may consider as "cyber security breaches".

We publish a summary of incidents reported to us each year in our Connected Nations report pursuant to work we do under the Communications Act 2003.

You will find further information on this on our website, including on the following pages:

- Our Connected Nations reports can be found here: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/coverage-and-speeds/infrastructure-research/.Pages 49 and 50 of our 2024 report, for example, talk about cyber security compromises.
- Previous 6 years' Connected Nations reports can be found at that address
- Our network security and network resilience work is outlined in this document: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/information-for-industry/network-security-and-resilience/our-work

There are also additional details of cyber security compromises reported to Ofcom since the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021 came into force in a report written by Ofcom and published by the Department of Science, Innovation, and Technology, which can be found here: -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/677ebd2bd721a08c006655b8/telecoms-security-report-oct-2022-to-2024-to-dsit_Redacted.pdf starting on page 19.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any further queries, then please send them to information.requests@ofcom.org.uk – quoting the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Information Requests

Request an internal review
If you are unhappy with the response you have received to your request for information, or think that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law, you may ask for an internal review. If you do, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom. We will either uphold the original decision, or reverse or modify it.

If you would like to ask us to carry out an internal review, you should get in touch within two months of the date of this letter. There is no statutory deadline for us to complete our internal review, and the time it takes will depend on the complexity of the request. But we will try to complete the review within 20 working days (or no more than 40 working days in exceptional cases) and keep you informed of our progress. Please email the Information Requests team (information.requests@ofcom.org.uk) to request an internal review.

Taking it further
If you are unhappy with the outcome of our internal review, then you have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.