

Alcohol and entertainment statistics bulletin 2009: Frequently asked questions for licensing authorities

What is the purpose of this exercise?

One of the key aims of this exercise is to make some of the most regularly requested information about the number of licensed premises publicly available, and so reduce ad hoc requests both to central and local government. In addition, the consistent information collected will provide an accurate baseline of data to assist in our ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Licensing Act. The data has proven to be highly valuable up to now and may also be used to inform any future adjustments to the licensing regime e.g. licence fees review.

Is this a new exercise?

This is the third year we have collected data on 'Alcohol, Entertainment and Late Night Refreshment Licensing' following on from the collection in 2007 and 2008. Last year's bulletin and online tables, reflecting the changes of the Licensing Act 2003, are available on the DCMS website at http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/5571.aspx

Prior to this collection, statistics for liquor licensing under the Licensing Act 1964 were collected on a three-yearly cycle. The most recent Liquor Licensing bulletin was published in 2004, and is available on the DCMS website at <http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/7138BLiquorReport.pdf>

Why do you keep asking Local Authorities for data?

We are conscious of the need to minimise demands on local authorities, but this collection can help reduce the burden in the longer term by answering more ad-hoc queries which local authorities would previously have been asked. The data requested

We have been working with local government colleagues in LACORS and the LGA; software providers; and individual Licensing Authorities before finalising what information we should seek, taking into account the usefulness of particular data and ease with which it can be gathered. The questionnaire was tested last year with a number of Licensing Authorities in order to make it as relevant and simple to complete as possible.

This year's questionnaire follows a very similar format to previous year's, with few changes to enable a consistent data series of the information, allowing for year on year comparisons. Also it makes it easier for Local Authorities to answer, as they will be aware of which questions were asked before and so are better prepared.

Which new questions have been added for 2009 and why?

No new questions have been added since the 2008 questionnaire, and other changes have been kept to a minimum, e.g. one additional category has been added to the 'responsible authority that instigated a review' question.

How will the data be published?

The data will be published in the same way as the last collections. It will be undertaken by DCMS, operating in line with the National Statistics protocols for the collection and release of information. We will publish the results in an online bulletin on the DCMS website later this year, giving both top-line and individual authority level figures.

How frequently will you be collecting this information?

DCMS will be reviewing when the collection will switch from an annual basis to a three year cycle, in line with the previous series.

My Local Authority has changed following the local government reorganisation¹ that created nine unitary authorities in England from 1 April 2009. Which Local Authority boundary does this collection require information from?

DCMS are aware that there will be a number of structural changes to Local Authorities. This collection requires information as of 31st March 2009 and the preceding 12 months, therefore please respond under the Licensing Authority boundaries which were in place in that period, and not the newly formed Unitary Authority boundaries. For example, if you are responding from Caradon LA, then please respond as Caradon LA and not Cornwall Unitary Authority.

What if we can't provide some of the information?

We would ask that licensing authorities provide the most comprehensive and accurate information they can.

However, we recognise that licensing authorities' IT systems are set up differently, and it may be difficult for some authorities to extract some of the information we are requesting. We would appreciate authorities' efforts in providing as much information as possible. Where there are difficulties completing any of the questions, this should be noted in the comments box to help us improve the exercise in future years. If estimates are provided then this needs to be made clear in the comments box.

What if we can't provide information for the specific dates requested?

If authorities are unable to provide data at 31 March 2009 and the preceding 12 months, we would request that they provide data as close to this date (and

¹ ONS Guidance on Local Government changes
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/admin_areas.asp

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the corresponding preceding 12 months) as possible. Authorities should indicate this in the comments box when they return the questionnaire.

What happens if we don't respond?

Even if an authority is unable to respond to all of the questions, we would appreciate it if as much information as possible is provided. As we will be publishing data by licensing authority area, there will be a gap where information is not provided.

Last year's statistical bulletin secured a 97 percent response rate from LAs (compared with a 99 percent response rate from the courts in the previous series). The greater the number of responses we receive the more accurate and 'true' the overall picture will be.

Why are you asking about 24-hour licences?

We are asking for information about the number of 24-hour licences in force because of continued public interest in this area. We also know that there are very few 24-hour licences, and licensing authorities have generally been able to provide this information easily in the past.

Why do you want hotel bars split between those that are open to guests, and those that are open to the public for 24 hours?

Most hotels will be able to serve alcohol to their guests around the clock. Under the previous licensing laws, all hotels with a "residential licence" under Part IV of the Licensing Act 1964 would have been able to serve alcohol to their guests for 24 hours. This provision would have been convertible during transition and hotels would have had to vary their licence in order to be able to sell alcohol to members of the public for 24 hours.

We are therefore asking for the breakdown to determine the proportion of premises that are potentially able to open to the general public for 24 hours, as a result of the new Licensing Act.

Where can I get further information?

For further information, please contact the analysis team at DCMS by emailing licensing.statistics@culture.gsi.gov.uk or calling 020 7211 6188.

How do I send the information back?

Please email responses by Friday 21st August 2009 to licensing.statistics@culture.gsi.gov.uk