



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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03 September 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0768-14

Thank you for your email of 06 August asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1. How many civil servants are employed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK (ie not including embassies and consulates abroad)?*
- 2. Of those, how many recorded, either on their application or on subsequent employee information forms, that they spoke at least one language in addition to English? This is irrespective of whether they use it in the course of their work.*
- 3. What is the breakdown of second languages spoken (for example: 15% of employees speak French as a second language, 8% Arabic etc?)*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

The FCO has 2903 UK based members of staff currently serving in the UK, of which 1717 are Diplomatic Service staff and therefore will have, or will expect to in the future, serve overseas. There are a further 1696 FCO UK Based staff overseas that have not been included in the reply.

Of those 2903 staff, 836 have either passed an internal FCO language examination or have self declared a language skill on our HR information management system. These

declarations are voluntary and therefore there are staff who speak an additional language but have neither passed an internal FCO language exam nor self declared and have not been included in the 836.

To provide an answer to how many recorded an additional language on their application would entail checking the personal file of each member of staff. This would exceed the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. Normally under section 16 of the Act we would be obliged to advise you to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit. However, in this case we cannot advise you how to narrow your request.

Of those members of staff currently posted in the UK, who have passed an internal examination or self-declared an additional language, the breakdown of languages is as follows:

Language	% of total headcount of staff on Home Postings
French	15.36%
German	7.54%
Spanish	6.92%
Russian	2.86%
Arabic	2.55%
Italian	2.03%
Portuguese	1.89%
Japanese	1.79%
Mandarin	1.62%
Turkish	0.93%
Polish	0.72%
Urdu	0.69%
Greek	0.65%
Dutch	0.59%
Thai	0.59%
Hungarian	0.55%
Farsi	0.52%
Hindi	0.48%

Punjabi	0.48%
Romanian	0.48%
Czech	0.45%
Gujarati	0.41%
Korean	0.38%
Bulgarian	0.34%
Cantonese	0.34%
Norwegian	0.34%
Indonesian	0.28%
Swedish	0.28%
Albanian	0.24%
Bengali	0.24%
Bosnian	0.24%
Serbian	0.24%
Danish	0.21%
Dari	0.21%
Swahili	0.21%
Afrikaans	0.17%
Croatian	0.17%
Yoruba	0.17%
Slovak	0.14%
Catalan	0.10%
Estonian	0.10%
Latvian	0.10%
Other	0.10%
Slovene	0.10%
Tamil	0.10%
Ukrainian	0.10%
Vietnamese	0.10%
Amharic	0.07%
Finnish	0.07%
Hebrew	0.07%
Lithuanian	0.07%
Malay	0.07%
Nepali	0.07%
Slovenian	0.07%
Acholi	0.03%
Armenian	0.03%
Azeri	0.03%
Bangla	0.03%
Burmese	0.03%
Cambodian	0.03%
Georgian	0.03%
Maltese	0.03%
Montenegrin	0.03%

Shona	0.03%
Slovakian	0.03%
Uzbek	0.03%
Zulu	0.03%

A significant number of our staff overseas have an additional language skill/qualification.

You may be aware that we re-opened a Language Centre in the FCO in 2013. This is part of strengthening the long-term capability of the FCO, through increasing our language abilities as a core diplomatic skill, and gets the best out of our staff in a wide range of jobs and locations around the world.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

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Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



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