Background Quality Report
UK Defence Statistics Compendium

The purpose of a background quality report is to inform users of the statistics about the quality of the data used to produce the publication and any statistics derived from that data.

This assessment relates to the UK Defence Statistics Compendium published by the Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA) directorate of the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

1. Introduction

Overview

UK Defence Statistics (UKDS) is an annual compendium of defence statistics. It has been produced since 1992, prior to which similar statistics were published as Volume 2 of the Statement of Defence Estimates. The publication has expanded over the years and currently consists of 7 chapters on a range of areas of defence statistics. The content is reviewed each year, with new tables being added and other tables removed based on relevance and data availability. UKDS is published electronically at the end of September each year. A hardcopy version was produced until 2008, but it has not been produced since 2009 for financial reasons. A small number of paper copies are printed each year and these are available upon request.

UKDS currently consists of 7 chapters, covering Finance; Personnel; Health; Formations and Equipment; Search and Rescue; the Defence Estate; and Sustainable Development, Military Aid and Conflict Prevention. Much of the data presented in UKDS gives more detailed breakdowns of information that have already been published in other MOD official statistics publications or other reports (such as the MOD Annual Report and Accounts).

This report focuses on the process by which the UK Defence Statistics Compendium is produced. It is supplemented by other Background Quality Reports which discuss the statistics shown in UKDS in more detail, for example UKDS Tables 1.9a-d show Defence Inflation Statistics. Information on these Statistics is given in the Background Quality Report on Defence Inflation. Other Background Quality Reports can be found in the Reports section of the DASA website[1]. A list of current Background Quality Reports is given in Annex A.

Methodology and Production

The UKDS Compendium is produced by an editorial team led by the Head of DASA Web and Development Services (WDS). The production process is

1. Planning meeting of editorial team held in March / April each year – key changes and deadlines for each section / table discussed.
2. Internal and External Consultation meetings undertaken in May to discuss planned changes and obtain user views on planned and potential developments.
3. Data are collected by means of templates which are in the format of proposed tables. These are reviewed and sent out to producers by the end of May.
4. Producers supply data in templates and commentary by the agreed timescale.
5. Tables and factsheets are checked by statisticians in DASA Web and Development Services. Any discrepancies are resolved with producers who supply revised figures if appropriate.
6. Approved tables and commentaries are converted into HTML format web pages and loaded onto a test server.
7. Web pages are checked by data producers and DASA WDS.
8. Excel and pdf versions of tables are produced and checked.
9. Factsheets are converted into pdf format and checked.
10. Web pages, Excel and pdf files are transferred to the external and internal web servers to allow users to access them.
11. Editorial team hold review meeting to ensure key issues are captured and recorded for consideration at next year's editorial planning meeting.

Each chapter is signed off by a Grade 7 Statistician as a part of the checking / approval process.

<u>Contact details</u>

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DASA welcome feedback on this Background Quality Report or any of the statistics mentioned.

2. Relevance

UKDS is a document / single point of access which enables users to obtain a wide range of data on Defence in a consistent format. It enables users to access data quickly and easily, and it is a particularly useful starting point for users who do not know what information is available. It is the only publication which brings together a comprehensive set of statistical data covering the diverse aspects (including Finance, Personnel, Health, Formations and Equipment and Estate) of an organisation which employs over 275,000 personnel and accounts for almost £40 billion of public funding. UKDS is used by a wide range of users including the general public, the media, industry, special interest groups and MOD internal users. It serves a number of purposes including informing public accountability and debate, and policy development. UKDS includes a contact number for users wishing to obtain more detailed information and the Bibliography section incorporates a wide range of links, enabling users to obtain further information and obtain a deeper understanding of Defence and Defence issues.

In the 12 months to 30 September 2011 UKDS received on average 11,000 hits per month. Of these about 80% were from the internet rather than the MOD intranet. Between April 2010 and October 2011 the DASA enquiries helpline received 67 enquiries which related to or were fully or partly answered by UKDS. This represents over 20% of the total number of calls to the DASA enquiries line.

3. Accuracy

The data contained in UKDS come from a wide variety of sources. All data are checked by both the producer and professional statisticians in the central editorial team to ensure the quality of the data and tables provided. UKDS chapters are also approved and signed off by a professional (Grade 7) statistician.

The majority of tables in UKDS are badged as National Statistics and meet high quality standards. Some tables which are not produced under the supervision of statisticians and / or are from less reliable data sources are deemed to be outside the scope of National Statistics. Where this is the case it is clearly stated above the table. The UKDS Table of Contents also indicates whether a table is deemed to be within the scope of National Statistics. Where steps have been taken to remove bias e.g. Table 3.7 (Gulf Veterans Mortality) this is clearly identified in the related commentary.

For further details about the accuracy of information see the related Background Quality Reports in the Reports section of the DASA website[1].

4. Timeliness and Punctuality

The publication dates for UKDS are agreed up to 12 months in advance and are published on the Publication Release Dates[2] section of DASA web site[1] and on the National Statistics Publication Hub[3].

The publication timetable for UKDS is driven by the availability of the data and the time needed to validate the data to a consistent standard and publish in HTML format. Much of the data in UKDS relates to the

previous financial year or the position at 1 April. The earliest data is received from providers at the beginning of June and the last data in mid September. UKDS is published at the end of September, six months after the position date but less than one month after the final data table is received. The publication of UKDS is likely to be delayed in 2012 as a result of disruption caused by the London Olympics.

There have been no occasions on which UKDS has not been published at 9:30 on the pre-announced day of publication.

5. Accessibility and Clarity

UKDS is published on [DASA web site](#)[1] in HTML format. The HTML version makes extensive use of hyperlinks to enable users to go quickly to information of interest. Chapters are colour coded to facilitate navigation, and the contents page is available from every page. UKDS is also available in pdf format (at page, chapter and complete publication level) and Excel format (chapter level with one tab for each table).

Each chapter includes commentary which sets the data in context, summarises the key points, provides definitions and identifies the limitations of the data. In some chapters e.g. Chapter 3, more detailed commentary is provided for each sub section of data.

UKDS contains an extensive Glossary section to enable users to understand the terms used in the publication and there is also an extensive Bibliography section which enables users to identify publications produced by DASA and MOD which may provide more detailed or supplemental information, and provides links to a wide range of organisations which may help users to understand and apply the statistics and undertake further statistical research on Defence matters.

UKDS gives an enquiries email address and telephone number which users can call to get assistance in understanding the figures. This is staffed by experienced statistical staff who can help with interpretation and provide advice to both novice and advanced users.

6. Coherence and Comparability

The period of time covered in UKDS varies from table to table depending on what data are available and whether meaningful comparisons can be made. For most tables data are provided for the last seven years and a "benchmark" year (which in UKDS 2011 was the year 2000) to provide a longer term context. Where changes in underlying data make comparisons over time inappropriate this is clearly identified in the tables and related footnotes and commentary.

Wherever possible national and international standards are used for example Table 2.2 (Location of Service and civilian personnel in the United Kingdom) is based on Government Office Regions, many of the international financial comparisons in Chapter 1 are based on NATO definitions, and much of the health data in Chapter 3 is based on the ICD 10 coding system.

For more details on the coherence and comparability of specific areas of information refer to the Background Quality Reports in the [Reports](#) section of the [DASA website](#)[1].

7. Trade-offs between Output Quality Components

The main trade off for UKDS is that between early publication and including a comprehensive range of statistics which capture the broad range of MOD activities. It is felt that the current range of data and publication at the end of September represent the best compromise. While the publication might be produced earlier if there was less data checking, it is felt that this would risk compromising accuracy to an unacceptable level.

For more detailed consideration on the trade-offs between output quality components refer to the Background Quality Reports in the [Reports](#) section of the [DASA website](#)[1].

8. Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions

DASA holds annual consultation meetings with both internal[4] and external[5] users of UKDS, which provide a forum for user feedback on their needs and perceptions. The minutes and slides from the meetings are placed on the DASA website[1] as a matter of public record. These meetings are useful as attendees often use the data from UKDS regularly as a key part of their day to day business.

The introduction to UKDS invites customer feedback and gives both an email address and a telephone number which can be used to provide feedback. A log is kept of all callers to the DASA enquiries line and this is analysed on an annual basis to inform the development of UKDS. Users can also give feedback via a user feedback survey which "pops up" on the DASA website. Although interesting, the number of users providing this feedback is comparatively small (between 1 and 5% of users), and this limits it's value as a tool to inform the development of UKDS.

Although it is not possible to identify users and obtain feedback directly, some insight into user needs can be obtained from analysis of hit rates by page. An analysis of hits in April 2011 showed that all pages received at least 7 hits in the month, but that there was considerable variation with the highest being "MOD Research and Development Expenditure Outturn" (107 hits), "Recent Trends in Service and civilian strength trends" (93 hits) and "Declared Attack Helicopters and Combat Aircraft Holdings and Ceilings by country within the scope of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty" (83 hits). The average number of hits per page in April 2011 was 49.

9. Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

The vast majority of the data provided in UKDS is based on administrative data which providers use as a part of their day to day business and a substantial proportion of it has already been published elsewhere. The benefit of DASA publishing these statistics in a single compendium is that outputs from these administrative data and other publications are placed in the public domain in a way which makes them easier to access, and as a National Statistic, ensures their independence from political interference and adherence to quality standards. By recycling previously published figures cost is minimised and accuracy / validity is maintained. More rigorous checking is undertaken on tables which have not been produced under the supervision of GSS statisticians – this targeted checking helps to minimise cost without compromising quality. The use of standard templates each year reduces development costs while maintaining consistency.

UKDS plays an important role in ensuring public accountability for the £40 billion spent on Defence each year. The small burden that this places on the data suppliers is considered to be worthwhile to achieve this The central cost of collating and publishing UKDS is estimated to be £45,000 per annum.

10. Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

Much of the data in UKDS is already in the public domain. UKDS does not contain any identifiable personal data.

All staff involved in the production process have signed the Data Protection Act, and all MoD, Civil Service and data protection regulations are adhered to. All data are stored, accessed and analysed using the MoD's restricted network and IT systems.

We adhere to the principles and protocols laid out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics[6] and comply with pre-release access arrangements. The DASA Pre-Release Access lists[7] are available on the DASA website.

11. References

	Reference	Website Location
1	DASA web site	http://www.dasa.mod.uk
2	Publication Release Dates	Publication Release Dates

3	National Statistics Publication Hub	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html
4	Minutes of Official Statistics Consultation – Internal Users	internal
5	Minutes of Official Statistics Consultation – External Users	external
6	Code of Practice for Official Statistics	http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf
7	DASA Pre-Release Access lists	DASA Pre-Release Access lists

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Annex A – List of Current DASA Background Quality Reports

Background Quality Report	Related Publication(s) ((NS) – National Statistic, (OS) – Official Statistic)	Related UKDS Table(s) (2011)	Link
UKDS Compendium	UKDS (NS)	UKDS process and overall document	This document.
UK Armed Forces - Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Manning Statistics	UK Armed Forces – Quarterly Manning Report (NS), UK Armed Forces - Monthly Manning Report (NS), UK Armed Forces - Annual Manning Report (NS)	2.1, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 2.17, 2.18, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22	UK Armed Forces - Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Manning Background Quality Report
Civilian Personnel Statistics	QCPR - Quarterly Civilian Personnel Report (NS)	2.1, 2.25, 2.26, 2.27, 2.28, 2.29, 2.30, 2.31, 2.32, 2.33, 2.34, 2.35, 2.36, 2.37, 2.38, 2.39	Civilian Personnel Reports Background Quality Report
Search and Rescue Statistics	SAR Annual - Military Search and Rescue Statistics (NS), SAR Quarterly - Search and Rescue Quarterly Statistics (NS), Search and Rescue Annual Report and Pocket Brief (OS), Search and Rescue Quarterly Report and Pocket Brief (OS), Search and Rescue Annual Report and Pocket Brief (OS)	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5	SAR Background Quality Report
MOD Departmental Resources Statistics		1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8	Departmental Resources Background Quality Report
Research and Development Expenditure and Employment Statistics		1.7	Research and Development Background Quality Report
Defence Inflation Statistics	Statistical Notice – Defence Inflation Estimates (OS)	1.9	Defence Inflation Background Quality Report
Industry Statistics		1.10, 1.11, 1.12	Industry Statistics background Quality Report
Trade Statistics		1.13, 1.14	Trade Statistics Background Quality Report
Contract / Commercial Statistics		1.15, 1.16, 1.17	Contracts and Commercial Background Quality Report
International Defence Statistics		1.18, 1.19, 1.20, 1.21, 1.22	International Defence Background Quality Report
Formations, Vessels, Aircraft, and Vehicles of the Armed Forces Statistics		4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15	
Land Holdings and Buildings		6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5	

Statistics			
Sustainable development, Military Aid to the Civil Authorities and Conflict Prevention		7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8	
Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey	AFCAS Main Results Report (OS)		AFCAS Background Quality Report
TSP 10	TSP10 – UK Regular Forces Location (OS)	2.2, 2.3	TSP10 Background Quality Report
Navy Pocket Brief	RNPB - Navy Pocket Brief (OS)		Navy Pocket Brief Background Quality Report
Royal Navy Situation Reports	RN SitRep - Royal Navy Monthly Situation Reports (OS)		Royal Navy Situation Reports Background Quality Report
RAF Pocket Briefs	RAF Pocket Briefs (OS)		RAF Pocket Brief Background Quality Report