



MOD FOI/EIR Compliance Notes

Other FOI Issues and Considerations

CN15: Guidance on Statistical Data

Document history

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1	CIO-3-19-1-3	September 2012	September 2013

What this is about:

This note provides advice on dealing with requests within a request for information for a wide variety of statistics. It is important to be aware that statistical information can have an impact and needs to be presented in context.

Detail:

What is “statistical” information?

All information published in an answer to a Parliamentary Question or Ministerial Correspondence is considered an Official Statistic and is within scope of the Statistics & Registration Services Act 2007.

- For government statistical purposes, “Statistical information” is that which is not likely to directly or indirectly identify individual data subjects and includes analyses, projections and meta-data, as well as the statistics themselves.
- Numerical data may simply be a sum total or take the form of a table or graph. Statistics must be derived from a recorded or repeatable methodology; commentary on this methodology is also statistical information.

Answering requests

When you receive a request within a FOI request for statistical data you should:

- Check whether the information requested has already been published. Defence Analytical Services and Advice (DASA) produce UK Defence Statistics (UKDS) annually in September, which is available on the MOD Publication Scheme. UKDS and several other publications and reports can be viewed on the DASA web site www.dasa.mod.uk.
- Where the statistics to answer a question have already been published by DASA, an extract from the published table of statistics or the link to the publication on their website should be used. See the existing guidance in Commons Written Questions Guidance for an example of how this can be written (Information already in the public domain).
- If the requested information has not been published or where there is uncertainty if the information has been published, you should send the Parliamentary Question or Ministerial Correspondence to DASA:

DASA-CSD WDS_Business Manager
e-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Telephone xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

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DASA will advise you if the relevant data is not held.

- Where the statistical information has been provided for inclusion in the answer by a DASA branch, the lead branch must give the DASA branch sight of how the statistics have been incorporated into the draft answer before it is forwarded to Parliamentary Branch.
- A draft answer that references existing public domain material (even if from DASA's own web site) does not need to be referred back to DASA before it is forwarded to Parliamentary Branch. Statistical data relating to personnel, whether Service or Civilian, should ordinarily be rounded to a multiple of 10 to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of personal information either now or in the future (when it might be combined with other information as yet unreleased).
- However, in certain circumstances (such as for Health/medical statistics), unrounded numbers may be used - provided appropriate suppression policies are applied. Such, eventualities should be discussed on a case by case basis with Head DASA Health Information Branch (9355 68456).

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority has produced a Code of Practice for the use with Official Statistics and this is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

As well as the Code of Practice a number of National Statistician's Guidance booklets have also been produced but the key points to note in the use of Official Statistics as mandated by the Defence Main Board are:

- When preparing any publication containing statistics, including those drawn from administrative or management information, you must involve statistical professionals at the earliest opportunity;
- You must not use unpublished statistics without the advice of a statistical professional;
- You must not selectively quote favourable data from any unpublished dataset;
- Decisions taken by statistical professionals are final;
- Any publication containing official statistics must provide information relating to their quality, reliability and usability;
- Pre-release access to official statistics is a privilege. You must not disclose any information, nor seek to alter it in any way;
- Ignoring any of the above may constitute a breach of the Code and result in an investigation by the UK Statistics Authority and a published report to Parliament.

Further Guidance

For further guidance on the use of statistics within FOI Correspondence individuals should contact DASA at the address above or at:

Defence Analytical Services and Advice

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Telephone XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX