



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Human Resources Directorate**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

24 August 2015

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0764-15**

Thank you for your email of 27 July 2015 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1. In 2012, 2013 and 2014 how many parents went on maternity or paternity leave?*
- 2. What was the average length of this maternity or paternity leave?*
- 3. For those who went on leave in 2012 and 2013 how many parents changed their hours or the way in which they worked (i.e. part time, using flexi time or job share) within 12 months and 24 months of returning?*
- 4. How many parents left their job after maternity leave within 24 months of returning and what were their reasons for leaving?*
- 5. What flexible working options does your department provide?*
- 6. What HR and growth costs has the department incurred as a result of loss of talent within this demographic, this includes the time it takes for a new employee to get to optimum efficiency level which Oxford Economics anticipates to be 28 weeks worth of wages.*

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

Please find below the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information has been withheld using section 12 and 40.

**1. In 2012, 2013 and 2014 how many parents went on maternity or paternity leave?**

	Maternity leave only
2012	81
2013	84
2014	76

- 2. Paternity Leave is taken in addition to normal annual leave entitlement. Staff are entitled to choose to take either one or two consecutive weeks' paternity leave (not odd days). We have recently changed the way paternity leave is recorded. It is therefore not possible to differentiate paternity leave records for the period requested. What was the average length of this maternity or paternity leave?**

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. You may therefore wish to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit by requesting a shorter time period.

- 3. For those who went on leave in 2012 and 2013 how many parents changed their hours or the way in which they worked (i.e. part time, using flexi time or job share) within 12 months and 24 months of returning?**

As of 30 June 2015, of those who went on to maternity leave in 2012 and/or 2013 and were not already working remotely or part time on 31 Dec 2011, 34 are now working part time (including three remotely). A further 5 are working full time remotely.

- 4. How many parents left their job after maternity leave within 24 months of returning and what were their reasons for leaving?**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold some information relevant to your request. However, we are withholding this under Section 40 (2) and (3) (Personal Information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. As the numbers involved are so small we consider that disclosure would risk the identification of the individuals concerned.

However we can confirm that of those who did leave; all left on voluntary terms with the majority having been on secondment/loan to the FCO returning to their home department.

We believe that disclosure of specific numbers would breach the legitimate expectation of the individuals' rights to protection of their personal information. This would not be fair to the individuals concerned and disclosure would, therefore, be in breach of the first principle of the Data Protection Act 1998. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

- 5. What flexible working options does your department provide?**

The FCO has a number of agreed flexible working options; which are subject to agreement based on operational requirements.

Remote Working: Agreement by which the job is done regularly and/or entirely, or almost entirely, in a place that is not the principal office. This can take the form of permanently working in a different location to the principal location or partial home-working on an ad hoc or regular basis.

Compressed Hours: Working full time conditioned hours in a shorter period, without breaching the Working Time Directive: commonly two weeks; worth of working hours done in 9 working days, taking the 10<sup>th</sup> day off. This makes the working day longer e.g.8 hours per day over 9 days so that each annual leave day taken is also worth 8 hours.

Flexible Working Hours (FWH) Scheme: Applicable to either full or part time/reduced hours.

Job-share: Normally one full-time job/slot filled by more than one person, each of whom is paid pro rata for their agreed number of days/total hours worked.

Part-time/reduced hours: Working and being paid, by mutual agreement, for less than full time conditioned hours (usually calculated per week).

Term-time working: Agreement by which an officer works a mutually agreed number of hours/days, during term time only.

**6. What HR and growth costs has the department incurred as a result of loss of talent within this demographic, this includes the time it takes for a new employee to get to optimum efficiency level which Oxford Economics anticipates to be 28 weeks worth of wages.**

Whitehall is currently subject to a Civil Service-wide recruitment freeze which was introduced in May 2010; this has restricted FCO generalist recruitment to the Civil Service Fast Stream only. As a result of this and taking into account the very small numbers of parents who left their job after maternity leave no HR costs have been incurred.

In relation to the growth costs incurred as a result of loss; in the FCO, staff are expected to move positions every 3-5 years which means that there is a high level of internal turnover. When any officer leaves a position (whether due to resignation or the end of their tour length) it is advertised internally and filled by an existing staff member. While the employee is new to the position they are already experienced officers. This combined with the very small number of parents who left their job after maternity leave means no growth costs have been incurred.

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Yours sincerely,

HR Manager  
Human Resource Directorate



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