

Background Quality Report

UK Land Holdings

1. Introduction

Overview

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is one of the largest landowners in the country, with an estate equal to over 1% of the UK land mass. The estate, spread over approximately 4,000 sites, is critical to the effectiveness of the Armed Forces. It is used for training and accommodation and provides a base from which operations can be instigated. The MOD has published land holdings and building statistics since 1981.

The statistics on land holdings are published annually and provide land holdings in thousands of hectares by parent Service, country and type of use and in each case, whether owned, leased or with legal rights. Data are provided from administrative systems in the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). All the tables in this publication are National Statistics.

Methodology and Production

The land holding figures are derived from the DIO Infrastructure Management System (IMS) which is now the main data gathering system within DIO. The IMS contains information on all property assets that are owned, occupied or over which the MOD hold rights. The areas of each property are calculated from computerised mapping to provide the most accurate representation of the size of the Defence Estate. Due to the way the data is held in the IMS, it is no longer possible to show the extent of foreshore held by the MOD. Therefore, separate figures for this are no longer shown but are included in the totals provided.

Data are extracted from the IMS and collated by DIO staff to give the figures in the data tables.

2. Relevance

This publication is the primary means by which information on the MOD's land holdings is made widely available. This publication has a range of users including the media, politicians, academic researchers and the general public who use the information to:

- gain an understanding of size and condition of the MOD estate;
- set the context for other information on Defence;
- assist in understanding the impact of initiatives and policy on MOD estate

Public accountability requires that MOD should account for its assets as well as knowing where they are and how they are used. Although internal systems may be sufficient for internal use, publication as a Statistical Bulletin makes this information available publicly, regularly and as a time series. The tables include definitions and other information, so that the data are set in context and can be understood by a lay audience as well as those with professional interests.

3. Accuracy

The data in these tables have been extracted from a MOD database, the IMS, which is considered to be reliable and there are no significant concerns over the accuracy of data.

Recent data quality improvements to the IMS were reinforced as a result of DIO's Asset Verification Exercise – a physical audit of the entire Defence estate portfolio. The outcome of this

audit means that there is now a single data set – a key recommendation made in the National Audit Office's report, "[An Estate of the Right Size to meet Defence Operational Needs](#)". This comprehensive set of data has numerous benefits for DIO such as enabling evidence-based decision making, having an informed account of value of assets and total running costs, identifying assets which are under-utilised, and simply having access to information that would otherwise have been unavailable.

In addition to being manually sense-checked by DIO staff who have carried out the data extraction / collation, the figures are also reviewed by the DIO Chief Information and Process Owner. The data in these tables have also been subjected to a sense-check by Government Statisticians.

4. Timeliness and Punctuality

As a National Statistic, the release date for this publication was pre-announced on the [MOD's Calendar of Upcoming Releases](#)² section of GOV.UK in accordance with the guidance set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Following guidance from an assessment carried out by the UK Statistics Authority on UKDS, the different chapters of UKDS were separated in 2013 and released as individual publications. This was to allow information on various topics to be published as soon as the data is available, rather than waiting for all the other chapters to be completed, as was the case with previous editions of UKDS. A key benefit of this change is that timeliness of the statistics is improved, reducing the amount of time between the reference date of the statistics and the time of release. However, the timeliness of this publication has been reduced for this year being published a month later than in 2014.

Each year the data tables are updated to include the latest annual data, as at 1 April of that year.

5. Accessibility and Clarity

The report is published on the [MOD Land Holdings page](#)³ on GOV.UK as a PDF document. The tables are available as an Excel file to enable the figures to be reused.

An introduction to the bulletin is provided on the front page, a summary of key points and trends are included as well as a link to the Background Quality Report and the contact details of the responsible statistician. This is followed by a key findings section which includes graphical representation of some of the statistics, provides further detail about the trends in the data and draws attention to contextual information that has affected these trends.

Within the tables there is further information to clarify definitions, advise users of caveats in the data and explain changes since previous years.

The background information section assists with the accessibility and clarity of this bulletin by setting out the context of the statistics, providing definitions and explanations of the terms used and giving some brief information on methods and data quality.

6. Coherence and Comparability

The data tables cover the years 2000 and 2009 to 2015, providing a seven-year time series, together with a snapshot of the beginning of the century.

The statistics presented show both overall UK land holdings and the holdings for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland separately. This publication does not offer any comparisons with

holdings elsewhere and no demand for such comparisons has been identified. The form of the data allows users to make comparisons (e.g. international comparisons, comparisons to other land users) themselves.

7. Trade-offs between Output Quality Components

The process for collating information requires substantial checking and includes approval by the DIO board. Although the data are requested early, it is often not finalised until close to the publication date and could not be published earlier.

8. Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions

The MOD has previously held regular consultation meetings with users of Defence Official Statistics, which provided a forum for user feedback on their needs and perceptions. Proposed changes were set out at the consultation meetings in order to gain feedback from both internal and external users. More recently in February 2015, a [public consultation](#)⁴ was held on the MOD's Draft Statistics Plan. The MOD invites users to provide feedback to the statistical output teams on any of their publications or reports using the contact information on the front of the publication.

9. Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

The outputs are produced from the administrative data provided by the DIO. The benefit of the MOD publishing the data on land holdings is that these administrative data are placed in the public domain, and as National Statistics, in a way that ensures their independence from political interference and adherence to quality standards. The small burden that this places on the data suppliers is considered to be worthwhile to achieve this, and the consequent public accountability provided by their publication.

10. Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

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](#)⁵ and comply with pre-release access arrangements. The [Pre-Release Access List](#)⁶ is available online.

11. References

	Reference	Website Location
1	Statistics at MOD Homepage	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/statistics
2	MOD's Timetable of Future Releases of National and Official Statistics	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-timetable-for-future-releases-of-national-and-official-statistics
3	Publication homepage on GOV.UK	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-land-holdings-bulletin-index
4	MOD's Draft Statistics Plan Consultation	https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ministry-of-defence-draft-statistics-plan
5	Code of Practice for Official	http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-

	Statistics	practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf
6	Defence Statistics Pre-release Access lists	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-statistics-pre-release-access-list

Contact details

The Head of Defence Statistics (Web Development & Surveys) is responsible for the UK Land Holdings report.

Defence Statistics (WDS)

MOD Main Building

Level 3 Zone K

Whitehall

London SW1A 2HB

Tel: 020 7807 8792

E-mail: DefStrat-Stat-WDS-Hd@mod.uk

Defence Statistics welcome feedback on this Background Quality Report or any of the statistics mentioned. Statistical outputs produced by MOD can now be found on the [Statistics at MOD page](#)¹ of GOV.UK.

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