



Companies House

Companies House statistics user consultation response

24th June 2016

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www.gov.uk/companieshouse**

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Companies House is an Executive Agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)

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Background

Companies House publishes a range of statistics on company activity in the UK. These are currently published on a monthly and annual basis.

Companies House ran a consultation to seek users' views on proposals to change the frequency and format of its Incorporated Companies in the UK and Late Filing Penalties statistical releases. The consultation ran from 3 March to 13 May 2016, receiving a total of 12 responses. This document summarises the findings and explains Companies House's response and planned next steps. We thank all respondents for taking the time to respond to the consultation.

Summary of responses

In total, 12 responses were received from a range of organisations from both the Public and Private sectors. Six respondents were based in a Central Government department, five were based in private sector businesses, and one was from an academic / research background.

All 12 respondents reported using the Incorporated Companies in the UK statistics, with frequency of use ranging from daily to annually. Four respondents reported using these statistics daily, weekly or monthly, while seven reported using them quarterly, six monthly or annually. One respondent did not report the frequency with which they used the statistics.

Only three respondents reported using the Late Filing Penalties statistics. One of these respondents reported using the statistics six monthly, while the other two reported using them annually.

Respondents mainly reported using the statistics for background information, for monitoring trends and for research. Smaller numbers of respondents also reported using the statistics for decision making, writing briefs and benchmarking. Other uses that were each reported by just one or two respondents included evaluating the performance of Companies House, linking to other data sources, modelling / forecasting, and inclusion in reports.

Incorporated Companies in the UK

The majority of respondents (8 out of 12) felt that a reduction in the frequency of publication of Incorporated Companies in the UK would not cause difficulties or problems for them or their organisation. Similarly, nine respondents answered that such changes would have either no impact or limited impact on them, while three felt that the changes would cause a major impact.

The main reasons given for a reduction in the frequency of publication causing problems or having a major impact were that less frequent publication would make it more difficult to monitor trends in incorporation, users wanted to be able to reference the figures regularly, and that more frequent publication would allow users to see any changes more quickly. On the other hand, one respondent reported that they already accessed the data on a quarterly basis, and so the proposed changes would align with their existing practices. Furthermore, one of the respondents reported that “We agree with the switch from the incorporated companies statistics being monthly to being quarterly ... The frequent, small changes in the figures can be unnecessarily disruptive in our analysis ...”

Turning to the proposed changes in the format of the publication, nine of the twelve respondents said that the proposed changes would either meet their requirements or make no difference to them. Only three respondents felt that the changes would make things more difficult for them. Similarly, 10 respondents reported that publishing the full range of data tables accompanied by a concise summary of the main findings would either have no impact or limited impact on them, while just two respondents felt it would have a major impact.

Those respondents who felt that the proposed changes would make things more difficult for them and have a major impact stated that a more concise summary of the findings would lead to a lack of information for users. One respondent also felt that it may lead to a lack of transparency. This user did not use the data tables and referred to the pdf document for all of their information, meaning that it would be important for them that the main messages were all clearly conveyed in the summary accompanying the tables. Other respondents, however, felt that brief and concise

information would be beneficial for users, if the detailed data was also provided. One respondent, who supported the proposed changes, agreed that some written narrative would still be necessary “to ensure that the data are reported correctly and the right terms and interpretation is used”.

Further comments focussed on the need to clearly explain what the statistics do and do not represent (for example that although new incorporations are new legal entities, they may not necessarily be actively trading). This user also felt it important to show both the Total and Effective register sizes, and to be clear on differences between the two.

Late Filing Penalties Statistics

Only one respondent reported that a reduction in the frequency of publication of Late Filing Penalties Statistics would cause problems for them or their organisation. Similarly, nine respondents stated that a reduction in the frequency of publication would either have no impact or that they did not use the publication. The remaining three felt that there would be limited impact. The main reason given for the proposed reduction having some impact was because respondents felt that less frequent publication would lead to the information being out of date.

When asked whether the proposed changes to the format of the publication would benefit them in any way, five respondents felt that they would while seven felt that they would not. Two of the three respondents who reported currently using the publication felt that the proposed changes would benefit them. These respondents stated that more information to accompany the figures would help with an in-depth understanding of the figures. One user felt, however, that they would prefer to see the raw statistics.

When asked what the impact would be of publishing the existing data tables accompanied by key explanatory points, seven respondents replied either no impact or that they did not use the statistics, two said limited impact, and three said major impact. Of those who stated that they currently used the statistics, two felt that producing key points would have no impact and one felt that it would have a limited impact.

The main reason why respondents felt that accompanying the figures with key points would have a major impact was because summary information would help users interpret the data. One respondent, however, felt that the key points would not be helpful, and preferred to draw their own conclusions from the data.

Very few additional comments were provided in relation to the proposals for Late Filing Penalties statistics. One respondent felt that it would be helpful to add the average value of late filing penalty imposed to the existing data. This respondent also stated that “any sense the statistical release could give of the distribution of the late filing penalties (including graphs) could be useful”.

Companies House response

As the majority of respondents supported the proposal to reduce the frequency of publication of Incorporated Companies in the UK from monthly to quarterly, we intend to proceed with plans to do this. The last monthly publication will be of June 2016 figures, to be published in July 2016. Dates for the quarterly publications will be as follows:

Period covered	Publication month
July to September 2016	October 2016
October to December 2016	January 2017
January to March 2017	April 2017
April to June 2017	July 2017

In line with our current practice, statistics will be released on the last Thursday of the month in which they are published. All release dates will be pre-announced via the [statistics release calendar](#) on the gov.uk website.

As the majority of respondents also felt that the proposed changes to the format of the publication would make little difference, we will proceed with plans to reduce the length of the publication. We are currently reviewing the content for the new format of publication, to ensure that the information we provide remains helpful and informative so as to continue to meet our users' needs. We are also reviewing whether to continue to publish the release in pdf format or as html web pages, in line with Government Digital Service's drive to move away from pdf publications.

We will take on board comments about being clear what the statistics do and do not represent and the differences between the Total and Effective registers, and will ensure that the publication explains things clearly for the user. We are currently developing a definitions document to explain the terms contained within the publication. This will be published alongside the first quarterly release in October 2016.

As the Late Filing Penalties statistics are not widely used, and indeed are only used infrequently by those who do use them, we will also proceed with plans to publish these statistics on a six monthly basis. The last monthly publication of Late Filing Penalty statistics will be of June 2016 figures, to be published in July 2016. Figures for the six month period April to September 2016 will then be published in October 2016, and those for the period October 2016 to March 2017 will be published in April 2017. As with the Incorporated Companies in the United Kingdom release, release dates for Late Filing Penalties statistics will be pre-announced via the [statistics release calendar](#) on the gov.uk website.

Although there was limited enthusiasm for the idea of accompanying the data with key explanatory points, we believe this will be beneficial for users. We will adopt this approach, but will remain conscious of the limited need for additional context, and so will ensure that the key points provide helpful explanation in a concise manner. The key points will be published in html format.

We agree that providing information on average late filing penalty value will add value to the statistics and will endeavour to provide this. We will also investigate providing further information on the distribution of late filing penalties.

Taken together, these changes will allow Companies House to dedicate more resource to the development of the statistics and the supporting material to accompany them. This will ensure that the statistics better meet our users' needs, and increase their compliance with the Code of Practice for official statistics.

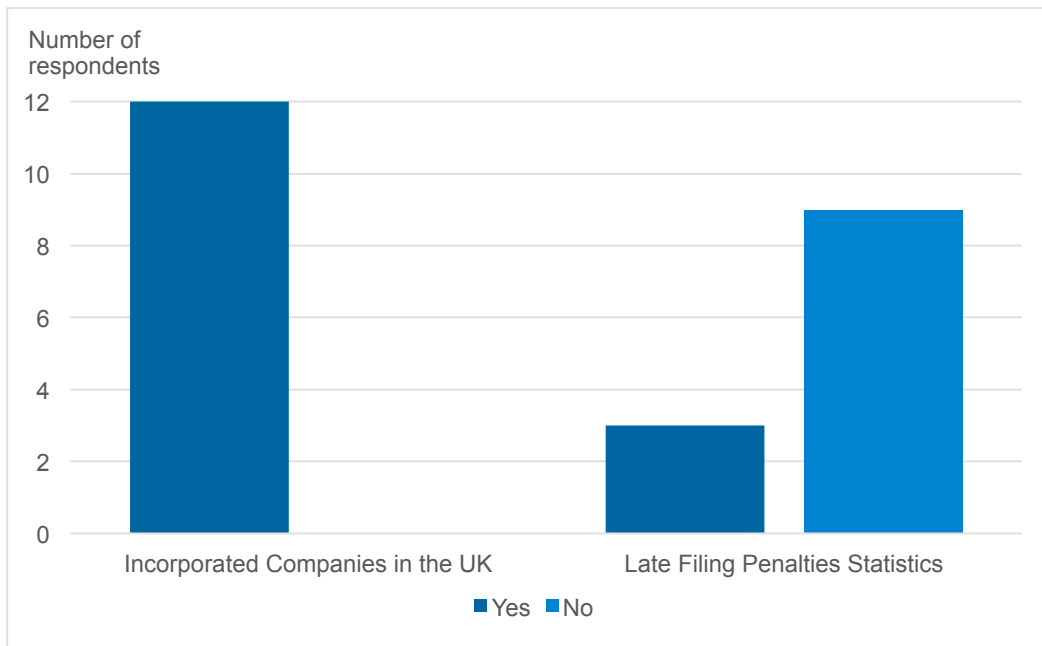
We are committed to ongoing engagement with users of the statistics to ensure we continue to meet their needs. We will seek feedback on the changes to the statistics once they are implemented. We also welcome feedback on an ongoing basis. Please send comments to: statistics@companieshouse.gov.uk.

Appendix A – summary of responses

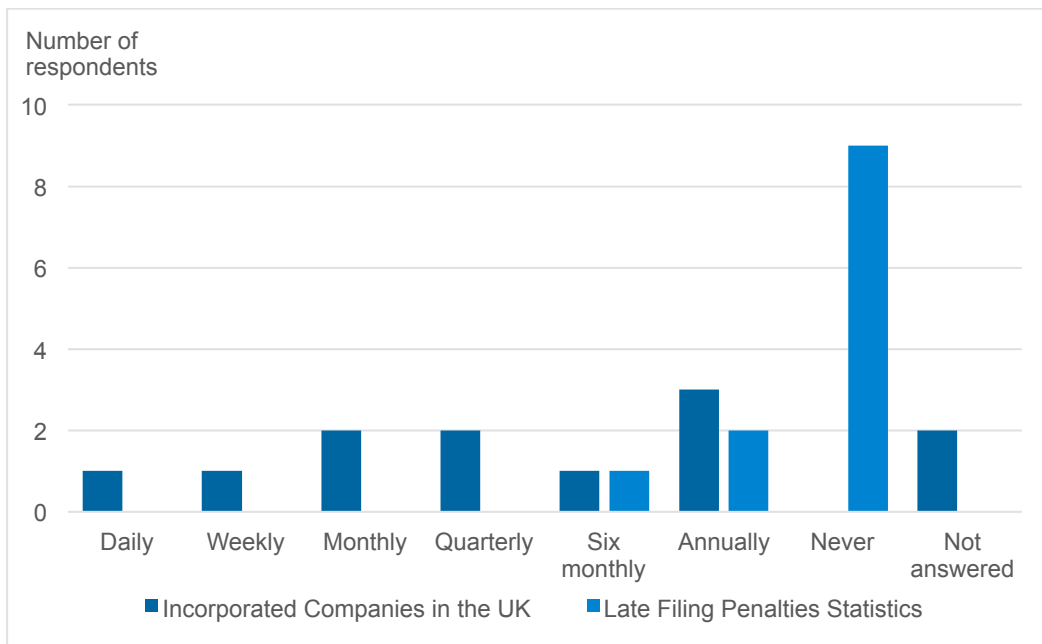
This section provides a summary of the responses to each of the quantitative survey questions. Qualitative answers provided as further information in answer to certain questions are not provided here, but are summarised in the specific sections above.

Use of Companies House statistics

Do you use the following statistics?

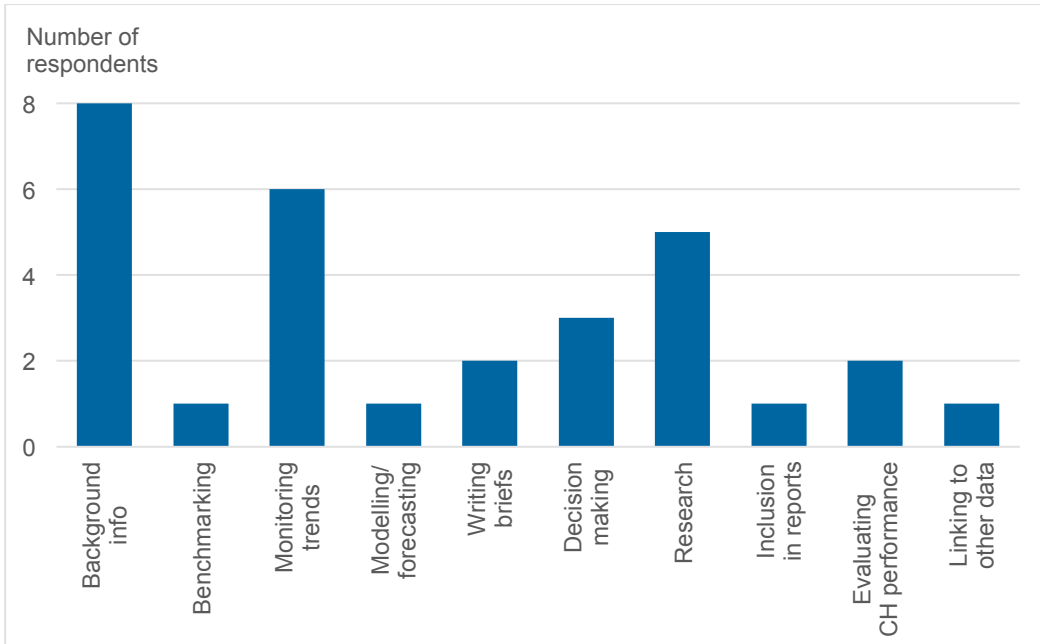


How frequently do you use the statistics?

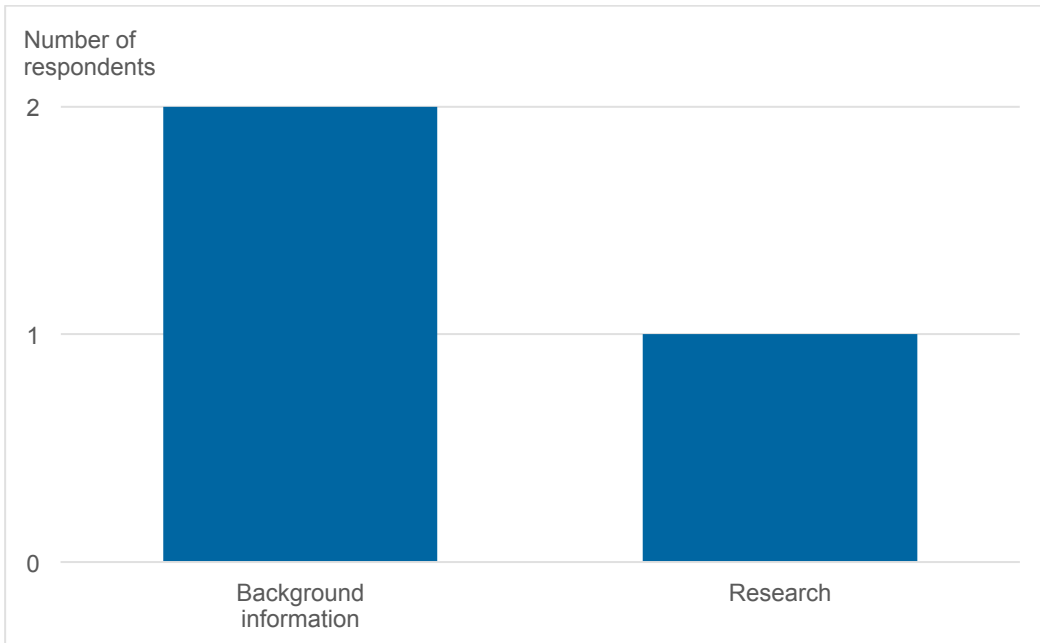


What do you use the statistics for?

Incorporated Companies in the UK

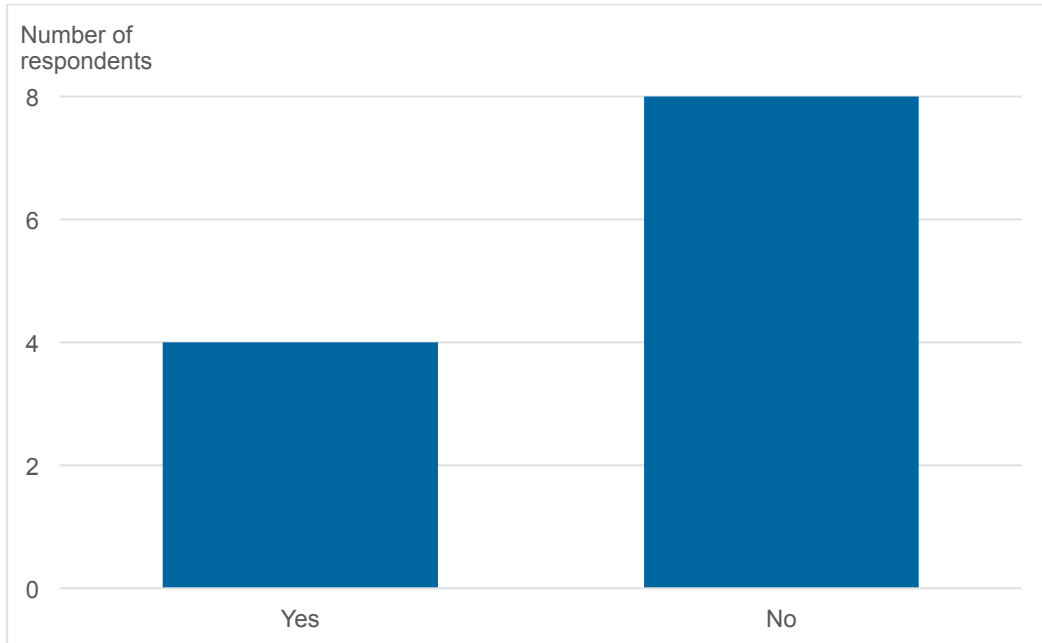


Late Filing Penalties Statistics

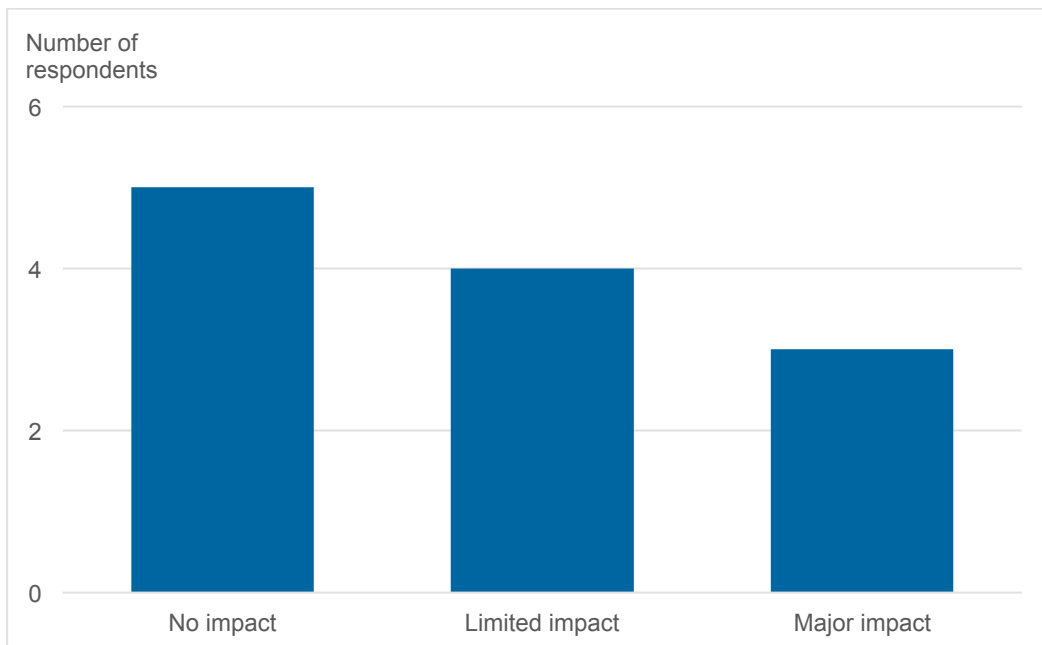


Incorporated Companies in the UK

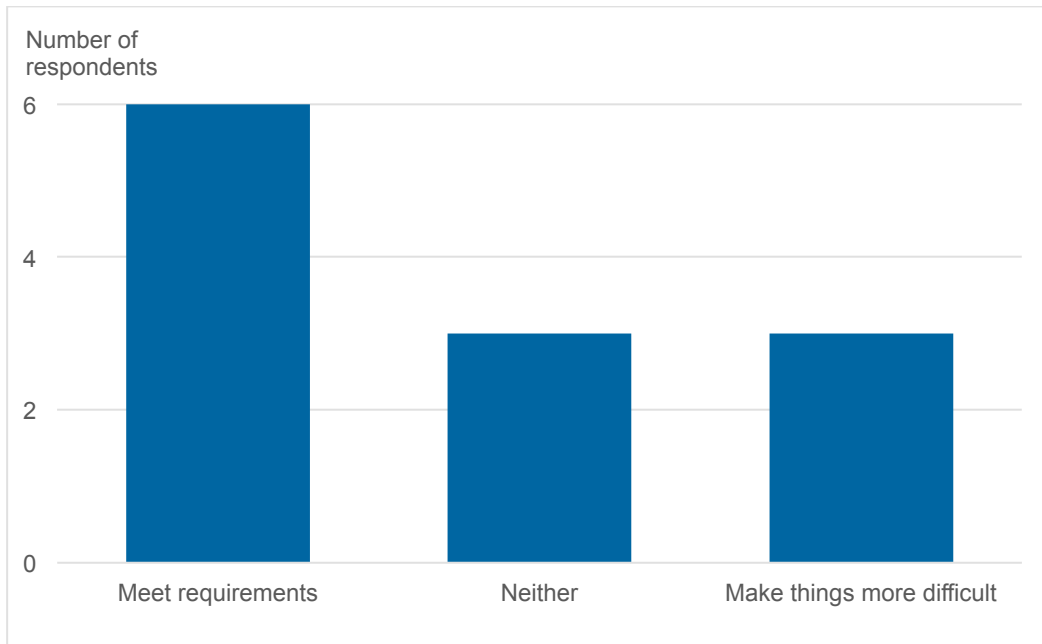
Would a reduction in the frequency of publication of Incorporated Companies in the UK statistics cause difficulties or problems for you or your organisation?



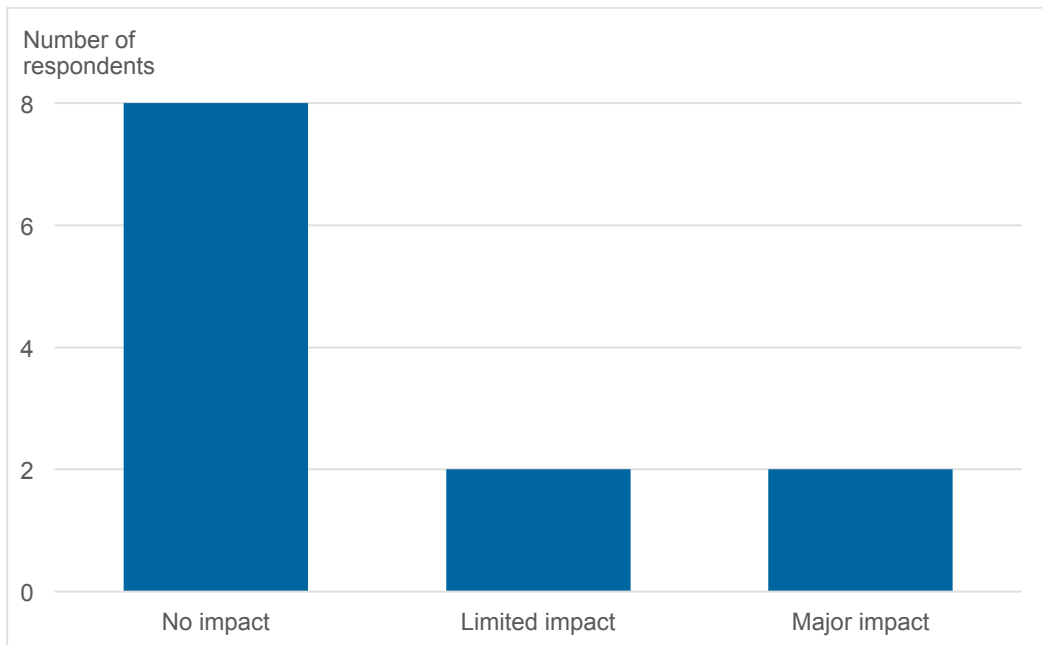
What would the impact be if we published the Incorporated Companies in the UK statistics less frequently?



Would a change in the format of Incorporated Companies in the UK meet your requirements or would it make things more difficult for you?

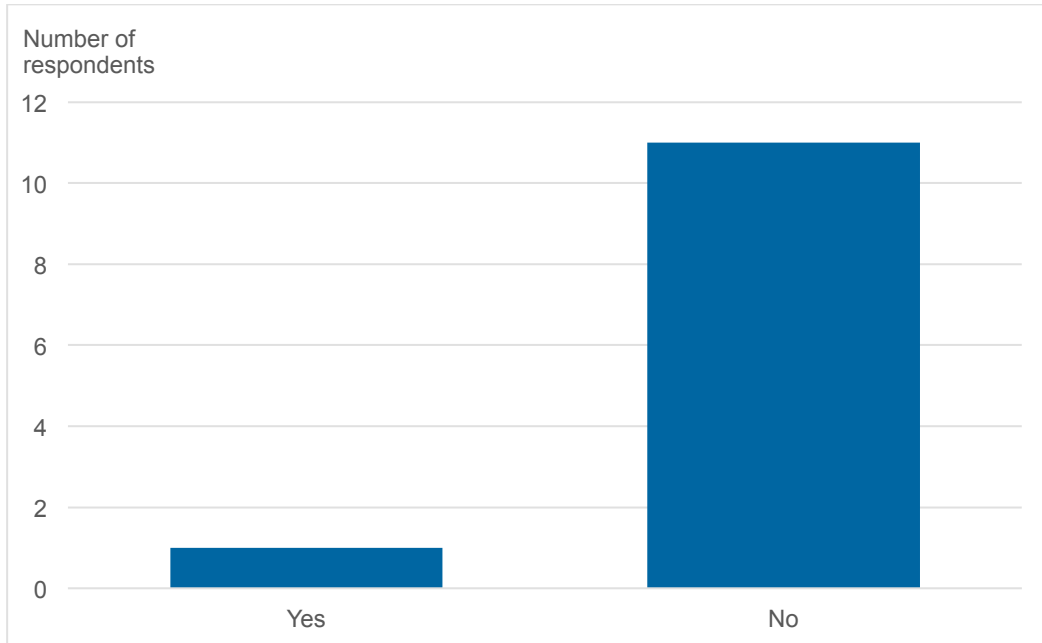


What would the impact be if we were to publish data tables accompanied by a concise summary of the findings, rather than the current, lengthier, statistical release?

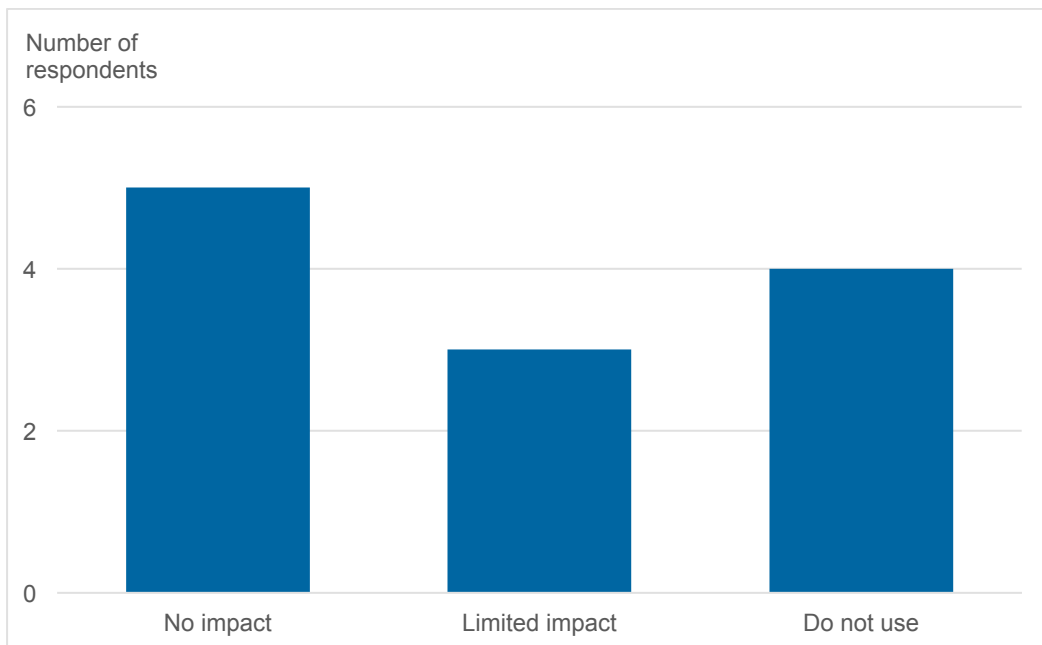


Late Filing Penalties statistics

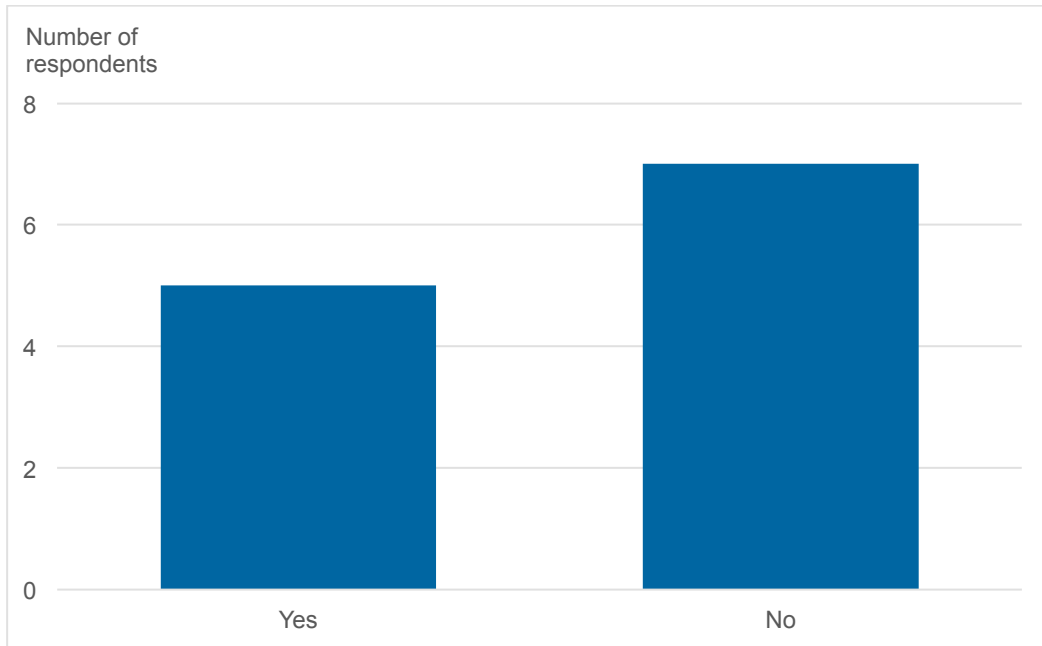
Would a reduction in the frequency of publication of Late Filing Penalties statistics cause difficulties or problems for you or your organisation?



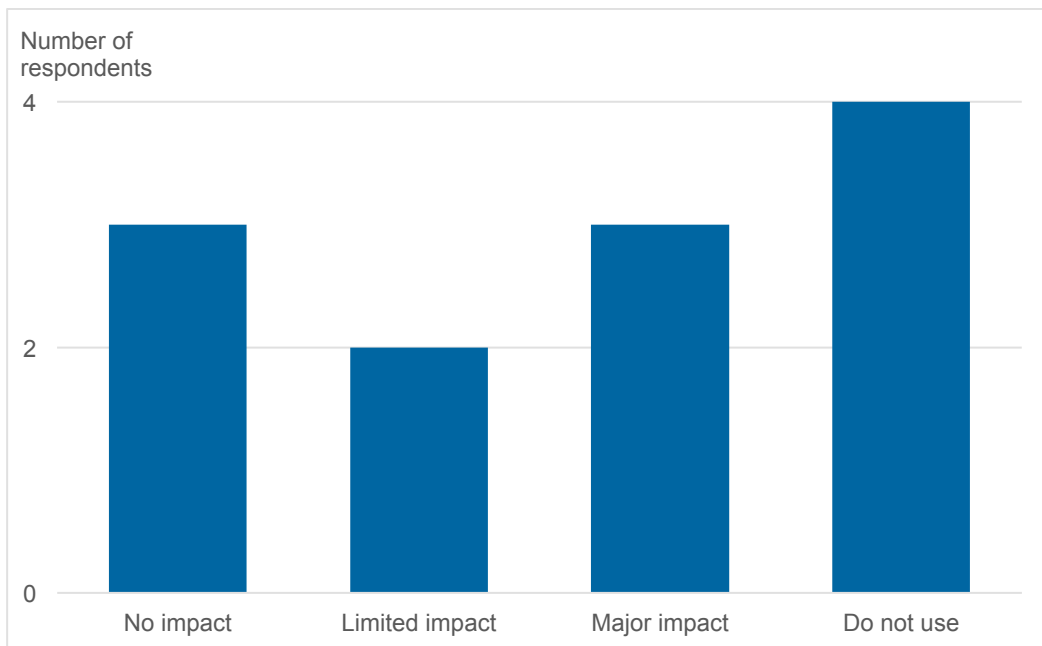
What would the impact be if we published Late Filing Penalties statistics less frequently?



Would a change to the format of this publication as described above benefit you in any way?

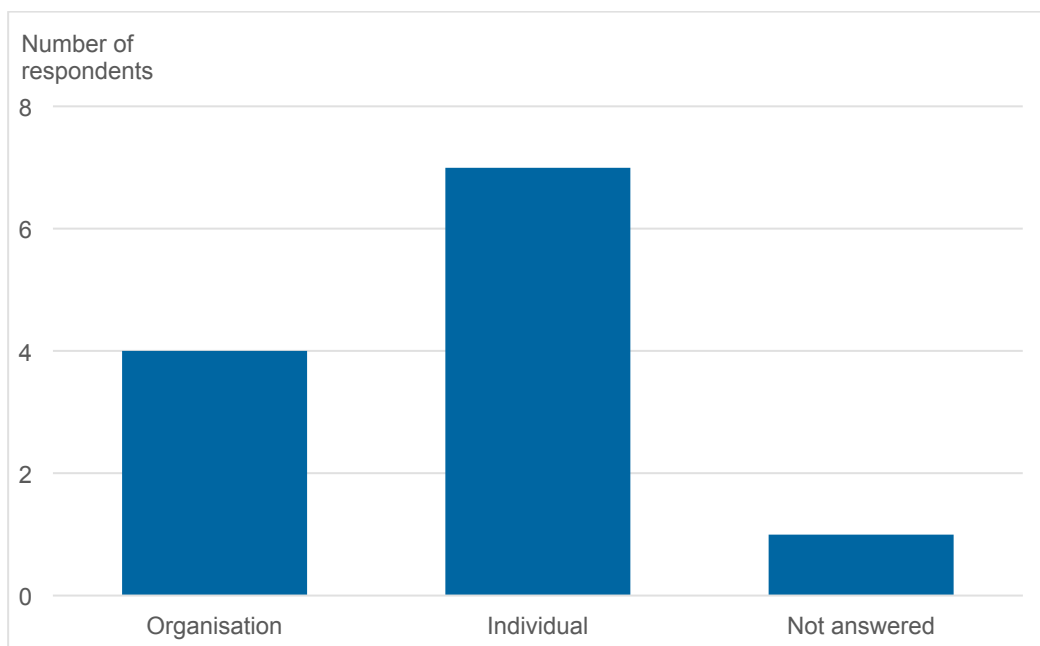


What would the impact be if we were to publish the existing data tables accompanied by key explanatory points?

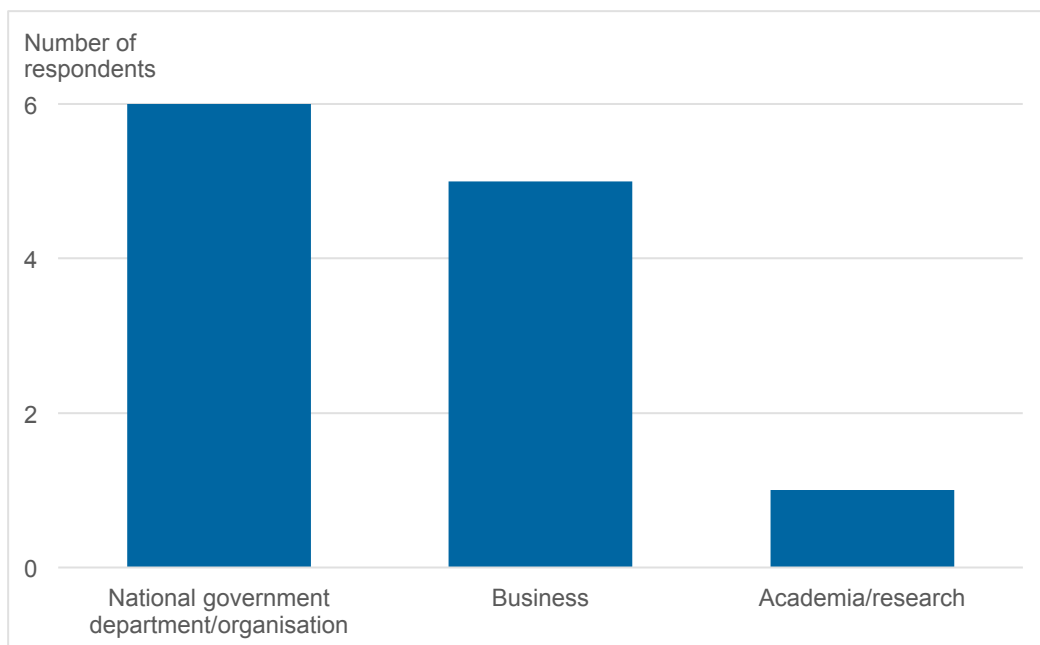


About you

Are you answering this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?



What sector do you work in?



Appendix B – summary of consultation questions

Use of Companies House statistics

1. Do you use the following statistics?

Incorporated Companies in the UK:

- Yes
- No

Late Filing Penalties Statistics:

- Yes
- No

2. How frequently do you use the statistics?

Incorporated Companies in the UK:

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Six monthly
- Annually
- Never

Late Filing Penalties Statistics:

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Six monthly
- Annually
- Never

3. What do you use the statistics for? Please tick all that apply.

Incorporated Companies in the UK:

- Background information
- Benchmarking
- Monitoring trends
- Modelling / forecasting
- Writing briefs
- Decision making
- Research
- Inclusion in reports
- Linking to other data sources (please specify)
- Evaluating the performance of Companies House

- Policy development
- Do not use
- Other (please specify)

Late Filing Penalties Statistics:

- General background information
- Benchmarking
- Monitoring trends
- Modelling / forecasting
- Writing briefs
- Decision making
- Research
- Inclusion in reports
- Linking to other data sources (please specify)
- Evaluating the performance of Companies House
- Policy development
- Do not use
- Other (please specify)

Incorporated Companies in the UK

We are proposing to publish Incorporated Companies in the UK quarterly instead of monthly.

4. Would a reduction in the frequency of publication of Incorporated Companies in the UK statistics cause difficulties or problems for you or your organisation?
- Yes
 - No

For those answering “yes” to question 4:

4a. Please tell us why this would cause a problem for you or your organisation.

5. What would the impact be if we published the Incorporated Companies in the UK statistics less frequently?
- Do not use
 - No impact
 - Limited impact
 - Major impact

For those answering “limited impact” or “major impact” to question 5:

5a. Please explain why publishing the statistics less frequently would have this impact on you.

We are considering reducing the length of Incorporated Companies in the UK so that it is a shorter summary of the main findings. We still intend to publish all of the data tables and develop a suite of accompanying information about the statistics.

6. Would a change in the format of the publication as described above meet your requirements or would it make things more difficult for you?

- Meet requirements
- Make things more difficult
- Neither

For those answering “make things more difficult” to question 6:

6a. Why would a change of format make things more difficult for you?

7. What would the impact be if we were to publish data tables accompanied by a concise summary of the findings, rather than the current, lengthier, statistical release?

- Do not use
- No impact
- Limited impact
- Major impact

For those answering “limited impact” or “major impact” to question 7:

7a. Please explain why this would have an impact on you.

8. Do you have any other comments on this proposal?

Late Filing Penalties statistics

We are proposing to publish Late Filing Penalties Statistics every six months instead of monthly.

9. Would a reduction in the frequency of publication of Late Filing Penalties Statistics cause difficulties or problems for you or your organisation?

- Yes
- No

For those answering “yes” to question 9:

9a. Please explain why publishing the statistics less frequently would cause you problems.

10. What would the impact be if we published Late Filing Penalty statistics less frequently?

- Do not use
- No impact
- Limited impact
- Major impact

For those answering “limited impact” or “major impact” to question 10:

10a. Please explain why publishing the statistics less frequently would have this impact on you.

We are proposing to expand the Late Filing Penalties Statistics publication to contain key points relating to and explaining the figures.

11. Would a change to the format of this publication as described above benefit you in any way?

- Yes
- No

For those answering “yes” to question 11:

11a. How do you feel these changes would benefit you?

12. What would the impact be if we were to publish the existing data tables accompanied by key explanatory points?

- Do not use
- No impact
- Limited impact
- Major impact

For those answering “limited impact” or “major impact” to question 12:

12a. Please explain why this would have an impact on you.

13. Do you have any other comments on these proposals?

About you

14. Are you answering this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?

- Organisation
- Individual

15. Please enter your name.

16. Please enter your organisation name (if applicable).

17. Please enter your email address.

18. What sector do you work in?

- Academia/research
- Business
- International organisation
- Journalist/media
- Local or regional government/public organisation
- National government department/organisation
- Voluntary and charity
- Other (please specify)

To support transparency in our decision making, responses to this consultation will be made public. This will not include your name or the name of your organisation. Any information provided in response to this consultation could be made publicly available if required under a Freedom of Information request.

Please indicate if you are not content for your responses to be published.

- Yes, I am content for my responses to be published.
- No, please do not publish my responses.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this consultation.

Help with queries

If you need any further information on this consultation please contact:

Sarah Whitehead
Companies House
Crown Way
Cardiff
CF14 3UZ

Tel: 02920 380240

Email: statistics@companieshouse.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/companieshouse

Contact Centre: **0303 1234 500**

For training and quality purposes your call may be monitored

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