



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

Campaigns and Engagement Department  
Communication Directorate  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

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

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0333-16**

Thank you for your email of 22 March 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*“Can you please provide me with the results of the global FCO Staff Survey between 2012 and 2015 for each individual FCO Post/Country (as appropriate)?*

*In particular, I am interested in the detailed FCO staff survey results for the UK and Japan.”*

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

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

The information you have requested is exempt under sections 36(4) and 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act because, its disclosure would, or would be likely to inhibit the free and frank exchange of views within the FCO.

Section 36 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours release of this material. There is a clear public interest in understanding the quality of management and working conditions in the Civil Service. It is strongly in the public interest that there are effective feedback mechanisms within the Civil Service about the quality of management and working conditions. The Civil Service People Survey constitutes such a mechanism, as this information is statistical in nature subsection 36(4) applies.

The public interest in understanding the quality of management and working conditions in the Civil Service is already served by the existing publication of results of the Civil Service People Survey at Civil Service and department/agency level. These are available on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) under the [Civil Service People Survey](#) section. In addition to providing an overall picture of the quality of management and working conditions at the Civil Service level it also provides information on the variation within the different departments and agencies within the Civil Service. The information requested may further public understanding of these issues,

however this needs to be balanced against the public interest in maintain the integrity of the People Survey as an effective feedback mechanism.

Publication of more detailed results from the survey sets a precedent to publish this information in the future. As the Civil Service People Survey is an annual exercise the publication of this information could result in, actual or perceived, pressure from individual managers for staff to answer the survey positively. Alternatively such pressure could increase non-response to the survey. Both of these situations, either individually or in concert, would significantly reduce the quality of the information received through the survey. Reducing the quality of the information received through the survey thereby limits our ability to use the survey as a tool for learning and accountability.

Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of the information would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act. In this case, I believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that personal data must be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and the FCO is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information. The names of Directors General, Directors and Heads of Mission are readily available. The results of the Civil Service People Survey for specific Director General groups, Directorates and Posts can therefore be connected back to these specific individuals. Therefore the results for specific Director General groups, Directorates and Posts can be considered to be personal data about these individuals because it pertains to their personal capability as a manager and leader.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

Yours sincerely,

*Campaigns and Engagement Department*  
Communication Directorate

