

# Framework for research access to ONS micro-data

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ONS

# Framework for research access to ONS micro-data

1. Hannigan
2. Statistics Act
3. Public good
4. Private harm

# Framework for research access to ONS micro-data

## 1. Hannigan

- 40+ mandatory requirements for handling protectively marked information
- Personal ONS data is protectively marked 'Restricted'
- Therefore all handling of all personal ONS data must meet all 40+ mandatory measures
- See <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/spf.aspx>

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## 2. Statistics Act

- *Personal* ONS data must not be disclosed
- Except :
  - To an **Approved Researcher**
  - To those assisting ONS with ONS work
  - With consent
  - (some others, not relevant here)

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## 2.1 What is an Approved Researcher?

- An *individual* who is
- a *fit and proper person*
- using data for *the purpose for which access is requested,*
- And who has *signed a declaration.*

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## **2.2 Fit and proper person?**

- Appropriate knowledge and experience
- Evidence of professionalism and competence
- Shows commitment to protecting confidentiality

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## 2.3 Suitable purpose?

- Supporting development of public policy
- Within the scope of the National Data Strategy
- Supporting an obligation in public law
- Exploring new methods

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## 2.4 Declaration?

An offence for an Approved Researcher to :

- Lose it
- Disclose personal information to the public domain
- Disclose it to another individual without ONS approval
  
- <2 years in jail + fine



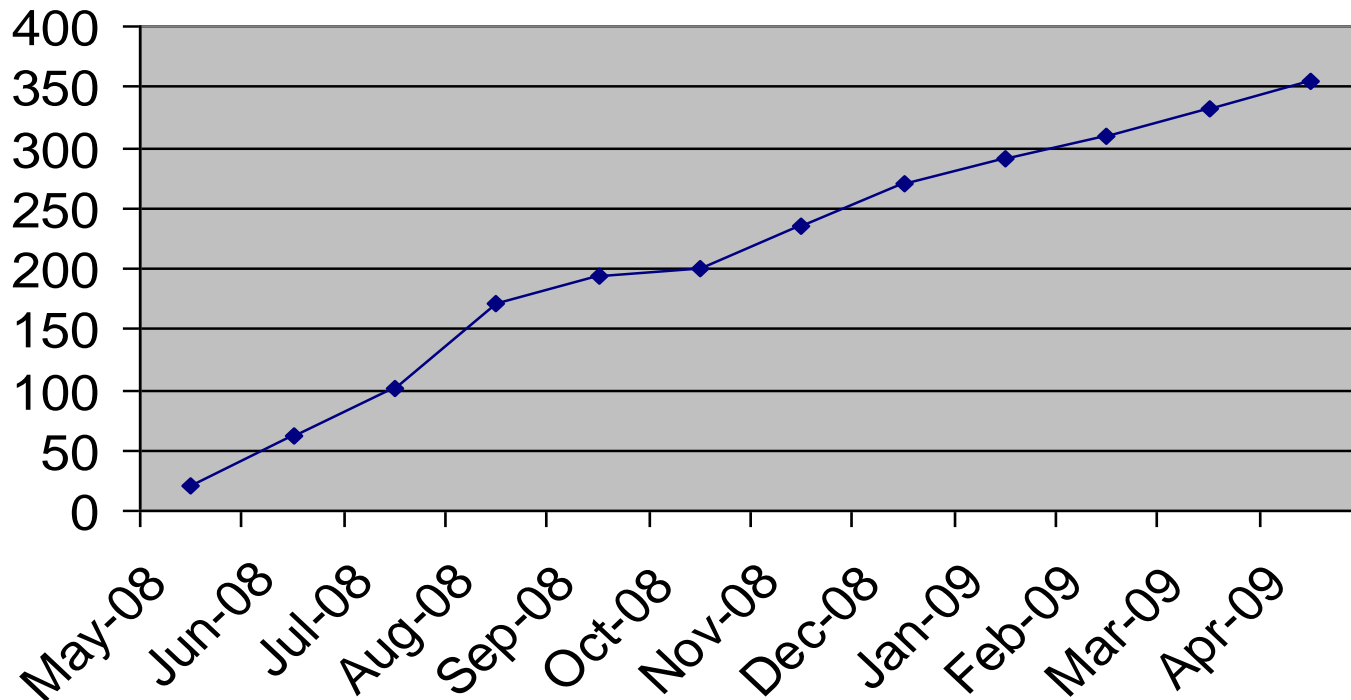
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## 2.5 Implementation

- Single form, to open the gateway.
- (Other paperwork necessary for the security and governance arrangements)
- To date, more than 350 Approved Researchers working on their agreed purposes.
- 1 year cover in first instance, easily renewable

# Framework for research access to Census micro-data

**Cumulative number of accredited  
Approved Researchers by Month**



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## 3. Public Good

- “Promote and assist statistical research”
- “Inform the public about social and economic matters”
- “Assist in the development and evaluation of public policy”

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## 4. Private Harm

- Non-disclosure rule
- Right to a private and family life
- Fair and lawful under the DPA
- No census opt-outs – obtaining consent for research is sometimes not an option
- Personal privacy third highest of all public concerns
  - ICO – “What Price Privacy”  
(1st – Crime, 2 – Education, 3 – Privacy, 4 – NHS)

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## **5. Risk management of *confidential* data**

- Distributing confidential data – high risk
- Local copies held for long periods – high risk
- Multiple institutions in collaboration – high risk
- Non GSI / non SPF / non ISO 27001 – high risk
- Overseas transfers – high risk

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## 5. Risk management of *confidential* data

- Distributing access, not data – low risk
- One copy held for all users – low risk
- Virtual collaboration – low risk
- A few audited safe centres – low risk
- Remote access from overseas – low risk

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## 5. Risk management evolution

- **Sheet music** – create it yourself
- **Vinyl / CD** recorded music – a very small expensive collection in hard copy, easily lost, and therefore carefully looked after.
- **iTunes** – make a massive cheap collection, easily lost, and easy to backup and replace. Not well looked after...
- **Spotify** – Distributed access. No losses, no cost to the user, 24/7 access to a vast catalogue.

# What makes data access safe?

