

FAMILY RESOURCES SURVEY
PROTOCOL ON DATASET RELEASE AND CONTROL

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Family Resources Survey (FRS) policy on data release and control. This protocol adheres to the National Statistics Code of Practice and is based upon work carried out for external data release with the Office for National Statistics and the Microdata Release Panel, which advises ONS.

As arrangements for data release have changed over time, sections 2 to 4 explain the arrangements by survey year and detail how they have changed with other sections detailing information that remains the same across all survey years. This document is split into six main parts as follows:

1. **Introduction:** This section sets out the structure to this document and provides some background information.
2. **Family Resources Survey 2006-07 onwards:** This section sets out the policy on data release and control for the survey year 2006-07 and subsequent years.
3. **Family Resources Survey 2005-06:** This section sets out the policy on data release and control for the survey year 2005-06.
4. **Family Resources Survey 2004-05 and before:** This section sets out the policy on data release and control for the survey years up to and including 2004-05.
5. **Timings of release:** This section sets out the timings of release covering test releases, restricted releases and wider release.
6. **Non-standard data access arrangements:** This section details those other government departments with non-standard data access arrangements.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Family Resources Survey (FRS) is an annual cross-sectional survey sponsored by the DWP with fieldwork contracted out to a Consortium of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The current contract commenced in April 2006 and will be retendered for April 2011.

NatCen take the lead on programming the survey questionnaire whilst ONS lead on sampling, data processing, quality assurance and data delivery. Fieldwork is shared equally between the ONS and the NatCen, and around 26,000 households are interviewed each year in the United Kingdom.¹ For their respective respondents to the survey ONS and NatCen retain identifiable

¹ From 2002-03 the FRS sample was extended to include Northern Ireland. Responsibility for programming the survey questionnaire, making annual modifications and data delivery are retained with ONS and NatCen, whilst the sampling, fieldwork and initial data processing is carried out by Central Survey Unit at the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

name and address information plus any interviewer notes in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Incomes Monitoring 1 is the team responsible for the processing and dissemination of the FRS. All FRS data received, subsequent processing releases, development releases and wider release of the data are managed and held within this team.

For FRS data up to and including 2005-06 ONS act as data controller and have control over data access and release. For FRS 2006-07 data onwards the DWP act as data controller and therefore have control over data release decisions for those years of data.

2 FAMILY RESOURCES SURVEY 2006-07 ONWARDS

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) became data controller under the new Family Resources Survey contract arrangements with effect from 1 April 2006. DWP are responsible for any arrangements for data release and control for FRS 2006-07 inclusive and beyond. This section of the document therefore provides the detail and guidance on data release for the Family Resources Survey (FRS) for the financial years 2006-07 onwards. This section will continue to be updated as further arrangements are agreed.

2.1 Confidentiality pledge

The assurance given to respondents of the survey is detailed in the survey 'purpose leaflet' used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The following wording has been used from FRS 2006-07.

ONS

"Is the survey confidential?"

Yes. The information you provide is treated with the strictest confidence by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), as directed by the National Statistics Code of Practice. It is used to produce anonymous statistics for decision-making in government and for genuine research purposes only.

In addition to staff in ONS, other staff of the Government Statistical Service, Universities and research organisations may apply for access to detailed but anonymous data from the survey. When approved these staff sign an agreement to abide by the same code of practice and its confidentiality clauses. No information which could identify you or your household will be passed to other civil servants or local authorities, commercial organisations or the press."

NatCen

"We guard your privacy

Your answers will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. They are used for statistical research purposes only. Names and addresses are never included with the results".

2.2 FRS Datasets

2.2.1 FRS Main Dataset

The FRS Main Dataset takes the form of that delivered to DWP by ONS but includes further edits to the data, imputed missing values and the addition of derived variables.

Read/write access to FRS data is given to Incomes Monitoring 1 (IM1) only and is controlled through a specific UNIX FRS group (the *frs_group*). The UNIX administration team enforce a protocol whereby new members to the FRS team or IM1 will automatically be given membership of the UNIX FRS group. When a member of staff leaves the team this access right is revoked. Access to these data from outside the FRS team, but still within DWP, requires authorisation from the DWP G7 FRS project manager and the Data Protection and Security team. The project manager holds responsibility for this data and ensures that dissemination is in accordance with agreed protocols.

Read access only is granted to users *within DWP* who have access to London and Newcastle UNIX servers. Access is controlled through the Information Directorate's Business Case Database (BCDB). The full list of the users within this group is also held by the FRS team.

All users are provided with a summary outlining their responsibilities and providing links to relevant guidance. Full terms and conditions are included in a Data Access Agreement. See Annex B for the Summary. It should be noted that users are referred to the IFD Protocols and National Statistics Code of Practice. Therefore, they must adhere to these rules as well as those specific to the FRS.

With each release of the dataset, users are informed of any specific restrictions that may apply. The Data Access Agreement for DWP data users is attached at Annex C1 (Data Access Agreement for Government Data Users). A data sharing and data access application, and a business case, must also be completed and submitted to the Data Protection and Security team at DWP.

2.2.2 FRS Anonymised Dataset

The FRS Anonymised Dataset is available for data users within the DWP (via the UNIX servers).

Annually the Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) team at ONS is consulted on the disclosiveness of the FRS dataset and the advice provided on which variables should be treated in order for the dataset to be deemed non-disclosive acted upon. See Annex A for further detail about the current anonymisation process and how this has changed over time.

With each release of the dataset, users are informed of any specific restrictions that may apply. The Data Access Agreement for DWP data users is attached at Annex C1 (Data Access Agreement for Government Data Users). A data sharing and data access application, and a business case, must also be completed and submitted to the Data Protection and Security team at DWP.

The FRS Anonymised Dataset and accompanying documentation is also deposited in the UK Data Archive (UKDA), via an End User Licence (EUL), for statistical and research purposes only. Access through the UK Data Archive is not made available until after the publication of the FRS annual report (typically around April each year). The UK Data Archive can be found at <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>

2.2.3 “Special Licence” Dataset: other government departments and research organisations

The “Special Licence” dataset comprises detailed but anonymised data that contain a level of detail not available under the basic Anonymised Dataset that is deposited at the UKDA. A “Special Licence” dataset is deposited at the UKDA containing the basic anonymised data *plus* further information such as local authority detail, unrounded income variables and single year ages (not top coded). See Annex A for further detail about the current anonymisation process for the “Special Licence” dataset and how this has changed over time.

ONS has established an arrangement with the UKDA through which an individual researcher can access detailed but anonymised data (formerly called “special licence” data) for statistical research purposes. The data are provided under ONS’ Approved Researcher (AR) arrangements.

Requests for access to the Special Licence Dataset should be made direct to the UKDA. The UKDA screens all requests against the published AR criteria as described in the 2007 Act and handles all communication with the customer. Those requests that meet the criteria are forwarded to DWP for explicit approval. Approval is subject to DWP approval and the AR criteria published by ONS. See Annex G for details for the Approved Researcher Declaration and the DWP Approved Researcher application form at Annex H. See Annexes E and F for detail of these processes.

2.2.4 Other FRS Datasets: other government departments and research organisations

In addition to the fully anonymised dataset and the “Special Licence” dataset, applications can be made for additional information to be added to the FRS dataset.

Requests for access to data are progressed *on behalf of* DWP through the existing Microdata Release Unit at ONS. Requests are assessed for disclosiveness by the Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) team at ONS and referred back to DWP for final approval. Where ONS can provide the data ONS will provide the data on behalf of DWP. Where ONS can not provide the data DWP will directly supply the data. For full details of the processes see:

- Annex E (Decision Tree of processes)
- Annex F (Summary of Data Release Protocol)
- Annex G (Approved Declaration, used by the UKDA)
- Annex H (Approved Researcher details)
- Annex I (MRP Customer Request form)

See section 6 for the current list of Government users that already have non-standard data access arrangements in place.

2.3 Data Security

Transfer of FRS data to users must conform to DWP Security procedures. Users should refer to the latest guidance on the DWP intranet. Latest guidance on data transfers is held here:

http://intranet/1/corp/sites/infodir/accesstodatasets/DWP_T376614.asp#TopOfPage

All datasets too large to be sent by email via the gsi network or sent by email but outside the gsi network must be encrypted prior to despatch. The encryption software used by DWP is PGP. External users need this software in order to receive FRS data. Alternatively, data can be delivered using Flagstone encrypted hard drives.

DWP currently encrypt and send CD-ROMs by secure TNT point-to-point courier to most other government. Packages are marked RESTRICTED and are double wrapped in a padded envelope and courier dispatch packaging. They also contain a tamper-evident seal. Users are informed of their decryption “key” following confirmation of receipt of data.

For further details on transfer of data, users should contact the FRS team at DWP.

3 FAMILY RESOURCES SURVEY 2005-06

This section of the document provides the detail and guidance on data release for the Family Resources Survey (FRS) for the financial year 2005-06. The guidance differs for this year compared to previous years because the confidentiality pledge was revised by ONS to extend the data access arrangements.

3.1 Confidentiality pledge

The assurance given to respondents of the survey is detailed in the survey 'purpose leaflet' used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The following wording was used for the FRS 2005-06.

ONS

"Is the survey confidential?"

Yes. The information you provide is treated with the strictest confidence by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), as directed by the National Statistics Code of Practice. It is used to produce anonymous statistics for decision-making in government and for genuine research purposes only.

In addition to staff in ONS, other staff of the Government Statistical Service, Universities and research organisations may apply for access to detailed but anonymous data from the survey. When approved these staff sign an agreement to abide by the same code of practice and its confidentiality clauses. No information which could identify you or your household will be passed to other civil servants or local authorities, commercial organisations or the press."

NatCen

"We guard your privacy

Your answers will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. They are used for statistical research purposes only. Names and addresses are never included with the results".

3.2 FRS Datasets

3.2.1 FRS Main Dataset: DWP

See section 2.2.1.

3.2.2 FRS Anonymised Dataset: other government departments and research organisations

See section 2.2.2..

3.2.3 "Special Licence" Dataset: other government departments and research organisations

See section 2.2.3. Please note that when granting access to the special licence dataset, ONS, as data controller, does not act on behalf of DWP.

3.2.4 Other FRS Datasets: other government departments and research organisations

See section 2.2.4. Please note that when granting access to the FRS dataset, ONS, as data controller, does not act on behalf of DWP

3.3 Data Security

See section 2.3.

4 FAMILY RESOURCES SURVEY 2004-05 AND BEFORE

This section of the document provides the detail and guidance on data release for the Family Resources Survey (FRS) up to and including the financial year 2004-05.

4.1 Confidentiality pledge

The assurance given to respondents of the survey is detailed in the survey 'purpose leaflet' used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The following wording was used for the FRS 2004-05 and before.

ONS

"Is the survey confidential?"

Yes. The information you provide is treated with the strictest confidence, as directed by the Office for National Statistics Code of Practice. It is used to produce anonymous, statistical data for genuine research purposes only.

Your name and address are stored separately from other information about you, and all records are held on protected computer systems. No information which could identify you or your household is passed to any other organisation, commercial or public, outside the Office for National Statistics. In the unlikely event that we wanted to share your details with another organisation (for instance, if another government department wished to carry out a follow-up survey) we would seek your informed consent first.

As a further assurance of confidentiality, results that identify people's local authority area, and which therefore might stand some chance of being identified with them or their households, are made available only to the research staff of government departments and reputable institutes who need to use these statistics from the survey."

NatCen

This pledge was used for the FRS 2002-03 and before.

"When you take part

Your privacy is protected. Your answers, given in strict confidence, are used for statistical research purposes only. Names and addresses are never included with results".

This pledge was used for the FRS 2003-04 and FRS 2004-05

"We guard your privacy

Your answers will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. They are used for statistical research purposes only. Names and addresses are never included with the results”.

4.2 FRS Datasets

4.2.1 FRS Main Dataset: DWP

See section 2.2.1.

4.2.2 FRS Anonymised Dataset: other government departments and research organisations

See section 2.2.2.

4.2.3 Local Authority information

See section 3.2.3. The “Special Licence” dataset is available from 2002-03 onwards.

4.2.4 Other FRS Datasets: other government departments and research organisations

Not available until 2005-06.

4.3 Data Security

See section 2.3.

5 TIMINGS OF RELEASE

This section details the timings of releases from the test releases and restricted releases, within DWP and across government, to the wider release of FRS data to research organisations via the UK Data Archive.

The annual publication of First Release of National Statistics for the Family Resources Survey takes place, typically around April. In addition, each year test releases and a restricted version of the Family Resources Survey (FRS) dataset are made available prior to this and circulated to government users.

5.1 Test releases

Test releases are available before the final release of data is made available to DWP analysts (with approved access to the full FRS dataset) and *upon request* to FRS data users across government only. The test release is limited in circulation and is provided in circumstances where a change in information has a direct impact on the needs of specific users. For government users requiring access to this release (excluding DWP analysts), the nominated user in a team signs a Data Access Agreement for the test release that governs the conditions under which the data are supplied.

During this period the following clause comes in to effect to manage the risk that early results will be made available.

This copy of the YYYY-yy FRS dataset is made available prior to the publication of the FRS main report and FRS-based National Statistics. This release is under the agreement that this dataset will not be used in a manner inconsistent with National Statistics' priority of publication. The database can be analysed but should not be used to take any actions, such as releasing estimates, which would deprive relevant National Statistics series of their 'first release' priority of publication.

The relevant statistics, and their planned month of release, are: Households Below Average Income, Family Resources Survey, Pensioners' Incomes and Take-up of Income Related Benefits.

The Data Access Agreement form for the test release can be found at Annex D. This applies to government users only.

The level of data supplied will be in accordance with the customer's access arrangements.

5.2 Restricted release

The final release is made available to all Government users at the same time as the deposit of FRS Anonymised Dataset and FRS Special Licence Dataset in the UKDA.

However, there may be circumstances under which the final release is made available in advance of the datasets being deposited at the UKDA and prior to publication of National Statistics. During this period the following clause comes in to effect to manage the risk that early results will be made available.

This copy of the YYYY-yy FRS dataset is made available prior to the publication of the FRS main report and FRS-based National Statistics. This release is under the agreement that this dataset will not be used in a manner inconsistent with National Statistics' priority of publication. The database can be analysed but should not be used to take any actions, such as releasing estimates, which would deprive relevant National Statistics series of their 'first release' priority of publication.

The relevant statistics, and their planned month of release, are: Households Below Average Income, Family Resources Survey, Pensioners' Incomes and Take-up of Income Related Benefits.

*If you would like advice on analysis and releasing FRS-based estimates during this time please contact Incomes Monitoring in DWP.**

Outside the period of restriction the following is used

*If you would like advice on analysis and releasing FRS-based estimates please contact the FRS team at DWP.**

The Data Access Agreement form for the restricted release can be found at Annex C1. This applies to government users only.

The level of data supplied will be in accordance with the customer's access arrangements.

5.3 Wider releases

The annual publication of First Release of National Statistics for the Family Resources Survey typically occurs around April each year. As soon as practical after this point the FRS Anonymised Dataset and FRS Special Licence Dataset are deposited in the UKDA.

6 NON-STANDARD DATA ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

This section details the key other government departments that currently have non-standard data access arrangements in place. As mentioned in the earlier sections other government departments and research organisations are only given access to the FRS Anonymised Dataset and a further agreement has to be put in place for requests for additional information. The Microdata Release Panel has approved the non-standard data access arrangements outlined in this section.

Seven organisations have access to a more disclosive level of data than that supplied in the FRS Anonymised Dataset. The data access arrangements for each government department are outlined as follows:

- Northern Ireland, the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) have full copies of the FRS dataset.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), HM Treasury (HMT) and the Scottish Government (SG) receive the FRS Special Licence Dataset *plus* the date of birth variables, the Gross Council Tax variable, the indeices of multiple deprivation variables, and the Urban/Rural classifications.