



Statistical Reform Team
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HA

Sent by post & email to: statsconsultation@hm-treasury.gov.uk

28th February 2008

Dear Sirs

Re: Limiting pre-release access to statistics: a consultation document - the response of The Market Research Society

I am writing on behalf of The Market Research Society (MRS) in response to the above inquiry. MRS welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Treasury inquiry and confirms that no part of this submission needs to be treated as confidential.

With members in more than 70 countries, MRS is the world's largest association representing providers and users of market, social, and opinion research, and business intelligence. All individual MRS members and MRS Company Partners agree to self-regulatory compliance with the MRS Code of Conduct. Full details regarding MRS and its activities can be found via: www.mrs.org.uk

MRS has an advisory board, the MRS Census and Geodemographics Group (CGG), which recommends MRS policy in relation to geographic, demographic and census information. CGG is submitting a detailed response to the inquiry, which MRS fully endorses.

The principal concern of MRS and CGG relates to the possible unforeseen effects of more restrictive pre-release regulations, and in particular upon the quality assurance processes applied to government statistics. The pre-release of statistics to expert users for quality control purposes should not be affected by tighter restrictions on pre-release of publication-ready statistics. To maintain the quality of official statistics it is vital that quality assurance processes are explicitly considered in drawing up the pre-release regulations and that no restrictions on quality control are imposed.

It is also essential that the regulations do not impinge upon statistics testing procedures. For example: currently statistics users receive test files, prior to release of large or complex datasets (such as the Census) in order to ensure that their computer systems will read and process the data correctly. Such practices should remain unaffected by the pre-release regulations.



Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require clarification regarding the MRS submission.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debrah Harding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Debrah Harding
Deputy Director-General & Director, Policy & Communication