

Covid-19 – Bespoke Data Access Requests - Scottish Government

In light of the extraordinary situation we are now in, in relation to COVID-19 and given the challenges we are all facing, we thought it was a good time to touch base on our contingency arrangements. As, our staff at the moment are supporting mission-critical work with other colleagues across the system, we have just had to make some difficult decisions in relation to current data access arrangements.

The current situation has resulted in increased pressures on the analytical staff within the Scottish Government. We are therefore not accepting any new bespoke data access requests, unless directly COVID-19 related, from **today at 17:00 (24 March 2020)** for Scottish Government datasets or NRS census data. This will include variations to existing data access permissions which have already been granted. We will review the situation over the course of the current public health emergency in light of Government advice and public health guidance.

We want to continue to support research, and those bespoke requests we have already received in recent days will be reviewed and considered as the situation evolves although, please bear with us, as it may take longer than normal to reply to you.

Our SG data is still accessible via the Open data platform: www.statistics.gov.scot or in over the one hundred bulletins we publish each year, most of which include data that can be downloaded.

With travel restrictions and staff being advised to work from home, we have also been asked whether it is possible for those researchers who are currently accessing our data via the Scottish National Safe Havens Network to be able to do this from home, to enable their work to continue. Due to our commitment to data confidentiality and because of data safety and security concerns, we are advising that this will not be permitted but we will consider requests for temporary remote access on a case by case basis. Criteria for consideration of remote access applications will include:-

- Type of data
- Discussions with/ views of data owners
- Any immediate impact / public benefit of completing this research over the next 3 months
- Timing considerations, e.g. time-critical projects, financial constraints, resource constraints

If remote access is granted, agreements will be put in place to cover the temporary changes, which will be in place until normal service resumes with the Scottish National Safe Haven Network.

We understand that some research will be delayed as a consequence, but it is essential that we continue to ensure compliance with current legal requirements and we do not create an unacceptable risk to data confidentiality. We must also comply with Government and public health advice on people health and wellbeing at these challenging times.

We will continue to review the situation throughout this emergency period and keep you updated regularly, through what we all hope will be a temporary interruption to our usual work.

If your project is being handled by eDRIS, please contact your research co-ordinator and refer to the eDRIS service users update of 19 March 2020.

Otherwise please get in touch with statistics.enquiries@gov.scot