

# USER INFORMATION GUIDE

## **BRES 2015: Guide to the use of potentially confidential data in relation to Notice controlled level access BRES estimates.**

Note: Important. There are legal penalties for the improper use of confidential data. This guide informs users on the use of the Notice controlled level access data without breaching confidentiality rules. If you have any doubts about how to apply the guidance please contact:

**Labour Market Division**  
**Room 1.024**  
**Government Buildings**  
**Cardiff Road**  
**NEWPORT**  
**NP10 8XG**  
**Telephone: 01633 456903**  
**Email: [BRES@ONS.gov.uk](mailto:BRES@ONS.gov.uk)**

Users applying for access to the 2015 provisional BRES estimates will have three different access level options this year.

- 1. Notice level BRES Data**
- 2. Safeguarded level BRES Data**
- 3. Open access level BRES Data**

The guidance in this document applies specifically to **Notice level BRES Data**.

**Safeguarded level BRES Data** is supplied purely for comparative purposes and cannot be passed to non Notice holders or put into the public domain. **Open access level BRES Data** can be freely passed to non Notice holders. Users may find it easier to provide Open access level BRES Data to individuals not physically named on their Notice.

The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is conducted under the Statistics of Trade Act (STA) 1947, as were its predecessors, the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI), the Annual Employment Survey (AES) and Census of Employment (CoE). This Act imposes restrictions on the way that data collected during the survey may be used. The provisions of the STA are importantly further regulated by the Employment and Training Act 1973 (ETA) as amended by the Employment Act 1989, which states that local planning authorities may only use confidential data for purposes that relate to development plans.

The main aim of these restrictions is to protect the identity of individual enterprises, who have made statistical returns, from being disclosed or otherwise deduced.

### **Disclosive Aggregate**

Aggregate data can be potentially disclosive and, therefore, potentially confidential. In theory, a 'disclosive' cell of data is one which either directly, or by deduction, would make known, from Notice level BRES data, the identity of an enterprise who made a statistical return. In practice, the ONS operates standard rules which are used to test each data-cell: those cells which pass these 'suppression' tests are deemed non-disclosive; those which fail are disclosive.

The rules are given at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/disclosure-controlpolicy-for-tables/index.html>

The BRES outputs published on the National Statistics website have already been subjected to the suppression tests and so the issue of confidentiality does not arise.

However, the Notice level BRES Data has not been suppressed and contains potentially disclosive Cells. As this output has not been subject to suppression users of this data are personally responsible for ensuring that any information which they publish or pass on to other users not named on their Notice, does not contain disclosive data.

Users who derive customised tables from Notice level BRES data, which include cells marked '!' (exclamation mark) must ensure that the general rules for hard and soft suppression, plus rounding, described below are not breached.

**1. Hard suppression.** Users of Nomis must suppress (i.e. blank out), for publication purposes, any data-cell which is marked with an '!' (exclamation mark). This is referred to as Hard suppression and is designed to prevent any disclosure of data that allows a particular business to be identified and rules of confidentiality to be broken. The primary rule of disclosure as applied to BRES is: *at least 3 enterprise groups in a cell and the total of the cell less the 2 largest local units must be greater than or equal to a pre-determined percentage of the value of the largest local unit.* If a data-cell fails this rule then it is considered disclosive and marked with an '!' (exclamation mark).

**2. Soft suppression.** Nomis does not apply soft suppression and it is the users responsibility to undertake this. Where 'hard suppression' is applied to a single cell in a row or column, it will follow that the value of the blank cell could easily be derived by simple subtraction from the total employment given in that row or column, or from sub-totals within the table. In such cases, hard suppression must be supplemented by what is called 'soft suppression'. 'Soft suppression' is where another cell in the row or column is blanked out to avoid this deduction by subtraction. Candidates for soft suppression may include cells with zero employment.

**3. Rounding.** Users of BRES Data in any publication derived from the Notice level BRES Data must also apply the general rule that any employment value in a data-cell must be rounded to the nearest 100. Therefore figures of less than 50 should not appear. Any publication derived from BRES outputs should thus be subject to hard suppression, followed by soft suppression followed by rounding to the nearest hundred.

### **Percentage figures**

The rule of suppression that applies to absolute employee figures also applies to percentage values. This means that both hard and soft suppression should be applied to percentages marked with '!' (exclamation mark).

### **Workplace Analysis**

This only applies to any analysis derived from the ABI, AES or CoE. The rules of suppression that apply to absolute employee figures also apply to the number of data units (workplace analysis). This means that both hard and soft suppression should be applied to data units marked with '!' (exclamation mark). However, the rounding rule does not apply in this instance.

### **Maps**

Any estimates represented in the form of a map (either generated from the bespoke map option on NOMIS or derived from downloaded estimates) are also subject to the rules of primary and secondary suppression. Users must ensure that no flagged estimate is represented on a map and that secondary suppression is undertaken if required. If users are producing their own map from downloaded estimates they must first apply primary and secondary disclosure to the estimates before using them for map generation.

### **Quality of estimates**

Users should note that BRES is a sample survey estimating the number of employees which gives rise to sampling errors. Non-sampling errors are not easy to quantify and include errors of

coverage, measurement, processing and non-response. Model variance increases as the geographies get smaller and this should be taken into account when considering the quality of sub national estimates

### **Publishing BRES data**

Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office. Also available is a list of the names of those given pre-publication access to the contents of this release.

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from political interference.

© Crown copyright 2010.

As long as the above disclosure rules are followed Notice level BRES data may be passed on to third parties or published subject to the standard Crown Copyright conditions. These are set out at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/site-information/information/creative-commons-license/index.html>

Safeguarded level BRES Data is supplied purely for comparative purposes and cannot be passed to non Notice holders. Open access level BRES Data can be freely passed to non Notice holders.

Users may find it easier to provide just Open access level BRES Data to individuals not physically named on their Notice.

### **Destruction of BRES data**

At the end of the access period, you are required to destroy all copies of the **disclosive** data derived from the Notice level BRES data, including temporary copies, CDs, printed copies, personal copies, back-ups, derived datasets and all electronic copies, unless a new Notice has been obtained for this project to extend. Please note this applies to the disclosive data only and not to any suppressed and rounded figures that have been published or are in the public domain