

NSW BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH: INFORMATION SERVICE POLICY

One of the primary functions of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is to provide a timely and comprehensive information service on crime and criminal justice issues. This document outlines the policy governing access to information from BOCSAR and the procedures that BOCSAR staff must follow when responding to requests for information.

Essential summary

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research offers an information service for clients who want information about crime and criminal justice issues. This document explains:

- When the service is available;
- The types of published and unpublished data held by BOCSAR;
- Restrictions applying to data that are subject to special conditions;
- Timeframes for responding to requests;
- The cost of data extracted by BOCSAR; and
- Payment procedures if purchasing for data to be extracted by BOCSAR.

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Ensure you have the latest version before using this document.

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1 Scope

This document outlines the policies governing the provision of information by staff at the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. It aims to provide a broad overview of the types of information available from BOCSAR and the restrictions on access to some types of data held by BOCSAR. All BOCSAR staff members who have an active role in the provision of statistical information must read and comply with the provisions set out in this document. Clients of BOCSAR should read this document if they require clarification of the procedures followed by BOCSAR information service staff.

2 Purpose

This document is intended to standardise the procedures for provision of information, including:

- How the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research responds to requests for information;
- The timeframes for responding to requests for information;
- The cost associated with the extraction of some types of data sourced from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research; and
- Restrictions on accessing some types of data BOCSAR holds.

3 Definitions

BOCSAR means NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Client means a client of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

COPS stands for the Computerised Operational Policing System, the computer system used by the NSW Police Force to record crime.

Crime and Justice Bulletins are a series of research papers published by the Bureau.

Crime hotspot boundaries are spatial data files representing areas of NSW with a relatively high crime density, that is, the number of criminal incidents per 50 square metres.

Data cubes are query tools that provide summarised reports that draw on NSW recorded crime or criminal court data.

Digital spatial crime data consists of geographically referenced crime data that can be mapped in a Geographic Information System (GIS).

LGAs are Local Government Areas.

Powerplay is business intelligence software produced by Cognos Inc, which the BOCSAR uses to query databases to produce summary information on crime and criminal justice issues.

The **Re-offending Database (ROD)** is a research database developed by BOCSAR the Bureau that uses probability-matching techniques to link all court appearances by the same individual since 1994.

SSDA is the Social Science Data Archives, a repository for social science data from a number of organisations, including BOCSAR.

Unit record data means the data are provided at an individualised level, rather than an aggregated or summary level.

4 Availability of information service

Information requests are answered between 9am and 5pm on weekdays, excluding public holidays. The Information Officer handles most requests for information. They can be contacted on (02) 8346 1100 (then select option 1) or at bcsr@justice.nsw.gov.au.

Depending upon the requirements and facilities available to the client, the required information may be provided in several ways: complete reports can be provided in hard copy, BOCSAR can email, fax or mail specific material, information can also be accessed from the BOCSAR website or can be compiled from one of BOCSAR's databases.

5 BOCSAR publications

BOCSAR produces several types of published reports, including quarterly recorded crime data, annual criminal court data, quarterly custody data and ad hoc research reports dealing with crime and criminal justice issues.

All recent publications can be downloaded free of charge in PDF format from the BOCSAR website (www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au). Examples of publications available for download include:

- All annual *Recorded Crime Statistics* publications since 1997;
- All quarterly *Recorded Crime Statistics* updates since 2004;
- All annual *Criminal Court Statistics* publications since 1997;
- All quarterly *NSW Custody Statistics* publications since 2011;
- All Crime and Justice Bulletins published since 1990; and
- All Bureau Briefs published since 1999;

Hard copies of BOCSAR publications are available at the State Library of NSW and several university and public libraries also hold copies.

6 Data available from the BOCSAR website

BOCSAR makes significant quantities of crime, court and custody data available on the BOCSAR website (www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au). Examples of information available for download from BOCSAR's website include:

- Tailored crime reports showing the latest maps, graphs and data on crimes, victims and offenders in NSW LGAs, suburbs or postcodes (using the interactive 'Crime Mapping Tool' - <http://crimetool.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/bocsar/>);
- How the crime rate for a given LGA ranks in comparison to other NSW LGAs (using the 'LGA ranking tool');
- Crime trends for the last 10 years, current to the most recent quarter of the current year (using the 'crime trends tool');
- Data on specific categories of crime, including the types of premises on which incidents occurred (using the 'specific crime tool');
- LGA tables showing the number and rate (per 100,000 population) of recorded criminal incidents, offenders and victims for each LGA
- Summary information on cases finalised in the NSW Criminal Court , including number of persons charged, penalties imposed and persons sentenced to prison;

- Data on the number of Apprehended Violence Orders granted;
- Data on adults and juveniles in prison in NSW, including receptions, discharges and custody population ;
- Research datasets containing information on all criminal incidents recorded by NSW Police from 1995, presented by offence type, month, Local Government Area and Postcode.

During standard working hours (see section 4) the Information Officer will be available to advise on the suitability of different statistics or to assist clients in locating information on the website.

BOCSAR aims to complete 95 per cent of such requests within one working day and 100 per cent of such requests within two working days.

Reports and/or data that are available for download from the website are provided free of charge to all clients.

7 Limited supply of published data by facsimile, email, regular mail or in person

Where a client does not have access to the Internet, the Information Officer may print out relevant tables from the website or from BOCSAR publications and send them to the client.

The Bureau aims to complete 95 per cent of such requests within one working day and 100 per cent of such requests within two working days.

Data provided by facsimile, email or in person will be provided free of charge.

8 Data available from data cubes

Some commonly requested data items are accessible via 'data cubes' created by the BOCSAR using Powerplay software. Examples of data that might be obtained via Powerplay requests include:

- Types of weapons involved in criminal incidents;
- Time of day or day of the week on which incidents were reported;
- Age and gender of alleged victims and offenders recorded by police in relation to criminal incidents;

- Number of charges in Local Courts under specific sections of criminal legislation;
- Age, gender and Indigenous status of persons found guilty in NSW courts.

If a client's Powerplay data request is complex or unclear, the client will be asked to submit the request in writing (either by post, email, facsimile or in person).

In most cases, if the required data is contained within one of the Powerplay data cubes, the request will be progressed using Powerplay. If, however, the request is particularly large, a programming query will be written by a statistical programmer to extract the data. The procedures for programming requests are outlined in section 9.

BOCSAR aims to complete 95 per cent of Powerplay requests within two working days and 100 per cent within three working days. Where there is any uncertainty as to the nature of the required data, the client will be asked to clarify the request in writing. The timeframe for provision of information begins once the request has been clearly specified.

All Powerplay requests will be charged as per the programming costs outlined in section 9.

9 Data available from programming

Where summary statistics are not available from a Powerplay data cube but can be compiled from a BOCSAR database, the client may be able to obtain the data via statistical programming. Examples of information that might be available via statistical programming include:

- Types of goods stolen in theft offences;
- Types of motor vehicles stolen;
- Number of persons charged with specific offences by the outcome of those charges;

If programming is required, the request must be submitted in writing (either by email, post, facsimile or in person). Where available, details of the client's contact telephone, email address and postal address for invoicing (if applicable) should be provided. If the written request is not clear, the client will be asked to clarify the request.

BOCSAR aims to complete 95 per cent of such requests within 10 working days and 100 per cent within 15 working days. Where there is any uncertainty as to the nature of the required data, the client will be asked to clarify the request in writing. The timeframe for provision of information begins once the request has been clearly specified.

Data from Powerplay requests or statistical programming are provided free of charge to State Government agencies and other individuals or organisations collaborating with BOCSAR in research.

For all other clients of BOCSAR, data from Powerplay or statistical programming taking longer than 30 minutes to extract will incur a minimum charge of \$440. Any request taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$220 per hour (or part thereof). Programming time includes time spent by the principal programmer extracting the data and the time spent by the secondary programmer checking the request.

10 Requests subject to special conditions

Data are subject to special conditions if they are (a) required at a geographic level other than one of the standard units used by BOCSAR, (b) requested frequently or (c) may be used to identify specific persons or incidents. The following subsections outline the procedures that apply to data subject to special conditions.

10.1 Other units of aggregation

In limited circumstances, aggregated data can be made available from BOCSAR's Criminal Incidents Geodatabase at a level of geographic aggregation other than Statistical Area Level 4, Local Government Area, postcode or suburb. Such requests must be made in writing. These data are only available for certain types of offences and will only be released with the approval of the Director or Deputy Director. The conditions for release of data at different geographical levels are described in section 10.5.

The same time standards and costs that apply to the provision of spatial data (see section 10.5) apply to requests involving data aggregated at different geographical levels.

10.2 Victim and offender data from the COPS database

When victims report crimes to the police or when police record the details of alleged offenders on the COPS database they expect their details to be kept confidential.

Except as provided for under BOCSAR's Privacy Code of Practice (<http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/codeofpractice.doc>) BOCSAR staff are bound by the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act* 1998. This Act prohibits the unauthorised release of personal information.

Data relating to small numbers of cases will not be released without the permission of the Deputy Director or Director.

When permission is granted to release this information, particular care will be taken to protect the identity of individuals. As a general rule, time periods with between 1 and 4 victims are not publicly released.

Offender data is limited to only those alleged offenders legally proceeded against by Police. An alleged offender may be proceeded against to court by way of a Court Attendance Notice or proceeded against other than to court by way of a warning, infringement notice, caution or Youth Justice Conference.

If permission is given to access victim and offender data and the data are available via Powerplay data cubes, the Powerplay timeframes will apply. If this information can only be accessed via statistical programming, the timeframes associated with programming requests will apply.

For both Powerplay and programming requests, programming time will be charged at \$440 if the request will take longer than 30 minutes, plus \$220 for each hour (or part thereof) of programming time in excess of two hours. Programming time includes time spent by the principal programmer extracting the data and the time spent by the secondary programmer checking the request.

10.3 Unit record data

Some de-identified unit record data pertaining to police and court records are deposited with the Social Science Data Archives (SSDA) within 12 months of the corresponding annual report being published by BOCSAR. Raw data files are available to researchers in various formats with explanatory notes. The SSDA can be contacted by phone on (02) 6125 2218 or ada@anu.edu.au.

There are special conditions governing access to unit record information held in the Bureau's Re-offending Database (ROD). These are set out in the policy document entitled 'Guidelines for access to and use of unit record file ROD data' also located on this website.

BOCSAR aims to complete 95 per cent of standard programming requests within 10 working days and 100 per cent within 15 working days. BOCSAR aims to complete 95 per cent of complex requests, such as those that involve record linkage, within 15 working days and 100 per cent within 20 working days.

If a request involves the provision of unit record data, the data will be provided free of charge to State Government agencies and other individuals or organisations collaborating with BOCSAR in research.

10.4 Digital spatial data and maps

Spatial data is available on the BOCSAR website (www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au). Specifically the Crime Mapping Tool allows users to create interactive rate and hotspot maps for various criminal offences.

Ad hoc spatial crime data, including crime hotspot boundaries, incident point maps, and digital spatial data (longitude and latitude coordinates) may be made available under certain circumstances from BOCSAR's Bureau's Criminal Incidents Geodatabase. All requests for spatial crime data must be made in writing and require the approval of the Director or Deputy Director.

The following requirements apply when requesting digital spatial data and maps:

- Maps containing crime hotspot boundaries are only available on the condition that they are presented at a level of aggregation that cannot identify individual victims;
- Crime maps produced by BOCSAR must be sourced to BOCSAR in any published reports or documents where those maps are reproduced;
- Incident point maps and digital spatial data will not be made available for offences against the person (e.g. domestic violence-related assault) occurring on residential dwellings;
- Incident point maps and digital spatial data will only be provided to State and Federal Government agencies where there is a clear public benefit from the release of such information and where the agency or agencies sign the undertaking provided in Section 17;
- Incident point maps and digital spatial data will only be made available to bona fide researchers if they have ethics committee clearance from a recognised university or research institute to use the data for the purposes prescribed in the request.
- incident point maps and maps created from raw digital spatial data must not be reproduced in any publication or passed on to any third party without the express consent of the Director or Deputy Director.

11 Summary of timeframes for completion of requests

BOCSAR aims to provide a timely and accurate information service for clients. The following table summarises the timeframe within which officers at the Bureau aim to complete requests for data. Where there is any uncertainty as to the nature of the required data, the timeframes summarised below begin once the request has been clearly specified. Any amendments to data requests (other than those arising from error on the part of BOCSAR) will result in the timeframe being reset to the date of the amendment.

| ITEM | TIMEFRAME |
|--|---|
| Publications/ data from the website | 95% within one working day 100% within two working days |
| Limited supply of published data via facsimile, email, regular mail or in person | 95% within one working day 100% within two working days |
| Data from Powerplay data cubes | 95% within two working days 100% within three working days |
| Data from statistical programming, unit record and re-offending data | 95% within 10 working days 100% within 15 working days |
| Complex programming requests (e.g. record linkage) | 95% within 15 working days 100% within 20 working days |
| Digital spatial data, including hotspots, incident point maps and digital spatial data | 95% within 15 working days 100% within 20 working days |

12 Summary of cost structure of BOCSAR data

12.1 Pricing principles

- BOCSAR is committed to providing open access through its website to key crime and justice statistics.
- BOCSAR will only charge a fee for data where its provision consumes significant staff resources.
- BOCSAR will seek over time to increase the range of data made available on its website.

12.2 Charges

- Data requests that can be answered using the website are free.
- Data requests taking up to 30 minutes are free.
- The minimum charge for a data request taking longer than 30 minutes but up to 2 hours to complete is \$440.
- All data requests taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$220 per hour (or part thereof).
- Requests for updates of data within 3 months of the original request may incur the minimum fee of \$440.
- All charges are inclusive of GST.
- Charges are based on Australian Bureau of Statistics rates for information consultancy services which accord with Australian Government cost recovery guidelines.

12.3 Charging exemptions

The following agencies/individuals are exempt from charging:

- State Government agencies
- Members of Parliament
- Students who are doing placements with NSW Government agencies

- Other individuals or organisations collaborating with BOCSAR in research.

12.4 Publications

PDF versions of recent publications can be downloaded without charge from the BOCSAR website (www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au).

12.5 Costs of computing requests

The following table outlines the costs associated with data requests that require computing. The programming time includes time spent by the principal programmer extracting the data and the time spent by the secondary programmer checking the request.

| ITEM | COST |
|--|--|
| Powerplay requests | No charge if a request takes less than 30 minutes. |
| Computer programming – COPS data, court data, custody data, unit record data, ROD data | A minimum charge for a request taking longer than 30 minutes but up to 2 hours to complete is \$440. |
| Digital spatial data, raw point data, maps displaying incident point data or hotspots | Any request taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of \$220 per hour (or part thereof) |

13 Payment procedures

When paying for publications and/or data requiring computer programming, the following applies:

- Clients can be invoiced for their purchase. A client will be asked to complete a 'Client Creation Form' after he or she agrees to pay the charge BOCSAR will then arrange an invoice from the Finance section of the NSW Department of Justice.

14 Requests from specific categories of clients

14.1 Requests from the media

Limited supplies of published reports are provided to the media at no cost. The quantities supplied are to be determined by the Director or Deputy Director.

Unpublished data may be made available, subject to the costs structures set out in section 12, at the discretion of the Director and/or Deputy Director.

In order to facilitate informed public debate about crime and criminal justice issues, any unpublished data given to the media may also be given to other media outlets, the relevant Government departments and/or Ministerial officers.

The Director or Deputy Director will respond to all requests for comment to the media.

14.2 Requests from consultants

Irrespective of whether a consultant is employed by a Government agency, requests for publications or data requiring statistical programming will be charged according to non-Government agency rates.

Data access provisions for consultants will be the same as those that apply to the agency for which they are consulting. For example, consultants who have been contracted by a government agency will be given access to incident point maps and/or digital spatial data if the data are requested by the government agency and if there is a clear public benefit from the release of such information. In such situations, both the government agency and the consultant are required to sign the undertaking in Section 17 and both parties will be deemed to be responsible for any breach of that undertaking.

14.3 Requests from students on placement with NSW Government agencies

Students who are on placement with NSW Government agencies who request data requiring statistical programming will be exempt from standard charges.

Data access provisions for students will be the same as those that apply to the agency for which they are on placement. For example, students who are on placement with a NSW Government agency will be given access to incident point maps and/or digital spatial data if the data are requested by the Government agency and if there is a clear public benefit from the release of such information. In such situations, both the Government agency and the student are required to sign the undertaking in Section 17 and both parties will be deemed to be responsible for any breach of that undertaking.

14.4 Requests from students and academics doing grant-funded research projects

Irrespective of whether a project is supported by a NSW Government agency, requests for data requiring statistical programming will be charged according to non-Government agency rates.

Data access provisions for grant-funded research projects will be the same as those that apply to non-Government agencies.

15 Acknowledgement and referencing of data

Data sourced from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research must be acknowledged in any document (electronic or otherwise) containing that data. The acknowledgement should take the form of **Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research**.

16 References

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research Privacy Code of Practice:
<http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/codeofpractice.doc>

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 No 133
<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/1998/133>

17 Undertaking by Non-Employees of BOCSAR

I, _____ acknowledge the following conditions on the use of the data provided by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice:

1. Data are to be used solely for the declared purpose for which they have been requested.
2. Analysis, results and findings derived from the data will not present individual cases or small numbers that may allow the identification of individuals.
3. Data will be sourced to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in any published report.
4. A copy of any resulting research report is to be provided to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research at least one week prior to publication.
5. Data obtained as part of this study will be kept on a password protected computer server for a period of seven years and then destroyed.
6. Personal information collected as part of this project will be safeguarded against unwanted publication.
7. In cases where unit record data, incident point maps or digital spatial data have been provided, this information will not be passed on to any third party without the express consent of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.
8. I am to inform the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research of any approach by any person seeking access to personal information.

Signature

Signature of Witness

Name

Name of Witness

Title

Organisation (if applicable)

Date

18 Document information

Title: Information Service Policy

Business Centre: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Author: Stephanie Ramsey

Approver: Don Weatherburn

Date of Effect: 1 May 2018

Next Review Date: 1 July 2020

File Reference: 1.2.2

Key Words:

19 Document history

| Version | Date | Reason for Amendment |
|----------------|------------------|--|
| 14 | 19 April 2018 | Revised by Stephanie Ramsey |
| 13 | 20 December 2012 | Revised by Don Weatherburn (section 10.4 and 10.5) |
| 12 | 19 July 2012 | Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald for fee increase |
| 11 | 5 September 2011 | Revised by Craig Jones to clarify access arrangements for student researchers |
| 10 | 16 May 2011 | Revised by Craig Jones to clarify access arrangements for spatial data |
| 9 | 31 August 2010 | Revised by Jessie Holmes to incorporate spatial/mapping data |
| 8 | 31 March 2010 | Revised by Jessie Holmes to incorporate acknowledgement and referencing of BOCSAR data by others |
| 7 | 22 October 2009 | Revised by Jessie Holmes to reflect victim and person of interest policies |
| 6 | 1 August 2008 | Revised by Tracy Painting to incorporate revised pricing policy |
| 5 | Feb 2007 | Revised by Don Weatherburn and Craig Jones |
| 4 | Dec 2005 | Revised by Suzanne Poynton |
| 3 | May 2004 | Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald |
| 2 | Jul 2001 | Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald |
| 1 | | Written by Karen Freeman |