

Reference: 01468133

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Information Rights Advisor
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22 July 2022

Freedom of Information: Right to know request

Thank you for your request for information asking for data showing the number of mobile subscribers by operator between 1985 and 2022. We received this request on 24 June 2022 and have considered it under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “FOI Act”).

Your request

You asked:

I am in the process of writing an academic paper for Strategic Management Research and wonder if you can help me with specific information.

What I need is data showing number of mobile subscribers by operator, from 1985 – 2022.

It would be most appreciated if you could help me out with this.

Our response

I have interpreted your request to mean market share data. Whilst we do hold information within the scope of your request, we consider that disclosure of this information is exempt under section 44(1) of the FOI Act. Section 44(1) of the FOI Act provides that information is exempt from disclosure if its disclosure is prohibited by or under any enactment. The enactment that prohibits the disclosure of this information is section 393(1) of the Communications Act 2003. Under this section, we are prohibited from disclosing information on this subject since it was shared with us while carrying out our regulatory functions and none of the gateways for disclosure in section 393 of the Communications Act 2003 apply here. Section 44 is an absolute exemption under the FOI Act and does not require a public interest test.

We also consider that other exemptions such as section 43(2) of the FOI Act (relating to the disclosure of information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person) would be applicable here.

To be helpful we can provide you with some information from our Technology Tracker. This is a survey that Ofcom conducts, and we can provide you information from the results of the question, 'which mobile operator do you use most often'. We do not hold data as far back as 1985 in the tracker, however it has records from 2008 when the question was added to the survey. Please note that this information does not represent an accurate picture of mobile subscribers per operator as this information is based on claimed usage by individuals on a survey (and some individuals may answer incorrectly), and it will only show one provider per customer (when they may use multiple).

The percentages of mobile subscribers from the survey is in the attached Excel spreadsheet and the most recent survey information can be found on our [website](#).

If you have any queries, then please contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Childs

If you are unhappy with the response you have received in relation to your request for information and/or consider that your request was refused without a reason valid under the law you may ask for an internal review. If you ask us for an internal review of our decision, it will be subject to an independent review within Ofcom.

The following outcomes are possible:

- the original decision is upheld; or
- the original decision is reversed or modified.

Timing

If you wish to exercise your right to an internal review **you should contact us within two months of the date of this letter**. There is no statutory deadline for responding to internal reviews and it will depend upon the complexity of the case. However, we aim to conclude all such reviews within 20 working days, and up to 40 working days in exceptional cases. We will keep you informed of the progress of any such review. If you wish to request an internal review, you should contact information.requests@ofcom.org.uk.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information about this, and the internal review process can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#). Alternatively, the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire

SK9 5AF