NSW BUREAU OF CRIME STATISTICS AND RESEARCH: INFORMATION SERVICE POLICY

Table of contents

Scope

This document outlines policies governing the provision of information by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR). 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. Clients of the BOCSAR should read this document if they require clarification of the procedures followed by BOCSAR Information Service staff.

1 Introduction

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) is committed to providing criminal justice information that is accurate, appropriate and which communicates in a way that aids understanding.

As an agency BOCSAR's aims are to:

- identify factors that affect the distribution and frequency of crime;
- identify factors that affect the effectiveness, efficiency, or equity of the NSW criminal justice system; and
- ensure that information on these factors and on crime and justice trends is available and accessible to clients.

BOCSAR clients include government agencies, the public, the media, community groups, local councils, members of parliament, students, academics and researchers.

This document explains:

- The types of published and unpublished data held by BOCSAR;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.

2 Availability of information service

Information requests are answered between 9am and 5pm on weekdays, excluding public holidays. The Information team handles most requests for information. They can be contacted on (02) 8688 9800 or at bcsr@justice.nsw.gov.au.

 Information may be provided in several ways: referral to relevant tools and files on BOCSAR's website; email of files or reports, direct mail of limited information when email is not available.

Information Officers are required to undertake training in disability and flexible service delivery and reasonable adjustments can be made, on request, to accommodate the needs of persons with a disability.

3 BOCSAR publications

BOCSAR produces many types of reports, including quarterly recorded crime statistics, biannual criminal court statistics, quarterly custody statistics and ad hoc research reports dealing with crime and criminal justice issues.

All 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 from 1997 to 2015 (replaced by web-site tables from 2016, biannual from 2019);

- All quarterly *Custody Statistics* updates since 2013

- All Crime and Justice Bulletins published since 1990; and

If the client does not have access to the Internet, they can contact the BOCSAR on (02) 8688 9800 for alternative access arrangements.

4   Data available from the BOCSAR website

BOCSAR makes significant quantities of crime and court data available on the BOCSAR website (www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au). Information available on the website includes:

- Information about crime, offenders and victims by area, suburb or postcode, with output by report, map or graph (using the 'Crime Mapping Tool')

- LGA tables showing the number and rate (per 100,000 population) of recorded criminal incidents, by the LGA in which they occurred; and

- Summary information on cases finalised in Local, Children's and Higher Courts, including number of persons charged, penalties imposed, persons sentenced to prison and the number of Apprehended Violence Orders granted;

- NSW Criminal Court sentencing information for proven adult offenders, for the past five years via the NSW Adult Criminal Sentencing Tool.

Reports and data are available for download from the website are provided free of charge to all clients. 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 via email or direct mail if email is not available.

5   Customised data

5.1   Power Play data cubes

When relevant data is not publicly available on the BOCSAR website, a customised data request may be undertaken where data is extracted from BOCSAR's suite of pre-prepared PowerPlay data cubes. Customised Power Play requests are required in writing via email and new and resource-intensive requests require the approval of the Executive Director

5.2   Customised data available from programming

Complex, large or non-standard data not available in the pre-prepared Power Play cubes may be available from BOCSAR source databases. These customised requests require bespoke code to be written by a statistical programmer. Programming requests must be in writing via email and require the approval of the Executive Director.

6   Requests subject to special conditions

6.1   Re-offending database and Unit Record data

There are special conditions governing access to unit record information held in the Bureau's Re-offending Database (ROD) and other databases. These requests have their own access guidelines and approval process. These documents outline how to access unit record information for research purposes:

- [Guidelines for access to and use of unit record file ROD data for researchers](#)

- [Guidelines for access to and use of NSW unit record criminal incident data](#)

Applications for access to unit record data and record linkage require the approval of the Executive Director.

6.2   Digital spatial data and maps

Spatial crime data, including crime hotspot boundaries and digital spatial data (longitude and latitude coordinates) may be made available under certain circumstances from BOCSAR's Criminal Incidents Geodatabase. Requests for spatial data and maps are referred to the Spatial Analyst for further assessment. All requests for spatial crime data must be made in writing and require the approval of the Executive Director. Once approved the request will be assigned to the Spatial Analyst.

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;

- 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;

- 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.

7 Approvals required for customised data requests

BOCSAR's Executive Director will review and approve all complex, resource intensive, decision critical or pre-publication data requests prior to distribution. This applies to both PowerPlay and Programming requests.

Table 1. Data request requiring Executive Director approval.

Request type	Description and examples
Programming	All new[1] programming requests requiring the extraction of data from BOCSAR's source data-systems by Programming Team.
Resource intensive	New requests which require more than 2 hours of staff time to compile.
Intended for publication	Requests from clients such as the Productivity Commission, the NSW Audit Office, media, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the NSW Law Reform Commission
Requests to inform government decisions	Relevant new requests from government policy officers

[1] Where a new regular request is established, the Executive Director must review and approve the first version of the request, but not subsequent data refreshes

8 Summary of timeframes for completion of requests

BOCSAR aims to provide a timely and accurate information service for clients. The following table summarises BOCSAR's timeframe for completion of requests.

Where there is any uncertainty as to the nature of the required data, the timeframes 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
Data from Powerplay data cubes	95% within five working days 100% within ten working days
Data from statistical programming	95% within ten working days 100% within 15 working days
Digital spatial data, including hotspots, incident point maps and digital spatial data	95% within 15 working days 100% within 20 working days
Complex data requests for researchers (eg linked data, unit record files)	95% within 15 working days* 100% within 20 working days* *after receiving written approval from the Executive Director

9   Summary of cost structure of BOCSAR data

9.1   Pricing principles

- BOCSAR will seek over time to increase the range of data made available on its website.

- 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.

9.2   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 $500 plus GST.

- Data requests taking longer than two hours will incur an additional charge of $250 plus GST per hour (or part thereof).

- Charges are based on time taken to complete request includes time spent administering the application/request for data, data extraction by the principal worker and time spent by the secondary worker checking the request.

- Requests for updates of data within 12 months of the original request may incur the minimum fee of $500 plus GST.

- All charges are inclusive of GST.

- Charges are determined on a cost recovery basis.

9.3   Charging exemptions

The following agencies/individuals are exempt from charging:

- State Government agencies

- Members of Parliament

- Other individuals or organisations collaborating with BOCSAR

.

10   Payment procedures

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

Clients are invoiced for their purchase. To receive an invoice, the client should indicate in writing that he or she agrees to pay the charge. New clients will be required to complete a Customer Creation Form.

11   Requests from specific categories of clients

11.1   Requests from the media

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.

Only the Executive Director responds to requests for comment to the media. On occasion the Executive Director may delegate to the Director Research & Evaluation or Director Reporting and Insights.

11.2   Requests from consultants

Data access provisions for consultants are 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 data if the data are requested by the government agency and if there is a clear public benefit from the provision of such information.

11.3   Requests from students on placement with NSW Government agencies

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

Data access provisions for students are the same as those that apply to the agency for which they are on placement.

11.4   Requests from students/academics doing grant-funded 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 are the same as those that apply to non-Government agencies.

12   Definitions

BOCSAR means the 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).

Incident point maps plot the geographic latitude/longitude of recorded criminal incidents to visualize the location of data on a map.

LGAs are Local Government Areas.

Powerplay is IBM Cognos business intelligence software that BOCSAR use to query data cubes to produce summary information on crime and criminal justice issues.

The *Re-offending Database* is a research database developed by BOCSAR that uses matching algorithms to link all court appearances by the same individual since 1994. Extracts of unit record data from ROD are available for research purposes (not operational purposes).

Unit record data means the data are provided at an individualised level, rather than an aggregated or summary level. Unit record data is provided in a de-identified format.

13   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**.

14   References

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

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 No 133
http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/scanact/inforce/NONE/0

15   Document information

Title:	Information Service Policy
Business Centre:	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
Reviewer:	Tracy Painting
Approver:	Jackie Fitzgerald
Date of Effect:	24 January 2023

17 Document history

Version	Date	Reason for Amendment
14	23 January 2023	Revised by Karen Freeman
13	27 August 2019	Revised by Tracy Painting. Revisions include change of Department name, fee increase, and revisions to sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 10.4 and 10.5)
12	20 December 2012	Revised by Don Weatherburn (section 10.4 and 10.5)
11	19 July 2012	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald for fee increase
10	5 September 2011	Revised by Craig Jones to clarify access arrangements for student researchers
9	16 May 2011	Revised by Craig Jones to clarify access arrangements for spatial data
8	31 August 2010	Revised by Jessie Holmes to incorporate spatial/mapping data
7	31 March 2010	Revised by Jessie Holmes to incorporate acknowledgement and referencing of BOCSAR data by others
6	22 October 2009	Revised by Jessie Holmes to reflect victim and person of interest policies
5	1 August 2008	Revised by Tracy Painting to incorporate revised pricing policy
4	Feb 2007	Revised by Don Weatherburn and Craig Jones
3	Dec 2005	Revised by Suzanne Poynton
2	May 2004	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald
1	Jul 2001	Revised by Jackie Fitzgerald