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Our reference: FOI 0655-08 (CONS 40/2008)

19 August 2008

Consular Directorate (G/55A)
Old Admiralty Building
LONDON
SW1A 2AH

Lewis MacAskill

By email: request-1580-17d90d68@whatdotheyknow.com

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Dear Mr MacAskill,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST

Thank you for your email to the Information Rights Team of 3 August in which you requested information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Your request stated:

"I would like to know how many British passport holders currently reside overseas?"

We do not hold an accurate figure for this information. However, each year we ask all posts in our overseas network to provide an estimate of the number of British nationals residing in their consular district (in some countries there may be a number of posts each with their own consular district, e.g. in Spain and Turkey). At the end of the financial year 2006/07, taking all our posts answers together we have arrived at a global estimate of approximately 12 million (12,113,756) British Nationals residing overseas.

In providing their estimate we ask posts to use, where available, official figures provided by their local authorities, i.e. census data, immigration authority figures etc. These figures will not normally include dual nationals, so where this number could be a significant proportion of the British national population some posts will add an estimate to the local authority figure. Where there are no local authority figures available, posts are asked to provide a rough estimate. To date, however, the methodology for providing an estimate has been left to individual posts.

The Institute for Public Policy Research also carried out a study on British Nationals living abroad covering the calendar year 2006. You can find the results of this "Brits Abroad" survey on the BBC Website at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/brits_abroad/html/.

You may see that there can be large discrepancies between the numbers collated by different organisations. I expect these discrepancies can be attributed to differing sources and methodology.



If you have any queries about this letter, or are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint, you should write to Stephen Durrant at the above address within 40 days. If necessary, we will conduct an internal review of how we handled your request. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaint procedure provided by the FCO. The ICO can be contacted at The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

[Signed]

Alexandra Gaunt
Strategy, Communications and Training Group