



# Foreign & Commonwealth Office

## Consular Directorate

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Our reference: FOI 0333-11/CONS 33-11

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*Dear Mr Sharma,*

## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UNDER THE FREEDOM OF ACT 2000: REF 0333-11**

Thank you for your e-mail of 24 March in which you requested, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA or Act), information about British passport applications processed at our missions in India.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) holds information relevant to your request. I will respond to your questions in turn.

*1 and 2. How many Adult First-Time Applications for British Passports have been MADE/REFUSED in British High Commission in New delhi since BNA-1981 came in to force on 01.01.1983?*

The FCO does not hold records on the number of issued passports dating back to 1983. In addition, the BRIT (Biometric Recognition Information Technology) database, which has been used to issue British passports overseas since 2006, does not have a reporting facility that allows us to extract data on the number of passports issued at a specific UK mission overseas. The same applies to the database that pre-dates BRIT. This is because the systems are only designed to extract the information that is vital to our operation. The only way to obtain the information you have requested would be to manually search individual records. The same applies to extracting data relating to the numbers of refused applications.

Under Section 12 FOIA, Public Authorities such as the FCO are not obliged to comply with requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would be likely to exceed 'an appropriate limit'. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For a central government department such as the FCO, the appropriate limit is set at £600. This figure represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3½ working days in determining whether the government department concerned holds the information, and to find, retrieve and extract the relevant material. Given the large body of work which would have to be carried out to find the information which you seek, the time taken to do this would exceed the cost limit under the Act.

### *3. On WHAT GROUNDS refusal was made?*

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office holds and uses data for purposes notified to the Information Commissioner under the Data Protection Act 1998 (which may be viewed at [www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)). Such personal data may be disclosed to other UK Government Departments and public authorities.

I refer to our answer above. We are unable to provide this information without conducting a manual search.

4. *How many Adult First-Time Applications for British Passports have been MADE in British Deputy High Commission in Chennai [Madras] South India in between 2005 and 01.07.2009?*

For the reasons explained above, we are unable to provide the data you have requested for our Deputy High Commission in Chennai.

However, we can provide the following data from the BRIT database for passports issued in the period 01/01/2006-01/07/2009 for our missions in New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai:

First time Adult 32-page passports-216

First time Adult 48-page passports-15

First time 'Look-a-like Adult 32-page-472

A 'Look-a-Like' passport is issued to all British nationals not entitled to the Common Format Passports (CFP), i.e. those with no Right of Abode in the UK:

British Overseas Citizens;  
British Overseas Territories citizens (though they may also be eligible to hold a BC passport);  
British Protected Persons;  
British Nationals (Overseas);  
British Subjects who do not have the right of abode in the UK;  
Unrepresented Commonwealth Citizens, with the approval of their Country's nearest representative

5. *.How many Adult First-Time Applications for British Passports have been REFUSED in British Deputy High Commission in Chennai [ Madras] South India in between 2005 and 01.07.2009 ?*

BRIT does not distinguish between refusals of adult and child applications. The only way of establishing the numbers would be to conduct a manual search of all applications refused in the period. Given the number of applications, this would exceed the cost limit under Section 12 the Act, as explained above.

5. *On WHAT GROUNDS refusal was made?*

The FCO does not hold centrally data about why passports applications are refused at our missions overseas. Such information could only be extracted by manually searching the records relating to all applications that have been refused. The cost limit under the Act, therefore, applies.

6. *In which, how many of them Muslim applications?*

Those applying for a British passport are not required to state their religion, so the FCO does not hold this information.

7. *In which, how many of them, PASSPORT FEE RETAINED, prior to Consular Fee Order 2008?*

We have assumed that your question relates to Chennai and for the period 2005-2008. Prior to 2008 passport fees were not retained and were always claimable by the applicant. Data on the number of refused applicants who had claimed/not claimed the passport fee is not held centrally and it is not, therefore, possible to determine how many applicants did not claim a refund without conducting a manual search. The time taken to do so would exceed the section 12 FOIA cost limit.

8. *In which, how many of them, PASSPORT FEE RETURNED to the applicant prior to Consular Fee Order 2008?*

I refer to our answer above. We are unable to provide the information on the number of refused applicants who had fees returned.

9. *In which, how many of them, PASSPORT FEE RETAINED, after the Consular Fee Order 2008?*

After the 2008, all fees for passport applications are retained. The only exception would be, for example, in the case of a child's application where there is an ongoing custody dispute. In such circumstances the application fee would be refunded and the application returned. The FCO does not keep statistics on the number of applications for which fees have been refunded. As above, the information could only be obtained by conducting a manual search of applications in the period and the time needed to do so would exceed the Section 12 FOIA cost limit.

10. *In which, how many of them, PASSPORT FEE RETURNED to the applicant after the Consular Fee Order 2008?*

As explained, there are no applications for which the fee would be returned, other than in the circumstances above.

11. *How long is the average process time taken to each Adult First-Time Applications by British High Commission?*

The average time taken to process first time passport applications, once all of the relevant documents have been received, is 12 weeks. Individual applications may, however, take more or less than the average time depending on the quality of documents provided, and how quickly the local authorities respond to the request for verification. The FCO does not keep statistics on the length of time taken to process the applications.

12. *How many Adult First-Time Applications for British Passports are still being processed and pending through PPT applications in British High Commission in New delhi, at present?*

There are currently 71 First Time Adult applications pending.

13. *Why Adult First-Time Applications submitted according to [ukinindia@fco.gov.uk](mailto:ukinindia@fco.gov.uk) instructions, with passport fees to the PPT applications, British High Commission, New delhi India has been returned to addressee without any reason or covering letter?*

Applications are returned if they are submitted without the full supporting documentation and processing fee.

14. *Why important original documents like Collegiate Mark sheets, School records Family photographs and Identity documents are RETAINED by the British High Commission?*

Documents are only retained in cases where the applicant has not provided the means for them to be returned or in cases where the application is refused on the grounds that it is fraudulent.

*15. Why British High Commission's correspondences sent to the applicants are only with illegible sign without their name printed?*

Consular officials at our High Commission are not required to provide their name on correspondence to members of the public.

I hope you are satisfied with this reply. If you have any queries about this letter, or are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and you wish to make a complaint or if you would like a review of our decision, please write to the Information Rights Team at The Old Admiralty Building, Room SG 120, London, SW1A 2PA. E-mail: [dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk](mailto:dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk). Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications. You have 40 working days to do so from the date this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (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.

We continually strive to improve our service, so we would welcome your feedback and comments. If you would like to provide feedback, please email our Information Rights Team at: [dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk](mailto:dp-foi.img@fco.gov.uk).

You can also find out more about the FCO and freedom of information issues at our Access to Information website: <http://foi.fco.gov.uk/en>

*Yours sincerely,*

*Louise Edwards*

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Strategy, Communications and Training Group