



الهيئة العامة للإحصاء  
General Authority for Statistics

## Freedom of Information Policy

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## Abbreviations:

Abbreviations	Description
GASTAT	General Authority for Statistics

## Key Terminologies:

Term	Description
Policy	Freedom of Information Policy
Public entities	Any independent governmental or public entity or affiliates thereof in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, any company runs, operates, or maintains public utilities or national infrastructure, or renders public service related to management of these public utilities or national infrastructure shall be deemed as a public entity.
Other entities	Authorities, companies, and entities to which the State contributes.
Information	Data that are handled through tabulation, analysis or summarization or any other method to become relevant to the statistical areas and does not identify the statistical unit.
Indicators	Data or information that are usually calculated based on mathematical equations.
Metadata	Information that describes the data and its characteristics, including business, technical and operational data.
Requestor	Any public or private sector entity, or any individual that requests access to data.

## Objectives:

- Clarify the freedom of information policy to enhance the culture of freedom of information and the principle of transparency.
- Regulate procedures for the freedom of data and information exchange, to serve public entities, the private sector, and individuals.
- Enhance integration and connectivity with customers in data freedom, which contributes to supporting studies and research.

## Applicability and scope of work:

- The Basic Principles and Guidelines for Freedom of Information apply to all requests from individuals to view or obtain public - unprotected - data and information produced by GASTAT - whatever its source, form or nature - and this includes paper records, emails, and information stored on computers or audio tapes, video, maps, photographs, manuscripts, handwritten documents, or any other form of recorded information.
- These guidelines do not apply to the following protected data and information:
  1. Information that, if disclosed would harm the state's national security, policy, interests, or rights.
  2. Military and security information.
  3. Information and documents obtained by an agreement with another country and classified as protected.
  4. Inquiries, investigations, seizures, inspections, and surveillance in relate to a crime, violation or threat.
  5. Information that includes recommendations, suggestions, or consultations for issuing a governmental legislation or decision that is yet to be issued.
  6. Commercial, industrial, financial, or economic Information that, if disclosed would result in gaining profits or avoiding losses in an illegal manner.
  7. Scientific or technological researches, or rights that enclose an intellectual property right that, if disclosed would lead to an infringement of an incorporeal right.
  8. Information in relate to competitions, bids, and auctions that, if disclosed would violate the competition fairness.
  9. Information that can be confidential or personal under other applicable laws and regulations or that requires certain legal action to be accessed or obtained.

## Policy and Principles:

### Transparency:

An individual shall have the right to access information related to the activities of GASTAT to enhance the system of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

### **Necessity and proportionality:**

Any restrictions on obtaining or requesting access to protected information received, produced, or handled by the authority shall be justified clearly and explicitly.

### **Public information should be available:**

Everyone has the right to access public - unprotected - information. The requestor does not need to have a particular reason or interest in this information to obtain it so as not to be exposed to any legal liability related to this right.

### **Equality:**

All requests by individuals to access or obtain public information shall be dealt with on an equal and non-discriminatory basis.

### **Contracting:**

When contracting with other entities - such as companies that perform public services - GASTAT must annually verify the compliance of other parties with these basic principles and guiding rules in accordance with the mechanisms and procedures specified by GASTAT, provided that this includes any subsequent contracts made by other parties.

### **Rights of individuals to access or obtain public information:**

1. The right to access and obtain any information not protected by any public entity.
2. The right to know the reason for refusing to access or obtain the required information.
3. The right to appeal against the decision of refusing the request to access or obtain the required information.

### **Main steps for requesting access, obtaining public information, or filing a complaint:**

- Requests are submitted by filling out a “general information request form” – electronic or paper – and submitting it to the entity that has the information.

- Within a specified period of time (30 days) from receiving the request to access or obtain public information, GASTAT shall take one of the following decisions:
  1. **Approval:** If GASTAT approves the request to access or obtain information in whole or in part, the individual must be notified in writing or electronically of the applicable fees, and GASTAT must make this information available to the individual within a period of time not exceeding (10) working days from receiving the amount.
  2. **Rejection:** If the request to access or obtain information is denied, it must be provided in writing or electronically and the following information should be included:
    - Determine whether the request was rejected in whole or in part.
    - Reasons for rejection, if applicable.
    - Inform the requestor of the right to file a complaint against this rejection and the process to do so.
  3. **Extension:** If the request for access to information cannot be processed in the specified time, GASTAT shall extend the period in which the response will be given by a reasonable period depending on the size and nature of the requested information – for example, not exceeding (30) additional days – and provide the individual with the following information:
    - Notice of extension and the date the request is expected to be completed.
    - Reasons for delay.
    - Inform the requestor of the right to file a complaint against this extension and the process to do so.
  4. **Notice:** If the required information is available on GASTAT’s website, or if it is not within its remit, the individual must be notified in writing or electronically, provided that it includes the following information:
    - The type of notice, for example, the required data are available on GASTAT’s website, or it is not within its remit.
    - Inform the requestor of the right to file a complaint against this notice and the process to do so.
- If the individual wishes to file a complaint against the rejection of the request by GASTAT, he/she can file the complaint in writing or electronically, and GASTAT shall take the necessary measures in accordance with its internal policies.

### **Freedom of information and open data:**

Open data programs and policies are usually prepared and developed to support the national economic and innovation agenda. Undoubtedly, availability and dissemination of a specific set of public information for researchers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and start-ups helps to create an environment conducive to business

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growth and indicates an open and transparent systems. Open data programs and policies are also a proactive step by the entities in maintaining the right to access public information by making available or publishing a specific set of information - such as open data - before requesting access to or obtaining it. Thus, effective open data programs and policies reduce the volume of requests to access public information, therefore, reducing government expenditures related to processing requests.

