
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Simon Palmer
Director of Home Office Analysis and Insight
(by email)

17 November 2021

Dear Simon

Transparency of statistics related to small boat crossings

I am writing to you about the public use of statistics on small boat crossings which are not already included as part of an existing publication or ad-hoc release.

Migrant English Channel crossings are an area of strong public interest. There have been quotes from Ministers and widespread media coverage, including regular [BBC reports](#), quoting the Home Office as the source of figures. The Home Secretary [recently commented](#) on the demographics of the individuals making small boat crossings in a Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee oral evidence session and last year the then Minister for Immigration Compliance [quoted](#) the number of people crossing in oral evidence to the Commons Home Affairs Committee. There is also an [open inquiry](#) by the Home Affairs Committee. In a recent oral evidence session for this committee, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State [quoted](#) the number of people arriving in small boats this year.

The current approach to the release of figures on migrant crossings does not meet our expectations, as set out in our statement on [data transparency](#). These figures should be published in an accessible form, with context and sources clearly explained. Making the statistics equally accessible to all supports the public's confidence in the data and government decision-making more generally, which is particularly important when discussing areas of high importance and interest.

It is good that you have plans to develop and publish a comprehensive report on migrant boat crossings, but work to ensure that all the underlying data is properly assured might mean this will not be published until February 2022. However, given the continued interest in and use of these data, you should publish aggregate numbers of arrivals sooner. In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics' trustworthiness pillar, I would also urge you to make your plans for the new report on migrant boat crossings public, including pre-announcing the publication date. Additionally, where unpublished data are referred to unexpectedly, this information should be published as soon as possible after any statement has been made with any limitations clearly set out.

I know that you take these concerns very seriously and I look forward to continuing positive engagement with your team on this matter.

I am copying this letter to Jon Simmons (Head of Protection, Irregular Migration and Asylum Analysis and Migration Statistics), Bex Newell (Head of Migration Statistics) and Amy Baxter (Acting Head of Profession for Statistics).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ed Humpherson

Director General for Regulation