



20 September 2024

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2024/00742

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 22 August in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Medical Research Council (MRC), The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Innovate UK, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

For each of the above 4 councils for 2023 please may I have:

- (1) The total amount granted for research involving, the use of live animals, licenced under ASPA 1986.*
- (2) The amounts granted to develop human relevant research which would reduce/replace the use of animals.*
- (3) The amounts granted and the number of grants specifically where, in full or part, the less commonly used species of dogs are used or are intended to be used.*
- (4) The amounts granted and the number of grants specifically where, in full or part, the less commonly used species of Non- Human Primates are used or are intended to be used. Please may I have the figures for each of the years 2021 - 2023.*

If any on your other councils grant money for research under ASPA 1986 please can I also have figures as above for 2023.

Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds some information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

We have identified that the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) also grant funding awards for activities captured by ASPA 1986, therefore have included relevant responses to each question below. Details of NERC's approach to the use of animals in research is available [here](https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/nerc/our-policies-and-standards/approach-to-the-use-of-animals-in-research/)¹.

- (1) The total amount granted for research involving, the use of live animals, licenced under ASPA 1986.*

The information regarding the amount granted for research involving animals for MRC, EPSRC, Innovate UK (IUK), BBSRC and NERC can be found below. Please note that this is not the specific cost of research involving animals, but the total cost of these grants, of which the use of animals may be only one aspect of the proposed research. The figures are of all grants involving the use of animals, including the use of live animals and research that uses animal samples, for example, animal tissues.

¹ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/nerc/our-policies-and-standards/approach-to-the-use-of-animals-in-research/>

MRC:

In calendar year 2023, the total amount of grants made by MRC that involved the use of animals was approximately £176 million. In addition, MRC provided £64 million of funding to programmes involving animals in MRC institutes, units and centres.

EPSRC:

During calendar year 2023, EPSRC authorised £10.4 million in grant funding to projects that involved the use of animals.

Innovate UK:

IUK began capturing information on animal testing in November 2023, therefore do not hold data for the whole of calendar year 2023. We can confirm that no funding was provided during the months of November and December 2023 to projects that involved the use of animals.

BBSRC:

In line with our previous response to you on this subject, [FOI2023/00079](#)², BBSRC funding information is recorded by financial year. £37.8 million funding was granted to projects involving the use of animals in 2022/23 and £39 million in 2023/24.

NERC:

In calendar year 2023, NERC have recorded £4.8 million of funding being awarded to grants that involved the use of animals.

Please note that during 2023, UKRI have begun developing and testing a new grant application system. This system currently captures the use of animals in projects differently to the previous grant application system and does not currently feed this information through into databases that can be queried in the same way. As such, there may be a small number of grants that involve the use of animals that were not captured in the above data. This system is still in development and capturing data on animal use in a structured format that makes it fully available for queries is on the development roadmap.

(2) The amounts granted to develop human relevant research which would reduce/replace the use of animals.

UKRI encourages the development of new methodologies in all areas of health research and directly funds the development of non-animal technologies both through research council-specific funding opportunities and by its core funding commitment to the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animal Research (NC3Rs). MRC and BBSRC provide the core funding to NC3Rs, currently at approximately £10 million per year.

The replacement, refinement and reduction (3Rs) principles are embedded in all research within UKRI's remit that may involve animal use, with all animal research funded by BBSRC, EPSRC, MRC and NERC required to integrate and report on the principles of the 3Rs. More details on the reporting of animal use in funded projects can be found [here](#)³.

Furthermore, opportunities to develop the 3Rs may sometimes arise from research during the course of a project, even if this was not anticipated at the project's outset. These occurrences are captured in evaluations of the funded research through the Researchfish platform.

To note, all research funded by MRC is targeted toward improving human health and therefore is 'human relevant'. However, much of BBSRC's work has relevance to the whole animal kingdom, for example veterinary research. As such, focusing on "human relevant research" is not the sole priority when considering replacement, reduction and refinement.

² <https://ukri.disclosurelog.co.uk/disclosures/69f22546-5b6e-43f3-ba34-00413835cdc7>

³ <https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/reporting-your-projects-outcomes/additional-funder-questions/#:~:text=by%20the%20award.-,Animal%20use,-This%20section%20is>

MRC:

MRC is unable to provide figures for the amounts granted towards replacement or reduction of the use of animals, as grants are not selectively categorised in this way.

EPSRC:

In calendar year 2023, approximately £14.3 million in funding was granted to reduce/replace the use of animals by EPSRC. Please note that EPSRC also do not categorise grants in this way, but it was possible to identify this information from a manual search due to the makeup of the EPSRC portfolio, as such this figure is considered to be reasonable estimate.

Innovate UK:

Data on projects that are specifically developing replacements for the use of animals is not collated by IUK, however £3.8 million core funding is allocated from the Grant Funding Agreement to the Medicines Discovery Catapult, which is directed towards the development of platform technologies that would replace the use of animals.

BBSRC:

BBSRC's direct spend on research supporting the 3Rs for 2022/23 was £2 million, and £2.7 million in 2023/24.

NERC:

This information is not captured in a way that enables NERC to provide figures for the amounts granted towards replacement or reduction of the animals.

(3) The amounts granted and the number of grants specifically where, in full or part, the less commonly used species of dogs are used or are intended to be used.

MRC:

During calendar year 2023, MRC granted funding of £4.2 million to projects involving the use of dogs.

In answering your request, we considered the risks of being able to identify individual grants from small numbers in combination with the total amount of funding providing. Therefore, in line with standard statistical reporting practice, the data you have requested has been suppressed to mitigate against the identification of specific grants under the exemption at Section 38(1)(b) of the FOIA, where disclosure would, or would be likely to endanger the safety of any individual.

Further details on the application of Section 38 are included below.

We can therefore confirm that in 2023, there were between 1 and 4 projects funded by MRC that involved the use of dogs.

EPSRC:

No grants were funded by EPSRC during calendar year 2023 that involved the use of dogs.

Innovate UK:

IUK does not hold this data.

BBSRC:

In financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24 BBSRC did not fund any research grants involving dogs that also required a license under ASPA 1986. BBSRC supports a broad scope of research projects relating to dogs, some of which may have applications benefiting dog health for example, veterinary applications. Details of these grants can be found directly on [UKRI's Gateway to Research](https://gtr.ukri.org/)⁴.

NERC:

There were no NERC funded grants within 2023 that indicated the use of dogs.

⁴ <https://gtr.ukri.org/>

(4) The amounts granted and the number of grants specifically where, in full or part, the less commonly used species of Non- Human Primates are used or are intended to be used. Please may I have the figures for each of the years 2021 - 2023.

MRC:

MRC provided funding of £6.5 million to projects that involved the use of non-human primates in calendar year 2021. In 2022, £2.7 million funding was granted. During 2023, no grants were funded by MRC that involved the use of non-human primates.

As above, under the exemption at Section 38(1)(b) of the FOIA, we are suppressing the number of grants that these amounts relate to. We can confirm that in both 2021 and 2022, there were between 1 and 4 projects funded by MRC that involved the use of non-human primates.

EPSRC:

No grants were funded by EPSRC during calendar years 2021, 2022 or 2023 that involved the use of non-human primates.

Innovate UK:

IUK does not hold this data.

BBSRC:

In financial year 2021/22, BBSRC awarded grants to the value of £0.4 million to projects that indicated the use of non-human primates. During 2022/23 this amount was £1.3 million, and £1.9 million in 2023/24.

In 2022/23 and 2023/24 this funding was received by 5 grants each financial year.

As noted above, under Section 38(1)(b) of the FOIA, we are suppressing the number of grants awarded for 2021/22. We are able to confirm that this funding amount was awarded to between 1 and 4 projects.

NERC:

There were no NERC funded grants during 2023 that indicated the use of live non-human primates.

Section 38 – Health and Safety

We consider that releasing the number of grants that involved the use of dogs or non-human primates, when it relates to fewer than 5 projects, falls under the exemption at Section 38(1)(b) of the FOIA, where disclosure would, or would be likely to endanger the safety of any individual.

To explain further, we believe that releasing the exact number of projects, in combination with the amount of funding that these grants collectively received and additional publicly available information (e.g. whether a university has large animal facilities), would make these projects identifiable and in doing so would likely risk the safety of the researchers involved.

Section 38 is a qualified exemption and requires UKRI to consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in its disclosure.

Public interest in favour of disclosure

- It would further the understanding and participation in the public debate on issues concerning the use of animals in research.
- It would promote accountability and transparency by public authorities for decisions taken with regard to public expenditure.
- It would promote accountability and transparency in allowing individuals, organisations and other bodies to understand decisions made by public authorities about research involving animals.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- The disclosure of information relating to research organisations or individuals may put at risk the safety of individuals associated with any relevant research.
- Disclosure of the identified information would make it available to individuals or organisations that may use this information to disrupt research or operations being conducted, or to target individuals or groups of suppliers by subjecting them to either physical harm or verbal harassment.
- UKRI has an obligation to protect information that may endanger the safety of individuals and organisations and ensure there is no harm from the release of grant information.
- Disclosure is likely to draw attention that is unwarranted, stressful, or harmful to individuals that would be likely to endanger their safety.

We have concluded, taking the above arguments into consideration, that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure therefore the information is exempt from disclosure.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact within the next 40 working days:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints policy](#)⁵.

Yours sincerely,


Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

⁵ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>