

Introduction

Whitehall Monitor aims to chart government – using data to analyse the size, shape and performance of Whitehall and present it in an understandable, compelling and useful way.

We use open data published by government, Parliament and a few other sources to look at everything from how big each government department's budget is and how many staff it employs to how much legislation it has been responsible for and how many written parliamentary questions it has answered on time. As well as providing a valuable snapshot of what government is, what it looks like and some of the many things it does, we hope to show how well it does its job and how this has changed. In so doing, we hope to provide the evidence and the impetus to make government more effective.

This is the second *Whitehall Monitor* annual report. We also publish more frequent analysis as and when data is issued at www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/our-work/whitehall-monitor.

About the report

The report is divided into three broad sections, which each consist of a number of chapters:

- **Inputs** are the resources that political and civil service leaders have at their disposal, including budgets and people.
- **Outputs** are what government departments do with those resources and how they manage them, for example legislation, contracting and arm's-length bodies.
- **Outcomes** are the real-world impacts of those outputs – the actual difference made by government departments on the ground.

The front page of each chapter summarises its key findings and also introduces the relevant datasets. The website links at the foot of each chapter page will take you to the dataset in full, allowing you to see, analyse and visualise the data for yourself. These links will also take you to any previous *Whitehall Monitor* blogposts or bulletins on the same or similar subjects. There is an Endnotes section at the end of the report for chapter notes.

This report went to press in early November 2014. In some cases, more recent data will have been published. Again, the links for each chapter will take you to analysis of any such data.



Why Whitehall matters

Whitehall, London SW1, is the street connecting Westminster with Trafalgar Square and the restaurants, bars and other attractions of the West End.

But, lined with government departments such as the Treasury, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health, it is also the street connecting the political decisions of government and Parliament with the rest of the country and with people's everyday lives. What happens in Whitehall, therefore, matters.

Whitehall Monitor aims to provide a way of thinking about government that can allow us to judge its effectiveness – through inputs (the resources Whitehall has available to it), outputs (how government departments manage those resources) and outcomes (the real-world impact of what government departments do).

Within this framework, we consider the size (budget and staff numbers) of departments; their diversity, stability of leadership and engagement; how they manage their resources (whether directly or through arrangements including contracting and arm's-length bodies); what they do with them (such as legislation and responding to political and public enquiries); how they measure their performance; and how much of a difference their policies and reforms make in the real world.

In so doing, we define 'Whitehall' as a collection of 16 central ministerial departments and one non-ministerial department (HM Revenue and Customs, or HMRC). The term does not refer only to London SW1, the geographic Whitehall, but to the departments as they operate around the UK. Where possible, we try to focus on the core department managed by and interacting directly with the leaders of the department, both on the political side (secretaries of state and junior ministers) and on the civil service side (the permanent secretary).

This isn't always possible – not all data distinguishes between the core and the rest – and so we sometimes examine the whole departmental group, which includes arm's-length bodies and other agencies. In some of our analysis, for example government reshuffles, we will also include other government departments (such as the Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales Offices), but in every case, these will be clearly introduced.

We hope that this second *Whitehall Monitor* annual report will provide a useful and usable snapshot of government in graphics, showing the shape, size and performance of Whitehall and (where possible) how it has changed since 2010.

Why open data and transparency matter

The commitment of the Coalition and the previous Labour government to open data and transparency means the UK is now seen as a global leader in the field.

But why does it matter? The present Government has outlined three aims for open data: greater accountability and democracy (allowing citizens to hold government to account); economic and social growth (companies can use open data to build products and feed growth); and more efficient public services (helping government and the taxpayer get a better deal and better services).

In publishing *Whitehall Monitor*, we hope we are contributing to better democracy, allowing the public, journalists and others to see how government works and what it is possible to do with government data. But we hope it can also lead to better public services and more effective government; our hope is that departmental leaders can learn from others and understand their own department better.

In the past year we have seen advances in how particular datasets are published and used by government (including financial data and Permanent Secretary Objectives). There are, however, still improvements government can make, which we address in the Executive Summary and throughout this report.

Nevertheless, with this annual report, we are in a better position than ever to analyse how government operates and performs using the data it publishes. And the more that people use government data, the better and more useful it will become.