**ANNEX A**

**FOI DOF/2026-0500**

**Request**

**RE: SYSTEMIC APPLICANT OUTCOMES BY DEMOGRAPHIC**

This request relates strictly to anonymised, aggregated statistical data regarding the initial online psychometric/aptitude screening tests utilised in recent Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) General Service recruitment competitions. Specifically, I am requesting data for the following competitions:

1. **Staff Officer (SO)** General Service Recruitment Competition (most recent external/internal volume campaign).

2. **Deputy Principal (DP)** General Service Recruitment Competition (most recent external/internal volume campaign).

Please provide the following information held by the Department of Finance and/or HRConnect:

1. The total number of applicants who registered for and sat the initial online test stages for both the SO and DP competitions.

2. A statistical breakdown of the pass/fail rates (or progression rates to the next stage) for these initial online tests, categorised by the following demographic groups:

   a) Age bands: 16-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-54, 55-59, and 60+.
   b) Gender: Male and Female.
   c) Candidate Status: Internal NICS candidates versus External candidates.
   d) Intersectional data: The pass rates, fail rates, or progression rates of candidates within each of the age bands listed above, cross-referenced and broken down by:
      - Internal versus External candidate status; and
      - Male versus Female candidates

   e) please include data for internal female candidates within the following age bands: 50-54, 55-59 and 60+.

3. Equality, Adverse Impact and Validation Information

   Copies of any:
   - Adverse Impact Analyses;
   - Equality Monitoring Reports;
   - Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs);
   - Equality screening exercises;
   - Test validation reviews; or

- Other documented considerations relating to age, sex, or internal/external candidate status undertaken by the Department or conducted by the test providers regarding these testing exercises, including any undertaken before or after implementation of the online tests, or otherwise relating to the performance of older candidates, female candidates and internal staff.

Where the exact breakdown requested is not available, please provide the closest available aggregated data held in recorded form.

To ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, I am exclusively requesting aggregated, anonymised statistics. No personally identifiable information is requested, and the large pool size of these volume competitions precludes any risk of identifying individual applicants.

If any part of this request is withheld under an exemption, please provide the specific exemption cited and details of the public interest test applied, while releasing all other non-exempt information.

**DoF response**

I can confirm the department holds some of the information requested.

1 & 2. The information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption, and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. By applying Section 22 Exemption of the FOI Act, we are required to carry out a Public Interest Test. This can be found attached as a separate document (Annex C).

3. Specific reports are not held but tests have been developed on the basis of the competency framework, job descriptions, documents used by incumbents in their work and interviews with incumbents and their managers. It is therefore designed to have content validity built in. The Management Decisions uses scenarios generated by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) i.e. incumbents and managers, and scoring keys are developed with them. Generalisable Validity is used for numerical and Critical Thinking/Reasoning tests along with convergent and divergent validity analysis.

All exercises are designed with diversity in mind, using content that is relevant and realistic (hence content and face valid) but not requiring any knowledge of the work so that external candidates, and those groups under-represented in the organisation, are not disadvantaged. Materials are reviewed by Diversity Panels (people from outside the organisation of diverse background to identify if there is anything in the content that is less appropriate to any groups).