



Office for
Statistics Regulation

Regulatory Guidance

Publishing official statistics and National Statistics

**Answering some frequently asked
questions**

First released: October 2018

Updated: December 2018 with clarification of section:
'Sharing official statistics and other statistics prior to release'

Publishing official statistics and National Statistics

Here are some answers to questions we have received about publishing official statistics in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

If you have any questions you would like answered, please email regulation@statistics.gov.uk.

Contact: Penny Babb, Head of Policy and Standards, Office for Statistics Regulation.

Topics covered:

- [Pre-announcing the release of statistics](#)
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- [Sharing official and other statistics prior to release](#)
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Pre-announcing the release of statistics

Do we have to list our statistical outputs on the release calendar on GOV.UK or can we use our own calendar?

The key issue is about being transparent about the forthcoming release of your statistics. Ideally consider using GOV.UK or other central release calendar (in addition to your own website), as the overriding consideration is to ensure that the range of your users and potential users is aware of forthcoming publications. [Practice T3.1]

What if I need to delay, postpone or stop publishing my statistics?

Central to maintaining public confidence in official statistics is keeping users informed in a timely way about changes to publication dates, giving reasons for the delay or deferment. [Practice 3.1]

Decisions on whether to cease the publication of official statistics should be made openly, involving users in the process. This final decision should be authorised by the Head of Profession for Statistics. [Practices T2.1, T3.2, and V1.6]

The Head of Profession for Statistics may wish to seek the advice of the National Statistician and Director General for Regulation when considering the cessation of statistics. The Director General should be contacted when you have concerns about meeting the principles of the Code. [Practice 2.8]

Think about the impact a change, delay or cessation would have on the public value of official statistics, and ensure that known users' needs are considered. It may be that the decision is based on the limited value of the existing statistics, for example, if another source better meets user needs or if the needs change. [Practice V1.6]

Labelling the status of the statistics

How should we make clear the status of the statistics, particularly as we move to publish in a digital form rather than in PDF bulletins?

To build public confidence in statistics, users need to understand the provenance of the information. The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* requires official statistics producers to show the designation as National Statistics when the statistics have been so assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. The designation is shown by using the National Statistics logo.

Consider the design of your website or release to clearly show when the statistics are designated as National Statistics.

For example, **ISD Scotland of NHS National Services Scotland** has developed a new web publication for its [acute hospital activity statistics](#).

ISD Scotland better information, better decisions, better health Back to ISD Website

Acute Hospital Activity & NHS Beds Data Release

Transforming Publications 

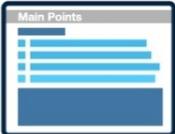
Home > Home

Beta publication: From March 2018 onwards, this new version has replaced the previous format and is the sole release of the Quarterly Acute Hospital Activity and NHS Beds data.

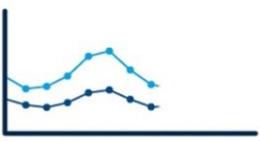
Data summary

Published: 26 June 2018
Next publication: 30 October 2018

An overview of the latest data



Trend data



See the data over time

Data explorer



Explore and visualise more data

Data files



Access the files from this data release

Glossary



Definitions of terms used in this data release

[Questions this data](#) [Official data release](#) [How this data is used](#) [Contact us](#)

Department for Work and Pensions publishes official statistics on the [income-related benefits](#) and makes clear that they are official statistics.



Department for Work & Pensions

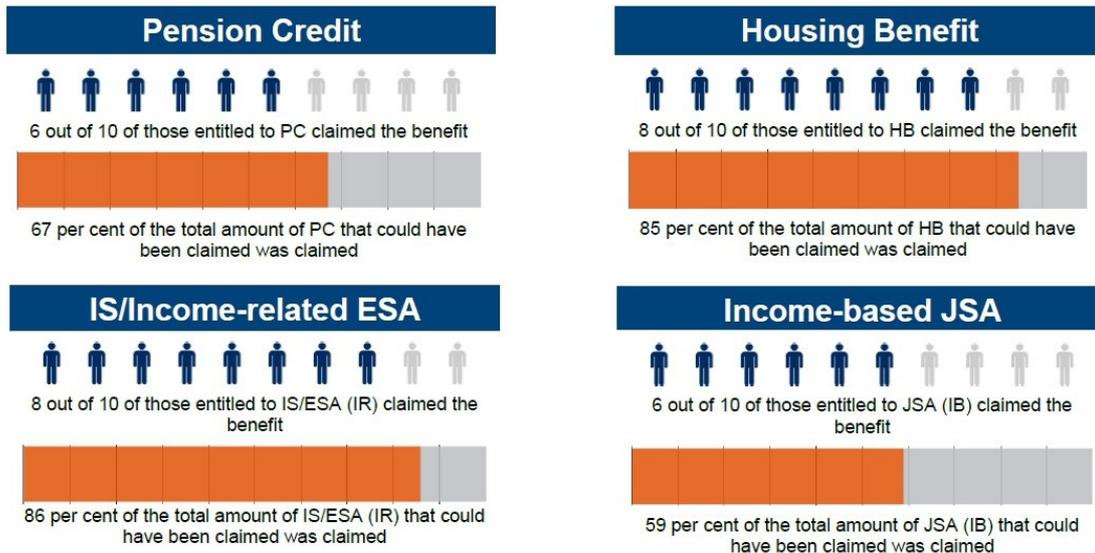
Income-Related Benefits: Estimates of Take-up

Data for financial year 2015/16

Official Statistics

Annual
Published: 14 September 2017
Great Britain

This report looks at estimates of take-up for the main income-related benefits. These are Pension Credit (PC), Housing Benefit (HB), Income Support/Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (IS/ESA (IR)) and Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA (IB)). Take-up refers to the receipt of benefits someone is entitled to and we estimate take-up in two ways, by numbers of people who claim these benefits ('caseload') and by the amount these people claim ('expenditure').



Statistical releases can include both official statistics and National Statistics. For example, compendia releases may present relevant official statistics, experimental statistics, and statistics for other countries. It is important to help users appreciate the status of each set of statistics. In this example, **DWP** makes clear the different statuses of its [benefit statistics](#).

About these statistics

The statistics are released quarterly in February, May, August and November and are primarily sourced from data originally collected via administrative systems. All are National Statistics **except** Personal Independence Payments (which are official statistics), and Universal Credit, Benefit Combinations and Bereavement Support statistics (which are experimental). Further information is available [here](#).

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Where non-official statistics or data are published, it is helpful for users if the status of the data, relevant links, and brief explanations are given. For example, **Ofsted** publishes

[management information](#) releases on its [inspections of children's homes](#) and provides a clear notice about the status of the data sets.

Management Information	
Policy area:	Children's homes inspections and outcomes
Theme:	Education, children's services and skills
Published on:	18 September 2018
Coverage:	England
Period covered:	1 April 2018 to 30 June 2018
Status:	Provisional: Management Information
Statistician:	Adam King
Statistician's telephone number:	0300 013 0020
Public enquiries:	enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Press enquiries:	pressenquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Publication medium:	Ofsted website
Publication frequency:	Quarterly

Ofsted also provides an overall [schedule](#) for the release of its management information and official statistics:

Schedule for the release of children's homes inspection outcomes management information and official statistics

Month	Release
March	Management Information: Inspections between 1 October and 31 December, as at March
June	<i>No release of management information</i>
July	Official Statistics: Inspections between April and March, based on data as at early May
July	Management Information: Inspections between 1 January and 31 March, as at June
September	Management Information: Inspections between 1 April and 30 June, as at September
December	Official Statistics: Inspections between April and September, based on data as at early November
December	Management Information: Inspections between 1 July and 30 September, as at December

Sharing official statistics and other statistics prior to release

Is it OK for us to share data or statistics with a key stakeholder, for example, for quality assurance of the estimates or to input into a project, and to release to the public later?

When preparing some **official statistics** for publication, the statistics can be shared for quality assurance purposes, such as sense checking the method or the data. The legislation requires that accurate records are maintained of those who receive the statistics. [Practice T3.3]

The *Pre-release Access Orders* for each administration allow for information to be shared ahead of publication when it is needed to produce other official statistics that will be published at the same time or shortly afterwards.

Ensure that anyone with access prior to publication is clear about their role and the need to prevent any disclosure – any indication of the statistics or messages they convey. This will typically restrict access to named individuals within teams and may affect the way they work with their colleagues during that access period. [Practice T3.4]

Unpublished data, such as management information from administrative sources or provisional/uncleaned survey data, can be shared on a restricted basis for operational purposes on a strictly need-to-know basis. Clear guidance should be provided with the data to ensure everyone receiving the information understands how they should handle it. Publishing this kind of information also should be conducted in an orderly way, ensuring equality of access on release; otherwise, confidence in the official statistics will be harmed.

Statistics producers may undertake other analytical activities, producing statistics that are **not official statistics** but that may be published, such as statistical research projects. When considering sharing this kind of information prior to publication, it is important to think through the nature of the involvement of the stakeholders, such as other departments. Anticipate the role of the stakeholders, being clear about what information you need to share and why. Plan from the outset the points at which information will be shared and how it will be protected. Be transparent in your plans about the role of the stakeholders and the nature of any data sharing. [Practices T6.3 and T6.4]

Be open about the point at which the statistics will be released publicly and in what form. [Practices T3.1 and T3.5]

Publishing ad hoc statistics releases

How should we handle ad hoc statistics?

It is important to provide fair and equal access to both regular and ad hoc official statistics. [Practices V2.1, T2.1 and T3.1]

The [National Statistician's guidance on management information and official statistics](#) sets out the standards for ad hoc statistics releases (see the Annex):

All ad hoc statistical releases should:

- i. be clearly labelled as official statistics;
- ii. be accompanied by an explanation as to why the release is being published;
- iii. ideally be pre-announced, even if this is literally only a day or two ahead of publication (in exceptional circumstances even a few hours' pre-announcement can help prepare users);
- iv. include commentary that draws out the main messages in the statistics in a way that the non-expert user can reasonably be expected to understand. This should include reference to the policy or operational context relevant to the statistics, and new information or insights provided by the statistics; and
- v. include, or link to, information about methods and quality.

Where your department decides to release ad hoc statistics or other data such as management information as non-official statistics, we strongly recommend that you voluntarily apply the Code. For example, MHCLG has voluntarily adopted the Code in publishing its monthly data for the [building safety programme](#). It provides a statement of compliance in each bulletin describing its approach to achieving *Trustworthiness, Quality and Value*.

Revisions and corrections

How should we handle revisions and corrections under Code 2.0?

Confidence in the independence and integrity of statistics producers is encouraged by being open about decision making, so be transparent about your approach to scheduled revisions and unscheduled corrections. Publish your policy. Release revisions and corrections as soon as is practicable, prominently announcing their release. [Practice T3.9]

When considering a correction, you will need to apply appropriate professional judgement to determine whether the impact is sufficient to merit publishing the amendment. This decision needs to be consistent with your organisation's revisions and corrections policy. It will guide you in deciding the seriousness of the errors in relation to the public interest of the statistics. If necessary, seek the advice and guidance of your Head of Profession. [Practices T2.3 and T5.6]

For corrections, you need to issue the statement and amendment as quickly as you reasonably can with a clear notice about the changes. Alert users and potential users to the corrections. Try to anticipate the impact the changes will make on users' decisions and try to advise how to mitigate that impact.

Where the revisions are scheduled, treat them as other official statistics and pre-announce their publication date in the release calendar. [Practice T3.1]

Be sure to explain clearly the scale, nature, cause and impact of the changes in the statistics. [Practice Q3.4]