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(by email)

19 May 2022

Dear Senior Statistician

Hate motivation in Northern Ireland statistics

We recently reviewed the Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI) [Hate Motivation Statistics](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Hate crime is a sensitive and high-profile topic that has received increased public attention in recent years. Hate crime statistics are valuable because they tell us how common behaviour motivated by hostility or prejudice is – an indication of how tolerant of diversity our society is. As such, we decided to review the relevant statistics across the UK against the Code. We also reviewed the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service's (COPFS) [statistics on hate crime in Scotland](#), and the Home Office's [statistics on hate crime in England and Wales](#). We spoke to a handful of users of the statistics, to hear their views on trustworthiness, quality and value.

We found many positives in the statistics, particularly around the level of breakdowns available and the clarity and insight of the context and explanations. Other positives include:

- A close working relationship with policy teams and appointing a hate crime lead who works on external user engagement ensures the statistics continue to meet users' needs and add value.
- Having access to the system where data are stored allows data to be quality assured at an early stage of the process and PSNI takes advantage of this to ensure that the quality of the data coming out the system is high. This contributes to the quality of the statistical outputs.
- The background information is clear and useful, in particular the descriptions of the perception test, the contrast and different strengths and limitations between the recorded crime statistics and the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey results, and the comparison with the approach taken in England and Wales. This adds insight and supports user understanding and interpretation of the statistics.
- A [data development log](#) is maintained that details proposed changes to existing data sources or new data sources that have been identified for all PSNI statistics. This is a simple yet effective way to increase transparency and trustworthiness of the statistics.

- The statistics release calendar uses open data star measures to give an indication of the accessibility and usability of the different outputs.

We identified several areas where the trustworthiness, quality and value of the statistics could be enhanced:

- While there are some excellent examples of user engagement, certain aspects of user engagement could be improved. For example, the biennial user survey, which asks users about their satisfaction with all PSNI statistical outputs, including the hate motivation statistics, was last carried out in 2018. To ensure that the statistics remain relevant and continue to meet user needs, you should restart the user survey. The [user feedback document](#), which helpfully highlights the actions your team have taken in response to specific pieces of user feedback, has not been updated since 2014. To enhance transparency and trustworthiness it is important that such information is regularly updated.
- The [user guide to police recorded crime statistics for Northern Ireland](#) has not been updated since 2018. As the annual bulletin comments on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on trends, it would enhance user confidence if the user guide was updated to reflect how recent changes may have impacted data quality.
- Including population rates of hate motivations (incidents and crimes per 10,000 population) is useful because it controls for changes in the population size over time. However, the source of the population estimates should be described in each publication where these appear. The methodology document should also either discuss the strengths and limitations of these estimates or direct users to the existing data quality report produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. This will aid user understanding of any limitations and help ensure the statistics are not misinterpreted.

When discussing these findings with your team, it became clear that some of the above issues had already been identified as areas for improvement by your team. Resource constraints were highlighted as the main reason they have not yet been addressed. As these statistics are key to understanding an important societal issue it is important that the team is sufficiently resourced to allow these statistics to continue to deliver quality and value for users.

Thank you to your team for their positive engagement during this review. We look forward to continuing to engage with you and the team and we hope that the above helps inform the further development of this publication.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further or if we can offer further assistance.

Yours sincerely



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