

C. Code 3.0: Standards for Official Statistics

Proposal to inform Consultation question 3
The Standards for Official Statistics, set out specific statistical practices that those producing official statistics must follow. These Standards are most equivalent to the current Code 2.1. We believe these revised standards set out clearer and more-actionable requirements for official statistics producers, to better support them in producing and disseminating statistics that serve the public good.
Main Audience: For official statistics producers

Standards for Official Statistics

For official statistics producers

The Standards for Official Statistics describe the standards and practices that those producing official statistics must meet.

The Standards for Official Statistics are grounded in the core concepts of the Code of Practice – Trustworthiness, Quality and Value – and build on the **Guiding Principles from the Code**.

Good-practice guidance for each standard is available within the Code Hub.

Official statistics become **accredited official statistics** when they have been verified by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to meet these standards. Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and are required under the Act to continually meet the standards of the Code.

To ensure official statistics serve the public good:

1. Producers must behave with integrity, working and communicating in ethical, honest, objective and professional ways
2. Chief Statisticians/Heads of Profession for Statistics must have autonomy in deciding statistical methods and the content and timing of statistical releases
3. Producers must release statistics in an orderly way, at a standard time, and pre-announce the date and timing of the release
4. Producers must manage data and statistics safely and securely and encourage the provision of information by being open about how it will be used and protected
5. Chief Statisticians/Heads of Profession for Statistics must encourage a quality culture that promotes good practice and ensure their statistics will not materially mislead users
6. Producers must use suitable data sources and sound methods, and assure the quality of the statistics across the production and release processes, being open to innovate to keep statistics relevant and useful
7. Producers must prominently explain the quality of the statistics, including any strengths and limitations, and communicate the uncertainty in the estimates
8. Producers must put users at the centre of decision making about the statistics, listening to and acting on feedback, and be transparent about statistical planning
9. Producers must ensure the statistics are accessible and freely available to all
10. Producers must clearly present the statistics to support appropriate interpretation, collaborating with other producers and experts to develop fuller insight for key topics

Standards for Official Statistics with related practices

Trustworthiness

1. Producers must behave with integrity, working and communicating in ethical, honest, objective and professional ways

so that the public can have confidence in the behaviours of those involved in handling and using data and statistics

- Handle data and statistics with honesty and integrity
- Act professionally, work collaboratively and behave responsibly
- Be ethical in how you collect, access, use and share data
- Do nothing to undermine confidence in the independence of published statistics
- Present statistics and explanations impartially and objectively, ensuring statistical communication is balanced by presenting the totality of evidence rather than promoting a particular perspective (see the Standards for Intelligent Transparency)
- Recruit suitably skilled staff and apply an appropriate competency framework. Have clear roles and responsibilities for these staff
- Provide resources and time to enable staff to develop skills, knowledge and competencies, including training on safe data and quality management

2. Chief Statisticians/Heads of Profession for Statistics must have autonomy in deciding statistical methods and the content and timing of statistical releases

so that the public can have confidence in the independent and objective nature of statistics

- Apply professional judgement, free from conflicts of interest, to decide methods, standards and procedures, as well as the content and timing of release for regular and ad hoc statistics (see the **Standards for Intelligent Transparency**)
- Promote the professional standards of the Code of Practice across the organisation
- Challenge inappropriate use of statistics and pre-empt misunderstandings by explaining potential misinterpretations of the evidence
- Seek the advice of the National Statistician or the Chief Statistician for the relevant administration on professional matters, including any concerns about statistical independence
- Report concerns about meeting the Code to the Director General for Regulation

- Apply good business practices in managing your resources. Raise any concerns about inadequate funds to deliver key priorities with senior leaders

3. Producers must release the statistics in an orderly way, at a standard time, and pre-announce the date and timing of the release

so that the public can have confidence in how and when the statistics are released

- Be open about how you ensure your release process is orderly
- Pre-announce release, giving the time and date in a 12-month release calendar, 4 weeks ahead where possible
- Release on a timely basis, meeting the needs of users, and as soon as the statistics are ready. Provide a straightforward way for users to contact the producer team
- Limit access before release to quality checking and for operational purposes
- Act in line with the relevant pre-release access rules and principles set out in legislation
- Release at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday unless an alternative release time is agreed with the Director General for Regulation
- Release policy and ministerial statements separately from the official statistics, in line with professional standards, and with advice from the lead statistician (see the **Standards for Intelligent Transparency**)
- Release revisions and corrections of errors as soon as possible in line with published policy, being clear about the nature and scale of change

4. Producers must manage data and statistics safely and securely and encourage the provision of information by being open about how it will be used and protected

so that the public can be confident about providing their own information for official statistics

- Work in line with the UK Statistics Authority's [ethical principles](#)
- Work with users to understand and promote the social acceptability of the statistics, clearly explaining how data will be used when collected for statistical purposes
- Consider and manage the rights of data subjects at all times, in ways that are consistent with data protection legislation
- Keep and handle data safely and securely. Follow all relevant statutory obligations governing the collection, storage, sharing, access, linking and analysis of data. Keep up to date with changing circumstances and technological advances

- Protect personal data when producing statistics. Be transparent about the choices made and apply appropriate disclosure control methods before release
- Hold regular reviews. Share best practice across the organisation and ensure data management and sharing arrangements are robust

Quality

5. Chief Statisticians/Heads of Profession for Statistics must encourage a quality culture that promotes good practice and ensure their statistics will not materially mislead users

so that the public can have confidence that published statistics are fit to be used for the intended purpose

- Be open about your quality management approach and how you ensure appropriate quality standards. Be proactive in considering the dynamic nature of statistical quality
- Use independent evaluation to periodically review the effectiveness of processes
- Provide a safe environment and support staff in raising quality concerns
- Conduct timely reviews of quality issues and determine whether published statistics should be withdrawn and if unpublished statistics are suitable to be released
- Inform the Director General for Regulation of any concerns about potentially misleading statistics
- Commission reviews of statistical areas with serious quality concerns and be open about the resulting actions taken to improve the statistics

6. Producers must use suitable data sources and sound methods, and assure the quality of the statistics across the production and release processes, being open to innovate to keep statistics relevant and useful

so that the public can have confidence that the statistics are produced in robust ways

- Produce statistics to a level of quality that meets their intended uses
- Use the best available data for what needs to be measured. Monitor for changes in the sources, and explain any issues and their implications for use in producing statistics

- Check the suitability and availability of existing data from governmental and non-governmental sources before collecting new data
- Maintain constructive relationships with those involved in the statistics supply and preparation process. Be clear about your data requirements. Ensure the burden on providers is proportionate to the anticipated benefits
- Base methods on national or international good practice, scientific principles or professional consensus. Identify and address limitations. Use recognised standards, classifications and definitions
- Use data that are coherent when aggregated, consistent over time and comparable across geography. Seek to improve consistency and coherence
- Collaborate with experts, other analysts and statistics producers in the UK and internationally and share best practice
- Use a proportionate quality assurance approach across production and release processes. Be open about why you are satisfied that the statistics are of suitable quality. Monitor quality dimensions for both input data and the statistics
- Keep up to date with possible ways to improve the statistics. Assess the added value of method developments and consider the impact on the statistics
- Regularly review strengths and limitations in the data and statistics, involving users. Be open about your decisions and reasons

7. Producers must prominently explain the quality of the statistics, including any strengths and limitations, and communicate the uncertainty in the estimates

so that the public can have confidence in using the statistics to make decisions and take actions

- Prominently communicate the quality of the statistics and the strengths and limitations that impact their use. Describe any uncertainty in the estimates, for example, using qualifying words, numbers and graphics
- Explain the nature of data sources and why they were selected. Prominently communicate limitations in the underlying data and explain their impact
- Be clear about the methods used. Explain quality issues related to the methods, systems and processes. Identify potential bias and describe any steps taken to address it
- Give advance notice of method changes. Explain the nature and extent of the change, and provide a consistent back series where possible
- Clearly flag where statistics are being developed and tested. Be transparent about developments, outlining the plans and expected outcomes

Value

8. Producers must put users at the centre of decision making about the statistics, listening to and acting on feedback, and be transparent about statistical planning

so that the public can have confidence that statistics are relevant and useful

- Ensure statistics support informed and effective decision making. Involve users in deciding on your work programme, including when statistics are started, stopped or changed, being clear on where and why user needs can and cannot be met, such as addressing information gaps
- Be open about your public engagement strategy and how you work with stakeholders, including users and potential users of statistics outside of your organisation
- Maintain a dialogue with a range of users. Be deliberate and proactive in engaging stakeholders and accountable to users
- Be open about your annual statistical work programme and how you make the best use of available human, financial and technical resources
- Use a variety of methods to engage with users that are suited to different types and preferences of users. Use evidence of stakeholders' interests and consider new and innovative ways to engage that better meet the needs of users and potential users
- Review user satisfaction routinely, considering the relevance, timeliness, accessibility, clarity and accuracy of the statistics and data
- Involve users in the ongoing development and testing of statistics

9. Producers must ensure the statistics are accessible and freely available to all

so that the public can have confidence that there is equal access to official statistics and the value of data are maximised

- Provide free and equal access to regular and ad hoc published statistics
- Make sure statistics, data and other relevant information, such as metadata, coding and guidance, are easily accessible, and account for the needs of users with disabilities, in line with accessibility legislation
- Provide data at the greatest level that is practical to support use. Enable data and statistics to be shared, accessed and linked, using common data standards
- Support the reuse of data and statistics. Release useful supplementary analyses, and statistics and data from commonly asked queries

- Be transparent about any charges for additional services
- Ensure that statistics continue to be publicly available

10. Producers must clearly present the statistics to support appropriate interpretation, collaborating with other producers and experts to develop fuller insight for key topics

so that the public can have confidence that the statistics support understanding and use

- Release relevant, clear and unambiguous statistics, data and related information that are suitable for all types of users
- Communicate the statistics in a way that helps users understand issues and empowers them to make better decisions
- Provide a clear description of the main messages with suitable data visualisations. Help users interpret complex results without undue emphasis on a single message
- Provide comparisons to support interpretation and signpost other relevant statistics. Explain the consistency and coherence with other related statistics and sources
- Advise and support users. Anticipate misunderstandings by pointing out potential misinterpretations. Clarify the meaning of the statistics when they are used inappropriately
- Collaborate with other producers across the UK and subject experts to provide appropriate context and insight on the statistical topic
- Improve ways of disseminating and presenting the statistics. Look to better meet the needs of different types of users and potential users

Related information

Understanding the Code and how it supports the public good: an introduction to the core concepts of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

Guiding Principles from the Code: these principles explain how anyone working with data can put TQV into practice, in a wide range of settings

Standards for Intelligent Transparency: these standards set out what public bodies need to do to ensure an open, clear and accessible approach to the publication and communication of data, statistics and wider analysis

Guidance hub: information that supports use of the Code, including understanding and delivery of the principles and standards