

# Consultation on the Code of Practice for Statistics: Findings and next steps

May 2025

## Summary

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has completed its consultation on the proposed third edition of the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The responses showed strong overall support for the proposals but also highlighted important areas for further strengthening and clarifying the Code.

OSR will now use the feedback we received from the consultation to complete the refresh of the Code. We aim to release Code 3.0 in autumn 2025.

## Introduction

The [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) is a set of standards for the production of statistics. Statistics are a public asset: when produced in line with the Code, they serve the public good and inspire public confidence. The Code is managed and maintained by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority.

The Code has been firmly embedded in the work of analysts producing official statistics across government. However, in recent years, there have been substantial changes in the data landscape for statistics producers highlighted in our [State of the Statistics System Report for 2024](#). These include the rapid growth of new technologies, an increased desire for statistics from users, and developments in the ways statistics are produced and disseminated.

It is important that the Code remains relevant and evolves to support producers in this changing context. So, OSR launched a [review of the Code \(edition 2.1\)](#) in September 2023 to hear from stakeholders across a wide range of settings about the current suitability of the Code and how it can be adapted to meet the coming challenges and opportunities for data and statistics. After our [extensive engagement and call for evidence](#) over 2023 and 2024, we concluded that we should draft a new edition of the Code.

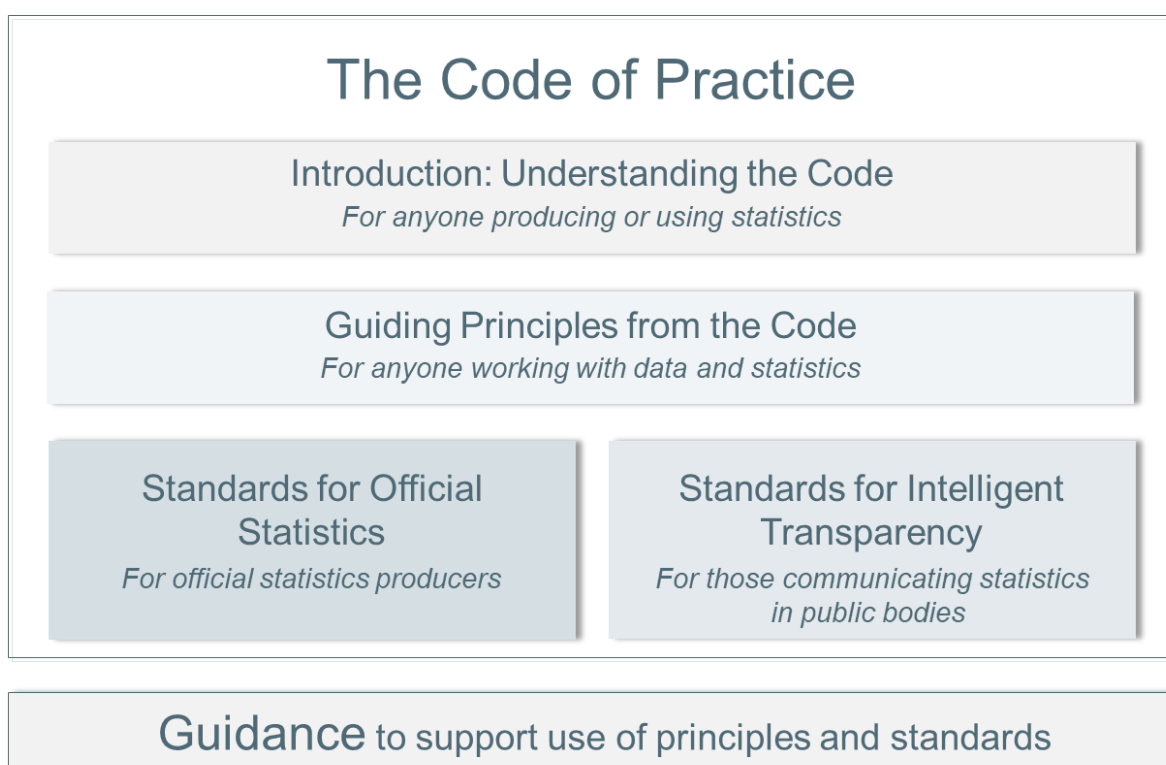
In line with the requirements of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, OSR held a [Code consultation](#) to test a proposed refresh of the Code of Practice (Code 3.0). The consultation ran for 16 weeks and closed on 14 February 2025.

This paper summarises the feedback that OSR received through the consultation and how we are further refining the Code accordingly.

## The proposed draft Code 3.0

The proposal for Code 3.0 (illustrated below in Figure 1) preserves the core concepts of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV) that form the three pillars of the current Code, while making material changes to its content and presentation. The full detail of the proposals can be seen on the [Code consultation webpage](#) on the OSR website, as well as on the [test webpages](#) on the Code website.

**Figure 1. The proposed Code Hub, which includes the Code of Practice for Statistics edition 3.0 and accompanying guidance.**



We proposed that Code 3.0 would comprise three key elements:

1. Understanding the Code and how it supports the public good

The TQV framework is explained in a new introduction, 'Understanding the Code and how it supports the public good', which communicates OSR's position on what TQV is and why this framework is important for statistics and other types of analysis and evidence.

2. Guiding Principles from the Code

Beneath the introduction sit the guiding principles from the Code, which explain how anyone working with data can put TQV into practice, in a wide range of settings.

### 3. The Code Standards

Code 3.0 has two sets of standards which are relevant to public bodies:

- Standards for Official Statistics

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 proposed a shift from the current Code, which has 14 supporting principles and 84 practices, to a set of 10 standards of practice. 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.

- Standards for Intelligent Transparency

The Standards for Intelligent Transparency set out what anyone communicating statistics in public bodies needs to do to ensure an open, clear and accessible approach to the publication and communication of data, statistics and wider analysis.

We proposed that the Code be set within a 'Code Hub' on OSR's website, which would also include guidance on how to understand and use the Code.

## The consultation

Those who responded to the consultation were asked a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions. These included six satisfaction ratings and open-text responses to gather views on:

- the introduction – Understanding the Code
- the Guiding Principles – related to (a) statistics and (b) other evidence
- the Standards for Official Statistics
- the Standards for Intelligent Transparency
- overall satisfaction with the draft Code 3.0

The questionnaire also collected suggestions about topics for future guidance to support the application of the Code, and about whether a printed booklet is needed.

## The respondents

We received 61 consultation responses, returned either online in MS Forms (31) or by email (30). Nearly two-thirds of the responses (38) were formal responses made on behalf of organisations, and just over one-third were from individuals (22). The annex to this paper lists the organisations that participated and gave permission to have their name shared.

A total of 43 responses were received from organisations and individuals in official statistics producer settings, and 17 responses were from other non-producer stakeholder settings (1 response was blank and could not be assigned). The stakeholders covered a range of interests, including regulatory, public bodies, commercial, fact checking and genealogy. The producer organisations reflected the four nations and different sizes and types of producer bodies from government departments, agencies and organisations listed on an [OS Order](#).

The following analysis looks at the overall findings and compares the responses from these two groups of stakeholders (referred to as the 'producer group' and 'non-producer group' in this paper) to inform OSR's development of the Code.

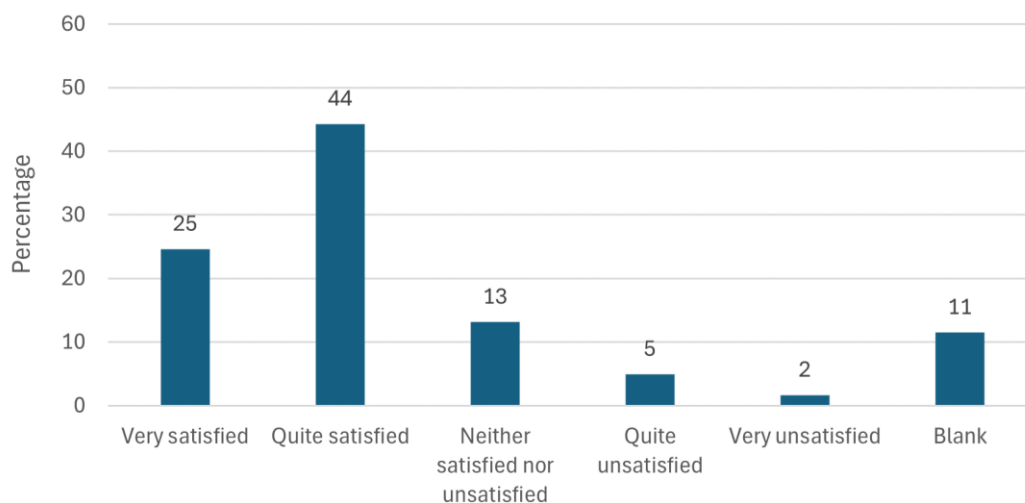
We are satisfied that we have received a good range of responses that give us confidence in understanding how best to improve and complete the refresh of the Code.

## Feedback from the consultation and OSR's response

### Overall

The consultation responses provided strong support for the proposed design of Code 3.0. More than two-thirds of all respondents (42 out of 61, 69%) were either very (15, 25%) or quite (27, 44%) satisfied that the proposals in the draft Code 3.0 meet their needs. Eight respondents (13%) were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, while four (7%) were unsatisfied. Seven (11%) did not respond to the question (see **Chart 1**).

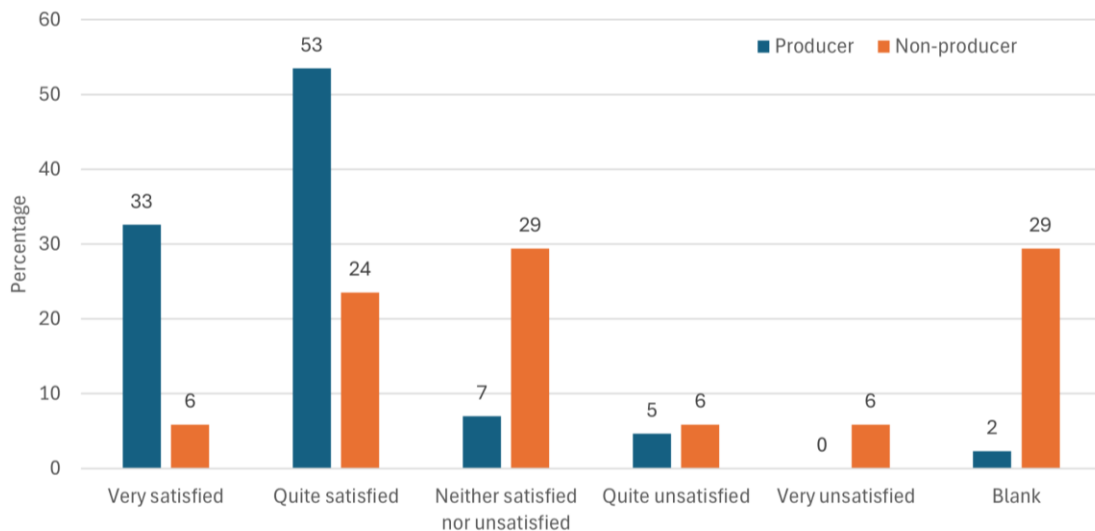
**Chart 1. Overall satisfaction that draft Code 3.0 meets your needs.**



A comparison of the responses for stakeholders in the producer group and those in the non-producer group reveals some notable differences of view. **Chart 2** shows that a larger proportion of the producer group respondents were satisfied (86%) compared with the non-producer respondents (29%). In contrast, 29% of the non-

producer group respondents reported neither being satisfied nor unsatisfied, and 12% were unsatisfied.

**Chart 2. Overall satisfaction that the draft Code 3.0 meets your needs, by respondent type.**



### OSR response:

Based on these findings, we intend to continue to develop Code 3.0 in the format proposed in the consultation. We will consider the feedback received on all elements of the proposals to ensure that we take account of the needs of the different groups.

### Feedback on the proposed Code, by section

The following paragraphs set out the headline findings for each section of the proposed Code 3.0, with a summary of how we intend to use the feedback that we have received.

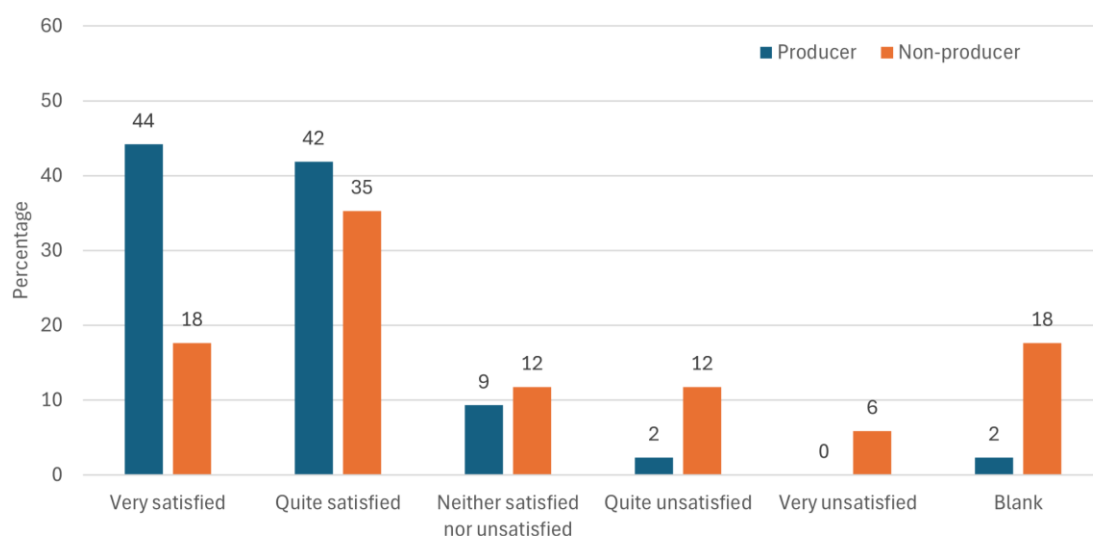
#### *Understanding the Code*

We asked: How satisfied or unsatisfied are you that ‘Understanding the Code and how it supports the public good’ explains the importance of the Code?

Most respondents felt that this section explained the importance and principles of the Code well, with 75% (46 out of 61) saying they were very or quite satisfied (22 and 24, respectively).

**Chart 3** shows the percentage distribution of satisfaction for the producer group and the non-producer group. Both groups had high proportions of respondents that were satisfied with ‘Understanding the Code’, but satisfaction was higher among those in the producer group.

**Chart 3. Satisfaction with 'Understanding the Code', by respondent type.**



Some respondents felt this section was too long and that the readability could be improved, but these comments contrasted with others that described the section as concise, clear and well contextualised. One noted the lack of reference to alignment with the Civil Service values and the UN Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics.

**OSR response:**

We will consider the comments received and draw on them to further clarify and enhance the introductory text.

*Guiding Principles from the Code*

We asked the following questions:

- a) How satisfied or unsatisfied are you that the 'Guiding principles from the Code' set out the essential practices for delivering statistics that support society?
- b) How satisfied or unsatisfied are you that the 'Guiding principles from the Code' set out the essential practices for delivering other types of evidence that support society?

The Guiding Principles received strong overall support for how well it set out the essential practices for delivering **statistics** that support society, with 67% (41 out of 61) of respondents being either quite or very satisfied.

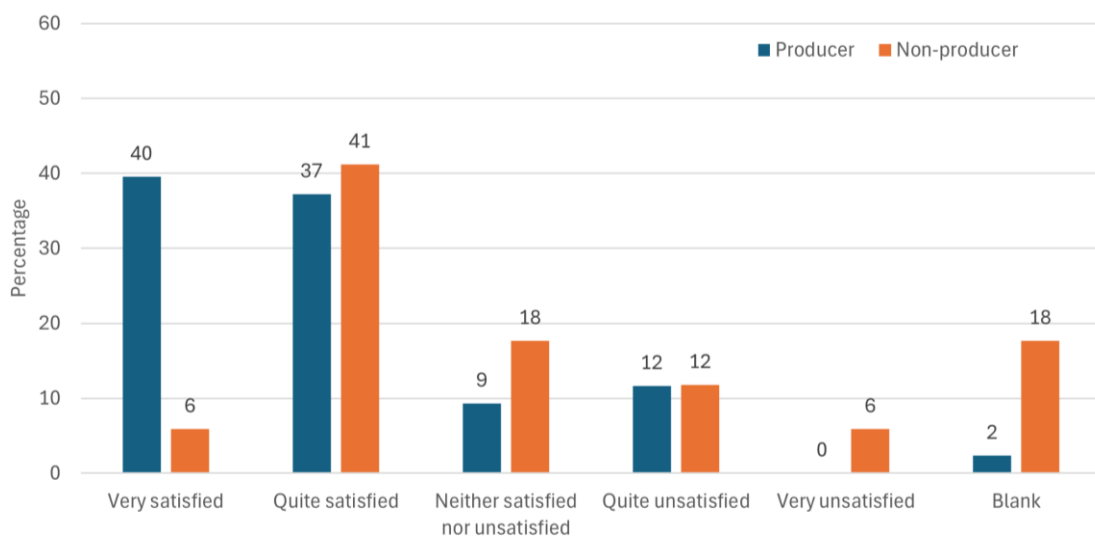
However, the levels of satisfaction were lower when respondents were asked how well the Guiding Principles set out the essential practices for delivering **other types of evidence** that support society – 36% of all respondents (22) were quite or very satisfied, while 33% (20) were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, and 23% (14) were either quite or very unsatisfied (5 did not respond).

**Charts 4a and 4b** show the percentage distributions of satisfaction for the Guiding Principles for the two response groups. The charts illustrate contrasting views about applying the Guiding Principles to statistics or to other evidence.

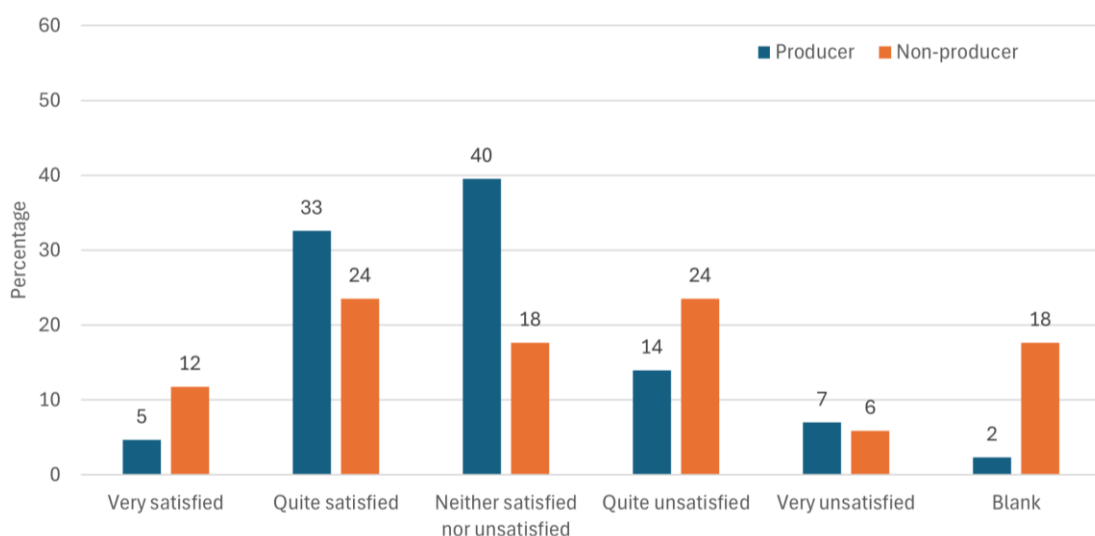
The producer group showed high satisfaction levels for relating the principles to statistics, with 77% being either very or quite satisfied, compared with just over a third (37%) that were satisfied with relating the Guiding Principles to other evidence and 40% that were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied.

In the non-producer group, 47% of respondents were satisfied with relating the principles to statistics, compared with 35% in relation to other evidence. A similar proportion (29%) were unsatisfied with relating the principles to other evidence, and 18% of the respondents were unsatisfied with relating the principles to statistics.

**Chart 4a. Satisfaction with the Guiding Principles – for statistics – by respondent type.**



**Chart 4b. Satisfaction with the Guiding Principles – for other evidence – by respondent type.**



The comments indicated some confusion over the intended audience, purpose and standing of the Guiding Principles. There were many comments in support of the principles themselves and the use of dos and don'ts lists, but there were also many salient points for how to further improve the principles.

**OSR response:**

We will consider the context for the Guiding Principles, specifically whether they should apply as standards for the voluntary application of the Code and their overlap with Understanding the Code, to ensure the principles and our expectations are clear, relevant and widely applicable.

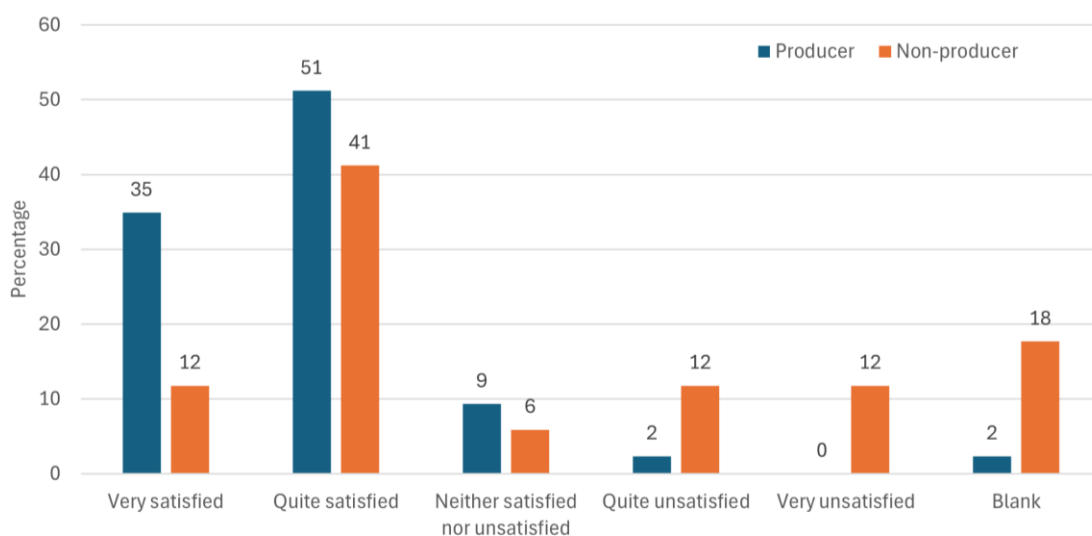
*Standards for Official Statistics*

We asked: How satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the 'Standards for Official Statistics' in representing the required standards for official statistics?

The Standards for Official Statistics constitute the central section of the Code. These standards reflect our remit as the UK statistics regulator and set out our expectations of official statistics producers when producing statistics to ensure that they serve the public good. Three-quarters of respondents (46) said they were either quite or very satisfied with this set of standards.

**Chart 5** shows the percentage distribution of satisfaction with the Standards for Official Statistics in the two response groups. Respondents in both groups, particularly those among in the producer group, showed high levels of satisfaction. However, levels of dissatisfaction were higher among the non-producer group of respondents, with over a quarter (24%) saying that they were either quite or very unsatisfied.

**Chart 5. Satisfaction with the Standards for Official Statistics, by respondent type.**





Most respondents were positive about the areas covered by the standards, but some respondents felt the standards as written were too long. There were also many helpful, specific comments suggesting ways to improve the content and presentation of the practice lists in each standard.

**OSR response:**

We will closely review all the comments and suggested actions to tighten and refine the content and design of the Standards for Official Statistics.

*Standards for Intelligent Transparency*

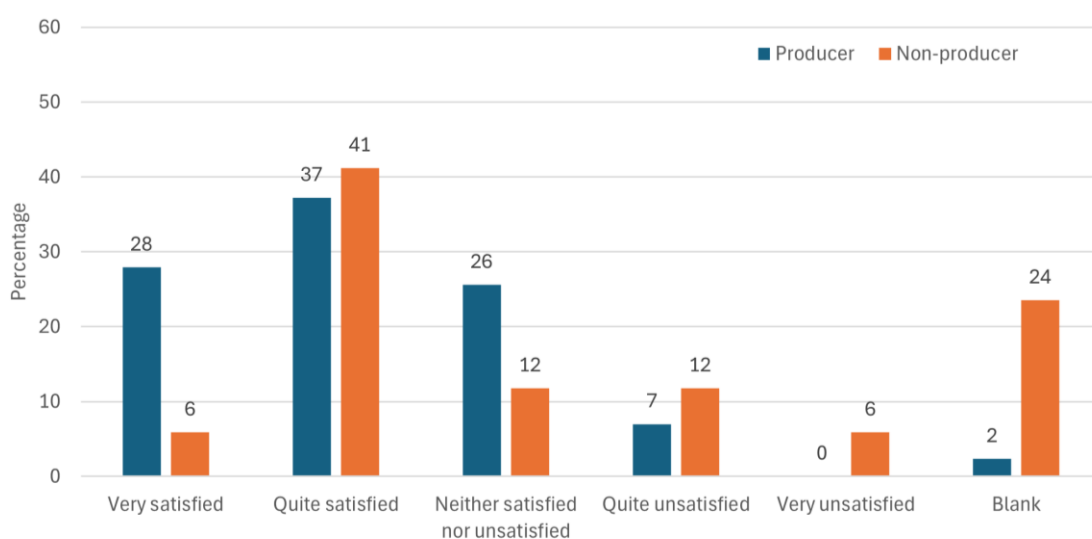
We asked: How satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the 'Standards for Intelligent Transparency' in setting the required standards for using statistics in the public domain?

The Standards for Intelligent Transparency were welcomed overall, with around three in five (36, 59%) respondents being either very or quite satisfied that they set the required standards for using statistics in the public domain.

**Chart 6** shows the percentage distribution of satisfaction with the Standards for Intelligent Transparency for the two response groups. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the respondents in the producer group said they were very or quite satisfied. Just over a quarter of the group (26%) were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied.

Just under half (47%) of the non-producer group respondents were satisfied with the Standards for Intelligent Transparency, and levels of dissatisfaction were higher for this group, at 18%, than for the producer group (7%).

**Chart 6. Satisfaction with the Standards for Intelligent Transparency, by respondent type.**



Respondents' comments reflected strong support for the Code to set standards for the appropriate use of statistics and supported a role for OSR in providing oversight

and accountability of these standards. However, some respondents felt that the term 'intelligent transparency' is unclear and that these standards need to be expanded to give clearer direction. Some statistics producers expressed concern that they would be expected to police intelligent transparency.

**OSR response:**

We will consider how to unpack and clarify the expectations within the intelligent transparency standards and principles. We will also consider the feedback regarding the term 'intelligent transparency'. OSR is currently conducting a separate review of intelligent transparency, involving direct engagement with stakeholders. We will draw on the evidence resulting from this review as well to inform the further development of the standards.

## Feedback on Code 3.0 supporting materials

### *Guidance*

Comments about the importance of guidance were provided throughout the consultation, highlighting a range of areas in which producers needed further clarification of concepts and examples of good practice. Suggested topics included how to spot and prevent misuse of statistics, AI and automated data analysis, managing relationships with data providers to ensure data are of sufficient quality, how to conduct independent evaluations, and how to communicate with users (including the use of social media). Many comments flagged the need for case studies and real-world examples. There were also suggestions for using different formats of guide, such as videos explaining key concepts.

**OSR response:**

We have produced guides to support each standard in the Code and will test these with stakeholders and develop guidance on areas within our expertise and remit. We will contact those expressing an interest in testing guidance in the Code consultation to request their input.

### *Printed booklet*

We asked whether a printed Code booklet was needed. Most respondents said that they did not need a printed booklet (71%, 43 out of the 56 respondents that answered the question), with only 13 saying that they would.

**OSR response:**

We will produce both online and PDF versions of the full Code and make these available for download and local printing. We do not intend to print the full Code booklet but will provide guidance material to support its use, targeted to specific audiences.

## Next steps

OSR will further review the formal and informal feedback that we have received and use it to complete the refresh of the Code of Practice. Before publishing a final Code 3.0, we will share further drafts with key stakeholders such as Chief Statisticians and Heads of Profession for Statistics and user representatives. **If you are interested in providing further feedback as we finalise and test the Code, please contact us by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk).**

We will submit the third edition of the Code of Practice for Statistics to the Regulation Committee and the Authority Board of the UK Statistics Authority for approval, prior to its release. We aim to release Code 3.0 in autumn 2025.

We will provide further updates on progress via the [refreshing the Code of Practice webpage](#) on the OSR website.

## Annex: Organisations responding to the Consultation

### **Official statistics producer organisations:**

Cabinet Office  
Department for Business and trade  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (statistics officials)  
Department for Education  
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology  
Department for Transport (statistics officials)  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Department of Health and Social Care  
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
HM Revenue & Customs  
Jisc  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
Ministry of Defence  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Justice  
Natural Resources Wales  
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency  
Office for National Statistics  
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills  
Public Health Scotland  
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Scottish Government  
Scottish Qualifications Authority (Awarding)  
Scottish Social Services Council  
UK Health Security Agency  
Welsh Government

### **Non-producer organisations:**

Better Statistics CIC  
Building Digital UK  
Centre for Public Data  
Full Fact  
Information Commissioner's Office  
Market Research Society  
Open Past  
Royal Statistical Society