

Guidance: Ensuring Public Accountability

This guidance outlines a model for public accountability that we expect official statistics producers to apply and encourage any producers that publish statistics to adopt, including those who voluntarily apply the Code.

Official statistics

Producers of official statistics

Official statistics producers are accountable to the public for how well their statistics serve the public good.

Public accountability requires demonstration of how the [Standards for Official Statistics](#) are achieved, based on evidence of practice and an openness to listen and respond to feedback.

To enable public accountability, we expect official statistics producers to:

Give an account by providing information alongside data and statistics about the sources and methods used, the reasons for their selection, their strengths and limitations, and quality measures related to features such as accuracy and reliability

Be held to account by providing the means for users to engage meaningfully in open and constructive ways with the producers, so questions can be asked and responses given

Make good by improving the statistics or their production if and where needed and responding appropriately to user and other stakeholder feedback

We expect official statistics producers to publish clear information about each of these areas of practice so that they can be held to account by users. These actions reflect practices in the **Standards for Official Statistics**.

Users

In deciding whether to use official statistics, we recommend that users carefully review the material shared by official statistics producers about the statistics to decide whether the statistics meet the user's specific need.

We encourage users to work with statistics producers to assist in developing new official statistics and improving existing official statistics by giving feedback when requested and participating in opportunities to test official statistics in development.

Users and other members of the public can also flag any concerns about official statistics by contacting the producer teams.

The Office for Statistics Regulation

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) considers evidence of how official statistics producers meet the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Where we find the standards have been met, we confirm the status of 'accredited official statistics' (called National Statistics in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#)). Our compliance reviews are published on our [website](#). Concerns about the production or use of statistics can be raised with OSR through our [Raise a concern](#) web page.

Other statistics

We encourage all producers publishing statistics to be open about how they ensure their statistics are delivered to professional standards.

All statistics producers that have [voluntarily committed](#) to applying the [Code Principles](#) should demonstrate to their users how they adhere to the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in a published statement. The producers should regularly review their statements to ensure they reflect the actions and improvements undertaken for the statistics.

Questions for producers to consider in applying this guidance

Questions relating to quality:

1. What is the need for these statistics?
2. How well do the data match the concept you wish to measure?
3. What are the levels of response, completeness, duplication and known sources of error?
4. What are the limitations of your statistics?
5. How will the limitations affect the quality and use of the outputs?

Questions relating to user engagement:

1. How do you know what users think about the statistics?
2. Are users satisfied or unsatisfied with the quality of the statistics?
3. What changes would users like to see in the statistics?
4. In what ways have you been able to address users' needs?
5. How have you fed back to users on what improvements you have/haven't made?

Other resources

Further questions the statistical community can use to interrogate their work and assure its quality are available in [quality questions and red flags](#) from the Government Statistical Service.

Office for Statistics Regulation guides:

- [Thinking about quality when producing statistics](#)

- [Guidance on user engagement](#)
- [Guidance on voluntarily applying the Code](#)

Code of Practice for Statistics:

- [Understanding TQV](#)
- [The Code Principles](#)
- [Standards for Official Statistics](#)
- [Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis](#)
- [Code Guidance](#) – further information and examples for each principle are given in the short guides for the Standards for Official Statistics