Standard 8: be relevant

Standard 8 of the [Standards for Official Statistics](#) in the Code of Practice for Statistics focuses on what is needed to ensure statistics meet user needs.

Putting users at the heart of statistical planning means providing an opportunity for users to influence decisions and for producers to hear about what matters to them. It relies on both producers and users being responsive, transparent and collaborative.

It is not about producers providing engagement as a token gesture but developing an ongoing conversation with users inside and outside government. It is not about building a wish list but is a means to discern important questions that statistics can help answer.

The Standard:

8. **Producers must put users at the centre of decision making about the statistics, listening and responding to feedback, and be transparent about statistical planning**
   so that the public can have confidence that statistics are relevant and useful

   8.1. Be accountable to users by providing the means for users to engage meaningfully in open and constructive ways, enabling questions to be asked and providing prompt responses

   8.2. Actively engage key users of your statistics, such as in academia, business, civil society, the media, and public bodies, to identify the most important questions the statistics need to answer. Report on the findings and your decisions in your annual statistical work programme

   8.3. Gain views from a range of users to inform decisions 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. Involve users in the ongoing development and testing of statistics

   8.4. Review user satisfaction routinely, considering the relevance, timeliness, accessibility, clarity and accuracy of the statistics and data. Provide feedback to users about your findings and resulting actions

   8.5. Publish your public involvement and engagement strategy. Be clear how you engage with users inside and outside of your organisation, as well as other stakeholders with an interest in the statistics such as intermediaries and community groups

   8.6. Consider new and innovative ways to engage that better meet the needs of users and potential users

Questions to consider:

1. **Benefit:** Why are you producing the statistics? How do the statistics help people and society?

2. **Users:** Who are your users both inside and outside government? In what ways would users and other stakeholders like to engage with you? What types of opportunities can you create to enable users to engage? Who else do you need to hear from?

3. **Use:** What kind of uses and decisions are informed by the statistics? What are the important questions that users would like to be answered? Do your statistics answer these questions? Are there questions that you are not answering with the statistics? How do you balance maintaining time series with ensuring statistics remain relevant?

4. **Potential users:** Who could find the statistics useful but are not using them? Why not? Are there signs of data gaps or inappropriate use?

5. **Open plans:** Have you shared your decisions about the statistics and your plans with users and other stakeholders? Have you been you clear about what you can and can't do, and why this is the case?

Related guidance:

Office for Statistics Regulation:

- [User engagement framework](#)
- Public Involvement and Engagement toolkit (coming soon)

Government Statistical Service (GSS):

- [User engagement top tips](#)
- [User engagement guide](#)
- [User engagement guidance and advice](#)
- [Identifying stakeholders](#)
- [Stakeholder mapping](#)

Cabinet Office:

- [Consultation principles: guidance](#)

Office for National Statistics:

- [Engaging the public on data: stakeholder communications toolkit](#)

Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK):

- [Public engagement in practice resources](#)

Public Engagement in Data Research Initiative (PEDRI):

- [Resources](#)

Good practice examples:

Statistical decision making:

- Blog – ORR: [People-first approach: developing the data strategy for the Office of Rail and Road (ORR)](#)
- Case study – NISRA: [Putting users and stakeholders at the centre of statistical production](#)
- Case study – Scottish Government: [Reviewing and amending statistics provisions](#)
- Case study – Scottish Government: [Statistics Serving the needs of users of statistics - Statistics](#)
- Blog – NISRA: [You're planning to do what? Statistics, resource constraints and user engagement](#)
- Blog – Mental Health Outcomes Framework, Northern Ireland: [Improving mental health services in Northern Ireland](#)
- Case study – Welsh Government: [Innovating outputs to balance meeting needs with resources](#)

Engaging users:

- GSS – [User engagement case studies](#)
- Case study – Ofsted: [Engaging users during a review of outputs](#)
- Case study – Natural England: [Involving users in the production and ongoing development of statistics](#)
- Blog – ACAS: [A new approach to focus groups](#)
- Smart Data Research UK: [Delivering smart data conversations across the UK](#)
- Case study – Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID): [Turning knowledge into action](#)
- Case study – National Records Scotland: [Communicating uncertainty for Scotland's Census 2022; a case study from National Records of Scotland](#)

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](#) – other short guides supporting use of the Code
- [Required policies and statements relating to official statistics production](#)