Director General for Regulation

Ben Humberstone
Deputy Director, Health Analysis and Life Events
Office for National Statistics
(by email)

3 October 2019

Dear Ben

I am writing in response to your letter[1] on 2 October in which you outlined your plans to review and develop the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) baby names in England and Wales[2] release and supplementary content.

We commend you on the publication of an accessible, insightful and engaging blog[3] on the topic of baby names and how they reflect societal change. By acknowledging the various approaches taken by users when analysing the baby names data, for example in adding up different spellings of names, such as Muhammed, you demonstrated a clear understanding of how these statistics are used and understood by the public. This is clearly aligned with the Value pillar in the Code of Practice for Statistics[4].

We welcome your plans to consider publishing the blog and statistical bulletin simultaneously in future to avoid any potential confusion around release dates. This should enhance public trust in the statistics. It will also enable additional analyses and insight based on the latest data to be included in the blog as well as cross-referencing it with the statistical bulletin. These developments should increase the value of the overall baby names publication package to the public.

Our Population and Society domain team would welcome your ongoing engagement as your plans progress.

I am copying this to Debra Prestwood, Head of Profession for Statistics at ONS, and Will Moy, Chief Executive at Full Fact.

Yours sincerely

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

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[1] https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/developments-to-ons-baby-names-in-england-and-wales-statistics/

[2] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/babynamesenglandandwales/2018

[3] https://blog.ons.gov.uk/2019/08/28/whats-in-a-name-theres-more-than-you-might-think-to-the-ons-baby-names-list/?hootPostID=a79d352d586e9538ad74a3be1f339c69

[4] https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/the-code/value/v1-relevance-to-users/