UK Statistics Authority

Office for Statistics Regulation

Code of Practice for Statistics

Edition 3.0

Ensuring statistics serve the public good

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The Code of Practice for Statistics

(Edition 3.0)

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About the Code

What is the Code of Practice for Statistics and who is it for?

Official statistics serve the public good when, as public assets, they provide insight that allows them to be used widely for informing understanding and shaping action.

The Code of Practice for Statistics (the Code) sets the standards that those producing official statistics should apply to deliver statistics that serve the public good, in line with section 10 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

But the Code is not just for official statistics. Everyone can apply or draw on the Code. It can help show what is needed to have confidence in data, analysis and statistics, whether as a user of information or as a producer of information.

The Code is based on the core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV), which are introduced in the section Understanding TQV. TQV is a useful framework for analysts and organisations both inside and outside of government.

The Code Principles unpack TQV and help anyone using data and producing statistics to work in a way that allows others to have confidence in their commitment to delivering the best possible outputs.

The Standards for Official Statistics set out the specific standards and practices related to each Code principle that producers of official statistics must follow to ensure that official statistics serve the public good and support public confidence.

Closely related are standards that help ensure public bodies use statistics, data and wider analysis transparently, and with integrity, clarity and accuracy. The Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis describe the three standards and related practices that all public bodies should meet when communicating statistics, data and wider analysis in the public domain.

Guidance

A set of short guides is available to support the use of the Code Principles and the Standards for Official Statistics. These are helpful for any producer of statistics, providing a wide range of resources relevant to each area of practice.

Guidance – Ensuring Public Accountability 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.

Guidance on the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis helps anyone working within public bodies to understand their role in ensuring statistics, data and wider analysis are communicated in an open way and to apply the standards in their work.

Guidance – Required policies and statements relating to official statistics production provides a list of the organisational policy documents and statements, relating to official statistics production, required in the Code of Practice for Statistics edition 3.0.

The Glossary of Terms provides explanations of key terms used within the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Further detailed guidance is available from OSR on applying Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.

Key definitions and important information

Official Statistics

Official statistics provide information that helps us understand economic, social and environmental issues at all levels of society. They are statistics produced by Crown bodies and other organisations listed within an Official Statistics Order, on behalf of the UK Government or the devolved governments. The Code of Practice sets the standards for the production of official statistics.

Official statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). The Standards for Official Statistics in the Code set out OSR's expectations of statistics and the people and organisations that produce them.

Official statistics with the label and badge of 'accredited official statistics' (AOS) are statistics for which OSR has conducted an independent review, called an assessment, and judged to comply with the Standards for Official Statistics.

'Accredited official statistics' are called 'National Statistics' in section 12 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. The accreditation may be removed by OSR where practice later fails to comply with the standards of the Code. The list of Accredited Official Statistics is a comprehensive list of all official statistics that OSR has assessed and accredited.

'Official statistics in development' is a temporary label used to indicate where new or existing official statistics are being developed and tested with users, in line with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality, and Value. Even though official statistics in development are going through development and testing, a producer that chooses to label statistics as such must be confident that they provide insight that informs understanding of a given topic and can help shape action.

The Office for Statistics Regulation and the Code

The Code is maintained by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. The Statistics Registration and Service Act 2007 requires the Authority to publish and maintain a code of practice.

The Code aligns with the Civil Service and NI Civil Service core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. It is consistent with the Nolan principles, the

Ministerial Code, and the Northern Ireland Guidance for Ministers, as well as the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

OSR maintains policies related to the Code of Practice for Statistics that guide our regulatory work – for further information see the OSR policy webpage.

Understanding TQV

For anyone producing or using statistics

The Code of Practice for Statistics ensures that statistics are not just numbers, but reliable tools for understanding the world, providing insight to inform understanding and shape action. As such, statistics are vital to support democracy and democratic debate.

The Code is based on the core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV). Taken together, TQV provides an ethical framework that can support the publication of any kind of analysis or evidence. It is relevant for and can be used by anyone in any organisation who wants to ensure that the information they provide is relevant, informative and impactful.

Statistics and the public good

Statistics serve the public good as public assets that provide insight, which allows them to be used widely for informing understanding and shaping action.

To fully realise the potential of statistics, the organisations producing them should place serving the public good at the heart of their work and be conscious of their responsibilities to society.

Meeting the public good

Producing statistics that live up to their potential to serve the public good requires recognising that statistics are more than just aggregated numbers. How things are done matters as much as the numbers themselves.

In any social exchange of information, there are three factors at play.

Firstly, the audience will consider the culture and behaviours of the information provider and their track record of meeting their commitments. In the case of statistics, this encompasses a wide range of people within an organisation – from the producer of the statistical bulletin to the minister quoting the statistics.

Secondly, there is the nature of the information itself – in the case of the statistics, this means the aggregated statistics and underlying data.

Finally, there is the context in which the information is heard and received by an individual as a user of the information.

If organisations only focus on the production of the numbers, they risk not fulfilling the practical utility of the statistics and may reduce confidence in the organisation itself and their outputs.

For people to have confidence, there must be clarity about the Trustworthiness of the organisation, the Quality of the statistics and, crucially, the Value of the statistics to the users.

The Code offers a framework that considers all three factors.

Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

Focusing on Trustworthiness, Quality and Value ensures people can have confidence in the production and communication of statistics.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness means that the public can have confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics. It reflects the integrity, professionalism and impartiality of the producers and the statistical system. Trustworthiness signals that statistics are not subject to manipulation or undue influence.

Trustworthiness is not just about following rules. It also requires behaviours and attitudes that foster confidence among those who interact with an organisation. Producers should be accountable for their actions and decisions, and responsive to feedback and criticism.

Trustworthiness also depends on the leadership and culture of the organisations that produce statistics, and the support and respect that analysts receive from senior leaders and stakeholders.

Quality

Quality is about using suitable data and appropriate methods to produce reliable statistics that meet user needs. Statistics should inform rather than mislead, and producers must uphold high standards of transparency and quality assurance.

Quality is dynamic and evolving, not fixed or absolute. It requires curiosity and a mindset that is open to seeing how statistics could be wrong. Maintaining quality involves continuous monitoring, innovation, collaboration, and effective communication with users to ensure statistics are developed, understood and used appropriately.

Value

Value means that statistics benefit the public by informing and supporting decision making, action and debate. It also means that statistics can be accessed, understood and used by a wide range of users. Providing value is the ultimate goal of statistics, as it reflects their contribution to society and the public good.

Value is not a static or one-off outcome, but a continuous and interactive process. Producers should engage with users and other stakeholders to understand their needs and be responsive to changing demands, data availability, and policy contexts.

The core principles of the Code work together and reinforce each other, providing a coherent framework for those producing statistics. For the public good to be served, all three must be addressed: Trustworthiness of people and organisations; Quality of data and methods; and Value for users.

Universality of this framework

Trustworthiness, Quality and Value can support any kind of research or evidence.

TQV does not prescribe a particular way of producing statistics or presenting data; instead, the focus is on the outcome of the public good, which allows for and encourages the adoption of new and innovative approaches in statistics. The framework supports the use of new data sources and new techniques to enable more-powerful insight on any aspect of society.

Wider application of these concepts can support a broad range of activities, including qualitative and quantitative research design, data collection and analysis. These can be conducted in a range of settings, for example, charities, universities, local authorities and companies – any organisation that wants to produce information that supports the public good rather than just private interests.

Providing resilient safeguards

There are clear threats to the production and use of evidence that could undermine democratic institutions and erode public confidence. Embedding Trustworthiness, Quality and Value provides strong, resilient safeguards against threats to the public good.

The current UK statistics environment is, in many ways, a positive one. We have an established statistical system. We have a respected research community. We have a wide range of media and social media outlets that draw on statistics and data and act as intermediaries between statistics producers and a wider user audience. Citizens, businesses, academics and decision makers have various ways to engage with and use data and statistics.

But we cannot take these positives for granted. Threats to the culture and environment of evidence use exist and are varied and numerous. The public and users of statistics can find gaps in the data they need or have concerns over deliberate, malicious misinformation. As the sources of data available to the public become more abundant, the public themselves may face information overload, while reliable statistics from reputable producers may face competition and need to report at pace to remain relevant and useful. Producers of statistics can face resource constraints or be operating in an organisational environment that does not sufficiently promote good practice or encourage learning and improvement. These factors can impact on producers' ability to innovate, collaborate and continuously improve their outputs which risks decreasing the relevance of the statistics and the potential for them to serve the public good.

While many of these threats have been part of society for some time, they may be magnified in an environment of technological advancement (including both social media and AI). These developments, for all the opportunities they bring, risk creating a degree of uncertainty for people.

Within the landscape of threats, the challenge is ensuring that accurate, cohesive data and statistics are accessible and available to all. Embedding Trustworthiness, Quality and Value provides strong, resilient safeguards against threats to public good by helping organisations to demonstrate their commitment to the public interest and to mitigate concerns about misinformation.

Summary: A Code for all

The Code of Practice for Statistics is not only a set of guidelines but also a source of inspiration and support for producers and users of statistics. When statistics and data are produced in line with the Code's framework of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value, they serve the public good.

Related information

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

Standards for Official Statistics: these Standards set out specific statistical practices for those producing official statistics

Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis: these standards set out what public bodies need to do to ensure an open, clear and accessible approach to the publication and communication of statistics, data and wider analysis

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

The Code Principles

For anyone working with data and statistics

The Code Principles unpack the core principles of the Code of Practice for Statistics – Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV).

They can be used by anyone in any organisation who wants to ensure that the information they provide serves the public good.

They can be applied by people in different roles, including analytical, operational, policy and communication roles, who are working with different types of evidence and analysis, such as data science, management information, economic analysis and social research.

They can be used both inside government and in other settings such as the commercial sector, academia and voluntary sector.

The principles form the basis of the ten Standards for Official Statistics which set out specific statistical practices expected of official statistics producers to ensure that official statistics serve the public good.

The Office for Statistics Regulation runs a scheme to recognise organisations working outside of official statistics production that voluntarily apply the Code.

The Code Principles

Trustworthiness	Quality	Value
1.Show integrity 2.Lead responsibly 3.Be transparent 4.Manage data responsibly	5.Prioritise quality 6.Be rigorous 7.Be open about quality	8.Be relevant 9.Be clear 10.Be accessible

Trustworthiness

Building confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data

To show you are trustworthy:

1 Show integrity

- Do present and use data and statistics objectively, being impartial and professional
- Don't withhold or misrepresent data or statistics due to political or commercial influence

2 Lead responsibly

- Do foster evidence-based decision making based on strong, professional analytical skills and promoting TQV
- Don't rely on biased evidence, be unwilling to listen to diverse views or refuse to adapt to changing circumstances

3 Be transparent

- Do be open about how, when and to whom you will release data and statistics
- Don't restrict the release of statistics because they make for uncomfortable reading or be reluctant to explain corrections or revisions

4 Manage data responsibly

- Do collect, use and share data in line with legal obligations and ethical principles and be open about choices made
- Don't ignore the rights of those providing their data or overlook risks to the disclosure of their personal or corporate information

Quality

Data and methods that produce assured statistics

To ensure the statistics are of suitable quality:

5 Prioritise quality

- Do promote and take a proactive approach to quality and continuous improvement, learning constructively from both mistakes and good practice
- Don't discourage innovation or collaboration or dismiss quality issues raised by staff, data suppliers, partners, topic experts or users

6 Be rigorous

- Do use suitable data sources and sound methods to meet intended uses, applying recognised professional standards
- Don't assume data are suitable or ignore quality issues or the implications of system and method changes on their continued suitability

7 Be open about quality

- Do clearly describe the quality of data and statistics, including uncertainty and bias in estimates and impacts on appropriate interpretation and use
- Don't assume quality remains static or fail to communicate key quality or methods information that could result in a misleading interpretation or wrong decision

Value

Statistics that support society's needs for information

To ensure the statistics are valuable:

8 Be relevant

- Do judge what is needed by listening and responding promptly to user feedback, explaining your choices about what can be reasonably progressed
- Don't make assumptions about what is useful or ignore requests for improvements

9 Be clear

- Do ensure that data and statistics are easy to use and understandable, and tailored to your audience's needs
- Don't present too much information, use confusing colours or jargon or present insufficient information to enable appropriate interpretation or use

10 Be accessible

- Do ensure easy access for all when publishing data, statistics and supporting material and meet legal accessibility standards
- Don't limit access to information or create barriers to data sharing or reuse where there is a public interest

Voluntary application of the Code – committing to uphold the Code Principles

Any producer of data, statistics and analysis that are not official statistics, who is applying the Code principles, is encouraged to be part of the TQV Voluntary Application scheme run by the Office for Statistics Regulation. The scheme reflects an ongoing commitment to apply TQV.

We encourage members of the scheme to be open and accountable in their application of the Code by publishing a statement explaining how they apply and meet the Code principles.

A commitment to the Code's core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value offers the opportunity for an organisation to:

- Compare its processes, methods and outputs against the recognised standards in the Code that we expect of official statistics
- Demonstrate to the public its commitment to Trustworthiness, Quality and Value
- Strengthen its practices by 'thinking TQV'

More information on applying the Code and joining the scheme is available:

- TQV Voluntary Application – a guide on how to apply TQV and to be part of the scheme
- Register of TQV Voluntary Application – organisations that have elected to apply the Code in the VA scheme

Related information

Understanding TQV: an introduction to the core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV)

Standards for Official Statistics: these standards set out specific statistical practices for those producing official statistics

Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis: these standards set out what public bodies need to do to ensure an open, clear and accessible approach to the publication and communication of statistics, data and wider analysis

Guidance – Ensuring Public Accountability: Producers of statistics should see themselves as accountable to their users and can apply OSR's guidance on accountability to provide reassurance about how they demonstrate Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

Code Guidance: information that supports use of the Code, including understanding and delivery of the principles and Standards, including a short guide for the Code Principles

Standards for Official Statistics

For official statistics producers

The Standards for Official Statistics describe the standards and practices required to ensure that statistics serve the public good. They should be applied by the teams and statistical leaders responsible for producing official statistics ('producers').

The Standards for Official Statistics are grounded in the core principles of the Code – Trustworthiness, Quality and Value – and directly relate to the ten Code Principles. Good practice guidance is provided for each standard .

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

Other producers beyond those producing official statistics can consider the standards and see how they can enhance their preparation and release of statistics into the public domain.

There are ten standards, as listed below. Each standard has a list of practices which set out the activities and behaviours required to meet the standard.

To ensure official statistics serve the public good:

Trustworthiness

1. **Show integrity**: Producers must act with integrity, working and communicating in honest, objective and professional ways, and challenging misuse
2. **Lead responsibly**: Producers must lead responsibly and make impartial decisions about statistics, under the direction and authority of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics
3. **Be transparent**: Producers must release statistics in a transparent way, at a standard time (usually 9.30am), and pre-announce the date and timing of the release
4. **Manage data responsibly**: Producers must manage data and statistics safely and securely and be open about how data will be used and protected

Quality

5. **Prioritise quality**: Producers must support a quality culture that promotes good practice and encourages learning and improvement, under the direction of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics

6. **Be rigorous**: Producers must use suitable data sources and sound methods, and assure the quality of the statistics across the production and release processes
7. **Be open about quality**: Producers must prominently explain the quality of the statistics, including strengths and limitations, and communicate the uncertainty in estimates

Value

8. **Be relevant**: Producers must put users at the centre of decision making about the statistics, listening and responding to feedback, and be transparent about statistical planning
9. **Be clear**: Producers must clearly present the statistics to support appropriate interpretation, collaborating with other producers and experts to develop fuller insight for key topics
10. **Be accessible**: Producers must ensure statistics are accessible and freely available to all

Related information

Understanding TQV: an introduction to the core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV)

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

Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis: 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

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

Standards for Official Statistics with required practices

The Standards for Official Statistics describe the standards and practices required to ensure statistics serve the public good.

Trustworthiness

Building confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data

Show integrity

1. **Producers must act with integrity, working and communicating in honest, objective and professional ways, and challenging misuse**
   so that the public can have confidence in the behaviours of those involved in handling and using data and statistics

   1.1. Act professionally, work collaboratively and behave responsibly

   1.2. Handle data and statistics with honesty and integrity, in ways that serve the public good

   1.3. Present statistics impartially and objectively, ensuring statistical communication is balanced and does not mislead. Provide clear explanations to support appropriate interpretation of key messages

   1.4. Monitor the use of your statistics. Challenge notable misuse of the statistics or raise concerns with the Office for Statistics Regulation

Lead responsibly

2. **Producers must lead responsibly and make impartial decisions about statistics, under the direction and authority of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics**
   so that the public can have confidence in the independent and objective nature of statistics

   2.1. Promote the requirements of the Code of Practice across the organisation, including at the most senior levels of leadership

   2.2. Provide impartial advice on the use of statistics, and foster an evidence-based approach to decision making

   2.3. Apply impartial, professional judgement to decide methods, standards and procedures, as well as the content, timing, frequency and mode of release for regular and ad hoc statistics with the approval of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics

2.4. Seek the approval of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics for major revisions to statistics; new official statistics and official statistics in development; to cease the production of official statistics that are no longer viable or required; and when seeking a change to the accreditation of official statistics

2.5. Publish a statement of compliance outlining how the statistics are produced in line with the core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

2.6. Apply good business practices in managing resources. Raise any concerns with senior leaders about inadequate funds to deliver key statistical priorities that are in line with the standards of the Code

2.7. Recruit suitably skilled staff and apply an appropriate competency framework. Have clear roles and responsibilities for these staff

2.8. Provide sufficient resources and time to enable staff to develop skills, knowledge and competencies, including training on applying the Code, secure data handling and quality management

2.9. Where needed, seek the advice of the National Statistician or the relevant Chief Statistician on professional matters, including any concerns about statistical independence

2.10. Periodically review adherence to the Code with the advice of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics. Promptly report serious concerns about meeting the Code to the Director General for Regulation

Be transparent

3. Producers must release the statistics in a transparent way, at a standard time (usually 9.30am), 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*

3.1. Pre-announce the release of statistics with the time and date in a 12-month release calendar. Give a specific release date and time four weeks ahead where possible

3.2. Agree changes to pre-announced release dates or times with the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics and announce promptly, explaining the reasons

3.3. Limit access before public release to those involved in the production of the statistics and the preparation of the output, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Maintain a list of those who have access before the statistics are finalised. Give no public indication of the statistics before release and do not share without prior permission of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics

3.4. Act in line with the relevant pre-release access rules and principles set out in legislation when circulating official statistics in their final form

3.5. Release on a timely basis, meeting the needs of users as far as possible and as soon as the statistics are ready, under the guidance of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics

3.6. Release at the standard time of 9.30am on a weekday unless an alternative release time is agreed with the Director General for Regulation

3.7. Advise on the appropriate use of statistics in policy and ministerial statements and ensure links to source statistics are given. Ensure policy and ministerial statements are not included in the release of official statistics

3.8. Provide a straightforward way for users to contact the producer team

3.9. Release revisions and corrections of errors transparently and as soon as possible in line with the organisation's published policy, being clear about the nature and scale of change

3.10. Ensure the status of the statistics is clear in the release – state whether they are accredited official statistics, official statistics or official statistics in development, and if the accreditation has been removed, draw users' attention to the loss of accreditation

3.11. Be transparent about your approach to the orderly release of statistics in a published release practice policy

Manage data responsibly

4. Producers must manage data and statistics safely and securely and be open about how data will be used and protected
so that the public can be confident about providing their own information for official statistics

4.1. Be ethical in how you collect, access, use and share data to serve the public good and be transparent about your approach in a published data management policy

4.2. Consider evidence on the degree to which the collection and use of data for sensitive topics are viewed as acceptable by society, particularly when planning new data collections or exploring new statistical methodologies or in periods of substantial change that impacts an official statistic. Explain your decisions

4.3. Always consider the rights of data subjects and manage in ways that are consistent with data protection legislation. Clearly explain their rights and how their information will be used and protected when collected for statistical purposes

4.4. Keep and handle data safely and securely. Follow all relevant statutory obligations governing the collection, storage, sharing, access, linking and analysis of data. Be transparent about breaches of privacy and act publicly in addressing weaknesses

4.5. Protect the confidentiality of individual and business information when producing statistics. Be transparent about the choices made in line with the producer's published confidentiality policy and apply appropriate disclosure control methods before release

4.6. Hold regular reviews of the data management arrangements used and share best practice across the organisation to ensure data protection procedures remain effective. Keep pace with changing circumstances such as technological advances

Quality

Data and methods that produce assured statistics

Prioritise quality

5. Producers must support a quality culture that promotes good practice and encourages learning and improvement, under the direction of the Chief Statistician/Head of Profession for Statistics
so that the public can have confidence that published statistics are produced by organisations that continuously improve quality standards

5.1. Promote and apply appropriate quality standards, taking account of how quality can change

5.2. Provide a supportive environment to enable staff to propose improvements in ways of working and raise quality concerns

5.3. Promote the sharing of good practice and examples of effective quality management. Learn from both mistakes and good practice and conduct timely reviews of quality concerns

5.4. Work collaboratively with data supply partners, other producers, topic experts, and other partners, to develop a common understanding of quality matters. Welcome and seek their input on ways to improve quality

5.5. Periodically review the effectiveness of your processes and quality management approach and be open about findings and planned improvements

5.6. Keep up to date with possible ways to improve the statistics. Innovate where possible to keep statistics relevant and useful. Collaborate across professions and organisations where appropriate

5.7. Assess the added value of potential improvements to methods and consider the impact on the statistics, including in relation to comparability and coherence

5.8. Publish your quality management approach and explain how it aligns with your organisation's commitment to data quality

Be rigorous

6. Producers must use suitable data sources and sound methods, and assure the quality of the statistics across the production and release processes
so that the public can have confidence that the statistics are produced in robust ways and fit for their intended purpose

6.1. Produce statistics to a suitable level of quality that means they meet their intended uses and are not misleading

6.2. Use the most suitable data for what needs to be measured. Monitor for changes in the data sources and potential bias in the data. Explain any issues and their implications for use of the data in producing statistics

6.3. Check the suitability and availability of existing data from governmental and non-governmental sources before collecting new data. Ensure that opportunities for data sharing, data linkage, cross-analysis of sources, and the reuse of data are taken wherever feasible

6.4. Maintain constructive relationships with those involved in the data provision, statistics preparation and quality assurance processes. Be clear about your data supply and quality requirements and understand how these will be met. Where possible, provide feedback to data suppliers on your use of their data

6.5. Ensure the burden on those providing their information is proportionate to the anticipated benefits

6.6. Use data that are coherent when aggregated, consistent over time and comparable across and within geographies at regional, national and local levels, where possible. Seek to design new statistics in ways that achieve UK comparability and improve consistency and coherence with related statistics

6.7. Base methods on national or international good practice, scientific principles or professional consensus. Identify potential bias and address limitations. Use recognised standards, classifications and definitions. Explain reasons for deviations from these standards and any related implications for use

6.8. Collaborate with experts, other analysts and statistics producers in the UK and internationally, where appropriate and share best practice

6.9. Use a proportionate quality assurance approach across production and release processes. Validate statistics through comparison with other relevant statistics and data sources where possible

6.10. Verify that the statistics are representative and of suitable quality and monitor relevant quality dimensions for both input data and the statistics, such as completeness and validity, accuracy and reliability, coherence and comparability, and timeliness. Quantify statistical error, including bias, and produce measures of confidence, where possible

6.11. Regularly review strengths and limitations in the data and statistics, including the continued suitability of data sources and methods. Be open about your decisions and reasons for change

Be open about quality

7. Producers must prominently explain the quality of the statistics, including strengths and limitations, and communicate the uncertainty in estimates *so that the public can have confidence in using the statistics to make decisions and take actions*

7.1. Prominently communicate the quality of the statistics and the strengths and limitations that impact their use, reflecting the needs of different types of users

7.2. Report on the key quality dimensions such as accuracy and timeliness, and, where possible, give estimates of error and confidence for the statistics. Summarise how uncertainty in the estimates may impact use by using qualifying words, numbers or graphics

7.3. Explain the nature of data sources and why they were selected, anticipating possible areas of misunderstanding or misuse. Prominently communicate limitations in the underlying data and explain their impact on the statistics

7.4. Be clear about the methods used. Explain quality issues related to the methods, systems and processes, including the extent to which the statistics are representative and comparable across the UK and internationally. Describe potential bias and steps taken to address it

7.5. Give advance notice to users of planned changes to methods and sources that will impact the statistics. Explain the nature and extent of the change, and provide a consistent back series where possible

7.6. Clearly flag where statistics are being developed and tested. Be transparent about developments, outlining the plans and expected outcomes, as well as the opportunities for users to be involved in the evaluation of the statistics

Value

Statistics that support society's needs for information

Be relevant

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 those 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

Be clear

9. 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

9.1. Release relevant, clear statistics, data and related information that are suitable for different types of users

9.2. Communicate the statistics in a way that helps users understand issues and support them to make appropriately informed decisions. Provide a clear description of the main messages with suitable data visualisations

9.3. Provide comparisons to support interpretation and signpost other relevant statistics, including within the UK and internationally. Explain the consistency and coherence with other related statistics and sources

9.4. Explain how the statistics add value and serve the public good, to demonstrate and help users and potential users understand how they could inform decision making

9.5. Aid understanding by highlighting potential misinterpretations. Clarify the meaning of the statistics when they are used inappropriately

9.6. Collaborate with other producers across the UK and subject experts to provide appropriate context and insight on the statistical topic

9.7. Give advance notice of material changes to the content of releases, such as the removal of data tables or variables, and any change in the frequency of release

9.8. Consider new ways to present data where appropriate. Improve ways of disseminating and presenting the statistics. Look to better meet the needs of different types of users and potential users

Be accessible

10. Producers must ensure 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*

10.1. Provide free and equal access to regular and ad hoc published statistics

10.2. Make sure statistics, data and related guidance are easily accessible. Provide other relevant information, such as metadata and coding where appropriate

10.3. Account for the needs of disabled people, using accessible communication formats and means which should work with commonly used assistive technologies and be in line with accessibility legislation

10.4. Provide data at the greatest level of detail that is practical to support use. Publish useful supplementary analyses, and statistics and data from commonly asked queries

10.5. Support the reuse of data and statistics, preventing barriers to use where possible. Ensure statistics are reproducible. Support data and statistics to be shared, accessed and linked, using common data standards with associated metadata

10.6. Be transparent about any supplementary statistical services that you provide and, where you decide to charge, publish your pricing policy

10.7. Ensure that statistics continue to be publicly available, such as through web or data archiving

Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis

For all those involved in the public communication of statistics, data and wider analysis

What is the aim of these Standards?

Statistics and data are the lifeblood of democratic debate and so it is vital that they are used in a way that serves the public good. These Standards support that goal by ensuring that public bodies use statistics, data and wider analysis transparently, and with integrity, clarity and accuracy. This approach is fundamental in allowing individuals and organisations to reach informed decisions, answer important societal questions, and provides a mechanism for holding governments to account. As a result, public confidence in the numbers used by public bodies, and the decisions based on them, is built and strengthened.

These Standards apply to the public use of statistics, data and wider analysis beyond the publication of official statistics. This includes, for example, press releases, blogs, social media posts, policy documents, speeches and interviews. Standards for how official statistics should be published can be found in the Standards for Official Statistics.

These Standards are based on the concept of intelligent transparency which is grounded in the core principles of the Code of Practice – Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.

Who are these Standards for?

Everyone has an important role to play in adhering to these Standards, not just analysts and statisticians. The Standards are relevant to a wide range of professions and roles across public bodies including communication professionals, policy professionals, analysts, Permanent Secretaries, Ministers and Special Advisers.

What is the scope of these Standards?

These Standards set out OSR's expectations for how statistics, data and wider analysis should be used in the public domain by public bodies. Data and wider analysis include management information, research and economic modelling. Whilst OSR does not regulate the content of these outputs, we may investigate how they are used in public. We may also draw on evidence relating to these Standards to illustrate how an official statistics producer body supports adherence to Code standards.

What do we mean by intelligent transparency and why is it important?

Intelligent transparency means proactively taking an open, clear and accessible approach to the use of data, statistics and wider analysis in the public domain. Intelligent transparency should be the default approach so that public bodies build trust and confidence in how statistics, data and wider analysis are used and, crucially, in the policies and wider decisions based on them. Intelligent transparency also enhances the reputation of public bodies, ensures that public conversations focus on the important issues, and minimises the risk of misinterpretation or misuse of statistics.

Good practice guidance is provided in **Guidance on the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis**.

The Standards

There are three standards, as listed below. Each standard also has a list of practices, which set out the activities and behaviours required to meet the standard.

To ensure public bodies use statistics, data and wider analysis transparently, and with integrity, clarity and accuracy:

1. **Equality of access**: Public bodies should make statistics, data and wider analysis used in the public domain available to everyone in a timely way
2. **Supporting understanding**: Public bodies should use statistics, data and wider analysis with integrity and communicate them with clarity and accuracy
3. **Decision making and leadership**: Public bodies should seek and use impartial, expert advice when using statistics, data and wider analysis in the public domain

Related information

Understanding TQV: an introduction to the core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV)

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

Standards for Official Statistics: these Standards set out specific statistical practices for those producing official statistics

Code Guidance: information that supports use of the Code, including understanding and delivery of the principles and Standards.

Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis, with required practices

1. Equality of access

Public bodies should make statistics, data and wider analysis used in the public domain available to everyone in a timely way
so that the public can easily access, scrutinise and verify claims and decisions made based on them

- Where possible, draw on the latest and most reliable published official statistics.
- Publish statistics, data and wider analysis, in advance of, or at the same time as, their use in public communications.
- Publish statistics, data and wider analysis separately from any related policy and ministerial statements.
- If unpublished statistics, data or wider analysis are referred to publicly, they should be published as soon as possible, ideally on the same day.

Relevant Code principles: be accessible; be transparent

2. Supporting understanding

Public bodies should use statistics, data and wider analysis with integrity and communicate them with clarity and accuracy
so that the public can easily understand the basis for claims and decisions made

- Do not use statistics, data or wider analysis in a misleading way. This includes not cherry-picking figures, taking figures out of context or placing undue certainty on them.
- Clearly communicate any key context and limitations associated with statistics, data and wider analysis to help the public understand and interpret them.
- Be clear about where statistics, data and wider analysis used in public communications come from. For example, cite sources in publications and on social media.
- Take proactive steps to prevent or minimise the risk of misinterpretation or misuse.

Relevant Code principles: show integrity; be clear; be open about quality

3. Decision making and leadership

Public bodies should seek and use impartial, expert advice when using statistics, data and wider analysis in the public domain
so that the public can have confidence that they have been used appropriately

- Senior leaders should actively promote and embed these Standards within their organisation. This includes communications, policy and analytical leaders.
- Those responsible for public communications should follow advice from professional analysts, such as analysts from the relevant statistical/ analytical teams and/or Chief Statisticians/Heads of Profession for Statistics/Directors of Analysis, on the use of statistics, data and wider analysis.
- In response to the use of unpublished figures in the public domain, the publication of statistics, data and wider analysis should follow advice from Chief Statisticians/Heads of Professions for Statistics.
- Senior leaders, including permanent secretaries and Ministers, should support decisions made by analytical leaders such as Chief Statisticians/Heads of Professions for Statistics/Directors of Analysis.

Relevant Code principles: lead responsibly; be rigorous; be relevant

More information on meeting these Standards, including questions that individuals and teams within public bodies can ask themselves, is available in **Guidance on the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis**, as well as OSR's regulatory guidance on intelligent transparency and FAQs.

Glossary of terms

This glossary provides definitions for terms found in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Key terms:

Trustworthiness – Building confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data

Trustworthiness means that the public can have confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics. It reflects the integrity, professionalism and impartiality of the producers and the statistical system. Trustworthiness signals that statistics are not subject to manipulation or undue influence.

Quality – Data and methods that produce assured statistics

Quality is about using suitable data and appropriate methods to produce reliable statistics that meet the needs of the people who use them. Statistics should inform rather than mislead, and producers must uphold high standards of transparency and quality assurance.

Value – Statistics that support society's needs for information

Value means that statistics benefit the public by informing and supporting decision making, action and debate. It also means that statistics can be accessed, understood and used by a wide range of people. Providing value is the ultimate goal of statistics, as it reflects their contribution to society and the public good.

Code Principles – The ten underpinning principles that unpack the framework of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.

Intelligent transparency – A concept that involves proactively taking an open, clear and accessible approach to releasing and communicating statistics, data and wider analysis so that they can be easily accessed, scrutinised and used appropriately. By ensuring that statistics, data and other analyses help people reach informed decisions, answer important questions and provide a way to hold governments to account, intelligent transparency ensures public understanding of, and confidence in, numbers used by public bodies.

Serving the public good –The principle that statistics should serve everyone, by enhancing knowledge about society and the economy, aiding understanding and shaping actions

Standards for Official Statistics – The standards and practices related to each Code principle that producers of official statistics must follow to ensure statistics serve the public good and support public confidence.

Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis – The three standards and related practices that all public bodies should meet when publicly communicating statistics, data and wider analysis.

Roles and organisations:

Chief Statistician – The accountable officer in an organisation producing official statistics that is given executive responsibility for decision making on statistical matters. In some organisations, this officer will also be the Head of Profession for Statistics; in others, the Chief Statistician will assign responsibility for professional matters to the Head of Profession for Statistics.

Chief Statisticians for the devolved governments – The principal advisers on official statistics in their own governments, with overall responsibility for implementing and co-ordinating professional statistical standards and for ensuring adherence with the Code.

- In Northern Ireland, the Chief Statistician is the Registrar General and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.
- The Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government oversees the Head of Profession in Scottish Government/agencies, and works with the Registrar General for Scotland and Head of Profession for Public Health Scotland.
- The Chief Statistician in Wales is responsible for the leadership of the statistical system in Wales, including setting and maintaining professional statistical standards. This covers both crown and non-crown producers of official statistics.

Devolved governments – The delegation of powers from a central authority to regional or local bodies, granting them a degree of autonomy while remaining under the central government's overall control.

Director General for Regulation – Leads the Office for Statistics Regulation and has a statutory role as the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment. The Director General is also the principal adviser on the assessment and reassessment of official statistics and their compliance with the Code of Practice. The Director General for Regulation is a member of the Board of the UK Statistics Authority, reports directly to the Chair of the Authority and operates independently from the National Statistician and all statistical producers.

Government Statistical Service (GSS) – The community for all UK civil servants that collect, analyse, produce and communicate statistics

Head of Profession for Statistics – Heads of Profession for Statistics oversee their organisations' statistical functions and needs. They are also responsible for applying the provisions set out in statistical legislation and the Code of Practice, both within their own organisation and more generally across the UK statistical system. Heads of Profession play a key role in building public trust in official statistics.

Lead official in an arm's length body – The senior statistician or analyst in an arm's length body (executive agency, non-departmental public body or non-ministerial department) that has been given the responsibility to lead on professional matters by the organisation and works with the Head of Profession for Statistics in a sponsoring department.

Lead statistician or analyst – The person who is professionally accountable for the production of statistical outputs.

National Statistician – Head of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and the government's principal adviser on official statistics. The National Statistician is an executive member of the UK Statistics Authority Board.

Permanent secretaries – Officials who head government departments; the most senior civil servant in a department.

Senior Statistician – In Northern Ireland, Senior Statisticians are the equivalent of Heads of Profession for Statistics. They are responsible for overseeing their own organisation's statistical functions, meeting their organisation's statistical needs, and implementing the provisions set out in statistical legislation and the Code of Practice within their organisation.

Special advisers – Temporary civil servants appointed to support ministers.

UK Statistics Authority – A non-ministerial department with the statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

Statistics:

Accredited official statistics – The status given to official statistics that the Office for Statistics Regulation has confirmed comply with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

Official statistics – Statistics produced by the UK Statistics Authority, government departments, the devolved governments, other crown bodies and organisations listed within an Official Statistics Order, as defined within section 6 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. Accredited official statistics and official statistics in development are sub-sets of official statistics.

Official statistics in development – A temporary label to indicate official statistics that are undergoing development and evaluation under the guidance of the Head of Profession for Statistics. They may be new or existing statistics and will be tested with users in line with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality, and Value.

Types of information:

Data – Characteristics of facts or information, usually numerical, such as observations, opinions, events or transactions, from which conclusions may be drawn. Data are the product of collecting information (source data). They can also be the subject of statistical processing (processed data).

Data sources – The origin or location from which data are generated, accessed or collected. Data may be collected in different ways, including through censuses, surveys (such as sample surveys of households or businesses), returns from administrative systems, as open data from the large-scale release of operational data from government departments, and privately held data from individual private-sector organisations (such as business operational data, and data available through web-scraping).

Data subject – An individual whose personal data are collected, processed and stored. Under relevant legislation, data subjects do not include the deceased or those who cannot be identified or distinguished from others.

Metadata – Information or data that defines and describes other data. Metadata can help people find and identify data, for example, through naming and labelling; describe different data types, relationships with other data and their characteristics; and help with data management, by indicating when and how the data were created, different file types or any other technical information.

Related information – Information that supports people's use and understanding of the statistics and data, made available alongside the statistics. This information might describe, for example, the sources or methods used, quality aspects and analysis, or provide a narrative about the main findings, context and use. It may explain any revisions or corrections.

Statistics – A collection of measures about a particular attribute compiled from a set of data. Statistics can help us understand overall patterns and draw general conclusions about these attributes for specific parts of the population.

Wider analysis – Analysis that takes place within public bodies, including management information, research and economic modelling.

Standards and legislation:

Accessibility legislation – The requirement to make a website or mobile application accessible by making it perceivable, operable, understandable and robust.

Common data standards, classifications and protocols – Agreed definitions, procedures and ways of working with statistics and data that support their consistency, comparability, coherence and reuse.

Official Statistics Orders – Orders made under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 that specify which non-Crown bodies, in addition to government departments and agencies, are authorised to produce official statistics.

Quality standards and guidance – Documentation produced to ensure that statistics and data are produced to consistent and appropriate levels of quality and are suitable for their intended uses.

Relevant legislation – Laws passed by the UK Government or devolved legislatures that directly impact the design, collection, processing, storage, publication or use of statistics and data, for example laws related to data protection.

Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 – The legal basis for the UK statistical system that established the UK Statistics Authority.

Other terms:

Accountable – Being responsible to the public and demonstrating how the standards of the Code of Practice are achieved, based on evidence of practice and an openness to listen and respond to feedback. Further guidance on accountability can be found here

Ad hoc statistical outputs – Statistical analyses produced and released outside of the scheduled release calendar, for example where there is a pressing need for additional statistics to meet the public interest.

Coding – The act of using computer languages such as R or Python. Coding can be used when producing statistics to automate data manipulation, do statistical analysis, and create visualisations for more efficient and reproducible production.

Coherence – How well data and statistics can be combined in different ways and for different uses.

Comparability – The extent to which statistics from different sources or time periods can be reliably compared.

Competency framework – An outline of the skills and behaviours expected of staff.

Correction of errors – An update to a published output to address mistakes made while producing, publicly sharing and communicating statistics.

Ethical – In accordance with the rules or standards for right conduct or practice, especially in terms of the standards of a profession.

Limitations – Inherent weaknesses in the quality of statistics, data or statistical methods that should be clear to ensure the statistics can be used and interpreted appropriately.

Misleading – When statistics are used to communicate a descriptive statement that the wider relevant statistical evidence would not support, despite otherwise being an accurate statement.

Misuse – The wrong or improper use of statistics so that the audience is led to conclusions that are unjustified or incorrect.

Quality culture – The environment within an organisation which determines how quality is thought about and handled within its production of statistics. This may include organisational or team values, beliefs and behaviours.

Reproducible – Using the same data and methods as the original study to obtain the same results. Analysis can be made more efficient and reproducible using a methodology called Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAPs) – which involves writing analysis as code and using open-source tools. An RAP is designed to be run and re-run numerous times and produce a consistent output.

Scheduled revisions – Planned changes to published statistics to improve quality by incorporating additional data that were unavailable at the point of initial publication.

Sensitive topics – Subjects that can evoke strong emotional reactions, potentially causing discomfort, offense or distress.

Sound methods – An appropriate and robust approach for analysing data to produce accurate and reliable findings.

Statistical independence – Means that decision making about statistical methods and dissemination is free from conflicts of interest, including political and commercial pressures that may influence the production, release and sharing of the statistics and data.

Supplementary statistical services – Providing information, advice and technical help in relation to statistics; conducting assessments of statistics' quality; conducting statistical surveys and analysis; and collecting, adapting and developing data.

Uncertainty – Uncertainty is influenced by randomness and inherent variability, as well as the context in which the statistics are used. Uncertainty reflects the extent to which a user can have confidence in using a statistical estimate for a particular question.

Voluntary application – When organisations producing non-official statistics voluntarily apply the Code of Practice. OSR encourages both government and non-government organisations to consider the framework of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value when publishing statistics or data that might inform public debate. This approach is flexible and entirely optional. Those committing to applying the Code and publishing a statement of compliance can join the voluntary application scheme and be added to the Register of TQV Voluntary Application.