



# Ministry of Defence

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## Ministry of Defence Statement on Statistical Quality Guidelines for Official and National Statistics

### Introduction

1. In accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Official Statistics<sup>1</sup>, all producers of Official Statistics are required to publish quality guidelines. Principle 4 of the Code of Practice states that "Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices."
2. In August 2009, the National Statistician published a set of guidelines aimed at assisting in the interpretation and implementation of the Code of Practice including a publication that addresses quality: Quality, Methods and Harmonisation<sup>2</sup>.
3. The UK Statistics Authority's Regulatory Standard for the quality assurance of administrative data<sup>3</sup> was published in 2015.
4. This document describes the quality guidelines used within the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

### Definitions of Statistical Quality

5. The quality of statistical outputs refers to how well the statistics meet users' needs and whether they are 'fit for purpose'. The definitions of statistical quality in the MOD are based on the European Statistical System's (ESS)<sup>4</sup> five quality dimensions:

**Relevance** - The degree to which the statistical output meets current and potential users' needs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/archive/national-statistician/ns-reports--reviews-and-guidance/national-statistician-s-guidance/quality--methods-and-harmonisation.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/monitoring/administrative-data-and-official-statistics>

<sup>4</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality>

**Accuracy and reliability** – The degree of closeness between estimated results and the true value that the statistics were intended to measure.

**Timeliness and punctuality** – Timeliness is the length of time between the reference point of the data and when it is published, while the latter is the amount of time between the planned and actual release date of the publication.

**Accessibility and clarity** – Accessibility is the ease with which users can obtain the statistics, including supporting documentation. Clarity relates to how easy it is for users to understand the data. Statistics should be presented in a clear and understandable format and available on an impartial basis.

**Comparability and coherence** – Comparability is the extent to which publications produced from different statistical processes have the potential to reliably be compared, and the latter is the extent to which statistics are comparable over time, place and geographical area.

6. In addition, we also consider the following quality components:

- Trade-offs between output quality components
- Assessment of user needs and perceptions
- Performance, cost and respondent burden
- Confidentiality, transparency and security

### **General policy on quality**

7. The MOD aims to produce Official Statistics of the highest possible quality, balanced against costs consistent with our duty to use public resources efficiently, and taking into account the expected uses of the statistics. We focus on both output (our Official Statistics) and process quality which relates to the underlying methods used to produce our publications.

8. A Background Quality Report (BQR) will be used to communicate with users about the quality of the statistics within National and Official Statistics publications. BQRs will normally be updated on an annual basis, or when major changes occur to the production of the statistical output. Any updates to BQRs will be published on the same day as the associated statistical outputs are released.

9. All National and Official Statistics include a link, usually on the front page of the publication, to the associated BQR to ensure this information is easily accessible to users.

### **Quality Management**

10. We seek to build quality into our Official Statistics in a number of ways including:

- Validation and cleansing of raw data.

- Using established documented production and quality assurance processes.
- Basing statistics on definitions that are consistent across the department, and where appropriate, with governmental, national and international standards.
- Reviewing our methods and processes where necessary to maximise relevance and utility.

11. We recognise that quality involves a process of continuous improvement. As part of quality management, we review quality aspects and our underlying data collection and processes on a regular basis, and conduct an annual quality risk assessment of our National and Official Statistics.