

User Engagement Strategy for the BIS National Statistics publication *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions*.

Background

This document sets out the actions taken by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in relation to user engagement for the publication *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions* (BPE). Its structure is based on the practices listed under Protocol 1 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Refer to the link below for further information:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice>

This paper will be reviewed and updated once a year.

Practice 1 - Identifying users

Users

There are a wide variety of different users of the *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions* (BPE) publication.

Using evidence from a variety of sources including a user survey, user mailbox and discussions within the Business Population and Demography Statistics User Group, BIS has identified the following main groups of users:

- Central and local government
- Business owners
- Banks
- Academics and students
- Research consultants
- Business representative bodies
- Media
- Overseas governments
- General public

Use made of the statistics

Again, using evidence from a variety of sources including a user survey, user mailbox and discussions within the Business Population and Demography Statistics User Group, BIS has identified the following different uses made of the *BPE* publication:

i. Informing the general public

The *BPE* publication provides estimates of the total number of UK private sector businesses and this is used by the public as a measure of the health of the UK economy. For example, it has been quoted by

the media in making an assessment of the success of government policies through analysing changes in the business population by employee size band¹.

ii. Decision making about policies (policy development and monitoring) and associated decisions about related programmes and projects.

The *Business Population Estimates* are used extensively within government to explain and promote understanding of the size and contribution of the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector to the UK economy (e.g. informed the Growth Review² and the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in 2011, regularly used to answer parliamentary questions).

The *BPE* publication is also used to inform policy development in economic impact assessments³⁴ and in estimating the likely impact of policy changes on the business population. For example, the employment data helped to determine the likely affect of a potential new policy based on employees (e.g. changes to National Insurance Contributions) and the turnover data can be used as a proxy for estimating profits (e.g. it was used for modelling the effects of potential changes in corporation tax).

In addition, the *BPE* publication is regularly used to inform policy development in assessing how many businesses would fall within scope of proposed policy actions (e.g. recently for informing the Business in You campaign, the Business Link Helpline, Web-Fuelled Business programme and the Get Britain Trading 2012 launch⁵).

The *BPE* publication is used extensively by several other government departments and agencies (e.g. HM Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education, the Office for National Statistics, the Prime Ministers Office, the Government Equalities Office, Low Pay Commission and the Insolvency Service) to provide evidence to support policy making. For example, to analyse the impact of the recession on business

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/yourbusiness/8823010/Small-business-employment-falls.html>

² <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/growth/growth-review>

³ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/enterprise/docs/b/11-993-business-improvement-programme-equality-impact-assessment.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/f/12-873-further-education-advanced-learning-loans-regulatory-impact.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.nationalenterprisenetwork.org/news/2012/02/national-enterprise-network-supports-%E2%80%99get-britain-trading-2012%E2%80%99-launch-event-alongside-business-minister-mark-prisk/>

numbers and to provide evidence for regional economic analysis (ONS) and economic impact assessments⁶.

The *BPE* publication is used by BIS to assess the extent of take-up of its policies, for example monitoring take-up of the Web-Fuelled Business programme.

Finally, the statistics are also used by BIS and other research organisations to provide evidence to determine samples sizes and weighting factors for government surveys that monitor business opinion and performance (e.g. the BIS *Small Business Survey*⁷ and the *SME Finance Survey*⁸).

iii. Informing private sector commercial choices

a) Targeting markets

A wide variety of private sector businesses use the *BPE* statistics to learn about the specific industrial sectors that they are operating in, to help determine levels of competition and the size of their market, for instance, to help with business planning.

b) Designing market research surveys

British Telecom uses the statistics for market research, market planning and forecasting.

iv. Informing public marketing campaigns

The *BPE* publication is quoted extensively in BIS marketing campaigns and press releases. For example, in 2012, the statistics were used in the launch of the 'Get Britain Trading' campaign to illustrate the contribution of SMEs to the economy.

Business representative bodies including the Federation of Small Business (FSB) also use data from the *BPE* publication for lobbying purposes.

v. Supporting third sector activity

Private sector businesses have used the *BPE* statistics to support research into the third sector.

vi. Facilitating academic research

The statistics are used by academic institutions and students for research purposes, for example to assess business churn rates, growth and the internationalisation of SMEs. They are also used by

⁶ <http://consultations.hse.gov.uk/gf2.ti/f/16450/427685.1/PDF/-/CD239%20Appendix%20A.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/enterprise/docs/b/11-p74-bis-small-business-survey-2010.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/enterprise/docs/10-636-2009-finance-survey-smes-results.pdf>

academia and school children to assess the importance of SMEs to the overall UK economy.

Practice 2 - User awareness

BIS primarily uses its website to make users aware of information relating to *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions*. For example from the home page of the publication, all the main outputs are easily accessible to users, see link below for further information:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/analysis/statistics/business-population-estimates>

Links to the former BIS publication, *Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Statistics for the UK and Regions* and also to other related business publications, such as the ONS produced *UK Business: activity, size and location* and *Business Demography* have been made available. The date of release for the next edition of the publication is provided here.

Further information on user engagement is available via a user engagement section of the BPE home page, where users can both provide feedback and be kept informed of future developments to the publication. See link below: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/analysis/statistics/business-population-estimates/bpe-user-engagement>

To be kept informed of publication dates and other new developments in relation to *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions*, users can ask to join the *BPE* e-mail distribution list (by sending an e-mail to the mailbox address: enterprise.statistics@bis.gsi.gov.uk).

BIS also monitors information on usage levels of *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions*. Refer to the annex of this paper to view information on the number of downloads for the publication.

Practices 3 & 6 - Users views & User feedback

BIS launched a user survey for the publication at the end of 2010 to get the views of users on the usefulness of the publication overall, the various outputs and also suggestions on how it could be improved. The survey is available via the following link: <http://surveymonkey.com/s/dmfydpb>

A summary of the results of the *BPE* survey (covering the period May 2011 to May 2012) are available on the *BPE* User Engagement web page, see above for more details and link. The results are generally positive and BIS is currently reviewing feedback from users to determine if and when any changes to the publication can be implemented.

BIS will continue to capture, update and publish the results and review feedback from the *BPE* user survey annually, before commencing work on the new publication.

BIS also runs an enterprise statistics mailbox to respond to queries from the general public relating to enterprise or business statistics and to also collect feedback from data users on the usefulness of the publication. BIS ensures that all queries are monitored and answered within 15 working days. The address of the mailbox is: enterprise.statistics@bis.gsi.gov.uk.

Collaborating closely with the ONS and the devolved administrations, BIS has set up and chaired the first meeting of the Business Population and Demographics Statistics (BPDS) User Group. The purpose of the User Group was to share information about the publications with users and to give users an opportunity to share their uses of the data with each other, and provide feedback and raise any issues. Information about the User Group is published on the *BPE* user engagement web page, including the minutes of meetings. Refer to the link to the user engagement webpage above for more information.

BIS monitors all sources of feedback listed above (the Enterprise Statistics mailbox, the Business Population and Demographics Statistics User Group, and the *BPE* user survey) to maintain a log of suggestions on how the *BPE* publication can be improved. Before starting work on each new release, BIS will review this list and consider whether any developments or amendments are feasible, given resource availability and the value the change would add.

Practice 4 - Quality

Further information on how the estimates for *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions* are calculated from the various underlying data sources is presented in the Methodology and Quality Note. The Methodology and Quality Note also provides information on the Revisions policy. The Methodology and Quality Note for each publication is available via the link below:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/analysis/statistics/business-population-estimates>

Practice 5 - Evaluation of experimental statistics

Currently BIS has no plan to produce any new experimental statistics as part of *BPE* publication, however we would inform and consult our users (e.g. via our website and at the BPDS User Group), if we decided to do this.

Practice 7 - Consultation

In 2008/09 BIS ran a public consultation and methodology review of the former publication *Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Statistics for the UK and Regions*. A link to the consultation and the also the Government Response document can be found below:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110920151722/webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/enterprise_old/enterprisesmes/page49415.html

The purpose of the consultation was to get feedback from users of the publication on how useful the publication was and get suggestions on how it could be improved. Subsequently *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions* was released in 2011, which implemented many of the changes suggested by both experts and users. These improvements have made the estimates more robust, accurate and relevant than before.

Queries and feedback

Any queries or feedback on this document should be forwarded to the Enterprise Statistics mailbox address: enterprise.statistics@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Annex – BPE Download statistics

Information on download statistics for the publication has been collected for *BPE 2011*. The figures below show the average monthly downloads for the three main statistical outputs for the 2011 edition between January and April 2012.

Name of output	Average monthly downloads
Statistical Release:	681
Detailed Excel datasheet:	442
Methodology Note:	51

BIS will update these statistics annually.

Last revised: June 2012.