



Cabinet Office

Civil Service Statistics

Development Plan

August 2020

Annual statistics on the size, structure, demographics, earnings and location of the Civil Service workforce have been published for a number of years, with reports going back to 1970 available [online](#).

Responsibility for the collection and publication of Civil Service Statistics transferred to Cabinet Office (CO) from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 1 October 2018.

Cabinet Office committed to the ongoing review and improvement of Civil Service Statistics and the associated Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES) to ensure that they continued to be of the highest quality and public value. As part of this commitment, Cabinet Office will publish ongoing development plans, setting out intended areas for improvement.

Civil Service Statistics are designated National Statistics in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment from the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) — the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority — undertook a compliance check of Civil Service Statistics during December 2019 and January 2020 to ensure that National Statistics standards have been maintained following the recent transfer of responsibility to Cabinet Office. The OSR confirmed continuing National Statistics designation in their [letter](#) published 19 February 2020.

Below we list some actions we have taken to improve these statistics, as well as our forward looking plans to increase their quality, trust, and value. Against each planned action we look to give users an indication of the timelines involved.

We will look to update our development plan on a regular basis.



Operational context & administrative data collection

What we have done

- Identified immediate areas for improvement in the collection process.
- Reviewing and refreshing the ACSES specification, improving its layout, readability and usefulness.
- Reviewing and refreshing the data collection template, providing more clarity on what data is being requested and why.
- Adding initial validation checks and providing summary outputs to the data collection template to assist data suppliers in quality assuring their data return ahead of sending to Cabinet Office team.
- Adding additional validation routines to run on receipt of data to capture data errors and inconsistencies much earlier in the process.
- Implementing a [Reproducible analytical pipeline](#) (RAP) approach using software written using the 'R' programming language, enabling a robust and automated transition from the raw data to the published tables and figures.
- Providing data suppliers with an html 'dashboard' that produces tables and visualisations of their data and comparisons to previous years' enabling a better and more efficient and engaged sign-off process.

What we will do

- Continue to develop our internal processes to drive efficiencies in the collection and publication process. **Ongoing**
- Work closely with data suppliers to better understand any issues or pinch-points in the collection process and to help CO team understand data suppliers' operational context. **Ongoing**
- Work with those data suppliers where there are concerns over any data quality issues, including non-response. **Ongoing**
- Provide further detailed descriptions of any implications for quality or accuracy within the statistics. **Ongoing**
- Scope alternative methods for data collection alongside existing processes, considering a range of innovative digital tools and techniques. **Ongoing**
- Further review the collection specification, working with key data suppliers to arrive at the optimal layout and most useful way of communicating the data request. **Ongoing**
- Work with key stakeholders and users to refresh current data fields and assess the need for new data, making sure relevance and value are maintained. **Ongoing**



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- Update the publication to include the recommendations of the OSR in their compliance check letter **August 2020**

Communication with data supply partners

What we have done

- Met with data suppliers ahead of the collection, sighting them on upcoming requirements and responding to their questions and concerns
- Providing data suppliers with clear communications and a central point for contacting Cabinet Office team.
- Ensured that an up-to-date and comprehensive data suppliers contact list was developed with full details of all relevant primary, secondary and sign-off contact details.
- Provided an improved specification and collection template to aid the data supply process.
- Enhanced the sign-off process by providing data suppliers with a 'dashboard' to better visualise their own data and provide quicker sign-off and/or data errors.

What we will do

- Continue updating guidance on the process including the specification, template and validation process. **Ongoing**
- Arrange a 'wash-up' meeting with data suppliers to enable effective feedback and to improve future processes. **September/October 2020**
- Develop an open-ended feedback mechanism so that data-suppliers can continue to help inform the data collection process. **Ongoing**
- Establish an effective fora to discuss the ongoing statistical needs in the data collection system and quality of supplied data. **September/October 2020**

User Engagement

What we have done

- Met with data suppliers, policy officials and key users ahead of the data collection process to understand issues, concerns and to develop appropriate processes.
- Provided an open-ended feedback mechanism for data suppliers (as users) to inform the development of the statistics



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- Developed a user survey on the publication website to enable users to provide valuable feedback on the statistics.

What we will do

- Communicate with our known users and suppliers to alert them to the most recent publication and request views on future engagement methods.
July 2020/ongoing
- Publish a blog on to highlight the publication and draw users attention to the statistics **TBC**
- Refresh our understanding of users, looking at request logs, google analytics, and experts in the same field. **Ongoing**
- Update and publish as necessary further information on users and uses of Civil Service Statistics. **Ongoing**
- Develop an appropriate communication strategy that meets user need, considering appropriate social media channels e.g. twitter, blogs, e-newsletters and email notifications. **Ongoing**
- Use existing internal Civil Service fora to engage with users on relevant statistical issues. **Ongoing**
- Review feedback on an ongoing basis and publish associated actions in an annual work programme update after publication. **Sept/Oct 2020 and ongoing**

Narrative and public value

What we have done

- Developed a more engaging 'cleaner' bulletin, making better use of charts and data visualisations alongside the descriptive narrative, drawing out the main findings much earlier and in a clearer way.
- Provided further clarity for users around scope and definitions, and how these impact the use of the statistics, looking to develop and build on these improvements in the future publications.

What we will do

- Work with specialist colleagues to continue to improve the narrative in the release, looking at trends and context. Consider the use of peer review, drawing on experience and expertise from within the government statistical community and across our statistical users to evaluate user value.
Ongoing
- Review the current content of the publication and consider potential changes, taking into account impacts on data suppliers and users as appropriate.
Ongoing



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- Look at publishing a range of additional analyses to give users better understanding of some of the drivers of change in the statistics. **Ongoing**
- Scope the development of an API to help facilitate user interrogation of the underlying data. **Ongoing**