



Home Office

Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics – Release practices

Home Office Analysis and Insight

June 2021

Background

The Home Office recognises that handling arrangements for the release of statistics are crucial to protecting the integrity and credibility of all official statistics. The [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#) created a new framework for National Statistics and established the independent UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) as a non-ministerial department, accountable to Parliament and responsible for safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that 'serve the public good'. The UKSA are responsible for preparing and publishing the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

The Home Office Chief Statistician and Head of Profession for Statistics are directly responsible for the management and production of Home Office official statistics outputs. They uphold and advocate the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics, and other guidance, relating to the associated release practices. This compliance statement sets out the position in the Home Office and its agencies, taking account of relevant legislation and the Code of Practice for Statistics (launched February 2018).

This statement describes how the Home Office, Ministers, Private Offices, Policy Divisions, Special Advisers, Press Officers, and other colleagues work with National Statistics outputs and the Code of Practice and clarifies roles and responsibilities.

In particular, this statement recognises that:

- there should be publicly accessible information on how all Home Office official statistics outputs are released;
- the publication of Home Office's official statistics outputs will be pre- announced according to official statistics practices, and in accordance with the Home Office Freedom of Information [publication scheme](#);
- the public release of Home Office official statistics outputs should take place in an orderly and planned way in order to ensure that there is no perception of interference in the statistics;
- Home Office statisticians may need to involve policy and operational staff in quality assurance of the statistics before their release;
- Ministers should be properly briefed, as part of pre-release arrangements, so as to be able to comment at the time of release.

Key definitions

Official statistics

Official statistics are statistics that are produced by crown bodies, those acting on behalf of crown bodies, or those specified in statutory orders, as defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

National Statistics

Statistics which have been assessed by the Office for Statistics Regulation as fully compliant with the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are a sub-set of official statistics.

Experimental statistics

Experimental statistics are newly developed or innovative statistics. These are published so that users and stakeholders can be involved in the assessment of their suitability and quality at an early stage. They are a subset of official statistics.

Scope of official statistics in the Home Office

The Home Office is responsible for collecting, compiling, processing, analysing, interpreting, and disseminating a wide range of official statistics which cover key areas of national interest in crime, policing, fire and rescue, immigration, terrorism, and animal scientific procedures.

Home Office statistical staff aim to provide a world-class service, making a vital contribution to the effective and efficient management and development of the Government's knowledge base, and providing trusted, relevant and timely advice for policy formulation.

However, the decision to designate these as National Statistics rests with the Office for Statistics Regulation.

None of the Home Office statistics are regarded as market sensitive.

The timing and release of official statistics

Release dates for all the Home Office's official statistics outputs are pre-announced via the [Research and statistics release calendar](#) on GOV.UK.

The release of both regular and ad hoc official statistics should be pre-announced through a 12-month release calendar with the month of publication normally pre-announced in advance and a specific release date at least four weeks in advance where practicable.

The timing of official statistics releases is the responsibility of the Home Office Chief Statistician (and Head of Profession for Statistics), in consultation with the National Statistician, as required.

Users are able to subscribe to an [e-mail service](#) on the GOV.UK website that will inform them of the release of a new Home Office research or statistics release on the day of publication.

Ad hoc Statistical releases

On occasion it may be necessary to publish statistical releases on a more ad hoc basis. Releases of the nature should only be in exceptional circumstances, releasing to a regular publication schedule is the expected standard. Circumstances where an ad hoc release might be appropriate could be in response to an urgent situation where it is in the public interest to make statistics available as soon as possible, or where some statistics have prematurely been disclosed ahead of planned publication and should be fully published to enable equality of access. The final decision on whether an ad hoc release is required is the responsibility of the Home Office Chief Statistician.

Ad hoc statistical releases should:

- i. be clearly labelled as official statistics;
- ii. be accompanied by an explanation as to why the release is being published;
- iii. be pre-announced as far in advance as possible, even if this is only a few hours' pre-announcement should be made to assist users
- iv. include statistical commentary and information about methods and quality to the standard expected in a regular official statistics release.

Format of official statistics releases

As per the Code of Practice for Statistics the Chief Statistician (and Head of Profession for Statistics) has sole authority for deciding on the content and timing of the release of regular and ad hoc official statistics. They may, however, consult with the National Statistician as necessary.

Releases will normally be in the form of a statistical bulletin – giving a number of tables and commentary – the first page(s) of which provide a short summary of the key points. Additional, more detailed, data are made available subject to restrictions of confidentiality and data quality.

In general, regular statistical releases are prepared to a standard format. Any ministerial statement about policy is issued separately from the statistical release.

Pre-release access to National and Official Statistics

In order to ensure that Home Office statistical publications are accurate and meet the highest professional standards, a limited number of officials are invited to comment on the draft publications in advance of their finalisation, specifically for quality assurance purposes.

In addition, a number of officials and Ministers receive up to 24 hours pre-release access to enable Ministers to respond to questions immediately following release. The number of named Ministers and officials who have pre-release access to official statistics is continually reviewed by individual teams and kept to the minimum number of officials.

The lists of officials given access to early drafts for quality assurance purposes and for briefing preparation within the pre-release access time period is approved by the Home Office Chief Statistician (and Head of Profession for Statistics) using the criteria set out in the legislation, in order to minimise access. These lists will be made available for each statistics publication at, or prior to, publication on the relevant collection page on GOV.UK.

A security marking – Official Sensitive – is used on each page of hard copies of documents containing statistics that are not already in the public domain. Similar arrangements will be made for statistics that are disseminated by electronic means, with each e-mail message including a similar security marking. An example of the wording of such statements is provided at Annex A.

In the event of non-compliance with pre-release access conditions, access may be withdrawn.

Minimum standards to apply to other data used by the Home Office

The Release Practices indicated in the Code of Practice for Statistics and the Statistics and Registration Act 2007 applies in full to National Statistics releases and are best practice for other statistical outputs.

Statistics due to be published in a National Statistics publication will not be released to the public in advance of that publication. This applies not just to the statistics that will appear in the publication ('statistics in their final form') but to the underlying detailed data where it is judged that such release would undermine the principles of the Code of Practice. This is to preserve the principles of orderly release, ensure that published data is consistent and complete, and to ensure the efficient use of public resources.

The Home Office and its agencies produce a great deal of other data. Some of this is management information, which is not routinely published, but is in regular use at national, regional, and local area level. Such information is used in everyday work by a large number of staff and may be published from time to time. This data is not subject to the pre-release access practices, although the original source of the data is sometimes the same as that used for official statistics releases. Where this is the case a principle is applied that data is only made available for management or operational use and is not for general public quotation.

The public are not always able to readily distinguish between other statistical information and National Statistics releases, although the latter will always make use of the National Statistics logo and will be clearly labelled. On account of this, all Home Office producers of data (who publish data) shall aim to follow the best practices and principles laid down in the

Code of Practice and in the National Statistician's guidance [Management information and official statistics](#).

Further information and contact details

For more information about the application of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics within the Home Office please see:

[Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics](#)

[Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics – Revisions and Corrections Policy](#)

[Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics – Release practices](#)

Please contact the responsible statistician named in each publication for details on specific administrative sources. Alternatively, the Chief Statistician for the Home Office can be contacted at:

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Email: ChiefStatistician@HomeOffice.gov.uk

Annex A Draft Security marking for Official Statistics outputs

The following wording is included when sharing Official or National Statistics documents with those granted pre-release access.

These are official statistics and should be treated as 'Official Sensitive'. These statistics are for named individuals only (not for sharing with anyone else or to be used in other documents before publication). Any accidental or wrongful release should be reported immediately and may lead to an inquiry. Wrongful release includes indications of the content or the trend of the figures including descriptions such as 'favourable' or 'unfavourable'.