



Cabinet Office

# Civil Service Statistics

## Development Plan

July 2021

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.

Official statistics should comply with 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 Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. The OSR 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. Continuing National Statistics designation was confirmed by the OSR 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.



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## Operational context & administrative data collection

### What we have done

- Identified immediate areas for improvement in the collection process.
- Reviewed and refreshed the ACSES specification, improving its layout, readability and usefulness.
- Reviewed and refreshed the data collection template, providing more clarity on what data is being requested and why.
- Added further validation checks and providing summary outputs to the data collection template to assist data suppliers in quality assuring their data return.
- Added additional validation routines to be run on receipt of returned data in order to capture data errors and inconsistencies much earlier in the process.
- Implemented 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.
- Provided 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.
- Added new, and refined some existing data fields to enable the publication of gender pay gap statistics aligned to the statutory regulations
- Added a new data field to identify the 'Function' associated with an individual's role.
- Included better labelling of the charts in our statistics bulletin, enabling users to identify the source data table from which the charts are derived.

### What we will do

- Continue to develop our internal processes to drive efficiencies in the collection and publication process. For example:
  - Using a Secure File Transfer Portal for the distribution of spreadsheet templates. We are developing this for use in the 2022 collection.
  - Build on our Reproducible Analytical Pipeline (RAP) approach for our internal data processing.
- 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. For example:
  - Using the Civil Service workforce MI working group and individual departmental outreach sessions **Ongoing**
- Work with data suppliers and policy leads where there are concerns over any data quality issues, including non-response. For example:



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- o We worked with Functional Leaders in 2021 to focus on improving the quality and quantity of responses to the Function data field.
  - o We will re-focus our efforts and work with appropriate colleagues to drive up reporting rates for those variables where non-response remains relatively high
- Provide further detailed descriptions of any implications for quality or accuracy within the statistics. For example:
  - o Improve the detail provided within our Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) document for variables impacted by quality concerns
- Continue to scope alternative methods for data collection alongside existing processes, considering a range of innovative digital tools and techniques. For example:
  - o We continue to work closely with colleagues across Cabinet Office developing the Shared Services strategy and the wider transition to cloud based services for our data suppliers.
- 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. For example:
  - o We have improved our specification template, making it easier to navigate and to give more clarity on our requirements
- 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. For example:
  - o In recent years we have included new data fields relating to gender pay gap, functions and socio-economic background.
- Update the publication to include the recommendations of the OSR in their compliance check letter. For example:
  - o Included data table sign-posting in the charts **August 2020 and ongoing**

### Communication with data supply partners

#### What we have done

- We continue to meet with data suppliers at key points ahead of the annual 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 supplier's 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.



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- 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. **Aug/Sept 2021**
- 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. **Aug/Sept2021**

## 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
- 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. **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**



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- 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. **August/Sept 2021 and ongoing**

### Narrative and public value

#### What we have done

- Developed a more engaging bulletin, making better use of charts and data visualisations alongside the descriptive narrative, drawing out the main findings 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**
- Look at publishing a range of additional analyses to give users better understanding of some of the drivers of change in the statistics. **Ongoing**
- Improve the accessibility of these statistics, looking to be fully compliant with recognised accessibility standards by:
  - o Developing a separate data tool to replace the standard tables. This will allow users to directly interrogate the underlying ACSES data-set, producing outputs in a fully accessible format. **August 2021 and ongoing**
  - o Publishing the statistical bulletin in HTML format in July 2022