

Statistical Guidance

# **Policy Statement on Quality Guidelines**

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## **Introduction**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed to producing accurate, timely, high quality official statistics publications that take into account user needs and which are produced and disseminated in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's (UKSA) Code of Practice. This note sets out the Department's guidelines for ensuring we produce quality assured statistics.

The quality of statistics is assessed according to the European standard for quality reporting, which contains nine quality dimensions which are: relevance; accuracy; accessibility and clarity; timeliness and punctuality; coherence and comparability; output quality trade-offs; user needs and perceptions; performance, cost and respondent burden; and confidentiality, transparency and security.

The following quality principles underpin the delivery of statistics in DWP.

## **Relevance**

- DWP statistics will be fit for purpose and relevant to identified user needs
- Harmonised concepts and definitions in statistical publications are used wherever possible in our statistical releases. Where a harmonised definition is available but not used, the reasons will be explained.
- Where statistical releases are dependent on administrative data sources, the statistical requirements of the administrative systems should be promoted

## **Accuracy**

- All DWP official statistical publications contain a description of major data quality issues relating to the release; and any impact that these have on a time series or comparisons between different groups covered by the statistics.
- Where appropriate, our statistical releases are independently assured by external experts or by internal specialists who are separate from the production process.
- Administrative data is published with details of how it is collected to allow users to understand its strengths and limitations.
- Survey data is presented with key information on sampling variability, confidence intervals, response rates and other relevant measures to allow users to make informed judgments on overall accuracy.
- All new official statistics outputs will be developed or overseen by qualified analysts who are trained in embedding quality into new products and processes.

## Timeliness and punctuality

- We take into account user requirements when deciding when statistical reports should be published and how frequently they are updated.
- Statistical outputs are produced in a timely manner and dates of release are pre-announced in accordance with the Code of Practice on Gov.uk [here](#);
- if the pre-announced date of release needs to be changed, we will provide an explanation on the [DWP statistics page](#);
- information on pre-release access will be published via a link on the [DWP statistics page](#)

## Accessibility and clarity

- All of our official statistics can be found on the [DWP statistics page](#)
- the Department publishes statistics via a range of dissemination methods including [Stat-Xplore](#) which is an online tool that lets you create and download customised statistical tables, and view the results in interactive charts;
- Methodologies, processes and practices are documented, and documentation is kept up to date and made available publicly where appropriate. This documentation is regularly reviewed to follow any emerging best practice or to learn from experience.

## Coherence and comparability

- As part of the quality assurance process, where a variable or statistic has changed markedly or looks unusual, it will be reviewed alongside related series from either within DWP or elsewhere, to check consistency and to understand the reasons for any significant differences;
- Our official statistics releases contain relevant breakdowns to enable users to make comparisons over time and/or between subgroups or geographic areas covered in the statistics, where this is possible;
- Comparisons over time will be maintained where possible. Where they are changed, we will provide an explanation in the publication or on the statistics section of the DWP web site;
- Any notable methodological changes to our official statistics will be pre-announced, either in a prior release or on the statistics section of the [DWP statistics page](#).

## **Output quality trade-offs**

- Analysis of the trade-offs between the different aspects of quality forms part of periodic reviews of existing statistics and planning for new work;
- The main trade-off arising in DWP statistics is timeliness against accuracy. We always assess the right balance taking into account fitness for purpose, and fully explaining any compromises in accuracy for improved timeliness;
- We will use experimental statistics as a means for signalling where significant trade-offs have been made and seeking user feedback.

## **User needs and perceptions**

- We consult with users of our statistics to understand how they use our statistics and what their needs are. These are prioritised, taking in account the resources available;
- We will consult and/or assess new questions in our surveys and pilot if necessary before they are put into a final questionnaire;
- We seek feedback from website users and conduct user satisfaction surveys as appropriate for the particular output.

## **Performance, cost and respondent burden**

- Data is gathered in an efficient and cost-effective manner, whether from surveys or administrative sources. Regardless of the source of the data, we will regularly check the quality of data being collected and whether there are any new, more efficient opportunities for sourcing data;
- Respondent burden is minimised by making extensive use of administrative sources e.g. the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS). DWP follow standard Survey Control procedures before commissioning new surveys.

## **Confidentiality, transparency and security**

- Data is handled, stored and accessed in a manner which complies with Government and Departmental standards regarding security and confidentiality, and fully meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act;
- Any revisions will be handled in accordance with the Department's revisions policy which is published on the statistics section of the [DWP statistics page](#)

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