

Statement on Quality Strategy Principles and Processes

Department for Transport

Definition

Statistical quality in the Department for Transport is defined as meeting users' needs with particular reference to the relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, comparability and coherence of the statistics collected, analysed and reported.

Four principles underpin the delivery of statistical quality in the Department for Transport:

- Users are identified and dealt with in a spirit of consultation and responsiveness, and their needs prioritised and met within available resources.
- Methodologies, processes and practices are documented to the correct level of detail for their purpose, kept up to date and made available where appropriate.
- Statistical processes and outputs are monitored and measured against standards with a view to their maintenance and improvement.
- Suppliers are respected and dealt with ethically, legally and effectively.

The key components of statistical quality in the Department for Transport are given below. To see how these principles and their key components are put into practice, reference should also be made to the Department for Transport procedural documents, identified below, which overlap with and reinforce particular aspects of delivering statistical quality in the Department for Transport.

Relevance

Relevance is defined as the degree to which the statistical product meets user needs for both coverage and content. Assessments of relevance needs to consider who are the users of the statistics, what are their needs, and how well does the output meet these needs.

Users of Department for Transport statistics should expect that they will be appropriately consulted about quality principles and strategy in line with the Department for Transport User Engagement Strategy.

Accuracy

For survey data the definition of accuracy is the closeness between an estimated result and the unknown true value. Accuracy can be split into sampling error, which are based on the size of the sample and the sampling methodology, and non-sampling error. Non-sampling error includes errors due to:

- the coverage of the survey not accurately reflecting the population for which conclusions would be drawn
- non-response to the survey; especially where the response varies across subgroups; measurement inaccuracies
- errors in processing the data
- modelling assumptions about the data

For administrative databases the definition of accuracy relates to how well the information is recorded and transmitted and includes;

- Completeness of the data
- Timeliness of recording and transmission
- Accuracy of recording of data items
- Correct use of coding
- Correct interpretation of the data items.

In addition, consideration should be given to whether or not the database contains material that is appropriate for the statistical inquiry being undertaken.

All DfT Statistical publications will contain a full description of data quality issues relating to the release; and any impact that has on analysis of changes over time; or comparisons between different groups will be transparent to a lay and expert audience.

All Statistical publications will be fully compliant with the published Revisions Policy and will have specific details as to how they are applying the Revisions Policy.

Survey data will be presented with full information on sampling, variability; confidence intervals; response rates and other relevant criteria to allow users to make informed judgements on quality.

Administrative data will be published with details of how it is collected to allow users to understand its strengths and limitations.

Timeliness and Punctuality

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication. An assessment of timeliness and punctuality should consider the following:

- Production time for the statistical release
- Frequency of release
- punctuality of release

All our publications will comply with the Code of Practice on pre-announcement dates of publications. We will publish Statistical releases as soon as possible after the relevant time-period. Statistical publications will be produced in line with our User Engagement and Customer Service Strategies.

Accessibility and Clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data. It also relates to the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the metadata, illustrations and accompanying advice. Specific areas where accessibility and clarity may be addressed include:

- Needs of expert and non expert users
- Consistency of standard in relation to revisions, rounding, data suppression (often required to maintain confidentiality) and spreadsheet type
- Help to locate information
- Clarity
- Dissemination

Statistical publications will be published in line with the Department for Transport accessibility policy for internet publications.

All publications will use Plain English wherever possible.

Comparability

Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and sphere. Comparability should be addressed in terms of comparability over:

- Time
- Spatial areas e.g. sub-national, national, international
- Sub-populations of the data e.g. gender, mode of transport

We will use harmonised concepts and definitions in statistical publications wherever they are available. Any statistical publication which does not use harmonised definitions will clearly explain why the harmonised definition has not been used and any plans to move it onto a harmonised basis where possible.

Coherence

Coherence is defined as the degree to which data derived from different sources or methods but which refer to the same phenomenon are similar. Coherence should be addressed in terms of:

- Data produced at different frequencies
- Other statistics in the same area
- Sources and outputs
- Coverage of different surveys and databases
- Definitions and coding used for different databases.

As standard practice, we will release related statistical publications on the same day in order to aid user understanding unless:

- This would mean significant delay to one set of published figures in order to present the coherent set of releases
- User Engagement suggests that separate releases on separate days would be preferable

Where related measures are published across several publications we will make it clear to users where the related information can be found.

Confidentiality

As standard practice we will ensure that all information is kept secure and ensure that information released does not reveal the identity of an individual or organisation or any private information relating to them taking into account information that might be available from other sources.

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