

Statistical notice: Ofsted revisions policy for official statistics

Statistical policy statement on revisions

Principle 2, practice 6 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires producers of official statistics to publish a revisions policy for those outputs that are subject to scheduled revisions and to provide a statement explaining the nature and extent of revisions at the same time as they are released.

Principle 2, practice 7 of the code requires producers of official statistics to correct errors discovered in statistical reports and to alert stakeholders promptly.

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics is available at:
www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html.

Version control

Version	Date	Details
1.0	June 2014	First release
2.0	January 2017	

Revisions

Ofsted aims to avoid the need for revisions to statistical publications unless they are absolutely necessary or planned, such as in the case of provisional statistics, which is subsequently revised. Ofsted puts systems and processes in place to minimise the number and scale of any revisions. A revision is defined as any change to a public domain official statistics, including paper documents and data that are published on the internet, such as Data View.

Revisions to Ofsted's statistical publications are made when we receive subsequent information or data that changes our understanding of previous periods: for example, when inspection grades are published after the provisional statistics for the reporting period have been released.

Revisions will also be published to correct data if there are errors.

Receipt of subsequent information and data changes

Most of our publications planning includes a first release based on provisional data, followed by a second release based on revised or final data. These are planned revisions and occur as part of the normal release practice. The timing of our statistical publications is designed to minimise the need for significant revisions because of changes to the information held. Annex A of this document sets out how and when we will make the revised or final statistics available. The same rationale and processes apply to all releases where planned revisions are made.

However, information held can change following the release of official statistics for reasons unforeseen and subsequent revisions may be needed in exceptional circumstances. Should such a situation arise, we will inform our users of the upcoming revision through our website.

Changes in source systems or methodological changes

Where major changes to the data held in administrative systems are planned or where we propose changes in statistical methodology, definitions or categories, we will, where possible, consult with users on the changes.

Methodological changes and improvements will normally be announced in advance on our website as they may result in revisions to already published data such as time series. Full explanations will be provided with revised data, where possible, to avoid breaks in the published time series. Methodological changes will normally be made in April/May for early years and childcare, social care, children's centres and local authority inspections releases; and in September for maintained schools, independent schools and learning and skills inspections releases.

Errors

Occasionally, errors may occur in our statistical processes. We do everything we can, including constant review of our processes, to minimise these errors. Where an error is detected, the Chief Statistician will consider:

- the importance of the statistics e.g. is it a headline figure or a figure that is being used in significant ways?
- the size of the mistake particularly relative to any stated levels of accuracy
- the recipients of the mistake
- the consequences of the mistake – does it alter the main message of the statistics or any likely use?

Minor errors will be amended as soon as identified and/or corrected in the next statistical release, depending on the type of error. Where errors are considered to be major, Ofsted will issue a statement on its web page and contact known users via policy colleagues and mailing lists.

Handling of revisions

Our policy on handling revisions to statistical publications is to be open and transparent with users about:

- the need for revisions
- how and when to expect standard, scheduled revisions
- the processes for communicating and publishing other revisions.

The official statistics outputs, which are subject to scheduled revisions, will contain a link to this policy. Annex A of this policy sets out how the revisions will be handled. Revisions will be announced in advance through the provisional statistics release or through the Ofsted website. The impact of revisions will be explained when revised and final data are released.

In some cases, scheduled revisions will affect numbers that have been provided in Freedom of Information requests, official correspondence or parliamentary questions. These will not be revised as the original response will have flagged the later release of revised data.

We will announce in advance the date for the release of revised figures or our intention to change the methodology. Revised figures will be released on the pre-announced date and in compliance with the same principles as the original information.

Helen Barugh
Chief Statistician
Ofsted
January 2017

Annex A. Ofsted procedure for planned revisions to official statistics

The following official statistics publications are subject to planned revisions:

- childcare providers and inspections (3 releases annually)
- maintained schools inspections and outcomes (3 releases annually)
- independent schools inspections and outcomes (biannual release)
- initial teacher education inspections and outcomes (annual release)
- further education and skills inspections and outcomes (biannual release)
- children's social care in England (annual release)
- local authority and children's homes in England inspections and outcomes (annual release)
- fostering in England (annual release)
- serious incident notifications from local authority children's services (annual release).

The reasons for and impact of changes between provisional and revised statistics will be explained in the subsequent statistics release. Valid reasons for changes include:

- updating figures to include the outcomes of those inspections carried out during the quarter, but where the inspection report had not been published at the time of compiling the provisional statistics
- updating figures to remove the outcomes of those inspections where the inspection report has been withdrawn or the inspection has subsequently been voided
- correcting any figure that was wrong due to typographical or similar error
- correcting any figure that was wrong due to errors in the compilation of the statistics.



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