

Statistical Notice

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.

Principle 2 Practice 7 of the Code requires producers of Official Statistics to correct errors discovered in statistical reports, and alert stakeholders, promptly.

The Code is at:

www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html

Version number	Date	Details
1	March 2010	First edition
1.1	November 2010	Amended references to Department for Children, Schools and Families, to Department for Education
2	June 2011	Addition of Annex A – statistics subject to scheduled revisions Addition of section relating to additional tables Update Head of Profession
3	April 2013	Deletion of references to the Research and Statistics Gateway and addition of references to gov.uk.

Version 3: Published April 2013

This statistical policy will be reviewed annually.

Revisions

1. The Department for Education (the Department) aims to avoid the need for revisions to statistical publications unless they are absolutely necessary, or planned in the case of provisional statistics which are subsequently revised. The Department also puts systems and processes in place to minimise the number and scale of any revisions.
2. There are three main reasons for revisions to the Department's statistical publications:
 - **Methodology changes:** Planned changes in how information is collected from administrative systems, or changes in statistical methodology to improve accuracy and measurement, or changes in definitions or categories;
 - **Data changes:** Receipt of subsequent (later) information or data; this can be planned e.g. receipt of more accurate information or data for the current period following more detailed validation of the source data; or unplanned e.g. late receipt of information or data from a data provider or administrative system, following discovery of an error or otherwise;
 - **Errors:** Errors in the Department's statistical systems and processes.

Methodology Changes

3. Where major changes to collection systems are planned or where we propose changes in statistical methodology, definitions or categories, we will, where possible, consult with users on the changes. We will always consider the options for maintaining a consistent time-series, for example, revising previously published time-series.

Data Changes

4. Some of our publications are planned on the basis that there will be a first release based on provisional data, followed by a second release based on revised or final data. In these cases, the statistical publication based on provisional data will set out how and when the revised or final statistics will be published. Further information on why and how this happens is included at Annex A.

5. Information held can change following the derivation and release of the relevant official statistics for unplanned reasons. The timing of each statistical publication is designed to minimise the risk of the need for significant revisions because of changes to the information held.

Errors

6. While we have robust procedures in place to minimise errors in statistical systems and processes and regularly review our procedures to minimise the risk of errors, we recognise that errors may occur occasionally. Where such errors do occur, we will assess the significance of the error on the interpretation of statistics in a statistical publication and determine an appropriate response in terms of publishing revisions and alerting users.

Handling of revisions

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

- the need for revisions;
- how and when to expect revisions as part of our standard publication processes;
- the processes by which other revisions will be communicated and published.

9. Communication of revisions to an external audience will primarily be through pages on gov.uk. Major planned changes to collection systems or statistical methodology will be announced in advance. Where changes are unplanned, users will be notified of the need for change and the planned release date for revisions through gov.uk.

Additional tables

10. We aim to publish statistics as soon as possible after data is made available to us and make every effort to publish all the statistical tables for each release together. However, in response to the needs of readers, for some releases we may decide to publish key tables early, and then later add tables that provide a more detailed breakdown of the data. Underlying data published as part of the Coalition Government's transparency agenda is included in this category.

Reporting

11. The annual report from the Head of Profession for Statistics to the National Statistician will provide information on:

- how many unplanned revisions were made to our publications and the reasons for these;
- how many of these revisions were due to errors in our statistical processes and procedures.

Jude Hillary

Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Education

Annex A - Statistics Subject to Scheduled Revisions

Some of our publications are planned on the basis that there will be a first release based on provisional data, followed by a second release based on revised or final data.

Provisional statistics are published based on a dataset where either the data collection is not fully complete, or all the data has been collected but full cleaning, validation or external checking has not been completed. Such statistics are published because there is a user need for the figures, at a time when it is felt that the quality is sufficient to meet those needs, with the caveat that there will be further updates later.

Final statistics are published when all planned collection, checking and validation is complete and the database is closed. There are no further planned changes, and unplanned changes would generally be made only in exceptional circumstances.

Revised statistics represent an interim stage between provisional and final.

The timing of publication of revised and final versions of statistics varies between publications, and between editions of the same publication, and depends on the scale of the changes since the previous version and the level of user interest in the figures. There are three possible ways that revised or final statistics may be published:

- as additional tables to the release of provisional statistics

Example:

In 2010, **Schools, Pupils and Their Characteristics 2010** was first released on 13th May based on provisional data. At this time, data for 10 out of 24,616 schools was missing from the dataset. This was explained in the commentary accompanying the release. Final tables including data for all schools were released on 17th June.

- as a separate statistical release, as soon as figures are available

Example:

In 2010, the Statistical First Release (SFR) **GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2009/10 (Provisional)** was released on 21st October. It reported on GCSE examination results at national and local authority level based on data submitted to the Department by awarding bodies. This data was then subject to a checking exercise by schools and a revised dataset was produced. This revised dataset was used to publish school level Performance Tables, and national and local authority data in **GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2009/10 (Revised)** on 12th January 2011.

- as part of the time series data when the next period's figures are released

Example:

In 2009, **Key Stage 2 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09 (provisional)** was published on 15th December. The attainment data was subject to a checking exercise by schools and a final dataset produced. The final figures were published as part of the time series in **Key Stage 2 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2009/10 (provisional)** the following year, on December 9th 2010.

Analysis prepared in order to provide answers to parliamentary questions and ad hoc requests received by DfE will always use the latest available dataset.