



HM Treasury National Statistics: revisions policy

HM Treasury's National Statistics are governed by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics¹, as determined and assessed² by the UK Statistics Authority³. One of the principles of the code is to publish "a revisions policy for those outputs that are subject to scheduled revisions" and where applicable, to "correct errors discovered in statistical reports, and alert stakeholders promptly".

Each HM Treasury National Statistics release has its own revisions policy, details of which are published in each release. However the general principles for revisions in all these releases are set out in this statement, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Code of Practice.

Our intention is to minimise the need for revisions to National Statistics, but when these do need to occur, our aim is to be open and transparent about any revisions, and to ensure that users of our statistics have easy access to comprehensive information about those revisions.

Definitions

A revision is a change to any National Statistic once it has been placed in the public domain, whether the change is scheduled or unscheduled (including errors), and whether the change is made in a printed document or an item published on the web.

Purpose of Revisions

HM Treasury National Statistics are sourced from financial accounting data, some of which are initially provisional. Where the Treasury's National Statistics releases include provisional data, these will routinely be revised, systematically, in subsequent releases until they reflect final accounting data.

Other revisions can also be made:

- to methodologies or systems to make revised series more accurate or more useful; or
- to reflect changes in classifications; or

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>

² The Treasury's National Statistics outputs are due to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority in Summer 2011, to ensure that we comply with the requirements of the Code of Practice.

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/index.html>

- for statistics showing spending by government departments, to reflect changes in the functions of departments, for instance through machinery of government changes⁴.

Revisions policy on scheduled revisions

‘Scheduled’ revisions are managed systematically, are pre-announced, and are scheduled to happen on particular dates, with details of forthcoming and latest revisions included in the revisions section of the relevant release. Such revisions will take place at the next scheduled release of the series.

Scheduled revisions usually occur for the following reasons:

- where they form a normal part of the release process for a given series, because the series initially reflect provisional financial accounting data, which are subsequently revised until they reflect final accounting data;
- to reflect changes in methodologies or systems, or changes in classifications, or changes in the organisation of government.

For all scheduled revisions, our intention is to give as much prior notice as possible before making any changes to previously published statistics. We would normally announce the schedule for the revision in the preceding release.

For those scheduled revisions involving changes which are deemed by the Head of Profession to materially change the basis or the format of the statistics in such a way that users would benefit from documentation in order to understand the changes better, the Treasury’s policy is to issue a substantive technical note, well in advance of the scheduled release date for the revised series, containing as much information as possible. This note will contain full background and details on the forthcoming changes; and it will be published via the usual arrangements for the relevant statistical release.

In the case of the market-sensitive monthly public sector finances release, published in conjunction with ONS, however, difficult decisions sometimes have to be taken about the most appropriate way to balance competing principles. The National Statistician/Heads of Profession reserve the right to decide when users’ right to know about scheduled revisions or impending corrections (see below) must give way to the requirement not to create market uncertainty. In such exceptional circumstances, and in due course, we will explain the reason for our chosen course of action.

Revisions policy on unscheduled revisions

‘Unscheduled’ revisions are those which do not fit into the managed pattern of revisions described above, and which need to be made at times additional to the scheduled releases. These can be caused, for instance, by errors, or other changes that are ‘avoidable’ in the sense that they are the consequence of changes that have happened because of errors or weaknesses in our procedures or systems, rather than by design.

⁴ Machinery of government is the generic term that refers to the way that central government is organised. More information is available at:
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/government_changes.aspx

For any unscheduled revisions, and regardless of whether the responsibility for any errors is ours or others, we will follow the procedures described below:

We will be open and transparent about the need for any unscheduled corrections and, in normal circumstances, if we ascertain the need for a correction that is substantial or significant, we will inform users about our intention to issue corrections, and by when. We will announce the correction through a prominent alert on our website, and include details about the timetable for the correction; the size and direction of the correction; and the reason for its occurrence. We will also place a notice on the UK National Statistics publication hub at: www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html

Decisions relating to the dissemination of unscheduled corrections will be approved by the Head of Profession in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time but in general terms:

Web versions of releases/publications/tables/articles/etc:

- As soon as possible after we ascertain that a correction is necessary and warranted, we will amend all current electronic versions of any release, publication, table, article etc which contains the affected statistics or text, and re-populate the website as soon as possible with those amended versions. If the correction is minor or insignificant in the sense of being inconsequential and hardly noticeable, we will include a note alerting readers to the fact that certain (albeit insubstantial) corrections have been incorporated, which statistics have been affected, and the reasons for the corrections, but we will not inform users separately. If the error is substantial or significant, we will, in addition, alert users and pre-announce the date for the issuance of the corrections through the procedures set out above.

Paper versions of releases/publications/tables:

- Unless there are compelling reasons, we will not attempt to recall/re-issue any paper versions of any release, publication or table etc that contains the affected statistics or text if it has already been distributed. We will, of course, ensure that when we issue further paper copies, they will include any corrections that have been incorporated in the electronic versions. However, if the error is substantial or significant, we will, where practicable, notify the recipients of paper versions by telephone or e-mail, and point them to the revised version available on the web. If the release or publication has a long shelf-life, we will consider re-issuing a revised paper version.

Specific revision policies for the Treasury's National Statistics releases

The Treasury has four National Statistics releases, as detailed on the page of our website with the reference: '[National Statistics](#)'. Three of these products are subject to scheduled revisions and details of the corresponding revisions policy are available as follows:

- The Treasury's monthly public finance statistics release is published jointly with ONS. The data in this release are open for comprehensive revision every month for all time periods. This ensures that the latest and best data are used for fiscal policy at all times. Further information is published in a separate note on the revisions policy for this release, which is available at: www.statistics.gov.uk/articles/nojournal/Public_Sector_Revisions.pdf

- The Treasury publishes two National Statistics releases containing public spending data:
 - the main Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA) National Statistics release, in April each year;
 - three in-year Public Expenditure In-year Update National Statistics releases, in July, October and February, which update key PESA series between the annual PESA release, and which are timed to include latest provisional or final outturn data, as soon as they become available. Further information on the timing and content of these releases, including the revisions expected in each release, was published as Treasury Press Notice 15/10, which is available at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press_15_10.htm

The data in all these public spending releases are open for revision in every release, to ensure that the latest and most up to date data are published. Long-run data are published on a consistent classification basis, as far back as possible.

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