



HM Treasury National Statistics: user engagement

HM Treasury's National Statistics are governed by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics¹, as determined and assessed² by the UK Statistics Authority³. The Code of Practice is intended to ensure that the range of official statistics meets the needs of users; and that the statistics are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards, and explained well.

The Code of Practice requires producers of official statistics to identify users and their uses of the statistics, and to engage with them on many aspects of the statistics. The Code therefore contains many practices that relate to user engagement. One of the main principles of the Code is that 'the production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public', and another is that 'effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value'.

This statement of user engagement aims to set out the main ways in which the Treasury will engage with users and help them to understand and make the best possible use of the Treasury's published statistics.

Our intention is to be open and transparent about all our statistics, and to ensure that users have easy access to our statistical data. We aim to help users to understand and make the best possible use of our products by publishing clear supporting commentaries, and comprehensive background information and material, and by encouraging users to contact us with feedback and queries.

Users, and uses

We aim to ensure that our statistical products meet the needs of all our users, both internal and external. Our main users are listed here:

- Treasury Ministers and Treasury officials
- Parliament, including the Treasury Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee
- Other government users, including the Office for National Statistics, devolved administrations and local government
- The Bank of England
- The Financial Markets

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>

- International organisations, including the EU Commission, Eurostat, IMF, OECD, and other overseas governments
- The Institute for Fiscal Studies
- Academics and researchers
- Other research bodies and think tanks
- The media
- The general public

We recognise that our users will have a variety of different requirements and uses for our statistics, which we need to fully engage with and understand. We intend to inform and consult users on our future plans to develop our statistics, and to ensure that these plans meet users' requirements, as far as our priorities and resources and data sources allow.

Many of our statistical outputs are produced as key information to help the Treasury achieve its main strategic objectives as a finance ministry, including maintaining sound public finances, and managing public spending. The statistical outputs are also used to assess the extent to which the Government meets key economic objectives. In the particular area of public spending, the analyses in the annual Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA) publication are now released as a National Statistics release in advance of the PESA publication, which is then presented to Parliament as a White Paper by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Networking and consultation

Engagement between Treasury statisticians and key users or user groups takes place regularly, via a range of channels, from formal meetings and conferences to ad hoc events and professional forums. In addition within HM Treasury, statisticians regularly engage with policy colleagues and senior officials to ensure effective and appropriate use is made of statistical resources.

Treasury statisticians take part in meetings of the Central and Local Information Partnership (CLIP) a forum to enable central and local government to work together to develop efficient and effective statistical information. More information on CLIP is available on the [CLIP website](#).

The Treasury normally consults users on any scheduled changes that we propose to make to any series in our statistical releases. Further details are contained in our revisions policy, which is found on our webpage: [HM Treasury Statistics](#).

In 2006 a full public user consultation was carried out on the PESA release. Full details are found at the following link: [PESA consultation website](#). As a result a number of presentational improvements were made to the PESA release.

Statisticians within Treasury respond to a large number of queries on our releases and data sources. This includes formal requests under the Freedom of Information legislation, as well as more informal requests from the public and colleagues across government. We endeavour to respond to all requests as quickly as possible and in all cases we would certainly aim to respond within 20 days.

Inviting feedback and queries about our statistics

We welcome comments or queries on our releases from all our users and each release has a point of contact for specific enquiries related to individual releases. In addition HM Treasury maintains a dedicated point of contact for general statistical enquiries: statistics-enquiries@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk.

Users are welcome to comment on any aspect of HM Treasury statistics, or on our policies relating to National Statistics, which are available on our website: [HM Treasury Statistics](#).

Outputs

The Treasury will publish timely, relevant, high quality statistics in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. In particular we will:

- publish our statistics on pre-announced dates. We publish a timetable of statistical releases for twelve months ahead, which is available on our website, and from the National Statistics Publication Hub. Links to these sites are here:
 - [Timetable for Treasury statistical releases on the UK National Statistics Publication Hub](#)
 - [Timetable for Treasury statistical releases on the HM Treasury website](#)
- release our statistics at the standard time of 9.30 on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to allow time for users to understand and respond to the information within normal working hours;
- issue all statistical releases separately from Ministerial policy statements;
- release our reports as soon as they are judged ready;
- ensure that all our National Statistics releases are made available via both the UK National Statistics Publication Hub and the Treasury website immediately upon release;
- provide open and accessible routes to allow users to comment or ask questions
- respond quickly and accurately to questions and enquiries, or to any complaints
- be transparent if ever we are unable to meet any of these commitments

Publication Strategy: making data as widely available, and accessible as possible

We aim to make our National Statistics accessible to the widest possible community and to maximise the use of our statistical information by as wide range of users as possible, subject to the need to comply with legal, ethical and confidentiality constraints. Our publication strategy is based on the following key principles

- All of our National Statistics releases are available on our website and via the National Statistics publication hub. Press releases with the key series are also available in hard copy to subscribers, as well as being published on the website.
- All our National Statistics releases are published on-line and are free to download. (The PESA White Paper is published by TSO as a Command Paper. It is available free to download on our website, and it is available in hard copy for a charge that covers the costs of printing and publication.)

- In order to aid understanding and use of our statistics, all relevant technical and methodological information will be published in advance or along side our releases.
- Much of the underlying data from our public spending National Statistics releases are now made available to download for free from our website or the *Making Data Public* website. This enables end users to carry out their own supplementary analyses, and increases the usability of our data.
- Revisions to previously published data will be included as far back as possible, to maximise the usability of our data.

To aid accessibility and provide clarity on our policies on revisions and quality of our releases the Treasury has published the following extra information:

Revisions policy, including pre-announcement and consultation on proposed changes to formats of releases, methods or classifications

Our intention is to be open and transparent about any revisions we make to National Statistics and to ensure that users of our statistics have easy access to comprehensive information about those revisions.

Releases will be prepared to a standard format, that will only be changed infrequently, and then with good reason. Our aim will be to maintain consistency as far as possible and to give a full account of any changes to the presentation of our releases. When we do have to make changes then we will give as much notice and forewarning as possible for all major changes to our statistical releases, and we would welcome user comments on the proposed changes.

Further information on our Policies on revisions is set out in our Revisions policy statement on the Treasury Statistics webpage: [HM Treasury Statistics](#).

Data quality

We aim to ensure that all our statistics are produced to a high level of quality that meets users' needs, and that our methods are robust, well documented, and consistent with relevant international standards and classifications.

We intend to be open and transparent about the quality of all the statistics we publish and to ensure that users of our statistics have easy access to comprehensive information about all quality-related aspects of our statistical releases.

Further information on our Policies on data quality is set out in our Quality statement available on our website: [HM Treasury Statistics](#).

Pre-release access

In some cases it may be necessary for senior officials or ministers to have advance sight of statistical releases before they are made available to the general public. This access ahead of publication is known as pre-release access. Under the legislation that came into force in December 2008 (Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008), this pre-release access is strictly controlled and subject to clear limits and rules.

The Treasury is fully compliant with the procedures and regulations on pre-release. Pre-release access is limited to a narrow pre-published list of ministers and senior official post-holders for a maximum period of 24 hours, for the purposes of giving ministerial advice and allowing ministers to be able to respond to figures immediately after they are published. Full details of our pre-release access arrangements are set out in our pre-release access compliance statements available on the HM Treasury Statistics webpage.

HM Treasury publishes lists of post-holders with privileged pre-release access to its National Statistics releases as follows:

- [Public Sector Finances Monthly First Release pre-release access list](#)
- [Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses pre release access list](#)

In some exceptional cases, the legislation gives necessary provision for additional pre-release in excess of 24 hours, where the statistical release is relevant to a third party publication that is going to be published at the same time or shortly afterwards. The Treasury used this special provision in March 2009 to ensure that data from the Public Sector Finances Monthly First Release, which was released at 9:30am on Budget day, could be incorporated into the Budget document published later that same day. The special arrangements for this exceptional pre-release access were agreed with the National Statistician, and were published on the Treasury website here:

- [Public Sector Finances Monthly First Release special pre-release access list for 22 April 2009](#)

Resources

In line with the principle in the Code of Practice on resources it is the intention of the Head of Profession in HM Treasury that adequate resources are devoted to the production of National Statistics releases in order to meet user needs.

Data sources for the Treasury's statistical releases

The Treasury's National Statistical releases are all derived from government and wider public sector financial accounting data held on administrative data systems. The data are collected for reporting to Parliament, for instance for Parliament to approve spending plans, or they are collected for departments' financial management and control of public spending and the wider public finances. Some sources are taken directly from banking or accounting sources. Because the key public finance aggregates are compiled using the internationally recognised definitions and frameworks of the National Accounts, the data collection specifications are adapted as far as possible to meet the requirements of the National Accounts, but the data are still limited in places by the specifications of the underlying financial accounting systems.

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