Standards for Official Statistics

Our statistics are produced in line with the Standards for Official Statistics and the Code of Practice for Statistics, which sets the standards for the production and communication of official statistics across the UK. Our commitment to these standards is intended to ensure that the statistics we produce are trustworthy, high quality and of public value.

The Department of Health (NI) is committed to supporting compliance with the Code of Practice at all levels of the organisation. The principles of transparency, integrity, quality and public value are embedded within our statistical activities and inform how evidence is used within decision-making across the Department.

Not all statistics we publish will be official statistics. In determining whether statistics should be designated as official statistics, we consider the requirements of the Code of Practice, relevant guidance issued by the Government Statistical Service, and advice from the Office for Statistics Regulation where appropriate. Where statistics are not classified as official statistics, we seek to apply the principles of the Code proportionately and wherever practicable.

This statement explains how the Department of Health (NI) demonstrates the three pillars of the Code of Practice: Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. Individual statistical publications provide additional information on how their specific outputs comply with the Code and any publication-specific quality considerations.

Trustworthiness

Confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data

The Department's senior leadership team actively supports compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics and promotes a culture in which evidence, transparency and professional integrity are valued. Statistical decisions are taken independently by appropriately qualified professional staff in accordance with the Code.

Our statistics are produced by government statisticians and analysts under the leadership of the Director of Information & Analysis (Senior Statistician). Statistical staff operate independently of Ministers and policy officials in determining statistical methods, content and publication arrangements. Decisions regarding the production, quality assurance and release of statistics are made in accordance with professional statistical standards and the requirements of the Code of Practice.

Our statistics are pre-announced and published openly and transparently in line with the Department's publication practices as described in our Statistics Charter.

Our procedures for revisions, errors, postponements and corrections are set out in our Statistics Charter and associated guidance. Where errors are identified, we seek to correct them promptly and transparently, ensuring users are informed of their impact.

We take seriously our responsibility to protect the confidentiality, security and integrity of the data that underpin official statistics. Our Statement on Confidentiality and Data Access explains how personal information is protected, how access to data is governed and how data may be shared responsibly for statistical and research purposes.

The Senior Statistician maintains close engagement with senior leaders across the Department and with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice and the ongoing development of statistical standards and governance.

Quality

Data and methods that produce assured statistics

The quality of Department of Health statistics is fundamental to ensuring that they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of users. Our Statement on Quality describes the processes and standards that underpin the production of our statistics, including quality assurance arrangements, staff training, continuous improvement activities and the application of appropriate scientific and analytical methods.

We aim to ensure that our statistics are accurate, reliable, coherent, timely and transparent. We consider the strengths, limitations and uncertainty associated with the data and methods used in producing our outputs and explain these clearly to users.

Each statistical publication is supported by appropriate methodological information and, where relevant, quality reports that describe data sources, quality assurance arrangements, limitations and any uncertainty associated with the statistics.

Where changes to administrative systems, data collections or operational processes affect statistical outputs, we seek to communicate these impacts openly. Where quality concerns or data limitations are identified, we explain their implications for users and the actions being taken to address them. We are committed to being transparent about data quality issues and to supporting informed interpretation of our statistics.

Where new methods, data sources or emerging analytical approaches are being developed, statistics may be published as Official Statistics in Development. Such publications are clearly labelled and accompanied by information on their strengths, limitations and intended development pathways. We actively encourage user feedback to support ongoing improvement.

Value

Statistics that support society's need for information

The Code of Practice places users at the centre of statistical production. We seek to understand and respond to the needs of those who use our statistics, including policymakers, healthcare organisations, researchers, academics, professional bodies, the media and members of the public.

Our Statistics Charter and Customer Service Statement explain how users can engage with us, provide feedback and raise concerns. We regularly review our statistical portfolio and publication outputs to ensure they remain relevant, timely, accessible and aligned with user needs.

User feedback, website analytics and stakeholder engagement are used to inform decisions on publication content, presentation methods and future development priorities. We are committed to continuous improvement and welcome feedback from all users of our statistics.

We aim to communicate statistics clearly, impartially and in accessible formats. Our outputs are made available through a range of channels including statistical reports, data tables, dashboards and other digital publications. We seek to ensure that our statistics are freely available and accessible to all users.

Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Analysis

The Department of Health (NI) seeks to apply the principles set out in the Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Analysis in all public communications.

Equality of Access and Intelligent Transparency

We support the principles of Intelligent Transparency and seek to ensure that statistics, management information and wider analysis used publicly are accessible, understandable and accompanied by sufficient context to support informed interpretation.

Statistics are released separately from policy announcements and ministerial statements wherever possible. Public statements drawing upon statistical evidence reference the relevant published statistics and provide appropriate context.

Where Ministers or senior officials intend to refer publicly to unpublished official statistics, management information or analysis, statistical staff will be consulted wherever practicable. Consideration will be given to publishing the supporting information through an ad hoc statistical release at the earliest appropriate opportunity, ensuring transparency and equality of access for all users.

Supporting Understanding

We seek to ensure that statistical evidence is presented clearly, accurately and without misleading interpretation. Public communications would identify the source of statistical information and, where relevant, explain the strengths, limitations and context necessary to support understanding.

Where uncertainty, caveats or methodological limitations exist, these will be communicated openly and proportionately.

Decision Making and Leadership

Statisticians provide impartial professional advice across the Department on the interpretation and appropriate use of statistics, data and analysis. They promote the principles of the Code of Practice throughout the organisation and support decisionmakers in using evidence effectively.

The Department's leadership is committed to fostering a culture that supports transparency, professional independence, continuous improvement and public confidence in official statistics. Through adherence to the Code of Practice and the principles of Intelligent Transparency, we seek to ensure that statistics continue to serve the public good.