

Public Confidence in Official Statistics

ONS Omnibus Survey
March 2005

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Key findings

1. Survey respondents were asked about the level of trust they had in government statistics, government institutions and key government officials. Individual views ranged widely, from strong trust to strong distrust, but most people's views fell between the extremes. Some statistical series, government institutions and key government officials were trusted more than others.
2. The most frequently given reasons for trusting each of several different sets of official figures were that they were easy to measure, or that there was a perceived absence of any vested interest in the results on the part of the government or those producing them. The most commonly cited reasons for not trusting official statistics were that they contradicted the respondent's personal experience, or that they were perceived as being open to manipulation by those producing them or those using them.
3. Overall, the level of trust in government institutions was slightly lower than that in official statistics.
4. A new set of questions was introduced in 2005, asking about the level of trust in a number of key government officials: A key feature of responses to these questions was the relatively low proportions of respondents who had heard of these posts. Answers to these questions should therefore be treated with caution, but among those who did give a trust score, scores were higher for officials than for either institutions or statistical series.
5. When asked about the general accuracy of official figures, respondents were slightly more likely to say they were generally accurate than that they were not. However, most people believed that there was political interference in the production of official figures, and that the government did not use official figures honestly.
6. Those who thought statistics were important as a basis for decision-making in society were more likely than other respondents to trust official figures, as were those who tended to trust in people generally.
7. Young single people, those with a higher education qualification, and those in managerial and professional occupations, were more likely than others to trust official statistics, but the associations were not strong.
8. A limited number of comparisons can be made with 2004 data, and overall, the picture is of slightly more favourable views in March 2005 than in July 2004. It seems unlikely that underlying attitudes would have changed much over a nine month period, although some respondents' answers to questions such as these are likely to be affected by what is in the news at the time. It is likely that differences in sample composition account for some of the apparent improvements.

1 Introduction

This report presents findings on the level of confidence the British public has in official statistics. It is based on data collected from 1703 adults aged 16 and over interviewed in the March 2005 round of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Omnibus Survey, and provides information on the following:

- the level of trust survey respondents had in government statistics, government institutions and key government officials;
- the reasons respondents trusted or distrusted official figures; and
- a comparison of the attitudes, opinions, and personal characteristics of respondents who trusted official statistics and those who did not.

Some of the questions were repeated from a similar exercise carried out in July 2004, and it is hoped to include similar modules of questions on the Omnibus Survey in future years, so that the level of public confidence can be monitored over time. Some data from the 2004 survey are included in this report: further results from that survey are available in the more detailed report on the National Statistics website -

www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/public_confidence/downloads/BritishOfficialStat.pdf

That report also describes the qualitative research which was used to inform the development of the questions, which took into account people's widely ranging levels of knowledge and interest in statistics, and their varying ability to give informed opinions on the subject.

The 2005 survey included a number of new questions; on the trustworthiness of ONS as an institution, in some of its statistical series, and in the two leading roles at the head of the organisation, that of National Statistician and Registrar General. These questions about ONS necessitate a caveat about the interpretation of the results, because it is likely that the answers of some respondents will have been affected by the fact that an ONS interviewer was asking the questions. This is likely to have led to more positive responses being given than might otherwise have been the case.

The Omnibus Survey is a multi-purpose survey carried out by ONS for use by government departments and other public or non-profit making bodies. Interviewing is carried out most months of the year throughout Great Britain, and each month's questionnaire covers a variety of topics, reflecting different users' requirements. Interviews are carried out in respondents' homes by interviewers who have been trained to carry out a range of ONS surveys.

2 Trust in official statistics

A number of questions on the Omnibus Survey were designed to measure the extent to which people believe that a range of statistical series produced by ONS and other government departments give a true picture of what is actually happening. The statistical series covered were:

- ONS figures on changes in the cost of living;
- ONS population figures from the ten-yearly Census;
- ONS figures on the number of people using the internet;
- Department of Health¹ hospital waiting list figures;
- Department of Transport figures on the number of road casualties; and
- Home Office² figures on domestic burglaries.

^{1,2} For respondents interviewed in Wales and Scotland, the name of the relevant Department was substituted.

Three of these items (ONS statistics on internet use, Census population, and the rate of inflation) were new: the other three (road casualties, domestic burglaries, and hospital waiting lists) were repeated from 2004. The items were rotated in the questionnaire so that they were not always asked in the same order.

Respondents were asked to answer on a scale from 0 to 10 for each statistical series, where 0 was 'do not trust at all', and 10 was 'trust completely'. Tables 1 and 2 compare the responses for the six statistical series. As in 2004, the statistics most likely to be trusted were road casualty figures, with an average score of 7.4 in 2005 (significantly higher than in 2004), and the least likely to be trusted were hospital waiting lists, with a score of 4.6. See Section 10 for further discussion of changes between 2004 and 2005.

Of the three ONS series included for the first time in 2005, internet use and Census population data had similar scores at 7.0 and 6.9 (though the score for internet use should be treated with caution, because 29% of respondents were unable to answer). Inflation figures did significantly³ less well, with a trust score of 5.9.

It can also be seen from Table 1 that the use of a single average score obscures differences in the extent of variation in the data. For road casualty figures, the most trusted series, 69% of respondents who answered gave a score of 7 or more, but only 3% gave a score of 3 or lower. For all other series except the least trusted one, hospital waiting lists, considerably more people gave high than low scores, and even for waiting lists, 24% gave a score of 7 or more.

Tables 1-2

3 Reasons given for trusting or distrusting official statistics

Respondents were asked why they trusted or distrusted each of the six sets of official figures, and each answer was assigned by the interviewer to one of a pre-defined list of codes, based on earlier qualitative research. Respondents were allowed to give more than one reason, and those who did were asked which was the main one. Table 3 shows the reason given (for those who gave more than one answer, the main reason) separately for those with a low level of trust (score 0-3) and those with a high level of trust (score 7-10).

Two reasons – personal experience⁴, and perceptions of vested interests in the results – accounted for 72% of reasons given for lack of trust in hospital waiting list figures, and 55% of reasons for not trusting ONS inflation figures. These two reasons were also important in relation to trust in domestic burglary figures (accounting for 42% of reasons given), but an additional 24% of respondents with low trust in these figures said it was because the data were difficult to collect. The latter was also given as a reason for not trusting ONS data on internet users and Census population figures by about a third of the small number of respondents with low levels of trust in these series.

The most frequently given reason for trusting the three most trusted series by those with a high level of trust in them was that they were easy to measure – 41% said this about road casualties, 33% about internet users, and 30% about Census population figures.

³ All differences described as significant are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, taking account of the reduction in the effective sample size due to weighting.

⁴ Earlier qualitative work has shown that many respondents' views about statistics are influenced by their own experiences regardless of the national picture. Thus, for example, someone who had recently lost their job might be unlikely to believe national figures showing that unemployment was falling.

The other main reason for trusting these data series, given by about one quarter of those with a high level of trust in them, was the perceived absence of any vested interest in the results on the part of the Government or those producing them.

Table 3

4 Trust in official institutions

As with official figures, respondents were asked how much they trusted various institutions, namely the Civil Service, the UK Government, the police, the courts, and the National Health Service (NHS).

Overall, the level of trust in institutions was slightly lower than that in official statistics, with the UK Government the least trusted (along with the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Executive for respondents living in those countries). It might be expected that trust in a particular institution would be related to the level of trust in the official figures it collects or produces. However the example of the NHS (the most trusted institution asked about) and hospital waiting lists (least trusted of the six sets of official figures asked about), shows that this is not necessarily the case.

The average trust score was significantly higher than in 2004 for every institution except the two highest scoring, the NHS and the police. See Section 10 for further discussion of changes between 2004 and 2005.

In addition to the institutions listed above, a question was asked about trust in ONS. This was placed separately from the module of questions about public confidence in official statistics, and towards the end of the interview, so as not to prejudice responses to other topics included on the survey. The form of question was the same as for other institutions. One in six respondents were unable to give an answer, but among those who did, ONS, with an average score of 7.3, appeared to be significantly more trusted than any of the other organisations asked about, including the NHS, with a score of 6.7. It seems intuitively likely that this difference results from influences on the interview of the kind noted in Section 1, rather than a reflection of respondents' real views.

Tables 4-5

5 Trust in individuals

A new set of questions was introduced in 2005, asking about the level of trust in a number of key government officials: those chosen were all positions with an important role in relation to the general public, as well as the government, and whose perceived independence is an important aspect of the job. They were the Registrar General and the National Statistician (the posts are currently combined), the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Scientific Adviser, and the Auditor General. Like the question about trust in ONS, these questions were asked towards the end of the Omnibus interview, to avoid prejudicing responses to other topics included in the survey.

A key feature of responses to these questions was the relatively low proportions of respondents who had heard of these posts. Almost four in five respondents could say whether or not they trusted the Chief Medical Officer, but only half could answer the question about the Auditor General. About three in five could answer the questions about the other posts. Answers to these questions should therefore be treated with caution.

From those who did give a trust score, scores were higher, and the range of averages was smaller, for officials than for either institutions or statistical series: the lowest average score for officials was 6.0, compared with 4.4 for institutions and 4.6 for

statistical series. The most trusted official was the Registrar General, and the least trusted, the Chief Scientific Adviser.

Table 6

6 General views about official statistics

Respondents were also asked if they agreed or disagreed with several more general statements about official figures. The results are shown in Table 7.

When asked about the general accuracy of official figures, respondents were slightly more likely to say they were generally accurate than that they were not (37% compared with 31%), but 32% were unable to give an opinion. The picture in relation to the perceived integrity of official statistics was different, however: only 17% of respondents agreed that *'official figures are produced without political interference'*, whereas 54% disagreed. Respondents were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement *'the Government uses official figures honestly when talking about its policies'*. The majority of respondents (60%) disagreed with this statement.

Respondents who disagreed with the statement that official figures are generally accurate were asked why they thought that. Their answers were recorded verbatim, rather than assigned to a pre-defined list of codes. Inspection of their answers shows that by far the most common reason for the lack of trust, given by about 60% of those asked, was a feeling that official figures were likely to be manipulated in some way. The apparent strength of these views ranged from quite mild, such as *'they are geared to reflect the government in power in the best light'* to very forceful *'I know that they are fixed. Government lies about these things all the time.'* A further 15% implied something similar, with answers such as *'I just don't trust the government'*. Thus, about three-quarters of those asked gave answers which either stated directly, or implied, that they thought there was likely to be deliberate interference with the figures.

There was no change between 2004 and 2005 in the extent of agreement with the statement *'the Government uses official figures honestly when talking about its policies'*, but there was a slight (and not statistically significant) shift towards less negative views as measured by agreement with the other two statements. The proportion saying that official figures were generally accurate rose from 34% in 2004 to 37% in 2005, and the proportion disagreeing with the statement that figures are produced without political interference fell from 58% to 54%. This is discussed further in Section 10.

A new question was asked in 2005, asking whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement *'official figures published by ONS are more trustworthy than those published by other government bodies'*. A clear majority, 62%, of respondents agreed with this statement, and only 4% disagreed, although a sizeable proportion, 35%, could not say one way or the other. Again, because this question was asked by an ONS interviewer who had obtained the co-operation of the respondent by giving an assurance of confidentiality and an explanation of the work of ONS, answers are likely to reflect confidence in the survey procedures, rather than pre-existing opinions about the probity of ONS.

Tables 7-8

Responses to the question about the general accuracy of official figures have been taken in the remainder of this report as the best indicator of overall level of confidence in official statistics, and one which is less likely than some others to be affected by the fact that the survey is carried out by ONS. Alternative measures based on answers to questions about statistical series, institutions or officials, are more affected by the

context in which they are asked, and may vary from year to year, depending on which questions are included.

7 Attitudes and opinions associated with trust in official statistics

In addition to the questions about official statistics, respondents were also asked about a number of other, possibly related, matters:

- which sources they drew on for informing their opinions about current issues;
- the extent to which they were interested in politics;
- whether or not they thought official statistics were important as a basis for decision-making in society; and
- whether or not they felt that in general, most people could be trusted.

The most commonly used sources of information were the television, used by 71% of all respondents, newspapers, 59%, and family or friends, 43% (Table 9). Women were more likely than men to use family and friends, and less likely to use the radio or the internet. Young people were the most likely to use the internet as a source of information – 23% of those aged 16-24 did so, compared with fewer than 5% of those aged 65 and over. Those aged 16-24 were also the most likely to say they used school, college, or work as a source. The use of newspapers and radio as a source of information was most common among those aged 35 and over, use of the television increased with age, and use of family and friends decreased with age.

About one respondent in five said they had a great deal or quite a lot of interest in politics, and a further one in three said they had some interest. Men were more likely than women, and older people more likely than younger ones, to be interested in politics.

As many as 70% of respondents said that statistics were important as a basis for decision-making in society, but this is another result that may have been affected by the context of the interview: part of the standard introduction used by interviewers emphasises just that point. Nonetheless, there was some variation with age, in that younger respondents were the most likely to recognise the importance of statistics.

To see whether trust in official statistics was related to trust more generally, respondents were asked whether they felt that in general, '*most people could be trusted*', or that '*you can't be too careful in dealing with people*'. On the whole, people were not particularly trusting: 56% said that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, compared with only 31% who thought that most people could be trusted. Men were more trusting than women, and older people more trusting than younger respondents. Among those aged 16-24, for example, 68% thought you can't be too careful in dealing with people, and only 17% said that most people could be trusted.

The clearest association of any of these four items with trust in official figures was according to whether or not respondents thought statistics were important in decision-making: 44% of those who thought they were important agreed that official figures are generally accurate, compared with only 15% of those who thought statistics were unimportant.

Trust in official figures is also associated with trust in people in general, but not with level of interest in politics. There was also a weak, but significant association with the sources of information respondents said they drew on when informing their opinions about current issues: those who used school, college or work, and those who used the internet, were a little more likely to agree that official figures are generally accurate.

Tables 9-10

8 Personal characteristics associated with trust in official statistics

Analysis was also carried out to assess which personal characteristics of respondents were associated with trust in official statistics (Table 11). Of those variables considered, the following groups had relatively high levels of trust:

- sex: men
- age: aged 16-24
- marital status: single
- employment status: working
- income: personal gross weekly incomes of £200 or more
- highest educational qualification: degree or higher
- age left full-time education: still in full-time education, or left at age 19 or older
- region: living in London and the south east
- type of neighbourhood (Acorn): living in prosperous urban areas
- socio-economic class (NS-SEC): higher professional occupations, unclassified.

The association with NS-SEC is interesting. The two most trusting groups are those in higher professional occupations, who are probably well-educated, and the unclassified, most of whom are young and still in education.

Table 11

9 Multivariate analysis

In order to provide a measure of the effect of variables such as age and socio-economic class, on the level of confidence in official statistics, logistic regression analysis has been used to see which characteristics are associated with trust in official statistics, independently of their association with other variables.

Logistic regression produces an estimate of the probability of an event occurring and explores the effect of other variables on it. The effect of an individual in a particular category compared to a reference category is measured in terms of relative odds. For example, table 12 shows that being an individual who generally trusts people, increases the odds of having confidence in official statistics, when compared to the reference category of people who generally don't trust others. The amount by which the odds change (increase or decrease) is shown by the relative odds minus one. In this case the increase is $(1.5 - 1) = 0.5$ which indicates that being a person who generally trusts people leads to 0.5 (50%) increase in the odds of having confidence in official statistics, while controlling for possible confounding effects of other variables such as age, marital status or socio-economic class.

The following variables thus have an independent predictive effect on trusting official figures to be accurate: age, marital status, socio-economic class, trust in people generally, and the perceived importance of statistics. The last of these has the strongest effect.

Table 12

10 Comparison of 2005 with 2004

A limited number of comparisons can be made with 2004 data, where the questions were the same, and these have been noted in the relevant earlier sections of this report. Overall, the picture is of more favourable views in March 2005 than in July 2004, as follows:

- Significantly higher average levels of trust in:
 - road casualty statistics;
 - the courts;
 - the Civil Service;
 - the UK Government.

- Slightly more positive views about the accuracy of official figures, and fewer negative opinions about official figures being interfered with.

It seems unlikely that underlying attitudes would have changed much over a nine month period, although some respondents' answers to questions such as these are likely to be affected by what is in the news at the time. There were some differences in the composition of the two samples, however, and these may help to account for the apparent change in views. Compared with those interviewed in July 2004, those interviewed in March 2005 were:

- more likely to have personal gross weekly incomes of £200 or more (55% compared with 47%) and less likely to have refused to answer the income question (5% compared with 10%)
- more likely to have a degree level qualification or higher (18% compared with 14%)
- more likely to have left full-time education at age 19 or later (24% compared with 21%)
- more likely to be in managerial and professional occupations (34% compared with 30%)

All these attributes were associated with higher levels of confidence in official statistics in 2005, and although none of them emerged as independent predictors of positive views, it is likely that these differences in sample composition account for some of the apparent improvements between 2004 and 2005. Several further measurements in the series will be required before it is possible to look for any long-term trends.

Table 13

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Table 1: Level of trust in statistical series

ONS Omnibus 2005

| | | Road casualty stats | ONS internet users | ONS Census population | ONS cost of living | Domestic burglary stats | Hospital waiting stats |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Raw scores | | | | | | | |
| 0 | not at all | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| 1 | | 0 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 2 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 9 |
| 3 | | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 12 |
| 4 | | 3 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 10 | 13 |
| 5 | | 8 | 10 | 9 | 14 | 16 | 15 |
| 6 | | 9 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| 7 | | 15 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 9 |
| 8 | | 30 | 19 | 23 | 16 | 12 | 10 |
| 9 | | 15 | 11 | 17 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| 10 | a lot | 9 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| 95 | depends | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 96 | DK | 7 | 25 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 5 |
| 97 | never heard | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Base = 100%</i> | | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> |
| Grouped scores | | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| 0-3 | low | 3 | 3 | 9 | 13 | 19 | 33 |
| 4-6 | medium | 20 | 20 | 21 | 34 | 37 | 38 |
| 7-10 | high | 69 | 47 | 62 | 42 | 35 | 24 |
| | DK/it depends | 8 | 29 | 8 | 11 | 9 | 5 |
| <i>Base = 100%</i> | | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> |
| Mean scores | | | | | | | |
| mean | | 7.41 | 6.99 | 6.91 | 5.93 | 5.50 | 4.63 |
| sd | | 1.80 | 1.92 | 2.32 | 2.33 | 2.38 | 2.54 |
| <i>Base*</i> | | <i>1564</i> | <i>1204</i> | <i>1559</i> | <i>1519</i> | <i>1538</i> | <i>1608</i> |

* those with scores 1-10 only

Table 2: Average scores for trust in statistical series: 2004 and 2005

ONS Omnibus

| | Road casualty stats | Domestic burglary stats | Hospital waiting stats |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Mean scores in 2005 | | | |
| mean | 7.41 ** | 5.50 | 4.63 |
| sd | 1.80 | 2.38 | 2.54 |
| <i>Base*</i> | 1564 | 1538 | 1608 |
| Mean scores in 2004 | | | |
| mean | 7.17 | 5.33 | 4.61 |
| sd | 1.90 | 2.34 | 2.51 |
| <i>Base*</i> | 1574 | 1534 | 1590 |

* those with scores 1-10 only

** statistically significant difference compared with 2004

Table 3: Main reasons for low and high levels of trust

ONS Omnibus 2005

| | Road casualty stats | ONS internet users | ONS Census population | ONS cost of living | Domestic burglary stats | Hospital waiting stats |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mean trust score | 7.41 | 6.99 | 6.91 | 5.93 | 5.50 | 4.63 |
| sd | 1.80 | 1.92 | 2.32 | 2.33 | 2.38 | 2.54 |
| <i>Base=those who gave a score</i> | 1564 | 1204 | 1559 | 1519 | 1538 | 1608 |
| Main reason for low level of trust | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Don't trust figures, from personal experience | 29 | 16 | 11 | 31 | 18 | 37 |
| Heard / read something bad about the figures | 4 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 9 |
| Figures are difficult to count or measure | 15 | 33 | 35 | 9 | 24 | 3 |
| Dept has vested interest in results / manipulates production or collection | 8 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 20 |
| Govt has vested interest in the results / interferes in production or collection | 10 | 3 | 8 | 22 | 14 | 15 |
| Figures misrepresented or spun by politicians or the media | 13 | 7 | 3 | 12 | 12 | 10 |
| Figures alone do not tell the whole story | 10 | 12 | 15 | 12 | 11 | 5 |
| Other answer | 10 | 21 | 19 | 8 | 4 | 3 |
| <i>Base=those with low level of trust</i> | 48 | 58 | 150 | 225 | 322 | 550 |
| Main reason for high level of trust | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Trust the figures, from personal experience | 16 | 17 | 15 | 22 | 16 | 39 |
| Heard / read something good about the figures | 8 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 13 |
| Figures are easy to count or measure | 41 | 33 | 30 | 19 | 28 | 15 |
| Dept has no vested interest in the results / does not manipulate production or collection | 16 | 21 | 22 | 24 | 12 | 10 |
| Govt has no vested interest in the results / does not interfere in production or collection | 7 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Other answer | 12 | 17 | 21 | 22 | 30 | 23 |
| <i>Base=those with high level of trust</i> | 1176 | 798 | 1046 | 711 | 596 | 415 |

Table 4: Level of trust in official institutions

ONS Omnibus 2005

| | NHS | Police | Courts | Civil service | Welsh Assembly | Scottish Executive | UK Govern-ment | ONS |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| 0 not at all | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 1 |
| 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 8 | 1 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 13 | 1 |
| 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 14 | 11 | 2 |
| 5 | 11 | 14 | 12 | 22 | 18 | 15 | 21 | 10 |
| 6 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 13 | 9 | 7 |
| 7 | 18 | 18 | 15 | 17 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 15 |
| 8 | 21 | 21 | 18 | 14 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 25 |
| 9 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 15 |
| 10 a lot | 8 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| 95 depends | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 96 DK | 2 | 2 | 11 | 10 | 16 | 11 | 3 | 16 |
| <i>Base=100%</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>77</i> | <i>130</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1692</i> |
| Grouped scores | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| 0-3 low | 10 | 11 | 13 | 12 | 21 | 25 | 35 | 3 |
| 4-6 medium | 27 | 29 | 28 | 42 | 35 | 42 | 41 | 19 |
| 7-10 high | 60 | 57 | 47 | 35 | 28 | 33 | 21 | 61 |
| DK/it depends | 3 | 3 | 12 | 11 | 16 | 12 | 4 | 17 |
| <i>Base=100%</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>77</i> | <i>130</i> | <i>1701</i> | <i>1692</i> |
| Mean scores | | | | | | | | |
| mean | 6.67 | 6.48 | 6.24 | 5.78 | 5.04 | 4.69 | 4.37 | 7.34 |
| sd | 2.31 | 2.30 | 2.37 | 2.01 | 2.60 | 2.16 | 2.41 | 1.86 |
| <i>Base*</i> | <i>1656</i> | <i>1656</i> | <i>1498</i> | <i>1513</i> | <i>65</i> | <i>115</i> | <i>1639</i> | <i>1409</i> |

Table 5: Level of trust in official institutions: 2004 and 2005

| | <i>ONS Omnibus</i> | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------|---------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| | NHS | Police | Courts | Civil service | <i>Welsh Assembly</i> | <i>Scottish Executive</i> | UK Govern-ment |
| Mean scores in 2005 | | | | | | | |
| mean | 6.67 | 6.48 | 6.24 ** | 5.78 ** | 5.04 ** | 4.69 ** | 4.37 ** |
| sd | 2.31 | 2.30 | 2.37 | 2.01 | 2.60 | 2.16 | 2.41 |
| <i>Base*</i> | 1656 | 1656 | 1498 | 1513 | 65 | 115 | 1639 |
| Mean scores in 2004 | | | | | | | |
| mean | 6.57 | 6.43 | 5.88 | 5.27 | 3.65 | 3.66 | 3.96 |
| sd | 2.29 | 2.31 | 2.35 | 2.03 | 2.67 | 2.33 | 2.39 |
| <i>Base*</i> | 1685 | 1669 | 1543 | 1499 | 86 | 139 | 1654 |

* those with scores 1-10 only

** statistically significant difference compared with 2004

Table 6: Level of trust in key officials

ONS Omnibus 2005

| | Registrar General | National Statistician | Auditor General | Chief Medical Officer | Chief Scientific Adviser |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Raw scores | | | | | |
| 0 not at all | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| 5 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 13 | 12 |
| 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 8 |
| 7 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 15 | 11 |
| 8 | 14 | 15 | 10 | 14 | 12 |
| 9 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| 10 a lot | 5 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| 95 depends | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 96 DK | 20 | 14 | 21 | 12 | 17 |
| 97 never heard | 22 | 24 | 29 | 10 | 21 |
| <i>Base = 100%</i> | 1693 | 1693 | 1693 | 1693 | 1693 |
| Grouped scores | | | | | |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| 0-3 low | 2 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 9 |
| 4-6 medium | 15 | 18 | 19 | 30 | 24 |
| 7-10 high | 40 | 39 | 26 | 38 | 30 |
| DK/it depends/ never heard of | 42 | 38 | 50 | 22 | 38 |
| <i>Base = 100%</i> | 1693 | 1693 | 1693 | 1693 | 1693 |
| Mean scores | | | | | |
| mean | 7.18 | 6.85 | 6.35 | 6.09 | 6.01 |
| sd | 1.93 | 2.07 | 2.18 | 2.18 | 2.25 |
| <i>Base*</i> | 976 | 1041 | 842 | 1313 | 1052 |

* those with scores 1-10 only

Table 7: Views about official statistics in general*ONS Omnibus 2005*

| | Figures are generally accurate | Figures are produced without interference | Government uses figures honestly | ONS is more trustworthy than other depts |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|--|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly agree | 2 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| Tend to agree | 35 | 15 | 13 | 52 |
| Neither | 28 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| Tend to disagree | 25 | 39 | 43 | 3 |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 15 | 17 | 1 |
| DK | 4 | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Agree | 37 | 17 | 14 | 62 |
| Neither / DK | 32 | 29 | 26 | 35 |
| Disagree | 31 | 54 | 60 | 4 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1699</i> |

Table 8: Views about official statistics in general*ONS Omnibus*

| | figures are generally accurate | | Figures are produced without interference | | Government uses figures honestly | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|---|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| | 2004 | 2005 | 2004 | 2005 | 2004 | 2005 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly agree | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Tend to agree | 32 | 35 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 13 |
| Neither | 27 | 28 | 19 | 21 | 21 | 22 |
| Tend to disagree | 28 | 25 | 40 | 39 | 42 | 43 |
| Strongly disagree | 7 | 6 | 18 | 15 | 18 | 17 |
| DK | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Agree | 34 | 37 | 17 | 17 | 15 | 14 |
| Neither / DK | 30 | 32 | 25 | 29 ** | 25 | 26 |
| Disagree | 36 | 31 ** | 58 | 54 | 59 | 60 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>1703</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1703</i> | <i>1699</i> | <i>1702</i> | <i>1699</i> |

** statistically significant difference compared with 2004

Table 9: General attitudes by sex and by age

ONS Omnibus 2005

| | Total | Sex | | Age | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | Men | Women | 16-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65-74 | 75+ |
| Sources of opinions | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Family or friends | 43 | 38 | 47 | 60 | 54 | 49 | 35 | 30 | 38 | 35 |
| School/college | 11 | 9 | 12 | 25 | 17 | 13 | 12 | 6 | 2 | 0 |
| Newspapers | 59 | 61 | 57 | 43 | 49 | 62 | 60 | 67 | 66 | 59 |
| Television | 71 | 72 | 70 | 54 | 68 | 71 | 71 | 78 | 75 | 78 |
| Radio | 29 | 32 | 26 | 14 | 23 | 29 | 35 | 35 | 29 | 35 |
| Internet | 15 | 19 | 12 | 23 | 21 | 20 | 17 | 11 | 3 | 4 |
| Other | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Interest in politics | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| a great deal | 5 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 11 |
| quite a lot | 17 | 20 | 15 | 9 | 13 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 21 | 24 |
| some | 34 | 33 | 35 | 30 | 34 | 37 | 37 | 35 | 32 | 26 |
| not much | 30 | 27 | 32 | 36 | 33 | 30 | 25 | 30 | 29 | 27 |
| none at all | 14 | 11 | 15 | 23 | 16 | 11 | 14 | 10 | 12 | 12 |
| Importance of statistics in decision making | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Very important | 21 | 23 | 19 | 16 | 22 | 19 | 22 | 22 | 27 | 20 |
| Fairly important | 49 | 49 | 50 | 63 | 49 | 56 | 49 | 46 | 38 | 42 |
| Neither important nor unimportant | 18 | 16 | 20 | 16 | 20 | 16 | 17 | 16 | 18 | 26 |
| Fairly unimportant | 9 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 10 |
| Very unimportant | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 |
| Whether people can be trusted | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Most people can be trusted | 31 | 34 | 29 | 17 | 24 | 31 | 39 | 31 | 36 | 38 |
| It depends on people / circumstances / dk | 13 | 14 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 13 |
| Can't be too careful in dealing with people | 56 | 53 | 58 | 68 | 61 | 56 | 51 | 55 | 49 | 49 |
| <i>Base=100%</i> | 1703 | 774 | 927 | 184 | 261 | 323 | 299 | 293 | 196 | 147 |

Table 10: Whether official figures are generally accurate, by attitudes and interests

ONS Omnibus 2005

| Attitudes and interests | Official figures are generally accurate | | | | Base (=100%) | dist ⁿ of variables |
|---|---|-------------------------------|----------|----|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | | | |
| All persons | % | 37 | 32 | 31 | 1698 | 100 |
| Trust in people | | | | | | % |
| Most people can be trusted | % | 43 | 34 | 23 | 527 | 31 |
| Depends on people/circumstance | % | 41 | 35 | 24 | 215 | 13 |
| Can't be too careful in dealing with people | % | 34 | 30 | 37 | 946 | 56 |
| Level of interest in politics | | | | | | % |
| A great deal | % | 32 | 27 | 41 | 90 | 5 |
| Quite a lot | % | 38 | 32 | 30 | 291 | 17 |
| Some | % | 39 | 31 | 30 | 577 | 34 |
| Not very much | % | 41 | 30 | 29 | 504 | 30 |
| None at all | % | 27 | 40 | 34 | 230 | 14 |
| Whether official statistics are important in decision- | | | | | | % |
| Very important | % | 45 | 27 | 28 | 360 | 21 |
| Fairly important | % | 44 | 31 | 25 | 837 | 49 |
| Neither important nor | % | 27 | 40 | 33 | 229 | 13 |
| Fairly unimportant | % | 14 | 30 | 56 | 145 | 9 |
| Very unimportant | % | 15 | 9 | 76 | 54 | 3 |
| Important | % | 44 | 30 | 26 | 1197 | 70 |
| Neither | % | 27 | 40 | 33 | 229 | 13 |
| Unimportant | % | 15 | 24 | 61 | 199 | 12 |
| Sources used to form opinions | | | | | | % |
| Family/ friends | % | 38 | 33 | 28 | 724 | 43 |
| School/ college/ work | % | 42 | 32 | 26 | 187 | 11 |
| Papers/ books | % | 37 | 31 | 32 | 995 | 59 |
| TV | % | 37 | 31 | 32 | 1206 | 71 |
| Radio | % | 37 | 32 | 32 | 495 | 29 |
| Internet | % | 44 | 27 | 28 | 255 | 15 |

Table 11a: Whether official figures are generally accurate, by various personal characteristics

ONS Omnibus 2005

| Personal characteristics | Official figures are generally accurate | | | | Base (=100%) | dist ⁿ of variables* |
|--|---|-------------------------------|----------|----|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | | | |
| All persons | % | 37 | 32 | 31 | 1698 | 100 |
| Sex | | | | | | % |
| Men | % | 41 | 28 | 31 | 772 | 45 |
| Women | % | 34 | 35 | 30 | 926 | 55 |
| Age | | | | | | % |
| 16-24 | % | 57 | 29 | 14 | 184 | 11 |
| 25-34 | % | 36 | 35 | 28 | 261 | 15 |
| 35-44 | % | 43 | 30 | 27 | 323 | 19 |
| 45-54 | % | 35 | 32 | 33 | 298 | 18 |
| 55-64 | % | 32 | 27 | 41 | 293 | 17 |
| 65-74 | % | 30 | 31 | 39 | 196 | 12 |
| 75+ | % | 27 | 44 | 29 | 146 | 9 |
| Marital status | | | | | | % |
| Single | % | 49 | 28 | 24 | 308 | 18 |
| Married/cohabiting | % | 36 | 32 | 32 | 1154 | 68 |
| Widowed, divorced, separated | % | 31 | 36 | 33 | 236 | 14 |
| Employment status | | | | | | % |
| Working | % | 41 | 31 | 28 | 1021 | 60 |
| Unemployed/ inactive | % | 32 | 34 | 35 | 677 | 40 |
| Own gross weekly income | | | | | | % |
| Less than £100 | % | 36 | 33 | 31 | 334 | 20 |
| £100 < £200 | % | 31 | 34 | 34 | 351 | 21 |
| £200 < £400 | % | 43 | 29 | 29 | 491 | 29 |
| £400 or more | % | 40 | 32 | 28 | 446 | 26 |
| Highest qualification | | | | | | % |
| Degree or equivalent | % | 47 | 29 | 24 | 306 | 18 |
| Below degree | % | 38 | 32 | 30 | 905 | 53 |
| No qual-fications | % | 30 | 33 | 38 | 489 | 29 |
| Age left full-time education | | | | | | % |
| Up to 14 | % | 24 | 41 | 35 | 143 | 8 |
| 15 to 16 | % | 34 | 31 | 35 | 797 | 47 |
| 17 to 18 | % | 40 | 33 | 27 | 292 | 17 |
| 19 to 25 | % | 43 | 30 | 26 | 334 | 20 |
| Over 25 | % | 41 | 33 | 26 | 66 | 4 |
| Still in education | % | 67 | 22 | 10 | 67 | 4 |
| NS-SEC | | | | | | |
| Large employers and higher managerial occupations | % | 32 | 40 | 28 | 93 | 5 |
| Higher professional occupations | % | 50 | 31 | 19 | 118 | 7 |
| Lower managerial and professional occupations | % | 37 | 34 | 29 | 374 | 22 |
| Intermediate occupations | % | 39 | 25 | 36 | 219 | 13 |
| Small employers and own account workers | % | 36 | 26 | 38 | 129 | 8 |
| Lower supervisory & technical occupations | % | 38 | 31 | 31 | 152 | 9 |
| Semi-routine Occupations | % | 35 | 33 | 32 | 282 | 17 |
| Routine occupations | % | 25 | 36 | 39 | 192 | 11 |
| Not classified | % | 50 | 29 | 21 | 140 | 8 |
| NS-SEC | | | | | | % |
| Managerial/ professional | % | 39 | 35 | 27 | 585 | 34 |
| Intermediate | % | 38 | 25 | 37 | 347 | 20 |
| Routine and manual | % | 33 | 34 | 33 | 625 | 37 |

Table 11b: Whether official figures are generally accurate, by various personal characteristics

ONS Omnibus 2005

| Personal characteristics | Official figures are generally accurate | | | | Base (=100%) | dist ⁿ of variables* |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------|----|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | | | |
| All persons | % | 37 | 32 | 31 | 1698 | 100 |
| Region (grouped) | | | | | | % |
| North | % | 38 | 30 | 31 | 414 | 24 |
| Midlands/ E Anglia | % | 37 | 35 | 28 | 452 | 27 |
| London | % | 43 | 33 | 24 | 196 | 12 |
| South East | % | 42 | 27 | 32 | 252 | 15 |
| South West | % | 31 | 32 | 37 | 177 | 10 |
| Wales | % | 35 | 40 | 25 | 77 | 5 |
| Scotland | % | 30 | 27 | 43 | 130 | 8 |
| Acorn group | | | | | | |
| A - Wealthy Achievers | % | 39 | 33 | 29 | 508 | 30 |
| B - Urban Prosperity | % | 43 | 26 | 31 | 183 | 11 |
| C - Comfortably off | % | 35 | 34 | 31 | 479 | 28 |
| D - Moderate Means | % | 33 | 32 | 35 | 318 | 19 |
| E - Hard Pressed | % | 38 | 31 | 30 | 194 | 12 |

Table 12: Relative odds ratios*ONS Omnibus 2005*

| | Sample size | Relative odds | 95% confidence interval |
|------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| General effect | | 0.61 | 0.52 - 0.72 |
| Age | | | |
| 16-44 | 767 | 1.50 | 1.20 - 1.87 |
| 45 and over | 936 | 1.00 | |
| Marital Status | | | |
| Single | 309 | 1.40 | 1.05 - 1.85 |
| Married/widowed/divorced/separated | 1394 | 1.00 | |
| Socio-economic class | | | |
| Higher professional/unclassified | 259 | 1.49 | 1.12 - 1.98 |
| Other | 1444 | 1.00 | |
| Trust in people generally | | | |
| Trusts people | 743 | 1.50 | 1.22 - 1.84 |
| Does not trust people | 960 | 1.00 | |
| Importance of statistics | | | |
| Important | 1198 | 2.79 | 2.18 - 3.57 |
| Not important | 505 | 1.00 | |

Table 13a: Personal characteristics: 2004 and 2005

| | <i>ONS Omnibus</i> | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| | 2004 <i>number</i> | 2004 % | 2005 <i>number</i> | 2005 % |
| All persons | 1703 | 100 | 1703 | 100 |
| Sex | | % | | % |
| Men | 777 | 46 | 776 | 46 |
| Women | 926 | 54 | 927 | 54 |
| Age | | % | | % |
| 16-24 | 202 | 12 | 183 | 11 |
| 25-34 | 248 | 15 | 261 | 15 |
| 35-44 | 325 | 19 | 323 | 19 |
| 45-54 | 291 | 17 | 300 | 18 |
| 55-64 | 265 | 16 | 293 | 17 |
| 65-74 | 217 | 13 | 196 | 12 |
| 75+ | 155 | 9 | 147 | 9 |
| Marital status | | % | | % |
| Single | 330 | 19 | 309 | 18 |
| Married/cohabiting | 1114 | 66 | 1158 | 68 |
| Widowed, divorced, separated | 256 | 15 | 236 | 14 |
| Employment status | | % | | % |
| Working | 1004 | 59 | 1024 | 60 |
| Unemployed/ inactive | 699 | 41 | 679 | 40 |
| Own gross weekly income | | % | | % |
| Less than £100 | 391 | 23 | 335 | 20 |
| £100 < £200 | 345 | 20 | 351 | 21 |
| £200 < £400 | 452 | 26 | 492 | 29 |
| £400 or more | 355 | 21 | 449 | 26 |
| no answer | 164 | 10 | 77 | 5 |
| Highest qualification | | % | | % |
| Degree or equivalent | 245 | 14 | 306 | 18 |
| Below degree | 908 | 53 | 907 | 53 |
| No qualifications | 546 | 32 | 490 | 29 |
| Age left full-time education | | % | | % |
| Up to 14 | 176 | 10 | 143 | 8 |
| 15 to 16 | 794 | 47 | 800 | 47 |
| 17 to 18 | 296 | 17 | 292 | 17 |
| 19 to 25 | 292 | 17 | 334 | 20 |
| Over 25 | 62 | 4 | 66 | 4 |
| Still in education | 77 | 5 | 67 | 4 |

Table 13b: Personal characteristics: 2004 and 2005

| | <i>ONS Omnibus</i> | | | |
|--|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| | <i>2004 number</i> | <i>2004 %</i> | <i>2005 number</i> | <i>2005 %</i> |
| All persons | 1703 | 100 | 1703 | 100 |
| NS-SEC3 | | % | | % |
| Managerial/ professional | 520 | 30 | 586 | 34 |
| Intermediate | 364 | 21 | 349 | 20 |
| Routine and manual | 664 | 39 | 627 | 37 |
| Unclassified | 160 | 9 | 141 | 8 |
| NS-SEC8 | | % | | % |
| 1.10 Large employers and higher managerial occupations | 59 | 3 | 93 | 5 |
| 1.20 Higher professional occupations | 100 | 6 | 118 | 7 |
| 2 Lower managerial and professional occupations | 361 | 21 | 374 | 22 |
| 3 Intermediate occupations | 217 | 13 | 219 | 13 |
| 4 Small employers and own account workers | 148 | 9 | 130 | 8 |
| 5 Lower supervisory & technical occupations | 148 | 9 | 152 | 9 |
| 6 Semi-routine Occupations | 304 | 18 | 282 | 17 |
| 7 Routine occupations | 212 | 12 | 193 | 11 |
| 8 Not classified | 160 | 9 | 141 | 8 |
| Region (grouped) | | % | | % |
| North | 422 | 25 | 417 | 24 |
| Midlands/ E Anglia | 448 | 26 | 454 | 27 |
| London | 175 | 10 | 196 | 11 |
| South East | 240 | 14 | 253 | 15 |
| South West | 172 | 10 | 178 | 10 |
| Wales | 94 | 6 | 77 | 5 |
| Scotland | 149 | 9 | 130 | 8 |