

Updated response 2013/14 customer satisfaction survey

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Introduction

In June 2014, we published the results of the [ONS Customer Satisfaction Survey 2013/14](#). We reported on how well you thought we were doing against a number of measures, such as your trust in our statistics and analyses, your satisfaction with the quality of our statistics and how satisfied you were with our overall performance.

While we are pleased with the results, there is still room for improvement. We have published this update to let you know what we have done in response to your feedback. We hope that we have addressed your concerns, and where we haven't, we have fully explained why.

We will be running our next annual Customer Satisfaction Survey at the beginning of 2015, and we hope once again that you will provide very valuable feedback on our statistics, analyses and services so that they meet your needs. We welcome your feedback at any time, so please do email us at ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk if you have any further thoughts on how we can improve.

National Accounts and Price Indices

Although you were satisfied with the quality of our National Accounts and Price Indices statistics, some issues were raised. We already recognised some of these issues, and to make sure that our economic statistics are meeting the highest international standards and current and future user needs, the UK Statistics Authority commissioned independent reviews into our National Accounts and Price Indices statistics.

National Accounts Quality Review of National Accounts and Balance of Payments

The [National Statistics Quality Review of National Accounts and Balance of Payments](#) was conducted by Dame Kate Barker (former Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee member) and Art Ridgeway (retired Assistant Chief Statistician responsible for the National Accounts and Analytical Studies at Statistics Canada). The review concluded that ONS National Accounts statistics are of a good standard, and ONS is making significant improvements, which were endorsed. There were 46 recommendations made in total, including the following that were considered a high priority:

- pushing forward with existing plans to reinstate the purchases survey or some alternate data source,
- changing the method of applying coherence adjustments only to selected service industries to align GDP(O) to the annual volume measure of GDP(E),
- developing deflation methodology for the inputs and outputs of the production process ('double deflation'),
- following current plans to seek broader international advice on further improvements to capital stocks estimates,
- adding to and enhancing recent improvements to the Inter-Departmental Business Register, and
- prioritising system improvements.

In our [response to the Review of National Accounts](#) we accepted, or partially accepted, all of the recommendations. All of the above high priority recommendations have been accepted.

UK Consumer Price Statistics: A Review

The review of price indices was carried out by Paul Johnson (Director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies). In his report, [UK Consumer Price Statistics: A Review](#), he concludes that, other than not accounting for owner occupiers' housing costs, the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) is a well constructed measure of inflation. Users should have confidence in it. He agrees with the view set out by the National Statistician that there are basic statistical flaws in the construction of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) and that the RPI is not a good measure of inflation.

Paul Johnson recommends, among other things, that:

- ONS should move towards making the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) its main measure of inflation;
- Government and regulators should move towards ending the use of the RPI as soon as practicable and, where they decide to keep using it, the Authority should ask them to set out clearly and publicly their reasons for doing so; and,
- The Authority and ONS should, on an annual basis, publish significantly more information about what is happening to prices and costs faced by particular groups of households

The Authority will consider his recommendations in detail and will undertake a full public consultation in the summer of 2015.

House prices

Some customers reported difficulty in understanding how house prices are changing. Official house price statistics are produced separately by ONS, Land Registry, Registers of Scotland and Land and Property Services Northern Ireland. A [consultation](#) is underway to assess a proposal to combine these different official sources of house price statistics, to produce one definitive government measure of house prices. The outcome of this consultation will be published early in 2015.

Crime statistics

There was some criticism of the coverage and quality of crime statistics.

Police recorded crime statistics have had their designation as National Statistics (the 'gold standard' for official statistics) removed by the UK Statistics Authority. There was also some criticism that the Crime Survey for England and Wales is not fully capturing new types of crime, such as crimes committed online. We have been working hard to address these concerns and to improve public trust in crime statistics.

A National Statistics re-designation project is underway, involving key players in the Home Office, the Police Service and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary who are represented on a strategic board to oversee the work. We also sought the views of users on police recorded crime data and a [Crime Statistics Survey](#) was carried out in November and December 2014. We will report on the findings in 2015.

We are also testing and developing new questions on fraud and cyber-crime for inclusion in the Crime Survey for England and Wales, so that the survey keeps up with the changing nature of crime. This work is ongoing and we aim to add new questions to the survey during 2015/16.

Accessing and finding ONS statistics

ONS website

There were many comments about the difficulty you experienced when accessing and exploring our data on the ONS website. We have taken account of these as part of our project to redesign the website to make our data easier to find and use. A prototype was made available from 8 December 2014 until 5 January 2015 and we invited you to tell us what you thought about it. We received over 200 comments with many being positive about the prototype website.

To keep up to date on our progress, take a look at the [ONS Digital Publishing blog](#), where regular updates on the website development are posted.

Data Explorer and API

Some of you commented that our data aren't always in the format you want, and that our spreadsheets aren't designed in a way that works for you.

Over the last few years, we've made data from the 2011 census available in open data formats through the "[Open Application Programming Interface](#) (API) and [Data Explorer](#) tools which we hope are improving your experience. We are evaluating the user experience to help us understand what other data might be made usefully available via these tools.

The API allows you to extract programmatically the data you want directly from the open data platform, and use it to suit your needs. Using these tools you can easily pull together data from ONS and other sources to get a full picture of how the UK economy and society is changing.

The Data Explorer puts you in control of our data, allowing you to choose the data you want to view and how you want to view it. As well as allowing you to choose the variables and breakdowns that you want, the Data Explorer can also generate visualisations to help you interpret the data.

We will also be working towards implementing new Government Statistical Service (GSS) wide guidance on presenting statistics in spreadsheets. This good practice guidance looks at how spreadsheets can be made more user friendly. This work will be led through the ONS Statistical Products Working Group and supported by the GSS Good Practice Team (who created the guidance).

Release calendar

You raised some concerns about the accessibility of the Publication Hub and the scheduling of statistics.

In response, we have worked with the Government Digital Service (GDS) to develop a new [release calendar](#). This new calendar can be found on the [GOV.UK](#) website, and includes a schedule of all upcoming statistical releases from across government, as well as links to previously published

statistics. The new release calendar has an improved search facility, clearer presentation and more consistent labelling, making it easier than ever before to find the statistics you need. We will continue to work with GDS, on behalf of the wider Government Statistical Service, to further improve the user experience, based on user feedback.

Geography

You said you would like some statistics to be available at a lower geographical level. We aim to produce data that is at the most helpful geographic level for you, and that does not disclose any information that risks identifying individual persons or groups of persons, households, or businesses.

During the 2011 Census, we worked with our customers to develop a new geography based on the number of people working in an area, called workplace zones. In 2014, ONS was presented with an award from the Demographic User Group (DUG) for our engagement with the private sector on this matter. The DUG includes companies such as John Lewis, Centrica, the Co-operative Group and Barclays.

We are committed to continuing this engagement for all our statistical geographies. As part of this engagement, ONS Geography ran its own customer survey earlier this year, the [response](#) to which contains further details on how ONS produces geographical data.

We also launched our Open Geography and Linked Data portals last year, which provide a wealth of open geographic information to support statistics, including post code directories, look-up files and boundaries for our statistical geographies.

Statistical commentary

Some respondents commented that our statistical commentary can be difficult for non-experts to understand, or doesn't cover the key information you need. To improve our commentary and the presentation of our statistics, we set up a working group to bring experts from across the organisation together to share good practice and focus on what you've told us. This group has been responsible for:

- promoting consistency and quality in our approach to statistical commentary,
- sharing feedback to build on what already works well, for example publishing infographics and interactive maps,
- collaborating on new products and guidance to improve your experience.

We have also introduced a new internal training course, which aims to improve the quality and consistency of our commentary. We will continue to work closely with the UK Statistics Authority and listen to your feedback to improve our statistical commentary. Please do email us at ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk if you have any further thoughts on how we can improve our commentary.

Census

Modernising the census

You told us that you would like to receive census results sooner, or have them updated more regularly. Carrying out a census is an enormous task. Collecting and processing questionnaires from some 24 million households is time consuming, particularly as we adjust the entire database for under coverage and incomplete responses. We are the only country in the world that includes these adjustments in our census results, but it provides a consistent set of census outputs that make the use and interpretation of the results easier. These additional processes take extra time.

The good news is that we're exploring how we can modernise the census in future, in particular by making better use of online surveys and administrative data held within government. In future, this may allow us to produce census data more quickly and more frequently. Earlier this year, following the outcome of our [consultation](#), the Government accepted our proposals to conduct a mainly online Census in 2021, alongside increased use of administrative data. We will keep you updated with the work on 2021 Census, and what this means for future census data. The design of the next census will be informed from the lessons learned from the 2011 Census.

Why we sometimes change census outputs

You also told us that we sometimes change census outputs from what you originally expected. In some cases the output formats, or content, were changed during their production as a result of our checks to ensure that the confidentiality of individuals was maintained. This is a key aim of the census. As a result, if it were not possible to protect confidentiality in the output we initially proposed, then changes were made to maintain confidentiality, while still trying to meet your requirements as far as possible.

Additional analysis

In response to user feedback, we developed a programme of 2011 Census analysis to focus on those areas that inform government policy and decision making, service planning and public debate. Customers have told us that the timing of analytical publications to coincide with census releases has provided them with additional context and is extremely valuable for their analyses at a local, regional and national level. Some examples of the additional analysis we have published include:

- [Over 4 in 10 aged 25 to 34 had a degree level or above qualification](#)
- [Household Overcrowding and Under-occupation by Ethnic Group, 2011](#)
- [What does the 2011 Census tell us about inter-ethnic relationships?](#)

We are sharing this important lesson across our organisation to deliver more insightful and timely analyses, and to contribute to planning the 2021 Census.

Communication

Newsletter and e-alerts

We received some suggestions on how we can improve our communication with you. In response, we've launched a monthly newsletter, [ONS Update](#), which keeps you informed about the latest ONS news, statistics and consultations. Please let us know if we can improve it to meet your needs.

We are continuing to improve our [e-alerts service](#), by working on the design and content of our daily emails based on feedback we've received from our subscribers. We are also evaluating the topics we have on offer to make them more relevant to you and avoid sending you the same information twice. Currently, we have 35,000 subscribers to our e-alerts, with 1,500 new subscribers every month.

Consultations and surveys

We acknowledge that we need to do more to demonstrate that we have listened and responded to your feedback. In response, we are improving our consultation processes to make sure we give clear and timely feedback for all our consultations and surveys, and explain our actions. As part of this commitment, we have started publishing short Plain English summaries alongside detailed response documents for all ONS consultations, so you can see the key points at a glance.

We have recently published [short summaries](#) to show how we've responded to feedback on our consultations since the start of 2013.

Social media

Many of you said you'd like us to continue using social media and infographics to communicate our statistics.

We are actively using social media to publicise and summarise the key messages for each release of our statistics and analyses as soon as they are published. Over the year, the number of our Twitter followers has increased from 48,000 to over 87,000.

Infographics

Following the positive feedback you gave us on our infographics and data visualisations, we will continue to produce professional innovative graphic design solutions to present our statistics in a way that is easily understandable and engaging.

Virtual Microdata Laboratory

You told us that you value the [Virtual Microdata Laboratory](#) (VML) as it provides secure access to our detailed data for approved researchers. You also highlighted that its security could be less restrictive. We have already added 2011 Census data and 2012 life events data to the Longitudinal Study, but there are significant further improvements on the way in spring 2015.

Some of the improvements will include:

- a new VML infrastructure, which will be more flexible, process data far more quickly and include current versions of a range of statistical and analytical software packages,
- improvements to the usefulness and labelling of the data available for analysis,
- expanded metadata and supporting documentation,
- reintroducing the Annual Respondents Database (ARD) to inform analysis of productivity.

Further improvements will be made throughout 2015 to expand the range and usefulness of data available and to increase its use across government.

A full review of the criteria for giving access to our microdata through the VML and other channels, will take place in 2015, supported by a public consultation. This review will attempt to maximise the use of our microdata, protect confidentiality and clarify the processes for gaining access to our microdata.

We welcome your feedback on these, or any other, improvements you'd like to see in the VML. To leave feedback email VML@ons.gsi.gov.uk.

Administrative Data Research Network

Building on the success of the VML, we are also providing further opportunities for researchers. We are working with the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) to increase the access researchers have to administrative data. ADRN is a UK-wide partnership between universities and government to bridge the gap between those who hold data, and those who need it for research.

Within the ADRN, the [Administrative Data Research Centre for England \(ADRC-E\)](#) has been set up by the University of Southampton, in collaboration with ONS and other universities.

We will provide a facility where administrative data from different sources can be linked and matched securely, using trusted methods. We will also provide a safe environment where researchers can access and analyse datasets and, before any results are published, make use of our expertise in disclosure checking.

Publishing timely outputs

Some of you commented that you would like us to publish data sooner. While we can't do that at the moment without compromising on quality, we're continuing to work on modernising our data collection and processing systems. We are looking at ways to acquire data more efficiently, so that it is made available to our statisticians sooner.

Two ways in which we are doing this are through the development of electronic questionnaires and making better use of administrative data. Electronic questionnaires will reduce the time delay caused by posting questionnaires, and lessen the need to further contact respondents to query data. Access to administrative data will mean that we can use data which has been collected by other government departments for non-statistical purposes. These developments will allow us to collect, validate and process our source data more efficiently. This could allow us to publish high quality statistics sooner.

We will be piloting online questionnaires during 2015, with the aim of replacing some postal business surveys from 2016. We aim to collect all our source data for business surveys through online questionnaires and administrative data by 2018. Household surveys are more complex, but we will begin pilots in 2015.

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