

Article

The HMRC and ONS response to the OSR review of statistics on earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information: November 2023

HM Revenue and Customs and the Office for National Statistics's response to the Office for Statistics Regulation's review of statistics on earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information published in June 2023.

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1 . Overview

In June 2023, the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\) published an assessment report](#) of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Office for National Statistics (ONS) statistics on earnings and employment from Pay as You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI). HMRC and the ONS welcome OSR's assessment report and have developed an action plan focusing on the six requirements.

The action plan details what we have already done and what we plan to do in response to the requirements identified by the OSR assessment report.

2 . Responding to the Office for Statistics Regulation's review

Recommendation 1: Understanding the landscape

To help users navigate and understand the coherence and comparability of labour market data available ONS should explain how the PAYE RTI statistics relate to other equivalent labour market statistics in a way that helps the full range of users understand how the different data sources relate to each output and the respective strengths of different figures to answer key questions about the UK's labour market.

Action

The ONS plan to update the [Comparison of labour market data sources](#) by early 2024. The ONS Labour Market team will work with ONS Digital Publishing to improve the presentation of the comparison report to better highlight the relationship between labour market sources and to draw out the strengths and limitations of each data source.

As we move to the Transformed Labour Force Survey, we will review and update the comparison report at regular intervals.

Recommendation 2: User engagement

To ensure that users' needs are fully understood and use of the PAYE RTI statistics is well supported: (a) HMRC and ONS should broaden their user engagement activities to harness a wide range of user views in the ongoing development of these statistics. (b) HMRC and ONS should communicate statistical development plans, manage user expectations about what further value can be obtained from the data and how future developments are being prioritised.

Action

Currently HMRC coordinate a user steering group with representatives from government departments and other public sector organisations. HMRC will use this forum to discuss and collect feedback on future publication developments and priorities. To share these development plans and priorities with wider users, HMRC will investigate the feasibility of publishing the RTI steering group papers and minutes from all future meetings, and will welcome comments and feedback on these from users via the email address at the end of this document.

HMRC and the ONS will look to improve user engagement of PAYE RTI earnings and employment statistics, using established groups to discuss PAYE RTI statistics and working with the ONS User Engagement team to help identify new users.

The ONS has previously explained that in the future they plan to make greater use of PAYE RTI data in their labour market transformation [articles](#). The ONS will publish more detailed plans on the potential use of PAYE RTI once microdata have been received later in 2023 or early 2024.

Recommendation 3: Accessibility

To help enhance the value offered by the statistics by supporting users' wider analysis needs, HMRC and ONS should review the way PAYE RTI statistics are currently disseminated, and implement any improvements needed. This user focused review should include considering ways to improve navigation around the data tables within Excel, making data more widely available, for example through NOMIS and better promoting the Datalab service.

Action

Through user engagement, HMRC and the ONS will improve how the data are disseminated in data tables in Excel. In July 2023, a note has been put in data tables asking for feedback on the presentation and format. Feedback will be reviewed and where possible incorporated into data tables. Example Excel spreadsheets will be made available before publishing in the new format.

The ONS are currently working on developing a labour market application programming interface (API) to improve the accessibility of data. It is hoped that a version of this will be made available in spring 2024.

Additionally, HMRC will better promote the Datalab service offered to access the PAYE RTI microdata, including placing links within the bulletin to [Datalab service access information](#).

Recommendation 4: Maximising insight through data linkage

To help maximise insight and the potential public value of the PAYE RTI data HMRC and ONS should consider ways to support user needs for additional insight by how any data gaps could be filled, whether that be through any ad-hoc analyses or additions to the regular publication if helpful and feasible.

Action

HMRC will look into how additions to the regular publication can be used to better help user needs for extra insight. They will consult with users on what additions have been helpful in the past and where opportunities have been missed.

HMRC will look to improve signposting to ad-hoc analysis where that analysis can be published.

Recommendation 5: Methodology

To support user confidence in the recent methodological changes and support ongoing understanding and development of the statistics: (a) HMRC should publish its analysis and evaluation of the implementation of the new imputation method explaining the impact on the quality of the statistics. (b) More widely, HMRC and ONS should update the quality and methodology documentation in ways that meet the needs of both expert and non-expert users.

Action

HMRC and the ONS to publish a report evaluating the new imputation method by spring 2024.

HMRC and the ONS will look to build on the methodology documentation already available to ensure it meets the needs of all users. A revised methodology document will be published alongside a new quality report in early 2024.

Recommendation 6: Quality assurance

To help provide assurances around the quality of the published statistics, HMRC and ONS should publish information about the start-to-end quality assurance process for PAYE RTI statistics.

Action

HMRC and the ONS will publish a Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) for Earnings and employment from PAYE RTI statistics in early 2024.

3 . Future developments

We will keep users updated with our future work on the Office for Statistics Regulation's (OSR) recommendations and resulting changes to our processes and plans. We will continue to report back to the OSR outlining our progress and completion of research and findings.

We welcome feedback on our statistics and methods. Please email us at labour.market@ons.gov.uk and rtistatistics.enquiries@hmrc.gov.uk.

4 . Related links

[Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 October 2023

Experimental monthly estimates of payrolled employees and their pay from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data. This is a joint release between HMRC and the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

[Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics: Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK](#)

Office for Statistics Regulation | Published 8 June 2023

Regulatory review of HMRC and ONS estimates of earnings and employment from PAYE RTI.

5 . Cite this article

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