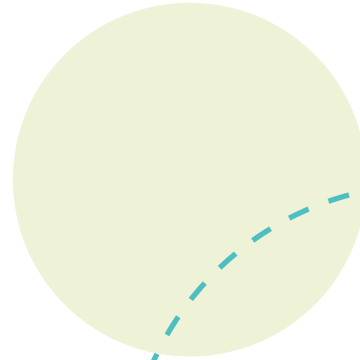
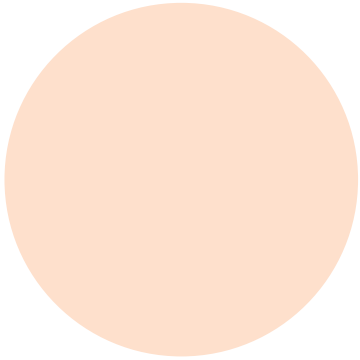
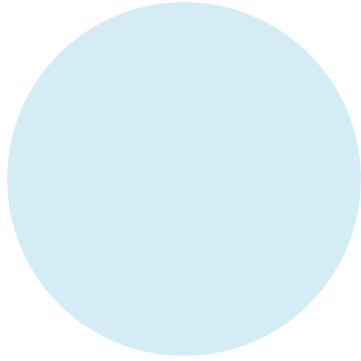
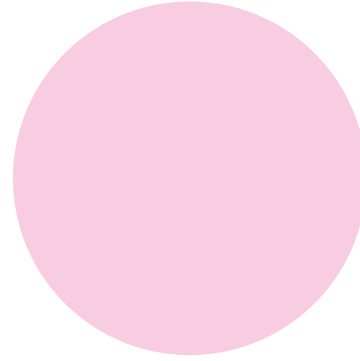
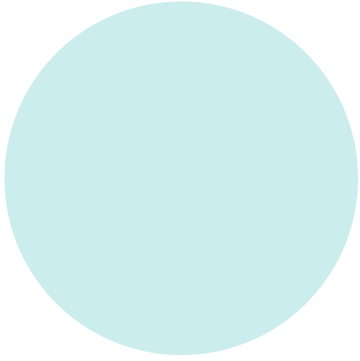
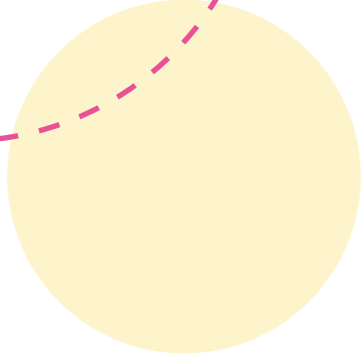


ONS strategy

2026 — 2028





Contents

Foreword	1
Who we are	3
Our objectives and outcomes	7
Our plans	10



Foreword

As the United Kingdom's national statistical institute, our mission is clear: to deliver high-quality, independent statistics that underpin the UK's most critical economic and societal decisions and inform the public.

Guided by the priorities established by the UK Statistics Authority Board, this strategy sets out how we will deliver our mission over the next two years, consolidating our recovery and organisational transformation.

There is a renewed focus on quality over quantity, improving our portfolio of critical statistics. We are developing our essential services as a modern national statistical institute, making our data easier to find, use and understand for users. And we are strengthening the foundations of our work by investing in our people and our data and technology.

I am proud of the way that the organisation has responded to recent challenges and is building on its strengths to deliver quality, trustworthy statistics and excellence in delivery. There is understandable demand for us to do more, faster. Our priority for the period of this strategy is to act and implement change in a way that improves the quality of, and restores trust in, ONS statistics. This is evident in the steps we have already taken to strengthen our leadership, implement improvements to critical statistical outputs and in how we work in the open, accounting to and collaborating with our stakeholders.

Though this strategy focuses on the immediate period of recovery, we will continue to plan for the future, including focused preparations for delivering the 2031 Census, making greater use of technology and AI, as well as linked census, survey and administrative data.

Each element of this strategy has been shaped with colleagues across the ONS and reflects a shared determination to restore pride and trust in the organisation. Since joining, I have been impressed by the skill and dedication of colleagues working across the ONS, often in close collaboration with the wider government statistical system. I know that with continued dedication and focus on this strategy we will be able to achieve our mission.



Darren Tierney

Permanent Secretary of the Office for National Statistics

July 2026



As the United Kingdom's national statistical institute, our mission is clear: to deliver high-quality, independent statistics that underpin the UK's most critical economic and societal decisions and inform the public.



Who we are

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the executive office of the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) which has the statutory objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good.

This strategy explains how the [ONS will deliver on the Authority's priorities](#) published in October 2025. The Authority Board expects to publish an updated strategy for the statistical system in due course, led by a new Chair and a new National Statistician. This will set the context for the next iteration of the ONS Strategy beyond 2028.

We are the UK's recognised national statistical institute, responsible for collecting, analysing and disseminating statistics about the economy, society and population. This includes conducting the census in England and Wales every 10 years.

Our statistics and analysis are crucial evidence for decision-making by central and local government, businesses, academics, charities and communities across the UK, as well as informing public debate.

We work closely with users of official statistics across the UK, and producers across the Government Statistical Service and beyond. Our statistics are assessed against the statutory Code of Practice for Statistics by the Office for Statistics Regulation.

The ONS and the Authority are accountable to Parliament, and we welcome the scrutiny provided by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. The Committee's challenge and support, including through its ongoing inquiry, will help inform our approach as we deliver this strategy.

The Devereux review

In 2025, the Authority Board and Cabinet Office jointly commissioned Sir Robert Devereux to review the culture and performance of the ONS. Actions taken following this review have focused on improving performance, reestablishing a positive organisational culture and prioritising critical economic and population statistics. This strategy continues this focus.

Following the Devereux review it was decided, at least temporarily, that the role of the National Statistician should be split between a Permanent Secretary of the ONS and National Statistician. Darren Tierney was appointed Permanent Secretary in August 2025.

National Statistician's Office

The National Statistician's Office (NSO) supports the National Statistician in their role as the principal adviser on official statistics to the UK Statistics Authority and government, and as the public voice of official statistics. The National Statistician is also the Head of the Government Statistical Service.

The NSO stewards the UK statistical system, promoting coherence, standards and quality so that decision-makers can rely on joined-up evidence. It supports statistical capability and collaboration across government and across the UK, as well as advancing international partnerships with other national statistical institutes and multilateral organisations, contributing to the development of international standards.

Over the period of this strategy, the NSO will continue to strengthen its system leadership role, focussing its efforts on the areas where it can have the most impact, such as delivering innovative statistical analysis on cross-government issues, and coordinating the statistical system's ongoing response to the UK Statistics Assembly.





MISSION

**To deliver trustworthy,
independent, high-quality
statistics that underpin the
UK's most critical economic
and societal decisions and
inform the public.**



We are focused on delivering trustworthy, independent and high-quality statistics to inform decision makers across the UK.



Our users include government, businesses, charities and members of the public. We continue to engage positively with our users and stakeholders, working in the open to share updates on our progress, seek feedback on our plans and inform our priorities.



Our top priority is the quality of our critical statistics. This means prioritising quality over quantity. We will make difficult decisions to focus on delivering what matters most.



Our statistics will be produced with a focus on the standards set by the Code of Practice for Statistics and its pillars of trustworthiness, quality and value.



New plans and projects will only be given the go-ahead where they align to this strategy and the unique capabilities of the ONS, they are affordable, and we are highly confident that they can be delivered.

Our objectives and outcomes

Over the next two years, the ONS will focus on recovery and delivery. This will continue the work already underway to improve our portfolio of statistics; develop our services as a modern national statistical institute and; strengthen the foundations of our work (people, culture, and data and technology).

Steps already taken include a narrowed focus of ONS publications to support improvements to the quality of our economic and social statistics that are key to decision makers. In 2026/27, we aim to reduce the number of outputs published by around 10%.

To deliver consistent, high-quality statistical work, business planning will be focused on prioritisation, affordability and delivery confidence. Programmes and change activities will be assessed transparently, only given approval once impacts on other ONS work have been identified and delivery criteria have been confirmed. This will ensure that the delivery of the work that matters most is protected.

The [ONS Business Plan](#) sets out in more detail, our three strategic outcomes which articulate what success looks like, alongside three strategic objectives designed to drive meaningful impact. To support delivery, we will actively identify and manage risks through a thorough approach to risk management, with assurance from Internal Audit and the National Audit Office, alongside independent regulatory assurance from the OSR.

The ONS tracks its performance through a number of key indicators and metrics. These indicators are currently being reviewed and are expected to be revised later in 2026/27 to clearly define what success looks like. Everything that the ONS delivers will be aligned to this strategy and the corresponding outcomes and objectives. They underpin our shared mission, provide clarity for decision-making, and serve as a focal point for business planning.



STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

Success is when we have:

1. improved the quality and trustworthiness of the statistics we publish
2. provided society and decision makers with timely and relevant data and statistics
3. developed an efficient, resilient and adaptable organisation with the right capabilities for the future



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To achieve the outcomes we will:

1. deliver and continuously improve an agreed portfolio of critical statistics
2. deliver agreed essential services of a national statistical institute that support the use of our data and statistics
3. build the essential capability improvements (culture, people, data and technology) required by the ONS today and in the future

Our plans

To deliver our mission throughout 2026/2028, we will strengthen the foundations of our work by investing in our people, our culture and our data and technology. We will align these supporting plans with this strategy and the ONS Business Plan.

Capability plans

These plans will strengthen the foundations across the ONS.

The **People Plan** will set out how we build the skills, leadership and culture needed to deliver high-quality statistics and services.

The **Digital and Data Plan** will set out how we develop the technology, data architecture and digital capability needed to support quality, resilience, security and efficiency.

Priority delivery plans

These plans will focus delivery in major areas of work.

The [Surveys and Economic Statistics Improvement Plan](#), combining the previously separate Plan for ONS Economic Statistics and ONS Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan for Economic Statistics) will continue to drive improvements in economic statistics and surveys. Progress against the plan is reported transparently through quarterly updates. To support this plan, we are delivering a programme to align to International Macro Economic Statistical Standards. We are also developing a Social Survey Strategy to provide a roadmap for surveys recovery, establish the basis for a sustainable surveys system and, look at the future of surveys beyond Census 2031.

Our [Census 2031 Strategy for England and Wales](#) will guide preparations for a modern, inclusive census of England and Wales, to serve as the foundation of our population statistics system into the future. In parallel, we will continue to deliver improvements to our critical outputs in the near term through a Population Statistics System Plan to be published later in 2026.

People Plan

To achieve our mission, the ONS needs people equipped with the right skills, capabilities and leadership. Success here will include the establishment of an agile, technologically skilled and forward-looking workforce producing statistics of the highest quality.

Attracting, developing and retaining skilled colleagues is key to our success, both now as we improve the quality of our critical statistics and prepare for the census in 2031, but also as we look to the future and the requirements of a modern national statistical institute.

Drawing upon recent external reviews and colleagues' views, our People Plan will identify core areas of focus to strengthen ONS culture, capability and performance.

The People Plan will enable a culture where highly skilled colleagues grow and collaborate to deliver high quality statistics underpinning the UK's most critical decisions. To deliver this, we must:

- be agile in how we recruit and retain talent
- build the skills we need now and for the future
- foster a collaborative culture, grounded in delivery, openness and trust

The People Plan will focus on six core areas: employee experience; capability; pay and reward; optimising performance; recruitment and resourcing; and leadership and management. It will set out practical actions to improve how we work, support colleagues, and build the skills and leadership the ONS needs.

We will foster a collaborative culture and demonstrate strong leadership through our ONS leadership commitment. Line managers within the ONS are expected to role model this commitment which complements the Civil Service Code.





LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

ONS leadership will fulfil our mission by: building trust with our teams, encouraging challenge, listening and taking decisive action on our priorities.

Digital and Data Plan

To deliver our mission, the ONS needs the technology and digital capability to produce high-quality statistics reliably, efficiently, and securely. Success here will mean more resilient and reproducible statistical production and outputs that better reflect the changing ways in which users access data and statistics.

Later this year, our new Director General for Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) will set out further detail of our strategic approach to equipping the ONS with the digital and data architecture we need in our Digital and Data Plan.

As we focus in the recovery period on improving quality and restoring confidence in our statistics, we will take a principled approach to delivering work across our technology and data portfolio, investing in technology and data where, and only where, we can:

- continuously improve the quality of our critical statistics
- improve the resilience or quality of a critical system
- deliver operational efficiencies
- improve our technical security and resilience



Principles for the Digital and Data Plan

Work so far during the recovery period suggests some principles that will guide the development of our Plan.

To improve quality, we want to:

- further develop our strategic digital products for surveys and data collection;
- make statistical production more streamlined, auditable and reproducible, from processing through to dissemination; and
- make better use of linked census, survey and administrative data sources.

To improve our efficiency, we want to:

- make it easier for teams to develop and improve services where this supports quality and value for money, within clear organisational guardrails
- take targeted action to reduce reliance on legacy systems, where this will most improve resilience, quality and efficiency
- organise work in ways that reduce duplication and make better use of specialist capability
- provide easier and more consistent access to well-managed data across the organisation, supported by the Data Governance Framework
- reduce the spread of new technologies by focusing on key skills and capabilities that work across multiple activities or domains

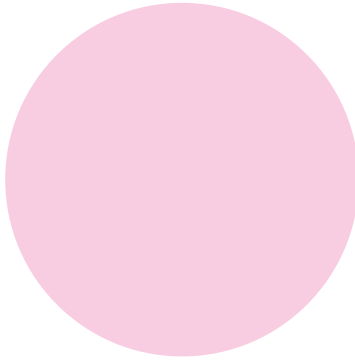
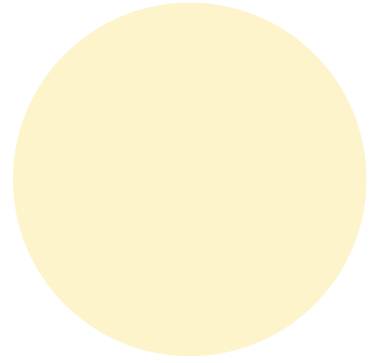
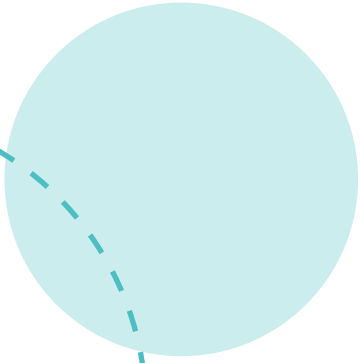
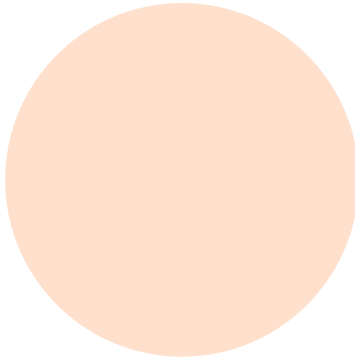
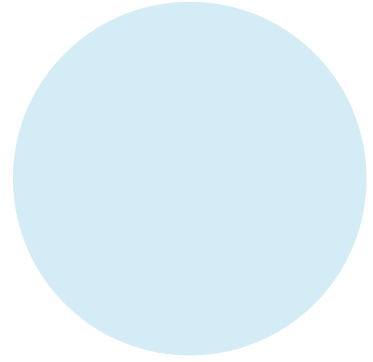
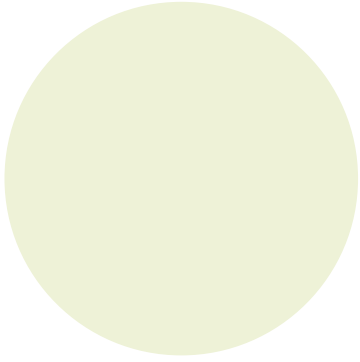
Artificial Intelligence

We are taking steps to respond to the changing way in which users access data and to ensure that our data and content are 'AI-ready'. This includes working with international partners to develop common quality frameworks, technical approaches and metadata standards as well as incorporating AI into the development of statistics using linked census, survey and administrative data.

Last year the ONS was one of the first national statistical institutes to deploy generative AI in the production of statistics with the in-house development of a ClassifAI application now used to code labour market statistics by type of occupation and industry. We will continue exploring how AI can support statistical production in practical ways.

Over time, AI may also offer opportunities to support efficiency and modernisation, for example in tasks such as rewriting code from legacy systems, wherever this can be done securely and with appropriate oversight.

The plan for digital and data will set out the ONS's longer-term direction for technology and data.





A decorative background featuring a large pink circle at the top, a large orange circle on the right, and various smaller colored circles (yellow, teal, pink, orange) scattered throughout. Dashed lines in yellow and teal are also present, creating a modern, abstract design.