

Response to the Consultation on Changes to ONS Products 2015

19 April 2016

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Executive Summary

At ONS, we are acutely aware of both the challenges and the opportunities which face producers of official statistics. The digital and data revolution has arrived, giving us access to more data than ever before; we need to make changes to keep pace with it. We are transforming into a modern, data-driven organisation capable and equipped to give the UK the statistics it needs. This aim was highlighted by the recent Review of UK Economic Statistics by Sir Charles Bean which outlined the need for ONS to invest in transformation in order to improve the evidence base for decision making.

To enable us to change we must reduce the cost of our current operations. Following the recent spending review ONS is seeking operational efficiency savings of 19% by 2019/20, in order to free up resources for transformation. To meet this challenge we are focused on making our core operations and back-office functions as efficient as possible, meeting our statutory obligations and producing high quality products and services at a lower cost. It is inevitable, given the scale of the challenge, we will have to do some things differently, stop some statistical work or scale back where products are not adding the maximum value for money.

From 13 December 2015 to 8 February 2016 we consulted on a number of options for how we would potentially scale back our existing operations. These were specific changes to our statistical outputs and services which, although important, represent a small proportion of the overall efficiency savings we will make through continuous improvement, rather than cuts.

We had 435 responses to the consultation from a range of stakeholders including national/local government, business, academia and voluntary organisations. We value the detailed responses provided as the feedback helps us to understand how and why organisations and individuals use our statistical outputs and to understand how we can make the necessary changes with as little impact on users as possible. The nature of consultation was that we were exploring possible options rather than presenting a final solution, therefore the feedback received has been taken into account and has influenced our decision making. Thank you for your time and contributions.

Consideration of responses was more qualitative than quantitative. Whilst we did consider the overall level of impact which users had rated against each of our proposals, we focussed more on what individual users said rather than the volume of response against a particular proposal. In this way we could assess impact against individual users when making decisions. We also recognised that some of the questions within the consultation were fairly specific and of a technical nature, these were aimed at more expert users. In this response we detail a little more about the impact of some of the more technical changes we will make.

In this document we set out our response to the consultation. For each section in the consultation itself, we detail the proposal we made, what our stakeholders said, and what we plan to do as a result. These decisions support the activities set out in our Business Plan for 2016/17 to 2019/20, which also outlines how we will transform the organisation over the next four years.

As part of this response we are considering how we consult with users in the future. Over recent years, including in 2010 and 2013 in response to Government Spending Reviews, we have consulted on potential reductions in outputs and services. We recognise that we need to do more to consult users on areas where we should expand, on gaps in our current provision and on how we can better meet user needs. We do this in pockets but not in a coordinated way which covers the breadth of our work programme. Consulting in this way would also help users to understand any reductions in the context of improvements. We will consider this and continue to engage with users as we make progress.

Below is a very brief summary of the outcomes of the consultation, detail then follows.

Changing how we publish our statistics, including moving away from production of some detailed statistical bulletins for single source outputs (focussing on data tables, metadata and headlines)

Whilst some users expressed concerns about the risk of loss of important analysis, the broad consensus was that this proposal represented the way we should be developing as an organisation. A change in the publication model would improve efficiency, potentially improve timeliness, and ensure that users are able to quickly understand key points, and access data.

We will therefore proceed with this proposal focussing on single-source statistical outputs. Users will start to see this new approach from April 2016 and we will work closely with key users and with the Monitoring and Assessment function of the UK Statistics Authority to ensure that the new model improves the service we provide.

Some users also raised the question of how we can focus our statistical releases in order to better inform debate and decision making, particularly in the area of economic statistics. We are considering how we may do this and will consult further in due course as necessary.

Stopping some surveys and reducing some survey sample sizes

To ensure our operations are as efficient as possible we proposed a series of potential changes to our portfolio of business and social surveys. Although we recognised that some of these changes were fairly technical in nature, we asked for your views in order that we could fully assess potential impact, alongside our internal assessment of the impact on statistical quality.

Our detailed response which follows outlines each area and the decisions we have taken. In summary:

- We will continue with the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey and the Occupational Pensions Schemes Survey
- We will continue with the Quarterly Stocks Survey, although we will keep this under review pending further use of alternative data sources
- We will *not* make the proposed changes to the Wealth and Assets Survey, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, the Annual Business Survey, and the Business Register and Employment Survey
- We will proceed with sample optimisation for the International Passenger Survey as this will improve the quality of migration statistics
- We will proceed with proposals to reduce the sample size for the Monthly Business Survey, using administrative data to replace some survey data, and will provide further analysis of the effect in due course.
- We will proceed with small changes to the response rate and sample size targets for the Business Expenditure on Research and Development Survey, Retail Sales Inquiry, the Insurance (Annual) Survey, the Pensions (Annual) Survey, the Producer Price Index (Monthly) Survey, the Quarterly Capital Assets Survey and validation rules for PRODCOM.

Publishing some of our statistics less frequently

User feedback clearly demonstrated that frequency is a key component of statistical quality and is of fundamental importance to agile decision making. We will not, therefore, proceed with proposals to reduce the frequency of our outputs at this time. We mentioned specifically the frequency of population projections. Whilst we will not proceed with this proposal we do intend to consider our future production model for national and sub-national population projections and we will consult with users as appropriate.

Stopping production of some statistics where users tell us this would have a low impact

We made it clear in the consultation that we will only stop producing statistics altogether as a last resort. We intend to make the majority of savings from efficiency and continuous improvement activities which will not impact on the outputs available to users. Users responded to the consultation outlining the use of the outputs we produce which are not required by legislation. These responses clearly demonstrated the importance of the vast majority of these outputs. It was useful for us to re-assess use of these outputs and confirm that at this time we will not look to cease production of any of these outputs.

The detail which follows outlines the responses to the consultation and any additional information regarding our decision making on these matters.

If you have any questions or require further information please contact ons.communications@ons.gov.uk.

Changes to our publications

Proposal

We proposed to replace some single source statistical bulletins with key bullets or shorter summary bulletins, alongside the data tables and metadata. This would create a more efficient production model, enable us to focus our resources in value added secondary analysis from multiple sources, and improve our products. The single source statistical bulletins where we would consider making this change were listed in Annex A of the consultation document.

You said

The majority of respondents indicated that their primary interest was access to data and metadata rather than detailed bulletins for single source outputs, with some respondents reporting that they carried out their own analysis. On the whole, respondents reported a preference for more timely outputs rather than detailed ONS analysis of single source outputs. Respondents indicated that they were content for the bulletins to be shortened as long as they still included some key trends and summary points. Many respondents wanted assurances that the methodology information would still be provided to inform analysts on the limitations of the data.

“The change would continue to meet [our] requirements as long as data tables and metadata (including essential technical notes) continue to be available. More timely publication of the datasets would be preferable to detailed analysis.”

However, there were some reservations that shortening statistical bulletins could make statistics less accessible to the wider population, and reduce their importance in informing the public debate. Some respondents also commented that if we provided less analysis the void would be filled by other commentators who may interpret the statistics differently and provide a less objective analysis. We are aware of these concerns.

Some respondents, particularly some voluntary organisations, indicated that they did not have the time or resources to conduct their own detailed analysis, and so they relied on our analysis to interpret the data.

Action

The majority of users thought this change would have a low impact and, indeed, many users highlighted how this new model would be an improved one for ONS. As such, we have decided to implement this change.

We will replace detailed statistical bulletins for single source outputs (that were listed in Annex A) with a new product focussing on key bullets or a shorter summary. The data tables and metadata will continue to be published. This change will allow us to focus on producing value added analysis on multiple data sources in order to inform debate and decision making, therefore mitigating the risk that some users raised around lack of analysis – this proposal will increase our ability to produce analysis. As we begin to move towards this model from April 2016, we will work closely with users and the Monitoring and Assessment function of the UK Statistics Authority to ensure that the changes we make meet user needs.

Changes to social surveys

Wealth and Assets Survey (WAS)

Proposal

We proposed the following changes to the Wealth and Assets Survey:

- having lower or no incentives for respondents to complete the survey
- reducing the sample size by up to 20%

You said

Those respondents who were users of WAS highlighted the value of the survey as a means of monitoring wealth trends, and how this impacts quality of life. It was also highlighted that there's no other source of this kind of information.

“This survey provides valuable insight into household and individual wealth and is useful in terms of context and to understand variations in, for example, health.”

A common comment was that a reduction in sample size would likely impact on the reliability of sub-samples and local area statistics. Similarly, there were also concerns about cutting incentive payments.

“Reducing incentives for respondents to take part could have a serious impact on the representativeness of the sample. For example, if poorer households are less likely to respond in the absence of incentives then the sample will suffer from selection problems.”

Some respondents did however question whether incentive payments were still an effective way of encouraging responses in the context of a general trend of decreasing survey participation.

Government departments, including HM Treasury, Department for Work and Pensions and Scottish Government indicated that reducing the sample size of WAS could have a significant impact on their policy decisions. In particular, they use WAS to assist policy development in areas including auto-enrolment, freedom and choice in pensions, issues relating to social justice and life chances, the state pension age and housing.

Action

Given the concerns about the impact of the proposals on the quality of these statistics at local level and the importance of WAS for wealth and pensions policies, we will not be reducing the sample size of WAS nor reducing incentive payments at this time.

International Passenger Survey (IPS)

Proposal

We proposed the following changes to the International Passenger Survey:

- Exclude some ports or airports from the survey sample if it has no detrimental impact on our migration statistics

- Change the times when passengers are interviewed at ports and airports so that they are conducted at the times with greatest passenger variations in order to improve migration statistics

You said

Some respondents said they had concerns about how the proposals would affect the quality of migration statistics, particularly given the relatively small sample size of IPS and that migration is currently a hot political issue. Local Authority respondents in particular raised concerns over whether there was likely to be an impact on data quality at sub-national level.

“There would be a HIGH impact if the quality of the International Passenger Survey (IPS) was diminished. This would occur if either the sample size or worse, the representativeness, of the IPS was damaged.”

Some government departments highlighted the importance of IPS data for policy decisions, particularly on immigration, and the potential knock on effects on trade and tourism data.

“It is also important to note that it is not just the accuracy of the overall national immigration, emigration and net migration figures that is vital, but that data providing breakdowns by nationality is also vital for the monitoring of immigration policy and any targets.”

Respondents also highlighted the importance of the survey being responsive to migrant flows.

“The gateways through which migrants enter and leave may change over time, as may the flight patterns of airlines. It is important that such changes, which may impact on the scale and nature of flows, are picked up as they occur by the IPS.”

However, the majority of respondents said the proposals would have a low impact, or that they would be happy for the proposals to be implemented if no or low impact on quality could be evidenced.

We also received some comments stating that they did not expect the proposals to significantly impact on quality, particularly if they were implemented carefully. Similarly, some respondents said that new administrative data sources may provide a more robust measure of migration going forward.

“In short if this is well thought out and designed then efficiency savings can be made with little loss of data utility.”

Action

Respondents told us they would be concerned with any changes to the International Passenger Survey (IPS) that would have a detrimental quality impact, especially to migration statistics. ONS will make no changes to the IPS that will have a detrimental impact on the quality of migration statistics.

ONS does periodically review the operation of the IPS to ensure the sample design adequately represents current passenger and migrant flows at the ports of entry and exit to the UK and that the optimal sample design is operationally viable. During 2016 we will improve the survey's coverage at key sites such as Dover and Gatwick which, because of greater numbers of migrant flows, are more important to migration statistics. We will also introduce migration specific collection activities at a range of ports including Heathrow. At the same time we will withdraw from a number of smaller sites shown to have a minimal impact on migration statistics because of so few migrant journeys starting or ending there. Those sites are Ashford, Ebbsfleet, Prestwick, Bournemouth and Plymouth. At a national level the proposed changes will improve the quality of migration estimates. At a regional level the quality of migration estimates will be improved or maintained.

ONS is also exploring with key users the possibility of securing a greater level of external sponsorship to protect the quality of travel and tourism statistics at a sub-national level. At national level the quality of travel and tourism statistics will be maintained under current plans.

Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OLS)

Proposal

We proposed to stop the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OLS) as a face-to-face survey until we are able to provide an online alternative.

You said

Respondents who were users of OLS outlined that it is important for developing and monitoring a range of policy issues (e.g. public health, particularly smoking, drinking, obesity and drug abuse; transport; national well-being; disability; tax; and digital inclusion) that aren't captured by other surveys. A collection of health organisations said that while there are alternative sources for some of these data, OLS has a long, consistent time series and offers comparisons across the UK Nations.

“Smoking and obesity data is routinely used for work such as our JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) and commissioning public health services.”

“The Internet module is the best data available on Internet use, which is extremely important for Britain's economy and economic future.”

Several respondents were concerned with the proposal because it would result in a break in some very long time series.

There were mixed views about the benefits of an online or face to face survey. Many respondents highlighted the merits of OLS as an offline survey, particularly the quality and reach of the data. They suggested that a move to an online survey could result in less representative or useful statistics. A few respondents highlighted that the data could be collected from commercial sources, or that the investment required to run a face-to-face lifestyle survey outweighed the benefits.

Action

The responses to the consultation highlighted the value of OLS for informing a range of policy decisions, particularly for public health issues such as smoking and alcohol consumption. A collection of health organisations said that while there are alternative sources for some of these

data, OLS has a long, consistent time series and offers comparisons across the UK Nations. As a result of this feedback, we have decided to continue running OLS at this time.

Changes to business surveys

Occupational Pension Schemes Survey (OPSS)

Proposal

We proposed to stop running the Occupational Pension Schemes Survey.

You said

Of the respondents who said they used OPSS there were mixed views on whether pension data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) would be sufficient if OPSS was stopped. Some respondents commented that stopping OPSS would not be a problem as long as the proposed changes to ASHE were not implemented. However, others stated that OPSS is a unique dataset and ASHE is not as detailed or useful as OPSS for monitoring pensions. Respondents also said that stopping OPSS whilst automatic enrolment onto pension schemes is underway would make it difficult to monitor the impact of the policy. They advised that no changes should take place until the impact of automatic enrolment is known.

“Many policy issues have implications for all members of pension schemes and as such losing the limited data available will prevent the PPI from assessing the implications of policy so effectively.”

“The OPSS is a widely used source in both policy analysis and modelling enabling consistent and detailed information to be gained when looking across the occupational pension scheme landscape, something which is not available at the scheme level through any other source.”

Action

Given the high impact of stopping OPSS on economic and pension policy, and the value of OPSS in providing pension membership and contributions data down to scheme level, we will continue to run OPSS at this time.

Quarterly Stocks Survey (QSS)

Proposal

We proposed to stop running the Quarterly Stocks Survey.

You said

Of the respondents who used QSS, the majority said that the changes would have a low impact on their work, particularly for local authorities and the voluntary sector.

However, some respondents highlighted the importance of QSS as a component of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). There were concerns that stopping QSS would have an impact on the accuracy of GDP, and therefore economic policy.

“This has the potential for a high impact on data needs. Inventories are a volatile and highly pro-cyclical component of GDP.”

Action

Given the potential impact on GDP figures, we will continue to run QSS at this time. However, we may consider this proposal again in the future once we have a better understanding of the potential impact on GDP statistics or the potential alternative data sources.

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Retail Sales Inquiry (RSI) & Monthly Business Survey (MBS)**Proposal**

We proposed to reduce the sample size of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. We also proposed to reduce the response rate target by 2 percentage points.

We proposed to reduce the sample size of the Retail Sales Inquiry.

We proposed to reduce the sample size of the Monthly Business Survey.

You said

Very few respondents said that the proposed changes to MBS or RSI would be problematic. The few respondents who did raise concerns wanted assurances that the quality of the data would be maintained if VAT data were to be used in place of survey data.

However, significant concerns were raised about the proposals to reduce the response rate target and sample size for ASHE. Respondents said that ASHE was crucial for monitoring economic activity, pay and equality across the country, and for monitoring policy proposals in these areas.

Many respondents were concerned about the impact on quality that reducing the sample size would have. It was also highlighted several times that the existing sample size is considered low, and so any reductions would have a high impact on local area data. In addition, some respondents highlighted that using HMRC data could cause discontinuities in the data and that any such issues should be better understood before changing the sample size.

“Information about earnings and income is very important to us, particularly given concerns over housing affordability, the impact of welfare changes and concerns about children living in poverty.”

A few respondents said that HMRC administrative data could replace ASHE data in the future, especially if the current quality of the data could be maintained. However many more said that, while they supported the use of HMRC data in principle, they were concerned that it would not provide data of the same or greater quality than ASHE.

“Provided HMRC data can offer a similar dataset the proposal to change methods would have little impact on our business”

Action

Given the large number of respondents who were concerned about the proposed changes to ASHE, we will not be reducing the sample size or response rate target of ASHE at this time.

We are currently investigating the use of VAT turnover data from HMRC as a replacement for some survey data on MBS. In principle, this would involve stopping the sampling of smaller businesses in some industry groups, and replacing the corresponding part of the estimate with

information obtained from the VAT data. This would save money by reducing the MBS sample and reduce burden on survey respondents, and will see a much larger data set being used to compile the estimates. Further work is required to establish methods and details of the proposal, and to determine the impact on MBS outputs, which feed into the Index of Production, Index of Services and the output measure of GDP. Analysis will follow in due course, but – if the development work shows this proposal is reasonable – it is our current intention to introduce this on a limited number of MBS industries from August 2016. An [update](#) on our work to use VAT data for statistical purposes is already available.

We will also progress with plans to remove the smallest firms from the RSI sample, potentially equating to a 20% reduction in the total sample from October 2016. A detailed analysis of the impact on quality will be published in Summer 2016 at which point we will finalise this decision. Whilst we are not planning to supplement with VAT data at this point we will continue to explore opportunities in the future.

Other proposed reductions in response rate target or sample size

Proposal

We considered reducing the costs of some of the business surveys that support our statistics, rather than impacting on the outputs themselves. The changes we proposed would be those which were the least significant and minimise the impact on the quality of our statistics. We proposed to:

- reduce the sample size by 5% and response rate target by 2 percentage points for the Business Register Employment Survey (BRES)
- reduce the response rate target by 7 percentage points for the Business Expenditure on Research and Development Survey (BERD)
- reduce the response rate target for the Insurance (Annual) Survey by 5 percentage points
- reduce the response rate target for the Pensions (Annual) Survey by 5 percentage points
- reduce the response rate target for the Producer Price Index (Monthly) Survey by 2 percentage points
- reduce the sample size by 10% and reduce the response rate target by 2 percentage points for the Quarterly Capital Assets Survey (QCAS).

You said

There was little or no objection to the proposals to reduce the sample sizes or response rate targets for the following surveys:

- Insurance Survey
- Pensions Survey
- Producer Price Index
- Quarterly Capital Assets Survey

There were, however, concerns raised about the proposed changes to BRES and BERD.

Respondents said BRES was important for monitoring employment at local level.

“...this is the only source of information on the estimates of the public/private sector split of employment below regional.”

Many respondents indicated that they thought BRES, like ASHE, had a small sample size when considering local level data, and so any reduction in that sample would have a significant impact on the quality of local level data. As BRES is the principal tool for maintaining and updating the IDBR, from which most business surveys are sampled, we recognise the importance of ensuring its quality; responses to this consultation supported this view.

“I am particularly concerned about the proposals to reduce the size of the Business Register & Employment Survey, which provides basic structural information (particularly on local units) which maintains the business register.”

Respondents highlighted the importance of BERD for monitoring business spending on research and development, business innovation and related policies.

“Few data sources exist to measure the scale of R&D and innovation activities in the economy, so efforts to address this through the BERD Survey or via other means are critical and very much welcome.”

Action

We will not be making changes to BRES at this time, because of its importance for monitoring employment and updating the business register.

However, given that users indicated a low impact of the following proposals we will:

- reduce the response rate target of the Insurance Survey (Annual) and the Pensions Survey (Annual) by 5 percentage points from April 2016
- reduce the sample size of QCAS by 10% and reduce the response rate target of QCAS by 2 percentage points from September 2016
- reduce the response rate target of PPI by 2 percentage points from April 2016.

The changes in response rate targets for the Annual Insurance Survey, Annual Pensions Survey, QCAS and PPI are small and are not expected to have a notable impact on quality.

The 10% reduction in the QCAS sample will be combined with a sample re-allocation to minimise the adverse effects on quality. Work is currently underway to investigate the sample design options available and assess the impact on precision of estimates. We will share the findings of the work with users, and anticipate this being available in the early summer.

We will also reduce the response rate target of the Business Enterprise Research and Development Survey (BERD) by 7 percentage points from April 2016. Although there was some concern about proposed changes to BERD, we have decided to take this change forward because, as with the other surveys, the change in response rate target is small and we expect there to be only a small impact on quality. The reduction in response rate target is slightly higher for BERD than the other surveys because the existing target is higher. We believe the existing target is unnecessarily high. We will however monitor the impact on quality later in the year and inform users of the findings.

Proposed changes in validation and 8-digit product level

Proposal

We proposed to reduce the validation rules and selective editing thresholds for the Annual Business Survey. We also proposed to review and rebalance the number of short and long questionnaires for ABS.

We proposed to reduce the validation rules and selective editing thresholds for PRODCOM. We also proposed to reduce the amount of data collected at the 8-digit product level and move towards the 6-digit level for PRODCOM.

You said

A number of respondents highlighted the proposed changes in validation rules for ABS as a concern. In particular, respondents highlighted the importance of ABS for monitoring economic impact and town planning. It was also noted that ABS is used to measure GDP and so feeds into key economic policy decisions.

“The ABS is used to measure GDP which is in turn used to monitor the economy and inform decisions on economic and fiscal policy.”

The majority of respondents said there would be a low impact from rebalancing the number of short and long questionnaires for ABS, particularly if the expected impact on quality was low. However, there were some concerns that quality might be impacted or that changes to the surveys would cause discontinuities in the data.

While some respondents noted that PRODCOM is used to balance and quality assure GDP, most had no issues with the proposals. The main concerns were around the potential impact on quality of PRODCOM data below 8-digit level and the impact on other statistics (for example GDP).

Action

We understand that there were some concerns with the proposal to change the ABS, we will therefore not proceed with these changes at this time.

We have decided to implement the proposals relating to PRODCOM. Respondents indicated that the proposed changes to PRODCOM would have a low impact.

We intend to stop producing PRODCOM at 8-digit level. Data at 8-digit level is very detailed and we need to suppress some data to maintain confidentiality. The removal of 8-digit product codes will allow us to provide more detailed data at other levels. It will also reduce the complexity of the surveys we send to businesses, reducing response burden and possibly resulting in more reliable data from respondents. Data at 8-digit level is currently required by Eurostat, and ceasing production of this data would depend on changes to existing legislation. The earliest we could adopt this change would be 2018.

We will be reducing the number of validation rules and decreasing the number of records which are prioritised for validation for PRODCOM from January 2017. We are identifying the rules which flag up a lot of errors, but ultimately have a small impact on the quality of the statistics. This will allow us to make the biggest savings for the smallest impact on quality. We will conduct a review to understand the full impact on quality in July/August 2016, and keep users informed of developments.

Publishing statistics less frequently

National and Sub-national Population Projections

Proposal

We proposed to publish National and Sub-national Population Projections once every 3 years, instead of once every 2 years.

You said

The majority of respondents said that the proposal would have a high impact, because of the importance of population projections for town planning, policy development and allocation of funding and resources. Some respondents highlighted that they notice significant changes in local populations in a short period of time, so extending the time between editions of Sub-national Population Projections would be problematic.

“Even when we move from one set of projections to the next with only a 2 year gap the differences can be quite marked especially in the elderly age bands. In recent years this has resulted in changes in our forecasts of millions.”

A few respondents did however indicate that changing the frequency from 2 to 3 years would have a low impact, either because they don't need updated projections every 2 years, or because they think little additional insight could be gained from more regular projections.

“I think producing the projections every 3 years is perfectly reasonable. It is difficult to spot trends over a shorter period and producing them every 2 years also puts a pressure on LAs to do the same if they are doing their own policy based projections.”

Action

We will not change the frequency of population projections at this time. However, we will continue to explore how the publication model for National and Sub-National Population Projections may be improved and will consult users directly as we consider this.

Other reductions in frequency

Proposal

We wanted to understand what the impact would be if we published some of our statistics less frequently.

You said

The majority of respondents said that any changes in frequency would have to be considered on a case by case basis following further consultation, but the general view was that frequency is a key element of quality and should be protected or improved.

Although concerns were also raised on the level of confidence users would have in less frequent data and the potential impact on policy reductions, other felt less frequent publication was a realistic suggestion.

“People would feel less confident with using these statistics as they got older or if the frequency was reduced.”

“For many products an annual release would probably suffice.”

Action

We will not be changing the frequency of our publications. We understand that the frequency of statistics is important to you and we hope to produce better, more timely statistics in the future as a result of our transformation programme.

Stopping production of non-statutory statistics

Proposal

We wanted to ask users about their use of our outputs which are non-statutory (i.e. those where we have more discretion in production). We were not proposing to stop these outputs at this time but were aiming to review the potential impact in case we needed to consider changes in these areas as a last resort. The full list of non-statutory of non-statutory products covered by the proposal are available in Annex B of the consultation document.

You said

Many respondents highlighted how essential these datasets were to their work, including some statutory obligations. Local authorities in particular stressed the importance of population statistics and births and deaths data when planning.

“Population statistics; given their importance I'm amazed that they are non-statutory...Key decisions would be based on greater uncertainty about the current situation.”

“Conception statistics are essential as are excess winter deaths, healthy life expectancies, suicide and vital statistics.”

A significant number of charities and other organisations stressed the importance of the infant mortality data, especially at national level, both for understanding the full picture and identifying trends.

"...The value of investigation of child deaths, and infants in particular, is well evidenced. At a local level a degree of understanding of trends and thus where effective impact may be made, is limited by the relatively small data that can be gathered in one county. There is huge value to us to have much wider national data both for ascertainment of the wider picture and for understanding trends and where our interventions may best impact, as well as the ultimate result of those interventions over time."

There were concerns from respondents involved in health and social care issues with particular worries expressed over the impact on alcohol and drug related research.

"Stopping the alcohol-related deaths statistics would be a very significant loss. It would make the task of understanding alcohol harms considerably more difficult and would severely undermine effective policymaking in this area."

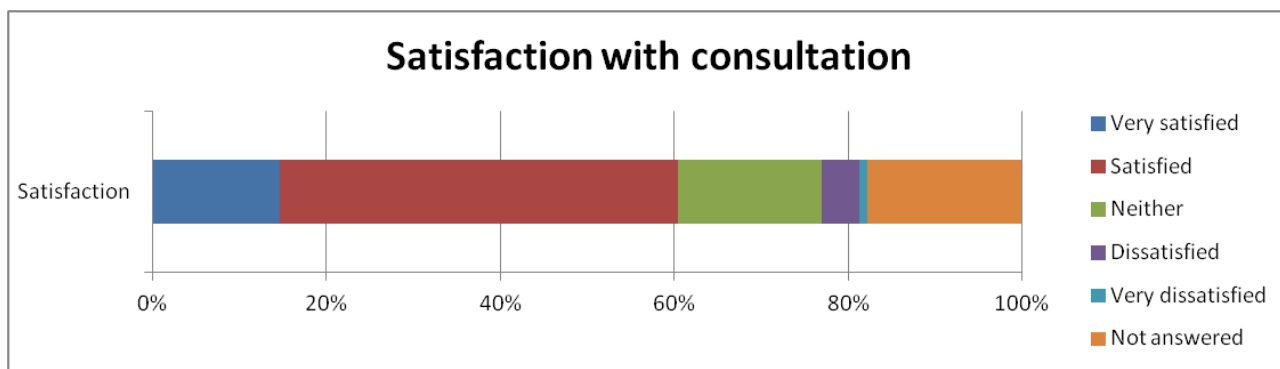
Finally, there were comments from the House of Commons Library outlining the economic data used by MPs, particularly International Comparisons of Productivity because it is centred on the UK's performance with other large economies.

Action

As a result of your feedback, we have decided to continue all of the products listed in Annex B of the consultation at this time. We believe cutting these products would have a greater impact on our users than some of the other proposals that were detailed in the consultation, we therefore choose to make those changes rather than cuts to outputs. However, where possible the number of tables published will be reduced to achieve efficiencies especially in cases where explorable data is becoming available.

Satisfaction with the consultation

We asked respondents “Overall, how satisfied were you with our online consultation service today”. 61% (265) of respondents said they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the consultation, with 5% (23) saying they were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”. In total, 18% (78) of respondents did not answer the question.



Consultation format

Many respondents said that the Word document was useful for submitting collaborative or corporate responses, because it is easier to share with their colleagues. We will ensure we continue to provide this option in future alongside an online alternative.

Some respondents had issues opening the PDF documents which listed the products which some of the proposals affected. In particular, some suggested the ability to open the list in a new tab would have been helpful. We will attempt to resolve this for future consultations.

Some respondents that they would have preferred radio buttons, rather than a list of affected products for some questions. We considered this approach, but we decided to use text boxes after internal testing suggested that radio buttons were more burdensome in this case. We will, however, consider this feedback for future consultations.

General comments

Some respondents said that they would have liked the proposals to contain more detailed information so that they could provide a more informed response. We intend for this consultation to be the start of the conversation for high and medium impact proposals, and a means of gathering initial views before more detailed discussions take place. Only proposals which clearly have a low impact on users have been implemented following this consultation. However, we will ensure that more detail is included in future consultations on this topic.

A few respondents queried the timing of the consultation; particularly that it launched shortly before Christmas. Our intention was to consult on proposed changes as soon as possible after Spending Review 2015, which inevitably meant our consultation launched in December 2015. We could not, however, wait until the new year as we wanted to get an early indication of user’s views so that they could feed into our business planning.

A group of respondents thought that the consultation should have taken a ‘clean slate’ approach, rather than increasingly cutting back on existing products. As stated in the Executive Summary, we consider this feedback for future consultations on this issue.

Next steps

The timescale for implementing each change has been outlined in the relevant sections of this document. We will keep users informed of the progress of this work, including further assessments of the likely impact these changes will have on the quality of our statistics.

Work is already underway to transform our technology and capability, including:

- Improving accessibility to our data, for example by launching the new ONS website
- A programme to transform the technology we use to collect and process data
- A workforce transformation programme to improve our capability in key areas, including data science, use of administrative data and digital technology.
- Improving access to data sources for statistical and analytical purposes

We may be forced to review or reprioritise our portfolio of work in the future, and will consult users further if and when this is necessary. We intend for this consultation to be the start of a continual process of engagement on our transformation on programme.

Getting in Touch

If you have any queries or comments about the consultation process, please email Simeon Bowen at ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk or call 0845 601 3034.

You can also write to us at the following address:

Consultation Coordinator,
Room 1.101
Office for National Statistics,
Government Buildings,
Cardiff Road,
Newport,
South Wales,
NP10 8XG.

For further information on ONS consultations, please visit <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/get-involved/consultations/index.html>

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Accessibility

All material relating to this consultation can be provided in braille, large print or audio formats on request. British Sign Language interpreters can also be requested for any supporting events.

Annex A: List of Respondents

This annex lists all respondents to the consultation, but please note the following:

- The number of respondents listed here does not match the 435 total responses we quoted in the Background section of this document. This is because some responses were submitted on behalf of multiple organisations and 29 responses were anonymous.
- Names have only been provided below for responses from individuals who gave us permission to publish their names.
- There are some responses from ONS. They are responses from individual staff members or teams within ONS who were invited to respond to the consultation.
- We have indicated whether the respondent said they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.
- Some organisations are listed multiple times to reflect the number of responses we received from them.

Organisation	Name	On behalf of
Aberdeenshire Council		Organisation
Action on Smoking and Health		Organisation
AECOM		Organisation
Alcohol Health Alliance		Organisation
Alcohol Research UK		Organisation
Andrew Baldwin Consultants	Andrew Baldwin	Individual
Andrew Berry Research & Evaluation		Organisation
Association of British Insurers (ABI)		Organisation
Babergh/ Mid Suffolk District Councils		Organisation
Balance - The North East Alcohol Office		Organisation
Bangor University	Bob Woods	Individual
Bank of England		Organisation
Barnsley MBC		Organisation
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council		Organisation
Bath and North East Somerset Council		Organisation
BEAMA		Organisation
Berkshire Healthcare NHS FT		Individual

Birmingham City Council		Organisation
BIS		Organisation
BIS (Business and Science Group)		Individual
Black Country Consortium		Organisation
Black Country Consortium Limited		Organisation
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council		Organisation
Bliss		Organisation
BMG Research		Organisation
Bournemouth Borough Council		Organisation
Bradford Met Early Year worker		Organisation
Braintree District Council		Organisation
Breckland District Council		Organisation
Brent Council		Organisation
Bridge Economics		Organisation
Bristol City Council	John Twigger	Individual
Bristol City Council		Organisation
British Beer & Pub Association		Organisation
British Chambers of Commerce		Organisation
British Fluid Power Association		Organisation
British Heart Foundation		Organisation
British Pregnancy Advisory Service (bpas)		Organisation
British Society for Population Studies (BSPS)		Organisation
Burnley Council		Organisation
Bury Council		Organisation
Cancer Research UK		Organisation
Capita Employee Benefits		Organisation
Cardiff University	Victoria Wass	Individual
CASE, London School of Economics	Abigail McKnight	Individual
Central Bedfordshire Council		Individual
Central Local Information Demography Group		Organisation

Centre for Cities		Organisation
Centre for Local Economic Strategies		Organisation
Centre for Local Economic Strategies		Organisation
CeLSIUS		Organisation
Child Death Overview Panel		Organisation
Cheshire East Council		Organisation
Cheshire West & Chester Council		Organisation
Children's Centre		Organisation
Children's Policy Research Unit (CPRU)		Organisation
Cicely Saunders Institute, King's College London		Organisation
CIH		Organisation
CIPD		Organisation
City & County of Swansea (local authority)		Organisation
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council		Organisation
City of Cardiff Council		Individual
City of London Corporation		Organisation
City of York Council		Organisation
City University London		Organisation
Civil Aviation Authority		Organisation
CLOSER, UCL Institute of Education	Alison Park	Individual
Cogent Skills		Organisation
Cogent Strategies International Ltd		Organisation
Community Action Suffolk		Organisation
Community Action Suffolk		Organisation
Competition and Markets Authority		Organisation
Cornwall Council		Organisation
Coventry City Council		Organisation
Cumbria County Council		Organisation
Dandy Booksellers Limited		Organisation
Demographics User Group		Organisation

Denbighshire County Council		Organisation
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills		Organisation
DCLG		Organisation
DCMS and some of its ALBs		Organisation
Department for Education		Organisation
Department for Education Capital Analysis		Individual
Department for Education Capital Analysis		Individual
Department for Education Central Capital		Individual
Department for Education Pupil Place Planning		Individual
Department for Education Pupil Place Planning		Individual
Department for Education Pupil Place Planning		Individual
Department for Education Pupil Place Planning		Individual
Defra group (Defra with its agencies and ALBs)		Organisation
Department for Transport		Organisation
Department for Work and Pensions		Organisation
Department of Energy and Climate Change		Organisation
DH – Including Office for Life Sciences		Organisation
Department of Health NI		Individual
Derbyshire County Council		Individual
Derbyshire County Council		Organisation
Derbyshire County Council.		Individual
Devon County Council		Organisation
Dorset County Council		Organisation
Dorset County Council		Organisation
Dudley MBC		Organisation
Dundee City Council		Organisation
Durham County Council		Organisation
Durham University		Individual

DWP		Organisation
East Riding of Yorkshire Council		Organisation
East Riding of Yorkshire Council		Organisation
East Sussex County Council		Organisation
East West Locations Limited		Organisation
Educe Ltd		Organisation
ekosgen		Organisation
Enterprise Research Centre	Professor Mark Hart	Individual
Equality and Human Rights Commission		Organisation
ESRC		Organisation
Essex County Council		Organisation
Euro-Peristat Project		Organisation
Experian Market Insight Group (Economics)		Organisation
Faculty of Public Health		Organisation
Falkirk Council		Organisation
Fife Council		Organisation
Financial Conduct Authority		Organisation
Forestry Commission		Organisation
Full Fact		Organisation
Gavurin Ltd		Organisation
Gedling Borough Council		Organisation
Glasgow City Council		Organisation
Glasgow City Council		Organisation
Glasgow City Council		Organisation
Gloucestershire County Council		Organisation
Government Digital Service		Organisation
Government Actuary's Department		Organisation
Government Office for Science		Organisation
GPS Economics		Organisation
Greater London Authority (Intelligence Unit)		Organisation
Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice		Organisation
Gwynedd Council		Organisation

Halton Borough Council		Organisation
Hammersmith and Fulham Council		Organisation
Hampshire County Council		Individual
Hampshire County Council		Organisation
Harrow Council		Organisation
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)		Organisation
HSCIC		Organisation
Health Statistics User Group		Organisation
Herefordshire Council		Organisation
Hertfordshire County Council		Organisation
Hertfordshire County Council Public Health	Claire Tiffany	Individual
High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd		Organisation
Highlands and Islands Enterprise		Organisation
Historic England		Organisation
HM Revenue & Customs		Organisation
HM Revenue & Customs		Organisation
HM Treasury		Organisation
Home Office		Organisation
House of Commons Library		Organisation
Hull City Council		Organisation
Hull City Council Public Health		Organisation
Hull Safeguarding children board		Organisation
Humber Local Enterprise Partnership		Organisation
Imperial College London	Professor David Blane	Individual
Institute and Faculty of Actuaries		Organisation
Institute and Faculty of Actuaries		Organisation
Institute for Employment Research	Derek Bosworth	Individual
Institute for Employment Research		Individual
Institute for Fiscal Studies		Organisation
Ipswich Borough Council.		Organisation
Ipswich Borough Council		Organisation
Kent Child Death Overview Panel	Dr Charles Unter	Individual

Kent County Council	Andy Smith	Individual
Kent County Council	Jeanette Forster	Individual
Kent County Council		Organisation
Kirklees Council		Individual
Lancashire County Council		Organisation
Lancaster University	Ian Walker	Individual
Land & Property Services, Northern Ireland		Organisation
Legal & General		Organisation
Leicestershire County Council		Organisation
Leicestershire County Council - Public Health		Organisation
LGBT Foundation		Organisation
Lincolnshire County Council		Organisation
LIS - Cross-National Data Center		Organisation
Liverpool City Local Enterprise Partnership		Organisation
Liverpool Community Health		Individual
Lloyds Banking Group		Organisation
Local Authority	T Bennetts	Individual
Local Authority		Organisation
Local Authority Public Health department		Organisation
Local Government Advisory Group		Organisation
Local Government Association		Organisation
Local Govt Boundary Commission for England		Organisation
London Borough of Bexley		Individual
London Borough of Harrow		Organisation
London Borough of Havering		Organisation
London Borough of Islington		Individual
London Borough of Redbridge Council		Organisation
London Borough of Waltham Forest		Organisation
London Economics		Individual
London School of Economics		Organisation

London School of Economics	Frank Cowell	Individual
London School of Economics	Bernard H Casey	Individual
Low Pay Commission		Organisation
LSE		Individual
LSE Library		Organisation
LSHTM	Michel Coleman	Individual
LSkIP	Richard Staniforth	Individual
Luton Borough Council		Organisation
Macmillan Cancer Support		Organisation
Manchester City Council		Organisation
Manchester Metropolitan University		Individual
Manchester University	Mark Elliot	Individual
Marie Curie		Organisation
Market Research Society		Organisation
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime		Organisation
Medway Council		Organisation
Metropolitan Police Service		Organisation
Midlothian Council		Organisation
Migration Statistics Users Forum		Organisation
Ministry of Justice		Organisation
Ministry of Justice		Organisation
MOD		Organisation
Mothercare		Organisation
N/A		Individual
N/A		Individual
NatCen Social Research		Organisation
National Assembly for Wales		Organisation
National Council for Palliative Care		Organisation
National Employment Savings Trust		Organisation
NIESR	Justin van de Ven	Individual
National Needle Exchange Forum (NNEF)	Jamie Bridge	Individual
National Records of Scotland		Organisation

NCVO		Organisation
Nesta		Organisation
Netmums		Organisation
Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust	Dr MP Ward Platt	Individual
New Economics Foundation		Organisation
New Forest National Park Authority		Organisation
NHS	Carol Cross	Individual
NHS Health Scotland		Organisation
NHSE		Organisation
NHS Maternity services	Patricia Seaton	Individual
NHS National Services Scotland		Organisation
NHS National Services Scotland		Organisation
None	Carl Allen	Individual
None	Anthony Faulkner	Individual
None (former demographer)	Greg Ball	Individual
North Ayrshire Council		Organisation
North East Local Enterprise Partnership		Organisation
North East Combined Authority		Organisation
North Somerset Council		Organisation
North Yorkshire County Council		Organisation
North-East Derbyshire District Council		Organisation
NISRA		Organisation
Northumberland County Council		Organisation
Northumberland County Council		Organisation
Nottingham City Council		Organisation
Nottinghamshire Child Death Panel		Organisation
Nottinghamshire County Council	Kristina McCormick	Individual
Nottinghamshire County Council		Individual
Nottinghamshire County Council	David Gilding	Individual
Nuffield Foundation		Organisation
OECD	Conal Smith	Individual
Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR)		Organisation

Office for National Statistics	Viv Firman	Individual
Office for National Statistics		Organisation
Office of Manpower Economics		Organisation
Office of Rail and Road		Organisation
Plymouth City Council		Organisation
Oldham Council		Organisation
ONS WISE Division		Individual
ONS	Susannah Farley-Green	Individual
ONS		Organisation
ONS		Organisation
Opportunity Peterborough		Organisation
Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion	Stefan Noble	Individual
Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion		Organisation
Oxford Economics		Organisation
Oxford Economics		Organisation
Oxford Economics		Organisation
Oxfordshire County Council		Organisation
Pan-Lancashire Child Death Panel		Organisation
Parent		Individual
Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association		Organisation
Pensions Policy Institute		Organisation
PeoplePlus		Organisation
Proskills UK		Organisation
Public Health & Protection, Wiltshire Council		Organisation
PHE		Organisation
Public Health England		Individual
Public Health in Norfolk County Council		Organisation
Public Health Nottinghamshire County Council		Individual
Public Health Wales NHS Trust		Organisation
RAC Foundation		Organisation

Reading Borough Council		Organisation
Regeneris Consulting		Individual
Retired Senior Civil Servant	Bill Wells	Individual
Rossendale Borough Council		Organisation
Royal Borough of Greenwich		Organisation
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames		Organisation
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames		Organisation
Royal College of Midwives		Organisation
Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists		Organisation
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health		Organisation
Royal National Institute of Blind People		Organisation
Royal Society for Public Health		Individual
Royal Statistical Society		Organisation
RTPI		Organisation
Salford City Council		Organisation
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council		Organisation
Scottish Enterprise		Organisation
Scottish Government		Individual
Scottish Government		Individual
Scottish Government		Organisation
Scottish Government		Organisation
Scottish Public Health Observatory		Organisation
Scottish Water		Organisation
Scottish Water		Organisation
Semi-retired public health specialist	Meic Goodyear	Individual
Shropshire Council		Individual
Shropshire Council		Organisation
Skills Development Scotland		Organisation
Small Area Health Statistics Unit		Organisation
SME Alliance Ltd		Organisation

Society for Social Medicine		Organisation
Solent NHS Trust	Sharon Peters	Individual
Solihull MBC		Individual
Somerset County Council	Adrian Lee	Individual
Somerset County Council		Organisation
Somerset County Council		Organisation
South Holland District Council		Organisation
South London & Maudsley NHS Trust	Dr Tony Rao	Individual
Southampton City Council		Organisation
Staffordshire County Council		Organisation
Stockport Council		Individual
Stratford-on-Avon District Council		Individual
Strongerinnnumbers.com		Organisation
Student Information Services		Organisation
Sue Ryder		Organisation
Suffolk County Council		Individual
Suffolk County Council		Organisation
St Edmundsbury Borough Council		Organisation
Surrey County Council		Organisation
Surrey County Council public health team		Individual
Swindon Borough Council		Organisation
Swindon Borough Council		Organisation
Swindon Borough Council		Organisation
Tamba, Twins and Multiple Births Association		Organisation
TAYplan Strategic Planning Authority		Organisation
Tees Valley Unlimited		Organisation
Telford & Wrekin Council		Organisation
Telford and Wrekin Council		Organisation
The British Film Institute		Organisation
The Co-operative Food (Location Planning)		Organisation
The Equality Trust		Organisation

The Investment Association		Organisation
The Lullaby Trust		Organisation
The Lullaby Trust		Organisation
The National Archives		Organisation
The National LGB&T Partnership		Organisation
The Pensions Regulator		Organisation
Thurrock Council		Organisation
Toby Warren Economic Development		Organisation
UCL	Dr Jennifer Mindell	Individual
UK Data Service		Organisation
UK Data Service		Organisation
UK Health Forum		Organisation
Universities UK		Organisation
University	J Round	Individual
University College London	Martin Jarvis	Individual
University of Bristol		Organisation
University of Bristol	Professor David Gordon	Individual
University of Bristol	Barnaby Reeves	Individual
University of Bristol		Organisation
University of Bristol		Individual
University of Bristol	Katy Turner	Individual
University of Hertfordshire		Organisation
University of Kent		Individual
University of Leeds		Individual
University of Leeds	Philip Rees	Individual
University of Oxford		Individual
University of Pennsylvania	Peter Miller	Individual
University of Reading	Christian Nygaard	Individual
University of Sheffield	Colin Angus	Individual
University of Southampton	Paul Smith	Individual
University of Stirling		Individual
University of Stirling		Individual

University of Warwick	Dr Richard Lampard	Individual
VisitBritain		Organisation
VisitScotland		Organisation
Wakefield Council		Individual
Watford Borough Council		Organisation
Walsall Council		Organisation
Warrington Borough council		Organisation
Warwickshire County Council Public Health		Individual
Warwickshire County Council		Organisation
Waveney District Council		Organisation
Waveney District Council		Organisation
Welsh Government		Organisation
West of England LEP		Organisation
West Suffolk District Council		Organisation
West Sussex County Council	Clare Toon	Individual
West Sussex County Council	Clare Toon	Individual
West Sussex County Council		Individual
West Sussex County Council		Organisation
West Sussex County Council (data working group)		Organisation
Worcestershire County Council		Organisation
WRAP		Individual
WRAP		Individual
	Andrew Brown	Individual
	John Hollis	Individual
	Sharon Quantrell	Individual
	Carrie Langford	Individual
	Mike Wingfield	Individual
	Beverley Sulley	Individual
	Robert Weeks	Individual
	Tony Champion	Individual
	Margaret Robinson	Individual

	Rachel Byrne	Individual
	Simon Ball	Individual
	Dr Joanna Gifford	Individual
	Alice Jones-Evans	Individual
	Phyll Buchanan	Individual