

POPULATION STATISTICS REVISIONS POLICY

This Revisions Policy is approved by The UK Population and Censuses Strategic Group.

The policy relates to population statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and any equivalent statistics published by the devolved administrations to ensure consistency in the handling of revisions relating to UK-wide population statistics.

National Records of Scotland (NRS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) have responsibility for the production and publication of population statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively and may publish separate revisions policies on their own websites.

This policy has been developed in line with the relevant statistical regulatory framework:

1. The [Regulatory framework](#) states that:

- “Producers of statistics and data should explain clearly how they assure themselves that statistics and data are accurate, reliable, coherent and timely”.

1.1 In the third principle of quality, producers of statistics should commit to the following:

- “[Scheduled revisions](#), or [unscheduled corrections](#) that result from errors, should be explained alongside the statistics, being clear on the scale, nature, cause and impact”.

2 Scheduled revisions

2.1 Scheduled revisions are planned amendments to published statistics in order to improve quality by incorporating additional data that were unavailable at the point of initial publication.

2.2 Statistical revisions are most commonly issued for two reasons:

- To incorporate **better source data** such as more complete or corrected reporting by respondents and to capture routine recalculations
- To reflect **improved methodology** such as changes in statistical methods or systems and changes in concepts, definitions and classifications

- 2.3 Major revisions and corrections (for any reason) will be accompanied at the time of publication by an explanation of their nature and extent. Updated back data will be provided if available and where they will add value.
- 2.4 ONS will announce substantial methodological changes, their reasons and effects, before the release of statistics based on the new methods. In the case of key outputs, an information paper providing more detail on the methodological changes will be made available on the website.
- 2.5 In planning revisions relating to improved methodology, ONS will consider carefully the balance between “bunching” revisions versus many successive revisions, in consultation with users. Whilst users often prefer grouping changes together to avoid multiple revisions, this does lead to larger, more complex projects and difficulties in distinguishing separate effects.
- 2.6 Revisions to population statistics have wide reaching implications and the need for them must be carefully assessed. There are implications for producers and direct users of population statistics and for the producers of other statistical series/outputs. There will always be a balance between the need for the most accurate and timely estimates and the need for stability.
- 2.7 Users must be made aware in advance of planned revisions, the timing of their release and the magnitude of the impacts. Users also need to know that unplanned revisions will be made in a transparent way.

3.0 Improved source data and methodology

- We will revise our population statistics where new source data become available, for example following new Census data and/or admin-based population estimates (ABPEs) delivering a new population base. We will communicate with users on issues of quality and completeness as required.
- We will communicate the transformation of population and migration statistics process and changes in methods to key stakeholders as these develop to ensure transparency. These process and changes may potentially lead to revisions. For the latest overview of the transformation of the population and migration statistics system, see the population and migration statistics [website](#).
- We will introduce new methods where there is quantifiable evidence that new or alternative methods are more accurate, and do not negatively impact transparency, timeliness or user acceptability.
- We commit to actively update and consult users via online and face to face user groups during the research phase which may last for several months or years before a new method is implemented.
- When statistics are released using existing methods that are actively under review in long term improvement projects, information accompanying the

release of those statistics will make clear reference to the ongoing research and its timescales.

- When implementation of new methods is confirmed, substantial methodological changes will always be announced before the release of statistics based on new methods or classifications, together with an indication of the likely effects.
- Where data allow, a revised back series to ensure consistency over time will be provided. We will aim to provide this back series alongside the first release of a new estimate based on the new method. However, when there is strong evidence a new method is more accurate, it may be used for the most recent reference period before a comparable back series is available. There will be an element of judgement in this, but user needs will be prioritised.
- We will seek to avoid frequent revisions and will attempt to ensure that revisions are in place prior to the production of our regular outputs.

3.1 Revisions will be published on the website and clearly labelled as such in the title of the outputs.

4. Unscheduled corrections

4.1 Unscheduled corrections are amendments made to published statistics in response to the identification of errors following their initial publication.

- If errors are discovered after publication, their impact will be investigated, and corrections made
- Where errors are discovered and they are within the bounds of uncertainty, we may not do a correction
- Where a correction is made, a correction notice will be provided on the website as soon as possible to inform users and ensure transparency
- Where corrections are assessed as having major impact, they will be issued as soon as practicable
- Where corrections are assessed as having a major impact, we will make efforts to inform key stakeholders directly
- Where corrections are assessed as having a minor impact, they will be incorporated in the next planned release if it is practical and cost effective to do so

4.2 Correction notices will be published on the release page and if the correction relates to a dataset page, they will also be included in the first tab of the spreadsheet.

5. Contact

5.1 If you require more information about this revisions policy or would like to feedback comments, please contact: pop.info@ons.gov.uk. We also invite comments on how users would like to be kept informed.