



Statement on orderly release and revisions policy

August 2019

Objective

“Organisations should commit to releasing their statistics in an open and transparent manner that promotes confidence.”

[Code of Practice for Statistics Edition 2.0, Value pillar V1 – relevance to users, February 2018](#)

In this statement on orderly release, ORR has outlined how we adhere to the orderly release principles in the Code of Practice. This has been broken down into the following sections:

- Release practices and publication strategy
 - Pre-release access to statistics
 - Revisions policy
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Release practices and publication strategy

Release of statistics

1. All ORR statistics are published as soon as they are considered ready following sufficient quality assurance under the guidance of ORR's Head of Profession for Statistics. Heads of Profession are responsible for overseeing their own organisation's statistical functions, and meeting their organisation's statistical needs. They are also responsible for implementing the provisions set out in statistical legislation and the Code of Practice.
2. The frequency of the release of statistics is discussed on a regular basis with users through our stakeholder forum - [Rail Statistics Management Group](#) (RSMG). Users are also consulted via the [user engagement](#) page of our data portal.
3. Statistics are made available free of charge on the ORR data portal at 9:30am on the relevant publication day in pdf (statistical release or factsheet) and Excel (data tables). Other formats are available on request. Some statistics also have interactive visuals using Power BI.

Publication schedule

4. All ORR official statistics are included in a [publication schedule](#) on the data portal. They are also shown in the release calendar on gov.uk.
5. The publication schedule pre-announces the release of all official statistics dates for a minimum of the next 12 months. Specific release dates are provided at least four weeks in advance.
6. Any changes to pre-announced release dates or times are agreed with the Head of Profession who promptly issues a delay note which is displayed on the ORR data portal with explanatory notes explaining the reason for changes.
7. Changes are only made due to technical or statistical reasons and are not influenced by non-statistical reasons. The Head of Profession has the final say on whether a date should be changed and to provide wording for the explanation.

Publication time

8. All ORR official statistics are released at 9:30am. Generally, ORR publishes statistics on a Thursday, but some publications may be released on a Tuesday. Rarely are they released on a Wednesday or Friday.

Responsible statistician

9. The name and contact details for the lead statistician responsible for production (and the author's name if not a statistician) is included on the front page of the published statistical release.

Policy, press or ministerial statements

10. All ORR official statistics are released free from government or rail industry pressure. ORR provides only factual commentary to complement the user's understanding of the data within the statistical release.
11. Any policy, press or ministerial commentary or statement regarding the data is issued separately. ORR lead statisticians work closely with policy, press and other colleagues to advise on the appropriate use of statistics within these statements, that statements include a prominent link to the source statistics and meet basic professional standards of statistical presentation, including accuracy, clarity and impartiality.

Access to statistics before their public release

Production, preparation and quality assurance

12. Access to statistics before they are in their final form and before their public release is limited to those involved in the production and quality assurance of the statistics and the preparation of the statistical release. Anyone with access prior to publication is clear about their role within the process and the need to prevent any disclosure.

Operational use

13. ORR statistics produced from management information and distributed internally for operational purposes prior to the production of their official statistics final form are labelled at 'OFFICIAL' level with access terms described to prevent inappropriate use.

Circulation of statistics in their final form before publication

14. ORR adheres to the rules and principles of pre-release access as set out in [The Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008](#).
15. ORR operates under the general principle that pre-release access to official statistics must be:

- limited to the minimum number of persons deemed necessary to allow the responsible Secretary of State for Transport and ORR's Chief Executive, to either:
 - provide responses to questions, or make statements about those statistics at, or shortly after, their time of publication
 - take action just before, at, or shortly after the time of publication.
 - allowed in those circumstances where the public benefit likely to result from such access outweighs the detriment to public trust in official statistics likely to result from so doing.
16. In line with the legislation, pre-release access to ORR's official statistics is restricted to a maximum of 24 hours before their public release on the following day at 9.30am. The [pre-release access list](#) is published on the ORR data portal.
17. This list of recipients is reviewed regularly and kept to a minimum. It presents the job titles and the organisations of all those persons to whom pre-release access has been granted, and if applicable, title or theme of the statistical releases to which these arrangements apply (some recipients receive all statistical releases while others only receive specific relevant ones).
18. All pre-release access documents are appropriately security marked. Further information on this can be found in our *Statement on Data Governance and Confidentiality*.

Conditions of access

19. Those persons who are given access to ORR's official statistics ahead of their release must keep the statistics secure and under embargo, and they must abide by the following conditions of access. They must avoid:
- disclosing the statistics or any part of a publication containing those statistics to any person not listed as a pre-release recipient
 - providing any indication of the size or direction of any trend revealed by the statistics
 - using such access for personal gain, or taking any action for political advantage
 - exploiting such access to change or compromise the content, presentation, or timing of publication of official statistics.
20. Where the statistics in question are market-sensitive, each recipient must sign a declaration to the above effect.

Exceptional circumstances

21. In exceptional circumstances the Head of Profession may also allow access to statistics ahead of their release to a limited number of persons sometimes for more than 24 hours. They will only do this if, in their opinion, the public benefit outweighs the detriment to public trust which is likely to result from such extended access. In each case, the reasons for such access will be published.

Breach of conditions of release

22. In the event where ORR becomes aware that a lapse in release practices for any of their designated National Statistics has led to a substantive breach of the principles and rules set out in the legislation and described in this Statement, the Head of Profession will:
 - notify the UK Statistics Authority's Chief Executive (the National Statistician)
 - take action to prevent a recurrence
 - provide the Authority with a written explanation using the Authority's standard reporting form.
23. [Breach reports](#) are published on the UK Statistics Authority website.
24. The National Statistician may decide to conduct an inquiry on behalf of the Authority, the results of which will be posted on the Authority's website. In the case of minor breaches, or genuinely accidental breaches which have no major repercussions, the Head of Profession may deal with the matter informally.

Sanctions against non-compliance

25. ORR's Head of Profession for Statistics may, for a period, withdraw pre-release access from any person judged to have breached the conditions of their access.
26. In addition, a heavier sanction can be imposed by the UK Statistics Authority which has a statutory duty to assess the extent to which any organisation's 'National Statistics' comply with the *Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008* and with the associated obligations set out in this Statement. The Authority can, for instance, challenge an organisation where it considers that pre-release access to a National Statistic is not justified or where an organisation is failing to conform to these arrangements. It can also withdraw, or consider withdrawing, 'National Statistics' designation from the statistics in question.
27. In the event of any such challenge or withdrawal the Head of Profession will publish the organisation's response or reaction on its website along with its plans for achieving conformance.

Revisions policy

Revisions of data

28. The aim of the revisions policy is to be open and transparent to the public about revisions that ORR makes. Since revisions are a normal and inevitable part of statistical publications ORR's revision policy will allow the public to acknowledge and plan for the revisions accordingly. Revisions can occur for some of the following reasons:
- ORR's data supplier(s) subsequently revising data after publication
 - Methodological changes
 - Errors.
29. Once ORR has identified the need for a revision, the Head of Profession will judge the severity of the revision required and will take action in accordance with the guidelines outlined below.

Minor revision

30. If ORR judges the error to be minor and results in the correction being very small or hardly noticeable ORR will:
- Update the error when a new release is due for publication
 - Place a revision flag (r) alongside the revised data within the next release
 - Place a revision note in the text accompanying the data with a brief description of the revision and provide a link to the ORR revisions log
 - The revisions log will be updated with details of the correction and any action ORR have taken to prevent re-occurrence.

Intermediate revision

31. If ORR discovers an error which is insubstantial but ORR feels the users of the statistics will benefit by making an immediate change, ORR will:
- Amend the statistical release (pdf) and/or the data table (Excel) versions of the data immediately
 - Place a revision flag (r) alongside the revised data
 - Place a revision note in the text accompanying the data with a brief description of the revision and provide a link to the ORR revisions log
 - The revisions log will be updated with details of the correction and any action ORR have taken to prevent re-occurrence.

Substantial or significant revision

32. If ORR finds an error which is substantial or significant we will follow the steps above and take further steps to raise awareness. The following procedures will be followed:
- Carry out the procedure listed above (under intermediate revisions)
 - Have a prominent note on the User Engagement page of the ORR data portal: <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/user-engagement/>
 - Alert stakeholders where possible
 - Alert senior staff at ORR if necessary.

Revisions log

33. All versions of ORR releases are updated to include any revisions to the data. Any revised data are flagged with an accompanying revision note provided to explain the reasons for the change.
34. ORR has a published [revisions log](#) online which is updated when a revision occurs. It allows users of the statistics to clearly see revisions over time.

Provisional data

35. Since some of the data published by ORR can be subject to change, ORR has highlighted these data as provisional. For example, quarterly passenger kilometres and journey data based on the rail industry's ticketing system (LENNON) and data supplied to ORR by TOCs is subject to change due to the systems used and timeliness of data supply and therefore marked as provisional.