

Updated response 2014/15 customer satisfaction survey

February 2016

Contents

Introduction	1
Updates from 2013/14	1
Consumer Price Statistics	1
House prices.....	1
Crime statistics	2
Response to 2014/15	2
Bean Review of economic statistics	2
Accessing and finding ONS statistics	2
ONS website.....	2
Data Explorer and API	2
Visual.ONS.....	3
Release calendar	3
UK Trade	3
Geography	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Statistical commentary	3
Helping Britain make better decisions	4
Communication	4
Economic Forum and Public Policy Forum.....	4
Consultations and surveys	5
Direct contact with statisticians	5
Social media	5
Infographics	5
Supporting researchers and academics	5
Virtual Microdata Laboratory	5
Administrative Data Research Network.....	6
Construction statistics	6
Publishing timely statistics	6
Online questionnaires	6
Administrative data	7
Nowcasting	7
Transforming ONS	7

Introduction

In July 2015, we published the results of the [ONS Customer Satisfaction Survey 2014/15](#). We reported on how well you thought we were doing against a number of measures, such as your trust in our statistics and analyses, your satisfaction with the quality of our statistics and how satisfied you were with our overall performance.

While we are pleased with the results, there is still room for improvement. We have published this update to let you know what we have done in response to your feedback and update you on some key developments over the last year. We hope that we have addressed your concerns, and where we haven't, we have fully explained why. By listening to what you tell us we'll develop better statistics to inform better decisions.

We will be running our next annual Customer Satisfaction Survey at the beginning of 2016, and we hope once again that you will provide very valuable feedback on our statistics, analyses and services so that they meet your needs. We welcome your feedback at any time, so please email us at ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk if you have any further thoughts on how we can improve, or help you make better decisions.

Updates from 2013/14

Last year we published a [response to the 2013/14 Customer Satisfaction Survey](#). We've included updates on some of the key issues from last year's response below.

Consumer Price Statistics

In January 2015 the UK Statistics Authority published [a report by Paul Johnson](#) (Institute for Fiscal Studies) into how inflation is measured in the UK. Having taken time to consider the review's findings, plus user reactions, the National Statistician launched a public consultation on the future of consumer price statistics in the UK. The consultation ran until September 2015, with a summary of responses published in November 2015.

The UK Statistics Authority intends to publish a final response to the consultation in the first half of 2016. As part of this it will consider the consultation responses and recommendations provided by the two external Advisory Panels for Consumer Prices. The Advisory Panels were set up in response to an earlier review of how consumer price statistics should be governed, and directly advise the National Statistician.

ONS has also been conducting research into the use of new data sources and innovative methods to calculate inflation. This has included the publication of experimental price indices using web-scraped data in September 2015.

House prices

In 2013/14 some users reported difficulty in understanding how house prices are changing, because official house price statistics are produced separately by ONS, Land Registry, Registers of Scotland and Land and Property Services Northern Ireland. In response, a joint [consultation](#) on proposals to develop a single official house price index took place from 7 October to 12 December 2014. The new index has now been approved, and work is underway to finalise the new methodology. Details of the transition to the new index will be published in early 2016, ahead of the first publication of the new index by mid 2016.

Crime statistics

Over the last few years, the accuracy and quality of crime statistics and the underlying data, have received some criticism. This has resulted in the designation of police recorded crime as National Statistics being removed by the UK Statistics Authority. We've been working with our data suppliers to improve crime statistics including extending the coverage of fraud in both the police recorded crime series and the Crime Survey for England and Wales. We have also taken steps to improve the communication of the strengths and limitations of the data.

Recently there have been increases in certain crime types in police recorded crime data, and across various police forces. These increases are likely to be influenced by improvements to the statistics, which have been implemented following a [2014 report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary](#) on police recorded crime statistics.

Response to 2014/15

Bean Review of economic statistics

In his summer Budget on 8 July 2015, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an independent review of the quality, delivery and governance of UK economic statistics. Sir Andrew Dilnot, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, welcomed the review, headed by Sir Charles Bean, as "an important opportunity to help meet the ongoing challenges of the statistical measurement of the modern economy". We are working alongside Sir Charles to support his review and ensure that our economic statistics inform better decision-making in the years to come. Sir Charles' [interim report](#) was published on 2 December 2015, with the full report due to be published by this year's spring Budget.

Accessing and finding ONS statistics

ONS website

There were many comments about the difficulty you experienced when accessing and exploring our data on the ONS website.

Over the past year, we have engaged with over 600 individuals and 80 organisations to user test the [Beta](#) version of the new site. Following their invaluable feedback, the new site has made significant improvements to search, navigation and performance.

The site will be moving from 'Beta' to 'Live' shortly.

Data Explorer and API

Some of you commented that our data aren't always in the format you want, and that our spreadsheets aren't designed in a way that works for you.

Over the last few years, we've made data from the 2011 census and a variety of economic and social titles available in open data formats through the [Open Application Programming Interface \(API\) and Data Explorer](#) tools which we hope are improving your experience. We are evaluating the user experience to help us understand what other data might be made usefully available via these tools.

The API allows you to extract programmatically the data you want directly from the open data platform, and use it to suit your needs. Using these tools you can easily pull together data from ONS and other sources to get a full picture of how the UK economy and society is changing.

The Data Explorer puts you in control of our data, allowing you to choose the data you want to view and how you want to view it. As well as allowing you to choose the variables and breakdowns that you want, the Data Explorer can also generate visualisations to help you interpret the data.

Visual.ONS

Last year, many of you said that you liked the infographics we were producing to communicate our statistics. We have built on that success by launching the [Visual.ONS website Beta](#), which uses charts, infographics and concise analyses to address the key issues of the day. For example, we've produced articles on the [debt and deficit of the UK public sector](#), [how big the UK population will be in 25 years](#) and [how many jobs are paid less than the living wage](#). Visual.ONS underlines our commitment to making our statistics accessible to everyone while continuing to produce detailed data tables for analysts and experts. We hope this inform the public and improve decision making across the country.

Release calendar

In August 2014 we moved the Release Calendar to the GOV.UK website and closed the Publication Hub. We've prioritised the functionality that needs to be added to the Release Calendar and are working with the Government Digital Service (GDS), who run GOV.UK, to get the most important pieces completed.

We've just finished some work on the clear labeling of National and Official statistics and are looking into adding guidance about these designations onto statistical announcements to make it clearer to users. Our next piece of work will be to develop a geographical filter in the next year, depending on GDS priorities.

UK Trade

In November 2014 our UK Trade statistics had their National Statistics status suspended. Your feedback told us that this was an area of concern for some of you. Over the last year we have made a number of improvements to our UK Trade statistics publication following the UK Statistics Authority's recommendations. They include:

- Providing [further information](#) on how UK Trade statistics are compiled, including details of the various data sources that are used
- Outlining what breakdown of trade in services our commentary will focus on in each edition of UK Trade
- Updating the [UK Trade quality and methodology information](#)
- Including contextual information to help you to draw meaningful conclusions from the data, for example the [trade contribution to GDP](#), [trade and the latest current account deficit](#) and [international comparisons](#).

We will continue to make improvements to UK Trade statistics as we work towards regaining their National Statistics status.

Statistical commentary

While many of you said that the presentation and commentary of our statistics have improved, we are continuing to work to make our statistics more accessible. As part of our work to develop a new ONS website, we used your feedback to refine our [new statistical bulletins](#) and make them more web friendly. The new presentation makes it easier to find and understand the key points, while still containing the detail for those who need it.

We have also continued to make improvements to the presentation of our bulletins. Some examples include:

- adding annotations to charts to reinforce the key points
- reviewing the charts we use to ensure it tells the story of the data in the simplest way possible, for example using more heat maps for geographic data or [spark line](#) charts to highlight data trends.
- editing our commentary to make it more concise

These changes are particularly evident in the latest edition of the Migration Statistics Quarterly Report.

Helping Britain make better decisions

Some commentators have highlighted that we need to ensure the statistics we produce have a greater impact on policy decisions, and ultimately, people's lives. In recent years, this has become one of our key goals. To help achieve this we have joined the Government's implementation taskforces. The taskforces have been set-up by the Government to oversee the delivery of key policy areas. Involvement in these taskforces has brought us closer to the decision making table, ensuring that independent statistics are at the heart of Government policy.

There are also several examples across ONS of how our work is impacting on policy decisions:

- The Teenage Pregnancy Knowledge exchange used our data to measure the success of their Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. [Our conceptions data](#) showed that teenage pregnancy had halved since 1998, and proved that the policies used to reduce teenage pregnancy had been successful.
- We were invited to present evidence to the cross-party parliamentary group on drugs, alcohol and tobacco on the reasons for a rise in heroin deaths in England and Wales. By not only providing the figures, but researching the underlying causes of the rise in heroin deaths, consulting the United Nations and others, we were able to provide a powerful narrative about the likely causes of the increase.
- Our analysis on the extent to which poor children grow up to be poor adults has been used by various charities, including Save the Children in Wales and the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. It was also part of the body of evidence that has led to the Government focusing on education, particularly in the early years, as the most important means of improving social mobility.
- To help assess the impact of changes to inheritance tax, the Welsh Government asked us to produce these data on [the number of houses sold for at least £1 million](#). This data will indicate the number of people in Wales who will be affected by this Government policy.

Communication

Economic Forum and Public Policy Forum

Some of you commented that we don't engage with you as effectively as we could. To help address this, we have started running a series of events across the UK where we explain the story behind our statistics and give our users the opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts. We ran our first Economic Forum in 2014, and it has now become a regular fixture, with a variety of analysts and economic commentators attending. We have recently expanded the Economic Forum to engage with audiences across the whole of the UK, with events taking place in Manchester, Cardiff and Edinburgh in early 2016. We are planning a further round of events outside of London, including one in Belfast, later in the year.

In 2015 we also ran our first Public Policy Forum, which aims to engage with the policy making and analytical community to ask what they need from us to make informed decisions.

Consultations and surveys

We acknowledge that our consultations, and their outcomes, could be more visible. To resolve this we are working with the developers of the new ONS website to ensure that our consultations and surveys will be easier to find when the new website launches. We have also started trialing new consultation tools, like [Citizen Space](#), which could make it easier to find and take part in ONS consultations. We are continuing to demonstrate that we have listened and responded to your feedback, by giving clear and timely feedback for all our consultations and surveys.

We have recently published [short summaries](#) to show how we've responded to feedback on our consultations since the start of 2015.

Direct contact with statisticians

You told us that you really appreciated the opportunity to have direct contact with our statisticians. We will ensure statisticians continue to be available to take questions on publication days, and run question and answer sessions on social media and online forums. For example, we recently ran a Reddit "ask me anything" question and answer session on data visualisations and also tweeted along with The Budget, providing statistics alongside the key announcements.

Social media

Many of you said you'd like us to continue using social media and infographics to communicate our statistics.

We are actively using social media to publicise and summarise the key messages for each release of our statistics and analyses as soon as they are published. Over the year, the number of our Twitter followers has increased from 87,000 to more than 200,000.

Infographics

Following the positive feedback you gave us on our infographics and data visualisations, we will continue to produce professional innovative graphic design solutions to present our statistics in a way that is easily understandable and engaging.

Supporting researchers and academics

Virtual Microdata Laboratory

We're always looking for ways to help inform decision making and research projects, which is why we're continuing to develop the Virtual Microdata Laboratory. You told us that you value the [Virtual Microdata Laboratory](#) (VML) as it provides secure access to our detailed data for approved researchers. However, you wanted better computers and software to work with and less restrictive security. In 2015 the VML received a significant upgrade

Some of the improvements included:

- new computers, which process data far more quickly and have current versions of a range of statistical and analytical software packages installed
- improvements to the usefulness and labeling of the data available for analysis
- expanded metadata and supporting documentation
- reintroducing the Annual Respondents Database (ARD) to inform analysis of productivity

In early 2015, we conducted a public consultation on the criteria for granting approved researcher access to our data and the VML, with the aim of making it easier for researchers to access data, while ensuring that our microdata continues to be safeguarded. Among other things, the proposals included:

- ensuring individuals who work on multiple (approved) projects to only need to be approved once
- allowing projects to request access to multiple editions of a dataset for an agreed period of time (for example, data for each quarter for 3 years)
- allowing researchers based outside of the UK to apply for approved researcher access
- making the criteria for accessing ONS microdata clearer

The consultation closed in March 2015, and an update was published in July 2015. Following the consultation, work has continued to update and refine the proposed changes to incorporate views of respondents and share findings with other Departments. Once this work is complete, the updated Approved Researcher Scheme will be launched.

We welcome your feedback on these, or any other, improvements you'd like to see in the VML. To leave feedback email VML@ons.gsi.gov.uk.

Administrative Data Research Network

We are continuing to work with the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) to increase the access researchers have to administrative data. ADRN is a UK-wide partnership between universities and government to bridge the gap between those who hold data, and those who need it for research.

Within the ADRN, the [Administrative Data Research Centre for England \(ADRC-E\)](#) has been set up by the University of Southampton, in collaboration with ONS and other universities.

We will provide a facility where administrative data from different sources can be linked and matched securely, using trusted methods. We will also provide a safe environment where researchers can access and analyse datasets and, before any results are published, make use of our expertise in disclosure checking.

Construction statistics

Some of you expressed concern that with construction statistics, after they lost their designation as National Statistics in December 2014. We took over responsibility for compiling Construction Price and Cost Indices statistics in April 2015, and are taking steps to improve the methodology going forward.

In June 2015 we launched our interim solution to tackle some of the issues with construction statistics in the short term, but we recognise this is not an ideal solution. To address this we published a [construction statistics workplan](#) on December 11 2015 to show how we plan to improve construction statistics in the long term. We will also be running a consultation in spring 2016 asking for your feedback on the type of price index we should be producing.

Publishing timely statistics

Online questionnaires

Currently we collect most of our data using face to face interviews and paper questionnaires. However online questionnaires have the potential to both reduce the time delay caused by posting questionnaires and, with appropriate "built-in" error checking, reduce the need to further contact

respondents to query information. This should allow us to publish better quality statistics more quickly, and better inform decision making across the UK.

We will introduce online questionnaires for some business surveys in 2016, having tested them extensively this year on the Monthly Wages and Salaries Survey. We are carefully studying the impact that the move to online questionnaires will have on the data quality and continuity. We aim to collect most of our economic survey data online by 2018 and over the same period will be starting our use of online collection for our household surveys too. The work to move our surveys online is being run alongside initiatives to make greater use of existing non-survey sources, reducing the demand we place on respondents.

Administrative data

Administrative data means data that are collected by other organisations (mainly government departments and public administrations) for administrative purpose. If the data is of a high enough quality, we can use it instead of having to conduct surveys, which are more expensive and time consuming. By making better use of administrative data, we can produce and publish data sooner, and encourage better use of statistics in decision making. We already get over 400 administrative data feeds from other organisations, and we are continuing developing in this area.

Census

Following the [announcement](#) in 2014 that we will conduct a mainly online census in 2021, with further use of administrative data, we have continued [our research into administrative data for the 2021 Census](#). As part of our research we recently produced a local area population dataset using administrative data from the NHS Patient Register, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Customer Information System, and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). While more work is needed to refine the methodology for these statistics, the results to date are promising. We will provide a further update on the progress of this work in spring 2016.

Legislation

We are working with the Cabinet Office to develop legislation that will allow us to easily access a wider range of administrative data, while still protecting personal information. We are still in the early stages of this work, but are hopeful that legislation will be passed in 2016.

Nowcasting

We are exploring innovative new ways of providing early estimates for our statistics. In October we published an experimental [nowcast of household income](#), which in future should provide early estimates of income distribution statistics many months earlier than current survey based estimates. It provides provisional estimates of household income several months in advance of the final publication. Unlike forecasts, which rely on assumptions about the future economic situation, nowcasts make use of data that are already available for the period of study. As these are experimental statistics, we are still evaluating them to ensure they meet the highest standards of quality. However, we hope to refine this service so we can provide nowcasts for other statistics in the future.

Transforming ONS

To help us better meet your needs, we have started a programme of change internally to improve the technology we use and the capability of our workforce. This involves replacing more than 100 systems currently used to develop our statistics with a handful of modern systems that will allow us to process data much more quickly and efficiently.

We will also be improving the skills of our staff by investing more heavily in analysts and data

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2014/15: updated response
scientists to ensure we are at the cutting edge of innovation. This will allow us to make better use of administrative data, big data and other innovations, allowing us to publish existing and new data more quickly, and better influence decision making across the country.

We are currently running a [Consultation on changes to ONS Products](#) to understand how we can make these changes with the minimum impact on your work.