

Background

Please confirm you have read and understood this important background information.

Yes, I have read and understood the information on this page.

About you

1 What is your name?

Name:

2 What is your email address?

Email:

3 What is your organisation?

Organisation:

British Airways Retired Staff

Section one: Measuring prices across the economy

1 Should ONS identify a main measure of price change across the economy?

Yes

Why? Please provide comments.:

There is confusion, due to the range of 'inflation' or 'price change' measures and a tendency for the relevant authorities to 'shop' for the one that is best for them (eg CPI is used for state pensions (as part of the triple lock) but (the generally higher) RPI is used for rail fare increases and student loan interest.

2 If you answered 'yes' to question 1a, then what should this measure be?

the CPIH, as recommended in the Johnson review. The CPIH includes owner-occupiers' housing costs. It does not currently hold the National statistics designation (although its reassessment is due to commence shortly). The index is a UK measure, designed by ONS to meet UK needs.

Why? Please provide comments.:

CPIH is better than CPI but it needs to be improved (eg to have a better method of measuring housing costs than "rental equivalence", also to include Council Tax). The UK Government has no direct control over CPI methodology, resulting in compromises that are OK if measuring difference in inflation across the European Union (the various EU HICPs) but not OK when measuring UK inflation (eg owner-occupied housing costs are left out of CPI due to no agreement across the EU on their measure).

My pension had been linked to RPI but is now linked to CPI. I have not seen the evidence that CPI is a better measure of our inflation than RPI and remain deeply concerned by the annual difference in RPI and CPI rises; currently CPI annual rises are around 1.0 percentage points below RPI annual rises. It is also unacceptable that, for example, my CPI-based pension rises take no account of owner-occupied housing costs

Of the current indices, I prefer RPI. However, if RPI is now deemed unsuitable as a national statistic I would welcome the development of a Household Inflation Index.

3. Should its production be governed by legislation?

No

Why? Please provide comments.:

It is better that production is governed by an independent body. If governed by legislation, the index's methodology might not be modified quickly enough, when necessary.

Section two: Measuring consumer price inflation for different household types

4 Should ONS seek to measure changes in prices as experienced by different households?

Yes

Why? How often? Please provide comments.:

This is a lower priority though. We first need an overall Household Inflation Index that better reflects our cost of living than CPI

5 If yes, how should ONS seek to do so?

Using a payments-based approach.

Why? Please provide comments.:

A payments-based approach best reflects my expenditure

Section three: The RPI

6 Do you use the following indices? (Please select those that you use)

RPI pensioner indices

If yes, for what purposes? Please provide comments.:

BA pension rises followed RPI until 2011 when the switch was made by the trustees to CPI. BA Pension Trustees still aspire to provide (the usually higher) RPI rises in the future and had proposed a rise halfway between the relevant RPI and CPI rises in April 2015 for the Airline Pension Scheme. This has resulted in a court case between the BA Pension Trustees and British Airways owners IAG, to take place in early 2016.

I and most other BA pensioners would prefer the higher RPI rises. My Pension Trustees had a solvency plan, just before 2010, which used future RPI rise assumptions and this was agreed by BA and its Pensions Trustees

7 Do you agree that the following indices should be discontinued? (Please select those that you suggest should be discontinued)

Any other RPI index

Why? Please provide comments.:

The issue for BA (and probably other) pensioners is that RPI is currently rising about 1.0 percentage points a year higher than CPI. I accept RPI may be flawed but have not seen CPI shown to be better. This increase in the average gap between CPI and RPI annually now being 1.0 percentage points, the reason for this gap being mostly the changes in the method of collecting clothing data, and this gap generally being bigger in UK than in most other countries, leads me to argue both RPI and CPI/CPIH should be discontinued to be replaced by an index that better addresses these accuracy problems.

8 Do you have any views on what 'freezing' changes to the RPI should mean in practice?

Yes

Why? Please provide comments.:

There remain strong academic arguments in favour of RPI, over CPI, from Dr Mark Courtney and others. As RPI's use is embedded by legislation (eg for gilts), then either it should be replaced by a less flawed index (RPIJ, CPIH) or its methodology should be changed to remove the flaws

Section four: Evolving consumer price statistics

9 Are the priorities identified by ONS in its forward work plan appropriate?

No

Why? Please provide comments.:

We need an index, for example a Household Inflation Index, which better measures our inflation. In the meantime work should concentrate on reducing the "formula effect" difference between RPI and CPI

10 Should ONS include council tax in the CPIH?

Yes

Why? Please provide comments.:

Council Tax does not depend on income, so it should be included in CPIH.

Additional information

Do you have any further comments relevant to this consultation?

Do you have any further comments relevant to this consultation?:

The current use of statistical data for a large range of issues necessitates a non political and independent control and oversight. The production of statistical indices is a complex subject requiring academic and impartial input.

User satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied were you with this online consultation service today?

Very satisfied

Please tell us if there are any specific areas for improvement, or if you have any other comments.:

Thank you for the opportunity to have an input to the debate.