

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	Gross Domestic Product on statistics.gov.scot http://statistics.gov.scot/data/gross-domestic-product-quarterly-output-by-industry http://statistics.gov.scot/data/gross-domestic-product-annual-output-by-industry
Name of producer organisation	Scottish Government (SG)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Liam Cavin Liam.cavin@gov.scot 0131 2444092
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of breach report	21/03/2019

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Trustworthiness: T3 – Orderly Release
Date of occurrence of breach	14/03/2019
<p>The Scottish Government (SG) routinely publishes the data for many official statistics publications on an open data portal, statistics.gov.scot. The publication process includes working with data before its official 9:30am release, to ensure that it is released in a timely manner. On this occasion, the national accounts team had provided annual and quarterly GDP data, for review, but embargoed until 9:30am on the 20th of March.</p> <p>In the process of reviewing and publishing another dataset, the GDP data was accidentally published at 17:10 on 14/3/2019. This was due to human error. Upon noticing the early release of sensitive data, immediate action was taken to remove it from the live website. By 17:14 this was complete. Web logs show that in the 4-minute period in which the data was live, there were no views or downloads of the data.</p>	

3. Impact of the breach

<p>There was minimal impact. In order to quickly remove the data from our website, all data was removed from the relevant pages. At 9:30am on 20 March 2019, the correct data was released, synchronised with the publication of data and commentary on gov.scot. In the six day period between the breach and eventual publication, no data was available for GDP on statistics.gov.scot. The official statistics were still available on gov.scot, and linked to from statistics.gov.scot.</p>
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4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

The breach was identified immediately, and the following action was taken:

- Worked to remove the data from the website, resulting in it being live for 4 minutes
- Reported the breach to the head of open data, head of statistics policy, head of profession, head of national accounts, and the statistician responsible for the dataset
- Requested web logs from our developers, which confirmed no public access during the period in which the data was live
- Re-published the data at 9:30am on the correct day

In the longer term, we recognise that it is important to review and update our processes, in order to prevent this happening again:

- We have initiated discussions with our web developers, to build more a more robust publishing system. Crucially, there is currently no 'are you sure' validation check when publication of data is initiated. This means that one misplaced click can result in sensitive data being published. We intend to introduce this or a better solution if one can be found.
- Whilst a new robust procedure is being developed, we are evaluating how we can better utilise our existing tools to prevent this from happening again. One simple solution is to perform the review of any embargoed datasets from within an administrative account which has permissions to review, but not to publish. We are implementing this change in procedure immediately, which will prevent accidental release occurring again.