

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

1. Core Information [\[guidance\]](#)

Title and link to statistical output	Life Tables for Scotland 2016-2018 Web landing page: https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level/scottish-national-life-tables/2016-2018 Direct publication URL: https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level/nat-life-16-18/nat-life-tabs-16-18-pub.pdf
Name of producer organisation	National Records of Scotland
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Alan Ferrier, Head of Demographic Statistics alan.ferrier@nrscotland.gov.uk 0131 314 4530
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	-
Date of breach report	8 th November 2019

2. Circumstances of breach [\[guidance\]](#)

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Practice T3.6 - Statistics should be released to all users at 9.30am on a weekday.
Date of occurrence of breach	24 th September 2019
<p>In preparation for publication release at 9.30am on Wednesday 25th September, the vital events statistics team at NRS were liaising with their counterparts at ONS to share the relevant publication web URLs to allow these to be included on our respective news releases – ensuring that all users across the UK could access comparable data from the devolved administrations (and vice versa).</p> <p>During this process the team at ONS were able to access the publication PDF URL on our live site, approximately 20 hours prior to the intended publication time of 9.30am.</p> <p>The issue this highlighted was that the way in which NRS statistical publication attachments (documents such as PDFs, word, excel) were being replicated to our live site in a different way to the html content (using the Drupal Content Management system), and as such were live on our website for between 12 and 24 hours before the publication date.</p> <p>Although this breach report is focussed on the ‘Life Tables for Scotland 2016-2018’ publication, the technical issue uncovered through this publication process will have impacted other NRS publications in the past, although it cannot be said with certainty the exact time period and publications impacted.</p>	

3. Impact of the breach [\[guidance\]](#)

Following an internal review of the available analytics and information on the downloads of our publication materials, there was no evidence that any of the material was accessed ahead of time by anyone other than those on the pre-release access list. For example, internal IT staff and statisticians checking the availability of the report online following the identification of this issue by the team at ONS.

Given that this was a systematic issue that could have impacted other past publications, we reviewed the available analytics information for a sample of our publications over the last 12 months and found there to be no unauthorised early access to our publication materials.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence[\[guidance\]](#)

Describe the short-term actions made to redress the situation and the longer term changes to procedures etc

Following internal discussions with our IT colleagues, the website replication process for all our publication attachments (PDFs, excel, etc) has been changed. This now ensures that our statistics cannot be accessed online before the scheduled release date at 9.30am.

This was a technical issue with the way in which our Drupal Content Management system was being used. For clarification this was only an issue with publication attachments, and not the webpages themselves which were never accessible prior to the publication time and date.

This new process was rigorously tested internally, and has now been in place since our Winter Mortality statistics publication on the 15th October and the National Population Projections publication on the 22nd October. There have been no issues with either publication.

This is a permanent fix to the issue and no future development work is required. However, to reassure ourselves we will be conducting ongoing monitoring of the available analytics to ensure there are no further issues of this nature.