

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS



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

Title and link to statistical output	Civil Justice Statistics in Scotland 2018-19 https://www.gov.scot/publications/civil-justice-statistics-scotland-2018-19/
Name of producer organisation	Scottish Government
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Paul Gona Paul.gona@gov.scot +44 (0) 300 244 4931
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	-
Date of breach report	7 April 2020

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

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Principle T3 - Orderly Release Practice T3.6 - statistics not released at the scheduled time of 09:30am (early publication)
Date of occurrence of breach	6 April 2020
<p><i>Give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc</i></p> <p>3 April The lead statistician compiling the publication completed the Web Registration which allows the publication to be released at the scheduled time at around 16:00. The form was submitted, generating an automated response of acknowledgement at 16:04. This first email contained the correct scheduled publication date and time (7 April at 09:30).</p> <p>However, still within the Web Registration form, the statistician realised that a relevant policy subject 'child protection' which is covered within this publication was not ticked within the relevant section while completing the form. They then edited this, ticking 'child protection'. At this point, the form was resubmitted again and generated another automated acknowledgement.</p> <p>Due to the default settings of the web form, however, this new acknowledgement contained an incorrect publication date and time (6 April at 09:00). The statistician did not notice this anomaly when the automated message came in at 16:05. This system glitch was later explained during the investigation process. The explanation given by APS, the publishers, is:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“As the form defaults to three days in advance, when users go in and edit the form it automatically resets the date to three days in advance again and needs to be amended too. So once you went back in to amend the form, the date would have automatically reset to the 6 April at 9am.”</p> <p>The form reset to three calendar days in advance as this is the default setting to allow time for simultaneous publication in both PDF and HTML. The default time of 09:00 was chosen as this is the most popular publishing time for content on the website. This function has now been removed and is under review.</p> <p>6 April The lead statistician got an email at 10:35 from the Account Executive at APS to enquire whether the publication was due that day, as they recalled it was meant to be released on 7 April at 09:30. The publication had been published 10 minutes before their message. The statistician instructed the</p>	

publishers to pull it down immediately through a reply at 10:36, as it was not meant to have been published on 6 April.

The chain of events leading to its publication and being taken down was summarised by Scottish Government Web Publications officials as follows:

“06/04/2020 10:26 – Publication is imported, with an embargo date of 06/04/2020 09:00

(Because the import time is after the embargo time, it will have published on gov.scot immediately. I assume this is because the APS registration form still had the date set to the 6 April, rather than 7 April)

06/04/2020 10:44 – Publication is imported again, this time with an embargo date of 07/04/2020 09:30”

The Account Executive at APS confirmed to the statistician that their Digital Publishing Team pulled the publication down from the Scottish Government website at around 10:40 upon receipt of the statistician’s message. The publication was therefore taken down within 20 minutes of the early release breach.

The publication was then embargoed again with the correct scheduled release date and time of 7 April at 09:30.

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

Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally

The Scottish Government is not aware of any press reports generated by this breach. This could be due to the combination of the unusual release time of 10:26 and also the swift action of pulling it down by APS, the official publishers.

With regards to website views, the Web Publications Team have advised that:

“The publication saw 10 unique pages views recorded in Google Analytics from non-Scottish Government IP addresses and 1 more from an internal IP.”

The statistician viewed from an internal Scottish Government IP address, and the assumption is that the single view is that of the lead statistician upon being notified.

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

The first action taken immediately after notification was to withdraw the data as soon as was practical. The publication was pulled down within 10 minutes and the total time it was online was less than 20 minutes.

The Account Executive at APS confirmed that their Digital Publishing Team will look to amend the form to prevent the default changes to scheduled publication times. Their response says:

“Our Digital Media Team will look to amend the form so that it does not do this in the future.”

Scottish Government statisticians will follow up with the APS Digital Media Team in due course to ensure that these changes to the system have been made.

The team affected by this breach will share details with the wider statistics teams within the Scottish Government to alert them to this system anomaly. They will also reinforce the importance of statisticians checking these forms thoroughly before submission. This will prevent re-occurrence within wider teams whilst the publishers implement a long-term solution.