

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

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

Title and link to statistical output	Online job advert estimates And commentary is included in the 'Online job adverts' section of the Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society release
Name of producer organisation	Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Division and Branch	Crime Income & Wealth, Economic Wellbeing
Responsible Divisional Director (DD)	John Marais
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Name: Gueorguie Vassilev Email: Gueorguie.vassilev@ons.gov.uk Telephone: 01633 456265
Name and contact details of Head of Profession for Statistics	Name: Iain Bell Email: stat.hopoffice@ons.gov.uk
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of breach report	19/08/2020

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

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Principle T3, practice T3.4 - The circulation of statistics in their final form ahead of their publication should be restricted to eligible recipients , in line with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation for the UK and devolved administrations. No indication of the statistics should be made public and the statistics should not be given to any other party without prior permission for access. The list of recipients should be reviewed regularly and kept to a minimum.
Date of occurrence of breach	18/08/2020
<p><i>Give an account of what has happened including roles of persons involved, dates, times etc. – please do not use technical jargon or acronyms</i></p> <p>The ONS publish weekly online job advert estimates as part of the wider <i>Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society</i> release. These are experimental data which can be used as an indicator of the demand for labour. Prior to publication, these data are circulated to teams within ONS, for quality assurance of the data and associated commentary.</p> <p>On 18/08/2020 at 16:58 the unpublished online job advert data and associated commentary (which were due to be published 20th August 2020) was circulated to ONS colleagues for quality assurance. This email was also sent in error to Public Health England who did not have reason or permission to receive the data. The data sent in error contained the unpublished experimental statistics, showing the latest</p>	

weekly movements of online job advert indices, broken down by category and by NUTS Level 1 region. The commentary surrounding this data included the following points based on previously unpublished data:

- The total volume of online job advert estimates decreased from the previous week
- Compared with the previous week, the largest percentage point decreases in online job adverts were in Northern Ireland (23 percentage points), followed by London (12 percentage points) and the West Midlands (10 percentage points).

Upon realising the mistake, the email was recalled and the individual at Public Health England was contacted to make them aware of the mistake, and ask them to immediately destroy the email and its contents. At 17:42 on 18/08/2020, Public Health England confirmed that the data had been destroyed, along with the attached data, without being circulated to anyone else.

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

Provide details of the impact of the breach both inside the producer body and externally – please do not use technical jargon or acronyms

Due to the nature of this breach the impact was low with the unpublished data only being received by one unauthorised email account within government. As a result of this, the number of people with access to the data was limited to the owner of that account and individuals who had delegate access to said account. Both the email and attached data were deleted without being shared more widely.

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. – please do not use technical jargon or acronyms

The nature of this breach was down to human error.

After speaking about the incident with their line manager and the ONS Head of Profession for Statistics, the individual responsible has reflected upon their responsibilities under the Code of Practice, and taken steps to ensure this mistake cannot happen again.

These steps include:

- Reviewing the end-to-end publication process to minimise the number of people who need to share the weekly data and draft with others.
- Only sharing data with internal colleagues through links that cannot be opened by anyone outside of the organisation, as opposed to attaching copies of the data to emails.
- Implementing the use of appropriate file transfer systems when sharing data with external colleagues to avoid attaching copies of the data to emails.