

Report of a breach of the Code of Practice for Statistics

Core Information

Information needed	Response
Title and link to statistical output	NISRA Awareness and Customer Satisfaction Survey 2020 https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/nisra-awareness-and-customer-satisfaction-survey-2020
Name of producer organisation	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Alexandra Pauley Alexandra.Pauley@nisra.gov.uk
Name and contact details of Senior Statistician / Lead Official	Siobhan Carey Siobhan.carey@finance-ni.gov.uk
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/nisra-awareness-and-customer-satisfaction-survey-2020
Date of breach report	14 April 2021

Circumstances of breach

Information needed	Response
Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Practice T3.6 – Statistics should be released to all users at 9.30am on a weekday Practice T3.1 – The release of official statistics should be pre-announced. Practice T3.3 – Access to statistics before their public release should be limited to those involved in the production of the statistics. Practice T3.4 – The circulation of statistics in their final form ahead of their publication should be restricted to eligible recipients.
Date of occurrence of breach	12 February 2021 (T3.1 & T3.6) 18 September 2020 (T3.3 & T3.4)

Please give an account of what happened including roles of persons involved, dates and times:

At 10.28am on 12th February 2021 the NISRA Awareness and Customer Satisfaction Survey 2020 publication was published on the NISRA website. The release date had not been pre-announced in advance.

Key figures from this publication had previously been published in the NISRA Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 which was laid before the NI Assembly on 18 September 2020 and published on the NISRA website on 22 September 2020.

This breach arose as a result of a lack of clarity regarding the status of the publication, with the Senior Manager for the area believing it was Management Information (which does not need to be compliant with the Code of Practice) rather than official statistics.

The breach was discovered when it was noted that there was a typo in the published date on the page. One of the cc recipients was aware that these were official statistics and queried the publication time.

Impact of the breach

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

These statistics were not released according to the correct protocol which could have undermined public trust in NISRA's adherence to the Code of Practice. The inclusion of the statistics in the NISRA Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20, prior to the release of the official statistics publication, meant that users did not have access to the official statistics publication and the relevant explanatory material. The failure to pre-announce the publication means that users may not have been aware of its release.

However, no complaints have been received and there is no evidence of any adverse impact. The main users of these official statistics are internal, aside from their use in the Annual Report.

Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

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

The Senior Manager has been briefed on the status of the official statistics and appropriate protocol. Branch procedures will also be updated to ensure such an oversight does not re-occur.

All staff involved in decisions regarding official statistics will be required to complete Code of Practice training.