
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ
(by email)

26 November 2021

Dear Lord Chancellor,

I am sure you were as disappointed as I was to see that statistics on transgender prisoners¹ were disclosed to the Daily Telegraph the day before their official publication on 25 November.

The statutory Code of Practice for Statistics requires that “statistics must be equally available to all, and not be released partially or to selected audiences”². For data on a sensitive topic to be published first in a newspaper alongside commentary from campaigning organisations is the opposite of what the Code expects and what the public deserve. Such leaks risk both misinforming the public and undermining trust in official statistics, giving the impression of special access for favoured groups. I am sure you would agree on the importance of trustworthy statistics, equally accessible to all.

The statistical bulletin lists some 80 people who were given access to the figures ahead of publication. The Code requires that access should be limited to those involved in the production and release of the statistics, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. 80 people cannot be needed for this. I should be grateful if the list could at least be reviewed and minimised to reduce the risk of a similar abuse in future.

But beyond this the longstanding view of the UK Statistics Authority is that Ministers and officials should not have access to statistics before they are made public. Equality of access to official statistics is a fundamental principle of statistical good practice, and the existence of pre-release access undermines trust in our official statistics system. It would give a strong signal were you to agree that Ministry of Justice statistics should be seen by Ministers and officials on publication, as is already the case for ONS statistics.

Statisticians in the MoJ are preparing a report on this breach of the Code. I know you will take note of this report and would urge you to review the Ministry of Justice’s practices in relation to pre-release access to statistics.

Yours sincerely,



Sir David Norgrove

¹ [HM Prison and Probation Service Offender Equalities Annual Report](#)

² [Code of Practice for Statistics](#)