

**Gail Rankin | Programme Lead, Systemic Reviews  
Office for Statistics Regulation**

Iain Stewart MP  
Chair, Transport Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

24 August 2023

Dear Mr Stewart,

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) supports and encourages innovation and improvement in data and statistics. As the OSR Programme Lead for systemic reviews, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence for the Transport Committee's inquiry '*Future of Transport Data*'<sup>1</sup>.

The OSR is the independent regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. In line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act (2007), our principal roles are to:

- Set the statutory Code of Practice for Statistics
- Assess compliance with the Code to ensure statistics serve the public, in line with the pillars of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. We do this through our regulatory work that includes assessments, systemic reviews, compliance checks and casework.
- Award the National Statistics designation to official statistics that comply fully with the Code.
- Report any concerns on the quality, good practice and comprehensiveness of official statistics.

As part of our planned programme of systemic reviews, in February 2022 we published the UK wide *Review of transport accessibility statistics*<sup>2</sup>. Accessible transport plays a key role in having an equal society and describes a transport network which allows all users equal opportunity to travel when they want, where they want, how they want, at a price they can afford. I would like to take this opportunity to share the key findings from this review and our wider views on data sharing and data linkage across government that may be of interest to the Committee for this inquiry.

Please let me know if you have any follow up questions or if OSR can support the Committee further in its inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



**Gail Rankin**

<sup>1</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7793/future-of-transport-data/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/review-of-transport-accessibility-statistics/>

**Office for Statistics Regulation written evidence, 'Future of Transport Data',  
September 2023**

**Review of Transport Accessibility Statistics**

*Gaps in Transport Data*

1. We found that that whilst many statistics on transport and transport use are well developed, existing official statistics are not fully answering the key questions of those with a specific interest in the accessibility of transport networks. These include:
2. Statistics on entire journeys: Current data are largely focused on measuring constituent parts of the transport experience, rather than entire journeys. As such, the connections between legs of journeys, which may pose significant challenges to disabled people, are not taken account of and statistics producers were unable to quantify how many opportunities people have missed out on due to failures or barriers in the transport network.
3. Survey data from disabled people: Across a wide range of policy areas, including transport, disabled people are systematically excluded from statistics which are based on surveys. The reasons for this are varied. Some individuals live in establishments such as care homes that are not included in samples based on households and survey questionnaires may not have been adapted to enable completion by those with some disabilities.
4. Granular data: Users of data and statistics told us of their need for more geographical and demographic information. We heard that often sample sizes were too small to allow for local authority or regional breakdowns, particularly in being able to differentiate the experiences of those living in urban areas and those who live in rural areas.
5. We looked at the three most commonly mentioned barriers to travel: affordability, safety and journey times, as well as at modal specific data gaps and concerns about data granularity. Data about the average cost per journey, for example costs for commuters of making the same journey by different modes of transport, was not published in England, Scotland, or Wales.
6. Some organisations raised concerns about the lack of, and poor quality of data available about physical abuse and hate crimes on public transport, particularly towards disabled people. We found that generally statistics were only available at a high level with limited detail, making the data difficult to analyse to form a coherent understanding of what was happening.
7. We found opportunities to improve data about a variety of modes of transport. This included Community Transport in England, bus and coach travel in Northern Ireland, and the accessibility of railway stations across Great Britain. In addition, our research highlighted concerns that statistics about walking and wheeling and taxi services did not reflect the lived experiences of disabled people.
8. Users also told us that a greater number of age breakdowns would be beneficial, for example to identify whether the experiences of young adults with disabilities varies from that of older adults with disabilities.

### *Bringing data and statistics together*

9. We found that both qualitative and quantitative data are needed to understand the experiences of those accessing transport. When qualitative and quantitative data are brought together, they can help to paint an insightful and engaging picture.
10. Some statistics users are not aware of the extent of available data and statistics, suggesting that engagement with users could be improved and existing publications could be promoted more. We also found that once users had identified the relevant statistics, data or analysis, many publications provide only a snapshot of experiences, making it difficult to understand how these are changing over time.

### *Our UK wide recommendations*

11. We recommended that statistics should be developed which reflect the lived experience of disabled people to support a focus on removing barriers to access.
12. All producers of transport statistics should aim to publish data and analysis that are already being collected or produced to improve transparency of ministerial statements and policy development, and to increase clarity and value from the findings.
13. The Department for Transport (DfT) and the Office of Rail and Road should work together to publish and regularly update statistics about the accessibility of train stations across Great Britain, covering accessible infrastructure to support those with different types of disabilities (such as step free access for those with mobility impairments) and geographical breakdowns.
14. The DfT should explore whether new or existing data, for example the English National Travel Survey, can be used to fill data gaps highlighted in the report, for example around community and coach travel.
15. Transport Scotland and Transport for Wales should publish internal analysis on journey times and seek user engagement on what else is needed to support local understanding and policy development.
16. The Office of Rail and Road should work with the DfT and the Rail Delivery Group to develop a publication about the use and impact of railcards, drawing on data from the Rail Delivery Group and other sources, such as the English National Travel Survey.
17. All statistics producers should explore where further demographic breakdowns of survey data provide new insights into the experiences of different population groups and publish data where this could be of interest to users. For example, new urban-rural splits of national figures, and more age breakdowns, such as focussing on the experiences of younger adults.
18. We are currently looking at what progress has been made towards achieving these recommendations, noting that some will require longer term changes to be secured. We would be happy to share updates on these with the Committee when they are published.

### Data sharing and linkage across government

19. The pandemic provided a strong impetus to share data for the public good. There has been some excellent progress in creating linked datasets and making them available for research, analysis, and statistics. However, despite the value of sharing and linking data being widely recognised, there remains areas of challenge and uncertainties about the

public's attitude to, and confidence in, data sharing.

20. OSR has been monitoring and commenting on data sharing and linkage across government for a number of years. Our most recent report on *Data Sharing and Linkage for the Public Good*<sup>3</sup> was published on 12 July 2023 and takes stock of the current data sharing and linkage landscape across government, specifically exploring the barriers and opportunities to this.
21. Of the 16 recommendations set out in the report, the recommendations we consider most relevant to this call for evidence are as follows.
- a. Report recommendation 1: Social Licence. The government needs to be aware of the public's views on data sharing and linkage, and to understand existing or emerging concerns. Public surveys such as the 'Public attitudes to data and AI: Tracker survey' by the Centre for Data, Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) provide valuable insight. They should be maintained and enhanced, for example to include data linking.
  - b. Report recommendation 3: The Five Safes Framework. Since the Five Safes Framework was developed twenty years ago, new technologies to share and link data have been introduced and data linkage of increased complexity is occurring. As the Five Safes Framework is so widely used across data access platforms, we recommend that the UK Statistics Authority review the framework to consider whether there are any elements or supporting material that could be usefully updated.
  - c. Report recommendation 4: Privacy Enhancing Technologies. To enable wider sharing of data in a secure way, government should continue to explore the potential for Privacy Enhancing Technologies (PETs) to be used to enhance security and protect privacy where data are personally identifiable. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Data Science Campus is well placed to lead and coordinate this work.
  - d. Report recommendation 5: Data Literacy in Government. To gain the skills to create and support a data-aware culture, it is important for senior leaders to have awareness of and exposure to data issues. One way to raise awareness and exposure would be for senior leaders to ensure that they participate in the Data Masterclass delivered by the ONS Data Science Campus in partnership with the 10 Downing Street (No10) Data Science Team.
  - e. Report recommendation 7: Arbitration Process. To facilitate greater data sharing among organisations within government, a clear arbitration process, potentially involving ministers, should be developed for situations in which organisations cannot agree on whether data shares can or should occur. Developing such an arbitration process could be taken on by the Cabinet Office, commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary and delivered working with partners such as No10 and ONS.
  - f. Report recommendation 10: Broader use cases for data. To support re-use of data where appropriate, those creating data sharing agreements should consider whether restricting data access to a specific use case is essential or whether researchers could be allowed to explore other beneficial use cases, aiming to broaden the use case were possible.

**OFFICE FOR STATISTICS REGULATION  
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<sup>3</sup> <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/data-sharing-and-linkage-for-the-public-good/>