

To: Leaders of UK political parties

4 June 2024

I am writing to ask for your support and commitment in ensuring the appropriate and transparent use of statistics during this general election campaign.

The work of the UK Statistics Authority is underpinned by the conviction that official statistics should serve the public good. This means that when statistics and quantitative claims are used in public debate, they should enhance understanding of the topics being debated and not be used in a way that has the potential to mislead.

To help government departments, public bodies and others do this day-to-day, the Office for Statistics Regulation has set out principles of ‘intelligent transparency’<sup>1</sup>. These demand that statistical claims and statements are based on data to which everyone has equal access, that are clearly and transparently defined, and for which there is appropriate acknowledgement of any uncertainties and context that people need to be aware of if they are realistically to interpret what they mean.

Adhering to these principles is just as important when parties are using statistics and making quantitative claims to help their candidates seek public office. Needless to say, the use of statistics in political communication is often necessarily succinct and devoid of lengthy explanation. Under these circumstances, a good rule of thumb is to consider how a reasonable person would interpret the statement being made and ensure that this is not likely to be misleading in the absence of additional information.

In the case of the governing party, it is also important that any public statements made during the pre-election period refer only to official statistics and data that are already in the public domain and not those to which ministers have privileged access.

Adhering to the principles of intelligent transparency is in the interests not just of the public but campaigners themselves. It avoids the need for subsequent clarifications and possible loss of trust in future claims, either later in the campaign or in government. The Office for Statistics Regulation will be monitoring the use of statistics in public debate through to polling day and we will be willing to highlight publicly where statements draw on statistics and data that are not published or are presented in a misleading way.

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<sup>1</sup> [Intelligent transparency, Office for Statistics Regulation](#)

I am sending identical letters to the leaders of the main political parties, with a copy to the Cabinet Secretary. The Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation has written to Permanent Secretaries of Civil Service departments in similar terms<sup>2</sup>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sir Robert Chote', written over a horizontal line.

**Sir Robert Chote**  
**Chair**

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<sup>2</sup> [Ed Humpherson to Permanent Secretaries: Transparency and Analytical Leadership, 24 May 2024](#)