
Other National Statistics

Three Year Work Plan 2002/03-2004/05

1. Summary

An Introduction to the Other National Statistics Theme

The Other National Statistics Theme covers statistics on a wide range of topics, including numbers of people working in the public sector and the armed forces; the provision of public and community services such as the Fire Brigade Service; compendia publications (those that contain statistics from a number of NS Themes) and statistics on international development. Departments involved in this theme are equally diverse, including CO, the Defence Analytical Research Agency (DASA), DFID, the ONS and HO.

The users of these statistics are also varied, and although mainly for central government, include local government, NGOs, international organisations, the business community, professional researchers, students and the public.

A full list of outputs within the Theme can be accessed via the internet at www.statistics.gov.uk. (Select 'Themes', then 'Other', then 'Books, releases and Compact Discs').

Brief Overview of the Theme's Work Programme

Last year's work programme details much of our planned activity for the next three years. In addition we will be addressing issues that have come to light since that plan was published. Key developments include:

Work is being taken forward across government to produce outputs on personal statistics from April 2002 onwards that reflect the new ethnic categories used in the Census (UK)

The CO are reviewing how their outputs are used and, more broadly, are developing a communications strategy which will include further development of their website (England and Wales)

DASA will continue to implement the findings of the NS quality review on *Armed Forces Personnel Statistics*, which was published in August 2001 (UK)

DASA will also be taking forward recommendations of both *Armed Forces Medical Statistics* and *United Kingdom Defence Statistics* (UK)

DFID are conducting an internal review of their systems for collecting information on the purpose of aid. This should lead to more comprehensive and accurate reporting in future

On the dissemination side, DFID are taking forward development of a CD-ROM version of the key output '*Statistics on International Development*'.

A number of reviews of the contents and use of compendia publications produced by the ONS are planned, including the '*Annual Abstract*'.

A wide-ranging review of dissemination practices to exploit new technologies is underway. This will see, for example, '*Regional Trends*' published simultaneously as an interactive PDF and paper publication.

2. Strategic Influences and Policy Drivers

There are a number of government policies that will impact on NS as a whole and these have been highlighted in the strategic introduction. These include:

- Civil Service Reform and the *Modernising Government Agenda*
- the *Knowledge Network* (a government-wide electronic communication tool)
- the ease of access to information and the desire to maximise the use of new technologies to develop dissemination techniques; and
- the impact of devolution and the requirement to produce coherent statistics at the national and sub-national level.

As part of our core work statistical developments must meet these requirements and additionally those drivers that are more specific to the work of this theme. These include:

- monitoring of Public Service Agreement targets – in particular the work of DFID in monitoring development outcomes and progress towards the *Millennium Development Goals*;
- performance indicators and various social policies such as *Social Inclusion* are key drivers for outputs within the theme;

- there is an increasing demand for regional and sub-regional information and this will particularly impact upon the work of ONS and how it develops its regional compendia series. The new *Neighbourhood Statistics Service*, itself a major development to meet the challenge of the government policy 'Neighbourhood Renewal', will have a particular impact on this area of theme activity.

3. Planned developments

Developments to outputs

In line with government policy, the quality of our outputs are constantly reviewed to determine whether they are fit for purpose, to assess the way in which we collect and publish the data, the mechanisms used and the need to exploit new technology. There is a government commitment to make all statistics available online by 2005 and to this end electronic dissemination and accessibility to data is a focus for all departments within the theme.

Personnel statistics

The theme plays a major role in the provision of personnel statistics, principally of the civil service and armed forces personnel, ensuring their coherence and constantly seeking ways to develop their production.

The range of civil service statistics collected and published are being developed to take account of changing users' needs, the Civil Service Reform and Modernisation agendas and changing demographics of society. A review of the way outputs are used is underway following analysis of a readership survey, and to develop a communications strategy, including further development of the CO statistics website. Work will also be undertaken to review progress against a review of user needs completed in 2000.

Work will continue to develop methods of dissemination. Recent developments include the publication of a single annual report on Civil Service Statistics. A wide range of statistics were placed on the internet to accompany this publication. The CO statistics web-site has been enhanced to include, amongst other improvements, clearer sign-posting.

Defence

A programme of work will be put in place to develop both electronic and paper versions of

defence statistics publications following the quality review of the compendia publication United Kingdom Defence Statistics.

Compendia

There are a number of developments planned. A consultation on the portfolio of outputs produced by ONS will take place to determine whether the range and detail of information available meets user needs. There is also a view to develop new analyses and plans to move to more web-based publications. For example:

- *Annual Abstract of Statistics* will appear as an interactive PDF on the NS website for the first time;
- *Regional Development Agencies State of the Nation Core Indicators* produced quarterly;
- *Region in Figures* will be published six monthly;
- *Regional Trends* future issues will be published simultaneously as an interactive PDF and paper publication.

The NS website is continually being developed, and alongside this the Theme Group is reviewing the key data to be included; bringing the Theme's StatBase information up-to-date and reviewing what data are supplied to other key datasets.

A prototype CD-ROM version of DFID's annual publication *Statistics on International Development* based on last year's edition has been published. This will be further developed for the 2001 edition and produced each year along with the hard copies.

Business continuity

In 2001-2002 a new project was established to ensure the continuity of production of statistics on war pensions following the transfer of responsibility from the former Department of Social Security and work on this will continue into 2002-2003.

Immediately following the General Election in June 2001, departmental changes affected a number of outputs within this theme. Although the outputs remain within the theme, departmental responsibilities have changed. Those affected are as follows:

- election statistics have moved from the HO to the Electoral Commission;
- betting licensing and liquor licensing statistics have moved from the HO to the DCMS;
- fire statistics have moved from the HO to the DTLR and the Regions;
- work on the new project to ensure continuity of production of statistics on war pensions will continue, following the transfer of responsibility from the former Department of Social Security to the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Report on the Quality Review Programme

Personnel statistics

Following a scoping review of the coherence of ethnic monitoring, a cross-departmental technical group has been established to take NS work forward. This group will report directly to the NS(S).

Defence

A NS quality review of armed forces personnel statistics was conducted by DASA in 2001. It identified several areas for improvement which could readily be accommodated in existing work plans, but some issues required further research or were dependent on changes to existing procedures which needed more time. Areas where work will be continuing over the period of this plan include:

- the development of a better method for identifying the geographic location of armed forces personnel in the UK and overseas;
- improvement in monitoring of the timeliness and accuracy of the administrative personnel systems from which the statistics are derived;
- development of procedures to ensure data is processed in accordance with Data Protection Act 1998; and
- securing service level agreements with all major data suppliers.

The review of defence medical statistics is currently underway. This review is customer focused and it is expected that the agreed recommendations for the review will be implemented.

DASA expect to undertake a through review of the quality of defence financial statistics (breakdown of MoD budget and expenditure) and defence related economic statistics (exports, imports etc). DASA will consult widely with outside experts and will build on existing inter departmental work on defence exports and employment estimation.

Compendia

A review of the contents of the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* took place in 2001. We intend to consult users on the major changes proposed as part of the NS 'Reference and Compendia publications' quality review scheduled for 2002. This quality review will span a number of titles (yet to be determined) and is likely to also include the *Monthly Digest of Statistics* and other major compendia. This is expected to deliver greater quality and coherence.

The quality review of *United Kingdom Defence Statistics* currently underway is expected to make a number of recommendations about the future scope and dissemination of defence statistics. While some of these may be able to be implemented quickly and within existing resources it is anticipated that others will require additional set-up costs and possibly additional on-going resources. These will be assessed in early 2002 when the full findings of the review are available.

As part of the ongoing review, the latest edition of *Scientific Procedures* included details of methodology, and an invitation to readers to suggest changes or enhancements to the publication.

International Development

DFID will continue their work in reconciling data sources within the Department to enhance data quality.

A major review of DFID's management information system coding will have huge implications for their statistical reporting systems in the future and the challenge of the next few years will be to ensure that this does not impact negatively on the timeliness or quality of statistics.

The quality review programme for the theme has been revised in the light of recent changes in departmental responsibilities. The revised programme is as follows:

2001-2002	Defence Personnel Statistics (published August 2001) Coherence of Public Sector Staffing Armed Forces Health Statistics UK Defence Statistics
2002-2003	DFID Statistical Information Systems Compendia Defence Financial and Defence Related Economic Statistics
2003-2004	Liquor Licensing Fire Statistics Civil Service Staffing Publications
2004-2005	Civil Service Management Information Animal Procedure Statistics

Other quality developments

There are a number of developments planned that are outside the scope of the quality review programme that will impact on the quality of outputs. These include:

DFID has initiated an internal review on the way in which it collects information on the purpose of aid. This will lead to revisions to data collection systems and reflect the changing nature of the aid programme. This should enhance data quality in new areas and lead to more comprehensive and accurate reporting. The quality of DFID's systems will be reviewed by the Development Assistance Committee in 2002/03 as planned.

Compendia

Linked initiatives include plans to review *UK in figures*, currently updated annually and available on the website, and replace it with a set of key social statistics which are regularly updated. The Quality Review of social reporting carried out in 2002/3 under the Social and Welfare theme will be combined with the quality review of compendia. This, together with work on plans for disseminating Census data, may also have implications for the content and format of reference and compendia publications. We will provide more information on these plans as they develop.

New measures for coherence

Personnel Statistics

CO are developing closer links with data providers through secondments and other opportunities for joint working. Action is also in hand to co-ordinate data requests to reduce burdens on data suppliers. This will include work on harmonising definitions and looking at new data sources in order to minimise burdens. Central guidance and support has been issued to update information on Ethnic origin to reflect the new ethnic categories. Work will continue to develop new outputs to reflect these categories and we expect to publish civil service personnel statistics using the new ethnic categories for data from April 2002 onwards. Additional analytical work will also be carried out in light of this change and user needs.

4. Costs

For a full explanation of National Statistics costs, see Appendix B.

Theme specific expenditure is as follows:

'Projected' Resource Costs:

2002/03	£3.2m
2003/04	£3.2m

These annual estimates of 'projected' expenditure include the following expenditure on **significant developments** (i.e. over £50k):

Development of DASA outputs	2002/03	£110k
Including quality reviews	2003/04	£125k

Please note, these figures represent **significant** developments only and will not match the total expenditure on statistical developments for the theme shown in Table 1 in Appendix B.

5. Contacts and further information

Websites

Further information on statistics covered by this Theme can be found at the following websites:

National Statistics
www.statistics.gov.uk

Cabinet Office
www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/civilservice/index/
statistics.htm

Department for International Development
www.dfid.gov.uk

Defence Analytical Services Agency
www.dasa.mod.uk

Home Office
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Scottish Executive
www.scotland.gov.uk

National Assembly for Wales
www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/index.
htm

Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency
www.nisra.gov.uk

Wilma Schofield
Scottish Executive

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Theme address

If you have any comments on this Theme plan, or suggestions for future programmes, please email us at:

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