

## **CHRONOLOGY OF KEY DATES AND EVENTS WHICH HAVE SHAPED: THE UK STATISTICAL AND REGISTRATION SYSTEMS**

### **1086 – Domesday Book**

William I commissioned a detailed inventory of all the land and property in England and Wales. The results of this first major statistical enumeration were set out in the Domesday Book.

### **1538 - Registration**

Henry VIII's Chancellor, Thomas Cromwell, instructs the clergy of every Parish to keep parochial registers of all the baptisms, weddings and funerals at which they officiated.

### **1597 - Registrars**

An Act of Parliament directed that transcripts of the parochial registers established in 1538 were to be sent annually to a diocesan registrar.

### **1800 – First Census Act**

The first Census Act, which also applied to Scotland, received Royal Assent on 31 December 1800.

### **1801 – First Census of the Population**

Enumeration for the first Population Census took place on 10 March 1801. Collection was delegated to parish officials.

### **1832 – First Statistics Office**

Establishment of the first statistical office – the Board of Trade.

### **1834 - RSS**

The Royal Statistical Society was established.

### **1836**

The Births and Deaths Registration Act and the Marriage Act received Royal Assent, thereby establishing secular system for recording births, marriages and deaths.

### **1837 – GRO (England and Wales)**

The General Register Office for England and Wales was established on 1 July 1837 at Somerset House. It was given responsibility for the administration of civil registration, for the analysis and publication of statistics on births and deaths, and for the conduct of the population census in England and Wales.

### **1840 – Registrar General's role**

Under the Population Act 1840 the Registrar General was made responsible for the Census of Population for England and Wales.

### **1841**

The first Census to be conducted by the GRO.

**1855 – GRO (Scotland)**

The General Register Office for Scotland was established along with a system of civil registration in Scotland.

**1861**

The first Census of Population carried out in Scotland based on the registration service.

**1861**

Establishment of the system of Public Accounts.

**1864 – GRO (Ireland)**

The General Register Office for Ireland was established.

**1874 - Registration**

The Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1874 transferred the onus of registration from the registrar to the next of kin. The Act also required the medical certification of the cause of death.

**1895**

The notification of infectious diseases became compulsory.

**1915**

National registration introduced as a wartime measure - administered by the GRO.

**1919**

The Local Government Board was abolished and responsibility for statistics on health was passed to the newly created Ministry of Health.

**1920 – Census Act**

The Census Act of 1920 put census-taking in Great Britain on a permanent legal footing rather than the result of a specific enactment as in Northern Ireland.

**1920**

On 11 October in Paris, the League of Nations convened the International Statistical Commission.

**1922 – GRO (Northern Ireland)**

The General Register Office for Northern Ireland was established.

**1926**

The registration of stillbirths was made compulsory.

**1927**

The Registrar General set up an Adopted Children Register to record all legal adoptions.

**1929**

The Local Government Act of 1929 transferred the civil registration function to local authorities.

**1938**

The Population (Statistics) Act 1938 greatly increased the amount of statistical information obtained from those registering a birth or death.

**1939 - CEIS**

The Central Economic Intelligence Service (CEIS) was set up in December 1939 as part of the War Cabinet Office. Its staff of economists and statisticians provided the seedcorn for the CSO (see below).

**1940 – Social Survey**

The Wartime Social Survey was established by the Ministry of Information to conduct surveys on economic and social topics and matters relating to wartime morale.

**1941 – Central Statistical Office**

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) was established on 27 January 1941 to meet Prime Minister Winston Churchill's requirement for the central co-ordination of official statistics in order to service the war effort. This marked the beginning of the present system of official statistics in the UK. Harry Campion was appointed as the first Director.

**1946**

The Social Survey became the Social Survey Division of the Central Office of Information (COI).

**1947**

The Statistics of Trade Act was passed, providing government statisticians with the opportunity to collect more information from industry and acting as the spur to the further development of economic statistics.

**1948**

The Cancer Registration scheme was introduced.

**1948**

The United Nations published the first issue of its 'Statistical Yearbook'.

**1949 – National Health Service Central Register**

The General Register Office was given responsibility for the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR).

**1960**

The Population Statistics Act of 1960 required the compulsory notification of the causes of stillbirths.

**1960**

Responsibility for statistics on the Balance of Payments was transferred from the Bank of England to the CSO.

## **1961**

Sampling was introduced to the Census of Population which, for the first time, was processed on computers.

## **1965**

The House of Commons Estimates Committee's sub-committee on Economic Affairs began an examination of the governance of official statistics. Some of the committee's recommendations were directed towards strengthening the status of the CSO and its central co-ordinating role. This led, eventually, to the creation of the Government Statistical Service (GSS) – an umbrella organisation established in 1968 to coordinate statistical work across the UK government.

## **1967 – Government Social Survey Department**

On 1 April 1967, the Government Social Survey which had its origins in the Wartime Social Survey (1940) became a separate department responsible to a Treasury Minister.

## **1968 – Government Statistical Service**

The Government accepts the Director of the CSO, Claus Moser's, wider proposals for giving the CSO a much greater degree of central management control over what he called the 'Government Statistical Service' (GSS). Moser thus became the first Head of the GSS.

## **1969 – Business Statistics Office**

The Business Statistics Office (BSO) came into being on 1 January 1969 in Newport - as part of Claus Moser's GSS reforms and as part of the Department for Trade and Industry but with close links to the CSO - with responsibility for most of the government's collection of statistics from businesses, irrespective of the Department requiring the information.

## **1970 – Office of Population Censuses and Surveys**

The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) came into being in May 1970 - also as part of Claus Moser's reforms - through a merger of the General Register Office for England and Wales (established in 1837) and the Government Social Survey Department (established in 1967). The OPCS took on responsibility for most of the collection of statistical information from persons and households through a programme of censuses, surveys and registration.

## **1972**

For the first time a professional statistician – George Paine – was appointed as Registrar General.

## **1972 – SOEC (Eurostat)**

The Statistical Office of the European Community (SOEC) was created.

## **1980 - Rayner Review**

On 21 January 1980, the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, commissioned a review of the Government Statistical Service under Sir Derek Rayner. The recommendations of the Rayner Review were published in a government White Paper in April 1981. The main conclusion of his report was that the needs of the government of the day, rather

than the public interest, should determine the priorities and work of the GSS. As a result the complement of the Government Statistical Service was cut by about 25 per cent.

### **1988 - Pickford Review**

A review conducted by Stephen Pickford examined the quality of economic statistics. It called for the greater centralisation of work on economic statistics in an enlarged CSO.

### **1989 – Merger of expanded CSO and BSO**

As a result of the Pickford Review, the CSO was expanded in July 1989 to incorporate the Business Statistics Office in Newport (established in 1969), most of the two statistics divisions in the Department of Trade and Industry's HQ, and the statistics division working on the RPI and the Family Expenditure Survey in the Department of Employment. As a result, the CSO's complement rose from under 200 to over 1,000. The enlarged CSO also became a separate government Department responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

### **1990**

On 17 May 1990, the Chancellor announced a package of measures designed to improve the quality of economic statistics.

### **1990 - RSS Report – 'Counting with Confidence'**

In July 1990, a Working Party of the Royal Statistical Society published their report entitled 'Official Statistics: Counting with Confidence'. This called for, amongst other things, a UK Statistics Act.

### **1991**

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) was established as an Executive Agency.

### **1994**

Between 11 to 14 April 1994, a Special Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission held in New York adopted the 'Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics'.

### **1995 (April)**

The RSS published its Report on the measurement of unemployment in the UK.

### **1995**

On 25 April 1995 the Shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, gave a speech to the RSS in which he called for the merger of the CSO and OPCS and a greater centralisation of official statistics within a new arms-length body reporting directly to Parliament.

### **1995 – Code of Practice**

The (then) Head of the Government Statistical Service, Bill McLennan, published the 'Official Statistics Code of Practice'.

### **1996 – The Office for National Statistics and the ONS Framework Document**

In April 1996, the Central Statistical Office (established in 1941) and the Office for Population Censuses and Surveys (established in 1970) were merged to form the new

Office for National Statistics (ONS) as an Executive Agency. Ministerial responsibility for the ONS was placed within the Treasury which set out the governance arrangements for the new Office in the ONS Framework Document. The Director of the ONS also took on the role of Registrar General and Head of the GSS.

### **1998 - Devolution**

The Devolution Settlement of 1998 laid the basis for separate parliaments/assemblies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

### **1998 – Green Paper: ‘Statistics - A Matter of Trust’**

In February 1998 the government published a consultation document under this title, setting out its plans for reforming the governance and administration of UK statistics with the aim of restoring public trust and confidence in official statistics.

### **1999 – White Paper: ‘Building trust in statistics’**

In October 1999 the government published its more concrete proposals for reform based on the submissions it had received as a result of its earlier public consultation.

### **2000 – Framework for National Statistics**

In June 2000 the Government published the ‘Framework for National Statistics’, which set out the new governance arrangements for official statistics in the UK, and which was hailed as ‘the biggest overhaul of official statistics for over thirty years’. The Framework described the aims and objectives of the new system and the roles and responsibilities of each of the main entities and organisations including two new players – the National Statistician and an independent Statistics Commission. The role of National Statistician also embraced the role of Director of the ONS, Registrar General, and Head of the GSS. The Framework also launched a new concept – that of ‘National Statistics’ – a designated set of official statistics so-labelled because they were expected to be compliant with a new and more rigorous ‘National Statistics Code of Practice’.

### **2001 – Statistics Concordat**

The Government publishes the ‘Statistics Concordat’ as a Supplementary Agreement to the Memorandum of Understanding between the UK Government, Scottish Ministers, the Cabinet of the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee.

### **2002 – National Statistics Code of Practice**

In October, the (then) National Statistician, Len Cook, published the ‘National Statistics Code of Practice’ along with the ‘National Statistics Protocol on Release Practices’ – the first of 12 supporting Protocols.

### **2004**

Statistics Commission publishes its report: ‘Legislation to Build Trust in Statistics’.

### **2004 – Statistics User Forum**

The Statistics User Forum (SUF) was established as a successor to the Statistics User Council (SUC).

## **2005**

The Information Centre for Health and Social Care was established as an independent body in England in April 2005 and charged with the task of collecting health statistics on behalf of the Department for Health.

## **2005**

On 25 May 2005 the Statistical Office of the European Community, Eurostat, issued its European Statistics Code of Practice.

## **2005**

The Statistics Commission published its report 'Official Statistics: Perceptions and Trust'.

## **2005 – Statistical Legislation**

On 28 November, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, announced his intention to introduce legislation in order to establish the independence of official statistics.

## **2006 – 'Independence for statistics'**

On 22 March 2006 the Government published a consultation document with the above title which set out its detailed proposals for statistical legislation.

## **2006 – Treasury Committee Report**

On 26 July the House of Commons's Treasury Committee published a report on its own analysis and assessment of the government's legislative proposals.

## **2006 – Government Response**

On 22 November the Government published a response to all the submissions it had received as a result of its earlier public consultation.

## **2006 – The Bill**

On 22 November the government published the first draft of its proposed legislation in the 'Statistics and Registration Service Bill'.

## **2006 – House Of Commons Research Report**

On 15 December the House of Commons Library published its Research Report on the Statistics and Registration Bill.

## **2007 – Appointment of the first UK Statistics Authority Chair**

On 23 July the Treasury Select Committee published the results of its hearing into the nomination of Sir Michael Scholar as the first chair of the 'Statistics Board' – later renamed the UK Statistics Authority. Two days later the House of Commons voted to recommend that the Queen appoint him to the post.

## **2007 – The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007**

On 26 July the Statistics and Registration Service Bill received Royal Assent.

**2008 – Commencement of the Statistics Act**

On 1 April 2008 the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 came into full effect. The Statistics Commission was dissolved and its function subsumed by the UK Statistics Authority.

**2008**

The Registrar General's statistical functions remained with the ONS. Then GRO transferred to the Identity and Passport Service (IPS), an Executive Agency of the Home Office. The NHSCR transferred to the Information Centre for Health and Social Care.

## CHRONOLOGY OF KEY STATISTICAL COLLECTIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

### 1801

The first 'Census of Population' took place on 10 March 1801. This gave the total number of people in England and Wales as nine million.

### 1839

The first classification of causes of death was devised by the Registrar General.

### 1841

The first 'modern' 'Census of Population for England and Wales' was carried out by the Registrar General – so-called because it required each householder to provide a self-completed schedule recording the names and characteristics of every individual in the household. This system has remained more or less unaltered to the present day.

### 1849

The first publication of the Registrar General's 'Quarterly Return' which continued until 1975 when it was replaced by 'Population Trends'.

### 1851

Two innovations were introduced in the processing and presentation of the Census results - the classification of people by their occupation, and geographical disaggregation.

### 1854

The first publication of the 'Statistical Abstract of the United Kingdom' – later to become the 'Annual Abstract', first published in 1948.

### 1855

The first publication of the Board of Trade's 'Annual Statistics of Trade'.

### 1886

The first 'Census of Wages/Earnings' took place.

### 1907

The first 'Census of Production' took place.

### 1911

The Registrar General's 'Social Classes' was introduced as a means of analysing population statistics according to occupation/employment status groups. In addition, The UK adopted the 'International Classification of Diseases' (ICD).

### 1914

The launch of the first 'Cost of Living Index'.

### 1928

The launch of the first 'Index of Production'.

**1939**

In September, as a wartime security measure, all citizens were allocated a national registration number from which the Registrars General created a comprehensive 'National Register' of the population of the United Kingdom. This later became their National Health Service number.

**1941**

This year saw the first official estimate of the 'National Income and Expenditure' (relating to 1938 and 1940).

**1946**

The first publication of the 'Monthly Digest of Statistics'.

**1947**

The Statistics of Trade Act was passed providing government statisticians with the opportunity to collect more information from industry and acting as the spur to the further development of economic statistics.

**1948**

The first 'Census of Production' to take place under the auspices of the Statistics of Trade Act.

**1950**

The first 'Census of Distribution' was undertaken.

**1951**

The concept of Socio-economic groups was introduced in the analysis of the Census results.

**1952**

National Registration, introduced in 1939 as a wartime security measure, was abolished in February 1952. In the meantime, the identity numbers and the registers had been used to prepare the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR). The latter is a register of NHS patients which is kept up-to-date from returns submitted by the local registrars of births and deaths and Family Practitioner Committees (FPCs).

**1952**

The National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) was formed from the National Registration records introduced in 1939.

**1952**

Publication of the first 'National Income and Expenditure Blue Book'.

**1952**

First Family Expenditure Survey (FES).

**1953**

The 'Hospital In-patient Enquiry' was first carried out.

**1953**

Publication of the first 'Economic Trends'.

**1957**

Launch of the first continuous 'Family Expenditure Survey'.

**1960**

Publication of the first 'Balance of Payments Pink Book'.

**1961**

Launch of the 'International Passenger Survey'.

**1962**

Publication of the first 'Financial Statistics'.

**1970**

The newly established OPCS launched the first major continuous multi-purpose survey under the sponsorship of the CSO - the 'General Household Survey'.

**1970**

First publication by the CSO of the annual 'Social Trends' which drew heavily on material held by the OPCS.

**1971**

The start of the 'Longitudinal Study' which linked a sample of individuals from census to census and to records kept in the registration system.

**1973**

OPCS launched the 'Labour Force Survey' on a biennial basis - a harmonised and synchronised household survey carried out by all members of the European Community.

**1975**

First issue of OPCS's official journal 'Population Trends'.

**1983**

The 'Labour Force Survey' was expanded to become annual and continuous.

## **LIST OF PAST AND PRESENT: DIRECTORS OF THE CSO/ONS, AND HEADS OF THE GSS**

**1941** - March - Harry Campion was appointed as the CSO's first Director.

**1967**- April - Professor Claus Moser was appointed as the second Director of the CSO. A year later he became the first ex-officio Head of the newly created Government Statistical Service (GSS).

**1978** - August - John Boreham, Claus Moser's Deputy, was appointed as the third Director of the CSO and the second ex-officio Head of the GSS.

**1985** - August - Jack Hibbert became the fourth Director of the CSO and the third ex-officio Head of the GSS.

### **1992**

Bill McLennan became the fifth Director of the CSO and the fourth ex-officio Head of the GSS.

### **1996**

Tim Holt became the first Director of the newly-created ONS, and the fifth Head of the GSS.

### **2000**

Len Cook became the first National Statistician, the second Director of the ONS, and the sixth Head of the GSS.

### **2005**

Karen Dunnell became the first woman to hold the post of National Statistician and Director of the ONS – and the seventh Head of the GSS.

### **2008**

Karen Dunnell became the first Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, retaining her responsibilities as National Statistician and Head of the GSS.

## **LIST OF CHAIRS OF THE UK STATISTICS BOARD/AUTHORITY**

### **2007**

Sir Michael Scholar became the first Chair of the newly created Statistics Board which he later named the UK Statistics Authority.