

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output

Marriages in England and Wales (provisional), 2011

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/marriages-in-england-and-wales--provisional-/index.html>

Name of Producer Organisation

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

Glen Watson, Director General (DG), ONS

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2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 – Release Practice

Practice 4: "Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 09:30 on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal working hours."

Date of occurrence

26 June 2013

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

- Annual abstracts on births, deaths and marriages are prepared annually and presented to Parliament in order to comply with Section 19 of the Registration Services Act 1953 as amended by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.
- Due to the need to present to Parliament in advance of publication, a delayed release

time (11:00) for annual abstracts on births, deaths and marriages has previously been agreed with the UK Statistics Authority Board (in June 2011) due to the time required for the process of presenting/laying documents before Parliament.

- On 14 June, a submission from Glen Watson was sent to the Minister for the Cabinet Office (MCO) asking him to formally present the abstract of marriages to Parliament on 26 June.
- MCO's Private Office were not able to gain MCO's sign-off in time for the Parliamentary process of presenting/laying to be completed in time to meet the 11:00 release time.

Reasons for breach

MCO did not give formal sign-off in time to complete the parliamentary process and meet the 11:00 release time.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

- The ONS Publishing Support Team had to remove the marriages release from the publishing queue for the ONS website.
- A number of customers have contacted ONS about the release but had to be told there was a delay in publication.
- The Media Relations team have delayed distributing the release to known users.
- The laying before parliament process was completed just after 14:00 and the release went live on website by 14:00.

4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

- The National Statistician's Private Office discussed with MCO's Private Office the importance of releasing statistics at a pre-announced time in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

5. Any other relevant supporting material

- Users are warned of the late release time for marriage statistics on the Publication Hub e.g. Marriage statistics for 2010 are laid before Parliament before publication. Consequently, figures will not be released until 11:00.
- There is no pre-release access for marriage statistics.