

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 (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS)

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction>

Name of Producer Organisation

Passenger Focus

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

Ian Wright, Head of Research. Email: Ian.Wright@passengerfocus.org.uk. Tel. 0300 123 0832.

Date of report: 14 July 2014

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 (release Practices), Practice 8

Ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication.

Date of occurrence

25 June 2014

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

A short BBC Breakfast television broadcast at 07:23 on the day of release (prior to the 09.30 release) commented that '80 per cent of rail users say that they are satisfied with their

onboard experiences. But a survey from Passenger Focus also said that levels of satisfaction varied greatly from company to company'. Repeated at 08:13.

Reasons for breach

Certain authorised communication and media contacts along with a limited number of key stakeholders have access to data 24 hours prior to publication, known as pre-release access (PRA). The data provided is confidential and is not to be shared prior to publication, this guidance is re-iterated within the accompanying e-mail provided. The BBC however, appear to have some access to the results prior to the release at 09:30 on 25 June 2014, albeit at a headline level.

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

The breach was first spotted by the Head of Profession (HoP) at Passenger Focus. Our communications team was also alerted to the breach by the Rail Delivery Group. We are not aware of any other comment or reaction to the matter.

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

Short Term Actions:

An investigation was launched to trace the source of the breach. Passenger Focus contacted all individuals with PRA access to provide written confirmation as to whether they had inadvertently or deliberately passed on any data from the current wave of NRPS. However all those with PRA access advised that they were not responsible. Due to the very general nature of the BBC comment it has been impossible to use any detail from that to identify potential sources. Indeed the BBC comment was so vague that it could have equally been applied to the previous release of data (and possibly even subsequent ones). All those with PRA access were reminded of their responsibilities and that under no circumstance were they to share the data. Additional wording within the accompanying PRA e-mails has been strengthened.

Long Term Actions:

Further changes are also being considered such as a further reduction in numbers on the PRA List, any future changes will be approved by our internal Statistics Governance Group.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

<http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/national-passenger-survey-introduction>