

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends 2009: Scottish Interim Life Tables: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/life-expectancy/life-expectancy-at-scotland-level/index.html>

Name of Producer Organisation

General Register Office for Scotland (GROS)

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

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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. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances.

Date of occurrence

Exact date unknown, but no earlier than 30th July until 5th August.

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

Two Scottish Interim Life Tables, which were due to be published at 9:30am on 6th August, along with the Registrar General's Review of Demographic Trends 2009, accidentally went live on the GROS website prior to 6th August.

Reasons for breach

The tables were being prepared for publication on the GROS website on 6th August, when last year's tables were accidentally overwritten with the new tables. These tables contained two provisional figures for the years 2007-2009, which had previously not been published, and an age breakdown of these two figures.

3 Reactions and Impact

None.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

A member of staff at GROS noticed that the new tables were on the website at around 10am on 5th August. Within 10 minutes they had been replaced with last year's tables. The web team then checked to see how many hits the 'Life Expectancy at Scotland Level' page, which contains both the 'Scottish Interim Life Tables' and the 'Scottish Decennial Life Tables', had had in the last week. There had been a maximum of 42 hits on this page between 30th July and the morning of 5th August. The web team were unable to identify how many of these hits were by internal GROS staff, i.e. those who have pre-release access to the tables, and it is also not known how many people, if any, opened the 'Scottish Interim Life Tables', and therefore had access to pre-release data.

To ensure this doesn't happen in the future some additional checks have been put in place by the web team. From now on, any web page that is being prepared for publication will be checked on the live website to ensure the current page has not been updated until after the embargo date.

5 Any other relevant supporting material (including link to published statements about this breach)