

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')

Travel Survey for Northern Ireland Headline Report 2010-2012
This is a National Statistics Publication, released on July 25 2013
http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/statistics/stats-categories/northern_ireland_travel_survey.htm

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Regional Development (DRD)

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

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2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Practice 7: Release Practices:

"Subject to compliance with the rules and principles on Pre-Release Access (PRA) set out in legislation¹, limit access before public release to those people essential for production and publication, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Publish records of those who have access prior to release"

Protocol 2, Practice 8: Release Practices:

"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."

¹ The PRA to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009 sets out the rules and

principles relating to the granting of PRA to official statistics that are wholly Northern Ireland devolved statistics.

Date of occurrence

24 July 2013

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

A DRD Official (named in the pre-release access list) sent a copy of the report to an individual within the Press Office who had not been named on the PRA list but whose colleague had.

Reasons for breach

While both the covering email and the ministerial submission contained a caution relating to not sharing official statistics, the official responsible for the breach believed that everyone within the Press Office could be treated as one entity and therefore shared the report with an official who had not been named on the PRA list.

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

The breach was discovered very quickly and there is no evidence of data leaks or comment prior to the publication of the report. We have been assured that the publication went no further (i.e. was not shared with anyone else). The official responsible for the breach contacted the Senior Statistician, apologised for his actions, assured the Senior Statistician that the publication had only been shared with one individual and that the same mistake would not be made again.

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

- The official responsible for the breach was immediately reminded of his responsibilities under the pre-release access guidance
- The Departmental Statistician immediately informed the Grade 6 Statistician at Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) with responsibility for Official Statistics.
- A published statement was added to the DRD website.
- The Departmental Senior Statistician immediately sent an email to all officials on the pre-release access list to remind them of their responsibility not to share the statistics with anyone not on the PRA list.
- In addition, the official who received the report in error was made aware that a mistake had been made and that the report should not be shared with anyone else prior to publication.

Medium-term actions:

- The branch will continue to include a number of cautions on any correspondence relating to the publication (pre-release emails, ministerial submission and on the report itself) highlighting that it is for named recipients only and not to be shared until after publication.
- The Senior Statistician will issue a statement to all Senior Officials in the Department informing them that a breach has taken place within the Department and reminding them of their responsibilities under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/statistics/stats-categories/northern_ireland_travel_survey.htm