

Monitoring Review

Monitoring Review 1/16
February 2016

Monitoring Review Final Update

Statistics for Parliamentary Constituencies

Publication date – March 2012

The Authority published the Monitoring Review Report '*Statistics for Parliamentary Constituencies*' in March 2012¹. Annex 1 provides a brief summary of the report and documents actions taken in response to the recommendations.

Statement from the UK Statistics Authority

The published Monitoring Review Report contained 9 recommendations to be progressed.

As of January 2016, all of the recommendations have been satisfactorily completed.

At the time of publication, the Authority found that statistics at parliamentary constituency level did not meet user needs. Between 2012 and the General Election in 2015, producers have responded to the resultant recommendations that were set out in the Monitoring Review. In some cases the actions taken have not directly aligned with the Authority suggestions; however, they have been in the spirit of improvement and addressed the underlying need. The Authority recognises that these actions have been taken given limited resource availability and competing business priorities. We are encouraged by the commitment of the producers to make continued improvements in this area and while some of the recommendations could be seen as still open; in particular recommendations 4 and 5 that relate to possible future constituency boundary changes; we feel the infrastructure is in place to deal with future change if required.

Given this, the Authority deems that the recommendations from this review have been addressed within what could reasonably be expected of the producers.

Impact on Official Statistics

The actions taken in response to the recommendations have resulted in improved user engagement, and new statistical products available at constituency level which now better meet user needs.

Ultimately, the availability of statistics at constituency level will support and add value to public debate.

¹ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-for-parliamentary-constituencies/>

Annex 1

The Monitoring Brief reviewed the current position and made the case for improving the availability of statistics for constituencies. A number of commentators, inside and outside Parliament, had noted the patchiness of data at parliamentary constituency level. The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires that statistics be produced to meet user needs and in as much detail as reliable and practicable.

The published Monitoring Review Report contained 9 recommendations to be progressed.

Recommendation 1	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>Government departments and other producers of official statistics should, subject to the resource implications being manageable, aim to accommodate the production and publication of constituency statistics along the lines proposed in this Monitoring Brief.</p>	<p>Government departments and other producers of official statistics have told us that they remain keen to accommodate the production and publication of official statistics for all geographic levels for which there is a required use.</p> <p>Discussions were held between ONS and the House of Commons Library with the aim of improving the availability of parliamentary constituency level data ahead of the 2015 General Election. Where possible ONS worked with government departments to facilitate publication of new constituency level data for which there was demand in time to inform debate during the election. In some cases this proved successful (for example, DfT’s road accident and casualties data and making business statistics available via NOMIS) but for others resource constraints meant that it was not possible.</p> <p>COMPLETED – NOVEMBER 2014</p>

Recommendation 2	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>There would be virtue in a common approach across the various producers of official statistics in the UK - in practice this would mean an agreed set of criteria and processes for the production of constituency level estimates.</p>	<p>ONS launched a new web portal² in December 2013.</p> <p>The portal gives users access to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a data catalogue that lists all the National and Official Statistics that are available for UK parliamentary constituencies, both in Westminster and the devolved parliaments, from 2010 until the present. • interactive maps that show how the characteristics of the residents of parliamentary constituencies vary on measures including age, pension, health, ethnicity, housing, employment, unemployment, tax credits, personal income and enterprise • a guide to parliamentary constituencies that explains the parliamentary system in Westminster and the devolved parliaments • information on the geography products which support the production of statistics. For example, signposting to the look-up files that relate parliamentary constituencies to statistical building block geographies. In line with the GSS Geography Policy, these can be used to aggregate up small area statistics to create parliamentary constituency estimates. <p>This helped to improve understanding of the availability of parliamentary constituency data. ONS continues to maintain the web portal.</p> <p>COMPLETED – NOVEMBER 2014</p>

² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/parliamentary-constituencies/index.html>

Recommendation 3	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>Statistical offices in government departments should aim to consult the House of Commons Library to ensure that the statistical needs of Members of Parliament are understood and taken into account; and establish an appropriate provider-user dialogue with parliamentary, political, media and special interest bodies most likely to value constituency level estimates.</p>	<p>Ahead of the General Election, ONS met regularly with the House of Commons Library to understand their statistical needs and to discuss the development of the parliamentary constituency data catalogue. ONS, in turn, contacted other government departments through the GSS Regional and Geography Committee (RGC) to improve the availability of data and to ask for input to the product.</p> <p>ONS also engaged with the BBC in the run up to the election, to assist with their planning for data analysis and presentation.</p> <p>The Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) meet regularly to discuss statistical needs and provision.</p> <p>There is an ongoing expectation that all departments should periodically consult users, including the House of Commons Library, on the production of statistics and the development of analytical work programmes.</p> <p>COMPLETED – NOVEMBER 2014</p>

Recommendation 4	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>It would be helpful if producers of official statistics were publicly to set out their plans for the provision of Westminster parliamentary constituency statistics on the new boundary basis, following completion of the current round of boundary reviews.</p>	<p>It was announced in January 2013 that work on the 2013 Boundary Review had ceased. Once the next Boundary Review is announced, the UK Statistics Authority will want to see producers of official statistics setting out their plans for the provision of statistics on whatever new boundary basis the Review recommends.</p> <p>The ONS Geography team and GSS RGC are in place to take forward any future review activity.</p> <p>COMPLETED – NOVEMBER 2014</p>

Recommendation 5	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>The publication of plans for the release of recalibrated 2011 Census data using the new parliamentary constituency geography should be arranged as soon as possible after the finalisation of the boundary review process.</p>	<p>It was announced in January 2013 that work on the 2013 Boundary Review had ceased. If a future Review makes recommendations before the next Census, the UK Statistics Authority will want to see re-calibrated 2011 Census data on the proposed new boundary basis being produced and published as quickly as practicable. ONS published Census data for the existing parliamentary constituency areas throughout 2013.</p> <p>COMPLETED – NOVEMBER 2014</p>

Recommendation 6	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>There is, we believe, a strong case for production by ONS of a statistical compendium publication to bring together a wide range of constituency statistics to assist parliamentary candidates, voters and researchers; however the associated benefits and costs would need to be examined in more detail first.</p>	<p>A new web portal was launched in December 2013. This includes a data catalogue with summary information for all official statistics datasets available for Westminster parliamentary constituency areas; explanation of the relevant geography information including look-up tables; and a guide to the parliamentary system in Westminster and the devolved parliaments.</p> <p>In February 2014 interactive mapping functionality was added to the portal and there have been two subsequent updates: one to add the most recently available data and the second to increase the number of variables. The last update was made prior to the General Election, in February 2015, and the map included 10 variables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proportion of the population aged 65 years and over • state pension claimant rate • general ‘good’ health rate • the proportion of the population identified as ‘non-white’ • average house prices • employment rate, aged 16-64 • unemployment rate, aged 16 years and over • child and working tax credits, proportion of families benefiting • average personal income • number of businesses per 10,000 residents <p>The interactive map has been favourably received by users and attracted some media attention.</p> <p>Short summaries looking at the main trends and geographic patterns for a selection of themes covering demography, health, economy, welfare and ethnicity were also released.</p> <p>COMPLETED – NOVEMBER 2014</p>

Recommendation 7	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>The timing of the publication of constituency level figures for the number of registered electors should be reviewed to try to get both the reference date and timing of publication closer to election times.</p>	<p>ONS assessed the feasibility of improving the timeliness of electoral statistics in discussion with the relevant stakeholders. This took account of the impact of the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in 2014 on local authority processes. The Electoral Commission have agreed to continue to work on this with the House of Commons Library.</p> <p>COMPLETED – NOVEMBER 2014</p>

Recommendation 8	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>A user-guide describing what official statistics are available at all local geographies (including parliamentary constituency level) would be of wide value. It could indicate not only whether statistics are available but also the latest date for which they have been produced, and plans for future availability and dissemination.</p>	<p>A data catalogue³ providing a list of the latest published datasets available for parliamentary constituencies was first published on the ONS website. It includes all the National and Official statistics that are available for Westminster parliamentary constituencies and the devolved parliaments. Links to where the data can be found are available and users can filter datasets, e.g. by theme or latest release date.</p> <p>The first release of the data catalogue was in December 2013, with subsequent updates in June 2014, February 2015 and September 2015. To help users search for parliamentary constituency data, a separate data finder was also published in the last release. ONS has committed to update the catalogue every six months.</p> <p>COMPLETED – JULY 2014</p>

³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/parliamentary-constituencies/data-catalogue-for-parliamentary-constituencies/data-catalogue-september-2015.xls>

Recommendation 9	
Status – Completed	
Recommendation	Progress
<p>The current proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries may involve constituencies crossing the boundaries of larger administrative units such as counties, and that this may have implications for the practicability of producing constituency data in some cases. Where these boundary changes present new problems in this regard, this should be explained publicly by the relevant producer body.</p>	<p>Information about this is now routinely included as metadata published alongside National Statistics datasets.</p> <p>COMPLETED – JULY 2014</p>