

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')

Population Projections for Areas Within Northern Ireland (2014-Based)

<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp47.htm>

Name of Producer Organisation

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

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

Brian Green, email: brian.green@dfpni.gov.uk, Tel: 02890348130

Report completed on 13 May 2016

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Statistical tables have been released contrary to Protocol 2, Practice 8 of the Code of Practice

"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

The breach occurred and was detected on the 13 May 2016 at 09:01.

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

An email was sent accidentally to an official in Fermanagh and Omagh District council on 13

May 2016 at 09:01 containing a zip file of 20 tables for the “Population Projections for Areas Within Northern Ireland (2014-Based)” statistical release – planned for release on 25 May 2016. This person was not the intended recipient of the email and was not a named member of either (i) the production team or (ii) the pre-release access distribution list.

The tables of statistics were being sent to members of our production team to prepare for upload to our website (i.e. formatting, development of infographics and interactive maps) in advance of the release date. The email **did not** contain any other product that forms part of our statistical releases (i.e. Statistical Bulletins, Press Notices, maps, charts).

Reasons for breach

The 20 tables contained within the email were being sent to the dissemination section of the production team within Demographic Statistics Branch (NISRA) for further development (e.g. web-site formatting, infographic and interactive map creation) in advance of publishing on 25 May 2016.

The email was intended for an internal recipient within the NISRA dissemination team. However, the email system auto-filled the email recipient to a recent contact within the sender’s mailbox – ie an official in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. This was not realised until immediately after the email was sent.

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

A phone call was placed to the recipient immediately at 09:02 to inform them of the error and issue deletion instructions. The recipient did not answer.

The responsible statistician was notified immediately and a recall action was sent to the recipient through the MS Outlook system at 09:05.

Additionally a follow up email was sent at 09:10 informing the recipient that the original email was sent in error and that the contents should not be opened or shared with anyone – and that they should be deleted immediately.

At 09:12 an attempt was made again to contact the recipient with no response.

At 09:25 a further call was place to the recipient’s organisation. At that time a colleague of the recipient was informed of the error and the importance of the breach. At this time NISRA was informed that the recipient was on leave on 13 May. A request was placed to have the email deleted from within the organisation if possible, prior to the recipient returning from leave. The colleague offered to contact the IT department within the receiving organisation to delete all emails related to the breach and confirm with NISRA when this had been done.

Subsequently, at 10:05, an email was received from the IT department of the organisation confirming the following:

- All emails relating to the breach (including follow-up emails from NISRA informing the recipient of the error) had been deleted at 09:50 (including deleted items)

- No other person other than the recipient and the IT colleague could access the emails prior to deletion

A phone call was received from the receiving organisation at 10:06 to follow up on the confirmation email, at which point it was confirmed again that the recipient was on leave on 13 May and that he had no access to the emails before deletion. In addition, the IT colleague who deleted the emails confirmed that they had not been opened before deletion.

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

Distribution of data files to the dissemination team within Demographic Statistics will not be done via email in the future and will be transferred by a file sharing network that only named individuals will have access to.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

6. Any other relevant supporting material

N/A