

Communicating statistics and data

As a communications professional, your role involves bringing together insights and ideas, to successfully implement and deliver impactful communications work ([Communications professionals Framework](#)).

Statistical evidence is a powerful communications tool

“Using statistics is a good way for communicators to use evidence and explain complicated information. The Code of Practice for Statistics and its principles and practices of ‘trustworthiness, quality and value’ provides an excellent guide to ensure this is done as effectively as possible. Any use of statistics in communications activity, from a tweet, to writing a press notice or creating a presentation should align with the Code, to ensure messages are clear, measured and appropriately tell the story.”

Working in partnership with your department’s analysts, you can ensure that:

- Your organisation’s use of statistics does not distract from your key communications messages, or itself become the story
- You use statistics in an appropriate way that enhances your organisation’s reputation
- You comply with the Code of Practice

You don’t need to know the Code inside out. Your Head of Profession will advise you on specific principles and practices of the Code. You need to focus on the outcomes of **Trustworthiness**, **Quality** and **Value**:

“To ensure users can confidently make decisions about the statistics that are presented to them, using them without question to access what they require and need”.

A simple way to achieve these outcomes is to ask the right questions about the statistics within your communications messages.

Here are some ideas to help you ask the right questions...

- Does it look right – is that an implausible number?
- If it’s unusual – it could be wrong – what’s behind the surprise?
- What exactly are we measuring – and why?
- Where do the data come from – what is the backstory?
- Be curious about someone else’s data – could a little more research help me understand this better?
- How are the statistics calculated – is the source reputable and did they show their working?
- Only compare the comparable – watch out for changes in definitions and different ways to measure the same thing
- What led to what – is this really a causal relationship?
- Understand the assumptions – has anything been left out? What happens if they are wrong?
- How sure are you about this – numbers contain uncertainty – how precise are yours?
- Put things in context – what’s the historical trend?
- Presentation is key – good use of pictures and graphics help convey meaning and should never cause confusion or misrepresentation

<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/statistics/working-with-users/statistics-policy-professionals-things-need-know/>