

REPORTING A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

1. Core Information

Title of statistical output and link	Conceptions in England and Wales: 2017 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/bulletins/conceptionstatistics/2017
Name of producer organisation	Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Name and contact details of person reporting the breach	Debra Prestwood – Head of Profession for Statistics Debra.prestwood@ons.gov.uk
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	N/A
Date of breach report	12/04/2019

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	<p>The relevant practices are T3.3 and T3.4, part of the principle of orderly release (T3) within the trustworthiness pillar:</p> <p>T3.3. Access to statistics before their public release should be limited to those involved in the production of the statistics and the preparation of the release, and for quality assurance and operational purposes. Accurate records of those who have access before they are finalised should be maintained.</p> <p>T3.4 The circulation of statistics in their final form ahead of their publication should be restricted to eligible recipients, in line with the rules and principles on pre-release access set out in legislation for the UK and devolved administrations. The details of those granted access should be recorded, together with clear justifications for access. No indication of the statistics should be made public and the statistics should not be given to any other party without prior permission for access. The list of recipients should be reviewed regularly and kept to a minimum.</p>
Date of occurrence of breach	
<p>An officer from the ONS communications division sent a restricted email intended for an internal colleague to an external person, by mistake.</p> <p>The external contact had a similar name to the intended recipient and when the member of the staff typed their name into Outlook it defaulted to the external person. The email contained pre-release information about conceptions for England and Wales in 2017 – due out Monday 15th April at 09:30.</p> <p>The email was sent at 13:37 on Friday 12th April 2019. It specifically included the key points from the bulletin. The member of staff responsible informed the lead for the release and the Media Relations Team. The error was recognised immediately and mitigating actions were carried out.</p>	

3. Impact of the breach

No impact has been detected.

The recipient of the email works for a charity whose work was not related to the topic of this publication, and in consultation with our Media Relations Office we therefore agreed any misuse of the statistics before publication was unlikely.

The recipient of the email confirmed that the email had not been opened and was deleted as requested.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

The following mitigating steps were taken

- ONS staff attempted to recall the message
- ONS staff contacted the recipient of the email and asked them to delete the email from their inbox – the recipient deleted the email as requested

ONS have recently started to develop stakeholder toolkits for proactively informing stakeholders about the key points and messages of statistical publications and encourage further sharing/syndication of key messages post-release. This is a new area of work, and thus the process and procedures are still developing.

In future all information of this nature will be stored in an internal database with limited access so in the event of it being sent externally in error prior to publication, recipients will not be able to access the link. Also, ensuring all emails containing unpublished statistics or key messages are marked as **OFFICIAL SENSITIVE BEFORE 09:30 DATE OF PUBLICATION**.