
Mary Gregory, Deputy Director for Regulation

Ian Knowles
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Transport
(by email)

1st August 2019

Dear Ian

ROAD ACCIDENTS AND SAFETY STATISTICS, GREAT BRITAIN

As you are aware, we have recently been reviewing your Road Accidents and Safety statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics. We appreciate the positive engagement and clear commitment to the development of these statistics that your team showed during this process. I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

We have concluded that the Road Accidents and Safety statistics are produced independently and offer useful insights to users. Strengths of these statistics include:

- the relevance and usefulness of these statistics to users – they are presented clearly, explained meaningfully and provide helpful insights that serve the public good;
- the transparent descriptions of the quality limitations of the statistics, including the use of other data sources to triangulate the statistics and to understand the extent and nature of underreporting of road accidents;
- the engagement with core users and user groups in terms of the future developments of the statistics;
- the knowledge and professionalism of your team in advising users on appropriate use, engaging and listening to users' needs, and handling data and methodology queries.

In the light of known limitations of the data sources and methods used to produce the statistics, we welcome your endeavours to develop a new adjusted injury severity series, and your engagement with the ONS Methodology Advisory Service to develop the new methods. This is a positive step to overcome the known quality limitations of the historical injury severity series for serious and slight injuries, and to enable you to provide better and clearer insights into road accidents. We also welcome your ambitions to develop consistent series in the light of two important changes that affect data collection – police forces adopting the CRASH system, which is a key step in improving quality and timeliness, and the phased introduction of online reporting of injuries by the public – both of which may affect the comparability of the data over time.

The Code of Practice for Statistics encourages innovation and development to ensure that statistics remain relevant to users in a changing world. Publication of new statistical series as experimental statistics gives a clear indication of such developments and is a positive endorsement of compliance with the Code's practices around improvement and innovation. We therefore welcome your decision to clearly label the new adjusted injury severity series as experimental statistics,

signalling that they are undergoing evaluation and may be subject to further development following feedback from users.

We also welcome your ongoing commitment to further developing these statistics, including the planned improvements, which include:

- a new flexible data dissemination tool which allows users to access data which meet their specific requirements in a timelier and less burdensome way;
- publishing ad hoc analysis as standard, to enable reuse;
- an assessment of the initial impact of the introduction of online reporting of injuries by the public.

I welcome these improvements and encourage your team to continue to be transparent around their future plans and timescales for the development of these statistics. This includes keeping users informed about progress with the workstreams currently being taken forward as part the broader STATS19 review, so that users may contribute their views and input into their evaluation. We would also encourage further developments in areas such as:

- reviewing the quality of the data used to produce and quality assure the statistics and updating the published quality documentation;
- reviewing users' continued need for road accidents and safety statistics on a quarterly basis since production moved to mid and end year estimates temporarily from the end of 2018;
- reviewing pre-release access to these statistics, with a view to keeping the number of individuals granted access to a minimum.

We will continue – through our new domain lead, Anna Price – to keep abreast of this work and will continue to reflect upon what its outcomes mean for the appropriate labelling of the serious and slight injury severity series going forwards.

I am copying this letter to Delphine Robineau, Head of Road Safety Statistics, Department for Transport.

Yours sincerely



Mary Gregory

Deputy Director for Regulation