



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

Department of Social Protection Statistics Quality Statement



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Introduction

This document outlines the Department of Social Protection (DSP) commitment to quality, and the procedures in place to provide assurance on the quality of statistical outputs under the responsibility of DSP on the Register of Official Statistics¹.

Contact

Any queries in relation to this document should be sent to StatsUnit@welfare.ie.

Other Documents

This document should be read in conjunction with the DSP Statistics Publication and Dissemination Statement, the DSP Statistical Release Calendar, the DSP Statistical Work Programme, and other relevant documents which sets out the standards for the production and dissemination of official statistics by this Department. These documents are available on the Department's statistics website².

Periodicity

DSP statistics will be released in accordance with the frequency and publication dates outlined in the DSP Statistical Release Calendar.

Users

DSP statistics are consumed by a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Public bodies, such as the Department of Finance, Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, Central Statistics Office (CSO), and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.
- Internal staff members in DSP.
- Media.
- Members of the general public.
- Political parties, public representatives, and the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- Bona fide research bodies, such as the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).
- Academia.

Data Sources

DSP statistics are predominantly produced from administrative data held by the Department, typically in respect of payments made by DSP to an individual in receipt of a social welfare scheme, or regarding registered information of each customer with a PPSN.

DSP also have data sharing arrangements with other public bodies, and some third-party data belonging to these bodies may be combined with DSP data for statistical purposes. The legal basis for the sharing of personal data with third parties and the processing of personal data is covered in more detail in the Department's privacy statement³.

¹ Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/registerofofficialstatistics/>

² Available at <https://www.gov.ie/dsp/statistics>

³ Available at <https://www.gov.ie/dsp/privacy-statement>

Classifications

There are several common classifications which are employed across a range of statistical products. Where possible, DSP statistical publications follow the standard classifications adopted by CSO regarding sex, NUTS Regions, NACE, broad nationality, and age groups.

Any deviations from these standard classifications will be clearly noted and the reason for deviation will be explained.

Quality Principles

The following section outlines DSP's approach to delivering on its commitment to the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice (ISSCoP⁴) quality principles in the production of statistics. The ISSCOP quality principles are:

- Relevance
- Accuracy and Reliability
- Timeliness and Punctuality
- Coherence and Comparability
- Accessibility and Clarity

Relevance

DSP's statistical output has been in place to meet a range of public interest needs, including, but not limited to the following:

- To meet information requirements from Social Protection data identified on foot of Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests.
- To service a range of information requests from within DSP, and from other government bodies.
- To respond to queries from the public made through the DSP press office, Freedom of Information requests, or direct queries to StatsUnit@welfare.ie.
- To disseminate information on important and significant Social Protection activities such as scheme recipients and expenditure, and
- To provide oversight and transparency of Social Insurance Fund income and expenditure, as well as Social Assistance expenditure.

Accuracy and Reliability

DSP is committed to producing reliable, accurate, and high-quality data and statistics. As almost all DSP statistical outputs are based on administrative data, errors associated with sampling are not normally present. However, the DSP Statistics Unit performs several validation checks on both source data and the final outputs to ensure the delivery and dissemination of accurate statistical outputs.

All DSP published stats will contain metadata outlining any data quality issues. These issues may consist of impacts on a time series or comparisons between different groups covered by the statistics. Any changes from pre-existing methods, standards, definitions, or classifications are to be clearly stated in the publication.

Where appropriate, external experts may be consulted to assess statistical outputs.

⁴ Available at <https://www.isscop.ie/>

Any survey data produced by the Statistics Unit will contain details of the sampling frame, the method of sampling and confidence intervals. This allows users to make informed decisions regarding the accuracy of the data.

All new statistical outputs will be developed or overseen by statisticians who are trained in embedding quality into statistical products and processes based upon the principles of CSO's Quality Management Framework⁵ (QMF). DSP's approach to revisions is covered in more detail in the DSP Statistics Publication and Dissemination Statement.

Timeliness and Punctuality

DSP Statistics will be released in accordance with the frequency and publication dates outlined in the DSP Statistical Release Calendar and the DSP Statistical Work Programme. Changes made to a pre-announced date of release will be recorded on the Statistical Release Calendar.

Coherence and Comparability

To the greatest extent possible, DSP statistics will be consistent by using the same, classifications, time intervals and unit of measure (for example conversion of pre-Euro currency values to Euro). Where statistics are produced on an annual basis, previous year's figures will be published side-by-side to facilitate comparison. Where it is necessary to deviate from this approach, or where there is a change in methodology, the revision protocol detailed in the DSP Statistics Publication and Dissemination Statement will apply.

The methodology and statistical procedures used to compile DSP statistics follows European and international standards and guidelines and are in line with best practice. Standard concepts, definitions and classifications are applied to all DSP statistics. Any deviation from these standards is clearly stated in publications.

A methodological note for each publication is available either as part of the publication, as a separate document, or on DSP's webpage.

DSP published statistics may contain relevant breakdowns to enable users to make comparisons over time and/or between subgroups or geographic areas covered in the statistics.

Accessibility and Clarity

Each publication is available in electronic format and, where possible, made accessible in formats consistent with the Open Data policy. Any open data produced by the Department will be accessed through Ireland's Open Data portal⁶. The data are published on the portal using clear English descriptions and detailing the metadata tags and other key information, such as release date, update frequency and period of coverage. Publications are also available in PDF form on the Department's statistics website⁷.

This approach provides clarity regarding the nature of the dataset and ensures that the statistics are easily found through keyword searches.

⁵ Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/quality/qualitymanagementframework/>

⁶ Available at <https://data.gov.ie/>

⁷ Available at <https://www.gov.ie/dsp/statistics>

Archiving of Statistics

Historical statistical products are archived on the DSP statistics webpage⁸, arranged by product and year of release.

Confidentiality

DSP Statistics Unit is committed to ensuring the confidentiality of all customer data. Staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment. Namely, Data Protection Obligations, Official Secrecy & Data Integrity Act, and Civil Service Code of Standards. DSP staff on secondment from the CSO are appointed as Officers of Statistics under section 21 of the 1993 Statistics Act. Every person appointed as an Officer of Statistics must sign a declaration pledging not to disclose information relating to an individual person, family or household.

DSP statistics also preserve the confidentiality of an individual in all publications. Aside from published statistical tables, the Department receives requests for data or statistics from a variety of sources, e.g., Parliamentary Questions (PQs), media queries, queries from other Government departments and members of the public. Each request must find a balance between providing a detailed and informative response while also ensuring that personal information relating to a claimant cannot be identified through the release of the data. In responding to these requests, the main disclosure control techniques to be employed will include one or more of the following:

- Data aggregation
- Table redesign
- Using broad ranges or classifications
- Rounding

⁸ Available at <https://www.gov.ie/dsp/statistics>