

*Role of Official Statistics and Official  
Publications*

# *Official Statistics*

## *Introduction*

In recent years, the quantity of digital data created, stored and processed in the world has grown exponentially. The demand for statistical information has never been so deceptive. In order for Official Statistics to continue to function as a universal language for all kinds of societal interactions and decision-making, it is important that the product 'information' is fit for purpose. Quality of statistics needs to be seen with a much wider scope, going beyond the side of production, including the use side and analyzing scientifically how these two sides are interacting in a dynamic relationship. The main challenges are to position the Official Statistics on the information market and to establish a fruitful cooperation with new partners, in particular from data sciences.

## *What is Official Statistics?*

- Official statistics are statistics published by the government agencies or other public bodies such as international organizations as a public good, Census reports, Armed weapons report, NADRA etc.
- Governmental agencies at all levels, including municipal, country and state administration, may generate and disseminate official statistics.
- Official statistics provide a picture of a country through data, and image such as graph and maps. Statistical information covers different subject areas economic, demographic, social etc.
- Official statistics provide quantitative or qualitative information on all major areas of citizens' lives, such as economic and social development, living conditions, health, education, and the environment.
- Almost every country in the world has one or more government agencies (usually national institutes) that supply decision-makers and other users including the general public and the research community with a continuing flow of information. This bulk of data is usually called official statistics.
- Official statistics result from the collection and processing of data into statistical information by a government institution or international organization. They are then distributed to help users develop their knowledge about a particular topic or geographical area, make comparisons between countries or understand changes over time. Official statistics make information on economic and social development so that measurement of

change is possible. Accessible to the public, allowing the impact of government policies to be assessed, thus improving accountability.

- During the 15th and 16th centuries, statistics were a method for counting and listing populations and State resources. The term statistics comes from the New Latin (council of state) *statisticum collegium* and refers to science of the state. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, official statistics are statistics disseminated by the national statistical system, excepting those that stand explicitly not to be official.

### ***Types of Official Statistics***

The term official statistics includes three types of statistics produced by public bodies:

- National Statistics, which have been assessed by the office for statistics Regulation as fully compliant with the Code of Practice for Statistics.
- Experimental Statistics, which are newly developed or advanced statistics. These are published so that users and stakeholders can be involved in the taxation of their suitability and quality at an early stage.
- Statistics that have not been assessed as fully compliant with the Code of Practice. A register of de-designated statistics is maintained by the office for Statistics Regulation.

### ***Why official Statistics?***

- Official Statistics inform decisions right across society, and those decision affect the lives of us all.
- They are essential to the public understanding of our society, economy and of the performance of government.
- It is axiomatic that good official statistics are essential to the proper functioning of a democratic state.
- In order to perform the role of as an instrument of policy making and political debate in a democratic society, the credibility of official statistics must be preserved.

### ***System of Official Statistics in Pakistan***

- Social and Economic statistical system
- General Statistical systems

### ***Social and Economic statistical system***

- Federal System / Statistical Division
- Provincial System / Provincial Bureaus of Statistics
- Financial Statistical System / State Bank of Pakistan

### ***General Statistical System***

- Federal
- Provincial Offices Functioning under different Ministries
- Autonomous
- Private Statistical Organization

### ***Statistical Division***

Statistical Division is responsible for preparation of integrated development plan for improvement of statistics, formation of policy regarding: national censuses and surveys and general statistics.

### ***Department of Statistics Division***

- Federal Bureau of Statistics (F.B.S)
- Population Census Organization (P.C.O)
- Agriculture Census Organization(A.C.O)

### ***Federal Bureau of Statistics(F.B.S)***

Federal Bureau of Statistics is the single biggest statistics organization in Pakistan. It collects, assemble and polishes data on various aspects of Social ,Economic, Manufacturing, Trade price, Demographic, Agriculture and General statistics of Pakistan.

### ***Population Census Organization (P.C.O)***

P.C.O is branch of Statistical Division, with the headquarter at Islamabad and provincial census organization in each of the four provinces.

### ***Agriculture Census Organization(A.C.O)***

The A.C.O was created in 1958 for planning and conducting decennial censuses of Agriculture and Live stock in Pakistan. First census of agriculture was conducted in 1960, second in 1972 and third in 1980.

### ***Advantages of Official Statistics***

Advantages of Official Statistics are that they are likely to involve a much larger sample than a statistician could ever achieve and it is free and accessible, so therefore practical.

### ***Disadvantages of Official Statistics***

A disadvantage of official statistics, and all secondary sources, is that the data was collected by somebody else for a different reason and the researcher has no control over original data collection. Furthermore, official statistics can be manipulated for the government's political advantage (e.g. trying to make it look as though unemployment levels are falling by changing how the data is calculated).

### ***Role of Official Statistics***

The need for statistics has never been so superficial. Data requests cover a wide range of aspects of society, including relatively new fields such as wellbeing, climate change or the economy. Official Statistics play a fundamental role in modern societies, guiding public policies, supporting business decisions and allowing citizens to assess the progress achieved and compare themselves with their neighbors. Statistics count more and more by giving understanding, they allow for more effective action, and they facilitate assessments, which improve how we react. However, the wonderful power of statistical knowledge also has dangers. Statistics are and must remain a way to impart knowledge about our societies, an instrument of rationality, a tool to enhance decision-making and effectiveness. In the context of the post-truth politics, they must not be perceived as leaving society behind. Official Statistics will necessarily be necessary for policy making of all countries. Official Statistics are a marker, a reference point for what we are and where we come from, a compass allowing us to observe, assess and find our bearings. In this sense, official statistics must be considered only as proof, evidence or an indication, and never as an end in themselves, a decision in essence, or an automatic law (decisions to be augmented, not computerized). They must clarify and facilitate choice, rather than impose the approach to be taken. They are a policy element, not a policy in themselves. They must rationalize debate rather than instrumentalize it. Yet the temptation is strong and the attraction almost magnetic. Therefore, so as not to lose our bearings, the statistical compass must not be the preserve of technicians.

Statisticians must engage with the public and cooperate even more intensively and regularly with the various users and stakeholders, whether they are public or private decision-makers, journalists, researchers or citizens. The aim is to better understand their needs (as users of statistics) and their constraints (as sources of statistics) in order to offer them appropriate information .what they need to know and what it is good to understand in a suitable manner. To do this, official statisticians must both adopt a new pedagogy and create a real data culture, becoming more flexible and responsive, to ensure that Official Statistics are well received and understood. It must also clearly draw the boundaries between objective truths and subjective reality. Official Statistics is necessary today for statistical work to start examining miracles from various, wider angles. Official Statistics has been doing this for several years already, particularly as regards the measurement of economic and social progress. It cannot limit itself only to the angle of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It must go beyond the essential GDP data, and draw in particular on environmental and social indicators, in terms of quality of life and well-being. This short summary explains the particular role and function that Official Statistics has for policy making . It also allows us to better understand its mandate, which is wider than the application of statistical methods for social sciences.

- Firstly, Official Statistics provides a public information infrastructure, a system of statistical products, all ‘stamped’ and certified, thus being able to fulfil the requirement of scientific quality and excellence. European Statistics, as produced by Eurostat with its partners at national level, are independent and based on common principles, standards, methodologies and technologies established in accordance with a professional code of ethics. That is mainly what differentiates them from the other information available online today that purports to be relevant or reliable statistical information.
- A second element is related to the subjects of observation, which are closely related to policy making and what is called ‘society’. ‘Variables’ like GDP, employment, income or inflation, reflect both in concepts and in reality, highly aggregated artefacts. These variables need to be designed and developed in order to make them quantifiable. The process of design is naturally oriented towards an optimal use of available statistical methods. Nevertheless, these

variables contain essential conventions and choices, which in order to justify their 'authority' have to be embedded in democratic and participative processes.

This set of statistical standards (including the statistical program) is a service that Official Statistics provides for societies.

Official Statistics is the outcome of a process that is scientific by nature. Official Statistics can be seen as a subcategory of 'scientific data', that more precisely help to understand how the societies functions and evolve. Equally important is however to highlight the fact that the categories and variables used in Official Statistics reflect and represent societal conventions. This is the main and overarching goal of statistical governance. Once trust in Official Statistics is lost, it takes years or even decades to rebuild it . To sustain the capacity of the statistical authority to provide trustworthy and relevant statistical information is for future improvements. It is also clear that the issue of trust goes much beyond the issue of trust in statistics; ultimately trustworthy statistics are necessary for the society itself to be with trust being at the core of the social contract underpinning human society. Official statistics provide a picture of a country or different phenomena through data, and images such as graph and maps. Statistical information covers different subject areas economic, demographic, social etc. It provides basic information for decision making, evaluations and assessments at different levels. The goal of statistical organizations is to produce relevant, objective and accurate statistics to keep users well informed and assist good policy and decision-making. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics were adopted in 1992 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and subsequently endorsed as a global standard by the United Nations Statistical Commission. According to the first Principle "Official statistics provide an essential element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. The categorization of the domains of official statistics has been further developed in the Classification of Statistical Activities, endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians and various other bodies. Users with a general interest include the media, schools and the general public. Official statistics

is used in order to be informed on a particular topic, to observe trends within the society of a local area, country, region of the world. Users with a business interest include decision makers and users with a particular interest for which they want more detailed information. For them, official statistics are an important reference, providing information on the phenomena or circumstances their own work is focusing on. For instance, those users will take some official statistics into consideration before launching a product, or deciding on a specific policy or on a marketing strategy. As with the business interest users, this group does not usually have a good understanding of statistical methodologies, but they need more detailed information than the general users. Users with a research interest are universities, consultants and government agencies. They generally understand something about statistical methodology and want to dig deeper into the facts and the statistical observations; they have an analytical purpose in inventing or explaining interrelations of causes and effects of different phenomena. In this field, official statistics are also used to assess a government's policies. One common point for all these users is their need to be able to trust the official information. They need to be confident that the results published are authoritative and unbiased. Producers of official statistics must maintain a reputation of professionalism and independence. The statistical system must be free from interference that could influence decisions on the choice of sources, methods used for data collection, the selection of results to be released as official, and the timing and form of dissemination. Statistical business processes should be obvious and follow international standards of good practice. Statistical programs are decided on an annual or multi-annual basis by governments in many countries. They also provide a way to judge the performance of the statistical system. Official statistics are part of our everyday life. They are everywhere: in newspapers, on television and radio, in presentations and discussions. For most citizens, the media provide their only exposure to official statistics. Television is the primary news source for citizens in industrialized countries, even if radio and newspapers still play an important role in the dissemination of release statistical information. On the other hand, newspapers and specialized economic and social magazines can provide more detailed coverage of



statistical releases as the information on a specific theme can be quite extensive. Official statistics provides us with important information on the situation and the development trends in our society. Users can gather information making use of the services of the National Statistical Offices. They can easily find it on the agency's website. The development of computing technologies and the Internet has enabled users businesses, educational institutions and households among others- to have access to statistical information. The Internet has become an important tool for statistical producers to disseminate their data and information. People are able to access information online. The supply of information from statistical agencies has increased. Today the advanced agencies provide the information on their websites in an understandable way, often categorized for different groups of users. Several glossaries have been set up by different organizations or statistical offices to provide more information and definitions in the field of statistics and consequently official statistics.

### ***Official Publications***

Official publications for international use was adopted by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' Official Publications Section in August 1983.

1. An official publication is any item produced by reprographic or any other method, issued by an organization that is an official body, and available to an audience wider than that body.

2. An official body is:

- Any legislature of a state, or federation of states; or of a province (state) or regional, local or other administrative sub-division
- any administrative agency of the central government of such a state or federation of states or of a province (state) or regional, local or other administrative sub-division
- any court or judicial organ
- any other organization which was set up by an official body and maintains continuing links with that body whether through direct funding or through its reporting mechanism or its accountability
- any organization of which the members belong to any of the above 4 categories, including intergovernmental organizations provided that the body is considered to be official in the country concerned.

**3.** An official publication is defined by the status of the issuing source regardless of the subject-matter, satisfied or physical form.

For the purposes of this definition, the term 'official publication' is comparable to terms used in some countries, such as 'government publication' and 'government document'.

**2.** The following bodies:

- universities
- learned societies and academies
- industrial and trade associations and chambers of commerce
- libraries, museums and art galleries
- independent research institutes not direct recipients of public funds

will be included as official bodies according to the practice of the individual country.

**3.** Political parties will not normally be considered as official bodies unless in the practice or constitution of a particular country there is reason to do so.

**4.** Nationalized enterprises and banks, public corporations and other statutory bodies set up to carry out industrial or other productive activity will be considered as official bodies according to the practice of the individual country. However, state majority ownership of capital and heavy direct funding in enterprises that are otherwise nominally independent will not cause those enterprises to be considered as official bodies.

**5.** Publications originating in official bodies but published by or with the cooperation of commercial firms, universities or independent research institutes, or any other non-official bodies, will normally be considered as official publications. Even after data have been published, some official statistics may be revised. Policy makers may need preliminary statistics quickly for decision-making purposes, but eventually it is important to publish the best Data revision available information, so official statistics are often published in several 'vintages'. In order to understand the accuracy of economic data and the possible impact of data errors on macroeconomic decision-making, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia has published a dataset[ that records both initial real-time data estimates, and subsequent data revisions, for a large number of macroeconomic series.

Thank  
you!