

Australian Bureau of Statistics Policy on Publishing

Summary

Publishing in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is the release of statistical information and data in any media, although primarily through the ABS web site www.abs.gov.au. Publishing, is the primary means by which the ABS achieves its mission of assisting and encouraging informed decision making, research and discussion.

2 Publishing is subject to policy, principles, standards and guidelines outlined in ABS Policy and Legislation and Publishing manuals.

ABS Policy

3 It is ABS policy that its basic core statistics should be published and made available to the community.

4 It is ABS policy that author areas preparing material for release are required to observe the publishing standards contained in the ABS Publishing Manual. Where there are difficulties in applying standards, the Publishing area should be consulted at an early stage.

Basic Statistics - Guidelines

5 The determination of what constitutes basic statistics requires some judgement from managers responsible for preparing releases. If any of the following guidelines apply to particular statistical tables they should be regarded as basic statistics:

- a. they are the major statistical aggregates from a statistical collection or the major statistical aggregates from a compilation based on a number of collections (e.g. the National Accounts);
- b. for collections with a State dimension, the major statistical aggregates for the State should also be available in a national release; and
- c. the information has been used regularly in media comment or, for new releases, would be expected to be used in mass media comment.

6 The key element in coming to a decision is whether the information is used, or is expected to be used by a substantial number of people, not just a limited number of specialist users.

Releasing Statistics

7 There are a number of ways by which statistics may be released. The primary delivery mechanism is through electronic publication on the ABS website. The website provides statistics free of charge. Formats include HTML/XML, PDF, Spreadsheet, Supercross Data Cubes and maps.

8 Most products are delivered as core data standard products, which are products prepared in anticipation of general user demand or for a substantial number of users (these products are always provided free on the web and sometimes via other types of media, such as publications or data available on CD rom);

In addition to the publishing on the Website, additional forms of delivery of ABS Statistics include

- services which provide access to "packages" of statistics, for example, AusStats which provides subscribers with Internet access to all ABS publications and a range of other data; or
- customised products and services which are made to order for specific customers
- an operator attended telephone information referral service
- Confidentialised Unit Record File data made available either through a dedicated remote access web-portal or on CD-Rom (for fee paying clients who meet strict confidentiality requirements)

9 The first release of statistics requires a discernible catalogued product (printed or electronic publication, PDF file or Main Features) advertised in the Release Advice.

The decision on the general design and presentation of statistics is made by the relevant subject matter Branch with advice from the publishing area where needed. A dedicated in-house desktop publishing system is utilised to generate a range of standard statistical products, and the content is often delivered for simultaneous publication in HTML/XML, spreadsheets and data cubes along with PDF Files. A small range of flagship products are also printed for sale and distribution.

For all website publications there is at least a Main Features component that will contain analysis and will usually be supported by downloadable spreadsheets and datacubes. In addition more detailed data is available on demand through a fee for service consultancy.

10 As most statistics are collected on a national level, the products released cover the nation, although there remain a small number of State and Territory specific products.

Factors affecting the decision whether or not to produce a standard product include:

- whether publication is required in the public interest;
- the size of the potential market of both paying and non-paying clients;
- the balance between expected costs and revenues; and
- the importance of publicising the product in catalogues, the Release Advice, etc.

11 Major statistical aggregates for a State should be included in national releases. However, separate State releases (which are not included in national releases) should be produced where they can be justified in terms of statistical aggregates of importance to State clients.

12 Products are prepared fully in accordance with ABS publishing standards.

13 All products should be approved at an appropriate level.

Cataloguing

14 All ABS publications, including PDF files and/or Main Features in the case of electronic only release, and core data standard products are identified by a unique number and are listed as products in ABS catalogues and directories.

15 Catalogue Numbers are not allocated to:

- a. material which is predominantly promotional; and
- b. consultancy services.