



# Official Statistics of Sweden

## Statistics Sweden

### 2007

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## **Background**

When a reform of Sweden's official statistics was implemented in the middle of the 1990s, 25 government authorities were given responsibility for official statistics. On 1 July 1994 much of the responsibility for official statistics in defined sectoral areas was transferred from Statistics Sweden to 24 other government authorities. Statistics Sweden continued to be responsible for multi-sectoral statistics, while other authorities were made responsible for other parts of the statistics. The authorities are listed in Appendix 1. However, it was still possible for Statistics Sweden to produce the statistics but now on behalf of other authorities which were responsible for the statistics.

One of the main purposes of the 1994 statistical reform was to give the users more influence over the statistics. Statistics Sweden was earlier the main producer of government statistics and there was some dissatisfaction from the users, who expressed that Statistics Sweden did not always listen to the users. It was expected that the reform would result in statistics that were of greater relevance to their users, that the statistical system would be more flexible and that the efficiency of statistics production would improve.

In accordance with its Directives, Statistics Sweden had already been responsible for coordinating and monitoring the official statistics. This role was strengthened somewhat by, among other things, all the authorities being requested to submit annual descriptions of their statistical products to Statistics Sweden, where they were compiled and published.

In 1998 an evaluation was completed of the statistics reform of 1994 on the instructions of the government. The evaluation showed that following the reform, official statistics continued to function efficiently. However, coordination and the overall view of the statistical system had worsened. The evaluation report recommended that a council be established for Sweden's official statistics to improve coordination and the overall view of the statistical system.

A problem not expressed in the report was the relation between Statistics Sweden and other authorities. Some authorities were negative to the coordination role of Statistics Sweden and felt that Statistics Sweden's attitude was condescending. Some authorities wanted a detached organisation responsible for coordination.

A Council for Official Statistics was duly established at Statistics Sweden in 2002. The Council, which is an advisory body, deals with matters of principle regarding the availability, quality and usefulness of the official statistics, as well as issues on facilitating the response process for data providers. The Council prepares an annual report on the official statistics, compiles an annual publishing plan, and maintains a register of the statistical authorities and their products. The Council also works for cooperation among the statistical authorities, and develops and administers a statistics network.

## **The structure of the system**

Swedish Parliament has decided that Sweden shall have official statistics for general information, investigative activities and research. According to a decision by Parliament, the government determines the subject areas and statistical areas for which official statistics are to be produced, and which authorities are to be given responsibility for statistics.

The statistical authorities decide on the content and scope of statistics within the statistics area(s) for which they are responsible. The statistical authorities also decide, in consultation with important users of the statistics and taking into account the demands made by the EU, which objects and variables are to be studied, which statistical measurements and study domains are to be used, the periodicity of the surveys etc. Except for Statistics Sweden there are no special appropriations for statistics; funding for statistics is included in the authorities' appropriation framework for their main task.

At the start of 2004, a routine was implemented for changes in the scope and content of the official statistics. The statistical authorities are recommended to report proposals on changes concerning subject areas, statistical areas and responsible authorities to the Council for Official Statistics. This report on changes shall be sent to all the statistical authorities, who are then given the opportunity to submit statements before the council meeting. The authority which has proposed a change can enclose its statements in its letter to the government. The Council also recommends that authorities report on plans for new statistical products, changes in existing products, and plans to discontinue products in the official statistics to the Council. The statistical authorities thus have the possibility to point out risks for duplication and the need to coordinate objects, variables etc. Previously, changes in surveys and discontinuation of surveys have in some cases caused problems when other statistical authorities have used the current statistics as input in their official statistics.

Official statistics are divided into 22 different subject areas and 104 statistical areas. Each subject area is divided into one or more statistical areas. In 2006, there were 321 statistical products (including secondary publishing), of which 70 percent were produced by Statistics Sweden. In 2006, 64 statistical products were regulated by EU regulations.

### **Laws, Ordinances and Instructions**

The official statistics are regulated by law, ordinances and instructions. The Official Statistics Act (2001:99) states that the official statistics shall be available for public information, investigative activities and research. They shall be objective and made available to the public. When official statistics are made available they shall be accompanied by the phrase "Official Statistics of Sweden" or a special symbol.

According to the Official Statistics Act, the official statistics shall also be produced and published so that identities of individuals are not disclosed. Furthermore, data in the official statistics must not be matched with other data with the aim to find out a person's identity. In addition, official statistics must of course comply with the provisions on confidentiality in the Secrecy Act (1980:100) and provisions on protection against violation of individuals' personal privacy by treatment of personal data according to the Personal Data Act (1998:204).

Section 13 of the Statistics Ordinance (2001:100) states:

"The statistical authorities shall provide documentation and quality declarations for official statistics, and shall, free of charge, officially release these statistics and make them available to the public in electronic form over a public network. Statistics Sweden may issue more detailed instructions following consultations with all the statistical authorities. Official statistics that are

also published in printed form shall be supplied free-of-charge to county libraries, university libraries, state libraries of higher education and the library of Statistics Sweden”

and Section 14 states that:

"Official statistics related to individuals should be disaggregated by sex, unless there are special reasons for not doing so."

An appendix to the Ordinance lists the subject areas and statistical areas included in the official statistics and the authorities responsible for the statistics in each respective statistical area.

The Ordinance (1988:137) with the Directive for Statistics Sweden states that Statistics Sweden shall be responsible for coordinating government statistics production, and shall work to improve coordination between the production of government statistics and the production of other statistics. Section 12 states that there shall be a council for the official statistics at Statistics Sweden, and sets out the composition and tasks of the council.

Collection of data from enterprises, municipalities and others by statistical authorities is regulated by, among other things, the Official Statistics Act. The statistical authorities, through various authorisations, have informed about regulations that are directed towards enterprises and others on the implementation of the obligation to provide data. According to Section 4 of the Statistics Ordinance, data for the official statistics shall be collected in such a way as to make the response process as simple as possible for data providers.

Section 27 of the Government Agencies’ Ordinance (1995:1322) states that before an authority makes a decision on instructions or general recommendations to data providers, it shall also investigate economic and other consequences and document these in a problem and impact analysis. Section 29 states that the authority shall see that the economic consequences are also minimised when it requests information or exercises supervision.

If the instructions can have significant effects on small businesses' working conditions, competitiveness or other terms, the authority shall also conduct a special impact analysis according to the Special Impact Analysis Ordinance (1998:1820) of the Effects of Rules on Small Businesses.

It is further stated in Section 3 of the Ordinance concerning Collection of Data from Business Operators and Local Authorities (1982:668) that authorities that collect information from municipalities or private businesses shall consult the organisation representing the data providers.

In addition to laws and ordinances, there are regulations and general recommendations for the publishing of official statistics (Statistics Sweden's Provisions and Recommendations on the Publishing of Official Statistics, SCB-FS 2002:16) Other available information includes Guidelines for decisions on content and scope of official statistics (Statistics Sweden, October 2003)<sup>8)</sup>.



### The product database

The concept statistical product is used to describe which statistics are produced. In principle, a statistical product may be equated with a statistical survey. Normally, there is a one-to-one relationship between a statistical product and a survey, which is described in a quality declaration. This is also normally true of the relationship between a procedure for gathering administrative information and a statistical product. Special types of statistical products are also known as secondary publishing, such as yearbooks that contain statistics from a number of surveys, and thus cannot be described in a single quality declaration.

Statistics Sweden keeps a database with all products in official statistics. In the database you can see which authority is responsible, when the product started, if it is still active, if there is an EU-regulation, a binding obligation to provide these data for the respondents, which subject-matter area it belongs to, the periodicity of the product etc.

### Official statistics 2007

Statistical authority authority is responsible	Number of statistical products for which the
Swedish Work Environment Authority	4
National Council for Crime Prevention	5
Swedish National Board of Student Aid	2
National Courts Administration	1
Swedish National Financial Management Authority	2
Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority	9
National Board of Fisheries	3
Swedish Social Insurance Agency	16
Swedish National Agency for Higher Education	5
Swedish Institute for Growth Policy Studies	7
Swedish Chemicals Inspectorate	6
National Institute of Economic Research	1
National Mediation Office	14
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	9
Swedish National Debt Office	2
Swedish Forest Agency	12
National Board of Health and Welfare	27
National Agency for Education	16
Swedish Energy Agency	17
Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis	13
Swedish Board of Agriculture	22
Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs	7
Statistics Sweden	119
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	1
Swedish Agency for Economic and regional growth	1
Total number of statistical products	322

### **The tasks and composition of the Council**

The Council is an advisory body. The duties are presented above and set out in Statistics Sweden's Directives. The Council consists of one chair and six other representatives who are managers at the statistical authorities. There is a Secretariat for the Council at Statistics Sweden. The authorities to be represented in the Council are appointed by Statistics Sweden after consultations with all the statistical authorities. Members shall serve on the Council for a period of not more than three years. Statistics Sweden's Director General is Chair of the Council, and the Council appoints its own Deputy-Chair

### **Council meetings**

The Council holds meetings twice a year. In February is the Council's annual report to the Government approved and in October the plans for the new report are decided on. Other items on the agenda are e.g. reports from work groups of the Council, establishing of new work groups and proposals to the Government for changes in the Statistics Ordinance Appendix regarding subject-matter areas and authorities. The decisions taken by the Council are normally recommendations to Statistics Sweden as the coordinator or to all the authorities.

### **The Council's work groups**

During 2007, seven work groups are actively working for the Council. The work groups treat issues on giving access to data, methodology and quality, electronic publishing, statistics on sub-national levels, the costs of statistics and the costs of data-providers. The work groups are made up of representatives for the authorities in the Council and representatives of other statistical authorities who expressed interest in this work. The work-groups are chaired by experts from Statistics Sweden. The work groups prepare cases which are discussed and decided on in the council.

### **The Councils report to the Government**

The report from the Council for Official Statistics aims to produce an overall view of the system for official statistics and to describe the situation regarding availability, quality, and presentation of statistics broken down by sex etc.

To provide a picture of this, the statistical authorities annually complete questionnaires on the provision of data and on costs and staff who work with the official statistics. The authorities also submit a list of their active products. As a complement to this information, special measurements have been made on punctuality and production time, documentation, the use of the Official Statistics of Sweden (SOS) logotype and reporting by sex in the statistics.

### **Soft coordination, broad-based cooperation and a strong infrastructure are the tools for improving the system of Official Statistics**

Statistics Sweden, in its role as coordinator, has the mandate to issue regulations to statistical authorities regarding documentation, quality declarations and publication. Though the main coordination tool since the Council was established has been coordination by cooperation - soft coordination and the development of a well-functioning infrastructure. Participation in the work-groups has been on a voluntarily basis and great interest in participating has been observed. Common guidelines for deciding what Official Statistics are and a definition of what a statistical product is, for sufficient quality, for preliminary statistics, for the websites at different authorities have been developed. There are specified routines for deciding on which



statistics are to be official. There is a database of all Official Statistics and all changes in the statistical system are continuously registered in the database. It is therefore possible to follow a statistical product from cradle to grave.

The users have one single point of contact with the Official Statistics via Statistics Sweden's website. There are slightly more than 300 statistical products within the Official Statistics and they are described in a consistent manner on the website. There is a common publishing plan that is continuously updated and there are links to the different authorities' websites where Official Statistics are published.

To date, the cooperation has led to a common view of Official Statistics, an increase in competence, more systematic assessments related to user needs of what should be included in the Official Statistics as well as a much better overview of the content of the Official Statistics. The availability of statistics for users who have an interest in statistics covering different areas has improved.

The work is still in an initial phase. Today we deal with aspects of statistics such as quality, documentation, response burden and security of information. Other aspects will emerge in the future. The value of systematic cooperation has the potential to increase as there are mutual benefits which can be derived from the joint development of statistics and common statistical systems rather than the development of separate solutions for each authority.