Increase the use of statistics, specifically for story-telling in traditional and non-traditional media

*Use of Data Stories*

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Articles of interest written for the non-statistician, published on Stats SA’s website

Data stories are written to:

- Summarise specific releases or reports
- Cover specific themes or subjects, drawing from multiple publications
- Contribute to conversations in the public sphere or to major news stories

Examples of data stories

An update to municipal spending and revenue (June 2018)

South Africa’s 257 municipalities spent a total of R88.0 billion in the quarter ended June 2018, 18% more than the R75.1 billion spent during the quarter ended March 2018. Municipal revenue was down, however, falling by 6% over the same period, from R87.6 billion (March quarter) to R82.6 billion (June quarter).

Stats SA’s latest Quarterly financial statistics of municipalities report provides an updated breakdown of municipal expenditure and revenue. The largest expenditure item in the quarter ended June 2018 was employee-related costs, contributing R24.1 billion (or 27.2%) to total municipal spending. Many municipalities buy electricity from Eskom that they then resell to various customers. Municipal purchases of electricity was the second largest expenditure item, contributing R16.2 billion (or 20.6%) to total spending.
A rumour wobbles an industry

Misinformation and hearsay have the power to influence an economy. Thousands of civil servants resigned from their posts in 2014 and early 2015 in response to rumours about proposed pension reforms. The economic effect was large enough to be seen in recent gross domestic product (GDP) data released by Stats SA.

The government services sector shrank by 0.8% in the first quarter of 2015, largely as a result of the resignations. The quarter-on-quarter annualised contraction is unusual, as the sector has historically exhibited consistent positive growth. Since 2011, growth within the sector ranged from 1% to just over 5% quarter-on-quarter (annualised). The last quarter-on-quarter contraction experienced by government was in the first quarter of 2004.

• Short: <700 words
• The heading: catchy
• The hook: the first paragraph draws attention
• The graphic: at least one is included

Moving beyond key results
• Trend
• Element within the publication that isn’t discussed often
• Links to other publications
• Links to current news in the media

What makes a data story unique?

The unexpected rise in resignations within the civil service began in May 2014 and peaked in November of the same year, according to the Government Pensions Administration Agency (GPAA). Members of the South African Police Service and teachers in particular resigned in order to withdraw their pension contributions, wrongly believing that from 1 March 2015 government would no longer allow civil servants the option of a cash lump sum.

Despite government’s reassurances that the rumours were false and that pensions were safe, resignations continued into the first quarter of 2015.

What impact did the resignations have on the economy as a whole? If government services had not contracted by 0.8%, but had instead expanded by 2.0% (quarter-on-quarter and...
Data stories are often accompanied by infographics and distributed on Social Media

Data stories are also often picked up by Traditional media

Search engines: **Data Stories obtain top rankings** for certain search terms
In 2017 data stories made up 8,5% of unique page views by for the entire website. **For Q1 2020/21 this has increased to 13,3%** *(13 data stories published in Q1:20/21)*