

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY DATES AND EVENTS WHICH HAVE SHAPED THE UK STATISTICAL SYSTEM

1086 – Domesday Book

William I commissioned a detailed inventory of all the land and property in England and Wales. The results of this first major statistical enumeration were set out in the Domesday Book

1538 – Registration

Henry VIII's Chancellor, Thomas Cromwell, instructs the clergy of every Parish in England (Scotland followed in 1552) to keep parochial registers of all the baptisms, weddings and funerals at which they officiated

1597 – Registrars

An Act of Parliament directed that transcripts of the parochial registers established in 1538 were to be sent annually to a diocesan registrar

1755

Webster's Census of Scotland - publication of the first successful census in Britain (an earlier one took place in Ireland in 1703)

1771

Introduction of the Corn Returns which have provided a continuous series of average prices for wheat, barley and oats from 1771 to the present day

1791-1799

Sir John Sinclair established the *First Statistical Account of Scotland*, introducing the term 'statistics' to the English language

1795

The Home Office asked the Lord Lieutenants of the counties in Great Britain to obtain production estimates of grain production. Further enquiries were carried out in 1798, 1801 and 1803

1801

The first *Census of Population* took place on 10 March 1801. This gave the total number of people in England and Wales as nine million.

1832 – First Statistics Office

Establishment of the first statistical office – the Board of Trade

1834 – Royal Statistical Society

The Royal Statistical Society was established

1837 – GRO (England and Wales)

The General Register Office (GRO) for England and Wales was established on 1 July 1837 at Somerset House. It was given responsibility for the administration of civil registration, for the analysis and publication of statistics on births and deaths, and for the conduct of the population census in England and Wales.

1839

The first classification of causes of death was devised by the Registrar General

1841

The first 'modern' *Census of Population* was carried out by the Registrar General – so-called because it required each householder to provide a self-completed schedule recording the names and characteristics of every individual in the household. This system has remained more or less unaltered to the present day.

1849

The first publication of the Registrar General's *Quarterly Return* which continued until 1975 when it was replaced by *Population Trends*

1851

Two innovations were introduced in the processing and presentation of the Census results – the classification of people by their occupation, and geographical disaggregation

1854

The first publication of the *Statistical Abstract of the United Kingdom* – later to become the *Annual Abstract* which was first published in 1948

1855

The first publication of the Board of Trade's *Annual Statistics of Trade*

1855 – GRO (Scotland)

The General Register Office for Scotland was established along with a system of civil registration in Scotland

1861

The first Census of Population carried out in Scotland based on the registration service

1861

Establishment of the system of Public Accounts

1864 – GRO (Ireland)

The General Register Office for Ireland was established

1866

The first agricultural census of farms in Great Britain

1871

Customs & Excise Statistical Office established

1886

The first *Census of Wages/Earnings* took place

1891

The Markets and Fairs (Weighing of cattle) Act provided for the start of a series of information relating to cattle and meat prices

1904

Establishment of a market reporting service covering the prices of fatstock, milking cows, eggs, potatoes, hay and wool

1906

The Census of Production Act 1906 paved the way for the first Census of economic activity in 1907

1907

The first *Census of Production* took place

1911

The Registrar General's *Social Classes* was introduced as a means of analysing population statistics according to occupation/employment status groups. In addition, The UK adopted the *International Classification of Diseases* (ICD)

1914

The launch of the first *Cost of Living Index*

1915

National registration introduced as a wartime measure - administered by the GRO

1919

The Local Government Board was abolished and responsibility for statistics on health was passed to the newly created Ministry of Health

1920 – Census Act

The Census Act of 1920 put census-taking in Great Britain on a permanent legal footing rather than the result of a specific enactment as in Northern Ireland

1922 – GRO (Northern Ireland)

The General Register Office for Northern Ireland was established

1924

The Forestry Commission's first *Census of Woodland*

1926

The registration of stillbirths was made compulsory

1927

The Registrar General set up an Adopted Children Register to record all legal adoptions

1928

The launch of the first *Index of Production*

1929

The Local Government Act of 1929 transferred the civil registration function to local authorities

1938

The Population (Statistics) Act 1938 greatly increased the amount of statistical information obtained from those registering a birth or death

1939

In September, as a wartime security measure, all citizens were allocated a national registration number from which the Registrars General created a comprehensive 'National Register' of the population of the United Kingdom. This later became their National Health Service number

1939 – CEIS

The Central Economic Intelligence Service (CEIS) was set up in December 1939 as part of the War Cabinet Office. Its staff of economists and statisticians provided the seedcorn for the Central Statistical Office (see below)

1940 – Social Survey

The Wartime Social Survey was established by the Ministry of Information to conduct surveys on economic and social topics and matters relating to wartime morale

1941 – Central Statistical Office

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) was established on 27 January 1941 to meet the Prime Minister's, Winston Churchill's, requirement for the central co-ordination of official statistics in order to service the war effort. This marked the beginning of the present system of official statistics in the UK. Harry Campion was appointed as the first Director.

1941

This year saw the first official estimate of the *National Income and Expenditure* (relating to 1938 and 1940)

1946

The Social Survey became the Social Survey Division of the Central Office of Information (COI)

1946

The first publication of the *Monthly Digest of Statistics*

1947

The Statistics of Trade Act was passed providing government statisticians with the opportunity to collect more information from industry and acting as the spur to the further development of economic statistics.

1948

The first *Census of Production* to take place under the auspices of the Statistics of Trade Act

1948

First *Balance of Payments* statistics

1948

The Cancer Registration scheme was introduced

1949 – National Health Service Central Register

The General Register Office was given responsibility for the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR)

1950

The first *Census of Distribution* was undertaken covering Great Britain

1951

The concept of Socio-economic groups was introduced in the analysis of the Census results

1952

National Registration, introduced in 1939 as a wartime security measure, was abolished in February 1952. In the meantime, the identity numbers and the registers had been used to prepare the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR). The latter is a register of NHS patients which is kept up-to-date from returns submitted by the local registrars of births and deaths and Family Practitioner Committees (FPCs)

1952

The *National Health Service Central Register* (NHSCR) was formed from the National Registration records introduced in 1939

1952

Publication of the first *National Income and Expenditure Blue Book*

1952

First *Family Expenditure Survey* (FES)

1953

The *Hospital In-patient Enquiry* was first carried out

1953

Publication of the first *Economic Trends*

1956

Publication of National Accounts *Sources and Methods*

1957

Launch of the first continuous *Family Expenditure Survey*

1960

Responsibility for statistics on the Balance of Payments was transferred from the Bank of England to the CSO

1960

Publication of the first *Balance of Payments Pink Book*

1960

The Population Statistics Act of 1960 required the compulsory notification of the causes of still-births

1961

Launch of the *International Passenger Survey*

1962

Publication of the first *Financial Statistics*

1965

The House of Commons Estimates Committee's sub-committee on Economic Affairs began an examination of the governance of official statistics. Some of the committee's recommendations were directed towards strengthening the status of the CSO and its central co-ordinating role and led, eventually, to the creation of the Government Statistical Service – an umbrella community established in 1968 to coordinate statistical work across the UK government

1967 – Government Social Survey Department

On 1 April 1967, the Government Social Survey which had its origins in the Wartime Social Survey (1940) became a separate department responsible to a Treasury Minister

1968 – Government Statistical Service

The Government accepts the Director of the CSO's, Claus Moser's, wider proposals for giving the CSO a much greater degree of central management control over what he called the 'Government Statistical Service' (GSS). Moser thus became the first Head of the GSS.

1969 – Business Statistics Office

The Business Statistics Office (BSO) came into being on 1 January 1969 in Newport – as part of Claus Moser's GSS reforms and as part of the Department for Trade and Industry but with close links to the CSO – with responsibility for most of the government's collection of statistics from businesses, irrespective of the Department requiring the information

1970 – Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) came into being in May 1970 - also as part of Claus Moser's reforms – through a merger of the General Register Office for England and Wales (established in 1837) and the Government Social Survey Department (established in 1967). The OPCS took on responsibility for most of the collection of statistical information from persons and households through a programme of censuses, surveys and registration

1970

The newly established OPCS launched the first major continuous multi-purpose survey under the sponsorship of the CSO – the *General Household Survey*

1970

First publication by the CSO of the annual *Social Trends* which drew heavily on material held by the OPCS

1971

The start of the *Longitudinal Study* which linked a sample of individuals from census to census and to records kept in the registration system

1971

The *Census of Employment* became the preferred source for workplace based employment information

1973

OPCS launched the *Labour Force Survey* on a biennial basis - a harmonised and synchronised household survey carried out by all members of the European Community

1974

The first *Purchases Inquiry* was held in conjunction with Annual Census of Production

1975

First issue of the OPCS's official journal - *Population Trends*

1979 – Agricultural Statistics Act

The Act provides authority for the collection of data relating to land use, equipment, crops and livestock reflecting the requirement to provide agricultural production information to Eurostat

1980 – Rayner Review

on 21 January 1980, the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, commissioned a review of the Government Statistical Service under Sir Derek Rayner. The recommendations of the Rayner Review were published in a government White Paper in April 1981. The main conclusion of his report was that the needs of the government of the day, rather than the public interest, should determine the priorities and work of the GSS. As a result the complement of the Government Statistical Service was cut by about 25 per cent.

1983

The *Labour Force Survey* was expanded to become annual and continuous

1988 – Pickford Review

A review conducted by Stephen Pickford examined the quality of economic statistics. It called for the greater centralisation of work on economic statistics in an enlarged CSO

1989 – Merger of expanded CSO and BSO

As a result of the Pickford Review, the CSO was expanded in July 1989 to incorporate the Business Statistics Office in Newport (established in 1969), most of the two statistics divisions in the Department of Trade and Industry's HQ, and the statistics division working on the RPI and the Family Expenditure Survey in the Department of Employment. As a result the CSO's complement rose from under 200 to over 1,000. The enlarged CSO also became a separate government Department responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer

1990 – RSS Report – 'Counting with Confidence'

In July 1990, a Working Party of the Royal Statistical Society published their report entitled 'Official Statistics: Counting with Confidence'. This called for, amongst other things, a UK Statistics Act

1991

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) was established as an Executive Agency

1995 – Code of Practice

In April, the (then) Head of the Government Statistical Service, Bill McLennan, published the *Official Statistics Code of Practice*

1995

On 25 April 1995 the Shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, gave a speech to the RSS in which he called for the merger of the CSO and OPCS and a greater centralisation of official statistics within a new arms-length body reporting directly to Parliament.

1995

The *Interdepartmental Business Register* (IDBR) (introduced for the 1993 Annual Census of Production) provides a consistent basis for economic statistics

1995

The *Agricultural Census* becomes an annual survey. The Census is held every 10 Years

1995

The Employment Department was abolished and its statistical functions split between the CSO and the Department for Education and Skills

1996 – The Office for National Statistics and the ONS Framework Document

In April, the Central Statistical Office (established in 1941) and the Office for Population Censuses and Surveys (established in 1970) were merged to form the new Office for National Statistics (ONS) as an Executive Agency. Ministerial responsibility for the ONS was placed within the Treasury which set out the governance arrangements for the new Office in the *ONS Framework Document*. The Director of the ONS also took on the role of Registrar General and Head of the GSS

1996

In March the ONS issued its *Policy for the Release of Statistical Data to the Press and Public* – a forerunner of later legislation covering ‘pre-release access’

1996

April witnessed the publication, as the first ONS publication, of a new comprehensive *Guide to Official Statistics*

1998

The *Annual Business Inquiry* (ABI) replaced and integrated the Annual Censuses of Production and Construction, the Purchases Inquiry, the Annual Employment Survey and several surveys covering the distribution and services sectors

1998 – Green Paper: ‘Statistics - A Matter of Trust’

In February the government published a consultation document under this title setting out its plans for reforming the governance and administration of UK statistics with the aim of restoring public trust and confidence in official statistics

1999 – White Paper: ‘Building trust in statistics’

In October the government published its more concrete proposals for reform based on the submissions it had received as a result of its earlier public consultation

1999

First publication of the *Scottish Household Survey*

1999 – Statistics Concordat (revised in 2001)

The Government and Devolved Administrations publish the *Statistics Concordat* as a Supplementary Agreement to the Memorandum of Understanding between the UK Government, Scottish Ministers, the Cabinet of the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Executive Committee

2000

First edition of *Scottish Economic Statistics*

2000 – Framework for National Statistics

In June 2000 the Government and Devolved Administrations published the *Framework for National Statistics* which set out the new governance arrangements for official statistics in the UK, and which was hailed as ‘the biggest overhaul of official statistics for over thirty years’. The Framework described the aims and objectives of the new system and the roles and responsibilities of each of the main entities and organisations including two new players – the National Statistician and an independent Statistics Commission. The role of National Statistician also embraced the role of Director of the ONS, Registrar General for England and Wales, and Head of the GSS. The Framework also launched a new concept – that of ‘National Statistics’ – a designated set of official statistics so-labelled because they were expected to be compliant with a new and more rigorous *National Statistics Code of Practice*.

2001 – ScotStat

Scotland establishes the first comprehensive arrangements to involve providers and users in the full range of government statistics

2002 – National Statistics Code of Practice

In October, the (then) National Statistician, Len Cook, published the *National Statistics Code of Practice* along with the *National Statistics Protocol on Release Practices* – the first of 12 supporting Protocols

2003 – Allsopp Report(s)

In December, Christopher Allsopp published the first of his two reports to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, The Governor of the Bank of England, and the National Statistician on the requirements for regional information and the adequacy of official economic statistics. His second and final report was published in March 2004

2004

January saw publication of the *Phillis Review, An Independent Review of Government Communications* which concluded that there was no need for 40 hours of advance notice of National Statistics

2004

Statistics Commission publishes its report: *Legislation to Build Trust in Statistics*

2004 – Statistics User Forum

The Statistics User Forum (SUF) was established in England as a successor to the Statistics User Council (SUC)

2005

The Information Centre for Health and Social Care (a Special Health Authority) was established as an independent body in England in April 2005 and charged with the task of collecting health statistics on behalf on the Department for Health

2005

The Statistics Commission published its report: *Official Statistics: Perceptions and Trust*

2005 – Statistical Legislation

On 28 November, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, announced his intention to introduce legislation in order to establish the independence of official statistics

2006 – ‘Independence for statistics’

On 22 March 2006 the Government published a consultation document with the above title which set out its detailed proposals for statistical legislation

2006 – The Bill

On 22 November the government published the first draft of its proposed legislation in the *Statistics and Registration Service Bill*

2007 – Appointment of the first UKSA Chair

On 23 July the Treasury Select Committee published the results of its hearing into the nomination of Sir Michael Scholar as the first chair of the ‘Statistics Board’ – later renamed the UK Statistics Authority. Two days later the House of Commons voted to recommend that the Queen appoint him to the post

2007 – The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007

On 26 July the Statistics and Registration Service Bill received Royal Assent

2008 – Commencement of the Statistics Act

On April 1 2008 the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 came into full effect. The Statistics Commission was dissolved and its function subsumed by the newly-named UK Statistics Authority (UKSA)

2008

The statistical functions of the Registrar General for England and Wales remained with the ONS. The GRO itself was transferred to the Identity and Passport Service (IPS), an Executive Agency of the Home Office. The NHS Central Register (NHSCR) was transferred to The Information Centre for Health and Social Care

2008

On 8 July the UK Statistics Authority launched a public consultation on its draft Code of Practice

2008

On 17 July the Government published its response to its earlier public consultation on pre-release access in a document entitled: *Limiting pre-release access to statistics: the Government's response to the consultation exercise*

2008

On 1 December the Government's *Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008* came into effect

2008

On 1 December the Scottish Government's *Pre-release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008* came into effect

2009 – Code of Practice

On 6 January the UK Statistics Authority fulfilled one of its key statutory duties by publishing the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*

2009

On 1 April the Northern Ireland Assembly's *Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009* came into effect

2009

On 21 October the Welsh Assembly's *Pre-release Access to Official Statistics (Wales) Order 2009* came into effect

2010

On 18 March the UK Statistics Authority published its report entitled *Pre-release Access to Official Statistics – a review of the statutory arrangements*