



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

# Principles, values and Code of practice for Official Statisticians

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# Principles, values and Code of practice for Official Statisticians (1/2)

- **Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (NSO-UNSC)**
  - Originally adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 1994
  - General Assembly Resolution 68/261 adopted on 29 January 2014, with a revised preamble.
  - Implementation Guidelines for the FPOS & how to ensure independence of national statistical systems, added in 2015
- **Principles Governing International Statistical Activities (CCSA)**
  - Endorsed by the CCSA at its 6th session in September 2005.
  - Principles are inspired by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.
  - Provide a list of good practices to help IOs in their implementation.
  - Revised Preamble and additional list of good practices endorsed by the CCSA in 09/2014
  - Endorsed by the Principals of all CCSA members in 2018

# Principles, values and Code of practice for Official Statisticians (2/2)

- **ISI's Declaration on Professional Ethics**
  - Adoption of the resolution by the ISI General Assembly on 21 August, 1985
  - Revision endorsed at the ISI World Statistics Congress in Lisbon, in August 2007
  - Consists of Shared Professional Values and a set of Ethical Principles, followed by short commentaries
  - The declaration's first intention is to be informative and descriptive, rather than authoritarian or prescriptive.
  - The definition of who is a statistician goes well beyond those with formal degrees in the field, to include a wide array of producers and users of statistical data and tools.

# Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (1/3)

- **Principle 1: Relevance, Impartiality, and Equal Access**
  - Official statistics provide an indispensable 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. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information.
- **Principle 2: Professional Standards, Scientific Principles, and Professional Ethics**
  - To retain trust in official statistics, the statistical agencies need to decide according to strictly professional considerations, including scientific principles and professional ethics, on the methods and procedures for the collection, processing, storage and presentation of statistical data.

# Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (2/3)

- **Principle 3: Accountability and Transparency**
  - To facilitate a correct interpretation of the data, the statistical agencies are to present information according to scientific standards on the sources, methods and procedures of the statistics.
- **Principle 4: Prevention of Misuse**
  - The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.
- **Principle 5: Sources of Official Statistics**
  - Data for statistical purposes may be drawn from all types of sources, be they statistical surveys or administrative records. Statistical agencies are to choose the source with regard to quality, timeliness, costs and the burden on respondents.
- **Principle 6: Confidentiality**
  - Individual data collected by statistical agencies for statistical compilation, whether they refer to natural or legal persons, are to be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes.

# Fundamental Principles Of official Statistics (3/3)

- **Principle 7: Legislation**

The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are to be made public.

- **Principle 8: National Coordination**

Coordination among statistical agencies within countries is essential to achieve consistency and efficiency in the statistical system.

- **Principle 9: Use of International Standards**

The use by statistical agencies in each country of international concepts, classifications and methods promotes the consistency and efficiency of statistical systems at all official levels.

- **Principle 10: International Cooperation**

Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contributes to the improvement of systems of official statistics in all countries.

# Principles Governing International Statistical Activities (CCSA)

**PRINCIPLE 1:** High quality international statistics, accessible for all, are a fundamental element of global information systems.



**PRINCIPLE 2:** To maintain the trust in international statistics, their production is to be impartial and strictly based on the highest professional standards

**PRINCIPLE 3:** The public has a right to be informed about the mandates for the statistical work of the organisations



**PRINCIPLE 4:** Concepts, definitions, classifications, sources, methods and procedures employed in the production of international statistics are chosen to meet professional scientific standards and are made transparent for the users



**PRINCIPLE 5:** Sources and methods for data collection are appropriately chosen to ensure timeliness and other aspects of quality, to be cost-efficient and to minimise the reporting burden for data providers



**PRINCIPLE 6:** Individual data collected about natural persons and legal entities, or about small aggregates that are subject to national confidentiality rules, are to be kept strictly confidential and are to be used exclusively for statistical purposes or for purposes mandated by legislation

**PRINCIPLE 7:** Erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics are to be immediately appropriately addressed



**PRINCIPLE 8:** Standards for national and international statistics are to be developed on the basis of sound professional criteria, while also meeting the test of practical utility and feasibility



**PRINCIPLE 9:** Coordination of international statistical programmes is essential to strengthen the quality, coherence and governance of international statistics, and avoiding duplication of work



**PRINCIPLE 10:** Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics contribute to the professional growth of the statisticians involved and to the improvement of statistics in the organisations and in countries



# ISI's Declaration on Professional Ethics

- **Shared Professional Values**

- I. Respect
- II. Professionalism
- III. Honesty (truthfulness) & Integrity

- **Ethical Principles**

- I. Pursuing Objectivity
- II. Clarifying Obligations and Roles
- III. Assessing Alternatives Impartially
- IV. Conflicting Interests
- V. Avoiding Preempted Outcomes
- VI. Guarding Privileged Information
- VII. Exhibiting Professional Competence
- VIII. Maintaining Confidence in Statistics
- IX. Exposing and Reviewing Methods and Findings
- X. Communicating Ethical Principles
- XI. Bearing Responsibility for the Integrity of the Discipline
- XII. Protecting the Interests of Subjects



# Shared Professional Values (1/2)

## 1. Respect

- We respect the privacy of others and the promises of confidentiality given to them.
- We respect the communities where data is collected and guard against harm coming to them by misuse of the results.
- We should not suppress or improperly detract from the work of others.

## 2. Professionalism

- The value Professionalism implies Responsibility, Competence and Expert Knowledge, and Informed Judgment.
- We work to understand our users' needs.
- We use our statistical knowledge, data, and analyses for the Common Good to serve the society.
- We strive to collect and analyze data of the highest quality possible.
- We are responsible for the fitness of data and of methods for the purpose at hand.
- We discuss issues objectively and strive to contribute to the resolution of problems.
- We obey the law and work to change laws we believe impede good statistical practice.

# Shared Professional Values (2/2)

## 3. Truthfulness and Integrity

- By Truthfulness and Integrity, we mean Independence, Objectivity and Transparency.
- We produce statistical results using our science and are not influenced by pressure from politicians or funders.
- We are transparent about the statistical methodologies used and make these methodologies public.
- We strive to produce results that reflect the observed phenomena in an impartial manner.
- We present data and analyses honestly and openly.
- We are accountable for our actions.
- We have respect for intellectual property.
- As scientists, we pursue promising new ideas and discard those demonstrated to be invalid.
- We work towards the logical coherence and empirical adequacy of our data and conclusions.
- We value well-established objective criteria of assessment.

# Ethical Principles (1/3)

## **1. Pursuing Objectivity**

Statisticians should pursue objectivity without fear or favor, only selecting and using methods designed to produce the most accurate results. They should present all findings openly, completely, and in a transparent manner regardless of the outcomes. Statisticians should be particularly sensitive to the need to present findings when they challenge a preferred outcome. The statistician should guard against predictable misinterpretation or misuse. If such misinterpretation or misuse occurs, steps should be taken to inform potential users. Findings should be communicated for the benefit of the widest possible community, yet attempt to ensure no harm to any population group.

## **2. Clarifying Obligations and Roles**

The respective obligations of employer, client, or funder and statistician in regard to their roles and responsibility that might raise ethical issues should be spelled out and fully understood. In providing advice or guidance, statisticians should take care to stay within their area of competence, and seek advice, as appropriate, from others with the relevant expertise.

## **3. Assessing Alternatives Impartially**

Available methods and procedures should be considered and an impartial assessment provided to the employer, client, or funder of the respective merits and limitations of alternatives, along with the proposed method.

# Ethical Principles (2/3)

## **4. Conflicting Interests**

Statisticians avoid assignments where they have a financial or personal conflict of interest in the outcome of the work. The likely consequences of collecting and disseminating various types of data and the results of their analysis should be considered and explored.

## **5. Avoiding Preempted Outcomes**

Any attempt to establish a predetermined outcome from a proposed statistical inquiry should be rejected, as should contractual conditions contingent upon such a requirement.

## **6. Guarding Privileged Information**

Privileged information is to be kept confidential. This prohibition is not to be extended to statistical methods and procedures utilized to conduct the inquiry or produce published data.

## **7. Exhibiting Professional Competence**

Statisticians shall seek to upgrade their professional knowledge and skills, and shall maintain awareness of technological developments, procedures, and standards which are relevant to their field, and shall encourage others to do the same.

## **8. Maintaining Confidence in Statistics**

In order to promote and preserve the confidence of the public, statisticians should ensure that they accurately and correctly describe their results, including the explanatory power of their data. It is incumbent upon statisticians to alert potential users of the results to the limits of their reliability and applicability.

# Ethical Principles (3/3)

## **9. Exposing and Reviewing Methods and Findings**

Adequate information should be provided to the public to permit the methods, procedures, techniques, and findings to be assessed independently.

## **10. Communicating Ethical Principles**

In collaborating with colleagues and others in the same or other disciplines, it is necessary and important to ensure that the ethical principles of all participants are clear, understood, respected, and reflected in the undertaking.

## **11. Bearing Responsibility for the Integrity of the Discipline**

Statisticians are subject to the general moral rules of scientific and scholarly conduct: they should not deceive or knowingly misrepresent or attempt to prevent reporting of misconduct or obstruct the scientific/scholarly research of others.

## **12. Protecting the Interests of Subjects**

Statisticians are obligated to protect subjects, individually and collectively, insofar as possible, against potentially harmful effects of participating. This responsibility is not absolved by consent or by the legal requirement to participate. The intrusive potential of some forms of statistical inquiry requires that they be undertaken only with great care, full justification of need, and notification of those involved. These inquiries should be based, as far as practicable, on the subjects' freely given, informed consent. The identities and records of all subjects or respondents should be kept confidential. Appropriate measures should be utilized to prevent data from being released in a form that would allow a subject's or respondent's identity to be disclosed or inferred.