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Office for Statistics Regulation's Areas of Research Interest

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4. Valued

Valued: Develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

4.1 Background

OSR's vision is that statistics serve the public good, and we propose that an in-depth understanding of what that means will allow us to develop our regulatory work and support the wider statistical and analytical systems. Even though we work with a range of data that is used as evidence, our statutory objective concerns official statistics and so we are interested in learning more about how they specifically serve the public good. We have delved into what the 'statistics serving the public good' means through several research projects; our most recent being a public dialogue in collaboration with Administrative Data Research UK (https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/a-uk-wide-public-dialogue-exploring-what-the-public-perceive-as-public-good-use-of-data-for-research-and-statistics/), and based on this successful partnership we are optimistic about the benefits of continuing to work with others (https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/blog/power-in-numbers-a-collaborative-approach-to-exploring-public-perceptions-of-public-good/) in this area.

To understand this notion of 'statistics serving the public good', it is necessary to understand the public these statistics are endeavouring to serve, and what they value. This is touched upon in the ARI on 'produced', where we explore Value in the Code, and the ARI on 'used' where we are interested in who is using statistics.

4.2 Questions

To further develop as a regulator, we are interested in better understanding how valuable statistics are in serving the public good so that we can ensure those who need to can focus on what really matters. In doing so, we have identified specific questions we would like to work towards answering:

4.2.1 Statistics that serve the public good

- What does it mean for statistics to serve the public good, and how might this be measured and communicated?
- What is unique about the way in which official statistics serve the public good compared to other sources of information?
- How can views from 'the public' be brought into this conversation, respecting that there is no single homogenous group and there will be many varied perspectives?

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