

**Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs
Committee**

The work of the UK Statistics Authority

Second Report of Session 2026–27

HC 115

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

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Summary

In October 2023, the Office of National Statistics (“ONS”) was forced to suspend publication of one of its key data sets, the Labour Force Survey, because of concerns about the reliability of its findings. Mistakes were also found in other important data sets, and the ONS’ flagship Integrated Data Service, a platform that would allow users both in government and outside it to access a range of official data, was abandoned after almost £230 million had been spent on it. The result was that there were serious questions asked about the ONS’s ability to fulfil its core mission overseeing the production of robust statistics. It was in this context that we launched our inquiry into UKSA (“UK Statistics Authority”), the public body responsible for the ONS.

When we launched our inquiry in April 2025, it was clear that there were serious issues with some of the nation’s most important economic datasets. But it was not clear what had driven these issues, nor whether there was cause to be concerned about the health of the broader statistical estate. Regrettably, we found that issues with economic statistics were not mere anomalies, but rather the manifestation of deeper and more wide-ranging problems within the UKSA.

We found that the ONS had become overstretched due to a failure to prioritise the production of its core data sets, taking on new projects without due regard for its core business. Project management was often poor. This was exacerbated by an organisational culture in which challenge was not always welcomed, and difficult messages were not escalated promptly.

We questioned the effectiveness of the UKSA Board in exercising oversight of the ONS. The Board did not fully understand the scale of emerging problems and failed to challenge senior management sufficiently before issues reached crisis point. In our view, the Board was repeatedly surprised by developments that should have been visible through effective governance and risk management. The Cabinet Office is also criticised for decisions that weakened the Board through delays and shortcomings in non-executive appointments.

Despite these criticisms, we strongly support the principle of statistical independence and do not accept calls for major structural changes to the UKSA framework at the current time. Independent statistics are a

cornerstone of effective government, and our recommendations focus on stronger accountability within the existing system rather than fundamental restructuring and legislative change.

We also note that much has changed since our inquiry began. Most notably, the Chair of the UKSA Board and the National Statistician have stepped down. There is an interim UKSA Chair and the ONS is currently being run by a recently appointed permanent secretary. Considerable efforts are being made to restore the ONS' reputation as a producer of reliable and trusted statistics and a new culture of openness, when mistakes are made as well as with successes, is apparent. We welcome the work that is being done in this respect. However, it is important that the permanent appointments are made to the posts of UKSA Chair and National Statistician, and that any changes to the latter role in particular are compliant with the underpinning legislation.

1 Introduction

1. Good data are essential in informing public policy and guiding effective decision making. Since the 1940s, the system of utilising official statistics at the heart of the UK's public evidence base has evolved, resulting in the statutory founding of the modern system when the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) was established in 2008.
2. Since then, the UKSA has been subject to scrutiny both by Parliament, mainly through this committee and its predecessors (having departmental overview responsibilities), and separately through reviews commissioned by government. In 2024 our predecessor committee published a report, "Transforming the UK's Evidence Base",¹ which made recommendations to address the changing data landscape. These included: grasping the opportunities presented by new technologies; joining up the UK's evidence base to better exploit data; and establishing a framework for prioritising demands, rooted in the concept of the use of official statistics for the public good. That inquiry ran concurrently with an independent review of the UK Statistics Authority by Professor Denise Lievesley CBE,² which had been carried out within the framework provided by the Cabinet Office Public Bodies Review Programme. The Lievesley Review, published in March 2024, concentrated on the governance, efficacy, accountability and efficiency of the statistical system environment. Both reports made a valuable contribution in setting out recommendations for reform and improvement of the statistics landscape which deserve ongoing consideration.
3. Despite these and other reviews, concerns had been building about the reliability of some of the UK's most important statistics, including those raised after the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was forced to suspend the publication of statistics derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). We were prompted by these concerns, and concerns raised about the flagship Integrated Data Programme (IDP) (which would lead to its closure in March 2026), to consider whether the difficulties the UKSA was facing were an anomaly, or whether problems ran deeper within the organisation. It was in this context that we launched our inquiry on the work of the UK Statistics Authority in April 2025.

1 Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2023–24, [Transforming the UK's Evidence Base](#), HC 197

2 Professor Denise Lievesley CBE, [Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority](#), March 2024

4. In examining the performance of the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA), and its two executive offices, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), we asked:
 - a. How well served are policy-makers, researchers, businesses and citizens, by the data that the ONS produces and the services it provides;
 - b. How is the UK's data environment evolving, and what challenges and opportunities does this present official statisticians and analysts? What does the development of a National Data Library mean for the ONS;
 - c. How successful has the OSR been in identifying issues with official data, and making the case for improvements; and
 - d. How does the UKSA Board carry out its statutory functions, and how involved is it in the decisions taken by senior leaders at the ONS and the OSR.
5. It was clear that our own concerns were mirrored in government. Around the same time that we launched our inquiry, the Cabinet Office and the UKSA Board commissioned a short, externally-led review of the performance and culture of the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Sir Robert Devereux KCB delivered his report in June 2025.³
6. Following our call for written evidence we conducted a series of oral evidence sessions. We are grateful to Sir Robert Devereux and Professor Denise Lievesley, who spoke to us privately about their respective reviews of the UK statistical estate. As the scale of the challenge became clear, we held two public sessions with leaders of the UKSA, a session with the UK's former National Statistician, Professor Sir Ian Diamond, who retired due to ill health during the course of our inquiry, and a final session with representatives from the Cabinet Office, the department with responsibility for oversight of the UKSA. In addition to this oral evidence, we also received 28 written submissions. We thank all those who contributed to the inquiry and to the many members of staff from the Office for National Statistics who reached out to the committee to share their views. We also thank our special adviser for the inquiry, Vanessa Holden.
7. It should be noted that the picture is not static and much has changed since we launched our inquiry and completed our oral evidence sessions. There have been significant changes in personnel, most notably with both the Chair of the UKSA Board and the National Statistician leaving their posts. Following the recommendation from the Devereux review that the

3 Sir Robert Devereux, [Review of the Office for National Statistics performance and culture](#), 26 June 2025

roles of lead statistical advisor to the UKSA Board and government and permanent secretary of the ONS be split, at least temporarily, Darren Tierney has been appointed as a new Permanent Secretary to head the ONS. There has been a strategy of consolidation, also partly in reaction to the Devereux review, with a focus on delivering a more limited range of data sets, and projects such as the Integrated Data Service have been closed.⁴ There is clearly a determination on the part of all those involved to ensure the ONS is functioning effectively. It is important that this momentum is maintained and regularised. Despite the significant amount of change that has taken place following our evidence sessions, it is important that this report records what we found and provides a basis for future scrutiny by this committee and by others.

4 Letter from the ONS Permanent Secretary to UK Statistics Authority Interim Chair regarding ONS prioritisation, [19 February 2026](#)

2 Understanding the UKSA

8. The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) was established by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 (the Act). It is responsible for “promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics for the public good”.⁵ Established as a Non-Ministerial Department and led by a majority non-executive board, the organisation reports directly to the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures. It oversees three constituent bodies (see Figure 1):
 - a. The Office for National Statistics (ONS); the UK’s ‘national statistical institute’ and its largest producer of official statistics;
 - b. The broader Government Statistical Service (GSS); comprising those involved in producing statistics across central government, the Devolved Administrations and public bodies; and
 - c. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR); which assesses and monitors official statistics, against a statutory standard.
9. Under legislation, the ONS is responsible for:⁶
 - a. the development and maintenance of definitions, methodologies, classifications and standards for official statistics;
 - b. the production of statistics;
 - c. the production of the retail prices index (RPI);⁷ and
 - d. ‘statistical services’ - a rather broad set of responsibilities which includes “providing information, advice and technical assistance”, undertaking quality assurance, conducting surveys and analysis, and “collecting, adapting and developing” data.
10. The ONS told us it had set itself four ‘strategic priorities’, to guide it in delivering against these legislative responsibilities:
 - a. an enhanced reputation for delivering trusted, relevant, independent statistics and analysis;

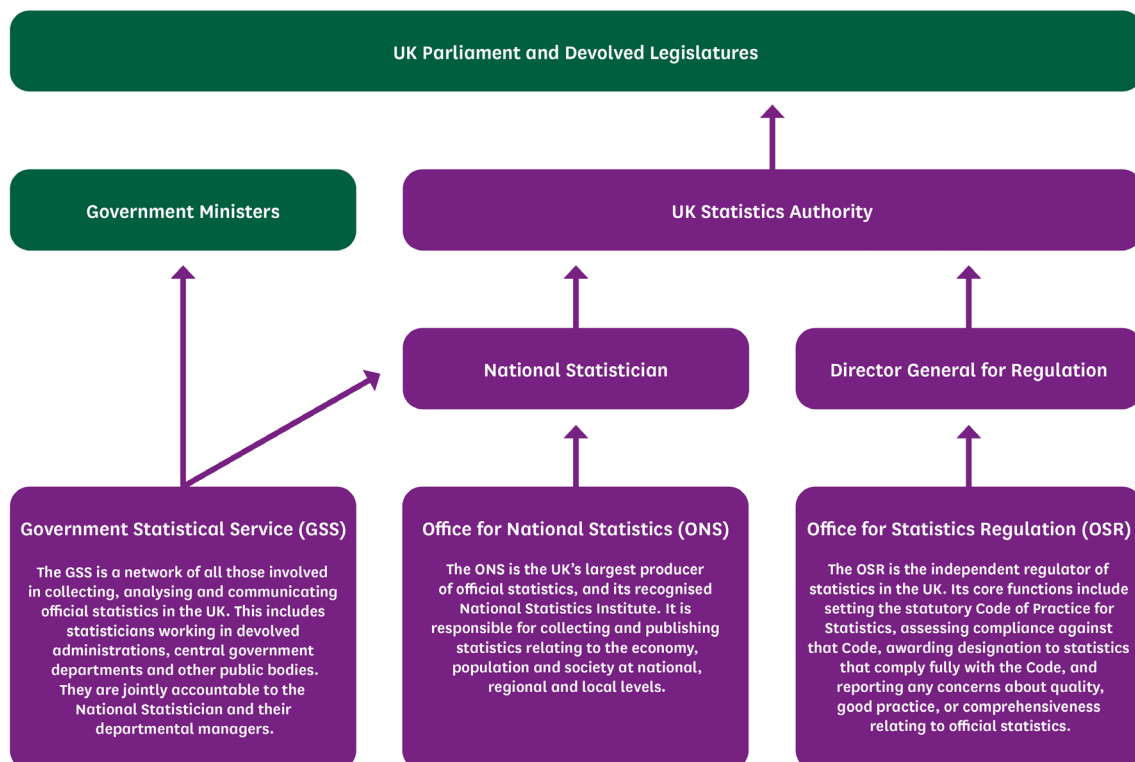
5 [Section 7 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#)

6 [Section 32 of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#)

7 This section of the Act obliges the ONS to produce the RPI but carves out specific responsibilities for HM Treasury and the Bank of England in approving any methodological changes. This carve-out reflects the historical importance of the RPI to gilt markets.

- b. top quality published statistics on prices, GDP (including trade and public sector finance), the labour market and population (including births, deaths and migration);
- c. to support the Government’s missions and other users by maximising the use of its statistics and responding to evidence gaps where it is uniquely positioned to do so; and
- d. greater linked data capabilities that result in faster, evidence-based decisions across government.⁸

Figure 1: What is the UKSA?



The UKSA’s governance

11. The 2007 Act established ‘independence’ for statistics by removing the ONS from the control of ministers. Some elements of the UKSA’s governance are defined by legislation; others are shaped by senior leaders and have changed over time.
12. The legislation establishes the following senior posts:
 - a. a non-executive **UKSA Chair**, appointed by His Majesty;

- b. no less than five other **non-executive members of the UKSA board**, appointed by the Cabinet Office, in consultation with the Board's Chair and representatives of the devolved executives;
 - c. a **National Statistician**, who is also to be the Chief Executive of the UKSA and the head of the ONS. The National Statistician is to be appointed by His Majesty and employed by the UKSA Board. S/he is the UKSA's principal advisor on statistics; and
 - d. a **Head of Assessment** to be appointed by non-executive members of the board and employed by the board.
13. The **Minister for the Cabinet Office** has some residual ministerial responsibilities for the UKSA such as non-executive appointments to the Board and the conduct of Parliamentary business on behalf of the UKSA. They can also issue directions where the Board is deemed to have failed.
14. Since the UKSA's establishment, National Statisticians have described themselves as being accountable not just to the UKSA Board, but also to the Cabinet Secretary and/or Head of the Civil Service. This is not laid down in law, but the Cabinet Office told us: "In line with usual practice the National Statistician, as a Permanent Secretary and civil servant, is line managed by the Cabinet Secretary or a delegate (in this case the Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary)".⁹
15. In the UK Parliament, several select committees consider the quality of statistics relevant to their work; the Treasury Committee, for example, has an ongoing interest in economic statistics.¹⁰ But it is the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, as the de facto departmental committee for the Cabinet Office and its agencies, which has taken the lead in scrutinising the performance of the UKSA following its establishment in 2008.
16. The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 provides a flexible framework which senior leaders can tweak according to their own priorities, and the context in which they are operating. Different boards have constructed different governance structures, and different National Statisticians have built different supporting structures. Dame Jil Matheson, when in post, delegated the running of the ONS to a Director General; John Pullinger while in post worked closely with his three Deputies across the ONS and the GSS.

9 Letter from then Parliamentary Secretary in the Cabinet Office Josh Simons MP and Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary and Civil Service Chief Operating Officer Catherine Little CB, [27 November 2025](#)

10 Oral evidence taken by the Treasury Committee on [4 February 2025](#)

3 Issues with the UKSA's performance

17. In the first years of this decade the ONS was widely considered to be performing strongly against its stated priorities. During the pandemic the ONS set up the covid-19 Infection Survey (CIS) to measure for prevalence and variants, and produced data regularly used by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), Ministers, and within the NHS. Former Chief Scientific Officer Sir Patrick Vallance (now Lord Vallance of Ballham) said of the survey: “It became the envy of countries all around the world who had nothing like this population surveillance programme”.¹¹ Beyond the CIS the ONS also established a rapid, fortnightly survey of the impact of covid-19 on businesses, used its existing opinions survey to gather details on vaccine intent and compliance with covid ‘guidance’, and used experimental data (e.g., anonymised mobile phone data) to track population movements during lockdown periods.¹²
18. The ONS convincingly surpassed all its targets for the 2021 Census, reaching 97 per cent of households, with 89 per cent of them responding online in the ONS’s first ‘digital-first’ Census.¹³ The success of the ONS’s 2021 Census stood in stark contrast to problems that other statistical institutes had faced with their own censuses. For example, Scottish Ministers elected to extend the collection period for Scotland’s 2022 census (which had been delayed for a year) after disappointing response rates.¹⁴ Nonetheless, significant issues were developing.

The Transformed Labour Force Survey

19. The first indication that there might be serious problems with the UK’s national statistics emerged in October 2023, when the ONS was forced to suspend the publication of statistics derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Employment figures are among the ONS’s most anticipated statistics, but the number of responses achieved by the survey had declined

11 Civil Service World, “[Sir Patrick Vallance celebrates UK COVID-19 Infection Survey success as IQVIA opens its UK HQ](#)”, 8 June 2022

12 See ONS, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

13 ONS, [Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), 28 June 2022

14 UKSA ([UKSA26](#)) para 56

to such levels that statisticians no longer believed they could be used to produce accurate estimates of employment and unemployment.¹⁵ Following the suspension the Sunday Times reported: “Shock in the City of London was palpable. For traders and economists, the survey is one of the most important indicators on the state of the economy”.¹⁶ The Bank of England, which relies on the data to inform decisions on interest rates, was forced to turn to alternative data sources.¹⁷

20. The ONS had understood for a decade or more that the quality of its economic statistics was at risk as a result of falling response rates to the LFS.¹⁸ In May 2017, in addition to establishing a number of short-term measures to support the struggling survey, leaders agreed on a longer-term vision: they would pursue a ‘dual approach’ to the production of employment data in future, with a greater reliance on administrative sources of data combined with a shorter ‘core’ survey focussed on collecting key data that could not be sourced elsewhere: the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS).¹⁹
21. Between 2019 and April 2025 responsibility for the development of new employment data was split between two Senior Responsible Owners (SRO’s): one in charge of developing a new survey, the other in charge of the resulting statistical output. Responsibility for each strand changed frequently.²⁰ In 2022, the ONS announced that it would be ready to “share analysis and insights from the transformed survey in early 2023”.²¹ In April 2023, an update indicated that the ONS was running the new survey in parallel with the old one, to ensure it had as much information on the differences between them as possible, and that from early 2024, the TLFS would replace the LFS.²²
22. However, the transition to this TLFS had not been completed before the existing LFS failed. There were significant differences in the results gathered between the two surveys such that it was not clear that the data being gathered by the new survey was giving an accurate picture of the UK’s labour market. The ONS commissioned external expert methodologists to review the design of the TLFS. They found that it had departed from the

15 ONS, [Operational Note – Labour Market Statistics 24 October 2023](#), October 2023.

16 The Times, [“Britain runs on ONS statistics: What happens when they’re nonsense?”](#), 24 May 2025

17 Financial Times, “Poor labour market data causes problems for Bank of England”, 9 May 2024

18 Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2023–24, [Transforming the UK’s Evidence Base](#), HC 197, para 27

19 Letter from then acting National Statistician Emma Rourke, [21 August 2025](#) (see Annex B)

20 Letter from then acting National Statistician Emma Rourke, [21 August 2025](#) (see Annex B)

21 ONS, [“Making everybody count: How we’re transforming the Labour Force Survey”](#), National Statistical, 29 March 2022.

22 ONS, [“Transforming the Labour Force Survey”](#), National Statistical, 3 April 2023

original vision of the project: rather than being a short survey which reduced the burden on respondents, it had been stretched to cover new areas, not least because there were no resources to start new surveys.²³ The review team recommended against “switching off” the LFS in July 2024, suggesting instead that the TLFS be redesigned in line with the original concept.²⁴

23. In July 2024, a paper submitted to the UKSA Board explained that the TLFS was not currently meeting required quality criteria and recommended that the project be reset “without previous strict financial constraints driving timescales”.²⁵ In April 2025, after the UKSA Board endorsed proposals from the then National Statistician, the ONS announced it intended to redesign the TLFS, adopting the shorter design originally envisioned, and endorsed by the independent review. The resetting of the project meant delaying the move from the LFS to the TLFS. The ONS’s most recent update on its labour market survey transformation plans outlined that there will be a critical progress check in January 2027, with July 2027 the point where, if the ONS and its users are ready, the ONS plans to start the process for a November 2027 transition.²⁶

The failure of the Labour Force Survey

24. Leaders agree that the ONS’s decision to remove a financial ‘boost’ for the LFS, introduced to shore up the survey during the covid-19 pandemic, in July 2023 was central to the problems that subsequently arose with it. There were simply too few responses to produce reliable results without the additional responses that the boost funded. The ONS moved swiftly to address the problem. Significant effort was required to bring response rates back to near pre-pandemic levels. Following interventions, including increases to survey incentives and interviewer numbers, response levels for Waves 2 to 5 were recorded as slightly above their pre-pandemic level in January to March 2026.²⁷ However, this increased resource did not immediately translate into more reliable estimates of employment: because the LFS is a multi-wave survey which tracks employment over five quarters, problematic data from one quarter continued to affect results for the subsequent four quarters.²⁸ Furthermore, the Market Research Society notes that, in relation to response rate recovery more widely, the “ONS has not

23 [Q203](#) (Professor Sir Ian Diamond)

24 ONS, [Labour Market Surveys Academic Review: Report to the Methodological Assurance Review Panel – UK Statistics Authority](#), December 2024.

25 UKSA, Board minutes, [25 July 2024](#)

26 See ONS, [Labour market transformation - update on progress and plans: August 2026](#), 11 August 2026

27 [Q208](#) (Professor Sir Ian Diamond); ONS, [Labour Force Survey quality update: July 2026](#), 21 July 2026;

28 ONS, [Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring report: July to September 2025](#), November 2025.

recovered at the same pace as the rest of the research sector”²⁹ and users remain concerned about the quality of labour force estimates.³⁰ Mistakes are still being made: recently, the ONS admitted that too many interviews had been conducted for the TLFS and too few for the LFS, with an impact, albeit short term, on the latter’s robustness.³¹

25. It should be noted that the UK is not alone in struggling to maintain the quality of survey data. Survey response rates have been declining around the world since at least 1980: this decline accelerated significantly during the covid-19 pandemic, which the UKSA told us was “often linked to an increased difficulty in accessing properties, increased cautiousness to share information, and declining trust in government and public institutions.”³² However, many other jurisdictions have measures in place that have buffered them against the trend of falling response rates.³³ Many have national population registers and/or more mature data-sharing arrangements that have allowed their statistical institutes to prop up surveys or even to do away with them. In some countries responding to official household surveys is required.³⁴ Professor Lievesley recommended in her review that the UKSA should engage with the Cabinet Office to explore the consequences of mandatory completion of the Labour Force Survey.³⁵ Both the UKSA and the Cabinet Office agreed to look into the concept, but neither has published anything further on the matter.³⁶

29 Market Research Society (UKSA07) para 22

30 In November 2025, the Monetary Policy Committee was still indicating that they were placing less weight on the LFS than other employment indicators (see MPC, [November 2025 Monetary Policy Report](#), November 2025; see also Financial Times, [“Europeans may simply do it* better”](#), December 2025)

31 James Benford, [“Learning from an operational issue temporarily impacting LFS data, in support of our continued recovery”](#), National Statistical, 19 June 2026

32 UKSA (UKSA26) para 41; [Q4](#) (Ed Humpherson)

33 See UKSA09 (Bernard H Casey), p.4

34 For example, in Europe, Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Slovakia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey all enforce compulsory LFS participation. Australia’s equivalent of the LFS is run as part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ broader Monthly Population Survey (MPS) framework. The MPS is defined as a compulsory survey under the Census and Statistics Act. Nations like Singapore go much further; its 1973 Statistics Act establishes a blanket requirement for residents to furnish statisticians with “data for statistical purposes”. See Financial Times, [“Europeans may simply do it* better”](#), December 2025.

35 Professor Denise Lievesley CBE, [Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority](#), March 2024

36 Cabinet Office, [Government Response to the independent review of the UK Statistics Authority](#), 12 March 2024, p.6-7; UKSA, [Response to the Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority](#), 4 September 2024, p.8

26.

CONCLUSION

The transition from the Labour Force Survey to the Transformed Labour Force Survey has not been handled well enough and the result has been significant reputational damage to the ONS. Project management for the Transformed Labour Force Survey was poor. Churn amongst Senior Responsible Owners was notable and the ONS seemed to lose sight of the original aim for a slimmed down survey to supplement greater use of administrative data. The project appears to be back on track but only following a reset.

27.

CONCLUSION

Until the transition to the Transformed Labour Force Survey, the Labour Force Survey remains the primary measure of UK employment and considerable efforts have been taken to improve its robustness. We are pleased to see that response rates have returned to near the pre-pandemic rate. However, achieving this appears to have been resource intensive. The sustainable solution remains a successful transition to the Transformed Labour Force Survey, with a shorter, more focussed survey component supplementing administrative data, as soon as possible.

28.

RECOMMENDATION

The UKSA should keep us informed of progress towards the successful delivery of the Transformed Labour Force Survey on a quarterly basis. The UKSA and the Cabinet Office should also update us on efforts to explore the consequences of mandatory completion of the Labour Force and other surveys to date in their responses to this report.

Integrated Data Service

29. In September 2020, as part of the then Government's National Data Strategy, it was announced that the ONS and the Cabinet Office would jointly lead the development of an Integrated Data Platform (subsequently known as the Integrated Data Service or IDS). The service was intended to provide mechanisms by which both internal and external analysts might securely access and link anonymised data sets across government departments.³⁷ In doing so, it would also allow analysts to explore complex policy problems, such as the relationship between health, education and employment, or the distributional impacts of tax and welfare policy. The IDS was intended to replace and expand the existing patchwork of different infrastructures through which researchers accessed government data, including the ONS's Secure Research Service, the Welsh-based Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank, and the HMRC 'data-lab'.

37 ONS, Integrated Data Programme: End of Programme Evaluation, 17 June 2026, p.5

30. However, by the time that Professor Lievesley delivered her review of the UKSA in January 2024, it was clear that there were significant problems with the programme. She identified two key issues:
- a. systemic and cultural barriers to responsible data sharing between government departments; and
 - b. a lack of clarity regarding the purpose, scope and requirements of the IDS, amongst users.³⁸
31. She made clear that resolving long-standing barriers to data-sharing was the responsibility of central government: the Cabinet Office, Number 10, and HM Treasury. So too did our predecessor committee, in its 2024 report on “Transforming the UK’s Evidence Base”.³⁹ But, at the time of writing, government has not made substantive progress.⁴⁰ As the then National Statistician Professor Sir Ian Diamond told the committee: “there has been a lot of effort on data sharing, and it has not been successful.”⁴¹
32. The ONS clarified the scope of its programme in mid-2024 in line with Professor Lievesley’s advice: it would now seek to deliver primarily for government analysts, rather than the broader research community.⁴² However, in 2025, the ONS announced that it would close the programme, and divert resources elsewhere.⁴³ While the limited infrastructure may be used by the ONS in future in the production of statistics, the prospect of an IDS allowing both researchers and government analysts to straightforwardly access a wide range of data, and in so doing transform the UK’s evidence base, was dead. This has come at a great cost: the ONS estimated the cost of the IDS programme to be £228.7m (covering the development and running costs from 2020 to 2025).⁴⁴

38 Professor Denise Lievesley CBE, [Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority](#), March 2024

39 Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2023–24, [Transforming the UK’s Evidence Base](#), HC 197

40 Former National Statistician Professor Sir Ian Diamond noted the “inherent conservatism” of departments faced with sharing data ([Q241](#))

41 [Q240](#)

42 UKSA, Board minutes, [27 June 2024](#)

43 ONS, Integrated Data Service (IDS) [last accessed 24 August 2026]

44 Letter from then Acting National Statistician Emma Rourke, [21 August 2025](#)

33. CONCLUSION

The Integrated Data System's aim of providing a growing range of data from across government to a range of users via a single access point remains laudable. While there are legitimate questions about the quality of project management within the ONS, much of the problem lay with the inability or unwillingness of government departments to allow access to their data; an issue that goes beyond the IDS project. UK governments continue to be unwilling or unable to ensure departments and agencies share data sufficiently.

34. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Office and the UKSA should update us on the long-term plan to improve data sharing across government in light of the failure of the Integrated Data System in its response to this report and quarterly thereafter. In particular, the Government should clarify where responsibility for integration of the work of the IDS with the National Data Library's Kickstarter Programme now sits, following the closure of the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

Other data errors

- 35.** Concerns about the ONS's performance were compounded by the announcement of other errors and revisions in the months following the suspension of labour force statistics.
- In March 2025, the ONS announced that it had identified errors in its Producer Price Index ("PPI") and Services Producer Price Indices ("SPPI"). The indices are used in both trade and GDP statistics. Trade statistics were briefly paused while the ONS undertook an analysis of the likely impacts. The ONS suggested "some goods export and import data from 2023 may be impacted, and some goods export data prior to 2014".⁴⁵
 - On 13 June 2025, the ONS wrote to the Office for Statistics Regulation ("OSR"), requesting that the 'accredited official statistics' designation be removed from its 'Household Total Wealth' publication, owing to "increased uncertainty around the quality" of the data.⁴⁶

45 ONS, [Producer Prices publications update - Office for National Statistics](#), April 2025.

46 ONS letter to the OSR on the Accreditation of Household Total Wealth in Great Britain, [13 June 2025](#)

- On 5 July 2025, the ONS reported that it had overestimated the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for April by 0.1 percentage points after the Department for Transport provided erroneous Vehicle Excise Duty data.⁴⁷ Because April's CPI data are heavily used to uprate contracts, the impact of this error was significant.
- In October 2025, the ONS published a correction to its Public Sector Finance statistics, which had the impact of reducing government borrowing for the financial year ending March 2025.⁴⁸ The correction was made after officials from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) reported that the data they had provided to the ONS on VAT was incomplete.

36. Some of these errors were made by government departments rather than the ONS itself. The ONS's Director General for Economic Statistics, James Benford, argued: "It is difficult for the ONS to set up a mechanism to independently check these external inputs".⁴⁹ Nonetheless, reporting suggested that the error was evidence of the ONS's incompetence.⁵⁰ One economist was reported to have said that "[t]his latest correction is a good reason to take all official data with a pinch of salt for now".⁵¹ In his review of the ONS, Sir Robert Devereaux noted that "ONS choices about priorities and funding affected the capacity of data collection and statistical production teams, delaying the identification, and also the resolution, of these issues".⁵² Nonetheless, it would not be reasonable to hold the ONS entirely accountable for errors made by departments.

Some success stories

37. Since the failure of the LFS, there have been countless reports on problems with the ONS's statistical outputs. There have been many fewer on its successes. However, in a recent, comprehensive review of the ONS, the statistical regulator noted that the ONS continued to be supported by many stakeholders:

47 ONS, [Vehicle Excise Duty impact on Consumer Price Inflation](#), 5 June 2025.

48 James Benford, ["An update and explanation on the public sector finance statistics"](#), National Statistical, 8 October 2025

49 James Benford, ["An update and explanation on the public sector finance statistics"](#), National Statistical, 8 October 2025

50 See for example, The Telegraph, ["Troubled ONS reveals £2bn borrowing blunder"](#), 8 October 2025.

51 Financial Times, ["ONS revises down UK government borrowing by £2bn after VAT error"](#), 8 October 2025

52 Sir Robert Devereaux, [Review of the Office for National Statistics performance and culture](#), 26 June 2025

“Multiple stakeholders expressed strong support for ONS’s work. Emphasis was given to the general quality of the National Accounts, the confidence that most users have in ONS’s consumer price statistics, and approval of the developments made in the use of real-time and other timely indicators, particularly during the covid-19 pandemic. Stakeholders also noted major improvements in ONS’s engagement with users of individual statistical outputs.”⁵³

- 38.** Migration statistics is one area in which the ONS has taken significant strides, with the move away from the patchy International Passenger Survey (IPS) to administrative data.⁵⁴ Transitioning from survey-based to administrative data-based estimates of migration has not been straightforward but, on the whole, users have welcomed the change. The OSR described “significant improvements made to the statistics”,⁵⁵ and the Migration Observatory said in a recent report:

“Overall, the UK has an impressive suite of immigration statistics which has grown and improved over time. There have been many welcome developments, such as a new initiative to link Home Office and HMRC records to understand visa-holders’ earnings and recently developed statistics on how asylum seekers originally entered the UK.”⁵⁶

- 39.** Consumer price statistics are also being transformed through the integration of new data, including on rail fares, second hand car prices, and grocery scanner data.⁵⁷ The OSR has generally spoken positively about the transformation journey, recognising that the ONS has made positive changes that improve the quality of consumer price statistics and that the alternative data sources and methods are “sounder and more suitable” for measuring inflation.⁵⁸

53 See OSR, [Systemic Review of Economic Statistics produced by ONS](#), 27 November 2025

54 Migration statistics are now drawn from the DWP’s Registration and Population Interaction Database (RAPID) and the Home Office’s Borders and Migration (HOBI) dataset. See ONS, [Improving long-term international migration statistics, updating our methods and estimates](#), 18 November 2025

55 OSR, [Office for National Statistics’ transformation of Long-Term International Migration Estimates: OSR progress report](#), 7 December 2023

56 Migration Observatory, [Top Ten Problems in the Evidence Base for Public Debate and Policy-Making on Immigration in the UK in 2025](#), December 2025.

57 ONS, [Introducing grocery scanner data into consumer price statistics](#), April 2025.

58 OSR, [Compliance review of the CPI and CPIH](#), September 2025

40. **CONCLUSION**

While there have been enormous problems at the ONS, we also note that not all the commentary about the ONS's performance has been well-informed, or constructive. Attempts to right long-standing, historical problems have sometimes been used as evidence of the ONS's ineptitude, rather than as necessary steps which help us better understand the UK economy and society. Good news stories, such as the immense transformation of migration statistics or the introduction of new data sources into inflation data, have attracted far less attention.

Focusing on “the work that matters most”: the ONS's new approach

41. Since Sir Ian Diamond's departure and the arrival of Darren Tierney in the role of Permanent Secretary, the ONS has announced a range of cuts to its outputs, concentrating on “delivery of the work that matters most” and “choosing realism over ambition”.⁵⁹ This includes:
- reducing its commitments in health, crime and subnational statistics;
 - narrowing its international work;
 - consolidating its business surveys portfolio;
 - ending work to harmonise data across the UK nations;
 - ending its support for Government ‘missions’; and
 - an overall 10 per cent reduction in outputs.⁶⁰
42. Statistics are divided into a new tiering model of three tiers with Tier One (highest priority economic and population and market sensitive statistics) prioritised for resourcing.⁶¹ It has also adopted a ‘waiting room’, allowing new activity to be held until resource to progress it is available.

59 James Benford, “[Making progress on improving UK economic statistics](#)”, National Statistical, 15 April 2026

60 Letter from the ONS Permanent Secretary Darren Tierney, [13 October 2025](#); [Q63](#) (Emma Rourke)

61 ONS, [How we plan and prioritise our work](#), 15 April 2026

43.

CONCLUSION

The need for immediate consolidation and prioritisation is a legitimate response to the short-term problems the ONS faces. It is essential in rebuilding trust with its key stakeholders. Nonetheless, there is a risk that this approach leads to stagnation, with projects sat in the ONS' "waiting room" indefinitely. Experience has shown that the ambition of the ONS has not always matched its capacity. The "waiting room" cannot be a mechanism for avoiding decisions about priorities, with demands for new work simply parked until an unspecified time in the future. We expect to see clear evidence of projects moving out of, as well as into, the "waiting room".

44.

CONCLUSION

Longer term, the ONS must still evolve to address the pressures it faces, including the need to make greater use of administrative data, the difficulties of relying on traditional surveys, demands for new data in policy responses, and the impact of AI. The organisation will need to demonstrate how it builds from addressing its short-term problems to consider the challenges ahead, showing realistic ambition in seizing the opportunities of the future.

4 Senior Leadership

The role of the National Statistician and senior posts

- 45.** Under the Statistics and Registration Service Act, the National Statistician is the head of the ONS and employed by the UKSA Board.⁶² The postholder is free to delegate functions to others but cannot delegate their status as head of the ONS. The UKSA itself is a Non-Ministerial Department (NMD), the type of arm's length body at furthest distance from their sponsor department, to ensure the independence of the production of national statistics from government. Reflecting this, there are no provisions in the act which establish a permanent reporting relationship between National Statistician and the Cabinet Office as the ONS's sponsor department.
- 46.** Last year, the Cabinet Office accepted recommendations made by Sir Robert Devereux that two main aspects of the National Statistician's role—lead statistical advisor to the UKSA Board and government, and permanent secretary of the ONS—be split, at least temporarily.⁶³ The required combination of outstanding statistical and management expertise was deemed to be too demanding and to limit excessively the pool of candidates for future appointments.
- 47.** On 7 July 2025, an internal expression of interest campaign to fill a newly created Permanent Secretary post at the ONS, open to existing Permanent Secretaries or Directors General only, was launched. Darren Tierney, previously a Director General in the Cabinet Office, was appointed as Permanent Secretary of the Office for National Statistics on a two-year fixed term basis on 5 August 2025 with responsibility for “the day to day running” of the ONS. He is the ONS's Accounting Officer. In the same month, James Benford was appointed as the new Director General for the Economic, Social and Environmental Statistics Group (ESEG) with a view to “driving forward improvements to the quality of ONS's key statistical outputs”.
- 48.** A separate public recruitment process for a new National Statistician was launched in late 2025. The job description described the National Statistician as reporting directly to the Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary and made no reference to its accountability to the UKSA Board. When we

⁶² [Section 5\(2\)\(b\) of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#)

⁶³ Sir Robert Devereux, [Review of the Office for National Statistics performance and culture](#), 26 June 2025

asked Catherine Little CB, Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office, about this, she was not aware that the specification had suggested the post was accountable to her, rather than to the UKSA Board:

I think the job description does refer to the responsibilities under the Act. Ultimately, they are responsible to me, from a permanent secretary line management perspective, but for their performance as the national statistician, they are responsible to the UKSA board.⁶⁴

- 49.** When we pushed her on whether it was the new Permanent Secretary, or the National Statistician who is now responsible for the ONS, she replied twice that the new Permanent Secretary was responsible for day-to-day organisational running, and the Board for oversight. She did not reference the National Statistician. Only in subsequent written evidence did she confirm: “The Acting National Statistician is the CEO and Head of the ONS”.⁶⁵ She also confirmed, at that time, that the National Statistician’s accountabilities would be made clearer via the interview process. With no National Statistician in post at the time of writing, the vast majority of employees now appear to report to its Permanent Secretary, Darren Tierney.
- 50.** In addition, recent job descriptions risk eroding one of the key legislative protections for statistical independence. The National Statistician’s status as a crown appointment, accountable to the UKSA Board, was one of the key mechanisms through which the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 established independence for statistics. Under current job descriptions, responsibility for the ONS, and therefore for the statistics it produces, now rests with a Permanent Secretary appointed by the Government, in a closed process.
- 51.** Professor Denise Lievesley has written to the committee to clarify that, in the short term, she welcomed the appointment of a senior public servant to strengthen the ONS operations, given that the role had “become too broad for one person, being both the professional lead for UK statistics and the overall manager of ONS”.⁶⁶ She proposed that the splitting of the role would free “the National Statistician to lead professionally across the UK Statistical System, supporting statisticians in all four nations and developing a coherent statistical programme that takes account of users inside and outside Government - ie the Chief Executive of UK

64 [Q359](#) (Catherine Little CB)

65 Letter from then Parliamentary Secretary in the Cabinet Office Josh Simons MP and Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary and Civil Service Chief Operating Officer Catherine Little CB, [27 November 2025](#)

66 Letter from Professor Denise Lievesley CBE, [9 December 2025](#)

statistics”.⁶⁷ However, she suggested it was vital to have clarity on the reporting responsibility of the National Statistician, and further, that this accountability should be to the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority.

52. CONCLUSION

The appointment of a Permanent Secretary to run the ONS was a reasonable response to the predicament the ONS was in, particularly as it allowed for swift action to be taken to address the issues facing the organisation. Importantly, though, the current arrangements are temporary. The Permanent Secretary, Darren Tierney, has been appointed to a two-year post, there is no National Statistician at the time of writing, and only an interim Chair of the UKSA Board.

53. CONCLUSION

While there is probably an optimal structure for the organisation, there is none that would fully protect it against poor leadership and management. Conversely, the right appointments can help an organisation succeed despite structural challenges. There is no evidence that the structure of the organisation has, to this point, been detrimental to the success of previous National Statisticians in running the organisation.

54. RECOMMENDATION

As and when a National Statistician is appointed, the Government and the UKSA Board will need to clarify the structure, including who ultimately leads the ONS, and how the arrangement aligns with the relevant legislation.

55. RECOMMENDATION

That the leadership of the ONS is at arm’s length from government is an important protection designed to ensure the integrity of official statistics. Should the Government wish to make permanent changes to the National Statistician’s role leading the ONS, it will have to change legislation. Should it do so, we expect it to demonstrate suitable protection for the integrity of official statistics in any change.

Senior management churn

- 56.** There has been considerable instability at the top of the organisation in recent years. Professor Sir Ian Diamond departed as National Statistician in May 2025.⁶⁸ Emma Rourke took over as Acting National Statistician;

⁶⁷ Letter from Professor Denise Lievesley CBE, [9 December 2025](#)

⁶⁸ UKSA, [Statement: Sir Ian Diamond steps down as National Statistician](#), 9 May 2025

however, she left the organisation just seven months later. Sir Robert Chote announced his early resignation as Chair of the UK Statistics Authority on 7 July 2025, shortly after his first appearance before this committee.⁶⁹ For several months, none of the three Deputy National Statistician roles were filled substantively.⁷⁰

57. The churn was not just of personnel but of roles, with new senior posts emerging and being filled with little due process apparent. For example, Professor Sir Ian Diamond told us that in 2020 a Second Permanent Secretary/Chief Operating Officer role was created because the Cabinet Office wanted a suitable role for a senior official, although he emphasised that the First Civil Service Commissioner was part of the interview process and the postholder was “fabulous”.⁷¹ The post was only filled for a short time before being replaced by a Director of Operations role, filled by expanding an existing role and without a recruitment process.⁷²

58. **CONCLUSION**

Appointing strong leaders for the long-term, with a united vision for the statistical system, might have helped the ONS to navigate its increasingly challenging operating environment. Instead, the ONS and the Cabinet Office seemed to create, advertise for and fill senior posts, while allowing others to remain vacant, with an apparent disregard for strategy or best practice.

Organisational Culture

59. During the course of our inquiry, it became apparent that the ONS had been operating with a high degree of dysfunction and that staff morale was low. From May 2024, Prospect and PCS union members at the ONS were engaged in industrial “action short of a strike” over efforts by management to enforce a 40 per cent office attendance rule. This was finally resolved after two years.⁷³ Further, such was the degree of dysfunction that, in 2023, external consultants were commissioned to conduct an organisational review of the psychological safety of its Senior Civil Service (“SCS”) grades. The ‘Labyrinth’ review, undertaken by external consultants, found that:
- a. the organisation’s governance and decision-making structure was seen as ineffective in setting and communicating strategic priorities;

69 Cabinet Office, UKSA and ONS, [Update on the Leadership of UK Statistics Authority and the Office for National Statistics](#), 7 July 2025

70 ONS, [Mike Keoghan to join Ellison Institute](#), March 2025

71 [Q253](#) (Professor Sir Ian Diamond).

72 [Qq51-57](#) (Emma Rourke; Sir Robert Chote)

73 Civil Service World, [“ONS office attendance rules to be relaxed”](#), 8 April 2026

- b. a resulting lack of strategic clarity helped to drive overprogramming and low delivery confidence;
 - c. there were occasionally over-robust and inconsistent reactions from senior leaders, especially when they were not sighted early on errors or work in development.⁷⁴
60. Sir Ian Diamond told us he had tasked his head of HR with responding to the report but had not closely monitored her progress.⁷⁵ The UKSA Board was not informed of the commissioning of the report nor kept abreast of the ONS's response to it.⁷⁶ Cultural issues within the organisation evidently persisted in the years following. In April 2025 the OSR reported that “despite some encouragement from senior managers, early warning of emerging problems has not always been welcomed”.⁷⁷ This was echoed by Sir Robert Devereux in June 2025: his review found, “a reluctance, at senior levels, to hear and act on difficult news”.⁷⁸ In the course of this inquiry, we heard directly from frustrated ONS staff:

“Many of us within the organisation have been attempting to highlight suggestions and influence approaches and decision making for a very long time and have become tired and frustrated with an apparent deteriorating gulf between the views of some Senior Civil Servants (SCS) and those charged with carrying out the detailed implementation.”

“The ONS needs a massive reset in many ways, least of all the need for significant cultural change for all the [Senior Leadership Team (SLT)]... It is totally unfair to suggest that the problem lay with Sir Ian Diamond and / or just the SLT but ample evidence exists to illustrate most of the SCS Team were complicit in generating the culture of today... An independent root and branch overhaul is much needed as well as external support and scrutiny to ensure delivery of change. Otherwise, the UK social and economic statistics are doomed.”

74 Letter from former acting National Statistician Emma Rourke, [7 July 2025](#) (The report, by Labyrinth Coaching and Consulting, has not been published but has been shared with the committee)

75 [Q288-294](#)

76 [Q292](#) (Professor Sir Ian Diamond); [Q119](#) (Robert Chote)

77 Office for Statistics Regulation, [Systemic Review of ONS Economic Statistics - Interim Report](#), April 2025

78 Sir Robert Devereux, [Review of the Office for National Statistics performance and culture](#), 26 June 2025

“Much of what has been identified by the committee and in related reports is accurate. Sadly, the internal response from senior leadership appears defensive... An example of this is the Devereux Review. Staff were not given the opportunity to participate freely.”⁷⁹

61. We were also told by Ed Humpherson, Head of the OSR, that external stakeholder challenge was rarely welcomed.⁸⁰ In this climate, it can hardly be a surprise that problems with prioritisation and with project management arose. These internal failures were exacerbated by a National Statistician with a very ambitious push to transform and improve the organisation. Ed Humpherson described the cumulation of these factors on the organisation: “once the energy of the pandemic subsided, the gap between the ambition and the capability became increasingly exposed.”⁸¹
62. Since these events, as we have noted above, there has been a significant turnover of senior staff at the ONS. A notable product of this new leadership is the openness with which the organisation now appears to be operating. Various strategies and recovery plans have been published, and we and the wider statistics community have been routinely updated on progress. Significantly, this has also been the case where problems have arisen, such as the recent error with the Labour Force Survey.⁸² This was regrettable, but the ONS was proactive in flagging the issue publicly and making clear the consequences.

63. **CONCLUSION**

An organisational culture in which challenge was apparently resented and in which bad news was not escalated appropriately until it was too late lay at the heart of many of the ONS’s problems. This appears to have been addressed by the senior leadership which has been proactive in communicating not only good news, but also ongoing challenges, with us and with the wider statistics community. We welcome this and expect it to persist as the organisation returns to ‘business as usual’.

79 Quotes from ONS employees, reproduced here anonymously with permission

80 [Q33](#) (Ed Humpherson)

81 [Q91](#) (Ed Humpherson)

82 James Benford, “[Learning from an operational issue temporarily impacting LFS data, in support of our continued recovery](#)”, National Statistical, 19 June 2026

5 The UKSA Board

64. Problems with the production of official statistics have inevitably focussed attention on the ONS. But the ONS is a constituent body of the UKSA, the employer of the National Statistician. The UKSA Board is charged with “promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good”.⁸³ Where issues have arisen with the ONS, questions should be asked of the UKSA Board.

The Board’s interpretation of its role

65. In his evidence to the committee, Sir Robert Chote, former Chair of the UKSA Board, described the role of the Board:

There are different dimensions to this but the key parts of the task of myself and the board are to provide support and challenge to the ONS and the OSR on an ongoing basis. At the same time, as a board with predominantly non-executive members, we cannot and should not try to do the executive’s job for it, blur lines of accountability, and cause a different set of problems by essentially wading in and trying to run the organisation ourselves when we see difficulties.⁸⁴

66. The recent Board appears to have understood that, despite their status as the employers of the National Statistician, they did not have the power to remove the post-holder.⁸⁵ They further understood that they had no say in the creation of key senior leadership posts in ONS, even when those roles were responsible for arguably the two biggest issues facing ONS: surveys and culture. Despite having serious concerns at the unusual appointment of a Director of Operations (which this report explores in more detail at paragraph 57), Sir Robert and his Board were content to allow the National Statistician to make that decision alone.⁸⁶

83 UKSA, [About the UK Statistics Authority](#) [last accessed 24 August 2026]

84 [Q9](#)

85 [Q189](#)

86 [Q53](#)

67. The recent Chair and Board’s interpretation of their role is in contrast to their predecessors. In his pre-appointment hearing, former Chair Sir David Norgrove suggested:

One of the main roles of any chair is to ensure that they have the right chief executive, so ensuring that the National Statistician is fulfilling his role properly is critical. I would have regular meetings with him and aim to get below the surface and understand what is really happening as well as helping him to lead the organisation.⁸⁷

68. Under the chairmanship of both Sir Michael Scholar and Sir Andrew Dilnot, the UKSA Board had a dedicated ‘ONS Board’, which looked in detail at the ONS’s progress in delivering against its strategy, intervening as it saw fit.⁸⁸ Indeed, under Sir Michael, the UKSA Board had a dedicated Deputy Chair with responsibility for the ONS.⁸⁹

The Board’s understanding of the ONS

69. It is also clear that the UKSA Board lacked a full and accurate understanding of the issues facing the ONS for some time. At a meeting shortly after the ONS publicly revealed issues with its labour force data, the UKSA Board revealed it “had not been made aware of the extent to which the [Labour Force Survey] response rate had fallen”.⁹⁰ Perhaps this is why Professor Lievesley wrote in early 2024: “the way in which issues and papers are presented to the Board do not represent issues in the most frank manner or seek steers and advice from members. This can have the effect of masking the true extent of persistent challenges and risks facing the organisation and the statistical system as a whole”.⁹¹
70. We also heard that the Board uncovered the ‘Labyrinth review’ (see paragraph 59), which was critical of the ONS’s senior leadership, almost by accident. Sir Robert was told of the report (written in March 2023), not by his most senior executives, but instead by a staff member in a private conversation over a year after the report was produced.⁹² We are concerned that insufficient scrutiny was placed by the Board on the decision not to

87 Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Pre-appointment hearing: Chairman of the UK Statistics Authority, 24 January 2017, [Q26](#)

88 Minutes from the ONS Board, available to July 2014, are available [here](#)

89 Previous UKSA Annual Reports and Accounts refer to the Deputy Chair with responsibility for the ONS. See for example: UKSA, [2008/09 Annual Report and Accounts](#), July 2009

90 UKSA, Board minutes, [26 October 2023](#)

91 Professor Denise Lievesley CBE, [Independent Review of the UK Statistics Authority](#), March 2024. See also [UKSA18](#) (Better Statistics CIC)

92 [Q144](#)

brief them on the review, and were surprised that Sir Robert did not insist on a Board discussion of the report after having discovered it. We see no evidence that the Board ever discussed the review.

- 71.** We found that the Board lacked a detailed understanding even on issues it discussed regularly. As this report has described, one of the key problems in the development of the TLFS was confusion about the project's scope. When we spoke to Sir Robert Chote about the TLFS, he still appeared unaware that the initial scope for the project had been a shorter, digital LFS equivalent.⁹³
- 72.** Historical organisational charts reveal that in the early years of the UKSA the Board had a small, dedicated staff with a direct reporting line to the Chair. More recently, this team appears to have been moved to sit under the ONS's head of finance: the direct reporting line it once enjoyed to the Chair has been replaced by several layers of reporting through the ONS Permanent Secretary.⁹⁴
- 73.** It should be noted that the UKSA Board was not operating at full strength for periods. Sir Robert Chote also told the committee that he had faced challenges in the appointment of his non-executive Board members:

In the last couple of years, it has been something of a struggle to maintain a full complement of non-executive members despite excellent candidates being available. The previous Government [prior to the July 2024 General Election] refused to renew members beyond their initial three-year term (contrary to good governance practice which would have allowed at least one additional term) and it took a significant period to complete the appointment process for our three most recent arrivals as the process was delayed by the general election.⁹⁵

- 74.** Sir Ian agreed that the Cabinet Office's approach to appointments to the Board had weakened it:

Certainly when I joined the board—I was on the board before I became the National Statistician—I felt initially that there were people there then, who had been on the board for some time, who really had a grasp of things and who I was learning from. In the last couple of years, two or three really good—in my opinion—non-execs were

93 See exchanges: [Qq156-157](#) and [Qq190-192](#).

94 See for example, UKSA, 2011/12 Annual Report & Resource Accounts (p.18), which describes the Secretariat's direct reporting line to the Chair. Under the UKSA's most recent [organisation chart](#), the Board's Secretariat is headed by a Deputy Director who reports to the Director responsible for Finance Planning and Performance, who in turn reports to the Permanent Secretary.

95 UKSA ([UKSA26](#))

stopped after one period and not renewed, simply because that was the policy. I do not think that is right. I think that had they been there, there could have been greater scrutiny.⁹⁶

75.

CONCLUSION

The Board of the UKSA exists to oversee the production of reliable statistics. That the Board seemed unaware of issues within the ONS until they reached crisis point, notably, though not only, with the Labour Force Survey, suggests it failed in its core purpose. Its reluctance to involve itself in the ONS operations appears to have extended to a lack of oversight, of scrutiny, and of challenge. The Board was repeatedly taken by surprise by problems with the ONS's culture and its outputs. It is difficult to understand why the Board, who must have understood that they were not receiving full and accurate accounts from their executive as far back as 2023, did not move more quickly to address the problem. They would have been well within their rights to demand copies of damning reports on culture and closely monitor the ONS's response. At any point, they could have made clear that senior executives no longer held the Board's confidence. They might have, as other boards before them had, reported publicly to Parliament about their concerns. Instead, they waited until early 2025 to jointly commission with the Cabinet Office an independent review of the ONS, a review that set out things a board should already have known. The Board's delay and inaction have cost the statistical system, as well as the very many of us who depend on official data.

76.

CONCLUSION

The Cabinet Office's decision to disregard the Chair's request to reappoint experienced non-executive directors significantly weakened the UKSA Board at a crucial time. It is the responsibility of the Cabinet Office to ensure an UKSA Board that is equipped to perform its role, not least by ensuring that it has a full complement of appointments and proper and timely succession planning to maintain capability as its membership evolves.

Rebuilding the Board

77. The recruitment of a new Chair of the UK Statistics Authority has been paused by the Cabinet Office.⁹⁷ Although a competition was launched in mid-2025 following Sir Robert Chote's decision to step down, ministers subsequently closed the process, citing the need to sequence senior

96 [Q296](#)

97 Letter from the then Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister regarding the appointment of the new Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, [4 December 2025](#)

appointments and to await the conclusions of our inquiry into the work of the UKSA. The Government indicated that it wished to appoint a new National Statistician first, with the Chair recruitment to be relaunched thereafter.⁹⁸

78. In the meantime, Penny Young continues as Interim Chair. In October 2025, under her leadership, the UKSA Board set out its priorities in five defined areas:

- Oversight of the ONS recovery plans;
- Foresight;
- Engagement;
- System-wide leadership; and
- 2031 Census

In setting out this revised strategy, the Board recognised the challenging circumstances and accepted “its share of responsibility”, saying it was “acting urgently to restore trust.”⁹⁹

79. We also note that the UKSA and the Cabinet Office have been working on a new Framework Document which will outline each organisation’s responsibilities and set out how they should work together. This document will supersede the current Memorandum of Understanding which was published in 2020.¹⁰⁰

80. CONCLUSION

We are grateful to Penny Young for her work as interim Chair of the UKSA since September 2025 and her role in leading recovery plans for the ONS. We find the priorities set out by the Board to be a balanced mix of recovery and building for the future in a way that will rebuild trust. We are particularly pleased to see a focus on technological resilience and legacy system reduction.

98 Letter from the then Chief Secretary to the Prime Minister regarding the appointment of the new Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, [4 December 2025](#)

99 UKSA, [Strategic priorities for the UK statistical system](#), October 2025

100 UK Statistics Authority and Cabinet Office, [Memorandum of understanding: Cabinet Office and UK Statistics Authority](#), 30 April 2020

81.

RECOMMENDATION

It appears that the appointment of a new National Statistician will precede the appointment of a new permanent Chair of the UKSA. This means the appointment of the next National Statistician has been overseen by the interim Chair, and, while the role is split with the ONS Permanent Secretary, will have to ensure clear responsibilities and lines of accountability for both. That the Government has left responsibility for this in the hands of an interim appointment is regrettable. A permanent chair of the UKSA should be appointed as soon as possible.

82.

CONCLUSION

The UKSA is responsible for overseeing the work of the ONS, but it is the Cabinet Office's responsibility to ensure that it is equipped to do so. We are pleased to see the Board of the UKSA is fully constituted and that the process to ensure timely succession for departing members is in place. It is important that this is maintained, even as impetus provided by the recent crises fades.

83.

RECOMMENDATION

An updated Framework Document should make clear the Cabinet Office's responsibility for ensuring a properly functioning UKSA Board.

Office for Statistics Regulation

84. The Office for Statistics Regulation's ("OSR") role is to assure UK statistics so it would be reasonable to expect that it would have flagged concerns about the ONS's performance to the UKSA Board. Its Director General, Ed Humpherson, told us that the OSR had been active in its scrutiny of economic data. The OSR had flagged issues with declining response rates as far back as March 2020, and had written in 2021 to the Director of National Accounts about the problems with a lack of investment in the core data collection for business surveys, a key input into business statistics.¹⁰¹ In July 2023, following a period in which the decline of response rates had accelerated during the pandemic, the OSR reported again that it was concerned that declining response rates meant there was an increasing reliance on weighting,¹⁰² which might not be sustainable.¹⁰³

101 [Q4](#)

102 Weighting refers to the use of other statistical methods to estimate the missing responses due to declining response rates to ensure the data are an accurate representation of what the survey is trying to measure. In this example there was concern that changes in population data were not being taken into account, causing a risk that estimates were becoming less representative of their true values.

103 OSR, [Progress report on TLFS](#), July 2023.

85. It is notable, however, that much of the original coverage of the ONS’s travails was driven not by the concerns raised by the OSR but by comments made by representatives of institutions such as the Bank of England and the Office for Budgetary Responsibility. When the Treasury Committee launched its brief inquiry into the ONS statistics in late 2024, its letter to the National Statistician cited concerns raised by the Governor of the Bank of England, representatives of the Monetary Policy Committee, and the Office for Budgetary Responsibility, and made no reference to any of the OSR’s work on economic data.¹⁰⁴ Neither did media coverage.¹⁰⁵
86. In July 2024, the OSR launched a review to gauge “how effectively and efficiently the economic statistics produced by ONS meet existing and emerging stakeholder needs”.¹⁰⁶ Its interim report, published in April 2025, found:
- a. issues with data quality, administrative data and user engagement, across the suite of economic data;
 - b. that users of data did not believe the ONS had a clear vision for its economic data; and
 - c. resource pressures on economic statistics and on the ONS more generally have intensified in the last two years.¹⁰⁷
87. The OSR did identify problems at the ONS. But conclusions and recommendations were sometimes hidden within dense reports, and it appears to have taken the OSR some time to draw together its various findings across different outputs and programmes into an overarching narrative about the state of the ONS. It appears to have lacked the profile to have successfully communicated the urgency of some of the issues to the UKSA Board.¹⁰⁸
88. **CONCLUSION**
As the regulator for UK statistics, it would have been reasonable to expect the Office for Statistics Regulation to have sounded the alarm over issues such as the problems with the Labour Force Survey more loudly than was the case. It was ultimately concerns from consumers of statistics such as the Bank of England, the Office for Budget Responsibility, and HM Treasury that prompted action.

104 Letter from Treasury Committee Chair to Professor Sir Ian Diamond regarding the Labour Force Survey, [November 2024](#)

105 See, for example, Financial Times, “[Faulty data leaves Britain in the dark](#)”, 2 April 2025

106 OSR, [Systemic Review Outline: Economic Statistics](#), July 2024.

107 OSR, [Systemic Review of ONS Economic Statistics](#), April 2025.

108 See, for example, [UKSA10](#) (Med Confidential), [UKSA14](#) (Welsh Government) and [UKSA18](#) (Better Statistics CIC)

89.

RECOMMENDATION

The OSR's responsibility for escalating concerns to the UKSA Board with greater urgency needs to be made clearer and its leadership held accountable for doing so. While it is proper that the OSR works through the UKSA Board, this committee remains an appropriate mechanism through which concerns can also be raised.

The UKSA's structure

90. There is not a consensus among stakeholders about how Government should respond to recent issues. Several individuals have suggested small tweaks to the UKSA's founding legislation; for example, more clearly separating the UKSA's production and regulation function.¹⁰⁹ A small number are in favour of root and branch reform: a return of the ONS to a Ministerial Department, the disbanding of the UKSA, and a new home for the regulatory function.¹¹⁰ The Royal Statistical Society, Sense about Science, the Royal Economic Society and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, however, caution against this approach. They told us:

the independence of the statistical system is a vitally important principle – and it is important that this is protected. The UN Principles of Official Statistics set out a vision for official statistics systems that provide impartial, reliable information for the public good. It also sets out that their responsibility should be to all users equally – and not just their governments' users.¹¹¹

91.

CONCLUSION

The integrity of official statistics is underpinned by the independence of their production. International experience demonstrates the potential consequences of that statistical independence being undermined.¹¹² Politically compromised statistics can have real economic consequences, including higher borrowing costs, policy errors and lasting reputational damage.

109 See, for example, [UKSA18](#) (Better Statistics CIC), UKSA 21 (Simon Briscoe), UKSA33 (Dr Arthur Barnett)

110 See, for example, [UKSA31](#) (Simon Briscoe, Richard Alldritt, and Bernard Silverman)

111 Letter from Professor Sir John Aston, President, Royal Statistical Society, Tracey Brown OBE, Director, Sense about Science, Professor Imran Rasul OBE, President, Royal Economic Society, and David Aikman, Director, National Institute of Economic and Social Research, regarding the independence of the UK's statistical system, [11 September 2025](#)

112 In Argentina in the late 2000s, political interference in inflation statistics led to implausibly low official inflation rates, widespread loss of trust, and the emergence of alternative "unofficial" measures used by citizens, investors and even provincial governments. This damaged Argentina's economic credibility and complicated debt

92.

RECOMMENDATION

The principle that official statistics are produced in a system designed to protect from political intervention remains an important one. We do not recommend changes to the relevant legislation nor to the structure of the UKSA or the ONS at this stage.

contracts and wage negotiations. In Greece in 2016, the head of the national statistical institute faced criminal charges for producing estimates of his country's deficit that revised the government of the day's figures upwards.

6 Funding

93. Funding is central to the relationship between the Government, the UKSA and the ONS. As a Non-Ministerial Department, the UKSA negotiates its budget directly with HM Treasury rather than via the Cabinet Office. The financial accounts do not present a clear picture of the adequacy of the funding settlement. The then minister Josh Simons MP told us “when I dug into the historical funding of the ONS in recent decades, I was quite surprised at the generosity of past settlements”, citing an average annual real rate of growth in the ONS’s budget of 6.5% since 2015-16, a more generous uplift than those for the NHS over the same period.¹¹³ In contrast, the Royal Statistical Society noted that the ONS faced “constrained resources.”¹¹⁴ This chimes with the view of the former National Statistician, Professor Sir Ian Diamond, who said to us “do I believe that for a national statistics institute trying to deliver what it is trying to deliver, it is underfunded? Yes, 100%”.¹¹⁵ In Sir Robert Devereux’s view, this underfunding was a direct consequence of a failure to prioritise.¹¹⁶
94. The ONS budget has been separated into core funding and that earmarked (‘hypothecated’) for specific projects. For example, as well as its core funding, the ONS has received significant sums specifically to conduct the Census for England and Wales every decade. Money was also specifically allocated to the covid-19 Infection Survey and other projects such as the Integrated Data Service (IDS) (see paragraphs 29 to 34). Once this has been stripped out, core funding has been fairly flat for most of this period (see Table 1). However, the ONS’s operating costs have not (as we discussed in relation to the Labour Force Survey. See paragraphs 19 to 28). Sir Ian Diamond told us:

“When you take that hypothecated money out, you have a relatively small amount left. You could not prioritise. I would have liked to have taken a large chunk of money from some of those programmes to prioritise other things, but that was not possible with the way the funding in the spending review came about.”¹¹⁷

113 [Q387](#)

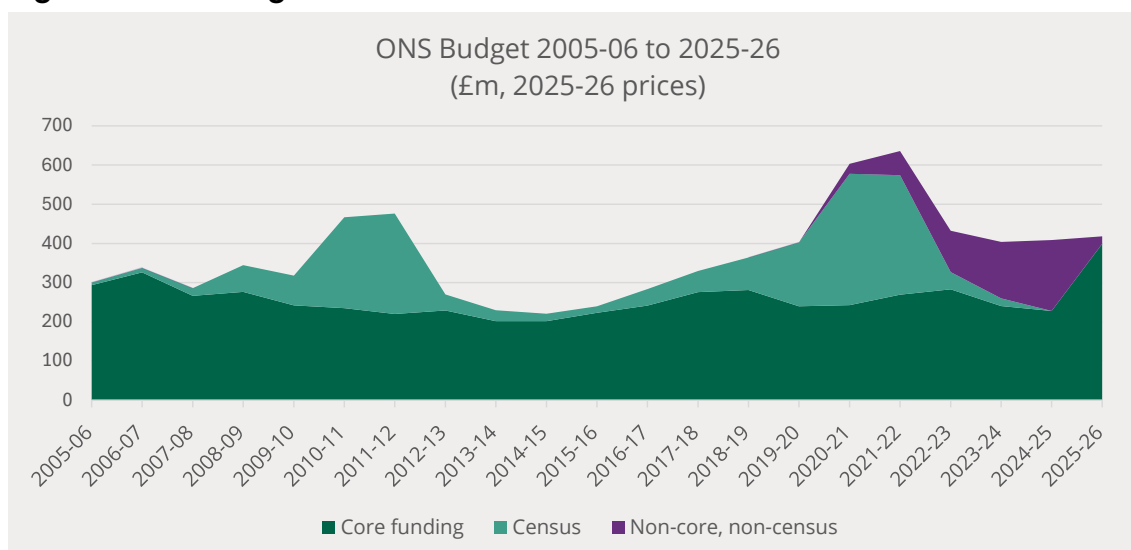
114 [UKSA24](#) (Royal Statistical Society)

115 [Q208](#)

116 Sir Robert Devereux, [Review of the Office for National Statistics performance and culture](#), 26 June 2025

117 [Q208](#)

Figure 2: ONS Budget 2005–06 to 2025–26



95. Sir Robert Devereux’s review found that the internal processes of the ONS were largely to blame for failures in this area, citing that the organisational interest in the ‘new’ might have been better managed “if ONS had a stronger system of planning and budgeting”.¹¹⁸ This was exemplified by the situation when the four leaders of the principal teams within the ONS were invited to make their own decisions on how best to balance their final budgets, despite the fact that collaboration was required across the teams to deliver each core economic statistic. Emma Rourke, the former interim National Statistician, acknowledged that the ONS was ‘over-programmed’, stating that the executive board had failed to reach a consensus during the planning process about removing activities from the portfolio, in order to match activity to resources; within the ONS there was an embedded culture of “not being an organisation that likes stopping things.”¹¹⁹
96. Much of the ringfencing has now been removed, in principle allowing resource to be moved between different areas more easily. However, HM Treasury has been explicit about what it expects the ONS to prioritise.¹²⁰ In the Spending Review the ONS was instructed to prioritise certain core economic statistics, and after that, assuming money was available, statistics to support the ‘mission government’-related priorities (now dropped. See paragraphs 41 to 42).¹²¹ By implication, other areas were to be deprioritised.

118 Sir Robert Devereux, [Review of the Office for National Statistics performance and culture](#), 26 June 2025

119 [Qq168-169](#)

120 See letter from the ONS Permanent Secretary, [13 October 2025](#), Annex E, paras 24-30

121 Letter from the ONS Permanent Secretary, [13 October 2025](#), Annex E, para 24

97.

CONCLUSION

While all similar public sector organisations can make a case for increased funding to deliver more, we conclude that poor internal processes, particularly around prioritisation, were more of an issue for organisational failings than the total funding envelope. Resource constraints were exacerbated by the failure to prioritise the production of core statistics adequately.

98.

RECOMMENDATION

The removal of much of the ringfencing around specific pots of money is sensible. However, if demand for statistics from government is not accompanied by discussion about resource or trade-offs, it will mean little. We expect the revised Framework Document between the Cabinet Office and the UKSA to include clear mechanisms to reconcile demands for statistics with funding to provide them.

99.

RECOMMENDATION

To support better prioritisation, we reiterate the recommendation made in the Office of Statistics Regulation's report on the State of the Statistical System 2026, that the National Statistician, once appointed, should publish a baseline view of capacity across the statistical system. This should include workforce data and identify any relevant skills gaps and constraints. It should be updated regularly. This will ensure that future discussions about funding, prioritisation, and demands for new statistics, are supported by a clear picture of existing resources.

Conclusions and recommendations

Issues with the UKSA's performance

1. The transition from the Labour Force Survey to the Transformed Labour Force Survey has not been handled well enough and the result has been significant reputational damage to the ONS. Project management for the Transformed Labour Force Survey was poor. Churn amongst Senior Responsible Owners was notable and the ONS seemed to lose sight of the original aim for a slimmed down survey to supplement greater use of administrative data. The project appears to be back on track but only following a reset. (Conclusion, Paragraph 26)
2. Until the transition to the Transformed Labour Force Survey, the Labour Force Survey remains the primary measure of UK employment and considerable efforts have been taken to improve its robustness. We are pleased to see that response rates have returned to near the pre-pandemic rate. However, achieving this appears to have been resource intensive. The sustainable solution remains a successful transition to the Transformed Labour Force Survey, with a shorter, more focussed survey component supplementing administrative data, as soon as possible. (Conclusion, Paragraph 27)
3. The UKSA should keep us informed of progress towards the successful delivery of the Transformed Labour Force Survey on a quarterly basis. The UKSA and the Cabinet Office should also update us on efforts to explore the consequences of mandatory completion of the Labour Force and other surveys to date in their responses to this report. (Recommendation, Paragraph 28)
4. The Integrated Data System's aim of providing a growing range of data from across government to a range of users via a single access point remains laudable. While there are legitimate questions about the quality of project management within the ONS, much of the problem lay with the inability or unwillingness of government departments to allow access to their data; an issue that goes beyond the IDS project. UK governments continue to be unwilling or unable to ensure departments and agencies share data sufficiently. (Conclusion, Paragraph 33)

5. The Cabinet Office and the UKSA should update us on the long-term plan to improve data sharing across government in light of the failure of the Integrated Data System in its response to this report and quarterly thereafter. In particular, the Government should clarify where responsibility for integration of the work of the IDS with the National Data Library's Kickstarter Programme now sits, following the closure of the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). (Recommendation, Paragraph 34)
6. While there have been enormous problems at the ONS, we also note that not all the commentary about the ONS's performance has been well-informed, or constructive. Attempts to right long-standing, historical problems have sometimes been used as evidence of the ONS's ineptitude, rather than as necessary steps which help us better understand the UK economy and society. Good news stories, such as the immense transformation of migration statistics or the introduction of new data sources into inflation data, have attracted far less attention. (Conclusion, Paragraph 40)
7. The need for immediate consolidation and prioritisation is a legitimate response to the short-term problems the ONS faces. It is essential in rebuilding trust with its key stakeholders. Nonetheless, there is a risk that this approach leads to stagnation, with projects sat in the ONS' "waiting room" indefinitely. Experience has shown that the ambition of the ONS has not always matched its capacity. The "waiting room" cannot be a mechanism for avoiding decisions about priorities, with demands for new work simply parked until an unspecified time in the future. We expect to see clear evidence of projects moving out of, as well as into, the "waiting room". (Conclusion, Paragraph 43)
8. Longer term, the ONS must still evolve to address the pressures it faces, including the need to make greater use of administrative data, the difficulties of relying on traditional surveys, demands for new data in policy responses, and the impact of AI. The organisation will need to demonstrate how it builds from addressing its short-term problems to consider the challenges ahead, showing realistic ambition in seizing the opportunities of the future. (Conclusion, Paragraph 44)

Senior Leadership

9. The appointment of a Permanent Secretary to run the ONS was a reasonable response to the predicament the ONS was in, particularly as it allowed for swift action to be taken to address the issues facing the organisation. Importantly, though, the current arrangements are temporary. The

Permanent Secretary, Darren Tierney, has been appointed to a two-year post, there is no National Statistician at the time of writing, and only an interim Chair of the UKSA Board. (Conclusion, Paragraph 52)

10. While there is probably an optimal structure for the organisation, there is none that would fully protect it against poor leadership and management. Conversely, the right appointments can help an organisation succeed despite structural challenges. There is no evidence that the structure of the organisation has, to this point, been detrimental to the success of previous National Statisticians in running the organisation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 53)
11. As and when a National Statistician is appointed, the Government and the UKSA Board will need to clarify the structure, including who ultimately leads the ONS, and how the arrangement aligns with the relevant legislation. (Recommendation, Paragraph 54)
12. That the leadership of the ONS is at arm's length from government is an important protection designed to ensure the integrity of official statistics. Should the Government wish to make permanent changes to the National Statistician's role leading the ONS, it will have to change legislation. Should it do so, we expect it to demonstrate suitable protection for the integrity of official statistics in any change. (Recommendation, Paragraph 55)
13. Appointing strong leaders for the long-term, with a united vision for the statistical system, might have helped the ONS to navigate its increasingly challenging operating environment. Instead, the ONS and the Cabinet Office seemed to create, advertise for and fill senior posts, while allowing others to remain vacant, with an apparent disregard for strategy or best practice. (Conclusion, Paragraph 58)
14. An organisational culture in which challenge was apparently resented and in which bad news was not escalated appropriately until it was too late lay at the heart of many of the ONS's problems. This appears to have been addressed by the senior leadership which has been proactive in communicating not only good news, but also ongoing challenges, with us and with the wider statistics community. We welcome this and expect it to persist as the organisation returns to 'business as usual'. (Conclusion, Paragraph 63)

The UKSA Board

15. The Board of the UKSA exists to oversee the production of reliable statistics. That the Board seemed unaware of issues within the ONS until they reached crisis point, notably, though not only, with the Labour Force Survey, suggests it failed in its core purpose. Its reluctance to involve itself in the

ONS operations appears to have extended to a lack of oversight, of scrutiny, and of challenge. The Board was repeatedly taken by surprise by problems with the ONS's culture and its outputs. It is difficult to understand why the Board, who must have understood that they were not receiving full and accurate accounts from their executive as far back as 2023, did not move more quickly to address the problem. They would have been well within their rights to demand copies of damning reports on culture and closely monitor the ONS's response. At any point, they could have made clear that senior executives no longer held the Board's confidence. They might have, as other boards before them had, reported publicly to Parliament about their concerns. Instead, they waited until early 2025 to jointly commission with the Cabinet Office an independent review of the ONS, a review that set out things a board should already have known. The Board's delay and inaction have cost the statistical system, as well as the very many of us who depend on official data. (Conclusion, Paragraph 75)

16. The Cabinet Office's decision to disregard the Chair's request to reappoint experienced non-executive directors significantly weakened the UKSA Board at a crucial time. It is the responsibility of the Cabinet Office to ensure an UKSA Board that is equipped to perform its role, not least by ensuring that it has a full complement of appointments and proper and timely succession planning to maintain capability as its membership evolves. (Conclusion, Paragraph 76)
17. We are grateful to Penny Young for her work as interim Chair of the UKSA since September 2025 and her role in leading recovery plans for the ONS. We find the priorities set out by the Board to be a balanced mix of recovery and building for the future in a way that will rebuild trust. We are particularly pleased to see a focus on technological resilience and legacy system reduction. (Conclusion, Paragraph 80)
18. It appears that the appointment of a new National Statistician will precede the appointment of a new permanent Chair of the UKSA. This means the appointment of the next National Statistician has been overseen by the interim Chair, and, while the role is split with the ONS Permanent Secretary, will have to ensure clear responsibilities and lines of accountability for both. That the Government has left responsibility for this in the hands of an interim appointment is regrettable. A permanent chair of the UKSA should be appointed as soon as possible. (Recommendation, Paragraph 81)
19. The UKSA is responsible for overseeing the work of the ONS, but it is the Cabinet Office's responsibility to ensure that it is equipped to do so. We are pleased to see the Board of the UKSA is fully constituted and that the process to ensure timely succession for departing members is in place. It is important that this is maintained, even as impetus provided by the recent crises fades. (Conclusion, Paragraph 82)

20. An updated Framework Document should make clear the Cabinet Office's responsibility for ensuring a properly functioning UKSA Board. (Recommendation, Paragraph 83)
21. As the regulator for UK statistics, it would have been reasonable to expect the Office for Statistics Regulation to have sounded the alarm over issues such as the problems with the Labour Force Survey more loudly than was the case. It was ultimately concerns from consumers of statistics such as the Bank of England, the Office for Budget Responsibility, and HM Treasury that prompted action. (Conclusion, Paragraph 88)
22. The OSR's responsibility for escalating concerns to the UKSA Board with greater urgency needs to be made clearer and its leadership held accountable for doing so. While it is proper that the OSR works through the UKSA Board, this committee remains an appropriate mechanism through which concerns can also be raised. (Recommendation, Paragraph 89)
23. The integrity of official statistics is underpinned by the independence of their production. International experience demonstrates the potential consequences of that statistical independence being undermined. Politically compromised statistics can have real economic consequences, including higher borrowing costs, policy errors and lasting reputational damage. (Conclusion, Paragraph 91)
24. The principle that official statistics are produced in a system designed to protect from political intervention remains an important one. We do not recommend changes to the relevant legislation nor to the structure of the UKSA or the ONS at this stage. (Recommendation, Paragraph 92)

Funding

25. While all similar public sector organisations can make a case for increased funding to deliver more, we conclude that poor internal processes, particularly around prioritisation, were more of an issue for organisational failings than the total funding envelope. Resource constraints were exacerbated by the failure to prioritise the production of core statistics adequately. (Conclusion, Paragraph 97)
26. The removal of much of the ringfencing around specific pots of money is sensible. However, if demand for statistics from government is not accompanied by discussion about resource or trade-offs, it will mean little. We expect the revised Framework Document between the Cabinet Office and the UKSA to include clear mechanisms to reconcile demands for statistics with funding to provide them. (Recommendation, Paragraph 98)

27. To support better prioritisation, we reiterate the recommendation made in the Office of Statistics Regulation's report on the State of the Statistical System 2026, that the National Statistician, once appointed, should publish a baseline view of capacity across the statistical system. This should include workforce data and identify any relevant skills gaps and constraints. It should be updated regularly. This will ensure that future discussions about funding, prioritisation, and demands for new statistics, are supported by a clear picture of existing resources. (Recommendation, Paragraph 99)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 8 September 2026

Members present

Simon Hoare (in the Chair)

Markus Campbell-Savours

Charlotte Cane

Sam Carling

Peter Lamb

John Lamont

Luke Taylor

The work of the UK Statistics Authority

Draft report (*The work of the UK Statistics Authority*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 99 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 13 October at 9.30am

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 1 July 2025

Sir Robert Chote, Chair, UK Statistics Authority; **Emma Rourke**, Interim National Statistician, UK Statistics Authority and Office for National Statistics; **Ed Humpherson**, Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation

[Q1–89](#)

Tuesday 8 July 2025

Sir Robert Chote, Chair, UK Statistics Authority; **Emma Rourke**, Interim National Statistician, UK Statistics Authority and Office for National Statistics; **Ed Humpherson**, Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation

[Q90–202](#)

Tuesday 9 September 2025

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Former National Statistician

[Q203–328](#)

Monday 3 November 2025

Josh Simons MP, Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office;
Catherine Little CB, Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office, Cabinet Office

[Q329–420](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

UKSA numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Dr Robin Hadley (Associate Lecturer , Manchester Metropolitan University); and Professor Daniel Muijs (Professor of Education and Head of the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work , Queen's University Belfast)	UKSA0013
2	Professor Lisa Purse (Professor of Film, University of Reading); and Dr Andrew Philip (Knowledge Exchange Fellow and Lecturer in Filmmaking, University of Reading)	UKSA0022
3	Simon Briscoe; Richard Alldritt; and Bernard Silverman	UKSA0031
4	Barnett, Dr Arthur	UKSA0033
5	Barnett, Dr Arthur (Retired, Retired Government statistician)	UKSA0025
6	Better Statistics CIC	UKSA0018
7	Briscoe, Simon	UKSA0021
8	British Society for Population Studies	UKSA0015
9	Care England	UKSA0005
10	Carnegie UK	UKSA0023
11	Casey, Bernard (Professor, SOcial ECONomic REsearch)	UKSA0009
12	Centre for Longitudinal Study Information and User Support (CeLSIUS)	UKSA0017
13	Champion, Prof Tony (Emeritus Professor of Population Geography, Newcastle University)	UKSA0020
14	King, Thomas	UKSA0004
15	MP, Preet Kaur Gill	UKSA0030
16	Market Research Society	UKSA0007
17	Richards, Notayesmanseconomics Shaun (Economist, Notayesmanseconomics)	UKSA0016

18	Royal Statistical Society (RSS)	<u>UKSA0024</u>
19	Scottish Government - Office of the Chief Economic Adviser (OCEA)	<u>UKSA0008</u>
20	Sikh Federation (UK)	<u>UKSA0027</u>
21	Sullivan, Professor Alice (Professor of Sociology, University College London (UCL))	<u>UKSA0003</u>
22	The Board of Deputies of British Jews	<u>UKSA0028</u>
23	UK Data Service (Census)	<u>UKSA0019</u>
24	UK Government - Cabinet Office	<u>UKSA0032</u>
25	UK Statistics Authority	<u>UKSA0026</u>
26	Welsh Government	<u>UKSA0014</u>
27	Women's Budget Group	<u>UKSA0002</u>
28	medConfidential	<u>UKSA0010</u>

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2026–27

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Pre-appointment Hearing: The Commissioner for Public Appointments	HC 246
1st Special	Ministerial Statements and the Ministerial Code: Government Response	HC 178

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
4th	Ministerial Statements and the Ministerial Code	HC 1036
2nd	Review of the 2024 general election	HC 487
1st	Appointment of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman	HC 781
3rd	Appointment of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists	HC 1263
2nd Special	Review of the 2024 general election: Government and the Electoral Commission responses	HC 1348
1st Special	Transforming the UK's Evidence Base: Government, UKSA, ONS and OSR responses	HC 757