

SJIAOS Discussion Platform

Launch of fourth discussion topic: Pre-release of official statistics

The fourth discussion on the discussion platform centres around statements taken from the article by Andreas Georgiou in this issue of the Journal.

‘Pre-release access to official statistics is not consistent with professional ethics’

Pre-release practice to official statistics varies across and within countries, with pre-release practiced widely: pre-release access by government and pre-release access by the press. In defending their policies and practices countries argue for and against specific pre-release options. Relevant questions in this discussion will be for example if advertised pre-release access by policy makers preclude the possibility of pressure (or the perception thereof) on the independent production of statistics to serve political/policy interests? Is pre-release to government impartial when it gives at least a head start to the party in power relative to its opposition? Does pre-release access by the press adequately protect the level playing field for market participants, and does not lead to profiteering by some? Do the benefits of pre-release outweigh the costs associated with the risks? Is there a need for strengthening the existing movement away from pre-release access and a tightening of the guidelines in codes of practice for official statistics?

Other ongoing discussions on the SJIAOS Discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com)

The extra discussion: Crises, politics and statistics: Official statistics in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

This special discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com) focusses on the roles of Official Statistics in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. It states the important role that official statistics will have to play in the phase of world-wide recovery from the pandemic and the rapid investments and actions that are needed to fulfil properly this role. It also

emphasis the importance of investing in achieving the objectives of the SDG indicators, the need to develop new statistics and using modern data sources, and last but not least the establishment of a new role of official statistics in the public statistical infrastructure.

The third discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform launched in March 2020, focusses on the Population and Housing Censuses.

You are invited to take position on questions *like if the census should be defined by its unique methodology or are the outputs the main element of its definition? If the criteria of individual enumeration, universality, simultaneity, defined periodicity, and capacity to produce small-area statistics, are still that relevant as essential features of a census? On the necessity of a census methodology the theoretical soundness of the register based census is questioned. The readers are also invited to give an opinion on to what extent the limited use of census results, in particular for evidence-based policy making, is still worth the huge cost?*

The second discussion on the discussion platform, kicked off in December 2019, is still open and waiting for more contributions.

The second discussion centres around statements taken from an article by Walter Radermacher ‘Governing-by-the-numbers/Statistical Governance; Reflections on the future of official statistics in a digital and globalised society’, published in the December 2019 issue (Vol 36, number 4).

The main statement you are invited to react on is: *Data are given – Facts are produced: In the long run trust in official statistics can only be maintained based on a continual striving for the best quality, with leadership based on profound knowledge of the business and with customer orientation as the supreme orientation. This*

implies that statistical products must meet the expectations of users in their design, production and communication.

The first discussion, was kicked off in September 2019 and is also still open for contributions.

The first discussion opened in September 2019: ‘Can un-official statistics help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Global Indicator Framework and how can Official Statistics play a role in this process?’ Based on statements taken from an article by MacFeeley and Nastav ‘You say you want a (data) revolution’ ‘A proposal to use unofficial statistics for the SDG Global Indicator Framework’, that was published in Vol 35, number 3.

You are invited to discuss on the main or detailed statement(s). The main statement is ‘*Official Statistics should consider switching from a purely production or manufacturing based model to a mixed business model: one combining the manufacture of official statistics with the franchising of production under license.*’ *First discussion: ‘Can un-official statistics help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Global Indicator Framework and how can Official Statistics play a role in this process.’*

You are invited to contribute on: www.officialstatistics.com

Some background on the SJIAOS discussion platform

In August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics (SJIAOS) launched the new on-line platform for discussion on topics of significant relevance for official statistics (www.officialstatistics.com) as part of the SJIAOS website. The discussion platform invites you to con-

tribute to important discussions at a time of your own choosing.

The ISI World Statistics Conference, the IAOS conference and Journals like the *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, are the traditional platforms where views on new developments and important issues in Official Statistics are exchanged. However, conferences occur only a few times per year, journal issues are released maybe four times per year and typically only reach specific interest groups. This new on-line discussion platform of the SJIAOS is an opportunity for anyone working or interested in official statistics, to contribute to topical discussions, at your own convenience.

Every three months there is a new discussion item. With each issue of the SJIAOS, a new discussion topic will be launched via a leading article. Statements from this article will then invite you to post your opinion and arguments. Each discussion will run for a year and be closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s). When fully up and running (after four journal issues), there will be four different discussions topics open for your contribution at any one time.

The discussion platform can be found on a prominent place on the new SJIAOS website (www.officialstatistics.com). Contributions have to be in English, have to be clear and concise, specifically addressing one of the statements and should not exceed 25 lines. When considered useful, references to a longer text (article, paper) can be added as an attachment. Contributors are required to register on the discussion platform. Anonymous contributions are not appreciated.

The SJIAOS discussion platform editor (James Whitworth) moderates the discussions and the quality of the contributions (but of course not on the positions taken), takes decisions on the integrity of the arguments and is available for support when needed.