

Quality Policy

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Quality Policy



Statistics Sweden's Quality Policy demonstrates how the agency complies with requirements placed on quality for its operations which follow from regulations for government agencies as well as from the quality frameworks for European Statistics and the Official Statistics Act and Ordinance.

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Introduction

Statistics Sweden's strategy sets out the long-term direction for its operations and aims to achieve the vision "We provide society with useful and trusted statistics". The vision expresses Statistics Sweden's focus on statistical quality, including the importance of relevance and accuracy. Statistics Sweden's operations comply well with current regulations.¹ This ensures that the agency fulfils its tasks, achieves its goals and meets other regulatory requirements.

Operations are also largely governed by the EU regulation on statistics² as further developed in the European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP), the principles of which make up the cornerstone of the common quality framework of the European Statistical System (ESS). Statistics Sweden, together with the statistical authorities in other EU countries have committed themselves to following this framework. The ES CoP includes principles covering the institutional environment, statistical processes, and statistical outputs.

Swedish official statistics are regulated in the Official Statistics Act (2001:99) and the Official Statistics Ordinance (2001:100). Section 3 a of the Official Statistics Act states which quality criteria are to be applied. In addition, Statistics Sweden has issued the following regulations on e.g., quality (Section 16 Official Statistics Ordinance):

- Statistics Sweden's Regulations and general guidelines for the official release, etc. of Official Statistics (2002:16)
- Statistics Sweden's Regulations on Quality for Official Statistics (2016:17)
- Statistics Sweden's Regulations and General Guidelines for the Evaluation of the Quality of Official Statistics (2021:26).

To support the implementation of these regulations, Statistics Sweden has provided A Handbook on Quality for Official Statistics of Sweden and A Handbook on Evaluation of Quality of Official Statistics of Sweden. The national quality framework is supplemented by guidelines developed within the System for official statistics (SOS):

- Guidelines for what constitutes Official Statistics
- Guidelines and routines for revisions of statistical values
- Guidelines and support for the implementation of Section 14 of the Official Statistics Ordinance³.

It is clear in the Swedish quality framework that the quality of statistics should be fit for purpose. The purpose of the statistics is based on the users' prioritized needs. It is also stated that the improvement process involves and cyclical procedure.

¹ Highlighted here are the Ordinance for Governance and Control (2007:603), the Ordinance for Government Authorities (2007:515) and the Ordinance with the directive for Statistics Sweden (2016:822)

² Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European statistics

³ According to section 14 of the Official Statistics Ordinance, all official statistics that are based on data from natural persons is to be broken down by gender if there are no special reasons for not doing so.

The purpose of the policy

The purpose of this quality policy is to explain how Statistics Sweden applies the above regulations in its work with quality, the aim of which is to constantly improve the quality of statistics in relation to their purpose and Statistics Sweden's operations in general. Continuous improvements can lead to an increase in quality or efficiency. Everyone at Statistics Sweden, regardless of tasks, affects - directly or indirectly - the quality of the statistics. Work with quality is seen therefore as a central and integral part of the entire agency – in the statistical production process as well as in administrative support processes. Quality is everyone's concern. The quality policy applies to all operations regardless of the form of financing.

Working with quality involves a common way of working

Working with continuous improvements at Statistics Sweden involves a cyclical approach with the following components:

1. Understand requirements and needs
2. Quality assure processes
3. Evaluate and analyse
4. Improve and develop

The improvement work needs the proper conditions in terms of:

- Lead and manage
- Support and deepen

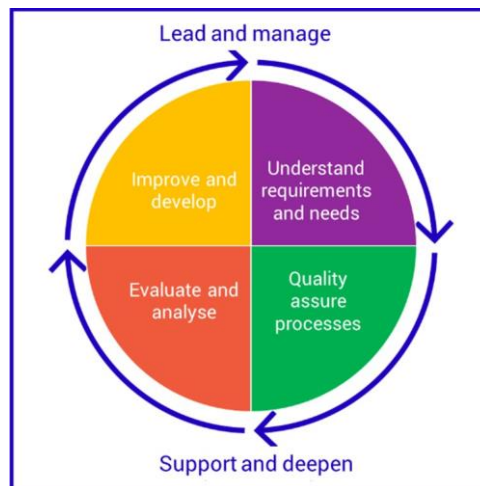


Figure: Statistics Sweden's quality work

Understand requirements and needs

As a starting point in all work at Statistics Sweden, there is always a dialogue with users and clients to determine the prioritized requirements and needs that make statistics, data, and other services useable. Specifically, in the production of statistics, dialogue takes place with specific users, in user councils and in conjunction with user studies, in order to systematically develop the content and quality of the statistics in other regards.

Quality assure processes

Our processes are standardized, efficient and quality assured thanks to increased digitization and automation. Local quality support systems are designed to suit specific processes. In the production of statistics, these local systems are based on Statistics Sweden's general Statistical Production Support (SPS). The SPS explains common methods, tools and procedure that govern the production of statistics.

Evaluate and analyse

The results of all processes are evaluated against the established quality requirements and needs to be met. Each process is evaluated and analysed systematically and regularly to form the basis for improvements and development efforts. Proposals for risk management and improvement measures can either be applied directly at the operational level or included in the planning of improvements and development at the tactical or strategic level.

Evaluation of the quality of the statistics is done in relation to the purpose of the statistics and the established quality requirements (fit for purpose). The evaluations provide input to improvements and can be used to strengthen the dialogue with users regarding their needs.

A selection of statistical products is evaluated by international experts with the evaluation system ASPIRE (A System for Product Improvement, Review and Evaluation)⁴. The accuracy of the statistics is evaluated in relation to six criteria to give input for improvements.

Improve and develop

Based on evaluations and analyses of results and processes, decisions are made on prioritized activities that are performed on an operational, tactical, or strategic level. Activities consist of improvement measures which can be quality-enhancing in line with changing requirements and needs. They may also aim to streamline operations or limit risks.

Managers at all levels are responsible for the work with quality in each section, unit and department. This includes follow-up of the effects and results of planned, decided and implemented improvement actions.

Risks of not fulfilling the agency's tasks, reaching the agency's goals or meet other requirements on the agency's operations are identified at an operational, tactical, and strategic level and managed in the form of measures in action plans and roadmaps.

At Statistics Sweden, the overall responsibility for the work with quality as well as management and further development of the quality framework is centralised within the organisation.

Support for the work on quality is available in the form of guidelines, manuals, instructions, tools, and templates on the intranet and in SPS, for the production of statistics.

⁴ [A System for Product Improvement, Review and Evaluation, ASPIRE \(scb.se\)](https://www.scb.se/om-scb/kvalitet/aspire)

Training and other competency development initiatives are carried out on an ongoing basis to develop and deepen knowledge and abilities.

Quality studies and other investigations are also carried out, if needed, to deepen understanding and knowledge, identify shortcomings and support the improvement of methods, tools, and procedures.

Statistics Sweden participates in international collaborations at various levels to develop and deepen the work on quality. Through cooperation, we take advantage of experiences and good examples from other countries and share our experiences with others.

Statistics Sweden provides support in quality issues to other agencies responsible for statistics by contributing to joint development work, arranging training sessions and seminars as well as providing guidance.

Quality declaration for Statistics Sweden's statistics

Statistics Sweden communicates its quality commitment by way of a special quality declaration which summarises what users can expect of Statistics Sweden⁵.

The quality of the statistics for which Statistics Sweden is responsible should be fit for purpose. Statistics Sweden therefore commits itself to

1. have dialogue with the users of statistics to understand their needs and how the statistics are used
2. formulate and specify the purpose based on the prioritized needs to be satisfied
3. design and perform the statistical production with consideration to the quality requirements that follow from the purpose, with regard to
 - Content
 - Accuracy
 - Timeliness and punctuality
 - Accessibility and clarity,
 - Comparability and coherence
4. report the quality of the statistics at the time of the official release
5. evaluate the quality of the statistics and, if necessary, improve it with consideration to the purpose and related quality requirements
6. re-formulate the purpose in dialogue with the users in step with changing needs.

Statistics Sweden always balances the purpose and quality requirements with applicable constraints such as costs and the response burden.

Consideration must also be given to statistical confidentiality and the availability of data.

⁵ The quality declaration is a summary of the main features of Statistics Sweden's quality regulations.