



FS Club
News Events Partnerships



Data Data Everywhere

Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation, UK Statistics Authority

Monday, 12 December 2022



A Word From Today's Chairman

Professor Michael Mainelli

Chairman
Z/Yen Group





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Today's Agenda

- 16:00 – 16:05 Chairman's Introduction
- 16:05 – 16:25 Keynote Presentation – Ed Humpherson
- 16:25 – 16:45 Question & Answer



Today's Speaker

Ed Humpherson
Director General for
Regulation
UK Statistics Authority





Office for
Statistics Regulation

Data Data Everywhere

*Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation
UK Statistics Authority
December 2022*





Poll question

- What is the correct completion of the quote? “Water, water everywhere....”
 - And nothing to drink
 - And not a drop to drink
 - Nor any drop to drink
 - And not yet anything to drink



Consequences of data abundance

1. Weaponisation of data
2. Context collapse
3. Information overload



Office for
Statistics Regulation

Statistics regulation



The Office for Statistics Regulation

- **The regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority**
- Promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics
- Do not produce statistics and are separate from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)



Our role

How statistics are produced

We uphold the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics and data used as evidence

How statistics are used

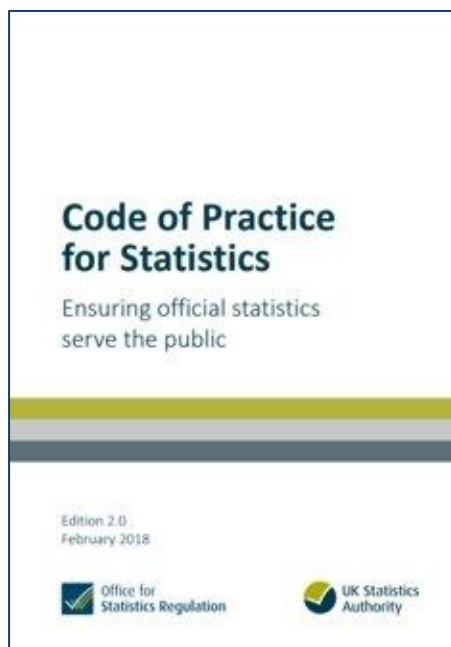
We protect the role of statistics in public debate

How statistics are valued

We develop a better understanding of the public good of statistics

Our vision : Statistics that serve the public good

What we deliver





Trustworthiness - Providing usable evidence that allows others to check whether you are trustworthy, in the form of public commitments

Quality - Statistics should be the best available measure of what they aim to represent, and should not be materially misleading

Value - Statistics should help people answer their questions

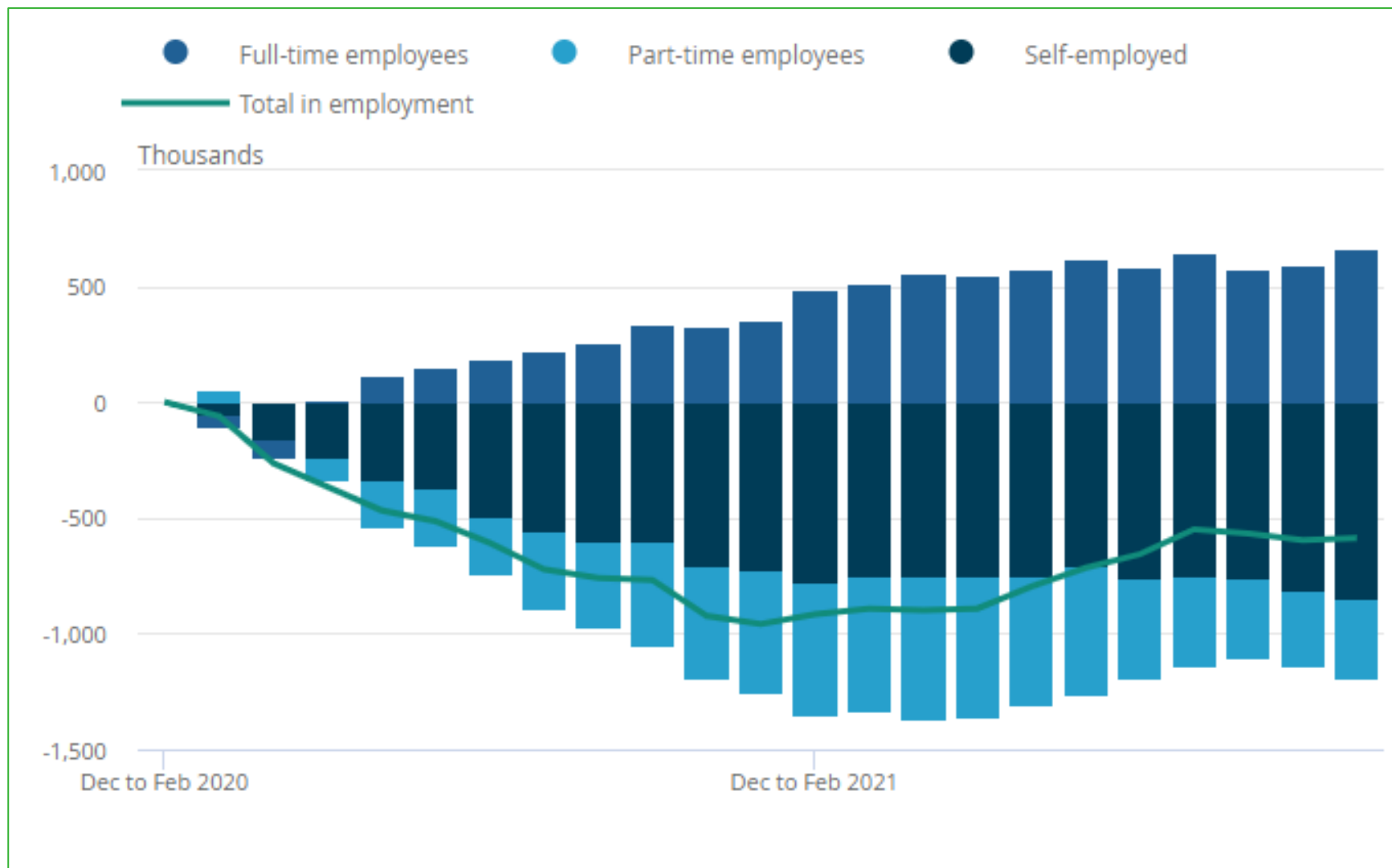


Weaponisation of data (T)

“There are 430,000 more people in employment than before the pandemic began”

The Prime Minister, Prime Minister’s Questions, 23 February 2022





UK employment by full-time employees, part-time employees, and self-employed people (aged 16 years and over), seasonally adjusted, cumulative change from December to February 2020, for each period up to October to December 2021

Employment in the UK: February 2022



Downing St was repeatedly warned over Boris Johnson's misleading jobs claims

Statistics watchdog wrote to the PM about 'selective use of data' after statement about number of people in work



📷 Boris Johnson leaves Downing Street ahead of PMQs On 2 March 2022. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Government officials were warned repeatedly about making misleading claims about job figures before the official statistics watchdog reprimanded [Boris Johnson](#) over the matter.



Context collapse (Q)



Context collapse



Lucy McDonald: Social media platforms facilitate context collapse: the collision of multiple audiences into one.

Online conversation is like turning up to a busy park where some people play cricket and others baseball



Conversations get confused – sometimes deliberately (people trying to disrupt a game of cricket by playing baseball rules)



Vaccine Surveillance statistics

Table 2. COVID-19 cases by vaccination status between week 36 and week 39 2021

Cases reported by specimen date between week 36 and week 39 2021	Total	Unlinked*	Not vaccinated	Received one dose (1-20 days before specimen date)	Received one dose, ≥21 days before specimen date	Second dose ≥14 days before specimen date	Rates among persons vaccinated with 2 doses (per 100,000)	Rates among persons not vaccinated (per 100,000)
Under 18	305,428	20,967	272,981	4,973	5,898	609	278.8	2,325.7
18-29	67,820	8,556	23,440	1,119	12,593	22,112	409.6	688.1
30-39	81,532	7,534	21,449	690	7,468	44,391	763.6	738.4
40-49	101,094	6,839	11,662	297	3,653	78,643	1,281.8	690.2
50-59	70,731	4,668	5,144	89	1,464	59,366	839.5	502.5
60-69	36,953	2,585	1,798	26	546	31,998	563.1	332.9
70-79	22,142	1,367	693	6	207	19,869	428.9	281.4
80+	10,581	869	403	4	199	9,106	354.4	319.5

*individuals whose NHS numbers were unavailable to link to the NIMS

** Interpretation of the case rates in vaccinated and unvaccinated population is particularly susceptible to changes in denominators and should be interpreted with extra caution.



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Vaccine Surveillance statistics

- Autumn 2021: widespread misuse of the UKHSA statistics on vaccines
- UKHSA: maintain a long-standing methodology and not shift goalposts
- UKHSA: Don't give oxygen to the issue or look like things are being hidden

HEALTH / CORONAVIRUS

How the UK Health Security Agency's misleading data fuelled a global vaccine myth

5 NOVEMBER 2021 | LEO BENEDICTUS

4 NOVEMBER 2021

Joe Rogan podcast uses Covid-19 death data out of context

The UKHSA explained these figures are to be expected, because a larger proportion of the population are vaccinated than unvaccinated.

[Read more...](#)



Vaccine Surveillance statistics Our judgement

Our judgement: risky presentation. Communication data is more than just presenting numbers

- provides lesson on harm when data are not well explained.
- need to guide users on how can and cannot be used.
- producers of data are the experts in their data and can help ensure appropriate interpretation and use.



Responding to context collapse

Deaths from COVID-19 with no other underlying causes

Release date:
16 December 2021

FOI Ref: FOI/2021/3240

You asked

Please can you advise on deaths purely from covid with no other underlying causes.

We said

This FOI request has been subjected to extensive misrepresentation on social media and elsewhere. Please read this blog explaining the correct interpretation of the data:

<https://blog.ons.gov.uk/2022/01/26/to-say-only-17000-people-have-died-from-covid-19-is-highly-misleading/>

Making an FOI request

Everything you need to know about
Freedom of Information and how to go
about making a request.



Responding to context Collapse

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Clear response:
It is "highly
misleading"



Science and Technology Committee, March 2022

Graham Stringer MP: But even that is not completely satisfactory, is it? In round terms, the number of deaths purely from Covid, if you look at death certificates, is 16,000 or 17,000. It is that sort of figure, I understand. You look sceptical.

Ed Humpherson: I am afraid that I am slightly sceptical.

Graham Stringer MP: Correct me then.

Ed Humpherson: I so dislike that figure that I am not going to repeat it. There is a figure that has been circulating that is based on the number of cases where the only cause listed on the death certificate was Covid. That is the number. If you look at all of the death certificates and ask, “Where is Covid listed as the underlying cause?”, the figure is 140,000. Both ONS and we have said that the smaller number is highly misleading because it takes a very small subset of death certificates where Covid is listed as the underlying cause.



Freedom of speech Reith Lecture



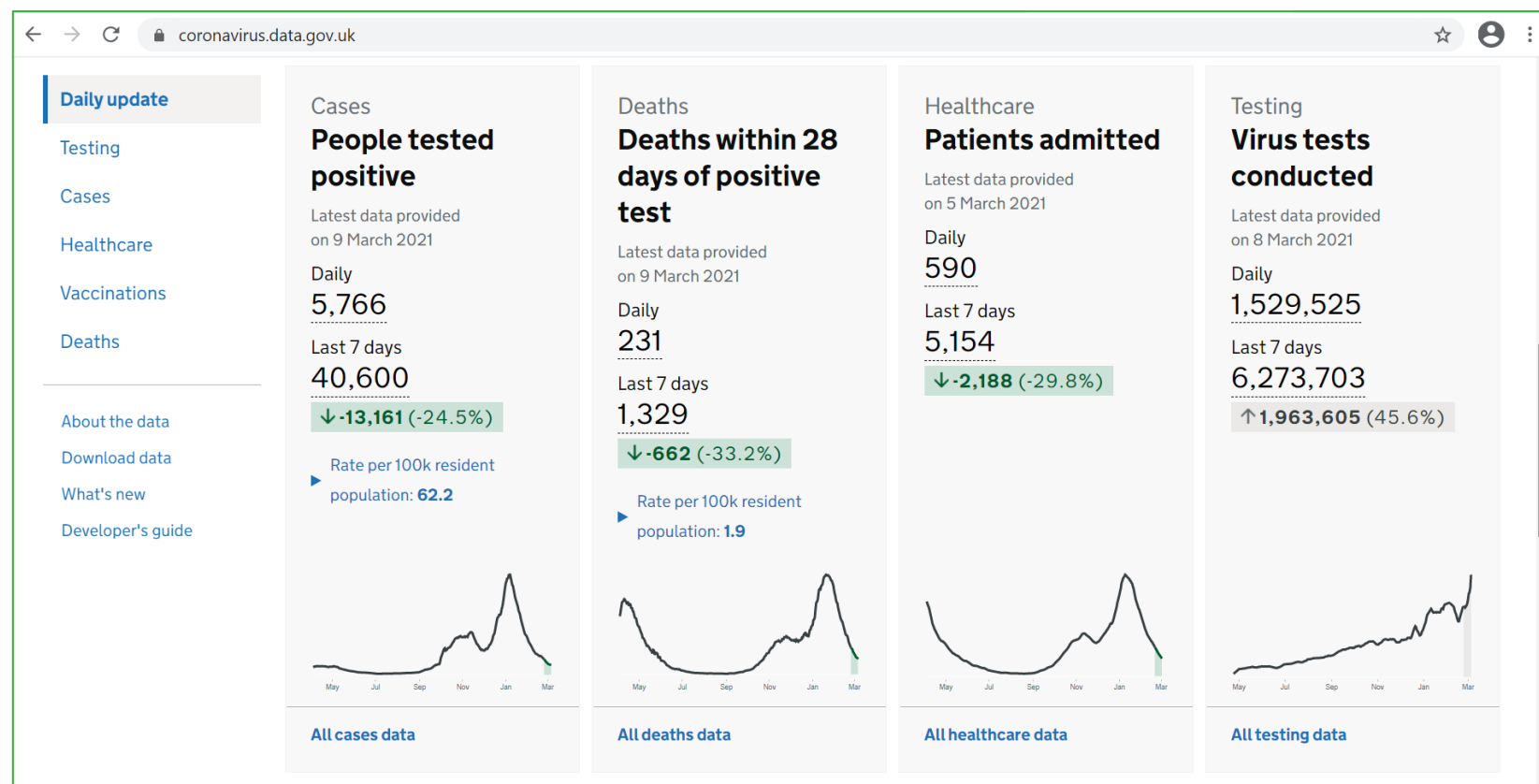
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

In this age of mounting disinformation all over the world, when it is easy to dress up a lie so nicely that it starts to take on the glow of truth, the solution is not to hide the lie but to expose it, and scrub from it, its false glow.



Information overload (V)





- nearly 200 metrics at 4pm each day – about 40 million individual figures
- Each week there are about 19 million page views across the site (March)
- Peak – 76 million hits in 24 hours

Source: PHE



Poll question

- What is the most significant risk factor causing misuse of data?
 - Weaponisation of data
 - Context collapse
 - Information overload
 - Other

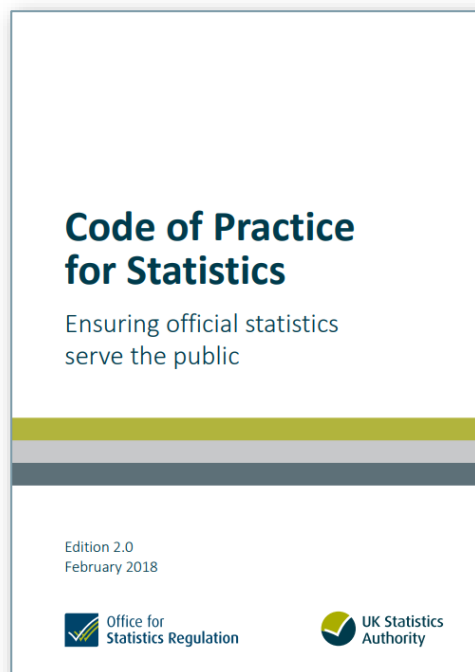


Why this matters

Statistics and data serve the public good when they:

- meet the needs of a **wider range of users**
- **hold** governments **to account**, **inform** public **debate**
- **influence choices** made by citizens

Upholding the trustworthiness, quality and value of statistics



Trustworthiness

Confidence in the people & organisations producing statistics

Quality

Data and methods that produce assured statistics

Value

Statistics that support society's needs for information



Office for
Statistics Regulation

Data Data Everywhere

*Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation
UK Statistics Authority
December 2022*



In a world of abundant data, we want people to have confidence in statistics produced by the public sector



Comments, Questions & Answers





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Forthcoming Events

- Tue, 13 Dec (10:00-10:45) Malaysia's Economic Transition: From Plantations & Palm Oil To Tech & Green Energy
- Wed, 14 Dec (11:00-11:45) Cash Is Not The 'Horse Cart' Of Payments. It's The Public Bicycle
- Mon, 19 Dec (11:00-11:45) Can You Really Measure Corporate Culture? A Look At The Financial Services Culture Board
- Mon, 09 Jan (15:00-15:45) An Update On EU Financial Services Legislation & Associated Initiatives

Visit <https://fsclub.zyen.com/events/forthcoming-events/>

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