

RSS policy and guidance on using social media and communicating on behalf of the Society

The Royal Statistical Society's vision is for data to be at the heart of understanding and decision-making. To achieve this vision, the RSS will need to communicate externally including through the press and social media. The Society recognises and encourages this. This policy is to lay out guidance on how this should be done.



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Definition of social media

Social media refers to websites, applications and online communities that enable users to create and share content or to take part in social networking.

RSS social media channels include:

3rd party

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Significance: comments

Why we use social media

The RSS is committed to providing an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of ideas.

Social media platforms are powerful and effective mechanisms for the RSS to promote its core activities and communicate with the ever-growing statistical community.

A guiding principle is that those who are authorised to communicate on behalf of the Society are encouraged to do so.

The RSS social media accounts

Following emerging conventions, the RSS social media accounts are purely corporate. Access to the RSS social media accounts is restricted to the web and social media editor, the media and external relations manager and the chief executive.



Staff and members are encouraged to ask that the society shares notices and posts of interest that achieve the following:

- Interact with members, stakeholders and organisations that share an interest in statistics
- Promote our values and core beliefs
- Promote statistical literacy
- Promote news and information
 - Publicise / celebrate the achievements of RSS members
- Provide important notifications
- Promote our conference, events, and training courses
- Target new audiences and demographics
- Encourage potential members to join
- Gather feedback and opinions
- Encourage debate
- Correct statistical falsehoods
- Extend our brand across 3rd party platforms
 - Publicise RSS job vacancies to the widest possible audiences

Using personal social media accounts

It is recognised that social media accounts blur the lines between personal and professional commentary. This is in part recognised in the wider world. Individuals associated with the RSS (including the President, VPs, and staff) may use personal social media accounts, and are welcome to link to RSS related material, but these are not RSS corporate accounts.

Using other affiliated social media accounts

Society sections, local groups and other RSS groups and committees can use RSS-branded social media accounts to promote the work of the group, such as events. The RSS social media team will share these posts if the RSS account @RoyalStatSoc is tagged in these posts. Alternatively, groups can email the social media editor to request a share/retweet of posts.

RSS groups setting up social media accounts should inform Society staff: this will enable us to promote content.

RSS affiliated accounts should not be used to express personal views, and should, where possible, have the agreement of the group's committee prior to posting.



Affiliated groups wishing to raise concerns with the Society are expected to use appropriate private channels, such as direct messaging or email, rather than publicly on social media.

Speaking to the press: who can speak on behalf of the society?

Key RSS personnel are authorised to speak externally on behalf of the Society, including:

- RSS president
- RSS vice presidents
- RSS chief executive

Certain Honorary Officers (in particular the Honorary Officer for National Statistics) will also be entitled to speak on behalf of the Society in their area of expertise.

The President and the Chief Executive can also authorise other people to speak on behalf of the Society where appropriate.

There are other roles in the Society who may from time to time be able to issue comment to the media. For example:

- The Director of Policy & Public Affairs
- The comms team may request a fellow to provide comment on an issue in their role as an RSS fellow
- Statistical ambassadors may comment on something which comes to them via the RSS comms team in their role as an RSS ambassador. Ambassadors' interaction with the media will usually be providing statistical expertise rather than giving the RSS line on a policy issue. Ambassadors should mention their association with the RSS when providing media comments

For clarity, RSS fellows (including those who are in committee positions – e.g. chair of a section) should not issue statements on behalf of the Society (e.g. in their role as a fellow of the RSS) without approval from the Chief Executive.

Non-executives should consult the office in time if they are intending to speak on behalf of the Society. Written lines for print and online media and key messages for any broadcast interviews need to be agreed with the RSS in advance. The RSS Media & External Relations Manager can help with arranging interviews and drafting comment. Where the Society has clear existing lines on an issue, it will be easier for them to speak to an issue. If not, greater care is needed. This does also mean that people speaking on



behalf of the Society must make themselves aware of the RSS's existing views on the topic.

We recognise that occasionally things will go wrong, and mistakes will be made. The Society can be open about this and can (in whatever way is appropriate) issue a clarification. But this is better than the RSS never saying anything at all.



Guidance and best practice when posting on social media (all accounts)

Behaviour online

It is our policy that all participants in any RSS activities and events should enjoy a welcoming, courteous, and respectful environment, free from discrimination, harassment, confrontation, or retaliation: this policy extends to the use of social media channels.

We actively always encourage all individuals to behave responsibly in any RSS social media activity and be respectful of others. Threatening verbal conduct will not be tolerated. Harassment, including verbal comments relating to gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, age, national origin, gender identity or expression, or sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, bullying, stalking, unauthorised or inappropriate photography or recording, and unwelcome sexual attention, will not be tolerated.

All individuals taking part in RSS-related social media activities must follow these standards of behaviour.

The RSS Code of Conduct

The Society's Code of Conduct defines the actions and behaviour expected of RSS fellows practising in their everyday professional life and has been drawn up to reflect the standards of conduct and work expected of all practising statisticians. These standards include actions and behaviours using social media platforms. The Code states members should:

- Act in the public interest
- Fulfil their obligations to employers and clients
- Fulfil their obligations to the profession and the Society
- At all time show professional competence and integrity

The code is mandatory for all professionally qualified fellows (CStats and GradStats) and fellows of the Society.

Both full and abbreviated versions of the Code of Conduct are available on the Society's website, together with how to raise concerns about any breaches of the Code and sanctions which may be taken.



Nothing in this policy shall be construed as a restriction on the ability of participants to constructively critique one another's work.

Language

- Do not use words or phrases that some people could consider sexist, racist, homophobic, or prejudiced in any other way
- Avoid swearing, slang and overly colloquial language
- Avoid using jargon and overly technical language unless necessary
- Learn to use the vocabulary and terminology of social media in general, but also for specific channels such as Twitter (<https://help.twitter.com/en/new-user-faq> and <https://help.twitter.com/en/glossary> are a good place to start)
- Use a consistent tone and try to come across as approachable rather than overly formal
- Use call to actions to encourage users to immediately perform a specified task (eg 'Register for this RSS event')
- Use catchy language but avoid blatant 'click-bait' (content of a sensational or provocative nature, whose main purpose is to attract attention and draw visitors to a web page)

Content

- Make posts about what the RSS does rather than about yourself
- Decide if social media should be used primarily to inform or engage. A combination of both is always desirable but engagement can require significant human resource, and this may be unrealistic
- Always be honest and get in front of any potentially negative story
- Post content regularly; it is better to not be on social media than to have an inactive profile. You can retweet posts from the main RSS account or key figures in the community if you struggle for content
- That said, do not overly re-post/re-tweet as followers may start to regard it as spam
- Make use of an editorial calendar or shared spreadsheet to decide what to post and when



Timing of posts

If you are trying to influence journalists, then ensure that you hit the daily news cycle.

There is much debate around when posts will have the most engagement, but see <https://www.ama.org/marketing-news/the-best-times-to-post-on-social-media/> for guidance. In short, it says:

- **Facebook:** Wednesday at 11am and 1pm with consistent engagement weekdays 9am–3pm
- **Twitter:** Peak times Wednesday 9am and Friday 9am; consistent engagement Monday-Friday 8am–4pm
- **LinkedIn:** Any time on Wednesday but especially 9–10am and 12pm with consistent engagement from Tuesday to Friday, 8am–2pm

Branding

- The RSS logo should appear in a prominent position and be used in its entirety – this includes the “Data | Evidence | Decisions” tagline
- The logo should not be cropped or transformed in any way (logos in a variety of sizes and formats are available on request from the RSS Marketing Manager)
- No added text or graphics should be added to the logo unless this has been agreed with the Marketing Manager
- Any group that is officially associated with the RSS such as a Section or Local Group must clearly describe themselves as such on their social media profiles
- While there are no formal specifications for usernames, it is good practice to include “RSS” where possible. For example, the General Applications Section uses @GAS_RSS on Twitter
- If there is room for a banner then try to avoid images that are contrived or negative



Engaging with your followers

- Think carefully about what platforms to focus on. For example, if your audience uses Twitter you should build a network on Twitter rather than trying to create a new audience on Facebook
- If you have a website with an existing audience then make use of 'share,' 'like' and 'follow' social media buttons
- Find out who the key influencers are across different channels
- Do not use too many social media channels. It is better to do well on a couple of networks rather than spread ourselves too thinly
- Use Analytics to find out what people are interested in and give them more of it
- Check traffic sources – where are people finding our content? Are they arriving via the RSS website, search engines or recommendations?
- Encourage people we meet face-to-face (eg at RSS events) to join us on social media and vice versa
- Be cautious about engaging with 'trolls' (people who deliberately post provocative messages with the intention of causing maximum disruption and argument). It is best to just ignore them, hence the popular phrase: 'do not feed the trolls'
- Find out as much about your audience as possible. You could direct people to an online survey to learn more about their interests and use the opportunity to get up to date and/or additional contact details
- Consider adding geolocation data to tweets to make them more relevant to local audiences e.g. RSS Local groups (<https://support.twitter.com/articles/122236#>)



Data protection and legal considerations

- Sections, local groups, special interest groups and RSS staff profiles should contain the disclaimer: 'The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily represent those of the RSS'
- Never show any confidential RSS data or information from a private conversation
- Do not breach an embargo or non-disclosure agreement
- Consent must be gained from the copyright holder prior to posting images, video, or audio
- Never post anyone else's personal data and keep any information about yourself to an absolute minimum
- Engage in debate but be careful not to defame an individual or organisation
- Do not give out advice that you are not qualified to give

Security

- Friend should be verified to ensure they are not coming from fake spam accounts
- Where possible, enable Multi factor Authentication (MFA) to send a unique login code to your phone
- Passwords should be at least eight characters and a combination of upper and lower-case letters, numbers and symbols. Passwords should be rotated every 6 months and the new password should never be the same as a previous password
- Ensure that connections from PCs and mobile devices are secure to prevent account details from being stolen. Always avoid using unencrypted public WIFI networks when entering passwords or other sensitive data. Using a VPN will help prevent hackers stealing your login credentials
- Enable automatic updates from your operating system (OS) and plug-ins
- Make sure your firewall is turned on
- Install anti-virus software and set the scans to run daily
- Clear cookies from your browser cache on a regular basis or set them to auto delete on exit
- Remove LSO "Super Cookies" or use anti-malware software (<https://www.malwarebytes.org/>)
- Never use a work account for personal use or vice versa as a hacker could learn enough about you to steal your identity

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