



Statistics in Action

A manifesto for empowering society through data



Statistics and data are at the heart of understanding and decision-making and will inform what the next government should do to enable the UK to flourish. They:

- Act as a key driver of productivity and economic growth when government and business properly invest in data skills and infrastructure.
- Build understanding of, and inform, the response to major international challenges such as AI, climate change and pandemics.
- Strengthen democracy by providing citizens with the ability to hold their government to account, build trust in government and help counter misinformation.

The RSS has identified three areas where we believe the next government should focus its efforts to unlock the potential benefits of data in the UK:

1. Better data for informed, transparent decision-making
2. Balancing AI innovation and regulation
3. Improving public understanding of statistics and data

Better data for informed, transparent decision-making

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the power of data to inform decision-making and the importance of transparency in communicating data to the public. There are opportunities for government to improve both its capacity for using data to make decisions and broaden the type of data that is used.

The RSS calls for:

1. The new government, within the first month, to direct government departments to improve data sharing and report regularly on their progress and, within the first 100 days, to set out plans to support the UK's data infrastructure.
2. All ministers to undertake statistical training and party leaders to commit to updating the ministerial code to ensure that ministers abide by the Code of Practice for Statistics – including on pre-release access to statistics.
3. The use of more granular inflation measures in decision-making – using the new Household Costs Indices when focusing on the impact of rising costs on different household types.
4. The assessment of new policy proposals to extend beyond their impact on economic growth to their impact on societal wellbeing, inclusiveness and sustainability.
5. Increased availability of government dashboards – using data for the public good to keep the public better informed about the functioning of the state.

Balancing AI innovation and regulation

AI is unlocking societal benefits – from increasing productivity to helping tackle climate change. But it also brings challenges ranging from misinformation to copyright infringement. Increasingly the AI ecosystem is controlled by large tech firms promoting their services and products. Data and statistics have vital roles to play in helping the UK harness the potential of AI while helping to protect against potential harms.

The RSS calls for:

1. An investment of £250 million over the next parliament in open-source development including support for an open-source unit in government, an open-source fund for business and developing open-source software – to democratise AI and allow the UK to compete internationally.
2. The AI Safety Institute to fund a unit dedicated to developing new evaluation methodologies to keep pace with technological advances.
3. A public register of cases where a complex algorithm or AI tool is used in the public sector – with risk assessments carried out in cases where the tool directly impacts on citizens (eg, its use in facial recognition or in informing decisions around welfare payments).

Improving public understanding of statistics and data

Statistical and data literacy is vital – for ensuring that people have the skills needed to drive research and innovation in the UK’s increasingly data-driven economy and for helping people to be informed citizens. The education system must meet both needs and we must ensure that people at all life stages are provided with the tools to interpret data in the public domain.

The RSS calls for:

1. A new approach to mathematics education with a more fulfilling curriculum placing a greater emphasis on data. Alternative methods of assessment should be explored including considering whether non-examination assessments might be appropriate.
2. A year-on-year increase in the number of qualified maths teachers in schools including by: expanding scholarship schemes for recruitment; guaranteeing 35 hours of subject-related CPD annually for STEM teachers;¹ and reviewing teachers’ salaries.
3. The public to be supported with the tools to critically evaluate claims made in the media, including on social media, and to identify potential misinformation. The UK Statistics Authority’s role in drawing attention to the misuse of statistics should be bolstered.

¹ These points are also made in [A Manifesto for Science](#) (the Royal Society) and [Maths Manifesto](#) (Council for the Mathematics Sciences)



DATA | EVIDENCE | DECISIONS

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The Royal Statistical Society is a charity which promotes statistics, data and evidence for the public good; we are one of the world's leading learned societies and the only UK professional body for all statisticians and data professionals.

Our vision is 'A world with data at the heart of understanding'