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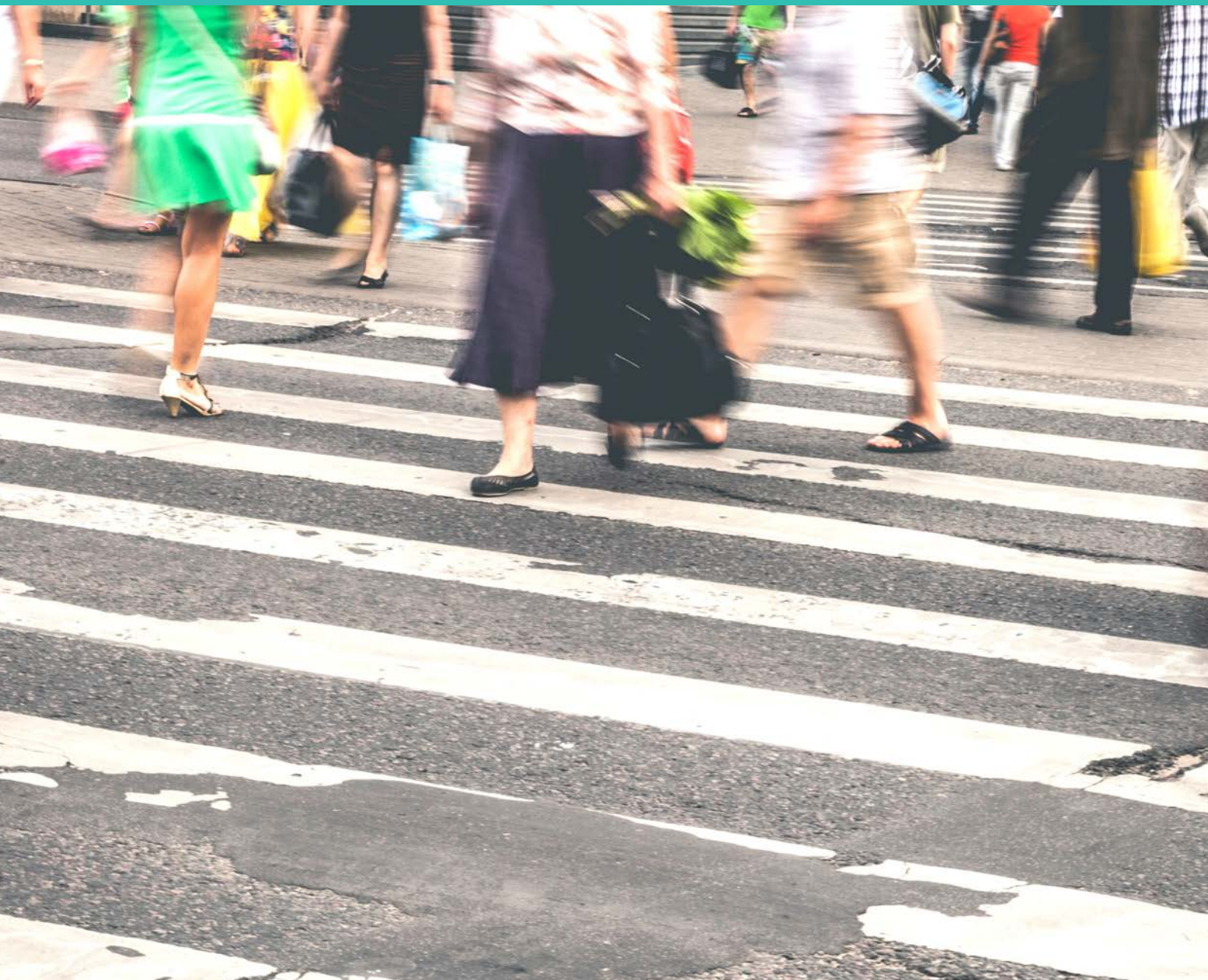
Social Research that works for society

Public confidence in official statistics – 2018

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Executive summary

A majority think statistics produced by ONS are free from political interference and are important for understanding Britain.

- Of those able to express a view, 73% agree that statistics produced by ONS are free from political interference compared to 70% in 2016 and 66% in 2014. This is a significant increase from 2014 to 2018.
- Of those able to give an opinion, 93% agree that official statistics are important for understanding Britain. This has not significantly changed from 2016 (92%) and 2014 (90%).

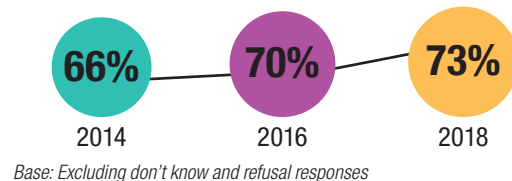
Levels of trust in ONS and the statistics it produces remain high, having not changed significantly since 2016.

- In 2018, of those able to give an opinion, 88% trust ONS, and 85% trust the statistics produced by ONS.
- In 2016, of those able to give an opinion, 90% trusted ONS and 85% trusted the statistics produced by ONS.

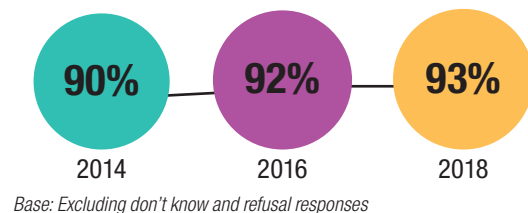
Agreement that official figures are generally accurate has remained the same.

- Of those able to give an opinion, 78% agree that official figures are accurate, the same level as in 2016 (78%) But remains a significant increase from the level reported in 2014 (73%).

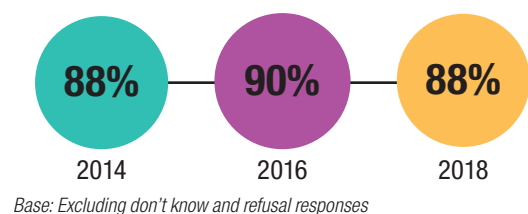
Significant increase between 2014 and 2018



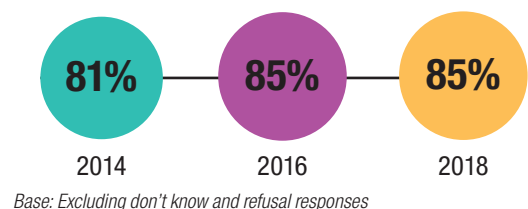
No significant change



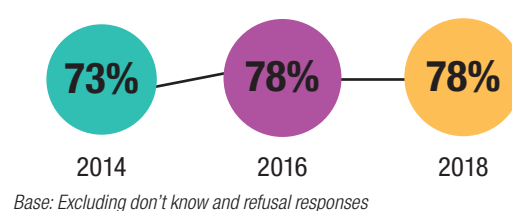
No significant change



No significant change

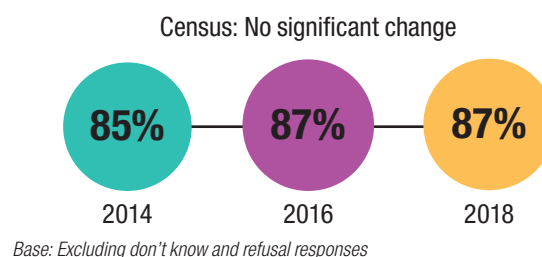


Significant change between 2014 and 2016



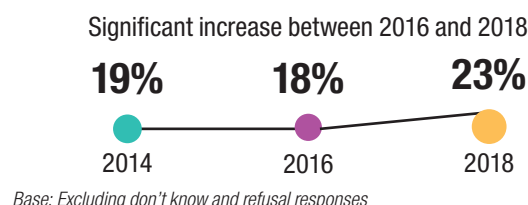
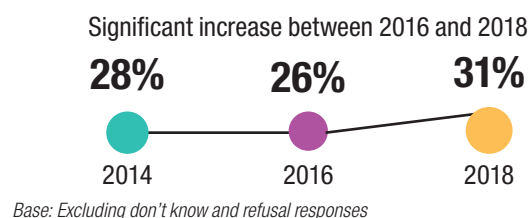
Perceptions of accuracy of official statistics vary depending on the set of statistics being asked about.

- In 2018, of those able to give an opinion, 87% agree that the census accurately reflects changes over time, compared to 70% who think this is the case for crime statistics.
- This was not significantly different to 2016, where of those able to give an opinion, 87% agree that the census accurately reflects changes over time, compared to 71% who think this is the case for crime statistics.



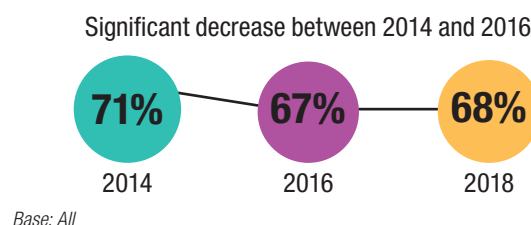
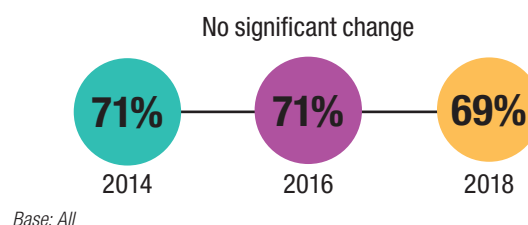
There has been an increase in the low numbers of people who think the Government and Newspapers present official figures honestly.

- Of those able to give an opinion, 31% agree that the government presents official figures honestly, a statistically significant increase from 26% who agreed in 2016.
- Of those able to give an opinion, 23% agree that newspapers present official figures honestly, a statistically significant increase from 18% who agreed in 2016. This finding suggests that confidence in how the media and government present official statistics, whilst still comparatively low amongst the general population, does appear to be increasing.



Awareness of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) remains at a similar level to that recorded in 2016.

- In 2018, 69% had heard of ONS on radio, TV, newspapers or somewhere else. This was not a significant change from 2016 (71%).
- Over two thirds (68%) of the general public said official statistics should be made equally available to everybody, including the public, at the same time. This was around the same level as reported in 2016 (67%).





1 Introduction

Background

This report presents findings on public attitudes to official statistics in Britain, based on results from the 2018 British Social Attitudes survey (BSA), conducted by NatCen Social Research¹ (NatCen). It explores levels of awareness, use of, and trust in official statistics in Britain. It also explores changes in attitudes to official statistics over time and variation in attitudes by demographics.

The research was commissioned by the UK Statistics Authority,² an independent body at arm's length from Government. Its executive office, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), is the UK's National Statistical Institute and largest producer of official statistics. The Authority also has an independent regulatory function (Office for Statistics Regulation), which ensures that statistics are produced and disseminated in the public interest and acts as a watchdog against misuse of statistics.

The UK Statistics Authority previously commissioned NatCen to conduct a survey of public confidence in official statistics in 2016³, 2014⁴ and 2009⁵. The 2009 questions were asked as part of NatCen's Omnibus survey. Earlier surveys of public confidence in official statistics were conducted in 2004, 2005 and 2007, as part of the ONS Omnibus survey.

Since the 2014 survey, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Model Questionnaire for measuring trust in official statistics⁶ has been used. This was developed by the OECD through harmonisation of existing national surveys

on public trust in statistics, including the questionnaire previously used in the UK. The same questions were asked on BSA 2018.

The OECD Model questionnaire has been asked in a number of other countries in recent years, including Sweden, Denmark and Australia.

The full list of questions can be found in Appendix C of the accompanying technical report.

Methods

The survey was designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over in England, Wales and Scotland, using a sampling frame drawn from the Postcode Address File (PAF). The module of questions on public confidence in official statistics was asked of a random half of the overall sample. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using Computer Assisted Interviewing (CAI).

Fieldwork took place between July and November 2018. A total of 1,968 interviews were undertaken with adults aged 18 or over. The response rate was 42.4%.

More information on the survey methodology and response rates can be found in Appendix B of the accompanying technical report.

For consistency, respondents who answered "don't know" or refused to answer a particular question are excluded from the base in most instances. Where this is the case, the wording 'of those able to give an opinion' is used in this report. This approach was taken in the previous reports on public confidence in official statistics, which were based on BSA 2014 and 2016 data. We are taking this approach again for comparative purposes. It is important to note that for a number of questions, the proportion of people who answered "don't know" was relatively high, up to around a quarter of people. The proportion of people answering "don't know" can be found in the detailed

1 <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/>

2 <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

3 http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1361381/natcen_public-confidence-in-official-statistics_web_v2.pdf

4 http://natcen.ac.uk/media/833802/public-confidence-in-official-statistics_final.pdf

5 <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/reports---correspondence/reports/strengthening-user-engagement-final-report.pdf>

6 <http://www.oecd.org/std/Stat%20newsletter%20final%20for%20the%20web.pdf>

tables in Appendix A of the technical report that accompanies this report. Where those who answered “don’t know” or refused to answer the question are included in the base, the wording of ‘the public’ is used in this report.

When a difference between the 2016 and 2018 data has been found to be statistically

significant (at the 95% level), this has been stated explicitly. When testing for statistical significance between years, ‘don’t know’ responses were always included in the analysis.

Data relating to individual questions does not always add up to 100% due to rounding.



2 Awareness and use of official statistics

Key points

- Public awareness of ONS remains relatively high, at 69% - a similar level to that seen in 2016 and 2014.
- Awareness of the UK statistics authority remains lower at 30%.
- Just under a quarter of the British public (24%) report that they have used statistics produced by ONS.
- There has not been any statistically significant changes in awareness of ONS or the UK Statistics Authority, or in public use of official statistics between 2014 and 2018.

Awareness of ONS and UKSA

Public awareness of ONS remains relatively high. Over two thirds (69%) of the British public have heard of ONS, a similar proportion as in 2016 (71%) and 2014 (71%).

As was the case in 2016, levels of awareness of ONS remain lower than other institutions. Apart from ONS, the organisations with the lowest levels of awareness were Royal College of Nursing (80%) and IBM (also 80%).

The public's knowledge of ONS is not significantly different to when it was last measured in 2016. Just under a quarter (24%) of respondents who reported having heard of ONS said they knew it 'well'. Almost a third (32%) of those who had heard of ONS said they only knew it by name.

Awareness of ONS remains higher than awareness of the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA). Just under a third (30%) of the general public reported having heard the name of UKSA or say they knew it well or somewhat. Six in ten people have never heard of the UK

Statistics Authority (60%), compared with only 29% who say the same of ONS. Awareness of the UK Statistics Authority is not significantly different to the level recorded in 2016.

Participation in and use of official statistics

Alongside asking whether respondents had heard of ONS, the BSA 2018 also measured the awareness of ONS's products and surveys by asking if respondents had used any of the data produced by ONS or taken part in any surveys run by ONS.

Over half of the British public (54%) recalled participating in the Census. This is significantly lower than when the same question was asked in 2016 where 60% of people recalled taking part, and in 2014 where 62% mentioned taking part. This trend is to be expected, as time goes on since the last census, respondents may have forgot that they took part, or may have been too young at the time of the last census.

Unsurprisingly, given they are based on samples of the population, participation in other ONS surveys was a lot lower (2% had participated in the Labour Force Survey, and 2% recalled participating in the International Passenger Survey).

Just under a quarter of the British public (24%) have used or referred to ONS statistics for some purpose, such as study, work or personal interest. This is not significantly different to the level observed in 2016 (25%) and 2014 (24%). In 2018, only 4% said they used these statistics frequently, 14% said they used them occasionally and 5% said they used them at least 5 years ago, proportions that are not significantly different to when the question was last asked in 2016.

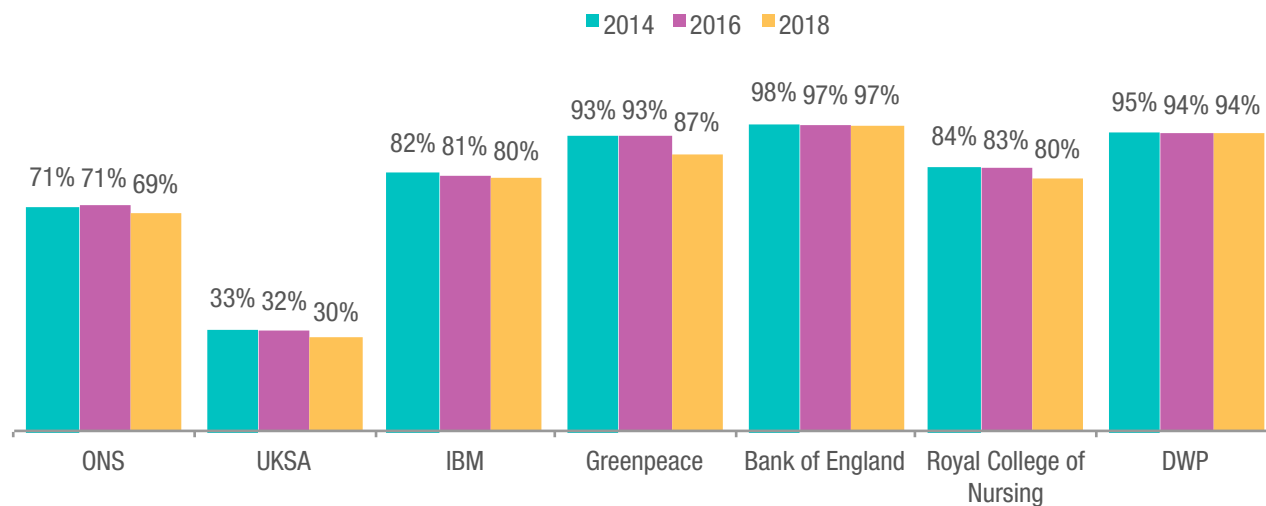
Those in managerial & professional occupations were more likely to have used or referred to statistics produced by ONS than other NS-SEC classes⁷. Four in ten (40%) of people in managerial & professional occupations reported having used ONS statistics compared to intermediate occupations

(16%). Just 10% of people working in lower supervisory & technical occupations had used statistics. Of those working in routine occupations 12% had previously used ONS statistics. Those with a degree were twice as likely to have used ONS statistics compared to the whole population (48% compared to 24%).

“ Awareness of ONS remains high at 69%, similar to 2016. Public awareness of the UK Statistics Authority remains lower, with six in ten having never heard of the organization ”

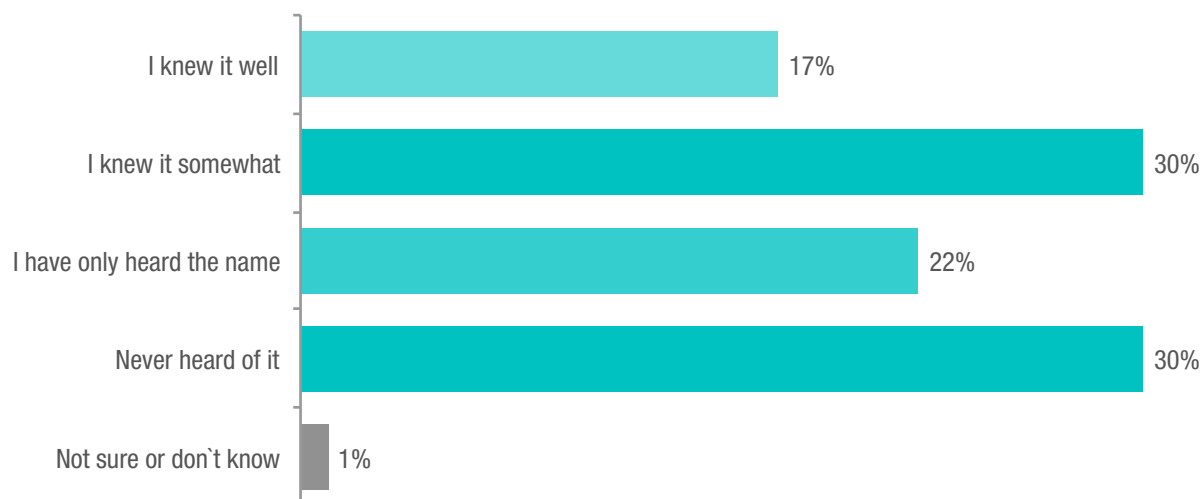
⁷ As measured using a collapsed version of National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), described in full on the ONS website - <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/soc2010-volume-3-ns-sec--rebased-on-soc2010--user-manual/index.html>

Figure 1. Public awareness of ONS, UKSA and comparator organisations 2014-2018



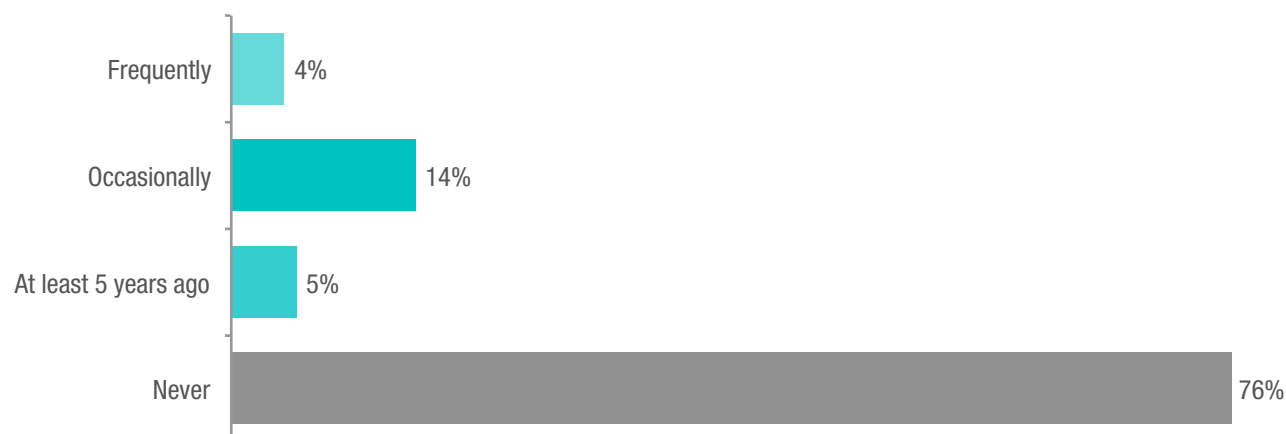
Base: all GB adults aged 16+

Figure 2. Awareness levels of ONS, 2018



Base: all GB adults aged 16+

Figure 3. Public use or reference to official statistics, 2018



Base: all GB adults aged 16+



3 Trust in ONS and official statistics

Key points

- Trust in ONS as an institution remains high – 88% of those who expressed an opinion either trusted it a great deal or tended to trust it
- However, nearly a quarter (24%) did not express any opinion – stating that they did not know whether or not they trusted ONS.
- Trust in statistics produced by ONS is slightly lower than trust in ONS as an institution – 85% of those who expressed an opinion.
- No statistically significant changes in trust in ONS or trust in statistics produced by ONS occurred between 2014 and 2018

Trust in the ONS

In addition to asking about awareness of institutions, BSA 2018 also asked about the level of trust in ONS compared to other institutions. As was the case in 2016, trust in ONS is relatively high. Excluding those who said they did not know or were unsure, 88% said that they trust ONS a great deal or tend to trust it. However, just under a quarter (23%) said they were not sure or did not know. The British public were more unsure about whether they trusted ONS compared to other institutions. A higher proportion said that they 'don't know' whether they trust ONS, than for other organisations and institutions, such as the civil service, the government and the police (those reporting "don't know" ranged between 2% – 9%). Across the whole population, 68% of respondents said they trusted ONS.

Amongst the general public, overall levels of trust in ONS has remained relatively stable

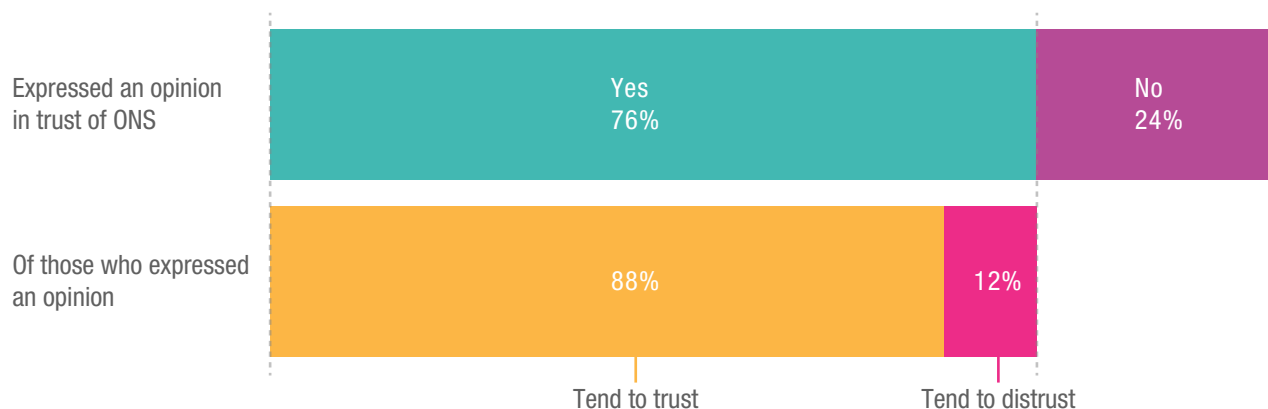
since 2014 (68%). Similarly, the British public's trust in Parliament, the Civil Service, the Police, the courts, the Bank of England, and high street banks and financial institutions has not changed significantly since 2016. In 2018, the media remained the least trusted institution listed with 19% of respondents who expressed an opinion saying they trust media – a similar level to that found in 2016.

The public trust in some institutions has fallen. The Government has seen significant decreases in trust since 2016. In 2018, 41% of the public who expressed an opinion, trusted the Government compared to 45% in 2016. Whilst trust in the government in general has decreased, agreement that the government presents official figures honestly has increased. Of those who expressed an opinion, 31% agree that the government presents official figures honestly compared to 26% in 2016.

Trust in statistics produced by ONS

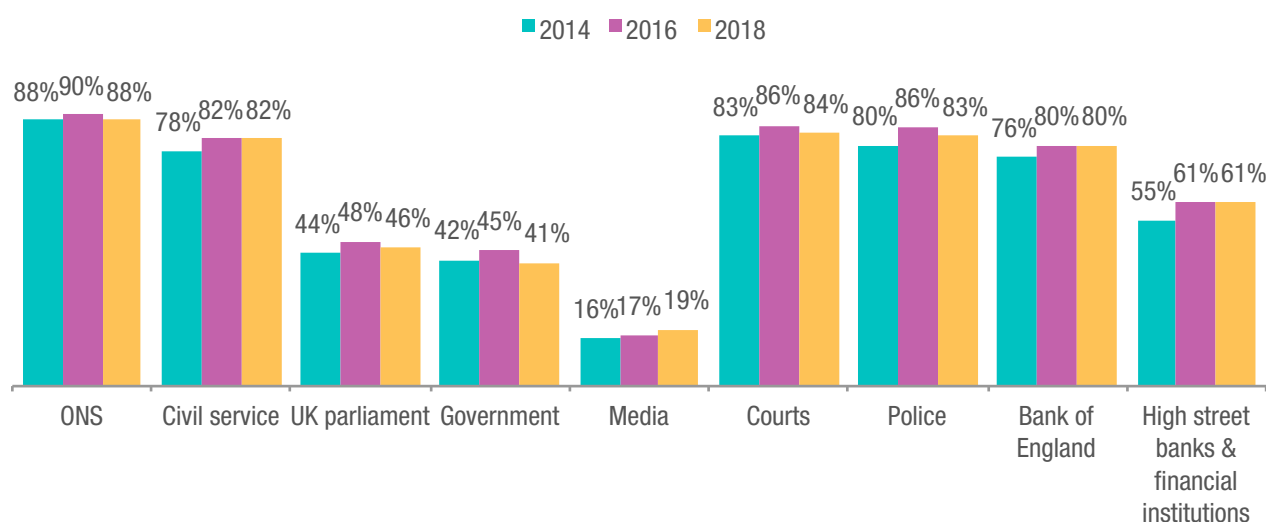
As well as trust in institutions, BSA 2018 asked whether people trusted the statistics produced by ONS. Overall the public trusts ONS statistics, and official statistics more generally. Out of those who expressed an opinion, 85% said they trusted ONS statistics. However the number of respondents who said they were unsure or didn't know, was again quite high at 19%. Overall, 69% of the British public trust the statistics produced by ONS, a similar level to that observed in 2016. Similarly, 63% of the public tend to agree that official figures are generally accurate. This again is not significantly different to the findings in 2016.

Figure 4. Trust in ONS



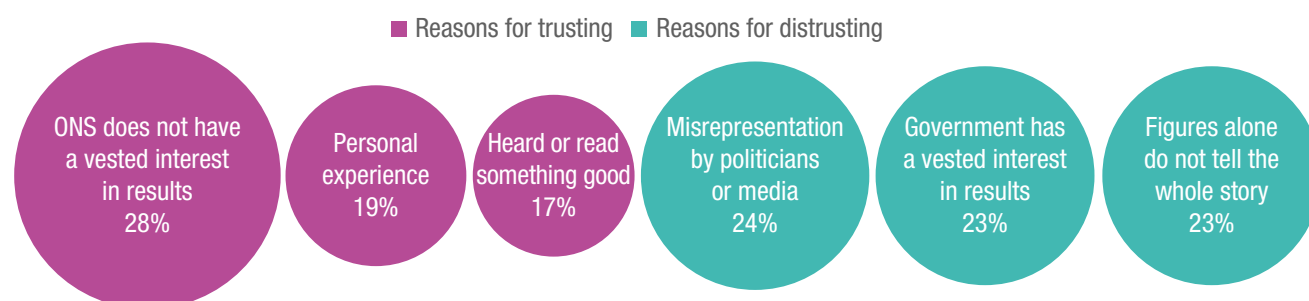
Base: First box (all); second box (excluding don't know and refusal responses)

Figure 5: Public trust of ONS and comparator organisations 2016-2018



Base: excluding don't know and refusal responses

Figure 6. Top three reasons for trusting/distrusting ONS statistics



Base: Respondents saying trust / do not trust ONS statistics

Relationship between trust and use

The majority of the public (85%) trust ONS statistics whether they have used statistics or not. Around 9 in 10 people (91%) who frequently use statistics trust them, and this is similar for those who use statistics occasionally. Of those who have used ONS statistics 5 or more years ago, 84% trust statistics, compared to 63% of those who have never used statistics. Those who had not used statistics before were much more likely to say that they didn't know if they trusted them (24%) compared to those who had previously used statistics (2%).

Reasons for trusting ONS statistics

Those who said that they trusted ONS were asked the reasons why they did. Interviewers did not prompt respondents, but instead put their given answers into a predetermined code frame. There was also an option for recording 'other' for responses which did not fit into the code frame.

The most common reasons given for trusting statistics produced by ONS were the same as in 2016. The most frequently mentioned answer was that ONS does not have a vested interest in results, or does not manipulate production or collection (28%). Excluding the 'other' category (22%) the second most cited reason,

mentioned by 19% of respondents, was a trust in the figures from personal experience. A slightly smaller proportion said they had heard / read something good about the figures (17%). These were also the three most popular reasons for trusting official statistics reported in 2016, although in 2016, 33% mentioned that the ONS does not have a vested interest in the results, so this appears to have declined in importance in 2018.

Reasons for distrusting ONS statistics

Similarly, respondents who said that they distrusted ONS were asked the reason for this. Figures being misrepresented or spun by politicians or the media was the most common reason, being mentioned by 24% who distrusted ONS statistics. This is a much lower proportion than the numbers that chose this reason in 2016 (31%). The second most common reason was that the government has a vested interest in the results or interferes in production or collection (23%), a similar rate to 2016 (22%). These were the two most commonly reported reasons when the question was last asked in 2016. The third most common reason given in 2018 was that the figures alone do not tell the whole story (23%). This was the fifth most cited reason in 2016, with 16% of respondents mentioning it.



4 General attitudes to official statistics

Key points

- Of those able to express an opinion, 78% agree that official statistics are generally accurate, similar to the proportion agreeing in 2016.
- There has been a statistically significant increase in agreement that the government presents official figures honestly when talking about its policies. Of those able to give an opinion, 31% agree that the government presents official figures honestly, up from 26% in 2016.
- Agreement around whether the media presents official figures honestly also remains low, but has seen a significant increase since 2016. Of those able to express an opinion, 23% agree that newspapers present official figures accurately compared to 18% in 2016.
- While people are skeptical about Government use of official figures, a majority of people (73% of those expressing an opinion) think ONS figures themselves are free from political interference.
- Of those expressing a view, most people (93%) agree that ONS statistics are important to understanding our country.
- There remains almost universal agreement that it is important for an independent body like the UK Statistics Authority, to ensure official statistics are free from political interference and to speak out publicly against misuse of official statistics.
- Just over two-thirds of the public (68%) say official statistics should be made equally available to everybody, including the public, at the same time.

Accuracy, use and handling of official statistics

Perceived accuracy of official statistics

Respondents to BSA 2018 were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that official figures are generally accurate. Of those able to express an opinion, 78% agree that official figures are generally accurate and just 22% disagree. This is a similar level to that observed when the question was last asked in 2016, and a statistically significant increase on the 73% recorded in 2014. However, it is important to note that in 2018, almost 1 in 5 (18%) responded 'don't know' at this question in 2018, the same proportion as in 2016.

The British public do not seem to have much confidence in the way that government and newspapers present official figures. Of those able to express an opinion, just under a third of people (31%) agree that "the Government presents official figures honestly when talking about its policies" and just under a quarter (23%) agree that "newspapers present official figures honestly". Despite this proportion still representing a minority of the population, both of these statements have had a small but significant increase in proportion that agree since the questions were last asked in 2016 (26% for government, 18% for newspapers).

Whether ONS statistics are free from political interference

Although the findings above suggest that many people remain sceptical about how official figures are used by the Government, this does not appear to translate into scepticism about political interference in the figures themselves.

Of those who expressed an opinion, almost three quarters (73%) of people agreed that “statistics produced by ONS are free from political interference”. This does not represent a significant change from 2016. As in 2016, around a quarter (24%) were unsure how to answer this question.

Under current Government rules, Government ministers in the UK are shown some official statistics prior to their release to the public. Respondents to BSA 2018 were given this information, and then asked to say whether they thought the current rules were right, or whether they should be changed so that official statistics are made available to everyone at the same time.

Over two thirds (68%) said official statistics should be made equally available to everybody, including the public, at the same time. This was around the same level as reported in 2016 (67%).

Most people agreed that statistics produced by ONS are important to understand our country – 93% of those who expressed a view felt this. While only a few disagreed that statistics produced by ONS were important, around

one in five (18%) were not sure whether they were important or not. These figures are not significantly different from those recorded in 2016.

As well as asking whether or not people agree that statistics are important, BSA 2018 also asked people whether they agree or disagree that:

- “It is important for an independent body, such as the UK Statistics Authority to ensure that official statistics are produced without political interference” and
- “It is important for an independent body such as the UK Statistics Authority to speak out publicly against the misuse of official statistics”

Among those who expressed a view, there was almost universal agreement that an independent body like the UK Statistics Authority should play these roles (97% and 98% respectively). Although a fairly large proportion were unsure whether these statements were important (14% and 12% respectively). This was similar to when the question was asked in 2016.

“ There remains almost universal agreement that it is important for an independent body, like the UK Statistics Authority, to ensure official statistics are free from political interference and to speak out publicly against misuse of official statistics ”

Figure 7. General attitudes to official statistics

	2014	2016	2018	Significant change
Official statistics are generally accurate*	73%	78%	78%	↑
Government presents official figures honestly when talking about its policies*	28%	26%	31%	↑
Statistics produced by ONS are free from political interference*	66%	70%	73%	↑
Newspapers present official figures honestly*	19%	18%	23%	↑
Statistics produced by ONS are important for understanding our country*	90%	92%	93%	
Official statistics should be made equally available to everybody, including the public, at the same time.	71%	67%	68%	

* Base excludes don't know and refusal responses



5 Questions about specific sets of statistics

Key points

- Perceptions of the accuracy of official statistics vary depending on the specific statistical series in question. Of those who expressed an opinion, 87% agree that the Census accurately reflects changes in the UK, just 70% said the same of crime statistics.
- Some statistics are more likely to be seen as subject to political interference than others – just 48% of those expressing an opinion agree crime figures are free of such interference compared to 77% for the census.
- Nearly a quarter of people have used the Census (23%). Far fewer have used crime statistics (20%), employment statistics (17%), GDP (15%) or CPI (15%).

Do statistical series accurately reflect what is happening in the UK?

BSA 2018 included a number of questions about views of specific series of official statistics – the Census, the Consumer Price Index (described to respondents as “statistics on inflation”) employment and unemployment statistics, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and crime statistics. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that each of these statistical series accurately reflect what is changing in the UK. The results indicate that behind the general perceptions of the accuracy of official statistics, discussed in section 4, there are some important differences in the ways in which the public views specific statistical series. While 78% of those who expressed an opinion agreed that

“official figures are generally accurate”, for specific statistics this proportion ranges from 70% for crime statistics to 87% for the Census (Figure 8).

The proportion of people who were able to give a response to these questions also varied – 35% are not sure whether GDP figures accurately reflected change over time, compared with 19% who are not sure about the accuracy of crime statistics.

Are specific statistics free from political interference?

Findings on attitudes to specific statistics also suggest that behind the overall picture reported in section 4 there are some differences in beliefs about the extent to which particular official statistics may be subject to political interference. While almost three quarters (73%) of those who expressed an opinion felt ONS figures in general are free from political interference, the proportion who felt that specific statistics are free from such interference ranged from just 48% for crime figures to 77% for the Census (Figure 9).

People also appear to be more sceptical about whether specific statistics are free from political interference than they are about their overall accuracy. For example, while 70% of those who expressed a view agree that crime figures accurately reflect changes in the UK, just 48% agree that they are free from political interference. A similar pattern was found in 2016.

The proportions of people who feel unable to comment on whether each statistical series is free from interference are similar to those saying they do not know whether they accurately reflect change over time.

Usefulness and timeliness of specific statistics

Respondents were also asked if they had used any of these specific official statistics. Those who had used each series were then asked to comment on their usefulness and timeliness.

The most commonly used data series was the Census – nearly a quarter (23%) had used it (Figure 10), with 15% having used it in the last five years. The vast majority of people (94%) who have used information from the Census agreed that it provides them with useful information.

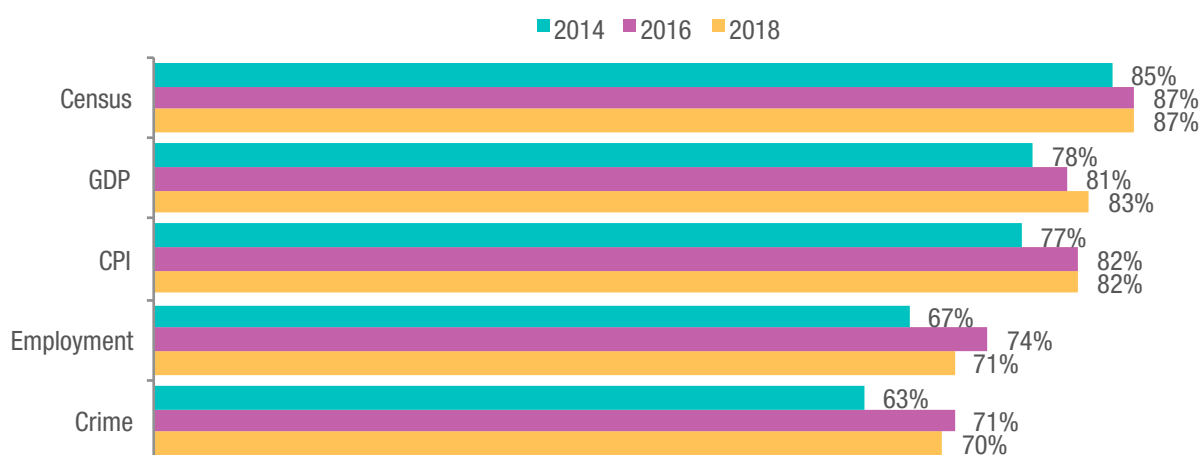
Fewer people had ever used crime statistics (20%), employment statistics (17%), Gross Domestic Product (15%) and Consumer Price

Index (15%). Users of GDP, CPI and crime data expressed similar views on the usefulness of the data to Census data users, with around 9 in 10 agreeing that these data series had provided them with useful information.

Agreement that employment statistics were useful was slightly lower, with 86% of data users agreeing that they provided them with useful information.

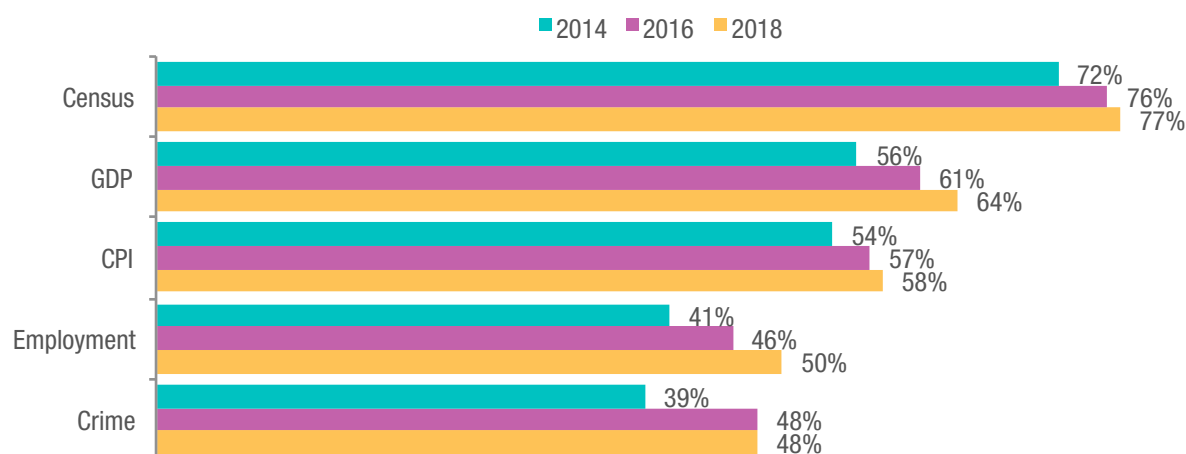
Users of these four other data series are more likely than Census data users to agree that the data are released quickly. Around two thirds of users of CPI (69%), GDP (68%), and employment statistics (67%) agree that these data are released quickly, compared with just half of Census users (50%). Around six in ten (61%) of users of crime statistics feel they are released quickly.

Figure 8. Perceptions of accuracy by statistical series



Base: Excludes don't know, and refusal responses

Figure 9. Perceptions of whether statistics are free from political interference by statistical series.



Base: Excludes don't know, and refusal responses

“ Perceptions of the accuracy of official statistics vary widely. While 87% of those who express a view agree that the Census accurately reflects changes in the UK, just 70% say the same of crime statistics ”

Figure 10. Public use of official statistics series



Base: all GB adults aged 16+

“ Some statistics are more likely to be seen as subject to political interference than others. Just 48% of those expressing a view agree crime figures are free of such interference, compared to 77% for the Census ”



6 Demographic differences

Key points

- People with higher socio-economic status and higher levels of education are more likely to have heard of ONS and to have used official statistics. They are also more likely to trust ONS statistics and be more positive about official statistics in general.
- Younger people are less likely to have heard of the UK Statistics Authority, however there is no clear relationship between age and trust in official statistics.

Further analysis of the questions reported in sections 2 to 5 explored differences in attitudes to ONS and to official statistics by age, sex, socio-economic status, and level of education. Appendix A of the technical report that accompanies this report includes detailed tables showing breakdowns of questions by these respondent characteristics. This section summarises the key differences (Figures 11 and 12).

Gender

Men are significantly more likely than women to report knowing ONS before the survey, with 70% of men saying they knew ONS well, or somewhat compared to 63% of women. Men are significantly more likely to say they knew UKSA well or somewhat (17%) compared to women (9%). Men are also more likely to have referred to ONS statistics in the past, with 27% of men saying they had referred to ONS statistics, compared to 20% of women.

However, men and women's levels of trust in various institutions such as banks, government and the civil service is not significantly different. Levels of trust in official statistics are also very similar across men and women, however women are significantly more likely to say they "didn't know" or are not sure whether they trust official statistics (21%) compared to men (16%).

When comparing attitudes towards official statistics between men and women, there are some differences, for example, men are more likely to agree that official statistics are generally accurate (66%) compared to women (60%), however this difference is driven by the fact that women are more likely to say they don't know or are unsure (22% compared to 15%). Similarly, men are more likely to agree that statistics produced by ONS are free from political interference (59%) compared to women (51%) but again this difference is driven by a larger proportion of women saying that they did not know or were unsure (29% compared to 20%).

Similarly, when looking at the differences between men and women's attitudes to specific sets of statistics, there are some significant differences in levels of agreement, but in each case, these were driven by women being much more likely to say they didn't know or were not sure regarding each statement.

Age

There are no differences between different age groups when it came to knowledge of ONS, however 55-64 year olds and those aged 65+ were significantly more likely to know the UKSA (18% and 16%) than 18-34 year olds (9%). There are also significant differences amongst age groups when it came to looking at those that had used statistics produced by ONS, however the pattern was not particularly clear cut. The age groups that are most likely to have referred to ONS statistics are those aged 35-44 (31%) and those aged 18-24 (30%). Only 15% of the oldest age group – those aged over 65 – had referred to statistics produced by ONS.

When it came to trusting ONS, again there are significant differences amongst age groups, but this time it is the two extremes of the age ranges that seem to be less trusting of ONS than those in the middle age groups. Around two thirds (67%) of 18-24 year olds, and 62% of 25-34 year olds said they trusted statistics

produced by ONS, similarly 65% of those aged 65+ said they trusted statistics produced by ONS. This is compared to 74% of 35-44 year olds and 72% of 45-54 year olds.

There were no significant differences across age groups when it came to attitudes towards specific sets of statistics produced by ONS, or when it came to attitudes towards the UKSA and its role in regulating the use of statistics.

Socio-economic status and level of education

There is a clear relationship between level of education and socio-economic status, and awareness of ONS and UKSA. Those in managerial professions were much more likely to say they knew of ONS (79%) compared to those in lower supervisory and technical occupations (58%) and those in routine and semi-routine occupations (50%). Similarly those with degrees were much more likely to say they knew ONS (80%) compared to those whose highest qualification is CSE's or equivalent (62%) or those with no qualifications (47%). Awareness of UKSA also followed a similar pattern along the lines of both socio-economic status and highest educational qualification. Unsurprisingly, there was a significant difference in the prevalence of the use of ONS statistics across socio-economic status and highest education level. Four in 10 (40%) of those in managerial and professional occupations have referred to ONS statistics in the past, compared to 10% in lower supervisory and technical occupations, and 12% of those in semi-routine and routine occupations. Just under half (48%) of those with a degree had referred to ONS statistics in the past compared to 11% with O levels or equivalent and just 5% of those with no qualifications.

There was a strong relationship between trust in ONS and socio-economic status and education level. This may also be related to the relationship discussed earlier between use of official statistics and trust in them. Those in managerial and professional occupations, and those with degrees were much more likely to trust ONS (79% and 84%) compared to those in semi-routine and routine occupations, and those with no qualifications (52% and 48%).

However this in part can be explained by those in semi-routine and routine occupations, and those with no educational qualifications being more likely to say that they “don’t know” or are unsure when it comes to trusting ONS. However, even when these respondents are excluded, there is still a clear pattern that those in managerial or professional occupations, and those with degrees are much more likely to trust ONS (88% and 94%) than those in semi-routine or routine occupations and those with no qualifications (78% and 71%).

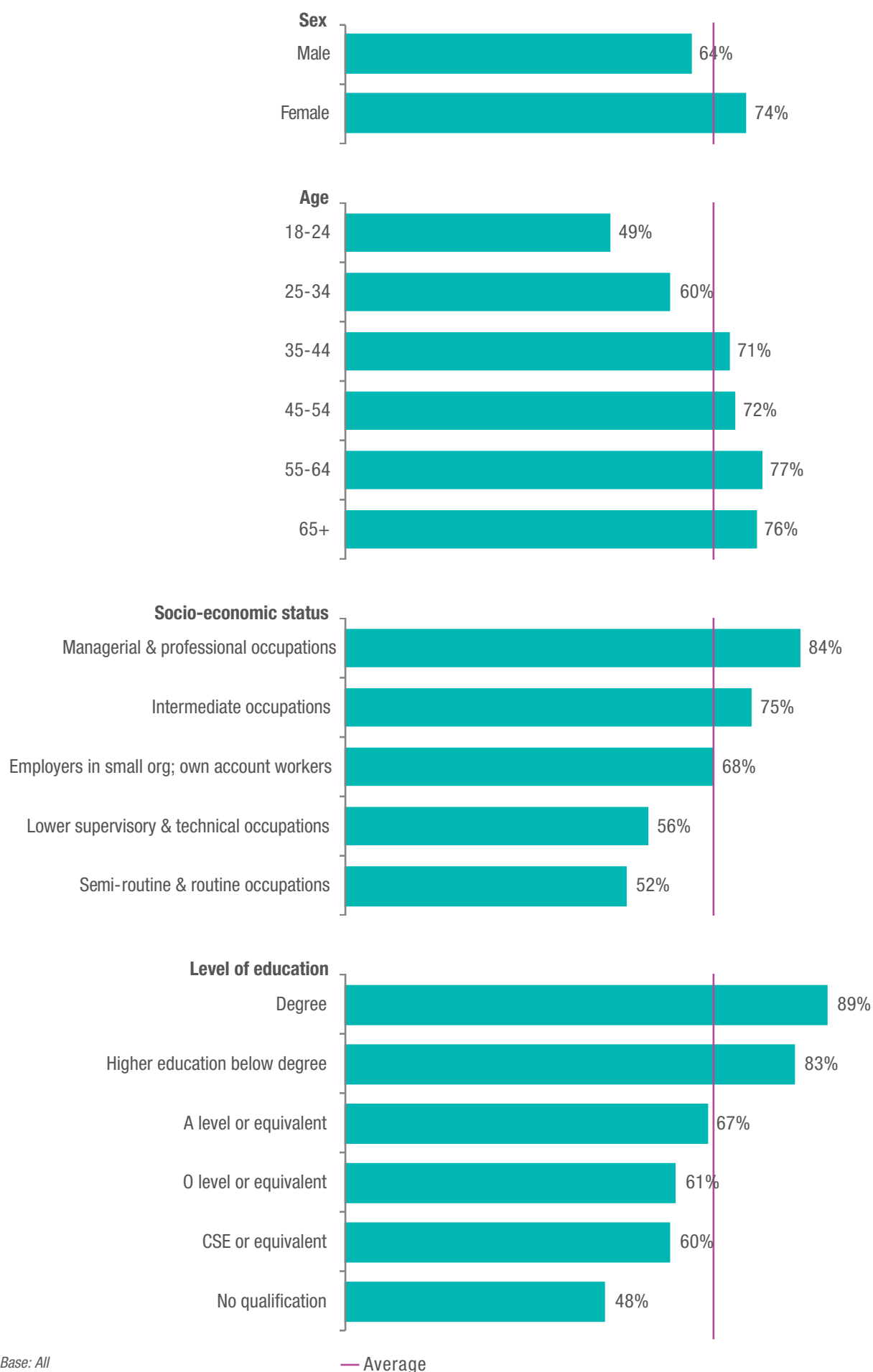
Attitudes to official statistics also varied across education level and socio-economic status. Those in managerial and professional occupations and those with degrees are more likely to think that ONS figures are accurate (72% and 77%) than those in semi-routine and routine occupations and those with no qualifications (52% and 44%). Again, this seems to be driven by those with lower/no educational qualifications and those in routine or lower supervisory or technical occupations being more likely to say that they don’t know or are unsure. However even when these respondents are excluded, those working in managerial and professional occupations (80%) and those with degrees (87%) are more likely to think that statistics produced by ONS are accurate compared to those in semi-routine and routine occupations (73%) and with no qualifications (65%).

Similarly, those with degrees, and in managerial occupations were more likely to think that statistics produced by ONS were important in understanding our country, and also more likely to think that figures produced by ONS were free from political interference than those with O levels or no qualifications, and those in lower supervisory or technical, routine or semi-routine occupations. Again, when those who said they didn’t know or were unsure were excluded from the analysis, the pattern still remained, although the differences are less pronounced.

A similar pattern was observed when looking at attitudes towards the specific sets of statistics – for each set, those with degrees and those working in managerial and professional occupations were more likely to think that the statistics accurately reflect what is changing in the UK, and also that the statistics are free from political interference.

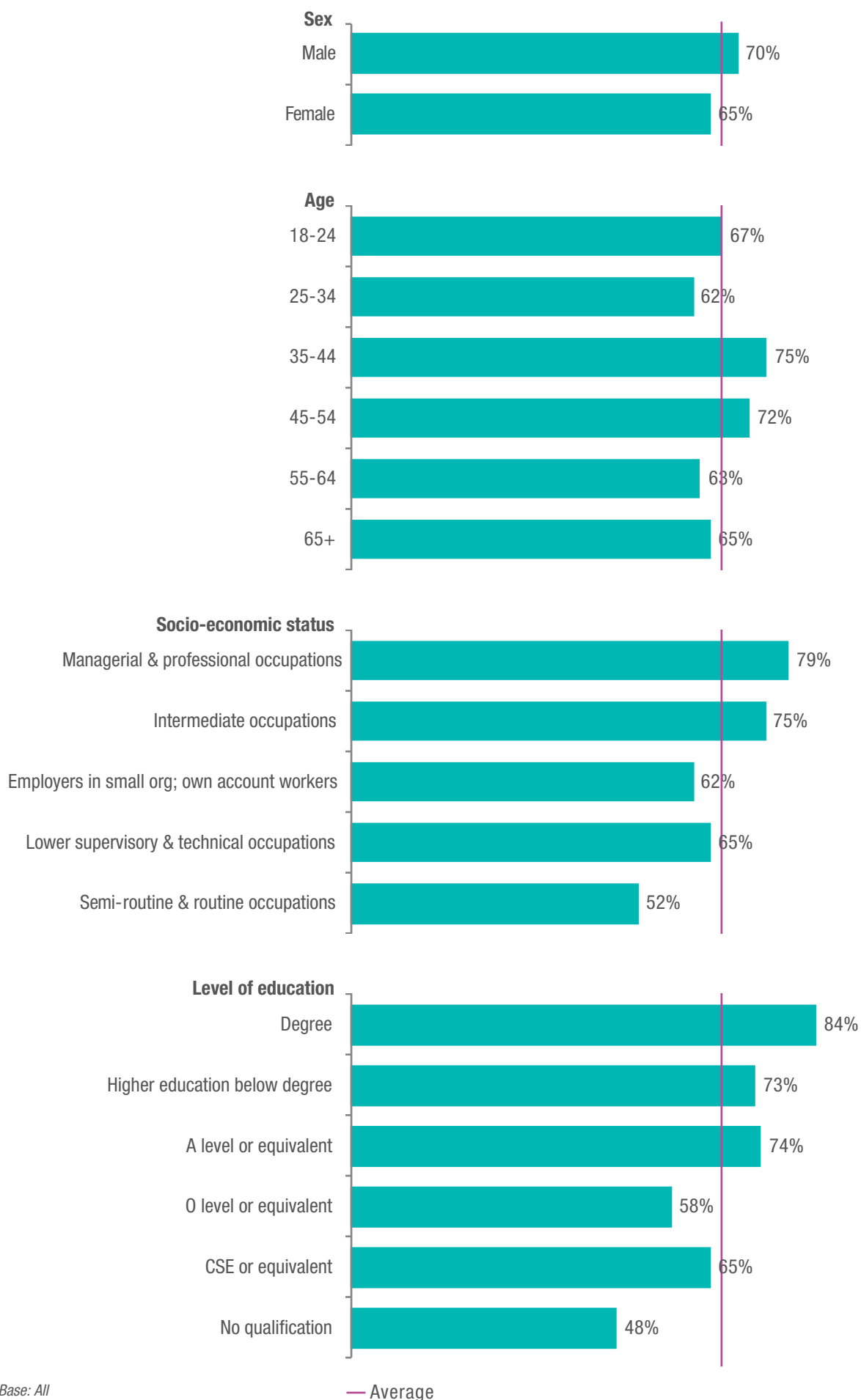
“ People with higher socio-economic status and higher levels of education are more likely to have heard of ONS and to have used official statistics. They are more likely to trust ONS statistics and to be more positive about official statistics in general ”

Figure 11. Awareness of ONS by demographics



Base: All

Figure 12. Trust in ONS by demographics



Base: All

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