

Samoa National Statistics System

Policy on Dissemination of Statistics

1. Introduction

To be valuable, statistics must be used as a basis for debate or decision-making. The Samoa Strategy for Development of Statistics (SSDS) states “Statistical information in the public arena has been and will always be the key to any successful development of policy and planning across all aspects of government.”

The Statistics Act 1971 provides the Bureau of Statistics with a mandate for ensuring statistics are widely available and with the legal basis for statistical dissemination. The Samoa Strategy for Development of Statistics provides the strategic direction for the dissemination of statistics (see Attachment One).

To achieve effective use of statistics they need to be easily available and trustworthy, and users need to be able to understand them and know how to use them. This Policy on Dissemination of Statistics is intended to provide the principles for ensuring the available statistics are used, to the set rules for SBS dissemination of statistics and to be a guide to best practice for other agencies in the National Statistics System.

2. Principles of Statistical Dissemination

The Policy on Dissemination of Statistics is based on the principles of:

- equality of access
- maintaining objectivity
- ensuring accessibility
- protecting confidentiality.

Equality of access ensures that all users have the same access to statistical information, so that there is no risk of a commercial or political benefit.

- Release of statistics is according to a calendar of release dates published at least one month in advance. The timing of a release is not influenced by its content or set to create an advantage to any particular group or individual.
- If prior access is given (for example to a government minister) then this is acknowledged in the data release.
- Statistics should be disseminated as soon as possible after the collection and processing of the data.
- As far as possible price should not be a barrier to access.

Objectivity in collection and presentation of statistics ensures that the integrity is respected.

- Statistical information is presented impartially, without advocacy or unsubstantiated judgement.
- Statistical analysis does not cover policy implications or unsubstantiated comments about causality.

- Statistical releases are open with regard to errors and revisions.
- Information about who the data is collected from, and how it is collected and processed is available for all published statistics (subject to confidentiality issues) – preferably at the time they are released.

Accessibility refers to the processes that ensure the statistics are widely available, understandable and fit for use.

- As much information as possible should be released, within resource and confidentiality constraints.
- All releases should have a media headline and summary – something to attract attention and encourage people to read it. Language should be straightforward and easy to understand.
- Statistics should be supported by commentary and analysis to enable a wide understanding so users are able to make the best possible use of them.
- Publication processes should be simple and easy to access by both users and producers of statistics.
- Electronic release (on the SBS website) would be the primary but not the only mechanism for dissemination.
- Use of statistics is encouraged through training and support.
- Users are consulted regularly about their needs and experiences in using statistics, and the feedback is used to update what and how statistics are disseminated.
- A summary of significant results will be available in Samoan language for all major statistical releases and reports (at a minimum).

Confidentiality refers to the protection of information relating to individuals and organisations, and ensuring that the information is not made available or disclosed to unauthorised individuals or entities. The principles for protecting confidentiality are:

- Legal requirements for the non-disclosure of individual information, without prior consent, are followed.
- Statistical producers take all reasonable steps to minimise the risk of disclosure of individual information - no statistics are produced that are likely to identify an individual unless specifically agreed with them.

3. Stakeholders and user needs

Different users of statistics have different needs that must be understood and appropriate products developed to meet their needs.

3.1 Government

Government – Ministers, MP’s and those officials working in government – can need anything from very quick statistics to in-depth analysis. Some of the primary need is for the data and indicators for planning and measuring progress on those plans.

3.2 International agencies

International agencies have two major needs – information to inform their analysis of the state of development in Samoa, and information to monitor progress on projects and programmes. The Millennium Development Goal indicators, and other indicators required for international treaty and convention compliance are also very important and need to be easily found.

International agencies also maintain global databases which need to be regularly updated.

3.3 Media

The media primarily need simple to understand key points that they can use directly in reporting.

3.4 Private sector (commercial users)

Use of statistics by commercial businesses and organisations assists them to develop a better understanding of the markets for their products, for identifying business opportunities and developing business plans. This often involves significant detail about an area, and customised information.

3.5 Non-Government Organisations

Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) may use statistics for planning and monitoring their activities.

3.6 Students and teachers

Students generally want quick easy to understand answers to questions and projects/assignments set by teachers. They know little about statistics or where to find them. SBS will spend time to explain the statistics supplied.

Developing teachers' knowledge of what is available and how to use it means students are given realistic and practical assignments. Teacher trainers will be invited to seminars on statistics and how to use them.

3.7 Researchers

Researchers may want a very wide range of data, down to sample lists or unit record databases. Their needs are diverse, and not easily planned for in advance. SBS aims to have flexibility to meet researcher needs.

4. Activities to strengthen user understanding and ability to use statistics

The Samoa Bureau of Statistics has a role to help strengthen user understanding and ability to use statistics.

The Bureau offers courses, workshops and seminars from time to time to help develop user understanding. These may cover finding and using statistics, as well as introductions to different areas of statistics.

In particular, SBS may provide NGO's with guidance on understanding and using statistics and as SBS resources allow, SBS will work alongside teachers to develop guidelines for using statistics in teaching.

Activities will be advertised on the SBS website with at least one month's notice, through the two-monthly newsletter and directly to major users and producers of statistics.

5. What forms of dissemination?

All standard products are available on the SBS website as soon as they are available in print form. The standard products are products 5.1 to 5.4.

5.1 Information Releases and Accompanying Tables

These products are the important first release of the latest statistics on a topic. They are aimed at general users across all user groups. Information releases can have several elements:

- Key points for media and others who want the core information quickly
- Analysis of the data and reasons for the changes in the data
- Graphs and presentation tables to help users understand the statistics
- Reference tables with the detailed information
- Information about the data that helps the user understand and use the data appropriately.

5.2 Tabular Reports

Tabular reports present detailed tables, usually from a large Census or Survey. They are aimed at the more intensive users of data from Government, the private sector or researchers.

5.3 Analytical Reports

Analytical reports are designed to interpret the data and make it easier to understand. Analytical reports are targeted at users of statistics across Government, International agencies, NGO's, the private sector, students and researchers. The media may also wish to use the summary sections of these reports.

5.4 Statistical Abstract

The annual Statistical Abstract brings together information from across the statistical system and should be a starting point for people wanting statistics about Samoa. This is particularly useful for international agencies and occasional users of statistics across all user groups.

5.5 Consultation and advice on statistics and statistical methodology

The Bureau of Statistics can provide advice on how to use statistics and on the design and carrying out of statistical activities and will provide information about best practise and international standards, to support statistical activities and services in Samoa.

5.6 Data sets for further analysis

Where practical a data set based on the individual data from a data collection may be made available to researchers who have signed a confidentiality protection agreement to protect the individual data. The Government Statistician will approve all such releases, and SBS may make any adjustments to the original data that it considers necessary to protect confidentiality and provide quality data.

5.7 Maps or sample listings

SBS may produce on request maps or lists from the GIS database, or listings of companies for researchers carrying out surveys.

5.8 Non-standard products

Commercial users and researchers may require non-standard products. SBS may supply, as resources allow:

- Customised tables

- Assistance with carrying out data collection
- Other services for which they have expertise and resources as appropriate.

5.9 Development of other products

The SBS may develop other products and services to meet demand or to take advantage of changing technology requirements.

6. Charging policies

- Access to the website sbs.gov.ws is free
- Printed information releases and accompanying tables
Distributed widely, free.
- Tabular, and Analytical reports, Statistical Abstract
One complimentary copy. For additional copies charges are made to cover printing and associated costs.
Cost of reports range from WST \$5 - \$30. A current list of available reports is available on the website.
- Customised and ad-hoc data, surveys, maps/sample lists
Charges may be made for customised products, ad hoc data, survey assistance, maps or sample lists to cover the costs associated with producing the product.

7. SBS Dissemination standards

The Samoa Bureau of Statistics ensures that the following dissemination standards are followed for every statistical release. All producers and publishers of statistical information are encouraged to do the same.

7.1 Standards for releasing information

- Statistics are disseminated as soon as practicable after they have been compiled, following the pre-published timetable.
- All information about the release and its contents is kept confidential until it is released.
- Any pre-release sharing of the results outside SBS must be approved by the Government Statistician and will usually be for the purposes of assisting SBS with analysis of the data.
- Statistical standards are followed where they exist (e.g. System of National Accounts manual, International Harmonised System of Trade Classification)
- Information is released in a form that makes it easy for users. All information should be in PDF form for ease of printing. Tables are available in Excel form for ease of user calculation and graphing. HTML forms should be developed as soon as practical, for ease of access.
- Technical material is written in the users' language and not in statistical jargon.
- Samoa Bureau of Statistics follows good practice standards for the analysis, presentation and writing about statistics¹.
- Reports have a consistent format over time as far as possible.

7.2 Information to assist users to understand the statistics

It is best practice when releasing statistics to include information about the methodology, classifications and processes used, or advise where it can be obtained. This allows users to assess whether the data are fit for any particular purpose.

¹ See for example UN publications *Making Data Meaningful*
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/EconStatKB/KnowledgebaseArticle10178.aspx>

Releases should also include information on the accuracy of the data and sources of error; including coverage error, sample error, response error and non-sampling error.

The Samoa Bureau of Statistics intends to develop standards for such information over the period of its Institutional Strengthening Programme, so that by 2014 appropriate supporting information is available for all statistics.

7.3 Revisions and errors

Data revisions to statistical series are clearly indicated in statistical releases.

If a significant error is found in the data, the corrected data is made publicly available as soon as possible after the identification of the error.

7.4 Providing comment on misuse of statistics

The Government Statistician may comment on misuse of statistics at any time, provided it is in an objective way.

7.5 Use of statistical information

All publications are copyright to the publishing agency. However users are free to copy, distribute, and use Samoa Bureau of Statistics information, as long as the source of the information is stated as Samoa Bureau of Statistics. The official statistics are however as published by the Bureau of Statistics.

7.6 Liability

While all due care has been used in processing, analysing and extracting information, Samoa Bureau of Statistics gives no warranty that any information supplied is free from error. Samoa Bureau of Statistics shall not be liable for any loss suffered through the use, directly or indirectly, of any information, product or service.

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Attachment One: Dissemination Strategy

From Samoa Strategy for the Development of Statistics

5.2 Coordination, Communication and Dissemination

Good coordination, communication and dissemination will ensure that users are able to use statistics and obtain value and benefit from the investment in the statistical system. Active communication of statistics and ongoing engagement with users and producers are key elements of the strategy in creating demand for statistics.

Action	Priority	Timing
5.2.1 Develop the concept and set up a statistical clearing house to support the Statistics Advisory Board and drive the dissemination, coordination and improvement in the standards of statistics across the statistical system.	1	2011
5.2.2 Develop a communication approach to increase the availability and usefulness of statistics: 5.2.2.1 develop a policy on how and what will be disseminated in consultation with users and producers to ensure information meets user needs but is achievable 5.2.2.2 review all products and develop new more user focussed ones 5.2.2.3 review and upgrade the SBS website 5.2.2.4 develop guidelines and terminology for statistical reporting in Samoan language	1	2011
5.2.3 Develop and implement promotional and advocacy plans, working with the most informed users of statistics, including: 5.2.3.1 developing a public awareness programme/information and outreach programme to promote statistics through the media and other channels for statistics, building on the current SBS activities 5.2.3.2 identifying new products and activities to promote statistics	1	2011
5.2.4 Review and redevelop dissemination processes to improve quality and timeliness including: 5.2.4.1 develop a public timetable for release of publications and meet this 5.2.4.2 develop a style guide which establishes the standards for preparation and dissemination of statistics	1	2011
5.2.5 Develop and implement a coordination plan that includes: 5.2.5.1 regular coordination and consultation meetings with the users, providers and other stakeholders of statistics 5.2.5.2 working with suppliers of statistics to develop a timetable and standard templates for information collected by other agencies that is to be published by SBS, and to develop mechanisms to extract and supply the data from other agencies through electronic transfer	1	2011 and ongoing