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Topic (iv) Managing revisions and version control to maintain credibility

CORRECTIONS TO PUBLICATIONS AT STATISTICS SWEDEN

Supporting Paper

Submitted by Statistics Sweden, Sweden¹

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Statistics Sweden is currently in the process of drawing up guidelines for the handling of corrections to publications. One problem that has been identified is that corrections are handled in different ways in different parts of the organisation and by different people. In some cases this may be justified, given the material to be corrected, but often this is not the case. The fact that the corrections are made in different ways and that they are not always transparent to readers weakens the usability of our statistics.
2. Our goal is that users should receive information rapidly and consistently when corrections have been made. To achieve this, clear guidelines are needed which everyone in the organisation can easily follow. In this paper, we present some of the issues where a course of action has been determined. The work on this issue is being carried out at the same time as our publication schedule is being expanded, giving users the possibility to search all our publications and choose their sorting options. At the same time it is possible to incorporate specific routines concerning corrections in the technical system.
3. Given the volume of Statistics Sweden's publications, corrections must occasionally be made to published material. Corrections are a necessary but unplanned measure. Corrections should be made if there are errors in figures or commentaries and can be made to final and preliminary statistics. It should be made clear when a correction has been made. Only the corrected version of an electronic publication should remain on the website.
4. Decisions on the procedures for processing a correction can be made on a case-by-case basis. Here we describe the basic principles for corrections to Statistics Sweden's publications. Guidelines for how corrections are to be made should be included in the handbooks for all the different types of publications (press releases, databases, publications and tables on the website). When a correction has to be made, it is important that this is done as soon as possible. It is thus important that the person making the corrections has access to accurate guidelines for how the correction is to be made and the process to be followed – where the correction is made, who makes the correction, which persons are to be informed etc.

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II. GUIDELINES

A. The basic rule is that inaccuracies in a publication are to be corrected

5. When an error has been detected, a decision has to be made as to the seriousness of the error and whether it is to be corrected. A basic rule is that, as far as possible, inaccuracies should be corrected. If the error is considered to be important for users, it should always be corrected. It is also important that we correct inaccuracies of a less important nature that, if they remain uncorrected, could give an unprofessional impression.

6. It is not always necessary however to correct inaccuracies of a less important nature. For example, a correction notice for a printed publication is not issued for a minor error, although such an error can be easily corrected on the website. If there is some uncertainty over the necessity of making a correction, the producer/author(s) should consult a representative from the Information and Publishing Department (IP).

B. All important corrections should be transparent to users

7. The producer, usually in one of the statistical production departments at Statistics Sweden, is responsible for the content of publications and for ensuring that inaccuracies are corrected and, where necessary, explained. The producer should always contact IP when a correction that is considered important for users is to be made. Staff working in IP need to have this information when they are liaising with the media and users, and IP can also provide advice on how corrections are to be made. In many cases, IP also takes the responsibility for publishing the correction.

8. Together with IP, the producer decides whether a correction is to be made transparent to users (logged) or whether it should be made without informing users. The most common procedure is that corrections are logged, one exception being for spelling corrections. Users' needs for correct information should be instrumental in determining if a correction is to be shown and corrections should always be shown when this is considered to be of importance for users.

C. Information on corrections is shown in a number of places

9. First page of the website

If a press release that is published on the first page of the website, has been corrected, this should also be shown on the first page.

10. Listings of publications on the website

A correction that is to be shown should always be visible when we list publications on the website, for example, under the heading "Publications". The listings may also be in the press room.

11. Information page

Each book and report has an information page on the website, preceding the publication itself. Information concerning corrections should be provided on this page.

12. Publications (reports, press releases, tables, databases)

There are different ways of making corrections related to the type of publication and whether it is a printed or web publication. Corrections can be made in:

- correction notices (printed publications),
- PDF files (web publications),
- html pages (tables, diagrams, press releases and web publications),
- database tables,

- periodicals: normally a correction would be inserted in the following issue. Corrections can be made to an electronic version as is done with books and reports on the web.

D. What should the correction notice contain?

- Correction notices for printed publications should contain the corrected information, date, formal information about the publication and possibly additional information about the correction. Templates should be provided for this.
- Corrections to electronic publications contain the date of the correction and possible supplementary information on the information page. The publication itself contains the correction possibly with accompanying information on the correction, as well as information on whether it is the first, second correction, etc.
- Tables and figures should be marked to show that a correction has been made. The date can be inserted in a footnote.
- Corrections to press releases should consist of the correction with possible explanatory information and the date.
- Corrections to database tables should contain the correction and the date.
- Regarding periodicals, the editor decides on an appropriate formulation. The correction should contain a reference to where the error is located together with the correct information.

E. Information on corrections is shown for varying periods of time

13. Information in the listings on the website on corrections remains for varying periods of time, depending on the type of publication. The publication itself also contains information about the correction for varying periods of time depending on the type of publication.

14. For publications that are issued regularly, the information on corrections should remain in the listings under the heading "Publications" for up to two weeks after publication of the new version. The information in the publication itself (pdf files) and on the information page is never removed. Information on corrections to monographs should not be removed from the listing or from the publication itself. A monograph is published on its own and there are no subsequent issues. It can thus be expected to have a longer life cycle than a publication which is issued regularly.

15. Corrections to periodicals are not shown in the lists under the heading "Publications", nor on the information page. (The system should, however, be such that corrections can be made in the same way as for books and reports.)

16. Information on corrections to press releases is removed one month after from all listings. However, correction notices in press releases should always be retained.

17. Information on corrections to tables and figures (html) on the website are removed when the table or figure is later updated. At this time the information is also removed from the listings.

F. Corrected publications and press releases should be archived

18. Producers in statistical production departments should supply two copies of archive printouts of the whole of the corrected version of books and reports that have not been printed but that have been published on Statistics Sweden's website. The Information and Publishing Department should supply a single copy of an archive printout of a corrected press release. All these printouts should be done using a special archive printer.

G. New notifications via e-mail that corrections have been made

19. Users subscribe to newsletters from Statistics Sweden via e-mail. Currently, a newsletter is sent out containing links to press releases and to reports. The newsletter is sent automatically when new press releases and reports are published. Users themselves may choose the subject areas or products for which they receive notification. The basic rule regarding corrections is that a new newsletter is sent to subscribers when corrections have been made to a press release or report. Notification of corrections should not be sent out automatically but only after an assessment of the seriousness of the error.

III. SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW CORRECTIONS SHOULD BE SHOWN ON THE WEBSITE

H. Books and reports

20. On the information page for the book on the website:
The corrected version should be marked on the information page of the publication in a separate field under the publication date, for example:
Corrected version 2006-02-09, Corrected version 2, 2006-02-13 etc.

21. In the listings under "Publications", the text *Corrected version* should be shown together with the date, for example:
Statistical Yearbook of Sweden 2006, corrected version 2006-07-05

22. PDF file of the publication:
The PDF file should contain the text *Corrected version or Second corrected version etc* on the title page under title information.

23. The PDF file should contain, if necessary, a description of the error. This is included in the summary under the heading *Correction + date*. If there is a correction notice, it is appropriate to use the same formulation.

I. Press releases

24. The text *Corrected version* and *the date* are inserted into a new text field in the press release template. The text should be shown in the row above the title of the press release.
For example:
Corrected version 2006-05-12
Service price index, 1st quarter 2006:
Price increases for services

25. The corrected figures/text in the text section of the press release are marked in bold followed by the text "corrected data" in brackets, for example:
55.9 (corrected data).

26. Corrections to tables in press releases are marked by an asterisk and the text "corrected data" is inserted under the table.
For example:

156 122 147 258*

** Corrected data*

27. Where the whole of a table or a figure is changed, the note "Corrected" is written adjacent to the heading of the table/figure. For example:

Employees aged 20-64 years on the regular labour market. Corrected

28. The corrected press release retains its original numbering.
29. If the press release is published on the first page of the website, the text *Corrected version* is inserted together with the heading. Example:
Higher import prices in December (Corrected version)
30. The text *Corrected version* and the date are also shown in all listings on the website, under Publications, in the press room and in the press archive.
31. If the correction needs an explanation, this is provided at the beginning of the press release. The text should be inserted in a new text/item field in the *content management system*. The information should have a different layout to distinguish it from the other text.

J. Tables and figures on the website

32. For corrections to tables and figures on the website, headings for figures and tables should contain the text *Corrected*. For example:
Ownership of shares in companies quoted on the Swedish stock exchange. Corrected
33. Changes in the tables are marked with an asterisk (*) in the table itself after the corrected data. This is then explained below the table. For example:

156 122* 147 258

* *Corrected data 2006-07-05*

34. In the listing of tables/figures under "Publication", the text *Corrected* is inserted.