Engagement with Users

The Office for National Statistics has engaged with users in several ways on the subject of retail sales and the publication of retail sales estimates.

Surveys

Most recently we have run a survey of users which when complete will provide details of how users view the publication material issued by ONS on retail sales and other short term statistics. Results of this will be published in 2015.

Seminars

In March 2014, a seminar was held, where ONS discussed the methods used to collate retail sales data, the future work plan for the development of these statistics and explained the latest set of estimates. This seminar was attended by a variety of users from across the retail industry and government.

A previous seminar in 2011, followed a similar format and was attended by a variety of users including the media.

Meetings

Each quarter, the RSI team engage with key stakeholders through the Short Term Output Indicators Steering Group. The Bank of England, Her Majesty’s Treasury, Office for Budget Responsibility and Department for Business Innovation and Skills are all represented on this group. The terms of reference and minutes of this group can be found on the ONS website http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-qualityspecific/economy/national-accounts/presentations-and-meeting-papers/index.html.

Prior to the STOIS Group being set up, the Retail Sales team hosted three User Engagement meetings with retail industry experts, government users and the banking industry. At these meetings, the work plan for Retail Sales was discussed and users brought to the table their wish list for retail sales statistics. As a result of this meeting, ONS were able to prioritise the development of seasonally adjusted internet sales statistics at main store group category.

To improve knowledge of the statistics amongst the media and retail industry commentators we have held meetings to discuss methods and latest estimates. These one-to-one meetings have helped to improve understanding of retail sales estimates and the methodology used to compile them.

Social Media

ONS have actively sought engagement with a wider set of users through social media. In doing so we have hosted a live twitter question and answer session and provided detailed tweets during a Channel 4 Dispatches documentary on Supermarket Wars.

Other
To increase knowledge of our statistics, we have produced short guides to retail sale statistics in the form of podcasts, short videos and short stories on trends within the data. We regularly seek to explain latest estimates to a wider audience through media interviews including TV and radio.