




Missing Numbers

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**Missing Numbers investigates
and campaigns to close
gaps
in government data**

- 
- 1. What's a missing number?**
 - 2. Examples!**
 - 3. Causes**
 - 4. How do we choose what to measure?**
 - 5. Found a missing number?**



**A missing number is important
public data that the government
does not collect**



For example: official data on the number of formal complaints made by citizens about each:

✓ hospital

✓ school

✗ jobcentre

Why Missing Numbers?

private-eye.co.uk/registry



Missing numbers in land and housing



Land ownership and control

- Land ownership concentration**
- What types of owner**



Land values

The lack of land market information may lead to inefficient allocations of land.... the effectiveness of the planning regime is hamstrung without access to adequate data on land values.

Bean Review of Economic Statistics, 2016



Affordable housing

- No data on how many Section 106 commitments are negotiated or what they deliver**



The rental market

- How have rental costs changed over time, per local authority?



The rental market

The majority of users we spoke to cited frustration at the lack of robust, timely and insightful statistics about the private rented sector... The dispersed nature of... information hinders users in developing an understanding of changing rental patterns.

Office for Statistics Regulation, Systemic Review, 2016

Missing numbers in social care



*“I am responsible for regulating data across economics, employment, health and more and it is **social care that stands out by far for its low quality or even absent data.** We need parity of measurement to have parity of policy.”*

Ed Humpherson, Office for Statistics Regulation



Quality of adult social care



Basic numbers on private care




Value of unpaid care

Missing numbers in Universal Credit



Whether it saves money



We cannot be certain that Universal Credit will ever be cheaper to administer than the benefits it replaces... We cannot judge the value for money.

National Audit Office, 2018



Whether it gets people into work


Claim


Universal Credit will mean 200,000 more people will be in work when it's fully rolled-out.

Conclusion

That's according to the government's own estimate, but it's subject to significant doubt. It's also currently unprovable: the National Audit Office says "the Department will never be able to measure whether Universal Credit actually leads to 200,000 more people in work".

Missing numbers on tax reliefs


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- **HMRC allows 424 tax reliefs**
 - **It estimates that 105 of these tax reliefs cost £416.8 billion**
 - **We don't know the cost of the remaining 239 reliefs**




Despite repeated recommendations, HMRC... still does not make tax reliefs sufficiently visible to support parliamentary scrutiny and public debate about areas where the UK chooses not to collect tax.

Public Accounts Select Committee, 2016

What causes a missing number?

- 
- 1. It's not considered important by the people with the power to produce it**
 - 2. It's embarrassing**
 - 3. It's difficult to collect**
 - 4. All of the above**

- 
- 5. The UK statistical system is better at producing accurate data than relevant data 🇬🇧**
 - 6. The UK statistical system is focussed on economic not social statistics 🇬🇧**

Not the ONS



Also not the ONS



The ONS



**How do we decide what's
missing, not just unimportant?**

Cats per square kilometre

Published by: Animal and Plant Health Agency
Last updated: 27 June 2016
Topic: Society
Licence: [Open Government Licence](#)

Summary

This dataset is a modelled dataset, describing the mean number of cats per square kilometre across GB. The figures are aligned to the British national grid, with a population estimate provided for each 1km square. These data were generated as part of the delivery of commissioned research. The data contained within this dataset are modelled figures, based on national estimates for pet population, and available information on Veterinary activity across GB. The

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[Dogs per square kilometre- upper 95th percentile](#)

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Criteria used by UK Statistics Authority for 'National Statistics':


- 1. Used to allocate public resources**
- 2. Topic of significant public interest**
- 3. Generates regular media reporting**
- 4. Used in PQs or ministerial speeches**

(and 4 more)


How can we fix our missing numbers?



With only a modest sense of how the public uses data and no evidence of the unmet needs, UKSA is not delivering public good as required under the legislation.



*We recommend that UKSA should...
build an evidence base of how statistics
are used in practice... and establish
where data gaps persist.*

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- 1. Commission an independent review like the 2016 Bean Review of Economic Statistics, but for social statistics**
 - 2. Call out missing numbers!**

What should you do when you spot a missing number?

1. Call it out!

**2. Tell the Office for Statistics
Regulation **

3. Get in touch 

Thank you!

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