

## Foreword

Accurate and impartial information is essential to a modern democracy. A key aspect of keeping the public fully informed is the production of objective statistics which people trust. Official statistics should also be easy to access and be made available in a timely manner. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) meets these needs.

The Office is committed to delivering the statistics needed by Government and the public, to the highest possible standards. This updated Customer Service Action Plan sets out in detail how we aim to fulfil this commitment.

The plan describes what the CSO does and how we publish our statistics, with a growing emphasis on electronic dissemination. All of our statistical reports and publications are available free of charge on our website ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)). The website will continue to play a greater role in how we make statistics available and accessible.

The plan builds on our Customer Charter by setting out specific commitments to quality customer service. One of the most important challenges for the Office is to reduce the burden on data providers, while continuing to meet new information needs. We are actively addressing this challenge.

This plan also recognises the range of internal roles which are combined to provide an excellent service to the public. The delivery of a high-quality statistical service depends on the performance, motivation and involvement of all our staff.

I am personally committed to continuing to develop our organisational capability, so that we can continue to deliver the best possible customer service to our internal and external customers.



Pádraig Dalton  
Director General

February 2013



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# ***Statistics for a Modern Ireland***

*The efficient and timely provision  
of high quality information  
for a  
changing society*

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# Chapter 1 What the CSO does

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) collects and compiles statistical information relating to the economic and social life of Ireland. We publish more than 300 statistical releases and reports every year. All the information we publish is available simultaneously on our website ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)).

## Main responsibilities

The functions, authority and responsibilities of the CSO are set out in the Statistics Act, 1993. The Office is mandated to:

- Collect, compile, extract and disseminate statistical information relating to the economic, social and general activities of the State.
- Decide independently on statistical methodology and standards, and on the content, timing and methods of disseminating statistics.
- Protect the confidentiality of the information collected and ensure that it is used only for statistical purposes.
- Maintain close and regular contact with the principal users and suppliers of statistics.
- Co-ordinate the statistics compiled by other public authorities to ensure adherence to statistical standards and classifications.
- Realise the statistical potential of the records maintained by public authorities.

In addition to our statutory mandate we also have an ethical statistical mandate which embraces impartiality, integrity, and the requirement to apply the best

statistical standards and methodology. In this regard we fully subscribe to the U.N. *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* and to the *European Statistics Code of Practice* adopted by the EU in 2005 and updated in 2011. Links to both of these documents are available on our website.

We serve the needs of Government and the wider community for impartial and relevant statistics on social and economic conditions. There are many and varied uses for our statistics. The community of users includes all sectors of society - Government Departments and other Public Bodies, universities and research institutes, the media, businesses, trade unions, other sectoral groups and the general public. There is also an important international dimension to our work, providing statistics which are internationally comparable, particularly at EU level. Our statistics are used by Eurostat, other EU Commission Departments, the European Central Bank, the UN and other international organisations, and by other national statistical offices.



## Chapter 2 Delivering Quality Service

The CSO is committed to serving all our customers.

### **Users of Statistics**

As an output-focused organisation, we are committed to providing high-quality statistical services to all our customers across the whole range of our activities. Our goal is to be the first port of call for statistics about Ireland - about the economy, social conditions, population etc. We are continuously improving and expanding our statistical outputs. Customer service is part and parcel of the work we do throughout the Office. This is reflected in the implementation of our *Statement of Strategy*.

### **Data Providers**

The statistics we produce depend critically on the co-operation of our survey respondents. We are committed to reducing the burden placed on business by CSO surveys. This is a corporate priority for the CSO and we have a co-ordinated action programme to reduce burden. We are also committed to protecting the confidentiality of the information supplied to us by persons and businesses. Under the Statistics Act 1993, the information collected by the CSO in its surveys and censuses is treated as strictly confidential and is only used for statistical purposes.

## Public Sector

Within the overall framework of the National Statistics Board's *Strategy for Statistics 2009-2014*, we are committed to promoting the use of official statistics to support evidence-based decision-making and to developing the statistical potential of administrative records. This involves a "whole system" approach to statistics, with each Department preparing a formal data/statistics strategy. The CSO is working closely with Departments: to help identify their data needs; to assess the statistical potential of their data holdings; and to provide the necessary technical support and advice.

## Key Publications

We publish over 300 statistical releases and publications each year. All of these contain a commentary written, insofar as possible, in clear accessible language to explain the statistics and related terminology to a general readership.

Some of our key publications include:

- The annual *Statistical Yearbook of Ireland*, our most comprehensive publication.
- *Measuring Ireland's Progress* which contains a wide range of economic, social and environmental indicators and comparative data for the other 26 EU Member States.
- *Women and Men in Ireland*, a report first published in 2004 presenting social and economic comparisons of the lives of women and men in Ireland, together with comparative EU data.

## CSO Website

The website ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)) plays an ever-increasing role in the dissemination of statistics and all CSO releases and publications are made available online free of charge.

The site contains statistics organised within the following themes:

- People and Society.
- Labour Market and Earnings.
- Business Sectors.
- Economy.
- Environment and Climate.

It also contains links to information about the Census of Population, the Quarterly National Household Survey and the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). The Census has its own website ([www.census.ie](http://www.census.ie)) which contains data on the 2011 Census. This data can also be accessed through [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie).

In relation to each statistical theme, the following services are available:

- *Statistics* on that theme.
- *Statbank*: This gives access to a wide range of CSO statistics, in a user-friendly format. Statistics can be selected and displayed in the form of tables or graphs and can easily be downloaded for further analysis.
- *Releases and Publications* relevant to the statistical theme.
- *Surveys and Methodology*, giving technical information and contact details in relation to each survey.

A Release Calendar gives an advance schedule of when statistical reports are due to be published.

The website also contains general information about the CSO (organisation chart, strategy documents etc.), links to the National Statistics Board website ([www.nsb.ie](http://www.nsb.ie)), links to the websites of other national statistical offices and relevant international bodies and a link to StatCentral. StatCentral is the portal to Ireland's Official Statistics. It provides information about statistics produced by government departments and state organisations. The site is maintained by the CSO.

The Students Corner contains useful statistical information and examples for use by schools and colleges. There is no charge for access to any of the statistics on our website.

## **Points of contact**

There are many points of contact for our customers. These include our Information Section, which is the first point of contact for many callers to the Office, the Trade Helpdesk and Census Inquiries Section. Full details are given on pages 23 to 25.

# Chapter 3 Our Commitment to our Customers

## Customer Action Plan

In this chapter we outline our commitments to all our customers based on the Twelve Principles of Quality Customer Service.

These Principles are:

- Setting Quality Service Standards.
- Provision of Information.
- Being timely and courteous in our dealings with customers.
- Ensuring physical access to our buildings is available on an equal basis.
- Recognising customer's rights under equality/diversity legislation.
- Implementing the provisions of the Official Languages Act.
- Reducing the burden on data providers.
- Recognising the internal customer roles which combine to provide the CSO's service to the public.
- Measuring our performance through constant monitoring.
- Provision of a complaints mechanism.
- Provision of an appeals mechanism.
- Continually consulting and evaluating ways to improve our performance and implementing improvements.

## Quality Service Standards

We are committed to providing the best possible service standards to all our customers. This plan sets out the service standards we aim to meet. To ensure these standards are met we will put measures in place to monitor our progress and adherence to these standards and we will be flexible enough to alter the plan if necessary.

Our Customer Charter (see Appendix) sets out in general terms our commitments to our external customers in relation to:

- Collection of statistics.
- Contacting the Office.
- Service through Irish.
- Receiving feedback.
- Monitoring our performance.
- Dealing with complaints.

The Charter is available on our website or from any contact points listed on page 24.

We will monitor the commitments made in the Charter and Action Plan and will report on progress in our Annual Report.

## **These are the standards you should expect when contacting the CSO**

### **If you contact the Office by telephone**

- You will be answered courteously and promptly.
- Persons answering calls will identify their business areas and themselves by name.
- The information you require will be given clearly and concisely and without undue delay.
- If the information is not readily available you will be informed of this and also of when it is likely the information will be available.
- If the person you make initial contact with cannot provide the information he/she will take your details and ensure that the information will be provided with minimum delay.
- If your call is being transferred to another person or area of the Office you will be given that person's name and telephone extension. In addition and prior to transfer of your call, your contact details will be requested in case there is a breakdown in transferring the call.

### **If you contact the Office by letter or email**

- We will provide clear and concise information without delay.
- If this is not possible we will acknowledge receipt of your correspondence and provide the information within 2 working days for emails and 5 working days for letters. If your query will take longer to answer we will inform you of this and let you know when you can expect a full reply.

- We will use clear language, avoiding jargon and technical terms, whenever possible.

### **If you visit our Office**

- You will be met promptly and courteously.
- If you have an appointment you will be collected from reception within 10 minutes of arrival.
- If the person you wish to speak to is unavailable, we will get another person to help you.
- Your business will be conducted in private if you wish.

### **Information**

We will provide all our customers with the most up to date information about the services we provide. We will ensure this information is available at all points of contact and that the information is clear, concise and meets the requirements of people with specific needs.

- The opening hours for our offices will be 9.15 to 5.30 Monday to Thursday and 9.15 to 5.15 on Friday.
- All our literature e.g. Customer Charter, Customer Service Action Plan, customer service leaflets, will be made available at all points of contact for our customers.
- We will continue to update information on our website ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)) as required.
- We will develop social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook, etc. to disseminate our statistical data to our customers.



## **Timeliness and Courtesy**

The CSO is committed to treating all our customers with courtesy, sensitivity and with the minimum of delay.

- We will continue to provide statistical information in accordance with our timeliness monitor.
- Each customer will be dealt with courteously.
- Contact names and numbers will appear on all survey forms and releases issued from the Office.
- Customer service training will be provided to each staff member.

## **Physical Access**

In the interests of both external customers and CSO staff we are committed to ensuring that all our offices are clean, safe and comply with all Health and Safety legislation. We will as far as possible facilitate access for people with disabilities and for others with specific needs.

- We will ensure that all our buildings conform to the best health and safety standards. An up to date safety statement will always be available.
- We will continue to improve the physical access to our buildings on a phased basis and in accordance with the timeframe set out in the Disabilities Act 2005.
- The Office has appointed an Access Officer to further assist people with disabilities to access our services and information. Contact details are included on page 24.
- Buildings will be maintained to an acceptable standard.

## Equality/Diversity

The CSO commits itself to ensuring that the standards of equal treatment set out in equality and disability legislation are met and where possible exceeded.

The CSO commits itself to providing its services in accordance with the National Disability Authority's Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information Provided by Public Bodies.

The CSO is an equal opportunities employer. When recruiting, the CSO will adhere to the principals set out in the Codes of Practice published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments, External Recruitment for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and External and Internal Appointment of Persons with Disabilities to Positions in the Civil Service and Certain Bodies.

## Official Languages

The CSO is committed to providing a quality service in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003.

- Any customer wishing to conduct their business with us through Irish will be facilitated.
- We are implementing schemes as agreed under the Official Languages Act.
- Training courses will be provided for staff to improve their Irish skills sufficiently to enable them to provide a good quality service to the customer.
- The following publications are available in Irish:  
Statement of Strategy  
Statement of Strategy Progress Report

Customer Service Action Plan  
Customer Charter.

## **Reducing the Burden on Data Providers**

We are committed to reducing the burden placed on business by statistical surveys, while continuing insofar as possible to meet new information needs. Between 2005 and 2011 we reduced the response burden by 19%. Our integrated approach to reducing burden includes the following actions:

- Measurement of the burden placed on business by CSO surveys and publication of annual statistics to track our progress in reducing burden.
- Ongoing review of questionnaire design and sample sizes.
- Greater integration between surveys and greater use of existing survey and administrative data sources.
- Developing the statistical potential of administrative data.
- Further development of electronic reporting options.
- Establishment of a single point of contact in the CSO for large businesses.

## **Internal Customers**

A wide range of internal customer roles combine to provide the CSO's service to the public. Our staff play a pivotal role and we will support them in ensuring that a good quality service is provided both internally and externally. In that context, we will:

- Finish development and implement an Internal Customer Charter during the lifetime of this plan.
- Train and educate staff about the requirements under the Customer Charter and the Action Plan.

- Support our staff in the provision of effective public services by providing appropriate and responsive administrative, IT and training services internally and through shared services.
- Provide appropriate training and development opportunities for staff.
- Continue to implement the Civil Service Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).
- Develop the use of partnership in implementing the work of the CSO.
- Progressively implement our Human Resources Strategy.
- Continue the process of consultation with our staff through section and divisional meetings.

## **Monitoring our Performance**

This Customer Service Action Plan sets out the high standard of service delivery that our customers can expect from us. It is not enough just to set out these standards and apply them. We must always strive to develop and improve upon these standards. We can only do this by a process of consultation with our customers and by evaluating our performance against the standards set. To achieve this we will:

- Monitor standards set in relation to telephone, correspondence and personal contact with the Office.
- Carry out surveys to determine the quality of service being delivered.
- Make comment cards available at all points of contact with our customers and encourage their completion. Feedback questionnaires will accompany selected survey forms.
- Conduct customer satisfaction surveys in association with the National Statistics Board.

## Complaints

We always aim to provide a high quality service to all our customers. However, in the event that we do not meet the standards we have set, we have put in place a complaints procedure (see page 27).

- A well-publicised, accessible and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints will be maintained.
- The Customer Relations Officer will act as a Complaints Officer for the CSO.
- All legitimate complaints will be treated with the utmost seriousness and sensitivity.

## Appeals

If any customer is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint an appeal procedure is in place (see page 27).

## Consultation and Evaluation

We actively seek and welcome feedback from our customers. We are conscious of the needs of our customers and will continue to be involved in consultative processes to try to improve our services.

- Through the National Statistics Board we will carry out a survey of our statistical users, present a report and act on its findings to improve the quality of our customer services.
- We will continue to consult with various user groups e.g. QNHS Advisory Groups, Energy Statistics Co-Ordinating Group, EU and ECB Working Groups and many more to ensure best quality practice in the collection and dissemination of our statistics.

- We will seek feedback by means of comment cards at all points of contact and by customer attitude responses attached to selected statistical survey forms.

## Chapter 4 How to Contact Us

### Locations

The CSO has offices in both Cork and Dublin at:

Skehard Road Cork Tel: 021 453 5000	Ardee Road Rathmines Dublin 6 Tel: 01 498 4000	Swords Business Campus Swords Co. Dublin Tel: 01 895 1300 (Census Inquiries)
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All our extensions can also be contacted through either our Cork or Dublin phone numbers or you can dial extensions directly by replacing the last four digits of these numbers with the appropriate extension number.

### Information Services

Our Information area is located in the Cork office. We will be happy to deal with your statistical queries. You can write, email, telephone or call in person. Our *Guide to CSO Publications and Releases* is available on our website.

Our internet site at [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) contains a broad range of information and statistics. All our statistical releases are published on the site at 11 am on day of publication.

You can purchase CSO Publications directly from Information Section. A full list of publications and their prices is available on request.

Weekly and four month in advance calendars of releases and publications are available on request. We can email calendars to you or you may view them on our internet site.

You can address your queries to any of the following:

Written	See addresses on page 23
Telephone	Noel O'Hara ext 5021
email	information@csso.ie
Fax	021 453 5555
Internet site	Noel O'Hara ext 5021 Webmaster@csso.ie
Sales of publications	Hugh O'Neill ext 5011
Oifigeach Gaeilge	Anna Donegan ext 5017 email anna.donegan@csso.ie
Access Officer	Eamonn Dorney ext 5036 email eamonn.dorney@csso.ie or cro@csso.ie

## Census Inquiries

Detailed inquiries on population statistics may be addressed to the Census Inquiries Section based in the Swords Office. The results of each census are published in detailed volumes covering topics such as age, sex, marital status, occupations, household composition etc. Small Area Population Statistics from the 2011 Census for urban districts, rural districts, towns and district electoral divisions are also published free on [www.csso.ie](http://www.csso.ie).

Contact: Denise o'Brien ext 1460

Fax 01 8951399

email [census@csso.ie](mailto:census@csso.ie)



## **Trade Helpdesk**

Trade statistics provide a wealth of information ranging from aggregates such as total imports and exports to the most detailed statistics at commodity by country level. Apart from the regular published results, detailed commodity results are available on printout or CD-ROM.

Contact: Teresa Moran ext 4238  
Lorcan O'Broin ext 4232

Fax 01 498 4240

email [trade@csso.ie](mailto:trade@csso.ie)

## **CSO Data Dissemination Service (Statbank)**

Online interactive access to CSO Data Dissemination Service is available via the Databases link on [www.csso.ie](http://www.csso.ie)

Contact: Jeremy Crowley ext 5649

Fax 021 453 5555

email [databank@csso.ie](mailto:databank@csso.ie)

## **Research Support**

The Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA) will hold, process and harmonise machine-readable data from surveys, census material, geographical databases, election results and so on, and will make them readily available to users in the academic, public and commercial sectors.

The CSO datasets currently available through the archive consist of anonymised micro-data from the Quarterly National Household Survey (and its predecessor the annual Labour Force Survey), the Household Budget Survey, the Census of Population and the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

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These datasets are available for non-commercial social research purposes only and users are required to sign a contract in advance covering the conditions under which they may use the data. See <http://www.ucd.ie/issda/contact.htm>

## **Freedom of Information**

Queries under the Freedom of Information Act can be addressed to:

Kieran Harte ext 5168

email [foi@cs0.ie](mailto:foi@cs0.ie)

Fax 021 453 5555

## Complaints

Initially your complaint can be addressed to the relevant section within the office. The staff there will try to find a speedy remedy.

If you are not happy with their response we will arrange for your complaint to be officially investigated by the Customer Relations Officer:

Eamonn Dorney  
Customer Relations Officer  
Central Statistics Office  
Skehard Road  
Cork

Phone +353 21 453 5036  
Fax +353 21 453 5555  
email [cro@cso.ie](mailto:cro@cso.ie)

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the review by the Customer Relations Officer the matter can be appealed to:

Liam Hogan  
Head of Dissemination  
Central Statistics Office  
Skehard Road  
Cork

Phone +353 21 453 5089  
Fax +353 21 453 5555  
email [liam.hogan@cso.ie](mailto:liam.hogan@cso.ie)

If the matter is still not resolved you may refer it to the Ombudsman at:

The Ombudsman  
18 Lower Leeson St.  
Dublin 2

LoCall 1890 22 30 30  
Phone +353 1 639 5600  
Fax +353 1 639 5674  
email [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie)  
Website [www.ombudsman.ie](http://www.ombudsman.ie)



# Appendix 1 Statement of Strategy

## CSO's Key Priorities 2012-2014

### **Goal 1 Meet Statistical Needs.**

The actions under this goal aim to deliver our existing core annual statistical programme; and, wherever possible, improve timeliness and quality, and meet new demands for statistics. We will continue to review the core programme and contribute to the identification at EU level of statistics which are no longer needed.

### **Goal 2 Develop the Irish Statistical System.**

This goal comprises ongoing professional support by the CSO for departmental statistical units; and a co-ordinated approach to the production and dissemination of statistical data across the public service. It reflects key aspects of Public Service Reform and the recently updated European Statistics Code of Practice. The CSO is taking a lead role in developing standards for statistical data and dissemination in the public service; and will review the relevant legislation to identify how the use of statistical data can be improved.

### **Goal 3 Promote Awareness and Use of Statistics.**

We will continue to develop our online services for the provision of statistical releases and tables, to maximise the availability and use of the information we publish. We are also extending our educational outreach programme to promote

statistical awareness; and will continue to organise regular seminars to explain statistics to users.

#### **Goal 4 Increase Efficiency.**

We are implementing an ongoing programme of business process reviews, so that we can continue to deliver our core statistical programme at lower cost. Our strategies on Human Resources and Information Technology will play an important part in this, as will our approach to Shared Services. A particular challenge will be the total transformation of our household survey system, to meet future requirements for social and household surveys.

#### **Goal 5 Reduce Burden.**

We are continuing to implement an integrated programme of burden reduction in our business surveys. Between 2008 and 2010, we reduced burden by 18%. While future reductions will not be so dramatic, we will continue to publish the annual Response Burden Barometer and maintain a strong focus on burden reduction. The evaluation of data options and impacts on data providers will be an integral part of planning for new surveys.

## Appendix 2 Customer Charter

This charter sets out our commitments to providing a high quality customer service.

### **Quality, timeliness and range of our statistics**

- We publish quarterly, monthly and weekly calendars of our statistical publication schedule.
- We set challenging deadlines for the publication of our statistics and maintain a timeliness monitor to measure the achievements of these deadlines.
- We publish all of our statistics simultaneously on-line at [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie).
- We are developing and enhancing our on-line statistical publication services.
- Where possible we provide additional statistical analysis as requested by our customers.
- Our statistical releases show the contact name and direct contact number should you require further information.
- We will prepare and elaborate a set of quality standards for our statistics.

### **Collection of statistics**

In order to compile statistics we must collect information with the co-operation of our data providers.

- A basic principle of our work is respect for our data suppliers.
- We aim to balance, in so far as possible, the need to collect statistics and the burden on our survey respondents.
- We are developing technologies to simplify and, where possible, reduce the task of responding to surveys.
- Our survey forms contain the contact details for the issuing area.
- In accordance with the Statistics Act 1993, your details are kept strictly confidential and are used only for statistical purposes.

## **Contacting the office**

### **By telephone**

- We will answer 90% of your calls within 20 seconds.
- We will identify ourselves to you when answering the telephone.
- If we cannot give an immediate answer to your query we will take the details and call you back.
- If the nature of your query requires us to take time in putting an answer together we will advise you of this and the length of time it will take.

### **By letter**

- We will reply to your letters within 5 working days. If we cannot give you a full reply within this time we will advise you of this and we will let you know when we can provide a full reply.
- Our correspondence will contain the name and contact number of the person dealing with you.



## **By email**

- For general queries you should contact the office at [information@cso.ie](mailto:information@cso.ie).
- We will respond to emails to this address within 2 working days. If we cannot give you a reply within this time we will advise you of this and we will let you know when we can provide a full reply.

## **Personal callers**

- You will be collected from reception within 10 minutes of your arrival.
- You will be able to conduct your business in private.
- If the person you wish to speak to is unavailable, we will get somebody else to help you.

## **Service through Irish**

- We are developing a scheme for provision of a bilingual service in accordance with the Official Languages Act, 2003.
- If you contact us in Irish we will arrange to answer you in Irish.
- We will make all our survey forms available in Irish and English.
- We will make our major corporate documents (Statement of Strategy etc.) available in Irish and English.

Tá leagan Gaeilge den cairt seo ar fáil.

## **Your Feedback**

We welcome your feedback on our services and invite feedback from the public in the following ways:

- Regular contact with users of statistics and data providers in statistical liaison groups.
- Readership survey forms with our publications.
- Comment boxes on selected survey forms.
- Provision of comment cards in our reception and library areas.
- Regular customer satisfaction surveys in conjunction with the National Statistics Board.
- A feedback form on our website at [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie).

## **Monitoring our performance**

- Our Customer Services Area will put measures in place to monitor our commitments in this Charter.
- In our Annual Report we will give information on the implementation of this Charter.