

## Foreword

I welcome the CSO's Statement of Strategy 2020–2023 which sets out an ambitious range of strategic aims for the next three years. The CSO's work is critical in informing debate and in supporting decision making and accountability in Ireland



This role has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic where the insight provided by the CSO has played an important role in helping Ireland chart its way through the crisis. Good quality statistics are key in measuring and describing our economy and society and to the development of policies.

Alongside the core activity of producing Official Statistics, the CSO increasingly offers expertise to the wider Civil and Public Sectors in the stewardship and sound management of data. CSO's leadership is central to leveraging Public Sector data as a national asset for the benefit of Irish society, businesses and policy makers and to promoting high quality administrative data underpinning Ireland's Official Statistics.

I wish the CSO every success in implementing this ambitious strategy over the next three years. I am confident that their professional and committed staff will deliver on the strategy's goals.

*Jack Chambers*

**JACK CHAMBERS**  
Government Chief Whip and Minister of State  
at the Department of the Taoiseach  
December 2020

## Introduction

CSO 2030 sets out our long-term vision to provide "Independent Insight for all" while this Statement of Strategy sets out our plans for the next three years.



There is an increasing appetite for timely, detailed, relevant, objective and independently compiled information addressing topics which reflect changes in Ireland's economy and society.

The importance of timely data came into sharp focus during the COVID-19 pandemic and this will remain a key focus during the lifetime of this strategy.

The accelerating pace of the news cycle is leading to significant changes in the way society interacts with and consumes information. The fundamental principles of confidentiality, quality, accuracy and integrity that lie at the heart of Official Statistics are important differentiators in this environment and need to be known and understood by our users.

To do this we must continuously engage with all our stakeholders, build statistical literacy and make our statistical products and services more accessible to all while meeting the demands for insight required by our expert users. This requires a diverse, innovative and committed workforce, delivering to their full potential. CSO staff are a dedicated and professional team, ambitious to deliver on CSO 2030 and on this Statement of Strategy.

The UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics describe Official Statistics as "an indispensable element for the creation of a democratic and informed society". The Official Statistics we produce are key in supporting Ireland in that endeavour.

*Pádraig Dalton*

**PÁDRAIG DALTON**  
Director General  
December 2020

## Who we are

The CSO is an independent office constituted under the Statistics Act, 1993. We provide free independent statistical information to support understanding, effective debate and decision making across government, business and society. Our outputs are a public good and are an essential part of creating an informed society for the people of Ireland.

### Our Vision:

Independent insight for all

### Our Mission:

To describe Ireland, its people, economy, society, and environment, through verifiable data and accurate information while providing impartial insight

### Our Mandate:

Our legal mandate is built on the Statistics Act, 1993 and on EU Regulation 223/2009, and provides for us to:

- Collect, compile, extract and disseminate information for statistical purposes relating to economic, social and general activities and conditions in the state
- Co-ordinate Official Statistics compiled by public authorities

Our core mandate is to provide high-quality, independent, objective, relevant and trusted information, with integrity and transparency. We do this to comply with our legal mandate, but just as importantly, to support the creation of an informed society for all the people of Ireland.

## Our Values

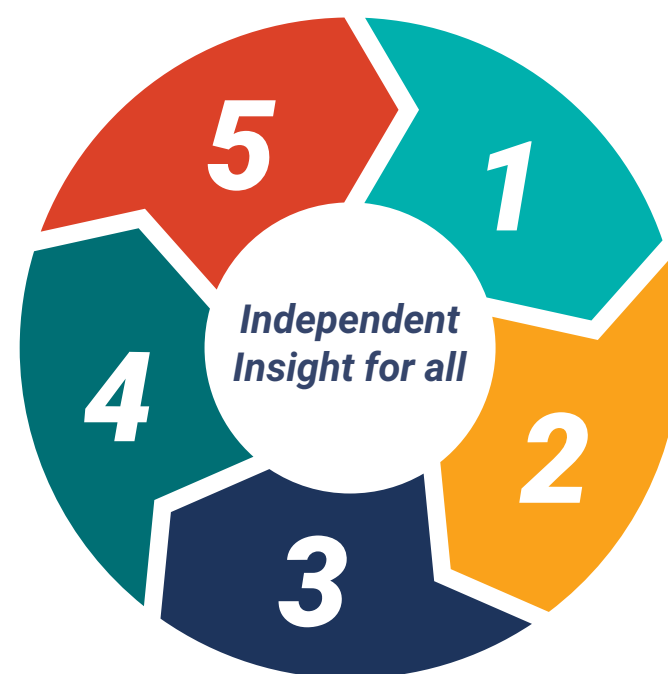
- **Independent:** We are professional, objective, impartial and always act with integrity
- **Trustworthy:** We are transparent and honest. We comply with the highest international statistical standards and deliver high quality products and services in an ethical manner
- **Confidential:** We apply the highest standards of confidentiality and respect for data privacy. We comply with the terms of the Statistics Act, 1993 and the GDPR and we legally guarantee to only ever use data provided to us for statistical purposes
- **Serve the public:** We are engaged with our customers and use our expertise to deliver a quality public service
- **Continuously learning:** We are ambitious, always horizon scanning and focused on innovation and collaboration

## Our Changing World

The environment that the CSO operates in is dynamic, with new challenges emerging all the time. These include

- A growing public appetite for timely information across an array of topics
- An escalating demand from within the Civil and Public Service for data services
- An increased complexity in what we are trying to measure and report
- Requests for more detail in our outputs and calls for flash and real time estimates, which may be subject to revision but are designed to provide timely insight on trajectories and trends
- The speed of, and changes to, the news cycle and how news is consumed across society
- Increased competition for user attention in a data saturated world
- Falling response rates to traditional statistical surveys
- Data needs emerging from Brexit and COVID-19
- The need to reduce respondent burden, develop alternative data sources and modernise data collection, storage and processing

## Our strategic priorities for 2020–2023



**1** Turn data and statistics into information and knowledge for all

**2** Increase use of secondary data sources

**3** Coordinate, oversee and assure the quality of all Official Statistics in Ireland

**4** Modernise our statistical processes and systems

**5** Continue to build the capacity of our people

## Our Strategic Aims

### 1. Turn data and statistics into information and knowledge for all

- Deliver on our extensive national and European statistical programme, including the Census of Population
- Progress more citizen focused outputs using interactive tools and through improved dissemination and communication channels
- Raise awareness of the CSO's values, including confidentiality, transparency and impartiality
- Promote the range, quality and accessibility of our products and services
- Respond to demand for new products or new services (including flash and real time estimates where relevant and appropriate) in consultation with our users
- Facilitate the use of microdata for research purposes
- Work with partners to develop new innovative statistical products and data sources to provide greater insight into emerging themes, including those that have emerged on foot of the COVID-19 pandemic

### 2. Increase use of secondary data sources

- Identify, explore and increase the use of new secondary data sources, including administrative and privately held data sources, for the production of Official Statistics
- Improve the quality of administrative data sources by developing standards, rules and guidelines to govern the classification, storage and management of data across the Civil and Public Service
- Examine the challenges and opportunities for statistical access to privately held data sources both nationally and internationally, and represent CSO's position in relevant fora
- Minimise Respondent Burden through the most efficient possible use of new data sources

### 3. Co-ordinate, oversee and assure the quality of all Official Statistics in Ireland

- Develop the role of the CSO as coordinator of statistical activities across all producers of Official Statistics in Ireland in line with the Statistics Act, 1993 and EU Regulation 223/2009
- Continue to guarantee statistical confidentiality
- Develop the Irish Statistical System (ISS) in line with the National Statistics Board (NSB) Strategy for Statistics, the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCOp), the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice (ISSCoP) and CSO's own Quality Management Framework (QMF) and Quality Strategy
- Build the ISS by extending the Statistician Secondment Programme across the Public Sector
- Consistent with our legal mandate, define the scope of the CSO's data oversight/stewardship role in the Irish data ecosystem
- Continually ensure the robustness of our statistical processes and systems

### 4. Modernise our statistical processes and systems

- Consolidate our quality developments (including the QMF), which are grounded in solid methodology, within the statistical production lifecycle of the CSO
- Use new technologies and methodologies to improve statistical processes and systems and share that knowledge with other producers of Official Statistics
- Develop the CSO's data architecture to create a service model where data is stored and managed centrally
- Develop our digital data collection abilities
- Develop digital data dissemination and information communication that allows users to engage easily with our data
- Explore opportunities with our colleagues in the international statistical and academic communities, in relation to machine learning and artificial intelligence
- Develop the CSO's geospatial skills and tools

### 5. Continue to build the capacity of our people

- Promote a culture of equality, diversity, inclusion and high performance and comply with our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty
- Encourage innovation, staff engagement and an involvement climate within the CSO
- Support personal and professional development
- Develop the statistical professionalism of the Office and of our seconded staff in the ISS
- Continue to develop and professionalise corporate supports to meet the evolving needs of the business and improve overall organisational effectiveness including the reduction of our carbon footprint
- Engage with and use our international networks to build the capacity of our people and organisation
- Develop a greater range of collaboration tools to support the blended office based and remote working environment

## Emerging themes

During the lifetime of this Strategy, the CSO will progress statistical development wherever gaps are identified in current statistical outputs, including those that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, or where new and emerging themes are recognised such as:



**Economic & Business:**  
Globalisation, the Services Economy, Digitalisation, Brexit, Productivity, Modern labour market and work environment



**Society:**  
Wellbeing, Equality, Gender, Diversity, Migration, the future of Census taking in Ireland, Education



**Environment and Climate:**  
Further development of environmental accounts, social impact of environmental change, climate indicators, progress towards ecosystem accounts



**Health:**  
Health services utilisation, socio-economic analysis, economic analysis of service users, geographical analysis of healthcare provision, supporting Ireland's health information system

## International engagement

The CSO is legally required to lead and coordinate the compilation of Official Statistics in Ireland. Three quarters of our statistical outputs are prescribed under European legislation. CSO subscribes fully to the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and complies with the European Statistics Code of Practice. We developed the Irish Statistical

System Code of Practice to support Irish producers of Official Statistics.

We provide leadership, throughout the international data ecosystem, through our work and collaboration with international bodies, such as Eurostat, the UN and other National Statistical Institutes (NSIs).

### How we will continue to deliver

#### People

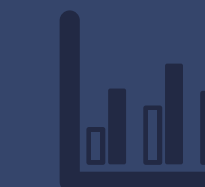
- Through the professionalism and expertise of our staff, we will maintain our commitment to the production of high-quality, independent and objective statistics
- We will continue to empower our people so that they have the capability, professionalism and skills to deliver on our strategic aims
- We will continue to encourage leadership, involvement and innovation from staff at all levels within the CSO
- We will continue to develop a culture of excellent performance

#### Technology

- We will continue to exploit the advances in technology to improve and develop our statistical production processes and to support improvements in the timeliness, quality, granularity and breadth of our statistical products

#### Quality

- We will continue to develop our quality, methodological and data protection supports to ensure that our statistical products remain at the forefront of best practice
- We will continue to build transparent and robust quality assurance structures to demonstrate our statistical products remain at the forefront of best practice
- We will assist Public Sector bodies to improve the quality of their administrative data sources



## CSO's Position in the Irish Data Ecosystem



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Good quality data is the foundation of decision making and an essential component in enabling the people of Ireland to live in an informed society. Good quality statistics help people to understand the changes taking place in Ireland's economy and society.

The Irish Data Ecosystem comprises the data holdings across the Irish Civil and Public Service. These data holdings offer significant insights for decision makers and the people of Ireland if they are structured and organised according to agreed standards and classifications. Without structure, data is locked in silos resulting in lost opportunities for efficiencies and insight.

The data and services we provide support data integration and enable policy development, policy evaluation and research by others. We provide leadership within the Irish Statistical System, including seconded CSO Statisticians who produce statistics and improve data management across the Civil and Public Service. We are also leading the development of the National Data Infrastructure, which encourages the use of unique identifiers across the Civil

and Public Sector, to allow more efficient management of data and the easier use of administrative data for the creation of Official Statistics.

As the data steward in the Irish Data Ecosystem, a role encapsulated in sections 10(2), 10(3) and 31 of the Statistics Act, 1993, the CSO will influence the improvement of the quality of administrative data sources by developing standards, rules and guidelines to govern the classification, storage and management of data across the Civil and Public Service.

A strong data ecosystem will directly benefit Ireland by:

- Streamlining public interaction with state services
- Underpinning evidence-based policy development and evaluation
- Informing improved service delivery
- Promoting the creation of a robust Public Service
- Providing high quality administrative data for the creation of Official Statistics



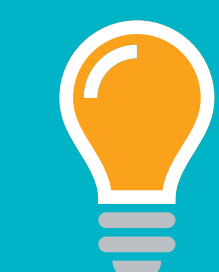
DATA creates



INFORMATION which generates



KNOWLEDGE and leads to



INFORMED DECISION MAKING

## STATEMENT OF STRATEGY 2020–2023

Independent insight for all

