

Introduction to the Neighbourhood Statistics Analysis Toolkit

Overview

Neighbourhood Statistics Service

The Neighbourhood Statistics Service was launched in February 2001 by the Office for National Statistics in partnership with central and local Government.

At its heart is the aim to supply the information needs for the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

Public services in the UK are seeking local solutions for local issues - whether they concern combating social deprivation or crime, providing housing, caring for the elderly or ensuring that the needs of school children or minority groups are met. But finding local solutions requires local information. One new source of consistent small-area geography data is [Neighbourhood Statistics](#).

Neighbourhood Statistics offers users ready access to a vast range of social and economic aggregate data relating to consistent small-area geography. It will be supported by a range of powerful analytical tools that can be used to turn the raw data into relevant and comprehensible information.

This toolkit supports the use of Neighbourhood Statistics data by providing:

- Guidance on appropriate statistical methods
- Equations for common statistics
- Case studies showing best practice
- Common pitfalls in the analysis of data

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1 What is the toolkit for?

Neighbourhood Statistics is part of the Government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal which aims to improve overall standards of living for the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This strategy seeks to improve the way programmes and services are targeted, including the provision of accurate, timely, and reliable data at the appropriate small area geographies. A large amount of such data is now available on the Neighbourhood Statistics website, and this will grow over time to become a rich resource for providing evidence in support of renewal programmes.

If the use of Neighbourhood Statistics data is to be maximised, there needs to be clear guidance on appropriate analysis techniques using the available data. The Neighbourhood Statistics analysis toolkit starts the process of providing such guidance to a wide range of users of Neighbourhood Statistics.

The Neighbourhood Statistics analysis toolkit underpins the [Renewal.net Evidence Toolkit](#), particularly in terms of analysing evidence by thinking about reliability, comparability and cause and effect.

As the data on Neighbourhood Statistics evolves, so too will the advice in the Analysis toolkit. Initially we focus on the basics, offering advice on generating and interpreting the statistics where we can, and providing warnings on what would be inappropriate use of the data where necessary. Where basic rules of thumb can be derived, these are provided along with the necessary conditions for using them.

In the toolkit we provide processes and checklists for carrying out good analysis ensuring that common pitfalls are avoided. The guidance helps users ask the right questions covering such topics as:

- Determining what you want to find out
- Considering the areas of interest
- Considering the time frame of interest
- Understanding the datasets to be used in the analysis
- Ways of analysing the data
- Checking on reliability of findings
- How to use the results of the analysis to support conclusions and back up bids to fund projects.

2 Who is the toolkit for?

The toolkit is aimed at any user of small area data, with a primary focus on those who are working on regeneration policy. We expect users from all of the following groups:

- **regeneration practitioners**
- **local communities** - who want to draw attention to an issue or to look at ways their local services might be improved
- **local authorities** - who manage many of the key public services at the county or district level; for example education, social services and social housing

- **government administrations and departments** - some of which manage local services directly and many of which are responsible for socio-economic policies
- **health authorities** and other bodies responsible for public health
- **police and fire authorities** - which have their special areas of responsibility as well as working closely with local government on many issues
- **other agencies and voluntary bodies** - which provide services to communities or groups within them
- **professionals and commentators** - who analyse social data to inform or assess policy
- **businesses** - which want to know about potential demands for commercial services of various kinds
- **citizens** - who want to see and understand what is happening in their neighbourhood, influence policy or gauge progress against the objectives and goals to which services work

3 What policy / intervention questions will the toolkit address?

With its focus on neighbourhood renewal, the current version of the toolkit aims to address the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of an area?
- How to find out if an area has changed over time

Some formulae for calculating common statistics are provided but the level of technical detail has been kept to a minimum.

Although this toolkit will help a user to increase the usefulness of small area data, there will be occasions where what you want to do is not covered. In such cases, or in any case of doubt, it is strongly recommended that you get advice from a Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor with a statistical background. The overall aim of the renewal strategy is to ensure that decisions are made on an informed basis, using the appropriate available evidence and analysis techniques.

4 Structure of the analysis toolkit

Figure 1 shows the current structure of the analysis toolkit. This will develop over time as the scope of analyses covered increases, and new techniques are added to increase the depth of analysis that is supported.

Following this introduction, the main document which holds the toolkit together is 'Finding statistics to build the evidence base'. This document provides guidance on the necessary steps for good analysis of Neighbourhood Statistics data. It also provides the links to more detailed guidance on:

- How to calculate commonly used statistics
- How to define the characteristics of an area
- How to describe changes over time compared to a baseline

In the future, the 'Finding statistics to build the evidence base' document will expand to include links to guidance / case studies on:

- Comparing different areas
- How to assess the impact of an intervention in an area, and
- More detailed and complex analyses

In support of all this work are a number of helpful resources:

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- [Glossary](#)
- Useful links
- [How to display the data](#)
- [Case studies](#)

Figure 1 Analysis Toolkit Structure

