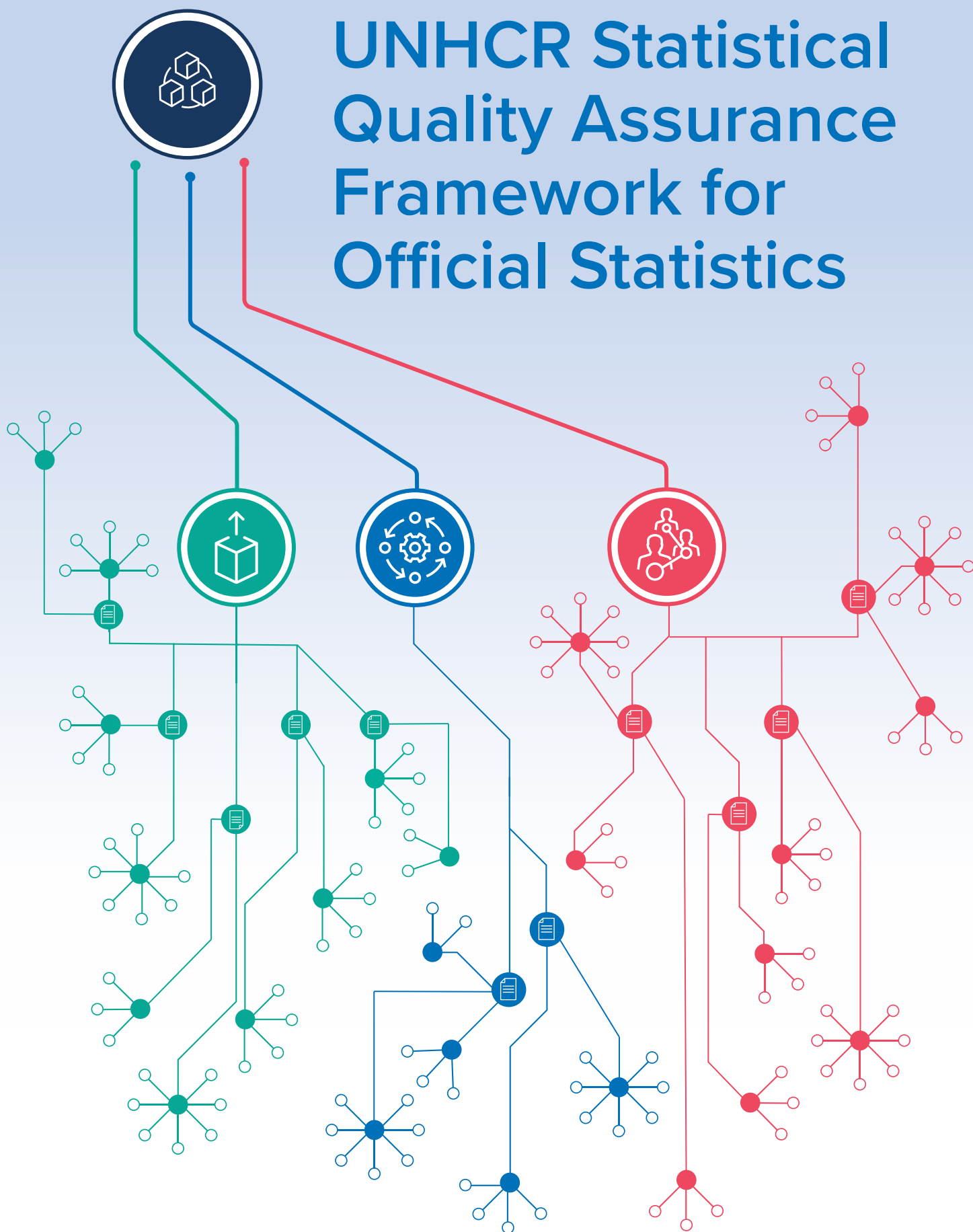


UNHCR Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for Official Statistics



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Acronyms

DER	Division of External Relations
DIMA	Data, Identity Management and Analysis Units in the Regional Bureaux
DIP	Division of International Protection
DIST	Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications
DPO	Data Protection Office
EGRISS	Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics
GDS	Global Data Service
GDPP	General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy (UNHCR)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IRIS	International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (EGRISS)
IROSS	International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS)
IRRS	International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics (EGRISS)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SQAF	Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for Official Statistics (UNHCR)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1. Purpose

- 1.1 UNHCR aspires to be a trusted leader on data and information related to refugees and other forcibly displaced and stateless populations.¹ The Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for Official Statistics (hereafter “Framework” or “SQAF”) supports this aim by providing guidance that enables the best possible development and production of UNHCR official statistics, which are published on the Refugee Data Finder.² The Framework establishes a set of quality principles and objectives, and identifies actions to meet those quality objectives. In so doing, it provides a common set of standards that support the development of new UNHCR official statistics as well as the quality assessment of existing UNHCR official statistics.
- 1.2 All the terms used in this Framework are listed and defined in Annex 1.

2. Scope

UNHCR official statistics: In this document, the term “official statistics” refers to the official statistics of UNHCR, also known as UNHCR official statistics. Official statistics of UNHCR are statistics that are officially validated and endorsed by the organization for public use and, where possible, produced using internationally agreed standards.³

- 2.1 The SQAF applies to all statistical activities for UNHCR official statistics.⁴ These activities generate officially validated and endorsed statistics, which are often derived from government statistics or operational data produced by UNHCR colleagues working in various functions.⁵ Official statistics are produced by UNHCR to serve a number of purposes and audiences, such as forcibly displaced and stateless people, governments, partners, donors, researchers and the general public as well as organizational units within UNHCR. The SQAF does not apply to UNHCR statistical activities related to back-office data in the fields of human resources, finance, administration, or Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- 2.2 The primary audience for the SQAF is all UNHCR colleagues in country operations, regional bureaux and headquarters who are involved in statistical development and production activities for UNHCR official statistics, which are overseen by the statistical leads in headquarters.⁶
- 2.3 The SQAF is also relevant for senior management overseeing the quality assurance of UNHCR official statistics and for statistical data suppliers, within the terms and conditions of their respective contracts and partnerships. For these secondary audiences, the SQAF serves as quality guidelines enabling them to better understand UNHCR quality principles and their associated actions.
- 2.4 UNHCR colleagues are encouraged to refer to and share the SQAF with internal and external users of UNHCR official statistics in order to generate confidence in the way UNHCR produces official statistics and their resulting reliability and quality, as well as to facilitate the exchange of best practices.

¹ See UNHCR, [Data Transformation Strategy 2020-2025](#), 2019.

² See UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#).

³ Internationally agreed standards include those developed by the UN Statistical Commission and the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS).

⁴ See also the definition of statistical leads, statistical activities and other key terms in Annex 1. See Annex 2 for the list of UNHCR official statistics as of June 2025.

⁵ Such functions include, but are not limited to, statistics, data science, information management, operational data management, registration and identity management, external relations, communication, reporting, economics, protection, and technical sectors (e.g., settlement and shelter, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), energy, environment, health, cash-based intervention and livelihoods).

⁶ See the definition of statistical leads in Annex 1.

3. Rationale

- 3.1 As the UN Agency mandated to protect and assist asylum-seekers, refugees, returnees and stateless people and, in specific situations, internally displaced people (IDPs), UNHCR has a vital role to play in generating, using and disseminating data on forced displacement and statelessness.
- 3.2 The supervisory role of UNHCR concerning the application of refugee law instruments involves, inter alia, obtaining from Governments information and statistical data concerning the condition of refugees.⁷ In addition, the mandate of UNHCR on statelessness “encourages States which are in possession of statistics on stateless persons or individuals with undetermined nationality to share those statistics with UNHCR and calls on UNHCR to establish a more formal, systematic methodology for information gathering, updating and sharing”.⁸
- 3.3 Improving the quality of data, including its integrity, coherence and consistency, is a key priority of UNHCR’s Data Transformation Strategy 2020-2025.⁹ The quality assurance established by this Framework generates higher-quality UNHCR official statistics, which in turn enable UNHCR to undertake better-informed policy-making, strategic planning, advocacy, communication, and resource mobilization and allocation. Better quality data also enables UNHCR to demonstrate accountability and to responsibly share statistical data with external actors for their own uses.

4. Quality principles, objectives and recommended actions for official statistics

- 4.1 This UNHCR Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for Official Statistics is informed by the United Nations (UN) Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.¹⁰ It is also aligned with commonly accepted frameworks of statistical quality assurance, such as the United Nations Statistics Quality Assurance Framework and the Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System.¹¹
- 4.2 Based on these international principles and frameworks, UNHCR has identified 11 quality principles for its official statistics, which are organized in three categories, as shown below in Table 1: statistical outputs, statistical processes and institutional environment. The principles are presented without hierarchy.

⁷ See UNHCR, [Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), 1951, Article 35, paragraph 2.

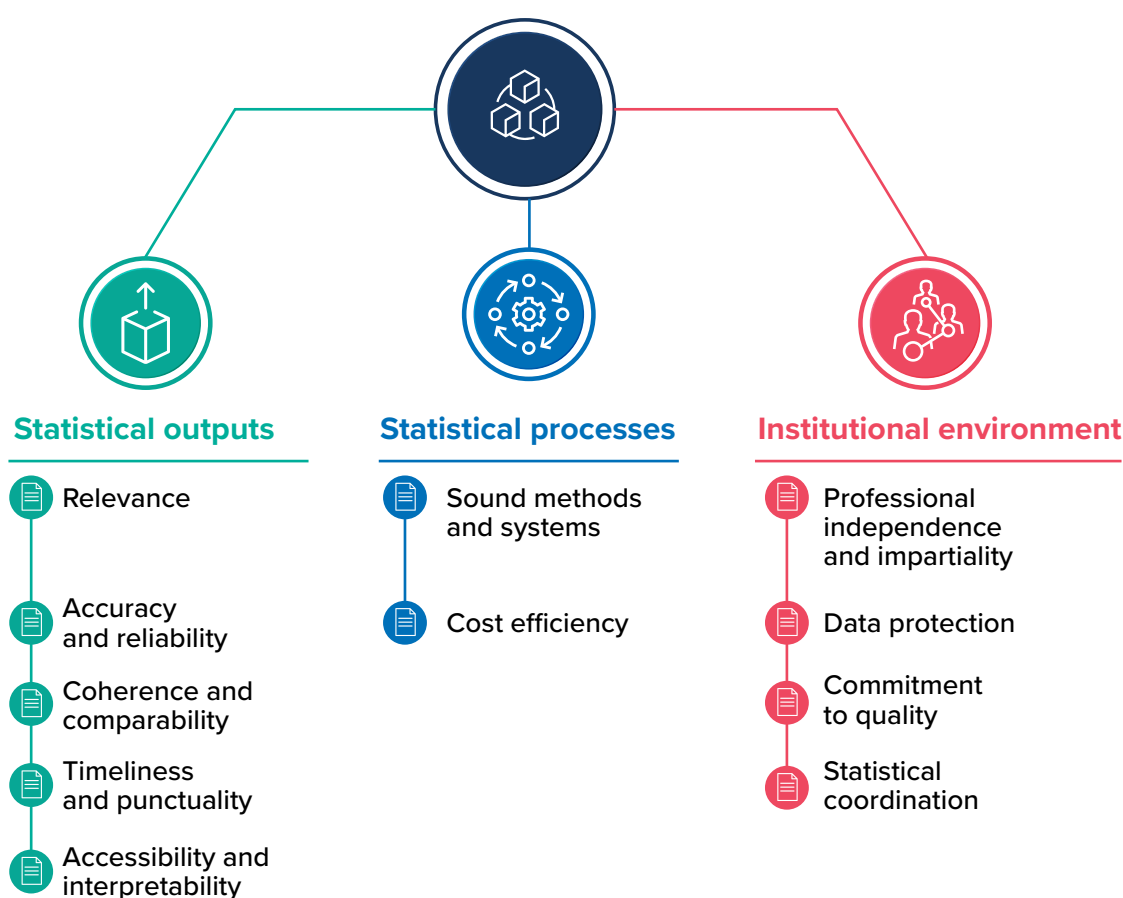
⁸ See UNHCR, [A Thematic Compilation of Executive Committee Conclusions](#), 7th edition, 2014.

⁹ See UNHCR, [Data Transformation Strategy 2020-2025](#), 2019.

¹⁰ See UN, [Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#), 2013.

¹¹ See UN, [United Nations Statistics Quality Assurance Framework](#), 2017, and Eurostat, [Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System](#), 2020.

TABLE 1: UNHCR quality principles for official statistics



4.3 These quality principles need to be balanced and considered against each other. For example, too much emphasis on accuracy might lead to a decline in terms of timeliness and punctuality, and the statistics must be accessible to users all the while ensuring they are not disclosive of individuals' personal data. Statistical leads make decisions about how to balance the principles, informed by UNHCR's mandate and the overarching responsibility to "do no harm", with a focus on maximizing the benefits of statistical activities while minimizing the risks.¹²

4.4 Many international standards and UNHCR policies are relevant to this Framework. These include notably:

- Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS),¹³ [International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics \(IRRS\)](#), 2018
- EGRISS, [International Recommendations on IDP Statistics \(IRIS\)](#), 2020
- EGRISS, [International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics \(IROSS\)](#), 2023
- UNHCR, [General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy](#), 2022
- UNHCR, [Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#), 2018

¹² For further details on responsible approaches to data management in humanitarian contexts, see Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), [Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action](#), 2023.

¹³ EGRISS was established in 2016 by the UN Statistical Commission. It is tasked with addressing challenges such as the lack of consistent terminology and standards for statistical compilation, with a view to improving the quality of national statistics and enabling their international comparison.

- 4.5 The sections below are organized by the three categories of quality principles and present each principle by providing:
- a description of the quality principle,
 - a statement of the objectives related to the principle, and
 - a list of recommended actions to achieve each objective, for each principle. These actions are to be undertaken by specific organizational units, as identified under each objective.
- 4.6 By following the statistical activities and processes described in the principles, objectives and actions, UNHCR can enhance its ability to generate higher-quality official statistics. Additional advice on all recommended actions can also be provided by the Global Data Service (GDS). Statistical leads can provide advice on best practices relating to their official statistics.



Statistical Output Quality Principles

4.7 The following five principles help UNHCR produce statistical outputs that meet quality standards.

Principle 1: Relevance

UNHCR statistical outputs meet the needs of users.

4.8 The relevance of a statistical output refers to the extent to which it meets the defined purposes of users. These can be internal users, i.e., UNHCR colleagues in various functions in headquarters, regional bureaux and country operations, and external users such as UN agencies and other international organizations, national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), national governments (including national statistical offices and other public institutions), private sector entities, researchers, academic institutions, the media, and forcibly displaced and stateless people. The principle of relevance means that UNHCR should strive to ensure completeness (e.g., full statistical coverage of the required population), include the appropriate content (e.g., disaggregate the data by age, sex, disability and other relevant diversity characteristics, in line with applicable policies and the UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework),¹⁴ and use appropriate concepts in its statistical outputs.

Objective 1.1: Procedures are in place to monitor the relevance and value of existing official statistics in meeting users' needs.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads** jointly with the **Global Data Service**:

- Regularly consult key internal and external users, including through user satisfaction surveys, to assess UNHCR's statistical outputs and to anticipate emerging statistical data needs and priorities.
- Consult with key internal and external users on proposed changes to statistical products, prioritizing changes based on users' needs and available resources.
- Regularly review usage analytics and user requests, queries and comments to identify new or changing statistical data needs.

Objective 1.2: Priority user needs are met and reflected in UNHCR work programmes that generate statistical outputs.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Periodically review UNHCR statistical products to reflect changes in users' needs.
- Prepare and review statistical data products and scrutinize, analyse and explain the data in relation to users' expectations.
- Periodically review feedback received from internal and external users on the usability and usefulness of published statistical data and products, both in terms of their content and format, and adjust them accordingly.

¹⁴ See UNHCR, [Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#), 2018, and UNHCR, [General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy](#), 2022.



Principle 2: Accuracy and reliability

UNHCR official statistics accurately and reliably portray the reality they have been designed to represent at a given point in time or for a given period.

- 4.9 Accuracy and reliability refer to the closeness of the statistical output to the true value of the variable that is being measured (accuracy) as well as to the consistency of measurement (reliability).

Objective 2.1: Data sources and statistical outputs are regularly assessed for accuracy and validated by statistical leads.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Identify and review data sources, including those that are already available and those that could be available in the future, and select the most appropriate for the purpose(s) and context.
- Determine which statistical data to consider as authoritative for each set of UNHCR official statistics.
- Implement efficient and effective procedures to obtain statistical data and corresponding metadata directly from the databases of data suppliers, where available.
- Familiarize data suppliers with the purpose(s) associated with collecting statistical data and, where relevant, the definitions of the indicators to be provided.
- Conduct data quality checks, validation and analysis of statistical data prior to the dissemination of statistical products.
- Make provisions for responding to comments, queries and complaints from data suppliers.

Objective 2.2: Methods and tools for preventing errors and improving the accuracy of statistical outputs are put in place at various stages of UNHCR statistical activities.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Take appropriate and timely actions to minimize the risk of errors when acquiring statistical data and associated metadata from data suppliers.
- Correct errors in statistical data outputs as soon as possible after they are detected and inform users in a timely manner.
- Implement efficient and effective procedures and systems for the verification, harmonization and estimation of statistical data, including validity checks and subsequent edits to the data.
- Systematically measure and document errors that may be introduced at various stages of the statistical process, including the potential significance of those errors.



Principle 3: Coherence and comparability

UNHCR official statistics are internally consistent and comparable over time and by geography and other thematic dimensions. It is possible to combine and use related statistical data from different data sources.

4.10 Coherence refers to the extent to which UNHCR official statistics are logical and consistent, while comparability denotes that UNHCR official statistics facilitate comparisons, such that they can be successfully combined with other statistical information and are comparable over time and across products and programmes.

Objective 3.1: UNHCR official statistics are produced based on international standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications.

Recommended action for **statistical leads**:

- In line with international standards, identify and include all the metadata required to support statistical activities.

Objective 3.2: UNHCR official statistics are internally coherent and consistent.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Check the coherence of statistical concepts with official statistics produced by UNHCR, and eliminate or explain any differences.
- Put in place systematic controls to maximize the internal coherence and consistency of published statistical outputs.
- Share information about new or revised statistical products with the relevant UNHCR organizational units that are involved in collecting statistical data to maximize coherence and minimize the risk of duplication of effort.

Objective 3.3: UNHCR official statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time.¹⁵

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Publish statistical outputs using a standard frequency and methodology. When changes in methodology or context require breaks in the time series, the changes should be recorded in the metadata, and users and relevant stakeholders should be informed of the purpose of and rationale for these changes.
- Regularly compare statistical data with data from previous reference periods and check for comparability over time.

Objective 3.4: UNHCR is able to review and reconcile different actual and potential sources of its official statistics.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- When various data sources are available, the quality and reliability of the data sources should be reviewed to decide which one(s) to use for official statistics. For example, one source might be timelier, or has a periodicity that is better synchronised with the publication of the official statistic, while another might more accurately reflect the reality of the situation. Select the data source that will generate the best quality official statistic overall, taking account of users' needs.
- In cases where different data sources are available for an official statistic on the same or similar topics (e.g., when sources change over time or have different geographical coverage), take action to reconcile data to ensure consistency and comparability.
- Document the process for reviewing and reconciling data sources with explanations about their differences and the rationale for the decisions taken.

¹⁵ A "reasonable period of time" means that the official statistics should, at minimum, be comparable across multiple reporting cycles.



Principle 4: Timeliness and punctuality

UNHCR official statistics are released in a timely and punctual manner.

4.11 This quality principle refers to UNHCR's adherence to official deadlines for the publication of official statistics and statistical products (punctuality) and to the time lag between the reference period and the data's availability (timeliness).

Objective 4.1: UNHCR publishes statistical outputs in a timely and punctual manner, according to a publicly available schedule.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads** jointly with the Global Data Service:

- Establish and maintain production and release schedules for UNHCR statistical outputs.
- Publish UNHCR release calendar for statistical outputs on a publicly accessible platform/channel.
- Inform users when the release of statistical outputs is delayed, explaining the reasons for the delay and communicating the new release date.

Recommended action for **statistical leads**:

- Monitor data suppliers' adherence to reporting timelines in order to ensure that the data needed for statistical outputs is received on time, taking action when delays occur.



Principle 5: Accessibility and interpretability

UNHCR statistical outputs are available and accessible to intended internal and external users, with supporting metadata and guidance to facilitate their interpretability.

4.12 This quality principle refers to statistical data being easily and readily available to all intended users (accessibility), with clear and understandable supplementary information and metadata (interpretability).

Objective 5.1: UNHCR makes its official statistics accessible to users by disseminating them with adequate accompanying metadata, using relevant technologies, methods, platforms and responsible open data standards.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads** jointly with the Global Data Service:

- Establish and implement efficient and effective statistical production and infrastructure activities for the internal and external dissemination of statistical data, together with the associated roles, accountabilities and authorities to responsibly manage this dissemination.
- Implement and maintain an efficient and effective statistical infrastructure for storing statistical data and metadata in an internal UNHCR platform from which statistical products can readily be derived and securely shared.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Record all statistical metadata in a central UNHCR repository, e.g., with definitions, classifications, variables, and any other information facilitating the description of statistical activities.
- Check that statistical products and associated metadata are fit for purpose before internal and/or external dissemination.
- Apply responsible open data standards to statistical outputs where possible.
- Publish and disseminate statistical products externally with free access for the public, including by making databases accessible via websites and mobile applications (with the necessary information security safeguards), as well as by preparing material for printed publications.
- Promote statistical products externally via a variety of public platforms and channels (e.g., wikis, blogs and social media) to ensure they reach different audiences, and provide briefings to key external users.
- Publish statistical outputs in the most relevant languages for their intended users, wherever possible.

Objective 5.2: UNHCR presents its official statistics and the adequate accompanying metadata in a form that facilitates their interpretation and allows meaningful comparisons by users.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Prepare statistical products in accordance with relevant UNHCR communication, publishing, branding, data visualization and presentation guidelines and standards.
- Notify internal and external users of new or revised statistical products at the earliest possible opportunity, and enable their timely access to these products. Ensure these notifications explain any major changes in statistical methods and data revisions to users.¹⁶
- Promote and facilitate users' understanding of statistical data and its limitations, particularly by providing metadata that describes data sources, methods and procedures and by undertaking capacity development activities.
- Provide timely responses to users' requests for information and questions about how official statistics are generated, ensuring that both the queries received and the responses provided are documented.

¹⁶ "Data revisions" are defined broadly as any change in a value of a statistic released to the public by an official national statistical agency. See OECD, [OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms](#), 2008. In the context of this SQAF, the term refers to such changes made by UNHCR.



Process Quality Principles

4.13 The following two principles pertain to the quality of the statistical activities used by UNHCR to develop, produce and disseminate its official statistics.



Principle 6: Sound statistical methods and systems

UNHCR methods and systems for managing its statistical data are well designed, developed, implemented, and documented according to international standards. UNHCR strives to continuously improve methods and systems to better manage and enhance the quality and transparency of its official statistics.

4.14 This quality principle refers to the use of sound statistical methodologies based on UN and/or other internationally agreed standards, guidelines and best practices.

Objective 6.1: The overall methodological framework used by UNHCR for its official statistics follows international standards, guidelines and best practices.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads** with support from the **Global Data Service**:

- Design or revise statistical products with a clear purpose, scope and timeline, in collaboration with internal and external experts to the extent possible.
- Configure end-to-end procedures and workflows for statistical activities that maximize efficiencies, clearly specify roles, accountabilities and authorities, and integrate the necessary safeguards, using internationally accepted methods to the fullest extent possible.
- Minimize the burden on data suppliers by reviewing the procedures involving them and requesting they provide only the minimum information necessary to accomplish statistical activities.
- Support relevant organizational units, particularly UNHCR country operations, with actions that enable statistical activities, such as those to establish information sharing protocols and/or data sharing arrangements when data sharing takes place between the operation and other actors, including national statistical offices.
- Experiment responsibly with new data sources, new statistical methods and new research perspectives with a view to improving UNHCR statistical methodologies and systems.



Objective 6.2: Procedures are in place to ensure that common statistical concepts, definitions, classifications and other types of standards relating to statistical data are documented and consistently applied across UNHCR.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service**:

- Identify and use the most appropriate statistical concepts, definitions and classifications for statistical data, starting with the premise that UNHCR adopts those that are already accepted and used by the international statistical community.
- Identify and fully document the various types of statistical metadata, and the needs for and uses of these types of metadata.
- Identify, design, build and operate a comprehensive set of metadata management tools for official statistics, taking advantage of available statistical infrastructure.
- Establish a process to record statistical metadata, ensuring that changes to statistical processes and outputs are well documented in the metadata over time by the statistical leads.
- Monitor that statistical metadata is “active” to the fullest extent possible, i.e., that it is used to drive statistical processes.
- Monitor that statistical metadata is kept accurate and up-to-date, and could be readily used for the automation of statistical processes.
- Record statistical metadata at the time it is created, preferably automatically as a by-product of the processes that generate it, rather than manually and long afterwards.
- Record each version of a statistical metadata value so it can be accessed or superseded, but not overwritten, retaining earlier values to allow access to historical statistics.
- Enable different views of the statistical metadata, based on the differing needs of various users, deriving these views from the recorded statistical metadata to ensure consistency.

Objective 6.3: UNHCR establishes and maintains cooperation with key stakeholders to improve its statistical methodologies and tools.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service** jointly with **statistical leads**:

- Participate in relevant international and regional statistical fora and meetings (e.g., EGRIS consultations, UN Statistical Commission events, etc.), whenever relevant and necessary.
- Organize regular meetings with members of the statistical community for whom UNHCR official statistics are relevant in order to learn about and share the latest advances in statistical production and infrastructure activities.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service** with support from **statistical leads**:

- Coordinate technical cooperation activities with other UN agencies to avoid the duplication of effort and to encourage complementarities and synergies between statistical activities (e.g., via secondments of staff, data sharing arrangements, participation in relevant inter-agency working groups, etc.).
- Encourage UNHCR colleagues and other stakeholders who contribute to the statistical process to participate in internal and external engagement activities that are relevant to UNHCR statistical processes, such as international and regional workshops, conferences, fora and meetings, whenever relevant and necessary.
- Engage with other UN agencies and other international bodies in dedicated work to develop or improve statistical concepts, classifications, standards and methods for statistical data, consulting technical experts within UNHCR as required.



Principle 7: Cost efficiency

UNHCR uses resources efficiently to produce its official statistics to a high standard at minimum cost.

4.15 This quality principle refers to the costs of producing official statistics being in proportion to their merits and impact, as well as to efforts to ensure the optimal use of resources when undertaking related activities.

Objective 7.1: UNHCR implements solutions that increase the cost efficiency of its statistical activities and measures the associated use of resources.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Determine priorities for statistical data production when resources are limited, taking into account users' feedback, organizational priorities, and operational and strategic risks.
- Measure and analyse the work effort involved and the resources required in each phase of the statistical activity. Compare the actual work required with what was planned, and use the findings of this analysis to optimize the statistical activity.
- Organize statistical workflows efficiently to minimize the human resources required and promote automation in statistical workflows.
- Establish good communication channels within teams producing statistical data as well as between teams, data suppliers, users and relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure that statistical activities and their outputs are prominently showcased with UNHCR senior management as well as externally.
- Advise senior management when the available financial, technological and human resources do not match the requirements for planned statistical activities.
- Prepare a business case to support requests to senior management for additional resources for statistical activities.
- Leverage the capabilities of the latest ICT to optimize statistical processes and increase the efficiency of statistical activities.



Institutional quality principles

4.16 UNHCR strives to be an organization that supports and promotes the production of high-quality statistical outputs. The following four principles refer to the institutional environment within UNHCR as a whole.



Principle 8: Professional independence and impartiality

UNHCR objectively develops, produces and disseminates its official statistics in an independent manner, without political and other external interference.

4.17 This quality principle refers to the aim that UNHCR statistical activities are free from political interference. This means ensuring that statistical production meets the criterion of scientific independence (professional independence) and that decisions on the methodologies, timing and content of its official statistics are guided by statistical considerations (impartiality).

Objective 8.1: UNHCR ensures that its official statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service**:

- Make public UNHCR commitment to following professional standards in collecting, producing and disseminating official statistics that are objective and impartial, including by publicizing this Framework.
- Develop and make public a UNHCR guidance document on the dissemination of official statistics.
- Where possible, publish statistical outputs in peer-reviewed professional journals, in collaboration with relevant statistical leads.

Objective 8.2: Choices of data sources and statistical methods as well as decisions about the dissemination of official statistics are mainly based on professional and statistical considerations.

Recommended action for the **Global Data Service** with support from **statistical leads**:

- Ensure that official statistics are produced on an objective basis, determined only or mainly by statistical considerations whenever possible.

Recommended action for **statistical leads**:

- Select sources, concepts, methods, processes and dissemination practices based on statistical considerations, using international standards and best practices or their national or regional equivalents.

Objective 8.3: UNHCR statistical products are clearly distinguished and released separately from its political and policy statements.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service** with support from the **Division of External Relations (DER)**:

- Support statistical leads in checking that statistical products avoid taking a political position.
- Support statistical leads in checking that statistical products and statements made at press conferences or other public events relating to their official statistics are objective and impartial.



Principle 9: Data protection

UNHCR only reuses personal data collected for statistical purposes for specific and compatible purposes, and where there is a legitimate basis.

4.18 This quality principle refers to the proactive steps UNHCR takes to ensure that statistical data is processed in line with the UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework, as applicable.¹⁷

Objective 9.1: UNHCR colleagues are briefed about the UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework and their responsibilities vis-à-vis its implementation when undertaking statistical activities.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads** with support from the **Global Data Service**:

- Support awareness of and adherence to the UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework when undertaking statistical activities.
- Promote the completion of the UNHCR Data Protection Learning Module and other relevant trainings by UNHCR colleagues involved in statistical activities.

Recommended action for the **Data Protection Office (DPO)**:

- Provide expert opinion, recommendations and advice to Personal Data Controllers on the interpretation and implementation of the UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework in UNHCR statistical activities.

Recommended action for **statistical leads**, jointly with the **DPO** and the **Global Data Service**:

- Train UNHCR colleagues on statistical confidentiality to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of personal data.¹⁸

Objective 9.2: Strict UNHCR protocols are applied to users accessing its statistical data for research purposes.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service**:

- Develop common methods, procedures and safeguards to provide anonymous statistical datasets for further analysis and use by external researchers, ensuring these datasets meet the standards set by the UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework.
- Put in place technical, organizational and legal measures to prevent the accidental or illegitimate disclosure (directly or indirectly) or unauthorized matching of statistical data on persons, households or other statistical units.
- Set a timeline for the regular re-assessment of statistical disclosure risks, taking into account new data sources, technologies and approaches.

¹⁷ The UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework is set out by the UNHCR, [General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy \(GDPP\)](#), 2022. The term “UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework” refers to all implementing instruments relevant to data protection, e.g., UNHCR Policies, Administrative Instructions and other types of guidance. As defined in the GDPP (section 4, paragraph 12), personal data is any information relating to an identified or identifiable individual.

¹⁸ “Statistical confidentiality” means that data relating to an identified or identifiable individual (or other statistical units) may only be used for statistical purposes, and that rules and measures are applied to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of this data (definition adapted from Eurostat, [Statistical confidentiality and personal data protection](#)).



Objective 9.3: Technical and organizational measures are in place in UNHCR to protect the security of statistical data.

Recommended action for the **Global Data Service**:

- Make ICT security rules and standards available to UNHCR colleagues involved in statistical activities and promote the UNHCR Policy on Information Security.¹⁹

Recommended action for the **Global Data Service** jointly with the **Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications (DIST)**:

- Periodically review technical and organizational measures to protect the security of statistical data, and when necessary, take corrective actions.

Objective 9.4: Data subjects are informed by UNHCR about the use of their personal data for research and statistical purposes.

Recommended action for **UNHCR country operations**:

- Ensure that data subjects are informed about the use of their personal data, explaining the ways in which their personal data will be processed for research and statistical purposes, in line with the UNHCR personal data protection and privacy framework and consulting UNHCR data protection focal points as needed.

¹⁹ See UNHCR, [Policy on Information Security](#), 2023.



Principle 10: Commitment to quality

UNHCR is committed to the quality of its official statistics.

4.19 This quality principle refers to UNHCR efforts to demonstrate the high quality of its official statistics and related outputs. In particular, the application of this principle includes systematically and regularly assessing the strengths and limitations of UNHCR official statistics and their outputs in order to continuously improve their quality.

Objective 10.1: The quality of the processes for, and outputs of, UNHCR official statistics is continuously assessed using this Framework.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service**:

- Promote the use of quality reviews at key points in statistical activities to examine whether quality criteria are met before the next stage takes place, notably to reduce the incidence of errors in official statistics.
- When deemed necessary, prepare and submit to senior management a business case for statistical quality and performance improvements that require additional resources.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads**:

- Conduct a regular (preferably annual), quality review of their statistical production activities, related products and their supporting infrastructure.
- Monitor quality at all stages of their statistical activities, in collaboration with relevant organizational units, including country operations.
- Based on the results of the quality review, identify and implement quality improvements within their statistical activities, in collaboration with relevant organizational units, including country operations.

Recommended action for the **Global Data Service** jointly with **statistical leads**:

- Provide opportunities to interested UNHCR colleagues to contribute to the development or revision of processes and methods for the production of official statistics and statistical products.

Objective 10.2: UNHCR official statistics are reviewed periodically.

Recommended action for the **Global Data Service**:

- Commission an external quality review of UNHCR statistical production activities, related products and their supporting infrastructure, on a periodical basis or as needed in case of severe and/or persistent problems.

Objective 10.3: UNHCR enhances its statistical capacity by recruiting and assigning highly qualified and competent statistical colleagues from relevant disciplines and by strengthening the statistical capacity of UNHCR colleagues.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service**:

- Promote the wide advertisement of statistics-related positions on relevant platforms and professional networks, both internally and externally, and in such a way as to target a diverse pool of qualified applicants.
- Strengthen the statistical capacity of UNHCR colleagues through various means, e.g., trainings, webinars and workshops.



Principle 11: Statistical coordination

UNHCR ensures the coordination of activities for the development, production and dissemination of all its official statistics.

4.20 This quality principle refers to the meaningful inclusion of humanitarian and development actors, national and local authorities, forcibly displaced and stateless people, and other stakeholders in statistical activities, as appropriate and without compromising the statistical quality principles set in this Framework.

Objective 11.1: Statistical activities to develop, produce and disseminate official statistics are well coordinated within UNHCR.

Recommended action for **statistical leads** with support from the **Global Data Service**:

- Put in place well-defined UNHCR procedures at the global, regional and country levels to coordinate statistical activities related to the official statistics for which the statistical leads are responsible.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service**:

- Train statistical leads and other UNHCR colleagues involved in statistical activities on the SQAf, promoting the application of professional standards on all aspects of UNHCR statistical activities.
- Develop and disseminate statistical processes and tools that support the use of standard concepts, definitions and classifications for statistical data.
- Support organizational units in UNHCR to identify and use statistical data produced by other UNHCR organizational units that is of equivalent quality, rather than data produced by other organizations.

Objective 11.2: UNHCR continuously maintains and develops cooperation on statistical activities at various levels within UNHCR and with other actors, as appropriate.

Recommended actions for **statistical leads** with support from the **Global Data Service**:

- Proactively cooperate with and share knowledge among governments and international and regional organizations to further develop national and regional statistical systems.
- Base statistical cooperation projects on user requirements, promoting the meaningful participation of key stakeholders and taking into account national priorities, circumstances, needs and resources.

Recommended actions for the **Global Data Service** with support from **statistical leads**:

- Ensure there are clear roles, accountabilities and authorities in UNHCR at the global, regional and country levels for the acquisition of statistical data from governments and organizations, so this data is collated and used consistently within UNHCR.
- Empower governments and national statistical systems to take the lead in statistical activities.
- Advocate for governments to adopt and implement the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and other relevant international statistical recommendations (e.g., IRRS, IRIS and IROSS).²⁰

²⁰ See UN, [Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#), 2013, and EGRIS, [IRRS](#), 2018, EGRIS, [IRIS](#), 2020 and EGRIS, [IROSS](#), 2023.

5. Identifying, assessing and publishing official statistics

- 5.1 Statistical leads in UNHCR can use the SQAF to assess and improve the quality of their **existing** official statistics, with help from the Global Data Service, if required. To support this, the SQAF is accompanied by a self-assessment form. The form is a practical tool for statistical leads to assess and monitor alignment with the objectives under each quality principle set in the SQAF. Table 2 shows the achievement scales and their meanings.

TABLE 2: Assessment of SQAF objectives

Achievement scale	Description
Fully achieved	All recommended actions to achieve the objective have been implemented.
Partially achieved	Some recommended actions to achieve the objective have been implemented.
Not achieved	The recommended actions to achieve the objective have not yet been implemented or should be implemented again in a different manner.
Not applicable	The objective is not applicable to this type of official statistic.

- 5.2 The SQAF self-assessment form can also be used to guide quality improvements of **prospective** official statistics. If a statistical lead aims to publish new official statistics, it is highly recommended they consult with the Global Data Service, which can help guide the development of statistical activities for official statistics. The Global Data Service can review the results of the self-assessment and, if needed, support the statistical lead in implementing quality improvements, with a view to enabling the maturation of their statistics and subsequent publication on the Refugee Data Finder as official statistics.
- 5.3 For both prospective and existing statistics, statistical leads should strive to ensure that the percentage of SQAF objectives that are fully and/or partially achieved (see Table 2) is equal to or higher than 90 per cent. For statistics that have not achieved this level of quality, the Global Data Service recommends investing in improving their quality. Prospective statistics can be published on the Refugee Data Finder as experimental statistics.²¹
- 5.4 Once the statistical lead confirms their prospective official statistic is ready for publication (i.e., once it has achieved the threshold recommended in paragraph 5.3), the Global Data Service will also review the quality of this statistic against the SQAF, and then work with the statistical lead to publish the new official statistic on the Refugee Data Finder.²²

²¹ “Experimental statistics” are a subset of newly developed or innovative official statistics that are undergoing evaluation. They are published to involve users and stakeholders in the assessment of their suitability and quality at an early stage. The goal is to develop statistics that can eventually be produced to the standards of UNHCR official statistics.

²² See UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#).

6. Monitoring

- 6.1 The Global Data Service monitors and maintains this Framework. In so doing, it may use the SQA self-assessment form to periodically review the quality of UNHCR official statistics against the SQA.

7. References

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Annex 1: Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of the SQAF:

- **Data source** is a specific data set, metadata set, database or metadata repository from where data or metadata are available.²³
- **Official statistics of UNHCR (or UNHCR official statistics)** are statistics that are officially validated and endorsed by the organization for public use and, where possible, produced using internationally agreed standards. In the SQAF, “official statistics” means “official statistics of UNHCR”.
- **Operational data** is data pertaining to the operational context, forcibly displaced and stateless people, and operational activities, including response. Examples include data about the security context and access restrictions, data about the needs and intentions of forcibly displaced and stateless people, and data about assistance and advocacy activities.
- **Organizational units** are entities in UNHCR headquarters, regional bureaux and country operations, for example: the divisions and services in headquarters such as the Division of International Protection (DIP) and the Global Data Service; the Data, Identity Management and Analysis Units (DIMA Units) in the regional bureaux; and the teams in country operations responsible for specific technical sectors (e.g., the shelter unit).
- A **statistic** is a numerical fact obtained through statistical processes.²⁴
- **Statistical activities** are activities in which the primary focus is acquiring, processing, storing, analysing and/or disseminating statistical data. UNHCR statistical activities for its official statistics are divided into two groups: statistical production activities and statistical infrastructure activities (see definitions below).
- A **statistical concept** is a statistical characteristic referring to the internationally accepted statistical standards, guidelines or good practices on which the concepts and definitions that are used for compiling the statistics are based, as well as to the description of deviations from those accepted statistical standards, guidelines or good practices, when relevant.²⁵
- **Statistical data** refers to the data used to produce official statistics.
- **Statistical data suppliers** are UNHCR colleagues or third parties, including governments, UN Agencies, international organizations, and national and international NGOs, that collect and/or provide statistical data for use in UNHCR official statistics.
- **Statistical infrastructure activities** are associated with developing or maintaining the statistical infrastructure that supports statistical production activities. One example is the management of UNHCR’s Population Statistics, which is conducted with a global platform that allows for the compilation of data on forcibly displaced and stateless people using standardized statistical classifications, processing procedures and storage mechanisms.
- **Statistical leads** are UNHCR colleagues in headquarters who are responsible for and lead the work to develop and produce UNHCR official statistics in their functional work area. As experts in their field, they produce data, own data and data systems, and/or set and implement statistical processes related to their functional work area. These include, for example and not exclusively, UNHCR colleagues in Protection, Programme, Development and Technical Sectors (e.g., settlement and shelter, WASH, energy, education). The statistical leads oversee and coordinate the work on official statistics within their respective organizational units, with technical support from other relevant UNHCR colleagues.

²³ Adapted from OECD, [OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms](#), 2008.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

- **Statistical metadata** is data that defines or describes statistical data. Metadata is data about data, or data that defines or describes other data. It is additional information or documentation about a dataset that makes it easier for others to understand and put the data into context.
- **Statistical outputs** (also referred to as **statistical products**) are the final products of official statistics that are generated through statistical activities and disseminated. These outputs describe, estimate, forecast, or analyse characteristics of groups, without identifying the individuals, and are made available for public use.
- **Statistical processes** are the procedures through which data is transformed or classified into different categories with the aim of producing statistics.²⁶
- **Statistical production activities** are associated with collating, collecting, storing, cleaning, protecting, analysing and sharing statistical data, and include the specification, design and development of these activities. Examples include UNHCR surveys, such as the Forced Displacement Survey,²⁷ the collation of data for UNHCR Annual Statistical Reports,²⁸ and the dissemination of such data in refugee and statelessness statistics and reports such as UNHCR Global Trends.²⁹
- **Statistical products:** see “Statistical outputs”.
- **Statistical quality** is defined broadly to include all aspects of how well both statistical processes and their outputs meet the expectations and needs of users and stakeholders. In the case of official statistics, statistical quality refers to the extent to which they meet the 11 quality principles defined in this SQAF.

Annex 2: List of UNHCR Official Statistics

As of June 2025, the list of UNHCR official statistics is as follows:

- [Population Statistics](#) (Statistical lead: Global Data Service, UNHCR)
- [Resettlement Data](#) (Statistical lead: DIP, UNHCR)

This list is maintained by the Global Data Service. It will be updated as more official statistics are published on the Refugee Data Finder.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See UNHCR, [Forced Displacement Survey](#).

²⁸ See UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#).

²⁹ See UNHCR, [Global Trends](#) and [Mid-Year Trends](#) reports.

Statistical Quality Assurance Framework for Official Statistics

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More information on the SQAF is available on the Refugee Data Finder:

<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/statistical-quality-assurance-framework.html>.

This document is available on UNHCR's statistics website:

<https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-statistical-quality-assurance-framework>.

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