



IPS Paper

Recurring data ethical dilemmas regarding the relationships between individuals and institutions: update with the present datalandscape

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Brief Description

The professional ethics approaches commonly followed by Official Statistics were crystallised in rejection of the practices implemented by both the Fascist and Stalinist regimes reflecting the relations of institutions towards individuals.

Professional ethics of Official Statistics have focused on respect for the individual's private sphere in combination with informing in the public interest and for the common good.

It has also focused on the confidentiality of individual data to prevent it from being used for institutions' control purposes.

It has tackled the issue of the legitimate aims pursued with statistical outputs when informing on particular populations described in order not to harm, etc.

Initial and continuing training of statisticians and adapted work processes have accompanied the imperative of sticking to ethical behaviours. The present period's radical changes regarding the role data play in people's daily lives are profoundly impacting how the ethical issues associated with data processing and uses are perceived in society.

The people in charge of data processing, statisticians and data scientists alike, are increasingly sensitive to the ethical issues raised in public debates, as is society in general.

For their part, official statistics institutions have to update their ethical responses to secure proper conditions related to the achievement of their basic missions, namely informing public policies and public debates.

My contribution will focus on the continuities and discontinuities of Official Statistics' ethical concerns in the context of data's evolving roles in society and related responses.

Abstract

The professional ethics approaches commonly followed by Official Statistics were crystallised in rejection of the practices implemented by both the Fascist and Stalinist regimes reflecting the relations of institutions towards individuals. Professional ethics of Official Statistics have focused on respect for the individual's private sphere in combination with informing in the public interest and for the common good. It has also focused on the confidentiality of individual data to prevent it from being used for institutions' control purposes. It has tackled the issue of the legitimate aims pursued with statistical outputs when informing on particular populations described in order not to harm, etc. Initial and continuing training of statisticians and adapted work processes have accompanied the imperative of sticking to ethical behaviours.

The present period's radical changes regarding the role data play in people's daily lives are profoundly impacting how the ethical issues associated with data processing and uses are perceived in society. The people in charge of data processing, statisticians and data scientists alike, are increasingly sensitive to the ethical issues raised in public debates, as is society in general. For their part, official statistics institutions have to update their ethical responses to secure proper conditions related to the achievement of their basic missions, namely informing public policies and public debates.

My contribution will focus on the continuities and discontinuities of Official Statistics' ethical concerns in the context of data's evolving roles in society and related responses.