

Tone and voice

The tone of your content helps engage readers more effectively; using active verbs adds pace to a sentence.

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Use active verbs and not passive verbs. Active verbs are when the sentence's subject does something. Passive verbs are when the sentence's subject has something done to it. In the examples below, the subjects are the policy and the study.

EXAMPLE

The policy encourages firms to...

Not

Firms are encouraged by the policy to...

EXAMPLE

The study shows a trend

Not

A trend is shown by the study

However, write "It is expected", rather than "One expects". Using "one" is considered old-fashioned and we refer to ourselves at ONS as "we".

Best practice for web writing is to use personal pronouns when referring to one's own organisation. Use personal pronouns (such as "we" or "our") when referring to ONS, apart from the following exceptions:

- when a publication has been produced in collaboration with another organisation or government body (such as Defra or Public Health England)
- when ONS is one of a number of organisations or government bodies being discussed in a paragraph
- when the use of "our" with the word "data" or "statistics" would add some doubt as to where that data comes from or its objectivity

EXAMPLE

This release has been produced by Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Public Health England (PHE).
This type of information isn't always present in the ONS data but it is in the PHE data.
The data show that...

The word "the" is not part of the official title but should be included if the term "ONS" is used adjectivally.

EXAMPLE

the ONS statistics suggest...

Do not use "on the ONS website" or "on our website". The user is already on our website. Provide a well-named link to the page you are referring to.

EXAMPLE

This is explored further on the [Retail Sales Index Quality and Methodology Information page](#).
Please refer to our previously published article [International immigration and the labour market, UK: 2016](#).