

Tutorial: Naming articles and publications

Statistics Explained

This tutorial sets out the rules and recommendations for naming [Statistics Explained](#) articles, article sections, online publications and publication chapters. It discusses the different publishing environments and formats (online publications and articles versus PDF or paper versions), the resulting difference in target and purpose of a name (search engines versus journalists and the general public) and the the best possible choices for articles and publications and their subdivisions.

Articles

Article names: general principles

As a consequence of the search strategies information seekers use in today's internet, ranking by search engines is all-important for a webpage's success. Specific information is only very exceptionally accessed via a website's structure, starting from a home page and patiently going through menus and links; people usually arrive directly from a search result (mostly Google). In practice this means that for an article to be picked up, it has to appear on the first page, among the first 10 results, of any relevant search. The name of an article, the level-1 heading which in Statistics Explained is also its URL, is an extremely important determinant of search ranking (hidden tags are demonstrably far less effective, probably because it is too easy to fake or overuse them).

Consequently, an article name is **NOT** primarily intended for journalists or the general public, but for search engines like Google: it is functional, repetitive if necessary and does not need to win any prizes for originality or creativity! Users only get to see it once they are in the article and also see the introduction briefly describing its subject and the table of contents; the only requirement from a users' point of view is that the title does not contradict these elements.

A second constraint on article names comes from Statistics Explained bringing together within one platform articles from many different sources and with very different characteristics. Articles being grouped by theme, users ideally have to be able to recognise and distinguish within each theme the content of a specific article by its name alone. Consequently, names need to be descriptive and distinctive, label-like – and as short as possible, avoiding container terms like 'focus' or 'perspective'.

The next section below focuses on the different publication categories in Statistics Explained and establishes specific naming rules for each of them; but prior to that, this section discusses the more general naming restraints resulting from the wide-open and 'wild' internet environment with billions of web pages where Statistics Explained articles have to stand out sufficiently to be picked up by users looking for them via search terms (or, in practice: be on the first screen of the search result, among the first ten of several millions of web pages!).

In general an article name should be:

- **short and descriptive**, **label-like** rather than journalistic ('High-tech statistics' rather than 'In 2012 two thirds of enterprises ...'), without non-informative container terms ('detailed', 'comprehensive', 'analysis', 'focus', ...);
- **containing the term 'statistics'** if at all possible, to set it apart from many similar but non-statistical web pages from a policy, legal, academic etc. perspective; and because the article has to be able to stand on its own and be self-explanatory (usually appearing in a web search result instead of as a chapter in a statistical book);

- **starting with basic topic** , further specified if necessary (e.g 'Freight transport statistics - cabotage'); don't use 'Statistics on xyz' but 'Xyz statistics' if at all possible, this would render the search dropdown list useless;
- **without 'European', 'Europe', 'European Union', 'EU'** : Eurostat presumably disseminates European statistics, and 'European Union' is mentioned in the first line of the introduction (also, Google knows the location of searchers);
- **without time period** : articles in principle present the latest data situation or are archived after some time.
- **large-cap only at the beginning** , small-cap in the rest of the page name.
- **Characters to be avoided in image file names** : *To avoid syntax problems it is recommended not to use / (slash), (backslash), ? (question mark), * (asterisk), + (plus) : (colon), | (vertical bar), " (quotation mark), long dash — (Alt 0151) or ' (apostrophe), € (Euro)*

In some cases, however, a more journalist-oriented subtitle (in bold) can be added on top, just below the level-1 heading.

Article names by publication or content type

Regional yearbook For Regional yearbook and other regional articles, which usually also provide a general overview of a statistical theme or topic, the same rule as for the Eurostat yearbook applies, *Xxx statistics* preceded by *Regional* or followed by *at regional level* ; the latter is to be preferred, because of the general rule mentioned above to start with the basic topic rather than with qualifiers, important for the dropdown search list. E.g. *Population statistics at regional level* .

The EU in the world For this compendium publication comparing EU statistics with the ones for other areas of the world, the basic subject is 'the EU in the world', so it is logical to have this at the beginning of the name and then specify the particular statistical theme: *The EU in the world – xxx* (e.g. *The EU in the world – population*); although the opposite approach, starting with statistical theme and then specifying EU versus world perspective, would also be conceivable (*Population statistics – the EU in the world*).

NB: 'The' at the beginning is contrary to rule not to have generic non-informative terms in the name, let alone at the beginning; in this case, however, no acceptable alternative appears to exist.

Statistical books focusing on policy area This category includes articles both from regularly updated 'policy' publications (e.g. *Monitoring sustainable development*) and from once-only flagship publications presenting data relevant for specific European policies (e.g. *Active ageing and solidarity between generations ; Smarter, greener, more inclusive? Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy ; Combating poverty and social exclusion*). Policy publications are usually also available in PDF and printed format, but some are online only (e.g. *European Neighbourhood Policy countries - statistical overview*).

For policy publications the principal focus is the policy, so this should be at the beginning, followed by the specific subject or perspective of the article. If all articles start with the policy issue, which is also central in the title of the online publication itself, this has the additional advantage of uniting all articles and the online publication, and showing them all together in the search dropdown list. E.g. online publication *Monitoring sustainable development* consisting of articles *Sustainable development - socioeconomic development* , *Sustainable development – climate change and energy* , etc.; online publication *Agri-environmental indicators* consisting of articles *Agri-environmental indicators - irrigation* , *Agri-environmental indicators – soil erosion* , etc.

Statistical books providing overview of statistical theme(s) Statistical books providing an overview of one or several statistical themes are made up by articles which together cover all topics of a theme, usually also including an introductory and one or more background articles on policies, methodology, etc.; e.g. *European business - facts and figures*, consisting of 81 articles; *Energy, transport and environment indicators*; *European social statistics*. Naming is roughly the same as for Yearbook articles; in fact many Yearbook articles can be reused for statistical books, complemented if necessary with more specific ones.

The name for an article providing a general overview of a statistical theme or topic should be basic and general: *Theme/topic statistics* (e.g. in *European social statistics*: *Asylum statistics*, *Healthcare statistics*) or when adding 'statistics' seems unnecessary or inappropriate, just 'Theme/topic' (e.g. *Hourly labour costs*, *Social protection - social benefits by function*).

Background articles Background articles follow the same general rules as statistical articles: label-like, descriptive, distinctive, short... They can be either stand-alone (e.g. *Short-term business statistics - legal base*) or part of an online methodological publication (e.g. *EU labour force survey*; *Statistics in development cooperation*). In the latter case the constituent articles follow the naming rule of policy publications (see 1.5), starting with the specific focus (usually the name of the online publication), followed by more targeted qualifiers, e.g. *EU labour force survey - ad hoc modules*; *Statistics in development cooperation - improving statistical capacity*.

Article section titles

The section and subsection titles within an article (level-2, level-3 and level-4 headers displayed in the table of contents) do not play a role in search ranking like the article names, but they also have an important function: they appear in the table of contents on top of the article and provide important to viewers about the structure and detailed content of the article. This means that section titles as well have to be label-like, relatively short, descriptive and summary rather than journalistic or highlighting the most noteworthy results.

Compare the informative value and ease of use of these two table of content sections:

1.1 Fertility patterns in Europe

1.2 By country

1.3 Effects of the economic situation

1.4 By parity

1.5 By employment situation

1.6 By educational level

1.7 Effects of migrant status

1.8 Recent trends

or

1.1 Fewer births were due more to fewer would-be mothers than to lower fertility

1.2 Fertility rates returned to 'lowest-low' levels in some Eastern European countries

- 1.3 Changes in fertility partially follow changes in the economy, with an average lag of less than two years
- 1.4 Slight tendency to wider decreases in first births than in subsequent births
- 1.5 Mixed fertility behaviour across countries for employed and non-employed women
- 1.6 Fertility of women with medium education has decreased more visibly than of those with low or high education
- 1.7 In most countries, immigrants' fertility decreased more than that of natives
- 1.8 Latest monthly data point to fewer countries with decreasing number of live births

The two aspects, label-like to fit in table of contents and journalistic to draw the attention can be combined in the same way as article titles and subtitles and some other articles: a label-like header combined with a subtitle in bold which does not appear in the table of contents.

For instance:

Fertility patterns in Europe

Fewer births were due more to fewer would-be mothers than to lower fertility

Additionally, long sections can be further subdivided using titles in bold (either label-like or journalistic) for subdivisions without their appearing in the table of contents and thus overloading it. In general, the table of contents should not be too long, nor overly detailed (level-4 titles are best avoided).

Online publication names

An online publication is essentially a clickable table of contents consisting of chapters, preceded by a very short introduction (2-3 lines at most) with a link to the PDF version if it exists. Each chapter normally corresponds to a statistical or background article and links to this. In some cases, however, the chapters are further subdivided in sections linking directly to article sections.

However, there is no need for chapter titles to be the same as the article names, but they should be connected in a recognisable way, so as not to confuse users clicking a chapter and arriving at an article with a totally different name.

Unlike articles, chapters have a context: they are part of an online publication whose title and brief introduction indicate what they are about in general. So chapter names do not need to contain in a repetitive way common elements (like 'Europe 2020 indicators' or 'European Neighbourhood Policy') or 'statistics' which are necessary in an article name often encountered without any preparation or context at all.

The names of online publications are constrained in a similar way as article names, by the internet environment where they have to be picked up by search engines, and by the Statistics Explained platform where many online publications come together. There is one difference, however: online publication names are also unique product identifiers and as a result serve more as a brand name than as a label identifying content (although the latter also remains important).