

Building Reliable Digital Indicators: Strengthening ICT Statistics Through Collaboration

Fredric Nyström, Statistics Sweden, fredric.nystrom@scb.se; (corresponding author)

Elin Stendahl, Statistics Sweden, Samuel Hedéren, Statistics Sweden, Robin Bergkvist, Statistics Sweden, Björn Forssell, Statistics Sweden

Abstract.

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the need for official statistics that are understandable, reliable, and useful continues to grow. Policymakers increasingly require indicators that support the monitoring of digital transformation, making coordinated ICT statistics essential. Rapid technological development also demands close cooperation between statistical producers and users to ensure that statistics meet real information needs. For Statistics Sweden (SCB), this aligns with the agency's vision of delivering trustworthy statistics and its goal of strengthening collaboration with other public authorities.

The purpose is to describe how SCB, through structured meeting forums and targeted communication channels, ensures that ICT statistics are disseminated, interpreted, and used correctly, and how these methods support continuous dialogue about user needs.

SCB works closely with key users such as the Ministry of Finance, the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS), and the Agency for Digital Government (DIGG). This partnership oriented approach supports the development of statistics in line with societal needs. The material draws on experiences from SCB's national ICT authority network, jointly run with PTS and DIGG and involving ten additional authorities, as well as insights from government assignments and Nordic cooperation.

The network provides a central forum for discussing indicators, thematic issues, and digitalisation trends. Regular meetings help create a shared understanding of how ICT statistics should be interpreted and used. Strengthened collaboration improves coordination and clarifies how existing indicators can monitor digitalisation goals while highlighting areas where new indicators are needed. Continuous dialogue is essential for ensuring correct use of statistics and for strengthening trust in ICT statistics as digital development accelerates.



Keywords: digitalisation, communication, ICT statistics, inter agency collaboration, Nordic cooperation

1. Introduction

Rapid digital development is increasingly shaping society and everyday life. Digital services and technologies are transforming how businesses operate, creating a growing need for reliable official statistics that describe this development. The survey ICT usage in enterprises provides key indicators that support policymakers in Sweden and the EU in monitoring digitalisation and guiding policy measures.

At the same time, fast technological change challenges statistical production. New technologies and behaviours risk making indicators outdated unless they are continuously developed in dialogue with users. Coordination between Statistics Sweden (SCB) and key stakeholders is therefore essential to ensure relevance, accurate interpretation, and effective use. Without such collaboration, statistics may be misunderstood or lose their value.

SCB collaborates closely with key stakeholders such as the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS), the Agency for Digital Government (Digg), and the Ministry of Finance. Through structured collaboration, shared understanding and relevant indicators can be ensured.

This report describes how SCB's collaboration model strengthens the quality and usability of ICT statistics and supports the development of reliable digital indicators.

2. The need for reliable ICT indicators

As digitalisation expands, the demand for high-quality statistics has increased. Policymakers require indicators to monitor goals, identify barriers, and design policies. Sweden's Digitalisation Strategy (Regeringen, 2025) highlights the importance of reliable and measurable indicators.

Indicators must be timely, detailed, and comparable across time and countries. Clear definitions and consistent interpretation are crucial for usability. However, rapid technological change means some indicators quickly lose relevance. For example, internet access is no longer informative since nearly all enterprises are connected.

This creates a need for continuous development and user dialogue. Reliable ICT indicators require not only statistical quality but also adaptability, coordination, and shared understanding to remain relevant in a fast-changing environment.

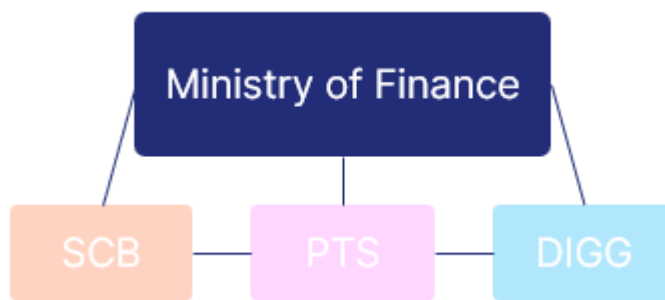
3. SCB's collaboration model

Collaboration is central to ensuring relevant and useful ICT statistics. SCB maintains ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders, enabling early identification of policy needs and technological developments. This functions as continuous monitoring of both the policy environment and digital trends.

Key stakeholders, such as PTS and Digg, operate within the same policy areas as SCB but bring different roles and perspectives. All three agencies fall under the Ministry of Finance. Continuous interaction not only improves the relevance of statistics but also builds trust, allowing for more open discussions and more responsive development of indicators.

The collaboration model is illustrated in Figure 1 and reflects a combination of formal and informal relationships across government.

Figure 1: Collaboration model



a. The Relationship with the Ministry of Finance

The Ministry defines overall priorities, while SCB translates these into statistical solutions. This balance between guidance and independence enables effective collaboration without compromising professional integrity. A clear example is the development of statistics on artificial intelligence (AI), where SCB, through dialogue with the Ministry, has been able to highlight resource needs and expand its work in this area.

b. The Relationship with PTS and Digg

Collaboration with PTS and Digg is more informal and exploratory. PTS produces infrastructure data, while Digg focuses on public-sector digitalisation. Together with SCB's broader statistics, these complement each other.

Recent joint government assignments have strengthened cooperation, leading to shared identification of data gaps and improved understanding of digitalisation.

c. Benefit and collaboration

Dialogue with users improves quality by:

- developing more relevant indicators
- ensuring alignment with policy needs

- improving interpretation and reducing misuse
- enabling faster adaptation to change
- identifying outdated or less meaningful indicators
- avoiding duplication of work

In this way, collaboration functions both as a development mechanism and as a form of quality assurance.

4. The government agency network for ICT statistics

As part of this broader collaboration model, SCB participates in a formalised inter-agency network focused on ICT statistics. The network serves as a concrete platform for operationalising collaboration and ensuring continuous dialogue among producers and users of statistics.

The network includes 14 organisations. SCB, PTS, and Digg host the meetings, bringing together stakeholders with different perspectives and areas of expertise.

a. Purpose

The primary purpose of the network is to create a shared understanding of digitalisation in Sweden. By bringing together producers and users of statistics, the network integrates different perspectives and areas of expertise. This contributes to a more nuanced and comprehensive view of digital development.

b. Meeting Frequency and Working Methods

The network meets twice a year, complemented by bilateral contacts when needed. Meetings are dialogue-based and focus on knowledge sharing rather than formal decision-making. Participants present developments in their

respective areas, discuss methodological issues, and explore new indicator needs.

c. Themes Discussed

In recent years, discussions have largely focused on artificial intelligence, digital skills, and data gaps. Methodological issues, such as measurement challenges and interpretation of statistics, are also recurring topics.

The network contributes to improved coordination between agencies, reduces the risk of duplication of efforts, and strengthens Sweden's ability to monitor and analyse digitalisation. It also creates the conditions for a more coherent national perspective in international collaborations, for example with Eurostat and the OECD. In addition, Nordic cooperation supports deeper knowledge exchange and greater harmonisation of methods within ICT statistics.

5. Communication channels and knowledge sharing

SCB uses multiple channels to ensure correct use of statistics. Data is published openly with documentation on methods and quality, and detailed metadata is available for advanced users.

Targeted communication and direct contact are used for key stakeholders. Key users are also encouraged to subscribe to SCB's news updates to stay informed.

A key objective is to prevent misinterpretation through clear explanations, for example through statistical news reports. Feedback from users helps identify needs for clarification and development.

Overall, SCB combines open access, targeted communication, and continuous interaction to ensure statistics are understood, relevant, and effectively used.

6. Examples

AI has been a central focus in recent years. SCB already produces indicators describing the use of AI in enterprises, including purposes and barriers to adoption. These indicators provide a baseline for understanding how widely AI is used. However, collaboration with PTS and Digg has highlighted important gaps. In particular, there is a need to better measure AI adoption and organisational maturity—that is, how deeply AI is integrated into business processes and strategies.

New indicators are therefore being explored, such as whether companies have formal AI policies or governance structures. These measures provide insight into how organisations manage and operationalise AI, going beyond simple usage metrics.

Nordic cooperation has also contributed to this development by enabling exchange of experiences and alignment of approaches. This has strengthened the methodological basis for new indicators and ensured their relevance in a broader context.

These examples illustrate how continuous dialogue leads to concrete improvements and more comprehensive statistical frameworks, while accelerating the development of more policy-relevant and methodologically sound indicators.

7. Conclusion

Collaboration is essential for understanding digitalisation. By combining perspectives, agencies create a shared view that no single actor could achieve alone. Continuous dialogue improves indicators, making them more relevant and aligned with user needs. This is particularly important for AI, where gaps remain in measuring adoption and maturity.

Future work should focus on indicators capturing structural aspects such as investments, skills, and organisational capacity, while maintaining flexibility.

In conclusion, collaboration is not just supportive – it is necessary for producing reliable, relevant, and forward-looking statistics in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. It also enables faster adaptation to technological change, strengthens trust in official statistics, and ensures that indicators remain meaningful as digitalisation, and particularly AI, continues to evolve.

8. Reference

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