Title: Statistical Disclosure Control in a Research Environment

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Statistical disclosure control (SDC) in a research environment poses particular problems. Most SDC research is concerned with ensuring that a finite set of tabular outputs are safe from disclosure, or that microdata sets are sufficiently anonymised. By its nature, a research environment is one where confidential data is made available for analysis with very few restrictions. Imposing SDC rules not designed specifically for this environment may lead to excessively complex rules which still fail to achieve the objectives of flexibility and effectiveness. This paper argues that the research environment requires a different approach to SDC based on fewer simpler rules with a necessary fuzziness in interpretation. This requires (a) clear agreement on the principles and general purpose of SDC, (b) the demonstration of classes of safe and unsafe outputs, (c) the active involvement of researchers, and (d) appropriate training programmes for both SDC staff and researchers.