 

**A Beginners guide to Harmonisation**

**What is Harmonisation?**

Harmonisation is the process of increasing comparability and coherence of statistics. Through collaboration of analysts across the GSS to maximize their value to users. It is broader than standardisation, which involves adopting uniform methods, processes or outputs.

Instead, Harmonisation acknowledges that there are often different levels of comparability and coherence that are achievable. From user guidance explaining where data is comparable or where caution should be applied, through to agreed harmonised questions.

More information on Harmonisation can be found [here](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/harmonisation/).

**Why is Harmonisation important**

Harmonisation allows analysts to work together to gain deeper insight from their data. This delivers more meaningful statistics that give users a greater level of understanding.

Bringing experts together can also take advantage of shared knowledge across the system, developing ways to best capture data and produce Official Statistics that answer user questions. As well as achieving cost savings by realising efficiencies of avoiding duplication.

Additionally, Harmonisation is required to comply with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/).

**Who are the GSS Harmonisation Team?**

The GSS Harmonisation Team are a team of researchers and statisticians. Within the Best Practice and Impact (BPI) division at the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The team works on a cross-governmental programme of work to support the GSS by improving harmonisation. To provide clearer and more robust comparison between data sources.

Further information on the Best Practice and Impact (BPI) division can be found [here](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/about-us/support-for-the-gss/).

**What is the GSS Harmonisation Champion Network (HCN) and a Harmonisation Champion?**

The Harmonisation Champions Network works across the GSS to increase awareness of harmonisation and the help available. Further information on which can be found [here](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/about-us/champion-networks/harmonisation-champions/).

Each government department has a nominated harmonisation champion (or several champions) to work with the network of harmonisation champions across the GSS. Details on these champions and can be found [here](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DhEdDhmYj_e8VTO30hn7baM7m6rFhmpeUTANG_o5r3o/edit#gid=0).

**What is a Harmonised question / principle?**

Harmonised principles are guidance on how to make statistics more comparable by encouraging producers to use the same methods of data collection and presentation. The principles include definitions, survey questions, standards for administrative data, rules for presentation and guidance for users. Our full list of Harmonised questions / principles can be found [here](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/0-harmonised-principles/).

**What is a Harmonisation topic?**

Harmonisation topics are related themes under whichHarmonised guidance and/or principles are grouped e.g. health, housing, demographics. Our full list of topics can be found [here](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/0-harmonised-principles/).

**What is a Harmonisation topic group and lead?**

Harmonisation topics are usually underpinned by a topic group, which are a working group of experts on that subject drawn from across the GSS. The chair of this group is the topic lead.

**Who should I contact with any further questions?**

To find out more about harmonisation please email us at: [GSShelp@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:GSShelp@statistics.gov.uk) or visit the harmonisation pages on the GSS website: <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/harmonisation/>