GSS NATIONAL STATISTICS HARMONISATION GROUP (NSHG) INFORMATION NEWSLETTER, No 4

Produced after the 5th June 2013 quarterly NSHG meeting

Introduction

For each meeting of the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) an information newsletter is produced. The information in the newsletter is combined with items and updates worthy of a mention between NSHG meetings. The newsletter is circulated across the GSS via the National Statistics Harmonisation web-pages (ONS web site), StatNet and StatsUserNet. This is the fourth in a series of quarterly newsletters. If you have any comments or queries, please do get in touch.

HEADLINES

NSHG Topic groups (Social Surveys)

Listed below are the current topic areas covered by the NSHG. The Topic Groups, lead by a subject matter expert, are responsible for the development and maintenance of the GSS Harmonised Standards.

For more detailed information on the harmonisation process, please see our web pages http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/harmonisation/harmonisation-index-page/index.html

- Benefits and Tax Credits
- Classifications
- Consumer Durables
- Country of Birth, Migration and Citizenship
- Crime, Anti-social Behaviour and Social Capital
- Demographic Information
- Economic Activity
- Education
- Ethnicity, Identify, Language, Religion and Sexual Identity(EILRS)
- Health, Disability and Carers
- Housing and Tenure
- Income
- Pensions

At the last NSHG meeting, the following main points were reported:

- Classifications
  A Classifications Policy paper was presented to the NSHG for endorsement before it is submitted to the newly reformed Statistical Policy Committee. The policy can then be presented to the GSS SPSC for formal adoption by the GSS.

- Country of Birth, Migration and Citizenship
  In order for the harmonised questions to be fully developed it was agreed the definitions that underpin the questions need to be agreed. At the last meeting the less complex definitions were put forward and agreed. Some of these are already in wide use and well defined within the UK.

- Benefits and Tax Credits
  A revised Interim Harmonised Standard covering the introduction of Universal Credits and Personal Independence Payments has been developed and it was intended to submit this for approval. However, due to ongoing amendments this is now on hold. It has been decided to produce an Interim standard because a proper impact assessment is not possible until at least 6 months of 2013/14 data is available.

There have been recent changes to Topic Leads. These are:

- Education – Karen Grierson (BIS) replacing Drew Hird.
- Health, Disability and Carers – Chris White (ONS0 has stood down as Topic Lead. A replacement is being sought.

Classifications

The Classifications and Harmonisation Unit have developed a series of coding tools to assist with the coding of the Standard Occupational Coding (SOC) 2010 and National Statistics Socio-economic Classifications (NSSEC).

These coding tools can be found on the Classifications web pages on the ONS web site: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/classifications-coding-tools/index.html

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The International Labour Office is looking at updating and revising ISCO 08. This may have an impact on mapping to other classifications.

At an International Training session, held in Paris last April, it was suggested ISIC may be revised and this may impact on NACE and UKSIC.

UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank

The UK Data Service Variable and Question Bank highlights GSS harmonised standards (more than 13,000 harmonised variables), has been further improved and is now fully live and operational, here: http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/variables

Jack Kneeshaw, from the UK Data Service, gave a presentation of the Variable and Question Bank (VQB) to the recent NSHG meeting. He demonstrated the ability of the VQB to search using a variety of criteria including variable, question wording, survey and date. Once a question is found there is now a clear indication of whether or not it is a GSS Harmonised Standard. It is also now possible to link that GSS Harmonised Question to a pdf file, of its parent Harmonised Standard on the ONS web site. Up to 24 variables (from different surveys) can also be saved in a 'basket' for comparison.

A couple of suggestions from NSHG members were offered to Jack. These were an indication of when the variable/question was used and the ability to show technical reports. It was also realised the VQB can potentially display anything deposited in the UK Data Archives, which could include Admin Data variables.

Another area being looked at is ensuring only the latest versions of Harmonised Questions are tagged as Harmonised Standards. This could be covered in a 'health warning' and a link to the ONS web site as the definitive version of the standard.

Harmonisation Roadshows

A roadshow is being planned for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It is hoped that as well staff from BIS, other staff from Governments Departments in London can attend. The Harmonisation Team are always willing to discuss the possibility of presenting our processes to those who express an interest. Please contact the harmonisation team for further information.

Harmonising Business Standards

A series of mini workshops has been organised for the ONS Business Survey areas who are located in Newport. These will take place in September. A list of proposed topics for initial consideration has been drawn up and it is planned to form topic groups around these, with interested parties. Please email harmonisation@ons.gsi.gov.uk you would like to be involved or informed.

NSHG Steering Group

The National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group (NSHSG) met for the first time on 24 April 2013. The purpose of this group is to lead the strategic direction of GSS harmonisation, overseeing the development of the GSS Harmonisation work plan and acting as an interface between the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) and the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG). The steering group will aim to raise the profile and impetus of the work of the NSHG.

A draft Terms of Reference was presented to the group, pointing out these would need to be reviewed once the remit of the group is fully agreed. The group was introduced to the NSHG strategy, the workplan, a paper covering NSHG achievements to date and other NSHG initiatives. The process of harmonisation was discussed along with the roles of the Topic Groups and their leads.

It was decided the next meeting would take place (before the next GSS SPSC meeting), via audio, on the 27 June.

NSHG Workplan for 2013

A copy of the 2013 NSHG Workplan may be retrieved from StatNet http://www.knowledgenetwork.gsi.gov.uk/statnet/statnet.nsf/6f111bd2854bbd0280256afc00761507/2606e8704a40b29180257b2100296059/$FILE/NSHG%20(13%202)%2010%20-%20NSHG%20Workplan%20Jun%2013.pdf

Harmonisation of Data Markers.

An update paper on this topic was presented to the NSHG, explaining the background behind the work and that an initial set of proposals should be ready by mid June. The proposal will initially be sent to the NSHG (by correspondence) and then to wider stakeholders including the Devolved Administrations.

If you are interested in knowing more, or wish to contribute, please contact:
harmonisation@ons.gsi.gov.uk

NSHG Workshop

The NSHG Annual Workshop will be held on the 25th September 2013 following on from the NSHG meeting, taking place at ONS Drummond Gate. The main theme of the workshop varies on alternate years. The years between are taken up with a review of the respective NSHG Harmonised Standards in an attempt to identify any need to update or amend, given the current prevailing circumstances within that area and with consideration for revision since any previous amendment.

There will also be a review of the NSHG Topic Groups, with regard to structure and responsibilities and a review of the NSHG structure. It is also hoped to have a presentation on Electronic Data Collection, recourses of the EDC Team permitting.

The dates of the next two NSHG meetings are:

Wednesday 25th September 2013, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate, Meeting Room 3. Followed by the NSHG Workshop in the afternoon

and

Wednesday 4th December 2013, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate, Meeting Room 3

If you would like to submit any papers for consideration at the quarterly NSHG meetings, please contact:
harmonisation@ons.gsi.gov.uk

All NSHG agendas, meeting papers and minutes (for both the quarterly meetings and the Workshops) are deposited on the GSS Intranet StatNet web pages under 'GSS Committees' and can be accessed via the following link;

http://www.knowledgenetwork.gsi.gov.uk/statnet/statnet.nsf/refDocs/SCWE-5SLDV6

Government Statistical Service

This year's GSS conference will be held on the 5th & 6th November 2013, in Birmingham, with the aim to "Inspire and develop the GSS community for the future".

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) is experiencing a time of challenge as well as opportunity. Advances in technology, reduced budgets and civil service reform are some of the issues that the GSS community need to adapt and respond to.

The 2013 GSS Conference will aim to inspire and energise the GSS community. The organisers hope members will learn from others to deal with these challenges, both from within and outside the community, whilst ensuring official statistics are more accessible and more widely used in decision making and debate.

In order to produce high quality statistics, analysis and advice for the public good, the GSS community need to be properly equipped with the right skills. The morning of the second day of the conference will therefore be dedicated to developing and/or refreshing skills for the whole community.

You can also follow our progress in organising the conference via our blog:
http://gssconference.wordpress.com/

NSHG Newsletters produced by:

Becki Aquilina and Mark Herniman
(Harmonisation Team)
Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Room 1400, Titchfield PO15 5RR
01329 444017
harmonisation@ons.gsi.gov.uk