Government Statistical Service

GSS NATIONAL STATISTICS HARMONISATION GROUP (NSHG) INFORMATION NEWSLETTER, No 9

Produced after the 18th September 2014 Quarterly NSHG meeting & Annual Workshop

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), and StatsUserNet. This is the Ninth 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 Principles.

- Benefits and Tax Credits
- Consumer Durables
- Country of Birth, Migration and Citizenship
- Crime and Anti-social Behaviour
- 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 with regard to Topic Groups:

- Classifications
  Since the last NSHG meeting on 4 June, it has been agreed that 'Classifications' should be removed from the list of Topic Groups, as was not really a Topic Group in the true sense. It will report to the NSHG on a less regular basis, as and when required.

- Benefits and Tax Credits
  Work on the interim revised principle for this topic still continues and will address the introduction of Universal Credits and Personal Independence Payments. There is still one issue remaining; the Social Fund question and whether the existing question should be split. A new question has been drafted and has been commented on by the Family Resources Survey (FRS) Team and the Data Collection Methodology (DCM) Team, both at ONS. Comments are still awaited from NATCEN.

There have been the following changes to the NSHG Topic Group leads:

- Emily Knipe has been appointed as the NSHG Topic Lead for Demographic Information, taking over from Julie Jefferies
- Jana Kubascikova-Mullen has been appointed as the Topic Lead for Consumer Durables, taking over from Joanna Bulman.
- Pamela Cobb has been appointed as the NSHG Topic Lead for Country of Birth, Migration and Citizenship, after the group has been without a lead for nearly a year.
- A Topic Lead for the NSHG Topic Group for Health, Disability and Carers, is still being sought and a new approach is being taken for this.

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

NSHG Strategy

The revised NSHG Strategy was presented to the GSS Statistical Policy and Standards Committee (SPSC) at their October meeting. This revised NSHG strategy contained case studies which outlined practical examples of harmonisation in action, which were provided to highlight the benefits and role of harmonisation to provide evidence based support for harmonisation practices.

National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group

The revised National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group has now met three times These first meetings, at monthly intervals, have been used to review the

role, strategic direction and the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Steering Group. Jacqui Jones has now been elected the Chair and once the items have been addressed the group will return to meeting twice a year.

The strategic direction of the Steering Group has now been proposed as:
Enabling users to make informed decisions in relation to the comparability of data / sources / statistics (within and across themes): by improving comparability through the development and use of harmonised principles and standards.

The Steering Group will support this by:

- Championing and raising the profile of harmonisation
- Setting the strategy
- Resource leverage
- Buy-in from Statistics Authority Monitoring and Assessment Team
- Identifying potential drivers and factors that would help embed harmonisation
- Identifying policy implications

The Steering group are now formulating a communication plan which will discussed at the next meeting in January 2015.

Harmonising Business Principles

The Harmonisation team presented a paper to the NSHG on the governance of business harmonisation. It was decided that a new NSHG sub-group for business statistics would be established to maintain momentum for investigating the harmonisation of business statistics. In addition, the Harmonisation team have been meeting with ONS business survey colleagues to gather support and receive further information about how to proceed.

There are plans for the Annual Business Survey and Monthly Business Survey questionnaires to be loaded onto the Variable and Question Bank before the end of the year.

NSHG Roadshows

Since the last newsletter the Harmonisation team have delivered roadshows to the Welsh Government and the Population and Demography Directorate at ONS.

The decision has been taken to pause roadshows at present to enable the formation of the Business harmonisation sub-topic group and progress new and ongoing areas of work. The Harmonisation team are still engaging with stakeholders and promoting harmonisation.

Further Promulgation Events

The Harmonisation team presented at the 19th GSS Methodology Symposium on the Impact of Harmonisation on Quality and Comparability.

Future Dates

The dates of the next two NSHG meetings are:

Wednesday 10th December 2014, 1100 to 1330 hrs at ONS Drummond Gate, Meeting Room 3 and
Wednesday 4th March 2015, 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

NSHG agendas, meeting papers and minutes (for both the quarterly meetings and the Workshops) are now held on the GSS website, under the 'Committees and Governance' section and can be accessed via the following link;
https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/about/governance-and-structure/national-statistics-harmonisation-group/

The site can be accessed by any Civil Servant, who will need to register, in order to access the GSSnet site. To log on to the GSSNet site, go to:
https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/

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