April 2017

GSS International Statistics **Dashboard**

News highlights

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| At home* **Exiting the EU -** It is important our statistics remain comparable over time and with those of other countries, and that the UK continues to play an active role in the international statistical community. Planning is underway to ensure the framework we have in place, when the UK leaves the EU, enables the UK statistical system to do this. The detailed information we have received from departments in the first part of the year is vital for this process, and we are very grateful for your timely and helpful responses. Regardless of our future relationship with the EU, the driving forces behind what we do and how we need to change, evolving user needs, the increasingly globalised and digital world we live in, and the wealth of data available to us, will remain the same. If you have any queries, please contact me, Will Laffan, EU Exit lead: will.laffan@statistics.gov.uk
* **Extension of MoU between ONS and the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)** – John Pullinger met with the Commissioner of the Chinese NBS, Mr Ning Jizhe during the UN World Data Forum and agreed to extend the MoU for an additional five years. John is keen to develop a structured programme which builds on the current MoU activities, focuses on common issues and strengthens our relationship with the NBS.
* Anew **MoU between ONS and Statistics Netherlands has been agreed** – both share a vision to create a global impact to data science through research, training and leadership. The MoU will support the following activities: staff exchange; learning opportunities to build data science capability; collaborating on projects of common interest; developing and investigating methodology and technology for combining data; investigating Big Data sources; sharing expertise on privacy, data protection, data storage etc.
* **GSS International Committee –** Ian Cope, Deputy National Statistician, for Population and Public Policy, joins the Committee as the new Chair – GSSIC will meet again on 18 April 2017 and will discuss: the National Statistician’s international priorities; Brexit; capacity building; SDGs; Peer Review and the World Data Forum. Secretariat: michael.bleakley@statistics.gov.uk
* **City Group on Ageing and Age-dissagregated Data** - John Pullinger championed this initiative at the 48th session of the [UN Statistical Commission](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/) (New York, March 2017). Older people tend to be forgotten in statistics and there is a need for better statistics on the elderly through the prism of the [SDGs](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300). We need to tackle the deficit in data; develop a forum for sharing expertise; and build harmonisation through the development of good practices and methodologies.  John received good support from across the globe to progress this work. The City Group will be led by NSOs and other interested stakeholders and will operate from 2018 to 2023. The group will report to the 49th session of the UNSC with a solid proposal, including TORs for the group.  **Next steps**: an international workshop in August 2017 in Hampshire, organised by ONS Titchfield and DFID, to map and decide the areas to work on, and the development of a portal to share good practice. Relevant experts from NSOs, UN Agencies, government, civil society, academia, and private sector will be invited. Contact: richard.pereira@ons.gov.uk
* **GSS international activity ‘round-up’:** - see page 2 below.
* **International ONS Economic Statistics Conference, 21-22 February 2017, Newport** – see report on **page 2 below.**
* **Useful reference**
* [ONS International Calendar](https://teamup.com/ksca0c1eead7c5d45a)
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**GSS international activity ‘round-up’ *via GSS International Liaison Officers***

**HMRC works with OECD on a number of tax administration issues, including publishing comparable information on approaches across OECD. We were approached by OECD to contribute to a UK country article for OECD’s series of publications. HMRC’s Executive Chair,** [Edward Troup](https://www.gov.uk/government/people/edward-troup) **suggested an article on the tax gap, which is a challenging statistic published annually by HMRC, and which aligns with the protocols and principles of the** [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/)**. Although the UK is arguably the world leader in tax gap estimation, a number of other countries are also developing tax gap measures, and the article will share the UK’s knowledge from several years’ experience of publishing this statistic. The article was drafted by analysts working on the measure and presents our thoughts on the benefits and limitations of the measure. It will be published by the OECD later this year. Contact:** heather.whicker@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

**DCMS has been invited to attend an expert workshop on cultural participation surveys in Germany. The workshop will bring together leading experts from several European countries who have experience of developing, conducting and analysing such surveys. Alison Reynolds will be giving a presentation on DCMS experiences with the** [Taking Part survey](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey)**, which measures engagement in sport and cultural activities such as arts, museums, heritage and libraries. The Taking Part survey is well established, having been running since 2005, and has recently undergone methodological changes, such as introducing an online longitudinal element. As well as sharing our experiences on the Taking Part survey, we hope to learn about other European approaches and explore scope to collaborate or compare results in future.**

**International Economic Statistics Conference, Newport**

**On 21 and 22 February 2017, around 200 delegates attended the inaugural international ONS economic statistics conference, hosted in Newport. The conference was intended to draw together a broad range of experts, both from the UK and further afield, to exchange ideas and discuss how to meet the challenges of measuring the modern economy, particularly in our increasingly digital age.**

***A different perspective***

**Although there was many interesting and impressive voices from the UK, including from our very own GSS, it was great to hear from international figures such as Peter Van de Van and Martine Durand from the OECD, and Silke Stapel-Weber from Eurostat, who brought a different perspective.**

***Global challenges***

**Yet despite the conference's international angle what really struck me was that so many of the speakers, irrespective of the organisation or country they had come from, returned to the same themes as we discussed how to measure the 21st century economy. This really underlined how the challenges we face are global ones that we need to work together to solve. This goes beyond sharing ideas about how we tackle problems we all experience separately at a domestic level - many of the problems are themselves global and cannot be solved in isolation.**

***Trade asymmetries***

**Trade asymmetries (ie where two countries produce different figures on how much they trade with each other) are a perfect example of the above. Dr Stapel-Weber drove this point home with a few striking figures about the size of some trade asymmetries, which particularly for small and open economies can represent a large proportion of GDP.** Carol Corrado (The Conference Board) pointed out in response how US and Canadian statisticians regularly compare trade data to get to the bottom of trade asymmetries, a piece of good practice others may be able to learn from.

***What’s next***

**The conference was a big success, and we'll be looking to build on it with future conferences in years to come, organised jointly with the newly established** [Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence](http://www.escoe.ac.uk/)**. But it's not enough to wait for next year - in the meantime we'll be making the most of our new contacts and continuing with the conversations we started, to jointly identify solutions to the challenges we all face in measuring the modern, digital economy.**

**More information, and content such as podcasts and the live recording of conference is on the** [ONS website](https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/events/economicconference)**.**

***Danny Langley, Head of User Insight and Engagement (ONS)***

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| And Away3* **World Data Forum 2017, Cape Town** – see review on page 5 below.
* **Meetings**
* [Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians](http://www.unece.org/stats/cesbureau.html) met in Geneva on 14-15 February 2017. John Pullinger reported a useful meeting with a small group of energetic NSI heads from Canada, Mexico, Austria, Finland, and Armenia, as well as UK, plus OECD, IMF, CIS and Eurostat. John was struck by the discussions on innovation. Examples cited in and around the meeting included:
1. Use of scanner data in CPI – up to 25% in several countries
2. The speed of take-up for online business surveys eg Kazakhstan now 25%
3. Innovation in communications to meet the populist/post truth challenge eg Austria use of interview format and engagement with schools
4. Southampton University mentioned as world leader on data innovation
5. Lots of mentions of the UN Global Working Group on data
6. Lots of possibilities for the GSS to link with the work of OECD, including secondments
7. UK leadership is well recognised eg Joe Grice’s work on the value of official statistics and Dominic Webber’s (ONS) work on unpaid household work got especially warm plaudits – congratulations!
* [Council Working Party on Statistics - the Maltese presidency](http://eu2016.statistics.sk/en/news9.html) has continued negotiations on the *Framework Regulation* *Integrated European Social Statistics* (IESS) proposal and expects to begin trilogue discussions with the EP and Commission on the *Extension of the European Statistical Programme* proposal in June 2017. The Maltese have a heavy workload with three new proposals for statistics regulations: a *Framework Regulation on Integrated Business Statistics* (FRIBS); a *Regulation on Territorial Typologies* (TERCET); and a *Framework Regulation on Integrated Farm Statistics* (IFS).  The Presidency is attempting to progress all four pending dossiers at Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS), but progress is understandably slow. Although generally supportive of each of the proposals, Member States have a number of specific areas of concern including the usual issues on the use of [delegated’ and implementing acts](http://www.eipa.eu/files/repository/product/20130904094203_Comitology_Brochure5EN_web.pdf). An additional CWPS was scheduled for early April in order to assist in moving matters forward.
* The **Director Generals’ Seminar on Globalisation** was held on 9 February 2017 in Luxembourg. Outputs from the meeting included: agreement on the importance of jointly addressing the challenges of globalisation; the need for close collaboration with international partners eg OECD, ECB, UN; work to be taken forward by BSDG and DMES Directors Groups on a number of priority areas. Contact: international@statistics.gov.uk for more detail.
* [UN Statistical Commission](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/) met on 6-10 March 2017 in New York. An important outcome was UNSC’s adoption of the **resolution on the ‘Work of the UN Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**’ and recommended its adoption by [UN Economic and Social Council](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/home) (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly. Also at the UNSC the UK proposed a **city group on ageing and age disaggregation**, as mentioned on page 1 above.
* **ONS International Development activity**
* The ONS International Development Branch (IDB) successfully delivered a mid-term review of the five- year National Strategy for Development of Statistics, of the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR). The review was led by IDB and drew in experts including ex-ONS director Mike Pepper, Rob Bumpstead (UKSA, Chief of Staff), Mark Gautrey (Head of Surveys and Life Events Processing) and Nick Palmer (Labour Market). The collaboration with UK exports in the review was much appreciated by NISR.
* An MoU with DFID has been signed for a four year project to support the Ethiopian Census - the first mission has been successfully conducted. Garnett Compton, ONS (2021 Census Statistical Design), led on the first mission accompanied by Cal Ghee, ONS, at IDB’s expense, and advised on plans for the pilot census, development of the questionnaire, and procurement of hardware.
* IDB supported the attendance of UK senior delegates at the first ever World Data Forum in Cape Town.
* Ian Coady, ONS Geography, visited the Jordanian Department of Statistics to discuss the use of geospatial analysis to increase the usability of census data.
* Nick Palmer, ONS Labour Market has joined IDB on a three month temporary attachment, to undertake some work for DFID ‘To develop a major initiative to improve the quality, consistency and dissemination of data on employment quality (wage rate, job security, conditions) and productivity in developing countries.’
* IDB supported a half day visit to UKSA / ONS in London from a delegation from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics on quality issues and dissemination.
* IDB also supported a visit of a high level delegation from Albania and Serbia on evidence based policy making.
* **News from DFID**
* The Provisional estimate of Official Development Assistance was published on 5 April 2017.
* Pakistan’s Sixth National Population and Housing Census will start in March 2017.  This is the first census conducted in Pakistan since 1998, and will verify the population of the sixth most populous country in the world, currently estimated at over 190 million and expected to grow to 250 million by 2030.  This is a huge exercise, involving 91,000 trained civilian enumerators accompanied by 200,000 army personnel and costing over 140 million USD.  DFID is providing direct support to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) to ensure critical software, hardware and other IT equipment is available to PBS to conduct the census operation effectively.  Provisional results are expected later this year with a full report to follow in 2018.  Contact for further information: Andy Murray (a-murray@dfid.gov.uk).
* In Zimbabwe, the Finance Bill 2017 has been adopted and with it, the amendment to the Zimbabwe statistics law, making it easier to share micro-data (giving the ZIMSTAT DG the authority to release data). This is quite a big step forward for the Statistics Office in Zimbabwe, and is the result of lobbying and advocacy efforts by DFID and other Development Partner. Contact for further information: Alex Jones (alex-jones@dfid.gov.uk)
* Outside DFID, Development Initiatives has just published its baseline report on the P20 initiative. This is an initiative to create a new metric – P20 – measuring where the **poorest 20%** of the world’s poor live.  This goes beneath national averages and gives us a fresh and interesting way to see where the poorest people live to help us leave no one behind. The report and more details about the P20 initiative can be found here: [P20 Initiative baseline report](http://devinit.us11.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a829237ca0cf1470615c7f059&id=992784e718&e=acc9c13cbb).
* **Useful reference**
* [Third newsletter on the DIGICOM project](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/vision2020/digicom/newsletters/issue3/desktop/) – modernising the communication and dissemination of European statistics
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**UN World Data Forum**

John Pullinger, National Statistician, Heather Savory, Deputy National Statistician for Data Capability and Emma Rourke, ONS Director for Public Policy Analysis, attended the first UN World Data Forum (WDF) in Cape Town from 15 to 18 January 2017. Analytical experts from around the world explored innovative ways to measure global progress and inform evidence-based policy decisions on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

John spoke in two sessions, one on ‘Counting People to Make People Count: the need for better data to ensure that no one is left behind’, and on the closing panel session.

The WDF was also an opportunity for the UK to promote the ONS data science campus; launch the DFID data disaggregation strategy; discuss the new City Group on Age and Ageing; and develop further understanding of the UK’s role in Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data.

**WDF reflections**

Heather enjoyed the pace and variety of the Forum reporting that:

*“..a set of challenges are referenced in almost every session, which I recognise as being in common with ours in the UK. Common themes included: how to deal with the data deluge; an obsession about the quality of ‘alternate’ data sources; concerns about discontinuities in Time Series; restrictions in the ability to share data across government departments; the need to have access to Commercial Data – quote ‘private companies now know more about society than we do’*

Heather also went to an interesting meeting on public-private partnership which is being set up to deliver a Global Platform to share data, across the UN, to deliver SDGs. Heather commented:

*“..we have been invited into this group and have made a commitment to work with a small number of others, including Amazon, Microsoft, the UN and the World Bank to get this going over the next 12 months…the best thing about being here is my feeling that we in the UK are very well placed within this global community, to make the best we can of the Data Revolution..”*

**‘Aligning 2015 agreements through multi-purpose disaster-related data and statistics’**

Emma presented on the panel discussing this topic and reported:

*“It was a rich and energising session, exploring the measurement of targets that seek risk-informed, resilient socio-economic growth and development. Participants discussed the context, gaps and the work to come in response to the call from Member States for technical work to be undertaken by the international statistical community; we felt that the 2011 tragic nuclear disaster in Fukishima demonstrated the need to set a broad contextual  framework for disaster scenarios beyond natural disasters.*

*We agreed that data pertaining to natural hazards and disaster risk are abundant, from multiple sources; one of our next steps is for ONS to participate in a global partnership on disaster-related statistics to exploit new data sources such as satellite data and geospatial analysis. We also had a very lively discussion about the role of National Statistical Institutes in developing predictive analytics, and the potential for coupling Natural Capital Accounting approaches with disaster risk information.*

*These are very exciting areas for ONS to take forward with some analytically mature partners, such as Mexico. These new uses of data and associated skills will enhance our capability beyond the niche policy area of disaster related statistics and are well worth investing in.”*

See [World Data Forum, Cape Town, official site](https://undataforum.org/) for more information.

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