



# GSS Harmonisation Team





Harmonisation is key in maximising the usefulness of data collected and statistics produced. Harmonisation is about ensuring commonality in the use of definitions, survey questions, administrative data and in the presentation of outputs across the Government Statistical Service (GSS).

Ensuring comparability across the GSS is important as it maximises the power of data and analyses without compromising quality.

The GSS Harmonisation Team maintains and develops a range of fully approved harmonised principles (harmonised definitions, harmonised survey questions, harmonised standards for administrative data and harmonised standards to be used when presenting outputs).

The GSS Harmonisation Team supports the GSS community of some 7,000 statistical producers. Our work is not restricted to the GSS – we can and do support other government professionals. We work closely with the GSS Good Practice Team, Quality Centre and Methodology Advisory Service, as part of the GSS Best Practice and Impact Team.

We can support you in developing and implementing harmonised principles as well as offering a consultancy service where we can collaborate closely with you to ensure harmonisation is adhered to.

Additionally, we provide training sessions and workshops to share our research and best practice with you to develop knowledge and expertise on harmonisation within your team.



## Harmonisation Advisors

Our team consists of researchers and operational staff, all of whom have expertise in overcoming barriers which hinder harmonisation and thus ensuring comparability of data sources is achieved.

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# Strategic direction

The GSS Harmonisation Team supports statistic producers and users by providing expert advice, support and guidance on the process of harmonising principles.

Our aim is to improve the comparability of official statistics and make linking data more accessible. To do this we work with a wide range of experts to gain a comprehensive understanding of comparability needs and aim to meet these through developing harmonised principles and providing advice and support to achieve this.

We keep abreast of all advances in producing and disseminating official statistics and adapt our harmonisation principles to suit. We cater for all modes of survey data collection and are focusing on ways in which we can harmonise administrative data.

The Harmonisation Team is the secretariat to the National Statistics Harmonisation Group (NSHG) and the National Statistics Harmonisation Steering Group (NSHSG). The groups have representatives across the GSS including topic experts and Heads of Profession.

# Building capability

The GSS Harmonisation Team actively uses the GSS network to effectively pursue ways to adopt harmonisation and educate on the benefits of harmonisation. We encourage, coach and support others to adopt Harmonised Principles, building awareness and knowledge along the way.

Our customised approach enables us to adopt the needs of any business area. Our support can range from ad hoc advice to long-term projects where we can work closely with departments and other organisations to provide a comprehensive level of direction.

## Workshops

We frequently set up workshops for both individual teams and wider business areas to discuss ways in which harmonisation can be implemented. We can focus on aspects important to the customer and answer any queries or concerns.

We encourage and facilitate group discussions on ways statistics can be compared across the GSS. By creating an engaging and interactive environment together, we can share knowledge and develop tools to aid harmonisation.

## Training

We offer a range of tailored and bespoke harmonisation training to meet the needs of your area. Our training can focus on how to achieve harmonisation and how to integrate harmonised principles in existing statistics.

## Seminars

We run a range of short seminar sessions aimed at understanding of the benefits of harmonisation and raising awareness of our harmonised principles. Sessions are structured to encourage discussion and are adapted to the audience needs. We make sure our seminars have the flexibility to incorporate both expert presentations and wider conversation on specific business areas.



# Consultancy

The GSS Harmonisation Team work collaboratively with departments and other organisations to ensure comparability of statistics is met.

## Independent reviews

We have a range of expertise in different topics across social and business surveys, and administrative data. We regularly scrutinise and assess comparability across official statistics on a range of topics to ensure we are delivering what is needed.

## Reviewing principles

Our GSS Harmonised Principles are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to meet the needs of departments and other organisations. If we identify that a change is needed, we will work with a range of topic experts to adapt and improve them, ensuring continuous coherence.

## Developing principles

We approach tasks and projects in a flexible and agile way to enhance productivity and collaboration. We have experienced researchers who work with teams to assess the need for creating new harmonised principles. If a need is established, our researchers will work to meet this priority.

## **Independent assurance**

The Best Practice and Impact (BPI) Team is able to provide independent assurance about statistical capability. This is a consultancy support function, usually led by a divisional director, whereby BPI staff work with GSS departments to identify areas for improvement and recommend ways forward.

We work with the producer to develop terms of reference for the review and use a mixture of desk research (for example, exploration of published outputs, policies and processes) and structured interviews with relevant stakeholders and staff to understand how things are done and produce recommendations for potential improvements to processes and capability.

# Sharing best practice

The GSS Harmonisation Team regularly identify and promote best practice across the GSS and beyond. We have several channels in which we can share work and expertise more widely.

## Harmonisation Champions

There are over 50 Harmonisation Champions across the GSS who work with us to promote and embed harmonisation. We ensure Heads of Profession are informed about harmonisation best practice and are able to cascade knowledge across their departments.



## Conferences

The team attends conferences to keep updated on the latest research and advances in the statistical profession. We also present our work to make sure we are reaching a wider audience.

We welcome new suggestions for different conferences to attend and present at. If you have an idea for an event you think could help us reach a wider audience, please get in touch.

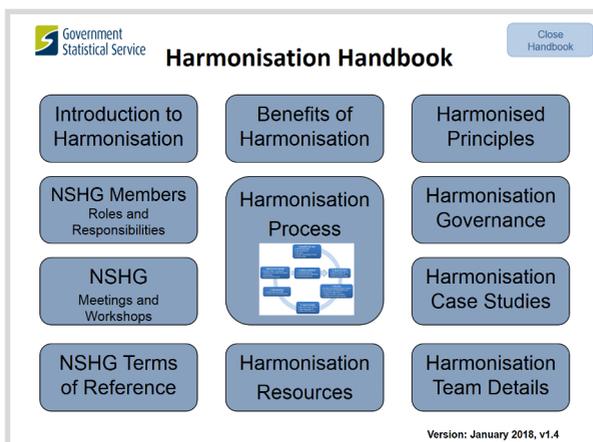


# Tools, guidance and standards

The GSS Harmonisation Team has developed various mechanisms to aid the development of harmonising statistics. Our tools are regularly updated to ensure they are clear, concise and meet customer needs. Our harmonised principles have been tested and approved to ensure that they are reliable and continue to be relevant.

## Harmonisation Handbook

The Harmonisation Handbook is a user-friendly guide to harmonisation providing an overview of harmonisation, case studies and the harmonised principles. It also includes the harmonisation process model which is followed when creating or amending harmonised principles.

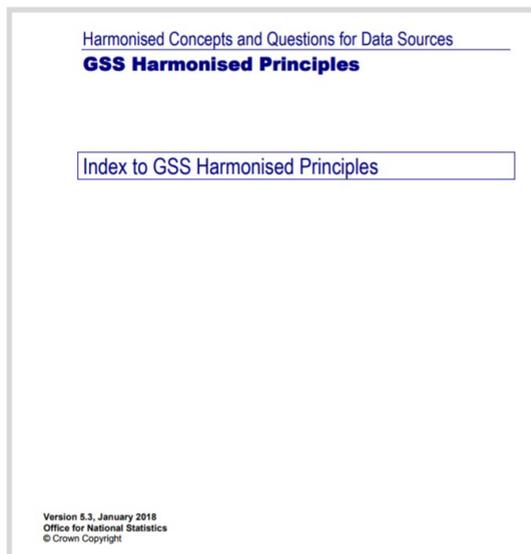


# Harmonised Principles

The GSS Harmonised Principles are approved documents containing harmonised definitions, harmonised survey questions, harmonised standards for administrative data and harmonised standards on the presentation of outputs. They have been developed by topic groups, after wide consultation with producers and customers across the GSS and beyond.

The Harmonisation Handbook and Harmonised Principles can be found on the GSS website and in our Harmonisation A to Z.

<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/statistics/methodology-2/harmonisation/introduction-to-harmonisation/>



# One GSS voice

The GSS Harmonisation Team provides continued support and guidance to colleagues in the GSS and beyond. The channels below present some useful information about our services. For more information, please get in touch.

## **GSS website** [gss.civilservice.gov.uk](https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk)

The GSS website provides news, guidance, career resources and event information for statisticians in government. The website is managed in collaboration with the GSS Central Policy Secretariat and the ONS Knowledge, Learning and Capability division.

## **GSS Slack channel** [gov-stats-service.slack.com](https://gov-stats-service.slack.com)

Network for GSS members to discuss professional and statistical topics of interest.

## **GSS Twitter feeds** [@GSSGoodPractice](https://twitter.com/GSSGoodPractice) [@UKGSS](https://twitter.com/UKGSS)

The GSS and Good Practice Team Twitter feeds provide members of the GSS with updates on events and training, and is used to share news and blogs from across the statistical system.



# Compliance

## Reviews of Statistical Releases

The GSS Best Practice and Impact Team (GSS Good Practice Team, GSS Quality Centre and GSS Harmonisation Team) facilitates a programme of reviews of statistical releases from across government. The review programme provides an overview of the presentation and communication of the statistics, the level of adherence to harmonised principles and the standard of quality reporting across the GSS.

The team works with the Presentation, Quality, Harmonisation and Geography Champions networks to review a sample of statistical releases and accompanying materials, providing a RAG rating and feedback for improvement to producers.

The reviews provide reassurance of adherence to certain aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics, build capability across the GSS and ensure the Presentation and Dissemination Committee and the Office for Statistics Regulation maintain oversight of release quality.

If you would like to put a statistical release forward for review, please get in touch.

