

Harmonised Concepts and Questions for Social Data Sources

GSS Harmonised Principle

General Health & Carers

About This Document and Update History

GSS Harmonised Principle

About this document

This document forms part of a series of GSS Harmonised Principles, designed to provide approved harmonised questions, definitions and outputs for a variety of social and business related topics. The use of harmonised questions, definitions and outputs will provide greater consistency for survey producers and comparability when using data.

For more information, please see the Introductory Document, available on the GSS website:

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

This is Version 3.4 published in June 2017

This document has been updated to Version 3.4 to reflect the change away from 'Primary Principles' and 'Secondary Principles' to 'GSS Harmonised Principles'. There has been no change to the harmonised questions.

Previous versions:

Version 3.3 published in May 2015

This document was updated to Version 3.3 to correct minor formatting issues and to change the term '*Harmonisation Standards*' to '*Harmonisation Principles*' as agreed by the National Statistics Harmonisation Group.

Version 3.2 published in August 2011.

This document was updated to Version 3.2 to reflect the change in status from Secondary to Primary Principle for General Health and Carers. Basic Questions on long term illness and disability have been revised and are now included in a new primary Principle titled 'Long Lasting Health Conditions and Illnesses; Impairments and Disability'. These changes have been ratified by the Heads of Profession for Statistics and were developed through consultation with the GSS Disability and General Health Topic Group

Version 3.1 published in October 2010.

This document was updated to Version 3.1 to correct typing and formatting errors.

Version 3.0 published in December 2008.

This document was updated to Version 3.0 to reflect changes in the format of the document, placing the 'Inputs' before the 'Outputs'.

Version 2.0 published in April 2008.

This document was updated to Version 2.0 to reflect changes in the contact details for the Harmonisation Team.

Version 1.0 published in June 2004.

This document is part of a series that replaced the Harmonised Concepts and Questions document. We have been working to make our guidance easier to find and clearer to use. Other than the formatting and layout changes, there are no new changes to questions or outputs in this version.

Please note that version control is new to this edition. Please ensure that you always use up-to-date versions of questions and outputs by checking our website for new editions – the version number will be incremented when changes are made.

Contents

GSS Harmonised Principle

Introduction 4

General Health:

Inputs 5

Outputs 6

Carers:

Inputs 7

Outputs 9

Introduction




GSS Harmonised Principle

Contact us

For more information about Harmonisation or to join our mailing list, please visit our website at:

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

If you would like further information or have any questions, please contact:

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General Health

Inputs

General Health

ASK IN PERSON IF AGE \geq 16; ASK BY PROXY IF AGE $<$ 16 OR PERSON UNFIT TO RESPOND IN PERSON

GENERAL HEALTH

One question providing a measure of subjective self-reported well-being for use in social surveys and suitable for data collection using CAPI, CATI and paper-based and online self completion forms.

Consistent with the question asked in the 2011 Census and with the EU-SILC and European Health Interview Survey Minimum European Health Module harmonisation principle, so direct comparison with these sources are possible.

Ask All

How is your health in general? Is it.....

1. **Very Good**
2. **Good**
3. **Fair**
4. **Bad**
5. **Very Bad**

This question has replaced the question on General Health previously used in the 2001 Census and social survey data sources from 2008 onwards.

General Health

Outputs

There is one question on general health covered in this section which asks about self-assessed health which has been shown to be a good predictor of demands for health services and is used in the construction of health expectancy metrics such as Healthy Life Expectancy. The full five scaled output categories can be used in longitudinal sources to measure change in general health status among individuals; and in cross-sectional data sources to measure change in the proportion of the population classified to each category over time in time series cross-sections.

The variable can also be collapsed into a dichotomised scale to measure the proportion of the population in 'Good' or 'Poor' general health, and trichotomised into 'Good' 'Fair' and 'Poor' general health as undertaken in some Eurostat publications.

The Office for National Statistics dichotomises this variable to compute the Healthy Life Expectancy Metric; details of how this is calculated is available via the Health Statistics Quarterly, No 26 –Review of Sources and Methods to Monitor Healthy Life Expectancy - on the ONS website:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/hsq/health-statistics-quarterly/no--26--summer-2005/index.html>

This question replaced a different question on general health using a three category scale. An investigation into the change in the time series and the impact on estimates of healthy life expectancy was reported on in a Health Statistics Quarterly article, An Investigation Into The Impact Of Questions Change On Estimates of General Health Status and Healthy Life Expectancy, published in 2009 and available on the ONS website at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/hsq/health-statistics-quarterly/no--41--spring-2009/index.html>

Output categories: General Health

How is your health in general? Is it....	Code
General health (5 point scale)	Nominal scale
Very good	1
Good	2
Fair	3
Bad	4
Very bad	5
Dichotomous output categories	
'Good Health'	= 1 OR = 2
'Poor Health'	= 3 OR = 4 OR = 5
Trichotomous output categories	
'Good Health'	= 1 OR = 2
'Fair Health'	= 3
'Poor Health'	= 4 OR = 5

The justification for the dichotomous collapses is the linkage between reports of 'Fair' general health and the prevalence of limiting long-standing illness or disability. Estimates using General Lifestyle Survey data from 2005 and 2006 found more than half those reporting their general health as 'Fair' also reported a limiting long-standing illness or disability, while less than 10 per cent of those reporting their general health as 'Good' or 'Very Good' did so. These findings are available in an HSQ article, , An Investigation Into The Impact Of Questions Change On Estimates of General Health Status and Healthy Life Expectancy, available for download from the ONS website at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/hsq/health-statistics-quarterly/no--41--spring-2009/index.html>

Carers

Inputs

ASK IN PERSON IF AGE \geq 16; ASK BY PROXY IF AGE $<$ 16 OR PERSON UNFIT TO RESPOND IN PERSON

BASIC CARERS QUESTION

- **Do you do any of the things listed on this card for family members, friends, neighbours or others because they have long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems relating to old age? Please do not count anything you do as part of your paid employment.**

1. Yes
2. No

SHOWCARD

- 1. Keeping an eye out, 'being there':**
 - Being available if needed
 - Making your whereabouts known so you can be contacted if needed
- 2. Social support and assistance:**
 - Sitting with
 - Chatting with/listening to/reading to
 - Making/receiving telephone calls to talk to them
 - Encouraging them to do things for themselves
- 3. Accompanying on trips out to go:**
 - Shopping
 - To hospital/GP/optician/dentist/chiroprapist
 - To the park/church/restaurant
- 4. Home and garden:**
 - Making meals
 - Going shopping for someone
 - Washing/ironing/changing sheets
 - Cleaning/housework
 - Gardening
 - Odd jobs/maintenance
 - Lifting/carrying heavy objects
- 5. Paperwork/official/financial:**
 - Helping with paperwork
 - Dealing with 'officials' (including by phone)
 - Paying bills/rents/rates
 - Collecting pension/benefits
- 6. Medical:**
 - Collecting prescriptions
 - Giving medication
 - Changing dressings
- 7. Moving about the home: giving help with**
 - Getting up and down stairs
 - Moving from room to room
 - Getting in and out of bed
- 8. Personal care: help with**
 - Getting dressed
 - Feeding
 - Washing/bathing/using the toilet

Carers

Inputs

IF YES TO BASIC QUESTION

LENGTH OF TIME SPENT CARING

- **Thinking about all the things you do for anyone else, about how many hours a week do you spend looking after or helping them? Please include any time you spend travelling so that you can do these activities.**
 1. 0-4 hours a week
 2. 5-9 hours a week
 3. 10-19 hours a week
 4. 20-34 hours a week
 5. 35-49 hours a week
 6. 50-99 hours a week
 7. 100 or more hours a week
 8. varies – under 20 hours a week
 9. varies – 20 or more hours a week

Carers

Outputs

Output categories: Carers *

All providing care	XXXX
All not providing care	XXXX

All persons	XXXXX
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**Note: Caring for family members, friends, neighbours or others.*