

Harmonised Concepts and Questions for Social Data Sources

GSS Harmonised Principle

Survey Reference Period

About This Document and Update History

GSS Harmonised Principle

About this document

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 5.6 published in June 2017

This document has been updated to Version 5.6 to reflect the change away from 'Primary Principles' and 'Secondary Principles' to 'GSS Harmonised Principles'. There has been no change to the harmonised questions. Additionally, this document was previously part of the Principle titled '*Other Primary Principles*' which combined several Principles together. It was decided to split these into separate Principles to make them easier to find.

Previous versions:

(The versions below refer only to the 'Survey Reference Period' element of the previous '*Other Primary Principles*')

Version 5.4 published in May 2015

This document was updated to Version 5.4 to correct minor formatting errors and to change the term '*Harmonised Standards*' to '*Harmonised Principles*' as agreed by the National Statistics Harmonisation Group.

Version 5.1 published in October 2010.

This document was updated to Version 5.1 to reflect corrections of spelling and changes in format of the document.

Version 5.0 published in February 2009.

This document was updated to Version 4.0 to reflect changes in the format of the document, placing 'Inputs' before 'outputs'.

Version 4.0 published in June 2008.

This document was updated to Version 4.0 to reflect changes in the contact details for the Harmonisation Team.

Version 1.0, was published in June 2004.

Version 1.0 was part of a series that replaced the Harmonised Concepts and Questions document. We had worked to make our guidance easier to find and clearer to use. Other than the formatting and layout changes, there were no new changes to questions or outputs in this version.

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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/>

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Survey Reference Period

Outputs

Most regular or continuous Government social surveys use financial year as the reference period though there are exceptions. There appears to be a significant need for annual figures on a common time basis.

While there may be specific needs for some surveys to have a different reference period from financial year, including disruption to key time series, it is proposed that surveys should consider moving to a financial year basis. Where this is not appropriate, they should at least where possible publish reference tables for financial years, on harmonised definitions, electronically or in other forms as appropriate.

The presentation of the financial year reference period should take the form "2001-02". Where periods other than financial year are referred to, this should be made clear.

As there is significant user interest for data on both calendar and financial year basis, the possibility of making summary data available on both bases should be considered for continuous surveys though there will also be cost and methodological considerations.