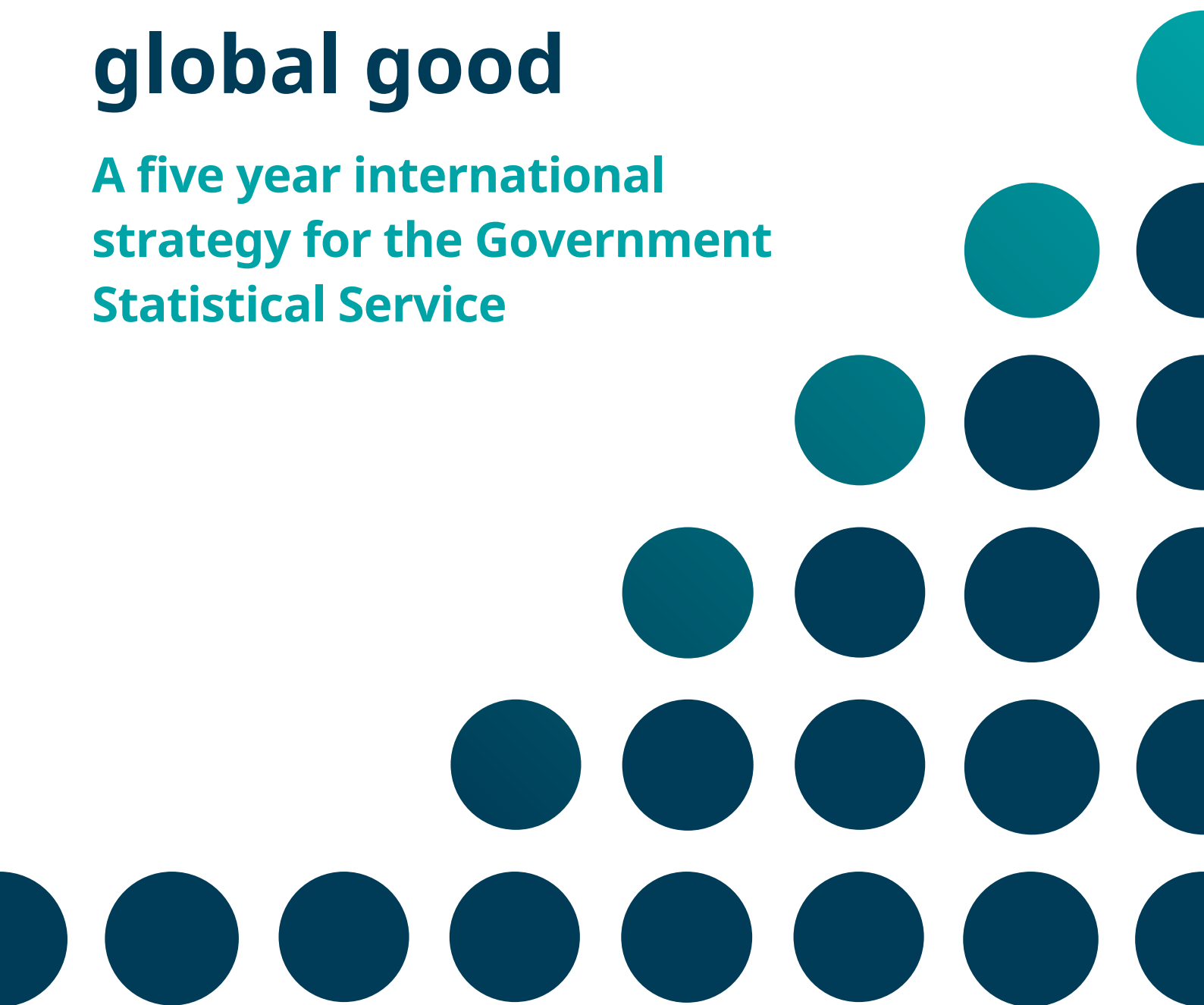


Statistics for the global good

A five year international
strategy for the Government
Statistical Service





**Statistics for the
global good**



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Foreword by
Sir Ian Diamond

Foreword

The world is changing at a radical rate and will be very different in five years – of that I have no doubt. The last six months alone have seen a paradigm shift in how we go about our daily lives and interact with each other as we respond to the pandemic. We have rapidly adopted innovative ways of working and reached greater levels of data interoperability than were thought possible just a short time ago.

Our statisticians have worked tirelessly to provide the government and society with the data and analysis it needed to make sense of recent events and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so into the future, when they will be looked to for reliable and timely information on all aspects of society and the economy. This impressive work has helped to position the UK Statistical System as world leading, considered by our peers as an exemplar in the COVID response.

Greater coordination of both public and private bodies has also been a key feature of the last six months, and we must reflect this in our future international relationships. Joined up, inclusive, internationally comparable statistics and data are key to understanding our society and economy and helping to build a sustainable global community where no-one is left behind.

As we begin a new chapter for statistics and data it is imperative that we are ambitious and lead the global community in promoting the value of statistics and how they can be a powerful force for good in a tumultuous and changing world.



Context

There can be no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our way of life. The need for fast, accurate statistics and data has been brought into sharp focus as we try and keep pace with the virus through responsive and effective policy.

The demand for international comparative data to inform critical decision making about society and the economy has been unprecedented and shows no sign of slowing down. The pandemic has also accelerated existing trends for more timely and granular data, and highlights the importance of being able to compare the UK's performance with other countries around the globe.

Climate change remains an urgent global challenge, posing a significant economic and humanitarian threat over the coming decades. The UK will host the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change in 2021 and has committed to focus on critical areas such as clean energy, clean transport, adaptation and resilience. Our commitment to cut carbon emissions extends to achieving "net zero" by 2050. Similarly, the UK is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN member states, and to work towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Accurate, internationally comparable statistics and data are of critical importance to measuring progress towards these goals and supporting relevant global and national policies.

As we near the end of the EU exit transition period, the UK's relationship with the European Statistical System (ESS) will also change. This means we need to change how we work with other National Statistical Organisations (NSOs), other governments and international bodies to set the conditions for future partnership and collaboration. We also need to be alive to wider changes in the UK's international relationships, for example as we move into the presidency of the G7 in 2021.

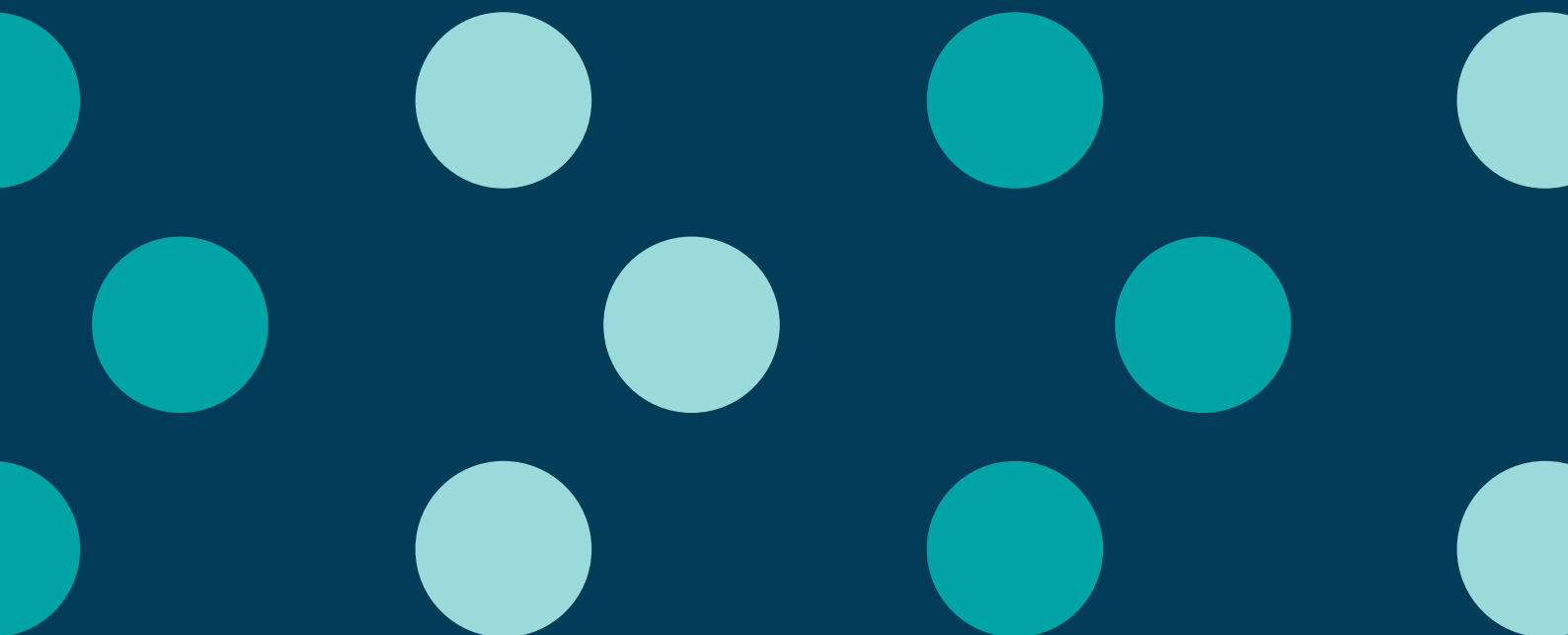
Increasingly, the immense potential of data is being recognised as key to driving growth both within the digital sector and across the economy. The government's recently published National Data Strategy sets out an ambitious objective to support data foundations and improve the quality and availability of data internationally. Further, as evidenced by the pandemic, through global collaboration the UK can further enhance its world-class status in science and technology, thereby aiding research and accelerating innovation.

Ultimately, our ability to shape international standards, influence global agendas and access comparative data will strengthen the UK's position in an increasingly data-driven world.

As the global community comes closer together, so must the statistical community. No country or statistical system can address all the challenges alone. As we deal with the global challenges facing us over the next five years and beyond, it is imperative that we work together in partnership, sharing expertise and resources and leading the way in shaping statistics for the global good.

International strategy —

Statistics for the
Global Good



Why an international strategy?

The UK has an independent statistical system, which means our statistics are free from undue influence. Nonetheless, the statistical system must respond to changing priorities of the UK Government and wider international discussions. Moreover, when statisticians from the GSS are overseas, we recognise that we represent the UK on the global stage.

The UK statistical system operates within a global context of international classifications, obligations, standards and guidance. Our effective engagement and influence on a worldwide platform is imperative to:

- influence the development of statistical regulations, classifications and standards in line with UK priorities and to support UK international policy objectives
- collaborate with other NSOs and international statistical organisations to share and learn best practice
- enhance our reputation as a world leading statistical system
- support other countries to achieve statistical modernisation in line with relevant country plans

The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of coordination and coherence across the GSS. The new ways of collaborative working that emerged to support the demand for fast, accurate statistics and data will not go away. A culture of inclusivity and sharing, not just of data but also of knowledge across departments and functions needs to be fully embedded and this also extends to the international arena. Our international partners are keen to learn from us and we have also benefitted greatly from collaboration with them over techniques, classifications and standards.

While we will support a unified cross HMG approach to international engagement across the GSS network and wider analytical function, there are many distinct policy priorities, departmental objectives and current and proposed international activities. For that reason, this strategy is not a detailed blueprint for everything that needs to be done. The different elements of the GSS will contribute to delivery of the objectives set out in this document in different ways, with each part of the network acting to complement the others.

Our vision

A world where positive change is driven by high quality, internationally comparable statistics and data.

Our mission is twofold:

- to lead in the modernisation and harmonisation of international statistics and shape the development of internationally comparable standards to support international and UK policy objectives
- to be at the forefront of the data revolution and use our knowledge and skills to help others respond to global challenges, and the UK to deliver its global priorities

We have seen how an inclusive, aligned approach across HMG and with our international partners can accelerate the production of accurate, timely statistics and data for the public and global good. We must continue to promote this.

Strategic Objectives

We will achieve our vision and mission through three main strategic thrusts, or objectives.

Influence

We will develop and maintain sustainable and effective relationships and partnerships to shape the statistical agenda and to work together to deliver shared action on the most pressing statistical challenges in support of the UK's priorities and for the global good.

As we emerge from the transition period in 2021, we must shape and strengthen the UK's distinct role and relationship with the European Statistical System by working across the GSS to deliver a strong post-EU Exit relationship, advancing UK interests. We must quickly adjust to the new circumstances, bolster governmental and people-to-people links across Europe and help negotiate a strong future partnership with Eurostat and the European Statistical System.

Our ambition is to ensure that the UK statistical system is influencing and shaping the discussion in all areas of importance to the UK. To do this we will actively engage with other countries and organisations to learn and share best practice and work closely, in the OneHMG ethos, with our colleagues across the UK government to identify priority areas and partnerships. Building and maintaining good working relationships with our international counterparts will also encourage greater collaboration on projects that will actively benefit the UK.

We will look to radically expand our network of influence outside of existing partnership areas to explore emerging issues of interest to the UK. We will do this in partnership with other sectors where appropriate as this will guide and facilitate our engagement, leading to greater sustainability. This is particularly relevant for the UK as its relations with the European Union evolve and demands for greater devolution at all levels are debated.

The pandemic has accelerated new ways of working in partnership with the private sector and academia to enable faster access to new forms of data and to extend the reach of our analysis for the public good. This type of collaboration will help to ensure that the statistics

and data we produce will be inclusive, relevant and impactful and will also enable us to influence and support the growth of developing statistical systems. We will look to work with users of our statistics and data internationally to promote this and also to fulfil our international obligations under the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We will share our knowledge and expertise with our international partners for the global good, through championing UK standards to shape the international debate and encouraging reciprocity where this would benefit the UK.

CASE STUDY

Trade

Now that the UK has left the EU we are able to negotiate, sign and ratify new trade agreements. Negotiations with partner countries will be underpinned by data and analysis and hence raise issues around international comparability. A key example here is trade asymmetries where the trade reported by one country is not the same as the trade reported by the partner country, e.g. UK imports from the US reported by the UK are not the same as US exports to the UK reported by the US. DIT, HMRC and ONS have been working collaboratively and with specific partner countries to understand what drives these differences. DIT has also participated in international Working Party and Expert Group meetings to influence developments in emerging areas of trade statistics that are inherently difficult to measure, such as Digital Trade, Trade in Services by Modes of Supply and Trade Asymmetries. Examples of relevant outputs that DIT helped to shape and deliver include the OECD/WTO/IMF Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade (the first systematic international effort to define and measure digital trade) and the WTO's TISMOS database (the first international database on Trade in Services by Modes of Supply).

CASE STUDY

Climate

The UK engages with the UNECE on climate through the UNECE Expert Fora for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics, which have been organised annually since 2015 to serve as a platform for collaboration, sharing ideas and experience, discussing concepts and measurement issues, and identifying areas for development of practical guidance. The UK is also a recent member of the UNECE Steering Group on Climate Change-Related Statistics (SGCC), which organises the Expert Fora. The Expert Forum is open for all countries

and organizations producing or using climate change-related data. An increasing number of UK government departments and organisations have been engaging with the Expert Fora since their inception: BEIS (previously DECC) has attended since 2015 and fed into the development of a set of core climate change-related indicators, endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2020; PHE led presentations on the Review of the Hazard Terminology and Classification at the October 2019 and September 2020 Fora and were asked to join the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters; and ONS and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) also led presentations on climate change adaptation at the September 2020 Forum.

Lead

We will seek leadership positions in international statistical forums and multilateral organisations to influence agendas and promote UK priorities and values.

The UK is often at the forefront of developing statistical methodology or innovative data practices. In such situations, we will seek to lead the radical progression of that work by nominating UK delegates for leadership positions on committees and working groups where appropriate. In addition, we will endeavour to be as engaged and helpful as possible in the debate so that the UK position is fully represented and considered.

We will showcase the work of the GSS by ensuring that we energetically represent the UK at international events, we will submit papers, make presentations and organise and chair panels. Where the UK has something to contribute to the global statistical system, we will loudly and actively promote it.

Our international delegates will be as prepared and as knowledgeable as possible with a clear perspective on the issues at stake and an overall view of the policy environment in which they are working. We will encourage our people to see that leadership in the international arena is critical to achieving the UK's policy objectives and is an integral part of their role as government statisticians.

By doing this, we will promote the UK and its values, as well as help others to develop their own capabilities. This will contribute

to the comparability of international statistical standards and the development of international rules and regulations which align with UK priorities and can be sustainably and efficiently implemented in the UK.

We will be at the heart of the promotion of UK leadership on science and innovation to boost UK prosperity and deliver solutions to global challenges. We will support the UK's ambition in promoting evidence-based policy making that drives growth in the UK economy and powers our recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. In particular, we will work to champion good governance, transparency, inclusivity, privacy and equality of access to data.

CASE STUDY

Titchfield City Group on Ageing and Age-disaggregated Data

As many countries are encountering the trend of ageing populations, the need for quality disaggregated statistics beyond the age of 65 is vital for effective policy making as currently those above 65 are usually treated as one homogeneous group despite often having vastly differing needs depending on age and location. The Titchfield City Group on Ageing and Age-disaggregated Data (TCGA) was created at the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in March 2018 where the UK was asked to lead the work. The purpose of the group is to address this statistical gap and establish international standards and methods for the compilation of inclusive statistics and data on across all ages. The UK led group has set a challenging timetable to complete this vital work and has divided the work into five priority areas which will be tackled at pace and will be completed by March 2023.

CASE STUDY

Machine Learning

The UNECE High Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) is a group of committed Chief Statisticians actively steering the modernisation of statistical organisations. Their mission is to work collaboratively to identify trends, threats, and opportunities in modernising statistical organisations. In the space of two years the ONS has positioned itself at the forefront of a successful ongoing project exploring the application of Machine Learning techniques to official statistical production. The UK has also been selected to sit on the Group's 'Blue Skies Thinking Network', which is the ideas factory and steering group for the HLG-MOS.

Build

We will build and strengthen existing relationships at all levels, including across the GSS, and seek to make our own and others' statistical systems stronger and more resilient through the promotion of the UK's core values.

Strong statistical and data systems can help countries to develop and prosper. Building capability across the world, and in particular in lesser developed countries, therefore allows the GSS to support wider development objectives.

We will seek to develop and strengthen global statistical capacity and support the use of quality, disaggregated data in less developed countries in support of UK priorities. This will include the provision of technical expertise and advice to developing NSOs as well as mentoring support and leadership training.

We will build and strengthen peer to peer partnerships in priority developing countries, focusing on statistical and data modernisation. This will enable more effective policy making in those countries and help set favourable conditions for UK trade and investments. As part of those partnerships, we will support visits, secondments and exchanges to encourage the transfer of skills and experience.

We will build and strengthen partnerships in the statistical development community such as PARIS21, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the World Bank, working consistently and coherently with UK priorities and other relevant policy leads. Closer alignment and partnership with these organisations will promote stronger coordination and thus achieve greater value for money.

The Commonwealth is an important network for the UK, reflecting shared history, values and language. The 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting and the subsequent Commonwealth Heads of Statistics Conference demonstrated the Commonwealth nations as key partners in the delivery of international priorities and global action. The UK's leadership, particularly during its period as Chair-in-Office, is central to delivering a lasting increase in the effectiveness of the Commonwealth, which will in turn enhance our ability to influence and drive change bilaterally, regionally and globally.

We will build and strengthen the GSS network by keeping in regular contact outside the meetings of the GSS International Committee and utilising the International Liaison Officer network to cascade and share information. We will share our international priorities and coordinate our international engagement where doing so will maximise the impact for the UK and reduce our resource burden.

CASE STUDY

[Kenya Census](#)

The 2019 Kenya Population and Housing census was the first ever paperless census conducted in Kenya, with digital technology used during mapping and enumeration. The ONS, with funding from FCDO, supported the census exercise through its partnerships with Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) by giving strategic advice and expert technical assistance, particularly in handling the deployment of 170,000 IT tablets to the field for data gathering. The partnership also supported the development of a central dashboard to monitor and manage incoming census data and report back to senior officials within the Government of Kenya. As a result of this collaboration, the census took place digitally and on time, with headline results being produced ahead of schedule.

CASE STUDY

[Increasing the transparency of SDG data in developing countries](#)

The ONS, with funding from FCDO, provides developing countries with a free, open source, multilingual tool for collecting and reporting disaggregated SDG data, together with support for its implementation. This Open SDG platform currently has 19 users worldwide and ONS has provided extensive direct support to 3 of these countries (Rwanda, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan), together with technical guidance to other countries as required. The collection of inclusive data which covers all vulnerable groups is essential to support the 2030 Agenda's ambition of leaving no one behind. The Inclusive Data Charter was set up by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data with support from ONS and FCDO. The objective is to improve the quality, quantity, financing, and availability of inclusive and disaggregated data as well as the capacity and capability to produce and use it. The ONS and FCDO join UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank who are also signed up, plus countries including Colombia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Philippines, Zanzibar and Peru.

Alignment with UKSA Strategy

This strategy is closely aligned to the UKSA Statistics Strategy, Statistics for the Public Good, which is bold and ambitious, recognising that producing the highest quality information requires synthesis between all facets of the research and public policy environment.

Core Principles

There are core principles which will flow through the work of the statistical system over the next 5 years. We will be:

Radical in taking opportunities to innovate and collaborate, using data for the public good

Ambitious in setting out to answer all of the research questions Government has, and helping citizens, businesses and civil society make better decisions

Inclusive in our approach to workforce, talent management, and the design of data, statistics and analysis

Sustainable in delivering a unique service in a way which delivers value for money through partnership and collaboration

Statistics for the Public Good also recognises the importance of international collaboration in the production of high-quality comparable statistics and data to address global issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Successful collaboration in the modern statistical world must be international too. As the Pandemic has vividly demonstrated, users need data that can be understood in the international context, not in national isolation. We will provide global statistical leadership in those fora, and on subjects central to the UK’s interests. We will promote transparency and high standards, and support coherence and comparability across the global statistical community. And, we will continue to work with, and learn from, our partners in the

developing world to ensure statistics and data are at the heart of the UK's development policies and agenda, and provide help to those most in need."

UK Statistics Authority

Statistics for the Public Good strategy document.

This strategy also aims to be ambitious and has at its core a focus on coordination and partnership across the GSS to achieve the maximum impact for the UK. Examples of how we can map elements of the International Strategy to the Statistics strategy can be seen below.

Radical	Ambitious
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore new relationships and ways of working • Constantly innovating methods • Rapid response to requests for data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence international standards • Leadership in the international arena • Place statistics at the heart of global policy making
Inclusive	Sustainable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive Data Task Force • Inclusive Data Charter • Collaboration with academia and private sector • Grow talent and encourage diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building/training • Value for international activity • Build enduring partnerships • SDGs

How will we do this?

There are several strategic enablers that will help us deliver our vision and objectives:

Coordination

We will and coordinate our activities to maximise effectiveness and communicate regularly with each other using innovative tools and techniques.

Coordination across the GSS and wider government will be key to ensuring that the UK position is coherent and strong in the global arena. It is essential that we share and communicate our priorities and plans and work together in partnership to deliver our objectives.

Accordingly, every Head of Profession will develop an international engagement plan (HOP's plan) covering the next 12 months, setting out:

- Priority themes
- Priority countries and organisations
- Planned meetings over the next 12 months
- Ways of working that will maximise coordination.

The UKSA International Relations team will ensure that the HOPs plans are developed and kept up to date with the assistance of the GSS International Committee and the International Liaison Officer network. They will also synthesise the plans and proposed meetings and communicate suggestions for better coordination in support of shared priorities.

People

We will ensure we are represented by the best people internationally and develop our staff through bespoke training and direct experience of international engagement.

It is essential that the best possible people represent the UK in our international dealings with other NSOs and international organisations. This is not just the most senior grade or the most academically qualified person but the person most able to engage on the topic. Our delegates must be ambassadors for the GSS and the UK. They must be engaged, helpful and collaborative as well as knowledgeable. More regular virtual meetings caused by the pandemic have been an unexpected bonus for our international work and we will strive to maintain these and ensure that our people are properly supported to use these channels in the longer term.

We will develop and deliver training for those identified as suitable representatives to ensure that they are aware of their role, including the context in which they are operating, and are introduced to the right networks to allow them to coordinate effectively. A strong GSS

cadre of international delegates will enhance the UK's position in the global statistical system and help us achieve our objectives. It will also contribute to the sustainability of our international work whilst encouraging development and retention of our people. Where appropriate we will partner in the delivery of such training and support.

Innovation

| We will harness and promote innovation in data collection, analysis and governance.

Innovation has never been more important to the statistical system, particularly since the outbreak of COVID-19, as demands for more granular and inclusive data multiply to feed the rapidly evolving policy environment. We must be flexible and agile in our approach to collection and analysis of data and utilise available and emerging technologies to innovate methods and approaches.

We will work at pace and cross-fertilise ideas across government, academia and the private sector to be as ambitious and radical as possible. We will encourage a positive innovation culture, where creativity, ideas and innovation are at the top of the agenda. When we are innovative and agile, we will naturally emerge as a global leader.

Resources

| We will identify and use resources efficiently to maximise demonstrable impact.

Investing in our people and promoting innovation comes at a cost and we will ensure that we devote appropriate resources to them in order to support rapidly changing demands for data. We will ensure that we develop appropriate technical capabilities to fully support the UK's priorities and policy objectives.

We will also seek to leverage alternative funding mechanisms and recover costs where possible to enable greater investment in priority areas and to pursue strategic partnerships. We will also strive to achieve optimum impact through an international engagement program that is coherent and coordinated in order to get maximum value for the taxpayer.

Governance and Evaluation

Governance

GSS International Committee

The GSS International Committee (GSSIC) is the sub-committee of the National Statistics Executive Group (NSEG) with responsibility for coordination and strategic leadership in international affairs in official statistics. Its core responsibility is to ensure the UK Statistical System is competent in international statistics forums and has the capacity to exert its influence and make its contribution to international statistical development, in the interest of the UK Statistics Strategy.

International Liaison Officer Network

Established in June 2011 by the GSSIC, the GSS International Liaison Officer (ILO) network helps to champion and implement the GSS International strategy across the GSS. ILOs are the conduit through which international activity is communicated and coordinated across the GSS. It is important that ILOs get to know their international patch and keep in touch with their HOP/Deputy National Statistician/ONS Head of Division on international issues. ILOs also enjoy two-way communication with the UKSA International team and enable synergies between GSS departments to be identified at an early stage.

Evaluation

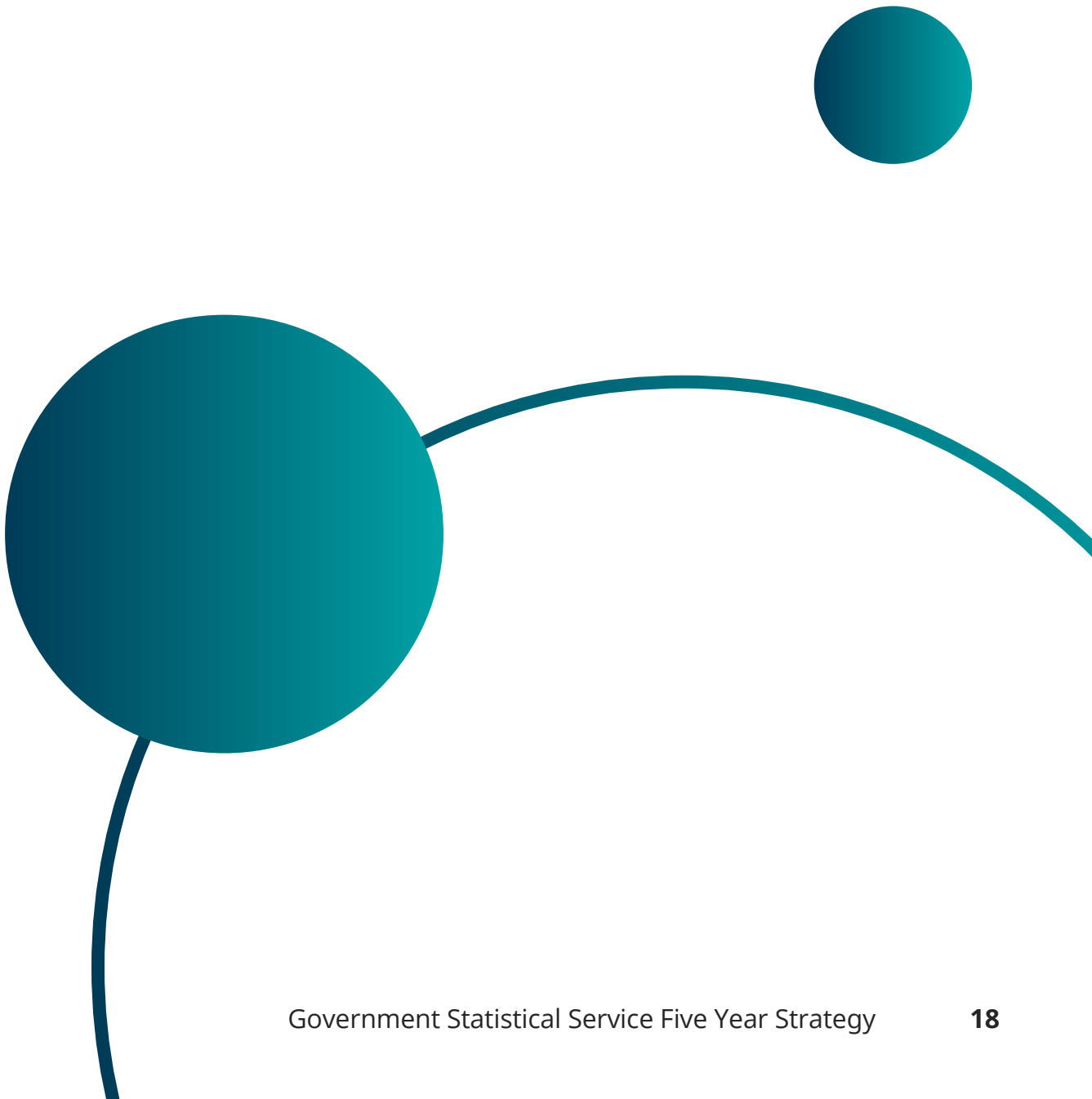
This strategy sets the strategic direction for GSS international engagement. It is a living document and will be reviewed periodically by the GSSIC to reflect the evolving international and political scene and the UK's changing priorities.

We are committed to monitoring the real-world impact of our work and assessing progress against the objectives which we have set ourselves. We aim to influence and shape ideas, individuals and decisions, using our knowledge, skills and innovative and radical approach. We will continue to develop our techniques for performance measurement, to tackle the challenges to simple quantification of complex outcomes reflected in this strategy.

Prioritisation

We will prioritise our international engagement in line with UK strategy and to support specific policy objectives. In doing so, we will ensure that we act in concert across the GSS to support each other, acknowledging that we will sometimes have different stakeholders and audiences.

Through the development of the HOPs plans, and utilising the ILO network to the full, we will identify shared priority themes and activities that will guide further collaboration and coordination. The GSSIC will regularly review the HOPs plans and ensure that we are fully leveraging our international engagement to achieve the maximum benefit.



Definitions

UKSA

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body at arm's length from government, which reports directly to the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

ONS

The Office for National Statistics is the executive office of the UK Statistics Authority. It is the UK's National Statistical Office and largest producer of official statistics.

GSS

The GSS is a UK network, spread across a whole range of public bodies, including the devolved administrations and UK government departments which produces and analyses statistics. It includes professional statisticians, data scientists, geographers, researchers, economists, analysts, operational delivery staff, IT specialists and other supporting roles. The GSS is also a part of the cross-government Analysis Function, which has built a community of analysts of various professional backgrounds working to provide the evidence base for understanding the biggest challenges of the day. Both the Analysis Function and the GSS are also led by the National Statistician.

NSO

The National Statistical Office is the body that has the responsibility for coordinating all activities at national level for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics. It should be noted that particularly in federated statistical systems other national authorities responsible for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics may also exist.



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Contact us

Have a question or need advice email us at: international@statistics.gov.uk

