

***Embedding harmonised standards into the UK statistical system***

**Purpose**

1. This paper presents an introduction to harmonisation work across the Government Statistical Service (GSS). It sets some of the challenges to increasing harmonisation together with a range of corresponding opportunities. The Government Statistical Service (GSS) is a community for all civil servants working in the collection, production and communication of official statistics.

**Recommendations**

2. NSIDAC members are invited to:
  - i. Note the work of the GSS Harmonisation Team and our strong focus on inclusivity;
  - ii. Note our challenges and opportunities presented;
  - iii. Note the work undertaken on our priority areas;
  - iv. Give feedback on the discussion points.

**Background**

3. Harmonisation is about improving the comparability and consistency of government data. This is primarily achieved by the creation of data collection standards and guidance, and subsequent work to embed these across Government.
4. Harmonisation covers high profile areas such as sex, gender identity, ethnicity, and disability. In these areas the challenge is to set standards for collecting protected characteristic data accurately, collaboratively and sensitively.
5. There is a strong tradition of ONS leading on recommending harmonisation standards for data collection across the UK. These harmonised standards are published on the Analysis Function website and are freely available to all. ONS supports the analytical community via a network of Harmonisation Champions across Government and beyond, including representatives from academia and research organisations.
6. The work of the Inclusive Data Task Force (IDTF) has increased the focus on inclusivity – with IDTF recommendations to ensure that the language used in the collection and reporting of personal characteristics is clear.

**The GSS Harmonisation Team**

7. The GSS Harmonisation Team is situated within ONS and has responsibility for creating and embedding the Government's 'harmonised standards' for all topics.
8. Harmonised standards and guidance are traditionally comprehensive. For data collection they typically cover:
  - Question stems, response options, interviewer guidance and respondent guidance
  - Questions optimised for telephone, face-to-face, and online self-completion mode

- Any variation by UK country to meet legislative and policy needs in the context of devolution
  - Guidance on where in a survey the questions ought to go and which other questions ought to be used in conjunction with this (and how they may interact)
  - Questions for administrative data collection
9. As well as data collection, harmonised standards and guidance also cover in a similar level of detail how to output data and how to use data.
10. In creating harmonised standards, we must balance the needs of a range of users:
- **Data collectors:** those who programme and run data collections, for example survey owners
  - **Data producers:** those who take collected data, clean it, and validate it, for example statistical teams
  - **Data users:** those who use collected data, for example policy makers or charities
  - **Data providers:** those whose data are captured, for example users of a service that collects administrative data or survey respondents
11. Improvements in technology and organisational ambition mean that government departments now collect more data than ever. As such, the data collection landscape is becoming more complicated and crowded. We need to ensure we have a strong narrative around the importance of using harmonised standards to collect / present data, and a strong voice to be heard. This is particularly important as the adoption of harmonised standards is not mandatory.
12. We therefore undertake a significant amount of engagement work across Government and the Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to promote and embed the adoption of harmonised standards. This is through a range of initiatives including targeting senior Government data leaders, running a network of harmonisation champions, bespoke support for high profile government data collections and training sessions across departments.

**Discussion point:** We welcome the views and ideas from NSIDAC members to help us promote and embed harmonised standards across Government and beyond.

### *Harmonisation workplan*

13. In February 2022 we published an ambitious new [GSS Harmonisation workplan](#). This had the support of the National Statistician, Devolved Administration Chief Statisticians and Cabinet Office's Government Equality Office. The workplan has been well received by users and stakeholders.
14. There are over 40 harmonisation topics, many of which are complex and emotive. **Annex A** presents current priority areas for harmonisation as set out in the workplan. **Annex A** also presents the harmonisation workplan deliverables, in planned publication date order. This emphasises our focus on continuous delivery and transparency in our approach.

15. In December 2022 we will publish a blog providing an update on how we are progressing against the commitments we set out in our workplan.

*Activity undertaken since workplan publication*

16. Notable successes since publication of the workplan in February 2022 include:

- **Delivered new standards** for Welsh language skills, coronavirus (COVID-19), and armed forces service.
- **Updated standards or guidance** for ethnicity, national identity, religion, socio-economic classification, and qualifications.
- **Undertaken research** including 30 cognitive interviews to test Socio-Economic Background questions, and workshops and surveys across government to understand data collector, processor and user needs.
- **Engaged with users** / research including Government organisations such as Sport England, Health-Northern Ireland, National Health Service (NHS), Cabinet Office, Welsh Government, , Scottish Government, Department. for Work and Pensions, Department of Health (Northern Ireland), Equality and Human Rights Commission, Department of Communities (Northern Ireland), and Higher Education Statistics Agency. We have also engaged with community groups such as the Welsh council for voluntary action, board of deputy of British jews and 'HEAR equality'.
- **Joined forces with Cabinet Office** to commission research on understanding terminology for ethnicity data collection. This research for the project will be finished by the end of 2022.
- **Focused on innovation** by designing a low resource method to gather insights on ethnicity and disability using an 'unmoderated card sort' exercise with the public. We are also utilising the knowledge of ONS interviewers to gather valuable insight into how existing questions are performing and understood by the public.
- **Provided bespoke support across government**, for example to Civil Service Human Resources on how they should collect diversity characteristics, and to the NHS on their development of a United Information Standard by reference of Protected Characteristics (UISPC).

17. We have also considered the role that harmonised standards play in relation to administrative data. We are aware of the strategic shift in using administrative data to replace survey questions. We are working closely with administrative data teams across ONS on areas such as ethnicity. Part of our work is around understanding the administrative data issues, such as metadata coverage and assumptions that may be made by data processors and statistics producers. We are currently advising NHS England on their work to update NHS data collection of protected characteristics.

**Discussion point:** We welcome the views and ideas from NSIDAC members on improving inclusivity in administrative data.

*Challenges and opportunities*

18. There are a range of barriers and inherent challenges to increasing harmonisation and driving forward inclusivity. However, there are also a range of corresponding opportunities. We see strong leadership from the centre of the statistical system as key

to realising these opportunities and continue to look for innovative ways to provide this leadership. **Annex B** explores the range of challenges and corresponding opportunities with our harmonisation work.

**Discussion point:** We welcome views on the challenges and mitigating actions set out in **Annex B**.

19. Since the IDTF report was published, we have worked to get a deeper understanding of the issues that impact the ability to drive forward inclusivity. One *specific challenge* that has become apparent in our work is around balancing the needs of a range of users' needs. We are aware that balancing the needs of a range of users can create tension as needs from diverse groups do not always align. Two particular examples of competing needs are in our ethnicity work and disability work:

Table 1: Balancing user needs in our disability and ethnicity work

Disability	Ethnicity
<p><b>IDTF Recommendation:</b></p> <p>ONS should transition its measures of disability to approaches more firmly based upon the World Health Organisation International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) biopsychosocial model conceptual frameworks</p> <p><i>(IDTF recommendation 5.1.1)</i></p>	<p><b>IDTF Recommendation:</b></p> <p>ONS should transition its measures of ethnicity to reflect the diversity of the population and is meaningful to those from specific ethnic groups.</p> <p>Language used in the collection and reporting of characteristics must be clear.</p> <p><i>(Summarised from IDTF recommendation 5.1)</i></p>
<p><b>What our research to date shows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders need data in line with the Equality Act (2010) or the Disability Discrimination Act (1995).</li> <li>• No stakeholders raised the need for data consistent with the biopsychosocial model.</li> <li>• The Welsh and Scottish Governments have endorsed the social model of disability, but it cannot be easily reconciled with UK legislation.</li> <li>• The Welsh Government is currently assessing the feasibility of collecting data in accordance with the social model.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What our research to date shows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who use, collect, and process the data need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ data to be comparable</li> <li>○ guidance on collection and reporting</li> <li>○ a standard which works for these users</li> <li>○ a strong narrative for any change to the standard</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The public need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ways to select a meaningful response option</li> <li>○ Improvements to terminology and presentation so improve inclusivity and overcome criticism of the 'Mixed' category</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>NSIDAC discussion point:</b></p> <p>Our current approach is to collect data in accordance with UK legislation and stakeholder needs, while being sensitive to the social model of disability. The IDTF recommendations, along with the Welsh and Scottish Government, endorse a radical shift to collecting data in accordance with the social / biopsychosocial models.</p> <p><b>Discussion point:</b> Is the committee happy for us to continue our approach, or</p>	<p><b>NSIDAC discussion point:</b></p> <p>We have identified a tension between comparability and respondent inclusivity with a new standard. A more inclusive question could reduce comparability with current data, however the benefits include better data quality, reduced respondent burden and potential ability to report on previously 'hidden' groups.</p> <p><b>Discussion point:</b> How does the committee feel about the balance between comparability and respondent</p>

does it feel a more inclusive approach must be prioritised?	inclusivity for the new harmonised standard for ethnicity?
---	--

**Discussion point:** Are we content to follow the spirit of the IDTF recommendations, rather than the letter?

20. Further information about our work on all our priority areas is explored in more detail in the section below.

### Priority work areas

21. When creating the GSS Harmonisation workplan we identified a set of priority topics. When considered against the drivers of Ministerial interest, cross-government strategies and IDTF recommendations these became the most important to update:

- Ethnicity, Disability, Mental health, Sex, gender, and gender identity.

22. Additionally, socio-economic background was also referenced in the IDTF recommendations. Work to develop a new harmonised standard is well underway and is due to be completed early summer 2023. Please see the separate socio-economic background briefing provided to NSIDAC members for more information, linked in this document as **Annex C**.

23. In order to give a flavour of our work on priority topics, **Annex D** looks at each topic in turn. For each topic, **Annex D** sets out:

- Driver for change
- Workplan deliverable
- 2022 work to date
- Impact of resource pressures
- Initial findings
- Next steps

**Discussion point:** We welcome your views on our priority work areas.

### **Reflections**

24. As well as specific work described above, below are wider reflections on harmonisation work:

- **Profile:** We are committed to raising the profile of harmonisation so that it is considered as default when planning data collection and considering administrative data sources. We have embedded the importance of harmonisation and coherence in the 'Devolution Awareness' training for ONS analysts (over 500 staff trained to date). We are expanding this training to government analysts in all departments.
- **Structural solutions:** Structural solutions will yield stronger results in the long run. For example, our new harmonised standard on socio-economic background will support multiple cross UK policy agendas. We are working closely with the

Integrated Data Service (IDS) to ensure that the expertise of data producers from across the UK is utilised to create an understanding of the comparability and consistency of UK wide data.

- **Inclusivity:** We will continue to look to exploit economies of scale when engaging with statistical producers and users on coherence, harmonisation and inclusivity collectively.
- **Partnership working:** Collaboration allows for expert knowledge to feed into the development of harmonised standards. For example, engaging with University College London enhanced our exploration into the different dimensions of religion. As a result, our guidance on religion has been enriched, giving users a clearer picture of why some seemingly similar questions may yield non-comparable data.

## Summary

25. Publication of the GSS Harmonisation workplan in February 2022 was a significant step in helping to develop coherent and inclusive data across the statistical system. We have built effective foundations to enable collaboration across ONS and wider government in the work that we do.
26. In terms of maximising our impact, we are aware that the data collection landscape is complicated and crowded, and that we need a strong narrative on the importance of using harmonised standards, and a strong voice to be heard. We are also aware of the strategic shift in using administrative data to replace survey questions and are focused on providing strong clear harmonised standards for all types of data collection.
27. We see strong leadership from the centre of the statistical system as key to realising these opportunities of harmonisation. We are aware that balancing the needs of a range of users can create tension as needs from diverse groups do not always align.
28. We welcome your feedback on discussion points in this paper:
- Discussion point:** We welcome the views and ideas from NSIDAC members to help us promote and embed harmonised standards across Government and beyond.
- Discussion point:** We welcome the views and ideas from NSIDAC members on improving inclusivity in administrative data.
- Discussion point:** We welcome the views on the challenges and mitigating actions set out in Annex B.
- Discussion point:** Are we content to follow the spirit of the IDTF recommendations, rather than the letter?
- Discussion point:** We welcome your views on our priority work areas.
29. We do not underestimate the challenge ahead, but we are excited about the future and the opportunity to help deliver inclusivity.

**Nick Woodhill and GSS Harmonisation Team, Statistical Coherence and Inclusion Division, ONS, 12 December 2022**

## List of Annexes

**Annex A** - Harmonisation workplan areas

**Annex B** - Harmonisation challenges and opportunities

**Annex C** – Socio-economic background briefing

**Annex D** - Further information on our priority topics



## Annex A - Harmonisation workplan areas

From engagement across government, we have established that the following areas require harmonisation activities - user feedback informed which were considered priority topics.

### Priority topics:

- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Mental health
- Sex and gender identity

### Other topics:

- Socio-economic background
- COVID-19
- Marital or partnership status; Sexual orientation; Titchfield city group on ageing
- National identity; Religion; Welsh language skills
- National Statistics socio-economic classification; Qualifications

Deliverables timetable:

### Spring 2022

- **Complete - Ethnicity** – Publish guidance setting out questions to be used while research is carried out
- **Complete - National Statistics Socio-economic Classification** – Publish an update to the standard
- **Complete - Welsh language skills** – Publish a new standard

### Summer 2022

- **In progress - Gender identity** – Publish an updated standard and guidance (*will be published before end 2022*)
- **Complete - National identity** – Publish an updated standard
- **Complete - Religion** – Publish an updated standard and guidance

### Autumn 2022 / Winter

- **In progress - Disability** – Publish initial findings of research and engagement (*will be published in Spring 2023*)
- **In progress - Ethnicity** – Publish initial findings of research and engagement (*will be published in early 2023*)
- **In progress - Sex** – Publish initial findings of research and engagement (*will be published before end 2022*)
- **In progress - Sex and gender identity** – Publish a timetable for next steps (e.g. activities such as designing, testing, and disseminating additional guidance) (*will be published before end 2022*)
- **Complete - Qualifications** – Publish updated guidance

### Winter 2022

- **Paused - Mental health** – Publish initial findings of research and engagement
- **Sexual orientation** – Publish an updated standard (*due for 2023 TBC*)

- **In progress - Socio-economic background** – Publish a new standard (*will be published Spring 2023*)

## Annex B – Harmonisation challenges and opportunities

Risks and challenges	Mitigation action and opportunity
<p>The <b>high-profile nature of this work</b> puts ONS under scrutiny and attracts public/media attention - producing the best statistics is not always the primary interest of lobby groups (on either side).</p>	<p><b>Collaboration and engagement</b></p> <p>We will work closely with ONS Communications, Media, Legal and Engagement teams to learn from previous experiences and manage risks.</p> <p>We will also work closely with ONS Census and Social Surveys Transformation, as well as Cabinet Office Equalities Hub and Devolved Administrations.</p>
<p><b>There is often not a ‘right’ answer</b> for data collection in our priority areas.</p> <p>We must acknowledge that we won’t be able to publish data collection standards that all stakeholders agree on.</p>	<p><b>Communicating complexities</b></p> <p>We are transparent with users, publishing interim updates and communicating our priorities.</p> <p>We clearly and openly explain the rationale for changes and associated decisions that we make. We will be sensitive to the fact we may not meet every user need.</p>
<p>There can be a <b>reluctance to break existing time series</b> by changing the approach in longitudinal data collections.</p> <p>The <b>cost of re-programming systems</b> that are already serving their primary purpose is often cited as a barrier.</p>	<p><b>Understanding needs and emphasising benefits</b></p> <p>We will work collaboratively to identify and communicate the benefits of change – such as improved response rates, inclusivity, and data quality.</p> <p>We will document user needs related to time series and administrative data systems, so that the potential benefits of change can be considered in relation to these challenges.</p> <p>We will continue to engage with data users, and ONS teams working on administrative data, to maintain open communication regarding plans in this area.</p> <p>We will also ensure that our work directly feeds into high-profile strategic initiatives (e.g., Integrated Data Service, OneONS Survey Strategy, Inclusive Britain, response to IDTF, Census 2023 recommendations).</p>
<p><b>Other teams across Government have the capacity to undertake their own work in these areas</b> which may conflict with our approach.</p>	<p><b>Engagement</b></p> <p>Harmonisation improves the efficiency and usefulness of statistics, with consistent definitions, collection and outputs supporting effective data comparisons, linkage and integration – vital for data linkage efforts. If teams do not harmonise, the benefits and opportunities</p>

	<p>of enhanced understanding and insight in key topic areas will be lost.</p> <p>We will continue to actively promote the benefits of harmonisation with key stakeholders, including the Cabinet Office Equalities Hub, the Devolved Administrations, and Census and Admin data teams within ONS, to understand and advise on how diverse needs can best be addressed in a harmonised way.</p>
<p><b>There is a lack of awareness</b> of the benefits of harmonisation, especially if they are not considered at the outset when designing data capture systems or statistical outputs.</p> <p><b>Harmonised standards are voluntary</b> - we do not have an explicit mandate to enforce their use.</p>	<p><b>Promoting and embedding harmonisation</b></p> <p>We operate a harmonisation champions network, with champions across government departments who promote harmonisation.</p> <p>We provide presentations and training to departments on the importance of harmonisation and how people can access advice and support.</p> <p>We will continue to engage with existing ONS initiatives and committees that embed best practice research methods, such as the OneONS Survey Strategy and the National Statistician's Data Ethics advisory Committee (NSDEC).</p>
<p>Definitions, terminology and thinking on these topics is <b>constantly evolving</b>.</p>	<p><b>Updating and reviewing</b></p> <p>Our standards and guidance are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. However, we will also develop an explicit monitoring and updating process to ensure that our products remain in line with changing societal norms and expectations.</p>

## Annex C – Socio-economic background briefing

The following briefing describes the progress update for socio-economic background provided to NSIDAC in December 2022.

This briefing provides information about the GSS Harmonisation Team's work to create a new UK harmonised standard for Socio-Economic Background (SEB). It sets out the background, the work completed so far and our upcoming work. It also looks in detail at the 'free school meals' question.

### Background

There has always been strong interest in measuring SEB, which increased after the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy lead to the [Civil Service recommendations for measuring SEB in the workforce](#) in 2018.

In 2022, the Social Mobility Commission (SMC) produced a [report and toolkit](#) with their own recommendations which simplified those put forward in 2018.

The [Inclusive Data Taskforce \(IDTF\) Recommendations](#) also highlighted data gaps in this area in particular around topics such as educational inequalities.

### Approach we've taken and work done to date

In our work we are concentrating on SEB specifically, not social mobility. The definition we're using for SEB comes from the Social Mobility Commission:

*'...the particular set of social and economic circumstances that an individual has come from. It permits objective discussion of the influence of these circumstances on individuals' educational and career trajectories; and it can be objectively measured by capturing information on parental occupation and level of education.'*

We committed to producing a SEB harmonised standard in our [Harmonisation Workplan](#) published in February 2022. To date, we have undertaken the following work:

- Desk research to understand user needs and what questions were currently asked to measure SEB
- Question redesign (desk-based) to bring into line with question design best practice<sup>1</sup> and accessibility guidance
- Created a topic group to ensure we were meeting data and user needs in this project. This group has representation from various government departments (including Cabinet Office and Social Mobility Commission) and Devolved Administrations
- Used the topic group to agree which questions to test. These were:
  1. The type of school that the respondent went to
  2. Whether or not they were eligible for free school meals
  3. Whether the main or highest income earner in their household was employed, self-employed or not working

4. The number of employees who worked for the main or highest income earner's employer
  5. Whether or not the main or highest income earner was a supervisor
  6. The main or highest income earner's occupation
  7. The highest level of education obtained by either parents of the respondent
- Undertaken 28 cognitive interviews<sup>2</sup> with members of the public from across UK.
  - A second topic group meeting to discuss the findings and our next steps

### Upcoming work

Our upcoming plans are:

- Conducting a small-scale survey to assess impact of a proposed redesign for the free school meal question, as well as look at impact of our redesign for parental occupation question (due by Christmas 2023)
- Publish a public blog setting out our work to date and timelines for new SEB harmonised standard (planned for January 2023)
- Conducting a second round of cognitive interviews (early 2023)
- Publish new harmonised standard on socio-economic background (Spring 2023)

We will continue to collaborate with colleagues in and out of the ONS (such as Social Surveys and UK Statistics Authority). We would welcome anyone else who has information, research or interest to get in touch with us.

This new standard will first be published for self-completion methods (online and paper modes) followed by interviewer-led modes (both face-to-face and telephone). We plan to explore the possibility of including the new socio-economic background harmonised standard question in surveys where all household members are interviewed (for example, Labour Market Survey).

### Free School Meals

In the new harmonised standard, we are developing, we propose to ask about Free School Meals (FSM) in the question set, but alongside other questions looking at the same reference period, therefore painting a bigger picture of their socio-economic background in school.

The current FSM question (based on the cabinet office and social mobility commission questions) does not include a reference period. We plan to include a reference period ('at any time between 11 to 16') within the FSM question to make it consistent with other questions within the wider question set. Focussing on ages 11 to 16 is also beneficial as there are less likely to be eligibility changes in this age group compared to primary aged children.

The current question asked about *eligibility* for FSM. Our proposal is to move away to instead asking if respondents *received* FSM. This is due to our research finding that

participants were more likely to recall if they received FSM, but not if they were eligible. We will conduct a small-scale survey to assess the data quality impact of this move.

We do not intend to remove the FSM question due to comparability and a lack of appropriate alternative. However, the refinements we're making to the question, as well as asking it as part of a wider set of questions, means we still think it is a helpful measure. And improving the FSM question as part of a new SEB harmonised standard provides an opportunity to promote and embed a consistent way for government to ask about FSM going forward.

## Summary

Our work to create a new SEB harmonised standard is progressing well. Our work to date has put us in a strong position and we are undertaking a complete set of cognitive interviews and testing (sampled from across the UK) to make sure it's robust.

We hope this standard will address concerns around the collection of parental occupation, free-school meals, parents' highest qualification and more in a survey space.

We welcome feedback and questions on our work from the NSIDAC members.

**Meg Pryor and Nick Woodhill, GSS Harmonisation Team, Statistical Coherence and Inclusive Division, ONS, December 2022**

### **For information: SEB Topic Group:**

- ONS Social Mobility Network
- Cabinet Office
- NISRA, Department for Communities
- Northern Ireland Census Office
- Welsh Government – Corporate Research, National Survey for Wales, Social Justice Statistics
- Scottish Government
- Food Standards Agency
- Office for Students



## Annex D – Further information on harmonisation priority topics

The following tables set out a summary of our work on each of our priority topics.

### *Ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Description
<b>Driver for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Inclusive Data Taskforce has recommended fundamentally rethinking ethnicity data collection</li> <li>• We often receive complaints from members of the public regarding the current ethnicity question not being inclusive</li> </ul>
<b>2022 work to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Published guidance</b> update regarding questions to use in Spring 2022</li> <li>• <b>Gathered views</b> from users via multiple routes (e.g., email correspondence, presentations and workshops, 1-to-1 meetings, surveys)</li> <li>• <b>Desk research</b> exploring other initiatives and research, findings of previous work (e.g., Census question development) and queries received</li> <li>• <b>Collaborating with the Cabinet Office Race Disparity Unit</b> on a joint research project exploring appropriate ethnicity terminology with the public (currently conducting focus groups and in-depth interviews)</li> </ul>
<b>Initial findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnicity is a contentious topic with tension between the needs of data users and respondents because:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ The current question is complex and problematic from a respondent point of view</li> <li>◦ Data users want consistency with data from UK censuses and comparability over time</li> <li>◦ Changes to administrative data systems are expensive, take time, and are not guaranteed – administrative ethnicity data is a key aspect being pursued as part of Census 2023 recommendations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish findings of research and engagement to date in Winter 2022-23</li> <li>• Decide on extent of question change that we are willing to pursue</li> </ul>

### *Disability*

Disability	Description
<b>Driver for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current disability questions were designed over a decade ago and have not been designed for self-completion</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They require updating to reflect changes in data requirements: considering new models of disability, outdated legislation and data gaps</li> </ul>
<b>2022 work to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaged with data collectors and producers (through a cross government survey) and engaged with data users across public, private and third sectors through workshops and interviews</li> <li>• Reviewed current questions to understand how they are performing</li> <li>• Reviewed international methods for strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>• Conducted innovative unmoderated 'card sort' exercise to explore how impairments classifications can be grouped to allow aggregated output for small sample sizes</li> <li>• Synthesised research so far into user needs statements (and shared these where appropriate with requirements gathering teams in ONS to reduce duplication of work)</li> <li>• Written article summarising research findings and recommendations</li> </ul>
<b>Initial findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current question has strengths (broad alignment to legislation, familiarity and user ease, and comparability with data sources) and limitations (not accurately capturing all disabled people, confusing and incomplete guidance)</li> <li>• Disconnect between GSS needs and inclusive practices - No users to date have asked for data in line with the definition IDTF recommended biopsychosocial model</li> <li>• Disconnect between legal requirement and devolved administration strategy - SG and WG have committed to using the Social Model of Disability which is irreconcilable with the Equality Act 2010 definition of disabled</li> </ul>
<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish research and engagement findings, early 2023</li> <li>• Design and test improvements based on research-led recommendations (including results from impairment classification grouping)</li> <li>• Design, test and publish self-completion, telephone and face-to-face mode questions</li> <li>• Seek guidance from stakeholders and leaders to determine whether a radical update in line with the social or biopsychosocial model of disability is required (dependent on work from WG)</li> </ul>

### Mental health

Area	Description
<b>Driver for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is presently no harmonised standard for mental health</li> <li>• Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) systemic reviews of mental health statistics in England and Northern Ireland recommend developing and improving a standard definition to aid consistent data collection and analysis</li> </ul>
<b>2022 work to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted a literature search of mental health statistics</li> <li>• Limited engaged with stakeholders, where mental health and disability overlap</li> </ul>
<b>Initial findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no consistent definition of mental health and getting agreement for one would be a substantial piece of work</li> <li>• There is some need to ensure mental health is considered in disability given the likely comorbidity of mental and physical conditions, however, this conflicts with the recommendation to split mental health from disability (in line with the social model of disability)</li> <li>• There is potential for users to misunderstand the current impairments classification of mental health (within the disability standard)</li> <li>• Although there is interest in a standard for mental health, the current disability standard partially meets this need</li> </ul>
<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish research and engagement findings, early 2023</li> <li>• Pause and review findings to determine 2023-2024 workstream</li> </ul>

### Sex and gender

Area	Description
<b>Driver for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high-profile nature of the recent UK censuses has led to an increased interest in how sex is measured and reported across ONS and government more generally</li> </ul>
<b>2022 work to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within ONS and within Government engagement and research (Equalities hub, Welsh gov, Scottish Gov, NISRA)</li> </ul>
<b>Initial findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept of sex collected by Census 2021 is not necessarily what other ONS data collections require</li> <li>• There is currently limited government guidance on how sex data should be collected, used, and reported, with stakeholders, including those across government, calling out for more support</li> </ul>
<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposting to existing guidance on sex data collection</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publishing a suite of existing technical guidance for data collectors</li> <li>• Undertaking new research to explore telephone and face to face data collection modes</li> <li>• Undertaking light touch stakeholder engagement: a survey for data users</li> </ul>
--	--

### *Gender identity*

Area	Description
<b>Driver for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our gender identity harmonised standard is 'under development' and we would like to update the question guidance to address feedback we have received</li> </ul>
<b>2022 work to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have conducted a review of the Gender Identity Standard which involved speaking to those who have adopted the standard</li> </ul>
<b>Initial findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The question needs more clarity on collecting free text data, proxy and interviewer modes of data collection</li> </ul>
<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse Census 2021 data to understand more about how the question performs (including the write in data).</li> <li>• Publish review of the Gender Identity Standard.</li> <li>• Test the question across interviewer modes (to complement the testing that has already been completed for self-completion modes)</li> </ul>

### *Socio-Economic Background (SEB)*

SEB	Description
<b>Driver for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Inclusive Data Taskforce highlighted data gaps in this area, in particular around topics such as educational inequalities</li> <li>• No current harmonised standard for SEB</li> </ul>
<b>2022 work to date</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Desk research</b> exploring other initiatives and research, findings of previous work (e.g., how surveys collect this data) and queries received</li> <li>• <b>Gathered views</b> from users via multiple routes (e.g., email correspondence, presentations and workshops, 1-to-1 meetings, surveys)</li> <li>• <b>Desk-based redesign</b> to bring questions in line with best practice and accessibility guidance</li> <li>• <b>Conducted cognitive interviews</b> with members of the public for the first iteration of the questions, the next round of interviews will be early 2023</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Planning a survey to improve respondent burden</b> for some of the questions</li></ul>
<b>Initial findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall, the questions have performed well during testing<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ We have made tweaks to the free school meals and parental occupation questions to reduce respondent burden</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publish findings of research and engagement to date in Winter 2022-23</li><li>• Continue with research (second round of interviews and the survey)</li></ul>