

# Consultation:

## Disaggregating annual subnational gross value added (GVA) to lower levels of geography, 1998 to 2019

Introducing the flexible geography project designed to provide statistics for user-defined areas of the UK.

Subnational Statistics Division  
Office for National Statistics

February 2022



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# Developing a method for producing annual gross value-added (GVA) at a subnational level

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) set up a project to develop the data and methods needed to provide GVA at subnational level. The project will publish experimental annual subnational GVA data that offers the flexibility for users to define and build their own geographies using the building blocks we produce. This flexibility is expected to help regional users access economic statistics in a way that enables them to develop non standard geographic areas that are of particular interest.

The ONS has released an article that presents a method for producing gross value added data at subnational level. The data are published as experimental statistics covering the period 1998 to 2019. As this is a experimental project, we would welcome your feedback using this consultation process to further its development.

The experimental statistics cover middle layer super output areas in England and Wales, intermediate zones in Scotland, District Election Areas in Northern Ireland, and other higher level geographies. Granular data are required by various users. We will make the building blocks data (lower layer super output areas in England and Wales, data zones in Scotland and super output areas in northern Ireland) accessible through the Secure Research Service.

The article accompanying the experimental statistics provides more detailed information on how the project evolved and how it might be developed further.

Our aim is to develop the experimental statistics to a stage where they can be published regularly. As indicated in the [article](#), in the future we would like to develop an online self-service platform that will enable users to explore subnational statistics, as discussed in the [Government Statistical Service's Subnational Data Strategy](#).

The devolved administrations have been involved in developing this project and their views helped to shape the direction and content of the project. There are more details about the project in the article accompanying the experimental statistics

**Issued:** 13 December 2021

**Respond by:** 7 March 2022

## Enquiries

Email: [ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk) OR [ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

## Audiences

We expect there to be 4 broad groups of people interested in this consultation:

- Devolved Administrations
- Government Departments
- Local Authorities and development agencies
- Academics, researchers and students

## Territorial extent

UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).

## After the consultation

We will publish a summary of the comments made approximately 12 weeks after the consultation closes.

## How to respond

We encourage you to respond online wherever possible as this is our preferred method of receiving responses.

However, responses in writing or via email submitted to the email address below will also be accepted. Should you wish to submit your main response via the consultation platform and any supporting information via hard copy or email, please be clear that this is part of the same consultation response.

**Respond online at:** <https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/external-affairs/developinggva>

**Email:** [subnational@ons.gov.uk](mailto:subnational@ons.gov.uk) OR [ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk)

### Write to:

Blessing Chiripanhura | Craig Thomas  
Subnational Statistics and Analysis Division  
Office for National Statistics  
Government Buildings  
Cardiff Road  
Newport  
South Wales  
NP10 8XG.

When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation.

Your response will be most useful if it is framed in direct response to the questions posed, though further comments and evidence are also welcome.

## Languages and accessibility

All material relating to this consultation can be provided in braille, large print or audio formats on request. British Sign Language interpreters can also be requested for any supporting events.

A Welsh translation of the consultation document and questionnaire is available upon request. Please contact [ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk) for further information.

**Mae cyfieithiad Cymraeg o'r ddogfen ymgynghori a'r holiadur ar gael ar gais. Cysylltwch â [ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk) i gael mwy o wybodaeth.**

## Confidentiality and data protection

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) needs your name and email address to receive your consultation response. We may contact you about your response to the consultation.

We aim to be as open as possible in our decision-making process. As part of this, we plan to publish an anonymised summary of the responses we receive. We will not publish the personal name of any respondent. Names of individuals, organisations and groups will not be linked to any comments that you give.

The names of all organisations and groups responding to the consultation will be published in a list of respondents.

Please be aware that, as a public authority, we are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and can never completely guarantee that names and responses will not be published. We will not publish personal contact details, such as email addresses. To find out more, read our Privacy Policy: Privacy - Office for National Statistics - Citizen Space ([ons.gov.uk](https://ons.gov.uk))

## Quality assurance

This consultation has been carried out in accordance with the government's consultation principles, available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>.

If you have any complaints about the way this consultation has been conducted, please email: [ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk](mailto:ons.consultations@ons.gov.uk).

# What the experimental statistics cover

The background of the project and methods used are detailed in the [article accompanying the experimental statistics](#). The article outlines the aims of the project, progress made to date, and a look ahead at what might be achieved in the future.

The experimental statistics of annual subnational GVA cover the following geographies:

- Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which have not been covered before and form the building blocks for higher level geographies \*
- Parliamentary constituencies
- Travel-To-Work Areas (TTWAs)
- Health boards
- A selection of bespoke areas of interest to users

Our [Census Geography article](#) defines key building blocks of lower layer super output areas, middle layer super output areas (MSOAs) and TTWA. LSOAs in England and Wales are synonymous with [data zones in Scotland](#) and [super output areas in Northern Ireland](#).

*\* We may publish the lower-level geography data in future as we continue to work on understanding how best to manage the disclosure risk. In the mean time, the dataset will be made available in the ONS Secure Research Service for access to accredited researchers.*

## Potential uses of the experimental statistics

We expect there to be three broad groups of people using the experimental annual subnational GVA statistics as follows:

1. The media and general public can present and see the headline measures as an indicator of change in the nation's GVA and differences by region.
2. Policymakers in government and local government can clearly identify which areas of the country are performing better than others, and measure GVA in addition to other available data sources to align with policies being proposed. Local government decision-makers can compare GVA in their area to other places with similar characteristics, and learn about differences between them.
3. Analysts outside government, such as academics and those in think tanks and charities, can improve the body of evidence on different aspects of the economy and the stories this can tell us.

We demonstrate the flexibility argued for in this article by applying the flexible geography concept to four user-defined test cases as described and presented in the [article accompanying the experimental statistics](#).

In producing the experimental statistics, we have aligned with the [UKSA's current strategy](#) which promotes being ambitious and radical in our approaches to illustrate the flexibility that we anticipate our users will require in the future.

The [article accompanying the experimental statistics](#) has a 'future developments' section that outlines our vision of this project's future. We want that vision to align with what our users want and are therefore launching the consultation process to get feedback and input. Briefly, the future developments include improving the availability and quality of subnational statistics, exploring other variables and administrative data sources to produce more timely and granular indicators, and developing an interactive online data portal to explore subnational statistics.

We have plans to continuously develop the experimental statistics to a point where the methods are good enough and the statistics can be published regularly to meet user needs. We would like to understand which aspects of these plans you support. We want to know which aspects will be most important to you, and if there are any steps that you feel are not needed or are missing from the plans.

## The consultation purpose and procedures

The purpose of this consultation is to get feedback on the development of the experimental annual subnational GVA statistics from our users and stakeholders. We appreciate all feedback and equally value all perspectives.

The questions that we want to ask you and the types of feedback that would be particularly useful are listed below. We will be grateful if you can respond as closely to each question as possible. We also provide space for you to give us any other additional information that may not have been covered by the questions.

## Consultation questions

1. Will you use the experimental statistics?

Yes	No
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2. Can you explain why or why not?

3. Do you intend to access the lower layer super output areas dataset in the Secure Research Service?

Yes	No
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4. How will you use the experimental statistics?

5. How useful did you find the accompanying article explaining the methods and processes followed in producing the statistics?

6. Do you have any suggestions about what we can do to improve the methods and procedures for producing the statistics?

7. Was anything missing from this article that would be beneficial to see in the future?

8. What is your overall view of the experimental statistics?

very poor	poor	good	Very good
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9. In the future we may undertake four-way industry breakdowns illustrated in the table below at Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) level.

**Table of industry breakdown**

Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4	
A	Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	G	Distribution	J	Information and communication	MN	Business services activities
BCDE	Production	H	Transport	K	Financial and insurance activities	OPQ	Public administration; education; health
C	Manufacturing	I	Accommodation and food	L	Real estate activities	RST	Other services and household activities



F	Construction
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10. Would you find these breakdowns useful?

Yes	No
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11. Please explain how and why industry breakdowns are valuable or not valuable to your work.

12. Are there any other industry breakdowns that you require for your work? (explain in detail)

13. Rank the following five future plans outlined in [the article](#) linked to this consultation in terms of importance with 1= least important and 6= most important.

a) Disaggregating gross domestic household income to lower levels of geography

1	2	3	4	5	6
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b) Disaggregating household final consumption expenditure to lower levels of geography

1	2	3	4	5	6
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c) Producing constant price estimates of gross value-added (real GVA).

1	2	3	4	5	6
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d) Producing annual GVA estimates at lower-levels of geography every year.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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e) Developing a new “Explore Subnational Statistics” service that provides a one-stop shop for subnational data and statistics

1	2	3	4	5	6
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14. Tell us any other subnational data requirements that you want us to know or pursue.