

Response to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) consultation on the approach to measuring and reporting SDGs in the UK

29 June to 29 September 2017

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provide details.

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Executive summary

We ran a public consultation between 29 June and 29 September 2017 to look at ONS's approach to reporting and how we prioritise areas for developing data for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) global indicators. Responses were invited via an online survey and ONS would like to thank all those who responded. There were 111 respondents from a wide variety of sectors.

The consultation was in three parts:

1. How should the ONS report progress?

This showed the proposed reporting mechanisms relating to data publication, data visualisations and in-depth commentaries and analyses and asked some questions on these proposals.

- Respondents were supportive of the proposed mechanisms for how we should report progress. They went on to expand on the detail such as the design of the website and its functionality, which should include the ability to disaggregate, and whether the data are comparable with other countries, collaboration and wider reporting. All of which aligns with our current programme of reporting and development work. An interactive [reporting platform](#) with downloadable data was launched on 9 November 2017 along with our first [report](#) which looks at progress made towards measuring the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators in the UK. We have also started to release a series of publications, these include a piece on [neonatal and under five mortality](#) which looked at the UK in comparison with other European countries and a SlidesShare on [renewable energy](#). We are also publicising the SDGs and our work through social media. All of our publications are available on our reporting platform under a [Publications](#) tab.

2. The criteria for data selection

Criteria on the ability to disaggregate, certainty of data source availability, the extent to which the data source matches the indicator definition and financial cost was presented and questions were asked around other criteria and initiatives.

Respondents suggested additional criteria that they thought should be considered for determining suitability of a data source to measure a global indicator, including: looking at international comparability; the potential to look at hard-to-reach groups; possibility of a joined up approach to other frameworks; getting feedback from further consulting and collaboration.

There were also many data initiatives that respondents thought could help with assessing progress towards the global indicators. Some of these included: the proposal of lots of new data sources including survey data; the exploration of data from civil society organisations;

suggestions of new questions for surveys; collaboration; new measures; harmonisation of questions; assessment tools and supporting frameworks.

We have already begun working on some of these suggested initiatives, such as looking at the potential of using data from non-government organisations and collaborating with business.

3. The approach to prioritising data development

This looked for views on how data developments should be prioritised.

Respondents stated an interest in “all” goals and specified a high preference for geographical disaggregation over other fields. We are exploring the potential of providing a geospatial element to report with maps. This could meet the needs of respondents who want to see reporting at a granular level with geographical breakdowns at every level possible.

Respondents felt that evidence of support from user engagement and information-gathering activities were the most important principles to use to develop data to plug gaps. Additional criteria that respondents suggested for prioritising data development centred around: what was relevant and a priority for the UK; where there was potential for collaboration; internationally comparable indicators, and to look at where there are links across targets. Respondents also wanted us to prioritise development of data sources that cover hard-to-reach groups.

We will take on board all the feedback and evaluate all the suggestions that have been provided around criteria for data selection and the approach to prioritising data development.

Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been designed to “leave no one behind” and bring an end to extreme poverty, inequality and tackle climate change. There are 17 goals that have been agreed by all 193 member states of the UN. The goals are underpinned by 169 targets and 244 global indicators and each country is required to report on these.

We are responsible for reporting to the UN on the position and progress made by the UK. To do this, we will develop, collect, analyse and disseminate data in accordance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) and data will be made available to all. We held a consultation from 29 June to 28 September 2017 setting out options on how we may do this and asked for feedback on the three areas listed below. Anyone could take part in this consultation and responses were invited via an online survey.

The three areas consulted on were:

1. How should the ONS report progress?
2. The criteria for data selection
3. The approach to prioritising data development

1. How should the ONS report progress?

The following reporting mechanisms were consulted on:

Data publication: all data held for global indicators will be updated as soon as it is available and will be open for all to access and download via a web-based tool.

Data visualisations: a summary of stock-take information will be available, for example, the number of indicators for which data are available and those where we are actively developing new datasets. Visuals of overall progress and change in global indicators will be provided as an annual snapshot, to show how the UK is doing.

In-depth commentaries and analyses: likely to include an annual summary of progress, which will signpost other relevant information, for example, the approaches adopted by devolved administrations, and will be published at the same time each year to facilitate easier comparisons of change; and more frequent in-depth analytical commentaries.

2. Criteria for data selection

Ability to disaggregate (as appropriate to the indicator) by the groups identified by the UN, income; gender; age; race; ethnicity; migratory status; disability; geographic location; and other characteristics specific to the indicator (for example, socio-economic groups).

Certainty of data source availability, for example, the likelihood of data being available for at least the next three years.

Extent to which the data source matches the indicator definition, for example, some data may be a complete match, others may be aggregated by different age groups to those proposed in the indicator.

Financial cost

3. Approach to prioritising data development

Official data sources for monitoring UK progress against the global indicators are currently being considered and once complete it is likely to confirm a large number of indicators where there may not be sources. We have sought views on how to prioritise data development activities.

The outcome of this consultation is described in the following section.

Summary of responses

There were 111 completed responses to the consultation on the approach to measuring and reporting on SDGs in the UK. Responses were completed by a variety of people working or involved in various sectors. These included academia and research, national government departments and organisations, local or regional government or public organisations, international organisations, business, cross-sectors and a large proportion from voluntary and charitable organisations. A list of those who responded can be found in Annex A.

How should ONS report progress?

- Respondents were supportive of the proposed reporting mechanisms and over three quarters (78%) expanded with detail, such as the website being interactive and having downloadable data with the ability to disaggregate. This aligns with what we have developed
- There was strong support for a variety of dissemination methods, including reports, summaries, visuals and social media to reach the broadest possible audience. Outputs should be available in a central location. This aligns with our current programme of reporting
- The majority of respondents (62%) said that they would prefer reporting to focus solely on the SDG indicators rather than be combined with wider measures of UK progress such as measures of national well-being

Criteria for data selection

- Half of respondents (51%) said that they felt other criteria should be considered for data selection. Some suggestions included considering international comparability; the potential to look at hard-to-reach groups; possibility of a joined-up approach to other frameworks; getting feedback from further consulting and collaboration
- Respondents recommended initiatives to assist with assessing the progress of some of these, including the proposal of lots of new data sources and the exploration of data from civil society organisations; collaboration; suggestions of new questions for surveys; new measures, harmonisation of questions; projects, assessment tools and supporting frameworks

We had already begun working on some of these suggested initiatives, such as looking at the potential of using data from non government organisations and collaborating with business.

Approach to prioritising for data development

- Half of respondents said that they were interested in “All” of the goals and would not prioritise one goal over another for data development

- Respondents ranked geographical location (39%) as the most important area of disaggregation for the global indicators
- Half of respondents said that they had specific data requirements and geographic breakdowns at national, country, regional, local authority and cities, urban and rural (where possible) featured highly
- Evidence of support from user engagement and information-gathering activities as well as the feasibility of acquiring or developing data were considered the most important principle that would assist in development for filling gaps of those listed
- Over half (55%) of the respondents didn't want other criteria to be considered in prioritising the approach to developing data. Just over a third (35%) suggested additional criteria that centred around: what was relevant for the UK, where there was potential for collaboration; internationally comparable indicators, and to look at where there are links across targets. Respondents also wanted us to prioritise development of data sources that cover hard to reach groups

Section 1 How should the ONS report progress?

Question 1

We asked... Will the proposed reporting mechanisms provide you with enough information about the global indicators to understand the progress the UK is making towards the SDGs?

You said...

Half of the respondents said that they were supportive of the proposed reporting mechanisms set out around data publication, data visualisations and in-depth commentaries and analyses.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who thought the proposed reporting mechanisms was adequate



Question 2

We asked... Are there specific ways in which you would like us to report or provide access to data for global indicators? If yes, please state.

You said...

While respondents stated that they were supportive of the proposed mechanisms in question 1, over three quarters of them (78%) expanded on the mechanisms with more detailed suggestions in question 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who wanted ONS to report in specific ways or provide access to data for global indicators



Some suggestions which expanded on the proposed mechanisms set out in the consultation included:

- Having a website that was interactive that provides disaggregation data (with maps and charts) that filters by goal, target, indicator and themes

Disaggregation should have granularity with characteristics not just at national but regional and local levels, cities and sector and spatial mapping (where possible).

- Providing progress updates against targets, international comparability and inclusion of overseas territories
- Having a variety of dissemination tools in order to reach a wide range of people - this should include timely; simple reports (by goal, target and indicator); summaries, visualisations (interactive), maps, short videos, in-depth narratives, social media and blogs. Material should be in one central online location
- Collaboration with stakeholders and other organisations
- Wider reporting on interaction and inter-linkages between the goals, using information on national and thematic indicators; possibly building on existing indicators (such as measuring national wellbeing) and comparison with international indicators (such as the European Sustainable Development Indicators)

Many of the suggestions align with our current programme of reporting and development work.

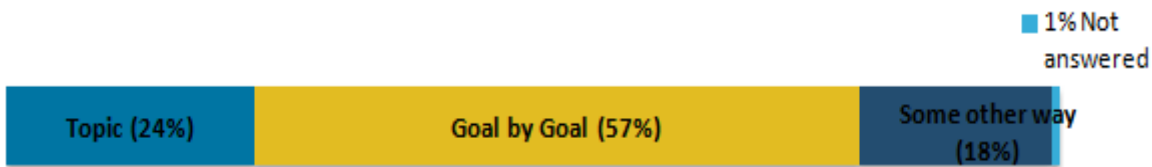
Question 3

We asked... Which approach is most meaningful to you in terms of how the ONS reports on progress?

You said...

Over half of respondents (57%) favoured reporting on a goal-by-goal basis, almost a quarter (24%), preferred a topic-by-topic approach and 18% wanted reporting done in some other way.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents and the most meaningful approach for ONS to report on progress



Question 3a

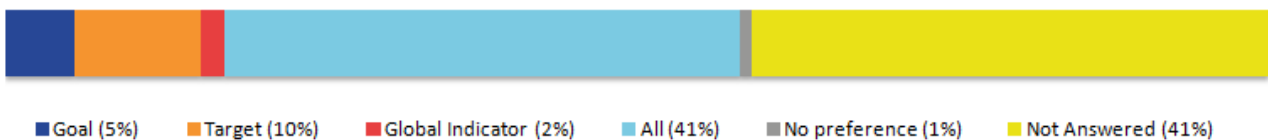
We asked...

If a goal by goal approach was the most meaningful, at which level would you find it most useful for ONS to report on UK progress?

You said...

Around 4 in 10 (41%) of respondents thought that reporting by “All” of the options proposed would be the most meaningful approach. This was followed by 1 in 10 (10%) who favoured reporting by target within each goal.

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents and what was most meaningful to report on if a goal-by-goal approach was used



Question 3b

We asked...

If you would prefer a topic reporting approach which topics would be most meaningful to you and why?

You said...

Respondents suggested numerous topics that were meaningful to them, including those related to existing frameworks and others that specifically related to the environment, inequality, poverty, gender, education, health, housing, the economy and justice.

Question 3c

We asked...

If a different approach is most meaningful to you, please state.

You said...

Some respondents said that different approaches would be more meaningful, some of these included:

- A crosscutting approach across topics that cut across the goals (for example, food insecurity cuts across a few of the goals and covers nutrition, environmental and climate impact of food production and access to land etc)
- UN style reports reporting on position and target by region
- Reporting by geography
- Cities perspective
- Reporting organised by the targets that government departments are responsible for
- A narrative to explain the strategy of the UK's push on the SDGs
- Looking at other frameworks.

Question 4

We asked...

While the “Measuring National Well-being” and “Sustainable Development Goals” agendas are motivated by different needs, both are concerned with measuring UK progress to help ensure a sustainable future. With this in mind, which would you prefer to see?

You said...

The majority of respondents (62%) would prefer to see a separate report that focused solely on SDGs, rather than a combined report (32%) that also looked at measuring national wellbeing. The remaining 6% of respondents had no preference.

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents with a preference for a combined report or separate Measuring National Well-being and “Sustainable Development Goals”



Section 2 Criteria for data selection

Question 5

ONS recognises that there may be a need to develop new data sources to monitor progress and will consider criteria such as the ability to disaggregate, certainty of data sources availability and the extent to which data sources match indicator definition and financial cost

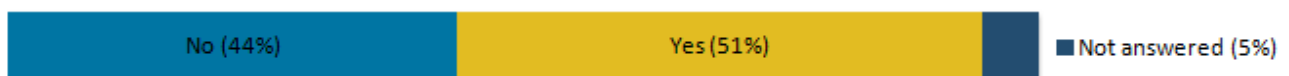
We asked...

Do you feel there are any other criteria that should be considered?

You said...

Half of respondents (51%) said that they felt other criteria should be considered, this compared to 44% who said that other criteria need not be considered.

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who thought that other criteria should be considered



Examples of some of the “other” criteria stated that should be considered when developing data sources included looking at ensuring international comparability; new measures; feedback from collaboration with different sectors (including private sector and civil societies); information from qualitative sources; current government indicators; joining up with other frameworks; indicators by government department responsible; other levels of dissagregation and the potential to look at hard to reach groups and data gaps.

Question 6

We asked...

If you are aware of any existing or planned data or initiatives that would assist us in assessing progress towards the global indicators, please provide details

You said...

There were many existing or planned data or initiatives that respondents thought would assist in assessing progress towards global indicators across many of the goals and some not goal specific.

Some of these initiatives centred around: new data sources; the explorations of data from civil society organisations; collaboration; suggestions of new questions for surveys; new measures; harmonisation of questions; projects, assessment tools and supporting frameworks.

Section 3 Approach to prioritising data development

Question 7

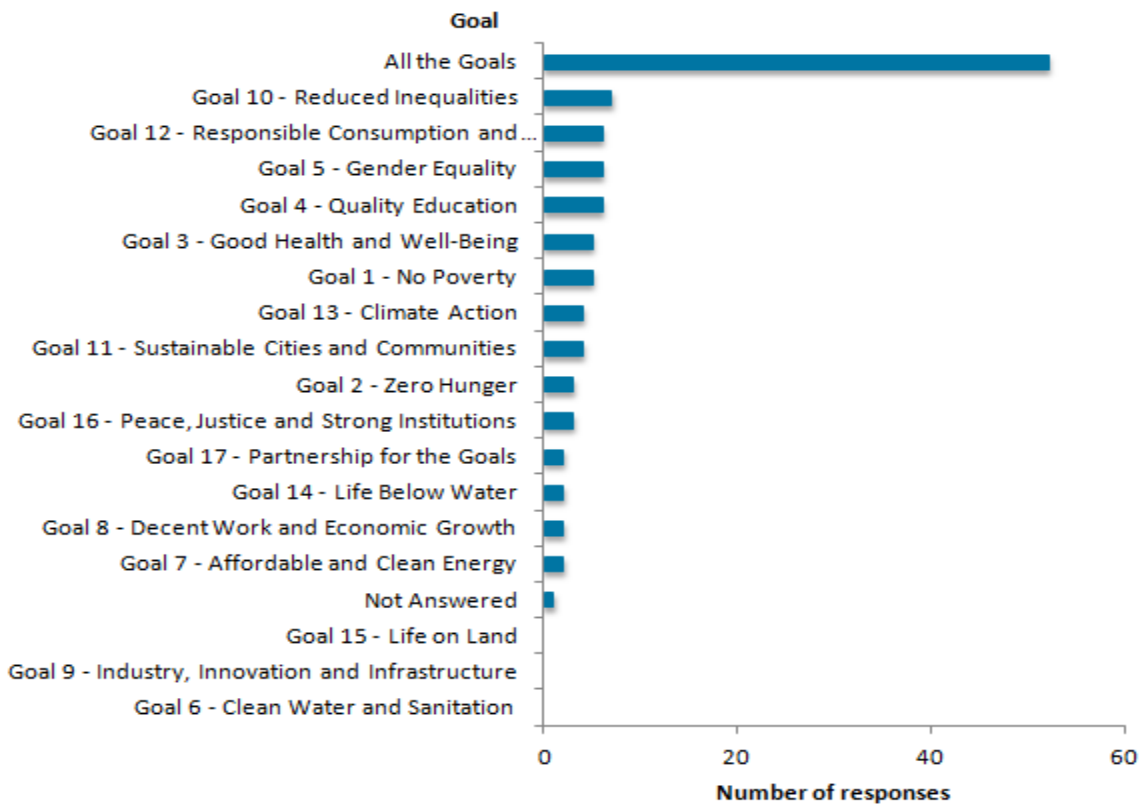
We asked...

Which goals are you most interested in?

You said...

Half of the respondents were interested in “All” of the goals and thought that should be given the same priority in data development. The remaining half was spread across the goals with the exception of Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure Innovation) and Goal 15 (Life on Land), where there wasn’t any preference for these Goals from the respondents in this consultation.

Figure 7: Goals respondents were interested in



Question 8

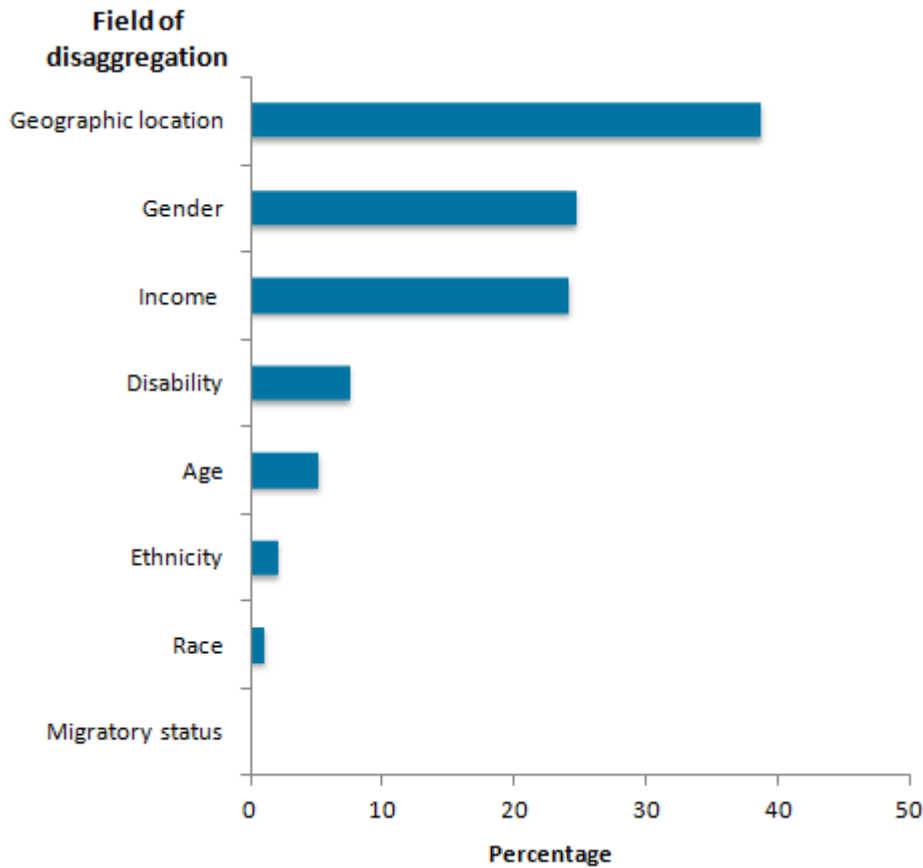
We asked...

The United Nations recommends that where relevant in the national context, data for the global indicators should be disaggregated by the fields listed. Please rank the following fields in order of interest to you where 1 is of most interest and 8 of least interest:

You said...

Geographic location was the highest (39%) when looking at just the respondents who ranked 1 as the most important area for disaggregation for the selected fields, followed by gender (25%) and income (24%). These fields also feature as the highest with the addition of age when considering those who ranked fields 1 to 3.

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents with level of disaggregation fields ranked in order of interest



Question 9

We asked...

Do you have any specific needs relating to the fields listed in question 8, for example, specific geographies, age groups, or ethnic group breakdowns?

You said...

Half of respondents (50%) said that they had specific needs relating to the fields listed, though 40% did not.

Figure 9: Percentage of people with specific needs relating to the disaggregated fields



Some of the specific needs that respondents wanted were:

- Geographical breakdowns – this stood out by far as the most important need for respondents, with breakdowns wanted at different levels including national, country, regional, sub regional, local authority, cities, urban and rural (where possible).
- All the protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) – specifically highlighted for inclusion not included in question 8 were sexual identity and religion.
- Topic specific, wellbeing and disaggregation could include household types (including marital status), occupational status, income and economic activity.

Question 10

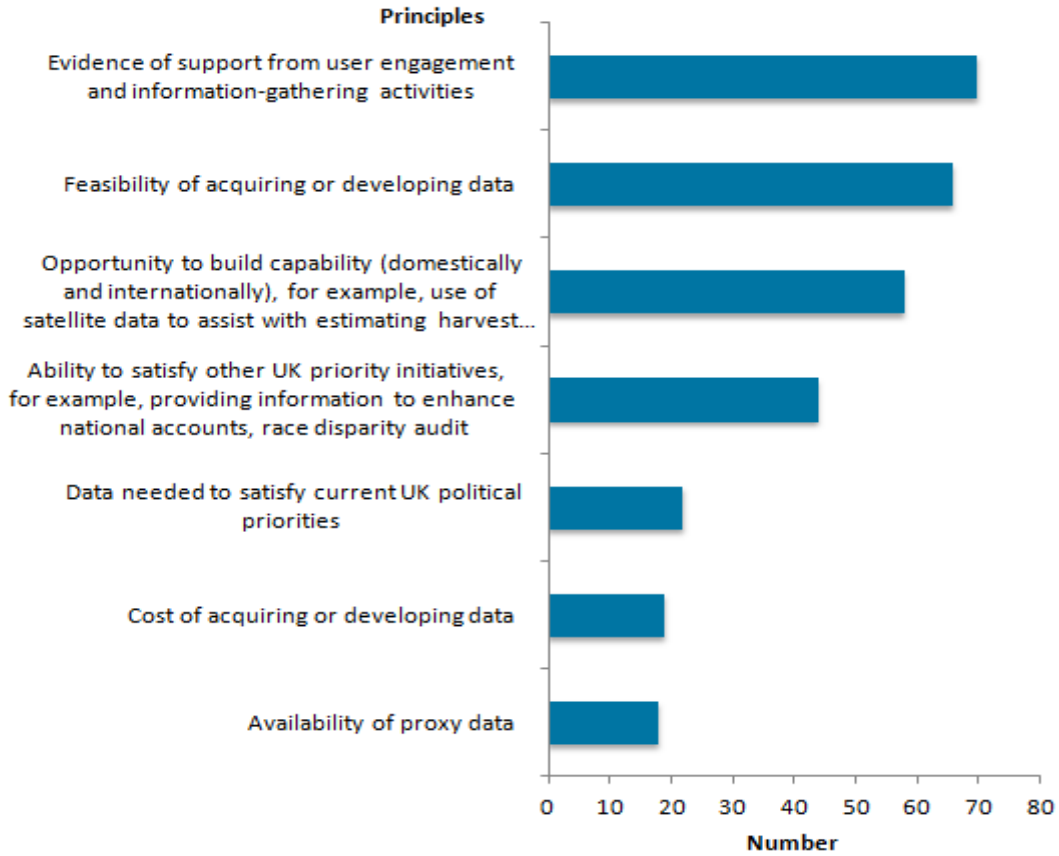
We asked...

After data availability we propose the following principles for use in prioritising our approach to developing data to plug gaps. For you, which are the most important principles of those listed? (choose up to three).

You said...

Respondents said that “Evidence of support from user engagement and information gathering activities” was the most important principle to consider when looking at data gaps. This was followed by “Feasibility of acquiring or developing data”. Respondents said that “Cost of acquiring or developing data” and “Availability of proxy data” should be considered the least important in prioritising.

Figure 10: Most important principles for respondents



Question 11

We asked...

Are there any other criteria you would like us to consider in prioritising our approach to developing data?

You said...

Over half (55%) of the respondents didn't want any other criteria to be considered in prioritising the approach to developing data. However, just over a third (35%) said they would like other criteria to be considered.

Figure 11: Percentage of people who wanted other criteria considered



Some of the criteria that respondents wanted to be considered centred around:

- **Data collection and data sources** - to include qualitative data; developing new questions for surveys and harmonisation
- **Relevance and priority for the UK** - to look at what matters for the UK and what areas require the most work
- **Collaboration** - to further engage with stakeholders (including organisations and the private sector and international)
- **International comparability** - to look at cross-country comparability of indicators
- **Cross cutting analysis** - to look at potential of topic linkages
- **Targeting data gaps** - looking at hard to reach groups (such as children who live outside households and families)
- **Disaggregation** – to look at providing low level geographies and to use ordinance survey mapping

Conclusion and next steps

Our aim is to make the information on the global indicators available in the most accessible way and we are keen to make use of the diverse range of data available, as well as different reporting styles. The consultation responses have shown that respondents are supportive of the mechanisms for reporting progress that we proposed. Many of the suggestions for additional reporting given are currently underway or are already scheduled in our programme of work.

There were a number of suggestions on the criteria for data selection which included international comparability; looking at hard to reach groups; other frameworks and further collaboration. There were also many data initiatives that were suggested around new data sources; suggestions for new survey questions; new measures; assessment tools and supporting frameworks.

Respondents told us what their specific needs were and reporting at a granular level with geographical breakdowns stood out as the most important. ONS is currently looking at the possibilities of providing a geo-spatial element to report with maps to help show data at a granular level. Relevance and priority to the UK, potential for collaboration; international comparability; links across the targets were suggested as areas to use for prioritising data development.

The progress we have made so far includes:

- Developing a [reporting platform](#) to disseminate (downloadable) data with charts. This was launched on the 9th November and is still under development
- The publication of our first [report](#) around SDGs on the 9th November and we have started to release a series of publications. These include a short piece on [neonatal and under five mortality](#) which looked at the UK in comparison with other European countries and a SlidesShare on [renewable energy](#)
- We have also begun to highlight the importance of SDGs by aligning with significant outputs on relevant topics and communicating through social media. All of our publications are available on our reporting platform under a [Publications](#) tab.
- Working closely with various stakeholders to discuss the possibility of collaborating on outputs.

We would like to thank everybody who took the time to respond to our consultation. We will take on board the suggestions and feedback provided as we continue to develop data sources, data gaps and prioritise our approach to reporting.

Annex A: List of responses

There were 111 responses to the questionnaire but some people responded on behalf of more than one organisation. There were 28 respondents who did not give permission for their details to be published.

| Organisation | Sector | Respondent Name |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2030hub | National government department or organisation | David Connor |
| AAT | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| Age International | Voluntary and charity | Marcus Green |
| Age UK | Voluntary and charity | Marcus Green |
| Aviva plc | International organisation | -- |
| Blu Dot Advisory | International organisation | Darshita Gillies |
| Brighton & Hove Food Partnership | Voluntary and charity | Vic Borrill |
| Bristol Green Capital Partnership CIC | Cross-sector city sustainability network | -- |
| British Retail Consortium | Business | Leah Riley Brown |
| Business and Professional Women - BPW UK | Voluntary and charity | Rosemary Horsley |
| CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project) | Voluntary and charity | Jennie Gleed |
| Church Action on Poverty | Voluntary and charity | Courtney Scott |
| Co-op | Business | Ruth Woodal (added) |
| Common Futures Network | All Sectors | Corrine Swain/Ian Wray |
| Commonwealth Medical Trust (Commat) | International organisation | -- |
| Data Orchard | Voluntary and charity | Sian Basker |
| Data2X/UN Foundation | International organisation | Gayatri Koolwal |
| Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges | Academia or research | Iain Patton |
| Equality and Human Rights Commission | Local or regional government or public organisation | Andrew Harding |
| Feeding Britain | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| FORWARD | Voluntary and charity | Jenny Vaughan |
| Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development | Voluntary and charity | Andrea Westall |
| FundaMentalSDG / King's College London | Academia or research | Nicole Votruba |
| Girlguiding | Voluntary and charity | Alex Webber |
| Global Sustainability Institute, Anglia Ruskin University | Academia or research | Aled Jones and Lauren Stabler |
| Greater Manchester Combined Authority | Local or regional government or public organisation | -- |
| Happy City CIC | Voluntary and charity | -- |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| HelpAge International | Voluntary and charity | Marcus Green |
| IKWRO (Iranian and Kirdish Women's rights organisation) | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| Institute for Sustainability, Newcastle University | Academia or research | Graham Long |
| Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) | Voluntary and charity | Richard Jones |
| International Service | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| Keep Scotland Beautiful | Voluntary and charity | Catherine Gee |
| Learning for Sustainability Scotland | Academia or research | Rehema White |
| Lumos | Voluntary and charity | Bríd O'Brien |
| Minority Rights Group | Voluntary and charity | Claire Thomas |
| National Alliance of Women's Organisations | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| Nordic Model Now! | Voluntary and charity | Anna Fisher |
| Nourish Scotland | Voluntary and charity | Courtney Scott |
| Ordnance Survey | National government department or organisation | James Norris |
| Oxfam GB | Voluntary and charity | Courtney Scott |
| Philippine Statistics Authority | National government department or organisation | -- |
| Restless Development's Accountability Advocates | Voluntary and charity | Keya Khandaker |
| Royal Geographical Society | Voluntary and charity | Damian Testa |
| Sedex | Academia or research | Jonathan Ivelaw-Chapman |
| Social Value UK | Membership organisation for people across all sectors who are interested in accountability, sustainability reducing inequality | Ben Carpenter |
| Socialist Educational Association Scotland | Academia or research | David Watt |
| Sustain | Voluntary and charity | Courtney Scott |
| The Association for Geographic Information | Voluntary and charity | Damian Testa |
| The Brightspace Foundation | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| The Food Foundation | Voluntary and charity | Courtney Scott |
| The Proactivists | Academia or research | Stephen King |
| The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| The Royal Statistical Society | National government department or organisation | -- |
| The Sustainable Development Unit for Health and Social Care | National government department or organisation | Jerome Baddley |
| The Trussell Trust | Voluntary and charity | Courtney Scott |
| Trades Union Congress | Working people | Gemma Freedman |
| Transparency International UK | Voluntary and Charity | Rose Zussman |

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| UK National Commission for UNESCO | National government department or organisation | Professor Kiran Fernandes |
| UKHealthForum | Voluntary and charity | -- |
| University of Birmingham Centre for the Study of Global Ethics | Academia or research | Wouter Peeters |
| WRAP (waste and resources action programme) | Voluntary and charity | Andrew Parry |
| WWF-UK | Voluntary and charity | Dominic White |

Individual Responses

Charles Nouhan
 Corinne Lennox
 David Eyles
 David Griggs
 David Short
 Dr Louise Livesey
 elaine
 Graham Phillips
 H. B. Adediran Olaiya, M.A.
 Ian Hamilton
 Jhon Munoz
 John Scott
 Joyce Hallam
 K McCauley
 Marianne Haslegrave
 Michael Harwood
 Mr R W Ebley
 Neil Smith
 Paul Allin
 Paul Morran
 Roger Horne
 Sally Spear
 Sarah
 Sarah Johns
 Susan Hill

Getting in Touch

If you have any queries or comments about the consultation process, please email Simeon Bowen at ons.communications@ons.gsi.gov.uk or call 0845 601 3034.

You can also write to us at the following address:

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Room 1.101

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Government Buildings,

Cardiff Road,

Newport,

South Wales,

NP10 8XG.

For further information on ONS consultations, please visit <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/consultationsandsurveys>

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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.