

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is aiming to move all business surveys from paper to an online mode of data collection by 2019. The main drivers behind the Electronic Data Collection (EDC) programme are to meet the requirements of the UK Government's Digital by Default initiative and to reduce costs associated with traditional surveys. It will potentially improve the quality, timeliness and accuracy of data and could increase response rates from certain groups.

Historically surveys within the ONS were designed at different times and for different needs, resulting in them being developed in isolation of each other. The EDC programme gives rise to a unique opportunity to review all ONS business survey questions and to develop harmonised questions wherever possible. Harmonised questions will increase efficiencies by enabling survey producers to re-use tried and tested questions when developing future business surveys. They will increase survey respondents' understanding and interpretation of questions, and they will help users to compare outputs more easily.

This presentation will focus on how the Harmonisation Team within the ONS is working collaboratively with methodologists to review and harmonise questions as they are transferred from paper to online, the benefits this will bring and the issues that need to be considered.