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**Coverage**  
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**Theme**  
Social and Welfare

## ONS data review furthers understanding of inequality

A major review of the data used by Government to help understand and tackle inequality is published today by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Today's report concludes that while there is more equality information available than reported in an earlier Government-commissioned study, there remain significant gaps to fill.

This four-month review, led by a taskforce chaired by ONS, was launched after the Cabinet Office-commissioned Equalities Review highlighted gaps in data needed to present a complete picture of inequality in society.

The starting point for today's report on equality data was the measurement framework proposed in the Equalities Review which included eight equality characteristics (gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, transgender, religion/belief and socio-economic status) and ten equality domains (including longevity, health, education and standard of living).

The ONS-led taskforce reviewed the availability of data for each area of the framework. It found that more equality information is available than had previously been reported, and highlighted a number of positive developments in data gathering that will help tackle some gaps.

However it confirmed that there are some significant omissions, especially in data on disability, transgender and sexual orientation.

The taskforce report links the data gaps and inconsistencies to a lack of strategic co-ordination between the organisations that gather and disseminate equality data. It makes 22 recommendations to improve data co-ordination, comparability and quality, and improve data accessibility and presentation.

Introducing the report, National Statistician Karen Dunnell said:

"Better measurement of equality is essential if we are properly to analyse, understand and address inequalities in society.

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“That was why I welcomed the recommendation in the Equalities Review that ONS should lead a cross-cutting review of current data needs across Government and today’s report represents a significant step towards better equality measurement.

“The taskforce that I created has identified a great deal of work already underway which will address existing gaps in equality data. However it confirms that more work is needed and sets out a ‘road map’ for further improvements. I look forward to working with government and wider stakeholders to implement its recommendations.”

### BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The full report of the equality data review, and links to other useful sources, is available at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/measuring-equality/default.asp>
2. The ONS taskforce was set up in response to a recommendation in the Cabinet Office-commissioned Equalities Review published in Feb 2007: <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/equalitiesreview/>
3. The Equalities Review recommended that the starting point should be its new ‘framework of measurement’ and that ONS should be responsible for leading the review and for ensuring that data on equalities across Government and the devolved administrations met existing and future need, nationally and locally.
4. The ‘framework of measurement’ in the Equalities Review is a matrix of eight equality characteristics (such as age and gender), 10 equality domains (such as health and education ) and three aspects of equality (outcomes, processes and choice).
5. The data review took place from June to September 2007 and was guided by a cross-Government task force with members drawn from eight Whitehall departments and the three devolved governments. The report considered the measurement of UK equality, with the understanding that the different government statistical organisations in the UK needed to work in partnership to achieve this.
6. The final report from the ONS-led data review benefited significantly from constructive responses to an early draft given by a number of reviewers drawn from outside of Government.
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