

## SLS Question Consistency Tool

### Context

To conduct analyses over time – whether they follow cohorts, use panel data methods, or use repeated cross sections – we need to know which topics persist over time. For example, a researcher studying the effects of a policy on student safety needs to be able to see which questions talk about safety before they even begin their analysis. Prior to this, there did not exist any easy-to-understand table or graphic of questions over time.

A good example of a tool showing question availability over time is IPUMS' [Current Population Survey](#).

### General Navigation

A user of the SLS data would first like to see which topics are available over time. They can see this in the “Map – Q” tab of the tool. Here, each topic is listed under “Question Domain”, each unique question is under “Question ID”, and the different ways a question has been asked is under “Question.” The user can filter the product to type of respondents under “Source” and to the grades of students under “Grade.” Which questions are available are then denoted by the “x”s for each year.

For example, a user studying student health over time could filter Source to “Student” and Question Domain to “Wellbeing,” and look at the availability of questions over time. S120 is about student stress and anxiety, and then x’s by year suggest the question has been asked since 2016/2017. The user may then note that S120 appears twice for students in grade 4 with different text. It appears first as “Does school make you feel stressed or anxious?” in 2016/2017 and then as “Does school make you feel stressed or worried?” for 2017/2018 onwards. This means how students were asked about stress changed between 2016/2017 and 2017/2018.

Typically, surveys change not just their questions over time, but the response options given to respondents. These response option changes are reflected in the “Map – Response Changes.” In this new tab, everything is the same, except “Response Options” reflects the response options given to respondents for each question. As with changes in question wording, a change in response options would be reflected in a new row with everything else being the same. For example, NQ20 is a question asking students whether they are taught about Indigenous people in Canada. The presence of an “x” in every year since “2009/2010” suggests the question has been asked since 2009/2010. The tool shows both the question wording and response options changed between 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, as denoted by the difference in “Question” and difference in “Response Options” between the two years with the option “at no time” changing to “never.”