



English Housing Survey dissemination strategy

Summary of responses to consultation exercise (November 2009)



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This note summarises the responses received to the consultation exercise held on the EHS dissemination strategy. Responses from external and internal users are presented separately below under the main headings used on the consultation response proforma.

1. Summary of external responses

These are some of the key comments made by external respondents to the dissemination strategy sent out in November 2009. Seven responses were received.

Respondents came from energy consultancies and housing organisation backgrounds, as well as academic.

The use of data was wide ranging, from the occasional user who uses the survey for reference purposes, to those making full use of the datasets, web tables and publications to inform their work. Examples include fuel poverty, energy and domestic stock modelling.

Headline report

Users were generally supportive of the format which provided a good first look at the data, as well as being able to track trends.

Annual report

Majority of users preferred the report to be split .i.e. one covering household, the other stock and energy issues.

Users recommended more detail and topics (affordability, preferred housing tenure, resident views on best/worst thing about housing by tenure) to ensure wider range of users could benefit. They wanted more emphasis on regional data or geographical indicators, with maybe appendices containing regional breakdowns against key indicators.

Technical report

Generally, the respondents were not heavy users of this report, but acknowledged its usefulness as a reference tool and wanted it made available. One of the suggestions for inclusion was more information about how derived variables were calculated. Only one respondent actively used with particular reference to weighting.

Web tables

Seen as a useful first look at data and to quickly see trends. Again, a call for more geographical data, more tenure based data and also in other formats. One respondent found the SEH15 approach useful for trend work.

Public datasets

This was one of the areas that elicited the strongest response. All found this most useful, particularly those doing their own analysis.

Some found it easier to access the data from the department, on a single CD, rather than the UK archive, which required a little more legwork.

Again, the possibility of geographical data being made available from the VML, was met with a very positive response, since this is an area that came up repeatedly in comments made by users.

Suggestions were made to make the data available in formats other than SPSS (SPSS viewer, Por format, Excel).

Information and advice service

All respondents were enthusiastic about this service, with various suggestions as to what it might offer and the possible limitations.

These included the provision of bespoke tables, a clear point of contact for advice, with responsiveness being key (being able to get a response straightaway from a phone call).

It was thought an excellent idea, as long as it didn't take resources away from more pressing concerns and it would have to be balanced between academic and technical advice.

Building user community

The idea of workshops cautiously welcomed. Possible thematic approach to make clear the intentions of the workshop and finding the right balance to cater for the wide range of users of the data. This was thought of as a good opportunity for networking.

One respondent suggested some kind of monthly/quarterly newsletter to cover topics or advice. Also, some sort of training in the use of EHS data for staff that they could take back to the offices, to train or advise their colleagues.

Comments

Some users suggested a larger sample size, the availability of regional data or geographical indicators, data in Excel format. More specifically “the dept needing to be more vigilant of where social housing tenures can or can’t be disaggregated.”

Overall, the availability of data was hugely appreciated for energy work, domestic house modelling etc.

2. EHS dissemination strategy - summary of internal responses

Key internal users across a range of policy areas were interviewed during November/December 2009 to get detailed feedback on how they access and use the survey. Some of these meetings were organised as small group sessions, others as one to one discussions.

Published reports

Internal users are supportive of the headline report which provides early access to key findings. Ideally they would like more detail but appreciate the need to balance speed with reliability of findings. In this context they also prioritise avoidance of revisions to findings, which create confusion and difficulties in expunging erroneous results from briefing materials.

Generally they are content with the organisation and content of annual reports with focused chapters relevant to their own areas. However this does mean that they may be unaware of relevant material covered in other chapters within the report.

Views on reporting style differ. Some prefer detailed tables to use as reference material, others appreciate text and diagrams which accentuate key messages arising from the detailed results.

There was a strong view on the need for printed reports (see comment on web-based outputs below). Printed reports can be flagged and annotated according to the individual user needs and a formally printed version does not get lost in the mass of A4 paper that officials typically work with.

Web outputs

Internal users find web tables useful but, given the pressures of their workflow, much prefer personal contact with analysts from whom they can be confident that they are using definitive and current information from the survey. The inevitable bulk of web material poses problems for rapid navigation to the relevant findings, not helped by the speed of access often experienced using the Department’s internet service. Often internal users’ requirements are highly specific and may not be published in tables or reports in the precise detail required for briefing purposes.

Data quality/geography

Internal users tend to focus on information needs and leave the methodological considerations to analysts. They want findings to be as up to date and regular as possible but appreciate the resource constraints under which the survey operates. This equally applies to the level of geographical disaggregation the survey can provide. Internal users wish to see the lowest level geography that can be achieved but understand the limits and would not wish to compromise data quality by receiving unreliable results from the survey.

User engagement

Internal users are keen to be consulted on their own policy based needs but see this as more effective if organised through ongoing face to face liaison than periodic formalised meetings. Their focus tends to be on analytical outputs rather than the specific questions/survey instruments for achieving those outputs.

CLG
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