



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Consultation on the future shape of the English Housing Survey



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Summary of the consultation

Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation:	The future format and design of the English Housing Survey.
Scope of this consultation:	<p>The Department for Communities and Local Government is planning to make changes to the English Housing Survey as part of its on-going need to make administrative savings. The consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aims to collect users' views on the possible approaches and innovations for improving the cost effectiveness of the survey; and • seeks to identify the impacts of the plans on users.
Geographical scope:	England
Impact Assessment:	An impact assessment is not required as this is a technical consultation relating to National Statistics outputs.

The consultation process and how to respond

To:	Any organisation or individual who uses the results from the English Housing Survey. This includes local and central government as well as academic, private and charitable organisations.
Body responsible for the consultation:	Department for Communities and Local Government.
Duration:	Four weeks from: Wednesday, 21 January 2015 to: 5pm on Tuesday, 17 February 2015
Enquiries:	<p>Stephanie Freeth (or Rachel Murphy) English Housing Survey Team Strategic Statistics Division Department for Communities and Local Government Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF</p> <p>0303 44 41969 (or 0303 44 41589) ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk</p>

<p>How to respond:</p>	<p>The questions asked in this consultation are listed on page 8.</p> <p>Please state whether your answers reflect your personal views or those of your organisation. Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant, who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance in Annex 3 if you would like the department to treat your response as confidential.</p> <p>Please send responses, preferably via email, to: ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk</p> <p>or by post to: Rachel Murphy English Housing Survey Team Strategic Statistics Division Department for Communities and Local Government Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF</p> <p>Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.</p> <p>Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.</p>
<p>After the consultation:</p>	<p>The responses will be used alongside other sources of evidence to inform the future format of the English Housing Survey.</p> <p>A summary of the consultation responses will be published on the Department for Communities and Local Government web page within 12 weeks of the close the consultation.</p>
<p>Compatibility with the Consultation Principles:</p>	<p>The results of the English Housing Survey are National Statistics and the department has a duty to comply with the Statistics and Registration Act 2007, including the <i>Code of Practice for Official Statistics</i>¹. The Code states that the production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet user needs and users are to be consulted before changes that affect statistics or publications are made.</p> <p>This consultation document and consultation process have</p>

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/>

	<p>been planned to adhere to the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office.</p> <p>If you are not satisfied that this consultation has followed the Consultation Principles or have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact DCLG Consultation Co-ordinator:</p> <p>4th Floor Fry Building 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF</p> <p>or by e-mail to: consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk</p>
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Background to this consultation

<p>Getting to this stage:</p>	<p>The English Housing Survey was launched in April 2008 and brought together two former Department for Communities and Local Government surveys: the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey. Fieldwork has run on a continuous basis since 2008 and results from the survey have been published each year since then.</p> <p>The English Housing Survey forms a key component of the housing evidence base within the department, the Department for Energy and Climate Change, and the wider housing community. It is a complex two-stage survey including both a face-to-face interview with over 13,000 households and a physical assessment of the condition and energy efficiency of the accommodation of half of the households interviewed. It currently costs around £4m per year.</p> <p>Although the department is planning to make changes to the survey as part of its on-going need to make administrative savings, it is committed to retaining the English Housing Survey at the centre of its robust evidence base for housing and other policies. It is therefore using this opportunity to identify innovative ideas not only for saving costs but also for improving the delivery and outputs of the survey.</p>
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Previous engagement:	<p>A consultation took place on proposals arising from a review of the cost of the English Housing Survey in 2010. Information on that consultation and a summary of the responses to those proposals can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/english-housing-survey-cost-review</p> <p>The English Housing Survey Team ran a session on the survey at a department-wide Statistics User Engagement Day in November 2013. Around 60 external participants attended the session, including representatives from local authorities, housing trusts, third-sector organisations, other government departments and academic researchers.</p>
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Consultation on the future shape of the English Housing Survey

This document invites your comments on the plan for the future shape of the English Housing Survey.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is planning to make changes to the English Housing Survey as part of its on-going need to make administrative savings. We are seeking views on how best we might do this whilst continuing to meet the needs of the department and other users. We are using this opportunity to help us identify innovative ideas for improving the running of the survey and to ensure that we continue to get value for money.

The survey is currently run annually. Possible options for saving money include pausing the survey for one year in 2015-16 and/or running the survey on a biennial basis. Alternatively there may be other ways to deliver the survey at lower cost which enables us to retain an annual survey.

This consultation is designed to engage users in developing the survey going forward and to identify the impacts of the cost saving approaches on users if they were introduced. We welcome comments on the approaches identified as well as alternative suggestions for achieving the same outcome or for improving the survey or its outputs.

To inform our decision, we would like to understand how the survey data are currently used as well as the impact of the likely changes on users. We also need to consider a range of technical issues. These are detailed in the Annex together with background information on the English Housing Survey and the consultation process.

All responses will be considered in the context of the aims and objectives of the survey; the financial budget; questionnaire length and timing; and coherence constraints.

The consultation questions

1. What cost-effective solutions are there to redesign the survey? We are open to any innovative ideas for improving the delivery and/or cost effectiveness of the survey. Please describe your ideas, detailing how the approach would meet your analytical needs.
2. Pausing the English Housing Survey for one year in 2015-16 and/or running the survey on a biennial basis are possible approaches to deliver cost savings. Would you be affected if the department were to adopt either or both of those approaches? If so, please explain how, using examples on the way you use the data to illustrate your response.
3. If the department were to run the survey on a biennial basis, what would be the best approach to carry out a robust and cost effective survey? We are particularly interested in views and suggestions on set up costs, feasibility of a biennial survey,

sample size options, ideas for following up respondents from the earlier surveys in the series and data collection methods.

4. Which topics in the survey are of most and least value to you?
5. Are there any questions that you would consider removing?

Annexes

1 English Housing Survey, background and methodology

The English Housing Survey was launched in April 2008 bringing together two former long standing and well regarded surveys - the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey. The survey is run on a continuous basis and consists of two main elements: an initial interview survey of approximately 13,300 households and a follow up physical inspection of a sub-sample of around 6,200 of dwellings including vacant dwellings.

The interview survey questionnaire contains a core set of questions which is asked of respondents every year. The core questions cover household composition, housing history and aspirations, tenancy deposits, work done to the home, attitudes to the home, neighbourhood and landlord, detailed housing costs, adaptations to the home, plus a detailed income module.

The questionnaire also contains a number of rotating questions which come in and out of the survey on an annual or biennial basis (or in some cases, less frequently). Topics covered in these modules include: second homes; fire and fire safety; satisfaction with the neighbourhood; work undertaken to improve energy efficiency of the home; adaptations made to the home to improve accessibility; and tenancy deposits.

The interview survey questionnaire is published on the Department for Communities and Local Government web page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-questionnaires>

The physical survey is conducted by qualified surveyors who undertake an internal and external inspection of the home to record the type, age and construction type of the property. They assess the property's state of repair, heating system, energy efficiency characteristics and health and safety risks.

The content of the physical survey has remained largely unaltered from the former English House Condition Survey. Surveyors continue to record details of the nature and type of each dwelling; the presence and condition of facilities and services; the condition of the internal and external building fabric; the health and safety risks associated with the dwelling; the presence and condition of shared facilities and services in blocks of flats or on estates and an assessment of the environment in which the dwelling is located.

The physical survey form is published on the Department for Communities and Local Government web page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-physical-surveys>

2 Technical issues to be considered when redesigning the English Housing Survey

Sample size

It is important to ensure that the sample size is large enough to generate a dataset that is sufficient to carry out the required analysis. The English Housing Survey currently conducts 13,300 household interviews and 6,200 physical surveys per year, with annual reporting of results from the data.

The majority of the analysis using the physical survey data is based on two years of data using the paired household sub-sample (i.e. where both a household interview survey and a physical inspection of the property are secured).

The department is looking into possible changes to the sample size and the reporting frequency. We would welcome:

- feedback on the implications for the sample size and any practical aspects for any proposed design, and in particular if the survey became biennial;
- comments on how best to deliver any proposed design in practical terms, and in particular a biennial survey;

Data collection approaches

The department is looking into the feasibility of using different methods of data collection for both the interview and physical survey elements of the English Housing Survey. This could include the use of telephone or on-line methods. We would welcome users' views on any possible options.

Since the survey began in 2008, respondents have been asked, as part of the interview survey, whether they would agree to being contacted to help with any future research if required. The department would like to explore options for following up this sample of existing respondents. We welcome your views on how best to exploit the potential the follow up sample can offer.

Scope of the interview and physical surveys

In 2011-12, a fairly radical overhaul of the interview survey questionnaire was undertaken. This was driven by a significant reduction in funding and the consequent requirement to reduce the length of the questionnaire from 50 to 30 minutes. An extensive review of the physical survey form was also undertaken to identify and recommend areas and options for reducing the scope and complexity of the physical survey. Following this review some questions were removed or modified reducing the length of the physical survey by three pages.

The department intends to carry out another review of the interview survey questionnaire and physical survey. Respondents are invited to review the questionnaire and physical survey form and provide an indication of the modules/questions that are essential to their work, those modules/questions they would ideally like to keep and those that are not necessary to their work.

3 Data security

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

The Department for Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and, in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.