
Chapter 4

Response rates

The target response rate for the 2012-13 English Housing Survey (EHS) was 60%. This chapter provides details of the final response rates and information on action taken to maximise response.

Overview

- 4.1 The target response rate for the EHS is set by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It is monitored closely by NatCen through analysis of electronic data reports and direct contact between interviewers and their team leader. NatCen sets and monitors targets for coverage within each wave and monitors response at an area and interviewer level. When response rates fall below the target, remedial action is taken. In 2012-13, this remedial action included reissuing addresses in Quarter 1 and the introduction of a conditional incentive in Quarters 3 and 4.

Interview survey

- 4.2 In 2012-13, interviews were achieved at 13,652 households. This represents a response rate of 59%. More details on the response rate to the EHS interview survey in 2012-13 are provided below, Table 4.1.
- 4.3 Of these 13,652 interviews, 80% were conducted with the household reference person (HRP), 19% with the HRP's partner and 1% with a proxy.

Table 4.1: Interview survey response rate, 2012-13

all issued households

	Number (N)	Issued cases (%)	In-scope cases (%)
Total issued addresses	25,286		
Not yet built/under construction	25	0.1	
Demolished/derelict	66	0.3	
Vacant/empty housing unit	1,116	4.4	
Non-residential address	295	1.2	
Address occupied - no resident household	338	1.3	
Communal establishment/institution	57	0.2	
Other ineligible	64	0.3	
Total ineligible addresses	1,961	7.8	
Total in-scope addresses	23,325	92.2	
Not issued	1	0.0	0.0
Issued, but not attempted	26	0.1	0.1
Inaccessible	25	0.1	0.1
Unable to locate address	40	0.2	0.2
Unknown whether residential: Info refused	1	0.0	0.0
Unknown whether residential: no contact	39	0.2	0.2
Residential but unknown eligibility: info refused	4	0.0	0.0
Residential but unknown eligibility: no contact	61	0.2	0.3
Other unknown eligibility (no contact)	31	0.1	0.1
Contact but not confirm if address is residential	1	0.0	0.0
Info refused whether resident(s) are eligible	3	0.0	0.0
Eligibility not confirmed: language barrier	7	0.0	0.0
Other unknown eligibility (contact made)	25	0.1	0.1
Total unknown eligibility	264	1.0	1.1
Refusal by phoning office	944	3.7	4.0
Information refused on no. of dwellings	116	0.5	0.5
Can't identify target respondent(s): info refused	230	0.9	1.0
Information refused about number of households	91	0.4	0.4
Refusal before interview: by selected respondent	4,631	18.3	19.9
Proxy refusal	87	0.3	0.4
Refusal during interview (unproductive partial)	29	0.1	0.1
Broken appointment, no re-contact	750	3.0	3.2
Total refusals	6,878	27.2	29.5
No contact with anyone at address	1,444	5.7	6.2
MULTI DWELLINGS - No contact made with selected dwelling	8	0.0	0.0
No contact with responsible adult	167	0.7	0.7
Contact made at DU, but not from selected HH	88	0.3	0.4
Total non contact	1,707	6.8	7.3
Ill at home during survey period: Head Office	13	0.1	0.1
Ill at home during survey period: Interviewer	132	0.5	0.6
Away or in hospital all survey period: Head Office	27	0.1	0.1
Away or in hospital all survey period: Interviewer	232	0.9	1.0
Physically/mentally unable/incompetent: Head Office	31	0.1	0.1
Physically/mentally unable/incompetent: Interviewer	215	0.9	0.9
Language difficulties: Head Office	27	0.1	0.1
Language difficulties: Interviewer	94	0.4	0.4
Lost productive	2	0.0	0.0
Interview achieved but respondent requested data deleted	7	0.0	0.0
Other unproductive	44	0.2	0.2
Total other unproductive	824	3.3	3.5
Full interview	13,650	54.0	58.5
Partial interview	2	0.0	0.0
Total interviews	13,652	54.0	58.5

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- 4.4 In 2012-13, the response rate dropped below the target of 60%. In an effort to increase the response rate a number of remedial actions were taken. These are described below.

Reissues

- 4.5 In Quarter 1 (Waves 1 and 2), 1,987 cases were reissued (981 cases in Wave 1 and 1,006 in Wave 2). Around three quarters of the cases that were reissued had refused or had a broken appointment at the first issue, and a fifth had been non-contacts. The reissues were carried out by a different interviewer to the one who did the first issue. Fieldwork for these reissues took place between 25 June and 22 July 2012.
- 4.6 In Wave 1, 1,384 interviews were carried out at first issue (a response rate of 54%). Another 173 interviews were achieved after reissue (a conversion rate of 19%). This increased the overall Wave 1 response rate to 62%¹.
- 4.7 In Wave 2, 1,405 interviews were carried out at first issue (a response rate of 53%). A further 136 interviews were achieved after reissue (a conversion rate of 15%). This increased the Wave 2 response rate to 59%².
- 4.8 Reissuing cases was effective in increasing response. However, it had two key drawbacks. First, households which were interviewed at the reissue stage and agreed to the physical survey had to have appointments after the fieldwork period allocated to surveyors for that wave. This required additional coordination and in some cases it was not possible to arrange a surveyor appointment. Second, reissues are very costly. For these reasons it was decided to not continue reissuing cases after Quarter 1 and, from Quarter 3, to adopt a conditional incentive instead.

Incentives

- 4.9 A conditional incentive was introduced in Quarter 3, from which point all participating households were given a £10 gift card at the end of the interview. Response increased from 53% in Quarter 2 to 59% in Quarter 3 and 62% in Quarter 4, Table 4.2.

¹ Some of these interviews were omitted from the final response figures for various reasons e.g. because the respondent asked for the data to be deleted or they were found to be ineligible.

² As above.

Table 4.2: Number of addresses interviewed per quarter, 2012-13

all addresses in scope

	Interviewed	In scope	Response
Quarter 1	3,087	5,145	60.0%
Quarter 2	3,368	6,297	53.5%
Quarter 3	3,368	5,682	59.3%
Quarter 4	3,829	6,201	61.7%
Whole fieldwork period	13,652	23,325	58.5%

Physical survey

- 4.10 Not everyone who takes part in the interview survey is eligible to take part in the physical survey. Cases eligible³ for the physical survey are identified by the CAPI (computer-aided personal interviewing) programme as part of the interview survey. Interviewers are then responsible for securing the consent of the householder to a physical survey. The interviewer explains the purpose of the survey and briefly what it will involve. If the respondent is willing, the interviewer arranges a fixed appointment for the physical survey. The interviewer is provided with the times the surveyor is available on their laptop to help make the appointment.
- 4.11 Of the 9,590 interviewed households eligible for the physical survey, 76% agreed to have a physical survey, which is below the target of 80% (see end of chapter).
- 4.12 In 2012-13, 6,304 physical surveys were achieved. Of these, 6,058 were surveys in occupied properties. This represents 83% of households which agreed to a physical survey at the interview. This was below the target of 85% conversion rate (see end of chapter).
- 4.13 The remaining 246 surveys were conducted at vacant addresses. This represents 32% of the vacant addresses eligible for a physical survey. This is above the target of 30% conversion rate for such properties. More details on the response rate to the physical survey for the EHS in 2012-13 are provided below, Table 4.3.

³ See Chapter 1 on sub-sampling for more information on how addresses are deemed eligible for the physical survey.

Table 4.3: Physical survey response rate, 2012-13

all addresses eligible for physical survey

	Number (N)	Cases eligible for PS (%)	Cases agreed to PS at IS (%)
Occupied addresses			
Total occupied addresses eligible for physical survey	9,590		
Eligible but refused appointment at interview	2,299	24.0	
Eligible and agreed appointment at interview	7,291	76.0	
Total unproductive	1,233	12.9	16.9
Incomplete survey	8	0.1	0.1
Refusal on doorstep	209	2.2	2.9
Refusal to HQ	752	7.8	10.3
Household missed appointment	63	0.7	0.9
Surveyor missed appointment	2	0.0	0.0
Spec call no contact	172	1.8	2.4
Other reasons for non survey	27	0.3	0.4
Full survey (paired cases)	6,058	63.2	83.1
Vacant/derelict addresses			
Total vacant/derelict addresses eligible for physical survey	824		
Eligible but refused appointment at interview	67	8.1	
Total unproductive	511	62.0	67.5
Incomplete survey	1	0.1	0.1
Refusal on doorstep	114	13.8	15.1
Refusal to HQ	41	5.0	5.4
Household missed appointment	11	1.3	1.5
Spec call no contact	321	39.0	42.4
Spec call - appointment made	2	0.2	0.3
Other reasons for non survey	21	2.5	2.8
Survey achieved (vacant)	237		
Survey achieved (derelict)	9		
Total vacant/derelict physical surveys achieved	246	29.9	32.5
Total physical surveys achieved	6,304	60.5	78.3

Notes:

- 1) for the occupied addresses the cases eligible for a physical survey is the total occupied addresses eligible for the physical survey; and the cases agreed to a physical survey at interview survey is the total occupied addresses who agreed to have a physical survey at the interview.
- 2) for the vacant addresses the cases eligible for a physical survey is the total vacant addresses eligible for the physical survey; and the final column is the percentage out of all the eligible occupied addresses excluding those who refused an appointment at the interview stage (not all the vacant addresses were contacted at the interview stage so did not have the chance to refuse).
- 3) the cases eligible for a physical survey is all the occupied and vacant addresses eligible for the physical survey; and the cases agreed to a physical survey at the interview survey is all the occupied and vacant addresses who did not refuse to have a physical survey at the interview stage.

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- 4.14 Interviewers and surveyors were encouraged to speak to each other before interviewer fieldwork commenced to discuss any issues there may be on availability and booking appointments for the physical survey. Interviewers and surveyors were each provided with reciprocal contact details to facilitate this contact. (Prior to 2012-13, only interviewers had contact details for surveyors and could initiate this contact.)
- 4.15 The overall response rate for the physical survey decreased from 68% in 2011-12 to 61% in 2012-13. There are a few possible reasons for this. The proportion of households consenting to a physical survey at the end of the interview has decreased. In the first few waves of fieldwork there was a higher level of “soft” appointments (whereby the respondent agreed to have a physical survey but no fixed appointment was made), which are less likely to result in a productive survey than fixed appointments. In Quarter 1 some cases were reissued to interview (to increase response to the interview) which meant that there was not enough time to carry out physical surveys. Furthermore, some physical surveys were not undertaken at the end of the year as the required number had already been achieved.