



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



English Housing Survey

Quality Report 2015-16



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Summary

This Quality Report provides a brief summary of key issues relating to quality of which users of the English Housing Survey (EHS) outputs need to be aware. The report begins with the purpose and background of the EHS followed by an introduction to methodology, and a summary of work undertaken in 2015 and 2016 to improve the quality of EHS statistics. A more detailed discussion of survey methodology and how it affects quality is provided in the EHS Technical Report, which includes chapters on sampling, questionnaire, fieldwork, response rates, data processing, weighting and standard errors.¹

This report covers all dimensions of quality defined by the European Statistical System as recommended by the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

- **Relevance** – The report discusses work undertaken to ensure that the EHS meets user needs, including details of the user consultation process for the 2015-16 reporting strategy and the 2017-18 questionnaire.
- **Accuracy and reliability** – This report also outlines the main sources of bias and other errors in a sample survey of this type, which affects the degree of closeness between EHS estimates and true population value.
- **Timeliness and punctuality** – In addition, this report provides information on headline and all other data releases from the EHS, and considers trade-off between timeliness and the other quality dimensions.
- **Accessibility and clarity** – The different methods available for accessing EHS outputs is also described. That includes reports and tables available on Open Government Licence on gov.uk, End User Licence, Special Licence and Secure Access datasets released through the UK Data Service.
- **Coherence and comparability** – The final section explains how the EHS monitors and reports on coherence and comparability of the survey estimates over time, harmonisation of the survey with ONS standards, reporting of geographic variables, and information on similar housing surveys carried out by devolved administrations.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>

1. Introduction

The primary purpose of the English Housing Survey

- 1.1 The English Housing Survey (EHS) is a flagship survey of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It is designed to collect information about people's housing circumstances and the energy efficiency and condition of the housing stock in England. It covers all housing tenures and provides valuable information and evidence to inform the development and monitoring of MHCLG's housing policies.
- 1.2 The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) makes an annual financial contribution to the running cost of the survey and uses the data to measure the effectiveness of its policies designed to improve the energy efficiency of English homes and to monitor fuel poverty.

A brief history of the English Housing Survey

- 1.3 The EHS was launched in April 2008, bringing together two former housing surveys – the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey.
- 1.4 The English House Condition Survey started in 1976 and was carried out every five years until 2001. From 2003 onwards, the English House Condition Survey operated continuously until its merger with the Survey for English Housing to form the EHS. Prior to the English House Condition Survey, a Regional Housing Survey in 1967 and Housing Condition Survey in 1971 included a physical survey similar to that in the English House Conditions Survey. The English House Condition Survey reports are available on The National Archives website.²
- 1.5 The Survey of English Housing was a continuous household survey. It collected information from nearly 20,000 households each year about the housing characteristics of households and people's attitudes to housing and related matters. It operated continuously from 1993-94 and the final fieldwork year for the Survey of English Housing was 2007-08. The Survey of English Housing reports are available on The National Archives website.³
- 1.6 The first four English Housing Surveys (2008-09 to 2011-12) were conducted by the Office for National Statistics, MMBL-CADS and the Building Research

²<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121108165934/http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/englishhousecondition/>

³<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121108165934/http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/h/housingsurveys/surveyofenglishhousing/>

Establishment (BRE). A consortium consisting of NatCen Social Research, CADS Housing Surveys, BRE and Bryson Purdon Social Research carried out the 2012-13 to 2015-16 surveys. In 2015, MHCLG awarded a new contract covering the survey years 2016-17 to 2018-19 to NatCen Social Research in consortium with CADS Housing Surveys and BRE.

Overview of methodology

- 1.7 The population or key units of interest in the EHS are residential households and dwellings in England. A dwelling is defined as a unit of accommodation where all the rooms and amenities are for the exclusive use of the household(s) occupying them. The EHS collects information about the respondents' main home so it defines a household as one person or a group of people (not necessarily related) who have the accommodation as their only or main residence, and (for a group) share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area. This definition is slightly different from the definition used in the 2011 Census.⁴
- 1.8 The EHS has two components, an interview survey undertaken with approximately 13,300 households each year and a physical inspection of a random sample of the dwellings of about 6,000 of the households included in the interview survey as well as about 200 vacant properties. The interview surveys are conducted by trained interviewers and the physical surveys are carried out by qualified surveyors.
- 1.9 Data collection on the EHS operates continuously over all four quarters of the year. However, to accommodate a delay to the start of the survey caused by the consultation on the future of the EHS, fieldwork for the 2015-16 EHS took place over three quarters of the year, beginning in July 2015.
- 1.10 The data collected from the 13,300 households selected for the interview surveys are analysed on an annual financial year basis. The data from the physical surveys are analysed on a two year rolling basis. The results of the physical survey presented for '2015' are based on fieldwork conducted between April 2014 and March 2016.
- 1.11 The sample of the EHS is representative of the population of England. For the survey years 2008-09 to 2011-12, the sample was selected using a simple random sample design. The sample design changed in 2012-13 so that the sample is currently unclustered over two years of the survey, but is clustered over a single year. The advantage of this approach is that it reduces the fieldwork

⁴ The definition of a household in the 2011 Census was one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) **living at the same address** who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area.

area to half the country so interviewer and surveyor travel time/costs are significantly reduced.

- 1.12 The EHS sample is stratified by geographic region, tenure and households with a Household Reference Person who worked in non-manual occupations (2001 Census), and subsampled by tenure (identified using Experian's Residata⁵).
- 1.13 To produce unbiased estimates for the population of households and dwellings in England, a process of weighting is carried out. This includes:
- scaling up to the total number of addresses in the sample frame;
 - adjusting for selection probabilities where there is not a one-to-one relationship between the address and dwelling or the dwelling and household;
 - models to produce response weights adjusting for non-response bias;
 - calculating a design factor to adjust for tenure subsampling; and
 - calibration to control/population totals.
- 1.14 From the 2013-14 EHS, the weights were calibrated to one set of control totals for households/dwellings using the MHCLG dwelling counts. Before that, the calibration was to two sets of control totals for households by age, sex and tenure from the ONS Labour Force Survey and dwelling control totals from MHCLG dwelling stock. Details on the weighting methodologies applied before and after 2013-14 are available from:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>.
- 1.15 A smoothing procedure was introduced to the weighting process of the 2015-16 EHS. That procedure was designed to reduce year-on-year instabilities in the survey estimates caused by sampling variations in the 'dwelling-to-household' ratios, one of the data items used for deriving the survey weights. The dwelling-to-household ratios used to derive the weights were smoothed by taking the average ratio across two years of the EHS (2015-16 and 2014-15). The smoothed weights were used for producing the published findings of the 2015-16 EHS and subsequent surveys in the series. The smoothing procedure is described in more detail in the technical report of the 2015-16 EHS.⁶

⁵ Experian possess a database that contains information obtained from a number of sources including insurance companies, Census, etc. referred to as Residata. It is from this that information is taken on predominant tenure within a postcode as well as other information. The matching of the EHS sample to Residata is carried out by BRE.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>

English Housing Survey quality reviews

- 1.16 In addition to the introduction of the smoothing procedure to the weighting process, the EHS team has undertaken other actions over the course of the 2015-16 EHS to improve the quality of the data. Disclosure control rules were tightened to ensure compliance with the updated Government Statistical Service's guidance on statistical disclosure control.⁷ The EHS team is a member of a cross-government surveys group set up to share knowledge, experiences and good practice.

⁷ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Guidance-for-microdata-produced-from-social-surveys.pdf>

2. Relevance

The degree to which statistical outputs meet users' needs⁸

Annual user consultation

- 2.1. Each year, the EHS team conducts a review of forthcoming data collection and reporting priorities to ensure that user requirements are being met. The user consultation carried out in Autumn 2016 had three main objectives:
- to review the data collected through the interview survey questionnaire to ensure that policy requirements were being met;
 - to review the modelled data to ensure that the concepts measured and standards applied are still appropriate to what users want to measure; and
 - to review the outputs published, in particular the annual reports and the live tables.
- 2.2. The EHS team organised a number of meetings with policy teams and analysts across MHCLG and BEIS.
- 2.3. On the basis of these discussions, the EHS team devised the 2015-16 EHS reporting strategy and a document outlining proposed changes to the 2017-18 questionnaire. The documents were presented to the EHS User Group meeting for sign off. No changes were required to the modelled data.

User group membership

- 2.4. Membership of the EHS User Group is reviewed and refreshed annually to ensure that all relevant MHCLG and BEIS policy teams have representation. The group comprises over 30 policy officials and analysts. The group is chaired by a principal analyst from the EHS team. The survey's Senior Reporting Officer is consulted before any major change is implemented.

⁸<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

Reporting strategy for 2015-16

2.5. The 2015-16 EHS has the same reporting strategy as the 2014-15 survey. A series of eight short thematic reports were produced. Each report has about 20 pages of substantive contents. The topics covered include:

- first time buyers;
- future home owner;
- mortgagors;
- the private rented sector;
- the social rented sector;
- housing costs and affordability;
- potential for stock improvement; and
- people's perception of their neighbourhood.

2.6. The reporting strategy was signed off by the EHS User Group and was a direct response to feedback from survey users that the EHS reports produced before 2014-15 were too lengthy and technical. The current approach also fits well with guidance produced by the Government Statistical Service Good Practice Team and it is our view that it will make the EHS data more accessible to a wider audience.

2.7. The 2015-16 annual reports supplemented information provided in the headline report which was produced by the EHS team and published in March 2017. While the user consultation helped to identify priorities for the headline report, the EHS team did not consult directly on its content.

3. Accuracy and reliability

The degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value⁸

- 3.1 This section summarises the steps taken to quality assure the EHS data and to minimise the main sources of bias and other errors that affect a sample survey of this type. The main sources of error are sampling error and non-sampling error, which includes coverage error, non-response error, measurement error, processing error and model assumption error. While it is not possible to measure all sources of error, quantitative estimates are produced where possible and published in the technical report of the 2015-16 survey.

Sampling error

Sampling error is the error that arises because the estimate is based on a sample survey rather than a full census of the population⁸

- 3.2 The results obtained for any single sample may, by chance, differ from the true values for the population but the difference would be expected to average to zero over a number of repeats of the survey. The amount of variation depends on the size of the sample and the sample design and weighting method.
- 3.3 Although the estimates produced from a sample survey will rarely be identical to the population value, statistical theory allows us to measure the accuracy of any survey result produced from data collected using a statistically robust methodology. Standard errors can be estimated from the results obtained for the sample, and these allow the calculation of confidence intervals which give an indication of the range in which the true population value is likely to fall.
- 3.4 A measure of the impact of the variation introduced by the sample design and the weighting is the design factor (deft). This is evaluated relative to the error that would have been produced had the survey been carried out using a simple random sample. A deft greater than one shows that the design and weighting have increased the variability of the estimate and increased the measure of the standard error relative to simple random sample design.
- 3.5 Sampling error is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 of the technical report. That chapter includes examples of standard errors and confidence intervals calculated using the appropriate design factors.

Coverage error

Coverage error arises from failure to cover adequately all members of the population being studied⁸

- 3.6 The sample is drawn from the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of addresses maintained by the Post Office. This source provides good coverage of the population of interest, i.e. residential households and dwellings in England. The achieved sample of dwellings does not include any new dwellings built since the creation dates of PAF files from which the sample taken. The weights are adjusted using the number of new dwellings built between the PAF date and the reference date for the weighting to account for this error in coverage.

Measurement error

Measurement error may arise due to inaccuracies in individual measurements of survey variables because of the inherent difficulties of observing, identifying and recording what has been observed⁸

- 3.7 Measurement error may occur randomly, or may reflect a problem experienced by most or all interviewers or surveyors. The key mechanisms in place to minimise measurement error focus on the questionnaire and physical survey form development process and interview and surveyor training.
- 3.8 For the interview survey, researchers at NatCen responsible for the interview fieldwork, use in-house expertise in question design and testing to ensure that the questions are understood by respondents in the way intended. Full-scale piloting of questions is not undertaken for the EHS. New questions introduced to the survey are reviewed by NatCen and MHCLG after the first quarter of data collection.
- 3.9 For the physical survey, BRE and CADS Housing Surveys who lead on the inspections work together to apply expert knowledge of buildings research and housing surveys to minimise inconsistencies in the data collection process.
- 3.10 Assessing the condition of an individual dwelling poses more practical difficulties compared with collecting information about the characteristics of a household. These difficulties mainly stem from the technical problems in the diagnosis and prognosis of any defects found in the dwelling. Difficulties are found particularly in more subjective assessments such as the state of repair. To assess effects of surveyors making different judgements about the same information, a calibration workbook exercise and a surveyor variability study (SVS) were conducted in 2014-15. The calibration workbook was a desk-based exercise, with surveyors asked to record assessments as they would in the field for a set of examples with

descriptions and photographs of a number of dwelling faults. Results from the 2014-15 exercise showed no significant difference overall in the surveyors' assessments. The SVS involved a call-back exercise in which 300 properties were re-surveyed by a second surveyor and results compared with the first surveyor. The survey measures with low levels of agreement tended to be found in the topic areas covering external environments and stock condition, and typically required a surveyor's opinion on topics with generally high degrees of variability (e.g. an opinion of the local area or the condition of a property). The annual training sessions for surveyors have been updated to target more the topics identified as having a higher observed level of variability.

- 3.11 All new interviewers receive distance learning material and complete a one-day training course in administering the EHS interview before starting fieldwork. All new surveyors receive distance learning material and complete a residential briefing course before starting work on the survey. Ongoing refresher distance learning via a newsletter and briefing days for interviewers and surveyors are provided as needed to ensure that fieldwork staff are kept up to date with new developments in the EHS.

Processing error

Processing error includes errors in data capture, coding, editing and tabulation of the data as well as in the assignment of weights⁸

- 3.12 Processing error can be systematic, for example, an error in the programming syntax that leads to a wrong code being consistently applied in a particular set of circumstances. The EHS has mechanisms in place to ensure accurate data capture and processing and minimise processing error. They include:
- carrying out systematic testing of the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) program used by interviewers to record interview survey answers;
 - conducting extensive test on the validation systems used in processing physical survey data; and
 - testing the syntax for the automated data checking processes.
- 3.13 Processing error can have an impact on the variability of the survey estimates (variance). The key checks put in place to minimise this source of error include:
- minimising data entry errors caused by the interviewer or incorrect answers given by respondents using a number of validation checks built into the CAPI program;

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- reviewing addresses containing multiple household or dwellings to ensure that the sampling selection protocol has been followed;
 - comparing key variables collected at the household interview with the physical survey; and
 - validating data outputs with:
 - checks on case and variable completeness;
 - investigation of outliers;
 - time series comparison;
 - comparison with external data sources; and
 - selective case by case analysis.

3.14 The number of errors and required alterations to raw data is monitored to ensure that quality standard is maintained.

Response rates

Non-response bias may occur if non-respondents differ from respondents. Non-response can lead to an increase in the variance of survey estimates, as non-response will reduce the sample size⁸

- 3.15 The effect of non-response bias is minimised by steps applied in the weighting process. Valid but non-responding cases are checked to assess if they are typical of those that remain. Where non-response biases were found at any stage of the survey, adjustments were made to the responding cases in the weighting procedures for that stage.
- 3.16 To ensure that an adequate sample size is attained with an acceptable level of variance, a target number of interview surveys are set and an assumption made for non-response rate, from which the size of the required issued sample is calculated. Response rates are continually monitored and interviewers are trained to maximise response rates.
- 3.17 For item non-response, imputation is carried out when creating key derived variables, using either external data sources or sample median from other information collected on the EHS. Addressing non-response through imputation can lead to the appearance of the variance being reduced, as imputed values are usually less extreme than would be observed from sampling alone.
- 3.18 Imputation rates are monitored and reported on through the Quality Monitoring reports as part of regular progress meetings with consortium. Overall response rates, key item non-response and imputation rates are published in the EHS technical report.

Model assumption error

- 3.19 In October 2012, the Cabinet Secretary and the Head of the Civil Service commissioned a review of the quality assurance of analytical models that inform government policy. The review published a final report in March 2013, setting out results of work to map business critical models and quality assurance in government.⁹ The models used in the EHS have been reviewed in light of the recommendations in this report and updated model documentation has been produced. In particular, the underlying assumptions of the model are now clearly identified, the inputs required and the key outputs of the models are documented, and any changes to the model are recorded. The model documentation is consistent with that used for other models in MHCLG developed as part of a Quality Assurance working group. The model assumptions are discussed further in the EHS technical report.

⁹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206946/review_of_qa_of_govt_analytical_models_final_report_040313.pdf

4. Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.

Whether the outputs are up to date with respect to users' needs⁸

- 4.1 There is a trade-off between timeliness and the other quality dimensions, in particular accuracy, accessibility and clarity. It is important to ensure that the EHS has adequate processes to ensure accuracy of the survey dataset and produce clear publication tables, and apply appropriate disclosure-control to public datasets released.
- 4.2 To provide timely data to users, key headline figures from the EHS are published in a headline report, usually around 11 months after the end of the reference period. For the 2015-16 survey year, the headline report was published on 2 March 2016. The publication date for headline reports and further annual reports is pre-announced on the official statistics release calendar <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>
- 4.3 A further series of thematic reports were published on 13 July 2017. The topics covered in the reports included first time buyers, future home owner, mortgagors, the private rented sector, the social rented sector, housing costs and affordability, potential for stock improvement and people's perception of their neighbourhood. The 2015-16 End User Licence and Special Licence datasets were released on the UK Data Service in Summer and Autumn 2017 and the Secure Access dataset will be released on the UK Data Service in 2018.
- 4.4 BEIS published a report on fuel poverty based on the 2015-16 survey year in June 2017 after the release of the headline report, as specified in the [Memorandum of Understanding in Relation to Data Sharing](#) between MHCLG and BEIS (the document refers to DECC as it was set up prior to machinery of government change).
- 4.5 In accordance with Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, ministers and eligible staff are given pre-release access to EHS statistics 24 hours before release. The EHS pre-release access list is published on the MHCLG statistics web page.¹⁰
- 4.6 The EHS data production and publication schedule are kept under review and take into account user needs when considering the timeliness of future data releases.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

5. Accessibility and clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information.

Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the release details, illustrations and accompanying advice⁸

5.1 The different formats available for accessing EHS data are described below.

GOV.UK

5.2 The EHS webpages are accessible from the MHCLG statistics launch page¹¹. The table below shows the total number of hits and unique users on selected EHS webpages from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

Number of hits on www.gov.uk between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016

Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews
government/collections/english-housing-survey	39,187	26,611
/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2013-to-2014-headline-report	13372	10417
/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2013-to-2014-household-report	12186	8037
/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2014-to-2015-headline-report	4876	3678
/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2013-profile-of-english-housing-report	3213	2182
/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2013-energy-efficiency-of-english-housing-report	1579	1074
/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2013-to-2014-fire-and-fire-safety-report	673	460

5.3 Feedback from users indicates that it is important for them to be able to find statistics quickly. Following this feedback, the EHS team reviewed and updated the EHS webpages in July 2016. To improve the accessibility of statistics links to all findings and information on the UK Data Service datasets can now be directly accessed from the frontpage. In addition, the questionnaire and survey form for

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

each year can be found with the reports from that year, to make them more easily accessible. A new dedicated page for households selected to participate in the survey has also been set up, with a direct link from the front page. Over the next year the EHS team will continue reviewing the webpages. The address of the front page is <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>.

- 5.4 Between August 2015 and end of March 2016 the EHS team received more than 130 queries from outside the government, more than 20 queries from other government departments (excluding BEIS) and more than 70 requests for ad-hoc analysis by MHCLG colleagues. The team also responded to a large number of Parliamentary Questions.

UK Data Service End User Licence

- 5.5 The anonymised EHS datasets are released every year, via End User Licences at the UK Data Service <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>. Beginning with the 2014-15 data, simplified versions of the derived datasets are available as End User Licence datasets, while the more detailed data are available as Special Licence datasets. The lowest geography in the End User Licence datasets is region.
- 5.6 The datasets are available in SPSS, Stata or tab delimited formats. Due to limited demand, data are not routinely made available in SAS or R, but data in SPSS format can be imported in some versions of SAS or R. Any potentially disclosive information is removed and only high level statistical region geographic identifiers are included. Checks are undertaken to avoid the release of disclosive information via for example free text and string variables.
- 5.7 From 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, EHS End User Licence datasets have been downloaded from the UK Data Service 827 times by 211 User IDs for 224 unique projects.¹² The majority of users are staff and students at higher and further education institutes. Other users include charities, not-for-profit organisations, central and local government, and commercial users (for non-commercial purposes only).

UK Data Service Special Licence

- 5.8 The more detailed datasets of the 2014-15 and subsequent EHS are only available as Special Licence datasets. The Special Licence datasets will include the detailed 'raw' interview and 'raw' physical survey files and extended versions of the derived datasets. For further detail, a list of the general, interview and

¹² These figures exclude the Fuel Poverty Datasets. Including those, the figures are as follow: From 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, End User Licence datasets have been downloaded from the UK Data Service 937 times by 229 User IDs for 247 unique projects.

physical derived variables released under the End User Licence and Special Licence is available in Chapter 5 of the EHS technical report.

- 5.9 The decision to release the datasets under Special Licence was taken to ensure that the EHS complies with the Government Statistical Service guidance contained in GSS/GSR Disclosure Control Guidance for Microdata Produced from Social Surveys.¹³ The content and the level of disclosure control applied in the 'new' Special Licence datasets is similar to what had been released under the End User Licence up to and including 2013-14. For more information on Special Licence datasets, see <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/how-to-access/conditions/special-licence>.

UK Data Service Secure Data Service

- 5.10 The UK Data Service Secure Data Service provides access to data that are too detailed, sensitive or confidential to be made available under the standard End User Licence or Special Licence. Data accessed in this way cannot be downloaded. Once researchers are specially trained, they analyse the data remotely from their institutional desktop or in a Safe Centre at University of Essex.
- 5.11 The EHS datasets with detailed geographic identifiers are available only via the Secure Data Service.

Open data standards

- 5.12 The Open Data White Paper '*Unleashing the Potential*' published by Cabinet Office in June 2012 announced that 'the Government intends to adopt the Five Star Scheme as a measure of the usability of its Open Data.'¹⁴
- 5.13 The data published on the EHS pages of GOV.UK are subject to rights detailed in the Open Government Licence v2.0, as specified on the MHCLG statistics summary page: 'All content is available under the <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/2/> , except where otherwise stated'. The data are published in pdf format and Excel (Level 2 available on web with an open licence in proprietary machine-readable format)
- 5.14 The more disclosive of the EHS datasets released through the UK Data Service dictate a more restrictive licence than the Open Government Licence. As

¹³ Published October 2014, available from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologytopicsandstatisticalconcepts/disclosurecontrol/policyforsocialsurvey/microdata>

¹⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78946/CM8353_acc.pdf

discussed above, EHS datasets are released on an End User Licence or a Special Licence and a dataset with detailed geographic identifiers is released with Secure Access licence. While not meeting level 1 of open licence because of the necessary disclosure control restrictions, the datasets from this service are available in tab-delimited format (Level 3 criteria of non-proprietary, machine-readable).

- 5.15 The MHCLG Linked Open Data Communities is an initiative to improve accessibility of datasets held by the Department.¹⁵ The EHS is not currently included in the sets of data on Open Data Communities, but will be considered as the site is expanded to publish new data. The Open Data Communities is Level 5, providing linked data in multiple machine-readable formats including JSON, RDF, Turtle and N-triples, and a SPARQL 1.1 endpoint.

English Housing Survey data security strategy

- 5.16 In July 2013, a review of the data security strategy for EHS was undertaken and a new agreement published on EHS webpages.¹⁶

¹⁵ <http://opendatacommunities.org/>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-data-security-strategy-and-arrangements>

6. Coherence and comparability

The degree to which data can be compared over time and domain (for example geographic level). The degree to which data that refer to the same topic but are derived from different sources or methods, are similar⁸

- 6.1 Following user feedback, the EHS annual reports have included more findings on long-term trends and information on changes in definitions over time in the English House Conditions Survey, Survey of English Housing and EHS. Variable naming has been retained from English House Conditions Survey and Survey of English Housing variables where there has been no significant change to the data collected.
- 6.2 MHCLG routinely compares EHS data outputs with comparable data sources on the similar topics. Where inconsistencies are identified, these are flagged up in the reports.
- 6.3 The EHS team reviewed and changed the weighting methodology in 2013-14. The new weighting approach may have an impact on the coherence with other available data sources on households and dwelling stock and on the comparability of the EHS data over time.

Devolved administration data sources

- 6.4 Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales conduct their own housing surveys. There has been limited work in recent years by MHCLG on evaluating if outputs from those surveys have been produced in comparable ways as for the EHS. Users are advised to review technical advice provided for each of the surveys to assess how variables of interest in their analysis compare across each of the four surveys.
 - **Scottish House Condition Survey** – the largest single housing research project in Scotland, and the only national survey to look at the physical condition of Scotland's homes as well as the experiences of householders. The survey is now an integrated component of the Scottish Household Survey since 2012.¹⁷
 - **Northern Ireland House Condition Survey** – provides a comprehensive picture of the dwelling stock, including condition and energy efficiency, and

¹⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/SHCS>

examine the association between dwelling conditions and the social and economic circumstances of households.¹⁸

- **The Living in Wales Survey** – carried out from 2004 to 2008, and featured a property survey by a qualified surveyor in 2004 and 2008.¹⁹ This survey was succeeded by the National Survey for Wales which featured a property survey in 2017.

6.5 The BEIS annual report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2016 includes a brief section on fuel poverty in devolved administrations. Users are advised to contact BEIS for further information on fuel poverty and other energy policy issues across UK.²⁰

Geographies below England level

6.6 Frequent queries are received on the availability of EHS data for geographies below England level, such as at former Government Office Region (GOR) level, local authority level and Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA). As outlined in the Written Ministerial Statement of 18 September 2012, *Official Report*, Column 32WS, MHCLG does not publish official statistics by government office region. The EHS datasets available through the End User Licence from the UK Data Service provide geographical identifier for statistical region (England divided into nine areas) to allow users to create their own regional statistics.

6.7 Due to the relatively small sample size at local authority and LSOA level (the EHS is not designed to be representative at local authority level), the data cannot be used for analysis below regional level. MHCLG has concerns about the potential disclosure of individual respondents if EHS datasets containing lower geography variables were released with no restrictions. Restricted access to the lower geography variables is available by Secure Access licence at the UK Data Service for users to link the EHS to other datasets for analyses designed to produce aggregated national or regional level findings (see Accessibility section).

Harmonised questions

6.8 A cross-governmental programme of work is currently underway looking into standardising inputs and outputs for use in National Statistics. This is known as harmonisation. Its aim is to make it easier for users to draw clearer and more

¹⁸ http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/housing_research/house_condition_survey.htm

¹⁹ <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/living-in-wales-survey/?lang=en>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2016>

robust comparisons between data sources. The EHS adopts harmonised questions where possible.²¹

Sources for further information or advice

- Link to headline report
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-headline-report>
- Link to annual reports
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-first-time-buyers>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-future-home-owners>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-housing-costs-and-affordability>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-mortgagors>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-peoples-perception-of-their-neighbourhood>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-potential-for-stock-improvements>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-private-rented-sector>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-social-rented-sector>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2015-to-2016-private-rented-sector>
- Link to technical report
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>
- Link to data security strategy
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-data-security-strategy-and-arrangements>
- Link to data sharing agreement
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539739/DataSharing_Agreement_MHCLG_DECC_May_2016_with_signatures.pdf
- Link to explanation of open data standards
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-white-paper-unleashing-the-potential>
- Guidelines for Measuring Statistical Quality of official statistics, published by the ONS, available at
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/guidelines-for-measuring-statistical-quality/index.html>
- Official Statistics Release Calendar
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>

²¹<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/harmonisation/harmonisation-index-page/index.html>

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- Code of Practice for Official Statistics
<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>
 - Further information email: ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk

In accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 the United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, signifying that they are fully compliant with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

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