



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



English Housing Survey

Quality Report



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- 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.

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Department for
Communities and
Local Government



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February 2015
Department for Communities and Local Government

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Summary

This Quality Report provides a brief summary of key issues relating to quality that users of the English Housing Survey outputs need to be aware of. The report begins with purpose and background of the English Housing Survey, a brief introduction to methodology, and a summary of work undertaken in 2014 and 2015 to improve the quality of English Housing Survey statistics. A more detailed discussion of survey methodology and how it impacts on quality will be provided in the English Housing Survey Technical Report published in summer 2015, which will include chapters on sampling, questionnaire, fieldwork, response rates, data processing, weighting and standard errors. Note that the format of this Quality Report differs from the Technical Advice Note on Data Quality published in previous years for the English Housing Survey, which focused solely on the accuracy quality dimension.

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

- **Relevance** – This section discusses work undertaken to ensure that the English Housing Survey meets user needs, including details of a user consultation process for the 2014-15 questionnaire and physical survey form, formation of a user group and English Housing Survey session at DCLG Statistics User Engagement Day.
- **Accuracy and reliability** – This section summarises the main sources of bias and other errors in a sample survey of this type, which impact on the degree of closeness between English Housing Survey estimates and true population value.
- **Timeliness and punctuality** – This section provides information on headline and all other data releases from the English Housing Survey, and considers trade-off between timeliness and the other quality dimensions.
- **Accessibility and clarity** – This section covers different ways of accessing English Housing Survey outputs, including reports and tables available on Open Government Licence on gov.uk, End User Licence datasets at UK Data Service and Secure Access datasets at UK Data Service.
- **Coherence and comparability** – This section explains how the English Housing Survey monitors and reports on coherence and comparability of survey 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. Introduction

Primary purpose

- 2.1 The English Housing Survey is the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) flagship survey of 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 DCLG's housing policies.
- 2.2 The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) also make an annual financial contribution to the running cost of the survey and use 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

- 2.3 The English Housing Survey was launched in April 2008 bringing together two former housing surveys – the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey.
- 2.4 The English House Conditions Survey started in 1976 and was carried out every five years until 2001. From 2003 onwards, the English House Conditions Survey operated continuously until the merger to form the English Housing Survey. Prior to the English House Conditions 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 Conditions Survey reports are available on The National Archives website.¹
- 2.5 The Survey of English Housing was a continuous household survey that collected information from nearly 20,000 households each year about the characteristics of their housing and their attitudes to housing and related issues. 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.²

¹<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121108165934/http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/englishhousecondition/>

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

- 2.6 For the survey years 2008-09 to 2011-12, the interview survey was conducted by the Office for National Statistics and the physical survey conducted by MMBL-CADS and Building Research Establishment (BRE). In December 2011, a new contract for the survey years 2012-13 to 2014-15 was awarded to a consortium led by NatCen Social Research. This consortium includes CADS Housing Surveys, BRE and Bryson Purdon Social Research.

Overview of methodology

- 2.7 The population or key units of interest in the English Housing Survey are residential households and dwellings in England. The Survey definition of household and dwelling is consistent with the Census 2011.³
- 2.8 The English Housing Survey has a complex two-stage methodology, including a household interview in occupied dwellings and a physical inspection of occupied and vacant dwellings by a qualified surveyor. The Survey is continuous, operating in four quarters (eight waves) over the year.
- 2.9 A household interview is undertaken with approximately 13,300 households each year (referred to as 'full interview sample'). These data are analysed on an annual financial year basis, with the fieldwork for the 2013-14 survey year completed between April 2013 and March 2014.
- 2.10 Both an interview and a physical survey are undertaken in approximately 6,200 dwellings each year (or in the cases of vacant dwellings a physical inspection only is completed). This is referred to as the 'dwelling or household sub-sample' depending on whether the analysis relates to dwellings or households. These data are analysed on a two year rolling basis with the results presented for '2013' based on fieldwork conducted between April 2012 and March 2014.
- 2.11 The English Housing Survey is a representative sample for England. For the survey years 2008-09 to 2011-12, a simple random sample survey

³ A household is defined as one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and a living room or sitting room or dining area. A dwelling is defined as a unit of accommodation which may comprise one or more household spaces (a household space is the accommodation used or available for use by an individual household). A dwelling may be classified as shared or unshared. A dwelling is shared if: the household spaces it contains are 'part of a converted or shared house'; or not all of the rooms (including kitchen, bathroom and toilet, if any) are behind a door that only that household can use; and there is at least one other such household space at the same address with which it can be combined to form the shared dwelling. Dwellings that do not meet these conditions are unshared dwellings.

design was used. From 2012-13 onwards with the new contract, the survey design changed to partially clustered for single survey year (the sample is only in pre-selected areas for half of England). However, when aggregating any two years of survey data the combined sample is entirely unclustered and covers all areas in England. The English Housing Survey sample is stratified by geographic region, tenure and households with an HRP who worked in non-manual occupations (2001 Census), and subsampled by tenure (identified using Experian's Residata⁴).

2.12 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 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 totals.

2.13 From 2013-14, the weights were calibrated to one set of control totals for households/dwellings using the DCLG 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 DCLG 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>

2.14 The English Housing Survey methodology is detailed further in the Technical Report to be published in summer 2015.

English Housing Survey quality review

2.15 The start of a new contract with the consortium led by NatCen Social Research provided a good opportunity to review the data quality processes. A Quality Plan has been produced outlining tasks, roles and

⁴Experian 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 English Housing Survey sample to Residata is carried out by BRE.

responsibilities, quality measures, and the monitoring and reporting process. The documentation of key processes has been reviewed to ensure consistency in the application of principles and for knowledge management purposes.

- 2.16 A quality reporting process has been set up with the consortium to prepare a regular Quality Monitoring Report on quality measures for review at regular Project Meetings held with DCLG. The first of these reports was delivered in January 2014.
- 2.17 A review of the English Housing Survey data validation process took place in early 2014 to streamline the process to be applied from 2013-14 onwards and to minimise sources of processing error. As part of the data quality review, DCLG are handing over data checking steps previously carried out in-house to contractors, and taking on more of a monitoring role, ensuring that processes have been undertaken adequately.
- 2.18 As part of reinvigorating the governance structure for the English Housing Survey, a Technical Advisory Group of DCLG analysts, academics and survey experts was set up in 2014. The group provide methodological and technical advice to the English Housing Survey team and quality assure of any proposed changes to the methodology. The weighting process for 2013-14 survey onwards was changed as a result of a review of the process led by the Technical Advisory Group. A paper detailing the change in methodology is available⁵.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice#technical-advice-notes-and-reports>

2.Relevance

'The degree to which statistical outputs meet users' needs'⁶

- 2.1 The English Housing Survey team have undertaken a range of activities to raise the profile of the survey and to ensure that user requirements are being met. They have consulted users on the contents of the questionnaire, established a user group of key customers from DCLG and DECC and participated in the DCLG Statistics User Engagement Day.

User consultation on the questionnaire

- 2.2 The English Housing Survey team held a series of meetings with DCLG and DECC analysts and policy customers and with some representatives of external organisations in autumn 2013. The purpose of the meetings was to inform the content of the 2014-15 survey year interview questionnaire and physical survey form.
- 2.3 Users suggested adding a number of new topics to the survey. The English Housing Survey team considered the viability of the proposals and the capacity of the 2014-15 interview and physical survey form. They concluded that the survey was at capacity so some existing questions less central to users' needs were rotated out of the survey temporarily to make space for the new topics. The questionnaire documentation and physical survey form for 2014-15 containing a summary of the changes made are due to be published on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-questionnaires>.
- 2.4 A user consultation on the contents of the 2015-16 English Housing Survey was not conducted in autumn 2014. This is because the department has not decided whether to carry out the survey in 2015-16. That decision will be made in early 2015 at the conclusion of the consultation on the future shape of the English Housing Survey.

User group

- 2.5 A user group of the survey's main policy and analyst customers in DCLG and DECC was formed in autumn 2013 as part of the English Housing Survey team's effort to invigorate the governance structure for the survey.

⁶<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

The user group has advised the English Housing Survey team on the content of the annual reports for 2013-14.

DCLG Statistics User Engagement Day

- 2.6 The English Housing Survey team ran a session at a department-wide Statistics User Engagement Day in November 2013. The purpose of the event was to:
- seek views to inform the department's priorities and future work programme that will ensure we make the best use of our resources;
 - provide a forum for greater transparency of the department's statistics and the processes behind their production and to obtain feedback on methodology or outputs, including where we can reduce or cease those no longer required; and
 - seek views on the coherence, scope and dissemination of statistical publications.
- 2.7 Around 60 external visitors attended the English Housing Survey session that day, including participants from local authorities, housing trusts, academics, third sector organisations and other government departments. All feedback from the user engagement day was recorded for the English Housing Survey team to consider and incorporate where possible.
- 2.8 The feedback on topics in the English Housing Survey was that there was mostly good coverage of the subject areas relevant to users. Many attending the session were new to the English Housing Survey and would welcome further opportunities to learn more about the survey.
- 2.9 Most local authorities did not have specialist software for data analysis, so used the figures provided in reports and tables. Academics, other government departments and third sector organisations tended to be more experienced users equipped with specialist software for analysing the anonymised public dataset available from the UK Data Service. The English Housing Survey team have taken steps to support users who do not have access to specialist analysis software. For example, they have made key English Housing Survey data items available in Excel format on the gov.uk website.
- 2.10 Many issues were discussed during the session, the predominant themes that emerged are listed below and are discussed further in relevant sections of this report:

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- difficulties of finding data on gov.uk website and the need to improve user guides;
 - availability of data for geographies below England level and user guidance on how to generate regional tables;
 - long-term trends and changes in definitions over time; and
 - differences in measures and outputs for other data sources, such as overcrowding.

2.11 All attendees were encouraged to send further feedback after the event to enable the English Housing Survey team to get details on the issues that were not picked up during the User Engagement Day.

2.12 The English Housing Survey team continuously work with statistics teams within DCLG and across government to facilitate opportunities for user engagement. We invite users to complete our short survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZLVHMQP> or contact us at ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk

3. Accuracy and reliability

‘The degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value’⁷

- 2.1 This section summarises the steps taken to quality assure the English Housing Survey data and the main sources of bias and other errors that impact on 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 will be published in the Technical Report for the 2013-14 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 population.’

- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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. Standard errors can be estimated from the results obtained for the sample, and these allow calculation of confidence intervals which give an indication of the range in which the true population value is likely to fall.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Sampling error is discussed in more detail in the Technical Report. Examples of standard errors and confidence intervals calculated using the

⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

appropriate design factors are given in each of the detailed English Housing Survey annual reports.

Coverage error

‘Coverage error arises from failure to cover adequately all members of the population being studied.’

- 2.6 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 observed.’

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 For the interview survey, NatCen 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 English Housing Survey. New questions introduced to the survey are reviewed by NatCen and DCLG after the first quarter of data collection.
- 2.9 For the physical survey, BRE and CADS Housing Surveys work together to apply expert knowledge of buildings research and housing surveys to minimise inconsistencies in the data collection process. There are more practical difficulties in assessing the condition of an individual dwelling than 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.

- 2.10 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 2009-10. 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 2009-10 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. The calibration workbook exercise and SVS is being repeated in the 2014-15 survey year.
- 2.11 All new interviewers receive distance learning material and complete a one-day training course in administering the English Housing Survey 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 ad-hoc as needed to ensure that fieldwork staff are kept up to date with new developments in the English Housing Survey.

Processing error

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

- 2.12 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. Mechanisms in place to ensure accurate data capture and processing and minimise processing error include:
- NatCen carry out systematic testing of the CAPI programme used by interviewers to record interview survey answers

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- BRE conduct extensive testing of the validation systems used in processing physical survey data
 - NatCen and BRE test syntax for automated data checking processes

2.13 Processing error can also impact on variance, for example, random keying errors in entering data which, across replications, would cancel each other out. The key checks in place in NatCen and BRE to minimise this source of error include:

- minimising data entry errors by interviewer or incorrect answers given by respondents with a number of validation checks built in to the CAPI programme, for example, extreme numeric values or unlikely combinations of answers
- review of multi-household or dwelling addresses to ensure selection protocol followed
- comparison of key variables collected at household interview with physical survey
- data outputs are validated with checks such as:
 - case completeness
 - variable completeness
 - investigation of outliers
 - timeseries comparison
 - comparison with external data sources
 - selective case by case analysis

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

2.15 As mentioned earlier, the English Housing Survey team reviewed the data validation process in early 2014 in time for processing the 2013-14 survey data. The review did change the data validation methodology or resulting outputs, but improved the efficiency of the process by automating a number of tasks and consolidating some of the checks.

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 size.'

- 2.16 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 and, if not, to counter any resulting response bias in the grossed data set. 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.
- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 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 in English Housing Survey. 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.
- 2.19 Imputation rates are now being 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 English Housing Survey Technical Report.

Model assumption error

- 2.20 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.⁸
- 2.21 The models used in the English Housing Survey have been reviewed in light of the recommendations in this report and updated model documentation has been produced. In particular, we now identify clearly the underlying assumptions of the model, the inputs required and the key outputs of the models, plus record any changes to the model. The model documentation is consistent with that used for other models in DCLG developed as part of a Quality Assurance working group. The model

⁸https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206946/review_of_qa_of_govt_analytical_models_final_report_040313.pdf

assumptions are discussed further in the English Housing Survey
Technical Report.

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' needs.'*⁹

- 2.1 There is a trade-off between timeliness and the other quality dimensions, in particular accuracy, accessibility and clarity. It is important to ensure that there are adequate processes to ensure accuracy of the large survey dataset and produce clear publication tables, and apply appropriate disclosure-control to public datasets released.
- 2.2 To provide timely data to users, key headline figures from the English Housing Survey are published in a headline report, usually around 11 months after the end of the reference period. For the 2013-14 survey year, the Headline Report was published on 25th February 2015 alongside this quality report. 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>
- 2.3 DCLG will publish further annual reports on Households, Profile of English Housing, Energy Efficiency, and Fire and Fire Safety for the 2013-14 survey year in summer 2015. The 2013-14 survey year datasets will be released on the UK Data Archive later in 2014 after disclosure control is applied.
- 2.4 DECC will publish reports on fuel poverty based on the 2013-14 survey year in May 2015 after the release of the headline report, as specified in the [Memorandum of Understanding in Relation to Data Sharing](#) between DCLG and DECC.
- 2.5 In accordance with Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, ministers and eligible staff are given pre-release access to English Housing Survey statistics 24 hours before release. The English Housing Survey pre-release access list is published on the DCLG statistics web page.¹⁰

⁹<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

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

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- 2.6 The English Housing Survey data production and publication schedule are kept under review and will take into account user needs when considering the timeliness of future data releases. During the recent user consultation process, the lag between data collection and publication was not raised as a major issue. However, the English Housing Survey team do receive data requests for more recent years than we have available, so we are aware that this may be an issue for some users.

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 advice.’¹¹

- 2.1 For the reports published on 2012-13 survey year, the English Housing Survey team reviewed presentation of data and provided infographics where possible. We also updated user guidance accompanying data releases. The different formats available for accessing English Housing Survey data is described below.

GOV.UK

- 2.2 The English Housing Survey webpages are accessible from the DCLG statistics launch page¹². The table below shows the total number of hits and unique users on selected English Housing Survey webpages from February 2014 to January 2015.

Number of hits on www.gov.uk between February 2014 and January 2015

Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews
government/collections/english-housing-survey	31,244	20,514
government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-to-2013-headline-report	2,604	1,994
government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-to-2013-household-report	7,355	4,838
government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-profile-of-english-housing-report	2,081	1,386
government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-energy-efficiency-of-english-housing-report	1,049	738
government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-to-2013-fire-and-fire-safety-report	674	484

¹¹<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

¹²<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

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- 2.3 Feedback from users indicates that it is important for them to be able to find statistics quickly. DCLG statistics teams have noted that there is potential for improvement to the layout and search facility on the gov.uk website. The English Housing Survey team will be reviewing and updating the webpages in 2015 when the annual reports are published.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>
- 2.4 In response to user demand, we have started to publish online annual reports by chapter, in addition to the pdf of the full report.

UK Data Service End User Licence

- 2.5 The anonymised English Housing Survey data sets are released each year once the main annual reports have been published, via End User Licences available to all members of the public at the UK Data Service
<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/> .
- 2.6 The registration process for access to the UK Data Service is different for UK university or college users than for other UK users, non-UK users and commercial users. This is explained in detail here:
<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/how-to-access/registration.aspx>
- If you are based at a UK institution of higher or further education (UK HE/FE), you will need to contact your library, IT helpdesk or e-resources administrator. Your institutional web pages or intranet may also contain useful information on how to obtain a username and password.
 - For other UK users, non UK users and Commercial users, it is a two-stage process. The first step is to apply for a UK Data Archive username and password at: <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/sign-up/credentials-application>
 - Once these have been received, complete the registration process as detailed for UK University or college users, selecting 'UK Data Archive' as organisation when you log in and/or register.
- 2.7 The datasets are available in SPSS, Stata or tab 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 these software. Any potentially disclosive information is removed and only high level statistical region geographic identifiers are included. Checks are undertaken prior to release to avoid the release of disclosive information via for example string variables.

- 2.8 For any problems accessing English Housing Survey datasets on UK Data Service, please contact the UK Data Service directly at <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/help/get-in-touch.aspx>. UK Data Service will refer any queries that they cannot answer to the English Housing Survey team at DCLG.
- 2.9 From April 2012 to January 2013, End User Licence datasets have been downloaded from the UK Data Service 455 times. 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 Secure Access

- 2.10 The UK Data Service Secure Access provides access to data that are too detailed, sensitive or confidential to be made available under the standard End User 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.
- 2.11 The initial registration process is the same as for accessing End User Licence datasets, with a more detailed application process once logged on, details here: <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/secure-access/about.aspx>
- 2.12 The English Housing Survey datasets with detailed geographic identifiers are available only via Secure Access at the UK Data Service.

Open data standards

- 2.13 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.'¹³
- 2.14 The data published on English Housing Survey pages of gov.uk is subject to rights detailed in the Open Government Licence v2.0, as specified on the DCLG 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 is published in pdf format and Excel (Level 2 available on web with an open licence in proprietary machine-readable format)

¹³https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78946/CM8353_acc.pdf

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- 2.15 The more disclosive nature of the datasets at the UK Data Service dictates a more restrictive licence than the Open Government Licence. As discussed above, there is a dataset released on an End User Licence, and a dataset with detailed geographic identifiers 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).
- 2.16 The DCLG Linked Open Data Communities is a relatively new initiative to improve accessibility of datasets held by the Department.¹⁴ The English Housing Survey is not included in the initial set 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

- 2.17 In July 2013, a review of the data security strategy for English Housing Survey was undertaken and a new agreement published on English Housing Survey webpages.¹⁵

¹⁴<http://opendatacommunities.org/>

¹⁵https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/211323/Data_Security_Strategy_July_2013.pdf

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 similar.'*¹⁶

- 2.18 Following user feedback, the annual reports will expand analysis on long-term trends and information on changes in definitions over time in the English House Conditions Survey, Survey of English Housing and English Housing Survey. 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.
- 2.19 DCLG routinely compare English Housing Survey data outputs with comparable data sources on the same topics. Where inconsistencies are identified, these will be flagged up in our reports.
- 2.20 The English Housing Survey team recently reviewed and changed the weighting methodology. 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 English Housing Survey data over time.

Devolved administration data sources

- 2.21 The devolved administrations Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales conduct their own housing surveys. There has been limited work in recent years by DCLG on evaluating if outputs have been produced in comparable ways as for the English Housing Survey. 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 fieldwork runs from January to December each year. The survey is now an integrated component of the Scottish Household Survey since 2012.¹⁷

¹⁶<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/best-practice/gss-best-practice/gss-quality-good-practice/quality-measurement-and-reporting-guidance/index.html>

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

- **Northern Ireland House Condition Survey** – provides a comprehensive picture of the dwelling stock, including condition and energy efficiency, and 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 featured a property survey by a qualified surveyor in 2004 and 2008.¹⁹ This survey was succeeded by the National Survey for Wales, but this has not so far featured a property survey.

2.22 The DECC Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2014 includes a brief section on fuel poverty in devolved administrations, users are advised to contact DECC for further information on fuel poverty and other energy policy issues across UK.²⁰

Geographies below England level

2.23 At the user engagement day and during the user consultation process, the availability of English Housing Survey data for geographies below England level was questioned, such as at former Government Office Region (GOR) level, local authority level and lower super output layer (LSOA). Unfortunately, due to the relatively small sample size at local authority and LSOA level (the English Housing Survey is not designed to be representative at local authority level), DCLG has concerns about both the quality of estimates that could be achieved and the potential disclosure of individual respondents if these datasets were published with no restrictions. Restricted access to these variables is available by Secure Access licence at UK Data Service (see Accessibility section).

2.24 The English Housing Survey datasets available on End User Licence from UK Data Service provide geographical identifier for statistical region (England divided into nine areas) to allow users to create their own regional statistics. As outlined in the Written Ministerial Statement of 18 September 2012, *Official Report*, Column 32WS, DCLG no longer publishes statistics by government office region.

Harmonised questions

2.25 A cross-governmental programme of work is currently underway looking into standardising inputs and outputs for use in National Statistics. This is

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-2014>

known as harmonisation. The aim is to make it easier for users to draw clearer and more robust comparisons between data sources. The English Housing Survey adopts harmonised questions where possible.²¹

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

Sources for further information or advice

- Link to headline report
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey#reports>
- Link to annual reports and TAG notes
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey#reports>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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/211334/DCLG_and_DECC_memorandum_of_understanding_in_relation_to_data_sharing.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>
- Code of Practice for Official Statistics
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/the-national-statistics-standard/code-of-practice/index.html
- Further information email: ehs@communities.gsi.gov.uk