



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



English Housing Survey

Quality Report 2018-19



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Introduction and summary

1. This Quality Report provides a brief summary of key issues relating to quality of which users of the English Housing Survey (EHS) need to be aware. The report begins with purpose and background of the EHS, a brief introduction to methodology, and a summary of work undertaken in 2018-19 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.
2. This report covers all dimensions of quality defined by the European Statistical System as recommended by the Government Statistics Service Quality Centre.¹
 - Relevance – The report discusses work undertaken to ensure that the EHS meets user needs, including details of the user consultation process for the 2018-19 reporting strategy and the 2020-21 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 the 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 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<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/quality-statistics-in-government/#the-ess-dimensions-of-quality>.

National Statistics status

3. The UK Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance 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.
4. National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value as set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. It is the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's statisticians' responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.
5. The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in April 2011 following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority in September 2010.² This was the last time the statistics last underwent a full assessment against the Code of Practice for Statistics.
6. Since the latest review by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:
 - Informed users about the quality of the statistics presented in published reports through this Quality Report, and introduced flow charts outlining quality assurance processes;
 - Annual publication of a Technical Report which contains detailed information about methods for users;
 - Revision of the publication timetable ensures that the main reports are released in a more timely manner, January for the Headline Report and July for the thematic reports;
 - Added a named analyst in all reports;
 - Since 2014-15, thematic reports published annually to reflect policy interests, rather than the previous larger reports, to make it easier for users to find information;
 - Infographics and factsheets added to reports to provide more visual and bitesize information for users; and

²https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-assessment-report-57-statistics-from-the-english-housing-survey_tcm97-34184.pdf

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- Regular meetings with colleagues who run housing surveys in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to ensure that data can be compared across the UK.

The primary purpose of the English Housing Survey

7. 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.
8. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) makes an annual financial contribution to the EHS 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

9. The EHS is one of the longest standing surveys in government, with 2017 marking the 50th anniversary of the first survey in 1967. The initial one page survey form used in 1967 was the first in the world to set benchmark for housing conditions based on inspections by trained professionals of a random sample of the homes across whole nations. At that time, the survey covered England and Wales.³
10. The EHS, as we know it now, was launched in April 2008 bringing together two former housing surveys – the Survey of English Housing and the English House Condition Survey.
11. 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 it merged 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.⁴

³A report to mark the 50th anniversary of the EHS, which examines how the English housing stock changed between 1967 and 2017 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/50-years-of-the-english-housing-survey>

⁴<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121108165934/http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/englishhousecondition/>

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12. 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.⁵
13. 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 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. That contract has a provision to be extended to cover the 2019-20 and 2020-21 surveys and MHCLG extended the contract in 2018.

Overview of methodology

14. The population or key units of interest of 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.⁶
15. 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. Data collection on the EHS operates continuously over all four quarters of the year.⁷

⁵<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121108165934/http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/surveyofenglishhousing/>

⁶The 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.

⁷To accommodate a delay to the start of the survey caused by the procurement of the contract for carrying out the 2016-17 to 2018-19 EHS, fieldwork for the 2016-17 EHS began in May rather than April 2016.

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16. 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 survey are analysed on a two year rolling basis. The results of the physical survey presented for '2018' are based on fieldwork conducted between April 2017 and March 2019.
17. 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 area to half the country so interviewer and surveyor travel time and costs are significantly reduced.
18. The EHS sample is stratified by geographic region, tenure and households with an Household Reference Person who worked in non-manual occupations (based on the Census), and subsampled by tenure (identified using Experian's Residata).⁸
19. 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;
 - Modelling to produce response weights adjusting for non-response bias;
 - Calculating a design factor to adjust for tenure subsampling; and
 - Calibration to control totals.
20. Since the 2013-14 EHS, weights have been calibrated to one set of control totals for households/dwellings using the MHCLG dwelling stock estimates. 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's dwelling stock estimates. 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>

⁸ 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.

21. A smoothing procedure was introduced to the weighting process from the 2015-16 EHS. The smoothed weights were used for producing the published findings of the 2015-16 EHS and subsequent surveys in the series. The dwelling-to-household ratios used to derive the weights were smoothed by taking the average ratio across two years of the EHS (2016-17 and 2017-18 for the 2017-18 EHS weights). The smoothing procedure is described in more detail in the technical report of the 2015-16 EHS.⁹

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey-technical-advice>

Section 1

Relevance

The degree to which statistical outputs meet users' needs¹⁰

Annual user consultation

- 1.1. Each year, the EHS team conducts a review of forthcoming data collection and reporting priorities with the EHS User Group to ensure that the EHS meets user requirements. The User Group comprises over 30 policy officials and analysts from the core government departments that use the EHS (MHCLG, BEIS and the Home Office). Membership of the EHS User Group is reviewed and refreshed annually to ensure that all relevant policy teams have representation. The group is chaired by a the Head of the EHS. The survey's Senior Reporting Officer is consulted before any major change is implemented.
- 1.2. The annual review has three main objectives:
 - to review the data collected through the interview survey questionnaire to ensure that policy requirements are 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.
- 1.3. The 2019 annual user consultation was slightly different to previous years'. Given the speed at which policy priorities were changing in the latter half of 2019 (ie a General Election was called), the EHS team adopted a different strategy for the 2020-21 EHS. Instead of developing brand new questions to collect data which may no longer be relevant for policy development when they are available in 2022, questionnaire development in 2019 focused on improving the core questions in both the interview and physical surveys to ensure the EHS provides better quality data for policy making going forward.
- 1.4. The EHS team organised a number of meetings with EHS users (policy and analytical) across MHCLG and BEIS to review outputs and modelled data. On

¹⁰ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/quality-statistics-in-government/#the-ess-dimensions-of-quality>

the basis of those discussions, the EHS team devised the 2018-19 reporting strategy.

Reporting strategy for 2018-19 EHS

1.5. The findings from the 2018-19 EHS will be published in a series of short thematic reports in July 2020, alongside four factsheets. Each report will have about 20 pages of substantive contents, factsheets will be 2 sides. The factsheets have been introduced for the first time this year to provide user friendly short salient and self-contained topics. The detailed topic will cover:

- Housing costs and affordability
- Housing across the life course (i.e. comparing the housing circumstances of householders in different age groups)
- Energy efficiency
- Profile and condition of the English housing stock

The factsheets will cover:

- Second homes
- Sofa surfing and temporary accommodation
- Size of English homes
- Accessibility of English homes

1.6. The reporting strategy was signed off by the EHS User Group. The reporting format was developed in 2014-15 as a direct response to feedback from survey users who felt 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 makes the EHS data more accessible to a wider audience.

1.7. In addition to the annual thematic reports, each year a series of over 100 data tables are published on gov.uk. These live tables are a rich source of trend data as they have been published each year since 2008-09.

1.8. The 2018-19 thematic reports supplement information provided in the headline report which was produced by the EHS team and was published in January 2020. While the user consultation helped to identify priorities for the headline report, the content of the headline report does not change much year on year and the EHS team does not consult directly on its content.

Section 2

Accuracy and reliability

The degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value¹¹

- 2.1 This section summarises the steps taken to quality assure the EHS data and 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 have been produced where possible and are published in the Technical Report.

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.

¹¹ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/quality-statistics-in-government/#the-ess-dimensions-of-quality>

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- 2.5 Sampling error is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 of the EHS 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 studied

- 2.6 The EHS sample is drawn from the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of addresses maintained by the Post Office. That 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, 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. In addition, new questions introduced to the survey are reviewed by NatCen and MHCLG after the first quarter of data collection. While full-scale piloting of questions is not routinely undertaken for the EHS, NatCen's Questionnaire Development and Testing Hub reviewed the EHS questions asked of leaseholders in 2017-18 using a method known as cognitive testing. The recommendations of the review were implemented on the EHS from 2018-19.
- 2.9 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.

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- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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 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. The EHS has mechanisms in place to ensure accurate data capture and processing to 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;

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- conducting extensive tests on the validation systems used in processing physical survey data; and
 - testing the syntax for the automated data checking processes.
- 2.13 Processing error can have an impact on variance, for example, random keying errors in entering data which, across replications, would cancel each other out. 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;
 - reviewing addresses containing multiple household or dwellings to ensure selection that the sampling 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.
- 2.14 The number of errors that 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 size

- 2.15 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 have responded to the EHS. 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.
- 2.16 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.

- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 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

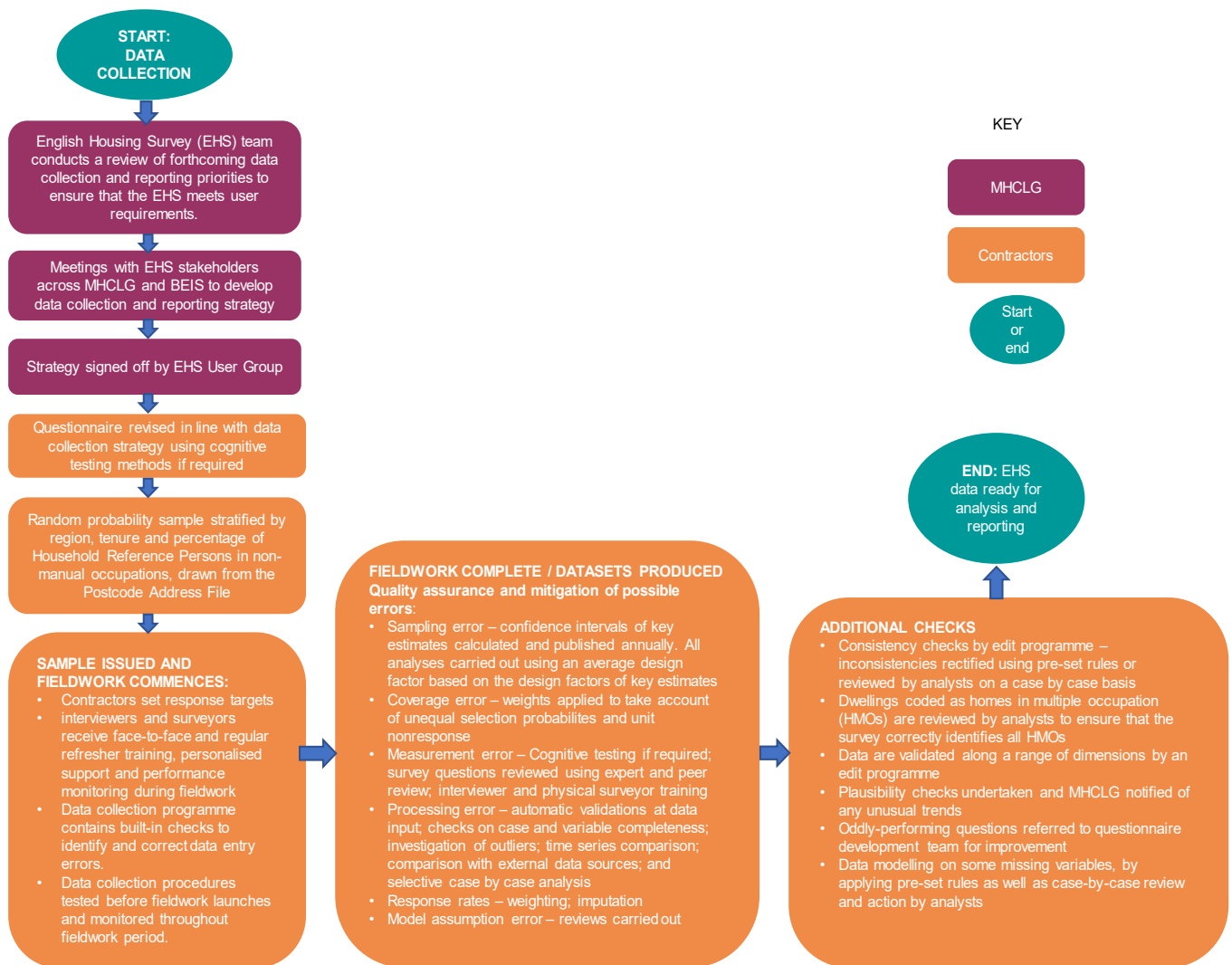
- 2.19 In October 2012, the Cabinet Secretary and the Head of the Civil Service commissioned a review of the quality assurance of analytical models that inform government policy. The review published a final report in March 2013, setting out results of work to map business critical models and quality assurance in government.¹²
- 2.20 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.

¹²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206946/review_of_qa_of_govt_analytical_models_final_report_040313.pdf

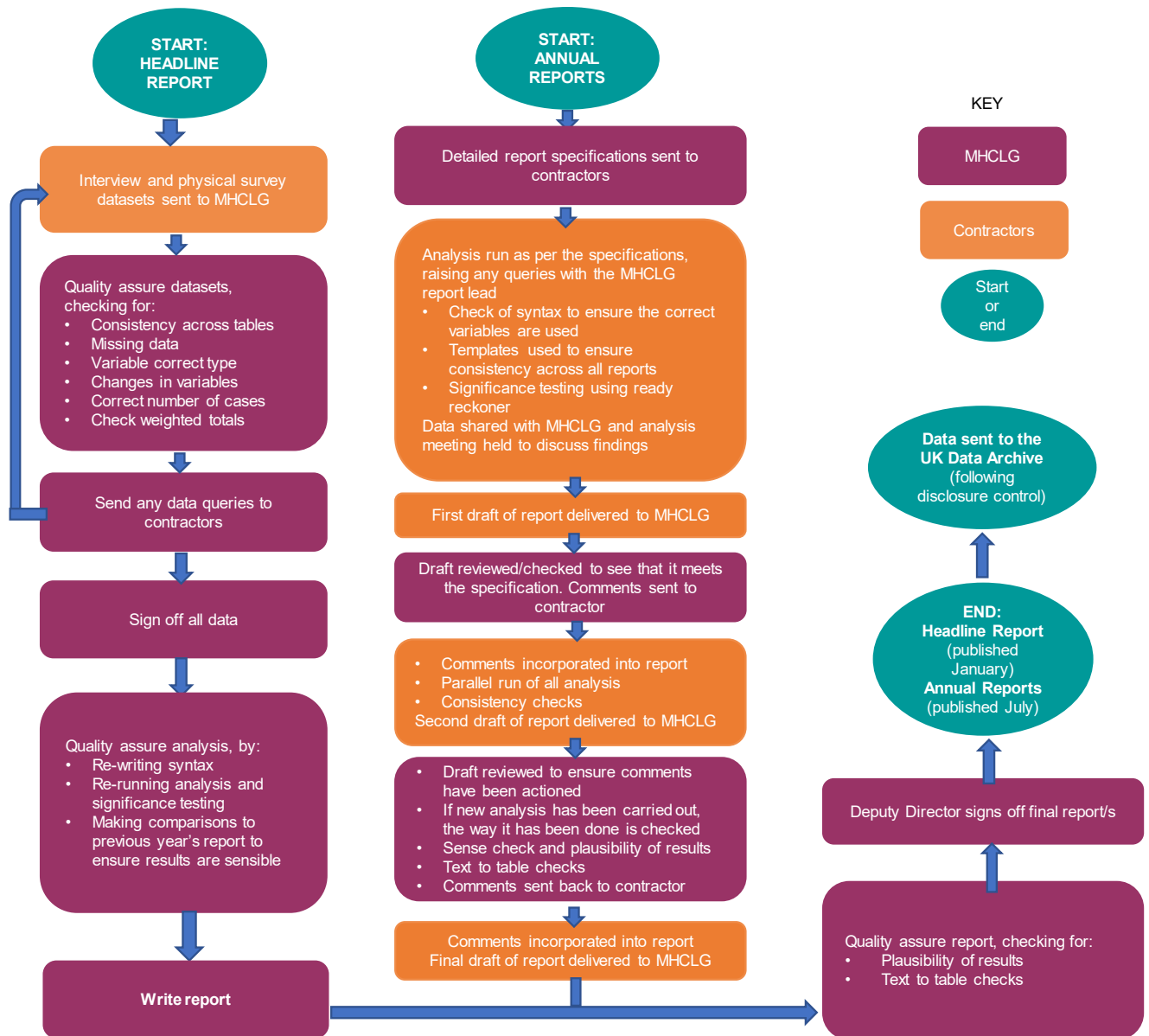
Quality flow charts

2.21 A summary of the quality assurance processes for both data collection and reporting are provided in the flow charts below:

Quality assurance flowchart: data collection



Quality assurance flowchart: reporting



Section 3

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' needs¹³

- 3.1 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 the public datasets released.
- 3.2 To provide timely data to users, key headline figures from the EHS are published in a headline report, usually within 10 months of the end of the survey year. For the 2018-19 EHS, the headline report was published in January 2020. 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>
- 3.3 A further series of thematic reports on the 2018-19 EHS will be published in July 2020. The topics covered in the reports will include: Housing costs and affordability; Housing across the life course (comparing the housing circumstances of householders in different age groups); Energy efficiency; Profile and condition of the English housing stock. In addition four short factsheets on: second homes; sofa surfing and temporary accommodation; size of English homes; and accessibility of English homes.
- 3.4 The 2018-19 End User Licence, Special Licence and Secure Access datasets will be released on the UK Data Service in the summer and autumn of 2020.
- 3.5 As specified in the Memorandum of Understanding in Relation to Data Sharing between BEIS and MHCLG, BEIS is due to publish a report on fuel poverty based on the combined 2017-18 and 2018-19 EHS in spring 2020 after the release of the 2018-19 EHS headline report.
- 3.6 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

¹³ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/quality-statistics-in-government/#the-ess-dimensions-of-quality>

release. The EHS pre-release access list is published on the MHCLG statistics web page.¹⁴

- 3.7 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.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

Section 4

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 advice¹⁵

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

GOV.UK

4.2 The EHS webpages are accessible from the MHCLG statistics launch page.¹⁶ The table below shows the total number of hits and unique users on selected EHS webpages for calendar year 2019.

Page	Page views	Unique page views
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey	45,813	28,652
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-headline-report	18,975	14,503
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-private-rented-sector	3,730	2,670
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-home-ownership	3,350	2,419
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-households	2,625	1,849
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-energy	2,387	1,725
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-stock-condition	2,226	1,542
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-questionnaire-and-physical-survey-form	2,084	1,544

¹⁵ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/quality-statistics-in-government/#the-ess-dimensions-of-quality>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-social-rented-sector	2,043	1,483
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2017-to-2018-neighbourhoods	728	554

- 4.3 Between April 2018 and end of March 2019 the EHS team received a large number of requests for advice/information about the EHS from other government departments and outside the government as well as for ad-hoc analysis by MHCLG colleagues. The team also responded to a large number of Parliamentary Questions.

UK Data Service End User Licence

- 4.4 The anonymised EHS datasets are released every year via the UK Data Service <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>. Checks are undertaken on the datasets released through UK Data Service to avoid the release of disclosive information. Any potentially disclosive data items such as free text and string variables are removed from the datasets and only high level statistical region geographic identifiers are included. From the release of the 2014-15 data, only simplified versions of the derived datasets are available under the End User Licence to minimise the risk of data disclosure further; more detailed data are available only as Special Licence datasets. The lowest geography in the End User Licence datasets is region.
- 4.5 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.

UK Data Service Special Licence

- 4.6 The more detailed data of the EHS are only available as Special Licence datasets from 2014-15. The Special License datasets 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 physical derived variables released under the End User Licence and Special Licence is available in Chapter 5 of the EHS technical report.
- 4.7 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.¹⁷ The contents 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

- 4.8 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 or Special Licences. 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. The Secure Data Service then screens all the analysis outputs to ensure that no individuals can be identified before releasing them to the researcher for publication.
- 4.9 The EHS datasets with detailed geographic identifiers are available only via the Secure Data Service at the UK Data Service.

Open data standards

- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 The more disclosive of the EHS datasets released through the UK Data Service dictate a more restrictive licence than the Open Government Licence. As discussed above, EHS datasets are released on an End User or a Special Licence and a dataset with detailed geographic identifiers is released with Secure Access licence. The datasets from the UK Data Service are available in tab-delimited format (meeting Level 3 of the Scheme, namely, data made available in an open, non-proprietary format).
- 4.12 The MHCLG Linked Open Data Communities is an initiative launched to improve the accessibility of datasets held by the Department.¹⁸ Data released through the Linked Open Data Communities meet Level 5 of the Five Star Scheme (i.e.

¹⁷ Published October 2014, available from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologytopicsandstatisticalconcepts/disclosurecontrol/policyforsocialsurvey/microdata>

¹⁸ <http://opendatacommunities.org/>

linked data in multiple machine-readable formats including JSON, RDF, Turtle and N-triples, and a SPARQL 1.1 endpoint). 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.

English Housing Survey data security strategy

- 4.13 All respondents taking part in the EHS are given an assurance by MHCLG and its contractors that the information they provide will be handled in the strictest confidence as directed by the Code of Practice for Statistics, the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation. MHCLG undertakes to ensure that the survey information is used to produce anonymous statistics for decision making in government and for genuine research purposes only. The steps taken to ensure respondent anonymity while still maximising the utility of the statistics for users are published on the EHS pages on Gov.uk.¹⁹

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-housing-survey-data-security-strategy-and-arrangements>

Section 5

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 similar²⁰

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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

- 5.4 Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales conduct their own housing surveys. The EHS Team works closely with those survey to share best practice.
 - **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. Since 2012, the survey has been an integrated component of the Scottish Household Survey.²¹
 - **Northern Ireland House Condition Survey** – provides a comprehensive picture of the dwelling stock, including condition and energy efficiency, and

²⁰ <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/quality-statistics-in-government/#the-ess-dimensions-of-quality>

²¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/SHCS>

examine the association between dwelling conditions and the social and economic circumstances of households.²²

- **Welsh Housing Conditions Survey** – is very similar to the EHS and the housing surveys in Scotland and Northern Ireland and is run on an ad-hoc basis. The most recent being the 2017-18 survey, for which the sample was drawn from eligible households in the National Survey for Wales 2017-18.

Geographies below England level

- 5.5 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). The EHS datasets available through the End User and Special Licences 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.
- 5.6 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).

Harmonisation of statistics inputs and outputs

- 5.7 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. The Government Statistical Service published a Harmonisation Strategy in 2019. Its aim is to make it easier for users to draw clearer and more robust comparisons between data sources. The EHS adopts harmonised questions where possible.

²² <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey>

Sources for further information or advice

- Link to headline report
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>
- Link to annual reports
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>
- 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/Data_Sharing_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 Quality, published by the Government Statistical Service Quality Centre
<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/quality/>
- Official Statistics Release Calendar
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>
- Code of Practice for Statistics
<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>
- Further information email: ehs@communities.gov.uk

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