

Delivery Plan for the Long Term Strategy for Population Surveys in Scotland 2009 – 2019

1. The Scottish Government's Long Term Strategy for Population Surveys in Scotland 2009 – 2019¹ was originally published in June 2009 with a refresh published in March 2012. This paper sets out the delivery plan for the strategy.
2. Table 1 on the following page shows the main pieces of work that have been identified and the long-term aims that all work is progressing toward. Work completed in 2009 to 2012 is noted in grey and details have been removed.
3. There are four strands to the strategy:
 - Core questions and pooled sample
 - Respondent burden and response rates
 - Analysis and dissemination
 - Scottish Government cross-sectional surveys

Annex A, that begins on page 3, provides more detail on the pieces of work currently planned for action.

4. This delivery plan will be updated biannually for the meetings of the Scottish Population Survey Co-ordinating Committee.
5. Work will be taken forward by the Scottish Population Survey Working Group and overseen by the Scottish Population Surveys Co-ordinating Committee. The remit and membership of the Committee and the Working Group can be seen on the Population Surveys webpage².

Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Scottish Government

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¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/SurveyStrategy>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/scotstat/SPSCC>

	Harmonisation	Data management	Respondent rates and respondent burden	Analysis and dissemination	SHS, SCJS and SHeS
Work complete 2009 – 2012	Procurement Review Progress core question harmonisation Review core questions Finalise wording of core questions All core questions included in major SG surveys	Develop quick response system to identify field work activity Investigate a centralised sampling system Instigate centralised sampling for the major SG surveys	Investigate response rates Investigate ways to improve response rates	Investigate the costs and benefits of clustering Publish a user guide of topic/item coverage in surveys Develop guidance for informed consent forms and permissions statements	SHS Review Review purpose and content of all major SG cross-sectional surveys in co-ordination with each other Procure major SG surveys in line with recommendations from the procurement review First year of fieldwork for the centrally sampled surveys under new contracts
	Core questions and pooled sample	Response rates and respondent burden	Analysis and dissemination	Scottish Government cross-sectional surveys	
2013	Investigate the requirement for a method to impute missing data for core variables Monitor the topic coverage of other surveys to assess opportunities for harmonisation and efficiencies Promote centralised sampling knowledge and resources to other surveys across Scotland Examine the performance of core questions and review if necessary	Continuous monitoring of respondent burden Monitoring of survey fieldwork outcomes Monitor developments in relation to alternative modes of data collection	Review reporting thresholds Develop dissemination strategy for pooled samples Develop weighting procedures for the individual surveys and pooled sample Consider options for dissemination of themed analysis Provide weights for individual surveys and the pooled data Analyse and disseminate pooled data Work with AQMeN to disseminate survey data through events	Investigate the standardisation of data storage practices for major SG surveys and pooled sample Coordinate survey technical reports and user guides to facilitate understanding and effective use of survey data	
2014 - 2015	Investigate using harmonised data to create an expanded sampling frame	Analysis of non-response by comparing survey and census non-response patterns Pilot alternative modes of data collection		2015: Review purpose and content of surveys and re-procure contracts if continuing	
2016 - 2019	Align local surveys with the co-ordination process	Subsequent work depends on the results of investigations and reviews of emerging technologies and investigations			

Annex: Detail of work to be taken forward over 2013

The details of the delivery tasks for 2013 have been divided into continuous activities and more distinct projects. The continuous activities are expected to require regular low level input (e.g. monitoring fieldwork outcomes) or a watching brief (e.g. monitoring developments in relation to alternative modes of data collection). While it would be beneficial to the delivery of the long-term strategy for the Scottish Government to be more pro-active in relation to some of these activities, due to limited resources we are restricted to being proactive and responding to opportunities that arise.

The distinct projects are pieces of work which require more concentrated resources over a specific period of time.

Time specified for tasks is approximate.

Ongoing Monitoring Activities

Monitor the topic coverage of other surveys to assess opportunities for harmonisation and efficiencies	
Description	Monitor the questions included in other surveys in Scotland. If opportunities arise, propose that SG core questions should be included and/or question wording should be modified to replicate SG core.
Output	Capitalise on opportunities for harmonisation and efficiency savings.
Lead	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Managers of other surveys
Time needed	Ongoing
Start date	Summer 2012
Planned completion date	Ongoing

Promote centralised sampling knowledge and resources to other surveys across Scotland	
Description	Through the development and delivery of the centralised sampling project the SG gained a detailed knowledge of survey sampling. This resource should be shared with other public bodies which deliver surveys in Scotland.
Output	Assistance for other surveys. (As a result of this strand, OCSP will be selecting the sample for the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey from 2013 onwards)
Lead	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Managers of other surveys
Time needed	Ongoing
Planned start date	Summer 2012
Planned completion date	Ongoing

Continual Monitoring of Respondent Burden

Description	Monitor the number and length of Scottish Government population surveys in the field. Data linkage should be considered as an option for meeting new and changing requirements associated with our surveys. The new Data Sharing and Linking Service will provide a resource to enable new linkages to take place from Dec 2013.
Output	Report to SPSCC as necessary
Lead	Survey Harmonisation Co-ordinator
Other groups involved	Survey Managers Contractors
Time needed	Ongoing
Planned start date	Ongoing
Planned completion date	Ongoing

Monitoring of survey fieldwork outcomes

Description	For the 3 surveys each of the contractors will supply the SG with quarterly fieldwork outcome reports. These reports will be analysed to ensure that the outcomes meet the levels specified in the survey contracts.
Output	Sign-off on quarterly fieldwork, any issues raised with survey managers and contractors.
Lead	Survey Harmonisation Co-ordinator
Other groups involved	Survey Managers Contractors
Time needed	Ongoing
Planned start date	May 2012
Planned completion date	Ongoing

Monitor developments in relation to alternative modes of data collection

Description	Monitor research and changes made in relation to modes of data collection in other surveys in Scotland, UK or elsewhere. (A comprehensive study was completed by ONS in 2010 – available here)
Output	Updates for SPSCC when required
Lead	Survey Harmonisation Co-ordinator
Other groups involved	Survey Managers
Time needed	Ongoing
Planned start date	Ongoing
Planned completion date	Ongoing

Distinct Projects

Investigate the requirement for a method to impute missing data for core variables	
Description	Imputing can be used to address unit (an eligible sample unit fails to participate in the survey) and item (some questions are not answered by a responding unit) non-response. This investigation will be concerned with item non-response as unit non-response is addressed by weighting. The investigation will review existing survey practices for imputation and assess the requirements for applying imputation to data from the 2012 survey sweeps.
Output	Short paper examining current practices and appraisal of future options.
Lead	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Survey Managers
Time needed	4 weeks
Planned start date	Summer 2012
Planned completion date	On hold

Examine the performance of core questions and review if necessary	
Description	An important element of the development of the pooled sample will be the quality assurance of pooled data. The QA process will incorporate an assessment of the performance of the core questions across all three surveys
Output	Recommendations on the future of core questions
Lead	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Topic lead analysts
Time needed	2 months
Planned start date	August 2013
Planned completion date	October 2013

Review Reporting Thresholds	
Description	Investigate procedures in place to avoid reporting on small numbers which may be disclosure or unreliable and look at areas for improvement. Make recommendations and produce guidance.
Output	Paper and recommendations, including minimum sample cell requirements for publication.
Lead	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Survey Managers
Time needed	4 weeks
Planned start date	On hold
Planned completion date	

Develop dissemination strategy for pooled samples	
Description	In developing the strategy the following issues need to be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs and expectations of users of the data • Guidance for users on most appropriate sources of data (Pooled sample/ individual surveys/ IHS) • Consider previous work on links with IHS and other surveys
Output	Dissemination Strategy for Pooled Sample (Report)
Lead	Survey Harmonisation Co-ordinator
Other groups involved	Survey Managers
Time needed	3 months
Planned start date	September 2012
Planned completion date	January 2013

Develop weighting procedures for the individual surveys and pooled sample	
Description	From 2012 onwards the weighting of survey data will be undertaken by the SG rather than the survey contractors. The procedures for deriving the weights need to be in place prior to receipt of the survey data in 2013.
Output	Full weighting methodology and code which can be implemented upon receipt of survey data.
Lead	Survey Harmonisation Co-ordinator
Other groups involved	Methodology Advisory Service
Time needed	8 months
Planned start date	January 2012
Planned completion date	March 2013

Dissemination of themed analysis/topic reports	
Description	Investigate ways to increase the dissemination of Scottish Government analysis and other analysis of survey data. Investigate the production of themed reports using Scottish Government survey data.
Output	Increase use of Scottish Government survey data across stakeholders and researchers
Lead	Communities Analytical Services Division
Other groups involved	SHS Lead Analysts Network AQMeN
Time needed	Ongoing
Planned start date	Ongoing
Planned completion date	Ongoing

Work with AQMeN to disseminate survey data through events	
Description	AQMeN have funding available to run a number of training events and workshops to promote the use of Scottish and UK Datasets. AQMeN could work with the SG to deliver events to coincide with the release of new survey findings and data.
Output	Events/workshops promoting the use of survey data and survey findings
Lead	AQMeN
Other groups involved	Survey managers Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Time needed	TBC
Planned start date	Summer 2013
Planned completion date	End of 2013

Provide weights for individual surveys and pooled data	
Description	The derivation of the survey weights was previously undertaken by survey contractors. This will be completed by OCSP for survey data from 2012 onwards.
Output	Range of required weights (e.g. household, individual, etc) for individual surveys and the pooled sample
Lead	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Survey managers and nominated analysts for QA
Time needed	Dates for individual surveys to be confirmed
Planned start date	May 2013
Planned completion date	August 2013

Analyse and disseminate pooled data	
Description	The work will include: weighting the pooled sample; dataset quality assurance; analysis and preparation of outputs; and quality assurance of outputs. Details of the proposals are specified in the dissemination plan for pooled samples.
Output	Dataset and dissemination of findings
Lead	Office of the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Nominated analysts for QA
Time needed	5 months
Planned start date	July 2013
Planned completion date	November 2013

Investigate the standardisation of data storage practices for major SG surveys and pooled sample	
Description	Data storage and data conversion (SPSS to SAS and SAS to SPSS) is being considered for SHS data. Wider work will include consideration of storing data in XML format or some other platform-independent format.
Output	Recommendations for the storage of SHS data which are applicable for data from the other surveys and the pooled sample
Lead	SHS Survey Manager
Other groups involved	Survey Managers
Time needed	4 months
Planned start date	November 2012 (though preparatory work from summer 2012)
Planned completion date	March 2013

Share best practice and consider potential for harmonised approach to microdata release	
Description	For each of the surveys there are procedures for allowing researchers access to detailed (potentially disclosive) data where a strong argument can be made. Consider improvements and sharing of processes across surveys.
Output	Recommendations for harmonised procedures
Lead	Office for the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Survey Managers
Time needed	TBC
Planned start date	July 2012
Planned completion date	June 2013

Coordinate survey technical reports and user guides to facilitate understanding and effective use of survey data	
Description	The technical reports for the individual surveys include information on sampling, response rates and weighting. As these activities have been completed by OCSP they will be responsible for the technical write-up.
Output	Required sections for individual survey technical reports
Lead	Office for the Chief Statistician and Performance
Other groups involved	Survey Managers Survey Contractors
Time needed	9 months (not continuous)
Planned start date	Spring 2013
Planned completion date	End of 2013