

Overview

This paper provides a broad-based summary of the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) 2012 development work, which has been underpinned by the SHS Review 2010 project which was undertaken to scope the requirements for the SHS from 2012 onwards.

This includes consideration of the multi-layered consultation activities undertaken in 2010 to identify the key priorities amongst users and stakeholders and identification of how these align against wider Scottish Government analytical priorities such as the Long Term Strategy for Population Surveys in Scotland 2009-2019.

Background to the review project and access to the final outcome reports when published will be available from the SHS website:

- www.scotland.gov.uk/SHSReview

Background

The SHS is a continuous survey based on a sample of the general population in private residences in Scotland. The survey is designed to provide reliable and up-to-date information about the composition, characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households and individuals on a range of issues both nationally and at a sub-national level.

The SHS was first commissioned by the then Development Department of the Scottish Executive in 1998, with fieldwork running continuously since February 1999. It was commissioned under recognition that the information sources available for Scotland were often too infrequent, insufficiently detailed, or based on too small samples to provide reliable information for Scotland.

Until recently, the SHS was the largest sample survey in Scotland involving interviewing with around 15,500 households annually, though this has reduced in the last few years to around 14,000 households. The survey is designed to inform research and evidence based policy making at national and local authority level. It is also designed to be representative so that the data can be broken down both geographically and in terms of population sub-groups (e.g. based on demographics such as age and gender).

Although the SHS has undertaken a continuous cycle of review since its inception in 1998, the Written Evidence for Assessment¹ (WEFA) submitted as part of the assessment of the

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002/Consultation/WEFA>

SHS by the UK Statistics Authority in 2009, identified the need for a full scale review of the SHS. The previous reviews included a biennial review of the topics covered in the survey and the actual questions asked, and the wider-reaching reviews looking at issues such as survey methodology. The last large-scale review was completed in 2005. There is also regular consultation with users on their requirements, such as, the Questionnaire Review 2009 project to enhance the SHS questionnaire for fieldwork in 2009, and the Website Review 2009 to assess the usability and accessibility of information on the SHS website².

Survey Review 2010 Project

The SHS Survey Review 2010 project was set up to assess the operation of, and uses made, of the survey with the primary aim of assessing the achieved benefits, quality and continued need for the survey and to maximise the benefits through appropriate question and topic content.

It is recognised that the SHS has evolved over the years, growing organically through both widening out the topic coverage within the survey (with demands for questions by far outstripping the space available) and the survey design itself changing to accommodate these additional demands. There is increasing demand for survey estimates at a sub-national level which places emphasis on re-prioritising the survey coverage and considering how the survey can be delivered more effectively and efficiently.

As such, the review focused on the following key areas:

- Purpose of the survey
- Alignment with broader analytical work within and beyond Scottish Government
- Topic coverage
- Survey design
- Project ownership and management

Survey Priorities

The review on survey priorities was conducted in the latter parts of 2009 through to summer 2010 with a mixed method approach applied:

- Review of existing survey documentation
- Face-to-face interviews (with internal stakeholders)
- Web-based consultation exercise (with external stakeholders and others)
- Consultation with contractors (Ipsos MORI and TNS BMRB)
- Focus groups (focus group exercises with external stakeholders)

² Summary information on these processes are available from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/SHSReview>

Internal interviews

The review revealed a widespread opinion that whilst the SHS is good, it could be better. The survey is considered to have considerable potential which at the moment is underutilised. Although the SHS meets the needs of many of its users within and outwith Scottish Government there is scope for improvements to be made to raise the utility of the data it provides. In many instances this is based on the substantial pressures and demands for the survey to gather additional and more detailed data. These demands reflect changes that have impacted stakeholders within Scottish Government (such as the National Performance Framework) and beyond (such as Single Outcome Agreements) and the often rather niche needs of voluntary and community sector organisations.

It is highly unlikely that the present survey design would be able to respond to the considerable pressures and demands the SHS is under. Fully incorporating the demands of all stakeholders would grossly inflate the survey running time and change the way the survey is carried out in areas such as sample size. As the review goes forward it is essential to consider how the demands on the survey can be managed. Whilst the survey can and should continue to benefit a range of stakeholders, there is a need for the survey to identify who its key users should be. Furthermore, there appears to be scope to consider a shift to a fully core and modular design.

Web-based survey

The web based survey examining the views of key stakeholders within and outwith Scottish Government on the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) revealed that there was strong awareness of the SHS and it is understood as providing a picture of Scottish households and individuals as a support for government policy.

The majority of respondents use the survey several times a year. The uses of the data were broad ranging from general awareness and background information through to providing the main source of data in a particular topic area. The SHS was also used to report about local authorities and Single Outcome Agreements (SOA's), as a support to sub-group analysis and as a means of developing and monitoring policy.

Respondents used the full breadth of the topics covered by the survey. The importance of topics was higher in broader policy areas of the survey such as neighbourhoods alongside demographic information such as household composition. Topic use was lower in the more specific topics covered by the survey such as recycling and internet access. The high use of health data can largely be attributed to respondents from the NHS.

The survey was considered to be adequate for the needs of respondents. Three out of five respondents said the range of topics covered by the survey was adequate for their needs and one in two said the depth of coverage was adequate. However, a quarter stated that the depth of coverage in the SHS was not adequate for their needs.

Despite the general view that the survey was adequate for their needs, there was considerable demand for additional content and a more detailed examination of existing

topics, particularly amongst respondents from local authorities and the voluntary sector. These demands covered a wide range of often disparate topics which made them difficult to easily summarise but included economic, environment, communities and equalities.

Respondents made a number of suggestions regarding revisions to the survey. These included demands towards: improving the timeliness of data; increasing sample sizes to allow improved sub-group and sub-local authority analysis; a modular survey; and moving content better suited to alternative Scottish Government surveys (such as health and community safety). Timeliness and sample sizes was identified as an issue particularly amongst local authority respondents.

Focus groups

As a follow-up to the web survey, a series of focus groups were ran with the aim of gathering more detailed views and opinions of survey development and particularly the identification of priority areas for consideration in the future.

The main findings from the focus group discussions identified that the purpose of the SHS should be: “to provide representative data on a range of policy areas, at national and local authority level, on an annual basis to support Scottish Government”.

The survey has a disparate range of users and there is an expectation on the SHS to primarily meet the needs of Scottish Government followed by other public bodies.

The survey should cover a wide range of topics at a broad level to support population sub-group and cross variable analysis.

Participants found it difficult to remove content from the survey as the majority of information gathered was considered to be valuable. Despite this, there was considerable demand for additional content to be incorporated into the survey across a range of topics.

Survey Design

Following consideration of the messages coming out of the first phase of the survey review, the SHS Steering Group commissioned the Office of the Chief Statistician in the Scottish Government to explore redesigning the SHS into a fully core and modular structure, to test whether it could work in practice.

Scottish Government Analytical Service Divisions (ASDs) were asked to liaise with their own internal and external stakeholders and provide prioritised bids for SHS content. The criteria for inclusion of items in the SHS were given and ASDs were informed that where existing questions or topics were not requested for continued inclusion they would be removed.

A sufficiently high number of questions were either not requested for continued inclusion (and so are recommended for removal) or were requested for part inclusion only (and so

can be modularised) to render detailed analysis and challenge of respective priorities unnecessary at that stage.

Topics recommended for inclusion, above and beyond the Core Questions (for inclusion in all SG surveys) are:

- Household and householder characteristics
- Transport & travel, including travel diary, fuel use, use of public transport
- Income, mortgage, rent, children's material deprivation
- Housing, including tenure, previous accommodation, housing lists
- Perceptions of neighbourhood, including greenspace and children's safety
- Volunteering behaviour
- Satisfaction with local services
- Internet use
- Recycling behaviour
- Attitudes toward energy efficiency, climate change
- Sport
- Culture
- *Childcare
- *Social mobility
- *Household expenditure (beyond mortgage and rent)

The three topics proceeded with a star* were suggested for addition without details of how many questions would be required to cover them sufficiently. These topics are tentatively recommended for inclusion if they can be covered sufficiently and robustly with a few minutes of questions, or if they need longer they can be shown to be of sufficient priority to remove other questions.

Two topics, household formation and housing preparation for older living, were also suggested for addition without details of how many questions would be required to cover them sufficiently. These topics are not recommended for inclusion, in order to allow adequate space in the survey for priority content from the House Condition Survey.

The items not requested for retention in the survey, in some cases being explicitly recommended for removal, cover:

- Some transport & travel items including motorbikes, vehicle storage, opinions about Traffic Scotland
- Detailed employment information (better collected through the Labour Force Survey)
- Children's schools – which school child attends and opinions about it
- Health and social care (better collected through the Health survey)
- Housing adaptations
- Neighbourhood likes and dislikes
- Antisocial behaviour (better collected through the Crime and Justice Survey)

All items requested for retention or addition to the survey were sorted according to the level of coverage (national, urban/rural, 15% SIMD/other, Local Authority) and frequency (annual, biennial, or less) that was requested. The majority of content was requested for national, local authority level coverage (or national coverage requiring full sample in order to collect sufficient cases of relatively rare event, such as travel by plane). However a sufficient number of items were requested at a lesser frequency or geography to allow for a core and modular structure.

This exercise also confirmed the requirement to integrate the Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) with the SHS through recognising that there is a relatively large overlap in topic coverage between the two surveys.

An in-depth discussion about the future of surveys and the use of surveys across Scotland was had at the ScotStat Survey Conference³ in March 2010. Further discussion on priorities, in light of public sector financial pressures, were discussed at the Annual Statistics Stakeholder Conference⁴ on 1st November 2010.

Outcomes from the survey review project were considered alongside these discussions to derive a design that provides increased efficiency and will still meet the majority of user needs. This will be achieved by running a combined household and house condition survey.

The SHS will be fully modularised, and the SHCS will become a module of the SHS. A more efficient design will enable headline SHS statistics to be reported annually at both national and Local Authority levels, but there will be offset by a slight reduction in the precision of SHS estimates. This will not effect the SHCS physical survey element.

The proposed core and modular design is based on a 11,000 annual household sample with an average interview length of 60 minutes.

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/scotstat/analystsnetwork/2010SurveyConference>

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/scotstat/StatsCon2010>

Figure 1: Draft modular structure for the SHS, integrating the SHCS, 2012-2015 inclusive

	sample size	minutes interview w time	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Full sample - CORE	11,000	4	SG Core (equalities, tenure, mental wellbeing, smoking, caring, experience of crime)	SG Core (equalities, tenure, mental wellbeing, smoking, caring, experience of crime)	SG Core (equalities, tenure, mental wellbeing, smoking, caring, experience of crime)	SG Core (equalities, tenure, mental wellbeing, smoking, caring, experience of crime)
Full sample annual (provides LA level estimates annually)	11,000	30	satisfaction with services, use of transport, travel diary, income, previous accommodation, cultural activities, feeling safe, neighbourhood (three greenspace questions - Year 1 only)	satisfaction with services, use of transport, travel diary, income, previous accommodation, cultural activities, feeling safe, neighbourhood	satisfaction with services, use of transport, travel diary, income, previous accommodation, cultural activities, feeling safe, neighbourhood	satisfaction with services, use of transport, travel diary, income, previous accommodation, cultural activities, feeling safe, neighbourhood
Full sample biennial (provides LA level estimates every other year)	11,000	6	young people, transport and travel	volunteering, local services & visits to the outdoors; landlord satisfaction	young people, transport and travel	volunteering, local services & visits to the outdoors; landlord satisfaction
About one-third sample annual (provides national level estimates annually; could be combined over years to provide LA estimates)	3,500	15	SHCS internet, attitudes towards housing and climate change household expenditure	SHCS internet, attitudes towards housing and climate change household expenditure OR sport OR culture	SHCS internet, attitudes towards housing and climate change household expenditure	SHCS internet, attitudes towards housing and climate change household expenditure OR sport OR culture
About one-third sample biennial (provides national level estimates every other year, less potential to)	3,500	5	SHCS internet, financial inclusion transport	SHCS child material deprivation childcare OR social mobility OR attitudes to housing in older age	SHCS internet, financial inclusion transport	SHCS child material deprivation childcare OR social mobility OR attitudes to housing in older age
	3,000	follow-up	house condition physical survey	house condition physical survey	house condition physical survey	house condition physical survey

Survey Questions

The key issue to note with the proposed core and modular design is that the model cannot be finalised until the exact questions in all topic areas have been fully worked through and tested, which is necessary to see how long modules take to administer. The timings given are very approximate, especially for the modules covering new topics for which questions have not yet been devised, and are likely to alter.

A third phase of consultation will shortly be kicked off to finalise the question content. This will be delivered again through liaison with the SHS Lead Analysts to ensure they can reflect internal and external stakeholder priorities.

This will involve finalisation of question wording where recognised questions are already in place. In other instances, specific questions will have to be identified where only topic themes were set out through the survey design phase.

Piloting of any new or substantially changed questions will need to be undertaken as part of the survey development work for the new contract.

Survey Requirements and Procurement

The Scottish Government is currently undertaking a procurement exercise for the SHS 2012-2015 contract. The SHS contract will run from June 2011 to mid 2016. Fieldwork will run from January 2012 to December 2015. The contracts will run for 5 (4 years of fieldwork) years. Contractors will also be asked to provide costings for 1 and 2 year fieldwork extensions. The main aims and objectives of the SHS 2012 have been defined within this exercise as:

- Meet central and local Government needs for priority policy relevant data across a broad range of topics (including needs for continuing time-series of data collected by the SHS and SHCS currently);
- Be understandable and useful to stakeholders and so lead to a high level of buy-in and use of the SHS;
- Have built in flexibility to respond to different data needs regarding geography and frequency (e.g. to provide some data annually at Local Authority level, and some biennially at a national level), and changes to these requirements over time;
- Align with other surveys and data vehicles (in particular the Scottish Health, and Crime and Justice Surveys);
- Produce high quality data in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics so as to provide data that is suitable for the production of National Statistics publications in a cost efficient way;
- To allow detailed follow-up surveys of sub-samples from the main survey sample, if required.

Final sign off of the contract is timetabled for 10th June 2010, from which the SHS Project Team will look to pull together all relevant documentation outlining outcomes from the survey review project, the survey implementation requirements as part of the contract and ongoing consultation work around scoping future dissemination strategy for the survey outputs.

As the contract procurement is still part of an ongoing competition we are unable to provide definitive costs for the survey. The Invitation To Tender (ITT) document set a guide price of £6-£8 million for the duration of the contract.

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