



Department for Transport

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Dear Mary

Response to the National Travel Survey Compliance Check

Thank you for your letter about the National Travel Survey (NTS) Compliance Check sent on 17 September 2018. I am formally responding as Head of Profession for Statistics to outline the steps we have taken to address the recommendations in the letter. Overall, we noted the letter was very positive about the survey and the engagement of the NTS lead statistician Darren Stillwell and his team with your team at the Office for Statistics Regulation. We were also pleased that the innovative work of the NTS team has subsequently been recognised with a case study on the Code of Practice website and a blog on the GSS website.

We had already addressed a number of recommendations as part of the July 2018 NTS statistical release. Since then, the team have been working towards addressing the final three recommendations in your letter. Darren emailed Oliver on 31 January 2019 with an informal update on progress and I am writing now to confirm the completion of all of three recommendations. I address each one below, along with the actions we have taken:

- **A new NTS quality report, capturing existing and internal quality management approaches, confidentiality protection, and updated standard errors and confidence intervals.**

In January 2019 the NTS team published a user friendly quality report published covering those aspects of quality, and others:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775062/annex-d-nts-2019-quality-report.pdf

At the same time, we also published a set of standard errors and confidence interval tables updated for 2017:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775065/nts-2017-standards-errors.ods). We also have a new process now to produce more confidence intervals for our 2018 release, due in July 2019.

- **A new system for publishing ad hoc NTS analysis as standard, to enable reuse.**

In January 2019 we published external 34 ad hoc requests (see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ad-hoc-national-travel-survey->

[analysis](#)), and have a process now in place to do this at least once a year, which will be alongside one or both of our two main NTS statistical publications. We have had many follow up queries on these tables and this has highlighted the benefit of publishing them.

Publishing information on users views and experiences of the NTS

On 29 May 2019, we published four documents:

- a) A Discovery report investigating the benefits of designing a digital diary for the NTS;
- b) A Discovery report investigating the benefits of designing an interactive analysis tool for the NTS;
- c) An NTS user feedback exercise asking for views on proposed changes to survey questions; and
- d) A proposed revised questionnaire to sit alongside the user feedback document.

These are the first four documents here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-developments-for-the-nts>. The Discovery reports detail a wide range of user views about the National Travel Survey. They outline how respondents, interviewers, NTS contractors, and internal and external end users of the data might benefit from either a self-service online analysis tool or a digital travel diary.

Further to this, I would also like to draw your attention to our continued user engagement and transparency with some other publications. In January 2019 we published:

- a) Articles from external users showing innovative uses of the NTS data:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775032/2019-nts-commissioned-analyses.pdf
This was the second in the series after we introduced the concept in January 2018.
- b) Two NatCen reports on testing questions, and incentive and advance letter experiments:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775068/nts-2019-incentive-experiment-and-advance-letter-experiment-interim-report.pdf and
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/775067/nts-2019-cognitive-testing-report.pdf.

Ultimately, these experiments were unsuccessful in that they did not show an improvement in response rates for the survey. However, we feel it is important to publish these methodological reports to continue to show how we are continually striving to improve the NTS.

Finally, in May 2019 we published the results of the first wave of our new NTS panel survey, the National Travel Attitudes Study: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-attitudes-study-ntas-2019-wave-1>). This first wave consisted of questions previously asked on the British Social Attitudes Survey, but also 17 new questions driven entirely by policy needs within the Department on important topics such as low emission vehicles and seatbelt use. It will provide a flexible way of addressing policy needs for evidence in the future.

I hope this letter addresses all the remaining points of your original letter, and please contact either me or Darren if you wish to discuss any aspects further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Knowles', written in a cursive style.

Ian Knowles

Head of Profession for Statistics, Department for Transport