
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Professor Roger Halliday
Chief Statistician and Data Officer
Scottish Government
(by email)

16 October 2020

Dear Roger

Scottish House Condition Survey Statistics

As you are aware, we recently completed our review of the compliance of the [Scottish House Condition Survey \(SHCS\) statistics](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

We initiated this review following the public commitment we made in our 2020/21 [Regulatory Work Programme](#) to focus on statistics about key issues within Housing. We appreciate the positive and constructive way that the team engaged with us during the review, especially as we continue through these challenging times.

We found a range of positive features that demonstrate the trustworthiness, quality, and value of the statistics:

- The [Key Findings summary](#) drawing users' attention to the main messages in a clear and insightful way, along with comprehensive [methodology notes](#) which are updated annually and contain accessible information on the methods used and quality assurance approach.
- Establishing a new process to publish ad hoc data requests and analyses, making SHCS data accessible to all users in an open and transparent way.
- The survey data being published in Open Data format, and the team's plans to make the survey data accessible for wider re-use and further analysis via the UK Data Service next year.
- Future plans to develop new ad-hoc analyses based on deeper dives of the SHCS data on topics of particular user interest.
- Your team's regular engagement with users of the SHCS statistics through a range of means including the annual user days for the Scottish Household Survey (of which the SHCS is part) and communicating with users through the [ScotStat](#) network.
- Regular engagement with the survey contractors, Ipsos MORI and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) throughout the year, including attending the interviewer and surveyor training, resulting in good working relationships and the ability to deal with any queries promptly.

We identified some areas for improvement that would enhance the quality and value of the statistics:

- The ability to compare housing conditions across the different UK nations continues to be an area of interest for users. To assist users with doing this appropriately, we suggest that you provide signposting to other countries housing conditions data and relevant analyses within the SHCS statistics and contribute to cross-UK work to highlight the extent of the comparability and difference of these sources with the SHCS.
- In order to support transparency regarding planned developments of the SHCS statistics, the team should publish details about its future development plans for the statistics and its overall approach to user engagement, so that users are clear about the available channels for them to feed in their views on such developments.
- While the SHCS statistics are based primarily on survey sources, some administrative data are used for comparison purposes and as a small element of SHCS fuel poverty measurement. Where these administrative data sources are used, including those that are badged National Statistics, we expect producers to be assured of the quality of these data and its suitability for their use, and communicate this assurance to users. Our [administrative data quality assurance guidance](#) provides a framework to help producers to do this.

The suspension of all face-to-face surveys due to COVID-19, has created uncertainty around the future of SHCS data collection for both the social and physical survey. We discussed this in detail with your statisticians and heard of their potential plans in this area, including learning from, and sharing best practice with, other UK and Republic of Ireland statisticians through the Five Nations House Conditions Surveys meetings. We recommend that the team publish its plans soon so that users are informed of any future changes as soon as possible. Given the uncertainty and changing nature of events, we welcome that the team has agreed to keep in contact with us as these plans progress.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further. I am copying this letter to Ailie Clarkson, Lead Statistician, and Claire Wood and Rucha Amin in the statistics team, and Adam Krawczyk, Head of Housing, Homelessness & Regeneration Analysis at the Scottish Government.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
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