

06/12 : SCOTTISH POPULATION SURVEYS COORDINATING COMMITTEE

SCOTTISH HOUSEHOLD SURVEY REVIEW UPDATE

Background

The SHS is currently carried out on behalf of the Executive by MORI/TNS. It is now in the last year of its second 4 year contract which covers data collection until the end of 2006. As the basis for the continuation of SHS from January 2007 onwards, DD:ASD has undertaken an extensive review completed in December 2005. Since then, two main strands of work have been taken forward:

- the procurement of a new SHS contract covering data collection from 2007 to 2010
- an extensive review of questionnaire content for 2007

This paper concentrates on progress with these strands and raises some issues which have arisen.

Main Contract (2007-2010)

An Invitation to Tender (ITT) for the third four year sweep of the SHS was issued to 13 possible contractors in February 2006. In the end, only one tender was received from a consortium of three large research agencies (IpsosMORI, TNS and the Scottish Centre for Social Research). This brought into focus the issue of market capacity in Scotland. One of the reasons for the consortium forming was to increase capacity and to allow the individual survey companies to sustain a varied portfolio within their organisations. The meeting should note these issues for future survey developments.

The Tender Evaluation Panel are now in the latter stages of post-tender negotiation with the consortium and anticipate being in a position to let the contract by the end of June 2006.

Questionnaire Consultation

It was agreed that the questionnaire consultation for 2007 should be completed through lead analysts who need to consult with relevant policy colleagues regarding draft packages. It was recommended that they should be given some indication of allocated time and packages should be signed off by senior policy colleagues before being submitted to the SHS team for consideration.

The deadline for lead analysts to submit their revised packages was the end of March 2006. The SHS team have evaluated and made decisions on which questions should be included and which should be rejected in the revised questionnaire. The meeting should note that with the exception of transport, no lead analysts are moving their topic area to a modular design. The revised questionnaire will be passed to the contractor for scripting and piloting when the contract is let and will be in field in January 2007.

It is important to note that this process has been extremely helpful in identifying owners of topic areas and it is anticipated this will facilitate future engagement and policy use of the data.

It should also be noted that we still need to resolve issues about the content of the socio-economic core questions with OCS.

Survey Design

The review board agreed in principle that the survey should switch to an unclustered design. It was recognised that an unclustered design would bring extra costs and these should be scrutinised against alternative approaches.

The tenders were asked to submit costs for two sample strategies – unclustered and the most efficient design to produce specified levels of precision. In the event, the difference in cost was substantial (approximately £0.5 million over the life of the contract). The Tender Evaluation Panel has decided to opt for the most efficient design (a combination of clustered and unclustered areas resulting in 70% of the sample being unclustered at the end of each two year sweep, compared to 42% at present). Adapting to this option was not felt to inhibit possible future developments of an Integrated Household Survey in Scotland.

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