

## SCOTTISH HOUSEHOLD SURVEY DEVELOPMENTS

### 1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to inform members of the Committee about recent and forthcoming Scottish Household Survey (SHS) developments. Members of the Committee who are (or who may become) users of the SHS are invited to:

- ask any questions that they may have regarding the changes to the SHS for 2007;
- if they use the Travel Diary, consider the balance that might have to be struck between the size of sample for which the questions can be asked and the amount of detailed information that can be obtained about each reported journey;
- note the expected timescale for the development of the survey.

1.2 Some other information about the SHS, such as some recent and forthcoming publications of Transport-related results of the survey, is given in paper T&TSAC(06) 7. More information about the survey, including all the SHS publications, can be found on the SHS website: [www.scotland.gov.uk/shs](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/shs) .

### 2 Changes to the SHS for 2007

2.1 Members of the Committee will recall, from paper T&TSAC (05) 6, that the SHS was the subject of a Quality Review. As part of this, external consultants (Ewen McCaig and Traci Leven) obtained the views of users of the SHS, and made suggestions for improvements to the survey. The resulting "McCaig report" can be found on the SHS Website. In the light of the review, and the developing needs of the Scottish Executive (SE) for information, significant changes will be made to the SHS for 2007 onwards, including:

- the "modularisation" of the survey - to a much greater extent than hitherto, some topics/questions will be asked only of randomly-chosen sub-samples, in order that the survey as a whole can cover more topics/questions. Transport Statistics has taken great advantage of this facility, and so been able to increase greatly the number of Transport topics/questions in the survey;
- the introduction of a "Culture and Sport" module - the sample size will be increased by approximately 4,000 per year (in 2007 and 2008, at least), who will be asked many questions on those topics plus some "core" SHS questions (e.g. on the composition of the household).

2.2 Members of the Committee will recall being consulted on changes to the SHS Transport-related questions for 2007. Frank Dixon's e-mail of 12 December 2005 invited members to suggest changes to the current questions and new questions/topics for inclusion in the survey. The responses from Committee members and colleagues within SE were combined into a set of proposed changes to the Transport-related questions. These were considered by the SHS Technical Group, along with proposals for changes submitted by those who are responsible for other topic areas. The eventual outcome was described in Frank Dixon's e-mail of 5 July 2006, which provided a list of SHS "Transport" questions to be asked with effect from January 2007 (subject to successful piloting in the Autumn). That e-mail explained that, in order to make "space" for the many new Transport topics/questions that had been requested, SE had had to drop some of the existing questions, and to ask some of the existing questions only of randomly-chosen sub-samples. That was the "price" that SE had to pay to increase greatly the number of "Transport" questions, as it was not possible to increase the total amount of interview time.

2.3 The new questionnaire is being piloted over a few weeks, starting on 23rd October. The "interviewer debriefing" from the pilot is scheduled for 15th November.

2.4 The McCaig report suggested significant revisions to some of the definitions used for the Travel Diary (e.g. abolishing the "¼ mile or 5 minutes on foot" "cut-off" for the inclusion of journeys or stages of journeys), and to the way in which it collects details of journeys (e.g. obtaining an "overview" of the day's journeys, and checking that none have been overlooked, before asking for the details of each journey), in order to address the apparent under-counting of journeys. As a result, some major changes will be made to the Travel Diary.

2.5 Because of the extent of the redesign, it is uncertain whether the "new" Travel Diary will require the same amount of time (per interview, on average) as the "old" one. Therefore, depending upon the "pilot" results, it may be necessary to revise the proposed coverage of the Travel Diary for 2007, in order that (overall) it will fit into the time available for it (the current aim is to include the Travel Diary in around 12,000 interviews per year for 2007 onwards, fewer than hitherto due to the need to make "room" for many new questions on other Transport topics). Should the new Travel Diary appear to take, on average, significantly longer (or shorter) per interview than the current one, SE would have to decide how to change it to fit into the limited amount of time that is available. Broadly speaking, the choice is between (a) sample size and (b) level of detail - e.g. if the new Travel Diary were taking longer than the current one, one could save time by:

- collecting fewer details for each journey (and continuing to include the Travel Diary in around 12,000 interviews); *or*
- collecting the same amount of information for each journey but asking the Travel Diary questions of a smaller proportion of the sample.

Should SE have to make such a choice, SE's view is that, in general, it should be better to obtain fewer details of a large number of journeys than many details of a small number of journeys. **Members of the Committee who have a particular interest in the Travel Diary data may wish to consider this, just in case their advice is sought at the meeting** (as mentioned earlier, the "pilot" survey's "debriefing" is on the day before our meeting, so we should know by then if there is a problem with the average length of the redesigned interview).

2.6 A *provisional* timetable for subsequent developments is as follows:

- January 2007 - new questionnaire introduced;
- Spring 2007 - scrutiny of the initial results from the first month or two's interviews;
- July 2007 - first quarter's data delivered to Scottish Executive;
- August 2007 - first quarter's data enter the public domain, following the publication of the usual quarterly Statistics Publication Notice;
- Autumn 2007 onwards - first analyses of the results of some of the new questions (e.g.) in the quarterly series of articles in the "*Scottish Transport Review*";
- August 2008 - publication of the SHS Annual Report for 2007;
- Autumn 2008 - analyses of the results of many of the new questions in "*Household Transport in 2007*"; anonymised datasets for 2007 made available at the Data Archive.

2.7 **Members of the Committee are invited to note the above points, and to ask any questions and raise any issues that they may wish on these matters.** Or, if they prefer, they can contact Frank Dixon outwith the meeting (direct line: 0131-244-7254).