

Number: WG23798



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Welsh Government

## Consultation Document

# New approach to surveys in Wales: consultation on topics

Date of issue: 27 November 2014

Action required: Responses by 18 February 2015

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy



## Overview

The Welsh Government and Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies commission a range of large-scale surveys of people in Wales. They include the National Survey for Wales, the Welsh Health Survey, the Active Adults Survey, the Arts in Wales Survey, and the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey.

It has now been decided to amalgamate the National Survey, the Welsh Health Survey, the Arts in Wales Survey, and the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey into a single survey, to begin in 2016-17. We are in discussions with Sport Wales over including the Active Adults Survey.

This consultation sets out more information on what has been decided and provides an opportunity to influence the topics that the new survey should cover.

## How to respond

By completing the consultation response spreadsheet.

## Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

## Contact details

For further information:

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## Data protection

### How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

## Background

The Welsh Government and its partner organisations commission a range of large-scale surveys of people in Wales. These surveys provide information which can be difficult or impossible to obtain from other sources: for example, people's views about the services they receive, what they know about particular issues, their assessments of their own health or other aspects of their lives, and what they do or would like to do with their time. The surveys include the National Survey for Wales, the Welsh Health Survey, the Active Adults Survey (run by Sport Wales), the Arts in Wales Survey (run by Arts Council of Wales), and the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey (run by Natural Resources Wales).

The surveys have run for a number of years and are well-respected, heavily-used sources of information which feed into a wide variety of policy decisions. They are also used by central and local government, the NHS, the third sector, academia, and members of the public. Details about the surveys are given at Annex A.

There is an ongoing need for us to provide results that are sufficiently robust and precise for a wide range of purposes. It is also important to ensure we continuously review how we do things, especially at a time when budgets are under pressure, so that we obtain best value for money. We have therefore reviewed the options for how we can reduce survey costs from 2016-17 onwards while still collecting the information needed for decision making and providing the potential for a much more flexible approach. To help inform the decision we commissioned external survey experts to advise on the options; the report is available [here](#).

Based on this report and on wider discussions, it has been decided to amalgamate the National Survey, the Welsh Health Survey, the Arts in Wales Survey, and the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey into one survey. The Welsh Government is in discussions with Sport Wales over whether the new survey will also replace the Active Adults Survey.

The new survey will begin in 2016-17 and will involve a random sample of around 12,000 people across Wales each year. It will be carried out face-to-face in people's homes, by an external survey contractor.

The new approach will continue to provide vital information for decision-making, collected to the highest standards. It is however a more cost-effective way for us to do this compared with running several separate surveys, mainly because it is more efficient to design and run a single survey.

The new approach has a range of other advantages. It will allow for much richer analysis across topics currently included in separate surveys. It will mean that people across Wales spend much less time taking part in our surveys, for example because we do not need to ask the same questions about age, employment status, etc. in different surveys. It will also allow us to minimise the risk of fieldwork problems as we will not have different surveys competing for the same pool of interviewers.

However, the new approach means that in bringing together the separate surveys, we need to reduce their overall length by around 20%. This can be managed by asking some topics less often (e.g. where results are slow-changing) and other topics only of subsamples of respondents (e.g. where the results are only required at a national or regional level: a more efficient use of survey time). Some topics that are low-priority or no longer needed will be dropped completely. The new approach also means we can be more flexible and reactive in adding or removing questions for particular samples.

### **What are the main issues?**

This consultation is designed to help us to identify, for the National Survey, the Welsh Health Survey, the Arts in Wales Survey, and the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey:

- which topics we need to continue including in the new survey;
- how often these topics should be included and which should be included as 'core' questions;
- what level of results are needed (national / regional / local health board / local authority), and therefore which topics can be asked only of a subsample of survey respondents;
- which topics need to be asked together, in the same year of the survey, so that the results can be analysed together;
- which topics are no longer needed and can be dropped; and
- whether any new topics are needed.

There will be a range of competing needs for information from the new survey. It will be unlikely that we will be able to meet the exact needs of all stakeholders. We will seek to take account of as much feedback as we can. However priority must be given to the topics that add most value, meet the needs of most users, and have clear justification and planned **uses**, be it for decision making, monitoring government targets, planning or resource allocation.

As discussions are still under way over including the Active Adults Survey, the consultation does not cover Active Adults topics.

### **How do I respond?**

Please fill in the accompanying spreadsheet, which is designed to capture responses. It includes a series of tabs on: how to fill in the consultation; your details; a summary of the recent Welsh Health Survey consultation results; the topics currently included in the other surveys; any additional topics you would like to be considered; and any extra points you would like to make.

A consultation on the Welsh Health Survey was carried out between 21 May and 13 August 2014. The results from that consultation are summarised in the spreadsheet with space provided for additional comments.

Because a consultation has not recently been carried out for the National Survey, the Arts in Wales Survey, or the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey, the information requested on topics from those surveys is different. Recent topics are listed. For any topics that are of interest to you, please indicate:

- How often you need the information (ideally).
- How often you need the information (at minimum).
- At what geographical level the data would need to be used.
- What the impact would be if the information was not collected in future.
- Other than the core topics, what other topics you might want the results to be analysed by.

Please focus on the uses that will be made of the information, and on what impact not having the data would have on decision making and monitoring.

Please also bear in mind what topics that would be appropriate for a household survey of this kind and the length of time that might be available.

If you do not have Microsoft Excel 2010, or have other problems filling in the spreadsheet, please contact us.

Please send your response to [surveys@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:surveys@wales.gsi.gov.uk) by the end of **18 February 2015**.