

# United Kingdom Statistics Authority

## Assessment of the Lifestyles Surveys



This statistical release is a National Statistics publication. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. It is a statutory requirement that National Statistics should observe the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) assesses all National Statistics for compliance with the Code of Practice.

During 2010 the Lifestyles Surveys, consisting of the Health Survey for England, Smoking, Drinking and Drug among young people in England, and the Infant Feeding Survey, underwent assessment by the United Kingdom Statistics Authority. These statistics were recommended continued designation as National Statistics.

The designation of National Statistics status was subject to a number of requirements. The UKSA report also contained a number of suggestions for improvement. Further details on these requirements and suggestions, including detail on how these are being addressed are contained below. (Note, not all the requirements/suggestions below relate directly to HSE.)

### Requirements for designation as National Statistics

#### Requirement 1

Take steps to develop a more complete understanding of the use made of the statistics by non-government users; publish the relevant information and assumptions, and use them to better support the beneficial use of the statistics.

Our current understanding of the uses made of these statistics is contained within the Data Quality Statement that accompanies this publication.

In addition, we will shortly be launching a public user consultation (expected December 2011). We will use this to develop more complete understanding and these will be published in future publications (possibly the introduction). The findings will also help to ensure that the publications remain useful and relevant in the future.

#### Requirement 2

Confirm that future changes to methods or classifications will be announced in advance of any publications.

We can confirm that all future changes to methods or classifications will be announced in advance of publication. The content of the HSE 2010 was pre-announced and is available on the following link: <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/publications-calendar/methodological-changes>

### **Requirement 3**

Communicate to users the steps taken to address the issue of falling response rates and the impact of these actions. NHS IC should also consult users to ensure the Lifestyles Surveys, in particular the HSE, are of a suitable quality to meet their needs and publish the results.

We have informed users via the Health Surveys Programme Network <https://groups.ic.nhs.uk/ICHSPN/default.aspx>. Details were posted on the NHS IC website <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/services/the-health-surveys-service> and subscribers were also informed via a newsletter sent on 26 September 2011 (available from above webpage in 'News and Updates'). Users can register to receive the newsletter via the above link. We will also be including this as part of the consultation to ensure that the Surveys meet users' needs.

### **Requirement 4**

Communicate the implications of the reduction in central funding to stakeholders and users of the Lifestyles Surveys and investigate users' views to help guide future planning.

This was also communicated to users via the Health Surveys Programme Network as above. We will investigate users' views as part of the consultation we are launching in December.

### **Requirement 5**

In consultation with users, review the publication format of the Lifestyles Surveys.

In response to comments we have received to date, the HSE will be published as individual chapters (similar to SDD which users have informed us they prefer). We will seek to confirm this approach via the consultation and also welcome comments via the 'Have your say' link on the publication webpage.

### **Requirement 6**

Provide more commentary and analysis in the Lifestyles Surveys' publications to aid understanding and interpretability of the statistics.

We will be working with the contractors to ensure that the commentary is expanded to aid further understanding and interpretability of the statistics. As well as describing the trends, we will also explore and explain the factors that may have influenced the trends – these may be policy, law, or behavioural (amongst others). This is included in this HSE publication and will continue in future publications.

### **Requirement 7**

Publish information on the strengths and limitations of the Lifestyles Surveys in relation to particular uses.

Details are included in the Data Quality Statement that accompanies this publication. The data quality statement explains how the statistics may be used, the robustness of the figures and any limitations of the statistics. Confidence intervals etc are also explained where appropriate. A Data Quality Statement will accompany all future publications.

### **Requirement 8**

Publish the tables published in PDF format for SDD and IFS in formats that encourage and enable re-use.

We can confirm that the tables for SDD and Infant Feeding Survey (IFS) will also be published as stand-alone excel files (similar to HSE). The full datasets will also be made available via UK Data Archive.

### **Suggestion 1**

Refer to the generic classes of use put forward in the Authority's Monitoring Brief: *The Use Made of Official Statistics*.

We can confirm we have read the document and as part of the consultation we will aim to develop greater understanding of the users and uses of these statistics and use this information to inform the content of the publication. We will publish our understanding and assumptions referencing the generic classes of use contained within the document

### **Suggestion 2**

Place announcements of changes to methods or classifications on the relevant survey page of NHS IC's website.

This will happen for all future publications. It has already occurred for SDD published in July 2011 - <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/health-and-lifestyles-related-surveys/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england-in-2010>

There were no changes to methods or classifications for HSE 2010.

### **Suggestion 3**

Review the contextual commentary for the 2010 IFS to ensure that assertions are referenced appropriately.

This is being addressed for the final 2010 IFS report (expected to be published in 2012).

### **Suggestion 4**

Provide clearer links and references to the quality measures provided in the technical reports.

The Introduction contains further information informing users of the technical reports and how they can be used. This is also addressed in the Data Quality Statement. This will feature in future publications also.

### **Suggestion 5**

Provide better signposting to alternative means of accessing data, such as through the UK Data Archive or via data custodians.

Further details are placed on the HSE 2010's homepage on the NHS IC website signposting the datasets deposited (and to be deposited) in UK Data Archive. This will also occur for future publications.

### **Suggestion 6**

Investigate sources of administrative data for their potential to reduce both the cost and the burden of the Lifestyles Surveys and publish the results.

This has already been actioned via the Health Surveys Programme Network and will also be included as part of the public consultation.