

Labour Force Survey (LFS) Performance & Quality Monitoring (PQM) Report Question & Answer (Q&A)

Q1. Why are you producing a new LFS PQM?

A. There are a number of reasons for this. The first is that the format of the PQM has remained largely unchanged for the past ten years and the LFS research team felt that its contents were in need of review. A number of key indicators of data quality were identified as missing from the report while some of the currently present items were no longer thought to be of interest. The process of identifying and agreeing changes to the PQM was done in consultation with customers (internal and external) to ensure that it continues to meet customer requirements.

There has been a drive across all social surveys to harmonise the way in which survey quality is reported on. Changes being made to the PQM bring the LFS into line with many of the recommendations emanating from this initiative.

Also, with the support of the Statistics Commission, the Office for National Statistics is piloting new corporate quality reports prior to rolling them out across the office for all outputs. The format and content of the new LFS PQM brings it into line with the corporate approach.

Q2. What extra are you reporting on and why?

A. Overall, the PQM has adopted the new ONS corporate template for quality reporting, in which quality is reported against the six European Statistical System (ESS) dimensions of quality, namely relevance, accuracy, timeliness & punctuality, accessibility and clarity, comparability and coherence. Each dimension is defined in the PQM.

Specific changes include:

- a more detailed 'Executive Summary' that describes the current status of the survey in terms of response rates, sampling errors etc.; makes comparisons with previous periods; and contains a general discussion of any issues affecting data quality. Any changes to the survey, such as new or modified questions, would be highlighted here.
- a time series of achieved number of household and person interviews for GB & UK.
- provision of sampling variability estimates for a number of key LFS variables
- provision of wave-specific response rates and an overall response rate for the quarter being reported on, for both GB & UK.
- a time series of wave specific response rates
- a report on the composition of non-response and how it has changed over time
- provision of income response rates by NS-SEC
- a summary of sample attrition by key person level characteristics

Q3. How is the response rate defined?

A. The response rate at wave one is calculated in the same way as it was previously and is the number of households in which interviews were achieved as a proportion of all eligible households. However, instead of an aggregate response rate for waves two to five these are now presented individually. The wave specific response rates are also 'true' response rates in that they are calculated with respect to all eligible cases irrespective of whether they were part of fieldwork for the period in question. For example, a refusal at a previous wave is included in the calculation of the response rate. The previous method of calculating an aggregate response rate for waves two to

five was based only on cases that were part of fieldwork in the quarter being reported on.

Q4. Why have response rate definitions changed?

A. The old method of calculating response rates was an operational or fieldwork response rate, which was used to measure interviewer performance at each wave of the survey. The new method of calculating response rates is an internationally-recognised output-oriented method, and can be used as an indicator of non-response error, and of the quality of statistical outputs.

Q5. Why are response rates lower?

A. The response rates are not lower, it is just that they are calculated differently. This can be illustrated by an example.

	Wave 1 JM06	%	Old method		New method	
			Wave 2 AJ06	%	Wave 2 AJ06	%
Interviewed	80	80	70	78	70	70
Non-contact	10	10	10	11	10	10
Refusal – wave 1	10	10			10	10
Refusal – wave 2			10	11	10	10
Total	100	100	90	100	100	100

These 10 cases are not issued as part of wave two fieldwork and as such, are not included in the calculation of the old response rate for wave two cases in AJ06.

By including the outcome of cases in a cohort from a previous wave, the reported response rate has fallen from 78 to 70 percent. This lower rate provides a more accurate description of the representativeness of the data.

Q6. What are you no longer reporting on and why?

A. The PQM no longer reports the following:

- Response rates for Greater London. Instead, we are reporting response rates by wave for all Government Office Regions, including inner and outer London.
- Question-specific response rates. Customer feedback indicated that there was little interest in this, with the exception of income response rates. Therefore, we have provided a more detailed breakdown (i.e. by NS-SEC) of income response rates than was previously available.
- Proxy response rates separately for London. Customer feedback indicated a lack of demand for this information.
- Forced response questions. Removed in response to customer feedback. These rarely change and the reporting of them is not considered to contribute to the monitoring of performance and quality.
- Target response rates. Removed as targets are very out of date and relate to the old (non-wave specific) method of calculating response, and not to the new method.

Where there is demand for any of this dropped information, a request can be put to the LFS research team to provide this.

Q7. Will there be a back series of these reports?

A. No. There is no intention to provide a back series of reports. Instead we include charts showing how all the main series have changed over time. So while all the estimates are available, they will not be combined into a set of historical reports.

Q8. Why is the new PQM not as timely as the old PQM?

A. The old PQM was published on the NS website and sent to clients approximately three weeks prior to the release of the quarterly data on which it was based. As the new PQM contains a small amount of market sensitive data in the form of estimates for key variables, the PQM is now released in accordance with the published timetable for the Labour Market Statistics First Release. This is a requirement of the National Statistics Code of Practice and the Protocol on Release Practices.