

1) Introduction

The 2008 Place Survey provides information on people's perceptions of their local area and the local services they receive. The survey collects information on 18 national indicators (NIs) for local government, used to measure local government performance for 152 county councils, metropolitan district councils, London boroughs and unitary authorities. The Place Survey was designed primarily for use at the local level. National and regional figures are produced for benchmarking purposes.

2) Use of survey data for local and national performance measurement

The results of the Place Survey inform the measurement of the performance of local government. The survey collected information on 18 national indicators for local government, used to monitor performance in 152 local authorities (county councils, metropolitan district councils, London boroughs and unitary authorities).

2008 was the first year that the Place Survey was run, and therefore its primary purpose was to supply baseline figures. A further survey is due to be run in autumn 2010.

The Place Survey is designed primarily for use at the local level. Other government surveys, such as the Citizenship and British Crime Surveys, should be used at the national and regional level where identical questions are asked. The results of the Place Survey can also be used to measure some indicators in Public Service Agreements (PSAs) 15, 17, 21, 23 and 25 and the Department Strategic Objectives (DSOs) for Communities and Local Government, Cabinet Office, Home Office and the Department of Health.

3) Data Source

The Place Survey was run between September and December 2008 but designed to reflect the structure of local government from 1st April 2009, when five new county and four new unitary authorities were established.

Each individual council was responsible for running the survey in their local area, using a core questionnaire supplied by Communities and Local Government. A copy of the questionnaire and manual supplied to local authorities can be found on the Department's [website](#).

Local authorities had the option of adding additional questions (from the "question bank" in the above link). 543,713 questionnaires were completed. Unweighted data were supplied by councils to the Audit Commission. The data were then weighted and provisional results for national indicators were sent to 152 councils in February 2009. Following a review of the survey conducted by Communities and Local Government, adjustments were made to the provisional data results and confidence intervals. The review and the changes to the data are discussed in the following section. Each questionnaire should have been completed by any resident aged 18 or over living at an address.

4) Data quality

Unlike other surveys (e.g. the Citizenship Survey), the Place Survey was not run by a single contractor under a single contract – each local authority was responsible for running its own survey. Ensuring data quality was complicated, given the large number of separate surveys. Quality was assured in a number of ways.

The Place Survey manual detailed eight common standards that needed to be followed when conducting the survey: following the timetable, using the questionnaire template, using the appropriate sampling method, using a correct sampling frame, using a common method of data collection (postal), maximising response rates, achieving a sufficient sample to enable statistically reliable data, and submitting results using templates and tools provided on a dedicated Place Survey website.

The provisional data sent to the Audit Commission were then subjected to initial checks, and weighted, and provisional national indicators results (scores and confidence intervals) were sent to 152 county councils, metropolitan district councils, unitary authorities and London Boroughs.

Communities and Local Government conducted a quality review of the survey, involving an independent academic statistician as well as members of the Government Statistical Service (GSS). The review was based around the principles in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). On the advice of the review, the provisional data were revised. The revised results reported are based on the same underlying data submitted by councils and used to calculate the provisional results. The differences between the provisional results and the revised results arise from (1) capping of the scaled (final) weights to reduce the impact of individual responses to the overall estimates and (2) the application of an inflation factor to the confidence intervals which enabled them to more accurately capture the impact of the survey design and non-response. This inflation factor is based on the weighting and therefore it varies between local authorities.

The review considered the impact of low response rates in some areas. There is no evidence that either specific sections of the population or any particular localities have been systematically underrepresented. Furthermore, as noted above, the inflation factor applied to the confidence intervals following the review has improved the robustness of the results. Nonetheless, where response rates are low (less than 30%) and confidence intervals are wide (outside +/- 3 percentage points) some caution may be necessary when using the results to set performance targets (for example as part of local area agreements), particularly when the target is linked to a financial reward.

A technical report detailing the reviews' findings and recommendations can be found [here](#).

5) Notes on analysis and data presentation

The primary purpose of the Place Survey is to collect information at local authority level, to inform performance monitoring. When looking at data from the Place Survey the following should be noted:

- It should be remembered that a sample of residents, and not all residents living in Northumberland, participated in the survey.
- All results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant.
- Overall results are accurate to +/- 3 to 4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, but this assumes a perfect random sample has been achieved (in practice, margins of error may be slightly larger).
- Further information on this, and a full guide to statistical reliability, is provided in Appendix 2 from the full Northumberland [report](#).
- In accordance with the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Place Survey guidance, the base for each question is "valid responses" or all those providing an answer. Those stating "don't know" or who do not complete the question are excluded from some – but not all – of the calculations. The base size does, therefore, vary from question to question, depending on the extent of non response, and whether there was a requirement to remove don't know responses.

6) Definition of Terms

The following give define some of the key terms used in the survey and analysis:

"Your local area" – when completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to consider "local area" as the area within 15-20 minutes walking distance from your home.

"Civic participation" – the 'Getting involved' section defines civic participation as being involved in any of the following in the preceding 12 months:

Being a local councillor (for the local authority, town or parish)

Being a member of a group making local decisions relating to any of the following: local health or education services; regeneration of the local area; to tackle local crime problems; a tenants group; services for young people; ant other group making decisions on services in the local community

7) List of national indicators collected via the Place Survey

The following 18 national indicators for local government have been collected using the Place Survey.

NI 1: % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

NI 2: % of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood

NI 3: Civic participation in the local area

NI 4: % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality

NI 5: Overall/general satisfaction with local area

NI 6: Participation in regular volunteering

NI 17: Perceptions of anti-social behaviour

NI 21: Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by police and other local services

NI 22: Perceptions of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area

NI 23: Perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration.

NI 27: Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues

NI 37: Awareness of civil protection arrangements in the local area

NI 41: Perceptions of drunk or rowdy behaviour as a problem

NI 42: Perceptions of drug use or drug dealing as a problem

NI 119: Self-reported measure of people's overall health and well-being

NI 138: Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood

NI 139: The extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently at home

NI 140: Fair treatment by local services.

The Place Survey Manual contains further information on each national indicator, including full definition, rationale, formula and a worked example. [Click here](#) to access this document.

8) The Place Survey in Northumberland

A full report produced by Ipsos Mori, detailed tables and analysis down to 27 locality and 3 service area level is available on the InfoNet [website](#).

A total of 8,861 responses were achieved in Northumberland which ensured data could be broken down with reliability to the new geographies in the county. The breakdown of returns by the three areas and 27 localities is as follows:

Three Areas:

	Number of Returns
South East	3,644
North	2,845
West	2,372
Total	8,861

27 locality areas

	Number of Returns
Allendale	162
Alnwick	653
Amble	160
Berwick and Islandshire	506
Blyth	878
Choppington, Stakeford and Guidepost	244
Coquetdale	200
Cramlington	745
East Ashington	345
East Bedlington	203
East Tynedale	496
Ellington, Lynemouth and Linton	134
Glendale	155
Haltwhistle and West Tyne	208
Hartburn and Rural West	116
Hexham and Hexhamshire	500
Mid Tyne	161
Morpeth	677
Newbiggin	139
North Tyne and Redesdale	129
Ponteland	365
Prudhoe	325
Seahouses and Belford	183
Seaton Valley	399
West Ashington	297
West Bedlington	270
Widdrington and Cresswell	212
Total	8,861

This breakdown is representative of the overall population spread across the county.

9) Further Information

For more information on the Place Survey see the following links:

CLG: [Main Place Survey page](#)
[Headline Results](#)
[Further Results](#)
[Place Survey Manual](#)

InfoNet website: [Ipsos Mori Report & detailed tables for Northumberland](#)