

The Family Resources Survey

The Family Resources Survey is a major study, sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It provides facts and figures about the living conditions and resources of people in the UK today.

The Family Resources Survey has been running since 1992. Prior to 2002/03 the survey covered Great Britain; from 2002/03 the survey was extended to cover the UK. The fieldwork for the survey in Northern Ireland is managed by the Department for Social Development (DSDNI) and is currently carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

The contract for fieldwork for the survey in Great Britain has been re-tendered four times, most recently in 2010. A consortium made up of the Office of National Statistics and the National Centre for Social Research won that contract, for 2011-12 to 2014-15 inclusive. As part of the new contract the cost of the survey has reduced, but the Department has sought to retain as far as possible the accuracy of FRS estimates. This has been achieved primarily through:

- the FRS incorporating those elements of the General Lifestyle Survey (GLF) used to provide cross-sectional data for the EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). While the FRS is used to measure UK poverty, the GLF, an ONS survey, is currently used to satisfy the EU-SILC, which is used to compare poverty levels across Europe. It is proposed that from April 2012 the FRS will be used to capture the cross-sectional data requirements for EU-SILC, while ONS will retain responsibility for the longitudinal EU-SILC requirements. Completed FRS interviews will form the sample frame for a follow-up survey, which ONS will use to meet the longitudinal EU-SILC requirements. DWP and ONS have agreed to share savings from this exercise. DWP will seek to minimise any increase in the length of the FRS questionnaire, and disruption to FRS estimates. More details can be found at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/consultations/open-consultations/the-future-of-the-qlf-survey/>.
- reducing the sample size: From April 2011 the target achieved sample size for GB will reduce by 5,000 households. Therefore the overall achieved sample size for the UK will be around 20,000 households. We have assessed that this still allows core outputs (such as measures of poverty and take up of income related benefits) from the FRS to be produced, though with slightly wider confidence intervals or ranges. These are outlined in Annex A.

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Annex A: Estimated effect of sample size reduction on key poverty and take-up estimates

Sample size	25,000 (current)	20,000 (proposed)
Confidence interval for numbers of children in child poverty estimates Before Housing Costs - "plus or minus"	133,000	147,000
Confidence interval for numbers of pensioners in pensioner poverty estimates After Housing Costs - "plus or minus"	84,000	92,000
Confidence interval for CHANGES in the numbers of children in child poverty estimates Before Housing Costs - "plus or minus"	189,000	212,000
Confidence interval for CHANGES in the numbers of pensioners in pensioner poverty estimates After Housing Costs - "plus or minus"	126,000	140,000
Estimated range for percentage take-up rates for Pension Credit - width of interval	10.80ppts	10.90 ppts
Estimated range for percentage take-up rates for Housing Benefit - width of interval	8.30ppts	8.50 ppts
Estimated range for percentage take-up rates for Council Tax Benefit - width of interval	7.10ppts	7.20 ppts