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Welcome to the new look *Approach* the newsletter from the social research team at Ipsos MORI Scotland

We have had an exceptionally busy year so far embarking on a range of new and important studies, including the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS), an evaluation of the Caledonian System (a Scottish Government funded domestic abuse intervention), and work exploring the 'Poverty Premium' for Citizens Advice Scotland.

We've also been reporting on several studies that began last year. One of these is the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS). In this edition of the newsletter we present two articles that draw on findings from SALSUS. Carolyn Black looks at our experience of moving the survey from paper-based to online administration, while David Myers considers what the data can tell us about the attainment gap between young people in Scotland's richest and poorest communities.

In this edition, we're also reflecting on our work in a wider sense: November 2015 marked the 20th anniversary of our Edinburgh office. To celebrate, we held an event at National Museums Scotland, attended by friends, clients and colleagues. Mark Diffley's report on the event includes links to the slides and publication we presented on the night.

We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter but do get in touch if you would like to offer feedback or suggest topics for future articles:

email **Sara Davidson** or call Sara on **0131 226 8673**.

We have the technology:
moving survey research online

As internet access becomes more universal and research budgets continue to be squeezed, the potential to move research to a less expensive method needs to be kept under review. Our experience of moving the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) from paper to online self-completion highlights both the specific features that made the change feasible for this survey and the general questions that need to be addressed in considering the change for any survey.

SALSUS is a long-running survey measuring substance use among young people. It is completed in school, under exam conditions during mixed-ability classes such as Personal and Social Education, under exam conditions. Preserving the trend data is key to the success of the survey, enabling the Scottish Government to track progress against targets for reducing smoking, drinking and drug use among young people.

The latest wave of the survey, conducted in 2015, was the first to be carried out online, following 15 waves of paper-based administration. To understand the impact of this mode change, we conducted a pre-survey online feasibility study, an **online pilot** and are currently completing a mode-effect experiment. This work has raised a series of questions that researchers should ask themselves before moving to an online methodology from a paper based approach. These cover four main areas: sampling, access to IT, confidentiality, and response rates.

First, you need to consider your sample: will you be able to use the same or equivalent sampling approach? This is not an issue for SALSUS as whole classes within schools are selected rather than individual pupils but it could be more problematic for a general population survey. One possibility could be to use a traditional sample source such as the Postcode Address File (PAF) to select participants but then provide a survey link and log-in by post rather than a questionnaire.

Second, access to IT facilities – this issue actually has two elements to it: access to devices – computers, tablets etc. – that will enable participants to reach the online survey and the quality of their internet access.

When thinking about access to IT, you first have to ask does everyone in the sample have access to the internet? If not, it is important to consider the potential for bias but just because not everyone has internet access it doesn't necessarily mean there is a problem. That depends on the answer to the next question – is there a pattern among those that do not have access?

In SALSUS, not every school had computers for every pupil but through the feasibility study we determined that there was no pattern to this that was likely to bias the data. For instance, pupils living in rural areas or enrolled in smaller schools were no less likely than the pupil population as a whole to have internet access. If you are surveying the general public, there will be patterns. Older people, households in areas of deprivation and rural households currently have lower levels of internet access or poorer quality internet services but this will reduce over time. In the meantime, consider offering a paper alternative to mitigate this.

While respondents might have a computer, this does not always mean they can access the survey. You also need to look at the quality of their access – for example:

- Will there be firewalls/anti-virus software preventing the survey from working?

- Will the survey work on all versions of the main internet browsers?

- Is the survey compatible with different types of devices?

While your IT team or survey provider should be able to answer the second two questions, the first requires a thorough technical pilot (discussed below).

The third key issue is: will completing the survey online affect respondents' perceptions of confidentiality? It can be difficult to predict what respondents' perceptions will be: some might feel that online administration is more confidential because their information 'disappears' whereas others, who are less comfortable with technology, have concerns about their information falling into the wrong hands.

In the SALSUS feasibility study and technical pilot, pupils perceived online completion to be more confidential; partly because it meant they no longer had to hand their questionnaire back to a teacher. Of course it may also have been in due, in part, to their age. We know from other work we have done – for example, **our work for the Scottish Government exploring the public acceptability of data sharing and linkage for research purposes** – that older people tend to be most worried about confidentiality than the young.

Consider your audience carefully: are they used to completing tasks online that involve entering personal details? Unless you are conducting feasibility work there is no real way to know, so this should be borne in mind when analysing results – have the trends changed in a way that would indicate respondents are being more or less honest?

The final question to consider, after taking access issues and perceptions of confidentiality into account, is: will moving to an online approach have a negative effect on the survey response rate? If the answer to this question is yes, you need to consider steps to mitigate this, which might involve changing your sampling assumptions or offering an incentive to try to increase participation. In

SALSUS, the feasibility study suggested that the response rate would be lower with online administration so we adjusted the sampling assumptions accordingly to maintain the number of pupils taking part, confident that the reduced response rate was unlikely to cause bias.

Once you have asked yourself these questions, you will have a good idea if you should go ahead with a move to online. However, we have one last recommendation: conduct a technical pilot. Given the scope for technical problems in online research, it is always sensible to test the system you plan to use to identify and eliminate as many 'gremlins' as possible. After going through all of the preparatory work, it would be a shame to lose out on trends because of avoidable technical mishaps!

To give one small example, we found during the SALSUS pilot that the survey script would sometimes close spontaneously when pupils were partway through completing it because drug names were firewalled by particular schools and local authorities. Even when the survey as a whole had been safe-listed, the drugs questions still caused it to crash. Without conducting the pilot, we would have assumed the safe-listing would have been enough. Thanks to the pilot we were able to identify that this was not the case and put a solution in place before fieldwork commenced.

If you are still unsure about the move to online, you have the option to run a full scale mode-effect experiment (conducting half of the survey on paper and half online). This will allow you to explore any impact the change in mode has on the survey results. However, in most cases, fully considering the questions above and running a thorough technical pilot should ensure a smooth transition.

For more information, contact: **Carolyn Black**

The aspirations gap
in Scottish education

Education has been one of the most prominent policy issues over the course of the SNP's time in government and is likely to be a major issue in the forthcoming Holyrood election. Since 2007 Scotland's education system has seen important changes including the reintroduction of free university tuition and the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

A persistent gap in attainment between young people from the richest and poorest communities and a gap in the percentage of young school leavers going on to university has been one of the biggest political issues and was one of the drivers behind the First Minister's proposal to reintroduce standardised testing through the National Improvement Framework.

Data from Skills Development Scotland's annual School Leaver Destinations reports show that in 2008/9, just over one-third (35%) of Scotland's school leavers entered higher education, while by 2013/14 this had risen slightly to 39%.

Looking at the data by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) quintile reveals a stark disparity: In 2009, the majority (57%) of school leavers from Scotland's most affluent neighbourhoods (SIMD5) went to university when they left school. This compares with only 16% of their peers from our most deprived communities (SIMD1) meaning that young people from affluent neighbourhoods were more than three times as likely to go to university (Figure 1).

By 2013/14 a similar-sized majority (59%) of school leavers from SIMD5 entered university, while the proportion of leavers from SIMD1 had increased to around a quarter (23%) – a significant narrowing in the gap, though those from the least deprived neighbourhoods were still more than twice as likely to go into higher education (Figure 1).

Figure 1. School leavers entering university by SIMD
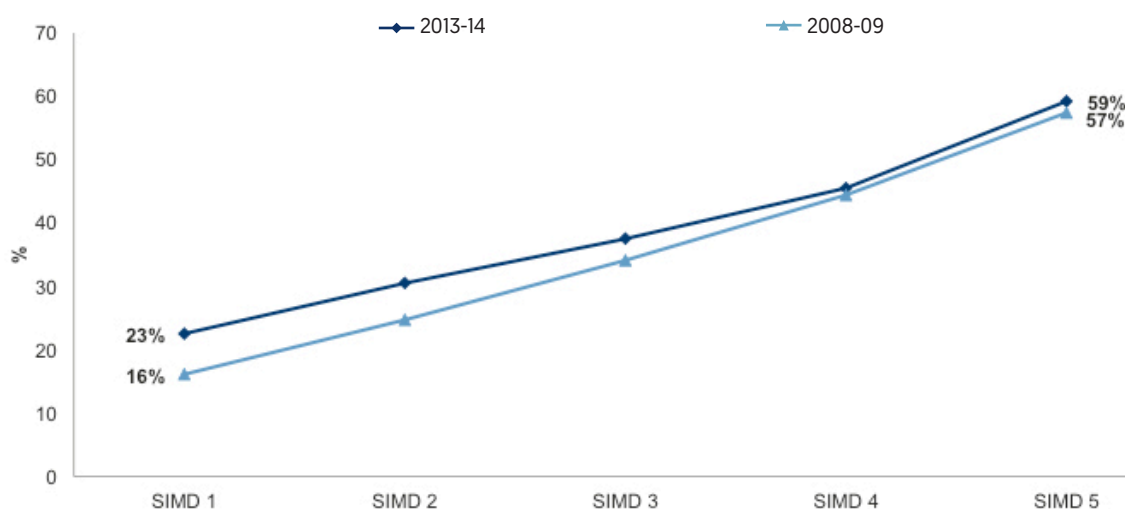
Base: All leavers from public-funded schools (2008/09 53, 534; 2013/14: 51,876)

Behind the increasing percentage of young people going to university has been a surge in young people's aspiration to enter higher education, particularly in the most deprived areas.

Data on young people's post-school expectations has been collected by the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey [SALSUS]. Data on a wide range of topics [mainly smoking, drinking and drug use] has been collected every two years from S2 and S4 pupils. What do the data tell us about what young people expect to be doing when they leave school?

The 2008 wave of the survey found that 48% of S4 pupils expected to go to university when they left school. By the time of the 2013 wave of the survey, the majority [53%] of S4s expected to do so. In both years the percentage aspiring to university was higher than the percentage going on to attend.

How do these encouraging statistics on aspiration look at a more local level? In 2008, two-thirds [64%] of S4s from SIMD5 aspired to go to university after leaving school, more than double the 30% of their peers from SIMD1 who had the same aspiration.

By the 2013 wave of SALSUS, however, while the proportion of S4 pupils from SIMD5 who expected to enter higher education was similar to in 2008, at around two-thirds [69%], the proportion of those from the poorest neighbourhoods aspiring to go to university had increased significantly to 43% [a couple of percentage points higher than their peers from SIMD2 neighbourhoods!]. [Figure 2].

Figure 2. S4 SALSUS respondents expecting to go to university by SIMD

Base: All S4 pupils who took part in SALSUS [2008: 4,645; 2013: 17,122]
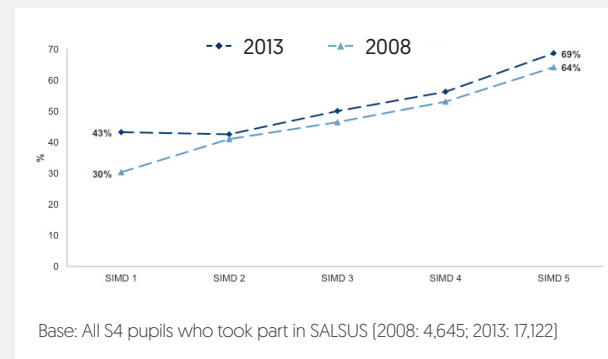
Bringing the two sets of data together shows the extent of the gap in outcomes not just between the most and least deprived neighbours but also the large and widening gap within the most deprived areas between the percentage of young people who hope to go to university and percentage who actually do so.

For further information, contact: **Steven Hope**
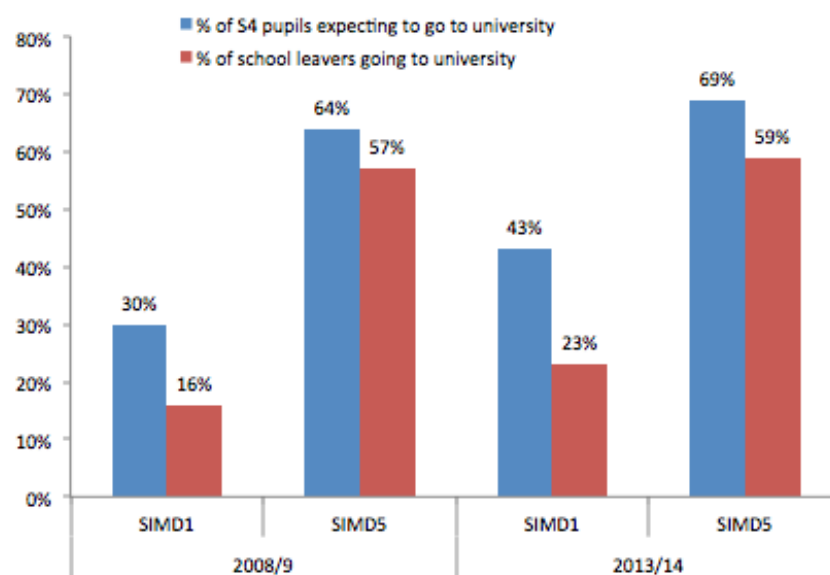
Happy birthday to us!
Celebrating 20 years of Ipsos MORI Scotland

Marking the 20th anniversary of our permanent Ipsos MORI office in Scotland - 2015 was a special year for us.

On November 24th we were joined by over 100 friends, colleagues and clients in the National Museum of Scotland to look back on how Scotland has changed over that time, and forward to how the country and our industry will face up to the challenges of the future.

Our Chief Executive Ben Page kicked off the evening with a look back at the significant **social, cultural and attitudinal changes in Scotland since 1995**, drawing heavily on data from large and valuable time series such as the Scottish Household Survey (SHS). Ben concluded that, despite the continued existence of a number of social problems, the people of Scotland are on the whole safer, wealthier and healthier than in 1995, with greater optimism about the future.

Professor Carol Tannahill then looked at a Future Scotland outlining the challenges the nation faces on a variety of fronts, from the ageing population, to structural changes in the Scottish economy and significant climate change. The future growth and prosperity of Scotland depends on having the data to measure the significance of these factors, as well as strategies to deal with them.

Thoughts then turned to the political and constitutional future of the country, with Scottish Television's Political Editor Bernard Ponsonby outlining his views of the political scene in light of the 2014 independence referendum and the more recent general election results. In advance of the event we released new survey data which suggested that **a majority of Scots believed the country will be independent by 2025**. However, Bernard concluded that the Scottish Government was unlikely to push for a second referendum until it was as sure as possible of winning and that that may be some time away.

In the final part of the evening Mark Diffley, Director at Ipsos MORI Scotland, considered some of the ways in which the research industry is likely to change and adapt over the next few years. In the foreseeable future it is likely that the most robust and significant public opinion and behavioural data will come from the Scottish Government's key national studies such as the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS).

However, the industry is changing and adapting to new technological advances, changing consumer behaviour and the changing landscape in qualitative research. To illustrate one technological advance, the evening finished with an interactive polling session using an application called 'MeeToo'.

The application is not intended as a substitute for robust survey evidence but is designed to be used at meetings and conferences as a stimulus for delegates and to ask their views on relevant issues. The application is easy to use anonymously and produces graphs of results within seconds of the vote closing. In our event we discovered that delegates' views on whether Scotland will be independent in 10 years were broadly in line with our public polling; a useful exercise in respondent engagement and a great talking point at the post-event party!

In addition to **the new public polling we released** to explore social attitudes and what the future of Scotland might look like, we produced a new document collating our key thought pieces from the last few years, covering all the major issues we have researched. **The document can be downloaded here.**

Here's to our next 20 years!

For more information, contact: **Mark Diffley**