



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities



Neighbourhood  
Renewal Unit

# Good Practice Note

Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme

## Note 4

### Using Household Survey Data

Version 1 - August 2004

**Evidence • Analysis • Strategy**

**strengthening strategies through the better use of evidence**

## **Good Practice Notes**

**Evidence • Analysis • Strategy**

This series of Good Practice Notes has been created for the benefit of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Programme. It aims to provide clear practical advice to partnerships on how to gather, understand and use information and evidence in order to strengthen their work in promoting neighbourhood renewal.

The Notes draw on good practice from the Pathfinder Programme itself and also more widely. They are written for a non-expert audience. More detailed advice and guidance is available from numerous sources.

The Notes presently available are:

Note 1	Creating, Updating and Using a Neighbourhood Baseline
Note 2	Undertaking Local Evaluation
Note 3	Developing Strategies
Note 4	Using Household Survey Data

## **Contents**

**This note explains how to understand and make use of household survey data. Sections of the note are as follows:**

- **Section 1 - Household Surveys: The Basics**
- **Section 2 – What Data is Available?**
- **Section 3 – Understanding the Data Tables**
- **Section 4 – Analysing the Data**
- **Section 5 – Getting Satisfaction?**

**Further information and advice on evaluation and developing effective regeneration programmes can be found at [www.renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net)**

**This Note has been prepared for the NRU by SQW Ltd.**

## Section 1

# Household Surveys: The Basics

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A detailed **household survey** has been undertaken by MORI and NOP in each of the 35 Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder areas. The 20 Round 1 Pathfinders were surveyed in early 2003, and the 15 Round 2 Pathfinders were surveyed in early 2004. This Note is written for all Pathfinders and explains how to make the best use of this data.

The surveys represent an important part of the national baseline for the Pathfinder Programme, and will also be useful for each Pathfinder individually. The intention is that the surveys will be repeated in future years of the Programme, to allow change to be tracked over time.

The set of questions asked in the Round 2 survey was slightly different to the set of questions posed in the Round 1 survey, but the advice given in this Note applies equally to both. The way that the survey data is presented, and the way that it can be analysed is exactly the same for both Round 1 and 2 Pathfinders.

### Understanding the Basics

Many people, including many professionals, are not familiar with how surveys are undertaken, what they can be used for, or what their limitations are. However, survey data can provide very accurate and valuable information for small areas that is simply not available from other 'official' statistics.

In this section we explain the basics about the Pathfinder surveys and try to answer some of the more frequently asked questions. The rest of this Note will explain in more detail how to make the most of the data.

#### What questions do the surveys ask?

The surveys provide information about the quality of life in Pathfinder target neighbourhoods, the needs and priorities of local people, and their experiences and views on local services. There is a clear focus on public services. Influencing the way these operate and, therefore, understanding what the issues are is crucial to neighbourhood management.

Both the Round 1 and Round 2 surveys ask questions about:

- Quality of life and the area
- The local community
- Local area and environment problems
- Health and social care services
- Childcare and education services
- Police services and crime
- Accessibility of services
- Housing services
- Household demographic information
- Employment and income
- Improvements needed in the area.

The Round 2 survey was slightly longer and had additional questions, including some questions asking those who said they were dissatisfied with key services to give the reasons why they were dissatisfied.

Copies of each of the **questionnaires** used by MORI and NOP in the Round 1 and Round 2 surveys can be found on the *SurveyReporter* website (see below for details). The questionnaires were specifically designed for the Pathfinder Programme.

#### Where can I get the data from?

A special website – **SurveyReporter** - has been created by the National Evaluation team which contains all of the survey data and copies of the questionnaires, all of which can be downloaded. There is also an easy-to-use on-line analysis tool for more sophisticated analysis.

The website can be found at <https://survey.nop.co.uk/nme/>

## Why have the surveys been done?

There are two main aims of the surveys:

- To help the **National Evaluation team assess the impact** of the Pathfinders on their neighbourhoods over time. The Pathfinder Programme is due to run for 7 years, and its purpose is to improve the quality of life for people who live in the Pathfinder areas. By undertaking a 'baseline' survey at the start, and then repeating it later in the Programme, we should be able to see how life in the Pathfinder areas has changed over time.
- To help **individual Pathfinders make more informed decisions** about what their priorities should be, and what interventions to undertake. A key challenge for Pathfinders is to develop strategies that are evidence-based and clearly focused. The information provided by the survey is therefore useful now as it tells us more about each neighbourhood, the people who live there and the services being provided to them.

A lot of statistics and information are available in Britain today, but often very little of it relates to specific neighbourhoods. These surveys provide a lot of new information of direct relevance to each specific Pathfinder neighbourhood.

Some people might also ask why such surveys are necessary when there is so much detailed **Census** information. However, whilst Census information can be very useful, these surveys have two additional advantages:

- The surveys will be repeated during the lifetime of the Programme, allowing 'real-time' information to be made available: the Census will not be repeated again until 2011; and
- The surveys ask questions about public services and satisfaction with services; this sort of question is not included in the Census.

## How reliable is the survey data?

To interview every household in an area is very expensive, and usually not necessary. For this survey, we took **a sample of 500 households** in each Pathfinder area (in practice, usually slightly more). Undertaking these 500 interviews is enough to ensure that the survey results will be representative of the views of the whole community. The households were chosen at random, to ensure that the sample was representative.

Statistically speaking, the sample size is big enough to say that the survey results will be accurate to within 5 percentage points or better, at the 95% confidence level. This means that 95% of the time the 'true' answer would fall within 5 percentage points (or less) either side of our findings. This is standard practice for this type of survey, and represents a high degree of reliability.

## How was the research undertaken?

Each individual interview was undertaken face-to-face by an experienced researcher, in the interviewee's own home. All interviewers are trained by NOP and MORI and they always carry Photo-ID cards. If no-one was in when the interviewer called the first time, they then called back at different times of day. This means that the number of houses called at is kept to a minimum. The interviewer arranges to do the interview at a time that suits the householder. If a household did not wish to be interviewed, the interviewer did not call back again. Participation was entirely voluntary.

All interviews are confidential. No-one outside NOP/MORI will know who has been interviewed or what they said. No details about individuals are given to other organisations. There is also a rigorous quality control procedure to ensure that questionnaires are completed accurately and professionally.

NOP and MORI interviewers are from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and some speak other languages. They are also able to arrange for interpreters to help with an interview if necessary.

**Will the surveys be repeated?**

Yes. NRU are committed to repeating the surveys for both Round 1 and Round 2 Pathfinders. The exact timetables for this have not been agreed yet, but Pathfinders will be informed when this is so.

**Who undertook the surveys?**

The surveys were designed and undertaken by **MORI** and **NOP**, two of the UK's largest and most experienced survey companies. MORI and NOP worked closely with the rest of the National Evaluation team, led by SQW, when designing the research. The National Evaluation is funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.



**Document 2:  
Individual Pathfinder 'break-down' results**

There is also a separate document **unique to each Pathfinder** that provides a more detailed break-down of the results for each area. Again, the results are presented question by question, in tables. The difference is that each document only includes results for that Pathfinder, and for each question the results are broken down by 6 categories:

- Men and women
- Different age groups
- Presence of elderly people/children in household
- Presence of children up to age 15 in household
- Satisfaction with area
- Limiting long-standing illness

This allows us to understand how the responses to each question may differ between **different groups** within the community. Some Pathfinders also have break-down data by **ethnicity**. It is not possible to provide break-down data on ethnicity for those Pathfinders where the BME communities are small, as this would compromise individual confidentiality.

**Illustration of part of a table...**

**Question**

**Possible answers**

**Results for one Pathfinder broken down by gender, age, etc**

Q11. Have you heard of '[Pathfinder]'?  
Base: All

	All areas		Gender		Age			Person aged 65+ in Household		Children up to 15 in Household					
	Total (A)	All pathfinder areas (B)	All comparator areas (C)	Male (D)	Female (E)	16-34 (F)	35-54 (G)	55+ (H)	Yes (I)	No (J)	Any children (M)	Aged 0-4 (N)	Aged 5-11 (O)	Aged 12-15 (P)	Not (Q)
Total	609	7564	1515	218	290	168	182	156	114	395	239	127	137	100	2
Yes	80 12% C	1855 25% AC	1	31 14%	29 70%	23 14%	21 12%	16 10%	9 8%	51 13%	24 10%	15 10%	13 9%	11 7%	2
No	445 73% BC	5578 74% C	-	185 85%	260 90%	144 86%	160 88%	139 89%	104 91%	341 86%	214 90%	115 89%	123 90%	89 89%	0
Don't know	3 1% C	126 2% C	-	2 1%	1	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	2 1%	1	1 1%	1 1%	-	0

**Website  
SurveyReporter**

The *survey database* itself is also available on the **SurveyReporter** website (which can be found at <https://survey.nop.co.uk/nme/>) You can use it to analyse the data yourself, and cross-reference different questions. This is explained in more detail in later sections of this Note.

## Section 3 Understanding the Data Tables

When looking at the tables of data, there are some key features of the data and how it is presented that you need to understand. We explain them here.

### (1) Numbers and Percentages

The survey is based on a sample of interviews – just over 500 in each Pathfinder area. The data presented in each table presents the **actual numbers** of those people interviewed who gave each category of answer (i.e. how many of the 500), as well as the **percentage** that this represents for that column.

Each entry shows both the number of respondents who gave this answer (23) and what % this represents of the total number in that column.

23  
14%

Q11. Have you heard of '(Pathfinder)'?  
Base: All

	All areas		Gender		Age			Person aged 65+ in Household		Children up to 15 in Household				
	All pathfinder areas (B)	All comparator areas (C)	Male (D)	Female (E)	16-34 (F)	35-54 (G)	55+ (H)	Yes (I)	No (J)	Any children (M)	Aged 0-4 (N)	Aged 5-11 (O)	Aged 12-15 (P)	No. (Q)
Total	609	754	1513	218	200	148	182	156	114	305	239	127	137	100
Yes	60 12% C	185 25% AC	1	31 14%	29 15%	23 16%	21 12%	16 10%	9 8%	51 13%	24 10%	13 10%	13 9%	11 11%
No	445 87% BC	567 72% C	-	185 85%	240 90%	144 88%	160 88%	138 89%	104 91%	241 86%	214 90%	113 89%	123 90%	89 89%
Don't know	3 1% C	12 2% C	-	2 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	2 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	-

## (2) Bases and Filters

Not all of the questions in the survey are asked of all the 500 or so people interviewed. Some of the questions are 'filtered', based on responses given to an earlier question.

**Example:  
Filter questions**

So, for example, in the Round 2 survey, everyone was asked Question E1:

*"..which of these services have you personally used in the last 12 months?"*  
(they are shown a list of key services, including family doctor/GP, dental services, etc)

But only those who said 'yes' to using dental services in the last 12 months were asked the follow up Question E4:

*"How satisfied are you with the dental services that serve this area?"*

Quite a number of the questions in the Pathfinder surveys are filtered in this way. It ensures that people are only asked questions that are relevant to their circumstances. There would be little point in asking if someone was satisfied with a personal service if they had not used it recently. So, when analysing the survey data, it is important to be clear about who the **base group** answering the question actually are – is it everybody or just those who have answered an earlier question?

For clarity, every table clearly defines the base group for the question as a whole, and shows the actual number of respondents in that base group at the top of each column. **You must always read the question and table carefully and be aware of the base group.**

Q11. Have you heard of '(Pathfinder)'?  
Base: All

**Base group for the whole question "All" : i.e. everyone was asked the question**

**168**

**The base group for the column. 168 people fall into this column.**

	All areas		Gender		Age			Person aged 65+ in Household		Children up to 15 in Household					
	Total (A)	All pathfinder areas (B)	All comparator areas (C)	Male (D)	Female (E)	16-34 (F)	35-64 (G)	65+ (H)	Yes (I)	No (J)	Any children (K)	Aged 0-4 (L)	Aged 5-11 (M)	Aged 12-15 (N)	None (O)
Total	500	7564	1510	218	290	168	182	155	114	395	239	127	137	100	
Yes	60 12% C	1855 25% AC	1	31 14%	29 10%	23 14%	21 12%	16 10%	9 8%	51 13%	24 10%	13 10%	13 9%	11 11%	
No	445 89% BC	5678 75% C	-	186 85%	260 90%	144 86%	160 88%	138 89%	104 91%	341 86%	214 90%	113 89%	123 90%	89 89%	
Don't know	3 1% C	126 2% C	-	2 1%	1	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	2 1%	1	1	1	-	

It is important to be aware of any filters and what the base group for a question is, if you are to understand what the data means – is the response a % of all households or just some of them?

It also affects the reliability of the data. Some questions are only asked of a few people. Bases of less than 100 are considered to be small, and should be used with caution. Data based on responses from less than 100 people can have a statistical error of at least +/-10 percentage points. Data based on responses from less than 50 people have even greater error margins, of at least +/-15 percentage points. **For this reason, we do not recommend that you rely on data in the tables where the base group at the top of the column is less than 50.**

### (3) Accuracy and Error Margins

The survey is based on a **random sample** of local households in each Pathfinder area, not a full census. The results of this sample are used to make estimates about the **whole local population**. For example, if 50% of the households in the survey sample say their quality of life is good, we use this to infer that 50% of the households in the whole population in the area would also say their quality of life was good.

Because we are using a tried and tested methodology to take our sample and are interviewing at least 500 households, we can be confident that the results from this survey are reliable, but there is always a modest **error margin** when taking samples.

#### (a) Error Margins in General...

**Generally speaking, we can say that for the Pathfinder surveys, the error margin is +/- 5 percentage points. This is a good rule of thumb to use.**

Technically speaking, this means that for each result (e.g. 76% of households say that their quality of life is good), we can be 95% certain that the 'true' answer will lie in a range that is within 5 percentage points of the given result (e.g. the percentage of households who say that their quality of life is good will actually lie between 71% and 81%).

It is particularly useful to be aware of error margins when comparing results that are very close together (e.g. 76% compared to 78%) as the difference could simply be accounted for by the sample error, rather than representing any real difference. For this reason, when looking for differences between statistics you should always be looking for larger gaps – smaller gaps should generally be ignored (see the next section on analysis).

#### (b) Error Margins for 'Extreme' Results...

Just to confuse matters, error margins actually vary depending on:

- The size of the sample for that question; and
- The actual survey result itself (e.g. whether 10% or 50%)

Error margins tend to be larger in the 'middle' of the range, where results are close to 50%, but smaller towards the edge of the range, where results are closer to 0% - i.e. where the responses are more obviously different, e.g. 90% said yes, 10% said no.

So, based on 500 interviews in each Pathfinder area:

- **A finding of 50%** has a margin of error of **+/- 4.4** percentage points. So if 50% of households in the survey say they have a good quality of life, we can be 95% confident that the true proportion for the whole population is between 45.6% and 54.4%.
- **A finding of 10%** (or, similarly, a finding of 90%) has a margin of error of **+/- 2.6** percentage points. So if 10% of households in the survey were satisfied with their area (or 90% were dissatisfied), the true finding in the population is between 7.4% and 12.6% (or between 87.4% and 92.6% dissatisfied).

As already noted above, if you are looking for a **safe rule of thumb** (i.e. one that covers every eventuality) you could say that the results in this survey are **all accurate to +/- 5%**, as this covers all types of result, even though some margins of error may actually be slightly smaller.

### (c) Error Margins for Smaller Bases...

As discussed above, some questions are only asked of sub-groups within the full sample – for example just those answering ‘yes’ to a particular question. So, some results will be based on **sub-groups** of the sample (or **base groups**) that are smaller than 500. Also, when looking at the breakdowns of answers (what answers women gave, or people of a certain age group gave, rather than the whole sample) we will also be dealing with sub-groups of the sample that are smaller than 500.

Where a set of responses to a question comes from a smaller base – in effect, a smaller sample - we have to be aware that the error margin rises. **The smaller the base group, the larger the error margin.** You can always tell what the base group for a response is, as it is given at the top of every column in every table.

For ease, we have suggested below some safe **rules of thumb** for different sample sizes/group sizes:

Sample size / Base group size	Accuracy
100	+/- 10 percentage points
200	+/- 7 percentage points
300	+/- 5.5 percentage points
400	+/- 5 percentage points
500	+/- 4.5 percentage points

If you are analysing results for sub-groups/bases of less than 100 you should be aware these are likely to have fairly wide margins of error. **We do not recommend that you rely on results from sub-groups of less than 50.** These results should be taken as being indicative only.

#### (4) Households or Individuals?

The surveys that have been done are of households not just individuals. Each Pathfinder survey is based on interviewing approximately 500 households in that Pathfinder area (usually slightly more to be on the safe side). One individual in each household was interviewed – some of the questions were about their individual characteristics and experience (e.g. How old are you? How satisfied are you with the Police?) but some of the questions were about other members of the household (e.g. Do you have any children living here? Has anyone else in your household reported a crime in the last year?).

This means that when we look at the results of the survey, strictly speaking we are looking at what households think about different issues in the area, not just individuals (as in an opinion poll, for example). For social research this is standard practice. So, when quoting statistics from the survey, strictly speaking the correct phrasing would be:

Q: How satisfied are you with this area as a place to live?

A: 77% of households were satisfied.

In practice, when analysing and reporting the results from the surveys, this distinction will not matter much, but it is important to be aware of it because for some questions in the survey, it does matter.

##### Example: Information about other household members

Two different questions are asked in the Round 2 Survey:

Question G3: *Have you personally reported any of these crimes or problems to the police in this area in the last 12 months?* (a list of possible crimes is given)

Question G4: *Apart from any incidents we have just talked about, has anyone else in your household reported any of these crimes or problems to the police in this area in the last 12 months?* (the same list of crimes is given again)

Looking at the results for G3 gives a headline result – in this case, for example, 4% of individual respondents said they had reported a burglary. The purpose of G4 is to give a fuller answer. So, if we combined the results for both questions, we could then say that “a total of x% of all local households included someone who had reported a burglary in the last 12 months”. However, to arrive at this answer, we cannot simply add together the results of G3 and G4, as they could overlap; sometimes one household may contain more than one person who had reported a burglary. The *SurveyReporter* website allows this sort of analysis of the data.

##### Example: Age and household structure

This is a rather more complicated example, and it does not apply to many questions, but there are some instances where information appears to relate to the whole household, but actually only relates to the individuals being questioned! The main examples of this can be found in the Pathfinder break-down tables that relate to age and gender. Some caution is required when interpreting these tables.

For example, in the Round 2 Survey tables, Table 178 asks respondents **how old they are**. It then provides the standard breakdown of the results by gender, household type, etc. This is one of the few occasions where such a breakdown could actually be rather misleading, because the data in the table only relates to the age of the respondents who answered the question, not to the rest of their households. So, under the column for ‘households containing any children’ it provides an age breakdown – but this only relates to the age of the respondent who answered ‘yes, we have children in the household’, it does not provide the age of the children themselves!

Similarly, Table 180 (which combines Tables 178 and 179) appears to give an **age breakdown** of all the members of all households. It does not. The data within the table actually just shows 'how many households contain at least one person of that age', not 'how many individuals are of that age'. So, in the 'male' column (all households containing at least one man), the age breakdown shows how many households containing a man also had at least one person of that particular age group.

This data may appear confusing, but it can be useful in providing a sense of how local households are structured. What it does not allow us to do is to compile a detailed population breakdown of how many individuals there are in different age groups, although this sort of information is available from the 2001 Census.

For most questions, the distinction between households and individuals does not matter greatly, but to avoid making mistakes, you should simply read the wording of the question carefully and be aware of who is being covered by the question – is it just the individual respondent or other members of the household?

## **!Summary! Some things to be aware of...**

As we all know, statistics can be abused and misunderstood. There are some common pitfalls to avoid. Here is a simple summary of what to be aware of....

- **Read the question!**

Always read the question very carefully and be aware of exactly what is being asked and who is being asked the question – is it a question aimed at everybody or just filtered groups of respondents? An accurate understanding of the question being asked means that you can interpret the data correctly.

- **Rows or columns?**

The data tables contain both the actual absolute number of respondents who gave each answer as well as the percentage that this represents. Remember that the percentages given are a proportion of the total number of responses for the *column*, not the row!

- **Error Margins**

Although the survey results are very reliable, you should always be aware that there is some margin of error. For the main survey results (i.e. questions asked of everybody) the error margin is +/- 5% or less.

- **Beware of small bases**

Some survey questions are only asked of relatively small sub-sections of the whole sample – for example the number of people actually using specialist mental health services in an area may be very small. Where a base group for a question is small (less than 100), be aware that the error margin will be larger, and where the base is less than 50 it is probably better not to rely on the data, as it may not be very representative.

## Section 4

# Analysing the Data

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There are different types of analysis that you can do with the survey data. We explain the benefits of some of the more straightforward types of analysis in this section, and provide some advice on how to do it. *(Further thoughts on how this sort of analysis can help you with decision-making, and the sorts of questions to ask, can be found in Good Practice Notes 2 and 3 in particular, which consider local evaluation and developing strategies.)*

### (1) Identifying Significant Differences

The simplest form of analysis is to compare two statistics. You may want to compare the situation in your Pathfinder with another Pathfinder, or to compare your Pathfinder with the average for all Pathfinders, or just compare different levels of satisfaction within your own Pathfinder area – e.g. which services are people most dissatisfied with?

When comparing two statistics you will need to check that there is a sufficient difference between the numbers for it to actually represent a **meaningful difference**. **We give you some simple ‘rules of thumb’ to use.**

#### (a) Individual Pathfinder vs. Pathfinder Average

It is sometimes useful to compare the results for a Pathfinder with those across all Pathfinders. How can you tell whether the difference here is significant?

The sample used for individual Pathfinders is about 500. Across all Pathfinders, over 7,500 people were surveyed. On the basis of these sample sizes we can say that there is a significant difference between a Pathfinder and the rest when the results differ by at least the following margins:

Individual Pathfinder statistic	Difference required to be significant
12% or less or 88% or more	+/- 3 percentage points
13% to 26% or 74% to 87%	+/- 4 percentage points
Between 27% and 73%	+/- 5 percentage points

So, as a rule of thumb, as long as the pathfinder’s result is **at least 5 percentage points bigger or smaller** than the average there is a significant difference.

#### (b) Comparing Within a Pathfinder

You may want to compare two headline statistics within a Pathfinder to rank them by importance. For example, where everyone has been asked how satisfied they are with different local services, you may want to compare the answers and see if satisfaction is higher for one service than another. When comparing two statistics like this within one Pathfinder, the following rule of thumb ought to be used:

If one of the statistics is...	Difference required to be significant
9% or less or 91% or more	+/- 4 percentage points
10% to 18% or 82% to 90%	+/- 5 percentage points
19% to 34% or 66% to 81%	+/- 6 percentage points
Between 35% and 65%	+/- 7 percentage points

So, as a rule of thumb, as long as the results are **at least 7 percentage points apart** then there is a significant difference.

**(c) Differences between smaller sub-groups**

You might want to compare results between different subgroups in a Pathfinder, e.g. compare what men said with what women said, or compare the results from households with children as opposed to households without children. These sorts of results are given in the break-down table for each Pathfinder, and can also be generated using **SurveyReporter** website.

As a general rule, if you carry out analysis based on sample sizes of 100 or more, a difference of 14 percentage points (or more) between two groups is always statistically significant. So, if you have a finding of 50% amongst households with children and a finding of 64% amongst households without children, you can be confident that the difference between the two groups indicates a genuine difference in the population, and is not just a result of the survey margins of error. The larger the sample size, the smaller the difference needs to be to indicate a genuine difference between different groups in the whole population. The following table shows some examples:

Sizes of the groups	Difference required to be significant
Both 250	+/- 9 percentage points
One of 200, one of 300	+/- 9 percentage points
Both 200	+/- 10 percentage points
One of 150, one of 250	+/- 10 percentage points
Both 150	+/- 12 percentage points
One of 100, one of 200	+/- 12 percentage points
Both 100	+/- 14 percentage points

Generally speaking, we do not recommend that you seek to analyse sub-groups that have smaller bases than 100, and you should not rely on results from sub-groups of less than 50.

**(d) “Automatic Significance Testing”**

In the data tables made available for every Pathfinder you may have noticed that many of the statistical results in each table have small letters underneath them. These identify which other statistics in the same row are significantly different from that result. The letters are generated automatically when the data tables are produced by NOP – it automatically identifies where the significant differences lie. The letters identify the columns within which the significantly different results lie – all columns have a letter at the top of them to identify them.

This is one way to identify significant differences, although it only applies within a table, so is not of much help when comparing results from different tables.

Underneath the result, there may be some small capital letters. These show which other results **in that same row** are significantly different, by giving the letter of the column they appear in – in this case columns A and C.

**1855**  
**25%**  
**AC**

Q11. Have you heard of '(Pathfinder)'  
Base: All

	All areas		Gender		Age			Person aged 65+ in Household		Children up to 15 in Household				
	Total (A)	All pathfinder areas (B)	Male (D)	Female (E)	16-34 (F)	35-54 (G)	55+ (H)	Yes (I)	No (J)	Any children (M)	Aged 0-4 (N)	Aged 5-11 (O)	Aged 12-15 (P)	None (Q)
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Don't know	3 1% C	126 2% C	-	2 1%	1	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	2 1%	1	1 1%	1 1%	-

## (2) Benchmarking and Comparisons

An important way to make sense of the results for a Pathfinder is by comparing them with some sort of benchmark. We outline some of the different types of benchmark here, and explain when they should be used.

### Comparing with other Pathfinders...

Generally speaking, comparing **one Pathfinder with another** is unlikely to help your analysis very much. All Pathfinders are different. All neighbourhoods are different. The fact that results in two neighbourhoods may differ is therefore often not terribly meaningful – it may just show that the nature of the problems in the two neighbourhoods are different.

The best way to make comparisons with other Pathfinders is to use the **Pathfinder Average** – the average for all Pathfinders in your Round. The main value of this is that it will show you where your Pathfinder differs markedly (if it does) on any particular issue. This can be helpful in highlighting key issues. For example, satisfaction for a particular service may be well below the Pathfinder average, indicating that this may be a particular problem in your neighbourhood. These sorts of comparisons help to show up the bigger differences.

There is an important cautionary note here, however. We must remember that all Pathfinders are based in **deprived areas** and therefore the fact that your Pathfinder may not differ from the average does not mean that there is no issue! In many cases, for example the incidence of crime, all Pathfinders will have results that are 'bad' by national standards – in this case, high crime. The fact that your Pathfinder may have less crime than other Pathfinders does not mean that there is low crime and therefore no issue! The results need to be interpreted with care.

### Comparing with the Comparator...

Each Round of Pathfinders has a 'National Comparator' area, which can be thought of as a 'virtual neighbourhood'. The survey that was undertaken in Pathfinder areas has also been undertaken in non-pathfinder deprived neighbourhoods, to allow a comparison in the future, to help the National Evaluation team evaluate the impact of the Programme as a whole.

For example, for the Round 2 survey, as well as undertaking interviews in the 15 Pathfinder areas, NOP and MORI also undertook a further 1,500 interviews to create a 'National Comparator' which will act like a 'control group' for the Programme. Each of the 15 Pathfinders is located in a different local authority district; in each of these districts, a ward with similar deprivation characteristics to the local Pathfinder area, but without a neighbourhood management partnership, was selected and 100 households were interviewed at random. All of the interviews in the 15 areas were then put together to create what can be thought of as a 'virtual neighbourhood', which is very similar in characteristics to the Pathfinder areas but does not have the benefit of a Pathfinder partnership.

During the lifetime of the Programme, the progress in Pathfinder areas can be compared with changes in this virtual neighbourhood, to help the evaluation team identify what added value the Pathfinders bring and what changes are attributable to them.

At this stage, there is little point in comparing your Pathfinder with the Comparator, and we do not recommend this. The real benefit of the Comparator will be seen in future when it can be used to measure whether improvements in Pathfinder areas are greater or smaller than any improvements in the Comparator.

#### Comparing with National Benchmarks...

The best and most valuable type of comparison is with local, regional or national benchmarks that show what the national average is, or what service performance ought to be.

The Key Findings reports sent out to Round 2 Pathfinders, and the *SurveyReporter* website include some national benchmarks. Typical sources include the General Household Survey, the People's Panel, the Survey of English Housing – these are national surveys that often reveal what the position for an 'average neighbourhood' is for a particular issue. The distance between a Pathfinder's situation as a deprived neighbourhood and that of the national average is the 'gap' that the neighbourhood renewal process is seeking to close. Comparisons with such benchmarks show where the renewal challenges lie.

#### Comparing over time...

Repeat household surveys will be undertaken in all Pathfinder areas in the future. At that time, comparisons with the first wave of surveys will be possible and any changes over time will be identifiable.

### (3) Cross-Table Analysis

You can go a stage further by analysing the data for your area in more detail. In particular, you can examine how different groups within the local community experience life and services differently. This is done by cross-referencing different questions in the survey. For example, by crossing the question on 'How satisfied are you with local hospital services?' with 'Is English your first/main language?', we can see how opinions on local hospital services may differ between those of different language groups, possibly revealing issues affecting minority ethnic groups.

The break-down tables provided to all Pathfinders already provide 'cross-tabled' information like this, presenting every question broken down by certain categories (i.e. questions) – gender, age, household tenure, etc.

Our interactive *SurveyReporter* website allows you to undertake your own cross-table analysis relatively easily. It does not require specialist knowledge and is a flexible tool.

## Section 5

# Getting Satisfaction?

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Many of the questions in the household surveys ask residents how satisfied they are with different public services, and different aspects of those services. Understanding what 'satisfaction' means is important and can help us to deepen our understanding of what people think and why.

Whilst understanding satisfaction is a complex subject we have attempted to highlight some issues here for you to think about when analysing your own Pathfinder data.

- **Understanding different levels of satisfaction**

The survey questionnaires for the Household Survey ask residents to rate many services on a scale of 'very satisfied', 'fairly satisfied', 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'fairly dissatisfied' and 'very dissatisfied'.

It is worth looking at the spread of opinions given for each service as this can be revealing. When reporting results the easiest way to do this is to add up the positive responses (all those both fairly and very satisfied) and compare this with the negative responses (all those fairly and very dissatisfied). This is a good general comparison. However, it may disguise a more complex picture. In particular, what proportion of responses are 'very' positive or negative?

Experience from past surveys suggests that those who say they are 'very' satisfied or dissatisfied are generally quite clear in their opinions, whereas those who are 'fairly' satisfied may be somewhat more ambiguous in their views and this could cover a wider range of experiences. Some service organisations prefer to rely mainly on the views of those expressing strong opinions (i.e. 'very') for their targets and indicators. Understanding the proportion of people with 'strong' views is certainly helpful and can add more depth to your analysis.

Similarly, those who are 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' are not simply refusing to give an opinion, but may often be balancing good and bad points following mixed experiences.

- **Service satisfaction is not the same as service quality**

We should not assume that the actual quality of a service can always be accurately defined simply by looking at the levels of 'customer satisfaction'. The reason for this is that a customer's satisfaction is often influenced by a number of factors not just the actual experience of the service. One of the most important factors is the role of 'expectations'.

Put simply, if someone approaches a service with very low expectations, they are likely to be easily satisfied. However, if someone else who has high expectations approaches the same service they may be disappointed if it does not match what they were expecting, and are likely to be less satisfied.

In deprived areas, these sorts of issues may be particularly important. Residents who have received consistently low levels of service from key public services may have learnt to have low expectations of those services and may therefore be satisfied with standards of service that would be unacceptable elsewhere. So, for some services in deprived areas, levels of satisfaction may actually be unduly 'flattering' to some services, which may be even worse than they appear.

- **Identifying factors for improvement**

The challenge for Pathfinders is not only to identify where there are problems with public services but to understand what aspects of those services need the most improvement. Customers are often satisfied with some aspects of a service, but not others – for example, they like their GP and his service, but don't like the long waiting times.

We must gather whatever evidence we can to try to identify the specific causes of dissatisfaction so that our 'solutions' are targeted and not too general.

- **Resident priorities**

In the surveys, we ask residents what their own priorities are for improvements in their neighbourhoods. Whilst these responses are important it is also important to note that such questions tend to lead to more obvious and tangible problems being identified – ‘we need more youth facilities’, ‘there is too much crime’, etc. More complex issues, or those that are not so obvious or affect a smaller number of people (e.g. mental health problems) are less likely to be identified. The point here is that your Pathfinder may also need to identify and be aware of a broader set of priorities than those identified purely through general resident surveys.