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An innovative approach to the English Private Landlord Survey

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Outline

- Traditional approach to the Private Landlord Survey
- A new approach
- Pros and cons
- Coverage and representativeness
- Outcomes and challenges
- Lessons

Traditional approach to the Private Landlord Survey



Traditional approach to the Private Landlord Survey

- Views, practices and plans of private landlords and agents
- Standard quantitative survey
- Face to face / telephone
- Follow up to the English Housing Survey
- Achieved around 1,000 responses with 64% response rate (2010)
- Findings at national level
- Some limited comparison to previous surveys
- Inform policy on private rented sector (PRS)

A new approach



The Tenancy Deposit Protection schemes

- Since 2007, TDPs protect tenant deposits
- 390k landlords & agents and 3.4m deposits

Presented opportunity for a new approach...

- TDP admin data combined, analysed and used as sample frame
- Online survey – landlords and agents
- Survey administered by TDPs themselves (data protection)

Pros

Cons



Pros

- Cost, timing, ability to access and potentially deliver higher number of responses, access to TDP administrative data

Cons

- shorter questionnaire, dependence on TDPs, limited ability to compare with previous surveys, reduced coverage of whole PRS

Survey coverage

- EHS (2014-15) tells us 44-66% of private renters live in TDP tenancies
- Similar profiles registered and not, although some differences in types of households
- More likely to be in work (and full time work) and on higher (and the highest) incomes
- At landlord level: lots of reasons why a landlord might not have registered a deposit with a TDP (can't assume "rogue")

So...good coverage of PRS population, though reduced compared to previous surveys

Survey representativeness

- Oversampled larger portfolio landlords and agents
- Survey data were weighted to be as representative as possible of three quite distinct populations:
 - Landlords
 - Deposits/tenancies
 - Registrants (agents and landlords registered with TDP)
- Low response rate affects representativeness

Survey representativeness

- Challenges around defining populations of interest:
 - **Landlords**
 - quantifying the landlords that 'sit behind' agents
 - agents unable to answer for landlords
 - **Tenancies**
 - Deposits <> tenancies
 - **Registrants**
 - duplication across TDP datasets. 24% registered with more than one TDP



Survey outcomes and challenges

- High number of responses (7,823)
- Low response rate (7.2%)
- Delivered regional / sub-group analyses

However...

- Quality of admin data poorer than expected
- Uncertainties meant project management challenging
- Lower response rates than anticipated
- Highly dependent on TDPs
- Reduced coverage (though greater depth) of findings



Lessons
Learned

-
- Use a pilot!
 - Understand as much as possible any third party (admin) data
 - Build in contingencies for uncertainties – resources & timetable
 - Invest in key stakeholder relationships
 - Plan but be prepared to be flexible!
 - Be clear about the advantages and limitations of new approach
 - Have a robust approach to weighting (esp. with low RRs)
 - Recognise data protection and file transfer challenges / risks
 - See it as a platform for improvement

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