

DWP Style Guide

A guide to writing reports for the Department for Work and Pensions

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1 THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissions research to inform policy development on a range of social security related measures. All research likely to attract a substantial readership is published in the Department's Research Report Series. Other research publications include research summaries, and methodological working papers. All of these research outputs are published on the DWP research website <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/>

The aim of this guide is to help authors to produce reports of research commissioned by the Department which will be read and understood by policy customers, Ministers and others outside the Department with an interest in social security and welfare to work matters.

We hope the guide will save time for authors and the Department, by minimising the number of comments, which need to be incorporated after the first draft of a report. We also hope that it will help authors to produce reports that maximise the impact of their findings.

The guidelines should be followed in all reports submitted to the Department. We recognise that individual styles are expressions of the authors, and the guide does not seek to restrict this. Nor do we expect it to make consultation between authors and DWP project managers unnecessary. Research methods vary widely, and there will be cases where alternatives to these guidelines are preferable. If you think that this may apply to your report, you are strongly advised to consult your DWP project manager before submitting the first draft. DWP project managers will provide contractors with a copy of the style guide once the contract has been let.

2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

2.1 Structure of reports

All reports published by the Department follow the same broad structure:

- cover and title page
- contents page
- acknowledgements
- authors credits
- glossary of terms
- abbreviations
- summary
- main report
- appendices
- references
- back cover summary

2.2 Cover and title page

The title chosen for the report should be agreed with the DWP project manager. It should:

- be clear
- be interesting
- give a general idea of coverage in a non-technical way
- be as brief as possible, with a longer descriptive subtitle if necessary

The cover will include the logo of the DWP. It may include the logo of other departments or agencies involved in the project especially if it is jointly commissioned. DWP will arrange for appropriate logos to be inserted on the cover.

Company or organisational logos should be removed before the report is submitted to the DWP project manager.

The information required for the title page includes:

- title
- author(s)
- research organisation(s)

2.3 Disclaimer

All reports relating to research commissioned by the Department must carry the following disclaimer:

‘Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the Department for Work and Pensions or any other government department.’

The printers will add this to reports published by the Department, so it is not necessary for the authors to include it. For reports published outside the Department however, the authors must include this disclaimer.

2.4 Contents Page

All reports should include a contents page and a list of figures and tables if appropriate. It would be helpful if the contractor could provide a contents page that automatically updates itself. This means that any changes made to the pagination at the final edit stage, prior to going to the printers, are automatically updated. In terms of pagination, roman numerals (e.g. i, ii, iii, iv) should be used to number content preceding the summary; arabic numerals (e.g. 1,2,3,4) should be used thereafter.

2.5 Acknowledgements

If the report is to be published by the Department, it should:

- note that the research was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions
- acknowledge the role of relevant Department for Work and Pensions staff in the research

2.6 Authors' credits

A brief note about the authors should be included. This should be no more than a paragraph of about five lines per author. Author's credits should appear in alphabetical order and with the author's names in bold.

2.7 Glossary of terms

A glossary of terms should be included as this makes the report more accessible to people who may not have an in detailed knowledge of social security issues.

2.8 Abbreviations

A list of abbreviations is required at the front of the report. When using abbreviations in the text each chapter is treated as an individual unit. Therefore the first time a term is used it should be written in full and abbreviated throughout the chapter. The next time the term is used in following chapters it should be written in full and then abbreviated throughout the rest of the chapter. Abbreviations used in reports for specific benefits should conform to DWP abbreviations for example Child Benefit is Ch.B. . The DWP project manager can provide specific advice on this if necessary.

Abbreviations should generally only be used to refer to proper nouns (e.g. LPO for Lone Parent Obligations), rather than for convenience alone (e.g. LPs for lone parents).

2.9 Summary

This is the section which Ministers and senior policy customers are most likely to read so clarity and conciseness are essential. Section 3.1 in this document provides more information about the writing style required for research reports.

The DWP social research community prefers:

- the title of 'Summary' rather than 'Executive Summary or 'Abstract';
- the aims of the project and a brief description of the research methodology to be included at the beginning of the summary;
- the inclusion of all key findings and conclusions;
- key findings and conclusions to be referenced in the main text. For example: 'The perception that staff were knowledgeable was high for clients (Section 3.2)'; and
- policy recommendations to be included, where appropriate.

The summary should appear at the front of the report. As well as being incorporated in the body of the report, it should stand up to being read independently of the main report and, as a rough guide, should be no less than two pages and no more than eight A4 pages in length. A stand-alone four page summary and back-page summary should also be produced (see sections 2.14 and 2.15).

When producing the first draft of a report for the Department, the summary should be included at the same time, rather than being delivered separately at a later date.

2.10 Main report

As well as the project description, analyses and findings, the main report should include the following sections:

- the aims of the project;
- a background to the project;
- a layperson's guide to the research methodology, including an indication of how this determines the kinds of inferences and conclusions that can be drawn from the findings. This is more detailed than the information relating to the research design included in the summary.
- any special conventions used in presenting findings, such as the system for referring to a series of surveys, separate sample subgroups, or for attributing verbatim quotes.

Detailed technical and methodological information should be included in appendices rather than in the main body of the report (Refer to 2.11).

2.11 Appendices

The following types of information should be placed in appendices:

- detailed technical information e.g. sample frame
- sampling method
- response rates (Refer to Section 3.7 for the preferred way of calculating response rates)
- any other methodological information
- questionnaires, topic guides and other important field documents

Copies of letters, forms and questionnaires normally appear in the form of two to a page. In some cases, where a questionnaire is particularly long, it may be excluded from the published report. When this occurs, DWP will make the questionnaire available on request.

In addition, the DWP project manager will ask the contractor to provide copies of quantitative research documentation and cleaned data. This is to ensure that documents and data can be archived at the ESRC Data Archive. DWP quantitative survey data is archived as a matter of routine but not qualitative data.

2.12 References and sources

References should be listed alphabetically by author in a single bibliography at the end of the main report, rather than at the end of each chapter.

The preferred way of presenting references is as follows. Note the use of capital letters, italics and abbreviations. In particular, capitals should only be used in titles for words which would naturally be capitalised, such as the first word and proper nouns.

Author, A.N. and Writer, A. (year of publication) 'Title of paper: subtitle of paper', *Title of Journal*, volume number, issue number, pages

Author, A.N. (year of publication) *Title of book: subtitle of book*, Town [and State if U.S.]: Publisher

Author, A.N. (year, of publication) 'Title of paper: subtitle of paper', in Writer, A. (ed), *Title of book*, Town [and State]: Publisher

For references within the text or footnotes, the following style is preferred:

(Author, year, [page numbers(s)])	for one author
(Author and Writer, year, [page number(s)])	for two authors
(Author <i>et al</i> , year, [page number(s)])	for more than two authors

2.13 Footnotes

Footnote references should appear after the punctuation mark when the reference refers to the preceding clause or sentence. For example:

'Of those men in couples with children who did not have a job, only 22 per cent declared that they would not want a job if one were available.¹

This will not apply when it is obvious that the footnote reference number only refers to the word it is next to.

2.14 Stand-alone four-page summary

In addition to the research report, a four page stand-alone summary is produced for each report published in the Research Report Series for publication on the DWP website: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/summ_index.asp. The summary should include a summary of key findings on the first page, followed by a summary of the research, featuring sections on methodology and a more detailed description of the report findings. It should be produced in column format – 2 columns per page and the second column on the fourth page should not exceed half the page in length, to allow for the insertion of a standard text on DWP research report availability.

2.15 Back-page summary

The authors should supply a back-page summary for the rear cover, which summarises the evaluation topic and scope of the findings in no more than two paragraphs and not exceeding half a page in length

¹ by contrast, over 50 % of women in the same situation said they would not want a job if one were available.

3 THE CONTENT AND STYLE OF THE REPORT

3.1 Writing style

The Department has a commitment to the use of plain English, and the preferred style is to:

- use gender neutral language – for example, avoiding the use of masculine pronouns to cover both sexes;
- do not use the passive form;
- keep sentences short and clear;
- keep paragraphs short and clear;
- keep the text flowing between paragraphs;
- do not number paragraphs
- write for a generalist audience and do not assume that all readers are familiar with the subject matter or methods;
- reports should be clearly structured and signposted as many readers ‘dip ‘ into the reports rather than read the entire document;
- explain results of technical analyses, and give lay descriptions of tests and analyses carried out (more technical details with a full description of the analyses should be placed in an appendix, as discussed in Section 2.11);
- avoid listing lots of percentages to make a point, but instead describe the relationship between the figures, and use the percentages to illustrate;
- ensure assertions are fully justified by evidence, and that any prior assumptions which are not directly tested are identified as such;
- write in a balanced, value-free way based on evidence from the research and not conjecture;
- clearly distinguish inferences, conclusions and recommendations from descriptions of the findings;
- conclusion should focus on policy implications of the findings;
- any recommendations should take full account of resources available and possible implications;
- avoid jargon as far as possible; any unavoidable jargon terms should be explained the first time they are used;
- do not use Americanisms, for example, labor;
- refer to tables and figures as Table 1.1, Figure 2.1, etc., rather as ‘below’, ‘above’ or ‘overleaf’, since pagination may be changed by the printer; and

- cite all sources using attributions in footnotes (see section 2.12).

The style should be consistent throughout the report, for example, the use of abbreviations, the use of punctuation, or the tense in which the document is written. This is especially important if different authors write separate chapters. The lead author for the publication is responsible for ensuring that, when the chapters are brought together, the style is consistent across the whole report.

In general, the past tense should be used for reporting findings. Inferences from the data about the current state of affairs can be couched in the present tense, but the data itself will belong to the (recent) past by the time the report is written. Check with your DWP project manager if you intend to depart from these guidelines for any reason.

The first draft of a report is usually circulated to policy customers in the Department, and so should also meet these criteria. In instances where research has been jointly commissioned, the first draft will be circulated outside the department to other government departments and agencies. Although subsequent drafts may well require amendments, the first draft should still be well-structured, easy to read, concise and accurate. The first draft of a report should be written to a standard that will not require stylistic amendments, grammar or spelling corrections.

3.1.1 Capital letters

As well as the usual rules for using capital letters, the following words should begin with capital letters:

- benefit names, for example, Income Support;
- the names of government departments, for example, the Department for Children, Schools and Families; and
- official job titles, for example, Research Officer.

3.1.2 Punctuation and Hyphens

Each full stop should be followed by two spaces. Other punctuation should be followed by a single space.

The following conventions are preferred for hyphens:

- fractions, for example, three-quarters, two-fifths or one-third
- to convert two or more separate words into a single one, which then acts as an adjective, noun or other part of speech, for example, take-up of benefit, or full-time work

3.2 Quotations

All quotations should be italicised. The following conventions should preferably be used for quotations.

3.2.1 Quotations from documentary sources

Short quotations, of one whole sentence or less, should be included in the text, in italic type enclosed in single quote marks. They should also be attributed using normal type, in parentheses, running on from the quotation.

Longer quotations should be in italic type, indented, with a line of space above and below. They should be attributed using normal type, in brackets running on from the quotation.

Attribution of quotations from published sources should be made in footnotes in line with the guidance in section 2.12.

3.2.2 Use of 'verbatim' quotations

The use of verbatim quotations from interviews is fundamental to the presentation of findings from qualitative research, which seeks to explore respondents' views and experiences and to discover the meaning they attach to words and concepts. However, quotations should not be included as a substitute for analysis. They should be used to illustrate a point, rather than to make it. Readers should not have to wade through a long quotation, or worse still a long series of quotations, to work out the point made. Rather, the point should be made in the text, and then reinforced by a quotation.

Quotations of just a few words can be included in the text within single quote marks, followed by the source, in brackets. Longer quotations should be placed in an indented paragraph of italic type within single quote marks, with a blank line above and below. The attribution should be in normal type on the following line from the quotation. It should indicate where the respondent fits into the sampling scheme – for example, by indicating age, sex, and benefit status.

'I first claimed Jobseeker's Allowance last year. That was after I lost my job at the factory.'

(Woman, 20-39, current recipient)

The system for attributing quotations should be described early in the report, before the first verbatim appears.

3.3 Headings

Headings are needed to provide the report with a structure. There should not be more than four levels of headings as this obscures rather than clarifies the organisation of the report. Use of the following conventions would help typesetters when the report comes to publication.

- **CHAPTER HEADINGS** (these should be in bold capitals; chapters should be numbered 1,2,3, etc.)
- **Section headings** (these should also be emboldened ; only the first word and any proper nouns should begin with a capital letter; this capitalisation should be followed for all lower levels of heading; section headings should be numbered 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.) This includes headings such as 'introduction'.

- **Subsection headings** (these should be in bold, italic, with numbers for example, 3.2.1).
- Sub-sub-subsection headings these should not be used unless absolutely unavoidable. If used, they should be underlined, but not numbered.

At least one blank line should be left after a chapter heading, but the text should start on a new line directly below section and lower-level headings. The headings in this guide provide examples of the preferred style.

3.4 Numbers and percentages

The following conventions should be used for presenting numbers:

- it should be made clear exactly what the percentages are describing. This is especially important when discussing findings for subgroups, or subgroups of subgroups, rather than the sample as a whole;
- in text, try to avoid starting sentences with numerals. If it is necessary, the number should be written in full. For example, 'Eighty-seven disabled people were interviewed.' Large numbers can be rounded for economy, but clearly some judgement is needed;
- in tables, the symbol '%' should be used, but in text it should be written out in full as 'per cent';
- in text, write out numbers from zero to ten; for numbers 11 and over, use numerals;
- fractions should be written out in the text and hyphenated, for example, one-third, and two-fifths. In tables and diagrams they should be presented in numerical form;
- where fractions or proportions are given in the text, the percentage should be given in percentages afterwards. For example, 'Three-quarters of Income Support claimants (74 per cent) were dissatisfied, while half (52 per cent) of the Family Credit claimants reported dissatisfaction';
- figures of 0.5 or above, in both text and tables, should be rounded to the nearest whole number (except in special cases: for example, where showing slowly changing indices).

It is important to remember that not all readers will understand percentages correctly. Percentages over 100 per cent are often misinterpreted: for example, some people think a 200 per cent rise in a value means that it has doubled, rather than tripled. In these cases, use words rather than figures to make the point.

It is also worth thinking carefully about whether and when the use of proportions rather than numbers actually helps the reader. Fractions from halves to fifths, and tenths, probably do; the rest probably do not. Comparisons of different sized fractions, such as thirds and fifths, are best avoided in almost all cases.

3.5 Tables

Tables are tools to get a message across clearly and simply. If possible, large tables with many columns and rows should be avoided. In some cases, two smaller tables would show the data more clearly than one large one.

Like quotations, tables should not be used in isolation, but the information summarised and key findings or points indicated in the text.

Conventions for tables are:

- Always give the unweighted bases in the table where the difference between weighted and unweighted numbers is small; but where the weights are large, and the two sets of numbers are very different, both bases should be included.
- Describe the base underneath the table, where possible, for example, 'Base: all respondents (1,520)'.
- Use concise and informative titles, which indicate the main axes of the table. Section heads within tables should be bold and base or total should be italicised.
- Lines within tables should be avoided.
- Clearly indicate the cell contents, for example 'row percentages', 'column percentages', 'multiple response', 'average weekly income', etc.
- The unit of measurement (e.g. '£', '000') should be in the column or row heading, not in the cells of the table.
- Do not use percentages where the base falls below 50: either report the actual frequency or indicate that the base was too small for a figure to be calculated (see below).
- Number tables using the chapter number, followed by a full stop, and followed by the number of the table within that chapter. For example, the second table to appear in Chapter Three will be labelled 'Table 3.2'. Letters should not be used in table headings e.g.3.2 a.
- If applicable, the source should be quoted beneath the table and tables should be consistent throughout the report.
- Tables should be placed within the text of the relevant chapter.

It is the author's responsibility to:

- check that figures in the table are correct
- check that totals add up

The following conventions should be used in tables, and explained early in the report, before the first table appears.

- * less than 0.5 per cent
- 0 no observations
- category not applicable
- .. data not available
- [] numbers in square brackets are percentages based on fewer than 50 observations

References to tables in the text should be by number only. Positions may change slightly when text is prepared for printing, so do not use conventions such as above, below or over the page.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide examples of preferred table formats.

Table 3.1 Occupation of Partner: present/most recent job

			Column Percentages	
	Working 16+ hours per week		Out of work/ Part-time	
	1996	1998	1996	1998
Professional	22	15	20	9
Non-manual	8	7	3	7
Service	3	3	6	5
Manual	66	75	72	79
<i>Base¹</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>4</i>

¹ Excludes those with missing or insufficient information to code occupational group.

Table 3.2 Reasons for feeling trapped on Income Support

Multiple responses included

Categories	%
Better off on Income Support than in work	34
No jobs/suitable jobs available	26
Level of Income Support too low	18
No childcare available	16
Health problems/sick	12
Age: too old to find new job	7
Not worth working in low-paid job	3
Worried about leaving benefit/loss of confidence for work	2
No opportunities for training/ improving skills	2

Insufficient money to look for job	2
Other	4
<i>Base: All who feel trapped</i>	450

3.6 Figures and diagrams

Charts are a useful way of summarising relationships in data and we would encourage their use in presenting both qualitative and quantitative data. However, if authors have provided a table with all the specific figures, it is not necessary to generate graphs for every single figure pictorially recreated on them. Figures and diagrams should either be inserted in the report in Word format, or can be submitted separately as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Like tables, figures and diagrams should be as clear as possible, appropriately sized (space approximately 110mm(width) x 666mm (height) in which to created charts) so that they do not dominate the layout. The key points identified by the figures and diagrams need to be discussed in the text.

Points to remember are:

- use concise and informative titles;
- avoid using 3-D charts as they are more difficult to read;
- include a key for graphs and diagrams, where appropriate;
- label axes fully (with units of measurement, if appropriate);
- ensure sufficient labelling to make the information easy to access;
- ensure any labels are clear and easy to read;
- include the sample base, unweighted, where appropriate;
- number diagrams or figures using the chapter number, followed by a full stop, followed by the consecutive number of the diagram within that chapter. For example, the second diagram to appear in Chapter Three will be labelled 'Figure 3.2';
- if applicable, the source should be quoted beneath the diagram;
- graphs and figures are generally produced in black and shades of grey, or white unless a graph is too complex. Colours should only be used in

exceptional circumstances, for example where it is necessary to differentiate between a number of lines or bars in a chart.

- for publication, the style of figures and diagrams should be consistent throughout the report.

3.7 Response rates

Response rates should always be calculated from the number of in-scope cases in the sample. Many of the samples for the Department's research are drawn from benefit records, and the section below describes the way in which the DWP social research community prefers response rates to be presented in those instances. Where it is not possible to use the presentation/ calculation described below, please consult your DWP project manager to agree an alternative presentation/calculation for response rates .

There are two figures of interest to the Department:

- the response rate for those in scope of the study (i.e. in the sampling frame), to give an indication of the risk of bias in the achieved sample
- the response rate for those in scope of fieldwork (i.e. in the contacted sample), to give an indication of field performance

The response rate for those in scope of the study is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{number of achieved interviews} \times 100}{\text{number of cases sampled} - \text{number of ineligible cases}}$$

Ineligible cases are those which are found not to be eligible for the study at all. For example, people sampled for a survey of families who were found not to have children, or people not getting Income Support in a survey of Income Support recipients.

Having found the number of cases, which were in scope of the study, the response rate for those in scope of fieldwork is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{number of achieved interviews} \times 100}{\text{number of cases in scope of study} - (\text{number of invalid cases} + \text{number of cases no issued to interviewers})}$$

Cases may be invalid for the following reasons:

- respondent moved from given address, and not traceable
- respondent moved from given address, and traceable to an area outside fieldwork
- respondent not known by occupants of given address
- respondent died
- address derelict or empty

- address not traced or not complete
- address business or industrial (except in special cases: for example surveys of Child Support Agency clients, who often give their work address for contact; or surveys of employers)

Valid cases for benefit record-based samples, which should be used to calculate the response rate, fall into the following categories:

- successful interviews
- doorstep refusals
- no contact after agreed number of call-backs
- appointments broken after agreed number of call-backs
- interview stopped by respondent
- respondent away during fieldwork
- respondent incapable of doing interview (ill/incapacitated)

Cases which are not used at all, because the required number of interviews is achieved before they are issued, should not be included in the fieldwork response rate.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 provide examples of the preferred way of presenting response rates. They indicate both the response rates among the population in scope of the study, and among the sample of valid cases.

Table 3.3 Recommended presentation of response rates for individuals sampled from Department for Work and Pensions records

	N	Population in Scope of study %	Population in Scope of fieldwork %
Number sampled	2222		
Ineligible (not population of interest)	18		
	0		
<i>In scope of study:</i>	2042	100	
Cases not issued to interviewers (opt-outs)	222		
Cases not issued to interviewers (reserve sample)	0		
<u>Invalid cases</u>			
Respondent moved out of fieldwork area	10		
Respondent moved, untraceable	280		
Respondent not known by occupants	30		
Respondent died	10		
Address derelict or empty	60		
Address not traced/not complete	10		
Address business/industrial	10		
	410	69	
<i>In scope of fieldwork:</i>	1410		100
<u>Non-contact after agreed no. of call-backs</u>			
With anyone at the address	80		
With named person	110		
	190	60	87
<u>Refusals</u>			
All information refused	10		
Personal refusal	100		
Broken appointment. No re-contact	40		
Proxy refusal	30		
	180	51	74
<u>Other reasons for no interview</u>			
Respondent away during fieldwork period	30		

Respondent incapable of interview (e.g. health problems)	20		
Inadequate English/refused interview in English	10		
Interview terminated by respondent	10		
	70	48	69
Response rate	97	48	69

Table 3.4 Recommended presentation of response rates for businesses/organisations sampled from Department for Work and Pensions records

	N	Population in Scope of study %	Population in scope of fieldwork %
Number sampled	2222		
Ineligible	180		
<i>In scope of study:</i>	2042	100	
Cases not issued to interviewers (opt-outs)	222		
Cases not issued to interviewers (reserve sample)	0		
<u>Invalid cases</u>			
Business moved out of fieldwork area	10		
Business moved, untraceable	280		
Business not known by occupants	30		
Out of business/ceased trading	10		
Address derelict or empty	60		
Address not traced/not complete	10		
Residential address	10		
<i>In scope of fieldwork:</i>	410	69	
<u>Non contact after agreed no. of call-backs</u>	1410		100
With anyone at the address	80		
With appropriate job-holder	110		
	190	60	87
Refusals			
All information refused (e.g. switchboard	10		

refusal)			
Personal refusal	100		
Broken appointment. No re-contact	40		
Proxy refusal	30		
	180		
<u>Other Reasons for no interview</u>			
Respondent away during fieldwork period	40		
Inadequate English/refused interview in English	10		
Interview terminated by respondent	20		
	70	48	69
Response rate	70	48	69

4 Providing Text for the Printer

To prepare the final document for the printer the following tasks must be done:

- company or organisational logos should be removed
- graphs and figures should be provided as computer files in a format agreed with the DWP project manager. In the case of graphs and figures this will normally be the spreadsheet from which the charts were originally generated. This will enable the printers to create the figure or the figure themselves in the house style, rather than work with and try to adapt, the spreadsheet version
- a clean electronic copy of the final report in Word must be sent to the DWP project manager Please provide the whole report in one computer file if possible (rather than separate files for each chapter, etc). Tables should not be submitted separately but should be included in the same document and inserted in the relevant part of the text.
- reports produced by more than one contractor should be compiled before being submitted to the Department. The conventions used in a joint report should be agreed by the contractors and the DWP project manager before drafting the report
- where possible, the first draft report should include the contents page, acknowledgements, authors' credits, glossary of terms, list of abbreviations and summary. These should not, in any event, be submitted later than the final version of the report
- it is the author's responsibility to proof read all draft reports before submitting them to the Department

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