

# Moving ONS business surveys online

## Challenges and successes

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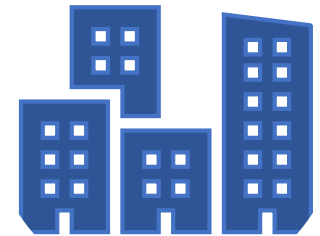
Office for National Statistics (ONS), UK

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# ONS Business Surveys

## Survey portfolio

- 77 business surveys (nearly all mandatory)
- 2.6 million questionnaires per year
- 380,000 businesses selected per year
- Larger businesses could receive nearly all
- Burden could be substantial



## Mode: historically, nearly all on paper

- **For ONS:** printing, posting, processing a major operation
- **For businesses:** outdated as the digital world evolved



# Developing an online data collection system

- Decision: an ONS, bespoke “Survey Data Collection” service
- Started cautiously to get it right:
  - Built the infrastructure, account management system, design tool and the electronic questionnaire (eQ)
- Business-centred research methods:
  - user testing merged with cognitive interviews
- First survey online was the Monthly Wages and Salary Survey (MWSS)
- Rather than a survey-by-survey approach, designed across the survey portfolio



# Successes

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- 85% (2.1 m) of annually despatched questionnaires now online
- First-time clearance rates improved and reduced operational burden from printing and processing
- Better meets businesses' needs
- System more flexible compared to paper
- New infrastructure developed to manage most of our remaining complex surveys
- A real 'One ONS' approach, collaboration across disciplines



# Challenges

- Complex surveys: need tailored information, or detailed accounts-based data
- COVID-19 Pandemic – higher risk appetite, but also meant editable pdfs for paper surveys
- managing the live environment, while also delivering change (updates, bugs)
- Numerous modes for businesses while we finish transitioning but they ask for a central online portal
- ‘Tightening our belts’ and ‘cutting our cloth’



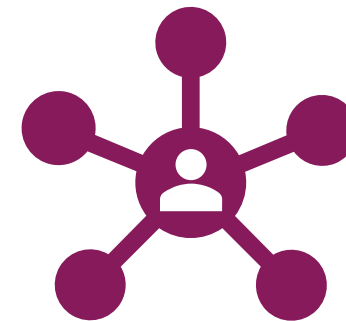
# Next steps

## The work continues to move the remainder online.

- Over this financial year, we aim to have **98% online**, reducing reliance on paper, telephone and editable pdfs, bringing efficiencies for the office and improving the business experience.



Continuing to reduce our survey portfolio, tailor our service to become more **business-centred** and improve our internal systems.



# Thank you!

Welcome any questions or comments

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