



Office for  
National Statistics

# Living Costs and Food Survey

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- Key Results of 2009 survey
- Data collection: interview and diary
- Developments: looking ahead

# Living Costs and Food Survey

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- Sample of around 6,000 households
- Interview plus two-week diary of expenditure
- Response (interview plus diary) = 51%
  - decline in response
  - similar trend across social surveys

# Sample design

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- Stratified by:
  - region
  - ownership of cars
  - socio-economic group head of household
- Clustered: post code sectors are PSUs

# Interview: overview

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- Expenditure
- Income
- Ownership of consumer durables
- Demographics
  
- Also part of Integrated Household Survey (IHS)

# Uses of Survey

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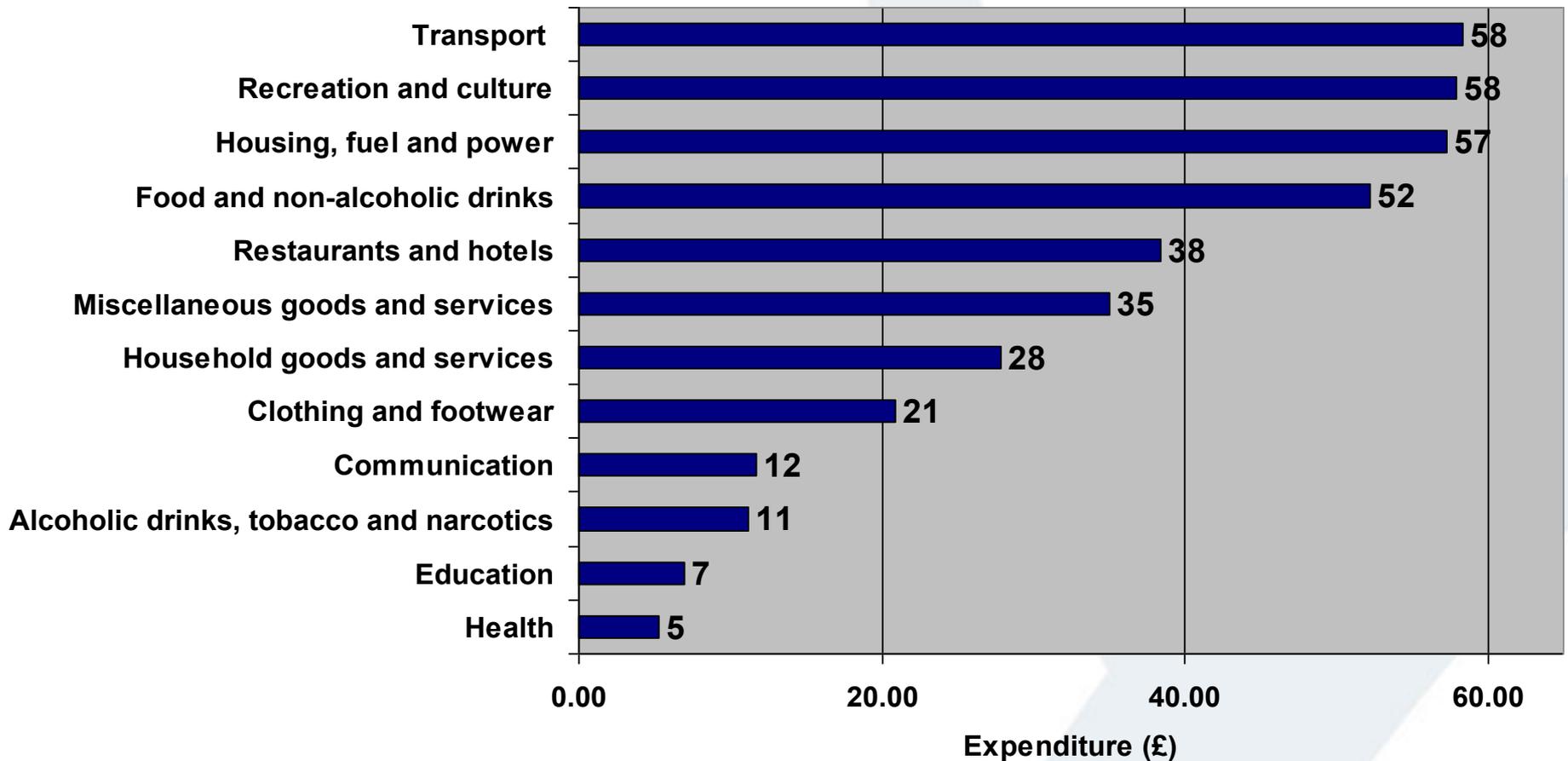
- Retail Price Index
- Consumer price indices
- Spending patterns of population
- Household expenditure for GDP
- Effect of taxes and benefits
- Food consumption and nutrition

# Headline figure 2009

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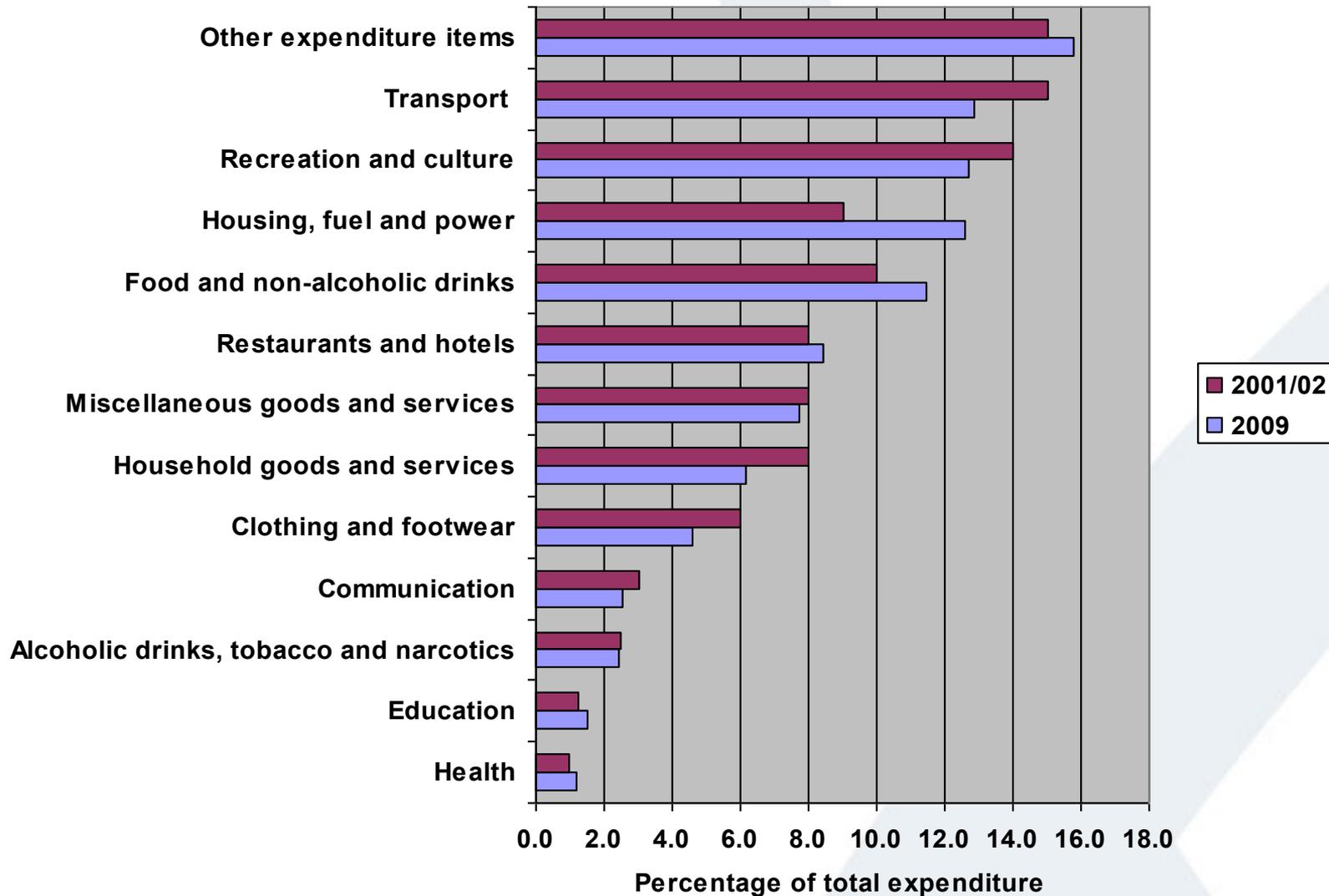
- Average household weekly expenditure was **£455** (£471 in 2008)
- First drop since current methods implemented in 2001-02

# Average weekly expenditure on main commodities and services 2009



Source: Living Costs and Food Survey, Office for National Statistics

# Changes over time (percentage of total expenditure)



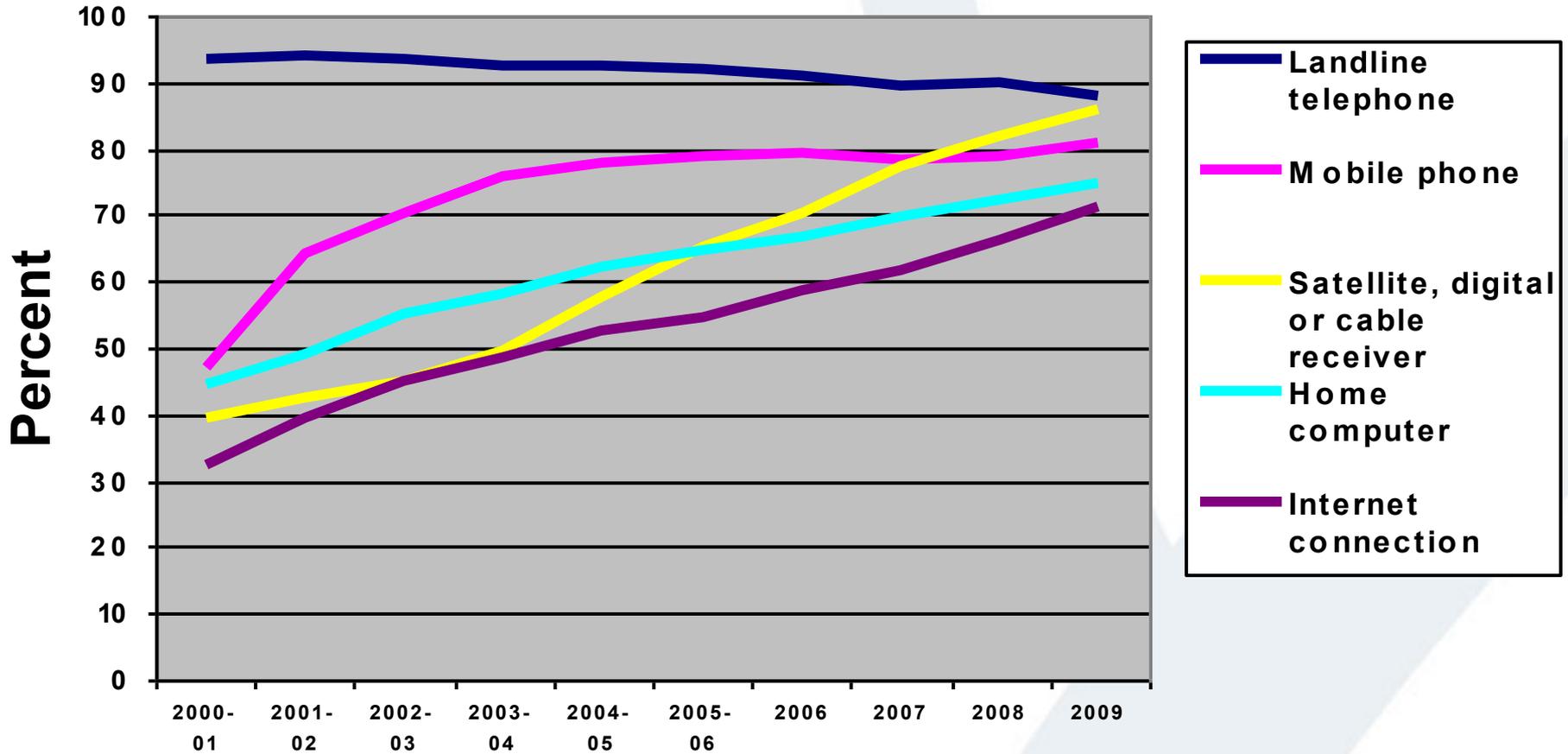
# Housing-related costs (renters and mortgage holders)

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- £71 a week - average net rent paid by renters
  - London £111
  - North East £37
- £133 a week - average mortgage payment by mortgage holders
  - London £203
  - Scotland £112

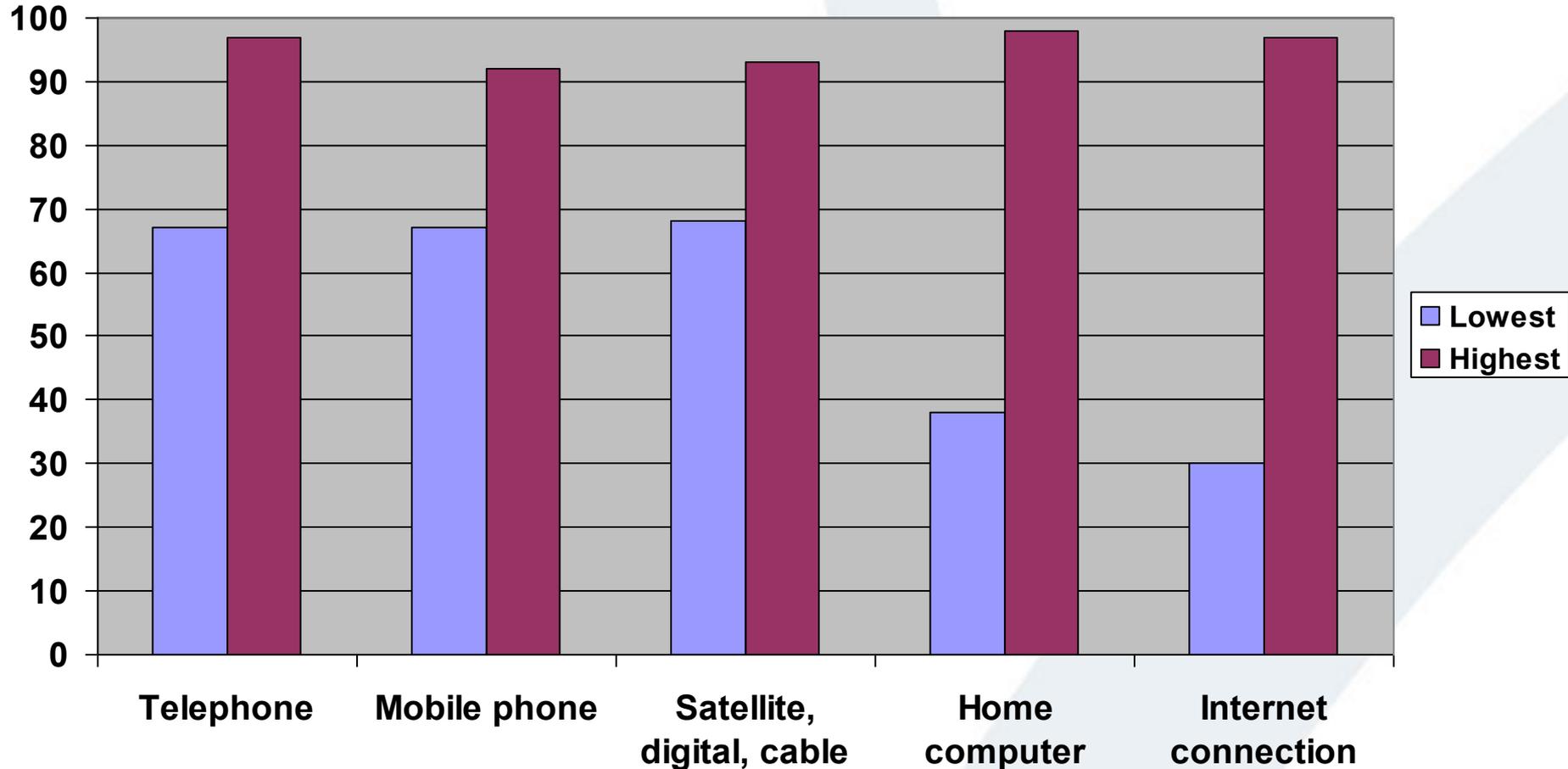
# Households with...

# 2009



# Ownership by income decile 2009

Percent



Source: Living Costs and Food Survey, Office for National Statistics

# Interview: expenditure

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- Expenditure on:
  - regular payments, eg. utility bills
  - insurance
  - licences
  - season tickets
- Large purchases (retrospective). Specified items for 3-12 months:
  - motor vehicles
  - carpets; furniture; holidays; some housing
- Other purchases over £5,000 in last 3 months

# Diary: overview

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- Two weeks
- All adults (essential that Main Diary Keeper completes diary)
- Children aged 7-15 complete simplified diary
- Diary designed to capture a high level of detail on food and drink purchases, including weights and measures

# Encouraging respondents

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- Incentive: £10 per adult; £5 per child, for completed diaries
- Information given about uses of survey
  - phone and internet links
  - Advance letter and leaflet
- Interviewers well briefed on importance of survey

# Easing respondent burden

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- Till receipts attached to diary
- Mini diary issued for recording purchases while eating out etc
- Support from interviewers in completing diary, annotating receipts etc
- Questionnaire content reviewed and streamlined

# Diary: interviewers role

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- Brief respondents
- Return to check progress during diary period
- Check at end of diary period, and annotate diary and receipts where necessary
- Where information is missing (eg weights and measures) return to retailers to check
- Calling patterns optimised

# Diary: HQ processing

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- Team of coders transfer data from paper diaries to electronic format (Blaise)
- Check data quality: queries returned to interviewers where necessary;
- Missing data imputed: obtained via web searches and other sources
- Questionnaire and diary data combined

# Further developments

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- Improved efficiency in collecting “missing” weights and measures; increased use of the internet
- Consideration given to increased use of technology in data collection (scanners)
- Questionnaire review
- Pilot of increased incentive to improve response