

# Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) 2015: Online Feasibility Study



HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

**Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey  
(SALSUS) 2015: Online Feasibility Study**

Carolyn Black, David Myers and Lorraine Murray, Ipsos MORI Scotland

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) is a continuation of a long established series of national surveys on smoking, drinking and drug use.

In the past the survey has always been administered on paper. However, as technology has advanced, the transition from paper to online administration is being considered for the 2015 wave of SALSUS. The move to a web-based survey is in line with other national surveys and reflects greater engagement with information technology (IT), particularly among young people.

Ipsos MORI Scotland conducted a study to explore the feasibility of administering the survey online. The results of the feasibility study will inform whether to move forward with the online methodology for SALSUS 2015, and specifically whether to conduct an online pilot (to identify any practical problems with an online methodology) and a mode effect experiment (to assess whether the change of mode has any significant impact on results).

## Methods

The feasibility study comprised 5 strands:

- desk research, reviewing past examples of online research in schools
- a short postal survey of secondary headteachers
- telephone depth interviews with 9 liaison teachers from the most recent wave of SALSUS
- an online survey of all remaining liaison teachers
- telephone depth interviews with local government officers who could provide an overview of the IT capacity/technical issues for secondary schools in their area. Interviews were conducted with representatives from 31 of the 32 local authorities.

## Key findings

Overall, the majority of local authorities (24 out of 32) would be able to complete SALSUS 2015 online. While 8 local authorities were classified as possibly being problematic, this was, to some extent, due to a lack of information.

The most likely means for running SALSUS 2015 will be on PCs in information and communications technology (ICT) suites, although a number of participants said that they would 'top-up' with laptops.

On balance, the results suggest that an online survey could result in a reduced response rate. In 2015, schools will be given the chance to complete on paper if they do not want to complete the survey online.

Participants highlighted a number of potential risks when completing the survey online including timetabling issues, a lack of computers and software compatibility. However, a number of options to overcome these obstacles were also mentioned.

Generally, liaison teachers thought that moving the survey online would be more enjoyable for pupils. Only a small proportion thought it would have a negative impact on pupils' honesty or concentration.

The current IT infrastructure could not support a full, nationally representative, 3-way (paper/PCs in ICT suites/tablets) mode experiment. However, a 2-way mode experiment (paper versus PCs in ICT suites) would be possible.

While there are some moves towards the use of mobile devices, such as tablets, schools appear to be retaining ICT suites for the near future. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to test this mode for future waves of SALSUS.

### **Important factors for consideration during an online pilot**

As the mode effect study will focus on PCs in ICT suites, the online pilot should do the same. However, as a number of schools would be administering SALSUS online in classrooms, we would recommend including at least some of these schools in the pilot.

The online pilot should focus on the following areas:

- testing logistical issues (including timetabling, accommodating all pupils in a PSE class and establishing exam conditions)
- testing software issues (including software compatibility, connectivity and access to survey links)
- assessing pupil reaction to the survey.

### **Recommendations**

The key recommendation is that the SALSUS 2015 electronic trial should move past break-point one and **an online pilot should be conducted** because it does appear feasible to conduct SALSUS online in 2015.

If the pilot goes well, and the trial progresses past break-point two, **the mode effect experiment should be a two-way mode experiment** comparing paper completion in classrooms to online completion on PCs in ICT suites.

# 1 Introduction

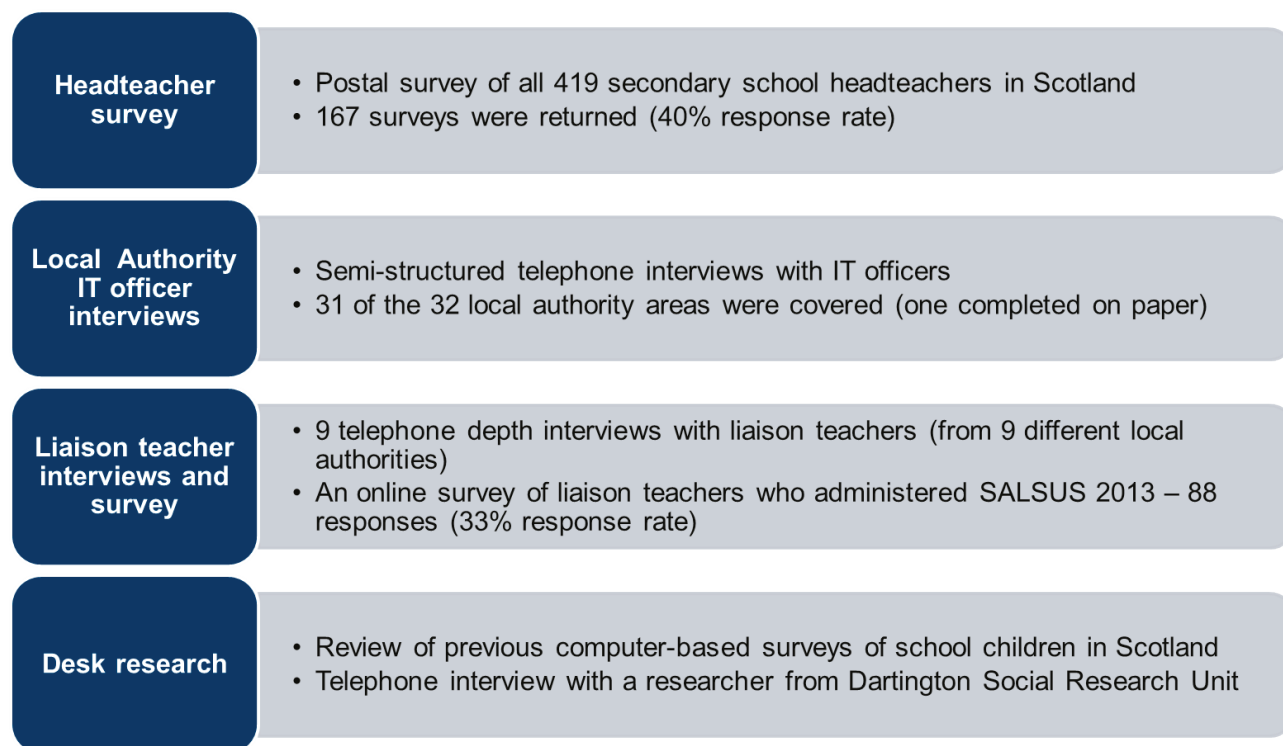
- 1.1 The Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) is a continuation of a long established series of national surveys on smoking, drinking and drug use. These were carried out jointly in Scotland and England between 1982 and 2000, to provide a national picture of young peoples' smoking, drinking, and drug use behaviours within the context of other lifestyle, health and social factors. Since 2002, Scotland has developed its own, more tailored, survey known as SALSUS.
- 1.2 SALSUS measures progress towards Scottish Government targets for smoking and drug use, and are used to inform the Scottish Government priority for addressing harmful drinking among young people.
- 1.3 The survey series also provides local prevalence rates for smoking, drinking and drug use across Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs), local authorities and NHS Boards. SALSUS data are used in a number of the ADP national core indicators, which allows them to monitor their progress against a common set of outcomes. ADPs and their community planning partners make extensive use of SALSUS data in local needs assessments and in developing their strategic priorities.
- 1.4 SALSUS datasets are stored on the UK Data Archive and are available to researchers.
- 1.5 SALSUS is currently paper-based. However, as technology has advanced, the transition from paper to online administration is being considered for the 2015 wave of SALSUS.
- 1.6 Moving from paper to online administration can bring cost efficiencies and improved data quality. However, previous research and experience suggests it can be harder for schools to administer online surveys, it can result in decreased response rates and changing the mode may also affect the responses.
- 1.7 Ipsos MORI Scotland has been commissioned to undertake the 2015 wave of SALSUS and, as part of that contract, to conduct a study to explore the feasibility of administering the survey online. Depending on the results of the feasibility study, there may then be an online pilot and a mode effect experiment to assess whether the change of mode has any significant impact on results.
- 1.8 This report presents the findings from the feasibility study.

## 2 Methods

### Overview

2.1 The feasibility methodology is summarised in figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1 Feasibility study methodology



2.2 All discussion guides and questionnaires were designed by Ipsos MORI and can be found in the Annex.

### Headteachers' survey

2.3 A single page postal survey containing three questions was sent to all 419 secondary school headteachers in Scotland. The survey was kept short in order to minimise the burden on headteachers and to maximise the response rate. It covered: whether schools would be more or less likely to participate in SALSUS should the survey move online; whether schools had the technical capacity and capability to administer the survey online; and a space for comments or explanatory information. Fieldwork was conducted between October and November 2014. Completed surveys were received from 167 schools, giving a response rate of 40%.

### Liaison teacher depth interviews and online survey

2.4 Depth interviews were conducted with 9 liaison teachers (from 9 different local authorities) who had assisted with the administration of SALSUS 2013. Interviews were conducted between 8 October and 13 November, and took around 20 minutes.

2.5 In addition to identifying important issues related to conducting online research in schools, the interviews fed in to the design of a quantitative survey sent to all 270 other liaison teachers who assisted with the administration of SALSUS in 2013. The survey was conducted between 5 and 26 November. Completed surveys were received from 88 liaison teachers, giving a response rate of 33%.

## **Interviews with Local Authority IT representatives**

2.6 Emails were sent to the Directors of Education of all 32 local authorities, asking them to identify a local government officer who had responsibility for the IT arrangements in the authority's secondary schools. Follow-up telephone calls to the Directors' offices were made when necessary. The nominated individuals were invited to participate. A total of 29 interviews were conducted between 2 October and 17 November<sup>1</sup>, and took between 15 and 30 minutes. One individual was unable to participate in a telephone interview but provided responses to the questions by email. Clackmannanshire and Stirling have joint service provision, so one interview was conducted which covered the arrangements in schools across both authorities.

## **Desk research**

2.7 A review of literature on previous computer-based surveys of school children was carried out, including research by Ipsos MORI, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and ScotXed. This was used to inform the design of research materials and provide context to the report.

2.8 In addition, a telephone interview was conducted with Kate Tobin from the Dartington Social Research Unit, who has been involved running several recent online studies in 5 Scottish local authorities with over 250 primary schools and over 45 secondary schools.

## **Research questions**

2.9 While the main aim of the study was to identify whether or not it was feasible to conduct SALSUS 2015 online, it was also designed to inform whether or not a 2- or 3-way mode experiment was possible and worthwhile. In order to reach a conclusion, the processes/issues involved in moving online were broken down into a set of key questions (see Figure 2.2). The answers to these questions determined what, if any, mode experiment would be recommended.

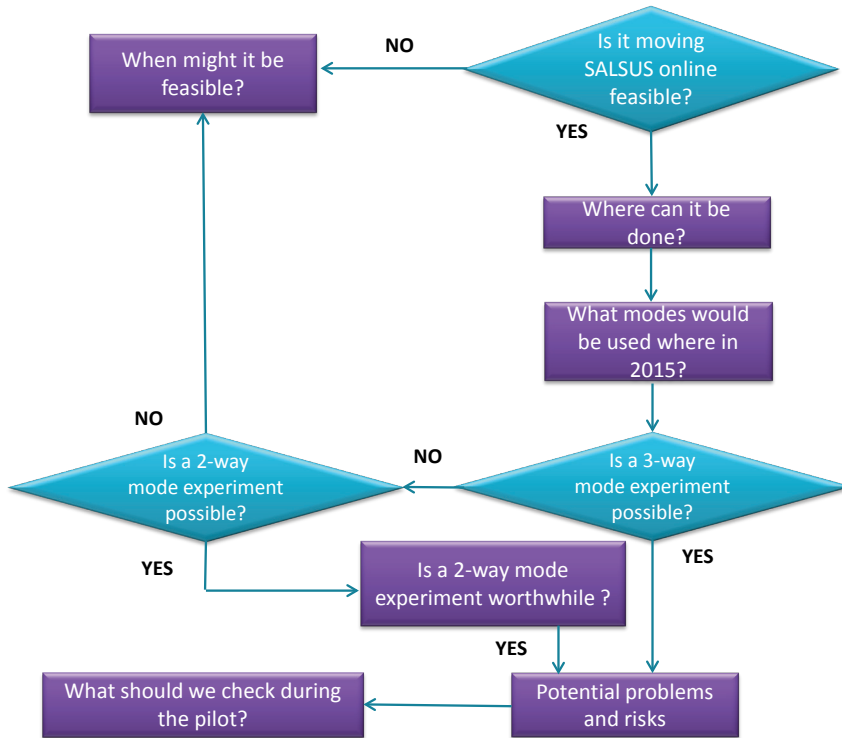
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<sup>1</sup>

One local authority did not participate as the IT officer was absent on sick leave during the fieldwork period.



Figure 2.2 Key questions in the online feasibility process



## 3 Summary of findings from desk research

### Overview

- 3.1 As noted in the introduction, a transition of the SALSUS survey methodology from paper to online is to be trialled in the 2015 wave of SALSUS. Before commencing the feasibility study, it was important to think about the broader issues surrounding the administration of online surveys in a school setting.
- 3.2 There are two main reasons to move from paper to online:
- Cost efficiencies – with paper surveys, printing and postage alone make up a substantial proportion of the costs and provide only minor economies of scale (e.g. the data collection cost of surveying 30,000 is almost three times as much as surveying 10,000). While online surveys can be expensive to set up, beyond a certain sample size, increasing numbers only results in a small cost increase. In a large survey such as SALSUS, particularly every four years when data is required at a local level, this would be beneficial.
  - Improved data quality – online surveys provide greater control of the responses given by pupils, particularly in relation to complex routing. They can also be used to reduce non-response (e.g. a warning can be flashed on screen if a question is unanswered). However, for ethical reasons, we recommend that pupils are not forced to answer questions.
- 3.3 While these are sound reasons, neither of them provide any immediate, direct benefit to the schools administering the survey. In order to explore the issues that an online methodology would raise for schools, existing data sources were consulted including academic papers on mode effects in adolescent health surveys<sup>2,3,4</sup>, evidence from existing online feasibility studies<sup>5,6</sup> and the experiences of research teams currently conducting online school surveys<sup>7,8</sup>. The previous research suggests it can be hard for schools to administer online surveys and this might result in decreased response rates. It was extremely important to explore this in the feasibility study, as minimising the burden on schools should be central to any school survey research design. The key findings from this desk research are summarised below dealing first with issues of technology and then looking at school and pupil reactions.

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<sup>2</sup> Beebe et al. (1998). An Evaluation of computer-assisted self-interviews in a school setting: Public Opinion Quarterly Volume 63: 23-632.

<sup>3</sup> Brener et al. (2004). The association of survey setting and mode with self-reported health risk behaviours among high school students; Survey Methods Newsletter, National Centre for Social Research, Vol 22: Spring 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Halfours et al. (2000). A comparison of paper versus computer-assisted self-interview for school alcohol, tobacco and other drug surveys.

<sup>5</sup> Ager, R., Bailey, M. and Sizmur, J. (2014). The PISA 2015 Field Trial in Scotland. Slough: NFER.

<sup>6</sup> ScotXed, (2013). Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS): To consider a proposal to move SALSUS from a paper based survey to an on-line administered survey in 2013. [Unpublished].

<sup>7</sup> Ipsos MORI (n.d.) In-School Online Research: the Hows, Whys, Whens and When Nots of Using Online Interviewing in Schools. [Unpublished paper].

<sup>8</sup> Telephone interview (28 November 2014) with Kate Tobin, Dartington Social Research, Researcher on Improving Children's Outcomes project.

## **Information technology**

3.4 The key IT issues raised in the desk research are as follows:

- **System compatibility:** it is essential to check compatibility of school IT systems with the delivery methods of the survey (e.g. a USB drive rather than online, compatible versions of Windows). Compatibility checking requires extra time prior to carrying out the online research. Schools may have off-campus IT system management from a private supplier who may charge to carry out system changes, or be reluctant to change security settings.
- **Operations:** operational issues reported include computers crashing mid-test, technical problems with hardware settings, and the unreliability of internet connections in rural areas.
- **Approval from local authority:** the research found that advance local authority approval of online survey links to ensure no automatic blocking occurs if multiple logons to one site take place at the same time is important.

## **School reactions and administration**

3.5 Previous research on school and pupil reactions has indicated a number of areas for attention:

- **Timetabling:** time is needed for schools to prepare, including making ICT arrangements if necessary. Key points in the school calendar such as coursework deadlines, exams or other learning and teaching commitments need to be taken into account. However, automatic routing in online questionnaires saves a considerable amount of time in the completion stage in comparison to the paper method.
- **Pupil participation:** schools reported positive responses from pupils. However, there appears to be a greater issue over conferring during an online survey than when completing a paper questionnaire under exam conditions, due to the online work appearing similar to a 'normal' lesson. There is evidence that pupils may provide incorrect answers 'for fun', taking paper questionnaires more seriously. Appropriate introductions and supervision, spacing of desks, use of tablets over PCs and inclusion of audio elements may mitigate these effects.
- **Confidentiality:** some concerns raised about confidentiality of online research compared to paper delivery, and possible impact of this in producing socially desirable responses. Use of Audio-CASI for sensitive subjects and having questionnaires direct to the next question may mitigate against social desirability bias and confidentiality concerns.

## **Gaps in the research**

3.6 It is important to note that the many of the problems described above are not actually due to the fact that the survey is completed electronically but rather

the environment in which the survey is completed – the ICT suite. It will be difficult to separate the effect of completing the survey electronically and completing it in an ICT suite. However, much of the research that has identified these problems was conducted pre-2010 before the widespread adoption of tablet computers, or did not consider tablets in their research design. Completing the survey on a tablet in ‘exam conditions’, in a classroom, rather than on a PC, in an ICT suite, may more closely resemble a traditional paper administration method and would avoid many of the problems listed above. This meant that exploring the feasibility of using tablet computers was also a key task for the feasibility study.

## 4 Can SALSUS be run online?

### Key points

Overall, the majority of local authorities (24 out of 32) would be able to complete SALSUS 2015 online. While 8 local authorities were classified as possibly being problematic, this was due to caution over a lack of response from liaison teachers.

The most likely means for running SALSUS 2015 will be on PCs in ICT suites.

On balance, the results suggest that an online survey could result in a reduced response rate.

Participants highlighted a number of potential risks when completing the survey online including timetabling issues, a lack of computers and software compatibility. However, a number of options to overcome these obstacles were also mentioned.

Generally, liaison teachers thought that moving the survey online would be more enjoyable for pupils. Only a small proportion thought it would have a negative impact on pupils.

### Where can SALSUS run online in autumn 2015?

- 4.1 **All** local authority IT officers reported that **every** secondary school in their council area would have the technical capacity to participate in an online version of SALSUS 2015.
- 4.2 Assuming there was sufficient advance notice and testing of the survey link, all indicated that administering the survey would be straightforward and should pose no serious problems. Many noted that they had run online surveys in the past, or that schools in their area had successfully taken part in other national online studies (e.g. the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy) or large-scale online assessments exercises.
- 4.3 However, headteachers and liaison teachers held more mixed views. While a small majority (59%) of headteachers said that their school would have the technical capacity and capability to do so online in the autumn of 2015, 25% reported that they would not, and 15% did not know.
- 4.4 Seventy-nine per cent of liaison teachers thought that it would be feasible for their school to administer the survey.
- 4.5 As the findings from the IT officers and individual schools are not always in agreement, it is unlikely that any one measure will give the true picture. In order to better appreciate the findings across all of the research strands, the survey results were compared for each local authority (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 – Summary of feasibility research strands

	Headteacher survey	Local Authority IT officer survey	Liaison teacher survey <sup>9</sup>	Number of schools in the local authority	Ability to complete online
Local Authority 1	78%	Y	100%	>15	Good
Local Authority 2	64%	Y	75%	>15	Good
Local Authority 3	50%	Y	100%	<9	Good
Local Authority 4	100%	Y	100%	9-14	Good
Local Authority 5	100%	Y	100%	>15	Good
Local Authority 6	67%	Y	83%	9-14	Good
Local Authority 7	100%	Y	67%	<9	Good
Local Authority 8	57%	Y	50%	>15	Good
Local Authority 9	50%	Y	67%	9-14	Good
Local Authority 10	75%	Y	50%	>15	Good
Local Authority 11	54%	Y	71%	>15	Good
Local Authority 12	55%	n/r <sup>10</sup>	88%	>15	Good
Local Authority 13	50%	Y	100%	9-14	Good
Local Authority 14	100%	Y	n/r	>15	Good
Local Authority 15	75%	Y	75%	9-14	Good
Local Authority 16	56%	Y	75%	>15	Good
Local Authority 17	50%	Y	50%	9-14	Good
Local Authority 18	67%	Y	50%	9-14	Good
Local Authority 19	0%	Y	100%	9-14	Mixed
Local Authority 20	100%	Y	0%	<9	Mixed
Local Authority 21	27%	Y	80%	>15	Mixed
Local Authority 22	0%	Y	100%	<9	Mixed
Local Authority 23	33%	Y	50%	<9	Mixed
Local Authority 24	33%	Y	50%	9-14	Mixed
Local Authority 25	n/r	Y	n/r	<9	Poor/DK
Local Authority 26	50%	Y	33%	<9	Poor/DK
Local Authority 27	40%	Y	n/r	<9	Poor/DK
Local Authority 28	0%	Y	0%	<9	Poor/DK
Local Authority 29	67%	Y	n/r	<9	Poor/DK
Local Authority 30	50%	Y	n/r	9-14	Poor/DK
Local Authority 31	33%	Y	n/r	9-14	Poor/DK
Local Authority 32	33%	Y	n/r	<9	Poor/DK

<sup>9</sup> For ease of comparison, we have shown liaison teacher results as a %, but it should be noted that, within each local authority, the base sizes were very small. In six local authorities the base size was 1, in five it was 2, in five it was 3, in four it was 4, in one it was 5, in two it was 6, in one it was 7, in one it was 8 and in one it was 9.

<sup>10</sup> n/r = no response.

4.6 The local authorities were classified into three groups – local authorities in which the majority of schools seem able to complete SALSUS online in 2015 (18 local authorities), local authorities where the picture is mixed and may require further work getting either headteachers or liaison teachers to buy into the survey (6 local authorities) and local authorities in which it may be problematic to administer SALSUS online (8 local authorities). We have been cautious in our assumptions and, for example, have classified Local Authority 29 as potentially problematic because we had no response from liaison teachers in that area (rather than knowing for certain that it will be problematic).

### What is the most likely means for running SALSUS online?

4.7 Taking the views of IT officers together with those of liaison teachers (headteachers were not asked about this), the most likely means for running SALSUS online in 2015 will be administering the survey in ICT suites.

4.8 Twenty-one IT officers said this would be the most likely way, seven said it would be a mix of ICT suites and laptops in classrooms and two said it would be mainly laptops in classrooms.

4.9 Seventy-three per cent of liaison teachers indicated that it would be ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ feasible to administer the survey in ICT suites. Fewer thought that it would be possible to administer the survey using either laptops/netbooks (35%) or tablets (17%). Only a very small percentage thought that it would be possible to administer the survey on tablets or laptops but not in ICT suites. See Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Liaison teachers’ views on administering SALSUS online in 2015

*On balance, do you think it would be feasible for your school to administer SALSUS in the autumn of 2015 in Personal and Social Education (PSE) classes under exam conditions using...?*

	Yes - definitely	Yes - probably	No – probably not	No – definitely not	Don’t know	Base
ICT suites	16%	57%	15%	8%	4%	79
Tablet devices	2%	15%	25%	57%	2%	61
Netbooks/laptops	6%	29%	22%	40%	3%	63

4.10 Liaison teachers who had said ‘yes’ to more than one option were asked for their preferred method. Eighty-eight per cent indicated a preference for ICT suites. This reflects past experience, with 83% reporting that the last time they ran an online survey it was administered in an ICT suite while 14% said that it was completed using laptops or netbooks.

4.11 IT officers were not explicitly asked about ‘bring your own device’ (allowing pupils to use their own personal devices to access the internet in classrooms) but representatives from three local authorities mentioned this spontaneously as a possible method for completing the survey. However, the most commonly used device in these circumstances is a smartphone, which is not suitable for SALSUS as the survey is too long for a small screen.

## **What is the likely impact on school response rates?**

- 4.12 It is important to bear in mind that, while schools may have the capacity and capability to administer SALSUS online, it does not necessarily mean that they will. As with most school surveys, participation is at the discretion of the headteacher.
- 4.13 On balance, the results suggest that an online survey could result in a reduced response rate.
- 4.14 Headteachers and liaison teachers were asked if their school would be more or less likely to participate in an online version of SALSUS. While 39% of headteachers said that a move online would make no difference, 34% reported that they would be less likely to participate and 27% said they would be more likely. Because the SALSUS school response rate is already very high (71% in 2013), this is potentially more negative than it might at first appear because there is more scope for schools to move from taking part to not taking part, than to move from not taking part to taking part.
- 4.15 There were a number of local authorities where higher proportions of headteachers said that they would be less likely to participate online: East Ayrshire, Eilean Siar and Orkney (all 100%), Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire (both 67%), and North Lanarkshire (64%).
- 4.16 Similarly, 43% of liaison teachers expected that a move to online would make no difference to their school's likelihood to participate, while 28% expected that their school would be less likely to take part, and 21% said that their school would be more likely to take part. Liaison teachers were more likely to report their school being less likely to participate in North Lanarkshire (100%), and Angus and East Dunbartonshire (both 67%).

## **What are the potential problems or risks posed by running SALSUS online?**

- 4.17 This section examines some of the most likely problems which could arise as a result of administering SALSUS online, how much of a risk these might be, and whether they can be resolved.
- 4.18 There are two main risks:
- Schools decide not to take part because the survey is online (which affects the response rate)
  - Schools take part, but they can't complete the survey or it does not work.
- 4.19 There are a number of potential problems which underpin both of these risks. Table 4.3 summarises some of the most common problems encountered by liaison teachers when they last administered an online survey in school.



Table 4.3: Liaison teachers: problems encountered in most recent online survey  
 Q. When the survey took place, did the school encounter any of the following issues?

	Yes – a major issue	Yes – was an issue, but overcome /fixed	No	Base
The survey site was blocked by a firewall or filter	7%	18%	75%	61
There were problems with software compatibility	10%	17%	73%	63
The number of pupils taking part took up too much bandwidth and made the survey run slowly	13%	21%	66%	61
It was more difficult to manage the survey under exam conditions	10%	27%	63%	62
There were accessibility issues for pupils with additional support needs	6%	32%	61%	62
Audio or video elements made the survey run slowly	10%	32%	58%	60
There were problems with computers not working	19%	44%	37%	63
There were not enough computers	21%	50%	29%	62
There were difficulties timetabling classes into ICT suites	23%	52%	25%	61

### Timetabling difficulties

4.20 The problem of timetabling classes into ICT suites was the most frequently cited major issue by liaison teachers (23%). A further 52% indicated that it was an issue but they were able to overcome it.

4.21 Most of the liaison teachers with whom depth interviews were conducted noted that it was relatively straightforward to book an ICT suite, provided that there was sufficient notice. In the survey, around half of the liaison teachers said that it was difficult to book an ICT suite (47%), while 35% said that it was easy to do so. Most commonly, 3-4 weeks' notice was required and very few required longer than 6 weeks. The Dartington Social Research Unit indicated that schools required at least one - ideally two - months' notice.

4.22 A further complication stems from the fact that ICT suites tended to be subject-specific rooms, so there were timetabled classes in them. If there is a clash with the PSE time of a sampled class alternative accommodation would have to be arranged for the original class. The NFER Pisa Study trial also found that

demands placed on school ICT facilities for coursework completion and exam preparation was a problem.

4.23 The SALSUS main fieldwork period is long enough to be able to accommodate this although it would likely have an impact on schools/classes which require to be chased up at the end of the fieldwork period (and therefore have an impact on response rates). It may therefore be prudent to extend the fieldwork period by a few weeks if moving online.

4.24 It would also help to recruit schools earlier than at present, potentially while timetables are being drawn up for the next academic session in May or June. This would allow schools greater flexibility since they would be informed during recruitment of the number of classes to be sampled and the timing of the fieldwork period, allowing schools to identify the most appropriate time for sampled classes to take part, as well as being able to plan for any alternative arrangements for subject classes which would normally be using the ICT suite.

### **Lack of available/working computers**

4.25 Major problems with computers not working and there being too few computers were cited by one in five liaison teachers. There was quite a bit of overlap, and overall, around a quarter had experienced major issues with one or both of these problems.

4.26 In the liaison teacher survey, around 60% indicated that the capacity of their ICT suites was smaller than the average size of a PSE class.

4.27 Around half the IT officers (n=16) thought capacity in ICT suites would not be a problem and a further five indicated that it would be easy to use laptops in the ICT suites to 'top up'. Three did think that capacity would be a problem. The rest were not sure.

4.28 If topping up with laptops is not possible, there are other potential ways to overcome these problems, such as splitting the class between two ICT suites or splitting the class in half (with half doing the survey one week, the other half another week). However, these solutions require an additional member of staff to provide cover.

### **Software/website issues**

4.29 Liaison teachers were less likely to report the following as major issues: audio or video elements making surveys run slowly, software compatibility problems, or websites being blocked. Around three-quarters thought that these issues were not a problem the last time they administered an online survey in the school (although, depending on the nature of the survey, they may simply not have arisen).

4.30 A number of IT officers mentioned that plug-ins (especially audio and video elements) would have the potential to cause surveys to run slowly, especially if there were a large number of participants. This would be exacerbated by class

teachers using webpages with audio or video content as teaching resources at the same time because more bandwidth would be used.

4.31 This should not be problematic as the SALSUS questionnaire in 2015 will not contain audio or video elements.

4.32 A small number noted concerns over software compatibility, particularly where schools across the authority may be using different browsers or different versions of the same browser. All IT officers said that testing the survey site in advance to ensure that there were no such problems would be advantageous to the smooth running of the survey. They also said that unblocking websites was straightforward.

4.33 The Dartington researcher indicated that the main problem to be aware of are PC's crashing while a high volume of pupils are completing the survey - partially due to problems with internet connections/bandwidth (particularly in rural areas). This can be addressed by staggering completion of the survey across schools.

### Pupil reaction

4.34 A number of liaison teachers and IT representatives mentioned that children are used to doing things on computers, already do a number of assessments online, and take part in online surveys using Survey Monkey. In addition, 58% of liaison teachers said that pupils enjoyed the experience of completing an online survey more than they would have with a paper survey (Table 4.4)

Table 4.4: Liaison teachers: pupil reaction to their school's most recent online survey

*Q. In general, how did pupils react to completing the survey online?*

	More than they would have with a paper survey %	The same as they would have with a paper survey %	Less than they would have with a paper survey %	Base
They enjoyed the experience	58	42	0	60
They rushed through their answers without much thought	18	73	8	60
They took it seriously	12	85	3	60
They conferred over answers	10	70	20	61
They were concerned about confidentiality	5	73	22	60

4.35 NFER research on a computer-based pilot of the PISA test in Scottish schools noted that a number of pupils appeared not to take the test seriously. Similarly, Ipsos MORI research on an online pilot questionnaire of 12-15 year-olds found that participating children were more likely to confer over answers than in a paper-administered survey conducted under exam conditions, and were more likely to deliberately provide misleading answers.

- 4.36 This view was echoed by a number of liaison teachers, with 18% saying that pupils rushed through their answers more than they would have with a paper survey, in the most recent online survey in their school. However, 72% of liaison teachers said that pupils did this to the same extent as they would have with a paper survey. One-fifth of liaison teachers said that pupils were less likely to confer over answers (20%) or to have concerns over confidentiality (22%) with an online survey.
- 4.37 When asked what effect they thought moving online would have on SALSUS (as opposed to their most recent experience of a survey), 10% of liaison teachers said that pupils would rush through the survey or not take it seriously. This compares with 25% who thought that an online survey would have no effect on pupils' responses, and the 13% who felt that pupils would provide better quality data, or more honest answers.
- 4.38 Liaison teachers thought that there would *less* concern about confidentiality than there would be with a paper survey.
- 4.39 Taking these factors into consideration, moving the survey online would appear to pose little risk to the way in which pupils approach the survey, and could potentially yield better data.

## 5 Mode Effect experiment

### Key points

The current IT infrastructure could not support a full, nationally representative 3-way (paper/PCs in ICT suites/tablets) mode experiment.

However, a 2-way mode experiment (paper versus PCs in ICT suites) would be possible.

While there are some moves towards the use of mobile devices such as tablets, schools appear to be retaining ICT suites for at least the near future. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to test this mode and conduct the mode experiment in SALSUS 2015.

### What are the options?

- 5.1 Many of the potential benefits and risks of completing the survey online are related to the *place* of administration rather than simply the type of device (e.g. confidentiality concerns because it is harder to put ICT suites into exam conditions, pupils being in a different 'mind set' when taken from the classroom to the ICT suite, limited Wi-Fi coverage for use of classroom-based devices). Therefore, classroom-based administration (on laptops/netbooks or tablets) and ICT suite administration (on PCs) should be treated separately in any mode effect experiment as they are too different to be considered as a homogenous 'online survey' method.
- 5.2 The ideal would be to conduct a three-way mode experiment comparing paper completion in classrooms, online completion in classrooms (laptops/netbooks and tablets) and online completion in ICT suites (on PCs). This would require a nationally representative sample for each mode with a minimum sample of 8,000<sup>11</sup> paper and 4,000 for each of the online modes. This is one possibility and the primary research explored the feasibility of this.

### Would a three-way mode experiment be possible?

- 5.3 The current IT infrastructure across Scottish schools could not support a full three-way mode experiment because there are insufficient schools with the ability to conduct the survey online in classrooms.
- 5.4 Most local authorities have very few tablet devices in school. Those schools that do have tablets tend not to have a full PSE size class set (often only 10-15 devices per set). In the liaison teacher survey, only 17% said that they could administer SALSUS 2015 using tablets.
- 5.5 The use of laptops/netbooks in class was more widespread than the use of tablets. The interviews with IT representatives suggests that 10 of the 30 local

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<sup>11</sup> Technically, only around 4000 on paper would be needed for the mode experiment aspect but the paper sample also needs to be able provide nationally representative results in case there are problems with the online results.

authorities would be able to use laptops/netbooks for the mode effect experiment. Overall, 35% of liaison teachers said that they could administer SALSUS using laptops.

- 5.6 We estimate that the maximum sample size that we could achieve for pupils completing the survey on laptops/netbooks or tablets would be around 4,000. However, we are not confident that all of these would complete the survey in classrooms (some would be on laptops/netbooks in ICT suites), so the maximum achievable sample size would likely be somewhat short of 4,000.
- 5.7 A further problem, raised by a number of IT officers, is the lack of Wi-Fi connections and/or the unreliability of Wi-Fi connections in classrooms. Problems related to this may further reduce the achieved sample size.
- 5.8 Moreover, the geographic profile of classroom-based devices would not be sufficiently representative of Scotland as a whole (and consequently not comparable to that of the paper sample).

### **Would a two-way mode experiment be possible?**

- 5.9 A two-way mode effect experiment, comparing paper administration in classrooms and PCs administration in ICT suites, will be possible.
- 5.10 As outlined in Section 4, although there will still be schools that need to administer the survey on paper (or have a strong preference for doing so), for the most part it is feasible to conduct SALSUS 2015 online using ICT suites. There were 6 local authorities where the transition may be more difficult. However, these tend to be smaller local authorities which would have limited impact on the national picture and, while the schools in these areas may have had reservations, the local authority IT officers were still confident they could participate.
- 5.11 This would suggest that the geographic coverage for a two-way mode effect experiment would be sufficient.

### **Would a two-way mode experiment be worthwhile?**

- 5.12 While it is *possible* to conduct a two-way mode effect experiment comparing paper completion in classrooms with online completion in ICT suites, it would not necessarily be worthwhile if there was evidence of a move towards classroom-based devices in the near future.
- 5.13 However, although there is something of a move towards classroom-based devices, it is not particularly fast or widespread. Most schools still use a traditional ICT suite set up (28 of 30 would use ICT suites to administer SALSUS 2015).
- 5.14 Twenty-one out of 30 IT officers said that they would be using ICT suites for the foreseeable future, five said they are moving towards classroom-based devices, three said that it was too hard to predict and one did not want to

answer. One IT representative said her local authority had gone full circle – they had moved away from ICT suites and had PCs in classrooms, but had realised that the ‘traditional’ ICT suite was more useful.

5.15 This suggests that a two-way mode experiment is worthwhile. If classroom-based devices do become much more widespread, a further mode effect experiment may be required, but this is likely to be several years down the line.

## 6 Important factors for consideration during an online pilot

6.1 This section looks at what the important issues are for conducting a pilot of the online survey. Figure 6.1, summarises the purpose of the pilot.

Figure 6.1 Overall purpose of the online pilot

Overall purpose of pilot	
Pilot the instructions given to both liaison teachers and class teachers	Ensure that the survey works as it is intended to (e.g. the links work, the data is submitted successfully)
Identify problems and potential solutions for these	Identify any ways in which the survey processes can be improved and the burden for schools can be minimised

6.2 In particular, the pilot will explore the extent to which problems identified in Section 4 above affected the administration of the survey, ie:

- timetabling issues
- availability of computers
- connectivity issues
- software compatibility/website issues
- accommodating the requirements of pupils with additional support needs
- if it was possible to administer the survey in exam conditions or not.

6.3 The effect on pupils will also be explored, specifically:

- pupils' overall reaction to completing the survey online
- if pupils took the survey seriously
- if pupils appear to be taking time and care over their answers
- if there appears to be much conferring over answers
- if pupils have concerns over confidentiality.

6.4 The pilot is not intended to identify or measure any difference in response between paper and online modes. This would be the purpose of the mode experiment. However, if there were major concerns (e.g. clear evidence of poor quality data), we would reassess.



## 7 Recommendations

- 7.1 The key recommendation is that the SALSUS 2015 electronic trial should move past break-point one and **an online pilot should be conducted** because it does appear feasible to conduct SALSUS online in 2015.
- 7.2 If the pilot goes well, and the trial progresses past break-point two, **the mode effect experiment should be a two-way mode experiment** comparing paper completion in classrooms to online completion on PCs in ICT suites.
- 7.3 As the mode effect study will focus on PCs in ICT suites, the online pilot should do the same. However, as a number of schools would be administering SALSUS online in classrooms, we would recommend including at least some of these schools in the pilot.
- 7.4 The online pilot should focus on the following areas:
- testing logistical issues (including timetabling, accommodating all pupils in a PSE class and establishing exam conditions)
  - testing software issues (including software compatibility, connectivity and access to survey links)
  - assessing pupil reaction to the survey.

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Telephone interview (28 November 2014) with Kate Tobin, Dartington Social Research, Researcher on Improving Children's Outcomes project.

## 9 Annex - Topic guides and questionnaires

### INTERVIEW WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY IT REPRESENTATIVES

#### Introduction

Introduce self, Ipsos MORI

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. We have been commissioned by the Scottish Government to assess the feasibility of running SALSUS online in 2015 or in future waves.

The interview should take around 30 minutes depending on your answers.

Obtain permission to audio record, explain how it will be used.

#### Background

To start off, can you give me a brief description of your role and responsibilities?

*I'm now going to ask you some questions about aspects of the IT infrastructure within your Local Authority.*

#### Overall reactions

As we outlined in the email we sent to you, the Scottish Government has asked us to assess the feasibility of running the survey in online, on tablets or PCs, ahead of the next wave of the survey in 2015. What is your reaction to this?

How many schools in your Local Authority area would be able to participate in an online version of SALSUS?

What do you think would be the main issues or problems?

How could they be overcome?

Would they be overcome?

#### Details on tablets

Roughly what proportion of S2 and S4 pupils in your Authority's schools have access to a tablet device?

S1:

S3:

S2:

S4:

S5:

S6:

In which schools are these devices available to pupils? *(We will have a list of schools in the Authority to hand here)*

[Probe on specific numbers if possible]

Are these devices linked to individual pupils or are they pooled? Linked/Pooled

How is the decision taken in terms of where tablets are used and who receives them?

What are your Authority's plans for the future in terms of provision of tablets for pupils? [Probe: Will this happen across all schools; when is it likely to happen; who will be responsible for making the decision?]

[If don't know]: Who would be the best person for us to speak to about this?

### **ICT suites**

Moving on, in terms of ICT suites across your Authority's secondary schools, how many suites are there per school and what is the average capacity of these suites?

How much variation is there in terms of ICT suite provision and size across the Authority?

And what are the Authority's plans for the future of ICT suites in secondary schools? [Probe: Will this happen across all schools; when is it likely to happen; who will be responsible for making the decision?]

[If don't know]: Who would be the best person for us to speak to about this?

### **Security issues**

Pupils participating in an online version of SALSUS would be provided with a link to an external website and a unique access code. Are there likely to be any issues in terms of online questionnaires being blocked by firewalls in your Authority's secondary schools? Yes/No

[Issues]:

How could these issues be resolved?

What anti-virus software does your Authority use?

What bandwidth is available on your Authority's school networks?

What would be the maximum number of participants at any one time?

Would there be any other issues raised by a large number of pupils participating in an online survey at the same time? Yes/No

[Issues]

### **Previous experience of online surveys in the Authority**

Have schools in your Authority taken part in any online research projects before?  
Yes/No/Don't know

[If yes]: When did this happen most recently?

What problems, if any, were encountered?

How were these problems resolved?

Are there any other types of problems which you could foresee if we conducted SALSUS online in the Authority?

And are there any other issues which you feel would be important to take into account from an IT perspective?

How would you feel about your Authority's secondary schools participating in an online version of SALSUS in 2015?

Finally, is there anything you would like to add that we have not already discussed in terms of IT provision in your Authority and any potential implications that this may have on conducting online research in school?

[If it's not feasible in 2015]: When do you think it would be feasible?

Can I just check that it is OK to name your Local Authority in the report to the Scottish Government? Yes/No

## INTERVIEW WITH LIAISON TEACHERS

### **Introduction**

Introduce self, Ipsos MORI

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. We have been commissioned by the Scottish Government to assess the feasibility of running SALSUS online in 2015 or in future waves.

The interview should take around 30 minutes depending on your answers.

Obtain permission to audio record, explain how it will be used.

### **Background**

To start off, can you tell me how many times you have helped out with the running of SALSUS?

### **General reactions**

Overall, what's your reaction to SALSUS potentially being run online?

### **IT Infrastructure and provision**

*I'm now going to ask you some questions about aspects of the IT arrangements in your school.*

### **Tablets**

Does your school have tablet devices for pupils? Yes/No

[If yes]: Which pupils have these devices?

[Probe for year group; whether the devices are for individual pupils or pooled]

How is the decision taken in terms of where tablets are used and who receives them?

Would it be feasible for the school to participate in SALSUS in 2015 using tablets?  
Yes/No

... in PSE classes? Yes/No

... under exam conditions?

[If not feasible in 2015]: What are the school's plans for future provision of these devices for pupils?

### **ICT suites**

How many ICT suites are there in your school?

How many pupils can be accommodated in each one?

What is the average size of a PSE class in S2 and S4?

S2:

S4:

How easy would it be to book an ICT suite for a PSE class?

How would you deal with the issue of not having enough PCs for the whole class?

Are PSE classes in each year group timetabled together? Yes/No

If there are problems with the size of PSE classes are there any other ways of getting a mixed-ability sample with smaller groups of pupils?

### **Previous experience of online surveys in the school**

*Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about online research in schools.*

Has the school ever participated in online research with pupils before?  
Yes/No/Don't know

[If yes]: Was it easy or difficult for the school to participate? Easy/Difficult

[If yes]: How did pupils react to taking part?

What are your thoughts on the school's experience of having taken part?

How would the school go about ensuring absent pupils were able to participate when they return to school?

How do you think your head teacher would react to a request to undertake SALSUS online in 2015?

Do you expect that there would be an impact on parental consent of the survey were online?

What do you think would be the likely impact on pupil reaction at the school if the survey were to be online?

[Probe: Willingness to take part and way they may complete the survey]

From a school perspective, what advantages and disadvantages do you think there would be in moving the survey to an online method rather than a paper-based one?

Advantages:

Disadvantages:

Do you expect that there would be any particular concerns over confidentiality?

Other than the issues we have discussed, are there any other potential issues which you feel would need to be considered if SALSUS were to move online?  
[Probe: What would help overcome any problems?]

We are doing depth interviews with ten liaison teachers and then sending a short survey to other liaison teachers. Are there any other issues which you think are important which you think we should ask your colleagues in other schools but which we have not discussed today?

Could you supply us with the name and contact details of the person responsible for IT provision in your school, in case we need to check any technical details?

Finally, is there anything further that you would like to add?



## LIAISON TEACHERS' SURVEY

### Introduction

Ipsos MORI has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to conduct the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) 2015. This wave will trial the move from the traditional, paper-administration to an online methodology.

This current survey is part of the wider SALSUS project assessing the feasibility of running part of SALSUS online in the autumn term of 2015. The survey, as well as a survey of headteachers and telephone interviews with local authority IT specialists, will inform whether or not the trial will continue to the piloting stage, and subsequently the main survey.

**Please note that this is simply a feasibility study and does not constitute an agreement for your school to participate in the 2015 wave of SALSUS.**

The survey should take around x minutes to complete.

Please be assured that all of the information you provide will be confidential and anonymous. It will not be possible to identify any particular individual or school in the results.

Thank you very much in advance for taking part. We appreciate your views greatly.

If you have any queries about the survey, or about how to complete the questionnaire, please contact David Myers at Ipsos MORI Scotland on 0131 240 3260 or david.myers@ipsos.com.

### ICT suites

Q1. How many ICT suites are there in your school?

Write in:

Q2. How many pupils can be accommodated in each one?  
Please give details if they vary in size

Write in:

Q3. How many PSE classes are there in S2 and S4?

Write in:

S2  
S4

Q4. What is the average size of a PSE class in S2 and S4?

Write in:

S2

S4

Q5. Are PSE classes in each year group timetabled together?

Yes – the whole year group at one time

Yes – around half of the year group at one time, around half at another time

Yes – other (write in):

No

Don't know

Q6. How easy or difficult would it be to book an ICT suite for a PSE class?

Very easy

Fairly easy

Neither easy nor difficult

Fairly difficult

Very difficult

Don't know

Q7. How much notice would be required in order to timetable a PSE class into an ICT suite?

Less than a week

1-2 weeks

3-4 weeks

5-6 weeks

7-8 weeks

Longer (please write in)

Don't know

Q8. Evidence from local authorities and head teachers suggests that often there are more pupils in a PSE class than computers in an ICT suite. Do you have any suggestions on the best way to address this?

Write in:

Don't know

Q9. Are there any other mixed-ability classes that are small enough to be accommodated within an ICT suite?

Write in:

### **Previous experience of online surveys in the school**

*This section looks at the school's previous experience of having taken part in online research.*

Q10. Has the school ever participated in a survey that pupils completed online?

Yes

No

Don't know

Q11. [If yes]: Thinking of the most recent survey, how was the questionnaire completed?

On PCs in an ICT suite

On tablet devices

On laptops/netbooks

Don't know

Q12. [If yes]: How easy or difficult was it for the school to administer the survey online?

Very easy

Fairly easy

Neither easy nor difficult

Fairly difficult

Very difficult

Don't know

Q13. [If difficult]: Why was it difficult?

Write in:

Q14. When the survey took place, did the school encounter any of the following issues?

There were not enough computers

There were problems with computers not working

There were problems with software compatibility

The survey site was blocked by a filter or firewall

Audio or video elements made the survey run slowly

The number of pupils taking part took up too much bandwidth and made the survey run slowly

There were difficulties timetabling classes into ICT suites

It was more difficult to manage the survey under exam conditions

There were accessibility issues for pupils with additional support needs

Yes – this was a major issue

Yes – it was an issue but it was overcome/fixed

No

Q15. [If yes]: In general, how did pupils react to completing the survey online?

Along the top of the grid  
More than they would have with a paper survey  
The same as they would have with a paper survey  
Less than they would have with a paper survey

They enjoyed the experience  
They rushed through their answers without much thought  
They took it seriously  
They conferred over answers  
They were concerned about confidentiality

Q16. Do you have any other comments on the experience of administering an online survey of pupils?

Write in:

### **Feasibility of running SALSUS online**

*This section looks at whether or not it would be feasible to run SALSUS online in your school in the Autumn Term in 2015, or in a future wave of the survey.*

Q17. Do you think that your school would be more or less likely to participate in an online version of SALSUS?

Much more likely  
A little more likely  
It would make no difference  
A little less likely  
Much less likely

Q18. On balance, do you think it would be feasible for your school to administer SALSUS in autumn 2015 online in PSE classes under exam conditions using...?

Down side of grid  
... ICT suites  
... tablet devices  
... netbooks or laptops

Across top of grid  
Yes – definitely  
Yes - probably  
No – probably not  
No – definitely not  
Don't know

Q19. [If yes to two or more options]: Which would be your preferred method?

ICT suites  
Tablet devices  
Laptops or netbooks

Q20. [If no]: When do you think that the school would be in a position to be able to administer SALSUS online?

By 2017  
By 2019  
After 2019  
Don't know

Q21. If the survey were to move online, what effect, if any, do you think that this may have on pupils answers to the questions?

Write in:  
No effect  
Don't know

Q22. Do you think that an online methodology would have a positive or negative effect on pupils' willingness to participate in the survey?

Very positive  
Fairly positive  
Neither positive nor negative  
Fairly negative  
Very negative  
Don't know

Q23. What effect, if any, do you think conducting SALSUS online would have on parental consent?

Parents would be more likely to give consent  
There would be no difference  
Parents would be less likely to give consent  
Don't know

Q24. How easy or difficult would it be to follow up with pupils who were absent on the day of the survey if SALSUS was online?

Very easy  
Fairly easy  
Neither easy nor difficult  
Fairly difficult  
Very difficult  
Don't know

Q25. Other than the issues raised above, are there any other potential issues which you feel would need to be considered if SALSUS were to move online?

Write in:

As previously noted, this survey is part of a wider study looking at the feasibility of moving to an online methodology for SALSUS 2015. As part of this wider study, we would like to get the views of someone in your school who works in IT provision. The aim of this will be to get more details on the practical IT issues that could be associated with the survey such as firewalls and software compatibility. If this is dealt with at a local authority level please let us know.

We would be grateful if you could provide the contact details for someone in your school who would be able to provide this information. We would then send them a link to a similar survey to this. The survey is voluntary, so it would, of course, be entirely up to them whether or not they wanted to participate

All information provided would be strictly confidential and the survey responses would be anonymous.

Q26. Could you please provide us with the name and email address of the person responsible for IT provision in your school?

Name (write in):

Email address (write in):

This is dealt with at a local authority level and not a school level

**Thank you very much for taking the time to give us your views. Please be assured that the information you have provided is confidential and anonymous. We will not disclose the identity of any participating teachers or schools to the Scottish Government.**

## HEADTEACHERS' SURVEY

### SALSUS Online Feasibility Study

**Q1** Would you be more or less likely to participate in SALSUS in 2015 if the survey moved from paper delivery to online delivery?

**PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY**

Much more  
likely

A little more  
likely

It would make  
no difference

A little less  
likely

Much less  
likely

**Q2** Do you think that your school would have the technical capability and capacity to administer SALSUS online in 2015?

**PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Q3** Please use this box to add any further comments or information, or to give reasons for any of the answers that you have provided above.

**PLEASE WRITE IN BELOW**

---

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this social research publication:

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [salsus@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:salsus@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) for further information.





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