

2. Whose voice runs the planning system?

Blog Series: Planning the Data Revolution

Whose voice runs the planning system?

In this edition, we explore how better data collection can ensure more informed decision making for planning, development and placemaking across the country.

A representative audience

Our methodology is one that prioritises collecting quality data to influence and inform design decisions. To start this process, we collect key demographic and behavioural data such as when people provide feedback, what age they are, and what gender a respondent is.

This allows us to understand who the audience is each time we consult, and search for methods that look to expand the audience for the next project - to make our consultations as representative of the general population as we can.



What does the data say?

Respondents are asked to provide their age category, and we have used a sample of 5,614 responses*.

Those under 18 make up more than 20% of the national population but have been excluded from this analysis. It is rare for most children to engage in consultations unless we conduct very targeted methods.

The table below shows how many of our respondents are in each age category and what ONS statistics say the country is.

Age category	% of respondents	% of England & Wales (18+)	Difference
18 to 24	3.11%	10.50%	-7.39%
25 to 34	12.65%	17.05%	-4.40%
35 to 44	19.28%	16.39%	+2.89%
45 to 54	20.92%	16.76%	+4.16%
55 to 64	21.98%	15.86%	+6.12%
65+	22.05	23.44%	-1.39%

**This data has been collated from a number of consultations held across England. These consultations have been held in various places, including dense urban areas, edge of town locations and rural villages. Our methods result in comparatively higher engagement among younger groups, meaning traditional methods are even more unrepresentative.*

What does the data say?

Those under the age of 35 engage with the planning system in significantly lower numbers than what is representative of the country. Conversely, those **between 35 and 64 are overrepresented** in the planning system. This shows that as people get older, they are more likely to make their views on the planning system known.

We recently added a 75+ bracket. We noticed that the catch all '65+' bracket did not allow the depth of analysis required. Since adding this, we have learnt that 73% of those who described themselves as 65+ are aged 65 to 74, with 27% being 75+.

Of UK retirees, 65- to 74-year-olds comprise 53% and the remaining 47% are aged 75+. Assessing the newer data shows that **those aged 65 to 74 are overrepresented** while those over 75 are underrepresented.

In the last 30 years, the number of people in the UK living past 75 has grown significantly, from 3.9 million up to 11.2 million. People are living longer and healthier and the views provided by the newly retired are often distinct from those who are older.

Why is this important?

People of different ages experience life and the built environment differently. For example, our data and public opinion polling shows older people tend to be more resistant to development and younger people more open to it. We also know that younger people are finding it ever harder to get onto the housing ladder, whilst those already on the housing ladder (older groups) have benefited in the form of ballooning house prices.

It isn't just about the principle of development, though. Active travel is an important part of how we create more sustainable places, and it is not as high a priority among older groups. When assessing feedback by age group, it is clear to us that different generations think about where they live in different ways and have different priorities.

We need to be planning our cities and towns for the future, allowing the planning system to create spaces that are suitable for everyone, and not one space that tries to suit everyone.



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