

# Survey of Empty Homes in the East England

Report

Research Study Conducted for  
Government Office for the East of England



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

August – October 2005



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# Contents

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary of Findings</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>9</b>
Current Status	9
Reasons for Current Status	10
Type of Property	13
With Commercial Premises	15
Number of Rooms	17
Condition of Property	19
Reason for Ownership	20
Mortgage or Loan	21
Problems with Ownership	23
Reasons for Properties being Empty	24
Services to Encourage Use	25
Preferred Provider of Services	25
Future of the Properties	28
<b>Appendices</b>	
First Letter	
Reminder Letter	
Questionnaire	
Marked-up Questionnaire	
Sample Profile:	
All	
Owners/Responsible and Empty	
Statistical Reliability	



# Introduction

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This volume contains the findings from a postal self-completion survey with owners of long-term private empty homes in the East of England. It was conducted by MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East), who worked in partnership with a sample of local authorities (LAs) in the East of England. This is the first time a regional study of the reasons why properties remain empty has been undertaken on a regional basis.

The purpose of the research was to understand the reasons why privately owned properties in the East of England have been empty for some time, to determine what obstacles exist to bringing the properties back into use, and to identify possible solutions.

## Methodology

The survey was based on a sample of nine GO-East LAs, purposefully selected as representative of the region in terms of sub-regions, as well as council and geographic types. These were Chelmsford, Great Yarmouth, Huntingdonshire, Ipswich, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Mid Bedfordshire, Norwich, Peterborough and South Norfolk. The nine LAs provided their databases of relevant empty addresses classified as privately owned and vacant for at least six months as at 5 April 2005 – i.e with a cut-off void date of 30 September 2004 - in a standard format. This included the empty property address plus owner name and address, as well as council tax band and date void.

In total, the nine LAs provided 3,294 empty property addresses, which form the basis for the survey. All owners had UK addresses, so that pre-paid return envelopes could be used. Where the owner had more than one empty property at different locations, a separate letter and questionnaire was sent for each; where an owner had more than one empty property at the same location, one questionnaire was sent to cover all of them.

On this basis, MORI mailed-out 3,197 letters individually addressed to the owner, together with self-completion questionnaires separately printed with each empty property address/es. Despatch was on 25 August 2005, which means that effective void time period from the cut-off date of 30 September 2004 was nearly one year; the return date was 16 September. A second, reminder letter was sent to all owners who had not responded, together with another questionnaire for all relevant addresses. The reminder mail-out was despatched on 29 September, with a return date of 21 October; however, completed questionnaires were still being returned when the analysis was finalised on 28 October. The letters included reference to the £250 prize draw which was being offered by MORI. Both the letters and the questionnaire are appended.

In total, 1,195 questionnaires were returned from the two mail-outs, with 1,153 eligible for inclusion in the analysis. The table below summarises the aggregate response rates achieved, showing both mail-outs and in/eligible returns.

<b>Response Rates</b>	
	<b>Number</b>
First Mail-out	
<b>Despatched</b>	<b>3,197</b>
Returned	762
Response rate %	24%
Reminder Mail-out	
Despatched	2,476
Returned	433
Response rate %	17%
<b>Total Returned</b>	<b>1,195</b>
<b>Total Response Rate %</b>	<b>37%</b>
Eligible	1,153
Ineligible:	42
Returned blank/refused	36
Demolished/burnt down/no property at address	3
Owner moved	2
Housing association	1

*Source: MORI*

## Questionnaire

The one-page/two-sided self-completion questionnaire was designed and developed by MORI in consultation with GO-East, amended from previous questionnaires used for similar surveys. In particular, two initial questions at the beginning of the questionnaire allowed respondents to identify if they were currently the owner or responsible for the property and whether it was empty. Respondents who were not the owner of, or not responsible for, the property, or where the property was not empty, were then asked to complete one further question. All other respondents – i.e currently the owner/responsible for empty property - were asked to complete the remaining 12 questions on the questionnaire.

## Layout of Volume

The following pages contain the summary of the survey, followed by a more detailed commentary of the key findings for each question, including relevant sub-group analysis. The next section contains the computer tables, with each question analysed by two pages of sub-groups agreed with GO-East, which includes some variables from the original address databases. In addition, as noted above, the first question is based on all 1,153 returned questionnaires and the second question on 557 from those who are not currently the

owner/responsible for the property or it is not empty; the remaining 12 questions are based on 596 questionnaires returned from those who are currently the owner/responsible for the empty property. Finally the appendices contain the questionnaire marked-up with the overall aggregate results and the sample profile, together with details on statistical reliability (see below). Also included are the first and second letters, as well as the self-completion questionnaire.

## **Presentation and Interpretation of Data**

It should be noted that questionnaires returned were a sample, not the entire population, of empty private properties, which means that not all the differences are statistically significant. However, the profiles of the population of addresses for which questionnaires were despatched and sample of returned questionnaires are similar in terms of all three variables from the address database, including the nine LAs as well as the council tax band and time void:

<b>Population and Sample Profiles</b>				
	<b>Population Despatched</b>		<b>Sample Returned</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,197</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,153</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>				
Chelmsford	354	11	134	12
Great Yarmouth	297	9	107	9
Huntingdonshire	141	4	55	5
Ipswich	591	18	199	17
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	137	4	56	5
Mid Bedfordshire	435	14	128	11
Norwich	255	8	95	8
Peterborough	466	15	142	12
South Norfolk	521	16	234	20
<b>Council Tax Band</b>				
A	959	30	331	29
B	850	27	308	27
C	644	20	230	20
D to H	744	23	284	25
<b>Time Void</b>				
Pre-2000	342	11	110	10
2000-2002	416	13	138	12
2003	456	14	180	16
1st Quarter 2004	339	11	133	12
2nd Quarter 2004	834	26	284	25
3rd Quarter 2004	810	25	308	27

*Source: MORI*

Assuming that the returned questionnaires are a representative sample, then the statistical reliability for the results with 1,153 completed questionnaires from a population of around 3,200 addresses would be up to plus or minus three percentage points and four percentage points for the 596 sub-sample at the 95% confidence interval. For example, with a sub-sample size of around 600 completed questionnaires, where 50% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the “true” value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had returned questionnaires) will fall within the range of  $\pm$  four percentage points from the sample result; in fact the actual result is

proportionately more likely to be closer to the centre (50%) than the extremes of the range (46% or 54%). A guide to statistical reliability is included.

Where percentages do not add up to 100, this may be due to computer rounding or multiple answers. The term “net” is the balance when a negative finding has been subtracted from the positive finding.

## **Publication of Data**

As with all our studies, these findings are subject to MORI’s standard Terms and Conditions of Contract. Any press release or publication of the findings from this survey requires the advance approval of MORI. Such approval would only be refused on the basis of inaccuracy and misrepresentation of the results.

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*Toby Taper  
Louise Granger*



# Summary of Findings

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- Fifty-two per cent of respondents say they are currently the owner or responsible for the property which is empty. Almost as many (48%) say they are not, almost evenly divided among the property not being empty and not being the owner/responsible (25% and 23% respectively).
- Forty-two per cent of those who are not currently the owner/responsible for the property or it is not empty say it has been sold and a further 24% that it is being rented out, while 16% say they or family or friends are living in it.
- All those currently the owner/responsible for the empty home were then asked to complete the remaining 12 questions on the questionnaire.
- Sixty-three per cent of the empty private properties are houses, while 18% are flats or maisonettes, and 15% bungalows.
- Ten per cent are connected to commercial premises.
- Forty-four per cent have five or more rooms, excluding kitchens and bathrooms, with 30% having up to three and 22% four rooms.
- Forty-nine per cent of owners rate the present condition of their empty properties as good, with 30% saying it is poor, making the net good balance +19 points, while 22% do not give a definite answer.
- When asked how/why they came to own this empty property, 60% say they bought it, including 27% to live in themselves and 19% as an investment; a further 22% inherited it.
- Thirty-four per cent of owners currently have a mortgage or loan on their empty property, while 62% do not.
- Sixty-seven per cent say that owning this empty property causes them some problems or concerns - covering 48% saying sometimes, and a further 19% always or often - while 30% say it never causes them any problems.
- Four of the five most frequently given reasons for why their property is currently empty are to do with repairs and/or renovation, including the largest single reason - given by 37% - that these are in progress. Seventeen per cent say they need doing and nine per cent each they are planning, and can't afford, to do them. The other reason among the top five and the second most frequently given, by 28%, is that they are trying to sell the property.
- Forty-two per cent think that at least one of the seven services listed might encourage them to bring their empty property back into use, including 27% selecting a grant to help pay for repairs and/or renovation. Among the others, 50% say none of these and a further eight per cent leave the question blank.
- Similarly, 39% would prefer at least one of the five organisations listed to provide these services, including 30% selecting the council or local authority

Among the others, 47% say none of these and/or do not want any services, while a further 14% leave the question blank.

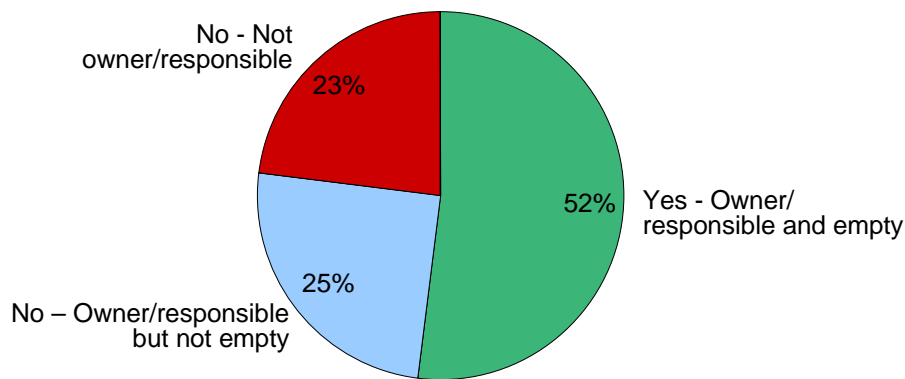
- Thirty-eight per cent think they will eventually sell the empty property, and a further 26% rent, it. Seventeen per cent expect to live in it themselves, and a further four per cent that family or friends will live in it.
- Forty per cent think their empty property will eventually be occupied within six months, 17% between six to 12 months, and 14% a year or more. A further 21% says they do not know when it will be occupied, and three per cent that it is not for occupation.

# Key Findings

## Current Status

The first question at the beginning of the questionnaire allowed respondents to identify if they are currently the owner or responsible for the property and whether it is empty. Fifty-two per cent say they are currently the owner or responsible for the home and it is empty. Almost as many - 48% - say they are not, about evenly divided between the property not being empty and not being the owner/ responsible (25% and 23% respectively).

**Q1 Are you the owner/responsible for the property at this address, and is it currently empty?**



Base: All respondents (1,153)

Source: MORI

There is some variation between the nine LAs in terms of this initial question, with respondents in Mid Bedfordshire more likely currently to be the owner of an empty home (68%). On the other hand, Ipswich tends to have more properties which are not empty (38%), while both Chelmsford and King’s Lynn and West Norfolk have more who are not the owners (both 34%). In addition, longer void times also tends to indicate the respondents are owners of empty homes (65% since 2002 or before), while more recent voids are associated with not being empty since the first quarter of 2004 and not the owner for the third quarter (33% and 35% respectively). There is little variation in terms of council tax bands.

<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
		<b>Not empty</b>	<b>Not owner/responsible</b>	
	%	%	%	
<i>Base: All (1,153)</i>				
<b>Total</b>	52	25	23	
<b>Local Authority</b>				
Chelmsford	42	24	34	
Great Yarmouth	59	17	24	
Huntingdonshire	60	24	16	
Ipswich	39	38	23	
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	54	13	34	
Mid Bedfordshire	68	17	15	
Norwich	45	33	22	
Peterborough	57	23	20	
South Norfolk	53	26	21	
<b>Council Tax Band</b>				
A	53	27	19	
B	48	25	27	
C	53	23	23	
D to H	53	25	22	
<b>Time Void</b>				
Pre-2000	67	20	13	
2000-2002	64	20	17	
2003	57	26	17	
1st Quarter 2004	45	33	22	
2nd Quarter 2004	50	29	21	
3rd Quarter 2004	42	23	35	

Source: MORI

## Reasons for Current Status

Respondents who are not currently the owner/responsible for the property or it is not empty, were then asked to complete one further question about the reasons for its status. Forty-two per cent say the property has been sold and a further 24% that it is being rented out, while 16% say they or family or friends

are living in it. Other reasons each given by one per cent of respondents are shown in the table below.

<b>Q2 Why are you currently not the owner/responsible for this property, or why is it not empty?</b>	
	%
<i>Base: All not currently owner/responsible or empty (557)</i>	
Sold it	42
Renting it	24
I/family/friends living in it	16
I am joint owner with other family members	1
Holiday let/use at weekends/used as 2 <sup>nd</sup> home	1
Executor/owner deceased	1
Awaiting probate	1
Never owned it/not my property	1
Awaiting property to be sold	1
Used/occupied by another user	1
Other	5
Blank	8

*Source: MORI*

Again there are differences between sub-groups on the reasons for the current status of these properties. By LA, properties in Great Yarmouth and Mid Bedfordshire are more likely to have been sold (59% and 61% respectively), while those in Ipswich and the lowest council bands tend to be rented out (42% and 34% respectively). In addition, the most recent voids also tend to have been sold (56%) and those empty since the beginning of 2004 to be rented (34%).

<b>Reasons for Current Status</b>			
	<b>Sold</b>	<b>Renting</b>	<b>Living in</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Base: All not currently owner/responsible or empty (557)</i>			
<b>Total</b>	42	24	16
<b>Local Authority</b>			
Chelmsford	49	14	14
Great Yarmouth	59	16	14
Huntingdonshire	36	27	14
Ipswich	31	42	13
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	50	15	19
Mid Bedfordshire	61	12	10
Norwich	38	33	12
Peterborough	38	15	23
South Norfolk	37	20	21
<b>Council Tax Band</b>			
A	35	34	13
B	43	24	14
C	45	23	13
D to H	46	12	23
<b>Time Void</b>			
Pre-2000	19	22	19
2000-2002	30	28	12
2003	31	26	19
1st Quarter 2004	40	34	16
2nd Quarter 2004	40	25	16
3rd Quarter 2004	56	17	14

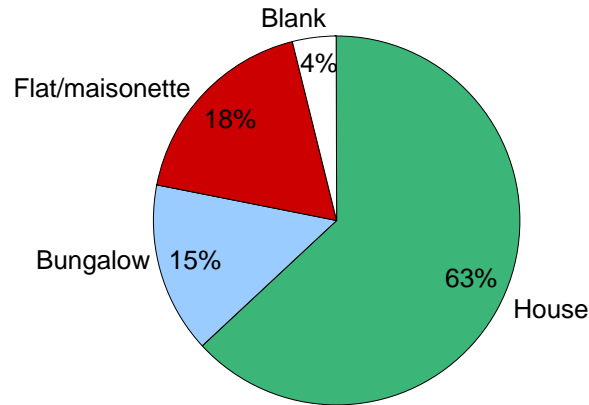
Source: MORI

All other respondents - i.e. currently the owner/responsible for empty home - were then asked to complete the remaining 12 questions on the questionnaire.

## Type of Property

Sixty-three per cent of the empty private properties are houses, with 18% flats or maisonettes, and 15% bungalows.

### Q3 What type of property is this?



Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

All nine LAs have considerably more empty houses than flats or maisonettes and bungalows. However, as may be expected, Norwich has more flats or maisonettes (35%), with both South and King's Lynn and West Norfolk having more bungalows (25% and 30% respectively). In terms of council tax bands, 75% of the higher D to H are houses, with more flats and maisonettes in the lowest (43%) and bungalows in C (26%). There is little variation in terms of how long the properties have been empty.

Type of Property	House	Flat/ maisonette	Bungalow
	%	%	%
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>			
<b>Total</b>	63	18	15
<b>Local Authority</b>			
Chelmsford	57	27	9
Great Yarmouth	56	25	17
Huntingdonshire	70	21	6
Ipswich	67	22	9
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	67	3	30
Mid Bedfordshire	68	16	15
Norwich	60	35	2
Peterborough	59	19	14
South Norfolk	65	6	25
<b>Council Tax Band</b>			
A	46	43	6
B	68	14	16
C	66	5	26
D to H	75	5	16
<b>Time Void</b>			
Pre-2000	64	18	18
2000-2002	60	17	20
2003	62	23	12
1st Quarter 2004	72	12	15
2nd Quarter 2004	62	22	13
3rd Quarter 2004	64	15	16
<i>Source: MORI</i>			

## With Commercial Premises

When owners were asked if their empty property is connected to a shop, office or any other commercial premises, 10% say it is.

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**Q4** *Is this property connected to a shop, office or any other commercial premises?*

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	%
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>	
Yes	10
No	86
Blank	4

*Source: MORI*

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Again, by LA, there are relatively more empty private homes with commercial premises in Great Yarmouth (21%) as well as Mid Bedfordshire and Norwich (17% and 16% respectively). These properties are also more likely to be in the lowest council tax band A and have been empty for longest (22% and 20% respectively).

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**With Commercial Premises**

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	<b>Yes %</b>	<b>No %</b>
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>		
<b>Total</b>	10	86
<b>Local Authority</b>		
Chelmsford	7	84
Great Yarmouth	21	76
Huntingdonshire	9	91
Ipswich	8	90
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	3	97
Mid Bedfordshire	17	82
Norwich	16	81
Peterborough	4	90
South Norfolk	7	88
<b>Council Tax Band</b>		
A	22	74
B	5	92
C	4	93
D to H	7	89
<b>Time Void</b>		
Pre-2000	20	77
2000-2002	16	82
2003	9	84
1st Quarter 2004	5	93
2nd Quarter 2004	10	87
3rd Quarter 2004	4	91

*Source: MORI*

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## Number of Rooms

Respondents were asked how many rooms their empty property has, excluding kitchens and bathrooms. Forty-four per cent have five or more rooms, with 30% having up to three and 22% four rooms.

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**Q5** *How many rooms does this property have, excluding kitchen/s and bathroom/s?*

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	%
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>	
1	2
2	9
3	19
4	22
5	22
6	11
7	4
8	3
9 or more	3
Blank	4
1-3	30
4	22
5 or more	44

*Source: MORI*

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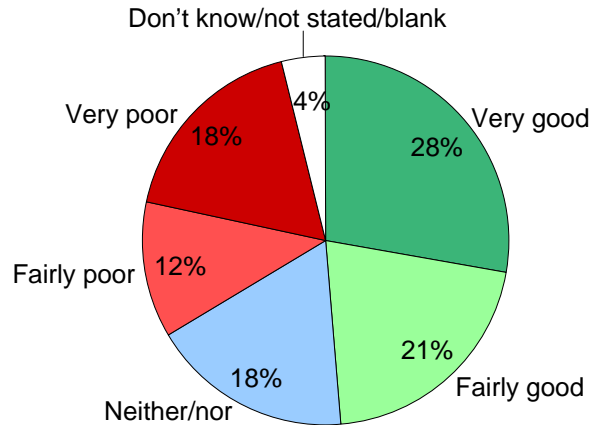
Although there are relatively few differences between LAs, South Norfolk tends to have more larger empty private homes (56%). Predictably, by council tax band, the lowest A properties tend to be smaller (52%), with the higher D to H the largest (69%). However, there is little difference according to how long the properties have been empty.

<b>Number of Rooms</b>			
	<b>1-3</b> %	<b>4</b> %	<b>5 or more</b> %
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>			
<b>Total</b>	30	22	44
<b>Local Authority</b>			
Chelmsford	36	14	46
Great Yarmouth	35	21	40
Huntingdonshire	30	27	42
Ipswich	28	27	41
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	27	27	43
Mid Bedfordshire	34	24	37
Norwich	30	26	42
Peterborough	31	21	41
South Norfolk	22	18	56
<b>Council Tax Band</b>			
A	52	21	22
B	29	27	41
C	22	25	48
D to H	11	15	69
<b>Time Void</b>			
Pre-2000	28	23	47
2000-2002	35	16	45
2003	28	20	47
1st Quarter 2004	28	15	53
2nd Quarter 2004	30	24	43
3rd Quarter 2004	29	28	35
<i>Source: MORI</i>			

## Condition of Property

Forty-nine per cent of owners rate the present condition of their empty properties as good, including 28% very good, with 30% saying it is poor; 22% do not give a definite answer to this question. This makes the net good balance +19 points.

**Q6 How would you rate the present condition of this property?**



Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

There is some variation between LAs, with Chelmsford properties rated more highly (net good +42 points), as are those in Norwich and South Norfolk (both +32). In contrast, empty properties in both Huntingdonshire and King's Lynn and West Norfolk are rated overall negative on their condition - i.e. more poor than good (net poor -31 and -13 respectively). Perhaps unexpectedly, homes in the second lowest council tax band B are also rated more positively (+32). However, more predictably, properties that have been empty for longest are also rated overall negative (-10), while views are more positive about those void since 2004.

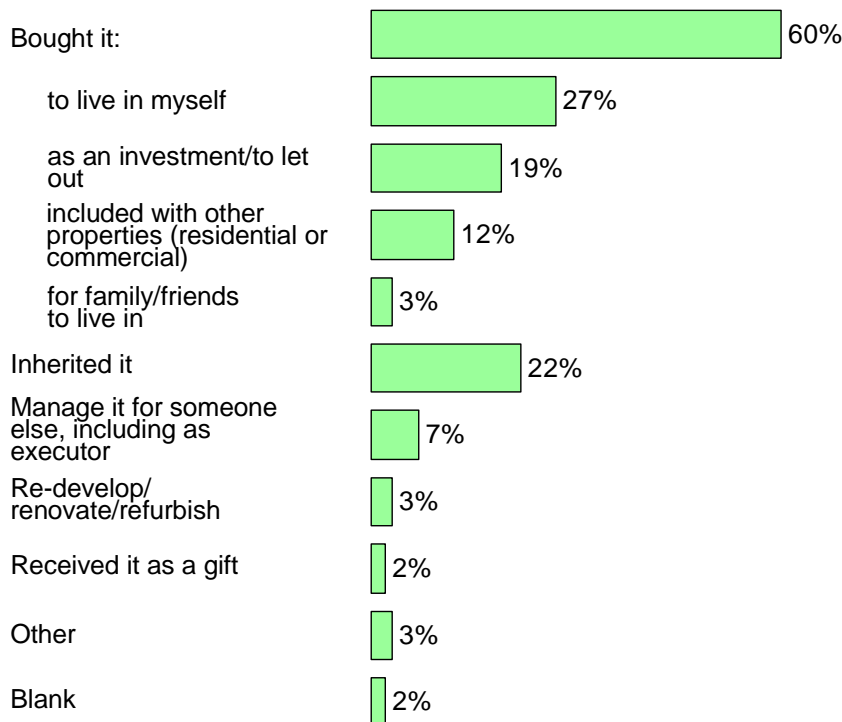
Condition of Property	Good %	Poor %	Net good ±%
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>			
<b>Total</b>	49	30	+19
<b>Local Authority</b>			
Chelmsford	63	21	+42
Great Yarmouth	43	35	+8
Huntingdonshire	27	58	-31
Ipswich	46	24	+22
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	40	53	-13
Mid Bedfordshire	49	30	+19
Norwich	51	19	+32
Peterborough	51	28	+23
South Norfolk	55	23	+32
<b>Council Tax Band</b>			
A	43	34	+9
B	54	22	+32
C	48	34	+14
D to H	53	28	+25
<b>Time Void</b>			
Pre-2000	31	41	-10
2000-2002	40	33	+7
2003	51	25	+26
1st Quarter 2004	55	15	+40
2nd Quarter 2004	54	30	+24
3rd Quarter 2004	57	29	+28

*Source: MORI*

## Reason for Ownership

When respondents are asked how and/or why they came to own or be responsible for the empty property, 60% say they bought it. This includes 27% who bought it to live in themselves, 19% as an investment and/or to let out, and 12% with other properties. A further 22% inherited it. Other reasons given by seven per cent or fewer respondents are shown in the graph below.

**Q7 How/why did you come to own/be responsible for this property?**



Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

## Mortgage or Loan

Thirty-four per cent of owners say they currently have a mortgage or loan on their empty property, while 62% do not.

**Q8 Do you currently have a mortgage or loan on this property?**

	%
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>	
Yes	34
No	62
Blank	4

Source: MORI

Although there is little variation between LAs, owners in Great Yarmouth are more likely not to have a mortgage or loan on their empty property (75%), as are those in Huntingdonshire and King's Lynn and West Norfolk (73% and 70% respectively). So too are those with properties which have been empty since before 2000 (84%).

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**Mortgage or Loan**

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	<b>Yes %</b>	<b>No %</b>
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>		
<b>Total</b>	34	62
<b>Local Authority</b>		
Chelmsford	36	61
Great Yarmouth	21	75
Huntingdonshire	27	73
Ipswich	32	60
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	27	70
Mid Bedfordshire	29	68
Norwich	40	58
Peterborough	41	54
South Norfolk	40	56
<b>Time Void</b>		
Pre-2000	14	84
2000-2002	25	69
2003	38	59
1st Quarter 2004	47	48
2nd Quarter 2004	42	55
3rd Quarter 2004	32	63

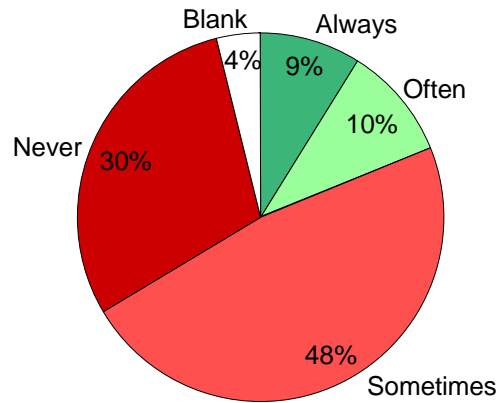
*Source: MORI*

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## Problems with Ownership

Respondents were asked whether owning this empty property causes them any problems or concerns. Sixty-seven per cent say it does to some extent - covering 48% saying sometimes, and a further 19% always or often - while 30% say it never causes them any problems.

**Q9 Does owning this property cause you any problems or concerns?**



Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

There is relatively little variation between sub-groups.

### Problems with Ownership

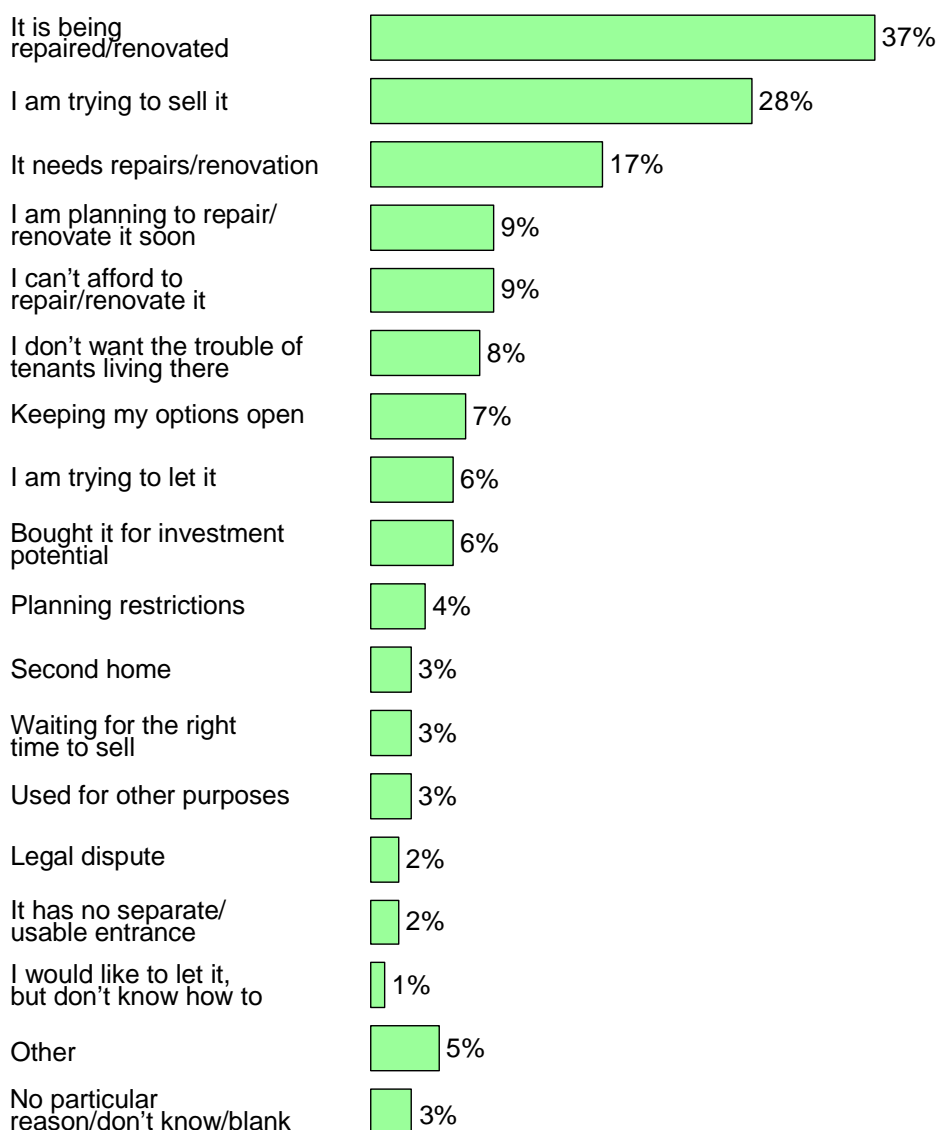
	Always/ often %	Sometimes %	Never %
<i>Base: All owner/ responsible and empty (596)</i>			
<b>Total</b>	19	48	30
<b>Local Authority</b>			
Chelmsford	11	52	34
Great Yarmouth	23	49	25
Huntingdonshire	30	30	39
Ipswich	23	47	27
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	20	63	17
Mid Bedfordshire	15	47	36
Norwich	21	51	26
Peterborough	21	36	33
South Norfolk	17	54	26

Source: MORI

## Reasons for Properties being Empty

When owners are asked why their property is currently empty, they give a wide range of reasons. Four of the five reasons mentioned most frequently are to do with repairs and/or renovation, including the largest single reason - given by 37% - that these are in progress. Seventeen per cent say they need doing and nine per cent each they are planning, and can't afford, to do them. Also among the top five reasons, and the second most frequently given by 28%, is that they are trying to sell the property. Other reasons given by no more than eight per cent of respondents for their property being empty are shown in the graph below.

### Q10 Why is this property currently empty?



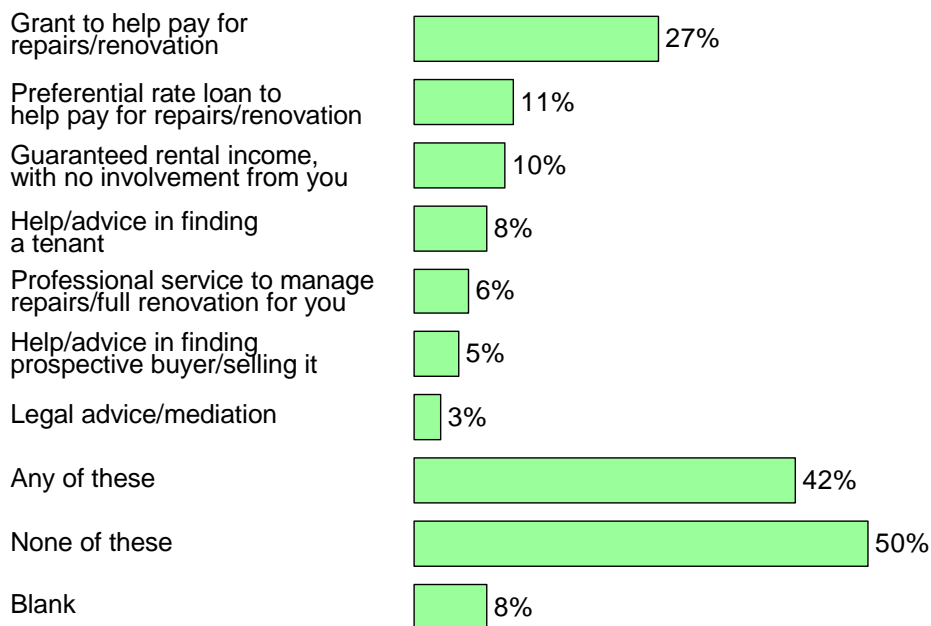
Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

## Services to Encourage Use

When respondents are asked which services they think might encourage them to bring their empty properties back into use, 42% give at least one of the seven listed. Among the others, 50% say none of these and a further eight per cent leave the question blank. The service most frequently selected, by 27%, is a grant to help pay for repairs and/or renovation. This is followed some way behind by 11% choosing preferential rate loan to help pay for repairs and/or renovation and 10% guaranteed rental income with no involvement from them. The other four services are mentioned by under 10% of respondents as shown in the graph below.

### Q11 Which of these services, if any, do you think might encourage you to get this property occupied?



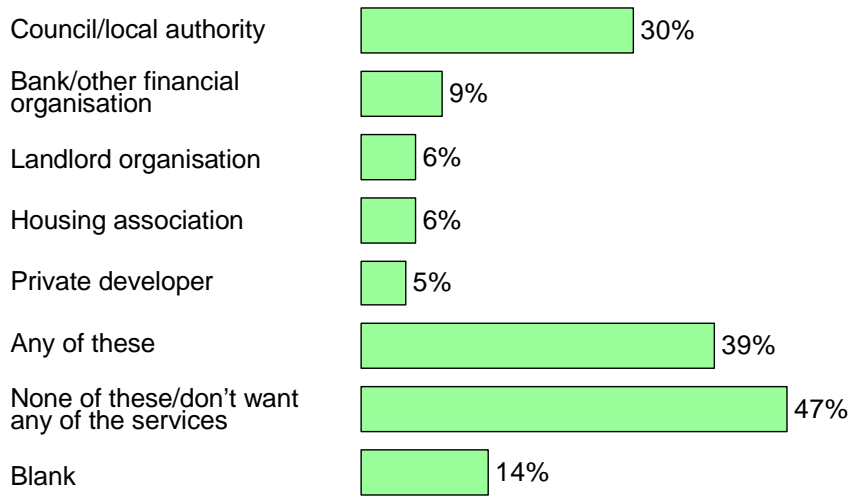
Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

## Preferred Provider of Services

Similarly, when owners are asked who they would prefer to provide these services, 39% select at least one of the five organisations listed. Among the others, 47% say none of these and/or do not want any services, while a further 14% leave the question blank. Among those responding, 30% select the council or local authority, with the proportions choosing the other four organisations shown in the graph below.

**Q12 Generally, who would you prefer to get these services from?**



Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

There is relatively little variation between LAs about preferring the council to provide these services. Within other sub-groups, those with properties in the lowest council tax band A tend to select the council as their preferred service provider as do those with properties empty since the second quarter of 2004 (37% and 36% respectively).

---

**Preferred Provider of Services: Council/Local Authority**

---

%

*Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)*

<b>Total</b>	30
<b>Local Authority</b>	
Chelmsford	30
Great Yarmouth	40
Huntingdonshire	33
Ipswich	29
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	23
Mid Bedfordshire	28
Norwich	28
Peterborough	31
South Norfolk	27
<b>Council Tax Band</b>	
A	37
B	24
C	28
D to H	28
<b>Time Void</b>	
Pre-2000	31
2000-2002	33
2003	27
1st Quarter 2004	32
2nd Quarter 2004	36
3rd Quarter 2004	20

*Source: MORI*

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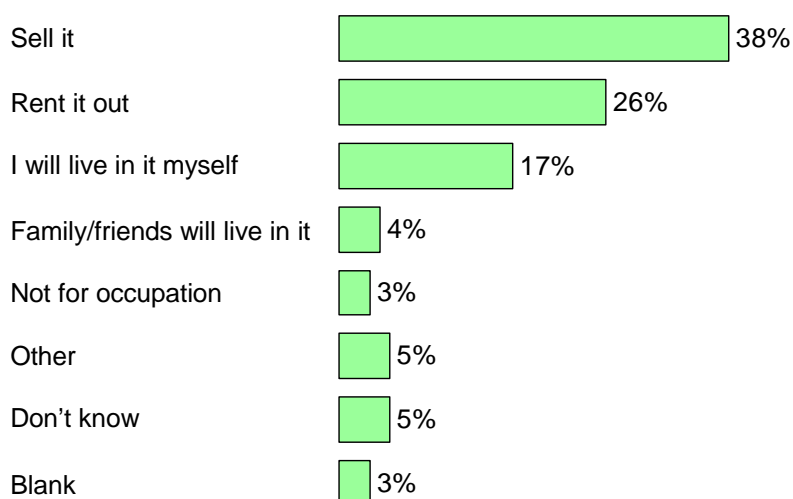
## Future of the Properties

At the end of the questionnaire, owners were asked two questions about the eventual occupation of their empty property.

### Eventual Occupation

Firstly, they were asked how they think this empty property will eventually be occupied. Thirty-eight per cent say they think they will sell, and a further 26% rent it. Seventeen per cent expect to live in it themselves and a further four per cent that family or friends will live in it. Three per cent say it is not for occupation, and five per cent give other reasons; eight per cent do not know or leave the question blank.

#### Q13 How do you think this property will eventually be occupied?



Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

There are some differences between LAs about the eventual occupation of these empty properties. More in Chelmsford and King's Lynn and West Norfolk are likely to be sold (55% and 53% respectively), with owner tending to say they will live in it themselves in three other LAs - Great Yarmouth, Huntingdonshire and South Norfolk (25%, 24% and 23% respectively). Within other sub-groups, properties in the higher D to H council tax band and the most recent voids are also likely to be sold (45% and 53% respectively). Again those in the higher D to H band and 2000 to 2003 void property owners tend to say they will live in it themselves (24% and 25% respectively), while 35% of the lowest A band will eventually rent it out.

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**Future of the Properties: Eventual Occupation**

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	Sell it	Rent it out	Live in it myself
	%	%	%
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>			
<b>Total</b>	38	26	17
<b>Local Authority</b>			
Chelmsford	55	14	14
Great Yarmouth	25	32	25
Huntingdonshire	27	30	24
Ipswich	38	33	10
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	53	23	10
Mid Bedfordshire	32	30	18
Norwich	40	23	7
Peterborough	46	26	14
South Norfolk	32	19	23
<b>Council Tax Band</b>			
A	36	35	8
B	29	27	21
C	40	25	17
D to H	45	14	24
<b>Time Void</b>			
Pre-2000	20	28	16
2000-2002	27	22	24
2003	29	23	25
1st Quarter 2004	48	28	10
2nd Quarter 2004	41	31	15
3rd Quarter 2004	53	21	12

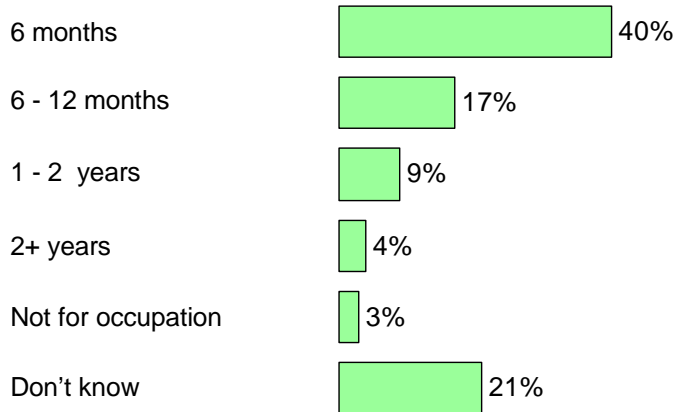
*Source: MORI*

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**Occupied When**

Finally, respondents were asked when they think their empty property will eventually be occupied. Forty per cent say within six months, 17% between six to 12 months, and 13% a year or more. A further 21% say they do not know when it will be occupied, and again three per cent that it is not for occupation.

**Q14 When do you think this property will eventually be occupied – within ...?**



Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

Source: MORI

Between sub-groups, owners in Great Yarmouth are more likely to think that it will be at least a year before the empty property is eventually occupied and a similar proportion with homes in the higher D to H council band that it will be within six to 12 months (22% and 23% respectively). By time void, respondents think that the 2004 voids will be occupied within six months (49%), with the oldest more likely to take at least a year (26%).

---

**Future of the Properties: Occupied When**

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	Up to 6 months %	6-12 months %	1 year or more %
<i>Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)</i>			
<b>Total</b>	40	17	14
<b>Local Authority</b>			
Chelmsford	43	20	13
Great Yarmouth	40	16	22
Huntingdonshire	33	12	18
Ipswich	44	14	13
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	33	27	13
Mid Bedfordshire	34	22	11
Norwich	44	19	9
Peterborough	47	10	12
South Norfolk	36	19	13
<b>Council Tax Band</b>			
A	35	13	15
B	44	14	16
C	43	20	11
D to H	38	23	12
<b>Time Void</b>			
Pre-2000	12	16	26
2000-2002	23	22	18
2003	42	19	12
1st Quarter 2004	53	12	10
2nd Quarter 2004	46	19	10
3rd Quarter 2004	51	15	10

*Source: MORI*

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# Appendices

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25 August 2005

Address No: xxxx

Insert Address

Dear Owner

### Survey of Empty Homes

MORI, the independent polling and research organisation, is carrying out a postal survey for the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) with private owners of empty homes.

The purpose of this research is to help in understanding the various reasons why properties are left empty. We also want to see whether offering different sorts of assistance to owners could help to bring them back into use. The findings from this research should help to improve the services available to owners of empty properties in a way which meets their needs.

**MORI was selected to carry out this survey because we are a completely independent research organisation. Nine local authorities in the East of England have provided us only with the addresses of empty homes and their owners. I would like to re-assure you that all your answers will be completely confidential. The information you give us in completing the questionnaire will be seen only by MORI, not by anyone else, and will be used for research purposes only. It will not be possible for any individual person or property to be identified in the survey findings.**

The questionnaire should take just a few minutes to complete. If you own more than one empty property at different locations, you should receive a questionnaire for each one separately; if you own more than one empty property at the same location, there is only one questionnaire to cover all of them. Once you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to MORI in the reply-paid envelope provided by 16 September 2005.

**If you complete and return the questionnaire, you will be entered in a Prize Draw, with one owner randomly selected to receive a cheque for £250.**

We very much hope that you will take part in this survey, and would like to thank you in advance for your help.

Yours sincerely



Professor Toby Taper  
Director, MORI Social Research

#### Market & Opinion Research International

MORI House 77-81 Borough Road, London, SE1 1FY  
t: +44 (0)20 7347 3000 e: mori@mori.com f: +44 (0)20 7347 3800 www.mori.com  
Registered Office: As above Registered in England and Wales registration number 948470



29 September 2005

Address No: xxxx

Insert Address

Dear Owner

### Survey of Empty Homes

You may remember that I wrote to you recently about a postal survey that MORI, the independent polling and research organisation, is carrying out for the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) with private owners of empty homes. As we have not received a reply from you, I am writing again with another copy of the questionnaire which I hope you will complete and return to MORI.

The purpose of this research is to help in understanding the various reasons why properties are left empty. We also want to see whether offering different sorts of assistance to owners could help to bring them back into use. The findings from this research should help to improve the services available to owners of empty properties in a way which meets their needs.

**MORI was selected to carry out this survey because we are a completely independent research organisation. Nine local authorities in the East of England have provided us only with the addresses of empty homes and their owners. I would like to re-assure you that all your answers will be completely confidential. The information you give us in completing the questionnaire will be seen only by MORI, not by anyone else, and will be used for research purposes only. It will not be possible for any individual person or property to be identified in the survey findings.**

The questionnaire should take just a few minutes to complete. If you own more than one empty property at different locations, you should receive a questionnaire for each one separately; if you own more than one empty property at the same location, there is only one questionnaire to cover all of them. Once you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to MORI in the reply-paid envelope provided by 21 October 2005.

**If you complete and return the questionnaire, you will be entered in a Prize Draw, with one owner randomly selected to receive a cheque for £250.**

We very much hope that you will take part in this survey, and would like to thank you in advance for your help.

Yours sincerely



Professor Toby Taper  
Director, MORI Social Research

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t: +44 (0)20 7347 3000 e: mori@mori.com f: +44 (0)20 7347 3800 www.mori.com  
Registered Office: As above Registered in England and Wales registration number 948470



## East of England: Empty Homes

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR:**

**<pre-print from database>**

**I would like to re-assure you that all your answers will be completely confidential. The information you give us in completing this questionnaire will be seen only by MORI, not by anyone else, and will be used for research purposes only. It will not be possible for any individual person or property to be identified in the survey findings.**

**Q1. Are you currently the owner/responsible for the property at this address, and is it currently empty?**  
TICK ONE BOX ONLY

**YES:** owner/responsible **and** empty

**NO:** owner/responsible **but not** empty

**NO:** **not** owner/responsible

**IF NO, NOT EMPTY OR NOT OWNER/RESPONSIBLE AT Q1, COMPLETE Q2 & RETURN QUESTIONNAIRE TO MORI**

**Q2. Why are you currently not the owner/responsible for this property, or why is it not empty?**  
TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Sold it

Renting it

I/family/friends living in it

Other (TICK BOX & WRITE IN)

**IF YES AT Q1, COMPLETE REST OF QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN TO MORI**

**Q3. What type of property is this?**  
TICK ONE BOX ONLY

House

Bungalow

Flat/maisonette

**Q4. Is this property connected to a shop, office, or any other commercial premises?** TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Yes

No

**Q5. How many rooms does this property have, excluding kitchen/s and bathroom/s?**

CIRCLE NUMBER (BEDSIT IS "1")

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9+

**Q6. How would you rate the present condition of this property?**  
TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Very good

Fairly good

Neither good nor poor

Fairly poor

Very poor

Don't know/no opinion

**Q7. How/why did you come to own/be responsible for this property?**  
TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Bought it:

to live in myself

for family/friends to live in

as an investment/to let out

included with other properties (residential or commercial)

Inherited it

Received it as gift

Manage it for someone else, including as executor

Other (TICK BOX & WRITE IN)

**Q8. Do you currently have a mortgage or loan on this property?**  
TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Yes

No

**Q9. Does owning this property cause you any problems or concerns?**  
TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Always

Often

Sometimes

Never

**Q10. Why is this property currently empty? TICK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY**

- |   |                          |  |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| It is being repaired/renovated                | <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't want the trouble of tenants living there | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It needs repairs/renovation                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bought it for investment potential               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I am planning to repair/renovate it soon      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Keeping my options open                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I can't afford to repair/renovate it          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Second home                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I am trying to sell it                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | It has no separate/usable entrance               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Waiting for the right time to sell            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Planning restrictions                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I am trying to let it                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Legal dispute                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I would like to let it, but don't know how to | <input type="checkbox"/> | Used for other purposes                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (TICK BOX & WRITE IN)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | No particular reason/don't know                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Q11. Which of these services, if any, do you think might encourage you to get property occupied? TICK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY**

- |  |                          |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Grant to help pay for repairs/renovation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Guaranteed rental income, with no involvement from you | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Preferential rate loan to help pay for repairs/renovation      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Help/advice in finding prospective buyer/selling it    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professional service to manage repairs/full renovation for you | <input type="checkbox"/> | Legal advice/mediation                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Help/advice in finding a tenant                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | None of these  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Q12. Generally, who would you prefer to get these services from? TICK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY**

- |                                   |                          |  |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Council/local authority           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Housing association                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Landlord organisation             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Private developer                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bank/other financial organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> | None of these/don't want any of the services | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Q13. How do you think this property will eventually be occupied? TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

- |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I will live in it myself       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family/friends will live in it | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rent it out                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sell it                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (TICK BOX & WRITE IN)    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <hr/>                          |                          |
| Not for occupation             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Q14. When do you think this property will eventually be occupied – within...? TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 6 months           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6-12 months        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1-2 years          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2+ years           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not for occupation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know         | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE  
PLEASE RETURN IT TO MORI IN THE PRE-PAID ENVELOPE PROVIDED  
TO BE ENTERED IN THE £250 PRIZE DRAW**

**Final Topline 28/10/2005**  
**GO-EAST: EMPTY HOMES**

- 1,153 self-completion postal questionnaires returned from 3,197
- Fieldwork conducted between 26 August to 28 October 2005
- An asterisk (\*) denotes a finding of less than 0.5%, but greater than zero
- Where figures do not add up to 100, this may be due to multiple coding or computer rounding
- Bases are Q1 All (1,153) and Q2 All not currently the owner/responsible for the property or not empty for Q2 (557). The rest of the questionnaire - Qs3 to 14 - are based on All currently the owner/responsible for empty property (596)
- Some of the "other" responses have been back-coded

**Q1. Are you currently the owner/responsible for the property at this address, and is it currently empty?**

Base: All (1,153)

	%
Yes: owner/responsible and empty	52
No: owner/responsible but not empty	25
No: not owner/responsible	23

**Q2. Why are you not the owner/responsible for this property, or why is it not empty?**

	%
Sold it	42
Renting it	24
I/family/friends living in it	17
I am joint owner with other family members	1
Holiday let/use at weekends/used as 2 <sup>nd</sup> home	1
Executor/owner deceased	1
Awaiting probate	1
Never owned it/not my property	1
Awaiting property to be sold	1
Used/occupied by another user	1
Other	5
Blank	8

**Q3. What type of property is this?**

	%
House	63
Bungalow	15
Flat/maisonette	18
Blank	4

**Q4. Is this property connected to a shop, office or any other commercial premises?**

Base: All owner/responsible and empty (596)

	%
Yes	10
No	86
Blank	4

Q5. How many rooms does this property have, excluding kitchen/s and bathroom/s?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+	Blank
%	2	9	19	22	22	11	4	3	3	4

Q6. How would you rate the present condition of this property?

	%
Very good	28
Fairly good	21
Neither good nor poor	18
Fairly poor	12
Very poor	18
Don't know/no opinion	1
Blank	3

Q7. How/why did you come to own/be responsible for this property?

	%
Bought it: to live in myself	60
as an investment/to let out	27
included with other properties for family/friends to live in	19
Inherited it	12
Manage it for someone else, including as executor	3
Re-develop/renovate/refurbish	22
Received it as a gift	7
Built it	3
Other	2
Blank	*
	3
	2

Q8. Do you currently have a mortgage or loan on this property?

	%
Yes	34
No	62
Blank	4

Q9. Does owning this property cause you any problems or concerns?

	%
Always	9
Often	10
Sometimes	48
Never	30
Blank	4

**Q10. Why is this property currently empty?**

	%
It is being repaired/renovated	37
I am trying to sell it	28
It needs repairs/renovation	17
I am planning to repair/renovate it soon	9
I can't afford to repair/renovate it	9
I don't want the trouble of tenants living there	8
Keeping my options open	7
I am trying to let it	6
Bought it for investment potential	6
Planning restrictions	4
Waiting for the right time to sell	3
Use for other purposes	3
Second home	3
Legal dispute	2
It has no separate/usable entrance	2
I would like to let it, but don't know how to	1
Other	5
No particular reason/don't know	*
Blank	3

**Q11. Which of these services, if any, do you think might encourage you to get property occupied?**

	%
Grant to help pay for repairs/renovation	27
Preferential rate loan to help pay for repairs/renovation	11
Guaranteed rental income, with no involvement from you	10
Help/advice in finding prospective buyer/selling it	8
Professional service to manage repairs/full renovation for you	6
Help/advice in finding a tenant	5
Legal advice/mediation	3
Any	42
None of these	50
Blank	8

**Q12. Generally, who would you prefer to get these services from?**

	%
Council/local authority	30
Bank/other financial organisation	9
Landlord organisation	6
Housing association	6
Private developer	5
Any	39
None of these/don't want any of the services	47
Blank	14

---

**Q13. How do you think this property will eventually be occupied?**

	%
Sell it	38
Rent it out	26
I will live in it myself	17
Family/friends will live in it	4
Not for occupation	3
Other	5
Don't know	5
Blank	3

---

**Q14. When do you think this property will eventually be occupied - within...?**

	%
6 months	40
6-12 months	17
1-2 years	9
2+ years	4
Not for occupation	3
Don't know	21

---

## Sample Profile: All

	Number	%
<b>Total</b>	1,153	100
<b>Local Authority</b>		
Chelmsford	134	12
Great Yarmouth	107	9
Huntingdonshire	55	5
Ipswich	199	17
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	56	5
Mid Bedfordshire	128	11
Norwich	95	8
Peterborough	142	12
South Norfolk	234	20
<b>Council Tax Band</b>		
A	331	29
B	308	27
C	230	20
D to H	284	25
<b>Time Void</b>		
Pre-2000	110	10
2000-2002	138	12
2003	180	16
1st Quarter 2004	133	12
2nd Quarter 2004	284	25
3rd Quarter 2004	308	27

Source: MORI



## Sample Profile: All Owners/Responsible and Empty

	Number	%
<b>Total</b>	596	100
<b>Local Authority</b>		
Chelmsford	56	9
Great Yarmouth	63	11
Huntingdonshire	33	6
Ipswich	78	13
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	30	5
Mid Bedfordshire	87	15
Norwich	43	7
Peterborough	81	14
South Norfolk	124	21
<b>Council Tax Band</b>		
A	176	30
B	147	25
C	122	20
D to H	151	25
<b>Time Void</b>		
Pre-2000	74	12
2000-2002	88	15
2003	102	17
1st Quarter 2004	60	10
2nd Quarter 2004	143	24
3rd Quarter 2004	129	22
<b>Property Type</b>		
House	376	63
Flat/maisonette	108	18
Bungalow	90	15
<b>With Commercial Premises</b>		
Yes	61	10
No	513	86
<b>Number of Rooms</b>		
1-3	178	30
4	130	22
5 or more	262	44

## Sample Profile (cont'd)

	Number	%
<b>Total</b>	596	100
<b>Condition</b>		
Good	293	49
Poor	175	29
<b>Mortgage</b>		
Yes	200	34
No	372	62
<b>Problems</b>		
Always/often	114	9
Sometimes	285	48
Never	176	30
<b>Services: Encourage</b>		
Any	252	42
None/blank	344	58
<b>Services: Prefer</b>		
Any	232	39
None/blank	364	61

Source: MORI

## Statistical Reliability

The statistical reliability calculations shown below assume that the returned questionnaires are a representative sample; however, these calculations do not apply if the returned questionnaires are not a representative sample. Therefore, and given some of the small numbers involved, findings should be treated with caution.

It should be remembered that questionnaires were returned for a sample, not the entire population, of empty private properties. Therefore the figures obtained may not be exactly those if all questionnaires had been returned (the “true” values). However, the variation between the sample results and the “true” values can be predicted from a knowledge of the size of the sample on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which this prediction can be made is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” value will fall within a specified range.

The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample and sub-sample, with percentage results at the “95% confidence interval”.

<b>Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels</b>			
	<b>10% or 90%</b>	<b>30% or 70%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>±</b>	<b>±</b>	<b>±</b>
50	8	13	14
100	6	9	10
200	4	6	7
400	3	5	5
600	2	4	4
1,200	2	3	3

*Source: MORI*

For example, with a sub-sample size of around 600 completed questionnaires, where 50% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the “true” value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had returned questionnaires) will fall within the range of  $\pm$  four percentage points from the sample result; in fact the actual result is proportionately more likely to be closer to the centre (50%) than the extremes of the range (46% or 54%).

When the results are compared between separate samples and/or sub-groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be “real”, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one - ie if it is “statistically significant” - it is again necessary to know the total population, the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer, and the degree of confidence chosen. Assuming “95% confidence interval”, the differences between the two sub-sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below.

<b>Differences required for significance at or near these percentages</b>			
	<b>10% or 90%</b>	<b>30% or 70%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Sample sizes</b>			
50 and 50	12	18	20
50 and 600	7	11	12
100 and 100	8	13	14
100 and 200	7	11	12
100 and 400	7	10	11
100 and 600	5	8	9
200 and 200	6	9	10
200 and 400	5	8	9
200 and 600	3	5	6
400 and 600	2	3	3

*Source: MORI*

For example, if 42% of respondents in one LA give a particular answer compared with 58% in another, both with sub-samples of around 100 in a sub-sample of around 600, then the chances are 95 in 100 times that this 16 percentage point difference is significant (ie greater than 14 points), which could not have happened by chance.