



[Home](#) > [Business and industry](#) > [Business regulation](#)

> [Consumer rights and issues](#)

> [Choice on units of measurement: markings and sales](#)

[Department for
Business & Trade](#)

[Office for Product
Safety &
Standards](#)

Consultation outcome

Choice on units of measurement: consultation response

Updated 27 December 2023

Contents

[Summary](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Consultation responses](#)

[What we did with the consultation responses received](#)

[What the responses said](#)

[The government's response](#)

[Next steps – new guidance on use of imperial in markings and sales](#)



© Crown copyright 2023

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/choice-on-units-of-measurement-markings-and-sales/outcome/choice-on-units-of-measurement-consultation-response>

Summary

1) The UK has a long and proud history of using imperial measures and their use is closely associated with our culture and language. We commonly refer to our walks in miles, our fuel economy in miles per gallon and we buy our beer and milk in pints. Imperial units therefore continue to play a role in our everyday shared experience.

2) The government has analysed all consultation responses received and reviewed the arguments for and against expanding the use of imperial units in domestic consumer transactions. After careful consideration, the government has decided against any legislative changes at this time.

3) Whilst the government is not making any changes to the law, new guidance will be published to promote awareness of the current freedoms that exist to display imperial units, alongside a more prominent metric equivalent. A wider review of metrology legislation is being undertaken in line with the government's commitment to identify opportunities for reform of Retained EU Law. As the first step in this review we have announced our intention to update the specified sizes that prepacked still and sparkling wine can be sold in allowing both to be sold in 500ml and 200ml sizes and introducing a new 568ml 'pint' quantity.

Introduction

4) A review of units of measurement was announced in September 2021 with the aim of exploring how to give more choice to businesses and consumers over the units of measurement they use for domestic trade, while maintaining that measurement information remains accurate and ensuring our measurement system best reflects the needs of British businesses and consumers.

5) UK law currently requires metric units to be used as the primary indicator for all trade purposes for the majority of goods sold by quantity. While imperial units can be used alongside metric units, the imperial markings must be less prominent than the metric. For example, the metric unit could be displayed in characters in a **bold font**. There are exceptions to this including the pint for draught beer or cider, the pint for milk in returnable containers, and the troy ounce for precious metals.

6) As part of the review of units of measurement, the government ran an early-stage consultation "Choice on units of measurement: markings and sales" from 3 June to 26 August 2022. The evidence gathered from this consultation has informed the government's plans for weights and measures

policy for consumer transactions.

7) This consultation sought to identify whether we should give greater choice to businesses and consumers over the units of measurement they use to buy and sell products. The consultation questions focused on potential changes to the current law to increase choice, how they would be best achieved and their potential impact.

Consultation responses

8) The consultation ran from 3 June to 26 August and we received 101,108 responses. 170 responses were considered as void, therefore, in total we analysed 100,938 responses. Responses were marked as void when they were either blank, duplicated, or had technical errors that prevented them from being viewed. Out of the responses we analysed, we identified 93,041 as being from consumers, 4,718 from businesses and 3,179 from academia, healthcare, government and trading standards, and other organisations.

9) Respondents submitted their responses to the consultation in various ways. 94,951 responses were received through an online form via a digital platform, 6,128 were received via email and 29 by post.

10) The consultation was published on GOV.UK on 3 June 2022 with an option to complete a response form via email. An online form was made available on 6 June 2022 on Citizen Space to provide an additional way for people to give their views. However, for 2 of the questions, the online form erroneously contained additional answer options not in the consultation document. To ensure consistency, the online form was updated to align with the original consultation document. All responses to questions were recorded and considered as part of the consultation.

11) All questions were optional to respond to, and answer methods were a mixture of pre-set tick boxes (via the online form) and free text boxes, allowing respondents to provide a full range of views. All comments and evidence were considered during analysis.

12) Twenty-five key stakeholders, representing business, consumer and trading standards associations, and large retailers, provided a direct response to the consultation. [\[footnote 1\]](#)

What we did with the consultation

responses received

13) Each individual response was carefully considered and all answers within a response were reviewed to assess the overall preference expressed in the entire response.

14) Due to the volume of responses to the consultation, it was decided that the most efficient use of government resources would be to first do a baseline thematic analysis of all responses to see what the general appetite for increased use of imperial units was and to consider arguments raised for and against legislative change in general.

15) Each response was coded based on the overall view and ideas raised within it, ensuring that all the points raised, from both multiple-choice questions and free text boxes, were accurately captured. Responses were put into one of four categories according to the overall preference expressed: status quo, more choice, purely metric and purely imperial.

16) The approach we adopted for the analysis was the same for all responses, whether they were received by online form, email, or post.

What the responses said

17) The results of our analysis showed that 98.7% of respondents were in favour of using metric units when buying or selling product, either as the primary unit of sale (maintaining status quo) or as the sole unit of sale (purely metric). 1.3% of respondents were in favour of increased use of imperial units when buying or selling products, either by increased choice between using metric and imperial units or moving to a purely imperial system.

18) The breakdown of responses into the 4 categories is as follows:

| Overall preference | Number of responses | Percentage of responses |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Status quo (keep metric as primary unit of measurement) | 81,867 | 81.1% |
| More choice (open to increased use of imperial measures) | 870 | 0.9% |
| Purely metric (completely metric system) | 17,798 | 17.6% |

| Overall preference | Number of responses | Percentage of responses |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Purely imperial (completely imperial system) | 403 | 0.4% |
| Total | 100,938 | 100% |

19) Of the key stakeholders we have had direct engagement with, 84.0% were against any further choice over units of measurement in sales. Of the 16.0% that were in support of further choice, the majority did so on the basis that a compulsory metric equivalent should always be provided, and others said that any change should not be mandatory for business.

20) A key theme that emerged from respondents who were opposed to change to the current units of measuring system was concern that increased choice over units of measurements could present increased costs to businesses and present barriers to international trade. This concern was shared across different respondent types, including both businesses and consumers.

21) Furthermore, respondents stated that a greater choice over units of measurement could increase confusion to members of the public who were not educated in imperial units. Other respondents suggested that having more than one primary system of measurement for buying and selling goods could make it harder for people to compare different products' value for money.

22) On the other hand, one argument raised by some who were in favour of increased use of imperial measures was that it could provide greater inclusivity for those who are more familiar with using imperial units. One stakeholder suggested that greater choice to businesses on whether they sell in imperial or metric units would reduce regulatory burdens.

The government's response

23) The government acknowledges the concerns many respondents expressed about possible changes to the current system used for units of measurement. Analysis of consultation responses shows that while a small minority would welcome greater choice and flexibility in the units used for domestic trade, the majority of respondents expressed limited or no appetite for increased use of imperial measures.

24) The government has considered all arguments for and against making legislative changes. This included points of view raised in email correspondence to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy before the consultation was launched, including, but not limited to arguments around the British tradition of using imperial measures, and that the current law is overly prescriptive and does not allow for freedom for choice. The importance of measurement accuracy, traceability and consistency was also considered, particularly in the context of consumer empowerment and promoting fair trade.

25) The government took the consultation analysis and all the considerations above into account in considering whether or not to make any legislative changes. Ultimately, it was decided that the arguments against making any changes, including arguments concerning consumer confusion, increased costs for businesses, and barriers to international trade, taken together with the overwhelming response against the increased use of imperial measures, outweighed the arguments in favour. Nonetheless, the government did give particular consideration to the argument that increased use of imperial units could provide greater inclusivity for those more familiar with them than metric. However, the government felt that, on balance, this concern could be adequately addressed through improved guidance to raise awareness of current freedoms to display imperial measures, rather than requiring legislative change. (See the “Next Steps” section below for further discussion of the government’s proposals for improved guidance.)

26) The government has therefore decided not to make any legislative changes at this time. As a result of this decision, it has decided that further analysis of which changes might be made, how they might be implemented, and the scale of their impact was unnecessary and not an effective use of public resources. Therefore, a full question by question breakdown of responses to each consultation question has not been prepared and is not included in this document.

Next steps – new guidance on use of imperial in markings and sales

27) Whilst the government is not making any changes to the law at this time, as stated above, imperial measurements remain a part of our culture and language, and we acknowledge that some respondents would welcome the opportunity to have more freedom regarding the units they purchase goods in.

28) To support this, we are publishing new guidance that will raise awareness of the current freedoms that exist to display imperial units alongside a more

prominent metric equivalent and encourage and support traders to consider their use. A wider review of metrology legislation is being undertaken in line with the government's commitment to identify opportunities for reform of Retained EU Law. As the first step in this review we have announced our intention to update the specified sizes that prepacked still and sparkling wine can be sold in allowing both to be sold in 500ml and 200ml sizes and introducing a new 568ml 'pint' quantity.

1. British Beer and Pub Association, British Chambers of Commerce, British Retail Consortium, British Soft Drinks Association, Builders Merchants Federation, Chartered Trading Standards Institute, Citizens Advice, Consumer Council Northern Ireland, Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association, Dairy UK, Federation of Small Businesses, Food and Drink Federation, Forum of Private Business, Fresh Produce Consortium, Institution of Engineers in Scotland, Nationwide Caterers Association, National Consumer Federation, National Craft Butchers, Tesco, The Gin Guild, UK Weighing Federation, Which?, Wine and Spirit Trade Association.

[↑ Back to top](#)

OG

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated

[© Crown copyright](#)