Economic and Social Data Service

English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA); Wave 1, 2002-2003 :

Teaching Dataset

ESDS Longitudinal

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Introduction to the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA)

The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) is a longitudinal study of ageing and quality of life among older people that explores the dynamic relationships between health and functioning, social networks and participation, and economic position as people plan for, move into and progress beyond retirement.

The main objectives of ELSA are to:
- describe health trajectories, disability and healthy life expectancy in a representative sample of the English population aged 50+;
- examine the relationship between economic position and health;
- investigate the determinants of economic position in older age;
- describe the timing of retirement and post-retirement labour market activity;
- understand the relationships between social support, household structure and the transfer of assets.

ELSA is the first UK study that has the range of topic coverage and sample size to enable detailed analysis of the ageing process.

The study itself is the result of a collaboration between University College London, the Institute of Fiscal Studies, and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). Other academic collaborators based at the Universities of Cambridge, Nottingham and Oxford provided expert advice on specific modules.

Funding for the first two waves of ELSA has been provided by the US National Institute on Aging, and a consortium of British Government departments, specifically: Department for Education and Skills, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department of Work and Pensions, HM Treasury, Inland Revenue, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Office for National Statistics.

The sample

The ELSA sample is representative of people aged 50 and over, living in private households in England. It was drawn from households that had previously responded to the Health Survey for England (HSE). The HSE is an annual cross-sectional household survey that collects a wide range of health data and biometric measures. The ELSA sample was selected from three survey years of the HSE (1998, 1999 and 2001). Households were included in ELSA if they contained at least one adult of 50 years or older in the household who had agreed to be recontacted at some time in the future. Within households there were three different types of individual who were eligible to be invited to take part in the study: core sample members, younger partners and new partners. These may be further described as:

- Core sample members (C1CM): these were individuals living within the household at the time of the HSE interview and were born on or before 29 February 1952. This date was chosen to ensure all sample members were aged 50 or over at the beginning of March 2002, i.e. in time for the start of ELSA fieldwork. In order for the individual to be eligible, the interviewer had to ascertain that the individual was living in a

private residential address in England at the time of the ELSA interview. Eligible core members who responded to the ELSA survey formed the baseline sample for analysis.

- Younger partners (C1YP): these were the cohabiting spouses or partners of core sample members, who were living within the household at the time of the HSE interview and were born after 29 February 1952. In order for the individual to be invited to take part, the interviewer had to ascertain that the 'younger partner' was still living with an eligible core sample member. Younger partners were not part of the sample and should not be included in analyses. Their information has been collected in order to make the data as complete as possible.

- New partners (C1NP): these were the cohabiting spouses or partners of core sample members at the time of the first ELSA interview, who had joined the household since the HSE interview. Like younger partners, they were not part of the sample and should not be included in analyses. Their information has been collected in order to make the data as complete as possible.

People who had joined the household of a sample member since the HSE interview were only invited to take part in an interview if they were the cohabiting spouse/partner of a core sample member, regardless of their age. New household members who were over 50 years old (born on or before 29th Feb 1952) but were not known at the time of the HSE interview could not become core sample members.

These three types of respondent can be identified using the FINSTAT variable.

Access to the main ELSA data

The main ELSA data are available via the UK Data Archive as SN 5050. It is envisaged that future waves of the study will be made available via this study number. Further information about the methodology of ELSA can be found in the ELSA user documentation. There is also an FAQ for ELSA, prepared by the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) Longitudinal function (http://www.esds.ac.uk/longitudinal/).

How to obtain the ELSA teaching dataset

The LSYPE teaching dataset can be obtained from the UK Data Archive by ESDS registered users and is subject to UK Access Management Federation (UKAMF) authentication. Further information can be found on the ESDS how to access data web page.

The teaching dataset is available in two proprietary formats: SPSS and STATA. The dataset is also made available in tab-delimited format.

The dataset can also be accessed via the ESDS Nesstar server – http://nesstar.esds.ac.uk/webview/index.jsp. See **Appendix C** for further details.

Data and variables within the dataset

The ELSA teaching data file contains information obtained from individual interviews and self-completion questionnaires from all 12,100 participants. The individual interview comprised the following twelve modules:

- household demographics (variables prefixed DH);
- individual demographics (DI);
- health (HE);
- social participation (SP);
- work and pensions (WP);
- income and assets (IA);
- housing (HO);
- cognitive function (CF);
- expectations (EX);
- psycho-social health (PS);
- final questions (FQ);
- self-completion (SC).

The teaching dataset contains selected variables from each of these modules, with the exception of household demographics. In total there are 408 variables on the dataset. A full data dictionary, listing all the variables, values and their labels, is provided in the documentation file, elsa_sampler_UKDA_Data_Dictionary.rtf, that accompanies this study.

Please note that the teaching dataset does not include Wave 0 (Health Survey for England) data; nor does the data file contain a unique identifier that would allow the file to be merged with other ELSA files.

Missing values within the dataset

Many variables within the teaching dataset have values of −9 through -1. These are referred to as 'missing values'. Missing values are used to represent the variety of situations where respondents did not provide data in response to questions or where a variable could not be computed.

In the case of ELSA, for most questions the following missing values apply:

-1 Not applicable
-8 Don't know
-9 Refusal

For some questions, a response of 'don't know' or 'refusal' was not permitted. This is indicated in the questionnaire. Note also that some missing data in the SPSS file is denoted by a dot (.) – see information on missing values in the SPSS and STATA dataset below.

For various reasons, some respondents did not complete the questionnaire. Where possible, for these 'partial' interviews, the questions that were not asked were coded as −1 (not applicable).

It is often useful to run frequencies on the variables as a first stage in any analysis to examine the distribution of responses and the proportion of −9 through -1 answers. Within this dataset you should generally exclude missing values in your analysis because the question is not relevant to these cases. However, this is not always the case – you may, for example, have a specific interest in the 'Don't know' responses.

Missing values have been dealt with slightly differently within the two versions of the teaching datasets.

Missing values in the SPSS teaching dataset (elsa_sampler.por)
The SPSS teaching dataset has all −9 through −1 responses set as missing values.

Missing values in the STATA teaching dataset (elsa_sampler.dta)
The STATA teaching dataset includes all −9 through −1 responses as valid responses. STATA has only one code for missing data denoted by a dot (.). You can turn the −9 through −1 values (or any value) into missing by using 'mvdecode'. For example to set −8 to missing for the variable DIFAD you would type the following:

mvdecode difad, mv(-8)

Weighting the data

The variable in the dataset to be used for weighting is W1WGHT. Weights were calculated for core sample members only (including proxy and partial interviews), as this is the sample of interest. All other non-sample individuals that were interviewed (i.e. new and younger partners) have a weight of zero. When running weighted analyses, researchers should remember to exclude non-sample members in the unweighted base, if quoted. The data for partners can be used as characteristics of the core members (i.e. supplementary information).

Further information on weighting can be found in the main ELSA User Guide 1, pp. 4-6.

Please note that the variables AHSECLS2 and ASTRATIF – variables that should be used to calculate true standard errors when using the main ELSA files – are not included on this teaching dataset.

APPENDIX A

ELSA WAVE 1 TEACHING DATASET: CODEBOOK

A full data dictionary, listing all the variables, values and their labels, is provided in the documentation file, elsa_sampler_UKDA_Data_Dictionary.rtf, that accompanies this study.

APPENDIX B

RELATED RESOURCES

Online user guide for ELSA:
http://www.esds.ac.uk/longitudinal/access/elsa/l5050.asp

ESDS Longitudinal resources, including other teaching/sampler datasets:
http://www.esds.ac.uk/longitudinal/resources/introduction.asp

Learning and teaching resources:
http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingdata/learning.asp

APPENDIX C

ENGLISH LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF AGEING (ELSA):
NESSTAR SAMPLER USER GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Via the online Nesstar software tool, registered Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) users can now analyse, visualise, subset and download selected data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA). Frequencies can also be run on the data by users who are not registered with ESDS.

As with other Nesstar datasets, the sampler is in an accessible rectangular format and is therefore ideal both for exploratory research and as a tool for teaching on research methods courses.

This user guide provides worked examples from the sampler.

1. BEFORE YOU START …

1.1. What is Nesstar?

Nesstar is a web-based system for the dissemination of data. The program allows users to search for, locate, browse, analyse and download a wide variety of statistical data within a web browser. There is no need for specialised software – data held on a Nesstar server can be viewed by anyone with a web browser.

1.2 How do I access Nesstar?

The UK Data Archive, in its role as service provider for the ESDS, hosts a Nesstar server populated with a wide variety of survey datasets. The ESDS Nesstar catalogue can be accessed via http://nesstar.esds.ac.uk/webview/index.jsp.

2. GETTING STARTED

2.1 ESDS Nesstar

Please take a moment to familiarise yourself with the Nesstar interface.

Before you should be two main frames. The left frame has a light blue background. In the right frame who should see the welcome to the ESDS Nesstar Catalogue message.

2.1.1 The left frame

At the top of the frame are two folders (e.g. ⊞) called Research Datasets and Teaching Datasets – click on the Teaching Datasets folder to open up its contents.
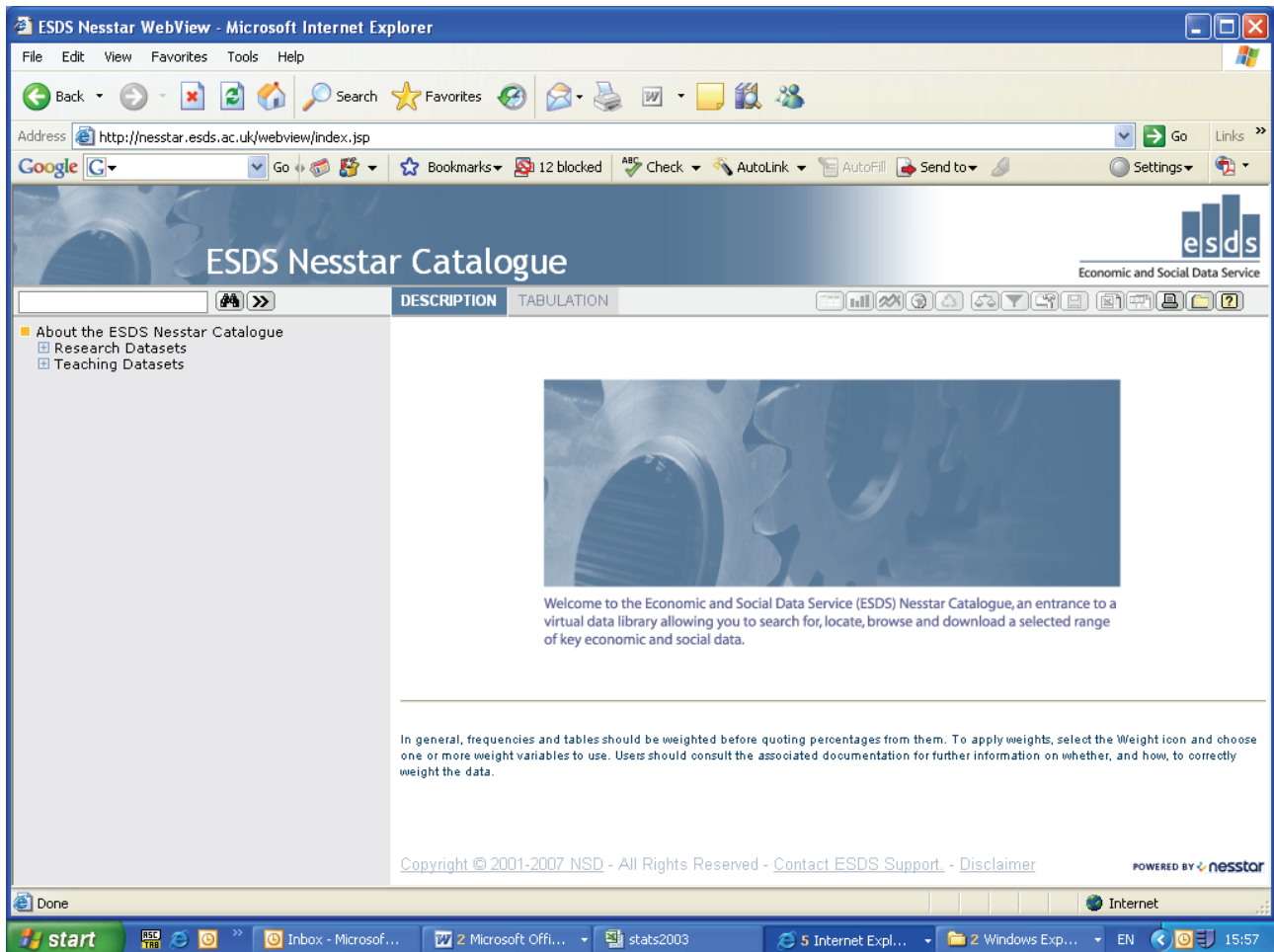
The left frame now contains a list of sub-folders (e.g. ⊞), each with the name of a particular survey series.
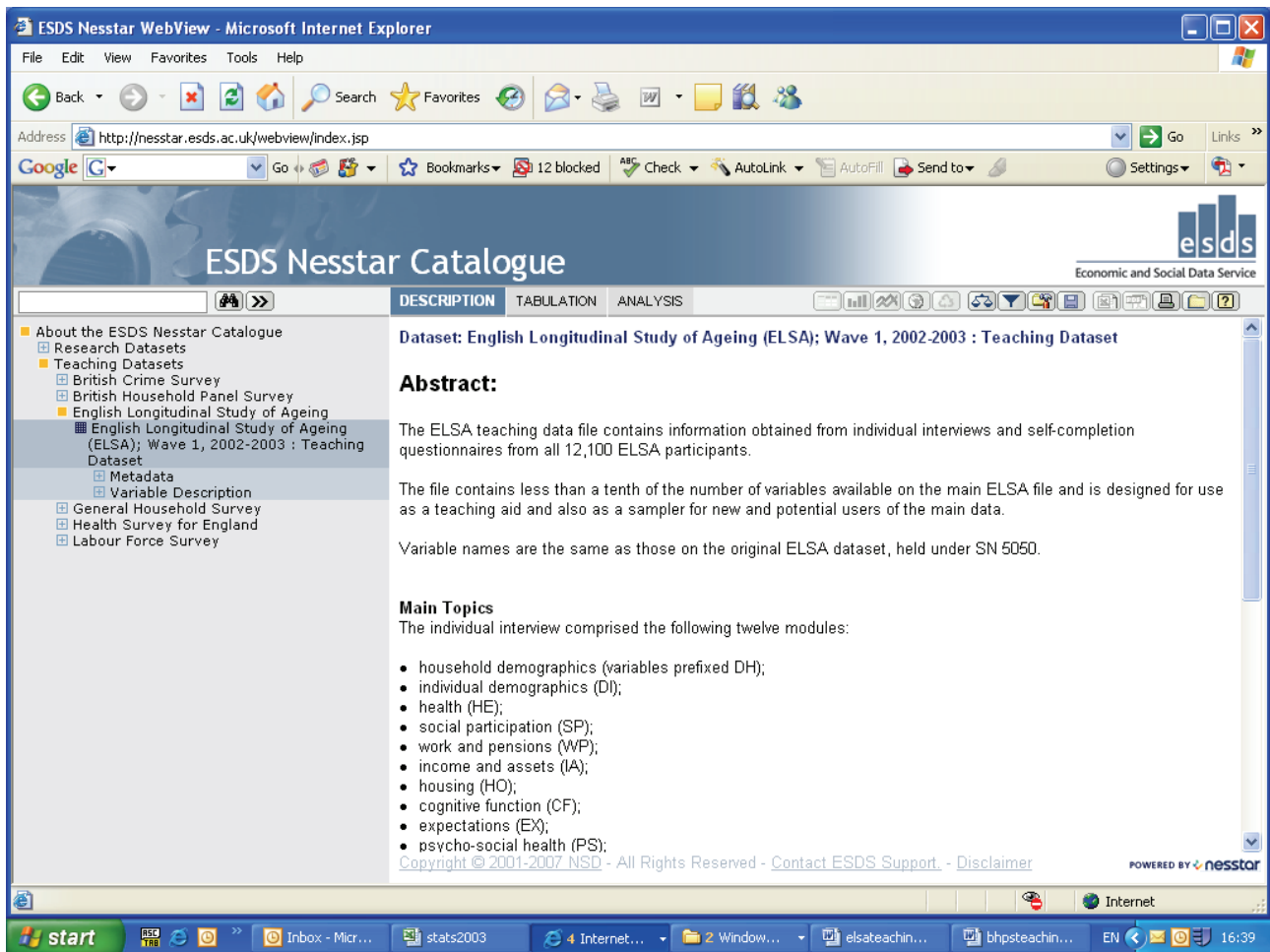
2.1.2 The right frame

When any action is performed in the left frame of the interface, the results are displayed in the right frame. We will see this when we come to browse the metadata and analyse the data.

3. THE ELSA SAMPLER DATASET

3.1 Becoming familiar with the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing sampler dataset

At http://nesstar.esds.ac.uk/webview/index.jsp, click on the Teaching Datasets folder and open up its contents. The list includes an ELSA teaching dataset, click on the icon (e.g. ▦) for that file.

You will be presented with two further sub-folders or 'trees': 'Metadata' and 'Variable Description'.

If you click on the Metadata folder you will open up two new folders: 'Study Description' and 'Data Files Documentation'. You should also notice that in the right frame, the survey's 'Abstract' has appeared.

3.2 The Variable Description tree

Open up the Variable Description folder, which is below the Study Description folder. The Variable Description tree houses a list of sub-folders. Each sub-folder contains a set of variables, grouped according to which survey module they fall into.
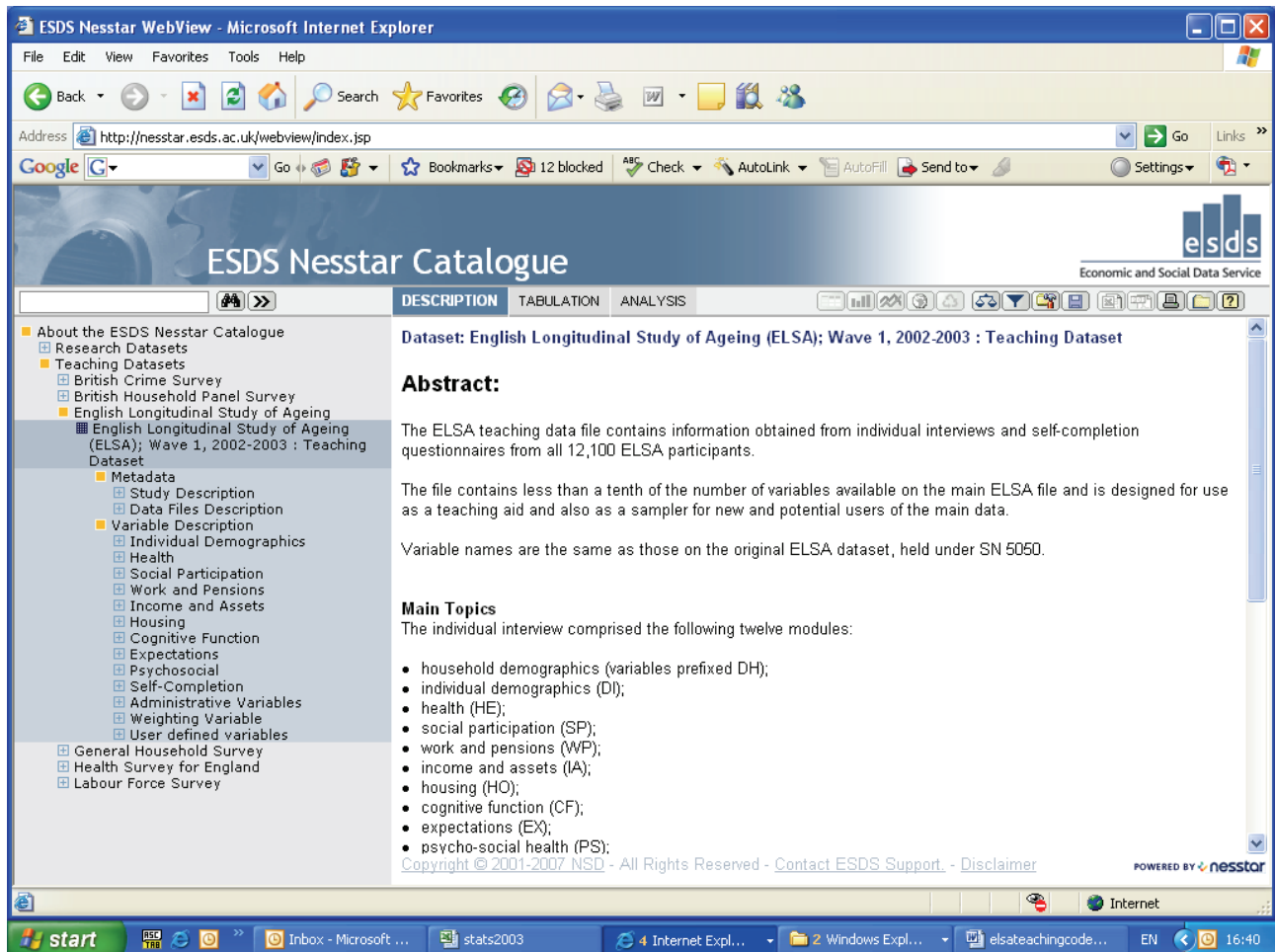
Click on the 'Social Participation' folder to view a list of the variables categorised under that topic. Now click on the text 'Did you look after anyone in the past week?'. Displayed in the right frame you should now see the actual question asked in the survey and the possible responses to the question together with the coded value for each response and the respondent totals and percentages.

4. EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

4.1 Cross-tabulations

In addition to requesting frequencies, Nesstar allows registered ESDS users to conduct cross-tabulations.

To conduct a cross-tab you first need to click on the 'Tabulation' tab at the top of the right frame. In the right frame, a template for a table will then appear with instructions on how to populate the table. Follow these instructions by moving to the list of variable group folders in the left frame and opening the 'Cognitive Function' folder. Click on the variable 'How would you rate your memory at the present time?'.
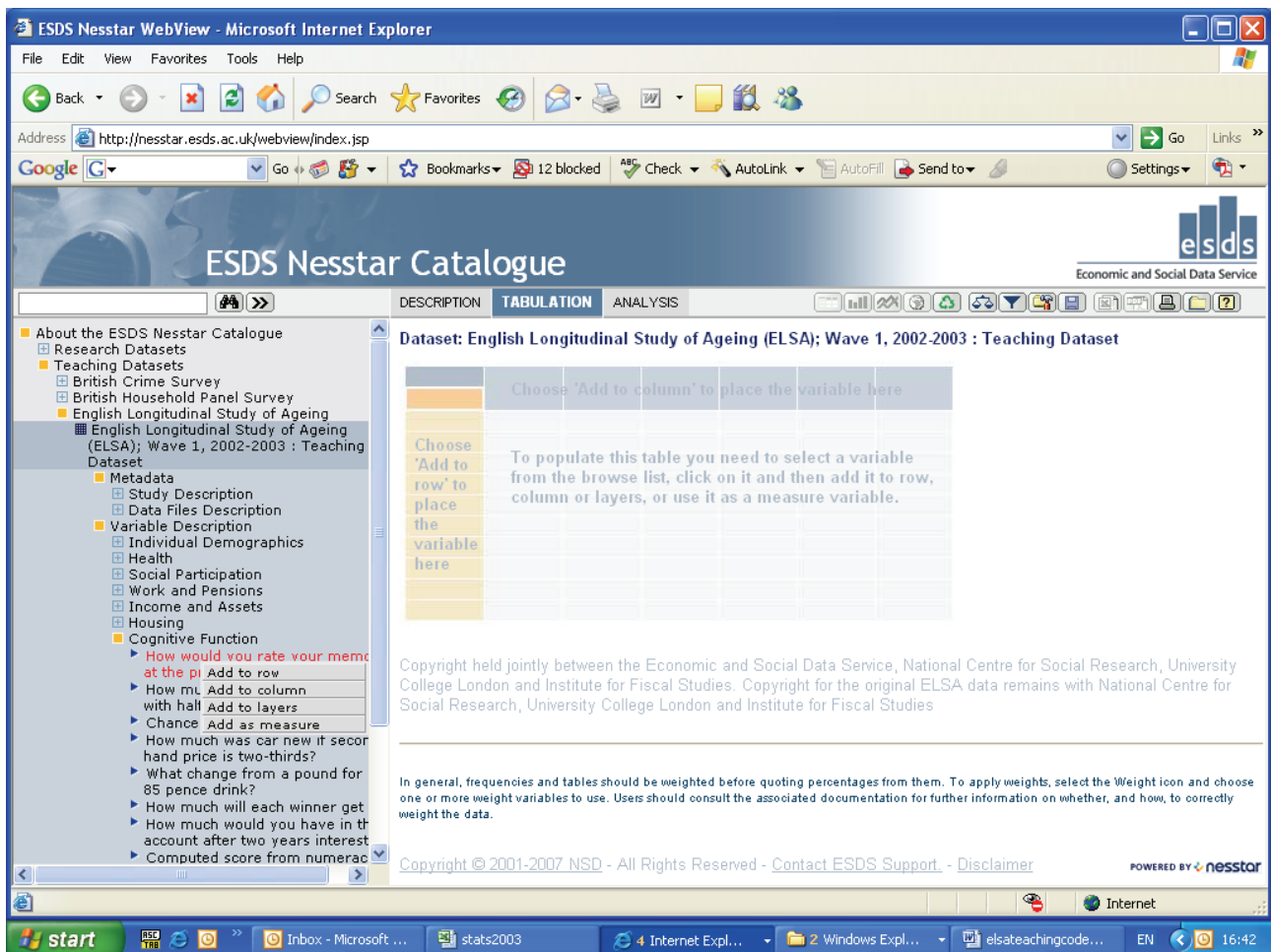
The variable should now be highlighted in red and a drop-down box should appear alongside it. Click on 'Add to row'.

At this point, you will be prompted to enter your institution (or UK Data Archive) username and password (see earlier section on 'How to obtain the ELSA teaching dataset'). Having entered your details, a frequency table for the variable 'How would you rate your memory at the present time?' should be displayed in the right frame.

To create a two-way table, select a second variable in precisely the same manner as you chose the first. For example, highlight 'Subject's sex' from the 'Administrative Variables' folder and this time 'Add to column'. The results for the two-way table should appear in the right frame.

4.2 Weighting data

The Nesstar software allows users to weight their results. To apply a weight, the user should click on the 'Weight' button (⚖, at the top of the right frame) and then select the appropriate weight by clicking it across to the 'Selected Variables' box. Click the 'Ok' button to view the results with the selected weight applied.
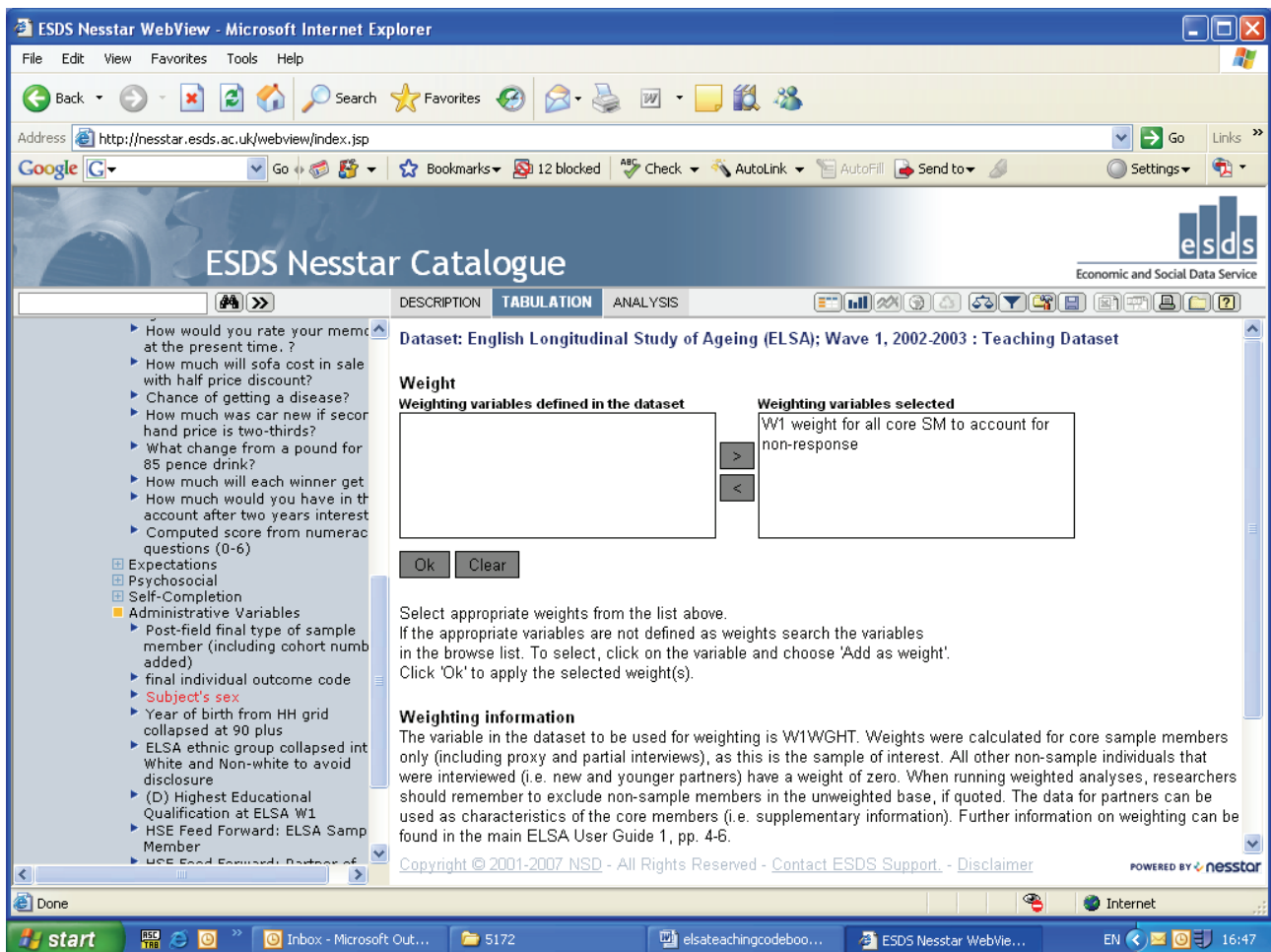
4.3 Subsetting data

Nesstar users may also subset the data that they analyse. For example, to select male respondents only for analysis, click on the 'Subset' button ( ). Employing the same strategy used to select variables for frequencies and cross-tabs, select the variable 'ELSA ethnic group collapsed into White and Non-white to avoid disclosure' from the 'Administrative Variables' folder and click on 'Add to subset'. Next, highlight '1 White' in the right-hand box and then click on the 'Add' button. Click the 'Ok' button to view the results for white respondents only.

5. DOWNLOADING DATA

Having browsed and explored the ELSA sampler dataset within the Nesstar environment, users may download the dataset in order to undertake further analysis in their preferred data analysis software package.

To download the dataset, click on the 'Download' button ( ), select your preferred data format and then click 'Download'.
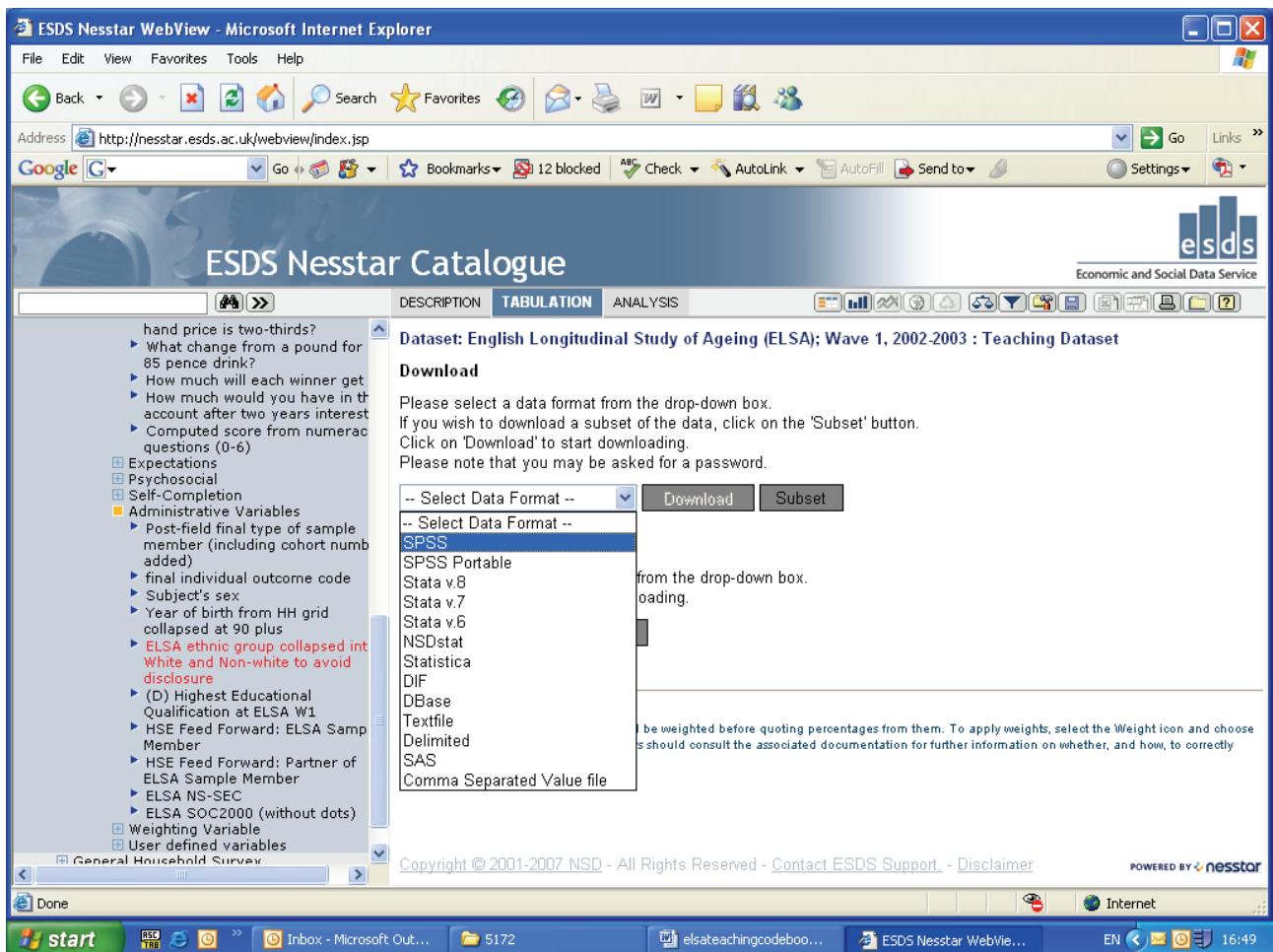
6. MORE ABOUT NESSTAR

A more complete guide to using Nesstar can be found at http://www.nesstar.com/download/documentation.html. Remember that to run cross-tabs and undertake other exploratory analysis beyond requesting frequencies, you will need to be registered with the ESDS (http://www.esds.ac.uk/).

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