# British Social Attitudes 2007

# *User Guide*

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This note provides information in brief about the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey. It accompanies the final version of the datafile (bsa07.sav). For further details about the surveys, see Stafford, R. *et al* (forthcoming), *British Social Attitudes 2006/2007: Technical Report*, London: National Centre for Social Research.

# 1    Overview of the survey

The surveys were conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). BSA's core-funding is provided by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, which is one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, and this was supplemented by grants from the Economic and Social Research Council, the Hera Trust, The Nuffield Foundation and The Leverhulme Trust. Various Government departments also supported modules in the 2007 survey: Department for Health, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and Skills, Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Transport.

# 2    Data collection methods

The fieldwork was conducted by NatCen. Interviews were conducted in the respondent's home, using a laptop computer. In order to increase the number of topics on BSA, four versions of the questionnaire were fielded, and respondents were randomly assigned to one of the versions. All respondents answered a core set of demographic and other classificatory questions and individual modules are then carried on either one, two, three or all four versions. In 2007, the face-to-face interview was designed to last about 68 minutes and was then followed by a self-completion questionnaire.

Fieldwork was carried out between June and September 2007, with a small number of interviews taking place in October and November. A summary of the response is as follows:

|  | Number | Lower limit of response (%) | Upper limit of response (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Addresses issued | 8888 | | |
| Out of scope | 873 | | |
| Upper limit of eligible cases | 8015 | 100.0 | |
| Uncertain eligibility | 254 | 3.2 | |
| Lower limit of eligible cases | 7761 | | 100.0 |
| Interview achieved | 4124 | 51.5 | 53.1 |
| **Interview not achieved** | 3637 | 45.4 | 46.9 |
| Refused[2] | 2888 | 36.0 | 37.2 |
| Non-contacted[3] | 287 | 3.6 | 3.7 |
| Other non-response | 462 | 5.8 | 6.0 |

The data file should be used in conjunction with the following documentation:

- Outline of the BSA questionnaire
- Documentation of the BSA questionnaire program (final version dated Jan 2009)
- BSA showcards (one set per questionnaire version)
- BSA self-completion questionnaire (one per questionnaire version)
- Address Record Form

# 3 Sample design

The BSA survey was designed to yield a representative sample of the population in Britain aged 18+. The sample of addresses was drawn from the Postcode Address File. At each address, the interviewer established how many occupied dwelling units it contained. If there were several, one was selected at random for interview (using a Kish grid and random numbers). The interviewer then established how many adults aged 18+ lived in the (selected) dwelling unit. If there were several, one adult was selected (using a similar procedure as that used for dwelling units). The unequal selection probabilities arising from these procedures are taken into account by the weighting.

# 4 Explanation of the dataset

The BSA questionnaire covered: Attitudes to health, social welfare, transport, constitution and devolution, education, respect and emotional support. Version A of the self-completion questionnaire included a module of questions about leisure time and sports, which were fielded as part of the *International Social Survey Programme*, of which the BSA series is a member.

# 5 Weighting the data

The datasets (in common with all surveys based on samples from the Postcode Address File) must be weighted to take account of differing selection probabilities. Simplifying slightly: households are selected with equal probability, but only one person in each household is interviewed for BSA. People in small households therefore have a higher probability of selection than people in large households and the weighting corrects for this.

Following some experimentation with the BSA 2004 dataset, we have decided to implement a more sophisticated weighting approach from BSA 2005 onwards. In addition to the selection weighting, the weights for BSA 2007 incorporate two components:

- Non-response weighting: Where information is available about both responding and non-responding addresses, this can be used in the weighting to reduce non-response bias. Information about non-responding addresses is available from two sources: census information about the area of the address and interviewer observation.
- Calibration weighting: this is designed to adjust the sample to the regional sex and age profiles of the population.

Obviously any change in procedures on a survey series like BSA risks disrupting the time-series. We have therefore carried out some comparisons of the frequencies produced using the old and the new weighting schema on the **2005** data. The results are as follows:

**A random sample of variables:** A random of sample of 53 variables were compared. Although there were small differences between the distributions produced by the old weights and the new weights, none of them were statistically significant at the 95% level.

**A selection of time-series variables:** 42 variables with particular time-series interest were selected and compared. Although there were small differences between the distributions produced by the old weights and the new weights, none of them were statistically significant at the 95% level.

**NatCen advice on the use of weights on BSA 2007**

The data must be weighted in all analysis. The new weighting scheme is superior to the old weighting scheme in that it reduces non-response bias. The new weights should therefore be used in all reported analysis. The datafile is not pre-weighted and the new weights must be applied using the SPSS command:

WEIGHT BY WtFactor.

However, when reporting time-series analysis, there is a small possibility that the change of weighting scheme could disrupt the time-series. Our tests show that there is unlikely to be many statistically significant differences in the frequencies produced by the old and new weights on any substantive variables. Some socio-demographic variables, however, do show small, but statistically significant, differences. This is particularly important in the case of age, as age is often related to attitudes. (Region, on the other hand, is rarely related to attitudes). In most cases where age is an important factor, people will have already taken this into account in analysis – e.g. by cross-tabulating variables by age or by including age as an independent variable in regressions. Hence the changes to the age structure of the sample is unlikely to change the conclusions to substantive analyses conducted in the past. We do not propose to go back and reweight past datasets.

However, as a precaution, our recommendation is that when reporting time-series analysis the 2007 figures should be rerun using the old weighting structure (OLDWT) to check that this does not present a radically different picture. The figures produced using the new weights (WTFACTOR) should still be the ones used in reporting, but any substantial differences should be mentioned in a note.

***Please note that the data must be weighted in all analysis.*** The file is ***not*** preweighted. Before running any analysis, please use the following SPSS command:

weight by wtfactor.

# 6    Socio-economic classifications

With the 2001 census, the Office for National Statistics have switched from SOC90 to SOC2000 for the coding of occupations. At the same time, they switched from the Social Class and Socio-Economic Group classifications to the new National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). The BSA data file contains the following variables based on the new classification:

|  | Respondent | Spouse/partner |
|---|---|---|
| NS-SEC operational categories | ROpCat | S2OpCat |
| NS-SEC analytic classes | RClass | S2Class |
| NS-SEC analytic classes (grouped) | RClassGp | S2ClassG |

Further information about these new classifications is available on the ONS web site:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/ns_sec/default.asp

**It is our advice that the new classifications should be used whenever possible. However, there are some time-series analysis where the old classifications may be needed, for example, analysis of changes in the role of class over time. For this purpose, 'best estimates' of the older classifications have also been included on the BSA datafile:**

|  | **Respondent** | **Spouse/partner** |
|---|---|---|
| Socio-Economic Group | RNSEG | S2NSEG |
| Socio-Economic Group compressed | RNSEGGrp | S2NSEGGp |
| Registrar General's Social Class | RNSocCl | S2NSocCl |
| Goldthorpe scale | RNGH | S2NGH |
| Goldthorpe scale compressed | RNGHGrp | S2NGHGrp |

# 7   Related publications

The results of the BSA survey are published in: Park, A., Curtice, J., Thomson, K., Phillips, M. and Clery, E (eds.) (2009) *British Social Attitudes: the 25th Report*, London: Sage.

# 8   Contact details

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