

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA) 2009

User Guide

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1 Overview of the survey

1.1 The *Scottish Social Attitudes* series

The *Scottish Social Attitudes* (SSA) survey was launched by the Scottish Centre for Social Research¹ (*ScotCen*, part of the National Centre for Social Research, the largest independent, not-for-profit social research institute in Britain) in 1999, following the advent of devolution. Based on annual rounds of interviews with around 1,500 people drawn using random probability sampling, its aims are to facilitate the study of public opinion and inform the development of public policy in Scotland. In this it has similar objectives to the *British Social Attitudes* (BSA) survey, which was launched by the National Centre in 1983. While BSA interviews people in Scotland, there are too few in any one year to permit separate analysis of public opinion in Scotland.

SSA is conducted annually² and has a modular structure. In any one year it will typically contain four or five modules, each containing 40 questions. Funding for its first two years came from the Economic and Social Research Council, while from 2001 onwards different bodies have funded each year's individual modules. These bodies have included the Economic and Social Research Council, the Scottish Government and various charitable and grant awarding bodies, such as the Nuffield Foundation and Leverhulme Trust.

1.2 The 2009 Survey

The 2009 survey contained modules of questions on:

- Government and public services in Scotland (funded by the Scottish Government Office of the Chief Researcher from 2004-2007 and again in 2009)
- Anti-social behaviour (funded by the Scottish Government)
- What makes somewhere a good place to live, with a particular focus on the importance of greenspace (funded by the Scottish Government)
- Drugs and recovery from problem drug use (funded by the Scottish Government),
- National identity, in collaboration with David McCrone and Frank Bechhofer of the University of Edinburgh (funded by the Leverhulme Trust)
- Escape places and violence (funded by NHS Health Scotland), and
- Constitutional change (self-funded by ScotCen).

¹ The Scottish Centre for Social Research was formed in February 2004 as the result of a merger between The National Centre's existing organisation within Scotland and Scottish Health Feedback, an independent research consultancy.

2 Data collection methods

2.1 Sample design

The survey is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over, living in Scotland. The sample frame is the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of postal delivery points compiled by the Post Office. The detailed procedure for selecting the 2009 sample was as follows:

- I. 102 postcode sectors were selected from a list of all postal sectors in Scotland, with probability proportional to the number of addresses in each sector for addresses in urban areas and a probability of twice the address count for sectors in rural areas (i.e. the last 3 categories of the Scottish Government's 6 fold urban-rural classification). Prior to selection the sectors were stratified by Scottish Government urban-rural classification³, region and percentage of household heads recorded as being in non-manual occupations (SEG 1-6 and 13, taken from the 2001 Census).

- II. 30 addresses were selected at random from each of these 102 postcode sectors

Interviewers called at each selected address and identified its eligibility for the survey. Where more than one dwelling unit was present at an address, all dwelling units were listed systematically and one was selected at random using a computer generated random selection table. In all eligible dwelling units with more than one adult aged 18 or over, interviewers had to carry out a random selection of one adult using a similar procedure.

2.2 Fieldwork

1. Fieldwork for the 2009 survey ran between late April and early September 2009. An advance letter was sent to all addresses and was followed up by a personal visit from a ScotCen interviewer. Interviewers were required to make a minimum of 6 calls at different times of the day (including at least one evening and one weekend call) in order to try and contact respondents. All interviewers attended a one day briefing conference prior to starting work on the study.

² With the exception of 2008. Annual sweeps took places from 1999 to 2007 and again in 2009 and 2010. 2010 data will be available in Autumn 2011...

³ See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/29152642/7> for details.

2. Interviews were conducted using face-to-face computer-assisted interviewing (a process which involves the use of a laptop computer, with questions appearing on screen and interviewers directly entering respondents' answers into the computer). All respondents were asked to fill in a paper self-completion questionnaire which was either collected by the interviewer or returned by post. Table 1 (below) summarises the response rate and the numbers completing the self-completion questionnaire in 2009.

2.3 Response rates

The Scottish Social Attitudes survey involves a face-to-face interview with respondents and a self-completion questionnaire, completed by around nine in ten of these people (89% in 2009). The numbers completing each stage in 2009 are shown in Table 1. See Given and Ormston (2006) for details of the 2005 survey⁴, Cleghorn, Ormston and Sharp (2007)⁵ for the 2006 survey and Ormston (2008) for the 2007 survey⁶.

Table 1: 2009 Scottish Social Attitudes survey response

	No.	%
Addresses issued	3060	
Vacant, derelict and other out of scope ¹	358	11.7
Achievable or 'in scope' ¹	2702	
Unknown eligibility ²	49	1.8
Interview achieved	1482	54.8
Self-completion returned	1320	48.9
Interview not achieved	1220	44.7
<i>Refused</i> ³	817	30.2
<i>Non-contacted</i> ⁴	188	7.0
<i>Other non-response</i> ⁵	166	6.1

Notes to table

1 This includes empty / derelict addresses, holiday homes, businesses and institutions.

2 'Unknown eligibility' includes cases where the address could not be located, where it could not be determined if an address was residential and where it could not be determined if an address was occupied or not.

3 Refusals include refusals prior to selection of an individual, refusals to the office, refusal by the selected person, 'proxy' refusals made by someone on behalf of the respondent and broken appointments after which a respondent could not be re-contacted.

4 Non-contacts comprise households where no one was contacted after at least 6 calls and those where the selected person could not be contacted.

5 'Other non-response' includes people who were ill at home or in hospital during the survey period, people who were physically or mentally unable to participate and people with insufficient English to participate.

⁴ Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/05122049/0>

⁵ Cleghorn, N., Ormston, R. and Sharp, C. (2007) *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2006 core module: technical report*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research

⁶ Ormston, R (2008) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2007 Core Module Report 1: Attitudes to Government in Scotland* Scottish Government Social Research,

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/05/16095134/0>

3 Analysis variables

Most of the analysis variables used in SSA reporting are taken directly from the questionnaire and to that extent are self-explanatory. These include age, sex, household income, and highest educational qualification obtained. The main analysis variables included in the dataset which require further definition are set out below.

3.1 The Scottish Household Survey six-fold urban-rural classification (urindsc2)

The 6-fold version of the urban-rural classification is included on the dataset (urindsc2). Areas in this version are classified as follows:

	Area type	
1	Large Urban	Settlements over 125,000 population (Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh)
2	Other Urban	Other settlements over 10,000 population
3	Small, accessible towns	Settlements 3-10,000 population and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more
4	Small, remote towns	Settlements 3-10,000 population and more than a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more
5	Accessible rural	Settlements less than 3,000 population and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more
6	Remote rural	Settlements less than 3,000 population and more than a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more

3.2 National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC)

The most commonly used classification of socio-economic status used on government surveys is the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). SSA respondents were classified according to their own occupation, rather than that of the 'head of household'. Each respondent was asked about their current or last job, so that all respondents, with the exception of those who had never worked, were classified. The seven NS-SEC categories are:

- Employers in large organisations, higher managerial and professional
- Lower professional and managerial; higher technical and supervisory
- Intermediate occupations
- Small employers and own account workers

- Lower supervisory and technical occupations
- Semi-routine occupations
- Routine occupations

See variable R2Class. The remaining respondents were grouped as 'never had a job' or 'not classifiable'. Note that where respondents were not economically active or were retired, but their spouse or partner was currently economically active, their spouse/partners' job details were collected instead of the respondents. The variable 'P2Class' indicates spouse/partner NS-SEC.

3.3 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)⁷ 2009 measures the level of deprivation across Scotland – from the least deprived to the most deprived areas. It is based on 37 indicators in seven domains of: Current Income, Employment, Health, Education Skills and Training, Geographic Access to Services (including public transport travel times for the first time), Housing and Crime. SIMD 2009 is presented at data zone level, enabling small pockets of deprivation to be identified. The data zones are ranked from most deprived (1) to least deprived (6,505) on the overall SIMD and on each of the individual domains. The result is a comprehensive picture of relative area deprivation across Scotland.

The SSA09 dataset includes a variable (QSIMD09) that indicates which SIMD quintile the respondent lives in (with 1 being the least deprived and 5 being the most deprived) based on the SIMD scores for all data zones - not simply those included in the SSA sample.

3.4 Party identification

Respondents were classified as identifying with a particular political party on one of three counts: if they considered themselves to be a supporter of that party, if they said they were closer to it than to any other party or if they said they would be likely to support that party in the event of a general election.

⁷ See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/SIMD/Overview> for further details on the SIMD

4 Split sample

In SSA 2009 we included a module of questions asking about people's attitudes to violence. We explored the impact of the gender of the perpetrator and victim on responses by running a split sample experiment in which one half of the 2009 SSA survey sample was asked about scenarios involving primarily a man committing a violent act on another man and the other half is asked about a woman committing a violent act on another woman.

Respondents with odd serial numbers were asked questions Q489-493 [vstrg1m] to [vbagsn2m], which describe scenarios with a male protagonist. Respondents with even serial numbers were asked Q494-498, [vstrg1f] to [vbagsn2f], which describe scenarios with a female protagonist. The dataset includes derived variables [vstrg1c] to [vbagsn2c], which combine responses to the male/female versions of the questions.

5 Weighting the data

The weights applied to the SSA 2009 data are intended to correct for three potential sources of bias in the sample:

- Differential selection probabilities
- Deliberate over-sampling of rural areas
- Non-response.

Data were weighted to take account of the fact that not all households or individuals had the same probability of selection for the survey. For example, adults living in large households had a lower selection probability than adults who lived alone. Weighting was also used to correct the over-sampling of rural addresses. Differences between responding and non-responding households were taken into account using information from the census about the area of the address as well as interviewer observations about participating and non-participating addresses. Finally, the weights were adjusted to ensure that the weighted data matched the age-sex profile of the Scottish population (based on 2008 mid-year estimates from GROS). The main weight for use in analysis is 'Wtfactor'.

5.1 Additional weights for urban-rural analysis

Since fewer people live in remote areas than in accessible rural areas, the survey boosted the number of respondents in some areas within the classification more than others. This means that people in different types of rural areas had different chances of selection, and

thus it has been necessary to create additional weights for certain analyses of the rural boost of the sample.

For sampling an urban/rural variable based at postcode sector level was used. E.g. if 60% of postcodes in a postcode sector were in Remote Rural areas then the postcode sector and addresses within it were classed as Remote Rural for the purposes of stratifying the sample. However, some *individual* postcodes within that sector might in fact fall into Accessible Rural or another category. Therefore, this variable is not included in the final dataset for 2009. Instead, a new variable (Urindsc2) derived at the level of individual postcodes has been added on to the final dataset. This classifies respondents' addresses according to the 6-fold Scottish Executive urban-rural classification. If using this 6-fold urban/ rural variable the standard WTFACTOR weighting variable should be used.

The following 2-fold categorisations of urindsc2 are also included in the dataset (variable name in brackets):

Ministerial Urban/ Rural classification: categories 1-4/ categories 5,6 (**RURAL**)

Accessible/ remote classification: Categories 1-3 & 5/ categories 4,6 (**REMOTE**)

Accessible urban/ Rural or remote urban: Categories 1-3/ categories 4-6 (**URBANAC**).

If using ANY of these three variables, different weights should be used. These are:

WtRural (to use when analysing by RURAL)

WtRemote (to use when analysing by REMOTE)

WtUrban (to use when analysing by URBANAC)

5.2 Advice on analysis of time-series data

The new weighting scheme is superior to the old (pre-2005) weighting scheme in that it reduces non-response bias. The new weights (WTFACTOR) should therefore be used in all reported analysis. However, when reporting time-series analysis, there is a small possibility that the change of weighting scheme could disrupt the time-series.

Some analysis comparing frequencies produced using the old and new weights was carried out on SSA 2009. This suggests that it is unlikely that there will be many statistically significant differences between results produced using the old and new weights.

However, the 2009 dataset also includes a variable based on the old weighting structure (OLDWT). As a precaution, our recommendation is that **when reporting time-series**

analysis – and particularly when presenting ‘head line’ frequencies without more detailed analysis – **the 2009 figures should be rerun using the old weighting structure (OLDWT)** to make sure that this does not present a radically different picture. The figures produced using the new weights (WTFCTOR) should still be the main ones used in reporting.

6 Documentation

The documentation has been organised into the following sections

- Interview (contains the CAPI and self-completion questionnaires and showcards)
- Data (contains the list of variables and derived variables and the SPSS syntax used to create derived variables)
- Project instructions (contains interviewer and coding instructions).

In previous years the derived variables were not created in SPSS and therefore the documentation contained the specification given to the project programmer. From 2009 onward the derived variables will be run in SPSS and the syntax provided as part of the data documentation.

7 SSA 2009 dataset

The SSA 2009 dataset consists of one SPSS file

SSA09.sav	records 1482	variables 675
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The data file contains questionnaire variables (excluding variables used for administrative purposes and any variables which could potentially identify an individual respondent) and derived variables. The variables included in the individual file are detailed in the “Variable List” document in the data section of the documentation. Details of the question wording can be found in the questionnaire documentation.

8 Related publications

There have been several reports already published using the SSA 2009 data. These are:

Ormston, R, Bromley, C, Curtice, J, Reid, S, Sharp, C, Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen); *Development of survey questions on attitudes to violence and escape facilities*, FINAL REPORT, NHS Health Scotland 2010
<http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/4277.aspx>

Ormston, R; Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen); *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2009 Core Module: Attitudes to Government, the Economy and Public Services in Scotland*; Scottish Government Social Research 2010
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/15102525/0>

Ormston, R., Bradshaw, P, Anderson, S ; Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen); *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2009: Public attitudes to drugs and drug use in Scotland*; Scottish Government Social Research;2010
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/05/19111419/0>

Ormston, R, Anderson, S; Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen); *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2009: Local Issues, National Concerns: Public Attitudes to Antisocial Behaviour in Scotland*; Scottish Government Social Research 2010
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/17133110/0>

Reid, S, Curtice, J ; Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen)
Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2009: Sustainable Places and Greenspace; Scottish Government Social Research 2010
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/07/02134238/0>

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