



British Social Attitudes Open Teaching Dataset: Poverty and Welfare 2019

User Guide

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Version: 1.0

Date: August 2021

Contents

Introduction	3
Background to British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey	3
Survey design	3
Response rate.....	4
Overview of the BSA teaching dataset	4
Sample.....	4
Topics.....	4
Missing Values.....	4
Don't know and refusal	4
Not applicable.....	5
Survey methodology variables	5
Survey weight	5
Variables in the dataset	6
Variable list.....	6
Attitude scales.....	7
Syntax used to create the dataset	8

Introduction

Each year, the British Social Attitudes survey asks a representative sample of people questions about social, political, and moral issues. Starting in 1983, the BSA provides valuable insight into trends in public opinion used by policymakers, journalists and researchers.

This open teaching dataset contains data from British Social Attitudes Survey 2019, which interviewed 3,224 adults 18 and over. The data all comes from the [original study accessible via the UK Data Service](#); but to make the data accessible for teaching via an open data license, the dataset contains a subset of variables and simplified demographic variables.

This user guide provides

- background to BSA survey including details of the survey design.
- details of this open teaching dataset including a variable list, syntax used to create the dataset and full codebook.

Background to British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey

The *British Social Attitudes* (BSA) survey series began in 1983. One of the BSA's main purposes is to allow the monitoring of patterns of continuity and change, and the examination of the relative rates at which attitudes towards social issues change over time.

Each year the interview questionnaire contains 'core' questions, which are repeated in most years, and a wide range of socio-demographic questions. The remainder of the questionnaire is devoted to questions (modules) on a range of social, economic, political, and moral issues - some asked regularly, others less often.

The BSA is run by [NatCen](#), who have final responsibility for the coverage and wording of the annual questionnaire. However, funding for BSA comes a number of sources (including government departments, the Economic and Social Research Council and other research foundations). Further information about the series and links to publications may be found on the NatCen Social Research [British Social Attitudes](#) website.

Survey design

The BSA questionnaire normally comprises two parts, one administered face-to-face and one for self-completion.

The British Social Attitudes survey 2019 is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over. The sampling frame for the survey is the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of addresses (or postal delivery points) compiled by the Post Office. For practical reasons, the sample is confined to those living in private households. People living in institutions (though not in private households at such institutions) are excluded, as are households whose addresses were not on the PAF.

The sampling method involved a multi-stage design involving the selection of postcode sectors (clustering), which are first stratified by region, population density and the

percentage of owner-occupiers. Within each postcode sector, addresses are selected first and then an individual at each address.

In 2019 the sample for the British Social Attitudes survey was split into four equally-sized parts (each part still being nationally representative in its own right). Each part was asked a different version of the questionnaire (version A, B, C, D). As a result, some questions were asked to the full sample and others to only a random quarter, half or three quarters of the sample.

Response rate

In 2019, NatCen interviewed 3,224 adults 18 and over, which was a response rate of between 44.3% and 44.8%.¹

Overview of the BSA teaching dataset

Sample

The open dataset contains all 3, 224 cases from the original study.

Topics

The open dataset contains variables covering the following topics:

- views about poverty
- interest in politics and party identification
- trust in the government and government spending
- attitude scales: left-right ideology, libertarian and authoritarian scale and welfarism scale
- and many demographic variables

A full list of variables can be found below.

Missing Values

Don't know and refusal

When asked a question, survey participants may respond 'do not know' or refuse to answer. Such responses are recorded using specific codes, often something distinctive compared to other values such 99 or 999.

To help with analysis of this dataset, 'not answered', 'don't know' and 'can't choose' values are pre-set as missing values in the SPSS and Stata versions.

¹ Response is calculated as a range. The lower limit includes addresses that may have ineligible, for example, where it was not clear if the address was residential or commercial. Where it was not clear, the lower limit calculation assumes the address was eligible. Conversely, the upper limit assumes such cases are ineligible, and therefore excludes from the calculation of the response rate.

Not applicable

The dataset also includes a not applicable category that has been set as missing. The not applicable category applies when a participant was not asked the question. In this case, there are three different reasons:

- not all questions are relevant to all participants
- the survey had a split sample with different versions of the questionnaire in use and not all questions were included in each version
- some participants did not participate in a self-completion section of the survey

Survey methodology variables

Survey weight

Many survey datasets contain variables called survey weights. These variables are made by the data collectors for you to apply when analysing data. We use weights to make sample data better represent the population it's designed to reflect by adjusting for over and under-represented cases. Under and over-representation can result from the complex sampling methods used in large scale surveys and other issues including non-response.

In this teaching dataset, the survey weight variable **WtFactor** is for use when analysing the total sample. The weight accounts for unequal selection probabilities from the sample design (selection weight) and for non-response. A further element of the weight calculation is to adjust the final non-response weight so that the weighted sample matches the population profile in terms of age, sex and region.

For more information about the weight variable, see the [BSA 2019 User Guide](#).

Variables in the dataset

The open teaching dataset contains 26 of the original variables. The survey questions can be found in the questionnaire, which is included in the [documentation for the main study data](#). The documentation that accompanies this open dataset includes a codebook.

Variable list

Sserial	Archive Serial
WtFactor	Final BSA weight
RSex	Sex of respondent
RAgeCat	Age of respondent(grouped)<7 category> dv
eq_inc_quintiles	Quintiles of total equivalised household income, net of tax, NI, disability benefits and housing costs (missings removed)
RClassGp	NS-SEC analytic classes [respondent] 6 category dv
HEdQual3	Highest educational qual obtained - dv
Married	Marital status <4 categories> dv
ChildHh	Whether respondent has any children in household: dv
skipmeal	How often do you or other members of your household skip a meal because there is not enough money for food?: SC B, C
paptype	Newspaper readership (grouped)
SMNews	How often, if at all, do you read the news via a social media site, such as Facebook or Twitter?
Partyld2	Party political id (compressed) dv
Politics	How much interest do you have in politics?
SocTrust	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?
Spend1	Which would be your highest priority for extra govt spending?
Dole	Opinions differ about the level of benefits for unemployed people - Which comes closest to your own view
TaxSpend	If it had to choose, should govt reduce/increase/maintain levels of taxation and spending?
MuchPov	Some people say there is very little real poverty in Britain today - Others say there is quite a lot - Which comes closest to your view
Poverty1	Is someone in Britain in poverty if they had enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted
Poverty2	Is someone in Britain in poverty if they had enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they needed
NatFrEst	Out of every 100 people receiving benefits in Britain, how many have broken the law by giving false information to support their claim?
incdiffs	Differences in income in GB are too large?: SC B, C
welfare2	Welfarism scale (welfhelp to proudwlf) dv
leftrigh	Left-right scale (redistrb to indust4) dv
libauth	Libertarian-authoritarian scale (TradVals to censor) dv

Attitude scales

The variables left-right scale (leftrigh), Libertarian-authoritarian (libauth) and the welfarism scale (welfare2) are constructed from responses to a set of items. For each, items are invited to “agree strongly”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “disagree strongly”.

For left-right (leftrigh) the items are:

- Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off. [Redistrb]
- Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers. [BigBusnN]
- Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth. [Wealth]
- There is one law for the rich and one for the poor. [RichLaw]
- Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance. [Indust4]

For libertarian-authoritarian scale (libauth), the items are

- Young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values. [TradVals]
- People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. [StifSent]
- For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence. [DeathApp]
- Schools should teach children to obey authority. [Obey]
- The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong. [WrongLaw]
- Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards. [Censor]

For welfarism scale (welfare2), the items are:

- The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other. [WelfHelp]
- The government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes. [MoreWelf]
- Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one. [UnempJob]
- Many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help. [SocHelp]
- Most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another. [DoleFidl]
- If welfare benefits weren’t so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet. [WelfFeet]
- Cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people’s lives. [DamLives]
- The creation of the welfare state is one of Britain’s proudest achievements. [ProudWlf]

You can read more about how NatCen create the scales in the [User Guide that comes with the main survey](#).

Syntax used to create the dataset

```
GET "UKDA-8772-spss\spss\spss25\bsa19_for_ukda.sav".
```

*Select variables.

```
SAVE OUTFILE "BSA2019_Poverty_Open.sav"  
/Keep Sserial WtFactor RSex RAgecat eq_inc_quintiles RClassGp  
HEdQual3 Married ChildHh skipmeal paptypes SMNews PartyId2 Politics  
SocTrust Spend1 Dole TaxSpend MuchPov Poverty1 Poverty2 NatFrEst  
incdiffs welfare2 leftrigh libauth.
```

```
Get "BSA2019_Poverty_Open.sav".
```

*Combine -2 and -1 into one category of not applicable.

```
RECODE RSex ChildHh Married skipmeal SMNews Politics SocTrust Spend1 Dole TaxSpend SMNews  
MuchPov Poverty1 Poverty2 incdiffs (-2=-1).  
EXECUTE.
```

*Fix variable measurement.

```
Variable level skipmeal incdiffs RAgeCat (ordinal).  
Variable level libauth welfare2 leftrigh Sserial WtFactor (SCALE).
```

*Set missing values.

```
MISSING VALUES RSex ChildHh Married skipmeal Politics SocTrust Dole TaxSpend MuchPov Poverty1 Poverty2  
incdiffs welfare2 leftrigh libauth(-1,8,9).  
MISSING VALUES RAgeCat PartyId2 (-1,-2,8).  
MISSING VALUES eq_inc_quintiles (-1).  
MISSING VALUES RClassGp paptypes (-1,8).  
MISSING VALUES HEdQual3 (8).  
MISSING VALUES Married (-1,-2,9).  
MISSING VALUES Spend1 SMNews (-1,98,99).
```

```
SAVE OUTFILE "BSA2019_Poverty_Open.sav".
```