

ScotCen

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Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2021/22

User Guide

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA) 2021

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 ScotCen Social Research¹ in 1999, following the advent of devolution. Based on annual rounds of interviews with around 1,200-1,500 people drawn using probability sampling, it aims 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 ScotCen's parent organisation, NatCen Social Research, in 1983. While BSA interviews people in Scotland, there are usually 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 a range of modules on different topics (a full module is considered to be 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, NHS Health Scotland, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and various charitable and grant awarding bodies, such as the Nuffield Foundation and Leverhulme Trust.

1.2. The 2021/22 Survey

The 2021/22 survey contained modules of questions on:

- Attitudes to Government
- Attitudes towards Scotland's handling of the coronavirus pandemic
- Attitudes towards accessing healthcare services digitally
- Attitudes towards people with problem drug use
- Attitudes to the EU, Brexit and Scottish Independence

Each of these modules was funded by the Scottish Government.

¹ In 2012 the Scottish Centre for Social Research became ScotCen Social Research.

² With the exception of 2008 and 2018. Annual sweeps took places from 1999 to 2007 and again from 2009 to 2017 and in 2019. All 2019 data will be available at the UK Data Archive by May 2021.

2. Data collection methods

2.1. Sample design

From 1999 to 2015, the survey was conducted with adults aged 18 or over. For the first time in 2016, the age range for the survey was extended to include 16 and 17 year olds to reflect the lowering of the age limit for voting in Scottish elections.

The survey is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 16 or over, living in private households in Scotland. The sample frame is the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of postal delivery points compiled by the Post Office. Due to the change in survey mode for SSA 2021/22 from face-to-face to push-to-telephone, the sampling design was adjusted. Without face-to-face fieldwork, it was not necessary to cluster the sample. Instead, a stratification design was implemented to over-sample more rural areas and the most deprived SIMD 2020 quintile. The detailed procedure for selecting the 2021/22 sample was as follows:

- i. The sampling frame was first divided into twelve sampling strata as listed below. These were based on Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 quintiles and the Scottish Government's 6-fold urban-rural classification³.

Large Urban Area – SIMD quintile 1

Large Urban Area – SIMD quintiles 2 to 5

Other Urban Area – SIMD quintile 1

Other Urban Area – SIMD quintile 2 to 5

Accessible Small Town – SIMD quintile 1

Accessible Small Town – SIMD quintiles 2 to 5

Remote or Very Remote Small Town - SIMD quintile 1

Remote or Very Remote Small Town - SIMD quintile 2 to 5

Accessible Rural Area - SIMD quintile 1

Accessible Rural Area - SIMD quintile 2 to 5

Remote or Very Remote Rural Area - SIMD quintile 1

Remote or Very Remote Rural Area - SIMD quintile 2 to 5

³ See [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification](#) for details.

- ii. The number of addresses to be drawn from each stratum were calculated based on differential response rates to SSA 2019 by SIMD quintile and urban-rural classification, with a target of at least 150 responses from each urban-rural category and SIMD quintile.

- iii. Invitations to take part were issued to the 21,619 addresses selected and any adult in the household was invited to opt-in to take part in the survey. Up to 2 eligible adults were able to take part per household. The total number of invitations issued consisted of a main sample of 11,071 addresses, a reserve sample of 3,129 addresses, and an additional sample of 7,575 addresses. An assumption was made, based on longstanding evidence from a range of previous face-to-face surveys which used PAF as a sampling frame, that 10% of addresses were ineligible to take part in this survey, as it is not possible with the survey methodology (opt-in approach) to ascertain eligibility for all issued addresses. Addresses that are ineligible or out of scope include: empty / derelict addresses, buildings under construction, holiday homes, businesses, other non-residential buildings (such as schools, offices and institutions), and addresses that had been demolished. Students were included at either their main term-time or their main out-of-term address.

2.2. Fieldwork

1. Fieldwork for the 2021/22 survey ran between 21st October 2021 and 27th March 2022. As this was the first time SSA had used this methodology and as a result of the ongoing circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic, there was some uncertainty around the likely response rates that would be achieved. Initially due to complete within two months, the fieldwork period was extended to five months due to issues with response and the need to issue additional sample to secure a minimum number of interviews.

2 A letter and information leaflet were sent to each address inviting up to two adults who were resident there,⁴ and aged 16 or over, to take part. The letter explained how potential respondents could opt-in by providing their telephone number either via secure online portal, email or contacting the survey freephone telephone helpline. Interviewers from ScotCen's Telephone Unit then contacted those who had opted in to conduct the survey interview or arrange a time to do so. Where possible, interviews were sought with two eligible members of each participating household. Up to two reminder letters were sent out to all households in the sample who had not opted in. Individuals were offered a £10 Love2Shop gift voucher for taking part.

3 All interviews were conducted over the telephone using computer assisted telephone 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).

4 Survey invitations were initially issued to 11,071 households. The sample size was set with the aim of achieving 1,200 interviews. It assumed that 10% of households would opt-in (the opt-in rate), that 90% of opted-in households would go on to complete an interview (the response rate) and that enough second interviews would be achieved across all households to deliver an average rate of 1.22 interviews per achieved household (the per household interview/PHI rate)⁵. Due to a lower than anticipated opt-in rate, response rate and per household interview rate, after 6 weeks of fieldwork a reserve sample of 3,129 cases was issued. Whilst the opt-in rate marginally improved, response rate and PHI rate remained lower than expected. Thus, to fully assure an acceptable number of interviews, a further reserve of 7,575 address was issued.

5 After the intended two-month fieldwork period had lapsed due to lower than expected response rates, in an attempt to improve the opt-in rate, an additional mailing was issued to households in the original sample who had neither opted-in nor opted-out or had opted in but could not be reached to do the survey. This letter offering an increased incentive (£20 gift voucher) for taking part. The same was offered to those who had opted-in but could not be reached by the telephone interviewers. This additional mailing resulted in 173 interviews – 15% of the total achieved – which, whilst a significant increase, was not enough to avoid issuing the additional reserve sample

⁴ Only one adult was able to opt-in per household, although they were informed that two adults can take part. Once the opt-in adult completed the interview they were asked if any other adults were able to take part or arrange a time to take part in the survey.

2.3. Response rates

Of the addresses issued and assumed eligible, 7% opted in. The overall response rate among opted-in households was 77%. Table 1 (below) summarises the opt-in rate and response rate for SSA 2021/22.

	No.	% of eligible sample	
Addresses issued ¹	21775	100%	
Assumed vacant, derelict and other out of scope ²	2178	10%	
Achievable or 'in scope'	19598	90%	
Opted-in	1349	Opt-in rate (assumed ineligible included)	6.2%
		Opt-in rate (assumed ineligible excluded)	7%
	No.	% of opted-in households (1349)	
Total interviews achieved ³	1130	-	
Productive households	1043	77%	
1st adults in households who said another eligible adult lived in household ⁴	126	9.3%	
2nd adults in households who took part	87	6.5% (of opted-in households) (69% of households who said another eligible adult lives in household)	
Reasons for interview not achieved	No.	% of opted in household	
Refusals ⁵	49	3.6%	
Non-contact (household level) ⁶	197	14.6%	
Other unproductive ⁷	18	1.3%	

Notes to table:

¹These addresses were all sent a letter inviting them to opt-in to take part.

²This includes empty / derelict addresses, buildings under construction, holiday homes, businesses, other non-residential (such as schools, offices and institutions), and addresses that had been demolished. Based on previous face-to-face surveys which had used PAF as a sampling frame, it was assumed that 10% of addresses would fall into this category.

³The total interviews achieved is higher than the no. of productive households because up to 2 eligible adults were able to take part per household.

⁵ These assumptions were based primarily on figures from the Scottish Health Survey, which was delivering a similar approach, but also on a range of other UK push-to-telephone surveys.

⁴At the end of the interview the first adult in the household (generally the adult who opted-in to take part) was asked if there were any other adults (aged 16 and over) living at the address who could take part. If the respondent stated that there was another adult who could take part then the interviewer was either put through to speak to the second respondent or an appointment was booked to interview them at a different time. This can be compared to the number of second adults in the household who did take part.

⁵Refusals include any households who did not take part in the survey after having opted-in to take part including: 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.

⁶These are the number of households (out of those who had opted-in to take part in the survey) whom the Telephone Unit interviewers had not been able to make contact with during the fieldwork period. In total contact was made with 1276 individuals (who had opted-in to take part or for whom another adult they live with who had completed the interview had suggested they might like to take part) which is 82% of productive households interviewed.

⁷'Other unproductive' includes people who were not available during fieldwork which may have been for a variety of reasons (such as being ill at home or in hospital during the survey period or away for most or all of the fieldwork period), people who were unable to participate due to physical or mental health issues or where a language barrier made recruitment too difficult (despite some translation and interpreting services being offered). This also includes those who were contacted in error (where a wrong number had been given during the opt-in) and those deceased.

Table 2 below shows the achieved sample size for the full SSA sample (all respondents) for all previous years.

Table 2: Scottish Social Attitudes survey sample size by year

Survey year	Achieved sample size
1999	1482
2000	1663
2001	1605
2002	1665
2003	1508
2004	1637
2005	1549
2006	1594
2007	1508
2009	1482
2010	1495

2011	1197
2012	1229
2013	1497
2014	1501
2015	1288
2016	1237
2017	1234
2019	1022
2021/22	1130

3. Analysis variables

Most of the analysis variables used in SSA reporting are taken directly from the questionnaire which should be used in conjunction with this user guide. A selection of the key analysis variables included in the dataset are set out below.

Background and classification questions for use in analysis appear in the documentation under the following headings: household grid, newspaper readership, party identification, CASI and classification.

3.1. Individual demographic variables

- **Rspsx21** – Respondent sex
- **Ragecat4**, **Rage1624** or **Rage1629** – Respondent age (banded into 6 categories or 4 categories with bottom category either 16-24 or 16 to 29). As this is the fourth year 16-17 yr olds are included then the previous age bands starting at age 18 are included in the dataset if a direct comparison with previous years is required. These variables are **Ragecat2** or **Rage1824** or **Rage1829** – Respondent age (banded – 6 categories or 4 categories with bottom category either 18-24 or 18-29).
- **Hedband21** – respondent highest educational qualification (banded)
- **Incqurt2** – household income (quartiles) – nb this variable differs from the variable Incqurt, which was used in previous years up until 2010.
- **Reconsum** – working status (collapsed version)
- **Tenure3** – tenure of household (banded into Owner/Social Renter/Private renter/Rent free or squatting)

- **HIncDif4** – self-rated hardship (collapsed version) – nb in 2010 the answer options were changed.
- **Disnew4** – whether has a disability or long-term illness
- **Children/Childsch** – whether has children (aged 0-17)/school aged children (4-15) in household or not
- **HHTypeB** – banded household type (single person household, 1 adult with children, 2 or more adults with children, 2 adults with no children, 3 adults with no children)
- **MarStat** – respondents’ marital/relationship status

3.2. Party identification, political interest and national identity

- **Politics or politic2** – Interest in politics (politic2 = grouped)
- **Party3** – Scottish party-political identification (grouped)
- **Idstrng**– Strength of party-political identification
- **Bestnat2** – national identity that best describes respondent (collapsed into Scottish/British/Other)
- **Natid** – National identity (‘Scottish not British’ to ‘British not Scottish’)

3.3. The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey two-fold urban-rural classification (urbanac)

The 2-fold version of the urban-rural classification is included on the dataset (urbanac). Areas in this version are classified as ‘urban’ (codes 1-3 below) and ‘rural’ (codes 4-6 below):

	Area type	
1	Large Urban	Settlements over 125,000 population (Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh)
2	Other Urban	Other settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 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

3.4 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 NSSEC2010AN. The remaining respondents were grouped as 'never worked and long-term unemployed' or 'not stated / not classifiable'.

3.4.Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)⁶ measures the level of deprivation across Scotland – from the least deprived to the most deprived areas. It is based on indicators in seven domains of: Current Income, Employment, Health, Education Skills and Training, Geographic Access to Services (including public transport travel times), Housing and Crime. SIMD 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 (6,976) on the overall SIMD and on each of the individual domains. The result is a comprehensive picture of relative area deprivation across Scotland.

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

3.5. Party identification

⁶ See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/SIMD/> for further details on the SIMD

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.

4. Weighting the data

The weights applied to the SSA 2021/22 data are intended to correct for potential sources of bias in the sample including differential selection probabilities due to deliberate over-sampling of rural areas and the most deprived SIMD quintile as well as non-response.

Due to the change in survey mode for SSA 2021/22 from face-to-face to push-to-telephone, the weighting design required adjustments. In 2021/22 it consisted of three stages:

- Selection weighting
- Modelling participation within households
- Calibration

The first stage, selection weighting, controlled for the effects of the sampling design. Issued cases received a weight adjusting for the differential probability of selection by sampling strata.

The second stage, within-household participation weighting, consisted of modelling the probability that households with more than 1 eligible adult would provide 2 responses. A logistic regression model was fitted for households with more than 1 eligible adult with number of responses as the outcome measure and variables associated with participation as the covariates. Area-level census variables and survey variables harmonised at household level were tested for association with number of responses per household. Stepwise logistic regression was used to fit the model for within-household participation.

The final model included the following variables: harmonised household income, quintiles of population density, quintiles of population aged over 55, and quintiles of population in a BME group. From this model, the predicted propensity to provide one or two responses was estimated for households with at least one eligible adult. Households with only one eligible adult were assigned a probability of 1. The within-household non-response weights were calculated as the reciprocal of these propensities.

The third stage was calibration weighting, which adjusts the weights so that characteristics of the weighted achieved sample match population estimates. The selection and non-response weights were combined and rescaled to the mid-year

population estimate for adults aged 16 or above in Scotland prior to calibration. The calibration variables used in 2021/22 were age by sex categories and SIMD quintiles. After calibration, the weights were trimmed at the 1st and 99th percentiles to remove outliers and improve weighting efficiency.

The final weighting efficiency for 2021/22 was 50% with an effective sample size of 565. The reduction in weighting efficiency compared with SSA 2017 and 2019 reflects the lower response rate and higher level of bias within the 2021/22 responding sample. The weighting adjustments were chosen in order to balance the requirements of maximising efficiency and minimising residual bias in key variables and those in the most deprived SIMD quintile.

5. Documentation

The documentation files provided with the dataset are organised into the following sections

- Interview questionnaire

The Technical Report for the Core Module is available here: [Scottish Social Attitudes 2021/22 - core module: technical information - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-attitudes-2021-22-core-module-technical-information/pages/1_to_4.aspx)

6. SSA 2021/22 dataset

The SSA 2021/22 dataset consists of one SPSS file.

The data file contains questionnaire variables from the sections of the 2021/22 questionnaire and demographic variables (excluding variables used for administrative purposes and any variables which could potentially identify an individual respondent) and derived variables. Details of the question wording can be found in the questionnaire documentation.

7. Contact details

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