

ScotCen

Social Research that works for society

Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2021/22

User Guide

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA) 2021/22

User Guide

1. Overview of the survey	1
2. Data collection methods	1
3. Analysis variables	4
4. Weighting the data	5
5. SSA 2021/22 Panel Dataset	7
6. Contact details	7

1. Overview of the survey

1.1. The Scottish Social Attitudes series

The *Scottish Social Attitudes* (SSA) survey was launched by ScotGen 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 ScotGen'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 Panel Survey

The 2021/22 Panel Survey contained questions on:

- Attitudes to Gaelic and Scots funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Attitudes to Sovereignty funded by the ESRC

2. Data collection methods

2.1. Sample design

ScotGen Panel members are recruited from the Scottish Social Attitudes survey (SSA), which interviews those aged 16 and over across Scotland (including the Highlands and

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

² With the exception of 2008 and 2018. Annual sweeps took place 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.

Islands). NatCen panel members are recruited from the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) which interviews those aged 18 and over across Britain (south of the Caledonian canal).

The SSA and BSA are high-quality, random probability surveys: this means that households and individuals are selected at random, and then considerable effort is expended by field interviewers to achieve an interview, including visiting the selected addresses multiple times.

For SSA in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019, fieldwork was conducted face-to-face as was BSA 2018 and 2019, with individuals selected at random. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BSA 2020 wave was conducted using a 'push-to-web' methodology, with up to two participants in a household allowed to take part and encouraged to take part online (although an opt-in telephone option was also available).

Those interviewed as part of the SSA / BSA were asked to join the Panel at the end of the SSA / BSA interview. Panel members recruited from SSA 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019 or BSA 2018, 2019 and 2020 (aged 18-24 only) who had not subsequently left the panel or become 'inactive' were approached to participate (no quotas were used) and the random probability design was therefore maintained. The sample design for the Scottish Social Attitudes survey (and therefore the ScotCen Panel which is recruited via the SSA survey) involves stratification and clustering.

Two of the features of the ScotCen panel that distinguish it from other methods used in polling are that it uses both web and telephone fieldwork to boost response rates and allow coverage of those without access to the internet, and that it uses a longer fieldwork period to ensure everyone has the opportunity to take part, not just those that are 'readily available'

2.2. Fieldwork

Fieldwork for the 2021 survey ran between 23rd September to 21st October 2021.

The fieldwork approach for the panel survey employed a sequential mixed mode design, where panel members were first invited to participate in the research online (using multiple points of contact by post, email and text) before being contacted by telephone if they had not yet completed the interview after two weeks (and if telephone numbers were available). In this way we were able to access those who do not have regular access to the internet or, for instance, those who may have literacy or language barriers.

A £5 love to shop gift card was sent as a 'thank you' to those who participated.

In contrast to conventional internet or telephone polls, the fieldwork period lasted for one month. This was to ensure that we could make repeated attempts to contact the selected individuals to try to secure their participation, rather than only including those that are 'readily' available.

Web fieldwork ran from 23rd September to 24th October and Telephone fieldwork ran from 30th September to 23rd October.

2.3. Response rates

This survey achieved a 39% response rate among the ScotCen panellists recruited from SSA invited to participate. When taking account of non-response at the SSA interview and then also at the point of recruitment to the panel, the overall response rate was 12%. A response rate of 79% was achieved among the NatCen panellists invited to participate. When taking account of non-response at the BSA interview and then also at the point of recruitment to the panel, the overall response rate was 9%.

Table 2:1 Survey response	From SSA	From BSA
Response to the survey		
Issued	3,091	206
Deadwood	415	0
Achieved	1,203	162
Survey response rate	39%	79%
Overall response³		
Issued (SSA / BSA)	11,490	1,925
Deadwood (SSA / BSA)	1,232	183
Productive (SSA / BSA)	4,781	649
Recruited to panel	3,544	401
Response rate (SSA / BSA)	47%	37%
Panel recruitment rate	74%	62%
Panel deadwood	47	2
Overall survey response rate	12%	9%

³ A sub-sample of panellists recruited from BSA were issued (those living in Scotland, and those aged 18-24 for from BSA20). In addition, BSA20 used a push-to-web methodology, meaning the number of eligible individuals per address and the number of deadwood addresses is not known. These response rates are therefore estimates, based on the assumption that response rates for BSA in Scotland and for people aged 18-24 were the same as for the study as a whole, that 10% of addresses issued were deadwood, and that an average household contained 1.9 eligible adults.

3. Analysis variables

Variables names indicate the original source of that variable:

- Variables preceded by Sep21 were asked in the 2021 Panel Survey
- Variables preceded by 'Cur' are demographic variables: the questions were only asked of respondents if we did not have this information from previous participation in our surveys – the variable is then a combination of that fed-forward data and the data obtained in this Panel wave for new participants
- Data preceded by 'ff' is fed forward previous face-to-face SSA/BSA surveys

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.

3.1. Demographic variables

- Latest sex
- Latest age category (grouped) (DV)
- Latest highest educational qualification achieved
- Latest NS-SEC analytic class (grouped) (DV)
- Latest class identity
- Latest main economic activity (grouped) (DV)
- Latest subjective income
- Latest household income (2021) (grouped)
- Latest equivalised household income (2021) (grouped) (DV)
- Whether respondent has long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability (DV)
- Latest tenure (grouped)
- Latest number of people in household (DV)
- Latest household type (DV)
- Latest relationship status (grouped)
- Latest whether respondent has any children (0-18) in the household (DV)
- Latest ethnic group (grouped) (DV)
- Latest frequency of internet use (grouped)

3.2. Other DVs

- Sep21_SSA21_Und_Sp_Gael – Whether respondent understands or speaks any Gaelic
- Fed forward – Libertarian-Authoritarian Scale (DV)
- Fed Forward – Left-Right Scale (DV)

3.3. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)⁴ 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 (cur_simd5) 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.

3.4. 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.

4. Weighting the data

Non-response to ScotCen Panel surveys can occur at any one of three stages: the surveys used for recruitment (SSA and BSA, the Scottish and British Social Attitudes surveys), the request to join the panel at the end of that interview and the survey of panel members itself. Weights are computed to adjust for non-response at each of these three stages; the panel weighting process is carried out separately for BSA and SSA respondents. The final weight (Sep21_Weight_SSA) is a combination of the (composite)

⁴ See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/SIMD/> for further details on the SIMD

non-response weights calculated (separately) for BSA and SSA respondents; each one is the product of the three weights described. We use this three-stage system because the variables associated with non-response can be different at each stage. With this system we also can maximise the use of the data collected from the Scottish or British Social Attitudes Survey (SSA/BSA). The following describes the three stages of weighting:

- a. **SSA / BSA survey weight:** the panel members were recruited from the SSA 2015, 2016, 2017 or 2019 waves or BSA 208, 2019 or 2020 (living in Scotland). The SSA and BSA surveys each have weights that adjust for unequal selection probabilities and address-level non-response; each set of weights is calibrated to population estimates to make them representative of the general population in terms of region, gender and age.⁵

- b. **Panel weight:** this weight adjusts for non-response at the panel recruitment stage where some people interviewed as part of the original survey (SSA/BSA) chose not to join the panel. A logistic regression model is used to compute the probability of response of each panel member, contingent on a standard set of socio-demographic variables. The model is weighted by the respective survey (SSA/BSA) weight. The panel non-response weight is the inverse of these probabilities and adjusts for non-response using the following variables: age and sex groups, region (region of Scotland for SSA), household type, household income, education level, ethnicity, tenure, social class group, economic activity, political party identification and interest in politics.⁶ The panel non-response weight is multiplied by the SSA weights to produce a composite panel weight that makes the panel representative of the population.

- c. **Survey weight:** this weight adjusts for non-response to a particular panel survey. A logistic regression model is used to compute the probabilities of response of each participant, contingent on the same standard set of variables used at the previous stage. The model is weighted by the panel weight from the previous stage. The panel survey weight is equal to the inverse of these probabilities of

⁵ More details on the SSA weight can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-attitudes-2019-technical-report/documents/> (Page 7). More details of the BSA weighting approach can be found here: <http://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/>

⁶ The characteristics that are likely to change with time for an individual and whose distribution differed between 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 SSA sample have been entered into the model in interaction with SSA year.

response. The final survey weight is produced by multiplying the survey weight by the (composite) panel weight.

As mentioned above, steps b and c were carried out separately for BSA and SSA; the weights were then combined (and scaled) to produce the final survey weight.

5. SSA 2021/22 Panel Dataset

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

The data file contains questionnaire variables from the sections of the 2021 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.

6. Contact details

ScotCen Social Research
Scotiabank House
6 South Charlotte Street
Edinburgh
EH2 4AW
0131 228 2167 Phone 0131 228 2167

Lisa Rutherford (Research Director)
Lisa.rutherford@scotcen.org.uk

Lucy Dean (Senior Researcher)
Lucy.dean@scotcen.org.uk

Alex Scholes (Senior Researcher)
Alex.Scholes@scotcen.org.uk