



Health Survey for England 2021

User Guide – Special Licence dataset

Joint Health Surveys Unit:
National Centre for Social Research
Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London

A survey carried out for NHS England

At NatCen Social Research we believe that social research has the power to make life better. By really understanding the complexity of people's lives and what they think about the issues that affect them, we give the public a powerful and influential role in shaping decisions and services that can make a difference to everyone. And as an independent, not for profit organisation we're able to put all our time and energy into delivering social research that works for society.

Natcen Social Research
35 Northampton Square
London EC1V 0AX
T 020 7250 1866
www.natcen.ac.uk

A Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England No.4392418.
A Charity registered in England and Wales (1091768) and Scotland (SC038454)

Contents

1	Background.....	2
2	Special Licence dataset	3
3	Using the data.....	4
3.1	Variables on the file	4
3.2	Notes about particular variables	4
3.2.1	ONS Local Authority Area Classification variables	4
4	Further information	5

1 Background

The Health Survey for England 2021 is the thirty-first year of a series of surveys designed to monitor trends in the nation's health.

The 2021 Health Survey was commissioned by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (now NHS Digital) and carried out by the Joint Health Surveys Unit of NatCen Social Research and the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at UCL (University College London).

The aims of the Health Survey series are:

- to provide annual data about the nation's health;
- to estimate the proportion of people in England with specified health conditions;
- to estimate the prevalence of certain risk factors associated with these conditions;
- to examine differences between population subgroups in their likelihood of having specific conditions or risk factors;
- to assess the frequency with which particular combinations of risk factors are found, and which groups these combinations most commonly occur;
- to monitor progress towards selected health targets including the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children;
- to measure the height of children at different ages, replacing the National Study of Health and Growth (since 1995);
- to monitor the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children (since 1995).

The 2021 survey included additional topics on physical activity, wellbeing (including loneliness), and gambling. The survey also provided updates on repeated core topics, including general health, long standing illness, smoking and drinking.

The topic reports on this survey, including a detailed Methods and Documentation volumes, are available [here](#) (part 1) and [here](#) (part 2).

See also: <https://www.natcen.ac.uk/healthsurveyforengland>

2 Special Licence dataset

Each year, the Health Survey for England is made available to users on End User Licence (EUL) through the UK Data Service (UKDS). A review of the EUL data was undertaken for HSE 2015; variables and topics were assessed for their risk of disclosure in conjunction with guidance on the external release of survey data. As a result of the review, some variables or groups of variables were adjusted via top coding or re-grouping. Other variables or sets of questions were removed entirely, such as the individual medication codes. The HSE household file was also removed from EUL.

Some of the variables no longer included in the EUL dataset, as well as the Household file, are now available under Special Licence. The Special Licence individual dataset contains the variables included in the HSE 2021 EUL dataset, plus additional variables. The Household file has the same content as the EUL household datasets, including individual and household level serial numbers to enable users to match the household data with the main individual file.

3 Using the data

The HSE 2021 Special Licence data consists of two files:

HSE 2021 SL.sav	7,120 records	Contains data for all individuals in households who gave a full interview. It contains information from the main individual schedule, self-completions and the nurse visit (where one occurred). The SL dataset contains the variables on the EUL dataset, plus additional variables noted in the SL variable listing.
HSE 2021 HH SL.sav	8,647 records	Contains data on household composition, sex and age for all individuals in co-operating households (including those not interviewed).

3.1 Variables on the file

The data file contains questionnaire variables, demographic information and derived variables that are not in the EUL dataset. The variables included in the dataset are detailed in the “**List of Variables**”. Users should also refer to the EUL dataset documentation.

3.2 Notes about particular variables

3.2.1 ONS Local Authority Area Classification variables

The Special Licence dataset includes ONS area classification variables that were previously included in the HSE EUL datasets. The 2011 area classifications cover local authority districts and reflect 2011 census geographies. Amendments have been made to the classification variables, so the variables included in the HSE SL datasets differ to those in previous EUL datasets. The variables have been renamed to reflect the changes. More information on the classifications, as well as the changes, can be found on the ONS website: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/geographicalproducts/areaclassifications/2011areaclassifications/abouttheareaclassifications>

4 Further information

For further information the user guide and documentation listed with the EUL dataset should be consulted. This documentation provides an overview of using the data, weighting variables, notes on specific variables, as well as interviewer and nurse documentation.

Further information about the Health Survey for England 2021 is also available in the following publications:

- [Health Survey for England 2021 Part 1](#)
- [Health Survey for England 2021 Part 2](#)