

A guide to using Scottish and UK datasets

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA)

The Scottish Social Attitudes survey (SSA) was launched by ScotCen Social Research in 1999, following the advent of devolution. Based on annual rounds of interviews of between 1,200 to 1,500 people drawn using probability sampling. The SSA survey has been conducted annually each year since 1999, with the exception of 2008. The survey has a modular structure. In any one year it typically contains three to five modules, each including 40 questions.

Survey years, sample sizes and modules

Year	Sample size	Modules
1999	1,482	The 1999 survey was the first round of SSA served as a Scottish Parliamentary Election Study.
2000	1,663	The questionnaires covered social capital, public spending and social welfare, cohabitation, democracy and participation, nations and regions, education, and illegal drugs, and included a comprehensive classification section.
2001	1,605	The questionnaires covered devolution and constitutional change, national identity, illegal drugs, housing, neighborhoods and communities, religion and included a comprehensive classification section
2002	1,665	The questionnaires covered democracy and participation, health care (with a focus on services in rural areas), transport and discrimination as well as a comprehensive classification section.
2003	1,508	The questionnaires covered access to local services, election issues, devolution, English people and Muslim people living in Scotland as well as a comprehensive classification section.
2004	1,637	Topics covered in the questionnaire included attitudes towards young people and youth crime, drinking and smoking, families, environmental justice, and public services in Scotland. A comprehensive demographic and classification section was also included.
2005	1,549	Topics covered in the questionnaire included attitudes towards national identity, fertility, the health service, providing for old age, social identities and public services in Scotland. A comprehensive demographic and classification section was also included.

2006	1,594	Attitudes to government and public services in post-devolution Scotland, discrimination in Scotland, attitudes towards young people and youth crime, views about national identity, attitudes towards homelessness, demographic and classification.
2007	1,508	Attitudes to government and public services in post-devolution Scotland, attitudes to drinking alcohol and the role of alcohol in Scottish culture, views about the 2007 Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections (included a mock ballot for the local election), views on the funding, provision and delivery of public services in Scotland, demographic and classification.
2008	No survey in this year	
2009	1,482	Government and public services in Scotland, anti-social behaviour, what makes somewhere a good place to live, with a particular focus on the importance of green space, drugs and recovery from problem drug use, national identity, escape places and violence, constitutional change.
2010	1,495	Government and public services in Scotland, attitudes to discrimination and positive action, devolution and independence, social and moral issues.
2011	1,197	Government and public services in Scotland, Constitutional change, National identity and the 2011 Scottish Elections. In addition, it included a small number of questions on the Scottish Election.
2012	1,229	Constitutional change, National identity, Attitudes to the Gaelic language, 2012 Scottish local elections, Police reform
2013	1,497	The 2013 survey contains questions on constitutional change

Geographical units reported

Scotland. Lower level breakdowns may be possible, contact the research team for information. From 2002, the survey has contained a boosted rural sample to allow greater analysis within rural areas.

Useful websites

<http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/series/?sn=2000049> the UKDS has a page dedicated to the SSA series. By clicking the + sign under the “Data access” heading, the page expands to include a specific line for each year of the survey. Clicking on the year of choice will provide basic details on the SSA (such as principal investigator, sponsor, and sampling method), an abstract, and the research documentation (when scrolling down). Scrolling further down will show a list of publications using the data. In the research documentation, the longest and most useful document is the user guide. It provides a lot of very useful information, including the questionnaire itself and information on weighting.

<http://www.scotcen.org.uk/our-research/research/scottish-social-attitudes/> The SSA page on Scotcen has a variety of short, easy to follow reports which answer specific questions (such as So where does

Scotland stand on more devolution? Or Scotland more left-wing than England? Using the SSA, and sometimes additional sources of information.

<http://whatscotlandthinks.org/scottish-social-attitudes-reading> the reading page on the SSA has a selection of the ScotCen short research reports, as well as 3 governmental reports which are longer and more comprehensive, and a short list of academic publications using the data.

<http://whatscotlandthinks.org/ssa> the What Scotland Thinks website also allows to look at the distribution of specific questions and at simple contingency tables from the SSA without downloading the dataset. To look at the distribution of a specific question, choose one of the questions in the list (or search if you are looking for a specific word, although the same concept could appear with different wording and the list is not long, so browsing through the questions might be a better option), and click on it. You can choose to view the results as a graph or a table, and you can exclude the “don’t know”. To view a contingency table with the variable you chose, go to the “Explore” section, and next to “see these data broken down by” choose the variable you wish to add. Notice that the first variable you chose will act as the dependent variable, while the variable you chose as a breaking variable will act as the independent variable. The list of breaking variables contains more variables than the list of questions on the main page, and particularly it contains demographics such as age and education.

Weights

The weighting in the SSA corrects for two things: 1. People from smaller households have a higher chance of being sampled, as one person is selected from each surveyed household. 2. There was a rural boost – some rural areas were over-sampled, so their residents had a larger chance of being sampled. The variables for weighting are:

WtFactor – for using the whole sample, including for when using the 6-fold urban/ rural variable.

WtRural - to use when analysing by RURAL WtRemote - to use when analysing by REMOTE

WtUrban - to use when analysing by URBANAC