



Scottish Surveys  
Core Questions

# SSCQ 2018-2021 Questionnaire Review

*Consultation Outcome Report*

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## The Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ)

There are three large scale population surveys in Scotland – the Scottish Household Survey (SHS), Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) and Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS). They each contain a harmonised set of around twenty core questions that are asked in all three surveys. This provides a sample size of around 20,000 interviews which allows for greater precision of estimates and both geographic and classification breakdowns that are simply not possible in the component surveys alone. These core results are published annually as the Scottish Surveys Core Questions (SSCQ) since 2012.

The core questions take around 9 minutes 46 seconds of time in each of the large scale surveys – most of this time is to collect personal characteristics questions that all surveys would wish to be asking anyway, plus a number of topic questions that were last agreed in 2011 and have been asked each year 2012-2017 (except mental wellbeing which has been asked since 2014).

## Aim and Process of the Questionnaire Review

Following the first 5 years of SSCQ collection, and in anticipation of fresh survey procurement and questionnaire reviews of the Scottish Household Survey and the Scottish Health Survey, the content of the SSCQ topic questions was reviewed for the first time in 2017.

The review was put out to public consultation from January 2017 to March 2017, alongside the consultation on the SHS questionnaire, the process of which is detailed in a separate report<sup>1</sup>. The resulting bids for existing and new topic areas are summarised in Annexes 1 and 2.

The SSCQ review working group<sup>2</sup> summarised these bids into four credible options, detailed in Annex 3. The SSCQ steering group<sup>3</sup> considered these and put forward a proposal to the Analytical Leaders Group<sup>4</sup> for sign-off prior to publishing this report and seeking implementation with each survey project board.

The following criteria were applied in weighing up the options:

1. Strategic Scottish Government priority.
2. Strong stakeholder support and/or requirement (e.g. type, range and number of stakeholders)
3. Equalities breakdowns required that individual survey sample sizes cannot support.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Household Survey (SHS) - 2018-2021 Questionnaire Review - Full report: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/16002/Publications/QuestReviewFullReport>

<sup>2</sup> The SSCQ review working group comprised analytical staff from the Office of the Chief Statistician, the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, Scottish Household Survey and Scottish Health Survey teams.

<sup>3</sup> The SSCQ steering group comprises senior analytical staff in the Office of the Chief Statistician, Justice Analytical Services, Communities Analysis Division and Health and Social Care Analysis.

<sup>4</sup> The Analytical Leaders Group comprises of senior analytical staff of the Scottish Government, including the Chief Researchers and the Chief Statistician, and representatives from key business areas.

4. Sub geographic or other breakdown required that individual survey sample sizes cannot support – even when two years of data are combined.

## Results of the SSCQ Questionnaire Review

All of the existing and new questions had a strong business case for inclusion. Not surprisingly there were more demands for questions than time allowed in each component survey. As such, the SSCQ working group had to identify space for new questions by proposing existing questions be rested for a set time.

A compromise position on questions to rest and new questions to include was agreed and endorsed (corresponding to Option 2 in Annex 3) and is set out in this paper.

### Questions to be rested in 2018 and 2019

The Scottish Surveys Core Questions currently covers the questions listed below (and detailed in Annex 1). The length of time estimated to ask each of the topic questions is shown alongside the topic questions. We agreed to rest the questions **in bold** for two years (2018 and 2019) to make space for new questions arising as priority areas in our stakeholder review, with a view to resuming these questions in 2020.

#### Personal Characteristics

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Marital status
4. Sexual orientation
5. Ethnicity
6. Religion
7. Country of birth
8. Disability
9. Long-term conditions
10. Economic activity
11. Highest qualification held
12. Household type
13. Housing tenure

#### Topic Questions

14. Car access (8 seconds)
15. Self-assessed general health (16 s)
16. Smoking (12 s)
- 17. Mental well-being (1 min 44 s)**
18. Unpaid provision of care (20 s)
19. Perceptions of local crime rate (30 s)
- 20. Confidence in the police (1 min 15 s)**

While there is evident policy and stakeholder demand for mental well-being and confidence in the police, resting these provides our best possible option for generating the required space for new topics. The collection of 5 years of data on these relatively stable variables gives us unprecedented analysis down to electoral ward geographies, which we will be publishing on statistics.gov.scot in the coming months, and detailed equalities characteristics such as ethnic group, country of birth and sexual orientation. These questions will each remain in the SHes and the SCJS respectively, publishing at Health Board and at Police Division level.

## Questions to be included in 2018 and 2019

As part of the review stakeholders were asked to provide strongly evidenced bids for new questions. The following sets of questions, each of which have a strong rationale (detailed in Annex 2), are to be included as they provide significantly more value as a core question than in one survey alone, they fit within the available time window and are evidenced as fit for purpose.

### Local Government – satisfaction with key public services

OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED ARE YOU WITH EACH OF THESE SERVICES?

A - Local health services		
B - Refuse collection	Response options	
C - Local schools	Very satisfied	[1]
D - Social care or social work services	Fairly satisfied	[2]
E - Public transport	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	[3]
F - Street cleaning	Fairly dissatisfied	[4]
G - Council sports and leisure facilities	Very dissatisfied	[5]
H - Council Libraries	No opinion	[6]
I - Council Museums and Galleries		
J - Council Parks and Open Spaces		

Changes in the satisfaction people express with key council services such as schools is one key area where the Scottish Government Local Government Unit, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the Improvement Service, and COSLA would benefit from having increased samples sizes in local areas, and therefore questions in the SSCQ. All of the stakeholders above have raised issues with the SHS sample size for most local authorities in terms of the ability to detect 'real' differences in performance between local authorities and over time. This has a significant impact on the utility of a key part of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF).

These questions span seven areas pertaining to the LGBF: schools, social work, sports and leisure centres, libraries, parks, museums and galleries, refuse collection and street cleaning and two national indicators on local health services and public transport. Total interview time is estimated to be 1 minute 35 seconds. Inclusion in the core would also allow a wider range of equalities breakdowns (e.g. disability, ethnicity).

There is also evidence that satisfaction between the general public and users of some specific services (like schools) are starting to significantly diverge. Whilst the Scottish Government Local Government Unit and stakeholders would like to have included a question to isolate users of these services and provide a much needed boost to the sample size of users, this was not possible due to a lack of interview space in SHeS and SCJS. It is at least possible to identify users of schools (parents) through the SSCQ household type question. Service use questions will continue to be asked in the SHS.

## Further considerations and future work

### Equalities – Discrimination and Harassment

In order to ensure there is capacity to monitor fair treatment of individuals from minority groups it has been suggested that the current SHS and SHeS questions on discrimination and harassment are harmonised. Slightly different questions are asked of a ¼ sample in the SCJS and the business area wish to retain this distinction. This change would be largely time neutral as the questions exist in the surveys at present.

Have you personally been **unfairly treated** or **discriminated** against in Scotland in the last 12 months, that is since August 2016, for any of the reasons on this card?

PROBE: What else?

INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL THAT APPLY

- |                                          |                                                        |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Your age                              | 9. Your sexual orientation                             |
| 2. Your sex or gender                    | 10. Your trans status, including non-binary identities |
| 3. Where you live                        | 11. Sectarian reasons                                  |
| 4. Your language                         | 12. Your religious belief or faith                     |
| 5. Your ethnicity                        | 13. Your mental ill-health                             |
| 6. Your nationality                      | 14. Any other health problems or disability            |
| 7. Your accent                           | 15. Other reason                                       |
| 8. Your social or educational background | 16. I have not experienced this                        |

Have you personally experienced **harassment** or **abuse** in Scotland in the last 12 months, that is since August 2016, for any of the reasons on this card?

PROBE: What else?

INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL THAT APPLY

- |                                          |                                                        |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Your age                              | 9. Your sexual orientation                             |
| 2. Your sex or gender                    | 10. Your trans status, including non-binary identities |
| 3. Where you live                        | 11. Sectarian reasons                                  |
| 4. Your language                         | 12. Your religious belief or faith                     |
| 5. Your ethnicity                        | 13. Your mental ill-health                             |
| 6. Your nationality                      | 14. Any other health problems or disability            |
| 7. Your accent                           | 15. Other reason                                       |
| 8. Your social or educational background | 16. I have not experienced this                        |

### Community cohesion and empowerment questions

It has not been possible to identify enough time for proposed questions on community cohesion in all three constituent surveys of the SSCQ.

A group of new questions on community cohesion will be included as new questions in the SHS – which will support the monitoring required by the Community Empowerment Act 2015, the Land Reform Act 2016, the review of open government and the Scottish Government Action plan, providing the relevant stakeholders with more information than they currently have. Going forward, a number of years data can be combined to provide better precision at LA level and/or sub LA breakdowns, although this will take more years worth of data than if the questions were included in the core.

Where there are going to be common questions in both surveys – e.g. on isolation, and from 2018 onwards also loneliness biennially in SHeS – the SHS and SHeS teams are also going to work with the lead analysts for the social context/community

engagement questions in order to develop harmonised questions. This would raise the sample size for the questions from 10,000 annually in the SHS to 13,000 every other year, and 23,000 for two combined years.

### **Looking forward to 2020 and 2021**

The conclusion reached in this questionnaire review sees the resting of mental wellbeing and confidence in the police questions in 2018 and 2019 in favour of questions on satisfaction with local government services. The agreed position in 2020 and 2021 will thus be a rotation back to include mental wellbeing and confidence in the police, subject to a check on these business areas still needing these questions as SSCQ, whether any new significant policy priorities have emerged for SSCQ, and will ultimately be endorsed by ALG. We are aware that the need for data on satisfaction with local government services will likely persist beyond 2019.

## **ANNEX 1: Assessment of bids for topic questions – existing questions**

### **Police Confidence**

Confidence in the police remains a key strategic issue for Scottish Government, justice stakeholders (including but not limited to Police Scotland) and academics, and the granularity offered by the core enhances the analytical potential in this area greatly - particularly as the SCJS will have a smaller sample size going forward. Overall, the confidence in policing questions clearly meet all four of the assessment criteria set out above. Whilst we recognise that the data on police confidence has been collected for some time, and the existing data is helpful, continuing to collect the data will be important for monitoring trends and developments on an on-going basis – particularly because of the increasing focus on these measures within Police Scotland and amongst wider stakeholders. For instance, we might expect the recently established and ACC-led Public Confidence Board will lead to initiatives being taken forward to better understand drivers and trends in police confidence and to try to increase confidence. Therefore, having the potential to monitor the impact of the work taken forward by the group will be important. Initial conversations have recognised that drivers of confidence likely differ amongst sub-population groups, by geography and by personal experience so having data based on a much greater sample size and with the associated increase in precision will be helpful.

### **Smoking**

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable poor health and premature mortality. Each year tobacco use is associated with around 10,000 deaths in Scotland (around a fifth of all deaths). Several of the Scottish Government's National Indicators are relevant to smoking. In addition to the specific indicator to reduce the proportion of adults who are current smokers (measured using SHeS data), there are more general related indicators on, for example, reducing premature mortality and reducing emergency admissions to hospital. SSCQ is the key source for sub-group analysis of smoking rates including within NHS board deprivation breakdown used to produce annual smoking cessation LDP standards (formerly HEAT targets) at NHS board level. The SSCQ smoking estimates are also used by Health and Social Care Partnerships to monitor smoking levels at a local level and to target cessation services. Smoking is among the most requested variables for additional analysis from the SSCQ.

### **Self-assessed health**

Population measures of self-reported health provide a general indicator of the burden of disease on society. They reflect subjective experiences of both diagnosed and undiagnosed illnesses, and their severity, which more objective measures for the whole population can sometimes overlook. Self-assessed general health is often a reflection on the presence or absence of long-term conditions, both physical and mental. Such conditions account for 80% of all GP consultations and for 60% of all

deaths in Scotland. Data from the SSCQ allows differences for smaller equality groups to be monitored and Health & Social Care Partnerships use the data at LA level to inform needs assessments, strategic assessments and local strategies/plans.

Self-assessed health is used in the calculation of healthy life expectancy for Scotland - used to measure the population purpose target. The model involves using breakdowns by 5 year age groups. Currently the data for adults comes from the SHS and for children from SHeS. There is potential to improve the robustness of the estimates going forward by utilising the larger overall sample from the SSCQ.

## **Caring**

There is a strong policy demand and stakeholder need to retain these questions regularly. The Carers (Scotland) Act will come into effect in 2018 and the new rights it invokes are likely to lead to more people identifying as carers. It is important to monitor these change at Integrated Joint Board (LA) level given that this is the delivery level for services. LA level data will not be available from SHeS until 2021. There is a policy need to track this data annually but if that is not possible it is most important that the questions are included in 2019 to show changes in the year following implementation of the Act.

## **ANNEX 2: Assessment of bids for topic questions – new question bids**

### **Satisfaction with local government services**

(1 minute 35 seconds plus 20 seconds on use of services)

COSLA, SOLACE, the Improvement Service, members of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework Group (LGBF) and many individual LAs have all expressed a need for increased sample sizes to effectively monitor differences in performance between local authorities and in individual LAs themselves over time, as there is significant difficulty in doing this currently. This includes distinguishing at LA level between the satisfaction of all adults versus users which are starting to significantly diverge for some services, including schools which is also one of the key public services tracked through the National Performance Framework Indicator on satisfaction with public services

In terms of criteria 1, improving the quality of all public services is a key national outcome and satisfaction with schools is one of the services tracked through the national indicator, whilst there are national outcomes and/or indicators relating to the quality of the local environment and neighbourhood, and cultural engagement . There is a clear trend emerging in that satisfaction with schools amongst all adults is declining substantially, but amongst parents (users) it so far seems to be holding up. However, existing SHS sample sizes for all LAs (criteria 4)– even when combined over two years – do not allow ‘real’ differences (i.e. statistically significant differences) between LAs, or in individual LAs over time, to be detected for *users* of services such as school and social work. This is also true for analysis of all adults (excluding those who give no opinion) for the majority of LAs. As funding for public services continues to be squeezed, it will be increasingly important to distinguish between perceptions of the performance of services (all adults) and the views of those people who have actually used the services in the last year (users).

As noted above, for criteria 2, a large number of high profile stakeholders including COSLA and SOLACE support the need for increased sample sizes and therefore inclusion in the core. This also includes many individual local authorities who responded to the SHS 2017 and beyond consultation. Although not formally consulted on this SSCQ proposal, it is also expected that a range of culture and sport stakeholders would support better quality LA level data for adults, users and equality groups on satisfaction with museums and galleries, and libraries, and leisure and sport centres respectively.

In relation to criteria 3, even combining two years’ worth of SHS data for all adults or the users of these key public services would not allow breakdowns at national level to be provided by key equality groups such as ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation.

It should be noted that there is no other way of collecting consistent comparative data across all 32 Scottish LAs, a point made by all the stakeholders above.

## **Social context/community engagement and empowerment**

(1 minute 1 second)

A distinctive Scottish approach to policy and public services has evolved since devolution, characterised by working in a more participative and co-productive way and focussing on developing the assets and capabilities of people and communities. Firm commitments have been made, including in the Community Empowerment Act 2015, the Land Reform Act 2016, and the development and delivery of a Scottish Open Government Action Plan. These commitments put an emphasis on openness and putting power into the hands of people and communities who should have a greater say in how services are delivered with opportunities for communities to take over public sector land and buildings.

In addition, following the introduction of the outcomes approach with the National Performance Framework in 2007, policy areas from across the Scottish Government have increasingly recognised the role and importance of social connections, cohesion and empowerment in achieving a range of policy outcomes. Hence there has been an increasing need across a range of policy areas for robust measures in this area to support monitoring of these policy priorities.

There is a strong demand from external stakeholders, including COSLA, Audit Scotland/the Accounts Commission, SOLACE and the Improvement Service in developing new questions within one of the large-scale surveys. Current measurement approaches are regarded as unable to adequately reflect this changing landscape hence new measures are required. The core provides the only way of getting this data cost-effectively at a national level with consistency and robustness for comparisons.

With the increasing focus on place and communities, a larger sample size is required to make data available that allows analysis between areas within a local authority and not just at local authority level. This would also allow analysis to identify potentially important influential factors contributing to community strength and engagement with public services.

This is a developing area and changes taking place may be obscured through combining data across years. In addition, with inequalities being a major concern in community outcomes, the ability to analyse differences by protected characteristics is also essential and needs the larger sample size of the core.

## ANNEX 3: Assessment of bids for topic questions – options

The time saved from each survey for each of the following options is summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Time savings from the four Core drop options – before the inclusion of new questions

Options	Time Saving Effect [mm:ss]		
	SHS	SHeS	SCJS
1	-	-	-
2	02:59	01:15	01:44
3	01:52	00:08	01:44
4	03:23	01:23	02:00

### Options

1. Do nothing. We could retain the current set of core questions but this would be disappointing for some key stakeholders given the emerging new data needs that the SSCQ provides an ideal vehicle for, but equally the demands for core data make it challenging to satisfy all user needs. Due to the high demand for space in the SHS questionnaire, retaining existing SSCQ topic questions would mean that some policy areas across the Scottish Government and externally, would end up with no data or severely limited data on policy priorities at national and/or LA level, due to the inability to free-up space in the SHS,<sup>5</sup> never mind geographic or small equality group level breakdowns that the SSCQ offers. This would include LA level income estimates, and the development of child poverty data at LA level and/or social context-community empowerment questions which are a priority for both the Scottish and local government representative organisations such as COSLA, given that LAs and CPPs are the key delivery agents of these priorities<sup>6</sup>. The SHS would also not be able to collect data on the uptake of childcare. The SHS is the only vehicle to collect much of this data given the need for LA level data and/or to drill down to small groups (e.g. households with children).
2. Rest mental wellbeing, and perceptions of police performance questions for two years – saving of 2 minutes 59 seconds in the SHS, 1 minute 15 seconds in the SHeS and 1 minute 44 in the SCJS annually. This would allow enough time for either satisfaction with local government services or social context questions to become SSCQ for two years. Given that these SSCQ removals would free up time for the SHS this time could be used to cover income of all

<sup>5</sup> Removing the police confidence, crime and mental wellbeing questions from the SHS would free up over 3 minutes of time in the SHS which can be devoted to providing other policy areas with data. As an alternative, there is limited scope to reduce existing questions beyond those areas which have already offered up questions for deletion or reduction in frequency of measurement, without leading to significant stakeholder disquiet. It should be noted that a significant level of review and negotiation has been undertaken by the SHS team to reduce downwards the size of the demand for new SHS questions to what is absolutely essential.

<sup>6</sup> See Community Empowerment Act and the Child Poverty Bill which is currently moving through the Scottish Parliament.

adults in the household - the first step in calculating LA level child poverty estimates- and allow new social context/community empowerment questions on an annual or biennial basis, as well as other policy area priorities. The inclusion of satisfaction of local government services (instead of social context questions) would result in a small increase in time of around 30 seconds for SHeS but will be time neutral for SCJS.

3. Rest mental wellbeing, unpaid caring and car ownership – saving 1 minute 52 seconds in the SHS, 1 minute 44 seconds in SCJS and 8 seconds in SHeS (as only car ownership would be removed). This would allow for some of the new social context / community empowerment questions to be included in the SSCQ, as SHeS have indicated that they may be able to find a minute of time within their own questionnaire review to cover some of the social context bid for SSCQ.
4. Rotate mental wellbeing, unpaid caring, car ownership and perceptions of police performance biennially – saving of 3 minutes 23 seconds in SHS, 1 minute 23 seconds in SHeS and 2 minutes in SCJS. This would not allow for the new questions to have such a detailed geographic or classification breakdown as if they had two successive years to pool together.