

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2019: Technical Report

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SCOTTISH SOCIAL ATTITUDES SURVEY 2019: TECHNICAL REPORT

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1. The Scottish Social Attitudes series

The Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) survey was launched by ScotCen Social Research in 1999, following the advent of devolution. Based on annual rounds of interviews of between 1,000 to 1,500 people drawn using probability sampling (based on a stratified, clustered sample)¹, 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, these are usually too few in any one year to permit separate analysis of public opinion in Scotland (see <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/> for more details of the BSA survey).

SSA has been conducted annually each year since 1999, with the exception of 2008 and 2018. The survey 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 individual modules each year. These bodies have included the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), 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 Like many national surveys of households or individuals, in order to attain the optimum balance between sample efficiency and fieldwork efficiency the sample was clustered. The first stage of sampling involved randomly selecting postcode sectors. The sample frame of postcode sectors was also stratified (by urban-rural, region and the percentage of people in non-manual occupations) to improve the match between the sample profile and that of the Scottish population. For further details of the sample design, see Section 3 below.

2. The 2019 survey

The 2019 survey contained questions on:

- Attitudes to Government – funded by Scottish Government
- Attitudes to Minimum Unit Pricing – funded by NHS Health Scotland
- Attitudes to the European Union – funded by ESRC
- Intra Household Distribution of Resources – funded by Scottish Government
- Attitudes to Violence Against Women and Girls – funded by Scottish Government

Data from SSA 2019 will be deposited with the UK Data Archive in the first quarter of 2021. Separate programmes of reporting and dissemination are planned for each of the modules. This technical annex covers the methodological details of the survey.

3. 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. The detailed procedure for selecting the 2019 sample was as follows:

1. 93 postcode sectors were selected from a list of all postal sectors in Scotland, with probability proportional to the number of addresses in each sector for addresses in urban areas and a probability of twice the address count for sectors in rural areas (i.e. the last 3 categories in the Scottish Government's 6 fold urban-rural classification², region and percentage of household heads recorded as being in non-manual occupations (SEG 1-6 and 13, taken from the 2011 Census).
2. 30 addresses were selected at random from each of these 93 postcode sectors.
3. Interviewers called at each selected address and identified its eligibility for the survey. Where more than one dwelling unit was present at an address, all dwelling units were listed systematically and one was selected at random using a computer generated random selection table. In all eligible dwelling units with more than one adult aged 16 or over, interviewers had to carry out a random selection of one adult using a similar procedure.

Addresses that are ineligible or out of scope include: empty / derelict addresses, buildings under construction, holiday homes, businesses, other non-residential (such as schools, offices and institutions), and addresses that had been demolished. Students are included at either their main term-time or their main out-of-term address.

² See <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification> for details.

4. Fieldwork

Fieldwork for the 2019 survey ran between August 2019 and March 2020. There was a five week pause in fieldwork during the pre-election period, with no interviews taking place between 6.11.2019 and 12.12.2019 inclusive. An advance letter was sent to all sampled addresses and followed up by a personal visit from a ScotCen interviewer. Interviewers were required to make a minimum of 6 calls at different times of the day (including at least one evening and one weekend call) in order to try and contact respondents. Interviewers new to the study attended a face-to-face briefing prior to starting work on the study, while interviewers who had worked on SSA in the previous two years completed a self-briefing at home.

Interviews were conducted using face-to-face computer-assisted 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). All respondents were also asked to fill in a self-completion questionnaire using the interviewer's laptop. If the respondent preferred, the questions could be read out by the interviewer.

5. Response rates

The Scottish Social Attitudes survey involves a face-to-face interview with respondents and a self-completion section (completed using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing). Table 1 (below) summarises the response rate and the numbers completing each stage of SSA 2019.

Table 1: 2019 Scottish Social Attitudes survey response

	No.	% of total eligible sample
Addresses issued	2790	
Vacant, derelict and other out of scope ³	295	11
Achievable or 'in scope'	2495	
Unknown eligibility ⁴	49	1
Interview achieved	1022	41
Self-completion completed	958	38
Interview not achieved		
Refusal ⁵	1008	40
Non-contact ⁶	187	7
Other unproductive ⁷	229	9

³ This 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.

⁴ 'Unknown eligibility' includes cases where the address could not be located, where it could not be determined if an address was residential and where it could not be determined if an address was occupied or not.

⁵ Refusals include: refusals prior to selection of an individual; 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.

⁶ Non-contacts comprise households where no one was contacted after at least 6 calls and those where the selected person could not be contacted.

⁷ 'Other unproductive' includes people who were ill at home or in hospital during the survey period, people who were unable to participate due to physical or mental health issues or where a language barrier made recruitment too difficult (despite translation and interpreting services being offered).

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

6. Weighting

All percentages cited in SSA reports are based on weighted data. The weights applied to the SSA 2019 data are intended to correct for three potential sources of bias in the sample:

- Differential selection probabilities
- Deliberate over-sampling of rural areas
- Non-response

Data were weighted to take account of the fact that not all households or individuals have the same probability of selection for the survey. For example, adults living in large households have a lower selection probability than adults who live alone. Weighting was also used to correct the over-sampling of rural addresses. Differences between responding and non-responding households were taken into account using a combination of geographic variables (urban/rural, SIMD etc) and interviewer observations about participating and non-participating addresses. Finally, the weights were adjusted to ensure that the weighted data matched the age-sex profile of the Scottish population (based on mid-year estimates from the National Records of Scotland).

7. Analysis variables

Most of the analysis variables are taken directly from the questionnaire and are self-explanatory.

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

The remaining respondents were grouped as 'never had a job' or 'not classifiable'.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)⁸ 2020 measures the level of deprivation across Scotland – from the least deprived to the most deprived areas. It is based on 38 indicators in seven domains of: income, employment, health, education skills and training, housing, geographic access and crime. SIMD 2020 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 2020 and on each of the individual domains. The result is a comprehensive picture of relative area deprivation across Scotland.

The analysis in this report used a variable created from SIMD data indicating the level of deprivation of the data zone in which the respondent lived in quintiles, from most to least deprived.⁹

⁸ See <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/> for further details on the SIMD.

⁹ These variables were created by the ScotCen/NatCen Statistics Unit. They are based on SIMD scores for all datazones, not just those included in the sample – so an individual who lives in the most deprived quintile of Scotland will also be included in the most deprived quintile in the SSA dataset.

The Scottish Government urban-rural six-fold classification

The 6-fold version of the urban-rural classification is included on the dataset (Ur6fold). Areas in this version are classified as follows:

	Area type	
1	Large Urban Areas	Settlements of 125,000 or more people.
2	Other Urban	Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people.
3	Accessible small towns	Settlements 3,000 to 9,999 people and within 30 minutes' drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more.
4	Remote small towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.
5	Accessible rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more.
6	Remote rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.

8. Analysis techniques

Significance testing

Where reports authored by ScotCen Social Research discuss differences between two percentages (either across time, or between two different groups of people within a single year), this difference is significant at the 95% level or above, unless otherwise stated. Differences between two years are tested using standard z-tests, taking account of complex standard errors arising from the sample design.

Differences between groups within a given year are tested using logistic regression analysis, which shows the factors and categories that are significantly (and independently) related to the dependent variable. Analysis is carried out in IBM SPSS Statistics v.25, using the CS logistic function to take account of the sample design in calculations.



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