



# British Social Attitudes Open Teaching Dataset: Environment and Politics 2017

## User Guide

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## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Background to British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey .....	3
Survey design .....	3
Response rate.....	4
Overview of the BSA teaching dataset .....	4
Sample .....	4
Topics.....	4
Missing Values .....	4
Don't know and refusal .....	4
Not applicable.....	4
Survey methodology variables .....	5
Survey weight .....	5
Variables in the dataset .....	6
Variable list.....	6
Attitude scales .....	7
Syntax used to create the dataset .....	8

## Introduction

Each year, the British Social Attitudes survey asks a representative sample of people questions about social, political, and moral issues. Starting in 1983, the BSA provides valuable insight into trends in public opinion used by policymakers, journalists and researchers.

This open teaching dataset contains data from British Social Attitudes Survey 2017, which interviewed 3,988 adults 18 and over. The data all comes from the [original study accessible via the UK Data Service](#); but to make the data accessible for teaching via an open data license, the dataset contains a subset of variables and simplified demographic variables.

This user guide provides

- background to BSA survey including details of the survey design.
- details of this open teaching dataset including a variable list, syntax used to create the dataset and full codebook.

## Background to British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey

The *British Social Attitudes* (BSA) survey series began in 1983. One of the BSA's main purposes is to allow the monitoring of patterns of continuity and change, and the examination of the relative rates at which attitudes towards social issues change over time.

Each year the interview questionnaire contains 'core' questions, which are repeated in most years, and a wide range of socio-demographic questions. The remainder of the questionnaire is devoted to questions (modules) on a range of social, economic, political, and moral issues - some asked regularly, others less often.

The BSA is run by [NatCen](#), who have final responsibility for the coverage and wording of the annual questionnaire. However, funding for BSA comes several sources (including government departments, the Economic and Social Research Council and other research foundations). Further information about the series and links to publications may be found on the NatCen Social Research [British Social Attitudes](#) website.

## Survey design

The BSA questionnaire normally comprises two parts, one administered face-to-face and one for self-completion.

The British Social Attitudes survey 2017 is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over. The sampling frame for the survey is the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of addresses (or postal delivery points) compiled by the Post Office. For practical reasons, the sample is confined to those living in private households. People living in institutions (though not in private households at such institutions) are excluded, as are households whose addresses were not on the PAF.

The sampling method involved a multi-stage design involving the selection of postcode sectors (clustering), which are first stratified by region, population density and the

percentage of owner-occupiers. Within each postcode sector, addresses are selected first and then an individual at each address.

In 2017 the sample for the British Social Attitudes survey was split into four equally sized parts (each part still being nationally representative in its own right). Each part was asked a different version of the questionnaire (version A, B, C, D). As a result, some questions were asked to the full sample and others to only a random quarter, half or three quarters of the sample.

#### Response rate

In 2017, NatCen interviewed 3,988 adults 18 and over, which was a response rate of between 45% and 46%.<sup>1</sup>

## Overview of the BSA teaching dataset

### Sample

The open dataset contains all 3, 988 cases from the original study.

### Topics

The open dataset contains variables covering the following topics:

- views about climate change and actions related to the environment
- interest in politics, political action and party identification
- voluntary work
- attitude scales - left-right ideology and libertarian-authoritarian scale
- and many demographic variables

A full list of variables can be found below.

### Missing Values

#### Don't know and refusal

When asked a question, survey participants may respond 'do not know' or refuse to answer. Such responses are recorded using specific codes, often something distinctive compared to other values such 99 or 999.

To help with analysis of this dataset, 'not answered', 'don't know' and 'can't choose' values are pre-set as missing values in the SPSS and Stata versions.

#### Not applicable

The dataset also includes a 'not applicable' category that has been set as missing. The 'not applicable' category applies when a participant was not asked the question. In this case, there are three different reasons:

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<sup>1</sup> Response is calculated as a range. The lower limit includes addresses that may have ineligible, for example, where it was not clear if the address was residential or commercial. Where it was not clear, the lower limit calculation assumes the address was eligible. Conversely, the upper limit assumes such cases are ineligible, and therefore excludes from the calculation of the response rate.

- not all questions are relevant to all participants
- the survey had a split sample with different versions of the questionnaire in use and not all questions were included in each version
- some participants did not participate in a self-completion section of the survey

## Survey methodology variables

### Survey weight

Many survey datasets contain variables called survey weights. These variables are made by the data collectors for you to apply when analysing data. We use weights to make sample data better represent the population it's designed to reflect by adjusting for over and under-represented cases. Under and over-representation can result from the complex sampling methods used in large scale surveys and other issues including non-response.

In this teaching dataset, the survey weight variable **WtFactor** is for use when analysing the total sample. The weight accounts for unequal selection probabilities from the sample design (selection weight) and for non-response. A further element of the weight calculation is to adjust the final non-response weight so that the weighted sample matches the population profile in terms of age, sex and region.

For more information about the weight variable, see the [BSA 2017 User Guide](#).

## Variables in the dataset

The open teaching dataset contains 25 of the original 580 variables.

The survey questions can be found in the questionnaire, which is included in the [documentation for the main study data](#).

The documentation that accompanies this open dataset includes a codebook.

### Variable list

Sserial	Archive Serial
Rsex	Person 1 SEX
RAgeCat	Age of respondent(grouped)
Married	Marital status
ChildHh	Whether respondent has any children in household
HEdQual3	Highest educational qual obtained
eq_inc_quintiles	Quintiles of total equivalised household income, net of tax, NI, disability benefits and housing costs (missings removed)
RClassGp	NS-SEC analytic classes
CCBELIEV	Which of these comes closest to your view about climate change
carallow	Should be allowed to use their cars as much as they like, even at cost to environment
carreduc	For the environment everyone should reduce how much they use cars
carnod2	No point in reducing my car use to help the environment unless others do
cartaxhi	For the sake of the environment car users should pay higher taxes
carenvdc	People who drive cars that are better for the environment should pay less to use roads
plnenvt	People should be able to travel by plane as much as they like, even if this harms the environment
plnuppri	The price of a plane ticket should reflect the environmental damage that flying causes, even if this makes air travel much more expensive
Politics	How much interest do you have in politics?
Voted	Did you manage to vote in the general election?
actchar	In the past 12 months, how often, if at all, have you taken part in activities of charitable or religious organisations that do voluntary work?
Actpol	In the past 12 months, how often, if at all, have you taken part in activities of political parties, political groups or associations?
govnosa2	People like me don't have any say about what the government does
PartyId2	Party political id (compressed)
leftrigh	Left-right scale
Libauth	Libertarian-authoritarian scale
WtFactor	Final BSA weight

## Attitude scales

The variables left-right scale (leftrigh) and Libertarian-authoritarian (libauth) are constructed from responses to a set of items. For each, item respondents are invited to “agree strongly”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “disagree strongly”.

For left-right the items are:

- Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off. [Redistrb]
- Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers. [BigBusnN]
- Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation’s wealth. [Wealth]
- There is one law for the rich and one for the poor. [RichLaw]
- Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance. [Indust4]

For libertarian-authoritarian scale (libauth), the items are

- Young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values. [TradVals]
- People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. [StifSent]
- For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence. [DeathApp]
- Schools should teach children to obey authority. [Obey]
- The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong. [WrongLaw]
- Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards. [Censor]

You can read more about how NatCen create the scales in the [User Guide that comes with the main survey](#).

## Syntax used to create the dataset

\*SYNTAX FOR CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICAL ACTION DATASET

```
GET "UKDA-8450-spss\spss\spss25\bsa2017_for_ukda.sav".  
SAVE OUTFILE = 'bsa_2017_open_enviropol.sav'  
/Keep = Sserial Rsex RAgeCat Married ChildHh HEdQual3 eq_inc_quintiles RClassGp CCBELIEV carallow  
carreduc  
carnod2 cartaxhi carenvdc plnenvt plnuppri Politics Voted actchar actpol govno2 PartyId2 leftrigh  
libauth WtFactor.
```

```
GET "bsa_2017_open_enviropol.sav".
```

\*Combine -1 and -2 skipped and not applicable.

```
RECODE Rsex ChildHh CCBELIEV carallow carreduc carnod2 cartaxhi carenvdc plnenvt plnuppri govno2  
actchar actpol Politics Voted (-2 thru -1=-1).
```

\* set missing values.

```
MISSING VALUES Rsex ChildHh RClassGp CCBELIEV carallow carreduc carnod2  
carenvdc plnenvt plnuppri actchar actpol govno2 Politics (-1, 8, 9).  
MISSING VALUES Married (9).  
MISSING VALUES RAgeCat HEdQual3 (8).  
MISSING VALUES RClassGp (-1,8).  
MISSING VALUES Voted (-1,8,9).  
MISSING VALUES leftrigh libauth (-1,9).  
MISSING VALUES PartyId2 (-1,8).  
EXECUTE.
```

\*Correct measurement level.

```
VARIABLE LEVEL RClassGp (NOMINAL).
```

```
Variable level carallow carreduc carnod2 cartaxhi carenvdc plnenvt plnuppri actchar actpol govno2  
(ORDINAL).
```

```
Variable level libauth (SCALE).
```

```
EXECUTE.
```

\*Adjust labels due to the changes above.

VALUE LABELS

Rsex

-1 'skipped or na'

1'Male'

2'Female'

8'Dontknow'

9'Refusal'.

VALUE LABELS

Voted

-1 'skipped or na'

1'Yes'

2'No'

8'Dontknow'

9'Refusal'.

VALUE LABELS

ChildHh

-1 'skipped or na'



1 'Yes'  
2 'No'  
8 'Dontknow'  
9 'Refusal'.

VALUE LABELS

carallow carreduc carnod2 cartaxhi carenvdc plnenvt plnuppri govno2

-1 'skipped'  
1 'agree strongly'  
2 'agree'  
3 'neither agree nor disagree'  
4 'disagree'  
5 'disagree strongly'  
8 'cannot choose'  
9 'not answered'.

VALUE LABELS

actchar actpol

-1 'skipped'  
1 'once a week or more'  
2 'one to three times a week'  
3 'several times in the past year'  
4 'once in the past year'  
5 'never'  
8 'cannot choose'  
9 'not answered'.