



Department
for Education

Children's Services Statistical Neighbour Tool

Background

December 2024

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Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to provide background to the calculation of the Children's Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking Tool (CSSNBT).

Background

Statistical neighbour models provide one method for benchmarking progress. For each local authority (LA), these models designate several other LAs deemed to have similar characteristics. These designated LAs are known as statistical neighbours. Any LA may compare its performance (as measured by various indicators) against its statistical neighbours to provide an initial guide as to whether their performance is above or below the level that might be expected.

The CSSNBT was originally produced by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in 2007. There is an accompanying practitioner [user guide](#) and [final report](#) which explain the tool and its development in more detail.

The background variables used in the tool are listed in table 1 below. These are the variables used to define each LAs statistical neighbours.

In addition to updating the background variables derived from Census data using the 2011 Census in 2014, the tool was amended in 2019 and 2021 to assign statistical neighbours for local authorities affected by local government reorganisations (i.e. Dorset; Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire) and update (in 2021) mean weekly pay and % pupils known to be eligible for FSM for all LAs.

Table 1: Background Variables used in the model

Variable	Source for 2007 model ¹	Source for update ²
Mean Weekly pay - gross	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (resident)	Update
% of pupils known to be eligible for FSM	DfES	Update
% of vehicles that are three years old or less	DVLA 2004	No update
% dependent children in household with occupancy rating of +2 or more	Census 2001	Bespoke ³
% dependent children in overcrowded household	Census 2001	Bespoke ³
% dependent children in households with 2 or more cars	Census 2001	Bespoke ⁴

¹ [CAS theme tables/advanced query](#)

² [Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics 2011 Census Tables](#)

³ [ONS 2011 Census Occupancy Rating Bedrooms](#)

⁴ [ONS 2011 Census Number of Cars/Vans in Household](#)

Variable	Source for 2007 model¹	Source for update²
% dependent children in one adult household	Census 2001	Bespoke ⁵
% dependent children in household where HRP is in any managerial or professional occupation	Census 2001	Bespoke ⁶
% dependent children in household where HRP is in any routine occupation	Census 2001	Bespoke ⁶
% people with mixed ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% people with Indian ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% people with Pakistani ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% people with Bangladeshi ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% people with Other Asian ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% people with Black Caribbean ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% people with Black African ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% people with Other Black ethnicity	Census 2001	Table: Ethnic Group
% of working age people with higher qualifications	Census 2001	Table: Highest level of qualification
% people in good health	Census 2001	Table: General Health ⁷
% households owned outright or owned with mortgage	Census 2001	Table: Tenure
% households with 3 or more dependent children	Census 2001	Bespoke ⁸
% of the population living in villages, hamlets or isolated settlements	Census 2001	Table: Usual resident population ⁹

⁵ [ONS 2011 Census All Dependent Children living in One Adult Household](#)

⁶ [ONS 2011 Census National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification](#)

⁷ The health classification changed in 2011. Figures used in 2011 refer to the percentage of people in good or very good health.

⁸ [ONS 2011 Census Number of Dependent Children in Household](#)

⁹ [Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics 2011 Census Key Statistics](#)

Impact of the update

Table 2 below summarises the number of LAs that have new neighbours. On average, Local Authorities have two new statistical neighbours.

Table 2: Number of new statistical neighbours by number of Local Authorities as a result of the Census 2011 update

Number of new statistical neighbours	Number of local authorities
0	8
1	48
2	42
3	32
4	15
5	5
6	2

Table 3 below summarises the number of LAs that have new neighbours as result of the 2019 and 2021 local government reorganisations and refresh of mean weekly wage and % of children eligible for FSM.

Table 3: Number of LAs that have new neighbours as result of the latest changes

Number of new statistical neighbours	Number of local authorities
0	44
1	66
2	34
3	8



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