The Data Dictionary

The Data Dictionary is the primary documentation of all variables (both survey items and derived variables) in the ALSWH datasets and is in the form of a searchable Microsoft Access database (www.alswh.org.au/InfoData/datadict.html).

The Data Dictionary contains the origin of all survey items, the exact text and response codes, the surveys on which they have appeared and indicates items which are similar in content. Similar details are included for derived variables. For some derived variables however, it is not practical to include important information such as how the variable was developed and recommendations for usage. This additional information is provided in Sections 2 and 3 of this Supplement.

The Dictionary is designed to be used in conjunction with hard copies of the surveys. Users are encouraged to obtain copies of the surveys from the ALSWH web site, www.alswh.org.au/surveys.html.

Components of the Data Dictionary

Components are listed in alphabetical order for easy reference

Access level: Each variable is designated an access level based on the ALSWH Privacy Protocol. All personally identifying data (such as study ID, names, contact details and date of birth) are assigned Level A access and only made available to staff whose work involves contact with participants and who have signed the appropriate privacy agreements. All other items (de-identified items) are assigned Access Level B or C and are available to all approved applicants. Country of birth and language spoken at home are available at Access level B in aggregate form only.

Category: Data categories are broad classes for related variables. Each item is assigned to only one category, although some could theoretically be placed into more than one category. Categories facilitate searches for specific classes of items.

Description: For survey items, the description is the full text of the item as it appears on the surveys. The full name (and where available, a definition) is included for derived variables. Additional information on derived variables can often be found in Sections 2 and 3 the Data Dictionary Supplement.

Index number: A unique identifier is assigned to each record. The Index is of the form *category_number*. Numbers are allocated sequentially to each new record within a category. For example, MEDH-023 is the 23rd item in the medical history category.

Index number for a Similar item: Provides the index number for the corresponding similar item.

Included in the Data Dictionary Supplement: When this indicator is marked, further information about the variable is available in the Data Dictionary Supplement.

Responses: Records the response options for each variable. This field will be blank for survey items that require a written response and for some derived variables.

Response code: Records the coded values for responses. This field will be blank for survey items that require a written response and for some derived variables.

Source: A reference for or a description of the source of each variable.

Used in derived variable/s: Provides information about the item's use in the creation of derived variables (those developed within ALSWH as well as externally validated scales/scores). The derived variable's description, variable name, and index number are provided in the format *Description [Variable name; Index number]*.

Variable name for an Exact item: Indicates survey items or derived variables that match this record exactly, that is, have the same text and responses or scores.

Variable name for a Similar item: Indicates survey items or derived variables that are similar to an exact item (*Variable name for an exact item*) but for which either the wording, responses or coding differ.

Variable type: Indicates the type of variable described by the record (see below).

Type	Definition
Survey Item	An item from at least one ALSWH survey
ALSWH Derived Variable	A variable developed within the ALSWH and created as a function of 2 or more survey items
Validated Scale/Score	A scale/score developed outside the ALSWH and created as a function of 2 or more survey items
ALSWH Weighting Variable	Adjusts for over-sampling of women living in rural or remote areas
Survey Information Variable	Variable indicating whether the full or short version of survey was completed

Forms in the Data Dictionary

Forms are listed in alphabetical order for easy reference

Categories Form: Lists names and codes for all categories.

Dictionary Form: Displays all fields in the data dictionary. Examples of ways to use the form are to search using 'Control F' (the binoculars icon) for items based on:
- o Categories
- o Key words in the description section
- o Variable names

Note that searching by category alone may not find all the relevant information.

Once a relevant record has been found, other related records may be found using the index numbers in the cross reference section. However, users should be aware that the cross reference is not an all inclusive link to other relevant items and should satisfy themselves that they have adequate information to proceed.

Related records may also be found by searching for *similar items* to the *exact item* already located.

Find Index Number For Variables: Available separately for Younger, Mid-age and Older cohorts.

Item Type Summary: Lists the different item types.

Questions Sorted Alphabetically: Contains Index number, description, and variable names for all surveys; sorted in alphabetical order of the item description.