

NHANES Diet & Demographic data for 2011-2012

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) is a program of studies designed to assess the health and nutritional status of adults and children in the United States. The survey is unique in that it combines interviews and physical examinations. NHANES is a major program of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). NCHS is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and has the responsibility for producing vital and health statistics for the Nation.

The NHANES program began in the early 1960s and has been conducted as a series of surveys focusing on different population groups or health topics. In 1999, the survey became a continuous program that has a changing focus on a variety of health and nutrition measurements to meet emerging needs. The survey examines a nationally representative sample of about 5,000 persons each year. These persons are located in counties across the country, 15 of which are visited each year.

This NHANES dataset includes demographic and dietary information on individuals including their consumption of specific foods on a monthly basis. Daily consumption variables have been added to the dataset for standardization as well as a calculation of various nutrition components of the diet. Demographic variables are also included.

Possible project topics include looking for clusters of individuals according to their dietary habits (an “unsupervised” problem) or seeing if dietary patterns predict group membership (a “supervised” problem). Suggested groups for a supervised classification project are a) member of the Armed Forces (code as yes/no), b) older persons (code as >60) or c) country of birth (code as U.S. versus not).

The variable names, definitions and coding are given in the Excel spreadsheet. Note that the data file is in SPSS statistics format, so you would read it in using a Statistics source node. And using the “Real labels as names” and “Read labels as data” options will make it easier to make sense of the results.