
UK Data Service responses to changes in the data landscape

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UK Data Service



Overview

- What is the UK Data Service?
- Facilitating access to (sensitive) data
- ONS Approved Researcher Scheme
- Consultation and Special Licence review
- Impact on UK Data Service and researchers
- Conclusions



What is the UK Data Service?

- A comprehensive resource funded by the ESRC
- A single point of access to a wide range of secondary social science data
- Data support for research and teaching
- Training and guidance on a range of research data issues



Types of data

Survey Microdata

Major UK surveys

Cross-national, business data,
longitudinal

Census

Aggregate data for 1971-
2011

Microdata for 1991-2011

International Macrodata

Multi-nation aggregate
databanks

Qualitative/Mixed Methods

Range of multimedia
qualitative data sources

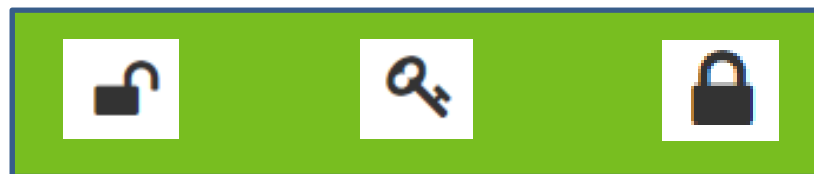
Mix of qualitative and
quantitative data

UK Data Service



Levels of access

- Open
 - Freely available to all
- Safeguarded
 - End User Licence (EUL) – data may be downloaded immediately after user and project registration
 - Special Conditions – e.g. additional licence agreements
 - Special Licence – detailed application form and permission from data depositor
- Controlled
 - Secure Access data - detailed application procedure, depositor approval, face-to-face training, remote access only, outputs subject to statistical disclosure control (SDC)



Differences between licences

- Data are anonymised
- EUL microdata for major Government surveys will typically have aggregated categories or some of the collected information will be withheld
 - Age is banded e.g. 18-29, 30-39, 40-49 and so on
 - Small geographies such as local Authority District are combined to Government Office Region
 - Ethnicity, country of birth, wealth, income, prescription medication, attitudes, behaviours and so on, could be sensitive
- Special Licence and Secure Access data collections enable researchers to tackle important research questions at higher levels of detail



Data are anonymised

	ID	Sex	Region	Age	Education	Jobstat	Jobstart	Hholdsze
1	87456	1	4	4	4	1	1	4
2	87457	1	6	3	3	2	99	3
3	87548	2	1	1	2	1	1	5
4	87459	1	5	4	99	1	1	2
5	87460	2	99	5	5	1	1	2
6	88126	1	3	2	2	1	1	99
7	88127	1	7	2	1	1	1	5
8	88128	2	8	4	3	1	1	4
9	88130	2	8	5	4	2	99	3
10	88141	99	2	1	4	99	99	3
11	88142	1	2	1	3	2	99	2
12	88257	1	99	3	2	1	1	1
13	88274	1	4	5	1	1	1	2
14	88275	2	1	99	1	1	1	3
15	88411	2	3	2	4	1	1	4
16	88425	2	3	4	2	1	1	2
17	88428	99	7	5	1	1	1	4
18	88541	1	3	2	3	2	99	3
19	88699	2	5	4	2	1	1	5
20	88700	1	4	6	1	1	1	4

Value Labels

Value:

Label:

1 = "London"
2 = "East"
3 = "South East"
4 = "South"
5 = "South West"
6 = "Midlands"

Add
Change
Remove

Value Labels

Value:

Label:

1 = "18-29"
2 = "30-39"
3 = "40-49"
4 = "50-59"
5 = "60-69"
6 = "70-74"

Add
Change
Remove



Example - spatial variables

- A local government researcher in London would want to use microdata that can be analysed by Local Authority District. Additional licences for restricted data can facilitate this.



Source: directory.londoncouncils.gov.uk

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Approved Researcher (AR) Scheme

- The AR Scheme facilitates access to Office for National Statistics (ONS) data that cannot be published openly
 - Detailed application to demonstrate researcher is 'fit and proper'
 - Knowledge, experience, security, 'public good'
 - ONS Special Licence data were supplied by the Economic and Social Data Service and the UK Data Service under the AR Scheme for about a decade
- A consultation on the AR Scheme was started in 2015



Key recommendations

- Researchers must have particular qualifications and/or research experience
- Accredited researchers will be approved for five years
- Researchers will be required to successfully complete Safe User of Research data Environments (SURE) training
 - ONS Special Licence (SL) data were withdrawn from the UK Data Service holdings as a follow-up to this review. The review of ONS SL is ongoing.



Office for National Statistics surveys affected by the Special Licence Review

- Labour Force Survey
- Annual Population Survey
- Integrated Household Survey
- General Household Survey/General Lifestyle Survey
- Living Costs and Food Survey
- Crime Survey for England and Wales
- Life Opportunities Survey
- ONS Omnibus/Opinions Survey
- Wealth and Assets Survey
- National Survey of Bereaved People



Finding data

Series

UK Data Service series record for:

Community Life Survey

[Abstract](#) | [Access](#) | [Get started](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Links](#) | [Search](#)

SERIES ABSTRACT

The Community Life Survey was first commissioned by the Cabinet Office in 2012-2013. It is an annual household survey conducted with adults resident in England, covering a range of topics including measures that are key to understanding society and local communities. These include volunteering, charitable giving, neighbourhood, civic engagement, social action and subjective well-being. The survey incorporates a small number of priority measures from the Citizenship Survey, which ran from 2001-2011. These measures were incorporated in the Community Life Survey so that trends in these issues could continue to be tracked over time.

DATA ACCESS

- + [GN 33475 | COMMUNITY LIFE SURVEYS, 2012/2013-](#)
- + [GN 33476 | COMMUNITY LIFE SURVEYS, 2012/13- : SPECIAL LICENCE ACCESS](#)

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Working with ONS

- The SL Review has affected every aspect of our work from pre-ingest, ingest, access, support
- Generating usage reports, the withdrawal of c.150 SL studies, provision of new supporting documentation, survey of projects using SL data from the last 3 years, statistical disclosure control, moving variables from SL to Secure Access equivalent or a new study.
- Streamlining work has been scheduled
- These changes have had a large impact on the work of researchers. SL model is well known. Might other depositors follow?



SDC review



- Anonymisation tests performed on EUL data
 - A range of demographic and employment variables used
 - SDCMicro in R. Results were positive. Some increased risk associated with non-banded age variable.
- Intruder testing performed on SL data i.e. attempts to identify respondents
 - Could some widely-used variables be made available under EUL with edits to other variables?
- A careful balance between research need and security. 'Personal information' classification has serious implications.



Access and user support

- Researchers who could previously download SL variables now have to use the UK Data Service Secure Lab for any new data
- This requires successful completion of SURE training
- Outputs they produce are subject to SDC
- Increased short-term workload for our staff
- Long-run impact is uncertain
 - Could use of data decrease?
 - Will researchers meet future access requirements?



Early conclusions

- Be responsive
 - Systems must be in place to react quickly to change
- Build close working relationships
 - Share information
- Understand your users and help your users understand your challenges as well
- More change is imminent
 - Digital Economy Bill



Acknowledgments

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Questions

ukdataservice.ac.uk/help/

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