



Introducing our data and services

UK Data Service





Data are critical for the way we are able to describe and explain the society in which we live.

Fiona Devine, University of Manchester



Data services are changing

There's now a more comprehensive data resource to enable evidence-based social and economic research.

The ESRC-funded UK Data Service provides simpler and more unified access to an extensive and expanding range of high-quality social research data – from UK censuses to government-funded surveys, longitudinal studies, international macrodata, qualitative data and business microdata.

The UK Data Service is designed to provide seamless access and support to meet the needs of academic researchers as well as a growing number of researchers and analysts in business, third sector and all levels of government.

The new service is built on the shoulders of several long-standing data collections and services, integrating and replacing:

- Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS)
- Census Programme
- Secure Data Service
- Survey Question Bank

It's also staffed by data experts based at centres of expertise across the UK:

- UK Data Archive, University of Essex
- Mimas, University of Manchester
- Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research, University of Manchester
- School of Geography, University of Leeds
- Geography and Environment, University of Southampton
- EDINA, University of Edinburgh
- Department of Information Studies, University College London
- Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, University College London

What data are available?

There are currently more than 6,000 datasets in our collection which include the following types.

Major UK surveys

Government-provided surveys are often used to inform policy. All of these can be used to describe a population at one point in time and most can be used to compare populations across time.

Cross-national surveys

Cross-national surveys are studies where the same survey instrument and, where practical, methods and fieldwork protocols are used across many nations.

Longitudinal studies

Longitudinal studies have data from repeated observations of the same subjects, allowing researchers to analyse change at the individual level.

UK Census data

UK Census data includes aggregate, boundary, flow and microdata from the last five UK censuses (1971 to 2011).

International macrodata

International macrodata are socio-economic time series data aggregated to a country or regional level for a range of countries over a substantial time period.

Business microdata

Business microdata are detailed data provided by the Office for National Statistics which can only be accessed in a secure setting to ensure confidentiality.

Qualitative and mixed methods

Qualitative and mixed methods data include in-depth interview transcripts, diaries, anthropological field notes, answers to open-ended survey questions, audio-visual recordings and images .

For examples of each type:

ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/key-data



6,000 datasets

25,000 registered users

60,000 downloads worldwide yearly

Where do the data come from?

- national statistical authorities
- UK government departments
- intergovernmental organisations
- research institutes
- market research agencies
- other data archives worldwide
- individual academics with research grants

How can I access the data?

You can search and browse our collections in Discover. There you will find full descriptions of each dataset along with related resources such as survey questionnaires, support guides and case studies of how the data were used. All are freely available on the website: discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk

When you're ready to download data (or analyse it online where possible) register with the UK Data Service. There is no fee to register. Find how to access our data: ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/how-to-access

How are the data used?

Our data are being used to advance research, inform policy and improve teaching.

Advancing research

Every day, researchers from all sectors browse our data collections and download data to support active projects. Their work asks questions from all areas of society, providing findings that further our understanding of key social issues.

Informing policy

Most research that uses our data is published in academic journals providing a valuable resource to further social science thinking in all sectors. Some findings are actively consulted by policymakers and publicised in the media, where they can have even greater impact.

Improving teaching

The use of real-life data in coursework adds interest and relevance. It also gives the next generation of social scientists the appetite for data and the data analysis skills necessary to make real contributions to future research and society.

To learn more, browse our library of case studies showing the many different ways UK Data Service data have been used: ukdataservice.ac.uk/use-data/data-in-use

FAQs

Some answers to your questions about the UK Data Service

Q. Where will I find the UK Data Service?

A. Data, documentation and support are all available online. Go to:
ukdataservice.ac.uk

Q. Is this service only for academic users?

A. No. The UK Data Service is open to social and economic researchers and teachers from all sectors, including central and local government, charities and foundations, independent research centres, think tanks, and business consultants and analysts. While a few data owners have access restrictions on their data, most collections are available under a standard end user licence or under special licence conditions.

Q. Is there a charge for data?

A. In most cases, no. Continued ESRC funding ensures that all materials in the UK Data Service are available to search and browse free of charge, including data documentation and support guides. Data required for non-commercial purposes can be downloaded at no cost. There is also no fee to register. There is a charge for commercial use of data, and in certain other instances. If charges are applicable, you will be notified during the ordering process.

Q. How do I register?

A. . Registration is required if you wish to download, order or analyse data online, where this is possible.

For information about who can access our data and the registration process:
ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/how-to-access/registration

Q. Will I be able to get 2011 Census data through this service?

A. Yes. The UK Data Service includes a full range of census support services and access will be provided to the ESRC's existing collection of census data 1971-2001 as well as the new 2011 Census datasets. Data availability will follow the release of census data in phases by the Office for National Statistics. To learn more: census.ukdataservice.ac.uk

Q. How do I share my research data?

A. There is more than one avenue through which you can share your data. For example data can be deposited: in a specialist data centre or archive; through a self-archiving system; or in an institutional repository. There are advantages and disadvantages to each.

For more guidance, including details on how to deposit data with the UK Data Service: ukdataservice.ac.uk/deposit-data

Q. I am an ESRC grant holder. How do I deposit my data at the end of my grant?

A. All ESRC researchers are contractually required to offer data to the UK Data Archive through the UK Data Service, which has staff on hand to provide advice and guidance on data management issues. Contacting us early on is highly beneficial.

For more information:
ukdataservice.ac.uk/deposit-data/esrc-researchers

Q. Do you provide information about how data should be prepared for sharing and longer-term archiving?

A. Yes. The UK Data Service offers advice and workshops for those creating, supporting and managing research data in the social sciences and beyond.

Consult our detailed modular information at:
ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage-data

Q. Is there training available in how to analyse data?

A. Yes. The UK Data Service offers workshops for social science data users, available in a range of formats and locations. See what's available at:
ukdataservice.ac.uk/news-and-events/events

You can also find a wide range of courses through the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM):

www.ncrm.ac.uk/training

Q. Why should I cite data?

A. Data are a vital part of the scientific research process and proper citation should be a significant feature of research publications. Data citation:

- acknowledges the author's sources
- makes identifying data easier
- promotes the reproduction of research results
- makes it easier to find data
- allows the impact of data to be tracked
- provides a structure which recognises and can reward data creators

For guidance and examples:
ukdataservice.ac.uk/use-data/citing-data

Q. Where can I learn more?

A. ukdataservice.ac.uk

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