

# An Introduction to the UK Data Service

Sarah King-Hele, UK Data Service, University  
of Manchester

AMBS PhD students

29<sup>th</sup> January 2021

# Overview

- Types and sources of data available from the UKDS
- Data access
- Other useful resources and support
- Website demo
  
- Questions – type your questions in the chat box  
– answers at the end

# 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
- Support, training and guidance

# Who is it for?

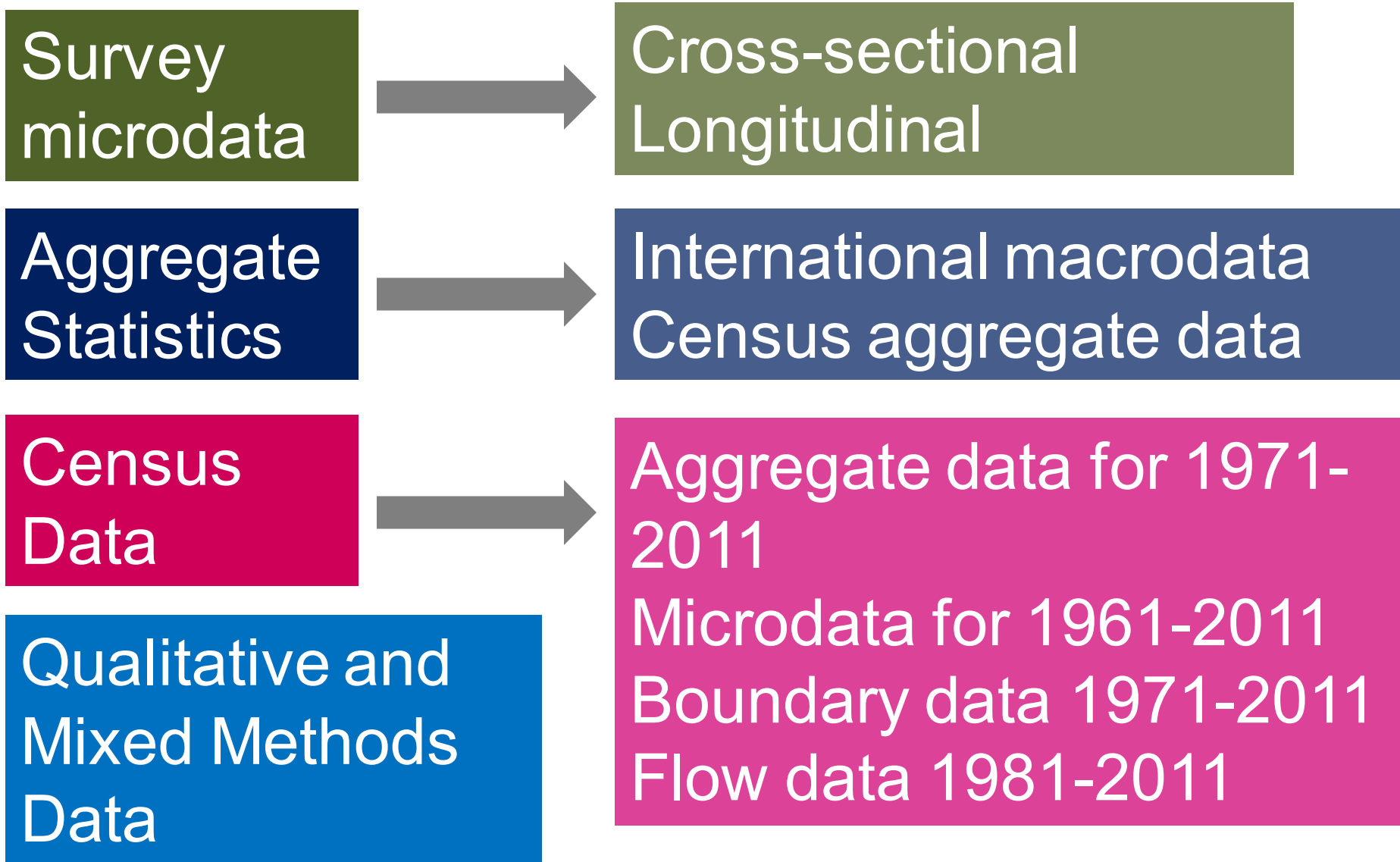
- Academic researchers and students
- Government analysts
- Charities and foundations
- Business consultant
- Independent research centres
- Think tanks



# Sources of data

- Official agencies, mainly central government
- International government organisations
- Research institutions
- Individual academics - research grants
- Market research agencies
- Public records/historical sources

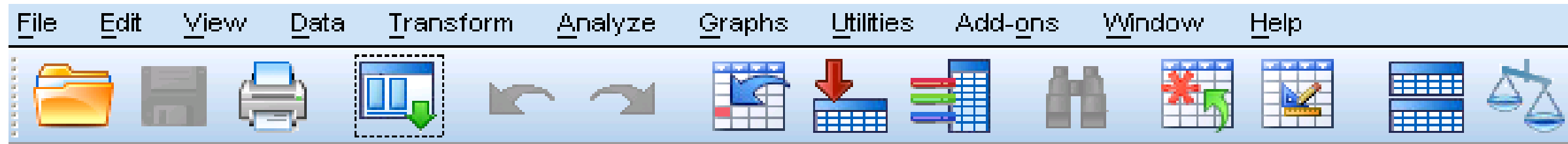
# Types of data collections



# Survey microdata

- Anonymised individual or household level data
- Need to use an analysis package e.g. SPSS, Stata, R
- Very flexible (allow to produce your own tables, populations and attributes)

# Survey microdata – how it looks



	rowlabel	sex	age	livharm1	ethgrp2	educat3	work
1	61302140	2	36	1	1	1	
2	61384060	1	44	4	1	3	
3	63684260	1	43	1	1	2	
4	63790220	2	27	3	4	3	
5	63843180	1	38	1	1	4	
6	71105020	2	18	3	3	2	
7	71105140	1	65	3	3	4	
8	71106020	1	58	5	1	1	
9	71106060	2	38	3	1	1	
10	71108100	1	29	3	4	4	



# UK and cross-national surveys

## Background

- Collect data about individuals or households
- Commissioned by Government
- Conducted by organisations such as the ONS or NatCen



## Key characteristics

- Large sample sizes; nationally-representative
- Repeated cross-sections: same (or similar) questionnaire with a new sample every time - many repeated regularly



## Cross-national surveys

- Studies where the same survey instrument are used across many nations
- Same or similar methods and fieldwork protocols

# UK and cross-national surveys - examples

## **UK surveys e.g.**

Quarterly Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey

Health Surveys, Social Attitudes Surveys, Crime Surveys

Family Resources Survey; Living Costs and Food survey

## **Cross-national Surveys e.g.**

European Social Survey, Eurobarometer, etc.

# Labour Force Survey

- A key government survey
- Measures employment, unemployment and economic activity
- Plus related topics
  - occupation, training, hours of work and personal characteristics of household members aged 16 years and over
- Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 1992-
  - ~60,000 interviewed per quarter
- Also
  - Longitudinal datasets (linking quarters)
  - Annual population survey

UK jobless rate falls to 5.6%, lowest since 2008, but pay still sluggish

Economists say fall in unemployment is still not feeding through to consumers in the form of higher wages



The UK employment rate is 73.4%, the highest since comparable records began in 1971. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Britain's unemployment rate has dropped to its lowest level since 2008 but earnings growth has slowed, according to the final official labour market figures before the election.

# Longitudinal data



Similar to 'UK Surveys'

- Individual level data with large samples, nationally-representative
- Surveys are repeated, often annually



**BUT**

- Follow the same individuals over time

# Panel studies: Understanding Society

- UKHLS, run from 2009-
- Multi-topic household survey – e.g. demographics, ethnicity, language use, health, disability and caring
- Contains BHPS sample Wave 2 onwards – (British Household Panel Survey 1991-2009)
- COVID study, April, May, June 2020+

# Cohort studies

- Survey design: track individuals over time who were born in a particular period
  - National Child Development Study (1958)
  - 1970 British Cohort Study
  - Millennium Cohort Study (2000/01)
- Different decades: examine generational change
- Topics: Health/medical and social and economic

# Aggregate data

- Aggregated: statistics or counts
- Units are geographical areas
- Can be used:
  - as they are
  - for further analysis – trends, relationships
  - as contextual information



# International macrodata

- Time series data aggregated to country or region (Annual, Quarterly, Monthly)
- Regularly updated
- International governmental organisations (IMF, OECD, IEA, World Bank, UN)
- Wide range of socio-economic topics



# UK census data

- 1961-2011 UK census data
- Used as baseline for other statistics
- Small geographies
- Census outputs
  - aggregate data
  - flow data e.g. commuting
  - microdata
  - boundary data



# Qualitative data

**Qualitative data** is non-numeric information for example:

- interview transcripts
- visual data; focus groups
- essays; diaries
- audio data; questions
- case notes; newspaper clippings

**Mixed methods** approaches combine qualitative data with quantitative (numeric) data



# Access conditions






Data Type	Access conditions
<b>Open access</b> <i>Most Census / International - Small number of survey teaching datasets</i>	Open access
<b>End User Licence</b> <i>Most research datasets</i>	Requires registration and user name and password UK academics and students login using their institutional username and password
<b>Special Licence</b> <i>e.g. Most survey microdata with lower level geography</i>	Restricted to 'Approved Researchers' under the Statistics and Registration Act
<b>Secure access</b>	Restricted to 'Approved Researchers' and access limited through a physical or virtual environment

# Finding data: ukdataservice.ac.uk


The image shows the homepage of the UK Data Service website. At the top right, there are links for 'Site search', 'FAQ', 'Help', 'Contact', and 'New users'. Below this is a navigation menu with 'UK Data Service' on the left and 'About us', 'Get data', 'Use data', 'Manage data', 'Deposit data', and 'News and events' on the right. The 'Get data' link is circled in red. Below the navigation menu are social media icons for LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and a 'Register / Login' button. A large dark blue banner contains the text 'Explore the UK's largest collection of social, economic and population data resources.' Below this text is a search bar with a 'Search data' dropdown and a magnifying glass icon, which is also circled in red. At the bottom, there are two columns: 'About the UK Data Service' on the left and 'Guides and resources' on the right. The 'Guides and resources' column includes a link for 'Dataset guides' and a partially visible 'Topic guides' link. A photograph of a red double-decker bus is visible in the bottom left corner, and a photograph of a woman's face is visible in the bottom right corner.

Site search FAQ Help Contact New users

UK Data Service About us **Get data** Use data Manage data Deposit data News and events

     Register / Login

Explore the UK's largest collection of social, economic and population data resources.

Search data 

About the UK Data Service Guides and resources

Dataset guides

Topic guides

# Other resources and support from UKDS

## Webinars , online workshops & conferences

- See events pages

## Guides, video tutorials, interactive modules

- Topic
- Dataset
- Methods and software

## Helpdesk

- Individual support by e-mail

## Case studies

- How others used the data

# Useful UKDS guides and webinars

- Past events – see webinar recording: eg.
  - Qualitative data: <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/news-and-events/eventsitem/?id=5573>
  - Social network analysis series (in Python): <https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/news-and-events/eventsitem/?id=5661>
- Data Skills Modules – surveys, longitudinal, aggregate data – for new learners [UK Data Service » Data skills modules](#)
- Using Survey data – guide/webpages with exercises – process of starting survey research, aimed at dissertation students [UK Data Service » Guide to using survey data](#) or PDF: [Using survey data \(ukdataservice.ac.uk\)](#)
- Guides
  - [What is weighting?](#) (PDF guide)/ An introduction to using weights in social surveys (Video) - basic video introduction. [Weights in social surveys: an introduction - YouTube](#)
  - [What is Stata?](#) [And What is SPSS 20 for Windows?](#)



# Other useful resources

- Understanding Society training in Stata, R, SAS and SPSS - or same materials online in your own time using MoodleX

[www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/help/training](http://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/help/training)

- NCRM training database – huge range of courses

[NCRM Training and Events](#)

- Most countries have data archives or services:

[UK Data Service » Other data providers](#)

# Why use our data?



## Advantages

- Save resources (time, money, effort)
- Use data you could not collect yourself
  - from the past,
  - other countries
  - large/representative samples
- Use high quality data



# Survey documentation

- Very important – the key to understanding the data!
- Questionnaires, user guides, technical reports, details of derived variables
  - Questions
  - Who answered
  - How the survey was conducted
  - Any changes to the raw data
- All available on our website
- Searchable using Control-F



# Survey weights

- Often needed with survey data
- Weighting variable(s) in the dataset
- Make the sample data better represent the population
- Easy to use in statistics packages
- Details will be in the survey documentation



See our guides:

- [What is weighting?](#)
- [An introduction to using weights in social surveys \(Video\)](#)
- [How to use weights in Nesstar \(Video\)](#)

# Cite the Data

- Citations provided for every record and dataset
- Use the UK Data Service citation tool to copy and paste the correct citation



## Citation and copyright

The citation for this study is:

NatCen Social Research. (2014). *British Social Attitudes Survey, 2013*. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 7500, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7500-1>

# Website demo

[www.ukdataservice.ac.uk](http://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk)

Finding data:

- Use search box on front page to search catalogue: catalogue search: [UK Data Service » Studies](#), searches for studies or series, searches for words or phrases in the title of studies or other parts of the catalogue page e.g. abstract.
- Key data pages: [UK Data Service » Key data](#)
- Theme pages: [UK Data Service » Data by theme](#), include COVID19, poverty, health, economics etc
- Variable and question bank: [UK Data Service Discover » Variable and question bank](#), searches for words or phrases in variables and questions in surveys.
- Qualibank: [UK Data Service Discover » UK Quali Bank](#)

# Questions

Website:

[www.ukdataservice.ac.uk](http://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk)

- New website in spring 2021

Contacts:

[sarah.king-hele@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.king-hele@manchester.ac.uk)