



Economic and Social Data Service

active users

41,783

datasets delivered

50,941

data report downloads

120,627

new registrations

24,220

new data sets

456

new editions

299

Economic and Social Data Service

Annual Report August 2008 – July 2009

Welcome to the ESDS Annual Report for 2008-2009 from the Chair and Director



I have enormously enjoyed my first year as Chair of the ESDS Advisory Committee. Throughout 2008-2009 the service continued to deliver against its stated aims and objectives, most notably in my view by its growing ability to use advancing technology to deliver data. ESDS continued also to strengthen its international collaborations and its collections grew significantly in value as more and more longitudinal studies were added and augmented. I would also single out the increasing use of ESDS datasets by students as a core part of their training as well as by senior academics for their research.

It has been a pleasure to work with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) case officer, Siân Millard (née Bourne), during 2008-2009. I would also like to thank Abi Obafemi of the Joint Information Systems Committee for his commitment to ESDS and for providing the excellent facilities for meetings at Brettenham House. I have greatly enjoyed working with Kevin Schürer and the other members of the ESDS staff and I look forward to the continued development of ESDS under Kristine Doronenkova's able administration as ESRC case officer.

I would like to congratulate my distinguished predecessor Jil Matheson on her appointment as the Government's National Statistician.

Audrey Brown
Chair, ESDS Advisory Committee 2008-2009

As we approach the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is daily becoming more obvious that reliable, carefully curated research data are critical to the decision making process. The world we live in now is becoming so complex and fast-moving, that it is literally vital to be able to access top quality social and economic data in order to plot our futures.

I believe ESDS is providing just such a service, right now. ESDS is firmly established as the UK's foremost provider of economic and social research data and it has been my privilege to have seen the service continue to grow during 2008-2009.

Going into the mid-term review during 2010 we have a terrific opportunity to demonstrate how ESDS is achieving its strategic aims and how it can continue to provide a unique value-added service for students, researchers and policy makers into the next decade.

Kevin Schürer
Director, ESDS

Economic and Social Data Service

Annual Report August 2008 – July 2009

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The Economic and Social Data Service

The Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) is a distributed national data service established in 2003 by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). ESDS was set up to provide enhanced access and support for an extensive range of key economic and social data, both quantitative and qualitative, spanning many disciplines and themes. ESDS is based on a successful partnership between the Universities of Essex and Manchester, and comprises six distinct yet inter-related services.

ESDS aims and objectives

The overall aim of ESDS is to promote wider and more informed use of data for research and teaching in the social sciences and to ensure that these data continue to be available over time.

To achieve this aim ESDS will:

- > develop a clear, co-ordinated acquisitions strategy in conjunction with the ESRC and JISC;
- > develop and promote common standards and agreed strategies for data preparation, processing, documentation and preservation;
- > integrate data services through the development of a universal single point of access and simple registration procedures and common conditions of use;
- > enhance underlying data sources through the development of value-added services around key datasets and series;
- > promote increased use of datasets through both general and specialist user support activities;
- > develop interface and analysis tools appropriate to differing levels of expertise amongst end users;
- > respond to key technical developments in the broader information environment;
- > engage on a regular basis with a wide range of stakeholders, including data suppliers, data funders and end users.

This is ESDS

ESDS Government – Led by **Angela Dale** of the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research (CCSR) in Manchester, this service promotes and facilitates the use of large-scale government surveys in research, learning and teaching – providing methodological guides, short courses and support for key statistical packages. It is supported with input from the UK Data Archive in Essex in the areas of data acquisition, processing and dissemination.

ESDS International – This service is led by **Jackie Carter** at Mimas in Manchester and is responsible for international macrodata, with support from the UK Data Archive. The service supports and disseminates data from major intergovernmental organisations, plus a range of international survey datasets. It promotes and facilitates use of international datasets in research, learning and teaching across a range of disciplines.

ESDS Longitudinal – Managed jointly by **Jack Kneeshaw** at the UK Data Archive and Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) in Essex, the service promotes the use of longitudinal data and supports a range of longitudinal datasets by creating data enhancements and providing user support and training.

ESDS Qualidata – Led by **Louise Corti** at the UK Data Archive, ESDS Qualidata provides access to and support for a range of qualitative datasets. It generates a number of data enhancements and provides information and training resources for the re-analysis of qualitative data.

ESDS Access and Preservation – Hosted by the UK Data Archive and led by **Melanie Wright**, this service represents the core of the ESDS, focusing on data acquisition, processing, preservation and dissemination. It provides access to most of the data held by ESDS through a variety of web-based systems and also handles registration of users across ESDS.

ESDS Management – The overall management of ESDS is the responsibility of the UK Data Archive, led by **Kevin Schürer**. This service provides consistency and standards across the other services and performs a broad strategic role in relation to the supply, funding and use of social science data. It also provides a coherent marketing and outreach strategy for the whole of ESDS.

Further details of the activities of these individual services can be found on the ESDS web site at www.esds.ac.uk. This report covers all six services, and for brevity includes a combined set of performance statistics.



Executive summary

Each ESDS data delivery service presents a case study and a general report for 2008-2009. These are followed by a statistical report for the whole of ESDS.

In the case studies, ESDS Government spotlight the teaching of undergraduates in the use of advanced quantitative techniques, while ESDS International (macro) feature a study of the biases affecting corporate decisions on overseas investment. ESDS International (micro) focus on a study of children in poverty, while ESDS Longitudinal demonstrate the use of sampler datasets drawn from a survey of children born in the 1990s. ESDS Qualidata cite the re-use of data by students, while ESDS Access and Preservation give examples of how researchers interrogate a major psychiatric dataset.

In their report, **ESDS Government** describe how the Essex and Manchester teams work together to create a unified service. Essex concentrates on building the collections, while Manchester promotes the collections for research and teaching and provides user support. During 2008-2009 the service promoted the use of data in research by raising awareness with educators and by providing instruction in data analysis and related skills. Six successful meetings were held between data producers and data users, and there was continued effective outreach featuring posters and web-based resources.

ESDS International reached its 20,000th user during the reporting period. The service's user community was extended, partly via YouTube and Twitter. New online resources and value-added services were developed, and new guides to important studies were released. New resources became available, including the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the African Development Indicators were added to the data portfolio. The service held its fourth Annual Conference and presentations were made at conferences around the world.

ESDS Longitudinal had its busiest ever year due to the ESRC's emphasis on investing in longitudinal studies, such as Understanding Society and Timescapes. There were many updates to existing studies plus releases of several important waves and sweeps of data. Sampler files were piloted and the Conditional Access system was developed. New user resources were published such as web pages and 'useful notes' and a steady flow of workshops was delivered.

ESDS Qualidata was very busy during 2008-2009. Several new studies were added on subjects as varied as the social condition of older men and the role of television coverage of the Iraq war. Considerable effort went into teaching social scientists how to search and access the collections and how to do secondary analysis of data. Technical development continued including use of the semantic web and the processing of interview transcripts, while the tension between the archiving of data and the complex ethical issues arising from its re-use was explored.

ESDS Access and Preservation continued to enhance the preservation systems at the UK Data Archive, moving the servers into a more robust environment and developing a metadata strategy to improve information development. The Lucene search engine was introduced, allowing users to conduct basic or advanced searches combining a range of variables across the catalogue. Developmental work was also carried out preparing for the integration in 2009-2010 of the Survey Resources Network (SRN) and the Secure Data Service (SDS), both funded by the ESRC.

ESDS Management held a think tank in advance of the mid-term review of ESDS. This identified key areas where ESDS has made a clear impact, namely the generation of research activity, influence on policy making, and the teaching and instruction of future economists and social scientists. Preparatory work was also carried out on a new ESDS Collection Development Strategy and potential strategic alliances were developed, partly by welcoming visits from experts involved in data management.

The statistical report demonstrates the growing user base of ESDS. Web site page hits and user queries continued to rise, the 2008 and 2009 figures being up on the previous year by 27 and 28 per cent respectively. The number of datasets delivered to users exceeded 50,000 for the first time, the increase in demand for ESDS Qualidata being especially noticeable. There was a 64 per cent increase in the datasets further processed for value-added delivery via Nesstar and Beyond 20/20, and there was a trebling of longitudinal datasets added to the collection and processed.

Demonstrating the impact of ESDS

ESDS Government

ESDS in undergraduate teaching: advanced quantitative methods



The ESRC initiative on Advanced Quantitative Methods has developed a number of activities aimed at enhancing the capacity of UK social sciences in quantitative methods. As part of this, ESRC commissioned a series of pilot projects specifically focused on testing new and different approaches to teaching quantitative methods, to establish which were most effective.

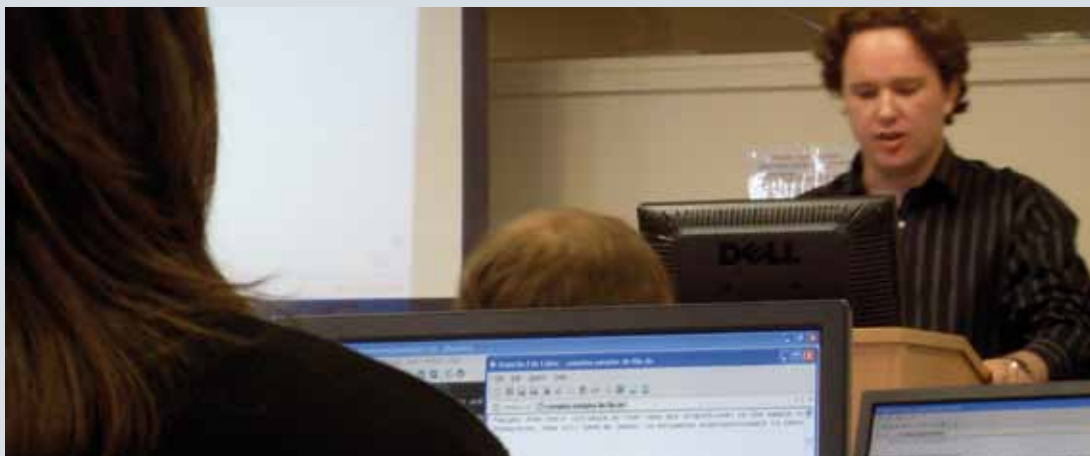
One of these projects, awarded to Mark Brown and Jo Wathan at the University of Manchester, developed materials to support use of ESDS government surveys in under-graduate dissertations. As part of the project, second-year sociology undergraduates were invited to attend five half-day workshops that introduced the range of government surveys available and explained how to access data and how to conduct exploratory analyses.

This work is continuing to provide valuable impact in the following ways:

> Three workbooks developed by this project are now available on the ESDS web site and are being promoted more widely to teachers and students across the UK.

> A one day workshop for methods teachers, held in April 2009, which provided an opportunity for methods teachers to meet and share information, not just about this specific project but more widely. The meeting introduced the ESDS Longitudinal and ESDS International learning and teaching resources, as well as those for ESDS Government. Participants also heard about another ESRC-funded undergraduate pilot project: Contextualising the Teaching of Quantitative Methods in Politics, led by Sean Carey at the University of Sheffield. The meeting was heavily over-subscribed and those who attended were very eager to exchange information and establish links as well as to find out about the ESDS resources.

> By providing an input into the review of undergraduate methods teaching conducted by the ESRC's Strategic Advisor on the Undergraduate Teaching of Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences, Professor John MacInnes.



ESDS International (macro)

Going global: making investments abroad



ESDS International is a rich data resource for researchers investigating corporate behaviour and decision-making. Business schools are active users of the service, including Kristina Vasileva from the Cass Business School at the City University London.

Kristina's work examines familiarity bias in decisions regarding foreign direct investment. Foreign direct investments are investments made when a company builds or acquires a controlling interest in an enterprise in another country. Typically these investments involve long-lasting financial commitments and exchanges of personnel and technology. They create the new jobs, markets and the commercial ties which underpin globalised economies. Kristina analysed managers' preferences to invest in countries socially and culturally familiar to their own when making this type of corporate investment decision.

Kristina based her analysis on a general regression model using data drawn from the OECD's International Development Statistics, the World Bank's World Development Indicators and the International Monetary Fund's International Financial Statistics which are all made freely available by ESDS International. Her results show that corporate decisions regarding foreign direct investments are prone to familiarity bias. Foreign direct investors prefer to invest in countries that are geographically closer to their home countries as physical proximity is often an indicator of cultural and linguistic familiarity. Corporate managers feel more familiarity towards countries with which they share a border, certain historical ties such as a colonial

relationship, or even a common past if previously part of the same country. Usually such historical ties lead to the existence of minority population which strengthens familiarity through a common language and culture.

Institutional similarities are also important indicators of business climate familiarity and Kristina's work shows corporate investors prefer to invest in countries whose economic and legal systems share similar origins to their own as well as being part of the same international economic or political unions. The research also shows the size of the source country's economy is a relevant factor as is the country's openness to trade. These results suggest that by implementing measures that will ease the understanding of doing business, governments can increase the attractiveness of their country for investments.



ESDS International (micro)

Young Lives: an International Study of Childhood Poverty



Birth cohort studies have traditionally been among the most accessed survey data held in the ESDS collection. *The National Child Development Study*, the *1970 British Cohort Study* and the *Millennium Cohort Study* repeatedly achieve 'top 20' status when accesses get counted for annual reports.

But if these UK birth cohorts are among the established 'jewels in the crown' of the ESDS collection, they are by no means the only birth cohort data that attract users' attention. The release, in February 2006, of Round 1 of a cross-national study that follows cohorts of babies born in 2002 in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam was relatively low-key – as is often the case when just the first sweep of data are available for a longitudinal study. However, in collaboration with the study team at the University of Oxford, ESDS International has worked hard to promote the study to data users

and, helped by the release of Round 2 of the data in February 2009, the study has built up a growing and cosmopolitan user base. At the end of this reporting period, 133 users from 70 institutions, representing 12 countries have now accessed the data.

Scientific output based on *Young Lives* includes quantitative and qualitative research and is both subject-based and methodological. Much of the research conducted so far focuses on single countries but the design of the study allows cross-national comparisons, both across the participating countries and with other birth cohort studies.

The study itself, sponsored by the UK's Department for International Development, goes from strength to strength with the recent announcement of continued funding which means that the project is underwritten until at least 2017.

ESDS Longitudinal

Introducing the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children



ESDS Longitudinal has recently released a set of social science sampler datasets from the *Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children* (ALSPAC). Each of the six datasets contains a subset of variables compiled using questionnaire and/or assessment data on a particular topic, such as household composition, attitudes toward neighbourhood, housing conditions, socio-economic information, child/parental height and parental employment/occupation.

These bespoke datasets were created by the ALSPAC study team with ESRC funding and are designed both as introductory data files for researchers and for use in undergraduate classrooms as teaching resources for quantitative methods courses. ALSPAC (also known as the '*Children of the 90s*' study), which is based at the University of Bristol, is an ongoing longitudinal study of a population of children born to mothers resident in one geographical area in England.

Information has been collected at regular and frequent intervals from pregnancy and throughout childhood concerning the child's physical environments, parental characteristics (including economic and educational indicators), social circumstances, and family relationships. To take part in the study, ALSPAC recruited more than 14,000 pregnant women with estimated dates of delivery between April 1991 and December 1992, who were living in the Avon Health Authority area.

The ALSPAC team have created an online forum for social and economic researchers, which includes information for those wishing to apply for access to other ALSPAC data.



ESDS Qualidata

Re-using ESDS Qualidata: teaching the researchers of the future



Jo Haynes, Lecturer at the University of Bristol, has been using numerous data collections from ESDS Qualidata to support her teaching of qualitative research methods for several years. She has taught over 65 MA and Ph.D. students using this material. A key motivation has been her desire to provide students with data, enabling more teaching time to focus on developing skills in data analysis.

Jo uses studies with diverse topics such as *Creating Citizen-Consumers: Changing Relationships and Identifications, 2003-2005* (SN 5590); *Consumption, Lifestyle and Identity: Reading the New Men's Lifestyle Magazines, 1985-1997* (SN 4543); *Context and Motive in the Perpetuation of Racial Harassment and Violence in North Staffordshire, 2004* (SN 5274); and *British Migrants in Spain: the extent and nature of social integration, 2003-2005* (SN 5271). Selection criteria have included data quality and the ability to divide the dataset into sub-samples of a manageable size for student projects (e.g. by participant characteristics, geography, or other features). Students are then asked

to write 4,000 word reports based on their analyses of these sub-samples. There are challenges with having students re-use existing data: for example, the quality and amount of supporting material describing the original research varies across the collections.

The key benefits of re-using data for students – the researchers of the future – are the opportunities it provides to evaluate critically the design, execution and conclusions of the original study and to practice developing their own new rationales for reinterpreting data. She has been impressed by students' creativity in generating new questions for existing data, sometimes related to the initial topic but deepening its focus and, in other cases, asking new questions altogether. For example, in the study of British migration to Spain, the original questions addressed trends, motivations, and identity of British migrants to Costa del Sol, finding a lack of integration of migrants within the local Spanish community. The student project re-analysed these data by exploring the reproduction of class differences, looking at how migrants constructed and reconstructed class in their new communities by distinguishing themselves not only from tourists, but from other expatriate Britons as well.

(This text is based on a presentation given by Jo Haynes for a National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) Train the Trainers workshop, 13 July 2009 in London.)



ESDS Access and Preservation

ONS Psychiatric Morbidity Surveys: some examples of their use



The Office for National Statistics' *Psychiatric Morbidity in Great Britain* survey series began in 1993. The surveys have been conducted among various population groups over time. Alongside common aims such as assessment of the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity, they have also covered issues specific to different populations. Groups examined so far include:

- > adults (1993 and 2000): the surveys aimed to estimate psychiatric morbidity and related factors among adults living in private households;
- > homeless people (1994): coverage included co-morbidity between mental and physical illness; drug, tobacco and alcohol use; and precipitating factors, including housing circumstances;
- > prisoners (1997): the prevalence of psychiatric problems among remand and sentenced prisoners was examined, to inform policy decisions about services;
- > children and adolescents (1999 and 2004): coverage included conduct, emotional and hyperkinetic disorders; autistic spectrum disorder; and relationships between psychiatric morbidity and aspects of young people's lives;
- > young people in local authority care (2001-2003), which aimed to assess how many children looked after by local authorities had mental health problems and how far needs for treatment were being met.

During 2008-2009, *Psychiatric Morbidity* datasets were ordered by 67 ESDS users, mostly from academia, but also from the government and voluntary sector, with funding provided by research councils, government and charities. As expected from a diverse data series, the range of research being conducted is very wide, covering not only direct mental health issues, but also topics with a more socio-economic focus, such as the effects of alcohol marketing on consumption, and youth lifestyles.

Further examples include: an examination of relationships between psychiatric symptoms, life events and disabilities; specific conditions such as depression in adults, eating disorders in young people, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD); risk factors for child conduct problems; rates of psychiatric disorder within specific geographical areas; children's experience of bereavement; suicide risk and substance misuse; the effects of unemployment on mental state; and sleep research.

The survey series continues, most recently with a third survey of adults, conducted in 2007. Initial results were published in January 2009, and ESDS anticipates the deposit of the data in due course to facilitate further secondary analysis.



ESDS Government

Government surveys, especially repeated series, provide a key resource for UK social science. ESDS Government promotes and facilitates effective use of surveys such as the *General Household Survey* (GHS), now renamed the *General Lifestyle Survey*; the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS); the *Opinions Omnibus Survey* and the *British Crime Survey* (BCS).

ESDS Government teams at Essex and Manchester

The work of ESDS Government is divided between the UK Data Archive at Essex and CCSR at Manchester. The Essex team is responsible for negotiating the deposit of data with the data producers, for checking the data quality and documentation, and ensuring the safe preservation of each file. They also disseminate the data online and, for most of the ESDS Government surveys, provide the data in Nesstar for the online exploration of metadata, frequency distributions and analyses.

The Manchester team is responsible for promoting and supporting the use of the government surveys in research and teaching, including answering user queries and producing enhanced ancillary materials, made available via the web site.

Promoting use of data in high quality research

Two important elements of the outreach strategy address the two ends of the user spectrum. First, the aim is to increase the use of government surveys in teaching and learning at under-graduate and Masters level and, second, to promote greater use of some of the unique aspects of the government surveys. These unique aspects include information collected for all members of the household, organised so that links can be made between different members of the same family or household; a long time period thus facilitating the analysis of change over time; a growing number of surveys with a true longitudinal dimension.

To achieve these ends the service has consulted those who teach survey analysis to establish the most profitable lines of communication. It has also held a one day workshop for methods teachers to promote and share information on resources. This has resulted in proposals to augment our 'Getting Started' guides by posting short videos on the ESDS web site.

To promote greater use of the more complex aspects of government surveys the service has:

- > held a workshop on concepts in complex sample design and the analysis of survey data using Stata;
- > developed a new online guide to analysing complex survey design in ESDS Government datasets;
- > run a data manipulation workshop for analyses of surveys at different levels (for example, household and individual) or which have a complex structure (where the data is held in a number of separate linkable datasets or 'tables');
- > provided a user guide to one of the most complex government surveys, the Expenditure and Food Survey.



Contact and collaboration with data users and producers

User meetings bring together data producers and users from academia, government departments and voluntary organisations. They provide a very important forum for discussion of new survey developments, user consultation and dissemination of new research findings.

Six meetings are now held each year – each on a different survey or set of surveys and each with about eight short presentations. The programme is developed in collaboration with the survey producer (Natcen or ONS) and, where appropriate, the relevant government departments, such as the Home Office or Department of Health. Meetings are typically attended by 60-70 people and all presentations are published on the ESDS web site, forming a widely-used repository of information on the surveys. These meetings often have valuable outcomes; for example, following discussions at a recent *Family Resources Survey* meeting ONS agreed to deposit the Households Below Average Income dataset with the UK Data Archive – a dataset widely used by government to chart changes in income inequality. A less tangible outcome is the opportunity for discussion – both formal and informal – between a wide range of users, representative of the funding departments and the data producers.

Wherever possible the aim is to develop resources in collaboration with the data producers. The recent guide to the *Expenditure and Food Survey* provides an example where the service has worked in collaboration with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), who are responsible for the sections of the survey on food purchases and ONS who run the entire survey. This ensures that the final guide, which is available online, provides material which is of value to a wide spectrum of users.



Outreach activities

As a result of consultations aimed at achieving greater use of government surveys, a theme-based poster series has been developed which highlights the benefit and potential of the survey series. In autumn 2008, a series of A4 sized posters focusing on crime were sent to over 400 UK social science departments with a request to display and circulate these materials. In September 2009, another set of posters on the topic of health were sent to UK social science departments. Other outreach is achieved by twice-yearly newsletter, regular email updates to users, conference presentations and regular hands-on introductory workshops.

The range of web-based resource increases annually as more user guides are added to the collection. These include theme-based guides to help users identify relevant topics on health, crime, consumption – and methodological guides - for example, on using the government surveys to analyse change over time, or on using hierarchical data, matching files and pooling data.

ESDS International

During the last year ESDS International has further enhanced its macro and microdata portfolios, created a new set of e-learning materials and implemented exciting new ways to engage with the user community. In addition, the service reached a milestone and welcomed its 20,000th user this year.

Extending the user community

ESDS International is keen to engage and extend the user community using innovative technologies and this year launched its own YouTube channel and Twitter account. With presentations from the most recent annual conference uploaded to YouTube and regular tweets to provide users with updates on new features, the service is able to engage more interactively with the user base. ESDS International is also working collaboratively with others, such as Intute Economics, to promote the service and engage subject communities. These new methods of communication, in addition to the ESDS International Wikipedia page, will further increase the profile of the service.

Online resources and value-added services

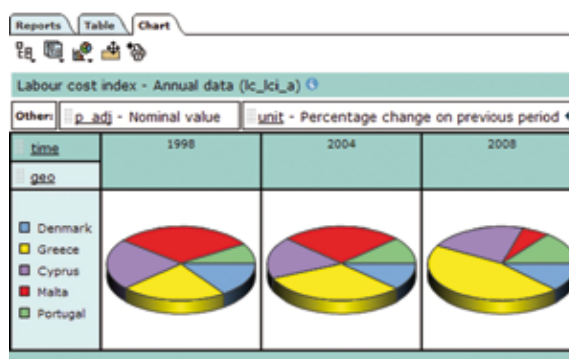
The team made practical preparations for the OECD's move towards Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), and in ground breaking work successfully converted and processed data from SDMX format into Beyond 20/20 format.

Behind the scenes, the team also prepared for the move to a new version of Beyond 20/20 in September 2009 and a simultaneous upgrade to a new, more powerful and resilient hardware infrastructure.

Introductory guides were produced for two sets of survey data supported by the service. A guide to the Eurostat surveys (e.g. the *European Union Labour Force Survey* (EU-LFS) and the *European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions* (EU-SILC) and a guide to several regional barometer surveys (e.g. Afrobarometer) outlining what data are available, how they might be accessed and what resources exist.

Developing Research Capabilities

Following on from the success of the Countries and Citizens e-learning materials an additional set of e-learning materials were released in February 2009, based on a key socio-economic data topic - the United Nation's (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They have been designed to enable learners to explore the UN's MDGs whilst at the same time guiding them through using the datasets available at ESDS International. These materials are freely available to all for use in self study or within taught courses although they are aimed primarily at UK higher and further education learners.



Data portfolio enhancements

The service further enhanced its macrodata portfolio this year with the launch of the World Bank's Africa Development Indicators in May 2009. This extensive database provides data on 53 African countries and 5 country groups; a key feature being the level of detail with over 1,200 indicators for each country. The Africa Development Indicators cover topics ranging from national accounts, trade, and government finance to health, education, energy and the environment. As data can be difficult to collate on Africa the importance of having just one database with this information is invaluable for research.

In addition, licensing for the UN Comtrade database has been agreed and work has been undertaken to prepare this for release in September 2009. The UN Comtrade contains time series data for over 140 reporter countries from as far back as 1962. It is the largest depository of international trade data and it will be a valuable new resource for our user community.

The reporting period was a quiet one in terms of acquiring new microdata. The 2007 data were added for the Latinobarómetro survey and data for round 2 of the Young Lives birth cohort study were released to users early in 2009.

ESDS International on the road

The fourth ESDS International conference was held on 1 December 2008 at the Institute of Materials in London. Based on the theme of 'the changing world',

it brought together delegates from both the data user and data provider communities to share experiences and discuss new developments in international data. Speakers included Joachim Doll, from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), who showcased their new 'OECD.stat' statistics portal to enable improved access to their datasets. Valentina Kalk, from the World Bank also introduced the African Development Indicators database, which the World Bank have recently made available online.

The service also gave presentations at various high profile events including the International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST) 2009 conference in Tampere, Finland with a talk on 'Mind the Gap: Global Data Sharing' discussing the barriers restricting global data sharing and the work ESDS International has undertaken to provide resources that are freely available to all. A presentation on 'Infrastructures for the use and re-use of research data' was also given at the Madrono Data Repositories Seminar 2008 in Madrid, highlighting progress on new initiatives to support the use and re-use of research data. The service also attended the OECD Forum 2009: 'The Crisis and Beyond' in Paris in June 2009 where the theme of the event was on creating a stronger, cleaner and fairer economy.

Furthermore, outreach and training activities this year included courses given on 'Cross-National Data Resources for East Asia' at the University of Oxford and Bristol University as well as running a new joint event with ESDS Government, 'Britain in a European Context'.



ESDS Longitudinal



In recent years, the ESRC has placed an increased emphasis on the UK's longitudinal data portfolio. The new UK Household Longitudinal Study – *Understanding Society* – and the Qualitative Longitudinal Study – *Timescapes* – have added to an already very rich set of resources. Plans continue apace towards the creation of a new Birth Cohort Facility and the launch of what will be the UK's fifth national birth cohort study in 2012. These developments, and others described below, represent a welcome challenge for ESDS Longitudinal in its task of promoting and supporting the use of these major ESRC investments.

Developing the data portfolio

The ESRC's focus on longitudinal data resources has inevitably meant that the reporting period has been ESDS Longitudinal's busiest in terms of data received, processed, released and promoted. There have been a large number of updates to data already held but, most significantly, new waves and sweeps have been added for many of the major longitudinal studies:

- > in October, a new education data file, consisting of variables extracted from the National Pupil Database, was released as part of the *Longitudinal Study of Young People in England* (LSYPE);
- > an interim version of Sweep 8 of the *National Child Development Study* (NCDS) was deposited in February;
- > users of the *British Household Panel Survey* (BHPS) gained access to wave 17 of the study in May;

- > the much-anticipated calendar life history data from Wave 3 of the *English Longitudinal Study of Ageing* (ELSA) was made available in June;
- > over the course of the year, the third sweep of the *Millennium Cohort Study* (MCS) was enriched by the addition of school assessment data, a geographically-linked file and a longitudinal family information file.

In addition, a set of social science sampler files for the *Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children* (ALSPAC) – produced by the ALSPAC study team as part of an ESRC award – was released in April 2009 (see ESDS Longitudinal Case Study for further details).

Access to sensitive data

In many ways, these new additions and updates form part of the 'routine' workflow for the service – in the sense that established procedures for the receipt and release of end user licence data are now in place. However, much time and effort over the past 12 months has been put into creating systems for making sensitive data – previously unreleased to ESDS users – available under a range of special access conditions. Success here owes much to the close and ongoing collaboration that ESDS Longitudinal maintains with the data depositors: a vital part of the service's work not seen by the end user.

Procedures are now in place which allow the ESDS to provide access to six low-level geography datasets for the three birth cohort studies and to nine datasets containing geographical markers for the BHPS. These

data are available under Special Licence and, in the case of seven of the BHPS geography files, under a new Conditional Access system. The Conditional Access system allows registered ESDS users to access a single medium-level BHPS geography file after agreeing to 'click-use' conditions and, additionally, permits UK users to access a second (or third etc.) file from the set under Special Licence. Around 70 users have accessed the Conditional Access files since the system went live in January 2009.

Through collaboration with the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS), Special Licence access is now provided for some of the biomedical data collected as part of the NCDS. Indeed, many of the major panel and cohort studies are now producing – or soon will be – biomedical data from samples taken from respondents. In keeping with its policy to control access to geographical information very tightly, ESDS Longitudinal will endeavour to work closely with the data depositors in examining ways in which sensitive biomedical data can be shared.

Longitudinal research resources

ESDS Longitudinal has a schedule of maintaining online resources and creating new ones. Activity in the reporting period includes:

- > the creation of new web pages for Understanding Society (in anticipation of data being lodged with the ESDS in 2010) and for the ALSPAC sampler files;
- > a new resource – Useful notes - piloted on the ELSA web pages, containing a selection of the ELSA queries/responses addressed by the ESDS Longitudinal help desk;
- > an increasing proportion of ESDS Longitudinal data is available via Nesstar with the first three waves of the LSYPE being added late in 2008;
- > a major new resource focusing on access to and the use of biomedical data in longitudinal data research remains under development. This resource is expected to be of use to social scientists who are investigating the possibility of control for biomarkers in their analyses which, in turn, is likely to open up new strands of research and challenge conventional wisdom.

Spreading the message

Outreach and training continues to be an important aspect of the service's work. As in previous years, ESDS Longitudinal staff gave presentations at a range of events, including introductory workshops for the three birth cohort studies and an ELSA user day. The introductory workshops continue to attract attendees in good numbers, which in turn increases usage of the data. In January 2009, ESDS Longitudinal staff also organised, in collaboration with colleagues from the Data Management through e-Social Science (DAMES) project, a seminar entitled 'The significance of data management for social survey research' and, in April 2009, gave a presentation at the successful 'Learning and teaching with real data' workshop organised by ESDS Government.



ESDS Qualidata



Data highlights

ESDS Qualidata has processed and enhanced a number of important studies. One new processed acquisition worthy of mention, among the many, is Sara Arber's research on the lives of elderly men *Older Men: their Social Worlds and Healthy Lifestyles*, 1999-2002 (SN 6011) which examines how gender roles and relationships influence the quality of life of older, often single, men. Of equally topical interest is Marie Gillespie's research entitled *Shifting Securities: Television News Cultures Before and After the Iraq War*, 2003-2005 (SN 6126) examining the changing relationships, particularly regarding the issue of trust, between government, media and multicultural publics in the wake of the Iraq War.

Teaching and methods

ESDS Qualidata has significantly increased its level of activity in many areas of training and teaching, notably in instructing potential users about searching and accessing collections, conducting secondary analysis workshops, and successfully embedding many collections in methods teaching in the UK. For example, sessions on access and secondary analysis sessions were run at the NCRM Autumn School and at a postgraduate conference at the National University of Ireland. ESDS Qualidata staff have also given numerous workshops to methods teachers on how to use their new open-access web-based resource featuring qualitative interview extracts from the collections. A new resource focusing on non-interview methods, such as focus groups and diaries has been completed this year. Diverse qualitative data

collections are being used for methods instruction, as Jo Haynes' teaching experiences demonstrate (see the ESDS Qualidata case study). Her work alone has reached over 65 students. More generally, ESDS usage statistics show that in the past year, about a third of qualitative data usages were for methods teaching.

Technical innovations and developments

ESDS Qualidata continues to develop its online technical functionality and explore new technical tools. It has been engaged in developing a new back-end processing system for qualitative studies that will streamline and automate the preparation of interview transcripts. The system will convert deposited interview transcripts into standardised RTF and Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) compliant XML format for dissemination respectively via the UK Data Archive's catalogue web download system and ESDS Qualidata Online. The project successfully trialled Adobe Flex software to develop the user interface.

Louise Corti, the head of ESDS Qualidata, is also a principal investigator of the ESRC/EPSCRC Technology Enhanced Learning Programme award, Semantic Technologies for the Enhancement of Case Based Learning (ENSEMBLE) project. This is a three year technically challenging project exploring the potential of the 'Semantic Web' to support teaching and learning in complex, controversial and rapidly evolving fields utilising case based learning. Using ESDS Qualidata studies as exploratory complex test data, the project is investigating how Semantic Web technologies and techniques can improve the learning process.



In addition ESDS Qualidata is continuing its ongoing development of an efficient and straightforward delivery system for the downloading and streaming of audio-visual media such as interviews with some of the pioneers of qualitative research.

Publicity and outreach

Ensuring that users are kept up-to-date with the most recent and best advice continues to be a core goal for ESDS Qualidata. Staff were heavily involved with the creation of the *Managing and Sharing Data* guide and web pages which offer researchers detailed guidance on managing and sharing data across the complete data lifecycle. In addition, to assist potential depositors grappling with 'hard-to-archive' data with complex challenges, such as exceptionally sensitive data and uncertainty about anonymisation, ESDS Qualidata has provided several depositor case studies on its web pages. These describe how researchers have previously tackled the task of archiving their challenging data. Ongoing discussion with researchers has also highlighted the tensions that can arise between ethical review and the accompanying focus of Research Ethics Committees on data protection with the desire to share and archive research data.



Staff have organised and participated in successful workshops on the ethics of archiving and on access to ESDS collections for librarians. Most prominently in April 2009 ESDS Qualidata took a key role in the Bremen international workshop on *Qualitative Longitudinal Research and Qualitative Resources in Europe* that brought together for the first time representatives from 14 countries to assess existing capabilities and plan for future activities. Focusing on the re-use of qualitative data and on the development of qualitative longitudinal research and data resources across Europe, the workshop produced reports on the state of qualitative archiving in each country. From these reports an updated profile of each country's qualitative data infrastructures will be available from the ESDS Qualidata web site.

Papers at international conferences, such as IASSIST and the International Conference on e-Social Science, have been presented by staff members on topics including re-use, ethical sharing, qualitative teaching resources, audio data, FEDORA and semantic web tools. In addition members of ESDS Qualidata continue to publish on a range of topics including archiving, access, re-use, ethical issues and data sharing. Staff are also consultants and advisory/committee members for programmes and institutions such as the Irish Qualitative Data Archive, the Human Communication Audio-Visual Archive (CAVA) and the JISC Digital Repositories programme.

ESDS Access and Preservation

New catalogue search

A new catalogue search functionality for ESDS was introduced during 2008-2009. The old Data Catalogue search was replaced with a simple Basic Search which combines the various field-based searches into a single search across all fields of the Study Description. The field-based searches (i.e. title, name, geography, keyword, date, publications and study number) which were previously available in the Data Catalogue have all moved to the Advanced Search where they can be combined using the standard Boolean operators AND, OR and NOT.

The new Advanced Search facility allows a more detailed interrogation of the UK Data Archive's holdings and allows users to find datasets more efficiently. Complex searches such as looking for non-attitude surveys carried out in the last ten years on the elderly in Scotland can now be framed easily through the Advanced Search interface. The resulting hit list is displayed in ten datasets per page format but can be grouped to be displayed as a single, scrollable, expandable list.

Each ESDS support service, Government, Longitudinal, International and Qualidata, has its own tailored interface to best suit the needs of their specific users. The ability to combine search fields in this way has been achieved by adopting the open source Lucene search engine.

Preservation planning and metadata

During 2008-2009 work began behind the scenes on making some considerable infrastructural changes relating to technical infrastructure, preservation planning and metadata. For example, by the end of the reporting period almost all ESDS servers at Essex were running in a virtual environment providing a more robust and reliable technical infrastructure and ensuring a superior business continuity model. Furthermore, a new workflow for technical development has been introduced which will help streamline application development; planning of the new preservation system is complete and will be live towards the end of 2009. An integrated preservation metadata strategy is also under construction which will dovetail with developments across the collection in applications development.

Integration with sister services

Two new sister ESRC services were initiated in 2008-2009 which seamlessly augment and enhance access to data. The first is the Survey Resources Network. The aim of the Network is to provide a coherent and integrated approach to the development of skills and knowledge, the dissemination of research findings and research resources, and the promotion of best survey practice. From the perspective of ESDS, a key component of the Network is the Survey Question Bank (SQB). The SQB aims to

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced Search' interface. It includes a search bar with a dropdown menu set to 'All Fields'. Below the search bar are five rows, each starting with an 'AND' operator and a dropdown menu set to 'All Fields'. To the right of each row are radio buttons for 'Any', 'All', and 'Exact'. Below these rows are fields for 'AND Year (yyyy)' and 'optional end year', an 'AND Service' dropdown set to 'All Data Catalogue', and a checkbox for 'Show only major studies'. At the bottom, there are 'Sort by' options for 'Relevance' and 'Date', a 'Clear Search' button, and a 'Search' button.

expand and extend the services previously available via the ESRC Question Bank based at the University of Surrey. Managed by the UK Data Archive, the new SQB will seek to inter-operate with ESDS and its survey data collection, enabling users to move – at the click of a button – from the survey question, to its context in the questionnaire, to the variable frequency. Integrating the SQB with ESDS will also allow users to make the opposite journey – to locate variable frequencies in the ESDS Nesstar catalogue and then to move seamlessly to the underlying survey question.

The second sister service is the UK Data Archive's pilot Secure Data Service (SDS), which is funded by the ESRC to develop a system to provide safe and secure remote access by bona fide researchers to data heretofore deemed too sensitive, detailed, confidential or potentially disclosive to be made available under standard licensing and dissemination arrangements. In the SDS, no data are downloaded, but rather the approved and trained user accesses data held securely on a central server and conducts their analyses there. Collaborative spaces allow for a disbursed project team to work together virtually, and all outputs are checked for statistical disclosure issues before being approved for release. Users can

also bring any other ESDS datasets into their secure workspace, and the service provides a secure environment for data linkage. The service was funded alongside an Administrative Data Liaison Service, co-ordinated by St Andrew's University, which will assist users in accessing and using these increasingly important data sources. The SDS is in its developmental phase and will be launched in December 2009.

ESDS self archiving

A year after the ESDS self-archive, UKDA-store was launched for ESDS researchers, over 110 datasets are in the system. This additional archiving capacity has enabled ESDS to bring in and make available many more datasets than the usual quota. Studies in the system cover a wide range of topics with many based on psychology and linguistic experimental research data. Over 150 users have registered for the service and it is now planned to increase the promotion of this service.



ESDS Management

Effective delivery of ESDS relies on ESDS Management taking a strategic lead in relationships with stakeholders and providing overall direction and management for the service. ESDS Management is hosted by the UK Data Archive.

Advisory Committee

One of the most important routes through which ESDS Management carries out its strategic role is by working closely with the ESDS Advisory Committee, which is composed of a range of individuals and representatives of bodies concerned with the supply and use of social science data. The people on this Committee during 2008-2009 are listed on the inside of this report.

The current Chair of the Advisory Committee is Audrey Brown from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Vice-Chair is John Curtice, from the University of Strathclyde. The Committee normally meets twice a year (October and March). The first of these meetings in 2008-2009 was preceded by a 'scene setting session' designed to look ahead to the forthcoming mid-term review. This session was initiated by an international perspective from Myron Gutmann, then Director of the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). Several themes emerged during the session, helping to steer the Committee's subsequent thinking and discussion. Amongst the most critical of these themes is the need for better integration of services for researchers and educators; the need to balance confidentiality with accessibility of data; and the need for international co-operation.

Impact

One overarching theme which emerged during 2008-2009 was the need for ESDS to demonstrate its social and economic impact, especially in light of the mid-term review at which the 'added value' of the service will be carefully scrutinised. The March 2009 Advisory Committee meeting was extremely useful in this regard with many helpful suggestions for demonstrating this impact although, as the Vice-Chair pointed out in his comparison between ESDS and a power station, there are limits to how it can be measured by the use to which its products are put!

Myron Gutmann offered a helpful international view, stressing that ESDS should be valued firstly, for the academic activity that it engenders, secondly, for its influence on policy outcomes and thirdly, for its use in teaching. He also suggested the institution of a prize for the best student essay based on ESDS resources.



International alliances

In May 2009, ESDS was well represented at the annual conference of the International Association for Social Science and Information Service and Technology (IASSIST) and International Federation of Data Organizations for the Social Sciences (IDFO), held this year at Tampere in Finland. ESDS Management and UK Data Archive technical staff have also participated in several meetings of an alliance including data archives from Australia and the USA which are working together to make best use of the latest Data Documentation Initiative (DDIv3.0).

Multi-site working

Close co-operation between the UK Data Archive, Mimas and CCSR remains essential for the effectiveness of ESDS, and this is facilitated by regular meetings of staff. The ESDS Senior Management Team (SMT) hold regular quarterly meetings alternating between London and Manchester to address key planning issues. These meetings also allow Manchester-based ESDS staff to meet and discuss issues of concern with the Director. Specific 'task-focused' teams also meet virtually, both according

to regular schedules and on an ad hoc basis. Over the past year, communication across the services has been enhanced through the development of the ESDS Intranet and the introduction of internet-based conferences. The annual cross-service 'away day' held in London in January 2009 also provided an opportunity for staff from across the whole of ESDS to discuss and exchange ideas and experiences.

Collection strategy

In August 2008, the 6,000th study, on Offending, Crime and Justice, was added to the collections which have continued to grow steadily throughout the year with many valuable new accessions. In September 2008, ESDS Management met with the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). This was to discuss the potential depositing of data arising from a large number of surveys NatCen have undertaken for a range of government departments and other organisations over a number of years. These have not previously been lodged with the UK Data Archive and include commissioned research and qualitative data. Preliminary work was conducted to evaluate the costs and benefits of these potential deposits – over 200 new surveys in all – to help plan how they might be integrated into the ESDS collection.

Personnel changes

There were some significant personnel changes during the year. Gordon Chancellor and Paola Antonicelli joined the UK Data Archive in August 2008 as members of the ESDS Management service, while Richard Deswarte took over management of the ESDS Qualidata service in September. Ken Miller, Head of Information Development and Programming, and Pam Miller, Metadata Standards and Resource Discovery Manager, both at the UK Data Archive and highly respected members of ESDS personnel, took early retirement in June 2009. Vanessa Higgins assumed day-to-day responsibility for management of ESDS Government from Angela Dale at the end of 2008-2009, while Siân Millard, ESRC case officer for ESDS, left at the end of the year. Siân's excellent support of ESDS has played a significant part in the successful

management of the service and all ESDS staff wish her the very best of luck in her future career. We welcome Kristine Doronenkova as Siân's successor at ESRC and are already optimistic for the continued success of ESDS with her support.

ESDS communicating and engaging

ESDS has an established international reputation as an expert provider of research data in economics and the social sciences. As such it is constantly in demand for advice and expertise, both for the training of future researchers and for contributions to conferences in the UK and around the world. During 2008-2009 ESDS delivered many training sessions and presentations, as detailed in the individual service reports, and received a range of visits from experts from all over Europe and as far afield as Japan and Australia.



Measuring ESDS

This section provides a statistical summary of activity across all sections of ESDS. Figures are also produced in most cases for the previous reporting year in order to enable year on year comparisons. However, it is equally important, if not more so, to place the statistical evidence in a long-term context in order to provide a broader perspective. This represents a headline digest of the most interesting statistics collected about the service. For those requiring more detailed statistical information on the working of ESDS, the service provides quarterly statistical returns reporting against a Service Level Definition (SLD) to the JISC Monitoring Unit (MU). These are available at www.esds.ac.uk/news/jiscmu.asp.

Data acquired and processed

With the exception of the important international macrodata series, the data provided by the various sections of ESDS are acquired, processed and mounted on the download service for online access via ESDS Access and Preservation at the UK Data Archive. Due to the special licensing arrangements relating to the international macrodata series these are acquired directly by ESDS International at Mimas, then processed and loaded onto the Beyond 20/20 data delivery server in Manchester.

As shown in **Table 1**, the throughput of collections was broadly in line with 2007-2008, although with a small increase overall. Most significantly, there was a trebling in the number of new ESDS Longitudinal datasets and a doubling in the number of ESDS Longitudinal updates and new editions.

Table 2 shows very significant increases in data processing for value-added delivery of ESDS Government and ESDS Longitudinal datasets via Nesstar and for ESDS International via Beyond 20/20. The figure for ESDS Government is just short of a doubling and for Longitudinal it is five-fold. The total figure is up by 64 per cent up on that for the previous year.

Data access

Users wish to receive data for research, teaching or learning in a variety of ways and forms, and meeting these changing needs and requirements is one of the challenges that continuously faces ESDS. In order to accommodate the wide range of data needs ESDS provides a combination of data access tools. As a result of these multiple routes to, and forms of, data access it is not a straightforward task to measure data usage and certainly not easy, or in some cases appropriate, to attempt to compare the various usage figures across the component parts of ESDS.

In outline, users of ESDS can access data in the following ways. For survey-type microdata, across all services, registered users have the option of downloading a data bundle directly from the data catalogue. These bundles relate to whole data collections or studies which in many cases will contain multiple datasets, and will also include files containing documentation, user guides and notes. Users can also request such data bundles to be made accessible to them by machine-to-machine file transfer protocol (FTP), or written to a fixed portable device (e.g. CD/DVD/USB) and sent to them, although the latter is declining significantly in demand. Data bundles can also be made available to users indirectly via third party access arrangements, most commonly university-based data libraries and sister data archives. All these forms of data download are reported in **Table 3a**.

A subset of the micro survey data, primarily those supported by the four specialist units of ESDS, is also made available to users via the Nesstar online data browsing and visualisation tool. This allows users to download whole data collections as mentioned above, but also permits the user to define bespoke subsets, filtering on one or more variables within a given dataset. Additionally, the system can be used to generate aggregate tabular data in the form of two- and three-way tables, as well as graphical representations of these in the form of histograms, piecharts and in some cases maps. All of these can be saved to a local device (downloaded) or hyperlinked for sharing or future reference. Only the download of whole data collections is recorded in **Table 3a**.

Table 1 Data collections acquired and processed for online delivery

Service	2007-2008			2008-2009		
	New datasets	Updates and new editions	Total	New datasets	Updates and new editions	Total
ESDS Core	87	22	109	94	20	114
ESDS Government	277	150	427	232	119	351
ESDS International	14	96	110	24	104	128
ESDS Longitudinal	26	20	46	77	54	131
ESDS Qualidata	22	2	24	29	2	31
Total	426	290	716	456	299	755

Table 2 Datasets further processed for value-added delivery via Nesstar and Beyond 20/20

Service	2007-2008			2008-2009		
	New datasets	Updates and new editions	Total	New datasets	Updates and new editions	Total
ESDS Core	5	2	7	2	2	4
ESDS Government	67	7	74	104	35	139
ESDS International*	1	68	69	1	89	90
ESDS Longitudinal	3	1	4	11	9	20
Total	76	78	154	118	135	253

*International macrodata are delivered via Beyond 20/20; all other services via Nesstar

Table 3a Datasets delivered to users by access method

2007-2008	Download	FTP	Other access	CD-ROM/DVD	Nesstar	Total
ESDS Core	9,639	500	1,121	11	34	11,305
ESDS Government	22,052	689	4,639	2	353	27,735
ESDS International*	1,118	387	598	0	10	2,113
ESDS Longitudinal	6,073	71	357	3	125	6,629
ESDS Qualidata**	728	7	63	0	0	798
Total	39,610	1,654	6,778	16	522	48,580

2008-2009	Download	FTP	Via/access	Portable	Nesstar	Total
ESDS Core	9,260	391	964	2	23	10,640
ESDS Government	24,332	1,059	3,875	1	231	29,498
ESDS International*	968	269	790	1	0	2,028
ESDS Longitudinal	6,757	164	445	1	116	7,483
ESDS Qualidata**	1,174	20	98	0	0	1,292
Total	42,491	1,903	6,172	5	370	50,941

* international micro datasets only, macrodata series counted separately (see Tables 3b and 4)

** Nesstar does not include qualitative data

Table 3b Data Reports generated for international macrodata via Beyond 20/20

Total number of Data Report downloads	Total
2007-2008*	91,205
2008-2009	120,627

*the 2007-2008 figure includes Data Reports generated only for the period 1 September 2007 - 31 July 2008, to reflect when recording of this information began

Table 4 ESDS International macrodata accessed via Beyond 20/20

	Total number of data analysis sessions	Individual users
2007-2008	105,587	6,340
2008-2009	90,236	6,674

Table 5 Use of Nesstar online microdata browsing and analysis service

	Total number of data analysis sessions	Individual users
2007-2008	16,995	8,719
2008-2009	17,944	8,419

A further complication arises from the fact that any of the microdata collections enumerated in **Table 3a** can also be redistributed locally to students using the data for instructional purposes.

International macrodata are supplied to users via the Beyond 20/20 software interface based at Mimas. This allows the user to create tabular statistics in the form of data reports, as well as graphical outputs, similar to those of Nesstar described above. These can also be downloaded to a local device. **Table 3b** reports the number of data report downloads.

It is important also not to overlook the access given to registered users to online qualitative data collections. These consist mostly of open-ended interviews and responses and are not really downloaded or saved in the same ways as the structured data collections mentioned thus far. Users can download related audio and image files from the collection but more usually might cut and paste snippets of text, thus making measurement problematic.

With this outline of data access methods established, **Table 3a** shows that overall the number of microdata collections delivered to users continued the increasing trend of previous years, breaking the 50,000 figure for the first time. Within this figure, the basic distribution of data access between the various services supporting microdata also remained broadly the same, although the demand for ESDS Qualidata seems to have increased very significantly. The available statistical information would therefore suggest that after a period of year-on-year increase in usage during the first six years of ESDS, the apparent plateauing reported last year appears to have been temporary. It is important to note that these figures do not include counts of data redistributed for use in classrooms. Unfortunately, these data are notoriously difficult to capture since lecturers do not always return class registrations in a timely fashion. As a result figures are always at best approximate, but these add roughly a further 50,000 users accesses, in broadly the same proportions by service as shown in **Table 3a**.

Table 6 User queries received by ESDS service responsible for answering

Service	2007-2008			2008-2009		
	Queries	Referrals	Totals	Queries	Referrals	Totals
ESDS Management	2,335	15	2,350	2,845	123	2,968
ESDS Government	259	70	329	255	22	277
ESDS International	288	19	307	358	9	367
ESDS Longitudinal	74	0	74	70	0	70
ESDS Qualidata	199	0	199	228	1	229
Total	3,155	104	3,259	3,756	155	3,911

Table 7 New registrations and active registered users

	2007-2008	2008-2009
New registrations	20,938	24,220
Total active registered users	46,304	41,783

Turning to the experience of use for international macrodata, **Table 3b** records the number of Data Reports downloaded as an impressive 120,627, a figure considerably higher than the previous year's, clearly indicating the high demand and usage of these collections of data. Access of the Beyond 20/20 system witnessed a decrease in the number of registered data analysis sessions falling somewhat compared with those of last year, as shown in **Table 4**.

It is interesting that while the number of accesses has fallen slightly, the number of data downloads has increased (**Table 3b**) and the number of users has increased from 6,340 last year to 6,674 in 2008-2009 (**Tables 8 and 9**).

Those using the Nesstar system for the online analysis and tabulation of microdata saw a notable increase, with the number of registered data analysis sessions increasing by 6 per cent (**Table 5**).

Lastly, in addition to data access by users it is important to note the continued high demand for documentation downloads, user guides, reports and

manuals. One measure of this is PDF downloads, reaching a figure of 1,927,828. Such guides and reports are also available in a number of other formats including HTML, RTF and Microsoft Word files.

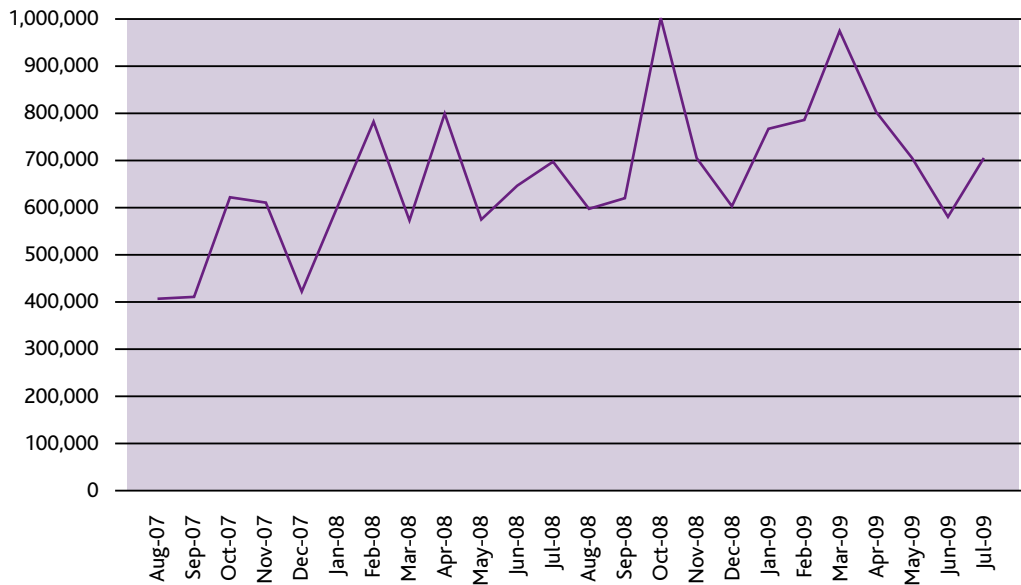
User queries

The number of user queries increased by 652 or 28 per cent over last year's figure (**Table 6**) with most of the increase, as last year, being witnessed by the central ESDS help desk. Queries to the specialist services remained at roughly the same levels as previously.

Registrations

The past year saw a reversal in the decline in the number of new user registrations occurring in the previous year (**Table 7**). Overall, however, the total number of active registered users within the year fell somewhat.

Figure 1 Web site use August 2007 to July 2009 (page hits)



Web site usage

As the previous section on data access demonstrated, the internet is clearly the major tool for the delivery of ESDS products and services. However, many web statistics can be misleading since uncorrected counts will give an artificially high figure due to the site being trawled by so-called web-crawlers as well as page calls to image files (pictures, logos and the like). Once these corrections have been implemented, the total number of page hits in the reporting year was 27 per cent up at 8,953,315, compared to a figure of 7,068,221 for the previous year. The pattern of hits over the last two years is shown in Figure 1 and perhaps the most noticeable features of this graph are the steady background increase and the peak figure in October, always the busiest time of the year but exceptionally high in 2008.

Usage by user type

Breaking usage of the various services down by type or section of user, as shown in Table 8, illustrates that the principal user groups continue to be drawn from academic staff and students at institutions of higher education, ranging from 85 per cent (ESDS Government) to 97 per cent (ESDS Qualidata). Public sector workers (central and local government, charitable organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), etc.) tend to account for between 6 and 12 per cent of usage for most

services. The exception to the general trend is with international macrodata, where licensing arrangements imposed by the data owners restrict use primarily to the academic sector. Here use is more heavily concentrated towards students, both under- and post-graduates, who jointly account for some 82 per cent of use, thus supporting the building of future research capacities.

Usage by discipline

Table 9 shows the relative proportions of active users in the most popular disciplinary areas for each of the specialist services. With some variations, the largest disciplinary users across all services are economics and sociology, with international macrodata being particularly heavily used by the former, and less so by the latter - whilst for qualitative data, the reverse is true. International macrodata, more so than others, are also widely used by the business/accounting/finance sector, which is not surprising given the nature of much of these data. What is perhaps most striking is the fact that all types of data have a broad and wide-ranging disciplinary appeal, suggesting that ESDS reaches much further than the core social sciences, including in its varied user community, health and medical researchers, humanities researchers as well as others.

Table 8 Usage by user status

	Percentages					
	Core	Government	International (macro)	International (micro)	Longitudinal	Qualidata
Academic	30.0	28.6	15.6	35.1	41.0	30.2
Undergraduate	21.0	26.2	34.3	14.6	14.4	23.9
Postgraduate	38.2	30.8	48.3	43.1	35.2	43.7
Public sector	8.1	11.7	0.0	6.3	8.0	1.1
Commercial	1.2	1.8	0.0	0.3	0.7	0.0
Other	1.4	1.0	1.8	0.6	0.7	1.1
Number of users	2,020	2,970	6,674	350	1,622	451

Table 9 Usage by discipline of user

	Percentages					
	Core	Government	International (macro)	International (micro)	Longitudinal	Qualidata
Business/Accounting/Finance	10.0	5.2	16.5	8.9	3.8	10.2
Economics/Econometrics/Labour/ Employment	20.8	31.2	62.6	33.4	42.6	6.9
Geography/Area Studies	5.2	5.2	2.7	2.9	2.6	7.1
Health/Medicine	7.5	7.9	0.5	2.9	7.2	1.1
History/Humanities	2.2	1.6	0.9	0.9	0.6	3.3
Politics and International Studies	8.0	4.8	5.5	14.0	2.2	4.9
Psychology	4.3	2.5	0.1	3.4	5.3	8.6
Social Policy/Administration	5.6	5.7	1.4	6.0	6.2	7.3
Sociology	15.2	14.5	1.0	17.1	15.3	33.3
Statistics/Methodology/Computing	4.6	7.6	1.1	2.6	5.7	3.1
Other	16.6	13.7	7.8	8.0	8.5	14.2
Number of users	2,020	2,970	6,674	350	1,621	451

Advising ESDS

ESDS has an Advisory Committee to advise on the general direction and strategy of the service, and to provide the ESDS Director with comments on Annual Reports and reports for periodic reviews.

Chair

Audrey Brown (from February 2008)
Department for Children, Schools and Families

Vice-chair

John Curtice
University of Strathclyde

Members

Sara Arber
Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

Tanvi Desai
London School of Economics and Political Science

Richard Blundell
Institute for Fiscal Studies

Keith Dugmore
Demographic Decisions Ltd.

Peter Elias
Institute of Employment Research,
University of Warwick

Jude England (from April 2008)
British Library

Nigel Fielding
Department of Sociology, University of Surrey

Myron Gutmann (from April 2008)
ICPSR, University of Michigan, USA

Peter Halls
Computing Service, University of York

Michael Hughes (until April 2009)
Office for National Statistics

Julia Lane
National Science Foundation, USA

Corrine Moy
National Opinion Polls

Dennis Roberts (from April 2009)
Office for National Statistics

Gillian Robinson
Queens' University Belfast

Patten Smith
Ipsos MORI

Martin Weale
National Institute of Economic and Social Research

Economic and Social Data Service staff

Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research
Angela Dale

Institute for Social and Economic Research
Nick Buck

Mimas
Jackie Carter

UK Data Archive
Kevin Schürer
Louise Corti
Melanie Wright

In attendance

Siân Bourne
ESRC

Abi Obafemi
JISC

Michael Hughes
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