

Worksheet: Finding the right survey data for your project.

This worksheet will help you search for data for your own research project. Following the worksheet, you will

- try different ways of finding data through the UK Data Service
- assess if a dataset is suitable by consulting the catalogue entries

Task – Find data for your research project

Work through the sections to 1) identify your data needs, 2) search for potential datasets, 3) evaluate if potential datasets are suitable.

Things to remember:

- you need to search for a survey that collects information about all the key concepts in your research
- the first datasets you find might not be the most suitable
- the ideal dataset for your research might not be available, but you might be able to make some compromises

Follow instructions marked with a ➔ on your computer

1. Identify your data needs

Before searching for relevant data, you need to identify what information you need to answer your research question(s).

For example, consider the following questions:

- has the public become more fearful of crime over time?
- does fear of crime vary by age?

To answer these questions, we need to look for:

- surveys containing questions/variables measuring both the fear of crime and age
- questions that have been included in surveys at different points (and ideally also in a fairly recent survey)
- data that can be used to make inferences about the population (i.e. a large representative sample)
- data relating to individuals (rather than households or any other unit of analysis)

Can you do the same for your research project, using the boxes below?

Tip: Following the previous worksheet, 'Thinking before doing' can help you think through these aspects of your research project.

1.1. Start with your research topic and question(s)

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1.2. Now think about the type of data you will need to answer your question(s):

To answer the question(s), I need a dataset...

...for the time period...	
...for the population...	
...with the following units of analysis...	
...that includes data on the following characteristics of interest ...	

Tip: focus your search

To help you search for data, it might be useful to identify a key focus for the search.

For example, for the research questions discussed above, age is a relatively straightforward thing to measure and most surveys include questions capturing basic demographics. In contrast, fear or crime is more complex and only a small number of surveys are likely to collect relevant information. The search should therefore focus on finding surveys that ask questions about crime and feelings of safety.

2. Your data search

With a good idea of what you are looking for, you can now start searching for data.

This section will guide you through different ways of looking for data. Following the steps, the aim is to keep a record of your data search and make a list of potential datasets.

When you find a relevant dataset you can turn to Section 3, to help you evaluate its suitability.

2.1. Do you already know of any possible surveys?

Start with any surveys you know of already. Consider:

- are there any commonly used surveys for researching your topic?
- have any relevant surveys been mentioned by previous studies, textbooks or in the news?

Make a note here

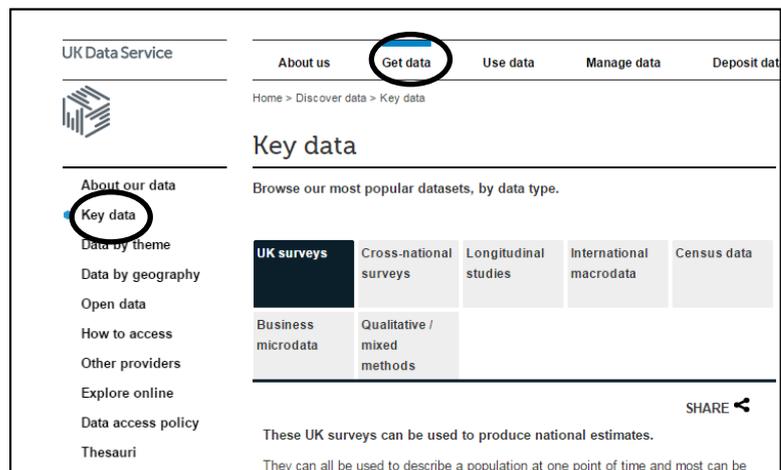
2.2. Search tool 1: Key data

If you know the name of a survey available through the UK Data Service, one of the easiest ways to find it is by looking at the collections of Key data.

The [Key data](#) pages highlight the most popular datasets.

The datasets are grouped by tabs for different types of data and survey datasets appear under:

- UK Surveys
- Cross-national surveys
- Longitudinal studies



Browsing the names and descriptions of these key data sources is a useful way of finding high quality data.

- ➔ Go to <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/> > Get data > [Key data](#)
- ➔ If you are looking for cross-national or longitudinal data, select the relevant tab

Can you find any surveys that seem relevant?

Make a note here

2.3 Search tool 2: Theme pages

The theme pages list data available for research into a number of key themes including crime, health and housing. Theme pages also include advice, research examples and links to relevant resources.

- ➔ Go to <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>
>Get data > [Data by theme](#)
- Is there a relevant theme for your research?
- If so, do the pages highlight any relevant data sources?

Make a note here

UK Data Service

About us Get data Use data Manage data Deposit data

Home > Discover data > Data by theme > Crime

Crime and social control

"Concerns over youth gangs and anti-social behaviour"

Key data Discover Analysing Research Resources

SHARE

Whilst there is a wealth of data on crime, social order and related issues, some studies are regarded as 'key' in the UK – either through their subject/geographical coverage, their methodology, their longevity, their usage among the research community or because they feed into the creation of 'official' figures and indicators.

The majority of the data described are known as 'raw', 'primary' or 'source' data in the sense that they represent information that has been collected 'first-hand'; they are original data sources which may then be used for 'secondary' analysis by researchers not involved in the data collection process. The majority of these data are anonymised because they describe the attitudes, behaviour, circumstances and personal details of the individuals being studied. These [types of data](#) are heavily used by the academic and government research communities.

The UK Data Service provides access to the following primary data sources:

Study name	Coverage	Topics
Arrestee Survey, 2003-2006	2003-2006 England and Wales	problematic drug misuse among arrestees levels of demand for drug and alcohol treatment services levels of intravenous drug use among respondents gang membership social attitudes with irregular crime questions

Tip: Theme pages highlight all types of data, so if you're looking for a specific type of data (such as survey data) check to make sure the study is of the type you're looking for.

2.4 Search tool 3: Data Catalogue

Another way to access data is to use the Data Catalogue, the UK Data Service search engine.

To use the Data Catalogue, you need to identify relevant search terms.

- For your research, identify useful search terms and use them in the Data Catalogue

Make a note here

Get data

Search and browse our Data Catalogue

GO

[FAQ](#)

Your portal to data and resources

Then

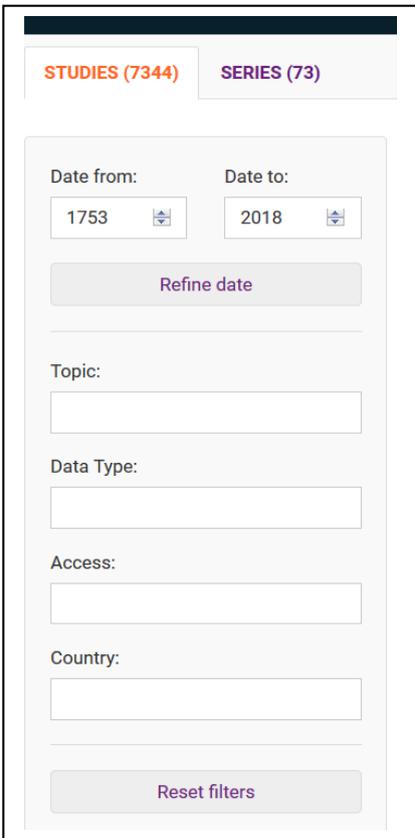
- ➔ Go to <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/> > Get data
- ➔ Type in your search term > press 'go'

Results related to the term will be returned.

- How many results did you get?

Too many results?

The UK Data Service catalogue contains a lot of data. Therefore, your search is likely to produce an unhelpfully large number of results. This means an important part of using the catalogue is finding ways to narrow your search.



The screenshot shows a search filter panel with the following elements:

- Two tabs: "STUDIES (7344)" and "SERIES (73)".
- Date filters: "Date from:" with a dropdown set to "1753" and "Date to:" with a dropdown set to "2018". Below these is a "Refine date" button.
- Topic: A text input field.
- Data Type: A text input field.
- Access: A text input field.
- Country: A text input field.
- A "Reset filters" button at the bottom.

Refining your search

You can refine your search using the panel on the left hand side of the Data Catalogue screen.

When searching for a data collection, you can narrow your search based on other characteristics.

- Date:** Limit your search to data relevant to a particular period.
- Topic:** Narrow your search using a predefined list of topics.
- Data type:** Choose between cross-sectional surveys, longitudinal data, qualitative data and more.
- Access:** Safeguarded, open or controlled data
- Country:** Pick a geographical location.

3 Using the catalogue page to evaluate a dataset

When you find a potentially relevant dataset, you need to look more closely to decide if it might be useful. At this stage, the catalogue entry provides very useful information.

→ Locate the potential dataset in the catalogue

Now read the catalogue entry and complete the table below.

Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2013-2014

[Details](#)
[Documentation](#)
[Resources](#)
[Access](#)

Details

Title: Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2013-2014

Alternative title: CSEW

Study number (SN): 7619

Persistent identifier: [10.5255/UKDA-SN-7619-2](#)

Series: [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#)

Principal investigator(s): Office for National Statistics

Sponsors and contributors

Depositor: Office for National Statistics

Data collector(s): TNS BMRB

Sponsor(s): Ministry of Justice
Home Office
Office for National Statistics

Title (and date):

Who collected the data?		
Do the survey aims and topics seem relevant?		
What time period does the data relate to? Is this suitable for your project?		
Is the sample based on the population you are interested in? (Are there any important groups missing?) Is it a representative sample? (What sampling technique was used?) What is the sample size?		
Unit of analysis: Who does the data relate to (i.e. individuals or households?) Is this suitable?		

Next steps

Examine the survey documentation to find specific questions/variables relating to your key concepts.