

A guide to using Scottish and UK datasets

Guide to using the UK Data Service (UKDS)

Based on worksheets written by Paul Norris, University of Edinburgh

- Open a web browser and go to the UK Data Service (UKDS) at: <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>

UKDS provide many resources for researchers who wish to analyse existing datasets, or make data they have collected available for others to use. Our interest is in finding out about a study which has been previously deposited with UKDS.

Finding datasets

We can find datasets on the website in several ways.

Main Search box

- Find the search dialog box on the right hand side of the screen.



For example, type **'drinking' in the search box make sure you select **'Data'** rather than **'Website'** and click **'Go'**.*

The Search identifies a number of surveys, there are around 980 hits in total, for example:

- The Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People Survey

(an annual survey that acts as an official measure of progress towards targets for reducing smoking and drug use among young people)

The British Crime Survey, 2008-2009: Special Licence access, Drinking Behaviour Module (a supplementary questionnaire administered as part of the BCS to collect information on more sensitive issues, along with respondents' drinking and drug use behaviours)

- Get Data tab
- Click on the "Get Data" tab towards the top left of the screen.
- The resulting screen provides, again, the general search box for the UKDS website, alongside three other useful ways to access data:
- The right-hand side of the page gives a list of links for quick access to different types of datasets held by UKDS, including UK surveys and Cross-national surveys.
- The left-hand side of the page has a tab called "Data by Theme", providing lists of surveys on 5 key issues: Ageing, Labour market, Housing and local environment, Crime and social control, and Health and health behaviour.

The UKDS provides the full datasets as well as documentation for each dataset. Let's look, for example, at the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS) of 2007. You can find it through this route:

- On the right-hand side of the screen, click on the "UK Surveys" link.
- Scroll down the list of studies, find the link labelled "Scottish Social Attitudes Survey" and click on it. Basic information about SSAS is given here.

**Alternatively, go to <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/series/?sn=2000049>*

- When you are at the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey page, Click on the + icon under Data Access. This gives a list of the different years of data held by UKDS.
- In the resultant list, find the survey for 2007 and click on its name.

This reveals more detailed information about this particular survey; the topics it covered, the type of sampling used, the number of respondents etc. The very bottom of the page also gives a list of publications which have used the data. This is useful for seeing what other people have done with the data.

To look at the actual questionnaire used in this survey. About half-way down the web page there is a section headed 'Documentation'. Scroll to this and you'll see a link marked 'User Guide'. This opens the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2007, User Guide (You can also find the same file on the course's Learn website - under "SPSS Datasets" name SSAS2007_UserGuide.pdf

Click on the link to open the User Guide via the UKDS website. We recommend that you don't print this file, as it has 243 pages!!!

User Guides explain how a particular dataset was assembled. How the survey was conducted, what questions were asked, how the data was entered into electronic form, and give you other useful information to allow you to analyse the data yourself.

Finding exemplar questions

In addition to searching for whole datasets, you can also use UKDS to identify questions about specific topics



- You can access the UKDS Variable Search at <http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/variables>
- For example, enter “drinking” in the search box. Click on ‘Go’.

The search finds thousands of questions containing the term “drinking”. Clicking on any single question shows you the full text of the question, and all the possible answers a respondent was offered.

Downloading datasets

Once you found a survey you would like to download, you will need to log in as a UKDS user to download the survey. This option is only open to users from UK universities.

To register, click on the 'Login / Register' box on the top right-hand side of the screen, click 'Login to the UK Data Service', select your university and click continue. On the new screen login using your usual university user name and password. Then select the 'New user' option, complete the registration form and agree to the End User Licence.

After registration, login to the website, find the desirable survey, tick the download/order box and register the use of data according to the intended use. You can download multiple datasets with a single use of data. You will then be able to download the files in either SPSS or Stata form.

Further information

For a broader guide to internet resources related to surveys, we recommend the online tutorial on The Internet for Social Statistics available on the Internet for Social Statistics Virtual Training Suite at: <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/he/tutorial/social-statistics>

This tutorial was written by Robin Rice and Anne Donnelly of the University of Edinburgh’s Data Library, and offers a one-stop tour of data and survey related Internet sites (as well as some more general tips on browsing the web).