

Datasets

Using ESDS data for teaching

Introduction

The use of data in teaching is an invaluable way for learners to engage with real-life research. By investigating the collections held at ESDS, learners can find out how real data is originally conceived, collected, analysed and managed. Data based on well-known studies or surveys can bring both substantive and methodological topics alive.

The ESDS produces 35 tailor-made survey datasets, which are available for teaching purposes, which are easier for students to handle. Both the study methods and data can be downloaded, free of charge at www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/subjectResults.asp?subcat=IV\B The subjects areas covered include crime, health, general household surveys and young people.

There are also over 15 teaching datasets in the ESDS Nesstar Catalogue where a selected range of social and economic data can be browsed and visualised online without the need for special software. These include material from the UK longitudinal studies <http://nesstar.esds.ac.uk/webview/index.jsp>

Online documentation in the ESDS Catalogue, such as the actual survey questionnaires and interviewer instructions, can be accessed without registration, but in order to download data as part of a taught course teachers need to register an account. Details can be found at www.esds.ac.uk/support/newuser.asp or www.esds.ac.uk/resources/teaching.asp Data used for teaching should be kept in a secure place and access restricted to students on the course.

The ESDS offers the following additional resources for classroom use:

- methods and data analysis guides providing introductions to re-using data using particular methods or software; www.esds.ac.uk/support/statguides.asp
- case studies showing how ESDS data have been used for research and teaching; www.esds.ac.uk/resources/datainuse
- useful guidance and training materials on data sharing and data management www.data-archive.ac.uk/create-manage including confidentiality, consent and ethics; www.data-archive.ac.uk/create-manage/consent-ethics
- thematic pages which provide an introduction to available material on themes like housing, health or crime; www.esds.ac.uk/resources/themes.asp
- guides to popular datasets and data series www.esds.ac.uk/support/datasetguides

Other dedicated ESDS resources for teachers and students include:

- Teaching material on interview methods and non-interview methods such as focus groups, diaries and visual methods;
- An online resource for teachers who want to explore data on measuring psychological distress to demonstrate research principles and methods;
- Resources supplying key steps in analysing attitudes to same sex relations, fear of crime and health differences;
- Teaching materials demonstrating how qualitative data can be re-used with activities for use in the classroom or as self-paced learning activities

Examples of case studies

Summaries of 80 social science research projects may be accessed at www.esds.ac.uk/resources/datainuse/casestudies.asp. The following may be of special interest to young people:

Do comprehensive schools reduce social mobility?

This study by Vikki Boliver, University of Durham, in collaboration with Adam Swift at the Politics Department and Balliol College, University of Oxford, used data from the National Child Development Study.

When comparing young people with the same level of ability, but from different types of school, the study found that the selective system did not lead to increased mobility of children from any particular background.

Do smarter children avoid drug use later in life?

Using data from the 1970 British Cohort Study, James White and others at University of Cardiff and University College, London found that children with higher IQs measured at five or ten years of age were more likely to use illegal drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy later in life. There was no link with social class and education. They also found a stronger association amongst women than men.

Electoral participation of young people in Europe

In elections between 1999 and 2002 the overall turnout rate for 22 European countries was 70 per cent, compared to 51 per cent for electors aged less than 25. Using data from the European Social Survey, Edward Fieldhouse, Mark Tranmer and Andrew Russell, University of Manchester, looked at non-voting among the young.

They used multilevel logistic regression, a statistical model used to analyse clustered data in medical, public health, epidemiological, and educational research, to test the extent to which variations in turnout were - on the one hand - attributable to the characteristics of young people and - on the other hand - attributable to the electoral context in each country. They found that variations in turnout among young people have both individual-level and contextual-level explanations.

SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR SCHOOLS

This resource is one part of a series of resources produced for Social Science for Schools. The Social Science for Schools website, www.socialscienceforschools.org.uk, is home to a number of teaching resources created to bring current and engaging social science research to your classroom.

Feedback and enquiries can be sent to schools@esrc.ac.uk