

The UK Data Archive (<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk>) is the national centre for expertise in acquiring, curating and providing access to social science and humanities data. Founded in 1967 at the University of Essex, it provides the largest collection of digital data in the social sciences and humanities in the UK, and consists of over 7,000 quantitative and qualitative datasets from a range of disciplines. Most of the data are what is called 'safeguarded' – they can only be accessed by a process of registering that should result in knowing who is using the data and for what purpose.

Searches for Qualitative Data

The contents of the archive are accessible via Discover on the UK Data Service (www.ukdataservice.ac.uk) or go direct to <https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue>

When searching the catalogue of studies you can restrict your research to those that collected qualitative data by using the filter Data Type on the left hand side and selecting 'qualitative and mixed methods data'.

Note that while you can call up all studies with qualitative data you would normally start by using search terms in the search box at the top. Here you can either look for a word (or words) that might appear in a project title or look for a KEYWORD that the text has been tagged by. Try sex and you'll see a set of options appearing in the search box including a series of pre-existing KEYWORDS containing sex.

Other filters are shown on the left hand side, such as date range.

The Archive has selected some studies to be part of a 'key collection'. These are better documented and more searchable. Be sure you know whether you are looking in the whole catalogue or at the key collection.

Searches within Qualidata are doing something rather different from the search of studies in 'Discover'. Qualidata is searching within the text content of a more restricted range of qualitative data projects and hence will return results to specific interviews, focus groups etc.

More Recent Emphasis on Qualitative Data

While the UK Data Archive has a long tradition of promoting secondary analysis as an established methodology for re-using quantitative data, use of this approach has been less prevalent and more contested for qualitative data (see Corti et al, 1995). Change was prompted by Qualidata, a specialist service set up in 1994. Its aim was to facilitate the archiving of qualitative material, and draw attention to the existence and potential of such data to the research community. Qualidata – which became part of the UK Data Archive in 2012 – was central in promoting and supporting the archiving and reuse of qualitative data.

Linked factors driving this change included:

1. The increased digitisation of qualitative research, making archiving and re-use more practical and accessible.
2. Recognition by qualitative researchers of the opportunities associated with archiving and re-use.
3. Support for retention and re-use by research funders' (i.e. ESRC grant holders are required to [submit qualitative data](#) resulting from their research grants to the UK Data Archive).

Further work is required to realise the contribution of archiving and re-use of data to qualitative enquiry. This should extend good practice to researchers, as well as ensuring the secondary analysis of qualitative data is promoted by funders' (the ESRC's recent Secondary Data Analysis Initiative, for example, prioritised the re-use of quantitative data).

SOME USEFUL REFERENCES:

There is a useful discussion of the qualitative longitudinal data available at the UK Data Archive on the BigQual website, by Dr Libby Bishop: <http://bigqlr.ncrm.ac.uk/2016/06/27/guest-post-4-libby-bishop-data-from-the-past-and-for-the-future-qualitative-longitudinal-data-available-at-the-uk-data-service/>

A list of resources on re-using qualitative data is available on the UK Data Service website:

<https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/use-data/secondary-analysis/reusing-qualitative-data>

See also:

Corti, L., Foster, J., Thompson, P. (1995) 'Archiving qualitative research data', *Social Research Update*, Issue 10: <http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU10.html>

Heaton, Janet: Secondary analysis of qualitative data: an overview. In: *Historical Social Research* 33 (2008), 3, pp. 33-45:

https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/19143/ssoar-hsr-2008-no_3_no_125-heaton-secondary_analysis_of_qualitative_data.pdf?sequence=1