

A guide to the UK Alcohol Data Map

Introduction

Put simply, the data map is a database of existing datasets on alcohol in the UK. Using the search engine at <http://www.ias.org.uk/search.html>, you can find that data you need for your research; for example, you can search for:

- A survey that asked about binge-drinking, usual volume of alcohol consumption and sexual behaviour, and can be broken down geographically to local authority level.
- A longitudinal survey that asked about drinking frequency and perceived parental attitudes to alcohol, among teenagers.

The data map also links to the UK Data Archive, where – once you have gone through the steps below – you can access the data itself. This brief guide explains how to search the data map, how to navigate through the results, a guide to the terms used, and how to access data from the UK Data Archive.

Copyright

Descriptions of the data held at the UK Data Archive are based on the metadata held in the UKDA Data Catalogue and reproduced with permission. Further information and online documentation as well as the data can be accessed via the catalogue.

Disclaimer

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How to use the Data Map

How to search

You can search for data based on a number of different characteristics, including the topics covered and the methodology used. To select a characteristic, select a general area from the first drop-down list (e.g. 'other alcohol variables'). This will then bring up a range of options in the second-drop down list (e.g. 'drink driving').

You can then add a second characteristic (e.g. 'Country', then 'Scotland'), making sure you remember to select a way to connect this to the previous characteristic (the 'Connector' box) – usually selecting 'AND'. As in other search engines, use:

1. 'AND' to search for both characteristics (covering drink-driving in Scotland)
2. 'OR' to search for one or the other characteristics (the survey either covers Scotland, or asked about drink-driving, or both)
3. 'NOT' to search for one characteristic but not the other (looking at drink-driving, but not covering Scotland)

To search for more than two characteristics, click the 'Add search term' box in the bottom-left corner of the screen.

When you have added all the characteristics you want, click 'Search' in the bottom-right corner of the screen.

Searching on age and sample size

Age and sample size are the only characteristics that involve numbers, rather than binary indicators as to whether something exists ('Dates include' only allows you to select whether fieldwork overlapped with a particular calendar year).

To search for age/sample size, firstly choose how you want to search – whether you want to search for 'age includes', 'age/sample size more than' or 'age/sample size less than'. In the second box, you can now select the age/sample size you are interested in.

For example, to search for surveys that are conducted among people under 18, select 'age less than' in the first box, and '18' in the second box. This will return all surveys that include people under 18, not those that are restricted to that age group.

Where descriptions of datasets did not include an upper age limit, we have set that to 110. We make no guarantee that any 110 year-olds were actually surveyed!

How to navigate the results

The results are presented for each individual dataset (survey and year) that matches the search criteria. These are grouped by the survey series they are part of – for example, the General Household Survey series includes datasets spanning 1978 to 2005, and these often cover different topics.

To find out more about a dataset that matches your search, simply click on the survey year in the results page (e.g. 1978). This presents more detailed summary information on that particular dataset, together with a link to the UK Data Archive if available (see below).

You can also find out more about a particular survey series by clicking on the series name (e.g. General Household Survey'), either from the initial results page, or from the detail page for the individual dataset. This usually gives a short description of the survey, together with links to *all* the datasets that are part of it (*not* just the ones that meet the search criteria).

A guide to terms used in the data map

The terms used are generally self-explanatory, but the following notes on the common shorthand used in the search fields may be useful:

- ***Beverage-specific***: when asking about drinking behaviour, some sets of questions ask about alcoholic drinks in general, while others ask for each type of drink in turn (for example, 'how often do you drink?' vs. 'how often do you drink beer?', then 'how often do you drink wine?' etc.). Where the latter approach has been used, the description of the variables describes it as 'beverage-specific'. Beverage-specific is a search option under the Consumption main heading, and is best used alongside the other Consumption variables (e.g. beverage-specific AND frequency).
- ***Drinking patterns***: this divides between '***binge-drinking***' and '***drunkenness***'. 'Binge-drinking' here refers to reporting drinking more than a specific number of drinks on a single occasion/day (e.g. 'how often have you drunk more than 6 standard drinks on a single occasion?'). 'Drunkenness' here refers to a self-perceived feeling of drunkenness or drinking too much. Therefore binge-drinking is externally-determined ('objective'), while drunkenness is determined by the respondent ('subjective').
- ***Status*** (under 'Other drinking'): this refers to drinking status, i.e. whether or not someone drinks at all.

There are also some terms that only appear in when looking at an individual records:

- ***Quantity-frequency measures***: where sets of questions have asked how often someone has drunk alcohol, followed by how much they usually consume when they do drink, this has been called a 'quantity-frequency' measure (as this is a standard way of estimating total average consumption).
- ***Time periods***: the time period for alcohol questions is usually included in the description of the question. For example, '12 month frequency measure' = how often have you had an alcoholic drink in the past 12 months'. 'Lifetime' refers to questions that ask whether people have *ever* done something.
- ***Detail level***: 'High', 'medium' or 'low' following a keyword simply refers to the number of questions on that particular topic in the survey. For example, 'smoking (high)' means that there is a high level of detail available on smoking, while 'smoking (low)' means that will only be 1-2 questions on smoking on the survey.

How to Access Data

Nearly all of the datasets included here can be downloaded for free from the UK Data Archive (<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>). Users must use an Athens password to access data, but those outside of an institutional Athens login can simply register their usage of data to gain a password (providing you are not using the data for commercial reasons). See <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/aandp/access/access.asp> for details.

Once you have found a dataset you are interested in, you can simply access the data by clicking on the link at the top of the page, where it says 'links to Data-archive record' in red. The record here also gives the SN (Study Number) that identifies the dataset in the Data Archive. If the link is not available, then the study may not be available through the Data Archive (you can check by searching via <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/search/searchStart.asp>).

Please note that in the case of any discrepancy between this resource and the material accompanying the datasets on the Data Archive, the most accurate information is likely to come from the material directly deposited with the Data Archive. Note also that copyright for the underlying data and associated user guides belongs to the data creators.