ONS Secure Research Service (SRS) update

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July 2021

What is the Secure Research Service?

The ONS's Secure Research Service (SRS) gives accredited researchers secure access to de-identified, unpublished data in order to work on research projects for the public good.

We have been accredited as a Digital Economy Act (DEA) 2017 processor by the UK Statistics Authority for the preparation and provision of data for research purposes.

The Five Safes Framework

Safe People

Safe Data

Safe Projects

Safe Outputs

Safe Settings

Researcher Journey

Legend:
- Safe People
- Safe Projects
- Safe Data
- Safe Setting
- Safe Output

- Researcher contacts Accredited Processor
- Accredited Processor provides training
- Researcher completes the assessment
- Feasibility assessment (Accredited Processor / Data Owner)
- Agreement in principle from Data Owner
- Ethical assessment undertaken
- Accredited Processor facilitates development of project proposal
- Project proposal reviewed by NSDEC if necessary

- Successful applicants become Accredited Researchers
- Project proposal reviewed by Research Accreditation Panel

- Research serving the public good is published

- Accredited Processor checks outputs to safeguard the confidentiality of the data
- Data Owner can specify thresholds
- Technological and physical security monitoring
- Data Owner determines mode of access
- Accredited Processor team support the researcher throughout research project
- De-identified data ingested into the Accredited Processor's environment
- Project approved

Recent growth

The last few years have seen significant growth in the service in terms of number of researchers, projects, datasets and outputs cleared.
We now have:

- over 4,000 accredited **researchers**
- over 600 current live **projects** in the SRS
- about 115 secure **datasets** available for research
- 2000 **safe outputs** cleared in 2020

Funding from Administrative Data Research UK (ADR UK)

Enhanced technology

To meet increasing demand, we have enhanced the processing power and storage capacity of the SRS. Since July 2018, we have put in:

- 6 additional citrix servers for carrying out research analysis
- 2 additional servers for SQL data processing have been added.
- Storage has also increased by over 12TB

Critical in enabling research to inform the Government response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
Also, to support NPD projects, prepare for the launch of LEO, and cater for a general increase demand.

March 2020

Sorry, we're
CLOSED

Due to **COVID-19**
restrictions

Office for **National Statistics**

SRS response

Introduced a policy to allow researchers temporary access to the SRS from home

Extended the availability of researcher access to the SRS (to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Moved our training from classroom to online

Brought in new, Covid-related data

Home working – access conditions

- Pre-requisite – Assured Organisational Connectivity (AOC)

- Commitment from organisation that staff will comply with legal and procedural requirements of access, and accept liability for any mis-use

- Access must be from the researcher's corporate machine and connection to the SRS via the corporate Virtual Private Network (VPN)

- Access must be from within the UK

- All researchers must read and sign a user agreement, which is signed off by the organisation

Home working – project conditions

- ONS test that there is a clear need for the project to be accessed from home:
    - Is the project important to the UK's response to the COVID-19 pandemic or to the current operation of the Government and public services?
    - Would there be a significant detriment to the public benefit of the research if there were delays to the project?
    - Has the project been commissioned or is it affiliated with a government department or local authority in any way?
    - Is there a time constraint on the project that significantly affects the delivery of the project?
    - Is the project's funding at risk?

- Every project seeking access from home has to have approval from data owners

Training

- Shortened researcher training material that could be delivered online was developed

- This enabled continued accreditation of new researchers.

- First online course delivered in April 2020

- Numbers receiving training has ramped up throughout the year

- Now training approximately 100 new researchers per month

Future developments - data catalogue

The SRS data catalogue is served as a spreadsheet downloadable from our website - see 'Related Downloads' section [here](#)

But current offer is sub-optimal for a variety of reasons:

- does not meet Government metadata standards
- users cannot easily use the catalogue to understand if data is suitable for their use
- search and discovery functionality is limited
- cannot easily link research articles to the data that supports it

We plan to deliver a new SRS data catalogue solution which will make detailed descriptions of datasets available through an open discovery website.

Future developments – IDP / IDS

Current SRS platform has limitations

IDS will subsume the SRS in the coming years and replace the existing functionality

IDS will **bring together ready-to-use data to enable faster and wider collaborative analysis for the public good.**

The IDP solution will be able to exploit state of the art cloud-based infrastructure and technologies that are not available to the existing SRS

Scalability will be a key feature of the design

Any Questions?

Office for **National Statistics**