



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

Department of Social Protection Statistics Policy on Access to Research Microdata Files

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Overview

Introduction

This document outlines the policies behind the re-use of data collected for analytical and policy-making purposes by the Department of Social Protection (DSP), and the procedures in place to ensuring that the integrity and confidentiality of customer microdata is maintained.

Customer microdata for research and analysis can be classified into the following categories:

1. Source Tier – This is the ‘raw’ microdata which contain disclosive variables, including customer number, date of birth, unique personal number etc.
2. Analysis Tier – This is similar to the source tier microdata but has been ‘pseudonymised’ through the removal of names and other unique identifiers (with the exception of an anonymised identifier number for each company).

Source Tier Access Arrangements

Access to Source Tier survey microdata is available to a limited number of internal staff (those gathering and analysing the data within the DSP Statistics Unit). Subject to consideration and approval by the DSP Chief Statistician, analysts and researchers within DSP but outside the Statistics Unit, may be granted access to Source Tier data for the purposes of applied policy research that informs policy development.

Analysis Tier Access Arrangements

Access to Analysis Tier microdata files can be made available to Government Departments, State Agencies or other third parties (for example, researchers engaged in policy analysis, or consultants working on behalf of one of the aforementioned organisation types) subject to our Access Criteria and meeting data protection guidelines. While Analysis Tier data does not contain direct identifiers, there is still a risk of disclosure through indirect identification, and access to Analysis Tier data is therefore strictly controlled by the Chief Statistician.

Analysis Tier Access Criteria

Access shall only be provided for scientific and research purposes only. Researchers and their organisations must have a proven track record in data analysis or research.

Access to Analysis Tier microdata will not be granted to individuals working in organisations that have a vested or commercial interest.

Researchers must submit a clear and specific research proposal that is acceptable to the Chief Statistician. The analysis/research undertaken must comply or be consistent with the specific purpose for which the access was granted.

Researchers are required to sign an Approved Researcher Agreement, which requires that researchers use the data only for the purposes outlined in the submitted research proposal, and that they do not disclose any information relating to a customer that comes to their knowledge through their use of DSP microdata.

Researchers are provided with Analysis Tier microdata which has a selection of variables tailored to their research proposal in line with data minimisation best practices.

Researchers must abide by the Statistical Disclosure Controls (SDCs) prescribed by the Statistics Unit to protect confidentiality. The DSP Statistics Unit will review the aggregates produced to check that they are non-confidential in nature.

The Department has the right to perform any statistical disclosure control that it deems appropriate to any output which is based on the research carried out using Department RMFs.

The Department reserves the right to monitor the implementation by researchers of their Confidentiality Agreement, up to and including audits by the Department, access logging and recording of hot desk sessions.

[Requesting Access to Research Microdata Files](#)

Please email statsunit@welfare.ie for enquiries on applying for RMF access.