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Secondary Data Analysis in Social Research

MA Social Research module

Module Outline

This module is aimed at postgraduate students who are interested in using secondary data analysis as their main or subsidiary research method. It assumes no prior mathematical expertise, although some familiarity with SPSS would be useful. The module will consider the role of secondary data analysis in social research and examine some of the vast range of sources that are available to researchers both nationally and internationally. Students will access data in its raw and aggregate form and use SPSS to prepare data for analysis. Students will be encouraged to consider the potential of using secondary data analysis in their own research, whether as the primary method or in combined approaches.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module students will be able to:

- Understand the potential for the use of secondary data analysis in social research;
- Critically assess the limitations and opportunities that the approach presents in general, and in the context of their own research in particular;
- Access the range of secondary data sources available to social scientists working in their field and evaluate their appropriateness to their research;
- Use statistical packages such as SPSS to download large secondary datasets and to prepare these datasets for analysis by recoding variables and dealing with technical issues such as non-response and missing variables;
- Select and demonstrate an application of the techniques to their own research

Course Assessment

3,000-word report using data accessed and prepared during the course including statistical outputs, tables and charts.

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