

UKDA potential barriers to data sharing – with suggested solutions



Available from <http://data-archive.ac.uk/create-manage/training-resources>

	REASONS NOT TO SHARE DATA	REPLIES OR ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF SHARING
1	My data is not of interest or use to anyone else.	It is! Researchers want to access data from all kinds of studies, methodologies and disciplines. It is very difficult to predict which data may be important for future research. Who would have thought that amateur gardener's diaries would one day provide essential data for climate change research? Your data may also be essential for teaching purposes. Sharing is not just about archiving your data but about sharing them amongst colleagues.
2	I want to publish my work before anyone else sees my data.	Data sharing will not stand in the way of you first using your data for your publications. Most research funders allow you some period of sole use, but also want timely sharing. Also remember that you have already been working with your data for some time so you undoubtedly know the data better than anyone coming to use them afresh. If you are still concerned you can embargo your data for a specific period of time.
3	I have not got the time or money to prepare data for sharing	It is important to plan data management early in the research data lifecycle. Data management ideally becomes an integral part of your research practice, reduces time and financial costs and greatly enhancing the quality of the data for your use too.
4	If I ask my respondents for consent to share their data then they will not agree to participate in the study.	Don't assume that participants will not participate because data sharing is discussed. Talk to them – they may be less reluctant than you might think, or less concerned over data sharing! Make it clear that it is entirely their decision, whereby they can decide whether their data can be shared, independent of them participating in the research. Explain clearly what data sharing means, and why it may be important. But they are still free to consent or not. You can always explain what data archiving means in practice for their data. If you have not asked permission to share data during the research, then you can always return to gain retrospective permission from participants.
5	I am doing highly sensitive research. I cannot possibly make my data available for others to see.	The first thing is to ask respondents and see if you can get consent for sharing in the first instance. Anonymisation procedures can help to protect identifying information. If these first two strategies are not appropriate then consider controlling access to the data or embargoing for a period of time. Also data that is held in the UK Data Archive is not publically available. Only registered researchers can gain access to the data.

6	I am doing quantitative research and the combination of my variables discloses my participant's identity.	Quantitative data can be anonymised through processes of aggregation, top coding, removal of variables, or controlled access to certain variables (i.e. postcodes).
7	I have collected audiovisual data and I cannot anonymise them, therefore I cannot share these data.	Visual data can be anonymised through blurring faces or distorting voices, but this can be time consuming and costly to carry out. It can mean losing much of the value of the data. It is better to ask for consent to share data from participants in an unanonymised form, and/or control access to the data.
8	I have made promises to destroy my data once the project finishes.	Why were such promises made? Always avoid making unnecessary promises to destroy data. There is usually no legal or ethical need to do so, except in the case of personal data. But that certainly would not apply to research data in general. Also consider where you have received this advice from? You may need to negotiate with research ethics committee or ethics boards about this agreement.
9	My data have been gathered under complete assurances of confidentiality.	Again why was such an assurance made? It is best to avoid unnecessary promises. Anonymisation procedures can be implemented to protect identities, but confidentiality can never be completely guaranteed. You can also consider controlling access to the data.
10	My data collection and resulting transcripts are in a foreign language.	This should not be a problem. The UK Data Archive can accept foreign language transcripts although translations into English are preferred.
11	It is impossible to anonymise my transcripts as too much useful information is lost.	Get in touch with us at the UK Data Archive. We may be able to help and it might not be as difficult as it looks. Also, access controls on the data may be a better solution than anonymisation if too much useful information would be lost.
12	My data collection contains data which I have purchased and it cannot be made public.	It is important to know who holds the copyright to the data you are using and to obtain the relevant permissions. You need to be aware of the licence conditions of the data you are using and what you can and cannot do with the data.
13	Other researchers would not understand my data at all - or may use them for the wrong purpose.	Producing good documentation and providing contextual information for your research project should enable other researchers to correctly use and understand your data.
14	There is IPR in the data.	This should not be a problem if you seek copyright permission from the owner of the intellectual property rights. This is best done early on in the research project, but could be sought retrospectively.