What kind of data?

Statistics and numeric data 2014

There are many kinds of statistics and numeric data that can be used to support project or research work.

Data is produced by many people and organisations for differing purposes. Statistics are often not easy to find. For various reasons, mainly because of commercial confidentiality or sensitivity, some statistics are not publicly available or may only be available for a fee.

Government policy and budgetary reasons may result in statistical data being available some years and not others, produced for a short time then discontinued, or produced as a one off survey.

This checklist may help define your requirements more clearly:

**Recent:**
Would one to five years of data be enough to ensure sufficient observations for modelling?

A short time series may be all there is available if the data is, for example, based on a one off or infrequent survey. Consider time series or survey data that has a continuum

**Time series:**
Is a longer time series of data 10, 20, 30, 40 years required? Consider

- The length of data is available for example when a particular survey began, such as the New Zealand Household Labour Force survey (HLFS) which began in 1985.
- If any changes have been made in methodology e.g., changes to the System of National Accounts, Changes in currency such as European countries changing to the Euro.

**Frequency:**
Is annual, quarterly, monthly or daily data required?

- Check when the frequency began, for example quarterly GDP data for New Zealand began with the June 1977 quarter.

**Source:**
What is the origin of the data; or where is it from?

- An official source such as a country’s Statistical Office
- Central Bank
- Government Department
- An official agency such as the United Nations, World Bank or OECD?

**Comparison:**
Do you want to compare one country with another or a group of countries?

- Use the official agencies databases such as the United Nations, World Bank or OECD
**Resourcefulness:**

Sometimes it is necessary to look in more than one place for data from the same survey i.e.

- **New Zealand Household Labour Force Survey** (HLFS) data is not all publicly available from just one source, and is not all available as a consistent time series. Depending on the data required it may be necessary to look at:
  - the New Zealand Time series database,
  - the Infoshare database
  - the *Labour market statistics* (in print and online).
  - And some data may need to be obtained directly from Statistics New Zealand.

**Updating data:**

If you are wanting to update data that has been previously published in, for example, a working paper or journal article, check

- Has the researcher manipulated raw data from a number of sources to produce the data you want to update?
- Can you identify the underlying data types so that you can produce comparable updated data?

**Regularity:**

Many longitudinal studies, panel data studies and income differential studies are based on data collected at regular intervals, but others for example; national statistical agencies running household surveys are collected irregularly.

Although you may want up-to-date data on specific topics, it may not be possible as there is nothing more recent than that which is made available by agencies such as the World Bank (e.g. GINI *income differentials*).

**Timeliness of data:**

There can be a three year time lag in international comparative data, particularly for the social sciences, as the data is:

- collected by a national statistical agency,
- passed on to an international agency, then
- reprocessed by that agency in an attempt to produce consistent and comparable data

**Free or fee:**

Is the data likely to be freely available or is it only available for a fee? For example, fees are charged for data on, salary packages. Consider if it is worth the expense.

**Is the type of data you want actually collected:**

Some data is not available because it is not collected, for example FDI by sector is not available for New Zealand because Statistics New Zealand does not collect that data, however other countries statistical offices do

For more information check Statistics and numeric data subject guide page.
University of Auckland
General Library Building
Level M

Location of print collection
Official statistics