

Microdata for Policy Research: Lessons from the UK experience

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Spectrum Presentation Theatre, BP House

20 Customhouse Quay, Wellington

Abstract

The UK's use of microdata for policy research has expanded significantly in the last ten years. The requirements for evidence-based policy, along with developments in access to confidential data, have helped the UK to develop a robust, generic infrastructure for research. This presentation discusses the use and impact of microdata on policy in recent years, focusing on the use of confidential business data. It discusses how the infrastructure was developed, showing how the needs of the user community fed into development. Finally, it reviews some of the problems faced currently, including the need to avoid seeing microdata as a panacea; and tries to draw together lessons learned from the UK.

Biography

Felix Ritchie is currently senior microeconomist and Head of Microdata Analysis and User Support at the UK Office of National Statistics. He was responsible for the concept, design, and development of ONS's Virtual Microdata Laboratory (VML) in 2004. The VML quickly became noted for its principles-based approach to all aspects of research management, and continues to be at the forefront of development in secure access to confidential data.

Prior to joining ONS, Felix was a programmer, electricity analyst, lecturer at the University of Stirling, head of IT for a German labour economics research institute, and operations manager for a small IT company.

Felix writes regularly on the management of research and research facilities, and on statistical disclosure control, as well as working in labour and productivity economics.