

The provision of geographical data in longitudinal data sets

Researchers

Paul Boyle, SDHI and Longitudinal Studies Centre - Scotland, University of St Andrews

Andrew Cullis, Longitudinal Studies Centre - Scotland, University of St Andrews

Robin Flowerdew, School of Geography & Geosciences, University of St Andrews

Vernon Gayle, Longitudinal Studies Centre - Scotland, University of St Andrews

Background

The provision of longitudinal data in the UK has improved substantially in recent years and a growing number of researchers are becoming skilled in analysing such data. Concurrently, there has been a growing interest in the influence of local-area characteristics on the trajectories of individuals; a pertinent example is the 'context versus composition' health debate. However, the ability to investigate the influence of locale on individuals is hampered by the lack of geographically refined information that is usually included in longitudinal datasets. Ideally, from a geographical perspective, detailed information about each individual's local context would be available. However, disclosure of such information could be expensive and could involve confidentiality risks. It is therefore essential to work out how geographical data can be used to add value to these studies at a reasonable cost and without the risk of infringing confidentiality guidelines.

Aims of Study

- To provide recommendations about how geographical identifiers may be added to longitudinal databases
- To critically assess the geographical information that is potentially available for inclusion in longitudinal datasets
- To identify the requirements that researchers have for certain types of data
- To consider the feasibility of the various options for integrating such data, bearing in mind the possible disclosure risks that accompany each
- To provide recommendations about the optimal solution(s) for the various longitudinal datasets

Methods of Working

The project will consult, as widely as possible, given the relatively short timescale. Structured and semi-structured telephone interviews will mainly be undertaken, although some face-to-face interviews will be conducted. Correspondence through e-mail will also form part of the consultation process.

Funding

This project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).