

## Accessing research data

Transcript of video

By Henning Hansen, UiT The Arctic University of Norway  
ORCID: 0000-0002-9186-1441

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Before embarking on a research project, it is crucial to search for any readily available research data that bears relevance for your research project. While sharing research data is still something of a novelty within certain research disciplines, there is no guarantee that you will find research data that is relevant for your research. But sometimes you might be surprised by what you find. Depending on your area of research, locating and reviewing the available data at an early stage of the research process may be just as important as the literary review.

Reviewing the available research data is closely interlinked with the initial phase of the research project – the formulation of research questions and the shaping of the study. Looking into the available data within your field of research, preferably before you start your own data collection, may save you a lot of time.

Identify the latest research in your field and try to access the underlying data. Continue where others ended their research projects, instead of working on the time-consuming process of re-inventing the wheel. Do not be afraid to stand on the shoulders of research data giants!

Keep in mind that the same body of research data can often be used for a number of different research projects. If you come across published research that is particularly relevant to your own work, try to find and access the data. Sometimes you will find a reference and a link to the associated research data together with the published study, and if not, you can also search for the dataset on a data search engine. But even if you are unable to find the data online, you also have the option of contacting the corresponding author and requesting access to the underlying data.

If you are able to access the data, you may find yourself in a position to review the findings for yourself, and thereby be able to properly assess the validity and integrity of the published research, and even to replicate the study. The published research may sometimes just be the tip of the iceberg, and therefore it might be important and useful to look beyond the published material. Sometimes researchers have only had time to use a tiny bit of the collected data themselves but are generously offering access to the full dataset to the wider research community, for others to use.

By looking at the underlying data you may get a deeper understanding of the research at hand, which in turn may help you to better understand the fuller picture and to review the facts at a whole new level of detail.

Research data from previous research projects can be used and cited in your own research at the same level as any other published research. You can strengthen your argument by using research data, and it can furthermore serve as a valuable source of inspiration when conducting your own research. By looking at how colleagues and other researchers in your own field have executed their data collection and structured and shaped their datasets, you may improve the methodology and overall quality of your own work, and also save a lot of time.