

Official statistics are **quantitative data** that is compiled by the UK government. This is collated by a broad range of departments and is published by the Office for National Statistics and the gov.uk websites

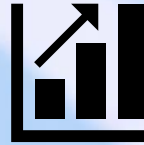
This can be hard statistics, such as birth and death rates or soft statistics such as the rate of unemployment, crime rates and domestic violence. **Hard statistics** are more factual as there is a legal obligation to provide the data, whilst **soft statistics** are more open to interpretation and often only represent a percentage of the social issue they are looking to measure.



Department for Education

Many of the official statistics in the UK are made possible by the **Census** which is conducted every 10 years and compiled quantitative data from every household in the UK. Another form of official statistics is the achievement data produced by the **Department for Education** each year for a wide range of examinations and courses

## Strengths



Provide an overview into social issues that can be used to generate further research in that area

Have **high reliability** as the research that informs them is conducted on a regular basis – e.g. prison stats released monthly

Can provide a useful insight into trends over time in areas such as education, health and family diversity

**Can be manipulated** to serve political ideologies – particularly as definition can change (e.g. poverty)

**Can lack validity** – e.g. dark figures of crime and domestic violence in society are often under-reported

## Limitations

# Sociological Research Methods