

WWW.AGESTATS.IE USER GUIDE

C|A|R|D|I

Centre for Ageing Research
and Development in Ireland



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INTRODUCTION

This user guide provides a simple guide to the features of www.agestats.ie, a cross walk of ageing surveys across the island of Ireland.

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CARDI has created www.agestats.ie to support anyone undertaking research on ageing and older people in Ireland, North and South. If you are exploring specific themes or topics, it can point you to the sources with the data you need. The website provides a summary of 31 selected surveys, organised into nine themes:

Themes		
Demographics	Employment and work	Living environment
Economic and material	Family, social networks, support and participation	Political and civic
Education and training	Health and wellbeing	Values, attitudes and opinions

While aimed primarily at researchers and statisticians, www.agestats.ie is an easy to use tool that policymakers, people in the voluntary and community sector, journalists and others can use to find datasets and individual statistics on ageing topics quickly. It does not require any background or training in research and can provide easy comparison between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland on issues related to ageing and older people.

When you first visit www.agestats.ie, the homepage (pictured below) is displayed.

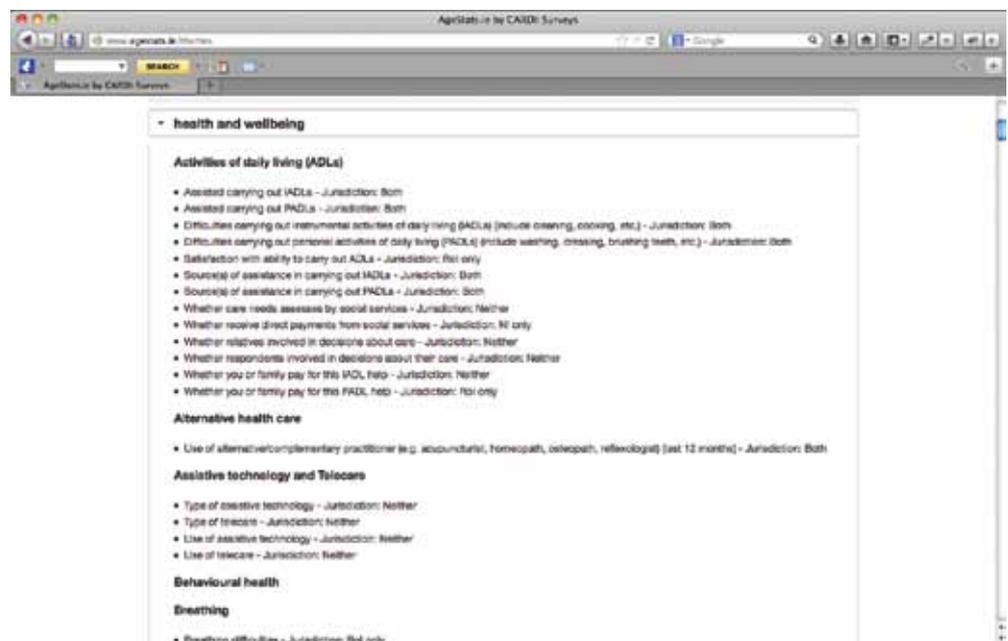


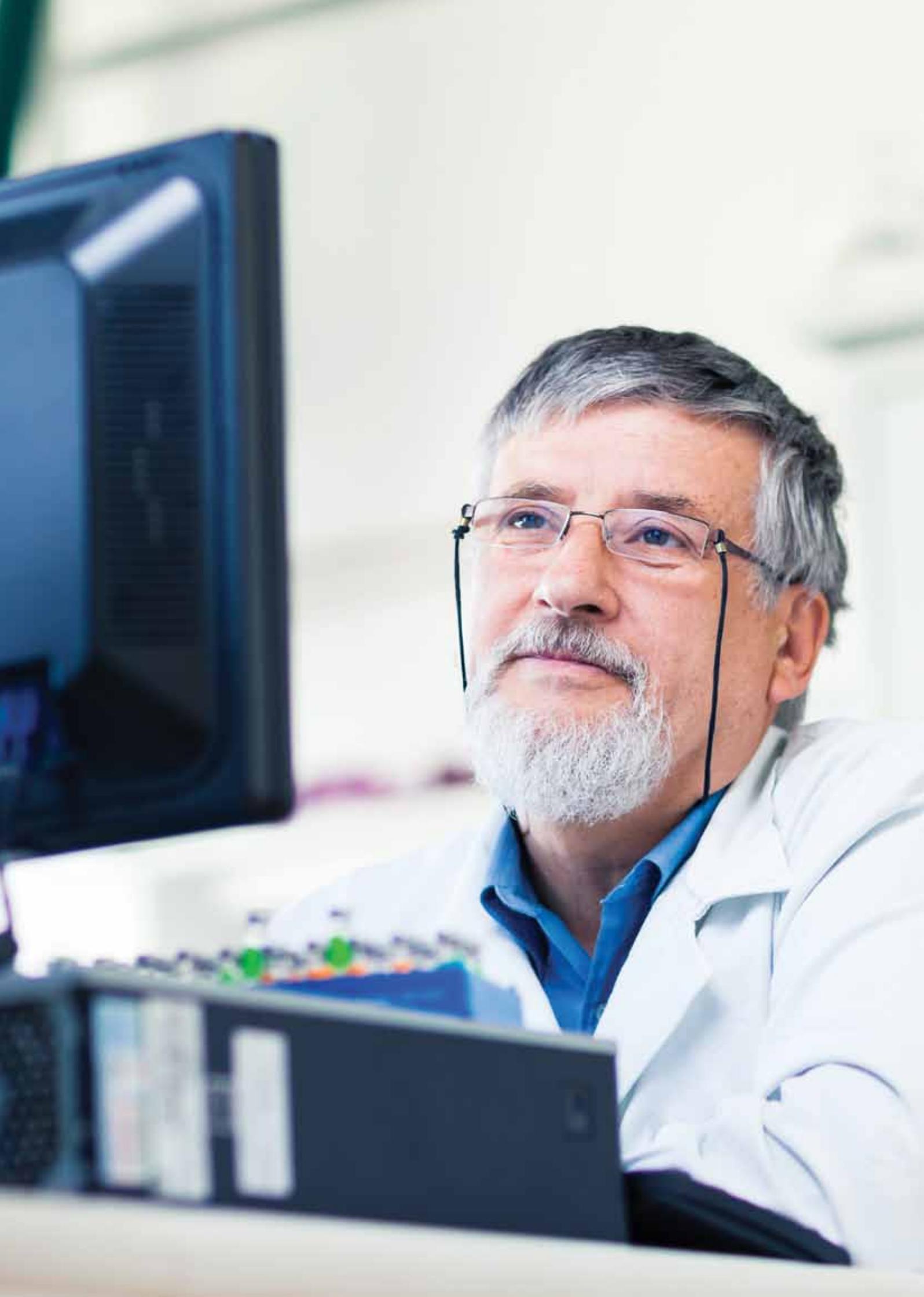
ABOUT

The “About” tab in the homepage leads to an information screen which details the work of CARDI and also presents a complete list of surveys used on www.agestats.ie. It also links to an overview and methodology paper. The full list of surveys and rationale for those chosen is available in the appendix to this document.

THE “OVERVIEW”

The “Overview” tab presents a complete list of the nine themes across all of the surveys. Under each theme is a list of data accompanying that theme, and a classification as to whether or not there is data available for both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. So for example under the “Health & wellbeing” theme, we can see that home help / home care data is available for both jurisdictions, while day centre services data are Republic of Ireland only. Some data are not available in either jurisdiction – see the sample list below.

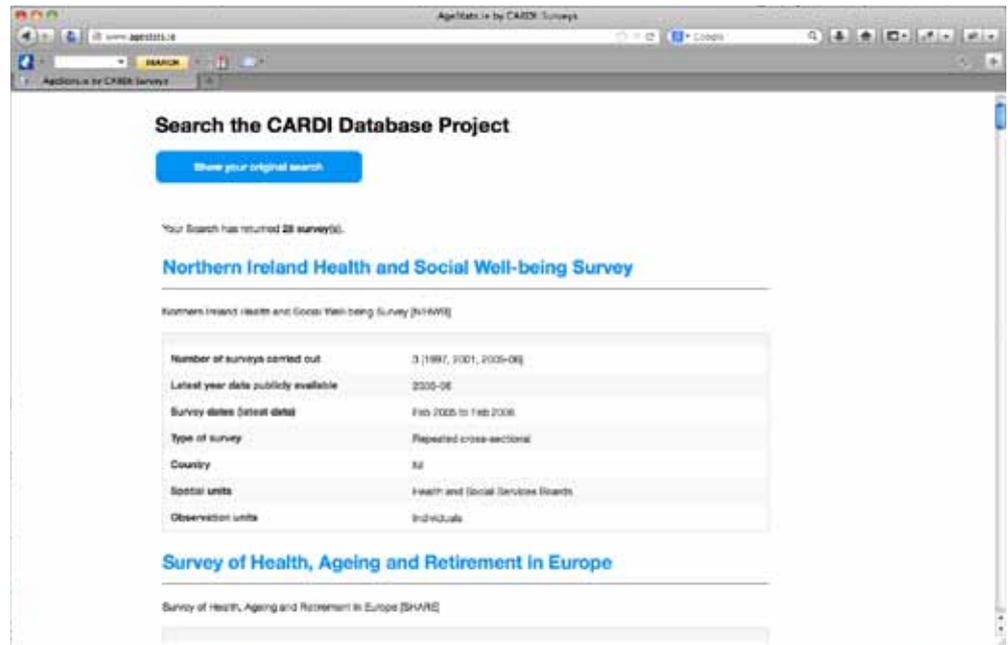




QUICK SEARCH

From the homepage, it is possible to search through the data sources using a quick search by keyword, e.g. poverty, education, health. To do this, enter the keyword in the "Quick search" box, select Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland or Both and click the "Do search" button.

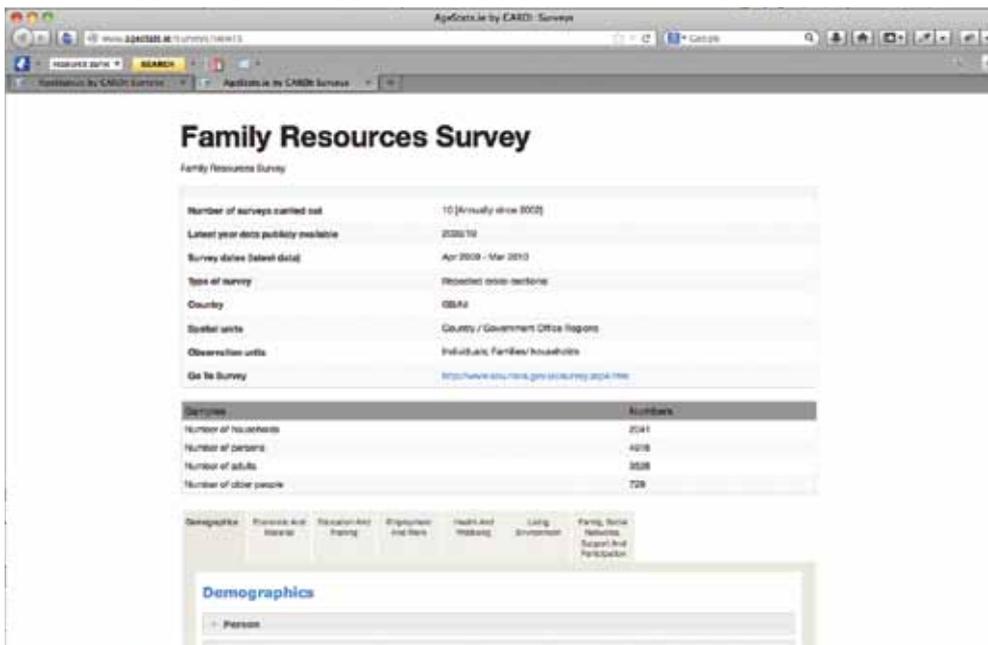
Using the example of "health", this will bring the user to a search results page as pictured below. For each survey in the search results, several pieces of information are displayed, including the number of surveys carried out, survey dates, the last year the data is publicly available and the jurisdiction.



RESULTS DATABASES

The quick search presents a list of all relevant surveys in the database with accompanying information. More details and a link to the original survey data can be obtained by clicking on any of the selected surveys, which will lead to the sample screen below.

This screen presents full information on the survey selected, including the sample size and what themes the survey covers. There is also an external link to the original survey.



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Family Resources Survey' page. The page title is 'Family Resources Survey'. Below the title, there is a table with the following information:

Number of surveys carried out	10 (Annually since 2002)
Latest year data publicly available	2009/10
Survey dates (latest data)	Apr 2009 - Mar 2010
Type of survey	Repeated cross-sectional
Country	GBA
Spatial units	Country / Government Office Regions
Observation units	Individuals, Families/households
Go to Survey	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/survey.asp?ref

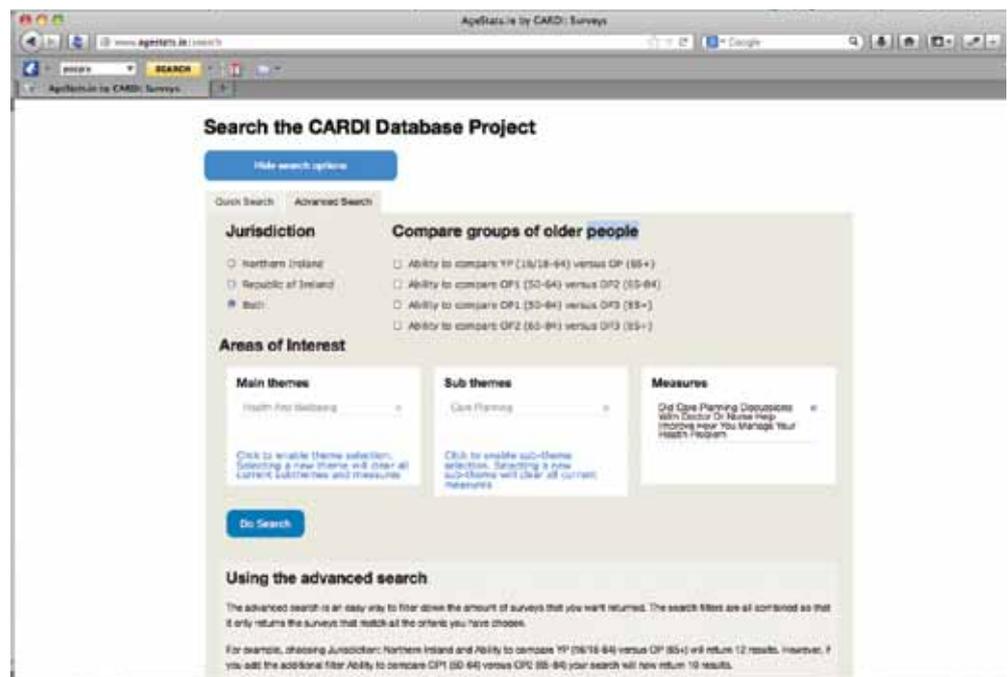
Below this table is a 'DETAILS' section with a table:

DETAILS	Numbers
Number of households	2041
Number of persons	4018
Number of adults	3528
Number of older people	728

At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a 'Demographics' section with a dropdown menu currently set to 'Person'. The page also features a navigation menu with categories: Demographic, Financial and Material, Education and Training, Employment and Work, Health and Wellbeing, Living Arrangements, Family, Social Networks, Regional and Participation.

ADVANCED SEARCH

Under the “Search” tab on www.agestats.ie, it is possible to perform an advanced search. The advanced search is an easy way to filter down the amount of surveys that you want returned. The search filters are all combined so that it only returns the surveys that match all the criteria you have chosen. In addition to selecting the jurisdiction, users can also select the groups of older people for which data is available, and further filter searches by main theme, sub theme and measure. As an example, users can select “Health and wellbeing” as a main theme, “Care planning” as a sub theme and “Did care planning discussions with doctor or nurse help improve how you manage your health problem?” as a measure. This will return just one survey in the results. See the screen capture below as an example of using the advanced search function.



MULTIPLE THEME SEARCH

The advanced search also allows users to search across multiple themes, sub-themes and measures from a single query. The order in which themes and sub-themes is entered is very important.

There are several steps to a multiple theme search:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | You must start by choosing all the themes you are interested in. You can change your themes once you have selected them. However, this will mean that any sub-themes or measures you have chosen will be removed from the query and you will have to reselect them. |
| 2 | Your sub-themes dropdown will now display all the sub-themes related to the themes selected in the previous step. You may have a lot of sub-themes here. You can scroll down the list or if you start typing then the list will be limited to entries that match what you have started to type. |
| 3 | Once you have selected a sub-theme you will be able to select a measure. However, once you select a measure your sub-theme selection will be locked. Unlocking and changing your sub-theme selection will mean that your selected measures will disappear. |
| 4 | Any measures within your selected themes and sub-themes will appear in a dropdown. You may have a lot of measures here. You can scroll down the list or if you start typing then the list will be limited to entries that match what you have started to type. |

For further information on using www.agestats.ie, please contact agestats@cardi.ie.



APPENDIX

BACKGROUND TO WWW.AGESTATS.IE

Every year, government, research and academic institutions and other public or private organisations in the North and South of Ireland conduct a large number of separate surveys capturing a wide range of social, economic and other data.

Much of these data are now easily available from *Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA)* in the Republic or from *Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS)* archive at the University of Essex. While the datasets are well-documented, a researcher interested in carrying out a comparative analysis of some aspect of older people's lives in the North and the South must trawl through the documentation of each survey to ascertain what information is available and for what level of analysis, i.e. the individual, the benefit unit/family or household.

The purpose of www.agemstats.ie is to provide a summary of the topic areas and measures covered and the level of analysis in each of 31 selected surveys – 15 in the South and 16 in the North. The aim of this unified database is to encourage secondary data analysis across the border. The selected datasets do not form an exhaustive list but were chosen to give the best possible mix across topic areas and measures.

Researchers should be under no illusion about the difficulties of carrying out comparative research on the island of Ireland. Although, as can be seen from this unified database, there are a mass of data available on both sides of the border, very few are directly comparable. Few of the questions on identical topics are the same in North and South even in relation to the data collection exercises initiated by the European Union. The wording is invariably slightly different. Similarly, the unit of analysis – individual, benefit unit or household – also differ between the two jurisdictions. Greater cooperation between the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in the design of questionnaires could lead to a far greater harmonisation of standard questions and agreement over the unit of analysis.

CHOICE OF TOPIC AREAS

The first issue in compiling a unified dataset concerns the topic areas (or themes) that are likely to be of interest to the potential researcher. Should the selection be based upon some well-developed theoretical perspective such as living standards, well-being, life course approach or happiness, or should it be based on an expert view of what topics are likely to be of interest to the comparative researcher? We started compiling the topics from a living standard's perspective, but found that this was too narrow and we therefore developed, with the help of CARDI, an ad hoc list of topics which we considered would be of interest and utility to researchers in Ireland, North and South. We started with some main themes, divided these into sub-themes and then looked at specific measures.

NUMBER OF THEMES/SUB-THEMES

Choosing which themes, sub-themes and measures to be included in this unified database was a challenging process. It is hoped the final eight themes chosen strikes the right balance between too much and too little information.

- Economic and Material
- Education and Training
- Employment and Work
- Health and Well-being
- Living Environment
- Political and Civic
- Family, Social Networks, Support and Participation
- Values, Attitudes and Opinions

Each of these main themes was further divided into sub-themes and these in turn were divided into measures. We also included a section titled 'Demographics' to describe the main demographic variables included in the survey. To see an overview of the themes, sub themes and measures click here www.agestats.ie/themes

DERIVED VARIABLES

Many surveys contain a large number of derived variables. These are variables which are constructed from a combination of other variables by researchers to explore some particular hypothesis. For example, a researcher may be interested in all those households living in poverty. Now there are many different ways in which a household may be defined as living in poverty. The Republic of Ireland uses what is called a 'Consistent' poverty measure. This is currently defined as a household with an income below 60 per cent of the median income and who is deprived of two or more goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living. To ascertain whether a household is in consistent poverty it is therefore necessary to combine variables on income and deprivation to produce a new derived variable called consistent poverty. The only derived variables which have been included in the unified database are those relating to poverty measures. Resources did not permit a more extensive coverage as this would involve gaining access and undertaking a systematic audit of existing versus derived variables in each dataset.

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION

A number of criteria determined the choice of survey to be included in the unified database. First, we have included those surveys which have the best coverage of our selected themes for older people. We have not, for example, included any surveys which focus exclusively on children or young adults. We have also excluded surveys which have limited information on older people, for example the National Diet and Nutrition Survey or the Labour Force Survey in the North and the National Employment Survey of the Earnings, Hours Employment Costs Survey in the South, which focus primarily on people of working age or under 65 years of age.

Second, if the survey was periodic (e.g. repeated cross-sectional), we have included only the most recent survey for which the data are publically available. For example, the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in Northern Ireland has been conducted annually since 1995/96 but we have included only data from 2001-2002 – the most recent survey for which the data are available. As different topic modules are included each year, it would have been a mammoth task to include every theme/sub-theme and measure in each survey. For those interested in the topics covered in previous years, they should consult the [NISRA website](#). However, we have flagged up instances in the datasets where information relevant to the study of the lives of older people is available, e.g. special waves of the Eurobarometer surveys.

Third, we have included only those surveys conducted from 2009 onwards, unless we considered that the survey is a rich source of information on older people, in which case it has been included. Three surveys in the North and four surveys in the South have been included on this criterion. Examples for the North include Northern Ireland Health and Social Well-being Survey (2005/06) and the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey (2002/03) and in the South, the National Disability Survey (2006) and the National Survey of Housing Quality (2001-2002).

THE DATASETS

Based on these three criteria, the unified database contains 31 surveys in total - 16 from the North and 15 from the South.

In Northern Ireland:

- Census of Population of Northern Ireland
- Continuous Household Survey
- Family Resources Survey
- Health Survey Northern Ireland
- European Values Survey
- Living Costs and Food Survey
- Northern Ireland Crime Survey
- Northern Ireland Health and Social Well-being Survey
- Northern Ireland House Condition Survey
- Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey
- Northern Ireland Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey
- Northern Ireland Survey of Activity Limitation and Disability
- Travel Survey Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Household Panel Survey
- Understanding Society
- Ageism and Ageing in Northern Ireland

In Republic of Ireland:

- Census of Population of Republic of Ireland
- Survey on Income and Living Conditions
- Quarterly National Household Survey
- National Disability Survey
- Household Budget Survey
- Household Travel Survey
- National Travel Survey
- National Survey of Housing Quality
- Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition
- The Irish Longitudinal study on Ageing
- Public Attitudes to Disability Survey
- Eurobarometer
- European Values Study
- Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe
- Ageism and Ageing in the Republic of Ireland

It is anticipated that the Age Stats website www.agestats.ie will be updated annually to ensure that it stays up to date with the latest datasets across Ireland, North and South.

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