

Searching for data at ICPSR

In these examples, you'll be trying some new tools and exploring to see their features and limitations.

Sample data searches:

- Abortion
- Crime and education

For each of these subjects, explore the resources listed below to see which would be best if you were looking for

1. ICPSR general data search
 - a. Go to <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/index.html> and click on the **Data Access & Analysis** tab at the top.
 - b. Use the search box and the radio button to search the “Data Holdings” not the “Web Site” for your subject.
 - c. What kinds of materials do you find? (e.g. administrative data? Survey data? Aggregate or micro data? Time coverage? Etc.)
 - d. Can you adjust your search terms to focus your search on one kind of data?
2. ICPSR Bibliography of Data-Related Literature search.
 - a. On the **Data Access & Analysis page** where you started your searching in the step above, choose the link **Bibliography of Data-Related Literature** and try your search again.
 - b. Your search will result in a bibliography of research articles and books and other materials that have used data in the ICPSR data archive. Click on the **Related Data** link for one or more of these items and examine what you find. Does the “description” give you information about the study that helps you narrow or focus your search?
3. ICPSR Social Science Variables Database search.
 - a. On the **Data Access & Analysis page** where you started your searching in the step above, choose the link **Social Science Variables Database**. This is a database of variables in selected studies. Click on the link **See which codebooks can be searched** and review the list of study titles for which variable-level searching is available.

- b. Return to the **Social Science Variables Database** search page and use the Variables search box to repeat your search. After a brief list of *studies*, your results will have a list of variables. Each variable-entry will look something like this, with two links: one to the variable and one to the study:

□ **VCF0838**

Study 8475

[American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File, 1948-2000](#)

Desc: There has been some discussion about abortion

- c. Click on each link for several variables to see what kind of information you get. How might this information help the user focus the search?
4. Using ICPSR Topic Archives.
 - a. ICPSR also has “topical archives.” The studies in these are also available through the tools you’ve already used (above), but are gathered together by topic to allow easier browsing and more focused searching. Go back to the **Data Access & Analysis page** where you started your searching in step 1 above, and click on the link **Special Topic Archives**.
 - b. Try searching and browsing for your subject here. Do you find studies you missed in your other searches? Is this a possible good starting place of either of your topics?
 5. Using a codebook.
 - a. Sometimes the only way you or a user can really tell if a study will meet the user’s needs is to examine the “codebook” (or “documentation” or “metadata”) – the file or files that list all the variables in a study and perhaps reproduce a survey instrument (questionnaire). In this step we’ll do that!
 - b. Go back to the **Data Access & Analysis** page where you began in step 1 above. Use the search to find the study “Outdoor Recreation Survey, 1977: General Population Survey,” which is ICPSR study number 7679.
 - c. Your search should lead you to this page:
<http://webapp.icpsr.umich.edu/cocoon/ICPSR-STUDY/07679.xml>.
At the top of that page, click on the **Browse Documentation** tab and click on the link for the “Codebook.” (Note: you may have to register to do this. Do so!)
 - d. Once you have the codebook open in Adobe Acrobat, see if you can determine if “rock climbing” was a recreation studied. What else can you learn from this codebook?