

Principles for sharing microdata

UNODC policy for disseminating microdata adhere to the following principles to be applied indistinctly to all potential users:

1. **Access for research purposes.** UNODC shares microdata for statistical and scientific research purposes only. The data are to be used solely for reporting aggregated information, including modelling, and not for investigating specific individuals, household, institutions or establishments.
2. **Adequate timeliness.** No microdata is to be shared before the publication of report(s) or output(s) which the data were originally collected for. After the publication of the planned report, UNODC verifies if any proprietary rights of data producers, donors or implementing partners prevent the publication of microdata.
3. **Respect of data ownership.** Microdata are owned by UNODC in cases where it was the only institution responsible for the data collection. If data were collected jointly with other institution(s) or government(s), an explicit agreement with these institutions is required to allow UNODC to disseminate microdata. It is a good practice to include specific language on arrangements for microdata dissemination in agreements/contracts with institutions partnering on sample surveys and other collections of microdata.
4. **Data anonymization.** UNODC share microdata only when all the necessary steps are taken to ensure respondents' anonymity and confidentiality. These steps include the use of a well-grounded and scientifically sound methodology for data anonymization to ensure the protection of individuals privacy by eliminating all direct and indirect identifiers and by aggregating/obscuring data when needed. For data related to geographical entities, such as agriculture fields, particular care will be taken to ensure anonymity of geographical locations and affected units. As a general rule, UNODC considers confidential any information that relates to geographical units equal or smaller than 5x5 Km. In exceptional cases, if there is a well-justified requirement for more detailed information, information that relates to units not smaller than 1x1 Km may be shared. In all cases, the minimal size of the geographical unit (or units) to use when sharing microdata will be selected after thorough examination of resulting files against the need of preserving anonymity of households, individuals, geographical areas or other entities.
5. **Quality of microdata.** Assuring the quality of the data published by UNODC is of utmost importance and microdata not meeting required quality standards will not be shared. Data is deemed of high quality if it is complete, consistent and accurate, obtained following a sound methodology, and correctly representing the reference population. Data are to be accompanied by adequate metadata and supporting documentation, including a description of the methods used to collect and analyze the data.
6. **Use for research purposes.** UNODC shares microdata to external entities only if they submit enough information to allow UNODC to assess the fit of their research objectives/goals and the confidentiality measures they take. To this end, UNODC requests data users to submit information on: i) research content and methodology, ii) use of the microdata, iii) microdata

storage, iv) dissemination of research findings, v) target audience and vi) possible ethical issues which may affect UNODC as part of the microdata request. The data requestor will also pledge to comply with specific rules and conditions in the use of microdata.

7. **Attention to political sensitivity.** UNODC conducts research on topics that are politically sensitive as they often relate to illicit activities, so breach of confidentiality and/or other data misuse may have serious consequences on the individual entities participating in UNODC research. While some international organizations like UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank, and Eurostat have guidelines for sharing microdata online or via special requests, the very nature of UNODC research in illicit activities requires additional care in managing microdata and requests to access them to avoid risks for the respondents and UNODC personnel involved in the research as well as possible reputation risks for the Office.
8. **Accountability:** within UNODC, the Research and Trends Analysis Branch (DPA/RAB) is responsible for supervising the implementation of the policy for sharing microdata for statistical purposes. Requests for accessing microdata files by external users will be managed by the UNODC office responsible for conducting the survey/research activity and for storing the resulting datasets. Within RAB, a team comprising the Chief of RAB, the Chief of the Data Development and Dissemination Section (DDDS) and other senior staff, or their delegates and subject matter experts, is responsible for reviewing microdata requests addressed to RAB and for assessing that all the steps for granting access to microdata as highlighted below have been taken. Access requests managed by other UNODC offices will be managed by a responsible team, which will consult with RAB when examining requests to share microdata files.