

Comprehensive and longitudinal data continuously gain importance in the social sciences. As surveys increasingly face problems such as non-response, alternative data sources - particularly administrative or register data - attract the interest of researchers and become more and more available.

Despite their manifold advantages compared to survey data, administrative data also have shortcomings. First, they are primarily collected for administrative purposes. Research is only a secondary use. Second, we have to take into account that changes in the data collection method and the recorded information happen without the consideration of research needs. Finally, there is often a remarkable time lag between the data collection and their provision for research purposes. Considering the different pros and cons of survey and register data, the linkage of these data sources may improve their quality and analytic potential.

Our presentation will focus on the sources, preparation and accessibility of administrative data of the Research Data Centre of the German Federal Employment Agency. On the one hand these data comprise detailed information on employment structure (qualification, age, nationality, income etc.), industry (5-digit level) and location (districts) of establishments. This so-called Establishment History Panel is composed of annual datasets and includes all establishments with at least one employee in Germany since 1975. On the other hand they include person-level data on a daily basis with exact information on the income and benefit receipt since 1975. Furthermore these datasets comprise a unique establishment identifier which can be used to link the administrative data of establishments and their personnel. Additionally the administrative data can be linked to several survey data sets on individuals, households or establishments. Hence these combined datasets also allow multi-level analysis. We describe the administrative data's scope and validity as well as their potential for data linkage.

**Keywords:** administrative data, labour market, data access