# Introduction to the Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey Workshop

# Navigating and using LFS documentation

The LFS has extensive documentation to help you understand and use the data. This exercise is designed to show you to navigate and use the LFS documentation.

## Task

Use the documentation to explore potential variables for a research question.

Scenario: You are interested in zero-hour contracts. You want to carry out some exploratory analysis to find out who is reliant in zero-hour contracts. In particular, you are interested in: migrants, families and geographical differences.

Learning outcomes:

* Can navigate the different volumes of the LFS User Guide
* Know that some variables are only in some quarters and how to check using documentation
* Understand that variables have changed over time and how to identify a change
* Can use the documentation to identify if you need to access secure data
* Can identify what variables are in the longitudinal files
* Identify and manage multi response variables
* Can identify and understand derived variables

## Locate the documentation.

This activity will start by looking at data available from the October-December 2020 Quarterly Labour Force Survey (SN 8777). [Start by navigating to the catalogue page for the dataset](https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8777). Navigate to the documentation tab.

## Review the Questionnaire

Using the ‘LFS User Guide Vol 2. – Questionnaire’, locate any questions that collect information about zero-hour contracts. Hint: use the find function (CTRL+F) to search for ‘zero’.

Question 1: What is the name of the variable assigned to the question that asks about zero-hour contracts?

Useful information we find at this stage include:

* The question is asked in all waves.
* The variable is available in the EUL dataset
* Those answering the question can give up to three responses (How are multiple responses handled in the dataset? It is important to know how different variable types are handled in the dataset)

## Variables Details: Volume 3

You can find out more information about variables capturing zero-hour contracts by looking at Volume 3. See the file: ‘LFS User Guide Vol. 3 – Details of LFS Variables 2020’.

Again, you can search the document for ‘zero’.

You will discover that Vol. 3 includes more variables with information about zero-hour contracts because Vol. 3 also includes details of derived variables.

Look at the details for FLEX10 on p.163. Here we can find out additional information including:

* The question is asked in all quarters and waves, but this is a recent change (since 2020)
* The variables is a multi-response variable and you can find out more details about this type of variable in the notes at the beginning of the user guide (see page 3).

Question – What does the (1-3) in the name FLEX10(1-3)

FLEX10 is used to derive two more variables on the datasets that relate to zero-hour contracts, FLED10 and FLEXW7.

Question 2: What is the name of the derived variable that is labelled: Whether respondent works zero hours contract?

## Understanding Derived Variables

How has FLEXW7 been derived?

You can learn more about derived variables by examining Vol. 4 - Standard Derived Variables 2016. Search for FLEXW7 and you will find the details on p.140.

## Checking the data dictionary

Next, you can search the data dictionary for the derived variable for zero-hour contract workers. The data dictionary will tell you information about each variable in the named dataset, including: position number, name, label, measurement level, and categories. Below is an excerpt from the data dictionary for the October-December 2020 QLFS.

Image showing details of entry in the data dictionary:
Pos. = 171
Variable = FLEXW7
Variable label = Respondent has zero hours contract
Value = 1.0 Label = Yes
Value = 2.0 Label = No
Value = -9.0 Label = Does not apply
Value = -8.0 Label = No answer

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**5.** Use the same documentation to explore if and how to use the LFS for the following analyses?

* Migrants – potential search terms: birth or country
* Families – potential search terms: children or family
* Geography

**Zero-hour contracts among migrants to the UK - What variables identify immigrants to the UK, can you identify by country of birth or origin?**

**Households with zero-hours contracts – Which datasets and variables would be needed to examine households reliant on zero-hours contracts?**

**Is it possible to examine geographical differences in relation to zero-hours contracts? With which datasets?**

**Can you examine movement in and out of zero-hours contracts? [Consider if the variables present in the longitudinal data sets?**

**6.** Check how to access the variables you are interested in. Are they available under End User License or Secure Access?

Are they in the longitudinal datasets? Are they in the APS?

One way to find some of this information can be found in ‘LFS User Guide Vol. 2 – Questionnaire’. Have a look at the ‘structure of the question specification’ on page 5.

Another way is to check the data dictionary for the dataset.

**Question 4.** How would you carry out analysis to see if individuals move in and out of zero-hour contracts over time?