

# Improving access to the Medical Officer of Health Reports

Annual reports on a wide range of topics relating to public health were produced by the Medical Officers of Health (MOH) for each local authority district in England and Wales between the 1840s and 1970s. The Wellcome Library has recently digitised the full texts of Medical Officer of Health Reports for districts in Greater London and made them available online at <http://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/>, and work is underway to digitise the texts of reports for the rest of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

In addition to narrative text, the reports contain large numbers of statistical tables containing quantitative data. 271,783 tables have been identified within the 6652 reports already digitised for Greater London, all of which are presented in tabular layouts distinct from narrative text within texts of individual reports online. An example of a table of Cause of Death by Age for the district of Acton for 1910 is at <https://goo.gl/8CpPnw>, with tabular data below the image viewer.

Wellcome is working to improve access to, and usability of, the wealth of valuable information contained in the reports. Please help us to do this by completing this short survey about current access functionalities and potential development related to the tabular data. The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes, and all questions are optional.

## 1. Are you already aware of the Medical Officer of Health Reports?

Please tick all responses that apply to you.

*Check all that apply.*

- No, I wasn't aware of them
- I was aware of them, but haven't used them
- I've used narrative text from the reports
- I've used quantitative data from tables in the reports
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. If you've used the reports, what has it been for?

Please give a brief description below, including links and references if relevant.

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**3. 3. Would you like to use information from the Medical Officer of Health reports about the following topics?**

The topics below are some of the most common across the reports, but there are many others. Please make requests under 'other'.

*Check all that apply.*

- Basic demographics (population size, age, sex, etc.)
- Mortality and causes of death
- Fertility (births)
- Diseases and ailments
- Health inspections
- Workplace and housing inspections
- Food inspections
- Finance and expenditure
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. 4. How useful do you find the current access functionalities?**

The current website is available at <https://goo.gl/yev7u8>.

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	1 (not useful)	2	3	4	5 (very useful)
Keyword search	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Filtering (by location or years)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Browsing (by location or year ranges)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Downloads of individual report and table texts (eg <a href="https://goo.gl/PcrbcU">https://goo.gl/PcrbcU</a> )	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bulk downloads of all report and table texts ( <a href="https://goo.gl/DJ7u2n">https://goo.gl/DJ7u2n</a> )	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. 5. What do you like and/or dislike about the current access functionalities, and how might they be improved?**

Please try to be as specific as possible.

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## Integration of tabular data

The digitisation and tabulation of quantitative data contained in tables within the reports has made them much easier to use for individual districts, but it is still difficult and time-consuming to locate and combine equivalent data from tables in multiple reports across districts and years to enable large-scale comparative analyses (for example, trends in deaths from cholera across all districts in London between 1850 and 1900). As a result, research to date has focussed mainly on analysis of the narrative text of reports.

A scoping study is exploring the technical feasibility of integrating equivalent quantitative data from tables across multiple reports into structured and operable data to make it much easier to access and use. The study also aims to assess the potential value of, and demand for such integrated data.

A simple example of this kind of integration of equivalent data on Cause of Death by Age from tables in reports from six different districts in 1910 into a single, queryable dataset contained in a spreadsheet can be seen at <https://goo.gl/yiAvSK>. The spreadsheet can be downloaded to enable filtering by column.

**6. 6. Are you interested in using quantitative data from MOH report tables?**

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very interested

**7. 7. Would having integrated data make this easier for you?**

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No easier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Much easier

**8. 8. Which of the following topics would you most like to have integrated quantitative data from MOH report tables about?**

These topics have been identified as relatively common and consistent in tables across multiple reports.

Mark only one oval per row.

	1 (low priority)	2	3	4	5 (high priority)
Basic demographics (population size, age, sex, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mortality and causes of death	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fertility (births)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diseases and ailments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**About you**

It would help us to interpret responses to this survey if we have some understanding of the people who provide them. All responses below are optional.

**9. Please describe your research interests**

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**10. Please select the sector(s) most relevant to you**

Check all that apply.

- Academic
- Commercial
- Charity / not for profit
- Central government
- Local government
- Health
- Personal use
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Are you aware of similar information available from other sources?**

If so, please provide some details (source, content, location, etc.)

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## Your details

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It might also be helpful to be able to contact respondents to follow up responses and/or to provide updates and gain feedback on future developments. If you're happy for us to do this, please provide your contact details below. Your details will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

**12. Name**

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**13. Email address**

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**14. Do you have any further comments or questions?**

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