Research data access services (RDA)

Startup kit

Preparing a request for access to research data

To access certain administrative data from the Gouvernement du Québec, as well as survey data from the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ), you must submit a request for access to data for research purposes from the research data access services (RDA) at the ISQ.

When submitting your request, providing complete and up-to-date documents is the best way to ensure timely analysis of your request and accelerate the process of concluding a data access contract. Processing time for a data access request can be greatly reduced by submitting a clear and complete request right from the start of the process.

A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both the researcher and the RDA will also facilitate all participants' work at the various stages of processing a request.

To help you in this process, the ISQ has prepared this startup kit to guide you throughout the different steps of preparing your request. The startup kit contains helpful information on:

1) what documents you will need to prepare in order to submit your request
2) the complete process by which we handle your request, as well as your roles and responsibilities.

The kit contains:

- an explanation of the major steps involved in processing a request
- the actions you'll need to take to prepare your request, from choosing the appropriate form to deciding how you want to access your data
- a checklist of items to be verified and documents to be supplied before submitting a request
- a list of the various templates and reference documents for the different steps of the data access process.

For any questions or comments you may have about the process of getting access to research data, please contact the ISQ's research data access service at sad@stat.gouv.qc.ca.

This document was updated on September 22, 2022. For the latest version, please visit the website: statistique.quebec.ca/research.

INSTITUT
DE LA
STATISTIQUE
DU QUÉBEC

Québec

Major steps involved in processing a request

The process of accessing research data can be divided into five major steps. At each of these steps, the researcher and the ISQ's research data access services team each have certain specific responsibilities, as detailed in the table on the next page.

Research data access – How an access request is processed

	Access request submission	Request processing	Contractual and administrative commitments	Research file preparation	Access to the research file, use of data and dissemination of results	Project tracking	Project closure
Researcher	Explore available databanks and variables and review the startup kit Run a cost simulation, if desired Prepare the request (form, supporting documents and document verification list) Ensure that all submitted documents are included and up to date Submit the request in the Research Zone	Provide documents and information requested by the ISQ to evaluate your request If necessary, obtain the authorizations needed to add external data to the research file	Review the security and data protection rules included in the contract Sign the contract and the confidentiality agreement (research team and associated organization)		Complete the orientation session provided by the ISQ (research team) Submit your sworn statement View the research file in a secure environment (at a CADRISQ data centre or remotely) Use the data Share only those statistical results that meet the ISQ's confidentiality requirements	Ensure that renewal of the project's ethics approval covers the entire authorized access period At the end of the authorized access period, request an extension if the research is not yet complete Inform the ISQ of any scientific publications resulting from use of the research file	Inform the ISQ when the research project that uses the research file is finished, and authorize it to begin closing the project Return all authentication elements to the ISQ that were provided to authorized persons
Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ)	Assist the researcher in defining their needs	Evaluate data availability and technical feasibility of the request Estimate cohort size, if necessary Provide the researcher with an approximate cost estimate Evaluate data privacy Inform the researcher of the applicable data access conditions	Prepare and send the contract and confidentiality agreement Sign the contract	Proceed with selection of individuals targeted by the research project from the databanks under their responsibility Databank pairing, if necessary (probabilistic method) Select and extract authorized variables Create the research file for the project	Conduct a mandatory orientation session for the research team (security, data privacy and rules for controlling the risk of disclosure) Swear in the research team Provide researchers with a secure environment to access the data, including access to statistical software tools (e.g. STATA, R, SAS, SPSS) Make the research file and statistical results of the researcher's work available in accordance with the established terms Verify statistical results before publication to ensure compliance with ISQ confidentiality rules	Enter ethics approval renewals obtained by the researcher in the project file Publish references to scientific publications resulting from use of the data on the RDA website	Deactivate access for the researcher and their team Destroy all data in accordance with the established terms Retain programs and documentation associated with the project at the researcher's request

Actions required when submitting a request

Once you have reviewed the major steps involved in processing an access request, here are the actions you'll need to take to prepare for submitting your research data access request.

Learn what data is available

The website of the research data access service includes a complete catalogue of the files and variables available for research. Pairing and matching services are available for the various databanks.

If you wish to include data files in your request that are not available through the research data access service's website, you must submit a request directly to the ministry or organization that manages the data in question.

> In Québec, access to research data is free. Researchers authorized to work with research data have free access to a secure IT environment and a full software suite. Support for submitting your request and analysis of your research project by ISQ professionals are also free of charge.
>
> However, when an authorized research project requires additional work to produce research files (e.g. for pairing work or to extract the requested information from a ministry's or organization's databanks), fees are charged in order to cover expenses associated with the production process.

Register at the Research Zone

Before submitting a research data access request, you must first register at the Research Zone at the data access service's website, where you will be asked to provide your contact information and the name of the primary organization with which you are associated.

To determine whether you may submit a request to the research data access service, please read the eligibility conditions on the RDA website.

Select the appropriate form

To begin preparing your request, you must select the appropriate form for your needs, which may be any of the following:

1. **Obtain information about an upcoming project: feasibility study or approximate cost estimate**

   In the Research Zone, click on "Créer un nouveau projet" ("Create a new project"), then select the option for "Demande d'information" ("Information request"). In the form that then appears, you can provide a high-level description of your project. This form is especially useful in a project's exploratory stages.

   You can also use the cost simulator to estimate the costs of producing a research file for a project.

2. **Submitting a new research data access request**

   In the Research Zone, click on "Créer un nouveau projet" ("Create a new project"), then select the option for "Demande d'accès aux données à des fins de recherche" ("Request for data access for research purposes"). You can then describe the new research project, upload the documents required to evaluate your request, provide information on the research team, specify your selection criteria and data extraction criteria, and indicate which software you will need to use and the location(s) from which you want to access the data. An example form (in French) is available in the Templates and reference documents folder of the startup kit.

3. **Modifying an existing authorized project**

   In the Research Zone, click on "Faire une demande de modification pour un projet déjà autorisé" ("Modification request for an existing authorized project"). You can then modify an existing authorized project, e.g. if your project has new needs.

Provide information on the research team

The lead researcher is the person in whose name the request is officially submitted, and who will sign the contracts that lead to access to the research file.

In accordance with the *Act respecting the Institut de la statistique du Québec*, the researcher who submits the request must be associated with a public organization and must provide documentation to confirm their association with the organization. Various documents can be accepted for this purpose. If needed, an example proof of association form (in French) is available in the Templates and reference documents folder of the startup kit.

Define the access conditions

Before submitting your data access request, you must choose one or two ways of accessing the ISQ's secure data environment. This environment was designed to ensure data security while also providing a powerful and user-friendly work environment.

You can access the research file in the ISQ's secure data environment in either of the following ways:

- **At an Institut de la statistique du Québec research data access centre (CADRISQ)**

  The master research file can be accessed directly at a CADRISQ data access centre. View the list of CADRISQ centres.

- **Remotely**

  In this case, the research file is viewed from a non-CADRISQ location. A remotely accessible microdata file is generated from the master file in order to minimize the risk of revealing personally identifiable information. Remote access incurs additional fees for the creation of this additional file.

Checklist of items to be verified and documents to be supplied before submitting a request

To reduce the processing time for your request, you must provide all requested documents and information. In order to verify the conformity of elements included in a request and of any documents attached to the request, it is strongly recommended that you use the checklist of items to be verified and documents to be supplied before submitting a request, which is included in the startup kit.

List of templates and reference documents for the different steps of the data access process

To help you become familiar with the documents that will be used for your research data access request, the ISQ provides a list of the templates and reference documents most commonly used for access requests. This list is included in the startup kit.

What happens after the request is submitted?

The startup kit guides you through the process of preparing an access request, but what happens after the request is submitted?

1 Evaluation

Once your request is complete and accompanied by all required documents, the ISQ data access service team will evaluate your request. If the evaluation leads to a positive result, the team will recommend that an access contract be created and signed.

2 Contract

You will be sent a contract that is binding on you, your associated organization and the ISQ. This contract specifies the nature and content of the research file, the production costs and the security and data privacy rules that you must follow. It contains all of the conditions and obligations that the parties are subject to.

Note that standard contract templates and confidentiality agreement templates can be found in the Templates and reference documents folder of the startup kit.

3 Creation of the research

Once both parties have signed, a technical specification is generated and the process of creating the research file can begin. If you have a file from an external source that contains data you would like to pair with the administrative or survey data you have requested, you must send the file to the ISQ in a secure manner.

If data in your possession needs to be paired with the data available through the RDA services website, it is strongly recommended that you use the two verification tables (Checklist table - Match file and Checklist table - File with research variables) located in the "Templates and reference documents" folder of the startup kit. These tables will help you to correctly prepare the form and content of the files to be submitted to the ISQ for production of the final research file.

4 Access

Once the research file has been created, each member of the research team must attend an orientation session provided by the ISQ and sign a confidentiality agreement. Access will then be granted in accordance with the established terms.