



Data linkage in a pandemic

In the past few months, we have seen how the movement of people has helped SARS-CoV-2 travel quickly around the world. The analysis of data brought together from different sources is a key component in understanding and managing this pandemic. Australia's high quality administrative data and systematic approach to data linkage give us a strong advantage in fighting this virus. We can analyse data sets within and across all jurisdictions to provide our governments with the information they need to plan for and manage health services.

The Population Health Research Network has already seen an increase in demand for our linkage services. Examples of how data linkage has assisted in this pandemic include:

- Identifying health service usage and outcomes for confirmed COVID-19 cases
- Finding contact information for lists of travellers
- Identifying sociodemographic characteristics and comorbid conditions for COVID-19 cases
- This demonstrates how essential our data linkage services are in a pandemic situation.

The current status of our PHRN data linkage units response to the COVID-19 pandemic are listed below:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

The AIHW Data Integration Services Centre will continue to operate but is expected to have reduced capacity in undertaking projects due to priority COVID-19 related work and other staff shortages.

Centre for Victorian Data Linkage

CVDL has set up business continuity arrangements and continue to provide linkage services to government and researchers. We are undertaking urgent COVID-19 related linkage work which may limit our capacity to respond to other requests, along with any direct COVID-19 related impact on the CVDL team or their families. We encourage researchers to contact us

via the CVDL mailbox about potential linkage requests, and we can advise on capacity and timelines based on the situation at the time of the request.

Data Linkage Queensland

Please note that linkage work will be delayed for the foreseeable future. Requests relating to COVID-19 and departmental business will be given priority. All other linkage requests will be delayed and processed as resources become available.

SA NT DataLink

SA NT DataLink is operational with the secure data linkage unit operating with a staff roster and maximum physical distancing to manage the risk of co-locating staff within a confirmed space, and avoiding public transport. All other staff including the Client Services team are working remotely from home, but able to be contacted by phone or email as usual.

SUFEX

The SUFEX service is operating normally at this time [Service Status: Green]. Our technical and support teams are able to work from home as/when required, ensuring continuity of the service. We will communicate any change to users as quickly as possible – via [email](#) and the [SUFEX landing page](#).

SURE

SURE will continue to provide secure remote access services to researchers without interruption. With many researchers needing to work from home over the coming months, please be aware that SURE is designed to be secure and readily accessible to authorised SURE users regardless of location. If you are an existing researcher and are unsure how to setup SURE on your home computer, please contact SURE at Admin@saxinstitute.org.au

We are also able to quickly provide secure workspaces to assist with maintaining business continuity during periods of working from home, or for activities using sensitive data in support of COVID-19 work. If you think SURE could be of assistance, please contact the SURE Program Manager, Matthew Gorringer, at matthew.gorringer@saxinstitute.org.au

Tasmanian Data Linkage Unit

Tasmanian Data Linkage Unit will continue to operate as normal for the foreseeable future.