

Key Sociological Concepts

Identified

Reliability

Defined

Data reliability is concerned with ideas such as:

- The **consistency** of the data collected.
- The **precision** (or lack of same) with which it is collected
- The **repeatability** ("**replication**") of the data collection method

In simple terms, **data** can be considered broadly **reliable** if the **same results** (or broadly similar) can be gained by **different researchers** asking the **same questions** to the **same** (or broadly similar) people.

Applied

1. Consistency:

Will, for **example**, the **same question** asked of the **same person** in **similar circumstances**, produce the **same answer**?)

2. Precision

For **example**, how **systematic** is a form of data collection that relies upon asking people questions about something about they may have little direct knowledge?

3. Repeatability / Replication:

For **example**, if another sociologist attempted to repeat my research "down the pub", would similar results be achieved?

Related

Reliability is related to:

- **Validity** (there may be a trade-off between data reliability and validity).
- **Triangulation**
- **Research methods** (some methods, such as questionnaires), are more reliable than others (such as participant observation)
- **Standardisation** (for example, is everyone asked the same set of questions in the same way?).