

Key Sociological Concepts

Identified

Representativeness

Defined

The extent to which whether the results of research can be generalised to wider populations. Consider two types of representativeness:

- **Sample:** The characteristics (such as age, class, ethnicity or gender) of our sample group must exactly represent the characteristics of our target population if it is to be considered representative.
- **Data:** Information we collect through our research must be comprehensive enough to accurately represent something. Official UK crime statistics, for example, are not representative of all those who commit a crime in our society.

Applied

1. **Generalisation:** Can the data collected from our sample be applied (“generalised”) to the target population from which the sample was drawn?

2. **Research:** With **primary** research it is easier to ensure both sample and data are representative than with **secondary** research.

3. **Sample type:** Some types, such as **Opportunity** / **Snowball** sampling) will only be representative of the people being studied.

Related

Representativeness is related to:

- **Validity** – does our research sample / data give us a true picture (accurate representation) of the behaviour we’re studying?
- **Sampling** – different types of sample may be more or less representative than others.
- **Generalisation**