



## Statistical Institute of Belize Microdata Access Policy

### Objectives

The Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) aims to allow researchers under strict supervision to access statistical microdata files. In accordance with Section 42(5) of the SIB Act, the Institute seeks to provide a mechanism whereby researchers can access detailed data files solely for bona fide research or statistical purposes, without jeopardising respondents' confidentiality.

### Location

The SIB is located at: 1902 Constitution Drive, Belmopan, Belize, C.A.  
Tel: 501-822-2207/2352  
Fax: 501-822-3206  
Email: [info@statisticsbelize.org.bz](mailto:info@statisticsbelize.org.bz)  
Website: [www.statisticsbelize.org.bz](http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz)

### SIB Operations

Researchers can access complete databases on-site at the SIB and be provided with computer equipment, software, office space and SIB staff supervision or alternatively can be provided with a subset of variables and/or cases from a database for off-site use, provided they will not lead to the identification of an individual, household, business, enterprise or organisation.

### Data

In the case of on-site access:

- SIB constructs the necessary data files before the guest researcher arrives, and ensures no restricted data leave the facility.
- Researchers proposing multiple analyses employing multiple datasets have access to only one dataset at a time. Under no circumstance are researchers permitted an opportunity to merge datasets on their own.

- SIB allows researchers to supply their own anonymised data to link to SIB datasets and will create merged datasets for storage at SIB. The researcher-supplied data may consist of proprietary data collected and “owned” by the researcher or other publicly-available data legally obtained by the researchers. Researchers MUST provide SIB with complete documentation of any data proposed for merger with SIB data. Researchers expecting to use merged files are responsible for interacting with SIB to ensure their data can be merged with SIB data. SIB accepts user data files in SPSS format.
- SIB periodically creates and maintains back-up copies of all computer files. Back-up files are stored securely and are accessible by SIB only, although they may be made available to researchers needing to return for additional analyses. These back-up files contain user-supplied data as well as merged files, and will be destroyed at the written request of the user.

## Computer Equipment

- Researchers will have the use of a workstation that is not linked to the Internet and will not have access to removable media such as CD-ROM or DVD writers, floppy disks or USB ports.

## Software

- CPro and SPSS are installed in the workstation in addition to MS-Office applications. Additional programming/analytical languages may be supplied as needed. For more information on the software versions available contact SIB in advance.
- Researchers must have sufficient expertise to conduct their own analyses with the software applications provided. SIB does not provide technical support for this.

## Office Space

- Researchers must work under the supervision of SIB staff and only during normal working hours (Monday to Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.)
- Researchers can only reserve access to a data file for three days at a time; any unused time is lost.
- Admittance to SIB is limited to researchers whose names are included in the research proposal. They are required to show photo-identification before admittance.
- A maximum of two collaborating researchers can sit at the computer station.
- Following notification of approval of proposal, scheduling time at SIB is on a first-come, first-served basis and should be done at least five (5) clear working days prior to visit.

## SIB Staff Supervision (For Disclosure Review)

- Researchers are not allowed to bring documents, manuals, books, etc. that may enable them to identify and disclose confidential information accessed at SIB. Neither are they allowed to use cell phones, pagers or other devices that would enable them to communicate outside SIB while at the workstation.
- Queries must be directed only to the staff of the Data Dissemination department.
- Researchers may not save outputs, files or programs to transportable electronic media. SIB can copy output or programs to transportable media, if requested.
- Researchers may take the results of their analyses off-site only after a disclosure review by SIB. Disclosure reviews consist of looking for tabular cells less than five, tables with geographical variables in any dimension, models with geographical variables (or variables tantamount to geographical variables) as outcome variables, or case listings.
- All logs must be printed or electronically archived and are kept by SIB, which will retain programs, procedures and results run by researchers.
- All computer output generated by statistical programs and all hand-written notes based on this are subject to disclosure review by SIB staff before removal from SIB. Output is restricted to summary tables. In no case may any table contain cells with fewer than five observations. If found, these small cells are suppressed, generally by obliterating them. To ensure that small cells cannot be calculated from other cells in the same row or column, staff make illegible the totals for the rows and columns corresponding to the small cell. Once the disclosure review is completed, researchers receive a photocopy of the final tabulations. SIB staff use best practice in determining whether tabular data are identifiable and are conservative in their decisions. SIB's decisions are final and not subject to negotiation.
- Researchers are encouraged to complete the evaluation form so that it can help SIB to make the necessary improvements to the services.

## Submission of Research Proposals

Researchers must submit proposals using the designated application form and should allow at least one week for a response. Prospective researchers are encouraged to check with SIB's Data Dissemination Manager before writing their proposals to ensure the data of interest to them is available.

Researchers should develop their proposals in a way that helps SIB to create the analytical files required for the project. Proposals should be explicit about the variables needed and any case selection required. Only data items needed for the proposed analyses will be included in the analytical data file and proposals should say why the requested data are needed. Overly large and complex projects or those poorly defined require extensive communication between SIB and the proposers. This can make the process move slowly. Work to prepare data files can be

accomplished most expeditiously if large, complex projects are sub-divided into manageable parts and requested data are clearly defined.

Researchers wishing to merge SIB data with external data should provide the latter to SIB's Data Dissemination Manager before their scheduled visit.

Upon receipt, the research proposal is evaluated by a review committee convened for that purpose.

The following criteria apply to a proposal review:

- Scientific and technical feasibility of the project.
- Availability of SIB resources.
- Risk of disclosure of restricted information.

Researchers should note that approval of their application does not constitute endorsement by SIB of the substantive, methodological, theoretical or policy relevance or merit of the proposed research. SIB's approval is only a judgement that the research described in the application is not illegal use of the requested data file, and that it is highly probable the project can be completed successfully at SIB.

**Disclaimer:**

*The Statistical Institute of Belize makes every effort to ensure that its statistical products and services are of a high quality. However, it is possible that errors were inadvertently committed during the production process. It therefore does not accept responsibility for any negative impact these errors may have had on a researcher's study.*