

What is high quality social research?

One of the key aims of the SRA is to promote high quality standards in social research. There is an extensive body of knowledge on what high quality research looks like and we support the dissemination of this evidence through our training programme, publications, events and advocacy work. In judging the quality of social research we use six 'high level' criteria:

1. **Useful:** good research should have some practical relevance and researchers should clearly spell out how they expect their research to contribute to developments in methodology, theory, social policy and/or practice.
2. **Fit for purpose:** methodological choices should be grounded in evidence showing that the research design and approach are fit for purpose, cost effective and are likely to generate the intended research outcomes. Good and effective research should also draw on theory and/or on previous substantive evidence on the research topic. The research findings and conclusions must be clearly supported by the research evidence gathered.
3. **Transparent:** good research should be open to scrutiny and provide: i) a detailed account of how the research (including the analysis) was conducted so others can judge its quality and robustness; ii) evidence of 'reflective practice' i.e. an appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology and how it worked in practice, the possible impact on the findings and how learning from the research can inform future methodological developments; iii) acknowledgement of who funded the study, and the contributions of different research team members and others who have made the study possible.
4. **Independently validated:** good social research should be peer reviewed by researchers who are not involved in the conduct of the study, but who have the relevant methodological competence to judge the quality and robustness of the design, and whether the study's conclusions are supported by the evidence collected. Peer reviewers should also comment on whether the findings are presented in a way that readers/users of the research, who may not themselves be skilled researchers, can make their own judgements about the status of the data and the legitimacy of the findings.
5. **Useable:** research outputs should be readily actionable without too much further interpretation and 'translation'. They should be expressed in lay language, related to the audience's known concerns and should highlight the implications of the research. They should be timely produced (i.e. when needed, not just when available), made widely available through appropriate channels and communicated through media that can reach both research and non-research audiences.
6. **Ethical:** good social research should be fully ethical in line with SRA guidance.