

## **RSS Social Statistics Section Report for January 2011-December 2011 For Annual General Meeting: Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at 14.00**

This report reviews our programme from the last AGM in December 2010. The programme for the period began in March with a well-attended afternoon meeting on **Social Network Analysis: State of the art and new developments**. Martin Everett (University of Manchester) began the meeting with a history and overview of social network analysis. This was followed by talk on a number of specific methodological aspects of network analysis, by Mark Tranmer (Manchester) on random effect models for social network and group dependencies, Tom Snijders (Nuffield College, Oxford) on modelling dynamics of social networks, and Johan Koskinen (Manchester) on recent advances in exponential random graph modelling and inference.

April 2011 saw another afternoon meeting, on **Showcasing ALSPAC [The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children] as a Resource for Social and Health Researchers**. The aim of the meeting was to demonstrate the ALSPAC data and its potential for answering research questions concerning health and social factors. The four presentations covered the following issues: the ALSPAC data and its linkage to important administrative data sources (Andy Boyd, University of Bristol); factors affecting the relationship between gestational weight gain and the health of mothers and their offspring in later life (Debbie Lawlor, Bristol); a comparison of the socio-economic differences in children's behavioural and educational development found in ALSPAC and a US cohort (Liz Washbrook, Bristol); and the use of genetic data to establish the causal relationship between physical characteristics with a genetic basis, like obesity, and important outcomes, like educational attainment (Stephanie von Hinke Kessler Scholder, Imperial College Business School, London).

The topic of the May 2011 meeting was **The Extending survey measures to children: experience from the British Crime Survey [BCS]**. It considered the methodological challenges in producing estimates of crime victimisation of children aged ten to fifteen, and lessons learned from a pilot study of extending the BCS to cover this age group. Catherine Grant (TNS-BMRB) discussed the design of the pilot study, development of the measures, and the response rates, and John Flatley (Home Office) described initial estimates of the levels of crime experienced by children obtained from the study.

A one-day meeting on **(Im)migration: Attitudes, Impacts and Projections** was held in July 2011, jointly with the Environmental Statistics Section. The meeting ranged widely over different aspects of migration and immigration, both in the UK and internationally. David Metcalf (London School of Economics), who is also the chair of the UK Migration Advisory Committee, began the meeting with an overview of the recent migration policy in the UK. Scott Blinder (University of Oxford) discussed public attitudes to immigration and survey measurement of them. Jakub Bihak (University of Southampton) then discussed migration forecasts and the uncertainties in them due to different theories and measurements based on censuses, registers and surveys. Priya Deshingar and Matteo Sandi (University of Sussex) discussed the impact of climate change on long-term migration projections, with particular reference to India. The meeting was concluded with a talk by Marian Scott (University of Glasgow) on the 29<sup>th</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, including comments on effects of migration on population size and its environmental impacts.

September 2011 saw a meeting on **The School Workforce Census [SWF] – Opportunities for Analysis**. The SWF has been designed to be a single, annual exercise that collects detailed individual level information on school workforce members. It has been designed to replace several existing collections and has resulted in more complete data of higher quality on the school workforce. Tanya McCormack, Louise Skelton, John Howlson from the Department for Education discussed the issues and challenges involved in moving to this single data collection, analyses undertaken on the SWF census for policy development and the scope for the wider research and statistical community to use this data.

In October 2011, a one-day meeting was held on **Mode effects on survey measurement**, with Margaret Blake (National Centre for Social Research [NatCen]), Pamela Campanelli, Michelle Gray (NatCen), Steven Hope (NatCen), Annette Jäckle (ISER, University of Essex), Peter Lynn (ISER, University of Essex), Gerry Nicolaas (NatCen) and Patten Smith (IPSOS-MORI) as the speakers. The background for the topic was the increasing interest in the use of mixed modes of data collection, driven by a desire to improve survey response rates and reduce fieldwork costs, combined with the concern that responses to survey questions may differ between modes and lack of knowledge about the causes of such mode effects. The meeting considered the causes of differential measurement error between modes, and how this knowledge can be used to design better mixed modes studies.

The first meeting of November 2011 was on **Developing a measure of sexual function for community surveys**. The speakers, Kirstin Mitchell and George Ploubidis (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) described the psychometric development and validation of a measure of sexual function to be used on the third National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, the largest survey of sexual behaviour in the world. They discussed some of the challenges associated with measuring the prevalence of sexual function in the community. They then described the new measure and present data on model fit, test-retest reliability of the latent construct, and on how it performs against external validation criteria.

The annual Cathie Marsh memorial lecture took place in November 2011 on the theme **Why do the media, the public and politicians abuse and misunderstand statistics**. The event was sponsored by NatCen and is a meeting jointly organised with the Social Research Association, who took the lead in the organisation this year. Neville Davies (University of Plymouth), Mike Hough (ICPR, Birkbeck, University of London) and Richard Alldritt (UK Statistics Authority) were the presenters and the session was chaired by Jil Matheson (National Statistician, ONS). A large audience listened to the speakers examining the challenges faced and progress being made by producers of statistics in reaching out to the wider public as well as professional users of statistics, and discussing the implications for education and the professional social research and statistics community.

Directly following the AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011 there will be an afternoon meeting on **Improving the quality of fuel poverty measures**, with Damon Wingfield (Department of Energy and Climate Change), David Gordon (University of Bristol), Ian Preston (Centre for Sustainable Energy) and Stewart Robbins (E.On) as the speakers. They will reflect on different aspects of the measurement of fuel poverty, including efforts to improve the quality of its measurement, and the perspectives of experts from different sectors.

The Section would like to record its warm-felt thanks for work done by Bob Erens, who is retiring from the Section Committee. It would also like express its thanks to Paul Marchant, the Council representative on the Committee, for his interest in the work of the Section and significant contributions to the work of the Committee.

If you would like to join the email distribution list, to receive details of meetings organised by the RSS Social Statistics Section, please register at the following site:

<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa.exe?SUBED1=rss-social-stats&A=1>

The following list of nominees from the Section Committee was published in the October 2011 edition of the RSS News.

Chairman: Jouni Kuha  
Vice-Chairman: Richard Laux  
Secretary: Alison Walker  
Meetings Secretary: Tarani Chandola

Ordinary members:

Nick Allum  
Gabi Durrant  
Antony Fielding  
Chris Kershaw  
Charles Lound  
David Robinson\*  
Patrick Sturgis  
Joel Williams

\* indicates proposed new member

Unless alternative nominations are received by the theme manager for sections ([p.gentry@rss.org.uk](mailto:p.gentry@rss.org.uk)) before 22 November, these persons will be declared elected at the annual general meeting of the section on 6<sup>th</sup> December.