

Spring 2026 Newsletter

Social Statistics Section



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Letter from the Chair

Ben Hansen (2026 Chair)



Dear SSS members,

It's a great honor to serve as 2026 chair of the Social Statistics Section. Social statistics figured centrally in the founding of our discipline. With behavioral and administrative data continuing to be central to discourse in social advocacy, research and business communities alike, our section can be assured of our continuing importance to the field and to broader society.

The section sponsors and co-sponsors a number of awards, with recent section leadership adding new citations and initiatives to nominate section members for recognition by the ASA. We'll be continuing these initiatives, and we seek your help. Please take a moment to think of members of the section who've given notable service to it, and also of

students or early career statisticians with interests in government statistics. Nominations for the Outstanding Section Service award should be sent to me (bbh@umich.edu) by April 15, and young statisticians interested in the [Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship](#) (WJSS) opportunity should prepare and submit applications by May 1. The WJSS is a joint venture with the Government Statistics Section (GSS). We also collaborate with GSS on the previously announced [Roger Herriot Award](#), for which nominations are due April 10. Nominations for this year's [Social Statistics Section Distinguished Scholar Award](#) are due April 15. Finally, please send me your ideas about members the section might nominate to become Fellow of the ASA.

Speaking of service, the ASA has in recent years participated in the Social Science Advocacy Day of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), lobbying members of U. S. congress to support social science. Big thanks to section

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Letter from the Chair (continued)

members David Francis and Jessaca Spybrook, who traveled to Washington in 2025 and 2026 to advocate for all of us at this event, and to ASA Executive Director Ron Wasserstein, who is chairing COSSA in 2026.

Speaking of Washington: like most of you, I quite disagree with those political actors who see their grievances as cause to withhold research funding, indiscriminately lay off federal science officers, and otherwise sabotage the research enterprise; the human cost of this has been wrenching to see. Yet I can empathize with one of the political sentiments animating these recent attacks, the sense of one's cultural perspective being excluded from important closed-door discussions. I'd urge to those of us on the left and center that our right-leaning SSS colleagues are likely also to be disgusted with DOGE, whether or not they tell us so, if they may differ with us on other matters. Yes, we do have such colleagues; having studied the section's member list, I can assure you of this.

I urge us to continue welcoming these members. When the call came to the section for participants in COSSA's lobbying event, it was for members in staunchly red states. We need to be able to persuade conservatives as well as liberals of the value of social statistics. We'll see strong arguments more clearly by keeping right-leaning members in our fold. I would also maintain that diversity, ideological as well as demographic, helps us do better science – as the philosopher Paul Feyerabend wrote 60 years ago, "you can be a good empiricist only if you are prepared to work with many alternative theories rather than with a single point of view and 'experience'"[1] – but that's a conversation for another day.

Speaking of conversations, this year's JSM section mixer will be joint with the Government Statistics and Survey Research Methods Sections, as well as the Washington Statistical Society. (We'll have the section's business meeting a bit later in August, over Zoom.) I look forward to seeing you there.

Ben Hansen,
SSS Chair (2026)

[1]: Feyerabend, P.K. (1999). How to be a good empiricist: A plea for tolerance in matters epistemological. In J. Preston (Ed.), *Knowledge, science, and relativism: 1960-1980* (pp.78-103). Cambridge University Press. (Reprinted from *Philosophy of science: The Delaware seminar vol. II*, pp.3-39, by B. Baumrin, Ed., 1963, Interscience Publishers)

Upcoming JSM Deadlines and Events

2026 Joint Statistical Meetings Deadlines (Boston, Massachusetts):

April 2: JSM Meeting & Event Requests

May 1: Registration and housing open

June 1: Draft manuscript deadline

June 1: Early registration deadline

July 2: Housing deadline

August 1 – August 6: 2026 Joint Statistical Meetings

From the Program Chair

Xiaojing Wang (2026
Program Chair)



Looking to JSM 2026:

The Social Statistics Section is pleased to share an outstanding set of sessions for the 2026 Joint Statistical Meetings. This year's program reflects the breadth, diversity, and timeliness of work across our section, bringing together research that addresses both foundational statistical questions and urgent societal applications.

Our sessions explore a wide range of topics, including statistical design and inference in data-rich settings, privacy and usability in decision-making, causal inference for important social interventions, record linkage, remote observations, and methods for understanding community dynamics through network and spatial structure. Collectively, these sessions highlight the important role of social statistics in helping us better measure, understand, and respond to the complexities of contemporary society.

We are excited to offer a program that speaks to both methodological innovation and substantive impact. Whether your interests lie in experimental design, observational studies, measurement, data integration, or robust modeling for high-stakes decisions, we hope you will find these sessions engaging and inspiring. We warmly invite all members and JSM attendees to join us for these conversations and to celebrate the continued contributions of social statistics to research, policy, and practice.

Invited Panel Session

1. Statistical Design and Inference in the Era of Ubiquitous Data
Sun, Aug 2, 2026 | 2:00 PM - 3:50 PM

Invited Paper Sessions

1. Advancing Privacy and Usability: Applications for Data-Informed Decision making in Society
Mon, Aug 3, 2026 | 2:00 PM - 3:50 PM
2. Understanding the Causal Effect of Key Interventions in Contemporary Society
Wed, Aug 5, 2026 | 10:30 AM - 12:20 PM

Topic-Contributed Paper Sessions

1. Inference from Remote Observations
Mon, Aug 3, 2026 | 2:00 PM - 3:50 PM
2. Modern Record Linkage Techniques for a Complex and Ever-changing World
Tue, Aug 4, 2026 | 10:30 AM - 12:20 PM
3. Advances in Experimental Designs and Observational Studies with Complex Treatments
Thu, Aug 6, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 10:20 AM

Contributed Paper Sessions

1. From Mechanisms to Community Indicators: Measurement, Data Integration, and Calibration
Mon, Aug 3, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 10:20 AM
 2. Evaluating Interventions and High-Stakes Decisions: Causal and Robust Modeling Approaches
Tue, Aug 4, 2026 | 8:30 AM - 10:20 AM
 3. Structure Matters: Network and Spatial Dependence for Community Dynamics
Thu, Aug 6, 2026 | 10:30 AM - 12:20 PM
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Other Upcoming Deadlines and Events

- Roger Herriot Award ([More information here!](#))
April 10 2026
- Social Statistics Section Distinguished Scholar Award ([More information here!](#))
April 15 2026
- Outstanding Section Service Award ([More information here!](#))
April 15 2026
- Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship ([More information here!](#))
May 1 2026

Social Statistics Section Distinguished Scholar Award: Nominations due by April 15

The Social Statistics Section (SSS) of the American Statistical Association (ASA) invites nominations for the Social Statistics Section Distinguished Scholar Award for lifetime contributions to the development and application of statistical science to social problems and issues including but not limited to demography, sociology, economics, political science, criminology, education and public policy. This award is given every two years to honor lifetime contributions. Every other year, a mid-career award will be given to candidates within 15 years of their terminal degree.

To submit a nomination for the Social Statistics Section Distinguished Scholar Award, please submit the following to Elizabeth Tipton, tipton@northwestern.edu, by April 15, 2026. Read more about the award [here](#).

Outstanding Section Service Award: Nominations due by April 15

The 2026 Outstanding Section Service Award is available to each section every three years, making it a great opportunity to recognize someone who has shown exceptional leadership on a specific initiative or provided dedicated, long-term service. More details and past recipients can be found [here](#).

Please send any nominations for SSS members that deserve this recognition to bbh@umich.edu by Wednesday, April 15.

Roger Herriot Award: Nominations due by April 10

Nominations are sought for the 2026 Roger Herriot Award for Innovation in Federal Statistics. The award is intended to reflect the characteristics that marked Roger Herriot's career including:

- Dedication to the issues of measurement
- Improvements in the efficiency of data collection programs
- Improvements and use of statistical data for policy analysis

Individuals or teams at all levels within federal statistical agencies, other government organizations, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, and the academic community may be nominated based on their contributions. Please see this website for more information on the award and where to send the nomination package: washstat.org/awards/herriot.html.



SSS Member Highlight: **Daniel McCaffrey** **Frederic Lord Chair of Measurement and Statistics at ETS**

In the Spring 2024 newsletter, the SSS began highlighting members in newsletters. Our next highlighted member is Daniel McCaffrey. We hope you will enjoy reading about his background, activities, and vision for the future of social statistics.

Fun Fact:

Last year I was in Delhi for 9 weeks from October to December working on a project. During that time, I visited Ranthambore National Park where I saw six tigers in the wild over 3 days. I struggle when asked for a fun fact because I feel nothing in my life is exceptional enough to be “fun”, but, in this case, I think I was exceptionally lucky!

Can you describe your current role?

My current title is the Frederic Lord Chair of Measurement and Statistics at ETS. Educational Testing Service (ETS) is the world's largest private educational testing and assessment organization- you might be familiar with ETS because we administer the GRE and the TOEFL. In this role I conduct research, lead projects, and have a few direct reports. My current research involves work on evaluating AI scoring of constructed responses with a focus on the validity, methods for large-scale survey assessments of student achievement and applied problems that arises from various projects. I oversee a small team of researchers working on methods for improving the value of data collected from large-scale survey assessments like the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) or the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and I also oversee the team of psychometricians and data analysts who do the data management and analysis for NAEP and other large-scale surveys. I am serving as interim leader of a project with the Ministry of Education in India through its PARAKH center which has conducted national surveys of achievement in India and supported reforms in assessment.

Can you share one or two experiences that impacted your career direction?

There are many things that impacted my career direction. One of those was my opportunity to work on a study of value-added measurements of teachers using student longitudinal test score data. The study was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and led by Dan Koretz at RAND. The goal was to provide an understanding of the methods and the validity of rather strong claims being made about this value-added. Dan gave me a lot of space to lead the work exploring the statistical methods and issues around value-added. We had a great team that produced a strong report on the methods at a time when little was known about value-added except from people who were advocating for them. Our work received much attention and contributed to the policy debate. It also launched me on over tens years of research around value-added, teacher evaluation, measuring student growth, and accountability.

SSS Member Highlight (continued):

A second experience was the excellent mentorship and camaraderie I received as a member of the RAND Statistics Group. The support I received gave me the opportunity and confidence I needed to learn how to be an applied statistician and to take on the myriad of diverse challenges and methodological issues that arose in policy research. It also taught me the importance of mentorship and supporting your team. The skills I learned from my mentors and my time at RAND are what I rely on today and the lessons I learned about leadership have guided me in the leadership positions I have had including leading the RAND Statistics Group and serving as the Associate Vice President for Psychometric Analysis and Research at ETS.

What professional meetings / conferences do you regularly attend?

I usually attend the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association and the National Council on Measurement in Education as these are most related to the work at ETS.

What area of social statistics do you believe warrants more study?

There are many areas for more study but the one that has my strongest interest now is the design of a K-12 educational data system for the US. States and the National Center for Educational Statistics provide data on student achievement, but the systems are not well coordinated. The massive data collected by states could be better leveraged to support national reporting. Also, other data collected on students through digital learning systems have information that could be used for supporting the data needs filled by summative state assessments, NAEP and other national surveys.

Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship: Apply by May 1

Awarded jointly with the ASA's Government and Social Statistics Sections, this scholarship supports work toward a career in government statistics. The scholarship encourages promising young statisticians to consider a future in government statistics by providing up to \$1,000 for use in exploring any of a broad number of opportunities. The Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship (WJSS) was created to honor the memory of a founding member of the Government Statistics Section and a longtime contributor to federal statistics.

Applications are due by May 1, and the award will be announced in June. A proposal for the activity to be funded, a completed application form, and two letters of recommendation should be submitted to Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship Committee.

Social Statistics Section Social Media

The Social Statistics Section is on social media!

Follow us on X/Twitter (@amstat_sss).

If you have material you would like us to share, send us a message!

Social Statistics Section Executive Committee

Ben Hansen: Chair

Elizabeth Tipton: Past-Chair

Daphna Harel: Chair-Elect

Tyler McCormick: Secretary / Treasurer

Xiaoqing Wang: Program Chair

Eli Ben-Michael: Program Chair-Elect

Claire Kelling: Publications Officer

Ruoqi Yu: Council of Sections Representative

Moira Skelley: Staff Liaison

Please find more information about SSS [here](#).
