

**GSS/SSS April 2013 NEWSLETTER**  
**Government Statistics and Social Statistics Sections**  
**American Statistical Association**

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**UPCOMING DEADLINES AND EVENTS:**

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>April 8</b>         | Submit Abstracts for Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) Research Conference contributed papers, organized sessions, and technical demonstrations <b>DEADLINE</b> |
| <b>May 3</b>           | Vote for the ASA 2013 officers until 11:59 pm <b>DEADLINE</b>                                                                                                                     |
| <b>August 3-8</b>      | JSM 2013—Montreal, Quebec, Canada                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>September 16-18</b> | 2013 ASA Biopharmaceutical Section FDA-Industry Statistics Workshop—Washington, DC                                                                                                |
| <b>October 9-11</b>    | 10 <sup>th</sup> International Conference on Health Policy Statistics—Chicago, IL                                                                                                 |
| <b>November 4-6</b>    | 2013 FCSM Research Conference—Washington, DC                                                                                                                                      |

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**2013 JOINT STATISTICAL MEETINGS: INVITED AND TOPIC CONTRIBUTED SESSIONS**  
**NEW!**

*Submitted by Eric Rancourt (GSS Program Chair) and Deborah Griffin (SSS Program Chair)*

The Social and Government Statistics sections (SSS and GSS) have organized a great set of technical sessions and luncheon roundtables for the upcoming Joint Statistical Meetings. The 7 invited sessions and 12 topic-contributed sessions listed below cover a broad set of topics that we think you will find to be of great interest. We also organized regular contributed papers into 13 additional sessions covering diverse areas of interest including causal inference, social networks, challenges in measuring poverty, modeling and model error, confidentiality, nonresponse, and more! In addition to these papers and panels, we encourage you to visit the poster sessions. Posters provide a great opportunity for you to interact with the authors to discuss their research. The sessions begin on Sunday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 pm and the final sessions are on Thursday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, at 10:30 am. We hope you plan to come early and stay through Thursday to get the chance to attend all of these sessions.

**INVITED SESSIONS**

- The Undercount of Young Children in Official Statistics
- Toward Better Statistical Methods for Causal Inference
- Graphical Approaches for Survey Data
- New Developments in the Use of Smartphones for Survey Research
- Measuring Relationships in U.S. Federal Household Surveys
- Elicitation of Data Users' Utility Functions and Prior Information in Work with Large-Scale Data Collection for Government Agencies
- Would the real Steve Fienberg please stand up: Getting to know a population from multiple Incomplete Files

**TOPIC CONTRIBUTED SESSIONS**

- The 2013 CPS ASEC Field Test
- Robust inference in social science with wrong but useful models
- Hurricanes, damned hurricanes, and statistics
- Design and Adjustment Challenges in Modern Surveys
- Bayesian Modeling of Populations
- Administrative Records Use for Health Insurance Research
- Administrative Records Quality, Coverage, and Applications for Surveys and Censuses
- Record linkage Research and Applications
- Evolution of Federal Statistical Agency Disclosure Review Boards
- Real-World Approaches to the Knotty Problems of Outliers, Faulty Values and Covariates in Complex Sampling Designs
- New Paradigms for Missing Data Methods in Social and Economic Surveys
- Dynamic Modeling in Tobacco Control Policy

GSS and SSS have also organized several roundtables. We expect these topics to be highly informative and of interest to a wide variety of the membership; **space is limited so please sign up promptly.**

### **The National Children's Study (NCS) Vanguard Data Analytics**

Christina Park, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

#### ***Abstract***

The U.S. National Children's Study (NCS) is a longitudinal study that will enroll and follow a population-based national sample of about 100,000 children from before birth through 21 years of age. Its goal is to collect and provide information to better understand the influence of biological, environmental, genetic, and social factors on the health and development of children. The Vanguard phase of the Study started its field work in 2009 and will run in parallel to the Main Study several years ahead for the duration of the NCS to determine the feasibility, acceptability and cost of the elements that will form the Main Study. The Vanguard Study data capture methodology has evolved over time where currently, a Master Data Element Specification is used to detail information about all the tables and data elements that are transmitted to a central data repository. A Metadata Repository is also being developed to describe, document, and assist data use and analysis. This roundtable will provide an overview of the Vanguard Study data capture system progress and analytics approach and provide a summary of feasibility and acceptability evaluations on the participant recruitment, retention, and study visit logistics.

### **Extracting Social Science Insights from Social Media**

Martin Barron, NORC at the University of Chicago

#### ***Abstract***

Social Media—broadly defined as electronic communication that allows people to create, share, exchange, and comment on content among themselves in virtual communities and networks—represents a growing pool of raw data. It represents what Bob Groves termed “organic data”—data that arises as a naturally occurring product (or by product) of other actions (in contrast to “designed Data”—data that would not exist if not for the intentional actions of a researcher). Researchers have already begun mining this data—from blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and a host of other sources—to glean insights on a wide variety of social science topics. Social Media has been used to track flu rates, drug intake, electoral preference, and consumer prices. Although researchers have begun extracting insights from social media, numerous questions remain about the reliability and validity of this data, particularly for drawing inferences to broader populations. This round table will discuss the growing use of social media for social statistics. We'll explore the potential of this data, its drawbacks and limitations, exemplars of this type of research, and the statistical and methodological research necessary to continue advancing the use of social media data for social science statistics.

**Blending probability and non-probability samples using calibration techniques**

Charles DiSogra, Abt SRBI (discussion leader) and Curtiss Cobb, GfK

***Abstract***

Web panels recruited through probability samples, e.g., ABS, are generally limited in size due to recruitment costs. Properly constructed, these panels can be an ideal generalizable sample for rapid Web surveys. To overcome their small size to be able to meet larger sample requirements, it has been demonstrated that an appropriate quota sample drawn from one or more non-probability opt-in Internet panels may be used to supplement the probability sample and the combined data calibrated to approximate the probability sample's estimates. Variables that effectively discriminate between these probability and non-probability samples are used in the calibration weighting. Based on experience at GfK/Knowledge Networks with KnowledgePanel, the speaker will discuss the methodology and feasibility of calibrating blended samples from different sources. This methodology can be used with any single-purpose probability-recruited Web panel. Alternatively, if mode effects are ignorable, any probability telephone, in-person or mail sample might also potentially benefit from a non-probability Web sample supplement as a cost-saving function. These applications are for discussion.

**Forecasting U.S. Elections**

Walter Hill, St. Mary's College of Maryland

***Abstract***

The most widely watched elections in the USA are those for the presidency. A set of predictions has appeared in the "PS: Political Science & Politics" in the issue published just before the election. Forecasters use a number of techniques: regression models, polling data, futures markets on elections and statements by pundits. Papers published in PS all use variants of regression models. In the 2009-2012 cycle a number of papers were published observing that many of the models over-predicted the Democratic vote. That is, researchers said the Democratic candidate, Obama, "should" have received more votes, and McCain fewer votes, than they obtained. Race is hypothesized to be a key variable in explaining the over-prediction, although there may be other variables. Papers by Piston, Lewis-Beck, and Kinder have this position. Often it is difficult to disentangle key control variables (race, region, ideology, party identification). For example, a voter supporting McCain could easily be a conservative Republican who would vote against almost any Democrat. How can you conclude race was a key variable? We will discuss two attempts to answer the disentanglement question. One is by looking at selected county level data from 2004 and 2008. A second is to look at attitudinal data in questionnaires. Both have been used and estimate effects on the order of several percent.

**Sampling Asians in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey**

Margaret Carroll, NCHS/CDC

***Abstract***

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) is a series of cross-sectional, probability surveys conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics/CDC that collects health related data on a representative sample of the United States non-institutionalized population. Selected subgroups such as non-Hispanic Blacks, low

income Whites and Hispanics have been selected at higher rates than other subgroups, i.e. oversampled to obtain more stable estimates. Beginning in 2011, Asians were oversampled in NHANES. Similar to other surveys in which Asians have been oversampled, response rates for this subgroup in NHANES 2011-2012 are low, below 70 percent, thus increasing the likelihood for non-response bias. In this round table, we will discuss possible guidance for NHANES data users in analyzing and interpreting data on Asians.

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**AAPOR WEBINAR: DEFINING HARD-TO-SURVEY POPULATIONS AND MEASURING THE DIFFICULTY** **NEW!**

*Submitted by Jonaki Bose*

**Wednesday, April 10, 2013, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. EDT, (Noon - 1:30 p.m. CDT, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. PDT)**

**Instructor: Roger Tourangeau**

This webinar provides a conceptual framework for studying “hard-to-survey” populations. This term has been applied to a wide range of populations, who exhibit a variety of different characteristics that make them difficult to survey. For example, there are many papers on methods for sampling rare populations—low prevalence populations that must be selected from a general population sampling frame. Other populations are difficult to survey because they are widely scattered, inaccessible or highly mobile. This course explores the different dimensions that make populations hard to survey and also examines metrics that have been used to quantify the different sources of difficulty. This webinar will:

- Provide a deeper understanding of the dimensions that make populations hard to survey;
- Cover the various metrics used to assess the degree of difficulty encountered at each major survey operation; and
- Explore the underlying factors that make some populations harder to survey than others.

**Roger Tourangeau, PhD**, is a Vice President and Associate Director at Westat, one of the largest survey firms in the United States. Before joining Westat, he was Research Professor at the University of Michigan’s Survey Research Center and the Director of the Joint Program in Survey Methodology at the University of Maryland. He has been a survey methodologist for nearly 30 years. He is an author on more than 70 research articles. He is the lead editor of the volume (Hard-to-Survey Populations), to be published by Cambridge University Press, coming out of the recent International Conference on Methods for Surveying and Enumerating Hard-to-Reach Populations

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**ASA-SRMS members:** To receive AAPOR member pricing on webinars, call Erika Moy at (847) 205-2651 ext.290.

|                                          | Member | Nonmember |
|------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
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| Live Webinar + Recorded Version          | \$79   | \$99      |
| Recorded Version Only                    | \$59   | \$79      |
| *Student - Live Webinar or Recording     | \$15   | \$20      |
| *Student - Live Webinar + Recording      | \$20   | \$25      |
| <i>*proof of student status required</i> |        |           |

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- You must use a telephone line to participate in the webinar.
- Purchase the recording at the reduced rate of \$20 along with your live webinar. Following the event, the recorded version can be purchased at the full cost.

Your registration fee includes one telephone and Internet connection, handouts, a course evaluation and one certificate of completion.

Register at [http://www.aapor.org/source/education/webinar\\_details.cfm?mtg=WEB0413](http://www.aapor.org/source/education/webinar_details.cfm?mtg=WEB0413)  
Questions? Contact AAPOR at [info@aapor.org](mailto:info@aapor.org)

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**CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE 2013 FEDERAL COMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY (FCSM) RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

*Submitted by Pamela McGovern, FCSM Research Conference Program Chair*

Abstract submission for the 2013 Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) Research Conference is currently open. This three-day conference will be held November 4-6, 2013 in Washington, DC and will bring together researchers in the statistical community from government, private sector, and academia to discuss and exchange current research and methodological topics relevant to statistical programs. We will be accepting abstracts for papers, technical demonstrations, and organized sessions until **April 8, 2013**. For more information, including the Call for Papers and abstract submission instructions, see the [FCSM Research Conference website](#) or the [COPAFS website](#).

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**COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ON FEDERAL STATISTICS: MARCH 2013 MEETING PRESENTATIONS NEW!**

*Submitted by John Dixon, COPAFS Representative, Government Statistics Section*



William G. Bostic, Jr, Associate Director for Economic Programs, U.S. Census Bureau  
*Big Data Projects at the Census Bureau* (605 KB, pdf)

He reviewed projects at Census, particularly on changes in systems to integrate different data sources. It will be a part of the 2020 census, and some establishment and housing surveys. It sounds expensive.



Michael Horrigan, Associate Commissioner for Prices and Living Conditions, BLS  
*Big Data: A Perspective from the Bureau of Labor Statistics* (286 KB, pptx)

He talked about some projects at BLS. It is being studied for use in a number of prices programs (consumer and producer prices, CPI), as well as sampling and data checking. He discussed some uses of big data for improving data in a number of quality dimensions, as well as concerns where the assessment of quality in big data hasn't been studied.

**He also discussed this topic in Amstat News;**  
<http://magazine.amstat.org/blog/2013/01/01/sci-policy-jan2013/>

John Horrigan, Vice President and Director of the Media and Technology Institute at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies  
*Big Data -- The Consumer's Perspective*

**He talked about how consumers are using data more and more, as measured by broadband use and surveys showing how consumers use data to make decisions.**

Robert Groves, Provost, Georgetown University  
*Big Data Meets Official Statistics*

**He echoed previous talks;** "(t)he volume of data generated outside the government statistical systems is increasing much faster than the volume of data collected by the statistical systems; almost all of these data are digitized in electronic files". Official statistics has the opportunity to benefit from that data or be challenged by it.

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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON METHODS FOR SURVEYING AND ENUMERATING  
HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS (H2R 2012) NEW!**

*Submitted by Nancy Bates, H2R 2012 Conference Co-Chair*

Despite Hurricane Sandy, the International Conference on Methods for Surveying and Enumerating Hard-to-Reach Populations (H2R 2012) went forward as planned in New Orleans October 31-November 3. This was the first US conference devoted to the topic of surveying hard to count populations since a conference sponsored by the Census Bureau almost 20 years ago. Nancy Bates from the U.S. Census Bureau and Brad Edwards from Westat organized and co-chaired the conference. Social Statistics Section chair, Linda Jacobsen, served on the conference planning committee as well. The conference was generously sponsored by various government statistical agencies; the GSS, SSS, and SRMS sections of ASA; the National Science Foundation; and private survey research organizations.

Over 300 people registered for the conference. Attendees included sociologists, statisticians, survey methodologists, ethnographers and other practitioners from 19 countries on 6 continents. The conference committee awarded Deserving Researcher Travel Awards that enabled three participants to attend from Iceland and Peru. The conference included short courses on social media research methods, designing survey instruments across cultures and languages, and respondent-driven sampling. The conference featured 36 paper sessions, 2 poster sessions and a plenary session. The plenary session, *Methodology of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, featured three speakers who described a census of the Irish Travellers, a nomadic minority group from Ireland who are socially disadvantaged and hard to reach in geographical and psychosocial terms. Dr. Cecily Kelleher from the University College Dublin led the study and was one of the speakers along with Brigid Quirke and Missie Collins from Pavee Point, a community organization committed to the promotion of Travellers' human

rights. Paper sessions included topics such as locating and tracking H2R populations, surveying racial and ethnic minorities, sampling H2R populations, surveying stigmatized and hidden populations, and conducting surveys in areas of natural disasters.

Conference work products include the conference proceedings, which are now available online at <http://www.eventscribe.com/2012/ASAH2R/>. A special issue on H2R populations is planned for the *Journal of Official Statistics* and will be co-edited by Gordon Willis and Tom Smith. Finally, a 32-chapter conference monograph featuring invited conference papers is being published by Cambridge. The book should be available in late 2013. Each ASA section that provided seed money for the conference received a handsome return on their investment and several sections have agreed to use a portion of these profits to help pay for monographs for all conference registrants.

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**NOMINATIONS FOR JEANNE E GRIFFITH MENTORING AWARD**

*Submitted by Kevin Cecco, Griffith Award Selection Committee*

The Jeanne E. Griffith Mentoring Award was established to honor Dr. Griffith who died in August 2001 after working for more than 25 years in the Federal statistical system. Throughout her career, and especially in her latter senior management positions at the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Science Foundation, one of Jeanne's highest priorities was to mentor and encourage younger staff at all levels to learn, to grow, and to recognize and seize career opportunities as they came along.

The winning mentor(s) will be selected for his or her efforts in supporting the work and developing the careers of junior staff. Examples of typical mentoring activities include:

- Advising junior staff to help them create career opportunities, networking skills, and contacts for growth and development;
- Counseling junior staff and providing resources to help develop their technical writing, analysis, presentation and organizational skills and knowledge;
- Encouraging junior staff growth and career development through attendance and oral presentations at meetings with higher level officials, staffs of other agencies, professional associations, training courses, and conferences;
- Motivating junior staff and building self confidence through feedback on their efforts, being a listener when that is needed, and creating a caring and supportive environment;
- Serving as a role model for junior staff through professional expertise, information and insights, balancing collegial and personal roles, and including everyone across rank, race, ethnicity, and seniority.

The previous recipients of the Jeanne E. Griffith Mentoring Award are: Rich Allen (National Agriculture Statistical Service), 2003; Beth Kilss (Internal Revenue Service), 2004; Renee Miller (Energy Information Administration), 2005; Martin O'Connell (U.S. Census Bureau), 2006; Stephanie Shipp (National Institute of Standards and Technology – at the time of the award), 2007; Rosemary D. Marcuss (Bureau of Economic Analysis), 2008; Kevin Cecco (Internal Revenue Service), Lillian S. Lin (Centers for Disease



Control and Prevention), 2009; Deborah H. Griffin (U.S. Bureau of the Census), 2010; Jenise L. Swall (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), 2011, and William Mockovac (Bureau of Labor Statistics) 2012.

Nominations should be prepared in the form of a letter or memorandum for the Award Selection Committee:

- The letter or memorandum should summarize the nominee's actions that support and encourage junior staff in the Federal, State, or Local statistical community in developing their careers.
- **Nominations may be accompanied by up to six supporting letters. These should be attached to, and submitted with, the nomination.**
- The Award Selection Committee finds that descriptions of what nominees actually do are the strongest demonstration of candidate mentoring. Here are some examples: the mentor is a source of advice...counsels with long-term goals in mind...thought I was well qualified even though I had some doubts...encourages staff to seek out positions that will increase their visibility and stretch their professional capabilities. These are more explicit and unique to the mentor than generic statements such as: the mentor is a coach...a teacher.
- Photo copies and email copies of support letters are acceptable.

Nominations for 2013 will be accepted beginning in **January 2013**. The last date for submission of nominations is **April 5, 2013** and the Award Committee will make its determination of the award winner by **April 30, 2013**. The award will consist of a \$1,000 honorarium (to be split if there is more than one awardee), a citation, and a plaque, which will be presented at a ceremony arranged by the co-sponsors in **June 2013**.

The nomination package must be mailed or emailed **no later than April 5, 2013**, to:

The Jeanne E. Griffith Mentoring Award Committee  
c/o The American Statistical Association  
732 N. Washington Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-1943  
[rick@amstat.org](mailto:rick@amstat.org)

**Sponsors of the Award:** The Government Statistics Section (GSS) of the American Statistical Association manages the award. GSS would like to thank our co-sponsors:

- National Opinion Research Center (NORC),
- Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS),
- American Institutes for Research (AIR),
- American Educational Research Association (AERA),
- STATA,
- Social Statistics Section, American Statistical Association,
- Washington Statistical Society,

- Westat, and
- Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP).

*Please contact Stephanie Shipp ([sshipp@ida.org](mailto:sshipp@ida.org)), if you would like to contribute to the award.*

For more information about the nominating process for the 2013 award, please go to:  
<http://www.amstat.org/sections/sgovt/JEGform13.doc> or <http://www.amstat.org/sections/sgovt/JEGform13.pdf>.  
If you have questions about the award, please contact **Rick Peterson** at [rick@amstat.org](mailto:rick@amstat.org) or (703) 684-1221, and **Kevin Cecco** at [kevin.cecco@irs.gov](mailto:kevin.cecco@irs.gov) or 202-874-0464.

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## GOVERNMENT STATISTICS SECTION

*The mission of the Government Statistics Section (GSS) is to promote the use of sound statistical theory and methods in the production of data at all levels of government--be it Federal, State, local, or international; assist in the broad dissemination of those data; and encourage good statistical practice by all users. Areas of interest for the Section include all that involve the production, dissemination, and application of governmental statistics, including concern with statistical policy issues, quality and usefulness of governmental data products, special problems of State and local data, comparability of data among different countries, and the role of professional statisticians in the public sector.*

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National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), U.S. Department of Agriculture  
National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## SOCIAL STATISTICS SECTION

*The Social Statistics Section seeks to advance research in social statistics, both in areas which involve the use of methods of statistical inquiry, and in those which involve the use of statistical data and the development of statistical measurement. This section will also plan for active participation in the affairs of the American Statistical Association by those interested in these matters and for representation of activities in this major field in the program of the ASA.*

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