

GSS/SSS MAY 2012 NEWSLETTER
Government Statistics and Social Statistics Sections
American Statistical Association

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**UPCOMING DEADLINES AND EVENTS:**

**May**

31 JSM 2012 Early Registration Ends

**June**

1 JSM 2012 Regular Registration Opens

1 H2R Student Travel Award Application Deadline

**July**

28 JSM 2012 Begins

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H2R 2012 STUDENT TRAVEL AWARD DEADLINE APPROACHES! **NEW!**

Submitted by Nancy Bates and Brad Edwards, Co-Chairs, 2012 H2R: Survey Methods for Hard to Reach Populations Conference

The H2R 2012 conference offers a Student Travel Award for students in graduate programs in statistics, survey methodology, demography, ethnography, or allied disciplines related to topical sections of the conference. Support is offered for students to attend the International Conference on Methods for Surveying and Enumerating Hard to Reach Populations. The conference will be held, October 31 to November 3, 2012 in New Orleans, LA.

Applications must be supported by a professor working in relevant fields. Awards will be granted to cover expenses up to \$500. Winners are expected to attend H2R sessions, the poster

presentations, and the opening reception in order to be recognized. Application for 2012 H2R Student Travel Award must be received **by June 1, 2012.**

For more information and application form please visit the conference website:
<http://www.amstat.org/meetings/h2r/2012/index.cfm?fuseaction=main>

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**WILLIAM MOCKOVAK RECEIVES THE JEANNE GRIFFITH MENTORING AWARD! NEW!**

*Submitted by Clyde Tucker, 2012 Chair, Griffith Award Selection Committee*

William Mockovak, a statistician with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), was selected to receive the 2012 Jeanne Griffith Mentoring Award. The purpose of the award is to encourage mentoring of junior staff in the statistical community in the federal, state, and local government. The award is sponsored by the Government Statistics Section, the National Opinion Research Center, Westat, the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics, the American Institutes for Research, the American Educational Research Association, and the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy.

Dr. Mockovak serves as the Director of the Behavioral Science Research Center in the Office of Survey Methods Research. In this position, he has been an outstanding mentor to research staff for well over a decade. Dr. Mockovak will be presented the award at a ceremony scheduled for **4 pm on Wednesday, June 20th**, at the **Bureau of Labor Statistics Conference Center** located at 2 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20212.

If you would like to attend, please email your first and last name to Clyde Tucker, [nctucker@cox.net](mailto:nctucker@cox.net). He will add your name to the list at the guard station. Please bring a picture ID.

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JSM 2012 ROUNDTABLES NEW!

Submitted by Deborah H. Griffin, SSS 2012 Program Chair-elect, and Eric Rancourt, GSS 2012 Program Chair-elect

The Social Statistics Section and the Government Statistics Section are sponsoring six luncheon roundtables at the 2012 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM). These roundtables provide an ideal setting for learning more about issues and methods relevant to social and government statistics. Please consider signing up for one (or more) of these luncheon roundtables when you register for JSM.

Using the American Community Survey to Improve Sample Design and Survey Weighting

Alfredo Navarro, US Census Bureau

Virtually all national surveys use complex sample designs that involve some level of stratification. The specific survey objectives determine how much stratification is required. As the demand for more detailed survey estimates increases, so does the requirement for finer levels of stratification. Weighting and estimation methods are also becoming increasingly more complex and adjustments to offset non-response and coverage errors are now standard in survey

weighting. These adjustments for coverage require an independent data source. In the past decade, the Census 2000 long form sample estimates have provided the best source of data for stratification and weighting adjustments. The 2010 Census did not collect these detailed social, economic, and housing data. The American Community Survey (ACS) is the new source of this information, providing valuable information for survey designers. This round table will discuss how best to use ACS data in sample design (stratification) and survey weighting, and will cover advantages as well as issues and limitations.

Measuring Trust in Official Statistics

Jennifer Hunter Childs, US Census Bureau

The Census Bureau and other members of the Federal Statistical System are seeking ways to reverse the decline in response rates for their ongoing surveys to avoid increasing operational costs and declines in data quality. The Census Bureau is fielding a public opinion data collection to address attitudes, beliefs, and concerns the public may have regarding its trust in federal statistics, the collection of statistical information by the federal government, and attitudes about administrative records. The results will allow us to understand how current events impact public perception towards federal statistics. Ultimately, the information will enable the Census Bureau to better understand public perceptions which will provide guidance for communicating with the public and planning future data collection activities that reflect improved understanding of public concerns. The Census Bureau will share the results with other federal statistical agencies to maximize the utility of this information and ultimately, the quality and efficiency of federal statistics. This roundtable will provide an overview of the progress and early results of this public opinion survey and discuss how this information can be best used.

Update on the Census Bureau's Survey Planning Data Base

Nancy Bates, US Census Bureau

The Census 2000 Planning Database (PDB) assembles an array of demographic, housing, and socioeconomic data down to the tract level; many variables are correlated with enumeration difficulty and with response rates. The Census Bureau actively used the PDB in the planning and execution of the 2010 Census when designing the Communications campaign (with the goal of targeting hard-to-enumerate groups), and developing local action plans. External groups used the on-line PDB to conduct their own analysis to support 2010 efforts. The PDB is being updated to include data from the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey's 5-year estimates and other operational paradata such as 2010 Census mail return rates. We have expanded the new database to include block group-level statistics and will make this survey planning database publicly available to serve the planning needs of external survey practitioners. This roundtable will introduce the database, its content, and some suggested applications.

Testing and Implementing an Internet Survey Response Option

Jennifer Tancreto, US Census Bureau

Internet use is becoming an integral part of daily activities, as people use it for shopping, financial transactions, social interaction and communication. Internet surveys offer an opportunity to blend the self-administered nature of a mail survey with the technological advantages of automated data collection modes. Developing an Internet response mode requires

thoughtful planning about the interaction between the user and the online survey and the optimal use of web technology. Moreover, since a web mode is often used as part of a mixed mode design, development of an Internet mode requires consistency in question wording and presentation across modes. This round table discussion will focus on issues pertinent to the development and implementation of an Internet survey, particularly as part of a mixed mode design. Lessons learned from a recent test in the American Community Survey will be shared.

Model-based estimation: When is it good enough for production?

Wendy Barboza, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA

Within many Federal statistical agencies, the primary goal of statisticians working in the research environment is to have their work incorporated into production. In particular, work related to model-based estimation can be a very challenging endeavor. Many questions arise when attempting to convert this type of research into an operational setting. Is there a different methodological approach to consider and investigate? What potential covariates were examined and are there others? What diagnostics were used to evaluate the performance of the model? Was an independent source(s) used to validate the model-based estimates? Are the error levels for the model-based estimates acceptable? How do the model-based estimates and error levels compare to the current methodology? Why is the model better than what is currently in place? In this session, we will focus on model-based estimation and deliberate the criteria for determining when the research methodology is ready for production.

The Census of Population. Now What!?

David Dolson, Statistics Canada

Although analysis, evaluation and dissemination activities continue, the 2010/11 round of censuses is largely completed. This roundtable will give participants the opportunity to share regarding lessons learned, issues faced and strategies for the next round. As we look to the future, some potential topics for discussion include:

- In what regards are improvements and changes most needed
- What are the greatest risks before us and strategies to address them
- Multimode data collection, including Internet
- Increased use of administrative data
- Moving towards register based methods?
- Societal and generational factors
- Cost, quality tradeoffs
- Maintaining coverage quality
- Research plans

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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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Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), U.S. Department of Commerce  
Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), U.S. Department of Justice  
Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U.S. Department of Labor  
National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (formerly SRS), NSF

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National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce

## 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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