**GSS/SSS JUNE-JULY 2012 NEWSLETTER**
**Government Statistics and Social Statistics Sections**
**American Statistical Association**

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**UPCOMING DEADLINES AND EVENTS:**

**July 28-August 2**     Joint Statistical Meetings, San Diego, CA

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**LETTER FROM SECTIONS' CHAIRS    NEW!**

Dear Members of the Social Statistics and Government Statistics Sections:

Earlier this year, the officers of the Social Statistics Section (SSS) and Government Statistics Section (GSS) conducted a review of the fiscal stability and activities of our respective sections. In the process of this review, several points surfaced:

1. Both sections have faced increased costs over the past few years associated with events at the Joint Statistical Meetings, very low returns on our reserves, and ASA administrative overhead, which have reduced our financial reserves;
2. Many of the past revenue sources (e.g., printing and publications fees) have disappeared due to free electronic dissemination; and
3. Although our reserves are currently sufficient, it is important that our sections have a self-sustaining budget to continue to effectively serve you going forward.

As fiduciaries of the sections' financial resources, we are obliged to address increasing costs and administer our reserves on your behalf. Therefore, the Executive Boards of each section voted to raise SSS and GSS dues to $6.00 per year. The joint SSS-GSS membership rate will increase to $10.00 per year ($7.00 is the current rate). Student rates will remain unchanged at $1.00 per year. These new dues will go into effect September 1, 2012.

This change will help us serve you better by helping to ensure that we have the funds to support activities that serve our section members. For example, GSS just co-sponsored the *2012 International Conference on Establishment Surveys,* which took place in Montreal, Canada, June 11-14, 2012, and SSS is co-sponsoring the *International Conference on Methods for Surveying and Enumerating Hard-to-Reach Populations,* which will take place in New Orleans in October of 2012. And, having now completed one American FactFinder workshop (held in Washington, D.C. in April), we are planning to create a Webinar with the U.S. Census Bureau to widen the scope of this activity. Finally, both sections are proud to provide support for the annual Student Paper Competition and special awards, such as the Roger Herriot Award for Innovation in Federal Statistics.

We welcome any comments you have on this change. Feel free to email either one of us jsalvo@planning.nyc.gov or bharrisk@omb.eop.gov. We look forward to seeing you at JSM in San Diego and hope that you will attend the SSS Business meeting on Monday July 30th at 5:30 pm and the GSS Business meeting on Tuesday Jul 31st at 5:30 pm.

Brian Harris-Kojetin                                  Joseph Salvo
Chair, Government Statistics Section          Chair, Social Statistics Section


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**COUNCIL OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ON FEDERAL STATISTICS:  JUNE 2012 MEETING NEW!**
*Submitted by Robert Lussier, COPAFS representative, Government Statistics Section*

*The Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS) acts as the advocate for the development and dissemination of high-quality federal statistics. Member organizations include professional associations, businesses, research institutes, and others interested in Federal statistics. Through COPAFS, members have an opportunity to review and have an impact on issues including timeliness, quality, confidentiality, and the relevance of data. COPAFS holds quarterly meetings, the last one being on June 1, 2012. Detailed minutes, together with copies of the overheads used by the presenters can be found on COPAFS website*
***www.copafs.org***


As part of his Executive Director's report, Ed Spar described an OMB memo clamping down on the conference activities of federal agencies. With agencies now encouraged to organize conferences in-house, COPAFS conference activity is being impacted. Mr. Spar also talked about the budget situation, especially related to the economic census and the American Community Survey (ACS). Mr. Spar described the $20 million cut from the economic census as basically a misunderstanding in Congress that is likely to be reversed. There are two bills on the ACS. One would eliminate it, and the other would make response to it voluntary. Mr. Spar also described the recently released 2010 census coverage measurement numbers. He credited the Census Bureau for reporting the gross errors (undercount and over-count) for geographic detail, including large counties. Finally, Mr. Spar noted that the next Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Policy Seminar is scheduled for December 4-5.

## A Review of Plans for the Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Patricia Hu, the new director of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), described her organization as collecting, analyzing, and reporting transportation data, and ensuring the cost-efficient use of resources in monitoring transportation's contributions to the economy. BTS, established in 1992 under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act is part of the Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration. However, BTS is not the only statistical agency within the Department. The Federal Highway Administration spearheads the National Household Travel Survey.

Ms. Hu described some specific BTS programs. Reflecting the growing importance of freight, the Commodity Flow Survey (CFS) collects data from 100,000 shippers on domestic freight shipments by commodity types, origins, and destinations. A Trans Border Freight Data program supplements the CFS. Ms. Hu also described programs on passenger travel, such as the collection of monthly data on airline enplanements, on-time performance, and ground delays. There is also a 2010 National Census of Ferry Operators, and a GIS-based Intermodal Passenger Connectivity Database. This program, for example, identified that Americans in rural counties are losing access to inter-city transportation options.

BTS is engaged in modernizing data programs, such as a web response option for CFS, and the streamlined tracking of airline information. BTS also promotes data access, and is getting into the development of mobile apps, web engineering, and data visualization. Other initiatives include the re-introduction of the Journal of Transportation Statistics, the re-energizing of the ASA's Transportation Statistics Interest Group, and the coordination of transportation statistics and definitions across North America.

## Measuring Sexual Identity in NCHS Surveys

Jennifer Madans, National Center for Health Statistics, presented work in progress on Measuring Sexual Identity in NCHS Surveys. She started by describing the need to better understand the health of sexual minority groups, as there is evidence of health disparities, and a need for data to help address them.

Collecting data on sexual identity is complex. One challenge is the definition of concepts such as sexual orientation, sexual attraction, sexual behavior, and sexual identity. Further complicating matters is the fact that sexual identity can change over time and with context (for example, depending on who is asking). There also are issues with the varied use and comprehension of terms in the media and across subgroups. Different groups relate to terms differently. For example, sexual non-minorities tend to talk more about what they are not rather than what they are. For example, they might report that "I'm not gay." They might also not know the meaning of some terms such as "heterosexual" and "bi-sexual." In contrast, sexual identity tends to be highly salient to sexual minorities–such as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender persons.

Ms. Madans then reviewed some of the ways sexual identity has been asked in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) and the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). In the NSFG, about six percent of respondents do not answer sexual identity,

which gives "missing" a higher frequency than some of the target groups. Missing responses are less of a problem in the NHANES, but they are not random. For example, missing responses have been more common among Hispanics. The 2006-2008 NSFG includes improvements to wording and allows people to write in what they mean by "something else." The number of "missing" is sharply reduced overall, but remains high in some groups.

The plan is to add questions on sexual identity to the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), a larger and interviewer-conducted survey. Goals for the new questions are to reduce misclassification (especially for non-minorities), reduce "something else" and "don't know" responses, and to sort non-minority from minority cases. Testing of the new NHIS questions will continue through 2012, and full implementation is targeted for January 2013.

## How Good Are the Annual Social and Economic Supplement Earnings Data? A Comparison to SSA Detailed Earnings Records

Fritz Scheuren, National Opinion Research Center, described research that matches records from the Current Population Survey's 2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) with Social Security's 2005 Detailed Earnings Records (DER). The joint project of U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Health and Human Services compares the two to gauge their consistency on income earned in calendar year 2005.

Mr. Scheuren described the handling of income imputation in cases of ASEC nonresponse, noting the difference between item imputes (e.g., cases where a specific question is unanswered) and whole imputes (e.g., cases where the entire supplement is imputed). Imputation is a potential factor in the comparison, as poverty rates differ by imputation status.

In comparing ASEC and DER data, Mr. Scheuren noted that DER is not a gold standard, as it misses some persons and sources of earnings. DER and ASEC can differ in a number of other ways, so that an ASEC-DER comparison is not a pure "apples to apples" comparison.

Results were tabulated for persons age 15 and above with earnings. Overall, 52 percent had ASEC and DER incomes within $10,000 of each other, and 79 percent were within $20,000. For records without imputation, 61 percent were within $10,000 and 88 percent were within $20,000. Records with whole imputes were least consistent, with only 24 percent within $10,000 and 72 percent within $20,000. The correspondence also is strong when looking at the "in-poverty" population. When DER is substituted for ASEC, the majority of persons do not change poverty status, and that result holds across demographic groups.

Still to be studied are persons with no ASEC-DER match, and those with highly dissimilar incomes.

## Managing and Analyzing Longitudinal Data

Patricia Ruggles, Orlin Research, Inc., described the company she runs. It provides products to enhance the use of complex data in social science research. For example, analysis of longitudinal data is complex. Sample attrition, weighting problems, and inconsistencies in response across

waves of a survey complicate matters. Creating the necessary links can be difficult in standard statistical packages, such as SAS or SPSS. It may also be highly inefficient, as one would have to track, for example, each person's income for each month of the survey. Analysts often shy away from using large longitudinal data sets such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) or use such databases only for cross-sectional analyses.

Ms. Ruggles described three basic steps in the use of longitudinal analysis: (1) understanding the data, (2) preparing data for analysis, and (3) performing analyses. Using 2008 SIPP as an example, Ruggles expanded on these steps, and described how her company's products can help with each step.

Further information on the Orlin system can be found at www.orlinresearch.com.

This concluded the June meeting. The next COPAFS meeting will take place September 21, 2012.

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**UPCOMING JSM 2012 EVENTS    NEW!**
*Submitted by Elizabeth Stuart, 2012 SSS JSM Program Chair, and Daniell Toth, 2012 GSS JSM Program Chair*

Please join us for an exciting line up of SSS- and GSS- sponsored sessions at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM)! A list of the invited sessions, topic contributed sessions, and lunchtime roundtables appears below. You can find all of our sessions on the JSM's website (http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2012/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=main)         by searching by sponsor ("Social Statistics Section" or "Section on Government Statistics"). Thanks to all of the organizers and presenters for your help in putting together a great program!

Please email Elizabeth Stuart (estuart@jhsph.edu) or Daniell Toth (Toth.Daniell@bls.gov) with any questions or suggestions. This is also the time to start thinking about JSM 2013: please send any ideas for sessions to next year's program chairs, Deborah Griffin (deborah.h.griffin@census.gov) or Eric Rancourt (Eric.Rancourt@statcan.gc.ca*)*.

## <u>Invited Sessions</u>

| **Sunday, July 29** | |
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| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 32A) | "Statistical challenges in mental health research," *Organizer: Yuanjia Wang, Columbia University* |
| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 30E) | "Protecting confidentiality of complex data," *Organizer: Jerome P Reiter, Duke University* |
| **Monday, July 30** | |
| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 28A) | "Causal inference with longitudinal data: Challenges and new solutions," *Organizer: Elizabeth Stuart, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health* |

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| 10:30-12:20 pm (HQ-Sapphire H) | "A showcase of statistical activities at federal statistical agencies," *Organizer: Jeri Mulrow, National Science Foundation* |

**Tuesday July 31**

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| 10:30-12:20 pm (HQ-Sapphire B) | "Missing data and causal inference," *Organizer: Baojiang Chen, University of Nebraska Medical Center* |

**Wednesday, August 1**

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| 2:00-3:50 pm (HQ-Sapphire H) | "Benchmarking and seasonal adjustment," *Organizer: Tucker McElroy, U.S. Census Bureau* |
| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 29A) | "Treatment effect heterogeneity in causal inference," *Organizer: Kosuke Imai, Princeton University* |

**Thursday, August 2**

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| 8:30-10:20 am (HQ-Sapphire D) | "Small population, big impact: Improving the measurement of the group quarters population in the American Community Survey," *Organizer: Krisztina Marton, Committee on National Statistics* |

## Topic Contributed Sessions

**Sunday, July 29**

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| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 31A) | "Statistical and bioinformatical innovations in genomics research in the VA cooperative studies program," *Organizer: Ilana Belitskaya-Levy, VA Palo Alto Cooperative Studies Program Coordinating Center* |
| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 31B) | "Statistical pipeline: Made in the USA in honor of Nampeo McKenney and Nagambal Shah," *Organizer: Juanita Tamayo Lott, Tamayo Lott Asssociates* |
| 4:00-5:50 pm (CC-Room 25C) | "Estimating unauthorized migration," *Organizer: Enrico Marcelli, San Diego State University* |
| 4:00-5:50 pm (CC-Room 28A) | "Federal perspectives on privacy, confidentiality, and data quality," *Organizer: Eve Powell-Griner, National Center for Health Statistics* |

**Monday, July 30**

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| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 27B) | "Analyzing and adjusting for nonresponse," *Organizer: Polly Phipps, Bureau of Labor Statistics* |
| 10:30-12:20 pm (CC-Room 28E) | "Challenges of data analysis in transportation," *Organizer: Jenny R Guarino, U.S. Department of Transportation/RITA* |
| 2:00-3:50 pm (HQ-Sapphire H) | "40 years and counting: CNSTAT's role in government and social statistics," *Organizer: Juanita Lott, Tamayo Lott Associates* |
| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 31A) | "Data-driven transportation statistics," *Organizer: Promod Chandhok, Ph.D, Bureau of Transportation Statistics* |

| **Tuesday, July 31** | |
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| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 21) | "Challenges of continuing a longitudinal study after a long hiatus: The Project Talent example," *Organizer: Michael P. Cohen, American Institutes for Research* |
| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 24C) | "Evaluating CPS ASEC data quality," *Organizer: Edward J Welniak, U.S. Census Bureau* |
| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 30E) | "Randomization inference and causal effects with groups and networks," *Organizer: Cyrus Samii, New York University* |
| 10:30-12:20 pm (CC-Room 23A) | "Transportation statistics interest group panel," *Organizer: Peg Young, BTS/RITA/U.S. Department of Transportation* |
| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 31B) | "Command responsibility: Building cases of policy from patterns of individual events in international human rights cases and domestic class action suits," *Organizer: Megan Price, Benetech* |
| 2:00-3:50 pm (CC-Room 30E) | "Labor estimates by firm size," *Organizer: Nathan Clausen, Bureau of Labor Statistics* |
| **Wednesday, August 1** | |
| 8:30-10:20am (CC-Room 27A) | "Causal inference with multi-level data when the covariates are imperfect," *Organizer: Dan McCaffrey, RAND Corporation* |
| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 26B) | "Statistics in uncovering administrative cheating on tests," *Organizer: Martin Levy, University of Cincinnati* |
| 10:30-12:20 pm (CC-Room 33A) | "Innovations in study design in the VA cooperative studies program (CSP)," *Organizer: Ying Lu, VA Palo Alto Healthcare System/Stanford University* |
| 10:30-12:20 pm (CC-Room 33B) | "Patient-reported outcomes in mental and behavioral health," *Organizer: Douglas Gunzler, Case Western Reserve University* |
| **Thursday, August 2** | |
| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 30A) | "Innovative data analysis of clinical trials in the VA cooperative studies program," *Organizer: Ying Lu, VA Palo Alto Healthcare System/Stanford University* |
| 8:30-10:20 am (CC-Room 28E) | "Frequentist and Bayesian models in government," *Organizer: Wendy Barboza, USDA/National Agricultural Statistics Service* |
| 10:30-12:20 pm (CC-Room 31A) | "Evaluations of the American Community Survey and 2010 Census data," *Organizer: Linda Jacobsen, Population Reference Bureau* |

**Lunchtime Roundtables:**

Note: all lunchtime roundtables take place in CC-Ballroom 20D at 12:30-1:50 pm on the date specified.

| Monday, July 30 | |
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| | "Update on the Census Bureau's survey planning database," *Nancy Bates, U.S. Census Bureau* |
| **Tuesday, July 31** | |
| | "Model-based estimation: When is it good enough for production?" *Wendy Barboza, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA* |
| **Wednesday, August 1** | |
| | "Testing and implementing an internet response option," *Jennifer Tancreto, U.S. Census Bureau* |
| | "Using the American Community Survey to improve sample design and survey weighting," *Alfred Navarro, U.S. Census Bureau* |

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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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## 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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