

**GSS/SSS JULY 2006 NEWSLETTER**  
**Government Statistics and Social Statistics Sections**  
**American Statistical Association**

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**Government Statistics Section**

**THE STATISTICAL SYSTEM IN WASHINGTON STATE**

*By Wei Yen and Jim Mayfield, Washington State Institute for Public Policy; and Irv Lefberg and Harold Nelson, Washington State Office of Financial Management.*



Seattle, Washington will be the site for this year's Joint Statistical Meetings. As fellow members of ASA and natives of Washington, we invite you all to attend this year's JSM and experience the Evergreen State. We would also like to take this opportunity to introduce you to Washington and to the state's statistical system.

## **About Washington State**

The state of Washington was established in 1889. Since then, the state population has grown from 350,000 to about 6 million today. Located at the northwest corner of the continental U.S., Washington is active in international commerce and is a leader in aircraft manufacturing, software engineering, internet commerce, lumber and wood products, and agricultural products such as apples and wheat. Its Gross State Product in 2004 is estimated at \$262 billion.<sup>1</sup> Washington's main metropolitan areas include Seattle, Tacoma, and Vancouver, WA, on the west side, and Spokane and Tri-city area on the east side of the state. Olympia is the state's capital, located 60 miles south of Seattle.

## **Washington State's Statistical System**

To operate efficiently, modern governments rely heavily on a wide variety of statistical information and the state of Washington is no exception. There are two activities of Washington State government, in particular, that rely heavily on statistical information: One is the development of operating, capital, and transportation budgets; the other, policy/program development and evaluation.

As with the federal government, Washington State also relies on a statistical "system" that is decentralized.<sup>2</sup> Statistical information for the state is dispersed by subject area, with information residing in different locations. However, many data sharing agreements and other coordination efforts are in place to make the system work in a more integrated fashion. In most cases, the information for a particular subject area resides in a state agency charged with functions related to the subject area. For instance, statistical information on recipients of human services such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Medicaid resides in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

The state also relies on statistics provided by federal and local governments and the private sector. Here we devote our discussion to the state government statistical information only.

Much of the statistical information used by the state for operation and policy/program development is publicly available on the internet, in printed annotated reports or data books, and in other formats. However, some of the statistical information that is routinely used by state agencies is not published or readily available to the public. Some of these statistical sources are internal agency reports while others are simply raw data held in agency information or payment systems. For example, the DSHS Medical Management Information System contains detailed records of all publicly-paid medical services provided to eligible individuals.

In addition to agency statistical information systems, the state produces other information in the form of forecasts. Two key forecasts are the state's official population forecast and the long-term employment and labor force forecast, produced by the Office of Financial Management (OFM). In the area of forecasts, Washington State is unique in having two joint legislative-executive forecast councils: the Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council and the Washington State Caseload Forecast Council, which issue forecasts used to develop the state operating budget.

In addition to population projections, OFM also serves as a repository for several major statistical information systems that track caseloads in human service areas, such as Medicaid eligibility caseload and prison beds. OFM is the home of the Washington State Population Survey, a biannual survey modeled after the federal Current Population Survey. Washington is one of two states that conduct such state population surveys on a regular basis. The merged business tax database is also maintained at OFM (as well as the Department of Revenue).

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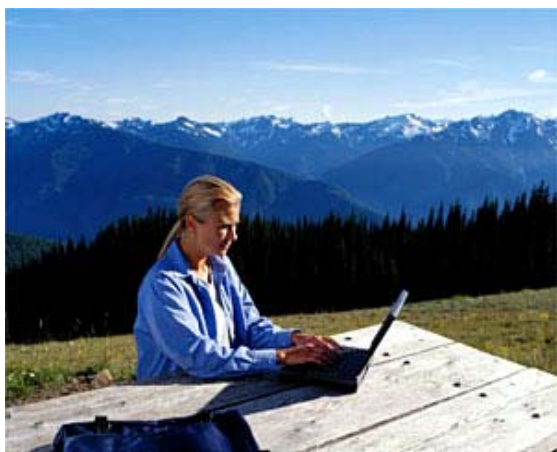
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.erfc.wa.gov/pubs/nov05pub.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.brookings.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb63.pdf>

Washington's statistical information systems can be broadly grouped into the 11 subject areas as shown in Exhibit 1.

**Exhibit 1: Washington's State Information Systems**

| <i>Category</i>                             | <i>Description</i>                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Population                               | Population projections and demographics for state, counties, cities, and small areas. .                      |
| 2. Economy                                  | Economic indicators and forecasts.                                                                           |
| 3. State Government Finance                 | State government revenue, budget and expenses                                                                |
| 4. Human Services/Public Assistance/Welfare | Publicly funded services and entitlements, such as TANF, Medicaid, substance abuse treatment, and childcare. |
| 5. Health/Healthcare                        | Health status, health indicators, expenditures, uninsured, hospital discharge data                           |
| 6. Criminal Justice                         | Arrests, sentencing, prison and jail inmate populations, types of crimes, crime rates                        |
| 7. Education                                | Enrollment, grades, and graduation and dropout rates                                                         |
| 8. Natural Resources                        | Land, timber and fisheries                                                                                   |
| 9. Environment                              | Air and water quality, hazardous waste, and water resources                                                  |
| 10. Energy                                  | Utility tariffs and prices                                                                                   |
| 11. Transportation                          | Traffic volume, collision, and speed trend                                                                   |



### **Accessing Washington's State Government Data Sources**

State agencies typically post published reports of aggregated data on their respective websites. Access to such reports is free to the public. In addition to published reports, some agencies also compile regular reports for internal circulation. Agencies that routinely produce such reports make them available to the public upon request.

The vast majority of the state's statistical information is, however, maintained at a detailed level such as information about individuals receiving public services, employee earnings and hours worked, or information about business entities. Information on individuals is usually confidential and not publicly accessible unless explicitly permitted by law. However, in most cases, individual-level information is available for legitimate research purposes, with agency approval. Several state agencies have opted to form an independent human subject review board that also governs the use of confidential data at the participating agencies.

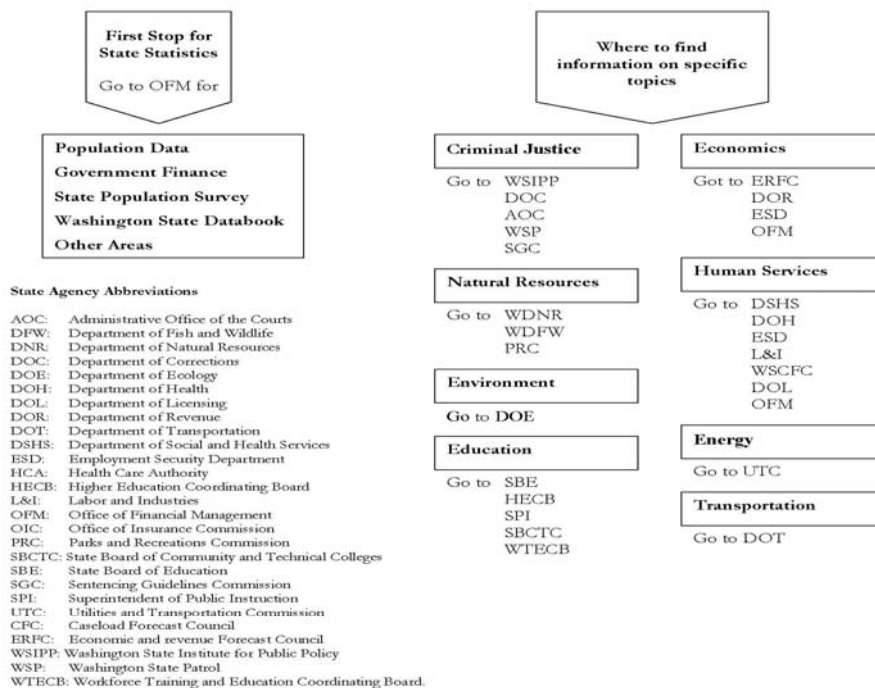
The utility of individual-level data may be greatly enhanced by linking data among related agencies. Linking individual-level data across agencies requires a good understanding of the “common identifiers.” Agencies have various ways to identify individuals and the rules can even vary among divisions of the same agency. The conventional practice in linking records among agencies is to use multiple fields, whenever possible, rather than relying on a single identifier. It is advisable to consult with experienced agency analysts when undertaking such an effort.

## Navigating Washington’s State Government Statistical System

Due to the decentralized nature of Washington’s state government statistical system, navigating the system can be challenging. However, if you know what you need and follow the navigation schematic in Exhibit 2, you will avoid unnecessary effort.

For researchers looking for basic demographic information of the state, a stop at the Office of Financial Management’s website may be all they need. Others may need to follow the schematic to contact the relevant agency or agencies. The navigation schematic in Exhibit 2 can also be found on the Internet at [www.wsipp.wa.gov](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov) (under “Policy Areas”). Researchers can use the website to view statistical publications and information systems of each listed agency by clicking on the agency’s name. Each publication or information system is accompanied with a brief description and, where applicable, the name of the publication or information system contains a link to its source on the Internet.

Exhibit 2. Navigating Washington’s State Government Statistical System



See you all in Seattle in August!

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of their respective agencies

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## **Social Statistics Section**

### **MAXIMIZING YOUR JSM EXPERIENCE: A CHECKLIST FOR JSM 2006**

Beth Kilss, Publications Officer

Last year at this time we developed a checklist to help you get ready for the 2005 meetings in Minneapolis. Well, it turns out that many folks found it useful and gave us a lot of positive feedback, so we decided it was worth repeating. And now that the Joint Statistical Meetings are right around the corner, you're probably in the middle of making your plans for Seattle -- right? If you're like a lot of us, you keep meaning to make your plans and start working on the slides for your presentation, and, oh, yes, sign up for that Roundtable luncheon. The list goes on and on ....

So, it's a good thing you're reading this article, because the Social Statistics Executive Board believes that your JSM experience should be enjoyable, stimulating, and stress-free. To help you achieve this goal, once again we offer ten suggestions for getting the most out of your 2006 JSM experience:

1. **Prepare Ahead of Time** -- For those who are session chairs, authors, discussants, or poster presenters, the American Statistical Association's (ASA's) Web site offers excellent, useful guidelines for preparing for your role. Don't wait until the last minute, but, rather, take advantage of the material available to prepare yourself. The following link leads you to information that will help you prepare for any role you may have this year -- <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2006/index.cfm?fuseaction=speakers>.
2. **Be Informed** -- Being a member of ASA and one or more sections will be a much more rewarding experience if you know what's going on. One way, of course, is to go to ASA's Web site at [www.amstat.org](http://www.amstat.org). Another is to regularly read ASA's monthly membership magazine *Amstat News* -- see, for example, the May 2006 *Amstat News*, pages 4-6, to learn what ASA's Board of Directors has been doing this year; or check under the Section News each month for the Social Statistics Section article. The May 2006 issue also includes a lot of useful information about JSM 2006 on pages 22-26.
3. **Plan Your Schedule for JSM 2006 in Advance** -- Because the program for JSM is online, you don't have to wait until you get to Seattle to decide on which sessions you want to attend. There is so much to choose from that you may run into conflicts, but doing a careful review of the sessions, business meetings, luncheons, and special events you want to attend will allow you to maximize your participation. In fact, ASA offers a function online called "My Program" to help you create and prioritize a virtual program of the things you want to attend. Check out -- [http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2006/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=my\\_program\\_help](http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2006/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=my_program_help).
4. **Know Your Section's Sessions** -- Social Statistics Section's Program Chairs for 2006 and 2007 have worked very hard to put together an exciting group of sessions, roundtables, and other activities for this year's program. In the Social Statistics columns of recent *Amstat News* issues, you will find details about SSS's invited sessions (April), roundtable luncheons and short course (May), and its topic contributed and contributed sessions (June). Be sure to check these out, especially the roundtable luncheons and short course, which require advance registration.
5. **Know Your Section's Activities** -- Social Statistics has an annual Business Meeting and Mixer. This will be on **Monday, August 7, at 5:30 p.m.** in the Everett Room of the Sheraton Seattle. At this session, you'll get a chance to meet your fellow section members and hear what's been going on over the past year, as well as look ahead at what's coming. And last, but not least, you'll be able to enjoy food and drink in a very relaxed atmosphere where we can all get to know each other a little better.

6. **Meet the Section Officers** -- If you come to number 5 above, you'll get to meet the current officers in person, as well as learn who our newly elected officers are. Current officers include: Susan Schechter, Chair, 2006; Jerry Gates, Chair, 2005; Jennifer H. Madans, Chair, 2007; Juanita Tamayo Lott, Program Chair, 2006; Allen L. Schirm, Program Chair, 2007; Dawn Von Thurn Nelson, Secretary/Treasurer, 2006; Trivellore Raghunathan, Council of Sections Rep, 2006; Beth Kilss, Publications Officer, 2006; and Monica Clark, ASA Ex Officio. And Congratulations to our recently elected officers: Linda Gage, Chair, 2008; Jana L. Asher, Program Chair, 2008; Sharon M. Stern, Publications Officer, 2007-08; Daniel H. Weinberg, Council of Sections Rep, 2007-09.

7. **Express Your Opinion** -- We welcome your thoughts and ideas about the Social Statistics sessions, activities, newsletter, *Amstat News* column in Section News, the SSS portion of the ASA Web site, or anything else on your mind that relates to our organization. We want to better serve our membership well, but we need your input to help us do that. To contact the SSS officers, go to ASA's Web site at: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/ssoc/> and click on "Officers." We're looking forward to hearing from you!

8. **Find Out What Your Association Is Doing** -- Attend the ASA Open Meeting, the President's Address, and any other open meeting sponsored by a section you may be interested in joining. Check the online program for dates and times -- <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2006/index.cfm>.

9. **Do Something New** -- If you're not a member of the Social Statistics Section and are interested in learning more, plan to attend the Business Meeting and Mixer to find out what we're all about. We welcome your attendance. Or just take a closer look at the program this year and plan on doing or attending something you've never done or attended before! Try it! You'll like it!

And last, but not least --

10. **Make Your Travel Plans** -- By now, you should at least have made your hotel reservations if you're planning to stay in the conference hotels, as they are the most convenient to the meetings. And don't wait till the last minute to make airline reservations, because August is a busy time for vacations and flights are often booked months in advance. Pick up the phone now!

See you in Seattle!

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## **SHORT COURSE ON STATISTICAL DEMOGRAPHY WITH APPLICATIONS AT JSM 2006**

### **Registration Required**

#### **Statistical Demography with Applications - Continuing Education – Course**

**Monday, August 7, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Sponsors:** The ASA, Social Statistics Section, Section on Government Statistics, Section on Survey Research Methods

**Instructor(s):** Bruce D. Spencer, *Northwestern University*, Juha M. Alho, *University of Joensuu*

The course will discuss central concepts of demography from the viewpoint of statistical theory. Topics covered will include data sources, classical mathematical demography and its relation to pension funding and aging, stochastic demographic forecasting and its applications, and census error and its effects. Technical details will be avoided, but material has been selected so heuristic arguments can be presented. Particular attention will be paid to variability in populations and demographic processes. The course will show how stochastic forecasts can be produced using simulation methods, and the mechanics will be illustrated using free software developed by the instructors. The course will demonstrate that the volatility of demographic processes is commonly underestimated. No prior knowledge of demography is required. Familiarity with basic statistical modeling is assumed.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK:** Alho, J.M. and Spencer, B.D. (2005). *Statistical Demography and Forecasting*. Springer. ISBN: 0-387-22538-2.

#### **Course attendees are expected to be familiar with the topic at the level of:**

*Applied Linear Regression* by Sanford Weisberg, John Wiley & Sons OR

*Analysis of Survival Data* by D.R. Cox and David Oakes, Chapman & Hall/CRC Press OR

*Sampling Techniques* by William G. Cochran, John Wiley & Sons.



### Questions about the Continuing Education Program?

Please contact Madge Haven [madge@amstat.org](mailto:madge@amstat.org) or Rick Peterson [rick@amstat.org](mailto:rick@amstat.org)  
Phone: (703) 684-1221

### PLANNING AHEAD FOR SOCIAL STATISTICS SESSIONS IN 2007

This is another reminder that it is time to be thinking about topics for **Invited Sessions for JSM 2007**. If you have any thoughts or suggestions, contact **Allen Schirm, Program Chair 2007** ([aschirm@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:aschirm@mathematica-mpr.com)).

The **deadline** for submitting invited session proposals is 12 midnight eastern time on **July 26, 2006**. (The opening of online submission is June 26, 2006).

### AMERICA'S CHILDREN REPORT RELEASED

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics will release its latest annual report, *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-being 2006* on July 14. The report is a compendium of statistics from 21 Federal agencies with the latest available data on 26 key indicators related to children's economic security, health, behavior and social environment, and education and on 9 background measures related to population and family characteristics. This year, Parental Reports of Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties, first presented as a Special Feature in the 2005 report, has become an annual indicator. The 2006 *Brief* highlights selected information displayed in previous reports, reflects improvements to the summary list, and fills an important data gap in children's mental health. View, download, and order a copy of the report from the Forum's website <http://childstats.gov>. The web site includes detailed data tables and figures (not in the *Brief*), previous reports and their related links, other Forum reports, and information about the overall structure of the Forum.

#### For more information, contact:

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301.458.4256  
[sgodiwalla@cdc.gov](mailto:sgodiwalla@cdc.gov)  
<http://childstats.gov>

### COMMON DESTINY: FILIPINO AMERICAN GENERATIONS

Just a reminder that **Juanita Tamayo Lott**, Human Resources Division, Census Bureau, and 2006 Program Chair for Social Statistics Section, author of the recently published book *Common Destiny – Filipino American Generations*, will be signing copies on **Friday, July 28**, at the Smithsonian Institution public program, Contemporary Issues Facing Filipino Americans, which will be from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm in the Dillon Ripley Center, next to the Smithsonian Castle. Also at the Ripley Center is the commemoration photo exhibit of 100 years of Filipino Americans, 1906-2006, on display through August 20 and then travels to various cities, starting with Honolulu.  
(See [www.apa.si.edu/filamcentennial](http://www.apa.si.edu/filamcentennial) .)

### THE NATIONAL HEALTH INTERVIEW SURVEY (NHIS) WORKSHOP

## National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, Maryland, July 13, 2006

The Division of Health Interview Statistics will conduct a seminar on the NHIS on July 13th following the 2006 National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Data Users Conference. The seminar will be held at the NCHS in Hyattsville, MD (located in the Washington, DC Metro area).

The target audience for the seminar is beginning and intermediate users of the survey data.

A preliminary agenda includes:

- Overview of the NHIS
- Accessing data through the Web
- Sample design issues
- Analytic examples
- Co-sponsoring questions on the NHIS
- New on the NHIS

You may contact Peter Meyer [pmeyer1@cdc.gov](mailto:pmeyer1@cdc.gov) to be put on the Workshop mailing list.

For additional information about

- the NHIS, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/nhis/hisdesc.htm>
- the NCHS 2006 Data Users Conference to be held July 10-12, 2006, at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington D.C, go to [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/events/duc2006/duc\\_announce.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/events/duc2006/duc_announce.htm) or [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/events/duc2006/duc\\_announce2006.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/events/duc2006/duc_announce2006.htm)

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## OPEN FOR REGISTRATION: U.S. FEDERAL STATISTICS AS A SYSTEM September 25, 2006

*Registration Deadline: September 11, 2006*

*Information: <https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/materials/2006-0925.html>*

*Lists, registration, payment and cancellation: <https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/>*

*Sponsor Affiliate List: <https://projects.isr.umich.edu/jpsm/sponsorlist.cfm>*

*JPSM Home Page: [www.jpsm.org](http://www.jpsm.org) Click on "Short Courses"*

*Phone: (301)314-7911, email: [course@survey.umd.edu](mailto:course@survey.umd.edu)*

### U.S. FEDERAL STATISTICS AS A SYSTEM

A one-day short course sponsored by the Joint Program in Survey Methodology

September 25, 2006

Presented at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, MD

**Katharine G. Abraham** - Joint Program in Survey Methodology, University of Maryland

**Robert M. Groves** - Joint Program in Survey Methodology, University of Michigan

### Topics And Approach

#### *Motivation*

This is a course for new employees of Federal statistical agencies or anyone else who wants to learn more about how the various Federal statistical agencies work collectively to provide needed information to the citizens of the United States. Even if you know how some piece of the statistical system works, you may feel poorly informed about how the system as a whole functions.

What is the Federal Statistical System? We answer this question with reference to the history, activities, outputs and customers of the 70 plus Federal agencies whose responsibilities include the production of statistical information, focusing



especially on the dozen or so agencies whose principal mission is to provide such information. How the agencies adapt to changing circumstances is an important theme, illustrated by the redesign of the household survey used to produce the monthly unemployment rate, the development and implementation of the new North American Industry Classification system and other examples.

Mechanisms for coordination among the statistical agencies and between the United States and other countries are covered. We conclude with a discussion of the enduring debates over centralization versus decentralization of the statistical system, agency principles and practices, privacy and confidentiality and other issues regarding the organization and functioning of the system.

## **Instructors**

Katharine G. Abraham is a professor in the Joint Program in Survey Methodology and holds an adjunct appointment in the Department of Economics at the University of Maryland. Abraham served from 1993 through 2001 as Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and her research has included work on a variety of economic measurement issues.

Robert M. Groves is a research professor at the Joint Program in Survey Methodology and the director of the University of Michigan Groves Research Center. Groves has extensive experience in research and teaching on a wide range of survey methodology issues.

## **Tentative Schedule**

8:00 - 9:00	Check In
9:00 - 10:15	What is the U.S. Federal statistical system?
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 12:00	Snapshots of social and economic reality: Learning about the Federal statistical system through its major programs
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:30	Keeping the picture in focus
2:30 - 2:45	Break
2:45 - 3:30	Continuity and change in the Federal statistical system
3:30 - 4:30	Inventing the future great debates

## **Location**

The course will be held at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda, One Bethesda Metro Center, at Wisconsin Avenue and Old Georgetown Road in Bethesda, Maryland. The hotel is in the heart of Maryland's high-tech corridor, just 6 miles from downtown Washington, D.C., with convenient access to the Capital Beltway and the Metro subway system. The Hyatt is accessible via the Metro Red Line at the Bethesda Metro stop. A map will be sent with your registration confirmation. For overnight room reservations, call the Hyatt Regency Bethesda at 301-657-1234. There is a parking garage located directly underneath the Hotel which offers both valet and self-parking. The garage is not owned or operated by the Hyatt Regency.

[http://www.hyatt.com/usa/bethesda/hotels/map\\_bethe.html](http://www.hyatt.com/usa/bethesda/hotels/map_bethe.html)

## **Fees & Course Materials**

The registration fee is \$400. Full-time university students (with a supervising faculty advisor's signature) and employees of JPSM sponsor/affiliate organizations are eligible for a reduced fee of \$300.

Lunch and refreshments are included in the fee. Participants will be provided with a notebook containing detailed course notes.

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## **ANNOUNCING THE 23RD INTERNATIONAL METHODOLOGY SYMPOSIUM**

### **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN MEASURING POPULATION HEALTH**

**Who:** Organized by Statistics Canada

**When:** November 1 - 3, 2006

**Where:** Chateau Cartier Resort, Gatineau, Quebec (10 minutes from downtown Ottawa)

## **Registration And Preliminary Program Announcement**

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/conferences/symposium2006>

This international event addresses statistical methodology issues relevant to the work of a government statistical agency, as well as to a broader statistical community in the health care industry, government, universities, and other research organizations. The Symposium will focus on methodological issues related to producing reliable information on population health. The first day is comprised of two concurrent workshops, while the second and third days will each start with a plenary session followed by two streams of parallel sessions.

**For more information, send e-mail inquiries to [symposium2006@statcan.ca](mailto:symposium2006@statcan.ca) , or contact Milorad Kovacevic by phone at 613-951-9891 or by e-mail at [Milorad.Kovacevic@statcan.ca](mailto:Milorad.Kovacevic@statcan.ca) .**

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## **Government Statistics Section**

### *Mission Statement*

*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**

### *Mission Statement*

*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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