

GSS/SSS SEPTEMBER 2005 NEWSLETTER
Government Statistics and Social Statistics Sections
American Statistical Association

GSS web site: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/sgovt/>

SSS web site: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/ssoc/>

Editor: Pat Melvin
(patricia.l.melvin@census.gov)

GSS Publications Officer: Robert Lussier
(robert.lussier@statcan.ca)

SSS Publications Officer: Beth Kilss
(beth.a.kilss@irs.gov)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **MEETING ON MEASURING INCOME ON SURVEYS—CONTENT AND QUALITY**
 - **REPORT ON SOCIAL STATISTICS SECTION ROUNDTABLE LUNCHEONS AT JSM 2005**
 - **SOCIAL STATISTICS IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN...**
 - **THE 2005 MORRIS HANSEN LECTURE**
- ~~~~~

MEETING ON MEASURING INCOME ON SURVEYS—CONTENT AND QUALITY

On August 25, 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) convened a meeting of Federal agency representatives to discuss current approaches and potential improvements to collecting income data in the major federal surveys with a focus on health and human services policy needs. The 3-hour session was arranged under the auspices of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, HHS and the HHS Data Council.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to 1) discuss current approaches to income data collected in the major national surveys in the context of health and human services policy needs, and 2) identify ideas and opportunities for potential improvements, including opportunities for collaborative research, data collection, analytical and methodological work.

Presentations were made by Chuck Nelson, U.S. Census Bureau, on Income Data on Census Surveys; Jennifer Madans, National Center for Health Statistics, on Income Data on National Center for Health Statistics Surveys; Steven Cohen, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, on Income Data on the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS); Jessica Banthin, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, on Income Measurement in MEPS; and Dan Waldo, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, on Income Data on the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey.

In addition, a short working paper, *Measuring Income on Surveys: Content and Quality, An Overview*, was made available to meeting attendees. It describes the income data collected in the major Federal surveys and summarizes past findings on the quality and comparability of the data collected.

~~~~~

**REPORT ON SOCIAL STATISTICS SECTION ROUNDTABLE LUNCHEONS AT JSM 2005**

Our 2006 Program Chair **Juanita Tamayo Lott** provides some interesting observations about Social Statistics Section's successful Roundtable Luncheons, which recently transpired at the JSM in Minneapolis. Here's what she had to say--

The sessions were, in my view, fantastic. In general, folks got to talk to others outside of their immediate bailiwick but with common interests. This may also be a function of the fact that the roundtables were crosscutting. It was great for networking, sharing information, and fashioning opportunities to collaborate. Following are summaries of each session:

- **Frontline View of Data Collection Operations**, led by Kathleen Ludgate, Director, Boston Regional Office, U.S. Census Bureau  
*Discussion items:*
  1. Kathy used CPS as an example to describe what goes on during data collection;
  2. Ongoing challenges include:
    - Hiring, training, and retaining staff (2,600 Field Reps nationwide for CPS)
    - Conventional telephone surveys assume phones in a residence. Many folks use cell phones that are not necessarily geographically coded to an address. They may not even have landlines. While initial contact is in person, follow up is by phone interview by Field Reps (FRs) or from a telephone center. Number of follow ups range from 1- 7.
    - Getting the interview requires much creativity and ad hoc flexibility from data collectors. Laura Knapp mentioned that NORC trained their interviewers in improvisation skills, including reading body language and contextual factors to elicit an environment conducive to response.
    - There is a need to create alternative ways for re-interviews as telephone follow up becomes moot. Tom Kuba noted that Lockheed Martin is brainstorming new and strategic plans to reduce non-response other than via FRs. Kathy and Laura suggested looking at changes in survey design to maximize initial responses.
  3. Survey design suggestions
    - Statisticians and survey researchers should communicate/meet with data collectors to review and improve questionnaire design, content, and wording by building on the latter's experience to elicit productive responses during the initial face-to-face interview.
    - Participants mentioned the human factor as most critical to establish rapport, elicit social interaction, and get the desired outcome—complete and accurate response during first contact. They urged that data collectors listen to respondent first, even before a formal interview, to establish respect and parameters. Survey design and process should be supportive of this.
    - Participants viewed technology (i.e., modes of responses) as inhibitors or enhancers or even neutral in eliciting productive responses.
  4. Conclusion
    - Traditional surveys have focused on improvements to data collection modes and process, namely technological improvements and completing or correcting initial responses.
    - Participants encouraged innovative focus on the survey design stage, building on the knowledge of effective data collectors to maximize accurate and complete initial responses up front and reduce follow up.
- **A Multigenerational Conversation Among Statisticians**, led by Gladys Reynolds, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
*Discussion items:*
  1. This was a less structured and very lively discussion.
  2. There were 9 participants -- 4 from the Federal government, 2 from academia, and 3 from the private sector. It was terrifically distributed generationally, with 3 being 30 years old or younger; 3 between 30 and 60; and 3 over 60 years old (I think). (Several folks were unable to register due to an early deadline for lunch registration.)
  3. The mood was one of a hunger to connect across generations and sharing (maybe correcting) perceptions/stereotypes about generational and cohort differences in education, employment opportunities and life chances. The older folks wanted to mentor the younger ones with specific information.
- **Human Welfare and Population Trends** led by Kelvin Pollard, Population Reference Bureau  
*Discussion items:*
  1. This was a fascinating session where Kelvin shared graphs of global and national population trends related to what is growing, what is shrinking, and where changes are occurring. He noted, for example,

that world population is still growing, but with slower momentum than previously, approaching 6.6 billion. Developing countries account for nearly all of this increase.

2. Most of the participants, who were from the private sector, registered because they thought this was such an interesting topic, about which they knew little. In addition, Dallas Welch of Statistics New Zealand was at the table, so we had the opportunity to compare across countries. She felt that New Zealand was experiencing very similar demographic changes as the U.S., even though they are less than 5 million folks.
3. One interesting trend discussed is that by 2050, older American's share of the U.S. population is projected to approach the share of children and youth (23.4% to 20.7%). In contrast, in 1950, the population under age 18 comprised 31.4% of the U.S. population while the population age 65 and older accounted for 8.1%.
4. Participants also discussed the fact that since 1950 the U.S. population growth in the South and West has dwarfed that in the Northeast and Midwest. Kelvin used the creation and loss of major league baseball and other sports teams to illustrate this phenomenon and how baseball manifests population shifts. For example, the Brooklyn Dodgers became the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Milwaukee Braves became the Atlanta Braves. Also, baseball is moving to smaller metropolitan areas, such as the Tampa Devil Rays and, for a time, beyond national borders with the Toronto Blue Jays.
5. Kelvin noted that the discipline of statistics was grounded in demography--the statistical study of human populations. Participants agreed that identifying and understanding demographic and geographic trends were vital not only for understanding human welfare but using appropriate statistical theories and methods.

---

#### **SOCIAL STATISTICS IS LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN...**

to be considered for our future executive board, and we need your help. Our section is currently in the process of nominating candidates for the upcoming Spring 2006 elections. Please take time to consider running or nominating someone you know.

#### **Positions Available:**

The Social Statistics Section has vacancies for the following positions:

- **Chair** (serves as Chair-Elect in 2007, Chair in 2008, Past Chair in 2009).
- **Program Chair** (serves as Program Chair-Elect in 2007, Program Chair in 2008).
- **Publications Officer** (serves for a two-year term, 2007-2008)
- **Council of Sections Representative** (serves for a two-year term, 2007-2008)

#### **Duties Involved:**

To learn what each of these positions is about, see the descriptions of duties at:

<http://www.amstat.org/sections/cos/handbook/index.cfm?fuseaction=handbook#officers>

#### **What You Can Do:**

Two candidates are needed for each position. If you have any suggestions for possible candidates (It's okay to include yourself!), please contact Susan Schechter, 2006 Section Chair ([susan\\_schechter@omb.eop.gov](mailto:susan_schechter@omb.eop.gov)), or by phone on 202-395-5103.

#### **More Details:**

For each person nominated, please specify the position(s) and provide a sentence or two on why you think the person would be appropriate. (Please note that more suggestions might be received than the number of candidate slots available, so some of the suggestions might not result in the person being nominated.)

Susan is looking forward to receiving your suggestions, and thanks you in advance for your help with the nomination process!

---

## THE 2005 MORRIS HANSEN LECTURE

The fifteenth annual Morris Hansen Lecture will be delivered by Donald B. Rubin of Harvard University. The title of his lecture will be "Causal Inference Through Potential Outcomes: Application to Quality of Life Studies with 'Censoring' Due to Death and to Studies of the Effect of Job-Training Programs on Wages." The discussants will be Graham Kalton of Westat, Inc. and Edward L. Korn of the National Cancer Institute. Carol House of the National Agricultural Statistics Service will give opening remarks, and Trena Ezzati-Rice of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality will serve as the Chair. The Hansen Lecture series is sponsored by the Washington Statistical Society, Westat, Inc., and the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The lecture will be held from 3:30 to 5:30 on Wednesday, November 2, 2005 in the Jefferson Auditorium, U.S. Department of Agriculture, South Building, which is located on Independence Avenue, SW, between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets. A reception will follow immediately (from 5:30 to 6:30) in the Jamie L. Whitten Building, across Independence Avenue. The Independence Avenue exit from the Smithsonian METRO station is at the 12th Street corner of the South Building, which is also where the handicapped entrance is located. Attendees who do not require handicapped access should enter at the 5th wing, along Independence Avenue. Please bring a photo ID to facilitate gaining entrance to the building. The lecture is open to the public, there is no admission fee, and an "RSVP" is not necessary.

**Abstract of the lecture:** Causal inference is best understood using potential outcomes, which include all post-treatment quantities. The use of potential outcomes to define causal effects is particularly important in more complex settings, i.e., observational studies or randomized experiments with complications such as noncompliance. This lecture deals with the issue of estimating the casual effect of a treatment on a primary outcome that is "censored" by an intermediate outcome, for example, the effect of a drug treatment on Quality of Life (QOL) in a randomized experiment where some of the patients die before their QOL can be assessed. Because both QOL and death are post-randomization quantities, they both should be considered potential outcomes, and the effect of treatment versus control on QOL is only well-defined for the subset of patients who would live under either treatment or control. Another application is to an educational program designed to increase final test scores, which are not defined for those who drop out of school before taking the test. A further application is to studies of the effect of job-training programs on wages, where wages are only defined for those who are employed, and thus the effect of the job-training program on wages is only well-defined for the subset of individuals who would be employed whether or not they were trained. Some empirical results are presented from Zhang, Rubin, and Mealli (2004), which indicate that this framework can lead to new insights because the analysis is not predicated on traditional econometric assumptions.

**About the lecturer:** Donald B. Rubin is the John L. Loeb Professor of Statistics and former Chairman of the Department of Statistics at Harvard University, where he has taught for over 20 years. Professor Rubin has over 300 publications, including several books, on a variety of topics, including causal inference, missing data, sample surveys, computational methods, Bayesian statistics, and applications in many areas of social and biomedical science; and he is among the most highly cited mathematical scientists in the world. Among his many honors and awards, he is a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a past John Simon Guggenheim Fellow, a member of the International Statistical Institute and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a past Fisher Lecturer at the Joint Statistical Meetings, and a recipient of two of the most prestigious awards available to statisticians: the Samuel S. Wilks Medal of the American Statistical Association and the Emanuel and Carol Parzen Prize for Statistical Innovation. Professor Rubin holds an A.B. degree (psychology) from Princeton University, and M.S. (computer science) and Ph.D. (statistics) degrees from Harvard.

~~~~~

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.

~~~~~

## 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.*

~~~~~

GOVERNMENT STATISTICS SECTION OFFICERS AND CONTACTS

Chet Bowie

Chair, 2005

chet_bowie@marketstrategies.com

Nat Schenker

Chair, 2004

nschenker@cdc.gov

Stephanie Shipp

Chair, 2006

stephanie.shipp@nist.gov

Brian Harris-Kojetin

Program Chair, 2005

bharrisk@omb.eop.gov

Michael P. Cohen

Program Chair, 2006

michael.cohen@bts.gov

John W. Hall

Secretary/Treasurer, 2005-06

jhall@mathematica-mpr.com

Daniel Kasprzyk

Council of Sections Rep, 2004-05

dkasprzyk@mathematica-mpr.com

Robert Lussier

Publications Officer, 2005-06

robert.lussier@statcan.ca

Wendy Alvey

COPAFS Rep, 2005-06

wendy.l.alvey@census.gov

John Czajka

COPAFS Rep, 2004-05

jczajka@mathematica-mpr.com

Pat Melvin

Newsletter Editor

patricia.l.melvin@census.gov

Bill Wong

Assistant Editor, *Amstat* Online

william.wong@irs.gov

Tai Phan

GSSLIST Coordinator

tai.phan@ed.gov

Monica Clark

ASA Ex Officio

monica@amstat.org

SOCIAL STATISTICS SECTION OFFICERS AND CONTACTS

Jerry Gates

Chair, 2005

gerald.w.gates@census.gov

Colm O'Muircheartaigh

Chair, 2004

colm@norc.org

Susan Schechter

Chair, 2006

susan_schechter@omb.eop.gov

Renee Miller

Program Chair, 2005

renee.miller@eia.doe.gov

Juanita Tamayo Lott

Program Chair, 2006

juanita.t.lott@census.gov

Susan Hinkins

Secretary/Treasurer, 2005

hinkins-susan@norc.org

Trivellore Raghunathan

Council of Sections Rep, 2005

teraghu@umich.edu

Beth Kilss

Publications Officer, 2005-06

beth.a.kilss@irs.gov

David Nichols

Assistant Editor, *Amstat* Online

dnichols@spss.com

Monica Clark

ASA Ex Officio

monica@amstat.org