



Foreword from the President



It's hard to believe that I am nearly half-way through my term as President! I want to start by thanking my predecessor, Sir David Spiegelhalter, for all his continuing work for the Society, especially for his outstanding public engagement, and so much more. On a personal level, I want to thank him for his support as I tried to learn the ropes to follow him.

It has been a highly successful year for the Society in terms of media attention and policy work. Our Statistics of the Year initiative generated international coverage and earned us MemCom's 'best campaign' award for the second consecutive year - following our previous success over politicians' pre-release access to statistics. We continue to be indebted to our members, who generously provide their time and expertise to inform the many strands of our work to influence public policy.

I'm delighted that we have been able to grow our Statisticians for Society programme, which helps RSS members provide *pro bono* statistics expertise to small UK charities. To date, the project has supported many organisations including the Consortium for Street Children and the Green Schools Project. I look forward to seeing this work go from strength to strength in the coming years.

One of the most pressing issues facing society today is harm to the environment. I was therefore particularly pleased that in 2019 our Guy Medal in Gold winner, Stephen Buckland, and the winner of the Barnett Award, Marian Scott, were recognised for their leading work on environmental statistics. In the same year, the Society started to address the issue of its own environmental impact. I hope members will have noticed the more environmentally-friendly wrapper in which *Significance* is now dispatched, while a range of measures are being introduced to reduce our headquarters' energy and plastic consumption.

As you may have heard, after eight years of exemplary service, the Society's Executive Director, Hetan Shah, is stepping down in January 2020 and moving on to run the British Academy. Hetan has been like a conductor at the RSS, ensuring that the whole is even more than the sum of its parts. He has been a complete pleasure to work with and I would like to thank him for all he has done for the Society.

Looking forward, 2020 is an exciting year. It is the bicentenary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, our first female fellow. There are many celebrations planned, including special lectures, school's engagement, a new Nightingale award and a celebratory edition of *Significance*. I am also delighted that Sylvia Richardson is President Elect and look forward to working with her as she joins Council in preparation for her own Presidency. I wish you all a Merry Christmas, and hope to see many of you in 2020, including at the next Conference in Bournemouth!

With best wishes



Professor Deborah Ashby

Goal 1

For statistics to be used effectively in the public interest, so that policy formulation and decision-making are informed by evidence for the good of society.

Data Manifesto

We produced a new *Data Manifesto*, setting out ten recommendations for the UK government. This publication outlines how data should be used to strengthen democracy and trustworthiness, and to support policymaking, productivity and prosperity.

Media

In 2019 we enjoyed regular coverage in the press, radio and television, which has continued to raise the Society's profile. To give a few examples: our President was interviewed by *BBC News*; Vice President for External Affairs Jen Rogers appeared on six episodes of BBC's *Watchdog*; and our Executive Director wrote an opinion piece for the *Financial Times*. The Society received UK and international coverage via many other outlets including *The Times*, Radio 4's *More or Less*, Indian broadsheet *The Statesman*, and Japanese national newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

TEF

The UK Government announced an independent review of the Teaching Excellence Framework, and the RSS provided a representative for the review panel; two of our fellows also gave oral evidence to this inquiry. Our concerns about the framework were reported in outlets including *Times Higher Education* and *The Guardian*.

Gender Pay Gap

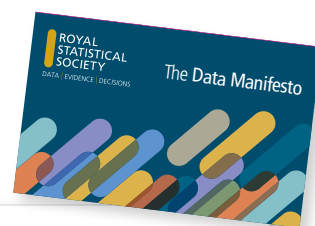
We published *Better Data for Fairer Employment*, which outlines the current problems with gender pay gap reporting by UK employers. In June, the RSS gave oral evidence to the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee on this issue, and we are working closely with the Government Equalities Office on how the reporting process can be improved. We are hopeful that this work will lead to a better template for the UK process, which other countries might then choose to adopt in the years ahead.

Data Ethics

In October, we launched a new *Guide for Ethical Data Science*, which was produced in partnership with the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries.

UK Parliament

We responded to inquiries and met with Parliamentarians on issues including regional economic imbalances, digital technologies and the National Data Strategy. Our Executive Director gave oral evidence to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and we were quoted at length in the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee report on inflation measures.



BETTER DATA FOR FAIRER EMPLOYMENT: STATISTICS' ROLE IN TACKLING THE GENDER PAY GAP



Goal 2

For society to be more statistically literate, so that people's understanding of data, risk and probability can inform their daily decision-making, leading to better outcomes.

Education

The Society is working in partnership with the maths community on a new research project, led by Professor Frank Kelly, which aims to strengthen school curricula to meet the rising need for data skills in the workplace. This work is being carried out in partnership with the Royal Society, the London Mathematical Society and the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications.

Outreach

We have developed a range of hands-on statistics activities which have been showcased by members at events, including at a conference in Cambridge on 'Talking Maths in Public'.



Significance

Significance magazine, which we publish jointly with the American Statistical Association, continues to grow in popularity. At the time of writing, our articles in the Wiley Online Library have been downloaded more than 161,700 times this year.

Training

The range and popularity of our training programme continues to go from strength to strength; by the end of November we had booked 430 people onto our public training courses. We ran 33 public courses in 2019, and provided bespoke training for clients including NHS England, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Ministry of Defence.

Events

We ran several well-attended public events. These included a Parliamentary roundtable in February on the new poverty measure developed by the Social Metrics Commission. In July, we staged our annual awards evening, which attracted around 100 attendees to the Society's Lecture Theatre. In September, we held a panel discussion entitled '100 Years of Education Trials', organised by our Social Statistics Section and the National Foundation for Educational Research.



Goal 3

For a strong body of professional statisticians to maintain and develop the skills they need so that they can critically apply methodology, interpret results and communicate findings.

Accreditation

The RSS Professional Affairs Committee has reviewed our processes for accrediting statisticians. A number of member consultation events have been held, and plans are now in place to improve procedures for universities and individuals seeking to meet our GradStat standards.

Healthcare

In partnership with the Health Foundation, we launched a Florence Nightingale Award for Excellence in Healthcare Data Analytics. The first award will be made in 2020, as part of our work to celebrate the bicentenary of Florence Nightingale's birth.

Corporate Membership Partnerships

We have developed membership schemes with a number of new organisations, and the Society now has 28 corporate partners.

Honours

Each year we award medals and prizes to people who have made outstanding contributions to the development of statistics. The 2019 awards ceremony was held at our international conference in Belfast.

2019 honours and awards recipients

Guy Medal in Gold	Stephen Buckland
Guy Medal in Silver	Susan Murphy
Guy Medal in Bronze	Jonas Peters
Barnett Award	Marian Scott
Research Prize	Tengyao Wang



Goal 4

For statistics as a discipline to thrive, so that methodology is advanced, applied and made accessible, leading to greater understanding of an increasingly complex world.

Journals

Our journals continue to prove popular as the place to be published in and, by the end of 2019, five discussion paper meetings will have been held. These included a very well-attended session at the Society's conference, comprising a pair of papers on 'Signs and sizes: understanding and replicating statistical findings'. In total, the three series published nearly 4,200 pages.

International Conference

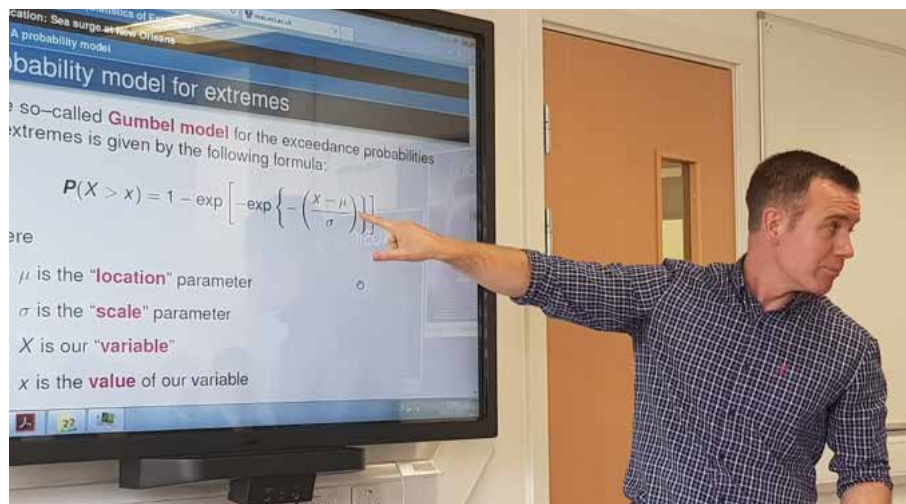
The September 2019 RSS International Conference in Belfast was attended by 555 delegates from 33 countries. The programme featured the first ever Data Ethics Day, sponsored by the Ada Lovelace Institute. Income from sponsors and exhibitors reached a record high this year, with new sponsorship from Deloitte and City University Hong Kong. The 2020 conference will take place next September in Bournemouth.

Sections and Local Groups

Our Sections and Local Groups continue to be very active, and held over 100 events and meetings in 2019. For example, in October, the Environmental Statistics Section and the Edinburgh Local Group held a joint event on offshore renewables. Local Groups also organised valuable outreach activities with schoolchildren through partnership initiatives including Maths Week Scotland.

Special Interest Groups

New Special Interest Groups were launched on the topics of Women in Data Science and Statistics, Teaching Statistics and Finance & Economics.



Goal 5

For an engaged and energised membership and staff to work collaboratively with partner organisations and other stakeholders in meeting these goals, so that the Society can maximise its impact.

Membership

We are pleased to report that, in 2019, the Society's membership numbers exceeded 10,000 for the first time. Of these members, over 6,000 are full fellows, and most of the remainder are part of our e-student category.

Statisticians for Society

We have further developed our work on supporting RSS members to provide pro bono statistics expertise to small UK charities. In 2019, we matched 50 charities with volunteer statisticians.

Partnerships

The Society has continued to work with a wide range of partners throughout the year including government statistical bodies (e.g. the Office for National Statistics); research councils (e.g. UK Research and Innovation); statistical societies (e.g. American Statistical Association, the International Statistical Institute); mathematical bodies (e.g. through the Council for the Mathematical Sciences); and scientific bodies (e.g. Royal Society).

International Development

The Society continues to organise placements for RSS members to volunteer abroad with the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), and Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21). Both these initiatives help build capacity for low-income countries to develop their statistical systems.

Goal 6

For the RSS to be a financially stable and well-run organisation with effective governance and use of technology, so that it will grow in relevance, exert influence and have wider impact.



Awards

In June, we won the 2019 MemCom award for 'Best Campaign on a Shoestring', for our Statistics of the Year initiative, which highlighted key international and UK statistics on issues including the environment, health and poverty. The judges noted that this was 'a very well executed campaign' with 'a relatively small outlay generating impressive results'.

IT

In early 2020, the Society will launch a new website and Customer Relationship Management database. This will lead to significant improvements in the service we can offer to members, and the efficiency of our internal systems.

From past to present...

The image of the sheaf of wheat first appeared in our original seal. Being the end product of the harvesting and bundling of wheat, it was a pictorial way of expressing the gathering and analysis of data: the foundations of statistical work.

It also implied that statistical practice comprises more than the collection of data, but also its active interpretation and application as well (threshed for others, if the rural analogy is sustained). Rigorous data gathering is still at the heart of modern statistics, but as statisticians we also interpret, theorise and present the data we collect.



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