



Foreword

A lot can happen in five years. Since the last strategy, the COVID-19 pandemic thrust data and evidence into the limelight in a way that we have never seen before, changing the public relationship with data and statistics. This paradigm shift has meant that statistical considerations are front and centre of discussions around other emerging topics, such as climate change and the cost-of-living crisis.

Data and statistics are also driving the development of powerful new artificial intelligence (AI) tools that have the potential to reshape our lives, including large language models that can produce stunning human-like outputs – but only because their machine learning models have been trained on vast amounts of human-generated data. As the world looks to respond to the threats and opportunities posed by AI, policymakers and the public will need statisticians and data professionals – much as they did during COVID – to help them make sense of the underlying models, the quality of data inputs, and the reliability of model outputs.

We live in a world where data and statistics are everywhere, and we have a membership that is diverse as a result. Our members are drawn from across sectors and disciplines and have a diverse range of personal characteristics - this combination brings richness to the Society and our wider community. We are also diverse geographically both across the UK and internationally, with nearly a quarter of our membership based overseas. Post-pandemic virtual living means that the world is now better connected, and engaging with our international membership is easier than ever. Our approach to membership is inclusive: across people, countries, and subject matters, and encompassing the data pipeline from collection and analysis to insight and impact. Membership engagement is fundamental to the continued growth of our profession, and the Society must remain responsive to the evolving needs of statisticians and other data professionals globally and have the agility to respond to emerging issues that will affect us all – whether it be the widespread deployment of AI tools by governments and industries, or the challenge of predicting and preparing for extreme weather events in a changing climate. In these areas, and many more besides, our members will play an invaluable role in ensuring that data is at the heart of understanding and decision-making.

The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) is entering this new strategic period with some challenges ahead: the transition to open access publishing continues to impact the financial return from

journals, and we are planning to relocate our office within Central London. These challenges also bring opportunity: as we consider our value to members and the wider society and how we can make more of what we do well; and redesign our physical estate to better meet the needs of members and staff. The broad applicability and relevance of data and statistics has led to the RSS engaging with the work of each of the UK's National Academies, and the recently announced Academy for the Mathematical Sciences will provide the opportunity to increase impact on a range of important challenges with data and statistics at their heart. Building on our successes in strengthening external impact over the last five years, there is also an opportunity to boldly embrace this role in the current global context. At the same time, we know that we can learn from our partners around the world.

This strategy is structured across four main goals that reflect our Charter, focusing on strengthening the profession, innovating as the discipline evolves, ensuring that data is used responsibly and appropriately in the public interest, and supporting the public understanding of complex statistical issues. These goals are aspirational, articulating the impact that society will strive to make over the next five years.

Our thanks are extended to the RSS long-term strategy group for their support in developing this strategy, and particularly to Jennifer Visser-Rogers, group chair, for her commitment, energy and enthusiasm. There are almost limitless opportunities for impact, and aligning the efforts of our membership with this strategy will give us the best chance of success.



S. Cumbers

Sarah Cumbers - Chief Executive



Andrew Garrett

Andrew Garrett - President

Strategy 2024-2029

About us

The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) is a membership society and charity that brings together all who have an interest in, and appreciate the value of, data and statistics. We are a professional body and learned society that advocates for the importance of data and statistics.

The vision of the RSS is to have a world where data is at the heart of understanding and decision-making. To help achieve our goals, we act as a conduit to match our membership expertise with important issues, and are a source of information and guidance to help navigate the complex data and statistical questions that face us all. We advocate for and influence the responsible use of data and statistics, support research and provide a platform for developing the profession, promoting growth and ensuring the future of the discipline. We are based in the UK, but our strategy is without borders, and we seek opportunities for impact globally.



Values

We subscribe to a set of values that guide our work and our wider membership, providing purpose and direction:

- **Inclusive**
we are welcoming and supportive, and a home to anyone who has an interest in data and statistics, taking active steps to ensure everyone feels included.
- **Impactful**
we harness the power of data and statistics, supporting understanding, maintaining standards, and ensuring quality.
- **Collaborative**
we work in partnership with other organisations and individuals.
- **Progressive**
we respond to real world challenges, evolving the discipline and upskilling the profession.

Goals



1 Enabling a strong, diverse profession

Statisticians and other data professionals¹ are developed and nurtured to enable their personal growth as part of a well-connected community, and ensure the sustainability of the profession.

- Understand diversity within the profession, and ensure that diversity is reflected in our membership and our governance, and supported and celebrated through our activities.
- Develop a vision for the future data professional and how their needs will be met.
- Proactively support the pipeline of future data professionals, raising the profile of careers and advocating for increasing diversity.
- Innovate mechanisms for networking to bring data professionals together and foster a sense of identity and community.
- Better scope and define our role in supporting data professionals in the international community.

2 Facilitating innovation and growth

Opportunities for the development and evolution of statistical science and data disciplines are recognised and utilised, and expertise harnessed, so that wider society continues to be advanced through the application of statistics and data science.

- Consider emerging trends in the discipline and how it may expand, and harness the opportunities that this offers.
- Ensure our avenues for knowledge sharing, including our sections and local groups, annual conference and other events, meet the demands of the discipline.
- Keep journals and publications refreshed and develop strategies for boosting impact, reach and relevance, so that they meet evolving needs of readers and contributors.

¹ Why are we using the phrase 'data professional'? The role of data in society is changing, and the Royal Statistical Society must widen its remit to embrace this in order to stay relevant to the changing landscape, continue to support its diverse membership, and safeguard the Society's future. The term data professional is being increasingly used as an umbrella term to describe statisticians, data analysts, data scientists, data architects, and data engineers. Data professionals work across a variety of sectors including academia, government, civil society, business and industry, and the media, and our membership reflects this. We have taken an inclusive approach in using the term 'data professionals'.



Goals



3 Championing the public interest

Societal decisions are informed and improved by the appropriate use of data and statistics that are reliable, that are used responsibly, and that are relevant to society's most important questions.

- Develop relationships with external stakeholders, both UK-based and international, including within government, agencies collecting data, policy makers and research councils, acting as a convenor, trusted advisor and critical friend.
- Advocate for a statistical system that delivers reliable and relevant statistics that help us better understand the world, challenge decision-making, and emphasise the importance of linking users and producers of statistics.
- Advocate for the use of statistics in informing evidence-based policy making.
- Influence societal decisions through clarifying and communicating issues relating to data and statistics.
- Advocate for responsible and ethical use of data and statistics and good data governance.



4 Supporting public understanding and engagement

People have an understanding of the data and statistics that influence their daily life decisions, their work and the world around them, and feel empowered to meaningfully engage with issues.

- Horizon scan for real world topics of public interest where data and statistics are important, and break down statistical elements of complex issues and make these readily available.
- Review available channels to reach the public and co-develop new resources to aid learning and understanding in real life contexts.
- Identify and develop key data professionals who can communicate complex statistical issues to different audiences.
- Provide support for journalists and other professionals working with data as part of their role, to ensure a sound working understanding.
- Advocate to improve statistics and data content across curricula, including consideration of the best methods by which to assess these subjects, and the support needed to upskill teachers
- Work with awarding bodies to ensure statistics content in qualifications at all levels is suitable, learning from the successful establishment of other qualifications in mathematics.

Delivering the strategy



The society has a small staff, and relies on the expertise, skills and enthusiasm of our membership to deliver much of our work. The 2024 strategy will be delivered in alignment with the following key principles:

Resources

The future financial sustainability of the Society is considered as we review our income streams, prioritise and plan our activities.

Membership

Our services, products and physical estate are supported by, and meet the needs of, a diverse, engaged and growing membership.

Governance

Our governance structures and processes are fit for purpose, efficient and inclusive.

People

Our staff, and active members who volunteer their time for the society, are enabled in their work through our culture and provision of practical support.

Impact

The positive change that our work brings about – both within our membership and wider society – is explicitly considered in prioritisation, planning and review of activities.

Partnership

We work in partnership with others where possible, within the UK and internationally, to ensure efficiency and delivery of more than the sum of our parts.

Sustainability

The carbon footprint of our activities is considered, and we actively work to reduce our impact on the planet.

From past to present...

The image of the sheaf 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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