

Statistical excellence in journalism – 2007 winners

Guardian writer **Ben Goldacre** was the first winner of our award for statistical excellence in journalism. His piece, 'When the facts get in the way of the story', published on 1 April 2006 won favour from a panel of judges comprising senior and experienced statisticians, politicians and journalists.

Second prize – Matthew Parris

'The truth about those little red lights: a tale of power and poppycock' – The Times, 22 July 2006

Third prize – Paul Wallace

'Transatlantic rivals', Economist, 6 May 2006

Fourth place commendation – Andrew Dilnot and Michael Blastland

Piece on mortality rates in Wales for Radio 4's More or Less programme, 22 June 2006

Fifth place commendation – Philip Thornton

'Why the real rate of inflation is twice what the official figures tell us' – The Independent, 13 June 2006

Panel chair, Sheila Bird said:

'The view of the judges was that Ben Goldacre had made good points combating bad reporting and grabbing the attention of the reader. Not only did he dig deeper to get the facts behind the story, he also managed to explain a number of statistical techniques all in one succinct and newsworthy piece.

'Matthew Parris had written a witty and clear piece, the judges said. It tackled a real example of how misreported statistical data can readily become an accepted "fact".

'The judges felt that Paul Wallace had tackled an important area of international comparison in a succinct and well-crafted piece with good statistical themes.

'The Royal Statistical Society instituted these awards to encourage excellence in journalists' use of statistics to question, analyse and investigate the issues that affect society at large. This use enables citizens to hold decision makers in all sectors to account through accessible communication of complex information, highlighting of success and exposure of important missing information.

'The Society was greatly encouraged by the strength of journalism shown by all of the entrants in reporting on statistical issues. We look forward to opening the awards for 2008.'