

Editorial
Conference papers for the 2009 Radical
Statistics Conference issue:
"An Ageing Society: are we prepared?"

There were a record number - ten presentations. Three themes ran through the conference: the need for better statistical data, making good use of available data, and the dangers of misinterpreting or over-reacting to statistical information.

Four of those presenting papers have submitted articles:

Bytheway and Johnson argue that "apocalyptic demography", with older people lumped together in one category, provides a bad basis for policy development.

Hussein describes problems in extracting information on abuse from the Protection of Vulnerable Adults List which is designed for administrative not research purposes.

Willis challenges ethnic stereotypes of care within the family and discusses evidence from the Home Office Citizenship Survey on how older people provide support for their younger relatives.

Simpson sets out a correction to the formula used for predicted population change. The inclusion of 'age momentum' based on the current age structure improves the accuracy of projections and also reveals that migration is a minor factor. He notes that population drift affects all ethnic groups and is certainly not a driver for ethnic segregation. Population forecasts for the older age-groups are the least problematic.

Abstracts and/or power point slides for the remaining six presentations can be found on our website: <http://www.radstats.org.uk/conf-history.htm>.

Jon Godwin described a scoping study to consider the case for the proposed Scottish Longitudinal Study of Ageing and to explore the most appropriate means of meeting existing data gaps.

Emily Grundy discussed the socio-economic factors associated with health inequalities in later life. She also included the best cartoon: view this on the website.

Bleddyn Davies warned of the dangers of basing policies to reform social care on inadequate information.

Jay Ginn reviewed evidence on how policies for pension provision could contribute to pensioner poverty and inequality. She also discussed the issue of intergenerational equity.

Jackie Birks entertained us with a review of the evidence leading to the conclusion "Don't waste your pension on ginkgo"!

Finally John Grimley Evans inspired us not to stereotype by age but to recognise the increasing diversity in health with ageing and to be "sensitive to the biological realities that statistics can hide".

The editors apologise for the substantial delay in production, but this has allowed us to include a topical and erudite article by Judith Masson on the statistics for childcare proceeding applications. She exposes the inadequacy of court records for statistical purposes and discusses fluctuations in numbers of applications in response to inappropriate policies and press coverage of the Baby P scandal.

The 'Radical Statistics Reporter' has contributed two short notes: "Improved population statistics?" and "Ghost-statistics, raw data and the meaning of authorship" (the latter linking back to Aubrey Blumsohn's article in Issue 94).

Please study the summary report of the Annual General Meeting and take note of the exhortations and appeals for financial support.

It is appropriate for an issue concerned with an ageing population that the final page has publicity for an all union demonstration on April 10th initiated by the National Pensioners Convention in defence of the welfare state and public services. Do support this; some members will recall the conference in February 2004, reported in issue 86, 'Privatisation: Policies and Statistics' that alerted us to the dangers of privatisation.

Please note that any reader can take the role of 'Radical Statistics Reporter' so we hope you will all submit notes commenting on interesting events or developments.

Signed notes, articles, reports and book reviews are also welcome. Please see the list of books waiting to be reviewed and or suggest others. Information for authors is given on the inside back cover and on the website.

Finally, we appeal for help in editing the newsletter. If anyone would like to join the editorial team please let us know.

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