

Radical Statistics 68



"I used to be unemployed. Now
I'm only a seasonal adjustment"

Summer '98

The **Radical Statistics Group** is a group of individuals based on the distribution of this newsletter. The small amount of central administration work is done by a committee known as 'The Troika', and elected at the Annual General Meeting. The editorship of this newsletter rotates. Details of how to subscribe are given below and details of how to contribute are given on the inside back cover. Apart from producing this newsletter, the work of the RSG is done by its sub-groups whose membership is open to all interested parties. Please contact the relevant sub-group co-ordinator below if you wish to get involved. Use the newsletter to advertise if you wish to start a new group.

Radical Statistics electronic discussion group: radstats@mailbase.ac.uk

The Troika

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Deadline for Autumn newsletter copy: **30th November 1998** (see inside back cover)

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Radical Statistics is available by subscription from Radical Statistics Group, c/o 10 Ruskin Avenue, Heaton, Bradford, BD9 6EB. Current rates are £5 per year for low waged (self-defined) and £12 for waged and overseas, and £20 for institutions. The cost to the unwaged is £3 for one year.

Radical Statistics is usually produced three times per year.

Data Protection Act

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, any member of the Radical Statistics Group is entitled to ask:

- a) For a printout of his/her personal details and name and address as kept on the Radical Statistics Group computer.
- b) That his/her personal details do not be so stored. Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this right, please contact the Troika (address on inside front cover) with requests in triplicate.

Contributions to Radical Statistics

All readers of Radical Statistics are invited to contribute to the newsletter. Articles may vary from brief notices to detailed articles. Letters and reviews are also welcome. Contributions should be sent to one of the editors using the address and guidelines below.

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Deadline for Spring 1999, Issue No.70: **November 30th 1998**

For those with access to computers, editors would prefer contributions on 3.5" DOS discs, using Wordperfect, Microsoft Word, or ASCII text and mentioning the hardware the discs were prepared on. Please also include a printed copy. Ideally use 1" margins, Bookman 13 pt for text, 18 pt bold for subheadings, 18 pt italics for your name, and 24 pt bold for the title. If you cannot access a computer, paper is quite acceptable, but entails extra work for the editors. Graphs, charts and diagrams should be on paper, in clear print, clearly labelled and giving the source. Please state where in your article you wish graphics and tables to go. The Harvard system should be used for referencing. Please could you include your name, full postal address, telephone and e-mail at the end of your article. If you have any queries, please contact one of the editors.

Refereed articles: an attempt to improve quality

If you wish to have your article referred before publication, please state this and send three copies (but no disc) to one of the editors. Two readers will review your article for clarity and relevance to the concerns of Radical Statistics - see back cover - and may suggest improvements. The editors may then require you to make alterations before publication. Articles not refereed will receive minimal editorial change and are likely to appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

Radical Statistics – who are we?

The Radical Statistics Group was formed in January 1975 by statisticians and research workers with a common concern about the political assumptions and implications of much of their work and awareness of the actual and potential misuse of statistics and its techniques. The group is independent of any other organisation, but Members are radical in the sense of committed to helping to build a more free, egalitarian and democratic society.

Our concerns Among our particular concerns are:

- The mystifying use of technical language in order to disguise social problems as technical ones
- The lack of control by the community over the aims of statistical investigations, the way these are conducted and the use of information produced
- The power structures within which statistical workers are employed, and which control the work and the uses to which it is put
- The fragmentation of problems into separate specialist fields to the detriment of common problems

Subscribe to Radical Statistics!

On joining, you will receive Radical Statistics three times a year and all news of special events. Make cheques payable to 'Radical Statistics'. Send this form to Radical Statistics (subs), c/o 10 Ruskin Avenue, Bradford BD9 6EB

Ring the letters that describe your interests.

You or other Radical Statistics subscribers can use this information to find others to discuss potential new work for existing or new subgroups.

Annual rates:
Waged £12
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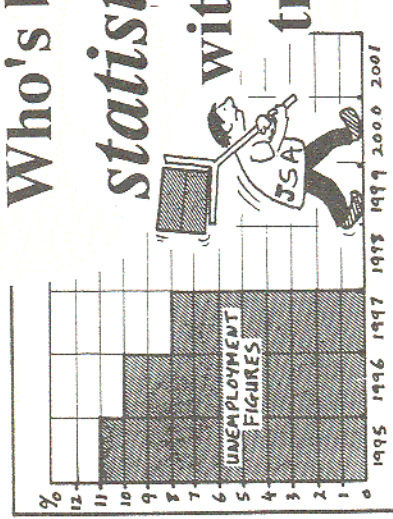
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Signed:

Who's being statistical with the truth?



Statistics have made their way into virtually every area of modern society. In every political controversy statistics are produced to justify one claim or another.

Does this mean that statistics are produced by technical criteria but misused? Are statistical methods themselves shaped by vested interests, by political influences and ideological viewpoints? Are statistical results presented to justify decisions or as a means of understanding the needs of society?

Are statistics presented in a fragmented and restricted way which prevents some questions being researched or even asked? Do they often mystify rather than explain? Can they be demystified and made useful to more people?

What do these questions mean for people working in statistics, for research and for teaching? These are amongst the questions which the Radical Statistics Group is addressing. If these questions concern you, why don't you join us?

*Concerned
about valid,
reliable
statistics?*

*Worried about
the integrity of
statistical
work?*

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Our concerns

- Among our particular concerns are:
- The mystifying use of technical language in order to disguise social problems as technical ones.
 - The lack of control by the community over the aims of statistical investigations, the way these are conducted and the use of information produced.
 - The power structures within which statistical workers are employed and which control the work and the uses to which it is put.
 - The fragmentation of problems into separate specialist fields to the detriment of common problems.

The group has an administrative 'troika' elected at the annual conference. The conference looks at radical perspectives on statistical methods and the social production of statistics. It also charts the future work of the group.

Conference

Working groups

Much of our work is based around working groups - they have been active on health, education, nuclear issues, race, Nicaragua, women and statistics and performance indicators. They produce books, pamphlets and papers and contribute to a range of campaigning issues. Campaign groups often approach us for help and advice - we try to put them in touch with a member who can help.

Journal

Radical Statistics carries articles and news three times a year, initiating debates around our members' interests. Our editorial policy is loose and we encourage all who share our concerns to contribute.

We urge anyone with similar concerns to join the group by completing the back of this leaflet, to make contributions to our newsletter and to join one or more of our working groups.

Choosing schools by numbers? The statistics of school performance. 4-page broadsheet, 1992. Price including postage: 50p (1 copy), 30p (2-99 copies) 20p (100+ copies).

Unofficial Guide to Official Health Statistics (2nd ed.) including: Sources - Registration of Events - Inequalities in Health - Health and Social Care - Environment - Social Disadvantage (forthcoming)

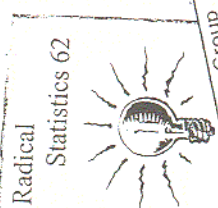
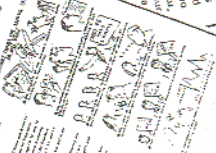
Statistics in Society including: History of Statistics - Government Statistical Agencies - Health - Education and Housing - Poverty and Wealth - Employment - Sexism, Racism and Xenophobia - Crime, Control and Fear (forthcoming)

Radical Statistics back issues are available at £1.50 each - Recent contents -

- No.62: Identifying disadvantaged areas - Part time employees - Health Promotion or NHS cuts - National Income Statistics - Political arithmetic of capitalism
- No.63: UK's antiquated electoral system - Poverty and disabled children - Do the 'poor' experience more crime - Permanent sickness and unemployment.

Choosing schools by numbers?

The statistics of school performance



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Radical Statistics Health Group

DH Hospital League Tables

Make cheques payable to Radical Statistics and send (publications), c/o

10 Ruskin Avenue

Bradford

BD9 6EB

A full list of publications since 1975 is available on request.

Questions which you might like to consider either at the launch of the league table or when reporting them:

1. Accident and Emergency
2. How accurately was time recorded to decide whether attenders were assessed in under 5 minutes?

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