

ESRC Research Performance and Economic Impact Report 2011/12



Introduction

Economic impact encompasses a broad range of effects on the long-term economic growth and international competitiveness of the UK and on the wellbeing of citizens in this country and beyond. It includes direct and often quantifiable economic benefits as well as wider impacts that will contribute to society more generally, such as effects on the environment, public health or quality of life. The social sciences have impact across civil society, government, business, and professional practice, and have contributed to improvements in social welfare and public services, influenced public policy and underpinned operational and organisational change.

As this report demonstrates, the ESRC delivers significant impact across the full range of its funded activities. Our collaborative partnerships have resulted in strong leverage for social science, representing 13 per cent of our total budget in 2011/12, whilst our major research investments have collectively brought in a further £32 million in additional grants from public, private and third sector funders in the same period. We are supporting the next generation of researchers and professionals through our new network of Doctoral Training Centres, which are designed not only to equip students with the skills for an academic career, but also with knowledge and attributes which are highly valued in any workplace. Our unrivalled investment in datasets and other resources continues to provide us with new insights; and we continue to innovate across our entire portfolio, including in our approach to the evaluation of impact and through the exploration of new mechanisms to facilitate more effective knowledge exchange.

Highlights

- The heavily-publicised BBC experiment, undertaken in collaboration with the EROS network to explore how people handle tasks under stress;
- The identification of the significant contribution of social science, and of ESRC-funded research and researchers in reducing the risk of social exclusion among young children in disadvantaged groups and areas through contribution to the Sure Start initiative;
- The release in 2011 of the first longitudinal data from the ESRC's flagship study, *Understanding Society*;
- The evidence from an economic impact evaluation of the ESDS revealing a net economic value for the service of around £18 million per annum – more than five times ESDS operational costs.

The report has been completed in line with the template provided by BIS for the reporting year 2011/12, and includes data on particular aspects of

ESRC performance alongside a selection of illustrative examples of impact and impact-generating activities from ESRC-funded research, training and knowledge exchange. Where available, all quantitative data are reported on an annual basis for the period 2008/09 to 2011/12.

Impact through knowledge exchange

Building and maintaining strong and enduring partnerships with users continues to be a priority for the ESRC, and our approach to knowledge exchange (KE) is designed to enable partnership in all its forms. During 2011/12, the ESRC's knowledge exchange opportunities were further rationalised, resulting in a more flexible, integrated scheme which offers funding throughout the research lifecycle to maximise the potential impact of social science.

The priority that the ESRC places on Knowledge Exchange is exemplified by the significant rise in 2011/12 KE spend, as reported opposite. In addition, grantholders are expected to embed appropriate user engagement and knowledge exchange mechanisms within applications to the Council through Pathways to Impact. Funding for these activities is accounted for as part of the grant expenditure, rather than as part of the below reported KE expenditure.

The 2012 CIHE/UK-IRC report 'Enhancing Impact' confirms that the 'interaction intensity' of the social sciences (the percentage of respondents reporting at least half of the specified interactions with external users in the previous three years) is virtually identical to both health sciences and STEM. Yet as the report notes, this equality of engagement by social scientists is not reflected in support from HEIs. The ESRC thus has a particular responsibility to maximise the impact of social science research. Our achievements in this regard are detailed throughout this report.

Impact through Networks

Evidence from the ESRC's work to identify the determinants of impact has shown that having established relationships and networks with user communities is a vital factor in impact generation. Sponsored by the TSB and the ESRC, The Financial Services Knowledge Transfer Network (FSKTN) operates as a platform connecting financial services, technology vendors, academia, regulators and government, with the goal of stimulating the kind of innovation that will cement the UK's position as a centre for financial services excellence. In 2011/12, the FSKTN helped to support the ESRC in implementing an innovative pilot project to enhance business

| METRIC ¹ | UNITS | YEAR | | | | NOTES |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|
| | | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | |
| <i>Common Metrics - Inputs</i> | | | | | | |
| Total Funds Available | £mil | 206 | 210 | 214 | 213 | Includes Third Sector/ Philanthropic organisations Largest component - Government Departments |
| Budget Allocation | £mil | 178 | 179 | 188 | 186 | |
| Leverage | £mil | 28 | 31 | 26 | 27 | |
| <i>of which Private</i> | £mil | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| <i>of which from other Research Councils</i> | £mil | 17 | 22 | 16 | 12 | |
| <i>of which from other source</i> | £mil | 9 | 8 | 8 | 14 | |
| <i>of which Private</i> | % | 1% | 0% | 1% | 0% | |
| <i>of which Other Research Councils</i> | % | 8% | 10% | 7% | 6% | |
| <i>of which Other</i> | % | 4% | 4% | 4% | 7% | |
| Total Expenditure | £mil | 206 | 210 | 214 | 213 | |
| <i>of which responsive grants schemes</i> | £mil | 45 | 47 | 45 | 44 | |
| <i>of which Postgraduate Awards</i> | £mil | 60 | 58 | 56 | 61 | |
| <i>of which Other components</i> | £mil | 101 | 105 | 113 | 108 | |
| <i>of which responsive grants schemes</i> | % | 22% | 22% | 21% | 21% | |
| <i>of which Postgraduate Awards</i> | % | 29% | 28% | 26% | 29% | |
| <i>of which Other components</i> | % | 49% | 50% | 53% | 50% | |
| <i>Optional Metric - Inputs</i> | | | | | | |
| Value of Support for Cross-Council Programmes ² | £mil | NR | 32 | 36 | 37 | |

¹ Figures are as presented in the ESRC Annual Report and Accounts www.esrc.ac.uk/publications/annual-report/index.aspx

² Highlighted here is the ESRC's contribution to cross-Council research; evidence of the integral role of social science in these interdisciplinary endeavours.

engagement by identifying key research teams and potential industry partners to bid for 'pump prime' funding with the aim of leveraging co-investment from business. Projects supported under the business co-investment pilot will report in early 2013, but there have already been some early successes reported both in terms of securing the required co-funding, and potential for longer term impacts, as the example below demonstrates.

A collaboration between researchers from University College London (UCL) and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) on High Frequency Trading Risk Simulation has attracted co-funding and technical support from Microsoft and MegaNexus for the development of data resources and infrastructure support. The business partners are intending to take the work forward in the areas of risk modelling and the development of cloud-based analytics platforms. The project has also directly led to discussions with the Bank of England to develop analytical tools and a platform to support the newly established Financial Policy Committee. The grantholders have subsequently secured funding as part of a consortium for a new ESRC Centre on Systemic Risk.

Impact through Innovation

The ESRC strongly encourages innovation in all its funded activities. In 2012/13 we will launch our first dedicated call for 'Transformative Research' which will aim to encourage greater innovation across the social sciences and provide a mechanism to support genuinely new and exciting research that challenges

current thinking. In the meantime, we continue to support innovation through our standard schemes and to encourage creative thinking in communication and knowledge exchange, as demonstrated in the example below.

Emotion regulation describes the mental and behavioural processes by which people influence their own feelings and the feelings of other people. The BBC collaborated with the ESRC funded network Emotion Regulation of Others and Self (EROS) at the University of Sheffield to explore how people handle tasks under stress, co-developing a 20-minute online personal performance analysis 'Can you compete under pressure?' The experiment measures the connection between controlling emotions and the reaction to perform in sport and in everyday life, and represents the biggest ever study of the psychology of pressure. The experiment was publicised on the BBC One Show, and was featured prominently on the BBC website www.bbc.co.uk/labuk. The full results of the experiment will be available in autumn 2014.

Impact through Collaborative Activities

Working in collaboration with users at the outset and throughout the research process significantly enhances the likelihood of impact and, in times of economic uncertainty, collaboration ensures that all partners are able to pool expertise and maximise value from their own investment. The ESRC supports a range of collaborative opportunities, including our Ventures scheme for co-funding research with potential

policy and practice beneficiaries, and the International Partnership and Networking scheme, which aims to establish sustainable international collaborations. However, as the following examples demonstrate, our major investments are also strongly encouraged to develop their own collaborative partnerships to maximise impact as part of their ongoing research activities.

Researchers at the Centre for the Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy (CPP) at the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) led an international consortium of 12 research organisations in an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the current EU VAT system, published in late 2011. The evaluation was wide-ranging, covering everything from how VAT impedes households' welfare to the macroeconomic effects of VAT on growth and competitiveness. This evaluation was central to the formulation of the European Commission's proposals, set out in a Communication of 6 December 2011, to take forward wide-ranging reform of the EU VAT regime, including a review of current VAT rates and compliance costs for businesses. The impact of the evaluation is confirmed in the Commission's new report 'Tax reforms in EU member states 2012', which introduces a chapter on VAT as follows: 'an ex-post evaluation of the [VAT] system was carried out through a study produced by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and published in December 2011... its findings provided the analytical input for the Commission's Communication on the future of VAT adopted in December 2011... This chapter presents some key economic issues related to the legal and institutional features of VAT in the EU and provides new analytical evidence, largely based on the IFS study.'

The Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme enables organisations across the private, public and third sectors to improve their competitiveness and productivity through accessing the knowledge and skills residing within UK universities. In 2011/12 the ESRC co-funded nine new projects and 165 ongoing projects, all involving academic social scientists. During the past year we have refocused our funding of KTPs to prioritise collaboration with the business sector, in particular the retail and financial services sectors. The quality of ESRC-supported KTPs is evidenced by the number of finalists and winners in the 2011 KTP awards, with five of the 16 finalists receiving support from the ESRC; to be eligible for an award, a partnership must have received a grade of 'outstanding' or 'very good' from the external assessment panel.

An ESRC/NERC-funded KTP between Falmouth Harbour Commissioners (FHC) and the University of Plymouth enabled Falmouth Port to develop and embed a framework for sustainable port operation and development and to increase annual profits from 15 per cent to 43 per cent through helping the FHC to better understand and engage with its stakeholders. Falmouth Harbour Commissioners run the port commercially and their source of income is from vessels using the Port, and

charges to leisure craft, merchant and cruise ships for services provided. However, this must be achieved by working within restrictions including the Port's location in a conservation area and increasing legislation. The FHC was in danger of missing out on business opportunities due to lack of understanding by stakeholders. Defining and mapping stakeholders, and providing enhanced engagement and education, this KTP has enabled the Port engage proactively with its stakeholders, and to achieve management time savings and improved management of stakeholder issues. This has safeguarded business which was at threat of being lost, and generated new business opportunities, creating a financially viable and sustainable Port, attracting new business and benefiting the Cornish economy. Before being offered a job with FHC at the end of the KTP, the associate drove stakeholder engagement and has recruited a number of organisations, universities and colleges to be actively involved. The KTP also led to the implementation of a tailored integrated management ISO accreditation which recognises the revolutionary and industry best practice Port Management system developed from the KTP sustainable framework, which should benefit other ports in the future. According to a representative of the Port, "this partnership exceeded all original expectations".

Impact through Commercialisation/Exploitation

This is a challenging area for social science because of the absence in most cases of recognisable markets for social science outputs; examples of successful commercialisation are therefore rare. However, where opportunities do present themselves, ESRC-funded researchers have been able to report strong successes, and real potential for exploitation, particularly those arising from involvement in interdisciplinary research teams, such as the example below.

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common form of dementia, affecting around 465,000 people in the UK. Despite its prevalence, it remains difficult to diagnose in the early stages of the disease. Researchers at the Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh have established that people in the early stages of AD have a particular difficulty in doing two tasks at the same time (dual tasking). In contrast, healthy older people do not have any difficulty with dual tasking. The researchers have devised a simple, inexpensive, non-invasive cognitive test that accurately diagnoses early stages of dementia. The diagnostic tool uses a short automated assessment, which could be used with minimal training by clinicians to substantially improve accuracy in AD diagnosis, monitor disease progression, and to assess the impact of treatment interventions.

Recent development of the product has focused on developing the software to run on a tablet device. This has included support from Toshiba who provided tablet PCs to aid development. The team is now focusing on clinical proof of concept; early clinical trials are underway. The aim is to have a more reliable and accurate diagnostic aid that can be used in primary care (eg, GP surgeries) and reduce the number of patients with an uncertain diagnosis being referred for more expensive follow up assessments in hospitals or clinics.

Impact through Interactions with Policymakers

This is an area in which the ESRC has been able to demonstrate significant success in recent years, with much ESRC-funded research and other activity having actual and potential policy impact. However, our work to date to identify policy impact confirms that research can only ever be one of a number of influences on policy, and it is therefore very difficult to isolate the specific impact of one piece of research or a single researcher; the illustrations below should be viewed in that context. Nevertheless, regular and ongoing interaction with policymakers is vital for successful impact on policy. ESRC investments perform strongly in this area – an analysis of 33 of our managed investments shows that in 2011/12, these major research grants collectively secured an additional £26 million in funding from over 300 grants from public sector organisations; and each held an average of nine events targeted at a policy or mixed audience.

Research undertaken by Dr Steve Johnson at the University of Hull traced the history of the Sure Start initiative, which was established by the UK government in 1999. This work identified the significant contribution of social science, and of ESRC-funded research and researchers in reducing the risk of social exclusion among young children in disadvantaged groups and areas:

- The ESRC supported the skills base underpinning the initial research review and establishment of Sure Start;
- Leading academics were involved directly in the cross-departmental review of children’s services;
- ESRC-funded researchers contributed to the wide research literature on social mobility and related topics;
- The ESRC ensured key data resources were available to undertake vital research on the Sure Start initiative, for example birth cohort study data;
- The ESRC provided core funding for institutes engaged in Sure Start-related research such as the Centre for Longitudinal Studies and the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion.

Work by the Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy (LSE) on the economics of low carbon cities was part-funded by DECC (the Department of Energy and Climate Change), and was based on the downscaling of data from the Committee on Climate

Change to make it relevant at the city scale. The subsequent report – presenting the economic basis for large-scale investments in low-carbon cities – was voted one of the most transformative ideas to be presented at the UN Climate Conference in Durban in December 2011. In January, it was launched by the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change to an audience of 150 people from the public, private and civic sectors, and to an audience of 350 primarily business people in Leeds. The launch received widespread media coverage, has been the basis of detailed discussions with DECC and DCLG (the Department for Communities and Local Government), and will inform the current work of the Committee on Climate Change on local carbon strategies. It has been one of the main drivers for the development of a low-carbon strategy for the Leeds City Region. The work is being replicated in various contexts across Europe, and discussions are underway to replicate the study in Tokyo, Beijing and other world cities.

Impact through Public Engagement

The ESRC’s flagship science in society event, the Festival of Social Science, continues to expand its reach and successfully connect non-academic audiences with social science. The ESRC Festival of Social Science offers a fascinating insight into some of the country’s leading social science research and how it influences our social, economic and political lives, and demonstrates how social science research makes a difference. This celebration of the social sciences takes place across the UK – via public debates, conferences, workshops, interactive seminars, film screenings, virtual exhibitions and much more.

In 2011, the Festival featured 131 events in 41 UK towns and cities, and attracted a total audience of 17-18,000 people. In 2012, we undertook a review of the longer term success of the Festival; this evaluation identified that the Festival has reached over 43,000 attendees in five years, many of whom are new to the ESRC, and had a low or limited awareness of social science prior to attendance. Audience feedback shows very high levels of satisfaction and intention to attend future events. There was also clear evidence of attendees making use of what they see and hear at events, for example passing on information, finding out more about

| METRIC | UNITS | YEAR | | | |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <i>Common Metrics – Outputs</i> | | | | | |
| Knowledge Transfer and Exchange | | | | | |
| KE Spend | £mil | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
| | | 3.9 | 4.4 | 4.8 | 6.5 |
| <i>Optional Metrics</i> | | | | | |
| Strategic Partners (public sector) ³ | # | 28 | 34 | 27 | 30 |
| Strategic Partners (private sector) ⁴ | # | NR | NR | NR | 4 |

³ The ESRC maintains a number of strategic partnerships with a range of research beneficiaries, including government departments, NDPBs, devolved administrations and other key organisations such as the British Library.

⁴ In addition to the relationships reported above, ESRC has developed strategic relationships with businesses, and umbrella bodies representing business interests in line with Delivery Plan priorities. These are reported here separately for the first time.

topics covered and using information personally; and there was strong support (97 per cent of respondents) for continuation of the annual Festival in future.

“It is great to be exposed to so much interesting research in an accessible and engaging way. This is a unique Festival which really encourages researchers in the social sciences to share their work with non-specialists – we need more of this.”
(Attendee feedback)

Impact through skilled people

During 2011/12 the first cohort of students began their training at our new national network of 21 Doctoral Training Centres. The DTCs were commissioned in 2010/11 as part of our new Postgraduate Training Framework, and are major centres of excellence in postgraduate training which cover the full disciplinary range of the social sciences, and interdisciplinary research, providing innovative approaches to both the delivery and content of postgraduate training. For the first time transferable skills training is embedded in the core training provision, with the DTCs offering both innovative methods of ensuring researcher development and novel opportunities for postgraduate researchers to gain experience of working with user groups through a series of people-exchange initiatives.

Impact through Postgraduate Research Training

As part of our commitment to deliver impact through skilled people, ESRC PhD students have the opportunity to extend their award for up to six months with a placement in a non-academic host organisation within the public, private or third sector. Students work on specific projects involved with public or organisational policy. During the year 75 student internship awards were made and of those internships funded, 93 per cent took place with the public sector, and seven per cent with the third sector. Collaborative training enables researchers to develop relevant skills to undertake excellent research, work effectively with and in user organisations and to exploit the outcomes of their research. As the testimonial below demonstrates, these placements provide a highly valued opportunity for students to apply the skills and experience gained through their PhD training within a different environment and to develop an insight into how research can interact with policy and practice.

“I learned a significant amount about how academics with an interest in influencing policy should set about doing so. These are lessons that I intend to incorporate and use throughout my academic career, ensuring that my scholarship has the best

possible chance of positively impacting the thinking of those who make decisions... I secured some fantastic contacts at the very heart of Government. In addition to senior decision-makers with whom I had had direct contact... I was also able to leverage my position to meet other senior policymakers, including those more directly relevant to my academic focus... I also derived valuable lessons about how Government takes decisions on contentious, top-level policy issues, which... will be invaluable in informing my future research.”

Impact through Skills Provision

Not only does ESRC funding continue to support the social science research leaders of both the present and the future, our research also underpins the delivery of new knowledge, training and resources for practitioners and professionals in a wide range of areas, as the examples below illustrate.

The Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre (DCAL) at University College London (UCL) brings together leading researchers in the fields of sign linguistics, psychology, and neuroscience. It is the largest research centre in this field in Europe with nearly 40 staff and research students, about one third of whom are Deaf.

The Centre's British Sign Language Corpus Project has developed the first national computerised and publicly accessible BSL corpus – that is a unique collection of language recordings of British Sign Language. The recordings will be of enormous benefit to students and teachers of BSL and to sign language interpreters across the country, leading to improved services for Deaf people that will better ensure their full participation in society. The collection of video recordings shows 249 Deaf men and women of different ages and backgrounds conversing in BSL with each other in pairs. They answer questions, tell stories, and show their signs for 102 key concepts. The filming took place in eight cities across the UK to reflect regional variation within BSL. In addition to practical applications in the UK, the web-based corpus video data is set to contribute significantly to international linguistics research. It will also be a valuable resource for people with an interest in technology, particularly those working towards automatic sign language recognition (the signed equivalent of voice recognition) and the development of virtual signers ie, signing avatars.

A research team of psychologists and doctors, which included an ESRC/MRC interdisciplinary student, led by Dr Nick Sevdalis at Imperial College London's Clinical Safety Research Unit has devised the Observational Teamwork Assessment for Surgery (OTAS) tool to assess the quality of team-related behaviours of the core members of an operating theatre team. The tool captures five team-related behaviours: Communication, Coordination, Cooperation, Situation Awareness and Leadership, each one of which is rated on a seven-point behaviourally-anchored scale. OTAS is being used to evaluate the effectiveness of one of the largest national quality improvement projects in surgical care in England and Wales – the Surgical Safety Checklist, mandated for national use by the National Patient Safety Agency in January 2009. It has been independently translated in Italian and

revalidated for use in operating theatres in Italy and in German and Spanish speaking countries through an established network of research collaborators.

Impact through People Exchange

As part of our drive to streamline and rationalise our operation, funding for placement fellowships has now been brought within the remit of the wider Knowledge Exchange Opportunities scheme. However, the importance that we confer upon the role of placements in facilitating direct exchange of knowledge and expertise between academic and non-academic partners remains undiminished.

In addition to the placements that the ESRC supports directly through the KE Opportunities scheme, our major investments are also strongly encouraged to deploy this mechanism independently by establishing their own placement opportunities with relevant users. As the following example demonstrates, this direct exchange can result in an immediate use of research

findings by the user partner, and significantly increases the potential for longer-term impact.

Researchers from the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) at the University of Manchester collaborated with staff from KPMG People Services, who design reward packages for top managers in business. Part of the project involved the secondment of KPMG's David Shammai to CRESC to study the pay patterns of top executives in the FTSE 250 (mid-sized British companies).

The research showed that pay within the FTSE 250 is best seen as a 'fee' that is scaled according to company size (measured in terms of market capitalisation) rather than a return for performance. This reframing of the problem opens up new ways to evaluate management pay and reward packages, moving away from traditional definitions linking pay to performance, and therefore opening up potential new approaches to the design and control of reward packages, which could lever improved financial outcomes for shareholders.

Following the research, KPMG utilised the findings at an internal training day for its reward practitioners, as well as providing 1000 business clients with details of the research outcomes.

| METRIC | UNITS | YEAR | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | NOTES |
|--|-------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Common Metrics - Inputs</i> | | | | | | | |
| Human Capital | | | | | | | |
| Principal Investigators ⁵ | # | NR | 272 | 215 | 301 | | |
| Research Fellowships ⁶ | # | NR | 138 | 91 | 75 | | |
| <i>Common Metrics - Outputs</i> | | | | | | | |
| Human Capital | | | | | | | |
| Number of PhD Students Supported | # | 686 | 719 | 730 | 645 | | |
| Number of Other Students Supported ⁷ | # | NR | NR | 6 | 6 | | |
| Finishing Rates ⁸ | % | 85% | 85% | 83% | 73% | | |
| <i>Common Metrics - Outcomes</i> | | | | | | | |
| Human Capital | | | | | | | |
| Destinations of leavers: | | | | | | | |
| Of which University | % | 63% | 62% | 73% | 66% | | Further study and HE employment |
| Of which Wider Public Sector | % | NR | 15% | 8% | 9% | | Includes schools |
| Of which Third Sector | % | NR | NR | 3% | 3% | | Voluntary/Unpaid work |
| Of which Private Sector | % | NR | 10% | 8% | 6% | | |
| Of which Unknown or Other | % | NR | 13% | 4% | 6% | | |
| Of which Unemployed | % | NR | NR | 4% | 10% | | |
| Placements in user organisations ⁹ | # | 65 | 168 | 76 | 75 | | |
| <i>Optional Metrics</i> | | | | | | | |
| Users placed in HEIs/ESRC Research Investments ¹⁰ | # | 52 | 32 | 64 | 49 | | |
| Researchers trained in media/PE skills | # | 154 | 313 | 114 | 171 | | |

⁵ Data includes all PIs on all grants commencing activity in the period 1 April 2011-31 March 2012 funded under the following schemes: Small and Standard Grants, Programme Grants, Ventures, Centres (first and subsequent phases), KE Opportunities, NCRM nodes.

⁶ Data includes all Fellowship grants commencing activity in the period 1 April 2011-31 March 2012 funded under the following schemes: Professorial Fellowships, Research Fellowships, Mid-Career Fellowships, Postdoctoral Fellowships, and International Fellowships. Data excludes Placement Fellowships (reported separately) and Research Fellows funded as part of other Research Grants. Note that the Post-Doctoral Fellowships scheme closed to new entrants in February 2011, which has resulted in a decline in the total number of Fellows supported. The new Future Research Leaders scheme is now the primary mode of dedicated support for early-career researchers.

⁷ This figure relates to a strategic initiative to build research capacity in Demography.

⁸ The figure reported for 2011/12 is the four-year submission rate. Figures reported in previous years have been the five-year submission rate. The method of data collection for the submission rate survey has changed in 2011/12, moving to a multi-Council platform.

⁹ Reported here are both placements organised and part funded by ESRC through its KE Opportunities scheme, and also placements organised by the Council's major investments.

¹⁰ See above.

Sustaining world class research to enable impact delivery

During 2011/12 we have continued to invest in the best research while also aiming to enhance the impact of our funded research on society.

We continue to encourage and support research applications which demonstrate one or more of innovation, interdisciplinarity and impact.

During 2011/12 the ESRC spent approximately £134 million of its gross budget on supporting research.

Evidence from the Council's evaluations demonstrates the consistently high quality and impact of ESRC research, with 94 per cent of all projects graded as 'good', 'very good' or 'outstanding'. The expertise of ESRC-funded social scientists is recognised and sought out at the highest levels, as exemplified below: this represents just one example among many, with major ESRC research investments providing substantial advice to policy and decision makers on an average of more than 14 occasions per investment in 2011/12.

Professor Steve Pudney, Director of the ESRC Research Centre on Micro-social Change (MISOC) at the University of Essex, was appointed in 2011 to the Technical Advisory Group on Measuring National Well-being. The group is advising the Office for National Statistics on its work in responding to David Cameron's call for the development of official measures of wellbeing. He was also selected to be a panel member for the next national assessment of the quality of research in UK universities, the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

ESRC investment in world-leading data and infrastructure is critical to the delivery of high quality social science research and its wider impact. Through major strategic investment by the ESRC the UK now has a data infrastructure that is the envy of many other countries, and an international reputation for developing some of the most groundbreaking methodological tools and techniques.

2011 saw the release of the first longitudinal data from the ESRC's flagship study, *Understanding Society* – a world leading study of the socioeconomic circumstances and attitudes of 100,000 individuals in 40,000 British households. Initial findings include:

- Despite policies over the last 15 years aiming to expand access to university places for people from less advantaged homes, middle-class children continue to be the main beneficiaries, undermining interventions to improve social mobility;
- There have been reductions in persistent low income for households, reducing the number which are living below the poverty line. This analysis draws on direct evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions;

- Young people have suffered more from unemployment than any other employment group during the recession, finding it harder not only to find jobs, but also to keep them once are in work. This 'double penalty' poses challenges to maintaining young people's attachment to the labour market on leaving education, to avoid the long term 'scarring' effects of unemployment;
- Bullying often begins at home rather than the commonly held belief that it comes from the playground – sibling bullying is more widespread in the UK than in, for example, the USA;
- Teenagers who turn their backs on a healthy lifestyle and turn to drink, cigarettes and junk food are significantly unhappier than their healthier peers. Increased participation in sport is associated with increased happiness;
- Data exploring how British people feel about their nationality shows that people from ethnic minority backgrounds identify more closely with 'Britishness' than their white counterparts.

These and other analyses have generated significant profile for the study, and it is anticipated that they could lead to longer term impacts. The release of the *2012 Findings* report in the spring generated 805 mentions in the national and international press: coverage included *The Telegraph*, BBC, *Daily Mail*, *The Mirror*, *The Times*, *Times Higher Education*, and *The Guardian*. There was also a major piece on BBC Radio 4's Today programme. We are also committed to widening the use of our datasets, launching in 2011 a new initiative in Secondary Data Analysis, which offers researchers the opportunity to exploit existing data resources; this initiative should play a major role in helping us to understand more about the underlying explanations behind findings such as those from *Understanding Society* and other major ESRC-supported datasets. The appointment of an Impact Fellow to work alongside the *Understanding Society* team will also improve the uptake of findings and lessons from the study into policy and practice.

The ESRC also plays an important leadership role for the social sciences internationally, with some of our major investments demonstrating impact beyond the UK's borders, and ESRC schemes supporting collaboration with overseas partners to bring together the best UK social science research with the best worldwide. Of particular note is the longstanding partnership with the Department for International Development (DFID), which has funded over 100 projects since 2005, many of which have been collaborations with researchers in the developing world, and are leading to genuine changes in these countries.

Funded under the ESRC/DFID scheme, Professor James Manor (Institute of Commonwealth Studies) analysed the workings of the world's largest poverty programme, India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). The programme is meant to be demand-driven – giving every rural household the right to 100 days of wage-employment annually to undertake unskilled manual work, as a hedge against destitution – and has stronger transparency mechanisms than any poverty programme on earth. However, the project team encountered an acute 'allergy' among many bureaucrats and politicians to transparency and downward accountability, and found that enhanced transparency is insufficient to ensure fundamental change. Downward accountability – which occurs less often – is also required, and harder to achieve.

Working closely throughout with India's Planning Commission and Rural Development Ministry, the project provided recommendations to both the Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office which triggered policy change to enhance poor people's access to information, and improve levels of transparency and accountability. The project also worked closely with civil society organisations that help poor people make better use of information.

Professor Manor has also held discussions with the South Africa desk at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, which is interested in encouraging an employment guarantee programme in that country.

Methodological developments and future challenges

The ESRC's Evaluation Committee continues to support an innovative programme of qualitative and quantitative approaches for the assessment of economic and societal impact in all its forms. The evidence from the Evaluation Committee's programme of work confirms the substantial contribution of ESRC-funded research and researchers in supporting the economy and society. In 2011/12, the Evaluation Committee has:

- Continued to address the challenging area of quantifying impact, in the context of developing our understanding of the impact of research data infrastructure at the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS);
- Added to its portfolio of policy and practice case impact evaluations, focusing on ESRC's Energy Groups;
- Explored the impact of interdisciplinary research through an evaluation of the cross-Council Rural Economy and Land Use (Relu) Programme; and
- Built on the emerging evidence of the impact of

| METRIC | UNITS | YEAR | | | |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <i>Common Metrics – Outputs</i> | | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
| Knowledge Generation | | | | | |
| Number of Grants reporting outputs | # | NR | NR | 1952 | 4853 |
| Refereed Publications ¹¹ | # | 1066 | 1772 | 2144 | 2947 |
| Non Refereed Publications | # | 4856 | 4088 | 3452 | 3462 |
| Co-authorship of refereed publications - International ¹² | # | NR | NR | NA | 61 |
| <i>Optional Metrics - Outcomes</i> | | | | | |
| Research Quality (Evaluation Grade – projects rated Outstanding, Very Good or Good) ¹³ | % | 97% | 97% | 96% | 94% |
| Level of usage of ESRC Research Resources ¹⁴ : | | | | | |
| <i>Active registered users</i> | # | 46304 | 41783 | 23099 | 20635 |
| <i>Datasets delivered</i> | # | 48580 | 50941 | 56777 | 61081 |
| Additional Funding leveraged by major ESRC investments | £mil | NR | NR | NR | 32 |
| <i>Of which from private sector</i> | % | NR | NR | NR | 5% |
| <i>Of which from public sector</i> | % | NR | NR | NR | 80% |
| <i>Of which from third sector</i> | % | NR | NR | NR | 15% |

¹¹ The ESRC's Research Catalogue records all publications produced during the award period, and captures post-award publications on a voluntary submission basis through the cross-Council Research Outcomes System.

¹² This is the first year in which we have been able to report against this metric, based on data collected through the Research Outcomes System. However, data collected is likely to be partial due to the voluntary nature of submission.

¹³ Due to the introduction of ESRC's new final reporting system in 2009/10, which delays project evaluation until 12 months after grant completion, the number of grants assessed in 2011/12 was approximately one third of average numbers. Expert analysis has shown that current bibliometric data are not a sufficiently robust measure of the impact of most social science disciplines. For this reason the Council is reporting evaluation grades for the work it funds. These grades reflect the results of independent peer review of end of award reports.

¹⁴ We report here on the number of users registering to access the datasets available from the ESRC's principal data facility, the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS), and the number of unique datasets delivered to users. The significant drop in registered users between 2009/10 and 2010/11 is due to change from Athens to the Shibboleth user registration system in 2010. Previously users were registered for three years, but are now registered for a single year and must reregister annually to continue to make use of the available services. Note also that the figure is based on a single day's 'snapshot' (31 March 2012) rather than an annual average.

PhD trained social scientists through a study with members of the Government Economics Service and Government Social Research (GES/GSR).

Key points and findings from each of these evaluations are summarised below.

The Economic Impact of ESDS

The Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) is a national data archiving and dissemination service which came into operation in January 2003. The service provides preservation, dissemination, user support and training for an extensive range of key economic and social data, both quantitative and qualitative, spanning many disciplines and themes. ESDS users come from the public and commercial sectors, as well as from academia. All ESRC grant-holders are required to offer for deposit any data arising from their research. From October 2012, the ESDS has been integrated into the new UK Data Service.

This exploratory evaluation assessed the economic benefits and impact of the ESDS, developing robust estimates of the value of ESDS in the context of a broader qualitative analysis of impact. The study did not attempt to quantify policy impacts, but included case studies to illustrate the types of impact that have been made possible by the availability of data through ESDS.

The forms of value that have been measured reveal a net economic value of around £18 million per annum, that is more than five times ESDS operational costs. Efficiency impacts for ESDS's active registered user community are estimated to range from £68-112 million per annum, which might translate to at least £100 million per annum or more for the wider user community. The economic analysis suggests a 2.5-fold to ten-fold return (£58-233 million over 30 years) on annual investment in research data and ESDS research data infrastructure.

The study identified a wide range of ESDS benefits, including ease of access to data and documentation, speed of delivery, and preservation of data. The economic analysis suggests considerable value for users of ESDS data and services at relatively little cost, with a benefit/cost ratio and return on investment at the higher end of or above what is typical of academic, special and public libraries.

Following the completion of this study, the methodology and approach employed by the evaluation team is now being repurposed for use in two further economic impact evaluations – a NERC/JISC funded study of the British Atmospheric Data Centre (BADC) and a JISC review of the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

Impact of ESRC's Energy Groups

This evaluation represented the latest in the Policy and Practice Impact Evaluation series, focused on the three Energy Research Groups which were established as part of the ESRC's contribution to the RCUK Energy Programme. These Groups addressed issues such as what influences habits and practices, and the impacts of the design of market and regulatory frameworks on energy production, supply and use. The evaluation drew out a number of examples of strong impact arising from the three Groups, including:

- Key input from the Electricity Policy Research Group (EPRG, University of Cambridge) into the Ofgem 'Transmit' project and their review of energy network regulation;
- Work from the Research Group on Lifestyles, Values and Environment (RESOLVE, University of Surrey) on the '21st Century Living' project, which looked at green purchasing, and has impacted on business planning and marketing decisions for Homebase and the Eden Project, who supported the work; and
- The Sussex Energy Group's conceptual impact on the nuclear debate, resulting from the influence of key expert advisors and the trusted reputation of the group on this issue.

In addition to the identification of specific impacts, the report also highlights a number of effective techniques used by the Groups to maximise their impact; these will be incorporated into the ESRC Impact toolkit, which provides advice and guidance for researchers in achieving greater impact from their research;

- **Benefits of fora and participatory groups** – the EPRG ran a self funding Electricity Policy Forum comprising a mixture of industry, government and regulator representatives. This proved an effective and innovative mechanism for the exchange of ideas and information;
- **Direct Whitehall briefings** – there are several examples given of the importance and effectiveness of the Groups engaging with government departments, including RESOLVE researchers attending policy-informing Defra workshops and focus groups, and a DECC team coming to be briefed at EPRG;
- **Using communications advisors** – the Groups employed or worked with communications advisors which produced good outcomes; and
- **Mapping end users** – all Groups mapped the policy landscape, including key influencers, in order to develop clear strategies and plans of action.

Impact of the Rural Economy and Land Use (Relu) Programme

This was the first impact evaluation of a major cross-Council research programme. The Relu Programme is led by ESRC on behalf of the funders (ESRC, NERC, BBSRC, Defra and the Scottish Government). The evaluation found that Relu has been highly successful in generating a diverse range of research impacts at both programme and project-level. Indeed, the evaluation speaks of the Relu programme as getting near to 'as good as it gets' in terms of the structures and schemes put in place to foster research impact.

The range of research impacts highlighted mirrors the interdisciplinary nature of the programme, with impact having occurred across different spheres including the private sector and policy-making. The evaluation includes three project impact case studies, and good evidence of 23 projects' instrumental or conceptual impact. It also includes evidence of the impact of the transfer of individuals connected to the programme to non-academic settings. Given that the evaluation focused on the first three of four calls under the programme, there may be many further research impacts to come arising from the projects supported. For example, at programme level, evidence was found of significant influence over the approach to Foresight's Land Use Futures Project and subsequently the Coalition government's White Paper Natural Choice, published in June 2011. At project level, the case studies include:

- Evidence of impact on debates on carbon footprinting and the question of ‘local food’, resulting in the application of research findings in the commercial sector through the engagement of companies including all the leading supermarkets, Marks and Spencer and Unilever, as well as the establishment of a spin out company providing environmental footprint assessments for the fresh produce industry;
 - Development of a ‘report card’ for the assessment of diffuse water pollution, which has been adopted for use by the Environment Agency; and
 - Collaboration with a warm water fish production business which has led to changes in the business strategy and, according to the proprietor, “made the business easier to run”.
- The Programme Director, Assistant Director and their team are commended in the report for their leadership, which made a vital contribution to the impact of the programme overall, and to that of the individual projects. The Directorate created mechanisms to set up two way dialogues with user stakeholders at the programme-level across a number of thematic areas (eg, the Food Chain Forum) and worked with researchers to bring about effective knowledge exchange. Furthermore, a dedicated communications resource produced regular policy briefings and workshops. The Directorate also used knowledge exchange mechanisms such as work-shadowing and visiting fellows to foster research impact. They set up monitoring mechanisms in attempting to capture impact and created a Stakeholder Impact Analysis Matrix (SIAM) database through which award holders under the programme could capture information about their stakeholders and research impacts. For the final conference, the director designed an innovative competition to find the best examples of Relu Impact.

Impact of Social Scientists within GES/GSR

The study aimed to identify and evaluate the contribution to policymaking made by social scientists working within the Government Economic Service and Government Social Research Service. In particular, it looked closely at the differences in the contributions of people with PhDs and those without, and also at the factors and processes that could enhance or lessen contributions to decision-making.

Thirteen per cent of the social scientists who took part in the study held PhDs, compared with 66 per cent who held masters degrees and 21 per cent who held Bachelor degrees. Sixty-six per cent of respondents with PhDs were in senior positions, compared with 49 per cent of those with Masters degrees and 19 per cent of those Bachelor degrees.

The contribution to decision-making by social scientists with PhDs was widespread – but not always readily visible in policies. Despite this, the study identified examples of advice and recommendations that have been taken up. For example, a senior social scientist working in the Intellectual Property Office played a leading role in the drafting of the Hargreaves Review, which proposed a system to drive economic growth and innovation that is now being implemented by government. Another social scientist based with a regulator applied and consolidated an innovative solution, resulting in a cost-efficient enforcement outcome for scrutiny of company mergers and acquisitions. Employers, policy clients and social scientists recognise the value of research

methodologies learned in doctoral training and how they help in addressing policy issues. But employers commented that social scientists require an ability to grasp what is needed, deliver pragmatic solutions, and avoid over-emphasis on fine detail to make a difference in a policy setting.

Although a PhD is not a requirement for recruitment to government economic and social research services, PhD holders have an advantage in some skills that are highly valued by employers, such as project management. There was a condition, however, that employees with PhDs should have softer skills, such as being good communicators and networkers to maximise their policy contributions. Many considered that their formal PhD training helps them with the uptake of new methods, evidence from academia and other organisations’ research findings.

When policymakers and social scientists worked alongside each other, this was regarded as an important factor in developing trust and collaboration. It was also thought to provide social scientists with a better awareness of the context of policymaking, and to optimise the relevance and timing of their input.

Shortly after work on this study commenced, we were asked by the Government Statistical Service (GSS) to consider extending the evaluation to cover the impact of statisticians working within government. This additional work will be reported in next year’s RPEI.

Future Developments

The Evaluation Committee is conscious of the complexities involved in documenting the broad and often diffuse impact of social science. To this end it has taken a multi-dimensional approach, gathering evidence from a range of perspectives to build a convincing overall picture of the importance of social science in a number of policy domains. In 2012/13, we plan to hold a further workshop to bring together leading experts in impact evaluation with the intention of discussing our work to date, and exploring new avenues for future development.

Evaluations underway in 2012/13 will address some of the ongoing challenges in understanding the impact of social science. Of particular note is an evaluation to assess the impact of social science on business through working with three significant Business Schools at the Universities of Cardiff, Warwick and Lancaster. Given the priority that is placed upon business engagement in the current ESRC delivery plan, this evaluation will be invaluable in helping us to better understand how to maximise future impact on the private sector from our research.

In addition, we will continue our work to consolidate and develop our understanding of impact from our major resources investments through an evaluation of two of our collaborative surveys – the academically driven European Social Survey and the user-orientated Workplace Employee Relations Survey. We will also complete the follow-on study on the impact of social scientists working with the GSS, already noted above.

RCUK

Research Councils UK (RCUK) is a strategic partnership of the UK Research Councils which enables the Research Councils to work together more effectively to enhance the overall impact and effectiveness of their research, training and innovation activities. The RCUK Impact Report reports on activities that Councils are doing together; how cross-council working is being delivered and the added value and impact that is being achieved as a result. The RCUK Impact Report can be found at www.rcuk.ac.uk/publications/reports/impacts/pages/impact2012.aspx

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Study of the contribution of social scientists to government policy and practice (2012) www.esrc.ac.uk/impacts-and-findings/impact-assessment/development-studies.aspx

Annex 1: Full Metrics

| | UNITS | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total Funds Available | £mil | 156 | 206 | 210 | 214 | 213 |
| Budget Allocation | £mil | 135 | 178 | 179 | 188 | 186 |
| Leverage | £mil | 21 | 28 | 31 | 26 | 27 |
| <i>of which Private</i> | £mil | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| <i>of which from other Research Councils</i> | £mil | 17 | 17 | 22 | 16 | 12 |
| <i>of which from other source</i> | £mil | 3 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 14 |
| <i>of which Private</i> | % | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 0% |
| <i>of which Other Research Councils</i> | % | 11% | 8% | 10% | 7% | 6% |
| <i>of which Other</i> | % | 2% | 4% | 4% | 4% | 7% |
| Total Expenditure | £mil | 156 | 206 | 210 | 214 | 213 |
| <i>of which Responsive Mode Grant</i> | £mil | 42 | 45 | 47 | 45 | 44 |
| <i>of which Postgraduate Awards</i> | £mil | 56 | 60 | 58 | 56 | 61 |
| <i>of which Other components</i> | £mil | 58 | 101 | 105 | 113 | 108 |
| <i>of which Responsive Mode Grant</i> | % | 27% | 22% | 22% | 21% | 21% |
| <i>of which Postgraduate Awards</i> | % | 36% | 29% | 28% | 26% | 29% |
| <i>of which Other components</i> | % | 37% | 49% | 50% | 53% | 51% |
| Human Capital | | | | | | |
| Principal Investigators | # | NR | NR | 272 | 215 | 301 |
| Research Leaders in Sponsored Institutes | # | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Research Fellowships | # | NR | NR | 138 | 91 | 75 |
| Knowledge Generation | | | | | | |
| Number of Grants assessed for reporting | # | NR | NR | NR | 1952 | 4853 |
| Refereed Publications | # | 733 | 1066 | 1772 | 2144 | 2947 |
| Non Refereed Publications | # | 5810 | 4856 | 4088 | 3452 | 3462 |
| Co-authorship of refereed publications - International | # | NR | NR | NR | NR | 61 |
| Co-authorship of refereed publications - Industry | # | NR | NR | NR | NR | NA |

| | UNITS | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Human Capital | | | | | | |
| <i>Number of PhD Students Supported</i> | # | 743 | 686 | 719 | 730 | 645 |
| <i>Number of Masters Students Supported</i> | # | NR | NR | NR | NA | NA |
| <i>Number of Other Students Supported</i> | # | NR | NR | NR | 6 | 6 |
| Finishing Rates | % | 84% | 85% | 85% | 83% | 73% |
| Knowledge Transfer and Exchange | | | | | | |
| KE Spend | £mil | 4 | 3.9 | 4.4 | 4.8 | 6.5 |
| IP Activity (discretionary) | | | | | | |
| Patents applications | # | NR | NR | NR | NA | 3 |
| Patents granted | # | NR | NR | NR | NA | 3 |
| Spinouts/new businesses created | # | NR | NR | NR | NA | 0 |
| Income from IP activity | £mil | NR | NR | NR | NA | 0 |
| Human Capital | | | | | | |
| Destinations of leavers | | | | | | |
| <i>Of which University</i> | % | 51% | 63% | 62% | 73% | 66% |
| <i>Of which Wider Public Sector</i> | % | NR | NR | 15% | 8% | 9% |
| <i>Of which Third Sector</i> | % | NR | NR | NR | 3% | 3% |
| <i>Of which Private Sector</i> | % | NR | NR | 10% | 8% | 6% |
| <i>Of which Unknown or Other</i> | % | NR | NR | 13% | 4% | 6% |
| <i>Of which Unemployed</i> | % | NR | NR | NR | 4% | 10% |
| Placements in user organisations | # | 40 | 65 | 168 | 76 | 75 |
| Public Policy | | | | | | |
| Number of Strategic Partners (concordat partners) | # | 23 | 28 | 34 | 27 | 30 |
| Number of Users placed in HEIs/ESRC Research Investments | # | 62 | 52 | 32 | 64 | 49 |
| Research Quality (Evaluation Grade) | % | 30 | 32 | 38 | 29 | 20 |
| | % VG | | | | | 47 |
| | % G | 67 | 65 | 59 | 67 | 27 |
| | % S | | | | | 7 |
| | % P | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| | % W | | | | | 0 |
| | % U | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Level of usage of ESRC Research Resources: | | | | | | |
| <i>Active registered users</i> | # | 47635 | 46304 | 41783 | 23099 | 20635 |
| <i>Datasets delivered</i> | # | 47934 | 48580 | 50941 | 56777 | 61081 |
| Value of support for Cross-Council Programmes | £mil | NR | 25.1 | 32 | 36 | 37 |
| Number of Researchers trained in media/PE skills | # | 246 | 154 | 313 | 114 | 171 |
| NEW INDICATORS (2011/12) | | | | | | |
| Number of Strategic partners (business) | # | | | | | 4 |
| Further Funding (Reported in Investment Annual Reports) | £mil | | | | | 32 |
| <i>of which private sector</i> | % | | | | | 5 |
| <i>of which public sector</i> | % | | | | | 80 |
| <i>of which third sector</i> | % | | | | | 15 |
| Non academic seminars/workshops hosted by investments | # | | | | | 340 |
| <i>of which for private sector audience</i> | % | | | | | 6 |
| <i>of which for public sector audience</i> | % | | | | | 19 |
| <i>of which for third sector audience</i> | % | | | | | 4 |
| <i>of which for general public audience</i> | % | | | | | 4 |
| <i>of which for mixed audience</i> | % | | | | | 67 |



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