



# Security for all in a changing world

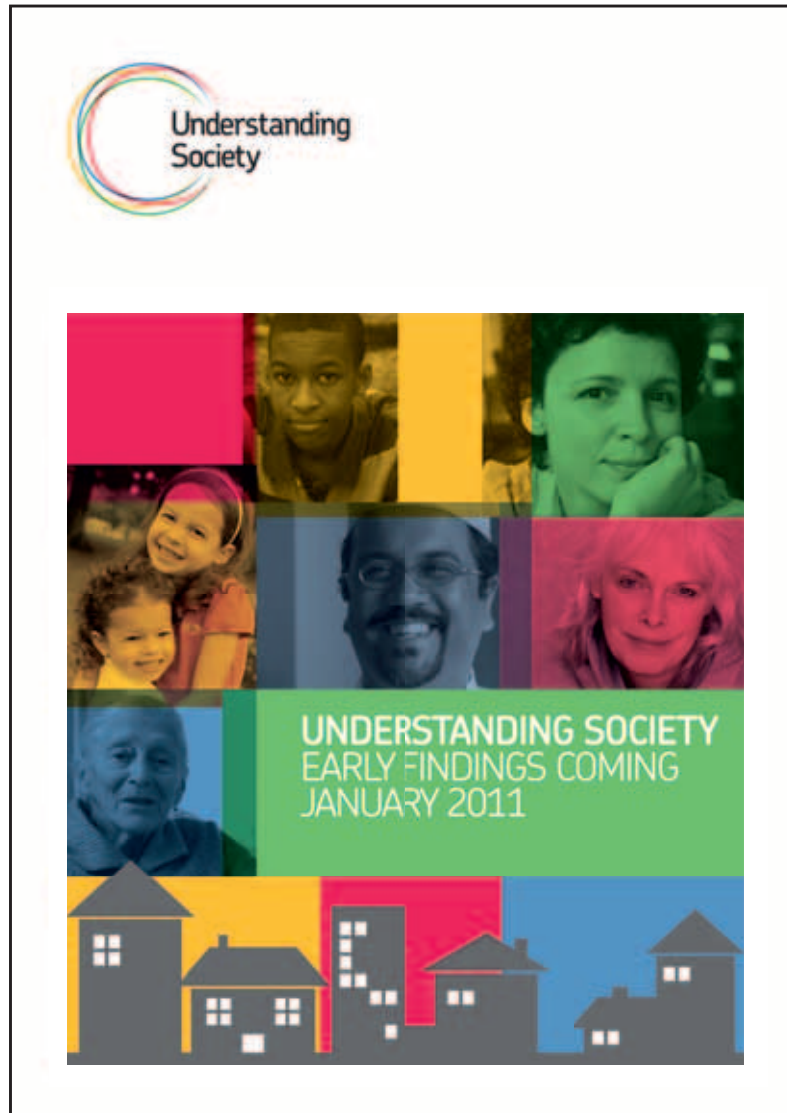


Global Uncertainties brings together the activities of the UK's Research Councils in response to global security challenges. The programme helps governments, businesses and societies to better predict, detect, prevent and mitigate threats to security.

[www.globaluncertainties.org.uk](http://www.globaluncertainties.org.uk)



# Providing new insights into our lives



Understanding Society is a major research study designed to provide valuable new evidence about the people of the UK, their lives, experiences, behaviours and beliefs. The study follows 100,000 people in 40,000 households year by year and asks them questions about a wide spectrum of areas relating to their working and personal lives.

[www.understandingsociety.org.uk](http://www.understandingsociety.org.uk)



# ESRC research making an impact



The ESRC's magazine *Society Now* provides research findings, comments and opinions from leading experts on key issues. *Society Now* is published online using a dynamic page turner Flash-presentation as well as a print-friendly PDF for download.

In 2011 we are launching a new, interactive online magazine format that will showcase economic and social science news and features from *Society Now*.

[www.esrc.ac.uk/societynow](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/societynow)



Published by the Economic  
and Social Research Council



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Jacky Clake

EDITOR Nick Stevens

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE Debbie Stalker,  
Jeanine Woolley

CONSULTANT EDITORS

Martin Ince, Romesh Vaitilingam,  
Sarah Womack

PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTION

BBC Customer Publishing  
Tel 0117 933 8063

ART EDITOR Paul McIntyre

ACCOUNT MANAGER Alison Crocker

DIRECTOR Julie Williams

PRINT William Gibbons

COVER ILLUSTRATION Matt Herring

© 2010 The Economic and Social Research Council. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval systems or resold without the prior consent of the ESRC.

The views and statements expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the ESRC.

All information in this magazine is verified to the best of the authors' and the ESRC's ability. However, we do not accept responsibility for any loss arising from reliance on it.

Britain in 2011 is a publication of the Economic and Social Research Council. All profit made from the sale of the magazine is reinvested in research communication.



ESRC Polaris House,  
North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1UJ  
Tel +44 (0) 1793 413000  
Fax +44 (0) 1793 413001  
www.esrc.ac.uk

# Welcome to Britain in 2011

**THE UK IS** emerging from a global recession and there is a pressing need to establish sustainable growth. The boundaries of public and private responsibilities – and the balance between state intervention and individual responsibility – are being redrawn. From these issues emerge new challenges that relate to changes to public services, welfare reform and civil liberties.

It is more important than ever to understand how people and organisations make choices and how behaviour can be shaped through different interventions. Social science is central to all of these concerns and plays a key role in a wide range of national and global issues including sustainability, health and well-being, global food security and, of course, economic growth.

The ESRC funds research across this wide range of issues and contributes to greater knowledge and understanding of the many challenges our society faces. But, importantly, much of this research goes further to propose solutions and show where interventions have a positive effect. Many examples of these important contributions are gathered here in *Britain in 2011*.

For example, experts on the environment and climate change share their findings on how society and nations perceive the threat of global warming and what they're doing to meet the challenges at a local and global level.

Economists from some of the most respected academic institutions dissect the causes of the global economic crisis, evaluate the UK government's reaction and suggest strategies for speeding economic recovery and growth.

Social scientists show the impact physical science makes on our attitudes and behaviour, whether through developments in genomic research, the application of nanotechnology or the extraordinary work of particle physicists.

Researchers look at our behaviour in the current economic crisis and examine whether we are building a Big Society or if modern society is becoming more fragmented.

Media experts focus on the changes in entertainment and broadcast media brought about by new technology, and how digital social media continue to revolutionise how we interact with each other locally, nationally and internationally.

And with the first coalition government since the Second World War, experts on politics examine the behaviour of the British electorate and whether politics has undergone a seismic and permanent shift.

The publication of *Britain in 2011* could not come at a more appropriate or difficult time. Difficult, because as the government gets to grips with the economy it is challenging to predict the effects of the various new policies on society.

But it's also an appropriate time because the many contributions we've included from across the social science community, and the research findings they contain, show that now, more than ever, economic and social science research has a fundamental impact on almost every aspect of our society.

We hope you enjoy reading *Britain in 2011* and we welcome your comments or suggestions – [britain@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:britain@esrc.ac.uk)



**Professor Paul Boyle**  
Chief Executive,  
Economic and Social Research Council

# Britain in 2011

Annual magazine of the Economic and Social Research Council



**49** How British politics has undergone a seismic shift

# Contents

**61** Britain in facts and figures  
*The state of the nation explained*

## ENVIRONMENT

- 8 Perception or reality?
- 11 **OPINION**  
Crunch time?
- 12 Taking advantage of the green revolution
- 12 Local food for locals
- 13 Carbon reduction champions
- 14 How low can you go?
- 14 Save our spaces
- 15 A new manifesto
- 16 Disease politics
- 16 The price of protection
- 17 Pre-empting natural disasters
- 18 The cost of carbon emissions
- 19 Look to the hills
- 20 **OPINION**  
The politics of change

## PUBLIC SERVICES

- 22 The future of public services
- 24 **OPINION**  
What future for Britain's road network?
- 25 School league tables highly misleading
- 26 Getting to the heart of the matter
- 27 Abolishing league tables reduces school effectiveness
- 28 **OPINION**  
Back to school
- 29 Academy schools: the policy U-turn
- 30 Designs for life
- 31 Healthcare competition saves lives
- 32 Off the streets
- 33 Funding higher education
- 34 **OPINION**  
Caring for our elderly

## MONEY AND BUSINESS

- 36 Britain's war on want
- 38 **OPINION**  
Getting finance to support investment
- 39 Harder than ever to get into television production
- 40 Who owns UK plc – and does it matter?
- 41 Manufacturing becomes a service industry
- 42 Realities of recruitment
- 42 Britain's entrenched inequalities
- 43 University-industry links: the myth of the ivory tower
- 44 Car society: time for a revolution
- 45 Public sector pensions
- 46 Why cut business taxes?
- 47 Gift Aid it: getting more money to charities
- 47 Bigger charities becoming more dominant
- 48 **OPINION**  
Hostile takeovers

## POLITICS

- 50 A passion for politics
- 52 **OPINION**  
Out of touch with British society?
- 53 The Muslim debate over violence
- 54 Political parties in post-war Europe
- 54 A question of freedom
- 55 Should voting be compulsory?
- 56 An alternative take on the 2010 General Election
- 57 What women want
- 58 A question of trust
- 59 Is environmental justice being served?
- 60 **OPINION**  
The coalition and the European Union



**8** The future of Britain's environment



**87** Science and innovation



**21** Public services under the spotlight

**RECESSION AND RECOVERY**

- 76 Research for economic growth
- 78 **OPINION**  
Lessons from the great depression
- 79 Indexing benefits and tax credits: which inflation measure to use?
- 80 Britain's demand for migrant labour
- 80 Getting lone parents with school-age kids back to work
- 81 Committee of experts
- 82 Bailed out bankers escape liability through a legal loophole
- 82 A better tax system
- 83 Back to work
- 84 Rethinking Britain's economic past
- 85 On your bike
- 86 **OPINION**  
A question of commitment

**SCIENCE AND INNOVATION**

- 88 Challenging the assumptions of physics
- 89 Can veterinary diagnostic devices help control livestock disease?
- 90 **OPINION**  
Blurring the boundaries of life
- 91 Bringing together synthetic biology, art and design
- 92 The technology of identity
- 92 Explanations for schizophrenia among black African-Caribbean people
- 93 The future of police forensics
- 94 Moulding the future of plastic electronics
- 94 Neuroscience, identity and society
- 95 Pandemic response report
- 96 Adapting to age
- 97 GM crops ten years on: Hope, hype and reality
- 98 **OPINION**  
The science of the very small

**SOCIETY**

- 100 The best days of our lives?
- 101 On the move
- 102 **OPINION**  
The Big Society in practice
- 103 Generous people and the altruism gene
- 104 Battle of the bottle
- 104 Faith-based schools in a secular culture
- 105 Turning a blind eye
- 106 The future of drug regulation
- 107 What is social enterprise?
- 108 Social marketing puts fires out
- 109 **OPINION**  
Living longer still seen as a problem

**MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT**

- 110 The era of e-friends
- 113 Right to know
- 114 **OPINION**  
3D cinema: the billion pound bonanza
- 115 Musical benefit
- 116 Finding religion
- 117 Greening the arts
- 118 Go with the creative Flow
- 118 Navigating the moral maze of embryo science
- 120 **OPINION**  
Containing a crisis
- 121 Why pay if you can copy for free?
- 122 Where creativity meets commerce