Going it alone?
Cutting a new deal with Europe
Devolution fallout rumbles on
The complex route to No. 10
How 2015 could change everything

DIVIDED GENERATIONS
Why the wealth gap between young and old is still widening
ESRC RESEARCH MAKING AN IMPACT

Society Now offers a readable, intelligent, concise overview of issues concerning society. Written by journalists, academics and other experts, the magazine explores and explains the ESRC’s research and its impact, reaching a wide range of readers from the private sector, academia, government and the general public.

Society Now is published three times a year and is free to subscribers. For more information see www.esrc.ac.uk/societynow
Britain in 2015, the Economic and Social Research Council’s (ESRC) magazine, is unique in presenting how scientific research influences life in Britain today. The ESRC celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2015 and to mark the occasion we reflect on some of the key achievements of social science over the past 50 years (page 64). We also look at issues that researchers have highlighted as particular concerns for 2015 and well-known commentators reflect on the findings (page 6).

Politics is perhaps this issue’s most significant topic. The vote in the referendum on Scottish independence, although close, has for the time being halted the move to an independent Scotland. But it has opened up further issues in terms of how power and decision-making is distributed between devolved powers and the UK Parliament. Members of the ESRC Future of the UK and Scotland programme present a round-up of what the referendum result will mean over the coming years (page 12). The traditional system of party politics is in turmoil with UKIP presenting a challenge to all three main political parties. Experts from the British Election Survey tell us on page 18 how, based on their research, the vote might be split in the next election.

The NHS is dear to most people’s hearts and each of the main political parties presents a different view of how it might be sustained or even saved. But how is the service really faring in the face of structural reforms, austerity pressures, costly medical advances and more people living longer? Find out on page 26. Elsewhere in the magazine we look at how old age and associated illnesses are creating one of the major issues for governments to solve. More of us are living longer, increasing the chances that dementia will affect us in some way. What is being done to meet the challenge and how can social science help those with dementia and their carers (page 80)?

The economy continues to give experts cause for concern. Unless growth is very strong, achieving deficit reduction at the speed that all political parties are promising will be painful (page 39). What potential fiscal policies might have trouble dealing with future unexpected shocks? And for workers, real wages are still falling and the prospects of significant increases for most remain bleak. Find out whose salaries are being hit the hardest on page 52.

We hope you enjoy reading Britain in 2015 and discovering how social science research has shaped and continues to shape British society.
BRITAIN IN 2015

CONTENTS

ON THE COVER

06  HESTON BLUMENTHAL: The Big Issues for 2015
12  DEVOLUTION FALLOUT & THE ROUTE TO NO. 10: Scotland the Brave; Poll Positions (p18)
54  DIVIDED GENERATIONS: Under Pressure; Healthier, Wealthier Retirement (p58)
74  GREEN HOMES: Costing the Earth
80  DEMENTIA CARE: Living with Dementia
118  GOING IT ALONE?

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

12  SCOTLAND THE BRAVE An analysis of the referendum on Scottish independence
16  OPINION: A Nudge in the Right Direction
17  HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES / BUILDING A BRIDGE
18  POLL POSITIONS
20  MYTHS OF THE GREAT WAR / MIGRATION MATTERS / DEMOCRACY UNDER THE MICROSCOPE
22  CANNABIS COSTS
23  PEOPLE ON THE MOVE
24  OPINION: Age-old conflict
25  FIGURES: Politicians Behaving Badly

PUBLIC SERVICES

26  LIFE SUPPORT What impact have recent cuts and reforms had on the NHS?
30  OPINION: The London Effect
31  THINKING SMALL / WINNERS & LOSERS
32  SAFE AS HOUSES?
34  RELOCATION, RELOCATION / SIZE MATTERS
35  THE GRAMMAR DIFFERENCE
36  FORCE FOR GOOD
37  OPINION: To Trust a Policeman
38  FIGURES: Behind Closed Doors

MONEY & BUSINESS

39  SHOCK ABSORBER New government or old in 2015, what path will it follow to reduce debt and deficit?
42  OPINION: Averting Financial Crisis
43  THE HOUSING MONEY-GO-ROUND / WHAT A WRITE OFF
44  OUT OF THE LOOP
46  THE FUNDING FALLOUT
47  WARM WELCOME / ALL IN THE MIND?
48  AUCTIONS FOR CASH / WHEN EXPERTS AGREE
50  OPINION: The Resilient High Street
51  FIGURES: Student Finances

SPECIAL ESRC ANNIVERSARY FEATURE

64  50 YEARS OF SOCIAL CHANGE How has the Economic and Social Research Council supported research over 50 years to improve the wellbeing of British society?