Surveying Europe
Job insecurity up
Trust in politicians down

Changing behaviours: Kicking the flying habit
Innovation: Giving the state credit when it’s due
Voices: Insights into how labour markets work

ESRC RESEARCH MAKING AN IMPACT
SUMMER 2013 ISSUE 16
Welcome to the Summer issue of Society Now, the ESRC’s regular magazine which showcases the impact of the social science we fund.

This issue we look at the European Social Survey which finds that there is more pressure at work, increased job insecurity and less trust in political institutions across Europe.

We introduce the winners of the new ESRC Celebrating Impact Prize and show how they are achieving outstanding impact on the economy and society.

Flying creates a high proportion of UK carbon emissions yet even those who otherwise act ‘green’ are flying more, not less. Why? And what initiatives might change our behaviour?

And with unemployment in many of the eurozone countries at a record high, governments urgently need policies that will encourage job creation, particularly for young people. Nobel laureate Professor Chris Pissarides offers research and policy advice.

I hope you find the magazine enjoyable and informative. Please do email us with your feedback or ideas for content.

Nick Stevens, Editor - nick.stevens@esrc.ac.uk

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The UK public has endured a long list of government blunders over the past three decades ranging from the Poll Tax to the private finance initiative for the London Underground, according to researchers Professor Anthony King and Sir Ivor Crew. But research suggests that flawed policymaking shares common patterns and key lessons can be learned.

In this two-year project, the researchers examined examples of domestic failures of policy and administration presided over by UK governments between the early 1980s and 2010. “We looked at 12 cases of significant policy initiatives and the general case of IT project failures which failed to achieve their objectives, which were often counter-productive, which wasted public resources and/or inflicted inconvenience or distress on a large section of the public, which could have been foreseen and avoided,” says Professor King.

The researchers set out to identify the institutional causes of project failure by exploring documentary sources and conducting more than 50 interviews with politicians, officials and political journalists. “Our interviewees spoke to us openly, frankly and informatively and the distance of time since most of the events under discussion was helpful in this regard,” they point out. “Our focus was more on failures of policy design than failures of policy implementation although...”

Summarising the institutional causes of past government blunders, Professor King points to failures of deliberation, accountability and restraint in the UK’s policymaking arrangements. Common examples of deficient deliberation include the lack of pre-legislative consultation with expert external bodies, inadequate or non-existent parliamentary involvement, the absence of pilot schemes, dummy runs and evaluations, and the failure to consult or co-ordinate with the bodies responsible for implementation. Deficient accountability, the researchers explain, arises largely from high turnover of ministers and senior officials and the instability of policy-design teams, while the want of judicious restraint is manifested by the setting of unrealistic targets and timetables and a culture of haste and determination to ‘deliver’.

Findings reveal that while blunders can never be totally eliminated, the number of blunders could be substantially reduced if politicians and officials learned the lessons of past mistakes. “It’s not a case of one key lesson,” Professor King argues. “Rather it’s a series of lessons with one overarching theme – that successive UK governments have attempted to do too much, far too quickly and without paying sufficient attention to the ‘do-ability’ of their policies.”
CHILDHOOD DISORDERS

The number of children diagnosed with childhood developmental disorders, including autism and Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), has risen sharply over the last 20 years. Researchers aim to establish whether there are really more children with the symptoms that underpin autism and ADHD or whether the rise is due to increasing awareness and changing diagnostic criteria and practice.

ERG grant number: ES/K003356/1

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Are care services best delivered through very small, locally based services that are ‘close to the user’ or do large organisations offer more efficient and effective care? Researchers aim to test the relationship between size and performance in organisations providing adult social care to establish if micro-enterprises outperform larger care providers in delivering valued, innovative, personalised and cost-effective services to users.

ESRC grant number: ES/K002317/1

PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Using the Adult Inpatient Survey, researchers will produce a new set of patient-level, nationally representative findings on how many older people report that they are not treated with dignity and respect, or that they did not receive the help they needed with eating, during hospital stays from 2002-2011. The research aims to increase the effectiveness and quality of health services and to ensure national minimum standards are enforced.

ESRC grant number: ES/N004018/1

IN BRIEF

CHILDREN ADOPTED by gay or lesbian couples are just as likely to thrive as those adopted by heterosexual couples, according to research into the experiences of adoptive families headed by same-sex couples. And further findings from this first UK study of its kind suggest that adoptive families with gay fathers may be faring particularly well.

The study looked at 130 adoptive families including 41 headed by gay fathers and 40 by lesbian mothers, and used home visits, including in-depth interviews, written questionnaires, recorded parent-child play sessions and information from teachers. All but four of the children studied were aged between four and eight years and had been placed with their families for at least one year prior to being assessed. Researchers looked at family relationships, parental wellbeing and child adjustment.

“Overall we found more similarities than differences in experiences between family types,” explains researcher Professor Susan Golombok. “And it appears that children with same-sex adoptive parents are no more likely to suffer from psychological disorders than children with heterosexual adoptive parents. Nor do they differ in gender role behaviour.”

The study also shows that gay fathers were significantly less likely to report having depressive symptoms than lesbian mothers and heterosexual couples, most probably reflecting the lower levels of depression shown by men than women generally and the fact that gay fathers had not turned to adoption following years of fertility treatment. Gay fathers also appeared to have more interaction with their children and the children of gay fathers had particularly busy social lives.

“Same-sex couples have had the legal right to adopt since 2005 but remain a small proportion of the total number of adopters,” says Professor Golombok. “Some agencies have concerns about the effect on children of being brought up by a same-sex couple. That is why it is important to conduct investigations such as this one.”

This study indicates that these issues do not appear to be a significant problem for young children – although the researchers and some parents acknowledge that bullying could later become a problem.

“A number of adoption agencies are actively recruiting same-sex adopters and our message would be that there is an untapped pool of potential adopters who seem to be in a position to provide a very positive family environment for children waiting to be adopted,” she concludes.

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Children are as happy with gay parents
Environment influences exercise

THE PLACE WHERE you live influences the type of exercise you take, says a new study from the Centre for Research on Environment, Society and Health (CRESH) at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Researchers explored the relationship between physical activity and physical environment and found that people living in the ‘best’ environments (eg, high green space, low air pollution) were more likely to exercise for leisure. Those living in the most environmentally deprived areas were less likely to exercise for leisure but more likely to engage in non-recreational walking, such as walking to work or the shops. The health benefits may remain the same, say researchers, but exercise for some is a necessity rather than a pleasurable choice. The fact that physical environment clearly affects an individual’s opportunities to choose healthy behaviours is important. “This study re-emphasises the significance of factors external to the individual in influencing physical activity,” says researcher Dr Niamh Shortt.

The French favour London

LONDON HAS BECOME a destination of choice for highly-skilled French people with an ambition to succeed, according to new research from Middlesex University. The 18-month study set out to examine the motivations and experiences of highly-skilled French migrants (and their families) working in the capital’s business and finance sectors.

Findings showed that the French valued London for the opportunities it provided in two key areas of life: occupationally, the city offered accelerated career escalation and enhanced remuneration in an economic environment prized for its meritocracy, openness and flexibility; socially, London offered an unsurpassed cosmopolitanism that provided almost limitless choice, and the liberty to exercise these choices.

Although most of the 37 participants in the study initially came to London intending to stay a short time for career advancement, the majority recognised the potential costs of further onward mobility, especially in terms of any pre-retirement return to France.

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IN BRIEF

CYCLING TO WORK
How can cycle commuting in the UK be changed? Cycle commuting varies substantially within the UK. While cycling is increasing in some areas, there is limited evidence on the effectiveness of interventions. This study of commuting choices in Chester, Bristol and Cambridge will examine the uptake of cycling to work through an agent-based model focusing on social interactions and social norms.
ESRC grant number: ES/K004549/1

MILLENIUM STUDY
The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) is a unique research resource that follows the lives of over 19,000 children born across the UK around 2000. In the latest sweep of the data, researchers will survey the MCS cohort at age 14 as they reach a critical stage between childhood and adulthood. Sweep six will collect data ranging from time diaries to measures of body fat.
ESRC grant number: ES/K005987/1

BIOCHEMICAL SECURITY
A major security concern over coming decades will be advances in life and associated sciences and the technologies that will enable the proliferation of Chemical and Biological Weapons (CBW). This project aims to help improve the operation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention by focusing on advances in synthetic biology, neuroscience and nanotechnology.
ESRC grant number: ES/K011227/1
IN BRIEF

LATER LIFE DRINKING
Relatively little is known about patterns of alcohol consumption in later life. Based on the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, this study will explore the stability of drinking in later life and the key events that are associated with changes in drinking patterns. Life history data will be used to identify life course transitions that may be associated with changes in alcohol consumption.

ESRC grant number: ES/K004131/1

ELDERLY LONELINESS
Loneliness is a significant problem for older people with 42 per cent of those aged 65-plus in England reporting loneliness. While many services have been developed to combat loneliness, few have achieved their aim.

Using the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, researchers will explore the pathways into and out of loneliness and how social and health factors are linked to loneliness pathways.

ESRC grant number: ES/K004077/1

SOFTWARE DIVERSITY
Software saturates everyday life and the extraordinary proliferation of software projects in the last two decades defies easy analysis. This project draws on data produced when people make or code software together using public code repositories, such as GitHub, Bitbucket, LaunchPad and SourceForge. Researchers aim to track, analyse and characterise flows of practices within the meta-community of programming practices.

ESRC grant number: ES/K007912/1

Human rights at a glance

VISUALISING COUNTRIES’ PERFORMANCE on human rights across the globe is now much easier thanks to the successful creation of a Human Rights Atlas by researchers based at the University of Essex.

The Atlas is based on the publicly available data on country conditions, legal commitments and human rights for over 200 countries and territories for the period 1981-2011, and provides a user-friendly web interface with a global map that allows users to visualise and compare country indicators relevant to human rights. The Atlas, which will be updated regularly, is not only an important data resource but is successfully raising awareness about human rights among a wide audience.

Devolution fails to widen gap

IS SCOTLAND REALLY more ‘left-wing’ or ‘social democratic’ in outlook than England, as is frequently claimed? And is there any evidence that devolution has intensified any differences in outlook between Scotland and England? Research on data from the Scottish and British Social Attitudes surveys suggests that the gap between Scotland and England may be narrower than many people imagine.

The findings indicate that despite the advent of separate Scottish political institutions, distinct Scottish territorial policy communities and a considerable degree of policy divergence between Scotland and England, Scotland has in fact moved to the right over the last decade – in almost exact parallel with similar trends in England. For example, support for the view that government should redistribute income from the better-off to the less well-off has fallen in both countries since 1999. So although Scotland remains a little to the left of England on this issue, the gap between both countries has not widened during the course of the last decade.

The study suggests that devolution has not served, as some may have feared, to widen the gap between English and Scottish social attitudes or public opinion on some of the central issues facing government. To that extent at least, accommodating Scotland within the framework of the United Kingdom looks to be no more difficult a job now than it was a decade ago.

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Hands up everyone who thinks Scotland could be a better place to live.
END-OF-LIFE CARE is a highly topical, but under-researched issue. In a new study, a consortium of research teams from the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium examined the use of sedation in end-of-life care with a focus on 82 patients who died from cancer in their own home, hospital or care home. “A small minority of dying people experience refractory symptoms such as agitated delirium or extreme distress that is unresponsive to conventional therapies,” explains researcher Professor Jane Seymour. “In such circumstances, continuous sedation may be used to decrease or remove consciousness until death occurs. Our aim in this study was to explore how doctors and nurses in three countries make decisions to use sedation in end-of-life care and how they and bereaved relatives experience this practice.”

Adequate symptom control for a dying patient is considered central to all modern understandings of a ‘good death’. This study, Professor Seymour points out, is one of the few to take a qualitative perspective on clinical decision-making surrounding the use of continuous sedation until death and the only one to date which includes the perspectives of nurses, physicians, as well as bereaved informal care-givers.

A preliminary part of the study involved a secondary analysis of survey data, showing unexplained and marked differences in the rates at which clinicians report the use of continuous sedation in end-of-life care between the three countries. The qualitative research shows that the variations relate to contrasting cultural values about death and dying as well as different legal contexts.

An important finding from the UK data concerned the role of nurses, especially when working in the community: “When a person dies at home in the UK, it is very often a nurse who has the responsibility for deciding when to commence medications that have been prescribed in advance by clinicians,” Professor Seymour explains. “These are challenging and difficult decisions and our research suggests that the pivotal role played by nurses needs to be recognised.”

Researchers suggest that while guidelines are important they do not remove the need for individualised decision-making at the bedside of each individual dying person. More open discussion of end-of-life care is urgently needed, they say. “We need greater understanding of the process by which decisions are made and what practical support and assistance nurses and clinicians need when making these decisions,” Professor Seymour concludes.

For nearly all measures of wellbeing, Britain’s elderly are on average better off than their Chinese counterparts, according to a recent study. Researchers compared the relationship between socio-economic status (wealth and education) and multiple dimensions of elderly wellbeing (disability, mobility, self-reported health status, depression and life satisfaction) in the most in-depth survey of ageing ever carried out in the UK and China.

Findings further show that wealth more strongly affects physical health in England than in China. But the opposite is true in terms of psychological health measures. The impact of wealth per capita on psychological health measures (life satisfaction, depression) is stronger in China than in the UK.

Researchers say that cross-country comparisons such as this are invaluable in influencing the way people think about the causes of differences in wellbeing and will, in this case, help inform better design of future programmes to support the elderly in both the UK and China.

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ESRC Grant Number RES-062-23-2078
The benefits of online interaction

ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS can markedly improve their users’ feeling of wellbeing and increase users’ likelihood of taking part in associated offline activities, says researcher Dr Louise Pendry.

“After e-mail, online discussion forums are one of the most popular ways for people to interact online,” Dr Pendry explains.

“Around ten per cent of UK online users take part in online discussion forums,” she adds. This study assessed a range of users’ experiences with online forums focused on parenting, the environment, health and hobbies. Researchers considered whether users develop a sense of identification with other forum users and, if they did, assessed the psychological benefits of doing so.

Findings suggest that, in particular, forums dealing with difficult-to-discuss or stigmatised topics can provide a very positive source of support for users, especially among those who identify most with other users. “We predicted and found that the relationships between identification and wellbeing were strongest for users of stigmatised forums,” she says.

The study also shows that users of all types of forums can translate the identification they develop there into offline civic engagement, such as petitioning. “Highly identified users of forums are more willing to get involved in associated offline activities,” says Dr Pendry. “And we urge end-users and policymakers to recognise the benefits of online discussion forums for users’ wellbeing and for their civic engagement potential.”

A design for desistance from crime

YOUNG OFFENDERS ARE taking longer to stop offending and face increasing difficulties in moving away from crime, according to a recent Scottish study. Youth offending has typically been a temporary, age-limited phenomenon which peaks at 16, drops off sharply in the early 20s, and usually ends by the late 20s. But the study finds that the process of stopping offending (‘desistance’) appears extended – lasting for many disadvantaged young people into their late 20s and early 30s. “It’s a longer, more ‘zig-zag’ path to desistance than it used to be,” says researcher Dr Monica Barry, “and drug/alcohol misuse is undoubtedly a significant factor in this.”

Dr Barry asked a sample of 40 offenders and ex-offenders why they thought young people stop offending and how they would help young people reduce or cease offending.

“Respondents strongly emphasised the need for consistent, continuous one-to-one support as the best means of encouraging desistance, as well as social work interventions where communication was respectful, non-judgemental and constructive (ie, forward- rather than backward- looking),” says Dr Barry.

Fines, community service and imprisonment were judged by the majority of those interviewed to be unreasonable, ineffective and often counterproductive. But education about harmful substance misuse was considered important as were leisure facilities to reduce boredom and therefore reduce re-offending.

These recommendations aside, those interviewed firmly expressed the opinion that ultimately the young person had to want to stop offending themselves. This widely held view, Dr Barry argues, is problematic if it leads to an expectation that young people can, in effect, stop offending on their own at a time when opportunities for everyone are reducing. “Desistance by design should not just mean that offenders make a conscious effort to change but that the society into which they wish to integrate also makes a conscious effort to welcome them,” she says. “Desistance is a two-way process and must be recognised as such.”

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Targeting climate change emissions

ONE OF SEVERAL major barriers to the adoption of effective climate change mitigation policies is the view that such policies have regressive effects, ie, place a higher financial burden as a proportion of household income on poor than on rich households. Based on a study of household-level carbon dioxide emissions and household socio-economic characteristics, researchers conclude that while many mitigation policies are likely to have regressive distributional implications, there are several policy options to counteract regressive effects.

“Our findings are highly policy-relevant as they help identify which emission areas could be targeted most effectively with minimal negative effects on vulnerable households,” explains researcher Dr Milena Buchs. For example, modelling distributional implications showed that carbon dioxide taxes have most regressive effects when levied on home energy emissions and least regressive effects if levied on transport. In fact, they were mildly progressive if only applied to flights.

Crowds can increase wellbeing

MANY ARGUE THAT mass gatherings are bad for your health, but research into one of the largest crowd events on earth finds that occasionally the very opposite can be true.

At the annual month-long Hindu festival, the Magh Mela, millions of people gather at the conjunction of the Yamuna and Ganges rivers in Allahabad, Northern India to celebrate their faith. “For one lunar cycle a vast tented village grows up on the flood plain,” says researcher Dr Nicholas Hopkins. “Every year the Mela is vast.”

According to conventional thinking, the Mela should be a stressful experience, with negative consequences. “The conditions are harsh, noisy and crowded,” Dr Hopkins points out. “At times you are locked into a sea of humanity and can hardly move. It is raucously noisy and it can be intensely cold at night. Yet many of the pilgrims describe the Mela as ‘serene’ or ‘blissful’. Our aim was to discover how this could be.”

While researchers admit that the Mela does pose real health threats that would be foolish to ignore, their study finds that, as a whole, participation actually increases peoples’ mental and physical wellbeing.

“We believe that the Mela has much to teach us about the roots of human wellbeing,” says Dr Hopkins. “Recent research shows the importance of networks and groups in sustaining our health. The more we are part of a network or group, the better our health and conversely anything which disrupts our network or group membership can be bad for our health.”

Evidence suggests that our ability to cope with the world has much to do with the support we get from others. Equally, our confidence in going out into the world depends upon the expectation that others are there if we need them. They constitute a ‘social safety net’. “We found that the experience of being part of a tightly-knit group of Hindu pilgrims, and the sense of support one gets from one’s fellow pilgrims, enhances one’s sense of being part of the community more generally – even after the Mela had finished,” he explains. “The intensely positive experiences in crowds can endure even after the event has ended.”

IN BRIEF

LABOUR LAW

Based on a study of Cambodia, China, India and South Africa, researchers will explore the role of labour law in alleviating poverty in developing countries. This two-year project also aims to produce a diagnostic tool or template to assist those who are reforming labour laws to do so in ways appropriate to the stage of development and institutional characteristics of different countries.

ESRC grant number: ES/J019402/1

GAY FATHER FAMILIES

In the first study of its kind, researchers will examine families where children are raised in gay father families from birth. The study will explore the development of infants raised from birth by gay fathers in the UK, France and the Netherlands. One aim is to determine whether, as many believe, infants ‘need’ women to be involved in their early care and emotional lives.

ESRC grant number: ES/K006150/1

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Until recently, psychologists assumed that people from different societies all think in the same way as those in the West. But when psychologists started testing non-Western people, they found intriguing cultural differences. This new study, which is based first in the East London British Bangladeshi community, aims to explain how and why these cultural differences in thinking styles emerged and are maintained.

ESRC grant number: ES/J01916X/1
A recent survey report from the European Social Survey (ESS) has focused on the economic crisis and how it has affected the quality of work and social integration. Using survey data from ESS Rounds 2 and 5, it presents results collected in 2004 and 2010 across 19 European countries – giving a ‘before and after’ picture of the impact from the financial crisis.

The researchers, led by Professor Duncan Gallie at the University of Oxford, conclude that the economic crisis has had ‘significant effects for the quality of work’. It has led to reduced levels of employee training, changes in work patterns, increased job intensity and higher job insecurity. Potentially even more damaging over the long term, the recession has hit young people’s job aspirations and undermined people’s trust in politics and democratic institutions.

“The findings that Gallie and his colleagues have unearthed clearly indicate the negative impact the recession has had in parts of Europe on people’s working lives”, says ESS Director Rory Fitzgerald.

Different European economies
Countries were divided into five broad categories, including two ‘liberal Anglo-Saxon’ countries (UK and Ireland); four Nordic countries; four ‘continental’ West European countries including Germany and France; six East European countries; and three Southern countries (Greece, Portugal and Spain). Approximately 37,000 interviews were carried out in each of the survey rounds.

Although the economic crisis has left its mark across Europe, the research showed clear differences in how much the different countries had been affected. The Nordic countries have maintained a high-quality work environment and the greatest protection against psychological distress caused by unemployment. Countries’ institutional frameworks, in particular employment regulation and welfare support, are important factors according to the report.

“The impact that different country-level institutional frameworks appear to have had on various outcomes is rather stark – providing interesting comparisons for policymakers”, adds Rory Fitzgerald.

How unemployment affects wellbeing
Support for the unemployed is an area where these differences are particularly obvious. Unemployment has a severe negative impact on wellbeing and can affect people over a long period of time, both through the experience of poverty and being socially isolated. The survey findings show that financial deprivation is the biggest factor; it accounted for over half of the wellbeing impact for the person who experiences unemployment, and all of the impact for their partner.

However, the impact of unemployment is less in the Nordic countries than in the rest of Europe. “The Nordic countries have welfare systems that provide much more generous financial support to unemployed people and this sharply reduces the financial deprivation brought by unemployment”, Professor Gallie points out.

More work pressures and job insecurity
For those who have kept their jobs, the pressure is on. The results suggest that work intensity (productivity and time pressures) rose as the recession hit in 2008, across all European regions. There was also an increase in ‘high-strain’ jobs (with little influence over work decisions), but

Rising unemployment and job insecurity has affected trust in political institutions
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this was limited to the Anglo-Saxon countries (UK and Ireland), the East European countries, and particularly France.

Job insecurity rose sharply in the liberal economies of the UK and Ireland, as well as in the Southern and East European countries – but remained at the same level in the Nordic and Continental countries. Evidence also suggests that there were no major shifts in the structure of the workforce towards temporary or part-time staff, although the proportion of part-timers increased in most countries. But temporary or part-time staff were more likely to have taken pay cuts than those in standard-contract jobs.

The increased work strain has also taken its toll on family life. ESS findings show that there was a small but significant increase in work-family conflict between 2004 and 2010, across most countries.

A number of changes in working conditions over the period contributed to it, including an increase in unsocial hours, an increase in working overtime at short notice and the growth in job insecurity. But by far the most important factor was the rise in work pressure,’ states the report.

Public distrust in politics and democracy
The surveys explored how rising unemployment and heightened job insecurity has affected people’s trust in political institutions. They revealed a decline between 2004 and 2010 in overall levels of political trust and satisfaction with democracy across much of Europe, but this varied markedly between countries.

‘It was significant in Britain, Belgium, Denmark and Finland; particularly notable in France, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain, and reached truly alarming proportions in the case of Greece,’ concludes the ESS report. The financial crisis ‘not only eroded the objective economic conditions of many citizens, but also created widespread anxiety about a country’s future even among those who did not experience hardship directly.’

“The negative impact of the recession on people’s trust in politics and satisfaction with democracy in certain parts of Europe gives cause for concern”, adds Rory Fitzgerald.

“The ESS has been continuing to track trust and satisfaction with democracy throughout the sovereign debt crisis phase and will do so into the future. Data to be released in October this year will show whether trust and satisfaction with democracy has continued its decline in some regions, or whether an improvement has been seen.”

Ardel Foss is ESRC Copy Editor

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a biennial cross-sectional survey covering more than 30 nations. It is designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe’s changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. It is funded through the European Commission’s Framework programmes, the European Science Foundation, and national funding councils in participating countries, including the ESRC in the UK.

www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Economic Crisis, Quality of Work and Social Integration: Topline Results from Rounds 2 and 5 of the European Social Survey
UK REGIONAL DISPARITIES have widened following the financial crisis. Public spending cuts will exacerbate these trends – at least in the short run – as already weaker areas bear the brunt of those cuts. If the coalition government is serious about achieving geographical ‘rebalancing’ it is falling short of its stated objective. What has gone wrong and what could government do to turn things around?

There are two broad explanations for what has happened. The first points to the structural characteristics of areas to explain their differing fortunes. Areas with lots of highly educated workers tend to be more ‘resilient’ to economic shocks – either because the initial shock is smaller (if demand for local firms holds up) or because workers are able to adjust even when jobs disappear.

The second explanation places the blame more firmly on the effect of government cuts that are felt disproportionately in already weak economies – either because of the explicit targeting of cuts or because weaker economies are simply more reliant on the public sector. Of course, these two factors interact – underlying structural weakness can be compounded by the effect of public sector cuts. On balance, I think it is clear that both these forces are at work in the UK and it is almost impossible to disentangle the relative contributions.

If this is the case, what can government do to offset the consequences for regional disparities? Much has been written about the overall fiscal position. I will not revisit those issues here. Instead, I will briefly discuss three interrelated areas concerning the ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ of policy.

The government’s flagship policy in this area is the Regional Growth Fund (RGF). The government claims that one billion pounds of RGF expenditure will safeguard or create 240,000 jobs. If these figures were true the RGF would be an incredibly successful scheme and a useful tool for achieving rebalancing. In practice, unfortunately, that is a very big ‘if’.

Incomplete monitoring will mean that much of the ‘leveraged’ private sector funds (‘£6 for every £1 of public money’) would likely have been spent anyhow. In other words, there is a lot of ‘deadweight’ here. Another way of seeing this is to note that if government truly believed these numbers you might expect to see a lot more spending on RGF.

RGF money is targeted at places that are particularly vulnerable to public sector cuts. This highlights the question of which areas government should be looking to support if it wants to achieve rebalancing. On this question there is a fundamental, but unresolved, tension concerning the government’s growth objectives. On the one hand, government wants to maximise the economic potential of relatively successful places to help increase the overall growth rate. On the other government wants rebalancing. Of course, some will argue that these objectives are not in conflict.

Many economists would disagree. If we do need to choose (at least in terms of prioritising one over the other) what should we do? Overall, at least for the UK, I think the evidence points towards prioritising growth in our more successful places even if this leads to more uneven spatial development. But this is a very difficult recommendation for constituency-based politicians to implement.

This brings me to the final point – how might we formulate better rebalancing policy – or who decides? The coalition wants to give local government increased powers to drive growth. Setting aside the extent to which this is real and radical decentralisation of powers, the localism agenda offers an interesting opportunity to figure out what policy could do better.

There is huge disagreement on what policy should do to try to better rebalance growth. There are no easy answers on what policy should do but genuine localism, combined with effective evaluation, offers the chance for much greater experimentation so that policymakers can try to figure out what might work.

**Areas with lots of highly educated workers tend to be more ‘resilient’ to economic shocks**
Celebrating impact

The ESRC Celebrating Impact Prize is a new, annual opportunity to recognise researchers who are achieving outstanding impact on economy and society through collaborative working, partnerships, engagement and knowledge exchange activities.

The winners were announced at the awards ceremony held in London on 14 May 2013 with BBC broadcaster and former economics editor, Evan Davis. The award ceremony was attended by leading academics and research users, as well as influential individuals from public, private and voluntary organisations. A short film was shown about each winning impact, featuring research users – these films are available to view on the ESRC website, along with further details and the event programme featuring both first- and second-prize winners.

Outstanding Impact in Society recognises research that has benefited society more widely or a specific group of the public. The winner was Professor Cathy Nutbrown, University of Sheffield. Professor Nutbrown worked with 20 early years practitioners to adapt a family literacy framework – Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Models (ORIM). The original 20 practitioners shared their work with 300 practitioners, between them reaching 6,000 families. Through partnership with the National Children's Bureau the project reached local authorities and a number of networks concerned with early years education, influencing local policy and national practice in parents' role in early literacy.

Outstanding International Impact recognises research that has achieved impact at an international level in business, policy or societal issues. Professor Fulong Wu, University College London, received this prize. Professor Wu works at the forefront of Chinese urban and planning policies. More than half of China’s population now lives in cities and rapid urbanisation has raised profound challenges. His research has explored a socially sustainable form of urbanisation and integration of rural migrants in urban China. Professor Wu’s ESRC/DFID jointly funded projects have been instrumental in reframing debates and enhancing research and professional development in China.

Outstanding Impact in Public Policy recognises research that has contributed to the development of UK public policy, be it local, regional or national. The winners were Professor Kevin Morgan and Dr Roberta Sonnino, Cardiff University. The team highlighted the potential of public procurement to promote sustainability.
focusing on local authorities spearheading school food reform in the UK and Italy. Their research analysed and inspired public policy reform at local and national levels in England, Scotland and Wales. The Welsh Government’s reform of national school food policy, Appetite for Life, was inspired by their research and is now creating wider impact on procurement policy across the public sector.

Outstanding Impact in Business recognises research that has generated business impact through successful knowledge exchange and engagement. Professor Paula Jarzabkowski, City University, received this award. As a result of three projects funded collaboratively by the ESRC and industry, Professor Jarzabkowski has had global impact on the re-insurance business. She gained deep insights and a global overview through applying the ethnographic research method. Professor Jarzabkowski identified the potential risk of market collapse, arising from increased complexity in re-insurance products. She developed tools to enable businesses to address the issues through relationship management and risk analysis, resulting in firm behaviour change.

Outstanding Early Career Impact recognises student researchers who have achieved or shown potential in achieving outstanding impact. This was awarded to Dr John Jerrim, Institute of Education. Dr Jerrim has influenced how statistical evidence on educational achievement is presented to the British public by government departments and policymakers. Dr Jerrim demonstrated that England’s apparent declining performance on the international rankings of school pupils’ academic achievement is not a statistically robust finding and that public policy should not be based upon these claims.

Impact Champion of the Year is a nominated individual who has a significant personal track record in supporting and enabling impact and knowledge exchange. The winner was Professor Alan Walker, University of Sheffield. Professor Walker has an exemplary career-long record in championing impact. This is most recently demonstrated as the central aim of the cross-Research Council New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Programme, in capacity-building among researchers at all stages of their careers, pioneering new approaches and in achieving direct impact, particularly in the policy field. Professor Walker’s dedication to impact has proved inspirational across a wide range of disciplines as well as among non-researchers.

Each category winner received a trophy and £10,000 to further knowledge exchange, public engagement or other communications activities to promote economic and social research impact. A further £10,000 was awarded to the department of the Impact Champion of the Year. The runners up received £5,000, also to invest in impact activities, as a result of the Prize attracting a high standard of applications.

Professor Paul Boyle, ESRC Chief Executive, said: “The breadth of impacts rewarded by the prize demonstrates the range of issues that social science research contributes to, offering solutions to the many challenges our society faces.”

For more information, see: www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/celebrating-impact-prize/prize-winners-2013.aspx

The ceremony was attended by leading academics and research users, as well as influential individuals from public, private and voluntary organisations.
Tolley Blair once famously said that ‘education is the best economic policy we have’. That was 15 years ago and since then the educational system has grown rapidly. The number of graduates alone has more than doubled with over eight million graduates now in the labour market. 

With such a rapid increase in education, there are concerns that British employers are not making the best use of the increased supply of qualified labour. Only a year after its launch the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) voiced this concern by urging government ‘to invest as much effort in raising employer ambition, in stimulating demand, as it does in enhancing skills supply’.

Indirect evidence suggests that such concerns may be overblown. Even in the face of rapid educational expansion, the monetary benefits of education remain high. Nevertheless, an ever-growing pool of qualified labour has meant that the rewards have become more variable. This suggests that the demand for qualifications has also grown.

More direct evidence on skills used by workers in employment – obtained by asking them about their jobs – provides further support that jobs as well as workers have been upskilled. The latest such data comes from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012 (SES2012). This is a nationally representative sample survey of individuals in employment aged 20-65 in Britain. A total of 3,200 individuals took part and they were interviewed in their own homes for around one hour.

There are concerns that British employers are not making the best use of the increased supply of qualified labour. The sixth in a series of similar such surveys carried out since 1986. The latest survey was funded by the ESRC and the UKCES.

The series shows that between 1986 and 2006 the proportion of jobs requiring graduate qualifications doubled from ten per cent to 20 per cent and jobs requiring no qualifications fell from 38 per cent to 28 per cent. The upward movement became even more pronounced between 2006 and 2012. Jobs requiring no qualifications on entry fell from 28 per cent in 2006 to 23 per cent in 2012, while jobs requiring degrees or higher rose from a fifth (20 per cent) in 2006 to around a quarter (26 per cent) in 2012. At no time in the 1986-2012 period have falls and rises of these magnitudes been recorded. One interpretation is that employers, when recruiting, are increasingly asking for qualifications which are not necessary to do the job. But the research team found no evidence to support this view.

At the same time, there has been a rapid increase in the number of working aged adults with qualifications. For example, the number of graduates in the labour force has grown by 20 percentage points between 1986 and 2012. How effectively have these qualifications been used? One way of answering this question is to examine whether workers have qualifications which are too high for their jobs. We would expect some level of mismatch because it is not always possible for people to find employment that effectively uses the skills and educational qualifications they have. Also search processes used by employers and employees are often imperfect and so mismatches are inevitable.

Using the survey series, the research team examined the match between the qualification level of each respondent and the qualification level they report someone would need to get the job they currently do. From this, it is possible to calculate whether the respondent is ‘over-qualified’ in relation to their current job; that is,
they have a higher level of qualification than is required.

The results of the latest survey suggest that between 2006 and 2012 the long trend of rising levels of over-qualification in Britain was put into reverse. From 1986 to 2006, two or three percentage points were added at each data point to the proportion over-qualified. Yet between 2006 and 2012 the proportion fell by two percentage points, with an even sharper decline among graduates where it fell by six points. This suggests that at a time when the supply of qualified workers was growing ever larger, better levels of matching were also taking place.

That is the good news. The bad news is that the upskilling of jobs appears, at best, to be weakening. Few would deny that qualifications are important for work, but they only capture part of the abilities required to do a job competently and do not tell us whether the type of work requires long periods of training or whether it takes a long time to learn to get to grips with the job once in post. SES2012 and its predecessors offer such insights. Here, the evidence suggests that there has been a decline in both training and learning times since 2006. From 1986 to 1997, there was an upward trend in both measures, but from then onwards upskilling petered out and by 2012 there were noticeable falls in both.

The 2012 survey and its three predecessors also asked jobholders to give an importance rating to over 40 different work activities. Using these data the survey team can gauge how the generic skills content of jobs has changed. While the use of generic skills rose between 1997 and 2006, there has been little change since 2006, with the growth in the use of most generic skills virtually coming to a halt. Computing skills requirements continued to rise, but much more slowly than in the past. Around nine percentage points were added to the proportion of respondents regarding computing skills as ‘essential’ to their daily work activities at each data point between 1997 and 2006, but between 2006 and 2012 just over three percentage points were added.

Based on these results, the major issue for policy is that, while existing businesses are making better use of publicly supported education than in the past, the upskilling of jobs which has characterised the last 20 years is slowing down. Since the economy’s prosperity is based on the skills of its jobs, policymakers should concentrate most on ensuring that this slowdown does not turn into a long-term reversal of the upskilling trends of the 1986-2006 period. So more needs to be done to challenge some employers to ratchet up their skill demands. While it is a laudable ambition for Britain to have a high stock of skilled labour, these skills need to be used effectively, and for that to happen the demand for skills needs to be raised.
The rewards of innovation

How should policymakers foster sustainable long-term growth? Professor Mariana Mazzucato believes an important element is a more pro-active role for the government to become an ‘entrepreneurial state’ and a financial eco system where all those who contribute to innovation receive some of the rewards. By Phil Thornton

The state has not only fixed markets but also shaped and created them.

“The reason why industrial policy is back on the agenda is that finance is viewed as having become too large and so policymakers want to rebalance the economy towards ‘real’ areas like manufacturing”, she says.

“But we must also make sure we transform the indicators of economic performance in all sectors as they have become too financialised.”

At the heart of her critique is the idea that the current system rewards ‘profit extractors’ at the expense of ‘value creators’.

“We need to fine tune how we better reward those companies in all sectors that are investing for the long run – in areas like human capital and R&D – rather than those that just suck out money through practices like share-buybacks which are prevalent in both high-tech and low-tech sectors.”

Her thinking is based on research carried out while she was economics director of the ESRC Centre for Social and Economic Research on Innovation in Genomics (INNOGEN) and director of the EC-funded FP7 FINNOV research project.

Professor Mazzucato says there is a need for more sophisticated measures of firms’ ability to add value, rather than a single measure such as a credit score or stock price.

But perhaps an even more important element of her long-term growth vision is a more pro-active role for the government to become an ‘entrepreneurial state’.

“In her view economists and policymakers have been blinded by the notion that all government does is solve ‘market failures’.

She says the state has not only fixed markets but also shaped and created them. She points to the origin of biotech, nanotech and to specific products like the Apple iPhone: all its key technologies such as GPS, touch-screen display, communication technologies, and the internet trace their funding to the state.

Indeed, venture capital often waits for the state to bear the highest risk in the funding of new technologies and early stage firm financing, before having the guts to enter itself, she says.

One worry for many policymakers is to be seen as trying to pick winners with the echo of the failed interventions of the 1970s.

Professor Mazzucato says investments in innovation are risky – for both the private and public sector – so of course there will be some losers for every winner.

She says the problem is more about how to reform the financial eco system so that the collective system of innovation fits with a more collective distribution of the rewards to those that have contributed to the process.
“More thinking is needed about how to make sure the profits generated from innovation-led growth do not get siphoned off by a small share of the actors who have contributed to the process”, she says.

While some believe the state can earn back a return via tax, firms’ use of tax avoidance and the low level of corporate taxes make that an inappropriate mechanism to ensure there are future funds for innovation.

A more direct method might be an innovation fund that companies pay into when they benefit directly from state investments – such as Google’s algorithm which was funded by the state.

She says: “If the US had earned back even just one per cent from the investments it made in the internet, there would be much more today to invest in green technology.”

She points to income contingent loans, used for students, as another mechanism. Alternatively the state can retain some equity, as is common in countries like Finland where SITRA (a public funding agency) funded early stage Nokia and made profits from the retained equity which were then used to re-invest in other companies.

BNDES, the Brazilian state development bank, provides long-term ‘patient’ finance to industry and makes a 20 per cent return on equity which is reinvested in innovation, as well as redistributed via the Treasury into the economy – helping ‘smart’ growth also be inclusive.

“Innovation is a big topic but what government has to do – at every point in the business cycle, not just the recession – is to do what the private sector isn’t doing”, she says.

“Because we have not given the state credit for what it does, we have not found a way for it to reap the rewards – more important than ever in the era of budget cuts.”

Phil Thornton is Editor of Re-igniting Growth and lead consultant, Clarity Economics

If the US had earned back even just one per cent from the investments it made in the internet, there would be much more today to invest in green technology.
We present an at-a-glance overview of the key issues in Britain today. In this issue our focus is on migration. All statistics are from Eurostat March 2013 data unless otherwise stated.

Work-related visas

In Q4 2012, there was a 3% fall in work-related visas issued (to 145,138) largely relating to very highly skilled workers. For work-related visas and admissions the highest numbers relate to Indian, Australian and US nationals. Source: Home Office, Immigration Statistics October-December 2012

“Recognize yourself in he and she who are not like you and me” Carlos Fuentes

“A nation that cannot control its borders is not a nation” Ronald Reagan

3.8%
1.9%
77%

Largest EU27 immigration rate is Luxembourg, where 3.8% of the population were immigrants. Largest number was the UK, with 566,044

Largest EU27 emigration rate was Ireland, where 1.9% of the population emigrated. Largest number was Spain, with 507,742 emigrants

77.1% of the total number of non-nationals living in the EU27 were found in Germany, Spain, Italy, the UK and France

In the year to June 2012 the estimated number of British citizens immigrating long-term to the UK was 76,000. The estimated number of British citizens emigrating long-term from the UK in the year to June 2012 was 155,000. Emigration of British citizens has been steadily increasing and is now significantly higher than a low of 128,000 in the year to June 2010. Net migration of British citizens was -79,000 in the year ending June 2012. This means that 79,000 more British citizens left the UK than arrived during that year.

Source: ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, February 2013

Migrating to study

190,000 migrants arrived to study in the UK in the year to September 2012 – significantly lower than 246,000 in the previous year. Source: ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, May 2013
Non-nationals in EU27

Germany had the highest number of non-nationals (7.4 million persons) of the EU27 countries. The five countries with the highest number of non-nationals accounted for 62.9% of the EU27 population.

Why do people emigrate to the UK?
Study remains the most common reason stated for migrating to the UK with 197,000 migrants arriving to study in the year to June 2012. A definite job (108,000) is the next most common reason.

Why do people emigrate from the UK?
Of those emigrating from the UK, 125,000 had a definite job and 76,000 were looking for work. Just 21,000 of emigrants left the UK for formal study.

Source - ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report, February 2013

Emigration
Spain reported the highest number of emigrants in 2011 (507,742), followed by the United Kingdom with (350,703), Germany (249,045) and France with (213,367). In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Poland, Romania and the three Baltic Member States, emigrants outnumbered immigrants.

“A simple way to take measure of a country is to look at how many want in... ...and how many want out” Tony Blair
Flight of fancy

Flying creates a high proportion of UK carbon emissions yet we’re all flying more, not less. Why do people act in a pro-environmental way at home but still find it acceptable to fly to a holiday destination? And what initiatives might change our behaviour and encourage us to use other forms of transport? By Jennifer Garrett

How environmentally friendly is your lifestyle? Most of us do the recycling and turn the lights off at home. But our daily actions are often offset by the one habit it seems we find hard to break – flying.

Although flying accounts for a large proportion of UK carbon emissions, carbon emissions which are emitted higher in the atmosphere, closer to the greenhouse gas layer, have an even larger effect on climate change. The concentration of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere reached a significant milestone in May, with a daily average of 400 parts per million. With air travel predicted to grow significantly, both in the UK and globally, this is potentially catastrophic for our environment.

“So much policy has been focused on the home, yet for people who take two or three flights a year they might use up as much carbon flying on holiday than they save in all their other activities. The proportionality is important”, says Dr Stewart Barr at the University of Exeter. Dr Barr and his team have been investigating environmental lifestyles and behaviour change for sustainable development, engaging in critical debates surrounding sustainability policy in the UK.

Encouraging people to carry out actions that benefit the environment has been much more effective in and around the home than in leisure and tourism contexts. We are more likely to perform pro-environmental behaviours if they are socially desirable, like kerbside recycling schemes, or provide financial or health benefits, such as cycling to work.

“Most people think it is a good thing to save money or not to waste things – it is the expected thing to do the recycling. But when it comes to flying the main argument for stopping is carbon emissions, and climate science is difficult to communicate and still bound-up with controversy in the popular media”, says Dr Barr.

So why do pro-environmental attitudes seem not to transfer beyond the home? A lack of awareness of the environmental impact of air travel is not the problem. A large proportion of the population agrees that flying less would have a positive effect on the UK’s contribution to climate change, but rather than look at environmental awareness, we should be looking at the everyday consumption practices of people as barriers to change.

Dr Barr’s team has shown that even among those who appear most committed to the environment, only a very small proportion transfers this to their holidays by choosing not to fly. “Our ESRC-funded project suggests that income is a key factor. People with higher disposable incomes just use the low-cost airlines more”, explains Dr Barr.

The research found that three groups in particular fly most often: young professionals, who enjoy regular weekend breaks; ‘empty nesters’ who are recently retired and enjoy flying to exotic destinations; and young families – parents who wish to continue the young professional lifestyle with their children.

Tackling the gap between environmental attitudes and behaviours is of particular importance for sustainability policy. Dr Barr believes the techniques of ‘social marketing’ can promote behaviour change in citizens in some situations: “Social marketing is about using conventional marketing techniques, like those supermarkets use to get us to buy more products, but to promote social or environmental good.”

Transport policy should be about providing serious investment to change how people experience travel.

Social marketing can make pro-environmental behaviours more attractive by using a series of positive messages tailored to different audiences.
“People are not generally interested in the environment; they are interested in living a good life and having fun. Social marketing goes beyond the ‘deficit model’ – that if we just give people more information they’ll change their behaviour. Social marketing can make certain pro-environmental behaviours more attractive by using a series of positive messages tailored to different audiences.”

Findings show travel is regarded as a reward for being ‘green’ most of the time; frequent fliers who report day-to-day sustainable behaviours attribute far less guilt to flying than car journeys. This presents a number of challenges.

“One challenge for encouraging individuals to change their behaviour is the contradiction in policy. For example the Department for Education – and universities in general – promote gap-year travel as something to widen your horizons and increase employability. But the Department for Transport and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are asking people to reduce how much they fly.”

According to Dr Barr, the main challenge lies in our transport systems. “Current infrastructures don’t support the behaviour change agenda. People have limited choices for travel and so there is only a limited amount you can do if you rely on behaviour change as a strategy. Ultimately people won’t change their behaviour if it doesn’t benefit them, so travel needs to be timely, reliable, efficient and cheap.”

The motivations for flying tend to be that it is quicker, cheaper and easier. But most find the experience of airports and flying rather unpleasant. For domestic and European travel, flying does not always work out cheaper or quicker – but it is a socially accepted behaviour.

“It should be about promoting wellbeing in a low-carbon context, relying less on foreign travel to get enjoyment and providing serious investment in infrastructure to change how people experience travel”, Dr Barr points out.

Dr Barr and his team have been working with collaborators to develop a travel app enabling low-carbon travel options to be more easily identified. The app will be available by the end of June.

“The vast bulk of European travel could become low-carbon by rail travel – you really don’t need to fly. The main aim of the app is to demonstrate to the travel industry that rail travel can be sold as a viable alternative option to flights.”

Our addiction to cheap flights will be difficult to break, but ‘staycations’ may also prove a more viable option in future. “We will always want to travel abroad, but there are also huge opportunities to promote domestic tourism. There is a role for the UK tourism industry to reinvent itself as a low-carbon alternative to international travel.”

Jennifer Garrett is an ESRC Communications Officer

For more information, see:
ESRC Grant number RES-189-25-0326: Social Marketing for Sustainability: developing a community of practice for co-creating behavioural change campaigns
ESRC Grant Number RES-001-25-0158: Promoting Sustainable Travel: a social marketing approach
Now in its 11th year the ESRC Festival of Social Science this year takes place from 2-9 November, exploring the effects of social science on our daily lives.

The Festival of Social Science connects researchers with new audiences, including individuals from business, charities, government, teenagers, pensioners and parents. The organisers learn from the experience of holding an event, benefit from opportunities to network and gain a better understanding of individual perceptions of their research. Attendees can experience and understand how social science is exploring the issues that affect many in society and take part in debate and discussion of these wide-ranging issues in a local environment.

The Festival has come a long way since its conception in 2003, when it was known as Social Science week. The first Social Science week was a series of 20 events targeted at a largely academic audience, with the events concentrated in London. Today it has grown to become a diverse and wide-reaching celebration of the social sciences, with access to over 180 free and engaging events for everyone from schoolchildren to politicians. In recent years the Festival has spread ever further across the UK, with events held from Exeter to the Hebrides.

The format of the 2013 Festival remains similar to previous years with events targeting one of four different types of audience: a general audience; those with some knowledge and a specific interest in the research, such as a parent group or participants in a research project; professionals including local businesses, charities and government agencies; and schools or college students, with organisers working in conjunction with teachers.

Organisers have the freedom to be creative in their event design and to try innovative approaches, which suit the audience needs. This has created a variety of different formats from film screenings, talks, exhibitions and debates, to plays, workshops, seminars or even walks.

Events are also reaching new audiences. One 2012 event was held at a local prison. Organiser Charlotte Bilby of Northumbria University said: “Clearly these small events have had an enormous impact on an exceptionally hard-to-reach group of people. I can’t tell you how positive my colleague and I felt about the whole experience we had that week. We go into prisons so often and ask for help and knowledge, and we were able to go and give that back.”

Feedback on the Festival’s value has been overwhelmingly positive from both audience and event organisers alike. In 2012, 86 per cent of attendees said they planned to seek out further information on the topic of the event, while 84 per cent said they would use the information from the event in their own work/studies.

The most popular objective among event organisers was to increase awareness and understanding of a specific social science topic, and 97 per cent of event organisers were satisfied with their event overall.

We are now working closely with universities in Bristol and Sheffield to develop and support social science festivals across the country, and to support universities in embedding academic engagement with new audiences. In the coming years we hope to broaden this approach and work with universities in other major cities to develop local social science festivals.

The call for applications to hold events as part of the 2013 Festival of Social Science has now closed and the programme of events will be announced in September. We have received many innovative and unusual applications that will ensure this year’s festival continues to explore and explain the issues that affect society and their impact on our daily lives.

For more information, see: www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/festival/index.aspx
Britain in 2013 is available from WH Smith Travel and High Street shops, Waitrose, Waterstones and Marks and Spencer. And Society Now subscribers can order a copy at the reduced price of £3.95 by calling 01793 798177 and quoting SN16 OFFER

The Britain in 2013 iPad app is also available on the Apple App Store or iTunes
Unemployment in the 17 countries of the eurozone has hit a record high and is fast approaching 20 million people. The young are bearing the brunt of this jobs crisis: Eurostat, the data office of the European Union (EU), reports that nearly one in four 16-24 year olds in the single currency area are now out of work. And the proportion is far higher in some countries: more than 40 per cent in Italy and more than 50 per cent in Greece and Spain, compared with 7.4 per cent of under-25s in Germany.

Policies to tackle unemployment have been central to the work of Chris Pissarides, professor at the London School of Economics and, for many years, director of the macroeconomics programme at the ESRC-funded Centre for Economic Performance. Research by the 2010 Nobel Prizewinner in Economics and his co-recipients – Peter Diamond and Dale Mortensen – has provided deep insights into how labour markets work and how policymakers should respond.

The trio were recognised for their analysis of ‘search frictions’, a phenomenon that is key to understanding such diverse markets as those for a job, a house and a spouse. While a given market may have buyers and sellers who can in principle agree on a price, this may be insufficient for immediate trade to take place. Both buyers and sellers may need to invest in a costly and time-consuming process of search to locate and assess partners with whom to ‘match’. And they eventually need to agree to enter a transaction rather than wait for better opportunities.

By far the most influential application of search and matching theory has been to the labour market, where it led to the concept of ‘equilibrium unemployment’. The central idea is that workers need to spend time and resources to find suitable job opportunities; and firms need to spend time and resources to locate and screen job applicants. Matching takes time – and so unemployment is naturally higher than it would be in a world without frictions. One significant prediction of search theory is that after a recession, recovery may be slow even once job opportunities start to emerge.

Pissarides’ core theoretical work on labour markets with search frictions has been accompanied by numerous contributions to policy analysis, both in the UK and the EU. Indeed, he was active in debates about Europe’s need for jobs well before the crisis, notably in discussion of EU targets for employment agreed in Lisbon in 2000.

The so-called ‘Lisbon strategy’ emphasised job creation in advanced technology industries. In contrast, Pissarides has argued that the major source of new jobs will be the sectors that provide services to the general public, notably health and domestic services. He notes that in three sectors of the economy, job creation in Europe lags far behind the United States: retailing; business-to-business services, such as finance, insurance and commercial property; and health and education.

Despite an initially hostile reception, the European Commission has now adopted Pissarides’ approach, as indicated in the recommendations of its 2012 Growth Survey. Last September, he was invited to deliver a keynote lecture on the same platform as the ‘three presidents’ (of the Commission, the Council and the Parliament) at the ‘jobs for Europe’ summit, which discussed his recommendations. Some have become part of the official EU agenda for job creation.

In other recent work, the Nobel laureate has looked at the contrasting experiences of youth
In recessions, especially in countries with rigid labour markets like Italy or Greece, young people typically stay unemployed for too long.
and adult unemployment in European countries during the latest recession. Germany, for example, is the most successful of major countries in its ratio of youth to adult unemployment: it has a very elaborate subsidised apprentice system for youths. Italy and Greece are the worst: both have rigid labour markets with a lot of job protection for adults and low levels of job turnover.

Pissarides points out that youth unemployment is higher than adult unemployment even in normal economic times. But in recessions, especially in countries with rigid labour markets, young people typically stay unemployed for too long. In these circumstances, urgent policy action is needed to avoid long-term unemployment, which destroys talent and creates social problems.

“A good labour market is one in which young people are given the chance to go ‘job shopping’ until they discover what they are good at”, he explains. “Just like they are not expected to marry their first boyfriend or girlfriend, they should not be expected to take their first job and stick to it forever.

“Job shopping is the reason why youth unemployment is more than adult unemployment in normal times”, he adds. “The best kind of market that provides this experience is a flexible market with a lot of job turnover. In this market, employers are able to take advantage of new job opportunities and create many jobs for youths to try out. But in rigid labour markets or in recessions, young workers stay unemployed for too long. That is when we need active labour market policies.”

Elements of an active labour market policy for Europe’s jobless youth could include extending education places, through universities and colleges offering more applied and shorter courses; providing specially designed training; subsidising self-employment or recruitment of unemployed youths by companies; and teaching young people how to look for and learn about jobs.

In recent months, Pissarides has become even more closely involved with policy advice. Back in his native Cyprus, he was appointed president of the government’s Economic Policy Council just before the crisis erupted. The country’s severe treatment initially seemed to shake his belief in European integration. But he remains committed to keeping Cyprus in the eurozone, calling on all members to join in strengthening its foundations. In particular, he wants to see progress on a banking union and a fiscal union. He also emphasises the importance of completing Europe’s ‘single market’, especially lifting barriers to trade in services to increase competitiveness and job creation.

Pissarides remains an active participant in UK debates about the economy. He believes that a fundamental policy rethink is needed in response to changes in the structure of society and the world economy. “The urgent problem is to get the country out of recession and restore balance in the government’s accounts”, he notes. “But these problems are closely linked to longer-run dilemmas.”

According to his analysis, the key issue is that the gap between spending and tax revenue is too large and unsustainable: “Everyone wants to see low taxes, low debt and a sound social welfare system. But these are difficult to achieve with the growing pressures on core elements of national life: a universal health service, high-quality education, generous transfers to the poor and good pensions. At the same time, people have come to expect – and demand at the polls – lower taxes, a legacy perhaps of the Thatcher era.”

The big question remains unanswered, Pissarides says: how do we plan to balance the desire to have generous transfers to the poor and good quality health and education services on the one hand, with the low taxes and deficits that voters demand on the other? “We will have to answer this question”, he concludes. “Otherwise, we will be muddling through, papering over the cracks when the real need is to fix the foundations.”

Romesh Vaitilingam is an economics writer and adviser to various research institutions (Twitter: @econromesh)

Christopher Pissarides is the School Professor of Economics and Political Science at the London School of Economics. In 2010 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for his work with Peter Diamond and Dale Mortensen on the analysis of markets with search frictions.

Professor Pissarides was made a Knight Bachelor in the 2013 Queen’s Birthday Honours for services to Economics.

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ESRC PARTICIPATING IN WHAT WORKS NETWORK
The ESRC is participating as a funding partner in the What Works Network for public sector investments, announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander, and Minister for Government Policy, Oliver Letwin. The What Works Network aims to provide robust research evidence to guide decision-making on £200 billion of public spending.

As well as two existing centres of excellence – the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence and the Educational Endowment Foundation – the network will consist of four new independent institutions part-funded by the Government, with significant contributions from the ESRC.

The new centres will focus on four key research areas: tackling crime, promoting active and independent ageing, effective early intervention, and fostering local economic growth.

As well as disseminating research evidence to local level decision-makers, the new research centres will also feed insights into government to inform national decision-making. It is the first time a government anywhere has set up such a model at a national level.

Primary users of the centre’s outputs will be decision-makers and practitioners working in local economic partnerships, cities and local authorities, which will use the evidence to ensure the best spending decisions for their areas.

NEW TEAM TO NAVIGATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
The ESRC has appointed a new Local Government Navigator Team. The team, made up of three Knowledge Navigators, will focus on building relationships, raising the profile of social science research and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

Local councils and communities across the UK are having to tighten their purse strings in the face of a period of sustained austerity and respond to profound demographic, technological and environmental change. To adapt and respond to these challenges they need to access the best knowledge and understanding available.

The UK funds a huge amount of research that can benefit local authorities and the communities they serve. To help local government access this knowledge, the ESRC, in partnership with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executive and Senior Managers (SOLACE) and the Local Government Association (LGA) is funding a knowledge navigator team who will give councils an opportunity to tap into this existing research, exert more influence over future research agendas, and develop their own research and development capacity. They will also help the research community connect with the needs of the sector and the communities it serves to generate greater impact.

CONSORTIUM UNDERTAKING NEXT BRITISH ELECTION STUDY
The ESRC announced that the next British Election Study will be hosted by a consortium comprising the Universities of Manchester, Oxford and Nottingham.

The British Election Study has been conducted at every General Election since 1964, and is designed to help our understanding of long-term trends in British voting behaviour. The study looks at why people vote, and why they vote the way they do. Previous studies have received high public and academic recognition and have made a major contribution to the understanding of political attitudes and behaviour over 50 years.

The scientific leadership team for the 2015 Study will be Professor Ed Fieldhouse, Dr Jane Green, Professor Hermann Schmitt (all Manchester), Professor Geoff Evans (Oxford, Nuffield) and Professor Cees van der Eijk (Nottingham).

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE DATA RESEARCH CENTRES
The ESRC has announced the call for four Administrative Data Research Centres (ADRCs), one each in Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales.

The centres will be part of the Administrative Data Research Network (ADRN) – a partnership between government departments, research funders, national statistical authorities, and the research community that will reach across the UK to facilitate research based upon linked, routinely collected administrative data.

The four ADRCs are being commissioned in parallel to a new Administrative Data Service – the information and co-ordinating body. Combined, this new data resource will help position the UK at the forefront of research based on linked administrative data.

CENTRE FOR CHARITABLE GIVING AND PHILANTHROPY REPORT
The Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (CGAP) programme has drawn to a close. What has it achieved in its five-year programme and what do its results mean for strengthening our society through giving, now and in the future?

The findings and messages from the work of the CGAP consortium have been brought together and published in an accessible new summary available from the Centre. We will feature a full article on the CGAP findings in a future issue of Society Now. For more information or to obtain a free copy of the CGAP Five-Year Review 2008-2013, go to www.cgap.org.uk
People

NEW ESRC COUNCIL MEMBERS

David Willetts, the Minister for Universities and Science, has appointed four new council members to the ESRC. All council appointments are from 1 August 2013 to July 2016.

Professor Linda Woodhead is Professor of Sociology of Religion at Lancaster University. She has previously been Director of the £12m AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme and her main interest is in the interactions between religious change and wider social, economic and political changes in contemporary societies.

Professor Tara Fenwick is Professor of Education at the University of Stirling, and Director of the Research Postgraduate Programme there. Previously she was Head of Educational Studies and Professor at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Her research interests lie in education and learning in the workplace, professional education and continuing development, gender studies in work and learning and the sociology of work and professions.

Carole Willis is the Director of Research and Analysis at the Department for Education, and the department’s Chief Scientific Adviser. Carole’s background is in economics, and she has experience of working in a range of government departments as well as in the private sector.

James Richardson is the first ever Chief Scientific Adviser at HM Treasury and also Director, Fiscal and Deputy Chief Economic Adviser. He has a PhD in economics.

Two re-appointments have also been made to Council. They are Martin Coleman and Professor David Martin. Their re-appointments are also from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2016.

Martin Coleman is Head of Antitrust, Competition and Regulatory practice for Norton Rose LLP. Previously, he held a post at Brunel University as a lecturer in law, specialising in public law and legal systems. He has advised the senior management of major international companies and national governments on competition law and regulatory matters.

Professor David Martin is a Professor in the School of Geography, University of Southampton, Co-Director of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods and since 2002 has been the co-ordinator of the ESRC Census Programme. Professor Martin is particularly interested in census methods, geographical information systems and delivery of health care.

QUEEN’S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

A number of prominent social scientists and ESRC grant holders have been honoured in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

Knights Bachelor


Professor Malcolm John Grant, CBE, President and Provost, University College London; ESRC Council member 2008-2013. For services to Higher Education.

Professor John Robert Hills, CBE, Professor of Social Policy, London School of Economics; Director of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at LSE, ESRC Fellow. For services to Social Policy.

Professor David Harry Metcalf, CBE, Chair, Migration Advisory Committee, London; Professor at the Centre for Economic Performance. For services to UK Migration Policy.

Professor Christopher Antoniou Pissarides, FBA, Professor of Economics and Political Science, London School of Economics and Political Science; Professor at the Centre for Economic Performance. For services to Economics.

Dames Commander of the Order of the British Empire

Professor Judith Anne Rees, CBE, lately Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science and Director, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Environment; Director of ESRC Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy, ESRC Council member 2004-2010. For services to Higher Education.

Commanders of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)

Professor Anthony Francis Heath, FBA, Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester and Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Oxford; former Director of the British Election Surveys and Co-Director of the Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends (CREST). For services to Social Science.

Professor John Peter Scott, FBA, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Professor in Sociology, University of Plymouth. For services to Social Science.

Professor Albert Weale, FBA, Professor of Political Theory and Public Policy, University College London; former ESRC Fellow. For services to Political Science.

Professor Rosemary Deem, Vice-Principal (Education) and lately Dean of History and Social Science, Royal Holloway, University of London; former ESRC grant holder. For services to Higher Education and Social Science.

Professor Judith Eleri Phillips, Professor of Gerontology, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of the Research Institute for Applied Social Sciences, Swansea University; former ESRC grant holder. For services to Older People.

IMPACT WINNERS

The ESRC has rewarded researchers for their outstanding economic and social impact in the first Celebrating Impact Prize. The winners and runners up were announced at the awards ceremony held in Westminster on 14 May.

The applications were judged by a panel of experts from business, academia and the public sector. The shortlisted entrants were invited to attend an interview, with a user of their research, to further demonstrate to the panel their role in achieving outstanding research impact.

See page 14 of this issue of Society Now for the full article on the Celebrating Impact Prize and list of winners and runners-up.
Publications

Research Design: Creating Robust Approaches for the Social Sciences

Research design is of critical importance in social research, despite its relative neglect in many methods resources. This new book discusses the nature of design; gives an introduction to design notation; offers a flexible approach to new designs; looks at a range of standard design models; and presents craft tips for real-life problems and compromises. Most important, it provides the rationale for preferring one design over another within any given context.

Locating urban conflicts: ethnicity, nationalism, and the everyday

Cities have emerged as the epicentres for many of today’s ethno-national and religious conflicts. In 12 multidisciplinary essays, this book brings together key themes that dominate our current political, social and cultural attention: emerging areas of contestation in rapidly changing and modernising cities, the resulting forms of habitation and spatial practice, and the effects of extreme and/or enduring conflicts upon ordinary civilian life.

America’s war on terror

Following 9/11 the United States faced a situation of exceptional insecurity. In that period the Bush administration argued that certain international norms did not apply to US conduct. Its argument was underpinned by the claim that the US was in a state of armed conflict or ‘war’ with ‘a new kind of enemy’. This book examines whether this approach outlasted the moment of insecurity that gave rise to it. More than a decade on from those attacks, and following a change of administration, what influence do these arguments have on American policy?

Rural migrants in urban China

After millions of migrants moved from China’s countryside into its sprawling cities a unique kind of ‘informal’ urban enclave was born – ‘villages in the city’. Like the shanties and favelas before them elsewhere, there has been huge pressure to redevelop these blemishes to the urban face of China’s economic vision. This book looks at migrants and their enclave ‘villages in the city’ and reveals the characteristics and changes in migrants’ livelihoods and living places. It analyses how living in the city transforms and changes rural migrant households, and explores the social lives and micro economies of migrant neighbourhoods.

EVENTS

28-30 AUGUST

Exploiting Existing Data for Health Research

The fourth International Conference hosted by the Scottish Health Informatics Programme, in association with the four UK Ehealth Informatics Research Centres. The conference will provide a forum for the presentation of new and exciting research that uses linked, electronic health data and is an opportunity to discuss present and future challenges in this area.

www.scot-ship.ac.uk/conference-2013

6 SEPTEMBER

Reframing Resolution: Managing Individual Workplace Conflict

Currently there are concerns surrounding the perceived increase in individual workplace conflict. Conflict resolution has become a crucial issue for policymakers and practitioners. This seminar series brings together academic researchers to explore innovative conceptual approaches and new empirical data in relation to workplace dispute resolution and the management of conflict.

www.bam.ac.uk/civircm/event/info?reset=1&iid=881

18 SEPTEMBER

Organisational Innovation, People Management and Sustained Performance

This session will focus on how to design the workplace to foster the career adaptability of talented individuals, to ensure skills supply. It will also investigate how mid-sized businesses can realise the potential opportunities that modern apprenticeships offer, and will look at other potential sources of new skills.

www1.aston.ac.uk/aston-business-school/researchcentres/aston-centre-for-human-resources-achr/esrc-seminar-series

24-25 OCTOBER

The Big Society, Localism and Housing Policy, Seminar 2

This seminar will explore the latest research and theories about the role of housing in new planning and Big Society policy agendas, and their impacts on communities throughout the UK. The seminars seek to benefit policymakers and practitioners and to disseminate findings.

bigsocietylocalismhousing.co.uk
The ESRC magazine *Society Now* aims to raise awareness of our research and its impact. It addresses a wide range of readers, from the MP to the businessperson, the voluntary worker to the teacher, the public through to the social scientist, and is published three times a year (spring, summer and autumn).

*Society Now* offers a readable, intelligent, concise overview of current issues concerning society.

To subscribe to the magazine, please send an email including your full name and address to: societynow@esrc.ac.uk

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Our research informs public policies and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective. Most important, it makes a real difference to all our lives.

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More at www.esrc.ac.uk

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