7 days of social science research
This publication uses the ‘Monday’s child’ nursery rhyme to focus on different areas of ESRC-funded research. Although the selection of research projects only constitute a small part of our research investment in each area, they aim to convey the breadth and diversity of ESRC’s research portfolio.

Monday’s child is fair of face
Image and identity

Tuesday’s child is full of grace
Charity and volunteering

Wednesday’s child is full of woe
Poverty and inequality

Thursday’s child has far to go
Migration

Friday’s child is loving and giving
Relationships and family

Saturday’s child works hard for a living
Work and employment

And the child that is born on the Sabbath day
is bonny and blithe, and good and gay
Happiness and wellbeing

The ESRC Seven Days video series showcases the great breadth of our research, illustrated with one case study for each day of the week. Featuring interviews with a wide range of ESRC-funded experts the videos are available to view on the ESRC website.

www.esrc.ac.uk/sevendays
The ‘Monday’s child’ nursery rhyme tells us not only that we are different, but also that we together shape the context of our lives and times.

Regardless of whether we are a Monday or Friday child with different backgrounds, experiences or ambitions, we are all part of society – a melting pot of people and communities.

With the Seven Days publication we highlight how ESRC-funded research is exploring all areas of our lives; whether it is how we relate to our family, how we interact, the impact of work, the blight of poverty, our generosity, our self-perception, our concerns or happiness. In short, the breadth of our research aims to reveal how society works and how we can improve it.

Not least in difficult times it is vital to explore how research evidence in turn can make our lives better, through improved policy and practice. In addition to studying who we are and how we work together, we also need to examine where we want to go and the best way of getting there.

Social science can provide invaluable tools – both to understand our world and to improve our lives.

Professor Paul Boyle  
Chief Executive  
Economic and Social Research Council
MONDAY’S CHILD IS FAIR OF FACE

Image and identity

How is beauty, attraction and body image perceived in our society? Research shows that good looks gives an advantage in confidence and interaction with other people, and can potentially boost career and salary. But a focus on looks and body image can also create more insecurity and negative perceptions about one’s own body, not least among teenagers, and sideline older people as irrelevant in a society for the young and good-looking.

Finding faces in the crowd

We have a natural ability to seek out faces. Recent research from the University of Glasgow sought to find out how people manage to spot particular faces in a crowd. Researchers found that people use a combination of colour, shape and feature cues to find faces quickly.

“People appear to look for skin-colour patches that are organised as face-shaped templates first, to identify possible face candidates within the visual field,” explains Dr Markus Bindemann, currently at the University of Kent. They might then use additional features, and particularly the eyes, to confirm that they are indeed looking at a face.

Research on human face-spotting skills can be useful for improving automated vision systems. As the need for better surveillance techniques and security systems increases, so too does the need for more accurate ways of finding a face in a crowded scene.

“While face perception has generally been studied widely in psychology, face detection has been remarkably under-researched in this field,” Dr Bindemann says. “However, in terms of finding faces humans often appear to perform much better than machines. Hence, a better understanding of the complex processes employed by the human brain could bring practical benefits for automated surveillance, engineering and security domains.”

“In terms of finding faces humans often appear to perform much better than machines”
Facial attraction

Once we have picked out faces in the crowd, we quickly form an opinion on whether the person is good-looking or not – and behave accordingly. Research shows that good-looking people tend to get preferential treatment. Whether it’s a five-year-old in reception class or the candidate at the job interview, a person’s attractiveness is a key influence on how we treat them.

Past studies have already shown what it is about a face that adults find attractive. Now researchers at Durham University have discovered how these preferences develop during childhood.

“The important point is that physical attractiveness permeates all aspects of how we interact with others, so we need to understand how feelings of attraction develop,” says Dr Lynda Boothroyd at Durham University. “Studies indicate that adults prefer faces which are feminine (if female), symmetrical, healthy-looking, and ‘average’ in terms of dimensions. We also prefer faces which bear a slight resemblance to our parents, perhaps due to childhood learning. What we aimed to discover was which of these preferences are present from early childhood and how other preferences develop.”

Based on a study of 346 participants aged three to 17 years, the research team now has some answers and believes that hormonal changes associated with puberty may hold the key. While very young children have very low preferences for faces, preferences begin to emerge in very early puberty, plateau at around 10-14 years and then increase again between 14 and 17 years.

“These patterns correspond roughly to the expected patterns of hormone release over the course of puberty, which may mean that it is the sex hormones released during puberty which activate our preferences for relevant facial traits,” Dr Boothroyd explains.

Gossip magazines fuel teenage eating disorders

The increased awareness of beauty during puberty can also make teenagers insecure about their own attractiveness. A study from the Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer) is the first to identify an association between media exposure and changes in eating behaviour. The study finds that teenagers who look at gossip magazines are more likely to binge eat, skip meals or make themselves sick after meals.

“It’s the type of images and accompanying messages found in gossip magazines which may be significant,” says DECIPHer Research Fellow Dr James White, Cardiff University. “What distinguishes gossip magazines is the way they ridicule celebrities who are overweight or even just don’t conform to unrealistic ideals. And at the same time they praise celebrities for losing weight. That combination of messages of ‘fat is bad’, ‘thin is good’ seems to be a particularly potent influence on vulnerable teenagers.”

“Messages of ‘fat is bad’, ‘thin is good’ seems to be a particularly potent influence on vulnerable teenagers”

Findings showed that adolescents – both boys and girls – who had looked at gossip magazines most often during the study were also most likely to report worrying changes in eating behaviours. In contrast, exposure to TV or to other types of magazines appeared to have no effect. Recognised risk factors for eating disorders, such as age, gender, body mass index and perceived pressure from the media to lose weight, were taken into account during analysis.

The message, say researchers, is that greater awareness is required of how exposure to the kind of images of celebrities and models in gossip magazines can affect teenage eating habits.
But words will never hurt me

Negative media coverage is bad enough, but hearing people comment on your appearance can be very damaging for confidence and self-esteem. Help in dealing with hurtful comments is now at hand, thanks to findings from the collaborative research project Emotion Regulation of Others and Self.

“Our findings show that a simple-to-learn technique can dramatically reduce the harm caused by hearing derogatory comments about your looks,” says Professor Paschal Sheeran at Sheffield University. “Given how hugely hurtful we found some of the comments that people make about others to be, this simple technique could reduce a lot of people’s distress.”

Following a pilot study, the research team found that a person’s hair, skin, weight, teeth, body, legs, ear shape and even eyebrows are all considered fair game for a negative comment. And, particularly for women, frequently receiving stigmatising comments can lead to depressive symptoms, eating disorders, poor body image and low self-esteem.

In this study, researchers explored whether forming simple if/then plans (ie if x happens, then I will do y) would be successful in helping a sample of women ignore stigmatising appearance-related comments. “In other words, we wanted to know whether it is enough to form a goal intention to ignore such comments (‘I will ignore these comments and carry on with what I am doing’) or whether it is necessary also to form an if/then plan (‘As soon as I hear comments, then I will immediately ignore them’) to ensure that abusive comments do not capture attention,” Professor Sheeran explains.

Findings show that participants with a concrete if/then plan at their fingertips were less distressed by critical comments, and this effect was especially pronounced among participants with low body satisfaction. “It may seem extraordinary that this simple technique works so well, but it is a technique which has been shown to work in other situations such as reducing anxiety, and clearly can work for those distressed by comments about their looks,” he concludes.
Cosmetic surgery tourism

Just how far will people go to gain a more attractive body? Quite a distance, says a new ESRC research project. Cosmetic surgery ‘tourists’ from the UK are travelling to Europe, South Africa, Asia and beyond in search of the best cosmetic surgery deals. This growing phenomenon has attracted the attention of researchers at the University of Leeds. “Helping people make better informed decisions about cosmetic surgery and avoid bad experiences is one of our key aims,” says project leader Professor Ruth Holliday.

Cosmetic surgery travel across the world offers women and men the chance to combine a holiday abroad with cosmetic surgery ranging from dental work to face-lifts and other body enhancements. Researchers are interviewing people travelling from the UK and Australia to six popular cosmetic tourism destinations: Thailand, Korea, Singapore, Spain, Tunisia and Poland. They are also speaking in depth to workers in the industry, including cosmetic surgery tourism agents, care workers, interpreters and tour guides, clinic staff and surgeons.

Lower prices and better value for money are the key reasons attracting people to clinics abroad, say researchers. UK cosmetic travellers can cut their surgery costs by half when they travel to Europe. Saving money, combined with the opportunity to ‘be like a film star’ for a week in a glamorous Thai resort, entice some Australians to opt for cosmetic surgery abroad in South East Asia.

“People are told that the choice of surgeon is key to managing risk, but there is currently no way of evaluating the risk profile of different surgeons”

Despite the lure of foreign climes, the pitfalls of surgery abroad must not be ignored. An estimated 100,000 UK citizens venture abroad for medical procedures every year and some are putting their health at risk, partly through a lack of information. “People are told that the choice of surgeon is key to managing risk, but there is currently no way of evaluating the risk profile of different surgeons,” Professor Holliday points out. “In addition, there are clearly unscrupulous people involved in this industry, and there are no guarantees of safety for cosmetic procedures.”

These risks apply to the UK as well, meaning that staying at home may not be the answer either. “We hear a lot about bad experiences abroad, but not much about the good ones,” she says. “Many people are completely satisfied with their surgery abroad, and there are plenty of botched surgeries in the UK as well. There is this idea of terrible, dangerous surgery abroad and wonderful, safe surgery at home. That’s just not an accurate representation. What’s needed now is better regulation at home and abroad and more information, so people can make the best decision.”

Growing old gracefully

Whether we try to boost our attractiveness through artificial or natural means, an attractive body is often considered to be a youthful body. Many women experience ageing – particularly changes to their physical appearance – as a challenge. But, for the majority of women who took part, the ‘Look at me!’ research project provided a welcome and unusual opportunity to explore the very complex range of feelings associated with ageing.

Researchers took a new approach to finding out how older women feel about their representation in the media and society. After investigating stereotypical images of ageing women, the messages these images give out and how they affect women’s wellbeing, the researchers encouraged participants to create new and alternative representations using fine art, sculpture, photography and phototherapeutic techniques. The images created by the women were presented in various exhibitions held in Sheffield last year.

The images exhibited were far from ‘cosy’, says Dr Lorna Warren at the University of Sheffield. “Rather, from the mundane to the magnificent, it was a very honest, sometimes challenging, sometimes humorous display of images showing women exploring their own feelings about being or becoming ‘older women’.”

For some of the women, involvement in the project proved hugely influential. “Some, particularly those who took part in therapeutic workshops, told us that taking part had had a lasting impact on their perception of their own ageing bodies and even improved their quality of life,” Dr Warren explains. And the exhibition had wider impact too. According to feedback from visitors to the exhibition, 88 per cent claimed they would now like to see more images of older people in public places.

Offering alternative views on ageing is important, researchers argue. “At present most images of older women we see in public are negatively stereotyped, the butt of humour or the target of anti-ageing interventions,” Dr Warren says. “Or, on the other hand, older women are invisible. Much greater focus is needed on how older people are presented in society.”

See the Seven Days video about this project at www.esrc.ac.uk/monday
Charity and volunteering

We are a nation of givers. Charitable giving from UK households has remained stable over the last two decades – with the poorer households donating the highest percentage of their earnings. Others instead donate their time or expertise: both volunteers and wealthy entrepreneurs can create lasting change in society.

Giving: stable but critical

Britons have not lost their spirit of charity, despite the recession and less money to go around. The New State of Donation report by the Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (CGAP) and the Centre for Market and Public Organisation shows that total spending by households on charitable causes has been remarkably stable over the last 20 years. But this relative stability is both good and bad news for the sector, argues Professor Cathy Pharoah, Co-Director of CGAP.

“It means charities can rely on donors, even in times of recession,” she points out. “On the other hand, there has been no real uplift in donations – despite increases in the generosity of tax relief, big changes in the way people give to charity and the professionalisation of charity fundraising. As such, the scale of the challenge charities face in raising levels of charitable giving in the UK is clearly huge.”

Individuals currently donate around one quarter of the total income received by UK charities. Moreover, individual giving is of increasing importance as a source of support for voluntary and community organisations at a time when statutory funding is being cut back.

While major appeals such as Comic and Sport Relief generate huge publicity and enthusiasm, they do not raise giving overall. “Innovation in fundraising may help maintain giving, but our research suggests that habits of giving may be relatively unchanging,” Professor Pharoah explains. Finding ways to support giving as an everyday activity is the challenge that fundraisers must address.

See the Seven Days video about this project at www.esrc.ac.uk/tuesday

TUESDAY’S CHILD IS FULL OF GRACE

Charity and volunteering

We are a nation of givers. Charitable giving from UK households has remained stable over the last two decades – with the poorer households donating the highest percentage of their earnings. Others instead donate their time or expertise: both volunteers and wealthy entrepreneurs can create lasting change in society.
Commercial income not enough for donation shortfall

The challenge of raising donations have led charities to explore funding from the commercial sector. Research from the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) shows that charities in England and Wales increasingly are relying on commercial revenue, rather than grants and donations.

Drawing upon a longitudinal dataset of charities’ annual returns between 2002 and 2007, the research confirmed existing findings that charities increasingly are relying on revenue from commercial sources – such as contracts to supply services, for-profit subsidiaries, fees for services or for endorsing products, or sale of non-charity products.

“This is the first study to conclusively show that charities in the UK are replacing grants and donations with commercial revenue,” says Professor Stephen McKay at the University of Birmingham.

The increase in commercial revenue occurred across almost all fields of charitable activity. However, estimation modelling showed that this increase was not large enough to match the reduction in donations. “As grants and donations fall, commercial income has risen to compensate – though only partially,” Professor McKay adds.

For charities, this means that commercial revenue might not make up the shortfall when donations dwindle.

Larger charities enjoy highest income growth

In an increasingly competitive charity market, are there advantages to being of a certain size? Based on data from the Charity Commission in England and Wales, findings from TSRC and CGAP show that the UK’s larger charities grew at a higher median (average) rate than their smaller counterparts between the mid-1990s and 2008. But, says TSRC Research Fellow Dr David Clifford, “it is not necessarily the very largest charities that enjoyed the highest percentage income growth”.

Exploring the growth rates of a set of charities that have existed since the mid-1990s and relating income growth to initial charity size, the study shows that initially larger charities have grown more on average than initially smaller ones. These findings are consistent with the idea of a ‘professionalisation’ of the charitable sector – but not necessarily a ‘Tesco-isation’, where the initially very largest charities would have the highest growth rates of all.

“Some people have been concerned that the dominance of larger charities may marginalise their smaller counterparts, but others see the focus on size in itself as unhelpful”

But whether this is good or bad news for the charity sector depends on where you stand, Dr Clifford adds. “Some people have been concerned that the dominance of larger charities may marginalise their smaller counterparts, but others see the focus on size in itself as unhelpful. Note too that we examined trends over a period in which the total charitable income grew, and where on average smaller charities also experienced growth. It will be interesting to monitor patterns of income change during the more difficult current financial climate.”
Charities face celebrity challenge

Many charities have used celebrities to promote their cause – but it’s not without its challenges. In recent years the relations between the celebrity industry and the charitable sector has markedly intensified, and most of the larger charities now have celebrity liaison officers amongst their staff. But there are signs that the era of celebrity endorsement may be on the wane.

Preliminary findings based on a study of eight mainstream UK newspapers show that articles about charity that mention celebrity peaked in the early to mid-2000s and have since declined. While celebrity is more likely to be mentioned in articles about charity than in articles on most other topics, this is no longer a growth industry.

“It’s not that celebrity has ceased to be useful, but charities may need to think more carefully about how they attract celebrities to their cause and how they make use of them,” says Dr Daniel Brockington, University of Manchester, who is examining this issue as part of a fellowship on Celebrity and Development.

Learning key lessons from those charities with highly professional celebrity liaison officers is a possible way forward for less experienced charities, he suggests. For example, timing is key – the charity may need to wait for a year or longer before exactly the right moment to approach the celebrity arises. It is also important to design charity events which match the skills and attributes of the celebrity. Celebrities don’t want to be add-ons – they want to forge a decent relationship with the charity.

Survey evidence suggests that mainstream celebrity’s appeal is not broad, and does not lead to effective engagement with political causes. However almost all of us do have public figures who influence our thinking. “The challenge for charities is how to create authentic relationships with the right public figures,” Dr Brockington concludes.
Entreprenuers creating social change

Wealthy people giving to good causes might seem like an old cliché, but can make a real difference, research suggests. An in-depth CGAP study of philanthropical entrepreneurs – past and present – shows that the large-scale donations and philanthropic activities of wealthy individuals can lead to far-reaching economic and social change.

A study of the life of Scottish-born US steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, for example, highlights the powerful impact of entrepreneurs. After retirement Carnegie became a generous supporter of education and scientific research, funding schools, universities and libraries, as well as initiatives for world peace.

"Wealthy entrepreneurs are frequently happy to get involved in large-scale philanthropy, but they want control over where and how the money is spent"

Despite the current economic climate, the UK potentially boasts a good number of extremely wealthy entrepreneurs with significant resources – including money, time, commitment, networks and reputation – to help encourage social change. “Wealthy entrepreneurs are frequently happy to get involved in large-scale philanthropy, but they want control over where and how the money is spent,” explains Professor Eleanor Shaw at the University of Strathclyde.

This control, however, is more likely to be a positive rather than a negative influence. “Entrepreneurs are typically innovative and excellent at solving problems,” she says. “Their approach to tackling an issue can be very different to the route taken by, for example, a government department. They are particularly adept at addressing the root causes of a problem.”

Interestingly, the study further suggests that the entrepreneurs themselves can reap huge business benefits from philanthropy, in terms of their own social standing, reputation, influence and networks. “Entrepreneurial philanthropy can prove a win-win situation for all those involved,” Professor Shaw points out.

Volunteering at stable levels

Many people choose to volunteer and donate time instead of money to good causes. A number of surveys indicate that rates of volunteering in the UK have remained stable over the last two decades. Estimates show that between 10 and 30 per cent of the adult population participate in volunteering activities on a monthly basis, according to TSRC research.

“The overall picture given by survey datasets is one of considerable stability in the level of volunteering,” says Dr Laura Staetsky, currently at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Voluntary activity by individuals have been documented since the early 1980s by UK surveys such as the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), the National Survey of Voluntary Activity and the Citizenship Survey. While for instance the BHPS figure for people doing ‘unpaid voluntary work’ has been consistently around 20 per cent, the Citizenship Survey shows that around 43 per cent are involved in volunteering.

The figures vary between surveys because of differences in survey questions, definitions and scope of the survey. A topical survey exploring volunteering will likely generate higher estimates than a general survey, as it will go more into detail about activities and provide more specific wording and context.

Although there have been reports that the number of volunteers has increased due to the recession, it is yet too early to say whether this is the case.

Young volunteers bring communities together

The positive impact of volunteering has been brought home in Whitehaven, Cumbria, where a pioneering volunteer initiative resulted in closer collaboration between an isolated Bengali community and their local neighbours.

A dozen student volunteers from the University of Central Lancashire’s Centre for Volunteering and Community Leadership put on a set of workshops as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science. “We called the event Culture Shock!,” explains project leader Dr Alethea Melling, “and it was hugely successful in bringing those of all ages from Whitehaven’s Bengali community together with people from other countries, faiths and cultures – beginning a dialogue between them around issues relating to race and cultural difference.”

Prior to the event, Whitehaven’s small Bengali community had been socially isolated from the rest of the town. Student volunteers with Bengali, Pakistani, Indian, Kenyan, Congo, Chinese and white UK backgrounds organised the workshops, which enabled up to 100 people to enjoy diverse cultural experiences ranging from sari fittings to henna painting. Culture Shock! formed part of the Global Youth Leaders project, where young people with leadership skills become mentors in deprived communities in Britain and abroad. “As the example of Whitehaven shows, we believe that given the right support, young people have the genius and dynamism to direct and effect positive change within their communities,” Dr Melling adds.
WEDNESDAY’S CHILD IS FULL OF WOE

Poverty and inequality

Despite the advances in standards of living, health and longevity, many people are still blighted by poverty, and inequality remains entrenched. Research shows that over one third of UK children experience poverty at some point during their early years, and many low-income households risk falling back into poverty over time. Meanwhile, the income gap between the poorest and the richest is still widening. Pledges to end poverty remain unfulfilled – but research can help us understand the nature of poverty, better ways of measuring it and the best policies to counter it.

Over one third of children are poor in the first five years

Despite efforts to eradicate child poverty, research based on the Millennium Cohort Study shows that 39 per cent of UK children experienced poverty based on their family income at some point during their first five years of life.

The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) is tracking the lives of a sample of children born in 2000 through their early childhood and into adulthood. Findings from the third MCS survey (2006) of almost 15,500 children at the age of five show that while the proportion of families in poverty remained fairly consistent between 2001 and 2006, there was considerable turnover among those who experienced it. In other words, while 14 per cent of children were consistently income poor between 2001 and 2006, poverty touched the lives of many more children than a snapshot taken at one point in time suggests.

Why do people become poor? Findings show that relationship breakdown was one key factor. One in four mothers who moved into poverty between the first (2001) and third (2006) MCS survey did so on becoming a lone parent. Changes in the number of earners in a family were important too. More than a quarter of families who had moved into poverty had become workless between the 2001 and 2006 surveys.

Surprisingly, moving into employment is no guarantee of escaping poverty. More than one in six of those who remained in poverty did so despite one or two parents becoming employed.
Poverty casts a wide net

‘Poverty turnover’, the movement of people into and back out of poverty over time, means that poverty may be an experience that touches many more people’s lives in the UK than had previously been thought. What this means for policymakers, says Professor Stephen Jenkins at the London School of Economics and Political Science, is that helping people out of poverty should not be the only concern of policy – anti-poverty policies should also aim at stopping people falling back into poverty.

Using the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), researchers have been able to follow the same 10,000 people annually over 18 years – offering a more detailed picture of poverty than official statistics can provide.

“The design of the tax-benefit system needs to recognise that many people may experience poverty at some time; it is not simply about helping a never-changing low-income group”

“Official statistics tell us how much inequality there is or how many poor people there are in a given year, and compares those numbers with the corresponding statistics from the previous year,” Professor Jenkins explains. “But missing from ‘snapshot pictures’ like these is information about whether the people who were poor one year are the same people who are poor the following year. Similarly, the circumstances of those with middle-income or top-income origins are not tracked over time.”

The ‘poor may be with us always’, but the longitudinal perspective reveals that it is not the same people who are always poor. BHPS data show, for example, that over a six year period only two per cent of households remained consistently below the poverty line. There is substantial turnover in the low-income population between one year and the next.

Crucially, this also means that over a period of several years many more people experience poverty than are poor in a single year. While official statistics indicate that around 18 to 20 per cent of people in the UK live in poverty (that is, they live in a household with an income below 60 per cent of the national average), BHPS data show that, over a four year period, about one third of people are touched by poverty.

“Since more people are touched by poverty over a period of time than are poor in any one year, the government needs to focus not only on policies designed to increase people’s chances of leaving poverty, but also on policies designed to reduce the risk of returning to poverty – or better yet, to reduce the risk of becoming poor in the first place,” Professor Jenkins argues. “Put another way, the design of the tax-benefit system needs to recognise that many people may experience poverty at some time; it is not simply about helping a never-changing low-income group.”

Getting the measure of poverty

Adding to the challenge of finding out how many people experience poverty is the definition of ‘poverty’ itself. How do we define poverty, and where do we draw the line on minimum acceptable incomes and living conditions? In other words, how poor is too poor?

Key government measures generally take poverty to mean living in a household with an income below 60 per cent of the national average. But while this is easy to measure and does provide useful comparisons over time, research from the Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK (PSE) project suggests it is too narrow and essentially an arbitrary measure.

The PSE project is currently assessing the wide variety of ways in which poverty may be measured. One such method, the ‘consensual’ or ‘perceived deprivation’ approach, sets out to determine whether there are some people who fall below the minimum acceptable standards for the society in which they live and the time at which they live. In this method, people are asked what they think are necessities for living in the UK to establish a publicly agreed minimum standard. Those who cannot escape falling below these minimum standards are defined as being in poverty.

Defining poverty is not just an abstract, academic pursuit, emphasises Professor David Gordon at Bristol University. Definitions of poverty are key to people’s life chances and opportunities. They provide a basis for redistributing income and resources through the tax and benefit system. “As such, they are essential for determining questions of fairness in society,” he argues.

See the Seven Days video about this project at www.esrc.ac.uk/wednesday
Income gap fails to narrow

Is the gap between the poor and the better-off closing or widening? It has widened, but not as rapidly as previously, concludes research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS).

Based on a study of average take-home incomes since the 1990s, the findings show that income inequality rose during Labour’s 13-year period in office and was at around its highest level in 2009–10 since current measurement began in 1961. However, this rise followed the much sharper rises in income inequality that occurred during the 1980s, explains IFS Senior Research Economist Robert Joyce. The Labour government’s tax and benefit reforms seem to have mitigated the rise in income inequality, preventing the gap between rich and poor from widening by more than it did.

Crucially, within approximately the middle 60 per cent of the income distribution, inequality actually declined under Labour. A key factor acting to increase income inequality was the escalating top incomes during the economic boom, particularly in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Over the next few years, the income gap will again be greatly influenced by what happens to those at the top of the income distribution. The latest government statistics, for 2009–10, showed a particularly dramatic rise in the incomes of the top one per cent – but this is prior to tax changes hitting those at the higher end of the income distribution. On the other hand, substantial cuts to benefits and tax credits will hit those on low incomes proportionately hardest, increasing the gap between them and those with higher incomes, who tend to be less reliant on income from the state.

Overall, the less-than-rosy picture for living standards seems to apply across most of the income spectrum – but a key source of uncertainty is whether the poor or rich will see the largest falls in their incomes overall, as earnings struggle to grow faster than prices, and state benefits and tax credits are cut.
The ‘shame’ of being poor

In a relatively affluent society poverty often remains hidden and kept out of sight. The research project ‘Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes’ is investigating whether being poor necessarily results in low self-esteem or feelings of shame, and whether welfare policies could actually increase any shame that may be attached to being poor.

Jointly funded by the ESRC and the Department for International Development, under the ESRC/DFID International Development (Poverty Alleviation) Research Scheme, a team of a dozen researchers will interview children and their parents about how being poor affects the way they feel about themselves and the way they are regarded by their own community. Participants will come from the UK, Norway, China, India, Pakistan, Uganda and South Korea.

“There is evidence of parents going without things themselves in order to buy their child the latest trainers – an example of ensuring their child does not feel shame at school”

“Very little is known about the way people in different countries experience and regard poverty,” explains Professor Robert Walker at the University of Oxford. “In the UK, we talk about the ‘stigma’ of poverty. There is evidence of parents going without things themselves in order to buy their child the latest trainers – an example of ensuring their child does not feel shame at school.” However, it has been suggested that, in China, for example, it might be more important for adults, even in poor families, to maintain ‘face’ and to uphold their own sense of dignity.

“Our objective is to use this research to work together with policymakers and agencies to deliver policies that tackle poverty effectively, while simultaneously recognising the importance of promoting dignity and a sense of self-respect,” Professor Walker states.

Putting wellbeing in the picture

How poverty impacts on people’s overall wellbeing, and how a sense of wellbeing in turn can affect people’s experience of poverty, is examined in the Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways project.

Based on research in rural communities in Zambia and India, researchers have developed a new integrated model for assessing wellbeing which considers not only what people think and feel, but also what they have and do and the broader environment in which they live. The model aims to provide a common framework which can accommodate local understandings and priorities.

“Initial findings suggest that in these marginalised communities it is how people are doing in economic terms which is the most consistent predictor of levels of wellbeing. People often referred to economic issues as they explained their responses or described their experience,” says Dr Sarah White at the University of Bath.

“But assessing wellbeing across different domains captures much more than looking at economic status alone. It helps to explain variability amongst respondents by gender or marital status for example, and identify areas where different kinds of people are doing well and feeling good, or finding things a struggle.”
THURSDAY’S CHILD HAS FAR TO GO

Migration

The UK is among the top ten destinations for migrants worldwide, and fears of our society being overwhelmed by migrants frequently surface in the immigration debate. But research shows that our perception of immigrants are more nuanced than assumed, and merely focusing on immigration as a threat is counter-productive. The average immigrant has a stronger sense of British identity than most home-born Brits – and children’s experiences are crucial to migrant families staying or leaving.

New citizens get that ‘British’ feeling

Some 195,000 people became British citizens in 2010. The vast majority of these – almost 90 per cent – claimed to feel at least a little British. “And that,” says Dr Ben Gidley, “means this country’s newest citizens feel a whole lot more British than the rest of the UK-born population.”

As part of the Citizenship and Integration in the UK project, researchers from the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) and Birkbeck, University of London, surveyed a sample of people who applied for British citizenship in 2010. “Our aim was to find out more about Britain’s new citizens: who they are, what attitudes they have to Britishness, and how well or otherwise they are integrating into British society,” explains Dr Gidley, Senior Researcher at COMPAS.

Findings paint a largely positive picture of the attitudes held by Britain’s newest recruits towards citizenship and integration. For example, 81 per cent of those surveyed took the Life in the UK test rather than the alternative ESOL test (English for Speakers of Other Languages), with citizenship course route open to those with less English language proficiency on the point of application. The majority of respondents (more than 80 per cent) claimed that applying for citizenship helped them feel they belong to the UK.

“Our findings show that new citizens have a very strong identification with Britain and Britishness,” Dr Gidley points out. “However, they are more likely to feel British than they are to feel English/Welsh/Scottish or Northern Irish. This is in contrast to the UK-born population, where the exact opposite applies.”

Findings also show that today’s new citizens are much more likely to take steps to become involved in their communities – for example through volunteering – than their UK-born neighbours. And, contrary to popular fears, new citizens are far more likely to integrate with people from other ethnic groups than the native population.
"What we did identify is that new citizens take different paths to becoming integrated, and a ‘one size fits all’ approach to integration misses the mark," Dr Gidley explains. "Two particular paths to integration stand out from our research. First, a strong sense of local belonging (eg through having children in local schools) can go hand in hand with a strong sense of Britishness. For others, including those who live in areas with fewer migrants, the local connection may be weaker but social mixing and inter-ethnic friendships may be stronger, and again be associated with a strong sense of Britishness."

In general, researchers conclude, the majority of those applying for UK citizenship show the sorts of attributes that can be viewed as positive indicators of integration.

**Our complex views on immigration**

Although immigrants generally are keen to integrate, opposition to immigration remains widespread in the UK. A new study confirms findings from half a century of opinion polls: the public would like to see immigration reduced. But how do members of the public define ‘immigrants’? And could public opinion vary according to specific immigrant groups?

To try and build a more detailed understanding of public attitudes to immigration, COMPAS researchers surveyed a sample of some 1,000 adults living in Britain. Findings reveal that 69 per cent of respondents favoured cuts in immigration. But the study also found that the public’s views on immigration are complex in a way that previous polls have failed to capture, and that these views vary substantially depending on which immigrant groups the public is considering.

For example, more than half of respondents wanted reductions either ‘only’ or ‘mostly’ among illegal immigrants, while just over a third (35 per cent) supported reductions equally among legal and illegal immigrants. Researchers found majority support for reducing immigration of low-skilled workers (64 per cent), extended family members (58 per cent) and asylum seekers (56 per cent). However, only minority support was found for reducing immigration of high-skilled workers (32 per cent), immediate family members (41 per cent) and students (31 per cent).

What this means, researchers argue, is that preferences vary between specific groups of immigrants. And policies that respond to the overall public preference for reducing immigration without taking account of these differences may reduce immigration in ways that a majority of the public does not support. Crucially, some of the largest immigration groups generate the least opposition among members of the public (eg students), whereas some categories that are small in numbers generate high levels of public opposition (eg asylum seekers).

Members of the public and the government may be thinking about different things even when both are talking about immigration, Dr Scott Blinder at COMPAS concludes. "Categories such as temporary immigrants and students loom large in official statistics, but less than a third of the public has in mind either of these categories when thinking about immigrants."

See the Seven Days video about this project at www.esrc.ac.uk/thursday

**Politicians need to spell out immigration benefits**

With the public remaining sceptical to immigration in general, politicians are unlikely to win many votes by extolling the benefits of migration. But pandering to negative public sentiment can be dangerous, suggests a new study of forced migration under the RCUK Global Uncertainties (GU) programme. “Most governments are aware of the positive economic aspects of migration, but are simply not bold enough in explaining these benefits to the public,” GU Fellow Dr Anne Hammerstad at the University of Kent points out.

A three-year research project is exploring why migrants and asylum seekers are commonly seen as a threat to security – looking at ideas and beliefs on forced migration and their impact on insecurity in the UK, South Africa and India. "One key question is, what are the consequences of treating particular migrant groups as a security issue?“ says Dr Hammerstad.

Early findings suggest that treating migration as a security problem – as an intrusion or invasion – can produce the very consequences that are feared. “If migrants are treated like intruders or criminals, it can lead to feelings of alienation and even radicalisation,” says Dr Hammerstad. Research into Zimbabwean migration to South Africa suggests that the South African government’s ‘neglectful approach’ to the large-scale influx of Zimbabweans in the past decade allowed local resentments to fester and finally erupt in violent xenophobic riots in 2008.

“If the South African government had put proactive policies in place to deal with the influx and done more to dispel inaccurate perceptions of Zimbabweans as ‘welfare scroungers’ and criminals, then xenophobia and vigilantism would have had less breeding ground and South Africa might not have ended up having to deploy soldiers to restore order in some townships,” Dr Hammerstad explains.

Of course there are migrants with criminal intent, and mass influxes – especially into poorer host states – can be a considerable burden. But governments could do more to ensure both the benefits of migration as well as its complexities are better understood.
Ethnic mixing on the increase

How immigrants impact on local communities is a common theme in the immigration debate – and concerns about the ethnic composition of UK neighbourhoods appear to have grown in recent years. “What these debates represent is a swing from an era of concern about discrimination and racism to an era of concern about extremism and separateness,” says Dr Nissa Finney at the University of Manchester.

But assumptions that ethnic groups are choosing to become more segregated are mistaken, suggests research from the now-finished Understanding Population Trends and Processes programme. Rather, for a number of Britain’s minority groups, it is natural change (births minus deaths) that contributes most to population growth. “Even without migration, neighbourhoods can change ethnic composition through family-building,” Dr Finney explains.

Within Britain, researchers identify some similarities across ethnic groups in terms of who migrates and where they migrate to. For example, young adults are moving to ethnically diverse urban areas, while families and older people are moving to the suburbs. Overall there is increased ethnic mixing in residential areas.

Ethnic group population change in Britain can to a large extent be explained by benign and unexceptional demographic processes, researchers conclude. In other words, the ethnic composition of any neighbourhood is the result of complex processes involving individuals’ life choices and pathways, and cannot simply be read as an indicator of social integration.

Jobless immigrants prefer home sweet home

Fears about immigrants include the suspicion that they are ‘scroungers living off benefits’ – but contrary to popular belief, jobless immigrants are likely to leave quickly if they are out of work. A study of labour immigration in the Netherlands finds that rather than adding to the host state’s social welfare bill, unemployed labour migrants opt to return to their home country.

Findings from the Research Centre for Population Change showed that across all immigrant groups, unemployment shortens the migration period and leads to return migration. Moreover, the longer the migrants are unemployed the higher the chance they leave – and vice versa, the longer they are re-employed the less likely they are to leave.

The study examined all labour immigrants to the Netherlands over the period 1999-2007, in all, more than 94,000 people. The biggest labour immigrant group turned out to be from the UK, comprising 13 per cent of the labour migrants. Only 18 per cent came from developing countries.

These findings challenge the perception that labour immigrants in the Netherlands are attracted by the generosity of the welfare state, since almost half of recent labour immigrants leave if they experience unemployment. In terms of policy, this suggests that voluntary return schemes might be more successful if they target recent immigrants, as opposed to long established ones.
The lives of migrant children

Other factors than work can affect the decision to stay or leave – such as children’s experience of life in another country. Based on focus groups with around 60 Eastern European children and detailed case studies with over 20 migrant families who now live in Scotland, researchers have gathered crucial information on migrant children’s experiences of settling abroad and some of the difficulties they encountered.

“We found that children’s experiences of migration vary considerably,” explains Dr Daniela Sime at the University of Strathclyde, “and listening to children can help us develop more appropriate networks of support for them and their families.”

Findings show that children had a key role as ‘cultural brokers’ for their families after migration, often mediating their access to services and helping to develop social relationships with other families. Also, children’s happiness, educational opportunities and wellbeing were key factors when parents decided whether to return or not to their country of origin.

“Listening to children can help us develop more appropriate networks of support for them and their families”

With follow-on funding from the ESRC, researchers are currently disseminating their findings widely in a series of events ranging from seminars to exhibitions of artwork by migrant children, displaying migration through their eyes. “Our aim is to ensure that service providers have a better understanding of what migrant children need and can translate this into improved practice,” Dr Sime points out.
FRIDAY’S CHILD IS LOVING AND GIVING

Relationships and family

Finding ‘the one’ may be difficult, but the vast majority of people in relationships say they are happy with their partners. Researchers are examining how people ‘click’ and the secret behind long-lasting relationships. Findings show that a stable family situation with married parents results in less stress and fewer behaviour problems for children – while even fractious sibling relationships can develop positively over time.

Sibling satisfaction

If your children are at war with each other and your house resembles a battleground, then take heart. A research project which has tracked the lives of 50 children from the age of six to 17 years offers some grounds for hope. “You can’t predict how a particular sibling relationship will develop,” says Professor Rosalind Edwards at the University of Southampton. “But we found that young people’s relationships with their brothers and sisters can change over time and sometimes in very positive ways.”

In this project – part of the Timescapes qualitative longitudinal study – researchers asked young people how they saw themselves and their relationships with their siblings, friends and parents over a period of eight or so years. The aim was to discover the significance of sisters, brothers and friends in the lives of children and young people, as well as how those relationships unfolded over time.

Findings show not only that sibling difficulties are sometimes resolved over time, but also that older siblings can be an important source of support in helping their younger siblings deal with issues such as bullying or adjusting to secondary school.

Researchers also identified a strong sense of responsibility held by older siblings to protect their younger siblings. But younger sisters and brothers can act in caring ways towards their older siblings too.

“Sibling relationships can be the longest relationship in your life – longer than with your parents or your friends,” Professor Edwards points out. “We were surprised at how little the meaning of this relationship for those involved has been studied, and believe our findings have enormous relevance not only to professionals and policymakers but to everyone with a brother or sister.”

See the Seven Days video about this project at www.esrc.ac.uk/friday
Changing family forms influence child wellbeing

The ‘traditional’ family, headed by married parents, has become less common in the UK in recent decades. Rising rates of lone motherhood, cohabitation and parental separation have resulted in more diverse and transient family groupings. But do different family experiences make children more or less prone to emotional and behavioural problems?

Data from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which is tracking a sample of 19,000 children born in 2000 through their early childhood and into adulthood, show that 59 per cent of MCS children were born to married couples, 25 per cent to cohabiting parents and 16 per cent to lone mothers. Only three quarters of all the MCS children were still living with both natural parents at the age of five.

Findings show that, according to mothers’ reports, children from cohabiting families that had broken down were said to exhibit relatively high levels of behaviour problems, as were those born to single mothers who subsequently cohabited with the natural father or re-partnered. Children of married couples were less likely to exhibit problem behaviour than those in other family groups.

The most common explanation for such findings, researchers point out, is that new partnerships increase stress amongst parents, partners and children. Tensions can rise as families adjust to new relationships, the mother focusing on the new partner and children competing for their mother’s attention. This may also help explain the greater level of child behavioural problems in less stable Millennium cohort families, along with the psychological and economic pressures on parents which can often affect children too.

Happy outlook for UK relationships

Whether you are married or cohabiting with your partner, the vast majority of couples in the UK are happy with their relationship. Findings from Understanding Society, the world’s largest longitudinal household study of 40,000 UK households, show that around 90 per cent of individuals who are living with a partner are happy with their relationship.

Research further indicates that the UK’s happiest couples are those in which both are educated to degree level, have no children, have been together for less than five years and the man is employed. After taking into account a variety of factors, including age, gender, number of children, relationship duration, employment status and education, research indicates that married people are happier than their cohabiting counterparts.

“One 88 per cent of respondents said their partner understood the way they feel, with only 10 per cent admitting that they have felt let down by their partner when they were counting on them”

Whether married or not, however, findings show that partners provide a vital source of positive emotional support for the vast majority of people in the UK. Nine out of ten people who were married or cohabiting stated in the Understanding Society survey that they talk to their partner about their worries. “Spouses or partners were largely described as providing positive support,” explains Professor Heather Laurie at the University of Essex. “Some 88 per cent of respondents said their partner understood the way they feel, with only 10 per cent admitting that they have felt let down by their partner when they were counting on them.”
What’s the recipe for lasting relationships?

Given the influence partners have in our lives, we know surprisingly little about why people stay together. The new Enduring Love? project aims to redress the balance by exploring people’s experiences of long-term relationships.

“Much recent policy and research has focused on the causes and effects of relationship breakdown,” explains Dr Jacqui Gabb at the Open University. “But many heterosexual and same-sex couples also remain together for significant periods of time. In some ways, then, these couples appear to sit outside the growing tendency towards serial or transitory relationships. Our aim is to understand more about couples who stay together and what helps them sustain these long-term relationships.”

The project, which was launched in September 2011, is certainly capturing public attention. In the first month alone almost 2,500 people completed the research team’s online questionnaire answering questions about their long-term relationships. More than half of these respondents have asked to be kept informed about the project findings. “We’ve been surprised by the huge interest this research is generating,” Dr Gabb says, “but people tell us that they appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their relationships and want to know more about how others make their relationships work.”

Very early findings suggest that it may be the small everyday gestures – something as simple as making your partner a cup of tea – that ultimately cement relationships together. But evidence concerning similar ‘top tips’ is only one area of this study. Researchers will also explore wider issues such as what a long-term relationship means today, and how cultural myths about finding ‘the one’ and ‘living happily ever after’ are reconciled by adult couples whose own relationships may fall short of these romantic ideals.

“We all know that not all relationships last,” says Dr Gabb. “Although some people do find ‘the one’, many more seem to have multiple long-term relationships. Perhaps we need to start thinking not about ‘the one’ but about ‘the ones’, and help people understand how they can make these relationships more fulfilling.”
Spreading emotions

Dealing with emotions is an important part of maintaining relationships with other people. As part of the Emotion Regulation of Others and Self network, the ‘Interpersonal consequences’ project looks at how we affect other people’s feelings.

One focus of the research is on expressing worry, which we do for several reasons – to seek comfort and support from someone else, or to alert the other person to a potential concern. But worrying may not produce the type of support intended.

For example, so far researchers have found that focusing on the negative aspects of a problem during conversations with your partner makes women feel worse, but not men. And if you respond to someone else’s expressed worry by trying to appear calm and comfort them instead of seeming concerned about the issue, this can make them more rather than less worried.

“Women in particular report that they try more to make their male partner appreciate how worrying the problem is, but they try even harder when they are met by a relative lack of expressive response from their male partner,” says Dr Brian Parkinson at the University of Oxford.

Based on methods ranging from diary-keeping to video recording, some early results reveal that people sometimes express worry to make others more worried too. And this strategy seems to work. “Findings in one of our recent experiments show that just seeing a friend’s anxious expression can make a person take less risky decisions,” Dr Parkinson points out.

Why people ‘click’

The emotional influence is heightened when we are attuned to others. Very often humans imitate each other without even realising it. Based on the very latest advances in brain science, a new Social Interaction project is discovering more about how copying helps people ‘click’ and the types of brain activity which make people jar or gel.

“When two people interact, their two brains become coupled together to the extent that exactly the same area in both people’s brains will become activated”

“Put simply, the more we copy someone else – for example incidental movements such as scratching one’s head – the more we align or ‘click’ with them,” explains Professor Simon Garrod, University of Glasgow. “Even two people rocking in separate rocking chairs will tend to end up rocking in sync. Although most of this copying is automatic, the more you copy someone else the more you click with them. And the opposite applies. We find that in research projects which deliberately block someone from copying another, then that person will walk away from the encounter feeling that they didn’t much like the other person.”

Why does this happen? Using a range of techniques including MRI scanning of brain activity, researchers believe they now have a better understanding of the mechanisms underpinning our social interactions. “We find that when two people interact, their two brains become coupled together to the extent that exactly the same area in both people’s brains will become activated,” Professor Garrod explains. “When this happens the two people begin to feel they are ‘clicking’ with each other.”

The effect of brain coupling can be seen in people playing the game ‘rock, paper, scissors’. Research shows that very rapidly players will start to copy how the other is playing. Ultimately, of course, unless players are conscious of what’s happening, that ‘brain coupling’ works against either winning.

This research is important, Professor Garrod points out, because it helps to explain more about what underpins social relations – the ‘glue’ that holds us together. When people ‘click’ there are huge advantages to be gained in terms of better collaboration and greater empathy. Society is increasingly interconnected, and understanding more about how we interact is crucial.
SATURDAY’S CHILD WORKS
HARD FOR A LIVING

Work and employment

With recession and rising unemployment people are becoming more insecure about their jobs. Research shows that increased insecurity and pressure at work can impact negatively on sleep, stress levels and family life, with children looking forward to the weekends for ‘family time’. Management practices and industrial relations are central to employee wellbeing – but in terms of work hours Brits have been surpassed by the Americans.

UK and Ireland: most job insecurity in Western Europe

The recession is ramping up people’s fear of losing their job. In 2010, a third of British and Irish workers feared for their jobs – suggesting that UK and Irish workers feel the least secure of any West European country, according to European-wide data collected for the European Social Survey (ESS).

Recent ESS data from 21 countries paints a picture of pay cuts, shorter working hours and lower job security across Europe. Europeans are feeling less secure in their jobs and more pressured at work than they did before the recession.

Workers in the UK, Greece, Portugal and Netherlands were most likely to report having to work harder than before the recession, with more respondents agreeing that their job requires them to work very hard in 2010 compared to 2004. Findings show that almost one fifth of British workers said they had to work shorter hours and a quarter of British workers said they had to do less interesting work.

ESS researchers at City University London found large variations in the proportion of respondents reporting having to take reduced pay. This applied to around one in ten workers in Belgium, Switzerland and Norway; between one fifth and a third of workers in the UK, Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and the Ukraine; over a third of workers in Greece and Spain; and over half of working respondents in Estonia and Ireland.

Interestingly, the recession has not increased negative attitudes towards female employment. Across all 21 countries, comparing 2010 with 2004, the same or a smaller percentage of people agreed with statements such as ‘when jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women’.
Long working hours affect sleep

Job insecurity could lead to more pressure at work and longer working hours – but it comes at a price. More than 48 hours of work per week is associated with less sleep and poorer sleep quality, especially for women, according to Understanding Society, the world’s largest longitudinal household study. Poor sleep is both a symptom and precursor of poor health, and is associated with work problems and absenteeism.

Analysis of data on work and sleep based on 15,000 UK employees finds that not only working hours but also job satisfaction affects the quality of sleep. One third of the most dissatisfied employees report poor sleep quality, compared to only 18 per cent of the most satisfied. In addition, the least satisfied workers are more likely to have shorter sleep duration (14 per cent) compared to those who are most satisfied with work (8 per cent).

Findings further highlight the link between excessive job demands and anxiety and stress. Data from Understanding Society show that longer working hours are linked to higher anxiety levels, among both men and women. However, women who work long hours are more stressed than their male counterparts.

The timing of work has a smaller impact on anxiety than the numbers of hours worked, but weekend working is associated with slightly higher anxiety among both men and women. “These findings are clear evidence of the links between wellbeing at work and at home,” researchers argue.

Following the trends of industrial relations

Are UK employers embracing family-friendly work practices, helping to reduce stress at work and improve work-life balance? This is one of the questions the sixth Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS6) – to be published in 2013 – is exploring, alongside issues such as the effect of performance-linked pay, trade union decline and employee representation. WERS is the flagship survey of employment relations in Britain, collecting data from employers, employee representatives and employees in a representative sample of workplaces.

“WERS provides an invaluable map of industrial relations in the UK and how it is evolving over time,” says Professor Stephen Wood at the University of Leicester and a member of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skill’s Steering Committee for WERS6. “Pay, working conditions, job satisfaction, wellbeing at work are key issues in working people’s lives, and WERS provides evidence on what’s happening in these and other areas crucial to people’s livelihoods and the UK’s economic performance.”

Findings from previous WERS surveys have indicated, for example, that job satisfaction is linked to higher performance. The introduction of family-friendly management practices has also been linked to improved performance in organisations with a large body of already committed workers.

The 2011 WERS survey repeats the core questions of earlier surveys, concerning issues such as employee representation, payment systems, equal opportunities, employee relations and training. But the survey will also cover new ground in terms of current workplace issues, such as the impact of the recession on employment and employers.

“Pay, working conditions, job satisfaction, wellbeing at work are key issues in working people’s lives”

“It’s only speculation but I suspect the most recent survey will show that firms may not have been so quick to shed labour during this recession as in the past,” Professor Wood suggests. “Employers would not want to lose skills, particularly in manufacturing, and are more likely to have cut hours or overtime than made workers redundant. The beauty of WERS is that it provides us with reliable data on just this type of issues.”

See the Seven Days video about this project at www.esrc.ac.uk/saturday
The wellbeing of employees

Working conditions are determined by more than industrial relations – how the business is run can make a big difference to the workplace. Modern management practices can improve employee wellbeing, according to research from the Centre for Economic Performance. Analysis of data from Finland reveals that what’s known as ‘high involvement management’ (HIM) techniques – which seek to engage employees more fully in their jobs – may not only improve a firm’s performance but can also increase employees’ happiness.

To date, the impact of HIM on employee wellbeing has been open to debate. On one hand, these practices could enrich employees’ working lives by offering them greater job autonomy, by rewarding effort more fairly or by building effective teamwork. On the other hand, if HIM is simply a means of intensifying worker effort, this may lead to a higher incidence of illness, injury, absence and stress.

“We find high involvement management is positively associated with various aspects of employees’ wellbeing,” says Alex Bryson, Senior Research Fellow at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. “In particular, it is strongly associated with higher evaluations of subjective wellbeing, including higher job satisfaction and fewer feelings of tiredness at work. It is also associated with a lower probability of having a workplace accident.”

But high involvement management is also associated with having more short absence spells – perhaps, Mr Bryson suggests, because working in such a system is more demanding than standard production and because multi-skilled employees cover for each other’s short absences.

Overall, both the nature of high involvement practices and the way in which new practices are introduced (ie how much employees are involved in consultation leading to change) appear to be important for employee wellbeing.

Roll on the weekend, say children of working parents

More involvement may mean more fulfilling jobs, but job demands can also infringe on family life. As part of the Timescapes longitudinal study, researchers have focused on children’s views and feelings about their parents’ employment.

Based on in-depth qualitative interviews with 14 families between 2007-2010, researchers find that life for many children of working parents can be one big rush on weekdays. Children whose parents’ lives were very structured by employment complained of little scope for flexibility or control over their time in the mornings and after school. Children said they felt tired and also that the tempo of the mornings was too fast, describing them as ‘busy’, ‘hectic’ and ‘very rushed’ as the families struggled to synchronize the various demands on their time including school and work. In those parents worked from home or had a short commute described a much more leisurely feel to their weekday mornings and a greater control over their time after school.

When asked how they felt at the weekends compared to during the week, many parents and, interestingly, several children specifically commented that weekends were more ‘relaxed’. Not only were weekends described as having a different tempo and emotional feel for all family members, but also a greater freedom of choice for children as well as parents.

Weekends were also described by children as providing the opportunity to do something as a family, something not so easily achieved in the routines of everyday working family lives. However, ‘family time’ also involved time to ‘chill out’ at home, which, for the children, seemed to mean unregulated time to do as they wished and, for parents, was sometimes explained as the need to re-charge their batteries.

“These findings lend weight to the case that ‘family-friendly’ working practices should represent an attainable option for working parents.”

“Our findings show that where parents’ employment circumstances afforded a greater degree of flexibility in the mornings, children’s experiences of time, space and care seemed of a comparatively better quality,” says Dr Jeni Harden at Edinburgh Napier University. “These findings, drawing on both children’s and parents’ voices, lend weight to the case that ‘family-friendly’ working practices should not exist only as policy rhetoric but represent an attainable option for working parents.”
Working mothers get go-ahead

Juggling work and family life can be a difficult act, but research into maternal employment and child socio-emotional behaviour provides some welcome news for working mothers. Despite concerns that young children suffer if they are left in childcare during their early years, a new study finds that there are in fact no significant detrimental or harmful effects on a young child’s emotional wellbeing if their mothers work.

“We found no evidence of a longer-term detrimental influence on child behaviour of mothers working during the child’s first year of life”

Based on data for 12,000 children from the Millennium Cohort Study, researchers find that the ideal scenario for children, both boys and girls, is one where both parents lived in the home and both were in paid employment.

“Some studies have suggested that whether or not mothers work in the first year of a child’s life can be particularly important for later outcomes,” explains Dr Anne McMunn at the International Centre for Lifecourse Studies, University College London. “But we found no evidence of a longer-term detrimental influence on child behaviour of mothers working during the child’s first year of life.”

Americans more hard-working than Brits

We might work hard for our living, but Americans are putting in longer hours than us. Forty years ago the French and British used to work more than the Americans, but now they work less, according to a new study from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS).

Dramatic changes have occurred since the 1960s in the annual number of hours worked by the French and British, says Dr Antoine Bozio, Senior research economist at the IFS. While the number of hours worked by Americans did not change significantly over that period, the annual hours worked by the British and French fell markedly.

Much of this change can be explained by changes in the employment of the young and old. In France, for example, young people engaged in any sort of education tend not to work. In terms of older workers, American employees are more likely to retire later than French and – to a slightly lesser extent – British workers. So, for older men and women there is a large decrease in hours per worker in France and similarly in the UK, contrasting with an increase in the US.

In all three countries, the employment rate for women has almost doubled in the last 40 years. But while American married women have increased both their participation and their mean annual hours of work, French women have seen their average hours decline markedly.

“Taken together these changes add up to an enormous shift in the relative positions of these countries since the 1960s,” Dr Bozio concludes.
THE CHILD THAT IS BORN ON THE SABBATH DAY IS BONNY AND BLITHE, AND GOOD AND GAY

Happiness and wellbeing

Are we a happy society? Research is exploring how we best can measure happiness and analyse levels of wellbeing in the UK. While there is no ‘happiness gene’, there seems to be a genetic influence on wellbeing along with other factors. Money and materialism lowers general wellbeing, while religion can make us more resilient – and happiness turns out to be contagious.

Putting happier nations on the policy agenda

In November 2010 Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the Government would start measuring progress ‘not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving’ – partly influenced by findings from the Wellbeing and Economics research project, led by Professor Andrew Oswald at the University of Warwick.

Academic research into wellbeing is slowly changing how politicians think. Now, Professor Oswald points out, we are increasingly aware of ‘the profound need in modern society to measure human wellbeing in ways that go far beyond traditional economists’ ways’. Standard indices of a country’s prosperity – such as the level of Gross Domestic Product, or GDP – are well-known and widely collected. Yet if they are to do their job effectively, politicians and policymakers arguably have to go beyond GDP. They have to try to understand, and measure, the happiness and mental health of their country’s citizens.

Almost everyone is interested in happiness, yet much of this fascinating research area lies almost uncharted. Data tells us that happy people are disproportionately the young and old (not middle-aged), rich, educated, married, in work, healthy, exercise-takers, with high fruit-and-vegetable diets and
slim. Furthermore, happy nations are disproportionately rich, educated, democratic, trusting and have low unemployment. We know that some nations are happier than others – for example Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland. But knowledge on why that should be is sparse.

Understanding the determinants of something as complex as happiness is difficult, Professor Oswald argues. The last few decades have seen a body of researchers attempt to rise to the difficult challenge of how to study ‘happiness’ in a systematic, empirical way. Looking ahead, bringing together researchers from a range of disciplines – including psychology, economics, epidemiology, medicine, statistics, sociology, political science, and management science – will lead to a better understanding of what really determines human wellbeing and how best to measure it.

See the Seven Days video about this project at www.esrc.ac.uk/sunday

Genes matter for happiness

Can genes contribute to wellbeing and happiness? Yes, according to a new study. About one third of the variation in individuals’ baseline levels of happiness is explained by genes, say researchers from the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP).

“Our results suggest that genetic factors significantly influence individual subjective wellbeing,” says Dr Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, CEP Research Associate. “Moreover, using two independent data sources, we find that one particular gene – SLC6A4 – is positively associated with significantly higher levels of life satisfaction.”

These results are the first to identify a specific gene that is associated with happiness. Researchers stress, however, that genetic factors complement, rather than substitute for, the influence of socio-demographic, economic and cultural variables on life satisfaction.

“Future work could attempt to identify other genes or gene-environment interactions that are implicated in subjective wellbeing,” Dr De Neve states. “While the SLC6A4 gene may explain a significant portion of the variation in happiness, it is important to re-emphasise that there is no single ‘happiness gene’. Rather, there is likely to be a set of genes whose expression, in combination with environmental factors, influences how happy people feel.”

Materialist values linked to lower wellbeing

A number of factors may contribute to our sense of happiness – but money and material possessions are not among them, a new study suggests.

“Our findings show that a strongly materialistic orientation is linked to lower wellbeing,” says Dr Helga Dittmar at the University of Sussex. “Crucially, materialism is linked significantly with negative effects on all dimensions of personal wellbeing, including poorer life quality, a less positive sense of self, poorer mental and physical health, and dysfunctional consumer behaviour.

“Hence we found, for example, that strong materialistic values were linked with feeling less satisfied with life, experiencing more negative emotions, as well as feeling greater anxiety and depression. This link held across different age groups.”

Many people are unaware of the psychological and social costs that a strongly materialistic outlook may entail. "As a society we should be wary of encouraging excessively materialistic values – particularly through advertising which implies that the pursuit of materialistic goals is the way to become successful, attractive and happy," says Dr Dittmar.

“Given our findings, the influence of these materialistic messages on young people is particularly worrisome,” she continues. “Advertising for under-12s is banned in Sweden, and the possibility of adopting this type of measure in the UK, combined with greater educational input on the potential dangers of materialism for both adults and children, should now be explored.”
Faith feeds resilience

If money can’t buy us happiness, then what does? Could religion hold the key to happiness and, if so, how does this happen? A research project under the Religion and Society programme, funded by the ESRC and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, has explored the potential link between religion and happiness or wellbeing.

“It’s actually very difficult to measure people’s levels of happiness and wellbeing, and even more difficult to evaluate cause and effect where religious affiliation and belief are concerned,” says Professor Elaine Graham at the University of Chester.

In this project researchers investigated the relationship between religion and wellbeing by bringing together economists, psychologists, statisticians and theologians from Estonia, India, Sweden, the UK and USA in a series of workshops held between 2008 and 2009.

“No-one would want to say that religion makes you happier, but evidence drawn from across many religions does suggest that people of faith do record better mental and physical health,” Professor Graham explains. “Crucially, a religious faith appears to make people more resilient.”

Resilience, researchers believe, may result from the strong networks of support many religious people experience within their faith community. Such support and the structure provided by faith may help people navigate their way through difficult times. In addition, religion may offer a worldview which prepares people for life’s ups and downs and makes them more resilient in the face of adverse circumstances.

“All researchers involved in this project recognised the contribution of religion to the multidimensional phenomenon of happiness and wellbeing,” Professor Graham concludes. “And in my view there is a strong link between religious faith and resilience.”
Happy children

Not only faith communities, but also families are crucial when it comes to providing support networks and a sense of stability. Family relationships make a big difference to children’s wellbeing.

Findings from the Understanding Society study show that young people aged 10 to 15 years in the UK overall are very satisfied with their lives: 70 per cent rate themselves as happy or very happy. Moreover, there is little difference between the average life satisfaction score of those children living in the household with the bottom fifth income and those children living in households in the top fifth income bracket.

Young people are in general very happy with their family situation – well over 60 per cent say they are ‘completely satisfied’ in this respect. However, in families where the child’s mother is unhappy in her partnership, only 55 per cent of young people say they are ‘completely happy’ with their family situation – compared with 73 per cent of young people whose mothers are ‘perfectly happy’ in their relationship. The quality of relationships in the family matter too. Children who quarrel once a week with their parents and don’t discuss important matters with them have only a 28 per cent chance of rating themselves completely happy with their families.

More detailed examination of what influences young people’s happiness reveals that healthy behaviours in adolescence are linked to happiness. The study shows that young people who never drank any alcohol were between four and six times more likely to have higher levels of happiness than those who drank alcohol. Youth who smoked were about five times less likely to have high happiness scores compared to those who never smoked. Higher consumption of fruit and vegetables and lower consumption of crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks were both associated with high levels of happiness. And the more hours of sport youth participated in per week, the happier they were.

Happiness is catching

A healthy and active life may be a good antidote to unhappiness, but if you still are feeling down, go find a happy person. People’s happiness is influenced by the people around them, argues Professor Peter Totterdell at the University of Sheffield. In fact, emotions can be transmitted from person to person through what might be termed ‘emotional contagion’.

A study undertaken as part of the Emotion Regulation of Others and Self project indicates that merely witnessing emotional interactions between other people can be sufficient to induce the same feelings in ourselves. For example, in one study, staff in a hospital department reported their reactions to over 1,000 interpersonal interactions between co-workers across 15 working days. Analysis shows that staff felt significantly more emotionally drained after witnessing unpleasant reactions compared to pleasant ones.

“People do have dispositions to feeling and expressing particular emotions which indicates a genetic component, but more recent research indicates that our social networks also affect how we feel,” Professor Totterdell explains. “We are all embedded within various kinds of social networks, such as friendship groups, work-based associates, team-mates at a sports club, and local community contacts. These networks form our personal neighbourhood, and how we feel depends partly on the feelings of those to whom we are connected.”

In a further study conducted in a supermarket and a prison, researchers found that people deliberately try to improve others’ feelings and that the quality of relationships between people was affected by the strategies they used to regulate how others feel. “So it seems that when it comes to happiness, we really may all be in it together,” Professor Totterdell concludes.
MONDAY’S CHILD IS FAIR OF FACE

FINDING FACES IN THE CROWD

Human face detection in natural scenes
ESRC grant number: RES-062-23-0389
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-062-23-0389/read)

Dr Markus Bindemann
Email: m.bindemann@kent.ac.uk

FACIAL ATTRACTION

Perceptions of facial attractiveness across development
ESRC grant number: RES-000-22-3990
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-3990/read)

Dr Lynda Boothroyd
Email: l.g.boothroyd@durham.ac.uk

GOSSIP MAGAZINES FUEL TEENAGE EATING DISORDERS

Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer)
(www.decipher.uk.net)

Dr James White
Email: whitej11@cardiff.ac.uk

BUT WORDS WILL NEVER HURT ME

Words will never hurt me: implementation intentions regulate attention to stigmatising comments about appearance
ESRC grant number: RES-060-25-0044
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-060-25-0044/read)

Emotion Regulation of Others and Self (EROS):
A collaborative research network
(www.erosresearch.org)

Professor Paschal Sheeran
Email: p.sheeran@sheffield.ac.uk

COSMETIC SURGERY TOURISM

Sun, sea, sand and silicone: aesthetic surgery tourism in the UK and Australia
ESRC grant number: RES-062-23-2796
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-062-23-2796/read)

Professor Ruth Holliday
Email: r.holliday@leeds.ac.uk

GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

Look at Me! Images of Women and Ageing
New Dynamics of Ageing Programme
(www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk)

Representing Self – Representing Ageing
ESRC grant number: RES-356-25-0040
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-356-25-0040/read)

Dr Lorna Warren
Email: l.warren@sheffield.ac.uk
TUESDAY’S CHILD IS FULL OF GRACE

GIVING: STABLE BUT CRITICAL

*The new state of donation: Three decades of household giving to charity 1978-2008* (www.bris.ac.uk/cmpo/publications/other/stateofdonation.pdf)
Centre For Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (www.cgap.org.uk)
Centre for Market and Public Organisation (www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo)
Professor Cathy Pharoah
Email: catherine.pharoah.1@city.ac.uk

COMMERCIAL INCOME NOT ENOUGH FOR DONATION SHORTFALL

*The marketisation of charities in England and Wales* Third Sector Research Centre (www.tsrc.ac.uk)
Professor Stephen McKay
Email: s.d.mckay@bham.ac.uk

LARGER CHARITIES ENJOY HIGHEST INCOME GROWTH

Are big charities becoming increasingly dominant?
*Tracking charitable income growth 1997-2008 by initial size* Third Sector Research Centre (www.tsrc.ac.uk)
Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (www.cgap.org.uk)
Dr David Clifford
Email: dcm104@soton.ac.uk

CHARITIES FACE CELEBRITY CHALLENGE

Charities need to rethink celebrity
*Celebrity and development* ESRC grant number RES-070-27-0035 (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-070-27-0035/read)
Dr Daniel Brockington
Email: dan.brockington@manchester.ac.uk

ENTREPRENEURS CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE

*Entrepreneurs as philanthropists* Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (www.cgap.org.uk)
Professor Eleanor Shaw
Email: eleanor.shaw@strath.ac.uk

VOLUNTEERING AT STABLE LEVELS

*Individual voluntary participation in the United Kingdom* (www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/QuantitativeAnalysis/Individual voluntaryparticipationintheUK/tabid/520/Default.aspx)
Third Sector Research Centre (www.tsrc.ac.uk)
Dr Laura Staetsky
Email: lstaetsky@jpr.org.uk

YOUNG VOLUNTEERS BRING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

ESRC Festival of Social Science – Culture Shock event Centre for Volunteering and Community Action (www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/education_social_sciences/the_centre_for_volunteering/index.php)
Dr Alethea Melling
Email: a.melling@uclan.ac.uk

WEDNESDAY’S CHILD IS FULL OF WOE

OVER ONE THIRD OF CHILDREN ARE POOR IN THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

*Child poverty in the first five years of life* (www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?itemtype=document&iid=1062)
Centre for Longitudinal Studies: Millennium Cohort Study (http://cls.ioe.ac.uk/)
Dr Jonathan Bradshaw
Email: jonathan.bradshaw@york.ac.uk

POVERTY CASTS A WIDE NET

*Changing fortunes* (www.iser.essex.ac.uk/2011/09/13/changing-fortunes)
British Household Panel Survey (www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps)
Professor Stephen Jenkins
Email: s.jenkins@lse.ac.uk

GETTING THE MEASURE OF POVERTY

*Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK (PSE)* ESRC grant number RES-060-25-0052 (www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-060-25-0052/read)
*Poverty and Social Exclusion* (www.poverty.ac.uk)
Professor David Gordon
Email: dave.gordon@bristol.ac.uk

INCOME GAP FAILS TO NARROW

*Poverty and inequality in the UK: 2011* (www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5584)
Institute for Fiscal Studies (www.ifs.org.uk)
Mr Robert Joyce
Email: robert_j@ifs.org.uk

THE ‘SHAME’ OF BEING POOR

Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries ESRC grant number RES-167-25-0557 (www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0557/read)
*ESRC/DFID International Development (Poverty Alleviation)* Research Scheme (www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/Project/60650/Default.aspx)
Professor Robert Walker
Email: robert.walker@spi.ox.ac.uk

PUTTING WELLBEING IN THE PICTURE

*Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways* ESRC grant number RES-167-25-0507 (www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0507/read)
Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways (www.wellbeingpathways.org.uk)
Dr Sarah White
Email: s.c.white@bath.ac.uk
THURSDAY’S CHILD HAS FAR TO GO

NEW CITIZENS GET THAT ‘BRITISH’ FEELING

Citizenship and integration in the UK
(www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/citizenship/integrationintheuk/)

Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS)
(www.compas.ox.ac.uk/)

Dr Ben Gidley
Email: ben.gidley@compas.ox.ac.uk

POLITICIANS NEED TO SPELL OUT IMMIGRATION BENEFITS

The securitisation of forced migration
ESRC grant number RES-071-27-0089
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES071-27-0089/read)

RCUK Global Uncertainties Programme
(www.globaluncertainties.org.uk)

Dr Anne Hammerstad
Email: a.hammerstad@kent.ac.uk

ETHNIC MIXING ON THE INCREASE

Ethnic Group Population Change and Integration; A Demographic Approach to Small Area Ethnic Geographies
ESRC grant number RES-163-27-0011
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-163-27-0011/read)

Dr Nissa Finney
Email: nissa.finney@manchester.ac.uk

JOBLESS IMMIGRANTS PREFER HOME SWEET HOME

Does unemployment cause return migration?
(www.cpc.ac.uk/resources/downloads/Does%20unemployment%20cause%20return%20migration.pdf)

Research Centre for Population Change
(www.cpc.ac.uk/)

Dr Jackline Wahba
Email: j.wahba@soton.ac.uk

THE LIVES OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

At home abroad: The life experiences of children of Eastern European migrant workers in Scotland
ESRC grant number RES-061-25-0121
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-061-25-0121/read)

Dr Daniela Sime
Email: daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk

FRIDAY’S CHILD IS LOVING AND GIVING

SIBLING SATISFACTION

Siblings and Friends: The Changing Nature of Children’s Lateral relationships

Timescapes
(www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk)

Professor Rosalind Edwards
Email: r.s.edwards@soton.ac.uk

CHANGING FAMILY FORMS INFLUENCE CHILD WELLBEING

Parent relationships and child wellbeing
(www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?itemtype=document&id=1060)

Centre for Longitudinal Studies: Millennium Cohort Study
(http://cls.ioe.ac.uk/)

Professor Kathleen Kiernan
Email: kathleen.kiernan@york.ac.uk

HAPPY OUTLOOK FOR UK RELATIONSHIPS

Social support from family and friends
Understanding Society
(www.understandingsociety.org.uk/)

Professor Heather Laurie
laurh@essex.ac.uk

WHAT’S THE RECIPE FOR LASTING RELATIONSHIPS?

Enduring Love? Understanding long-term adult couple relationships in contemporary Britain
ESRC grant number RES-062-25-3056
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-062-25-3056/read)

Dr Jacqui Gabb
j.a.gabb@open.ac.uk

SPREADING EMOTIONS

Emotion Regulation of Others and Self (EROS):
A collaborative research network
(http://www.erosresearch.org/)

Dr Brian Parkinson
Email: brian.parkinson@psy.ox.ac.uk

WHY PEOPLE ‘CLICK’

Social interaction: a cognitive-neurosciences approach
(www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-060-25-0010/read)

Social interaction
(www.socialinteraction.gla.ac.uk/)

Professor Simon Garrod
Email: simon.garrod@glasgow.ac.uk
SATURDAY’S CHILD WORKS HARD FOR A LIVING
UK AND IRELAND: MOST JOB INSECURITY IN WESTERN EUROPE

European Social Survey (ESS)
www.europeansocialsurvey.org
Dr Rory Fitzgerald
Email: r.fitzgerald@city.ac.uk

LONG WORKING HOURS AFFECT SLEEP
Sleep duration and quality according to job characteristics
http://research.understandingsociety.org.uk/files/research/findings/early-findings/5%20Early%20findings%20Chapter%205.pdf
Understanding Society
www.understandingsociety.org.uk/
Dr Mark Bryan
Email: markb@essex.ac.uk

FOLLOWING THE TRENDS OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
Workplace Employment Relations Survey
www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/research-resources/surveys/wers/index.aspx
Professor Stephen Wood
Email: sjw111@leicester.ac.uk

THE WELLBEING OF EMPLOYEES
Wellbeing in the workplace: the impact of modern management
http://cep.lse.ac.uk/_new/publications/abstract.asp?index=4001
Centre for Economic Performance
www.cel.ac.uk/
National Institute of Economic and Social Research
www.niesr.ac.uk
Mr Alex Bryson
Email: a.bryson@niesr.ac.uk

ROLL ON THE WEEKEND, SAY CHILDREN OF WORKING PARENTS
Children and working parents
www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/Policy%20Conference%202011/paper-5.pdf
Timescapes
www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/
Dr Jeni Harden
Email: jharden@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

WORKING MOTHERS GET GO-AHEAD
Working mothers and children’s wellbeing
International Centre for Lifecourse Studies in Society and Health
www.uclac.uk/icsl
Dr Anne McMunn
a.mcmunn@ucl.ac.uk

AMERICANS MORE HARD-WORKING THAN BRITS
Extensive and intensive margins of labour supply: Working hours in the US, UK and France
www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5498
Institute of Fiscal Studies
www.ifs.org.uk/
Dr Antoine Bozio
Email: antoine.bozio@ipp.eu

AND THE CHILD THAT IS BORN ON THE SABBATH DAY IS BONNY AND BLithe, AND GOOD AND GAY
PUTTING HAPPIER NATIONS ON THE POLICY AGENDA

Wellbeing and Economics
ESRC grant number RES-051-27-0168
wwva.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-051-27-0168/read
Professor Andrew Oswald
Email: andrew.oswald@warwick.ac.uk

GENES MATTER FOR HAPPINESS
Genes, Economics and Happiness
http://cep.lse.ac.uk/_new/publications/abstract.asp?index=4012
Centre for Economic Performance
http://cep.lse.ac.uk/
Dr Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Email: jedeneve@gmail.com

MATERIALIST VALUES LINKED TO LOWER WELLBEING
The link between materialism and wellbeing
ESRC grant number RES-000-22-4020
www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-4020/read
Dr Helga Dittmar
Email: h.e.dittmar@sussex.ac.uk

FAITH FEEDS RESILIENCE
How religion affects happiness
www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/featured_findings/religion Adds_value_to_the_happiness_hypothesis
AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme
www.religionandsociety.org.uk/
Professor Elaine Graham
Email: e.graham@chester.ac.uk

HAPPY CHILDREN
UK youth are happy after all?
Understanding Society
www.understandingsociety.org.uk/
Dr Cara Booker
Email: cbooker@essex.ac.uk

HAPPINESS IS CATCHING
Our emotional neighbourhoods
Emotion Regulation of Others and Self (EROS):
A collaborative research network
www.erosresearch.org.uk/
Professor Peter Totterdell
Email: p.totterdell@sheffield.ac.uk
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