

# The Importance of Statistics

by RSS GetStats Board Members

'A thriving democracy needs good statistics, well explained and well understood. Only then can we adequately understand the world around us and make sensible decisions about the choices that individuals and society confront.' Robert Chote, Chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), Chair of the getstats Board.

'As we move into the century of data the need for everyone to understand how to use statistics and to be able to spot errors in data has never been more necessary. I am pleased to be able to support everything getstats does to help this to happen.' Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice-chancellor of the University of Aberdeen.

'If we want to understand what is happening to our society, the answers will be found in numbers. It is only by understanding and respecting statistics and data that we can recognise trends, evaluate policy and consider how best to make Britain a better place.' Mark Easton, BBC Home Editor.

'I believe it is really important to support getstats in order to help produce quantitatively literate citizens for a society increasingly dependent on statistical data in order to function democratically and equitably.' Professor Harvey Goldstein FBA, Professor of social statistics at the University of Bristol.

'We are all surrounded by numbers and statistics everyday of our lives. By learning what they mean and how to use them we have a better understanding of the world around us and can play a greater part.' Dr Julian Huppert, MP for Cambridge.

'Statistical understanding is such an important component of empowering the citizen. I subscribe to the World Bank definition of 'empowerment' – the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this are actions that build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context governing the use of these assets. Trusted and trustworthy statistical information and the ability of citizens to use these data effectively are central to this.' Professor Denise Lievesley CBE AcSS, Head of the School of Social Science and Public Policy at King's College London.

'In the rapidly emerging digital society we will be confronted with a relentlessly increasing volume of data about every imaginable sphere of life. I want more people to understand Statistics because it will enable them to tell when this data is being used well, and, more often, when it is being misused as 'policy based evidence' Professor John Macinnes, Professor of sociology at the University of Edinburgh.

'Statistics really matter. They help all of us understand the world we live in, and inform all the most important aspects of public debate.' Dame Jil Matheson DCB, former National Statistician.

'Statistics are too important just to leave to experts, and it's crucial that people grasp the basic principles so that they can make good judgements—whether about their own lives or about wider public issues.' Professor Bernard Silverman FRS, chief scientific adviser (CSA) at the Home Office and Professor of statistics in the Department of Statistics, University of Oxford.

'We get bombarded with numbers, and I feel very strongly that people should be able to take them apart and see which ones are worth taking any notice of.' Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter OBE FRS, Winton Professor of the Public Understanding of Risk, University of Cambridge.

'All citizens have a right to know why it is important to be able to get trustworthy information from the enormous amount of data in the world around us; they should be able to understand good and bad data-based arguments, including being sceptical about anecdotes used to further a cause; and they should be able to do certain statistical tasks for themselves. That's where the getstats campaign comes in.' Professor Neville Davies, Professor of statistical education, Plymouth University

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