

## THE STATISTICS USER FORUM and StatsUserNet

The Statistics User Forum (SUF) is hosted by the Royal Statistical Society and supported by the UK Statistics Authority. SUF was formed in 2004, with initial funding from the Economic and Social Research Council, as the successor to the long-established Statistics User Council. SUF is an umbrella organisation for an increasingly large number of groups of statistics users (two representatives from each group are invited to attend SUF meetings). The purpose of SUF is to support users of official statistics in communicating their needs to the Government Statistical Service (GSS). The overall aim is to maximise the value of official statistics for the benefit of society.

Direct interaction between user groups and relevant producers is often the best way of exploring issues, raising unmet needs, providing feedback on statistical products and testing new developments. Current proposals to widen the brief of the GSS's theme working groups to include more user input provide another route for user groups to communicate with producers. It can also be useful to share concerns and experiences using StatsUserNet (see below) to enable others who may have an interest to see the concerns raised, and to encourage open debate and response to concerns or requests. Where SUF comes in is where there are issues that could run more widely across topics and themes, where the exchange of knowledge and experience between user groups will be beneficial, and generally to support user groups. To this end, there are many SUF events. Also, SUF promotes improved external communication and engagement about statistics, and has worked in collaboration with the Good Practice Team in the GSS to encourage this. For more on SUF, including its formal objectives and its current priority areas (e.g. on making more use of administrative data and preparing for the 2021 censuses), please see <http://www.rss.org.uk/suf>

The website StatsUserNet has been active since 2012 to facilitate online communication between members of SUF, and to stimulate engagement both between users of official statistics, and between users and producers of official statistics. The website provides a mechanism for the RSS and SUF to keep in touch with current statistical issues and with a range of users of official statistics.

The site carries news of interest to users, materials relating to relevant events, discussion forums and other facilities. Do join the Statistics User Forum community on the site in order to see SUF meeting and event papers, as well as joining, other communities of interest and sharing useful information or links. There are now over 3,150 members of StatsUserNet, holding online discussions, storing and sharing documents, blogging on topics of interest, promoting events of interest to members, and connecting with one another. Many producers of government statistics are members of the site, along with a wide range of users from all sectors.

I look forward to FRSUG's participation in SUF and StatsUserNet. I am sure we will have much to learn from your vibrant and active group, and I trust we can support the group in the ways outlined above. Do of course please contact me if you have any questions or issues to raise.

PAUL ALLIN, CStat, FRSA

Chair, Statistics User Forum

Visiting Professor, Department of Mathematics, Imperial College London [p.allin@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:p.allin@imperial.ac.uk)