

**From:** [Statistical Society of Australia](#)  
**To:** [Marie-Louise Rankin](#)  
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## STATS MATTERS & EVENTS

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13 July 2023

Newsletter days are not without their challenges. Some Thursdays prove to be more difficult than others, especially when my newsletter folder is empty, and frustration mounts. By noon on a Thursday, desperation can set in when I face a situation of having no articles and no ideas. What could I possibly write about?

However, today is an exception—a Thursday-gem. I'm delighted to share that this week I was spoiled for choice. Being indecisive at the best of times, I'm including every article that came my way since last Thursday. I appreciate your patience, as I invite you to embark on a journey as we explore diverse topics across different corners of the world.

Of course, our armchair travel starts in Australia, with a write-up about the SSA SA Branch's June networking meeting with Dr Dale Godfrey, Director of the Research Grants at the University of Adelaide, talking about "Navigating the Australian funding landscape". From there, we head to the United Kingdom, where the government has launched an inquiry into utilising harnessed data for improved government policies.

Continuing our voyage, we arrive in the Netherlands. Did you know that

residents of the Netherlands are exempt from completing census forms? We explore the reasons behind this unique approach. Furthermore, for those with a culinary curiosity, we uncover the secret to finding the best herring in the Netherlands— a statistician will tell you!

If these matters are not of interest to you, maybe you are more into online dating? This newsletter will lead you to an article that explains how having the right data at your fingertips could improve your online dating experience significantly.

I hope there is something for everyone in this issue.

Enjoy!

[Marie-Louise Rankin](#)

Executive Officer

*Read newsletter in your [browser](#)*

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**SA Branch – June 2023 Networking Meeting**

The SA Branch of Statistical Society organised a networking evening in June for members and non-members. Held in the modern Braggs building of the University of Adelaide, guest speaker Dr Dale Godfrey, Director of the Research Grants at the University of Adelaide, gave a talk on “Navigating the Australian funding landscape”. Points included:

- Positioning yourself as a sought-after collaborator on grant applications
- Key points to consider when crafting funding applications.

Attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions after the talk. There was some lively discussion on the current funding landscape and the different funding bodies: ARC, NHMRC and MRFF. After the talk, attendees were able to mingle, network and sample the generous refreshments, a welcome opportunity after the COVID lockdowns! The event was attended by 25 guests.

Lan Kelly  
Vice President,

SA Branch, SSA

If you would like to recommend a topic or a great speaker for SA Branch meetings, please email the SA Branch Secretary, [Dr Gabrielle Lincoln](#).

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## **Digital Census Revolution: 40 Years of Streamlining Data Collection in the Netherlands**

The Dutch census, conducted by Statistics Netherlands (CBS), has a rich history as the oldest official statistic produced by the organisation. However, unlike traditional census methods involving door-to-door interviews, the Netherlands has embraced digital innovation for over four decades. This groundbreaking approach, made possible by the country's robust municipal Personal Records Database (BRP) and the System of Social Statistical Databases (SSB), has eliminated the need for inhabitants to fill out questionnaires and has significantly reduced the survey burden and costs.

As CBS completes the second part of the 2021 census, this article published on the CBS website, delves into the implications of this digital transformation, the initial results, the role of information security, and the future prospects for detailed demographic and socioeconomic analysis.

Read the full article by Miriam van der Sangen [here](#).

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## **Harnessing New Data for Improved Government Policies: Inquiry Launched by the UK Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee**

According to a media release published on the website of the UK Parliament, its Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee has initiated a new inquiry aimed at exploring the potential of harnessing new data to enhance government policies. This inquiry will focus on the collection and analysis of data by government and public bodies, with a particular emphasis on opportunities for reforming the existing system.

As more data becomes readily available, ranging from supermarket loyalty cards to smartwatches, the committee will investigate how civil servants can effectively utilise this wealth of information to inform decision-making and achieve policy objectives. Key areas of examination will include the future of population statistics proposed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), ethical considerations in data usage, privacy protection for citizens, and challenges related to accessing official statistics.

The committee aims to understand how statisticians and analysts can derive meaningful insights from the vast amounts of data generated daily and use them to improve the lives of the general public. In addition, the inquiry will assess the potential opportunities and risks associated with emerging data sources, explore changing demands for evidence, and evaluate the adequacy of existing privacy safeguards. By soliciting evidence and insights from various stakeholders, the committee seeks to ensure that official data and analyses serve the evolving needs of users and have a significant impact on policymaking.

The outcome of the inquiry will make for interesting reading. Read the full media release [here](#).

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## **Statistical Analysis Clears Controversy Surrounding Dutch Herring Competition**

For three decades, the Dutch Newspaper AD (*Algemeen Dagblad*) conducted an annual search for the best herring, a cherished tradition that recently came under scrutiny. Economist Ben Vollaard claimed that, based on his statistical analysis of a published dataset from an influential annual ranking in 2016 and 2017 of consumer outlets for Dutch New Herring, the competition was rigged, sparking widespread attention and accusations of fraud.

The controversy piqued the interest of Leiden statistician Richard Gill. He

argued that Vollaard's analysis was flawed and that the coding and processing of data can significantly impact the outcome. In a thorough investigation, Gill and his colleague Fengnan Gao (Shanghai); who reanalysed the data and found no evidence of deliberate manipulation or causal relationship, putting an end to the controversy surrounding the beloved herring competition.

Referring to the most important question though, where do you get the best herring?

Read [this article in Mirage News](#) (6 July 2023) and find out.

If you are after a more scientific analysis, read Richard Gills' [blog version of his and Gao's paper](#) on this topic.

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## **Freedom to conduct and publish opinion polls**

The freedom to publish opinion polls is a crucial aspect of public discourse. These polls and surveys investigate topics that can generate significant public interest. They are an integral part of the social and political fabric in many countries, although sometimes governments impose limitations, particularly concerning the release of poll results before elections and the review of survey questionnaires.

Since 1984, WAPOR (the World Association for Public Opinion Research) and ESOMAR (the global representative of the Data, Research, and Insights Community) have collaborated on a series of studies that evaluate these governmental restrictions worldwide. The findings of these studies are compiled in "Freedom Reports," which are published every five years. The most recent freedom survey was conducted in 2022, and the corresponding report was issued in 2023.

To access the latest report, please click [here](#).

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## **Introducing the Release Candidate of the DORIS Tool**

This week the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced the availability of the release candidate for the DORIS tool. DORIS, which stands for "Digital Open Rule Integrated Cause of Death Selection", is a software designed to streamline the process of determining the underlying cause of death.

By analysing the information provided on death certificates, DORIS assists in

the automated selection of the underlying cause of death according to the fully digitalised mortality rules of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).

As an integral part of the ICD-11 suite of tools, DORIS is freely accessible and has been specifically developed to enhance mortality reporting. The WHO is dedicated to supporting all countries in adopting and utilising the DORIS tool.

For further details, please click [here](#).

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### **Data and online dating: better data boosts online matches**

In the world of online dating, where making the first move and interpreting signals can be challenging, machine learning and data analysis are offering potential solutions.

Edward McFowland III, Assistant Professor of Business Administration in the Technology and Operations Management Unit at Harvard Business School, along with his coauthors, delved into the realm of online dating to investigate the impact of transparency on user engagement.

Their research findings indicate that revealing the identity and photos of those who express interest (by "swiping right") improved interaction rates for both men and women.

To accelerate the online dating process, reducing information imbalance is a key strategy. This involves promptly informing individuals about the people who are interested in them, boosting users' confidence. Imagine having the knowledge of exactly who likes you without having to interpret ambiguous cues such as smiles, texts or awkward conversations.

In a study involving 100,000 newly registered heterosexual daters, the research team introduced a premium feature called "who likes you" to half of the participants. The control group could only see the number of swipes they received, while the test group had their photos unblurred after one month, revealing the identities of those who had liked their profiles.

The results showed that when women were aware of who liked them, they became more proactive, sending 21 percent more messages to potential dates compared to the control group. Women with this feature also experienced a 29 percent increase in their number of matches, while men had a 15 percent increase. A match was defined as a series of four online exchanges, although it was unclear whether these matches translated into real-life connections.

The article "Swiping Right: How Data Helped This Online Dating Site Make

More Matches" by Kara Baskin (Harvard Business School website, 12 April 2022) explores the implications of McFowland and his team's study, highlighting how data can enhance the matchmaking process and potentially influence online engagement platforms beyond the realm of romance. Read the full article [here](#).

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### **Mentioned in previous newsletters:**

#### **Request for topic suggestions: R-Ladies of Melbourne to showcase R demos at ASC & OZCOTS 2023**

We are delighted to announce that R-Ladies of Melbourne will be participating in the upcoming [Australian Statistical Conference & OZCOTS 2023](#), setting up R demos during the event. The organisers are seeking your assistance in identifying specific areas of interest that attendees might like to see in these demos.

By tailoring their presentations to match our delegates' needs, R-Ladies can ensure that the sessions are both relevant and valuable. Please email our Event Coordinator, [Jodi Phillips](#), to share your preferences or suggestions for particular topics. Thank you!

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#### **SSA Branches have opened applications for funding to attend ASC/OZCOTS 2023**

Branches of the Statistical Society are offering funding for student and early career members of the society to attend the [Australian Statistical Conference \(ASC\) and Australian Conference on Teaching Statistics \(OZCOTS\)](#) in Wollongong, 10th - 15th December 2023. All branch funding will cover registration to the conference, with some branches covering additional travel if funds allow. For full details see each branches' announcement.

- Canberra (check your email for 'Canberra branch ASC & OZCOTS 2023 rego grant')
- NSW ([application form](#))
- Queensland ([application form](#))
- South Australia & Northern Territory ([application form](#))
- Victoria & Tasmania ([application form](#))
- Western Australia ([application form](#))

With best wishes,

ASC & OZCOTS 2023 Programming Committee

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### **SSA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee: We want you!**

The SSA's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee is charged with ensuring that our Society is welcoming and accessible to all. Since its formation in 2021, we've done many things to ensure diversity of our Society, including developing guidelines to help ensure Branch and Section events are welcoming and inclusive, seeking feedback on EDI issues from our members, and providing feedback to the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the inclusion of questions on sex and gender in future censuses. You can find out more about the committee [here](#).

If you're enthusiastic about equity, driven by diversity, or interested in inclusion, then we'd like to invite you to join the EDI Committee. For more information, please get in touch with the EDI Committee chair, [Jess Kasza](#).

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## **SSA Events**

### **ECSSN & NZSA webinar-SmP2023: Perspectives from two Early Career Statisticians**

20 Jul 2023, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM (AEST), held online

Join us for a friendly panel discussion where Melissa Middleton and Shih Ching Fu share their experiences as delegates to Science Meets Parliament 2023 (SmP2023).

Every year the SSA sponsors two early career statisticians to attend this event organised by Science and Technology Australia. In 2023, more than 300 attendees and almost 100 parliamentarians spent the day at Parliament House engaged in discussions and meetings about the role of science and technology in Australia's future.

Come and hear Melissa and Shih Ching answer questions about how their expectations of the day, how they prepared to meet an MP, and other lessons they learned. There will be a time of open questions at the end.

To register click [here](#).



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## Statistical Consulting Network July Meet-Up

28 July 2023, 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM AEST, held online

Come along with your thinking cap, maybe a problem, and some lunch!

The Statistical Consulting Network invites you to their monthly meet-up, a virtual lunchtime meeting where statisticians help each other out with problems that they aren't sure how to deal with. This virtual meeting is held on Zoom at lunchtime on the last Friday of each month, 12:30-1:30 PM (AEDT). We start each meet-up with announcements, or occasionally a special topic discussion, then discuss problems that attendees have brought along with them.

We also have a Slack workspace where members of the consulting network can communicate between meetings, or post problems or relevant materials they would like to discuss during a meeting.

[Zoom link](#)

Password: 660145

[Slack Workspace link](#)

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## Machine Learning with Python

5 Aug 2023, 9:00 AM (AEST) – 6 Aug 2023, 12:00 PM (AEST), held online

The Statistical Society of Australia's Victorian and Tasmanian branch warmly invites you to a workshop on machine learning with Python, presented by Patrick Robotham from Magic.

This two-day workshop aims to enable data scientists to incrementally incorporate Python in their workflow. After an introduction of Python basics, the workshop focuses on developing Python models in a workflow framework that is most commonly seen in a production environment. Participants will benefit from a gentle introduction to Python on the first day before learning some powerful modelling concepts and tools on the second day.

For more information and to register click [here](#).

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## Sampling course

12 Oct 2023, 9:00 AM (AEDT) – 8 Dec 2023 (AEDT), held online, one hour a week

The Social Research Centre and the Statistical Society of Australia (SSA) are very proud to offer statistical training from the International Program in Survey and Data Science (IPSDS), a joint program of the University of Mannheim and the Joint Program in Survey Methodology at the University of Maryland.

The 8-week online sampling course is aimed at working professionals who are interested in expanding their data collection skills. The course will be available fully online with prerecorded videos that students are expected to watch on their own time plus weekly 1-hour live interactive sessions with the instructor, Raphael Nishimura, Director of Sampling Operations at the University of Michigan.

By the end of the course, you will...

- understand the basic ideas, concepts and principles of probability sampling from an applied perspective
- be able to identify and appropriately apply sampling techniques to survey design problems
- be able to compute the sample size for a variety of sample designs
- understand and be able to assess the impact of the sample design on survey estimates
- be able to estimate the precision of the survey statistics using different estimation techniques

Please book before 15 August 2023 to take advantage of the Early Bird Deadline For more details and to register click [here](#)

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### **Check out these pre-conference workshops held in Wollongong on 10 December 2023:**

- [Essential Skills for Statistical Communication](#) presented by Professor Sir David Spiegelhalter, University of Cambridge and Dr Linden Ashcroft, University of Melbourne

The workshop will include a panel discussion. Presenters Prof David Spiegelhalter and Dr Linden Ashcroft will be joined by applied mathematician and science communicator [Dr Sophie Calabretto](#), and ABC journalist and 'lapsed mathematician', [Casey Briggs](#), to share their experiences.

- [Statistical Consultancy – The Essentials for Getting Started and Ongoing Success](#) Presented by Professor Julie Simpson, University of Melbourne, A/Professor Emily Karahalios, University of Melbourne and A/Professor Karen Lamb, University of Melbourne, A/Prof Sue Finch from The University of Melbourne and
- [Deep Statistics for More Rigorous and Efficient Data Science](#) presented by Professor Xiao-Li Meng, Harvard University

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### [Australian Statistical Conference \(ASC\) and Australian Conference on Teaching Statistics \(OZCOTS\)](#)

10th - 15th December 2023, Wollongong

**Early Bird deadline is 31 July 2023!**



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### Other events

**Deadly Entertainment - Find out about the deadly nature of early cinema and photography**

Monday, 14 August 2023, 1 pm, Chau Chak Wing Museum, The University of

Sydney's museum of art, science, history and ancient cultures

As part of National Science Week 2023, Dr Elizabeth Carter will discuss how a team of conservators, chemists and statisticians worked together to develop a protocol used internationally to identify the dangerous film bases of early cinema and photographic film.

[Find out more.](#)

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## **From the Convener of ICME**

It is just 1 year before we meet in beautiful Sydney for the [15th International Congress on Mathematics Education \(ICME-15\)](#)!

Our team has been diligently working to ensure that this congress surpasses all expectations. We are committed to creating a dynamic and engaging event at which the latest developments in mathematics education can be shared, discussed, and celebrated. As we move forward in our planning, I am delighted to provide you with a brief update on some of the exciting developments that await us in Sydney.

The congress provides a unique opportunity to showcase your work, collaborate with peers from different parts of the world, and contribute to the advancement of mathematics education globally.

Sydney, with its vibrant culture, breathtaking scenery, and rich history, serves as the perfect host city for this international gathering. Beyond the stimulating scientific program, we are also preparing an array of social events and excursions that will allow you to experience the best of what this beautiful city and its surroundings have to offer. The networking opportunities and lasting connections you will make during your stay in Sydney will undoubtedly be invaluable.

Plan now to join us in Sydney for ICME-15, July 7-14, 2024. We are looking forward to welcoming you!

Warm regards,

**Kim Beswick**

Convener ICME-15

Professor of Mathematics Education

Head, School of Education

The University of New South Wales

## **Proposals for Discussion Groups and Workshops Now Open**

Discussion Groups gather Congress delegates who are interested in discussing challenging, controversial, or emerging issues and dilemmas of interest. Through collaboration between international or regional audiences, Discussion Groups are facilitated to be genuinely interactive and an excellent opportunity for participants to engage with contemporary topics in mathematics education.

**Discussion Group Proposals open from 7 July and are due by 31 December.** We highly encourage international engagement and expect proposals to include scholars from at least **three different countries and two different regions** of the world.

[Learn more about the Discussion Groups](#)

## **Workshops**

Congress Workshops are an excellent opportunity to provide hands-on experience to Congress delegates. Workshops target a variety of participants and must have a well-defined theme that enables delegates to share practical strategies and approaches to their work as researchers, and as teachers.

**Workshop Proposals open from 7 July and are due by 31 December.** Workshops must have a professional focus.

[Learn more about the Congress Workshops](#)

## **Registrations Now Open!**

Registrations now open for ICME-15, the 15th International Congress on Mathematical Education! Join us at the ICC Sydney for this exceptional opportunity to connect with experts in mathematical education.

[Click here for more information and to register](#)

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## **Find great candidates through SSA's Career Centre**

It's tiring to sift through piles of under-qualified resumes from generic job boards. SSA's Career Centre is the ultimate solution for targeted job advertising.

When you post your job openings on our [Career Centre](#), each potential candidate will be tailored to your requirements, ensuring a perfect fit for your organisation. Don't forget to highlight the exceptional job benefits, bonuses, and unique company perks that make your organisation stand out.

Find the ideal candidates for your open positions and advertise your job opportunities on SSA's Career Centre.

Post a job [here](#).

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### **Current Vacancies in SSA's Career Centre**

[Professor in Financial Mathematics or Mathematical Statistics](#)

Other

University of Leuven (KU Leuven)

The Faculty of Science at KU Leuven (Belgium) ...

[Lecturer in Mathematics and Statistics](#)

Western Australia

Murdoch University

See Murdoch University's web page for information ...

[Internal Revenue Agent \(Examiner\) - DIRECT HIRE \(12 MONTH REGISTER\)](#)

Multiple Locations (See Description)

Internal Revenue Service

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If you have news from the Australian statistical community to share in Stats Matters and Events, please get in touch [with us](#)! We love getting feedback too.

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