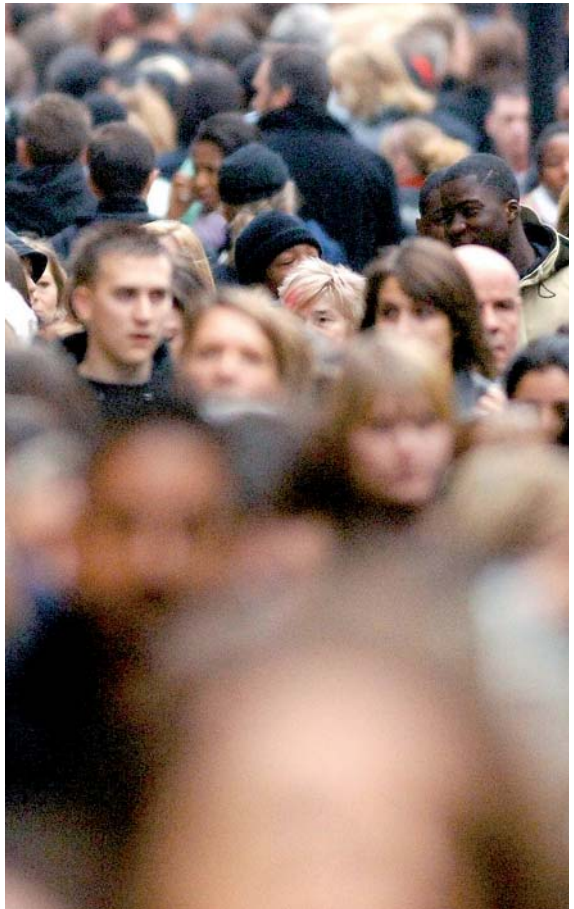


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RESEARCH
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Social Science
Excellence
with impact



 RESEARCH
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“Social science research is essential to the UK’s core needs: economic recovery and skills, security and terrorism, environmental sustainability, helping our children succeed at school and managing our ageing population”

PROFESSOR IAN DIAMOND FBA, AcSS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ESRC

The importance of research for development and growth in the UK has frequently been emphasised. In a time when public spending is increasingly under pressure it is more important than ever to recognise the value research brings to society.

Here we highlight social science excellence with impact. Without research excellence we will not be able to provide quality evidence for the public, private and third sector. However, without the drive and focus to meet the costs of research excellence we will not be able to maintain the current world class quality of UK social science.

Excellence needs to be followed with impact. With public spending under increased scrutiny it is natural to ask how funded research can contribute to a prosperous society – directly or indirectly.

The answer can be found on the following pages. As these examples show, research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council provides a wide range of findings across all sectors of society; valuable evidence that can be used to improve policy and practice. Research knowledge is a vital tool to create a **productive economy**, a **healthy society** and a **sustainable world**.



Research for a productive economy

ESRC research has shown that policy interventions to reduce youth unemployment could have substantial returns in terms of life-earnings in the longer term:

- + A study by the Centre for Market and Public Organisation of the effect on wages of youth unemployment in the early 1980s suggests that policy interventions to reduce young peoples' exposure to long periods of unemployment could represent a good return on investment in terms of improved lifetime earnings.
- + Studies into the effectiveness of training interventions for long-term unemployed suggest that keeping young people in education provides a better outcome and return on investment for the public purse.

Research indicates that Britain has a strong base for innovation but it requires continuing investment to develop the business base

Social scientists are mapping the impacts of the current recession on small businesses and putting forward ideas for the reform of global financial regulation:

- + Research from the Advanced Institute of Management Research indicates that Britain has a strong base for innovation but it requires continuing investment to develop the business base. For Government this means ensuring that the UK's businesses have access to sustained investment.
- + Research from the Centre for Economic Performance indicates that opening markets to competition led to the boom of the 1980s and 1990s and suggests that governments should resist the temptation to weaken competition policy for short-term gain during the recession.

ESRC-funded economists have been instrumental in shaping policies that have benefited the poorest in our society:

- + The Institute for Fiscal Studies' tax and benefit model contributed to the abolition of the ten per cent tax band. It was used by the Treasury Select Committee to understand the effects on households of abolishing the band.
- + Work carried out at the Centre for Economic Performance was critical in showing that the minimum wage would not necessarily lead to job losses. It has been estimated that 12 million workers have benefited from the minimum wage at a total wage bill impact of about £1.2 billion.

Research for a healthy society

ESRC's range of longitudinal and birth cohort studies is essential to our understanding of the complex relationships between factors such as unemployment, life choices and environment and their effects on individuals' health and wellbeing:

- + Data from the British Household Panel Survey revealed that 20 per cent of men and women who find work following a spell of unemployment are four times more likely on average to be laid off 12 months later.
- + Research on the 1958 Birth Cohort shows that boys, in particular, are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and therefore less likely to be in trouble with the police where they have 'involved' fathers.

Social and medical science work best in partnership when it comes to improving life chances and reducing inequalities:

- + The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children has provided evidence of a link between significant maternal stress during pregnancy and a child's increased vulnerability to psychological and perhaps medical illnesses later in life.

- + The 1958 Birth Cohort Study was the first to compare Body Mass Index and height growth and showed that if a child had overweight parents they were more likely to become an obese adult. It also showed that this group of people gained weight at a faster rate from early adulthood and continued to do so throughout adult life. This has helped to inform policy on reducing obesity in childhood and informing families.

Studying behaviour at football matches has helped police deal in a less confrontational way with crowd control

Social science research has affected practice in areas such as welfare, policing and tackling poverty:

- + The Children 5-16 Research Programme has directly impacted on the lives of mothers and children affected by domestic violence. The research has informed debates that resulted in amendments to the Children Act 1989 and has influenced policy initiatives such as Every Child Matters.
- + Studying behaviour at football matches has helped police deal in a less confrontational way with crowd control. Findings from the ESRC research carried out by Dr Clifford Stott have been included in a European Handbook on controlling violence at international football matches.

Research for a sustainable world

ESRC research is providing the evidence to inform the urgent action which is required to mitigate and adapt to environmental change:

- + ESRC research has been instrumental in shaping current government policy on waste management by investigating how policy and political pressures influence processes across England. The findings have been central to new government guidance on waste policy and in strengthening the role of regions in developing waste planning policy.
- + A methodology for assessing the economic value of freshwater and marine environmental systems that was developed by the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment is being applied by the Environment Agency. This has led to the UK adopting a more cost-benefit approach to the implementation of the EU's Water Framework Directive than other EU countries.

ESRC provides authoritative, vital information on green energy systems, through vigorous research to identify sustainable, economically efficient energy transition:

- + Research by the Sussex Energy Group has helped to identify the factors that aid the successful deployment and take-up of low carbon technologies. Their findings have helped to shape the UK's position for climate change negotiations, and the group has also advised Chilean and Indian governments on their technology transfer policies.
- + Research from the Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy influenced the Government's position on developing the Green Economy in the last budget. Ongoing work at the Centre is examining the implications for climate change on UK economic policy.

Social sciences are crucial to understanding the nature of conflict, social justice and security:

- + The multidisciplinary Global Uncertainties research programme, led by the ESRC, is addressing global security challenges such as terrorism, organised crime and threats to our infrastructure. A part of the programme is looking at causes of radicalisation and the best policies for preventing and dealing with radicalised individuals.
- + Access to water and sanitation has only slowly improved in many poor areas of the world, despite international efforts. The Research Centre for Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability has highlighted how water management can be improved by taking local issues and dynamics into consideration in policy debates.

ESRC

The Economic and Social Research Council is the UK's leading research and training agency addressing economic and social concerns. It aims to provide high-quality research on issues of importance to business, the public sector and Government. The issues considered include economic competitiveness, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and our quality of life.

www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk

Social Science
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Focusing on excellence with impact

The ESRC is one of the seven UK research councils forming the strategic partnership of Research Councils UK (RCUK). RCUK working in partnership cultivates the essential research and skills to provide the bedrock for the UK to have a **productive economy, healthy society** and contribute to a **sustainable world**.

- RCUK nurture the highest **quality research**, as judged by international peer review providing the UK with a competitive advantage. Global research requires we sustain a diversity of funding approaches, fostering international collaborations, and providing access to the best facilities and infrastructure, and locating skilled researchers in stimulating environments.
- RCUK research achieves **impact** – the demonstrable contribution to society and the economy made by knowledge and skilled people. To deliver impact, researchers and funders need to engage and collaborate with the public, business, government and the third sector.

www.rcuk.ac.uk/framework