

ISERNEWS



**World class
socio-economic
research
and surveys**

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Most British ethnic minority groups are highly educated on average and more likely to attend university than white British people

Why British ethnic minorities may struggle to get well-paid graduate jobs

British ethnic minority graduates are between 5 and 15 per cent less likely to be employed than their white British peers six months after graduation

There are also differences in wages for most of the ethnic minority women and black Caribbean men who do find jobs after graduation.

Three and a half years after graduation this difference in earnings for ethnic minorities, especially for women, increases – possibly indicating that ethnic minority graduates are finding it much harder to climb the career ladder than their white British peers.

The new study by the Institute for Social and Economic Research has looked into data from the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE), a rich dataset on graduates in the UK for the first-ever comparison of how university choices, parental background and social class impact on ethnic minorities in terms of their chances of finding employment and their earnings both six months and three and half years after graduation. *Continued overleaf*

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Researchers found that ethnic minority graduates are less likely to be employed than white British graduates from a similar socio-economic background, who grew up in an area with similar opportunities and who have similar qualifications.

Most ethnic minority groups in Britain are highly educated on average and more likely to attend university than white British people. However, the study, by researchers Wouter Zwysen and Simonetta Longhi at the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex, has found that ethnic minority graduates are finding the transition from education to work harder and are especially less likely to find employment soon after graduation.

They found that early graduate unemployment is associated with earning 20 to 25 per cent less later on than those that were employed right after graduation. Despite their on average high qualifications, ethnic penalties persist on the labour market.

The researchers compared ethnic minority graduates to their white British peers who graduated with similar qualifications in terms of grade, quality of university and degree; and also those who grew up in similar areas with the same local opportunities and parental background. These factors actually appear to matter very little for employment while some of the earning differences are due to ethnic minority graduates of some groups graduating with lower grades or from different universities.

The variations among ethnic minority groups are substantial and the gaps tend to be larger for women than men. Right after graduation, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese graduates are least likely to be employed (10 to 15 per cent less likely than white British) while the latter are not at a disadvantage three and a half years after graduation. In terms of

earnings, black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are most at a disadvantage and earn 3 to 7 per cent less than white British of similar backgrounds and similar qualifications. Three and a half years after graduation these gaps have increased to earning almost 10 per cent less.

Three and a half years after graduation ethnic minority female graduates – with the exception of Chinese and Indian graduates – are earning 12 to 15 per cent less than white British graduates, while black Caribbean and black African male graduates earn 19 and 12 per cent less than white British graduates.

The authors point out that these low average earning gaps can mask substantial variation. They find that when comparing graduates from low parental socio-economic background and with a small and low educated co-ethnic community as a support network most ethnic minorities earn less than their peers. On the other hand, ethnic minority graduates from high parental class background and with access to a large and highly educated co-ethnic community have similar, if not higher, wages than their white British counterparts.

Wouter Zwysen said: “This supports the idea that, especially for ethnic minorities, the information and resources available in the community can provide support in finding good jobs. It also points towards the fact that even among graduates ethnic minorities experience disadvantage and if they lack the right networks they may have fewer chances compared to similar white British.

“Additional resources could be given to these vulnerable groups through employability programmes or guidance. If ethnic minority graduates lack the contacts to find good first jobs, job centres and universities could provide additional guidance with initial job search and help establish contacts with employers.” ●

“This supports the idea that, especially for ethnic minorities, the information and resources available in the community can provide support in finding good jobs... additional resources could be given to these vulnerable groups through employability programmes or guidance”



The ISER building at the University of Essex

Microsimulation for developing countries – ISER plays key role in major new project based on the success of EUROMOD

ISER researchers, led by Professor Holly Sutherland, will play a key role in a new United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER)-funded project – SOUTHMOD: The Economics and Politics of Taxation and Social Protection – a research and development project based on our successful tax-benefit microsimulation model EUROMOD.

EUROMOD is funded by the European Commission and is a complex model which allows researchers to model the impact of tax and benefit changes in 28 EU member states, allowing analysis at a country level and for cross-country comparison. EUROMOD is now used widely by policy makers to track the potential impact of tax or benefit policy changes on people's lives.

Working alongside South African Social Policy Insights (SASPRI), members of the EUROMOD team at ISER have begun work on the ambitious project which will build tax-benefit microsimulation models, based on the EUROMOD platform, for a selection of developing countries. These models will collectively be known as SOUTHMOD.

The main focus of the project will be on Africa where microsimulation models will be constructed for Ghana, Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. These new models will complement existing models for South Africa (SAMOD) and Namibia (NAMOD), which are also based on EUROMOD and have been put together by SASPRI. To provide further comparability, a model will be built for one country from Latin America (Ecuador) and initial scoping for one country from Asia (Vietnam) will be undertaken.

In producing these new microsimulation models, the project aims to shed fresh light on the system-wide impacts of social protection and tax systems in these countries, providing the analytical tools for policy makers and researchers alike to understand the current tax-benefit systems and to be able to simulate the impacts of policy changes – real and potential.

Whilst oversight of SOUTHMOD remains with UNU-WIDER, ISER and SASPRI, engaging local teams of model developers in each country is critical to the project's success. In addition to providing the technical platform for these models in the form of EUROMOD software and tools, ISER's role is to support the Ghanaian and Ethiopian teams. ISER staff will also be involved in the training of all local developers, in producing new tools and software add-ons for analysing income distributions, and for the construction of the model in Ecuador.

The project runs from 1 December 2015 until 31 January 2017 and involves ISER's Holly Sutherland, Olga Rastrigina, Chrysa Leventi, Iva Tasseva, Sanja Vujackov, Xavier Jara and Kostas Manios.

Groundbreaking new project to study impact of racial and ethnic harassment on health

A significant new research project will help policy makers and healthcare providers to understand how ethnic minorities experience harassment and its impact on their lives by making use of data from the largest longitudinal household panel survey in the UK – *Understanding Society*

Working with a range of stakeholders to shape the project design, analysis and dissemination, the ESRC-funded study will offer new insights into the experience of discrimination over time for different ethnic groups in Britain, and the pathways between discrimination and mental health and health behaviours, in order to identify intervention points and priority areas for policy development.

The project will be led by Dr Alita Nandi and Dr Renee Luthra, working alongside Professor Michaela Benzeval and Professor Shamit Saggar, and will look at several research areas.

Firstly, who experiences ethnic or racial harassment? The study will look at an overview of the prevalence, intensity and persistence of harassment in British society today. Following a long tradition of survey-based research on harassment and its effects, the researchers' first aim is to understand who is most likely to experience harassment in Britain today. Are particular ethnic and religious groups more likely to experience harassment? Which types

of individuals within these groups are more vulnerable?

Secondly, the study will look at whether ethnic minorities living in certain types of areas are at greater risk of experiencing harassment and look for the causal impact of residential characteristics on harassment.

Thirdly, researchers will seek to identify protective factors against the negative impact of harassment on mental health and wellbeing. They aim to uncover factors that make individuals resilient to the negative consequences of harassment on mental health and wellbeing among ethnic minorities.

The fourth research area will look at the effect of ethnic or racial harassment on health behaviours. The researchers will examine related – but distinct – research questions: what is the effect of ethnic and racial harassment on the health behaviours of the foreign born adult? and what is the effect of exposure to ethnic or racial harassment on the health behaviours of UK born (or raised) ethnic minorities? ●

New ISER research: India, domestic violence against mothers in marriage and child mortality

New ISER research has shown that nearly one in ten child deaths under the age of one in India can be attributed to domestic violence against the mother during the marriage

There were 1.3m deaths of children under five in India in 2013 – accounting for one fifth of global child mortality. While access to health care plays a large part in these individual tragedies, other factors such as domestic violence also have a significant impact.

Research by ISER PhD student Seetha Menon has shown that nearly one in ten child deaths under the age of one in India can be attributed to domestic violence against the mother during the marriage.

To address this, domestic violence against women needs to be dramatically reduced, and women treated more equally in India – both in public and at home.

India has established several programmes aimed at reducing the number of young children who die in recent years. These rely on equitable health care and improved access to public health services with a distinct focus on births in rural and poor households.

Yet, in spite of these programmes and of making considerable advances, UN data suggests India is likely to miss its Millennium Development Goal to reduce the child mortality rate to 42 per 1,000 live births by the end of 2015.

The study used India's 2007 National Family and Health Survey which interviewed 124,385 women between 16-49 years of age.

The analysis showed that the link between domestic violence and child mortality in rich households is almost non-existent but is almost double – 17.5 per cent of infant deaths – in rural households.

The effect is also higher in baby girls as opposed to baby boys, suggesting that girls are particularly vulnerable to the negative effect of domestic violence.

Improving absolute levels of gender equality could save the lives of young girls and help redress India's birth gender ratio: in the 2011 census only 918 girls were born per 1,000 boys.



The researchers' first aim is to understand who is most likely to experience harassment in Britain today



White British couples are not necessarily the most equal in how they divide up the daily chores

Who does the housework in multi-cultural Britain?

The first ever nationally representative study of how housework is organised by couples across different ethnic groups in Britain finds that, contrary perhaps to expectation, white British couples are not necessarily the most equal in how they divide up the daily chores or in their attitudes to men's and women's roles

The study, by Professor Heather Laurie from the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex and Dr Man-Yee Kan from the University of Oxford, examined the attitudes and behaviours of almost 30,000 co-habiting or married men and women taking part in the UK's huge household panel study, *Understanding Society*.

The data provided a detailed picture of how much time couples spend on routine housework and their attitudes to men's and women's roles within the household and in employment. The researchers were able to see how education levels, employment status, socio-economic background and ethnicity played a part in determining how British couples divide up chores.

In all groups women spend significantly more hours on housework than men – taking on an average share of 70 per cent of the chores in the home such as cooking and cleaning. Women who have a degree and those in paid employment do a significantly lower share than those without jobs or without higher level qualifications. But there was considerable variation by ethnic background.

Professor Heather Laurie said: "We found both differences and similarities among ethnic groups, but were surprised to see that in multi-cultural Britain today white British couples are not necessarily the most modern and egalitarian in their outlook on housework. Black Caribbean men have the least traditional attitudes to gender roles while Indian men report taking on a fairer share of routine housework than white

British men even though Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women spend significantly more time on housework than white British women.

Education was important for both men and women. Indian men with a degree do more housework than those without, as do Bangladeshi men with a degree, Chinese men with a spouse who has a degree, Indian women with a degree and mixed background women whose spouse has a degree.

Men spend – on average – fewer than half the hours that women spend on housework each week, with men spending a mean of 6 hours a week compared to a mean of 14 hours a week for women. Pakistani men however, report spending the fewest housework hours and the lowest share of housework of all groups. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women report spending a high of almost 24 hours a week on housework on average. Once other factors such as education, whether in paid employment, and whether a first or second generation immigrant are taken into account, the difference compared to white British women falls to between 3 and 5 hours a week.

Our research is the first study of its kind to use the rich data available from *Understanding Society* to look at a large scale nationally representative sample of Britain and examine close up how couples divide housework chores across different ethnic groups. The results should be interesting to policy makers, educationalists and sociologists looking to understanding how couples are living in Britain today. ●

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of EUROMOD, the EU tax-benefit microsimulation model: call for papers for September Anniversary Conference

In September 2016 EUROMOD, the EU wide tax-benefit microsimulation model, will be 20 years old.

ISER will be celebrating the occasion with a conference to mark EUROMOD's achievements so far and to look forward to future developments, on 5-6 September 2016 at the University of Essex.

There will be keynote presentations from people with strong associations, past or present, with EUROMOD-related research including Sir Anthony Atkinson, Olivier Bargain, Herwig Immervoll, Andreas Peichl and Holly Sutherland. There will also be a panel session on policy uses of EUROMOD.

We welcome abstracts (or papers) that make use of EUROMOD or are strongly related to how EUROMOD might be used. The aim is to showcase all the many ways in which EUROMOD itself, as well as models built for non-EU countries using the EUROMOD software platform and approach, have been or could be used for research and policy analysis.

The conference will combine plenary sessions with poster sessions and plenty of time for discussion, exchange and reflection.

Please submit abstracts/papers to Iva Tasseva at itasseva@essex.ac.uk by 1 May 2016. We will respond by the end of May and circulate a draft programme shortly after.



EUROMOD will be 20 years old in September

New linked data on pupil outcomes, attendance and exclusions open up research possibilities

New data from schools is now linked to the data from *Understanding Society*, the UK Household Longitudinal Study, creating new opportunities for researchers to track the impact of social and economic situations, health, lifestyle and parental attitudes on the performance of pupils

Understanding Society provides rich data from 40,000 households across the UK on socio-economic situations, health, attitudes and behaviours. Through the data linkage it is now possible for researchers to track the educational pathways of children and young adults in the study from reception class up to A-levels.

Researchers can now use the study's linked data to explore the connection between household characteristics and events and children's school records including exam results, absence and exclusion histories.

Researchers can work with the data to explore questions such as how family composition affects children's grades, whether parenting styles are likely to improve children's school results and how children's health affects their absence rates.

The English National Pupil Database, which has been recording children's attainment since 1996, is now linked to *Understanding Society*. New topics have been added to the linked education records that were first released in February 2015 and can be accessed with the main *Understanding Society* data set from the UK Data Service under the Secure Access License.

Understanding Society data is now linked to the following education data:

- School absences (2006-2013)
- Temporal and permanent exclusions from school (2006-2012)

- Attainment at ages 5, 7, 11, 14 and 16 and new records on Key Stage 5 results (for mostly 17-19-year-olds) have now been added.

Dr Birgitta Rabe, Research Fellow at ISER said: "These new data sets build upon our existing data linkage files and will allow researchers more opportunities to investigate the relationships between the rich longitudinal data from *Understanding Society* and outcomes recorded in school administrative data. The linkage means household circumstances and changes can be measured against academic achievement to investigate questions such as, does the household income affect children's test scores?"

Understanding Society also offers unique opportunities to link in data about schools. Codes of schools that children in the survey attend and those that young adults last attended are collected every two waves. School codes for waves 3 and 5 have been recently released and are available from the UK Data Service through Special License access. Using these codes researchers can link to the information collected in the survey on pupils and school leavers and receive information about:

- the quality of schools (e.g. from school performance tables)
- school composition (by ethnicity, free school meal eligibility etc.)
- financial resources used in schools
- teachers. •



Researchers can now use the study's linked data to explore the connection between household characteristics and events and children's school records including exam results

Understanding Society – new data and training courses

The fifth wave of longitudinal data from *Understanding Society* study has been released, including data from over 41,000 interviews with adults and over 3,600 obtained from children aged 10 to 15.

Total data obtained through the survey now amounts to 228,000 interviews with just over 70,000 adults and their households. Nearly 10,000 10-15 year olds have been interviewed to date and the total number of interviews with young people now exceeds 22,000.

What's new in the main survey? New survey modules include questions on cultural participation and workplace composition as well as new questions on the Scottish referendum, adult identity, adult self-efficacy and adult delayed self-gratification. For the first time, participants aged 16-24 years old were asked about their ethnic identity.

Professor Michaela Benzeval, Director of *Understanding Society*, said: "The fifth wave of *Understanding Society* data provides researchers with rich opportunities to investigate changes in people's lives. As the study becomes better known, the number and breadth of people using the data and publishing findings is growing steeply. We encourage users to get involved in shaping the study through proposing experiments in the Innovation Panel or to run associated studies and we ourselves are experimenting with new ways to collect better quality data."

Learn how to use *Understanding Society* data at one of our free courses on 14-15 April 2016 or 17-18 November 2016 at ISER, University of Essex. Online courses are also available.



Alison Garnham chairs the expert panel of Katie Schmuecker, Trevor Huddleston, Matthew Whittaker and Matt Elsby discussing new ISER research on measuring incomes

New ways of measuring poverty

Panellists Trevor Huddleston, Chief Analyst at Department of Work and Pensions, Matt Elsby from HM Treasury, Katie Schmuecker from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Matthew Whittaker from The Resolution Foundation discussed new research by

Professors Mike Brewer, Steve Pudney and Stephen Jenkins on new ways of measuring poverty at an event for policy makers, think tanks, government researchers, third sector researchers and campaigners and those looking at how the UK assesses living

standards, the persistence of poverty and the dynamics of poverty, as part of the recent ESRC Festival of Social Sciences.

The event was chaired by Alison Garnham, Chief Executive of the Child Poverty Action Group. The presentations and a blog about the new studies are available on the ISER website.



Dr Cara Booker (left) speaking on BBC lunchtime news

Screen time and young people's well-being

Dr Cara Booker's recent research into the impact of increased screen time on young people's well-being attracted widespread media coverage.

Cara appeared live on BBC lunchtime news before a policy event with the thinktank the Strategic Society Centre where the policy implications of the research were discussed by experts including Joe Hayman, Chief Executive of the PSHE Association and Lucie Russell, Director of Campaigns, YoungMinds.

Losing benefits hurts more than paying taxes

In a new piece of research, Silvia Avram argues that people react not just to the financial incentives embedded in taxes and benefits, but also to the way these are presented. She suggests that by changing the way a policy is framed, we may be able to change behaviour.

Dr Avram, Research Fellow at ISER said: "Since the Labour Party introduced the JobSeeker's Allowance and the New Deal Reforms two decades ago, the question of how to help people transition into paid employment has been at the forefront of the policy agenda. Most politicians and policy analysts argue that the solution is to 'make work pay', i.e. to increase the gap between the income received in and out of work. In practice, the drive to 'make work pay' almost invariably translates to welfare cuts. Yet, by framing policy differently, it may be possible to alter the design of welfare benefits so as to encourage people to take up work without necessarily cutting financial support."

ISER Working Paper Series 2015-17 *Benefit Losses Loom Larger than Taxes: The Effects of Framing and Loss Aversion on Behavioural Responses to Taxes and Benefits* by Silvia Avram



Silvia Avram suggests changing behaviour by reframing policy

A link between obesity and mental health problems – but only for middle aged obese

A new research study by Professor Meena Kumari looked at over 11,000 participants using data from *Understanding Society*, the UK Household Longitudinal Study

Adiposity, the state of being obese, is associated with poor mental health in middle age only, according to the latest research led by Professor Meena Kumari with Professor Michaela Benzeval and Apostolos Davillas at the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex using data from *Understanding Society*.

Researchers studied a group of 11,257 participants. Each person was given a medical examination where their weight, height, waist circumference and percentage fat were measured to assess a number of measures of adiposity. Body mass index was calculated from height and weight. They also completed a General Health questionnaire to check for symptoms of depression and anxiety and the mental component summary to assess mental health functioning. The findings are published in the February issue of *Plos One*.

The researchers found that greater adiposity was associated with poorer mental health functioning but not in all age groups. The association of greater adiposity and poor mental health functioning was seen in those aged in their 30s to 50s and then decreased in older ages. Diseases such as cardiovascular disease, arthritis and endocrine diseases played a role in explaining the association of body mass index with mental health functioning. The association of waist circumference and mental health functioning remained associated with each other in middle age after taking into account a wide variety of factors.

Several explanations were suggested by the researchers for their findings. First, social isolation potentially experienced by people who are obese may be greater at younger than older ages. Secondly, increased adiposity may be considered normative in older age groups and thus, may be less associated with poor mental health than in younger age group. Thirdly, people who have large waists, that is, are 'apple-shaped' may have a poor self-body image and therefore be at greater risk of developing poor mental health functioning.

Professor Kumari said: "This study emphasises the inter-relatedness of obesity, diseases and mental health and suggests that treatment of any of these problems in isolation may be less beneficial than addressing them in combination."

"The research is useful because there has been a massive increase in adiposity levels in the population recently – at the same time mental health is thought to have deteriorated, on average in the population and it is useful to understand how adiposity and mental health are related.

"I think in layman's terms, the general perception is that increased adiposity (greater body mass index, having a bigger waist or higher

percentage fat) would be associated with poorer mental health. However, the papers that have looked at the question don't always see this, some evidence shows that increased weight is actually associated with better mental health (this is called the 'jolly-fat' hypothesis) but there are papers that show that increased adiposity is associated with poor mental health functioning.

"We wondered if these findings were mixed because researchers have varied in what they include in their analyses to try and explain their associations or that the associations might be different in different age groups. *Understanding Society* is a good study to try and examine this association because it has measured height, weight and other measures of adiposity by a nurse (rather than just asking people) and we have lots of variables collected to help us understand any associations that we might see.

Most importantly, unlike a lot of other studies, we have adults right across the adult age range.

"We didn't see an association of adiposity and mental health functioning in young (under 30) or older people (over 50). The associations we see are restricted to the 'middle aged', which might explain why the literature is mixed. Further, in middle age having a chronic disease (cardiovascular disease, arthritis and endocrine disease) appeared to account for the association of BMI and mental health functioning. It might be because people with disease develop poor mental health and obesity or that obesity causes poor mental health and disease or that poor mental health causes disease and obesity – we don't know from these analyses but we concluded that clinicians should think about how these things are inter-related as each one is important in middle age." ●



The researchers found that greater adiposity was associated poorer mental health functioning but not in all age groups

"*Understanding Society* is a good study to try and examine this association because it has measured height, weight and other measures of adiposity by a nurse (rather than just asking people) and we have lots of variables collected to help us understand any associations that we might see. Most importantly, unlike a lot of other studies, we have adults right across the adult age range"

Understanding Society launches its fourth findings report

A selection of the UK's latest longitudinal findings focus on dynamics of the housing market, health behaviours and young people's wellbeing

Understanding Society's latest report describes the trend towards lower housing mobility, more instability and lower quality housing for many people.

Leading policy makers from the housing sector met in December to welcome the launch of Insights 2015. The event looked at what current trends need to inform the debate on the future of housing. Delegates also received a Housing Topic Guide that highlights the research questions that can be explored and existing research using the study's data.

Evidence was presented by research author, Dr Paul Sissons from the Centre for Business in Society, Coventry University and discussed by the panel who included Terrie Alafat, Chief Executive at the Chartered Institute of Housing; Matt Bell, Group Head of External Affairs at Berkeley Group; Shane Brownie, Head of Research and Analysis at the National Housing Federation; and Stephen Howlett, Chief Executive of Peabody Housing Trust who also provided a commentary for the report.

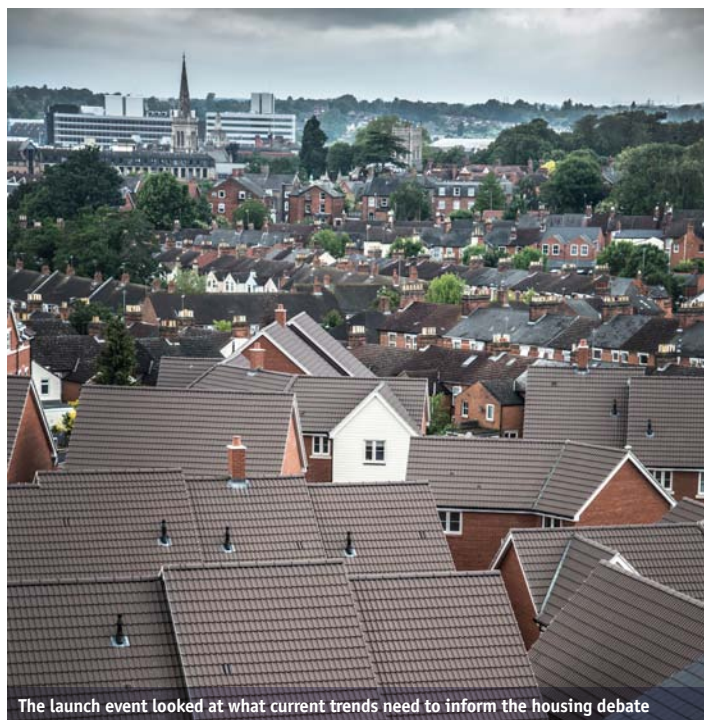
Other chapters discuss whether people's health behaviours can be influenced through everyday activities and how the UK can



improve young people's wellbeing and offer a more coordinated approach across government on mental health and the family.

Commentary on the research articles was also provided by David Buck, Senior Fellow, Public Health & Inequalities, The King's Fund; and Professor Paul Burstow at the Health Sciences School, City University (previously Minister of State at the Department of Health 2010-12).

Michaela Benzeval, Director of *Understanding Society* said: "Insights 2015 includes a small selection of findings emerging from this world-leading study and with the help of our commentators; it highlights how useful such research is to policy. Evidence drawing on the data can help to inform practitioners across many sectors, shape political and media debate and help academics and policy makers understand how UK lives are changing in response to our environment, jobs, government and behaviours." ●



The launch event looked at what current trends need to inform the housing debate



Insights 2015 discusses how the UK can improve young people's wellbeing

"Evidence drawing on the data can help to inform practitioners across many sectors, shape political and media debate and help academics and policy makers understand how UK lives are changing in response to our environment, jobs, government and behaviours"

The Institute for Social and Economic Research is based at the University of Essex and receives funding from the university and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Established in 1989, the Institute incorporates three centres: **ESRC Research Centre on Micro-Social Change (MiSOC)**; **ESRC UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (ULSC)**; and **The Microsimulation Unit**, which is responsible for the EUROMOD project.

ISER is home to *Understanding Society*, the UK household longitudinal survey which collects information annually, providing valuable new evidence about the people of the UK, their lives, experiences, behaviours and beliefs.

If you are interested in finding out any more about the articles in this newsletter or about ISER's work, please contact Louise Clarke Cullen at lcullen@essex.ac.uk

ISSN 2041-8922

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