

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Embargo: Tuesday the 20<sup>th</sup> of October**

### **PARLIAMENT COUNTS: MPs TAKE UP STATISTICS TRAINING**

**Marking World Statistics Day on Tuesday the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, the Royal Statistical Society's #ParliamentCounts campaign will get into full swing with 20 MPs taking up statistical training. After more than 320 House of Commons candidates backed the campaign during this year's general election, 55 were successfully elected on 7 May. The successful candidates will now attend workshops on how to properly interpret statistics and data to improve evidence-informed policy making.**

The idea to offer MPs statistics training follows RSS polling of MPs in 2012, in which only 40% were found to answer a simple question about the probability of flipping a coin and getting two heads in a row\*. There has been much criticism of how politicians use and present numbers, often in crucial areas such as the economy and the cost of living. Although gaps in numerical skills are not limited to politicians it is important numbers are used correctly to inform the critical decisions they make, which affect all citizens.

This training will provide parliamentarians with the expertise and support for dealing with complex data which is so essential in ensuring that statistics remain at the heart of the policy debate.

The RSS is pleased to see that so many MPs have engaged with this campaign and this will be the first of a number of training sessions that will be scheduled for MPs in Westminster, with a training session for MPs staff also happening on the 22nd of October.

The #ParliamentCounts campaign can be found online at [www.rss.org.uk/lobby](http://www.rss.org.uk/lobby), including a list of candidates who have already given their support to the campaign.

**Commenting on the workshops, Royal Statistical Society executive director, Hetan Shah, said:**

“It's excellent to see our political representatives building up their statistical literacy so they won't be bamboozled by numbers trotted out by lobbyists and journalists. The Royal Statistical Society will be continuing to work with parliamentarians and their staff to help them with their data skills.”

ENDS

## NOTES

\* In 2012, 97 MPs during the last parliament were asked what the probability is of flipping a coin and getting two heads in a row. The correct response is 25%. A BBC story about the Ipsos MORI survey of MPs can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-19801666>, and further slides of the research (which was commissioned by the RSS) can be found here <http://www.rss.org.uk/Images/PDF/publications/rss-winter-2011-survey-of-mps.pdf>.

The RSS with both the International Statistical Institute (ISI) and the American Statistical Association (ASA), is marking World Statistics Day on the 20th of October with a statement urging that global development must no longer be hampered by a lack of the most basic data. Almost 50 organisations worldwide have signed up to the statement calling for 'a true data revolution' to measure progress toward the new UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**For more information on the #ParliamentCounts campaign and World Statistics Day, please contact Magdalen Wiley, RSS Press & Policy Officer, on 020 7614 3920 or at [m.wiley@rss.org.uk](mailto:m.wiley@rss.org.uk)**

The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) founded in 1834 is one of the world's most distinguished and renowned statistical societies. It is a learned society for statistics, a professional body for statisticians and a charity which promotes statistics, data and evidence for the public good. Today the Society has 6000 members around the world. [www.rss.org.uk](http://www.rss.org.uk)