



# Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022



A world with data at the heart of understanding and decision-making

# Strategic Goals



**1** For statistics to be used effectively in the **public interest**, so that policy formulation and decision-making are informed by evidence for the good of society

**2** For society to be more **statistically literate**, so that people's understanding of data, risk and probability can inform their daily decision-making, leading to better outcomes

**3** For a strong body of **professional statisticians** to maintain and develop the skills they need so that they can critically apply methodology, interpret results and communicate findings

**4** For statistics as a **discipline** to thrive, so that methodology is advanced, applied and made accessible, leading to greater understanding of an increasingly complex world

**5** For an engaged and energised **membership and staff** to work collaboratively with **partner organisations** and other stakeholders in meeting these goals, so that the Society can maximise its impact

**6** For the Society to be a financially sustainable and **well-run organisation**, with effective governance and use of technology, so that it will grow in relevance and exert influence



## Foreword by the President

We live in a world of ubiquitous data. Everywhere we turn we see debates to which statistics can contribute, such as those around 'post truth', artificial intelligence and evidence-informed policy. The world has also committed to a set of Sustainable Development Goals, which include indicators of progress. The context presents many opportunities for those of us who care about science, data, evidence and facts. The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) is a community of such people, who work collectively for 'data at the heart of understanding and decision-making'.

Trustees of the RSS have agreed that the main pillars of our Society's strategy should remain unchanged for the coming period. In the last five-year period, the Society focused particularly on strengthening its external impact, and also on becoming a more effectively-run organisation. In the coming five years, we will focus particularly on engaging our membership to help us achieve our goals. Our other major priority is to engage with the emergence of data science and to consider its impact both on statistics in particular, and on society more generally.

Looking more internally, during this period we will strengthen our customer relationship management systems, and aim to make our premises fit for purpose, as finances allow. Both of these will allow us to become more effective in how we engage with our fellows, and also with the wider world.

**Sir David Spiegelhalter**

President





# 1. Statistics and the public interest

**Strategic goal:** For statistics to be used effectively in the **public interest**, so that policy formulation and decision-making are informed by evidence for the good of society.

**Context:** There are increasing concerns about the ramifications of a 'post truth' society. In parallel the public is faced with increasing amounts of data and information from multiple, often conflicting, sources. Meanwhile, the rise of algorithms, artificial intelligence and data science creates both societal opportunities and challenges.

**The role of the Society:** To help ensure that statistics are used to help build a prosperous, fair and sustainable world.



### **Activities:**

- Working in partnership with other bodies that care about science, evidence and facts.
- Helping policymakers and governments understand the value of statistics and evidence as outlined in the RSS Data Manifesto.
- Thought leadership, influencing the public debate, convening and responding to policy consultations.
- Encouraging statisticians to be involved in *pro bono* activity, including working with the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences.

### **Priorities**

- Maintain and build upon the increasing policy influence of the RSS.
- Push forward the debate around opportunities and challenges posed by data science, artificial intelligence and machine learning.
- Play a leading role in discussions of data ethics.
- Maintain and increase the Society's media profile.

## 2. Education, statistical literacy and public engagement

**Strategic goal:** For society to be more **statistically literate**, so that people's understanding of data, risk and probability can inform their daily decision-making, leading to better outcomes.

**Context:** Not enough people understand and appreciate the value of statistics and statistical thinking. There is evidence of weak statistical literacy among many sectors of the wider public. Research shows that the UK is an outlier internationally in the low numbers of students doing any form of mathematics after the age of 16. Parliamentarians, public decision-makers and the media all often struggle with basic statistical concepts.

**The role of the Society:** To help the UK school system to improve the teaching and learning of statistics and data in the curriculum. To help other stakeholders improve their statistical literacy.



### Activities:

- Campaigning for better teaching of statistical literacy at all levels in the education system.
- Awards for good use of statistics by journalists and others.
- Foundation training and support for a wide variety of groups seeking to improve their confidence and competence in statistics.
- Members encouraged to be confident in speaking to the media about statistics.
- Publishing Significance magazine to make statistical issues more accessible.

### Priorities

- Influence school curricula and practice to improve the quality of the teaching and learning of statistics and data.
- Engage our fellows to increase statistical literacy in their own areas of employment.
- Develop new funded projects which enable us to increase the reach of our statistical literacy work.
- Increase the profile of our awards.



## 3. Developing the profession

**Strategic goal:** For a strong body of **professional statisticians** to maintain and develop the skills they need so that they can critically apply methodology, interpret results and communicate findings.

**Context:** Statistics is a profession which is relevant and increasingly valued across a broad range of sectors of industry, as well as in commerce, government, academia and research organisations. The rise of data scientists also creates new needs and opportunities.

**The role of the Society:** To provide professional qualifications and training for statisticians. To consider what role it can play in supporting the emerging data science community.

### Activities:

- Professional qualifications and revalidation.
- Accreditation of university courses.
- Training and continuing professional development.
- Scientific meetings.
- Careers promotion.

### Priorities

- Market the GradStat and Chartered Statistician qualifications, having updated them recently.
- Launch our new university course accreditation scheme, on a paid-for basis.
- Continue the growth of our professional training courses.
- Develop the role of the RSS as a professional body in the context of data science.



## 4. Strengthening the discipline

**Strategic goal:** For statistics as a **discipline** to thrive, so that methodology is advanced, applied and made accessible, leading to greater understanding of an increasingly complex world.

**Context:** The discipline of statistics is thriving, with increased interest in data from all application areas. The emergence of data science is providing new ways of working and applications. There is a need for greater investment in fundamental research in statistics, and also for better ways of funding multidisciplinary work.

**The role of the Society:** To ensure funding of research meets the needs of statistics. To help knowledge exchange and networks to develop the discipline.

### Activities:

- Journals.
- Discussion meetings, section and local group events.
- Annual conference.
- Making the case for research funding to operate in a way that works for statistics and the mathematical sciences.

### Priorities

- Scope and potentially launch a new journal for data science.
- Encourage sections and local groups to undertake activities that support statistical integrity and the discipline.
- Help research funding bodies understand the best mechanisms to support statistics.

# 5. Engaging the membership, staff and partners

**Strategic goal:** For an engaged and energised **membership and staff** to work collaboratively with **partner organisations** and other stakeholders in meeting these goals, so that the Society can maximise its impact.

**Context:** Membership organisations are finding it increasingly challenging to recruit and retain members. Members have indicated that they would like to be more involved in the work of the Society but many – especially those from the private sector – have limited time. Therefore, the Society wishes to improve engagement of members. The Society has a committed and motivated staff with a good mix of skills and experience. The RSS has strong partnerships across civil society, government, and science.

**The role of the Society:** The Society is a membership body, and will provide a channel for its members to collectively help achieve the vision of the RSS. It will do this through working in partnership with other organisations where appropriate. It will also maintain a strong staff team to help it achieve these ends.

## Activities:

- Increase the engagement and capacity of our sections and local groups.
- Increased focus on member recruitment, engagement, retention and involvement.
- Disseminate news about our work through member communications, our website and social media channels.
- Work jointly with partner organisations to achieve joint goals, and take a convening role where appropriate.
- Engage and develop staff in the delivery of this work.

## Priorities

- Increase the involvement of members in working with the RSS to achieve the goals of the strategy, particularly via our sections and local groups.
- Maintain and increase membership through high-quality member benefits, and through increased messaging emphasising the wider charitable work of the Society.
- Explore new mechanisms to involve the data science community (e.g. through employer packages rather than individual membership).
- Maintain and develop a wider range of partnerships in order to influence change.
- Convert our non-member supporters into members.



## 6. Being a well-run organisation

**Strategic goal:** For the RSS to be a financially sustainable and **well-run organisation**, with effective governance and use of technology, so that it will grow in relevance, exert influence and have wider impact.

**Context:** Governance is functioning relatively well. The RSS has a good mix of earned income streams, and a journals contract which secures income until 2022. Financial pressures include costs relating to the closed final salary pension scheme. A new customer relationship management (CRM) system is required. The interior of the premises also need some refurbishment.



### Activities:

- Maintain and improve Society governance through the Council and various committees as well as through effective policies.
- Society management under the direction of the Senior Management Team.
- Commercial activities, fundraising and sponsorship to increase income.

### Priorities

- Invest in a new CRM system to enable better communication with members.
- Scope a plan to ensure premises are fit for purpose and implement as finances allow.
- Deal with pension liabilities.
- Grow commercial and fundraising income streams such as the ISO 18404 scheme.
- Implement new processes to satisfy new data protection legislation.

DECISION





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