RSS Journalism Award Winners 2015

Regional Journalism: '[Suicide kills as many as the Troubles](#)' - Kathryn Torney, *The Detail*

The judges felt that that this was an interesting topic, of great public interest to the region. It clearly presented and explained the data relating to suicide in Northern Ireland, including contrasting the numbers dying through suicide since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement compared with the numbers killed during the Troubles. The article presented simple statistics in an interesting, interactive way, providing links to the sources of data which allowed the interested reader to further scrutinise the data. There was a good discussion of the possible mechanisms with relevant quotes from experts, concluding with areas of further work that could be done to investigate the issue in greater detail. Overall the authors are to be commended for their work in using statistics to highlight an important issue.

Investigative Journalism: '[The Script report](#)' - Jon McClure, *The Detail*

This was a well-grounded piece of investigative journalism using previously unpublished statistical information to highlight the apparently anomalous situation regarding drug prescribing in Northern Ireland in order to stimulate further investigation by the relevant authorities. The authors told the story in a non-sensational manner using relevant national and international comparisons to delve in-depth and focus on a specific issue. Overall it was an appropriate length, with good use of graphics and interactivity and the authors are to be commended for the way in which they pulled together data from various areas to compile a large dataset of relevant material.

Explaining the Facts: '[Big Data – are we making a big mistake?](#)' - Tim Harford, *Financial Times*

In this article Tim Harford raised awareness of what can be accomplished by analysing 'Big Data' and also what its limitation are. It took a simple idea on a topical subject and explained it well, including drawing a clear, readily understandable distinction between when data are correlated and when the relationship could be considered causative. He used relevant examples, both recent and historical, to engage constructively with the issue including a good discussion of sampling bias, the difference between precision and

accuracy, and how models without theory can prove fragile in the long run. The judges felt that this was an excellent exposition of the relative pros and cons of 'Big Data', that as well as having relevance to anyone wanting to understand the topic, it could also usefully be added to the first year reading list for Statistics courses.

Data Visualisation: '[Jihadism: Tracking a month of deadly attacks](#)' - Christine Jeavans, Nassos Stylianou, Richard Bangay, Aidan Fewster and Charlotte Thornton, BBC News

This piece of data journalism used statistics to dramatically illustrate how the majority of jihadi attacks are targeted on a few countries. The judges liked the interactive display that allowed the reader to make the most of the information available; the breakdown of different countries and attacks within countries allowed a clear understanding of the extent of the attacks. There was excellent documentation of the data collection process including justifications of the methodologies and assumptions made. This article with its associated methodological notes dealt well with the potentially unreliable and incomplete data in an assured and highly engaging way. It is a very good example of the responsible use of hard-to-get and problematic data to inform the public about a matter of great, tragic, current importance.