

## Social statistics

Ludi Simpson

1 GOT something big to say? Grab a statistic, it lends authority. Most people know perfectly well that statistics can support different angles on the same story. But who has the time to put together the whole picture for themselves?

2 In the UK, concern for the health of statistics – not least when it comes to statistics relating to health issues, such as patient waiting times, public-private health financing, and more – has 15

attempts to rescue the field from the spin of political and industrial lobbies. The UK Statistics Authority now oversees the production of official statistics independently of government, and is answerable only to Parliament.

3 Straight Statistics, a pressure group of legislators, statisticians and journalists, runs a website presenting statistics that have been "straightened out", having previously been twisted for political, business or personal advantage – a practice the organization says is "widespread – and often undetected".

4 Partiality is deeply embedded in statistics. Data collection generally costs so much that little will be counted unless it is a government priority. This holds as much for questions in fundamental surveys such as the 10-yearly national census as it does for one-off inquiries. So it is not only the twisting of statistics that needs addressing but the way they are produced.

5 This is the starting point for the UK group Radical Statistics, which held its 35th annual conference in London last month. The audience and contributors were bound together not just by an understanding of statistics: these were people who produce and live by statistics, a diverse bunch of researchers and commentators who like what they do but don't always like what is done with their skills. Or what is not done with their skills: that is the extra ingredient. If current statistics are shaped by their funders' priorities, who will produce statistics to fulfil other priorities – and what would those statistics look like?

6 Take the "league tables" that rank the performance of UK schools. Decades of work has shown beyond doubt that these divisive tables are 18. Once standard errors of uncertainty are attached, the vast majority of schools are very similar. Only the extreme outliers remain interesting. The best use of the tables



would be to screen for a few examples of best or worst practice, or ones which suffer from poor measurement.

7 So what might statistics aimed at improving schooling achieve? In their recent book *The Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett argued that societies with the most unequal incomes have the worst health and most crime. If they are right, we might look to reduce inequalities between and within schools, and later at work.

8 It's the same when it comes to employment. Figures purporting to measure unemployment tend to hide the full cost, not least by omitting people not claiming state benefits. Statistical skills could be applied to estimating how many of these missing unemployed there are, and how the figures are affected when governments change the rules. Can the priorities underlying the collection of statistics be changed? This is where it gets interesting. It's time for a new statistics of social justice.

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## Tekst 4 Social statistics

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- 1p 14 Which of the following is in line with paragraph 1?
- A A study's validity depends on the presentation of its scientific data.
  - B Research findings ought to be verified before publication.
  - C Statistics may be interpreted in more than one way.
  - D Unconventional ideas should be substantiated by statistics.
- 1p 15 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 2?
- A frustrated
  - B ignored
  - C led to
  - D restored
- 1p 16 Which of the following statements about Straight Statistics in paragraph 3 is true?
- A Analysis of data by Straight Statistics undermines the credibility of the UK Statistics Authority.
  - B Straight Statistics is responsible for communicating information generated by the UK Statistics Authority.
  - C Straight Statistics reports misuse of official data to the proper authorities.
  - D The work of Straight Statistics is complementary to the role of the UK Statistics Authority.

"This is the starting point for the UK group Radical Statistics" (alinea 5)

- 1p 17 Wat zijn de **twee** uitgangspunten van Radical Statistics?  
*Vul de onderstaande zin aan (op je antwoordblad).*

De manier waarop ..... **en** de manier waarop.....

- 1p 18 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 6?
- A correct
  - B implausible
  - C meaningless
  - D reliable

"other priorities" (final sentence paragraph 5)

- 1p 19 Which of the following topics from paragraphs 6-8 is mentioned as an example that could benefit from a different statistical approach?
- A free health care
  - B quality of education
  - C redistribution of income
  - D stimulating employment

- 1p 20 How can the tone of this article be characterised best?
- A defensive
  - B dismissive
  - C hopeful
  - D matter-of-fact
  - E sarcastic

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**Bronvermelding**

*Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.*