

## Centre of Methods and Policy Application in the Social Sciences

### 2015 COMPASS Research Colloquium

# Evaluating policy-relevant questions using existing data

29 July 2015 @ 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

FREE but must rsvp to [b.milne@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:b.milne@auckland.ac.nz) (for catering purposes)

Statistics New Zealand, Statistics House, The Boulevard, Harbour Quays, WELLINGTON



## Programme

10.00–10.15 Morning tea

10.15–10.30 Introduction to COMPASS Research Centre and its work programme – *Professor Peter Davis*, COMPASS Director

10.30–11.15 The COMPASS “social laboratory” – *Professor Peter Davis*

What do the books “The Healthy Country?” (Woodward & Blakely) and “The Spirit Level” (Wilkinson & Pickett) have in common? They are big picture, they present novel and stimulating interpretations, they are societal in scope – and they largely rely on aggregated (ecological) data of an observational kind. Can we add methodological precision to these speculations without losing the sense of the “bigger picture”? At COMPASS we have developed a rudimentary inquiry system using simulation methods based on existing research data. We propose over the next two years to extend this system to a societal level using the New Zealand Longitudinal Census.

11.15–11.45 A Knowledge laboratory of the early life-course – *Roy Lay Yee*

The “Knowledge Lab” micro-simulation project aims to integrate “best evidence” from systematic reviews and meta-analyses into a working model of the early life course (from birth to age 21). We will describe progress on the Knowledge Lab project, and how it will be used to: (i) test the validity of the underlying behavioural equations and specific knowledge sources (meta-analyses, systematic reviews); and (ii) test policy scenarios by carrying out experiments on the “virtual cohort” created by the working model.

11.45–12.30 Life-course predictors of mortality inequalities – *Dr Barry Milne*

New Zealand has made great contributions to the understanding of the effects of socioeconomic factors on mortality, through the work of Tony Blakely and collaborators using data from the New Zealand Census Mortality Study. We extend this work by linking mortality data to the New Zealand Longitudinal Census – a link of individual Census records from 1981 to 2006 – to assess life-course socioeconomic predictors of mortality. We will describe this project, its aims, and some early findings.

12.30–1.15 Lunch (provided)

1.15–1.45 Explaining the low income return for education among Asian New Zealanders – *Liza Bolton*

Aotearoa New Zealand has a long and rich history of migration from Asia, with Asians comprising around 10% of the usually resident population. For people of all ethnicities, educational attainment is positively associated with income, but in all qualification categories at the 2013 Census, Asian New Zealanders were earning markedly less than their European, Māori, and Pacific counterparts. This investigation uses 2013 New Zealand Census data to create explanatory models that investigate the factors related to this anomalous difference.

1.45–2.15 Contribution to the accessibility of quantitative skills – *Martin von Randow*

Around the world many groups have been lamenting the shortage of quantitative skills among those entering the workforce, especially in the social sciences. Research methods content has been cut from programmes in order to retain student numbers, leading inevitably to those skills not even being there to pass on. COMPASS has long been working to alleviate these concerns locally, with short courses (NZSSN), data archiving (NZSSDS), and hands-on teaching in both quantitative and qualitative skills.

2.15–2.45 The New Zealand Election Study (1990–2014) – *Professor Jack Vowles*

The New Zealand Election Study (NZES) has been in the field after every New Zealand election since 1990. This presentation discusses its methodology and some of its main findings, particularly those based on longitudinal analysis. It discusses briefly the contribution of the NZES to the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), from which a module of questions is included. The NZES faces challenges in the form of barely adequate funding and declining response rates and the presentation concludes with discussion of how these may be addressed.

2.45 Finish