

# Tracking change: using data to monitor quality of life

**Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), University of Essex**

## **Meeting Global Challenges**

ISER's research focuses on crucial social and economic issues relevant to public policy, with a speciality in long term research – following the same survey respondents over time to examine the processes underlying social change. The institute combines academic excellence with real world impact. The Institute has an international reputation for the quality, rigour and insight of its research. The technical and intellectual skills that contribute to this reputation are also dedicated to resolving the social and economic issues raised by policy makers in the UK, in Europe and in other parts of the world. Its research activities include tax-benefit modelling for European countries and a range of research projects looking at life chances across European countries.

## **A Multidisciplinary Approach**

The multidisciplinary approach and interdependent nature of the activities of ISER's two ESRC-funded centres, the UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (ULSC) and Research Centre on Micro-social Change (MISOC) are at the heart of the Institute's success. Researchers in sociology, economics, demography, epidemiology and psychology work alongside a team of survey methodologists. Close links are firmly established with other University of Essex departments including health and human sciences, psychology, and law. Collaborations exist with sister institutions and research centres around the world.

## **Research Impact**

The ISER has produced an immense amount of data that is being continuously used by policy developers and other research institutions for the betterment of societal research. By developing new methodology to highlight the importance of correctly assessing the disability benefit system they have strongly impacted on public policy. This goes hand in hand with a study on the economic ramifications experienced by women, ethnic and religious minorities and disabled people as well as information explaining the effect of lower income on social mobility which has influenced the development of family policies both domestically and abroad.

ISER carries out research for a range of organisations including UK and other national government departments, the EU, third sector and commercial organisations.

## **Funding Sources**

ISER's two long-term research centres are funded by the ESRC with support from the University of Essex. Other funding is from QR money, the European Commission, a range of other ESRC grants, government departments, charitable foundations, NGOs and the private sector. ESRC funding has recently been secured for MISOC for the period 2009-14. ISER was awarded £15m by the ESRC to establish and run waves 1 and 2 of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, *Understanding Society*. Government department co-funders are also supporting the study.