



## **The Changing Face of Scotland**

18<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Sensation, Dundee

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As part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science 2010, Sensation, the Dundee science centre was the backdrop for exploring the changing pattern of migration within Scotland. This event was organised as by AQMeN, in collaboration with the University of Dundee.

The morning session explored a number of inter-related topics through a series of four seminars and was full to capacity with 80 delegates from academia and the public sector across Scotland. A number of delegates stayed on for the afternoon sessions in which the potential of three Scottish datasets were demonstrated.

In the first presentation, Allan Findlay from the University of Dundee posed the question 'Is Scotland a Meritocracy?', exploring a number of factors impacting social and occupational mobility within Scotland with reference to a number of Scottish datasets. It seems that it's not only who you are but where you are that determines your ability to achieve in Scotland.

An international perspective of Scotland's demography by Chris Wilson, University of St Andrews provided a comparative view of mortality, migration and fertility with other European countries. Evidence implies that Scotland is still reeling from a legacy of lifestyle factors (e.g. smoking, poor diet and alcohol abuse) resulting in our countries poor health outcomes, while migration of 18 -24 yr olds seeking to take advantage of our excellent higher education system from south of the border and young international migrants seeking employment opportunities give migration patterns distinct to Scotland.

A talk on Scotland's fertility: past, present and future by Elspeth Graham, University of St Andrews explored the concept that fertility is linked to a number of factors both economic and social, and a question around the impact of the current economic recession on the future fertility of Scotland was posed.

In the final presentation Robert Wright, University of Strathclyde discussed Scotland's future demographic prospects. Previously portrayed by the media and politicians as Scotland's 'ticking time bomb' our demographic problems have now miraculously been defused or have they? The audience was given a demonstration of how predictive modelling can be used to misinform if only one set of uncertainties or variables are used.

For someone new to the social sciences, the methods, range of datasets discussed and the range of research questions that were explored using these datasets was both fascinating and informative. I now have a better understanding of what Scottish datasets are available and how they can be used in the context of my own research and feel more



confident about discussing these with my colleagues. The seminars also provided a good overview of current thinking from leading experts on the topics within the Scottish context.

Over lunch delegates were encouraged to explore the science of their senses within the centre with the warning: "HIGH RISK OF SERIOUS FUN!"

The afternoon session comprised of two interactive demonstrations. The first provided by Euan Smith and Andrew White from Scottish Government focused on the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) databases, and the second by Ed Turnbull and Rob Collins from General Register Office Scotland on disseminating the census results for Scotland. These demonstrations provided a very useful introduction to the types of information contained within each of the databases and how to go about navigating around them. There is now much anticipation around the development of the new and improved Scotland's Census Results On-Line web space and the release of the 2011 census results.