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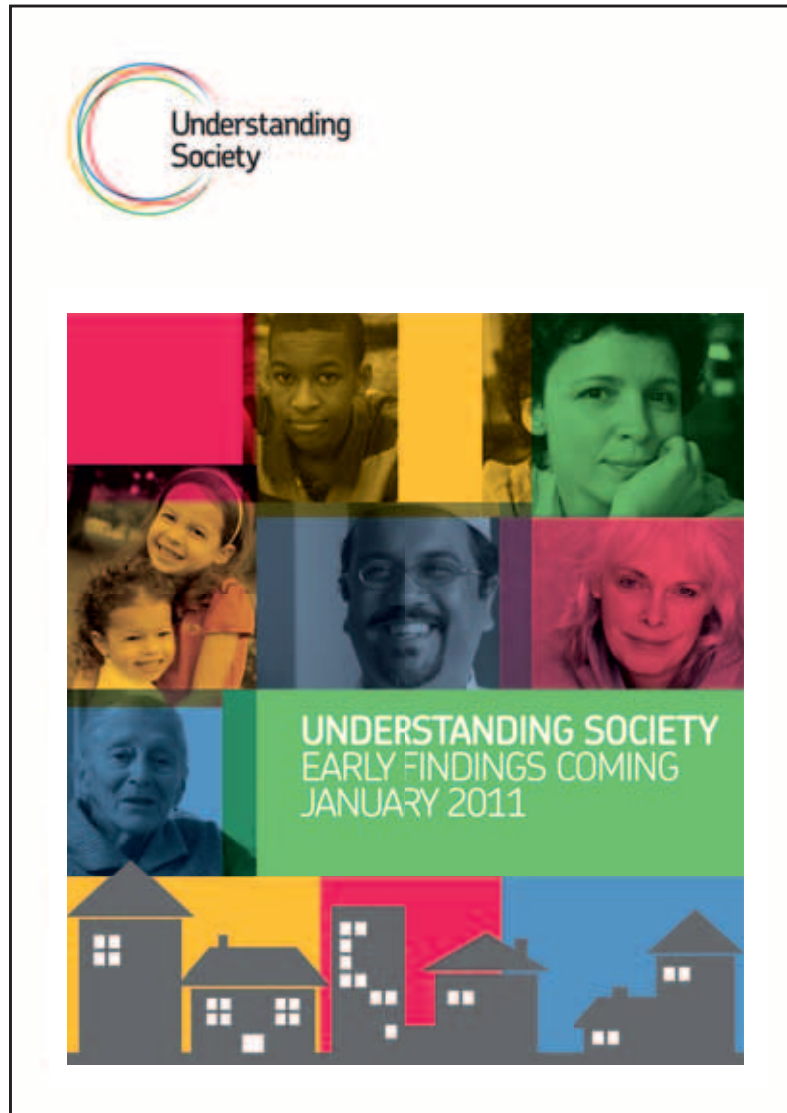


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In 2011 we are launching a new, interactive online magazine format that will showcase economic and social science news and features from *Society Now*.

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Published by the Economic
and Social Research Council



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Britain in 2011 is a publication of the Economic and Social Research Council. All profit made from the sale of the magazine is reinvested in research communication.



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Welcome to Britain in 2011

THE UK IS emerging from a global recession and there is a pressing need to establish sustainable growth. The boundaries of public and private responsibilities – and the balance between state intervention and individual responsibility – are being redrawn. From these issues emerge new challenges that relate to changes to public services, welfare reform and civil liberties.

It is more important than ever to understand how people and organisations make choices and how behaviour can be shaped through different interventions. Social science is central to all of these concerns and plays a key role in a wide range of national and global issues including sustainability, health and well-being, global food security and, of course, economic growth.

The ESRC funds research across this wide range of issues and contributes to greater knowledge and understanding of the many challenges our society faces. But, importantly, much of this research goes further to propose solutions and show where interventions have a positive effect. Many examples of these important contributions are gathered here in *Britain in 2011*.

For example, experts on the environment and climate change share their findings on how society and nations perceive the threat of global warming and what they're doing to meet the challenges at a local and global level.

Economists from some of the most respected academic institutions dissect the causes of the global economic crisis, evaluate the UK government's reaction and suggest strategies for speeding economic recovery and growth.

Social scientists show the impact physical science makes on our attitudes and behaviour, whether through developments in genomic research, the application of nanotechnology or the extraordinary work of particle physicists.

Researchers look at our behaviour in the current economic crisis and examine whether we are building a Big Society or if modern society is becoming more fragmented.

Media experts focus on the changes in entertainment and broadcast media brought about by new technology, and how digital social media continue to revolutionise how we interact with each other locally, nationally and internationally.

And with the first coalition government since the Second World War, experts on politics examine the behaviour of the British electorate and whether politics has undergone a seismic and permanent shift.

The publication of *Britain in 2011* could not come at a more appropriate or difficult time. Difficult, because as the government gets to grips with the economy it is challenging to predict the effects of the various new policies on society.

But it's also an appropriate time because the many contributions we've included from across the social science community, and the research findings they contain, show that now, more than ever, economic and social science research has a fundamental impact on almost every aspect of our society.

We hope you enjoy reading *Britain in 2011* and we welcome your comments or suggestions – britain@esrc.ac.uk



Professor Paul Boyle
Chief Executive,
Economic and Social Research Council

Britain in 2011

Annual magazine of the Economic and Social Research Council



49 How British politics has undergone a seismic shift

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