



2020

**CAMPAIGN FOR
SOCIAL SCIENCE
REPORT**

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Publisher:

The Academy of Social Sciences
The Campaign for Social Science

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Photo Credits: Shahin Khalaji, Dan Burton
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FOREWORD

WELCOME TO THE CAMPAIGN FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

In early 2020 the Campaign planned its new strategy, co-developed with our excellent board, and with clear intent to achieve a step-change in our profile and range of activities. Within a matter of weeks, the context had changed entirely, and, as with all organisations, our plans had to adapt.

As you'll see throughout this Report, whether it was despite or because of the pandemic, we have achieved a lot of the step-changes in profile and activity we aimed for before the pandemic. The overriding feeling I have about this is a deep pride in our team, Fellows, partners and the wider social science community for how each has stepped up to very real challenges in the most urgent circumstances.

In our own team, we have achieved much more across the range of our activities than ever before: introducing comment series, video interviews and more events, extending our established policy activities, convening excellent briefing sessions and publishing a report on the vital contribution of social science to business.

The outline of activities in the rest of the report will make that clear, including those built around our 'Covid-19 hub' approach. To me, this is a clear model of what we should be doing, fulfilling our role of being the public voice for the outstanding contribution of social scientists to the most pressing issues of the day. My genuine passion for the Campaign stems from this clarity of purpose and unique position: we're the only Campaign focused solely on the social sciences, with a mission to promote their vital role in improving decision-making, society and lives.

Our role as part of the Academy makes that even stronger.

This does not mean we act alone, far from it. Indeed, I am particularly pleased that our increased activity is utterly in line with the key principles of our renewed strategy - of partnership, profile and public advocacy. On partnership, for example, we have worked with SAGE Publishing, the ESRC, the UK Evaluation Society and others, as outlined throughout this report.

More than this, our understanding of partnership is based on a core belief that the social science/STEM dichotomy is artificial, and we're stronger together. This was embodied in our SAGE Annual Lecture from Professor Trish Greenhalgh, by far our largest event ever, and an emblem of how integrated the disciplines have been in the most effective responses to the pandemic.

The vital role of social science, in partnership with others and in our own right, is only going to grow as we plot a path to recovery from the pandemic. Our clear objective now is to build on the approaches and momentum established by our Covid-19 hub work to expand to the other key societal and policy challenges of our time.

I am looking forward to delivering this in the coming months, drawing on the extraordinary expertise in our team and community, and, as always, I would be delighted to hear from you if you would like to get actively involved.

**- Prof Bobby Duffy FAcSS, Chair
Campaign for Social Science**



CHAMPIONING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE CAMPAIGN SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED ITS REACH AND MADE GREAT STRIDES IN BECOMING A MORE PUBLIC CHAMPION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN 2020

The Academy's new strategy, allied to an increase in momentum across our work as a whole, and Professor Bobby Duffy FAcSS becoming the new Campaign Chair in late 2019, brought renewed focus and energy to the Academy and its Campaign, making it an exceptionally successful year. As a public champion the Campaign's work showcases the social science roles in enhancing decision-making, society and lives.

In May 2020, just six weeks after the pandemic lockdown in the UK, we launched a digital hub showcasing examples of social science contributing to understanding and tackling the impacts of the pandemic. Our [Covid-19 hub](#) raised awareness of the Campaign and its work beyond our existing audiences and became a key reference source for others both in academia and beyond. It demonstrated the essential contribution of the social sciences to understanding and tackling short term mitigation and

management as well as longer term social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

The hub brought together illustrative examples of impactful social science research from across disciplines, demonstrating both the breadth and depth of social sciences contributions. It did this in several ways. As a first point of reference 'hub of hubs' it provided more than 60 up-to-date links to selected 'social science rich' Covid-19 resource centres created by individual universities, learned societies and research institutions.

We commissioned, hosted and shared widely more than 40 comment pieces, each informed by research evidence and expertise. Engaging video interviews featured social scientists from academia, and other areas of professional practice, working on major, funded research studies helping inform the response to the pandemic. The latter were in partnership with King's Policy Institute.

The [comment piece series](#) featured many leading social scientist practitioners and researchers. For example, David Halpern FAcSS on evidence in policy-making, Sir John Curtice FAcSS on voters' expectations, Professor Louise Arseneault FMedSci FAcSS talking about Covid-19 and mental health, and Professor Sir Cary Cooper CBE FAcSS on the lessons from the pandemic for the workplace. Contributors were drawn widely from academia, research organisations, private and third sector, public bodies and media; and very willingly gave their time to the Campaign cause. It also included a mini-series of nine pieces exploring how What Works centres responded to the pandemic, again illustrating the depth of social sciences engagement across policy and practice. Forty-seven percent of the comment piece authors were female and 12% from BAME backgrounds. Extensive communications activity around the hub and updates via new Campaign e-shots and Twitter increased the traffic to the Campaign's website by over 170% (compared with 2019).

Partnerships were invaluable in helping to increase the Campaign's reach and exposure. Most notably, we thank Sage Publishing, for partnering on event curation, virtual technology and dissemination. The number and range of the Campaign's autumn events also increased to take advantage of virtual opportunities; all were very well attended. In September, a discussion event on social statistics formed part of our Covid-19 programme. Chaired by Sir Ian Diamond FAcSS, the UK's National Statistician, the event looked at the [role of social statistics in informing the pandemic](#) and featured presentations by ESRC's Alison Park FAcSS, Urban Big Data Centre's Nick Bailey FAcSS, and Angela Saini, an independent science journalist. In November, as part of ESRC's Festival of Social Science, we held a discussion around the launch of *The Upswing*, a new book by the renowned US political

scientist Professor Robert Putnam, jointly with Sage Publishing and King's College. Robert and his co-author Shaylyn Romney Garrett were joined by Professor Jennifer Rubin FAcSS and Lord David Willetts FAcSS, who explored what the trends and lessons from the US mean for the UK and other countries.

In December we held our most popular event to date with an audience of over 750 people. This was the [Campaign's 2020 Annual SAGE Lecture](#) titled '*Give me back my fact: How can social science help us survive the post-truth pandemic?*' by Professor Trish Greenhalgh OBE, Professor of Primary Care in Oxford. Dr Mahlet (Milly) Zimeta, Head of Public Policy at the Open Data Institute, delivered an excellent response. Trish has been a leading voice in public health debates and the interest we received in her lecture was unprecedented. Trish drew attention to mass dissemination of distorted scientific facts in the wake of the COVID-19 and the important role of the social sciences in countering this harmful and misleading trend. To tackle the problem, she emphasised the need to draw on the 'social science of science' to produce a 21st-century post-truth account of what science is.

SAFEGUARDING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE PRIMARY WAY IN WHICH THE ACADEMY AND ITS CAMPAIGN HELP IN SUSTAINING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IS THROUGH ITS POLICY AND ADVOCACY WORK, SUPPORTED BY SECONDARY DATA GATHERING AND, AT TIMES, OUR OWN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

We were active in a number of policy areas in 2020. Our single most important output in the year – the *Vital Business* report – succeeded in demonstrating the multitude of ways in which the private sector depends on, uses and values social science methodologies, knowledge and skills.

In February 2020, we issued a [response to the government's planned points-based immigration regime](#), pointing out its likely effects on recruitment of social scientists. This continued the work we had completed in 2019 in our [World of Talent](#) reports and our [recommendations for immigration policy](#). We continued our participation in the UKRI-led 'Global Talent Group'. Later in the year, we provided detailed empirical information to UKRI, at their request, on the numbers of non-UK origin HEI staff in the social sciences, highlighting

important issues. We were the only non-STEM body invited to contribute to this evidence, prepared at government's invitation. The other invitees were the Royal Society, the Wellcome Trust and the Association of Medical Research charities. Our evidence-based policy work with UKRI also continued through 2020 as an invited participant in their COVID-19 communications working group which concerned government policy as well as research.

In March, we released our response to the [2020 Budget](#), which took place before the first COVID-19 lockdown. In it, we previewed some of the concerns about measuring service-sector Research and Development (R&D).

Our single most important output of the year in terms of sustaining the health of the social sciences was the [Vital Business](#) report. This was a report on primary qualitative





Vital Business

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE UK PRIVATE SECTOR

research involving senior leaders in business across a wide range of sectors from fintech to the extractive industries. The findings indicated the high levels of business dependence on knowledge, methodologies and skills from the social sciences: in leadership, strategic planning, market awareness and development, innovation, understanding consumer behaviour, international supply chains, sustainability issues and more. It is an important document not only in demonstrating to government policy makers the value of social sciences to business, but in also in confirming to business more widely what the social sciences are and in initiating the Academy and its Campaign's outreach to the private sector for the future.

We thank SAGE Publishing for sponsoring this project. We took the opportunity to use the COVID-19 restrictions to revise our approach to dissemination of such reports, focusing not on a launch event, but instead on targeted personalised approaches to a wide range of stakeholders. We complemented this with

wide outreach on social media and through the Academy's extensive contact networks and a press release. Three Academy-authored blogs featuring the findings were widely used and cited (the [LSE Impact blog](#); SAGE's [Social Science Space](#) and the Higher Education Policy Institute on the [implications of the report for higher education policy](#)). This work has also fed into our consultation responses during the year and highlighted the employability implications for the social sciences. It will continue to be a useful point of reference for some time.

The report was downloaded almost 1,000 times and there was extensive uptake in the media and social media. The step change in our communications and in disseminating our work both more widely and in a targeted way, also brought significant benefits in 2020. We enhanced the network of our friends and allies, together with our Fellows, to support visibly and intellectually the promotion of social sciences and the Academy/Campaign. Our *Vital Business* report gave us the platform to reach out to

high-profile social scientists in the media, to parliamentarians and decision-makers, to those with high political and public sector profiles, and to sister bodies and funding agencies to promote the important messages in the report.

Their willing participation has increased our outreach and engagement on social media and this has translated to our ongoing work and exposure offline, growing our audience significantly.

Additionally, the Academy and its Campaign completed three consultation responses, one in May and two in the final quarter of 2020.

- The first was to the [UKRI consultation on Open Access Publishing](#), for which we worked closely with learned society members, sharing draft responses and ensuring key messages were aligned. Particular concerns focused on the publication outlets deemed appropriate and the potential consequences for scholar choice of publishing outlets; on learned societies; and on the international visibility of UK research.
- The second was to the [ESRC Consultation on the Review of the PhD in the Social Sciences](#). We highlighted the issues of the length of the PhD, the balance between taught and project-based elements, and also the issues of employability and careers outside academia.
- In December, working with Dame Jil Matheson FAcSS, we completed our response to the government's [National Data Strategy consultation](#). We made common cause with the Royal Society and the Royal Statistical Society, who agreed with our points about the need to link data skills with substantive knowledge and understanding, including the social sciences, and also about what social

science could contribute to understanding skills teaching, and data access and governance. We took part in roundtables organised by both bodies, as well as commenting on their draft responses. Our response to [UK National Data Strategy Consultation 2020](#) was published in January 2021.

- We also strengthened our links with the Royal Society and the Royal Statistical Society and gathered their support for our views on possible changes to the Office for Students stance on the Teaching Excellence Framework.

Our monthly Policy Monitor, highlighting UK Parliamentary consultations and select committee hearings where social science evidence would be especially useful, was made freely available to Campaign Supporters, as well as to Member Learned Societies, Fellows and eBulletin subscribers.

CAMPAIGN SUPPORT IN 2020

THE CAMPAIGN FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE IS SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIAL SCIENCE COMMUNITY. WE THANK ALL OUR SUPPORTERS IN 2020 FOR THEIR COMMITMENT, IDEAS, CASE STUDIES, SOCIAL MEDIA AMPLIFICATION AND FOR THEIR SPONSORSHIP

All the more so as the HE sector faced very serious challenges in this year. The great majority of Campaign supporters sustained their support for our work and we were delighted that Newcastle University also joined as a new supporter during the year. The full list of 2020 supporters follows.

The Campaign's Strategic Leadership Forum held two well-attended online meetings in 2020. In June, Jo Johnson, the former Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, spoke to the Forum about major issues currently facing UK universities, such as the expected decrease in international student numbers, and what policies or prospects the universities may expect going forward. Within the context set out by him, the Forum discussed ways in which social sciences could make its case effectively in the challenging months ahead

The Forum's December meeting focused on the graduate employability agenda and heard from two speakers. Rachel Hewitt, Head of Policy at the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), spoke about the growing importance of the graduate employability agenda to the government's HE policy, and its implications. Professor Emilia del Bono, Director of the Centre for Micro Social Change (MiSoC) at the University of Essex, gave a presentation on what Covid-19 is likely to mean for the prospects of graduates joining the labour market since the pandemic. The Forum is an entitlement for gold and silver level Campaign supporters.

Finally, we thank the Campaign Board for their advice and ideas, and in particular for their work in helping to formulate the Campaign's new strategy. This forms an integral part of the Academy's overall strategy .

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CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES RELY HEAVILY ON DONATIONS AND SPONSORSHIPS FOR FUNDING. WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL TO OUR SUPPORTERS. TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT JOINING THE CAMPAIGN, PLEASE CONTACT: CAMPAIGN@ACSS.ORG.UK



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