



## ISSR NEWSLETTER

### Quarter 1, 2021 Issue

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### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

#### Dear ISSR stakeholders and friends

Around this time last year our lives were flung into the uncertainty of COVID-19, which continues to have ongoing impacts throughout the world. As I write this from UQ's Long Pocket precinct, I am conscious of how lucky I am, in the genuinely random sense of that word, to live a relatively "normal" life, while much of the world still grapples with the pandemic.

As mentioned in our previous newsletter at the end of last year, ISSR's staff and students were exceptional through what was a crazy 2020. They continued to work together and support each other to deliver outputs and outcomes for the Institute of the highest standards. This year (2021) has started off very strongly with new research opportunities, and it has been wonderful to see and hear the increased activity and energy around the office.

ISSR is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all and to addressing health inequalities. This newsletter focuses on our impact area, the [Social Science of Health](#). This area of the Institute continues to grow in

[apnoea types and symptoms](#)

[Dr Caroline Salom – Leading ISSRs research into co-morbid substance use and mental health disorders](#)

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strength and breadth, and is underpinned by a number of large government program evaluations, numerous sleep related research projects, and an expanding and strengthening partnership with Health and Wellbeing Queensland.

This first issue of the newsletter for 2021 provides a small snapshot of this diverse activity, highlighting ISSR researcher's work on drug use patterns during the pandemic, environmental toxicant exposures on pregnancy, and how machine learning can help diagnose sleep apnoea. In addition, we have introduced a new segment that showcases the wonderful research that our Higher Degree Research students are undertaking within the Institute.

The year ahead is shaping to be another big one for the Institute, which will include an Institute Review, which occurs every five years and provides an ideal opportunity for us to reflect on the past and look to the future. In addition, 2021 also sees the new ARC Centres of Excellence for Children and Families across the Life Course (ISSR hosted) and the Digital Child (ISSR node) launch their activities. We are also in the process of finalising our 2020 Annual Report, which will provide another summary of the work and achievements of ISSR.

I would like to wish you all a safe and happy break over the Easter period.

Regards.

**Mark Western, Director ISSR**

## ISSR RESEARCH – SOCIAL SCIENCE OF HEALTH

### How Queenslanders' drug use changed during the COVID-19 restrictions

The use of ecstasy/MDMA and methamphetamine were reported to have decreased in Queensland as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions. However, there was a reported increase in use of cannabis and alcohol during the same period. This information was gained by ISSR researchers as part of their contribution to the Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System that surveyed 100 drug users immediately after the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in Queensland. [Read more here](#)



### Evidence-based research to consider toxicant exposure in pregnant women in Queensland

Emerging evidence shows that a by-product of water disinfection by chlorination may be associated with adverse birth outcomes. ISSR researchers are undertaking new research to support policy makers to implement evidence-based changes to minimise toxicant exposure of Trihalomethanes (THMs) in pregnant women in Queensland. [Read more here](#)



### Artificial intelligence to identify and link

## obstructive sleep apnoea types and symptoms

Obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) happens when a person's throat is partly or completely blocked while they are asleep, causing them to stop breathing. Affecting 936 million individuals globally, it has serious implications on wellness and public health and safety. Despite its prevalence and severity, the current diagnostics for OSA are less than ideal, and ISSR researchers are using new computing technologies to improve OSA assessments and diagnosis. [Read more here](#)



## RESEARCH LEADER PROFILE

### Dr Caroline Salom – Leading ISSRs research into co-morbid substance use and mental health disorders

Dr Caroline Salom joined ISSR in 2016 as a Research Social Scientist and she is currently a Group Leader. Caroline and her team lead research and evaluations for a range of clients focusing on co-morbid substance use and mental health disorders and associated social and health issues. [Read more here](#)



## RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

### Seeking young adult volunteers

Young adults (18-24 years) are more likely to be involved in road accidents. A study being conducted at ISSR is seeking to change this.

A team of ISSR researchers have begun a randomised control trial to test a new program that is investigating the role of sleep, nutrition, activity and transport use in young adults in lowering their risk of road crashes. [Find out more here](#)



### Driving under influence of drugs and medications study

The Institute for Social Science Research is conducting a simulated driving study aimed at determining the health impacts and driving impairments of people who drive under the influence of illicit drugs or prescription medication. [Find out more here](#)



## Help us understand children's sleep

The University of Queensland is conducting The Sleep Transitions and Regularity study (STARs) - a four-year study aimed at understanding children's sleep and napping patterns.

The objective of the study is to understand how daytime naps influence children's development with the aim of providing better information to families and carers.

Researchers are calling for parents and kids to be involved in a national study into early childhood sleeping patterns at The University of Queensland. [Find out more here](#)



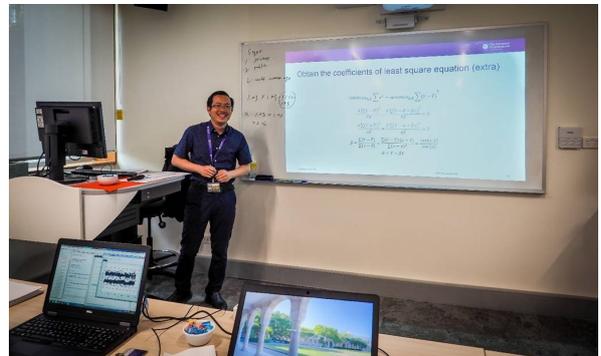
## TRAINING AND EVENTS

### Methods for Social Analysis and Statistics (MFSAS)

ISSR provides training for government, academic and industry professionals who need research methods and evidence based approaches to support the design, implementation and evaluation of research projects, policy and programs.

The MFSAS program is designed for those who need to use, understand, and interpret statistical information, but who may not necessarily have a background or training in statistics:

- [MFSAS Gathering Qualitative Data Course \(2 days\)](#)
- [MFSAS Program Evaluation Course \(1 day\)](#)
- [MFSAS Essential Social Analysis Skills Course \(3 days\)](#)
- [MFSAS Social Cost-Benefit Analysis Course \(3 days\)](#)
- [MFSAS Introduction to Longitudinal Data Analysis and Panel Regression Models \(2 days\)](#)
- [MFSAS Modelling change and event occurrence \(2 days\)](#)
- [MFSAS Longitudinal Data Analysis Course \(5 days\)](#)



Our courses are ideal for professionals in government departments, agencies, non-government organisations, university staff and postgraduate students who want to learn more about methods for social analysis and translate scientific social research into public policy outcomes. [See all upcoming course dates for 2021](#)

### Custom and group bookings

For groups, the course content can be customised to meet your research training needs, and can potentially include working on your research problems and data. Group courses can be held at your location or at [ISSR's training facilities](#). To discuss group training options please contact [issr.education@uq.edu.au](mailto:issr.education@uq.edu.au).

### [Download MFSAS Training Brochure](#)

## HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH (HDR) at ISSR

### HDR THESIS SHOWCASE

#### Double burden of malnutrition: a

## contemporary global health challenge\_

Through a systematic review and meta-analysis, an ISSR PhD researcher recently found a decline in the prevalence of underweight and an increase in the prevalence of overweight/obesity among women in South Asia and Southeast Asia. This research is important because it addresses an important evidence-gap and has the potential to contribute to intervention development and policy change addressing obesity as a public health issue in low to middle-income countries. [Read more here](#)



## HDR research opportunities

The Institute for Social Science Research is a national leader in advanced interdisciplinary social science and evidence based policy research. ISSR researchers address some of the most important issues and challenges facing Australia today in areas such as education, employment, housing, social wellbeing, homelessness, sustainability, and Indigenous studies. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, our scholars work closely with policy makers and frontline development workers to ensure our research directly impacts upon policy and practice and contributes to systemic institutional change. A list of our current HDR project topics can be found [here](#).



*Please share our newsletter with colleagues who may be interested.*



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Authorised by: Institute for Social Science Research  
Maintained by: [issr@uq.edu.au](mailto:issr@uq.edu.au)

This email was sent by Institute for Social Science Research, University of Queensland Long Pocket  
Precinct, Level 2, Cycad Building (1018), 80 Meiers Rd, Indooroopilly QLD 4068 to  
[x.aitkensmith@uq.edu.au](mailto:x.aitkensmith@uq.edu.au)

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