



Population Association of America

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA): Demographic Research Community Responds

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. According to the White House, the Act is “an extraordinary response to the country’s economic crisis and designed to jumpstart our economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges...”. In recognition of the health and economic impacts of biomedical and behavioral research, the final version of the law included \$10.4 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

In response to this infusion of funding, the NIH created a variety of new research and training mechanisms. As of February 2010, NIH had committed almost all of its ARRA funding, awarding almost 14,000 grants nationwide. Information about all of the NIH ARRA awards is available at: <http://recovery.nih.gov/>.

Population scientists have successfully competed for ARRA awards. Below are some examples of ongoing ARRA-funded population research projects supported by two NIH Institutes, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA). NICHD and NIA support most of the discretionary, competitive federal funding for population, or demographic, research awarded by the NIH.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

- **Fragile Families and Child Well Being in Middle Childhood:** The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is a longitudinal study involving approximately 3,700 unmarried parents and 1,200 married parents and their children. This ARRA grant will help researchers answer the following questions: How do children develop over time, and how do family resources influence children's health and development? How do the resources of unmarried parents evolve over time, relative to those of married parents? How do children's genetic endowments interact with their environments to influence their outcomes? What role do social (non- biological) parents play in the lives of children? (Sara McLanahan, Princeton University)
- **Impact of Health Problems on Academic Achievement:** To what degree do higher rates of health problems among minority children of all economic strata

and among poor children from all minority populations prior to the start of elementary school put them at an academic disadvantage once elementary school has begun? This project addresses a timely and significant public health issue: the connection between health problems and academic struggles in early childhood to the race/ethnic and economic stratification of American society. The main goals are to determine how these demographic inequalities affect children over their lives and identify outcomes that could inform policy recommendations. (Robert Crosne, University of Texas-Austin)

- **Research on the Effects of the U.S. Welfare System on the Low Income Population:** Studies on the effect of welfare benefits on fertility, marriage, cohabitation, and family structure lack of consensus – thus, weakening the value of this research for policy-makers. This project will examine, compare, and contrast various studies to best explain the nature and size of the effect. (Robert Moffitt, John's Hopkins University)

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

- **Enhance Long-Term Research Project on Health, Economics of Older Americans.** NIA awarded four grants totaling more than \$19 million over the next two years to expand the Health and Retirement Study (HRS)--the nation's premiere long-term study and data resource on the combined health, economic, and social factors influencing the well-being of Americans over 50. The ARRA funding will improve the quality of the data being collected, expand minority participation and add genetic analysis and biomarker and psychosocial data. (David Weir, University of Michigan)
- **Harmonize multi-country data sets:** Since 2007, researchers at RAND have been working to harmonize a number of multi-country data sets, including the 2002 - 2008 waves of the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), the Survey of Health, Ageing, and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), and the Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging (KLoSA). The result has been a digital library that researchers can search to identify comparable questions across the surveys. This new ARRA award will add three additional harmonized data sets - the Japanese Study on Aging and Retirement (J-STAR), the Indonesia Family Life Surveys (IFLS), and the Irish Longitudinal Study on Aging (TILDA) to the current system and add more HRS data collected before 2002. This expansion will be a critical resource for researchers studying the implications of global aging. (Arie Kapteyn - RAND)
- **Social, Medical and Economic Demography of Aging:** To understand the implications of population aging in the U.S. and abroad, well-trained researchers are needed who utilize contemporary analytic methods and population modeling and analyze and project population trends in aging and health. This ARRA award expands an existing predoctoral and postdoctoral research training program in the fields of social, medical, and economic demography of aging. (Kenneth Land, Duke University)