

For more information:

Rosanne Desmone
703.302.1861 (direct)
703.946.3820 (mobile)
Rosanne@amstat.org

[*Note to editors:* ASA will be pleased to try to set up interviews with any of the presenters; contact rosanne@amstat.org. Press can register for the conference online at <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/index.cfm?fuseaction=pressregistration>]

Timely Topics Take the Podium at ASA's 2008 Joint Statistical Meetings

Statistics gurus discuss the statistical issues of topics in the news: climate change, elections, the environment, clinical trials, consumer credit, the 2010 census, sports, and more

ALEXANDRIA, VA (PRWEB) JUNE 30, 2008 – Topics in the news are featured at the 168th annual Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM), as statisticians from around the world report on and debate the statistical implications of a variety of subjects among the more than 2,500 presentations and other sessions at the 2008 JSM, the American Statistical Association (ASA) said today. JSM, the world's largest annual gathering of statisticians, is attended by more than 5,000 statistics experts from the government, industry and academic sectors. JSM will be at the Colorado Convention Center August 3—7.

"This year's conference will address issues of national and international concern, including climate change, elections and the use of steroids in sports," said Ron Wasserstein, ASA executive director. "The 2010 census, as well as activities that address health, physical and social sciences issues and manufacturing processes and quality are on the agenda. Statisticians develop and use methodologies appropriate for understanding whether relationships between events are real or simply random coincidence. "

A representative sample of the JSM 2008 timely topics appears below; additional sessions of interest can be found at URL. A complete list of JSM sessions, can be obtained from the online program at <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=main>, where you can search on the activity number, keywords, and presenter's name or affiliation.

Who (really) are the first boomers? (Activity #135)

Did the Boomer Generation begin with the first person born in 1946 or with everyone born in the 1940s? This session looks at the data to determine the actual start of the baby boom.

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=abstract_details&abstractid=300852

What can statistical methods tell us about steroid use and its effects among major league baseball players? (Late-breaking Session -- Activity #333)

This panel discussion reviews results on hitting performance and looks at how these results can be applied to evaluating pitching performance. Are there unusual patterns of hitting of the "steroid sluggers" such as Barry Bonds and Mark McGwire, and are there similar unusual patterns of pitching of pitchers such as Roger Clemens?

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=abstract_details&abstractid=302726

The Accuracy of Election Polls (Activity #164)

This group of sessions addresses the problems of accurately measuring preference in election polls, discusses factors that may affect poll accuracy, and evaluates the performance of the 2008 pre-election polls in the primaries, and provides a variety of answers to the question of why election polls differ.

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=activity_details&sessionid=203233

Coors Field: Why is the home field advantage so high and what are its implications? (Activity #170)

Coors Field has the greatest home field advantage differentials of any baseball team in major league history. Home field differentials, however, need to be evaluated on the overall quality of the team. A key question is: does the team play particularly well at home, poorly on the road, or both? It is possible that the high altitude conditions at Coors disrupts the batting styles of hitters and leads to the team's poor road performance. These and other issues complicate the Rockies playoff chances, making last year's NL pennant win noteworthy.

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=abstract_details&abstractid=300282

Child Mortality: What we count counts (Activity #212)

Mortality in children (10 million annually) remains unacceptably high, but children can be saved by improving medical technology, improving delivery and utilization of the technology, or a combination of both. Effectively implemented programs could save millions of lives. Statistics plays a key role in the design and evaluation of effective programs.

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=abstract_details&abstractid=300273

Tracking space junk (Activity #37)

There are currently thousands of resident space objects orbiting the planet, and this number will grow substantially over the coming years. The challenge of tracking these objects is made difficult by limited observational resources, and by external factors such as atmospheric conditions and space weather that can alter an object's trajectory. This talk focuses on developing a modeling approach to meet the challenge.

<http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm>

Numbers in the news: a survey (Activity #351)

How often are statistical concepts or skills needed to read newspaper reports containing numerical results? This paper surveys over 500 news articles, classifying and tabulating the statistical knowledge into more than 100 categories that are relevant to understanding them.

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=abstract_details&abstractid=301831

A colorectal cancer risk prediction tool (Activity #378)

Several modifiable risk factors have been identified for colorectal cancer (CRC), the second leading cause of cancer death in the US. The presenters have developed models to estimate the probability of first incidence of proximal, distal or rectal cancer in white men and women, aged 50+ years. Relative risks differed by gender and tumor site.

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=abstract_details&abstractid=300070

It really is getting warmer (Activity #453)

Global warming is gaining attention as a major threat. This paper focuses on weather data collected for one city, Lubbock, Texas, over a time period of 93 years. New temperature records are being set every year in Lubbock and the goal was to determine if these records are typical or a byproduct of a

warming climate. The results of the study suggest a three-degree temperature increase in Lubbock over the last 93 years.

http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/onlineprogram/index.cfm?fuseaction=abstract_details&abstractid=300486

About JSM

JSM is held jointly with the American Statistical Association (ASA), the International Biometric Society (ENAR and WNAR), the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS), and the Statistical Society of Canada. The theme for this year's conference is *Communicating Statistics: Speaking Out and Reaching Out*. A brief history of the JSM can be found at

<http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2008/pdfs/ABriefHistoryoftheASAAnnualMeetings.doc>.

About the American Statistical Association

The American Statistical Association (ASA), a scientific and educational society founded in Boston in 1839, is the second oldest continuously operating professional society in the United States. For more than 160 years, ASA has been providing its 18,000 members serving in academia, government, and industry and the public with up-to-date, useful information about statistics. The ASA has a proud tradition of service to statisticians, quantitative scientists, and users of statistics across a wealth of academic areas and applications. For additional information about the American Statistical Association, please visit the association's web site at <http://www.amstat.org> or call 703.684.1221.

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