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ECONOMIC  
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RESEARCH  
COUNCIL

UK Research  
and Innovation

Better  
Lives

Research Highlights

#ESRCBetterLives



**The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)** funds research into the big social and economic issues facing us today. We are part of UK Research and Innovation and receive most of our funding through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). We support independent, high-quality, relevant social science research.

Social science aids growth, promotes innovation, informs policy and shapes society, **making people's lives better.**

A glowing globe of the Earth is held gently by two hands, one above and one below. The background is a warm, golden-yellow gradient with soft, out-of-focus light spots, creating a sense of care and global unity.

## **What is social science?**

Social science is the study of society, how we behave and interact, and our impact on the world around us. In other words, just about everything that really matters to people and society.

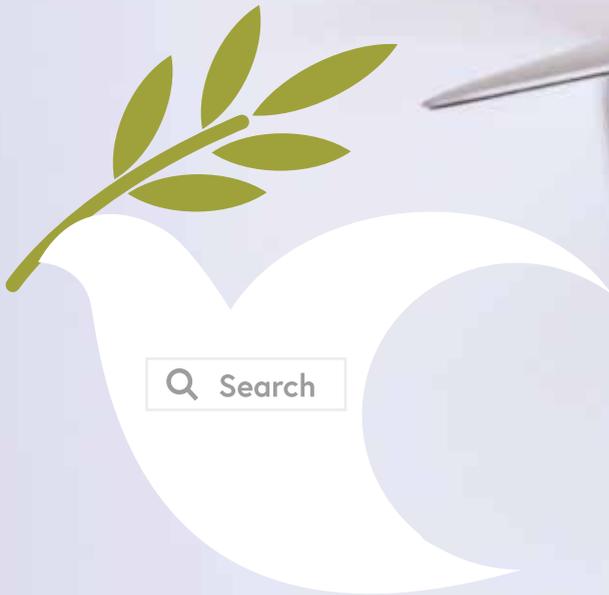
Social scientists study a huge range of subjects including health and wellbeing, education, economics, environmental change, ageing, politics, crime and governance, population change and international development.

## **How we make a difference**

We fund research, resources and training that have the maximum impact on people and society.

We help to tackle the biggest challenges society faces through partnerships, new ways of funding research, and involvement with some of the world's most ambitious research programmes. Our research informs policymakers and practitioners, and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective.

The following pages show how our research has influenced and benefited government, business, society and people in the UK and internationally.



The first legal search engine of its kind, the Language of Peace database gives all sides of a conflict **immediate access to around 1,000 peace agreements**, as a potential resource for ongoing negotiations.

Professor Marc Weller, University of Cambridge

Animation videos for breastfeeding routines have been viewed **15 million times on Facebook, shared 65,000 times**, and used as a staff training tool in **200 health boards** across the UK.

Professor Amy Brown, Swansea University



A blurred photograph of a road at night. In the foreground, a speed limit sign with the number '20' is visible on the road surface. To the left, there is a red metal guardrail. In the background, a white car is driving away, its headlights and taillights blurred. The overall scene is out of focus, emphasizing the speed limit sign.

Research on the limitations of human vision has been influential in lowering speed limits to 20mph in residential areas, **saving an estimated 38 lives and preventing over 450 serious injuries each year**, and stimulating car technology innovation.

Professor John Wann, Royal Holloway, University of London

**More than 1,000 hair stylists**  
have gained the Sustainable Salon  
Certificate, which saves the average  
four-seat salon **286,000 litres of  
water, 24,150 kWh of energy  
and £5,300 a year.**

Dr Denise Baden, Southampton Business School



Research into crowd resilience has enhanced crowd management practices for over **700 local emergency specialists**, improved safety for **125,000 festival goers** and changed stadium safety procedures in the UK and abroad.

Dr John Drury, University of Sussex



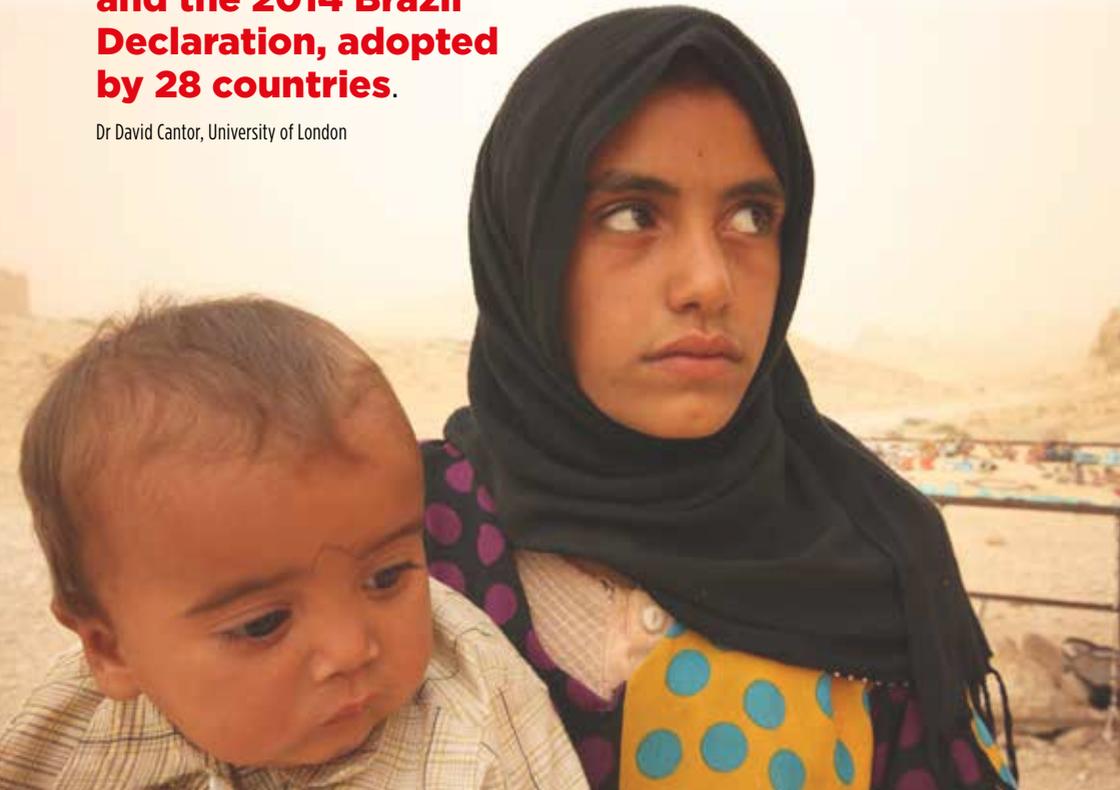


Recommendations from research led to a new national reporting system on 'use of force' for **all 43 police forces** in England and Wales, detailing use of 'less-lethal' force including Tasers, batons, irritant sprays and restraint.

Dr Abi Dymond, University of Exeter

Research on the protection of refugees and other displaced persons led to new guidelines and policy change including **the world's first international framework on climate refugees and the 2014 Brazil Declaration, adopted by 28 countries.**

Dr David Cantor, University of London



A photograph of two young students in school uniforms (white shirts and dark ties) standing in front of a whiteboard. They are both smiling and holding markers, appearing to be actively engaged in a lesson or collaborative work. The student in the foreground is looking towards the whiteboard, while the student behind her is also looking in the same direction. The background shows a window with bright light coming through, suggesting a bright, airy classroom environment.

The Cognitive Acceleration method of teaching developed at King's College London has been adopted by **more than 1,500 schools** in the UK, and is also widely used in primary and secondary schools across **Europe, South Africa, the US, China and Australia.**

Professor David Johnson &  
Professor Michael Shayer, King's College London



Research on HIV prevention led to a 'Cash plus Care' programme that has helped **over two million girls in 10 African countries** avoid contracting HIV/AIDS since 2014.

Professor Lucie Cluver, University of Oxford

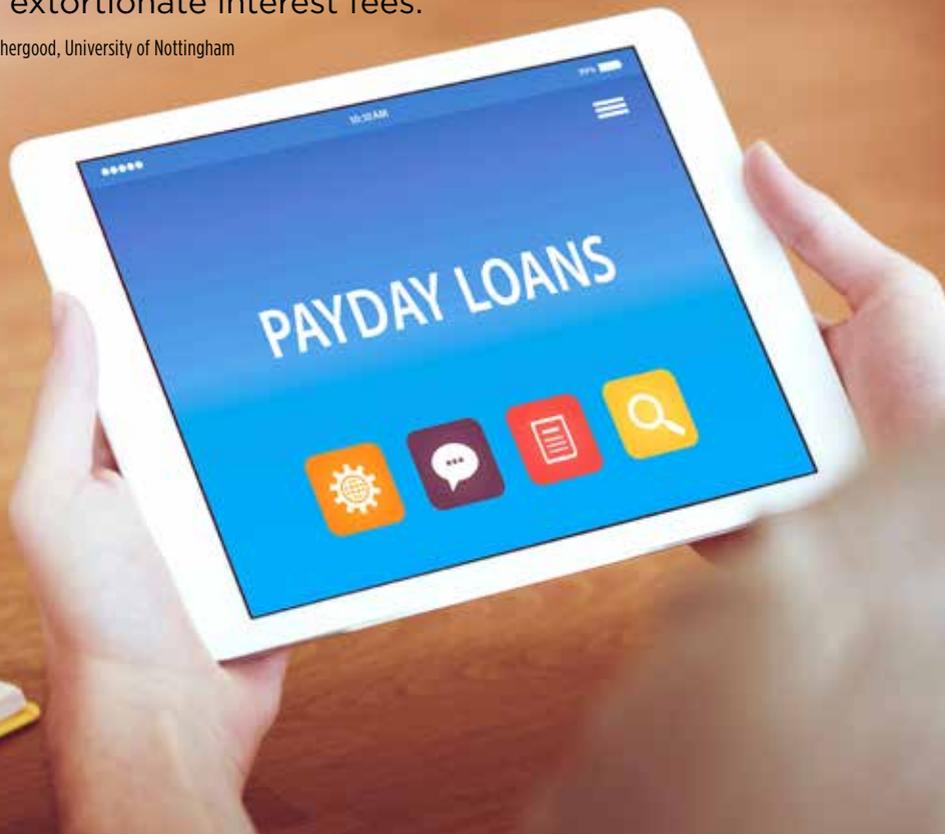


A Knowledge Transfer Partnership helped car retailer Benfield Motor Group to implement 'lean' techniques for their aftersales service, dividing the work into three separate service streams - **increasing annual sales turnover by £720,000.**

KTP Associate Melissa Whipp, Newcastle University Business School

Research for the Financial Conduct Authority led to a price cap for payday loans – protecting **more than four million payday loan customers** from extortionate interest fees.

Dr John Gathergood, University of Nottingham





The Cognitive Interview from child witnesses, based on research into eyewitness memory, forms part of the national training for all police officers and is advocated in **20 countries worldwide.**

Professor Amina Memon, Royal Holloway, University of London

Birmingham's inward investment strategy, based on business investment research, **attracted £150 million over two years, supported almost 10,000 new jobs**, and ranked Birmingham as Western Europe's highest-performing city in the *World's Most Competitive Cities Report*.

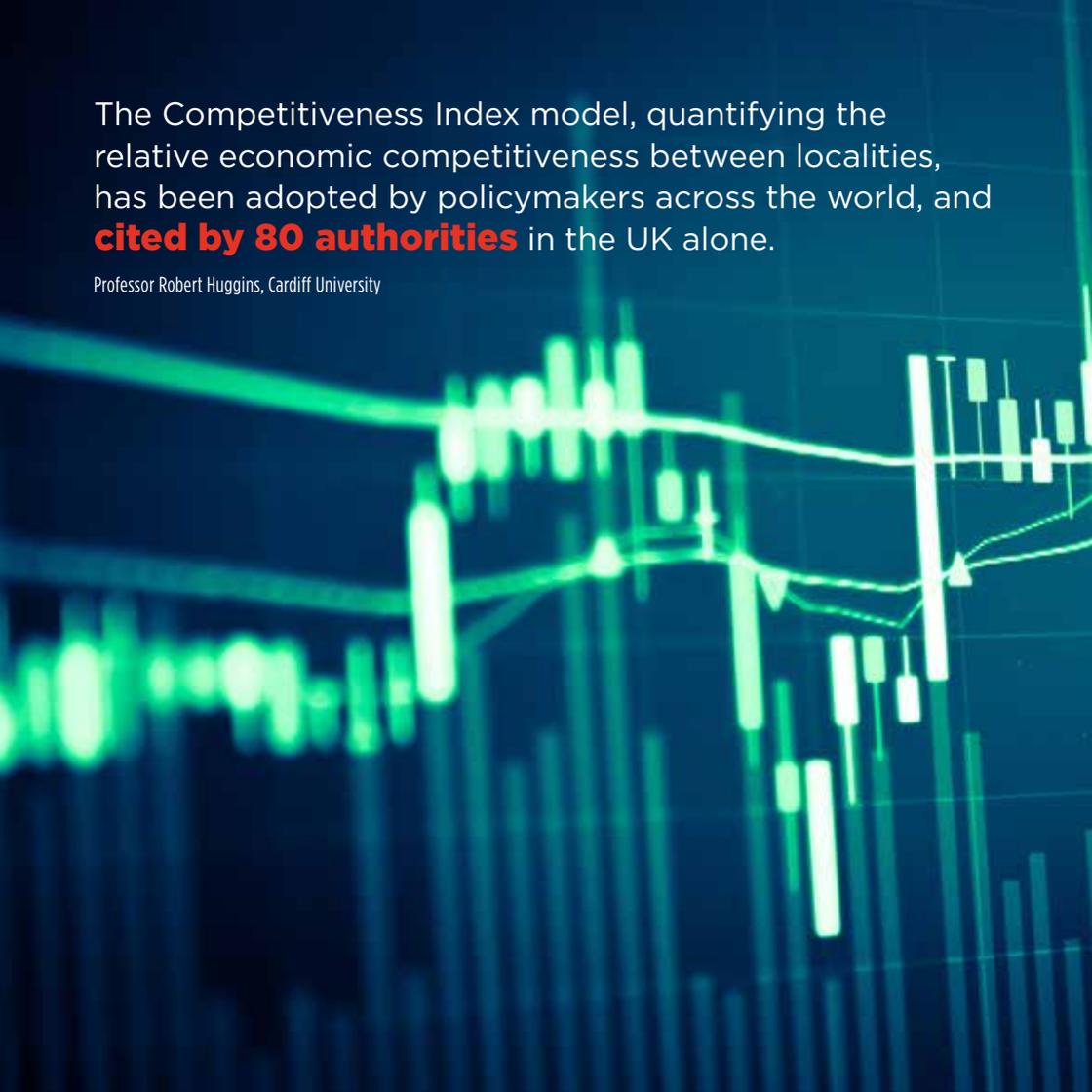
Professor Nigel Driffield, Warwick Business School





Research provided the EU with a new fuel poverty measurement tool highlighting the **54 million European households** struggling to heat and power their homes.

Dr Harriet Thomson, University of Birmingham



The Competitiveness Index model, quantifying the relative economic competitiveness between localities, has been adopted by policymakers across the world, and **cited by 80 authorities** in the UK alone.

Professor Robert Huggins, Cardiff University



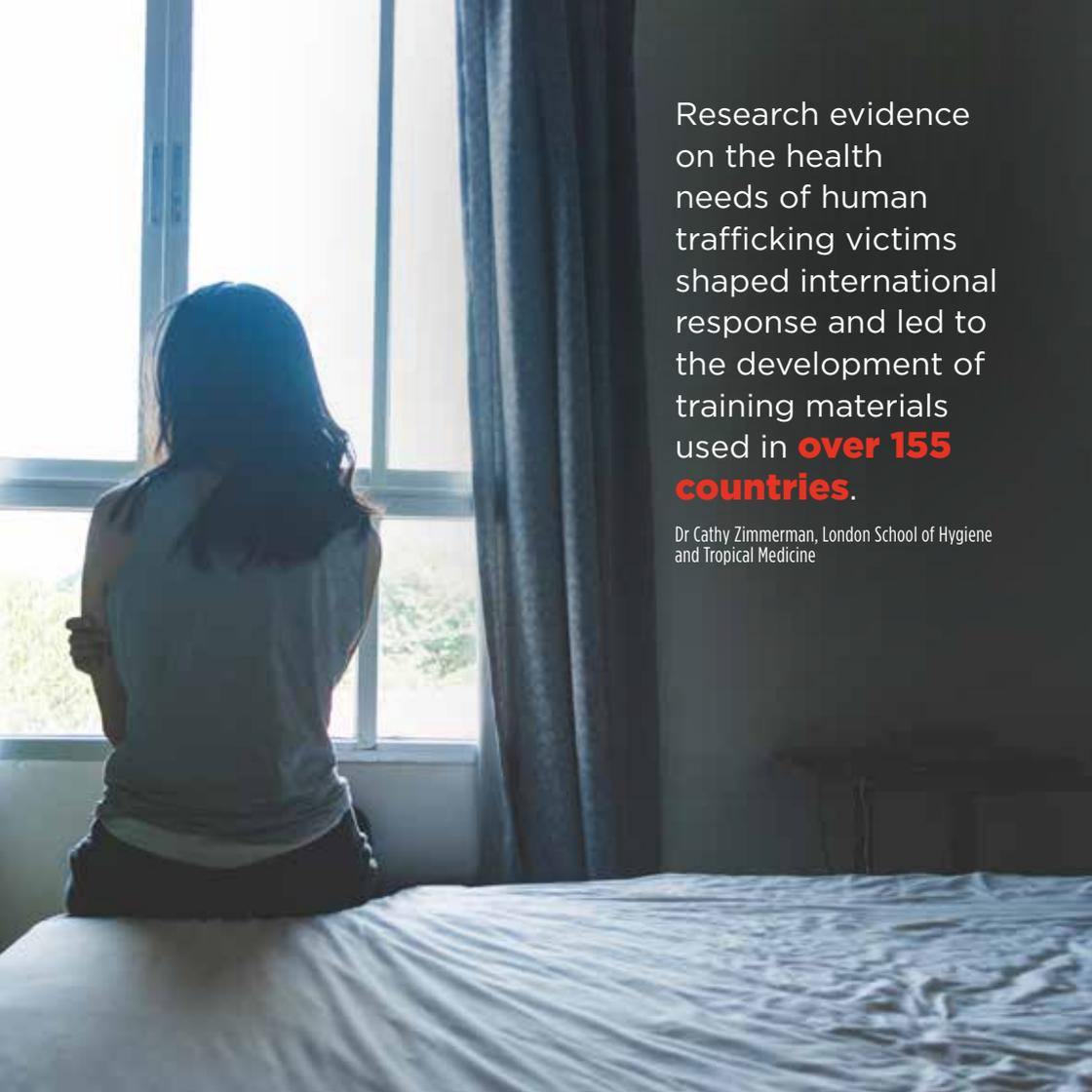
Research into ethically produced jewellery opened a new market in jewellery retail, led to a **£200,000 increase in annual turnover** for manufacturer Hockley Mint, and improved working conditions and the environmental impact of gold mining.

KTP Associate Rose Dunne, Birmingham City University



In China the Spatial Design Network Analysis software was used to evaluate the spatial design of a major growth corridor in the city of Huainan – safely allowing the accommodation of an **additional 1.2 million people** in the city.

Dr Crispin Cooper, Cardiff University; Alain Chiaradia, University of Hong Kong



Research evidence on the health needs of human trafficking victims shaped international response and led to the development of training materials used in **over 155 countries.**

Dr Cathy Zimmerman, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



The first comprehensive theory of deliberate firesetting led to new training for more than **450 multidisciplinary staff** offering treatment nationally across **more than 30 UK forensic hospitals.**

Professor Theresa Gannon, University of Kent

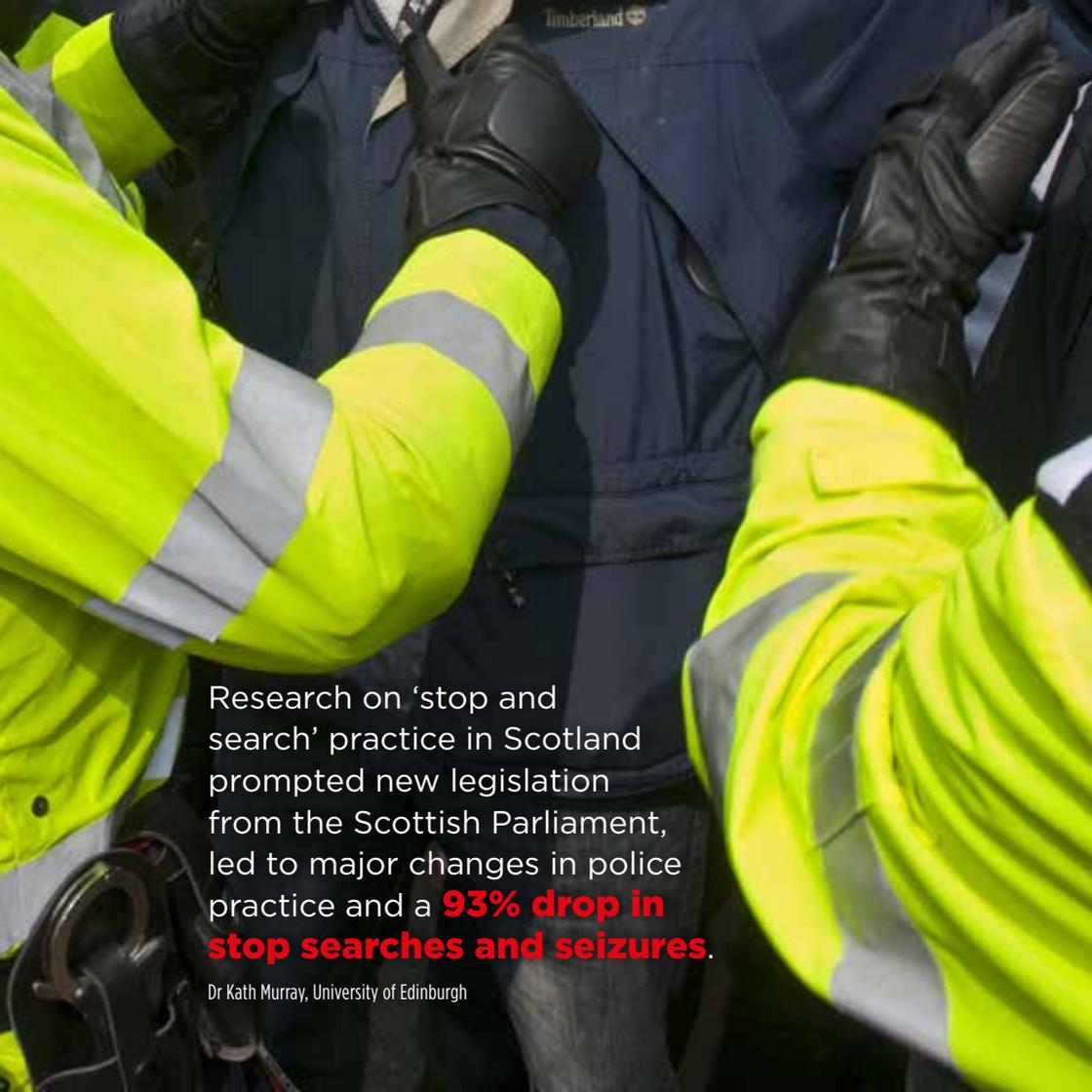


Researchers changed open data policy and created an online resource of over **10,000 public toilets** – helping the elderly, pregnant women and people with medical conditions.

Dr Jo-Anne Bichard and Gail Ramster,  
Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design

During the 2014 Ebola outbreak the Ebola Response Anthropology Platform, providing advice for communities and aid workers, was accessed by **more than 16,000 users**, provided pre-departure **training for 362 clinical personnel** in Sierra Leone, and shaped UK and international strategy.





Research on 'stop and search' practice in Scotland prompted new legislation from the Scottish Parliament, led to major changes in police practice and a **93% drop in stop searches and seizures.**

Dr Kath Murray, University of Edinburgh



Research into primary school children's reading comprehension underpinned the Inference Training programme, **used in more than 600 schools nationwide**, and LEE Comprensivamente, a programme **used by 900 teachers** in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil.

Professor Jane Oakhill, University of Sussex;  
Professor Kate Cain, Lancaster University



New leadership development programmes based on healthcare management research were **delivered to over 65 NHS Trusts**, with **over 700 senior clinicians and 300 NHS directors** participating in organisational change programmes.

Professor Ian Kirkpatrick, University of Leeds



**Over 60,000  
rural Kenyans**

have benefited from 'smart' hand pumps using mobile phone technology and remote monitoring, combined with a community-based payment model and local maintenance.

Dr Rob Hope, University of Oxford





## UK Research and Innovation

Find out more about us at [esrc.ukri.org](https://www.esrc.ukri.org)

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