THE CAMBRIDGE STATISTICS DISCUSSION GROUP
HAVE TO LEAVE BY 9PM OR CUSTODIAN (LUIS) EXTRA SHIFT CHARGES

Monday 3rd November 2025 7:00 for 7:30
Please note earlier start time
The Statistical Laboratory,
Centre for Mathematical Sciences,
Wilberforce Road, Cambridge, CB3 0WB

Benefits of data openness in a digital world

Sam Gilbert
Bennett Institute for Public Policy

Abstract: We are at a moment of extreme pessimism about data with news stories implicating social media and mobile phones in cyberespionage. To many this is a worrying state of affairs but are we worrying too much? In this talk I will argue that data openness and data-drive advertising are good things and are misunderstood. In particular data-driven advertising is not about controlling behaviour but involves targeting groups of people which brings economic benefits. Internet search data has been used to meet public health challenges such as providing insights into Zika and Ebola. I will argue we should be targeting the distribution of digital power rather than concerning ourselves with business models of particular companies.

Speaker: Sam Gilbert is an entrepreneur and researcher working at the intersection of politics and technology. An expert in data-driven marketing, Sam was Employee No.1 and Chief Marketing Officer at Bought By Many, the multi-award winning fintech ranked No. 13 in The Sunday Times TechTrack100. Previously, he was Head of Strategy and Development at Experian, and Head of Consumer Finance at Santander. He holds an MPhil with distinction in International Relations and Politics from the University of Cambridge, and a BA with first class honours in Modern History and English from the University of Oxford. He is the author of "Good Data: An Optimist's Guide to Our Digital Future".

Directions: The main entrance is reached from Clarkson Road by going along the footpath to the right of the Newton Institute, and turning left through the gatehouse towards the main building (Pavilion A), which has a glass front and a curved grassed roof. The main entrance is in the middle of the glass front. Coffee before the talk will be in the common room in Pavilion D, and the talk will be in Meeting Room 4 in Pavilion A. Free parking is available after 5pm on Clarkson and Wilberforce Roads.

Provisional Next Meetings (2025):
26th November – Riikka Hofmann (Faculty of Education) on '100 years of educational trials – no significant difference?'
3rd February 2026 – Nick Galwey (formerly GlaxoSmithKline) on 'Connecting the False Discovery Rate to shrunk estimates'.
March – Mihaela van der Schaar (Cambridge Centre for AI in Medicine) on 'Revolutionising healthcare: AI-driven breakthroughs in medicine and healthcare delivery'.
April – Daniela De Angelis (Biostatistics) on 'Real-time nowcasting and forecasting of COVID-19 dynamics in England'.
Supper: Some members eat regularly in Wetherspoons (St Andrew's Street) before each meeting at **5-15pm**. Feel free to join them.
Subscriptions: of 1 pound are now due for attending the 2025-2026 session.
Secretary: Peter Watson, MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, 15 Chaucer Road, Cambridge CB2 7EF; telephone 01223 769479; E-mail peter.watson@mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk.

Slides and .mp3 files of old talks: http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/people/peter.watson/csdg.html