

NIH's Social Sciences and Population Studies (SSPS) study section is changing!



The number of grant applications submitted to NIH and reviewed by the Social Sciences and Population Studies (SSPS) study section has significantly increased beyond the capacity of a single review panel. To handle the applications, we have created a second “mirror-image” study section and will begin running two panels named Social Science and Population Studies A & B (**SSPA & SSPB**) for applications submitted for the June and July 2012 deadlines. Both SSPA and SSPB will review applications covering the same scientific areas and all submitted applications will be randomly divided into one of the two groups. Each study section will have its own membership roster with similar types of expertise represented.

When will this start? Applications submitted for the June and July 2012 receipt dates (to be reviewed in September and October) and thereafter will be assigned to either SSPA or SSPB.

Which applications will this affect? This will affect applications that fall within the scientific scope of the current SSPS (see review guidelines below) including investigator initiated R01s and R21s. It also includes investigator initiated R03s assigned to the NIA (R03s assigned to NICHD are reviewed by the CHHD-W panel).

Who are the reviewers for SSPA and SSPB? Study section reviewers include roster members—individuals who agree to serve multi-year terms as a reviewer—and ad hoc or temporary reviewers. The current SSPS roster members will be divided across the two panels and additional members for each panel are being recruited from the scientific community. The specific rosters for SSPA and SSPB are going through the approval process now and will be announced late summer or early fall. Reviewers in SSPA and SSPB represent relevant scientific fields including demography, sociology, economics, social epidemiology, human development, developmental psychology, geography, and anthropology.

What study section should I request in my cover letter? If you want your application to be reviewed in one of the Social Science and Population Studies A and B study sections, you should request “SSPA or SSPB” in your cover letter.

Can I request that my application be reviewed specifically in SSPA or SSPB? SSPA and SSPB are being set up to cover the same scientific scope. Applications will be assigned to SSPA and SSPB without consideration of requests for a specific assignment for SSPA, or SSPB. There are a few exceptions including applications that involve SSPA or SSPB study section members or other rare situations that may determine which study section will do the review. Resubmissions of applications will be reviewed by the same study section which reviewed the original submission unless a conflict of interest or other factors prevent this assignment.

SSPS Working Group: We thank the following individuals from the research community and NIH who served on the working group that made these recommendations: Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Northwestern University; Eileen Crimmins, University of Southern California; Christine Himes, Syracuse University; David Lam, University of Michigan; Wendy Manning, Bowling Green State University; Greg Bloss, NIAAA; Rebecca Clark, NICHD; John Phillips, NIA; Karyl Swartz, CSR.

What types of research are reviewed in SSPA and SSPB? The Social Science and Population Studies (SSPA & SSPB) Study Sections review applications related to population processes, composition and distribution, their antecedents and consequences, and their inter-relationships with biological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, institutional, behavioral, developmental and biomedical factors and processes. This includes modeling, data collection and other studies of morbidity, mortality and health, population movement and distribution, reproduction, population aging and composition, economic factors, labor force and retirement, household and family structure, intergenerational relations, institutional structure, the genetic profiles of population members related to these variables, and biodemography in the U.S. and other countries. Most studies involve large population samples. Covered topics include:

- Morbidity, mortality and health over the life course, including health disparities, functioning and disability, studies of perinatal, infant, child, adult and elderly health.
- Reproductive health and behavior, including studies of pregnancy outcomes; contraceptive use and sexual behavior; fertility and infertility, birth spacing and timing; birth intentions; and family structure.
- Population movement; including migration within and across national boundaries.
- Population composition and changes in composition, such as population aging, household and family structure, economic status and inequality, and health status, and family relationships.
- Health and labor economics and policy, including intergenerational exchanges and bequests, employment, labor force and retirement; labor force transitions, income security of population segments such as children or elderly persons.
- Population and the environment.
- Patterns of risk behavior, including substance use, behavior problems, and obesity.

Who do I contact with questions?



Valerie Durrant, Ph.D.
Scientific Review Officer, SSPB
Valerie.durrant@nih.gov
(301)827-6390



Suzanne Ryan, Ph.D.
Scientific Review Officer, SSPA
Suzanne.Ryan@nih.gov
(301)435-1712

For more information on NIH peer review, study sections, and rosters see: www.csr.nih.gov