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## What is on a Demographer's Mind? : A Worldwide Survey

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### Abstract

**Background:** Over the years, the community of demographers has grown in numbers and research interests, and has become increasingly interdisciplinary. The question is whether this process of growth and diversity has led to a fragmented community of demographers.

**Objective:** We examine whether or not demographers are characterized by a high level of consensus in approach and outlook. We focus on two issues. The first relates to the level of consensus among demographers on what they perceive to be the most urgent population issues, and what their opinions are about population and fertility developments. The second issue focuses on the question of whether or not there is a common approach or research style among demographers.

**Methods:** We gain insight into the opinions and attitudes of 970 demographers on the basis of an internet survey among IUSSP members, carried out in 2009.

**Results:** There is a high level of consensus on what is considered the most important population issue: 'population aging'. With respect to population policy, demographers are greatly divided. There is, however, a high level of consensus on what makes a demographer successful: being highly empirical. Demography seems to be a well integrated discipline, as applied researchers take note of what pure researchers publish and vice versa. Demography has scientific leaders who form a unifying power within the discipline.

**Conclusions:** The core of the discipline of demography is to be found in an openness to insights from different disciplines, a commitment to data and empirical research, and well integrated spheres of applied and pure research.

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