

# WSS



## The Washington Statistical Society

SINCE 1926

### Save the Date!

## 2024 Washington Statistical Society President's Invited Talk Annual Awards Ceremony and Reception

**When:** Tuesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Event time and registration information to follow in formal announcement

**Where:** Jefferson Auditorium, USDA South Building  
1400 Independence Ave. (between 12th and 14th Streets)  
Smithsonian Metro Station (Blue, Orange, and Silver Lines)

## Responsibly Represent People in Data: Navigating Data Privacy Challenges in Public Policy



**Claire McKay Bowen** (she/her) is a senior fellow in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population and leads the Statistical Methods Group at the Urban Institute. Her research primarily focuses on developing technical and policy solutions to safely expand access to confidential data that advances evidence-based policy-making. She also has interest in improving science communication and integrating data equity into the data privacy process. In 2021, the Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies identified her as an emerging leader in statistics for her technical contributions and leadership to statistics and the field of data privacy and confidentiality. Further, she is a member of the Census Scientific Advisory Committee and several other data governance and data privacy committees as well as an adjunct professor at Stonehill College.

Bowen holds an Honors BS in mathematics and physics from Idaho State University and an MS and PhD in statistics from the University of Notre Dame. After completing her PhD, she worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory, where she investigated cosmic ray effects on supercomputers.

**Abstract:** At what point does the sacrifice to our personal information outweigh the public good? If public policymakers had access to our personal and confidential data, they could make more evidence-based, data-informed decisions that could accelerate economic recovery and improve healthcare resources distributions. However, access to personal data comes at a steep privacy cost for contributors, especially underrepresented groups. Revealing too much location information places people at risk such as empowering stalkers to track people more easily, but too little personal, location information will severely hinder the effectiveness of contact tracing of a contagious disease.

This talk will discuss the intricate data privacy challenges faced by the U.S. government and private sector in data collection and dissemination. It will use the various collaborations the Urban Institute has with government agencies and other organizations as examples, such as generating synthetic health services data and integrating data equity in statistical data privacy. This body of work aims to implement innovative statistical data privacy methods and uphold data governance principles, empowering researchers and policymakers to access and leverage data for the betterment of society while protecting individual privacy.

### **Discussant: Matt Williams (RTI International)**



For over a decade of federal service and thousands of hours of additional consulting and research, Matt Williams has sought to bridge disparate communities in the federal and international evidence-based landscape. Examples include connecting the survey research and Bayesian statistics communities, bringing optimization and advanced modeling into production of official statistics, developing a research agenda for privacy for survey statistics, teaming up with the evaluation community, and right-sizing solutions for developing countries. Since joining RTI in 2022, Dr. Williams has reached across disciplines to progress innovation initiatives and the

development of staff related to privacy, data modernization, and complex Bayesian models. Dr. Williams provides senior technical leadership on large-scale data collection and analysis programs. Matt succeeds through a combination of excellence in research, management of technical operations, and interpersonal relationships.