

Wellington Statistics Group (WSG) Report, 2025

The Wellington Statistics Group did not host many events during 2025, although several members were active in a number of ways. The WSG Convener, **John Haywood**, has been kept busy in the first year of his two-year term as President of the New Zealand Statistical Association; you can read more about those activities in the NZSA President's Report.

Along with seminars from local statisticians at VUW, there were a number of international visitors to Wellington during 2025, who gave statistics presentations. Over Easter we hosted the **NZSA's 2025 Visiting Lecturer, Dr Matt Beckman** from Penn State University, USA. As part of his tour of New Zealand universities, Matt gave a presentation at VUW on 23 April, *Evaluating natural language processing (NLP) tools designed to assist instructors with formative assessment for large-enrollment STEM classes*.

Prof Carl Scarrott from University of Galway, Ireland visited John Haywood briefly during August. Carl gave a presentation on 13 August, *Bayes-ically fair: A Bayesian Ranking of Olympic Performances*. Carl's talk was very popular with the local audience since, with the proposed Bayesian ranking scheme that he presented, NZ's Olympic Games performance was number one in the world! The work by Carl and his co-authors uses shrinkage to provide a more stable per-capita type ranking than a simple count of medals won, which is unduly influenced by population size.

The **2025 VUW Shayle Searle Fellow** was **Prof Antonio Loureiro** from Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Prof Loureiro visited VUW for two weeks, working with Alejandro Frery and his lab of postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers. On 8 September Antonio gave a fascinating presentation, *On the Design of Real-Time Mobility Foundation Models*, which highlighted a disparate range of interesting and challenging research problems, linked under the overarching theme of mobility analytics.

Dr Matteo Ventura from University of Brescia, Italy spent almost six weeks in Wellington from mid-September, hosted by Ivy Liu and Richard Arnold. During his visit Matteo gave a seminar on *Clustering rating data within the CUB framework: a case study on sustainability for Made in Italy products*. Our final international visiting statistics speaker in 2025 was **Prof Xiaowen Zhou**, Concordia University, Canada. Prof Zhou was hosted in Wellington by Budhi Surya and he shared with us his insights into *Threshold Brownian Motion* on 19 November.

A full listing of the VUW seminars from 2025 is available at the following webpage:

<https://sms.wgtn.ac.nz/cgi-bin/seminars?keyword=&datefrom=2025-01-01&dateto=&groupMATH=Y&groupSTOR=Y&searched=Y>

Congratulations to WSG member and current Statistics PhD student **Adam Glucksman** on winning the Stats NZ Jacoby Prize for 2025 at the biennial New Zealand Population Conference (photo below, Adam is on the right). The prize is awarded once every two years by the Population Association of New Zealand and Adam's winning paper was based on his honours thesis, written under the supervision of Phil Morrison, Louise McMillan and Ivy Liu. The paper will be published in the forthcoming New Zealand Population Review Vol 51.



Congratulations also to WSG member and current NZSA Secretary **Ivy Liu**, who was promoted to Professor at the start of the year. In recognition of that promotion Ivy delivered her public, inaugural lecture, *The beauty of uncertainty* on 4 September. Below is a photo of Ivy prior to her lecture, sandwiched between Prof Nicola Nelson, the Dean of Science and Engineering, and Prof Nic Smith, the VUW Vice-Chancellor.



Anyone who wants to watch Ivy's inaugural lecture can access the recording here:

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/about/our-story/news-events/public-lecture-series/public-lecture-series-events/the-beauty-of-uncertainty>

Financially WSG remains in a healthy position, and we are grateful to all the WSG past and current sponsors: Victoria University of Wellington, Statistics New Zealand, the Ministry of Social Development and Statistics Research Associates Ltd.

John Haywood

WSG Convener

06 December 2025