At the Center for Economic and Social Research (CESR), we explore how people around the world live. Our in-depth, evidence-based research and analysis deepen the understanding of human behavior in a wide range of contexts. We examine how individuals think, interact, age, invest and make other important decisions in an era increasingly driven by technology, globalization and fierce competition for diminishing resources.

Housed within the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, CESR draws upon interdisciplinary expertise and resources from across the university and beyond. Our work aims to enhance social welfare by informing and influencing policymaking across the public and private sectors. Along the way, our expert faculty and research fellows are revolutionizing how innovative technologies are used in social science and economic inquiry, while bolstering our commitment to making the world a better place.
CESR unites scientists, researchers and scholars from a wide range of fields, locations and global perspectives to address financial and health disparities, social inequality and the needs of children, families and elders. We break down intellectual boundaries and geographic borders to fuel knowledge, raise awareness and inform policymaking along the spectrum of factors driving human behavior. Our data-driven research addresses such vital issues as:

**Aging**
We study the impact on healthcare, social services and labor supply as the proportion of older people grows globally and more people retire.

**Children and Families**
We explore the causes and consequences of health, educational and developmental factors on young people and family wellbeing.

**Development Economics**
We define theories and methods for creating public and private initiatives to achieve lasting benefits in developing nations.

**Financial Decision-Making**
We use hard data, creative analysis and behavioral economics to help people make financial choices that will better serve them as they age.

**Inequality**
We examine the impact of geography, gender, age, disability, and race and ethnic minority status on individual health and wealth, as well as the causes of disparities between socioeconomic and racial groups.

**Mobile Health**
We employ and develop intelligent technologies related to virtual reality and interactivity to enhance physical wellbeing around the world.

**Self-Reporting**
We refine and seek new tools to foster the accuracy and precision of information gleaned from the public’s self-reported behavior.

**Subjective Wellbeing**
We survey people about their wellbeing and analyze their responses to evaluate which policies make people better off.
CESR unites leading economists, software developers, psychologists, demographers, sociologists and other specialists to conduct research that informs practical policies for promoting social welfare. Our interdisciplinary approach spans expertise from anthropology to big data and statistics to capture the realities of 21st century life around the globe, so that we can find ways to improve it. CESR also leverages the advantages of being part of the University of Southern California — a world-class institution that fuses artistic creativity with scientific discovery. Our partnerships within USC include the Institute for Creative Technologies, the Keck School of Medicine, the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, the Spatial Sciences Institute and the Rossier School of Education. Our collaborations also extend worldwide, as we continue combining new technologies with profound social insights to help people shift their behavior to more positive actions — no matter where they live.

CESR STAFF BY DISCIPLINE

- Programmers
- Psychologists
- Economists
- Sociologists
- Research Assistants
- Other Specializations
With vast experience in programming, application development, and survey design and hosting, CESR researchers deploy next-generation devices to assemble comprehensive, in-the-moment data collections to account for the vast range of experiences about what it means to live and work in the 21st century. These include:

- Global internet panels, in which participants answer surveys online — wherever they are and whenever they wish to participate
- Wearable reporting devices, such as accelerometers that can relay real-time responses
- Global positioning systems
- Quick Response barcodes
- Brain-activity imaging and other medical tests
- Smartphones, palmtop devices and tablets

Using these and other methods, we can form instant focus groups or create population-representative samples in the blink of a text message — resulting in vastly superior data about people’s thoughts, actions and interactions with each other and their world.

**OUR SURVEY SOFTWARE:**

CESR can provide assistance for survey hosting, design and management utilizing our open source software, NubiS. CESR programmers have developed this tool for all aspects of data collection, including in-person, computer-assisted, and telephone studies, from survey design to data reporting. A purpose-built Sample Management System can accommodate all aspects of your respondent database, allowing for contact records, response overview, and interviewer management. NubiS runs on any server, PC, laptop, netbook, tablet or smartphone and supports interviews in all languages.

**TIMES DAYBREAK POLL**

Part of CESR’s Understanding America Study and conducted in partnership with The Los Angeles Times, the Daybreak Poll was one of very few to predict the winner of the presidential election. The poll’s unique methodology focuses on respondents’ intensity of commitment to a candidate, ranking their certainty of choice on a scale of 0 to 100. The Daybreak Poll is also notable for making its raw data sets available to the public. During the election, each day’s updated results could be downloaded from our poll’s dedicated datasite.

The Understanding America Study team developed another tool, NubiS, that facilitates data gathering by traditional methods — from self-reporting to face-to-face, telephone or online interviewing — but also can collect continuous information from smartphones, tablets and other external devices such as accelerometers, GPS, blood pressure meters and other biomedical equipment.
CESR researchers helped analyze the genomic and survey data of nearly 300,000 individuals and found three genetic variants that influence our sense of wellbeing. Investigators also found two genetic variants associated with depressive symptoms, based on an analysis of nearly 180,000 people, and 11 genetic variants associated with neuroticism, based on an analysis of 170,000 people. The depression results were replicated through an analysis of another sample of nearly 370,000 people.

**GENETICS AND EDUCATION**

A CESR faculty member led an international group that conducted one of the largest-ever genetic studies identifying genetic variants associated with the level of formal education that individuals complete. The research found 74 genetic variants that (together with environmental factors) influence cognitive abilities and personality traits that in turn affect the number of years one spends in school.

**FOSTERING ADVANCES ACROSS DISCIPLINES**

Our dedicated centers and programs foster the work not only of CESR faculty and fellows but also support the efforts of peers and organizations around the globe.
A free public resource developed and maintained by CESR’s Global Aging, Health and Policy program, the Gateway to Global Aging Data (g2aging.org) provides a massive online platform for population survey data on aging, health and retirement around the world. This site offers a digital library of survey questions, a search engine for finding comparable questions across surveys, and harmonized data for analysis and comparisons across nations.

Also accessible through the Gateway is the vast, invaluable metadata from a family of Health and Retirement Studies (HRS) around the world. HRS is one of the largest and most ambitious population surveys ever undertaken, and its scientific success — along with rising concerns over global aging — has led to the development of sister studies in more than 30 countries around the world, including England, Mexico, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, China, India, South Africa and 20+ European nations. This multidisciplinary, multi-purpose study provides nearly endless opportunities to better understand how we age through its longitudinal survey data on health, cognition, work and retirement, pensions, wealth and savings, disability, families, social networks and wellbeing. The Gateway, which recently expanded to collect include biological markers and environmental data, lowers the barriers to conducting longitudinal and cross-country research, benefiting the larger research community.
CESR researchers are continuously developing new projects to keep up with the rapid pace of global changes in the 21st century. In just one year, our work included studying baby bathtime practices around the world, exploring uses for genome economics, learning how Hispanics regard the Social Security system, finding what affects choices made by elderly women in the Asian Pacific, launching a household panel in India, starting a database of police homicide statistics, studying inclusiveness in Finland’s education system, and using the Understanding America Study to gauge opinions surrounding the 2016 presidential election.
DISSEMINATING RESULTS

In addition to publishing in major journals, our faculty members share their impactful research in print and online through CESR Reports and the CESR-Schaeffer Working Paper Series in partnership with the USC Schaeffer Center, as well as our blog, “The Evidence Base.” We have also made available all data collected in the Understanding America Study for researcher download at uasdata.usc.edu.

CESR hosts frequent conferences, seminars and conversations that attract leading social and economic scientists from around the globe, increasing the flow of information through fertile exchanges of ideas and viewpoints.

FRONTIERS OF BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS
CESR partnered with the National University of Singapore and the Civil Service College of Singapore to hold Frontiers of Behavioral Economics, a conference advancing the potential of this rapidly growing area of microeconomics. While behavioral economics is used throughout America and Europe, its ideas and interventions only recently are gaining traction in Asia. So, with a particular focus on the Asia Pacific region, some of the world’s foremost thinkers and decision-makers gathered to share insights and interventions encompassing such domains as health, finance and the environment in addressing the challenges brought about by rapid demographic, epidemiological and social change. A follow up conference is being planned.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING APPROACH TO ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEACHING AND LEARNING
CESR researchers are currently examining the effectiveness of Knowledge in Action (KIA), a project-based learning approach to teaching Advanced Placement (AP) courses. This randomized controlled trial field experiment in 75 schools across five large U.S. school districts is investigating teachers’ KIA implementation and the impacts of KIA on students’ academic performance as measured by AP exam-taking and scores, critical thinking and problem solving skills as measured by the College and Work Readiness Assessment, and intra- and interpersonal skills and civic engagement as measured by a student survey.

HARMONIZING CROSS-NATIONAL STUDIES OF AGING
A CESR Report compared studies of how much households around the world spend on food, education, healthcare, automobiles, clothing and other items, reconciling the findings and varying methodologies to make future international research easier and less time-consuming.

IMPROVING CHILDREN’S FOOD CHOICES AT SCHOOL
CESR researchers examined the effectiveness of low-cost “nudges” in combating childhood obesity. Their field experiment looked at the healthiness of milk choices made at school by more than 1,400 children. The interventions tested were based on the behavioral theories of reciprocity and theories of self-control. Nearly two-thirds of children made a goal to select the healthier milk, and almost 90 percent of those followed through.

BUILDING THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR GLOBAL POLICY ON CHILDHOOD VACCINES
CESR researchers worked with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop a conceptual framework and research agenda for assessing the broader economic impact of childhood vaccination. By modeling the impact and cost-effectiveness of pneumococcal conjugate vaccination globally and in low-income countries for WHO and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, their work helps to reduce the burden of streptococcus pneumonia, which leads to an estimated half a million deaths in children under 5 years old worldwide every year.
CESR maintains offices in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., but our collaborations span the nation and the globe. They include such organizations as:

- Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
- All India Institute of Medical Sciences
- Arizona State University
- Asian Development Bank
- Broad Institute
- California Institute of Technology
- Charles University, Prague
- Civil Service College Singapore
- Copenhagen Business School
- Cornell University
- Dartmouth College
- Duke University
- Emory University
- Erasmus University
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
- Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- FINRA Investor Education Foundation
- Free University Amsterdam
- George Lucas Educational Foundation
- George Washington University
- Gibson Consulting Group
- Harvard University
- Hong Kong University of Science & Technology
- India Institute of Population Science
- Indian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- Institute for Financial Management and Research
- Inter-American Development Bank: IDB
- Karolinska Institute
- London School of Economics
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- National Bureau of Economic Research
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
- National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, India
- National Institute on Aging
- National Science Foundation
- National University Singapore
- Naval Health Research Center
- New York University
- Peking University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Princeton University
- RAND Corporation
- Renmin University in China
- Scripps Research Institute
- Seoul National University
- Social Security Administration
- Stanford University
- Stony Brook University
- Swiss Science Foundation
- The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- Tilburg University
- Trinity College Dublin
- Tsao Foundation
- U.S. Army
- Universidad de los Andes
- University College London
- University of Arizona
- University of Arkansas
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, San Francisco
- University of Chicago
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Exeter
- University of Groningen
- University of Helsinki
- University of Illinois
- University of Lausanne
- University of Manchester
- University of Michigan
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Quebec, Montreal
- University of Rome Tor Vergata
- University of Sydney
- University of Tokyo
- University of Trento, Italy
- University of Virginia
- University of Zurich
- USDA
- World Bank
- World Health Organization