SAMUEL H. PRESTON
SAMUEL A. STOUFFER FELLOW

SAMUEL H. PRESTON, the Frederick J. Warren Professor of Demography in the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, has been recognized as one of the world's leading demographers. His breakthrough development of the "variable-r" method, based upon age-specific growth rates of a population, changed the way demographers examine populations. Previously, population models were limited to unchanging birth and death rates. Preston's development of variable-r methods, in which "r" represents a population's age-specific growth rates, provided a way for demographers to use the formulas of basic stable population theory to examine non-stable populations. His work has extended beyond the development of mathematical and statistical tools to applying those tools to examining population change and contributing to public policy. In the 1970s, he produced a landmark study of cigarette smoking and mortality patterns. A decade later he was the first to show that quality of life for populations differed by age group, notably, that the well-being of America's older population was improving while that of the younger population was deteriorating. His findings were frequently cited by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in proposing increased social services for children. Preston can also be credited with debunking the belief that rapid population growth created impoverished countries. Currently his work focuses on mortality among different populations, such as infants and children, the elderly, late nineteenth century Americans, captive animals, and soldiers in the Iraq War.

Preston is the author or editor of 16 books and has published more than 140 articles on topics from mortality, health, and aging, to urbanization, race and ethnicity, female labor force participation, fertility, occupational mobility, marriage and divorce, and population and the environment. He currently chairs committees at the National Research Council addressed to the National Children's Study and to international divergences in longevity. In 2006, he received the Mindel Sheps Award for Mathematical Demography and Demographic Methodology by the Population Association of America.