A Brief Introduction to Programming with R

MEcon/MIQEF Introductory Week

Erik Senn & Jeremia Stalder

2025-09-05

Part I: Background / Tools

Schedule

Morning Sessions

09:15 - 10:00

Introduction, Background, Tools

10:00 - 10:15

Break, support with installations

10:15 - 11:00

Exercises, First steps with R

11:00 - 11:15

Break, Q&A

11:15 - 12:00

First steps with R, Concepts

Afternoon Sessions

12:00 - 13:15

Lunch (individually)

13:15 - 14:00

Exercises

14:00 - 14:15

Break, Q&A

14:15 - 15:00

Working with Data

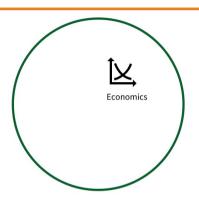
Welcome

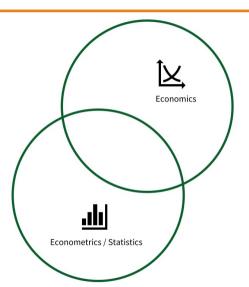
- 1. Fire up your notebooks!
- 2. Download (or clone) the course materials
 - GitHub Repository
 - Course slides available online

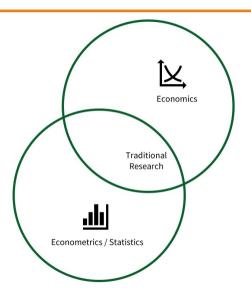
Why learn to program (now)?

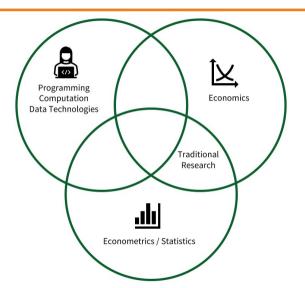
Background: Technological change

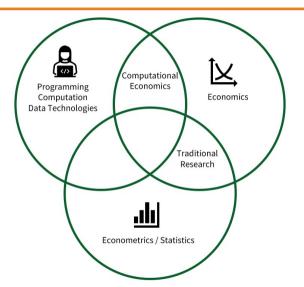
- Computers have become omnipresent
- Data is one of the world's most valuable resources
- Al and machine learning are reshaping every business and industry

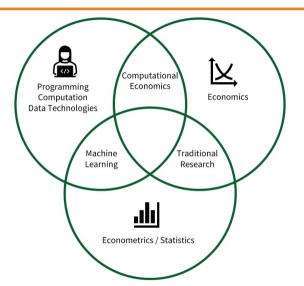














Why R?

A data language

- Widely used in data science jobs
- Particularly adapted to program with data
- Originally designed for statistical analysis
- Competing with Python as the top data science language



• Relatively easy to learn

- Relatively easy to learn
- Extensive free resources:

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 - DataCamp: Introduction to R

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 - RStudio Cheatsheets

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- Extensive free resources:
 - DataCamp: Introduction to R
 - RStudio Cheatsheets
 - Stack Overflow

The Tools



R is the programming language.

You can download R from: https://cran.r-project.org/

RStudio

RStudio is the integrated development environment (IDE).

You can download RStudio from: https://www.rstudio.com/

RStudio Cloud

RStudio Cloud lets you use RStudio without a local installation

You can use RStudio Cloud by registering here: https://rstudio.cloud

Exercises

Exercise A: Setting up a Working Environment

- 1. Open RStudio and navigate to your desired working folder
- 2. Create a new folder called r course
- 3. Set it as your working directory
- 4. Create subfolders: data and code
- 5. Create a new R Project in the r course folder

Exercise B: R Scripts

1. In the R console, type:

```
print("Hello world")
```

- 2. Create a new R script: File > New File > R Script
- 3. Type the same code in the script and run it

Part II: First Steps and Basic

Concepts

First Steps in R

Variables and Vectors

a <- 2

а

[1] 2

Working with Vectors

R easily allows to work with **vectors** of data!

```
Andy Betty Claire Daniel Eva
10 22 33 22 40
```

Indexing

We can access **single** (or **multiple**) elements of a vector:

```
a[3]  # Access the 3rd element

Claire
    33

a[3:5]  # Access the 3rd to 5th elements

Claire Daniel    Eva
    33    22    40

a["Claire"]  # Access by name
```

Claire

Inspecting variables

```
class(a) # Display the class
[1] "numeric"
str(a) # Display the structure

Named num [1:5] 10 22 33 22 40
- attr(*, "names")= chr [1:5] "Andy" "Betty" "Claire" "Daniel" ...
```

Math Operators

Basic operators:

- +:+
- -: -
- ×:*
- ÷:/

More operators:

- a^n : a^n
- \sqrt{a} : sqrt(a)
- $\ln a : \log(a)$
- e^n : exp(n)

Basic Programming Concepts

Loops

- Repeatedly execute a sequence of commands
- For a known or unknown number of iterations
 - o for-loop: number of iterations typically known
 - o while-loop: iterate until a condition is met

for-loops in R

Γ1] 5

```
n_iter <- 5  # Define number of iterations
# Specify the loop
for (i in 1:n_iter) {
    print(i) # Print the number 'i'
}

[1] 1
[1] 2
[1] 3
[1] 4</pre>
```

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for-loops: Summing numbers

[1] 332

```
numbers <- c(72, 42, 150, 13, 36, 19)
total_sum <- 0  # Initialize sum

# Specify the loop
for (n in numbers) {
    total_sum <- total_sum + n
}
total_sum</pre>
```

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Nested for-loops

```
n_iter_inner <- 100</pre>
n iter outer <- 500
# Start outer loop
for (i in 1:n iter outer) {
    # Code for outer loop
    # Start inner loop
    for (j in 1:n iter inner) {
        # Code for inner loop
```

How many iterations does this combination amount to?

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while-loops in R

```
# Instantiate starting value
total <- 0

# Loop while the condition is TRUE
while (total <= 10) {
   total <- total + 3.14
}
total</pre>
```

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Booleans and Logical Statements

```
2 + 2 == 4  # Is 2+2 equal to 4?

[1] TRUE

3 + 3 == 7  # Is 3+3 equal to 7?

[1] FALSE

4 != 7  # Is 4 not equal to 7?

[1] TRUE
```

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Control Flow with Booleans

```
condition <- TRUE

if (condition) {
    print("The condition is true!")
} else {
    print("The condition is false!")
}</pre>
```

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R Functions

[1] 32

- Functions take parameter values as input, process these values, and return results
- Many functions are provided with R
- Additional functions via packages

```
numbers <- c(13, 25, 39, 881)
mean(numbers)  # Compute the mean

[1] 240
sd(numbers)  # Standard deviation

[1] 428
median(numbers)  # Median</pre>
```

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Creating Custom Functions

[1] 240

```
# Define custom mean function
my mean <- function(x) {</pre>
    x bar <- sum(x) / length(x)
    return(x bar)
# Test the function
my_mean(numbers)
Γ1] 240
mean(numbers) # Compare with built-in
```

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Data Structures and Indices

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Vectors and Lists

```
# Integer vector
integer_vector <- 9:20</pre>
integer_vector[2] # Second element
[1] 10
integer vector[2:5] # Second to fifth
[1] 10 11 12 13
# String vector
string_vector <- c("a", "b", "c")</pre>
string_vector[-3] # All except third
[1] "a" "b"
```

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Lists

Lists can contain different types of elements:

```
# Create a list
my_list <- list(</pre>
    numbers = integer_vector,
    letters = string_vector,
    condition = TRUE
str(my_list)
List of 3
 $ numbers : int [1:12] 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 ...
 $ letters : chr [1:3] "a" "b" "c"
 $ condition: logi TRUE
```

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Accessing List Elements

[1] 9 10 11

```
# Access by name
my_list$numbers[1:3]

[1] 9 10 11
my_list[["letters"]]

[1] "a" "b" "c"
# Access by index
my_list[[1]][1:3]
```

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Matrices

```
# Create a matrix
my_matrix <- matrix(integer_vector, nrow = 4)</pre>
my matrix
    [,1] [,2] [,3]
[1,] 9 13 17
[2,] 10 14 18
[3,] 11 15 19
[4,] 12 16 20
my_matrix[2,] # Second row
[1] 10 14 18
my matrix[, 1:2]  # First two columns
    [,1] [,2]
[1,] 9 13
[2,] 10 14
```

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15

Data Frames

```
# Create a dataframe
my_df <- data.frame(
    Name = c("Alice", "Betty", "Claire"),
    Age = c(20, 30, 45)
)
my_df</pre>
```

| Name | Age |
|--------|-----|
| Alice | 20 |
| Betty | 30 |
| Claire | 45 |
| | |

```
my_df$Age  # Access column

[1] 20 30 45

my_df[2,]  # Second row
```

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Exercises

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Exercise A: Write a Sum Function

Write a function that takes a **numeric vector** as input and returns the **sum** of the vector's elements.

```
my_sum <- function(x) {
    # Your code here
}</pre>
```

Test by comparing with built-in sum() function.

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Exercise B: Robustness and Warnings

Test your my_sum() function with:

Add error checking to make the function robust.

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Exercise C: Standard Deviation Function

Implement a function to compute the standard deviation:

$$\mathrm{SD} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N-1}\sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$$

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Exercise D: Standard Error Function

Building on Exercise C, implement:

$$\mathrm{SE}_{\bar{x}} = \frac{\mathrm{SD}}{\sqrt{N}}$$

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Exercise E: T-test

Implement a **one-sample t-test** function:

$$t = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu_0}{\mathrm{SE}_{\bar{x}}}$$

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Exercise F: Fibonacci Sequence

Generate the first 30 Fibonacci numbers where:

•
$$F_0 = 0, F_1 = 1$$

•
$$F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$$
 for $n > 1$

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Exercise G: Multiples of 3 and 5 (*)

Write a function that computes the sum of all **multiples of 3 or 5** up to a number N.

Hint: Multiples of both 3 and 5 should only be added once!

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Exercise H: Prime numbers (*)

Write a function that computes the sum of all **prime numbers** up to a number N.

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Part III: Working with Data

Loading/Importing Data

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Loading built-in R data sets

```
# Load built-in dataset
data(swiss)

# Check if loaded
class(swiss)
```

[1] "data.frame"

The data() function loads built-in R datasets into your environment.

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Inspect the data structure

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First few rows of the data

head(swiss, 4)

| | Fertility | Agriculture | Examination | Education | Catholic | Infant.Mortality |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| Courtelary | 80.2 | 17.0 | 15 | 12 | 9.96 | 22.2 |
| Delemont | 83.1 | 45.1 | 6 | 9 | 84.84 | 22.2 |
| Franches-Mnt | 92.5 | 39.7 | 5 | 5 | 93.40 | 20.2 |
| Moutier | 85.8 | 36.5 | 12 | 7 | 33.77 | 20.3 |

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Comma Separated Values (CSV)

Example of **CSV format**:

```
"","Fertility","Agriculture","Examination",...
"Courtelary",80.2,17,15,...
"Delemont",83.1,45.1,6,...
```

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Importing data from different sources

```
# CSV files
swiss_csv <- read.csv("./data/swiss.csv")

# Excel files (requires readxl)
library(readxl)
swiss_excel <- read_excel("./data/swiss.xlsx")

# SPSS files (requires haven)
library(haven)
swiss_spss <- read_spss("./data/swiss.sav")</pre>
```

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Introduction to the Tidyverse

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What is the Tidyverse?

To install and load:

```
install.packages("tidyverse")
library(tidyverse)
```

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The Pipe Operator |>

Transform nested functions into readable pipelines:

```
# Traditional approach
head(select(swiss, Fertility, Education), 3)
```

| | Fertility | Education |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Courtelary | 80.2 | 12 |
| Delemont | 83.1 | 9 |
| Franches-Mnt | 92.5 | 5 |

```
# With pipe operator
swiss |>
  select(Fertility, Education) |>
  head(3)
```

| Erik Senn & Jeremia Stalder | Courtelary | 80 2 | 12 | 59 / |
|-----------------------------|------------|------|----|------|

Fertility

Education

Select columns with select()

```
# Select specific columns
swiss |>
  select(Fertility, Education, Catholic) |>
  head(3)
```

| | Fertility | Education | Catholic |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Courtelary | 80.2 | 12 | 9.96 |
| Delemont | 83.1 | 9 | 84.84 |
| Franches-Mnt | 92.5 | 5 | 93.40 |

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Select columns - Advanced patterns

```
# Select by pattern
swiss |>
select(starts_with("E"), contains("Mort")) |>
head(3)
```

| | Examination | Education | Infant.Mortality |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|------------------|
| Courtelary | 15 | 12 | 22.2 |
| Delemont | 6 | 9 | 22.2 |
| Franches-Mnt | 5 | 5 | 20.2 |

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Filter rows with filter()

```
# Keep rows meeting conditions
swiss |>
  filter(Education > 20) |>
  select(Fertility, Education, Catholic) |>
  head()
```

| | Fertility | Education | Catholic |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Lausanne | 55.7 | 28 | 12.1 |
| Neuchatel | 64.4 | 32 | 16.9 |
| V. De Geneve | 35.0 | 53 | 42.3 |
| Rive Droite | 44.7 | 29 | 50.4 |
| Rive Gauche | 42.8 | 29 | 58.3 |

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Create new variables with mutate()

| | Education | High_Education | Fertility | Fert_per_100 |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Courtelary | 12 | FALSE | 80.2 | 0.802 |
| Delemont | 9 | FALSE | 83.1 | 0.831 |
| Franches-Mnt | 5 | FALSE | 92.5 | 0.925 |

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Arrange rows with arrange()

```
swiss |>
  arrange(desc(Education)) |>
  select(Education, Examination) |>
  head(4)
```

| Education | Examination |
|-----------|----------------|
| 53 | 37 |
| 32 | 35 |
| 29 | 16 |
| 29 | 22 |
| | 53 32 29 |

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Summarize data with summarize()

```
swiss |>
summarize(
   mean_edu = mean(Education),
   sd_edu = sd(Education),
   median_fert = median(Fertility),
   n = n()
)
```

| mean_edu | sd_edu | median_fert | r |
|----------|--------|-------------|----|
| 11 | 9.62 | 70.4 | 47 |

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Group operations with group_by()

```
# Add Religion variable
swiss <- swiss |>
 mutate(Religion = ifelse(Catholic > 50,
                           'Catholic',
                           'Protestant'))
# Group and summarize
swiss |>
 group by (Religion) |>
  summarize(
    mean education = mean(Education),
    mean_fertility = mean(Fertility),
    count = n()
```

| Religion | mean_education | mean_fertility | count |
|------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| Catholic | 9.11 | 76.5 | 18 |
| Protestant | 12.14 | 66.2 | 29 |

Combining multiple operations

```
swiss |>
  filter(Agriculture < 50) |>
  group_by(Religion) |>
  summarize(
   avg_exam = mean(Examination),
   n = n(),
   .groups = "drop"
) |>
  arrange(desc(avg_exam))
```

| Religion | avg_exam | r |
|------------|----------|----|
| Protestant | 23.1 | 15 |
| Catholic | 12.3 | 6 |

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Reshape data: Wide to Long

```
# Original wide format
swiss_subset <- swiss |>
    slice(1:2) |>
    select(Fertility, Agriculture)
swiss_subset
```

| | Fertility | Agriculture |
|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Courtelary | 80.2 | 17.0 |
| Delemont | 83.1 | 45.1 |

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Reshape data: pivot_longer()

```
# Convert to long format
swiss_subset |>
  pivot_longer(
    cols = everything(),
    names_to = "Metric",
    values_to = "Value"
)
```

| Metric | Value |
|-------------|-------|
| Fertility | 80.2 |
| Agriculture | 17.0 |
| Fertility | 83.1 |
| Agriculture | 45.1 |
| | |

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Join data frames

```
# Sample data
df1 <- data.frame(
  Province = c("A", "B"),
 Population = c(5000, 6000)
df2 <- data.frame(
  Province = c("A", "B", "C"),
 Language = c("FR", "FR", "DE")
# Left join keeps all rows from df1
left_join(df1, df2, by = "Province")
```

| Province | Population | Language |
|----------|------------|----------|
| A | 5000 | FR |
| В | 6000 | FR |

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Working with dates using lubridate

```
library(lubridate)
# Create and parse dates
dates <- c("2023-09-08", "2023-09-15")
parsed dates <- ymd(dates)</pre>
# Extract components
data.frame(
 date = parsed_dates,
 year = year(parsed_dates),
 month = month(parsed_dates),
  weekday = wday(parsed_dates, label = TRUE)
```

| date | year | month | weekday |
|------------|------|-------|---------|
| 2023-09-08 | 2023 | 9 | Fri |
| 2023-09-15 | 2023 | 9 | Fri |

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Advanced tidyverse: map functions

70.1 50.7

```
# Apply a function to multiple columns
swiss |>
select(Fertility, Agriculture, Education) |>
map_dbl(~ mean(.x)) |>
round(2)

Fertility Agriculture Education
```

11.0

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String manipulation with stringr

```
library(stringr)
# Example text
provinces <- c("Courtelary", "Delemont", "Franches-Mnt")</pre>
# String operations
data.frame(
  original = provinces,
  lower = str_to_lower(provinces),
  length = str length(provinces),
  contains_e = str_detect(provinces, "e")
```

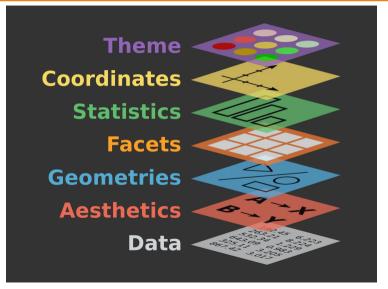
| original | lower | length | contains_e |
|--------------|--------------|--------|------------|
| Courtelary | courtelary | 10 | TRUE |
| Delemont | delemont | 8 | TRUE |
| Franches-Mnt | franches-mnt | 12 | TRUE |

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Visualization with R (ggplot2)

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Grammar of Graphics - Layers



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ggplot2 basics

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Prepare the data

```
Catholic Protestant
18 29
```

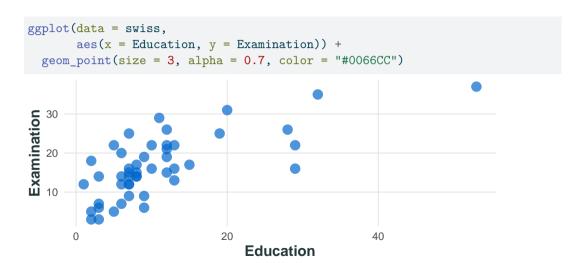
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Building a plot: Data + Aesthetics



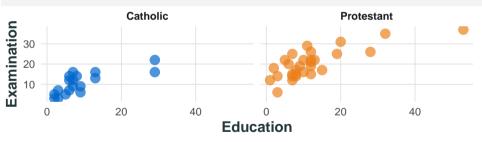
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Adding Geometries



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Using Facets



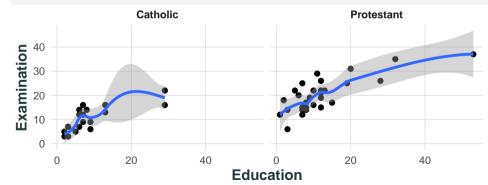
Religion

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Protestant

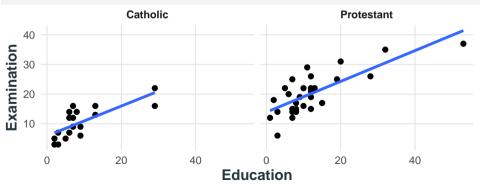
Catholic

Adding Statistics with loess



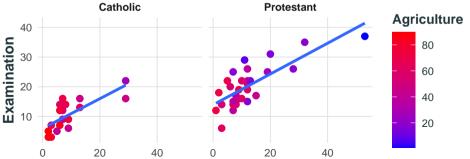
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Adding Statistics with Im



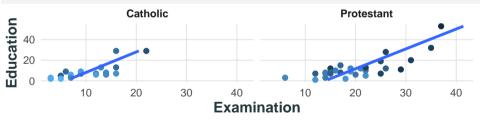
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Multiple Aesthetics



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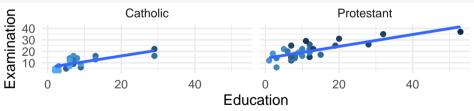
Change coordinates





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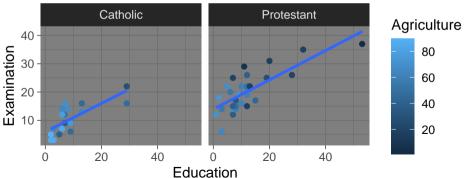
Customizing Themes





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Pre-built Themes



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Save plots

```
# Save the last plot
ggsave("my plot.png",
       width = 8, height = 5,
       dpi = 300)
# Save a specific plot
p <- ggplot(swiss, aes(Education, Examination)) +</pre>
 geom point()
ggsave("scatter.pdf", plot = p,
       width = 6, height = 4)
```

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Basic Statistics with R

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Descriptive Statistics

```
# Create sample data
x \leftarrow c(10, 22, 33, 22, 40)
# Basic statistics
c(mean = mean(x),
 median = median(x),
 sd = sd(x),
 min = min(x),
 max = max(x)
 mean median sd min
                              max
 25.4 22.0 11.5 10.0 40.0
```

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T-test Example

```
# Generate sample data
set.seed(123)
sample \leftarrow rnorm(30, mean = 10, sd = 2)
# One-sample t-test
t_result <- t.test(sample, mu = 10)
t_result$p.value
[1] 0.794
t result$conf.int
[1] 9.17 10.64
attr(,"conf.level")
[1] 0.95
```

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Linear Regression - Setup

0.579

10.127

```
# Define the model formula
model1 <- Examination ~ Education

# Fit the model
fit1 <- lm(model1, data = swiss)

# View coefficients
coef(fit1)

(Intercept) Education</pre>
```

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Simple Linear Regression - Results

```
summary(fit1)
```

```
Call:
lm(formula = model1. data = swiss)
Residuals:
   Min
         10 Median
                          30
                                Max
-10.932 -4.763 -0.184 3.891 12.498
Coefficients:
          Estimate Std. Error t value
(Intercept) 10.1275 1.2859 7.88
Education 0.5795 0.0885 6.55
               Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 0.0000000052 ***
Education 0.0000004811 ***
```

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Multiple Linear Regression

R2 Adj_R2 RMSE 0.728 0.709 4.304

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Regression Coefficients Table

```
# Extract coefficient information
coef_summary <- summary(fit2)$coefficients
round(coef_summary, 3)</pre>
```

```
Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 18.537 2.637 7.03 0.000
Education 0.424 0.087 4.89 0.000
Catholic -0.080 0.017 -4.75 0.000
Agriculture -0.068 0.040 -1.71 0.095
```

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Other Econometric Models

```
# Binary outcomes - Logit
glm(v \sim x1 + x2,
    family = binomial(link = "logit"))
# Binary outcomes - Probit
glm(v \sim x1 + x2,
    family = binomial(link = "probit"))
# Count data - Poisson
glm(y \sim x1 + x2,
    family = poisson())
# Panel data - Fixed effects (requires plm)
library(plm)
plm(y \sim x1 + x2,
    data = panel data,
    model = "within")
```

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Print Regression Results - Console

(1.29) (2.64)

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Observations 47 47 R2 0.49 0.73 Adjusted R2 0.48 0.71

======== Note: p<0.05; **p<0.01;** p<0.001

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Export Results to LaTeX

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Save Regression Output

```
# Save as LaTeX file
stargazer(fit1, fit2,
          type = "latex",
          out = "./results/regression table.tex",
          title = "Swiss Data Analysis",
          covariate.labels = c("Education (years)",
                              "Catholic (%)",
                              "Agriculture (%)"))
# Save as HTML
stargazer(fit1, fit2,
          type = "html",
          out = "./results/regression_table.html")
```

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Final Remarks

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Best Practices for R Programming

1. Organization

- Start scripts with library() calls
- Use meaningful variable names
- Comment your code with #

2. Efficiency

- Use functions to avoid repetition
- Vectorize operations when possible
- Use the tidyverse for data manipulation

3. Reproducibility

- Set seeds for random operations
- Use relative paths (./data/)
- Document package versions

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Resources for Learning R

Online Resources:

- Stack Overflow
- R for Data Science book
- RStudio cheatsheets
- CRAN documentation

Al Assistance:

- ChatGPT
- GitHub Copilot
- Google Bard

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Upcoming Courses

Next Week

R Programming Course

Instructor: Erik Senn

Dates: September 8-11, 2025 Time: 9:00-12:00 and 13:00-17:00

Location: Rosenbergstrasse 30, Room 61-152

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Thank You!

Thanks for joining our R workshop!

Happy Coding!

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Survey

Please take a moment to provide feedback on today's workshop.

Your input helps us improve future courses!

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