MSc in Data Analytics

CA1

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Github: https://github.com/mkoleva0/DataAnalytics\_CA1

**Abstract**

*The study investigates population dynamics in Ireland through the application of several machine learning algorithms, with a specific focus on Regression and Classification techniques, to predict population growth and its relationship with migration patterns. The analysis has verified a consistent uptrend in the population over the past several decades, a path that is projected to continue. A relationship has been identified between net migration and demographic fluctuations within this timeframe, with periods of increased migration influencing these growth figures.*

**Introduction**

I’ve completed the analysis using python, and executing the code in a Jupyter notebook. This is a handy way of easily ~~executing~~ processing ~~with~~ the code, and visualizing the trends, along with using powerful libraries that python offers for data manipulation, visualizations, statistical analysis and machine learning algorithms, such as pandas, seaborn, numpy, scikit-learn etc. **~~Here reference Pyhton for data analysis 5. Getting started with pandas.~~**

The **pandas library** was used for data manipulation, which is a key for its high-performance, easy-to-use data structures, and data analysis tools. The **pandas** library is particularly adept at handling tabular data and analysis, as detailed in **Python for Data Analysis by Wes McKinney with Chapter 5** providing an introductory course to get started with pandas. This library's functionality was essential for cleaning, transforming, and aggregating data necessary for this demographic study.

When it came to visualizing trends, **seaborn** was used, which is built on top of matplotlib and provides a high-level interface for drawing attractive and informative statistical graphics. This library simplifies the creation of complex visualizations, allowing for an intuitive understanding of the data's narrative through rich, interactive plots.

**NumPy**, another cornerstone in the Python data science stack, was used for its array object and multidimensional array processing capabilities. Efficient and scientific computation is made possible with **NumPy**, handling large array and matrix data with ease.

In addition to these, **scikit-learn** was included for its machine learning utilities. **scikit-learn** offers a wide range of data mining and data analysis algorithms that can be used for future extensions of this study.

I further extended our analytical toolkit with **statsmodels.api**, a library that provides classes and functions for the estimation of many different statistical models, as well as for conducting statistical tests and statistical data exploration. An example from my analysis is the use of **statsmodels.tsa.arima.model**, which allowed us to apply **ARIMA** models for time series forecasting. This was particularly useful in understanding and predicting demographic trends over time.

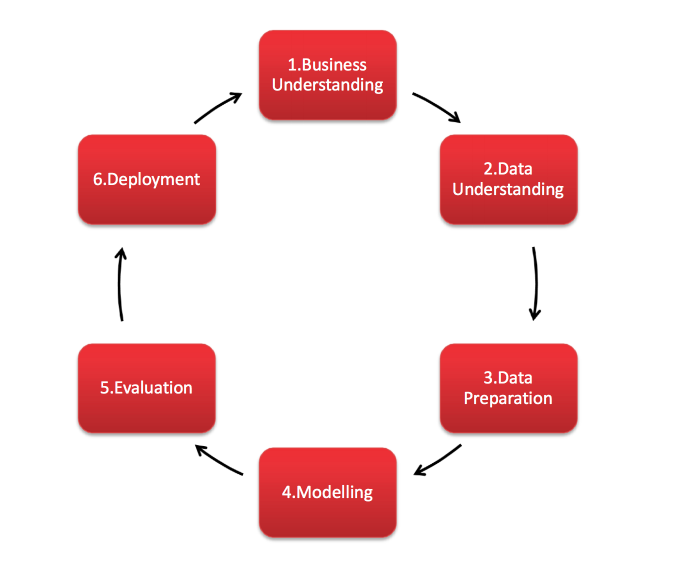
For iterating over our data and model parameters efficiently, Python's **itertools** was used. This module is a collection of tools for handling iterators. It can produce complex iterators in a memory-efficient way, allowing for the dynamic combination of parameters when fine-tuning my models.

This methodical application of Python's robust programming capabilities, combined with powerful analytical libraries, lays a solid foundation for rigorous data analysis, ensuring that the study of demographic and migration trends in Ireland is both thorough and precise.

I’ve followed the good practices of python, such as naming variables in a clear and understandable way, defining function where possible in order to avoid repetition of code. However, rather then following the Object-oriented programming principles, as encapsulation and inheritance, my code is characterized by a step-by-step approach where data and functions are separate, and the code is organized into procedures and functions that are called as needed.

**Methodology**

My research into Ireland's population and migration trends used a structured approach called CRISP-DM. This is like a roadmap for my study. The six phases of CRISP-DM guided me from understanding the business problem to deploying the model which will be followed in this report as well.

[[1]](#endnote-1)

https://www.sv-europe.com/crisp-dm-methodology/

**Business Understanding**

The purpose of this analysis is to study Ireland’s changing population figures and migration flows over a period spanning from 1996 to 2023. My focus will be on the following areas:

* Investigating the patterns and trends in net migration, including inflows and outflows and their impact on population size and structure
* Examining shifts in the population’s age groups, noting trends in both the younger and older segments

The evaluation of these elements aims to provide a comprehensive report that enhances understanding of Ireland’s demographic changes over the specified period.

**Data Understanding**

In a 2018 Harvard Business Review article, Redman states, "Poor data quality is enemy number one to the widespread, profitable use of machine learning." He also notes the challenges bad data can pose, especially during the training of models and their real-world applications. Understanding the importance of good data, this study uses three datasets from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to examine Ireland’s population and migration trends.

The three datasets used in this project are as follow:

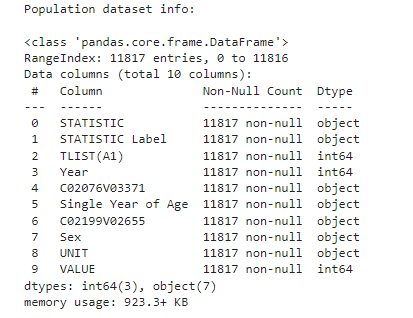
1. PEA11.20231013T111046.csv - Population estimates from 1926 with Age and Sex breakdown
2. PEA18.20231016T141007.csv - Estimated Migration (Persons in April) with Country and Sex breakdown
3. PEA03.20231022T221016.csv - Estimated Migration (Persons in April) with Age group and Sex breakdown

The first dataset tracks the shifts in Ireland's population over the years and includes details about the age distribution. The second and third dataset, on the other hand, tell us about migration patterns, detailing both incoming and outgoing movements. Notably, those datasets also break down by the countries of origin, as well as the age, allowing us to identify the primary sources of immigrants to Ireland.

Before analyzing the data, it's important to first take a good look at it. This means seeing how much data there is, what kind of information it has, and if there are any gaps or odd patterns. By doing this first, I can make sure our later analyses are reliable. This preliminary examination was conducted using the necessary pandas methods, as detailed in the “Examine the structure and shape of the datasets” section of my Jupyter notebook.

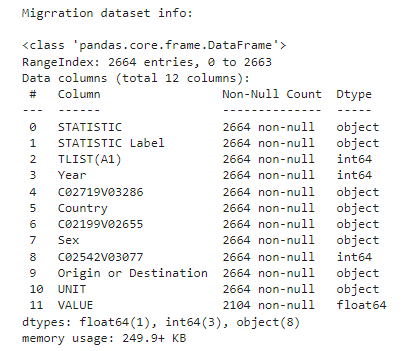
Here is a short summary of the structure of the first dataset:

* There are 11817 rows and 10 columns
* Present data types are: int and object (which later will be converted to categories)
* No null values



The same was applied for the second dataset and here is the information gathered:

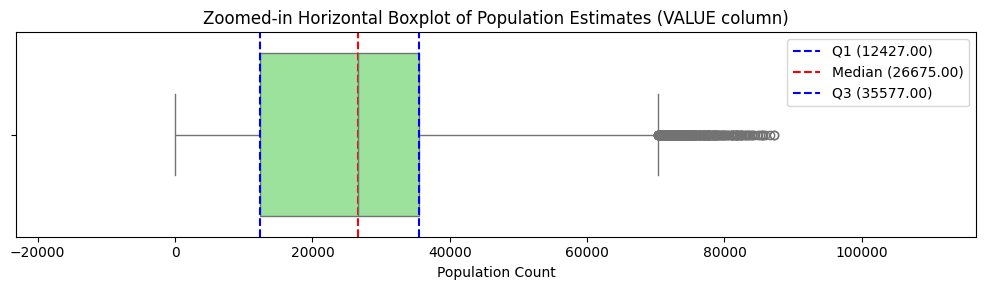
* There are 2664 rows and 12 columns
* Present data types are: int, object and float
* There are 560 missing values for the ‘VALUE’ column



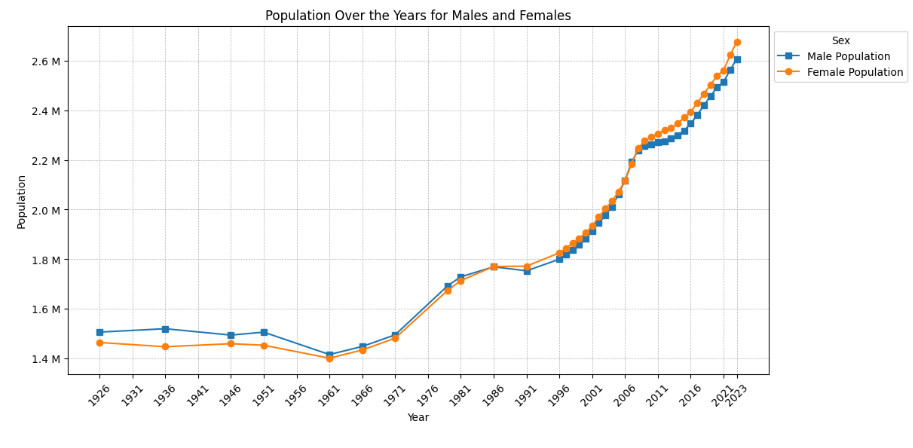
As the third dataset was added only for the optimization of the machine learning model and applying the normal distribution, a brief analysis was done, such as imputation of the null values and preparing the data for the application of the models. This has been performed in the CA1\_2\_final Jupyter notebook in the section ‘Migration dataset with age group data exploring and preparation’.

Checking for missing data is crucial because gaps in data can affect our results. There are two main approaches to address this: deletion and imputation. Taking a further look at the dataframe with the country breakdown, I was able to confirm that those missing values are for different countries and different years, where I do not have any data for the Immigrants, Emigrants and respectfully for the Net Migration. Imputing values where none exist can introduce bias, especially since the missing data spans different countries and years. Having said that, as of now I will be removing those rows. Imputation was performed for the third data set, where I was able to calculate the Net Migration (the missing values), as I had the values for Immigrants and Emigrants. I also checked all three dataframes for duplicates to ensure accurate analysis and found none.

Part of my work was checking for unusual data, or outliers, as detailed in the "Dealing with Outliers" section of my Jupyter notebook. I found many in both datasets, but realized they represent totals, like the yearly sum for all ages and both genders in the population data, or the sum for all countries and both sexes in the migration data. So, I'll use two versions of each dataset: one for total values and another for detailed breakdowns. A visual representation of the outliers for the population data set can be seen below:



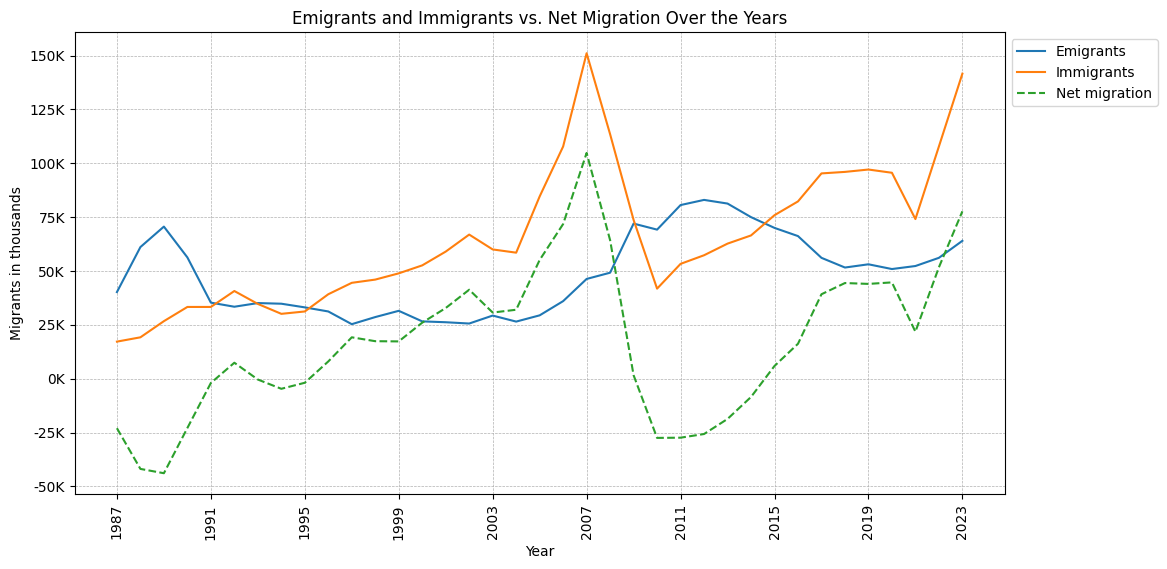
A couple of visualizations were performed for each dataset, representing the whole data available in order to get an idea of the different points of data.



We can see a steady growth in both male and female populations in Ireland, with the female count slightly surpassing the male in recent years, highlighting evolving demographic patterns over the decades. A simple linear regression analysis was applied and it shows Ireland's population is growing, a trend that will be examined more closely with machine learning later in this report. Early results match up with the CSO's population projections (CSO, 2023).

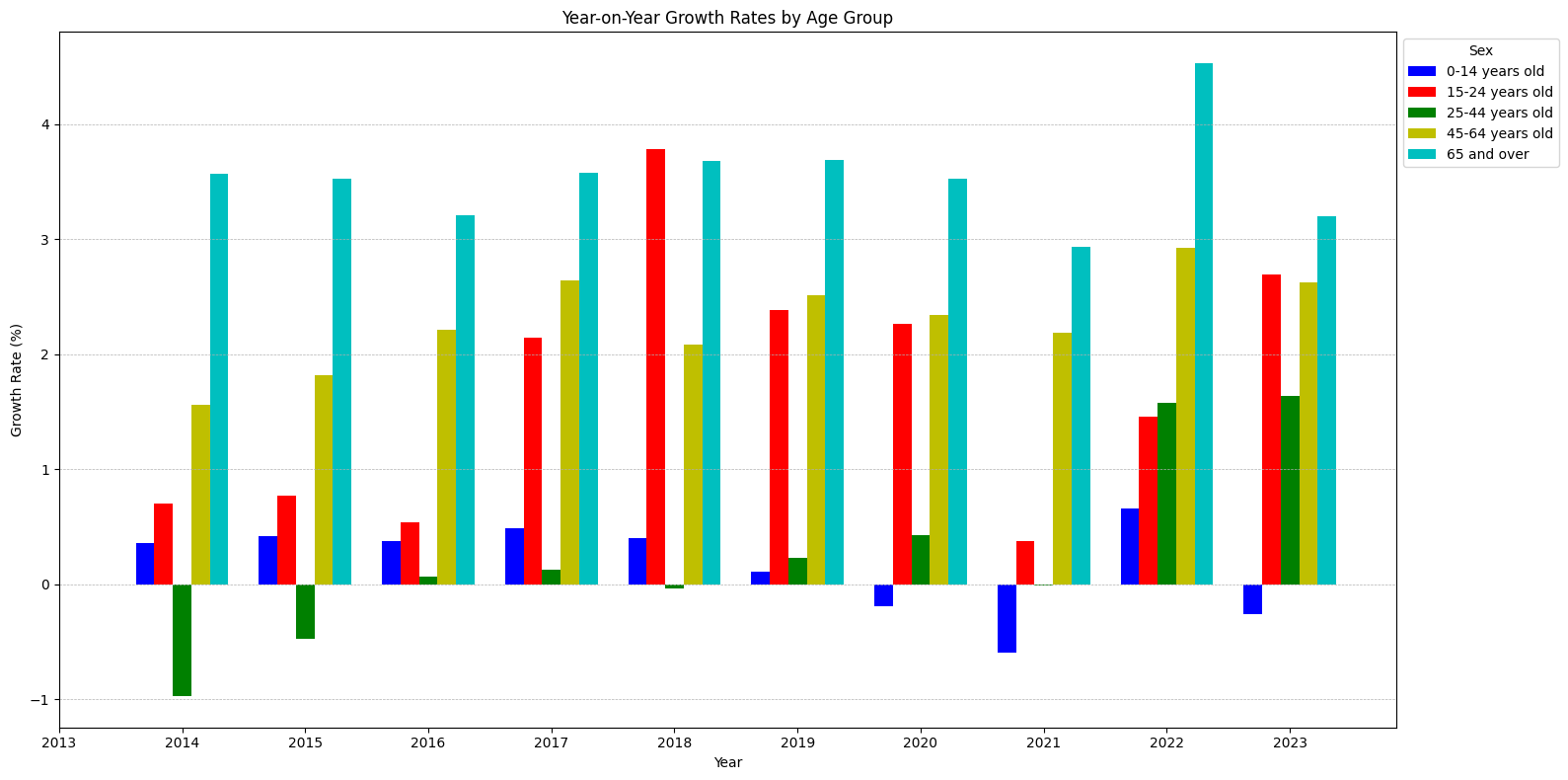
Tufte states, "The number of information-carrying (variable) dimensions depicted should not exceed the number of dimensions in the data" (Tufte, 2007, p.77). In line with this, the visualization focuses solely on 'Sex' and the total population value, ensuring I don't overcomplicate the display. In alignment with Tufte’s principles, using a line chart for time-series data allows for clear visualization of trends over the years. I used blue for males and orange for females to clearly differentiate the two, making it easier for viewers to compare trends without relying on colors that might have cultural biases. I also decided to format the y-axis values with ‘M’ for millions, simplifying the numbers and making the chart cleaner.

A similar visualization for the migration dataset was done, including all present years within the dataset.



The chart reveals a 15-year high for immigration in 2023, marking the most significant inflow since the 2007 peak.

I adjusted the population data to focus on specific age groups and it's change during the years. I only looked at the past 10 years because recent changes, like tech advancements and job market shifts, make this period especially relevant. For better accuracy, I turned the 'Age' column into an integer, so that later on I can apply the descriptive statistics to the numerical values. This meant changing entries like 'Under 1 year' to '0', using extraction of the integer value using regex. With these changes, I added a new column to sort these ages into groups, making it easier to see the age distribution. This gave me a lot better outcome when it comes to the visualization of the data, as we only have 5 age groups now, instead of having each single year of age, which was going to be a very heavy representation.



The most significant growth appears in the oldest age group (65 and over), suggesting an aging population, while the younger age groups exhibit more fluctuation in their growth rates.

For finding the standard deviation and mean of the Age I focused on the year 2022. Based on the calculations, where I had to use the weighted mean due to the structure of the data, I was able to calculate the average age in Ireland for 2022 being 38.37, which aligns closely with the report from the CSO (Central Statistics Office, 2023).

For the analysis, a Binomial distribution was employed to model the probability of different outcomes in trials that can result in either success or failure. The Binomial distribution is defined by two parameters: the number of trials *n* and the probability of success *p* in a single trial. It provides a way to calculate the probability of obtaining a certain number of successes in a fixed number of trials. (National Institute of Standards and Technology, no date). Those calculations can be found under the Binomial distribution module in the CA1\_2\_final Jupyter notebook.

In assessing the continuous data related to Ireland’s population and migration, I will evaluate whether it conforms to a normal distribution. A normal distribution has a bell-shaped density curve defined by its mean and standard deviation and extreme values in the data set have no significant impact on the mean value. If the data in fact follows normal distribution then 68.2%, 95.4%, and 99.7% observations lie between mean ± 1 SD, mean ± 2 SD, and mean ± 3 SD. (Campbell, 2007).

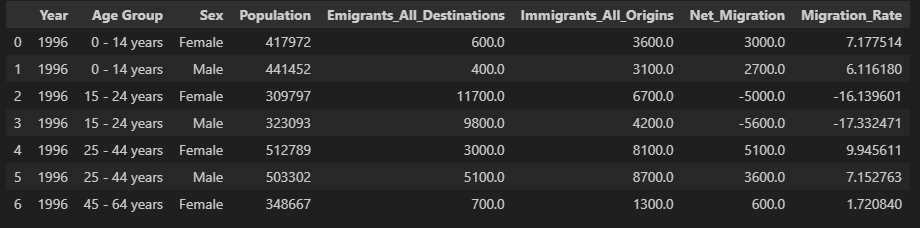
A test for normal distribution was performed on this data for different age groups, using the Shapiro-Wilk test, giving us a p-value of 0.328 for the age group 0-14, which does not provide us with enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the data is normally distributed

So, I will be assuming that this data is following the normal distribution and calculations will be performed. The whole analysis can be found in CA1\_2\_final, under Normal distribution.

**Data Preparation**

Data will be segmented for detailed analysis. Several machine learning algorithms will be applied to model Ireland's population growth. The outcomes of these models will then be compared to assess their predictive accuracy. With the initial two datasets I had, I did not have the age breakdown in the migration data, so I only had two features – Year and Net Migration, and the population as the target variable. The data was split so that the first 80% is used for training the model and the last 20% for testing it. This way, the model learns from earlier years and is tested on the most recent ones, following a standard approach for predicting over time (Hyndman & Athanasopoulos, 2018).

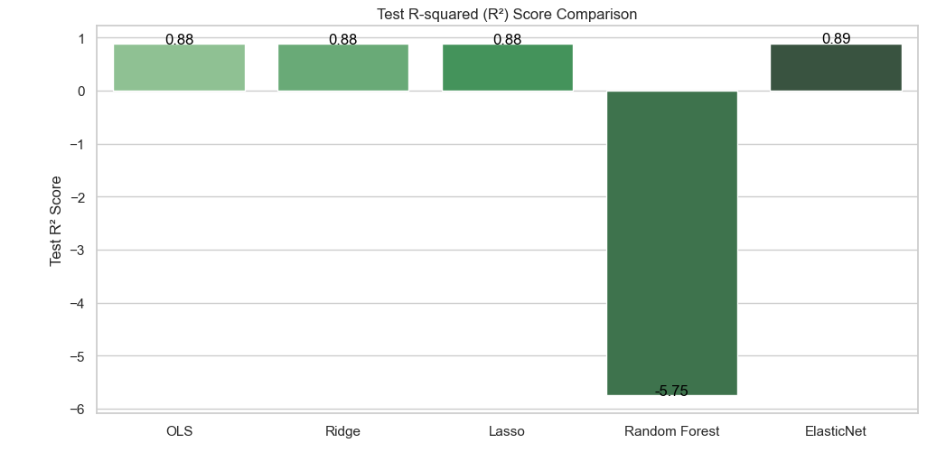
In order to get more data for the machine learning algorithms and improve the accuracy of the models, a third dataset was introduced containing the Age Group breakdown, so that we can later merge the data with the population dataset that also has the Single Year of Age column. To do the merge, the same age groups that were created earlier were used, with some small changes in the syntax, as I noticed that they did not match exactly with the migration data. Once the converting was done, a right join was performed for both tables on the Year, Age Group and Sex category, giving us the population, net migration, immigration and emigration in one single table. The representation of the numbers was also adjusted, so that we can have the same unit for both values. Final outcome of the merging of the datasets:



**Modelling**

For continuous data, regression analysis has been employed due to its suitability for predicting numerical outcomes. Regression is ideal for understanding and quantifying the relationship between a continuous dependent variable, such as Ireland's population size, and one or more independent variables. This phase involves selecting the appropriate regression techniques, adjusting model parameters, and assessing model fit to ensure accurate predictions and valuable insights into the factors influencing population growth.

The training set will be utilized to train a suite of models, including Linear Regression, Ridge, Lasso, ElasticNet, and Random Forest, with the latter four undergoing hyperparameter tuning for optimization. Post-training, the models will be evaluated on the test set to compare predictive accuracies, using metrics like MAE, RMSE, and R².



The bar chart indicates that ElasticNet Regression achieved the highest R-squared (R²) score of 0.89 among the tested models, suggesting it was the most effective at capturing the variance in Ireland's population data. Conversely, the Random Forest model significantly underperformed with a negative R² score of -5.75, indicating that it did not predict the test data accurately and was worse than a model that would simply predict the mean of the target variable. The other models — OLS, Ridge, and Lasso — show comparable performance, each with an R² score of approximately 0.88, reflecting a good fit to the test data.

**Evaluation**

References:

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Hyndman, R. J., & Athanasopoulos, G. (2018). Forecasting: Principles and Practice (2nd ed.). Monash University. Available at: <https://otexts.com/fpp2/accuracy.html> (Accessed: 1 October 2023).

1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)