

ECON 5/POLI 5D
DATA ANALYTICS/ SOCIAL SCIENCES

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LAB-4
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HOW TO ACCESS COURSE MATERIALS?

Course materials on my website



TODAY: MINDSPARK RCT (LAB 4)

- **Motivation:** can personalized, computer-assisted learning raise test scores?
- **Data:** Mindspark student-level dataset (Muralidharan, Singh & Ganimian 2019)
- **Agenda:**
 1. Workflow & reproducibility (paths, clean start)
 2. Descriptives & graphs: treated vs control
 3. Regression + interpretation
 4. (Bonus) heterogeneity by gender and age
- Then: we run the do-file top-to-bottom and fill in code/interpretation together

WHY THIS STUDY? (RCT LOGIC)

- **Treatment** (Mindspark): adaptive practice + instant feedback
- **Control**: business-as-usual schooling
- Because assignment is **randomized**, a simple treated-vs-control comparison has a causal interpretation
- Today we will focus on:
 - Visualizing mean differences
 - Estimating linear relationships with regression
 - Checking whether patterns differ across subgroups

KEY CONCEPT 1: DESCRIPTIVES + CLEAR FIGURES

- We will plot **average math scores** by treatment status
- **Baseline** vs endline outcomes:
 - `per_math1` = baseline math score (
 - `per_math2` = endline math score (
- Stata tools used:
 - Set a readable theme: `set scheme plotplainblind`
 - Bar means: `graph bar (mean) var, over(treat)`
 - Always label axes/titles so figures are self-contained

KEY CONCEPT 2: REGRESSION + INTERPRETATION

- Regression in the do-file: `reg per_math1 ses_index`
- Interpreting the slope β :
 - A 1-unit increase in `ses_index` changes predicted math score by β
 - Because scores are in 0–1 units, multiply by 100 for % points
- Prediction and comparisons:
 - Predicted score at `ses_index = 0.5`: $\hat{y} = \hat{\alpha} + 0.5\hat{\beta}$
 - Difference between 0.5 and -0.5: $\hat{\beta}(0.5 - (-0.5))$

KEY CONCEPT 3: VISUALIZING + SUBGROUP ANALYSIS

- Scatter + line of best fit:
 - `twoway (scatter per_math1 ses_index) (lfit per_math1 ses_index)`
 - This shows both **raw variation** and the **linear trend**
- Optional: **conditional regressions** (heterogeneity)
 - By gender: `if st_female1==1 vs ==0`
 - By age: create an indicator `above_med_age` using the median
- When comparing groups, keep the outcome and covariate the same; only change the sample