

# Hypothesis testing with linear models

DClin Research Methods 1

Dr Christopher Wilson  
Teesside University

## Key points from Lecture 1:

- Generate research questions based on where the current literature is
- Incorporate the current theoretical models that explain your phenomenon of interest
- Some topics need more on the “*What?*” but many need more on the “*How?*” - build from wherever current knowledge is and design your study accordingly.
- Transparency and open science practices (e.g., registration) can prod you to clarify these points before you begin data collection.

## Key points from Lecture 2:

- Statistical significance is an indicator of confidence that if the null hypothesis were true, we would be unlikely to find such a result.
  - The importance of statistical significance is often *overstated* in that it does not:
    - Confirm that our alternative hypothesis is true
    - Mean that our result is clinically meaningful
- The importance of statistical significance is often *understated* in that:
- There is no such thing as a “near significant” result - alpha thresholds ( $p$  values) are decided in advance
  - Studies need to be designed with sufficient power (i.e., sample size) to detect the effect of interest
  - The reliability of significant results depends on the analysis being applied correctly (e.g., test assumptions)



## Key points from Lecture 2 (cont.):

- When designing studies, we need to understand the effect we are looking for and run power analysis
- When designing studies, we need to decide how best to assess the data to test our hypothesis/es
- When analysing the data, we need to look at it in detail, not just take a “cookier cutter” approach

## Suggested reading:

The Eight Steps of Data Analysis: A Graphical Framework to Promote Sound  
Statistical Analysis

<https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/r8g7c>

# Overview

- Hypothesis testing
- Linear models
- Linear models in R

Note: Some of the points discussed today will be best understood in combination with the next few lectures, but we have to introduce the concepts first.

# Designing studies: think about the data!

When designing your study:

- Identify the most appropriate research question/hypothesis
- Figure out how the data you're collecting will help you test the hypothesis
- Figure out how best to model your hypothesis with the data you will have

---

Do this at the design stage, when considering your method/measures.  
Don't wait until later!

# Different types of research hypothesis

- Hypothesis testing is a method for making inferences about a population based on a sample
- In clinical psychology research, for example, we might be interested in the role of attentional bias in anxiety

# Different types of research hypothesis

- However, we need to phrase this in terms of a hypothesis that we can test:
  - There is a difference in attentional bias between anxious and non-anxious individuals
  - There is a difference in attentional bias between anxious and non-anxious individuals, but only for threat-related stimuli
  - Level of anxiety predicts level of attentional bias to threat-related stimuli
  - Level of anxiety moderates the relationship between attentional bias and depression



## Hypothesis influences research design

- The nature of these hypotheses will determine the design of the study, the variables that are measured, and the statistical analysis that is used
- In many cases people come to analyse their data and find it difficult to know which statistical test to use
  - This is not necessarily because of a lack of statistical knowledge

# Different analyses for different designs?

Psych students are often taught to use different statistical tests for different types of designs. For example:

- t-test for comparing two groups
- ANOVA for comparing more than two groups
- Correlation for testing the relationship between two continuous variables
- Regression for testing the relationship between a continuous and a categorical variable
- ANCOVA for testing the relationship between a continuous and a categorical variable, controlling for a third continuous variable

# All of the previous examples are based on regression

To print the PDF document, please use the Print button on the toolbar.



# Think about your questions before you think about the stats

## The role of attentional bias in anxiety

Let's assume we have several variables:

- Age, Gender
- Stimulus level: Threatening / Non-threatening
- Anxiety Score
- Attentional bias (based on reaction times)

## How do we analyse the data?

In the coming weeks, we will see how taking a modelling approach allows us to answer the questions we want, rather than designing questions to fit a set of tests.

# What does “modelling” the data actually mean?

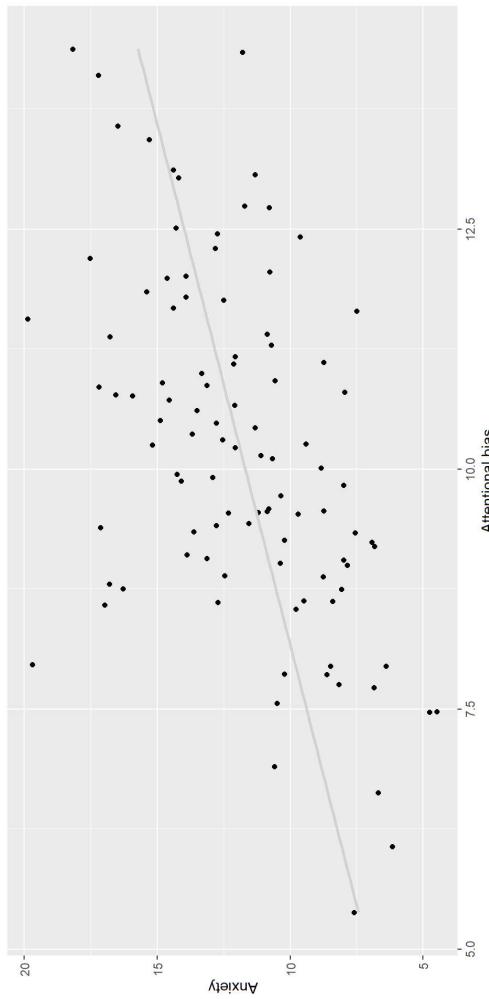
- “Modelling” means figuring out what is the best way to represent our data.
- For research purposes, we could extend that to say “What is the best way to represent (and test) our hypothesis with the data?”

For example, a t-test *models* the data of two groups as their means and their variance scores

# Linear models using continuous predictor variables

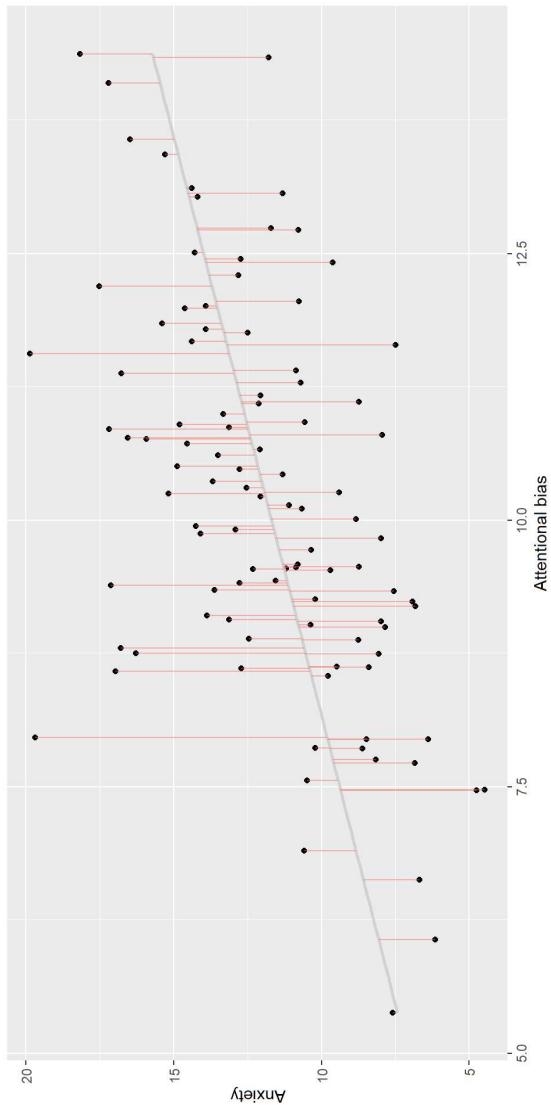
# Linear regression

18



- The regression line is the line of best fit through the data (smallest amount of overall error between the line and the data points)

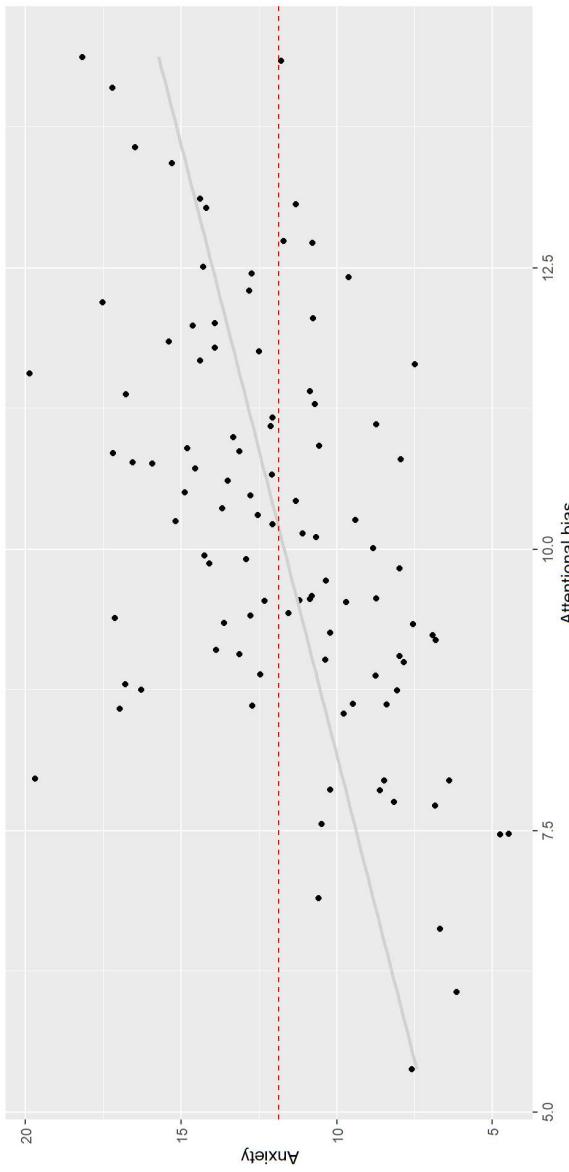
# Residuals



- The distances between the data points and the regression line are the residuals

But what is the null hypothesis in regression?

# The null hypothesis in regression



- The null hypothesis is that the line of best fit is no better at predicting the y variable than the mean of the y variable

# Looking at regression output

```
1 model1 <- lm(y ~ x, data = df)
2
3 summary(model1)
```

- ① The `lm()` function is used for linear regression. The model is specified using the formula  $y \sim x$ , where  $y$  is the outcome variable and  $x$  is the predictor variable.

- ② The `summary()` function is used to get a summary of the model. This includes the intercept and slope values, the standard errors, the t-values, and the p-values.

# Looking at regression output

```
1 model1 <- lm(y ~ x, data = df)
2
3 summary(model1)
```

Call:  
lm(formula = y ~ x, data = df)

Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-5.7220	-2.0505	-0.2625	1.7419	9.8712

x

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t )
(Intercept)	2.4787	1.6579	1.495	0.138
x	0.9213	0.1603	5.747	1.03e-07 ***

---

Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 2.912 on 98 degrees of freedom  
Multiple R-squared: 0.252, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2444  
F-statistic: 33.02 on 1 and 98 DF, p-value: 1.029e-07

What if we have a categorical predictor variable?

# Example: t-test

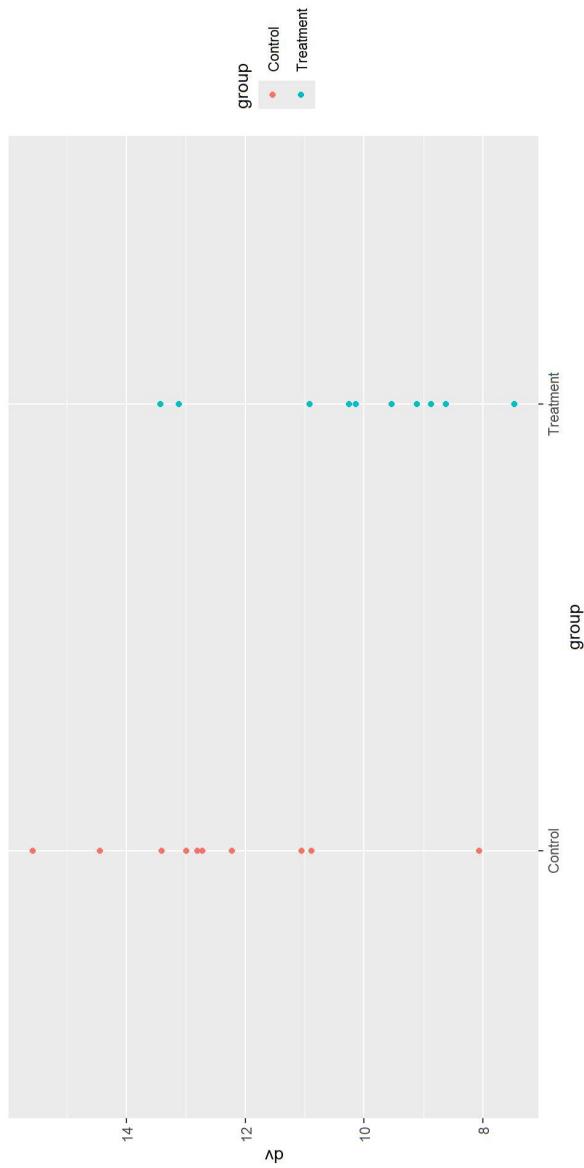
- A t-test is a special case of a linear model where there is one predictor variable (group) and one outcome variable (DV)

```
1 # run a t-test  
2  
3 t.test(dv ~ group, data = df)
```

Welch Two Sample t-test

```
data: dv by group  
t = 2.5438, df = 17.872, p-value = 0.02044  
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means between group Control and group Treatment is not equal  
to 0  
95 percent confidence interval:  
0.3938876 4.1420977  
sample estimates:  
mean in group Control mean in group Treatment  
12.41724 10.14925
```

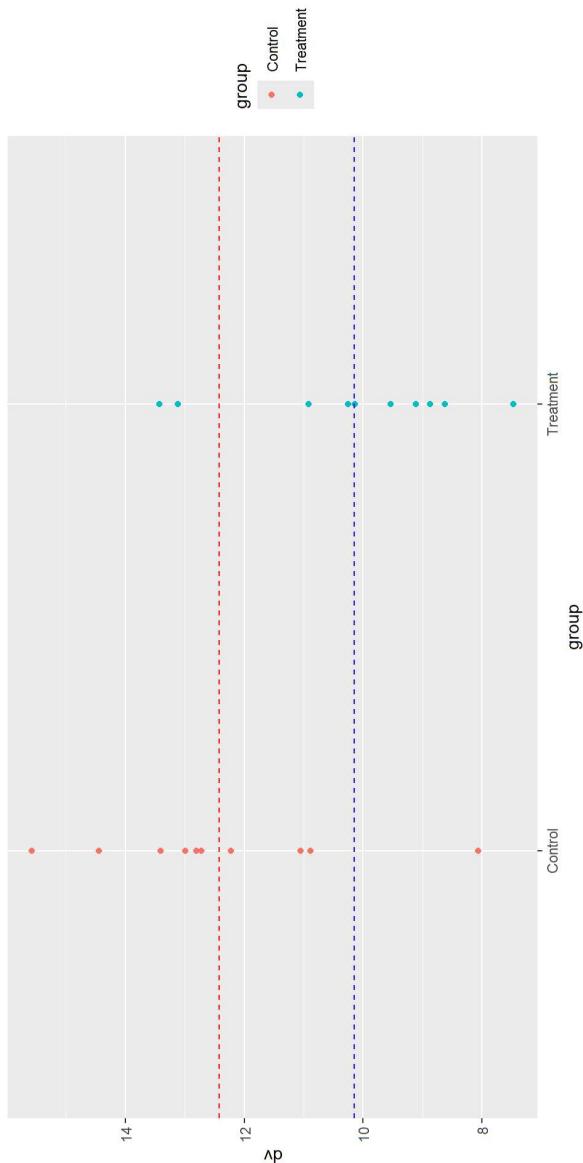
# Plotting the data #1



Here we can see the data for each group

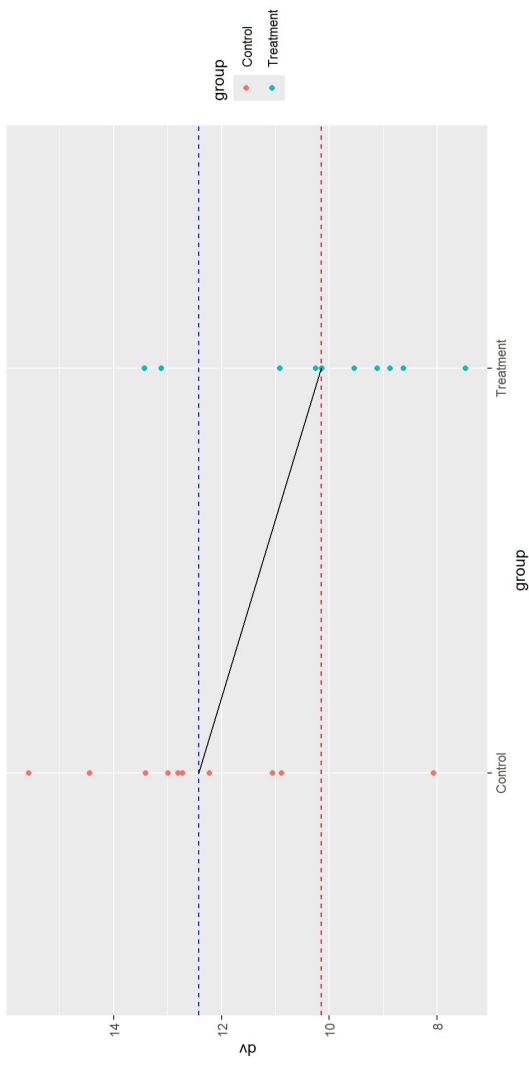
## Plotting the data #2

27



Here we can see the mean for each group, represented by the dashed lines

## Plotting the data #3



In a regression model, the intercept is the mean of one of the groups, and the slope is the difference between the means of the two groups

# Example: t-test as a linear model

```
1 # run a linear model
2
3 lm(dv ~ group, data = df) |> summary()
```

```
Call:
lm(formula = dv ~ group, data = df)

Residuals:
    Min     1Q     Median      3Q     Max 
-4.3505 -1.2934   0.0505   0.8258  3.2899 

Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)    
(Intercept) 12.4172   0.6304 19.696 1.25e-13 ***
groupTreatment -2.2680   0.8916 -2.544  0.0204 *  
---
signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 ':' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 1.994 on 18 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.2644, Adjusted R-squared:  0.2236 
F-statistic: 6.471 on 1 and 18 DF,  p-value: 0.02036
```

- In the above example, the t-test and linear model give the same results. The intercept for the linear model is the mean of the Control Group, and the slope is the difference between the means of group Control and Treatment.

# We can check the confidence intervals from the regression model

```
1 # show the confidence confidence intervals of the coefficients  
2  
3 lm(dv ~ group, data = df) |> confint()  
  
(Intercept) 11.092729 13.7417583  
groupTreatment -4.141139 -0.3948464
```

- We can see that the confidence interval of the regression coefficient is the same as the confidence interval of the difference between means in the t-test

What's the value of using this approach?

# Advantages of using models

- Using models allows us to test a wide range of hypotheses using the same approach
- This means that we can use the same approach to test hypotheses about:
  - the relationship between two continuous variables
  - the relationship between a categorical predictor and continuous outcome
  - Continuous and categorical predictors in the same model
- We can use this approach regardless of the number of predictor variables or levels in a categorical predictor

# ANOVA as regression

# One-way ANOVA

```
1 # running an ANOVA
2
3 aov(dv ~ group, data = df) |> summary()
```

	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
group	2	48.97	24.486	6.435	0.00518 **
Residuals	27	102.73	3.805		

---

Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

In this example, we can see that there is a significant effect of group on the outcome variable. However, we do not know which groups are significantly different from each other.

# ANOVA as regression

```
1 lm(dv ~ group, data = df) |> summary()
```

```
Call:
lm(formula = dv ~ group, data = df)

Residuals:
    Min     1Q   Median     3Q    Max 
-4.3505 -1.2824 -0.1621  0.9322  3.3567 

Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)    
(Intercept) 10.1493   0.6168 16.454 1.34e-15 ***
groupGroup 2  2.2680   0.8723  2.600  0.0149 *  
groupGroup 3  3.0016   0.8723  3.441  0.0019 ** 
---
signif. codes:  0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

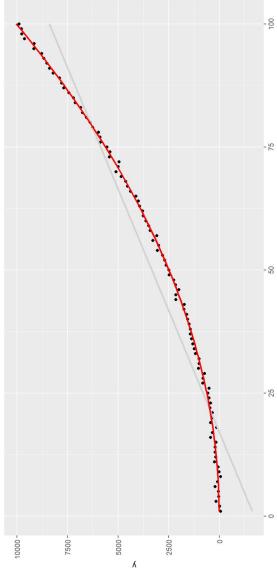
Residual standard error: 1.951 on 27 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.3228, Adjusted R-squared:  0.2727 
F-statistic: 6.435 on 2 and 27 DF,  p-value: 0.005183
```

In this example, we can see that there is a significant effect of group on the outcome variable. However, we can also see:

- that Group 2 and Group 3 are significantly different from Group 1.
- the exact difference between the means of each group

# What about non-linear relationships?

- Not all relationships between variables are linear
- For example, the relationship between age and cognitive functioning is often non-linear
- In these cases, we can use other approaches (e.g., polynomial regression) to test the relationship



## What about non-linear relationships? #2

37

- Once you become confident with the idea of modelling the relationships between variables, you can apply different types of model, based on what fits the data
- Fit is an important concept in modelling. *For example, to test a binary outcome (e.g., Yes/No), we would use logistic regression, because this type of model fits the data better.*
- There are also ways to model data to fit non-linear relationships for continuous data
- We are starting with the linear model, since all of the alternative approaches you know (e.g., t-test, ANOVA etc.) are based on a linear model.

# How do we know if a linear model is appropriate?

- You need to check the assumptions of linear models when using them to test hypotheses
- These assumptions are:
  - Linearity
  - Independence
  - Homoscedasticity
  - Normality
- Many of these assumptions can be checked using the residuals of the model. If you are using R, the `plot()` function can be used to check these

# Summary

- Once your research question has been decided, figure out how you can model your hypothesis with the data you are collecting
- Many different types of hypothesis can be tested using regression models
- This can allow us to ask questions that are more complex because we can include multiple predictor variables in the same model (next week)
- We can get more information from a regression output than from a t-test or ANOVA (for example)
- However, we need to check the assumptions of linear models before reporting them