


[Home](#)
[Posters](#)
[Statistics](#)
[Activities](#)
[News](#)
[About us](#)
[Further information](#)
[Calendar](#)


HIGHLIGHTS

[2013 Special Sites](#)
[Celebrations](#)
[Videos](#)
[News articles](#)
[Inaugural Event in Mexico](#)
[AME National Meeting](#)
[Positions in 2013](#)

Myths and Realities

Word "statistics" evokes many different meanings, depending on each person's own experiences. What follows is a compilation of some common myths. We hope that we can help clarify the meaning of the discipline - its goals and motivations - as well as those of its practitioners.

To deal the truth, please click on the corresponding myth.

Myth 1: It only makes sense to consult with a statistician after the data has already been collected.

Myth 2: The uses of statistics are merely tabulating data, building histograms and graphs, and drawing pie charts and bar plots.

Myth 3: A statistician's work can be replaced by a computer, because it is all about performing certain numerical calculations.

Myth 4: Electoral survey projections were wrong. That is proof that statistics is useless.

Myth 5: Since statistics can prove anything, it may be used (and indeed, is used) for lying.

Myth 6: The statistician's job is to "gather statistics", that is, to compile data and figures, ranging from sport statistics to census statistics.

Myth 7: Statisticians are only trained in methods, algorithms and numerical techniques that are commonly used in applications.

Myth 8: We do not need to consult a statistician because one of our team members had two statistics courses as part of their undergraduate training.

Myth 9: In order to think like a statistician, you need a degree in statistics.

Myth 10: Statistics can't be referred to as an exact science, because it only yields approximate results

Myth 11: The fields where statistics can be applied are very limited.

Myth 12: Statistics consists of a set of known, fixed methods that do not change.

Myth 13: A statistician would place his head in an oven and his feet in ice, and say that on average he feels fine.

Myth 14: Statistics is the art of torturing numbers until they confess to anything.

Myth 15: A deck of cards must be shuffled many times in order to produce a fair game.

Myth 16: If a person knows probability theory, he/she can become a millionaire by participating in lotteries.

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[Return](#)

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