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Statistics Quotes


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"There are three types of lies -- lies, damn lies, and statistics."  
— Benjamin Disraeli

tags: attributed-no-source, lies, lying, misattributed-mark-twain, statistics, truth


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"Statistically speaking, there is a 65 percent chance that the love of your life is having an affair. Be very suspicious."  
— Scott Dikkers, You Are Worthless: Depressing Nuggets of Wisdom Sure to Ruin Your Day

tags: adultery, humor, infidelity, love, relationships, romance, statistics, suspicion


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"A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic."  
— Joseph Stalin

tags: death, humanity, life, media, statistics, tragedy


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"Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are pliable."  
— Mark Twain

tags: facts, statistics


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"A recent survey or North American males found 42% were overweight, 34% were critically obese and 8% ate the survey."  
— Banksy

tags: humor, obesity, statistics


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"Most murders are committed by someone who is known to the victim. In fact, you are most likely to be murdered by a member of your own family on Christmas day."  
— Mark Haddon, The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night Time

tags: statistics


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"I couldn't claim that I was smarter than sixty-five other guys--but the average of sixty-five other guys, certainly!"  
— Richard P. Feynman, Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!: Adventures of a Curious Character

tags: education, humor, intelligence, mathematics, statistics

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"Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns- the ones we don't know we don't know."  
— Donald Rumsfeld

tags: knowledge, statistics

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The logic behind patriotism is a mystery. At least a man who believes that his own family or clan is superior to all others is familiar with more than 0.000003% of the people involved."

— Criss Jami, Killosophy

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tags: arrogance, arrogant, belief, bias, clan, country, estimate, estimated, estimation, family, funny, funny-but-true, humor, illogical, inferior, inferiority, irrational, logic, mystery, nation, nationalism, patriot, patriotic, patriotism, people, percent, percentage, pride, prideful, sarcasm, sarcastic, stat, statistic, statistics, stats, superior, superiority, true

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"If your experiment needs a statistician, you need a better experiment."

— Ernest Rutherford

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tags: experiments, science, statistics

27 likes



"All statistics have outliers."

— Nenia Campbell, Terrorscape

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tags: chance, life, outlier, philosophy, probability, statistics

26 likes



"We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet."

— E.M. Forster

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tags: poetry, poverty, statistics

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"99 percent of all statistics only tell 49 percent of the story."

— Ron DeLegg II, Gents with No Cents

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tags: economics, mathematics, numbers, statistics

18 likes



"He could not believe that any of them might actually hit somebody. If one did, what a nowhere way to go: killed by accident; slain not as an individual but by sheer statistical probability, by the calculated chance of searching fire, even as he himself might be at any moment. Mathematics! Mathematics! Algebra! Geometry! When 1st and 3d Squads came diving and tumbling back over the tiny crest, Bell was content to throw himself prone, press his cheek to the earth, shut his eyes, and lie there. God, oh, God! Why am I *here*? Why am I *here*? After a moment's thought, he decided he better change it to: why are *we* here. That way, no agency of retribution could exact payment from him for being selfish."

— James Jones, The Thin Red Line

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tags: algebra, bell, death, fear, geometry, machine-guns, mathematics, payment, probability, retribution, selfishness, statistics, warfare

17 likes



"Another mistaken notion connected with the law of large numbers is the idea that an event is more or less likely to occur because it has or has not happened recently. The idea that the odds of an event with a fixed probability increase or decrease depending on recent occurrences of the event is called the gambler's fallacy. For example, if Kerrich landed, say, 44 heads in the first 100 tosses, the coin would not develop a bias towards the tails in order to catch up! That's what is at the root of such ideas as "her luck has run out" and "He is due." That does not happen. For what it's worth, a good streak doesn't jinx you, and a bad one, unfortunately, does not mean better luck is in store."

— Leonard Mlodinow, The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives

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tags: gambling, luck, math, probability, statistics

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"I guess I think of lotteries as a tax on the mathematically challenged."

— Roger Jones

Like

tags: lottery, mathematics, statistics

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to these reports, has 0.00 children, 0.032 cars, and 0.040 TVs.

— Kato Lomb

tags: [humor](#), [statistics](#)

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"Statistics, likelihoods, and probabilities mean everything to men, nothing to God."

— Richelle E. Goodrich, *Smile Anyway*

tags: [ability](#), [almighty](#), [god](#), [likelihood](#), [might](#), [omnipotence](#), [power](#), [probability](#), [richelle](#), [richelle-goodrich](#), [statistics](#)

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"Nature has established patterns originating in the return of events, but only for the most part. New illnesses flood the human race, so that no matter how many experiments you have done on corpses, you have not thereby imposed a limit on the nature of events so that in the future they could not vary."

— Gottfried Leibniz

tags: [induction](#), [leibniz](#), [regression](#), [statistics](#)

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"Statistics show that the nature of English crime is reverting to its oldest habits. In a country where so many desire status and wealth, petty annoyances can spark disproportionately violent behaviour. We become frustrated because we feel powerless, invisible, unheard. We crave celebrity, but that's not easy to come by, so we settle for notoriety. Envy and bitterness drive a new breed of lawbreakers, replacing the old motives of poverty and the need for escape. But how do you solve crimes which no longer have traditional motives?"

— Christopher Fowler, *Ten Second Staircase*

tags: [british](#), [crime](#), [crime-solving](#), [habits](#), [motives](#), [poverty](#), [powerless](#), [statistics](#), [status](#), [violence](#), [wealth](#)

10 likes



"Of course, if 40% of women need oxytocin to progress normally, then something is wrong with the definition of normal."

— Henci Goer, *Obstetric Myths Versus Research Realities: A Guide to the Medical Literature*

tags: [birth](#), [doctor](#), [humor](#), [statistics](#)

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"...when one considers that there are more than 750,000 police officers in the United States and that these officers have tens of millions of interactions with citizens each year, it is clear that police shootings are extremely rare events and that few officers--less than one-half of 1 percent each year--ever shoot anyone."

— David Klingler, *Into the Kill Zone: A Cop's Eye View of Deadly Force*

tags: [law-enforcement](#), [shooting](#), [statistics](#)

3 likes



"This book is an essay in what is derogatorily called "literary economics," as opposed to mathematical economics, econometrics, or (embracing them both) the "new economic history." A man does what he can, and in the more elegant -- one is tempted to say "fancier" -- techniques I am, as one who received his formation in the 1930s, untutored. A colleague has offered to provide a mathematical model to decorate the work. It might be useful to some readers, but not to me. Catastrophe mathematics, dealing with such events as falling off a height, is a new branch of the discipline, I am told, which has yet to demonstrate its rigor or usefulness. I had better wait. Econometricians among my friends tell me that rare events such as panics cannot be dealt with by the normal techniques of regression, but have to be introduced exogenously as "dummy variables." The real choice open to me was whether to follow relatively simple statistical procedures, with an abundance of charts and tables, or not. In the event, I decided against it. For those who yearn for numbers, standard series on

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## historical statistics.

— Charles P. Kindleberger, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises*

tags: [econometrics](#), [economics](#), [finance](#), [statistics](#)

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“Regression analysis is the hydrogen bomb of the statistics arsenal.”

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— Charles Wheelan, *Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data*

tags: [statistics](#)

1 likes

“[Adolphe Quetelet] developed the idea of 'social physics', since the regularity of societal statistics seemed to reflect an almost mechanistic underlying process. Just as the random molecules of a gas come together to make predictable physical properties, so the unpredictable workings of millions of individual lives come together to produce, for example, national suicide rates that barely change from year to year.”

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— David Spiegelhalter, *The Art of Statistics: How to Learn from Data*

tags: [statistics](#)

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“The emotions, I have observed, are but slightly influenced by arithmetical considerations: the mother, when her sweet lisping little ones have all been taken from her one after another, and she is hanging over her last dead babe, finds small consolation in the fact that the tiny dimpled corpse is but one of a necessary average, and that a thousand other babes brought into the world at the same time are doing well, and are likely to live; and if you stood beside that mother—if you knew her pang and shared it—it is probable you would be equally unable to see a ground of complacency in statistics.

Doubtless a complacency resting on that basis is highly rational; but emotion, I fear, is obstinately irrational: it insists on caring for individuals; it absolutely refuses to adopt the quantitative view of human anguish, and to admit that thirteen happy lives are a set-off against twelve miserable lives, which leaves a clear balance on the side of satisfaction.”

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— George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*

tags: [emotions](#), [rationality](#), [statistics](#), [suffering](#)

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“Probability does not exist”

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— Bruno De Finetti, *Theory of Probability: A Critical Introductory Treatment*

tags: [math](#), [philosophy](#), [probability](#), [statistics](#)

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“When the CERN teams reported a 'five-sigma' result for the Higgs boson, corresponding to a P-value of around 1 in 3.5 million, the BBC reported the conclusion correctly, saying this meant 'about a one-on-3.5 million chance that the signal they see would appear if there were no Higgs particle.' But nearly every other outlet got the meaning of this P-value wrong. For example, Forbes Magazine reported, 'The chances are less than 1 in a million that it is not the Higgs boson,' a clear example of the prosecutor's fallacy. The Independent was typical in claiming that 'there is less than a one in a million chance that their results are a statistical fluke.' This may not be blatantly mistaken as Forbes, but it is still assigning the small probability to 'their results are a statistical fluke', which is logically the same as saying this is the probability of the null hypothesis being tested.”

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— David Spiegelhalter, *The Art of Statistics: How to Learn from Data*

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“We have seen the problems that result when researchers only report significant findings, but perhaps more important are the conscious or unconscious set of minor decisions that might be made by the researcher

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to stop collecting data, what data to exclude, what factors to adjust for, what groups to emphasize, what outcome measures to focus on, how to split continuous variables into groups, how to handle missing data, and so on. Simonsohn calls these decisions 'researcher degrees of freedom', while Andrew Gelman refers more poetically to the 'garden of forking paths'."

— David Spiegelhalter, The Art of Statistics: How to Learn from Data

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