

Research Methods for Political Science PO3110 (TCD)

HT: Tutorial 1 - Week 2

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<https://github.com/letmeni/research-methods>

28-29 January 2020

Tutorials

- Participation is mandatory;
- Come prepared: reading assigned materials, attending lectures, doing homework;
- Using SPSS ([Download it here](#));
- Going over homework, problem sets and topics from lectures (not a substitute!);

Assessment

- ① 60% \Rightarrow Exam;
- ② 20% \Rightarrow 4 homework exercises.
 - Submit online via Blackboard (Turnitin) on the Monday evening preceding the tutorial session;
- ③ 16% \Rightarrow Research project paper:
 - Deadline: Monday, 20/04 @ 11:59pm
 - Check assigned groups on Blackboard;
- ④ 4% \Rightarrow Tutorial participation, including presentation sessions (Weeks 11&12):
 - *Two unexcused absences in tutorials will be tolerated. Beyond that, the student will receive a zero for participation.*

Late Submission Policy

- Talk to me in advance and send evidence of serious circumstances;
- 5 points per day will be taken off your mark on assignments submitted late without a valid and previous excuse (capped at 30 points for the paper);
- Homework exercises received after noon on Tuesdays automatically receives a zero.

Assignments' Submission

- Blackboard/Turnitin (not by email!);
- \LaTeX , Word/Open Office and submitted as **PDFs**;
- Statistical Software: SPSS. You can use alternatives such as R or STATA if you want, but not Excel!
- Please do include the syntax (code) from whichever software you are using;
- When including tables use the “export” function from SPSS saving figures in high resolution;
- Don't submit screen-shots.

Important Dates

Homework:

- Week 4: HW 1 (Monday, 10 February @ 11:59pm)
- Week 6: HW 2 (Monday, 24 February @ 11:59pm)
- Week 9: HW 3 (Monday, 23 March @ 11:59pm)
- Week 11: HW 4 (Monday, 6 April @ 11:59pm)

Research project:

- Weeks 11 & 12: Group presentations;
- Monday, 20 April @ 11:59pm: Paper submission.

Support

- Slides from HT & MT 2019 :
<http://andrsalvi.github.io/research-methods>
- Slides from **our tutorials** (HT 2020):
<https://github.com/letmeni/research-methods>
- Questions:
 - ① preferably in class;
 - ② Office hours: by appointment, preferably on Tuesdays 13-14;
 - ③ leticia.barbabela@ucdconnect.ie

Today's tutorial

- Describe/summarize a **sample**: measures of central tendency and dispersion;
- Infer something about **population**;
- **Test** a hypothesis.

Using SPSS to describe distributions of variables in our sample

- ① Open SPSS;
- ② Download the dataset from James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," American Political Science Review 97, 1 (March 2003): 75-90:
 - <https://tinyurl.com/method-conflict>
- ③ Calculate mode, median, mean and standard deviation for "population":
 - What do we conclude?
- ④ Do the same for "country region":
 - What is the problem?

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Measures of Central Tendency

Central Tendency:

- Gives us a sense of the where to locate the "centre" of the distribution.

Measures:

- 1 Mode
- 2 Median
- 3 Mean

Practical Calculations of Central Tendency

- **Mode:**

- The score that occurs most frequently in the data set;
- The tallest bar in a frequency distribution.

- **Median:**

- Rank scores according to magnitude;
- Choose the middle one;
- Odd: $\frac{n+1}{2}$
- Even: average between the value at position $\frac{n}{2}$ and $\frac{n+1}{2}$

- **Mean:**

- Average;

- $$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{n}$$

- Influenced by outliers, while mode and median are not.

Measures of Dispersion

- **Range:** Difference between largest and smallest observation;
- **Deviance/Spread:**
 - **Total dispersion:** "Sum of Squared Errors (SS)"

$$\sum (x - \bar{x})^2$$

- **Average dispersion:** "Variance"

$$\text{Var}(x) = \sigma^2 = \frac{SS}{n-1} = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2}{n-1}$$

- **Average dispersion squared:** "Standard deviation"

$$\text{sd}(x) = \sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2}{n-1}} = \sqrt{\sigma^2}$$

The **sample** variance is denoted by s^2 and the **sample** standard deviation by s .¹

¹Greek letters refer to the population and latin ones to the sample

The goal is inference

More than being able to describe/summarize the **sample** (with measures of central tendency and dispersion), we want to learn something (value, relationship ...) about the **population**, for instance ...

Using known distributions

- In statistics we have some known distributions: t-distribution, chi-square, F-distribution etc;
 - Probability density functions;
- **Normalizing:** Transform our data into a distribution we know, e.g.:

$$Z = \frac{\text{estimate} - \text{hypothesized value}}{\text{standard deviation of the estimate}}$$

- we can use this z-score to assess the probability of observing a value this extreme by chance;
- this is more than roughly guessing the probability simply by looking at the distribution in our sample..

Parameter

- A numerical quantity that characterizes a given population;
- As an example we will be looking at the mean;
- The mean is a summary: a hypothetical value that doesn't have to be observed in the data;
- We use the **sample** mean (\bar{x}) to estimate the **population** mean (μ), that is, a parameter;
- The sample we have is one of many possible ones (in a distribution of samples, that also can be describe by measures of central tendency and spread);
- Each different sample will have a different mean.

Central Limit Theory

- As samples get large (> 30), the sampling distribution has a **"normal distribution"** with a mean equal to the population mean;
- The standard deviation of the sample means is also known as the "standard error of the mean" or **standard error**:

$$SE_{\bar{X}} = \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$$

Confidence Intervals

- *Limits constructed such that for a certain percentage of samples (eg.: 95%) the true value of the population parameter will fall within these limits;*
- Confidence Interval (in this case the population parameter is the mean):

$$CI = \bar{x} \pm z * \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$$

The Z score for 95% confidence is 1.96

- It applies to other parameters as well, we are looking at the mean just as an example...
- Let's do it on SPSS with a different dataset...
- Calculate the confidence interval for "age";
- What does this result tell us?

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Hypothesis testing

- Prediction from theory, eg.: *difference with respect to a set value, relationship between variables*;
- Fit a model to the data and evaluate the probability of the results shown by the model given the assumption that no effect exists (null hypothesis);

$$outcome_i = bX_i + error_i$$

- Prediction: difference (one variable) or relationship (two variables)?
- Level of measurement of variable(s);
- Choose levels of significance (eg.: 95%);
- Test statistic = $\frac{effect}{error}$
- p-value: probability of getting such a test statistic score under null hypothesis.

References

- Field, A (2013) *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*. 4th edition. London:Sage
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