

Self-Study Material (OLD)



RKDF UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

Fourth Semester

Course	Category	Subject	Subject Code
B.A.	GE	STATISTICAL METHODS FOR ECONOMICS	BA-EC-403
Total Credit: 6		Max.Marks:100 (Internal:40+External:60)	

Course Outcomes (CO):

After completing this course student will be able to:

CO1:- gain insights about the significance of Statistics in Economics.

CO2:- have knowledge about the sampling and its methods.

CO3:- understand the conceptual framework of correlation and relation with variables. CO-4: elucidate the facets of index numbers and their methods.

CO4:- to apply the knowledge regarding various research tools.

Units	Topic	Duration (In Hours)	Marks
I	<p>Introduction and Overview</p> <p>The distinction between populations and samples and between population parameters and sample statistics, the use of measures of location and variation to describe and summarize data</p>	18	20
II	<p>Elementary Probability Theory</p> <p>Sample spaces and events; probability axioms and properties Bayes' rule, independence.</p>	18	20
III	<p>Random Variables and Probability Distributions</p> <p>Defining random variables, probability distributions, functions of random variables, continuous distributions (uniform, binomial, normal, poisson and exponential random variables).</p> <p>Keywords: Random variable</p>	18	20
IV	<p>Random Sampling and Jointly Distributed Random Variables</p> <p>Density and distribution functions for jointly distributed random variables computing expected values" Sampling Principal steps in a sample survey, methods of sampling, the role of sampling theory properties of random samples</p> <p>Keywords: Sampling survey</p>	18	20

Part- C Learning Resource

Text Books, Reference Books, Other Resources

Suggested Readings:

1. Ahuja, H.L. (Latest Addition). Principles of Micro Economics, Sultan Chand and Company, New Delhi (Hindi and English Versions)
2. Barla, C.S. (Latest Addition) , Micro Economics, National Publishing House, Jaipur, New Delhi (Hindi and English Versions)

Reference Book

1 CB Gupta An Introduction to Statistical Method 2 PN Arora Statistical Method

1 Richard J. Larsen and Morris L. Marx, An Introduction to Mathematical Statistics

Suggestive digital platform web links <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistics> Equivalent

Courses:

NPTEL Course: Introduction To Probability And Statistics

Code Details Gender-1 Environment & Sustainably-17 Human Values-13] Professional Ethics-14
Employability-1) Entrepreneurship

Signature of Members

Suggestive digital platforms web links

1. <https://epgo.inflibnet.ac.in/Home/> view Subject? Catid = 11
2. <https://vidyamitra.inflibnet.ac.in/index.php/search?subject%5B%D=Fundamentals+of+microeconomic+theory&domain%5B%5D=Social+Sciences>
3. <https://www.swayamprabha.gov.in/index.php/channel/profile/profile/7>

Suggested equivalent online courses:: <http://www.mcafee.cc/Introecon/IEA2007.pdf>.

The distinction between populations and samples and between population parameters and sample statistics

Understanding the difference between populations and samples, as well as between population parameters and sample statistics, is fundamental in statistics and research methodology.

1. Population vs. Sample:

- **Population:** In statistics, a population refers to the entire group that you want to draw conclusions about. It includes all individuals or items that meet certain criteria.
- **Sample:** A sample, on the other hand, is a subset of the population. It's a smaller group selected from the population, often in a systematic or random way, with the aim of making inferences about the entire population.

2. Population Parameters vs. Sample Statistics:

- **Population Parameters:** These are numerical values that describe certain characteristics of a population. For example, the mean (average), median, mode, standard deviation, variance, etc., are all population parameters. Since it's often impractical or impossible to measure an entire population, these parameters are usually unknown and must be estimated using sample statistics.
- **Sample Statistics:** These are numerical values calculated from the data collected from a sample. They are used to estimate population parameters. For example, if you calculate the average height of 100 randomly selected people from a population, that average height is a sample statistic. It's used to estimate the population mean height.

Population parameter vs. sample statistic

When you collect data from a population or a sample, there are various measurements and numbers you can calculate from the data. A parameter is a measure that describes the whole population. A statistic is a measure that describes the sample.

You can use estimation or hypothesis testing to estimate how likely it is that a sample statistic differs from the population parameter.

Research example: Parameters and statistics in your study of students' political attitudes, you ask your survey participants to rate themselves on a scale from 1, very liberal, to 7, very conservative. You find that most of your sample identifies as liberal – the mean rating on the political attitudes scale is 3.2.

You can use this statistic, the sample mean of 3.2, to make a scientific guess about the population parameter – that is, to infer the mean political attitude rating of all undergraduate students in the Netherlands.

Sampling error

A sampling error is the difference between a population parameter and a sample statistic. In your study, the sampling error is the difference between the mean political attitude rating of your sample and the true mean political attitude rating of all undergraduate students in the Netherlands.

Sampling errors happen even when you use a randomly selected sample. This is because random samples are not identical to the population in terms of numerical measures like means and standard deviations.

Because the aim of scientific research is to generalize findings from the sample to the population, you want the sampling error to be low. You can reduce sampling error by increasing the sample size.

Key Points:

- Populations are the entire group of interest, while samples are subsets of populations.
- Population parameters are characteristics of populations, while sample statistics are characteristics of samples.
- Statistical inference involves using sample statistics to make educated guesses about population parameters.

Understanding these distinctions is crucial for ensuring that the conclusions drawn from a sample accurately reflect the population it's drawn from. Improper sampling techniques or confusion between populations and samples can lead to biased or unreliable results.

The use of measures of location and variation to describe and summarize data

Measures of location and variation are fundamental tools in descriptive statistics used to summarize and understand datasets. Here's an overview of each:

1. **Measures of Location (Central Tendency):** These measures indicate the central or typical value of a dataset. Common measures of location include:
 - **Mean:** The average value calculated by summing up all values in the dataset and dividing by the total number of values. It is sensitive to outliers.
 - **Median:** The middle value in a dataset when arranged in ascending order. It is less affected by outliers compared to the mean.
 - **Mode:** The value(s) that occur most frequently in the dataset. A dataset may have one mode (unimodal) or multiple modes (multimodal).
2. **Measures of Variation (Dispersion):** These measures describe the spread or variability of the data points around the measures of central tendency. Common measures of variation include:
 - **Range:** The difference between the maximum and minimum values in the dataset. It's simple but sensitive to outliers.
 - **Variance:** The average of the squared differences from the mean. It gives a measure of how much the values in the dataset deviate from the mean. However, it's not in the original units of the data, so the standard deviation is often preferred.
 - **Standard Deviation:** The square root of the variance. It provides a measure of the average distance of data points from the mean. It's commonly used because it's in the same units as the data and is sensitive to outliers.
 - **Interquartile Range (IQR):** The range between the first quartile (25th percentile) and the third quartile (75th percentile). It's less sensitive to outliers than the range.

These measures collectively provide a comprehensive summary of the dataset, giving insight into its central tendency and dispersion. They help in understanding the distribution of data points, identifying outliers, and making comparisons between different datasets. Depending on the nature of the data and the objectives of analysis, different measures may be more appropriate.

Population moments and their sample counterparts

Population moments are statistical measures that describe the characteristics of a probability distribution for a population, while their sample counterparts are estimates of these moments computed from a sample of data drawn from that population.

Here's an overview of some common population moments and their sample counterparts:

1. Mean (First Moment):

- Population Moment: The mean of a population is the average value of all the individual data points in the population. It's often denoted by μ (mu).
- Sample Counterpart: The sample mean (\bar{x}) is calculated as the sum of all observations in the sample divided by the number of observations.

2. Variance (Second Moment):

- Population Moment: Variance measures the spread or dispersion of a population distribution. It's the average of the squared differences from the mean. Population variance is denoted by σ^2 (sigma squared).
- Sample Counterpart: The sample variance (s^2) is an estimate of the population variance, calculated similarly, but dividing by $n-1$ instead of n to correct for bias. It's computed as the sum of the squared differences from the sample mean, divided by $n-1$, where n is the sample size.

3. Standard Deviation:

- Population Moment: The standard deviation is the square root of the variance. It's denoted by σ (sigma).
- Sample Counterpart: The sample standard deviation (s) is the square root of the sample variance. It provides a measure of the dispersion of the sample data around the sample mean.

4. Skewness (Third Moment):

- Population Moment: Skewness measures the asymmetry of the probability distribution of a real-valued random variable about its mean. Positive skewness indicates a longer tail on the right, while negative skewness indicates a longer tail on the left.

- Sample Counterpart: Sample skewness is an estimate of population skewness, calculated from sample data. It indicates the asymmetry of the sample distribution.

5. Kurtosis (Fourth Moment):

- Population Moment: Kurtosis measures the "tailedness" of the probability distribution of a real-valued random variable. It indicates whether the data are heavy-tailed or light-tailed relative to a normal distribution.
- Sample Counterpart: Sample kurtosis is an estimate of population kurtosis, calculated from sample data. It provides information about the peakedness of the sample distribution.

These moments and their sample counterparts are essential in descriptive statistics, as they provide insights into the central tendency, variability, and shape of a population or sample distribution. They help analysts understand the characteristics of data and make inferences about the underlying population based on sample data.

Elementary Probability Theory

Sample spaces and events; probability axioms and properties

The fundamental concepts of probability theory:

Sample Space and Events:

1. **Sample Space (S):** The sample space is the set of all possible outcomes of a random experiment. It's denoted by S . For example, when rolling a fair six-sided die, the sample space is $S = \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$.
2. **Event (E):** An event is a subset of the sample space, i.e., a collection of outcomes of interest. It's denoted by E . For example, if we define the event "rolling an even number," then $E = \{2, 4, 6\}$.

Probability Axioms:

The concept of probability is built on three fundamental axioms:

1. **Non-negativity:** The probability of any event is a non-negative real number. That is, for any event E , $0 \leq P(E) \leq 1$.
2. **Normalization:** The sum of the probabilities of all possible outcomes in the sample space is 1. Mathematically, for a sample space S , $P(S) = 1$.
3. **Additivity:** For mutually exclusive events (events that cannot occur simultaneously), the probability of their union is the sum of their individual probabilities. Mathematically, if E_1, E_2, \dots, E_n are mutually exclusive events, then the probability of their union is:

$$P(E_1 \cup E_2 \cup \dots \cup E_n) = P(E_1) + P(E_2) + \dots + P(E_n)$$

Probability Properties:

1. **Complement:** The complement of an event E (denoted by E' or E^c) consists of all outcomes not in E . The probability of the complement of an event is $1 - P(E)$.
2. **Intersection:** The intersection of two events E_1 and E_2 (denoted by $E_1 \cap E_2$) consists of outcomes that belong to both events. The probability of the intersection of two events is denoted by $P(E_1 \cap E_2)$.
3. **Union:** The union of two events E_1 and E_2 (denoted by $E_1 \cup E_2$) consists of outcomes that belong to either event E_1 or event E_2 . The probability of the union of two events is denoted by $P(E_1 \cup E_2)$.
4. **Independence:** Two events E_1 and E_2 are independent if the occurrence of one event does not affect the occurrence of the other. In terms of probability, $P(E_1 \cap E_2) = P(E_1) \times P(E_2)$.
5. **Conditional Probability:** The probability of event E_1 given that event E_2 has occurred is denoted by $P(E_1 | E_2)$ and calculated as $\frac{P(E_1 \cap E_2)}{P(E_2)}$, provided $P(E_2) > 0$.

These axioms and properties form the foundation of probability theory and are used to calculate probabilities in various real-world scenarios, from gambling to weather forecasting to financial modeling.

Bayes' rule, independence

Bayes' Rule:

Bayes' rule is a fundamental theorem in probability theory that describes how to update the probability of a hypothesis H given evidence E in light of prior knowledge $P(H)$ and $P(E|H)$. It's given by:

$$P(H|E) = \frac{P(E|H) \times P(H)}{P(E)}$$

where:

- $P(H|E)$ is the posterior probability of hypothesis H given evidence E ,
- $P(E|H)$ is the likelihood of observing evidence E given hypothesis H ,
- $P(H)$ is the prior probability of hypothesis H ,
- $P(E)$ is the marginal probability of evidence E .

Bayes' rule is particularly useful in fields like statistics, machine learning, and medical diagnosis.

Independence:

Events A and B are independent if the occurrence of one event does not affect the occurrence of the other. Mathematically, two events are independent if:

$$P(A \cap B) = P(A) \times P(B)$$

or equivalently:

$$P(A|B) = P(A) \quad \text{and} \quad P(B|A) = P(B)$$

If events AAA and BBB are independent, then knowing that one event has occurred does not provide any information about the occurrence of the other.

Understanding these concepts is crucial for various applications in probability theory, statistics, and decision-making processes in many fields.

Random Variables and Probability Distributions

Random Variable Definition

In probability, a random variable is a real valued function whose domain is the sample space of the random experiment. It means that each outcome of a random experiment is associated with a single real number, and the single real number may vary with the different outcomes of a random experiment. Hence, it is called a random variable and it is generally represented by the letter “X”.

For example, let us consider an experiment for tossing a coin two times.

Hence, the sample space for this experiment is $S = \{HH, HT, TH, TT\}$

If X is a random variable and it denotes the number of heads obtained, then the values are represented as follows:

$$X(HH) = 2, X(HT) = 1, X(TH) = 1, X(TT) = 0.$$

Similarly, we can define the number of tails obtained using another variable, say Y.

$$(i.e) Y(HH) = 0, Y(HT) = 1, Y(TH) = 1, Y(TT) = 2.$$

Random Variables

A variable is something which can change its value. It may vary with different outcomes of an experiment. If the value of a variable depends upon the outcome of a random experiment it is a random variable. A random variable can take up any real value.

Mathematically, a random variable is a real-valued function whose domain is a sample space S of a random experiment. A random variable is always denoted by capital letter like X, Y, M etc. The lowercase letters like x, y, z, m etc. represent the value of the random variable.

Consider the random experiment of tossing a coin 20 times. You will earn Rs. 5 if you get head and will lose Rs. 5 if it is a tail. You and your friend are all set to see who will win the game by earning more money. Here, we see that the value of getting head for the coin tossed for 20 times is anything from zero to twenty. If we denote the number of a head by X , then

$X = \{0, 1, 2, \dots, 20\}$. The probability of getting a head is always $\frac{1}{2}$.

Properties of a Random Variable

- It only takes the real value.
- If X is a random variable and C is a constant, then CX is also a random variable.
- If X_1 and X_2 are two random variables, then $X_1 + X_2$ and $X_1 - X_2$ are also random.
- For any constants C_1 and C_2 , $C_1X_1 + C_2X_2$ is also random.
- $|X|$ is a random variable.

Types of Random Variable

A random variable can be categorized into two types.

Discrete Random Variable

As the name suggests, this variable is not connected or continuous. A variable which can only assume a countable number of real values i.e., the value of the discrete random sample is discrete in nature. The value of the random variable depends on chance. In other words, a real-valued function defined on a discrete sample space is a discrete random variable.

The number of calls a person gets in a day, the number of items sold by a company, the number of items manufactured, number of accidents, number of gifts received on birthday etc. are some of the discrete random variables.

Continuous Random variable

A variable which assumes infinite values of the sample space is a continuous random variable. It can take all possible values between certain limits. It can also take integral as well as

fractional values. The height, weight, age of a person, the distance between two cities etc. are some of the continuous random variables.

Probability Distribution

For any event of a random experiment, we can find its corresponding probability. For different values of the random variable, we can find its respective probability. The values of random variables along with the corresponding probabilities are the probability distribution of the random variable.

Assume X is a random variable. A function $P(X)$ is the probability distribution of X . Any function F defined for all real x by $F(x) = P(X \leq x)$ is called the distribution function of the random variable X .

Properties of Probability Distribution

- The probability distribution of a random variable X is $P(X = x_i) = p_i$ for $x = x_i$ and $P(X = x_i) = 0$ for $x \neq x_i$.
- The range of probability distribution for all possible values of a random variable is from 0 to 1, i.e., $0 \leq p(x) \leq 1$.

Probability Distribution of a Discrete Random Variable

If X is a discrete random variable with discrete values $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n, \dots$ then the probability function is $P(x) = p_X(x)$. The distribution function is

$$F_X(x) = P(X \leq x_i) = \sum_i p(x_i) = p_i$$

if $x = x_i$ and is 0 for other values of x . Here, $i = 1, 2, \dots, n, \dots$

Functions of random variables

Expected Value of Functions of Random Variables:

If X is a random variable and $g(X)$ is a function of X , then the expected value of $g(X)$ is denoted by $E[g(X)]$. It's calculated by finding the expected value of $g(X)$ for all possible values of X , weighted by their respective probabilities (or probability densities).

For example, if X is a random variable representing the outcome of rolling a fair six-sided die, and $g(X) = X^2$, then:

$$E[g(X)] = E[X^2] = \sum_{x=1}^6 x^2 \cdot \frac{1}{6} = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{x=1}^6 x^2 = \frac{1}{6} (1^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + 4^2 + 5^2 + 6^2) = \frac{1}{6} (1 + 4 + 9 + 16 + 25 + 36) = \frac{91}{6}$$

or, if X follows a continuous distribution, you would integrate over the range of X instead of summing.

Properties of Expected Values of Functions:

- Linearity:** The linearity property holds for expected values of functions of random variables as well. That is, for constants a and b , and random variable X , Y , and Z , we have: $E[ag(X) + bh(Y)] = aE[g(X)] + bE[h(Y)]$
 $E[a g(X) + b h(Y)] = a E[g(X)] + b E[h(Y)]$
- Expectation of a Constant:** $E[c] = cE[1] = c$ for any constant c .

These properties make the expected value an essential tool in probability theory and statistics, helping to quantify uncertainty and make predictions about random phenomena.

Continuous distributions (uniform, binomial, normal, poisson and exponential random variables)

Continuous distributions are mathematical representations of random variables that can take on an infinite number of possible values within a given range. These distributions are characterized by probability density functions (PDFs), which describe the likelihood of a random variable assuming certain values.

Here's an overview of some common continuous distributions:

1. Uniform Distribution:

- The uniform distribution is defined over a finite interval and is characterized by constant probability density within that interval.
- It is often denoted as $U(a,b)$, where a and b are the lower and upper bounds of the interval, respectively.
- The probability density function is given by: $f(x) = \frac{1}{b-a}$, for $a \leq x \leq b$
- All values within the interval have an equal probability of occurring.

2. Normal Distribution (Gaussian Distribution):

- The normal distribution is perhaps the most widely known and utilized continuous distribution.
- It is characterized by a bell-shaped curve and is fully defined by two parameters: the mean (μ) and the standard deviation (σ).
- The probability density function of the normal distribution is given by: $f(x) = \frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$
- It is symmetric around the mean and approximately 68% of the data falls within one standard deviation of the mean (empirical rule).

3. Binomial Distribution:

- Although often associated with discrete random variables, the binomial distribution can also be approximated for continuous random variables when the number of trials is large.
- It represents the number of successes in a fixed number of independent Bernoulli trials, each with the same probability of success.
- The probability density function for the binomial distribution is given by: $f(x) = \binom{n}{x} p^x (1-p)^{n-x}$ where n is the number of trials, x is the number of successes, and p is the probability of success in each trial.

4. Poisson Distribution:

- The Poisson distribution models the number of events occurring within a fixed interval of time or space when these events occur with a known constant rate and independently of the time since the last event.
- It is characterized by a single parameter, usually denoted by λ , which represents the average rate of occurrence of the events.
- The probability mass function of the Poisson distribution is given by:
$$f(x) = \frac{e^{-\lambda} \lambda^x}{x!}$$
 where x represents the number of events occurring in the given interval.

5. Exponential Distribution:

- The exponential distribution models the time between events in a Poisson process, where events occur continuously and independently at a constant average rate.
- It is characterized by a single parameter, often denoted by λ , which represents the rate parameter (the average number of events occurring in a unit interval of time).
- The probability density function of the exponential distribution is given by:
$$f(x) = \lambda e^{-\lambda x}, \text{ for } x \geq 0$$
 where x represents the time between events.

These continuous distributions have various applications in fields such as statistics, finance, engineering, and natural sciences, providing valuable tools for modeling and analyzing random phenomena.

Random Sampling and Jointly Distributed Random Variables

Density and distribution functions for jointly distributed random variables computing expected values

Random variables refer to a set of two or more random variables that are dependent on the same underlying probability space. Understanding their density and distribution functions is crucial for computing expected values and analyzing their behavior. Let's explore these concepts in more detail:

1. Joint Probability Density Function (PDF):

- For jointly distributed continuous random variables X and Y , the joint probability density function $f_{XY}(x,y)$ describes the probability of observing values x and y simultaneously.
- Properties of joint PDF:
 - $f_{XY}(x,y) \geq 0$ for all x and y .
 - $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_{XY}(x,y) dx dy = 1$, indicating that the total probability over all possible outcomes is 1.

2. Marginal Probability Density Function:

- Marginal PDFs describe the probability distribution of individual random variables from a joint distribution.
- The marginal PDF of X , denoted as $f_X(x)$, is obtained by integrating the joint PDF over all possible values of Y :
$$f_X(x) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f_{XY}(x,y) dy$$
- Similarly, the marginal PDF of Y , denoted as $f_Y(y)$, is obtained by integrating the joint PDF over all possible values of X .

3. Joint Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF):

- The joint cumulative distribution function $F_{XY}(x,y)$ gives the probability that X and Y are less than or equal to certain values x and y respectively:
$$F_{XY}(x,y) = P(X \leq x, Y \leq y)$$
- From the joint CDF, marginal CDFs can be obtained by fixing one variable and letting the other vary.

4. Expected Values:

- Expected values of functions of jointly distributed random variables can be computed using double integrals.
- For a function $g(X,Y)$ of jointly distributed random variables X and Y , the expected value is given by:
$$E[g(X,Y)] = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} g(x,y) f_{XY}(x,y) dx dy$$

- The expected value of a function $g(X, Y)$ can also be computed by integrating over the range of possible values for each variable, weighted by the joint PDF.

Understanding these density and distribution functions allows for the analysis of the joint behavior of random variables, calculation of probabilities, and estimation of expected values for various functions of interest. They are fundamental in probability theory and statistics, with applications in fields such as finance, engineering, and biology.

Principal steps in a sample survey, methods of sampling, the role of sampling theory properties of random samples

Principal Steps in a Sample Survey:

- Define the Objective:** Clearly state the purpose of the survey and the population of interest.
- Design the Survey:** Determine the survey methodology, including the sampling method, questionnaire design, and data collection procedures.
- Select the Sample:** Choose a representative subset of the population from which data will be collected.
- Data Collection:** Administer the survey to the selected sample.
- Data Analysis:** Process and analyze the collected data to draw conclusions and make inferences about the population.
- Report Findings:** Present the survey results in a clear and understandable format, often including descriptive statistics, tables, and charts.

Methods of Sampling:

- Simple Random Sampling:** Every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, and each sample of the same size has an equal chance of being chosen.

b. **Stratified Sampling:** The population is divided into subgroups (strata) based on certain characteristics, and random samples are then drawn from each stratum.

c. **Cluster Sampling:** The population is divided into clusters, and a random sample of clusters is selected. Then, data is collected from all members within the selected clusters.

d. **Systematic Sampling:** A random starting point is chosen, and then every n th member of the population is selected to be part of the sample.

e. **Convenience Sampling:** Sampling based on the availability and accessibility of subjects.

f. **Snowball Sampling:** Existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances.

Role of Sampling Theory:

Sampling theory provides a framework for making inferences about a population based on a sample. It involves understanding the properties of random samples, such as:

a. **Representativeness:** A sample should accurately represent the population from which it is drawn.

b. **Bias:** Samples should be selected in a way that minimizes bias, ensuring that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected.

c. **Precision:** Precision refers to the amount of variability or uncertainty in the estimates derived from the sample. Sampling theory helps quantify this uncertainty.

d. **Efficiency:** Efficient sampling methods aim to minimize the sample size while still achieving the desired level of precision.

e. **Generalizability:** Sampling theory helps determine the extent to which findings from a sample can be generalized to the population.

Sampling theory also guides the selection of appropriate sampling methods and the calculation of sample sizes necessary to achieve desired levels of precision and confidence in

survey results. It underpins the validity and reliability of survey findings and is essential for sound statistical inference.