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How to read statistics?

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Plan

- Why, how and when are statistics useful?
- Measurement issues: How to count what counts?
- Human rights data bases
- Statistical study example

Increased used of statistics in the HR field

- Monitoring: indicators, the MDGs
- Advocacy tools
- New Data sets
- Academic analyses

Statistics is a powerful tool

- Sally Clark case



- D.H and others v. the Czech Republic (ECHR)



Why statistics?

Quantitative vs. Qualitative

- Quantitative information is countable, structured, information poor
- Qualitative information is unstructured, information-rich, context-specific

Why statistics?

- When dealing with many observations, qualitative information becomes overwhelming.
- Statistics allows us to summarise quantitative information into a more useful amount of information.
- Better suited for generating universally generalisable results
- ...and because it is cool!

Discussion

What does this study tell us?

- Carlson, Matthew & Ola Listhaug (2007) “Citizens’ Perceptions of Human Rights Practices: An Analysis of 55 Countries” *Journal of Peace Research*, 44 (4): 465-483

On Measurement and Statistics

- Quantitative data are always:
 - Dependent on the definitions used
 - Data material available
 - Rigor of the coders
- To be useful, a particular measure must be:
 - Valid:
 - Concept validity
 - Measurement validity
 - Internal and external validity
 - Reliable
 - Coders must be competent and unbiased
 - Coding rules must be explicit

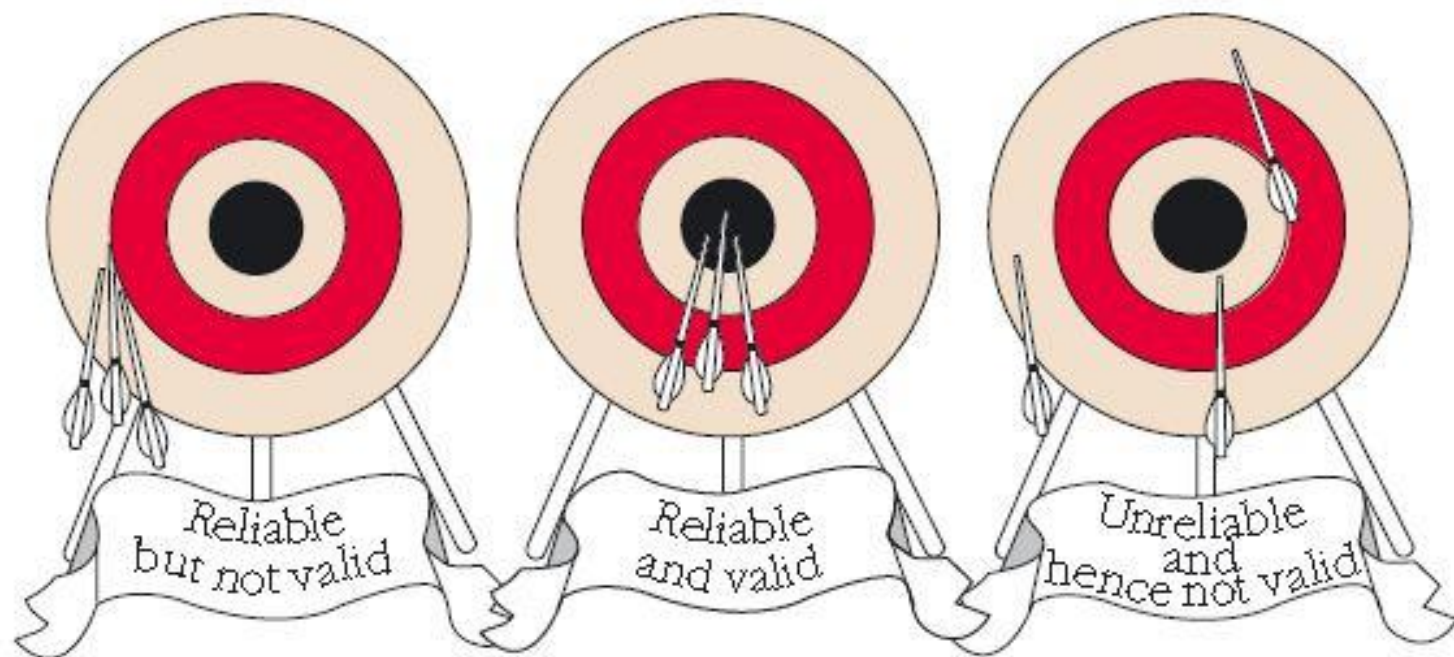


Figure 5.1 *Reliability and validity.* (Source: Open University, 1979, Classification and Measurement, DE304, Block 5, The Open University, Milton Keynes, p. 68)

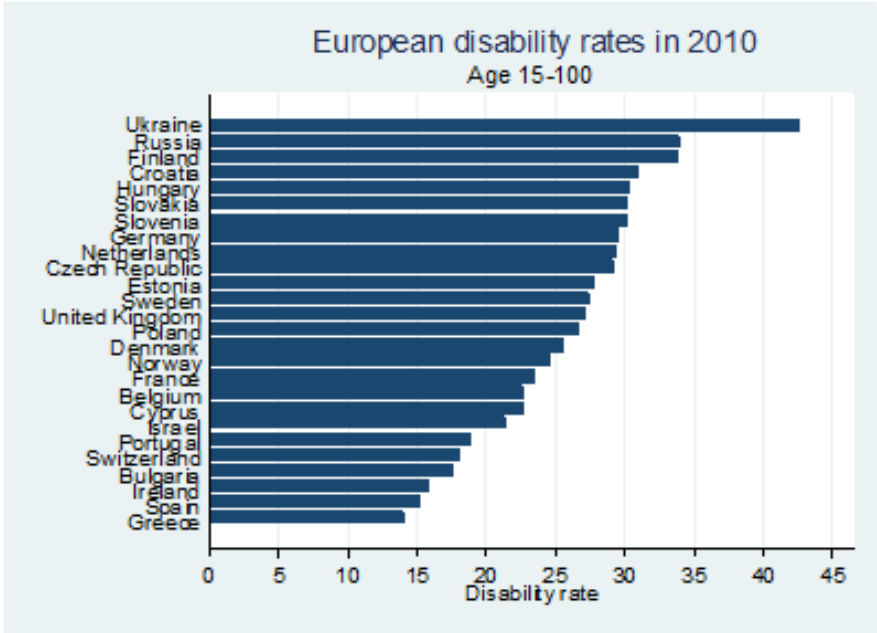
Read

Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Robert Adcock & David Collier

The American Political Science Review, Vol. 95, No. 3. (Sep., 2001), pp. 529-546.

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28200109%2995%3A3%3C529%3AMVASSF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y>



Human Rights data

Validity

- What are HR?
- How do we conceptualise/measure it?

Human rights data

Freedom House

- Free, partly free, not free (1 through 7)
- 10 political rights questions
 - procedural and actual
- 15 civil liberties questions
 - Expression, association, rule of law, individualism
- Particularly useful as indicator of performance
- Problem with time series: moving scale
- Policy Advocates – interested in particular outcomes...
- <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Human Rights Data

Political Terror Scale (PTS)

- Five-level index (subjective placement)
 - Based on Amnesty International and US State Department annual reports
 - 1976-2006
 - State-sanctioned killings, torture, disappearances, political imprisonment
 - Regarded as reliable but not too informative
- <http://www.politicalterror scale.org/>

Human Rights Data

- CIRI (Cingranelli-Richards HR data)
- Measures of government respect for 15 human rights
 - Based on Amnesty International and US State Department annual reports
 - 1981-2007
 - From killing and torture to worker's and women's rights
 - Data truncation
- <http://ciri.binghamton.edu/>

Human Rights Data

- SERF - Economic and Social Rights Empowerment Initiative
 - Index on the right to work, health, food, housing and education
 - measures the protection of rights relative to the country's economic capacity by adopting an “achievement possibility frontier”
- <http://www.serfindex.org>

Human Rights data

Reliability

- number of human rights violations is extremely difficult to measure precisely
- a change in a country's value on a standardised scale only means that the number of violations *reported* have changed. It does not necessarily mean that there has been an actual change.
- Missing data

Human Rights data

- Rough estimates rather than precise and objective facts
- Still useful and informative

- At present most focus on:
 - civil and political rights
 - negative aspects of rights

Example on statistical study:

Do Human Rights Violations Increase the Risk of Civil War?

“[I]t is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law”

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948: preamble para.3)

Challenges

- Enogeneity / causality



- Dependency
- Omitted variables (explanatory factors)
- Lack of data

Solutions

- Apply time-series cross sectional data
- Look at HRV *before* the onset
- Low threshold of civil war
- Modelation of temporal- and spatial dependence
- Include relevant control variables
- Control for unobserved time consistent variables

Results

Table 2: Regression results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Social and Economic Rights	0.980** (-2.451)		
Political Terror Scale		1.398*** (3.189)	
Social and Economic Rights Proxy			1.300*** (2.641)
GDP per Capita (log)	0.897 (-1.069)	0.770*** (-3.270)	0.701*** (-4.887)
Population (log)	1.450*** (5.582)	1.276*** (3.711)	1.423*** (6.326)
Other ongoing conflicts	0.659 (-1.502)	0.578** (-2.021)	0.725 (-1.356)
Spatial lag of conflict (50km)	1.580 (1.109)	1.205 (0.468)	1.651 (1.465)
Proximity to regime change	1.129 (0.402)	0.805 (-0.695)	1.399 (1.375)
Proximity to previous conflict	2.473** (2.445)	2.567*** (2.635)	2.090** (2.308)
ethnicity relevant	1.960 (1.415)	2.168 (1.635)	2.505** (2.311)
Constant	0.000*** (-6.661)	0.000*** (-5.545)	0.000*** (-7.086)
Log Likelihood	-414.22	-448.35	-641.01
Log Likelihood null model	-446.89	-491.77	-695.87
N	2544	3191	4637

- Human rights violations increase the risk of civil war!
- SERF: yearly increase of 3,2 pp
- PTS: yearly increase of 4 pp
- CP: almost no support

Questions?