

Foreword

Statistics is a vital part of social science training. In the United States, statistical understanding is required for undergraduate academic degrees across the social sciences. It is considered an indispensable component of research methods and a prerequisite for postgraduate study, which typically includes further study in advanced and specialised statistical topics. In the United Kingdom, statistical analysis is fast becoming a priority for postgraduate training although undergraduate degrees in sociology and related fields tend to place less emphasis on quantitative methods. British undergraduates gain experience in use of qualitative research techniques through completion of the undergraduate dissertation. In my experience, as a visiting lecturer at the Institute of Criminology, the University of Malta tends to blend the best of both traditions. Maltese students have the opportunity to learn statistical techniques at the undergraduate level, and further, to incorporate these in methodological designs for undergraduate dissertations.

The Research Road We Make: Statistics for the Uninitiated represents a perfect example of the Maltese tradition of pursuing the best of both worlds. The authors begin with an explanation of the research process, which situates statistical analysis within overall project design. Next, the discussion examines the types of data suitable for statistical techniques and provides a guide to data collection. The authors then move on to issues of interpretation of findings and presentation of results; this discussion includes an explanation of the very latest methods of visual projection. The final sections explain computer-assisted techniques and tools for data management. Overall, the text provides an engaging, substantive explanation of statistical analysis with reference to interesting, real-world issues important for social research.

In addition, the authors provide a bridge between concepts and techniques, many of which have been developed in Europe and North America, with applications to the Maltese context. To carry out effective and meaningful social science research, it is important to consider Malta's history, culture, and geography, and the discussion here achieves this with a range of examples from the Maltese Islands. *The Research Road We Make* represents an indispensable resource for success in statistical research.

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