

## Assignment #2: News article analysis

**Overview** For this assignment, you will write a brief report analyzing a news article that has some statistical content. Goals for this assignment are

- to connect ideas from this course to information and issues you will encounter in relation to your personal life or your role as a citizen
- to critically analyze statistical content in news articles

**Details** Find a news article that deals with the results of a study and has some statistical content related to what we have discussed in the course. In particular, you should look for a news article that involves the framework of variable/population/parameter/sample/statistic where the parameter/statistic of interest is a *mean* or a *proportion*. The news article you use should come from an established source aimed at a broad audience such as a newspaper or magazine. You can use an online source but should take care in evaluating the rigor of a source that is not widely known. Check with me if you are not sure. You should find your own news article and not use one if you know someone else in the class is using it.

Your report should focus on explaining the nature and results of the study in terms of the concepts and language we have been developing in this course. Here are some specific questions you might address:

- What broad question is being addressed by the study?
- To what populations(s) does the question apply?
- Is the study experimental or observational?
- For an experimental study, what are the treatments and outcomes?
- What are the relevant variables in the study?
- What is the size of the sample in the study? How were subjects in the sample selected?
- What are the parameters (means or proportions) of interest?
- What values of statistics (means or proportions) are reported?

Some of these questions might not be relevant to your news article. The news article might not provide enough information to answer all of the relevant questions. You might want to find the original source of the news article. Often, local papers use articles from national papers or wire services. The version that appears in the local paper is often edited to be briefer than the original version. You might also find it informative to trace the source for the news article. The original source might be a press article or a study published in an academic journal. These are sometimes available online. Try searching on any authors or institutions mentioned in the news article.

If your news article discusses several studies or multiple aspects of one study, you can focus on just one piece.

**Specific requirements** Submit a two to three page report by Monday, March 29. Your paper should be written with the following requirements:

- Use standard letter paper with reasonable margins and a reasonable font size (11 or 12 pt). Printing double-sided is fine.
- Use double or one-and-a-half line spacing to allow room for me to write comments.
- Include a full reference to your news article.
- Attach a copy of the news article or a link to an online version of the article.  
Note: In most word processors, you can include a link directly in the text. For example, in *Word*, go to the **Insert** menu and find **Hyperlink...** This will bring up a dialog box with **Link to:** where you can paste the web address (something like <http://www.nytimes.com/myarticle.html>).