

# SPSS AND PSPP FREQUENCIES COMMAND: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

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## Instructions

Descriptive statistics can be obtained using the Frequencies command. The path in both SPSS and PSPP is **Analyze>Descriptive Statistics> Frequencies**. In both packages the variables to be tabulated should be toggled from the list of variables on the left to the **Variable(s)** box on the right.

The settings in the command dialog box vary by software package.

### *SPSS Instructions*

- In the lower left-hand corner of the command dialog box, uncheck **Display frequency tables**. Frequency tables with numeric data are usually meaningless.
- Under the **Statistics** button, check the box for **Quartiles** in the Percentile Values section, and then check all statistics in the sections for Central Tendencies, Dispersion, and Characterize Posterior Distribution. Do not check **Values are Group Midpoints**.

### *PSPP Instructions*

- Click on all the Statistics in the command dialog box. Each statistic must be turned on individually.
- Under **Frequency Tables**, Display frequency tables should be set to *Never*.

## APA Tables

Tables for descriptive statistics usually include the mean and the standard deviation or standard error. The N is also appropriate if the number of observations varies by variable. Skewness and kurtosis are also appropriate if there is a need to discuss the shape of the curve. The mean and a related measure of dispersion are regarded as important because many higher order statistics are based on them. The other statistics can be used as appropriate, and even if not reported, are important for understanding the shape of the distribution.

## Written Interpretation

There is considerable variation in published research about how much should be discussed since the literate reader can discern what is happening from a well developed table. If there are measures unique to the study, they should certainly be described at length, and describing the dependent variable and any key analytic variables is also appropriate.

There is no consensus on who to deal with a transformed data, such as logarithmic and square-root transformations to alleviate skewness to the right. The transformed data are the underlying variables for higher-order statistics; however, the untransformed data is often more intuitive to the reader. Regardless the final decision, the transformation should always be mentioned when discussing variables in the Methods section.