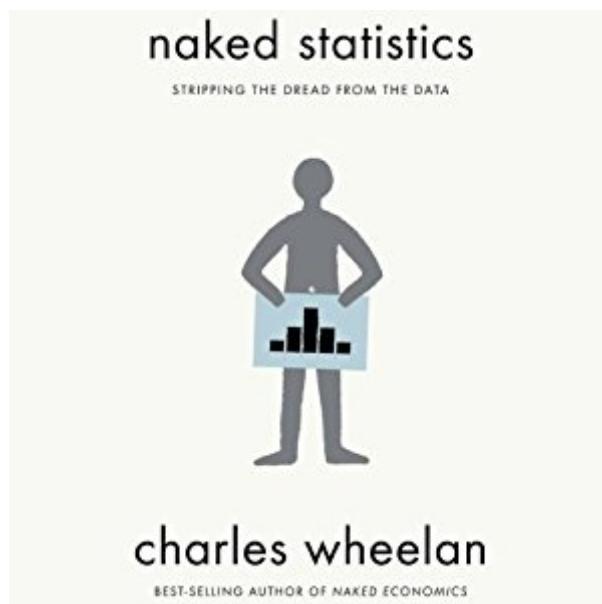


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# Naked Statistics: Stripping The Dread From The Data



## **Synopsis**

Audie Award Finalist, Business/Educational, 2014 Once considered tedious, the field of statistics is rapidly evolving into a discipline Hal Varian, chief economist at Google, has actually called "sexy". From batting averages and political polls to game shows and medical research, the real-world application of statistics continues to grow by leaps and bounds. How can we catch schools that cheat on standardized tests? How does Netflix know which movies you'll like? What is causing the rising incidence of autism? As best-selling author Charles Wheelan shows us in *Naked Statistics*, the right data and a few well-chosen statistical tools can help us answer these questions and more. For those who slept through Stats 101, this book is a lifesaver. Wheelan strips away the arcane and technical details and focuses on the underlying intuition that drives statistical analysis. He clarifies key concepts such as inference, correlation, and regression analysis, reveals how biased or careless parties can manipulate or misrepresent data, and shows us how brilliant and creative researchers are exploiting the valuable data from natural experiments to tackle thorny questions. You'll encounter clever Schlitz Beer marketers leveraging basic probability, an International Sausage Festival illuminating the tenets of the central limit theorem, and a head-scratching choice from the famous game show *Let's Make a Deal* - and you'll come away with insights each time. With the wit, accessibility, and sheer fun that turned *Naked Economics* into a best seller, Wheelan defies the odds yet again by bringing another essential, formerly unglamorous discipline to life.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Worth reading. He tries very hard to make statistics less dry, and to help one see why knowing

some background, even if not any heavy math, is useful when reading news reports and so on.

Helpful background for reading or listening to analysis of different kinds - political, environmental, and when friends seem so sure of something but it doesn't make sense.

In the unfolding Age of Big Data, no one who hopes to understand the way the world works can afford to be ignorant of statistical methods. Not a day goes by that statistical analysis isn't behind some front-page story -- in politics, sports, business, or even entertainment. The statistical concepts of probability, sampling, and statistical validity, once considered obscure and of interest only to geeks wearing pocket protectors, are now indispensable tools for the active citizen to grasp. Writing in a breezy and intimate style, with humor and lots asides to the reader, Charles Whelan attempts to unpack these concepts and explain them in English with a minimal use of advanced math, and he succeeds . . . up to a point. *Naked Statistics* was published just four months after Nate Silver's best-selling book, *The Signal and the Noise*, which covers much the same ground in a very different way. Whelan focuses on the nitty-gritty of statistical methodology, delving into such topics as how samples are chosen, what's meant by terms such as correlation, standard deviation, and regression analysis, and how to determine whether the results of a test are statistically valid. However, he doesn't lose sight of practical questions, unpacking such seemingly puzzling statements as "the average income in America is not equal to the income of the average American" and spotlighting the difference between precision and accuracy. Silver instead explains how statistical methods are applied in a wide range of activities, from baseball and basketball to Wall Street. Whelan includes lots of formulas laden with Greek letters, though, conveniently, they're confined for the most part to Appendixes that follow many of the book's chapters and can be skipped by a non-technical reader. (I ignored them.) Silver's book is refreshingly devoid of Greek letters. As Whelan makes clear, perhaps unintentionally, statistics is a forbiddingly technical field. Truth to tell, if you really want to understand statistical methodology and how it can be applied, you need a fair grounding in mathematics and a tolerance for terminology that doesn't appear in everyday English. In fact, you probably need to take the same sort of graduate school courses Whelan took years ago. This is heady stuff! All in all, for a run-of-the-mill mathematical illiterate such as me, Nate Silver did a much better job getting across the significance of statistics and how its methods are applied to strip away the complexities of today's often baffling, data-driven world.

Disclosure: I'm a social science researcher and statistician. Back in the day, I thought it would be fun to use Huff's 1954 "How to lie with statistics" in an intro stat course. Then now departed good

friend Gerald Bracey wrote "Reading educational research: How to avoid getting statistically snookered," and that became the new standard for my wish to use a book in an intro social science/educational research course. Now along comes Wheelan's book. It is in my opinion at the very least a great alternative to Bracey's book, and if I were teaching an intro statistics (as opposed to introductory research methods) course - including to undergraduates but these days likely for grad students too - I'd use Wheelan as one of the texts. We (meaning college professors) typically do a great job of scaring the daylights out of students about the really very logical statistical concepts. What we need to do is to a great job of helping people get past the fear so they can use the tools in every day life -- and keep from getting snookered. Now there's a way for everyone to get past the fear: get Wheelan's book.

Required reading for statistics class. This book was written as a response to How to Lie With Statistics. Wish we had read that book instead. This book does a pretty good job at explaining statistical concepts but I had a hard time relating to the author and remaining interested. The cover is also super awkward to read in public spaces which is necessary when you're a student.

The description "easy read" should not go with a book that explains statistics. Unbelievably, this book does that. I have read books and taken graduate level courses in an effort to learn statistics to transition from medical care to medical research. Although this book would be far from replacing those, it has taken much of the pain and obtuse explanations away and supplanted them with easy to understand lingo and real world application. I understand concepts much better after reading this book. Heck, I may try and learn economics by reading the same authors book on that subject ( which I have no clue about one, but will soon!)

It is very informative book, but the chapter on Regressional Analysis is poorly written. Here are two shortcomings of this first-rate author:- He pivots without saying so; may revert back later. Without fully going over one example, he would introduce a new example.- He sometimes does not know how to group or categorize information, with or without sub-headings. This results in meandering narrative in places. The Appendix to Chapter 11 is rushed. The title is "The t-distribution" but it is as much about "Degrees of Freedom", neither concept explained properly. It needed two graphs, rather than one. Finally I wish a gifted author like him would give rationale of why various statistical terms -- like 'Standard Error' -- were needed.

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