
TEST FOR NORMALITY?

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THIS IS NOT NORMAL
shout signs and hashtags
as if a QQ plot could show such skew,
as if we just had to do
a test with hyphenated names.
The mean-spirited have the Bell Curve
support their view of
intellect and
inequity, its top unlike
the Liberty Bell,
whose crack admits
light.

Asserting symmetry,
a ruler says there must
be outliers on both sides,
on both sides.
Right cancels left,
each twitching lobster
tail telling
how going slowly enough past the mean
hides how far an out-
liar can lie:
If at $z = 7.31$
the bell curve lies
a millimeter
above the axis,
its mode
would pass
the moon.

Author's Note:

Many statistical procedures require that a data set be well-described by a normal distribution, and this assumption must be put to a test (e.g., Anderson-Darling, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Shapiro-Wilk, etc.) before proceeding with the procedure.

In my country (USA), there has been a recent rise in activity by white supremacist individuals and organizations, some of which brings to mind controversial assumptions about race made in books such as

The Bell Curve (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). The line “on both sides, on both sides” conjures the remark by Donald Trump on August 12, 2017 concerning that weekend’s “Unite the Right” rally of hundreds of white supremacists, neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members in Charlottesville, Virginia: “We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides, on many sides.” Trump’s remark appeared to effectively make a moral equivalence between the anti-Semitic white supremacists and the counter-protestors (one of whom was killed by a car intentionally driven into the crowd by a white supremacist) he labelled the “alt-left”.

The ending adapts an example from section 4.1 of Sowey (1995).

References:

- *Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- *Sowey, E. R. (1995). Teaching Statistics: Making it Memorable. *Journal of Statistics Education*, 3(2).

Political Statistical Joke

Q: Why did the statistician hesitate to apply the square root transformation to the data on annual hate crimes?

A: She didn't want bigotry to be normalized.

This 12/12/16 joke by Lawrence M. Lesser was first published by CAUSEweb

at <https://www.causeweb.org/cause/resources/fun/jokes/square-root-transformation>.

This joke is a vehicle for discussing how transformations can make data more normal and stabilize variances across groups with different means (here the square root transformation for Poisson data).