Happy Stats Day 2016!

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Ahhhh, World Statistics Day. The error that it isn’t an internationally recognized holiday is something I’ll lobby to rectify as soon as I find out who is responsible for those sort of things. Statistics not only describe our world, they rule it. They certainly rule mine. Here’s how. When I wake up in the morning, I get out of bed with care knowing there is a 1 in 4239 chance I will die from a fall involving a bed or other furniture. Every week, 1,406 (95% confidence interval: 1,330 to 1,470) people in the US die from bed falls, so I feel it’s safe enough for me to take the 0.0236% chance to get up.

I won’t go through all the other perils I overcome to get out the door on my way to work but when I do get to the commuting stage, I take great care on my bicycle ride to the office. Given I have had 9 fractured bones in about 900 rides to or from work, here is a 1% chance I’ll fracture a bone on the way (95% confidence interval: 0.458% to 1.890%). You may well ask, “Why do you take the chance?” Arguably, riding still carries less risk of dying than driving a car or motorcycle or, interestingly, walking. And it decreases the 16% chance I’ll die from heart disease. And I get the chance for more statistics as I count the number of cyclists heading into DC on the Capital Crescent Trail while I head in the opposite direction (between 12 and 115 with a ratio of men to women of 2:1 to 4:1 and it is very weather dependent).

Then when I get to work, I’m buried to my forehead in statistics almost every day - p-values, run charts, difference-in-differences, ordinal logistic regressions and on and on. It is the heartbeat of logic that drives all we do in science-based improvement and has helped us make brilliant advances in health and medicine. We need to use statistics wisely and carefully and listen to them even when they are saying things we don’t want to hear.

So, while it doesn’t have the superficial allure of the International Days of chocolate (July 7) or wine (several for different varieties) or sex (there isn’t one – I guess it’s not needed), we all should celebrate World Statistics Day on October 20 and appreciate the science that helps us make sense of the world.

**Topic(s):** [Analytical Tools](https://www.usaidassist.org) [2]
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