

# How to use statistics in your writing

Statistics can be a powerful addition to any article. But here are some quick do's and don'ts:

## DO

### Use statistics!

Statistics can reinforce the point you are making. For example, why just say: "Children are addicted to their phones". You could add: "Children are addicted to their phones. The average teenager spends eight and a half hours on screens every day."

### Say where the statistic comes from!

The reader needs to know where the statistic comes from — was it a survey carried out by a polling company for example? Or is it data from a census? Is it from a source with a bias?

### And who the statistic relates to!

Don't say: "There are 3.5 million people living with a rare disease." Do say: "There are 3.5 million people living with a rare disease in the UK, according to the 2021 UK Rare Diseases Framework." Otherwise, people might think there are only 3.5m people in the whole world with a rare disease!

### Find statistics that are relevant to where you live!

Many of the statistics we find online come from American sources and are about American people. That's ok sometimes! But life in America will not always be the same as life in other places. Try to find statistics from a place that is relevant to your article.

### Link to your source!

Add a link to the source of your statistics in a footnote. This will help readers check out the statistics for themselves and do extra research.

### Do your own research!

Can you carry out your own survey for your article? That would be really impressive.

## DON'T

### Use statistics in a misleading way

For example, saying "Most children like brussel sprouts," is very different to saying "52% of French children aged 12 to 15 will eat brussel sprouts if they are covered in chocolate."

### Use statistics just from social media

You need to know where your statistic came from. It's ok if you spotted it on social media first, but try to find the original source.

### Use statistics that seem obviously wrong

Take a moment to think about the statistic you are using. Does it seem realistic? For example, even though we know China is a big country, it should ring alarm bells if you have written "90% of all people are Chinese".

### Use very old statistics

For example, a statistic on children's screentime from the 1990s will be largely irrelevant today. Try to find up-to-date data.

### Use statistics without any details or context

You should always try to include the source of your statistic and who and where it relates to. This can be in a footnote.

