***Significance* – notes for contributors**

Thank you for your interest in writing for *Significance* – a magazine and website all about statistics, in which we highlight the contribution statistics makes to our understanding of the world. We hope you find these notes of use in preparing your article.

**Our mission statement**

We’ll start by setting out our **mission statement**:

*Significance presents a statistical perspective on life around the globe. It challenges myths, provides a unique take on the stories of the day, and uses statistics to tackle society's most difficult questions. A data‐driven world requires evidence‐based thinking – and Significance is a showcase for the best of it.*

Our mission statement guides our approach to commissioning articles and sets the scope for the types of articles we are interested in publishing. In writing your article we ask that you adhere to the following **core principles**:

•Articles must be interesting, engaging and easy to read.

•Readers should finish your article knowing more about statistics, or the application of statistics, than they did before.

•Technical terms and mathematics should be kept to a minimum, and explained clearly where used (we recommend you do this in a box or sidebar, using real‐life analogies wherever possible).

**Our readers**

Please keep our **audience** in mind while writing. Though the vast majority of subscribers to our magazine are professional statisticians, our goal is to not only inform and entertain these **core readers** but also to encourage a wider appreciation of statistics and the role it plays in society. As such, the **target reader** is someone with an interest in data, who knows some of the basics but is by no means an expert. Note that our articles are often shared with the media, particularly when they are of broad public interest, so submissions that are written in the most accessible way have the opportunity to reach a huge international audience.

**Our Editorial Board**

Articles submitted to *Significance* will be vetted by the editor and an editorial board of statistical experts. If your article is accepted they will provide comments or questions to help you improve it and get it publication-ready.

**Key pointers**

**We’re a magazine, not a journal** – so avoid the formal tone and structure of an academic paper, and draw inspiration from intelligent, upmarket, mainstream magazines and websites. The Conversation, and any mainstream science magazine (see Science’s news features) or popular science book, would be good places to start.

**Remember to tell a story.** It’s not enough simply to describe a process.

**The opening paragraph is everything.** A strong ‘hook’ at the outset is invaluable for grabbing a reader’s attention, and a real-life anecdote that ‘humanises’ the subject and sets the context of what follows often works very well.

**Tell us why this story matters.** Your conclusion is extremely important.What do you want your readers to remember and think about once they’ve finished reading?

**Articles must be original** and not under consideration for publication elsewhere – though we welcome articles based on work in theses or in papers that have been submitted to or accepted by academic journals, provided the two are sufficiently different.

**Images/graphics** You are encouraged to include charts, graphs, tables and figures**.** Please refer to the RSS data visualisation guide (<https://royal-statistical-society.github.io/datavisguide/>). Ensure all supporting figures are presented simply and neatly, are labelled correctly and clearly, and that accompanying captions are written to support the reader’s understanding of the visual material.

Charts and graphs should be supplied as Adobe Illustrator‐compatible EPS files to allow our designers to update text and colour elements to fit house style. Editable PDFs are also suitable.

If you wish to use charts or graphs that are not your own work, please ensure that they are correctly sourced and referenced, and that you have permission to republish them from the original author or copyright owner. A letter or email confirming this permission is required.

You do *not* need to source and include stock photos - we will do that (although personal photos relating to the article are welcome).

**Formatting** All we need is a Word doc (not PDF) and hi-res versions of your figures and tables. Please do not 'design' the article, but do indicate clearly to us where a text box begins and ends.

**End references are optional** but should be limited to a maximum of 10. Use the Chicago referencing style, not Harvard - flagging each reference with a number in superscript, then ordering them as endnotes. If a reference is not an academic journal (ie if it is to a web page), please add a Bitly link in brackets after it, rather than including as a reference.

**Statistical content**

What makes *Significance* unique is our marriage of storytelling and statistics – and getting the statistical aspects of your article correct is as important as telling an interesting and engaging tale.

•Explain your data, quantity and quality of evidence, assumptions, methods, and models, and the limitations of your findings.

•Where estimates are made, be sure to quantify their accuracy, reliability, reproducibility, and validity.

•Write your conclusions carefully by ensuring that claims made or discussed are supported by the evidence provided.

•Keep mathematical details, such as symbols, notations and equations, to a minimum.

•Don’t mistake correlation for causation. It’s easily done, even if it’s unintended.

**Technical words and phrases**

As with all disciplines, statistics has its own set of technical words and phrases that will be immediately understood by those working in the field – and, as *Significance* is a magazine primarily written and read by statisticians, it might seem reasonable for contributors to use those words and phrases without explanation. However, the *Significance* Editorial Board does not share this view.

*Significance* aims to attract a broad readership, so contributors should always bear in mind that terms in common use in statistics may be misinterpreted by a non-specialist readership – “significance” being a notable example, but also terms like “confidence interval”, “critical value”, “estimate”, “likelihood” or “normally distributed”. Articles may also include terminology from a domain of application (e.g. medical: “risk of death”, “hazard ratio”) that may equally baffle statisticians working in other domains! Specific terminology should therefore be used carefully and flagged as such, or explained as necessary; novel or unusual meanings must be explained either within the text or in sidebars. The editor and reviewers may point out such issues and help devise suitable wordings.

**Data sources**

The *Significance* Editorial Board requires that authors include within their articles any links and/or references to the sources of data, computer code and/or software and software packages on which their analyses are based. We understand that some of these sources may not be publicly available, whether for legal, ethical or commercial reasons. However, readers should still be told where the data come from, even if they are not able to access the data directly.

**Word counts**

Use however many words you think the story needs – anything between 1,000 and 3,500 is good with us.

**Submitting your article**

Please supply articles in Word or Rich Text Format to significance@rss.org.uk. We do not accept submissions in LaTeX.

**Generative AI: our approach**

* Significance is a magazine written by humans for humans.
* We want human thought and writing, however imperfect, rather than the output of large language models (LLMs) in all instances and do not accept articles written, whether entirely or in part, by LLMs.
* AI-generated images are also excluded.
* There is one exception: small amounts of AI-generated text being used as an example of AI-generated text in the context of an article on AI, and clearly flagged as such.
* We acknowledge that AI assistance can be useful for some authors – for example, those writing in a second language, or the neurodiverse community – but we always prefer to work directly with authors on tackling any obstacles on their road to publication in *Significance*.
* We have no problem with AI writing assistants that check spelling and grammar (e.g. Grammarly).
* Readers want to hear your unique voice and benefit from your unique experience and skills.
* Write about what you know - if you don’t know the subject, don’t use an AI shortcut.
* We will review this policy periodically.

**Freedom of speech**

*Significance* considers academic freedom, press freedom, impartiality, pluralism and scientific rigour to be central to its mission to demonstrate the importance of statistics to everyone, and the magazine believes these principles are of vital importance to society as a whole. It is essential that the magazine and its contributors have the freedom to ask challenging questions, debate controversial ideas, express diverse, evidence-based opinions and publish content without fear of harassment, discrimination or censorship.

**Declaration of interests**

Authors are required to declare, at the point of submission of their article, any financial or other interests they may have or hold, any conflicts (personal or professional), or any affiliations that are relevant to the content of their submission. Examples include, but are not limited to:

•Paid employment by companies or organisations, whether full or part time

•Voluntary positions with companies or organisations, including committee memberships and appointments to advisory, management or oversight boards

•Directorships or shareholdings

•Research grants and funding

•Involvements in prior disputes, whether academic, civil or legal

Authors with no conflicts of interest or affiliations to declare beyond their academic appointment or main employment should state that they have no conflicts of interest to declare. Declarations of interest may be used by the editor and editorial board to inform editorial decisions, and declarations made will be published alongside accepted articles.

In the event that a relevant interest is not declared prior to publication and is later brought to our attention, the online version of the published article will be corrected, and a correction statement published in a future edition of the print magazine.

**If you have questions that are not answered here, please email significance@rss.org.uk. We appreciate your interest in contributing to *Significance*.**