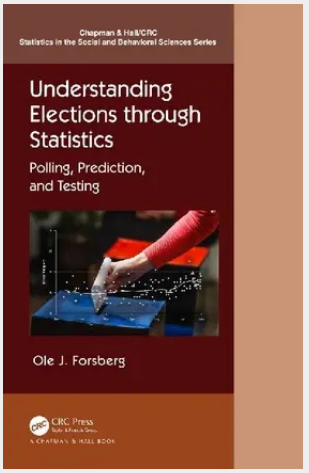
Forsberg

Understanding Elections through Statistics

Polling, Prediction, and Testing



78,50 €
78,50 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

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Elections are random events. From individuals deciding whether to vote, to people deciding for whom to vote, to election authorities deciding what to count, the outcomes of competitive democratic elections are rarely known until election day…or beyond. Understanding Elections through Statistics: Polling, Prediction, and Testing explores this random phenomenon from two points of view: predicting the election outcome using opinion polls and testing the election outcome using government-reported data. Written for those with only a brief introduction to statistics, this book takes you on a statistical journey from how polls are taken to how they can—and should—be used to estimate current popular opinion. Once an understanding of the election process is built, we turn toward testing elections for evidence of unfairness. While holding elections has become the de facto proof of government legitimacy, those electoral processes may hide a dirty little secret of the government illicitly ensuring a favorable election outcome. This book includes these features designed to make your statistical journey more enjoyable: - Vignettes of elections, including maps, to provide concrete bases for the material - In-chapter cues to help one avoid the heavy math—or to focus on it - End-of-chapter problems designed to review and extend that which was covered in the chapter - Many opportunities to turn the power of the R statistical environment to the enclosed election data files, as well as to those you find interesting From these features, it is clear the audience for this book is quite diverse. This text provides mathematics for those interested in mathematics, but also offers detours for those who just want a good read and a deeper understanding of elections. Author Ole J. Forsberg holds PhDs in both political science and statistics. He currently teaches mathematics and statistics in the Department of Mathematics at Knox College in Galesburg, IL.

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Artikelnummer: 9780367895358
Medium: Buch
ISBN: 978-0-367-89535-8
Verlag: CRC Press
Erscheinungstermin: 29.09.2020
Sprache(n): Englisch
Auflage: 1. Auflage 2020
Serie: Chapman & Hall/CRC Statistics in the Social and Behavioral Sciences
Produktform: Kartoniert
Gewicht: 318 g
Seiten: 225
Format (B x H): 155 x 234 mm

Kundenservice Verlag Dr. Otto Schmidt KG
Neumannstraße 10, 40235 Düsseldorf | kundenservice@otto-schmidt.de | 0221-93738-997 (Inland)