
Subject: Re: Definition of skewness

Posted by [K. Bowman](#) on Fri, 12 Aug 2005 14:01:08 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

In article <1123799104.723233.99170@f14g2000cwb.googlegroups.com>, "envi35@yahoo.ca" <envi35@yahoo.ca> wrote:

- > Hi there,
- > I want to use the skewness of some data series to do a rough
- > classification. But I'm confused with the IDL online help about the
- > SKEWNESS function: Skewness determines whether a distribution is
- > symmetric about its MAXIMUM. While in Microsoft Excel, it says Skewness
- > is a characterization of the degree of asymmetry of a distribution
- > around its MEAN.
- > It seems that the MEAN is right according to the algorithm of the
- > skewness function in IDL, why the online help of IDL says MAXIMUM? Is
- > this a typo or else? Could anybody knows more about statistics give me
- > some help?
- >
- > Thanks, Jenny

The documentation is incorrect. Skewness is related to the third moment about the mean.

It would be extremely helpful if the IDL manuals included the mathematical expressions for quantities such as this, but unless they receive many requests, RSI is unlikely to update the docs.

Regards, Ken Bowman

Subject: Re: Definition of skewness

Posted by [mchinand](#) on Fri, 12 Aug 2005 15:52:03 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

In article <k-bowman-6A23C8.09010712082005@news.tamu.edu>, Kenneth Bowman <k-bowman@null.tamu.edu> wrote:

- >
- > The documentation is incorrect. Skewness is related to the third moment about
- > the mean.
- >
- > It would be extremely helpful if the IDL manuals included the mathematical
- > expressions for quantities such as this, but unless they receive many requests,
- > RSI is unlikely to update the docs.
- >

While the SKEWNESS page does have the incorrect description, it does at least mention that it calls the MOMENT function and its help page does give the mathematical expression for

skewness (3rd moment about mean as Ken stated above). That's still no excuse for having the wrong description of skewness, however.

--Mike

--

Michael Chinander
m-chinander@uchicago.edu
Department of Radiology
University of Chicago

Subject: Re: Definition of skewness
Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Fri, 12 Aug 2005 15:59:31 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

Mike Chinander writes:

> While the SKEWNESS page does have the incorrect description, it does at least mention that
> it calls the MOMENT function and its help page does give the mathematical expression for
> skewness (3rd moment about mean as Ken stated above). That's still no excuse for having the
> wrong description of skewness, however.

No excuse!? Goodness, I could think of several, just off the top of my head. Starting with the fact no one has gone to the trouble to point it out to them. I really doubt that RSI is so perverse as to *deliberately* leave inaccurate information in its documentation just to see new users squirm.

Cheers,

David

--

David Fanning, Ph.D.
Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.
Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Subject: Re: Definition of skewness
Posted by [mchinand](#) on Fri, 12 Aug 2005 16:30:33 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

In article <MPG.1d66754d527d4ad6989a3d@news.frii.com>,
David Fanning <davidf@dfanning.com> wrote:

> No excuse!? Goodness, I could think of several, just off
> the top of my head. Starting with the fact no one has gone
> to the trouble to point it out to them. I really doubt that
> RSI is so perverse as to *deliberately* leave inaccurate
> information in its documentation just to see new users
> squirm.
>

I wasn't implying that the inaccurate description was deliberate on RSI's part.

Subject: Re: Definition of skewness

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Fri, 12 Aug 2005 20:41:10 GMT

[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

On Fri, 12 Aug 2005 16:30:33 +0000, Mike Chinander wrote:

> In article <MPG.1d66754d527d4ad6989a3d@news.frii.com>,
> David Fanning <davidf@dfanning.com> wrote:

>
>> No excuse!? Goodness, I could think of several, just off
>> the top of my head. Starting with the fact no one has gone
>> to the trouble to point it out to them. I really doubt that
>> RSI is so perverse as to *deliberately* leave inaccurate
>> information in its documentation just to see new users
>> squirm.

>>

>

> I wasn't implying that the inaccurate description was deliberate on RSI's part.

I find the documentation group at RSI to be very responsive (if a bit understaffed). Send it in, and I'd wager good wampum it will get fixed in the next release. Interestingly, none other than Richard Stallman has found spelling errors in their docs (via the IDLWAVE help files), which, of course, they fixed.

JD
