

## 1. Statistics in the Media

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More than ever before, we are presented with data and statistics in the news. However, most of the time, these analyses are reports of reports (secondary sources). In other words, they are interpreted, summarized, and often simplified by reporters. This exercise is intended to demonstrate the importance of interpreting reports as a critically informed consumer.

### Part I

Find an article in the newspaper (online papers are fine) that reports the results of a research finding. (Hint: Check the science section.)

For your chosen article, try to identify as many scientific method details about the research as you can by answering the questions below.

- (1) What were the title and authors of the original study upon which the statements in the article are based? What was the hypothesis for the research?
- (2) What methodology was used (e.g., experimental, correlational, case study)? Who were the participants and how were they recruited?
- (3) What were the conclusions of the research?
- (4) What were the limitations of the study? How convinced are you by the study's results?
- (5) What questions about the research do you have? What other details were left out that would be useful in evaluating the quality of the study?

### Part II

Now try to find the original research article on which the news story was based. You may be able to find the article through a search of Google Scholar or you may need to use a research articles database (e.g., PsycINFO) to search for the original research article. Read the original article, paying close attention to the scientific method details that you summarized earlier and then answer the questions below.

- (1) How well do you think the news story conveys the research findings presented in the article? (Hint: Read the abstract summary of the article to get a simple summary of the findings of the study.) Were the original findings accurately portrayed in the news story? Why or why not?
- (2) How do you think the popular press article should be changed to provide a more accurate depiction of the original research article published by the researchers?