

Biostat 200: Lecture 9

Associations, Correlations, and Causation

Visualization ReCap

- <http://flowingdata.com/2017/01/24/one-dataset-visualized-25-ways/>
- https://www.gapminder.org/tools/#_chart-type=bubbles
- www.Theyrule.net
- <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/>
- www.bewitched.com

Association: Peeling the Onion



I See Dead People

What's wrong with this statement?

Associations are not Causations

Everyone who ate pickles in the year 1743 is now dead.

Therefore, pickles are fatal?

True statement:

Palm size correlates with your life expectancy

The larger your palm, the less you will live, on average.

Try it out - look at your neighbors and you'll see who is expected to live longer.

Associations are ??? Causations

Why?

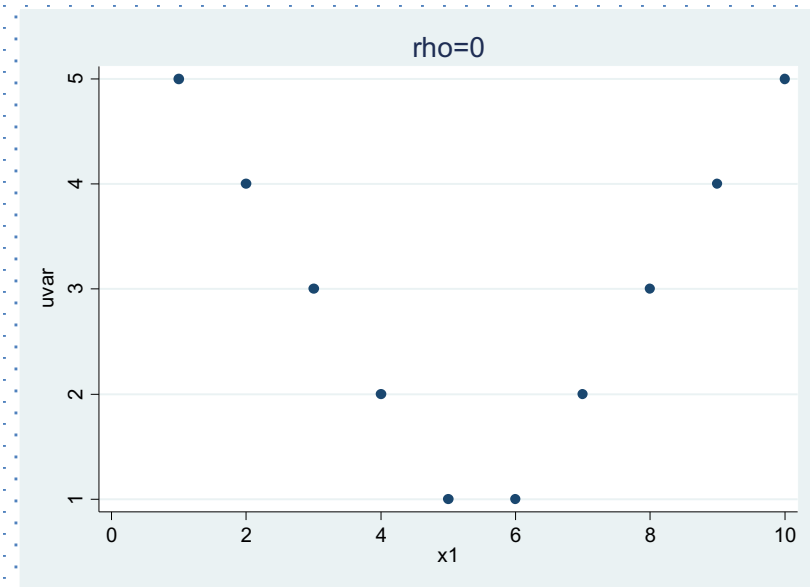
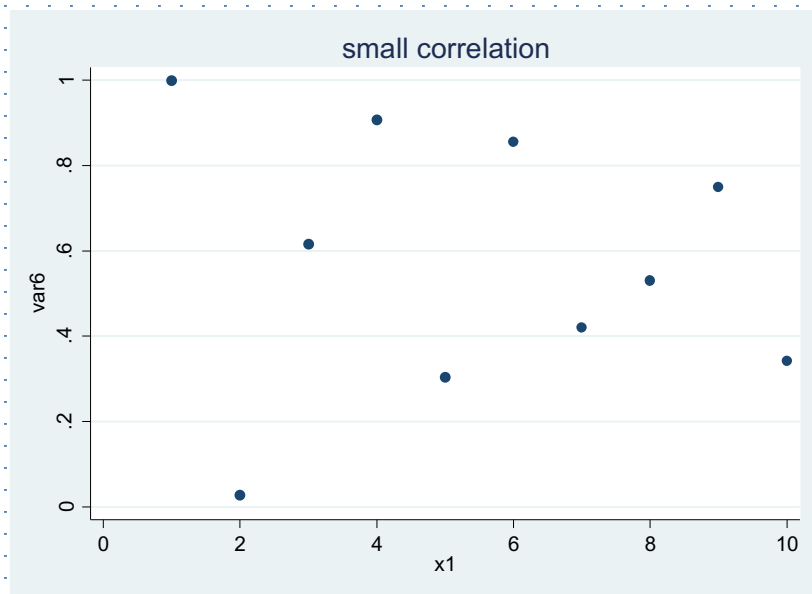
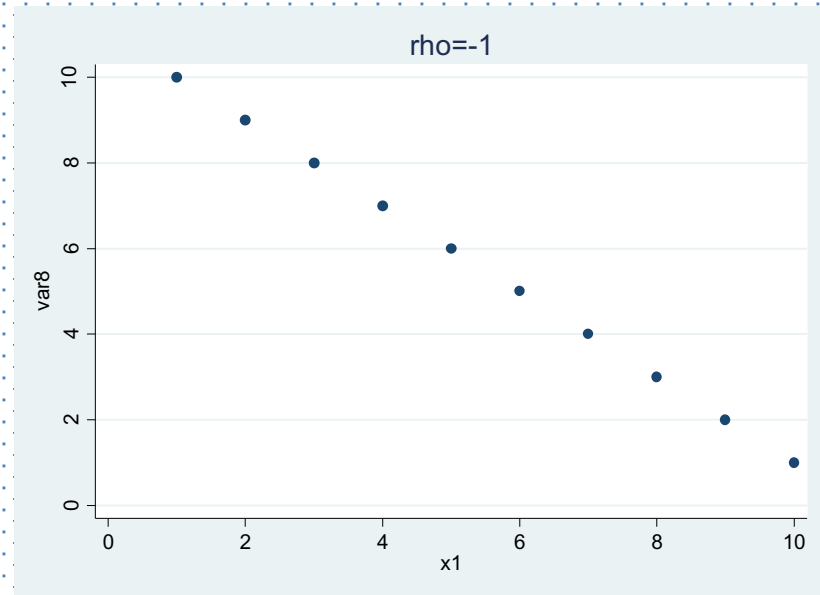
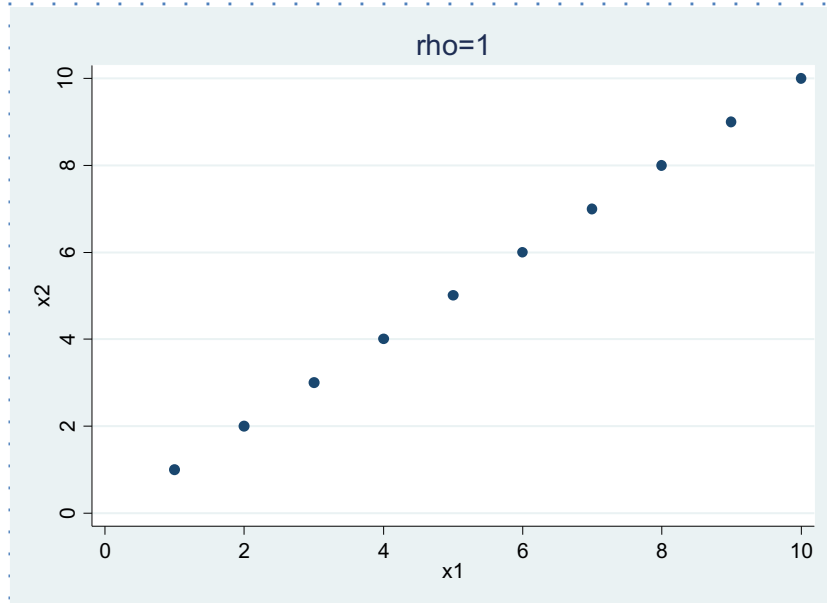
Women have smaller palms and live 6 years longer on average

**Don't stop at the first association.
Ask yourself (and the data) WHY?**

Correlation

- Correlation examines the relationship between 2 (usually) continuous variables
 - Does one increase with the other?
 - e.g. Does CD4 count increase with increasing age?
- Both variables are measured on the same people
- Correlation assumes a **linear** relationship between the two variables
- Correlation is symmetric
 - The correlation of A with B is the same as the correlation of B with A
 - Designated by ρ (rho)

Correlation



Correlation

- ρ lies between -1 and 1
- -1 and 1 are perfect correlations, 0 is no correlation
- An *estimator* of the population correlation ρ is Pearson's correlation coefficient denoted r
- It is estimated by:
$$r = \frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{x_i - \bar{x}}{s_x} \right) \left(\frac{y_i - \bar{y}}{s_y} \right)$$

Correlation

$$r = \frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{x_i - \bar{x}}{s_x} \right) \left(\frac{y_i - \bar{y}}{s_y} \right)$$

$$= \frac{1}{(n-1)} \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n-1} \right]} \sqrt{\left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2}{n-1} \right]}}$$

$$= \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\left[\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \right]} \sqrt{\left[\sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2 \right]}}$$

Correlation: hypothesis testing

- To test whether there is a correlation between two variables, our hypotheses are

$$H_0: \rho=0 \quad \text{and} \quad H_A: \rho \neq 0$$

- We need to calculate a test statistic for r

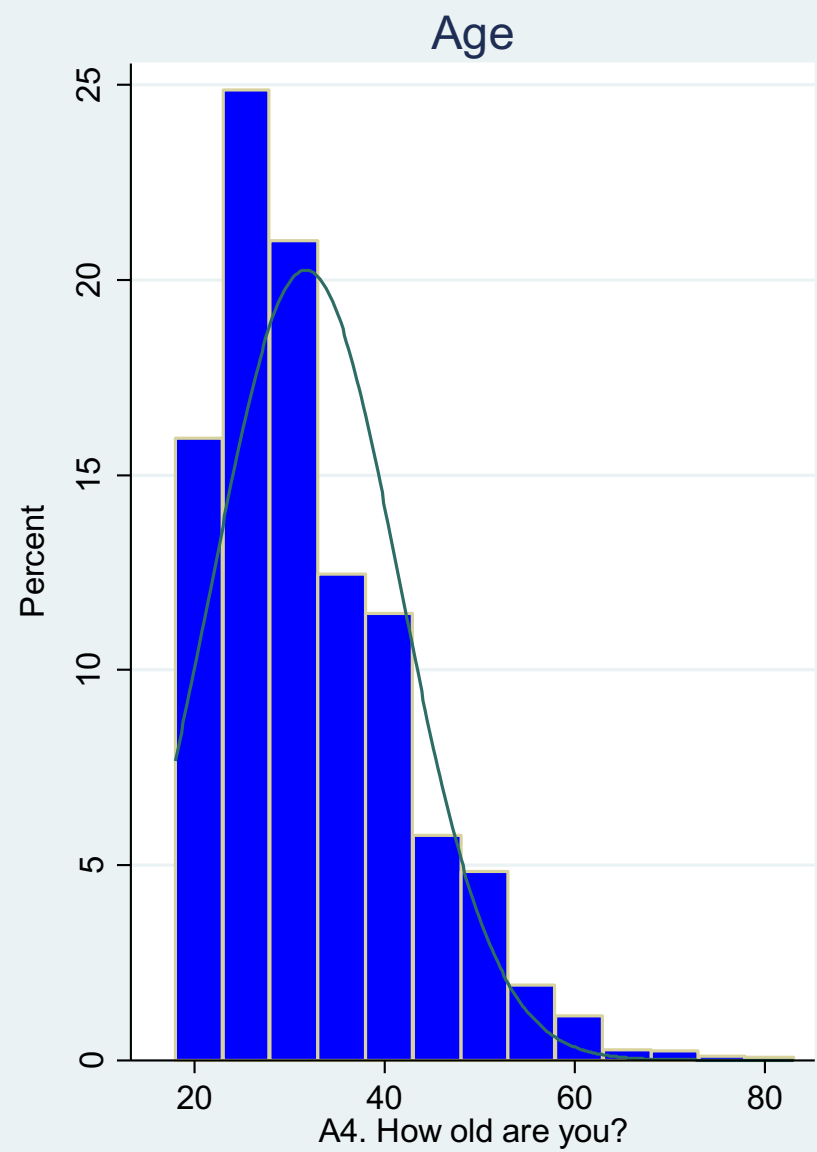
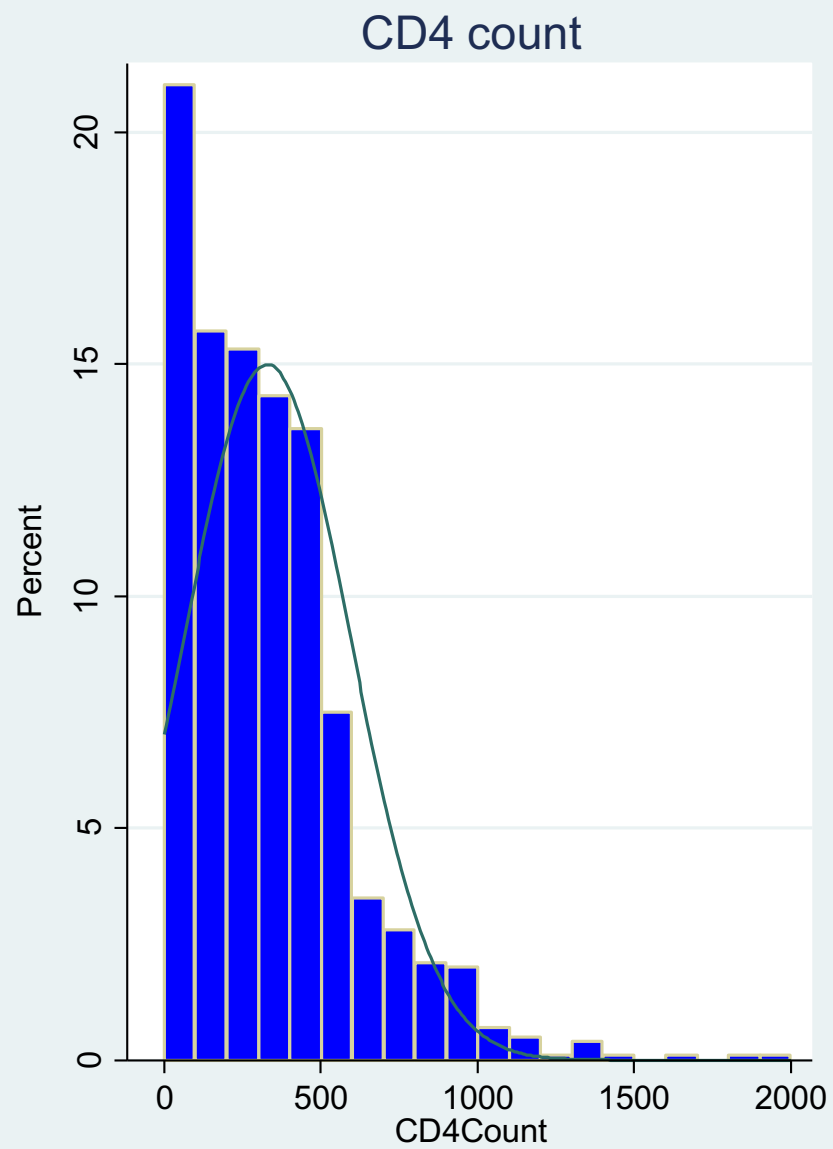
- The test statistic is $t = \frac{r - 0}{se(r)}$

$$\text{where } se(r) = \sqrt{\frac{1 - r^2}{n - 2}}$$

$$\text{so } t = r \sqrt{\frac{n - 2}{1 - r^2}}$$

Correlation: hypothesis testing

- The test statistic follows a t distribution with $n-2$ degrees of freedom under the null
- The assumptions
 - The pairs of observations (x_i, y_i) were obtained from a random sample
 - X and Y are normally distributed



Correlation example

```
corr cd4count age  
(obs=999)
```

```
              | cd4count      age_b  
-----+-----  
cd4count |      1.0000  
age_b   |     -0.1133      1.0000
```

Note that the hypothesis test is only of $\rho=0$, no other null
Also note that the correlation is the linear relationship only

Correlation example

`pwcorr var1 var2, sig obs`

```
. pwcorr cd4count age, sig obs
```

	cd4count	age_b
cd4count	1.0000	
	999	
age_b	-0.1133	1.0000
	0.0003	
	999	3387

Spearman rank correlation (Nonparametric correlation)

- Pearson's correlation coefficient is very sensitive to extreme values
- Spearman rank correlation calculates the Pearson correlation on the *ranks* of each variable
- The Pearson correlation coefficient is calculated, but the data values are replaced by the ranks

Spearman rank correlation (nonparametric)

- The Spearman rank correlation ranges between -1 and 1 as does the Pearson correlation
- We can test the null hypothesis that $\rho=0$
- The test statistic for $n>10$ is with $n-2$ degrees of freedom is compared to the t distribution

$$t_s = r_s \sqrt{\frac{n-2}{1-r_s^2}}$$

```
spearman cd4count age, stats(rho obs p)
```

```
Number of obs =      999  
Spearman's rho =     -0.1319
```

```
Test of Ho: cd4count and age_b are independent  
Prob > |t| =      0.0000
```

Matrix of Pearson correlations

- We can calculate a correlation matrix by listing multiple variable names
- Beware of which n's are used (use listwise option to get all n's equal so you are testing similar relationships)

```
pwcorr cd4count age nsupport_b auditc, sig obs
```

	cd4count	age_b	nsupport_b	auditc
cd4count	1.0000			
	999			
age_b	-0.1133	1.0000		
	0.0003			
	999	3387		
nsupport_b	0.0067	0.3597	1.0000	
	0.8340	0.0000		
	994	3370	3372	
auditc	0.0670	0.0580	0.0468	1.0000
	0.0392	0.0009	0.0078	
	948	3242	3230	3244

Matrix of Pearson correlations

- Using listwise option to get all n's equal

```
pwcorr cd4count age_nsupport_b auditc, sig obs listwise
```

	cd4count	age_b	nsupport_b	auditc
cd4count	1.0000			
	944			
age_b	-0.1053	1.0000		
	0.0012	944		
nsupport_b	0.0107	0.3209	1.0000	
	0.7416	0.0000	944	
auditc	0.0668	-0.0075	0.0475	1.0000
	0.0401	0.8181	0.1449	944

Matrix of Spearman correlations

```
spearman cd4count age nsupport_b auditc, pw stats(rho obs p)
```

```
+-----+
| Key |
|-----|
| rho |
| Number of obs |
| Sig. level |
+-----+
```

	cd4count	age_b	nsupport_b	auditc
cd4count	1.0000 999			
age_b	-0.1319 999 0.0000	1.0000 3387		
nsupport_b	0.0118 994 0.7093	0.4055 3370	1.0000 3372	
auditc	0.0945 948 0.0036	0.0777 3242 0.0000	0.0447 3230 0.0111	1.0000 3244

Matrix of Spearman correlations

```
spearman cd4count age_nsupport_b auditc, stats(rho obs p)
```

```
+-----+
| Key      |
|-----|
| rho      |
| Number of obs |
| Sig. level  |
|-----+

```

Here if you drop the “pw” option you get all n’s equal

```

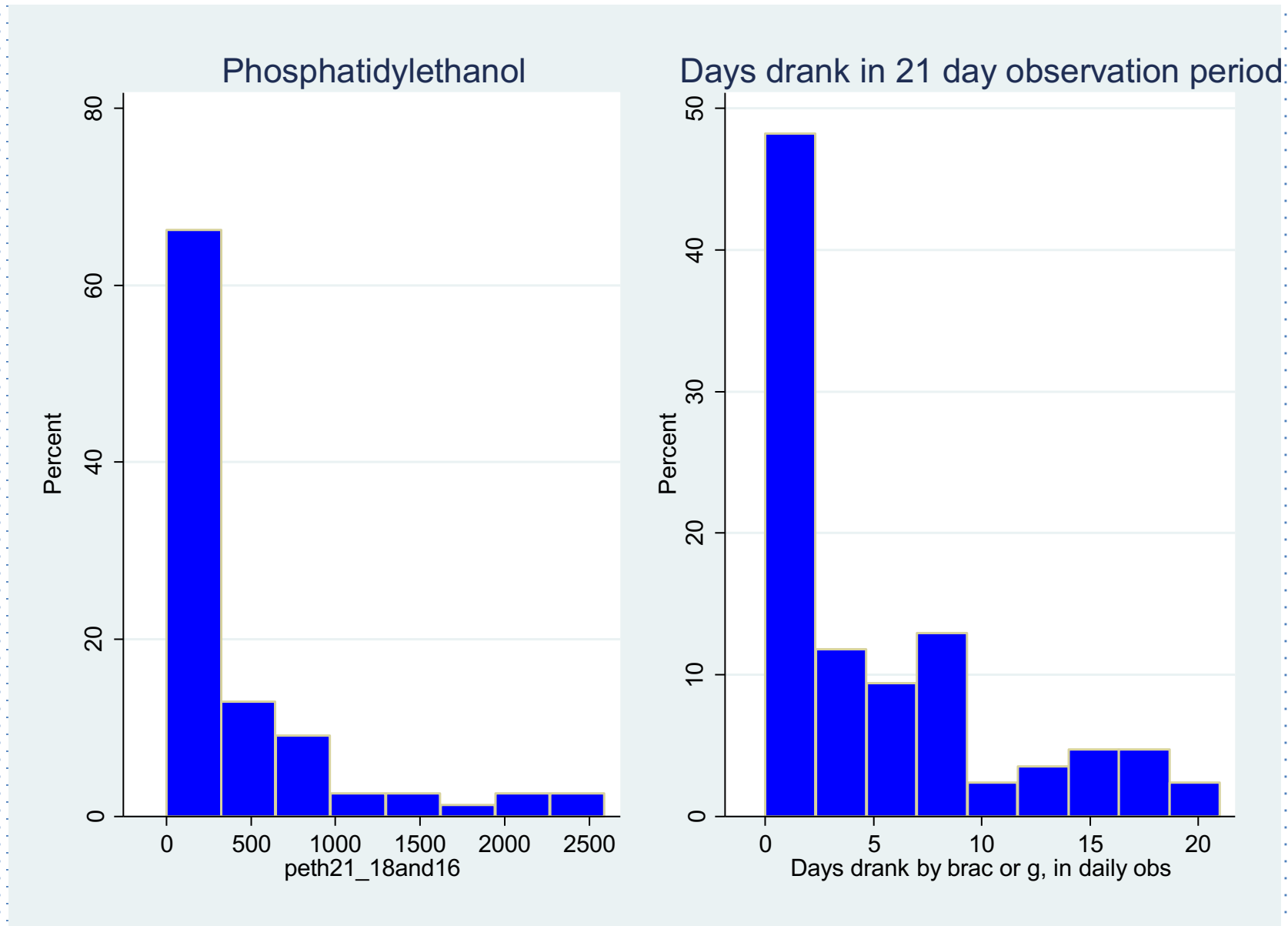
      | cd4count   age_b nsupport_b   auditc
-----+-----
cd4count | 1.0000
      | 944
      |
      |
age_b    | -0.1261   1.0000
      | 944      944
      | 0.0001
      |
nsupport_b | 0.0127   0.3546   1.0000
      | 944      944      944
      | 0.6971   0.0000
      |
auditc   | 0.0940  -0.0116   0.0431   1.0000
      | 944      944      944      944
      | 0.0039   0.7221   0.1859
      |

```

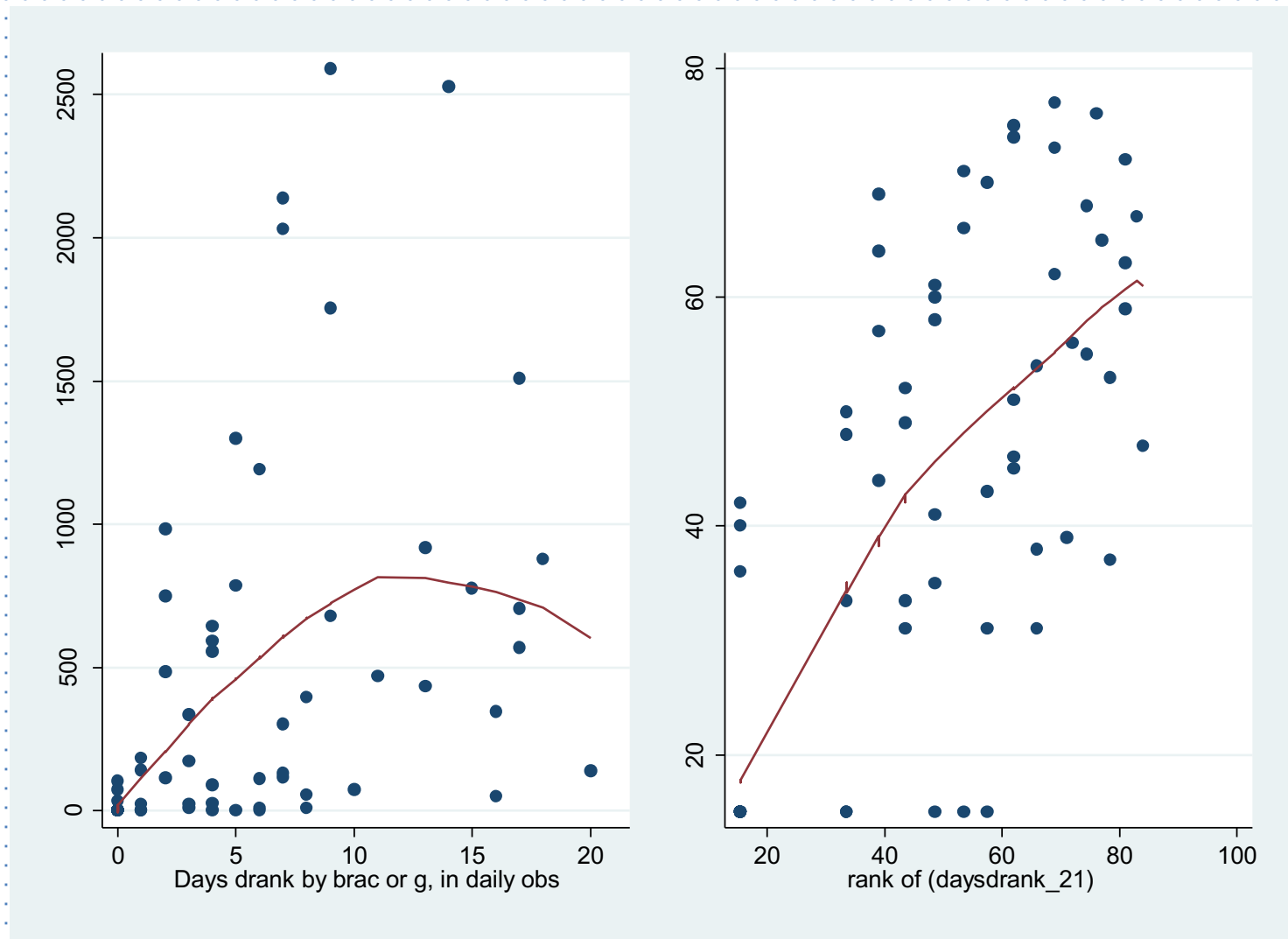
Pearson vs. Spearman

	Pearson	Spearman
Sensitivity to outliers	more sensitive	less sensitive
Can be used with ordinal data	no	yes
Assumes data are from a normal distribution	yes	no
Detects non-linear relationship	no	yes

Biomarker and alcohol consumption



PEth Biomarker of alcohol consumption vs. days drinking (raw data vs. ranks)



Pearson and Spearman correlations

```
. pwcorr peth21_18and16 daysdrank_21, obs sig
```

```
-----+-----  
| peth2~16 days~_21  
-----+-----  
peth21_18~16 | 1.0000  
|  
| 77  
|  
daysdrank_21 | 0.4717 1.0000  
| 0.0000  
| 77 85  
|  
-----+-----
```

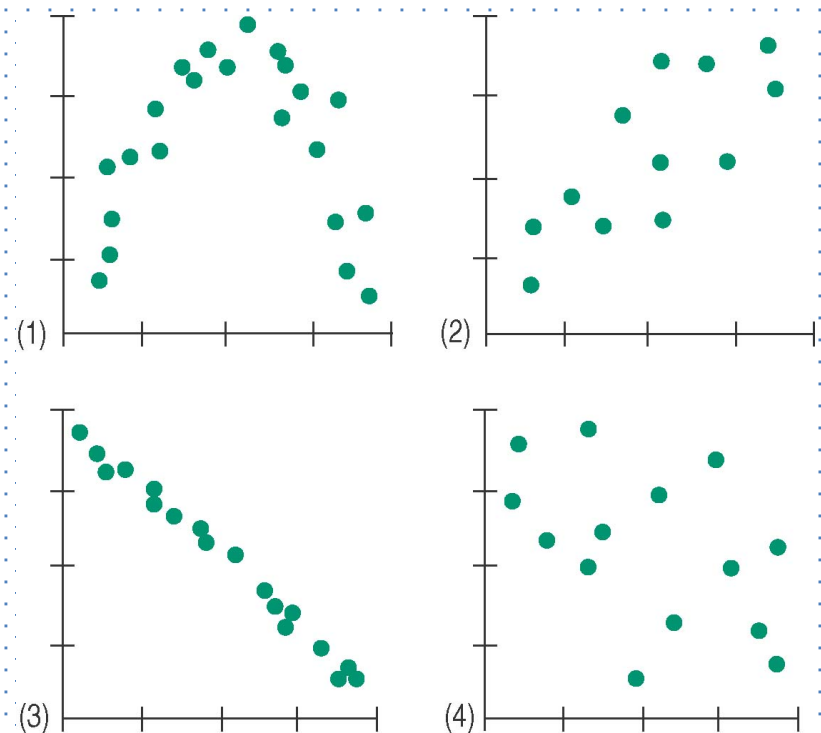
```
. spearman peth21_18and16 daysdrank_21
```

```
Number of obs = 77  
Spearman's rho = 0.7413  
Test of Ho: peth21_18and16 and daysdrank_21 are independent  
Prob > |t| = 0.0000
```

Association Identification

Which scatterplot below shows

- a) little association?
- b) negative association?
- c) linear association?
- d) moderately strong association?
- e) strong association?



Association Identification

Matching.

Here are several scatterplots.

The calculated correlations are:

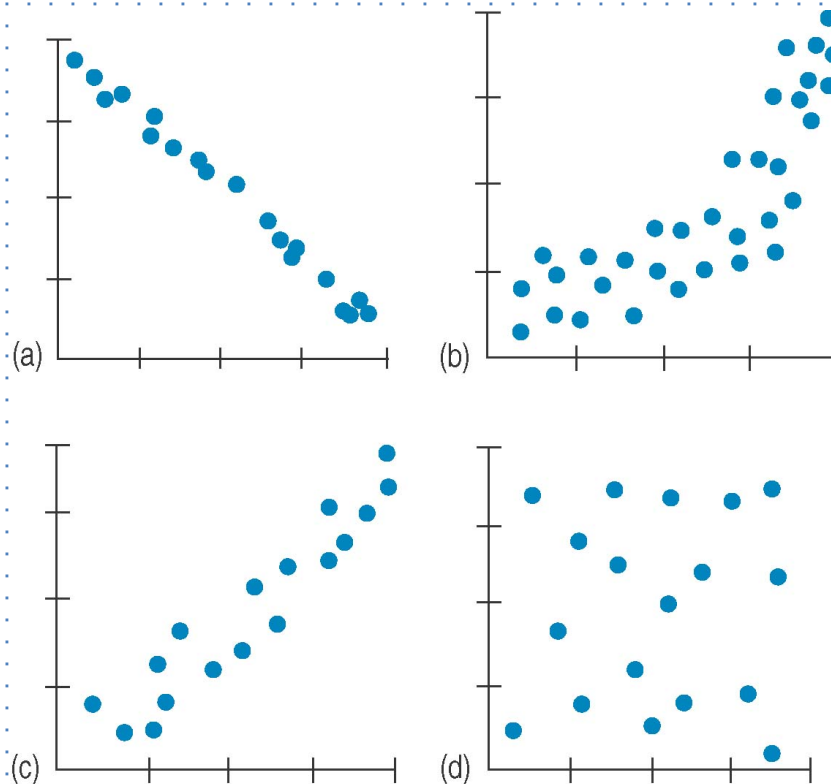
a) -0.977

b) -0.021

c) 0.736

d) 0.951

Which is which?



<http://www.tylervigen.com/spurious-correlations>

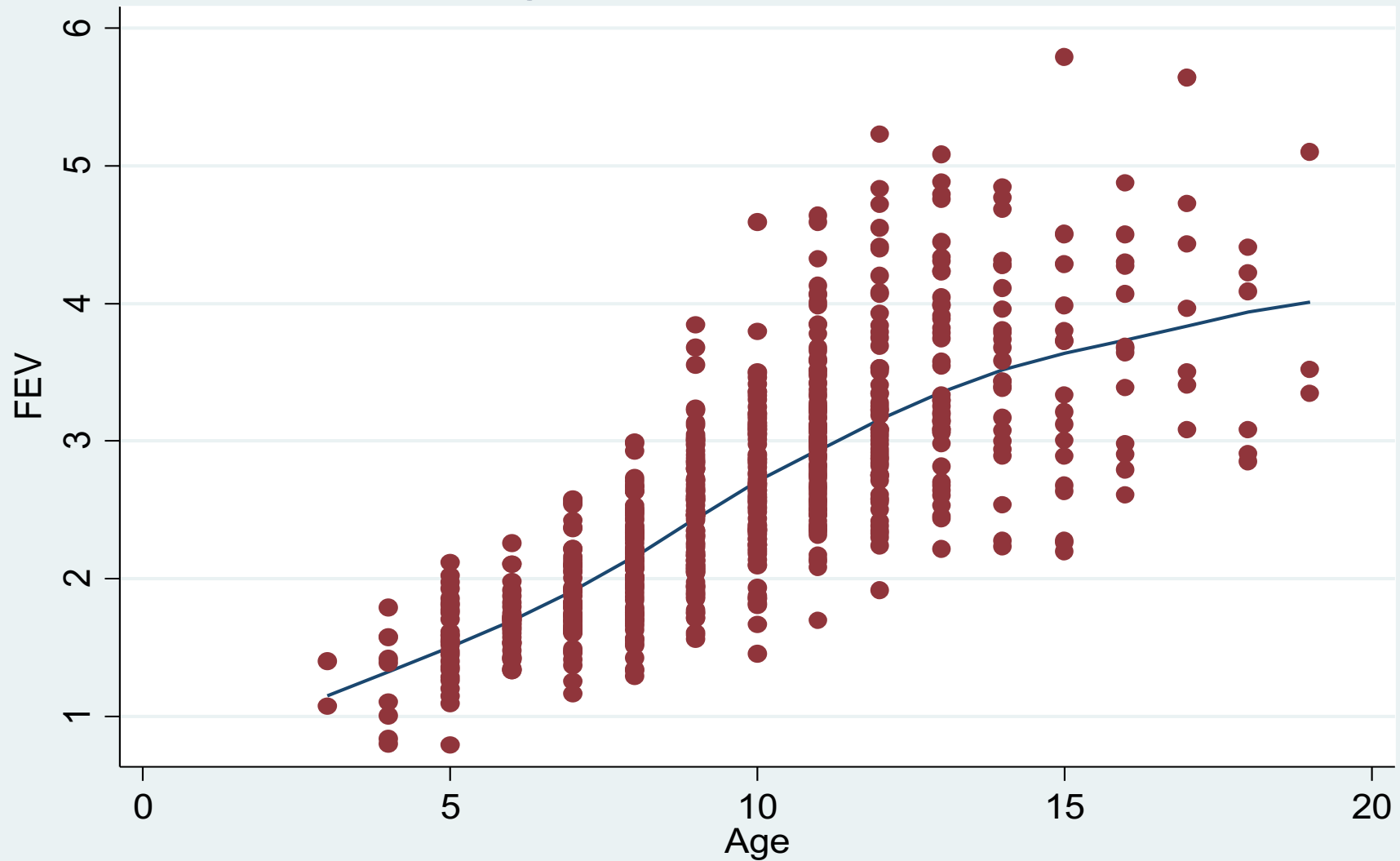
Simple linear regression

- Correlation allows us to quantify a linear relationship between two variables
- Linear regression allows us to additionally estimate how a change in a random variable X corresponds to a change in random variable Y

Forced expiratory volume (FEV)

- Studies in the 1970's of children and adolescent's pulmonary function, examining their own smoking and secondhand smoke
 - FEV is the amount of air expelled in the first second of exhalation; forced expiratory volume
 - The data are cross-sectional data from a larger prospective study
-
- Tager, I., Weiss, S., Munoz, A., Rosner, B., and Speizer, F. (1983), "Longitudinal Study of the Effects of Maternal Smoking on Pulmonary Function," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 309(12), 699-703.
 - Tager, I., Weiss, S., Rosner, B., and Speizer, F. (1979), "Effect of Parental Cigarette Smoking on the Pulmonary Function of Children," *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 110(1), 15-26.

FEV vs age in children and adolescents



```
twoway (lowess fev age, bwidth(0.8)) (scatter fev age, sort), ytitle(FEV)  
xtitle(Age) legend(off) title(FEV vs age in children and adolescents)
```

Correlation

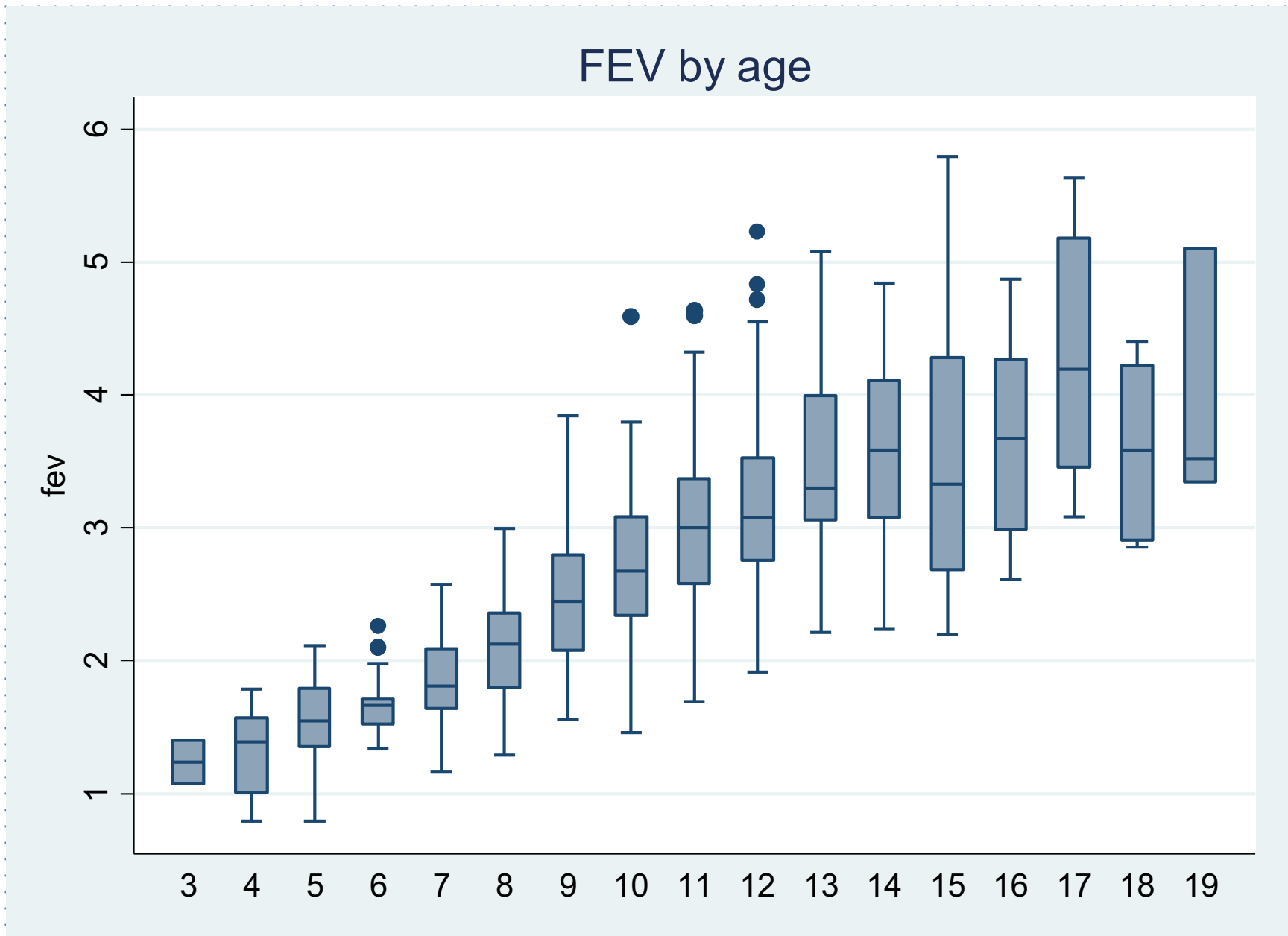
```
. pwcorr fev age, sig obs
```

	fev	age
fev	1.0000	
	654	
age	0.7565	1.0000
	0.0000	
	654	654

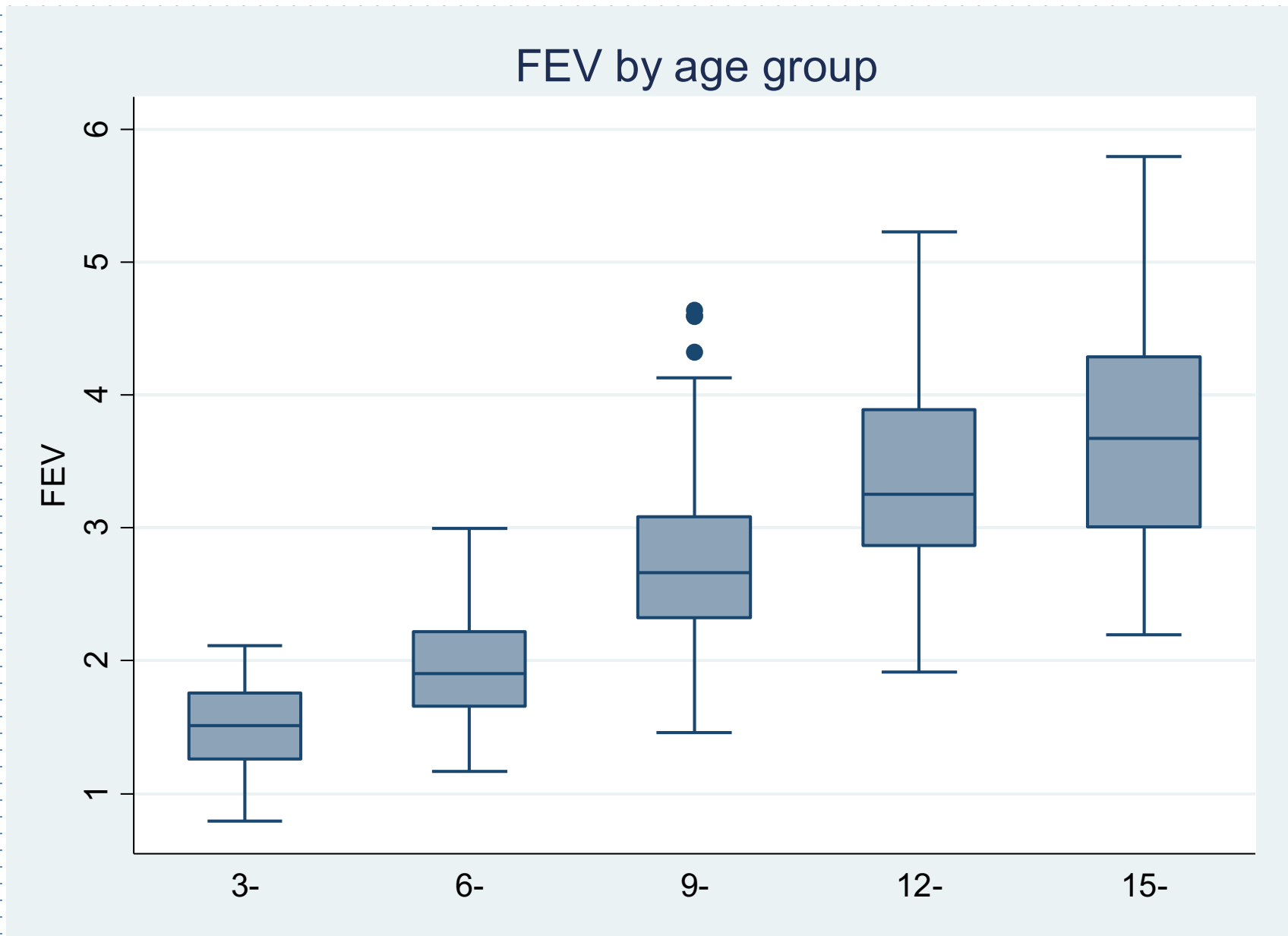
```
. spearman fev age
```

Number of obs = 654
Spearman's rho = 0.7984

Test of Ho: fev and age are independent
Prob > |t| = 0.0000



```
graph box fev, over(age) title(FEV by age)
```



```
egen agecat = cut(age), at(0,3,6,9,12,15,20) label  
graph box fev, over(agecat) title(FEV by age group) ytitle(FEV)
```

```
. tabstat fev, by(agecat) s(n min median max mean sd)
```

Summary for variables: fev
by categories of: agecat

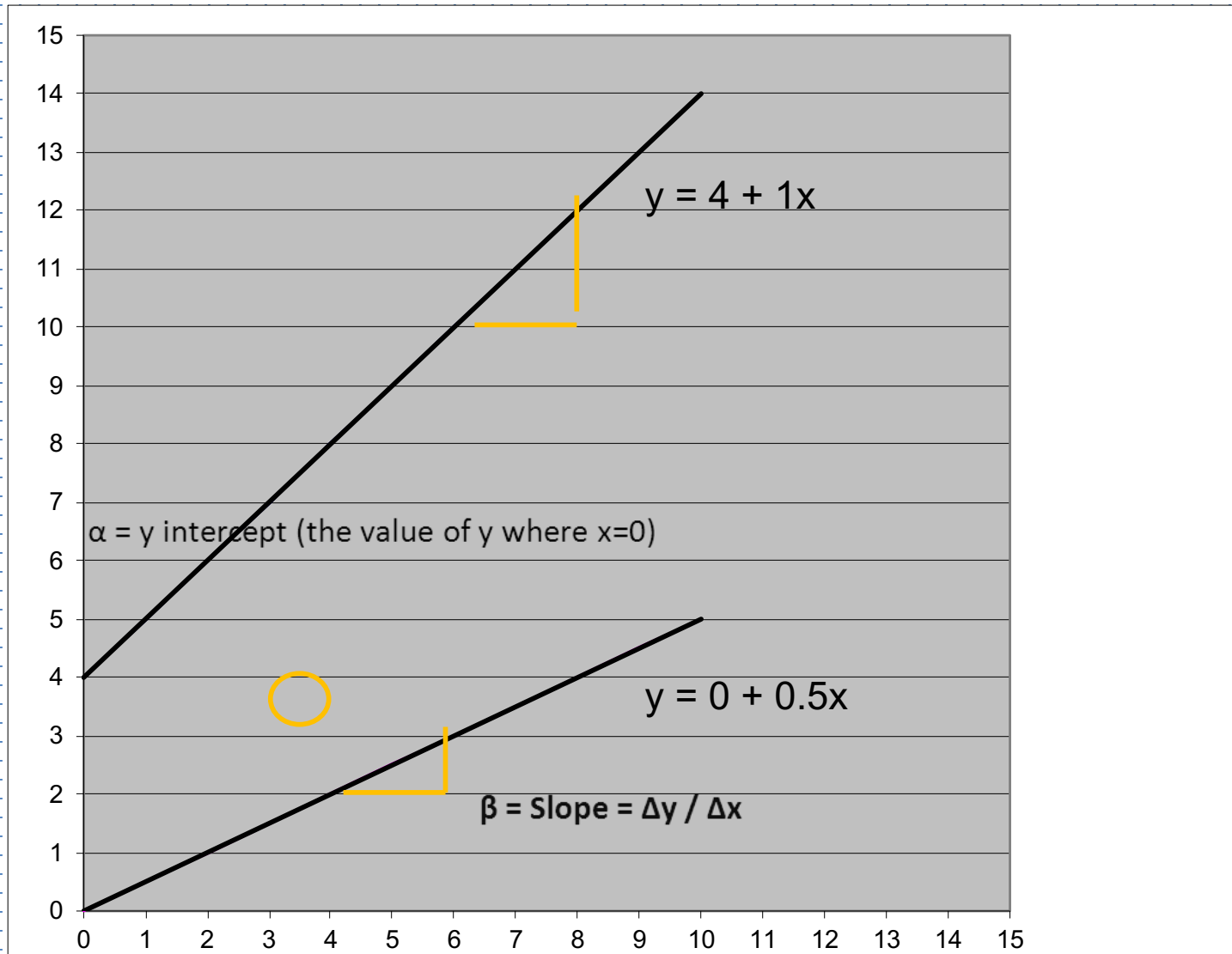
agecat	N	min	p50	max	mean	sd
3-	39	.791	1.514	2.115	1.472385	.3346982
6-	176	1.165	1.901	2.993	1.943727	.3885005
9-	265	1.458	2.665	4.637	2.71723	.5866867
12-	125	1.916	3.255	5.224	3.384576	.7326963
15-	49	2.198	3.674	5.793	3.710143	.8818795
Total	654	.791	2.5475	5.793	2.63678	.8670591

Simple linear regression

- The method allows us to investigate the effect of a difference in the *explanatory* variable on the *response* variable.
- Equivalent terms:
 - Response variable, dependent variable, outcome variable, Y
 - Explanatory variable, independent variable, predictor variable, correlate, X
- Here it matters which variable is X and which variable is Y
- Y is the variable that you want to predict, or better understand with X (we regress Y on X)

Recall the equation of a straight line

$$y = \alpha + \beta x$$



Simple linear regression

- Population regression equation is defined as

$$\mu_{y/x} = \alpha + \beta x$$

- This is the equation of a straight line
- α and β are constants and are called the coefficients of the equation

Simple linear regression

- α is the y-intercept of the line $y = \alpha + \beta x$
- Plugging back in to the population regression equation, α is the mean value of Y when $X=0$

e.g. $\mu_{y|0} = \alpha + \beta X = \alpha$

- β is the slope of the line
- β is the change in the mean value of y that corresponds to a one-unit increase in X
- e.g. $X=3$ vs. $X=2$

$$\mu_{y|3} - \mu_{y|2} = (\alpha + \beta*3) - (\alpha + \beta*2) = \beta$$

Simple linear regression

- Even if there is a linear relationship between Y and X in theory, there will (usually) be some variability in the population
- At each value of X, there is a range of Y values, with a mean $\mu_{y/x}$ and a standard deviation $\sigma_{y/x}$
- We note this by including an error term, ε , in our regression equation
- The linear regression equation is $y = \alpha + \beta x + \varepsilon$

Simple linear regression

- The linear regression equation is $y = \alpha + \beta x + \varepsilon$
- The error, ε , is the distance a sample value y has from the population regression line

$$y = \alpha + \beta x + \varepsilon$$

$$\mu_{y/x} = \alpha + \beta x \text{ (population regression line)}$$

so $y - \mu_{y/x} = \varepsilon$ is the error

Simple linear regression

- Statistical assumptions of linear regression
 - X's are measured without error
 - Violations of this cause the coefficients to attenuate toward zero
 - For each value of X, the Y's are normally distributed with mean $\mu_{y/x}$ and standard deviation $\sigma_{y/x}$
 - The regression equation is correct $\mu_{y/x} = \alpha + \beta x$

Simple linear regression

- More assumptions of linear regression
 - Homoscedasticity – the standard deviation of y at each value of X is constant; $\sigma_{y/x}$ the same for all values of X
 - All the y_i 's are independent
 - You can't guess the y value for one person (or observation) based on the outcome of another
- We do not need the X 's to be normally distributed, just the Y 's at each value of X

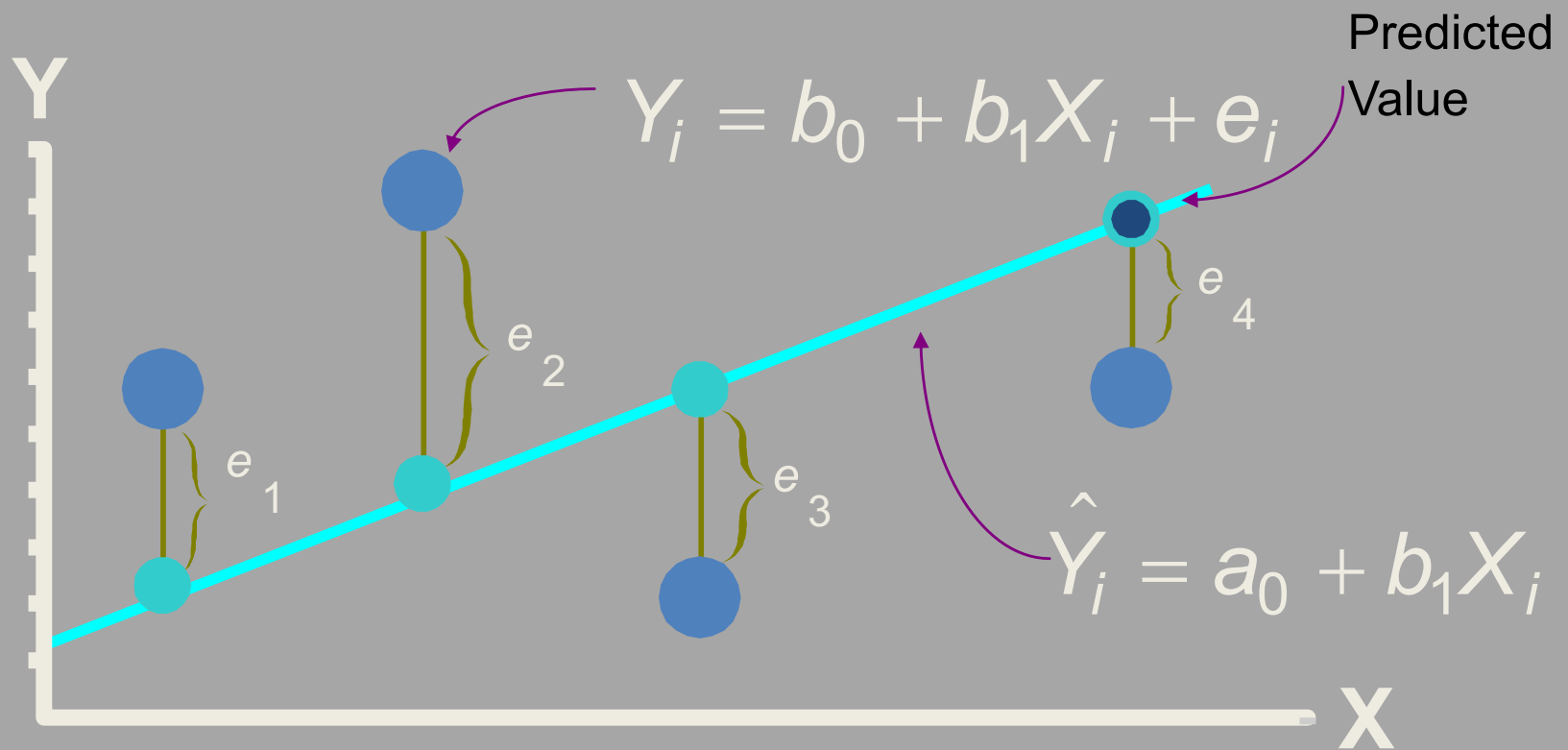
Ordinary Least Squares Regression

- We estimate the *coefficients* of the population regression line (α and β) using our sample of measurements of y and x
- The distance from a data point (x_i, y_i) to the line at x_i is the error and called the *residual*, e_i

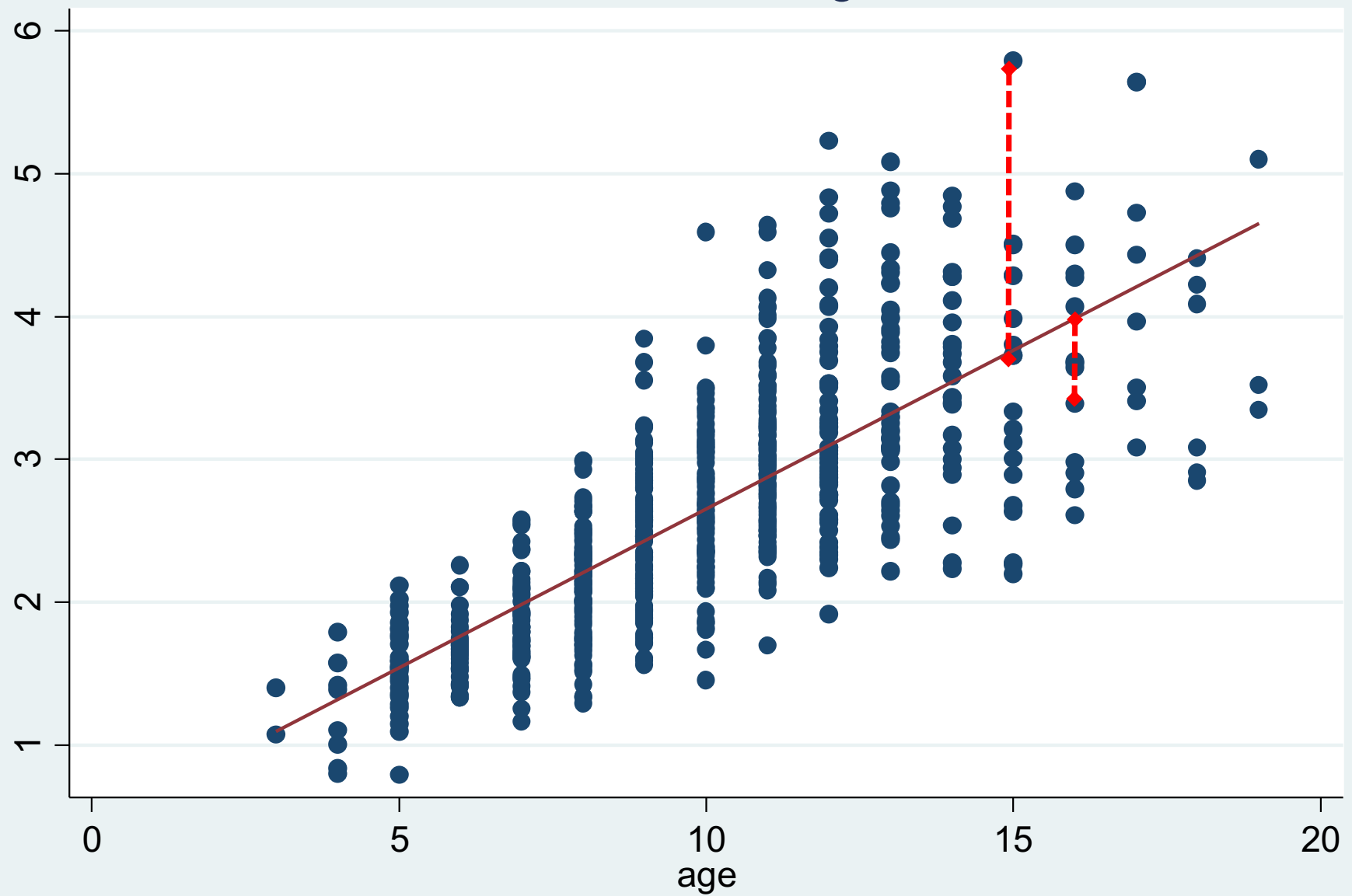
$$e_i = y_i - \hat{y}_i$$

- $\hat{y}_i$ is y -value of the regression line at x_i and is the predicted value of y at each x

Linear Regression Graphically



FEV versus age



Simple Linear Regression or Least Squares

- The regression line equation is $\hat{y} = \hat{\alpha} + \hat{\beta}x$
- The “best” line is the one that finds the α and β that minimize the sum of the squared residuals $\sum e_i^2$
- We are minimizing the sum of the squares of the residuals, called the error sum of squares or the residual sum of squares

$$\begin{aligned}\sum_{i=1}^n e_i^2 &= \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2 \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^n [y_i - (\hat{\alpha} + \hat{\beta}x_i)]^2\end{aligned}$$

Simple linear regression example: Regression of FEV on age

$$\text{FEV} = \hat{\alpha} + \hat{\beta} \text{ age}$$

`regress yvar xvar`

`. regress fev age`

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 654		
Model	280.919154	1	280.919154	F(1, 652) = 872.18		
Residual	210.000679	652	.322086931	Prob > F = 0.0000		
Total	490.919833	653	.751791475	R-squared = 0.5722		
				Adj R-squared = 0.5716		
				Root MSE = .56753		

fev	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
age	.222041	.0075185	29.53	0.000	.2072777	.2368043
_cons	.4316481	.0778954	5.54	0.000	.278692	.5846042

$\hat{\beta}$ = Coef for age

$\hat{\alpha}$ = _cons (short for constant)

Interpretating the parameter estimates

- The least squares estimate is

$$\hat{y} = 0.432 + 0.222 x$$

- The intercept, 0.432 is the fitted value of y (FEV) for x (age) = 0
- The slope, 0.222 is the change in FEV corresponding to a change of 1 year in age. So a child with age=10 would have an FEV that is (on average) 0.222 higher than someone age 9. And the same for age 7 vs. 6, etc.

Simple linear regression – hypothesis testing

- We want to know if there is a relationship between X and Y .
 - If there is no relationship then the value of Y does not change with the value of X , and $\beta=0$.
 - Therefore $\beta=0$ is our null hypothesis.
- This is mathematically equivalent to the null hypothesis that the correlation $\rho=0$.
- We can also calculate a 95% confidence interval for β

Inference for regression coefficients

- We want to use the least squares regression line $\hat{y} = \hat{\alpha} + \hat{\beta}x$ to make inference about the population regression line $\mu_{y|x} = \alpha + \beta x$
- If we took repeated samples in which we measured x and y together and calculated the least squares estimates, we would have a distribution for the estimates $\hat{\alpha}$ and $\hat{\beta}$
- The standard error of the estimates are

$$se(\hat{\beta}) = \frac{\sigma_{y|x}}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}}$$

$$se(\hat{\alpha}) = \sigma_{y|x} \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} + \frac{\bar{x}^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}}$$

where we estimate $\sigma_{y|x}$ with $s_{y|x}$

$$\text{and } s_{y|x} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{n-2}}$$

Inference for regression coefficients

- We can use these to test the null hypothesis $H_0: \beta = \beta_0$ against the alternative $H_0: \beta \neq \beta_0$
- The test statistic for this is
$$t = \frac{\hat{\beta} - \beta_0}{\text{se}(\hat{\beta})}$$
- And it follows the t distribution with $n-2$ degrees of freedom under the null hypothesis

Inference for regression coefficients

- When $\beta_0=0$, i.e. testing $H_0: \beta =0$ this is equivalent to testing $\mu_{y/x} = \alpha + 0*x = \alpha$
- This is the same as testing the null hypothesis $H_0: \rho=0$
- The regression slope and the correlation coefficient are related:
$$\hat{\beta} = r \left(\frac{s_y}{s_x} \right)$$
- 95% confidence intervals for β
($\hat{\beta} - t_{n-2,.025} \text{se}(\hat{\beta})$, $\hat{\beta} + t_{n-2,.025} \text{se}(\hat{\beta})$)

Simple linear regression example: Regression of FEV on age

$$\text{FEV} = \hat{\alpha} + \hat{\beta} \text{ age}$$

```
regress yvar xvar
```

```
. regress fev age
```

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Coefficient of Determination R^2

- $R^2 = r^2$, i.e. just the Pearson correlation coefficient squared
- R^2 ranges from 0 to 1, and measures the proportion of the variability in y that is explained by the regression of y on x

$$R^2 = \frac{s_y^2 - s_{y|x}^2}{s_y^2}$$

Simple linear regression example: Regression of FEV on age

$$\text{FEV} = \hat{\alpha} + \hat{\beta} \text{ age}$$

```
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```

```
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Evaluating the regression model

$$\text{model sum of squares} = MSS = \sum_{i=1}^n (\hat{y}_i - \bar{y})^2$$

regress fev age

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$$\text{residual sum of squares} = RSS = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{total sum of squares} &= TSS = MSS + RSS \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2 \end{aligned}$$

$$R^2 = \frac{TSS - RSS}{TSS} = \frac{MSS}{TSS}$$

$$MSS = \sum_{i=1}^n (\hat{y}_i - \bar{y})^2$$

regress fev age

Source	SS	df	MS
Model	280.919154	1	280.919154
Residual	210.000679	652	.322086931
Total	490.919833	653	.751791475

fev	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
age	.222041	.0075185	29.53	0.000	.2072777	.2368043
_cons	.4316481	.0778954	5.54	0.000	.278692	.5846042

$$F_{\text{statistic}}(\text{MSS df}, \text{RSS df}) = \frac{\left(\frac{\text{MSS}}{\text{MSS df}} \right)}{\left(\frac{\text{RSS}}{\text{RSS df}} \right)}$$

Number of obs = 654

F(1, 652) = 872.18

Prob > F = 0.0000

R-squared = 0.5722

Adj R-squared = 0.5716

Root MSE = .56753

= .7565²

$$R^2 = \frac{TSS - RSS}{TSS} = \frac{MSS}{TSS}$$

$$RSS = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2$$

$$TSS = \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \bar{y})^2$$

Overall Model Fit Using the F-Statistic

- The F statistic compares the model to a model with just $\bar{y}$ (the null model)

- The statistic is

$$F_{stat} = \frac{\left(\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (\hat{y}_i - \bar{y})^2}{\# \text{ indep vars}} \right)}{\left(\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{n - \# \text{ indep vars}} \right)} = \frac{\left(\frac{MSS}{MSS \text{ df}} \right)}{\left(\frac{RSS}{RSS \text{ df}} \right)}$$

- When there is only one independent variable in the model, these are equivalent tests
 - F test that compares the model fit to the null model
 - The ttest that $\beta=0$
 - The ttest that $r=0$ (Pearson correlation)

Inference for predicted values

- We might want to estimate the mean value of y at a particular value of x
- What is the mean FEV for children who are 10 years old? $\hat{y} = .432 + .222 * x = .432 + .222 * 10 = 2.643$ liters
- We can construct a 95% confidence interval for the estimated mean
 - $(\hat{y} - t_{n-2, .025} se(\hat{y}), \hat{y} + t_{n-2, .025} se(\hat{y}))$, where

$$se(\hat{y}) = s_{y|x} \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} + \frac{(x - \bar{x})^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}}$$

$$\text{where } s_{y|x} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - \hat{y})^2}{n-2}} = \sqrt{\frac{RSS}{n-2}}$$

Use Stata for your prediction

- Stata will calculate the fitted regression values and the standard errors
 - `regress fev age`
 - `predict fev_pred, xb` -> predicted mean values ($\hat{y}$)
 - `predict fev_predse, stdp` -> se of $\hat{y}$ values

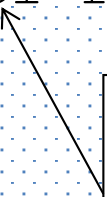
New variable names that I made up



You don't have to calculate these to get a plot with the 95% CI:

```
twoway (lfitci fev age)
```

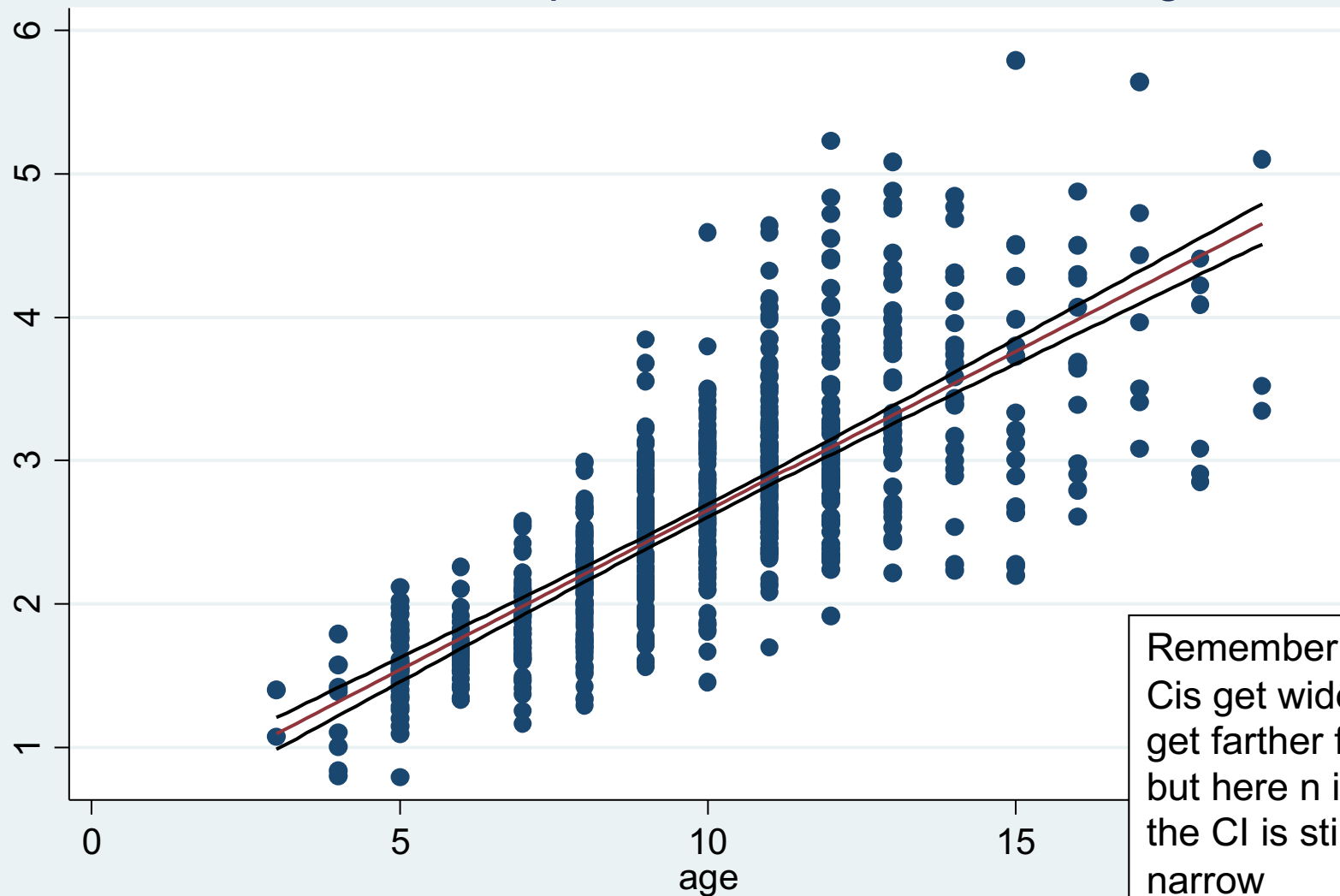
Stands for linear fit for the line, CI for the confidence interval



```
. list fev age fev_pred fev_predse
```

	fev	age	fev_pred	fev_predse
1.	1.708	9	2.430017	.0232702
2.	1.724	8	2.207976	.0265199
3.	1.72	7	1.985935	.0312756
4.	1.558	9	2.430017	.0232702
5.	1.895	9	2.430017	.0232702
6.	2.336	8	2.207976	.0265199
7.	1.919	6	1.763894	.0369605
8.	1.415	6	1.763894	.0369605
9.	1.987	8	2.207976	.0265199
10.	1.942	9	2.430017	.0232702
11.	1.602	6	1.763894	.0369605
12.	1.735	8	2.207976	.0265199
13.	2.193	8	2.207976	.0265199
14.	2.118	8	2.207976	.0265199
15.	2.258	8	2.207976	.0265199
336.	3.147	13	3.318181	.0320131
337.	2.52	10	2.652058	.0221981
338.	2.292	10	2.652058	.0221981

95% CI for the predicted means for each age



Remember that the CIs get wider as you get farther from $\bar{x}$; but here n is large so the CI is still very narrow

```
twoway (scatter fev age) (lfitci fev age, ciplot(rline)
blcolor(black)), legend(off) title(95% CI for the predicted
means for each age )
```

Next Time: More and More Modeling

- More linear regression
- More prediction
- Some non-linear regression
- Logistic regression