

PSYCH 10 · Fall 2026 · Worksheet for Lecture 1: What is statistics? · Answer key

These questions ask for your own observations and reasoning, so none of them has a single correct answer. What follows, in blue, describes the kinds of answers that do what each question asks.

Part 1 · Making the invisible visible

What is one thing about life at Stanford that you can't see by looking around, but could find out by counting? Say what you would count.

Anything countable whose pattern only appears once it is added up across many people: how many hours the students on one dorm floor sleep, who speaks and how often in a section, how long the line at a dining hall is at each hour of the day, how many students in a lecture hall have a laptop open. A complete answer names the thing being counted (hours, turns speaking, minutes in line) and the people or occasions it would be counted over, because the pattern lives in the aggregate rather than in any one person's day.

Part 2 · Where your guesses come from

Earlier we asked two questions: one about megacities, and one about gender disparities in school attendance around the world. Think about the one you got wrong, or were less sure about. What reasons or evidence did you use to make your guess? Try to name something specific, such as a class you took, a news story or video, or a place you've been.

The question is about where a guess comes from, so a good answer names a specific source rather than a feeling: a news story about one particular city, a geography class, a documentary, a trip, a map you remember, a conversation with someone from the country in question. "I just guessed" is an honest answer, but the useful next step is to ask what the guess was based on, because the two questions were chosen for the way most people's sources point them in the same wrong direction.

Part 3 · A number in the news

"The U.S. poverty rate fell to 10.2% in 2025."

What is one thing you would want to know before you believed this number?

Any one of the questions the lecture asked of the number: who counts as poor (the income threshold, and the reasoning behind it); who was asked, and how many people; what "fell" is measured against (the 2024 rate, and by how much); who the survey leaves out (people in prisons and nursing homes, and students in dorms, who are counted through their parents' household); and how large the margin of error is compared with the size of the fall.

Do you trust the number more or less than you did a few minutes ago? Why?

Circle one: more · less · about the same

Either direction earns credit, as long as the reason uses something from the lecture. A reason for "more": the number comes from a large, documented survey with a stated definition and a margin of error, so the definition behind the number is in plain view. A reason for "less": the definition of poverty is one choice among several (a different measure gives 13.1%), some people are left out of the count, and the fall from the year before is small relative to the margin of error. "About the same" is fine as well, if the reason says why what you learned didn't move you in either direction.