

Creating a Histogram

Overview

This set of instructions tells you how to use SPSS to create and edit a histogram. We'll assume that you have opened SPSS, that you have your variable(s) defined on the "Variable View" of the SPSS Data Editor screen, and that you already have data on the "Data View" screen.

NOTE: Measurement Scale Considerations

To build a histogram, you need a variable that is interval or ordinal in nature (rather than nominal or ordinal). SPSS uses the term "scale" for both of these measurement scales

To Get a Histogram

1. From the "Graphs" pull-down menu on the top toolbar, highlight "Legacy Dialogs." A fly-out menu will appear to the right. Click "Histogram..." at the bottom of this menu.
2. A pop-up window will appear called **Histogram**. In the left-hand panel of this window, you'll see a list of the variables you named on the "Variable View" tab of the Data Editor screen. Highlight the name of the variable for which you want to create a histogram; then click the ► button. This will move your variable to the right-hand portion of the pop-up window under "Variable." Then click the "OK" button.
3. A new pop-up window will appear called **Output – SPSS Viewer**.
4. To edit your histogram (something you'll probably want to do), put your cursor on top of the histogram and double-click. This will produce a new pop-up window called **Chart Editor** containing your histogram. All desired changes to your histogram must be made here in the Chart Editor.

To Change the X-Axis Numbers (and/or the Y-Axis Numbers)

- a. Put cursor over one of the numbers and click once. All X-axis numbers will be highlighted.
- b. Go to Chart Editor's "Edit" pull-down menu and click once on the "Properties" option.
- c. Near the top of the **Properties** pop-up menu, click once on the "Scale" tab.
- d. Change the "Major Increment" number to whatever you'd like the X-axis numerical "jumps" to be.
- e. Click the "Apply" button. [Follow these same instruction for changing the Y-axis numbers]

To Change the Width of the Bars (i.e., "Bin Width")

- a. Put your cursor over any of the bars and click once. All bars will be highlighted.
- b. In the "Properties" pop-up menu (which still should be in view), click the "Histogram Options" tab.
- c. In the "Bin Sizes" part of the "Properties" pop-up window, click "Custom" and "Interval width"; then change the number to whatever width you'd like each bar to have in your histogram.
- d. Click the "Apply" button.

To Position X-Axis Numbers Directly Under the Bars

- a. Put your cursor over any of the bars and click once. All bars will be highlighted.
- b. In the "Properties" pop-up menu (which still should be in view), click the "Histogram Options" tab.
- c. In the "Anchor First Bin" part of the "Properties" pop-up window, click "Custom value for anchor." Then change the number that's there by subtracting half of your bin width.
- d. Click the "Apply" button.

To Change the Color of the Bars

- a. Put your cursor over any of the bars and click once. All bars will be highlighted.
- b. In the "Properties" pop-up menu (which still should be in view), click the "Fill & Border" tab.
- c. Click inside the "Fill" box that's under the word "Color." Then choose a color for the bars.
- d. Click the "Apply" button.