

# Il percorso storico della statistica nell'Italia Unita

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## The Construction of Statistics as Science and as Tool of the Sciences

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The sources of statistical science are as wide in extent as its modern uses. The name itself comes from Italian (*stato*) and German (*Staat*), a political unit, and the word still bears, as one of its most common meanings, the sense of official numbers. This "state science" fused with political arithmetic and became quantitative between about 1820 and 1850, and soon afterwards there was an extensive discussion as to whether this field was defined by its object—state and society—or by its (quantitative) form. The question was settled by deeds more than by methodological discussions, as the aggregate regularities of official numbers became a model for comprehending other kinds of collective phenomena in the natural and social sciences. The mathematical field of statistics grew up beginning about 1890 as an attempt to synthesize the models and methods of statistical reasoning that had grown up everywhere. This mathematical field became highly important for statistical reasoning in the sciences and in business, the professions, and administration, yet has never dominated them. Instead, the many disciplines that rely on statistics remain distinctive and are often creative in their statistical methods and practices.