

Introduction to SPSS for Windows

This workbook is based upon the personal computer version of SPSS, SPSS for Windows. One of the advantages of using the Windows version of SPSS is that many of the features will be familiar to users of other programs which operate in a Windows environment, such as the wordprocessing package Word for Windows or the spreadsheet package Excel for Windows.

SPSS is a computer software package that is specifically designed to perform statistical operations and facilitate data analysis and is by far the most popular statistical package used by social scientists. It is worth pointing out at this stage that one of the best sources of information and help about SPSS and its various functions is literally at your fingertips, and can be accessed through the comprehensive **Help** menu within the SPSS program. Some of the important features of this Help menu include:

The Online Tutorial

This provides a good introduction to the program and adopts a clear step-by-step approach to the various features of SPSS.

The Statistics Coach

This provides some basic assistance with many of the statistical procedures available in SPSS. For more detailed statistical explanations you are advised to consult the SPSS applications guide or any good introductory statistics text.

The Contextual Help System

This provides information on specific features of SPSS. Pointing the mouse at the specific particular feature or control you want to know more about and clicking the right mouse key activates this help facility.

Getting started on SPSS

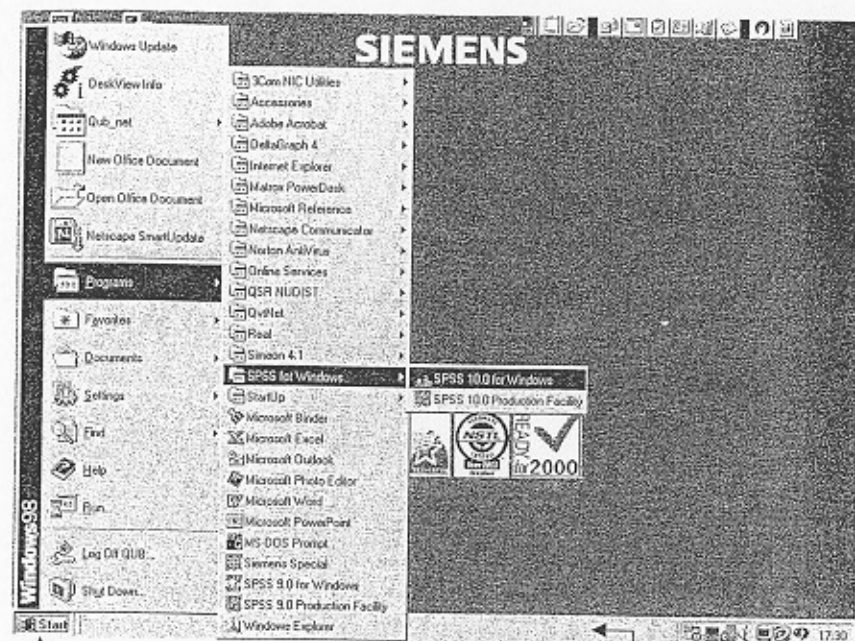
The SPSS program (assuming, of course, that it is installed on your computer) is accessed by clicking on the **Start** button situated on the bottom left-hand side of the computer screen and selecting **SPSS for Windows** from the **Programs** menu.

(You should note that the menu system may be configured slightly differently on the computer you are using and therefore the location of SPSS may not be identical to that illustrated in Figure O.1a.)

This will start SPSS (the SPSS icon will appear in the Windows Task bar at the bottom of the screen) and the **Data Editor** window will open up automatically.

Once opened, there are a number of ways to begin using the SPSS package. The opening dialog box (shown in Figure O.1b) offers five options and you can proceed by clicking on the required option button and then on **OK**.

Figure O.1a Starting SPSS



Start button

Task bar

It is worth pointing out that this dialog box may not always appear when you open SPSS (for example, if the previous user has clicked on the **Don't show this dialog box in the future** option). Fortunately, all of the options available in the opening dialog box can be accessed through the SPSS menu system.

The opening dialog box can also be removed by clicking on **Cancel** and, as we want to take a closer look at the **Data Editor** window, you can do this now.

The **Data Editor** window is blank at this stage and contains no data (see Figure O.2). You will need to become familiar with the window in Figure O.2 if you are to navigate around SPSS successfully. Some of its main features are explained below.

(1) The Title bar

The top section of the window is known as the **Title bar** and by clicking and dragging on this you can reposition the window anywhere on the screen. On the right-hand side of the Title bar are three small squares: