

Sound Intelligent When Talking About Statistics, Facts, Evidence And Data

When we conduct research, we can **obtain** or **acquire** data. We can then **draw on** this data in order to give evidence to support the arguments which we want to make.

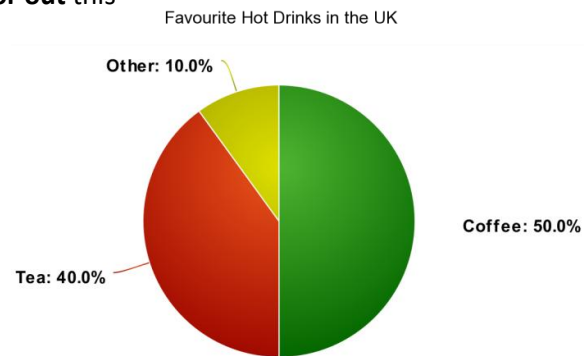
Sometimes we do not have exact figures that we can base our arguments on. However, we can give a **ballpark figure**, which is an approximate number. We could say that last year's profits were **in the region of** \$300 000.

It is always a good idea to look at data and figures very carefully. When we **scrutinize** or **examine** data and figures, we might find that there is something which causes the data to be inaccurate. For example, a travel company might be performing very well, but the data during the covid period might make the travel company look as if it is not performing very well, or that it has been mismanaged. In this case, we can say that the covid pandemic **skewed** the data related to profits. We can then decide whether we want to **factor in** the covid period (meaning to include this in the analysis) or to **factor out** this period or this data, so that it is **in alignment with** our projected profits.

The chart on the right shows the most popular hot drinks in the UK.

From the chart we can see that:

- Coffee drinkers **constitute** 50% of the population.
- 40% of the population **is made up of** tea drinkers.



When we make conclusions from data, we can use the following phrases to explain figures:
 The pandemic can **account for** the poor sales figures between 2020 and 2022.
 Our poor sales figures between 2020 and 2022 **stem from the fact that** the pandemic lowered demand considerably.

A) Match the phrases to the definitions

Based on the context of the article, can you match the words in the box to the definitions listed below? Then add the word into the example sentence. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the meaning of the sentence.

to obtain/acquire	to draw on	a ballpark figure	to skew
in the region of	to account for	to factor out	to be in alignment with
constitute	scrutinize	is made up of	to stem from the fact that

1. To not include something in your calculations or analysis of data: _____

"If we _____ the 2 years under covid lockdowns, the data shows that the country's tourism industry is really booming."

2. An approximate number: _____

"If you don't have the exact data, you can give us a _____."
"As a _____, the company made around \$1.2m last year in profits."

3. To use data as a resource: _____

"I would like to _____ last year's figures in order to prove my point."

4. To be caused by: _____

"Our poor results from the previous quarter _____ we didn't plan the roll-out of the new product effectively."

5. To be the same as or similar to something else: _____

"Thankfully, our figures from the previous quarter are _____ with our targets."

6. To get something: _____

"We have managed to _____ a lot of data regarding our customer preferences."

7. To distort something from its true value, to make something inaccurate: _____

"I think that last week's poor performance has _____ the results a little bit. Overall we are performing very well and improving every week."

8. To explain the reason for something: _____

"It is difficult to _____ the very poor figures that we have seen over the past months."
"The loss of our CEO _____ our poor sales last month."

9. Approximately: _____

"Losing our main client has cost us _____ \$50 000."

10. To be part of a whole: _____

"Women _____ 50% of our staff."
"Online sales _____ 70% of our revenue."

11. To be represented by (as a percentage): _____

"60% of our workforce _____ temporary workers on part-time contracts."

12. To look at something very carefully: _____

"Make sure that you _____ all the figures, because we can't afford to make any mistakes in our calculations."

B) Key Words in a New Context

Below you can find a paragraph. Can you fill in the gaps in the paragraph with the words from the box below? You may need to change the form of some of the verbs in order for them to fit into the sentence.

To obtain/acquire	to draw on	a ballpark figure
In the region of	to account for	to be in alignment with
Constitute	made up of	to stem from the fact that

Declining Birth Rates in Japan: Are there any Solutions?

Japan is facing a significant demographic challenge as birth rates continue to decline. According to data _____ from the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, the number of newborns in Japan hit a record low of 840,832 in 2020, a decline of over 25% from a decade ago.

To obtain accurate data on Japan's birth rates, we can draw on statistics from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. In recent years, birth rates have been _____ 1.4 to 1.5 children per woman, which is significantly below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman required to keep the population the same. If this trend continues, the population of Japan is projected to decrease by around 16 million people as a _____ by 2045.

One factor that _____ the declining birth rates is Japan's ageing population. Japan already has a high population of elderly people. Those over 65 _____ 28% of the Japanese population, which means that there are relatively few young people to have children and support them. This figure is expected to increase from 28% to 38% by 2050.

Japan's declining birth rates also _____ Japan is experiencing economic difficulties. The cost of raising children in Japan is high, and many couples are struggling to balance work and family life. Japan's gender gap is also a concern, with women often facing barriers to career advancement and limited access to affordable childcare. The highest management positions in Japan are mainly _____ men.

Japan's traditional values emphasize hard work and academic achievement, which can discourage young couples from starting families. Moreover, the stigma associated with

being a single parent or raising a child outside of marriage may also play a role. Many want to be _____ cultural norms.

So what can be done to solve this problem? The Japanese government has recently introduced policies aimed at supporting families and encouraging childbirth, such as subsidies for childcare and longer parental leave. However, it remains to be seen as to whether these policies will be enough to reverse the trend. There is no doubt that other

governments in the Western world will be watching closely. South Korea, Portugal, Spain, Germany and the UK will all need to _____ the experience and data obtained from the Japanese government's policies in order to put together their own "rescue" plans, as their populations are also set to decrease dramatically in the next 30 years if they take no action.

C) Comprehension Questions

1. What is the significance of the number 2.1 in the article?

2. What are 4 potential reasons why couples in Japan are choosing not to have children?

3. What are 2 ways in which the Japanese government is attempting to encourage couples to have more children?

4. What will the governments of South Korea, Portugal, Spain, Germany and the UK do and why?

D) More Uses of Selected Key Words

To draw on

This is a really flexible phrase for business English:

To draw on my skills / to draw on my expertise in / to draw on my

knowledge of / to draw on my previous experience / to
draw on our resources / to draw on data

"We had to draw on our emergency budget due to unexpected costs."

"We had a difficult situation, but I was able to draw on previous experience to solve it."

"I would like to draw on data from the last quarter. As we can see.."

A ballpark figure

There are also some further common phrases with 'ballpark', where ballpark means 'approximate':

A ballpark estimate / a ballpark calculation / a ballpark valuation / a ballpark projection

If you want to estimate or offer something and you are 'in the right ballpark', then it means that you are close to the correct or desired figure.

"Your price offer is a little high, but it is in the right ballpark."

To account for

'Account for' is a really nice phrase to use in business, because it sounds professional and has a fairly straight forward synonym. It has a few uses:

If something accounts for a particular fact or situation, it causes or explains it:

"The pandemic crisis doesn't account for such terrible figures in 2021. There must have been some other cause for our low profits. We should look more deeply into it."

This is a great question to ask in a meeting. "How do you account for.." is a great phrase meaning "How can you explain.." with regards to statistics:

"How do you account for the company's excessive expenditure in the second quarter of 2021?"

To be in alignment with

We can also be in alignment with rules, regulations and policies:

"We are still acting in alignment with company policy on spending."

Our interests and goals can be in alignment with those of another company:

"Our interests are in alignment, so I think that our partnership is going to work really well"

Here we can also simply use the verb 'to align':

"Our aims in this project align with those of our partner."

E) Glossary of words for sounding intelligent when talking about statistics, facts, evidence and data

to obtain
to acquire
to draw on
to scrutinize
a ballpark figure
in the right ballpark
to skew
in the region of

to account for
to factor in / out
an anomaly
to be in alignment with
to align with
to constitute
is made up of
to stem from the fact that