

case study

Do Pets or Friends Help Reduce Stress?

If you are a dog lover, having your dog with you may reduce your stress level. Does having a friend with you reduce stress? To examine the effect of pets and friends in stressful situations, researchers recruited 45 women who said they were dog lovers. Fifteen women were assigned at random to each of three groups: to do a stressful task alone, with a good friend present, or with their dogs present. The stressful task was to count backward by 13s or 17s. The woman's average heart rate during the task was one measure of the effect of stress. The table below shows the data.¹

Average heart rates during stress with a pet (P), with a friend (F), and for the control group (C)

GROUP	RATE	GROUP	RATE	GROUP	RATE	GROUP	RATE
P	69.169	P	68.862	C	84.738	C	75.477
F	99.692	C	87.231	C	84.877	C	62.646
P	70.169	P	64.169	P	58.692	P	70.077
C	80.369	C	91.754	P	79.662	F	88.015
C	87.446	C	87.785	P	69.231	F	81.600
P	75.985	F	91.354	C	73.277	F	86.985
F	83.400	F	100.877	C	84.523	F	92.492
F	102.154	C	77.800	C	70.877	P	72.262
P	86.446	P	97.538	F	89.815	P	65.446
F	80.277	P	85.000	F	98.200		
C	90.015	F	101.062	F	76.908		
C	99.046	F	97.046	P	69.538		

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From what you learned in Chapter 1, analyze this study by answering questions below.

1. Construct parallel boxplots for comparing the heart rates of the women in the three groups.
2. Calculate the numerical summaries for each group's data. Which measures of center and spread would you choose to compare? Why?
3. Determine if there are outliers in each of the three groups. Show your work.
4. Write a few sentences comparing the distributions of heart rates for the women in the three groups.
5. Based on the data, does it appear that the presence of a pet or a friend reduces heart rate during a stressful task? Justify your answer.