Description

These commands are provided for programmers wishing to write new st commands.

st_is verifies that the data in memory are survival-time (st) data. If not, it issues the error message “data not st”, r(119).

st is currently “release 2”, meaning that this is the second design of the system. Programs written for the previous release continue to work. (The previous release of st corresponds to Stata 5.)

Modern programs code st_is 2 full or st_is 2 analysis. st_is 2 verifies that the dataset in memory is in release 2 format; if it is in the earlier format, it is converted to release 2 format. (Older programs simply code st_is. This verifies that no new features are stset about the data that would cause the old program to break.)

The full and analysis parts indicate whether the dataset may include past, future, or past and future data. Code st_is 2 full if the command is suitable for running on the analysis sample and the past and future data (many data management commands fall into this category). Code st_is 2 analysis if the command is suitable for use only with the analysis sample (most statistical commands fall into this category). See [ST] stset for the definitions of past and future.

st_show displays the summary of the survival-time variables or does nothing, depending on what you specify when stsetting the data. noshow requests that st_show display nothing.

st_ct is a low-level utility that provides risk-group summaries from survival-time data.

Syntax

Verify that data in memory are survival-time data

st_is 2 {full | analysis}

Display or do not display summary of survival-time variables

st_show [noshow]

Risk-group summaries

st_ct "[byvars]" -> newtvar newpopvar newfailvar [newcensvar [newentvar]]

You must have stset your data before using st_is, st_show, and st_ct; see [ST] stset.
Definitions of characteristics and st variables

From a programmer’s perspective, st is a set of conventions that specify where certain pieces of information are stored and how that information should be interpreted, together with a few subroutines that make it easier to follow the conventions.

At the lowest level, st is nothing more than a set of Stata characteristics that programmers may access:

```stata
char _dta[_dta]           st (marks that the data are st)
char _dta[st_ver]         2 (version number)
char _dta[st_id]          varname or nothing; id() variable
char _dta[st_t0]          varname or nothing; t0() variable
char _dta[st bt0]         varname; t variable from stset t, ...
char _dta[st_bd]          varname or nothing; failure() variable
char _dta[st_ev]          list of numbers or nothing; numlist from failure(varname[==numlist])
char _dta[st_enter]       contents of enter() or nothing; numlist expanded
char _dta[st_exit]        contents of exit() or nothing; numlist expanded
char _dta[st_orig]        contents of origin() or nothing; numlist expanded
char _dta[st bs]          # or 1; scale() value
char _dta[st o]           _origin or #
char _dta[st s]           _origin or #
char _dta[st_ifexp]       exp or nothing; from stset ... if exp ...
char _dta[st_if]          exp or nothing; contents of if()
char _dta[st_ever]        exp or nothing; contents of ever()
char _dta[st never]       exp or nothing; contents of never()
char _dta[st after]       exp or nothing; contents of after()
char _dta[st before]      exp or nothing; contents of before()
char _dta[st wt]          weight type or nothing; user-specified weight
char _dta[st wv]          varname or nothing; user-specified weighting variable
char _dta[st w]           [weighttype=weightvar] or nothing
char _dta[st show]        noshow or nothing
char _dta[st t]           _t (for compatibility with release 1)
char _dta[st t0]          _t0 (for compatibility with release 1)
char _dta[st d]           _d (for compatibility with release 1)
char _dta[st n0]          # or nothing; number of st notes
char _dta[st n1]          text of first note or nothing
char _dta[st n2]          text of second note or nothing
char _dta[st set]         text or nothing. If filled in, streset (see [ST] stset) will refuse
to execute and present this text as the reason
```
All st datasets also have the following four variables:

- \_t0  time of entry (in t units) into risk pool
- \_t   time of exit (in t units) from risk pool
- \_d   contains 1 if failure, 0 if censoring
- \_st  contains 1 if observation is to be used and 0 otherwise

Thus, in a program, you might code

```plaintext
display "the failure/censoring base time variable is \_t"
display "and its mean in the uncensored subsample is"
summarize \_t if \_d
```

No matter how simple or complicated the data, these four variables exist and are filled in. For instance, in simple data, \_t0 might contain 0 for every observation, and \_d might always contain 1.

Some st datasets also contain the variables

- \_origin  evaluated value of origin()
- \_scale   evaluated value of scale()

The \_dta[st_o] characteristic contains either the name \_origin or a number, often 0. It contains a number when the origin does not vary across observations. \_dta[st_s] works the same way with the scale() value. Thus the origin and scale are \_dta[st_o] and \_dta[st_s]. In fact, these characteristics are seldom used because variables \_t and \_t0 are already adjusted.

Some st datasets have an id() variable that clusters together records on the same subject. The name of the variable varies, and the name can be obtained from the \_dta[st_id] characteristic. If there is no id() variable, the characteristic contains nothing.

**Outline of an st command**

If you are writing a new st command, place st_is near the top of your code to ensure that your command does not execute on inappropriate data. Also place st_show following the parsing of your command’s syntax to display the key st variables. The minimal outline for an st command is

```plaintext
program st name
    version 16.1
    st_is 2 ...
    ... syntax command ...
    ... determined there are no syntax errors ...
    st_show
    ... guts of program ...
end
```

st_is 2 appears even before the input is parsed. This is to avoid irritating users when they type a command, get a syntax error, work hard to eliminate the error, and then learn that “data not st”.

A fuller outline for an st command, particularly one that performs analysis on the data, is

```plaintext
program st name
    version 16.1
    st_is 2 ...
syntax ... [, ... noShow ... ]
st_show 'show'
marksample touse
quietly replace 'touse' = 0 if _st==0
    ... guts of program ...
end
```
All calculations and actions are to be restricted, at the least, to observations for which \(-st \neq 0\). Observations with \(_st = 0\) are to be ignored.

### Using the st\_ct utility

\texttt{st\_ct} converts the data in memory to observations containing summaries of risk groups. Consider the code

\begin{verbatim}
    st_is 2 analysis
    preserve
    st_ct "" -> t pop die
\end{verbatim}

Typing this would change the data in memory to contain something akin to count-time data. The transformed data would have observations containing

- \(t\) time
- \(pop\) population at risk at time \(t\)
- \(die\) number who fail at time \(t\)

There would be one record per time \(t\), and the data would be sorted by \(t\). The original data are discarded, which is why you should code \texttt{preserve}; see \texttt{[P] preserve}.

The above three lines of code could be used as the basis for calculating the Kaplan–Meier product-limit survivor-function estimate. The rest of the code is

\begin{verbatim}
    keep if die
    generate double hazard = die/pop
    generate double km = 1-hazard if _n==1
    replace km = (1-hazard)*km[_n-1] if _n>1
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{st\_ct} can be used to obtain risk groups separately for subgroups of the population. The code

\begin{verbatim}
    st_is 2 analysis
    preserve
    st_ct "race sex" -> t pop die
\end{verbatim}

would change the data in memory to contain

- \(race\)
- \(sex\)
- \(t\) time
- \(pop\) population at risk at time \(t\)
- \(die\) number who fail at time \(t\)

There would be one observation for each \texttt{race–sex–t} combination, and the data would be sorted by \texttt{race sex t}.

With this dataset, you could calculate the Kaplan–Meier product-limit survivor-function estimate for each \texttt{race–sex} group by coding

\begin{verbatim}
    keep if die
    by race sex: generate double km = 1-hazard if _n==1
    by race sex: replace km = (1-hazard)*km[_n-1] if _n>1
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{st\_ct} is a convenient subroutine. The above code fragment works regardless of the complexity of the underlying survival-time data. It does not matter whether there is one record per subject, no censoring, and one failure per subject, or multiple records per subject, gaps, and recurring failures for the same subject. \texttt{st\_ct} forms risk groups that summarize the events recorded by the data.

\texttt{st\_ct} can provide the number of censored records and the number who enter the risk group. The code

\begin{verbatim}
    st_ct "" -> t pop die cens ent
\end{verbatim}
creates records containing

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pop</td>
<td>population at risk at time t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die</td>
<td>number who fail at time t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cens</td>
<td>number who are censored at t (after the failures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ent</td>
<td>number who enter at t (after the censorings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As before,

```st
stct "race sex" -> t pop die cens ent
```

would create a similar dataset with records for each race–sex group.

**Comparison of st_ct with sttoct**

`sttoct`—see [ST] sttoct—is related to st_ct, and in fact, sttoct is implemented in terms of st_ct. The differences between them are that

- `sttoct` creates ct data, meaning that the dataset is marked as being ct. `st_ct` merely creates a useful dataset; it does not `ctset` the data.
- `st_ct` creates a total population at-risk variable—which is useful in programming—but `sttoct` creates no such variable.
- `sttoct` eliminates thrashings—censorings and reentries of the same subject as covariates change—if there are no gaps, strata shifting, etc. `st_ct` does not do this. Thus, at a particular time, `sttoct` might show that there are two lost to censoring and none entered, whereas `st_ct` might show 12 censorings and 10 entries. This makes no difference in calculating the number at risk and the number who fail, which are the major ingredients in survival calculations.
- `st_ct` is faster.

**Verifying data**

As long as you code `st_is` at the top of your program, you need not verify the consistency of the data. That is, you need not verify that subjects do not fail before they enter, etc.

The dataset is verified when you `stset` it. If you make a substantive change to the data, you must rerun `stset` (which can be done by typing `stset` or `streset` without arguments) to reverify that all is well.

**Converting data**

If you write a program that converts the data from one form of st data to another, or from st data to something else, be sure to issue the appropriate `stset` command. For instance, a command we have written, `stbase`, converts the data from st to a simple cross-section in one instance. In our program, we coded `stset, clear` so that all other st commands would know that these are no longer st data and that making st calculations on them would be inappropriate.

Even if we had forgotten, other st programs would have found many of the key st variables missing and would have ended with a “[such-and-such] not found” error.
Also see

[ST] stset — Declare data to be survival-time data
[ST] sttoct — Convert survival-time data to count-time data
[ST] Survival analysis — Introduction to survival analysis