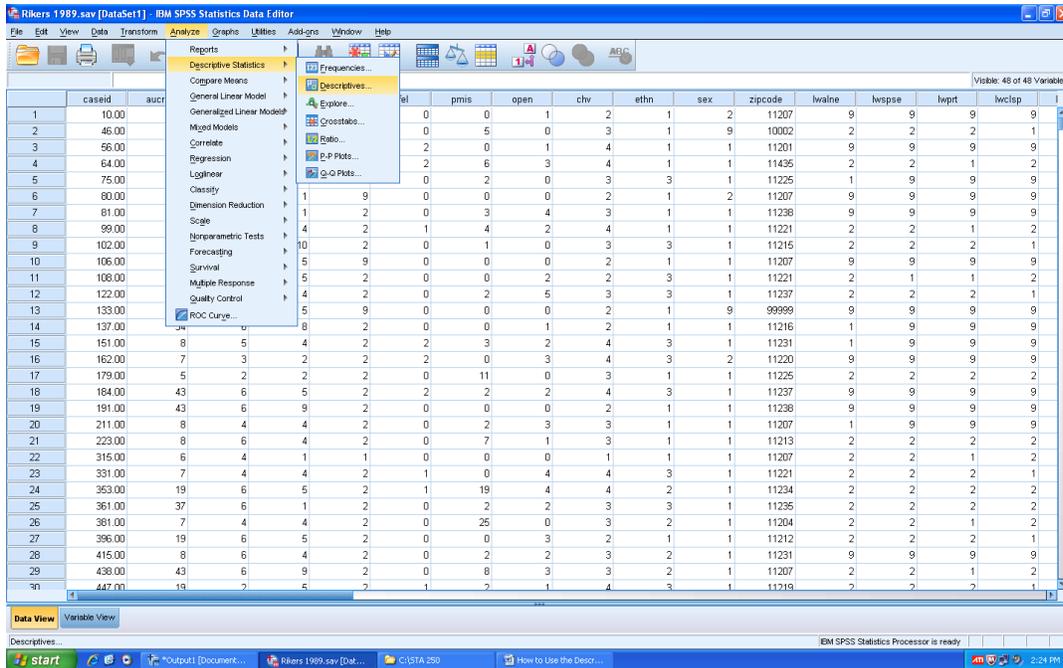# How to Use the Descriptives Procedure in IBM SPSS version 21-22

If you want to look at data in categories, **Frequencies** is the procedure to use. But if you want to look at a ratio-level variable like age, we often do not want to generate a very large table.

The **Descriptives** procedures (from ANALYZE > Descriptive Statistics > Descriptives) displays statistics about the variable – rather than a list of the frequency of each category.

Below is a table showing the default statistics (the ones you get if you do not change the settings) for Descriptives if you use this procedure for the Age variable in the 1989 Rikers.sav dataset.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AGE	1038	16.00	65.00	29.3160	7.54698
Valid N (listwise)	1038				

This table tells you that there were 1038 cases or records that were used as the basis of the statistics (the "N" or "number of cases"), and that the youngest arrestee was 16 and the oldest one was 65. The mean age (the average age) is 29.3. The standard deviation is a measure of the dispersion of the data (how much variation in the ages) there is around the mean – and it is 7.5.

The next screen shows you the choices you have in the **Options** box in Descriptives, if you want to change the settings. You will notice that S.E. Mean is an option – that is the Standard Error of the Mean – something we will get to later in the course.