

# Judging Individuals by the Average: The Ecological Fallacy

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Suppose a local newspaper runs a story saying, “The higher an area’s income, the higher its support for a particular party.” Many readers will naturally conclude, “So rich people like that party.” Yet when you actually survey people one by one, you can sometimes get the exact opposite result. This illusion, which arises when numbers about a group are transferred directly onto individuals, is called the ‘ecological fallacy.’ Put simply, the ecological fallacy is the mistake of inferring that a conclusion drawn from data gathered at the level of groups, such as regions, countries, or schools, ho