First edition
2022-08

Statistical methods — Guidelines for the evaluation of conformity with specified requirements

Méthodes statistiques — Lignes directrices pour l'évaluation de la conformité à des exigences spécifiques

Reference number
ISO 10576:2022(E)

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Published in Switzerland

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 69, *Applications of statistical methods*, Subcommittee SC 6, *Measurement methods and results*.

This first edition of ISO 10576 cancels and replaces ISO 10576-1:2003, which has been technically revised.

The main changes are as follows:

— examples were updated to incorporate lab-to-lab variability in the uncertainty calculations, see Annex B.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Conformity assessment is a systematic examination of the extent to which an entity conforms to a specified criterion. The objective is to provide assurance of conformity, either in the form of a supplier's declaration, or of a third-party certification (see ISO/IEC Guide 2, 2004). A specification is usually formulated as a single limiting value, LV, or as a set of (upper and lower) limiting values for a measurable characteristic. When the specification refers, e.g. to health-related characteristics, the limiting values are sometimes termed threshold limit value TLV, or permissible exposure limits, PEL.

Whenever conformity assessment involves measurement or sampling uncertainty, it is common practice to invoke elements from the theory of statistical hypothesis testing to provide a formal procedure. With the knowledge of the measurement procedure and of its behaviour with regard to the uncertainty of its outcomes, it is possible to estimate and control the risk of making erroneous declarations of conformity or non-conformity to the specifications. An operational way of formulating requirements of assurance is to require that the risk of (erroneously) declaring a non-conforming entity to be conforming should be small. Consequently, it is necessary to tolerate a (large) risk that an entity, which only marginally conforms, will fail to be declared as conforming. Applying a two-stage procedure instead of a one-stage procedure can decrease this risk.

When a test for non-conformity is performed, similar considerations apply.

In this document, this issue is addressed in respect of the testing of output from production or service processes for conformity and non-conformity with specifications.

Because of the apparent similarity to acceptance sampling procedures, it is sometimes seen that acceptance sampling plans are used in conformity assessment activities. Acceptance sampling and conformity assessment activities both utilize elements of hypothesis testing (see e.g. ISO 2854[2]). It is, however, important to realise that the objectives of the two activities are fundamentally different and in particular the two activities imply different approaches to the risk involved (see ISO 2854[2] and Holst[9]).

This document examines conformity assessment from a frequentist perspective. ISO/IEC Guide 98-4 examines conformity assessment from a Bayesian perspective. A comparison of these two approaches plus the fiducial approach is given in ISO/TR 13587.