Math 461 Spring 2024

Renming Song

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

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Outline

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1. General Info
2. 4.3 Expected Values
3. 4.4 Expectation of a Function of a Discrete Random Variable
4. 4.5 Variance

HW3 is due Friday, 02/09, before the end of class. Please submit your HW3 as ONE pdf file via the HW3 folder in the course Moodle page.

Solutions to HW2 is on my homepage.

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One of the most important concepts in probability theory is that of the expectation of a random variable.

Definition

Suppose X is a discrete random variable with mass function $p(\cdot)$. If

$$\sum_{x:p(x)>0} |x|p(x) < \infty$$

then we say that X has finite expectation and we define

$$\mathrm{E[X]} = \sum_{\mathrm{x:p(x)>0}} \mathrm{xp(x)}$$

to be the expectation of X. If $\sum_{x:p(x)>0} |x|p(x) = \infty$, the expectation of X is undefined.

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Example 1

Suppose that A is an event and define

$$I = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } A \text{ occurs} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Then $\mathrm{E}[\mathrm{I}] = 0 \cdot \mathrm{P}(\mathrm{A}^c) + 1 \cdot \mathrm{P}(\mathrm{A}) = \mathrm{P}(\mathrm{A})$.

Example 2

If X is the outcome when we roll a fair die, then

$$p(1) = \cdots = p(6) = \frac{1}{6}.$$

Thus $\mathrm{E}[\mathrm{X}] = \frac{7}{2}$.

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2 fair dice are rolled. Let X be the sum of the two dice. Then $\mathrm{E}[\mathrm{X}] = 7$.

Example 5

Suppose that

$$P(X = 2^{n-1}) = 2^{-n}, \quad n = 1, 2, \ldots.$$

Since

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Suppose that X is a discrete random variable with mass function $p(\cdot)$. Suppose φ is a function on $\mathbb{R}$. Then $\varphi(X)$ is a discrete random variable. We want to find $\mathrm{E}[\varphi(X)]$. Before presenting the general theorem, let's looking at an example first.

Example 1

Suppose that

$$P(X=-1)=\frac{1}{5}, \quad P(X=0)=\frac{1}{2}, \quad P(X=1)=\frac{3}{10}.$$

Find $\mathrm{E}[X^2]$.

Let $Y=X^2$. Then $P(Y=0)=P(Y=1)=\frac{1}{2}$. Thus $\mathrm{E}[X^2]=\frac{1}{2}$.

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What we did in the previous example was: first find the mass function of $\varphi(X)$ and then use the definition of expectation. We could also the following proposition

Proposition

Suppose that X is a discrete random variable with mass function $p(\cdot)$ and that φ is a function on $\mathbb{R}$. If

$$\sum_x |\varphi(x)|p(x) < \infty,$$

then $\varphi(X)$ has finite expectation and

$$\mathrm{E}[\varphi(\mathrm{X})] = \sum_{\mathrm{x}} \varphi(\mathrm{x})\mathrm{p}(\mathrm{x}).$$

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I am not going to give a proof of the above proposition. Let's apply this proposition to the previous example:

$$\mathrm{E}[X^2] = (-1)^2 \cdot \frac{1}{5} + 0^2 \cdot \frac{1}{2} + 1^2 \cdot \frac{3}{10} = \frac{1}{2},$$

which coincides with the answer we found before.

Example 2

A coin is tossed 4 times. Suppose that the probability of Heads is $\frac{2}{3}$ on each toss. Let *X* be the total number of Heads. Find $\mathrm{E}[\sin(\frac{\pi X}{2})]$.

$$\mathrm{E}[\sin(\frac{\pi X}{2})] = \sum_{k=0}^{4} \sin(\frac{k\pi}{2}) \binom{4}{k} (\frac{2}{3})^k (\frac{1}{3})^{4-k}$$

$$= 4 \cdot \frac{2}{3} \cdot (\frac{1}{3})^3 - 4 \cdot (\frac{2}{3})^3 \cdot \frac{1}{3}.$$

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$$= 4 \cdot \frac{2}{3} \cdot (\frac{1}{3})^3 - 4 \cdot (\frac{2}{3})^3 \cdot \frac{1}{3}.$$

Corollary

If X is a discrete random variable, and a, b are constants, then

$$\mathrm{E[aX + b] = aE[X] + b.}$$

This corollary follows immediately from the proposition. Let $p(\cdot)$ be the mass function of X. Then

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{E[aX + b]} &= \sum_x (ax + b)p(x) = a\sum_x xp(x) + b\sum_x p(x) \\ &= a\mathrm{E[X] + b.}\end{aligned}$$

The expectation of X, $\mathrm{E[X]}$, is also called the first moment of X. For any integer $n \geq 1$, $\mathrm{E[X^n]}$, if exists, is called the n-th moment of X. If X is a discrete random variable with mass function $p(\cdot)$, then

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Definition

Suppose that X is a discrete random variable with finite $\mathrm{E}[\mathrm{X}] = \mu$. If $\mathrm{E}[(\mathrm{X} - \mu)^2]$ exists, we call it the variance of the random variable X:

$$\mathrm{Var}(X) = \mathrm{E}[(\mathrm{X} - \mu)^2].$$

The square root of $\mathrm{Var}(X)$ is called the standard deviation of X:

$$\mathrm{SD}(X) = \sqrt{\mathrm{Var}(X)}.$$

$\mathrm{Var}(X)$ is always non-negative. It measures how spread-out the random variable X is from its mean. If $\mathrm{Var}(X) = 0$, then X is deterministic.

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Here is another formula for $\mathrm{Var}(X)$:

$$\mathrm{Var}(X) = \mathrm{E}[X^2] - (\mathrm{E}[X])^2.$$

Here is a derivation. Let $p(\cdot)$ be the mass function of X.

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{Var}(X) = \mathrm{E}[(X-\mu)^2] &= \sum_x (x-\mu)^2 p(x) \\ &= \sum_x (x^2 - 2\mu x + \mu^2) p(x) \\ &= \sum_x x^2 p(x) - 2\mu \sum_x x p(x) + \mu^2 \sum_x p(x) \\ &= \mathrm{E}[X^2] - 2\mu \cdot \mu + \mu^2 = \mathrm{E}[X^2] - \mu^2 \\ &= \mathrm{E}[X^2] - (\mathrm{E}[X])^2.\end{aligned}$$

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&= \mathrm{E}[X^2] - (\mathrm{E}[X])^2.
\end{aligned}$$

Proposition

Suppose that X is a discrete random variable with finite variance. Then for any real numbers a and b,

$$\mathrm{Var}(aX + b) = a^2 \mathrm{Var}(X).$$

In particular,

$$\mathrm{Var}(-X) = \mathrm{Var}(X).$$

Example

Suppose that X is a randomly chosen number from $\{1, 2, \ldots, 10\}$. Find $\mathrm{Var}(X)$.

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$$p(1) = p(2) = \cdots = p(10) = \frac{1}{10}.$$

$$\mathrm{E[X]} = \frac{1}{10}\sum_{k=1}^{10} k = \frac{55}{10} = \frac{11}{2}.$$

$$\mathrm{E[X^2]} = \frac{1}{10}\sum_{k=1}^{10} k^2 = \frac{1}{10}\frac{10 \cdot 11 \cdot 21}{6} = \frac{77}{2}.$$

$$\mathrm{Var}(X) = \frac{77}{2} - (\frac{11}{2})^2.$$