PO91Q: Fundamentals in Quantitative Research Methods

Worksheet Week 4 - Solutions

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Confidence Intervals

Confidence Interval Dynamics

1. Exploring the role of sample size With 95% level ($\alpha = 0.05$) and $s = 0.9$, the half-width is

$$\text{half-width} = t^* \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}, \quad t^* = t_{0.025,df}, \; df = n - 1.$$

   Using standard t–quantiles:

   - $n = 3$ ($df = 2$): $t^* \approx 4.303 \;\Rightarrow\;$ half-width ≈ 1.295
   - $n = 5$ ($df = 4$): $t^* \approx 2.776 \;\Rightarrow\;$ half-width ≈ 1.118
   - $n = 10$ ($df = 9$): $t^* \approx 2.262 \;\Rightarrow\;$ half-width ≈ 0.643
   - $n = 15$ ($df = 14$): $t^* \approx 2.145 \;\Rightarrow\;$ half-width ≈ 0.498
   - $n = 20$ ($df = 19$): $t^* \approx 2.093 \;\Rightarrow\;$ half-width ≈ 0.421
   - $n = 30$ ($df = 29$): $t^* \approx 2.045 \;\Rightarrow\;$ half-width ≈ 0.336

2. Confidence level and t^*

   a) Fix $n = 10$ ($df = 9$), $s = 0.9$; two-tailed t^*:

      - 80%: $t_{0.10,9} \approx 1.383$
      - 90%: $t_{0.05,9} \approx 1.833$
      - 95%: $t_{0.025,9} \approx 2.262$
      - 99%: $t_{0.005,9} \approx 3.250$

   b) Higher confidence $\Rightarrow$ smaller $\alpha \Rightarrow$ fatter central region $\Rightarrow$ larger quantile t^*; hence $2\,t^* \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$ increases with the level.

   c) Width ratio (same n, s) is the ratio of the two values of t^*:

$$\frac{\text{width}_{99\%}}{\text{width}_{90\%}} = \frac{t_{0.005,9}}{t_{0.05,9}} \approx \frac{3.250}{1.833} \approx 1.77.$$

3. Trade-off between variability and sample size
   a) At 95%, half-width = $t^* \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$.
      - $(n, s) = (8, 0.6)$: $df = 7$, $t^* \approx 2.365$, so half-width $\approx 2.365 \cdot \frac{0.6}{\sqrt{8}} \approx 0.502$
      - $(n, s) = (20, 1.0)$: $df = 19$, $t^* \approx 2.093$, so half-width $\approx 2.093 \cdot \frac{1.0}{\sqrt{20}} \approx 0.468$

      Thus $(8, 0.6)$ is (slightly) wider—smaller n and larger t^* outweigh the smaller s.
   b) Keep $s = 0.9$, level 95%. Need $t^* \frac{0.9}{\sqrt{n}} \leq 0.30$. Using $t_{0.025, n-1}$, the smallest n that satisfies this is about $n \approx 37$ (since $t_{0.025,36} \approx 2.03$ gives $2.03 \cdot 0.9/\sqrt{37} \approx 0.30$).
   c) Hold $n = 12$ ($df = 11$), level 90% so $t^* = t_{0.05,11} \approx 1.796$. Full width = 0.9 means

$$2\,t^* \frac{s}{\sqrt{12}} = 0.9 \quad \Rightarrow \quad s = \frac{0.9\sqrt{12}}{2\,t^*} \approx \frac{0.9 \cdot 3.464}{2 \cdot 1.796} \approx 0.868.$$

Calculations

1. A researcher is analysing individuals' relative fear of being a victim of burglary on a 1-100 scale. A random sample of 9 individuals found a mean score of 47 on the scale with a sample variance of 158.76 for fear of being burgled.

   a. What distribution would be used to calculate an 80% confidence interval around this mean?
      A t-distribution as we don't know the population standard deviation and n is small.

   b. Construct that interval.

      $\bar{x} = 47$
      $n = 9$
      t from tables = 1.397

      $s = \sqrt{158.76}$
      $s = 12.6$

      Confidence interval formula
      $\bar{x} \pm t \times \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$
      Lower bound
      $47 - 1.397 \times \frac{12.6}{\sqrt{9}} = 47 - 5.867 = 41.13$

      Upper bound
      $47 + 1.397 \times \frac{12.6}{\sqrt{9}} = 47 + 5.867 = 52.87$

2. We are investigating the height of men in the UK. For this we have obtained a random sample of 100 UK men and found they had a mean height of 180cm with a standard deviation of 10cm.
   a. Construct a 95% confidence interval for the mean height of UK males.

      $\bar{x}$ = 180
      s = 10
      n = 100

      As the population standard deviation is not known, the t distribution and t need to be used.

      Find the t-score for a 95% confidence interval in the t-table with 99 df.
      t = 1.984

      Confidence interval:
      $\bar{x} \pm t \times \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$

      Lower bound:
      $180 - 1.984 \times \frac{10}{\sqrt{100}} = 180 - 1.984 = 178.02$
      Upper bound:
      $180 + 1.984 \times \frac{10}{\sqrt{100}} = 181.98$

   b. Select all true statements concerning the constructed confidence interval and justify your choice for each statement.
      i. The probability of the population mean being within the upper and lower bounds is 95%.
         FALSE - The population mean is fixed but unknown and therefore can either be inside the bounds or outside. The Probability is therefore 50%.

      ii. 95% of men's heights fall between the upper and lower bound.
         FALSE - The distribution calculated is not the distribution of men's height, but the sampling distribution of the mean male height.

      iii. 95% of the cases in the sample fall between the upper and lower bound.
         FALSE - The distribution calculated is not of men's height in this sample, but the sampling distribution of the mean male height.

      iv. On average 95% of confidence intervals constructed would contain the population mean.
         TRUE

v. On average 95% of the means of samples with 100 respondents will fall within the upper and lower bands.
FALSE - This confidence interval is not making statements about various sample means but rather about the population mean.

vi. On average 95% of the sample means equal the population mean.
FALSE - The confidence interval is a range and does not make claims about where the population mean is exactly.

Significance Testing

Conceptual – Working with the App

1. Same effect size, different n (mapping t, n, and $\hat{d}$)
   a. With $t = 1.6$ and $n = 16$, $\hat{d} = t/\sqrt{n} = 1.6/4 = 0.40$. The power at $n = 16$ for $\hat{d} \approx 0.40$ and $\alpha = 0.05$ will be modest (typically well below 0.80).
   b. Keeping $\hat{d}$ fixed at 0.40 and raising n to 64 requires $t = \hat{d}\sqrt{n} = 0.40 \times 8 = 3.2$. The app will show the same $\hat{d}$ but a higher power at $n = 64$.
   c. As n increases while the underlying effect stays fixed, the standard error shrinks: $\mathrm{SE} = s/\sqrt{n}$. The test statistic is $t = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu_0}{\mathrm{SE}}$, so a smaller SE makes $|t|$ larger on average. For a fixed α, the critical cutoff (e.g., $t_{\alpha/2,df}$ for a two-sided test) is essentially fixed, so larger typical $|t|$ increases the chance that $|t| > t_{\alpha/2,df}$. Therefore, bigger $n \Rightarrow$ less sampling noise $\Rightarrow$ tighter estimates $\Rightarrow$ higher power.

2. Planning with a SESOI and α sensitivity
   a. For $t = 2.0$ and $n = 30$, $\hat{d} = t/\sqrt{n} \approx 2.0/\sqrt{30} \approx 0.37$. The app will report the power at $n = 30$ using this $\hat{d}$ (typically moderate at $\alpha = 0.05$).
   b. Turning on the SESOI with $d = 0.5$ switches the curve to a fixed target effect. The orange marker shows the n giving 80% power at $\alpha = 0.05$; for $d = 0.5$ this is typically in the few–dozen range for a one-sample t-test (on the order of the 30s).
   c. Increasing α to 0.10 lowers the critical threshold and reduces the required n for a given power; decreasing α to 0.01 raises the threshold and increases the required n. Formally, stricter α increases the critical t value, so a larger n is needed for the same probability of exceeding it under the alternative.

3. Was the study well powered? Post-hoc check and replication planning
   a. With $t = 2.1$ and $n = 25$, $\hat{d} = 2.1/\sqrt{25} = 2.1/5 = 0.42$. The app will show the power at $n = 25$ for $\hat{d} \approx 0.42$ and $\alpha = 0.05$; this is typically only moderate, not comfortably high.
   b. For replication planning, turn on SESOI and choose the closest option to $\hat{d}$ (e.g., $d = 0.5$). The orange marker will give the n needed for 80% power at the chosen α; expect a sample size in the few–dozen range for $d = 0.5$ at $\alpha = 0.05$.
   c. A significant result with low power can be fragile because small shifts in sampling may miss the effect and estimates are noisier. Picking a SESOI (a target d tied to practical importance) and planning for 80% power helps ensure a replication has adequate sensitivity to detect a meaningfully sized effect.

Summarising Conclusions

- Power is the probability your test will detect a real effect (reject H_0 when the effect truly exists).
- The curve fixes an effect size d and shows how power increases with n.
- If you base d on your observed test ($\hat{d} = t/\sqrt{n}$), the curve answers: "If the effect really was the size we observed, how likely would the test be to detect that effect at other sample sizes n?"
- If you base d on a meaningful minimum (SESOI), the curve answers: "How large should n be to reliably detect an effect that actually matters?"
- The 0.80 (80%) line is a convention (not a law). Many fields use it as a planning minimum; higher power (e.g., 90%) is desirable when stakes are high.
- Rule of thumb: because $t = d\sqrt{n}$, halving d requires about 4× the sample size to keep power roughly the same.

Why do many plots show an 80% power line?

- 80% power means choosing $\beta = 0.20$ (so power $= 1 - \beta = 0.80$). This is a planning convention, not a mathematical law.
- The convention became common through methodological guidance (e.g., Cohen's power analysis texts) and is echoed in many applied fields.
- In higher-stakes settings (e.g., confirmatory clinical trials), targets of 80–90% power are typical; 90

Applied Exercises

See RScript in the Online Companion