JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

The Normal Distribution

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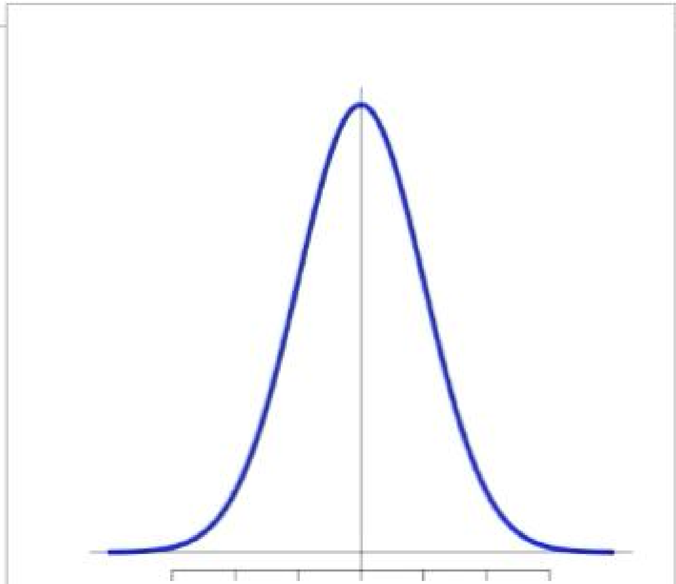
Learning Objectives

- Upon completion of this lecture, you will be able to:
  - Describe the basic properties of the normal curve
  - Describe how the normal distribution is completely defined by its mean and standard deviation
  - Recite the 68–95–99.7% rule for the normal distribution with regards to standard deviations

The Normal Distribution—1

- The normal distribution is a theoretical probability distribution that is perfectly symmetric about its mean (and median and mode)
  - A "bell"-like shape

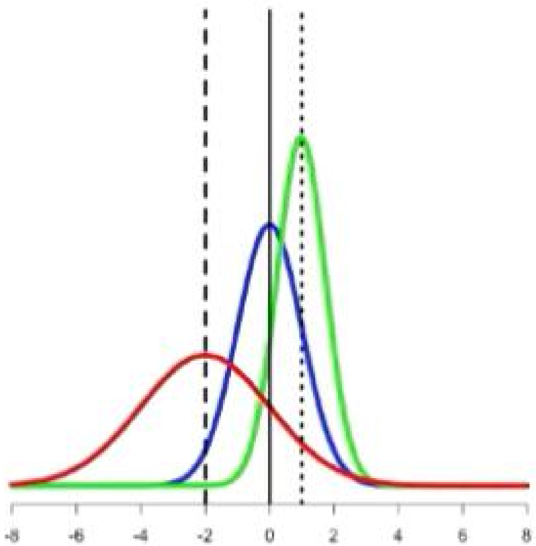


The Normal Distribution—2

- The normal distribution is also called the “Gaussian distribution” in honor of its inventor Carl Friedrich Gauss

Defining Quantities for any Normal Distribution

- Normal distributions are uniquely defined by two quantities: a mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ)
- There are literally an infinite number of possible normal curves for every possible combination of (μ) and (σ)



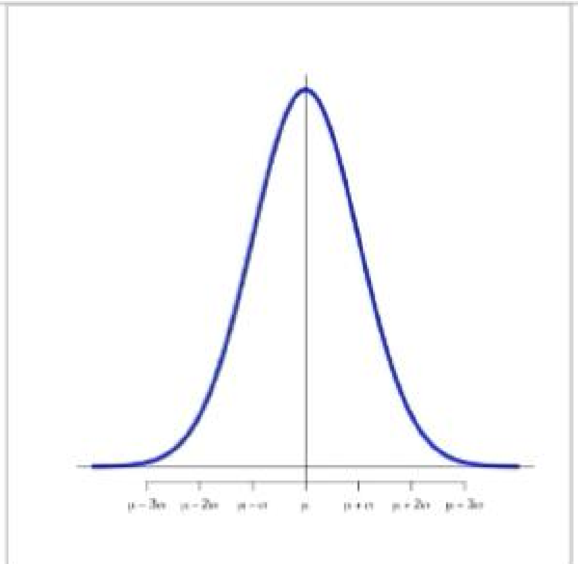
Underlying Formula for Normal Distribution

- This function defines the normal curve for any given (μ) and (σ)
- The proportion of values falling between a and b under a normal curve is given by:

$$\int_{a}^{b} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma} e^{\frac{-(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}} dx$$

Structural Properties of the Normal Distribution (Curve)—1

- All normal distributions, regardless of mean and standard deviation values, have the same structural properties:
  - Mean = median (= mode)
  - Values are symmetrically distributed around the mean
  - Values "closer" to the mean are more frequent than values "farther" from the mean

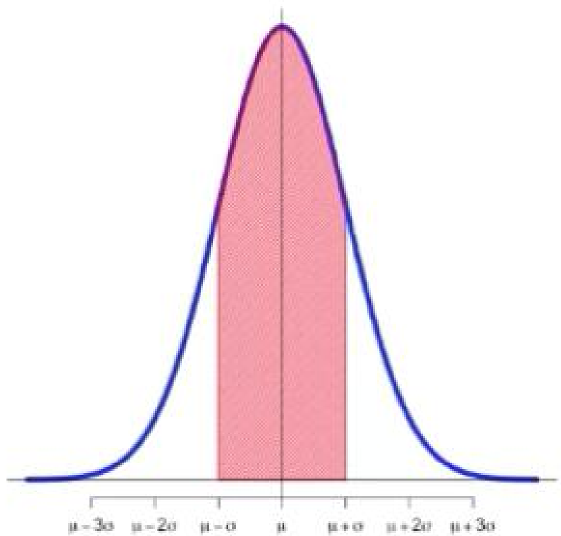


Structural Properties of the Normal Distribution (Curve)—2

- All normal distributions, regardless of mean and standard deviation values, have the same structural properties:
  - The entire distribution of values described by a normal distribution can be completely specified by knowing just the mean and standard deviation
  - Since all normal distributions have the same structural properties, we can use a reference distribution, called the *standard normal distribution*, to elaborate on some of these properties
  - In the next section, we'll show that any normal distribution can be easily rescaled to this standard normal distribution

The 68–95–99.7 Rule for the Normal Distribution—1

- 68% of the observations in a normal distribution fall within one standard deviation of the mean

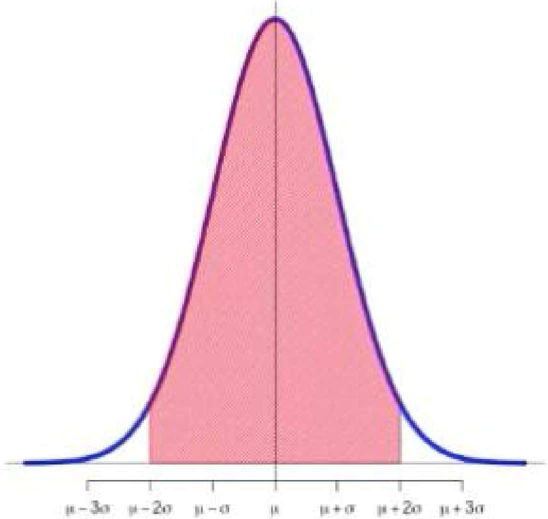


The 68–95–99.7 Rule for the Normal Distribution—2

- There are several ways to state this. For data whose distribution is approximately normal:
  - 68% of the observations fall within one standard deviation of the mean
  - The probability that any randomly selected value is within one standard deviation of the mean is 0.68 or 68%

The 68–95–99.7 Rule for the Normal Distribution—3

- 95% of the observations fall within two standard deviations of the mean (truthfully, within 1.96)

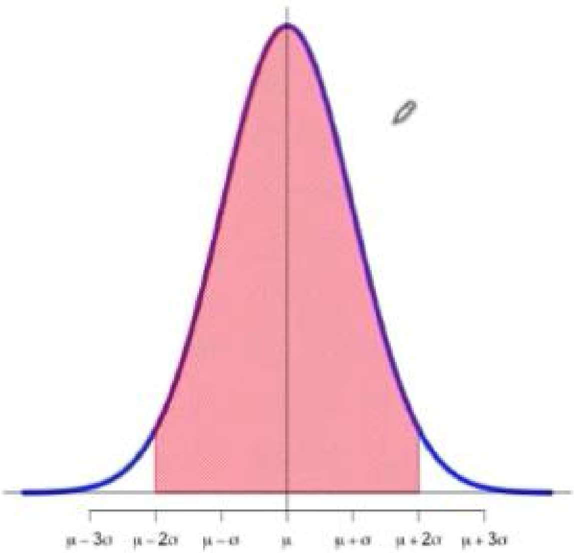


The 68–95–99.7 Rule for the Normal Distribution—4

- 99.7% of the observations fall within three standard deviations of the mean

2.5th and 97.5th Percentiles of a Normal Distribution

- 95% of the observations fall within two standard deviations of the mean (truthfully, within 1.96)



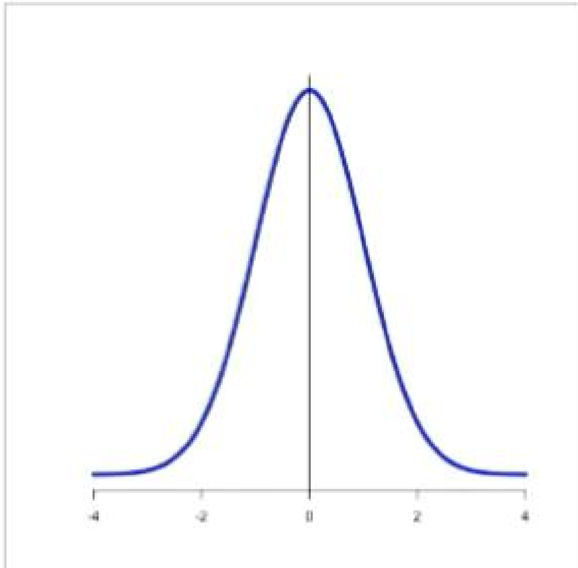
- The middle 95% of values fall between μ -2σ and μ+2σ
- 2.5% of the values are smaller than (and hence 97.5% are greater than) μ -2σ
- 97.5% of the values are smaller than (and hence 2.5% are greater than) μ+2σ

Percentage of Observations Under the Normal Distribution

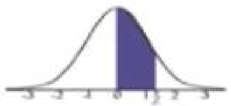
- Where did this rule come from: in other words, how do I know these relationships?
- What about the percentages under the curve for other standard deviation distances from the mean?
- All of the information I quoted, and much more, can be found in a "standard normal table"

The Standard Normal Distribution

- The standard normal distribution is a normal distribution with mean μ =0, and standard deviation σ=1
- Any normal distribution with mean μ and standard deviation σ can be rescaled to a standard normal distribution.



Percentage of Observations Under the Normal Distribution: Exhibit A

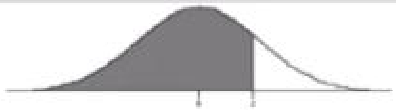


STANDARD NORMAL TABLE (Z)

Entries in the table give the area under the curve between the mean and z standard deviations above the mean. For example, for $z = 1.25$ the area under the curve between the mean (0) and z is 0.3944.

z	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.09
0.0	0.0000	0.0040	0.0080	0.0120	0.0160	0.0190	0.0239	0.0279	0.0319	0.0359
0.1	0.0398	0.0438	0.0478	0.0517	0.0557	0.0596	0.0636	0.0675	0.0714	0.0753
0.2	0.0793	0.0832	0.0871	0.0910	0.0948	0.0987	0.1026	0.1064	0.1103	0.1141
0.3	0.1179	0.1217	0.1255	0.1293	0.1331	0.1368	0.1406	0.1443	0.1480	0.1517
0.4	0.1554	0.1591	0.1628	0.1664	0.1700	0.1736	0.1772	0.1808	0.1844	0.1879
0.5	0.1915	0.1950	0.1985	0.2019	0.2054	0.2088	0.2123	0.2157	0.2190	0.2224
0.6	0.2257	0.2291	0.2324	0.2357	0.2389	0.2422	0.2454	0.2486	0.2517	0.2549
0.7	0.2580	0.2611	0.2642	0.2673	0.2704	0.2734	0.2764	0.2794	0.2823	0.2852
0.8	0.2881	0.2910	0.2939	0.2969	0.2995	0.3023	0.3051	0.3078	0.3106	0.3133
0.9	0.3159	0.3186	0.3212	0.3238	0.3264	0.3289	0.3315	0.3340	0.3365	0.3389
1.0	0.3413	0.3438	0.3461	0.3485	0.3508	0.3531	0.3554	0.3577	0.3599	0.3621
1.1	0.3643	0.3665	0.3686	0.3708	0.3729	0.3749	0.3770	0.3790	0.3810	0.3830
1.2	0.3849	0.3869	0.3888	0.3907	0.3925	0.3944	0.3962	0.3980	0.3997	0.4015
1.3	0.4032	0.4049	0.4066	0.4082	0.4099	0.4115	0.4131	0.4147	0.4162	0.4177
1.4	0.4192	0.4207	0.4222	0.4236	0.4251	0.4265	0.4279	0.4292	0.4306	0.4319
1.5	0.4332	0.4345	0.4357	0.4370	0.4382	0.4394	0.4406	0.4418	0.4429	0.4441
1.6	0.4452	0.4463	0.4474	0.4484	0.4495	0.4505	0.4515	0.4525	0.4535	0.4545
1.7	0.4554	0.4564	0.4573	0.4582	0.4591	0.4599	0.4608	0.4616	0.4625	0.4633
1.8	0.4641	0.4649	0.4656	0.4664	0.4671	0.4678	0.4686	0.4693	0.4699	0.4706
1.9	0.4713	0.4719	0.4726	0.4732	0.4738	0.4744	0.4750	0.4756	0.4761	0.4767
2.0	0.4772	0.4778	0.4783	0.4788	0.4793	0.4798	0.4803	0.4808	0.4812	0.4817
2.1	0.4821	0.4826	0.4830	0.4834	0.4838	0.4842	0.4846	0.4850	0.4854	0.4857
2.2	0.4861	0.4864	0.4868	0.4871	0.4875	0.4878	0.4881	0.4884	0.4887	0.4890
2.3	0.4893	0.4896	0.4898	0.4901	0.4904	0.4906	0.4909	0.4911	0.4913	0.4916
2.4	0.4918	0.4920	0.4922	0.4925	0.4927	0.4929	0.4931	0.4932	0.4934	0.4936
2.5	0.4938	0.4940	0.4941	0.4943	0.4945	0.4946	0.4948	0.4949	0.4951	0.4952
2.6	0.4953	0.4955	0.4956	0.4957	0.4959	0.4960	0.4961	0.4962	0.4963	0.4964
2.7	0.4965	0.4966	0.4967	0.4968	0.4969	0.4970	0.4971	0.4972	0.4973	0.4974
2.8	0.4974	0.4975	0.4976	0.4977	0.4977	0.4978	0.4979	0.4979	0.4980	0.4981
2.9	0.4981	0.4982	0.4982	0.4983	0.4984	0.4984	0.4985	0.4985	0.4986	0.4986
3.0	0.4987	0.4987	0.4987	0.4988	0.4988	0.4989	0.4989	0.4989	0.4990	0.4990
3.1	0.4990	0.4991	0.4991	0.4991	0.4992	0.4992	0.4992	0.4992	0.4993	0.4993
3.2	0.4993	0.4993	0.4994	0.4994	0.4994	0.4994	0.4994	0.4995	0.4995	0.4995
3.3	0.4995	0.4995	0.4995	0.4996	0.4996	0.4996	0.4996	0.4996	0.4996	0.4997
3.4	0.4997	0.4997	0.4997	0.4997	0.4997	0.4997	0.4997	0.4997	0.4997	0.4998

Percentage of Observations Under the Normal Distribution: Exhibit B



Normal Deviate z	.00	.01	.02	.03	.04	.05	.06	.07	.08	.09
-4.0	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
-3.9	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
-3.8	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
-3.7	.0001	.0001	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
-3.6	.0002	.0002	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001	.0001
-3.5	.0002	.0002	.0002	.0002	.0002	.0002	.0002	.0002	.0002	.0002
-3.4	.0003	.0003	.0003	.0003	.0003	.0003	.0003	.0003	.0003	.0002
-3.3	.0005	.0005	.0005	.0004	.0004	.0004	.0004	.0004	.0004	.0003
-3.2	.0007	.0007	.0006	.0006	.0006	.0006	.0006	.0005	.0005	.0005
-3.1	.0010	.0009	.0009	.0009	.0008	.0008	.0008	.0008	.0007	.0007
-3.0	.0013	.0013	.0013	.0012	.0012	.0011	.0011	.0011	.0010	.0010
-2.9	.0019	.0018	.0018	.0017	.0016	.0016	.0015	.0015	.0014	.0014
-2.8	.0026	.0025	.0024	.0023	.0023	.0022	.0021	.0021	.0020	.0019
-2.7	.0035	.0034	.0033	.0032	.0031	.0030	.0029	.0028	.0027	.0026
-2.6	.0047	.0045	.0044	.0043	.0041	.0040	.0039	.0038	.0037	.0036
-2.5	.0062	.0060	.0059	.0057	.0055	.0054	.0052	.0051	.0049	.0048
-2.4	.0082	.0080	.0078	.0075	.0073	.0071	.0069	.0068	.0066	.0064
-2.3	.0107	.0104	.0102	.0099	.0096	.0094	.0091	.0089	.0087	.0084
-2.2	.0139	.0136	.0132	.0129	.0125	.0122	.0119	.0116	.0113	.0110
-2.1	.0179	.0174	.0170	.0166	.0162	.0158	.0154	.0150	.0146	.0143
-2.0	.0228	.0222	.0217	.0212	.0207	.0202	.0197	.0192	.0188	.0183
-1.9	.0287	.0281	.0274	.0268	.0262	.0256	.0250	.0244	.0239	.0233
-1.8	.0359	.0351	.0344	.0336	.0329	.0322	.0314	.0307	.0301	.0294
-1.7	.0446	.0436	.0427	.0418	.0409	.0401	.0392	.0384	.0375	.0367
-1.6	.0548	.0537	.0526	.0516	.0505	.0495	.0485	.0475	.0465	.0455
-1.5	.0668	.0655	.0643	.0630	.0618	.0606	.0594	.0582	.0571	.0559
-1.4	.0808	.0793	.0778	.0764	.0749	.0735	.0721	.0708	.0694	.0681
-1.3	.0968	.0951	.0934	.0918	.0901	.0885	.0869	.0853	.0838	.0823
-1.2	.1151	.1131	.1112	.1093	.1075	.1056	.1038	.1020	.1003	.0985
-1.1	.1357	.1335	.1314	.1292	.1271	.1251	.1230	.1210	.1190	.1170
-1.0	.1587	.1562	.1539	.1515	.1492	.1469	.1446	.1423	.1401	.1379
-.9	.1841	.1814	.1788	.1762	.1736	.1711	.1685	.1660	.1635	.1611
-.8	.2119	.2090	.2061	.2033	.2005	.1977	.1949	.1922	.1894	.1867
-.7	.2420	.2389	.2358	.2327	.2296	.2266	.2236	.2206	.2177	.2148
-.6	.2743	.2709	.2676	.2643	.2611	.2578	.2546	.2514	.2483	.2451
-.5	.3085	.3050	.3015	.2981	.2946	.2912	.2877	.2843	.2810	.2776
-.4	.3446	.3409	.3372	.3336	.3300	.3264	.3228	.3192	.3156	.3121
-.3	.3821	.3783	.3745	.3707	.3669	.3632	.3594	.3557	.3520	.3483

Percentage of Observations Under the Normal Distribution—2

- In this class, I will only have you find relevant percentages under a normal curve for some early activities, and this will be done easily using R
- Generally speaking, I only want you to be familiar with the 68–95–99.7 rule
- Such computations will be wrapped into other analyses later in the course and completely handled by a computer

Using R to Compute Normal Curve Percentages—1

- We can use R as a calculator, i.e., an automatic standard normal table
- The relevant command that "looks up" values in a standard normal table is:
- For converting any standard deviation value (above or below the mean), z, to a corresponding proportion under a normal curve, the syntax is:

```
pnorm(z)
```

Using R to Compute Normal Curve Percentages—2

- As with any print version of a standard normal table, it is important to know what information pnorm(z) returns

- The normal distribution is a theoretical probability distribution that is symmetric and "bell-shaped"

- There are literally an infinite number of normal distributions, and each can be completely specified by only two quantities: the mean and standard deviation

- For all normal distributions
  - 68% of observations described by a normal distribution fall within 1 sd of the mean
  - 95% of observations described by a normal distribution fall within 2 sds of the mean
  - 99.7% of observations described by a normal distribution fall within 3 sds of the mean

- Other such percentages can be found using a standard normal table (available via R)