

# Empirical Exercise 3.1

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Now we can show how to use R to do some statistical analysis. This demonstration answers the questions of Empirical Exercise 3.1 at the end of Chapter 3. Furthermore, we carry out this exercise in the format of **reproducible research**. That means, we should accomplish the following tasks in answering the problem:

1. using R to compute the statistics asked in the questions
2. including R code and the results of running the code in the answer, and
3. describing our work and answers in plain language along with code and numerical answers.

## 1 A description of the problem

Empirical exercise 3.1 concerns the relationship between average earnings and education levels, using the data set from the 1992 and 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS). Specifically, we want to see whether the average hourly earnings (**ahe**) are different between workers with a bachelor degree and those with only high school diploma (**bachelor**).

## 2 Answers to the questions

### Question (a)

Compute the sample mean for average hourly earnings (**ahe**) in 1992 and in 2008. Construct a 95% confidence interval for the population means for **ahe** in 1992 and 2008 and the change between 1992 and 2008

- Read the data

The first thing first is of course read the data correctly from the Stata file `data/cps92_08.dta`, which can be read by the function `read.dta()` in the package of `foreign`.

```
library(foreign)
cpsdat <- read.dta("data/cps92_08.dta")
head(cpsdat)
```

	year	ahe	bachelor	female	age
1	1992	11.188811	1	0	29
2	1992	10.000000	1	0	33
3	1992	5.769231	0	0	30
4	1992	1.562500	0	0	32
5	1992	14.957265	1	0	31
6	1992	8.660096	1	1	26

- Calculate the sample mean for `ahe` in 1992 and 2008

There are many ways to compute the sample means in 1992 and 2008, respectively. First, to make you more familiar with the R language, we compute them in a very basic way. Then, we show how to get the same results with some powerful functions.

```
# extract the data for average hourly earnings in 1992 and 2008
ahe.92 <- cpsdat$ahe[cpsdat$year == 1992]
ahe.08 <- cpsdat$ahe[cpsdat$year == 2008]
mean.ahe.92 <- mean(ahe.92); mean.ahe.92
mean.ahe.08 <- mean(ahe.08); mean.ahe.08

[1] 11.62637
[1] 18.97609
```

The average hourly earnings are 11.63 dollars in 1992 and 18.98 dollars in 2008.

- Construct the confidence intervals

Recall that a 95% confidence interval for the population mean can be constructed as  $\bar{Y} \pm 1.96SE(\bar{Y})$  and  $SE(\bar{Y})$  is computed as  $s_Y/\sqrt{n}$ .

```
# the sample variance
sd.ahe.92 <- sd(ahe.92)
sd.ahe.08 <- sd(ahe.08)

n.92 <- length(ahe.92)
n.08 <- length(ahe.08)

# the standard error
se.ahe.92 <- sd.ahe.92 / sqrt(n.92)
se.ahe.08 <- sd.ahe.08 / sqrt(n.08)
```

```
# 95% confidence interval
# the 95% critical value from a normal distribution
cv.95 <- qnorm(0.975)
```

```
lower.lim.92 <- mean.ahe.92 - cv.95 * se.ahe.92
lower.lim.08 <- mean.ahe.08 - cv.95 * se.ahe.08
```

```
upper.lim.92 <- mean.ahe.92 + cv.95 * se.ahe.92
upper.lim.08 <- mean.ahe.08 + cv.95 * se.ahe.08
```

The 95% confidence interval for `ahe` in 1992 is (11.5, 11.75), and that in 2008 is (18.75, 19.2).

- Alternative methods to calculate the sample means and confidence interval

In the above example, to compute the sample averages in 1992 and 2008, we write code separately for each year, which can be done more easily in R.

We can compute the averages for each year using the function `aggregate()`, which splits the whole data base into two parts by the values of `year`. Then, for each part we compute the average by specifying the argument `FUN` to be `mean`, i.e., specifying the function to be used for each part as the `mean()` function. Also, in this case, we use `~` to specify a **formula** that means that we split `ahe` by `year`.

```
# Use aggregate() to compute the means in both years
ahe.means <- aggregate(ahe ~ year, FUN = mean, data = cpsdat)
ahe.means
```

```
  year      ahe
1 1992 11.62637
2 2008 18.97609
```

The confidence interval can be extracted from the results of the `t.test()` function, which is a list.

```
# t test for ahe in 1992
t.ahe.92 <- t.test(ahe.92); t.ahe.92$conf.int
# t test for ahe in 2008
t.ahe.08 <- t.test(ahe.08); t.ahe.08$conf.int
# test for the change between 1992 and 2008
t.ahe.diff <- t.test(ahe.08, ahe.92); t.ahe.diff

[1] 11.50019 11.75254
attr(,"conf.level")
[1] 0.95
[1] 18.74975 19.20244
```

```
attr("conf.level")
[1] 0.95
```

Welch Two Sample t-test

```
data: ahe.08 and ahe.92
t = 55.597, df = 12065, p-value < 2.2e-16
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means is not equal to 0
95 percent confidence interval:
 7.090601 7.608853
sample estimates:
mean of x mean of y
 18.97609  11.62637
```

The confidence interval of the change in average hourly earnings between 1992 and 2008 is (7.09, 7.61).

## Question (b)

Now we need to adjust the average hourly earnings in the 1992 dollars to the 2008 dollars with the inflation rate, computed as  $CPI_{2008}/CPI_{1992}$ .

```
# CPI in 1992 and 2008
cpi.92 <- 140.3
cpi.08 <- 215.2
# Inflation adjustment
inflator <- cpi.08 / cpi.92
cpsdat$ahe.adj <- with(cpsdat, ifelse(year == 1992, ahe * inflator, ahe))
```

In the code block above, we first use the function `with()` to attach the data frame `cpsdat` within its own environment so that when we refer to variables in `cpsdat`, such as `ahe` and `year`, we do not need to write `cpsdat$ahe` and `cpsdat$year` every time we use them.

The function `ifelse()` set the values of `ahe` based on the condition `year == 1992`. If the condition is true, we do `ahe * inflator`; if not, do `ahe * 1`.

Then we repeat what is done in Question (a) with the inflation-adjusted earnings in 1992.

```
ahe.92.adj <- with(cpsdat, ahe.adj[year == 1992])
mean.ahe.92.adj <- mean(ahe.92.adj)
t.ahe.92.adj <- t.test(ahe.92.adj)
t.ahe.diff.adj <- t.test(ahe.08, ahe.92.adj)
```

The sample average of the 1992 inflation-adjusted earnings is 17.83 in the 2008 dollars, the confidence interval for the 1992 mean is (17.64, 18.03), and the confidence interval for the

change between 1992 and 2008 is (0.85, 1.44)

### Question (c)

If we are interested in the change in workers' purchasing power, the results with the inflation-adjusted earnings should be used in comparison.

### Question (d)

Now let's compute the average earnings for high school graduates and college graduates with the 2008 data.

```
# select data in 2008
cps08 <- subset(cpsdat, year == 2008)

# calculate means
ahe.educ <- aggregate(ahe ~ bachelor, FUN = mean, data = cps08)

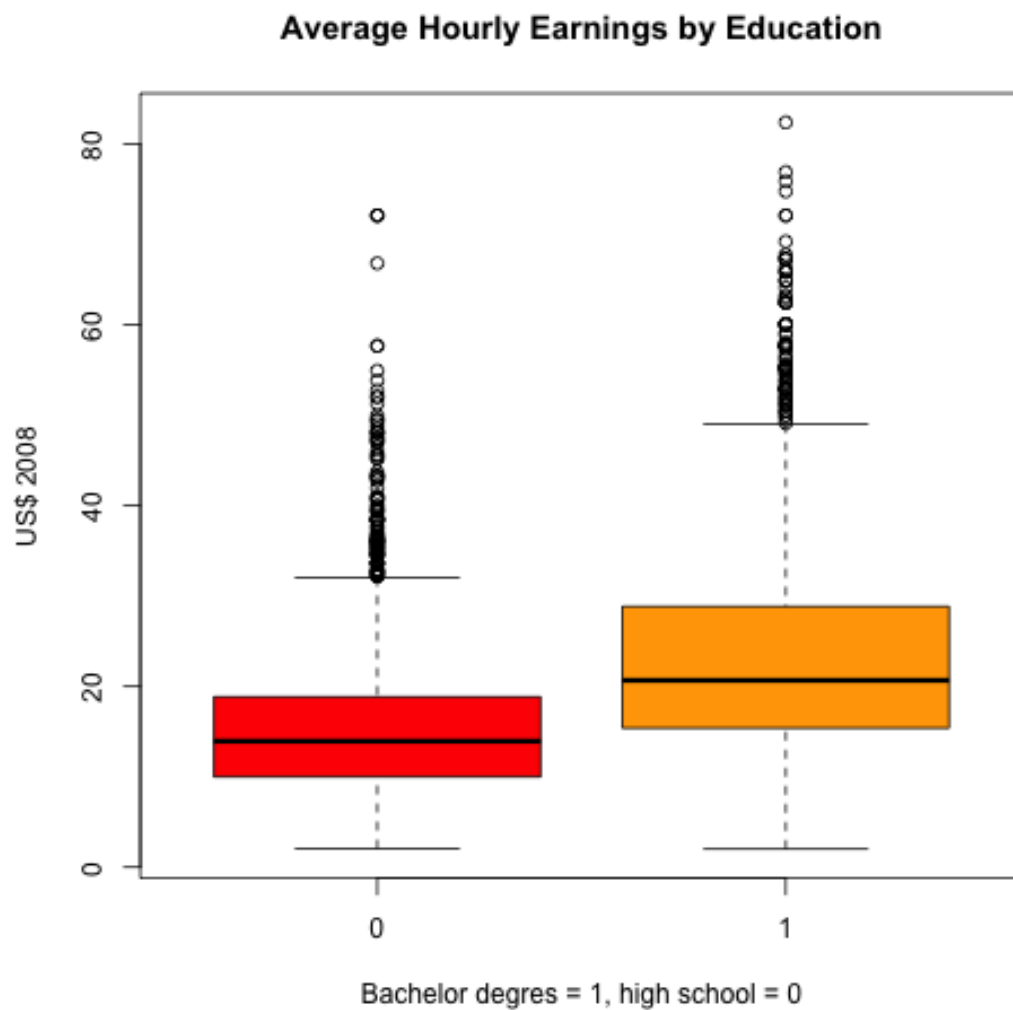
# select ahe and filter by bachelor
ahe.high.08 <- with(cps08, ahe[bachelor == 0])
ahe.bach.08 <- with(cps08, ahe[bachelor == 1])

# construct confidence interval
t.ahe.high <- t.test(ahe.high.08)
t.ahe.bach <- t.test(ahe.bach.08)
t.ahe.gap <- t.test(ahe.bach.08, ahe.high.08)
```

- The mean of the average hourly earnings of high school graduates in 2008 is 15.33 dollars with the 95% confidence interval (15.09, 15.57).
- The mean of the average hourly earnings of college graduates is 22.91 dollars with the 95% confidence interval (22.56, 23.26).
- The 95% confidence interval of the gap in earnings between the two groups is (7.15, 8).

We can create a boxplot to compare the means and confidence intervals of average hourly earnings between high school graduates and college graduates.

```
boxplot(ahe ~ bachelor, data = cps08,
main = "Average Hourly Earnings by Education",
col = c("red", "orange"),
xlab = "Bachelor degrees = 1, high school = 0",
ylab = "US$ 2008")
```



### Question (e)

We repeat the steps in (d) by replacing the 2008 data with the 1992 data and using the inflation-adjusted average hourly earnings.

```
# select data in 2008
cps92 <- subset(cpsdat, year == 1992)

# calculate means
ahe.educ.92 <- aggregate(ahe.adj ~ bachelor, FUN = mean, data = cps92)

# select ahe and filter by bachelor
ahe.high.92 <- with(cps92, ahe.adj[bachelor == 0])
ahe.bach.92 <- with(cps92, ahe.adj[bachelor == 1])

# construct confidence interval
```

```
t.ahe.high.92 <- t.test(ahe.high.92)
t.ahe.bach.92 <- t.test(ahe.bach.92)
t.ahe.gap.92 <- t.test(ahe.bach.92, ahe.high.92)
```

- The mean of the average hourly earnings of high school graduates in 1992 is equivalent to 15.31 the 2008 dollars with the 95% confidence interval (15.11, 15.52).
- The mean of the average hourly earnings of college graduates in 1992 is 21.78 in the 2008 dollars with the 95% confidence interval (21.45, 22.12).
- The 95% confidence interval of the gap in earnings between the two groups is (6.08, 6.86).