

Markov's inequality

If $X \geq 0$ and $a > 0$, then

$$P(X \geq a) \leq \frac{E(X)}{a}$$

Proof (discrete case)

$$\begin{aligned} E(X) &= \sum_{i=1}^n x_i P(X=x_i) \quad \text{for } 1 \leq i \leq n \\ &= \underbrace{\sum_{x_i \leq a} x_i P(X=x_i)}_{\geq 0} + \sum_{x_i > a} x_i P(X=x_i) \\ \Rightarrow E(X) &\geq \sum_{x_i > a} x_i P(X=x_i) \quad (\text{A}) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} x_i > a &\Rightarrow x_i P(X=x_i) > a P(X=x_i) \\ &\Rightarrow \sum_{x_i > a} x_i P(X=x_i) > \sum_{x_i > a} a P(X=x_i) \\ &\Rightarrow \sum_{x_i > a} x_i P(X=x_i) \geq a \underbrace{\sum_{x_i > a} P(X=x_i)}_{P(X \geq a)} \end{aligned}$$

by (A) : $E(X) \geq a P(X \geq a)$

So :

$$P(X \geq a) \leq \frac{E(X)}{a}$$

- (continuous case) :

$$\begin{aligned} E(X) &= \int_0^\infty x f_X(x) dx \geq \int_a^\infty x f_X(x) dx \geq a \underbrace{\int_a^\infty f_X(x) dx}_{P(X \geq a)} \end{aligned}$$

$$\Rightarrow P(X \geq a) \leq \frac{E(X)}{a}$$