4. As part of its twenty-fifth reunion celebration, the class of 1988 (students who graduated in 1988) at a state university held a reception on campus. In an informal survey, the director of alumni development asked 50 of the attendees about their incomes. The director computed the mean income of the 50 attendees to be $189,952. In a news release, the director announced, "The members of our class of 1988 enjoyed resounding success. Last year's mean income of its members was $189,952!"

   (a) What would be a statistical advantage of using the median of the reported incomes, rather than the mean, as the estimate of the typical income?

   (b) The director felt the members who attended the reception may be different from the class as a whole. A more detailed survey of the class was planned to find a better estimate of the income as well as other facts about the alumni. The staff developed two methods based on the available funds to carry out the survey.

   Method 1: Send out an e-mail to all 6,826 members of the class asking them to complete an online form. The staff estimates that at least 600 members will respond.

   Method 2: Select a simple random sample of members of the class and contact the selected members directly by phone. Follow up to ensure that all responses are obtained. Because method 2 will require more time than method 1, the staff estimates that only 100 members of the class could be contacted using method 2.

   Which of the two methods would you select for estimating the average yearly income of all 6,826 members of the class of 1988 ? Explain your reasoning by comparing the two methods and the effect of each method on the estimate.

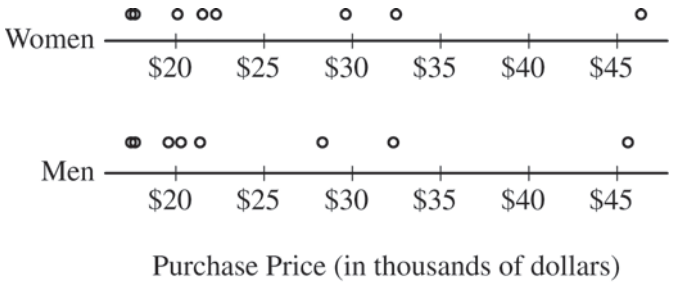
5. A researcher conducted a study to investigate whether local car dealers tend to charge women more than men for the same car model. Using information from the county tax collector's records, the researcher randomly selected one man and one woman from among everyone who had purchased the same model of an identically equipped car from the same dealer. The process was repeated for a total of 8 randomly selected car models.

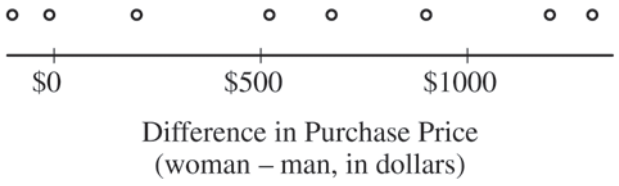
   The purchase prices and the differences (woman – man) are shown in the table below. Summary statistics are also shown.

Car model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Women	$20,100	$17,400	$22,300	$32,500	$17,710	$21,500	$29,600	$46,300
Men	$19,580	$17,500	$21,400	$32,300	$17,720	$20,300	$28,300	$45,630
Difference	$520	−$100	$900	$200	−$10	$1,200	$1,300	$670

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Women	$25,926.25	$9,846.61
Men	$25,341.25	$9,728.60
Difference	$585.00	$530.71

Dotplots of the data and the differences are shown below.





Do the data provide convincing evidence that, on average, women pay more than men in the county for the same car model?

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Question 4

Intent of Question

The primary goals of this question were to assess a student's ability to (1) describe why the median might be preferred to the mean in a particular context; (2) compare the relative merits of two sampling plans; and (3) describe a consequence of nonresponse in a particular study.

Solution

Part (a):

The median is less affected by skewness and outliers than the mean. With a variable such as income, a small number of very large incomes could dramatically increase the mean but not the median. Therefore, the median would provide a better estimate of a typical income value.

Part (b):

Method 2 is better than Method 1. A sample obtained from Method 1 could be biased because of the voluntary nature of the response. It is plausible that class members with larger incomes might be more likely to return the form than class members with smaller incomes. The mean income for such a sample would overestimate the mean income of all class members. With Method 2, despite the smaller sample size, the random selection is likely to result in a sample that is more representative of the entire class and produce an unbiased estimate of mean yearly income of all class members.

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Question 4 (continued)

Scoring

This question is scored in three sections. Part (b) has two components: (1) identifying a relevant characteristic for each sampling method; (2) indicating the effect of the biased method on the estimate of the mean income. Section 1 consists of Part (a); section 2 consists of part (b), component 1; and section 3 consists of part (b), component 2. Sections 1, 2, and 3 are scored as essentially correct (E), partially correct (P), or incorrect (I).

Section 1 is scored as follows:

Essentially correct (E) if the response includes the following two components:
1. Describes how skewness or outliers affect the mean or do not affect the median.
2. Makes a conjecture about a relevant characteristic of the distribution of incomes, such as skewness or an outlier.

Partially correct (P) if the response includes only one of the two components listed above.

Incorrect (I) if the response does not meet the criteria for E or P.

Notes:
- For Component 1, examples of responses that are acceptable include:
  - The mean is affected by skewness (outliers).
  - The median is not affected by skewness (outliers).
  - The mean is greater (less) than the median when there is right (left) skewness or outliers.
- For Component 1, examples of responses that are not acceptable include:
  - Don't use the mean for skewed distributions or distributions with outliers.
  - Use the median for skewed distributions or distributions with outliers.
  - Responses that include an incorrect statement about means and/or medians, such as for right skewed distributions, the median will be higher than the mean.
- It is possible to satisfy *both* components with a single sentence, such as, "If there was a billionaire in the sample, the mean would be higher than the median."
- If a response argues that using the *mean* is a more appropriate way to estimate the typical income, then reduce the score in section 1 by one level (that is, from E to P or from P to I).

Section 2 is scored as follows:

Essentially correct (E) if the response chooses Method 2 *AND* includes the following two components:
1. Identifies a relevant characteristic of Method 1.
2. Identifies a relevant characteristic of Method 2.

Partially correct (P) if the response chooses Method 2 *AND* includes only one of the two components listed above
OR
if the response includes both components but does not choose a method.

Incorrect (I) if the response chooses Method 1 *OR* otherwise does not meet the criteria for E or P.

Question 4 (continued)

Notes:

- Responses that do not explicitly choose Method 2 can still earn an E for section 2 if the choice is clearly implied. The choice of Method 2 is clearly implied if the response only discusses negative characteristics of Method 1 and only discusses positive characteristics of Method 2, such as, Method 1 is biased but Method 2 uses a random sample.
- Responses that *compare* the two methods can satisfy *both* components, such as, saying that Method 1 is more biased or that nonresponse will be less of a problem with Method 2.
- Responses that refer to the nonresponse bias as *voluntary response bias*, *response bias, undercoverage* can still earn an E.
- Discussions of conditions for inference should be considered extraneous and ignored.

Section 3 is scored as follows:

Essentially correct (E) if the response includes the following two components:

1. Indicates the incomes of responders may be different from the incomes of nonresponders.
2. Indicates the biased sampling method may produce a misleading estimate/conclusion about the mean income, including direction, for example, "The sample mean is likely to be higher than the mean of the population."

Partially correct (P) if the response provides only one of the two components listed above.

Incorrect (I) if the response does not meet the criteria for E or P.

Notes:

- A single sentence can satisfy the first component of section 2 and the first component of section 3. (For example, "In method 1, rich people are more likely to respond.")
- For component 2, either direction is acceptable but the direction must be consistent with the identified bias. Saying only that Method 2 will be more accurate or more representative does not satisfy component 2.
- If a response addresses possible nonresponse bias in Method 2, the response can still satisfy both components of section 3.
- Responses that focus on the larger sample size in Method 1 can satisfy component 2 if such responses describe the effect as reducing the variability of the estimate. (For example, "I would use Method 1 since the larger sample size would give less variability of the mean.")
- Responses that focus on untruthful survey answers can satisfy component 2 if the effect on the estimate is appropriate. (For example, "People contacted in Method 2 might say they make more money than they actually do. This would make the estimated mean too high.")