As a high-quality graduate statistics student, the correct answer to this question is:

(A) a sample characteristic

\*\*Explanation\*\*: In statistics, a statistic is a numerical value calculated from a sample. It is used to estimate or describe characteristics of the population from which the sample is drawn. For example, the sample mean, sample variance, and sample proportion are all statistics.

- (B) a population characteristic - This would be a parameter, not a statistic. Parameters are characteristics of the entire population, like the population mean or population variance.

- (C) unknown - This is not correct because a statistic is calculated from known sample data.

- (D) normally distributed - While some statistics might follow a normal distribution under certain conditions (e.g., the sample mean of a normally distributed population), this is not a defining characteristic of a statistic itself.

Therefore, the correct choice is (A).