Political Science 209 - Fall 2018

Probability

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Why probability?

- Probability rules our lives
- It is everywhere!

Why probability?

- Humans are really bad at interpreting probabilities
- Even worse at calculating (estimating) probabilities

Why probability?

The Media Has A Probability Problem

The media's demand for certainty — and its lack of statistical rigor — is a bad match for our complex world.

By Nate Silver
Filed under The Real Story Of 2016
Published Sep. 21, 2017

Why probability?

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- What are the chances you win the lottery?

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- What are the chances it rains tomorrow?
- What are the chances you win the lottery?
- What is the probabilty of getting an A in pols 209?

Why probability?

- We use probability to express and calculate uncertainty
- *Preview*: later we will use probability to make statements about the uncertainty in our data analysis

Two fundamental concepts of probability

- Frequentist: long-run frequency of events
  - ratio between the number of times the event occurs and the number of trials
  - example: coin flips

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- Frequentist: long-run frequency of events
  - ratio between the number of times the event occurs and the number of trials
  - example: coin flips
- Bayesian: belief about the likelihood of event occurrence
  - evidence based belief
  - often more sensible philosophy in political world

Important Terms

1. Experiment: an action or a set of actions that produce stochastic events of interest

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1. sample space: a set of all possible outcomes of the experiment, typically denoted by Ω

1. event: a subset of the sample space

(Imai - QSS)

Example

What is the experiment, sample space, and one event for coin flips or the pulling a single card out of a deck of 52?

Defining Probability

$$\text{Probability of event A} = P(A) = \frac{\text{number of elements in A}}{\text{number of elements in sample space}}$$

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$$\text{Probability of Head} = P(H) = \frac{1}{2}$$

Example

What is the probability of 3 head in 3 flips?

Sample space?

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$\Omega = \{HHH, HHT, HTH, THH, HTT, THT, TTH, TTT\}$

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$\{HHH\}$

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$P(\text{HHH}) = \frac{1}{8}$

Example

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What is the event space we are interested in?

$\{\text{HHT, HTH, THH}\}$

$P(2\ H) = \frac{3}{8}$

Axioms (rules) of Probability

- the probability of any event A is at least 0
  - $P(A) \geq 0$

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- If A and B are mutually exclusive (meaning only one or the other can happen), then $P(A \text{ or } B) = P(A) + P(B)$

Axioms (rules) of Probability

A^c - complement to A, i.e. part of sample space not in A

Sometimes it is easier to calculate the probability of an event by using its complement

Using the complement:

What is the probability of having at least one Tail on three coin flips?

$\Omega = \{HHH, HHT, HTH, THH, HTT, THT, TTH, TTT\}$

Using the complement:

What is the probability of having at least one Tail on three coin flips?

$\Omega = \{$HHH,HHT,HTH,THH, HTT, THT, TTH, TTT$\}$

P(at least one T) $= \frac{7}{8}$

P(at least one T) $=$ 1 - P(HHH) $=$ 1 - $\frac{1}{8}$

Example of simple probability

What is the probability of getting a Queen as the first card from a full deck?

$\Omega = \{?\}$

Event space $= \{?\}$

Example of simple probability

What is the probability of getting a Queen as the first card from a full deck?

$\Omega = \{?\}$

Event space $= \{?\}$

$\text{p(Queen)} = \frac{4}{52} = \frac{1}{13}$

How to quickly count the sample space when order matters: permutations

- Often we do not want to or can't write out all possible combinations by hand
- How many possibilities are there to arrange letters numbers 1,2,3?

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Three outcomes: 1, 2, 3 & three draws

First draw: A,B, or C

Second draw: two possibilities

Third draw: one left

3 x 2 x 1 possibilities

How to quickly count the sample space when order matters: permutations

Permutations count many ways we can order k objects out of a set of n unique objects

$_{n}P_{k} = n \times (n-1) \times (n-2) \times ... \times (n-k+1) = \frac{n!}{(n-k)!}$

What does n! stand for?

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What does n! stand for?

n! = n-factorial = $n $\times$ (n-1) $\times$ (n-2) $\times \dots \times$ (n-n+1)

$3! = 3 \times 2 \times 1$

Note: 0! = 1

Permutation Example:

How many ways can we arrange four cards out of a the 13 spades in our card deck?

first draw: ?

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$13 \times 12 \times 11 \times 10$

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$\$\ 13!\frac{}{(13-4)!=\frac{13!}{9!}=17160\$}$

Birthday Problem

Impress your family over Thanksgiving!

What is the probability that at least two people in this room have the same birthday?

Birthday Problem

Can the law of total probabilities and complement help us?

Birthday Problem

Can the law of total probabilities and complement help us?

Yes, P(at least two share bday) = 1 - P(nobody shares bday)

Birthday Problem

P(nobody shares bday)?

First find event space, i.e. everyone has a unique birthday

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How many possibilities for birthdays in a year?

365

How many unique arrangements would we need for nobody to share the birthday?

number of people in room - k

Birthday Problem

1. ${}_{365}P_k = \frac{365!}{(365-k)!}$ possibilities to arrange k unique birthdays over 365 days
2. What is the sample space? All the different possibilities for k birthdays (even non-unique).

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365^k

Birthday Problem

P(at least two share bday) = 1 - P(nobody shares bday) = 1 - $\frac{365!}{(365-k)! \times 365^k}$

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P(at least two share bday): k = 10; 0.116, k = 23; 0.504, and k = 68; 0.999.