8

CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

Figure 8.1 Have you ever wondered what the average number of M&Ms in a bag at the grocery store is? You can use confidence intervals to answer this question. (credit: modification of work "sweet, orange, food, green, red, color, brown, blue, colorful, yellow, chocolate, snack, dessert, toy, plain, candy, sweetness, treat, confectionery, coated, m ms, hard shell, snack food, jelly bean"/ Pxhere, Public Domain)

Chapter Objectives

By the end of this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Calculate and interpret confidence intervals for estimating a population mean and a population proportion.
- Interpret the Student's t probability distribution as the sample size changes.
- Discriminate between problems applying the normal and the Student's *t* distributions.
- Calculate the sample size required to estimate a population mean and a population proportion given a desired confidence level and margin of error.

Introduction

Suppose you were trying to determine the mean rent of a two-bedroom apartment in your town. You might look in the classified section of the newspaper, write down several rents listed, and average them together. You would have obtained a point estimate of the true mean. If you are trying to determine the percentage of times you make a basket when shooting a basketball, you might count the number of shots you make and divide that by the number of shots you attempted. In this case, you would have obtained a point estimate for the true proportion.

We use sample data to make generalizations about an unknown population. This part of statistics is called **inferential statistics**. **The sample data help us to make an estimate of a population parameter**. We realize that the point estimate is most likely not the exact value of the population parameter, but close to it. After calculating point estimates, we construct interval estimates, called confidence intervals.

In this chapter, you will learn to construct and interpret confidence intervals. You will also learn a new distribution, the Student's-t, and how it is used with these intervals. Throughout the chapter, it is important to keep in mind that the