# Missing Data Basics

#### Utrecht University Winter School: Missing Data in R



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#### Outline

Missing Data Descriptives

Missing Data Mechanisms

Missing Data Treatments



## What are Missing Data?

Missing data are empty cells in a dataset where there should be observed values.

 The missing cells correspond to true population values, but we haven't observed those values.



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Missing data are empty cells in a dataset where there should be observed values.

 The missing cells correspond to true population values, but we haven't observed those values.

Not every empty cell is a missing datum.

- Quality-of-life ratings for dead patients in a mortality study
- Firm profitability after the company goes out of business
- Self-reported severity of menstrual cramping for men
- Empty blocks of data following "gateway" items

#### A Little Notation

 $Y := An N \times P$  Matrix of Arbitrary Data

 $Y_{mis} := \text{The } missing \text{ part of } Y$ 

 $Y_{obs} :=$ The *observed* part of Y

 $R := An N \times P$  response matrix

 $M := An N \times P$  missingness matrix

The R and M matrices are complementary.

- $r_{np} = 1$  means  $y_{np}$  is observed;  $m_{np} = 1$  means  $y_{np}$  is missing.
- $r_{np} = 0$  means  $y_{np}$  is missing;  $m_{np} = 0$  means  $y_{np}$  is observed.
- $M_p$  is the *missingness* of  $Y_p$ .

# MISSING DATA DESCRIPTIVES



## Missing Data Pattern

Missing data (or response) patterns represent unique combinations of observed and missing items.

• P items  $\Rightarrow 2^P$  possible patterns.

	Χ	Υ
1	Х	У
2	Χ	
3		У
4	•	

Patterns for P = 2

	Χ	Υ	Z
1	Х	У	Z
2	Χ	У	
3	Χ		Z
4		У	Z
5	Χ		
6			Z
7		У	
8	•		

Patterns for P = 3

### Missing Data Pattern

The concept of a "missing data pattern" can also be used to classify the spatial arrangement of missing cells on a data set.

- Univariate
  - Missing data occur on only one variable
- Monotone
  - The proportion of complete elements, in both rows and columns, decreases when traversing the data set.
  - The observed cells can be arranged into a "staircase" pattern.
- Arbitrary
  - Missing values are "randomly" scattered throughout the data set.

### **Example Missing Data Patterns**

	Χ	Υ	Z			Χ	Υ	Z			Χ	Υ	Z
1	Х	У	Z		1	Х	У	Z		1	Х		Z
2	Χ	У	Z		2	Χ	У	Z		2	Χ	У	Z
3	Χ	У	Z		3	Χ	У	Z		3	Χ	У	Z
4	Χ	У	Z		4	Χ	У			4	Χ		Z
5	Χ	У	Z		5	Χ	У			5	Χ	У	Z
6	Χ		Z		6	Χ	У			6	Χ		Z
7	Χ		Z		7	Χ				7		У	Z
8	Χ		Z		8	Χ				8	Χ	У	Z
9	Χ		Z		9	Χ				9	Χ		
10	Х		Z		10		•	•		10	Х	У	•
Univa	Univariate Pattern		Monotone Pattern			Arbitrary Pattern							

### Nonresponse Rates

#### PROPORTION MISSING

- · The proportion of cells containing missing data
- Good early screening measure
- Should be computed for each variable, not for the entire dataset

#### ATTRITION RATE

 The proportion of participants that drop-out of a study at each measurement occasion

### Nonresponse Rates

#### PROPORTION OF COMPLETE CASES

- The proportion of observations with no missing data
- Often reported but nearly useless quantity

#### FRACTION OF MISSING INFORMATION

- Associated with an estimated parameter, not with an incomplete variable
- Like an  $R^2$  for the missing data
- Most important diagnostic value for missing data problems
- Can only be computed after treating the missing data

#### COVARIANCE COVERAGE

$$CC_{jk} = N^{-1} \sum_{n=1}^{N} r_{nj} r_{nk}$$

- The proportion of cases available to estimate a given pairwise relationship (e.g., a covariance between two variables)
- Very important to have adequate coverage of the parameters you want to estimate

#### INBOUND STATISTIC

$$I_{jk} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N} (1 - r_{nj}) r_{nk}}{\sum_{n=1}^{N} (1 - r_{nj})}$$

ullet The proportion of missing cases in  $Y_i$  for which  $Y_k$  is observed

#### OUTBOUND STATISTIC

$$O_{jk} = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{N} r_{nj} (1 - r_{nk})}{\sum_{n=1}^{N} r_{nj}}$$

• The proportion of observed cases in  $Y_i$  for which  $Y_k$  is missing

#### INflux Coefficient

$$I_{j} = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{P} \sum_{n=1}^{N} (1 - r_{nj}) r_{nk}}{\sum_{k=1}^{P} \sum_{n=1}^{N} r_{nk}}$$

- The proportion of observed cells in Y that exists in cases for which Y<sub>i</sub> is missing
- How well the missing values in  $Y_j$  connect to the observed values in  $\mathbf{Y}_{-i}$

#### **OUTFLUX COEFFICIENT**

$$O_{j} = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{P} \sum_{n=1}^{N} r_{nj} (1 - r_{nk})}{\sum_{k=1}^{P} \sum_{n=1}^{N} (1 - r_{nk})}$$

- The proportion of missing cells in Y that exists in cases for which Y<sub>i</sub> is observed
- How well the observed values in  $Y_j$  connect to the missing values in  $Y_{-j}$

# MISSING DATA MECHANISMS



## Missing Data Mechanisms

Missing Completely at Random (MCAR)

- $P(R|Y_{mis}, Y_{obs}) = P(R)$
- Missingness is unrelated to any study variables.

Missing at Random (MAR)

- $P(R|Y_{mis}, Y_{obs}) = P(R|Y_{obs})$
- Missingness is related to only the observed parts of study variables.

Missing not at Random (MNAR)

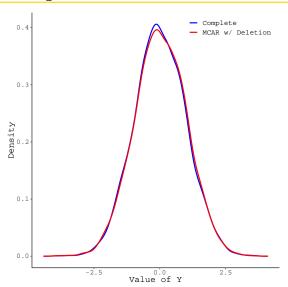
- $P(R|Y_{mis}, Y_{obs}) \neq P(R|Y_{obs})$
- Missingness is related to the *unobserved* parts of study variables.

### Simulate Some Toy Data

```
library(mvtnorm)
library(dplyr)
library(magrittr)
nObs <- 5000 # Sample Size
pm <- 0.3 # Proportion Missing
sigma \leftarrow matrix(c(1.0, 0.5, 0.3,
                   0.5. 1.0. 0.0.
                   0.3, 0.0, 1.0),
                 ncol = 3)
dat0 \leftarrow rmvnorm(nObs, c(0, 0, 0), sigma) \%\% data.frame()
colnames(dat0) <- c("x", "y", "z")
dat0 %$% cor(y, x)
[1] 0.5001822
```

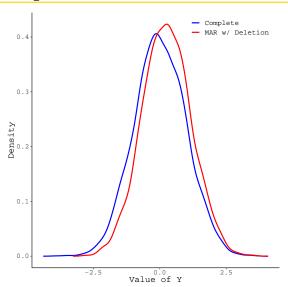
## MCAR Example

# MCAR Example



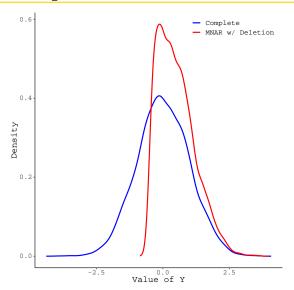
## MAR Example

# **MAR Example**



### **MNAR Example**

# MNAR Example



In our previous MAR example, ignoring the predictor of missingness actually produces *Indirect MNAR*.

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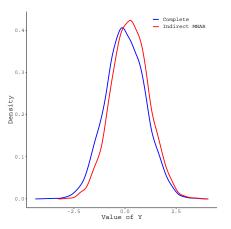
QUESTION: What happens if we ignore the predictor of missingness, but that predictor is independent of our study variables?

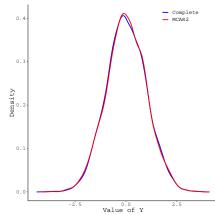
In our previous MAR example, ignoring the predictor of missingness actually produces *Indirect MNAR*.

QUESTION: What happens if we ignore the predictor of missingness, but that predictor is independent of our study variables?

ANSWER: We get back to MCAR:)

The missing data mechanisms are not simply characteristics of an incomplete dataset; we also need to account for the analysis.





## Testing the Missing Data Mechanism

We cannot fully test the MAR or MNAR assumptions.

- To do so would require knowing the values of the missing data.
- We can find observed predictors of missingness.
  - $\circ$  Use classification algorithms to predict missingness from  $Y_{obs}$ .
  - We can never know that we have discovered all MAR predictors.
- In practice, MAR and MNAR live on the ends of a continuum.
  - Our missing data problem exists at some unknown point along this continuum.
  - We can do a lot to nudge our problem towards the MAR side.

## Testing the Missing Data Mechanism

We can (partially) test the MCAR assumption.

- With MCAR, the missing data and the observed data should have the same distribution.
- We can test for MCAR by testing the distributions of *auxiliary* variables, **Z**.
  - Use a t-test to compare the subset of  $Z_p$  that corresponds to  $Y_{mis}$  to the subset corresponding to  $Y_{obs}$ .
  - The Little (1988) MCAR test is a multivariate version of this.

These procedures actually test if the data are *observed* completely at random.

# MISSING DATA TREATMENTS



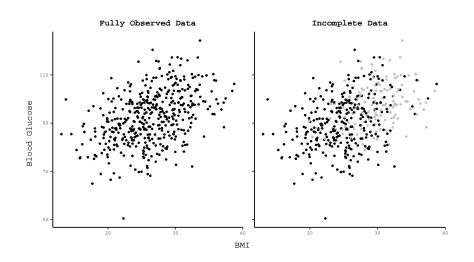
### Bad Methods (These almost never work)

#### Listwise Deletion (Complete Case Analysis)

- Use only complete observations for the analysis
  - Very wasteful (can throw out lots of useful data)
  - Loss of statistical power

#### Pairwise Deletion (Available Case Analysis)

- Use only complete pairs of observations for analysis
  - Different samples sizes for different parameter estimates
  - Can cause computational issues



```
diabetes1 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.4211879 0.3656630
glu 0.4211879 1.0000000 0.4028993
bp 0.3656630 0.4028993 1.0000000
diabetes2 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor(use = "complete")
         bmi
              glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.3262834 0.2776195
glu 0.3262834 1.0000000 0.3537169
bp 0.2776195 0.3537169 1.0000000
```

```
diabetes1 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.4211879 0.3656630
glu 0.4211879 1.0000000 0.4028993
bp 0.3656630 0.4028993 1.0000000
diabetes2 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor(use = "pairwise")
         bmi
              glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.3262834 0.2776195
glu 0.3262834 1.0000000 0.3537169
bp 0.2776195 0.3537169 1.0000000
```

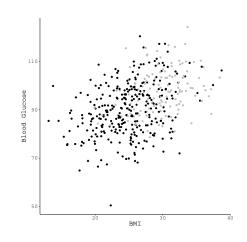
```
mean(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 92.34938
mean(diabetes2$glu, na.rm = TRUE)
[1] 89.9979
var(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 117.29
var(diabetes2$glu, na.rm = TRUE)
[1] 115.4501
```

```
s1 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = diabetes1) %>% summary()
s2 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = diabetes2) %>% summary()
s1$r.squared
[1] 0.2489047
s2$r.squared
[1] 0.1814826
```

```
s1$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 50.6762960 3.55510857 14.254500 3.689251e-38
         0.7369749 0.10360177 7.113535 4.628540e-12
bmi
           0.2333118 0.03608963 6.464788 2.704883e-10
bp
s2$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value
                                              Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 52.4139024 4.61043871 11.368528 3.224459e-25
            0.6267222 0.13652617 4.590491 6.464076e-06
bmi
            0.2368355 0.04472047 5.295907 2.266520e-07
bp
```

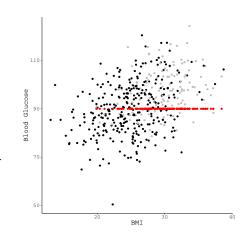
## (Unconditional) Mean Substitution

- Replace  $Y_{mis}$  with  $\bar{Y}_{obs}$ 
  - Negatively biases regression slopes and correlations
  - Attenuates measures of linear association



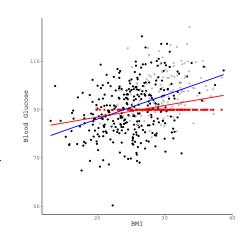
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```
imputed <- diabetes2</pre>
imputed[m, "glu"] <- mean(imputed$glu, na.rm = TRUE)</pre>
imputed[m, "bp"] <- mean(imputed$bp, na.rm = TRUE)</pre>
diabetes1 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.4211879 0.3656630
glu 0.4211879 1.0000000 0.4028993
bp 0.3656630 0.4028993 1.0000000
imputed %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.2486881 0.2115973
glu 0.2486881 1.0000000 0.3537169
bp 0.2115973 0.3537169 1.0000000
```

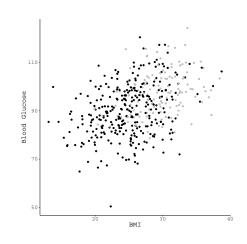
```
mean(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 92.34938
mean(imputed$glu, na.rm = TRUE)
[1] 89.9979
var(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 117.29
var(imputed$glu, na.rm = TRUE)
[1] 80.63184
```

```
s1 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = diabetes1) %>% summary()
s2 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = imputed) %>% summary()
s1$r.squared
[1] 0.2489047
s2$r.squared
[1] 0.1567534
```

```
s1$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 50.6762960 3.55510857 14.254500 3.689251e-38
bmi
         0.7369749 0.10360177 7.113535 4.628540e-12
           0.2333118 0.03608963 6.464788 2.704883e-10
bp
s2$coef
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 56.434068 3.73857631 15.095069 9.056479e-42
            0.351768 0.08667589 4.058429 5.848672e-05
bmi
            0.261839 0.03725021 7.029194 7.987962e-12
bp
```

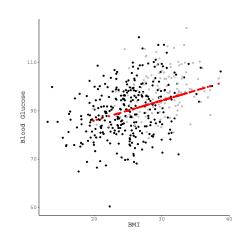
Deterministic Regression Imputation (Conditional Mean Substitution)

- Replace  $Y_{mis}$  with  $\widehat{Y}_{mis}$  from some regression equation
  - Positively biases regression slopes and correlations
  - Inflates measures of linear association



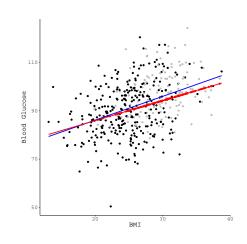
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```
diabetes1 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.4211879 0.3656630
glu 0.4211879 1.0000000 0.4028993
bp 0.3656630 0.4028993 1.0000000
imputed %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi
              glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.4520298 0.4189667
glu 0.4520298 1.0000000 0.4524985
bp 0.4189667 0.4524985 1.0000000
```

```
mean(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 92.34938
mean(imputed$glu, na.rm = TRUE)
[1] 92.03593
var(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 117.29
var(imputed$glu, na.rm = TRUE)
[1] 95.84904
```

```
s1 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = diabetes1) %>% summary()
s2 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = imputed) %>% summary()
s1$r.squared
[1] 0.2489047
s2$r.squared
[1] 0.2882985
```

```
s1$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 50.6762960 3.55510857 14.254500 3.689251e-38
         0.7369749 0.10360177 7.113535 4.628540e-12
bmi
           0.2333118 0.03608963 6.464788 2.704883e-10
bp
s2$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value
                                              Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 49.3228188 3.33953283 14.769377 2.311090e-40
            0.6708372 0.09344954 7.178604 3.027927e-12
bmi
            0.2630784 0.03655493 7.196795 2.687794e-12
bp
```

## General Issues with Deletion-Based Methods

- Biased parameter estimates unless data are MCAR
- · Generalizability issues

## General Issues with Simple Single Imputation Methods

- Biased parameter estimates even when data are MCAR
- Attenuates variability in any treated variables

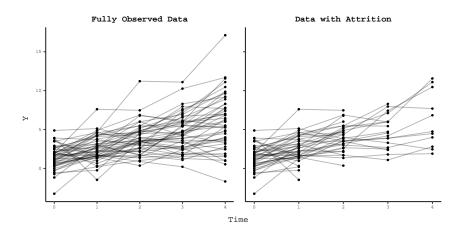
#### Averaging Available Items (Person-Mean Imputation)

- Compute aggregate scores using only available values
  - Missing data must be MCAR
  - Each item must contributes equally to the aggregate score

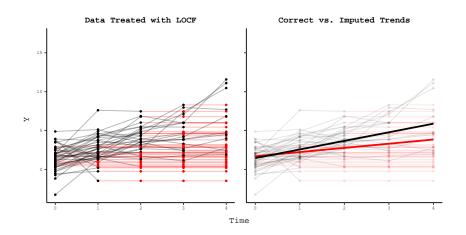
#### Last Observation Carried Forward (LOCF)

- Replace post-dropout values with the most recent observed value
  - Assume that dropouts would maintain their last known values
  - Attenuates estimates of growth/development

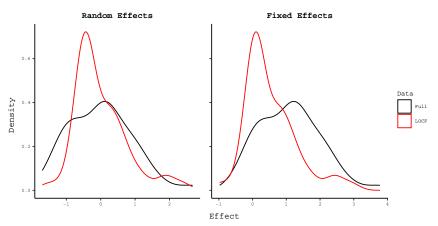
# LOCF



# LOCF

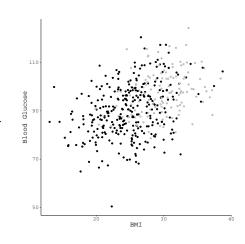


```
## Fit some multilevel regression models
fit1 <- lmer(y ~ t + (t | id), data = dat1) # Full data
fit2 <- lmer(y ~ t + (t | id), data = dat3) # LOCF data</pre>
```



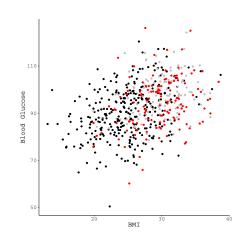
# Stochastic Regression Imputation

- Fill  $Y_{mis}$  with  $\widehat{Y}_{mis}$  plus some random noise.
  - Produces unbiased parameter estimates and predictions
  - Computationally efficient
  - Attenuates standard errors
  - Makes CIs and prediction intervals too narrow



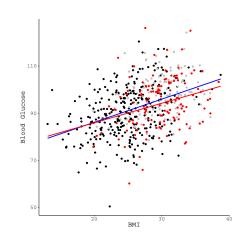
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```
diabetes1 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.4211879 0.3656630
glu 0.4211879 1.0000000 0.4028993
bp 0.3656630 0.4028993 1.0000000
imputed %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi
            glu
                            bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.3676541 0.3459863
glu 0.3676541 1.0000000 0.3986198
bp 0.3459863 0.3986198 1.0000000
```

```
mean(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 92.34938
mean(imputed$glu)
[1] 91.98755
var(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 117.29
var(imputed$glu)
[1] 123.7001
```

```
s1 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = diabetes1) %>% summary()
s2 <- lm(glu ~ bmi + bp, data = imputed) %>% summary()
s1$r.squared
[1] 0.2489047
s2$r.squared
[1] 0.2188541
```

```
s1$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 50.6762960 3.55510857 14.254500 3.689251e-38
         0.7369749 0.10360177 7.113535 4.628540e-12
bmi
           0.2333118 0.03608963 6.464788 2.704883e-10
bp
s2$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value
                                              Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 51.2876572 3.71778033 13.795236 3.223422e-36
            0.6248014 0.10763621 5.804751 1.237000e-08
bmi
            0.2552101 0.03721424 6.857862 2.383498e-11
bp
```

## Nonresponse Weighting

- Weight the observed cases to correct for nonresponse bias
  - Popular in survey research and official statistics
  - Only worth considering with Unit Nonresponse
  - Doesn't make any sense with Item Nonresponse



#### Multiple Imputation (MI)

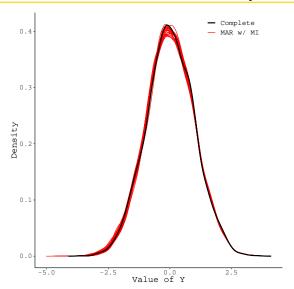
- Replace the missing values with M plausible estimates
  - Essentially, a repeated application of stochastic regression imputation (with a particular type of regression model)
  - Produces unbiased parameter estimates and predictions
  - Produces "correct" standard errors, Cls, and prediction intervals
  - Very, very flexible
  - Computationally expensive



What happens when we apply MI to our previous MAR example?

The MI-based parameter estimate looks good.

 MI produces unbiased estimates of the parameter when data are MAR.

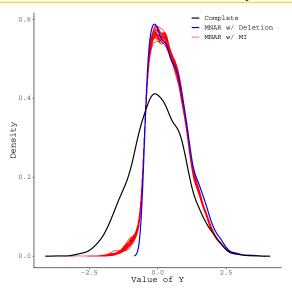


What about applying MI to our MNAR example?

The MI-based parameter estimate is still biased.

 MI cannot correct bias in parameter estimates when data are MNAR.

# Good Methods (These almost always work)





```
diabetes1 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cor()
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.4211879 0.3656630
glu 0.4211879 1.0000000 0.4028993
bp 0.3656630 0.4028993 1.0000000
pooledCorMat(miceOut, c("bmi", "glu", "bp"))
         bmi glu bp
bmi 1.0000000 0.3962675 0.3696741
glu 0.3962675 1.0000000 0.3996248
bp 0.3696741 0.3996248 1.0000000
```

```
mean(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 92.34938
with(miceOut, mean(glu)) analyses %>% unlist() %>% mean()
[1] 92.06123
var(diabetes1$glu)
[1] 117.29
with(miceOut, var(glu))$analyses %>% unlist() %>% mean()
[1] 125.3791
```

```
summary(fit1)$coef
             Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 50.6762960 3.55510857 14.254500 3.689251e-38
bmi
        0.7369749 0.10360177 7.113535 4.628540e-12
           0.2333118 0.03608963 6.464788 2.704883e-10
bp
pool(fit2) %>% summary() %>% select(-df)
        term
               estimate std.error statistic
                                                 p.value
  (Intercept) 50.7094660 4.67447330 10.848167 0.000000e+00
         bmi 0.6938806 0.12956378 5.355514 3.329401e-07
          bp 0.2420252 0.04645062 5.210375 8.817078e-07
```

# Good Methods (These almost always work)

#### **Bayesian Modeling**

- Treat missing values as just another parameter to be estimated
  - Models can be directly estimated in the presence of missing data
    - Essentially, runs MI behind-the-scenes during model estimation
  - The predictors of nonresponse must be included in the model, somehow
  - Computationally expensive



#### Good Methods (These almost always work)

#### Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML)

- Adjust the objective function to only consider the observed parts of the data
  - Models are directly estimated in the presence of missing data
  - The predictors of nonresponse must be included in the model, somehow
  - Unless you write your own optimization program, FIML is only available for certain types of models
  - In linear regression models, FIML cannot treat missing data on predictors (if the predictors are taken as fixed)

```
fit <- diabetes2 %>%
    select(bmi, glu, bp) %>%
    lavCor(missing = "fiml", output = "sampstat")

mean(diabetes1$glu)

[1] 92.34938

fit$mean["glu"]
    glu
91.17804
```

```
diabetes1 %>% select(bmi, glu, bp) %>% cov()
        bmi glu bp
bmi 21.58209 21.19108 22.65475
glu 21.19108 117.28999 58.19137
bp 22.65475 58.19137 177.85378
fit$cov
   bmi
       glu bp
bmi 21.533
glu 17.818 117.569
bp 18.250 51.554 169.383
```

```
mod <- "glu ~ 1 + bmi + bp"
fit <- sem(mod, data = diabetes2, missing = "fiml")
summary(fit1)$r.squared
[1] 0.2489047
inspect(fit, "r2")
   glu
0.181</pre>
```

```
summary(fit1)$coef %>% round(3)
         Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 50.676 3.555 14.255
bmi
     0.737 0.104 7.114
          0.233 0.036 6.465
bp
parameterEstimates(fit, ci = FALSE)[1:4, ]
 lhs op rhs est se z pvalue
1 glu ~1 52.414 4.588 11.424
2 glu ~ bmi 0.627 0.136 4.613
3 glu ~ bp 0.237 0.045 5.322
4 glu ~~ glu 94.192 7.578 12.430
```

#### References

Little, R. J. A. (1988). A test of missing completely at random for multivariate data with missing values. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, *83*(404), 1198–1202. doi: 10.1080/01621459.1988.10478722

