Notes 02 - Data Summaries

STS 2300 (Spring 2025)

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# Reading for Notes 02

There is no specific reading associated with the material in this set of notes. Instead, consider completing a couple of the R Programming modules from the swirl package to work on building your foundational R skills. The following would be particularly helpful as you learn more about R:

* Module 1 - Basic Building Blocks
* Module 3 - Sequences and Numbers
* Module 4 - Vectors
* Module 12 - Looking at Data

You can learn more about the swirl package [here](https://swirlstats.com/students.html) or you can talk to the instructor to get started.

# Learning Goals for Notes 02

* Be able to identify proper ways to summarize categorical and quantitative data and to write code to carry this out.
* Be able to conduct summaries by groups when applicable
* Be able to format summaries appropriately for use in future code (and for readability as discussed in Activity 02)
* Be able to use R Markdown to present statistical results that interweave text, code, and output (Activity 02)

# Quantitative vs. categorical data and representation in R

In statistics, we commonly split data into two types: **quantitative** (sometimes called numeric) and **categorical** (sometimes called qualitative). You should have learned (or will learn) these definitions of variables in STS 2120.

* **Quantitative data** consists of numbers with numeric meanings. In other words, it would make sense to interpret an average for this data. Quantitative data is usually the result of making counts or measurements.
* **Categorical data** consists of data split into categories. The data may or may not *look* like numbers. If they look like numbers, they have a non-numeric meaning (e.g. zip code).

In R, quantitative data can be stored in several different formats (e.g. int, num, dbl, etc.). We will typically not distinguish between these in our class. We can use the is.numeric() function to verify if a scalar, vector, or matrix is being treated as quantitative by R.

Categorical data also may be stored in different formats (e.g. chr, factor). We may discuss differences between these later in the semester. Functions like is.character() and is.factor() can be used similarly to is.numeric().

If we want to get a quick view of how all the variables in a data frame (or vector) are being stored, we can use the str() function.

**Practice**: Try using str() on the mtcars data frame from Notes 01. How is R storing each of the variables? Does the results seem to match how we would think of them “statistically”? (Note: You can compare this to the MA\_schools example using str() further down in the notes.)

**Answer:**

In some cases, we may need to convert a variable to an appropriate format. Functions like as.factor(), as.numeric(), etc. can help with this. We will revisit this more as it arises throughout the semester.

# Summarizing Quantitative Data

There are many, many ways to summarize numeric data. Below are some common ones that you likely saw (or will see) in STS 2120. The associated R functions are listed next to each.

Measures of data center:

* mean – mean()
* median – median()

Measures of spread:

* standard deviation – sd()
* variance – var()
* interquartile range (IQR) – IQR()

Measures of location:

* minimum – min()
* maximum – max()
* kth percentile (e.g. 90th) – quantile(\_\_, probs = .9)

Other:

* total or sum – sum()
* number of observations – length()

We can use any of these functions on a *vector of numeric values* to obtain a single number.

**Practice:** Try this on the mtcars data frame to find:

* The mean miles per gallon
* The minimum horsepower
* The 80th percentile for weight
* The standard deviation for displacement

(Hints: Remember you need to use the $ operator to isolate a vector/column from a data frame. You can use ? to find the column names for each variable in mtcars.)

**Answers:**

If we want to create a data frame of our summary with columns for each value (think PROC MEANS in SAS), we can use the summarize() function from the dplyr package. The summarize() function has a data frame as its first argument followed by calculations for as many statistics as we’d like. We can add names to these statistics in our output by preceding the calculation with a name and an equals sign. Below is an example:

library(dplyr)  
summarize(mtcars,  
 min\_mpg = min(mpg),  
 max\_mpg = max(mpg),  
 avg\_hp = mean(hp),  
 sd\_hp = sd(hp))

## min\_mpg max\_mpg avg\_hp sd\_hp  
## 1 10.4 33.9 146.6875 68.56287

The resulting output is still a data frame and has named columns that we could reference in future code (if we store the data frame in our environment).

**Practice:** Try running this code but save the output of the summarize() function in an object called car\_sum. Then reference the average horse power within this new object (Hint: use $ and the name for this column).

**Answer:**

# Summarizing Categorical Data

Let’s explore the MA\_schools data frame in the moderndive package associated with our textbook. If you haven’t installed this package before, you will need to run install.packages("moderndive") in your console. Otherwise, you can start with the code below to explore the structure of the data.

library(moderndive)

## Warning: package 'moderndive' was built under R version 4.3.3

str(MA\_schools)

## spc\_tbl\_ [332 × 4] (S3: spec\_tbl\_df/tbl\_df/tbl/data.frame)  
## $ school\_name : chr [1:332] "Abington High" "Agawam High" "Amesbury High" "Andover High" ...  
## $ average\_sat\_math: num [1:332] 516 514 534 581 592 576 504 505 481 513 ...  
## $ perc\_disadvan : num [1:332] 21.5 22.7 14.6 6.3 10.3 10.3 25.6 15.2 23.8 25.5 ...  
## $ size : Factor w/ 3 levels "small","medium",..: 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 1 3 ...

**Question:** Which of these variables are categorical? Which variable(s) would make sense to summarize with a table? (Note: You may also choose to use a function like head() to further explore the data)

**Answer:**

In Activity 01, we saw examples of using the table() and prop.table() functions as ways of summarizing data with a small number of possible outcomes.

**Practice:** Create a table of school sizes using table(). Then write a second line of code where your code from the first line is inside the prop.table() function. What is different about the two outputs?

**Answer:**

The output from these two functions are **not** data frames. This means they may be difficult to use in future code and calculations.

# Summaries by groups

The summarize() function has an argument called .by that allows us to calculate the same statistic(s) for different groups in our data (e.g., the minimum mpg for cars with automatic transmissions and for cars with manual transmissions). This method produces results as a data frame and is one way to solve our previous issue about the table() function producing output that is hard to use in future code and calculations. For example, we can use the n() function in summarize() along with a .by = size argument to calculate the number of schools *by* school size.

summarize(MA\_schools,  
 count = n(),  
 .by = size)

## # A tibble: 3 × 2  
## size count  
## <fct> <int>  
## 1 medium 69  
## 2 large 235  
## 3 small 28

These are the same results we would get using table(MA\_schools$size), but the output is now a data frame (with variables called size and count) that we can use in future code and calculations. In Notes 03, we will see how we could add a proportion to this table as well.

This same approach can be used to carry out numerical summaries by groups. Let’s revisit our mtcars summary from before but now summarize by transmission type (am).

**Practice:** See if you can edit your code from before to produce the output below. (Bonus: Add another column called count that tells us how many cars have each transmission type)

## am min\_mpg max\_mpg avg\_hp sd\_hp  
## 1 1 15.0 33.9 126.8462 84.06232  
## 2 0 10.4 24.4 160.2632 53.90820

To summarize by multiple groups, we can put variables inside c() for the .by argument. For example, suppose I wanted a table of how many cars had certain transmissions and numbers of cylinders.

summarize(mtcars,  
 count = n(),  
 .by = c(am, cyl))

## am cyl count  
## 1 1 6 3  
## 2 1 4 8  
## 3 0 6 4  
## 4 0 8 12  
## 5 0 4 3  
## 6 1 8 2

I can see that 12 cars have automatic transmission (am = 0) and 8 cylinders. We will learn in Activity 02 and Notes 03 some ways to make the output look nicer.

**Practice:** Update your code from the mtcars summary in the practice problem problem above to calculate numerical summaries by transmission and cylinders. Your output should look like this.

## am cyl min\_mpg max\_mpg avg\_hp sd\_hp  
## 1 1 6 19.7 21.0 131.66667 37.52777  
## 2 1 4 21.4 33.9 81.87500 22.65542  
## 3 0 6 17.8 21.4 115.25000 9.17878  
## 4 0 8 10.4 19.2 194.16667 33.35984  
## 5 0 4 21.5 24.4 84.66667 19.65536  
## 6 1 8 15.0 15.8 299.50000 50.20458

# Revisiting the Learning Goals for Notes 02

* Be able to identify proper ways to summarize categorical and quantitative data and to write code to carry this out.
  + Use the mario\_kart\_auction data frame from the moderndive package to create a table showing counts for two categorical variables.
  + Use the same data frame to summarize the center and spread of a quantitative variable from the data.
* Be able to conduct summaries by groups when applicable
  + Use the mario\_kart\_auction data frame to calculate the median and IQR of the total price for new versus used games.
* Be able to format summaries from raw output to more readable formats. (Activity 02)
  + After completing Activity 02, revisit your median and IQR from the previous learning goal and use the kableExtra along with one of the kable\_xxxx() functions. Change settings so the table does not take up the whole page.
* Be able to use R Markdown to present statistical results that interweave text, code, and output (Activity 02)
  + Use the kableExtra package along with R Markdown to create a short document summarizing the mario\_kart\_auction data. Make sure your tables use appropriate themes. Hide your code chunks in the knitted document so that someone who doesn’t know R could still read it and understand your summaries.