

# Near-consistent robust estimations of moments for unimodal distributions

Tuban Lee

This manuscript was compiled on May 27, 2023

**Descriptive statistics for parametric models currently heavily rely on the accuracy of distributional assumptions. Here, leveraging the invariant structures of unimodal distributions, a series of sophisticated yet efficient estimators, robust to both gross errors and departures from parametric assumptions, are proposed for estimating mean and central moments for common unimodal distributions. This article also illuminates the understanding of the common nature of probability distributions and the measures of them.**

orderliness | invariant | unimodal | adaptive estimation |  $U$ -statistics

The potential inconsistencies between the sample mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and robust location estimators in distributions with finite moments have been noticed for more than two centuries (1), with numerous significant attempts made to address them. In calculating a robust location estimator, the procedure of identifying and downweighting extreme values inherently necessitates the formulation of certain distributional assumptions. Inconsistencies naturally arise when these assumptions, parametric or semiparametric, are violated. Due to the presence of infinite dimensional nuisance shape parameters, the semiparametric approach struggles to adequately address distributions with more intricate shapes. Newcomb (1886) provided the first modern approach to robust parametric estimation by developing a class of estimators that gives "less weight to the more discordant observations" (2). In 1964, Huber (3) used the minimax procedure to obtain  $M$ -estimator for the contaminated normal distribution, which has played a pre-eminent role in the later development of robust statistics. However, as previously demonstrated, under growing asymmetric departures from normality, the bias of the Huber  $M$ -estimator increases rapidly. This is a common issue in parametric robust statistics. For example, He and Fung (1999) constructed (4) a robust  $M$ -estimator for the two-parameter Weibull distribution, from which all moments can be calculated. Nonetheless, it is inadequate for other parametric distributions, e.g., the gamma, Perato, lognormal, and the generalized Gaussian distributions (SI Dataset S1). Another interesting approach is based on  $L$ -estimators, such as percentile estimators. For examples of percentile estimators for the Weibull distribution, the reader is referred to the works of Menon (1963) (5), Dubey (1967) (6), Marks (2005) (7), and Boudt, Caliskan, and Croux (2011) (8). At the outset of the study of percentile estimators, it was known that they arithmetically utilize the invariant structures of probability distributions (5, 6). Maybe such estimators can be named as  $I$ -statistics. Formally, an estimator is classified as an  $I$ -statistic if it asymptotically satisfies  $I(LE_1, \dots, LE_l) = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_q)$  for the distribution it is consistent, where LEs are calculated with the use of  $LU$ -statistics (defined in Subsection ??),  $I$  is defined using arithmetic operations and constants but may also incorporate transcendental functions and quantile functions, and  $\theta$ s are the population parameters it estimates. A subclass of  $I$ -statistics,

arithmetic  $I$ -statistics, is defined as LEs are  $LU$ -statistics,  $I$  is solely defined using arithmetic operations and constants. Since some percentile estimators use the logarithmic function to transform all random variables before computing the  $L$ -estimators, a percentile estimator might not always be an arithmetic  $I$ -statistic (6). In this article, two subclasses of  $I$ -statistics are introduced, arithmetic  $I$ -statistics and quantile  $I$ -statistics. Examples of quantile  $I$ -statistics will be discussed later. Based on  $LU$ -statistics,  $I$ -statistics are naturally robust. Compared to probability density functions (pdfs) and cumulative distribution functions (cdfs), the quantile functions of many parametric distributions are more elegant. Since the expectation of an  $L$ -estimator can be expressed as an integral of the quantile function,  $I$ -statistics are often analytically obtainable. However, it is observed that even when the sample follows a gamma distribution, which belongs to the same larger family as the Weibull model, the generalized gamma distribution, a misassumption can still lead to substantial biases in Marks percentile estimator (7), rendering the approach ill-suited (SI Dataset S1).

Most robust location estimators commonly used are symmetric owing to the prevalence of symmetric distributions. An asymmetric  $\gamma$ -weighted  $L$ -statistic can achieve consistency for any  $\gamma$ -symmetric distribution, if  $\gamma \neq 1$ . However, it is tailored more towards certain specific distributions rather than a broad spectrum of common ones. Shifting from semiparametrics to parametrics, consider an estimator with a non-sample-dependent breakdown point (defined in Subsection ??) that is consistent simultaneously for both a semiparametric class of distributions and a distinct parametric distribution, such a robust estimator is named with the prefix 'invariant' followed by the population parameter it is consistent with. Here, the recombined mean is defined as

$$rm_{d,k,\epsilon,\gamma,n,\text{WHLM}} := \lim_{c \rightarrow \infty} \left( \frac{(\text{WHLM}_{k,\epsilon,\gamma,n} + c)^{d+1}}{(\gamma m_n + c)^d} - c \right),$$

where  $d$  is the key factor for bias correction,  $\gamma m_n$  is the sample  $\gamma$ -median,  $\text{WHLM}_{k,\epsilon,\gamma,n}$  is the weighted Hodges-Lehmann

## Significance Statement

Bias, variance, and contamination are the three main errors in statistics. Consistent robust estimation is unattainable without parametric assumptions. In this article, invariant moments are proposed as a means of achieving near-consistent and robust estimations of moments, even in scenarios where moderate violations of distributional assumptions occur, while the variances are sometimes smaller than those of the sample moments.

T.L. designed research, performed research, analyzed data, and wrote the paper.

The author declares no competing interest.

<sup>1</sup>To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: tl@biomathematics.org

mean. It is assumed in this article that in the subscript of an estimator, if  $k$  and  $\gamma$  is omitted,  $k = 1$  and  $\gamma = 1$  is assumed, if  $n$  is omitted, only the asymptotic behavior is considered, in the absence of subscripts, no assumptions are made. The subsequent theorem shows the significance of this arithmetic  $I$ -statistic.

**Data Availability.** Data for Table ?? are given in SI Dataset S1. All codes have been deposited in [GitHub](#).

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.** I gratefully acknowledge the constructive comments made by the editor which substantially improved the clarity and quality of this paper.

1. CF Gauss, *Theoria combinationis observationum erroribus minimis obnoxiae*. (Henricus Dieterich), (1823).
2. S Newcomb, A generalized theory of the combination of observations so as to obtain the best result. *Am. journal Math.* **8**, 343–366 (1886).
3. PJ Huber, Robust estimation of a location parameter. *Ann. Math. Stat.* **35**, 73–101 (1964).
4. X He, WK Fung, Method of medians for lifetime data with weibull models. *Stat. medicine* **18**, 1993–2009 (1999).
5. M Menon, Estimation of the shape and scale parameters of the weibull distribution. *Technometrics* **5**, 175–182 (1963).
6. SD Dubey, Some percentile estimators for weibull parameters. *Technometrics* **9**, 119–129 (1967).
7. NB Marks, Estimation of weibull parameters from common percentiles. *J. applied Stat.* **32**, 17–24 (2005).
8. K Boudt, D Caliskan, C Croux, Robust explicit estimators of weibull parameters. *Metrika* **73**, 187–209 (2011).